

# Mayong's Folk Traditions and the Colonial Gaze: Reclaiming Indigenous Knowledge in the Shadow of Superstition and Nationalism

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## ABSTRACT

This research delves into the intersection of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and Mayong's folk traditions within the context of colonial encounters, exploring the impact of colonialism on the indigenous knowledge of this unique Assamese region. Mayong, long misunderstood through colonial stereotypes as a land of black magic and superstition, offers a fertile ground for examining the resilience of its cultural and folk practices amidst the shadow of colonial influence. Colonial narratives, shaped by European romanticism and nationalism, painted Mayong's traditions as mystical and backward, leading to a historical neglect of its indigenous knowledge systems. This study aims to bridge the gap in IKS research by focusing on how Mayong's folk traditions were both misrepresented and, later, reclaimed in post-colonial discourse. The paper will explore how these traditions were preserved, altered, and revitalized through colonial and post-colonial periods, with a particular focus on the tension between modernization and the desire to retain indigenous cultural practices.

Through an interdisciplinary approach, this study will analyze the ways in which colonial perceptions shaped the image of Mayong, but also how local resistance to these external forces led to a reaffirmation of indigenous knowledge. The findings reveal a complex dynamic where Mayong's people have, over generations, successfully maintained and adapted their cultural practices—ultimately contributing significantly to the larger discourse of IKS preservation. By examining Mayong's struggle, resilience, and transformation, this research sheds light on the role of folklore and indigenous knowledge in shaping both regional identity and national pride. This research adds a new dimension to the field of IKS studies by focusing on the localized experience of Mayong, offering insights into the on-going reclamation of its cultural legacy and the role of folklore in modern India.

**Keywords:** Mayong, folk traditions, colonial encounters, indigenous knowledge, cultural resilience, post-colonial discourse, nationalism, modernization, cultural legacy.

## INTRODUCTION

Mayong (মায়ং), a small yet historically significant region in Assam, India, has long been associated with mystical practices, folk healing, and esoteric rituals. Known as the “Land of Black Magic”, Mayong's reputation has been shaped by oral traditions, colonial records, and contemporary discourse. While the region's cultural practices have often been sensationalized, its indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) encompass a rich interplay of spiritual healing, medicinal practices, and folklore deeply rooted in Assamese tradition.



Historically, Mayong functioned as a center for tantric practices, where local healers, known as *Bej* or *Ojha*, utilized a complex system of indigenous knowledge for healing, divination, and spiritual guidance (Borah, *Mayong*). These traditions, however, were largely misinterpreted by colonial administrators, who viewed them through an Orientalist lens that framed indigenous epistemologies as irrational or primitive (Said, 1978). Consequently, much of Mayong's historical narrative has been shaped by external perspectives rather than indigenous voices. In post-colonial India, there has been a resurgence of interest in reclaiming and studying Mayong's knowledge traditions beyond the stereotypes of magic and superstition. Recent academic inquiries into indigenous medical practices, folklore, and ritualistic traditions highlight the role of oral histories and community-based knowledge in sustaining Mayong's cultural legacy (Lyngdoh, 2016). This study seeks to critically examine how Mayong's folk traditions were historically represented, disrupted, and subsequently reclaimed within the framework of IKS.



Photo: Dr. Saswati Bordoloi

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Mayong's cultural and historical legacy is deeply intertwined with broader Indian epistemological traditions, particularly within tantric practices and folk healing methodologies. Oral histories suggest that Mayong was once an intellectual and spiritual hub where knowledge of herbal medicine, incantations (*mantras*), and metaphysical practices flourished (Borah, 2017). This indigenous system of healing and spiritual practice, however, faced significant disruptions under colonial rule. The British colonial administration, in its efforts to establish Western rationalist paradigms, actively sought to delegitimize local knowledge systems. Colonial ethnographic records, such as E.A. Gait's *A History of Assam* (1906), describe Mayong as a place of occultism and superstition, reinforcing Western narratives that marginalized indigenous knowledge (Gait, 1906). This dismissal of indigenous epistemologies led to a decline in traditional healing systems, as colonial governance imposed Western medical and legal structures that restricted indigenous practices (Guha, 1983). Post-independence, efforts to reclaim Mayong's indigenous traditions have emerged through scholarly research, cultural revival movements, and state-sponsored heritage initiatives. The establishment of Mayong's Museum of Black Magic and the increased documentation of oral traditions by researchers such as Bora reflect an evolving discourse that seeks to reposition Mayong's folk traditions within the larger framework of Indian knowledge systems. This study examines these shifting narratives, focusing on how Mayong's knowledge traditions have been preserved, adapted, and revitalized in contemporary discourse.

## **Overview of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and Their Relevance to Mayong**

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) encompass a vast body of indigenous knowledge, including Ayurveda, astronomy, philosophy, and folklore. These systems reflect India's diverse intellectual traditions and emphasize the interconnectedness of nature, spirituality, and scientific inquiry. Mayong's folk traditions, particularly its healing practices and ritualistic knowledge, align with the broader discourse on IKS, demonstrating an indigenous epistemology that has survived despite historical disruptions.

As Margaret Lyngdoh notes in her study on the Khasi belief systems, indigenous traditions in Northeastern India, including Mayong, operate within complex spiritual and social frameworks. These belief systems are often misunderstood when analyzed solely through Western epistemological lenses (Lyngdoh, 2016). Similarly, Mayong's traditions must be studied in their cultural and historical contexts, recognizing their role within IKS rather than dismissing them as mere superstition.

## **Colonial Encounters and the Construction of Mayong's Image**

The British colonial administration played a pivotal role in shaping the dominant perception of Mayong's traditions. The British Raj, through its documentation in gazette reports and administrative records, often categorized indigenous traditions as irrational, regressive, and incompatible with modern scientific progress. Similar to their approach to other indigenous traditions across India, British authorities regarded Mayong's spiritual and healing practices as superstitions rather than structured knowledge systems. Margaret Lyngdoh in her study on Khasi belief systems argues that colonial knowledge production selectively framed indigenous traditions in ways that aligned with European epistemologies, often portraying them as relics of a primitive past (ibid.). This perspective contributed to the marginalization of indigenous healing traditions, including those practiced in Mayong, by dismissing them as unscientific and irrational.

British ethnographic accounts of Northeast India, including writings on the Khasi and other indigenous communities, reveal an on-going tension between colonial fascination and dismissal. While some British officials romanticized indigenous traditions as exotic, others sought to eradicate them in favor of Western medical and scientific paradigms (ibid.). This duality is evident in the way Mayong was portrayed—both as a mysterious land of magic and as a backward community in need of modernization.

## **The Impact of Colonial Narratives in Shaping Perceptions of Mayong**

British colonial administrators and European travelers played a significant role in constructing the image of Mayong as a land of dark magic. Gazette reports and colonial documents frequently portrayed indigenous practices as regressive, mystical, or irrational, reinforcing the notion of Mayong as an outlier within Indian civilization. These narratives, often shaped by Eurocentric ideas of rationality and civilization, contributed to the marginalization of indigenous knowledge. For instance, British records from the 19<sup>th</sup> century categorized Mayong's folk traditions as primitive rather than acknowledging their medicinal and spiritual significance. This mirrors the way colonial authorities elsewhere in India sought to delegitimize indigenous systems of knowledge, from Ayurveda to tribal healing practices (Ziyue Bi). The colonial gaze, as seen in British administrative writings, functioned as a tool of epistemic domination, branding indigenous traditions as backward while privileging Western modes of thought.

## **Colonial Era: The Emergence of Social Reform Movements in Assam**

The colonial period marked a significant shift in the perception and treatment of indigenous traditions in Assam, particularly those of Mayong. British colonial records and missionary writings frequently dismissed Mayong's folk traditions as primitive and superstitious, disregarding their medicinal and spiritual significance. Colonial gazetteers categorized these indigenous healing practices as illegitimate, aligning with the broader imperialist agenda of undermining local knowledge systems to establish Western authority (Guha, 1999). The introduction of Western education and Christian missionary activities in Assam further propagated rationalist and reformist ideas, challenging indigenous belief structures. While these influences led to notable social reforms, they also contributed to the stigmatization of Mayong's rich folk medicine and healing traditions (Baruah, 2005). However, Assamese intellectuals and reformists recognized the depth of these traditional systems and sought to reclaim indigenous knowledge. Local scholars and cultural activists documented and preserved oral traditions, integrating them into

Assam's broader cultural heritage (Chatterjee, 1989). Peasant movements in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries also resonated with demands for the recognition of indigenous cultural practices, with folk traditions—including those of Mayong—becoming symbols of resistance against colonial narratives of backwardness (Sen, 2004). The colonial era, therefore, served as a turning point for Mayong's folk traditions, as local movements sought to challenge British misrepresentations and re-establish these practices within Assam's evolving socio-cultural identity. Understanding this history is crucial in appreciating Mayong's legacy beyond its portrayal as merely the "land of black magic".

### The Importance of Reclaiming Indigenous Knowledge in the Post-Colonial Era

Post-colonial scholarship has increasingly sought to challenge and deconstruct colonial narratives, emphasizing the importance of reclaiming indigenous knowledge. The revival of interest in Mayong's traditions is part of this larger intellectual movement that seeks to validate and integrate indigenous epistemologies into mainstream academic discourse. By moving beyond the stereotypes of black magic, recent scholarship and cultural initiatives in Assam have sought to reframe Mayong's legacy as a center of folk knowledge, healing, and spiritual wisdom. Lyngdoh notes that indigenous communities in Northeast India continue to navigate between tradition and modernity, adapting their belief systems to contemporary realities while preserving their cultural heritage (Lyngdoh, 2016). Similarly, Mayong's knowledge systems need to be examined not as relics of the past but as evolving traditions that remain relevant today.

### Post-Colonial Reclamation of Indigenous Knowledge

With India's independence in 1947, there was a renewed interest in reclaiming indigenous knowledge systems. However, Mayong's traditions remained largely underexplored in academic discourse, as the focus of IKS research was directed towards mainstream traditions like Ayurveda, Vedic mathematics, and classical Sanskrit texts. In recent decades, scholars and cultural activists have sought to document and revive Mayong's folk traditions as an integral part of India's intellectual heritage.

The post-colonial reclamation of indigenous knowledge is not merely a cultural revivalist project but a necessary step in decolonizing epistemology. The need to recognize and integrate indigenous traditions into contemporary discourse aligns with the broader movement of IKS research. Lyngdoh notes that the struggle of indigenous communities in Northeast India, including the Khasis, to maintain their traditions in the face of modernization reflects a larger pattern of indigenous resilience and adaptation (Lyngdoh, 2016). Mayong's community, similarly, has sought to preserve its heritage while navigating contemporary socio-political realities.

### Knowledge Suppression and Modern-Day Challenges

Despite renewed interest in indigenous traditions, Mayong's knowledge systems face significant challenges in the modern era. These include:

1. **Loss of Oral Traditions** – Many traditional healers and practitioners have passed away without passing on their knowledge to younger generations. The oral nature of Mayong's folk traditions makes them particularly vulnerable to erasure (Borah, Mayong).
2. **Scientific Skepticism and Misrepresentation** – Mayong's healing practices, herbal knowledge, and ritualistic traditions continue to be dismissed as superstition rather than recognized as structured indigenous knowledge. This mirrors broader trends in IKS research, where non-codified knowledge systems struggle for legitimacy.
3. **Cultural Appropriation and Commercialization** – The portrayal of Mayong in popular media often exoticizes its traditions, reducing them to mere spectacle rather than acknowledging their historical and epistemological significance.
4. **Integration with Modern IKS Research** – Unlike mainstream Indian Knowledge Systems such as Ayurveda or Vedic sciences, Mayong's traditions have yet to be systematically documented and integrated into academic research. This gap presents an opportunity for scholars to contribute to the discourse on IKS by studying and preserving Mayong's indigenous knowledge.



The historical marginalization of Mayong's folk traditions, first through colonial narratives and later through post-colonial neglect, has contributed to a significant research gap in IKS studies. This paper seeks to address this gap by analyzing how Mayong's knowledge systems were shaped by colonial perceptions and how they have been reclaimed in post-colonial discourse. By drawing upon historical sources, ethnographic research, and literary works such as Mayong, this study aims to reposition Mayong's folk traditions within the broader discourse on IKS.

### **Research Gap**

Despite the rich oral and folk traditions of Mayong, its indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) have remained largely understudied in academic discourse. Existing scholarship on Indian Knowledge Systems has primarily focused on mainstream traditions such as Ayurveda, Vedic sciences, and classical Sanskrit texts, while indigenous knowledge from Northeastern India, particularly Mayong, has been marginalized.

Several gaps in existing research highlight the need for this study:

1. **Lack of Scholarly Documentation** – While colonial records and folklore collections mention Mayong's traditions, there is a dearth of rigorous academic studies analyzing these traditions as part of IKS. Much of what is known about Mayong comes from anecdotal sources, local legends, and popular media, which often distort historical realities.
2. **Colonial Misrepresentation and Post-Colonial Neglect** – Colonial narratives shaped the perception of Mayong as a land of black magic and superstition, overshadowing its contributions to indigenous healing, spiritual practices, and local epistemology (Lyngdoh, 2016). Post-colonial scholarship has yet to fully engage with how these traditions were preserved, altered, or revitalized.
3. **Integration with Contemporary Knowledge Systems** – Unlike Ayurveda or Siddha medicine, which have been recognized and systematized within India's health and education frameworks, Mayong's folk healing practices remain largely informal and undocumented. There is a need to explore how these traditions can be integrated into contemporary IKS studies.
4. **Ethnographic Research Deficiency** – While historical and literary sources provide glimpses into Mayong's knowledge traditions, there is a need for ethnographic fieldwork that directly engages with local practitioners, healers, and communities to understand how these traditions have been transmitted and transformed over time.

This study aims to fill these research gaps by analyzing how Mayong's folk traditions were represented during the colonial period, how they have been reclaimed in the post-colonial era, and how they fit into the broader discourse of Indian Knowledge Systems.

### **Aims of the Study**

The overarching aim of this research is to critically examine the historical trajectory, colonial representation, and contemporary revival of Mayong's folk traditions within the framework of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). Specifically, this study seeks to:

1. Analyze how British colonial narratives shaped the perception of Mayong's folk traditions and indigenous knowledge.
2. Investigate the role of oral traditions, folklore, and local epistemologies in preserving Mayong's cultural and healing practices.
3. Assess the impact of post-colonial scholarship and cultural revival movements in reclaiming Mayong's indigenous knowledge.
4. Explore the potential for integrating Mayong's folk traditions into the larger discourse of IKS, moving beyond superstition narratives.
5. Conduct an ethnographic study of contemporary practitioners in Mayong to understand the transmission and transformation of traditional knowledge.

## Objectives of the Study

To achieve these aims, this research will:

1. Conduct a historical analysis of British colonial reports, ethnographic accounts, and literary sources to trace the representation of Mayong's knowledge traditions.
2. Examine primary and secondary literature on Mayong's folklore, including Jayanta Madhab Borah's *Mayong*, to understand how indigenous narratives counter colonial stereotypes.
3. Engage in ethnographic fieldwork by documenting the knowledge and practices of local healers, shamans, and spiritual practitioners in Mayong.
4. Compare Mayong's knowledge systems with broader IKS frameworks, identifying similarities with other indigenous healing traditions in India.
5. Provide a decolonial perspective on Mayong's traditions, arguing for their recognition as legitimate knowledge systems rather than mere superstition.

This section highlights the significant research gap in the study of Mayong's folk traditions and their place within Indian Knowledge Systems. By addressing the colonial misrepresentation, post-colonial neglect, and the need for ethnographic engagement, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of Mayong's indigenous knowledge. The study's objectives will help bridge this gap, contributing to both historical and contemporary discussions on IKS.

## Research Questions and Scope of the Study

This study seeks to examine the intersection of colonial narratives, indigenous resistance, and the post-colonial reclamation of Mayong's folk traditions. The key research questions guiding this study are:

1. How did colonial narratives shape the perception of Mayong's folk traditions?
2. What were the consequences of these colonial misrepresentations on indigenous knowledge preservation?
3. How have the people of Mayong resisted, adapted, and reclaimed their folk traditions in the post-colonial era?
4. What is the role of Mayong's folk traditions in the larger discourse on Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)?
5. How can modern scholarship contribute to the documentation and revival of these indigenous practices?

By addressing these questions, this research aims to bridge the gap in existing studies on Mayong, offering an interdisciplinary perspective that integrates history, anthropology, and folklore studies. The study will also contribute to a broader understanding of how indigenous communities navigate the challenges of modernization while striving to preserve their cultural legacy.

## METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach, combining historical analysis, ethnographic fieldwork, and textual interpretation to examine Mayong's folk traditions within the framework of colonial knowledge production and postcolonial reclaiming of indigenous wisdom.

### 1. Ethnographic Study

A field-based ethnographic study has been conducted in Mayong, Assam, focusing on oral traditions, healing practices, and the lived experiences of local practitioners. The ethnographic component includes:

- **Participant Observation:** Engaging with traditional healers (*Bej*, *Ojha*), local storytellers, and community elders to document healing rituals, incantations, and folklore.
- **Semi-structured Interviews:** Conducted interviews with practitioners, residents, and scholars to understand their perspectives on Mayong's mystical reputation and its evolving role in contemporary Assam.

- Cultural Immersion: Attended community rituals, folk performances, and religious ceremonies to analyze the continuity and transformation of indigenous practices.

## **2. Archival and Historical Analysis**

- Examination of British colonial records, missionary writings, and gazetteers that categorized Mayong's traditions as primitive, superstitious, or illegitimate.
- Comparative study of colonial policies towards indigenous healing traditions across India, drawing parallels with the treatment of *Ayurveda*, *Unani*, and tribal medicine.
- Analysis of Assamese-language literary texts, newspapers, and nationalist writings to trace shifting perceptions of Mayong's knowledge systems.

## **3. Textual and Discourse Analysis**

- Reviewing folklore collections, anthropological reports, and historical accounts of Mayong's traditions.
- Investigating how popular media and academic discourse have represented Mayong—whether as a site of exotic superstition or as a repository of lost indigenous knowledge.

## **4. Comparative Framework**

- Situating Mayong's folk traditions within broader discourses on colonial epistemology, indigenous knowledge systems, and postcolonial reclaiming of traditions.
- Examining how similar traditions in other parts of India—such as Bengali Tantra, Khasi healing practices, and Odisha's sorcery traditions—were treated under colonial rule.

By integrating ethnographic engagement with historical and textual analysis, this study aims to decolonize the narrative around Mayong's folk traditions and reposition them within India's diverse intellectual heritage.

### **Findings of the research**

The research highlights how colonial narratives misrepresented Mayong's folk traditions, reducing its rich indigenous knowledge system to mere superstition. However, despite colonial disruptions, the resilience of oral traditions ensured the survival of Mayong's cultural heritage. Post-colonial efforts have witnessed a revival of interest in these traditions, with contemporary scholarship repositioning Mayong's knowledge within the broader discourse of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). The findings indicate that rather than being an isolated case of mystical folklore, Mayong represents a dynamic and evolving indigenous epistemology.



Traditional healers of Mayong, Photo: Dr. Saswati Bordoloi

The outcome of this study reinforces the need to critically reassess colonial historiography, recognize the scientific and cultural depth of folk traditions, and integrate indigenous knowledge into mainstream academic and policy frameworks. By reclaiming Mayong's legacy, this research contributes to the on-going efforts to preserve, validate, and adapt traditional knowledge in modern India.

### **1. Colonial Representation and Stereotyping of Mayong's Traditions**

- Colonial texts and ethnographic accounts from British administrators and European travelers often portrayed Mayong as a land of black magic and superstition. This representation was shaped by Orientalist discourse, which framed indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) through the lens of mysticism rather than rationality (Said, 1978).
- Reports by colonial officers, such as E.A. Gait's *A History of Assam* (1906), emphasize Mayong's reputation for occult practices, but largely ignore the scientific and medicinal knowledge embedded within its traditions (Gait, 1906).
- The colonial gaze reinforced a dichotomy between Western scientific rationality and indigenous epistemologies, leading to the marginalization of Mayong's knowledge systems within official narratives (Cohn, 1996).

### **2. Impact of Colonial Disruptions on Indigenous Knowledge**

- The British administration's policies led to the institutional erasure of indigenous medical, spiritual, and ritualistic practices by replacing them with Western educational and administrative frameworks (Guha, 1983).
- Mayong's traditional healers (*Bej* or *Ojha*) were increasingly delegitimized as colonial governance prioritized Western medicine and law, reducing the influence of indigenous healing traditions (Borah, 2020).
- Despite colonial attempts to suppress indigenous knowledge, oral traditions remained a vital means of cultural transmission, ensuring the survival of key elements of Mayong's folk traditions (Lyngdoh, 2016).

### **3. Post-Colonial Reclamation and Revival of Mayong's Knowledge Systems**

- With India's independence, there was a growing effort to reclaim indigenous knowledge, particularly within the framework of cultural nationalism (Chakrabarty, 2000).
- The establishment of heritage museums and research initiatives in Assam has contributed to renewed scholarly interest in Mayong's folklore, magic, and traditional healing practices (Bora, 2017).
- Modern interpretations of Mayong's knowledge reflect a dual approach—one that integrates traditional healing and ritualistic practices with contemporary scientific inquiry (Mahanta, 2015).

## **RESULTS**

### **1. Resilience of Oral Traditions and Local Epistemologies**

- Despite colonial disruptions, Mayong's cultural knowledge persisted through oral traditions, which continued to be passed down across generations. This resilience highlights the importance of indigenous knowledge transmission outside formal institutions.
- The adaptability of Mayong's folk traditions is evident in the continued practice of healing rituals and herbal medicine, which now coexist with modern medical practices (Borah, 2020).

### **2. Shifts in Cultural Perception and the Role of Nationalism**

- The post-colonial discourse surrounding Mayong has shifted from one of superstition to one of heritage and cultural pride. This reflects a broader trend within IKS research, where previously marginalized traditions are now being re-evaluated for their contributions to holistic knowledge systems (Mukherjee, 2018).
- The intersection of folklore with nationalist movements has led to the strategic reclaiming of indigenous identity, positioning Mayong as a site of cultural resilience rather than colonial exoticism (Chakrabarty, 2000).

### **3. Integration of Indigenous Knowledge in Contemporary Discourses**



- The increasing interest in indigenous healing practices has led to collaborations between practitioners of traditional medicine and academic institutions, paving the way for an interdisciplinary approach to IKS (Mahanta, 2015).
- Digital archiving efforts have helped document Mayong's oral traditions, providing future scholars with access to indigenous narratives that were previously at risk of being lost (Bora, 2017).



Traditional healers of Mayong commonly use locally available medicinal plants and such as *Haritaki* (*Terminalia chebula*, known as *Xilikha*), Indian walnut or Indian hog plum (*Oroxylum indicum*), *Jetuka* (*Lawsonia inermis*), and *Ou Tenga* (*Dillenia indica*, or elephant apple). These natural ingredients are used to treat ailments ranging from digestive disorders and skin infections to inflammation and fevers, showcasing the deep ethno medicinal knowledge embedded in local healing practices.

## DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that colonial narratives played a crucial role in shaping external perceptions of Mayong, often reducing its complex knowledge systems to mere superstition. However, these narratives failed to account for the lived experiences and epistemological depth of indigenous practices. The resilience of oral traditions demonstrates how indigenous communities actively resisted colonial erasure, ensuring the survival of their cultural knowledge. Furthermore, the post-colonial reclamation of Mayong's folk traditions aligns with broader movements within IKS research that seek to validate and integrate indigenous epistemologies into contemporary discourse. The renewed scholarly and cultural interest in Mayong underscores the importance of revisiting colonial representations and highlighting the region's contributions to a diverse and pluralistic knowledge system.

The findings of this research highlight the adaptability of indigenous traditions in response to external influences. While colonial authorities sought to erase or reframe Mayong's folk traditions through the lens of superstition, the people of Mayong continued to practice and evolve their knowledge systems. Post-colonial India's re-evaluation of its heritage has provided a renewed appreciation of these traditions, fostering a shift from marginalization to cultural validation. The continued survival of Mayong's knowledge—through both oral transmission and scholarly engagement—exemplifies the resilience of indigenous epistemologies in the face of historical oppression (Guha, 1983).



Manuscripts of traditional Mayong healers containing sacred *mantras*, used and practiced by healers in their healing rituals. Photo: Dr. Saswati Bordoloi

The outcomes of this study underscore the significance of integrating IKS into academic discourse, policymaking, and educational curricula. The recognition of Mayong's folk traditions as part of a broader indigenous knowledge system can contribute to the decolonization of epistemological frameworks, promoting an inclusive understanding of cultural and scientific knowledge. Additionally, contemporary interdisciplinary research that bridges ethnography, history, and traditional medicine can further validate and sustain these indigenous practices in a rapidly modernizing society (Mukherjee, 2018). Moreover, the study highlights how cultural revival initiatives, particularly in Northeast India, have provided a renewed space for indigenous narratives to be reclaimed. Recent scholarly works (Bora, 2017; Mahanta, 2015) argue that the significance of folk traditions in contemporary society is not just about preservation but also about their relevance in a globalized world. Indigenous traditions, including those of Mayong, continue to evolve and contribute to local economies through cultural tourism, heritage conservation, and academic inquiry.

The digitalization of oral traditions has further enhanced their reach. Ethnographic projects and digital heritage repositories are ensuring that Mayong's folk traditions remain accessible to a global audience. The documentation of healing practices and magical traditions has encouraged cross-disciplinary research, bridging the gap between anthropology, history, and medical science (Mahanta, 2015). This integration of traditional knowledge with contemporary scientific frameworks has the potential to redefine how indigenous epistemologies are valued in mainstream academia.

Additionally, Mayong's folk traditions play a role in local identity politics. As debates around indigenous rights and cultural heritage continue in India, regions like Mayong exemplify the importance of maintaining cultural continuity amid socio-political changes. There is a growing recognition that the folk traditions of Mayong, often dismissed as superstition, contain sophisticated ecological, medicinal, and psychological insights that align with contemporary sustainable practices (Chakrabarty, 2000).

As efforts to reclaim indigenous heritage continue, Mayong stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of cultural knowledge, its adaptability, and its relevance in contemporary India. It challenges the binary of rationality versus superstition, highlighting the necessity of recognizing diverse knowledge systems beyond Western scientific paradigms.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS: NEW IDEAS, THOUGHT, AND INNOVATION

The study of Mayong's folk traditions within the framework of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) reveals the necessity of moving beyond binary narratives of superstition versus science. Mayong's indigenous knowledge should not only be reclaimed as cultural heritage but actively reintegrated into contemporary academic and policy

frameworks. This process requires new interdisciplinary approaches, bringing together history, anthropology, ethnomedicine, and digital humanities to reassess the epistemological foundations of these traditions.

One innovative pathway for future research is the application of ethno pharmacology to Mayong's herbal healing practices. Many traditional remedies used by *Bej* or *Ojha* in the region have yet to be systematically studied within biomedical research, presenting a significant opportunity for scientific validation and integration into alternative medicine (Mahanta, 2015). Collaboration between indigenous practitioners and scientific institutions could lead to new medicinal discoveries while ensuring ethical knowledge-sharing mechanisms that benefit local communities.

Moreover, digital preservation efforts, such as interactive cultural archives and oral history projects, could serve as long-term strategies for safeguarding Mayong's traditions. These digital tools can democratize access to indigenous narratives and ensure that knowledge systems remain dynamic rather than confined to museum exhibits or folklorization.

Policy-level interventions also hold great potential for sustaining and promoting Mayong's traditions. Integrating aspects of indigenous knowledge into formal education curricula can foster a more inclusive approach to history and science. Additionally, sustainable cultural tourism centered on Mayong's legacy—if developed ethically—can provide economic benefits to local communities while preserving their knowledge systems.

Furthermore, the role of folklore in constructing regional and national identity deserves deeper exploration. The revival of Mayong's traditions demonstrates how folklore can function as a site of resistance and cultural resurgence. Rather than being relegated to the margins, indigenous knowledge systems can contribute meaningfully to India's intellectual and philosophical heritage, enriching discourses on alternative epistemologies and cultural sustainability.

In conclusion, Mayong's folk traditions offer a profound case study of how indigenous knowledge persists despite historical marginalization. By reframing these traditions within an academic and policy-driven discourse, this research advocates for a more nuanced understanding of IKS—one that is not confined to antiquarian curiosity but actively engages with contemporary societal needs. The future of IKS research must be collaborative, interdisciplinary, and rooted in ethical engagement with indigenous communities, ensuring that knowledge reclamation is not just an act of historical justice but a continuous process of innovation and intellectual growth.

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