

THE HISTORY OF CIVILISATION OF THE
PEOPLE OF ASSAM TO THE TWELFTH
CENTURY A.D.

Thesis Submitted for the Degree of the
Doctor of Philosophy in the University
of LONDON.

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Title: The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.

As the title indicates, the scope of my work covers a wide field of study, including both the political and cultural history of Assam from the dawn of history until the end of the 12th century A.D. No systematic investigation has yet been made in the history of the land. My aim is to trace the origin of the composite culture of Assam and to find the missing links between this land and India on the one side and South-east Asia on the other. On an examination of the materials, which has not yet been properly done by any previous writer on the subject, I have tried to throw light on some obscure points and have traced the origin of that composite culture as far as possible. I have begun with the geography of the land in order to show that Assam was known to the outside world from the dawn of its history, and that its physical features contributed much to the heterogeneous cultures of Assam. Next I have dealt with the Racial problem, the migration and settlement of the various elements, showing that this land contained some primitive peoples and had links with South-east Asia on the one side and India on the other. For the study of racial elements, I have had to depend upon prehistoric remains, such as neoliths, megaliths and the like, and upon primitive survivals in the present dwellers of the hills and plains of Assam. My emphasis is on the non-Aryan foundation

of Assam's culture, which I have tried to substantiate with the help of the existing materials.

In dealing next with the political history, divided into five sections, I have traced the origin of the political dynasty in Assam, which, I believe, was founded by the Alpine-Aryans during the protohistoric period. I have traced the evolution of the political history in its different periods up to the end of the Pala line of kings, and have shown that Assam had something to contribute to the political history of India as a whole and that diplomatically its history was closely linked up with contemporary India.

Lastly in my chapter on cultural history, divided into five sections bearing on society, economic life, education and literature, religion and monuments, I have tried to go into the origin of each aspect of these subjects and to show the respective contributions made by the Aryan and non-Aryan elements of the province.

I have come to the conclusion that the virgin soil of Assam had a significant history of its own and contributed equally to the Indian political and cultural life.

The thesis contains a few illustrations and two maps.

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Abbreviations

Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute -	A.B.O.R.
Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India -	A.R.A.S.
Archaeological Survey of Burma -	A.S.B.
Asiatic Researches -	A.Res.
Assam Census Report -	A.C.R.
Assam Review -	A.Rev.
Bāṅgiā Sāhitya Parisād Patrikā -	B.S.P.P.
Bengal Census Report -	B.C.R.
Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, London -	B.S.O.S.
Calcutta Review -	C.R.
Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum -	C.I.I.
Dynastic History of Northern India -	D.H.N.I.
Early History of India -	E.H.I.
Early History of Kāmarūpa -	E.H.K.
Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics -	E.R.E.
Epigraphia Indica -	E.I.
Folk Lore -	F.L.
Geographical Journal, London -	G.J.
Harsacarita -	H.C.
History of Medieval Hindu India -	H.M.H.I.
History of North Eastern India -	H.N.E.I.
Indian Antiquary -	I.A.
Indian Culture -	I.C.
Indian Historical Quarterly -	I.H.Q.
Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal -	J.A.S.B.
Journal of the Assam Research Society -	J.A.R.S.
Journal of the American Oriental Society -	J.A.O.S.
Journal of the Bihar & Orissa Research Society -	J.B.O.R.S.
Journal of the Department of Letters -	J.D.L.
Journal of the German Oriental Society -	J.G.O.S.
Journal of Indian History -	J.I.H.
Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Arts, Calcutta -	J.I.S.O.A.
Journal of Oriental Research, Madras -	J.O.R.
Journal and Proceedings of the (All) India Oriental Conference--	J.P.I.O. Conf.
Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute -	J.R.A.I.
Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, London -	J.R.A.S.
Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal -	J.R.A.S.B.
Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, London -	J.R.G.S.
Journal of the Royal Society of Arts, London -	J.R.S.A.
Journal of the Society of Arts -	J.S.A.
Journal of the Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta -	J.S.O.A.
Journal of the U.P. Historical Society -	J.U.P.H.S.
Kāmarūpa Sānanāvalī -	K.S.
Linguistic Survey of India -	L.S.I.
Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India -	M.A.S.I.
Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal -	M.A.S.B.
Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India -	M.G.S.I.
Modern Review -	M.R.

New Indian Antiquary -
Political History of Ancient India -
Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal -
Rangpur Sāhitya Parisād Patrikā -
Records of the Geological Survey of India -
Sacred Book of the East -

N.I.A.
P.H.A.I.
P.A.S.B.
R.S.P.P.
R.G.S.I.
S.B.E.

INTRODUCTION

The ancient history of Assam, or Prāggyotiṣa - Kāmarūpa, the names by which the land was known from the dawn of its history, is an almost unexplored and uninvestigated field of study. The scope of our work as the title indicates, covers both its political and cultural aspects, from a remote period until the end of the Pāla line of Kings. Not to speak of the unwritten period of pre-historic culture, even for the historical one, no proper spadework has so far been done. Our aim, therefore, is to find out new facts and reconstruct the early history of Assam, based on a genuine, reasonable interpretation.

It is true that our knowledge of the past is only partial and this is not only because of the paucity of materials and their conflicting nature, but is also due to the weakness of the human mind in giving proper interpretation to the known facts. Moreover, all events in history cannot be explained with reference to cause and effect, apparent or real.¹ The periodisation in history is another defect that stands in the way. History is but an eternal process and the so-called distinction between pre-history and history is not very wide. In fact, a large part of contemporary history, being unwritten, passes either into pre-history and

¹John Buchan, *The Causal and Casual in History*, p. 17.

the blank of oblivion or 'into the vast body of the subject matter of archaeological science'.¹ History, therefore, must be viewed as covering the entire record of the people; because artificial man-made divisions of history obscure the fundamental unity of the civilisation. The past is never past, present is never present and even the so-called distinction between contemporary events and past history breaks down in the face of the inability of the human mind to hold the fleeting moment.²

That which one calls the present, is already past and can only be reclaimed through the traces it has left.³ It is aptly remarked that 'the present is the fruit of the past and the germ of the future'.⁴ Viewed from this standpoint, the ancient history of the civilisation of Assam is to be studied as only a chapter in the evolution of the cultural life of the people. Moreover, our efforts at tracing the origin of this culture in its most part is based on an interpretation of pre-historic survivals. In this task we cannot avoid making inferences and hypotheses for a period of which materials are few, and therefore, no statement relating to the past is final.⁵

¹Holmes, Handbook of American Archaeology, Pt.I, p.3

²B. Croce, History: Its Theory and Practice, Chap. I.

³A. Johnson, The Historian and Historical tradition, p.22.

⁴See, B.A. Hinsdale, How to Study and Teach history, p.5.

⁵J. Winson, 'Perils of Historical Narrative', Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 66 (1890).

The ancient history of Assam is the history of an ancient civilisation evolved through centuries, in some measure different from those of other provinces of India; its differences were mostly due to the complex nature of Assam's political and cultural conditions. But though Assam is, as it were, an anthropological museum with varied socio-religious systems, the continuous process of the different stages of her history has been closely linked up with India on the one side, as on the other with South-east Asia and the Pacific world. Assamese culture or cultures are but the sum total of the primitive and the advanced, contributed both by Aryan and non-Aryan elements. The history of India as a whole must remain incomplete without a thorough understanding of the origin and development of the civilisation of the province. Beginning with the pre-historic period, the land has been exposed to invasions from all directions; but with the dawn of history her links became closer both politically and culturally with the rest of India. In fact, the ancient history of Assam really began with the coming of Aryan civilisation beginning with the period of the Brāhmanas and the Epics. Except for stray references to colonisation of Southeast Asia from Assam, it is yet to be proved that Prāgjyotiṣa had effective political relations with Burma and other regions in Southeast Asia at an early period; but cultural links with them cannot be denied.

No attempt has so far been made to show the real connection between Assam and the rest of India on the one hand and Southeast Asia on the other. Existing sources indicate that her culture was a composite one, contributed by Austric, Alpine-Aryan and the Tibeto-Burman elements; but the origin of its various elements appears to have remained uninvestigated. We shall try to show that the pre-Aryans of Assam, like the Aryans, made a significant contribution to a fairly advanced civilisation. As S. K. Bhūñyā remarks: 'There was as its foundation a culture which permeated the life of the people and which raised the average man to a superior level, endowed with a consciousness of patriotism which would never desert him even under the severest temptation. But the glories of Kāmarūpa remain buried, because no vigorous investigations have been launched here to discover the treasures and reveal them to the rest of India which may as well be proud of the same.'¹ Our objective in this work has been to trace the missing links and show the nature of the ancient culture of Assam which had its due share in contributing to India's civilisation.

Of the sources, archaeology, both pre-historic and historical, is invaluable for the study of racial elements and socio-religious aspects of the history of the period. Epigraphy is of great help for both the political and

¹ I.H.Q. V. pp 457 f.

cultural history. Literary sources supplement our findings. The Assamese chronicles and other historical works are no doubt trustworthy to a certain extent; but the fundamental defect from which Indian literature in general suffers, is the absence of chronological treatment. It is true that time and place are the essentials of history. It is with reference to this defective chronology that Fleet remarks that 'the Hindus have not transmitted to us any historical work which can be accepted as reliable. - It is indeed very questionable whether the ancient Hindus ever possessed the true historical sense in the shape of the faculty of putting together genuine history on broad and critical lines.' But it may as well be held that chronology is not the sole test of a historical work; moreover, the critical treatment of historical data is a modern development. It is unfair that the entire mass of the literary works of the ancient Indians be criticised by modern standards or compared with those of Herodotus, Thucydides or Tacitus. Even these classical writers suffer from the same chronological and other defects. As J.B.Bury points out, the key note of the accounts of Herodotus is his contrast of the Hellenestic with the Oriental culture. Herodotus himself writes of an

¹The Imperial Gazetteer of India, II, pp 3-5; also, Macdonell Sanskrit Literature, p.10; Keith, J. RAS, 1914, pp.739, 1031 (note); Ibid, 1915, p.143 (note).

account: 'I do not disbelieve, nor do I absolutely believe it.'¹ There is no reason to doubt that some of the ancient Indian works may be used as materials for history and 'with all their admitted defects - occupy an important place in the evolution of Indian historiography.'² Moreover, to discover the truth lying in the mines of literary products and to give a true interpretation to both records and remains divested of self interested subjective criticism, constitute in general a fine historical art.³ S.K. Bhūñyā, disputing Fleet's statement, remarks that this 'would have been qualified to a great extent if it had been known that the Assamese people have preserved regular chronicles of their country from very early times.'⁴ Grierson rightly points out that the Assamese 'are justly proud of their national literature. In no department have they been more successful than in a branch of study in which India as a rule is curiously deficient. Remnants of historical works that treat of the time of Bhagadatta - are still in existence.- According to the custom of the country a knowledge of the Burañjīs was an indispensable

¹J.B. Bury, The Ancient Greek Historians, pp.42-44.

²U.N. Ghoshal, The Beginnings of Indian Historiography and other Essays, p.51.

³P.C. Choudhury, 'On the Historiography in Ancient India with Particular Reference to Assam,' Cottonian, Ganhati, 1949. pp.96-98.

⁴I.H.Q. V, p.457.

qualification to an Assamese gentleman; and every family of distinction as well as the government and public officers, kept the most minute records of contemporary events.'¹ We cannot agree with Gaiñ's remark that: 'The science of history was unknown to the early inhabitants of Assam and it is not till the Āhom invasion in 1228 A.D. that we obtain anything at all approaching a connected account of the people and their rulers.'²

Whatever the nature of the sources, an understanding of the geography of the land, which had an important bearing on the civilisation of the people, is essential. The land was known not only to the Buddhist world but also to the writers of the Epics, Purāṇas and other ancient works and in no small measure to the classical writers. Much depends on the identification of the names of people and places, mentioned in these works. A description of her geography with reference to the ancient period will show the fullness of its variety, which had an immense effect in contributing to the growth of diverse cultures. The natural divisions of the land, drawn by Nature herself, kept the hill tribes secluded and isolated from one another; but the nature of her geography had an important effect upon their outward form and inward character. The communications between the hills and the plains were not very difficult and, therefore,

¹L.S.I. V, I, p.396.

²History of Assam, p.1.

in the midst of bewildering diversities, there was at times a unity of purpose which led both the hillmen and the dweller of the plains to fight together against their common enemy. This perhaps will explain the fact that no imperial invader could conquer the land until the end of our period.

The study of the racial elements is another interesting and difficult problem in the history of the province, which has not been systematically made by any writer. Pre-historic archaeology and other evidence prove that the land, lying in one of the migration routes of mankind, received wave after wave of immigrants and perhaps sent out emigrants from pre-historic times onwards. Negrito, Austric, Indonesian, Alpine-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman and other elements equally contributed to her population. But no scientific anthropometric measurements have yet been made to identify a particular element in the general population. We shall, however, show that some of the earlier strains were developed here, though the fact remains that the land received elements from the west as from the greater part of Southeast Asia. This seems to be confirmed by their ethnography and other allied factors. We must admit that after hundreds of years of admixture, anything like a pure original element for study will be an impossibility. It is for the first time that we are attempting a comprehensive description of all the races that contributed to the Assamese culture; that culture,

formed by the currents and cross-currents of centuries of innundating migrants that swept over the hills and plains of the Brahmaputra was not fundamentally uniform. But that the various elements lived in harmony since a very early period, seems to be attested by the existing evidence.¹

The political history of the land began long before the foundation of the Varman line during the 4th Century A.D. The crude organisations of the primitive people did not perhaps centre round the central Kingdom of Prāggyotiṣa. The Kingdom, as we find, was not ruled by the aboriginal or Mongolian Chiefs. The first foundation of political rule can reasonably be attributed to the Alpines, who, we believe, were the traditional rulers, so significantly mentioned in literature. The traditional dynasty was long continued by different families, until the end of the Pāla line, and in spite of a few gaps, it seems that the same dynasty of Naraka-Bhagadatta ruled from Prāggyotiṣa throughout our period. We have no doubt, evidence of a few smaller principalities ruled by chiefs or feudatories of the central kingdom. Such a state of affairs continued till the time of the foundation of small kingdoms by the Kachāris, Manipuris, Jaintiās, Chutiās, Koches and the Āhoms in the beginning of

¹Sir Andrew Clow writes: 'Nowhere else in India has there been such a mixture of races as in the Assam valley and nowhere have the peoples lived in more harmony.' (Quoted by A. Ali and E. Lambert, Assam, pp.14 f.)

the 13th Century A.D. The political machinery and the ideals with which it was run, worked for the peace and prosperity of all. Both politically and culturally the rulers held diplomatic relations with the contemporary powers of India and the Kingdom was not disturbed by civil wars and revolutions, nor was it occupied by any foreign power, until the beginning of the 13th Century A.D.; in that respect the political history of Assam is very significant.

Society, economic conditions, education and literature, religion, and art and architecture, the constituents of Assam's culture, show that that culture was a complex one. It is not possible to go into the origin of the tribal social organisations in the present state of our knowledge; nor is it possible to show the relations of the tribal organisations in the past with the Hindu organisation of the plains. Our treatment of the subject will, therefore, be restricted to the latter system. It is quite likely that distinctions remained between the two. The varṇāśrama dharma of Hindu life did not affect the tribal system. But there is no basic difference between the totemism, taboos, laws of exogamy, etc that were evolved by the primitive elements, and the class distinctions of the Hindus. In fact, the origin of the social system of the Hindus may be attributed to the same causes that were responsible for the development of the social laws and marriage rules of the tribal non-Aryan life. The

whole structure of the socio-economic life of the non-Aryans was based more or less upon the same practices as were followed in an advanced Hindu society, and the non-Aryans in general greatly affected the whole Assamese social structure.

In the domain of economic life and industrial arts, the various elements equally contributed to their growth. Assam was for centuries a famous centre of the production of silk. Commercial relations both by land and sea were carried on from early times, and important routes from India to Burma and China lay through Assam. The economic wealth of the land greatly encouraged its prosperity, and, as we shall show, the non-Aryans had a great part to play in the material progress of the province.

In education and literature, the existing evidence does not indicate that the non-Aryans contributed towards their development. Their unwritten dialects, varied and unintelligible to each other, remained as such in our period. With the foundation of the political dynasty Kāmarūpa became, under the patronage of rulers, a great centre of education. The voluminous literature of the period, foreign accounts like those of Yuan Chwang, and the epigraphs testify to the gradual development of Assamese literature and education. The language, as we shall show, developed along its own independent lines, containing more non-Aryan words than those

of pure Sanskrit, unlike Bengali and other allied languages. This, along with many survivals of Austric and Tibeto-Burman elements in the place and river names of Assam, indicates the composite character of the Assamese civilisation.

For the study of the religious life of the people, we must consider the origin and development of almost all the faiths that existed in contemporary India. The origin of some of the advanced ideas of the Hindus may be explained on the basis of the crude faiths of the non-Aryans, such as the cults of the phallus and of fertility, fetishism, animism and the like. In fact, the origin of Tāntrikism in Assam, which had a great hold in the land, can be traced back to such cults. Assam remained throughout our period a favourable field for the evolution of all the primitive ideas of magic and sorcery, along with the advanced notions about god or gods and humanity in general. We are at times almost as primitive in our ideas and daily life as the so-called primitives themselves. In fine, the foundation of the various faiths in ancient Assam was laid by the non-Aryans; this we shall try to substantiate with the help of existing materials

In the domain of fine arts, the existing remains, as we shall show, point to the fact that the ancient Assamese artists worked in line with the traditional Indian system, but unlike those of other parts of India, were greatly influenced by the non-Aryan art. In discussing the subject, we shall

try to show the characteristics that were peculiar to the province and the similarities with the contemporary schools of India.

We dispute the contention that 'Assam is a country, which at most periods of its history has remained outside the Indian civilisation.'¹ The varied problems which a work like this involves, present us with many difficulties; but we shall deem our labour well-paid if we can justify our conclusion that the little known region of Assam had a significant history of her own and had close links both with India and with a wider world beyond - that the special Assamese characteristics resulted from the absorption of varied elements and interests.

By way of acknowledgement we feel it necessary to mention a few of the pioneer works in the field of Assam's history. Gait's, 'History of Assam,' hardly deals with our period. K.L.Barua's, 'Early History of Kāmarūpa,' was perhaps the first attempt made at a systematic account of the early history of the province; but its contributions to geography, ethnology and cultural history are practically negligible. P.N.Bhattacharya's 'Kāmarūpa Śāsanāvalī,' edits the epigraphs of the period with explanations in Bengali. N.N.Vasu's, 'Social History of Kāmarūpa,' in three volumes, is based more upon secondary materials and superficial observations

¹Cambridge History of India, I, pp.11-12.

than original researches, and has hardly dealt with geography racial elements and other factors of importance; moreover, the system of chronology and the interpretation of materials for political history are defective. R.M.Nath's, 'The Background of Assamese Culture,' cannot be utilised as a source for a work like this. B.K.Barua's, 'Cultural History of Assam,' deals with the ancient period. He has contributed nothing to the period prior to the 4th century A.D., nor has he touched upon geography, racial factors and pre-historic archaeology as materials for the study of the origin of Assamese culture, and has not, in our opinion, examined other important sources in their bearing on the various aspects of that culture. He has only touched upon the political history. Even for the cultural history of the period, he does not appear to have utilised all the available sources and some of his conclusions, therefore, seem neither convincing nor justified. In fact, he has not dealt with the origin of the composite culture of the Assamese.

R.G.Basak has contributed a chapter on Kāmarūpa between the 4th - 7th century A.D. in his 'History of North Eastern India', but his contribution has only a bearing on the political history of that period, and some of his theories do not find corroboration from the existing materials. H.C.Ray's chapter on Assam in his 'Dynastic History of Northern India,' volume I, deals briefly with the political history of the

period and he has contributed nothing to other aspects; moreover, his interpretations of some of the epigraphs to show the origin of the ruling families do not warrant the conclusions he has arrived at, nor do his inferences regarding the diplomatic history of the period give a true picture of the political condition. There are a few other secondary sources, dealing with medieval and modern Assam. None of these works gives us a fairly complete picture of Assam from the known period of her history until the end of the 12th century A.D., and most of them have been built more upon absurd theories than upon genuine historical facts. As regards the difficult problem of racial elements, the contributions made by Hutton, J.P. Mills, Haimendorf, Hodson, Gurdon, Playfair, Shakespeare, Endle and many others are invaluable, but so far no systematic attempt has been made to show in details the migration and settlement of the different elements at different periods of the history of the province. Besides these, I have utilised with profit some important materials from periodicals, contributed by many writers to political and cultural history.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not take this opportunity of acknowledging my gratitude to all the workers in the field of Assam's history, which I have done in the footnotes in the body of the thesis. I think, I can repay the debt that I owe to them by presenting them with a work,

that to a great extent drew its inspiration from their contributions to one of the virgin fields of India. I crave the pardon of those whom I have not properly addressed in my references. At the end, I have a pleasant duty to acknowledge my gratitude to Mr. J.P.Mills and Professor H.C.Ray who gave me valuable suggestions, and also to Professor C.H. Philips, the staff and the Post-Graduate students of the department of history of S.O.A.S. for their help at the seminars. My gratitude to Dr.A.L.A.Basham, Ph.D, the constant guide of my work, can hardly be repaid by an acknowledgment like this. But for his advice and suggestions I should not have been able to present this thesis.

CHAPTER I

SOURCES

Historical materials on which a reliable framework of the political and cultural history of early Assam can be built, are as meagre as confused. For the pre-historic period, we must depend entirely on neoliths and megaliths, and only a few of the latter can be ascribed to the ancient period. Even for the historical period, we have only a few local epigraphs and scattered literary documents, historical or otherwise. The legendary accounts with which we begin the political history of the land are as varied and conflicting as doubtful in their authenticity. Much will depend on the tracing of a connection between the legendary proto-historical period and the historical one. The genealogy given in the epigraphs, as far as it goes, is, however, unchallenged. We have to face similar difficulties in dealing with the cultural history.

The history of the province, in the proper sense of the term, before the rise of the Varmans during the fourth century A.D., is still obscure, and no writer has so far attempted to write even a brief outline of the period prior to the foundation of that line. We shall show that the civilisation of Assam began long before the fourth century A.D. in both its political and cultural aspects. The period

has, however, been obscured by the confused interpretations of the existing materials given by different writers. Hence we shall try not only to find new information but also to evaluate that already existing, and make an attempt at the reconstruction of the history of the land on a reasonable foundation.

The sources are broadly divided into original and secondary, contemporary and post-contemporary, internal and external, records and remains. To serve our purpose, these may be placed under the following heads: Literary, Foreign Accounts and Archaeological.

I. Literary Sources:

(i) Early and Later Brāhmanical Literature:

Both the early Vedic and later Vedic literature are important for the study of the cultural relations between the Aryans and the non-Aryans, inhabiting different parts of India, since their period of settlement and migrations. The cultural life that they depict, throws important light on the evolution of the Hinduism of later times - a mixture of Aryan and non-Aryan elements. The gradual advance of the Aryans to Eastern India is described in these works. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa for instance records the progress of the Aryans up to the Sadānīrā, identified with the Karatoyā, and to the east of that river.¹ The Karatoyā, we know, was

¹ Satapatha Br. I, IV, I, 14-15; S.B.E. XII, I, Intro. pp. XLI f, pp.104f; Weber, Indian Studies, I, pp.170f.

the ancient boundary of Prāggyotiṣa in the west,¹ and the source perhaps points to the spread of the Aryan culture to the land before the Buddhistic period. The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa gives further indication of the spread of that culture to Kāmarūpa.² The Gopatha Brāhmaṇa records a tradition of the origin of the name of Kāmarūpa,³ indicating an early contact of the Aryan and non-Aryan elements.

The next important sources, the Gṛhya and Dharmasūtras, composed from about 700-600 B.C. to A.D. 200⁴ are valuable for the study of the political and cultural life of the people of India in general.⁵ Similarly important are the works of Pāṇini and Patañjali. Prāggyotiṣa finds mention in the Śāṅkhyāyana Gṛhyasaṃgraha as the land of sunrise.⁶ This is confirmed by references from the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa (58, 109) and the Brhatsaṃhitā, based on the Parāśara Tantra⁷ of the beginning of the Christian era.⁸

¹Chap.II, pp 60f

²A.Br. 1,3,7, Dikshitar, I.H.Q, XXI, pp.29-33.

³Published in (Nos.215-252 of the Bibl.Ind.); Gait, History of Assam, p.11. ; also Bloomfield, J.A.O.S., XIS, 1-11

⁴Camb. History of India, I, p.227.

⁵R.K.Mookerji, Hindu Civilisation, pp.120f

⁶Chap.II, 38 (Benares Sans. Series)

⁷Kern, Intro. to Brhatsaṃhitā, p.32.

⁸H.C.Chaklader, Studies in the Kāmasūtra, p.72; J.C.Ghosh, J.A.R.S., V, pp.117-118.

Kautilya in his Arthasāstra makes an important reference to many places of Kāmarūpa, such as Suvarṇa-Kuṇḍya, Pāralauhitya, etc, in connection with the economic products of Kāmarūpa.¹

The next important sources are the Epics, which give an illuminating picture of the political and social life of the people. In the opinion of Macdonell, the kernel of the Rāmāyaṇa was composed before 500 B.C., but the later portions were probably not composed till 200 B.C. or even later.²

The Mahābhārata may have been compiled between 500 B.C. and A.D. 400.³ The Ādikāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa (Chap. XXXV) records the foundation of the city of Prāggyotisa by Arnūtarāja. The Kiskindhya Kāṇḍa (XLII) refers to Naraka's city of Prāggyotisa in the Varāha mountain. The same references to the city and the country of Prāggyotisa and to Naraka and his family, along with the Kirātas, Cīnas and other people, are found among others in the Sabhā.P. (XXVI - XXX), Aśvamedha.P. (LXXV - LXXVI), Udyoga.P. (XVIII), Drona.P. (XXVI - XXX), Bhīṣma.P. and Karṇa.P. (V) of the Mahābhārata.

The Brhatsamhitā of Varāhamihira, ascribed to the 5th century A.D.⁴ refers to both Prāggyotisa and the Lauhitya

¹Arthasāstra (S.S.tr.) pp.82f.

²History of Sanskrit Literature, p.309.

³Ibid.

⁴See Kern, Intro. pp.2-3.

along with Magadha, Cīna and Kāmbhoja.¹

Some Smṛtis, both earlier and later compilations, like those of Manu, Kāmandaka, Yājñavalkya and others are useful for their bearing on the political and social life of the people of India. They may be used with advantage for a study of some of the allied problems of the history of ancient Assam, though their references in most cases are theoretical and general.

Of the numerous dramas, plays, courtesies and historical or semi historical works, there are some which may be utilised for the contemporary history of Kāmarūpa. The first important work is the Raghuvamśa of Kālidāsa,² which is placed in the 5th century A.D.³ In his account of Raghu's Digvijaya (IV, 81-84) Kālidāsa refers to both Prāgjyotiṣa and Kāmarūpa to the east of the Brahmaputra, standing for the same Kingdom.⁴ As a source of historical material, the work is not very useful.

Dandin, who wrote his Daśakumāracarita about the 6th

¹Chaps, XIV,6; XVI,1:- Prāgjyotiṣa Lauhitya / Kṣīroḍa samudra puruṣādāh / Sakayavana Magadheśvara / Prāgjyotiṣa Cīna Kāmbhojāh/

²Ed. G.R. Nandargikar.

³M. Collins, Geographical data of the Raghuvamśa and Daśakumāracarita, p.48 (f.n.); also M.Chakravarti, J.RAS,1904,p.160.

⁴Collins, pp.14-15(f.n.)

century A.D.¹ mentions that Vikatavarman married a daughter of the Kāmarūpa King Kalindavarman.² Collins supposes that Videh and Kāmarūpa were united by this marriage alliance.³ The identification of the Kāmarūpa King is difficult, and we cannot rely upon the stories of Dandin, as they are fictitious.

Purṣottama, the writer of Trikāṇḍa, who probably flourished during the 7th century A.D.⁴ states that Prāggyotiṣa is in Kāmarūpa.⁵ The reference is to Prāggyotiṣa as a smaller area, included within the Kingdom of Kāmarūpa.

The Harṣacarita of Bāṇabhatta,⁶ attributed to the early part of the 7th century A.D., contains much historical material for the period of Bhāskaravarman. Both for political and cultural history, the work is of value for the study of the 7th century Kāmarūpa.

The Mūdrārākṣasa of Viṣākhadatta makes an important reference to Avantivarman. The work is placed between the 5th and the 9th century A.D.,⁷ but the probable date appears

¹Macdonell, India's Past, p.130, Collins, p.46.

²Ed. Bühler and Peterson.

³Collins, pp.22-23 (f.n.) 112-113, 125-26.

⁴Macdonell, India's Past, p.142.

⁵Trikāṇḍa, p.31.

⁶H.C. (Cowell's translation)

⁷S.Śāstrī, I.H.Q. III, pp.163-67; Charpentier, I.H.Q., VI, p.629; Jacobi, Viena Oriental Journal, II, pp.212-16; Keith, J.RAS, 1909, pp.145-49; Macdonell, India's Past, p.111.

to be the later half of the 7th century A.D. We shall try to prove that Avantivarman was a Kāmarūpa King.¹

Vākpati, who wrote his Gaudavaho during the 8th century A.D.² refers to the murder of the lord of Gauda and Magadha by Yasovarman of Kanauj.³ On the basis of epigraphy and other sources, we shall try to prove that the former ruler was Harsadeva of Kāmarūpa.⁴ The Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa of Ārya Jina prabhāsūri,⁵ is useful for contemporary history of Kāmarūpa.

Rājasekhara, who flourished during the 9th century A.D.⁶ in his Kāvyaṁimāmsā,⁷ places Prāgjyotiṣa among the countries in the east, and mentions Kāmarūpa as a mountain.⁸ In his Karpūramañjarī,⁹ he refers to both Kāmarūpa and Karnasuvarna along with Campā, Rādhā and Hārikela. Yādavaprakāśa, who flourished about the 10th century A.D.,¹⁰ in his

¹Political History, Section 3, pp - 314 f

²Macdonell, India's Past, p.103

³Ed. S.P.Pandit and N.B.Utgikar, VV, 354,414,417.

⁴Political History, Section, 3, pp. -336f

⁵Ed. T.Ganapatisāstri.

⁶Macdonell, p.111

⁷Chap.17.

⁸Kāvyaṁimāmsā, p.93

⁹Ed. M.M.Ghosh, Intro., XXIII, p.5, and (note.p,70)

¹⁰Macdonell, p.14; Gustav Oppert, Ed. Vaijayantī.

Vaijayanti mentions Prāggyotiṣa and Kāmarūpa as lying in the east: (Prāggyotiṣa - Kāmarūpa - Prāgjālika).¹

Ksemendra, who flourished between 1020 - 1040,² in his Abhidhānacintāmaṇi,³ mentions Bevikota, Uṣāvana, Koṭīvarsā and Sonitapura as other names of Bānapura, probably referring to the city now called Tezpur in Assam.⁴ This is confirmed by the Viṣṇu Purāṇa (I, XXI, 5, XXXII - XXXIII) and the Śānti Parva (339, 90-91) and a number of existing ruins.⁵

Somadeva, who flourished between A.D. 1063-81,⁶ in his Kathāsaritsāgara, mentions Udayādri as the abode of the Siddhas, situated east of Pundra. This was the Udayācala of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, which mentions it along with the Lauhitya and Kāmarūpa as lying in the east. The Varāha Purāṇa (177, 3lf) also mentions Udayācala, Kālapriya and Mūlasthāna as important centres of sun-worship. All these prove that Udayācala or Udayādri, associated with Kāmarūpa, are to be located in Assam, and, therefore, R.C.Hazra's location of Udayācala in Orissa⁷ is wrong.

Hemacandra, who flourished between 1088-1172,⁸ mentions in his Abhidhānacintāmaṇi Prāggyotiṣa and Kāmarūpa, and

¹D.G.Ganguly, I.H.Q., XIX, pp.214-224.

²Weber, History of Sanskrit Literature, p.213.

³Chap.IV, v.977.

⁴See Bhandarkar, A.B.O.R.I., XII, pp.103f.

⁵P.Bhattacharya, J.A.S.B. (N.S) V, pp.19-20.

⁶Macdonell, India's Past, pp.116f.

⁷Bhāratīya Vidya, IV, II, pp.212-216.

⁸Weber, History of Sanskrit Literature, pp.287f.

agrees with Yādavaprakāśā in taking Prāggyotiśa as another name of Kāmarūpa: (Prāggyotiśāh Kāmarūpāh).¹

Bilhana's Vikramāṅkadevacarita, which is dated about A.D. 1085,² refers to the invasion of Kāmarūpa.³ The contemporary King of Assam was probably Harṣapāla of the Pāla line.

Sandhyā^āKaranandī's Rāmaearita, which was probably composed during the first half of the 12th century A.D.⁵ refers to the conquest of Kāmarūpa by Rāmapāla's general Mayana.⁶

We shall try to prove that the contemporary King was Jayapāla

Kalhana's Rājatarāṅginī also throws some light on ancient Assam. The work is attributed to about A.D. 1148 - 49.⁸ It refers to Amrtaprabhā, the daughter of a Kāmarūpa King, married to Meghavāhana of Kāsmīra.⁹ It also mentions Lalitāditya's campaigns as far as the Lauhitya.¹⁰

Yasódhara, the author of the Jayamāṅgatā commentary on the Kāmasūtra, whose work is attributed to the 13th century A.D.¹¹ places Kāmarūpa among the countries in the east along

¹IV, 22.

²Ed. Bühler. Intro. p.23.

³Chap.III, 74.

⁴Political History, Section 4, pp - 386, 395

⁵H.P.Sāstrī, M.A.S.B, III, pp. 1-56.

⁶Chap. III, 47.

⁷Political History, Section 4, pp - 411f

⁸Macdonell, p.246; Stein, Rājatarāṅginī, I, p.6.

⁹B.K. II, 147-48; III, 9-10.

¹⁰IV, 171.

¹¹Macdonell, India's Past, p.174.

with Gauda: (Gauḍa Kāmarupakāḥ prācya viśeṣāḥ)¹

(ii) The Purāṇas: Both the earlier and later Purāṇas are useful particularly for the period for which we have little or no reliable evidence. The genealogies contained therein generally treat the contemporary dynasties as successive, and are, therefore, defective from the standpoint of chronology. Prāgjyotiṣa - Kāmarūpa, along with its rulers, finds mention in most of them. The Garuḍa P. (Chap. 89) mentions Kāmarūpa and Kāmākhyā as great centres of pilgrimage. The Nāradiya P. (Chap. I, II, XXXVIII) refers to Hidimbā. The Mārkaṇḍeya P.² (57-58) mentions Prāgjyotiṣa along with Udayācala, Lauhitya and Kāmarūpa as countries in the east. The same work (66) mentions that Svaroeis gave to his son a noble city on a hill in Kāmarūpa. It (109) further refers to the temple of the sun in Kāmarūpa. The Viṣṇu P. (I, IV, V, XXIX) mentions the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu, the installation of Naraka in Prāgjyotiṣa, the murder of the latter and the establishment of Bhagadatta. This is also mentioned in the Harivaṃśa (63-64). The same purāṇa (II, III) refers to the Kirātas and other people of Kāmarūpa, to Bāṇa of Śonitapura (I, XXI; V, XXXIIIf), and to Bhīṣmaka of Kuṇḍina (V, XXVI). The Brahma P. (114-15) relates the story

¹Kāmasūtra, p.225.

²Ed. Pargiter.

of the birth of Naraka in Kokāmukhatīrtha. The Vāyu.P. (45) includes Prāgjyotiṣa and the Lauhitya along with others as countries in the east. The Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa (27) mentions Prāgjyotiṣa as a Kingdom. The Skanda.P. refers to the prevalence of the Śakti faith in Kāmarūpa. The Agni P. refers to Bāna of Śonitapura. But of all the puranas, the most important work is the Kālikā Purāṇa, which was composed in Assam itself about the 10th century A.D.¹ It contains material for both the political and cultural history of Assam, which may be utilised with great advantage.

(iii) Tāntrik-Buddhist Works and the Assamese Chronicles:

The next important sources are the Tāntrik-Buddhist literature of Eastern India, Tibet and Nepal and the chronicles of Assam. Though some of them belong to a period later than the 12th century A.D., they are important in that most of them contain materials preserving early traditions. All the Tāntrik-Buddhist works make important mention of Kāmarūpa - Kāmākhyā and other pīthas of Assam. Kāmarūpa finds mention in the saptapañcāśaddesāvibhāga, based on the Śaktisaṃgama Tantra.² Similar divisions are

¹Eggeling, India Office Cat., VI, pp.1189-92 (No.3339); p.1192 (no.3343); Keith, Cat. of Sans. and Palm M.S. in the India office Library, II, pp.907-8; J.C.Roy, Bhāratavarṣa, XVII, II, p.677.

²Bk. III, VII, 10.

found in an earlier work, mentioned in the Candragarbhasūtra by Narendrayāśa, who flourished in about A.D. 566, and similar lists including Kāmarūpa are found in the Sanmoha Tantra.¹ The Kāmarūpa Yātrā, a Sanskrit work, composed in Assam, based on the Yoginī Tantra, the Kālikā Purāna and the Kulārnava, deals with the mode of the worship of Kāmākhyā. It also records the origin of the names of Prāgjyotiṣa and Kāmarūpa. The Tikṣakalpa, another Tāntrik work, deals with the worship of Tārā and the ancient geography of Kāmarūpa. The Kāmākhyā Tantra also deals with the account of Naraka - Bhagadatta. The Yoginī Tantra² is of special importance for the material it contains on the ancient geography of the land and the cultural conditions of the people. The Dīpikācanda of Puruṣottama Gajapati, another religious work, contains legendary accounts of the rulers of ancient Assam. The HaraGaurīsamvāda contains an important list of Kings of the ancient period.³ Of the other Tāntrik works that have bearing on the period, the following are useful: Pag Som Zon Zan, Grub'tab and Bka Nbab Bdun Idan, all Tāntrik works of Tibet;⁴ Dākārṇava;⁵ Kaulajñānanirṇaya,⁶ Akulavīra -

¹D.C.Sircar, I.C. VIII, pp. 433-64.

²Bk. I, Chap. XI.

³Chaps. VI-VII; P.C. Bagchi, I.H.Q, XVIII, pp. 231-260.

⁴G. Tucci, J.A.S.B., 1930.

⁵Ed. N.N. Chaudhury.

⁶Ed. P.C. Bagchi.

Tantra and Kāmākhyā Guhyasiddhi, attributed to Mīnanātha; Vyaktabhāvānugatattvasiddhi, attributed to Sahajayoginīcintā;¹ Gorakṣasamhitā;² Gorakṣavijaya;³ Kuṭārṇava;⁴ Kāmaratna Tantra, attributed to Gorakṣanātha;⁵ Sādhanāmāla;⁶ and other works which contain valuable information about the religious history of Assam during the Tāntrik-Buddhist period

Of all the works, the chronicles of Assam are by far the most important. As has already been noticed, a few of the religious works and the Purāṇas, like the Kālikā.P., the Yoginī Tantra and the HaraGaurīsamvāda, contain valuable information both for political and cultural history. The genealogy of the rulers, given in works like the HaraGaurīvitāsa,⁷ in the accounts of the family of Dimaruā⁸ and the Bhūñyār Puthi⁹ as in the HaraGaurīsamvāda, are important. The HaraGaurīvitāsa gives the ancient geography of the land. The accounts given in the Chronicles convince us that more or less systematic records of the past were kept, which may be regarded for the most part as supplementary materials for history, particularly when corroborated by epigraphy. The

¹See B.Bhattacharya, Intro. to Buddhist Esoterism.

²Ed. P.K.Kaivarta.

³Ed. A.K.Sāhityavisāraḍa.

⁴Ed. R.M.Chatterji.

⁵Des. Cat. Ass. M.S. (No.70)

⁶Ed. P.C.Bagchi.

⁷Gait, Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam, 1897.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

families mentioned in the works are also known from epigraphy and at least some accounts contain actual history. It is, however, true that history and traditions have been mixed together, and no chronicle gives a detailed account of all the rulers; the accounts have certainly committed the mistake of treating contemporary lines as successive ones; but the chronological difficulty appears in some cases to have been partially removed by the significant mention of the leading members of the families like those of Naraka, Mādhava, Jitāri, etc. So some of them help us to write an outline of the early history of Assam.¹

(iv) The Buddhist Sources: No definite mention of either Prāggyotisa or Kāmarūpa is made in the early Buddhist or Jaina records and it is not one of the sixteen Mahājānapadas of the Nikāyas.² It is possible that during the 6th century B.C. or at a later time Prāggyotisa was included in the greater Kingdom of Magadha and the land did not engage the attention of the Buddhist writers. But Lohicca or the Lauhitya finds mention in the Nikāyas, which refers to two Brāhmanas from the country of the Lauhitya.³ The evidence proves that as early as the period of the Nikāyas, the Lauhitya region, which probably included Prāggyotisa,⁴ entered

¹S.K.Bhūñyā, I.H.Q, V, pp.460-65.

²Anguttara Nikāya, I, 213; IV, 252,256,260.

³Dīgha Nikāya, I, 224; Saṃyutta Nikāya, IV, 117.

⁴B.M.Barua, I.H.Q, XXIII, pp.203-205.

into the pale of the Buddhist geographical knowledge and attained a fair reputation as a centre of Brāhmanical culture

The Buddhist literature of Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan associates Kāmarūpa with the nirvāṇa of the Buddha, which is said to have taken place either in modern Suālkuchi or Hājo.¹ This is confirmed by the Hungarian traveller Csoma de Koros;² but, as we shall show, the tradition is unfounded, as it has been proved that the nirvāṇa took place in Kusinagara in modern Gorakhpur.³ It is possible that Kāmarūpa was known to the Buddhist world by another name⁴ and some relics of the Buddha were carried to the land. In any case, no definite information of Kāmarūpa and her people is preserved in the early Buddhist and Jain works.

2. Foreign Accounts

(i) The Chinese Sources: Though in Chinese sources Kāmarūpa is chiefly mentioned in connection with the visit of Yuan Chwang during the 7th century A.D, commercial and cultural relations between this Kingdom and China through Burma and other routes are testified by earlier sources like Chang Kien of the second century B.C.⁵ The accounts of the

¹Waddell, Buddhism of Tibet, pp.307f.

²A.Res, XX, p.295.

³Cunnigham, A.S.Rept, I, XVIII,XXII; W.Hæy, J.ASB, 1900, I, pp.74f; Ibid, 1901, pp.29f.

⁴L.W.Shakespeare, History of Upper Assam, etc. pp.73f; C.R. XLV, 1867, pp.509-532.

⁵P.C.Bagchi, India and China, pp.7f, 16f.

Shung Shu (A.D.420-79) record the sending of two embassies from India to China, of which one was sent by Yu Chai in A.D. 428 from the Kapili valley.¹ We shall try to prove that the King from the Kapili was Kalyānavarman and the region is to be located in modern Nowgong.² Yuan Chwang's association with Bhāskara and his visit to Kamolupo (Kāmarūpa and the accounts that he left on the people and the country are of special importance for the political and cultural history of the land.³ The date of his visit (A.D. 642-43) is one of the sheet anchors of the Assamese chronology. The T'ang Shu mentions Kāmarūpa as Kamopo or Komalu.⁴ The records of I-tsing⁵ throw a new light on Devavarmā of Eastern India, who held sway in the Nālandā region. We shall show that the King was Avantivarman or Śālastambha. The account of Wang-Heuentse's mission⁶ throws light on the history of the period immediately after the death of Harṣa of Kanauj. Bhāskara's diplomatic and cultural relations with China and his keen interest in Chinese religion are also testified by two other Chinese missions which came to India after Yuan

¹Gerini, J.RAS, 1910, pp.1187-1201.

²Political History, Section 2, pp - 221, 229f

³Life, pp.165f; Watters, I, p.348; II, pp.185f; Beal, I, pp. 235f; II, pp.195f.

⁴Watters, II, pp.185f.

⁵Life, Intro. pp XXXVI - XXXVII.

⁶J.ASB, VI, p.69; I.A., IX, p.14.

Chwang.¹ The Chinese sources in short are valuable for our period.

(ii) Greek and Roman Sources: Classical writers from the 5th century B.C. seem to refer to the people and place names of ancient Assam, and in the earlier sources it is possible that the land was either known by other names or included in the Kingdom of the Prasii and Gangaridae. It is difficult however, to identify their references. Hecataeus of Miletus (500 B.C.) mentions such peoples as the Indoi, Kakatiai, Opiai, etc, of India.² Herodotus mentions Kalatiai along with Gandarioi and Padaioi.³ Can Kakatiai or Kalatiai be identified with the Kalitās of Assam? It is possible that, due to their predominance, some part of Kāmarūpa was known as the land of the Kalitās. Both Megasthenes and Strabo refer to the Dardai of the east, who were noted for their working in gold.⁴ It is possible that the reference is to some hill people of Assam. Strabo, referring to the Prasioi and Palibothra, mentions the river Oidanes falling with the Ganges into the sea.⁵ Curtius (VIII) mentions Dyardanes as a river flowing through the remotest part of India.⁶ It is

¹ Bagchi, India and China, pp.200f.

² McCrindle, Ancient India as Described in Classical literature Intro, XIV.

³ Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian, p.6 (f.n.)

⁴ McCrindle identifies them with the people of Dardistan (Ancient India in Classical Lit., p.51).

⁵ Ibid, p.42.

⁶ Ibid, p.77 (f.n.3)

possible to identify Strabo's Oidanes and Curtius's Dyardanes with Ptolemy's Doanes on the Brahmaputra. Pliny in his Natural History (VI) not only refers to a number of people of the frontier and trans-Himalayan regions, some having unusual features, probably referring to some Tibeto-Burman tribes of Assam in the north, but also speaks of races from the chain of the Exodus, of which a spur is called the Imaus. The Exodus is the Himalayas and Imaus stands probably for some hill in Assam. The same references are found in Arrian.¹ Among the people mentioned are the Chisiotosagi or Chiriotosagi, identified with the Kirātes.² Pliny mentions the Mandai, living on the mount Maleus, and lying beyond Palibothra in the east.³ It is possible to identify Mandai with the Gāros as they are called Mānde (man).⁴ Pliny next mentions beyond the Ganges a number of people including Colubae or Koluta, Orxulae, Abali and others. The Orxulae and the Abali were probably the Akās and the Ābars of Assam and the Colubae or Koluta were the Kalitās.

The other important classical sources, mentioning people and places which may possibly be identified as in Assam, are the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea (1st C. A.D), Ptolemy's

¹Megasthenes and Arrian, p 182.

²Ibid, pp 131f, 173.

³Ibid, pp 53 (fn), 131f, 156f.

⁴Playfair, Gāros, pp 7f.

⁵Megasthenes and Arrian, pp 131f.

Geography (2nd C., A.D.); Pomponius Mela (III); Ammianus Marcellinus; Pausanias; Dionysius; Aelian, Ctesias and others. For the ancient geography of Assam both the Periplus and Ptolemy's Geography are very useful. Their references to peoples and places of Assam are also supported by later writers. We have dealt with their geography in another place.¹ We may conclude here by stating that judged by the stray references of the classical writers, though in some cases vague, the mention of a number of tribes almost in their present habitat in Assam is important, particularly for the first two or three centuries A.D., when our own accounts do not give so much information. It will appear that the land and her people were known to classical writers from the 5th century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D. and even later.

(iii) The Muslim and Other Sources: In Alberuni's India, Kāmarūpa is mentioned as lying far to the east of Kanauj, the mountains of which stretched as far as the sea.² Minhājuddēn Sirāj, who wrote his Tabaqāt-i- Nāsirī during the middle of the 13th century A.D.,³ gives us valuable information regarding Kamru, Kamrud or Kāmarūpa in connection with the

¹Chap. II, pp - 35 f.

²Sachau, Alberuni's India, p 201.

³Tr. by Raverty, I, pp 560 f.

invasions of Bakhtiyar in (S.E.1127 = A.D.1205-6); Ghiāsud-dīn in A.D.1226; Nāsiruddīn in A.D.1227 and Yuzbĕg in A.D. 1256-57. We have dealt with their invasions in another place.¹ These accounts are supported by the Riyāz-us-Salātin.² We shall show that except Nāsiruddīn, none of the invaders could achieve anything; on the contrary, they met with complete failure. The accounts are important in that they depict also the cultural condition of the land.

The accounts of Qazim³ and Tavernier,⁴ though they lie beyond our period, also supply us with facts which may be utilised as supplementary materials for the political and cultural condition of ancient Assam during our period.

3. Archaeological Evidence:

(i) Coins: Numismatic evidence is one of the most reliable sources for the study of early history of any land, especially when the coins help us with a systematic chronology of the rulers. But unfortunately not a single coin of our period has so far been discovered,⁵ and this is one of the reasons why ancient Assam suffers from defective chronology. Literature, beginning probably with the fourth

¹Political History, Section 4, pp -421f

²Abdus Salam, Riyāz-us-Salātin, pp 65f.

³A.Res., II, pp 170f.

⁴V.Ball, Travels in India, Bk. III, chap. XVII.

⁵See K.L.Barua, E.H.K, (Preface).

century B.C,¹ and epigraphy,² however, point to the fact that both coins and cowries were used in the country.³

(ii) Inscriptions: The local epigraphs are important for the political and cultural history of our period. They have been found engraved on copper plates and rocks and impressed on clay seals. Besides their literary value, they record donation of lands, commemorate the achievements of rulers along with their ideals, and refer to diplomatic relations with contemporary powers and other facts of historical import. The genealogies they contain partly confirm those given in the chronicles. But most of them suffer from the absence of dates and only a few have recorded the regnal years of rulers. Even the genealogies are not entirely unbroken. Only two epigraphs dated in the Gupta Era have been found, the Badgaṅgā inscription of Bhūti-varman (G.E. 234 = A.D. 553-54) and the Tezpur Rock inscription of Harjjara (G.E. 510 = A.D. 829-830), and three, dated in the Śaka era have been discovered. It is curious that a local era, which was probably started by Bhāskara in A.D. 594, as proved by an Assamese manuscript,⁴ was

¹Arthaśāstra (Bhattasvāmi's Com.) p 63; J.B.O.R.S, XI, p 62; Schoff, The Periplus, pp 47-48, 258-59; Taylor J.A.S.B, 1847, I, pp 20 - 26; McCrindle, The Commerce and Navigation of the Erythrean Sea, p 31; H.C. (Cowell, pp 212 f)

²J.B.O.R.S., 1917, pp 508-514; E.I., XIII, pp 289f.

³Chap. V, Section 2. pp - 593f

⁴Chap. IV, Section 2, pp - 272 f

discarded in favour of foreign eras. The epigraphs which have so far been brought to light, are as follows:

A. Local Epigraphs:

(1) The Badgaṅgā epigraph of Bhūti-varman (G.E.234 = A.D. 553-54). It is incised in 3½ lines on a rock near Davāka in modern Nowgong. (E.I., 1947, 18-23; J.A.R.S, VIII, pp 138-39; I.H.Q, XXI, 143f.)

(2) The Doobi grant of Bhāskaravarman. It was found at Doobi. It consists of six plates, of which the last one is broken. In point of time it is earlier than the Nidhanpur grant. (J.A.R.S. XI, pp 33-38; Ibid, XII, pp 16-33; D.C. Sircar, I.H.Q, XXVI, pp 241-46).

(3) The Nidhanpur grant of Bhāskaravarman. The plates were seven, of which one is missing, and were found in a village called Nidhanpur in modern Sylhet. (E.I. XII, pp 65f; Ibid, XIX, pp 118f, 245-50; K.S. pp 1-43; B.S.P.P. (N.4) 1319 and Vijayā, Āṣādḥ, 1320).

(4) The three Nālandā Clay Seals of Bhāskaravarman (Dikṣit, A.R.A.S.I, 1917-18, p 45; R.D.Banerji, J.B.O.R.S., V, pp 302-303; Dikṣit, J.B.O.R.S., VI, pp 151-52, K.L.Barua, J.A.R.S. IV, pp 89f; H.N.Śāstri, M.A.S.I. (N.66).

(5) The Hāyūnthāl grant of Harjjaravarman. It was found in Hāyūnthāl in Nowgong; only the second of the three plates was found. (P. Bhattacharya, J.A.R.S, I, pp 109f; K.S. pp 44-53; Pratibhā (18th year) Nos. 1 & 2; I.H.Q, 1927, pp 838-44).

- (6) The Tezpur inscription of Harjjara. (G.E.510 = A.D. 829-30). It is incised on a boulder and contains nine lines. (Marshall, A.R.A.S.I., 1902-3, p 229; H.P.Sāstri, J.B.O.R.S., 1917, pp 508-14; Bhattacharya, K.S., pp 185-92; Pratibhā (17th year), Nos. 3 & 4).
- (7) The Tezpur grant of Vanamāla. It consists of three plates, found in Tezpur. (J.A.S.B, IX, II, pp 766f; P. Bhattacharya, K.S., pp 54-70; R.S.P.P., (N.I) 1321.)
- (8) The Nowgong grant of Balavarman III. It consists of three plates and was found in Sūtargāon in Nowgong. (Hoernle, J.A.S.B, LXVI, I., pp 285-97; P. Bhattacharya, K.S., pp 71-88; R.S.P.P., (N.2), 1317).
- (9) The Bargāon grant of Ratnapāla. It consists of three plates and was found in Bargāon, Tezpur. (Hoernle, J.A.S.B, LXVII, I, pp 99f; P. Bhattacharya, K.S., pp 89-109; B.S.P.P (No.1) 1322).
- (10) The Suālkuchi grant of Ratnapāla. It originally consisted of three plates, but one is missing; found in Suālkuchi near Gauhāti. (Hoernle, J.A.S.B., LXVII, I, pp 120-25; P. Bhattacharya, K.S., pp 110-115.
- (11) The Gauhāti grant of Indrapāla. It consists of three plates and was found in Barpanara (Darang). (Hoernle, J.A.S.B., LXVI, I, pp 113-132; P. Bhattacharya, K.S., pp 116-129; R.S.P.P., (Nos 2 and 4), 1319).
- (12) The Guākuchi grant of Indrapāla. Found in Guākuchi

near modern Nalbāri. It consists of three plates. (P. Bhattacharya, K.S., pp 130-45; R.S.P.P., 1336).

(13) The Khonāmukhi grant of Dharmapāla. Found at Khonāmukhi, Nowgong; it consists of three plates. (P.D. Choudhury, J.A.R.S, VIII, pp 113-126; N.K. Bhattasali; J.A.R.S, IX, 1-3).

(14) The Śubhāṅkarapāṭaka grant of Dharmapāla. It consists of three plates; the find spot is not known. (P. Bhattacharya, K.S., pp 146-167).

(15) The Puṣṭabhadrā grant of Dharmapāla. Found on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra near North Gauhāṭī. (P. Bhattacharya, K.S., pp 168-84).

(16) The Śilimpur grant of Prahāsa. Found inscribed on a stone slab in Śilimpur of the Bogra district in Bengal. It records a tulāpuruṣa gift by Jayapāla. (R.G. Basak, E.I., XIII, pp 289-95).

(17) The Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva. It consists of three plates and was found in Benares. (A. Venis, E.I., II, pp 347-58; Gaudalekhamālā, pp 127-46).

(18) The Assam plates of Vallabhadeva (S.E. 1107 = A.D. 1185). It consists of five plates. (Kielhorn, E.I, V, pp 181-88).

(19) The Kānāi Varasī inscription of North Gauhāṭī (S.E. 1127 = A.D. 1206 (K.S. Intro. p 44)).

(20) The Gāchtala inscription in Nowgong. Found in Gāchtala

It is incised on a stone pillar containing 24 lines, each with five letters. (Bhattasali, I.H.Q, XXII, pp 12 - 14).

B. Some Contemporary Epigraphs from other parts of India are important for the political history of Assam. Chief of these are:

(1) The Allahabad Pillar Prāśasti of Samudragupta. It mentions the frontier Kings of Kāmarūpa and Davāka during the 4th century A.D. (Fleet, C.I.I, III, pp 1f).

(2) The Mandasor epigraph of Yaśodharman, (M.E.589 = A.D. 532-33). It mentions Yaśodharman's invasion up to the neighbourhood of the Lauhitya. (Fleet, C.I.I., III, pp 142f).

(3) The Apsad epigraph of Ādityasena. It refers to the conflict between Mahāsenagupta and Suṣṭhitavarman. (Fleet, C.I.I, III, pp 200-208).

(4) The Tippera grant of Lokanātha (44). It refers to his liege lord Jayatūṅgavarśa and another feudatory prince, Jīvadhāraṇa. (Basak, E.I, XV, pp 301-312). We shall try to prove that Jayatūṅga was Bhāskaravarman.

(5) The Paśupati inscription of the Nepal King Jayadeva II (153). It refers to Harṣadeva, the conqueror of Gauḍa, Kalinga, Kosāla and other lands. (Bhagavanlal Indraji, I.A. IX, pp 178f).

(6) The Samangaḍ inscription of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa King Danti-dūrḡa (S.E.674 = A.D. 752). It refers to a clash between

Harsadeva and Kirtivarman, the Western Chalukya ruler (I.A, 1882, p 114).

(7) The Bhāgalpur grant of Nārāyaṇapāla of Gauḍa (I.A. XV, pp 304f). It refers to diplomatic relations between Prāgjyotisa, Gauḍa and Orissa during Devapāla's reign.

(8) The grant of the Ganga King Avantivarman (A.D.922). It refers to the donation of land to Visnusomācārya from Kāmarūpa (E.I., XXVI, pp 62-68).

(9) The grant of the Paramāra King Vākīpati Rāja (A.D. 981). It mentions the donation of land to Vāmanasvāmī, who was probably from Kāmarūpa. (E.I.XXIII, p 109).

(10) The Beṭāva grant of Bhojavarman. It refers to a conflict between Jātavarman and a Kāmarūpa ruler. (E.I, XII, pp 37-44).

(11) The Deopārā inscription of VijayaSena. It mentioned the submission of a Kāmarūpa ruler to him (E.I, I, p 305).

(12) The Mādhōinagar grant of Lakṣmaṇa Sena. Here this ruler is said to have subdued Kāmarūpa (J.A.S.B,(NS), 1909, pp 467f).

(iii) 1. Prehistoric Finds and Ancient Remains:

The remains of the undated history of our period consist of neoliths, megaliths and pottery. These are helpful for the study of the pre-Aryan and non-Aryan elements in Assam. The study of the subject as a whole will give us an idea of the link of the various people with those of the other parts

of India and the Oceanic world, and help us in the understanding of the origin and foundation of Assam's culture.¹

2. Monuments of the Historical Period: The monuments of the historical period, beginning at least with the 5th to the 12th century A.D, are found scattered throughout the province. These consist of remains of architecture, sculpture and image. As a subject of historical study they are useful not only for their artistic value but also for the light they throw on the religious conditions of the people. Epigraphy² proves that most of the rulers were responsible for the erection of temples, buildings, fortified cities, etc. for the benefit of all. The extensive remains, mostly associated with religion, also testify to the devotional zeal both of the rulers and the ruled. The temples and images of the various deities of different faiths, supply us with information on the state of social and religious life of the people. Though primarily dedicated to the deities of the Hindu or the Buddhist faiths, some of them strongly suggest non-Aryan influences.

One of the earliest specimens, ascribed to the 5th century A.D. is found in the region of Dah Parvatīā (Tezpur).

¹Chap. III.

²Tezpur grant of Vanamāla, V 24; Nowgong grant, V 14; Bargāon grant, Lines, 31-32; Gauhāti grant, V 10.

Similar monuments ranging from the 6th to the 12th century A.D. are found in the Bāmuni Hills, Tezpur, Viśvanātha, Negheriting, Chārduār, Gauhāti, Hājo, Kāmākhyā, Pāṇḍu, Umānanda, Nowgong, Numaligarh, Dibrugarh, Sadiyā and other areas of the province.¹

¹Chap. V, Section 5.

CHAPTER II

Geography

1. Location and Divisions:

'Hemmed in between the Eastern Himalayas, Southern Tibet, China, Burma and Nepal, the hills and valleys of the Brahmaputra, occupy a somewhat secluded and inaccessible portion of Asia.— The Upper central valley throws out on either side into the adjoining mountains hundreds of rugged glens.— Then rounding the rocky promontory of the Gāro Hills, the valley turns at a right angle sharply southern to the Delta of Bengal, extending a branch eastwards to the Cāchār Hills.¹ But in spite of this isolation, the province throughout her history remained in close contact with Southeast Asia as with India in the west through the river valleys and mountain passes. Assam presents us with the picture of a diverse physical conditions with hills and dales, forests and marshes, rivers and plains, elevations and depressions. In dealing with her geography we refer to the pre-partition boundary including Sylhet, which formed almost at all times an integral part of the province both geographically and culturally.²

¹Waddell, J.A.S.B, LXIX, III, pp 8f.

²B.K.Barua's opinion (Cultural History of Assam, I, p 2 (fn 2) that Sylhet was outside Assam, seems unwarranted in view of many historical references on the contrary: See Political History, Section 2, pp - 234, 244f, 294f

The province lies between latitudes $28^{\circ} 18'$ and 24° N. and longitudes $89^{\circ} 46'$ and $97^{\circ} 4'$ E. It is bounded on the north by the sub-Himalayan ranges of the Bhutan, Aka, Dafalā, Miri, Ābar and Mishmi, which have taken their names from the tribes inhabiting them. The northern boundary between this land and Tibet still remains ill-defined.¹ On the east the province is bounded by the Pātkāi range, a spur of the Assam Range of the Himalayas; on the southeast by the Nagā Hills, bordering on Burma; on the south by the Lushāi Hills to the confines of Burma; on the southwest by the Hill Tippera and Mymensingh, and on the west by the Gāro Hills and the river Sonkosā, making the natural boundary between this land and Bengal. The topography² of the province has not yet been fully described. In the ancient period, the boundaries were at times extended beyond the modern limits, particularly in the west and Southeast in Bengal.

The province may be divided broadly into two river valleys, the Brahmaputra valley, watered by the Brahmaputra throughout its length from Sadiyā in the northeast to Dhubri in the west, and by its tributaries on both sides of its bank; and the Suramā valley, mainly watered by the Suramā river. The former again may be divided into three regions -

¹See Robert Reid, 'The Excluded Areas of Assam,' G.J., C III, pp 18-29; Mills, 'The Assam-Burma Frontier,' Ibid, LXVII, pp 289-301.

²See Martin, Eastern India, III, p 626.

the Uttarakūla, the Dakṣiṇakūla and the Mājuli to the north of modern Sivasāgar, formed by the Brahmaputra. Geographically, the land may conveniently be divided into two parts - the plains and the hills. The plains comprise modern Goāl-pārā, Kāmarūpa, Darrang, Nowgong, Sivasāgar, Lakṣīmpur, Sylhet and Manipur; the hills consist of the Gāro, Khāsi-Jaintiā, Cāchār, Nagā and Lushāi Hills, and of the frontier tracts of Bālipārā and Sadiyā. Geologically considered, most of the hilly regions were formed in the period of the tertiary age and are full of mineral deposits.

2. Origin of the name Assam: The origin of the name Assam is uncertain. The word is an Anglicised form of the Assamese word Asama. It is curious that while the Shān invaders called themselves Tāi,¹ they came to be known as Āsām, Āsam, Asam and Acam, a name, which is taken to have been derived from the Āhoms. Gait writes that the term in the sense of 'the peerless' was applied to the Shāns by the local people.² He further adds that Assam was known to the Burmese as Athan. B.K.Kākaī points out that Asama, peerless, may be a Sanskritisation of some earlier formation like Āchām. In Tāi (Āhom) Chān means to be defeated, and with the prefix 'Ā', the formation Āsām would mean undefeated. The word Asama, first giv

¹Gait, History of Assam, p 245-46.

²Ibid.

to the Shāns (Āhoms), was later on applied to the country.¹ But the Tāi people are said to have entered Assam about the 8th century A.D. long before the coming of the Āhoms in the 13th century A.D.² B. Bhattacharya points out that the Vajrayāna sect and the Bodhisattvas are called asama in the Sādhanāmālā and so the name of the country may be associated with them.³ In Qazim and Padshāhnāmā the name is Asam⁴ and Tavernier took it as Asem.⁵ It is also suggested that Siam is called Ashan or land of the monks. The Shān, according to Grierson is the Burmese corruption of the original word Shām;⁶ so it is held that the Shān and Shām or Ashan coming to Assam, may have given the name to the region.⁷ But it is probable that the name was first applied to the land by the Bōḍos, a Tibeto-Burman people, as it may be derived from a Bōḍo formation like Hā-com, meaning low land.⁸ If this derivation is correct, the name Asama may go back to a period long before the coming of the Shāns or the Āhoms; because the Tibeto-Burmans began to enter Assam long before them.

¹ Assamese - Its Formation and Development, pp 2-3; N.I.A, I, pp 1 - 23.

² Haddan, The Wanderings of Peoples, pp 30-31.

³ I.H.Q, III, p 421.

⁴ J.A.S.B., XLI, p 55.

⁵ Travels in India, I, 16; II, 277.

⁶ L.S.I, II, p 59.

⁷ B.K.Barua, J.A.R.S. II, pp 102-104.

⁸ Baden Powell, Indian Village Community, p 135.

It, therefore, appears reasonable to suggest that the sanskrit formation Asama is based on an earlier Bodo form, Hā-Com. In discussing the ancient geography of the land we refer to the province by its ancient name Prāggyotiṣa - Kāmarūpa, because the word Asama does not find mention either in early literature or in epigraphy. It is likely that during the Buddhistic period, as we have already stated, the land was known by another name. In the discussion of the classical sources, we shall show reasons to believe that the province was in ancient days known by different names.

3. Origin And Antiquity of Prāggyotiṣa: The name Prāggyotiṣa is commonly associated with the Lauhitya, Kāmarūpa and Kāmākhyā. It occurs both in epigraphs and literature. It is also associated with all the rulers of the period, beginning with Naraka-Bhagadatta. The origin of the word is difficult to guess. It stood for both the city and the country. The name appears to be a Sanskritisation of some non-Aryan formation. It is suggested that the people called Chao Theius of China, coming to India, came to be known as Zuthis and occupied three important centres; the branch coming to Assam was called Prāg Zuthis which was subsequently changed into Prāggyotiṣa.¹ This ethnological derivation is doubtful. Kākati connects Prāggyotiṣa with the topography

¹R.M.Nath, The Back-ground of Assamese Culture, pp 4-5.

of the land and derives from an Austric phrase: Pagar-juh (jo) tie (c=ch), meaning an extensive hill.¹ The antiquity of the name Prāggyotiṣa cannot be traced earlier than the Sāṅkhyāyana Gr̥hyasamgraha, which mentions it as a sacred country, associated with the solar cult,² and the Rāmāyaṇa, which refers to its foundation by an Aryan chief Amūrtarāja.³ The interpretation of the name as a place of 'Eastern Astrology' is, however, justified by a number of references to its association with the solar cult and the planetary worship. Udayācala of the Samhitās and the Purāṇas was no other than Prāggyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa.⁴ The archaeological remains also point to the prevalence of the solar cult and the existing temple of Navagraha in Gauhāti and the Sūrya Pāhār in Goāl-pārā justify this origin of the name of the land. The Kālikā Purāṇa's evidence that Brahma made the first calculation of the stars in Prāggyotiṣa points to the early importance of the place in astrology and astronomy. This is confirmed by a number of Assamese manuscripts, dealing with these subjects. It is possible that the first astronomical observation was made in Navagraha.⁵ The Kālikā and other Purāṇas point to the prevalence of sun and fire worship in

¹The Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā, p 6.

²Chap. II, 38.

³Ādikāṇḍa, XXXV.

⁴J.C.Ghosh, J.A.R.S., V, pp 117-18.

⁵P.Bhattacharya, J.A.R.S., X, pp 73-81.

the land and the Assamese festival 'Bihu' is associated with fire worship and fertility rites, the relics of a vanishing Austric and Alpine-Iranian culture in ancient Assam. It is, therefore, likely that the name Prāggyoṭiṣa is only a relic of the prevalence of the solar cult. Spooner rightly points to the astronomical significance of the name in connection with the Magian culture in Prāggyoṭiṣa.¹ The name in fact, has references to the Aryan contact with the non-Aryans.

We have pointed out the possibility of Prāggyoṭiṣa being known to the classical writers, at least from the first century A.D, by other names, though the identification of the names of places and peoples, mentioned in their works is difficult. The first important classical work, which we believe mentions Assam is the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea.² Our identification rests on the order of description of the regions, one after another, and on significant references to various peoples. The Periplus states thus: From Masalia the course lies eastward across a bay to Desarena. Leaving this, the course is to the north, passing through a number of tribes, including Kirrhadae. After passing them the course turns again to the east and sailing with the coast

¹J.R.A.S., 1915, II, pp 433-36.

²Vincent, Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, II, pp 523-28; Schoff, The Periplus, pp 47f; Whiteley, The Periplus, 1940, pp 134f.

on the left and the sea on the right, you arrive at the Ganges and the extremity of the continent towards the east called Chryse. There is a mart on the Ganges of the same name through which passes a considerable traffic, consisting of the Gangetic spikenard, pearls, betel and the Gangetic muslins. In Chryse there is said to be a gold mine and a gold coin called Kaltis. Immediately after leaving the Ganges, there is an island in the ocean called Chryse which lies directly under the rising sun and at the extremity of the world towards the east. This island produces the finest tortoise-shell that is found throughout the Erythrean sea. But beyond this immediately under the north at a certain point, where the exterior sea terminates, lies a city called Thina, not on the coast but inland, from which raw and manufactured silk are brought by land through Bactria to Barygaza or else down the Ganges to Bengal and then by sea to Limurika or the coast of Malabar. To Thina itself the means of approach are very difficult and from Thina few merchants come, but very rarely. On the confines of Thina an annual mart is held and the Sesatae assembled there and did their marketing. The regions beyond this towards the north are unexplored either on account of the severity of the winter, the continuation of the frost or the difficulties of the country.

Masalia can be identified with the present Masulipatam in Bengal, and the bay leading to Desarena, with the

Sunderband area or the Upper part of the Bay of Bengal.¹ The Kirrhadae is identified with the Kirātas,² who inhabited parts of Southeast Bengal, and western Assam, including Sylhet and Tripurā. The mart on the Ganges may be located in present Vikramapura near Dacca; the place of gold mine is located by some in Tripurā and the coin Kaltis is said to have belonged to the lower part of Bengal.³ Taylor locates Chryse in Arakan and Pegu, which also may have included Malacca and Sumatra.⁴ McCrindle identifies it with Malacca⁵ and Whiteley with the Malaya Peninsula.⁶ Chryse is mentioned also by Pomponius Mela (III, 7, 70) and according to him it lay off the Ganges. Pliny (VI, 80) places it along with Argyre off the mouth of the Indus; but the location is very vague. Schoff identifies the place of gold with Chotanagpur and Chryse with Malacca.⁷ But following the routes of the Periplus, it appears probable that the place of the gold mine and Chryse lay almost in the same locality, to the east of the Ganges in the south western part of Assam, or Tripurā. Schoff himself admits that gold was brought to India through Tripurā from the rivers of Assam

¹Taylor, J.A.S.B., 1847, I, pp 6-8.

²Schoff, p 253; J.A.S.B., 1847, I, pp 10-11.

³Taylor, pp 20-26.

⁴Taylor, pp 26-27.

⁵Commerce and Navigation of the Erythrean Sea, pp 145-49.

⁶The Periplus, (Intro), p 10, pp 565f.

⁷The Periplus, pp 47-48, 258-59.

⁸Ibid.

This was noticed also by Tavernier who holds that both gold and silk from Assam were sent overland to China. He further adds that the washing of gold in Assam yielded a substantial quantity.¹ It is likely, as suggested by Taylor, that the place of gold was somewhere in Tripurā which was within Prāgjyotiṣa. The land of Chryse might have included portion of southwest Assam, southeast Bengal and Burma, and even have extended to the Philippines. As regards the coin Kāltis, Benfey connects it with the sanskrit word Kalitā (numbered)². It is possible that the coin bears the name of the Kalitās of Assam, who for a long time may have ruled in the land. Speaking of Chryse, Bhattasali writes that it stands for 'Sondvīp at the mouth of the united waters of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra.'³ It may be mentioned that Kauṭilya associates Suvarṇakunḍya in Kāmarūpa with the production of the best gold.⁴ As we have suggested, Chryse may have stood for a vast area, which included also parts of Assam and Bengal.

The Periplus's land of This with an inland city Thina, according to Schoff, is to be located in the western part of China; but he identifies the Sesatae doing marketing in

¹Travels, vol, II, p 281; Ball, Economic Geology of India, p23

²See McCrindle, p 31.

³I.H.Q., XXII, pp 245-52; Antiquities of Son-Ganges and Its courses, Science and Culture, Nov. 1941.

⁴Arthasāstra (S.S.tr.) pp 82f; N.N.DasGupta, I.C.V, pp 333-341.

malabathrum with the people allied to the Kuki-Chins, Nagās, Gāros and other allied tribes of Assam.¹ Whiteley² and McCrindle³ locate Thina in China, though the latter identifies the Sesatae with the people living in the vicinity of Sylhet.⁴

None of these identifications seems correct. From the statements in the Periplus it appears that the Sesatae were probably a people allied to the Gāros. If this be so, it is a far cry from the tribes of Assam, who assembled between their own country and Thina for marketing, to Western China. One confusing statement in the Periplus is the description of trade routes by which silk was exported from Thina; but the accounts seem to yield that one route lay through the mountain passes of Nepal, leading to Bactria where silk from Assam was purchased by merchants who were on their way to India and who afterwards sailed down the Indus to Barygaza or Gujarāt; the other route to Bengal and then to Limurika by sea lay through the Brahmaputra and the Ganges.⁵ If Schoff's reading of the name, This is tenable, it is likely that it stands for the last two syllables of Prāggyotiṣa with its capital Thina and the people Thinae. Even today

¹The periplus, pp 47-48, 261, 278.

²The Periplus, (Intro), p 10, pp 567f.

³Commerce and Navigation, etc, pp 145f.

⁴Ancient India, p 218.

⁵See also Chap. V, Section 2. pp - 586-87

a village near Gauhāti is known as Dispur. In making this identification, it must be remembered that the ancient boundary of Prāḡjyotiṣa extended up to the sea through southeast Bengal. Therefore when we find that in historical times the Kingdom of Prāḡjyotiṣa included Sylhet, Tippera and Noakhali districts and thus extended up to the sea-coast, we at once realise that the author of the Periplus, in talking of This, is really meaning Prāḡjyotiṣa.¹ Taylor locates the country of the Thinae in eastern Assam and identifies the capital Thina with Sera of Ptolemy. He also derives the Thinae from the Tāi race and identifies them with the Sinae of Ptolemy, located in eastern Assam.² But as we have stated, the land of This with its capital Thina covered a great area, extending from southeast Bengal to the eastern limits of modern Assam. Taylor's derivation of the Thinae from the Tāi or the Sinae from the Shyāns appears improbable, because the Tāi people could hardly enter Assam during the first century A.D. He rightly identifies the Sesatae with the Besadae of Ptolemy, located near the Moirandos and points out that the marketing habits of the former, as given in the Periplus correspond to those of the hill tribes of Assam.³

¹Bhattachali, I.H.Q, XXII, pp 245-52

²J.A.S.B, 1847, I, pp 29-30.

³Ibid, pp 32f.

The unexplored regions beyond Thina refer to the north-eastern part of the Himalayas, which, according to Wilson, are the northeastern parts of Assam, designated by Ptolemy as Ottorocaras. The same reference is made by Ammianus Marcellinus.¹ It appears from these accounts that in the first century A.D. the land of This with its capital Thina was identical with Prāggyotisa and the Thinae designated the people.

The geography of Ptolemy, a work of about A.D. 150 contains useful information. Ptolemy mentions the country of the Seres which, according to Taylor, stands, like Thina of the Periplus, for Assam, while the name Seres appears like the Thinae to have been applied to the inhabitants of the plains and the hills.² This identification is based on the geography of the regions described by Ptolemy. We shall, however, try to confirm our contention on the basis of the observations of other earlier and later writers. Pomponius Mela (III, VII) for instance, mentions the land of the Seres as being situated between India and Scythia. They are said to have been noted for their commerce. The reference, is, however, vague. But it is likely that the people, mentioned by Mela correspond to the Sesatae of the Periplus.³ Pliny (VI, XVII - XXII) gives a similar

¹Ibid, p 43.

²Ibid, pp 43f.

³Ibid.

description of the Seres and mentions the country as noted for silk which its forests produced. In speaking of the embassy from Ceylon to the Roman emperor Claudius, he represents the chief ambassador as stating that the people of Ceylon knew the Seres through trade and that the ambassador's father often visited them. Pliny mentions the river Psitaras, which may be identified with Teestā, in the land of the Seres, and recorded that merchants placed their goods on the further side of that river. If the Seres wanted to barter, they took goods which were deposited there and left the commodities which the foreign merchants wanted in exchange. These people may be the Bhutiās or other hill tribes of Western Assam.¹

Pausanias mentions two nations of the Seres, of which the Scythie Seres may be taken as the Thinae or Sinae of the Periplus.² Dionysius mentions similar hill people of Assam, allied to the Sesatae. He refers also to silk, which from its description may be the tassar or dyedamugā silk of Assam.³ Aelian mentions Schiratae or Siratae, who were either the Kirātas or the Sesatae of the Periplus. The Seres mentioned by Horace (I, 29) were the mountain peoples of Assam who are said to have been expert in the use of bows and arrows. Ctesias and Aelian mention the fruit of a tree called

¹J.A.S.B., 1847, I, #43f.

²Ibid, p 45.

³Ibid, p 46.

Siptachora, from which amber exuded, and upon which was noticed a small insect yielding a purple dye. The reference is probably to the country of Assam where the lac insect is found in abundance and red dye is prepared from lac.¹ The hill people, in the opinion of Wilford,² based on the account of Ctesias, collected the amber and prepared materials with the purple dye, and carried the whole in boats along with the dried fruit of the tree to other parts of India, including Magadha.³ The reference is probably to the hill tribes of Assam, such as the Bodos. Ctesias mentions the river Hyperchos which proceeded from the country where Siptachora was grown and which produced all good things.⁴ If the river may be identified with the Brahmaputra, it appears probable that the country of Siptachora or the lac tree, refers to Assam and the good things were the products of the land.⁵

We have mentioned elsewhere Strabo's reference to the river Oidanes falling with the Ganges into the sea,⁶ and Curtius's reference to the Dyardanes, flowing through the remotest part of India;⁷ we have also suggested the identification of Oidanes, Dyardanes and Ptolemy's Doanes with the

¹ Ibid, p 46

² Ibid, p 47.

³ A. Res. IX, p 65.

⁴ Heeren, Asiatic Nations, II, App. IV, p 380.

⁵ Taylor, p 47.

⁶ McCrindle, Ancient India as described in Classical Literature p 42.

⁷ Ibid, p 77 (f.n.3).

Brahmaputra.¹ Strabo further mentions the country of the Seres which abounded in elephants. The reference strongly supports the location of the country of the Seres in Assam; because Assam is one of the few countries where elephants were abundantly found, as they are today. Ptolemy describes the Seres and the Sinae as neighbours. He describes Serica as being bounded on the east and the north by unknown regions and on the south by India-extra-Gangem and the country of the Sinae. This evidently refers to Upper Assam. The journey of the caravan from Byzantium to the frontier of Serica, as described by Ptolemy seems to agree with the accounts of the Periplus of the route from Thina to Bactria or the route through Bhutan to Kabul and then to Balkh, as given also in Tavernier.² It appears that the merchants who traded with the Seres were not allowed to enter the latter country, but they carried on traffic with them at an opening or pass in the mountain Imaus. On the evidence from Arrian and Pliny, it is possible to identify Imaus, a spur of the Exodus or the Himalayas³ with some hill of Northern Assam. Pliny mentions another route to Serica via Palibothra (I, XVII). This was through the Brahmaputra to Assam or the route by the Ganges, mentioned in the Periplus, by which goods were

¹Chap. I, pp - 17-18

²Taylor, p 48.

³McCrinkle, Megasthenes and Arrian, p 182; Pliny, VI.

exported to Limurika by sea through Bengal.

Ptolemy states that to the east of Serica there are hills and forests where canes are grown and these are used as bridges. The reference is very important, as even today canes are found abundantly in the hills and forests of Assam, and most of the hill tribes use them as bridges. He also mentions that Serica is surrounded by hills and the country is traversed by two large rivers, Occardes and Boutes, which may be identified with the Sanpo and the Brahmaputra. Some of the hills, mentioned by Ptolemy are Annubi, identified with the Akā Hills; Casius is perhaps the Mishmi Hills; the mount Thagurus appears to be Reging (Ābar Hills), and the chain of the Emodi (Himalayas) is probably the mountains separating Assam from Tibet.¹

The location of the country of the Seres and Serica in Assam is also based on our identification of some of the hill tribes, mentioned by Ptolemy and confirmed by Ammianus Marcellinus; some of them can be located almost in their present habitat.²

Ammianus Marcellinus gives (XXII, Chap.VI) a general account of the physical features, extent, fertility and people of Serica, extending to the Ganges and abounding in silk; his accounts correspond in general to those of Ptolemy.

¹Taylor, pp 52f.

²See Chap. III, pp - 135f

We suggest that his Anniva is the Annubi of Ptolemy; Nazavicium is the Nagā Hills, since the people living there are called by Ptolemy Nagalogoe. His Asmira is the range of hills inhabited by the Miris and Emoden is the Himalayas. His description of the two rivers running through Serica corresponds to that of Ptolemy. Both mention Asmira and Essedon, Aspararta and Sera as famous towns of Serica. Sera stands for the capital of the Sinae. Taylor locates Asmira in present Laksīmpur; Essedon somewhere near Rangpur and Aspararta in Chārduār;¹ but their actual location is doubtful. Ptolemy mentions other places which are difficult to identify. Ammianus mentions silk from Seres under the name of Sericum and states that the people exported the article to other lands. Other important articles mentioned are skin, iron, aloe, musk and rhinoceros' horns. The mention of aloe and musk and particularly of rhinoceros is very important evidence for the location of the country of the Seres and Serica in Assam, for even today rhinoceros abounds in the forests of Assam. All these references indicate that Ptolemy's Sera and Serica stand for Thina and the Sinae of the Periplus,² and refer to Prāggyotiṣa with its capital Thina or Prāggyotiṣa pura. The country, during the 1st - 2nd century A.D, covered not only Eastern Assam but also extended to Southeast Bengal.

¹Taylor, pp 53f.

²Taylor, pp 55-59.

Other details in Ptolemy deal with the geography and peoples of other parts of Assam. Airrhadaï of Ptolemy is identified by Gerini with the country of the Andhras;¹ but Wilford takes it as the river Brahmaputra.² Both the identifications are wrong. In our opinion it may be identified with the country of the Kirātās or Ptolemy's Kirrhadae. Gerini locates the country of the latter in Sylhet, Tripurā and Cāehār in Assam. While Gerini takes Trilingon or Triglyton as identical with Kuladan near about Chittagong, Yule locates it in Tripurā.³ Tugma is located by Gerini in Cāehār or Manipur; Mareura in Old Prome and Pentapolis in Tripurā.⁴ The identification of Mareura with Manipur appears more probable in view of the geography of the area. Beyond Kirrhadia, Ptolemy mentions the Zamirai, located near Moirandos near the Gāro Hills and Sylhet, and Tiladai to the north of the Moirandos. To the north Ptolemy places Dabassai between the Bapyrrhos and the Dabassa ranges. Gerini, identifying Dabassai with Davāka, locates the place in Upper Burma,⁵ which is wrong. Davāka is to be located in the Kapili valley in Assam. Bapyrrhos, from which the river Doanes or the Brahmaputra arose, cannot be identified,

¹Researches on Ptolemy's Geography, p 28.

²See McCrindle, p 192.

³Gerini, pp 30-31.

⁴Ibid, pp 33-36

⁵Ibid, pp 52f.

as done by Gerini, with the Pātkāi Hills.¹ It is certainly a portion of the Himalayas. Ringberi of Ptolemy is identified by Yule with a place in Assam and by Gerini with one in Burma;² But the similarity of sound suggests its identification with Rangpur in Upper Assam. Kudutai of Ptolemy, derived from Kuluta,³ may be identified with the Kalitā and it is likely that Barrhai of Ptolemy⁴ is identical with the Bodos. Gerini rightly identifies Ptolemy's Alosonga with Shillong;⁵ Tiladai with the Kuki-Chins;⁶ but his identification of Besadae with the Mishmis,⁷ is hardly correct. They may be identical with the Sesatae of the Periplus, standing probably for the Gāros and other Bodos.

It appears from the accounts of both the Periplus and Ptolemy's geography that their authors knew something of the geography and peoples of Assam and that during the 1st - 2nd century A.D., if not earlier, the land was known as Thina or Seres and extended from the extreme Sadiyā region to Southeast Bengal. This, as we have tried to show, appears to be confirmed by other classical sources, both earlier and later, which point only to the antiquity of the land of Prāg-jyotiṣa.

¹Gerini, pp 134f, 281 f.

²Ibid, p 138.

³Ibid, p 356.

⁴Ibid, pp 362 f.

⁵Ibid, p 830.

⁶Ibid, pp 744, 830.

⁷Ibid, p 830.

4. Origin And Antiquity of Kāmarūpa-Kāmākhyā:

We have already mentioned the non-Aryan origin of the name Frāggyotisa and its association with astronomy. The words Kāmarūpa and Kāmākhyā also suggest an Austric or Alpine origin. Kāmākhyā is probably derived from an Austric formation, such as Kamoi (demon) in old Khmer; Kamoit (devil) in Chām; Kamet (corpse) in Khāsi; Komui (grave) or Komoch (corpse) in Santali. It may be a substitution of the word like Kumoch, meaning grave or the dead.¹ Kāmarūpa is derived from the formations like Kamru, or Kamrut, the name of a lesser divinity in Santali, and the land is thus associated with magic or necromancy.² Both Kāmarūpa and Kāmākhyā are closely associated in literature. B.K. Kākaīi thinks that the word Kāmarūpa symbolises a new cult, and in exhaltation of it the land was rechristened. The very name Kāmarūpa-Kāmākhyā suggests, in his opinion, that the cult is to be derived from some Austric divinity.³ The traditional origin of the name of Kāmarūpa, as given in the Gopatha Brāhmana, which relates the story of Kāmadeva's revival after being burnt up by Śiva, may be explained by the cult of magic and sorcery, associated with the Austric-

¹Kakati, Assamese - Its Formation and Development, pp 53-54.

²Ibid; N.I.A., I, pp 1-23.

³The Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā, pp 35f.

Alpine culture of Assam.¹ The traditional origin of the name Kāmākhyā also, associated with the genital organ of Satī, according to the Kālikā Purāna² and other works, can be explained on the basis of a pre-Aryan cult of the phallus, receiving new orientation with the introduction of Aryan culture.

While Kāmākhyā finds mention only in literature, Kāmarūpa is also mentioned in epigraphs. That the latter is a sanskritisation of some earlier formation, is proved by other sources. The usual name is found as Kamru or Kamrud in the Buddhist caryās, the HaraGaurīsamvāda, and the Muslim sources like the Tabaqāt-i-Nāsirī and the Riyāz-us-Salātin. Yuan Chwang mentions it as Kamolupo³ and in Tāng Shu, the name is given as Kamopo and Komolu.⁴ Lévi connects it with a formation like Tāmalipti.⁵ The references show the Austric origin of the name Kāmarūpa. Even the name of the Brahmaputra, the Lauhitya of literature, the Tsanpo of the Tibeto-Burmans, or the Lohit (Luit) of the Assamese popular literature,⁶

¹J.C.Ghosh's association of the name, Kāmarūpa with the Ut-Kochas, is improbable. (J.A.R.S., 1938, pp 1 f).

²Chaps. 36-37

³Watters, II, pp 185f.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Pre-Aryan and PreDravidian in India, pp 114, 118.

⁶The Tibetans call the Brahmaputra, Zagulchu; the Nishmis, Tellu and Lohit is the eastern branch of Tsanpo or the Brahmaputra. (Noel Williamson, G.J., XXXIV, pp 363-83; Sven Hedin, Trans-Himalaya, II, pp 96f; Hamilton, Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description, etc. pp 741f).

appears to have its origin in an Austric formation like Laotu, 'tu' meaning water; similarly the Karatoyā, called Kalotu in Chinese records, may be derived from an Austric word. The Kālikā P. (Chap. 82) gives a mythological origin of the name of the Brahmaputra.

5. Location of Prāggyotisa-Kāmarūpa:

In spite of the close association of Prāggyotiṣa with the Udayācala, the Lauhitya, and Kāmarūpa-Kāmākhyā both in epigraphs and literature, some writers place it in regions other than in Assam. R.C.Majumdar for instance, places Prāggyotiṣa in Orissa and adds that a certain Patoladeva, a Sāhi ruler of Gilgit, claims in an inscription from Hātum his descent from the Bhauma dynasty, and on the basis of this, he asserts that there was a Prāggyotiṣa Kingdom in the North Western India, and that the name of the dynasty along with the place name was later carried to Assam.¹ K.V.Athavale thinks that Naraka and his successors ruled at Prāggyotiṣa in Kāthiāwād and it was Vajradatta who went to Assam. He locates the original Prāggyotiṣa, therefore, not far from the Raivataka Hills, and holds that Vajradatta carried the name of the place and the dynasty to Kāmarūpa.² B.C.Law, on the basis of the Kiskindhyā Kāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa (Chap.42)

¹Bhāratiya Vidyā, VI, pp 111-112.

²Ibid, ~~vii~~pp 250-55.

and the Brahmānda.P. (27) holds that there was another Prāgjyotīṣa on the river Vetravati or Betwa.¹ B.M.Barua locates Prāgjyotīṣa in the Eastern Punjab. What is more improbable, he associated it with Uttara Prāgjyotīṣapura, the northern city of astronomy, located above Pañcanada and Amaraparvata.² These writers are under the impression that the Mahābhārata locates Prāgjyotīṣa in the west or north. The geography of the Epics is not accurate and, moreover, the actual interpretation of the relevant passages will only support our contention. The Kiskindhyā Kānda (Chap.42) locates Prāgjyotīṣa in the Varāha mountain where Naraka is said to have taken his abode.

The Varāha mountains where Prāgjyotīṣa is placed, definitely suggests a region at the foot of the Himalayas on the Assam Range in the Eastern Sea. It in no way suggests a location in the Punjab. The evidence from the Mahābhārata seems at first sight to be conflicting. In the Sabhā.P. there is a mention of Bhīma's campaign in the north and his fight with Bhagadatta of Prāgjyotīṣa; but in the same parva (26-30) and in the Aśvamedha P. (74-75), there is a mention of Bhīma's campaign in the Lauhitya in the east. These passages can be explained, as held by P. Bhattacharya, on the assumption that Bhagadatta's Kingdom extended to Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet and the frontiers of China. The Sabhā Parva's

¹I.C. III, pp 731f.

²I.H.Q, XXIII, pp 200f.

(26) reference to Bhagadatta's followers, the Cīnas and the Kirātas, also indicates that his Kingdom extended to the confines of China in the north and to the sea coast in South-east Bengal.¹ The location of Prāggyotiṣa and the Varāha mountain is also confirmed by the Varāha P. and the Brahma Purāna (114-115) which refer to the birth of Naraka in the Kokāmukhatīrtha and to his becoming the lord of Prāggyotiṣa. The mention of Kauśikā and Trisrotā as lying in the neighbourhood of the former place indicates that the region lay within Prāggyotiṣa.² There is nothing, therefore, to suggest that Prāggyotiṣa was in the Punjab or Kāthiāwād. The existence of the Bhauma dynasty in Orissa can only be explained by the fact that Harṣadeva of Kāmarūpa in the 8th century A.D. established a relation of his there.³

It is also suggested that there is evidence of the existence of Kāmarūpa-Kāmākhyā elsewhere than in Assam. The Padma.P. (Pātāla Khaṇḍa, V) states that the Kāmākhyā Devī was the presiding deity of Ahiṣhatra, and the poet Mukakavi Sārvabhauma composed three works in honour of Kāmākhyā of Kāñcīpura.⁴ The Śiva.P. mentions that in Sahyādri there was a country of Kāmarūpa.⁵ These references can be explained

¹K.S. (Intro), p 2 (f.n)

²Chap.140, VV72-75; H.C.Choudhury, B.C.Law Volume, I, pp 89-90.

³Political History, Section 3 pp -329-30

⁴H.P.Śāstrī, Notices of Sans.M.S., X, I, (Nos. 3268, 3291, 3295).

⁵Jñāna Saṁhitā, 48 (Vaṅgavāsī Ed.)

by the fact that it was the celebrity of the original Kāmarūpa-Kāmākhyā that carried the names to other lands. The existence of a temple of Devī in other places is not at all curious; but this does not prove that Kāmarūpa-Kāmākhyā existed in places other than in Assam.¹ That Kāmarūpa always implied Assam, is proved by the extant literature of the period.

The close association of Prāgjyotiṣa with the Lauhitya and Kāmarūpa-Kāmākhyā in both epigraphs and literature points to their existence in the same region from the dawn of history. The Arthasāstra, referring to various places of Kāmarūpa in connection with industrial products,² confirms its location in Assam. We have examined other literary sources, beginning with the Brhatsamhitā and the Raghuvainśa, which indicate that the ancient Kingdom of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa lay to the east of the Lauhitya.³ There is nothing to prove, as held by P.C.Sen on the basis of the Raghuvainśa that the Prāgjyotiṣas entered Assam from the west and the Kāmarūpas, who were foreigners, entered from the northeast; equally absurd is his argument that during Samudragupta's time Prāgjyotiṣa in the west was included within his empire and the Varmans ruled in the east in

¹See J.C.Ghosh, J.A.R.S., VI, p 11.

²S.S. tr., pp 82ff. Bhattasvāmī, Com., pp 40f.

³Chap. I, pp - 4f

Kāmarūpa.¹ Nor is it possible, as held by B.C. Law, that the Prāggyotiṣas were a people of non-Aryan origin;² because by that time the Kingdom was flooded with Aryans, though other elements, including the Alpines, were already there. As we have pointed out, Kālidāsa, referring to Prāggyotiṣa and Kāmarūpa, made only independent treatment of identical names,³ and the Kingdom definitely lay to the east of the Lauhitya. This is confirmed by other Brāhmanical, Buddhist, Chinese, classical and other sources and the epigraphs, beginning with the 5th century A.D.

While in the local grants, the name Kāmarūpa does not occur, Prāggyotiṣa and Prāggyotiṣādhipati, referring to the rulers, find mention in all of them. Kāmarūpa, however, finds mention for the first time in the Allahabad Pillar Prasasti of Samudragupta.⁴ The next references occur in the Belāva grant of Bhojavarman,⁵ the Śilimpur grant of Prahāsa,⁶ Deopārā inscription of Vijayasena,⁷ Mādhāinagar grant of Lakṣmanasena⁸ and the Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva.⁹

¹J.A.R.S, I, pp 12-15.

²I.C., III, pp 731f.

³M. Collins, Geographical Data, etc, pp 14-15 (fn) also H.N. Chaudhury, J.A.R.S., I, pp 103-6.

⁴Fleet, C.I.I., III, pp 1f.

⁵E.I. XII, pp 37-44.

⁶E.I. XIII, pp 289f.

⁷E.I., I, p 305.

⁸J.A.S.B., V, (N.S.) pp 467f.

⁹E.I., II, pp 347f.

In the contemporary epigraphs, Lauhitya finds mention in the Mandasor grant of Yaśodharman¹ and the Apsad epigraph of Ādityasena;² while Prāggyotiṣa is mentioned only once in the Bhāgalpur grant of Nārāyanapāla.³ These references confirm our contention that Prāggyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa and the Lauhitya were contiguous and in the same region. It is, therefore, only an imagination uncontrolled by a critical approach to its sources that will locate Prāggyotiṣa either in the Punjab or in Kāthiāwāḍ in the Epic period, and in modern Assam at a later time.

6. Extension of the Kingdom:

If Prāggyotiṣa was known to the authors of the pre-Buddhistic and Buddhistic literature, it was merely a name. It is difficult to determine the extent of the Kingdom either of Naraka of the age of Janaka or of his successors. But it appears, on the basis of the literary evidence, that at a time when Prāggyotiṣa was a flourishing Kingdom, most parts of Southeast Bengal were under the Lohita sea, and the Bengal Delta was just beginning to form. The confluence of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra formed this Eastern Sea, which finds mention as late as the period of the Brhatsamhitā of the 5th century A.D. It is likely that the southern boundary of Prāggyotiṣa in the pre-Buddhistic period or at a later time touched the sea. Kedar nath Majumdar, on the

¹C.I.I., III, pp 142f.

²Ibid, pp 200f.

³I.A., XV, pp 304f.

basis of the Mahābhārata and Manu, points out that in the Epic age at least the whole of Mymensingh, including three-fourths of modern Bengal was under the Lohita sea, and the Brahmaputra fell into it, taking a southern course round the Gāro Hills as it does today.¹ But on the other hand, the classical writers, beginning with the 4th century B.C. make mention of the Gangaridae or Gaṅgārāstra. Even the Nikāyas mention Ariga and Vaṅga among the sixteen Mahājānapadas. Southeast Bengal came to be known as Samatata. Even about the 1st century A.D., as appears from the Periplus,² the lands to the east of Samatata, comprising southern Mymensingh, Western Sylhet and portions of Comilla and Noakhali, were probably under water. The existing evidence seems to indicate that long before the foundation of Gauda and Puṇḍravardhana except, however, Ariga and Vaṅga in Southern Bengal, Prāgjyotiṣa may have included some portions of Bengal towards the southeast even when the delta was formed and many islands came up the Lohita sāgara.

The existing materials also convince us that the limits of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa, from the period of the Epics, if not earlier, extended much beyond the modern province of Assam, particularly in the northern and southwestern directions. But we should remember that the geography of the Epics

¹Mymensingher Itihāsa, Chap.I.

²Schoff, pp 47f.

is far from being accurate and their references to Prāḡjyotiṣa may be ascribed only to the first century A.D. or a little earlier during the time of Bhagadatta. On the evidence from the Sabhā P. (26-30), the Aśvamedha P. (74-75), the Udyoga.P. and other chapters of the Mahābhārata, which refer to the followers of Bhagadatta, the Cīnas and the Kirātas, inhabiting the hilly regions in the north and the marshy regions near the sea, it may be held that his Kingdom included not only portions of Southeast Bengal but also portions of Nepal and Bhutan. P. Bhattacharya rightly points out that Bhagadatta's Kingdom extended to the confines of China, Nepal or the Himalayan regions, otherwise his army could not have been consisted of the Cīnas and the Kirātas.¹ In the Udyoga.P. (4) Bhagadatta is called pūrvasāgaravāsī and in the Drona P. (25) he is styled as parvatapati. In the Rājasūya of Yudhiṣṭhira (Sabhā P. 34) Bhagadatta is said to have been present with his followers from the sea-shore. In the Sabhā.P. (51) he is said to have given as presents to Yudhiṣṭhira ivory tusks, rhinoceros' horns etc, indicating that Bhutan, Tibet and the hilly areas of Assam in the north were within his Kingdom, along with portions of Bengal, Sylhet, Tripurā, Mymensingh etc. On the basis of these Epic references Pargiter points out that Prāḡjyotiṣa touched the Himalayas and stretched southwards along both sides of the Lauhitya as far as the Bengal Delta on the sea.² In the

¹K.S. p 2 (f.n.) Intro.

²J.A.S.B., 1887, pp 104-5.

Rāmāyāna (Kiskindhyā Kāṇḍa, 42) Prāḡjyotiṣa is said to have been situated on the Varāha mountain and on the sea and to have been 64 yojanas in extent. The mountain probably stands for the Assam range of the Himalayas, and the sea lay to the south of the hills, which were probably connected by the Brahmaputra with the Bay of Bengal. This sea was the Lohita sāgara. It is almost certain that parts of Sylhet, Mymensingh and the neighbouring lands were under water until comparatively later times. The dwellers of the marshy regions, the Kirātas or the Kirrhadae of the Periplus and Ptolemy certainly occupied the low lying regions of Tripurā, Noakhali, etc. The foundation of Prāḡjyotiṣa by Amūrtarāja, son of Kusā and grandfather of Viśvāmītra, who performed his austerities on the bank of the Kauśikā, is another significant tradition. Prāḡjyotiṣa lay close to Dharmāraṇya (Ādikāṇḍa, 35). It is possible that Prāḡjyotiṣa extended up to the river Kauśikā. All these references led Pargiter to conclude that the Kingdom during the time of the Epics included the greater portions of modern Assam, along with Koch-Bihar, Jalpāiguri, Rangpur, Bogra, Mymensingh, Dacca, Tripurā, portions of Pabna and probably a portion of Nepal.¹ But, as we have stated, the Epics references have perhaps bearing on the geography of Prāḡjyotiṣa during the first century A.D. or a little earlier, when Bhagadatta

¹J.A.S.B, 1887, p 106.

may have flourished,¹ and on the basis of the classical sources it may be held that about that period the Kingdom extended to the north-eastern limits of modern Assam.

We have suggested in another connection that during the 6th - 4th century B.C. ancient Assam was either included in the greater Kingdom of Magadha, or the western boundary of Kingdom, whatever its south western limits, hardly extended beyond the Lauhitya or the Karatoyā.² During the age of Maurya imperialism and perhaps until the beginning of the christian era, the Kingdom was confined roughly to its modern boundary in the west. This is confirmed by the Brhatsamhitā, based on the Parāsāra Tantra of the beginning of the christian era.³ Beginning with the 1st-2nd century A.D. as shown by the Periplus and Ptolemy, and we believe also by the Mahābhārata, the south western boundary of Prāgjyotiṣa touched the sea; the western boundary may have extended beyond the Karatoyā to include the region to the east of the Kausikā and in its eastern limits it was extended to the Sadiyā region. Bhattasali rightly contends 'that the Kingdom even in the first century A.D. - extended up to the gulf of the Meghna, probably up to Noakhali and Chittagong coasts.'⁴

¹Political History, Section I, pp - 200, 206

²Ibid, pp - 204 f

³Kern, Intro, to Brhatsamhitā, p 32; H.C.Chaklader, Studies in the Kāmasūtra, p 72.

⁴I.H.Q, XXII, pp 245-52.

According to most Purāṇas,¹ dealing with the geography of an earlier period, the Kingdom extended up to the Karatoyā in the west, and included Maṇipur, Jaintiā, Cāchār, parts of Mymensingh, Sylhet, Rangpur, and portions of Bhutan and Nepal.² Beginning with the 4th century A.D. the western limit was again pushed back to the east of the Lauhitya. This was the time of Gupta imperialism and Kāmarūpa was only a frontier state like Samatāṭa and Davāka. This is proved by the Br̥hatsamhitā, which places Prāggyotiṣa to the east of the Lauhitya and the sea,³ and by the Raghuvaiṃśā, of about the same period, which states that Raghu entered Kāmarūpa after crossing the Lauhitya.⁴ But during the middle of the 6th century A.D. under Bhūti-varman, with the decline of the Guptas both in Magadha and Gauḍa, the Kingdom again expanded to include Puṇḍravardhana in North Bengal,⁵ and portions of southeast Bengal, including Samatāṭa, Tripurā, Noakhali and Sylhet.⁶ A tāntrik work of the 6th century A.D. mentions the boundaries of Kamarupa. The Śaktisaṅgama (III, VII, 10) and the Sanmoha Tantra, both based on the Chandragarbhasūtra

¹Wilson, Viṣṇu Purāṇa, V, p 88; Lassen, I.A.I, p 87; Ibid, II p 973.

²Martin, Eastern India, III, p 403; Buchanan, Account of Rangpur, J.A.S.B., 1838, I; E.R.E., II, p 132; Robinson, Description of Assam, p 146.

³Chap. LXIV, 6.

⁴IV, 81-84

⁵Political History, Section 2. pp - 237f, 256

⁶Bhattacharya, I.H.Q, XXI, pp 19f.

of Narendrayasā (A.D. 566) state that the Kingdom extended from Kālesvara to Svetagiri and from Tripurā to Nilaparvata, and Gaṇesagiri is mentioned as lying in the heart of Kāmarūpa.¹

It appears that during the 4th - 5th century A.D. as long as the Guptas had paramouncy in Northern India, Kāmarūpa comprised only a limited area; but as we have stated, Davāka, Sylhet and Tripurā were absorbed within the Kingdom during Bhūti-varman's time. From that time to the 8th century A.D. as proved by the Nidhanpur grant² and the Pasupati epigraph of Jayadeva II³ and confirmed by Yuan Chwang⁴ and his biography,⁵ the Kingdom included Karnasuvarṇa, Puṇḍravardhana and probably the Nālandā region.⁶ During the 8th century A.D. Harsadeva's Kingdom was larger in extent than that of any previous ruler of Kāmarūpa, for he probably held possession of Gauda, Magadha, Kalinga, Kosala and other lands, at least for a short time.⁷ With the early part of the 9th century A.D. there was perhaps a temporary setback, but during the middle of that century, as proved by the Tezpur grant,⁸ Vanamāla's Kingdom included Puṇḍravardhana, or almost

¹D.C.Sircar, I.C. VIII, pp 33-64.

²E.I., XII, pp 65f. XIX, 245f.

³I.A., IX, pp 178f.

⁴Watters, II, pp 185f.

⁵Beal, Intro. to Life, XXXVI - XXXVII.

⁶Political History, Section 2, pp - 293, 298f

⁷Ibid, section 3, pp - 333f

⁸J.A.S.B., IX, II, pp 766f.

the same area as that of Bhūti-varman, including portions of Southeast Bengal.¹ During the period of the Pāla line in the 11th - 12th century A.D., particularly during the time of Ratnapāla, Indrapāla, Dharmapāla and Jayapāla, the Kingdom extended to the same regions as under Bhūti-varman and Vanamāla. This is proved by their grants.² Kāmarūpa power declined towards the end of the reign of Jayapāla, but it was soon revived under Vaidyadeva during the middle of the 12th century A.D., as proved by his Kamauli grant,³ and to some extent under the family of Vallabhadeva⁴ and his successors until the Sena and the Muslim invasions of the Kingdom.⁵

As regards the eastern limits of the Kingdom, Davāka was absorbed within Kāmarūpa under Kalyāṇavarman and the outlying regions were brought under subjugation by Mahendrarvarman.⁶ As proved by the Baḍgaṅgā epigraph of Bhūti-varman,⁷ his Kingdom included modern Nowgong. When Yuan Chwang visited Kāmarūpa, the Kingdom of Bhāskara extended to the confines of Burma and China.⁸ During the 8th century A.D. under Harṣadeva, the eastern limits must have remained the same.

¹Political History, Section 3, pp - 360-61

²Ibid, Section 4, pp - 387f

³E.I., II, pp 347 f.

⁴E.I., V, pp 181-85.

⁵Political History, Section 4, pp - 414f

⁶Ibid, Section 2, pp - 231, 234-35

⁷E.I., 1947, pp 18-23.

⁸Watters, II, pp 185f.

The Tezpur Rock epigraph of Harjjara¹ and his Hāyūnthāl grant² prove that during the early part of the 9th century A.D. both modern Darrang and Nowgong were within the Kingdom. Harjjara's relations with the tribes in the north and his supremacy over them are also proved by the latter grant. The foundation of the temporary city of Hāruppeśvara by the family of Sālastambha in Tezpur, the Tezpur grant of Vanamāla, and the Nowgong grant of Balavarman³ during the 9th - 10th century A.D. also point to the extension of the Kingdom to its eastern limits. The Pāla grants further indicate that the Kingdom included the north eastern limits of modern Assam, and it is significant that Purandarapāla in the early 11th century A.D. had matrimonial relations with a frontier dependency in the Sadiyā region,⁴ indicating that before the foundation of petty states by Mongolian chiefs, Kāmarūpa included almost the whole of modern Assam, including Sylhet, Cāchār, Tripurā, parts of southeast Bengal and perhaps the Khāsi-Jaintiā Hills and Manipur.

The later Purāṇas and the Tantras prove that Kāmarūpa comprised lands, which on the east included the eastern limits of modern Assam, and in the west extended to the Karatoyā, and at times beyond that river. The Kālikā Purāṇa (A.D. 1000)

¹J.B.O.R.S., 1917, pp 508-514.

²J.A.R.S., I, pp 109 f.

³J.A.S.B., LXVI, I, pp 285 f.

⁴Gauhāti Grant, V 13.

states that Kāmarūpa extended to the Karatoyā in the west and included Maṇikūṭa, where stood a temple of Hayagrīva-Viṣṇu.¹ The Tikṣa Kalpa² refers to Kāmarūpa as triangular in shape, 100 yojanas in length and 30 yojanas in breadth, extending from the Karatoyā to the Dikkaravāsini in the east. The Kingdom was divided into Ratnapīṭha, Bhadrāpīṭha, Saumārapīṭha and Kāmapīṭha, bounded by the Karatoyā in the west and the Digāru in the east, the Kaṇḍa Hills in the north and the Navālaya in the south. The same divisions are given in the HaraGaurīvitāsa³ and the HaraGaurīsamvāda. The latter states that Ratnapīṭha included the region between the Karatoyā and the Svarṇakoṣa; Kāmapīṭha between the Svarṇakoṣa and the Kapili; Svarṇapīṭha between Puṣpikā and the Bhairavī and the Saumārapīṭha between Bhairavī and the Dikrong.⁴ The Yoginī Tantra (VI, 16-18) describes the boundaries thus:

Nepālasya Kāñcanādrim Brahmaputrasya Saṅgamam ।
 Karatoyām samārabhya yāvad-Dikkaravāsinīm ॥
 uttarasyām Kañjagiriḥ Karatoyā tu paścime ।
 tīrthasreṣṭhā Dikṣunadi pūrvasyām giri kanyakā ॥
 dakṣiṇe Brahmaputrasya lāksāyāḥ saṅgamā vadhiḥ ।
 Kāmarūpa iti Khyātaḥ sarvasāstresu niścitaḥ ॥

¹Chaps., 51, 76.

²Gait, Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam, 1897.

³Report on the Progress, etc, 1897.

⁴Descriptive Cat. of Ass. M.S.(No.54); Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā, p 8.

The Kingdom thus included the Brahmaputra valley, Bhutan, Rangpur, Koch Behar and the adjoining lands.¹ The area of the Kingdom is given in the same work thus: (I/II) -

triṁśad yojanavistīrṇaṁ dīrghena śatayojanaṁ ।
 Kāmarūpaṁ vijānihi trikoṅākārā-mūrttamam ॥
 īśāṇe caiva kedāro vāyavyāṁ gajasāsanaḥ ।
 dakṣiṇe saṅgame devī-lākṣāyā-Brahmaretasaḥ ॥

It appears, therefore, that the Kingdom was larger than most of the other Kingdoms, mentioned in the epics or earlier literature.² It remained so for centuries through varying fortunes, at least until the extinction of the Pāla line, and even extended beyond the traditional frontiers given in the extant literature.

7. Influence of the Physical Features:

A description of Assam's physical features is essential for understanding their influence on the course of the history of the land and her people. We have already noted that the province consisted of hills and plains and that the hilly regions were inhabited by the tribes. Though the land is surrounded by hills, it was through the river valleys of Assam and Burma and a few passes in the northeast and the south that these tribes entered Assam; it was, however, the valley that played a predominant part in the growth of Assam's

¹Gait, History of Assam, p 17.

²E.H.K., p 10.

civilisation. The mountainous character of the land was responsible for the growth of diverse cultures. The distribution of the races was largely influenced by geography. 'The geological character of the mountains which form the southern side of the valley - have also to some extent affected the distribution of races. The relatively low rounded gneissic and limestone hills to the west of the Dhansiri river and Barail range, and occupied by the Gāros, Khāsi, Jaintiā, Nikir and Kachāri, are more open to India, whilst the widely different geological formation to the east belongs to the rugged Burmese mountain system and is chiefly peopled by the same tribes broadly classed as Nagā.¹ 'The wilder tribes inhabit especially the labyrinthine glens and ridges of the upper valleys, while the more civilised tribes are mostly restricted to the bottom of the tropical central valley fringing the great river, which connects them with the plains of India. The steep ridges and deep ravines in this area are exceptionally numerous and act as dividing barriers. - On the south these ridges form a remarkable broad belt running in almost parallel lines meridiously through Tippera, Manipur and the Kuki-Lushāi land for several hundred miles between the Brahmaputra and Irrawaddy, and enclosing countless narrow valleys of great depth. The sides of several of these ridges are so cliffy as to effectively bar the progress of adjoining tribes.'²

¹Waddell, J.A.S.B., 1900, III, pp 8-9.

²Ibid.

It was in the valley of the Brahmaputra that a higher civilisation was evolved, contributed to both by the Aryan and non-Aryan elements. The spirit of exclusiveness, imparted by the natural barriers, dividing one people from another, and the spirit of independence, especially among the tribes, are primarily due to the physical features of the land.

Assam contains mines of economic value, mostly in the hilly regions, but distributed throughout the province.¹ The main geological deposits are coal, petroleum, iron, lime, salt, gold and silver, found in varying proportions.² But the economic resources are yet to be thoroughly brought to light. Gold, mixed with sands is found in most of the rivers 'There is scarcely a river - that does not yield more or less of this precious metal.'³ The most striking feature of the gold deposits is the universal distribution of the metal in small proportions throughout the gravel of the river beds.⁴

¹ Assam District Gazetteers, Vols. I-X.

² G.S.I., I, II, pp 168, 207; XII; XVI, pp 202f; XV, II; XX, X, XXXI; Hunter, Statistical Account of Assam, I, pp 21, 106f, 176, 231, 299f, 380f; II, 141f, 176f, 203f, 267, 370f; Robinson, Descriptive Account, pp 30-34; Physical and Political Geography of the Province of Assam, pp 53f; Wade, Geographical Sketch of Assam, pp 16-23; Watt, Commercial Products of India, p 874; Pemberton, Eastern Frontiers, pp 19f, 27f, 82f, 192f, 215f, 241f; Gurdon, The Khasis, pp 57f; McCosh, J.A.S.B., V, 204-8; Qazim, A.Res, II, pp 174-75; Playfair, The Gāros, 4f.

³ Robinson, p 34.

⁴ Watt, p 566; Hamilton, East India Gazetteer, p 40.

It is of interest that most of the temples in Assam like those at Gauhāti, Hājo and Tezpur, were built on small hills and many of these hills became places of resort for the attainment of spiritual lore. Such is the hillock, situated at a distance of seven miles from Gauhāti, called Vasīsthāsrama, associated with Vasīṣṭha in the Kālikā.P. Such are the temples of the Navagraha, Asvagrānta, Umānanda, Kāmākhyā, Hājo and the like. These Hindu and Tāntrik-Buddhist shrines became the centres for the diffusion of spiritual culture. The hills and forests again contain spots of natural beauty and the land 'occasionally presents a scenery comparable perhaps to the richest in the world.'¹ These hills and forests have an important effect upon climate, flora, fauna and rainfall of the province.²

The river system is another factor of importance to the province. The valley in particular is intersected by a large number of rivers. The Brahmaputra itself, flowing through the province, has mainly contributed to the material prosperity of the people, and contact with India has been possible by way of this river. Thomson rightly points out 'that the valley must have been in close contact with the culture and religion of northeast India as far back as history goes. The presence of a large navigable river like the

¹Robinson, pp 4f.

²A.Ali and E.Lambert, Assam (Oxford Pamphlets on Indian Affairs, No.37) p 7; Physical and Political Geography, pp 18 f.

Brahmaputra must have played a big part in facilitating this intercourse.¹ Commercial intercourse was possible on all these rivers. 'The number and magnitude of rivers in Assam probably exceed that of any other country in the world of equal extent: they are in general of a sufficient depth at all seasons to admit of a commercial intercourse in shallow boats; during the rains boats of the largest size find sufficient depth of water.'² It is again because of this river system that the province is one of the most fertile countries in the world.³ Not only the plains but also some of the hilly areas have been brought under cultivation, being inundated and intersected by small streams.⁴ In prehistoric times some of the hilly regions may have been under water and some of the plains were higher than we find them today. Sadiyā for instance must have been an island, surrounded by water and Manipur may have been a lake and a flat valley.⁵ It may be that some of the mountain barriers in the north and the east in the direction of the Mishmi and the Pātkāi Hills were not impassable during prehistoric days, and some racial elements may have made their way through them, as through Manipur in the south, into the valley or the adjoining hills.

¹ Assam Valley, p 45.

² W. Hamilton, East India Gazetteer, p 40; Wade, Geographical Sketch, p 14.

³ Hamilton, pp 39-40.

⁴ Wade, p 3.

⁵ See Assam District Gazetteer, I; G.S.I., XXXI, p 4.

The province in fine 'is a country of an almost terrifying prodigal Nature overgrown by rank and luxuriant jungle, beaten by rains - intersected by numberless rivers, pouring their torrents into the majestic Brahmaputra, and in the past racked by earthquakes and pillaged by elephant, rhinoceros and equally savage man. It is aptly epitomised in the province's motto arva, flumina, montes - cultivation, rivers and mountains.'¹ Writing on the topography and the advantages of the soil of the province M'Cosh describes it thus: 'Its climate is cold, healthy and congenial; its numerous crystal streams abound in gold dust and masses of the solid metal; its mountains are pregnant with precious stones and silver; its atmosphere is perfumed with tea, growing wild and luxuriantly; and its soil is so well adapted to all kinds of agricultural purposes that it might be converted into one continued garden of silk and cotton, of tea, coffee and sugar, over an extent of many hundred miles.'²

But the disadvantages of the physical conditions from which the peoples have suffered are greater than the advantages; owing to the mineral deposits in the hills Assam has suffered greatly from frequent earthquakes, which have buried some of the works of centuries of civilisation. They are

¹A. Ali and E. Lambert, Assam, pp 1f.

²Quoted in Eastern India, III, pp 626f.

'quite as good a cause of destruction as fluvial action; there are few masonry structures which could resist a shock like that of 1897, which not only laid in ruins the towns of Shillong, Gauhāti and Sylhet, but also overthrew many of the monoliths, which are so marked a feature of the Khāsi and Jaintiā Hills, and broke down most of the piers of the Silsāko, an ancient stone bridge, not far from Hājo.'¹

The luxuriant vegetation of the land has been another cause of the destruction of the monuments. 'The pipal (ficus religiosa) in particular is a great enemy of masonry buildings; and once a seed of this tree has germinated in the interstices of such a building, its downfall is only a question of time - The ruins which still survive represent only an inconsiderable fragment of the buildings that were in existence; but more will doubtless come to light when the jungle which now covers so vast an area in Assam comes to be removed -'² The river system and the fertility of the soil have also played their destructive role. Gait rightly points out 'that in the distant past the inhabitants of the country - attained considerable power and a fair degree of civilisation - This being so, the question will doubtless be asked why so few materials of their time have come down to us. The reason is that Nature has vied with man in destroying them. The Brahmaputra valley is an

¹Gait, History of Assam, p 21.

²History of Assam, p 21.

alluvial country and the impetuous, snow-fed rivers which debouch from the Himalayas find so little resistance in its friable soil that they are constantly carving out new channels and cutting away their banks; consequently no buildings erected in their neighbourhood can be expected to remain for more than a limited time.¹

The fertility of the soil had a demoralising effect on the inhabitants of the valley, but it invited energetic people from the hills and provided an opportunity for the admixture of racial elements. This perhaps explains why, during the 12th century A.D., the Hindu dynasty was superseded and petty Kingdoms were founded, mostly by tribal chiefs like those of the Manipuris, the Kachāris, the Chutiās, the Khāsi-Jaintiās, the Koches and others, some of which had long been in occupation of the hills. As Waddell points out, the fertility of the soil 'seems always to have attracted the more powerful tribes from the mountains. On leaving the fastnesses of their hills, however, they exposed themselves more freely to attack and on the other hand their more luxurious living inevitably resulted in their degeneration and absorption by the older settlers in the plains, eventually in their turn being conquered sooner or later by a more active horde of mountaineers who again in their turn succumbed in like manner to a fresher batch of invading hillmen. The

¹Ibid, pp 20-21.

process, which seems to have been going on from time immemorial, has resulted in a considerable mixing of races in the central valley; whereas the mountain tribes appear to have retained their purity of stock to a much greater degree. The varied geographical factors, therefore - the earthquakes, flood, climate, soil etc, were at different times responsible for turning this once prosperous land into almost a wilderness.²

8. Conclusion: To conclude, the physical features of Assam, dividing the hills and plains into component parts, drawn by Nature herself, have greatly contributed to the growth of heterogeneous cultures. The cultural link naturally goes beyond her frontiers; but unity of culture, even within the bounds of the province, seems to have been lacking. The unity of Assam in the midst of bewildering diversities lies probably in the peculiar character of her inhabitants, both in hills and the plains, a character marked by exclusiveness and independence, contributed by her geography. The spirit of patriotism and a sense of independence along with the rugged character of her land have been chiefly responsible for the fact that Assam, though subjected to frequent racial inroads in the past, remained independent, at least politically, until the beginning of the 13th century A.D. Even at

¹Waddell, J.A.S.B, 1900, III, pp 8-9.

²L.W.Shakespeare, History of Upper Assam, etc, pp 3-4.

a later time, beginning with the third decade of the 13th century A.D, when the Āhoms began to rule, the province remained independent until the third decade of the 19th century A.D, when the British occupied it. The hill tribes came under their subjugation only after long fighting and many privations. While almost the whole of India was subjugated by the Muslims, their invasions of Assam, beginning with that of Bakhtiyar, met with total failure. Muslim culture, in fact, was kept at arm's length until comparatively late times, and western culture crept into her body politic only during the middle of the 19th century A.D. Nothing perhaps better explains this independent character of Assam's history than an appeal to her geography, and none can draw a true picture of the character of the Assamese and their aesthetic sense in particular, without due emphasis on the surroundings in which they live. This independent nature of her people, distinguished by a sense of patriotism, if it may be so called, is a contribution to the fundamental cultural unity of India. The location of the land in proximity to China, Tibet and Burma, will ever make it a factor of great importance in international politics. What we have said concerning her geography will be obvious on a treatment of the diverse peoples that contributed to the growth of her civilisation.

CHAPTER III

PRE-HISTORY AND RACIAL ELEMENTS

Section 1

Pre-Historic Finds and Other Remains.

The subject of pre-history and racial elements in Assam is still a little investigated field of study; but it has an important bearing on the composite culture of the Assamese, which we have discussed in the body of the work. Our study of the subject will be from the standpoint of archaeology, ethnography and other allied factors.

1. Caves and Fortifications. We have no definite evidence that prehistoric man in Assam lived in caves. There are, however, caves in Chera, Syndai (Khāsi-Jaintiā Hills),¹ the Mikir Hills² and North Cāchār;³ traces of paintings and carvings have also been noticed.⁴ Speaking of the cave in Cāchār, Mills records a tradition that the remnants of a prehistoric Negrito race were blocked into a cave near Hāflong by a Kachāri King.⁵ Ursula Graham Bower writes that all through the Barail area in Cāchār are the remains

¹Hutton, J.A.S.B. XXII (NS) p 341

²R.M.Nath, J.A.R.S. VII, pp 19-23.

³Ursula Graham Bower, Naga Path, pp 121-129.

⁴Mills, J.A.R.S., I, pp 3 - 6.

⁵Ibid.

of caves, fortifications and villages of a vanished people called Siemi. The Zemi tradition connects with these people some curious beads, which are believed to have been buried in their graves. She also recalls the tradition that a Kachāri King was responsible for their death in a cave.¹ But nobody knows whether such people actually lived and the tradition is not supported by skulls or other remains in the caves. Such traditions are as unreliable as the stories of most of the tribes, which trace their origin from caves or rocks; but the theory of Perry that such myths are to be associated with the use of stone and the internment of the dead,² may not be correct. It may be that such stories have a bearing on the remote origin of the peoples who tell them.

2. Neoliths: Our knowledge of the earlier neoliths is meagre. Those that belong to the later Neolithic period, were probably made by the speakers of the Mon-Khmer speech beginning with 2500 B.C. or a little earlier.³ Mills points out that the earliest inhabitants of Assam, the Negritos, 'have left behind them an immense number of stone cells, probably blades of digging sticks. These are found on or just below the surface and differ in a most interesting way

¹Naga Path, pp 121-29

²Megalithic Culture of Indonesia, pp 70f, 79f.

³See Section 2. pp -130f

in different areas of the province.¹

We have noticed a few specimens, preserved in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. Stone celts, so far discovered from the province, reveal a variety of types, mainly three: the first is long, narrow and triangular; the second, more or less rectangular, and the third is the shouldered type. The first type may be compared with celts, found in dolmen graves of Southern India; the second one, which is rare, was probably hafted between two layers of wood, lashed together like the implements of the Polynesians; the third type is derived from the Mon-Khmer-Irrawaddy type. The adze type was found in the Gangetic plains and it is suggested that this was brought probably by the emigrants from the east.²

Of the shouldered specimens, two types are found in Visvanātha (Darrong) and Kanārpārā (Cāchār). Their shapes resemble the Burmese type, as described by Theobald,³ who noticed also two adzes of the same type from Singbhum.⁴ To judge from the geological formations of the Cāchār⁵ and the Mikir Hills lying close to the find at Visvanātha,⁶ the specimens from Assam were locally made. The rock materials

¹J.A.R.S., I, pp 3-6; Peal, J.A.S.B, LXIII, III, p 16.

²Hutton, Man in India, VIII, pp 228f.

³M.G.S.I., X, II, pp 167-71.

⁴P.A.S.B., 1875, pp 118-122; Pharye, J.A.S.B. XLII, I, pp 23-57; Ball, P.A.S.B, 1876, p 3.

⁵La Touche, R.G.S.I, XVI, IV, pp 202-203.

⁶Smith, M.G.S.I. XXVIII, pp 71-95.

of the specimens are also similar to the Khāsi and Sylhet trap. The parallel finds suggest a link between the Khāsis, people of Pegu (Burma) and the Mundas.¹ J. Cockburn noticed two celts in the Khāsi Hills, resembling the small jade specimens of the shouldered types from Yunnan. It is suggested that these may have been used with handles for agricultural purposes and for flaying animals. Similar implements, fixed on bamboo handles were used in Arakan.²

Throughout the area of the monoliths in North Cāchār, stone adzes are found. In some cases they resemble iron hoes, still used by Yimtsungrr Nagās and the Khāsis. One specimen is the shouldered type and another resembles an axe rather than an adze, flat and triangular, differing much from the prevailing type of stone implement found in the Nagā Hills, which is thick and roughly shouldered, but not so highly polished as that from Cāchār.³

Two more specimens were found in the Nagā Hills, with reference to which Hutton observes that the commonest type is the roughly shouldered triangular one, of which the cutting edge is polished. It was probably fitted into a wooden handle; the less common type is longer in proportion to its width, having no shoulders. Both the types may have been used as hoes and axes. One specimen from Bapugwema is shouldered

¹H.C. Dasgupta, J.A.S.B., IX (N.S.) pp 291-93.

²J.A.S.B., 1879, II, pp 133f; P.A.S.B., 1871, p 83.

³Mills and Hutton, J.P.A.S.B., XXV (N.S.) pp 295-96.

and is made of a hard reddish stone. The second type from Kamahu is smaller with cutting edges on both sides, made of white stone with pale green veins. The former type is associated with the Mon-Khmers of Malaya, Chotanagpur and the Irrawaddy valley. This indicates that some branch of the Mon-Khmers may have passed through the Naga Hills before it had learnt the use of iron.¹

In discussing the Chotanagpur prehistoric burials and the copper celts of the shouldered type found there, which may be associated with the shouldered stones and iron hoes, used by the Khāsi-Nagās like the Mundas, Hutton points out that their use is not co-extensive with the Munda speaking areas and suggests that it is either an intrusion from Oceania or a development which started in Eastern India and then spread to the Isles. He mentions also the Irrawaddy shouldered type, as found in the Naga Hills, in Bapugwema, Waichang and Kobak and Bolasan in North Cachar, where have been found a number of stone urns, containing ashes of the dead, the forerunners of the Khāsi stone celts and clan burials, as well as a number of stone adzes and axes. The axes are triangular, flat and polished, but the adzes or hoes have the appearance of being worked in imitation of metal originals, like the existing Khāsi and Nagā hoes. Hutton concludes that the shape of the shouldered stone adzes may have been derived

¹Hutton, 'Two celts from the Naga Hills.' *Man*, 1924, pp 20-22 also Peal, *J.A.S.B.*, LXV, III, p 20.

from metal. He further adds that if the use of copper is later than that of stone in this region, the shouldered stone celt may be an intrusion from Indonesia, but if copper was the original material for the manufacture of tools, the stone substitute may have reached Oceania from the west.¹

In our opinion the earlier evolution of the stone celt appears probable; but perhaps neither this nor the use of copper is due to the intrusion of a culture either from the east or the west, since both may have evolved independently in different centres. We do not, however, dispute Hutton's conclusion on the possibility of closer links between the Mon-Khmer Khāsi-Munda and Indonesian cultures.

G. Hesseldin noticed one stone adze in the Naga Hills, which is slightly shouldered. It is one of the rarest types and is made of fossilised wood.² Henry Balfour thinks that some of the celts from the same area were used as axes and hoes; one specimen with trimmed square shoulders and an uniform flat surface was noticed.³ In the Naga Hills, though some of these implements are now regarded as thunderbolts, associated with the fertility of crops, and are used as charms, they are still employed for pounding rice and spices and as hammers, which are similar to those from the Philippines.

¹C.R.I, 1931, I, I, pp 357f.

²'A Naga Hills Celt,' J.A.S.B. (N.S.) XXII, p 133.

³Man, February, 1924.

⁴Hutton, J.R.A.I., LVI, p 71.

Of the other specimens, six grooved hammers from Visvanātha, Assam are very important. They are 'perhaps the rarest of the numerous neolithic stone implements recorded from Eastern Asia.'¹ Some specimens of a less perfect form were discovered by J. Cockburn from the North-Western Provinces.² Similar types are also reported from Banda district and Foote noticed others from Bellary and Baroda.³ But the implements from Assam belong to a different type. As Brown points out, celted hammers have not been discovered in Burma, Malaya, Borneo, Indo-China or Yunnan. Only a single specimen is recorded from China, described by B. Laufer⁴ and another in a shell-mound on the southern shores of Sakhalin by Jeguina.⁵ It appears from the find spots of similar types that the hammer stones of Assam have close connection with those from Southern India and the North-Western Provinces. It is worth mentioning that stone celts from Vellore in North Arcot closely similar to those of the Naga Hills have been noticed; this indicates, in the opinion of Hutton, that the Nagas contain elements which migrated from Southern India.⁶

¹Coggin Brown, J.A.S.B., X (N.S.) pp 107f.

²J.A.S.B., 1883, pp 221-230.

³J.A.S.B., X, (N.S.) pp 107f.

⁴Jade, A Study in Archaeology and Religion, Field Museum of Natural History Publications, 154, X, 1912, p 50.

⁵J.A.S. (Tokyo), XXI, (No.247.)

⁶Hutton, Man, 1926, pp 222-24.

Some axe type celts were noticed by Lt. Barron in the Naga Hills; the local people believe them to have fallen from the sky.¹ Peal noticed some celts in the same area, even now used as hammers.² R.D.Banerji noticed an adze in a Padam Ābar village, which, on examination, was found to be made of the Ābar trap of the type, described by Goggin Brown.³ The local people still believe that it fell from the sky and possesses charms.⁴

Besides these, there are a large number of stray finds from different parts of the province, indicating the extent of the neolithic culture in the area. J.D.Anderson mentions a celt from Sadiyā, and Godwin-Austen describes another from the Khasi Hills.⁵ J. Lubbock refers to other specimens, particularly of jade, in Upper Assam, which are supposed to have fallen from the sky and to possess magical virtues.⁶ H.B.Meddicott refers to a stone hatchet from Dibrugarh,⁷ and Peal mentions a celt, said to have been dug out from a tea factory.⁸ E.H.Steel refers to a few neoliths, made of jade, found in the village of the Namsang Nagās.⁹ Some

¹J.R.A.I., I, pp LXII-LXIII.

²J.R.A.I., III, p 479.

³R.G.S.I. XVII, p 244.

⁴A.R.A.S.I, 1925-6, p 107.

⁵P.A.S.B., 1875, p 158.

⁶The Stone Age, 1867, p 822.

⁷P.A.S.B., 1875, p 159.

⁸P.A.S.B., 1872, pp 135-38.

⁹P.A.S.B., 1870, pp 267-68.

tribes, like the Āos,¹ Western Rengmās,² Semās,³ Lhotas,⁴ people of Manipur⁵ have stone celts, associated with fertility and good fortune. It may be mentioned that there is a universal belief, which may be associated with fetishism,⁶ that stone celts are thunderbolts and possess charms. This widespread belief of these primitive people confirms our view that some of these celts, handed down from generation to generation as heir looms, belong to a past age. The practice of using stone and copper celts like spearheads and other weapons as currency or a medium of exchange is reported from the Naga Hills. The Āos for instance formerly used a type of currency, called Chabili, a hereditary property of the family, associated with magic. These were made of iron in imitation of long 'daos.'⁷

It appears that only a few remains have so far been discovered. It would be a mistake to attribute all the existing neoliths or stone celts to the Khāsi-Syntengs alone, in view of the vast area in which they have been found. The areas include the Khāsi Hills, Darrang, Cāchār, the Nagā

¹Smith, The Ao Naga Tribe, p 88.

²Mills, A.C.R, 1931, III, I, App B, pp VI-VII.

³Hutton, The Sema Nagas, p 257.

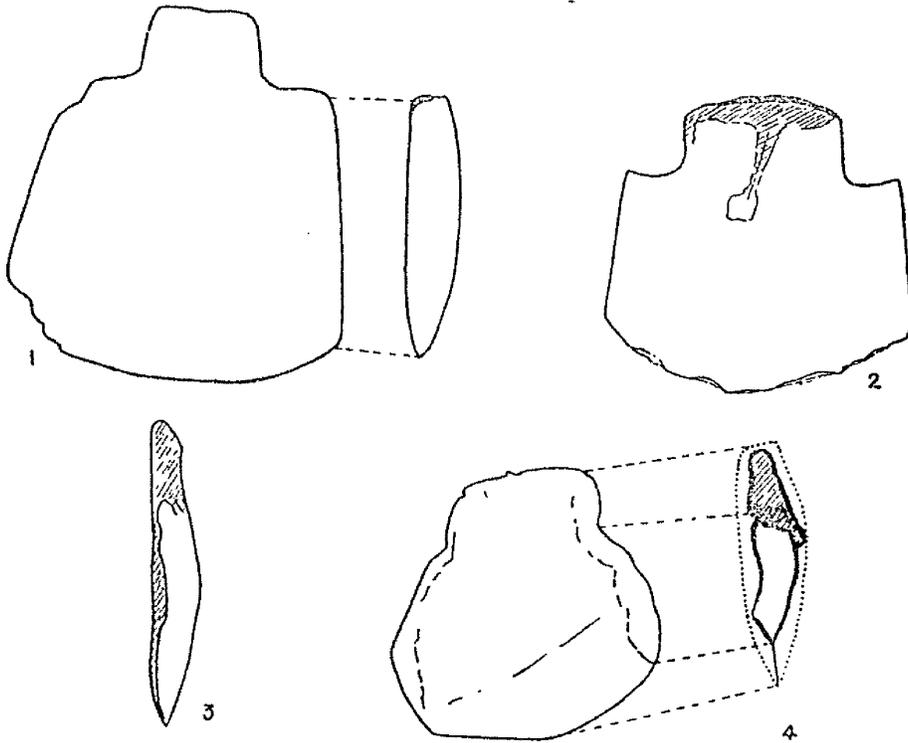
⁴Mills, The Lhota Nagas, pp 166f.

⁵Shakespeare, F.L. XXIV, pp 453-54.

⁶Hutton, The Angami Nagas, pp 403f.

⁷Mills, The Ao Nagas, p 102; S.C.Goswami, J.A.R.S., VII, pp 87f.

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Hills, Manipur and Upper Assam. But to whatever people the stone celts belonged, whether the Mon-Khmers of the Austric stock or others, they show definite links not only with Burma, Malaya and the Oceanic world but also with Central and Southern India and with the Gangetic valley and the west. The wide distribution of the celts points only to the once widespread neolithic culture in the province. The cult of fertility and magic, associated with most of them, and which we find working throughout the ancient period, perhaps laid to a certain extent the foundation of Assamese religious life.¹

3. Pottery: We are not certain whether any neolithic pottery has so far been discovered in the province. A few ancient specimens, consisting of pots, plates and jars of various descriptions, are now preserved in the Gauhati Museum, Assam.² It is suggested that these specimens 'exhibit the ceramic art of a bygone age, possibly pre-Aryan.'³ In the opinion of K.N.Dikṣit these are older than specimens of ancient pottery so far discovered in other parts of India.⁴ It is not possible at the present state of our knowledge to attribute them to a definite period, except

¹See Chap. V, Section 4. pp - 631f

²S. Kataki; I.H.Q., VI, pp 364f.

³K.L.Barua, E.H.K. p 184.

⁴E.H.K., p 184.

that, some of them may belong to an early period. The quality of the finds also indicates that the authors probably flourished in a period of fairly advanced state of culture, when the people knew the art of making pottery and cooking with such utensils.

4. Megaliths: Like the neoliths, our difficulty in the treatment of the megaliths of Assam lies in chronology, which has not yet been determined with accuracy by any writer.¹ The difficulty has been increased by the fact that the megalithic culture of Assam not only belongs to a period of undated history but also to a living present, particularly among the Khāsis and some Nagās.² As Mills rightly remarks: 'An archaeological characteristic of Assam of world wide fame is its wealth of megaliths. Indeed it is one of the few places in the world where monuments of this type are still created. Some of the old ones are of great age and interest - Both on megaliths and rocks in Assam are often found most interesting drawings.'³

(i) Origin and Links: But the origin of the megalithic culture as a whole is disputed. A.L.Lewis suggests its diverse origin in different centres.⁴ Fergusson believes

¹See Heine Geldern, *Anthropos*, XXIII, pp 275-315.

²Haimendorf, *Naked Nagas*, pp 21f; Hutton, *Man in India*, VIII, pp 228-32.

³*J.A.R.S.*, I, pp 3-6.

⁴*J.R.A.I.*, 1910, p 342.

that it was different from a common centre.¹ Elliot Smith² is in favour of tracing the origin to the prehistoric tombs of Egypt. Rivers associates it with the use of metal and with a class of people who carried their ideas to different centres by sea.³ In the opinion of Quaritch Wales an Egyptian wave travelled to Southeast Asia, bringing with it the solar cult, the use of beads, etc.⁴ H. Peake disagrees with these writers on the Egyptian origin of megaliths.⁵ The striking similarities between the Egyptian and Indian megaliths, connected also with those of Babylonia and Assyria, have been pointed out by writers.⁶ P. Mitra believes that a strong wave came to Southern India by sea and then travelled to the east and northeast and that it had contact with Egypt and other countries.⁷ Walter holds that the culture came to India by way of Palestine and Persia in the early iron age; it branched off in Northern India into two waves, one moving to the south and the other to the east. He is, therefore, in favour of the view that the megaliths and the Asura tombs of the Mundas had a western origin and that the culture

¹Rough Stone Monuments, etc, pp 45-46.

²Evolution of Rock-cut Tombs and the Dolmen, Essays Presented to Ridgeway, 1913, p 544.

³The Contact of Peoples, Essays Presented to Ridgeway, 1913, p 491.

⁴The Making of Greater India, pp 65f.

⁵Man, 1916, pp 117f.

⁶Walhouse, I.A., II, pp 278f; A.R.A.S.I. (Madras circle), 1913-14; P. Mitra, P.A.S.B. (N.S.) XVII, pp CCXLVII.

⁷Pre-Historic India, pp 335-38.

spread to Assam during the iron age.¹ Heine Geldern traces the origin of megaliths to the Mediterranean region and mentions a number of essentials, such as the planting of millet and rice, the use of the knife for harvest, rice beer, the rearing of pig, buffalo and cattle for sacrifices, pottery, the manufacture of cloth, pile-dwellings, headhunting, megaliths as memorials, feasts, etc.² Most of these features are found among those Assam tribes which erect megaliths.

While a wave of megalithic culture might have entered Assam from the west, the closer affinities of the megaliths of the Assam tribes, whether Mon-Khmer or Tibeto-Burman, with those of Southeast Asia and the Pacific world, suggest a migration of another wave from the latter regions. Hutton, speaking of the Dimāpur monoliths, has rightly pointed out that these are phallic in origin, and have parallels in Malaya and also to a certain extent in Chotanagpur. The monuments of the same place and Jāmuguri have been linked up with those of the Nagās. He does not find any connection between the monoliths from Assam with those of Egypt except in a few representation of heavenly bodies. The dolmens, he suggests may have been introduced from Southern India. He further suggests that they may have originated in the

¹See Haimendorf, J.R.A.S.B., IX, pp 149f.

²'PreHistoric Research in the Netherland Indies,' Science and Scientist in the Netherland Indies, New York, 1945.

Pacific area. He concludes that the origin of megaliths 'is of course uncertain, but it appears to me that it is to be mainly imputed to the Mon-Khmer intrusion from the east.'¹

The practice of disposal in stonecists, whether of the skull alone, as for instance among the Konyaks, or of the bones and ashes as by the Khāsis, provides an important link between the tribes of Assam and those of Burma and Southeast Asia on one side, and the Mundas and those of Southern India on the other. While this practice may have been followed for a long time past, only a few specimens of stone cists, containing remains of the dead have been found. In the Jaintia Hills at Laitlyngkote, a dolmen with bones of the dead was found with a menhir in pairs.² Calvert found in a monolith from Derebora, North Cachar a few remains of bones of a skull, which Arthur Keith took to be that of a man.³ Godwin-Austin reports that in a stone cist from the south of Jowāi, remains of bones, bangles and wristlets of brass were found.⁴ The stray finds confirm our belief that some of the megaliths were associated with the disposal of the dead, parallel instances of which are found not only in

¹Man in India, VIII, pp 228f.

²Hutton, J.A.S.B., NS, XXII, p 335.

³Mills and Hutton, J.P.A.S.B., XXV, (NS), pp 285f.

⁴J.R.A.I., I, pp 122f.

the dolmens of Southern India and those of the Mundas but also in Burma, Borneo and other islands in the Pacific. In Kelabit in Borneo, the megaliths are associated with burial urns and tanks as among the Khāsis, and some Nagās; the stone urns have cavities like those of the monoliths at Dimāpur and North Cachar. H.C.Raven¹ described some stone jars from Central Celebes, similar to those of North Indo-China, described by T. Donald Cartar. The jars are similar to the stone cists of the Konyaks and earthen pots of the Khāsi-Syntengs. Jars containing bones were found by the side of menhirs and dolmens in the Kelabit country in Borneo.² T. Ko mentions a stone funeral urn from Prome.³ Chas Duroiselle mentions two others with Pyu characters. Near the outskirts of Peikthanomyo and within the limits of Pyndaik at Hmawza were noticed six stone basins. The same authority noticed a number of funeral earthen pots, containing bones from Kyunbingon near the Bawbawgyi pagoda and at Tebingon near the same place, and also a stone urn from the Bawbawgyi pagoda at Hmawza;⁴ some more stone urns

¹The Stone Image and Vats of Central Celebes, *Natural History*, X, 1926, pp 272-82; Huge Stone Jars and Vats of Central Celebes, Similar to those of N. Indo-China, *American Anthropologist*, XXXV, (N.S.) p 545.

²E.Banks, Some Megalithic Remains from the Kelabit Country in Sarawak with Some Notes on Kelabits themselves, *Sarawak Museum Journal*, IV, 4, (N.15.) pp 411-37.

³A.S.I, 1910-11, p 93.

⁴Ibid, 1911-12, pp 147-49; A.S.B., 1912, II, pp 11-13.

with human remains were found with Pyu characters from Hmawza,¹ and four large ones from the same place.² It appears that stone urns in Burma were used for Kings and earthen pots for ordinary persons. The burial practices of Prome have close parallel to the Khāsi-Synteng and Kon-yak practices, and provide important evidence of their common ethnic origin. In fact, the use of stone for graves or memorials is common to both Mon-Khmer and Tibeto-Burman culture in Assam and has a wonderful similarity to the same practice by the people of Indonesia, Philippines, Formosa, Luzon, Nias and other islands in the Pacific.³

That the megaliths of Assam, connected with the South-east Asiatic type have closer affinities with those of Orissa than with those of Central and Southern India, may be inferred from the similarities in the method of their erection and their association with elaborate rituals. Haimendorf, for instance, dilating on the problem of origin, points out 'that the megalithic culture of the Southeast Asiatic type which still flourishes among Gadabas and Bondos and Bastar Gonds reached Peninsular India in late neolithic times from an eastern direction. Its centre of diffusion - though not necessarily origin - lay somewhere in Eastern Assam, North Burma or Southwest China and a far stronger

¹A.S.B., 1913, II, pp 13-15.

²A.S.B., 1920, II, pp 13-14.

³Perry, Megalithic Culture of Indonesia, pp 20-31.

branch stretched southwards and southwestwards into Indonesia and Oceania.¹ The elements of rituals, as found in Assam, Orissa, Nias, Luzon and other places, indicate that these 'must have been developed before the beginning of the great Austronesian migration and the movement of the Austro-Asiatic races westwards into Peninsular India.'² In the opinion of Haimendorf, therefore, the megaliths of the Austro-Asiatic type are not connected with the Dravidian one, and that the dolmens of Southern India appear to be older than the early iron age, while the migration of the Austronesians may have taken place in neolithic times and the megaliths of the Southeast Asiatic type may have been developed before this migration. The megalithic tombs of Southern India again are different from those of the Hos and the Mundas, which may be connected with the Mediterranean world. While the Austronesians are believed to have carried their culture into the Pacific, the area colonised by the Austro-Asiatics was limited and did not probably extend south of the Godavari. The prehistoric monuments of the Deccan like those of Western India had probably a different origin.³ Walter Ribon, however, is of opinion of the possible links of the two cultures from the east and the west and the spread of the same from the south and the west

¹Man in India, XXV, p 81.

²Haimendorf, J.R.A.S.B., IX, p 177.

³Haimendorf, J.R.A.S.B., IX, pp 149-78.

of India to the east. But Haimendorf holds that while the Mundas got it from the west, that the iron workers of Chatanagpur might have got the idea from the east, may be put as an alternative suggestion.¹

It is possible that some influence of the megalithic culture entered the Khasi Hills and led the Khāsis to practice the periodical collection of the remains of the dead which were deposited in stone cists; but such repositories have not been found among the Mundas. If the migration was from west to east, it may have taken place after that culture migrated from the east to the west. It may also be suggested that the practice of the Khāsis originated with them without outside influence. But the link between the western megalithic culture and those of Mid-India and Southeast Asia is suspected owing to the existence of megaliths in Tibet.²

The essential features of the megalithic culture of the southeast Asiatic type are confined to people with well developed agriculture, the use of the hoe, shifting cultivation, terraced cultivation, and cattle rearing both for food and sacrifice. These features are common in the Pacific area from neolithic times, and are associated with

¹Ibid; also M.C.Burkitt, Fresh Light on the Stone Ages in Southeast India, Antiquity, IV, 1930, p 338.

²Haimendorf, Man in India, XXV, pp 81f; G.N.Roerich, J.R.A.S.B, VIII, 1942.

the existence of the shouldered celts. While only a few such celts have been found in Southern India, various specimens have been discovered in Assam as in Burma and Central India. The shouldered type is associated with the Austro-Asiatic people and the quadrangular one with the Austronesians. It appears that the megaliths of the south-east Asiatic type, mainly associated with the Mon-Khmers, had their origin and were diffused from that area and may have exerted a limited influence in Southern India. The fact that close cultural and ritualistic parallels exist between the tribes of Assam, Orissa and Chotanagpur, is suggestive of a 'generic connection between all these manifestations of megalithic culture,'¹ as with the Oceanic world, fundamentally real and alive even today.² What distinguishes this culture in Assam is its close connection with the living faith of the people. 'The megalithic complex found in Assam and any other parts of South-east Asia appeared thus not as an accidental aggregation of various culture elements, but as a well coordinated system of customs and beliefs, a philosophy of life and Nature.'³

An important link between the Assam tribes and the Mundas, is pointed out by Hutton, who makes particular

¹Haimendorf, *Man in India*, pp 79f. (~~XXV~~)

²Quaritch Wales, *The Making of Greater India*, pp 48f.

³Haimendorf, *Man in India*, XXV, pp 74f; *Research and Progress*, V, pp 95-100.

reference to the monoliths from Dimāpur and Jāmuguri. The Nagā practice of the erection of megaliths has been connected with the former inhabitants of the valley of the Dhansiri and the Dayāng. The bulbous-headed carved stones of the Mundas may be taken as prototypes of the cylindrical specimens from these regions. As with the Khasi megaliths, those of the Mundas are monumental, but there appears to be no connection between the stones set up as memorials of the dead and those erected to assist the fertilisation of Nature, as had been the case with those of Dimāpur and Jāmuguri. If, however, the souls of the dead are sometimes identified with the reproductive powers of Nature, the phallic stones of the Dhansiri and the Naga Hills, may have belonged to the same culture as the monuments of the Khāsi-Mundas.¹ It was perhaps in the Dhansiri valley, that the megalithic culture, found in a different form among the Khāsis, Mundas and Nagās, reached its final development, despite Hindu influence, until it was overrun by the Shāns in the 13th century A.D.² The Wakching practice of the erection of megaliths for the dead is based on the idea that the soul is located in the phallic menhir for fertilisation. The same idea is explained by the monoliths of Jāmuguri; all these indicate

¹J.R.A.S., LIII, pp 151-56.

²Ibid, pp 158f.

a link between the tribes of Assam and those of the Pacific.¹

A far closer link between the Assam tribes and those of Orissa may be gathered from their common megalithic practices. The use of stone and forked wooden posts, erected with the same rituals, has been common in Assam, Indo-China, Oceania and certain parts of Africa.² While the use of wooden posts is found among the Assam tribes and Gonds, the Gadabas and the Bondos have not been used to it. It appears that the Y shaped posts show a connection between the Nagās and the Gonds. The Orissa tribes erect menhirs by the roadside like the Nagās, and the belief that the soul is attached to a stone is common among the Gonds and the Orissa tribes;³ but there are no feasts of merit among the Gonds, the tribes of Orissa and Southern India. This is a main point of difference between megalithic culture there and in Further India.⁴ Most of the present practices of the Assam tribes have, however, close parallels with those of the Orissa tribes, and of the people of Southeast Asia;⁵ But a highly developed megalith culture is found among the Āngāmi Nagās. This indicates that two cultural streams entered the Naga Hills,

¹Hutton, *Man*, 1927, pp 61-64.

²Haimendorf, *Megalithic Culture of Assam*. (App. to Schnitzer's *Forgotten Kingdoms in Sumatra*) pp 218f; *Man in India*, XXV, pp 75f; *G.J.*, XCI, pp 210f.

³*Man in India*, XXV, pp 76f.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*G.J.*, CXI, pp 210f.

the later of which is represented by the Āngāmis.¹ In any case, the various methods of the erection of megaliths in Assam have closer link with those of Orissa,² and Hutton is probably right in suggesting that both had a common cultural origin.³

In spite of these similarities between the Assam tribes and those of Orissa and of other parts of India, the various methods of erection by the Assam tribes and the association of megaliths with graves, ancestorworship, soul matter, fertility, social prestige, head-hunting, etc, show far closer links with the people of the Oceanic world, Madagascar and even Africa.⁴ The parallel is not only indicative of the fact that a strong megalithic cultural stream entered Assam from the Oceanic world but also that their authors had a common ethnic origin.⁵

It is significant that the megaliths of Assam, particularly of the Khāsi-Syntengs⁶ show close similarities with

¹Haimendorf, J.R.A.S.B., IX, pp 149f.

²Ibid.

³Caste in India, pp 24-25.

⁴Hutton, J.R.A.I, DVI, pp 71f; Man in India, XII, pp 1-18.

⁵Hutton, Man in India, IV, pp 1-13; E.Evans, Sarawak Museum Journal, IV, 4, pp 411-37.

⁶B. Clarke, J.R.A.I, III, pp 481-93; Fergusson, Rude Stone Monuments, pp 461f; H.Walter, A.Res, XVII, pp 492-512; Asiatic Journal XXVII, pp 321-23; Gurdon, J.A.S.B., 1904, III, pp 64f; The Khāsis, pp 144f; H.Yule, J.A.S.B., XIII, II, pp 617-19; Steel, Trans. of Ethnological Society of London, VII, N.S. pp 305-312; David Rox, Man in India, XVII, p 73; L.S. Anderson, J.A.S.B., XX (N.S.) pp 149f; Hariblah, A.G.R., 1931, III, I.

those of Stonehenge and of other places in the British Isles, Western Asia, the Mediterranean world and Europe. As Gurdon writes, 'it is remarkable that the shape of the stones should be so similar to those which exist in England, Brittany and I believe also in Denmark and Scandinavia.'¹

We need not go into a discussion of the different methods of erection of megaliths, as practised by the various tribes; but some of their present practices, such as those of the Nagās, give us an idea of the remnants of a once vigorous megalithic culture. Some of the ancient remains show various formations like dissoliths, (menhirs and dolmens in pairs), arranged in rows, circles, cromlechs, etc, most of which were associated with tanks. In the opinion of Heine Geldern, the older megaliths consisted of menhirs and dolmens, which were not used as graves, stone cists, terraces, pyramids, various types of tombs and others, associated with tanks.² The more recent ones consisted of stone cist graves, dolmen graves, menhirs, stone vats, figures of ancestors, pottery and show evidence of the use of metal.³ The older

¹Gurdon, J.A.S.B., 1904, III, pp 64-66.

²Prehistoric Researches in the Netherland Indies, Science and Scientist in the Netherland Indies, 1945, p 151.

³Quaritch Wales, The Making of Greater India, p 69.

megaliths were ornamented with geometrical designs, rosettes, heavenly bodies, carved cattle heads, women's breasts, pigs' heads, etc;¹ the more recent megalithic art consisted of circles, animals, birds, creepers, and the like.² Some of the ancient remains of Assam indicate that both the older and the younger megaliths existed in some areas of the province.

It is indeed difficult to study the question of racial elements on the basis of megaliths alone. But the weight of evidence points to the fact that while most of the tribes migrated from South-east Asia and the Oceanic world, bringing with them the cult of megaliths and the use of metal at a later time as in the Khasi Hills,³ it seems probable that other waves entered Assam from India. The question of the origin and migration of the megalithic culture will also be clear from a discussion of some ancient remains.

(ii) Some Ancient Remains:

A. Khasi-Jaintia Hills: So enormous are the megaliths of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, mixed up with the recent erections,

¹Prehistoric Researches, etc, p 151.

²Ibid; The Making of Greater India, p 61; Haimendorf, App. to Schnitzer's Forgotten Kingdom in Sumatra, pp 215f.

³Perry, Megalithic Culture of Indonesia, pp 92f.

that it is difficult to point to a particular specimen as belonging to the past. The Khāsi-Syntengs being the earliest users of stone, it is possible that some ancient remains still survive. Gurdon surmises that they have learnt its use from some prehistoric race who already occupied their present habitat;¹ but it is also likely that they brought their knowledge of the use of stone with them.

Some of the probable ancient rites are Chera, Jowāi, Nartiang, and Laitlyngkote, where megaliths are found in pairs, menhirs and dolmens, circles, cromlechs, and other forms. Most of them are memorials and only a few of the dolmens are associated with human remains.² At Laitlyngkote, a dolmen with bones of the dead was found by the side of a menhir. Near Jawlaija, a stone circle like an Āngāmiq 'tehuba' with a hole at the top of the cromlech was noticed. Between Nartiang and Nartiang Bazar several tanks, remains of ramparts and dissoliths lie scattered. 'The bazar itself is a wonderful collection of menhirs and dolmens.'³

In a rock in Khimmosniang between Jowāi and Jārain there is the carving of an elephant and close to it is an earthenwork; there is also a burial cist, lying at a distance

¹J.A.S.B, 1904, III, pp64f.

²Godwin Austen, J.R.A.I, pp 122-36; Report on the British Association for The Advancement of Science, Trans. 1874, p 153; Hooker, Himalayan Journal, II, XXIX; C.R, 1854, pp 128f.

³Hutton, J.A.S.B., XXII, pp 333-36.

from it, backed by a menhir. Further on the open hills are a number of menhirs and dolmens and near the locality is a tank with a dissolith and beyond it lies a circular cairn. There is another dissolith in front of it, which forms part of a circle. Another big menhir like those of the Kacha and Konyak erections was noticed in the locality. In Maput lies a megalithic bridge and another is seen over the Umnyakneh river between Jārain and Syndai. There are remains of a megalithic bridge on the river Āmsāri near Jaintīāpur; similar remains are found on the river Ambunon. Just beyond the bridge are a number of dolmens. In Jaintīāpur there is a broken pillar and outside the Temple ruins are menhirs and dolmens. The whole of the Jaintia hills show traces of a once widespread megalithic culture.¹ The remains of Khasi-Jaintia Hills perhaps belong to different periods of history and only the spade of an archaeologist will help us to determine their age and throw new light on their links with those of other tribes.

B. North Cāchār: As with the Khāsi-Synteng monuments, so with those from North Cāchār, we are faced with the same chronological difficulty; only a few of the remains can be attributed to an early period. Some of the sites are

¹Ibid.

Nungle, Belasan, Derebora, Kobak and Kartong.¹ Mills and Hutton have made an important study of some of them.²

The remains may be divided into male and female types; the former group constitute the larger ones from Kartong and a small group between Kartong and Kobak. The monoliths from the former have the shape of truncated cone, the flat base of which is circular; they have cavities. The second group lies between Kartong and Kobak. The specimens from Kobak belong to the male type, which are not pear-shaped, the top of the stones being conical rather than bulbous. One stone about 7 feet in length is cylindrical, in contrast to the pearshaped ones from Bolasan. Most of the Kobak stones contain carvings of bands, pigs, human heads, resembling those done by the Nagās. Some stones from Bolasan are similar to those from Kobak except in their carvings; others are pear-shaped and bulbous, though not so flat across the tops, but convex from the greatest circumference to the apex, with a cavity at the top. They are arranged in lines like the wooden posts of the Āos, in larger and smaller rows. One of the larger ones measures 6 feet in height, having a cavity of 10 inches in diameter and 2 feet deep; some contain carvings of elephants, dog teeth patterns, orbs, deer,

¹K.N. Dikṣit, A.R.A.S.I., 1929-30, pp 45-46; Godwin Austen, J.R.A.I, I, pp 122f; Ursula Graham Bower, Naga Path, pp 122 f.

²J.P.A.S.B., XXV, (N.S.) pp 285-300.

vessels, rainbows, etc. The Derebora stones are considered by Mills and Hutton to be the most ancient of the male types and different from those of Kobak and Bolasan in having larger cavities at the top.¹ These are placed in parallel lines along with a larger monolith lying at a distance; one stone measures 16 feet in circumference, another 17 feet 8 inches with a diameter of 1 foot 8 inches across its opening. One stone measures 23 feet 7 inches round its greatest circumference and its cavity is 5 feet 3 inches in depth. In the locality are remains of tanks and a dissolith.

At Malangha, there are pear-shaped stones and tanks in pairs as at Bolasan and near Kartong are more twin tanks. A knoll shows remains of a circle of stones with a menhir outside it. Between Malangha and Kartong there are several menhirs, flat on one side and round on the other, resembling a cricket bat. Some of them bear carvings of elephants and female organs. There are tanks all round the areas. Between Kartong and Waichang there are rows of cricket bat menhirs with sitting stones; two of them contain carvings of human figures, suggesting a Kacha Naga representation. In some of them occur m~~e~~ithan heads. Sitting stones in general are circular, flat on the top, but convex below; a few of them contain carvings of footprints, frogs, fish,

¹J.P.A.S.B., XXV (N.S.) pp 285f.

mithans and heavenly symbols. Tanks are found throughout the area. Near Kobak there are pairs of tanks, which suggest like the phallic monoliths a cult of fertility. At Kalimkhu are the remains of a fort. In Muchidui near Bolasan lies a dolm^ean tomb, perhaps containing human remains.¹

The origin of these monoliths is uncertain; but most of them have been associated with the Mon-Khmers of the South-east Asiatic type. As Mills and Hutton suggest, their authors were either Khāsi-Syntengs or Mikirs or a mixture of both, having affinity with the Nagā practices.² The Mikir origin is inferred owing to the fact that they have close parallels with the Dimāpur monoliths, and the Mikirs claim that they were connected with their authors. The association of most of the monoliths with the long-handled dao, suggests connection with both the Khāsis and the Mikirs, who used it in the past, as did the Āos, who attribute the use of such a weapon to a vanished race, called Mulung. The Khāsi-Syntengs are also associated with round sitting stones. The cricket bat shaped stones, though they somewhat resemble the flat carved monoliths from Kasomāri, are also probably Khāsi-Synteng in origin, as they are found along with sitting stones. While the figures of frogs, fish and heavenly bodies may be Khāsi-Synteng, the mithans are Kuki-Chin, which displaced the buffalo of the Mon-Khmers. From

¹J.P.A.S.B., XXV (N.S.) pp 285f.

²Ibid.

the occurrence of human heads among the carvings, the practice of headhunting is suspected,¹ which again belongs to different tribes; the carving of footprints has been common in Indo-China, as among the Konyaks and some peoples of Manipur. The cavities in the monoliths suggest that their authors burnt their dead and kept the remains therein, and that not only the Khāsi-Syntengs but also the Mikirs and some Kukis burnt their dead, as they do now. The Khāsi-Syntengs keep their remains in stone cists or earthen pots; the War of Shella use the hole of a wooden post as a temporary repository for their remains. In any case, though a mixed origin of the North Cachar monoliths is suspected, both Mills and Hutton conclude that they are to 'be associated with the Khāsi-Synteng group of tribes.'² But it appears to us, that while they are to be attributed mainly to the Mon-Khmer culture, their close link with the Kuki-Chin-Mikir and even the Kachāri culture and the megaliths of the Southeast Asiatic type, cannot be ignored. This is strongly suggested by the close parallels.

C. Dimāpur: The ancient Kachāri capital, Dimāpur is one of the important sites of megalithic culture. Most of the remains appear to be contemporaneous with the Kachāri civilisation, established before the Āhom invasion in the 13th

¹Ibid.

²J.P.A.S.B., XXV (N.S.) pp 285f.

century A.D. As in those of Kasomāri and Jāmuguri, we notice a touch of Hindu influence on most of them, though they are predominantly non-Aryan and associated like the present Naga megaliths, with rituals and the cult of fertility, as is indicated by their phallic shape.¹ They show links with those from other parts of the province, and even with those of the Khāsi-Mundas.²

Bloch classifies the monoliths into Chessman, Y shaped and buffalo horn types. The ornamentation of the former type is floral and geometrical, and sometimes the ornamental bands hanging down the columns have the carvings of swords or daggers. The most striking feature, apart from the hemispherical capital, is the band, carved round the neck of the column. On the latter type there are animal designs, carved between the three rosettes, which divide each half into separate fields of ornamentation; the figures are those of peacocks, elephants, deer, tigers, etc. The third type, resembling buffalo horns, contains rosettes and animal designs.³

Hutton rightly points out that the Dimāpur monoliths

¹Haimendorf, *Naked Nagas*, pp 31-32; R.F.Andrew St. John, *J.R.A.S.*, 1897, pp 423-27; 641-42.

²Gurdon, *The Khasis*, pp 149f; W.L.M.Shakespeare, *History of Upper Assam*, etc, pp 78f; Godwin Austen, *J.A.S.B.*, 1874, I, pp 4-6; Hutton, *J.R.A.S.*, VII, pp 55-70.

³*A.R.A.S.I.*, 1906-7, pp 19f; Godwin Austen, *J.A.S.B.*, 1874 I, pp 4-6.

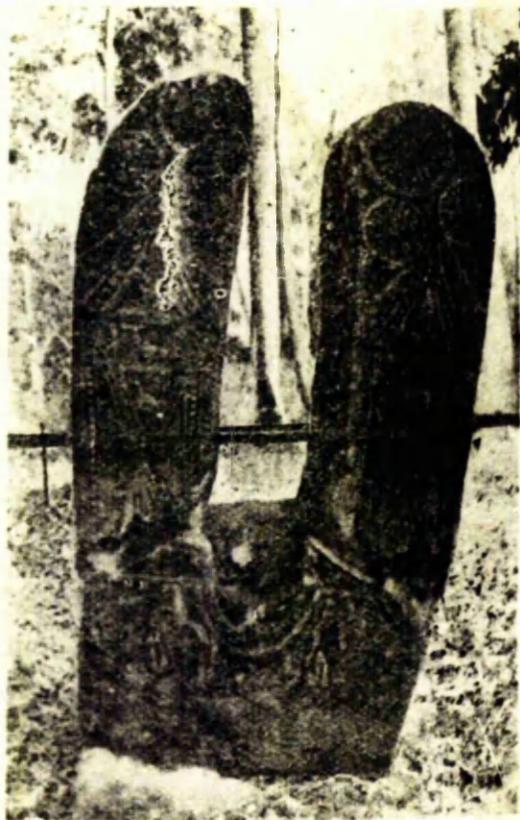
PL. II.



1



2



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show close links with the Semā and Āngāmiḥ posts. He carries the similarities further and adds that during the 'lisu' ceremony, the Āngāmis even now erect wooden substitutes as phallic emblems. The significance of the Y shaped and cylindrical posts differs with different tribes. The Gāros for instance erect them as memorials of their dead and for ceremonial purposes,¹ and the Āos as memorials of feasts; the Gāros, Semās, Sangtāms, Thado Kukis and others tie their sacrificial animals to such forked posts, whether of stone or wood. The phallic megaliths of Dimāpur, have therefore, close link with the Nagā practices.² As Mills points out, they show a close affinity between the Kachāri and Nagā culture and indicate their belief in the cult of fertility and animism.³ The remains of Dimāpur suggest the relics of a shifted development of Tibeto-Burman culture.⁴

D. Kasomāri-Jāmuguri: The remains of monoliths from Kasomāri and Jāmuguri reveal further specimens of non-Aryan workmanship with Hindu influence. Some of them belong at least to the period of the Kachāri civilisation. Bloch noticed a chessman type similar to those of Dimāpur, with a hemispherical capital, containing carvings of swords and

¹Playfair, The Garos, p 17.

²Hutton, J.R.A.I, VII, pp 55-70.

³A. Rev., April, 1928, pp 26f.

⁴J. Marshall, A.R.A.S.I, 1904-5, pp 7-8.

daggers. The base contains a horizontal band and the panel below it shows various animal designs, such as lions, elephants, etc; there are rosettes and other designs above, and the top is filled with a pearshaped panel with decorations. Though the specimens indicate a touch of North Indian art, the designs suggest non-Aryan workmanship.¹

Some of the Kasomāri monoliths are ornamented with human breasts like those of Dimāpur, suggesting the cult of fertility; some contain creepers, such as tied by the Āngāmis round each menhir. It is possible, writes Hutton, that the designs on the cylindrical monoliths of Dimāpur had a similar origin.² Two stones from Kasomāri with cavities at the top contain lotus carvings, and one of them contains a four armed human figure; from his waist hang three appendages, and the one between two legs is like a tail, worn by the Konyaks and like the one on a carved stone figure at Maibong. One stone is carved into a sort of basin or cavity and outside the rim runs a trough; the inner side of the trough is carved in a symmetrical pattern. Close to it there is an oblong stone, carved into a sort of wedge-shaped trough, open at one end. Another stone is an upright slab at the foot of which there is a hole like that of the cylindrical monolith of Kasomāri. It is possible that the two holes in this slab were used for offerings, as is done by the Āngāmis

¹T. Bloch, A.R.A.S.I., 1906-7, pp 22-24.

²Hutton, J.A.S.B., XX (N.S.) pp 143-47.

in their 'lisu' ceremony. The same idea is associated with the Dimāpur and Kasomāri monoliths.¹

Writing on the Kasomāri monoliths, Diksīt points out that these monuments, with the exception of a single round one of the chessman type, consist of carved flat monoliths, pointed at the top. The largest of them measures 10 feet in length. The upper portion of monoliths usually contains the carvings of two lotus stalks with two lotus buds on either side and another on the top. Between the two stalks at the bottom is carved a dagger or a spear. Some monoliths have two lotus leaves; others have human figures at the top. The space below the stalks is usually occupied by animal or bird designs.²

The monoliths from the valleys of the Dhansīri and the Dayāng have close affinities with those from Dimāpur; but unlike the latter place, the former was influenced more by Hindu art. As Hutton states, if the monoliths from the former areas may be connected 'with the existing remains of the Nagā tribes, we may perhaps infer that the culture of the latter people is on the down rather than the upward grade, and is a decaying remnant of a civilised culture, formerly established in the plains and subsequently extirpated from them by invasions which only allowed it to survive

¹Ibid.

²A.R.A.S.I., 1923-24, pp 234-35.

in the less desirable country but less accessible hills or which absorbed it into the Tāntrik worship of Hinduised Assam.¹ It is likely that the Jāmuguri monoliths represent a development later than those of Dimāpur, showing a rather decadent type. The remains certainly belong to the period of the contact of non-Aryan and Aryan culture. It is also possible that the Jāmuguri monoliths were influenced by extraneous art, as indicated by the carvings of tigers, which even suggest Shān influence. The difference between the Kasomāri and Dimāpur monoliths lies in the fact that there are no Y shaped monoliths in the former area; but in both, the cylindrical monoliths with carvings are almost similar. The dome of the cylindrical monolith at Jāmuguri, more elaborate than at Dimāpur, is carved with rays; the base contains carvings of elephants, which at Dimāpur occur only on the forked posts. If the monoliths of Jāmuguri were erected in a single row, they would resemble alignments like those of the present Lhota villages, and unlike those of Āngāmis which are in pairs or double rows, as usually at Dimāpur. In spite of the later development of the Kasomāri-Jāmuguri monoliths, as pointed out by Hutton, the possibility of their connection with the Tibeto-Burman and Mon-Khmer cultures of the Khāsi-Mundas is indicated both by their shapes and their association with the rites and cult of fertility.²

¹J.A.S.B, XX (N.S.) pp 143-47.

²J.A.S.B., XX (N.S.) pp 143f.

E. Other Remains: Mention may be made of a carved stone at Kigwema in the Naga Hills, incised with a pattern representing enemy's teeth and spearheads, associated with fertility symbols; the carvings are almost similar to those from Dimapur and Jāmuguri.¹ There are other carved stones and blocks in the Naga Hills, used now as seats, round the circular 'tehuba' of the Thevoma clan in Khonoma, carved with bone patterns and mithan horns; another with spearheads and a shield, and others with horn patterns. Another carved stone lies in the Southern Sangtam village of Photosimi; it is a menhir, carved with horizontal lines. There is another stone at Hebunamai of Memi, carved with a mithan head and foot prints.² The dates of their erection are uncertain. Mills mentions a stone from the Kacha Naga village of Peisa with a carved female figure, associated with the cult of fertility. It stands on a stone platform and leans on a monolith, surrounded by other stones. The writer supposes that the stone belongs to a vanished people, who once occupied parts of North Cachar and has left traces of their highly developed stone culture.³

(iii) Significance: The study of the megalithic culture of Assam gives us an idea that the megaliths had a socio-economic

¹Hutton, *Man*, 1926, p 74.

²Hutton, *J.R.A.I*, LVI, pp 71f.

³*Man*, 1930, pp 34-35.

and religious importance and were erected both for the living and in memory of the dead. In fact, the whole primitive life of the individuals and the community at large might have been bound up with them. This is shown both by the ancient remains and the present practices of most of the tribes. As Heine Geldern points out, megaliths are associated with notions concerning life after death, and these serve as a link between the living and the dead; through their magical virtue, they increase the fertility of men, their crops and their prosperity.¹ Whether among the Khāsis or the Nagās or others, the cult of ancestor worship was common. This helped not only to link the living and the dead but also to increase one's prosperity.² Some of the megaliths from North Cachar with cavities and containing remains of the dead are evidently relics of this ancestor cult as well as the cult of fertility. As Mills and Hutton rightly observe, the menhirs and dolmens of the area 'must be interpreted in the light of the Khāsi, Synteng and Nagā monoliths and dolmens as providing phallic memorials, through which the soul matter of the living or of the dead assists the fertilisation of Nature, the upright stone representing the male and the flat

¹Pre Historic Researches in the Netherland Indies, Science and Scientist in the Netherland Indies, 1945, p 149.

²Haimendorf, J.R.A.S.B., IX, pp 149f; Quaritch Wales, The Making of Greater India, pp 58-59.

one the female principle.'¹ The monuments with cavities may be associated with the same idea, and the holes were probably made to hold water, contain offerings or to promote rain, suggesting the Rengmā practice of making holes in their graves to have good harvest and rain. The monoliths from Kasomāri with similar shapes may be associated with the same idea.² The Kartong stones suggest the phallic cists of the Konyaks to hold skulls as at Derebora, though the monoliths at Balasan contain holes, too small for holding skulls.

'In any case, the North Cachar hollowed monoliths must represent a rather specialised development of a phallic ancestor cult, typical of Assam, widely spread in Southeast Asia and extending over even to Oceania and Madagascar.'³

The megaliths again are associated with the soul matter, residing in phallic menhirs and dolmens, and with head-hunting which ultimately increased one's prosperity.⁴ As remarked by Hutton, the practice of erecting megaliths, whether of stone or wood and the erection of soul figures in graves, as done by the Konyaks and others in Assam, as in the Pacific area, is associated with a belief in the soul matter and the cult of fertility. The association of some

¹J.P.A.S.B., ~~13~~ XXV, (N.S.) pp 285f.

²Hutton, J.A.S.B., XX (N.S.) pp 143-47.

³Mills and Hutton, J.P.A.S.B., XXV (N.S.) pp 285 f.

⁴Haimendorf, Man in India, XXV, pp 74f; Research and Progress, V, pp 95-100; App. to Schnitzer's Forgotten Kingdoms in Sumatra, pp 215 f.

of the monoliths of North Cachar and Dimāpur with the remains of the dead along with their phallic shape point to this idea of soul matter, which was believed to increase one's crops and welfare.¹

This cult of fertility, associated with the phallic menhirs and dolmens, representing male and female principles, can be gathered from both the ancient remains and present practices of almost all the tribes, particularly the Nagās. This is indicated also by their association with tanks, rice fields² and all rituals. The meaning of the phallic megaliths of Dimāpur can be gathered from the Āngāmi 'lisu' ceremony, when they erect wooden phallic posts; the giver of feasts among them, as with the Āos, Semās, Sangtāms and Rengmās, is believed to have prosperity. These posts are associated with the organs of generation, indicated by their shape, the straight post standing for the male and the forked one for the female principle. Both the cylindrical and forked monuments of Dimāpur, therefore, may be associated with the fertility cult and the increase of one's prosperity.³ In fact, this phallic fertility cult may be associated with all kinds of megaliths, whether of stone or wood.⁴

¹Hutton, C.R.I., 1931, I, I, pp 399f, 406f; Caste in India, pp 216-17.

²Hutton, J.R.A.I., LII, pp 242-49; Ibid, LVI, pp 71-82.

³Hutton, J.R.A.I., VII, pp 55-70.

⁴Hutton, J.R.A.I., LVI, pp 71-78.

The various methods and manners of erection of stones among the tribes cannot be reduced to a single formula. They are associated, as we have noted, with graves, or the ancestor cult, offerings, feasts of merit or social prestige, as among the Āngāmis,¹ headhunting² and other practices. These are explained not only by the remains of North Cachar, Kasomāri-Jāmuguri, Dimāpur and other places but also by the present elaborate rituals and practices of the tribes. All these fundamental ideas are, in fact, interlinked with one another, and almost identical meaning may be gathered from the megalithic erections of the people of Southeast Asia and the Oceanic world.

(IV). Conclusion: The study of the megalithic culture of Assam and its comparison with some present practices convinces us that its origin must be attributed to the lithic stage of culture.³ The authors of this culture had close links with those of the Southeast Asiatic type, parts of India and even beyond India in the west. The wonderful similarity of the megaliths of the people of different origin

¹Haimendorf, J.R.A.S.B, IX, pp 149f; Godwin Austen, J.R.A.I. Iv, pp 144-47.

²Hutton, J.R.A.I, LII, pp 242-49; Ibid, LVI, pp 71-82.

³See Hutton, (Man in India, X, pp 214-15; J.R.A.I, LVIII, p 408) who attributed the erection of megaliths and head-hunting even to the palaeolithic stage of human culture.

like the Khāsis, Nagās, Gāros and others makes us believe that different elements contributed to their development. Besides the Mon-Khmer Khāsis, some Nagās like the Changs and the Konyaks may have contained an Austric strain.¹ It would be a mistake to attribute all the megalithic remains to the Khāsi-Syntengs alone; because megaliths of Assam are not merely associated with graves but also with fertility, soul matter, festivals and feasts, headhunting, magic and prosperity. Moreover, the burning of the dead has been practised also by the Mikirs and the Gāros, and there is no great difference between the Khāsi practice of keeping the remains and the stone cist burial of skulls by the Konyaks. The megalithic culture of all the tribes has been part and parcel of their whole social existence, bound up with their life here and hereafter. The use of stone for graves and other purposes is no doubt primitive and ancient; so also is the belief in magic and fetishism or animism, which can be traced back to the lithic stage of human culture. Both the grave and the phallic stones served the same idea of fertility and, therefore, are functionally indistinguishable. The elaborate rituals, connected with them, may have been worked out differently by different tribes, but all are basically the same.

It appears that the fusion of racial elements took

¹C.R.I, 1931, I, I, pp 357f.

place at an early period and inter tribal movements were not rare. Some of the artistic motifs, like the lotus, occurring on some of the ancient megaliths, suggest that not only the Mon-Khmers and the Tibeto-Burmans but also the Alpine-Aryans contributed to the art of the megalith builders. This influence of the Hindus on non-Aryan monuments is indicative of an early fusion of races. Though both the Aryans and the non-Aryans contributed to the composite culture of Assam, the foundation of certain elements of this culture was no doubt laid by the non-Aryans.¹ Tāntrikism for instance which had such influence in ancient Assam, may in its origin be attributed to the phallic cult, associated with the megalithic culture of the tribes. The meaning of megaliths like that of the neoliths, and their bearing on the foundation of Assam's culture, will be more illumined on an examination of the racial strains in the population of Assam and conversely the megalithic complex of the province has an important bearing on our understanding of its racial problem.

¹See Chap. V, Section 4, pp - 631f

Section 2.

Racial Elements

I. Introduction: The pre-historic and other remains show that Assam contained various racial elements, and in fact, the province is a great anthropological museum, containing even today some very primitive peoples;¹ but no systematic or comprehensive study of them has yet been made. We shall try to show that while the province received wave after wave of immigrants from Southeast Asia and the Oceanic world as from India and the west, some elements of her population were probably indigenous.

Anything like a chronological treatment of the subject is impossible in view of the facts that no pre-historic human skulls have yet been found, and few anthropometric measurements have been taken. Not to speak of Assam, the problem of the origin of men and their early migrations is disputed.² But the weight of evidence indicates that not only the Deccan Plateau³ but also the Kāsmira region, as shown by the Siwalik fossils, were inhabited by some of the earliest men.⁴

¹Haimendorf, *The Naked Nagas*, p.3; J.B.Fuller, *Intro. to Playfair's Garos (XIII)*; Peal, *J.A.S.B. LXV, III*, pp.17f.

²Wright, *The Origin and Antiquity of Man*, 1913, Avevury, *Prehistoric Times*, p.426; B.S.Sewell, *Man in India*, X, pp.10f; Rivers, *Presidential Address, British Association Report, 1911*, pp.490-92.

³P.T.S.Aiyanger, *Stone Age in India*, p.5.

⁴E.O.James, *Introduction to Anthropology*, pp.61f.

According to geological researches, the Himalayan regions were once occupied by a sea called Tethys, and according to Oldham two promontories in Kāsmīra and Assam were formed. It is possible that like the former region, Assam also became habitable for men in the latest period of the tertiary age. In close proximity to the province, remains of a palaeolithic flake industry in Burma have been found, which is taken to be representative of the earliest palaeolithic stone culture, resembling that of Godavari.¹ But, as we have stated, no cave with human remains has been discovered in Assam. It is, therefore, impossible to determine whether the province was inhabited by pre-palaeolithic or even palaeolithic men, unless this is proved on the basis of actual human remains. Our study of the subject, therefore, will mainly be restricted to the surviving elements. But here also, as we have stated, no proper anthropometric measurements have been taken and writers like Ridgeway and Walcher believe that even the science of anthropometry is not very reliable for the study of men;² nor is it possible to find them in their original features after centuries of admixture. With the help of a study of their routes of migration, ethnography and other allied factors, we shall, however, study the subject and bring our assumptions nearer probability.

¹H.C.Das Gupta, J.D.L., V, pp. 14-15; De Morgan, Pre-Historic Man, 1924, p.280.

²C.R.I., V, I, 1913, p.517.

2. Routes of Migrations and Racial Types:

The province is a museum of races because it is situated in 'one of the great migration routes of mankind'.¹ The various elements passing through Assam from India on the one side and Southeast Asia on the other left their substratum in both the hills and plains.

The possible routes of migrations were three or four: first through the north or the mountain passes of Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan; second through valley of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra from India and the west; third by sea or the Bay of Bengal, passing either through Bengal or Burma, and fourthly the Assam-Burma routes, one over the Pāikāi passes in the northeast, leading from the Lidu-Margherita road to China through the Hukawang Valley in Burma and the other through Manipur and Cāchār in the southeast or south of Assam.

It is doubtful whether the northern route helped much in the migration of racial elements; but important trade routes existed through the mountain passes between Assam and Tibet as by waterways through the Brahmaputra, and the Ganges. The existence of both the routes is shown, as we have noted elsewhere, by the classical sources, like the Periplus and Ptolemy's geography.² The routes through mountain passes of Bhutan and Tibet are also mentioned in other later sources.³

¹Mills, A. Rev., March, 1928, p.24.

²See Chap. II, pp.39f ; also Taylor, J.A.S.B, 1847, I, pp.31f, 50f.

³See Pemberton, Report on Bhutan, p.144; Hamilton, II, pp.743f; Tavernier, Travels, p.221; Cultural History, Section 2, pp.586f.

On the basis of these sources, it appears likely that some racial elements, such as the Alpines and the Indo-Chinese made their way in small numbers into Assam through these passes in the north.

The contact with India through the Brahmaputra and the Ganges and the land routes is shown not only by the classical sources, but also by the accounts of Yuan Chwang.¹ It was through these routes that the pre-Aryans and Aryans entered the Assam valley. Contact with Southern India was possibly by sea, through the Bay of Bengal. An important reference is made by Pliny, (VI, XVII-XXII) who states that the people of Ceylon knew the Seres or people of Assam through trade.² Hutton is perhaps right in assuming that some elements of the Nagās migrated from Southern India by sea and entered Assam through Burma³. Even the sea route to China is mentioned by Yuan Chwang in the 7th century A.D.,⁴ and the passage down the Brahmaputra to the Bay of Bengal is said to have been under the control of the rulers of Kāmarūpa at that time.⁵

Besides the Indo-Chinese races, Oceanic elements may have come both by land and sea routes via Burma; of all the routes, the most important were through the river valleys of Burma and Assam and the mountain passes on the Assam-Burma borders.

¹See Chap. V, Section 2, pp. 581f

²Taylor, pp. 43f.

³Man in India, IV, pp.1-13; Ibid, XII, pp.1-18.

⁴Life, p.188.

⁵Life, (Intro.), XXVI-XXVII.

The earliest reference to the Assam-Burma route is found in Chang Kien, on the basis of which Pelliot has shown that from 200 B.C. there was a regular route by land to China through Assam, Upper Burma and Yunnan. Pelliot has described two routes from Burma through Manipur; but he has failed to take into account the transfer of the Burmese capital from Prome to Halim about A.D.750.¹ P.C.Bagehi, on the basis of the same source has shown that the routes from Pātaliputra through Assam-Burma to China were three: the first through the Pātkāi to Upper Burma, the second through Manipur up to the Chindwin, and the third through Arakan up to the Irrawady, all leading to Kunming in China.² A detailed description of the Assam-Burma routes is given in Kia-Tan of the 8th century A.D.³ Yuan Chwang's accounts of Assam also throw light on this question.⁴ Phayre points out that in early times contact between Gangetic India and Tagaung lay only through Manipur.⁵ At a subsequent time many routes were opened through Dihong, the Mishmi route, the Phungan pass to China, the route through Manipur to the Irrawady and the Pātkāi passes to Bhamo. Two other routes lay through Hukawang valley leading across the mountains from Myitkyna

¹Bulletin de l'Ecole Française de Extrême Orient, 1904, pp. 131-373.

²India and China, pp.7f, 16f.

³Ibid., pp.18f.

⁴Watters, II, pp. 185f.

⁵History of Burma, p.15.

to Tipland near Margherita and the Chaukan pass.¹ The other routes were through the passes of Donkin, Natu and Jilap. It was through these routes that the people from Southeast Asia and China made their way into Assam.

The importance of the routes of migrations will also be evident from the study of racial types.² As we have made it clear, no proper anthro-pometric measurement has so far been taken. Waddell's measurements³ are broad based and Dixon's measurements, particularly of a few Khāsis⁴ are insufficient evidence to come to any definite conclusion. Dixon, however, finds traces of the four important types with intermediaries, in the Khāsis and other elements: Bracycephalic Leptorrhine (B.L.), Dolichocephalic Platyrrhine (D.P.), Bracycephalic Platyrrhine (B.P.) and Dolichocephalic Leptorrhine (D.L.). Broadly speaking, most of the tribes contain in varying proportions Negrito, Austro-Asiatic, Alpine-Aryan and Mongolian elements. Writing on the areas of diffusion, Dixon thinks that the B.L.type 'appears to represent the southern extension of a great area, characterised by this factor, which includes most of Central

¹Peal, J.A.S.B., XLVIII, II, pp. 69-82; Jenkins, P.A.S.B., 1869, pp. 67-76; Pemberton, Eastern Frontier, etc. pp.54f; Robert Reid, J.R.S.A., XCII, pp.241-47; McCosh, J.A.S.B, V, pp. 203-204; R.C.Majumdar, Hindu Colonies in the Far East, pp.12-13, 226-27.

²See G. Ruggeri (J.D.L. V, p.216) for types of India; also B.S.Guha, An Outline of the Racial History of India, Cal., 1937.

³J.A.S.B., 1900, III.

⁴See T.G. Raychaudhuri (J.D.L.XXVI, pp.1-24) who disagrees with Dixon's conclusions.

Asia and the Great Plateaus, Northern China, and much of the north eastern portion of the continent, and as a type shows very close relationship with the Alpine, so widely spread in central and Western Europe. The B.P. type on the other hand represents the western extension of that type which forms the fundamental stratum among the population of Southern China and much of Southeastern China and the Malaya Archipelago?; 'This type, pressed from the east and northeast into Assam at a very early date', partly driving back and partly 'assimilating the still earlier aboriginal Negroid D.P. population. It brought with it the ancestral form of the Mon-Khmer speech'. Then after sometime 'the Aryan immigrants, characterised by a strong D.L. factor reached Bengal and Assam by way of the Ganges valley.'¹

Haddon traces D.P., D.M. (Dolichocephalic Mesorrhine) or Nesiot, M.P., M.M., B.L. and D.L. types.² Hutton points to the existence of the Negritos, Proto-Australoids, Austro-Asiatic, Indonesian, Melanesian, Alpine, Aryan and Mongolian types. The Negritos are believed to have come from the northeast³ and Proto-Australoids from Palestine,⁴ followed by early Mediterraneans, from whom the Austro-Asiatic speech is said to have been derived, later Mediterraneans, Alpines

¹Man in India, II, pp.1-13; Racial History of Man, pp.244, 261, 265.

²The Races of Man; pp. 115f, 156f; also Hutton, Intro. to Smith's Ao Naga tribes (XII-XV); Intro. to Mill's The Lhota Naga (XXXVIII).

³W.H.Flower, J.R.A.I., XVIII, pp.73-91.

⁴B.S.Sewell, Pros.16th. Indian Science Congress, pp.333f.

and Aryans from the west, and Mongolians from the east.¹ S.C.Roy suggests that a section of the Mediterranean-Dravidian passed eastward through Assam and became the Indonesian or Nesiote element. There appears to be a migration of that element also along the coast of Burma to Assam. Roy adds that an originally dolichocephalic pre-Dravidian element with some proto-Negroid stratum has been overlaid and submerged by aggressions, as well as a Nesiote and a Pareocean or South Mongolian element and Aryans.² Traces of the Melanesians, derived from the proto-Austroloid and the Negritos with a Mongolian admixture are noticed, particularly in the hilly regions between Assam and Burma. Culturally they are associated with the separation of skulls from the dead, bachelors' quarters, head-hunting, and a canoe cult. Hutton suggests also their association with the Austro-Asiatic and Indonesian culture. He further believes that the Austro-Asiatics might have migrated from the west, suggesting an alternative route across India and the Bay of Bengal for the Elamites and Mediterraneans to have reached the Indian Archipelago, and that there was again a movement from the coast of Burma to Assam; similar movements may have taken place from the eastcoast of India.³ In writing about the supposed connection between the Austro-Asiatic, pre-Dravidian

¹C.R.I., 1931, I, I, p460.

²Man in India, XIV, pp.273f.

³C.R.I., 1931, I, I, pp.444f.

and Munda languages, Hutton points to two routes of migrations, one from Eastern India to the Pacific and the other from the Pacific world to India.¹ In another place he traces the origin and diffusion of the Austro-Asiatic and Indonesian culture either from Southern India, travelling to the Pacific and then entering Assam, or coming from the side of the Indian Archipelago.² It appears, therefore, that the Austro-Asiatic culture, having close affinities with the Indonesian one may have entered Assam both from India and the Pacific world.

Most of the Mongolian migrations to Assam took place through the northeastern and southern routes of Assam via Burma.³ The Nagās are believed to have come from various directions. One wave of the Tibeto-Burmans came from the north, comprising the Akā, Mishmi, Gāro, Mikir, Kachāri etc; another from the south, the Lushāi-Kukis and another of an earlier wave, the Kol-Man-Annam, extending over part of the area, now occupied by the Nagās. The Bodos are also believed to have come from the north, greatly distributing and intermingling with the Mon-Khmer-Mundas in course of time.⁴

3. Negritos: On the basis of physical and other features, the existence of Negritos, allied to the Papuāns and the

¹Ibid., pp.357f.

²Man in India, IV, pp.1-13; Ibid, XII, pp.1-18; Man, 1926, pp.222-24; Ibid., 1930, p.81.

³Mills, A.Rev., March, 1928, pp.24f; Ibid, April, p.26.

⁴Hutton, Intro. to Mills' The Lhota Nagās, (XVI f.)

Andamanese in India, is pointed out by some writers¹. The same element formed one of the earliest strains in the population of the Assam Hills. As Mills points out, the pre-historic 'inhabitants of the mountains of Assam were almost certainly Negritos, little dark men with curly hair - Traditions speak vaguely of them and their curly hair still survives. It was probably they who made the little stone celts, which are frequently found in the hills.'² It is possible, as suggested by B.S.Sewell that they came to Assam and India from the northeast.³ Both physical features and other aspects of material culture point to the existence of this strain, particularly among some Nagās. Hutton finds traces of Papuan and Melanesian features among some of them.⁴ Though not common among the Semās, Āngāmis and Lhotas, instances of woolly hair have been noticed among the Āos,⁵ Rengmās,⁶ Phoms and Yamchings of the Konyaks,⁷ in the Kacha Naga country, particularly in North Cachar; the Thados have

¹B.S.Guha, Nature, May, 1928; June, 1929; C.R.I., 1931, I, III, p.1

²A.Rev., 1928, pp.24f; J.A.R.S., 1933, pp.3-6.

³Man in India, X, pp.10f; S.K.Chatterjee, Indo-Aryan and Hindi, pp.33f.

⁴C.R.I., 1931, I, I, pp.443f; Caste in India, pp.2-3; B.S.Guha, Racial Ethnology of India, p.130.

⁵Intro. to Smith's Ao Naga tribe, XIIIf.

⁶Mills, The Rengma Nagas, pp.16-17.

⁷Hutton, M.A.S.B., XI, p.17.

this strain with prominent jaws.¹ The Āngāmiq̄ tradition speaks of such peoples. The frequency of woolly hair in the north indicates that the former inhabitants had a greater infusion of ulotrichous blood. Hutton noticed also prominent jaws and small stature, associated with the Negrito strain, among the Āos, Phoms and other Konyaks.²

Both ethnography and the material culture of the tribes also point to the existence of such a strain. The Nagā reverence for the ficus, indicates, in the opinion of Hutton, a Negroid cult, spread over the Oceanic area; he suspects also a Negroid belief in the practice of hanging combs of bees and wasps in the entrance to the houses of some Nagās, found also in Andaman.³ The blowguns of the Thados⁴ are similar with those of the Polynesians and Philippines, while the Karens of Burma used a genuine blowgun.⁵ The use of blowgun like that of the simple bow among some tribes of Assam, is taken to be a Negrito survival, as in Malaya and the Philippines.⁶ The practice of exposure of the dead or the tree-burial of the dead by an 'apatia' (unnatural) death among some Nagās as among the people of Indonesia⁷, the use

¹Hutton, Intro. to Shaw's (Note on the Thado Kukis), J.A.S.B. (N.S.) XXIV, pp.4f.

²Hutton, Man in India, VII, pp.257f.

³M.A.S.B., XI, pp.6f; C.R.I., 1931, I, I, p.397.

⁴Hutton, Man, 1924, pp.104-7.

⁵Marshall, The Karen People of Burma, p.96.

⁶Skeat and Blagden, Pagan Races of the Malaya Peninsula, II, p.280; Sawyer, Inhabitants of the Philippines, pp.202f.

⁷See also Mosas, Life After Death in Oceania, XIII, I.

of a kind of thorn-lined trap for catching fish among the Nagās of the North and Thados, as in Melanesia,¹ the belief in a perilous path, which is required to be passed by the spirit of the dead, common among the tribes as in Andaman and the Pacific area, and other material factors and specimens of art are taken to be survivals of the Negrito strain among the Assam tribes.²

These factors of importance seem to be supported by traditions of dark little men or jungle folk among most of the tribes. We have pointed out to the Zemi tradition of such men called Siemi in North Cachar, the remnants of which are believed to have been blocked into a cave near Hāflong by the Kachāri King.³ Most of the tribes have traditions of such men.⁴ On the basis of this, Peal writes of a 'Mopia' people, who are believed to have been the dwellers of the region, north of the Pātkāi; he also refers to a monkey folk (Moinaknok)⁵. But as we have stated, it is unsafe to rely upon such traditions,⁶ as upon those referring to the origin of the tribes from caves. The physical features and other aspects of the material culture of the tribes that we

¹Balfour, *Man*, 1925, p.21.

²Hutton, *Man in India*, VII, pp.251-62.

³Mills, *J.A.R.S.*, 1933, pp.3f.

⁴Hutton, *J.P.A.S.B. (N.S.)* XXVII, pp.231-39; *The Sema Nagas*, p.192; *The Angami Nagas*, p.257; *The Lhota Nagas*, XXI, 89f.

⁵*J.A.S.B.*, LXIII, III, p.16.

⁶Hartland, *Science of Fairy Tales*, Chap. XII.

have noted, however, indicate that some features of the earliest human culture of Asia were evolved here and that Negroid element found its way into Assam at an early period from the Oceanic area. This is found among some Nagas of the inaccessible hills 'where individuals and sometimes whole communities show decided signs of Papuan blood in the frizzly hair, prominent or aquiline nose, in their very excitable disposition - and in the artistic bent - as well as in a number of minor items of material culture, which can be traced from Assam at any rate to Fiji'.¹

4. Austro-Asiatic-Mon-Khmers: Khāsi-Syntēngs.

Some of the neoliths that we have described, almost certainly belong to an early period of neolithic culture in Assam, and migrations of some neolithic men took place in that period. We can infer their existence also on the basis of the use of taro as a staple diet, as among the Konyaks like that of the Mentamai Isles off Sumatra. The Konyaks in fact represent one of the earliest inhabitants of the hills of Assam.² We are on firmer grounds when we come to the later neolithic culture, which is believed to have been brought by the speakers of the Mon-Khmer speech about 2500 B.C. Heine Geldern associates this culture with the cultivation of

¹ Hutton, Man in India, XII, pp. 1-18

² Haimendorf, G.J., XCI, p.203; J.R.A.I., LXVIII, pp.377-78.

millet, and rice, cattle-rearing, megaliths, ancestral figures in graves and head-hunting.¹

The Khāsi-Synteŋgs, speaking the Mon-Khmer speech, are associated with the Austro-Asiatic people. The term Austric is a linguistic rather than an ethnic one.² On the basis of Philology, Schamidt has traced the affinities of the Munda, Palaung, Wa, Malaya, Nicobarese, Mon-Khmer-Khāsi and others, consisting of the Austro-Asiatic branch, and forming with the Austronesian, Polynesian, Melanesian, Indonesian etc., the Austric family.³ F.A.Uxbond extends the group to include the Hungarian; but Hevesy, disputing the existence of the Austric group as a whole, connects the Munda language with the Ugrian.⁴ Rivet suggests that this group should be called Oceanic, consisting of the Australian, Papuan and Tasmanian, their centre of diffusion being either in the Indian archipelago or in Southern Asia, spreading by sea. Przyluski has even raised the problem of relations between the Austro-Asiatic and the Sumerian.⁵

It appears that though the Khāsi-Syntings have Mongolian features and mixed with other elements, they represent with

¹Pre-Historic Researches in the Netherland Indies, Science and Scientist in the Netherland Indies, 1945. (New York).

²C.R.I., 1931, I, I, pp.443f.

³Grierson, L.S.I., II.(Intro.), 4f; Ibid., I. I, pp.32-33. S.K.Chatterjee, Indo-Aryan and Hindi, p.35; Ribot, Pros. Third Pan-Pacific Science Congress, Tokyo, 1926.

⁴B.S.O.S.London, VI, pp.187-200.

⁵Pre-Aryan and Pre-Dravidian in India, (Intro.), 8.

their Mon-Khmer speech the only known peoples of the Austric stock in Assam, having close affinities with the Kol-Man-Annam group of tribes,¹ including the Hos and the Hundas. This is based not only in their linguistic similarities, (Table I.) but also in the use of similar types of stonecelts and iron hoes.² Gurdon rightly points out that the Khāsis came from the southeast; on the basis of the similarity of stonecelts, he contends 'that the Khāsis are connected with the people who inhabited the Malaya Peninsula and Chotanagpur at the time of the stone age.'³ On the study of ethnography of some Nagās and Mikirs, Gurdon concludes that the Man-Annam race once occupied a much larger area in Assam.⁴

Besides the Khāsi-Syntings, other tribes of the Austro-Asiatic stock are believed to have been migrated to Assam from the Pacific area, perhaps from the Philippines, as suggested by the use of buffalo in the Naga Hills and terraced cultivation among the Āngāmis.⁵ Moreover, the practice of head-hunting, fertility cults, megaliths, etc. are

¹Peal, J.A.S.B., LXV, III, pp.20-24.

²Hutton, C.R.I., 1931, I, I, pp.357f.

³The Khasis, pp.11-14; also Mills, A.Rev.1928, April, p.26.

⁴The Khasis, pp.11-14.

⁵Hutton, Intro. to Smith's Ao Naga tribe (XII-XV); Intro.to Mill's Lhota Nagas, (XXXVIII); C.R.I., 1931, I, I, pp.444f; Mills, A.Rev. Aug. 1928, pp.16f.

associated with Austro-Asiatic culture, having close parallels among the Assam tribes. Hutton rightly points out 'that the practice of head-hunting, the erection of megaliths, and the theory of the soul matter as a fertiliser belong to the Nagā culture - and are to be associated with the buffalo keeping tribes, who inhabited the hills before the Gayal or Mithan Keeping Kukis - on general grounds, I am inclined to associate the buffalo with an Austro-Asiatic culture or Indonesian culture - and to assign the head-hunting and soul fertiliser itself to the same Austro-Asiatic or Indonesian culture'.¹ It appears, therefore, that survivals of this culture are found among the Chāng and Konyak Nagas.² Writing on the Nagā-Bodo affinities, Hutton concludes that even the Bodos like the Nagās may have been connected with the Hō-Munda Mon-Khmer families.³ The Gāros, for instance have absorbed Khāsi and Nagā blood.⁴ It is possible that the people of the Austro-Asiatic culture were numerous at one time and in varying proportions an Austro-Asiatic strain may be found in most of the tribes. Ethnically at least the speakers of the speech had close affinities with the people of the Pacific area, constituting the Indonesian culture.⁵

¹J.R.A.I., LVIII, p.406.

²C.R.I., 1931, I, I, pp.444f.

³A.C.R., 1921, III, I, (App. C., pp. XVIIIf.)

⁴Playfair, The Garos, pp.22f.

⁵C.R.I., 1931, I, I, pp. 444f.

The Mon-Khmer speakers were followed by a great horde of the Tibeto-Burman coming into Assam by the same route in wave after wave.

5. Indo-Chinese Stock — Tibeto-Burmans.

Both physical features and other aspects of culture definitely indicate that the great bulk of Assam's population of both the hills and plains consisted of the Tibeto-Burmans of the Indo-Chinese stock. This is confirmed also by a few remains and literary evidence. Even the Mon-Khmer Khāsis are associated with the first Mongolian overflow into the land, followed by the Bodos from the northeastern direction.¹

The Upper courses of the Yangtse and the Hoangho in Northwest China were the original home of the Tibeto-Burman races and they entered Assam through the courses of the Brahmaputra, Chindwin, Irrawady, Salween, Mekong and Menam and mountain passes of Assam and Burma through the northeast and southeast, when they found the speakers of the Mon-Khmer speech occupying some hilly regions, and therefore, the latter were driven into different directions.² Some of them travelled to Nepal and Tibet, some occupied the foot of the Himalayas from Sadiyā to the Punjab in the west and the rest occupied the hills of Assam, such as the Garo hills, Lushai

¹Mills, A.Rev., March, 1928, pp.24f; April, p.26; Gait, History of Assam, p.253; Risley, C.R.I., 1901, I,I, pp.252-53; People of India, pp.41-42; Camb.History of India, I, p.47.

²Grierson, L.S.I., I, I, pp.41-44; Imperial Gazetteer of India, (Indian Empire), I, p.295.

Hills and Manipur, Mikir Hills, Cāchār and the Naga Hills and gradually spread over the plains in both Upper and Lower Assam, along the courses of the Brahmaputra on both its banks.¹

When and how the migration and settlement of the various branches of the same family took place is uncertain; but, as we have noted, the weight of evidence proves that the migration of tribes is to be attributed to different periods in the history of the land and that most of them, if not all, came after the intrusion of the Aryans from the west. It was after their distribution and occupation of particular areas that they came to be known as Nagās, Boḍos, etc., and the areas of their occupation were known by their tribal names. Even after their settlement, migrations from one place to another continued till recent times. The classical writers, beginning at least with the first century A.D. seem to refer to some tribes almost in their present habitat. We shall discuss about the Kirātas on the basis of both Indian and foreign sources.

We have made a few references to the tribes in another place.² Pliny mentions a people called Mandai in whose country lies the mount of Maleus, beyond the Ganges and Palibothra or Pātaliputra.³ It is possible to identify

¹C.R.I., 1901, I, I, pp.252-53; L.S.I., I, I, pp.41-44.

²Chap. II, pp. -38f

³McCrintle, Megasthenes and Arrian, pp.131f, 173.

Mandai with the Garos and Maleus with the Garo Hills, because the Gāros are known as Mānde, meaning man.¹ The Sesatae of the Periplus and the Besadae of Ptolemy were the same hill people of Assam², allied to the Gāros, Nagās, Lushāi-Kukis or the Mishmis.³ The Anthropophagi of Ptolemy or the Alitrophagi of Ammianus Marcellinus were probably a branch of the Mishmis or Nagās.⁴ Ptolemy mentions other tribes, confirmed by Ammianus. The Garinaoi may be identified with the Gāros; Nabannoe, the Rābhās; Asmeraoei, the Miris; Batoe, the Bhutiās and the Nagalogoe, the Nagās.⁵ The Barrhai of Ptolemy⁶ appear to be the Bodos. Gerini rightly identifies the Tiladai with the Kuki-Chins.⁷ These references indicate that some tribes had already settled in the province before the first century A.D., if not earlier.

When the differentiation of the tribes took place is not known, but linguistically they may be divided into many families with further subdivisions and clans. The Tibeto-Burman family as a whole is divided into two main branches:

A. North-Assam and B. Assam-Burmese.

¹Playfair, The Garos, pp.7f.

²Taylor, J.A.S.B., 1847, I, pp.32f.

³Schoff, The Periplus, pp.47-48, 261, 278.

⁴Taylor, pp.52f.

⁵Ibid.,

⁶Gerini, Researches on Ptolemy's Geography, pp.362f.

⁷Ibid., pp.744f, 830.

A. North-Assam Branch: The tribes like the Akā, Dafatā, Miri, Ābar and Mishmi, now occupying the foot of the hills in the north from western Assam to Sadiyā in the east, are included in this branch.¹ The group may again be taken as a link between the Tibeto-Himalayan and the Assam-Burmese branches; but even within their own group striking differences both in physical features, customs and dialects have been evolved. The dialectical differences will be evident from the table (No. 2). Most of the tribal names were given by their neighbours and plains people. The Akās call themselves Hrusso;² The Dafalās, Niso, Nising or Baṅgi (man)³. The term Miri means man⁴; the Ābar, independent⁵; the latter are known as Abuit or Ādi-āmi (hill men) and Madgu⁶. All of them are divided into various clans, mostly exogamous.

B. Assam-Burmese Branch:

(i) Nagā Group: The origin of the word 'Nagā' is obscure⁷; but the weight of evidence proves that it is to be associated

¹L.S.I., I, I, pp.59f; Ibid, III, II.

²Dalton, Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, pp.37f; Hesselmeier, J.A.S.B., XXXVII, II, pp.194-95; Waddell, J.A.S.B., 1900, III, p.19.

³Robinson, J.A.S.B., XX, pp.126f; Waddell, p.43; Dalton, p.35; Mackenzie, History of the Relations with the Tribes of the North-Eastern Frontier of India, pp.27f.

⁴W.Crooke, E.R.E., I, pp.33f; McCosh, J.A.S.B., V, p.194; E.J.T.Dalton, J.A.S.B., XIV, I, pp.250f, 427f.

⁵W.Crooke, E.R.E., I, pp.33f; Dunbar, Frontiers, p.100.

⁶Dunbar, Abors and Galongs, pp.1f; A.Hamilton, In Abor Jungles, pp.84f.

⁷Woodthrope, J.R.A.I., XI, p.57; Furness, J.R.A.I., XXXII, p.445; Butler, J.A.S.B., 1875, I, p.309.

with 'nok'(man)¹. Linguistically the group consists of three main subgroups: ² (a) Western- which includes Āngāmi, Semā, Rengmā and Kezoma; (b) central - Āo, Lhota, Tengsa, Thukumi and Yachumi; (c) eastern - Angwanku, Banpārā, Chingmegnu, Mutoniā, Mohangiā, Chāng, Assiringiā, Mosang, Shangge and Nāmsāngiā. There are besides the different families of the Konyaks. Not only between these three groups, but also among sub-divisions of the same group there are differences of both physical features, customs and dialects. The linguistic differences will be clear from the table (No.3).³

The Āngāmis have traditions of coming from the south, the Mao region and Maṇipur. They are divided into two main divisions - Kepezoma and Thekrono, further sub-divided into exogamous clans.⁴ The Semās also point to their migration from the south; they are divided into many exogamous clans.⁵ The Rengmās are broadly divided into two groups - Eastern and Western, further sub-divided into exogamous clans.⁶ The Āos believe in the common origin of man, tiger and spirit⁷; they are broadly divided into three groups - Chougli, Mongsen and Chaugki, divided into exogamous phratries and further

¹Peal, J.R.A.I., III, p.477; J.A.S.B. LXIII, III, p.14; Hutton, The Angami Nagas, pp.351f.

²See Hutton, Ibid; Damant, J.R.A.S. 1880, pp.228f; Woodthrope, J.R.A.I, XI, pp.58f.

³L.S.I., III, II; Brown, J.A.O.S., II, pp.155f; Bulter, J.A.S.B., XLIV, pp.307f.

⁴Hutton, The Angami Nagas, pp.6f, 100f; Godden, J.R.A.I., XXVII, pp.361f. 23f.

⁵Hutton, The Sema Nagas, pp.5f., 126f.

⁶Mills, The Rengma Nagas, pp.11f.

⁷S.N.Majumdar, Man in India, IV, pp.43f.

sub-divided into clans.¹ The Lhota traditions record their migration from various directions; they are divided into two broad groups - Liye and Ndneng, sub-divided into exogamous phratries and further sub-divided into clans.² The Yachamis bear close resemblance to the Āos and the Chāngs, and the latter are divided into various groups and exogamous clans.³ The Sangtarns are divided into two or three groups and clans.⁴ The Konyaks have two main divisions - Thendu and Thenkoh, each sub-divided into three clans.⁵ Closely allied to them are the Kalyo-Kengyus and the Phom Nagās.⁶

(ii) Nagā-Bodo and Nagā-Kuki Subgroups:

Linguistically in the former group may be included the Kacha, Kabui and Khairao; in the latter, Maram, Tangkul, Maring, Phadang, Yiyangkong, Sopovoma and others, including the Mikirs.⁷ All these tribes inhabit parts of Cāchār and Manipur; they show, however, both physical and linguistic differences (Table 4), and all of them are divided into various

¹Mills, The Ao Nagas, pp.13f; Smith, Ao Naga Tribe, pp.49f.

²Mills, The Lhota Nagas, pp.3f, 87f.

³Hutton, The Angami Nagas, pp.377f; Mills, C.R.I., 1931, I, III, pp.144-45.

⁴Hutton, The Angami Nagas, pp.357f; Mills, C.R.9., 1931, I, III, pp.143-44.

⁵Mills, Ibid, pp.145f.; Hutton, Ibid, pp.382f.

⁶Hutton, The Angami Nagas, pp.382f.

⁷L.S.I., I, I, pp.59f; Watt, J.R.A.I., XVI, p.353; Brown, Statistical Account, etc. pp.22f; Soppitt, A short Account of the Kacha Naga tribes etc. pp.2f; Johnstone, My Experiences, etc. p.27.

clans. The Mikirs call themselves Ārleng (man). Traditions connect them with the eastern portion of the Jaintia Hills, bordering on the Kapili as their original seat. They have an admixture of Khāsi blood.¹

(iii) Kuki-Lushāi-Meithei tribes and Their Subgroups:²

- a) Old Kuki, which includes the Hrangkul, Halam, Chaw, Langrong and others.
- b) Kuki-Chin, which includes the Meithei³, old Kuki and Chin.
- c) Northern Chin Subgroup - consisting of the Thado, Sokte, Ralte, Paite and others.
- d) Central Chin group - Lushāis and others.

The Lakhers⁴, occupying the southern portion of the Lushai Hills bordering on Burma may also be placed in the same family. Most of these tribes are now occupying parts of Manipur, Lushāi Hills, Cāchār and Mikir Hills. Both in physical features and dialects (Table 5) they show many differences. Most of the Lushāi-Kukis are connected with Burma and Chittagong.⁵

(iv) Bodo Group: The Bodo Group includes the most numerous tribes, living not only in the hills but also occupying parts

¹Stack and Lyall, The Mikirs, pp.4f, 151f; Stewart, J.A.S.B., XXIV, pp; 604f.

²L.S.I., I, I, pp.59f.

³Hodson, The Meitheis, pp.5f.

⁴Parry, The Lakhers.

⁵Shakespeare, The Lushai-Kuki Clans, pp.1f; Soppitt, Kuki-Lushai Tribes, pp.1f.

of the valley from Dhubri to Sadiyā. They were once a very dominant people of the valley and petty Kingdoms like those of the Kachāris and the Chutiās were established by them even before the intrusion of the Āhoms. Remnants of their political domination, after the Hindu Kingdoms and their culture, may be noticed from the names of places, particularly rivers, preceded by 'di' or 'ti', the Boḍo word for water.¹ They have affinities not only with the people of Nepal and Tibet and other Tibeto-Burmans like the Nagās, but also with the Khāsis.² The important members of the group are: the Gāros, Kachāris, Chutiās, Rābhās, Koches, Lālungs, Meches, Hājong, Hojāi, Dimsā and others; some of them got mixed up with the Shāns at a later time. In spite of their affinities, we find many differences in both their physical features and dialects. (Table 6.)

The Gāros constitute an important section of the group, though allied to the Khāsi-Nagās;³ they are divided into three exogamous divisions: Momin, Marak and Chakma.⁴ The Kachāris are divided into plain and hill Kachāris, subdivided into numerous exogamous clans.⁵ The Koches are likewise

¹Endle, A.C.R., 1881, pp.67f.

²Hutton, A.C.R., 1921, III, I, (App.C.pp.XVIIIf).

³Playfair, The Garos, pp.14f, 22f.

⁴Ibid, pp.59f; B.Bannerjee, I.A., 1929, pp.121-27.

⁵Endle, The Kacharis, pp.3f, 24f; Soppitt, Kachari tribe, etc., pp.12f.

sub-divided into many clans.¹ The Chutiās, who had an admixture of Shān blood, established their Kingdom in the Sadiyā region; they are broadly divided into Barāhi and Deorī.² The Lālungs got mixed up with the Gāros and Mikirs; they have numerous exogamous clans.³ The Rābhās, Hojāis, Hājongs, Meches and Barās, though had their common Bodo origin, came to be looked upon like the Koches as superior to the Gāro or the Kachāri, because they came under the influence of Hinduism at an early period.⁴ All of them have their different clans or septs.⁵

The Kikātas: The Bōdas have a close affinity with the Kirātas of ancient Indian literature. A consideration of the habitat of the latter is essential as the first foundation of a Kingdom in Assam is attributed to the Kirāta Chief Mahirānga dānava.⁶ The Kirātas are also associated with the Bhauma dynasty, particularly with Bhagadatta. The classical writers mention them under various names. Megasthenes and Arrian, confirmed by Pliny, mention Chiriotosagi and Skiratai, identified by McCrindle with the Kirātas.⁷ The

¹Risley, Tribes and Castes of Bengal, I, pp.490-92; Dalton, Ethnology, pp.89-92; Waddell, J.A.S.B., 1900, III, p.48; Playfair, The Garos, pp.19f; A.C.R., 1881, pp.74f.

²Endle, The Kacharis, pp.90f; Dalton, Ethnology, pp.77f; Waddell, J.A.S.B., 1900, III, p.42; A.C.R., 1881, p.77.

³A.C.R., 1881, pp.76f; Waddell, J.A.S.B., 1900, III, p.54.

⁴A.C.R. 1881, pp.73f.

⁵Endle, The Kacharis, pp.24f, 81f.

⁶Political History, Section I, pp.178-79

⁷Megasthenes and Arrian, pp.131f, 171.

Periplus calls them Kirrhadae and locates them in the hills of Assam and Burma.¹ Ptolemy's Kirrhadia, the country of the Kirātas corresponds to Tripurā, Sylhet and Cāchār according to Gerini.² Aelian's Schiratae appear to be the Kirātas.³ The classical writers, therefore, from the 4th century B.C. place the Kirātas in Southeast Bengal and Western Assam. The Indian sources, particularly the Epics, locate them in different parts of India; but most of the sources agree in placing them near the marshy regions in Southeast Bengal and the hills of Assam. The Udyoga P. (XVIII), Sabhā.P. (XXVI-XXVII), the Karna.P. and other chapters of the Mahābhārata mention them along with the Cīnas, forming the followers of Bhagadatta, with yellowish complexion, dwelling in the marshy regions near the sea-shore, that is, in Southeast Bengal. The Kiskindhyā Kāṇḍa (XL) of the Rāmāyana describes them as wearing thick top knots with conical heads, golden in appearance, fair looking and fierce. The Brhatsamhitā (XIV, 18, 29-30) places them in the northeast. The Mongolian affinity and their habitat in the marshy regions and the hills of Assam are also confirmed by the Viṣṇu.P. (Bk. II, III) and the Kālikā Purāna (38). Manu (X, 43-44) states that they were Kṣatriyas in origin, but became degraded owing to the extinction of sacred rites.

¹Schoff, The Periplus, p253; Taylor, J.A.S.B, 1847, I, pp 10-11.

²Researches on Ptolemy's Geography, pp 30-31, 52.

³Taylor, pp 46f.

This is also stated in the *Asvamedha.P.* of the *Mahābhārata*. But the most of the sources agree in stating that an important section of the *Kirātas* lived in Southeast Bengal and Western Assam and that they were Mongolians.¹ It is possible that at a later time they, like most of the Tibeto-Burmans, got mixed up with the Alpines who had already settled in Eastern India and Assam. The *Kirātas* represent, therefore, an early wave of Mongolians and might have settled in parts of Assam even before some *Bodos*; for it is mentioned as early as the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (1, 3, 7) that it was from the *Kirāta* towns of Eastern India that the Aryans brought the soma plant for sacrifice. This points to the early settlement of these people in Assam.²

6. Mixture of Various Strains: Both anthropometry and ethnography indicate that most of the early inhabitants of Assam had an admixture of different racial strains. When and how this admixture took place is difficult to posit; but it is likely that this happened both before and after their migration and settlement in the province.

Even the *Khāsi-Syntengs* show an admixture of Negrito, Austric, Alpine and Tibeto-Burman elements in varying proportions.³ As Dixon writes the *Khāsis* 'are racially

¹Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology*, pp.103f.

²B.A.Saletore, *The Wild Tribes in Indian History*, pp.13-25; B.C.Law, *I.C.I.*, pp 381f.

³R.B.Dixon, *Man in India*, II, pp 1-13.

closely related to the majority of the Tibeto-Burman tribes. With them they represent a very old drift of South-east Asiatic peoples, superimposed upon a previous aboriginal Negroid stratum and overlaid by a later wave of Alpine peoples.¹ Hutton noticed among most of the Nagās traces of Negroid, Austro-Asiatic, Alpine, Tibeto-Burman, Tāi and a race of southern origin, allied to the people of the Philippines, Borneo and parts of Indonesia.² These elements are found among the Āos³ and some Kukis like the Thados. The practice of ordeal by diving among the latter people is associated with Mon culture, and many of their customs are indicative of Khāsi-Ho cultures of Indonesian affinity and of those of the Pagan Malayans and the Philippines, as is their parallel custom of burial with Sumatra and the Philippines again. The Melanesians, like some Lushāis, were used to tasting the blood of their murdered enemies.⁴ The Lakhers likewise contain Austric, Nagā and Bodo blood and some elements of the Melanesian and Indonesian strain.⁵ Both the Semā⁶ and Āngāmi Nagās⁷ have an admixture of

¹Ibid.

²Intro. to Mills' Lhota Nagas, XXXVII.

³Intro. to Smith's Ao Naga tribe, XII -XV.

⁴Hutton, Intro. to Shaw's Thado Kukis, J.A.S.B. (N.S.) XXIV, pp.4f, 14 (fn); Codrington, The Melanesians, p.305; Lewin, Wild Tribes of Southeastern India, p 269; Hill Tracts of Chittagong, etc, p.107.

⁵Intro. to Parry's Lakhers, XIVf.

⁶Hutton, The Sema Nagas, pp.379f.

⁷Hutton, The Angami Nagas, pp 6f.

Mongolian, Bodo, and of elements of the peoples of the Pacific area.

A Dravidian strain coming from Southern India may be suspected among some Nagās. This is confirmed both by archaeology and ethnography. The use of conch-shells¹ and canoes as coffins by some Nagās and other tribes, as in the Pacific area may be connected with the sea and tend to confirm a tradition of their migration from the southeast like the Karens of Burma who have such traditions of a voyage across the Bay of Bengal from Southern India.² Connecting the Austro-Asiatic, Indonesian and South Indian culture, Hutton points out that the origin of this culture is to be attributed to Southern India. The iron age graves of Southern India, he further writes, show signs of affinity with those of the Nagās. The cenotaphs of Southern India resemble those of the Āngāmis. The use of conch-shells as ornaments by the Nagās, discovered also in North Arcot in a dolmen, seems to point to their association with the sea. Some megaliths of the two regions are also similar.³ Some stone celts from Vellore resemble the Naga type. On the basis of such parallels, it is possible to draw some conclusions that the Nagās contain elements which migrated from

¹Shakespeare, History of Upper Assam, etc, p.197.

²McMahon, The Karens of the Golden Chersonese, pp. 110f.

³Fergusson, Rude Stone Monuments, etc, p.476.

Southern India across the Bay of Bengal and via Burma.¹ It is also possible that this element migrated to Assam from India in the west by the land route. Dravidian elements may also be suspected among the Āos.² Hutton, however, rightly disputes Perry's theory of the origin of the Nagās, who in his book, 'The Children of the Sun' holds that the Nagās are connected with a Dravidian family ruling in Assam.³

Two elements of the Khāṣi culture indicate a connection between them and the Sawara of Madras and the Nicobarese. It is of interest 'that the Sawara like the Nicobarese and the Khasis speak a language of the Austro-Asiatic family and that there are strong traces among some of the Konyak Nagās also not only of an Austro-Asiatic vocabulary, but of cultural elements, such as the shouldered hoe, generally found with the same association.'⁴ The burial customs of the War of Shella show striking similarities with those of the Sawaras and the Nicobarese.⁵

Some writers like Vasu ascribe Dravidian origin of the families of Naraka and Bāna; but we have refuted these assumptions in another place.⁶ The Dravidian affinities

¹Hutton, Man in India, IV, pp.1-13; Ibid, XII, pp1-18; Man, 1926, pp.222-24; Ibid 1930, p.81.

²Intro. to Mills' Lhota Nagas, XXXVIII.

³Man, 1927, pp.128-31.

⁴Hutton, Man, 1939, p.57.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Chap. IV, Section I, pp - 186f

of the Koch-Kachāris have also been pointed out by some writers; Vasu asserts that they are to be connected with the Sumerians and the Dravidians.¹ But his conclusions are not supported by any genuine evidence. Risley thinks that the Koch 'are a large Dravidian tribe - among whom there are grounds for suspecting some admixture of Mongolian blood - But on the whole Dravidian characteristics predominate among them.'² Dalton supports Risley's theory.³ In our opinion, both their physical features and customs do not betray anything like a pure Dravidian origin of the Koch or the Kachāri; it may be that like other tribes they had an admixture of that blood. Waddell, on the basis of anthropometry has shown that they were Tibeto-Burmans and have no affinity with 'the dark Dravidian aborigins of India.'⁴ In fact, the Dravidian element in Assam's population appears to be negligible.

The fusion of the Nagā-Bodo blood took place at an early period, and though Nagās in particular, had absorbed many Oceanic elements, the common origin of the different Tibeto-Burman tribes may be gathered both from physical features and ethnography. The Semās for instance have an admixture

¹Social History of Kāmarūpa, I, pp3f.

²Tribes and Castes of Bengal, I, pp.490-92; People of India p.40.

³Descriptive Ethnology, pp.89-92.

⁴J.A.S.B, 1900, III, p.48.

of Bodo and Mongolian blood.¹ It was as a result of this fusion that intermediate group of tribes (Nagā-Bodo) originated. The use of the Y shaped posts either of stone or wood may be taken as an important element of Bodo culture and with a few exceptions, an element of Bodo origin can be traced in all the Nagā and other tribes using this kind of post. But, as pointed out by Hutton, if the Mon-Khmers and the Bodos have been more or less fused, then some such tribes, showing Nagā-Bodo affinities may have come out of a fused stock; the erection of forked posts may as well be owing to the presence of the Austric element in the fused races.² In any case we have strong grounds for Nagā-Bodo fusion.³ Kauffman, speaking of the use of a thread-square symbol in the graves of the Āngāmis, Āos, Chāngs, Tangkuls, Lhotas, Thados, Lushāis and the Kachāris holds that if this element entered the Naga Hills, when the Kachāris were still in the plains, then another link will be found between the Nagā and Bodo culture.⁴ The practice of lycanthropy among some Bodos and Nagās may also be associated with their common origin.⁵ Gurdon is right in pointing to close affinities of the Khāsis, Nagās, Gāros and Mikirs.⁶

¹The Sema Nagas, pp 379f.

²Hutton, J.R.A.I., LII, pp.56f.

³Hodson, Naga Tribes of Manipur, pp.17f; Playfair, The Garos, pp.22f.

⁴H.E.Kauffman, J.R.A.I, LXXIII, pp.101-106.

⁵Hutton, J.R.A.I., L, pp.48-50.

⁶The Khasis, pp.11-14.

Most of the tribes, particularly the Nagās, have closer affinities with the people of the Pacific area, from the direction of which some of them entered Assam. This is mainly based on a similar ethnographic survivals. Hutton mentions a number of parallels like the Non-Khmer speech of the Khāsis, the matrilineal system of the Gāros and Khāsis, enogamy, bachelors' halls, and shouldered celts as among the Khāsi-Nagās, ornamented spears, the use of the cross-bow, tattooing, canoe drums, buffalo, megaliths, jhuming and terraced cultivation, the theory of soul matter associated with headhunting, pile-dwellings, disposal of the dead, etc., all elements of Indonesian culture.¹ The parallels are indicative of a common origin of some Assam tribes and the people of Borneo, Philippines, Nias, Luzon, Formosa, Polynesia, Melanesia, and other Isles.² The very word 'penna' (restriction) among the Nagās has the same meaning in the Pacific area like the mythology concerning the heavenly bodies. The main basis of comparison is found in the use of stone and the belief in the cult of the dead. As in Australia, Samoa, Melanesia and others, with the Nagās there is a strong belief in the magical virtue of stones, associated with fertility and head-hunting. The megaliths,

¹Hutton, Man in India, XII, pp 1-18.

²Peal, J.A.S.B., LXIII, III, pp.13f; Ibid, LXV, III, pp.13-17; J.R.A.I., XXII, pp.244-61; Yule, J.R.A.I., IX, pp 290-310. Col. A. Lane-Fox, J.R.A.I., III, pp 480f.

of both the areas are strikingly similar and they are associated with the same ideas. The nature of the disposal of the dead, whether connected with the megalithic tombs or otherwise and the belief in life after death of both the areas show wonderful similarities.¹ E. Evans, commenting on the parallel customs between the Kelabits of Borneo and some Nagās, has shown that this was due to a common origin of their culture.² The practice of producing fire with the help of thong as done in the Naga hills, is identical with the similar practice among the Karens of Burma and the people of Borneo.³ Pointing to the close affinities of the Nagās with the Annam tribes, Hutton concludes 'that they both represent an approximately identical mixture of races and cultures.'⁴ In fact, of all the peoples of South-east Asia, the Assam tribes have close ethnic affinities with the people of Burma, whether Mons or Tibeto-Burmans.

7. Caucasic Strain:

In discussing the question of the admixture of elements, we have already pointed to the presence of an Alpine element in most of the tribes. This element like the Aryan definitely

¹Hutton, *Man in India*, IV, pp.1-13; F.M. Schnitzer, *Forgotten Kingdoms in Sumatra*, pp 150f, 162f, 191f; Hutton, *J.R.A.I.*, LVIII, p.406.

²*Sarawak Museum Journal*, IV, 4, 1937, pp 411-437.

³H. Balfour, *Man*, June, 1926, pp.101-103.

⁴*Man in India*, II, pp 158-59.

came of the Caucasian stock.¹ Keane thinks that the people of this stock spread to the confines of Southeast Asia in prehistoric times,² and subsequently they came down the river valleys of Assam and Burma, where they were confined into the hills and became the ancestors of the Nagās and other allied tribes.³ All through the uplands of Southeast Asia, therefore, from Tibet to Cochin-China this Caucasian admixture is noticed,⁴ as among some Nagās.⁵

Keane places the Nagās, Mishmis, Khāsis, Lushāis and others in the Tibeto-Burman family of what he calls the Homo-Mongolians,⁶ and to account for their special features, he states that the Mongolians in Central Asia were in contact with peoples of the Caucasian stock since the neolithic age, and it was there that the admixture took place.⁷ It is, therefore, from this contact that some Nagās and other groups absorbed a Caucasian strain.⁸ It might have taken place both before and after the migration of the Tibeto-Burmans to Assam.

¹H.C.Chaklader, *Man in India*, XVI, pp.183-89; S.C.Roy, *Ibid.*

²J.R.A.I., IX, p.259. XIV, pp.273f.

³Smith, *Ao Naga tribe*, pp.174f.

⁴Keane, *Man - Past and Present*, pp.186f; *Ethnology*, pp.152f, 326.

⁵Smith, pp 154f, 165; Keane, *Ethnology*, pp. 326f; *Man - Past and Present*, pp.186f; Furness, *J.R.A.I.*, XXXII, pp 445f. Hodson, *Naga Tribes of Manipur*, p.6; Butler, *J.A.S.B.*, XLIV, pp 310f; Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology*, pp.8f.

⁶*Man - Past and Present*, pp.193f; *Ethnology*, pp 300f.

⁷*Man - Past and Present*, p.268.

⁸Smith, *Ao Naga tribe*, p.174.

This Caucasian strain is found among the Āos,¹ Āngāmis, Manipuris and Mishmis. Hutton noticed Aryan features among the Āngāmis, whose definitely Mongolian features 'may be seen side by side with a straightness of eye and those that might be purely Aryan.'² The Manipuris are 'a fine stalwart race, descended from an Indo-Chinese stock with some admixture of Aryan blood, derived from some waves of Aryan invaders that have passed through the valley in prehistoric days.'³ Though with Mongolian features, some Mishmis show Aryan types, and they have a tradition to account for this Aryan admixture.⁴ Relying on this tradition of Parasurāma, who is said to have settled Brāhmanas near the Sadiyā region in the Brahmakunḍa, N.N.Vasu contends that these Brāhmanas became degraded because of the curse of Parasurāma and came to be known as the three families of Mishmis, two of Ābars and one of Dafalās and Niris each. He, therefore, asserts that these four tribes originated from the Vedic Brāhmanas.⁵ This theory is absurd and it is equally wrong to believe that Parasurāma settled Brāhmanas

¹Ibid, pp.154f.

²The Angami Nagas, pp.20f.

³Johnstone, My Experience in Manipur, etc, p.97; Brown, Statistical Account, etc, pp.28f; Watt, J.R.A.I., XVI, p.350; Hodson, Meithei, p.2.

⁴Dalton, Ethnology, p.18.

⁵Social History of Kāmarūpa, I, pp 84f.

near the present Parasurāmakunḍa.¹ It is possible that these tribes either in their course of migration or later intrusion took an admixture of Caucasian blood. The Dafalās, as described by Robinson, have Aryan features, which 'frequently passes into near approach to the Caucasian.'²

The above instances indicate that either before their migration or in course of their settlement in the province, some of the Tibeto-Burman tribes absorbed Caucasian blood of both the Alpine and the Aryan. The following treatment will throw more light on this question of Caucasian migration.

8. Alpine-Aryan: The existence of an Alpine element is noticed as early as the Indus Civilisation.³ In order to explain the theory of the inner and the outer band of the Indo-Aryan languages, Hoernle and others have surmised two waves of Aryans; one of them came earlier than the Vedic Aryans.⁴ There are scholars who believe that the Aryans did not enter India from outside.⁵ But the weight of evidence points to the common origin of the Aryans, both Indian and

¹K.L.Barua, E.H.K., pp.22-23.

²J.A.S.B., XX, p.129.

³Marshall, Mahengodaro and Indus Civilisation, II, p.643.

⁴Comparative Grammar of the Gaudian Languages, p XXXI; also Grierson, L.S.I., I, I, pp.116f.

⁵Sankarānanda, Rig Vedic Culture of the Prehistoric Indies, I, I, pp.71f; S.V.Venkatesvara, Indian Culture Through the Ages, pp 15-16.

European and their original habitat is believed to have been somewhere in Southern Russia.¹ It is also certain that they entered India through the northwest and the date of their first footing in India may roughly be set about the second millenium B.C.²

It was between the Indus Civilisation and the entry of the Aryans that the Alpines entered India. Hutton rightly contends that 'there is every good reason for supposing that between the end of the Mahenjodaro Civilisation - and the entry of the Vedic Aryans, the Indus Valley was subjected to an invasion of Alpines from the Pamirs'.³ So the Pamirian Alpines with bracycephalic leptorrhine elements arrived in India before the Vedic Aryans and contributed partly at least to the Rigvedic language and culture.⁴ This view of the earlier migration of the Alpines is supported by Haddon⁵, T.A.Joyce⁶, and others. That a branch of them entered the Punjab is proved by the Indus Valley finds; another branch might have passed towards the east and become the ancestors

¹Howell, Soul of India, p.28; G. Childe, The Aryans; S.K. Chatterjee, Indo-Aryan and Hindi, pp.13f; also Camb.History of India, pp. 64-76; Isaac Taylor, The Origin of the Aryans, pp.5-7; Max Müller, Science of Language, I, p.289.

²S.K.Chatterjee, Indo-Aryan and Hindi, pp.13f; also Winternitz, History of Sanskrit Literature, p.255.

³C.R.I., 1931, I, I, pp.368, 445f.

⁴B.N.Datta, J.D.L., XXVI, pp.78f; M.M.Chaudhuri, C.R; June, 1945.

⁵Races of Man, pp.60f; The Wanderings of Peoples, p.27.

⁶J.R.A.I., 1912, pp.467f.

of the non-Mongoloid *bracycephales* of Eastern India, speaking languages of the outer band, such as Bihari, Oriya, Bengali and Assamese. So the writers like Hutton, Hoernle, B.S.Guha, S.K.Chatterjee and others strongly support the theory of the coming of the Alpines before the Vedic Aryans, more or less allied to the Iranians. R.P.Chanda, on the basis of anthropometry and ethnography, contends that these so-called Aryans of the outer provinces were not Aryans at all and that these round-headed invaders might have come later than the Vedic Aryans.¹ We support his theory of the non-Vedic origin of the Brāhmaṇas, Kāyasthas and other higher classes of Eastern India like those of Gujarāt², but his theory of the intrusion of the round-headed so-called non-Aryans or Alpines subsequent to the Vedic Aryans, is no longer tenable for the reasons stated above.

Vedic literature speaks of Eastern India as 'Anupadesa' or the land of the Vrātyas, who were perhaps the Alpines or the non-Vedic Aryans and N.N.Ghose³ has traced the origin of this vrātya culture to the Aryan speaking Magians or Iranians, allied to the Alpines. The settlement of the Alpines in Eastern India and Assam is supported not only by the presence of *bracycephalic leptorrhine* features among the higher classes but also by the fact that in these areas the

¹Indo-Aryan Races, pp.59, 70.

²Ibid., pp. 162, 189.

³Aryan Traits in Iran and India, pp 214 f.

Austric and Dravidian speech were long superseded by the Aryan speech of the Alpines, who also introduced certain cultural traits, whose survivals may still be noticed in Assam. The Mediterranean-Aryan culture of the Punjab and Madhyadeśa, after the coming of the Aryans probably met the Alpine-Aryan culture of Eastern India and the result was a Neo-Aryanism.¹ The contributions made by the Alpines to Eastern India were considerable; but their original impress on languages, faith and customs was largely modified by the Aryan-migration and contact, with the result that these in course of time became indistinguishable from those of the Aryans.²

The association of the names of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa with magical practices and planetary worship strongly suggest the Vrātya culture of the Alpines, having remarkable affinities with those of the Magians of Iran.³ Even the Assamese language contains some common words of Iranian and Indo-European origin, which do not occur in Vedic Indian, and it may be shown that it has close affinities with those of the outer provinces of India, and must have been derived from a common pisāca language, introduced by the Alpines.⁴ To cite a few instances, the Assame word 'batar' has its correspondence

¹N.N.Ghose, Indo-Aryan Literature and Culture (Origins), pp 40f

²K.L.Barna, I.C., III, pp.161-171.

³Spooner, J.R.A.S., 1915, II, pp.433-36.

⁴See Chap. V, Section 3, pp. 597, 601

in meaning and phoneticism with 'weather' in English and 'wetter' in German; the word, 'bagā' (white) has its equivalent in Slavonic, 'bogu'; 'Kāllā' (cow calf) in Assamese has its equivalent 'kalb' in German and 'calf' in English. To cite a few cultural parallels, the disposal of the dead in the Assam valley by exposure in the past may be associated with the same Iranian practice and its introduction by the Alpines; so also is the practice of lighting a fire by the side of the dead before and after cremation and the period of uncleanness of women, observed during their menstruation.

Both anthropometry and ethnography, therefore, confirm our view that the higher classes of Assam and Bengal had a different origin, probably Alpine of a priestly class. The close affinities of these people of Eastern India with those of the other outer provinces in India in the west, suggest their common Alpine origin and give strong grounds for believing that their so-called Vrātya culture associated with the mlecchas, designated as such by the Vedic Aryans, had the same Alpine origin. B.S.Guha has shown that the Brāhmaṇas and Kāyasthas of Bengal, Telegu Brāhmaṇas, Oriya Brāhmaṇas, those of the Kenarese country, Nāgar Brāhmaṇas of Gujarāt and the Khos of Citral are basically of the same stock as the Early Aryans or Alpines. Epigraphic evidence of Nāgar Brāhmaṇas and Kāyasthas with their surnames datta, deva, dhara, nandī, sena, vasu, etc., both in Western India, particularly in Gujarāt and in Eastern India, as found among the donees of the Nidhampur

grant of Bhāskara,¹ points to the influence of the Alpines in Kāmarūpa. Bhandarkar has noticed affinities of the Brāhmanas and Kāyasthas of Eastern India with the Nāgar Brāhmanas of Gujarāt, Bombay and Kāthiāwāḍ on a similarity of such surnames. The Nāgars, associated with the worship of Hataka Śiva, are said to have lived originally in the Nāgari-Korsum near the Mānasa lake to the east of Kangrā and Kāsmīra and then migrated to Nāgarkoṭ and westward to Kāsmīra and spread subsequently over different parts of India.² This view is supported by other writers.³

The presence of Nāgar Brāhmanas and Kāyasthas in Eastern India, Bengal, Assam and elsewhere, does not require, in our opinion, to be explained on the basis of traditions, referring to their origin and migration from Kāsmīra, Gujarāt or Mithilā. It may be explained by the common origin of the Alpines, who were already present in Eastern India, even before Bhūti-varman in the 6th century A.D. made a land grant to some Nāgar Brāhmanas and Kāyasthas. This seems to explain the racial affinity of the priestly class of the same ethnic stock.

Early Iranian-Magian settlements in Eastern India, in regions like Videha, Magadha and Prāgjyotiṣa, are pointed out

¹The Last Plate.

²I.A., XL, pp.32f; Ibid, LXVI, pp.41-45, 61-72.

³J.C.Ghosh, I.H.Q, VI, pp.67-71; A.B.O.R.I, XVII, pp.385-86; Ghurye, C.R.I., 1931, V, I, pp.471f; Risley, Tribes and Castes of Bengal, I, p.21. (App.I); Ibid, II, pp.1f; J.C.Ghosh, I.C., I, pp.507f.

by Spooner, who holds that Prāggyotiṣa was a Magian settlement associated with planetary worship, and that Bhagadatta, had the same origin.¹ Whether or not there is a truth in his thesis of the Zoroastrian period of Indian history², the presence of the Alpines, allied to the Iranians, and the establishment of their Kingdoms in Eastern India, cannot be doubted. It is possible that even the rulers of the Bimbāsāra - Saisunāga dynasty and Janaka of Videha were Alpines like those of Naraka-Bhagadatta of Prāggyotiṣa. The designations like 'asura' and 'mleccha' of these rulers can be explained on the ground that they were neither pure Aryans nor Mongolians but Alpine-Iranians.³

Once we agree that the Alpines settled in Eastern India long before the Mongolians and were followed by the Aryans, the next important question to be decided is the intrusion of both the Alpines and Aryans into Assam. While the Alpines are believed to have entered through the northwest, an alternative route through the north and the Assam-Burma route is also possible. It is wrong to cling to the theory that all the immigrants entered India only through the north-west.⁴ We have discussed the possibility of the spread of the people of the Caucasian stock to Southeastern China in pre-historic times

¹J.R.A.S., 1915, II, pp.333-36.

²K.P.Jayaswal (J.B.O.R.S., II, pp.97-104) who disputes Spooner's theory.

³See K.L.Barna, J.A.R.S., IV, pp.37-53; I.C., III, pp.161-71.

⁴N.N.Ghosh, Indo-Aryan Literature and Culture (Origins), p.31 (note

to explain that strain among some Assam tribes. The possibility of the migration of peoples in pre-historic times through the north via Tibet and Nepal also is pointed out by some writers.¹

The whole theory of the entry of the Alpines and the Aryans into Assam seems to centre round the origin of the Kalitās, who, as we shall show, had an Alpine origin.² No published Assam epigraphs, however, mentions the Kalitās; but both Indian and classical sources point to their early settlement in Assam. We have shown elsewhere that Hecataeus' references to Kakatiai³ and that of Herodotus to Kalatiai⁴, mean the Kalitās. If Benfey is right in deriving the gold coin Kaltis, mentioned in the Periplus, from the Kalitās⁵, it may be held that these coins recall the ruling family of the Kalitās, probably of Bhagadatta. Ptolemy's Kodutai, derived from Koluta⁶, may also stand for the Kalitās. Pliny's reference to Colubae beyond the Ganges in the east, who are identified with the Kolutas,⁷ may mean the Kalitās. Indian literature, including the Epics, the Purānas and the Mūdrārākṣasa refer to

¹B. Sahani, The Himalayan Uplift Since The Advent of Man, Current Science, V. (No.2), 1936.

²K.L.Barna, J.A.R.S.VI, pp.67-71; I.C., III, pp.161-71.

³McCrimdell, Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature, Intro., XIV,

⁴ Megasthenes and Arrian, p.6(f.n.)

⁵McCrimdell, The Commerce and Navigation of the Erythrean Sea, p.31

⁶Gerini, Researchs on Ptolemy's Geography, p.356.

⁷McCrimdell, Megasthenes and Arrian, pp.131f.

the Kolutas and on the basis of their geography, it is possible to identify them with the Kalitās.

The importance of the Kalitās in the scheme of the ancient Assamese culture is well-known¹ and their culture represents one of the oldest in Northern India². The origin of these people is still a subject of speculation. B.K.Kākaḷi traces the early settlements of the Kalitās in the Sadiyā region and takes them to be Aryans.³ J.B.Neufville locates the Kalitās in the same area and points to their ancient and high civilisation.⁴ Dalton thinks that they were the earliest Aryan colonists of Assam,⁵ and were not Koch as held by Hodgson.⁶ Waddell thinks that they were 'the mixed descendants of the Indian Kāyasthas'.⁷ Robinson makes them the spiritual guides of the Koch, whose position was degraded by the advent of the Brāhmanas; he supports Waddell's theory of the Kāyastha origin of the Kalitās⁸. A purely Aryan Kāyastha origin of these people is uncertain, and equally wrong is the contention of Hamilton that they intermarried with the Koch.⁹

¹K.R.Medhi, J.A.R.S., III, pp.75-88; Assamese Grammar, Intro., XXVf.

²Bhattachali, I.H.Q., XXII, pp.245f.

³Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā, pp.59-64; also B.Rājkhowa, Short Account of Assam, p.7; *Kalita Jātir Itivṛtta*, pp.4 f

⁴Some Frontier Tribes of the N.E.Border of Assam, p.11., A. Res., ~~87~~ PP344-45

⁵Descriptive Ethnology, pp.79f, 321f.

⁶Aborigins of India, p. 141. ⁷J.A.S.B., 1900, III, p.49.

⁸Descriptive Account of Assam, pp.262-63.

⁹Account of Assam, p.54. Some writers connect them with the Buddhist Ksatryias (See, B.C. Law, Some Ksatryiya Tribes in Ancient India, p90) of the Koliya tribe; also *Kalita Jātir Itivṛtta*, p.43.

The common belief is that the Kalitās or their ancestors entered India from the west, settled in Upper India, and ultimately entered Assam, and that they were Kṣatriyas.¹ The same Kṣatriya origin is given among others by A.C. Agarwalla and R.K.Bardalai² and L.N.Bez Barua³. In the opinion of K.R.Medhi, they were not Kṣatriyas, but entered Assam before the Vedic Aryans and were non-Vedic Aryans. They entered, in his opinion, either through the west or the north, possibly the latter route.⁴ The presence of the non-Vedic Aryans in Assam is pointed out by a number of writers,⁵ and it is believed that the Assam valley was Aryanised before Central and Lower Bengal.⁶ To explain the name Kalitā, a theory of a Kulalupta(concealment of caste) is invented by some. S.C. Goswami holds the same view and asserts that they were high class Kṣatriyas. He quotes the Śāntiparva of the Mahābhārata (49), which states that in the R. Kṣavan mountain, in the capital of Sambarāsura of Kāmarūpa there lived many descendants of the Kṣatriyas and that they ruled a part of the country at the foot of the Himalayas. Ancient Indian literature mentions

¹G.K.Talukder, J.A.R.S., 1936, pp.109f.

²Assam Pradīpa, I. (No.2.)

³Bāñhī, XIV, I, p.27.

⁴J.A.R.S., III, pp.75-88.

⁵S.C.Goswami, J.A.R.S., 1934, p.161

⁶E.H.K., p.23.

a class of people called Koluta, Kuluta or Kolta, and of a country called Kuluta. According to the Purānas (Brahmāṇḍa, 49; Vāmana, 13; Padma, 3; Garuḍa, 55) the Kolutas were living in the foot of the Himalayas and some of them were known as Vrātya Kṣatriyas. In the Karna, P. a King of the Kolutas is said to have fought against the Pāṇḍavas. Kolutas or Kulutas are mentioned in the Harṣacarita, the Mūdrāṃkṣasa and other works, and they are said to have issued coins of their own.¹ Goswami concludes that the Kulutas once inhabited the foot of the hills from Kāsmīra to Assam and that the Kalitās of Assam were their descendants.² The association of the Kalitās with the Kolutas appears almost certain, but this does not prove the racial origin of the former except their doubtful Kṣatriya connection.

B.K.Kākāfi associates the Kalitās with the south. He refers to the existence of such people in Cuttuck and Sambalpur, who, according to traditions, migrated from Baudh and whose ancestors were water carriers. There are also Koltas in the Tons valley in Nepal.³ Kākāfi finds similarity between Kalitā and Kābatika of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa (XLV, 128) and Kariti (Bhīṣma. Parva, IX, 44) and points to 'the original southern habitat of the Kalitās.' He finds support for his

¹Camb. History of India, I.

²J.A.R.S., 1933, pp.68f.

³E.C.Mobbs, Indian Forester, IX, pp.663-799.

contention on cultural affinities between Assam, Bihar and the south.¹ But cultural affinities between states have nothing to decide about the Southern original home of the Kalitās, only a section of the people of Assam. Nath goes a step further and derives the Kalitās from the Kal-tons (stone workers), originally migrating from Southern India.²

As we have noted, the connection of the Kalitās with the Kolutas is almost certain; but their actual origin has been left unexplained by these writers. The existence of the peoples with similar names in Sambalpur, Orissa and Nepal does not require to be explained on a theory of the origin and migration of the Kalitās from these regions. If they represent a wave of the Alpines or even the Early Aryans, most likely the former, it is certain that they were the torch-bearers of the vrātya culture of Eastern India. Anthropometry also indicates the Alpine origin of the Kalitās, as they show bracycephalic leptorrhine features.³ While the theory of a route of their migration through the west is tenable, an alternative route through the north and the Assam-Burma route, is perhaps supported by the existence of a people with Caucasian strain or allied people in Nepal and in the Sadiyā region. On a study of their physical traits and ethnography, it appears almost

¹N.I.A., II, pp.332-39.

²Background of Assamese Culture, pp.45f, 63f.

³See Waddell, J.A.S.B., 1900, III.

certain that they originated from the Alpines of a priestly order, allied to the Nāgaras of Gujarāt and Kāyasthas of Bengal. The Kalitās of Orissa or Sambalpur may be the descendants of such people from Assam, or it may be that these were different colonies of the same people. That they originated from a priestly class, is shown by the fact that till recent times they acted as priests in converting some tribes into Hinduism. In all appearance the Kalitās stand for an ethnic type rather than a caste. If the Alpines were the early wave of the Aryans, the theory of the early migration of the Kalitās, cannot be discarded; but it seems to us that the Kalitās and the Alpines were not pure Aryans at all and that they might have migrated to Assam from various directions. Shortly after the coming of the Vedic Aryans, the Kalitās of Alpine origin, though they kept their distinct identity for some time, became mixed up with the former, and therefore they were regarded as Aryan Kṣatriyas. We, therefore, conclude that most of the Kalitās of Assam came of a fused Alpine-Aryan race and whatever traces of the Aryan settlements are found in north-eastern part of the province, may be attributed chiefly to the Alpines, who subsequently might have come under the Aryan influence.

When and how the pure Aryans entered Assam from the west is uncertain. We have noted that the early Vedic literature speaks of Eastern India as a Mleccha country¹ and does not

¹Dikshitar, I.H.Q., XXI, pp.29f; Bhandarkar, A.B.O.R.I., XII, pp.103-116.

refer to the introduction of the Aryan culture into Assam. But both the Aitareya (I, 3, 7) and the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas (I, IV, I, 14-15) point to the migration of the Aryans to the east of the Sadānīrā or the Karatoyā,¹ the western boundary of Ancient Assam. The reference is to the pre-Buddhistic period and preserves a story of the introduction of Aryan culture into the land.² The antiquity of the Aryanised name Kāmarūpa, which finds mention in the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa (Śukla Yajur Veda) and Prāggyotiṣa, which occurs in the Śāṅkhyāyana Gr̥hyasaṃgraha (II, 38) and the Rāmāyaṇa (Ādikāṇḍa, 35; Kiskindhyā Kāṇḍa, 42), not to speak of the Mahābhārata, also points to the early migration of the Aryans. The important mention of the Lauhitya (Brāhmaṇas) in the Nikāyas (Dīgha Nikāya, I, 224; Saṃyutta Nikāya, IV, 117), associated in other works with the Udayācala or Prāggyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa, also preserves an early tradition of the introduction of the Aryan culture into the land.³ Kauṭilya's reference to Aryanised places names like Suvarṇa-Kuṇḍya and Pāralauhitya from Kāmarūpa in connection with economic products,⁴ also points to the conclusion that during the Maurya period an Aryan wave

¹J. Eggeling, S.B.E., XII, Intro., pp.XLI f, 104f; Wæber, Indian Studies, I, pp.170f.

²Dikshitar, I.H.Q, XXI, pp.29-33.

³B.M.Barua, I.H.Q, XXIII, pp.203-5.

⁴Arthasāstra (S.S.tr.) pp.82f.

D.R.Mankad¹ takes Naraka as the first Aryan ruler of Assam, which is most unlikely. The Hara-Gaurīsamvāda associates Bhagadatta with the settlement of hundreds of Brāhmanas in Kāmarūpa and the same credit is given to Jitāri.² Speaking of Bhagadatta's association with the Mahābhārata war, Bhattasali contends that the spread of Aryan culture into Assam may be dated about 1500 B.C.³ The existing sources do no support his contention and his date is too early either for the Mahā-~~Ch~~hārata war or the entry of the Aryans into Assam.

We have already discussed the probable Alpine origin of Naraka-Bhagadatta, who later on may have come under the Aryan influence. We do not rely upon the legend, connecting Naraka with Kṛṣṇa and his divine origin as a result of the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu; we have also rejected Bhagadatta's participation in the Mahābhārata war and have come to the conclusion that he probably flourished in the first century A.D.⁴ But whatever the origin of Naraka and whatever the truth in his association with Kṛṣṇa or Janaka of Videha, it is almost certain that he came under the influence of the Aryans. The Naraka episode in the Kālikā. P. may represent an attempt of some Aryan chief of Videha to spread Aryan culture in Assam.⁵ Bhagadatta was likewise responsible for the

¹J.A.R.S., X, pp.14-22.

²Chaps. VI-VII.

³I.H.Q., XXII, pp.245-52. ⁴Chap. IV, Section I, pp. 200f

⁵J.K.Misra, J.A.R.S., 1944, pp.3f.

settlement of the Aryans. This is indicated even by his Aryanised name. We reject, therefore, the contention of B.M. Barua¹ that Naraka-Bhagadatta had no hand in the Aryanisation of the land. In fact, the entry of the Aryans might have begun from the time of the Brāhmanas and the Epics.

On the basis of epigraphy we have discussed elsewhere the introduction of Aryan culture. Beginning at least with the 6th century A.D. it became the systematic policy of the rulers to create agrahara villages for the Brāhmanas, and this royal policy was largely responsible for the settlement of the Brāhmanas and other high class Aryans in the land.² As a result of the spread of this Aryan culture, Kāmarūpa became a noted centre of Brāhmanical learning and Kāmarūpa Brāhmanas were honoured with similar donations of lands outside the Kingdom.³ Though probably of Alpine origin, the rulers largely contributed to the Aryanisation of the valley and became responsible for the Hinduisation of some tribes. The process started by them continued working throughout the period, so much so that even some petty Tibeto-Burman rulers, as heirs of the Hindu Kings, adopted Hindu culture and came to be looked upon as Kṣatriyas⁴; the example set by them was followed by their subjects. The impress of the Brāhmanical culture of Assam was felt not only in the neighbouring places of India but was also carried under the patronage of its rulers to distant places, like Burma and Southeast Asia.

¹ I.H.Q., XXIII, pp. 200-220.

² Chap. V, Sections 3 and 4 pp. 625-645

³ Ibid., pp. 626-28

⁴ Chap. V, Section 4, pp. 696-97

9. Historical Evidence of the migration of people from Assam to Burma and Southeast Asia - Cultural links between two regions.

Beginning with the foundation of the political dynasty in Assam, a cultural stream was probably carried from the province to distant lands, and we find historical references to the foundation of colonies in Southeast Asia by emigrants from this side of India. Though the weight of evidence indicates that Southeast Asia was colonised chiefly by people emigrating from Southern India, a few people may have gone there through the Assam-Burma route. On the basis of Chang Kein and other sources we have already pointed to regular trade routes leading to China and Southeast Asia through this Assam-Burma route.¹ The foundation of colonies and political Kingdoms in Burma and the neighbouring lands from the side of Assam is also pointed out by Phayre² and Gait.³ Gerini rightly points out that right from the Brahmaputra and Manipur to the Tonkin Gulf we have a continuous chain of states ruled by princes of Indian origin; they were ruling in Tagoy, Upper Pagan and Senwi in Burma, Muanghong, Ching, Rung, Muay-khwan and Dasama in the Lao country and Agrangaza (Hanoi) and Champā in Tonkin and Annam.⁴ The commercial and cultural

¹See above pp - 122 f

²History of Burma, pp 3f

³History of Assam, p 9.

⁴Researches on Ptolemy's Geography, pp 125f.

relations between India and China through the Assam-Burma route are also pointed out by the Periplus and Ptolemy's Geography,¹ confirmed by the accounts of Yuan Chwang.²

Two routes of emigration, one by land through Assam-Burma and the other reaching Indo-China by sea through the Bay of Bengal, therefore, have been suggested by writers on the subject of Indian colonisation of Southeast Asia. R.C.Majumdar has shown that the Indian colonists proceeded to these regions through East Bengal and Assam and established colonies not only in Burma but also in the valleys of the Chindwin, the Irrawaddy, the Salween, the Mekong and the Red River as far as Yunnan. To the east of the hills bordering on Manipur there was the Hindu Kingdom of Ta-tsin; about 150 miles further east, beyond the Chindwin, was another Kingdom just to the north of Ngan-si. In Yunnan was the Kingdom of Nan-chao or Tali. The whole of Upper Burma was colonised by the Indians who established Kingdoms at Prome, Pagan, Tagaung and other places. Similar Kingdoms existed in Laos, in Central Indo-China. The colonists, proceeding by sea established Kingdoms in Arakan, Lower Burma, Malaya Peninsula, Siam, Cambodia, Cochin China and Annam on the main land, and in the islands of Sumatra, Java, Borneo and Bali in the East Indies.³

¹See above, pp - 120f

²Ibid, pp - 122f

³R.C.Majumdar, Hindu Colonies in the Far East, pp 12-13, 226-27; Ancient Indian Colonies in the Far East, I.Campā (Intro).

Gait points out that an 'Indian King Samuda, who according to Forlong was ruling in Upper Burma in 105 A.D. must have proceeded thither through Assam and so must the Hindus who led the Tchampās or Shāns in their conquest of the mouths of the Mekong in 280 A.D.'¹ It is possible that Samuda belonged to a ruling family in Assam. The Kingdom of Champā is said to have been established by a Hindu King, Śrī Māra in the second century A.D.² Śrī Māra, as pointed out by Finot, is a restored reading. It is suggested that the name is identical with the Saumārapīṭha and the dynasty of the same name in Assam.³ But it is doubtful, because the name Saumārapīṭha had a later origin under the Tāntrik system. Many Hindu dynasties are associated with the name of Kaundīnya. The Chinese History of the Liang Dynasty (A.D. 502-556) referring to the founder of the dynasty in Bali states thus: 'The King's family name is Kaundīnya and he never before had any intercourse with China - The King uses a texture of flowered silk wrapped round his body -'⁴ The Hindu Kingdom of Cambodia, called Fu-nan in Chinese is

¹History of Assam, p.9.

²Hindu Colonies in the Far East, p.99.

³K.L.Barua, J.A.R.S., VII, pp.57f.

⁴Hindu Colonies pp, 22-23. The founder of a dynasty in Borneo about the 4th century A.D. was also Kaundīnya. (Hindu Colonies, p.21).

said to have been established by one Huen-tien about the first century A.D. Majumdar thinks that the name stands for Kaundīnya.¹ Towards the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century A.D., the throne was occupied by one Kiao-chen-ju or Kaundīnya. The history of the Liang Dynasty states that Kaundīnya was a Brāhmaṇa and an inhabitant of India.² It is significant that there is one Kundīna near Sadiyā in Assam. It is possible that the founders of the dynasties in Bali and Cambodia or Kāmbuja were Brāhmaṇas from Kundīna; because Kaundīnya is a gotra name³ and it occurs in the Nidhanpur grant of Bhāskara.⁴ The Mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa preserves traditions of the rulers of Kāmarūpa-Kūla, who were ruling in the Indian Archipelago and Further India from early times.⁵ We have no details about their accounts; but it is possible that the rulers were related to the Kings of Kāmarūpa. They were probably Alpine Brāhmaṇas like the Kings of Bali, Cambodia and other places.⁶

These stray references indicate that both politically and culturally the ancient 'history of Kāmarūpa seems inseparably connected also with the ancient history of Burma,

¹Hindu Colonies, p.155

²Ibid, p.157.

³Vasu, Social History of Kāmarūpa, III, pp.142-44.

⁴The Last Plate.

⁵Ed. T.G.Śāstri, VV 636-640; K.P.Jayaswal, The Imperial History of India, p.32.

⁶K.L.Barua, J.A.R.S., VII, pp.57-63.

Arakan and Further India as with different countries in India, including the Deccan.¹ If not politically, at least culturally, the ruling dynasty of Assam had important links with the people of Southeast Asia, and exerted its influence over them by sending out emigrants. Vasu is right in suggesting that 'the influence of the Bhauma dynasty had made itself felt in distant Burma before it began to spread in Eastern India. The origin of the grand architectural remains of the Saivas which still exist in Kāmbhoja or Cambodia and Mahā Champā or Annam should be traced to the Brāhmiṇ ascendancy which was firmly established by the Saiva Kings of the Bhauma dynasty.'²

10. Conclusion: In spite of the fact that Assam received various racial elements, including the Alpine-Aryans, the province remained predominantly, as now, a land of Tibeto-Burmans of the Indo-Chinese stock. This is evident at least on linguistic grounds. Assamese, spoken in the valley is the only Indo-Aryan language; but the Austric and the Tibeto-Burman elements have greatly contributed both to the language and to the culture of Assam. Though the process of Hinduisation of the non-Aryan tribes went on from early times,³ the converts were very few and the province remained,

¹B.M. Barua, I.H.Q., XXIII, pp.200-220.

²Social History of Kāmarūpa, III, pp.13f.

³Gait., History of Assam, pp.8f.

therefore, a land of heterogeneous racial strains with linguistic divergences. The opinion of B.K.Barua that 'Assam should be racially and linguistically homogeneous, that is to say, its inhabitants form a distinct entity among the people of India, united by a common tongue, an Aryan dialect of great antiquity,'¹ does not find justification from the existing facts. At no time in history has Assam been homogeneous and the present state of affairs also points in the other direction. The racial and linguistic homogeneity of Assam, seem, on the face of it, an impossibility. New light will be thrown on the problem by a more systematic study based on further more scientific field work.

Our curiosity is raised not so much by the effects of and contributions made by the different elements as by the question of how at different periods of Assam's history she became a refuge of so many peoples. In fact, she is one of the few places in India, which may be 'looked upon as a federation hall, where the most ancient and the most modern, the most antiquated and the most up to date, are found to meet together upon terms of perfect cordiality. The followers of all schools of philosophy - the Vedic, Paurānic and the Tāntrik have thrived here equally well, and the people of all races, Aryans and non-Aryans, Hindus and non-Hindus, have equally contributed to the building up of the social fabric of Kāmarūpa. In a word, with the ancient history of

¹Cultural History of Assam, I, p.3.

this glorious land is indissolubly bound up the social, religious and the national history of the whole of India.¹ The spirit of independence of the various elements may be taken as one of the contributions, made to Indian culture, and the Assamese culture, composed of the same elements, has got an impress of independent character.

¹N.N.Vasu, Social History of Kāmarūpa, I, pp.1-2.

TABLE 1.

Specimens of Dialects showing Khāsi-Mon-Khmer Affinity					
English	Khāsi	Mon	Mundari	Santali	Ho
One	Uwei	Mway	Miād	Mi'	Miād
Eye	Ka Khymat	Met	Me'd	Me	Met
I	Nga	Awai	Ing, Āing	Ing	Ing, Aing
Man	Ubriu	Karu	Horo	Har	Ho, Horo
Sun	Ka sngi	Tangway	Singi	Singehānde	Singi

TABLE 2.

Specimens of Dialects of the North-Assam Branch.					
English	Akā	Dafoulā	Miri	Ābar	Mishmi
One	A	Ākin	Āka	Āko	EKhing
Eye	Ni	Nyōk	Āmik	Āming	Ma-lom
I	Nga, Nya, Na	Ngo	Nga	Ngo	Hā
Man	Nunā	Bāngi	Āmi	Āmie	Nme, Name Male, Mowa
Sun	Jū	Dani	Danyī	Āreng	Ring, Ring-nging

TABLE 3.

Specimens of Dialects of the Nagā Group.					
English	Āngāmi	Semā	Rengmā	Lhota	Chāng
One	Po	Lāki	Me, Kāmmē	Ekhā	Chi
Eye	Mha, Mhi, Mhu	Āngniti	Aychte, Nghe	Omhyek	Nyuk
I	Ā	Ngī	Āle, Afe	Ā, Ai, Ākhā	Ngai bri, Ungi, Ngo
Man	Mā, Themā	Timi, Mi	Tame	Kyo	Miyet
Sun	Tināki	Ātsinkhe	Iyeka	Eng	Chāna

TABLE 4.

Specimens of Dialects of the Nagā-Bodo-Kuki Sub-Groups.					
English	Mikir	Kacha	Khoirāo	Tangkul	Maring
One	Īsi, Ishih	Kāt	Khat	Khatka	Khat
Eye	Āmek	Mik	Mik	Mik	Mit
I	Ne	Ānūi	Hai	I	Kai
Man	Ārleing	Minā	Mi, Chalpāmi	Mayārno	Napāwa, Thami
Sun	Ārnī	Tingnai	Tamik	Chimik	Mūmit

TABLE 5

Specimens of Dialects of the Kuki-Lushāi - Meithei - Chin Groups.

English	Meithei	Thado	Lushāi	Hrangkul	Kachin
One	Amā	Khat	PaKhot	EnKāt	Ngai mā, Aimā
Eye	Mit	KāMit	Mit	Mit	MĪ
I	Ai	Keima	Keimā	Gemā	Ngai
Man	Mi, Nipā	Mi, Pasal	Mipā	MĪrim	Wa, Lushā.
Sun	Namit	Ni, Nisā	Nī	Mīsā, Nīsā	Jān

TABLE 6.

Specimens of Dialects of the Bodo Group.

English	Gāro	Mech	Lālung	Koch	Plain and Hill Kachāri
One	Sā	Shāse, Māse	Kichā	Gasak, Goisā	Se, Sui, Māshī
Eye	Mikron	Mogan	Mu	Mukrong	Megan, Mū.
I	Āngā	Āng	Āng	Āngā, Ān	Āng, Ang
Man	Mānde	Mānshā	Libing	Māndai, Marok	Munshā, Shūbāng.
Sun	Sāl	Sān	Sāla	Sōl	Sān, Shān

CHAPTER IV

POLITICAL HISTORY

Section 1.

The Period of Traditional Accounts and
Early History.

The political history of Ancient Assam is wrapped up with legends, associated with the rulers of Prāggyotisa and Kāmarūpa. We attempt to find a connected history of the period, which can be relied upon to a certain extent. The accounts are not so scanty as confused and scattered, and the main difficulty lies in the absence of archaeological corroboration. We must, however, try to forge a connecting link between this obscure period and the beginning of the truly historical one. The association of some of the earliest rulers with Prāggyotisa, (the name of both the capital and the Kingdom, an Aryan or Aryanised name, which finds mention as early as the Śāṅkhyāyana Grhya Samgraha¹ and the Rāmāyana²,) is a clear indication of the contact of Aryan and non-Aryan cultures from early times. The legends apparently depict the history of a period, when the so-called non-Aryan chiefs came under the influence of the Aryans.

The legends, connected with political history, begin some time before Naraka, and, if they are to be believed, the period began with the Kirāta chiefs of Mongolian

¹Chap. II, 38.

²Ādikānda, 35.

affinity, having probably an admixture of Alpine blood; because the foundation of the Kirāta rule happened at a time when the Alpines may have already settled in Eastern India.¹ We have dealt with the origin and habitat of the Kirātas elsewhere.² The earliest King was a demon, Mahiraṅgadānava, who had his capital at Mairānka. The name suggests an Aryanisation of some Austric formation, with "ong", meaning water. The probable historical character of the chief seems to be indicated by the existence of a hill, Mairānkaparvata near modern Gauhati; but how and when the Kingdom was established are not known. He was succeeded by Haṭaka, Sambara, Ratna and Ghatakāśura who is said to have been killed by Naraka with Kṛṣṇa's help, when Naraka established a new line in Prāgjyotiṣa. Bhagadatta followed him, succeeded by Dharmapāla, Kāmapāla and others ruling for 19 generations. Then came a King of another dynasty, founded by Mādhava, who came from the west, and whose son Lakṣmīpāla invaded Gauḍa. His son Subāhu is said to have retired to the Himalayas and was succeeded by his minister Sumāli, followed by others including 21 Kings. Then came a Kṣatriya, named Jitāri from the Drāviḍa country, who took the name of Dharmapāla and brought to Assam several families of Brāhmanas and Kāyasthas from Kanarij and Gauḍa. His son Satānika or Ratnapāla invaded Gauḍa and was succeeded by his son Somapāla. This dynasty ruled for 8 generations, the

¹Chap. III, pp. 156f

²Ibid., pp. 144f

last being Rāmacandra whose son Śasānka or Ārimatta became the ruler of the four pīṭhas and raised a rampart in Vaidargarh. He was killed by Preṅguā, who in turn, was killed by Ārimatta's son Gajānka, who was succeeded by Sukrānka and Mṛgānka. Ārimatta's descendants ruled for four generations and with the death of Mṛgānka, the Kingdom was divided into many parts. This, in brief, is the kernel of the accounts, given in the Hara-Gaurīsamvāda and other works.¹

It appears from the accounts that the Mānava dynasty of the Kirāta chief Mahiraṅga was put an end to by Naraka, who established himself in Prāggyotiṣa after killing Ghaṭaka.² Before examining the details connected with the origin of Naraka, the reference to some of which has already been made³, we must consider the historicity of the Bhauma dynasty from epigraphy. We must also admit that nothing definite may be gathered about the history and chronology of Naraka from the said source. The Doobi grant refers to Naraka, Bhagadatta and Vajradatta⁴. The Nidhanpur grant states that Naraka, the chief of the rulers of the earth, was the son of Viṣṇu, who, assuming the form of the Boar, lifted up the earth, and from whom was born Bhagadatta, the friend of Indra, who challenged Indra in battle and who was famous for his conquests.⁵ The Tezpur grant refers to Naraka and his two

¹S.K.Bhūñyā, Assamese Historical Literature, Calcutta, 1929.

²Kālikā P. Chaps. 36-42; Yoginī Tantra (Cal.ed.) p.81

³See Chap. III, pp. 160f

⁴W2-4.

⁵W4-5.

sons, Bhagadatta and Vajradatta.¹ The Nowgong grant states that Naraka was the son of Viṣṇu, who deprived Indra of his glory and stole away Aditi's jewels, and who, having conquered Prāggyotiṣa, took up his residence there. His son Bhagadatta was an unique hero, whose younger brother was Vajradatta.² The Bargāon grant mentions Naraka, Bhagadatta and Vajradatta.³ The same reference occurs in the Gauhāti grant; but here Vajradatta is made the son of Bhagadatta.⁴ The Khonāmukhi⁵, the Śubhāṅkarapāṭaka⁶ and the Puṣpabhadra grant⁷ bear the same evidence. As we have stated, the references may not prove the historicity of Naraka; but that the Bhauma dynasty was founded by some chief cannot be doubted, and the evidence is important in the sense that all the rulers of the historical period trace their connection from the same dynasty.

Regarding the origin of Naraka, we have suggested his Alpine origin and his subsequent association of the Aryan culture.⁸ The Kālikā. P. itself refers to the establishment

¹W3-6.

²W3-8.

³W3-8.

⁴W5-8.

⁵W2-3.

⁶V4.

⁷V3.

⁸See Chap. III, pp. 160f

of the Aryans by him. It further states that Naraka, being brought up in Videha, was regarded as a Kṣatriya and that Gautama, the priest of Janaka, performed the Kesavapanā ceremony of Naraka according to Vedic rites. He is also said to have been well-versed in the Vedas and devoted to the duties of the twice-born.¹ Some writers like Vasu² and others ascribe a Dravidian or Phoenician origin to Naraka and his dynasty; but this theory is fantastic. K.L. Barua also contends that Kāmarūpa was a Dravidian kingdom about the time of the Mahābhārata war and that the rulers of the dynasty of Naraka were Dravidian, like the Aikṣvākus of Ayodhyā and the Janakas of Videha.³ He finds support for his contention in a tradition that Naraka was the worshipper of the phallus in the temple of Kāmākhyā.⁴ We have discussed the origin of the cult elsewhere; the worship of the phallus in the temple of Kāmākhyā may be associated with some pre-Aryan Austric culture,⁵ and this does not prove the Dravidian origin of Naraka. It is yet to be proved whether Naraka, who is said to have introduced the Devī worship in Kāmākhyā⁶ was the same as Naraka, associated with Janaka. Barua himself admits that 'as the earliest Aryan colonists in Assam were

¹Kālikā P., chap. 38

²Social History of Kāmarūpa, I, pp.121f

³E.H.K., pp 25f

⁴Ibid, 29f

⁵B.K. Kakati, Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā, pp.35f

⁶Kālikā, p. chap.38

the Kalitās, the Kings of the Naraka line were probably Aryan Kalitās. Whatever may have been the actual origin of Naraka and his descendants, there is no doubt that the Brāhmanas entolled them as Aryan Kṣatriyas and made them perform the various caste ceremonies, usually observed by Kṣatriyas.¹ It is reasonable to hold that, as the Kalitās were the Alpines with an admixture of Aryan blood², Naraka had also the same origin.³

It is, therefore, unlikely that the first political dynasty established in Assam was a Dravidian one.

It is equally absurd to suppose a purely Mongolian domination of Assam during this early period, when the Tibeto-Burmans could hardly establish themselves in the land.⁴ The survival of such a domination and rule, as indicated by the occurrence of the remnants of their language and culture in the names of places and rivers,⁵ is to be attributed to a latter period, just prior to the coming of the Āhoms.⁶ The rule of the Kirātas established by Mahiravīga, belongs certainly to an earlier period and it did not amount to more than the foundation of a small principality; while the dynasty of Naraka that followed it can reasonably be called the first political dynasty in Assam

¹E.H.K., pp.25f

²Chap.III, pp 165-166

³See Gait for different views about Naraka's origin.
(History of Assam, p.14)

⁴See Chap. III, pp -135f

⁵Gait, History of Assam, pp.6f ⁶See section 4, pp- 423-24

Besides the Kālikā P. and the Yoginī Tantra, other works make profuse reference to Naraka. The Kalika P. giving the genealogy of the family states that Naraka made the asura Hayagrīva his commander-in-chief and appointed Muḍu to defend Prāgiyotiṣa. He married Māyā, the daughter of the king of Vidarbha; he defeated Indra and took away Adīṭi's earrings. Kṛṣṇa subsequently killed him and installed Bhagadatta on the throne.¹ The Viṣṇu Purāṇa relates how Kṛṣṇa killed Muḍu and Naraka.² The same reference is found in the Bhāgavata P.³ The association ^{of Naraka} with the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu and the king of Videha, who is said in the Kālikā P. to have adopted him, has, however, made the question a difficult one. The Varāha incarnation episode is certainly a myth and this, therefore, is to be explained in conjunction with the reference made in the Kiskindhyā Kāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa to the location of the city of Prāgjyotiṣa in the Varāha mountain, where Naraka is said to have taken his abode.⁴ Explaining the origin of Naraka out of this incarnation, B.M. Barua contends that Naraka or the Narakas were autochthones, born of Bhūmi or in a place lying adjacent to the Varāha peak of the Himalayas.⁵

¹Kālikā P. Chaps. 36-42

²Chap. XXIX

³Bhāgavata P. (Calcutta Ed.), X

⁴Chap. 42

⁵I.H.Q., XXIII, pp.200f

The association of Naraka with the mountainous regions is also indicated by other sources. The Varāhapurāṇa states that in the Himalayan region there was a temple of Kokāmukha-svāmin, dedicated to Viṣṇu. The Brahmapurāṇa (VV114-115) states that Naraka, who was born as a result of the union of Viṣṇu with Mahī and Chāyā and was made the ruler of Prāgjyotiṣa, was born in the Kokāmukhatīrtha.¹ So both the Epic and the Paurāṇic evidences indicate that Naraka was born in some hilly region, probably at the foot of the Himalayas.

It is significant that Naraka is associated with the kingdom of Videha which also very likely formed part of the Alpine-Iranian culture in Eastern India.² Explaining his association with Janaka, D.R. Mankad contends that Naraka was either the adopted son of Janaka or his irregular son through Bhūmi.³ But the explanation is unlikely. As we have stated, the Varāha incarnation is a myth; it possibly recalls the story of Naraka's birth in some hilly region of Videha or Assam and his association with Bhūmi indicates the high antiquity of his Alpine origin. In any case, if Naraka was the contemporary of Janaka, he flourished during the period of the Rāmāyaṇa.

Another difficulty arises from the fact that Naraka is associated with both Rāma and Kṛṣṇa in the Kālikā P. and is made to rule from the end of the Tretā to the Dvāpara Yuga, which is absurd. It is, therefore, suggested that Naraka,

¹ See H.C. Chandhury. B.C. Law Volume, Pt.I, pp.89-90; Chap.140

² Spooner, J.R.A.S., 1915, II, pp. 4 33f.

³ J. A.R.S, X, pp. 14-22

like Janaka¹, was a dynastic title and that he belonged to the latter's family.² But the Naraka of his time and therefore that of Rāma was certainly different from the Naraka, killed by Kṛṣṇa. The virtuous and wicked character of the same person as given in the same purāna cannot refer to the same Naraka. The first Naraka, who came under the influence of Aryan culture and introduced Devī worship, was different from Naraka of the latter part of the story. The latter might have been the last Naraka who took to non-Aryan habits and was called an asura or a mleecha;³ he is associated also with Bāna of S'onita-pura (modern Tezpur).

The story of the association of Naraka with Bāna is given in a number of sources besides the Kālikā P. The story of Bāna gives another interesting episode in connection with the marriage of his daughter Uṣā with Anirudha, grandson of Kṛṣṇa.⁴ He is said to have been a great devotee of Śiva and traces his origin from Marīci, Kāśyapa, Hiraṇya-Kaśipu, Prahāda, Virocana and Bali. The origin of Bāna again is controversial. Sonitapura is located by Vasu somewhere in Sindh and Bāna is said to have come to Saumāra in Assam and established the Saumāra dynasty, having a Dravidian-Sumerian origin. It is further held that it was through the Saumāra

¹Raychaudhuri, P.H.A.J. (3rd ed.) pp 36f

²J.A.R. S.X pp 14f

³Ibid

⁴Viṣṇu Purāna, BKI, XXI, V, XXXII-XXIII; Śrīmadbhāgavatam X, Chap. 62.

dynasty of Bāna that phallic worship was established in Assam.¹ We shall show that none of Vasu's contentions is tenable. Kṣemendra in his *Abhidhānacintāmaṇi*² mentions Devīkoṭa, Uṣāvana, Koṭīvarṣa and Śonitapura as other names of Bānapura. On the basis of Cunningham's report³, Bhandarkar locates Bāna's capital in North Bengal (Dinājpur)⁴. But this is wrong. The Śāntiparva of the Mahābhārata (chap. 399, vv90-9) locates Bāna's capital as being contiguous with Prāggyotiṣa. The association of Naraka's capital with that of Bāna also indicates their close proximity. P. Bhattacharya points out that Bāna's kingdom might have extended from Assam to North Bengal.⁵ In any case it is absurd to suppose that the Saumāradyasty and Śonitapura existed somewhere in Sindh and Bāna's family ruled there. Phallic worship might have been introduced in Assam by the Austriacs and the Alpines, and the credit should not entirely be given to the Dravidians. The name Saumāra can hardly be attributed either to Sumerian or Dravidian origin. It is associated with the Saumārapiṭha of the Tantras of a much later time. If Bāna was a contemporary of Naraka or at least of the last Naraka, and therefore of Kṛṣṇa, the association of both the rulers may be explained

¹Social History of Kāmarūpa, I., pp 100-103.

²Abhidhānacintāmaṇi, IV, V977; also Trikāṇḍa, II, 197.

³A.S.J. Report, XV, p.95

⁴A.B.O.R.J., XII, pp 103f

⁵J.A.S.B. (N.S.) V. pp 19-20

on the supposition that Bānāsura was also an Alpine chief who founded another kingdom in Sonitapura or modern Tezpur, and took to non-Aryan habits. There is no reason to believe that Naraka's taking to non-Aryan habits was all due to the evil influence of Bāna. The historical character of Bāna seems to be indicated by the remains of Agnigarh, Agniparvata, and other remains in Tezpur,¹ as is that of Naraka by the existence of a village called Narakāsuraḡāon near Gauhāti. It is likely that like Narakas there were also Bānas.² The theory of the existence of more than one Naraka seems also to explain to a certain extent the gap between the successors of Naraka and the first historical ruler of the Varman line in the 4th century A.D. The historicity of both Kṛṣṇa and Janaka is no longer disputed, as they find mention in the later Vedic literature like the Upaniṣads.³ Though most of the legends about them are unreliable, it is evident that they flourished during the pre-Buddhistic period. To the same age may belong Naraka or the Narakas and it is likely that Bhagadatta was the son of the last Naraka, if the name Bhagadatta itself did not stand for a dynastic title.⁴

There is good reason for believing that Bhagadatta was also an Aryanised name. There is little to doubt that he was

¹J.A.S.B. V, pp 19-20.

²J.A.R.S. X, pp 14-22

³See Chap. V, Section 4, pp 63-64.

4. K. S. (Intro) pp 2-3

an Alpine chief, associated with the Iranian-Magian culture.¹ The historicity of the prince can be proved by a number of sources. He is significantly mentioned in almost all the chapters of the Mahābhārata and made to participate in the Mahābhārata war, fighting on the side of the Kurus because of his marriage relations with Duryodhana. As given in the Sabhāparva, he was the friend of Kuru and amighty warrior. In the Udyoga Parva he is said to have been equal in contest with Arjuna. In the Sabhāparva again he is designated as Śiva's friend and not inferior even to Indra in battle. The same source and the Udyogaparva refer to his troops of Cīnas and Kirātas, glittering with gold and dwelling in the marshy regions near the sea, i.e. in Southeast Bengal and Western Assam. It appears probable that before the Kuru-Pāṇḍavas came to prominence, Jarāsandha, who is described in the Ādiparva of the Mahābhārata along with Bhagadatta as an asura in his previous birth, established his sway in Magadha, and among his vassals we find mention of Vāsudeva of Puṇḍra and Bhagadatta of Prāggyotiṣa. The Pāṇḍavas, in order to raise Yudhiṣṭhira to the status of a samrāt, had to deal first of all with Jarāsandha, and when they started their digvijaya some petty chiefs of Northern India voluntarily submitted to them. Among the states joining their samrājya we find mention of Chedi, Magadha, Puṇḍra, Tāmralipti, and Suhana (West Bengal) including Prāggyotiṣa. Bhagadatta, though at

¹Spooner, I.R.A.S. 1915, II, pp 433f

first an ally of the Pāṇḍavas, had to join the confederacy formed against them because of his marriage alliance with the Kurus, and the Pāṇḍavas found in him a formidable warrior. In the Sabhā parva¹ he is said to have been defeated by Arjuna after a fight lasting for eight days. The Udyoga Parva² states that he, with his followers, the Cīnas and the Kirātas, went to help Duryodhana. The Droṇaparva³ refers to his exploits and courage, and tells how he rescued Duryodhana from the clutches of Bhīma and how he was at last killed by Arjuna. Not only the Mahābhārata but also other works like the Kālikā P. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Viṣṇu Purāṇa, the Harṣacarita⁴ and the Rājatarāṅgiṇī make important mention of his career. We shall shortly discuss his chronology.

What became of Kāmarūpa after Bhagadatta's death is uncertain. It is suggested that his immediate successors came under the political supremacy of the successors of the Pāṇḍavas and subsequently of Magadha after the extinction of their rule. The Kālikā P. mentions four sons of Naraka: Bhagadatta, Mahāsīrṣa, Madhavan and Sumāli, but epigraphy, already referred to, mentions only Vajradatta after Bhagadatta. The Harṣacarita mentions Priṣpadatta and Vajradatta after their ancestors. In the Karṇa Parva⁵

¹XXVI - XXVII

²XVIII

³XXVI-XXX

⁴H.C. (Cowell), p.217

⁵Chap. V.

there is a mention of certain Kṛtaprajña, the son of Bhagadatta, who is said to have been killed in the war by Nakula (Bhagadatta-suto rājan Kṛtaprajño mahābalaḥ - Nakulena nipātitaḥ) In the epigraphs there is no mention of these princes except Vajradatta, who in the Aśvamedha parva¹ is said to have fought for three days with Anjuna. The same reference is found in the Doobi, Nidhanpur and Gauhati grants. But it is uncertain whether Vajradatta was either the son or brother of Bhagadatta; because while in the inscriptions of Bhāskara², he is mentioned as his son, in those of Vanamāla³, Balavarman⁴, and Ratnapāla⁵, he is called the brother of Bhagadatta. It is more probable that Vajradatta was the son of Bhagadatta like Priṣpadatta, and both the brothers might have accompanied the father to the Mahābhārata war, if Bhagadatta actually fought in the war. It appears that the other three sons of Naraka did not rule. If Priṣpadatta may be identical with Kṛtaprajña of the Karna-parva⁶, it appears that he died as a prince and Vajradatta therefore succeeded Bhagadatta.

The genealogy of the rulers after Vajradatta is conflicting. According to one account⁷, Bhagadatta was succeeded

¹LXXV - LXXVI

²Doobi grant, V4; Nidhanpur grant, V5; Gauhati grant, V8

³Tezpur grant, V6

⁴Nowgong grant, V8

⁵Bargāong grant, V8

⁶K.S. (Intro), pp.10-11; E.H.K. p.35

⁷Hara-Gaṇṭhī-samvāda, chaps. VI-VII (Des.Cat.Ass.M.S.No54)

by Dharmapāla, Kāmapāla and others extending for 19 generations with 24 or 25 kings, mentioned by the initial letters of their names. The account given in the HaraGaurīvilāsa states that Bhagadatta was followed by Dharmapāla and Candrapāla, whose son was Ārimatta who had three daughters, Dharmavātī, Avanti and Jayantī. This source has rather mixed up rulers of different families; for Ārimatta, as we shall show, belonged to a different family. Epigraphy gives a list of rulers of the Pāṭa line after the family of Śālastambha. The difficulty lies in their identification. The chronicles give a list of 17 Pāṭa rulers such as Jayantapāla, Cakrapāla, Bhūmipāla, Premapāla, Pakṣapāla, Dakṣapāla, Candrapāla, Nārāyaṇa Pāla, Madhupāla, Indrapāla, Siṃhapāla, Kṛṣṇapāla, Supāla, Gandhapāla, Mādhavapāla, Śyāmapāla and Lakṣmīpāla who is said, to have been succeeded by Subāhu and his minister Sumāti. The account seems to have mentioned certain princes of the family of Jitāri before the family of Mādhaba, succeeded by Jitāri and his followers, the Pālas and others. Jenkins gives the list as Japandhupāla, Haripāla, Dharmapāla, Rāmapāla, Pakṣapāla, Candrapāla, Nārāyaṇapāla, Mantrīpāla, Hainapāla, Śyāmapāla, Matsyapāla, Sriṣpāla, Gandhapāla, Mādhavapāla and Lakṣmīpāla.¹ These Pāla kings may have belonged to different families and ruled in different places.

One tradition makes Subāhu to have been born in the 19th generation from Naraka, and he is said to have retired

¹J.A.S.B. IX, II, pp 766f

to the Himalayas. He was succeeded by his son Suparuā, followed by a minister, who killed Suparuā. We shall show that Subāhu, who fought with one Vikramāditya, belonged to the line of Mādhava who came from the west.

The Yoginī Tantra mentions one king named Devesvara, who was a Śūdra, and who is said to have ruled in Kāmarūpa at the commencement of the Śaka era. He is said to have spread Buddhism in Kāmarūpa and propagated the worship of Kāmākhyā. The identification of this prince is doubtful.

The same work mentions one Nāgasarikara of the Nāgākhyā line who is said to have been born of the Karatoyā in about 378 A.D. and founded a dynasty, which lasted for 400 years. His capital was above the Nāgasarikara temple at Pratapāgarh in Viśvanātha. Muslim sources, however, mention a king named Sarikal or Sarikaldib from the country to the east of Karatoyā or Kāmarūpa, who is said to have overthrown one Kidar Brāhmin, a ruler of Northern India. Other sources also refer to the same event.¹ One Afrasiab of Turan or Scythia is said to have defeated Saṅkal. On the basis of Firdusi, A. Salam writes that Saṅkal is associated with the adventure of Bahram Gaur, a Persian ruler.² Kidar Brāhmin is identified by some with Kidara Kushan Shah of Gāndhāra and placed in the 4th century A.D.³ The death of Saṅkal

¹Dawson Elliot History of India, VI, p.533; History of the Rise of the Mahammadan power in India. (Tr. by J. Briggs, I, 1908, pp. LXIX-LXX).

²Riyāz-us-Salātin, p.56.

³D. Neog, J.A.R.S., VII, pp.1-4.

again is attributed to Rustam. Bahram Gaur may have been Bahram III and it appears that the Kushan Satrap of Gāndhāra aided Bahram III.¹ If Sankal may be placed in the 4th century A.D., he may be identical with Nāga-Sankara who as a feudatory of the Guptas might have fought with Gāndhāra. In any case nothing definite can be gathered either from the Assamese chronicles or the Muslim sources about his Kingdom and successors and how he was related to the other ruling families. He was probably a minor chief ruling in some part of Western Assam.

According to another account Jitāri, who is said to have come from the Drāviḍa country, was succeeded by Suvatī, Padmanārāyaṇa, Candranārāyaṇa, Mahendranārāyaṇa, Gajendranārāyaṇa, Prānanārāyaṇa, Jaṣanārāyaṇa, Kṣovanārāyaṇa and Rāmacandra.² Prasiddhanārāyaṇa's Vamsāvati states that Rāmacandra was the 14th in descent from Jitāri. Hannay identifies Jitāri with Dharmapāla and holds that his kingdom was in Central Assam and the dynasty became extinct with Sukrāṅka.³ The identification, as we shall show, is hardly tenable. To follow the narrative, one Ārimatta is said to have been born of the princess of the house of Rāmacandra. According to the Vamsāvati of Prasiddhanārāyaṇa, he ruled at

¹K.L.Barua, J.A.R.S., VI, pp.37-53; Ibid, VII, pp.4-5.

²See J.A.S.B., IX, II, pp.766f; Gait, J.A.S.B. LXII, I, pp.268f

³J.A.S.B., 1848, p.464.

Vaidargarh until S.E.1160-A.D.1238. In the opinion of Gunābhirām Barua he was of the Nāgākhyā line and further holds that the tradition also ascribes the foundation of Vaidargarh in Betna in Kāmarūpa to Phānguā.

A number of traditions centre round Ārimatta and it appears that he was an important ruler. The genealogy given in the Dīpikācaṇḍī of Puruṣoṭtama Gajapati¹, mentions a number of rulers including one Haravinda whose capital was at Gandraprabhā on the Lohita. He was succeeded by his son Kusāraṅga and had his capital at Ratnapura and he is said to have ruled in Kāmarūpa, Gauḍa, Magadha and Jaintiā. It also refers to

¹Des. Cat. Assam. M.S. (No.42).

a king, Śrūtasena, the ruler of Saumārapīṭha, whose wife was Candramatī and whose capital was at Manapura on the Brahmaputra. The genealogy of the Rājās of Dimaruā¹ states that one Somapāla of Pratāpapura married Harmatī who being united with the Brahmaputra gave birth to Ārimatta. In one of his exploits he is said to have killed his father and in order to atone for his sin, he went to Brahmakuṇḍa, but the dead body of his father had to be cremated somewhere near Sadiyā, and subsequently he visited the Kuṇḍa with his father's ashes. The people of Pratāpapura along with another son of Somapāla went to Dimaruā and settled there. The account given in the Bhūñyār-Piṭhi states that Ratnapura in the Mājuli was founded by one Rariga and one of his descendants, Ariga was killed while fighting in the Mahābhārata war. Yudhiṣṭhira and his descendants are said to have ruled in Kāmarūpa down to Pratāpa, who was succeeded by his son Mayamatta in Ratnapura, who had two sons, Ārimatta and Nāgamatta and a daughter. Mayamatta's kingdom was divided between his two sons, and in the western part Ārimatta's minister, Samudra built the city of Viśvanātha. Mayamatta was killed by Ārimatta while he was hunting. Ārimatta then placed his minister in charge of the kingdom with Manohara, the son of the minister at Viśvanātha and after his pilgrimage Ārimatta drowned himself in the Dikhan river. The minister and his son ruled for some time in

¹Gait, Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam, 1897.

Viśvanātha and thereafter the latter's daughter, Lakṣmī, who had two sons Śantanu and Śāmanta, both having twelve sons and each reigning for some time.

According to another tradition Mayūradhvaja of the race of Śiva ruled the territory between Viśvanātha and Śuvasrī and had his capital at Ratnāvatiṭpura. His son Tāmradhvaja followed him, who was succeeded by Pratāpavīya, who married Harmatī, daughter of Haravinda, a descendant of Irābhaṭṭa of Saumāra and as a result of her union with the Brahmaputra, Ārimatta was born at Viśvanātha, who extended his kingdom to Bhutan and Nepal, till at last he killed his father and committed suicide. By another tradition, Ārimatta is said to have been defeated and killed by Phenguā who built a fortification, called Phenguāgarh in the Dhamdhamā mouza in Kāmarūpa.

Ārimatta is also known as Śāsārika, whose son Ratnasimha or Gajānka killed his father's murderer, Phenguā. In the Sāhāri mouza in Nowgong are the remains of a fort, known as Jaṅgalgarh, attributed to Jaṅgalvatāhu, another son of Ārimatta. He is said to have been defeated by the Kachāris and drowned himself in the Kalang river. It may be that Ratnasimha, Jaṅgalvatāhu and Gajānka stand for the same person. Gajānka was succeeded by Śukrānka and Mṛgānka with whose death Kāmarūpa was divided into many parts.

Before entering into the question of the identification of the rulers of the various accounts, we must make a brief reference to the kingdom of Bhīsmaka of the Sadiyā region.

in the extreme north-eastern corner of Assam. There are many archaeological remains in the area, some of which are attributed to Bhīṣmaka and Śisúpāla.¹ The story of Bhīṣmaka and his daughter Rukmini is narrated in the Bhāgavata and the Viṣṇupurāṇas.² It is also mentioned in the Rukmiṇī-Harāṇa of Śarīkaradva. The story relates how, in spite of the fact that Rukmiṇī had to her given in marriage to Śisúpāla, Kṛṣṇa came there and married her. It is strange as well as significant that Kṛṣṇa came such a long way to a distant place like Sadiyā for the daughter of Bhīṣmaka. Bhīṣmaka's capital lies at a place where a colony of the Kalitās is believed to have settled.³ The story about Kṛṣṇa's exploits may be a myth, but that there was a prince of the name of Bhīṣmaka is very probable. He was probably a chief of the Alpines. The story may have its origin in the invasion by some Aryan prince of distant Kāmarūpa during the period when Naraka flourished and was associated with Kṛṣṇa or Janaka of Videha.

To examine the accounts given in the chronicles, we divide the rulers into four main different families, though the fact remains that there were probably other minor chiefs ruling in different parts of the country at different times and contemporaneously with the main families. The families are those of Naraka-Bhagadatta, Mādhava, Jitāri, and Ārimatta.

¹T. Bloch, A.R.A.S.J., 1906-7, pp 25f

²Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Bk.V, chap. XXVI

³See chap. III, pp 162f

We shall try to connect them with the families of the Varmans, Śālastambha, the Pālas and Vaidyadeva or Vallabhadeva. It is extremely doubtful and confusing that some accounts make Bhagadatta succeeded by the Pālas; this appears to be false. It is equally mistaken that in some chronicles Jitāri is succeeded by rulers with their surnames 'Nārāyana'. We reject Naraka's birth story as a result of the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu. He was probably an Alpine chief, born somewhere in the hilly region either in Kāmarūpa or Videha, and must have established himself in Prāgjyotiṣa, or was helped by Janaka in establishing himself there after doing away with the last ruler of the Kirātas. Hence he may have flourished in the same period as Janaka and, like the latter, there were probably more than one Naraka. Bhagadatta was either the son of the last Naraka or he was not his son at all,¹ because in disagreement with the Purānas and the Tantras, the Epics, much older in composition, do not mention Bhagadatta as Naraka's son. The period of Bhagadatta is still doubtful. If the Mahābhārata war took place in the ninth century B.C.² and he participated in the war, he might have flourished about the same period. This cannot, however, be substantiated by the epigraphic evidence. That Bhagadatta was another Alpine chief, perhaps distantly related to the Bhauma family of Naraka, is very likely. Now according to the chronicles there were as many as 24 or 25 kings

¹J.K. Misra, J.A.R.S., 1944, pp 3f

²P.H.A.I., pp. 6, 22.

of the family of Naraka-Bhagadatta¹ and they cannot be made to rule for more than 600 years, allowing an average of 25 years for each King. If the genealogy given in the epigraphs is to be believed, the Varman line of Kings commencing their reigns from about the middle of the 4th century A.D. and tracing their origin from Bhagadatta are to be included with this group of 25 rulers. We have for the 13 Varman rulers from Puṣyavarman to Bhāskaravarman approximately 300 years and therefore another 300 years for their predecessors will mean that Naraka and Bhagadatta began their rule about the first century A.D. This makes us believe that either Naraka-Bhagadatta are dynastic titles, and therefore that there were more than 25 Kings, or Bhagadatta of the 9th century B.C. could not be the same as the ruler of the first century A.D. But on a consideration of all the existing sources, it appears likely that Bhagadatta's association with the Kuru-Pāṇḍavas is a later invention and he did not actually fight in the war. It is therefore, feasible that he flourished during the first century A.D. and was distantly related to Naraka or rather the last Naraka, who also, is to be placed in the same period. No definite connection can be traced between Naraka of the pre-Buddhistic period and Bhagadatta of the first century A.D. Bhagadatta was succeeded by Vajradatta and others until, in the fourth century A.D. Puṣyavarman of the same family established himself in Prāggyotisa.

¹Hara-Gaṇḍasamvāda. Chaps. VI-VII.

Of the family of Mādhava, who came from the west, only three or four rulers are mentioned after him, like Lakṣmīpāla, Subāhu, Suparuā, Sumāli and others. It is significant that the chronicles mention 21 kings of this family and exactly the same number is given in the epigraphs for the family that followed the Varman line. There appears to be little difficulty in their identification with the rulers of the line of Sālastambha, who established himself after Bhāskara. The manner by which Mādhava, a foreigner, came to Kāmarūpa and became King almost tallies with the description given in the epigraphs referring to the rise of Sālasambha.¹ The Vikramāditya-Subāhu conflict, of the chronicles is again similar with the Harṣadeva-Yasovarman conflict in the 8th century A.D., as narrated in the Gaudavaho.² Subāhu's retirement to the Himalayas may have reference to his defeat, after which he might have been taken as a prisoner to Kanauj or Kāsmīra. There are other significant facts which, on a comparison of the accounts of the chronicles with those of the epigraphs, make us believe that the family of Mādhava, that followed the Naraka-Bhagadatta family, was the line of Sālastambha.

Jitāri of the next family, as we have stated, is associated with the west or the aDrāviḍa country. He was a Kṣatriya, and settled many Brāhmanas and other high-class

¹Bargāon Grant, J.A.S.B, LXVII, I, pp. 99f.

²Section 3, pp. 341-42

Aryans. He was most probably Brahmapāla, the founder of the Pāla line in the epigraphs, because we find in the latter source that there was an end of the family of Śālastambha after Tyāgasimha, and the throne was occupied by Brahmapāla of a different line.¹ The rise of Brahmapala as given in the grants almost tallies with the rise of Jitāri. The number of rulers given in the chronicles is also equal to those of the epigraphs and moreover the second ruler of the accounts, Ratnapāla was also the same as that of the genealogy given in the grants.² The reference made by chronicles to many Pāla rulers probably applies to this line of Brahmapāla. The last King Rāmacandra of the chronicles may be identified with Jayapāla, the last known ruler of the epigraphs. Rāmacandra may also be identified with Somapāla or Mayamatta of other accounts.

It is very likely that Ārimatta who is mentioned as Rāmacandra's son, founded another line. Traditions attributing to him the murder of his father do not appear true. The story of his birth as a result of his mother Marmatī's union with the Brahmaputra is obviously false. Rāmacandra was not probably his father at all. The extensive conquests made by him in Assam and Bengal and the establishment of his capitals at Visvanāṭṭa and Ratnapura in Upper Assam along with the erection of a fortification, called Vaidargarh, make us believe that he was the same as Vaidyadeva, who established

¹Section 4, pp. 37/f

²Ibid., pp. 37/- 72

himself in Assam after dethroning Tiṅgyadeva.¹ Pheṅguā, who is said to have killed Ārimatta through the help of the latter's wife, is of doubtful historicity. It is possible that Pheṅguā was an invader from Bengal, probably of the Sena family, i.e. Vijayasena or Lakṣmaṇasena.² The three rulers mentioned after Arimatta: Gajāṅka, Śukrāṅka and Mṛgāṅka, must have been the descendants of Vaidyadeva, or may be related to Vallabhadeva, whose existence in Assam in 1185 A.D. with his three ancestors, Bhāskara, Rāyārideva and Udayakarna, is testified by his plates.³ The possibility of another small family being established by the descendants or successors of Vaidyadeva or Vallabhadeva, (who might have been engaged in the repulsion of the Muslim invasions beginning with that of Bakṣiyyar in A.D.1205-6,) under the name of Pr̥thu⁴ and Sandhiyā⁵ cannot also be discarded. The Yoginī Tantra mentions a King, Jalpeśvara, who is said to have built a Śiva temple in Jalpāiguri, and it is likely that he was the same ruler as Pr̥thu.⁶

While the traditional accounts of the later dynasties may thus be pieced together to find out a historical truth, the mystery of the earliest dynasty of Naraka is yet to be investigated and brought nearer historical probability.

¹Ibid., pp. 413-14

²Deopārā Ins. (E.I. I, p.305); Mādhāinagar Ins.(J.A.S.B.(N.S.)) 1909, pp. 467-76.

³Kielhorn, E.I., V, pp. 181-85.

⁴Camb. History of India, III, p.54.

⁵Rāmcaran Thākura, Biography of Śaṅkaradeva; also Section 4, pp.

⁶E.H.K., pp.266f.

Taking the Varman line of Kings as included in the list of 25 Kings of Bhagadatta's line, the beginning of the historical dynasty cannot be with reason extended beyond the 1st century A.D. or a little earlier. It is difficult at the present state of our knowledge to connect Naraka, of the time of Janaka of Videha or the pre-Buddhistic period, with Bhagadatta, who, as we have already stated, might have flourished about the 1st century A.D. Granting that Naraka was a dynastic title and Bhagadatta was the son of last Naraka, which is also doubtful, we do not know how many Narakas intervened between them. In fact, the successors of Naraka are unknown. It is equally difficult to identify the rulers intervening between Bhagadatta and Puṣyavarman. So what became of Prāḡjyotiṣa after Naraka and his successors is difficult to hazard at present. But we have already indicated that, till the foundation of the dynasty of Magadha by Bimbisāra-Saisunāga during the 6th century B.C. or a little earlier, the Kingdom might have been included within the political supremacy of the Pāṇḍavas and their successors and during the time of Bimbisāra, the Kingdom played no significant part in North Indian politics. The Brāhmanas¹, referring to the spread of the Aryan culture to the east of the Karatoyā do not mention Prāḡjyotiṣa. The earliest reference to the country is made by the Sāṅkhyāyana-Grhya-Saṅgraha², which probably refers to

¹Satapatha, 1, IV, I, 14-15; A. Brāhmana, 1, 3, 7.

²Chap. II, 38.

the pre-Buddhistic period. But as we have stated elsewhere, the Buddhist works referring to the sixteen mahājānapadas¹ do not include Prāgjyotiṣa. But the Nikāyas mention the Lauhitya², which is associated by other sources with Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa. We have also suggested that ancient Assam might have been known to the Buddhist world by another name.³

Besides Hecataeus and Herodotus, Megasthenes and Arrian as early as the 4th century B.C. seem to refer to the people and places of ancient Assam,⁴ though they do not make particular mention of the Kingdom. All the classical writers refer to the lands of the Prasii and Gangaridae, the former identified by most writers with Magadha with its capital Palibothra (Pātaliputra) and the latter with the Garigārāṣṭra lying to the east and southeast of Magadha. It may be suggested that the land of the Prasii included the modern Assam valley and the whole of North Bengal as far as Mithitā, and the Garigaridae probably lived in the region comprising the whole of South Bengal to the sea, and both the Kingdoms were within Magadha during the time of the Nandas.⁵ But it is an extremely doubtful point. It is equally doubtful whether the empire of the Mauryas during the 4th-3rd century B.C.

¹ Aṅguttara Nikāya, I, 213; IV, 252, 256, 260.

² Saṃyutta Nikāya, IV, 117; Dīgha Nikāya, I, 224.

³ Chap. I, pp. 14-15

⁴ Ibid; 175; Chap. II, pp. 35f

⁵ K.L.Barua, J.A.R.S., II, pp. 52-54.

absorbed Prāgjyotiṣa. Bhattasali writes that their empire did not include Kāmarūpa as the flood of Buddhism during Aśoka's time left Assam untouched.¹ B.C. Law also holds that the Kingdom remained independent and outside the pale of Aśoka's religious propaganda.² We have discussed the question of the introduction of Buddhism in another place³; the absence of any Aśokan monument in Assam is a strong ground for believing that the country lay beyond the political influence of the Mauṛyas. It is equally possible that during the rule of their successors, the Śunga-Mitras, the Kingdom remained outside the pale of Magadhan political hegemony. But Kauṭilya's reference to various places of Kāmarūpa in connection with industrial products⁴ makes us believe that about the 4th century B.C. the Kingdom played an important part in the cultural history of Eastern India.

The political significance of the Kingdom from the time of the Mauryas until the beginning of the Christian era was negligible. But the growing importance of the Kingdom during the 1st-second century A.D. is shown by the significant mention of it, made by the Periplus and Ptolemy's Geography. We have dealt with their observations in another place⁵; but suffice it to say here that, beginning with the 1st century

¹I.H.Q., XXII, pp.245f.

²J.U.P.H.S., XVIII, pp.43f; Smith, Aśoka, p.81.

³Chap. V, Section 4, pp. 650f

⁴Ibid, Section 2, pp. 561f

⁵Chap. II, pp. 35f

A.D. when Bhagadatta may have ruled, the Kingdom began to grow in importance. The Brhatsamhitā's reference to Prāgjyotiṣa, based on the Parāsara Tantra of the beginning of the Christian era¹, confirms the classical writers' significant reference to the land in both its political and cultural aspects. From the 3rd-4th century A.D., we are on a firmer ground regarding the political history of the period and the Brāhmanical and secular sources contain many references to Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa². To conclude, the political history of the land during the proto-historic and early historical periods is still obscure. We are still in the dark about the long period between Naraka and Bhagadatta and that between Bhagadatta and Puṣyavarman of the 4th century A.D., before which Prāgjyotiṣa did not attract the attention of North Indian dynasties.

It is wrong to infer that Prāgjyotiṣa alone continued to flourish throughout the period. The Chronicles, already quoted, show that other small Kingdoms were established in different parts of the province. Historical evidence of the existence of Kingdoms in Ḍavāka, Kadali³, Maṇipur⁴, Hiḍimbā and Tripurā⁵, is not lacking, though subsequently they may have been absorbed in the larger Kingdom of Kāmarūpa. It is equally wrong to attribute the foundation of these small

¹Kern, Brhatsamhitā, p.32; H.C.Chaklader, Studies in the Kāmasūtra, p. 72.

²Chap I, pp. 2f

³Nath, J.A.R.S., VII, pp.19-23.

⁴Syed. S. Ahmed, J.A.R.S., III, pp.66-69; Dalton, Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, p. 49.

⁵K.L.Barua, J.A.R.S., III, pp.92-98.

Kingdoms only to Alpine--Aryan Chiefs. It is reasonable to hold that at an early period in the history of the province, Boḍo or Mongolian Chiefs established principalities when, after Naraka and his successors, the central Kingdom of Prāḡjyotiṣa was either divided among them¹ or was on the verge of extinction. It is almost certain that Prāḡjyotiṣa dwindled into insignificance² for centuries, from the time of Naraka and his successors until the Indian and classical writers, beginning with the 1st Century A.D., brought it to notice and its lost political supremacy over Assam was re-established in the 4th century A.D. The extent of the Kingdom at different periods of its history, which indicates to a certain extent the importance of the land in contemporary politics, has been dealt with in another place.³

We cannot conclude this section but by repeating that no historical inferences can be made from the story of Naraka's birth as a result of the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu. The legend points to his high antiquity. He was an Alpine Chief and the contemporary of Janaka. We cannot be definite about his Chronology, but he probably flourished before the time of the Buddha. We do not find any direct relation between Naraka and Bhagadatta; the latter may have been the son of the last Naraka, in which case both of them

¹C.R. 1867, pp.517f.

²Pargiter, J.A.S.B, 1887, p.105.

³Chap. II, pp. 56f

flourished during the 1st century A.D., and therefore, Bhagadatta's association with the Mahābhārata war in the 9th century B.C. is a later invention. Whether or not Bhagadatta was the son of the last Naraka, it seems certain that he was an Alpine Chief. He may have been helped by a prince of Northern India to gain the throne. The story of Kṛṣṇa's invasion of Prāgjyotiṣa, Naraka's death at his hands and the installation of Bhagadatta, can only be explained on such a supposition. In any case, the foundation of the first political dynasty in Pragjyotisa is to be attributed to Alpine chiefs, having probably an admixture of Aryan blood.¹ With varying fortunes the Kingdom continued to flourish for centuries. The smaller Kingdoms, established in different places at different times by tribal chiefs, had but little influence and insignificant political careers; in course of time they were brought under the hegemony of Prāgjyotiṣa or absorbed within it. Though it passed through various stages, it remained the centre of political gravity, until it was pressed hard by the Koch and their predecessors from the West, and by the Āhoms in the east. In fact, for the pre-Āhom political history of Assam, we are mainly concerned with Prāgjyotiṣa-Kamarūpa, which held sway not only over the plains but also to a certain extent over the tribes, and which became the means of the diffusion of the culture of Assam. It was through this Kingdom again that the province had contact with other parts of India, both in the proto-historic and historical period.

¹See Chap. III, Section 2, pp. 169-70

Section 2.

The Varman Line.Puṣyavarman and the Chronology of his line.

The real political history of ancient Assam begins with the foundation of the Varman line of Kings. As epigraphy proves, Puṣyavarman, who traced his descent from the Bhauma dynasty of Naraka-Bhagadatta, was the first ruler of the line. We have suggested the possibility that the Varman line started in the first century A.D, if not earlier, and that the last Naraka and Bhagadatta, who flourished about the same time, really founded the first historical dynasty. The connection between the Bhauma dynasty and the Varman line is shown in the epigraphs. The Doëbi grant states that in the lineage of Naraka, was born a King of Kings, named Puṣyavarman, equal to Śiva in honour and fame, equal to Indra in sacrifices, an annihilator¹ of enemies. The goddess of fortune, though fickle by nature, was steady with him, who was, as it were, a second Viṣṇu¹. The Nidhanpur grant states thus: 'When the Kings of his (Naraka)family, having enjoyed the position (of rulers) for three thousand years, (all) attained the condition of gods, Puṣyavarman became the lord of the world ? ² The same reference is found in the Nālandā clay

¹vv 5-6

²v7

Seal: (Srimān Narakatanayo Bhagadatta Vajradattānvayo Mahārājādhirāja-Sri-Prāgjyotisendraḥ Puṣyavarmā).¹ The significance of the connection is obscure. In fact, all the rulers of the period, ending with the Pāla line, trace their descent from Naraka Bhagadatta, just as other lines in other parts of India traced their descent from the Sūrya or the Candra vamsa; similar legendary genealogies are found in the early history of Egypt, Babylonia, Greece and Rome. But we have tried to forge a link between the Bhauma dynasty and the Varman line. We cannot disbelieve all the accounts of Naraka, given in literature and confirmed by epigraphy, and therefore, once we accept the historicity of Naraka and suppose that he was either an Alpine chief from Eastern India or an Aryan chief, related to Janaka of Videha, the story of his birth as a result of the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu becomes clear. Historically interpreted, this legend indicates that he was either autochthonous, born of an Alpine family, already long settled in the land, or that he was an outsider established by Janaka as a feudatory chief of Prāgjyotisa. The legend also shows that Naraka and Janaka were contemporaries.²

We have also suggested the possibility of the existence of more than one Naraka, to the last of which Bhagadatta may have been related. We have rejected Bhagadatta's participation in the Mahābhārata war in about the 9th century B.C.³ Both literature and the writers of the epigraphs may have been

¹ Lines 1 - 2

² Section 1, pp 186f

³ Ibid, pp 200f

⁴ Ibid, pp

mistaken in making Bhagadatta the son of Naraka of the age of Janaka, and similar mistakes have been committed by the scribes in showing a direct descent of the historical rulers from Naraka. As we have stated, we cannot trace any direct connection between the first Naraka and Bhagadatta, though the latter may have been the son of the last Naraka, distantly related to the Bhauma dynasty, founded by Naraka.¹

It, therefore, appears that if the genealogy given in epigraphy, tracing the origin of rulers from Naraka and Bhagadatta, be relied upon and compared with those given in the chronicles, and if we conclude the ancestors of Pusyavarman in the list of 25 kings, the last Naraka and Bhagadatta cannot be far removed from the first century A.D.² The list cannot be made to include the first Naraka and his successors. In short, the name Naraka is a dynastic title.³ and his successors up to the last Naraka are to be excluded from this list of 25 Kings of the Varman line. Evidently there were other rulers intervening between the first Naraka, the founder of the Bhauma dynasty, and the last Naraka and Bhagadatta, who can, therefore, be related to the original founder of the dynasty only distantly. It is only on this basis that Pusyavarman's connection with Bhagadatta and the Bhauma dynasty can be shown, and this also testified to the fact that Pusyavarman belonged to a family, established either by an Alpine chief or an Aryan adventurer, in both cases, indicating his rather humble pedigree.

¹

Ibid pp 199f

² Ibid pp 200f ³ section 1, pp 185f

It may well be feasible that the same dynasty or line was continued until the 7th century A.D or even later. While in the intervening periods between Naraka and his successors and Bhagadatta and his successors, no political importance attached to the kingdom, with the accession of Puṣyavarman, the Kingdom gained new power and influence not only in Eastern India but also in Northern India as a whole as suggested by his assumption of the epithet, 'Mahārājādhirāja'. The dynasty ruled from the city of Prāgjyotiṣa, as it had been the capital during the reigns of his ancestors, though a few other small principalities may have been established in other parts of the province, before Puṣyavarman or even contemporaneously. ¹ The epithet, 'Prāgjyotiṣādhipati', used by all the rulers of the different families, must indicate that throughout the ancient period, Prāgjyotiṣa remained the capital city of all the rulers tracing their connection from the original Bhauma dynasty. It is, therefore, wrong to agree with B.M.Barua² that the epithet was borrowed from the Epics.

When and how Puṣyavarman occupied the throne at Prāgjyotiṣa is still uncertain. There is no basis for truth in the statement of R.M.Nath that he came originally from Central India and helped Samudragupta to expel the reigning King of Kāmarūpa and afterwards established himself on the throne. ³ It is equally absurd to connect the Varmans of Kāmarūpa with those

¹ Ibid pp 207 f ² I.H.G. XLIII pp.200-220

³ Background of Assamese Culture, pp 32-33

of Trigarta in the Udīcyottarapatha or somewhere in the Punjab as done by B.M. Barua.¹ There were many Varman families ruling at different times in ancient India before and after Puṣyavarman, and in the absence of any definite reference either in literature or epigraphy, we cannot be sure of how he rose to power. Suffice it to hold at the present state of our knowledge that he was an Aryan prince having an admixture of Alpine blood and connected with the family of Bhagadatta, who in our opinion flourished in the first century A.D.

Bhandarkar in his list of North Indian epigraphs divides the rulers of Kāmarūpa into; (a) The Puṣyavaram family of Prāggyotiṣa; (b) The Bhaumas of Hāruppeśvara, (c) The early Śālastambha family of Hāruppeśvara; (d) the Later Śālastambha family of Prāggyotiṣa and (e) the Bhauma Pālas of Durjayā. But epigraphy shows that there were only three main lines, all tracing their origin from a common ancestry and using the epithet 'Prāggyotisādhipati'. It is not correct to refer to some as rulers of Prāggyotiṣa, others of Hāruppeśvara and still others of Durjayā; nor is it certain that the rulers of the Śālastambha line ruled from Hāruppeśvara or the Pālas from Durayā and Kāmarūpanagarā.

We shall show that Prāggyotiṣa remained as the capital, and other place names occurring in the grants stood only for temporary places of residence.

¹ I.H.Q. XXIII pp.200f

² App. to E.I.XXIII

³ See K.L.Barua, J.A.R.S.VI, pp 12-18

The first historical mention of a Kamarupa King is found in the Allahabad prasasti of Samudragupta,¹ which refers to 'Samatata - Davāka - Kāmarūpa - Nepāla - Karttṛpurādi - pratyanta - nrpatibhir,' indicating that Samudragupta's 'imperious commands were fully gratified by giving all (kinds of) taxes and obeying (his) orders and coming to perform obeissance.' But the name of the frontier king of Kāmarūpa is not mentioned, nor do we know whether Puṣyavarman was the contemporary of the Gupta emperor. There are writers who assume that Samudravarman, or even his son Balavarman I, was the contemporary of the emperor and was defeated or exterminated by the latter. In the opinion of Basak, Puṣyavarman was the contemporary of Chandragupta and Samudravarman of Samudragupta.² Ray contends 'that there is no conclusive proof that the Guptas conquered Kāmarūpa', but the similarity of the names of Samudragupta and Samudravarman and of the names of their queens and the insertion of the Gupta era in an inscription, leads him to suspect 'that Gupta influence at least must have penetrated in the valley of the Brahmaputra.'³ He further adds that Samudravarman and Samudragupta were contemporaries. Leaving aside the question of Gupta influence for the present, mere similarity of names may not prove their

¹ Fleet C.I.I. 111, pp 1f (line 22).

² H.N.E.I, p211.

³ D.H.N.I. 1, p 238.

contemporaneity; nor can it prove that the name Samudravarman and his queen Dattadevī were given in imitation of Samudragupta, suggesting the acceptance of the political hegemony of the Guptas as held by P. Bhattacharya;¹ On the contrary it seems to indicate the rise of Samudravarman subsequent to that Gupta emperor.

It is absurd that Balavarman, Pusyavarman's grandson, is taken by some as one of the nine Kings, exterminated by Samudragupta in Āryyāvarte² and hence as the latter's contemporary. Vasu, placing Pusyavarman between A.D. 275-300, contends that Samudragupta defeated Balavarman and, what appears to be more absurd, he makes Samudravarman marry into the same family of the Guptas. In spite of this relation, he asserts Samudragupta was forced to fight against Balavarman according to the rule of the Āsvamedha sacrifice³ Dikṣit also identifies Balavarman of the epigraph with an ancestor of Bhāskara⁴. The same view is held by Bhattasli⁵, supported by Bhandarkar⁶, a theory which not only raises a new problem in chronology but also goes against the evidence from epigraphy. On the basis of the

¹ K.S. Intro. p.14

² Fleet, C.I.I. III, pplf, (line 21).

³ Social History of Kāmarūpa, II, p.141

⁴ Pros. Ist. O.C., 1920, 1, p C. XXIV 5. I. H. Q., XXI, pp 19f; E.I, 1947,

⁶ App. to E.I, XIX-XXIII

Badgarigā epigraph of Bhūti-varman, it can be shown that it is chronologically absurd to make Balavarman the contemporary of Samudragupta. This has been pointed out by D.C. Sircar¹; but his contention of the acceptance of the Gupta hegemony by Puṣyavarman on the basis of similarity of names between Samudravarman and the Gupta emperor and the use of the Gupta era, is yet to be definitely proved. Supporting Sircar's assumption that Puṣyavarman was the contemporary of Samudragupta, the relation between them being that of a vassal and an overlord, B.M.Barua also contends that the names were given in imitation. 'One may go perhaps a step further and suggest', writes Barua, 'that Puṣyavarman was the first Indo-Aryan ruler set up by Samudragupta over the two territories of Kāmarūpa and Davāka unified into a single kingdom².' It is yet to be proved that Puṣyavarman was set up by the Guptas as held by B.M.Barua. Bhattasali contends that the enemies of Skandagupta were the descendants of the family of Puṣyavarman³. His theory has been rightly challenged by B.M.Barua⁴ and Sircar⁵ because there is no connection except a slight similarity of name between Puṣyavarman and the Puṣyāmitras, who are referred to as Skandagupta's enemies in the Bhitari epigraph.

In any case, we cannot reasonably identify Balavarman of the inscription of Samudragupta with the grandson of Puṣyavarman, as the contemporary rulers of Northern India, said to have been uprooted by the emperor, are sharply

¹J.A.R.S. X, pp.63f ²I.H.Q., XX111, pp.220-22; Sircar I.H.Q. XX1 pp.143-45.

³I.H.Q. XX1, pp390f, ⁴I.H.Q. XX111 pp200f ⁵ibid, ~~XXI~~, 143-45

distinguished from the pratyanta-nrpatas or vassal kings¹. It is nowhere mentioned that Samudragupta invaded Kāmarūpa, much less exterminated its ruler. It may not have been due to an actual invasion, but perhaps out of fear of the so-called digvijaya of the imperial invader that the frontier kings from kingdoms like that of Davāka offered temporary submission. This will appear probable from the description of Raghu's digvijaya in Kālidāsa's Raghuvamśa, which states that when he crossed the river Lauhitya, the lord of Prāgjyotiṣa began to tremble in fear. The King of Kāmarūpa, who had successfully withstood other conquerors with his elephants, paid homage to Raghu. The lord of the Kāmarūpas worshipped the shadow of his feet with offerings of flowers, consisting of precious stones². This reference is taken by some to be an actual echo of the invasion of Samudragupta during the time of Samudravarman. Basak, for instance, holds that Samudravarman was rich enough to gratify the invader with presents and thus save his kingdom from being included within the Gupta empire. Kāmarūpa, therefore, in his opinion, preserved its autonomy but remained as a subordinate state³. But we have already attempted to show that Samudravarman was not Samudragupta's contemporary; nor can it be proved that Kālidāsa's Raghu was Samudragupta. The reliability of the evidence rests not only on the identification

¹Jayaswal identifies Balavarman with Kalyāṇavarman, ruler of Pātalīputra (J.B.O.R.S., 1933, p.142)

²Raghuvamśa IV, VV 81-84

³H.N.E.I., pp.212-13, also Pros.2nd O.C., 1922 pp.333-34.

of the real Viṅkramāditya but also on the age of Kālidāsa, who is reasonably placed during the fifth century A.D.¹ S.K.Bhūṅyā finds in Raghu's digvijaya an actual echo of the defeat of a Kāmarūpa ruler at the hands of the father of the poet's patron.² But the mysterious Vikramādityas, so commonly found in our traditions, seem often only to recall the ideal Hindu Digvijayins and may not have any actual bearing on contemporary historical events. It is reasonable to suppose that Samudragupta, if he was the prototype of Raghu, did not actually invade Kāmarūpa; his contemporary Puṣyavarman, like other minor rulers offered submission of his own accord. K.L. Barua's identification of Subāhu with Puṣyavarman, and his supposed defeat at the hands of Samudragupta, are corroborated neither by epigraphy nor by Assamese chronicles; nor can the event be ascribed to A.D.380 as K.L.Barua surmised; because Subāhu, according to our chronicles, belonged to the family of Mādhava and we shall try to prove that if the traditional conflict between Sabāhu and Vikramāditya has any historical basis, it probably took place in the 8th century A.D. between Harṣadeva and Yaśovarman of Vākpāti's Gauḍavaho.

Another disputed question is the location of Davāka, mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar inscription. It is associated with the Kapili valley in modern Nowgong in Assam⁴,

¹M. Collins, Geographical data of the Raghuvaṃśa and Dasakumāracarita, p. 48 and fn.; also M.Chakravarti, J.R.A.S., 1904, p. 160.

²I.H.Q., V, pp. 462-63.

³E.H.K., p. 42.

⁴Smith, E.H.I. p. 316.

because even today it contains a place called Ḍavāka. Smith has located Ḍavāka in the modern districts of Bogra, Dinājpur and Rājshāki to the north of the Ganges between Samatata and Kāmarūpa¹. Tripathi locates it in Dacca or the hill tracts of Chittagong². But, as rightly remarked by Raychaudhuri, the location of Ḍavāka in North Bengal is wrong³. In the opinion of Nath, during the time of Puṣyavarman there was another independent kingdom of Ḍavāka in the Kapili valley⁴. This is supported by Bhattasali⁵ and others⁶. Gerini wrongly identifies the Dobassai of Ptolemy with Ḍavāka in Upper Burma, the Kapili valley with the Gupta empire or the Saran district, and the river Kapili with the Ganges⁷. His identification is based on the supposition that one of the senders of the two missions from the Kapili as mentioned in the Sung Shu, (A.D. 420-79) who is called Yuchai (A.D.428) was no other than Kumāragupta I⁸. But we shall try to prove that the Kapili valley was in Ḍavāka in Nowgong, as is shown by the present Kapili river and by a number of antiquities throughout the region, which confirm our belief that an important principality was established there, and that the

¹Ibid, p.271

²History of Ancient India, p.244.

³P.H.A.I. p.544.

⁴I.C. VI, p.46; J.A.R.S, 1937, p.15.

⁵E.I, 1947, pp.18-23; Bhārtavarṣa (B.S.) 1348, p.90.

⁶P.C.Sen, J.A.R.S,I, pp.12-15.

⁷Researches on Ptolemy's Geography, pp.52f.

⁸J.R.A.S,1910, pp.1187-1201.

king from the Kapili, mentioned in the Chinese account, was a Kāmarūpa king. All these evidences show that the frontier state of Davāka, like Kāmarūpa, may have owed allegiance to the Gupta empire during the time of Samudragupta. The existing materials seem to prove that Davāka was not as old as Prāgjyotiṣa and may have been founded shortly before the 4th century A.D.

To conclude, Puṣyavarman was the contemporary of Samudragupta and Davāka was another frontier state lying close to the east of Kāmarūpa. Both the states may have submitted to Samudragupta, though their autonomy might have remained unimpaired. The use of the names like those of the Gupta emperor and his queen by Samudravarman and Dattadevi¹ and the employment of the Gupta era by a subsequent ruler of Kāmarūpa are insufficient evidence to prove the serious influence of the Guptas over the kingdom. No actual invasion of Kāmarūpa took place, nor was it included in the empire. As M.Collins rightly observes, in the Raghuvamśa Kāmarūpa lay 'outside the limits of Raghu's empire'². The contemporaneity of Puṣyavarman with the Guptas, is, however, one of the sheet anchors of Assam's chronology. The accession of Puṣyavarman cannot be placed after A.D.380. Some writers like Bhattasāli³ and Vasu place him during the 3rd century A.D. or a little later;

¹In the Clay Seal of Bhāskara the name is Dattavati (I2).

²Geographical Data, etc, p.22.

³He places Puṣyavarman between A.D.310-330 and his grandson Balavarman between 360-390. (I.H.Q, XXI, pp.19f.)

Gait places him during the 5th century A.D.¹. Both the theories are chronologically absurd. The earliest known date of Chandragupta II, according to the Nathurā inscription is A.D.380. This date, however, depends on the reading of a defective line in the epigraph. Bhandarkar reads it as prathame, which places Chandragupta's accession in 380; Sircar reads as pañcamē². In any case, Samudragupta could not have ruled long after 375 A.D.³ and he, therefore, must have finished his campaigns earlier. We shall, therefore, find no chronological difficulty in ascribing for Puṣyavarman's reign A.D.355-380. This date is supported by the Badgāngā epigraph of Bhūti-varman (G.E.234 - A.D.553-554), who was 8th in descent from Puṣyavarman. If we allow for each prince an average of 25 years, Puṣyavarman's accession may reasonably be placed in about A.D.355.

It was Puṣyavarman who after a long period of obscurity raised Kāmarūpa to an important position in Indian politics. The assumption of his title, Mahārājādhirāja indicates his independent status; but it is not known how far he was successful in the extension of the kingdom; nor does any evidence prove whether he made any attempt at welding the smaller states like Davāka into one unified kingdom as asserted by B.M.Barna⁴.

¹History of Assam, p.28.

²E.I,XXI, pp.8f; Sircar, Select Inscriptions, etc, pp.269f.

³Raychaudhuri, P.H.A.I,p.552.

⁴I.H.Q, XXIII,pp.200-20.

Samudravarman: The second ruler of the line, the son and successor of Puṣyavarman, may be placed between A.D.380-405. We allow 25 years for his reign because of his important career. Epigraphy refers to his kingly and warlike qualities. The Doobi grant states that he was 'of illustrious fame and endowed with all good qualities, who was like an ocean and akin to his father in power. -He was comparable to ocean for his greatness and coolness, and also in view of the fact that he was inestimable, amiable, grave - He, the abode of all good qualities, the destroyer of his enemies, the self-controlled, the righteous, went to heaven after having enjoyed the entire world'¹. The Nidhanpur grant further states that he was like the fifth samudra (ocean) and there was no mātsyanyāya in his kingdom². These vague statements, however, do not give us any clue to his enemies, nor can we suppose that he held sway over a vast kingdom. He was probably the contemporary of Chandragupta II. The reference to mātsyanyāya in the epigraph, which is explained as a state of disorder, in which the stronger oppress the weaker as the big fish swallow the smaller, and which is said to have been removed by Samudra-varman, indicates his consolidation of the political power and the establishment of a peaceful reign. The assumption of the title of Mahārājādhirāja suggests that, like his father, he ruled as an independent king³.

¹lvv 7-9

²v 8

³Clay Seal of Bhāskara, line 2.

It is recorded in a Burmese tradition, referred to by Phayre that an Indian King Samudra or Samudra was ruling in Upper Burma in 105 A.D.¹ Gait points out that this king 'proceeded thither through Assam and so must the Hindus who led the Tehampās or Shāns in their conquest of the mouths of the Mekong in 280 A.D.'² On the basis of this doubtful evidence, Vasu wrongly identifies this Samudra with Samudravarmaṇ and adds that, like Samudragupta, he was a paramount sovereign from Karatoyā to the Pacific Ocean³, a statement which is chronologically absurd if the date 105 A.D. is genuine. The kingdom of Kāmarūpa could not have extended to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, nor could the influence of the Bhauma dynasty have equalled that of Samudragupta. The comparison made between the two rulers by Vasu does not bear historical scrutiny, although it may be that some colonies were established during this period or even earlier from ancient Assam⁴. In any case, the identification of Samudra with Samudravarmaṇ is unhistorical.

Kālidāsa⁵ incidentally mentions that Raghu's son Aja selected a king of Kāmarūpa as his best man in the former's marriage with Indumatī. The reference may have a bearing on the importance of the frontier state of Kāmarūpa, but the poet

¹History of Burma, pp.3, 4f.

²History of Assam, p.9.

³Social History of Kāmarūpa, II, p.142.

⁴See Chap.III, pp. 171f

⁵Raghuvaṃśa, Canto. VII.

does not mention the name of the king. The identification with Samudravarma¹ is doubtful. The statement may not have any foundation at all and Kālidāsa may not have flourished during his time.

Balavarman: Samudravarma was succeeded by his son Balavarman who may be placed between A.D.405-420. This short period of his reign appears reasonable in view of his uneventful career. Epigraphy makes a few vague references to his qualities and warlike activities. He 'was considered pre-eminent and virtuous on account of the stand he took for the stability of his desired end and, endowed with wisdom and royal attributes, he acquired sovereignty. Having endured fire-like arrows in battle and conquered the mighty array of his enemies, he enjoyed the earth, and as such was known as Balavarman'². The Nidhanpur grant further states that 'his force and armour never broke up and his army could easily march against enemies'³.

Like his predecessors, Balavarman also assumed the title of Mahārājādhirāja⁴. We have already examined the facts which show that he was not the king of the Allahabad Pillar inscription.

It is difficult to say on the basis of the vague statements in the grants, what battles he actually fought with his enemies. It may be conjectured that he tried for the conquest of Davāka

¹K.L.Barna, E.H.K. pp.44f.

²Doobi grant, VV 10-12.

³V 9.

⁴Clay Seal, line 3.

or other small principalities to the east, but he could not have been very successful, since his triumphs are described in the vaguest and most general terms.

The many sided qualities and virtuous life of the king may have engaged the attention of contemporary rulers. The Rājatarāṅgiṇī refers to a Kāmarūpa princess, Amṛtaprabhā, for whose marriage a svayamvara was held at which Meghavāhana, the king of Kāśmīra, married her in the presence of all. Meghavāhana is said to have gone 'to the land of the King of Prāgjyotiṣa, who was descended from the race of Viṣṇu for the svayamvara of the king's daughter - There in the presence of kings, he received from the princess Amṛtaprabhā the bridegroom's garland, while the parasol of Varuṇa cast its shade upon him'¹.

In the same work there is a reference to the building of a vihāra by Amṛtaprabhā 'for the benefit of foreign bhiksus'. It states that the preceptor 'of her father who had come from a foreign country, called Loh and who in the language of that (country) was designated as Stunpā, built the stupa (called that of) Lo-Stoupā'². The reference to a guru from Tibet is significant; but it is not known how far Buddhism was prevalent in that country at that time. If Balavarman was the father of Amṛtaprabhā, who is said in the

¹Bk. II, 147-48.

²Bk. III, 9-10.

grants to have led a virtuous life¹, and if Meghavāhana may be placed during his time, it will bear witness to the fact that Kāmarūpa came under the influence of Buddhism as early as the 5th century, A.D. The historicity of the vihāra is also proved by Ou Kung. 'The attribution of a stupa', rightly states Stein, 'known by a Tibetan designation (Loh Stoupā) to the guru of this foreign queen, seems also to rest on genuine tradition'². If we accept Stein's reasonable conclusion, the importance of the matrimonial alliance between Kāmarūpa and Kāsmīra cannot be ignored, in view of the contemporary political history of India.

Kalyāṇavarman: Born of Ratnāvati, Kalyāṇavarman was the son and successor of Balavarman. On the basis of epigraphy and other references, he may be placed between A.D.420-440. He is said to have 'indulged in the supreme pleasure of doing good to others'; and he 'was of equal strength to Indra - with a face like the moon'; he 'did noble deeds and killed the mighty array of his enemies'³; and 'was not the abode even of very small faults'⁴.

The reference to his defeat of enemies and his 'face like the moon' is significant; because it has an important bearing on the history of the period. As we have already pointed out, the Shung Shu, covering the period from A.D.420 to 479 reports

¹Doobi grant, V 12.

²Kalhana's Rājataranginī, I, pp.81-82.

³Doobi grant, V 14.

⁴Nidhanpur grant, V 10.

the sending of an embassy to China by a king of Kapili. He has been identified by Gerini¹ with Kumāragupta I on the basis of a wrong identification of Davāka and Kapili. We have tried to show that these regions were located in modern Nowgong and that the king also was from Assam. The king who sent the mission in A.D.428 is simply called Yuchai (with the eye or the face like the moon), which appears to be a nickname. The name was not Yue-si as pointed out by K.L.Barna². As noticed by Gerini on the basis of the Shung Shu, it was Yuchai³. The early relations between Kāmarūpa, Davāka, Tripurā, Hiḍimbā, Kadali, and other small states lying to the south western and eastern side of the kingdom, are proved not only by epigraphy and archaeological remains, but also by literature. According to the Rājamālā, the rulers of Tripurā trace their origin from Yayāti, and it is said that Pretardhana, the 12th king from him, conquered the Kirātas and founded a kingdom with its capital on the bank of the Kapili river⁴. This kingdom may have comprised the Kapili valley, North Cāchār and perhaps also the modern district of Cāchār to the west of Manipur. It is also recorded that when Drkpati, the Kachāri king of Hiḍimbā, conquered the Kapili valley, the ancient Trivega, Kapili or Davāka became absorbed in the Hiḍimbā kingdom⁵. While the kings of Tripurā may have founded

¹Researches on Ptolemy's Geography, pp.52f; J.R.A.S,1910,
²E.H.K,p.46. pp.1187f.

³J.R.A.S.1910, pp.1187f.

⁴K.L.Barna, J.A.R.S. 1935, pp.92f.

⁵Ibid, pp.92-98.

a kingdom comprising the Kapili valley, the king from that region who sent the mission to China can hardly be identified, as done by K.L.Barna, with a Tripurā king; nor can we agree with Barna that the Hidimbā rulers absorbed the valley about A.D.500 after which the kings of Kāmarūpa reacquired it, to lose it again to the Kachāris in or after the 12th century A.D.¹. While we need not dispute the accounts given in the chronicles, which are to some extent corroborated by epigraphy, the chronological absurdities make it difficult to believe that the mission was sent by an unknown ruler of Tripurā, especially when we have firmer grounds for identifying him with a Kāmarūpa king. Barna, identifying the king with one Chandrapriya, further adds that during the 6th-7th century A.D., the Ḍavāka region was absorbed by Kāmarūpa². But we shall try to show that none of his statements appearstenable.

Bhattasali, on the basis of his theory that Balavarman of the Gupta epigraph was ruling in Ḍavāka, asserts that the 'kings of Kāmarūpa were content to remain satisfied with the modest limits of their kingdom up to the reign of Kumāragupta of the Gupta line and Gaṇapativarman of the Varman line of Assam'³. He, therefore, contends that Ḍavāka remained independent up to the middle of the 6th century A.D., when Kāmarūpa may have put an end to its separate existence, and that it was Bhūtivarman who made himself master of Eastern

¹Ibid, pp.92-98.

²E.H.K, p.47.

³I.H.Q, XXI, pp.19f.

India, by uniting Kāmarūpa, Davāka and Samatata into one kingdom, and who declared his overlordship by the performance of the Asvamedha¹. The existing evidence does not support the view that the influence of the Guptas remained until the middle of the 6th century A.D. and that Bhūti-varman alone was responsible for the unification of Kāmarūpa, Davāka and other regions. This was done long before the rise of Bhūti-varman, as we shall prove shortly.

The identification of Kalyāṇavarman with Yuchai on the basis of epigraphy seems to rest on a valid ground, and it was he who sometime before the sending of the mission in A.D.428 conquered Davāka. This assumption equally fits in with the chronology of that ruler. It may be that a reigning Tripurā king was ousted from the Kapili valley and Kalyāṇavarman signalled his victory by the incorporation of Davāka within Kāmarūpa and sending a diplomatic mission to China. The performance of an Asvamedha by a subsequent ruler has nothing to do with this achievement of Kalyāṇavarman.

Ganapati-varman: Kalyāṇavarman was succeeded by his son Ganapati-varman. In view of the uneventful character of his reign, it seems to have been short and he may be placed between A.D.440-450. Like the god Ganapati, he was known for his remarkable charities. He was endowed with innumerable qualities for the extermination of strife (as Ganapati) is

¹E.I,1947, pp.18-23.

born to destroy the Katiage¹. In the Doobi grant he is called Ganendravarman, who was 'a spark to the darkness-like enemy - and like Ganendra (Ganesa) was accomplished and exceptionally brilliant'². Nothing important is recorded of his reign, except that he placed his son on the throne in the presence of his subjects³, maybe due to his old age.

Mahendravarman: He was succeeded by Mahendravarman whose reign may be placed between A.D.450-485. His long reign of 35 years is tenable in view of his brilliant career and conquests, evidenced by his performance of two horse sacrifices. The Nidhanpur grant states that 'his (Ganapati's) queen Yajñāvatī brought forth a son, Mahendravarman, as the sacrificial fire (produces) fire, who was the repository of all sacrificial rites (like fire)'⁴. The Doobi grant also alludes to his great merit, like that of his father, who was the equal of Indra in strength and protected his people like his own children⁵.

Epigraphy refers to his warlike activities and conquests. According to the Doobi grant he was like 'salt to the sore of the enemy-'⁶. He 'conquered the earth with the ocean as her outskirts (sāgaramekhalāntam), subjugated his enemy through his power, and performed many sacrifices like Mahendra-'⁷. The

¹Nidhanpur grant, VII.

²VV 15-16.

³Doobi grant, V 17.

⁴v 12.

⁵VV 17-18.

⁶v 17.

⁷Doobi grant, V 19.

references are significant; Mahendra was the contemporary of Kumāragupta I who ruled till A.D.455, and who held sway over Bengal and Ppundravardhana, as proved by his two Dāmodarpur copper plates of A.D.444 and 447¹. But during the later part of the 5th century A.D. beginning with the reign of Skandagupta (455-467), the imperial Guptas were on the road to decline². It was but natural that Kāmarūpa in the east would try to expand in Bengal as the Gupta hold became weaker and weaker. The Dāmodarpur plates, Sārnāth inscription and the Eran epigraph of Budhagupta seem to prove that from A.D.477 to 496, the Gupta empire again revived and extended from Bengal to Eastern Mālovā³. But between the reigns of Kumāragupta I and Budhagupta, there is no evidence of the Gupta hold in Bengal. Mahendravarman, therefore, was able to expand his kingdom at the cost of the Guptas towards the end of the reign of Skandagupta. He was the first ruler of Kāmarūpa who not only shook off the last vestiges of the Gupta influence or allegiance, but also tried to carve out an empire at the cost of his weak neighbours. The importance of his political career is known from the performance of his two Aśvamedha sacrifices. He is described in the clay seal of Bhāskara as 'Śrī Mahendravarmā -dvisturaga-medhāharttā'⁴. (the performer of two horse

¹Sircar, Select Inscriptions, pp.283-87.

²Two other grants with the G.E. have been found in Baigrām (128- A.D.448), (Basak, E.I, XXI, p.815; Sircar, Select Inscriptions, pp.342f) and in Pāhārpur (G.E. 159- A.D.479) (Dikshit, E.I, XX, pp.61f; Sircar, Select Inscriptions, pp.346f.

³Ray Chaudhuri, P.H.A.I, pp.590f.

⁴Lines, 4-5.

sacrifices). This finds partial confirmation in the Nidhanpur grant, which describes him as 'yaajñavidhīnām-āspada'¹, (the repository of all sacrificial rites), and in the Doobi grant which states that he 'performed many sacrifices'². As far as we know, he was the first Kāmarūpa king to perform the Asvamedha sacrifice³, indicating his independent status and political influence over his neighbours. In the opinion of D.C.Sircar the credit should not be given to him but to Nārāyaṇavarman who performed the earliest Asvamedha in Kāmarūpa about the middle of the 6th century A.D.⁴. B.M.Barna, supporting him, writes that it is not true that Mahendravarman performed two horse sacrifices and was largely responsible for the distress of the Guptas towards the east⁵. But the actual words of the seal make it clear that it was Mahendra who performed two horse sacrifices. The power of the imperial Guptas declined long before the 6th century A.D. except for a while under Budhagupta, and their hold in much of Bengal was no longer strong enough to check the rising power of Kāmarūpa. There was, moreover, no local power at that time in Bengal. The actual significance of the statement in the epigraph that Mahendravarman extended his kingdom to the sea-shore can only be understood as implying the extension of the kingdom up to at least south-east Bengal, which he signalled by the performance of two horse sacrifices.

¹IV 12.

²V 19.

³The Doobi grant credits Vajradatta with the performance of

⁴I.H.Q., XXI, pp. 143-45.

many horse sacrifices. (V 4) This is doubtful.

⁵I.H.Q., XXIII, pp. 200f.

It is possible that Mahendrarvarman came into conflict with Budhagupta, whose occupation of Pundravardhana between A.D.477-496 is proved by his Dāmodarpur Plates¹; but the Kāmarūpa king could not make any headway in North Bengal. It is also likely that Mahendra extended his sway to south-east Bengal, where there is no evidence of Gupta rule until the time of Vaiṅyagupta, whose sway perhaps extended to Tripurā as proved by his Guṇaighar inscription (G.E.188= A.D.507)². The extension of the sway of Kāmarūpa to south-east Bengal may have occurred about A.D.470-80. There is no doubt that Kāmarūpa in the east and the Hūṇas in the north-west gave a blow to the declining Gupta empire³, and Mahendrarvarman gave a good account of himself by exerting his influence in North Bengal. Only a start was given, and, as we shall show, it was Bhūti-varman who actually made extensive conquests in Pundravardhana during the middle of the 6th century A.D.

Nārāyaṇavarman: Mahendra was succeeded by his son Nārāyaṇavarman who ruled between A.D.485-510. The Nidhanpur grant states that he was born 'for the stability (of the rule) of the world, who like Janaka (or his father) was well-versed in the principles of the philosophy of the (Supreme) self'⁴. 'In her (Suvratā) who was like Aditi, Cakrapāṇi-Nārāyaṇa, assuming a human form with the same name, became the king,

¹See P.H.A.I., pp.590f.

²Sircar, Select Inscriptions, pp.331f.

³Bhattachali, I.H.Q.XXI, pp.19f.

⁴v 13.

surrounded by Gods, with a view to ending the sixfold demerits of his subjects'¹. The grants, therefore, testify to his many sided qualities and virtuous life, and state that he did away with the evils of the time by maintaining a comparatively peaceful order in the kingdom. But nothing particular is recorded of his reign; so we may conclude that it was uneventful.

Bhūti-varman²: The accession of Bhūti-varman, son of Nārāyaṇa during the middle of the 6th century A.D. was a landmark in the early history of Kāmarūpa. Both his own Baḍgaṅgā epigraph and the Nidhanpur plates bear witness to the new vigour that was added to the kingdom, already growing in importance at the cost of neighbouring powers. On the basis of his epigraph, his reign may be placed between A.D.510-555. It contains the G.E. 234 = A.D.553-54. Sircar's reading of the date as 244³ is not correct, as it is distinctly written as 200.30.4⁴. This long reign of about 45 years appears to be reasonable in view of his most eventful career and conquests in all directions.

Epigraphy speaks highly of this prince. He was the 'sixth Mahābhūta (element) as it were, for the steady succession of (all) the properties'⁵. From⁶ him (Nārāyaṇa)

¹Doobi grant, V 21.

²While in the H.C.(Cowell, pp.217-18), the Baḍgaṅgā epigraph and the Nālandā clay seal, he is called Bhūti-varman, in the Doobi and Nidhanpur grants, he is called Mahābhūtavarman (Nālandā Clay Seal, Line 6).

³J.A.R.S., X, pp.63f.

⁴Bhattacharya, J.A.R.S, VIII, pp.138-39; Bhārtavarṣa, 1348.(B.S),

⁵Nidhanpur grant, V 14.

pp.90f.

Devavati generated Mahābhūtavarman of renowned power, for the plenty of the people, as Kārtikeya, the abode of wealth, was brought into existence by Mahādeva in Pārvati.¹ He was terrible to his enemies, and, like Indra, of renowned power and fame; who, 'having ascended the paternal throne, defeated the array of enemy power by dint of his powerful arms.'¹.

The mention of his enemies may refer to contests with the Later Guptas, petty chiefs of Southern and Eastern Bengal, and Yaśodharman of Māliṅgā, who is said to have overrun India up to the river Lauhitya². The growing importance of the kingdom of Kāmarūpa since the time of Mahēndravarmān, who extended her frontiers at the cost of the Guptas, and a new bid for supremacy by Bhūti-varman, were sure to draw the attention of any ruler of Northern India who aspired to imperial sway in the manner of the imperial Guptas. After Budhagupta and Vainyagupta, the imperial Guptas rapidly declined and the last blow was given to them by Yaśodharman³. He is said to have conquered lands 'which the command of the chiefs of the Hūnas - failed to penetrate'. 'He, before whose feet, chieftains, having (their) courage removed by the strength of (his) arms, bow down, from the neighbourhood of the (river) Lauhitya (āLauhityopakāṅṭhāt) up to (the mountain) Mahendra, the lands at the foot of which are impenetrable

¹Doobi grant, VV 23-25.

²Fleet, C.I.I., III, pp.142f (Lines 4-5)

³R.C.Majumdar, History of Bengal, I, pp.50-51.

through the groves of trees, (and) from Himalaya (the mountain of snow), the tablelands of which are embraced by the (river) Gangā, up to the Western ocean, by which (all) the divisions of the earth are made of various hues through the intermingling of the rays of the jewels of the locks of hair, on the tops of (their heads)¹. The epigraph, found at Mandasor, is dated in the Mālava era 589 = A.D.532-33. The rise of Yaśodharman, the conqueror of the Hūna chief Mihirakūla some time before A.D.532-33, was contemporary, as we have stated, with the decay of the Guptas not only in Bengal but also in Magadha. In Assam, his contemporary was no other than Bhūti-varman.

The contention of Vasu that Yaśodharman conquered Kāmarūpa about A.D.534, when he was opposed by Chandramukhavarman², the son of Bhūti-varman, is impossible in view of the dated Badgāngā epigraph of Bhūti-varman (A.D.553-54). Whether we take Yaśodharman's claim of conquests to be genuine or otherwise, the reference to kings from the neighbourhood of the Lauhitya bowing before him, does not necessarily imply the actual invasion of Kāmarūpa, much less its conquest. He might have made some conquests in Bengal. 'There is no reason to believe', writes D.C.Sircar, 'that Yaśodharman actually conquered the whole of India from the Himalayas to the Mahendra and from the bank of the Brahmaputra to the Arabian sea'³. So most of his

¹Fleet, C.I.I, III, pp.142f, Lines 4-5.

²Social History of Kāmarūpa, II, p.144.

³Select Inscriptions, etc, pp.393f; J.R.A.S.B., V, pp.407f.

conquests may be taken as poetic exaggeration¹. In any case, the hypothetical invasion of Yaśodharman is to be ascribed to the reign of Bhūti-varman, and it did not result in any loss of Kāmarūpa territory; on the contrary, as evidenced by the Nidhanpur grant, it was Bhūti-varman, who, shortly after the onslaughts of the invader, conquered territories in Pundravardhana to the west of Trisrotā between A.D.545-50.

In both the Doobi and Nidhanpur plates of Bhāskara there are references to the confirmation of a donation of land, made by Bhūti-varman in Mayūrasālmalāgrahāra in Chandrapurī viṣaya. To the east of the donated land lay the dried river Kauśikā and another stream, the Gaṅgānikā flowed through it. In the Tezpur grant of Vanamāla, however, lands granted in Chandrapurī are definitely localised as lying to the west of the Trisrotā (Teestā)². The Nidhanpur grant has raised a long controversy regarding the location of the land in question. The difficulty lies in the fact that the grant was found not in Bengal, but in Pañcakhaṇḍa in Sylhet. The land is definitely mentioned as lying in Mayūrasālmala in Chandrapurī, not only in the said grant, but also in the Doobi grant³, and Vanamāla during the 9th century A.D. donated lands somewhere in the same area⁴.

Disputing the location of the land in Bengal, J.C.Ghosh places it in Pañcakhaṇḍa in Sylhet and identifies Kauśikā with

¹S.K.Bhūñyā I.H.Q. V, p.463; K.L.Barna, E.H.K.p.49

²J.A.S.B. IX,II pp.766f (Last Plate)

³Last Plate.

⁴J.A.S.B. IX,II, pp.766f.

Kuśiārā and Chandrapurī with a modern village in that locality, named Chāndpur¹. Referring to Chandraparī (Chandrapurī) of the grant of Vanamāla, which is said to lie to the west of Teestā, Ghosh holds that we need not go to the west of the Trisrotā when we can find one nearer to the place in Sylhet. Besides, the Chandrapurī of the Tezpur grant is not stated to be a viṣaya². Disputing P. Bhattacharya's identification of Yuan Chwang's Shilhichatolo with Sylhet, Ghosh holds that the latter was included within the kingdom of Bhāskara. This he writes under the impression that the Nidhanpur grant was issued after the pilgrim left India, which is evidently wrong.

'Besides this', he writes, 'the tradition is in favour of placing Sylhet within the kingdom of Kāmarūpa³.' He further adds that Sylhet was not under a Tippera king in A.D. 641 and holds that the modern Pañcakhaṇḍa in Sylhet might have originated with the Brāhmanas who were granted lands by Bhūti-varman⁴. In short, Ghosh asserts that Bhūti-varman donated lands in Sylhet. This is also supported by P.L. Paul⁵ and A. Roy⁶. Ghosh finds further evidence of the location of the land in Sylhet and Bhāskara's occupation of the region in a place name called Bhāskarātṅgerī, which is found also in the Bhātera grant of Govinda Keṣava Deva (A.D. 1049)⁷. The name Pañcakhaṇḍa,

¹See Śrīhatṭer Itivṛtta, pt. IV, (f.n.) p. 74.

²I.H.Q., VI, pp. 60-71.

³See also Śrīhatṭer Itivṛtta, II, I, pp. 8-11.

⁴I.H.Q., VI, pp. 60-71.

⁵Early History of Bengal, p. 26.

⁶I.C. I, pp. 698f.

⁷E.I., XIX, pp. 277f.

applied to a place in Sylhet may not be ancient; U.C.Guha points out that it was given to a group of five Parganās in the early Mogul period¹. A.C.Chaudhuri holds that before the coming of the Brāhmaṇas to Pañcakhaṇḍa, it was known as Tingair, which was a Kuki word². Ghosh disputes this; the word stands, in his opinion, for sthala, a hilly region, and was the name of a part of Pañcakhaṇḍa. He presumes that this Teṅgerī in Pañcakhaṇḍa was known as Bhāskaratēṅgerī in memory of Bhāskara and therefore that the donated land lay there. He identifies the Kauśikā with the river Kuśiārā, which name, according to K.M.Gupta, is derived from two names: Kosikā and Barāk (Kosī and Barā) = Kuśiārā³.

Bhandarkar supports Ghosh's identification and the location of the land in Sylhet. The western boundary of the kingdom of Bhūtivarman, he holds, could hardly have extended to North Bengal or the district of Purnea; because at that time the imperial Guptas were masters of those regions. He concludes by holding that even at a later period, Bhāskara's kingdom did not extend so far as to include Purnea⁴. But the rise of Bhūtivarman is to be attributed to the middle of the 6th century A.D. when Gupta power had almost or wholly disappeared, and the Nālandā Clay Seal shows that Bhāskara's sway extended as far as the Nālandā region. Bhattasali, also locating the

¹History of Cāchār.

²Srīhatṭer Itivṛtta, II, I, p.131.

³U.C. II, pp.153-57; K.M.Gupta, Some Castes and Caste Origin in Sylhet, A.C.R., 1931, App.C.pp.XXII-XXVII.

⁴I.A., LXVI, pp.41-55, 61-72; Review of Barua's E.H.K., I.C., I, pp.136-37.

land in Sylhet, contends that the present Pañcakhaṇḍa was the Mayūrasāлма-lāgrahāra, created by Bhūti-varman. He identifies the headquarters of the Chandrapurī viṣaya with the flourishing village of Chāndpur, on the left bank of the modern Kuśiārā. The Brāhmanas of Sylhet still remember the tradition that Pañcakhaṇḍa was donated by a king of Tripurā in A.D.641. It is impossible, in the opinion of Bhattasali, for a Tripurā king to have occupied the region at this time; so he substitutes the name of Bhāskara in place of the king of Tripurā¹. But we shall try to show that none of Bhattasali's contentions can be substantiated by any genuine evidence.

The find spot of a grant does not prove that the donated land was in the same place. The Kamauli grant of Vaiḍyadeva, a later king of Kāmarūpa, was found in Benares, and this does not prove that the donated land was also there. That the land given by Bhūti-varman lay to the west of Triśrotā and the east of the Kausikā is clear from the grant itself, and it was in Mayūrasāлмаlāgrahāra in the Chandrapurī viṣaya². In the Khālimpur grant of the Gauḍa ruler, Dharmapāla, land is said to have been granted in a place called Mādha-Sāлмаli. It is possible that Mayūrasāлмаmala may be identified with Mādhasāлмаli³, and in that case Bhūti-varman's donated land was in the Pāundravardhana bhukti⁴. N.N.Dasgupta is right in holding that this bhukti or 'a part of it which included the

¹J.A.S.B.(Letters) I, pp.419-27.

²Nidhanpur grant, Lines 128-132.

³P.Bhattacharya, K.S., p.5; E.I., XII, pp.243f; also Gauḍalekhamālā, pp.15f.

⁴N.N.Dasgupta, I.C., II, pp.37-45.

Mayūrasālmala tract came to be occupied by Bhūti-varman shortly after Budhagupta had ceased to reign'. But he is wrong when he contends that 'a part or rather the eastern part of what was Paṇḍravardhana had always been a component part of the kingdom (of Kāmarūpa) in those times, is a presumption that may be safely discarded', and that since this region was under the Guptas in A.D.543-44, after Bhūti-varman, it was lost to the Kāmarūpa kings¹. But we shall show that the region was occupied by Bhūti-varman shortly after A.D.543-44, and continued to remain under Kāmarūpa under Bhāskara, who may have re-occupied it after a temporary loss during the time of his father Suṣṭhitavarman.

It is rightly pointed out by P.Bhattacharya that Mayūra-sālmala was situated in a plain, rather than in a hilly region like that of Pañcakhaṇḍa in Sylhet. Gaṅginikā cannot be identified with the stream, known in Sylhet as Gāṅginā, and Chandrapurī can hardly be identified with Chāṇḍpur in Sylhet, since the inscriptions point strongly to these places being in a district between the Kōśī and the Teestā. Bhattacharya further tries to prove that the donated land could not have been in Sylhet, on the basis of Yuan Chwang's reference to Shiḥlichatolo as a separate kingdom². The identification of this place with Sylhet is disputed by Finot who locates it in Prome in Burma³, and by Watters, who believes that it was

¹I.C., II, pp.37-45.

²J.R.A.S., 1920, pp.1-19.

³J.R.A.S., 1920, pp.447-525; also Beal, II, 199-200.

Tripurā¹. That it is not Tripurā is proved by the fact that the pilgrim mentions the latter as Kia-mo-lang-kia². The identification of the place with Sylhet is based on the geography of the regions given by the pilgrim³. But, as we shall show, the mere separate mention of Sylhet cannot exclude the possibility of the inclusion of the place within Kāmarūpa during Bhāskara's time or during the reign of Bhūtivarman.

In the opinion of P. Bhattacharya, again, the independent status of Sylhet is proved by an inscription of about A.D. 600, where is found written 'Srīhatṭādhīsvarebhyah'. The reference is very doubtful. It is in the prasasti of the temple of Iakhā Mandala at Madhā in Jaunsār Bāwar. It records the dedication of a temple of Śiva (V.20) by Īśvarā, who belonged to the royal race of Simhapura, for the spiritual welfare of her dead husband; he was Śrī Chandragupta, son of a king of Jālandhara. The prasasti is placed between A.D. 600-800. Above the prasasti in the centre there are some irregular letters, probably of a later date, which seem to read, 'Srīhatṭādhīsvarebhyah'⁴. The epithet has nothing to do with Sylhet, for both Simhapura and Jālandhara lay in the Punjab⁵. It is likely that it stands for the supreme lord, Śiva, the

¹Yuan Chwang, II, p.188.

²S.N.Majumdar, Cunningham's Ancient Geography of India, p.576.

³Life, p.132. This identification is also supported by Martin, Cunningham, S.N.Majumdar and others.

(S.N.Majumdar, Cunningham's Ancient Geography of India, p.576)

⁴Bühler, E.I, I, pp.10-12.

⁵Ibid.

presiding deity of Śrīhaṭṭa, for whom the temple was erected by Īśvarādevī. The name Śrīhaṭṭa is derived from Haṭakeśvara Śiva, who is said to have been worshipped by the Nāgar Brāhmanas originally in the region about Kāśmīra¹. In any case, the expression may best be taken to have a religious import rather than a political one, and it has nothing to do with the independent status of Sylhet, during either the reign of Bhūti-varman or that of Bhāskara.

In order to strengthen his theory of the separate political status of Sylhet, Bhattacharya further holds that the Yoginī Tantra and the Sādhanāmālā mention it as a separate kingdom and that the substitution of Bhāskara for the Tripurā king, who, according to local tradition, held sway over Pañcakhaṇḍa in A.D.641, is quite unjustified. He associates the name Pañcakhaṇḍa with the five Brāhmaṇa families, who were brought there by a Tripurā king; one of these was of the Kātyāyana gotra, the descendants of Manorathasvāmī, who took possession of the Nidhanpur plates and brought them to Sylhet². Bhattacharya is thus of the opinion that the sām-pradāyika Brāhmaṇas of Sylhet, claiming to have migrated from Mithiā were the descendants of Brāhmaṇas who came to Sylhet with the copper plates³. All these arguments prove, according

¹J.C.Ghosh, I.H.Q., VI, pp.67-71; A.B.O.R.I., XVII, pp.385-86; Bhandarkar, I.A., XL, pp.32f; Ibid, LXVI, pp.41-55, 61-72.

²J.A.S.B.(Letters) III, pp.45-51.

³Ibid; Review of Gait's History of Assam, I.H.Q., III, pp.839-41.

to Bhattacharya, that 'Sylhet fell within the spiritual boundary of sacred Kāmarūpa, but was independent of it politically'¹. Vanamāla, he points out, donated lands in Chandrapurī which was in Rangpur in North Bengal; the donated lands of Bhūti-varman, therefore, should be located in Rangpur. Bhattasali's identification of Gaṅginikā and śūśakansikā with the dead Kuśiārā in Sylhet, as Bhattacharya rightly points out, is wrong, and the ḍumbarichchedas of the Nidhanpur grant do not stand for tanks somewhere in Sylhet². But we need not discuss the question of the independent status of Sylhet to prove that the donated land of Bhūti-varman was not there; several factors combine to show that it was in Pāuṇḍravarḍhana. The strongest argument is the reference to the Chandrapurī viṣaya, which as we have stated, lay to the west of the Trisrotā or Teestā. This is definitely mentioned in the grant of Vanamāla and therefore, the land must have been in Pāuṇḍravardhana. The omission of the river Trisrotā in the Nidhanpur grant is only incidental. Bhattacharya's theory of the independent status of Sylhet is based on later works and traditions, and is not proved by any reliable source. His theory of the origin of the Nāgar Brāhmanas and Kāyasthas, based on the connection of the donees of the Nidhanpur grant, who are said to have migrated from Mithitā and other places, may perhaps be explained by their common Alpine origin, and

¹J.A.S.B. (Letters) III, pp.45-51.

²J.A.R.S., IV, pp.58-66.

they might have flooded Eastern India long before the Vedic Brāhmaṇas¹. If this be true, then Bhattacharya's theory of the later migration of Brāhmaṇas from one place to another does not hold good; because Kāmarūpa or even Sylhet was such an Alpine centre from early times. It is, however, difficult to explain when and how the plates were brought to Pañcakhaṇḍa in Sylhet; but it was definitely after the land was donated in Bengal and the origin of the name Pañcakhaṇḍa also is to be attributed to a later period.

As rightly pointed out by K.L.Barna, the identification of Chandrapurī seems to rest on the ancient geography of the region and the true interpretation of the grant. The river Kusiārā, he writes, cannot be identified with the śuśka-Kausīkā or the Gaṅginikā. It is fantastic, he adds, to suppose on the basis of the existence of a bill (tank), Chehotagāṅg, and a village Chāṇḍpur, that the land was donated in Sylhet. He identifies Kausīkā with the modern Kośi. The name of the river in Sylhet is Kusiārā and not Kausiyārā, and it is presumed that Kusiārā is derived from Kuiāra (sugar cane)². Speaking of the traditional king of Tripurā who in A.D.641 is said to have donated lands in Pañcakhaṇḍa to a number of Brāhmaṇas in Sylhet, Barna contends that this fact proves that the land donated by either Bhūti-varman or Bhāskara was not within Sylhet; because it was not possible for a

¹See Chap.III, pp. 158f

²K.L.Barna, I.C.I, pp.421-32.

Kāmarūpa king to donate lands within the sway of a Tripurā king. It may be, he further adds, that some of the Brāhmanas imported by the Tripurā king were the descendants of some of the donees of the Nidhanpur grant¹. But in our opinion, it is unsafe to rely on a tradition, not supported by epigraphy or any genuine source, and it is unnecessary to lend support to such a tradition in order to prove that the donated land was not in Pañcakhanda, when we have definite proof in the grant itself of its location in Bengal. We shall show that both during the time of Bhūti-varman and Bhāskara, Kāmarūpa held sway over both Sylhet and Tripurā.

The location of the land as given in the grant does not, however, help us to fix the exact boundaries of the plot, except that it was donated in Chandrapurī. But as we have stated on the basis of the Tezpur grant of Vanamāla, the land lay to the west of the Trishotā or Teestā. It is, therefore, evident that the land donated by Bhūti-varman also lay to the west of Teestā. The area of the land is not definitely known; but on the basis of the number of donees (205 Brāhmanas), it is reasonable to hold that it covered a vast area. It is also clear from the boundaries of the grant that the land lay to the east of the Kauśikā, the identification of which is difficult. In the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna (Chaps.57f), the name of the river is given as both Kauśikā and Kauśiki, which is taken to stand for modern Kośi². The śuśka-kauśikā

¹K.L.Barna, 'Nāgar Brāhmanas & Sylhet - A Rejoinder', I.C. I,

²Barna, I.C. II, pp.139-40.

pp.701-702.

of the grant is taken by K.L.Barna as the Burhi or Marā (dead) Kōśi, indicated in Buchanan's Map of 1809, and on the basis of this, he locates the land in the modern district of Purnea or in Morung to the north¹. P.Bhattacharya, disputing this, holds that some dried bed of the Kōśi in Bihār could not have been the śuśka-Kauśikā; but he maintains that it was in Kāmarūpa, which was bounded on the west by the Kauśikā². This is refuted by Barna. 'It is sufficient for our purpose', he remarks, 'that the Kōśi had some dried up beds till the time of Dr.Buchanan, to the east of the present river and that one of them was probably the śuśka-Kauśikā mentioned in the inscription'³. The identification of śuśka-Kauśikā with some dried branch or tributary of the present Kōśi appears probable; but it is not clear from the grant as to which district it flowed through at that time.

In the opinion of Barna, prior to the invasion of Yaśodharman, Bhūti-varman crossed the Karatoyā and conquered a part of Eastern Mithilā and Morung and made the land grants as a token of his triumph. He further holds that this portion of the territory remained under Kāmarūpa until the time of Śuś-thitavarman, when Mahāsenagupta invaded Kāmarūpa, defeated the former and occupied the area; that Bhāskara occupied a portion of Eastern Mithilā is confirmed by his assistance to the Chinese mission with troops, which could not have been

¹Ibid.

²I.C. II, pp.167-70.

³I.C.II, p.171.

led through a hostile territory. On these grounds, Barua asserts that the donated land lay in Purnea in Bihar and that Sylhet was not within Kāmarūpa¹. We shall examine the conquests of Bhāskara in another place; but it is very doubtful whether Bhūti-varman could extend his territory up to Bihar. It is a far cry from Sylhet to North Bengal and thence to Bihar. That the donated land lay in Pāundravardhana to the west of the Teestā and the east of the Kōśī, cannot be disputed. It is, however, doubtful whether the dried river Kausīkā can be identified with the modern Kōśī. It may be that since the name Kausīkā is evidently a diminutive, the Kōśī had a tributary with the name Kausīkā, in which case, the land can broadly be located between Kōśī and Teestā. The Pāundravardhana bhukti itself comprised a great area and it is likely that the land lay in the region of modern Dinājpur, on the border of Bengal and Bihar.

Our above contention is based on the following consideration. That the Gupta power so declined before the middle of the 6th century A.D. as to lose hold of Bihar, is very doubtful; nor is it likely that Bhūti-varman could conquer up to Purnea by A.D. 525 before the invasion of Yaśodharman in A.D. 533-34, as asserted by K.L.Barua². Bhūti-varman's conquests in Pāundravardhana cannot be placed before the exploits of Yaśodharman, or earlier than A.D. 545-50; because during

¹I.C. I, pp.421-432.

²E.H.K., p.49.

A.D.543-44, ten years after Yasodharman's invasion, the governor of a Gupta Parama-bhattāraka-Mahārājādhirāja-Prthivī-pati was ruling in Pāundravardhana¹. That the Later Guptas between A.D.510-554 were ruling over some parts of Magadha, if not Gauda, is proved by epigraphy; they were Kṛṣṇagupta, Harṣagupta, Jīvita and Kumāragupta III and the latter was the contemporary of Īśānavarman Maukhari, known from the Harāhā grant of A.D.554². The genealogy of these princes is also found in the Apsad epigraph of Ādityasena, and one of them, either Jīvita or Kumāragupta III, in the opinion of Raychaudhuri, may be identified with the king, mentioned in the Dēmodarpur plates³. In the Harāhā epigraph⁴, Jīvitagupta is said to have come into contact with the haughty foes, living in the sea-shore, and he is said in the Apsad epigraph⁵ to have 'churned that formidable milk ocean, the cause of the attainment of fortune, which was the army of the shining Īśānavarman, a very moon among kings'. This seems to refer to contests of these kings with some petty rulers of western and southern Bengal,⁶ where independent kingdoms were founded during the first half of the 6th century A.D.⁷. These kings

¹E.I. XVII, p.193; Sircar, Select Ins.etc. pp.337f; Raychaudhuri, P.H.A.I., p.598.

²H.P.Śāstrī, E.I., XIV, pp.110f.

³P.H.A.I, pp.600-601.

⁴E.I., XIV, pp.110f.

⁵C.I.I, III, pp.203f.

⁶Raychaudhuri, P.H.A.I, pp.602.

⁷Majumdar, History of Bengal, I, pp.50-54; Sircar, Select Inscriptions etc., pp.350-360.

were Dharmāditya, known from Farīdpur grant¹; Gopachandra, known from Farīdpur grant²; Vijayasena, known from Mallasārul grant³ and Samāchāradeva⁴; but their sway did not reach North Bengal.

In view of the sway of the Guptas over North Bengal as late as A.D.543-44, therefore, it appears improbable that Bhūti-varman conquered it, not to speak of Bihar, before this date. It may be suggested that either Jīvitagupta or Kumāragupta III came into conflict with Bhūti-varman after the invasion of Yaśodharman. But it is wrong to hold, as done by Basak⁵, and others, that it was only after the disappearance of the Imperial Guptas, to whom Kāmarūpa was bound by a tie of subordinate alliance since the time of Samudragupta, that Bhūti-varman succeeded in assuming virtual independence and bringing other rulers under his authority, and that after him the next five generations of rulers, having freed themselves from the Gupta allegiance, appear to have ruled in Kāmarūpa with the same status as the Maukharis and the Later Guptas. In fact, the Gupta allegiance was long broken by Mahendravarman⁶, and after Kalyāṇavarman's occupation of Davāka and the outlying regions, Sylhet and Tripurā may have remained in subordinate alliance to Kāmarūpa, which was perhaps continued under

¹I.A.,XXXIX,pp.195f; J.R.A.S, 192,pp.710f.

²I.A.,XXXIX, p.204.

³N.G.Majumdar, E.I., XXIII, pp.159f.

⁴Majumdar, History of Bengal, I, pp.50-54.

⁵H.N.E.I., p.215.

⁶See above, pp. 233- 35

Mahendravarman, who made fresh conquests, probably in south-east Bengal. It is, therefore, wrong to assert, as done by Sircar¹, that the long political influence of the Guptas over Kāmarūpa was only ended by Bhūti-varman. It is equally wrong to hold with Bhattasali that only Bhūti-varman made himself master of Eastern India by welding together Davāka and Kāmarūpa into one kingdom and declared his lordship over them by the performance of the Aśvamedha². This political supremacy was long asserted by Kāmarūpa; but it is unlikely that Bhūti-varman could make himself the master of the whole of Eastern India as did Bhāskara. D.C.Sircar is again wrong when he contends that it was Bhūti-varman who by the performance of the Aśvamedha assumed the imperial status after breaking off the subordinate alliance of the Guptas. 'We are thus inclined to believe', writes Sircar, 'that the seven generations of Kāmarūpa kings beginning with Puṣyavarman - were subsidiary allies of the contemporary Gupta emperors, viz. Samudragupta and his successors, and that Bhūti-varman re-established the fallen fortunes of the family'³. This statement does not bear historical scrutiny.

As we have already shown, Kalyāṇavarman united Davāka and Kāmarūpa between A.D.420-40, perhaps after defeating a Tripurā king, and Mahendra may have exerted his influence over

¹I.H.Q., 1950, XXXVI, pp.241-46; 'The Maukharis & the Later Guptas', J.R. A.S.B. XI, pp.69-74.

²E.I., 1947, pp.18-23; also J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.138-39.

³J.A.R.S., X, pp.63-77.

Tripurā, Sylhet and possibly Samatata between A.D.450-85. It was during their reigns that the Gupta influence was finally removed. A new impetus to the scheme of conquest was given by Bhūti-varman, as a result of which Kāmarūpa was extended to Pāṇḍravardhana. The find spot of his Baḍgaṅgā epigraph, in Nowgong near Ḍavāka, can be explained by his fresh consolidation of conquests in the eastern direction and the south-west, by which he probably brought Sylhet, Tripurā and other regions under his sway; these regions remained under Bhāskara in the 7th century A.D. Bhattasali points out that Samatata, including the entire regions enclosed within the lower part of the old Brahmaputra and the hills of Assam and Tripurā (i.e. the eastern part of present Mymensingh, an eastern strip of Dacca, and the entire districts of Noakhali, Tripurā, Sylhet and Cāchār) passed on to Bhūti-varman soon after A.D. 508; Bhattasali further adds that his successors were not only able to keep their hold on Samatata for four generations but also during Bhāskara's time, when the kingdom included Eastern India¹. The statement appears to be an exaggeration in view of the fact that during the 6th century A.D. there were independent kingdoms in Southern Bengal². It appears likely that some portions of south-east Bengal were occupied by Bhūti-varman. We shall examine the conquests of Bhāskara to show whether or not he was really the emperor of Eastern India.

¹J.A.R.S, X, pp.63-77.

²See D.C.Sircar (I.H.Q, XXI, pp.143) who disputes Bhattasali's contention.

The importance of the conquests made and the extension of the kingdom under Bhūti-varman becomes evident from his Bad-gaṅgā epigraph, which refers to his performance of a horse sacrifice¹. We must admit that in ancient India the Aśvamedha was sometimes performed even by rulers of minor importance; but in the case of Bhūti-varman, it had perhaps a special significance. As given in the Nidhanpur grant, he had a circle of feudatories and was able to capture the whole of Kāmarūpa by his benign glance: īkṣana-jita-Kāmarūpa². D.C.Sircar doubts whether the credit of the performance of the Aśvamedha should be given to Bhūti-varman and further adds that it was Nārāyaṇavarman and not Mahendra who performed two horse sacrifices. 'Is it then possible,' Sircar writes, 'to suggest that the second of the horse sacrifices assigned here to Nārāyaṇavarman, was celebrated when that king was too old and his son Bhūti-varman was ruling the country on his father's behalf, and that this was the reason why Bhūti-varman is said to be a performer of the Aśvamedha in a record of his reign?'³ This statement is possibly based on the Nidhanpur grant, which does not give the credit of an Aśvamedha to Bhūti-varman. But in the Doobi grant, an Aśvamedha sacrifice is ascribed to him⁴. Hence Sircar's contention is untenable.

As the Badgaṅgā epigraph is recorded in A.D.553-54,

¹E.I, 1947, pp.18-23.

²K.S. p.27 (f.n. 8).

³I.H.Q, XXI, pp.143f.

⁴v 25.

Bhūti-varman's conquests in Pāṇḍravardhana may be placed about A.D.550, when the Gupta hold declined in Bengal. The find spot of the epigraph in Nowgong indicates his conquests in the eastern direction. The decay of the Gupta power left the ruler of the rising kingdom of Kāmarūpa a free hand to launch his scheme of conquests. The donation of the land in North Bengal was but the testimony to his triumph in that direction. The policy of making land grants to Brāhmanas in and around Kāmarūpa was another proof of the patronage of learning and education. Bhūti-varman's victories not only made him supreme over North Bengal, and the outlying regions of Samatāṭa, Tripurā, Sylhet, Cāchār, Ḍavāka, including greater portions of modern Assam in the east, but also laid the foundation of the greatness of Bhāskara at a subsequent time.

Chandramukhavarman: The son of Bhūti-varman, Chandramukha may have ascended the throne in about A.D.555, and, according to our system of chronology, he may have ruled till A.D.565. This short reign of 10 years only is reasonable in view of the fact that he was an easygoing ruler and abdicated in favour of his son.

He is said to have possessed personal charms by which he could captivate the hearts of all and to have ruled his subjects wisely. The Doobi grant refers to him as the best of kings, the illustrious, who attracted the city damsels, who was wise and charming, and who ruled his kingdom like the sun

with brilliant lustre and was a source of delight to his subjects and himself happy and gay¹.

The Doobi grant refers to his fight with his enemies and the extension of the kingdom to the sea-shore. He lawfully broke 'the pride of the powerful enemies - conquered the earth with ocean as her girdle and frequently performed sacrifices'². The statements are, however, vague. These may refer to his consolidation of conquests in south-east Bengal after the defeat of local chiefs; alternatively, it is possible that he came into conflict with the Maukharis and the Later Guptas, who were struggling during this period for supremacy in Magadha and Gauḍa³.

It appears from the Doobi grant that his son, Sthitavarman, was associated with the administration and when the latter grew up and finished his education, he (Sthitavarman) was placed on the throne⁴. This evidently refers to Chandramukha's voluntary abdication in favour of his son.

Sthitavarman: The son of Chandramukha and Bhogavati⁵, Sthitavarman reigned between A.D.565-85. In view of his eventful reign and the performance of two horse sacrifices, this period of 20 years appears probable. The Doobi grant makes an important mention of his abhiṣeka on his accession. It was

¹vV 26-28; Nidhanpur grant, V 15.

²v 30.

³It is possible that Chandramukhavarman came into conflict with Kumāragupta III or his son and Isānavarman Maukhari (see Raychaudhuri, P.H.A.I, pp.602-5)

⁴vV 29-31.

⁵Nidhanpur grant, V 16.

performed according to the injunctions of the śāstras¹. This is the first recorded instance of the Vedic coronation ceremony of a Kāmarūpa ruler. He did away with all the causes of disorder in his kingdom. The Doobi grant states that 'in his capital city, which surpasses the city of Indra in beauty, blemishes like theft, famine, epidemic, oppressions, etc., were removed' by him². It may be suggested that Chandramukha's easy going career was responsible for disorder in the kingdom, which was ended by the strong hand of Sthitavarman. The noble ancestry of the king and his knowledge of the śāstras are also mentioned in the epigraph. 'Just as the moon makes the mountain caves gloomy and dark, so also the other kings were put to shame by him'. 'He was a moon to the lotus-like enemy, born in the line of the Bhaumas, with firm knowledge of different śāstras, well-versed in the Vedas, with a renowned lineage'³.

Important allusions are made to his feudatory rulers and to the building of a city on the bank of the Brahmaputra. 'Of him, the self-controlled, the feet assumed the beauty of land lotuses, turning red by the radiance of the gems at the diadems of the tributary kings bowing down. The illustrious king, Sthitavarman by name, built in his kingdom a city by the bank of the Brahmaputra, with his friends and followers'⁴. The city may have been Prāḡjyotiṣa; but the feudatories are

¹v 33.

²v 34.

³Doobi grant, VV 34, 38.

⁴Doobi grant, V 37.

unknown, though they may have been rulers of Sylhet, Cāchār, Tripurā, Davāka or even south-east Bengal.

Another significant fact mentioned in the Nālandā Clay Seal, is his performance of two horse sacrifices: (diṅ) r-āśvamedhayājī-Śrī Sthiravarmā¹. It is possible that during the early part of his reign, the feudatories in the eastern fringe of the kingdom and south-east Bengal gave trouble, but he celebrated his victory over them by the performance of the first Āśvamedha in about A.D.570; it is also possible that the sons of Īśānavarman Maukhari and the Later Guptas who were struggling for supremacy in Magadha and probably in Gauda², harassed Sthitavarman in North Bengal, when the latter tried to extend his power on the frontiers of Bengal and Magadha in about A.D.575-80. The limits of Kāmarūpa in Pundra-vardhana were probably kept intact and the victory of Sthitavarman was celebrated by his performance of the second Āśvamedha by A.D.580. If these surmises be correct, the chronology suggested for Sthitavarman (A.D.565-85) appears to be tenable. This victory of Kāmarūpa at the cost of the Later Guptas probably explains the invasion of Mahāsenagupta during the reign of Suṣthitavarman, which may be placed between A.D.585-92 or even later. Bhattasali rightly remarks that

¹Line 7.

²See P.H.A.I, pp.605f. Dāmodaragupta, son of Kumāragupta III is said to have continued the struggle with the Maukharis, started by Īśāna and Kumāragupta III. The Maukhari opponent of Dāmodara was either Sūryavarman or Sarvavarman (sons of Īśāna). As a result of their contest the supremacy over Magadha passed into the hands of the Maukharis (C.I.I., III, pp.216f).

the performance of two horse sacrifices by Mahendra, one by Bhūti-varman, and two others by Sthitavarman indicates the growing prosperity of the ruling family of Kāmarūpa¹, which, as we shall see, temporarily declined during Suṣṭhitavarman's reign.

Suṣṭhitavarman: The son of Sthitavarman, Suṣṭhita is called Suṣṭhira in the Clay Seal of Bhāskara and Mṛgānka in the Har-ṣacarita, which describes him as a 'splendid hero, famous in the world as Mṛgānka: great grandson of Mahārāja Bhūti-varman, grandson of Chandramukhavarman and son of Sthitavarman, who wore the unshaken majesty of Kailāsa' and 'took away the conch shells of the lords of the armies, not their jewels; grasped the stability of the earth, not its tribute; seized the majesty of monarchs, not their hardness'². The Nidhanpur grant records in the same strain: 'From that king (Sthitavarman) of unfathomable nature, of innumerable gems, and the spouse of the (Goddess) Lakṣmī, was born Śrī Mṛgānka, who had no blemish, just as the moon, free from spots, is born from the milky ocean, whose substance is unfathomable, whose pearls cannot be counted, and from which Lakṣmī was produced - who held the kingdom in his own hand and was known as Śrī Mṛgānka. - By whom was given away to supplicants as if it were (a clod of) earth, that shining Lakṣmī, whom Hari like a mirror bears with joy in his bosom'³. The Doobi grant further testifies

¹I.H.Q., XXI, pp.19f.

²H.C. (Cowell), pp.217-18.

³VV 17-19.

to his accomplishments. He was like 'Indra on this earth, born for uplift, like the highest virtue born of the company of the honest, like vast knowledge born of the study of the Vedas, like the great Agni in the sacrifice'. His mother 'was always made happy by illustrious Susthitavarman, with the brilliance of the full moon, just like Gaurī by Kārtikeya, Aditi by Indra, Devakī by lord Kṛṣṇa, the enemy of the demons'¹.

There is mention of the enemies, defeated by him both in the Harṣacarita, already quoted, and in the Doobi grant, which records that his 'feet were illumined with the jewels of the heads of the kings, brought under control by his power'². If the system of chronology accepted for him (A.D.585-93) appears reasonable, his reign saw the rise of a new power in the west. The political condition of Northern India assumed a new phase about this time. The fall of the imperial Guptas and the failure of Yaśodharman to build a permanent empire, led to the disintegration of Northern India, marked by the rise of a number of powers. Most important of these were the Puṣyabhūtiś of Sthāneśvara, the Maukharis of Kośala and the Later Guptas of Mālwā and Magadha. We have already referred to the struggle for supremacy over Magadha and Gauḍa between Īśāna and his successors and the Later Guptas. Īśāna, the powerful king of the Maukharis, claims in the Harāhā epigraph³ to have conquered a part of Magadha and defeated the Gauḍas. The Deo-Baranark inscription of

¹Doobi grant, VV 39-40.

²Ibid, V 41.

³E.I. XIV, pp.110f.

Jīvitagupta II¹ proves that Īśāna's successors, Śārvavarman and Avantivarman, held sway over some part of Magadha. While both Kumāragupta III, who defeated Īśāna, and his son Dāmodaragupta defeated the Maukharis², the latter (Dāmodara) fell fighting with the successors of Īśāna³. So in the struggle for supremacy between the Maukharis and the Later Guptas, fortunes wavered between them⁴; but with the rise of Mahāsenagupta, both Magadha and Gauda seem to have come under the sway of the Later Guptas.

It appears likely that the growth of Kāmarūpa power in Bengal and a new campaign of conquest, started by Suṣṭhita turned the attention of Mahāsenagupta towards the east, where Kāmarūpa rulers had taken possession of the whole of the Pāundravardhanabhukti. Ever since the time of Bhūti-varman, the political influence of Kāmarūpa in Eastern India effectively blocked the further extension of the power of either the Maukharis or the Later Guptas in North Bengal. The materials at our disposal do not prove that these powers held North Bengal. The Nidhanpur grant of Bhāskara in the early part of the 7th century A.D. proves that this king only confirmed

¹C.I.I., III, pp. 216f.

²C.I.I., III, pp. 203f (Aphsad Ins. of Ādityasena).

³P.H.A.I., p. 606 (f.n.)

⁴Opinion is divided whether the Later Guptas held Magadha. Raychaudhuri holds that the successors of Īśāna, as proved by the Deo-Barnark ins. of Jīvita, held parts of Magadha; the Later Guptas held sway only in Mālwa till the time of Mahāsenagupta (P.H.A.I., pp. 606). R.K. Mookerji (Harsa, pp. 60, 67); C.V. Vaidya (H.M.H.I. I, p. 35) and D.C. Ganguly (J.B.O.R.S., XIX, p. 402) locate them in Mālwa. R.D. Banerji holds a different view, (J.B.O.R.S., XIV, pp. 254f) challenged by Mookerji (J.B.O.R.S., XV, pp. 251f) & Raychaudhuri (J.B.O.R.S., XV, pp. 651f)

the donation of lands in Pāundravardhana as a result of the loss of copper plates. We have discussed this question in another connection¹. The activities of the Maukharis and the Later Guptas were probably confined to western and southern Bengal owing to the hold of Kāmarūpa in Pāundravardhana. It was perhaps Dāmodaragupta, who made an unsuccessful attempt in expelling the Varmans of Kāmarūpa from North Bengal during the time of Sthitavarman; but the latter signalised his victory by the performance of two horse sacrifices. Susthita probably, like his father, attempted fresh conquests on the frontiers of Bengal and Bihar; but the rise of Mahāsena provided a new opportunity for the Guptas to put an end to further Kāmarūpa influence in the west and north Bengal.

The invasion of Mahāsenagupta is testified by the Aphaśā epigraph of Ādityasena. It records that his 'mighty fame, marked with the honour of victory over the illustrious Susthita-varman (and white) as a full-bloom jasmine or water lily, or as a pure necklace of pearls pounded into little bits, is constantly sung on the bank of (the river) Lauhitya, the surfaces of which are (so) cool, by the siddhas in pairs, when they wake up after sleeping in the shade of the areca palm that are in full bloom'². In spite of this definite reference to Susthita and the Brahma-putra, some writers identify him with a Maukhari ruler. This is the view of Fleet³, R.K.Mookerji⁴, Hoernle⁵, S.K.Aiyanger⁶

¹See below, pp. 285f

²C.I.I, III, pp.200-208 (Lines 10-11).

³C.I.I, III (Intro) p.15.

⁴Harsa, p.25.

⁵J.A.S.B, LXIII, I, p.102.

6.J.I.H., V, p.319.

and others; but R.D.Banerji¹, P.Bhattacharya², B.C.Law³, Collins⁴ and others have rightly identified him with the king of Kāmarūpa. 'The association of Suṣṭhitavarman with the river Lauhitya clearly shows that the king of that name mentioned in the Nidhanpur plates is meant'⁵. Basak finds in verse 19 of the Nidhanpur grant a hint to the defeat of Suṣṭhitavarman⁶. But the actual interpretation of the verse which states, 'by him was given away to supplicants as if it were (a clod of) earth, that shining Lakṣmī', does not confirm his contention. It perhaps points to the king's benevolent nature. He might have bestowed large gifts on those who approached him as beggars and have had little attachment to wealth.

The date of the defeat of Suṣṭhita or the invasion of Kāmarūpa is difficult to determine. Vasu⁷ ascribes it to A.D.575, which appears to be impossible. The Maukhari menace itself was not over until A.D.570-80 as proved by their coins⁸, and Mahāsenā must have taken time to defeat them before he could advance up to the Brahmaputra. The invasion of the conqueror, therefore, cannot be placed earlier than A.D.590-93,

¹J.B.O.R.S., XV, pp.252f.

²K.S. (Intro) p.15.

³J.U.P.H.S., XVIII, pp.43f.

⁴Geographical Data, etc. pp.50f.

⁵Raychaudhuri P.H.A.I, p.607 (f.n.I).

⁶H.N.E.I., p.216.

⁷Social History of Kāmarūpa, II, 144.

⁸The dates of Sarvavarman & Avantivarman are taken to be A.D.553-54 and 569-70; but Dikshit reads them as 577-88 and 579-80 (See J.R.A.S. 1906, p.848; Tripathi, History of Kanauj, pp.55-60).

as he could only have re-established his supremacy over Magadha and Gauda towards the close of the 6th century A.D.¹ Mahāsena's attack must have occurred before the invasion of the Chālukya king Kīrtivarman, who claims to have conquered among other countries, ~~Anga~~, Vāṅga, Kalinga and Magadha; Kīrtivarman's last date is A.D.597-98². Taking all these contemporary events into consideration, the date of the invasion of Mahāsena can be placed between A.D.590-93.

It does not appear likely that Mahāsena actually advanced far into Kāmarūpa or crossed the Brahmaputra, since he embarked on a later campaign against the kingdom. The scene of the battle was the bank of the Brahmaputra, and Kāmarūpa was certainly affected by the loss of her possessions in North Bengal. It was, however, a temporary loss; because within two decades or so Pāṇḍravardhana was re-occupied by Bhāskara. The western boundary of Kāmarūpa still remained the Teestā or the Karatoyā. It is, therefore, rightly pointed out that 'this victory of the Gupta king had a political consequence, for he recovered the whole of the Pāṇḍravardhana and the Kāmarūpa boundary was pushed to the Teestā-Karatoyā. The result was that Kāmarūpa lost all the territories which included the land donated by Mahābhūtavarman'³. Kāmarūpa still held sway over portions of south-east Bengal,

¹Majumdar, History of Bengal, I, p.58.

²I.A., XIX, 7 (Mahākūṭa Ins.)

³E.H.K., p.53.

and Suṣṭhitavarman's political influence remained among his defeated feudatories¹.

In the verse 48 of the Doobi grant there is a significant mention of the steady advance of the Gauda army towards the frontier of Kāmarūpa. From this we may infer that after the conquest of Pūṇḍravardhana to the west of the Karatoyā, Mahāsenā pursued Suṣṭhita to his frontier and that the latter was killed or died in the course of his defeat. It may be that the resistance of Supratiṣṭhita and Bhāskara to Mahāsenā, mentioned in the said verse, took place soon after this; but the latter reference more probably applies to a second invasion of Mahāsenā, who in his first invasion could not achieve anything in the way of the conquest of Kāmarūpa to the east of Karatoyā. The probability of a second invasion is strengthened by the fact that in the Aṅgīśa inscription there is no mention of the two sons of Suṣṭhita, which suggests that this refers to the first invasion only; in any case, it is probable that Suṣṭhita fell fighting in the contest, but the frontiers of Kāmarūpa could not be pushed back from the Karatoyā and, therefore, the campaign was followed by a second invasion of Kāmarūpa².

Supratiṣṭhitavarman: It was with a heavy heart at the death of his father that Supratiṣṭhita ascended the throne about A.D.593, to make room, as we shall show, after a very short

¹Doobi grant, V 41.

²See below, pp. 270-71

reign, for his more capable brother Bhāskara. He was born of Śyāmādevī, 'the moon, as it were, to dispel (all) gloom - whose prosperity was for the benefit of others, who was possessed of elephants and attended by the chief among the learned, and possessed of a well established capital like a Kuḷācala, whose height is for the benefit of others, which is haunted by the chief of Vidyādharas and is rich in elephants-'¹. As stated in the Doobi grant, both the sons of Sustaḥita 'were endowed with royal qualities manifested on this earth through their merits; one was esteemed as the extirpator of the enemies, with awful countenance in battle, but lovely like the moon, in relation to his well-wishers - The elder (Supratisthita) one was of great fame with powerful hands, that looked like the trunk of a mighty elephant'².

Some writers do not give Supratisthita the credit of accession to the throne. Basak, referring to the verse 21 of the Nidhanpur grant, which states that 'his prosperity was for the benefit of others', holds that the phrase refers to Mahās-enagupta and that Supratisthita became his vassal. 'If he ever reigned as a king', Basak writes, 'he might have conducted the administration of Kāmarūpa on behalf of the Magadhan king, who occupied the kingdom after defeating his father'³. But the verse rather suggests that he reigned as an independent ruler with his mighty army, and that all that he did for the pros-

¹Nidhanpur grant, VV 20-21.

²VV 44-47.

³H.N.E.I, p.217.

perity of the kingdom passed to his brother, Bhāskara. The kingdom was never occupied by Mahāsena and hence the question of the vassalage of Supratisthita did not arise at all. P.Bhattacharya is right in holding that the allusion in the grant was to Bhāskara, who might have enjoyed the results of Supratisthita's activities; he rightly contends that Supratisthita reigned for a few years¹. The contention of K.L.Barna, therefore, that he died as a Yuvarāja² is untenable; nor is the surmise of Basak that Bhāskara might have been chosen king for his efficiency, and therefore Supratisthita had to abdicate³, supported by any genuine source.

Besides the Harṣacarita⁴, and the Clay Seal of Bhāskara⁵, there is a definite mention of Supratisthita as a ruler in the Doobi grant, which states thus: 'Then the elder (of the two) who was worshipped in the minds of the people, having, as ordained by fate, gone to the other world - Bhāskara ascended the throne⁶. It is evident that Bhāskara became king, probably after the premature death of his elder brother and after a rule of a few years by the latter⁷.

It appears likely that immediately after the death of his father, and before Supratisthita and his younger brother could make preparations for the recovery of the lost possessions in

¹K.S. p.31 (f.n.3).

²E.H.K, p.57.

³H.N.E.I, p.217.

⁴H.C.(Cowell) pp.217-18.

⁵Line 8.

⁶v 52.

⁷P.D.Chaudhury, J.A.R.S, XI, pp.33-38; B.P.Sinha, J.B.O.R.S, XXXV, p.130.D.C.Sircar, I.H.Q., XXV, 244
XXVI-5p.241f.

North Bengal, they were caught unawares by the second invasion of Mahāsenagupta. This is shown in the Doobi grant. 'Their father having left for paradise, and the Gauda army having gradually arrived (at the frontier) the two brothers, though in their youth only, arrived at the scene with a handful of soldiers on account of the disturbance of peace, without any care or anxiety, just like Bala and Achyuta'. The fighting between the Kāmarūpa and Gauda army is described in the same grant. 'Having arrived there (the two princes) - pierced through the huge troops of mighty elephants that looked like the range of the Krauñca mountain, belonging to the Gauda army, with sharp arrows - having destroyed the army of the enemy in a short span of time, with sharp arrows and various types of other deadly weapons - they became shrouded in the (darkness) of night and confronted with an array of wild elephants - They (the princes) were brought near their own country through sheer luck by the said armies - and having arrived again at their own place, delighted (the people) of their vast paternal kingdom'¹. The sense of the verses will show that the Gauda army arrived at the frontiers of Kāmarūpa, i.e. near the Karatoyā and when Supratisthita and Bhāskara arrived at the scene, a tough battle ensued with varying fortunes on either side, till at last the frontier was crossed and the two princes were pursued by the enemy; but they returned safe to their kingdom.

¹Doobi grant, VV 48-51.

In the opinion of D.C.Sircar, the battle took place in the heart of Kāmarūpa and he further holds that it was a naval fight, fought not far from Tezpur, with the result that the princes were taken prisoners and were reinstated in their kingdom as subordinate allies of Gauda. The king of Gauda leading the army, was, according to Sircar, either Śasāṅka or his immediate successor¹. But as we have stated, the battle was fought just outside the boundary line, created as a result of the defeat of Susthita in the hands of Mahāsena. It was after a hard fight that the frontier was crossed and the princes were pursued to their kingdom. The advance of the Gauda army as far as Tezpur is nowhere indicated in the grant. It is unlikely that the princes were taken prisoner and later on reinstated by Śasāṅka or his successor. The invasion cannot be placed earlier than A.D.593-94 when Sasanka's rise to power in Gauda is questionable. B.P.Sinha also takes the Gauda invader to be either Jayanāga² or Śasāṅka, more probably the latter. 'The invasion, though it failed in its immediate objective', he writes, 'must have created a sense of danger in the minds of the rulers of Kāmarūpa'³. This he writes in order to explain the cause of Bhāskara's alliance with Harsha. But as we have explained, the rise of either Jayanāga or Śasāṅka in about A.D.593-94 is very doubtful, and it seems probable that the

¹I.H.Q, XXVI, pp.241-46.

²The rise of Jayanāga is placed by some writers after Śasāṅka (Majumdar, History of Bengal, I, pp.79-80).

³J.B.O.R.S.,XXXV, pp.130-37.

invasion was a second attempt of Mahāsenagupta¹ against Kāmarūpa, in order to achieve what was left unfinished by his first invasion. The true reading of the grant leaves no room for doubt that both the invasions were very close in point of time. It is wrong, therefore, to assume that either Bhāskara or his brother was a vassal of Śāsānka or his successor, and it is equally wrong to suggest that the imperial invader in about A.D.593-94 was other than Mahāsenagupta, who, by his earlier campaigns, had already established himself in Magadha and Gauda. It is possible that by the second invasion the boundary of Kāmarūpa was further pushed eastward from the Karatoyā.

Immediately after the war, Supratisthita died, perhaps from a wound, received while fighting; but in spite of his failure to recover the lost possessions of Kāmarūpa in Bengal, he built a prosperous capital, and increased the military strength of the kingdom, to be successfully utilised by his more able successor, to complete what he had begun and left unfulfilled.

Bhāskaravarman: With the accession of Bhāskaravarman Kamarupa entered into a new chapter of her history, illumined by his Doobi² and Nidhanpur grants³, the Nālandā Clay Seals⁴, Bāna's Harṣacarita, the Chinese Records and other sources.

¹P.D.Chaudhury, J.A.R.S., XII, pp.1f.

²J.A.R.S., XII, pp.19f.

³E.I, XII and XIX.

⁴J.A.R.S., IV, pp.89f; J.B.O.R.S., VI, pp.151-52; R.D.Banerji, J.B.O.R.S., V, pp.302-304; H.N.Sāstri, M.A. S.B.(N.66)pp.69-70.

We are on firmer ground regarding the chronology of the period, thanks to his contemporaneity with Harṣa. The very short reign of his elder brother, Supratisthita, has been proved by Bhāskara's epigraphs, and it appears that the latter became king early in his life in about A.D.594. This date is confirmed by an early Assamese chronicle, "Kāmarūpa-Purāvr̥tta". Unfortunately the original manuscript is not available here. It states that in the year 612 Bakhtiyar advanced as far as Kāmapīṭha. This reference is based also on another manuscript, in which the same date is given¹. The date of his invasion as recorded in the Kānāi Varasī Inscription, Gauhati², and confirmed by the *Tabaḡāt-i-Nāsiri*³, is S.E.1127 = A.D.1205-6, in which case, the Kāmarūpa era might have been started in (1206-612) = A.D.594. It is only to a well-known ruler like Bhāskara that the commencement of an era may be ascribed. The system of chronology worked out for the Varman line on the basis of both epigraphy and synchronism will fit in with the starting of an era by that ruler exactly at that time. It is, therefore, probable that just after his accession Bhāskara celebrated his coronation by starting a new era in A.D.594. It is, however, strange that this local era was discarded in favour of either Gupta or Saka era in the epigraphs, but survived in some circles for over 600 years.

¹See K.L.Barna, J.A.R.S. April, 1934., (Ed. S. N. Sarmā)

²K.S., (Intro) p.44.

³Raverty, I, pp.56Of; A.Salam, *Riyāz-us-Salātin*, pp.65-68.

Bhāskara's accession was probably a little earlier than that of Harṣa (A.D.606). This may be gathered from his position as an aged king, dressed as Brahma, while Harṣa himself took the place of Śakra (Indra), in the religious ceremonies, described by Yuan Chwang¹. He ruled for at least a few years after Harṣa's death (647-48)², as he is associated with the Chinese Mission of Wang heuen tse that became involved in the usurpation of Arjuna after Harṣa's death³. On these considerations, the long reign of Bhāskara may be placed between A.D.594-650.

The name 'Kumāra' as mentioned in the Chinese sources, has probably reference to his accession early in his career. It has, however, been interpreted differently. P.Bhattacharya is of opinion that he retained this title as he remained a bachelor⁴; but in another place he contradicts himself, when he holds that it is highly improbable that he could remain unmarried, and suggests that perhaps he retained the title out of respect for his brother, who probably did not ascend the throne, or if he did, occupied it only for a short time⁵. Kielhorn contends that his actual name was Kumāra and Bhāskara was only his surname⁶. K.L.Barua explains

¹Life, pp.177f; Siyuki, I, pp.215f.

²Basak, H.N.E.I, p.220.

³J.A.S.B., VI, p.69; I.A. IX, p.14.

⁴K.S. (Intro), pp.16-17.

⁵E.I., XII, p.70.

⁶J.R.A.S., 1898, pp.384-85.

the title by holding that Bhāskara was a celibate¹. The name 'Kumāra' is also mentioned in the Harṣacarita in the expression: atra devena abhiṣiktah Kumārah²; but this does not refer to Bhāskara, who is called by Bāna 'Bhāskaradyuti' and 'Prāggyotisvara'³. N.R.Roy wrongly takes it to refer to Bhāskara, on the basis of which he makes him the vassal of Harṣa⁴. C.V.Vaidya believes that Bhāskara was anointed by Harṣa⁵. The same view is held by R.K.Mookerji⁶. But as R.C.Majumdar rightly points out, the evidence from Bāna and Yuan Chwang 'does not leave any doubt as to the independent position of Kāmarūpa'⁷. It is fantastic to identify the Kumāra Rājā, an already crowned king of Eastern India according to the Chinese Records, with 'Kumāra' of the Harṣacarita in order to find justification for the theory of the extension of Harṣa's empire to Kāmarūpa or to make it a vassal state. In the opinion of Tripathi the word 'Kumāra' refers to Mādhavagupta and Bhāskara at no time accepted Harṣa's authority, as Bāna rightly calls him 'Prāggyotisvara'⁸. D.C.Sircar, identifying the Kumāra with Kumārāgupta, son of Mādhavagupta, rightly remarks that 'Kumāra of the Harṣacarita cannot be identified with Bhāskaravarman of Kāmarūpa, as the latter

¹J.A.R.S, I, pp.97f; E.H.K., p.57.

²H.C.(Cowell) p.76; Tripathi, History of Kanauj, pp.104-5.

³H.C.(Cowell), pp.217-18.

⁴I.H.Q, III, pp.769-93.

⁵H.M.H.I, I, pp.11,30, 41.

⁶Harṣa, pp.44,48.

⁷I.H.Q, V, pp.229-36.

⁸J.B.O.R.S, XVIII, pp.317-18; History of Kanauj, pp.104-5.

was already a crowned king when he came into contact with Harṣa'¹. It is only reasonable to hold that the name or rather the title 'Kumāra', applied to Bhāskara by Yuan Chwang, has nothing to do with his name or even surname. It was perhaps a sort of nickname, which he retained even in his old age. It was a prefix added to Rājā and it may have been retained by him neither owing to his respect for his brother, who by his accession was long dead, nor because of his celibacy, but perhaps owing to his early accession to the throne. Kumārarājā Bhāskara of the Chinese Records, therefore, was quite a different person from the Kumāra of the Harṣacarita. As we shall show, the relation between Harṣa and Bhāskara was not that of an overlord and a vassal.

The early career of Bhāskara is noticed in connection with his association with his brother in the Gauḍa war, in which he was successful². The loss of the possessions of Kāmarūpa in Bengal since Suṣthitavarman's time and the second invasion of Mahāsenā in about A.D.593-94, were fresh in his memory. It was, therefore, one of his pressing duties to recover them at the earliest opportunity. The early part of his reign, even before the accession of Harṣa, was employed in preparations towards that end, and this explains his association with Harṣa, who was confronted with a similar difficult situation.

¹I.H.Q, XIX, pp.278-81.

²J.A.R.S, XII, pp.19f.

That Bhaskara by his kingly qualities, devotion to duties, and love of his people, contributed to the proper organisation of the state and the enhancement of the glory of the kingdom, both by peaceful means and wars, is revealed from his grants. He was 'like the sun - and the abode of all light - who is without cruelty, easily accessible, of immense effects, and the soles of whose feet are surrounded by people who resort to his protection-'¹. He was created 'for the proper organisation of the duties of various classes and stages of life - who has revealed the light of the Ārya dharma by dispelling the accumulated darkness of this Kali age by making a judicious application of his revenue'. He was equal to the strength 'of the whole ring of his feudatories; he who has devised many a way of enjoyment for his hereditary subjects, whose royal devotion to him was augmented by his steadiness of purpose, modesty and affability; he who is adorned with a wonderful ornament of splendid fame, made of the flowery words of praise, variously composed by hundreds of kings, vanquished by him in battle; he whose virtuous activities, like those of Śivi, were applied in making gifts for the benefit of others; he whose powers, as of a second preceptor of the gods (Brhaspati), were recognised by others, on account of his skill in dividing and applying the means of politics as appropriate to the occasion; he whose own conduct

¹Nidhanpur Grant, Lines, 22-25.

was adorned by learning, valour, patience, honour and good qualities'. He was devoid of faults, and always took the side of virtue, for which the Lakṣmī of Kāmarūpa became attached to his person¹. Moreover, 'his intellect was matured by listening to the essence of the meaning of the various śāstras', and he 'acquired through eloquence and poetic genius mastery of all styles, possessing sweet wordings with clear and superb ornamentation. Virtue dislodged was re-established by destroying evils. Glory was restored from the clutches of the wicked, just like a deer from a trap. Fortune, who fell victim to the intoxicating influence of the enemy, was augmented after due rectification and owned by him, who was of resplendent power and a follower of the doctrine of Maheśvara'².

Bhaskara's success rested not only in his organisation of the state but also in his political relations, both of war and diplomacy, with the leading powers of his time. The political condition of Northern India towards the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century A.D. assumed a new phase with the rise of the Maukharis, the Vardhanas and Devagupta in the west and Śaśānka in Gauda. There had been no love lost between the Later Guptas and the Varmans of Kāmarūpa for more than a decade, and the rising power of Śaśānka was also a matter of grave concern for Bhāskara in his task of

¹Ibid, Lines, 34-35.

²Doobi grant, VV 54-55.

extending the limits of his kingdom. The family of Puṣya-
bhūti was at first in close alliance with the family of Mahā-
senagupta out of fear of the Maukharis. As proved by Bāna,
Prabhākara appointed two sons of Mahāsenā, Mādhavagupta and
Kumāragupta, to wait upon Harṣa and Rājyasrī¹. From this it
would appear that Prabhākara was the overlord of the Guptas.
This alliance is also proved by the Madhuban and the Sonpat
grants of Harṣa, which represent Mahāsenaguptā Devī as the
mother of Prabhākara²; the Apsad grant further alludes to
the association of Mādhava with Harṣa³. With the marriage
of Rājyasrī, however, the two houses of the Vardhanas and the
Maukharis were drawn closer. The alliance between the Guptas
(Devagupta) and Śasānka, as shown by Raychaudhuri, was due to
the alliance of the Vardhanas with the Maukharis⁴. This Deva-
gupta is taken as the eldest son of Mahāsenā, and placed bet-
ween the latter and Mādhava⁵. He is mentioned in the Madhuban
and the Banskhera grants of Harṣa⁶. Raychaudhuri points out
that as the Guptas are associated with Mālavā in the Harṣa-
carita, there can be no doubt that this Devagupta II was
identical with the lord of Mālavā, who murdered Grahavarman
of Kanauj, though his name is not found in the Apsad epigraph⁷.

¹H.C.(Cowell); P.H.A.I, pp.606f.

²E.I, I, pp.72; VII, 157f; C.I.I., III, 231-32.

³C.I.I., III, 200f; P.H.A.I, pp.606f.

⁴P.H.A.I, pp.606f.

⁵Ibid, p.608.

⁶Bühler, E.I., IV, 210f, I, 72f; Kielhorn, VII, 157f.

⁷P.H.A.I, pp.607f; Hoernle, J.R.A.S., 1903, p.562.

This alliance of Devagupta with Śasānka and the murder of Grahavarman, Harṣa's brother-in-law, by the former, as well as the murder of Rājyavardhana, by the Gauda ruler¹, had an important bearing on the relations between Bhāskara and Harṣa.

Śasānka, immediately after the assassination of Rājyavardhana, occupied Kanauj, and released Rājyaśrī, the widowed queen of Grahavarman, from detention in her capital. With the murder of Rājya, Harṣa had no alternative but to ascend the throne at Sthāneśvara, and his duties were to drive Śasānka from Kanauj, to avenge his brother's murder, and to rescue his sister. To achieve these ends, Harṣa firmly resolved to advance with his army to bring the 'Five Indias under allegiance'², and punish his enemies as they deserved. The removal of Śasānka was also of immediate concern for Bhāskara, for the recovery of the lost possessions in Bengal. The intricate position in which Harṣa was placed, seemed to augur well for the Kāmarūpa king.

The details of the alliance are given in the Harṣacarita. The account may be exaggerated, but the kernel of the description appears to bear a historical truth. The alliance was concluded through Bhāskara's ambassador, Haṃsavega, who went to Harṣa's court. The first question that was put to him by Harṣa is stated by Bāṇa thus: 'Haṃsavega, is the noble prince well?' 'At this moment', was the reply, 'he is well'³. The

¹H.C.(Cowell), p.178.

²Watters, Yuan Chwang, I, p.343; also, Beal, I, p.213.

³H.C.(Cowell), p.211.

manner by which the ambassador persuaded Harṣa to make the alliance is remarkable indeed. As Hamsavega stated, 'from childhood, it was this prince's firm resolution never to do homage to any being except the lotus feet of Śiva. Such an ambition, so difficult of attainment - may be reached by one of three means, by a conquest of the whole earth, by death or by a friend like Your Majesty - The sovereign of Assam desires with Your Majesty an imperishable alliance - Commission me to say that the sovereign of Assam may enjoy Your Majesty's hearty embrace, so that the crushed bits of bracelet-gems may grind as they clash against the jewelled edges of great arm rings - If Your Majesty accepts not his love, command me what to report to my master.' The reply of Harṣa was equally appropriate. 'How could the mind of one like me possibly even in a dream show aversion, Hamsavega, when such a great and noble spirit, such a treasure of virtue and captain of the worthy, bestows his love as an absent friend upon me - Therefore, use your endeavours that my yearning to see the prince may not torment me long'¹.

While all writers admit the importance of this alliance in the careers of both the kings², there is much disagreement as to its interpretation. N.R.Roy³ contends that Bhāskara's seeking of an alliance with Harṣa out of fear of Śaśāṅka, and

¹Ibid, pp.217-18.

²Basak, H.N.E.I, p.220.

³I.H.Q, III, pp.769f.

his long association with the ruler of Kanauj only proves the subordinate position of Kāmarūpa, to which Harṣa's sway extended. But this has rightly been disputed by Majumdar¹.

R.D.Banerji, commenting on the alliance holds that it was the defeat of Suṣthitavarman at the hands of Mahāseṇa that led Bhāskara to seek an alliance, and that he 'may have felt the weight of Śaśāṅka's arms before he sent an ambassador to Harṣa to seek his alliance'². Tripathi thinks that it was his fear of Śaśāṅka that led him to offer his hand to Harṣa in the beginning of his campaign³. B.P.Sinha is of opinion that it was Śaśāṅka's earlier success over Kāmarūpa and Harṣa's preparations for war that served as the background of Bhāskara's alliance with Harṣa⁴. R.K.Mookerji finds in the offer of alliance Bhāskara's allegiance to Harṣa. But Tripathi, rightly disputing this, remarks that 'can the conclusion of a treaty by any stretch of imagination be interpreted as "offering allegiance of his own accord"?'⁵. Basak interprets it 'as a hint that the Kāmarūpa king was anxious to offer his personal services and remain under obligations to the emperor of Northern India'⁶. But he seems to contradict himself by holding that the alliance was due to a 'reciprocal longing' and that Harṣa, hearing of Bhāskara's accomplishments, was

¹I.H.Q, V, pp.229-236.

²History of Orissa, I, pp.128f.

³J.B.O.R.S, XVIII, pp.317-18.

⁴J.B.O.R.S XXXV, pp.130-137.

⁵History of Kanauj, p.104.

⁶H.N.E.I, p.223.

anxious to become his friend. He desired an interview earlier and Harṣa even wanted to assist him in his campaign against Śaśāṅka and other conquests¹.

From a study of the relevant passages from Bāṇa, already quoted, it appears that Bhāskara was known to Harṣa from some time past before the interview of Hamsavega, and the Kanauj king may have desired an earlier interview with Bhāskara. The political condition in Eastern India and the traditional rivalry between Kāmarūpa and Gauda on the one hand and the Guptas on the other was long known to the Vardhanas. Harṣa, therefore, expected such a proposal of alliance from Kāmarūpa, which became more probable after the murder of Rājyavarādhana by Śaśāṅka. Harṣa had a longing to meet Bhāskara, and hence Hamsavega was asked to send his master as soon as possible, so that they might plan a campaign against their common enemy. Moreover, Harṣa's immediate duty was to rescue Rājyasrī, and by the alliance, Harṣa hoped to encourage Bhāskara to carry on the campaign against Śaśāṅka. The necessity to recover the lost possessions of Kāmarūpa in Bengal and to check the rising power of the Gauda ruler was the real motive of the alliance on the part of Bhāskara; it was, therefore, as important for him as it was for Harṣa. The alliance was cemented after negotiations on both sides and on equal terms; its significance is realised by Raychaudhuri, who remarks that

¹ Ibid.

Harṣa concluded an alliance with Bhāskara in order to meet the league of the Guptas and the Gaudas¹. In other words, without Bhāskara's aid it is doubtful whether Harṣa could have vanquished Śāsānka².

It is unfortunate that the progress of the campaign is nowhere recorded. The Harṣacarita ends at a point when Harṣa returns to his camp after the recovery of his sister. Yuan Chwang states that proceeding eastward, Harṣa waged incessant warfare until in six years he fought the 'Five Indias' or brought the 'Five Indias' under allegiance³. Again his biographer writes: 'He (Harṣa) was soon able to avenge the injuries received by his brother and to make himself Master of India'⁴. It is further stated: 'At the present time Śīlāditya Mahārāja had conquered the nations from east to west and carried his arms to remote districts'⁵. The Chinese Records, therefore, are extremely vague about the military activities of Harṣa. Bāṇa incidentally alludes to riders, 'intently occupied in rehearsing the approaching Gauda war'⁶. An indirect reference is also detected in a passage in which the 'sunset is described in terms suggesting bloody wars', which led to 'the rising of the moon of Harṣa's glory'⁷.

¹P.H.A.I, p.609.

²N.N.Vasu, Social History of Kāmarūpa, II, p.148.

³Watters, I, p.343; Beal, I, p.213.

⁴Life, p.83.

⁵Watters, II, p.239; Beal, I, pp.256-57.

⁶H.C.(Cowell) p.209.

⁷Ibid, p.200 (Note 4).

Here also the references are vague. Harṣa's wars were continued towards the end of his reign, as is proved by his Koṅgoda (Orissa) campaign in about A.D.643. Even the existence of Śasāṅka as late as A.D.619, if not later, is proved by the Ganjam Plates; this seems to prove that Harṣa had not finished all his campaigns by A.D.612 despite the testimony of the Chinese Records.

A passage in the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa is explained by some writers as referring to Harṣa's march to Puṇḍra in pursuit of Śasāṅka and the latter's confinement within the limits of his own territory after his defeat. The passage runs thus: His (Rājyavardhana's) younger brother Ha (Harṣa) will be an unrivalled hero. He decided against the famous Soma (Śasāṅka). The powerful vaiśya king with a large army marched against the eastern country, against the excellent capital called Puṇḍra of that characterless man - He defeated Soma - and Soma was forbidden to move out of his camp (being ordered) to remain therein. Ha returned having (or not having) been honoured in that kingdom of the barbarian¹. The treatise neither refers to Bhāskara nor to the occupation of Śasāṅka's kingdom, and the reference is, therefore, vague.

While the details of Harṣa's occupation of Gauḍa after the expulsion of Śasāṅka remain in obscurity, further light is thrown on the question by the Nidhanpur grant of Bhāskara,

¹Ed. T.G.Śāstrī, VV 721-726; K.P.Jayaswal, Imperial History of India, p.50.

issued from his victorious military camp at Karnasuvarna in Bengal¹. This confirms a previous land grant by Bhūti-varman in the Chandrapurī viṣaya in Pāundravardhana², and seems to prove that at the time of the issue of the grant both Pāundravardhana and Karnasuvarna were held by Bhāskara. Many theories have been advanced to explain when and how these regions were occupied:- firstly, that Harṣa's empire extended to Kāmarūpa and Bhāskara occupied Karnasuvarna after the death of both Śaśānka and Harṣa; secondly, that, after the expulsion of Śaśānka from Gauḍa after A.D.619, Karnasuvarna was handed over to Bhāskara by Harṣa; thirdly, that the Gauḍa ruler, overthrown either by Harṣa or Bhāskara or by both, was not Śaśānka, as he was alive up to A.D.625, but one Jayanāga. We shall try to show that none of these theories are based on a reasonable interpretation of the materials.

To begin with the last, B.C.Law holds that the king, overthrown by Bhāskara, may have been Jayanāga³, and that Bhāskara, being defeated by Śaśānka, asked help from Harṣa, and, therefore, could not disobey Harṣa's commands⁴.

D.C.Ganguly holds that Bhāskara wrested Karnasuvarna from Jayanāga and was forced to surrender it to Śaśānka, who conquered Gauḍa from Jayanāga. He further contends that Śaśānka's victory made Bhāskara realise that Kāmarūpa was in danger; but when Śaśānka invaded Kāmarūpa is not known, nor

¹H.Beveridge, J.A.S.B, LXII, I, pp.315f.

²Above, pp. 239f

³E.I, XVIII, pp.60f.

⁴J.U.P.H.S, XVIII, pp.43f.

is Ganguly definite about the date of the occupation of Karnasuvarna by Bhāskara¹. The existing materials do not justify the conclusion that Bhāskara fought either with Śaśānka or Jayanāga before Hamsavega met Harṣa. It is equally improbable that Harṣa and Bhāskara, or Bhāskara alone, fought against a little known ruler like Jayanāga². It is likely that Jayanāga was defeated by Śaśānka himself, who would not have started his campaign against the Vardhana-Maukhari houses until after the occupation of Gauḍa and Karnasuvarna.

Tripathi believes that Karnasuvarna was occupied by Bhāskara after Arjuna's usurpation of Kanauj, when Bhāskara helped the Wang ~~Le~~uentse Mission, because Harṣa, he asserts, would not have allowed Bhāskara to take possession of such a fertile land and thereby increase his power³. Majumdar contends that Bhāskara occupied Karnasuvarna after Harṣa's death⁴, and adds that when Bhāskara aided the Chinese Mission and Arjuna was defeated, he made himself master of Eastern India and pitched his victorious camp in Śaśānka's capital. Bhāskara thereby is said to have fulfilled his grudge against Harṣa, who treated him as a vassal⁵. This is an extreme view⁶. We have no evidence of the existence of illwill between the two rulers until the end of their careers. The question of

¹I.H.Q, XII, pp.456-68; also R.P.Chanda, Gauḍarājamālā, pp.7f

²Majumdar holds that Jayanāga occupied Karnasuvarna after Śaśānka's death and before its conquest by Bhāskara. (History of Bengal, I, pp.79-80).

³J.B.O.R.S, XVIII, pp.316-18; History of Kanauj, p.103.

⁴History of Bengal, I, p.70.

⁵An Outline of Ancient Indian History & Civilisation, p.348.

⁶R.G.Basak, H.N.E.I, pp.227f.

Bhāskara's taking revenge against Harṣa is only based on imagination. There is no evidence to prove that Arjuna was the legal heir to the empire of Harṣa. He was perhaps a petty ruler of Tīrabhukti and, as rightly held by S.K.Aiy-
 anger, Bhāskara would not have helped the mission, if the legi-
 timate heir of Harṣa's empire was at war with it¹. It is
 wrong to hold that it was as a result of the anarchy after
 Harṣa's death that Karnasuvarṇa was occupied by Bhāskara.
 Harṣa's relations with Bhāskara appear to be those of an
 equal. We shall show that Karnasuvarṇa was occupied long
 before the end of Harṣa's reign.

In the opinion of P. Bhattacharya, Bhāskara was in Karnasuvarṇa with Harṣa for some time when the grant was issued, but the result of the conquest was enjoyed by Harṣa². The district was occupied by Harṣa, Bhattacharya suggests, after Śaśāṅka's death in A.D. 625, or after his expulsion by Bhāskara and Harṣa, and the grant may have been issued after the occupation³. He concludes by holding that Karnasuvarṇa came into the possession of Harṣa after Śaśāṅka's death, and Bhāskara either occupied it after Harṣa's death, or was rewarded with it because of his help to the Chinese Mission⁴. But rewarded by whom? It is fantastic to assume that a portion of land was given to Bhāskara by the Chinese Mission, as if whole

¹J.I.H, V, pp.313f.

²K.S., p.5.

³Ibid, Intro, p.16.

⁴E.I, XII, pp.66f; I.A. XLIII, pp.95-96. D.C.Sircar also contends that Bhāskara occupied parts of Bengal & Bihar after Harṣa's death. (I.H.Q.XIX pp.278-811.)

India was conquered by it from the hands of Arjuna. It is unfair that Bhāskara should be accused of treachery for his aid against the usurper, as is done by K.Kumar¹. What we know of his character makes it unlikely that he helped the mission out of grudge². The mission was but a peaceful one, sent by China 'in order that the principles of humanity and justice which had been diffused in that country should have a protector and representative there'³. It was only when the escort of Wang Hsuentse was killed by Arjuna that help was sent from Kāmarūpa, Nepal and Tibet⁴. Bhāskara's respect for Yuan Chwang, Arjuna's improper action, and the political confusion⁵, led him to help the mission to avenge the massacre; but his advanced age at the time would suggest that his help was not primarily offered from political considerations.

As regards the occupation of Śaśānka's kingdom after A.D.619 or after his death, Basak invents a theory of two campaigns on the part of Harṣa, in the second of which Bhāskara may have joined. In this the kingdom was wrested either from Śaśānka or his unknown successor, and Harṣa made it over to the Kāmarūpa king, who annexed it to his kingdom⁶. The date of occupation in his opinion is between A.D.619-637⁷. But he contradicts himself in asserting that Kaṇhasuvarṇa did not

¹I.H.Q., XIII, (N.4), 1937.

²See K.L.Barna, J.A.R.S., V. pp.118-121.

³J.A.S.B, VI, p.69.

⁴I.A., IX, p.14.

⁵H.N.E.I, p.231.

⁶Ibid, p.226.

⁷I.H.Q, VIII, pp.1-20.

form part of Kāmarūpa at any time and Bhāskara only pitched his camp there as an ally of Harṣa during the latter's second campaign. He concludes by holding that both North and Central Bengal were added to Harṣa's empire¹. We shall shortly prove that Basak's arguments are in no way justified. B.C.Sen contends that Śāsānka was not ousted and it was only after his death that his kingdom was annexed to Harṣa's empire. Bhāskara may have held a brief domination of Gauḍa after Harṣa's death². Vasu holds that Harṣa probably allowed Bhāskara to rule over Gauḍa³. Vaidya thinks that Śāsānka's power in Bengal remained until A.D.619, and after his death Karnasuvarṇa was given to Bhāskara, as he accepted Harṣa's overlordship⁴. This does not find corroboration from any genuine source. P.L.Paul asserts that Bhāskara's position was inferior to that of Harṣa, and Karnasuvarṇa may have been occupied after Śāsānka's death, but the occupation was not permanent⁵. B.P.Sinha believes that Śāsānka could not have died much earlier than A.D.637 and that he held Magadha until 625 or his death. Harṣa, therefore, had a partial success over him at a later date, Bengal and Orissa being annexed to Harṣa's empire after Śāsānka's death⁶. We do not know on what evidence Sinha makes Śāsānka flourish in full glory

¹H.N.E.I. p.229.

²Some Historical Aspects of the Inscriptions of Bengal, etc.

³Social History of Kāmarūpa, II, pp.148f. 1932, pp.260-68.

⁴H.M.H.I, I, pp.11, 30, 41.

⁵I.H.Q, XII, pp.63-83, (f.n.p.74)

⁶J.B.O.R.S, XXXV, pp.141f.

until A.D. 637 or 625. Smith likewise contends that Śaśānka escaped with little loss, his kingdom being subject to Harṣa at a later date, and Bhāskara had to obey the orders of the Kanauj ruler¹. What appears to be most unlikely, Smith² makes Bhāskara a Mongolian or a Hinduised Koch, which has been rightly disputed by P. Bhattacharya³.

The most important question to be decided is whether Harṣa's sway extended over the whole of India, including Kāśmīra, Nepal and Gauḍa and Kāmarūpa, as asserted by some writers. With this is intimately connected the expulsion of Śaśānka. K.M. Panikar for instance, giving the credit of the conquest of Gauḍa to Harṣa, asserts that his empire extended from Kāmarūpa to Kāśmīra and from the Himalayas to the Vindhya⁴. This has been rightly disputed by Majumdar, who limits Harṣa's empire to the modern U.P., Bihar and a portion of the Eastern Punjab with the exclusion of a portion of territory in the north-west; on the basis of the pilgrim's testimony, Majumdar is in favour of the view that Harṣa was only a king of Kanauj⁵. This is also an extreme view. We cannot as well accept Mookerji's theory that Harṣa's campaigns were over by A.D. 612⁶. The Chinese sources, as we have already examined, are not clear on this point. It is yet to

¹E.H.I, pp.312, 314, 329.

²Ibid, p.341.

³Pratibhā, 1328 (B.S.) N.8., pp.285-7.

⁴Harṣa, p.27.

⁵J.B.O.R.S., IX, pp.311-25.

⁶Harṣa, p.36 (N.I); Vaidya, H.N.H.I, I, p.13.

be proved that Kāśmīra and Nepal, not to speak of Kāmarūpa and even Gauda were included within Harṣa's empire. That his campaigns were not over by A.D.612, as we have stated, is proved by his wars against Pulakesin II Chālukya and Kōṅgoda. We do not know of his plans for the conquest of Gauda when he returned after the recovery of Rājyaśrī about A.D.606. Possibly he returned to Kanauj, for his consecration, leaving Bhāskara to deal with Śaśānka. Bhāskara's occupation of both Pūndravardhana and Karnasuvarna is undoubtedly proved by his Nidhanpur grant. As D.C.Ganguly rightly points out 'there is not the slightest evidence to prove that Harṣa ever held sway over Bengal', but 'the larger portion of Gauda, which was situated between Kāmarūpa and Karnasuvarna was within the kingdom of Bhāskaravarmen'¹. The occupation is proved by the fact that he with Yuan Chwang passed through Gauda with a vast army. Had this country been under any other king at the time, it is unlikely that Bhāskara would have been allowed to pass through it. So about A.D.642, writes Ganguly, Gauda, including Northern Rādhā, formed part of Kāmarūpa². But he does not believe that Śaśānka's kingdom was occupied long before the second meeting with Harṣa. The same view is held by Dasgupta, who states that it is doubtful whether Karnasuvarna was held by Harṣa; 'but in the second or the third quarter of the seventh century A.D. it was

¹I.H.Q, XV, pp.122-24.

²Ibid, pp.122-24.

occupied for sometime at least by Harṣa's faithful ally Bhāskaravarman', and his 'subjugation of Karnasuvarṇa was not merely of the nature of a raid on it-¹. But these writers are not definite about the date of Bhāskara's occupation. Their main difficulty is that they cannot reconcile the expulsion of Śaśāṅka at an early date with his existence in Orissa as late as A.D.619. Whatever may have been the participation of Harṣa in this act of the expulsion of Śaśāṅka, the fact remains that this was definitely done before Harṣa's campaigns against Pulakesin II. He would not have gone to war with Pulakesin if he had had a dangerous enemy on his flank. While R.D.Banerji's theory² of Śaśāṅka's overthrow through the combined efforts of Harṣa and Bhāskara seems unjustified, since there is no reference to such a campaign in any source, he is right, when he holds that the expulsion 'took place before the Ganjam plates, and at the time he (Śaśāṅka) had lost all his possessions in Bengal and was the master of Orissa only'³. B.N.Sircar rightly contends that Harṣa's sway never reached Bengal and Śaśāṅka's kingdom passed on to Bhāskara, as otherwise the latter could not have controlled the sea route to China, as testified by the pilgrim's biographer⁴.

¹I.C. II, pp.37-45; also Chanda, Pravāsi, Vaiśākh, 1339(B.S.) pp.62-63.

²Bāṅglāra Itihāsa, I, pp.87-88.

³History of Orissa, I, pp.128f.

⁴I.H.Q, VI, pp.442-43.

As stated by Banerji, it is evident that Gauda was lost before A.D.619, and it is likely that Karnasuvarna passed to Bhāskara before the coronation of Harṣa about A.D.612¹, and definitely at the time of the issue of the Nidhanpur grant². Either Śaśānka was driven out by Bhāskara alone or he fled to Orissa out of fear of the huge preparations of both Bhāskara and Harṣa. The latter inference is more likely, as no war with Gauda is mentioned in any source. The theory of the occupation of Śaśānka's kingdom by Bhāskara is further proved by the absence of any reference giving the credit to Harṣa. As Orissa was held by Śaśānka probably until his death some time after A.D.619, the reference in the Mañjuś-rīmūlakalpa to his confinement in his kingdom, may indicate his taking shelter there. We are, therefore, constrained to believe that Śaśānka's kingdom had definitely passed to Bhāskara by A.D.619, and perhaps even by A.D.612. The occupation was but the recovery of the possessions of Kāmarūpa, lost through Mahāsena's invasions, and the victory was confirmed by the issue of the grant.

The next disputed question to be decided is whether south-east Bengal, including Sylhet, Tripurā and portions of Samatata, was within Bhāskara's sway. While J.C.Ghosh³, Bhattasali⁴, A.C.Chaudhury⁵ and others favour the theory of the

¹K.L.Barna, J.A.R.S, 1934, pp.97-103; E.H.K, p.67.

²Raychaudhuri, P.H.A.I, p.609.

³I.H.Q, VI, pp.60-71; I.C.,II, pp.153-57; Bhandarkar, I.A.,

⁴J.A.S.B.(Letters) I,pp.419-27. LXVI,pp.41-55, 61-72.

⁵Śrīhatṭer Itivṛtta, IV (f.n.p.74).

inclusion of Sylhet within Kāmarūpa on the basis of the location of the Nidhanpur grant, P.Bhattacharya¹, K.L.Barna² and others assert that Sylhet lay outside Kāmarūpa. The question of the land granted has already been discussed in connection with the reign of Bhūti-varman³, and we have shown that it is to be located in Pāṇḍravardhana. The fact that Sylhet is separately mentioned for instance by Yuan Chwang or in the Sādhanāmālā, the Yoginī Tantra and other sources, cannot make a strong ground for assumption, as done by Bhattacharya⁴ that it was not within the kingdom of Kāmarūpa. The reference may be to a geographical unit rather than a political one. That South-east Bengal, including Sylhet, Tripurā, portions of Dacca, Nymensingh and other regions were already under Bhūti-varman, can be proved by the existing materials⁵. Bhattacharya's belief regarding the independent status of Sylhet, on the basis of an epigraph of Īśvarādevī of Jālandhara⁶, is wrong; we have shown that the epithet, 'Srihattādhīśvarebhyah', occurring in the grant, has nothing to do with the political status of Sylhet⁷. We have also shown that it is equally wrong to rely on the tradition by

¹K.S., p.5; J.A.S.B.(Letters) III, pp.45-51; J.A.R.S.IV, pp.58-66; E.I., XIX, pp.115f; K.S.(Intro) p.17; I.H.Q, III, pp.839-46.

²I.C., I, pp.421-32, 701-702; he holds a contrary view elsewhere (E.H.K, p.89).

³Above, pp. 239f

⁴K.S.(Intro), pp.5,17; J.A.S.B.(Letters), III, pp.45-51; J.A.R.S.,IV, pp.58-66; E.I. XIX, pp.115f.

⁵Above, pp. 253f ; Bhattasali J.A.S.B.(Letters) I, pp.419-27; K.L.Barna, J.A.R.S,III, pp.92f.

⁶E.I., I, pp.10-12.

⁷Above, pp. 244-45

which a king of Tripurā in 641 is credited with the donation of land to Brāhmaṇas in Sylhet¹. If he was identical with the king Ādi-Dharmaphā, who flourished according to Tripurā chronicles about the same time², we may assume that the grant was made in the capacity of a feudatory chief of Bhāskara. But unless the plates confirming the grant are found, we cannot be certain of the historicity of the grant itself.

One interesting piece of historical material of this period is the Tippera grant of the feudatory chief, Lokanātha, which throws a new light on the question of Bhāskara's sway over Sylhet and Tripurā. The grant, in the opinion of Basak, contains a date in the Harṣa era: 44 = A.D.650. The grant mentions Lokanātha's liege-lord, Jayatūṅgavarṣa, who helped Lokanātha in the latter's war against another feudatory, Jivadhāraṇa. Basak identifies the liege-lord of Lokanātha with Ādityasena or some other ruler³. B.C.Sen takes him as Dharmapāla of Gauḍa⁴, which is chronologically absurd. Majumdar takes him to be a Khadga ruler⁵, which also is wrong, since there is no reason to believe that the Khadgas held Tripurā or Sylhet. Vasu, taking Jayatūṅga as Jayatūṅgavarman, identifies him with some successor of Bhāskara, on the supposition that the date is the G.E.344 = A.D.663⁶. K.L.Barna

¹Ibid, pp. 247-48

²K.L.Barna, J.A.R.S., III, pp.92-98.

³E.I., XV, pp.301-312; H.N.E.I., p.195.

⁴Some Historical Aspects of the Inscriptions of Bengal, etc. p.354; Bloch places the grant during the 9th-10th century A.D.

⁵History of Bengal, I, p.88. (A.R.A.S.I., 1903-4, p.118 ↓).

⁶Social History of Kēmarūpa, III, pp.19-20, 45.

identifies Jayatūṅga with Śālastambha and holds that he assumed this title after dethroning Avantivarman¹. But all these assumptions appear to be incorrect. As we shall show, Bhāskara's successor was Śālastambha himself, who can be identified with Avantivarman. The date, as read by Basak is 44; it was probably in the Kāmarūpa era, started by Bhāskara in A.D.594 and, therefore, the grant is to be dated in about (44 + 594) = A.D.638. Bhāskara's political sway over South-east Bengal is testified by Yuan Chwang, who states that the rulers of Kāmarūpa had the sea-route to China under their protection². This is one of the strongest grounds in favour of our contention that Bhāskara held sway over Sylhet and Tripurā. If our date of the grant (638) is tenable, Jayatūṅga may be identical with Bhāskara, who was the liege-lord of Lokanātha, and Jīvadhāraṇa was probably another feudatory of Kāmarūpa, established in Sylhet, who went to war with Lokanātha. On these grounds, it is fair to conclude that both Tripurā and Sylhet were under Bhāskara. The Nidhanpur grant mentions a number of feudatories of Bhaṣkara, who 'made the circle of (related) powers attached to him and equalled the powers of the ring of his feudatories by the strength of his own arms'³ and 'vanquished hundreds of kings in battle, who spoke in praise of him'⁴.

¹J.A.R.S, I, pp.97-103.

²Life, Intro, pp.XVI-XVII.

³Nidhanpur grant, Lines 34f.

⁴Ibid; E.I., XII, p.78.

The Nalanda Clay Seals of Bhaskara provide further historical material in support of our contention that the bounds of Kāmarūpa reached even beyond Bengal. The seal contains the genealogy of the ancestors of Bhāskara and mentions the performance of a number of horse sacrifices, performed by some of them. The remark of Dikṣit that the seals might have been affixed to a letter of invitation to Yuan Chwang while he was at Nālandā¹, is merely a guess. P.L.Paul, in order to strengthen his theory of the subordination of Kāmarūpa to Harṣa, attaches no importance to it². D.C.Sircar, while admitting 'that the seal belongs to the period of Kāmarūpa occupation of Bihar', holds on the contrary that 'the occupation of Bihar is rendered doubtful by the fact that Harṣa probably established the Later Guptas in Magadha during the concluding years of his life - The seal may then be connected with Bhāskaravarman's stay in South Bihar in the year 643 A.D.'³ But there is no conclusive proof that the Guptas were established in Magadha by Harṣa. K.L.Barna supposes that both Harṣa and Bhāskara left their seals in Nālandā to commemorate their visit⁴. But we cannot agree with this interpretation. Dasgupta rightly contends that though it is difficult to say when Bhāskara 'extended his conquests up to the Nālandā region - the discovery of his seal at Nālandā - is not an

¹J.B.O.R.S, VI, pp.151-52.

²I.H.Q, XII, pp.63-83.

³I.H.Q, XIX, pp.278-81.

⁴E.H.K., p.98.

accidental phenomenon¹. It must have, therefore, a political significance.

It is worth noting that Bhāskara's association with the region existed long before his march with the pilgrim to meet Harṣa by A.D.643. Bhāskara heard of the pilgrim at Nālandā from a Kāmarūpa Brāhmaṇa, who went there to engage in a controversy. This seems also clear from his invitation to Śīlabhadra, asking him to send the pilgrim to Kāmarūpa. The story may have been exaggerated; but there is certainly a kernel of truth in it. Bhāskara is said to have sent his last messenger to Śīlabhadra with a letter, reading thus: 'if he (the pilgrim) does not come, your disciple will then let the evil portion of himself prevail - If necessary then I will equip my army and elephants and like the clouds sweep down on and trample to the very dust that monastery of Nālandā'². He could not have sent such a strong letter had Nālandā not been within the sphere of his influence. When it came into his possession is uncertain; but it appears that after its occupation Bhāskara established a relation of his in the region. This is confirmed by the accounts of Itsing, who states that the temple lands along with the revenue of 20 villages near about Nālandā belonging originally to Śrīgupta, reverted to Devavarmā of Eastern India who was willing to

¹I.C., II, pp.37-45.

²Watters, I, p.348; Life, pp.165f.

give back the whole endowment in case any priest came from China¹. The location of this China temple is disputed. Majumdar places it in Mrgasthāpana in Varendra or not far from its boundary on the bank of the Bhāgīrathī and the Padmā². B.P.Sinha places it in modern U.P. to the west of Magadhā³. D.C.Ganguly locates it in modern Murshidabad in Bengal⁴. But these identifications do not appear to be correct. I-tsing writes that 'two stages to the east of the Mahābodhi is a temple called Kiu-lu-Kea - About forty stages east of this, following the course of the Ganges is the Deer temple and not far from it is a ruined establishment - called the China temple'⁵. I-tsing gives his itinerary in a confused manner. It appears that the China temple lay not very far from Nālandā, and, therefore the Mrgasikhāvana agrahāra or the China temple can be reasonably located near the border of Bihar and Bengal. Devavarman 'whose kingdom included the Nālandā region (in the west) appears in the best of probability to have been a lineal descendant of Bhāskaravarman, who bore the same title 'varmā', equally described as the "King of Eastern India", who ruled in the first half of the seventh century A.D. and whose seal has been discovered at Nālandā'⁶. It appears probable that Devavarman was established by

¹J.R.A.S, 1881, 558-72; I.A,1881, 109-11, 192-93.

²History of Bengal, I, p.68; New History of the Indian people, VI, p.129.

³J.B.O.R.S,1951, pp.138-144.

⁴I.H.Q,XIV,pp.532f.

⁵Life, XXXVI f (note I); also Chavannes, Voyages des Pelerins

⁶N.N.Das Gupta, I.C.II, p.39. Bouddhistes, pp.82-84.

Bhāskara over the Nālandā region towards the end of his reign, perhaps after the departure of Yuan Chwang.

The epithet 'king of Eastern India', applied to Bhāskara by the Chinese sources, seems to have an important bearing on his political status in Eastern India¹. It is something, as remarked by Das Gupta, 'the significance of which seems to be much greater than it is ordinarily supposed to be'². It may have been applied owing to the fact that Bhāskara's kingdom included the whole of Assam, great portions of Bengal and some portions of Bihar or at least the Nālandā region. This is in consonance with the statement made by the pilgrim that the rulers of Kāmarūpa had the sea route to China under their protection³, evidently through the Delta of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, opening to the Bay of Bengal. There is a substratum of truth, though not the whole truth, in the statement of B.M.Barna that the Yoginī tantra's definition of Kāmarūpa, from Karatoyā to Sadiyā, is wide enough to indicate the vastness of Bhāskara's kingdom⁴; but the kingdom was certainly larger than this, and than B.C.Sen thinks it to have been, who places it, on the basis of the same work, to the east of the Brahmaputra⁵. We must go beyond these limits to include the Nālandā region in the west and the regions bordering on China ~~in the~~

¹See P.L.Paul (I.H.Q, XII, 63-83) who attaches no importance

²I.C., II, pp.37-45.

to it.

³Life, XVif.

⁴I.H.Q, XXIII, 200-220; also P.Bhattacharya, K.S.(Intro)p.17.

⁵E.I.I, I, pp.30,84.

in the east, as evidenced by Yuan Chwang, who states thus:
 'To the east of Kāmarūpa the country was a series of hills and hillocks without any principal city, and it reached the south-west barbarians (of China) - The pilgrim learned from the people (of Kāmarūpa) that the south-west borders of Szechuan were distant about two months' journey - In the south-east of the country were wild elephants which ranged in herds'¹. The accounts testify that Kāmarūpa touched the borders of Burma and China. Moreover, the route of the pilgrim's journey to Kāmarūpa supports our view on the limits of the kingdom in the west. The pilgrim crossed a large river and entered Kāmarūpa². The kingdom was according to him, 'more than a myriad li in circuit and its capital about thirty li'³. The large river, which is mentioned in the T'ang Shu as Kalotu, is identified with the Brahmaputra by Watters⁴. Cunningham identifies it with the Teestā, and further adds that the capital, visited by the pilgrim, lay in Koch Bihar⁵, which is wrong. Majumdar rightly identifies the capital with Gauhati and the river with the Karatoyā⁶. The T'ang Shu's Kalotu is evidently the Karatoyā. Yuan Chwang's Kāmarūpa, therefore, was large enough to include portions of Bihar, great portions of Bengal, including the Delta and almost the whole of modern Assam. Bhāskara truly justified the appellation, applied to him by the Chinese

¹Watters, II, pp.185f; Beal, II, pp.195f.

²Ibid.

³Watters, II, pp.185f.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ancient Geography of India, pp.572-73.

⁶S.N.Majumdar, Cunningham's Ancient Geography of India, pp.572-73 (note), 729.

sources as the 'King of Eastern India'.

What gives special interest to the career of Bhāskara is his respectful association with the pilgrim and his desire for insight into Buddhism. This becomes evident from his letter of invitation to Nālandā. When Yuan Chwang came to Kāmarūpa, Bhāskara made all provisions for music, banquets, and religious offerings in his capital. The pilgrim was there for about a month¹. The date of his visit can be placed at about A.D.643. Cunningham's supposition that he visited Kāmarūpa twice², is not supported by any evidence.

It appears from the conversation between the king and the pilgrim that the former was long attracted to China. We do not rely upon the literary accuracy of the accounts; but these seem to throw a light on the political and cultural relations between Kāmarūpa and China. 'Although I am without talent myself', the king is purported to have told the pilgrim, 'I have always been fond of conspicuous learning. Hearing then of your fame and distinction, I ventured to ask you here to visit me - Now through the kingdoms of India there are many persons who sing about the victories of the Tsin King of the Mahā Cīna country. I have long heard of this - I have ever had an esteem towards the east, but the intervening mountains and rivers have prevented me from personally visiting it'³.

¹Basak, H.N.E.I, p.230.

²Ancient Geography of India, p.LXIX.

³Beal, II, pp.197f; Watters, I, p.348.

The song refers to the victory of the prince of T'sin, the second son of the T'ang emperor, Kaotsu over the rebels in A.D.619. It appears that after Yuan Chwang's return to China, Bhāskara exchanged envoys with China and showed a keen interest in Taoism. When the two envoys Li-Yi-Piao and Wang-Hinan-tse visited India (643-46), Bhāskara asked them to send a portrait of Lao-tse and a sanskrit translation of the Tao-teh-King¹. Under the order of the emperor, Yuan Chwang translated the work and may have sent it to Bhāskara. The evidence indicates the cultural contact between Kāmarūpa and China.

The next period of Bhāskara's career was spent with Harṣa who, after returning from his Koṅgoda campaign, sent a messenger to bring back the pilgrim from Kāmarūpa. Bhāskara, however, did not want to part with the company of the pilgrim and, therefore, the reply sent to Harṣa was rather rude: 'He (Harṣa) can take my head, but he cannot take the Master of the Law yet'. Harṣa met the situation by an appropriate reply: 'Send the head, that I may have it immediately by my messenger who is to bring it here'². Bhāskara then started with the pilgrim and met Harṣa on the bank of the Ganges near Rājmahal³. Harṣa's orders were by way of an ultimatum. We cannot guess what would have followed next, had Bhāskara disobeyed it. The whole story seems to centre around the

¹P.C.Bagchi, India & China, pp.200f; Lévi, Pre-Aryan & Pre-

²Life, pp.165f; Watters, I, p.348. Dravidian in India, pp.114-15.

³Ibid.

pilgrim, whose importance has been so enhanced by his biographer. Bhāskara's compliance with the order does not, however, indicate blind obedience to Harṣa, but shows that he had as much keen interest in the pilgrim as Harṣa had. Harṣa's desire for the presence of the pilgrim in his capital was apparently connected with his preparations for holding religious ceremonies. Harṣa might have assumed an air of superiority, but Bhāskara's participation in the ceremonies with his followers, with the full glory befitting an independent sovereign, does not make us believe that the Kāmarūpa king was considered as a vassal by Harṣa. Bhāskara participated in the ceremonies and attended upon the pilgrim not because of the fact that he wanted to please Harṣa, but because of his respect for the pilgrim and keen interest in Buddhism.

It was in the fitness of things that the two chief monarchs of Northern India should take a leading part in the ceremonies, held at Kanauj and Prayāga in honour of the Chinese priest and Buddhism. These events made this period of Indian history memorable indeed, and at both Bhāskara was received with due honour. In the procession carrying the image of the Buddha at the Kanauj Assembly 'Śīlāditya Rājā, under the form of lord Śakra with a white chowrie in his hand, went to the right, and Kumāra-Rājā, under the form of Brahma with a precious parasol in his hand, went to the left¹.

¹Life, pp.177-78; Beal, I, pp.215f.

In the ceremony at Prayāga, Harṣa had his camp on the north bank of the Ganges and Bhāskara on the south bank of the Yamunā by the side of a flowery grove¹. The ceremony was solemnised with lavish gifts to people of all sects by Harṣa, 'establishing a record in individual charity and the liberality, hardly equalled in history'².

Shortly after the ceremonies, the pilgrim made his preparations to return to China; but Bhāskara requested him to stay in his kingdom. The statement made in this connection is significant, because it shows Bhāskara's leanings towards Buddhism³. The pilgrim refused to stay; but of all the valuable presents offered to him, he accepted only one from Bhāskara, a cap of skin for protection against rain. Immediately after the pilgrim's return, Bhāskara came back to Kāmarūpa. This ends a chapter of the history of Kāmarūpa, marked by the intimate relations between Harṣa, Bhāskara and Yuan Chwang. As his grants show, Bhāskara probably spent the remaining period of his reign in peaceful activities.

The accounts of the pilgrim throw much light on the accomplishments of Bhāskara and on the conditions of the people and the kingdom during his time. 'The country was low and moist, the crops were irregular; the jack-fruit and cocoanut were in great esteem though plentiful; there were continuous streams and tanks to the towns; the climate was genial. The

¹Life, pp.185f.

²R.S.Tripathi, History of Ancient India, p.161.

³Life, pp.187f; Chap.V, Section 4, pp. 654-54

people were of honest ways - their speech differed a little from that of Mid India'. The students were meritorious, and 'they worshipped the Devas - the deva temples were some hundreds in number and the various systems had some myriads of professed adherents. The reigning king, who was a Brāhmin by caste and a descendant of Nārāyaṇa Deva, was named Bhāskara-varman - the sovereignty had been transmitted in the family and his subjects for 1000 generations. His Majesty was a lover of learning and his subjects followed his example; men of ability came from far-off lands to study here; though the king was not a Buddhist, he treated accomplished Śramaṇas with respect'¹. There are some wrong statements in the pilgrim's observations. It is impossible that the family ruled for a thousand generations; the pilgrim in stating thus might have recorded a tradition he heard of. Equally mistaken is his reference to Bhāskara as a Brāhmaṇa by caste. This he certainly wrote under the impression that the king descended from Viṣṇu. Basak explains this by holding that he 'was a Brāhmanical Hindu in religion'². It is true that one's surname does not always prove one's lineage. But if the ancestors of the king may be traced back to the Alpines of the priestly order³, Yuan Chwang's testimony may have some significance⁴. By the time of the pilgrim's visit, the rulers definitely

¹Watters, II, pp.185f; Beal, II, pp.195f.

²H.N.E.I, p.230.

³Chap.III, Section 2, pp. 160f

⁴See N.N.Vasu, Social History of Kāmarūpa, III, p.109.

became Brāhmanical Hindus, though they adopted the title 'Varman', appropriate to other classes.

Inscriptions bear testimony to the many sided qualities and achievements of this one of the greatest rulers of ancient Assam. As the Nidhanpur grant states, he was born to dispel darkness from his kingdom and establish religion by making provisions for the proper organisation of classes and stages of life and ministering to the needs of learning. Because of his patronage, Kāmarūpa became a centre of learning, attracting students from outside. Learning was encouraged by his liberal gifts. He became an example for his subjects. He was, as it were, 'the very life of Dharma, the abode of justice, the home of virtues, the treasury of supplicants, the shelter of the terrified and the temple of plenty'. He made provisions for the Brāhmaṇas and other higher classes by donations of lands, and Kāmarūpa during the 7th century A.D. became a centre of the Aryan Hindus; the kingdom came under the civilising influence of the Brāhmanical religion, whatever the origin of the rulers and the ruled. It had been the systematic policy of the rulers to open agrahāra settlements for the Brāhmaṇas not only in the centre of the kingdom but also in distant places like Chandrapurī. The contact of Kāmarūpa with Sylhet, Tripurā, Bengal, Orissa, Mithiā, Magadha and Kanauj as with China had been going on for some time past. It was closer with Mithiā. With the expansion of the

political sway of the Varman line of kings, large portions of Eastern India came under the cultural ideas of Kāmarūpa. As Vasu rightly remarks, its influence spread to the islands in the Pacific, and some of the architectural remains in Cambodia, Annam and other places are to be attributed to the influence of the rulers of Kāmarūpa¹. Bhūti-varman gave proof of his patronage of the Brāhmanical religion by settling many Brāhmaṇas in the kingdom; this was followed by his able successor. How, under the influence of these people and their descendants in Kāmarūpa, Gauḍa, Orissa and other lands, the social life was moulded, proves to be a story of absorbing interest. Their influence increased from the time of Bhāskara, under whom the cultural traits and languages of Kāmarūpa, Gauḍa and Kalinga tended to be somewhat similar²; the relics of this close contact can be detected even now among those places which were under the political and cultural influence of Kāmarūpa³.

The many sided kingly virtues of Bhāskara earned for him the deep loyalty of the people. Though a great devotee of Siva, as testified by his grants and Bāna, his was a catholic mind. Being possessed of a tolerant and pious character, it was natural that towards the end of his career he showed a special leaning towards Buddhism. The fact that he was able to leave his kingdom with Yuan Chwang and spend some time at

¹Social History of Kāmarūpa, III, pp.13f.

²Chap.V, Section 3, pp.63

³Vasu, Social History of Kāmarūpa, III, pp.13f.

Harṣa's court testifies to the smooth government of his kingdom. Had it been otherwise, his absence from the kingdom would have invited rebellion. Hence with a vast well organised administrative machinery, Bhāskara gave a good example of truth and justice, holding before his subjects the ideal of a paternal king in the proper guidance of the state. Both for the moral and for the material welfare of his subjects, he devoted a major part of his eventful life. His presents to Harṣa give us some idea of the state of material progress that the people had reached during the 7th century A.D.¹.

¹See Chap.V, Section 2, pp. 553f

Section 3.

The Line of Śālastambha:

Śālastambha - Origin and Chronology of the family.

Śālastambha established a new line in Prāggyotiṣa, but his relationship to Bhāskara is unknown. In fact, the enlightened reign of the latter was followed by an obscure period. The genealogy given in the records of the family, however, traces its descent from Naraka-Bhagadāīa, and we shall show that the connection with the same Bhauma dynasty was maintained.¹

The rise of Śālastambha was nothing accidental, as it would appear to some writers. The HaraGaurīsamvāda² seems to give a clue to this otherwise obscure period. We have already pointed out that, according to this text, after the rule of the princes of Naraka family came a prince from the west named Mādhava, who established in Kāmarūpa a new line with twenty-one kings.³ This number is exactly the same as that of the princes of the Śālastambha line as given in the grants, the twenty-first being Tyāgasimha. We have, therefore, identified Mādhava with Śālastambha.⁴ It is significant that Mādhava is said to have come from the west, perhaps from the Nālaṇḍa region, which may for a time have

¹See below, pp. 319f

²Chaps. VI-VII; P.C. Bagchi, I.H.Q., XVIII, 231-60.

³Political History, Section I, pp. 179f

⁴Ibid. pp. 201f

been an outpost of Bhāskara's empire. It is possible to identify him with Devavarman, mentioned by I-tsing as King of that district; and he may have been established there by Bhāskara as a governor. We have already mentioned the China temple, built by ŚrīGupta with the agrahāras of twenty villages, being in the possession of Devavarman, and that he was willing to give them back to the Chinese priests.¹ Devavarman, the King of Eastern India, was probably a relative of Bhāskara or belonged to a collateral family of the Varmans.² There is, therefore, no difficulty in identifying Mādhava alias Devavarman of the Nālandā region with Śalastambha.

The identification of Devavarman of the records of I-tsing is, however, disputed. P.L. Paul identifies him with Devagupta, son of Ādityasena.³ R.C. Majumdar takes him to be the Khadga ruler, Devakhadga.⁴ The same view is held by Bhattasali.⁵ It is on this basis that Bhattasali writes that the glories of the empire-builders of Kāmarūpa came to an end with Bhāskara, as about this time, Devakhadga, as proved by the Ashrafpur grant,⁶ carved out a Kingdom in

¹Life, Intro. XXXVI-XXXVII; J.R.A.S., 1881, pp.558-72; I.A.1881, pp.109-11, 192-93.

²See above, pp. 299-300

³I.H.Q., XII, pp.67-83.

⁴J.A.S.B., 1923, pp.376-78; History of Bengal, I, p.87.

⁵J.A.S.B., 1914, pp.86-87; Iconography of the Buddhist, etc. p.6.

⁶M.A.S.B., I, pp.85f; P.A.S.B., 1885, pp.49f; Ibid, 1890, pp.242-43; Ibid, 1891, p.119.

Samatata, and the same plate is believed by Bhattasali to refer to Bhāskara by the epithet, 'Brhatparamesvara', the former's liege-lord. Two other Kings, Lokanātha of Tripurā and Kāntadeva of the Chittagong area are also said to have declared their independence, indicating the weakening of the central authority of Kāmarūpa, until at last Sālastambha about A.D. 700 overwhelmed the dynasty of Bhāskara.¹

The whole theory of the writer seems to contradict the evidence of the existing materials. Devavarman can hardly be identified with a little known Khaḍga ruler, nor is the theory of the independence of Tripurā and other regions immediately after Bhāskara to be supported. Sālastambha, as we shall show, did not overthrow the line or the dynasty of Bhāskara. Lokanātha, as we have suggested, was a feudatory of Bhāskara and continued to be so along with other minor chiefs of Eastern Bengal as long as the rulers of Kāmarūpa remained the lords of Eastern India. D.R. Bhandarkar, identifying Devavarman with a Kāmarūpa ruler, takes him and his successor Harṣadeva to be the son and grandson of Bhāskara.² While his identification is correct, it is unlikely that Devavarman was Bhāskara's son; and Harṣadeva was not the successor of the former. K.L. Barua rightly identifies him with Sālastambha, but places Avantivarman

¹I.H.Q. XXI, pp.19f: The statement of R.M. Nath that a Mleccha dynasty was founded by Sālastambha after overthrowing Avantivarman, is unfounded. (Background of Assamese Culture, pp.40f).

²E.I. App. (XIX-XXIII), pp.379-406.

in between them, on the basis of his theory that a gap of about 5-10 years elapsed between Bhāskara and Śālastambha, and during this period Avantivarman ruled. 'It is very probable,' writes Barua, 'that before 670 A.D. Śālastambha successfully revolted and dethroning the immediate successor of Bhāskaravarman, proclaimed himself a king, perhaps assuming the high sounding name of Jayatūṅgavarman.'¹ He further adds that Avantivarman was uprooted by Śālastambha alias Jayatūṅga, who was the king mentioned as Devavarman by I-tsing.² We have already shown that Jayatūṅga is to be identified with Bhāskara.³ The supposed gap between Bhāskara and Śālastambha is not supported by any genuine source and we have reasons to believe that Śālastambha was not an usurper. As we have suggested, Devavarman was probably a relative of Bhāskara. The Khadgas could not have held sway at any time over Nālandā. So 'there is nothing that goes against finding in Devavarman a successor of Bhāskaravarman'.⁴ We have also suggested that Devavarman is to be identified with Mādhava of the Assamese Chronicles, whom we have tried to identify with Śālastambha.⁵ It is, likely, therefore, that Devavarman was the same as Śālastambha. This appears to

¹J.A.R.S., I. pp.97-103; Ibid, VI, pp.12-18.

²J.A.R.S., I. pp.97-103.

³Above, pp. 295-96

⁴N.N. Dasgupta, I.C. II, pp.37-45.

⁵See above, pp. 310-311

have been indicated also by the system of chronology.¹

To us Devavarman appears to be an inversion of the surname 'Varmādeva', taken by the rulers of the Varman line and even by some, such as Haryjjaravarman and Balavarman, of the line of Śālastambha himself. If this inference is correct, Devavarman can be identified with Avantivarman and if this can be shown, the supposed gap between Bhāskara and Śālastambha would no longer be tenable. The name Avantivarman is found in the last line of the last stanza of Mūdrārākṣasa; but the name varies in different manuscripts, and is given as Chandragupta, Dantivarman, Ratnavarman and many others. Particular attention to the reading of the name Avantivarman has been drawn by Telang² and K.H. Dhruva in their editions of the play. Jayaswal thinks that the true reading is Chandragupta, whom he identifies with Chandragupta II.³ S. Ray takes the same view.⁴ But the question of the correct reading of the name of the prince rests on the date of Mūdrārākṣasa. J. Charpentier places the work in the late 5th century A.D.;⁵ S.K. Śāstrī sometime after A.D.388 and before A.D.415;⁶ Jacobi, A.D.700-900⁷ and Macdonell not

¹See below, pp. 323-24

²I.A. XLIII, p.67; J.R.A.S., 1910, p.535.

³I.A. XLII, p.265; J.R.A.S., 1923, pp.586-87.

⁴Intro. to the Mūdrārākṣasa, pp.9-14.

⁵I.H.Q., VII, p.629.

⁶I.H.Q., VII, pp.163-167.

⁷Viena Oriental Journal, II, pp.212-16; also Keith, J.R.A.S., 1909, pp.145-49.

later than A.D.800.¹ The ornate style of the work suggests that it is appreciably later than the plays of Kālidāsa, and it is likely that Viṣākhadatta flourished during the 7th century A.D. It is also probable that Avantivarman was his contemporary, in which case the correct reading of the name as Avantivarman, appears likely. Dhruva identifies him with Avantivarman Maukhari, father of Grahavarman;² Tripathi seems to hold the same view.³ But the reference in the play to the Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu seems to indicate that Avantivarman was a Kāmarūpa ruler. As J.C. Ghosh observes, Avantivarman of the play was certainly a successor of Bhāskara, as the reference in the play to the Varāhāvātara refers to the Bhauma dynasty.⁴

K.L. Barua, supporting our identification holds that the 'supposition is strengthened by the fact that the danger of the mleccha revolt as referred to in the śloka, was actually imminent in Kāmarūpa when the strong rule of Bhāskaravarman ended with his death - it appears that Śālastambha the leader or a governor - usurped the throne by deposing Bhāskaravarman's immediate successor. The danger which the author of the Mūdrārāksasa feared, actually materialised. Śālastambha occupied the throne of Kāmarūpa about 655 A.D.

¹India's Past, p.111.

²Intro. to the Mūdrārāksasa, p.XIf.

³History of Kanauj, pp.49-50.

⁴J.P.A.S.B. XXVI (N.S.), p.244.

after dethroning and probably killing him (Avantivarman).¹ The existing materials do not testify that Bhāskara was in danger of revolt at any time, and the actual interpretation of the stanza of the play will prove the contrary. It means that Avantivarman was destined to fight the mleccha revolt and save the kingdom just like Viṣṇu, who in his Boar incarnation lifted up the earth from universal dissolution. The statement appears to refer to the period immediately after Bhāskara's death, who probably did not leave any direct heir to the throne; hence the question of the dethronement or murder of Avantivarman does not arise. In all appearance, it appears reasonable to hold that Avantivarman was the immediate successor of Bhāskara.

But while epigraphy mentions Śālastambha, not a single reference is made to Avantivarman. The origin and connection of the former have also been disputed on the basis of a misleading statement in the Bargāon grant of Ratnapāla, which states thus: 'After thus, for several generations, Kings of Naraka's dynasty had ruled the whole country, a great chief of the mlecchas, owing to a turn of (adverse) fate, took possession of the kingdom. (This was) Śālastambha: (Mlecchādhinātho vidhicalanā-vasādeva-jagrāha rājyaṃ). In succession to him there were chiefs altogether twice ten (twenty) in number who are well-known

¹ E.H.K., pp.109-110.

as Vighrahastambha and the rest.'¹ Hoernle explains the word 'mleccha' as a foreigner.² Ray holds that whether Sālastambha established a different line or belonged to a collateral branch of the Varman line is hard to decide. It is also not conclusive that Bhāskara is mentioned as a Brāhmin by caste in the accounts of Yuan Chwang and Sālastambha is called a 'mlecchādhinātha'; for Bhāskara traces his descent from Bhagadatta who is described in the Mahābhārata as a 'mlecchānām-adhipati'. 'If there is any historical fact in the description of the epic', contends Ray, 'then there is reason to regard Bhagadatta as a prince of the non-Aryan Tibeto-Chinese races referred to as Cīnas and Kirātas in Ancient Indian literature. It appears that the line of Puṣyavarman and that of Sālastambha were closely related, in as much as both were of Mongolian origin - it would be safer to regard the two dynasties as separate Mongolian groups, who each accepted Aryan culture and sought to establish their blue blood by claiming descent from that epic hero.'³ But we have rejected Bhagadatta's association with the Mahābhārata war.⁴ The designation, 'mleccha' is a very wide term, which was used by the Aryan Brāhmaṇas to stand for all non-Aryans. It was used in the

¹ 79.

² J.A.S.B., LXVII, I, pp.103-4.

³ D.H.N.I., I, p.240.

⁴ Political History, Section I, pp. 200, 209

same sense as the Greeks used the word 'barbarians' for the non-Greeks. It is difficult to find that the term stood merely for the Mongolians. Moreover, Ray's argument appears to have been based on a misinterpretation of the sources, he has mentioned. 'Mlecchādhinātha' may not necessarily mean that the ruler also was a mleccha. Bhāskara's caste we have discussed and tried to show that the pilgrim's statement may have been based more or less on a genuine foundation.¹ In discussing the origin of Bhagadatta and the connection of the Varman family we have also shown that he was probably an Alpine chief,² perhaps of a priestly class, and before the influence of the Aryan culture, he and his family were designated as mlecchas. The probable connection between the Varman and Śālastambha line seems to point to their common descent from the Bhauma dynasty, established by Alpine chiefs, and not to the fact that they were separate Mongolian groups.

K.L. Barua, explaining the word 'Mlecchādhinātha', supposes that it means the governor of the Mech country. He further adds that when Bhāskara died, Śālastambha organised a revolt and dethroning the immediate successor of the former became king, and that Śālastambha belonged to the dynasty of Bhāskara, for nobles of the royal family

¹Section 2, pp. 306-7

²Section I, pp. 208-9

were often appointed as governors.¹ Barua's contention that Śālastambha was related to Bhāskara and that he was a governor, may be tenable, but it is yet to be proved that he was a governor of the Mech country and revolted against the family of Bhāskara. P. Bhattacharya seems to be right in holding that Śālastambha, like Brahmapāla, belonged to a collateral branch of the Bhauma dynasty.² Hence Majumdar's theory³ that 'Bhāskaravarman was shortly after overthrown by a barbarian, Śālastambha by name', and that the greatness of Kāmarūpa passed away with Bhāskara, are not supported by any existing evidence.

That Naraka and his descendants were called mlecchas is stated in the Hāyriṅthāl grant of Harṣjara, thus: (ato-mleccābhidhānās tu bhaviṣyās tava Pārthiva): 'Your future progeny, O'mighty king, will, therefore, be designated as mlecchas.'⁴ The actual reason may have been contained in the first plate, which is missing. The statement either refers to the non-Aryan habits of the predecessors of Śālastambha or to the fact that they were known as mlecchas owing to their Alpine origin. Śālastambha's origin and connection with the former ruling dynasty is also proved by a number of epigraphs. The Paśupati epigraph of the Nepal King Jayadeva II mentions Rājyamati,

¹E.H.K., p.107.

²I.H.Q., III, p.845.

³Outline of the Ancient History and Civilisation of India, p.348; also K.N. Datta, J.A.R.S., XII, pp.41-50.

⁴v2

the daughter of Harsadava, who was a successor of Śālastambha as 'Bhagadattarāja-Kulajā' (born in the family of Bhagadatta).¹ Prālabha,² Haryjara,³ Vanamāla⁴ and Balavarman III⁵ trace their origin from the Bhauma dynasty, though belonging to the family of Śālastambha.

It is suspected that Prālabha and Haryjara are mleccha names and the suspicion regarding Prālabha's ancestry is taken to have been strengthened by the fact that in the Tez-pur grant, his name is described as something strange: 'Prālabho ity adbhuto nāmadheyah'. On the basis of this and other references, Gait takes these rulers as Mongolians or aborigines and believes that they were later on 'fitted out with a noble ancestry'.⁶ But the actual interpretation of the texts will not guarantee his conviction. Prālabha is called 'wonderful to all' because of his warlike habits and he is described as 'against those who were enemies to his ancestors from Śālastambha down to Śrē Hariṣa-'.⁷ It is probable that the name Haryjara is of Austric origin, the word 'hara' in Austric means a hill.⁸ But can it be

¹I.A., IX, pp.175f.

²Tezpur grant, W7-8.

³Ibid, VIIIf.

⁴Ibid, VV16f.

⁵Nowgong grant, VV19f.

⁶History of Assam, p.30; also H.C. Ray, D.H.N.I., I, p.242.

⁷Tezpur grant, V8.

⁸B.K. Kākati, App. to B.K. Barua's Cultural History of Assam, I, pp.222f.

proved that he was racially also such? Moreover, the non-Aryan character of the name of a particular king has, in our opinion, very little to do with the determination of the racial origin of a royal dynasty. It is, therefore, wrong when Ray asserts that both the families of Śālastambha and Brahmapāla 'belonged to non-Aryan stock as the sound of the name Haryjara is distinctly non-Hindu. - They were right, however, in tracing their descent from Bhagadatta, the lord of the mlecchas, Cīnas and Kirātas, in as much as they appear to have belonged to that great line of Mongolian people. - The Mongolian physiognomy of the people of Assam and some of the districts of northern and eastern Bengal shows the substantial accuracy of this conclusion.¹ Here, as elsewhere, his contention is perhaps based on the misinterpretation of the sources. It is wrong to hold that all the rulers of ancient Assam were Mongolians. The Mongolian physiognomy of the people - and all of them do not have it - gives little indication that the ruling families had the same racial origin. The immediate successors of Śālastambha were Vijaya, Pālaka, Kumāra, Vajradeva, Harṣadeva, Balavarman II and those of Prālabha and Haryjara were Vanamāla, Jayamāla, Balavarman III and others; but none of these names betrays a non-Aryan origin. All these kings traced their origin from Bhagadatta and were connected with the Pāla line, as is shown by the

¹ D.H.N.I., I, pp.248-49.

grants of the Pālas.

The Bargāon grant of Ratnapāla, seems to have mentioned Sālastambha as a Mlecchādhinātha largely with a view to extolling the Pāla family, which, however, also traces its descent from the same Bhauma dynasty. So epigraphy seems to confirm our view that Sālastambha and the Pālas belonged to the same family as the Varmans. The fact that Naraka and Bhagadatta are associated with the introduction of Aryan culture¹ only proves that Assam may have come under Aryan influence long before the rise of the Varmans; but, as we have tried to show, the Narakas were Alpine chiefs, neither Mongolians, nor Mlecchas, nor aborigines.

Sālastambha, alias Devavarman or Mādhava, came from the Nālandā region, where Bhāskara had probably established him as a ruler, and, immediately after Bhāskara's death, without leaving any son, he came to Prāgjyotisa and declared himself as king. It is also possible that he belonged to a collateral branch of the family of Bhāskara. But how to connect Sālastambha with Avantivarman?

The name Sālastambha appears to be a Biruda; because in the Nowgong grant, Virabāhu or Jayamāla is called Ranastambha,² and in the Guākuchi grant, Samgrāma-stambha is given as one of the thirty-two Birudas of that king. Vijaya is called Vigrahastambha. So it appears likely

¹Chap. III, pp. 168-70

²J.A.S.B., LXVI, I, pp. 297f.

that Śālastambha had another name with the surname Varmādeva. If Devavarmā of the Chinese records was only a surname with its components reversed, we may identify him (with the surname Varmādeva) as Avantivarmādeva of the Mūdrārāksasa.

Now the question to be decided is how to reconcile the two seemingly contradictory statements in the Bargāon grant and Viṣṭkhadatta, and make the identification rest on a historical ground. The grant states that Śālastambha occupied the throne, 'owing to a turn of adverse fate'. It indicates that Śālastambha was not the rightful heir to the throne. The fact that he came from outside and was not directly connected with Bhāskara must have led the scribe to make such a statement. It was an instance of usurpation in the sense that Bhāskara left no heir of his own, nor does it appear that he selected Śālastambha to succeed him. It is likely that immediately after Bhāskara's death there was a temporary period of disorder, when Devavarman alias Avantivarman seated himself on the throne, having assumed the high sounding title of Śālastambha. If this assumption is correct, the identification becomes easy, and the theory of a big gap between Bhāskara and Śālastambha is no longer tenable. It was, therefore, immediately after Bhāskara, or perhaps after a break of a few months, that Avantivarman or Śālastambha ascended the throne in about A.D. 650-51, but not in 655 or 660 as held by K.L. Barua,¹ on the supposition

¹E.H.K., p.106; J.A.R.S., I, pp.97-103; J.A.R.S., VI, pp.12-18.

of a gap between them, in which Avantivarman ruled until dethroned by Śālastambha. That Śālastambha's accession cannot be placed much later than A.D. 650 is borne out by the fact that Devavarman (Śālastambha) was the contemporary of Ādityasena and I-tsing. Moreover, the Tezpur Rock epigraph of Haryjara is recorded in A.D. 829-30, and Haryjara is eleventh in descent from Śālastambha, including the two unknown rulers before Prālabha. Even Śālastambha's date of accession in A.D. 650 appears to involve unusually short generations. So on these considerations, we conclude that there was no big gap between Bhāskara and Śālastambha, who was the same person as Avantivarman.¹

The line of Śālastambha with twenty-one rulers may be placed between A.D. 650-990. Though the length of the period seems shorter, this chronology may be taken as a working hypothesis in view of the fact that most of the rulers were of minor importance. If this chronology be accepted, Śālastambha may reasonably be placed between A.D. 650-75.

Śālastambha carried on the old policy of the extension of the frontiers of Kāmarūpa in the west. We have already seen that the possessions of Bhāskara in the Nālandā region were inherited by him. A new power, however, rose in Magadha about this time in Ādityasena of the Later Guptas, who gave a good account of himself by reviving to some

¹P.C. Choudhury, 'A Historical Note on Avantivarman, referred to as a Kāmarūpa King', The Cottonian, Cotton College, Gauhati, April, 1948, pp.36-39.

extent the lost glory of his family. According to the Shāhpur epigraph he was ruling in (H.E. 66) = A.D. 672.¹ In another inscription he assumes the high sounding title of Mahārājādhirāja-Paramabhāttāraka.² The Vaidyanāth epigraph describes him as 'the ruler of the (whole) earth up to the shores of the ocean, the performer of the Asvamedha and other great sacrifices.'³ In one Nepalese record, he is called the 'Great Ādityasena, the illustrious lord of Magadha.'⁴ On the basis of these vague statements it is held that Devavarman or his successor could not retain 'his lordship over the Nālandā region and had to lose it to his mighty neighbour, Ādityasena in or before 672-73 A.D.'⁵ It is further supposed that he or his successor had by then lost hold over Karnaśuvarna as well.⁶ Raychandhuri thinks that these later Guptas are referred to as lords of the whole of Uttarāpatha.⁷ Basak contends that 'Bengal, specially the Southern Rāḍhā and Vaṅga' probably formed part of the kingdom of Ādityasena.⁸ But the epigraphs describe the exploits of this ruler in a conventional style,

¹Fleet, C.I.I., III, (No. 43).

²Ibid, p.212.

³Ibid, p.213 (Note).

⁴I.A., IX, p.151.

⁵N.N. Dasgupta, I.C. II, pp.37f.

⁶Ibid.

⁷P.H.A.I., pp.516-17.

⁸H.N.E.I., p.128.

nor can we infer the supremacy of the later Guptas in Bengal from the hypothetical epithet that they were the lords of Uttarāpatha.¹ The accounts of I-tsing (672-73) leave us no doubt regarding the occupation of the Nālandā region by Devavarman alias Śālastambha. There are other genuine evidences on record to show that his successors, particularly Harṣadeva kept their hold not only in North Bengal but also in the west as far as Magadha. It appears certain, therefore, that Avantivarman or Śālastambha retained the eastern part of Magadha, with perhaps the whole of Northern Bengal including Sylhet and some portions of south-east Bengal, and hence could be the patron of Viṣākhadatta. We have also reasons to believe that the latter's play was written somewhere in the western part of Kāmarūpa. Indeed, he may have been a paṇḍita from Kāmarūpa itself.²

In fact, Śālastambha, the founder of a new line of kings, but related to the former ruling family, carried on the traditional policy of the kingdom and perhaps justified the expectation of the author of the Mūdrārākṣasa and the writer of the Borgāon grant in establishing order in Kāmarūpa and making his influence felt in distant lands.

Vijaya or Vighrahastambha - Pālaka - Kumāra and Vajradeva:

The successors of Śālastambha are mere names. The Hāyathāl grant states that when Śālastambha died, his

¹R.C. Majumdar, History of Bengal, I, pp.81-82 and (f.n.)

²J.C. Ghosh, J.P.A.S.B., XXVI (N.S.), p.244.

brave son Vijaya, the 'vanquisher of enemies, became the mighty lord of the earth'.¹ The Bargāon grant calls him Vighrahastambha.² He was followed in succession by Pālaka, Kumāra, and Vajradeva.³ In view of their uneventful reigns, they may be placed between the short period of A.D.675-725. It is possible that the hold of the kingdom over Pundravardhana and the west was lost during this period. We learn from the Ragholi plates⁴ of Jayavardhana, a King of the Sāila dynasty, that the brother of his grandfather defeated a Paundra King and conquered his dominions. The conquest probably took place in about A.D.725⁵. But unfortunately no details of their rule in North Bengal are recorded.

Harsadeva or Śrī Hariṣa:

With Harsadeva's accession there was a new turn in the history of Kāmarūpa, and his period was one of the brightest ones in the history of the land. Bhandarkar's identification of this prince with the grandson of Bhāskara,⁶ and that of H.C. Ray with Haryjara,⁷ are hardly correct. As stated in the Hāyriṅthāl grant, after them (i.e., Vijaya,

¹V.4.

²V.9.

³Hāyriṅthāl grant, V.5.

⁴E.I., IX, p.41.

⁵D.H.N.I., I., p.276

⁶App. to E.I., XIX-XXIII, pp.279f.

⁷D.H.N.I., I, p.192.

Pālaka, Kumāra and Vajradeva) Harṣadeva became King, who was a King of great merit and piety and looked upon his subjects as his own children, but never ill-treated them.¹ In the Tezpur grant he is called Śrī Hariṣa.² His eventful reign may reasonably be placed between A.D. 725-50.

The Paśupati epigraph of the Nepal King Jayadeva II mentions one Śrī Harṣadeva, who is described as the conqueror of Gauḍa, Odra, Kalinga, Kosāla and other lands. It states thus: 'The King (Jayadeva II) wedded, as if she were Fortune, Queen Rājyamati, possessed of virtues, benefiting her race, the noble descendant of Bhagadatta's royal line (Bhagadatta-Rāja-Kulajā) and daughter of Śrī Harṣadeva, lord of Gauḍa, Odra, Kalinga, Kosāla and other lands, who crushed the heads of hostile kings with the club-like tusks of his rutting elephants.'³

The text of the epigraph shows that Harṣadeva of the family of Bhagadatta was connected with the royal house of Nepal by a marriage alliance. But the identification of Harṣadeva is disputed. In the opinion of B. Chakravarti, Rājyamati was not the daughter of the Kāmarūpa King Harṣadeva, and the King mentioned in the epigraph was an Orissa ruler, as descent from Bhagadatta is also claimed by the Bhaumakaras of Orissa. Though Harṣadeva is mentioned as

¹v.6.

²v.8.

³I.A., IX, pp.178f; Fleet, C.I.I., III, Intro. pp.178f.

the lord of Gauḍa, Oḍra, etc., there is no specific mention of the King, he asserts, as the King of Kāmarūpa.¹ He further contends that the absence of the name of Kāmarūpa has its significance. Harṣadeva was of the royal line of Bhagadatta, but could not perhaps claim the sovereignty of Prāgjyotiṣa.² The identification of Harṣadeva with a little known ruler of Orissa is not supported by any genuine source. The mere omission of the name Kāmarūpa cannot be held as a serious argument in favour of his other identification. The presence of the Bhaumakaras of Orissa, as we shall show, seems to suggest that they were established either by Harṣadeva himself or by his predecessor. As R.P. Chauda has shown, the ruler, who after the conquest of Orissa established a relation of his, named Kṣemaṅkaradeva there, was not Harṣapāla of Gauḍa as surmised by D.N. Mukherjee,³ but Harṣadeva of Kāmarūpa.⁴ This is also based on the fact that he and his successors claim descent from Bhagadatta.⁵ B. Miśra, however, disputes the connection between the Bhaumas of Orissa and Kāmarūpa.⁶ R.C. Majumdar, on the basis of the Bhaumas of Orissa tracing their origin from Nāraka-

¹E.I., XIV, pp.1-6; J.B.O.R.S., XIV, p.293.

²I.H.Q., XIV, pp.841-843.

³I.C., V, pp.371-72.

⁴Pravāsī (N.1), XXXII.

⁵R.D. Banerji, History of Orissa, I, p.159; S. Lévi, E. I, XV, pp.363-64.

⁶I.H.Q., XIV, p.841; Orissa Under the Bhauma Kings, pp.80-83.

Bhagadatta, contends that both Rājyamatī and Harṣadeva might have belonged to Orissa. He does not find 'any King of Kāmarūpa named Harṣa who may be credited with such brilliant conquests.'¹ But, as we have indicated, the possible connection between the Bhaumas of Kāmarūpa and Orissa may have been due to the fact that the latter were established by the rulers of Kāmarūpa. As suggested by Chanda,² the Mahāyāna remains of the Cuttuk Hills may be attributed to a line of Buddhist rulers who ruled over Utkala during the 8th century A.D. and traced their descent from Naraka Bhauma. It is likely that they were related to Harṣadeva of Kāmarūpa, and Kṣemendra, the first ruler of the line was placed on the throne by the former after his conquests.³ The epigraphs⁴ of the family show that they were ruling during A.D. 800-900, and it is possible that after Harṣadeva's death, the first ruler declared his independence. So the theory of Harṣa being a ruler of Orissa can easily be discarded. Kielhorn rightly points out that he 'was almost certainly a king of Prāggyotiṣa. In fact, he was probably the Hariṣa (or Harṣa) of the Tezpur grant, who would thus be placed in the first half of the eighth century A.D.'⁵. The same

¹Bhāratīya Vidyā, VI, pp.111-112; History of Bengal, I, pp.85f.

²Art in Orissa, J.R.S. Arts., Aug. 1930.

³K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S., II, p.106.

⁴S. Lévi, E.I., XV, pp.363-64.

⁵J.R.A.S., 1898, pp.384-85.

view is held by S.K. Aiyanger,¹ R.D. Banerji² and others.³

The identification of Harṣadeva with the Kāmarūpa ruler is also based on the date of the Paśupati inscription, which is recorded in 153 of a certain era. It is neither a Śaka era, as held by D.N. Mukherjee,⁴ nor a Harṣa era, as suggested by Bhagavanlal Indraji,⁵ but perhaps a Tibetan era 11 years earlier than the Harṣa era, which corresponds to $(153 + 595) = \text{A.D. } 748$.⁶ This date tallies with the system of chronology for Harṣadeva of Kāmarūpa, whom we have placed between A.D. 725-50.

When and how Harṣadeva could make such a vast conquest is not definitely known. It may be assumed that the conquests were made before the date of the Paśupati epigraph. (748). It is also likely that the conquests were not permanent. But it is difficult to believe that the statement in the inscription is an instance of poetic exaggeration.⁷ P. Bhattacharya contends that Harṣadeva might have established his sphere of influence over Gauḍa, Odra, Kāliṅga, Kosāla and other lands only temporarily.⁸ In the opinion of

¹J.I.H., V, p.326.

²M.A.S.B., V, pp.43f.

³P.L. Paul, Early History of Bengal, pp.29-32.

⁴I.C., V, pp.371f.

⁵I.A., IX, pp.178f; I.A., XIII, pp.411-28.

⁶See Fleet, C.I.I., III, Intro. pp.178f., I.A., XIV, pp.346f; also Jayaswal, J.B.O.R.S., XXII, pp.164f, 184.

⁷Gait, History of Assam, pp.30-31; J. Manóhan, Bengal, Past and Present, 1910, pp.62-63.

⁸K.S. p.23.

Bhandarkar, the Gaudavaho and the Gaṅga inscription, issued from Kāliṅga in the middle of the 8th century A.D., show that Harṣa had no such control over these regions. 'Nominal allegiance', adds Bhandarkar, 'to him for a time only has been shown - severally by these rulers'.¹ But we have seen that Bhāskara and his successor extended their sway to Nālandā. Evidence seems to support our view that the hold of Kāmarūpa over North Bengal was not lost during their time; it is, however, certain that under the weak successors of Śālastambha, there was a period of decline of the Kāmarūpa power in the west. But soon it was revived by Harṣadeva,

who made a new bid for supremacy by conquering new regions. As rightly observed by Das Gupta, 'we must admit that the statement in the Paśupati inscription about the lordship of Sri Harṣa over Gauḍa and the Southern provinces is not an instance of poetical exaggeration by his son-in-law's panegyrist'.² Great portions of Bengal were under Kāmarūpa from the time of Bhāskara to the time of Harṣadeva,³ and it is almost certain that till A.D.748 its hold over the regions was not lost.⁴ The latter held Bengal for a long time to enable him to pass through that country in his conquest of Oḍra, Kāliṅga, Kośala and other lands.⁵ 'It is not at all improbable that about 80

¹I.C., I, pp.136-37.

²I.C., II, pp.44-45.

³P.L. Paul, Early History of Bengal, pp.29-32.

⁴Das Gupta, I.C., II, pp.44-45.

⁵R.D. Banerji, M.A.S.B., V, pp.43f.

or 90 years after his (Bhāskara's) death, the territories acquired by him having been thoroughly consolidated by his successors, Śrī Harṣadeva was powerful enough to conquer new territories towards the south and west, in which two directions only the kingdom was capable of extension.¹ If the claim of conquest, though temporarily made, has any historical basis, Kāmarūpa, at least for the time being, reached the highest point of its glory during the middle of the 8th century A.D., and it included lands from Sadiyā in the east to Ayodhyā in the west, and from the Himalayas in the north as far as the Bay of Bengal and Orissa in the southwest. It included, therefore, Assam, Gauḍa, Orissa, portions of Magadha and a northern part of Madras State, including S. Kosāla.² This conquest must have been completed before Yaśovarman's invasion of Gauḍa and Magadha.

The rise of Kāmarūpa might have led other powers in India to raise their heads against Harṣadeva. Vasu³ contends that Harṣadeva first defeated one Pracāṇḍadeva of the Śaila dynasty and then wrested from him Kalinga and Kosāla; he further believes, on the basis of a tradition, that Ādisūra conquered Kāmarūpa about A.D. 732 after killing Harṣadeva. But it is chronologically impossible to ascribe the conquest of Kāmarūpa by a traditional ruler to that date.

¹E.H.K., p.113.

²Ibid.

³Social History of Kāmarūpa, II, p.157.

B.C. Sen holds that Harṣadeva possibly defeated Ādityasena's grandson, Viṣṇugupta;¹ but the system of chronology of the later Guptas is defective, and it was probably Jīvitagupta II who was defeated by Harṣadeva. The three successors of Ādityasena, Devagupta, Viṣṇugupta and Jīvitagupta II are placed towards the latter half of the 7th and the beginning of the 8th century A.D., and they were ruling over Magadha. It is doubtful that they extended their sway over other regions, including Bengal.² The Deo-Barnark epigraph of Jīvitagupta³ indicates that he was less powerful than Ādityasena. It is probable, therefore, that Jīvita was defeated by Harṣa before he could consolidate his hold over Magadha. Harṣadeva's contest with the Western Chālukyas is hinted at the Samangad epigraph of Rāṣṭrakūṭa Dantidurga (S.E. 674 = A.D. 752)⁴. D.N. Mukherjee holds that Harṣadeva was defeated by the Karnāṭaka army of Vikramāditya II Chālukya in A.D. 735,⁵ but his chronology is not supported by any source. The epigraph states that Dantidurga 'quickly overcame the boundless army of the Karnāṭaka (i.e., army of Kīrtivarman II, the Western Chālukya prince) which had been expert in defeating the lord of Kāñet, the king of Kerala, the Chalas, the Pāṇdyas, Śrī Harṣa and Vajrata.'⁶

¹Some Historical Aspects of the Ins. of Bengal, etc., p.278.

²Majumdar, History of Bengal, I, p.81.

³C.I.I., III, pp.216, 218.

⁴I.A., 1882, p.114.

⁵I.C., V, p.372.

⁶I.A., 1882, p.114.

Fleet's identification of Śrī Harṣa with Harṣa of Kanauj,¹ is chronologically impossible. Das Gupta rightly points out that as 'Śrī Harṣa of Kāmarūpa was a contemporary of Kīrtivarman, the conclusion is irresistible that it was he who, as the lord of Odra, Kalinga and Kosāla is alluded to in the Samangaḍ inscription as to have been worsted (evidently somewhere in the south) by the army of Kīrtivarman -'² No doubt he was the same ruler as Harṣadeva of the Paśupati epigraph, and was probably defeated some time before A.D. 748, when he invaded the south and had to return back. The event may have occurred just before the date of the Paśupati epigraph. There is no evidence that it led to the invasion of Harṣa's kingdom.

At the heels of this contest came a greater danger from the west. The most important ruler of Kanauj after Harṣavardhana was Yaśovarman, whose exploits form the subject of a contemporary work, Gaudavaho of Vākpati, and who was the contemporary of Lalitāditya of Kāsmīra. Though the work contains 'as little history as possible',³ the central theme of the killing of the lord of Gauḍa and Magadha by Yaśovarman is, however, important. The rise of this king is also proved by one inscription at Nālandā. But the identification of Yaśovarmādeva of the epigraph is disputed. H.N. Śāstrī⁴ holds that he was Yaśodharman of the Mandasor

¹Ibid. (f.n.)

²I.C. II, pp.44-45.

³Keith, History of Sanskrit Literature, p.50.

⁴E.I., XX, pp.37f.

epigraph, the contemporary of Balāditya of A.D. 530; this is also the opinion of Fleet¹ and A.K. Mrithunjayam.² But the name is distinctly written as Yaśovarmādeva; so he can hardly be identified with Yasodharman of Mālwa of two centuries earlier. He was no other than the ruler of Kanauj, Yaśovarman, mentioned in the Gaudavaho and Rājataranginī.³

It is unfortunate that Vākpati does not mention the name of the Gauda ruler, said to have been killed by Yaśovarman. In couplet 354 there is a brief reference to the lord of Gauda who fled through fear, and in 415 it is stated that 'the multitude of the (allied) kings of the lord of Magadha, who gave himself up to flight, having returned at once, appeared like the sparks of fire (issuing from) a shooting star and raining in the opposite direction.' In couplet 417 the slaying of the ruler is mentioned thus: 'the king (Yaśovarman) having slain the king of the Magadhas, who was fleeing, proceeded to those woods on the sea-shore which were perfumed by the cardamon.'⁴ It is yet to be proved that the poet's patron undertook all the exploits in the manner of the traditional digvijaya of a Vikramāditya. Smith, however, does not find any 'reason to doubt the substantial truth of his contemporary testimony.'⁵ But the

¹C.I.I., III, p.145 (f.n. 2); A.S.I., 1925-26, pp.131,158.

²I.H.Q., VIII, pp.228-30; Ibid, pp.615-17.

³Majumdar, I.H.Q., VII, p.664; Ibid, VIII, pp.371-73.

⁴Gaudavaho (Ed. S.P. Pandit and N.B. Utgikar.)

⁵J.R.A.S., 1908, II, pp.85-93.

testimony requires corroboration from other genuine sources.

But who was the Gauda ruler killed by Yaśovarman? The system of chronology so far accepted for Yaśovarman, based on Kalhaṇa, appears to be defective. His contemporary Lalitāditya is mentioned in the Annals of the T'ang dynasty as Mutopi, who is said to have sent to China an embassy during Hiuen Tsung's reign (A.D. 713-755). Yaśovarman, known as I-cha-fon-mo in Chinese records, is also said to have sent an embassy to China in A.D. 731. Kalhaṇa, who describes the exploits of the former, also mentions the defeat of Yaśovarman in the hands of Lalitāditya and incidentally refers to the killing of the lord of Gauda by Yaśovarman. Stein places the overthrow of Yaśovarman after A.D. 736, after which Lalitāditya performed his digvijaya.¹ Kalhaṇa, writing on the exploits of the Kāśmīra King, states that he approached the town of Prāgijyotiṣa and saw the smoke of black aloe wood burning in the forest.² The same work tells a story of the murder of a Gauda prince by Lalitāditya on the bank of the Bias.³ Smith contends that probably Lalitāditya's guest was the heir of the ruler slain by Yaśovarman, and came to Kāśmīra in order to ask aid for the recovery of his father's throne, usurped by Gopāla. Lalitāditya may have killed the heir, Smith opines, with

¹ Kalhaṇa's Rājataranṅinī, I, pp.88f.

² Rājataranṅinī, Bk. IV, 171.

³ Ibid, IV, 323-35.

the idea of the conquest of Gauda.¹

It is yet to be shown that Lalitāditya undertook such an expedition to the eastern ocean.² Smith places Yaśovarman between A.D. 725-731 and Lalitāditya's accession at about A.D. 724. The overthrow of Yaśovarman, in his opinion, took place between A.D. 740-45, and the exploits of Yaśovarman before his contest with Lalitāditya, about A.D. 730.³ But, as we have noted, Kalhana's system of chronology is defective. It is possible to place Yaśovarman and Lalitāditya about A.D. 725-55 in view of their sending of missions to the Chinese emperor who flourished between A.D. 713-755. This system of chronology also rests on the identification of the Gauda ruler, defeated or killed by Yaśovarman.

In the opinion of Majumdar, the king of Vaṅga opposing Yaśovarman was a Khaḍga ruler.⁴ It is unlikely that the Khaḍgas could exert their influence over a large area and for a considerable period of time; it is equally unlikely that the conqueror marched against an unknown Khaḍga ruler, whose kingdom hardly extended beyond Eastern Bengal. R.D. Banerji identifies the Gauda and Magadhan ruler with Jīvitagupta II.⁵ Yaśovarman's invasion was followed,

¹J.R.A.S., 1908, II, pp.765f.

²Ibid.

³Ibid, pp.765-93.

⁴History of Bengal, I, pp.82-89.

⁵Also, B.C. Sen, Some Historical Aspects, etc., p.281.

according to him, by another invasion led by Harṣadeva. 'Most probably', Banerji writes, 'this invasion from Assam followed upon the heels of that from Kanauj, or we may one day be surprised to learn that both armies invaded Bengal jointly.'¹ This identification is also supported by Tripathi.² But there is no evidence to prove that Jīvita held sway in Bengal or Gauḍa.³ R.D. Banerji himself admits that Gauḍa, Odra, Kalinga, etc., were under Harṣadeva, who ruled over Gauḍa for a long time before A.D. 748. He further adds that during the first quarter of the 8th century A.D., these regions were under Kāmarūpa, and about that time Yaśovarman attempted to conquer the whole of Northern India.⁴ But we have tried to show that Gauḍa was under Bhāskara, and that after his time it either remained under Kāmarūpa until the time of Harṣadeva, or the latter reacquired it from the hands of some petty ruler, after a temporary loss during the reigns of the weak successors of Śālastambha. Banerji's argument seems to have been based on the idea that Bengal was only temporarily occupied by Bhāskara after Harṣa's death and either Mādhavagupta or Ādityasena took possession of it, either from Bhāskara or his successor,⁵ which is unlikely.

¹M.A.S.B., V, pp.43f; Bāṅgāra Itihāsa, I, pp.104-5.

²History of Kanauj, p.198.

³Majumdar's History of Bengal, I, pp.81-82; See Basak (H.N.E.I., p.128) for a different view.

⁴Bāṅgāra Itihāsa, I, pp.104-5.

⁵Ibid, p.95.

We have shown that Ādityasena's contemporary Śālastambha extended his sway even up to the Nālandā region. Harṣadeva may have made Bengal the base of his operations to conquer Orissa and other lands. The successors of Ādityasena, who have been placed during the last quarter of the 7th and the first quarter of the 8th century A.D.¹ probably did not control Bengal.² Before Yaśovarman launched his campaigns, Harṣadeva got his chance to extend the bounds of Kāmarūpa in the west and the south-west, and it is more likely that the invasion of Yaśovarman was against Harṣadeva rather than against a petty ruler of Bengal or Jīvitagupta II, who may have already been defeated by the Kāmarūpa ruler by A.D. 725-30.

It is also chronologically impossible that Gopāla or his successor was overthrown either by Harṣadeva or Yaśovarman. Smith places Gopāla about A.D. 730-40;³ R.D. Banerji between 730-69;⁴ B.C. Sen between 750-775;⁵ S.K. Aiyanger places Dharmapāla's accession in 795.⁶ R.C. Majumdar, critically examining the dates of Smith, Chanda, and Basak, takes the Sārnāth epigraph of Mahīpāla I (1026)⁷ as the

¹Majumdar, History of Bengal, I, p.81.

²Ibid.

³E.H.I., pp.366f.

⁴J.B.O.R.S., 1928, pp.489f.

⁵Some Historical Aspects, etc., pp.316-17.

⁶J.R.A.S., (Bombay) N.S., III, pp.124-25.

⁷I.A., XIV, p.140; J.A.S.B., 1906, p.445.

fixed point and places Gopāla's accession at A.D. 770;¹ D.C. Bhattacharya before 788, the date of Dharmapāla's accession;² but on a revision, he places Gopāla between 700-744.³ Banerji also revised his earlier chronology and placed Gopāla's accession in 750.⁴ The most likely date of the rise of Gopāla appears to be after A.D. 750, after the defeat or the murder of the Gauḍa ruler by Yaśovarman, when anarchy became rampant in Bengal.⁵ During this period various rulers of India overran Bengal. It is almost certain, therefore, that the Gauḍa ruler, defeated by Yaśovarman sometime between 748-50, was Harṣadeva, and the overthrow of the former by Lalitāditya cannot be placed before A.D. 750. It is, however, not known whether Lalitāditya also took possession of Bengal, nor is it definitely known who was the Gauḍa ruler killed by him. This succession of events appears to be supported by the date of the Paśupati epigraph. (748) referring to the exploits of Harṣa. If this chronology is feasible, the identification of the Gauḍa ruler is easy. The Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa mentions a ruler with the name Śrī (Śrīnāma-mahīpati) before Gopāla and after Somākhyā (Sāsānka) in Gauḍa,⁶ and it is possible to identify him with Śrī Harṣadeva of Kāmarūpa and the lord of Gauḍa.

¹J.P.A.S.B. (N.S.) 1921, pp.1-6.

²I.A., 1920, pp.189-93.

³I.H.Q., III, pp.571-91; Ibid, VI, pp.153-68.

⁴M.A.S.B., V, pp.43-113.

⁵I.H.Q., VI, p.443.

⁶Ed. T. Gaṇapati Śāstrī.

S.K. Aiyanger's contention that Harṣadeva, the lord of Gauḍa, Oḍra and other lands, as mentioned in the Paśupati epigraph, was defeated by Yaśovarman¹ may be taken as correct. This agrees with the accounts given in the Assamese chronicles of a war between Vikramāditya and Subāhu, which may be identical with that between Yaśovarman and Harṣadeva.² All these evidences are in favour of the view that the defeat of Harṣadeva took place soon after A.D. 748, by which date he had completed his conquests and was the ruler of Gauḍa and Magadha. If Kalhana is right in attributing to Lalitāditya the murder of another Gauḍa ruler or prince in his kingdom, it may be held that Yaśovarman did not kill Harṣadeva, but took him as a prisoner to Kanauj, and, after Yaśovarman's defeat in the hands of Lalitāditya, the Gauḍa ruler fell into the hands of the latter and was killed by him. The story of a second ruler or heir to the Gauḍa throne being murdered by the king of Kāśmīra may probably be reconciled on the basis of such an assumption. The Gauḍavaho also seems to point to such a conclusion.

While Bengal was overwhelmed by the anarchy that followed the death of Harṣadeva, Kāmarūpa proper to the east of Puṇḍra seems to have been little affected by the invasions from the west and the south. When Bengal was overrun by these repeated invasions and anarchy became intolerable, Gopāla was chosen King.³ But the removal of a strong hand

¹J.I.H., 1926, p.327.

²S.K. Bhūñyā, I.H.Q., V, p.464.

³E.I. IV, pp.243f.

from Kāmarūpa, and the loss of her possessions in Bengal and the west took away the glory of the kingdom, so carefully built up by the toils of Bhūti-varman and his successors. The weakness of the kingdom continued until the time of Prālabha.

Balavarman II And His Successors:

It is generally held that the line of Śālastambha ended with the death of Harṣadeva;¹ but this was not actually so. As the Hāyūnthāl grant states: 'that King (Harṣadeva) having died, his son Balavarman became a powerful king (but) he too succumbed to death'.² We refer to this prince as Balavarman II as we have another Balavarman, of the Varman line. In view of his uneventful reign, he may approximately be placed between A.D.750-765. It was about this period that Gopāla rose to power and consolidated his position in Gauḍa.³

The period after Balavarman is obscure and his successor is unknown. The Hāyūnthāl grant simply states that in that line of Balavarman were born two princes. To quote the epigraph: 'Alas! in that line shining in the world like lily, moon and milk, there were born two princes, Cakra and Arathi - both (of whom) were expert in disregarding the words of (their) preceptors and (so) the son of the younger (i.e., Arathi) bore (the burden of) the

¹Gait, History of Assam, p.27.

²v.7

³Majumdar, History of Bengal, I, p.103.

kingdom (became king).¹ So there was possibly a gap between Balavarman and the two princes, Cakra and Arathi; but it is impossible to establish who were the princes ruling in the intervening period. On the basis of the genealogy given in the epigraphs of the line and the system of chronology we have tentatively worked out, it is reasonable to infer that there were at least two rulers² following Balavarman, until the throne was occupied by the son of Arathi. The unknown rulers may have ruled between A.D. 765-795.

Prālabha:

We have already indicated the difficulty of tracing the continuity of the line of Śālastambha after Balavarman. On the basis of this obscurity, it is held that Prālabha established a new line when the family of Śālastambha ended with Harṣa. Ray holds that the relation between the two groups, i.e., Śālastambha-Srī Harīṣa and Prālabha-Tyāgasimha is uncertain.³ Vasu takes Prālabha as Harṣa's brother.⁴ Bhandarkar identifies Balavarman with Prālabha.⁵ On a wrong interpretation of the Tezpur grant, P. Bhattacharya establishes a relation between Śālastambha and Harṣa as brothers.⁶ But all these conclusions are wrong. It is nowhere shown that Prālabha established a new line. P.

¹v.8.

²See K.L. Barua, E.H.K., pp.133-34.

³D.H.N.I., I, p.242.

⁴Social History of Kāmarūpa, II, 156.

⁵E.I., XIX-XXIII (App), pp.379f.

⁶I.H.Q., 1927, pp.344-45.

Bhattacharya himself has admitted that epigraphy does not indicate that Prālabha belonged to a new line. The Bargāon grant conclusively proves that all the 21 rulers of the family of Sālastambha belonged to the same line.¹ The Nowgong grant² also proves that Harjara (Prālabha's son) belonged to the line of Sālastambha.³ The connection with the Bhauma dynasty is shown by the Tezpur grant thus: from 'his (Bhagadatta's) line was born Prālabha, whose name was wonderful to all. He was the lord of Prāgjyotiṣa and destroyer of his enemies. His footstool was illumined by the light of the crest-jewels of all Rājās.'⁴ The contention of Ray that this reference proves the hostility of Prālabha to the Sālastambha - Hariṣa group of princes⁵ is based on a wrong interpretation of the expression, 'Kṣatavairivira', which only means the killer, or one who killed the enemy heroes. Gait, on the basis of this, contends that Prālabha 'killed or banished all the members of the former ruling family'.⁶ But neither the verse quoted above, nor the one that follows it, warrants such a conclusion. Verse 8 of the same grant states that 'he was against those who were enemies to his ancestors from Sālastambha down to Śrī Hariṣa, who were all deceased and who with all their

¹v.10.

²v.9-10.

³I.H.Q., 1927, pp.344-45.

⁴v.7.

⁵D.H.N.I., I, p.242.

⁶History of Assam, p.32.

noble and royal qualities, had delighted all the extreme regions.'¹ The reference here does not show the killing of the members of the former ruling family, nor does it suggest that Prālabha established a new line.

The continuity of Sālastambha's line after the two princes, Cakra and Arathi, through Prālabha seems also to rest on the identification of the prince who followed Arathi. The Tezpur grant mentions one brother of Prālabha, who is simply called Āratha. 'His (Prālabha's) brother, the greatest of all rājās, abandoned his valour with indignation but not his car (indignantly resigned the fight, yet left not his car)'² This reference to Prālabha's brother as an Āratha leaves us no doubt that Prālabha was also an Āratha (son of Arathi). It is possible that this Āratha was the younger brother of Prālabha, who did not rule, but may have served the latter as a commander of the army, or a ruler over some part of the kingdom. We have already quoted a verse from the Hāyūnthāl grant³ to show that, as the two princes Cakra and Arathi did not rule, the throne was occupied by the son of the younger or Arathi. So both the references read conjointly lead us to suppose that Arathi had two sons, Prālabha and his younger brother of the Tezpur grant, and the sovereignty passed to the elder of the two, (Prālabha). Hence the theory that Prālabha established a new line of a mleccha origin, not connected

¹v.8.

²v.9.

³v.8.

with Śālastambha's line, or that he was responsible for the murder of the members of the former ruling family, has no basis at all.

Ray places Prālabha towards the beginning of the 9th century A.D.,¹ and K.L. Barua between A.D. 800-20.² According to our system of chronology, he may be placed between A.D. 795-815. He was probably the contemporary of Dharmapāla of Bengal, whose reign saw the tripartite struggle for supremacy in Northern India between him, the Rāṣṭrakūṭa King Govinda III (A.D. 794-814) and the Gurjara Pratihāra King Nāgabhaṭa II.³ Banerji⁴ places Dharmapāla between 769-809; Smith in the 8th century A.D.⁵; S.K. Aiyanger in 795;⁶ D.C. Bhattacharya between 788-820 or 744-800⁷; Cunningham in 831;⁸ Bhandarkar in the early part of the 10th century A.D.⁹ and Majumdar between A.D. 770-810¹⁰. In view of his contemporaneity with Govinda III and Nāgabhaṭa II, the date of Majumdar (770-810) appears to be reasonable.

Epigraphy makes mention of the warlike activities of Prālabha and his brother; but it is difficult to identify

¹D.H.N.I., I, p.242.

²E.H.K., pp.134f.

³Majumdar, History of Bengal, I, pp.104-113.

⁴J.B.O.R.S., 1928, pp.489-538; M.A.S.B., V, pp.43f.

⁵E.H.I., pp.366f.

⁶J.R.A.S. (Bombay), (N.S.), III, pp.124-25.

⁷I.A., 1920, pp.189-92; I.H.Q., III, pp.571-591.

⁸A.S. Rep. XV, p.150.

⁹E.I., VII, p.33; Ibid, IX, p.26 (f.n.4).

¹⁰History of Bengal, I, p.104; also J.P.A.S.B. (N.S.), 1921, pp.1-4

the enemies who are said to have been defeated or brought under his control. Since Harṣadeva's death, Kāmarūpa was greatly affected by internal trouble, and probably also by external invasions. It may be inferred that the traditional rivalry between the kingdom and Gauḍa was revived. Prālabha may have appointed his brother as a commander and sent him to invade Gauḍa, when Dharmapāla was engaged in the long struggle with the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and the Pratihāras. But in the absence of any allusion we cannot be certain of any contest between Prālabha and Dharmapāla. Tārānātha, however, refers to Dharmapāla's subjugation of Kāmarūpa.¹ This is noticed by Chanda² and B.C. Sen.³ We do not know the basis of Tārānātha's reference, nor does he give details of any contest. Did Prālabha succeed in taking possession of some portions of Bengal in the north-east while Dharmapāla was engaged in the west, only to lose them soon afterwards? The actual invasion of Kāmarūpa by Dharmapāla is not proved by his Khālimpur grant,⁴ or by any Pāla epigraph.⁵ It is unlikely that Prālabha could have appreciably extended the limits of Kāmarūpa in the west so long as his imperial neighbour was in Gauḍa. He was only responsible for introducing order into his kingdom after a few decades of the disorder under the weak rule of his predecessors.

¹I.A., IX, p.366.

²Gauḍarājāmālā, p.23.

³Some Historical Aspects, etc., p.341.

⁴E.I., IV, pp 243f

⁵P. Bhattacharya, K.S. (Intro.), p.24 (f.n.I).

The reference to his brother who 'abandoned his valour with indignation, but not his car', may indicate a war between him and Dharmapāla, from which he may have returned without achieving anything in the way of conquests.

Haryjara or Haryjaravarman:

Prālabha was succeeded by his son Haryjara. It is significant that like Balavarman of the same family, he added the suffix, 'varman' to his name.¹ Bhandarkar wrongly takes him to be the son of Arathi and Jīvādevī.² He was no doubt the son of Prālabha, who was an Āratha (son of Arathi), and of Jīvādevī, Prālabha's queen. This is clear from the Hāyūnthāl grant which states thus: 'Of her was born - as Dharma's (Yudhiṣṭhira's) son was of Prthā (Kunti) or as Abhimanyu (was) of Subhadrā, Śrī Haryjara, the future lord over the earth, (who was) alike violent and charming.'³ The Nowgong grant, however, does not mention Prālabha's name. It states that 'after Pālaka, Vjaya, and other kings of his line had followed in succession, there arose in the land a Great King (moon of Kings) Haryjaravarman by name, who was an affliction to his enemies.'⁴ The fact that Prālabha's name is omitted here, gives no reason to suspect that Haryjara was not his son or that the latter belonged to a new line. But Hoernle

¹Nowgong grant, V.10.

²E.I. (App.) XIX-XXIII, pp.379f.

³V.11.

⁴V.10.

gives a wrong interpretation on the basis of this omission. He writes that the grant of Vanamāla 'seems to say distinctly that Prālabha belonged to Naraka's dynasty and that he was the father of Harṃjara. On the other hand, the Nowgong grant ignores Prālabha altogether and commences the dynasty with Harṃjaravarman. Nor is there anything in the latter grant to connect him with Naraka's dynasty; on the contrary, the non-Hindu sound of the name, Harṃjara points to a foreigner,' and as both the dynasties were foreigners, 'they may have occasionally preferred a claim to belong to the ancient indigenous line of kings.'¹ We have already examined the baselessness of such a theory in discussing the origin of the line of Śālastambha, to which both Prālabha and his son, Harṃjara belonged. There is nothing to prove the foreign origin of a family on the basis of the sound of a particular name of a ruler. It may not be expected that the whole genealogy of a dynasty should be given in all the epigraphs of the line. That Harṃjara was the son of Prālabha is also proved by the Tezpur grant which states thus: 'From her (Jīvādevī) he (Prālabha) had a son who was the King of Kings and was embraced by Lakṣmī herself and whose feet were worshipped by every rājā.'²

One important event in the career of Harṃjara was his abhiṣeka (coronation), performed according to religious rites, in which the people also took an important part.³

¹J.A.S.B., LXVII, I, p.105.

²v.11.

³Hāyūnthāl grant, VV.13-14.

Palaeographically his Hāyūnthāl grant is to be placed in about A.D. 825.¹ It is, therefore, likely that he ascended the throne about A.D. 815. His Tezpur Rock epigraph is recorded in the G.E. 510 = A.D. 829-30;² so the end of his reign may be ascribed to about A.D. 835.

The Tezpur grant of Vanamāla speaks highly of Haryjara's qualities, 'who, though alone, was victorious over all his rivals who stood against him.' The goddess of wealth embraced him 'with all the personal beauty of her sex.'³ This not only testifies to his virtues, but also to the prosperity of the kingdom, newly founded by Prālabha.

Some writers suppose that Gupta influence was working in Kāmarūpa as late as the 9th century A.D., as Haryjara's Tezpur epigraph was recorded in the Gupta era. It proves according to Vasu 'that the supremacy of the Guptas had long been acknowledged in Kāmarūpa and that Haryjara himself acknowledged it too.'⁴ This is also the opinion of Ray.⁵ But we have shown that the influence of the Guptas was broken by Bhūti-varman during the 6th century A.D., if not earlier. It is wrong to assert that as late as A.D. 830, when the Guptas had long left the political arena, their influence was still felt. As we have already stated, the mere use of an era has little to do with the political

¹K.S., pp.44-53.

²J.B.O.R.S., 1917, pp.508-514.

³VV.12-31.

⁴Social History of Kāmarūpa, II, pp.157-60.

⁵D.H.N.I., I, pp.238-39.

influence of one dynasty upon another.

In both his epigraphs Haryjara assumed the title of 'Mahārājādhirāja - Paramesvara - Paramabhāṭṭāraka'. This, along with many references to his feudatories, confirms our belief that he was an important ruler and extended his influence over neighbouring lands. He issued a sāsana to his feudatories in connection with the settlement of a dispute.¹ During his abhiṣeka, the defeated kings and feudatories were also present.² His political supremacy is mentioned in the Hāyūnthāl grant which states thus: 'Haryjara to whose palace, recorted for peace, the princes, who in order to conquer one another's kingdoms, kept fighting at the skirts of the hills and dales; in whom all qualities rested in equal degree, and who, though whole-heartedly engaged in works of welfare (for his subjects), can be approached at (spare) intervals and found in an unruffled mood.'³ The grant was found in the Kapili valley. It may be as a result of his victory over the petty chiefs of the hills and the plains in the east and south-east of the kingdom that the grant was issued. This, as rightly pointed out by Bhattacharya, indicates the political influence of the kingdom over the furthest limits of the hills.⁴ The Nowgong grant gives a further proof of his influence. 'Though in their military vaunting (other) kings tried to exhaust themselves by lengthy detraction of

¹J.B.O.R.S., 1917, pp.508-514.

²Hāyūnthāl grant, VV.13-14.

³V.12.

⁴K.S., p.52. (f.n.3).

his splendour, their crown-jewels gained no brilliance, as little as lamp lights set in the midst of the rays of the sun.'¹

Haryjara was probably the contemporary of Devapāla of Gauda, who is placed differently by different writers. R.C. Majumdar places him between A.D. 810-850²; R.D. Banerji³ 809-49 and D.C. Bhattacharya, 820-853 or 801-839⁴. He may reasonably be placed in the first half of the 9th century A.D. It is likely that Haryjara came into conflict with the Gauda ruler. The wide conquests of Devapāla are mentioned in epigraphs. The Bhāgalpur grant of Nārāyaṇapala records that Jayapāla, Devapāla's brother, started under the order of the latter to subdue all quarters. It states thus: 'When by order of his brother, he started with an army to subdue all quarters, the lord of the Utkalas left his capital, driven to despair from afar by the mere name of (Jayapāla), and the king of the Prāggyotisās enjoyed peace at last, surrounded by friends, bearing on his lofty head (i.e., being much obliged for) the command of that (prince) which bade (his foes) cease to plan battles.'⁵ The Monghyr grant records that Devapāla 'made tributary the earth between Revā's parents (Vindhya) and Gaurī's father (Himalayas) and enjoyed it even as far as Rāma's bridge in the south.'⁶ We cannot, however, make any historical sense of this. The

¹Nowgong grant, V.11.

²J.P.A.S.B., (N.S.) 1921, pp.1-6; History of Bengal, I, pp.116f.

³J.B.O.R.S., 1928, pp.489-538; M.A.S.B., V, pp.43f.

⁴I.A., 1920, pp.189-93; I.H.Q., III, pp.571-91; also Smith, E.H.I, pp.366f.

⁵Gaudalekhamālā, pp.58f; I.A., XV, pp.304f.

⁶E.I., XVIII, pp.304-7.

Bādār Pillar epigraph further states that owing to the good advice of his ministers, Devapāla eradicated the race of the Utkalas, humbled the pride of the Hūnas and scattered the conceit of the rulers of the Drāviḍa and Gurjara.¹ Here also the reference is not clear.

The Bhāgalpur grant is, however, significant. Banerji, on the strength of this, holds that Jayapāla led an expedition against Utkala and conquered Prāggyotiṣa for Devapāla.² B.C. Sen contends that the object of the Pāla expedition was to prevent war between Kāmarūpa and Utkala, and the Kāmarūpa king had to accept the authority of Gauḍa.³ Majumdar holds that Prālambha or Harjjara accepted Devapāla's sovereignty.⁴ But these interpretations seem to be wrong. A.K. Maitra finds here a reference to an alliance between Devapāla and the Kāmarūpa king. He adds that, while the ruler of Utkala, hearing Jayapāla's very name, fled from his capital, the Prāggyotiṣa ruler also, 'on hearing of Jayapāla's command, dropped all questions relating to warfare and lived very happily all his life, enjoying the company of his relatives.'⁵ This explanation appears probable. Hultsch, the editor of the grant, thinks that 'Jayapāla supported the king of Prāggyotiṣa successfully against the

¹E.I., II, pp.160-67.

²M.A.S.B., V, p.57; Bāṅglāra Itihāsa, p.119.

³Some Historical Aspects, etc., pp.364-65.

⁴History of Bengal, I, p.117.

⁵Gaudalekhamālā, pp.58-65.

king of Utkala.¹ Vasu writes that the Kāmarūpa King made an alliance with the Pālas.² Almost the same view is held by Gait.³ While Ray, supporting the view that Jayapāla supported the king of Prāggyotiṣa against Utkala, seems to assert that the Pāla army really crossed the Karatoyā, forcing the prince of the Brahmaputra valley to acknowledge the hegemony of the Pālas.⁴ But this is not supported by the grant in question. There was probably no Pāla invasion of Kāmarūpa, and no acceptance by Kāmarūpa of the Pāla hegemony.⁵

Who was the contemporary Kāmarūpa ruler, mentioned in the Bhāgalpur grant? While in one place, Bhattacharya takes him to be Jayamāla, Harjjara's grandson, or even Balavarman,⁶ in another place he takes him to be Harjjara or Vanamāla.⁷ The same alternatives are maintained by Ray.⁸ K.L. Barua takes him to be Jayamāla.⁹ On the basis of epigraphy and our system of chronology, it is more reasonable to hold that the ruler was Harjjara, since Jayamāla's career was not brilliant enough to invade Orissa

¹I.A., XV, p.308, (f.n.24).

²Social History of Kāmarūpa, II, p.159.

³History of Assam, p.32.

⁴D.H.N.I., I, p.248.

⁵K.S. p.38. (f.n.I),.

⁶K.S., (Intro.), p.23.

⁷I.H.Q., III, pp.837-50; also P.L. Paul, Early History of Bengal, pp.44-45.

⁸D.H.N.I., I, p.248.

⁹E.H.K., pp.128-29.

or conquer it. The event can hardly be placed after A.D. 850 when Jayamāla was not reigning.

It is only a superficial interpretation of the Bhāgalpur grant that will make us believe that Orissa was invaded by both the Gauda and the Kāmarūpa army. The expression that 'the king of Prāgjyotisās enjoyed peace at last surrounded by friends,' may not imply that the Kāmarūpa army invaded Orissa, or that he conquered Orissa after making an alliance with Gauda. It cannot be assumed that during the brilliant period of Devapāla, the Kāmarūpa army would be allowed to march through his country to Orissa. The credit of conquest should be given to Gauda. This is confirmed by the Bādār Pillar grant referring to 'the eradication of the race of the Utkalas' by Devapāla. It is possible that just at a time when Jayapāla invaded or conquered Orissa, the Kāmarūpa army under Harjjara invaded Bengal, and either was repelled by Jayapāla and peace was concluded, or returned to Kāmarūpa from the frontier of Bengal after hearing of the conquests of Jayapāla. This appears to be confirmed by the reference quoted above, made to Harjjara in the Nowgong grant.¹

It is suggested that the capital of Harjjara was at Hāruppesvara and that it remained there during the time of the Śālastambha line. P. Bhattacharya contends that Śālastambha himself shifted the capital, as he partially destroyed

¹V.11.

Prāggyotiṣa, and that the name Prāggyotiṣa during the time of his dynasty stood for the kingdom.¹ K.L. Barua holds that the capital was changed by Harjjara. None of these theories is tenable. In the Hāyuntḥāl grant of Harjjara, Hāruppeśvara is called merely a 'Jayaskandhāvāra' (victorious camp)². In the Tezpur epigraph of the said king it is called only a pura (city)³. The Nowgong grant describes Hāruppeśvara as a 'Paitāmahakataka' (ancestral camp).⁴ Prālambha is described in the Tezpur grant of Vanamāla as the lord of Prāggyotiṣa,⁵ and the same grant refers to Hāruppeśvara as a camp.⁶ The name Hāruppeśvara is derived from an Austric formation like hara or harup (to cover as with a basket or dish).⁷ It is associated with a deity and with the attainment of liberation,⁸ or with a linga (Haṭaka Śūlin). Haṭaka means gold; it is possible that a temple of Haṭaka Śiva was built by Harjjara in his temporary residence in or near Tezpur. It is said to have been rebuilt by Vanamāla. The ruins of these temples are found in modern Tezpur, which along with a Harjjara-pukhuri (tank) keep fresh the memory of Harjjara. During Vanamāla's

¹K.S. (Intro.) pp.22, 25.

²J.A.R.S., I, pp.109f.

³J.B.O.R.S., 1917, pp.508f.

⁴J.A.S.B., LXVI, I, pp.285f.

⁵V.7.

⁶J.A.S.B., IX, II, pp.766f.

⁷B.K. Kakati, App. to Cultural History of Assam, I, pp.202f.

⁸K.S. (Intro.), pp.22, 25.

reign, the city extended over a greater area, from the Bāmuni Hills on the east to Dah Parvatīā on the west.¹ It appears probable that the city of Hāruppeśvara with its Śiva temples was built by Harjjara as a place of temporary residence to watch and guard against the incursions of the neighbouring tribes.² The name Hāruppeśvara is only a relic of the admixture of Aryan and non-Aryan elements in the modern town of Tezpur. In any case, Prāgjyotiṣa remained as the permanent capital of the family. The extravagance with which the newly established city is associated, indicates the growing prosperity of the people. There is no impossibility in the establishment of a new town; but this does not necessarily imply that the capital was shifted to it.

Vanamāla:

With the accession of Vanamāla, son of Harjjara, the kingdom enters again into a phase of development. His Tezpur grant was issued in the 19th year of his reign, which may be placed about A.D. 854.³ His reign may have covered the period from A.D. 835-865.⁴ Bhattacharya places him about the middle of the 9th century A.D.;⁵ but a slightly earlier date fits better into the chronological scheme.

¹E.H.K., p.124; J.A.R.S., III, pp.2-6.

²See P. Bhattacharya, K.S., p.52 (f.n.3).

³J.A.S.B., IX, II, pp.766f; J.A.R.S., II, p.3; E.H.K., p.134.

⁴Haernle places the grant about 925. Kielhorn places the period from Prālambha to Harjjara between 800-925.

⁵K.S., pp.54-70.

He was probably the contemporary of Vignrahapāla I and Nārāyaṇapāla of Gauḍa, whose reigns saw the decline of the Pālas after Devapāla's death.¹

Epigraphy testifies to his kingly qualities and achievements. The Nowgong grant states that he was 'for a long time king in the land, devoted in faith to Bhāva (Śiva).' He possessed a charming body and pleasing disposition. He spoke nothing low and improper and was always noble.² His Tezpur grant states that he was 'renowned like the moon, the source of the universal delight, and adorned with the jewel wreath of all noble and royal qualities, and his footstool was borne by the crowns of numerous rājās - Further he was like the moon on the clear sky of the Naraka line - His fame which is the whitest of all, exists in the regions of the serpents ever laughing to scorn (even) its eternal splendour, in extreme regions (surpassing in whiteness) the water cast off from the trunks of elephants - and in the firmament (deriding) the spotless and pleasant beams of the moon full in her digits - The wife of Abja (Brahma) - sings his extended fame in temples - Large quantities of gold, elephants, horses, lands, wives, silver and jewels were his usual gifts - and he was himself in company with the learned.' The feudatory rājās came to him to pay their respectful homage.³

¹Majumdar, History of Bengal, I, pp.125f.

²VV.12-13.

³VV.16,19,24,26,28-29, 30f.

That Vanamāla extended his kingdom through conquests appears from his grant, which states that 'he was the worthy master of the territories that extended to the lines of forests (vanamāla) near the sea-shore.' He was like 'the sun in the field of battle by reason of his driving forth the darkness of the furious elephants of his vanquished foes', and he expelled 'all the rājās, who were like thunder to the mountains of the powerful army of their respective enemies - Some rājās, though they were conquerors of their rivals, yet from the fear of Vanamāla's power took refuge - in the extreme regions and others in heaven - The rest who were forward to throw their sharp shafts at him in battle, abandoned their lands in consternation - The enemies who were gallantly forward in battle with their elephants, were subdued by him.'¹ There is inscriptional evidence of his subjugation of petty rulers, which may refer either to his feudatories or minor independent chiefs in and outside the kingdom.

The reference to the extension of his kingdom to the lines of forests and the sea-shore is, however, significant. The former points to the extension of the kingdom over the hilly regions in the north and east and the latter perhaps means the inclusion of regions in South-East Bengal, including Sylhet, Mymensingh, portions of Dacca, Samatata and the neighbouring lands.² The minor rājās of the

¹ Tezpur grant, VV. 17-18, 20-23.

² E.H.K., p.125.

epigraph may refer to the tribal chiefs and other rulers. The policy, started by Harjjara, of bringing the tribal regions under the central authority of Kāmarūpa, was continued by Vanamāla. The Tezpur grant proves the extension of the limits of the kingdom again to North Bengal after the temporary loss of the region after Harṣadeva. Harjjara himself may have tried for it; but perhaps he failed. Vanamāla availed himself of the chance after the removal of the strong Gauda ruler, Devapāla, during the weak reign of Vigrapāla I. By his Tezpur grant, Vanamāla donated to Indoka lands, situated in the village of Abhiṣsūrabhātaka, lying to the west of Trisrotā and the north-east of Chandraparī (Chandrapurī),¹ almost in the same area where Bhūti-varman during the middle of the 6th century A.D. donated lands. P. Bhattacharya thinks that the river Karatogā was the western boundary of the kingdom of Vanamāla.² It probably included the regions lying between Teestā and Kausikā, including Puṇḍravardhana.³ The weakness of the Pāla rule might have accounted for this. The kingdom of Vanamāla, therefore, comprised almost the whole of modern Assam, parts of south-east Bengal, including Sylhet, Tripurā, Mymensingh and the neighbouring places, and Puṇḍravardhana in North Bengal. Thus he revived to some extent the kingdom of Bhāskara; but it does not appear likely that his

¹J.R.S.B., IX, II, pp.766f.

²K.S., pp.54-70.

³Vasu, Social History of Kāmarūpa, II, p.161; E.H.K., p.125.

influence was felt either in Orissa or in the Nālandā region.

The growing prosperity of capital and kingdom, and the king's liberality are evidenced by his grant. It gives a graphic description of his place of temporary residence in Hārupesvara, situated on the bank of the Brahmaputra, which he made beautiful by erecting many temples and buildings. The writer of the grant, describing the scenery of the capital on the bank of the Brahmaputra, states that the water of the Brahmaputra 'was made fragrant with the scent from the flowers dropped from the creeping plants, moved by the long-drawn breathing of the serpents, startled at the cries of the wild peacocks and various other birds - Further its streams were intermixed with the odorous water of the clouds, scented by the ashes of the Kālāgaru trees, burning from the conflagration of its adjacent groves - The inhabitants near its banks were all delighted with the smell arising from the musk of the deer - Further its streams were more sacred than those of others from their continually washing the sides of the mount Kāmakūṭa, which is inhabited on its top by Kāmesvara and MahāGaurī - moreover it was turbid with the odorous substances which were besmeared over and washed from the high breasts of the lovely women bathing, and it was adorned on both the banks with boats, decorated with various instruments; 'their utkampā (dancing motion) is augmented like that of the girls with their male

partners.¹ The whole picturesque scene was made sacred by the incantations of mantras coming from the temples. All these carried to distant lands the majestic glory of Vanamāla, who dedicated the later part of his life to religion and virtue.

The last important event of Vanamāla's reign was the establishment of his son on the throne. The Nowgong grant proves that he abdicated in favour of his son Jayamāla, when the latter finished his education and acquired the requisite qualifications for kingship. It further states that he starved himself to death,² evidently under the influence of religion.

Jayamāla or Vīrabāhu:

The successor of Vanamāla is disputed by some writers. Gait takes Jayamāla and Vīrabāhu as two princes.³ Hoernle, explaining verse 16 of the Nowgong grant, which refers to Vanamāla's abdication, holds that the name Vanamāla is used as an adjective of Jayamāla, who, therefore, in his opinion, abdicated in favour of Vīrabāhu.⁴ But this interpretation is wrong. It was Vanamāla who abdicated in favour of Jayamāla, another name of whom was Vīrabāhu, as is distinctly stated in the said grant.⁵ His (Vanamāla's) son was the

¹J.A.S.B., IX, II, pp.766f.

²VV. 16-17.

³History of Assam, p.91.

⁴J.A.S.B., LXVI, I, pp.293f.

⁵VV. 16-17.

excellent Jayamāladeva just as the cool-rayed one (moon) is (the son) of the great ocean of milk, and his glories un-deviatingly revolve with a splendour equal to that of the radiant (jasmine like) moon.' That Jayamāla was known as Vīrabāhu is clear from the verse 18 of the Nowgong grant: 'Having received the kingdom, the king, the excellent Vīrabāhu married (a lady) called Ambā, who was equal to himself in point of family, beauty and age.'¹ The same reference is found in the verse 21 of the said grant. Kielhorn is, therefore, right in taking Vīrabāhu as another name of Jayamāla.² It is likely that after his accession Jayamāla took the name of Vīrabāhu.³ In the Nowgong grant Vīrabāhu is known also as Raṇastambha, and in the Guākuchi grant of Indrapāla, Saṅgrāmastambha is stated to have been one of the thirty-two birudas of that king. The title 'Raṇastambha', indicates his warlike activities, and he is said to have distinguished himself in wars.⁴ This may refer to his battles with tribal chiefs, but it is possible that he accompanied Vanamāla in the latter's occupation of Puṇḍravardhana. In any case, it does not indicate his occupation of Orissa, as suggested by K.L. Barua.⁵

Jayamāla was probably the contemporary of Nārāyaṇapāla of Gauḍa whose reign is placed by different writers between

¹VV.15, 18.

²J.B.O.R.S., II, p.509.

³K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S., III, pp.2-5.

⁴Nowgong grant, V.21.

⁵E.H.K., pp.125f.

A.D. 852-907;¹ 860-914;² 860-915 or 845-899.³ He may be placed roughly from the middle of the 9th to the beginning of the 10th century A.D., and according to our system of chronology, Jayamāla may be placed between A.D.865-885. Though the Pāla power declined under Vīgrahapāla and Nārāyaṇapāla, it is unlikely that Jayamāla could make any headway to the west of the Karatoyā, except that he may have consolidated the conquest of Vanamāla in the Chandrapurī viṣaya. This appears to be confirmed by the statements of the epigraphs, quoted above, indicating his warlike career by such titles as Vīrabāhu and Raṇastambha.

Like his father, Jayamāla abdicated the throne in favour of his son Balavarman III, as he was attacked by a disease. This is proved by the Nowgong grant.⁴

Balavarman III:

That Balavarman was the son of Jayamāla is clear from his Nowgong grant: 'By him (Jayamāla) was produced from her (Ambā), just as fire from a stick of wood by one who understands the process, an excellent son, the celebrated Balavarman, endowed with every virtue - with eyes resembling the undulating flowers of the blue lotus, with a thick-set neck and well formed arms, and with a figure as beautiful as a fresh lotus flower, just opened under the touch of the

¹R.D. Banerji, J.B.O.R.S. 1928, pp.489-538; M.A.S.B.,V,pp.43f.

²Majumdar, J.P.A.S.B. (N.S.), 1921, pp.1-6.

³D.C. Bhattacharya, I.A., 1920, pp.189-93; I.H.Q., III, pp.571-91.

⁴VV.21-22.

rays of the rising sun.¹

Hoernle places the Nowgong grant, which was issued in the eighth year of his reign about A.D. 975,² which appears to be improbable. D. Bhattacharya places it about A.D. 883 and Kielhon places Balavarman before A.D.915,³ which seems to be chronologically feasible. P. Bhattacharya places him during the first half of the 10th century A.D.⁴, and K.L. Barua, on the basis of his grant, places his reign between A.D. 875-890.⁵ It is reasonable to place him between A.D. 885-910 and this seems to be supported by Kielhorn. He was, therefore, the contemporary of Nārāyaṇapāla of Gauḍa, whose chronology we have already discussed.⁶ Like his predecessor Vighrahapāla, Nārāyaṇapāla had a precarious position in Gauḍa which was again invaded by the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and other powers.⁷ This decay of the Pāla power after Devapāla provided an opportunity for Kāmarūpa to extend its limits in Bengal, and Vanamāla had already given a proof of this by donating lands to the west of the Teestā. Jayamāla consolidated these possessions, and it was time for Balavarman to make fresh conquests.

In his grant Balavarman assumes the imperial epithet of 'Mahārājādhirāja - Paramesvara - Paramabhattachāraka'.

¹V.20

²J.A.S.B., LXVI, I, pp.285f.

³J.B.O.R.S., II, p.509.

⁴K.S., pp.71-85.

⁵E.H.K., p.129.

⁶See above, pp. 364-65

⁷R.C. Majumdar, History of Bengal, I, pp.125f.

The same grant refers to the defeat of his enemies in wars. Just after his accession, 'Balavarman also shone forth as an extirpator of all his enemies, whom he expelled.'¹ He is said to have 'conquered all potentates in dire contest, by his arms, which showed dark against numerous flashes of his drawn sword-blade - '² It is difficult to say who were his enemies. The grant may have been issued (885±8) about A.D. 893; by it he donated lands to a Brāhmaṇa, Śrūtīdhara, in Hensivā in the Dijjinā viṣaya, in the same locality where Dharmapāla about a century later donated lands by his Śubhāṅkarapāṭaka grant.³ It lay to the west of Teestā and Karatoyā in and near Puṅḍravardhana.⁴ This confirms our belief that Balavarman made fresh conquests in North Bengal at the cost of the Pālas under Nārāyaṇapāla.

Both the place names in the grant appear to be non-Aryan or Bodo in origin,⁵ suggesting that the localities were then inhabited by non-Aryans. The reference in his grant to a battle may mean that Balavarman brought tribal chiefs under subjugation. It is also significant that Brāhmaṇas were established in the midst of the non-Aryan population, a process which was perhaps responsible for the intermixture of cultures from early times. This systematic policy of the Kāmarūpa rulers helped to a great

¹V. 24.

²J.A.S.B., LXVI, I, pp.285-97.

³See below, pp.397f

⁴See P. Bhattacharya, K.S., pp.164f; J.A.R.S., II, pp.82-84.

⁵B.K. Kākatī, App. to Cultural History of Assam, I, p.205.

extent not only in the spread of education but also in the contact of diverse cultures, so essential for the political consolidation of the kingdom. The city of Hārūppesvara, where the king is said to have resided temporarily, is called an excellent camp, indicating that it was not his permanent capital, to which we have already made a reference.¹ It was, therefore, a second capital, with a grandeur befitting the beautiful scenery on the bank of the Brahmaputra, and its establishment was no doubt considered important, to maintain contact with the neighbouring tribes.

With his personal charm, 'fearful of disgrace, harsh towards enemies, gentle towards religious preceptors, truthful, neither contemptuous nor vaunting, generous and purified from sin,'² Balavarman proved himself to be the last of the dutiful rulers of the line of Śālastambha, carrying on the administration with well-organised machinery of government.

An Obscure Period After Balavarman III:

The immediate successors of Balavarman are unknown. The Bargāon grant of Ratnapāla³ reveals that there were 21 rulers of the family of Śālastambha, the last being Tyāgasimha, who was succeeded by Brahmapāla, who established

¹ See above, pp. 357-58

² J.A.S.B., LXVI, I, pp. 285-97.

³ V.10.

a new line of the Pālas. But we find that Balavarman was the 14th in descent from Śālastambha or 17th if we include Cakra and Arathi and the brother of Prālabha. The writer of the Bargāon grant may have included these princes as well, in which case it appears that Balavarman was the 17th ruler of the family. If this assumption is correct, there were probably three intervening rulers¹ between Balavarman and Tyāgasimha, the 21st ruler of the line. It is unfortunate that no clue to this gap is given either in the grants of Śālastambha's line or in those of the Pālas. Balavarman's reign according to our system of chronology may have ended about A.D. 910. The date of the accession of Brahmapāla after Tyāgasimha is placed by Hoernle in about A.D. 1000.² K.L. Barua places him about A.D. 985 on the supposition that Tyāgasimha ruled between A.D. 970-85.³ He infers, therefore, that there was a gap of about a century (890-970) between Balavarman and Tyāgasimha, in which period six princes ruled.⁴ In discussing the period of Brahmapāla we shall try to show that his accession is to be placed about A.D. 990. It is possible that there were three rulers between Balavarman and Tyāgasimha, and if according to our system of chronology Balavarman's end may be ascribed to about A.D. 910, the three rulers may be

¹K.L. Barua contends that there were probably six rulers between them. (E.H.K., p.133).

²E.I., XVIII, p.290; H.C. Ray, D.H.N.I., I, p.247.

³E.H.K., pp.134, 149.

⁴Ibid, p.133.

placed between 910-970, and, therefore, Tyāgasimha may have ruled between A.D. 970-990, when Brahmapāla ascended the throne. But this gap of about 60 years cannot be bridged over unless new grants are brought to light; nor do we know anything about the reign of Tyāgasimha who is simply called 'the illustrious chief' in the Bargāon grant.¹ The obscurity of the period continued until a new line was founded by Brahmapāla.

¹V. 10.

Section 4.

The Pāla Line.

Brahmapāla: The origin of the founder of the Pāla line is given in the grants of the family, indicating that Brahmapāla was of the same Bhauma dynasty to which Puṣyavarman and Śālastambha belonged. The Assamese chronicles¹ mention that the family of Mādhava, whom we have identified with Śālastambha² was followed by one, founded by Jitāri, a Kṣatriya, who is said to have come from the Drāviḍa country and brought with him several families of Brāhmanas and Kāyasthas from Kanauj and Gauḍa. It is possible that he came from the Nālandā region or Orissa, and was the descendent of the royal princes established by Bhāskara or Harṣadeva, or from the region of North Bengal, which may have been ruled by a royal prince established by Vanamāla. It is interesting that the names of the rulers of this family of Jitāri as given in the Hara-Gaurīsamvāda end with the surname, Pāla like Dharmapāla, Ratnapāla, who is said to have invaded Gauḍa, Somapāla and others, ruling for eight generations, the last being Rāmacandra whom we have identified with Jayapāla.³ The epigraphs also give a list of 8 Kings including Purandarapāla, who reigned for about eight generations. Moreover, the name of

¹HaraGaurīsamvāda, Chaps. VI - VII; P.C.Bagchi, I.H.Q., XVIII, pp 231-60.

²Section 3. pp - 310f

³Section I, pp - 201-2

the second ruler was Ratnapāla as given in the grants. The identification of Brahmapāla with Jitāri, therefore, appears probable.¹

The connection of Brahmapāla with the former ruling family is proved by the Bargāon grant which states thus: 'Seeing that the twenty first of them (the line of Śāla-stambha), the illustrious Tyāgasimha by name, had departed to heaven without (leaving) any of his race (to succeed him), his officials, thinking it well that a Bhauma (of Naraka's race) should be appointed as their lord, chose Brahmapāla from among his kindred to be their king on account of his fitness to undertake the government of the country.'²

The Khonāmukhi grant of Dharmapāla records in the same strain. 'In that royal family was born a King, named Brahmapāla who was like a Kulācala and equal to Indra.'³ The same reference is found in the Śubhānkara-pāṭaka⁴ and the Puṣpabhadra grants⁵ of Dharmapāla. The election of Brahmapāla had an interesting parallel with that of Gopāla of Gauḍa.⁶ It may be that the administrators of Assam remembered the Pāla precedent.

¹Section I, pp -201-2.

²V.10.

³V.4.

⁴V4; K.S. pp.149f.

⁵V 3; K.S., pp 168f.

⁶E.I., IV, pp 243f.

In spite of this link with the lines of Puṣyavarman and Śālastambha, both connected with the Bauma dynasty, Hoernle opines that the line of Śālastambha ended with Harṣa, and was succeeded by another foreign dynasty, beginning with Prālabha and ending with Tyāgasimha, after whom the dynasty of Bhagadatta was restored in the person of Brahmapāla.¹ This is not supported by the grants we have quoted. Hoernle further adds that all these families were founded by aboriginal 'tribal chiefs, who aggrandising themselves, adopted Hinduism and got invented for themselves a quasi-Kṣatriya descent. All the genealogical details, therefore, before Brahmapāla, Śālastambha and Prālabha (or Harjjara) are unhistorical, the real lines commencing with those names. The lineage of Bhagadatta seems to have been a favourite one for the chiefs of Kāmarūpa to adopt.'² Gait³ and Ray⁴ write in the same strain referring to the non-Hindu aboriginal or Mongolian origin of all these lines. We need not enter into this controversy again, which we have already discussed with regard to the line of Śālastambha.⁵ The epigraphs do not support this view of the

¹J.A.S.B., LXVII, I, pp 103-104.

²J.A.S.B., LXVI, I, pp 120-121.

³History of Assam, p.30.

⁴D.H.N.I., I, pp.248-49.

⁵Section 3. pp - 316 f

foundation of different dynasties, one tracing its origin to Bhagadatta and the other indicating a foreign origin. There is absolutely nothing to suggest that all these families were tribal Mongolian groups. We have shown enough reasons in dealing with the origin of the Varman and Sālastambha lines to prove that none betrays an aboriginal or Mongolian origin. The evidence from epigraphy, supported by literary sources, justifies our conclusion that the original founders of the dynasty come under the influence of the Aryans. Puṣyavarman or Sālastambha may have been designated as mlecchas or non-Aryans because of the Alpine origin of the original founder of the Bhauma dynasty. Not to speak of the rulers of the Varman and Sālastambha lines, Brahmapāla himself is said to have established Brāhmaṇas and Kāyasthas in the Kingdom. So, by the time of the establishment of the Varman line, the rulers, notwithstanding their Alpine connection, were rightly designated as the Brāhmanical Hindus.

The election of Brahmapāla owing to his fitness to rule the Kingdom, is testified by the Bargāon grant. The event was important in the political history of the land. It may be presumed that Tyāgasimha had no issue and Brahmapāla, who may have been working as a governor somewhere in North Bengal or Orissa, belonging to a collateral family, was invited by the important officials of the state to ascend the

throne.¹ There is no good ground for believing, as remarked by K.L.Barua that such election was a myth.² We have parallels to such election from other parts of India.³ Brahma-pāla was chosen King not only because of his connection with the former ruling dynasty, having a rightful claim to the throne in the absence of the direct heir, but also because of his ability to undertake the difficult task of ruling the Kingdom and protecting the people, the basis of sovereignty in ancient India.

We face the same chronological difficulty with regard to this as with the earlier lines. Ray⁴ places Brahmāpāla about A.D.1000 and K.L.Barua in 985.⁵ If Hoernle is right in placing the beginning of the reign of his immediate successor, Ratnapāla in A.D.1010,⁶ Brahmāpāla may be placed in about A.D.990. He was, therefore, the contemporary of the Gauda ruler Mahāpāla I who is placed between A.D. 974 - 1036.⁷

The Bargāon grant gives a hint of the warlike character

¹Vasu (Social History of Kāmarūpa, II, pp 189f) holds that a certain Rājyadhara occupied portions of Bengal or Koch Bihar during these troublous times. But no gap between Brahmāpāla and Tyāgasimha is indicated.

²E.H.K, pp.135-36.

³See Section 5, pp - 430-31

⁴D.H.N.I., I, p.247.

⁵E.H.K, p.149.

⁶J.A.S.B, LXVII, I, p.102.

⁷See R.D.Banerji, J.B.O.R.S., 1928, pp 489-538; M.A.S.B, V, pp 43-113; R.C.Majumdar, J.P.A.S.B., (N.S) 1921, pp. 1f. D.C.Bhattacharya, I.A., 1920, pp 189-93; I.H.Q., III, pp. 571-591; Smith, E.H.I, pp 366f.

of Brahmapāla. 'Single handed he overcame his enemy in battle - his warriors have always thought very highly of (the conduct of) their home staying (King), seeing that his enemies fled away in all eight directions.'¹ On the basis of the Belāva grant of Bhojavarman, K.L.Barua supposes that Jātavarman invaded Kāmarūpa and defeated Brahmapāla, though he could not annex the Kingdom.² Vasu opines that he actually inflicted a defeat on the King of Kāmarūpa.³ This Varman line of Kings was ruling from Vikramapura in East Bengal during the 11th century A.D. when the Pāla rule after Mahīpāla I declined in Gauḍa.⁴ By the Belāva grant land was donated in Puṇḍravardhana. It states thus: 'Seeing the (great) glory of Pr̥thu, son of Veṇa, espousing Vīrasrī (the daughter) of Karna, extending his supremacy among the Āngas, conquering the fortunes of Kāmarūpa, (paribhavaṃs-tāṃ - Kāmarūpa-srīyaṃ) putting to shame the strength of the arms of Divya, crippling the dignity of Govardhana and giving away all his wealth to Brāhmaṇas, he (Jātavarman) established his own paramount sovereignty.'⁵ Basak holds 'that Jātavarman might have availed himself of this opportune moment of the revolt of Varendra of the Kaivartas under Divya for

¹V II.

²E.H.K, p.137.

³Social History of Kāmarūpa, II, pp.189f.

⁴R.C.Majumdar, History of Bengal, I, pp.197-204.

⁵E.I., XII, (V8), pp.37-44.

proceeding towards Kāmarūpa and bringing this province under his own sway.¹ But the actual interpretation of the statement, 'conquering the fortunes of Kāmarūpa,' does not imply the invasion of Kāmarūpa or the defeat of Brahmapāla, not to speak of bringing whole Kāmarūpa under Jātavarman's sway. As we shall show, the statement has probably a reference to the loss of Kāmarūpa possessions in North Bengal.² If Jātavarman was the contemporary of Vigrahapāla III of Bengal, who cannot be placed earlier than the middle of the 11th century A.D.³, the event can hardly be ascribed to the period of Brahmapāla whose reign falls between A.D. 990-1010 only. If there is any historical basis for this very wide conquest of Jātavarman, the event can be ascribed to the reign of Gopāla. In any case, it does not imply the actual invasion of Kāmarūpa proper. Hence the statement of A. Banerji⁴ and P.L. Paul⁵ that Jātavarman crippled the power of the King of Kāmarūpa, and that of R.D. Banerji⁶ that he actually conquered Kāmarūpa, are not established.⁷

The extension of the Kingdom during Brahmapāla's reign

¹Ibid.

²See below, pp - 393-94

³P.L. Paul, Early History of Bengal, pp. 44-45. Majumdar places Jātavarman during the second half or the third quarter of the 11th century A.D. (History of Bengal, I, pp. 197-204).

⁴A.B.O.R.I., XIX, pp. 298-305.

⁵Early History of Bengal, pp. 44-45.

⁶Bāṅglāra Itihāsa, I, p. 277.

⁷P. Bhattacharya, K.S. (Intro), p. 39.

in the west is doubtful; it is likely that his sway did not extend to Bengal. According to the Bāṅgarh grant¹ Mahīpāla I revived the paternal Kingdom; Majumdar thinks that this refers to Varendra in North Bengal.² Moreover, the Chandras, who established their petty Kingdom in East Bengal, ruling from Vikramapura, also became powerful. By two grants, Śrīchandra donated lands in Puṇḍravardhana; he probably flourished towards the close of the 10th or the beginning of the 11th century A.D.,³ when Brahmapāla was ruling. But in the east Kāmarūpa included greater portions of modern Assam including Nowgong. Since the 4th century A.D., traces of the existence of small principalities like Ḍavāka are found in modern Nowgong, adjoining the Mikir Hills, where remains of forts, temples and buildings are yet to be seen. Some of them are attributed to the capital of a King, named Haṃsadhvaja. The Tāntrik work Pag Som Zon Zan makes mention of another ancient Kingdom of Kadali in the same locality, along with others. It is associated with the activities of Mīnanātha and Gorakṣanātha of a little later time than Brahmapāla. During their time the ruler of Kadali was a woman, Kamalā, helped by her sister and ministers.⁴ The antiquity of the place is unknown. This Kingdom of

¹E.I., XXII, p.152.

²History of Bengal, I, pp.136-37.

³Majumdar, History of Bengal, I, pp.190-97.

⁴See Gorakṣavijaya (Ed. A.K. Sāhitya Viśārada, p.197)

Nārīrājya is located by some in Maṇipur or Burma¹ or Cāchār or even in the North-Western Frontier;² but it is rather to be located in the Kadali, Nowgong, ruled probably by a Jaintiā queen,³ enjoying the liberty accorded to women by the Tāntrik-Buddhists, and possibly as a feudatory of the Pālas of Assam. This place at a later time became associated with the birth of two noted Assamese writers, Mādhava and Ananta Kandali. This is another instance of the contact of the Aryan and non-Aryan people in the Kingdom and of the influence of Tāntrik-Buddhism, which flooded Eastern India, particularly Kāmarūpa under the patronage of the Pāla line.

The last important act of Brahmapāla was his abdication in favour of his son. This is proved by the Bargāon grant which states thus: 'Then having placed him (Ratnapāla) on the throne of the dynasty of Naraka - he (Brahmapāla) - went to heaven; for noble minded men who know the good and evil of the world, know how to do what is suitable to the occasion.'⁴

Ratnapāla: The accession of Ratnapāla saw another period of prosperity of Kāmarūpa. That he was the son of Brahmapāla,

¹Maināmatir Gān p.22 (f.n)2).

²H.C.Chaklader, Social Life in Ancient India, pp.59f.

³R.M.Nath, J.A.R.S., VII, pp.19-23.

⁴V 15; Śuālkuchi grant, Line 5.

belonging to the former ruling dynasty, is evident from the grants, which also describe him 'as the mighty crusher of enemies,' and 'the possessor of priceless virtues,' who 'emulated the renowned good deeds of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa.'¹ His own grants speak of him in the same strain. 'By him (Brahmapāḷa) - was begotten on her (his wife) a son, called Ratnapāḷa, who gained renown because his people justly concluded that a jewel like King, would, by his good qualities, foster the most worthy among them.'²

The many sided qualities of this ruler are depicted in high terms in most of the epigraphs of the family.³ He 'was of bright lustre and worthy of his name; he was a victor in battles and the royal goddess of fortune manifested herself at his feet, that were adorned by the garlands of crests of Kings.'⁴

It is evident from his Bargāon grant that Ratnapāḷa had the credit of building a new fortress in the capital, or fortified the old city of Prāggyotiṣa, giving it a new name of Durjayā (impregnable). The grandeur of the capital is depicted in poetic style, where 'the heat (of the weather) is relieved by the copious showers of ruttish water flowing from the temples of his troops of lusty elephants, which are

¹Gauhāti grant, V 9.

²Bargāon grant V 13; Śuālkuchi grant, Line 4.

³Bargāon grant, Lines 47-50; Śuālkuchi grant, Lines 23-26.

⁴Khonāmukhi grant of Dharmapāḷa, V 5; Subhāṅkarapāṭaka grant, V 5.

presented to him by hundreds of Kings conquered by his arms, entwined in the clusters of the flashes of his sharp sword. Though the capital is crowded with a dense forest, as it were, of the arms of his brave soldiers - yet it is fit to be inhabited by wealthy people (merchants) - It is frequented by many hundreds of well-to-do people just as a forest on the heights of the Malaya mountain (is frequented) by snakes. It is adorned by learned men, religious preceptors and poets, who have made it their place of resort - It resembles the summit of mount Kailāsa in being the residence of the Parameśvara (Śiva) and in being inhabited by a Vitteṣa (Kuvera).¹

There can be no doubt that Durjayā stands for Prāḡgyotiṣapura.² Bhattacharya's contention that the capital was shifted to this place from Hārurpeśvara by Brahmapāla,³ may not be true; because we have shown that Hārurpeśvara was only a temporary residence of the family of Śālastambha, and Prāḡgyotiṣa remained the capital not only of Śālastambha's family but also of the Pālas themselves.⁴ Hoernle contends that Ratnapāla either 'founded it or made it into a fortified place and fixed it as the residence of his dynasty. The fact that the Pāla Kings resided in the fort of Durjayā and

¹Bargāon grant, Lines 28-33; Śuālkuchi grant, Lines 6-7.

²The location of Durjayā in Nowgong by North (J.A.R.S., V, 15) is quite unlikely.

³K.S. (Intro), p.25.

⁴Section, 3, pp - 357f

the Harjjara dynasty in the 'ancestral camp' at Hārupesvara, while yet both dynasties called themselves 'lords of Prāgjyotiṣa,' may perhaps justify the conclusion that in their time - Prāgjyotiṣa, which was originally the name of a town became the name of a country.¹ None of these theories appears tenable. Hārupesvara, as held by Hoernle himself was only a camp or a place of temporary residence. Hence there is no question of the shifting of the capital to Durjayā. The probability appears to be that in view of the traditional rivalry between Kāmarūpa and Gauḍa and living in the midst of hostile neighbours, Ratnapāla built a strong fortress in the heart of the old city of Prāgjyotiṣa. The epithet, 'Prāgjyotiṣādhipati' seems to have stood rather for the city than the country in this particular case, though it may have stood for both. K.L.Barua, supporting Bhattacharya, holds that Brahmapāla shifted the capital to Gauhāti from Hārupesvara, and Ratnapāla simply strengthened it.² This theory is also not tenable. Ray is of opinion that 'it would perhaps be wrong to accept this name (Durjayā) as an alias for Prāgjyotiṣapura as Hoernle has done. It is not unlikely that these capitals (Prāgjyotiṣa, Hārupesvara, Śrī-Durjayā) may have been situated in the neighbourhood of the modern town of Gauhāti.'³ But Hoernle's identification of Durjayā with Prāgjyotiṣa is not wrong, and Ray has made

¹J.A.S.B., LXVII, I, p.105.

²E.H.K., pp.137-38.

³D.H.N.I., I, pp. 250f.

a mistake in stating that Hāruppeśvara lay near Gauhāti. It was situated in modern Tezpur,¹ far away from Gauhāti. Durjayā, as its name indicates, ~~was~~ a fortified place in Prāgjyotiṣa, which remained the capital of the line of rulers, beginning with Puṣyavarman, if not earlier, and ending with the Pāla line, or even later.

We have two records of the reign of Ratnapāla. His Bargāon grant was recorded in the 25th² and the Śuālkuchi grant in the 26th year of his reign.³ Hoernle places him between A.D. 1010-1050,⁴ which appears to be long; K.L.Barua places him between A.D. 1000 - 1030,⁵ which also does not fit into the chronology, we have worked out for the Pāla line. The most probable date appears to be A.D. 1010 - 1040, and as his second grant was recorded in the 26th year of his reign, it is possible that he had a fairly long reign of about 30 years. He was probably the contemporary of Mahipāla I and Nyāyapāla; the latter has been dated differently by different writers, ranging from A.D. 1025 to 1054.⁶

His own grants and those of Indrapāla and Dharmapāla

¹Tezpur Grant of Vanamāla.

²J.A.S.B., IXVII, I, p.102.

³Ibid, pp.120-125.

⁴Ibid, p.102.

⁵E.H.K., p. 149. P.Bhattacharya places him during the first half of the 11th century A.D. (K.S. pp.89-109).

⁶R.D.Banerji, J.B.O.R.S., 1928, pp.489-538; M.A.S.B., V, pp. 43f; R.C.Majumdar, J.R.A.S.B., (N.S.) 1921, pp. 1-6; D.C.Bhattacharya, I.A., 1920, pp. 189-93; I.H.Q., III, pp. 571-91.

point to Ratnapāla's warlike activities. As the Bargāon grant states, because 'of the elephants' pearls, carried forth by the impetus of the unrestrainable stream of blood running from the split foreheads of the elephants of his enemies, his (Ratnapāla's) battle field looked beautiful like a market place strewn with the stores of merchants and ruby coloured through (the blood of) the slain.'¹

The Gauhati grant refers to him as 'the mighty crusher of enemies.'² A significant reference to contemporary powers is made in the description of his capital: 'Like the cloth which protects King's broad chests, its boundaries were encompassed by a rampart, furnished with a fence strong like that used for the game-birds of the Śakas, fit to cause chagrin to the King of Gurjara, to give fever to the heads of the untameable elephants of the chief of Gauḍa, to act like the bitumen in the earth to the lord of Kerala, to strike awe into the Bāhikas and Taikas, to cause discomfiture (consumption) to the master of the Deccan and generally to serve for the purpose of discomfiting the (King's) enemies.'³ It is suggested that Ratnapāla actually came into hostile conflict with the powers mentioned in the grant. Vasu thinks that it refers to an unsuccessful attempt and invasion of Kāmarūpa by the said powers, who were defeated by Ratnapāla.⁴

¹V.14.

²VV.7, 15; also Khonāmukhi grant, V.5.

³Bargāon grant, Lines 34-35; Śuālkuchi grant, Lines 11-12.

⁴Social History of Kāmarūpa, II, pp.106-107.

Ray contends that the statement may have a bearing on contemporary incidents. He identifies the Kerala King with Rājendra Chola I (A.D. 1013-44) and the lord of the Deccan with the Chālukya Vikramāditya VI (A.D. 1076-1126). He takes the Taikas and the Bāhikas as the Turkish invaders. The King of Gurjara was either Rājyapāla (1018-19) or Trilōcanapāla (1019-27). The presence of the Gurjaras in Magadha and North Bengal, Ray writes, made them familiar to the Kāmarūpa poets.¹

Hoernle, commenting that the Kāmarūpa King actually came into conflict with them, identifies the Gurjara King with the Western Chālukya Jayasimha III or Someśvara I; the Kerala King with Chola Rājarāja; the Gauḍa ruler with Mahīpāla or Nyāyapāla and the Bāhikas and the Taikas with the Trans-Indus people of Balkh and the Tajiks.² S.L. Katare seems to take Ratnapāla as a scion of the Gauḍa Pālas, and further adds that the Chālukya army marched through Magadha, Vaṅga, Aṅga and Gauḍa, reaching Kāmarūpa. He identifies the master of the Deccan, who is taken by him to have been defeated by Ratnapāla, with Vikramāditya VI Chālukya of Kalyāṇi. He concludes by stating that owing to the difficulties of the region, Vikramāditya had to return.³ But

¹D.H.N.I., I, pp. 250-51.

²J.A.S.B., LXVII, I, pp. 105f.

³I.C., IV, pp. 43-52.

Ratnapāla had no connection with the Pālas of Gauḍa,¹ and the supposed invasion of Kāmarūpa or the defeat of this Vikramāditya probably did not occur at all.

The defeat of a Kāmarūpa ruler by certain Vikramāditya is, however, recorded in Bilhana's Vikramāṅkadevacarita.² Bühler, the editor of the work, identifies this Vikramāditya with Tribhuvanamalla of Kalyāṇa. He agrees that the reference to the defeat of the rulers of Kāmarūpa and Gauḍa is strange, but suggests that 'he made with his cavalry a raid into their territories.'³ P. Bhattacharya takes the King to be Karnāteṇḍu Vikramāditya and further adds that the invasion took place either during the reign of Indrapāla or Harṣapāla, but this did not result in the loss of any Kāmarūpa territory.⁴ K. L. Barua believes that Harṣapala became involved in a war with Bilhana's Vikramāditya Chālukya VI.⁵ Ray places the invasion during Ratnapāla's reign,⁶ which is chronologically impossible. Tripathi surmises that 'Ratnapala of Kāmarūpa, however, beat back the Chālukya army, which then returned by way of Southern Kosāla.'⁷ If the invader of Kāmarūpa was Vikramāditya

¹K. L. Barua, I. C., IV, pp. 263-64.

²Chap. III, śloka. 74.

³Intro. to the Vikramāṅkadevacarita, pp. 23, 31.

⁴K. S. (Intro), p. 38.

⁵E. H. K., p. 142.

⁶D. H. N. I., I, pp. 250f.

⁷History of Ancient India, p. 422.

Chālukya VI (1076-1126), the invasion can hardly be placed during Ratnapāla's reign. Even Vikramāditya's predecessor Somesvara I, who reigned from A.D. 1041 to 1069, could not have been the contemporary of Ratnapāla, even granting that Ratnapāla reigned between 1010 - 1050; because the Bargāon grant referring to the foreign powers was recorded in the 25th year of his reign, in which case it was issued about A.D. 1035. These writers are under the impression that the Chālukya King, mentioned in the Bargāon grant was the same as Bilhana's Vikramāditya. Moreover, while that Deccan King in the grant is said to have been defeated by Ratnapāla, Vikramāditya of Bilhana is given the credit of the defeat of the Kāmarūpa King. If there is any historical basis for the reference in the work, Vikramāditya was no other than the Chālukya Vikramāditya VI of Kalyāna, whose contemporary King in Kāmarūpa was neither Ratnapāla nor Indrapāla but probably Harṣapāla, who may be placed between A.D. 1080 and 1095.¹

There is really no good reason to believe that the contemporary powers mentioned in the Bargāon grant, actually invaded the Kingdom, or that Ratnapāla, coming into hostile conflict with them, made them turn back. While the reference has an echo of the existence of such powers, the poetic description of the capital refers only to the impregnability

¹See below pp - 394-95

of the fortified palace of Durjayā.¹ It was wise on Ratnapāla's part to take necessary precautions and provide for an invincible fortress in case of attack. The references to his warlike activities in other epigraphs probably refer to the suppression of hostile chiefs within Kāmarūpa proper or in North Bengal, which was probably brought under Kāmarūpa at the time. The political supremacy of the monarch is also attested by the fact that in his grants, he assumed the high sounding epithet of 'Parameśvara - Paramabhaṭṭāraka - Mahārājādhirāja.' The decline of the Pāla rule in Gauḍa after Mahīpāla I,² gave an opportunity for the extension of the influence of the Kingdom, at least in North Bengal.

Purandarapāla: Epigraphy seems to support the view that Ratnapāla's son did not reign. This is clear from the Guākuchi grant of Indrapāla, which states that his father having gone to heaven, his (Ratnapāla's) grandson, Indrapāla became King.³ This is confirmed by the Khonāmukhi grant of Dharmapāla, which records thus: 'Of him (Ratnapāla) was born a son named Purandarapāla, he, the only abode of splendour and performer of pious deeds, who was united with his ancestors while a prince, owing to the irony of fate, leaving behind Indrapāla - born of him.'⁴ Hoernle is, therefore,

¹K.S. (Intro), p.25.

²Majumdar, History of Bengal, I, pp.136f.

³v.17.

⁴v.6; also Subhankarapāṭaka grant, V.6.

right in suggesting that Purandarapāla died during the lifetime of Ratnapāla, who was succeeded by his grandson Indrapāla.¹

It is evident, however, from other grants that Purandarapāla was connected with the administration of the Kingdom, perhaps helping his father, or established as a ruler of some province by Ratnapāla. This is confirmed by the Gauhāti grant of Indrapāla. 'His (Ratnapāla's) son was Purandarapāla, a ruler of wide renown, liberal, jovial, pious and accomplished in all arts, a hero as well as a poet (sūrasca sukavisca) - who being passionately fond of the chase gave more than once extraordinary proof of it by the way in which he captured hostile Kings like tigers.'²

That he was probably a ruler over the extreme north-eastern region of Assam, near modern Sadiyā, seems to be indicated by his marriage of a princess from that region. The Gauhāti grant states that he married Durlabhā who was 'descended from the royal races of the extreme Kingdoms, conquered by the victorious arms of Jamadagni's son (Parasurāma) (Jāmadagnyabhūja - vikramārjita - prājya - rājya - nrpa - vaṃśa - sambhavā)³ The reference is to the ancient Kuṇḍīna of Bhīṣmaka as given in Viṣṇu Purāṇa⁴ and the existence of which is shown by the ruins of forts and temples.⁵

¹J.A.S.B. LXVI, I, pp.106-120

²VV 11-12; Guākuchi grant, VV 11-12.

³V.13; Guākuchi grant, V.13.

⁴Bk. V, chap. XXVI; K.S. pp.130f.

⁵Hannay, J.A.S.B., XVII, I, pp.459f.

The reference is significant in that it shows that Ratnapāla's Kingdom may have touched the north eastern frontiers of modern Assam. Purandarapāla, by a marriage alliance, may have got possession of the Kingdom of Kundīna during the life time of his father, over which he ruled as a prince. The region was inhabited by Tibeto-Burmans and in the midst of them a Hindu Kingdom or province was established. Both literature and archaeology seem to support the view that a colony of Alpines or Aryans settled near about Sadiyā,¹ which helped a great deal in the intermixture of Hindu and non-Hindu elements from early times.

Indrapāla: As Purandarapāla did not reign as King, his son Indrapāla directly succeeded Ratnapāla. His Gauhāti grant was issued in the 8th² and the Guākuchi grant in the 21st year of his reign.³ P. Bhattacharya places him towards the middle of the 11th century A.D.⁴ Hoernle ascribes the first grant to about A.D. 1050;⁵ so it is possible that Indrapāla reigned between A.D. 1040 - 1065. He was probably the contemporary of the Gauda ruler Vigrahapāla III, who is placed between A.D. 1041 and 1076.⁶

¹ See Chap. III, pp - 162f

² J.A.S.B., LXVI, I, pp. 116-120; K.S., pp. 116-129.

³ K.S. pp. 130-135.

⁴ K.S. pp. 116-129.

⁵ J.A.S.B., LXVI, I, pp. 116-120.

⁶ R.C. Majumdar, J.P.A.S.B., (N.S) 1921, pp. 1-6; R.D. Banerji, J.B.O.R.S. 1928, pp. 489-538; D.C. Bhattacharya, I.A., 1920 pp. 189-93; I.H.Q., III, pp 571-591.

The grants of the family speak highly of this ruler. His Gauhāti grant states that he 'kept control over himself and was foremost among the just and righteous, who vanquished all his enemies and who, like the light of the east (the sun), illumined the whole terrestrial globe: before whom, when he sat on the throne, the mosaic floor of his audience hall looked like a fruit covered tree' as the jewels fell 'from the crowns of the princes as they voluntarily stood, reverently bowing before him with joined hands; who dived into and passed across the deep and broad streams of all knowledge - During the righteous and virtuous reign of this King, the earth was heavy and greatly flourishing and became the cow that yields all desires to men, as in the time of Prthu.'¹ He 'properly ruled the earth for a long time, vanquished the enemy by dint of his might,' performed many sacrifices pleasing to Indra, 'and to the damsels he was like Kāmadeva.'²

Indrapāla was responsible both for the proper organisation of the state machinery and the augmentation of the prosperity of all. His capital Durjayā is described in the same poetic style as it was under Ratnapāla. He 'had a residence of corresponding virtues, a town full of elephants, horses and jewels, and impregnable to the attacks of any

¹VV 15-16.

²Khonāmakhi grant, V 7; also Śubhaṅkarapāṭaka grant, v.7.

royal dynasty, when it was named Śrī Durjayā.¹ As we have stated, it formed only a part of the old city of Prāggyotiṣa. 'There is nothing,' as Hoernle rightly remarks, 'in the land grants to show that Prāggyotiṣa had ceased to be the capital of the country in the time of either Balavarman or Indrapāla - At the same time it would seem that Indrapāla ordinarily resided in the townlet (nāgarī) Śrī Durjayā which was a strong fort, while according to Nowgong grant Balavarman appears to have ordinarily resided in Hāruppeśvara which is described as his paitāmahakataka or an ancestral camp.'² This disposes the theory of Bhattacharya, K.L.Barua and others of the establishment of different permanent capitals in different places by the families of Śālastambha and Brahmapāla.

In his grants, the King assumes the high sounding epithet of Paramesvara - Paramabhattāraka - Mahārājādhirāja.' By his Gauhāti grant land was donated in the village of Bhaviṣā in Kāsīpāṭaka in the viṣaya of Hāpyoma. The exact location of the land is doubtful. By his Guākuchi grant land was granted in the Paṇḍarībhūmi in Mandi Viṣaya to a Brāhmaṇa hailing from Sāvathi, identified with Srāvasti in Bengal; with the exception of Sāvathi all these place names are Bodo in origin.³ It was the systematic policy of the Kāmarūpa rulers to create Brāhmaṇa agrahāras in the midst of

¹Gauhāti grant, V.19.

²J.A.S.B., LXVI, I, pp.120f.

³B.K.Kākṛtyi, App. to Cultural History of Assam, I, pp.205-206.

non-Aryan people, which served both political, and cultural purposes. Indrapāla's assumption of imperial titles and the submission and attendance of rājās in his court doubtless indicate the political influence of Kāmarūpa over the neighbouring lands. There is no good ground for assuming that any portion of the Kingdom was lost either in the east or in the west in North Bengal. The hold of Kāmarūpa in Bengal is proved by the land grant in Paṇḍarī which can be identified with Puṇḍravardhana.¹ This extension of the frontiers may probably account for the invasion of Jātavarman during the reign of his son Gopāla, a weaker King to all appearance. It is baseless to assume, as done by Gait,² that Vijayasena, who cannot be placed earlier than A.D.1119, defeated Indrapāla. No loss of territory in Puṇḍravardhana is suggested by any evidence, and Vighrahapāla seems to have been a weak Gauḍa ruler, incapable of wresting any land from his eastern neighbour. With a well organised administrative machinery, political conquests, and a righteous rule, Indrapāla justified his name Indra.

Gopāla: Some writers doubt whether Indrapāla was succeeded by Gopāla. Ray holds that 'it is impossible to decide whether Gopāla, if he really belonged to the line of Brahmapāla, was an immediate successor of Indrapala.'³ The same view is held

¹K.S., pp.130-45; K.L.Barua, J.A.R.S. V, pp.112-115.

²History of Assam, p.32.

³D.H.N.I., I, p.255.

by Vasu.¹ But it is evident from the grants of Dharmapāla that Gopāla was the son and successor of Indrapāla: 'Of him (Indrapāla) Gopāla was the son, who was matchless in might and a light of the royal family; he was meritorious, munificent, learned and accomplished with politeness.'²

In view of his comparatively uneventful career, it may be presumed that Gopāla had a brief reign, and he may, therefore, be placed between A.D. 1065 - 1080. The Puṣpabhadra grant describes him as possessing many virtues, and as one who had the knowledge of nītidharma, and whose power like fire burnt the Kingdoms of his enemies.³ In spite of these references, it appears probable that Gopāla was a weak ruler and could not give proper attention to the defence of the Kingdom in the west. It is, therefore, likely that, as indicated by the Belāva grant of Bhojavarman,⁴ to which we have already made a reference, Jātavarman snatched away a portion of the Kingdom in Puṇḍravardhana; because by this grant land was donated in that region. The statement in the grant referring to Jātavarman's 'conquering the fortunes of Kāmarūpa,' may only be explained in that light. P.L. Paul is perhaps right in suggesting that Jātavarman came into conflict with either Gōpala or Harṣapala,⁵ we believe with

¹Social History of Kāmarūpa, II, p.169.

²Khonāmukhi grant, V.8; Subhāṅkarapāṭaka grant, V.8.

³V.4.

⁴N.G. Majumdar, Inscriptions of Bengal, III, p.17; also above, 376-77

⁵I.C., VI, pp.53-59.

the former, for the reasons stated above, and as Gopāla according to chronology, was the contemporary of Jātavarman.¹ The result was the loss of an important portion of the Kingdom in Puṇḍravardhana.

Harsapāla: Gopāla was succeeded by his son Harsapāla, whose pleasant character is the subject of more than one reference in prasastis. He 'was a source of pleasure and praised by the wise. Being good natured (harsapāla) Sarasvatī enjoyed the nectar of pleasure caused by the long sustained friendship with Lakṣmī.'² This indicates the prince's learning and prosperity in an equal degree. That he was a man of learning is also proved by another source. The Kavīndra-vacana-samuccaya credits him with the composition of a few verses.³

On the basis of our system of chronology, Harsapāla may be placed between A.D. 1080 - 1095. Epigraphy refers to the defeat of his enemies in the battlefield. Even the 'rākṣasas were terrified,' the grant records, 'by the split frontal globes of the foreheads of the elephants belonging to the enemies, as these thirsty elephants drank in a short span of time the profuse hot blood mixed with froth, on all sides of the battlefield.'⁴ It is possible that after a short period

¹See above, pp - 377f

²Khonāmukhi grant, V.9; Śubhaṅkarapāṭaka grant, V.9.

³Ed. F.W.Thomas, pp 47-48.

⁴Khonāmukhi grant, V.10; Śubhaṅkarapāṭaka grant, V 10; Puṣpabhadra grant, V.5.

when the power of Kāmarūpa declined in Bengal, Harṣapāla tried to regain the possessions in Pundravardhana, shortly after Jātavarman's invasion. This was probably before Rāmapāla's rise to power in Gauḍa after the weak rule of Mahīpāla II and Sūrapāla II, who ruled for a short period of four or five years or even less in the eighties of the 11th century A.D.¹ At this time may have occurred the invasion of the Chālukya Vikramāditya VI (1076-1126) or Bilhana's Vikramāditya, who is said to have overrun Magadha, Ariga, Gauḍa and Kāmarūpa.² If there is any historical basis for the far flung exploits attributed to the conqueror they could only have taken place when the Pālas were weak and it is possible that Harṣapāla may have been involved in war with him,³ somewhere in North Bengal or in the frontier of Kāmarūpa in the west; but it is unlikely that the raid resulted in the occupation of any land either in Gauḍa or in Kāmarūpa.⁴ The story of so many Vikramādityas in ancient Indian history, almost all of them associated with Kāmarūpa in their exploits, which reached from one end of India to the other, may only be explained in terms of the ideal 'digvijayin,' having little historical reality or sometimes

¹See R.C.Majumdar, J.P.A.S.B. (N.S) 1921, pp.1-6; D.C.Bhattacharya, I.A., 1920, pp 189-93; I.H.Q., III, pp 571-91.

²Vikramānkadevacarita, Chap. III, śloka, 74.

³K.S. (Intro) p.38; K.L.Barua, E.H.K, p.142.

⁴Bühler, Intro to Vikramānkadevacarita, pp 23, 31.

none at all. But the fact remains that during the time of Gopāla and Harṣapāla, Kāmarūpa underwent a diminution of her territory in the west, which as we shall see, was shortly re~~ac~~quired by their successor.

Dharmapāla: With Dharmapāla's accession the Kingdom again regained her lost prestige. Being peaceful at home and warlike abroad, Dharmapāla not only established a reign of virtue within the Kingdom but also extended the bounds of Kāmarūpa by conquering the lost possessions in North Bengal, and probably towards the sea in the southwest of the Kingdom. This is shown by his own grants. He 'was the lord of the earth girdled by the ocean (ambudhi - mekhalayā) - In the battlefield, decorated with flowerlike pearls, struck off from the heads of elephants, killed by the blows of the sword, that King alone remained victorious - Who alone made this earth to be governed by one King, and who is the only shelter of the refugees, whose fame is well-known throughout the world, and who is the vanquisher of enemy heroes.'¹

In view of his eventful reign, Dharmapāla may be placed between A.D. 1095 - 1120.² He was probably the contemporary of the Gauḍa ruler Rāmapāla, the period of whose reign is,

¹Khonāmukhi grant, VV 12-14; Śubhaṅkarapāṭaka grant, VV 12-14.

²P. Bhattacharya (K.S. pp 149-50) places him in the early part of the 12th century A.D.

however, a matter of great dispute. While some writers ascribe him to A.D. 1057 - 1102,¹ others place him between 1069 - 1111 or 1078 - 1120,² and 1077 - 1119.³ The most reasonable date for Rāmapāla appears to be the last quarter of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th century A.D.⁴

Dharmapāla's conquest in Bengal, as we shall show presently, was achieved just after his accession. His Khonāmukhi grant was issued in the first year of his reign, or about A.D. 1095-96. The land was donated in the hamlet of Meru adjoining Dighalaṇḍi in the viṣaya of Pūraji. This indicates the supremacy of the King over the region, inhabited mostly by tribal people. The names of the village and the viṣaya also appear to be Austric and Boḍo in origin.⁵ The Subhāṅkarapāṭaka grant was issued in the second year of his reign about A.D. 1096-97, and the land was donated in Kañjiā within Diḷḷinā viṣaya. These names are also of Austric origin,⁶ suggesting that during the time of the grant these places were inhabited by non-Aryans, among whom agrahāra villages were created for Brāhmaṇas. As the land

¹Banerji, M.A.S.B, V, pp.43-113; J.B.O.R.S. 1928, pp.489-538.

²D.C.Bhattacharya, I.A., 1920, pp.189-93, I.H.Q. III, pp.571-91.

³Majumdar, J.P.A.S.B. (N.S) 1921, pp.1-6.

⁴Smith places Rāmapāla during the 12th century A.D. (E.H.I. pp.366f).

⁵B.K.Kākatī, App. to Cultural History of Assam, I, p.207.

⁶Ibid, p.206.

was donated in the Digjinā viṣaya, identified with modern Dinājpur in North Bengal,¹ and to a Brāhmaṇa of Krosañja² in Śrāvasti, it appears that both Digjinā and Śrāvasti lay within Kāmarūpa, at a time when Rāmapāla of Gauḍa had not yet launched his career of conquests. Śāvathi of the Guākuchi grant of Indrapāla and Krosañja of the Subhāṅkamapātaka grant have been located in Puṇḍravārdhana and Dinājpur in Bengal.³ Śrāvasti also finds mention in the inscription of the Brāhmaṇa Prahāsa, wherein Jayapāla of Kāmarūpa is said to have offered him a tulāpuruṣa a gift of 900 gold coins.⁴ This Brāhmaṇa was from Bālagrāma in Puṇḍra, and he was also associated with a place called Tarkkāri in Śrāvasti, which is located by N.G.Majumdar in Madhyadeśa.⁵ In the opinion of J.C.Ghosh, Tarkkāri-Śrāvasti was not in Madhyadeśa but in Puṇḍra.⁶ Basak locates Bālagrama, Tarkkāri and Śrāvasti in Bengal or Gauḍa.⁷ P.Bhattacharya contends that Śrāvasti was in Kāmarūpa. He disputes Basak's location of the place in Gauḍa. It appears, he adds, that Prahāsa went to Bālagrama in Puṇḍra from Tarkkāri in Śrāvasti. It

¹P.Bhattacharya, J.A.R.S., II, pp.82-84.

²This place is also of Austric Origin (Kākāfi, App. to Cultural History of Assam. I, pp.206-7).

³J.A.R.S., II, pp.82-84.

⁴E.I. XIII, p.289.

⁵I.A. XLVIII, pp.209-31.

⁶I.A., LX, pp 14-18.

⁷E.I., XIII, pp.289-95.

is true, he admits, that Śrāvasti lay near the western part of Kāmarūpa to the east of Puṇḍra; Dijjinā viṣaya, in which Subhānkara lay, was also to the western side of Kāmarūpa, and Śilimpur where the grant was found also lay to the west of the Karatoyā.¹

Whatever the exact location of Śrāvasti, it is evident that it lay in North Bengal or within Puṇḍravardhana and the Dijjinā viṣaya was in modern Dinājpur. It appears, therefore, that both Dijjinā and Śrāvasti lay in the neighbourhood of Chandrapurī viṣaya near Dinājpur, where Bhūti-varman donated lands.² Vanamāla donated lands almost in the same area to the west of the Teestā-Karatoyā.³ The Kāmarūpa rulers cast covetous eyes upon the whole of Puṇḍravardhana, and they were responsible for the creation of agrahāras in that region for the spread of Brāhmanical culture. The evidence supports the view that after the temporary loss of Puṇḍravardhana during the time of Gopāla-Harṣapāla, Dharmapāla just after his accession, acquired the region, possibly from the hands of some minor chief in North Bengal or from Rāmapāla himself, and granted lands as a mark of his victory. The conquest of the regions 'girdled by the ocean', may point to the spread of Dharmapāla's influence towards the southeast of Bengal adjoining the sea. The

¹K.S. pp.164f.

²Section 2, pp - 239f

³Section 3 pp - 361f

successors of Jātavarman prior to the rise of Bhojavarman in East Bengal were weak rulers,¹ and it is probable that Dharmapāla established his supremacy over them to push the frontiers of Kāmarūpa towards the sea. Bhojavarman may have come into prominence during the second quarter of the 12th century A.D.² and it was about that time that he donated lands in Puṇḍravardhana, as proved by his Belāva grant.³ Therefore, the hold of Kāmarūpa over this region probably continued until the time of the successor of Dharmapāla. In any case, Dharmapāla succeeded in pushing back the boundary of Kāmarūpa again to the west of Karatoyā and there is nothing to show, as Bhattacharya believes, that Dharmapāla was troubled by his enemies or became anxious about an impending invasion.⁴

While, in his early grants, Dharmapāla was ruling from Prāggyotiṣapura, in the Puṣpabhadra grant, issued towards the end of his reign, he is said to have ruled from Kāmarūpanagara,⁵ though in the seal occurs the epithet, 'Prāggyotiṣādhipati,' referring perhaps to the Kingdom. There is a controversy about the location of Kāmarūpanagara. Vasu places it in Rangpur and holds that the change of the capital

¹See Majumdar, History of Bengal, I, pp.197-204.

²Ibid.

³E.I., XII, pp 37-44.

⁴K.S., p.164.

⁵V.20.

was due to two causes: the Shān and other non-Aryan tribes became powerful in the east and threatened Prāgjyotiṣa, while in the west Gauḍa was subjected to repeated invasions, so that the rulers of Kāmarūpa were compelled to shift the capital to the west in order to defend their Kingdom from the attack of the invaders.¹ But the Shāns invaded Assam only in the beginning of the 13th century A.D. What is more improbable, Vasu, basing his statement on a tradition of Rangpur, asserts that Dharmapāla was defeated by one Mayanamati on the bank of the Teestā.² The capital, as we shall show, was not shifted to Kamatā from Prāgjyotiṣa or its neighbourhood before the middle of the 13th century A.D. The donation of lands in Śrāvasti, or the liberality shown by Dharmapāla and his successor to the people living there, scarcely proves the change of the capital to a Kāmarūpanagara somewhere in North Bengal, in close proximity of Śrāvasti, as asserted by Bhattacharya.³ The same writer opines that the capital might have been changed from Durjayā to Kāmarūpanagara even before Dharmapāla; for otherwise, he holds, the name Durjayā and the Lauhitya would have been mentioned in Dharmapāla's Śubhānkarapāṭaka grant. Though his Kingdom extended to the Karatoyā, the capital had to be shifted from the region of the Brahmaputra in order to cope

¹Social History of Kāmarūpa, II, 174.

²Ibid, pp.173-74.

³J.A.R.S., II, pp.82-84.

with the invasion of powerful enemies from Bengal. Bhattacharya, therefore, identifies the capital with Kamatā. Speaking of the ruins of Kamatāpura,¹ as described by Buchanan Hamilton, Bhattacharya holds that a temple of Kāmākhyā was established by Indrapāla in Kamatā.² But there is no basis for such an assumption. It is, however, true that the Muslim writers speak of Kāmarūpa and Kamatā sometimes as synonymous and sometimes as two Kingdoms.³ It is also true that they called Kāmarūpa, Kāmru and used this name as synonymous with Kamatā.⁴ Even in the Chinese records Kāmarūpa is called Kamolu.⁵ In the Dharmāṅgala of Ghanarāma, Kāmarūpa is also called Kaṅgur, which may be an abbreviation of Kamatāpur. But Kāmarūpa or Kāmru, a region, cannot be identified with Kāmarūpanagara, a city. When Minhāj wrote his *Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri*, Kamatā or Kamatāpura was not known, but Kāmarūpa was known as Kāmruḍ, and its ruler as 'rae of Kāmruḍ.'⁶ The author of *Riyāz* and the later Muslim historians mention Kāmru and Kamatā together, because the seat of government was then at Kamatā or Kamatāpura. That the capital lay in the neighbourhood of Gauhāti, is proved by the Muslim invasions. Bakhtiyar in A.D.1205-6

¹also Hunter, *Statistical Account of Koch Bihar*, pp.368-69.

²K.S. (Intro), pp.28-32.

³Gait *History of Assam*, pp.42-43.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Watters, II, pp.185f.

⁶Raverty, I, pp 560f.

came up to Gauhāti and the event is recorded not only in the Tobaqāt-i-Nāsiri¹ but also in a Rock Inscription at North Gauhāti.² The subsequent invasions of Iwaz in A.D. 1226 and Tughril Khan Malik Uzbek of A.D. 1255 probably also reached Gauhāti, since their coins have been found there.³ This seems to indicate that even during the middle of the 13th century A.D., the capital of the Kingdom was near Gauhāti, not to speak of a century earlier. The ruins of Rangpur or Kamatā, ascribed to one Dharmapāla of traditions,⁴ can hardly be identified with those of Kāmarūpanagara of Dharmapāla of the Puṣpabhadrā grant. Therefore the city of Kāmruḍ of the Muslim writers, to which the invaders advanced, can reasonably be identified with a place in North Gauhāti, just opposite Prāggyotisapura or Gauhāti. The extensive ruins of fortifications, temples and roads, which may be ascribed to a period not later than A.D. 1100-1200, may have been the relics of a Pāla capital there during Dharmapāla's reign. This is ⁱⁿ consonance with a tradition that a King of the name of Dharmapāla had a seat of government there. The eastern portion of North Gauhati is still known as Rājduār (royal palace), indicating that the King's palace was there.⁵ The findspot of the Puṣpabhadrā grant is

¹Ibid.

²K.S. (Intro), p.44.

³J.P.A.S.B. (N.S) VI, pp.621-22.

⁴J.A.S.B., 1893, p.273.

⁵E.H.K., p.147.

Rajmāhal, near the capital. It is, therefore, evident that Kāmarūpanagara was at North Gauhāti, which remained the capital until the later part of the 13th century A.D., after which, with the foundation of a new dynasty it was shifted to Kamañā¹. It is also certain that the old city of Prāgjyotiṣa was not abandoned. Kāmarūpanagara of the grant was but an extension of the old capital to the northern bank of the Brahmaputra, and Dharmapāla and his successors remained as the lords of Prāgjyotiṣa².

After the consolidation of his conquests, Dharmapāla strove hard for the spread of religion and learning. As indicated by his Puṣpabhadra grant³, he became a propagator of the Vajrayāna, and he was not only a patron of religion but also a poet. The first eight verses of the said grant were written by him, who was 'the sun of the Pāla family, the crown jewel of poets, the abode of all arts, the possessor of all virtues, pure and virtuous'⁴. The Sadukti Karnāmṛta of Śrīdharadāsa contains ten verses, attributed to Dharmapāla⁵. The patronage of and the liberality shown towards the Brāhmaṇas are attested by his grants. With a well-furnished treasury, a systematic administrative machinery, and

¹ Ibid.

² The identification of Kāmarūpanagara with modern Kāmpur in Nowgong by North, (Background of Assamese Culture, pp.46-47) is impossible.

³ V 7.

⁴ Puṣpabhadra grant, V 8.

⁵ Ed. Rānavatāra Śarmā (Punjab Oriental Series XV, (No.162), 1933, (Intro), p.63.

a vigorous foreign policy, he extended the bounds of Kāmarūpa and restored peace and order, and thus proved himself one of the last great rulers of Kāmarūpa. He really justified his claim as the protector of dharma, artha and Kāma: (dharma-paro¹-pi-Kāmārthañca-pālayatīyah).

Jayapāla: The genealogy of the Pāla rulers, as given in the grants, ends with Dharmapāla, whose successor is, therefore, unknown. Vasu, on the basis of a Rangpur tradition, asserts that Dharmapāla was succeeded by his son, Bhavachandra, and the sovereignty of the family slipped away from the time of this king and his minister Gavachandra². But there is nothing to prove that Dharmapāla had such a son. This Dharmapāla of traditions and his reputed son may in fact have belonged to entirely different lines.

A Kāmarūpa nrpati of the name of Jayapāla is, however, mentioned in a Śilimpur stone slab inscription, the object of which was to record the erection of a temple wherein a Brāhmaṇa named Prahāsa built an image of Amaranātha. The inscription was found in the Śilimpur mouzā of Kethāl thānā of the district of Bogra. It mentions a tulāpuruṣa gift, made to that Brāhmaṇa by Jayapāla. 'Though excessively solicited', the epigraph records, 'he (Prahāsa) did not by any means accept nine hundred gold coins and a sāsana, (a grant of land)

¹Subhankarapāṭaka grant, V 12.

²Social History of Kāmarūpa, II, pp.174-75.

yielding an income of a thousand (coins) from Jayapāladeva, the king of Kāmarūpa of unimaginable glory while (the latter was) making a tulāpuruṣa gift¹. In spite of this explicit reference, the identification of Jayapāla as the ruler of Kāmarūpa is disputed. D.N.Mukherjee's identification of this prince with Jayapāla, the cousin of Devapāla of Gauḍa² is chronologically impossible, as Jayapāla of Gauḍa flourished during the 9th century A.D. and the script of the inscription is much later³. The name also occurs in the Chhāndoga Parāśiṣṭa Prakāśa, where a Jayapāla is said to have made the donation of a 'Mahāsrāddha' to Umāpati, the chief of paṇḍitas⁴. This Umāpati lived in the early part of the 12th century A.D. during the time of Vijayasena. H.P.Śāstrī in his introduction to Rāmacarita makes mention of this Jayapāla, whom he identifies with the cousin of Devapāla⁵; this again is chronologically impossible, for, as we have shown, Devapāla could not have flourished later than the 9th century A.D. R.D.Banerji holds the same view⁶. There is no mention of Jayapāla either as a ruler of Gauḍa, or as a cousin of Devapāla. Basak, the editor of the Silimpur epigraph, identifies Jayapāla of the inscription and Jayapāla of the work as a king of Kāmarūpa⁷. This is chronologically feasible. P.Bhattacharya

¹E.I. XIII, pp.289-95(V.22).

²I.C. V., pp.367-74.

³See Section 3 p.53

⁴J.Eggeling, Cat.of Sans. MS.in the India Office, Vol.I, p.925; E.I.XIII, p.289.

⁵M.A.S.B.III, p.8.

⁶M.A.S.B., V, p.58.

⁷E.I. XIII, pp.289-95.

holds the same view, and makes Jayapāla either the son or the grandson of Dharmapāla¹. It is, therefore, almost certain that Jayapāla of the epigraph was the same person as Jayapāla of the verse, and no other than the Kāmarūpa nrpati. H.C.Ray rightly points out that Jayapāla of the inscription cannot be identified with the cousin of Devapāla. In view of the proximity of the findspot of the epigraph to the frontier of Kāmarūpa and the similarity of its characters to those of the Pālas of Kāmarūpa, it will be reasonable, Ray holds, to take Jayapāla as belonging to that line². If the chronicles of Assam are to be relied upon, he may be identified with Rāmacandra³.

The next important question to be decided is Jayapāla's position in the Pāla group of princes. Basak⁴ places him without sufficient reason somewhere after Indrapāla. Ray is not certain whether Jayapāla should come before or after the Gopāla - Dharmapāla group⁵. But the genealogy of the Pāla line as given in the grants shows that he has no place, at least in direct succession, before Dharmapāla. The existing sources also do not support the view that he belonged to a collateral family of the Pālas. The fact that he is mentioned as a Kāmarūpa nrpati seems to prove that he was not a

¹K.S. pp.24(f.n.5), 36-37; also I.A., XV, pp.304-10; J.A.R.S.,

²D.H.N.I., I, p.255.

III, pp.21-22.

³Section I, p.202

⁴E.I., XIII, pp.289f.

⁵D.H.N.I., I, p.256.

feudatory rājā, but must have ruled from the central city of Prāgjyotiṣa. If Jayapāla's identification with Rāmacandra of the Assamese chronicles may be accepted, it appears almost certain that he was the successor of Dharmapāla and most likely his son. His date of accession may, therefore, be placed about A.D.1120.

The location of the land grant to Prahāsa in Śrāvastī in Pūndravardhana, to which we have already referred¹, proves that Jayapāla's sway reached North Bengal. It was not a new conquest, but one which had been made by Dharmapāla about two decades earlier. This epigraph proves that from about A.D. 1096-97 until the accession of Jayapāla or sometime later than A.D.1020, Pūndravardhana remained under Kāmarūpa.

The extension of the frontiers of Kāmarūpa to North Bengal, and the frequent bid for supremacy by her rulers since the decline of Guptas, resulted from the time of Śasāṅka in a traditional rivalry between Gauda and Kāmarūpa. So long as there were strong rulers in Kāmarūpa, Gauda rulers could not push back the western boundary of the former from Bengal. The minor chiefs, who occasionally became prominent either in North or East Bengal, had to give way after a short period to any conqueror. But now Gauda was in the ascendant under Rāmapāla, and the time had come when Kāmarūpa had to bear the full weight of the Gauda army. This perhaps accounts for the

¹See above, pp. 398f

invasion of Mayana, the general of Rāmapāla, as described in the Rāmacarita of Sandhyākaranandī. Though the text refers to the conquest of Kāmarūpa by Mayana¹, Majumdar thinks that Kāmarūpa was conquered not by Mayana, which he takes to be a misreading, but either by Jayapāla or Tiṅgyadeva during the reign of Dharmapāla of Kāmarūpa². But it is distinctly stated that the invader was Mayana; we shall show that the contemporary king of Kāmarūpa was Jayapāla himself. R.D.Banerji holds that Mayana conquered Kāmarūpa in about A.D.1095 and that Rāmapāla was succeeded by Kumārapāla in A.D.1097³. But only his own system of chronology makes Kumārapāla ascend the throne about that date. Vasu contends that during the weak reign of Bhavachaudra, son of Dharmapāla, the entire land from Kamatā to Kāmarūpa was lost, and this region was conquered by Rāmapāla⁴. But the reliability of the tradition on which his surmise is based is yet to be proved. P.Bhattacharya asserts that the invasion took place about A.D.1094-95 during Dharmapāla's reign, and this resulted in the occupation of only the south-western portion of Kāmarūpa, over which Tiṅgyadeva and Vaidyadeva ruled one after another, while Dharmapāla was ruling over the eastern part. Vaidyadeva, according to Bhattacharya, was the contemporary of Dharmapāla.

¹M.A.S.B., V, pp.92f; H.P.Sāstrī, M.A.S.B., III, pp.1-57.

²History of Bengal, I, pp.160-61.

³M.A.S.B., V, pp.92f.

⁴Social History of Kāmarūpa, II, p.215.

Bhattacharya, therefore, contends that there was a division of the kingdom after Mayana's conquest, the vassals of Gauda ruling over the western part and Dharmapāla and his successor ruling over the eastern¹. This theory has been contradicted by Bhattacharya himself by the fact that he has dated the Śubhāṅkarapātaka grant, by which lands were donated by Dharmapāla in Śrāvasti in Pundra in A.D.1095². The grants of Dharmapāla do not give us any ground for suspicion that any portion of Kāmarūpa was lost in the west until after the accession of Jayapāla in about A.D.1120.

We have examined the date of Ramapāla, who may reasonably be placed between A.D.1085-1130³. Jayapala made his offer to Prahāsa in Śrāvasti between A.D.1120-25, and the overthrow of this prince may be placed towards the end of the reign of Rāmapāla about A.D.1125-1130. It is rightly pointed out by Bhattacharya on the basis of the Chhāndoga Parisiṣṭa Prakāśa that Umāpati and Jayapāla flourished even during the second quarter of the 12th century A.D.⁴, but perhaps not later than A.D.1138. This last date of Jayapāla is confirmed by the Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva (A.D.1142), issued by him in the fourth year of his reign, i.e. in about A.D.1138⁵. By this grant Vaidyadeva claims to have donated lands in Prāggyotiṣa⁶

¹K.S.(Intro), pp.39f, 145.

²Ibid, (Intro), p.41 (f.n.4).

³See above, pp.396-97; Raychaudhuri (Studies in Indian Antiquities, pp.157-58) places him towards the end of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th century A.D.

⁴J.A.R.S, III, pp.21-22.

⁵A.Venis, E.I.,II, pp.347-58.

⁶Ibid.

indicating that in about 1138 he was the ruler of Kāmarūpa. The grant proves that Vaidyadeva was established by Kumārapāla, when the former suppressed the rebellion of Tiṅgyadeva, who was placed as a vassal of Rāmapāla over the western portion of Kāmarūpa in North Bengal. Tiṅgyadeva was the contemporary of Rāmapāla, as was Vaidyadeva of Kumārapāla, who had a very short reign. Kumārapāla is dated differently by different writers. Banerji places him between A.D.1097-1103¹; Majumdar, 1120-25² and D.C.Bhattacharya between 1111-1115 or 1120-32³. The most likely date appears to be A.D.1130-35 which was also the date of Tiṅgyadeva. Hence the invasion of Kāmarūpa during the reign of Jayapāla may reasonably be placed between A.D.1125-30. It is fantastic to place Vaidyadeva in A.D.1096 as done by D.C.Bhattacharya⁴. It is equally impossible to place the invasion of Mayana towards the end of the 11th century A.D., during Dharmapāla's reign, and evolve a theory of the division of Kāmarūpa at this time, as done by P.Bhattacharya. He himself has placed the reign of Dharmapāla during the first part of the 12th century A.D.⁵ The donee of the Śubhāṅkarapātaka grant, as we have noted, hailed from Śrāvasti in Puṇḍra and the land

¹J.B.O.R.S., 1928, pp.489-538; M.A.S.B., V, pp.43-113; Bāṅglāra Itihāsa, I, p.283.

²J.P.A.S.B. 1921 (N.S.), pp.1-6.

³I.A. 1920, pp.189-93; I.H.Q. III pp.571-91.

⁴I.A., 1920, pp.189-93; I.H.Q. pp.571-91.

⁵K.S., pp.149-50.

was donated in Dijjinā (Dinājpur); Bhattacharya has admitted that Kāmarūpa at that time extended up to that region¹. If by the suggested date of that grant (A.D.1095) Dharmapāla was dispossessed of the western part of the kingdom, which contained Kāmarūpanagara, how are we to explain that the Puṣpabhadra grant of the end of his reign was issued from the same capital? So the theory of the division of the kingdom between Tiṅgyadeva-Vaidyadeva and Dharmapāla-Jayapāla is not supported by any genuine evidence. Bhattacharya's theory is probably based on the assumption that Dharmapāla had his capital at Kamatā in North Bengal; but we have shown that it was at North Gauhāti².

It is equally wrong to conjecture, as done by K.L.Barua³, that the whole of Kāmarūpa was conquered by Mayana from the hands of Jayapāla, and that Tiṅgyadeva was placed as a vassal in the central city of Kāmarūpanagara or Prāggyotiṣa. As we have noted, Mayana's invasion resulted only in the loss of Kāmarūpa possessions in Bengal, over which Tiṅgyadeva was placed as a vassal. It was Vaidyadeva who completed his conquests. His Kamauli grant records the grant of two villeges of Śāntipātaka and Mandarā, situated in the viṣaya of Bādā in Kāmarūpa maṇḍala, in the bhukti of Prāggyotiṣa: (Śrī-Prāggyotiṣa-bhuktau Kāmarūpa-maṇḍale Bādā-viṣaye)⁴. It is

¹K.S., p.167.

²See above, pp.403-4

³E.H.K., pp.147-48, 194.

⁴E.I., II, pp.347-58 (lines 48-49).

significant that Tiᅅgyadeva is not mentioned as a ruler of Kāmarūpa, but simply called a prince ruling over the region to the east of the Pāla dominion. As the record states, when Tiᅅgyadeva rebelled, Vaidyadeva was sent by Kumārapāla to suppress his revolt, and Vaidyadeva, with his brother Budhadeva's help, succeeded in killing Tiᅅgyadeva. Soon after this event Vaidyadeva declared his independence and, as proved by his grant, as early as A.D.1138 he assumed the imperial title of 'Mahārājādhirāja-Parameśvara-Paramabhaᅇᅇā-raka', indicating his independence of the Pālas both of Kāmarūpa and Gauᅇa. It is not known when Vaidyadeva conquered the rest of Kāmarūpa in the east, where Jayapāla was still ruling as an independent king. But Vaidya issued his grant from Harisakoᅇcī and made the donation of two villages in the heart of Kāmarūpa¹. It is suggested by Bhattacharya that it was as a result of his victory over Jayapāla that Vaidyadeva donated lands by A.D.1138². But this ought to have been mentioned in the grant. So in the absence of any reference to the conflict between Vaidyadeva and Jayapāla, it is safer to suggest that Jayapāla did not go to war with Vaidyadeva. In any case, the conquest of Kāmarūpa by Vaidyadeva was complete by A.D.1138 and, therefore, the last date of Jayapāla cannot be placed after that.

¹K.L.Barua's location of the villages in the present Barpetā subdivision, Kāmarūpa appears tenable (J.A.R.S.,II,p.87).

²J.A.R.S., III, pp.21-22.

To conclude, it was Jayapāla who was defeated by Mayana between A.D.1125-30 and as a result, the possessions of Kāmarūpa in Bengal were ceded to the Pālas of Gauda and over them Tiṅgyadeva was placed as a vassal; when he revolted, during Kumārapāla's reign, Vaidyadeva killed him and subsequently declared his independence. He then made fresh conquests in the eastern portion of Kāmarūpa and began to rule over the whole of the kingdom from A.D.1138, about which date the Pāla family of Kāmarūpa became extinct¹. If this sequence of events and the chronology be correct, Jayapāla ruled between A.D.1120-1138 as the contemporary of both Rāmapāla and Kumārapāla, and Tiṅgyadeva and Vaidyadeva. That Jayapāla was the last Pāla ruler is also indicated by our chronicles, according to which he was no other than Rām-acandra. Vaidyadeva established a new line, and was known as Ārimatta, who is credited by the chronicles with the erection of many fortifications, not only in modern Kāmarūpa, but also in Viśvanātha and Ratnapura in Mājuli in Upper Assam². This also proves that Vaidyadeva established himself as the ruler of the whole of Kāmarūpa after Jayapāla.

The next important question to be decided is the supposed connection between Kāmarūpa and the Senas of Bengal. The Deopārā epigraph of Vijayasena states that 'he (Vijayasena)

¹The contention of P.Bhattacharya, supported by K.L.Barua, that Jayapāla defeated Vaidyadeva in a war when the latter invaded Kāmarūpa and issued his grant and even pursued him to his own territory, is not at all probable. (J.A.R.S., III, pp.21-23

²See Section I, pp.202-3 (f.n.); J.A.R.S., I, (No.2)).
also A.Bhattacharya, J.A.R.S., III, pp.12f.

impetuously assailed the lord of Gauḍa, put down the prince of Kāmarūpa and defeated Kalīṅga¹. The next important mention is made by the Mādhāinagar grant of Lakṣmaṇasena, which states that 'the lord of Gauḍa, Lakṣmaṇasena, subdued Kāmarūpa²'. The question naturally arises as to who were the contemporary rulers of Kāmarūpa. This will depend on the date of the Sena rulers of Bengal. Kielhorn places the grant of Vijayasena towards the end of the 11th century A.D., and ascribing him to the beginning of the last quarter of the 11th century A.D., makes Lakṣmaṇa the founder of the era beginning with A.D.1119³; but in another place⁴, he gives for Vallālasena, the father of Lakṣmaṇa, A.D.1169. R.D.Banerji, editing the grant of Lakṣmaṇasena, holds that his date falls in 1119 when Lakṣmaṇa conquered Kāmarūpa⁵. But he does not mention the prince subdued by him. The actual interpretation of both the grants will show that while Vijaya put down the prince of Kāmarūpa, Lakṣmaṇa only subdued the kingdom. It is unlikely that Kāmarūpa was conquered and ceded to their kingdom⁶. Raychaudhuri, writing of the invasion of Vijayasena, remarks that 'during the weak rule of the sons of Rāmapāla, the kinglets of the Gauḍa empire who helped Rāmapāla to regain his throne, engaged in a struggle for

¹E.I., I, p.305 (V 10).

²J.A.S.B., V (N.S) pp.467-476 (Line 32).

³E.I., I, p.305.

⁴E.I., VIII, (App.A), p.20.

⁵J.A.S.B., V (N.S.) pp.467-76; M.A.S.B. V, pp.43-113.

⁶See R.C.Majumdar, History of Bengal, I, pp.213f.

supremacy, in the course of which, Vīra, Vajardhana, the rājā of Kāmarūpa and the lord of Gauḍa himself were worsted and Vijayasena established the supremacy of his family¹.

But he also does not identify the king of Kāmarūpa.

P.Bhattacharya explains the conflict on a theory of the annexation of the western part of Kāmarūpa leading to the invasion, and further adds that the invasion took place in the reign of either the son or the grandson of Dharmapāla, that is, during the time of either Jayapāla or his successor. On this theory, Bhattacharya places Vijayasena during the middle of the 12th century A.D.². But this has been disproved by his own chronology. If Vijaya flourished, as he claims, in about A.D.1159-69, how can it be feasible that Jayapāla, whose last date cannot be far removed from A.D.1135 could be affected by the invasion? The successor of Jayapāla is yet to be found, if he was not Vaidyadeva himself. To make confusion worse confounded, Bhattacharya thinks that Jayapāla was again defeated by Lakṣmaṇasena, whom he places towards the end of the 12th century A.D.³. If Jayapāla was affected by any of these invasions, they will have to be ascribed to a date earlier than A.D.1138, which is well nigh impossible. Prinsep gives the dates of Vijaya - A.D.1063; Vallāla - 1066 and Lakṣmaṇa - 1116 only⁴. R.L.Mitra supports him and gives

¹Studies in Indian Antiquities, pp.157-58.

²K.S.(Intro) p.42 (f.n.3).

³Ibid, pp.37,43.

⁴J.A.S.B., 1938, I, p.41; also I.A.,II,p.272.

the dates as follows: Vijaya - A.D.1046; Vallāla - 1056 and Lakṣmaṇa - 1106¹. Cunningham's chronology is: Vijaya - A.D.1025; Vallāla - 1050 and Lakṣmaṇa - 1076². Smith ascribes the foundation of the Sena dynasty to A.D.1060³. All these dates are no longer tenable in view of the Muslim records and a number of works, the authorship of some of which, like the Dānasāgara and the Adbhūtasāgara, is attributed to Vallālasena. Though there are writers like Banerji who disbelieves in the reliability of the dates contained therein, their authenticity has been proved by others like R.C.Majumdar⁴, Raychaudhuri, D.C.Bhattacharya, N.N.Vasu and others. Dānasāgara was written in the S.E.1091 = A.D.1169 and Adbhūtasāgara in 1082 = A.D.1160, when Vallāla was alive. Majumdar, on the basis of these dates, holds that the date A.D.1118-19, taken to be the era started by Lakṣmaṇa, as believed by Banerji, was not actually such, and maintains that he might have come to the throne many years later than that date. He places, therefore, Vijaya's date of accession in A.D.1118-19; Vallāla in 1159 and Lakṣmaṇa in 1175⁵. D.C.Bhattacharya, on the basis of the same works, gives the dates as follows: Vijaya - A.D.1096-1157; Vallāla - 1157-1170 and Lakṣmaṇa - 1170-1200. He takes A.D.1119 as the date of Lakṣmaṇa's birth⁶. The period for Vijaya appears to be too

¹J.A.S.B., XXXIV, I, p.128; XLVII, I, p.396; Indo-Aryans, II, p.262.

²A.S.Rep.XV, p.158.

³E.H.I, pp.367f.

⁴J.P.A.S.B. 1920 (N.S.) pp.301-313.

⁵J.P.A.S.B. 1921 (N.S.) pp.7-16; History of Bengal, I, p.231.

⁶I.A., 1922, pp.145-48, 153-58; I.H.Q.III, pp.571-91.

long and it is yet to be proved that the date 1119 was the birth date of Lakṣmaṇa. As Raychaudhuri points out, the so-called Lakṣmaṇa era beginning with A.D.1119 was not started by Lakṣmaṇasena, son of Vallāla, as the theory is opposed to the evidence of the works of Vallāla and the *Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri* of Minhāj who wrote his work in A.H.658 = A.D.1260. The two works of Vallāla prove that he was alive in A.D.1168-69 and, therefore, his son could not have ascended the throne before that date. The work of Minhāj further proves that Lakṣmaṇa was ruling in Bengal at the time of the Nadiā raid of Bakhtiyār which took place after A.H.589 and before A.H.601, that is, between A.D.1193-1205¹. But it is difficult to decide whether the date A.D.1169 of Vallāla refers to the beginning or the end of his reign. In any case, it appears that his connection with the so-called Lakṣmaṇasena era beginning with A.D.1119 has no historical basis at all.

If the date A.D.1119 may be taken as the date of Vijaya-sena's accession, as done by R.C.Majumdar, the Sena chronology becomes easier; in this case Vijaya ruled from A.D.1119 to 1159; Vallāla - A.D.1159 to 1175 and Lakṣmaṇa - A.D.1175 to 1200 or even later. With this chronology, it is reasonable to hold that Vijaya's invasion of Kāmarūpa, if it actually occurred, cannot be placed before A.D.1142, the date of

¹A.M.S.J.V., Part II, pp.4-5; *Antiquities of India - 'The*

²Majumdar in his (*History of Bengal, I, Lakṣmaṇasena Era*).
page 231) gives a slightly different chronology

Vaidyadeva's Kamauli grant, in which he assumed the imperial title; while the invasion of Lakṣmaṇa took place some fifty years after, during the reign of some unknown successor of Vaidyadeva. On these considerations, it is impossible to place the invasions of these two Sena rulers, during the reign of Jayapāla and his successor. It is likely that Vijaya invaded during the time of Vaidyadeva, some time between A.D. 1142-45, and Lakṣmaṇa invaded towards the end of the 12th century A.D.; but none of these resulted in the permanent conquest of Kāmarūpa.

Successors of Jayapāla and Vaidyadeva: The immediate successors of Vaidyadeva are unknown. The contention of Ray that he was succeeded by Buddhadeva¹, is not supported by any evidence. The discovery of the plates of Vallabhadeva in Tezpur dated S.E. 1107 = A.D. 1185, edited by Kielhorn², reveals, however, the genealogy of a group of rulers, such as Rāyārīdeva, Udayakarṇa and Vallabhadeva. They trace their origin from the kings of Bhāskara's race of the Candra vaṃśa. Rāyārīdeva, known also as Trailokyasiṃha, is described as the 'frontal ornament of the king's of Bhāskara's race'³. The identification of Bhāskara with Bhāskaravarman⁴, is unlikely, as the latter is said to have belonged to the Bhauma

¹D.H.N.I, I, p.258.

²E.I. V, pp.181-88.

³Ibid.

⁴N.K.Bhattacharya, I.H.Q., XXII, pp.1-14.

dynasty. It is also not clear whether they were the direct successors of Vaidyadeva; for otherwise they would have traced the genealogy from him. K.L.Barua holds that they were not the direct successors of Vaidyadeva and could not have ruled between Vaidyadeva and the date of the inscription (A.D.1185); but he adds that they were probably feudatory chiefs under later Kāmarūpa kings¹. P.Bhattacharya asserts that they had nothing to do with Assam². Ray,³ Vasu⁴ and Bhattasali⁵ take them to be the immediate successors of Vaidyadeva's descendants. But, as we have stated, the fact that they trace their origin from the family of Bhāskara, and claim no relation with Vaidyadeva, makes it doubtful whether the family of Vallabhadeva was in any way connected with Vaidyadeva. There is, however, no difficulty in placing them after Vaidyadeva in direct succession and they may have had very short reigns. It is possible that Rāyārīdeva was placed as a feudatory of Vaidyadeva in the region about Tezpur in the east, and, during Vijayasena's invasion, the former helped Vaidyadeva. This is perhaps indicated by the plates of Vallabhadeva, which credit Rāyārīdeva with the defeat of the king of Vaṅga. Rāyārīdeva's encounter with Vijayasena⁶ can be explained in that light. It is also possible that after

¹E.H.K., pp.197-98.

²K.S. p.43(f.n.5).

³D.H.N.I., I, p.56.

⁴Social History of Kāmarūpa, I, pp.229f.

⁵I.H.Q., XXII, pp.1-14.

⁶Ibid, p.10; Ray, D.H.N.I, I, pp.259-60; Majumdar, History of Bengal, I, pp.213f.

the defeat and the death of Vaidyadeva in the hands of Vijayasena, the Sena king had to march against Rāyārideva, with the result that Vijayasena met with a reverse, which led Rāyārideva to establish himself as an independent ruler. Udayakarna, the next ruler, was not so important; but his successor Vallabhadeva is described in his grant as a great hero 'who sportively overcame hostile princes, as if they were courtezans'¹. Bhattasali and Ray seem to hold that the campaign led by Bakhtiyar in A.D.1202 to Tibet² was destroyed in Assam by Vallabhadeva or his successor³. This does not appear probable, because it is unlikely that Vallabhadeva, whose grant was recorded in A.D.1185 flourished until the invasion of Bakhtiyar in A.D.1205-6. The reference to his warlike activities in the grant may be explained by the fact that Lakṣmanasena invaded Kāmarūpa towards the end of the 12th century A.D; and Vallabhadeva was involved in war, with the result that the latter was subdued by the former, as stated in the Mādhanagar grant⁴.

The successor of Vallabhadeva is unknown; but during Bakhtiyar's invasion in A.D.1205-6, according to the *Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri*⁵, which is confirmed, we believe, by the *Kānāi Varasī*

¹v 10.

²Raverty, I, pp.560f; *Riyāz-us-Salātin* (A.Salam), pp.65-68;

³Bhattasali, I.H.Q,XXII, pp.4-6. Bhattasali - I.H.Q,IX, pp.50-62.

⁴Line 32.

⁵Raverty, I, pp.560f.

Rock epigraph of North Gauhāti¹, the name of the king then ruling was Bartu, or Pr̥thu². In the opinion of Wolseley Haig, this Bartu was no other than a Kāmarūpa king, who not only defeated Bakhtiyar but also Hisan Uddīn Iwaz (Sultān Ghiāsuddīn) in A.D.1227, and was ultimately overthrown by Nāsiruddīn, the son of Iltumish in A.D.1228³. The defeat of Bakhtiyar, as stated in the North Gauhāti inscription⁴ runs thus: Śāke turagayugmese madhu-māsa-trayodāśe Kāmarūpam-samāgatya turuṣkāḥ kṣayam āyayuh. (That is, on the thirteenth of Caitra in the śaka era 1127 the Turks coming into Kāmarūpa were destroyed). The second invasion of Ghiāsuddīn Iwaz is perhaps alluded to by an inscription from Gāchtala in Nowgong, indicating that the invader went up to that region. It was issued in the Śaka year 1149 = A.D.1227, and it records that the king Viśvasundaradēva ordered one Candrakānta to repair the damage done by the mlecchas to the temple of Śiva⁵. Bhattasali is right in suggesting that they were the Muslims who accompanied Ghiāsuddīn in his campaign against Kāmruḍ and Baṅg in A.D.1226⁶. Viśvasundaradēva was probably the real name of Bartu or Pr̥thu, as mentioned by Minhāj; he may have been the successor of Vallabhadeva. Glazier refers to local

¹K.S.(Intro) p.44; Bhattasali, I.H.Q., IX, pp.49-50.

²E.H.K., p.198.

³Camb.History of India, III, pp.50-54.

⁴K.S.(Intro), p.44.

⁵I.H.Q., XXII, pp.12-14.

⁶Raverty, I, p.594.

traditions which describe Prthu as an important king of Kāmarūpa, who built extensive fortifications in present Jalpāiguri in Bengal¹, perhaps after Bakhtiyar's repulse. The erection of a Śiva temple of Jalpeśvara in Jalpāiguri is attributed to one Jalpeśvara by the Yoginī Tantra; Jalpeśvara, according to our chronicles was another name of Prthu². So Prthu, Jalpeśvara and Viśvasundaradeva may stand for the same ruler, who, after the repulse of two invasions of Bakhtiyar and Ghiāsuddīn Iwaz, was finally overthrown by Nāsiruddīn³. The next Muslim invasion was that of Malīk Yuzbeg about A.D.1256-57⁴. The reigning king was probably Sandhīyā, who is mentioned in the Gurucarita of Rāmcaranthākura, and it was he who defeated Yuzbeg⁵. Soon after this, Sandhīyā shifted the capital to Kamatā, not only owing to the fear of repeated Muslim invasions, but also because of the fact that the Āhoms from the east began to push westward after the establishment of their rule in Upper Assam, beginning with the second quarter of the 13th century A.D. In fact, during the 13th century A.D. and at a subsequent time, with the decline and the extinction of the Hindu families, many principalities were founded not only by the Āhoms and the Kachāris, but also by the Koch and the Khāsi-Jaintiās. But

¹Report on the District of Rangpur, p.8.

²See Buchanan M.S. (Published by the Dept. of Historical Studies in Assam).

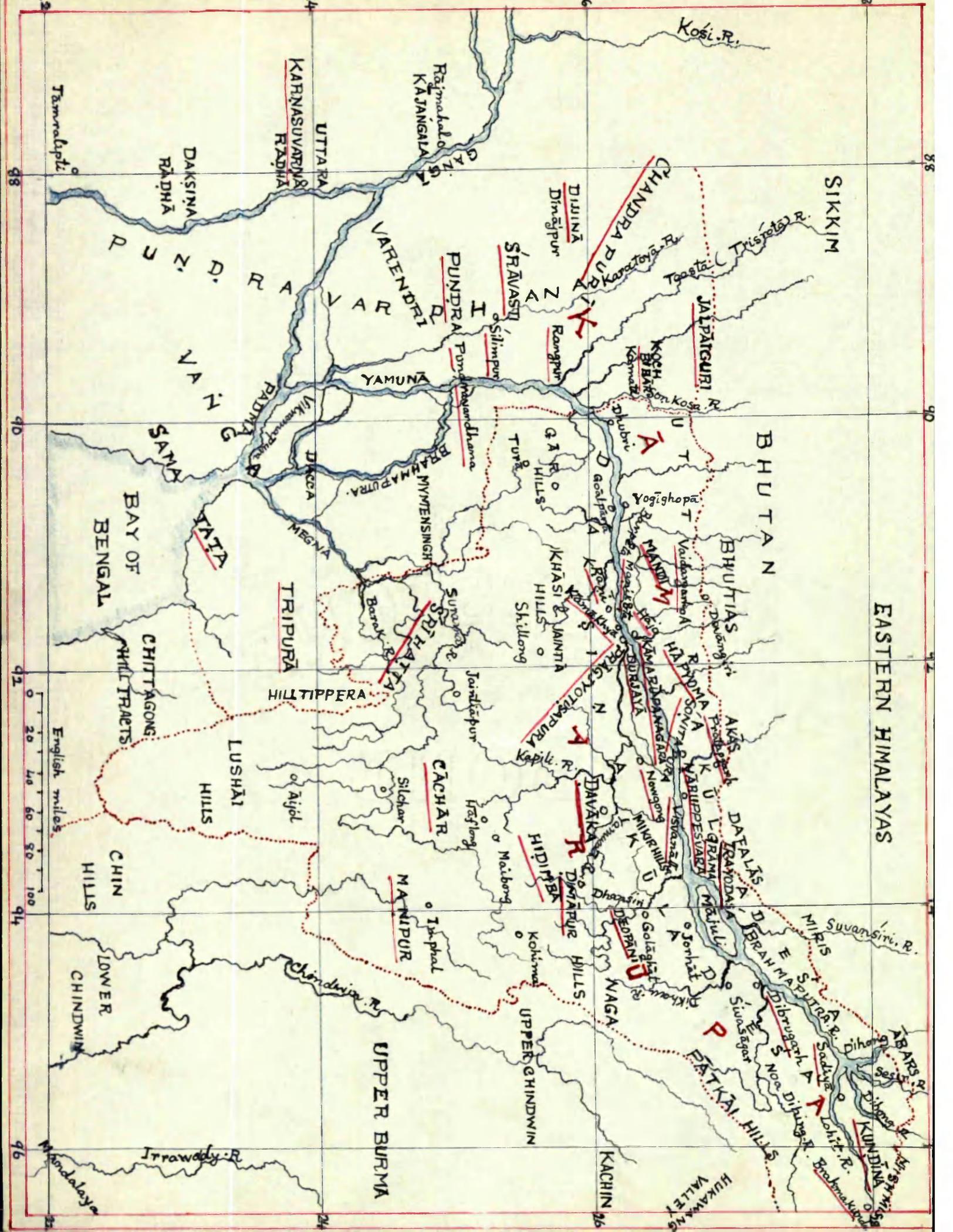
³E.H.K., p.227.

⁴Raverty, I, p.263.

⁵E.H.K., pp.245f.

the events of this period lie beyond the scope of our work.

To conclude, with Jayapāla came the end of a long line of kings, tracing their origin from the Bhauma dynasty, established in Prāggyotiṣa. Mayana's conquest was only limited to the possessions of Kāmarūpa in Bengal. After overthrowing Tiṅgyadeva, Vaidyadeva became responsible for the foundation of a new line in Kāmarūpa, but his direct successors are unknown. It was probably he who established Rāyārideva as a feudatory, who, after the overthrow and the death of Vaidyadeva, founded another line; his successor Vallabhadeva was perhaps involved in a war with Lakṣmaṇasena towards the close of the 12th century A.D. Viśvasundaradeva, alias Pr̥thu, and Sandhīyā were most probably rulers of different lines; but they did their duty in repulsing successive Muslim invasions. It is obvious from the narrative that the political history of the period after Jayapāla is as obscure as disconnected, and the unity of the kingdom was lost until a later time, when the Āhoms, after a long period of contests with their adversaries, restored the lost political unity to Assam.



Section 5.

Administration.Preliminary Remarks:

From early times we find terms indicating some form of government - monarchy or otherwise in Assam. For a better understanding of the ideas associated with that government we must consider the origin of the social order and the state, as well as their interrelations. According to the general view, in ancient India the state could not emerge without an organised society and its fundamental aim was to do away with the period of 'Mātsyanyāya', create conditions for the welfare of all and to strive for the realisation of the three aims of life, 'dharma - artha - kāma', paving the way for the fourth - 'mokṣa'. This could only be possible when some authority was devised to administer justice to all and this called for a machinery whose primary function was the administration of justice with the help of 'dandanīti'. In fine, the state was thought to have originated either by an appeal to a higher authority which provided the 'dandanīti' or by an agreement between groups in an organised society. Society as conceived in ancient India consisted of groups rather than individuals, and the aim of the state was to ensure the social and spiritual ends, first of each group, and only secondarily of individuals¹.

¹Manu, VIII, 41; Yājñavalkya, II, 195.

A number of conditions were required that the authority might provide for an orderly life. The ruler was made subservient to law, but placed above the groups, and was made to bear in mind that only the welfare of all would conduce to his own happiness¹. But the success of the system depended upon the mutual co-operation of state and society.

The actual system of administration, monarchical or otherwise, evolved through a gradual process, and took two forms: evolution from a tribal polity to an imperialism, or from a small republic to something like a confederation; in some cases, as among the tribes of Assam, the antique system persisted for centuries. With this evolution was linked up the enlargement of a state into a big kingdom. Though we come across terms indicating a gradation of monarchies and imperial titles like the 'ekarāt' and the 'samrāt', and the performance of imperial ceremonies by monarchs, suggesting the existence of empires at different periods even before the Mauryas, these were not empires on a large scale. The idea of an empire had an intimate relation with the geographical vision of a particular period and people, which widened with the new conquests made. In that sense no ruler of ancient Assam, including Bhāskara and Harṣadeva, could carve out a large empire, though they assumed titles like 'Mahārājādhirāja - Parameśvara - Paramabhattāraka'². Moreover, these titles had

¹Arthasāstra, I, 19; Śāntiparva, LXII, 28; Viṣṇu, P. III, 70.

²Sections 3 and 4.

different implications in different periods.

It is evident that kingdoms and institutions had a gradual development. It is not possible, however, to infer when an organised state was established in Assam; it is possible that it existed during the foundation of the Bhauma dynasty in Prāggyotiṣa by the Alpine chiefs of Bhagadatta's family. Even though the kingdom of Bhagadatta was a large one¹, evidence of its divisions and the distribution of state functions is lacking.

The existing sources, however meagre, show that monarchy was the only form of government in ancient Assam. We have no means of investigating the working of the machinery of government in a number of states, mostly feudatory, mentioned in the grants. Epigraphy indicates that the state was conceived of as constituted by seven component parts, called prakṛtis in the Hindu law books, having their respective functions and interrelations. These are the king (svāmin), minister (amātya), territory (jānapada), fort (durga), treasury (kośa), army (daṇḍa) and ally (mitra)². A significant reference to these elements (prakṛtayo) is made in the Bargāon grant, referring to the election of Brahmapāla when there was nobody of Naraka's race to succeed Tyāgasimha who died without leaving any heir³. Hoernle translates prakṛtayo as subjects⁴.

¹Chap.II, pp.57f; Section I, pp. 205f

²Arthasāstra, VI, 1: VIII,1; Manu, IX, 294; Kāmandaka IV,1: Śukra, V, 12-13; Ādi Parva, 217; Śānti P.LVI,5; LXVIII,7.

³V10

⁴J.A.S.B., LXVII, I, pp.113 f.

Kālidāsa used prakṛti both as ministry¹ and subjects². Mallinātha, quoting Viśva explains it thus: 'prakṛtiḥ sahaḥ yonau amātye paramātmani, itī Viśvaḥ'. Śukra also uses the term in different senses³. But ordinarily, as we have stated, the term prakṛti stands for seven organs or parts of the state. The expression in the Bargāon grant may have stood for the ministers, other officials and leading members of the community, who participated in the election or selection of Brahmajāla. The idea of the seven elements of the state (saptāṅga) is also clear from the Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva⁴. It appears, therefore, that in ancient Assam as in other parts of India, the conception of the state as an organism, constituted of the seven elements, was recognised. As B.K. Sarkar writes, this conception is 'not merely structural or anatomical but also physiological in the sense that it is functional - It embodies really a psychological attempt to conceive and classify political phenomena in their logical entirety'⁵.

Whether under monarchy or any other system, a balance between centralisation and decentralisation was the keynote of ancient Indian administration in general. The working of this principle in Assam will be illustrated from the treatment of the subject. This principle of autonomy may have worked both in political and socio-economic spheres. But the socio-

¹R.V. XII, 12.

²VIII, 18.

³V. 12-13.

⁴E.I., II, pp. 347 f.

⁵Positive Background of Hindu Sociology, Bk. II, I, p. 39.

economic and political life of the Assam tribes were apparently left undisturbed by the rulers of the central Kingdom of Prāgjyotiṣa, and we find only a few references to their relations with the centre. They were in fact governed by a different polity, evolved by them through centuries of segregated life, and more or less democratic.

I. Central Machinery:

(i) Kingship: We have a number of ancient Indian theories on the origin of kingship, such as divine, quasi-divine, contractual, or even originating in war¹. While some writers like Ghoshal² take an extreme view of the divinity of the ancient Indian king, pointing that the rulers were thought of not merely as nara-devatās but also as devatās, others³ take kingship to have been always more or less elective; but the truth lies midway between the two theories⁴.

Whatever the origin of kingship, belief in the divine nature of the rulers of Assam is indicated by the fact that they traced their descent through the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu. The same idea is suggested by the fact that some of them were compared with gods. Puṣyavarman was like second Viṣṇu⁵. Nārāyaṇavarman was the divine Cakrapāṇi in human form⁶.

¹Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, I, 14; Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, V.

²Hindu Political Theories, pp.180f; The Beginnings of Indian Historiography and other Essays, p.114.

³Jayaswal, Hindu Polity, II, pp.3f.

⁴N.C.Bandopadhyaya, Development of Hindu Polity, pp.83f,125f; N.N.Law, Ancient Indian Polity, pp.112f; P.N.Bannerjee, Public Administration in Ancient India, pp.70f.

⁵Doobi grant, V.6.

⁶Ibid, V.22.

Bhūtivarman¹ was like Indra in power and fame, like Suśhita-varman² and Brahmapāla³. Ratnapāla emulated the renowned good deeds of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa⁴, and was like Puruṣottama and Janārdana⁵. Vaidyadeva is compared with Varuṇa, Kuvera, Brhaspati and others because of his possessing their qualities⁶. The rulers might have been so compared because thereby they expected to receive respect from their subjects equal to that of the gods; for Manu says that even an infant king should not be despised, as he is a great god in human form⁷.

That kingship in Assam was sometimes elective, is gathered from epigraphy. We have already referred to the election of Brahmapāla by the high officials and important members of the state, as given in the Bargāon grant. As stated therein, he was elected as he belonged to the Bhauma family and possessed the requisite qualifications to rule the state⁸. This finds an earlier parallel in the election of Gopāla of Gaṇḍa⁹.

K.L.Barua believes that such instances of election are myths; he further opines that Brahmapāla was an upstart who proclaimed himself king, and the people had no other alternative than to accept him as such; and in order to justify his kingship, Brahmapāla was proclaimed as a scion of the Bhauma dynasty, the

¹Ibid, V.25.

²Ibid, VV.39-40.

³Khonāmukhi, V.4.

⁴Gauhāti grant, V.9.

⁵Bargāon grant, L46.

⁶Kamauli grant, 19.

⁷VII, 8 f.

⁸V10.

⁹E.I.IV. pp.243 f.

choice of the people having fallen upon him¹. But as the said epigraph shows, Brahmapāla was elected king because of his ability, when there was no issue of the last king Tyāgasimha. Instances of election are also found in other dynasties of ancient India. It is, however, true that in cases of election the choice in almost all occasions fell on a prince of the former ruling family and exceptions are rare, as are exceptions to the law of primogeniture in a hereditary monarchy².

The succession was normally by primogeniture, but that popular opinion was to some extent respected by the rulers, is shown by epigraphy, where we find instances of selection or nomination of princes, made by the reigning king. Gaṇapati-varman 'placed his son (Mahendra) in charge of his kingdom, having called the people together' - (janam samāhūya guṇānvitam sutam niyojya rājyaṃ divam eva yātavān)³. Chandramukhavarman likewise established his son Sthitavarman, when the latter grew up and finished his education⁴. We find also instances of setting aside rightful claimants to the throne either from their physical defects or bad qualities⁵. The two princes, Cakra and Arathi of the line of Śālastambha were not allowed to

¹E.H.K., pp.135f.

²cf. Rāmāyana, II, 110-34; Udyogaparva, CXLIX, 13-29.

³Doobi grant, VI.7.

⁴Doobi grant, VV.29-31

⁵cf. Śāntiparva, LVIII.103-10.

rule, as both 'were disposed to disregard the advice of their preceptors, and so the son of the younger (Arathi) bore the burden of the kingdom¹.

Instances of voluntary abdication for various reasons are found in epigraphs. Vanamāla, 'having observed that his son had finished his education and attained maturity, made over to him the royal umbrella'². Jayamāla or Vīrabāhu, being attacked by a disease, transferred his throne and crown to Balavarman III³. Brahmapāla abdicated in favour of his son Ratnapāla, as he thought it suitable to the occasion⁴.

It therefore appears that monarchy in ancient Assam was hereditary, and only on failure of heirs were the subjects consulted in the appointment of a king. The people participated in the ceremony of consecration, which gave kingship something of a popular character. The doctrine of royal divinity was not pushed to the extreme and the subjects accepted the king's divinity because he possessed such qualifications as splendour and power. He was the executor of daṇḍanīti, with the help of which he enforced the decrees of law, based on the code of the Brāhmanas and customs of the people. In a sense, the office of kingship, based on taxation and protection⁵, was a trust, and the monarchy was but a

¹Hāyūnthāl grant, V.8

²Nowgong grant, VV.16-17

³Ibid, VV.21-23.

⁴Bargāon grant, V.15

⁵cf. Śāntiparva, LXVI; Raghuvaiṅśa, I, II, 18; Arthasāstra, I, 9.

limited one¹. Under the circumstances the ruler could hardly make himself a complete autocrat. An ideal was held before the ancient Indian king, by following which he was expected to repay the debt he owed to his subjects; for an ideal ruler was he who could please his subjects². He was expected to strive for his peoples' welfare³. This is shown by epigraphy. Kalyāṇavarman indulged in the supreme pleasure of doing good to others⁴. Nārāyaṇavarman became king in order to remove the sixfold demerits of his subjects⁵ and the instability of the world⁶. Suṣṭhitavarman was born for the uplift of all⁷. Bhāskara devised many ways of enjoyment for his people⁸, and Harjjara engaged wholeheartedly in works of welfare of all⁹.

The King's Qualities: The king's training as a crown prince was responsible for his future regulated life, and this crown prince is one of the 18 tīrthas of literature¹⁰. The accident of his birth as the eldest prince did not make him an heir-apparent. He had to undergo a curriculum of training in all possible subjects¹¹. His qualities should include nobility,

¹See R.K.Mookerji, Chandra Gupta and His Times, pp.79-84.

²cf. Śānti P., L.VIII,133;Dīgha Nikāya, III,193.

³Arthasāstra I, 19; Viṣṇu P., III, 70.

⁴Doobi grant, VI4.

⁵Ibid, V.21.

⁶Nidhanpur grant, V.12

⁷Doobi grant, V39.

⁸Nidhanpur grant.

⁹Hāyūnthāl grant, VI2.

¹⁰Arthasāstra, I, 17.

¹¹Ibid; Manu, II.

intelligence, energy and personal attainments¹. Inscriptions claim such qualities for the rulers of Assam. Vajradatta studied the Vedas and the Āngas and acquired knowledge in the science of training and breeding of elephants and in the nature and excellence of horses². Samudravarman was the abode of all qualities³, like Balavarman, who was also pre-eminent on account of the stand he took for the desired end⁴. Nārāyaṇavarman⁵, like Sthitavarman⁶, had knowledge of the śāstras. Bhāskara, the personification of dharma, was the abode of politics and good qualities, and the protector of the terrified. Like Brhaspati he was skilled in dividing and applying the means of politics on proper occasions⁷. Harjjara was like Yudhiṣṭhira in truth, Bhīma to his enemies and Arjuna in battle. Lakṣmī embraced him because of his personal charms⁸. Vanamāla, who was possessed of all kingly qualities, was like the moon in the sky of the Naraka line, and by his qualities he overcame Yudhiṣṭhira, the sea, mountains, the sun, Karṇa and Bhīma⁹. Balavarman III possessed similar qualities¹⁰. Brahmapāla was the abode of rājanīti¹¹, like

¹Yājñavalkya, I, 309-11.

²Doobi grant, V4.

³Ibid, V9.

⁴Ibid, V10.

⁵Nidhanpur grant, V13

⁶Doobi grant, V38.

⁷Doobi grant, V54; Nidhanpur grant.

⁸Tezpur grant, VV 12,14; Hāyānthāl grant, VV11-12

¹⁰Puṣpabhadra grant, VV 16,19,26.

¹¹Nowgong grant.

¹¹Puṣpabhadra grant, V8.

Gopāla, who was the light of the Pāla line and accomplished in all qualities¹. The Bargāon grant speaks highly of Ratnapāla, whose 'figure is such as to undo Manmatha, whose profundity such as to put into shade the ocean, whose intelligence such as to be a guarantee of the conquest of the world, whose valour such as to surpass Skanda: who is Arjuna in fame, Bhīmasena in war, Kṛtānta in wrath, a forest conflagration in destroying his plant-like adversaries; who is the moon in the clear sky of learning, the (sweet) breeze of the Malaya mountain - the sun in eclipsing his enemies, the mountain of the east in the successful advancement of his friends'². Purandarapāla³ was accomplished in all arts, like Indrapāla, who possessed wide knowledge and was just and righteous⁴. Dharmapāla was the abode of all arts, possessor of all virtues, the crown-jewel of poets and the sun of the Pāla family⁵. Such statements, however exaggerated they may have been, indicate that the rulers possessed some of the requisite qualifications for kingship.

Ceremonies: One of the most important ceremonies of political importance was the abhiṣeka⁶. As described in the Brāhmanas

¹Ibid, V4; Khonāmukhi grant, V8.

²Lines, 47-50.

³Gauhāti grant, VII

⁴Ibid, VV 15-16

⁵Puṣpabhadra grant, V8.

⁶cf. Śatapatha Brāhmana, 1,1,13; S.B.E., XII, p.4; Ghoshal, The Beginnings of Indian Historiography, etc., pp.246 f.

and the Śrauta Sūtras, it included a number of minor rituals. The most important official in these rituals was the purohita, whose office is mentioned in the Vedas. Fyick even suggests his pre-Vedic origin¹. Evidence for the purohita in Assam is meagre; we find only two references. The Brāhmanādhikāri, Śrikanṭha, was probably a royal priest of Harjjara². The Kamauli grant mentions the Rājaguru Murāri³, who was probably not a purohita.

The abhiṣeka began with the sprinkling of holy water in the presence of state officers and others, and ended with the handing over of the sacrificial sword to the consecrated king by the purohita. An early reference to abhiṣeka is found in the case of Sthitavarman, who 'enjoyed like Indra the performance of the coronation ceremony by the Brāhmanas according to Śāstras, accompanied by propitiatory sound of conch-shell and drum'⁴. That the feudatory chiefs, princes, and even the common people, took part in the ceremony is indicated by the description of Harjjara's abhiṣeka. When that king sat on the throne, surrounded by the prostrated kings like Indra by the gods, he was bathed for coronation with water in silver pitchers and poured by princes of high birth, preceded by merchants (abhiṣik-to vanik-pūrve)⁵. The reference to merchants taking

¹Also Ethics of India, pp.148f; S.B.E. VII; Manu, III.

²Hāyūnthāl grant, Lines, 26-28.

³E.I, II, pp.347f.

⁴Doobi grant, V33.

⁵Hāyūnthāl grant, VV 13-14.

part in the ceremony is very significant, and as far as we know, no such parallel is found in contemporary inscriptions of ancient India. This shows that they were recognised as important members of the state.

B.K.Barma's contention¹ that Balavarman III and Indrapāla were also consecrated, is not supported by the actual interpretation of the texts. Referring to the former, the Nowgong grant states thus: 'So on an auspicious day, the king (Vīrabāhu) transferred in the prescribed form his throne and crown to his son-'². This refers either to the voluntary abdication of Vīrabāhu or to his selection of Balavarman as king. As regards Indrapāla, the Gauhāti grant states that before him, 'when he sat on his throne, the mosaic floor of his audience hall looked like a fruit-covered tree by reason of the stewn jewels (that fell) from the crowns of the princes, as they voluntarily stood, reverently bowing (before him) with joined hands'³. The reference here is not to a coronation but to a meeting in the court or a special sitting of the king's council. Barma is again wrong in holding that new names were conferred on kings at their coronation⁴. The title Mrgānka⁵ was not, as far as is known, given to Suṣṭhitavarman because of his coronation or accession. In

¹Cultural History of Assam, I, pp.40-41.

²v 23.

³v 15.

⁴Cultural History of Assam, I, p.41.

⁵The Nidhanpur grant (V 18), simply states that Suṣṭhita was renowned as Śrī Mrgānka.

any case, only on rare occasions were kings crowned by the Vedic ceremony of consecration, in which the state officers and important members of the community took part. The ceremony was a factor of political import, whereby a religious and a legal sanction were given to the office of kingship, imposing upon the king the moral duty of protecting his subjects and ruling righteously.

The Ásvamedha was another ceremony performed by rulers, usually after conquests. It is as old as the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa¹, and was performed by those who aimed at imperial sway. But the performance of the ceremony did not necessarily raise a king to an imperial status in every case or in every period of the history of ancient India. Instances are not rare of the minor rulers who had made only a few conquests, performing this rite. The Doobi grant makes the earliest reference to the performance of the ceremony in Assam by Vajradatta²; but the interpretation is doubtful. Mahendrarvarman performed two Ásvamedhas: (Śrī Mahendrarvarmā dvisturagamedhāharttā)³. Bhūtiarvarman also performed one, as proved by his Badgaṅgā epigraph⁴ and the Doobi grant⁵. Sthitarvarman performed two such sacrifices: ((dvi) r-Ásvamedhyājī Śrī Sthitarvarmā)⁶. The actual significance of the ásvamedhas

¹Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, XIII.

²v 4.

³Nālandā Clay Seal, Lines 4-5.

⁴Lines 1-2.

⁵v 25.

⁶Clay Seal, Line 7.

performed by these kings is difficult to guess; except perhaps Bhūti-varman none was of the stature of either Bhāskara, Vanamāla or Ratnapāla, whose conquests surpassed those of either Mahendra or Sthitavarman. The political import of the Āśvamedha, however, cannot be questioned, and both Mahendra and Sthitavarman must have made a few conquests before they performed the ceremony¹.

King's Duties and Rights: Duty first and rights afterwards was the gospel taught by the teacher of the Gītā to a Kṣatriya (Arjuna)². The law books emphasise that a ruler should be well protected: (rājyaṃ rakṣati rakṣitaḥ)³. He should strive for his protection from all enemies; the subjects also should show due respect to him. He was entitled to a share of the revenue in return for protecting his people and providing good administration. The state in fine had to make proper provisions for the king's welfare so that he might provide for the welfare of all. His duty of protection comprised himself, his family, and his people⁴. As the head of the administration, he had to provide for the proper working of the state departments both at the centre and in the local

¹See Section 2, pp. 233f, 259-60

²Chap. II.

³Arthasāstra, I, 17.

⁴cf. Arthasāstra, I, 19; Manu, VII-VIII; Āpastambha, II; Yājñavalkya, I, 327f; Sabhā Parva, 89-90.

units. In the court he was expected to give proper attention to all matters. This is indicated by epigraphy. Bhāskara was easily accessible to all and the people resorted to him for protection¹. Harjjara, though wholeheartedly engaged in works of welfare of his subjects, could be approached at spare intervals and found in an unruffled mood².

The responsibility of the rulers of Assam for maintaining the divine social order, consisting of the classes and stages of life (Varnāśrama), is indicated by the epigraphs; but how far this has a bearing on the actual fact is difficult to guess at present. It was, however, the traditional policy of the ancient Indian state to protect and maintain the dharma of classes and stages of life³, and several Kāmarūpa kings are said to have made special efforts in this direction⁴. The protection of dharma (religion) was another important duty of the Kāmarūpa rulers. Bhāskara is said to have revealed the light of the Āryadharmā by dispelling the accumulated darkness of the Kali Age and established virtue in the realm⁵. Dharmapāla, though a protector of dharma, also protected Kāma and artha: (dharmaparo'pi Kāmārthan ca pālayati vah)⁶.

¹Nidhanpur grant, V 25.

²Hāyūnthāl grant, V 12.

³Manu, IV, 126; VII, 221; Yājñavalkya, I, 361; II, 192.

⁴Nowgong grant, V 4; Nidhanpur grant; Tezpur grant, V 30; Gauhāti grant, V 18.

⁵Doobi grant, V 55.

The issue of sāsanas was another important duty of the king. Kautilya lays down that peace and war depended upon king's writs¹. In connection with land grants the rulers issued sāsanas, binding upon the officers and subjects². The Tezpur epigraph of Harjjara, referring to the settlement of a dispute, fixed a fine for the infringement of the sāsana by anybody³. Other important duties consisted of making donations and gifts to the deserving⁴, promoting learning, arts and crafts⁵, and finally giving protection to all. Epigraphy bears testimony to the making of land grants to the Brāhmanas, who were placed in a special position of favour. The rulers further made other gifts to the deserving. Bhāskara's virtuous activities, like those of Śivi, were applied in making gifts for the benefit of others⁶. Vanamāla made gifts of elephants, horses, maids, gold, silver and jewels⁷. That the king became a supporter of learning and a patron of poets, and helped in the cultivation of all arts, is clear from epigraphy⁸. But above all, his fundamental duty consisted in doing away with all disorders in the kingdom and affording protection of his subjects. Samudravarman removed the period of 'mātsyanyāya'⁹.

¹Arthasāstra, II, 10; Śukra, II.

²Nowgong grant; Gauhāti grant; Bargāon grant, etc

³J.B.O.R.S. 1917, pp.508f.

⁴cf. Manu, VII, 84-85; Arthasāstra, VII; Āpastambha, II, 10, 26.

⁵cf. Śukra, I, 370.

⁶Nidhanpur grant.

⁷Tezpur grant, V 30.

⁸Nidhanpur grant; Bargāon grant; Gauhāti grant, etc.

⁹Nidhanpur grant, VII.

Nārāyaṇavarman established the stability of his kingdom¹. Mahendravarman protected his subjects like his own children². Chaudramukhavarman removed all blemishes like theft, famine and oppressions³. Harṣadeva looked upon his subjects as his children, and protected them but never ill-treated them⁴. This paternal ideal encouraged the successful working of the administration and helped in creating goodwill between the ruler and the ruled.

To sum up, there were numerous checks on the autocracy of the king, such as the religious and legal sanction of the coronation ceremony, the spiritual influence of the purohita, the traditional emphasis on the rule of law or dharma, the king's training as a crown prince, the customs of the people and the country, the devolution of the machinery of government, and the king's duty of protection, which if not carried out might lead to revolt. These perhaps 'made the Hindu monarch act up to the concept of dharma'⁵.

(ii) Court Officers: Inscriptions mention a set of officials who helped the king in his court and the royal palace. Besides the Rājaguru⁶ the court was adorned by poets, learned men⁷ and physicians (Bhīṣakas)⁸. The chief warden of the palace was the

¹Ibid, V 13.

²Doobi grant, V 18.

³Doobi grant, V 34.

⁴Hāyūnthāl grant, V 6.

⁵Dikshitar, Hindu Administrative Institution, p.102.

⁶Kamandi grant, (E. I., II, 347f)

⁷Bargāon grant.

⁸Nowgong grant, V 21.

Mahādvārādhipati who probably controlled access to the king and appointed dvārapatis for guarding the gates of the palace. The Mahāpratihāra was the head chamberlain. The Hāyūnthāl grant of Harjjara mentions Jayadeva as the Mahādvārādhipati and Janārdana as the Mahāpratihāra¹. The Nowgong grant of Balavarman mentions one Mahallakapraudāikā², an old lady who was probably in charge of the royal harem. The king also appointed a number of messengers known as dūtaka, lekhaḥāraka and dīrghādhwaga, who communicated royal orders to local officers and subjects. They also served as peacetime messengers and guides³. In his day to day administration, the king was helped by a prince⁴; princes were also appointed as governors of provinces⁵. Even royal śāsanas were sometimes issued in their names, as proved by the Hāyūnthāl grant, which was issued by Harjjara's son Vanamāla⁶.

(iii) Mantri-pariṣad: The king was advised by a council of ministers. Yuan Chwang mentions that when Bhāskara, accompanied by his ministers, went to meet Harṣa, the former held a meeting with them⁷. The Kamauli grant mentions a council of ministers, and King Vaiḍyadeva is described as a sharp-rayed

¹Hāyūnthāl grant, Lines 26-28.

²Last Plate.

³Life, 165f; Walters I, 348.

⁴Hāyūnthāl grant; Subhaṅkarapāṭaka grant, V 6.

⁵Gauhāti grant, VV 11-13.

⁶Lines 25-26.

⁷Life, p.172.

sunain the midst of the assembly of the sacivas:(saciva-
samāya - saroja - tigma - bhānuh)¹. The actual strength of
the council is not known. The existing sources point to the
appointment of Brāhmaṇas as ministers. The Kamauli grant
states that these posts were held only by Brāhmaṇas and were
hereditary². The Kālikā Purāna confirms this. It states
that the king should appoint learned Brāhmaṇas as ministers³:
(mantrinas tu nrpaḥ kuryyād viprān vidyāvisāradān/Vinayajñān
Kulīnāṃ s' ca dharmārtha - Kusālān r' rjūn ll). This is also
laid down in the Arthasāstra⁴; but the Śānti-Parva recommends
the appointment of councillors from the four varṇas if they
possessed the requisite qualifications⁵. The Hāyuntāl grant
mentions one Śrī Govinda as the Mahāmātya (Great minister)
under Harjjara⁶. The Baḍgaṅgā epigraph mentions Āryaguna as a
Viṣayāmātya (minister in charge of a district) under
Bhūti-varman⁷. So there were probably many ministers in charge
of departments.

Inscriptions mention ministers as mantrins, amātyas and
sacivas. Though Kauṭilya does not make any distinction
between them⁸, Kāmaṇḍaka defines their respective functions.

¹v 10

²E.I, II, pp.347f.

³Chap.84, V 105.

⁴BK.I.

⁵LXXXV, 7-11.

⁶Lines 26-28.

⁷K.S., p.51.

⁸Arthasāstra, BK.I.

According to him the mantrin should, after due considerations, report to the king about the use of the four means of government, such as peace, corruption, force and dissensions, and about their application and result. The amātya was entrusted with the supervision of land and the collection of land revenue from cities, villages, etc. The saciva was in charge of the war department¹. It is likely that in Assam also a distinction was made between them. This will be evident from our treatment of various state departments. Collectively they were entrusted with the task of giving proper advice (mantra), on which the safety of the king depended².

It is not known whether there was anything like a small cabinet to transact important and confidential business³. That the king sat in the council is proved by the epigraphs, and there are references to feudatory chiefs and other important members of the community attending the meeting⁴. It is unlikely that they were also present at the ordinary meetings of the Mantripariṣad or of the small cabinet, if one existed.

(iv) Divisions of the State Machinery: The distribution of the functions of the state machinery was one of the primary duties of the king. The extension of the kingdom and its

¹Chap.XII.

²Arthasāstra, I, 5; Śānti Parva, LXXXIII, 48.

³cf. Arthasāstra, I, 15; Śānti.P.LXXXV, 61; Manu, VII, 56-57.

⁴Doobi grant, V 17; Gauhāti grant, V 15.

growing importance resulted in the evolution of an elaborate machinery, organised into departments such as the revenue, military, justice etc. from the central structure to the units. Epigraphy bears testimony to this. The Kālikā P. confirms this and recommends that for each department, like the treasury, local administration, and the judiciary, a group of officers should be appointed¹.

2. Revenue Administration: The administration of a kingdom depends upon revenue, without which the state cannot be run. As Kāmandaka writes, it is an universal saying that the treasury is the root of kings: (keśamūlōhi rājeti pravādaḥ sārvalaukikaḥ)². Like dharma and Kāma, artha was also important³. Dharmapāla, protected them all equally⁴.

(i) Principles: Revenue was derived both from taxation and other sources. The Hindu texts and epigraphs advocate the principle of equity in the matter of levying and the collection of taxes. The treasury was to be increased gradually, if at all necessary. Some communities, like the Brāhmanas of the agrahāras, were exempted from taxation. That this principle was followed in Assam is indicated by epigraphs, whereby lands given to Brāhmanas were freed from all taxes and official harassments⁵. The wealthy classes were required to pay taxes

¹Chap.84, V 54.

²Chap.XXI, 33.

³Arthasāstra, I, 7, 66f; Vana Parva, XXXIII, 48; Yudha Kāṇḍa,

⁴Khonāmukhi grant, V 12

LXXXIII, 32-39

⁵Nowgong grant; Bargāon grant; Gauhāti grant, etc.

because of their ability to do so. There were cases of irregular levies, but, according to Hindu texts, taxation was normally based on ability to pay and least sacrifice¹.

(ii) Income :

(a) Land Revenue and the Ownership of Land :

Land revenue formed the main item of state income. The traditional charge in ancient India was one-sixth of the produce, but the levy varied on different occasions, partly according to the nature of the produce of the land. To determine the incidence of tax a regular system of land tenure and survey was in force². The levy of land tax (kara) is mentioned in the Nidhanpur grant in connection with its re-issue when the original plates were lost³. The term is also mentioned in the Kamauli grant along with the expression: Karopaskar^avarjjitam⁴. Kara according to B.K.Barua⁵ stands for the general tax levied on land periodically, and he takes it to be synonymous with bhāga. Ghoshal takes it as other than bhāga, in the sense of a general property tax levied periodically⁶. It is, however, difficult to decide whether in Assam any distinction was made between kara and bhāga, which, according to the Smrtis,

¹P.N.Bannerjee, Public Administration, in Ancient India, p.180.

²cf.Arthasāstra, V 2; Manu, VII; Sukra, IV; Śānti P.XXIV.

³Line 51.

⁴E.I., II, p.353.

⁵Cultural History, I, p.81.

⁶Revenue System, pp.36-37, 64-65.

definitely means the king's share of the produce, paid in kind¹. But in such works kara is different from bhaga and is a tax paid in cash². It seems to us that the only term used for land revenue in Assam was kara, which probably stood for the tax paid both in cash and in kind. In any case it was, as Barua maintains, a periodical tax, but certainly not synonymous with bhāga. It was a regular tax levied on cultivators, who may have had the option to pay either in kind or in cash. The Nidhanpur grant mentions one Dattakarapūrṇa as the tax-collector.

We have already mentioned that to determine the incidence of land revenue, a system of land tenure was in force. This leads us to the consideration of the question of the respective rights of the crown and the tillers of the soil over land. Supporting the view of Smith and others that 'the law of India has always recognised agricultural land as being Crown property'³, B.K.Barua asserts that 'the Kāmarūpa kings, following the general northern Indian tradition, claimed that all land belonged to the crown'. He further contends that though 'the bulk of evidence proves the contrary - the king was the sole owner of the soil'⁴. But the evidence on which

¹Manu, VIII, 130, 276; Kaṭilya, V, 2, 271; Gautama, X, 24-27; See Keilhorn, E.I., VII, 160; R.D.Banerji, E.I.XV; Vogel, Antiquities of the Chamba state, 167-69; Ghoshal, Revenue System, 214.

²G.N.Jha, Manu Samhitā, IV, II, p.340.

³E.H.I, p.131; Oxford History of India, p.90.

⁴Cultural History, I, 76f.

his contention is based does not warrant such a conclusion. He himself admits that the procedure of granting lands to Brāhmaṇas raises an important issue regarding the Indian theory of the ownership of the soil by the Crown. Barua somewhat contradicts himself by holding 'that the major part of the cultivable land was held by the agriculturists who farmed it - The right of occupation was hereditary, subject to the payment of dues and taxes to the king's officers or representatives'¹.

The theory of the ownership of land by the crown is based on the wrong interpretation of texts from Kauṭilya and Manu (VIII,39)². But not only the early Vedic literature (R.V.X,173; A.V.IV,22-2) but also the Arthaśāstra itself (II,24; XIII) and Manu (IX,44) recognised the claim of the tillers of the soil to be owners of lands, and Kauṭilya made a distinction between Crown's land and privately owned land, over which the king had only a protective control³. The individual ownership of lands is best shown by later Smṛtis and commentaries⁴. The truth is that views on the question of ownership of land by the king and individuals differed according to place and time in ancient India, and whatever the divergent theories

¹Ibid, pp.76-77.

²Barnett, J.R.A.S., 1930,p.166; Bühler, Note on Manu (VIII,39); Hopkins,India, Old and New, pp.221f; Ghoshal (I.H.Q.,VI,658-63) criticises their views.

³Also Śānti P. LVI,43f; N.C.Bandopadhyaya, Economic Life,pp.118f; S.K.Das, Economic History, pp.9f.

⁴Ghoshal, Agrarian System, pp.81-103.

of the legal literature on this point, in practice the tillers of the soil were the ultimate owners of lands, the king's rights being normally confined to eviction for non-payment of taxes. Regarding public land, therefore, the king was entitled only to sovereignty; but his proprietary right extended to his own estates, including his right over forests, mines etc¹. There is in fact no genuine evidence for ascribing to the king the ultimate ownership of the soil². The king's relations with cultivators can be better explained by reference to his duty of protection of his subjects, in return for which he received revenue from the cultivators, and so long as the latter paid their dues, the ownership of the soil remained with them³. Though we have no clear evidence to show what view prevailed in ancient Assam, we may be sure that, as in other parts of India, the royal claim to ultimate ownership, if made at all, had no effect on the peasant, who paid his dues to the state and who was, therefore, the real owner of the soil.

This question of ownership will also be clear from the consideration of the system of land tenure in Assam and from the land grants, by which lands were donated by the kings.⁴ As rightly observed by Keith, 'when the king donated lands, he

¹Revenue System, pp.167f; Baden Powell, Indian Village Community, p.208; J.Manohan, E.History of Bengal, pp.142f; also Stein, Megasthenes and Kauṭilya, pp.93f,127f.

²Jayaswal, Hindu Polity, II, pp.173-85.

³Ibid, pp.17f.

⁴Nowgong grant; Bargāon grant; Gauhāti grant.

granted not ownership but privileges, such as the right to receive dues and maintenance from the cultivators¹.

(b) Custom Duties and Tolls: Another important source of revenue was the custom duty on commodities, which, according to Kautilya, was in the charge of an official called panyādhyakṣa. The Tezpur grant of Harjjara mentions the collection of duties on merchandise carried in keeled boats². The nature of the levy is not mentioned. The law givers declare that it should vary from one-tenth to one-fiftieth of the value of goods³. We have no information about custom houses. The said grant refers to the levying of śulka (tolls), collected by the Kaivartas (fishermen) on the bank of the Brahmaputra. The law books recommend the collection of such dues, ranging from one-sixth to one-twentyfifth⁴. We have no information about road ~~cess~~ and other traffic duties.

(c) Mines: The Bargāon grant mentions that the state derived profit from copper mines (kamalākāra). Kautilya places them in charge of ākārā-dhyakṣa and makes them a state monopoly; individually owned mines were also not rare. We have evidence of the washing of gold from the rivers of Assam and working in iron, particularly by the Khāsis, and of salt manufacture by the Nagās⁵. During the Āhom rule working in gold was

¹Camb.Hist.of India, I, pp.132f.

²J.B.O.R.S., 1917, pp.508-514.

³Arthasāstra, II, VIII; Manu, VII, 130-32; Gautama, 24-27;

⁴Arthasāstra, II. Vaśiṣṭha, IX, 26-27.

⁵Chap.V, Section 2, pp. 568f

extensively practised by the Śaṅowāls, who had to pay a custom duty to the state. This is confirmed by the Muslim source Frathiya-i-Ibrieyah¹. The artisans, therefore, had to pay their normal dues to the state.

(d) Other Levies and Incidental Charges: There were other taxes and charges, levied occasionally on the subjects. Kautilya enumerates a number of them, such as the charges on smiths, and other craftsmen, prostitutes, building sites, religious endowments, income tax, forests, fruits, flowers, heads of cattle, horses, hide and skin, to which must be added as sources of state revenue spoils of war, tributes, voluntary contributions, unclaimed property, fines, etc². The Kamauli grant is important in this connection. It states that the two villages of Śāntipātaka and Mandarā, donated to a Brāhmaṇa were 'to be provided with all sources of revenue': (sarvāyopāya-samyuktam) and 'to be made free from all kinds of regular and irregular taxes' (karopaskaravarjjitam)³.

Uparikara, utkhetana, and the dues to be paid by the cultivators in connection with the entry of chaurōdharana and cāṭa-bhāṭa, are mentioned in other grants⁴. Hoernle explains uparikara as taxes on tenants who have no proprietary right over lands and utkhetana as imposts⁵. Barnett takes uparikara as the

¹J.A.S.B., XXX, I, pp.49f; J. N Sircar, J. B. O. R. S., I, 179-195

²Arthasāstra, V; Śukra, II.

³Line 51.

⁴Nowgong grant; Bargāon grant; Gauhāti grant, etc.

⁵J.A.S.B., LXVI, I, 128f.

Tamil 'melvāram' or the crown's share of the produce¹. Ghoshal takes it as a tax on temporary tenants; he adds that in the grants of Assam, the officers collecting uparikara and utkhetana were oppressors. He therefore takes both the taxes as irregular revenue which 'bore hardly on the cultivators'². Fleet explains uparikara as a 'tax levied on cultivators who have no proprietary rights in the soil'³. B.K.Barua⁴ supports him. But in our opinion these interpretations are not tenable. Uparikara has nothing to do with the tax, levied on temporary cultivators, or upon those who had no proprietary right over lands; Upari here is obviously a preposition with the sense of the latin super or extra and uparikara, therefore, means an extra revenue derived from all classes of cultivators, both permanent and temporary. Utkhetana may have meant any kind of tax, levied on specified occasions⁵ as an emergency measure, including even levies on the feudatories. So while both uparikara and utkhetana may be included among the list of extra levies, their collection may not have involved acts of oppression. The officers collecting them, like the Auparika and the Utkhetaka were not private persons but state officers, and if they were oppressors at all, others like the rājñīs, rājaputras, etc. included in the list of persons, forbidden to

¹J.R.A.S., 1930, pp.165-66.

²I.H.Q., VII, pp.384-89; Revenue System, p.210; Agrarian System, pp.39,61.

³C.I.I., III, p.98.

⁴Cultural History, I, pp.81-82.

⁵Ghoshal, Revenue System, pp.224,299.

enter agrahāras, should be treated as such. The śāsana only refers to the nature of the Brahmadeya land, made immune from all exactions. Both uparikara and utkhetana were extra or irregular levies, payable by all cultivators, and the state collected them only as an emergency measure, as recommended by the Hindu texts¹.

The Chauroddharana was another irregular or extra tax included in the list of taxes from which exemptions were granted to the Brāhmaṇa donees in the grants of Ratnapāla² and Indrapāla³. In the Nowgong grant the land assigned to the donee is forbidden to be entered by the Chauroddharanika along with the others. Fleet takes Chauroddharana as 'with the exemption of the right to fines imposed upon thieves'. Vogel takes it as indicating that the donee was excluded from the special privilege of the punishment of thieves. R.D.Banerji takes it in the sense of the right of extirpation of robbers⁴. N.G.Majumdar takes it as 'with police protection'⁵. Ghoshal takes it as an oppressive tax imposed upon the villagers for protection against thieves, and further adds, on the basis of the grants of Assam, that it was levied for the maintenance of the village police, and was assigned to the donee along with the land itself⁶. The fact appears to be that the donees were

¹Arthasāstra, V; Sukra, II.

²Bargāon grant.

³Gauhāti grant.

⁴E.I., XIV; XV.

⁵Ins.of Bengal, III.

⁶I.H.Q, V, pp.277-79.

exempted from any provision in the shape of money and food to be given to the police officers who might enter their land in connection with the apprehension of thieves, as usually done in villages not exempted. Similarly the Brāhmaṇas were exempt from payments in connection with the entry of Cāṭas and Bhāṭas (cāṭabhāṭa pravesam), or regular and irregular military and police officers. All these were, therefore, included in the list of irregular levies to the state.

Another source of revenue was from the imposition of fines. The grant of Harjjara, referring to a sāsana, points out that any violation of it will be dealt with a fine of hundred cowries¹.

(iii) Items of Expenditure: The revenue had to be spent with an eye to the yearly budget, which according to Hindu texts should be a surplus one². Money had to be spent for specific ends³ and on productive and unproductive enterprises⁴. It was one of the aims of the kings of Assam to protect wealth and spend it properly⁵. Bhāskara judiciously applied or distributed the revenue: (yathāyatha - muṣita - karaṇikara ya - vitarana)⁶. Money was primarily spent for the expenses of the royal family, state officers and general administration; a considerable amount may have been spent on gifts and grants to the Brāhmaṇas and

¹J.B.O.R.S., 1917, pp.508-514.

²Yājñavalkya, I, 317.

³Kāmandaka, V, 76:(Kāle cāsya vyayaṃ Kuryāt trivarga parivr̥dhaye).

⁴Arthaśāstra, II; Śukra, II, 338-38.

⁵Khonāmukhi grant, VI2.

⁶Nidhanpur grant, 36.

religious purposes¹. We have no detailed information about the spending of revenue.

(iv) Revenue Officers: As the head of every department the king must have had a personal eye to income and expenditure, and was helped by a finance minister. We have already mentioned a few petty revenue officers like the toll collectors, (kaivartas), the tax collector, Dattakarapūrṇa, and the collectors of extra revenues, like uparikaras and utkheṭana. Besides them, there were others in charge of stores and the royal treasury, like the Bhāṇḍāgārādhi-kṛta and Koṣṭhāgārika². From the evidence of the Arthasāstra³ the former may have been in charge of the royal store-houses, and the latter in that of the treasury. The Nidhanpur grant⁴ mentions that the Mahāsāmanta Divākara was in charge of the Chāṇḍāgāra⁵. These two officers may have corresponded to the Sannidhātā, whose duties are enumerated in the Arthasāstra⁶. The name of the officer in charge of the entire collection of revenue, the Somāharta of Kauṭilya⁷, is not known. There were other minor officers, such as clerks, accountants and scribes, attached to the department. The most important part of the revenue

¹Tezpur grant of Vanamāla, VV 28-29; Gauhāti grant, V 10;

²Nidhanpur grant; Gauhati grant. Subhankarapāṭaka grant, V 7 etc.

³Bk.II, IV-V.

⁴Last Plate.

⁵See Ghoshal, Revenue System, p.224.

⁶Bk.II, V.

⁷Ibid.

administration was the department of records and survey works, which helped in the assessment of revenue.

(v) Land Survey and the Department of Records:

Epigraphy mentions various type of lands, such as kṣetra (arable land), khila (waste land) and vāstu (building sites). The Bargāon grant further mentions apakṛṣṭabhūmi (inferior land)¹. The grants indicate that some sort of classification was made in order to determine their nature and to be conversant with the amount of revenue that would accrue from a particular plot.

Inscriptions prove that both collective and individual land tenures were known. Both practices have been in use from the earliest times. While some writers are of opinion that collective ownership preceded individual², others hold the contrary view³; but the truth seems to lie in the fact that from the time when the right over land was recognised, arable lands were held individually and by the family members, but waste lands, forests, etc. were held in common, sometimes by the whole village⁴. As Macdonell and Keith hold, there 'is nothing to show that the community as such owned or held land'⁵. The land grants of Assam show that lands were given individually

¹J.A.S.B. LXVI, I, p.118; also K.S., p.107 (fn7) (for different views)

²Maine, Early History of Institutions, pp.77f; Village Community in East and West; Leveley, Primitive Property (Tr.Marriat); Ghoshal, Agrarian System, p.2.

³J.S.Lewinski, The Origin of Property, II, pp.6-18.

⁴N.C.Bandopadhyaya, Economic Life, 89f, 108f, 122; S.K.Das, Economic History, p.9f; B.Powell, Indian Village Community, pp.7f; Hopkins, India, Old & New, pp.209-231.

⁵Vedic Index, I, p.100.

and forests, mines, etc. belonged to the state. This system of land tenure is known now as Rāyatwārī¹. One difference from the present system lies in the fact that not only arable lands, but also those including pastures, water reservoirs, etc. could be held by a single person. By the Tezpur grant of Vanamāla, land was granted to Indoka, furnished with fertile fields and reservoirs of water. The Bargāon grant records the grant of a plot of land to Vīradatta, which included houses, paddy fields, dryland, water, cattle pastures, waste lands, etc. of whatever description, inclusive of any place within its borders. The Nidhanpur grant records the grant of lands to a number of Brāhmaṇas individually, but water, pastures etc. may have been held in common. The grant further shows that there were rules guiding such a land tenure. When lands granted by Bhūtivarman became liable to revenue on account of the loss of copper plates, Bhāskara renewed the grant to the Brāhmaṇas, 'who had been enjoying the grant in the manner of bhūmi cchidra, so that no tax is levied on it as long as the sun, the moon and the earth will endure'².

While lands granted to Brāhmaṇas were made revenue free and immune from all oppressions and confiscation, the grants do not help us in determining the ordinary arable land tenure of the cultivators. The mention of bhūmicchidranyāya³, is,

¹Ghoshal, Agrarian System, pp.77f, Revenue System, p.45; B.Powell, Land System, I, pp.180f; II, 467f; Vinogradoff, Outlines of Historical Jurisprudence, I, pp.325-26.

²Third Plate.

³cf. Arthasāstra, II, II.

however, important. Fleet explains bhūmicchidra as 'a fissure (furrow) of the soil'¹. Oppert translates chidra as 'a field unfit for cultivation'. In the opinion of K.M.Gupta, bhūmicchidra means all lands, and the meaning of bhūmicchidranyāya, is the rule relating to boundaries in connection with land grants². Barnett, explaining bhūmicchidranyāya, holds that the donees holding such lands became merely tenants-at-will³. Ghoshal explains it as 'the maxim of the uncultivated land'. It means also the granting of the full right of ownership that can be acquired by a person making a fallow land cultivable for the first time⁴. Bühler⁵ refers to the expression in the Vaijayantī (Bhūmikhanda, Vaisyādhyāya, 18) where it is explained as Kṛṣyayogyā Ghūh. The compound must be resolved as Kṛṣi+ayogyā (unfit for cultivation). Besides the Nidhanpur grant, the expression also occurs in the Kamauli grant as: Ghūcchidrañ ca-akiñcita Karagrāhyam⁶ (an uncultivated land, wherefrom no revenue is to be realised) and Ghūcchidreṇeti - nisāyāt⁷ (as determined by the Ghūcchidra rule). Hence the expression Ghūcchidranyāya in both the grants means, as suggested by P.Bhattacharya, that no assessment is to be made on the land covered by the grant, 'just like unarable land', which is not assessable⁸. The reference

¹C.I.I., III, p.138.

²I.A., II, pp.73-79.

³J.R.A.S., 1931, pp.165-166.

⁴Revenue System, p.212 (fn); I.H.Q., VII, pp.384-89.

⁵E.I., I, p.74.

⁶Line 51..

⁷Line 62.

⁸K.S. (Intro) p.33 (fn. I); J.R.A.S., 1926, pp.488-89; E.I. XIX, p.121; E.I. II, pp.349f; Gaudalekhamālā, p.134.

is important, as it shows that there were lands which, like waste lands, were left unsurveyed by the state, and were not brought under any system of tenure or placed under the bhūmicchidranyāya.

A special kind of tenure was Brahmadeya, by which lands were granted to Brāhmanas and were regulated by special rules. Such grants were made either in the form of small plots, or whole villages, called agrahāras. Epigraphy bears testimony to both the types; if granted to a single person, such land was called ekabhoga, and if to several persons, the land granted was ganabhoga. Such lands, as we have noted, were made revenue free and immune from all harassments. The Nowgong grant granting lands to Brāhmanas, states the king's sāsaṇa thus: Be it known to you that this land, together with its houses, paddy fields, dryland, water, cattle pastures, etc., of whatever kind it may be, as far as any place within its borders, and into which land entry is prohibited to all Rājās, Rājaputras, Rānakas, etc., and any other person who may cause trouble on account of the fastening of elephants, the fastening of boats, the searching for thieves, the exercise of authority, the infliction of punishment, etc.¹. The Nidhanpur grant further states that such agrahāras with all kinds of revenue were given perpetually to the donees. It further indicates

¹Nowgong grant.

that, owing to the loss of the copper plates, the land became liable to revenue and therefore a fresh sāsana had to be issued, confirming the original land grant to the heirs of the former donees¹. This epigraph proves that the registration of all grants was essential, in the absence of which even Brahmadeya lands, like ordinary arable lands, were liable to all kinds of taxes. It further confirms that it was the duty of the state to make periodical examination of claims and titles to land grants.

Epigraphy mentions endowments to temples and other religious institutions, which came to be known as dharmottara and devottara. An early reference to religious endowments in Mṛgasikhāvana near about Nālandā, made by Devavarman, occurs in I-tsing². Vanamāla not only repaired the fallen temple of Śiva, but also made a large gift of lands, elephants, gold etc. to the deserving³. Ratnapāla erected temples in Durjayā⁴. Vaṭabhadeva established a bhaktasālā near the temple of Mahādeva, for the maintenance of which he granted seven villages along with their woods, thickets, people, water and land: (sajhāta - viṭapa - grāmān - sajanān - sajalasthalān dadau)⁵. These endowments were under temple priests, though

¹Third Plate.

²Life, Intro, pp.XXXVI f.

³Tezpur grant, V 24.

⁴Gauhāti grant, V 10.

⁵E.I., V, pp.181f.

often supervised by the state. The practice was continued under the Vaiṣṇava Reformation of the 15th century A.D., and such temples became real centres for the diffusion of religious learning and social activities.

All these classifications¹ of land are indicative of an elaborate system of land survey, by which specific divisions were made on the basis of productiveness in measures of paddy. There was also a system of the demarcation of the boundaries of each plot on its eight sides (aṣṭasīmā) - (north, east, south, west, north-east, north-west, south-east and south-west). The land granted by Vanamāla was furnished with eight boundary marks². In the Nidhanpur grant, the boundaries of the Mayūrasālmalāgrahāra are given in detail³. The demarcations were made, with the help of hills, mounds, trees, pits, ponds, tanks, river beds and other natural barriers. Sometimes trees were planted to mark boundaries; The grant of Dharmapāla refers to the planting of a Sālmali tree and a bamboo post⁴. The definition of boundaries, in short, almost corresponds to the instructions in the texts⁵.

¹During the Āhom rule the classifications were Rāyotwārī, Nisfikherāj (half-assessed), Lākherāj (revenue free) (which includes Brahmottara, Dharmottara and Devottara) and waste land tenure based upon a system of state lease (Hunter, Statistical Account of Assam, I, 49f; Physical & Political Geography of Assam, 154f).

²Tezpur grant (Last Plate).

³Lines 128-132.

⁴Subhankarapūtaka grant.

⁵Manu, VIII, 246-48.

The officer marking the boundaries was called *Ṣimāpradāīā*. In the Nidhanpur grant the *Nāyaka* of Chandrapurī, *Śriksikuṇḍa* was the *ṣimāpradāīā*. The system of measurement is not given in detail. In the grants the size of a particular plot of land was only expressed in terms of producing certain measures of paddy. The measurement was probably made by the *droṇa* (an area on which one *droṇa* of seeds could be sown). The *Ṣil-impur* grant mentions both the measures of *droṇa* and *pāṭaka*¹. It is impossible to give the actual area of either measure².

In the Gupta inscriptions a *pāṭaka* is equivalent to forty *droṇas*³. *Kauṭilya* uses the term *droṇa* as a measure of weight being equivalent to about 21 lbs⁴. *Droṇa* is used in the same sense in *Pāṇini*⁵. In modern Assam it stands for one *bighā* of land, but we cannot be sure that it stood for the same area during our period. In Gupta times it was certainly much larger⁶.

The department of accounts kept minute details of the nature of the land grants, which were duly registered. In Assam the grants were generally drafted approximately in accordance with the formulae given in the *Arthaśāstra*. The usual particulars are: place, donor and his ancestors, witnesses, purpose of the grants, exact area of the estate, recipient,

¹E.I, XIII, pp.289f.

²See Section 2 pp. 593-94.

³cf. Gunaighar Grant of Vainyagupta (I.H.Q.VI, 1930)

⁴Pranath, Economic Condition, pp.72f.

⁵See N.C.Bandopadhyaya, pp.178f, 271 f.

⁶Sircar, Select Ins.p.501.

duration of the grant, inheritance, inalienability thereof, any guaranteed immunity from tax, etc., testification to future rulers, corroboration from law books¹, king's name and title, names of the composer and engraver and date². Most of these particulars are noted in the grants. The witnesses of the Nidhanpur grant are Haradatta, Dundhunātha and others. The record office in the city was known as adhikaraṇa. The documents (karaṇas) were kept in charge of a Karaṇika, the registrar of documents. The Kāyasthas were the writers. The composer of the Nidhanpur grant was Vasuvarman and the engraver (sekhyakāra or takṣakāra) was Kālīyā³. The composer of the Puṣpabhadra grant was Anirudha, and Śrī Vīnita was the engraver⁴. Most of the copper plates contain the figure of an elephant, the seal and the name of the king with titles⁵. The study of these details gives us an impression that the whole system of record keeping was well-organised⁶, a close parallel of that which we find under the Guptas.

3. Department of Justice: It has aptly been remarked that Dharma or law is 'the king of kings'⁷. It is not known when and how the judiciary was organised in Assam. The sources of

¹Corroboration is made in the Nidhanpur grant (K.S.pp.10-11).

²Barnett, Antiquities of India, p.129.

³Nidhanpur grant, Last Plate.

⁴Last Plate.

⁵See Hoernle, J.A.S.B., LXVI, I, p.114.

⁶Ghoshal, Agrarian System, pp.50-51.

⁷Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 1-4, 12.

law, as given in the texts are the Vedas, Vyavahāra, ācāra or cāritram and ātmatuṣṭi¹, to which was added royal sāsanas and equity².

(i) Officers: In the epigraphs, the rulers are often described as the abode of justice³. They had certainly a hand in the administration of justice. The land grants contain ordinances promulgated by the rulers, which were to be observed by the officers and the subjects concerned, who otherwise were to be punished⁴. These sāsanas took the form of law, and they did not violate the rules laid down in the law books⁵. Hindu texts mention a prādivāka or the chief judge; and other judges called dharmādhikārins. We have in our grants reference to only a few officers. The Kamauli grant describes Govinda Gonandana as the dharmādhikāra, probably a judge. Vaidyadeva communicated the royal order through him⁶. Epigraphy mentions officers with titles such as Nyāyakarānika, Vyavahārika, Kāyastha and others in the headquarters of a district (viṣayādhikarāṇa)⁷. These seem to have had judicial functions. There were probably courts of justice in the centre and local units⁸. Each district had an adhikarāṇa with the viṣayādhipati

¹(See Kullūkaśastra's Com.on Manu, II,6).

²Arthasāstra, III.

³Gauhāti grant, V 15; Puṣpabhadra grant, VV 3-4; Nidhanpur grant.

⁴J.B.O.R.S., 1917, pp.508-514; Nowgong grant; Bargāon grant.

⁵K.S. pp.10-11.

⁶E.I. II, pp.347f.

⁷Nidhanpur grant; Nowgong grant etc.

⁸cf. Arthasāstra, Bk.III.

as the head. The term *adhikaraṇa* is variously interpreted. Basak takes it as 'an administrative board of a district'¹. Majumdar takes it as 'the royal tribunal in a city'². The *Mrcchakaṭika* refers to the king's judges under the name of *adhikaraṇikas* sitting in the court. The *adhikaraṇa* in the sense of a court of justice is mentioned in the *Dasakumāracarita*, and judges are called *dharmādhikaraṇas* in the *Pañcatantra*. Beni Prasad takes *adhikaraṇa* 'as the office and probably the court of a district officer and a secretariat and advisory council'³. In the Nidhanpur grant, the *adhikaraṇa* is mentioned in connection with the headquarters of a district officer. It is therefore probable that in Assam the *adhikaraṇa* was responsible not only for justice but also for revenue and other aspects of the administration. Thus the *Nyāyakarāṇika* of the Nidhanpur grant, Janārdanasvāmī not only dealt with justice but was also an adjudicator who had to inspect and decide if the boundaries of lands were properly demarcated or not, and to settle all cases of disputes arising out of land. Altekar takes the *nyāyakarāṇikas* as presiding judges⁴. The term *Vyavahārin* has been taken as an administering agent or a man of business⁵, the superintendent of law and commerce⁶, or in the sense of a judicial administrator and proceedings⁷.

¹Ashutosh Mukherji Silver Jubilee Volume, III, pt.II.

²Corporate Life in Ancient India, pp 64-65

³The State in Ancient India, p.297.

⁴State & Govt.in Ancient India, p.152.

⁵Basak, Ashutosh, Mukherji S.J. Volume, III, pt.II; Pargiter, I.A.1930; Ghoshal, Revenue System, pp.205f, 213f.

⁶Arthasāstra, V, 3.

⁷cf. Barua, Old Brāhmi Ins.of Udayagiri and Kandagiri, pp.245f

Hoernle takes vyavahārins of the grants simply as traders¹, which is probably wrong, since the vyavahārin is mentioned in the list of officials connected with the execution of land grants, for instance Haradatta of the Nidhanpur grant, and was therefore probably a judicial administrator. This seems to be confirmed by the law books and the inscriptions of Aśoka². But we cannot be sure of the Vyavahārin's functions in Assam, as these are not enumerated in the grants. It is probable that he was a judicial administrator or a lawyer, whose chief duty consisted in interpreting laws in connection with boundary disputes of a district.

(ii) Judicial Procedure and Punishments: We have no details of judicial procedure in Assam, as given in the texts³.

Epigraphs mention two types of police officers, chauroddharanika and cāṭa-bhāṭa⁴. The former was the same as chauroddhātṛ or chauragrāha of the texts. He was a petty officer of the police department, charged with the apprehension of thieves⁵. His other function may have consisted in presenting a culprit in the court for trial. The duties of the cāṭa-bhāṭa have not been well defined. Vogel takes cāṭa or cāra as the head of a parganā, whose duty is to collect revenue and apprehend

¹J.A.S.B., LXVI, I, 128f.

²D.R. Bhandarkar, Aśoka, p.75.

³Yājñavalkya, II, 22.

⁴Nowgong grant; Bargāon grant.

⁵Altekar, p.152; Ghoshal, The Beginnings of Historiography etc., 192f; Beni Prasad, State in Ancient India, p.405.

criminals, and bhāṭa as subordinate to cāṭa¹. Bhagavan Lal Indraji explains the term as cātān prati - bhāṭah, i.e. soldiers against robbers². In the Prasnavyākaraṇāṅga, they are described as greedy and troublesome³. In Yājñavalkya they are mentioned along with thieves and record keepers. In the Surāt plates of Vyāghrasena they are associated with police and military duties⁴. The Talcher grant of Kula-stambha mentions them along with other officers and records that they tried to please their rulers⁵. Bāṇa mentions cāra-bhāṭas who were hated by people owing to their greed and cruelty⁶. PranMath holds that cāṭas were police officers and bhāṭas were officers with combined police and military duties, 'stationed at the śhānas for the protection of the countryside against thieves and criminals and to assist the revenue collectors in enforcing payment'⁷. Though details are lacking from the grants, it appears probable that cāṭa-bhāṭas had other duties than those of the police and military, and served also as spies. Like the chauroddharanika they had the duty of the apprehension of criminals, mainly in the country parts.

Inscriptions mention two other officers, Dāṇḍika and Dandapāsika⁸, who were probably associated with the department

¹Antiquities of the Chamba state, p.132.

²I.A., IX, p.175.

³Also E.I. XXI, pp.219-21.

⁴E.I., XI, pp.219-21.

⁵E.I., XII, p.157; XVI, p.14.

⁶H.C.(Cowell), pp.229-38.

⁷Economic condition, Intro, p.4 and pp.60-65.

⁸Nowgong grant; Gauhāti grant; Bargāon grant.

of justice and the infliction of punishment. Ghoshal takes them as police officers¹. But it is probable, as held by Beni Prasad, that they were 'judicial officers who are invested with the power of punishment'². Dāndika may be taken as a magistrate who pronounced verdict in the court, while the actual order was carried out by the Dandapāsika, who inflicted punishment. The latter, as suggested by Altekar, may have had also the duty of police who carried nooses to catch thieves³. Their actual duties in Assam are not defined. The scribe attached to the department was known as Kāyastha. The Nidhanpur grant mentions the scribe Dundhunātha.

The procedure of trials, as given in the texts⁴ is not given in epigraphs. Witnesses are, however, mentioned⁵; but it is not known whether they were summoned for trial. That justice was one of the chief aims of the administration is shown by the grants of some of the rulers, who are described as the abode of justice and righteousness, which suggests that these kings took care that officers like the Nyāyakaranikas and the Vyvahārins imparted justice fairly. We do not know whether resort was taken to oaths and ordeals for which the tribes of Assam have been noted. We have also no significant

¹Beginnings of Historiography, etc. pp.192f.

²State in Ancient India, p.405.

³State & Govt. in Ancient India, pp.152,163.

⁴Sukra, IV, 12-13; Yājñavalkya, I, 368

⁵Nidhanpur grant (Third Plate).

record of the punishments meted to criminals, except fines¹. The release of prisoners on such occasions as the birthday of the king is mentioned in the Nidhanpur grant of Bhāskara, who was the foremost among the just and the righteous². We may assume that punishments were much the same as in other parts of India, ranging from reproof and fines to execution³.

4. Military Organisation: The kingdom of the size of Kāmarūpa could not have existed without a well organised army. The success of this department depended upon a king's military qualities and organising capacity. Epigraphy shows that most of the rulers fought bravely in the battlefield. Balavarman I endured fire-like arrows in the battle and conquered his enemies⁴. Bhūti-varman defeated his enemies by dint of his powerful arms⁵. Suśthitavarman's feet were illumined by the jewels of the heads of kings brought under control by him⁶. Bhāskara vanquished a number of kings in battle, who spoke only in praise of him⁷. Harjjara was an affliction to his enemies⁸, was like Bhīma to his enemies and Jisnu in battle (Bhīmōri-varge samareṣu Jisnuh)⁹. Vanamāla resembled the sun in the battlefield by reason of his driving forth the darkness of the

¹J.B.O.R.S., 1917, pp. 508-14.

²Also Gauhāti grant, V 15.

³cf. Manu, VIII, 129f: (who mentions Vāgdanda, dhigdanda,

⁴Doobi grant, VII. dhanadanda and lastly vāhadanda).

⁵Ibid, V 25.

⁶Ibid, V 41.

⁷Ibid, V 49.

⁸Nowgong grant, V 10.

⁹Tezpur grant, V 12.

furious elephants of defeated enemies¹. Prālabha's footstool was illumined by the light of the crest jewels of all rājās². Balavarman III³, Brahmapāla⁴, Purandarapāla⁵, Ratnapāla⁶, Indrapāla⁷ and Harṣapāla⁸, all distinguished themselves by defeating their enemies. Dharmapāla won victory in the battlefields that were decorated with the flower-like pearls struck off from the heads of elephants killed by his sword⁹. Statements such as these indicate that the rulers possessed military qualities and fought on the battlefield, though it may be that some of the descriptions are poetic exaggerations. In any case it was not possible for the king to run the department single handed; so he had to appoint other officers for the purpose.

(i) Spies and Ambassadors - Foreign Policy and Diplomacy:

The importance of the system of espionage in ancient India is well known. Spies not only helped in the ordinary apprehension of criminals but also informed the king of internal trouble and impending external invasion and obtained

¹Ibid, V 18.

²Ibid, V 7.

³Nowgong grant, V 24.

⁴Bargāon grant, VII.

⁵Gauhāti grant, V 12.

⁶Ibid, V 9; Bargāon grant, VV 14f.

⁷Gauhāti grant, V 15.

⁸Khonāmukhi grant, V 10.

⁹Ibid, V 13.

information on the resources of an enemy's state. The Kālikā Purāna lays down rules for the appointment of spies in different departments, but the details are lacking. Both spies and ambassadors formed an important element of the foreign policy of the state¹.

The diplomatic relations of the rulers of Assam with neighbouring states and feudatories are mentioned in the grants. The Doobi grant records that the defeated tributary rājās bowed down to Sthitavarman². Bhāskara was well-acquainted with the sixfold royal policy³. The idea of the circle of states (maṇḍala) is also indicated by epigraphy. Bhāskara made the circle of related powers attached to himself and equalled the powers of the circle of his feudatories by the strength of his own arms⁴. The princes who were hankering after the conquest of each other's territory in the regions of hills and valleys, submitted to Harjjara for peace⁵, evidently because of his central position and influence in the kingdom. The Hāyūnthāl⁶ and the Gauhāti grant⁷ mention the defeated feudatories as bowing down in the council halls of Harjjara and Indrapāla respectively.

¹cf. Manu, VII, 156f (He mentions six principles of the foreign policy of the state: peace, war, balance of power, expedition, alliance, and creation of differences).

²v 37.

³Nidhanpur grant.

⁴Ibid, 34f.

⁵Hāyūnthāl grant, V 12.

⁶Ibid, VV 13-14.

⁷v 15.

War and diplomacy, therefore, formed an important element of the state policy. Epigraphs also refer to Mahāsāmantas and Sāmantas, who as feudatories helped the king with military contingents. It was the policy of the rulers to appoint them as commanders in the country parts and even in the central administration. The Mahāsāmanta and Senādhyakṣa Sucūta and the Sāmanta Balādhyakṣa Citta Ghona Bhaṭṭa Jiu find mention in the Tezpur Rock epigraph of A.D.829-30¹. Bhāskara appointed the Mahāsāmanta Divākara in the post of a bhāṇḍāgārika. The vassals often came to the capital to pay respect to the king². Inscriptions also mention other chieftains, such as Rājā, Rājaputra, Rānaka, Rājanyaka, Rājavallabha and others, who ruled feudatory states as the king's subordinates³. The Rājaputra was the son of the feudatory Rājā. The Rānakas and the Rājanyakas were probably minor feudatories inferior to Rājā. The term Rājanaka occurs in the grants of the Chamba state; in the opinion of Vogel it corresponds to Rāṇā, and was applied to the vassals of the local Rājās⁴. In the Rājatarāṅginī, however, Rājanaka is used in the sense of a minister⁵. Prānātha takes the Rājanakas along with Sāmantas and Rājaputras as land holding aristocracy, who had to supply the king with men and materials⁶. The Kamauli grant proves that the king sometimes displaced disloyal feudatories and established new ones.⁷

¹J.B.O.R.S. 1917, pp.508f.

²Tezpur grant of Vanamāla, V 30.

³Nowgong grant; Bargāon grant; Guākuchi grant, etc.

⁴Antiquities of the Chamba State, pp.110-121.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Economic Condition, pp.55f, 128f.

⁷E.I. II, pp.347f.

The Rāja-Vallabhas appear to be king's favourites or followers.

Both by peaceful means and war, therefore, the rulers of Assam tried to bring the feudatories under their control. The way in which they kept them in subjugation is revealed from grants; the royal *sāsana* implies that all the feudatories had to abide by the command of the sovereign¹, otherwise they would be properly dealt with. This is shown by the grant of Harjjara, which refers to the settlement of a dispute within the territory of the Mahāsāmanta Sucitta. It refers to a quarrel between boatmen, towers of boats, and local vassals, for tolls. The settlement was made by fixing the boundaries within which the boatmen were to pass by the midstream; anyone transgressing it was made liable to a heavy fine².

The rulers held diplomatic relations with contemporary powers, evidently for political ends. The undying alliance³ between Bhāskara and Harṣa of Kanauj, made through the instrumentality of Hamsavega, had an important bearing on the political history of Northern India during the early part of the 7th century A.D. Hamsavega was quite equal to the occasion. The way he presented the matter before Harṣa and won his confidence, resulting in the alliance, which lasted until the death of both the monarchs, called for a man of ability befitting a royal ambassador⁴. Another means of cementing

¹Nowgong grant; Bargāon grant, etc.

²J.B.O.R.S. 1917, pp.508-514.

³H.C.(Cowell), pp.211f.

⁴Ibid, pp.217-18.

alliances was by matrimony. The Rājatarāṅginī mentions the alliance between Meghavāhana and the Kamarupa king through the marriage of Amṛtaprabhā, daughter of the latter, with the Kāśmīra ruler¹. Another important alliance was between Harṣadeva and Jayadeva II of Nepal in the 8th century A.D. through the marriage of Rājyamatī to the Nepal king, which had an important effect on the Kāmarūpa king's conquest of Gauda, Odra, Kalinga, Kōśala and other lands². The Kāmarūpa kings were also related to the Later Guptas, the Maukharis and the Vardhanas. As mentioned in the Paśupati grant, the Nepal king's mother-in-law, Vatsadevī, was the daughter of the Maukhari king Bhogavarmaṇ, who married a daughter of Ādityasena. Thus Harṣa's wife was a granddaughter of Ādityasena³. Purandarapāla's marriage with a princess of the Śadyā region⁴ served the similar purpose of a diplomatic alliance. Subsequent diplomatic relations were held with the Pālas of Gauda and the rulers of Orissa⁵.

(ii) War and Ethics of War: The organisation of the military machine did not mean that wars were undertaken at all times. The conquering king tried to avoid wars as far as possible. Manu lays down that war is to be resorted to when all pacific

¹Bk.III, 9.

²I.A., IX, p.181.

³Ibid, pp.178f.

⁴Gauhāti grant, V 13; K.S., pp.130f; Section 4, pp. 388-89

⁵Section 3 and 4, pp.

means failed¹. A number of rules were laid down for fighting in the right manner; but in actual practice these were not strictly followed in any part of India. The most important feature of these rules was the consideration shown to the defeated prince, who was usually restored to his kingdom or replaced by one of his relations. Inscriptions show that some feudatories were appointed even to posts in the centre. The Mahāsāmanta Divākara for instance was appointed to the post of the bhāṇḍ-āgārikā². Defeated rājās were sometimes given an important place in the state affairs. As we have stated, during the coronation of Harjjara, they were also present³. In Indrapala's audience hall, they sat reverently bowing before the king⁴. It appears probable that the rulers were guided at times by a moral standard as regards actual fighting; but there is no evidence in our records that medical aid was given on the battle field or non-combatants left undisturbed in wars, as laid down in the texts⁵.

(iii) Composition of the Army: It appears that no hard and fast rule was made for the recruitment of soldiers from a particular class, though Kautilya lays down that a trained Kṣatriya constitutes the best of all soldiers⁶. Even Manu refers to the taking up of arms by the Brāhmaṇas in times of

¹cf. Manu, VII, 198: (Sāmnā dānena bhedena samastai athavā pr̥thak ī vijetum prayate tārinnayudhena kadācana); Śānti P.

²Nidhanpur grant (Third Plate).

LXIX, 24.

³Hāyūnthāl grant, VV 13-14.

⁴Gauhāti grant, V 15.

⁵Manu VII, 202-203; Śānti P. XCV, 18.

⁶Arthasāstra, VI, I; IX, 2.

need. This is confirmed by classical sources. An important reference to this is made by the Subhankarapāṭaka grant, which states that the Brāhmaṇa Himāṅga was expert in the discharge, flight and fall of arrows and skilled in different methods of attack and defence¹.

Six kinds of troops (ṣaḍaṅgabala) are mentioned in traditional literature, consisting of maula (hereditary), bhṛtaka (hired), śreṇī (guild army), mitra (ally), amitra (enemy) and āṭavi (forest army)². We have no details about any of them in Assam. The division of the army was the traditional fourfold one. The Nidhanpur grant mentions that Bhāskara's camp at Karṇasuvarṇa consisted of splendid ships, elephants, horses and infantry (mahā - nau - hastyaśva - patti)³. The city of Hāruppeśvara during the time of Vanamāla was occupied on all sides by the numerous troops of elephants, horses and foot soldiers⁴. Ratnapāla's capital Durjayā was crowded by his brave soldiers, who were hankering after the plunder of his enemy's camps⁵. We have no details about the commanders in charge of the different units of the army, as given in the texts⁶.

¹Subhankarapāṭaka grant, V 20.

²Arthasāstra, VI, I.

³Lines 1-2.

⁴Tezpur grant.

⁵Bargāon grant, L.30; Khonāmukhi grant, V 5.

⁶Arthasāstra, X; Manu VII; Śānti Parva, C; Udyoga Parva, CIV.

Cavalry: Inscriptions refer to horses in more than one place¹. We have already mentioned that cavalry formed an important element of the army of Bhāskara. The grant of Vallabhadeva indicates that horses were imported from Kāmbhoja². The Visṇu Purāṇa states that Kṛṣṇa, after defeating Naraka, took away from Prāgjyotiṣa as many as twenty one lakhs of horses from Kāmbhoja and other excellent breeds³. The location of Kāmbhoja is disputed⁴. The Mahābhārata seems to locate it in the N-Western India. But the Brhatsaṃhitā locates Kāmbhoja along with Prāgjyotiṣa and the Lauhitya in the east⁵, and the Pag Som Zon Zan locates Kām-po-tsa (Kāmbhoja) in Upper and Eastern Lushai Hills between Assam and Burma. Whatever the location, it appears that the Kāmarūpa rulers imported horses from Kāmbhoja. There are places like Manipur in Assam where ponies are the best of all Indian horses⁶. The Sabhā Parva (Ll, 15-16) states that Bhagadatta gave to Yudhiṣṭhira as presents horses of excellent breed and swift as the wind. The Tabaqāt - i - Nāsiri states that horses in large numbers were imported to Bengal and Assam from Tibet through mountain passes

¹Nowgong grant; Bargāon grant, etc.

²v 12.

³Bk.V, XXIX.

⁴N.Vasu, Bāṅger Jātia Itihāsa, p.172; J.C.Ghosh, B.I.XXIV, p.45; B.R.Chatterjee, Indian Cultural Influence in Cambodia, pp.278-79; Chanda, Gaudarājarnā-lā, p.37.

⁵XVI, V.I.

⁶Watt, Commercial Products of India, p.751.

in the north¹. The records, however, do not indicate that cavalry was greatly used in warfare. The Assamese foot-soldiers are said to have been more skilled than cavalry. This is testified by the historians of the Muslim invasions of Assam, who state that the Assamese were greatly frightened by the Muslim cavalry, but they succeeded in defeating and killing infantrymen². Inscriptions do not mention any particular officer commanding cavalry.

Elephantry: Elephants formed an important part of the army of Assam. The abundance of elephants in the forests of Assam is evidenced both by epigraphs³ and literature, including the classical sources⁴. The Śānti P. mentions that the easterners are noted for their skilful fighting with the help of elephants: (prācyā mātaṅga-yudheṣu kuśālāḥ)⁵. This is shown by the fact that Bhagadatta fought with troops of elephants⁶. Kauṭilya mentions that the elephants bred in places like Kalinga, Aṅga, Karūṣa and the East are the best⁷. The eastern country probably stands for Prāggyotiṣa. Kālidāsa writes that elephants were caught in the jungles of Assam⁸. The Viṣṇu purāṇa (V, XXIX) refers to 6000 elephants of Naraka. The figure is exaggerated.

¹Raverty, I, pp. 567-68; Elliot & Dawson, The History of Muhammadan India, II, pp. 311-12.

²J.B.O.R.S., I, p. 191.

³Nowgong grant; Bargāon grant.

⁴Chap. II, pp. 44 f

⁵101, 4.

⁶Udyoga Parva, CLXVI.

⁷Arthaśāstra (S.S.tr.) p. 54.

⁸Raghuvamśa, IV, V 84.

Yuan Chwang writes that in the southeast of Kāmarūpa, there were elephants in herds and therefore there was a good supply of elephants for war purposes¹. Troops of elephants were presented to Ratnapāla by the defeated kings². The biography of the pilgrim mentions that Bhāskara went to meet Harṣa with 20,000 elephants³; this figure too seems to be exaggerated, but confirms the Nidhanpur grant, which indicates that Bhāskara inherited from his brother a huge number of elephants⁴. A number of elephants were stationed in the victorious camp at Karnasuvarṇa⁵. Epigraphy also bears testimony to the fact that most of the rulers fought with the help of elephants. The title of the officer commanding the unit is not known; but epigraphs mention a petty servant, charged with the fastening of elephants (hastibandhaka)⁶.

Ships and Boats: The abundance of rivers in Assam and the extension of the kingdom towards the sea made the people well accustomed to the use of boats. Their acquaintance with the sea is indicated by the biography of Yuan Chwang⁷. Epigraphs refer to the royal boats in the Brahmaputra⁸. The grant of Harjjara contains a śāsana regulating the plying of boats to

¹Watters, II, 185f.

²Bargāon grant, Lines 28f.

³Life, pp.171f; Watters, I, p.348.

⁴Nidhanpur grant, V 21.

⁵Ibid, 1-2.

⁶Nowgong grant; Bargāon grant.

⁷Life, p.188.

⁸Nowgong grant; Bargāon grant.

avoid collisions between the royal boats and those of fishermen in the Brahmaputra¹. The Tezpur grant gives a description of the royal boats of the Brahmaputra near Hāruppasvara². Yuan Chwang states that Bhāskara went to meet Harṣa up the Ganges with a flotilla of 30,000 ships³. The figure is doubtful. His military followers along with those of Harṣa went by ships to attend the ceremony at Prayāga⁴. The classical⁵ and the Muslim sources⁶ point to the use of boats in large numbers by the Assamese⁷.

Epigraphy seems to allude to naval fights between Kāmarūpa and the neighbouring states. The Aḥsād inscription mentions that Mahāsenagupta's victory over Suṣṭhita was sung on the banks of the Brahmaputra⁸. The reference is perhaps to a naval engagement on the Brahmaputra. The fact that Bhāskara kept his ships ready in Karnasuvarna⁹ may also suggest that he had a naval battle with Śasāṅka. But both the allusions are doubtful. That Vaidyadeva won a naval victory over his enemies is proved by his Kamauli grant¹⁰. The officers in charge of this unit are not mentioned, except petty officers, such as Naubandhaka¹¹, in charge of the fastening of boats and Naurajjuka¹², in charge of the dragging of boats with the help of ropes.

¹J.B.O.R.S, 1917, pp.508f.

²v.30.

³Life, 171f; Watters, I, p.348.

⁴Life, p.186.

⁵Chap.II, pp. 43f

⁶J.B.O.R.S, I, p.186.

⁷See R.K.Mookerji, History of Indian Shipping & Maritime Activity, pp.225f.

⁸C.I.I, III, pp.206f.

⁹Nidhanpur grant, 1-2.

¹¹Nowgong grant; Bargāon grant.

¹⁰E.I.II, p.351.

¹²J.B.O.R.S.1917, pp.508f.

Infantry: Details about the foot soldiers are scanty. The Nidhanpur grant refers to them as patti¹. The Tezpur grant states that infantry along with other units of the army occupied all sides of the city of Hāruppeśvara². Of the soldiers of Ratnapāla, crowding the city of Durjayā, there were a number of foot soldiers, who were hankering after the plunder of the enemies' camps³. Inscriptions also point to rulers fighting with the help of foot soldiers, and the Muslim historians refer to the efficient fighting units of the Assamese infantry⁴.

Forts: The mountainous character of the land helped in the construction of forts, which, along with other natural barriers, played an important part against external invasions. The hill tribes of Assam lived in seclusion in well fortified villages; that is why we find so little or no reference to political relations between the kings of Kāmarūpa and their chiefs. The kings realised the importance of the construction of forts from early times, as emphasised by the writers on polity. Kauṭilya classifies them into water (audaka), mountain (pārvata), desert (dhānvana) and forest (vana) forts, serving their different purposes⁵. The Kālikā P. adds two more: earth (bhūmi) and tree forts (vrkṣa). The same work

¹VV 1-2.

²Tezpur grant of Vanamāla.

³Bargāon grant, Line 30; Khonāmukhi grant, V.5.

⁴J.B.O.R.S, I, p.191.

⁵Arthasāstra, II, III.

lays down rules for their construction, stating that they should be either triangular, semicircular, circular or square: (durgeṃ kurvan puram Kuryyātrikoṇam dhanurākṛtiṃ vartulaṅca catuskoṇam nānyathā nagaram caret)¹. The cities of Prāg-jyotiṣa², Ṣoṇitapura, Hāruppeśvara, and Durjayā, were well fortified both by natural barriers and forts. Prāgjyotiṣa, as described by the Viṣṇu P. (I,IV; V,XXIX) was well defended by a defence constructed by Muḍu. The same work refers to the fort at Agni Parvata in Ṣoṇitapura (Tezpur), ascribed to Bāna³. This is confirmed by the Kumāra-Haraṇa (V 194). The Bargāon grant, referring to the invincible city of Durjayā, states that it was encompassed by a rampart, furnished with a strong fence⁴. We have further actual remains of forts and embankments in Gauhāti⁵, Dimāpur⁶, Viśvanātha, Ratnapura⁷, Sadiyā⁸ and other places, which we have described in another place⁹. The evidence proves that the kings realised the importance of forts and other defences for the safety of the kingdom.

¹Chap.LXXXIV, VV 112f.

²The Mahābhārata refers to the well-defended city of Prāgjyotiṣa

³I, XXI; V, XXXII-XXXVII; P.Bhattacharya, J.A.S.B.V.(N.S.), in more than one place.

⁴Lines, 34-35.

pp.19-20.

⁵Dalton, J.A.S.B, XXIV, 1-4.

⁶Godwin-Austen, J.A.S.B, 1874, I, pp.2-3.

⁷Edwards & Mann, J.A.S.B, 1904, I, 254-261; Edwards, J.A.S.B. 1904(E.N.), 20-21; Dalton, J.A.S.B, XXIV, 20-21; Westmacott, J.A.S.B.IV, 190-91; J.A.R.S, VIII, 43-49.

⁸Hannay, J.A.S.B, XVII, I, pp.459f.

⁹Chap.V, Section 5, pp. 719f

(IV) Kinds of Warfare & Weapons used: Literary sources mention three kinds of warfare: prakāśa, kuṭa and tuṣṇīm yudha, based on the nature of fighting and the weapons used for the purpose¹. The first is explained as an open fight between equals, which is called a righteous war; the second consists in threatening from one side and assaulting from the other, or destroying the enemy when in trouble, or by bribes; while the third is to win over the leaders of the enemy by intrigues or other means, the last two being called unrighteous wars. To these are added what are called Khanḍa yudha (trench warfare) and ākāśa yudha (fighting from heights) and siege warfare². Details about these various kinds of warfare in Assam are lacking.

Wars were undertaken after sacrifices, consultation of omens and a meeting of the council. This is best illustrated by the nature of the fighting among the Assam tribes, which is very similar to the Hindu warfare. The surprise attack, or lying in ambush and then suddenly falling upon the enemy, was the chief strategy of these people, even against the British in recent times. An idea of the method of actual open fighting between the army of Kāmarūpa and Gauḍa is given in the Doobi grant of Bhāskara. This states that when the Gauḍa army arrived at the frontier, Bhāskara and Supratiṣṭha, though they were in their youth only, arrived at the scene with a handful of soldiers. They pierced through the huge troops of

¹Arthasāstra, VII, 10, 6. 2. *Ibid*, 10

mighty elephants of the Gauḍa army with sharp arrows; having destroyed the army of the enemy in a short space of time with sharp arrows and various types of deadly weapons, they in turn were attacked by a large number of elephants¹. An important allusion to siege craft is made by the historians of Bakhtiyar's invasion of Assam. This is an illustration of an unrighteous war, as given in the Arthasāstra, by which enemies were harassed to the extent of starving them to death. When Bakhtiyar invaded Kāmarūpa after his Tibetan campaign not a blade of grass or a stick of firewood could be found on the way, as the inhabitants of the passes set fire to them. Not a pound of food or a blade of grass could be found for their horses and cattle, and his followers had to kill their horses and eat them. When he reached the stone bridge on the Brahmaputra, his followers found the arches of the bridge destroyed. He was, therefore, compelled to take shelter in a temple, and as soon as the king of Kāmarūpa realised the helpless position of the Muslim army, he gave orders to his soldiers to build a stockade round the temple. The Muslims at last asked counsel from their leader, saying thus: 'if we remain like this we shall all have fallen into the trap of these infidels'. Then making a rush and attacking one corner of the stockade, they made their way out, but the Kāmarūpa soldiers followed them and destroyed the whole force².

¹Iv, 48-50.

²Raverty, *Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri*, pp.569f; *Riyāz-us-Salātin*, pp.65f.

This is a fine illustration of the fighting method of the soldiers of Assam. In any case, geography played an important part in the defence of the kingdom, unlike other parts of India, and the soldiers displayed no mean heroism. To kill or to be killed in war in defence of their country was never considered unrighteous but rather an act of special duty¹.

We have a few references to the types of weapons used in actual warfare. Kauṭilya speaks of various types, such as śakti, sūla, tomara (iron club), bhindipāla, (javelin) and gadā, besides swords, bows and arrows, in addition to armour of iron and skin². Most of these were used in Assam. The tribes particularly have always been expert archers, and most of them poison their arrows with aconite. Collections of their spears, arrows, swords, javelins and shields of hide, wood and bamboo in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford and the British Museum, London, give an idea of their extensive use³. The Doobi grant mentions sword, spear, discus, javelin, sharp arrows and other deadly weapons⁴. Indrapāla was a great archer (dhanurdhara)⁵. The Khonāmukhi grant refers to Dharmapāla's swordmanship⁶. Vallabhadeva is credited with the mastery of the art of archery⁷. We have already mentioned

¹cf. Śānti P., XCV, 7f.

²Arthasāstra, II, XVIII.

³The British Museum Hand Book to the Ethnographical Collections, 1910, pp.51,85.

⁴VV 48-50.

⁵Gaṅgākūchi grant (K.S. p.139).

⁶V 13.

⁷V 12.

that Himānga was expert in archery¹. The use of the churikā (dagger) is proved by the grant of Vallabhadeva². On the basis of the Arthasāstra, some writers point to the use of fire arms in ancient India³. But the weight of evidence proves that the use of canons and gunpowder was unknown until comparatively later times. The manufacture of gunpowder, however, in Assam perhaps after the 13th century A.D. during the Āhom period, is proved by a number of authorities. Gurdon writes that the Khasis 'knew the art of manufacturing gunpowder from saltpetre, sulphur and charcoal. It may be mentioned that the Jaintiā Rājās had canons'⁴. Tavernier observes 'that these people (Assamese) in ancient times first discovered gunpowder and guns, which passed from Assam to Pegu and from Pegu to China; this is the reason why the discovery is generally ascribed to the Chinese'. He adds that the 'gunpowder made in that country is excellent'⁵. We have no reference to the use of shields, but the tribes carry shields of hide, wood and bamboo during their raids. There is a passing reference to what may be a shield, in the Bargāon grant, which mentions the 'cloth which protects the king's broad chest'⁶; but this evidence is doubtful. The use of the

¹Subhāṅkarapāṭaka grant, V 20.

²E.I, V, pp.181f.

³J.C.Ghosh, I.H.Q, VII, 703-708; VIII, 267-271, 583-588.

⁴The Khāsis, pp.23f.

⁵Travels, II, 277; Voyages de J.B.Tavernier, II, pp.427f;
R.Maclagev, On Early Asiatic Fire Weapons, J.A.S.B., XLV, I,
pp.30-71.

⁶Lines, 34-35.

war-drum, though it does not find mention in epigraphs, is mentioned in literature, which refers to various types of drum, such as bherī, daṅkā, dīndīna, dundubhi, jayadhāka, rāmabherī and others¹. The use of banners (dhvaja and patākā) is mentioned in the Bargāon grant².

(V) Army officers: We have mentioned a few petty officers like hastibandhaka, naubandhaka, naurajjuka and others. As we have stated, the rulers went to war in person and they usually took a leading part in the organisation of the army. They were probably helped by a war minister. The Saciva, mentioned in the Kamauli grant, was, according to Kāmandaka, the minister of war with a number of military duties³. Vaidya-adeva served as a war minister under Kumārapāla of Gauḍa and fought against Tiṅgyadeva⁴. Under the war minister there was a commander-in-chief or general. The Nidhanpur grant mentions Śrī Gopāla as issuing a hundred commands and as qualified with five great sounds (prāptapañcamahāsabda). He was staying with Bhāskara in Karnasuvarna as the general of the army. The title pañcamahāsabda was probably conferred on him by Bhāskara because of his heroism in his war against Śasāṅka. The expression pañcamahāsabda has been variously explained. On the basis of the Rājataranginī, Bühler, Kielhorn

¹Kālikā Purāna, VI, V 40; Mādhavadeva, Ādikāṇḍa (Rāmāyaṇa)

²Lines 38f.

³Chap. XII.

⁴VV 10-14.

and Stein hold that it stands for five great titles, preceded by Mahā¹. Ghoshal thinks that it stands for a distinguished official and that an attempt was made to create a superior grade of officers in order to introduce efficiency in administration². P.Bhattacharya is of opinion that it stands for five officers preceded by Mahā³. But the weight of evidence, particularly the Mānasollāsa⁴ proves that the expression stands for five musical sounds and that it was often the privilege of using five musical instruments by the vassal rulers, conferred on them as a mark of distinction by their sovereign⁵. Gopāla, who was the general of the army in Karnasuvarṇa, may have received the privilege of using five musical instruments from his master Bhāskara, since he was the supreme commander of the army, next to the king and the war minister, if he was not the war minister himself, like Vaidya-deva, before his accession to the throne⁶.

The Hāyūnthāl grant mentions Śrī Guṇa as Mahāsenāpati who was also the supreme commander of the army under Harjjara⁷. Contemporary sources prove that the Mahāsenāpati was at the head of the army, next to the king and the war minister⁸.

¹Rājatarāṅgiṇī, IV, 140, 680.

²Kṛṣṇasvāmī Aiyanger Com. Vol. pp.30-32.

³K.S. p.42 (f.n.1). 4. 3. 12. 36 (Ed. G.K. Shrivastava, II, p.114) (Boroda, G.O.S., 1939)

⁴Fleet, C.I.L, III, pp.296-98; W.Elliot, I.A.V, p.251; S.K.Aiyanger, J.R.A.S.(Bombay), I, (N.S.) pp.238-48; Beni Prasad, State in Ancient India, pp.383-84.

⁵E.I., II, pp.347f.

⁶J.A.R.S., I, pp.109f.

⁷Altekar, State & Government in Ancient India, p.145.

There were other officers like Senādhyakṣa and Balādhyakṣa, posts which were held by feudatory chiefs. The post of the former was inferior to that of the Mahāsenāpati and the latter was inferior in rank to Senādhyakṣa. They were probably in command of the different units of the army in the country parts. This is revealed by the Tezpur Rock epigraph of Harjjara, which mentions Sucitta as the Mahāsāmanta Senādhyakṣa and Svāmī Citta Ghora Dakṣa as the sāmanta Balādhyakṣa¹. The Rānakas and Nāyakas of the grants were probably minor chiefs with military duties. There were others in charge of the different units of the army; but the details are lacking.

5. Administrative Divisions and Local Administration:

The detailed working of the local administration is not definitely known. The scanty materials that we have, indicate that an attempt was made to build the edifice upon local autonomy, at least in principle. The extension of the frontiers of the kingdom on all sides necessitated administrative divisions, and the rulers may have followed the traditional system of ancient India, which 'was built upon the basis of decentralisation on principle', and extended certain amount of autonomy to the units². But in practice on most occasions, political powers were curtailed in the local units, including

¹J.B.O.R.S., 1917, pp.508-514.

²R.K.Mockerji, Chandragupta and His Times, p.77.

the feudatory states, and the sources do not suggest a vigorous system of rural self-government¹. The free institutions and assemblies had little political power and the various units of administration enjoyed less autonomy². The local grants prove that the rulers tried their utmost to exert their influence by issuing *sāsanas*, by which orders were communicated not only to the royal officers and the feudatories, but also to the officers of the district and other units³. The infringement of the regulations were heavily punished⁴.

(i) Bigger Divisions: The Kingdom was divided into Bhuktis, Mandalas, Viṣayas, Puras, Agārahāras (groups of villages) and Grāmas. The term deśa, occurring in the grants, perhaps does not stand for an administrative unit. Expressions like Uttarakūladesa and Dakṣiṇakūladesa are found in the grants of Balavarman (Nowgong grant), Ratnapāla (Bargāon grant) and Indrapāla (Gauhāti grant); but these denote merely the regions lying on the northern and southern banks of the Brahmaputra. Like Kauṭilya⁵ and Manu⁶, the Viṣṇusamhitā⁷ takes deśa as an administrative unit; but in Assam it is doubtful whether it was a political division.

¹Ghoshal, The Beginnings of Indian Historiography, pp.137-38.

²Hopkins, The Social & Military position of the Ruling Caste in Ancient India, J.A.O.S., XIII, pp.17f; Ghoshal, Ibid.

³Nowgong grant; Bargāon grant etc.

⁴J.B.O.R.S., 1917, pp.508-514.

⁵Arthasāstra, I. I.

⁶VII, 114-115. pp

⁷Chap.III, 5.

The bhukti was perhaps the largest division, and the term, as with the Guptas, was used in the sense of a province; the Pun^dravardhanabhukti¹ for instance, under the Guptas, comprised the districts of Dinājpur, Bogra and Rājshāhi². That the Bhukti was the largest unit in Assam, is proved by the Kamauli grant, which contains the phrase: (Śrī-Prāggyotiṣa-bhuktan Kāmarūpa maṇḍale Bāḍā-visaye)³. It is of interest that about the beginning of the 12th century A.D. Prāggyotiṣa and Kāmarūpa, which stood for the kingdom or the modern province of Assam, were known as a bhukti and a maṇḍala; as we shall show, Kāmarūpa was also known as a viṣaya in the beginning of the 10th century A.D.⁴ It appears that during the 12th century A.D., the kingdom had far expanded beyond the bounds of the Prāggyotiṣa or Kāmarūpa of former times; but the kingdom of Bhāskara, for instance, was known only as Kāmarūpa, though it was definitely larger than that of Vaidya-deva. This seems to indicate that during Bhāskara's time the kingdom was not divided into administrative divisions; if it was divided at all, we have no evidence of any divisions larger than the viṣaya. It appears likely that during Vaidya-deva's time, the bhukti Prāggyotiṣa which included the viṣaya Kāmarūpa stood for the home province. The Yuvarājas of the grants, associated with the administration of their fathers⁵,

¹E.I., XV, pp.129f.

²Altekar, State & Government in Ancient India, p.157.

³E.I., II, p.353.

⁴E.I., XXVI, pp.62-68.

⁵Gauhāti grant, VV 11-13; Hāyūnthāl grant; Tezpur grant of Vanamāla.

may have served as governors of the bhuktis, as in many other kingdoms of the time. The details of their administration are not known.

The maṇḍala, as appears from the grant of Vaidyadeva, was the next administrative division. The grant of Vallabhadeva mentions the Hāpyocā maṇḍala lying to the east of Kīrtipura¹. The exact location of the place is uncertain; but, as suggested by Kielhorn, if it can be identified with Hāpyoma of the Gauhāti grant of Indrapāla², Hāpyocā can be located in modern Darrang. In the inscriptions of the Cholas, maṇḍala stands for a provincial unit, comprising two or three modern districts³. In Assam maṇḍala consisted of many viṣayas, the next administrative division. Inscriptions mention a number of viṣayas, such as Chandrapurī⁴, Dijjinā⁵, Hāpyoma⁶, Pūraji⁷, Bādā⁸, Kāmarūpa (grant of the Gaṅga King Avantivarman (A.D.922)⁹, Mandi¹⁰, etc. The Viṣaya was under a viṣayapati. The Viṣayapati of Chandrapurī, Śrīkṣikuṇḍa, is called a Nāyaka¹¹. The officer Nāyaka, according to Sukra, was in charge of ten grāmas¹². So the Chandrapurī viṣaya-Nāyaka Śrīkṣikuṇḍa was equivalent to viṣayapati of the contemporary inscriptions¹³. He had his padhikaraṇa (office) at

¹E.I., V, pp.181-88.

²Ibid.

³Altekar, State & Government in Ancient India, p.158; Dikshitar,

⁴Nidhanpur grant.

Hindu Adm.Institutions, p.357.

⁵Nowgong grant; Subhāṅkanapāṭaka grant.

⁶Gauhāti grant.

⁷Khonāmukhi grant; Puṣpabhadra grant.

⁸Kamauli grant.

⁹E.I., XXVI, pp.62-68.

¹⁰Guākuchi grant.

¹¹Nidhanpur grant.

¹²I, 190f.

¹³Kauṭilya sometimes uses Nāyaka in the sense of a Nāgaraka (II, XII; II, XXXVI); but in our inscriptions the former certainly stood for a viṣayapati.

his adhisthāna (headquarters) and was helped by several officers. He was perhaps helped by an advisory body or council as in the centre; but the details are not known. As the grants show, the king communicated his śāsana donating lands through the local officials to the people of the country parts. The king thereby tried to keep all local officers under control.

(ii) Administration of towns (pura): We have scanty information about the administration of the cities and towns, which were known as pura, nagara and kaṭaka. Cities and towns were not only the seats of government (adhikaraṇa) but also sometimes victorious camps (jayaskandhāvāra)¹, places of temporary ancestral residence (paitāmahakaṭaka)², forts and centres of all activities. According to Kauṭilya, the choice of the capital and its site were very important, and geographical, commercial and political factors had to be taken into consideration³. Śukra holds that the capital must have easy access to the sea⁴.

The cities mentioned in literature and grants, such as Prāggyotiṣapura⁵, Hāruppeśvara⁶, Durjayā⁷ and Kāmarūpanagara⁸, fulfilled all these conditions, being situated on the bank of the Brahmaputra, having easy communication by water. The

¹Nidhanpur grant; Hāyuntāl grant.

²J.A.S.B., LXVI, I, pp.285f.

³Arthaśāstra, Bks.II,III,VII.

⁴Śukra, I.

⁵Nowgong grant, V 5.

⁶Tezpur grant, V 30.

⁷Gauhāti grant, V 19; Bargāon grant, lines 28f.

⁸Puṣpabhadra grant, V 20.

cities were well fortified. The prosperous city of Prāg-
 jyotiṣa finds mention in the extant records beginning with
 the Epics¹. The beautiful cities of Hārūpeśvara² and Durj-
 ayā³, according to the epigraphs, had well decorated and
 extensive buildings, royal palaces and whitewashed temples.
 The Yoginī Tantra gives a graphic description of the city of
 Hājo (Apanarbhava)⁴. The cities and towns were inhabited by
 learned men, preceptors, poets, artisans and the like⁵. The
 royal roads and public paths were numerous and apparently
 conformed to the advice of the texts⁶. The grants mention
 streets and roads of different types by terms such as rāja-
 mārga⁷, catuspatha, rāthyā and vīthī⁸. The wealthy people
 moved in the streets mounted on elephants and horses, or
 carried on litters⁹. Roads ran from city to city; the streets
 were busy with heavy traffic and commerce, and contained
 numerous shops¹⁰.

The towns provided amenities to the inhabitants in the
 form of pleasure gardens, groves and other places of amusement.

¹Ādi Kāṇḍa, 35; Kiṅkindhyā Kāṇḍa, 42; Sabha.P.XLVII; Vana parva,
 XII; Udyoga P.XLVII; Śānti P.CCCXII; Harivamśa, CXXI-CXXIII.

²Nowgong grant, V 14.

³Bargāon grant, lines 28f.

⁴II, 9, 22-25, 28-31.

⁵Bargāon grant, Lines 31f.

⁶Sūkra; I, 212-15, 259-63; IV, 52-56; Yājñavalkya, I, 134; Arthasāstra,

⁷J.A.S.B, IX, II, pp. 766f. III, 10; VII, 12; Kāmaṇḍaka XIV, 24-41.

⁸K.S. pp. 168f.

⁹Tezpur grant of Vanamāla, VV 30f.

¹⁰Bargāon grant, Lines 38f.

Inscriptions mention these as ārāmas¹ and upavanas², where deer and peacocks moved freely. In Hāruppeśvara and Durjayā there were a number of lotus lakes, adored by various kinds of birds and flowers³. The Kālikā Purāṇa⁴ and the Yoginī Tantra⁵ give a long list of such flowers. There were beautiful gardens and groves of areca palms, betel vines, black aloe wood and cardamon creepers in Prāggyotiṣa, Hāruppeśvara and other towns⁶. These were irrigated by channels, led from rivers and tanks, which flowed round the principal towns of Kāmarūpa⁷.

As we have stated, our knowledge of the municipal administration is meagre. It was one of the important duties of the city officers to afford protection to all, as given in the Hindu texts⁸, which also refer to important regulations concerning health and sanitation in towns⁹. Our records do not mention particular officers in charge of urban administration. Kauṭilya speaks of the Nāgakara as governor of a city, which was watched on all sides by watchmen¹⁰; Śukra mentions among the staff the president, magistrate, collector, officer in charge of tolls and other dues, sentinel and a clerk to main-

¹Tezpur grant, V.28.

²Nowgong grant, V 6.

³Bargāon grant, Lines 36-37.

⁴75/55-64.

⁵II, 7, 191-93.

⁶Nowgong grant, V 5; C.I.I, III, pp.200-208.

⁷Watters, II, pp.185f; Si yu ki, II, p.196.

⁸Āpastambha, II, 10, 26.

⁹Arthasāstra, IV, I; Yājñavalkya, I, 138; Śukra, II, 37-47; Manu,

¹⁰Arthasāstra, II, XII, II, XXXVI. VIII, 395; Vaśiṣṭha, II, 13.

tain vital statistics¹. Kauṭilya's Nāgaraka had onerous duties²; but in Assam, his duties are not given in any of our records; nor do we know if he was helped by other officers or by a council of elders.

(iii) Village Administration (Grāma): The lowest unit of the administration in every part of India was the village³; but about this also our information is meagre. The grāma consisted of vāstu (lands for building houses), kṣetra (arable land), khila (waste land), gopracārabhūmi (cattle pastures), forests, water, etc. These are mentioned in our grants⁴, as given in Hindu texts⁵. Inscriptions mention a number of grāmas, such as Abhisūrabhāṭaka⁶, Heṁsivā⁷, Trayodaśa⁸, Bhaviṣā⁹, Kañjiā¹⁰, Guheśvara Digḍola¹¹, Chādi¹², etc. The agrahāras of the grants, like the Mayūrasālmalāgrahāra¹³ and Śrīngaṭikāgrahāra¹⁴ were perhaps made up of many village settlements. Inscriptions also mention small divisions like pāṭaka, Koñcī and palli, such as Kāsī pāṭaka¹⁵, Vāmadeva pāṭaka¹⁶,

¹II, 121-23.

²Arthasāstra, II, 36.

³See Childe, The Aryans, 82f; B. Powell, Indian Village Community, p. 74; Pran Nath, Economic Condition, Intro, p. 4 and 26-33.

⁴Nowgong grant, line 36; Bargāon grant, 56, etc.

⁵Arthasāstra, II; Baudhyāyana, III, I; S. B. E., II, p. 223; IX, 65;

⁶Tezpur grant of Vanamāla XIV, 243-44.

⁷Nowgong grant.

⁸Bargāon grant.

⁹Gauhāti grant.

¹⁰Subhāṅkarapāṭaka grant.

¹¹Puṣpabhadrā grant.

¹²Plates of Vallabhadeva.

¹³Nidhanpur grant.

¹⁴E. I., XXVI, 62-68.

¹⁵Gauhāti grant.

¹⁶Nowgong grant.

Devunikoñcī¹, Khyātipalli² etc. The area of a pāṭaka is uncertain. Under the Mauryas, the term pāṭhaka denoted a subdivision of a viṣaya³; but it was not so used in Assam. Pāṭaka is usually taken to be part of a village, or an out-lying portion of a village, or a kind of hamlet, having a name of its own, but belonging to a larger village⁴. This is confirmed by the Abhidhānacintāmaṇi which explains the term as one half of a village (pāṭakas tu tadardhe syāt)⁵. That pāṭaka constituted only a part of a village is shown by the local grants we have mentioned. The palli means a row or group of houses, or hamlet, and koñcī (modern kucī) may have stood for a part of a village, or a small village inhabited by members of a class or caste, such as Gaṇakakucī (inhabited only by the Daivajñas⁴). The terms palli and kumbha in the sense of one half and fourth of a village respectively occur in the Śukranīti⁶.

We have little information about the village officials and their functions. They had to discharge in the main, civil, revenue and other duties, and were responsible for the internal safety of the villages under their jurisdiction. As appears from the grants, the king sent sāsanas to the heads and respectable inhabitants of the villages and the country parts

¹Plates of Vallabhadeva.

²Puṣpabhadra grant.

³Altekar, State & Govt. in Ancient India, p.156.

⁴I.A.XVIII, p.135.

⁵Abhidhānacintā-maṇi (Böhtingk's edition), p.135.

⁶I, 193.

through the Viṣayapati¹. It is probable that the king sent royal officers occasionally to supervise and help them in their work of administration. The village headman was perhaps helped by an advisory body or a council of elders. The Jyeṣṭhabhadraṅ of the grants, to whom the royal sāṣana was communicated through the viṣayapati², were probably the elders of the villages. It was perhaps the Pañchāyat system. Sometimes they may have been represented in the unofficial body or council of the viṣayapati.

Inscriptions also make important mention of the leading men of the Jānapada (pramukhya-jānapadān)³, to whom the king sent his greetings and commands in connection with land grants. It is difficult to say who they were. Manu seems to refer to the jānapada as an institution which, with others such as kula, śrenī etc., was to be helped by the king in its working⁴. More or less the same institutions are mentioned by Yājñavalkya⁵. Hoernle takes jānapadān of the grants simply as common people⁶. In the Arthasāstra, jānapada is taken as a kingdom, country parts or as a village⁷. Pran Nath, on the basis of the same

¹Nowgong grant; Bargāon grant; Gauhāti grant; Guākuchi grant.

²Nowgong grant.

³Nowgong grant; Bargāon grant; Gauhāti grant; Guākuchi grant.

⁴Manu, VIII, 41: (jāti-jānapadān dharmān śrenī dharmāśca dharmavit
l samikṣya kuladharmāśca svadharmampratipādayet||).

⁵I, 361; II, 192: (kulāni jātiḥ śrenīśca ganān jānapadānapi l
svadharmāñjālitān rājā viniya sthāpayet pathi||)

⁶J.A.S.B., LXVI, I, pp. 131f.

⁷SS.tr. pp. 54-55, 143, 253.

work, maintains that jānapada is 'employed in an administrative sense and denotes a territorial division', that 'jānapadas enjoyed the position of self-supporting independent status' and that 'in the time of Kauṭilya the jānapada was the unit of local administration'¹. But jānapada is often used as opposed to pura and may either stand for a country part or a village. So in that sense it appears likely that the pramukhya-jānapadān were the heads or leading members of villages. It is also probable that they sometimes constituted an unofficial body or represented the villages in the council of Viṣayapati, as they did under the Guptas.

(iv) Classes and Guilds: Inscriptions² also mention other classes and castes, who were protected by rulers according to the injunctions of the texts³. The creation of agrahāras for the Brāhmanas alone with their own laws led to the growth of their class solidarity which was recognised by the state. In villages or parts of villages people of the same class or caste like the astrologers (Daivajñas)⁴ settled, and gave their names to those parts they inhabited. They also evolved their own customs, which were regulated by the state. The grants mention various domiciles of weavers: (catuvimsati

¹Economic Condition, Intro., 3-4; 35f, 45-46, 52f.

²Nidhanpur grant, V 7; Lines 34f; Tezpur grant, V 30; Gauhāti grant, V 18.

³Yājñavalkya, II, 192.

⁴Kamauli grant, V 8.

tantrānām bhūsimni and orāngi tantrānām bhūsimni)¹, who formed something like a guild (śrenī). Moreover Vanik and guilds are mentioned in other grants². These were not only interested in economic pursuits, but also sometimes took an important part in such a political ceremony as the abhiṣeka³. These castes, classes, and guilds had, therefore, an important influence in administration, and probably enjoyed a certain measure of independence⁴. This autonomy of socio-economic groups, guided by their own customs, is still to be seen in the Vaisnava sāstras of Assam, due recognition to which has been given by the state laws⁵. These centres of the village political and social life decide their own disputes and deal with culprits according to their own notion of law and justice. Group solidarity and democratic principles are even more effective among the tribes of Assam.

Conclusion: To conclude, the administration of ancient Assam was fundamentally based on the traditional lines of ancient India with local variations. Though the rulers exerted their influence over other units of administration, this influence was not pushed to the extreme, and the laws were based more or less upon the Hindu texts. The foregoing treatment does

¹Subhāṅkarapāṭaka grant.

²Bargāon grant, Lines 31-33.

³Hāyūnthāl grant, VV 13-14.

⁴See R.C.Majumdar, Corporate Life in Ancient India, pp.14f; R.K.Mookerji, Local Government in Ancient India, pp.20f; Fick, Social Organisation in N.E.India, pp.275f.

⁵See B.Rajkhowa, Short Account of Assam, pp.127f.

not justify the conclusion of a modern writer 'that Assam was crushed under despotic rule' both under the 'Āhom and previous dynasties'⁶. To quote L.W.Shakespeare, 'this remote part of India in ancient times enjoyed a superior form of government to any it has since experienced until taken over by the English'⁷.

⁶Hunter, Statistical Account of Assam, I, p.43;
Robinson, Descriptive Account of Assam, pp.196f.

⁷History of Upper Assam, etc. pp.59f.

CHAPTER V

CULTURAL HISTORY

Section 1.

Social Life.

1. Preliminary Remarks:

Human culture is a synthetic whole and the cultural history of any people comprises all aspects of their social, economic, educational, religious, artistic and other activities. Assamese culture is the sum total of the crude and advanced elements associated with these aspects of human life. It is mistaken to think that the primitive elements surviving from the prehistoric period have had nothing to contribute to the complex system. Indian culture as a whole has received various cross currents from the dawn of her history. We are to investigate the origin and foundation of the culture of the prehistoric and primitive men who left their substratum in the Assamese civilisation, though we must depend for such investigation for their most part on survivals¹. Human culture itself is evolutionary and progressive and we may take the prehistoric and primitive men as a guide to the study of that evolution². The lower culture in fact 'is the basis of human societies'³, and there is no 'human thought so primitive

¹Tyler, Primitive Culture, I, pp.17f.

²Ibid; Rivers, Dreams and Primitive Culture, p.24.

³Hodson, Primitive Culture of India, p.128.

as to have lost its bearing on our thought, nor so ancient as to have broken its connection with our own life'¹. In other words, for a true understanding of the composite culture of the Assamese in ancient times, we must go into the origin and gradual developments of some of the important features, contributed both by the pre-Aryans and Aryans - more by the former than the latter element.

It is evident from the existing materials that prehistoric men in the palaeolithic age were savage hunters, living in caves². It is likely that, as in Southern India, some caves in Assam were haunted by prehistoric men³. Living merely on hunting, they knew nothing about agriculture and other allied arts⁴. Foote, however, finds evidence of the use of fire in Southern India⁵, and it is possible that they produced fire with the help of stone, wood or bamboo thong, as is done even today by some Assam tribes. It was after some time that they discovered the use of chipped stones and towards the end of the period, when they changed their nomadic life, the necessity of protection against wild beasts led them to live in small groups, marked perhaps by crude exogamy, totemism and magic rites including the practice of human and buffalo sacrifices and a rudimentary matriarchy. The practice of

¹Tylor, Primitive Culture, II, p.452.

²Smith, Oxford History of India, I.

³See Chap.III pp.76-77

⁴S.K.Das, Economic History of Ancient India, pp.5f.

⁵Indian Prehistoric and Proto-historic Antiquities, p.11.

exposure of the dead is also attributed to them¹. Rudiments of their cave art have been noticed in Assam² as in Central and Southern India³.

The neolithic men introduced the art of cultivation, various crafts, trade, domestication of animals and pastoral economy, along with the use of polished stone implements. The existence of a joint tribal and family system based on the patriarchate have also been suggested⁴. The division of the people into exogamous units, the basis perhaps of the Aryan Hindu caste or class system, was developed, and the idea of holding different professions was evolved. Their painted pottery, like their weapons⁵ and cave art, was of an advanced type. The specimens from Assam give us an idea of the nature and extent of that culture⁶. The custom of the burial of the dead along with food and other articles and the practice of the erection of megaliths were well known to them⁷. Both these customs are practised even now by most of the Assam tribes.

As society began to advance to the age of metal, an advanced economic life differentiated its culture from the earlier stage. Remarkable progress was made in all spheres

¹P.T.S.Ayanger, Stone Age in India, pp.10-24.

²See Chap.III, pp. 76-77

³Footes, Antiquities, pp.188-89.

⁴Stone Age in India, pp.26f.

⁵Footes Antiquities, pp.23f.

⁶P.C.Chaudhury, 'Neolithic Culture in Kāmarūpa', J.A.R.S., 1944,

⁷Stone Age in India, pp.26-39. pp.41-47.

before the Aryans developed their system, for even the Vedic texts speak of the economic wealth and prosperity of the non-Aryans¹. Besides a number of geographical factors, the Aryan contact with the non-Aryans contributed to the development of this socio-economic system². The socio-economic divisions of the people as found in the Vedas³ brought about a new change in their life and divided them into occupational groups. The influence of heredity on economic pursuits worked strongly upon the social structure, forming the basis of the subsequent class or caste system and leading to the formation of subgroups⁴. It was, therefore, in the economic sphere that phenomenal changes and progress can be noticed, as the people passed from the lithic stage to the age of metal⁵. Working in metal in ancient Assam is evidenced by a number of sources. The washing of gold from the rivers and the smelting of iron from rocks, particularly in the Khāsi Hills, have been practised for a long time past⁶, and the non-Aryan elements had a great deal to contribute to the development of these techniques. There is evidence also of the existence of a medium of exchange side by side with barter before the Aryans, and the unit of value consisted at first of animal

¹R.V.III, 34, 9; also, B.Powell, Indian village Community, p.84.

²N.C.Bandopadhyaya, Economic Life and Progress in Ancient

³R.V. VII, 35, 16-18 and I, 113, 6. India, pp.5f, 37f, 80f.

⁴Bandopadhyaya, pp.102f.

⁵See P.Mitra, Pre-historic India, pp.245f.

⁶See Section 2 pp. 568f

skins; but in the pastoral stage the animal itself became a sort of currency and in that of the age of agriculture, a number of products passed as currency, such as garments, goat-skins, cowries etc¹. In Assam till comparatively recent times among the tribes, the value of things has been measured in terms of animal heads, spear heads, metal bowls and other metallic tokens. The system of barter side by side with exchange for money is still carried on by people both of the plains and the hills.

Not only in the socio-economic sphere but also in the more important branch of the religious beliefs, nay in the whole field of Indian culture, the non-Aryans have really contributed to and laid the foundation of modern Hinduism, whether in India or Assam, and many survivals of non-Aryan cults may still be traced². It is difficult, however, to hazard at present the respective contributions made by the various elements, nor is it justified to claim that Indian civilisation owes everything to the Dravidians as asserted by Hall³. Caldwell rightly points to the Aryan influence on the Dravidians from very early times⁴. Even the Negritos are said to have contributed the cult of the fig tree, a crude fertility cult, the invention of the bow, the idea of the

¹Ibid, pp. 592-93

²P.Mitra, Pre-historic India, Preface, IX; S.K.De, The 'Beginnings of Indian Civilisation' (Monthly Bulletin, Rāmkrṣṇa Mission Inst.of Culture), II, (No.10), Oct.1951, p.152.

³Ancient History of the Near East, p.174.

⁴Intro.to Grammar of Dravidian Languages, pp.113f.

soul of the dead, and a belief in the path of the dead to paradise. Most of these beliefs are found among the Assam tribes¹. These were no doubt further developed by later comers, such as the Proto-Austroloids, who laid the foundation of a neolithic culture, with the use of pottery and the blow-gun, in Southern India; a degenerated form of the latter is found in Assam, together with the idea of totemism². In the opinion of Hutton the snake cult and the worship of the Mother Goddess were probably brought in by the earlier invaders of the Mediterranean or Armenoid race, speaking a Dravidian language, whose religion is also associated with the cult of fertility, phallic worship, the Devadāsī cult and probably human sacrifice, the idea of the soul, solar and lunar cults, cult of the dead, and ancestor worship³. Even the conception of Karma and the transmigration of souls, the practice of yoga and the ideas centering round Viṣṇu, Śiva and Devī, the rituals of pūjā as opposed to homa and a large number of the Hindu myths, marriage rituals, etc. have been taken as survivals of the pre-Aryans⁴. It is difficult, however, to posit that a particular element is derived from this or that culture, but the non-Aryan foundation of Indian culture and modern Hinduism itself cannot be doubted. Hutton, perhaps rightly, summarises his findings by making a definite statement

¹Hutton, C.R.I., 1931, I, I, pp.443f; Caste in India, pp.195f.

²Ibid, also S.C.Roy, Man in India, XVII, pp.159f, 245.

³C.R.I. 1931, I, I, pp.394f.

⁴S.K.Chatterjee, Indo-Aryan and Hindī, pp.131-32.

that besides the Negritos, the Proto-Austroloids contributed to the totemistic theory and the Mediterranean - Iranian - Kolerian evolved their phallic and megalithic culture along with the life essence theory, the idea of reincarnation and the worship of the Mother Goddess. The later comers superseded the fertility and the soul matter cult by one of personified deities and their worship, again with the phallic cult, the cult of Devadāsīs, the belief in heavenly bodies, and the priestly institution. The final form of the modern Hinduism was determined by a conflict of what may be called proto-Hinduism in its religious aspect with ideas brought by the Iranian-Aryan, to whom it had to concede much, socially, culminating in the socio-religious position of the priests in India¹.

The foundation of Assamese culture was perhaps laid by all these elements, including the Austro-Asiatic, with their linguistic legacy, and the Alpine-Aryan-Tibeto-Burman elements, contributing to the development of a heterogeneous socio-religious complex. We have grounds for believing that the Alpines played a conspicuous part in the evolution of the culture of Eastern India, and, mixing with other elements, influenced every aspect of the life of the people. Survivals of Alpine culture may still be noticed in Assam throughout the whole socio-religious structure, which is based both upon crude

¹Hutton, C.R.I., 1931, I, I, pp.392f; Caste in India, 195f.

magic and advanced religious ideas. While the tribal elements owe a great deal of their culture to the earlier elements, including the Negritos, Austro-Asiatics and the Tibeto-Burmans, the civilisation of the valley is fundamentally based on the Alpine-Aryan system. The survivals of the Austric and the Tibeto-Burman culture may be noticed particularly in the names of places, rivers and other physical features throughout Assam¹. Even the names like Assam, Kāmarūpa, Kāmākhyā, Prāgjyotiṣa, Iauhitya, Karatoyā, etc. have an Austric or Boḍo origin², indicating an earlier contact of the non-Aryan and Aryan cultures.

A river name like Dhansiri may be derived from an Austric formation like siro-soro, meaning flowing as from a channel; in Boḍo, disor means to flow and sor, signifies crawling. The word Saumāra has an Austric origin, derived from the Khāsi, sam (to bathe); Austric, semir (turbid water); Munda-Sant-Khās, um (water). Hayagrīva has the same Austric origin; haya means red, and in Khāsi haim-haim means very red; Hayagrīva, therefore, means having a red neck. Harjjara, the name of a ruler, has an Austric derivation, the word hara meaning a hill. Hārupesvara, the name of a town, may be derived from the same source; Tezpur, a modern town may be derived from the Austric, tijo, meaning a snake. Darrang, the name of a modern division has an Austric derivation, dorr,

¹See Section, 3, pp. 601-602.

²Chap. II, pp. 31f

meaning a bridge and hong or ong, meaning water. Dijjinā, the name of a place, has a Boḍo origin, which may be derived from dijā (o) meaning to melt; jini (dirt). Heṅsivā (Grant of Balavarman) has a Boḍo origin, derived from formations like haing (relation); sebai (break). Kalāṅgā (Ratnapāla grant) is derived from the Austric, Kloṅ (noise). Hāpyoma (Indrapāla grant) is derived from the Boḍo, hap (penetrate); yao (hand); Mandi (Indrapāla grant) is derived from the Boḍo, mande (a hut in cultivated land); digḍola (Dharmapāla grant) is derived from the Austric, dik (house); dol (place); Hājo is derived from the Boḍo word meaning a hill. Dihong, Dibong and such other river names indicate both an Austric and Boḍo origin, hong or ong in Austric standing for water and di or ti in Boḍo standing for the same¹. A number of such survivals may be cited to prove the composite character of the Assamese culture.

The tribes, chiefly of Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman origin, whether or not Hinduised, have really contributed to the various aspects of the composite Assamese culture. The very basis of the social system, marriage laws, etc. of the Aryans and Aryanised Hindus of the valley, are more or less based on earlier elements, who evolved their own laws of exogamy, totemism and other features. In the field of economic life and cottage industries, evidence of the contribution made

¹B.K.Kakati, N.I.A. VI, pp.49-51; Ibid IV, pp.388-94; Assamese - Its formation and Development, pp.54-56.

particularly by the Bodo elements is not wanting¹. In the evolution of the various religious cults, fetishism, animism, cults of fertility and phallics, etc. the non-Aryan tribes have perhaps laid the foundation of Śaktism and Tāntrikism in Assam, which, mixing with the Alpine-Aryan system, has been much Hinduised, though in their fundamental ideas the whole system is based upon magic and other crude rites. The harvesting ceremonies of the Assamese, though they have Aryan or Hindu affinities, must have been greatly influenced by the tribes. The same influences can be detected in art and architecture and other aspects of Assamese culture. It is due to the admixture of these elements and the mutual influence of one upon the other that Assamese culture, though fundamentally allied to that of India, has retained its separate entity with local variations. An examination of its various aspects will explain the nature of that composite culture and will also help us in determining its place and its bearing upon a larger whole of a different people.

2. Social Divisions: Varṇāśramas:

The two fundamental principles on which the social life of the ancient Indians were based are the varṇāśrama dharma, and Assamese life also was not an exception. We need not go into the origin of varṇa. Suffice it to hold that both the

¹ See Section 2, pp. 567f,

non-Aryans and Aryans contributed to the development of the castes and classes in India and ideas like totemism and exogamy lay at the root of the caste system as a whole¹. A number of factors such as heredity, marriage relations, economic pursuits, religion, geography etc. contributed to the growth of a vast number of groups and subgroups in course of time². The fundamental contributory factor was the attitude of superiority assumed particularly by the higher classes. It is doubtful indeed whether the word varṇa meaning colour had in the beginning any relation with the caste or jāti of the later period, but subsequently the two have been closely associated and even identified. Whatever the origin, the caste system has never been marked by extreme rigidity in any period of its development in respect of restrictions of food, professions and even marriage relations, and that is why a number of subcastes grew up in course of time³.

We need not dilate upon the merits or otherwise of the caste system in general; but, as we shall show from our local epigraphs and other sources, the original four varṇas,

¹Hutton, C.R.I., 1931, I, I, pp.433f; Risley, Asiatic Quarterly (No.3) p.537; A.Lang, Myth, Ritual and Religion, I, pp.79f; B.N.Datta, Man in India, XIII, pp.97-114; S.C.Roy, Man in India, XIV, pp.74f, 99, 253; XVIII, pp.85-105; Risley, People of India, pp.263f; Gait, C.R.I., 1911, I, I, pp.365-95; E.R.E., III, pp.230-39; Hutton, Caste in India, pp.163f; Ghurye, Caste & Class in India, p.155; Caste & Race in India, pp.142f; R.W.Frazer, Literary History of India, p.25; Macdonell & Keith, Vedic Index, II, p.81.

²Chanda, Indo-Aryan Races, p.36; Ghurye Caste & Race in India, pp.2f; Risley, Tribes & Castes of Bengal, I, XVf.

³Manu, X, 8f.

Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra did not remain in their traditional position and even the Brāhmaṇas contracted marriages with the lower classes¹. There was a common bond between groups, all contributing to the welfare of all, because of their occupation of the same locality in a village, and interdependence in all matters has been the guiding principle of the system². Hindu society in fact was based on the principle of svadharma, which was both spiritual and functional, and it was conceived as an organism, the divisions being based primarily on the respective guṇa of each. This is shown by the fact of the four original varṇas originating from the same Brahman³. The respective duties and functions of the varṇāśramas are explained in the Mahābhārata⁴.

Epigraphy proves that Assamese Hindu society in general was based upon the same varṇāśrama dharma; but both, as described in the texts, give us an impression of an ideal state of society based upon divine social order; the rulers are said to have been created for upholding that order. Bhagadatta was the leader of all these divisions: varṇāśramānām gurur ekavīrah⁵. Bhāskara was created for the proper organisation of their divisions, which had become mixed up: avakīrṇā-varṇāśrama-dharmā pravibhāgāya nirmīto⁶. Vanamāla

¹ S.K.Das, Economic History of Ancient India, pp.26f.

² Ghurye, Caste & Race, pp.2-25.

³ Puruṣa Sūkta, X, 90.

⁴ Śānti Parva, LIX.

⁵ Nowgong grant, V 7.

⁶ Nidhanpur grant, Lines 34f.

gratified the appetite of the people of all classes and stages of life¹. During the reign of Indrapāla the laws of the four classes and stages were observed in their proper order². How and when the caste system was introduced into Assam is uncertain, but it was certainly introduced by the Aryans. On the basis of both epigraphy and literature we have discussed elsewhere the introduction of the Brāhmanical culture in the land, and have also pointed out that, beginning at least with the 6th century A.D., it was the systematic policy of the rulers to create agrahāras for the Brāhmanas.³

As appears from the epigraphs, the Brāhmana society was based on their vedasākhās, gotras and pravaras, which determined their exogamic marriage relations. The vedasākhās included various divisions or sections of the Vedas to which different sections of the Brāhmanas belonged. The gotras are associated originally with seven or eight ṛṣis and there were, therefore, seven or eight gotras, which in course of time increased to hundreds; closely connected with the gotra is the pravara, i.e. the invocation of Agni in the name of the ṛṣi ancestors of a Brāhmana, as he consecrated the sacrificial fire. The pravaras in fact are associated with the priests or sages whose names constituted the pravara of that gotra⁴. The Nid-

¹Tezpur grant, V 30.

²Gauhati grant, V 18.

³Sections 3 and 4, p. 10.

⁴E.R.E., VI, pp. 353f.

-hanpur grant mentions a number of Brāhmaṇas with their Veda-sākhās, pravaras and gotras.¹ The Tezpur grant mentions one Brāhmaṇa of the Śāṇḍilya gotra of the Yajurveda². The Nowgong grant mentions the Kāṇvasākhā of the Kapilagotra³. The Bargāon grant mentions the same sākhā of the Parāsara gotra⁴ and the Śuālkuchi grant refers to the Bhāradvāja gotra⁵. The grants of Indrapāla mention Brāhmaṇas of the Kāśyapa gotra⁶ and the grants of Dharmapāla refer to the Kauthumasākhā⁷, Sudha Maudalya⁸, Kārṣṇāyasa gotras⁹ and Āṅgīrasa pravara¹⁰.

Epigraphy also indicates that at least some of the Brāhmaṇas observed the orthodox rules and duties relating to yajana, yājana, adhyayana, adhyāpanā, dāna and pratigraha¹¹. They also followed other injunctions relating to snāna, yapa, sandhyā and other sacrifices¹². The Brāhmaṇas of ancient

¹The gotras are: Kautsa, Gaurātreyā, Vatsya, Saunaka, Aśvalāyana, Śālanākāyana, Gārgya, Ālambāyana, Āṅgīrasa, Pāṅkalya, Vārhaspatya, Sākaṭāyana, Vārāha, Kāśyapa, Vaiṣṇavṛddhi, Kauśika, Gautama, Kauṭilya, Kṛṣṇātreyā, Kavestāra, Māṇḍavya, Bhāradvāja, Kaundīnyā, Vasīṣṭha, Agnivesya, Śāṅkrtyāyana, Yāska, Pārāśarya, Bhārggava, Kātyāyana, Jātūkarna, Maudalya, Pautrimāsyā, Śāṇḍilya, Paurṇa, Śāvarṇika.

²v 30.

³v 26.

⁴v 16.

⁵v 16.

⁶Gauhāti grant, V.20; Guākuchi grant, V 21.

⁷Subhāṅkarapāṭaka grant, V 17.

⁸Puṣpabhadrā grant, V 12.

⁹J.A.R.S., VIII, p.118.

¹⁰Puṣpabhadrā grant, V 12.

¹¹Bargāon grant.

¹²Nowgong grant, V 32; Subhāṅkarapāṭaka grant, VII.

Assam held a position of honour in the royal court and served the state in the capacity of high officials. They were not only entrusted with the duty of the diffusion of learning and spiritual knowledge but they also took to other professions¹.

On a study of the surnames of some of the Brāhmaṇa donees of the Nidhanpur grant we have shown elsewhere the possibility of their intermixture with the Alpines and their close association with the Nāgar-Brāhmaṇas and the Kāyasthas². In fact most of the Brāhmaṇas of Bengal and Assam must have assimilated Alpine blood at an early period. As the Nidhanpur grant reveals³, some of the interesting surnames, not found elsewhere in India except Assam and Bengal, are - datta, ghoṣa, kara, kuṇḍa, mitra, deva, bhaṭṭa, sena, nāgara, nandī, soma, etc. It is worth mentioning that in modern Assam none of these surnames are found among the Assamese Brāhmaṇas, as they are in Bengal. In any case, due to the intermixture with the Alpine priests the Brāhmaṇas of Assam did not perhaps take to strictly orthodox habits. We have discussed elsewhere the question of the Brāhmaṇas of Assam taking to other economic pursuits⁴. It was not unusual that they took to the profession of a vaiśya or even of a śūdra, such as trade, agriculture, weaving and so forth; hence, in spite of their

¹Chap.IX, Section 5.

²Bhandarkar, I.A. LXI, p.48; J.C.Ghosh, F.H.Q. VI, pp.60f.

³Nidhanpur grant (Last Plate).

⁴See Chap.IV, Section 5, . . . ; Chap.V, Section, 3. . . .

pride in social superiority, they were liberal in their outlook regarding occupations and in their observance of other social laws. In fact, the Brāhmaṇas of Assam have always followed a rather flexible system, not as strictly rigid as in other parts of India, even in respect of food.

Epigraphs¹, beginning with the 6th century A.D., mention Kāyasthas, Karaṇas, ~~ukh~~khakas, daivajñas (gaṇakas) and others; but most of them, if not all, were officers and professional classes or divisions rather than castes. The origin of Kāyasthas is doubtful. There are at least two theories of their origin: ¹Sūdra and Kṣatriya. Chanda takes them to be of mixed Karaṇa caste². In the Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa³ and the Brhad̥dharma Purāṇa, the Karaṇas occupied the place of the Kāyasthas⁴. In the Sūtras, the Smṛtis and the Mahābhārata, Karaṇa is used in the sense of a caste⁵. Kāyastha is mentioned as an administrative officer in the Viṣṇu and Yājñavalkya smṛtis, and in the former, he is taken as a keeper of public accounts⁶. The later Smṛtis like ¹Uśānas and Vedavyāsa mention Kāyastha as a caste and the latter includes it among the ¹sūdras⁷.

¹Nidhanpur grant and other epigraphs.

²Indo-Aryan Races, pp.192f.

³See Wilson, Indian Caste, I, pp.439-41.

⁴Chanda, Indo-Aryan Races, pp.192f.

⁵Kane, History of Dharmasāstra, II, I, p.74.

⁶Viṣṇudharmasūtra, VII, 3.

⁷History of Dharmasāstra, II, I, p.76.

In the Nidhanpur grant¹, the Karaṇa or the Karaṇika, Janārdanasvāmī, was a Brāhmaṇa, and the Kāyastha was Dundhunātha; both the terms Karaṇika and Kāyastha are used here in the sense of officers and scribes². So the local epigraphs do not definitely establish that Kāyastha was used in the sense of a caste. If Kākati's derivation of the word from the Austric formation like Katho (to write); Kaiathoh (to keep accounts)³ is accepted, Kāyastha is to be associated originally with the writers⁴. Some contemporary epigraphs, however, use the word in the sense of a caste name⁵. But we do not know when Kāyastha began to be used in Assam as a caste name. We have suggested elsewhere the possibility of the Kāyasthas having assimilated Alpine blood, and have also pointed out that they were allied to the Nāgar Brāhmaṇas⁶. Therefore anything like a pure Brāhmaṇa or Kṣatriya⁷ origin of the Kāyasthas is very doubtful. We have also tried to indicate that among some of the donees of the Nidhanpur grant there were Kāyasthas and Nāgar Brāhmaṇas with surnames datta, soma, nandī etc. If our inference is correct, the Kāyasthas might have made their way into Assam at an early period. In Assam they are now given a position next to the Brāhmaṇas and

¹Last Plate.

²K.S. p.43(f.n.).

³App.to B.K.Barua's Cultural History of Assam, I, pp.202f.

⁴In Modern Assam the Kāyasthas are called Kāith.

⁵E.I., XVII, p.251; XII pp.61ff; P.A.S.B., 1880, p.78.

⁶Chap.III, pp.150f

⁷Vasu, Social History of Kāmarūpa, III, p.167.

constitute the main priestly class of our society, unlike that of other parts of India.

Another class of people, allied to the Karnas and the Kāyasthas, used in the sense of a writer, are the lekhakas. Sumantu, quoted in the Parāśara Mādhaviya takes lekhaka as a low caste, like an oilman, from whom food cannot be taken by a Brāhmaṇa¹, and in that sense lekhaka also stood for a caste; but our local epigraphs refer to him as a writer. Brhaspati, quoted in Smṛti Candrikā, refers to Gaṇaka and lekhaka as two persons who were connected with the work of a judge, and states that they were twice born². In any case, it is reasonable to hold that the lekhakas were a class of writers rather than a particular caste, and it is in that sense that the word is used in the local epigraphs. The Daivajñas find mention in the Kamauli grant³. They were astrologers and had a place of honour in Assamese society. They subsequently came to be known as Gaṇakas. The Brhaddharma Purāṇa states that Gaṇaka was born of a Śākadvīpi father and a Vaiśya mother⁴. The composition of a number of manuscripts in Assam, dealing with the solar cult and planetary worship, may be attributed to them. It is likely that, like the Kāyasthas and the Nāgar Brāhmaṇas, they had also an admixture of Alpine blood and like

¹II, I, p.383.

²History of Dharmasāstra, II, p.76.

³v 8.

⁴Uttarā Kāṇḍa, XIII, 52.

the Magians of Iran¹ contributed to the astronomical belief in Assam, justifying the name of Prāggyotiṣa. Even today they are given a position just below the Brāhmaṇas.

The word 'Vaidya' occurs in the Śubhāṅkarapāṭaka grant which was composed by a Vaidya named Prasthānakalasa². In Bengal the vaidya is taken to be a Kāyastha, next in rank to the Brāhmaṇas. It is doubtful whether the word was used as a caste name in the said epigraph. In fact, Vaidyas are not found now in Assam as a caste; we do not know whether they came to be known as ojāhs (physicians) and whether the latter may be associated with the vaidyas at all. The ojāhs of Assam, as we find today, may be of any caste.

Inscriptions of other regions, however, prove the existence and important position of the Vaidyas as early as the 8th century A.D., particularly in Southern India³. The Bhīṣaka again as a class of physicians is mentioned in the Nowgong grant⁴. According to Uśānas, he was the offspring of a Brāhmaṇa father through a Kṣatriya wife. He is also known as Vaidyaka. The Brahmapurāṇa quoted by Aparārka states that the Bhīṣaka lived by surgery and attended upon patients. It is unlikely that the Bhīṣaka of our epigraphs designated a particular caste; the term might have been applied to a number of varṇas and stood only for a professional class.

¹ Spooner, J.R.A.S. 1915, II, 433f.

² K.S., p.154.

³ E.I. VII, pp.317-321; Ibid, XVIII, pp.291-309; I.A.1839, pp.57f.

⁴ v 21.

We have already stated that modern Hindu society may be broadly divided into two classes - Brāhmaṇas and Śūdras. While evidence of the existence of Vaiśyas is not lacking, true Aryan Kṣatriyas are perhaps not found in Assam and our knowledge about them in the past is insufficient to come to any definite conclusion. Most writers take all classes, including the Kalitās as Śūdras. The origin of the word Śūdra is uncertain and most writers give it an aboriginal or non-Aryan origin; but it is certain that the Śūdra class was composed of various elements¹. Whatever their origin, the Śūdras were also included among the four varṇas of Hindu society and Ārya was taken in the sense of a free man and comprised all the four varṇas². In the modern sense the Śūdra is taken to include all who have adopted the Hindu system except the higher classes.

About the origin of Kalitās of Assam, who are now included among the Śūdras, we have discussed in another connection, and have tried to show that they were not pure Aryan Kṣatriyas³. We believe that their existence in Assam may be traced back as early as the fifth century B.C. if not earlier and that they were the remnants of the Alpine priests in Eastern India and Assam who, mixing with the Aryans, were designated as

¹ Beams, The Races of North Western Provinces, I, p.167; Lālmohan Vidyānidhi, Sambandha-nārṇaya, pp.89f; Risley, Tribes & Castes, II, pp.268f.

² Chaada, Indo-Aryan Races, pp.5, 245; Mac and Keith, Vedic Index, II, p.388.

³ Chap.III, pp. 165-66

Kṣatriyas. It is reasonable to hold that there were Kalitās in Assam even before the caste or varṇa system was introduced into the land, and the term, therefore, denotes an ethnic type rather than a caste¹. The Kalitās are still given a position next to the twice born classes and their social relations, marriage rules etc. are based on the orthodox system. The foundation of Assamese culture was mainly laid by them and, like the Brāhmaṇas, they still retain their individual identity.

Details regarding other Śūdra castes and classes are lacking. Epigraphy, however, mentions the Kaiivartas or fishermen who also helped the state by collecting tolls². They are often associated with water and boats. In the Smṛtis, the Kaiivartas are taken to be of mixed caste and Manu uses the term to mean the offspring of a Niṣāda father by a Āyogava mother³. The Brahmavaiivarta Purāṇa states that a Kaiivarta was born of a Kṣatriya father and a Vaiśya mother⁴. In the Buddhist Jātakas, fishermen are called Kevatta⁵. Whatever their origin, it is certain that the Kaiivartas were non-Aryans, and their economic pursuit consisted mainly of fishing. Epigraphy also indicates that some Kaiivartas took to agriculture. In Assam they are now divided into two sections:

¹Chap.III, pp. 165-66

²J.B.O.R.S. 1917, pp.508f.

³Manu, X, 4.

⁴X, 34.

⁵See Frick, Sociale Glisderung, (Tr.), p.302.

Hālovā (those who work with ploughs) and Jālovā (those who are actually fishermen)¹, or Doms.

It appears certain that they were low class non-Aryans, who, having adopted Hinduism, followed the general rules of Hindu society and were, therefore, included within the Śūdras.

Inscriptions make mention of the Kumbhakāras², and the Tantuvāyas³. Like other Śūdra classes, the origin of the Kumbhakāras is uncertain. Usānas takes Kumbhakāra as the offspring of a Brāhmana by a Vaiśya woman⁴. Vaikhānasa adds that such an offspring becomes either a Kumbhakāra or a barber. Vedavyāsa and Devala take them as Śūdras⁵. In modern Assam, the potters are known as both Kumāras and Hiḍās; but in their origin the Hiḍās were more degraded than the Kumāras and allied to the Kaivartas. They gave up their original profession of fisherman and took to the making of pottery. No intercourse has been allowed between the Kumāras and the Hiḍās⁶. The Puṣpabhadra grant refers to a degraded caste (atyaja) and mentions Dijja ratihāḍi in connection with the boundary of the land granted⁷. Perhaps the Hāḍis were allied to the Hiḍās and the Doms or fishermen. As they have taken to various professions in course of time, such as trade, agriculture, working in metal

¹A.C.R., 1901, I, p.132.

²Nidhanpur grant, Last Plate; E.I. II, pp.347f (Kamauli grant).

³Subhāṅkarapāṭaka grant.

⁴History of Dharmasāstra, II, I, p.78.

⁵Ibid.

⁶A.C.R., 1891, I, p.272.

⁷K.S. p.181 (f.n.3).

like gold, etc., sub-classes have developed, like the Br̥ttiyāl, Sonāri and others¹; but at present no intercaste marriage occurs between these various sub-groups. Patañjali takes the Tantu-vāyas as Sūdras, and therefore they were excluded from all religious rites². It is doubtful whether the Tantuvāyas of the epigraphs denoted a caste. Now in Assam the term Tātī, the modern equivalent of Tantuvāya, stands for a professional class.

These are some of the castes and classes, which we find mentioned in the epigraphs. It was on the basis of various occupations that a number of subgroups were formed, which later on developed into various castes. Towards the end of our period and at a subsequent time we find that some of the non-Aryan tribes also were included within the Hindu fold. The most important of these were the Rābhās, Kachāris, Meches, Koches and the like. The Hindu priests have been responsible for making them śaraṇīya (i.e. they have been accepted as Sūdras) according to Hindu rites, and all of them were included within one class (Sūdras). This process has been going on for a long time past, with the result that there has been an increase in the members of the Hindu fold. All social and marriage relations of the converted tribes have been based upon the injunctions laid down in the orthodox Hindu texts³. This conversion was possible because of the liberal outlook

¹A.C.R., 1891, I, pp. 277-78.

²History of Dharmasāstra, p. 63.

³Gait, History of Assam, pp. 8f, 47; also Section 4, pp. 696-97

of the Hindu system and in fact the Assamese Hindu social divisions have been more or less based upon a spirit of liberalism, and probably no caste or class, including that of the Brāhmaṇas followed their caste rules in strict accordance with the sāstras. The higher classes did not perhaps look down upon the degraded ones, as they did in other parts of India, and were not so strict in the observance of their rules relating to food and profession¹. The comparative laxity of class distinction in Assam's social system was primarily due to the Vaiṣṇava reformation.

The four āśramas, Brahmacarya, Grhastha, Vanaprastha and Yati stand for the four stages in a man's career. Manu describes how these were graded according to the age and status of the individual². The system was based on a life of discipline, and the acquirement of experience and knowledge. But it was rather an ideal than an actual practice. Like the varṇa system the āśramas were also flexible, and all evidence seems to show that the system was never accepted literally by more than a comparatively handful of people in any part of ancient India at any time. It appears to be a typical Brāhmaṇical attempt at including social phenomena of spontaneous growth in an artificially orderly system. As the very conception of varṇa underwent gradual changes as the society began to make progress with a new outlook

¹ See Robinson, Descriptive Account of Assam, p.264; A.C.R., 1881, p.66; Ibid, 1901, IV, I, pp.116f; K.L.Barua, Man in India, XXII, pp.76-78.

² Manu, IV, I; V, 169; VI, 1-2, 33.

on the changing conditions, so also ideas of the āśramas became liberalised. Even the lawgivers like Gautama¹ and Baudhāyana² hold that of the āśramas, that of the householder is the most important, and some works even go to the length of prescribing that other stages are not essential in the Kali age³.

On the basis of the local epigraphs, we have already referred to the four āśramas, mentioned along with the four varṇas. The rulers, we are told, were responsible for the upholding of this divine social order and stages of life⁴. We have, however, no details about the working of the system, nor do we know whether the four stages were strictly followed at any time by any individual. The instances of the abdication of rulers on different occasions⁵ do not give us strong ground for believing that they did so in order to live a life of renunciation, or that they entered into the life of a vana-prastha or a sannyāsī. It is unlikely that even the orthodox Brāhmaṇas followed the rules of the four stages and the existing evidence proves that they entered the life of a gr̥hastha and remained as such throughout their lives. Inscriptions refer only to their periods of Brahmacharya and gr̥hastha⁶. Even the great Vaiṣṇava reformer Śaṅkaradeva, who dedicated

¹III, I, 35.

²II, 6, 29.

³Kane, History of Dharmasāstra, II, I, p.424.

⁴Nowgong grant, V 7; Nidhanpur grant, Lines 34f; Gauhāti grant, V 18.

⁵Chap.IV, Section 5, p432

⁶Nowgong grant, V 31.

his life to the preaching of his tenets, remained a gr̥hastha, and advised his followers not to follow strictly all the injunctions of an orthodox Vaiṣṇava. The career of his disciple, Mādhavadeva, was, however, an exception, as he remained a celibate throughout his life¹. In fine, like the varṇa system, the four stages of life in ancient Assam were perhaps interpreted in a spirit of liberalism.

3. Family - Inheritance - Houses and Household utensils:

Our knowledge about the family and the nature of inheritance is meagre. Hindu life in general has been based upon the joint family system. Theoretically at least the joint family included the sapinda relations (direct blood relationship) and this theory of sapinda had twofold implications according to the Mitākṣarā and the Dāyabhāga, bearing upon inheritance and the like². We do not know whether ancient Assam followed the Mitākṣarā or the Dāyabhāga rules. In Bengal the latter system was followed³, and it is likely that ancient Assam also adopted it, since it is followed there today. Some of the important features of the Dāyabhāga were that sons had no interest in ancestral property by birth and they could claim partition only after their father's death, or partition could only take place between father and sons if the former so desired; a widow could succeed to her husband's interest on his death even if he had a joint interest with his brothers, and

¹Kathāgurucarita.

²Kane, History of Dharmasāstra, I, pp.150, 290.

³Ibid, p.322.

the right to take a deceased person's estate was regulated by the spiritual benefit conferred by the person claiming to be heir (by means of offering of pinda), and not by the principle of consanguinity, as in the *Mitākṣarā*¹. According to this system, therefore, the family system was based upon patriarchy, the father being the head of the family, possessing sole authority over his property. Though the law of primogeniture was not recognised, the eldest son was often given a greater share, as the burden of maintaining his parents in their old age fell upon him; otherwise all the sons got equal share. *Āpastambha* for instance, pleads for equal division and quotes *Manu* to that effect.² Preferential divisions were, however, not unknown. There are cases in which the father bequeathed his own earned property to whomever he desired.

Evidence of the joint ownership of landed property is furnished by the *Nidhanpur* grant by which land was given to several brothers jointly³. The division of the joint property is indicated by the *Subhāṅkarapāṭaka* grant which records that separate shares were given to brothers, *Himāṅga* and *Trilocana*⁴. The Hindu family tie sometime broke upon the sons getting married, when they demanded a share of their property and wanted to live independently⁵.

Evidence of adoption is lacking, but we may assume that

¹ *Ibid*, p.323.

³ ~~V-22~~. *Last Pl.*

⁵ See *Barnett, Antiquities of India*, pp.96f.

² II, 14; *Gautama*, XXIII.

⁴ V 22.

the same practices were followed in Assam as in other parts of India. The tribal family system has been based upon quite different principles, and their society shows traces of a matriarchal system, or indicates a transition from matriarchy to patriarchy¹.

We have no information about the nature of the dwelling houses of our period; but the nature of the Assamese is so conservative that it may be suggested that little improvement has been made in this respect and their houses remained for centuries almost the same, with little difference from the presentday conditions of the majority of the inhabitants. Normally the members of the same family may have lived under the same roof, and with the increase of members, new houses were required to be raised. The family houses generally consisted of one dwelling quarter with as many rooms as essential, often with a kitchen, attached; one small house or rather a shelter for the cattle; one stone house for paddy and other articles, and, for those who could afford it, a guest house and a small one for daily worship. With the separation of the family, new houses had to be constructed.

Evidence of the designs of houses is lacking; the materials probably consisted mainly of wood, bamboo, thatch, reeds and ropes. The material for plastering the walls was perhaps cowdung

¹Gurdon, Khāsis, pp.76f; Hutton, Sema Nagas, pp.130f; Angami Nagas, App.V, 398f; K.M.Kapadia, The Matrilineal Social Organisation among the Nagas of Assam, pp.3f; Playfair, Gāros, pp.71f; Hodson, Indian Census Ethnography, pp.40f; Gait, C.R.I., 1911, I, I, pp.237f.

mixed with clay and sand. The houses were built upon the ground, but the practice of raising houses on piles, particularly for cattle and storing of foodstuffs, may have been known. It is even today practised, particularly in the villages and paddy fields. In fact, the practice of the erection of piledwellings has been an extensive one among almost all the tribes¹ and it is likely that the people of the plains may have got the idea from them. Beds and seats may ordinarily have been made of wood, but beds of bamboo may also have been known.

We have discussed elsewhere the working in metal, wood, cane, bamboo and other materials in another connection². Household utensils, cooking vessels etc. were made of metal, wood, bamboo, pottery etc. Even now both metal and clay pots, bowls and other vessels are used both for drinking and cooking; bamboo pipes were also used for keeping articles like oil and salt, as they are used even now by the Assamese villagers. We have a number of earthenwares of the period³. Bāna mentions among the presents from Bhāskara wooden boxes, drinking vessels, earthen pots, cups, cane-stools, baskets and thick bamboo tubes⁴, indicating that these were used as household utensils. The common people probably had no furniture except cane mats and other articles made of bamboo. In fact our knowledge of the furniture of the period is insufficient. A later Muslim source, the Fathiya-i-Ibriyah mentions wooden boxes, trays and chairs

¹Peal, Notes on Platform dwellings in Assam, J.R.A.I., XI, pp. 53f.

²See Section 2, pp. 568f

³Ibid, pp. 576-79

⁴H.C. (Cowell), pp. 212f.

etc., from Assam, which were made from a single piece of wood. In any case, the nature of the household utensils and other articles, like the construction of dwelling quarters, naturally depended upon the position of the individuals concerned.

4. Marriage - Married Life and Women:

The Hindu social structure and its solidarity was based to a great extent on the institution of marriage, which had both a social and religious sanction. Manu recognises¹ as many as eight kinds of marriage; the recognition was certainly due to the mixture of the Aryan and non-Aryan elements. These marriages are: Brahma (based upon Vedic rites); Daiva (by which a girl is offered to a priest); Ārṣa (marriage by purchase in which the bride's father normally receives from the bridegroom a pair of oxen); Kāya or Prājāpatya (in which the marriage takes place after the proposal being made by the would-be bridegroom); Āsura (marriage by purchase); Gāndharva (secret union); Rākṣasa (marriage by force or capture) and Paiśāsa (secret elopement)².

The law books enjoin upon the Brāhmaṇas to follow Brahma, Daiva, Ārṣa and Prājāpatya, while the Kṣatriyas could follow Rākṣasa, Paiśāsa and Gāndharva types, and the Āsura form is valid for the Vaiśyas. The evidence from Assam is too meagre to arrive at any definite conclusion. It is unlikely that the rules of the texts were strictly followed in any part of ancient India. The secret marriage of Anirudha with Uṣā

¹III, 21-34.

²Barnett, Antiquities, pp.115f.

suggests a marriage of the gāndharva or even paisāsa kind¹. The marriage of Kṛṣṇa with Rukmiṇī, described in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa (V, XXVI; Rukmiṇī-Haraṇa) is an instance of the union of the rākṣasa type. Another kind of marriage, called svayamvara is mentioned in the Rājatarāṅginī in connection with the marriage of Amṛtaprabhā to Meghavāhana of Kāśmīra². No survival of this is found in Assam, except perhaps the type of informal union during the 'Bihu' dancing.

Normally among the higher classes, the institution of marriage has been based on formal rites according to the Prājāpatya type. The Puṣpabhadra grant (V 15) seems to throw a light on the marriage of what is known as pāṇigrahaṇa³. It records the marriage of Bhāskara to Jivā thus: tasyāḥ Kareṇa sa Karaṇ jagrhe grhastha-dharmmāya Kaṅkaṇa-dharamāhṛta-Kaṅkaṇena.

Child marriage, except among the Brāhmaṇas and Kāyasthas, who practise it even today, was perhaps as rare among other classes as widow remarriage among the former. Brāhmaṇa youths usually married after the completion of their period of education. It was often the duty of a king to bear the expenses of a poor Brāhmaṇa so that after his marriage he might be a grhastha. This is incidentally referred to in the Nowgong grant (V31). The Hindu system was based on the principle that no man or woman should remain unmarried and the snātaka was

¹Kumāra-Haraṇa.

²Bk.II, 147-48.

³See Antiquities of India, pp.115-16, 143-44.

required to enter on matrimony soon after his Brahmacharya¹. The necessity of progeny and lifelong companionship led the Hindus in general to marry. The Assamese Hindus of the plains, whether Brāhmaṇas or Sūdras, followed in general all the rites of marriages recognised in the texts². The Brāhmaṇas even now practise three rites regarding a single marriage: one before puberty; the second after the girl attaining that condition; and the third when she bears a child. We have no details of the marriage ceremonies of the ancient Assamese in general; the modern ceremony usually lasts for three or four days³, and the most remarkable feature of the system is the singing of marriage songs, which constitute an important element of Assamese folk poetry. The whole ceremony has a socio-religious sanction, and the sanctity attached to it perhaps made divorce an impossibility. In the marriage of widows no such ceremonies are performed.

Though endogamy has been the general rule, cases of inter-caste marriages, particularly among the lower classes have not been rare, and polygamy and widow remarriage have been almost an universal practice. We have no instance of polyandry in ancient Assam except among some tribes. It has always been an universal practice to take or demand a dowry from the bride's father. Instances of paying some sort of bride price by the bridegroom's parents were also not rare, and this has a parallel

¹Altekar, Education in Ancient India, p.39.

²See Thomson, Assam Valley, pp.61f.

³H.C.Barua, Notes on the Marriage System of the People of Assam, 1909.

in the marriage by purchase, found so commonly among the non-Aryan tribes in Assam. In fact, all the forms of marriage that we have described with reference to the Hindus, have parallels in those of the tribes¹. Even the practice of marriage by service that has been followed by some tribes, can be best illustrated by the 'capaniā' system of the Assamese in general, by which the bridegroom becomes a lifelong member of the bride's family. The tribal exogamous marriages may have influenced the marriage of the same kind among the Brāhmaṇas outside their gotras, fundamentally based on some kind of totemism². The only difference that we notice between the Aryan and non-Aryan system is the practice of premarital laxity and freedom of choice of partners allowed to both the sexes of the tribal people, marked by an ancient institution called communal barracks or bachelors' quarters³. In short, Assam being predominantly a land of non-Aryan inhabitants, marriage laws and customs of the Hindu and Hinduised population, might have been greatly influenced by the former.

The practice of Satī and concubinage was also known. Bhāskaravarman's name is associated with concubines. This is proved by Dāmodaragupta's 'Kuṭṭanimātam', which states that the king's concubine became a satī after his death⁴. The practice of satī is indicated by the Yoginī Tantra, which enjoins

¹Hodson, India-Census Ethnography, pp.42-45.

²A.Lang, Myth, Ritual & Religion, I, pp.79f.

³Peal, On the Morung as possibly a Relic of Pre-Marriage communism, J.R.A.I. XXII, pp.244-261; The Communal Barracks of Primitive Races, J.A.S.B. 1892, Pt.II, pp.246-69.

⁴Kāvyaṃālā, III, p.77, V 549.

Brāhmaṇa widows to burn themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands; vaiśya and sūdra widows were also allowed to do it if they were moved by a deep sense of love for their husbands. It was prohibited for unchaste women and those having many children¹. These practices and many others are evils of the Hindu married life in general. The tribal system depicts by contrast a healthy picture.

But whether followed in practice or in principle, the Hindu conception of married life has made woman a co-partner in the spiritual and temporal affairs of her husband, the 'grhalakṣmī' or 'sahadharminī'. Chastity and devotedness to her husband have been considered as two great ornaments of her character. Happy domestic life and the training of their children depended much upon women possessing good qualities and education. Evidence of the types of work done by women is lacking and epigraphy makes reference to various qualities of head and heart of queens only. References to other women are few. The Bargāon grant states that Śyāmayikā was devoted to her Brāhmaṇa husband, and, being endowed with virtues, shone like the full moon, pure in form, dispelling darkness². The Śuālkuchi grant records that Cheppāyikā was charming, true in faith, whose beauty was her own ornament and who resembled Lakṣmī³. Purandarapāla's wife, Durlabhā was like Śacī to

¹II, VV 302-308.

²V 18.

³V 18.

Indra, Śivā to Śambhū, Rati to Madana, Lakṣmī to Hari and Rohiṇī to the moon god¹.

Ideal womanhood of pure character and merits was, therefore, aimed at, and it was considered fortunate on the part of a woman to bear a worthy son.

Yajñāvātī, the mother of Mahendravarman resembled the sacrificial wood that produces fire². Harjjara's mother Jivadhā is compared with Kuntī and Subhadrā; she was also like the morning twilight, worshipped by many, and was the source of great spiritual fame³. Gopāla's wife Nayanā was a queen of wide renown⁴ and Ratnā, the wife of Harṣapāla and the Brāhmaṇa lady Paukā were noted for their works of charity and piety, compared with Pārvatī⁵. Most of these descriptions are more or less conventional and as we have stated, we find little indication of the general level of culture of the women of our period. It is likely that besides their household duties, some of them, particularly the queens, had some sort of education and taste for other allied arts⁶. The fine arts of the period portray female figures as playing on musical instruments and dancing and the same source gives an idea of feminine beauty, so graphically described in the Kumāra-Harāṇa, Rukmiṇī Harāṇa and the Yoginī Tantra⁷.

¹Gauhāti grant, V 13.

²Nidhanpur grant, V 12.

³Hāyūnthāl grant, VII; Tezpur grant, V 10.

⁴Puṣpabhadrā grant, V 5.

⁵Subhāṅkarapāṭaka grant, VII.

⁶See Section 3, pp. 628-29

⁷II, 9, VV 26f; The Yoginī Tantra describes Kumārī pūjā. It was perhaps under the Tāntrik influence (Bk.I., Chap.17, VV 33f).

Both literature and epigraphy depict the public and private life of women in general whether in a town or a village, in a court or a temple. Epigraphy supplies us with details about the character of town damsels and their immoral habits. When and how the purdah system was introduced into the Assamese society is not known; the wearing of veils is now a common practice among Assamese married women. The Tezpur grant indicates that women even took their bath in the open¹. The Bargāon grant refers to the life of ease, the whimsical nature and immoral habits of the town women, and mentions the existence of courtesans (veśyā and varastrī)². We have also reference to the institution of devadāsīs or temple dancers in the service of the main object of worship, particularly in Siva temples. The institution of the devadāsī goes back to a remote antiquity, and is associated with the Mediterranean world³. Historical references to the prevalence of the practice in India, particularly in Southern India are found as early as the third century A.D.⁴, if not earlier. It might have existed in Assam a long time before, perhaps introduced by non-Aryan elements. The institution is nothing but a sacred prostitution⁵. In Assam devadāsīs go by the name of naṭīs and these unmarried girls were usually supplied by a dancer (naṭ)⁶. An incidental reference perhaps to devadāsīs is found in the

¹J.A.S.B., IX, II, pp.766f. ²Second Plate.

³Hutton, C.R.I., 1931, I, I, pp.236f.

⁴See Altekar, The position of Women in Hindu Civilisation,

⁵Penzer, The Ocean of story, I, App.IV, p.239. pp.214f.

⁶We have information of higher classes becoming naṭs, like the Kalitās (M.C.R. 1901, I, p.141).

Tezpur grant of Vanamāla who is said to have made a gift of Veśyās to the Śiva temple¹. The survival of the practice is found even today not only in a Śiva temple in Doobi in Kāmarūpa but also in the Buddhist-Vaiṣṇava temple of Hājo. It appears probable that the institution developed in Assam under Tāntrik influence. It is, however, strange that the virgins dedicated for a noble cause, living as it were the life of a Buddhist nun, could degenerate into prostitutes and were allowed to defile the temples of god. In its extreme development, the institution has a parallel in the pre-marital communal life of the bachelors' quarters of the Assam tribes.

5. Food and Drink: Inscriptions are silent regarding the Assamese dishes of our period and literature gives only incidental references. Among the Assamese Hindus, unlike those of many parts of India, rice was the staple food, and all sections of the people including the Brāhmaṇas were accustomed to the taking of meat and fish with certain restrictions regarding the meat of a particular animal or fish. Climatic conditions and the nature of her inhabitants determined their diet. Dietary practice like the varṇāśrama system in Assam has been based on a spirit of liberalism, and this continued even under the Vaiṣṇava Reformation. Food restrictions were usually observed during a period of penance, uncleanness due to the death of a person and on occasions like the sankrānti and ekādaśī. These have parallels in the restrictions observed

¹v 24.

by the non-Aryan tribes not only regarding food but also other aspects of their culture¹. Serpent shaped and scaleless fishes were not taken by the upper classes: matsyāms' ca-salka-hīnāms' ca sarpākārāms' ca varjjayet². The Yoginī Tantra recommends the meat of ducks, pigeons, tortoise and even wild boars: hamṣa pārāvataṃ bhakṣyaṃ kūrmaṃ varāham eva ca Kāmarūpe parityāgād durgatis tasya sambhavet³. Meat of goats, deer, rhinoceros, etc. was also taken. Pork with the soft roots of the plantain tree made a good preparation⁴. References to beef eating are not found in Assam. Opinions are divided on the killing of cows and eating of beef in ancient India, even by the Aryans⁵. It is not unlikely that the practice was common among the Aryans⁶; but the absence of any definite reference in Assam does not help us to come to a definite conclusion about the prevalence of the practice among the Assamese Hindus.

The favourite curry of the Assamese has been an alkaline preparation from plantain trees⁷ and certain water herbs, used also as a substitute for salt, mixed with fish. Pacalā was made of the same tree and Kharicā from the green bamboo shoots. Sour curry preparations were made from the fruits like au (dillinis indica), tenteli, thekerā and cakalā sour fruits, all

¹Hodson, 'The Genna among the Hill tribes of Assam', J.R.A.I.,
²Y.T., II, 5, 275. ³Ibid. XXXVI, pp. 92, 103.

⁴Kumāra-Haraṇa, V 208.

⁵Cf. Wilson, Essays, II, p. 353; Colebrooke, A. Res. VII, pp. 288-89.

⁶R. L. Mitra, J.A.S.B., XLI, I, pp. 174-78; J.A.S.B. XXXIX, p. 241.

⁷Tavernier refers to the extraction of salt from this tree (Travels, II, pp. 282-283).

mixed with fish. Other special preparations consisted of pāyasa (rice pudding), prepared with milk, rice and sugar; various kinds of modaka and piṣṭaka were prepared from rice flour and guḍa (molasses)¹. These constitute now the special preparations of the Assamese, particularly during national festivals like the 'Bihu'. The Yoginī Tantra mentions the various preparations of curd, ghee and other sweets from buffalo's milk².

Literature also mentions other dishes (vyañjana)³, prepared with vegetables, fish, meat, pulses, etc; the spices used were āṛdraka (ginger), jīnaka (cumin), pippatīyaka (long pepper), manica (pepper), Karpūra (camphor), sariṣā (mustard) etc.⁴. The vegetables mentioned in the Yoginī Tantra are mūlaka, rājaka, vāstuka, pālaṅga, nālikā, śukna, tāphā, caṅgā, dḥekīyā (a kind of fern) etc.⁵.

With all these preparations the Assamese food remained perhaps simple, and all needs were supplied by home-made products, because every Assamese household had its cattle, paddy fields and vegetable gardens.

Home-made liquors, rice-beer, or the tāopānī of the tribes, were used as drink. The evidence from ancient Assam is very little. Bāṇa states that Bhāskara sent to Harṣa 'cups of ull-aka, diffusing a fragrance of sweet wine'⁶. The 'madhumada'^A

¹cf. Kumāra-Haraṇa: (Bahuvīdha pīthā kṣīra-modaka viśeṣa).

²II, 9, V 257.

³Kumāra-Haraṇa, VV 208-9. ⁴Y.T., II, 7, V 186; also Kumāra-Haraṇa, VV 207: hāladi marica hīṅgaka diyā ādā lona jani jirā māchāra pavita ll

⁵II, 9.

⁶H.C. (Cowell) pp. 212.

of the Bargāon grant was perhaps a kind of preparation of honey¹. The Yoginī Tantra mentions wine in connection with the worship of Kāmeśvarī: rudhirair māṃṣa-madais'ca pūjayet Parameśvarīm². The use of wine was not perhaps common among all people. Another favourite habit of the Assamese was the chewing of betelvine and nut (tāmbūla-pāṇa), introduced perhaps by the non-Aryans, particularly the Khāsis, who have a special liking for it³. The abundance of aneca-nut and betelvine in Assam is evidenced both by epigraphy and literature⁴. The use of these articles is given in the Yoginī Tantra which states that the Assamese women would always continue the practice. In fact, the practice of chewing unripe betel nut with lime is nowhere found in India except in Assam. This is recorded by a later Muslim source. The Pathiya-i-Ibriyah states that the people of Assam chewed pāṇ in abundance with unripe supāri, even unshelled⁵. The practice is now universal among the Assamese and has a social and national importance.

6. Dresses - Ornaments and Other Articles of Luxury:

The types of dress and ornament used by the Assamese, both males and females, are to be gathered from literature, epigraphy and sculptured remains of the period. As given in the Kālikā P. Assamese garments were known as vastra or

¹Second Plate.

²II, 7, 19.

³The articles like betelnut (gūvāka), betel vine (tāmbūla) and others are associated with their introduction by the Austric elements (S.K.Chatterjee, Indo-Aryan and Hindi, p.35).

⁴See Section 2 pp. 553-54

⁵J.A.S.B., LXVII, I, p.117 (f.n.20).

ācchādāna. The use of both stitched (sūcividham) and unstitched garments is referred to¹. Normally, as appears from the sculptures, the male dress consisted of a paridhāna like the present-day 'dhoti' or undergarment, worn round the waist, held tight by a parīveśa in the waist and with folds in the front, hanging down to the knee or just below it. Bāṇa states that Harṣa gave one parīveśa to Haṃsavega, one part of which had clusters of clear pearls². The same authority mentions leather parīveśa. The upper garments, called uttariya and uttariyāsāṅga in the Kālikā P.³ were specially used by the higher classes. No use of shirts is found in the sculptured specimens. The Bargāon grant mentions that the kings wore a kind of garment over the chest (vakṣaḥ-Kavāṭahata)⁴. The males of distinctive status used a head dress, ordinarily called pāguri (turban)⁵. In the religious ceremony at Kanauj the king Bhāskara wore a tiara on his head⁶. The practice has been long continued and even now the villagers of social position wear turbans, or a single headdress of a piece of cloth, worn round the head. A later Muslim source refers to its use. Qazim writes that the Assamese 'tie a cloth round their heads and another upon the loins and throw a sheet round their shoulders; but it is not customary in that country to wear turbans, robes, drawers and shoes'⁷. The tribes have been accustomed to the use of head-

¹K.P.Chap.69.

²H.C.(Cowell) p.215.

³K.P.Chap.69.

⁴Lines 34-35.

⁵The wearing of turbans was most common among the Āhom rulers and their officers.

⁶Life, pp.165f.

⁷A.Res. II, pp.170f.

dresses of various kinds; the Khāsis in particular wear a huge turban, made of a long piece of mugā cloth.

Women had distinctive garments according to their status, married and unmarried. In general they used two garments, upper and lower, hung from above the waist and fastened by a 'nivibandha'. The complete dress consisted of a girdle (mekhalā) worn round the waist if there was an upper garment (blouse) or just above the breast with a 'rihā', worn round the waist and a 'cādara' (upper garment), one end of which was coiled round the waist just over the 'rihā' and the other end placed across the breast and a shoulder behind. The garments were usually ornamented with embroidery and a particular dress indicated one's status in the society. The poor had to remain satisfied with a simple girdle and an upper garment (cādara). Married women wore veils and took particular care of their hair dressing with the help of combs, made of ivory, wood and bamboo, called in Assamese 'Kākoi' (Kaṅkatikā). The Bargāon grant refers to 'the use of jewelled mirrors (maṇimaya-darpaṇa) by women in their coquetries'¹. The tilaka (a mark made of red paste) on the forehead between the eye-brows indicated their married status as well as feminine grace.

The existing materials refer to the use of cotton, varieties of silk, woollen and leather garments, both simple or dyed and embroidered. The development of cottage industries and an almost universal use of handlooms in every Assamese

¹Second Plate.

household provided adequate clothing for the Assamese in general. There was, moreover, a special class of weavers (tantuvāyas)¹ who might have supplied the needs of people. The Kālikā P. mentions varieties of garments made of Karpāsa (cotton), Kambala (wool), Valka (bark), Koṣaja (silk from cocoons) and hemp cloth (Śaṇavastram)². We have dealt with the question of the extensive manufacture of these various kinds of cloths in another connection, and on the basis of the Indian and classical sources beginning with the first century A.D. we have also pointed out the importance of ancient Assam in the production of both raw and manufactured silk³. On the basis of Kauṭilya's reference to Kṣauma, dukūla and patroṇa in connection with their production in Suvarṇakunḍya and other places in Kāmarūpa⁴ and on a comparison with the various references to them in the Harṣacarita⁵, we have tried to show that these were nothing but the Assamese eḍi, mugā and pāt silk of Assam⁶.

The use of garments, made of fibres of barks of trees has been most common among the tribes. The eḍi cloths are warm and were used by all classes of peoples during winter⁷. The mugā cloths were generally used by the wealthier classes in all seasons⁸; pāt garments were usually worn by females of the

¹Subhāṅkarapāṭaka grant. ²Chap.69, V 2. ³Section 2, pp.559f

⁴Arthasāstra (S.S.tr.) pp.92f; Bhattaswāmī, Com. pp.40f;

⁵H.C.(Cowell) pp.212f. also Section 2, pp. 561f

⁶Section 2, pp. 563-64

⁷See Stack, Silk in Assam(Notes on some Industries of Assam) 1884-95, pp.6-12; Duarah, Eri Silk of Assam (do) pp.77f.

⁸See B.C.Allan, Monograph on the silk cloths of Assam, 1899; Stack, pp.13-21; F.Hamilton, Account of Assam, p.62.

higher and wealthier classes and the males used them particularly on festive occasions. Both mugā and pāt cloths are fine and costly¹. We have referred to the manufacture of embroidered and variously coloured garments². Important mention of painted and variously dyed cloths is found in the Harṣacarita, which includes some of them among the presents of Bhāskara to Harṣa³. The same reference is found in the Kālikā Purāna⁴ and Qazim⁵. Even the classical sources refer to the dyeing of cloths with lac⁶. It is now an universal practice among Assamese women to use embroidered garments. Their girdles, rihā and cādara contain beautiful specimens of artistic designs, consisting of flowers, creepers, and the like. As given in the Kālikā P. (69,8) the use of red and yellow garments was auspicious; but on religious occasions, the use of red and blue garments was forbidden. Even today Assamese women wear coloured garments while cooking, and their use is most common among the tribal women.

The use of ornaments in ancient India goes back to a remote period⁷. In Assam the practice is proved both by literature and sculptures. We have pointed out elsewhere to the epigraphic evidence of the various kinds of wares and jewellers' shops with ornaments⁸. The Kālikā P.(69,17-23)

¹Thos.Hugon, J.A.S.B.,VI, pp.21-38; J.C.Roy, J.B.O.R.S. III, pp.180f.

²Section 2, pp.565-66 ³H.C.(Cowell) pp.212f.

⁴Chap.69,8. ⁵A.Res, II, pp.173-74.

⁶Section 2, pp. 565-66

⁷Dikṣit, Prehistoric Civilisation of the Indus Valley,pp.50f.

⁸Bargāon grant (Second Plate).

gives an exhaustive list of Assamese ornaments, used by women from head to foot. In actual practice only a few of them may have been used by the wealthier people. The ornaments were usually made of gold and silver, and the main designs were worn in the feet, fingers, arms, wrists, neck and the forehead. The Kalika P. states (69,17-23) that silver ornaments could not be used above the neck: grīvordhadeśa raupyaṃtu na kadācic ca bhūṣanam. The same purāṇa states that iron and bell metal ornaments could not be worn, and those of other metals could be used only for the lower part of the body. But it is doubtful whether in actual practice such rules were followed. The sculptured specimens testify to the use of the necklace (hāra) of beads in particular; sometimes a pendant was attached to it in the middle; a flat necklace was called galpatā. The Keyūra and aṅgada were worn on the upper arms. The bracelet was known as Kaṅkaṇa. The use of bangles was also known. Kuṇḍalas (earrings) were used in ears, and nūpuras (anklets) in the feet; kinḱinī with attached small bells, as appears from the Tezpur grant of Vanamāla, were worn by unmarried girls. Īalātika was worn on the forehead just before the hair by married women. The use of ornaments, however, depended upon individuals, and the poor could hardly afford to wear precious ornaments.

The use of perfumes and cosmetics is also indicated by some sources. We have mentioned elsewhere the abundance of

agaru and sandal wood, musk of deer, gośīrṣa and other scented oil, as mentioned both in literature, including the classical sources, and epigraphs¹. On the basis of the Arthaśāstra we have also mentioned different varieties of sandal and aloe wood from various places of Assam, like Joṅga, Doṅga, Grāmeru, Jāpa, Turupa, etc. The same source gives an exhaustive list of perfumes (tailaparnikas) from Assam, such as Aśokagrāmaka, Joṅgaka, Grāmeruka, Suvarṇakuṇḍyaka, Pūrṇadvīpaka, Pāralauhātyaka, Antarvatya, Kālakeya, etc.². This is supported by the Harṣacarita³. The Kālikā P. (69, VV 37, 53) further points to the use of various perfumes, such as cūrṇikṛta (powder), ghrṣṭa (paste), dāhakarṣita (ashes), sammardajanasa (juice), prānyaṅodbhava (like musk) etc.

The use of scented oil by women, and even by men, before and after the bath, has been a common practice among the Assamese. The Tezpur grant (V 30) mentions that women used scented oil and anointed their breasts with odorous substances. The use of perfume was believed to increase one's beauty and grace; it was also used in sacrifices and ceremonies; sandal paste in particular has been universally used in all religious and social ceremonies. The Kālikā Purāṇa (69, 53) states that 'with perfume one meets his desire. It also increases merit, begets wealth and brings liberation'.

¹Section 2, pp. 574f

²Bhattachavāmi, Com. pp.36-40; Śrīmūla Com., pp.189-90.

³H.C.(Cowell) pp.212f.

Another favourite practice of the womenfolk was the colouring of their teeth, like the use of añjana for their eyes. This is stated in the Yoginī Tantra¹. The blackening of the teeth is even now practised by some Assamese women, and was perhaps common in other parts of India, as reported by Yuan Chwang².

Of the other articles of luxury, mention may be made of fans, particularly made of bamboo, cane and date-palm tree, garlands, footwear, umbrellas, jāpis (sun hats) prepared from date-palm leaves, etc. Foot-wear was made of wood (Khadam) and deer hide. The grant of Vallabhadeva refers to sandals with leather straps³. Umbrellas were usually made of cotton cloth. The ābhoga umbrella of the rulers of ancient Assam was part of the royal insignia⁴; the jāpi was used as its substitute by the Āhom rulers. Chatra and jāpi were often used as shades over deities. With these few articles of luxury and necessities, the average Assamese lived rather a simple life with little more than a bare maintenance.

¹II, IX, V 15.

²Watters, I, p.151.

³E.I. V, pp.181f.

⁴H.C.(Cowell), pp.213-14.

Section 2.

ECONOMIC CONDITION.1. Agriculture - Paddy and other products.

Neither literature nor epigraphy depicts the economic pursuits of the people of Assam in the period before the arts of cattle rearing and cultivation were known. As in other parts of India, Assam no doubt passed through various economic stages. It is worth noting that the stage of hunting was not entirely over among the tribes in Assam until comparatively recent times, and we find traces of it even now among some of them. Along with the vāstubhūmi, kṣetra, khila, etc., the grants mention go-pracāra-bhūmi or pasture land.¹ The art of cattle rearing along with cultivation, for which the land was privately owned,² was, therefore, an early institution in Assam. When the right of ownership over land was recognised and the art of cultivation was introduced, land, on which depended the main livelihood of the agriculturists, became their real property.

Cultivation was carried on in the beginning by a crude method of 'jhuming' i.e., by cutting down jungles and trees, setting fire to them, making holes in the land with the help of digging sticks and then sowing seeds without the use of hoe or plough. Even now among the tribes this is the main method employed in cultivation, believed to have been intro-

¹Nowgong Grant, Line 36; Also Bargāon Grant, Line 56 and other grants.

²Manu, VII, 237; Yājñā-Valkya, II, 167.

duced at a very early time.¹ But with the knowledge of the use of hoes and ploughs, people took to a more complicated process of cultivation. This method of the cultivation of land particularly in the agrahāra settlements is proved by our grants. We find also reference to irrigation. This was employed in terraced cultivation, which is believed to have been introduced by the Āngāmi Nagās from the Oceanic World (Philippine Isles)². We know from the grants that most of the important towns, villages, and arable lands were situated on the bank of rivers. Moreover, the occurrence of the expressions like 'sajala-sthala', used in connection with most of the donated lands, and other terms like jala, garta (pit), dobā (reservoir of water or small tank) etc.,³ indicate that the arable areas were supplied with water. Even orchards were irrigated by channels. This is proved by the accounts of Yuan Chwang, of the 7th century A.D., who states that 'water led from the river or from banked up lakes (reservoirs) flowed round the towns.'⁴ Land was, therefore, comparatively fertile and fit for the cultivation of various crops.

The extensive cultivation of paddy, at least from the 6th century A.D., is proved by the fact that the area of all donated lands are expressed in terms of the measures of paddy they produce. Rice being the staple food, it was natural that the cultivation of paddy constituted one of the chief economic

¹See Chap. III, pp. 150f

²See Chap. III, pp. 132f

³Nidhanpur Grant, Last Plate.

⁴Watters, Yuan Chwang, II, pp.185f.

pursuits of the people, whether living in the plains or the hills. Ancient Assamese works refer to summer and winter paddy. The Yoginī Tantra mentions a number of varieties in connection with the worship of different deities.¹ The cultivation of sugar cane is indicated by the fact that among the presents sent by Bhāskara to Harṣa included guḍa (molasses) prepared from sugarcane in earthen pots.² The Muslim travellers and historians of the Āhom period refer to sugarcane, and confirm its cultivation in our period. Qazim for instance writes that the sugar cane of Assam 'excels in softness and sweetness and is of three colours, red, black and white.'³ Both epigraphy and literature refer to the cultivation of pumpkins. Bāna mentions among the presents of Bhāskara pumpkin gourds containing painting materials.⁴ The Bargāon grant refers to arable land with clusters (hills) of gourds (tābukutiḱṣetra).⁵ The cultivation of various vegetables is mentioned in the Yoginī Tantra.⁶

The plantation of various fruit trees of different types is proved both by epigraphy and literature. The grants mention Kaṅṭāphala (jack fruit)⁷, Āmra (mango),⁸ Jambu (eugenia jambolana),⁹ Śrīphala,¹⁰ Dumbari¹¹ (fig), Śakhoṭaka,¹²

¹Chap. II, 5, 289-91.

²H.C. (Cowell), pp.212f.

³A. Res., II, p.173.

⁴H.C. (Cowell), pp.212f.

⁵Hoernle, J.A.S.B., LXVII, I, pp.89f.

⁶The important varieties are mūlaka, rājaka, vāstuka, pālaṅga, nālikā, sukna, lāphā, caṅgā, dḱekiyā, etc., (Y.T., II, 9).

⁷Grants of Indrapāla and Dharmapāla.

⁸Grants of Balavarman and Indrapāla.

⁹Nowgong Grant.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid. ¹²Grants of Ratnapāla and Indrapāla.

(walnut) Badari (Jajube), Lakuca,¹ (āmalaka) a kind of bread-fruit tree, Betesa (gamboza)², Pūga, (betel nut), Coraka (a king of wild palm tree)³, Rudrākṣa (bead tree)⁴ and others with sour taste such as Au (dilinisindica) Tenteli and others.⁵ The abundance of jack fruit and coconut is evidenced by Yuan Chwang who states that in Kāmarūpa 'the jack fruit and coconut were in great esteem though plentiful.'⁶ We are not sure whether oranges were grown during our period. But Qazim at a later time mentions them along with others. He writes that Assam 'produces mangoes, plantains, jacks, oranges, citrons, limes, pineapples and punialeh, a species of amleh which has such an excellence of flavour that every person who tastes it, prefers it to the plum. There are also coconut trees, peppervines, areca trees and sadij (malabathrum) in great plenty.'⁷ Not only mangoes but also a preparation of mango juice was sent by Bhāskara to Harṣa. Bāna states that the Kāmarūpa King sent bamboo tubes containing mango juice.⁸ A particular mention of the different uses of the plantain tree is found in Tavernier.⁹ The extensive plantation of areca nut and betel vine is supported by a number of literary sources and epigraphy. This is mentioned

¹K.S. p.163 (f.n. 3).

²K.S., p.109 (f.n. 2).

³Ibid, p.163 (f.n. 3).

⁴Ibid, p.115 (f.n. 2).

⁵Sec. I, pp. 540-41

⁶Watters, II, pp.185f; Siyuki, II, pp.195f.

⁷A. Res, II, p.173.

⁸H.C. (Cowell) pp. 212f.

⁹Travels, II, 282; also Kumāra-Haraṇa, V. 208.

in the Apsad inscription of Ādityasewa,¹ Nowgong Grant (V. 2f), Harṣacarita,² Yoginī Tantra, Qazim³ Fathiya-i-Ibriah⁴ and other sources. The plantation of Āladi or haridrā (turmeric), ādraka (ginger), jīraka (cumin), pippaliyaka (long pepper), marica (pepper), sariṣā (mustard), Karpūra and others is evidenced by the Kumāra-Haraṇa (207) and the Yoginī Tantra.⁵

Black pepper⁶ was an extensively cultivated product of Assam, like lac.⁷ Qazim, as we have noted, refers to pepper as one of the products of the land. The earliest reference to the lac insect is perhaps made by the classical writers. Ctesias and Aelian mention the fruit of a tree called Siptachora from which amber exuded and upon which there was found a small insect yielding a purple dye. The tree is said to grow in abundance in the country of Seres and the insect alluded to must be the lac insect. The region referred to is Lower Assam⁸. Ctesias further mentions that the country of Siptachora produced all good things.⁹ These included besides lac and other dyes, silk, aloe, musk, ivory, gold, etc. which were exported to India via the

¹C.I.I., III, pp. 200f.

²H.C. (Cowell), pp. 212f.

³A. Res, II, p. 173.

⁴J.A.S.B., LXVII, I, p. 117. (f.n. 20).

⁵II, 7, V. 186.

⁶Basu, Cultivation of black pepper in Assam. Bulletin, Agr. Dept., Assam, 1898 (N. 4); also Watt, Commercial Products of India, p. 897.

⁷Basu, A Note on the Lac Industry of Assam, Shillong, 1900; Watt, Commercial Products, etc., p. 1059.

⁸Taylor, J.A.S.B., 1847, I, p. 47; Wilford, A. Res, IX, p. 65.

⁹Heeren, Asiatic Nations, II, App. IV, p. 380.

Brahmaputra.¹ This is confirmed by Tavernier who states that Assam 'produces an abundance of shellac of - a red colour - it is the best lac in the whole of Asia for these purposes.'² The production of Tejpāt (malabathrum of the classical writers) was extensive in Assam. Watt rightly points out that it was mainly grown in Assam and Burma³. The classical works beginning with the 1st century A.D. associate the production and trade of this article with the Sesatae, some hill tribes of Assam.⁴ The articles of trade of these people, mentioned as petros and malabathrum, were the bark and leaves of tejpāt from Assam.⁵ The hill tribes of the classical writers like the Gāros, inhabiting the areas of the Garo Hills, Sylhet, etc., which were famous for the malabathrum extracted an essence from it, as mentioned by Sir William Jones.⁶ The abundance of sadij (tejpāt) is also testified by Qazim⁷. In fact, articles like tejpāt and manjit have been extensively cultivated in the hills and forests of Assam, mostly by tribes like the Gāros, Ābars and Mishmis. All these statements, indicate that important agricultural products were produced in Assam from early times.

¹J.A.S.B., 1847, I, p.47.

²Travels, II, pp.281-82.

³Commercial Products, pp.310f.

⁴McCrindle, The Commerce and Navigation of the Erythrean Sea, pp.145-49; Vincent, The Periplus, II, pp.523f; Schoff, Periplus, pp.47-49, 261, 278-79; Gerini, Ptolemy's Geograph, p.830.

⁵Taylor, J.A.S.B., 1847, I, pp. 32f.

⁶Ibid, p. 46.

⁷A. Res, II, p.173.

2. Fishing and Hunting:

We have mentioned in another connection that the people of Assam, whether Aryans or non-Aryans, were both fish and meat eaters.¹ Epigraphs mention a class of people, called Kaivartas² whose main profession was the catching of fish and selling them in the market. Fishing may also have been practised by individuals for their personal use, with the help of nets, traps, bamboo rods armed with iron nails, and by poisoning the river or a pond with herbs. We find no evidence of angling from our period. Most of these devices seem to have been borrowed from the tribes, because such modern words as tãngi (a kind of fishing net) and Khokã (a kind of fish trap) are of Tibeto-Burman origin.³

Inscriptions also refer to the hunting of animals for meat and for pleasure. This was a very ancient practice. We have, however, no evidence of professional hunters. Hunting was usually done with bows and arrows, sometimes poisoned, spears, nets and snares, and digging pits in the jungles. As with fishing, the various devices used in hunting may largely have been borrowed from the tribes. The Doobi grant refers to the snaring of a deer.⁴ The grants of Indrapãla make a passing reference to the catching of tigers, in connection with the daring exploits of Purandanapãla, who 'being passionately fond of the chase gave more than once

¹Section 1, pp. 539-40

²Tezpur Rock Inscription, J.B.O.R.S., 1917, pp.508f.

³Kãkati, Assamese - Its Formation and Development, p.77.

⁴J.A.R.S., XII, pp.16f.

extraordinary proofs of it by the way in which he captured hostile kings, like tigers, in nettings of arrows improvised for the occasion.¹ The plates of Vallabhadeva mention buffalo hunting.² The abundance of the elephants in Assam, and the use of ivory as an article of trade and industry point to the conclusion that elephants were caught for various purposes and sometimes killed for ivory. Kālidāsa refers to elephants, caught in the forests of Assam.³ Both fishing and hunting, therefore, constituted one of the important occupations of the people of our period. But the existing materials do not show that a considerable section of the people depended entirely on these pursuits.

3. Industries:

(i) Weaving, Sericulture, Embroidery and Dyeing.

In the development of various industrial products, the craftsmen of Kāmarūpa had a place in ancient India. The economic wealth of the country played a considerable part in their evolution. Whether in the art of weaving and sericulture, or working in metal, ivory, wood, leather, clay, cane, bamboo and the like, their reputation was equal to that of the craftsmen of other parts of contemporary India. This is evidenced by literature, foreign accounts and epigraphy, which mention different professional classes like weavers, spinners, dyers, smiths, workers in ivory, metal,

¹Gauhāti Grant, V. 12; Guākuchi Grant, V. 12.

²E.I., V, pp. 181-88.

³Canto, IV, V. 83.

wood, cane, bamboo, etc.

Besides the professional tantuvāyas,¹ we have evidence of the extensive manufacture of cloths, and the hand loom industry has always occupied an important place in every Assamese household, which probably contained as now a hand loom, besides other articles for weaving and spinning. Cotton shrubs were grown for the manufacture of cotton cloths.² The early use of cotton (tulāpāt) as a writing material is proved by some old Assamese manuscripts. Writing material was produced by pressing cotton so as to maké it into something like a sheet of paper.³ The use of karpāsa (cotton) garments is also shown by the Kālikā Purāṇa⁴ of the 10th century A.D. and the Harṣacarita.⁵ During the Āhom period the weavers had a good reputation. They were employed for the supply of royal robes of the Āhom kings. The usual process of manufacture involved treating the threads with some gummy substance, prepared generally from pounded rice, to make them hard before their use in the loom. There was an extensive supply of cotton clothes and the art reached a stage of perfection.⁶ The Kālikā P. proves also the use and manufacture of woollen garments (kambāla), bark cloths (valka) silk (koṣaja) and hemp cloth (śāṇavastram)⁷. Bark cloths were made of fibres of trees and plants, as they still

¹Subhāṅkarapāṭaka Grant.

²See W. Hamilton, East India Gazetteer, pp.40-42.

³Des. Cat. of Assamese Manuscripts, Introduction.

⁴Chap. 69, V. 2.

⁵H.C. (Cowell), pp. 212f.

⁶See Samman, Monograph on the Cotton Fabrics of Assam, 1897.

⁷Chap. 69, V. 2.

are by tribes like the Nagās, Gāros, Maṇipuris and the like.¹ Bāṇa mentions among Bhāskara's presents to Harṣa cloths smooth as birchbark². Most of the old Assamese manuscripts were also written on bark prepared from aloe wood³ and other bark called cācīpāt. An early reference to a variety of bark cloth worn by the kirātas forming the army of Bhagadatta is made by the Mahābhārata which refers to śrīṅkhala cloths.⁴

The art of sericulture, and the rearing of cocoons for the manufacture of various silk cloths, were known to the Assamese as early as the Rāmāyaṇa and the Arthasāstra. The former mentions Magadha, Aṅga, Puṇḍra and the 'country of the cocoon rearers,' (Koṣa-kārānām Chūmiḥ)⁵ which was no other than Kāmarūpa,⁶ lying to the east of Puṇḍra. The classical writers beginning at least with the 1st century A.D. make important mention of the production of silk and the silk trade in and through Assam. The Periplus refers to both raw and manufactured silk,⁷ which were from Thina or Assam.⁸ Pliny gives a description of the people of Seres who were noted for silk, which their woods produced.⁹ We have already stated elsewhere that the reference is to

1. Hutton, Angami Nagas, pp. 60f, 72f; Butler, J.A.S.B., 1875, I. p. 324; Godden, J.R.A.I., XXVII, p. 7; Woodthrope, J.R.A.I., XI, p. 62; Playfair, Garos, pp. 33f, 45, 56f; Walker, 'The Garo manufacture of Bark cloth', Man, 1927, pp. 15-16; Robinson, Account of Assam, pp. 415f.

2. H.C. (Cowell), pp. 212f.

3. Des. cat. of Assamese Manuscript, Introduction.

4. Sabhā Parvan.

5. Kiskindhyākāṇḍa, 40.

6. J.C. Roy, J.B.O.R.S., III, pp. 211f.

7. Vincent, The Periplus, II, pp. 523f.

8. Taylor, J.A.S.B., 1847, I, pp. 29f.

9. Schoff, The Periplus, p. 267; J.A.S.B., 1847, I, pp. 43f.

Assam.¹ Dionysius mentions people similar to the Sesata~~R~~ of the Periplus of Assam and he refers to the tassar or mugā silks of Assam, which were variously dyed.² Ammianus Marcellinus describing the people of Seres, mentions silk under the name of sericum, and the people are said to have been expert in the production of silk, exporting it to different countries.³ Schoff, on the basis of the Periplus, contends that the silk industry originated in China and travelled from there to Assam and other parts of India.⁴ In the opinion of Watt it originated in Manipur in Assam. He also adds that this place 'was the home of silkworm - that the real mulberry silk insect originated in Manipur and went from there to China.'⁵ Silk was, however, known in China as early as the Shang Period, (1523-1027 B.C.).⁶ It is difficult to fix a date for the knowledge of silk industry in Assam, but it was known at least as early as the period of the Arthasāstra and the Rāmāyaṇa, if not earlier. As the industry was mainly confined in the past to the Tibeto-Burman elements in Assam, it is not unlikely that they introduced some ideas from China, but the manufacture of mugā silk has been confined to Assam alone, and the place, like China, had a worldwide reputation for the manufacture of varieties of silk cloths, and had a profitable foreign trade.

¹Chap. II, pp. 41-42; J.A.S.B., 1847, I, pp. 43f.

²Ibid, p. 46.

³Ibid, pp. 68f.

⁴The Periplus, p. 264.

⁵J.S.A. (No. 2733), LIII, p. 562; also Hodson, Meitheis, pp. 39f.

⁶L. Carrington Goodrich, Short History of the Chinese People, p. 17

The varieties of silk from Assam are eḍi or erañḍi (attacus ricini) made from the silk of the worm of the same name, mugā (antheroea Assamoea) from a cocoon of the same name and pāt (paṭṭa). The rearing of eḍi cocoons takes a long time before they provide silk fit for spinning; the cocoons are fed, as the name indicates, on castor plants.¹ The eḍi cloths are usually white with a yellowish tinge, smooth as well as rough and very warm, used during winter.² As the Latin name indicates, the mugā silk is chiefly associated with Assam, though perhaps a small quantity is produced in Dehra Dun.³ The mugā has varieties like the Campā, the cocoons of which are fed on the campā tree (michelia cham-paka) and the megāṅkari or Adākari, feeding on the plants of the same name.⁴ The mugā cloths are usually yellowish with the tinge of gold and are often dyed red with lac.⁵ The pāt silk is the product of bombyx textor and bombyx croesi; the cocoons are fed on the mulberry trees. Of all the silk cloths, the pāt fibres are the smoothest and the finest, with a mixture of yellowish-white colour.

We have mentioned that the varieties of silk cloths are mentioned in the Arthaśāstra, which makes an important reference to Kṣauma, dukūla and patroṇa fabrics from Suvarṇa-kuṇḍya and other places in Kāmarūpa. Some writers are of

¹Duarah, Eḍi silk of Assam, pp.77-111.

²Stack, Silk in Assam. (Notes on some Industries of Assam, 1884-1895); Watt, Commercial Products, pp. 1012f.

³B.C. Allen, Monograph on the silk cloths of Assam, 1899; Watt, Commercial Products, pp. 1009f.

⁴Stack, Silk in Assam, pp. 13-21.

⁵F. Hamilton, Account of Assam, pp. 61-62.

opinion that Suvarṇakunḍya later came to be known as Karṇa-suvarṇa in Bengal.¹ That this contention is wrong and that it was a place in Kāmarūpa is shown by the expression:

Kāmarūpa caiva suvarṇakunḍyah, and Kāmarūpeṣu suvarṇakunḍyah.²

It is likely that the modern Sonkuḍihā in Kāmarūpa stands for Suvarṇakunḍya. K.L. Barua rightly points out that the place was an important commercial centre and 'must have then contained a settlement of merchants who traded not only in silk but also in fabrics manufactured from fibres and fragrant substances -'³. The evidence from the Arthasāstra is confirmed in details by Bāṇa, whose Harṣacarita gives valuable evidence on the industrial resources of Assam during the time of Bhāskara. It may, however, be that the work contains some exaggerated accounts and all the presents sent by Bhāskara to Harṣa might not have been wrought by Assamese artists and craftsmen; but most of them appear to be indigenous products. Bāṇa writes that Bhāskara sent to Harṣa Kṣauma cloths (Kṣaumāṇi), white as the Autumn's moonlight.⁴ Dukūla finds mention in the Bargāon grant of Ratnapāla (L.38) which states that it was used in making a flag. As Bāṇa mentions again, Bhāskara sent to Harṣa the Ābhoga umbrella

¹H.P. Śāstrī, B.S., P.P., 1326, p.249; S.K. Chatterjee, O.D.B.L., Intro. p.70.

²Bhattachaswāmī, Com., pp.40-45; G. Śāstrī, Arthasāstra with Śrīmūla Com., I, p.190; N.N. Das Gupta, I.C. V, pp. 339f; J.A.R.S., VII, pp. 24f; H.V. Trivedi, I.C., I, pp.258f; N.L. Dey, Geo. Dictionary, p.215; J.C. Roy, J.B.O.R.S., III, pp.193f; K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S., VII, pp.78f.

³J.A.R.S., VII, pp.29f.

⁴H.C. (Cowell), pp. 212f.

wrapped in a dukūla cloth¹. He mentions also a variety of pāt cloth among the presents, such as sacks of silk, woven out of pattasūtra.² The presents, therefore, included all the specimens of edi, mugā and pāt.

There is, however, a controversy among writers over the identification of Kṣauma, dukūla and patroṇa of the Arthasāstra. Kullūka explains Kṣauma as a cloth made of atasi fibre.³ J.C. Roy takes it as a linen and dukūla as fine linen. He adds that both, originally standing for linen, came to be applied to other fabrics, even to silk. He takes patroṇa as either edi or mugā silk.⁴ S. Sāstrī takes Kṣauma as flax; dukūla as cotton and patroṇa as fibre garments.⁵ K.L. Barua takes dukūla as mugā and holds that it may also stand for linen and other similar stuffs; kṣauma according to him is not merely linen but may also stand for any fabric of cotton, silk or mixed with both. Patroṇa in his opinion is a kind of fabric, made of leaves and barks.⁶ B.K. Barua⁷ takes both Kṣauma and dukūla as bark fibres. His contention does not hold good. The Harṣacarita makes it clear from its reference to the colour of kṣauma that it was no other than the present edi cloth of Assam. The edi cloth is usually white with a yellowish tinge. As regards

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Amarakoṣa, II, 6, 116. (Dukūla is taken to be the usual name for the finest kṣauma).

⁴J.B.O.R.S., III, pp. 193f, 211f.

⁵Arthasāstra (Tr.) p.82.

⁶J.A.R.S., VII, pp. 78-82.

⁷Cultural History, I, pp. 126f.

dukūla Kauṭilya himself states that the best type was from Suvarṇakunḍya and it was 'as red as the sun, as soft as the surface of a gem, being woven while the threads are very wet, of uniform or mixed texture.'¹ As the colour suggests dukūla was no other than the mugā silk. The process of weaving also points to the same conclusion. Patroṇa from Suvarṇakunḍya again is considered to be the best: (tāsām suvarṇakunḍyakā s'reṣṭhā).² It was no other than the finest paṭṭasūtra of the Harṣacarita and the present pāṭ of Assam, with a yellowish white colour.

The evidence from the Arthasāstra, the Harṣacarita and the classical writers among others prove that in the art of the rearing of silk cocoons and the weaving of the finest silk textiles, the weavers of Kāmarūpa had a reputation equal to those of China. The tradition has been continued to the present times.³ This is confirmed by observations of some later writers. Qazim, for instance, writes that the silk of Assam was very excellent, resembling that of China⁴. Tavernier remarks that the silk of Assam was produced on trees and the stuffs made of them were very

¹Arthasāstra (S.S. tr.) p.92.

²Ibid, p. 95.

³See Helfer, (On the Indigenous Silk worms of India), J.A.S.B., VI, 43; J.C. Roy, J.B.O.R.S., III, pp.180-245; Some Industries of Assam, Shillong, 1896, pp. 1-28, 77-111; Geoghegan, Some Account of Silk in India, pp. 16-17; Thos. Hugon, Remarks on the silkworms and Silk of Assam, J.A.S.B., VI, pp. 21-38; N.C. Bandopadhyaya, Economic Life, etc., p. 61; W. Hamilton, East India Gazetteer, pp. 40f.

⁴A. Res., II, pp. 173-74.

brilliant.¹ The industry, therefore, was continued throughout the centuries.

The art of embroidery and the manufacture of dyeing materials have also been known from early times. The sources are, however, few from our period. Important reference to coloured cloths is made by Bāṇa who states that Bhāskara sent to Harṣa variously coloured and painted cloths, and smooth as birch bark with the patterns of Jasmine flowers (bhūrjatvak komalāḥ jāṭī-patṭikāḥ).² These were either mugā or pāṭ cloths. The Kālikā P. (69) makes a particular reference to the variously ornamented cloths in connection with the gifts to different deities. The same work (69, B) refers to the use and manufacture of variously coloured cloths in connection with the worship of deities:

Nīlī raktam yad vastram tat sarvatra vivaryjitam
Raktam kauśeya-vastrāṅca Mahādevyai praśasyate
Pītam tathaiva kauśeyam Vāsudevāya cotsrjet ।

The manufacture of coloured cloths is also mentioned by later writers like Qazim, who writes that the Assamese people made an extensive use of them, and were also expert in embroidery work and the weaving of velvet cloths.³ The lac was one of the important dyes. We have already made reference to Cresias and Aelian, who mentioned the lac insect feeding on a tree, called siptachora, which yielded purple dye⁴, and we have also stated that the reference is to the people of Seres or

¹Travels, II, 281

²H.C. (Cowell), pp. 212-215.

³A. Res, II, pp. 173-74.

⁴Wilford, A. Res. IX, p.65.

ancient Assam.¹ The insect was also reared on different species of the ficus tree like the Mathurāśvātha, which finds mention in the grants of Dharmapāla.² The material was produced by the insects feeding on those trees³. It is, however, doubtful whether a systematic manufacture of lac was known in ancient times. The later traveller, Tavernier, referring to the manufacture of lac in Assam, writes that the people produced sufficient shellac, of a red colour; with it they dyed their calicoes and other stuffs and when they extracted the red colour, they used the lac to lacquer cabinets and other objects of that kind, and to make Spanish wax.⁴

The art of dyeing, therefore, was an ancient practice in Assam; the threads were either dyed before their use in the loom to manufacture variously striped cloths, or the finished garments were dyed red, black, yellow, blue and the like. The materials were not only lac and indigo, called 'rumdye' in Assam⁵ but were also prepared from various roots, leaves and barks of trees, like khoir (acacia catechu) acanthaceae and other ingredients, which made fast and dazzling colours.⁶

To conclude, Assam produced all specimens of fine cloths,

¹Taylor, J.A.S.B., 1847, I, p. 47.

²K.S., p. 182 (f.n. 4).

³See Note on the Lac Industry of Assam, Shillong, 1900.

⁴Travels, II, 281-82.

⁵Watt, Commercial Products, pp. 628, 1051.

⁶Duncan, Monograph on Dyes and Dyeing in Assam, pp. 5f.

both simple and coloured, and made important progress in all the allied industries.¹ Whether in the art of weaving or in the rearing of silkworms and the manufacture of dyed cloths, the tribes like the Khāsis, Nagās, Maṇipuris and the Boḍos had a great deal to contribute towards their development. Even today they produce them in plenty and supply the needs of their neighbours.² It is likely that the art of sericulture, weaving, etc. was introduced into Assam at an early period by the Boḍos and the allied tribes. The place names like Joṅga, Doṅga, etc., of the Anthasāstra³ associated with the industrial products of Kāmarūpa, which have a Boḍo origin, only support our contention.⁴ Duncan rightly points out that coloured cloths are more extensively used and manufactured by the tribes than the people of the plains. Some nagās have been expert dyers and produce extremely brilliant colours. The Maṇipuris have long been known as skilful and artistic dyers, and they may have been better in this respect than any people of Eastern India.⁵

¹J.C. Roy, J.B.O.R.S., III, pp. 211f.

²Gurdon, Khasis, pp. 39f; Dalton, Ethnology, p. 57; Mills, Ao Nagas, pp. 90f; Hutton, Angami Nagas, pp.60f; Angami Naga Dyeing processes, Man. 1923, pp. 36-38; Sema Nagas, pp. 46f; Mills, Lhota Nagas, pp. 36f, 125f; Rengma Nagas, pp. 64f; Hodson, Naga Tribes, pp.39f; Meithies, pp.22f; Shakespeare, Lushai-Kukis, pp.15f; Playfair, Garos, pp.33f; Engle, Kacharis, pp. 11f.

³Bhattaswāmī, Com., pp.36-38.

⁴K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S., VII, No. 1, pp.6-18 and No. 2, pp.1f; Ibid, pp.29-34.

⁵Duncan, Monograph on Dyes and Dyeing in Assam, pp5f, 28-29, 48-50.

(ii) Working in Metal, Salt and Ivory:

The art of working in metal, particularly in gold and silver, and the use of jewellery were practised from early times in ancient India.¹ We have already referred to the mineral resources of Assam.² Gold was found in almost all the rivers of Lakṣīmpur, particularly in Suvanśiri, Dikhau, Juglo and Dihong,³ Sivasāgar,⁴ Bharali and Dhausiri in Darrang,⁵ Khasi Hills along with the iron ore deposits,⁶ Soṇāi in Cāchār,⁷ Maṇipur⁸ and other places.⁹ The earliest reference to the abundance of gold in Suvarṇa-Kuṇḍya in Kāmarūpa is found in the Arthasāstra. On the basis of the practice of gold-washing from the rivers of Assam, N.N. Das Gupta rightly remarks that Suvarṇa-Kuṇḍya was one of the tracts of Assam on the bank of some river, which produced plenty of gold.¹⁰ Both Megasthenes and Strabo refer to the people called Derdai, who obtained gold from under the earth. 'Among the Derdai,' writes Megasthenes, 'a great nation of Indians living towards the east and among the mountains, there is a high table-land of about 3,000 stadia in circumference. Underneath this are mines of gold which are worked by ants.'¹¹ This refers to the abundance of gold in some of the mountains of Assam. We have

¹Dikṣit, Pre-Historic Civilisation of the Indus Valley, pp.50f; S.K. Das, Economic History, etc. p. 19.

²Chap. II, p.68

³Hunter, Statistical Account of Assam, I, pp.299f.

⁴Ibid, p.231.

⁵Ibid, pp.106f.

⁶G.S.I., I, Pt. II, p.207.

⁷Hunter, Account, II, pp.370f.

⁸Pemberton, Eastern Frontier, pp.27f; Hodson, Meithies, pp.1f.

⁹Robinson, Account of Assam, p. 34; Watt, Commercial Products of India, pp. 566f.

¹⁰I.C., V, pp.339-341.

¹¹McCrimdell, Ancient India as described in classical literature, p51.

discussed the possibility of the land of gold mines of the Periplus¹ being somewhere in Assam.² Schoff, on the basis of the work, remarks that gold was brought to India through Tripurā from the rivers of Assam and North Burma.³ The abundance of gold is also confirmed by epigraphy. The Tezpur grant states that the river Lauhitya carried down gold-dust from gold-bearing boulders of the sacred Kaifāsa mountain.⁴ We have already stated that the King Jayapāla offered as many as 900 gold coins to the Brāhmaṇa Prahāsa⁵. The Tezpur grant^{of Vanamāla} further records that he rebuilt the fallen golden temple of Śiva in Hāruppeśvara (Tezpur).⁶ The historians of the invasion of Bakhtiyar state that there was a huge image of gold where the invader took refuge when surrounded by the Kāmarūpa army. It weighed, according to the Riyāz-us-salātin, one thousand maunds.⁷ The washing of gold was practised extensively during the Āhom period. Tavernier informs us that the practice yielded a substantial quality, and gold and silk were exported from Assam overland to China.⁸ During the Āhom rule the washing of gold was done by the Soṇowāls. Fathiya-i-Ibriyah writes that thousands of people were employed by the government for the purpose.⁹

¹Vincent, Periplus of Erythrean sea, II, pp.523f; Taylor, J.A.S.B. 1847, I, pp.25f; McCrindle, The Commerce and Navigation of the Erythrean Sea, pp.145f.

²Chap. II, pp.32-33. ³The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, pp.47-48, 258-59

⁴J.A.S.B., IX, II, pp.766f. ⁵E.I., XIII, pp.289f. ⁶V.24.

⁷Raverty, Tabaqāti-i-Nāsiri, p.569; Riyāz-us-Salātin, (Tr.) p.67.

⁸Travels, II, pp.282f. ⁹J.A.S.B., XXX, I, pp.49f.

All these statements prove that the practice was an ancient and lucrative economic pursuit.¹

The existence of a copper mine is indicated by the Bargāon grant, which mentions Kamalākāra.² The working in the metal is proved by the existing remains of the copper temple at Sadiyā, ascribed to our period,³ and the copper plates of the rulers. The existence of silver in minute quantities is reported from some places⁴ and the working in the metal is indicated by the Kālikā Purāna (69, 17-23) which mentions various ornaments, and states that silver ornaments should not be used above the neck. As far as we know, we have no existing utensils of metal belonging to our period, except a few specimens of icons,

Evidence of the excellent workmanship of the jewellers' art, however, is provided both by literature and epigraphs. Inscriptions refer to various wares, and goldsmiths' shops with varieties of ornaments.⁵ The use of ornaments and other articles of metal is not only proved by the sculptured specimens of our period, but also by the Kālikā P., (69, 17-23), which as we have mentioned, refers to ornaments of gold, silver, bellmetal and even of iron. The best specimens of the period were probably included in the presents sent by Bhāskara to Harṣa, which according to Bāṇa included the Ābhoga umbrella,

¹Ball, Economic Geology of India, p.231; Hannay, J.A.S.B., XIV, II, pp.817-21; Hannay, J.A.S.B., XVII, 515-521; J.A.S.B., VIII, pp.621-25; Maclaren, Auriferous Occurences of Assam, 1904; W. Hamilton, East India Gazetteer, p. 40; Physical and Political Geography of Assam, pp.53f; Wade, Geographical Sketch of Assam, pp.16f.

²Line, 45.

³K.L. Barua, E.H.K., pp.187f.

⁴Robinson, Account of Assam, p.34; Hunter, Account, I, pp.380f; Tavernier, II, 281. ⁵Bargāon Grant, Line 39.

ornamented with jewelled ribs; ornaments, which crimsoned the heavenly spaces with the light of the finest gems; shining crest jewels; pearl necklaces which seemed the source of the milk-ocean's whiteness; quantities of pearls, shell, sapphire and other drinking vessels, made by skilful artists; bright gold leaf work; various birds with the necks bound in golden fetters and enclosed in gold painted cages.¹ The evidence seems to indicate that, whether working in gold, silver or copper² or making various ornaments and wares, the craftsmen of our period and at a subsequent time showed no mean workmanship.³ Even the art of working in bronze is testified by the existing images of Durgā in bronze from Dibrugarh, and Manasā.⁴ The tradition was continued and as a recent writer remarks 'the Assamese - keeps his betel nut in a silver box called a temā or a plate (baṭā) or bowl (bāti) of silver - and generally speaking, the gold and silver wares of the province consist of articles of personal adornment - Assamese jewellery is by no means without merit.⁵

A brief reference may be made to the working in iron and salt. Iron deposits have been traced throughout the hilly regions of the province, like those of Lakṣīmpur, particularly in Jaipur and Barhāt⁶, Sivasāgar,⁷ Kāmarūpa,⁸ Khāsi Hills,⁹

¹H.C. (Cowell) pp.212-15.

²See Gait, Copper and Brass Wares of Assam, 1894.

³See J.C. Roy, J.B.O.R.S., III, pp.221f. ⁴Sec. 5, p. .

⁵F.C. Henniker, The Gold and Silver Wares of Assam, pp. 1f.

⁶Hunter, Statistical Account, I, pp.299f; Assam District Gazetteer, VIII, pp.12-13. ⁷Hunter, Account, I, p.231.

⁸Ibid, p.21. ⁹Gurdon, Khasis, pp.57f.

Sylhet,¹ Manipur,² Naga Hills,³ Garo Hills,⁴ and other regions. According to Pliny⁵ the iron of Serica (Assam) was considered to be the best (XXXIII, XIV). The articles of merchandise mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus from Seres (Assam) consisted of skin, iron, aloe, musk and rhinoceros' horns.⁶ The classical sources, therefore, point to the working in iron from early times. Like the washing of gold, the people knew the art of smelting iron from the hills; the Khāsis in particular produced it in considerable quantities. In the opinion of Oldham, Khasi iron was as excellent for all purposes as Swedish, and huge quantities were exported to other parts of the province either in lumps or in the shape of hoes.⁷ The use of iron instruments in war also proves the early working in the metal.

The manufacture of salt either from rocks or brine springs was an ancient practice. Salt was found in the brine springs from Barhāt,⁸ Sivasāgar,⁹ Mikir Hills in Nowgong,¹⁰ Cāchār,¹¹ the salt spring in Manipur¹² and other places. The Nagās and the Manipuris in particular have been expert in the extraction of this material.¹³ The manufacture of salt, like iron,

¹Hunter, Account, II, p.267. ²Pemberton, Eastern Frontier, pp.27f; Hodson, Meithies, pp.1f; McCulloch, Account of Valley of Munnipore, pp.1f; Brown, Account, pp.3-9, 22.

³Hunter, Account, II, pp.176f. ⁴Ibid, pp.141f.

⁵Taylor, J.A.S.B., 1847, I, p.73. ⁶Ibid, pp.68f.

⁷Gurdon, Khasis, pp.57f. ⁸Hunter, I, pp.299f. ⁹Ibid, p.231.

¹⁰Ibid, II, pp.370f. ¹¹Ibid.

¹²Pemberton, Eastern Frontier, pp.27f; Brown, Account, pp.3-9,22; McCulloch, Account, pp.1f.

¹³Hutton, Angamis, pp.60f,70f; Brown, Account, p.36; Butler, J.A.S.B. 1875, I, p.324; McCosh, J.A.S.B., 1836, pp.204-8; Hodson, Naga Tribes of Manipur, pp.39f, 45f; Meitheis, 22f; Johnstone, My Experiences, etc. p.33.

therefore, was largely in the hands of the tribes. Even Tavernier mentions its manufacture from plantain trees and other stuffs.¹ The art of working in ivory was also known to a certain extent. The abundance of elephants in the forests of Assam is testified by all the epigraphs of the period, which also make particular reference to elephant pearls.² The classical writers also refer to the abundance of elephants in Assam, along with ivory and rhinoceros' horns.³ We have mentioned that Kālidāsa alludes to the capture of elephants in the jungles of Assam.⁴ Yuan Chwang wrote in his accounts that in the south-east of Kāmarūpa, there were elephants in herds.⁵ The biography of the pilgrim states that Bhāskara went with him to meet Harṣa with a huge number of elephants⁶. Bāṇa mentions among the presents of Bhāskara to Harṣa 'rings of hippopotamus ivory, encrusted with rows of huge pearls from the brows of elephants.'⁷ Working in ivory is now an extensive industry and one of the most artistic in Assam, practised not only in the plains but also by some tribes like the Manipuris.⁸

(iii) Working in Wood and the manufacture of Aromatics.

The art of woodcarving is proved by Bāṇa who writes that the presents from Bhāskara to Harṣa included 'carved boxes with

¹Travels, II, 283. ²Bargāon Grant, V.14.

³Taylor, J.A.S.B., 1847, I, 47f, 68f. ⁴Raghuvamśa, IV, V. 84.

⁵Watters, II, pp.185f; Beal, II, pp.195f.

⁶Life, pp.165f; Watters, I, p.348. ⁷H.C. (Cowell), pp.212-215.

⁸See W. Hamilton, East India Gazetteer, pp.40-42; Donald, Ivory Carving, Assam, 1900.

panels.¹ The Tezpur grant indicates that a large number of boats in the Brahmaputra were carved with beautiful designs and had attached ornaments.² Wood was used for the making of icons as proved by an icon of Jagannātha in Kṣetri in modern Kāmarūpa. Speaking of the various articles of wood, a later work, Fathiya-i-Ibriyah enumerates wooden boxes, stools, trays and chairs which were made from a single piece of wood.

The forests of Assam were noted for their valuable woods, like sandal wood and agaru or aloe wood, besides others like vata (ficus indica)³, Aśvattha (ficus religiosa),⁴ Madhurāśvattha,⁵ śālmali,⁶ Khadira (acacia catechu) etc. These were used for various domestic and religious purposes. Classical writers make important mention of aloe and musk from Assam.⁷ We have reference to sandal wood and aloe from Kāmarūpa as early as the Epics. Bhīma after his conquest of Prāgjyotiṣa is said to have received from its king sandal and aloe wood as presents.⁸ During the Rājasūya ceremony of the Pāṇḍavas, the presents from Prāgjyotiṣa included precious jewels, skins, gold, sandal and aloe wood, and heaps of aromatics.⁹ That sandal wood was found in abundance is evidenced by Kauṭilya. He refers to some of the best varieties like Joṅgaka (from Joṅga), Grāmeruka (Grāmeru), Jāpaka (Jāpa) and Taurūpa,¹⁰ all of which in the opinion of Bhattaswāmī were from Kāmarūpa.¹¹ Grāmeru may be identified with

¹H.C. (Cowell) pp.212f. ²J.A.S.B., IX, II, pp766f. ³Nowgong grant.

⁴Grants of Ratnapāla and Dharmapāla. ⁵K.S. p.182 (f.n. 4).

⁶Nowgong Grant. ⁷Taylor, J.A.S.B., 1847, I, p.47f, 68f.

⁸Sabhā Parva, XXX, 28. ⁹Ibid, LII, 10. ¹⁰Arthasāstra (S.S.Tr.) pp86/87.

¹¹Com. Trivedi, I.C., I, pp.258-61; N.L. Dey, Geographical Dictionary, p.215; Com. 36-38; N. N. Das Gupta, J. A. R. S. VII, 24-28

the present Gāmerumuri in Kāmarūpa.¹ The Jorīgaka and Taurūpa varieties were of red or dark-red colour, soft and with a scent like a lotus; the Grāmeruka was of the same colour but smelt like goat's urine; Jāpaka was also red and scented like a lotus. Another variety of sandal wood, called Nāgaparvataka, having the colour of saivāla (vallisneria) was probably from the Naga Hills,² where even now it is found in plenty. Bāna mentions among the presents from Bhāskara gośirṣa sandal with fine smell.³ Harṣa gave to Haṃsavega in his court toilet sandal, wrapped in a piece of white cloth, and enclosed in a polished coconut. The Arthasāstra makes similar mention of different varieties of aloe wood from different parts of Kāmarūpa. Of these the two best varieties were Joṅgaka and Doṅgaka (tadubhyam Kāmarūpajam.)⁴ The place names Joṅga and Doṅga appear to be Boḍo in origin,⁵ indicating that most of these were from the hilly regions, inhabited by tribes who greatly exploited the forest products. Pārasamudrika was another variety of the same wood scented like a jasmine flower, having a variegated colour and according to the commentary on the Arthasāstra, this was also from Kāmarūpa.⁶ Kāṭāgaru finds mention in the Tezpur grant⁷ and the Nowgong grant. (V.5). Kālidāsa mentions that when Raghu crossed the Lauhitya, the lord of Prāgjyotiṣa trembled in fear, along with the black aloe woods, which were

¹K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S., VII, pp.29f. ²Moti Chand (J.150, A. VII, p.85) (f.n. 1).

³H.C. (Cowell), pp.212f. ⁴Com. p. 36.

⁵K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S., VII, pp. 29f. ⁶Com., pp.36-38.

⁷J.A.S.B., IX, II, pp. 766f.

used as posts for tying elephants.¹ The Rājatarāṅginī, describing Lalitāditya's exploits, writes that the invader saw in Prāgjyotiṣa 'the smoke of incense rise only from the qualities of the black aloes burning in the forests.'² The evidence from the Harṣacarita is far more illuminating. Bhāskara sent to Harṣa bundles consisting of black aloe, dark as pounded collyrium; black aloe oil in thick bamboo tubes, and kakkola sprays.³

The musk of deer (Kasturikā mṛganām) and of oxen were other valuable scented animal products of Assam. We have classical evidence of musk in Assam.⁴ The former finds mention in the inscriptions of Vanamāla⁵ and Balavarman (V. 5). Bāṇa mentions among the presents from Bhāskara to Harṣa 'scented bags of musk oxen' and 'musk deer scenting the space all round them with their perfume.'⁶ The preparation of different perfumes and their use are given in the Kālikā P. which mentions cūrnīkrta (powder) ghrṣta (paste like that of sandal), dāhakarṣite (ashes), sammardajarasa (juice) like that of aloe oil, and prānyaṅodbhava (like musk).⁷ The actual use of perfumes by women is testified by the Tezpur grant of Vanamāla (V. 30). The Arthasāstra gives an exhaustive list of perfumes under the name of tailaparnika. Of these the varieties like Asokagrāmaka (from Asokagrāma), Joṅgaka, Grāmeruka, Suvarṇakunḍyaka, Pūrna-

¹Raghuvamśa, IV, V.81. ²IV, S. 171.

³H.C. (Cowell), pp.212f. ⁴J.A.S.B., 1847, I, pp.47f, 68f.

⁵J.A.S.B., IX, II, pp.766f. ⁶H.C. (Cowell), pp. 212f.

⁷Chap. 69, VV. 37, 53.

dvīpaka, (from Pūrṇadvīpa), Pāralauhityaka, Antarvatya, Kālayeka (from Suvarṇabhūmi) were all from Kāmarūpa.¹ That Antarvatya was in Kāmarūpa is proved by the expression: Antarvatyām Kāmarūpeṣu eva Antarvatyākhyā nadītīrajātaṃ.² Pāralauhitya was a place on the south bank of the Brahmaputra.³ Aśokagrāmaka was like meat in colour, having the scent of a lotus flower; Joṅgaka was reddish-yellow in colour and smelt like a blue flower or the urine of a cow; Grāmeruka was greasy and smelt like cow's urine; Suvarṇakuṇḍyaka was reddish-yellow, having the flavour of a mātuḍṅga (fruit of a citron tree or sweet lime); Pūrṇadvīpaka smelt like butter or lotus flower: Pāralauhityaka was like a nutmeg in colour; Antarvatyaka was of the colour of cascus and Kālayeka was greasy and yellow. The list indicates that Kāmarūpa was noted as early as the period of the Arthasāstra for the manufacture of the varieties of perfumes, and the tradition was kept alive throughout our period. Even today a great deal of perfume is made in different parts of the province.

(iv) Minor Crafts:

Both literature and epigraphy point to the existence of other minor crafts like leatherwork, stone work, brick work, pottery, cane and bamboo work, etc. The manufacture of woollen and leather goods is proved by the Kālikā P. (69, 2) which

¹Bhattachāwāmī, Com., J.B.O.R.S., 1925, p.40; Śrīmūla Com, pp.189-90; H.V. Trivedi, I.C.I., pp.258-61; N.L. Dey, Geographical Dictionary, p. 215; Das Gupta, J.A.R.S., VII, pp.28f; I.C. V, pp. 339-41; J.C. Roy, J.B.O.R.S., III, pp.193f, 221-235.

²Text, p. 190.

³Das Gupta, J.A.R.S., VII, pp. 24f; K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S., VII, p.p. 29-34.

mentions Kambala (woollen cloths) among the textile materials. Bhaskara is said to have given a cap of fur or skin to Yuan Chwang as a present for protection against rain in his return journey to China.¹ The development of the industry is shown by Bāna who states that Bhāskara sent to Harṣa 'loads of Kārdaraṅga leather bucklers with charming borders, bright gold leaf work winding about them' and 'pillows of samarūkha leather.'² An earlier reference to buffalo and rhinoceros' hide as export commodities from Assam is made by classical writers like Ammianus Marcellinus and Pliny.³ The grant of Vallabhadeva refers to sandals with hide straps.⁴

The extensive remains of temples and buildings give ample evidence of working in stone and brick. This is proved also by a number of epigraphs.⁵ The art of brick making is mentioned in the Śuālkuchi grant of Ratnapāla⁶. It was highly developed at a subsequent time, particularly during the Āhom period.

The art of making pottery was known from very early times.⁷ The Nidhanpur grant mentions Kumbhakāragarta (potter's pit),⁸ and the Kamauli grant refers to the Kumbhakāras, who were professional pottery makers.⁹ Some of the best specimens of pottery, with artistic and decorative designs, belonging to the 5th-6th century A.D., have been found in Dah Parvatīā; some specimens have also been found in Tezpur and Sadiyā.¹⁰ The clay seals of Bhāskara also point to the fact that the art of working

¹Life, p. 189. ²H.C. (Cowell), pp.212f. ³J.A.S.B., 1847, I, pp.68f

⁴E.I., V, pp.181f.

⁵Nowgong Grant, V.14; Tezpur Grant, V.24; Gauhāti Grant, V.10 etc.

⁶J.A.S.B., LXVII, I, pp.110f. ⁷Chap. III, pp. 85-86

⁸Last Plate. ⁹E.I., II, pp.347f. ¹⁰Sec. 5 pp. 718-19

in clay was developed. Moreover, Bāṇa mentions among the presents of Bhāskara 'drinking vessels embossed by skilful artists', molasses in earthen pots and 'cups of ullaka diffusing a fragrance of sweetest wine.'¹

Mat making was another allied art. Early literature² refers to the well-decorated and coloured sītal pātis (cool mats) used by the rich people. Mats were usually made of cane. The abundance of cane in the forests of Assam is testified by the classical writers. Ptolemy, for instance, states that to the east of Serica, which we have identified with Assam, there were hills and marshes where canes were grown and used as bridges.³ Evidence of the production of other cane articles is also supplied by the Harṣacarita, which mentions stools of cane.⁴ The cultivation of bamboo and its use for various purposes are well known. Bāṇa again testifies to this highly developed craft. He states that Bhāskara sent to Harṣa 'baskets of variously coloured reeds,' 'thick bamboo tubes' and various birds in 'bamboo cages.'⁵ All these prove that various industrial arts were developed in Assam during our period and continued till recent times, based on that traditions like those of the craftsmen of other parts of India, who showed equal skill whether in the making of clay toys or in the preparation of costly perfumes.⁶

¹H.C. (Cowell) pp. 212f. ²c.f. Kumāra-Haraṇa (Śaṅkaradeva).

³Taylor, J.A.S.B., 1847, I, pp.52f. ⁴H.C. (Cowell) pp.212f.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Birdwood, Industrial Arts of India, pp.131-32; Weber, History of Sanskrit Literature, p.275; Wilson, Daśakumāracarita, p.140.

4. Commercial Enterprises:

(i) Merchants, Transport and Trade Routes.

The economic resources of Kāmarūpa and her various agricultural and industrial products naturally led to the growth of both internal and external commerce. The country possibly exported more commodities than were imported from outside. Inscriptions refer to streets and good road connections between towns;¹ both land and water connections with other lands are supported by literature. The situation of the towns like Prāggjyotiṣa, Hāruppeśvara, Kāmarūpanagara and Durayā on the bank of the Brahmaputra greatly facilitated commercial intercourse. In fact, the network of the river system of Assam played a conspicuous part in contributing to the growth of all commercial enterprises both within the province and with other lands.² Merchants and wealthy people lived in the towns³ and moved in the streets on elephants and horses or carried in litters.⁴ Inscriptions make mention of towns and markets with vipaṇis (shops) and various kinds of wares and jewellery. The shops of the goldsmiths contained varieties of beautiful articles. There were jewels and pearls, bracelets and rings flashing with precious stones.⁵ Roads ran throughout the country and commercial traffic in the towns was heavy and noisy.⁶ The business centres, therefore, attracted many people from outside

¹Tezpur grant, V.30; Bargāon Grant, V.14; Lines 38-39.

²Hamilton, Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description, etc., II, p.741; Thomson, Assam Valley, p.45; Wade, Geographical Sketch of Assam, p.14; W. Hamilton, East India Gazetteer, p.40.

³Bargāon Grant, Lines 31-33; Gauhāti Grant, (Second Plate), Lines 6-8. ⁴Tezpur Grant, V. 30.

⁵Bargāon Grant, V.14; Ibid, Lines 38-39. ⁶Ibid.

and facilitated trading enterprises.

For internal trade, both animals and boats were used, besides human carriers. Inscriptions make numerous references to elephants, horses, buffaloes, cattle, and boats in the Brahmaputra.¹ The Tezpur Rock inscription of Haryjara indicates that the royal boats were numerous and even in so wide a river as the Brahmaputra, regulation of boat traffic was found necessary to prevent collisions between royal boats and those of fishermen.² Inscriptions also mention bullock carts (śakaṭa) and carriages drawn by elephants and horses carrying merchants and well-to-do people in the streets and market places.³ These conveyances served also the purpose of external trade.

Communications were by mountain passes, land and water routes. This, as we shall show, is testified by the classical writers beginning with the first century A.D., if not earlier. Water communications were not only by the Brahmaputra, its tributaries, and Ganges, but also through the upper courses of the Irrawady, Mekong, Menam, Chindwin and other rivers of Burma. Since the time of the intrusion of the oceanic elements into Assam through Burma both the land and the sea routes remained open.⁴ Trading by sea was carried on by a class of people, called Vaṅiks (merchants). Yuan Chwang states that the rulers

¹Nowgong Grant; Bargāon Grant; Gauhāti Grant, etc.

²I.B.O.R.S., 1917, pp.508f. ³Tezpur Grant, V.30; Kumāra-Harāṇa.

⁴The art of navigating the sea goes back to a remote period in India. (Bühler, Origin of the Brāhmi Alphabets, p.84; S.K. Das, Economic History, etc., pp.29f.); see also Frazer, Lit. Hist. of India, p.29; Keith, Camb. Hist. of India, I, 101 and others for a different view.

of Kāmarūpa had the sea route to China under their protection.¹ The existence of a sea route to China is also evidenced by the question put by Bhāskara to Yuan Chwang regarding his route of return to his place of nativity. 'But I know not,' said Bhāskara, 'if you prefer to go, by what route you propose to return; if you select the southern sea route, then I will send some officials to accompany you.'² Some of the aphorisms of Dāka refer to commerce by sea on the coast of Arakan. He also refers to a profitable trade with the people of Laṅkā or Kāmalāṅkā of Yuan Chwang, lying on the south-east of Samatata or the coast of Burma. 'Perhaps traders from Champā, Kāmarūpa and Vaṅga visited this coast for the purposes of trade.'³ It was quite possible from early times, as the Lauhitya sāgara, as evidenced by the classical and Indian sources, joined the Bay of Bengal.⁴ The merchants from Kāmarūpa, therefore, 'carried their merchandise in large boats down the Brahmaputra and reached the sea after skirting around the Garo Hills. They crossed the sea and traded in seaports like Tāmraḷipti.'⁵

The cultural and commercial contact between ancient Assam and China both by land and sea routes is shown by a number of sources, which support our contention that both the lands contained some elements of common culture, as China supplied some earlier racial elements that contributed to the development of the Indo-Chinese culture in Assam. The earliest reference to

¹Life, Intro. XXVI. ²Life, p.188. ³E.H.K., pp.189,319.

⁴Chap. II, pp. 56f

⁵E.H.K., p. 188.

commercial relations between India and China through the Assam-Burma routes is found in Chang Kien (200 B.C.). We have discussed this question in another place.¹ The two Indian Buddhist missionaries who visited China (1st C. A.D.) passed probably through the upper valley of the Irrawady and Yunnan. I-tsing refers to twenty Chinese priests as having come to India from Szuchuan through Upper Burma in the 3rd or 4th century A.D. In the 10th century A.D., 300 missionaries from China to India returned by way of Yunnan.²

The reference in the Shung Shu (A.D. 420-79) that a king of the Kapili valley in Assam sent an embassy to China,³ probably through this Assam-Burma route, also indicates the early political and commercial contact between Assam and China. This was strengthened during the 7th century A.D. during the time of the visit of Yuan Chwang to the court of Bhāskara. We have already referred to the sea routes to China, which were under the control of the Kāmarūpa rulers. The existence of a land route and the intimate relation between the two lands are revealed both by the accounts of the pilgrim and their conversations. Yuan Chwang writes thus: 'To the east of Kāmarūpa, the country was a series of hills and hillocks without any principal city and it reached the south-west barbarians (of China), because the inhabitants were akin to the Man and the Lao. The pilgrim learned from the people (of Kāmarūpa) that the south-west borders of Szuchuan were distant about two months'

¹Chaps. II. pp.35f ; III, pp.121f

²Majumdar, Hindu Colonies, pp.226-27. ~~Extreme Orient, 1904, pp.142f~~

³Gerini, J.R.A.S., 1910, pp.1187f; also Political History, Sec. 2
pp.221, 228

journey.¹ When the pilgrim was in Kāmarūpa, Bhāskara told him of his (Bhāskara's) interest and intimate knowledge of China. 'Now through the kingdoms of India,' said the king, 'there are many persons who sing about the victories of the Tsin King of the Mahācīna country; I have long heard of this. And is it true that this is your honourable birth-place? - I have ever had an esteem towards the east, but the intervening mountains and rivers have prevented me from personally visiting it.'² The song referred to relates to the victory of T'sin, the second son of the T'ang Emperor Kaotsu, over the rebels in A.D. 619. Even after this Bhāskara retained close contact with China. When the envoys of the T'ang dynasty, Liyipiao and Wang Hinantse (A.D. 643-46) came to India, Bhāskara asked the former to send him a sanskrit translation of Tao-teh-king and the latter for a portrait of Lao tse. The work was translated with the help of Yuan Chwang and some taoist teachers and sent to Bhāskara.³ Unfortunately we have no trace of the work, which if recovered, 'will be a document of inestimable value in the world of Chino-Indian contacts - a permanent memento of India's genuine desire to know China, however limited that desire might have been.'⁴ All these records point to the conclusion that Assam had intimate cultural contact and commercial relations with China, both by land and sea routes long before the time of Bhāskara in the 7th century A.D.

¹Watters, II, pp.185f; Beal, II, pp.195f.

²Beal, Ibid, pp.197f; Watters, I, p.348.

³Pre-Aryan and Pre-Dravidian in India, pp.114-115; P.C. Bagchi, India and China, pp.200f.

⁴S.K. Chatterjee, The National Flag and Other Essays, p.19.

A detailed description of the Assam-Burma routes to China is given in Kiatan (8th century A.D.). It describes the route from Tonkin in Southern China through Yunnansen, Yunnan-fou and Talifou; going westwards it crossed the Salween at Young Chang, on the west of that river, and then led to Chou-ko-leang to the east of Momein between Shiveli and the Salween. It branched off there, the main route leading through the valley of the Shiveli and joining the Irrawady on the south-west; the second route led to the west. From Chou-ko-leang, the main route reached Si-li, halfway between Ta-gaung and Mandalay; it passed by Toumin (Pagan) and reached Prome and leading through the mountain of Arakan in the west, it reached Kāmarūpa. The minor route from Chou-ko-leang led westwards to Teng Ch'ong (Momein) and crossing the mountains, reached Li-Shouei on the Irrawady near Bhamo; then crossing the river Mogaung, it led through the town of Nagausi through the mountains and then reached Kāmarūpa.¹

At a subsequent time numerous other routes were opened into China through Burma, Bhutan and Tibet and not only the people from the plains but also the hill tribes were responsible for these early commercial contacts.² These trading routes confirm our belief that ancient Assam had regular commercial transactions with China and the Far East through Burma, Manipur, Pātkāi and other passes of Assam in the north and the south-east.

That there were numerous mountain passes in the north of

¹Bagchi, India and China, pp.18f. ²See Chap. III, pp. 120f

Assam leading to China, Afghanistan and the west through Bhutan and Tibet is testified by a number of sources. As late a work as the *Tabaqāt-i-Nāsirī* writes that there were as many as thirty-five passes between Assam and Tibet and through them horses were brought to Lakhnauti. It was perhaps through these passes in the north and the north-east of Assam that some of the racial elements, such as the Alpines, entered the country. Rutherford states that the Lhasa traders had continuous commercial relations with Assam in the past. The merchants from Lhasa went to China and brought back various goods for sale to the Assam traders.¹ This is pointed out by the *Periplus* as early as the first century A.D. It states that from Thina or Assam² articles like raw and manufactured silk were brought by land through Bactria to Barygaza or else down the Ganges and then by sea to Limurika on the coast of Malabar.³ The work refers, therefore, to both land and water routes and points to trading relations with places like Afghanistan. The first of these routes was via Tibet or Bhutan. The Tibetans, we know, carried on a considerable traffic with Assam. A caravan consisting of about 20 persons went annually to the frontier of Assam and took up their quarters at a place called Chouna, while the Assamese merchants were stationed at Geganshur. This was one route through which the goods of Assam reached Bactria as well.⁴ Another route was through the mountain passes of

¹See Pemberton, Report on Bhutan, p.144; Hamilton, II, pp.743f.

²Taylor, J.A.S.B., 1847, I, pp.31-32. ³Ibid. ⁴Ibid.

Bhutan.¹ This is confirmed also by a later writer, Tavernier² who mentions that merchants travelled through Bhutan to Kabul to avoid paying duty that was levied on merchandise passing into India via Gorakhpur. He describes a journey extending over deserts and mountains as far as Kabul where the caravans parted, some for Great Tartary, and others for Balkh, and at the latter place merchants of Bhutan bartered their goods. The accounts given in the *Periplus* would, therefore, yield that merchandise brought from Assam to Balkh or Bactria was purchased there by merchants, who were on their way to India, and who afterwards sailed down the Indus to Barygaza or Gujarāt, where they took ship for the Red Sea. The other route by water down the Ganges and then by sea to Limurika no doubt refers to the route by the Brahmaputra and the Ganges. Merchandise from Assam was brought by this route to the Gangetic mart near Dacca and was then shipped to Limurika.³ The journey of the caravan from Byzantium to the frontier of Serica or Assam as described by Ptolemy seems to be identical with the description in the *Periplus* of the route from Bactria to Assam or with the route from Bhutan to Kabul and then to Balkh.⁴ It appears that the merchants who traded with the people of Assam were not allowed to enter the latter country, but they carried on traffic with them at a pass between Bhutan and Assam. Ptolemy (I, XVII) mentions another route to Assam via Palibothra (Pātaliputra). This was through the Brahmaputra to Assam, which was the route by the Ganges mentioned in the

¹Ibid. ²Travels, II, pp.259f.

³Taylor, J.A.S.B., 1847, I, pp.31-32. ⁴Ibid, pp.50f.

Periplus, by which merchandise was exported to Limurika by sea.¹

Assam's cultural and commercial relations with the rest of India were far closer. Besides the contact between Kāmarūpa and Videha, relations with Gujarāt and Kāśmīra from early times have been proved by the Epics, the Purānas and the Rājataranginī. We have already pointed out the route from Assam through the Brahmaputra and the Ganges to Bengal, Magadha and the west, as mentioned by the Periplus and Ptolemy. This is also referred to by Ctesias and Aelian, who mention a profitable trade in lac and amber from the Siptachora tree.² Wilford, on the basis of these writers, points out that these people where siptachora was found, traded with the rest of India, carrying the dried fruit of the tree, with the amber and the purple dye prepared from the lac in boats. They carried a great quantity to the King of Magadha to the amount of one hundred talents and in return they took bread, coarse cloth and other articles.³ Schoff, on the basis of the Periplus, rightly points out that gold from the rivers of Assam and Burma was brought to India through Tripurā.⁴ This is confirmed by the later traveller Tavernier who wrote that both gold and silk were not only sent overland to China, but also that the Tripurā merchants had trading relations with the Deccan.⁵ Assam's commercial relations even with Ceylon are indicated by another classical source. In speaking of an embassy from Ceylon to the Roman emperor Claudius, Pliny (VI,

¹Ibid. ²J.A.S.B., 1847, p. 47.

³A. Res, IX, p.65. ⁴The Periplus, pp.47-48, 258-59.

⁵Travels, II, pp.281f; also Ball, Economic Geology of India, p.231.

XVII-XXII) represents the ambassador as stating that the people of Ceylon knew the Seres, people of Assam¹ through the medium of trade and that the ambassador's father often visited them.

The most intimate contact, as we have stated was with Magadha. The earliest mention of the trade routes between Kāmarūpa and Magadha is found in the Arthasāstra.² The extension of the frontiers of Kāmarūpa to North Bengal, Kalinga, Kosāla and Magadha at a subsequent time and the close cultural contact between Kāmarūpa and these regions, including Nepal, led to the development of regular trade routes. The route to Magadha was not only by water, as evidenced by the classical sources, but also by land. The association of Bhāskara with Yuan Chwang and Harṣa during the 7th century A.D. reveals something about these routes. Communications were regular and easy. Hamsavega, the Kāmarūpa ambassador, met Harṣa on the bank of the river Sarasvatī, not far from Shāneśvara, after a month's journey.³ Another messenger from Bhāskara reached Nālandā within a short time.⁴ Similarly a messenger despatched by Harṣa when he was in Koṅgoda (Ganjam) reached Kāmarūpa quickly.⁵ Thus there was a regular exchange of envoys from one part of the country to another, probably by the land route. The line of communication we find from the route of Yuan Chwang. When he started for Kāmarūpa from Magadha, he came through Campā, Kājaṅgala (Rājmahal) and Puṇḍravardhana, and then, crossing a large river, which was evidently the Karatoyā,⁶ the pilgrim entered Kāmarūpa.⁷ The

¹J.A.S.B., 1847, I, pp.43f. ²Arthasāstra (S.S.tr.) pp.361f.

³H.C. (Cowell), pp.212f. ⁴Life, pp.165f; Watters, I, p.348.

⁵Ibid. ⁶Political History, Sec. 2. pp.101

⁷Beal, II, pp.195f; Watters, II, pp.185f.

importance of the water route is also revealed by the accounts. Bhāskara with the pilgrim went with his followers up the Ganges and met Harṣa near Kājaṅgala.¹ All this indicates that the kingdom had a continuous diplomatic and trading relation with the west both by land and water routes, not only during the 7th century A.D., but also before and after. The conquest of Gauḍa, Kośala, Kalinga and other lands during the 8th century A.D. by Harṣadeva seems to indicate that there were good road and water communications for the march of armies. The constant migrations of Brāhmaṇas and other people to and from Kāmarūpa, as revealed by epigraphy, also point to the same conclusion.

(ii) Articles of Trade:

One of the chief articles of trade was silk, both raw and manufactured, which was exported to other lands. This is testified by the Periplus which, as we have mentioned, records that from Thina (Assam)² both raw and manufactured silk were brought by land through Bactria to Barygaza or else down the Ganges and then by sea to Limurika or the coast of Malabar,³ Pliny also mentions that the silk trade was carried on in and through Assam.⁴ The same reference is found in Ammianus Marcellinus (XXII, VI).⁵ Another valuable article of export was tejpat, the malabathrum of the Periplus and other classical writers. The Periplus gives an interesting story of the Sesatae in connection with the marketing of this article.⁶ This refers to the description of

¹Life, pp.165f; Watters, I, p.348. ²Taylor, J.A.S.B., 1847, I, pp.29f.

³Vincent, Periplus, II, pp.523f; McCrindle, The Commerce and Navigation of the Erythrean Sea, pp.145f; J.L.Whiteley, The Periplus, pp.134f. ⁴Schoff, Periplus, p.267. ⁵Taylor, J.A.S.B. 1847, pp.68f.

⁶Vincent, II, pp.523f; McCrindle, pp.145; Whiteley pp.134f.

a trading in malabathrum of the people of Assam.¹ The evidence for the export of gold is pointed out by Schoff on the basis of the *Periplus* and we have already stated that gold was brought to India from the rivers of Assam and Burma.² This is confirmed by Tavernier who points out that both silk and gold were sent overland to China and the merchants of Tripurā, trading in the Deccan took back valuable commodities.³

The marketing habits of the Sesatae of Assam of the *Periplus* are described in other classical works. Pomponius Mela for instance (III, VII) describing the country of the Seres (Assam)⁴ writes that they were noted for their trade. They used to leave their merchandise and retire till the merchants they dealt with had left a price or bartered for the amount, which, upon their departure, the people of Seres returned and took. Similar reference is found in Pliny (VI, XVII-XXII) who refers to the marketing habits of the country of the Seres or Assam.⁵

The other articles of merchandise mentioned in the classical works are lac, buffalo and rhinoceros' hide and horns, iron, aloe, musk, cloth, etc. Ammianus Marcellinus mentions these commodities from the country of the Seres, which were exported to other parts of India.⁶ Pliny also mentions that they exported skin, iron and cloth. The iron of Serica (Assam)⁷ is considered to be the best in India (XXXIII, XIV). We have already mentioned the export of lac and amber of the siptachora tree on the basis of Ctesias and Aelian and the people exchanged them for bread,

¹J.A.S.B., 1847, I, pp.32-33. ²*Periplus*, pp.47-48, 258-59.

³Travels, II, 275, 281. ⁴J.A.S.B., 1847, I, pp.43f.

⁵J.A.S.B., 1847, I, pp.43f. ⁶*Ibid*, pp.68f. ⁷*Ibid*, p. 73.

coarse cloth, etc. They sold also their swords, bows and arrows.¹ The reference is to the marketing habits of some hill people of Assam.² Ctesias further mentions with reference to the country of Siptachora that it produced all good things,³ which according to Taylor⁴ refer to silk, lac and other dyes, also musk, ivory, gold, silver and iron which were exported to India via the Brahmaputra. The export of lac to China and Japan is mentioned also by Tavernier.⁵ The export of iron, hide, buffalo horns, pearls including lac and silk to China through Bhutan and Tibet was also common. We have already stated that the Lhasa merchants had regular trading relations with Assam in between their passes. The merchants from Lhasa used to go to China and brought back silver bullion and rock salt which they exchanged with the Assam traders for rice, silk, lac, hide, buffalo horns, pearls and other commodities.⁶ All these accounts prove that the country exported many valuable articles to other lands and had important commercial enterprises from early times.

(iii) Medium of Exchange - Weights and Measures:

It is not known when coins were first used as a medium of exchange in Assam.⁷ In early times, when the value of an

¹Wilford, A. Res., IX, p.65. ²J.A.S.B., 1847, I, p.47.

³Heeren, Asiatic Nations, II, IV (App.) p.380.

⁴J.A.S.B., 1847, I, p.47. ⁵Travels, II, p.282.

⁶Pemberton, Report on Bhootan, p.144; Hamilton, II, pp.743f.

⁷The use of coins like niṣka, hiraṇya, māna, kriṣṇala, śatamāna, Kārsapāna, paṇa, viṣṭa, suvarṇa, etc. is traced back as early as the Vedic, Brāhmaṇic, Buddhistic and other literatures. (Mac and Keith, Vedic Index, I, p.455; Cunningham, Coins of Ancient India, p.6; L.H.Gray, J.A.O.S., XX, pp.54-55; N.C.Bandopadhyaya, Economic Life, etc., pp.178f, 271f; Pran Nath, Economic Condition, etc. pp.72f; S.K.Das, Economic History, etc. pp.42f.

article was measured in terms of commodities, all business transactions were no doubt carried on by a system of barter and as in other parts of India, as shown by early literature, animals like cattle, animal skins, garments, rice, cowries, etc. were used for barter. The evidence of trading relations that we have just described points to the fact that barter was the only medium of exchange. It is worth noting that even now most of the tribes use articles like animal heads, mithans, daos, arrow and spear heads, gongs, bells, etc. in purchasing things. The people of the plains also were accustomed to carry on their commercial transactions with the help of barter even long after the circulation of coins. Unfortunately, not a single Assamese coin of our period has been discovered.

✓ The earliest reference to the use of cowries is found in the Harṣacarita; Bāṇa states that Bhāskara sent to Harṣa 'heaps of black and white cowries' as presents.¹ The use of cowries is further proved by the Tezpur Rock inscription of Harjjara.² The earliest reference to a silver coin from Kāmarūpa is noticed in the Arthasāstra which mentions it under the name of Gaulikaṃ.³ The gold coin Kalitī mentioned in the Periplus,⁴ which in the opinion of Benfey is associated with the word Kalitā,⁵ has probably a connection with the Kalitās of Assam who as rulers minted coins. A definite reference to gold coins is found also in the Śilimpur grant of the 12th century A.D., which referring

¹H.C. (Cowell), pp.212f. ²J.B.O.R.S., 1917, pp.508f.

³Bhattachaswāmī, Com. p.63; also K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S., VII, pp.29-34; J.B.O.R.S., XI, II, p.62. ⁴Schoff, pp.47-48.

⁵McCrinkle, The Commerce and Navigation, etc., p.31; Schoff, pp.258f.

to a tulāpuruṣa gift from the Kāmarūpa King Jayapāla states that the Brāhmaṇa Prahāsa did not accept the offer of 900 gold coins.¹ The same grant states that the Brāhmaṇa refused to accept a gift of land yielding an income of 1,000 coins. There is besides other evidence to show that the people worked in metal. These prove that both cowries and coins were used as a medium of exchange side by side with the exchange of articles for articles.

The evidence to the use of weights and measures is lacking.² Barnett rightly points out, however, 'that different ages and provinces followed different standards.'³ It is not known what was the standard of weight of the coins referred to in ancient Assam. The words droṇa and pāṭaka occur in the Śilimpur grant in connection with land grants.⁴ On the basis of Gupta inscriptions pāṭaka is taken to be equal to forty droṇas.⁵ As occurring in the Arthasāstra, the weight of a droṇa is taken to be about 21 lbs.⁶ Droṇa or doṇa is used now in Assam as measuring five seers of any article; but when applied to a plot of land, it stands for about a bighā of land. Both pāṭaka and droṇa might have been used in the sense of a particular area of land as well as for weights and measures, and were used in the exchange of commodities through barter. The reference in the Śilimpur grant to a tulāpuruṣa gift of 900 gold coins (i.e., equal to the weight

¹E.I. XIII, PP.289f.

²In ancient India we have early evidence as early as the Vedas. The weight of a niṣka is given in the Saṃhitās and the Arthasāstra as equal to 4 suvarṇas or (80 x 4) = 320 Kriṣṇālas; tulā (scale) is mentioned in the Yojur Veda and Kriṣṇāla in other texts. In Pāṇini we have māsa, viṣṭa, ādhaka and droṇa (Banda-padhyaya, pp.178f, 271f).

³Antiquities, p.206. ⁴E.I., XIII, V. 22, pp.289f.

⁵c.f. Gunaighar. ⁶Pran Nath, Economic Condition, etc., pp.72f. (U. H. & C., VI, 1930)

of the body), suggests that the weight of a gold coin was equal to about five tolās, taking the average weight of a body as about 120 lbs.

Section 3

Literature and Education.1. Introduction of script and the art of writing.

Not to speak of the Assamese script, which is definitely of later development, the question of the evolution of the Indian alphabets and the art of writing is still disputed.¹ But the weight of evidence proves the Indian origin of the alphabets.² It is also believed that Brāhmi is the parent of the Indian scripts.³ We cannot, however, conclude whether the Brāhmi or any other script had its origin in the prehistoric pictographs,⁴ till these are completely deciphered.⁵ But it is certain that during the period of the Vedas and subsequently both the script and the art of writing were developed.⁶

It is likely that the Assamese script was derived from the Devanāgarī through successive stages until it reached its final form. It was probably a 'descendant of the Kuṭila variation of the Gupta script of Eastern India'.⁷ An examination of the script of the epigraphs, written in Devanāgarī shows the trend of its evolution on independent lines. In any case, the earliest

¹Bühler, Indian Palaeography, pp.2, 8-9; Barnett, Antiquities, pp.225f; Keawy, Indian Education in Ancient and Later Times, p.33; Rhys Davids, Buddhist India, pp.107f.

²J. Dowson, J.R.A.S., XIII, pp.102f. ³Bühler, pp. 2f.

⁴P. Mitra, I.A., 1919, pp.57-64; P.A.S.B., XVII (N.S.), pp.279-85; Bhandarkar, C.R., 1920, 22-39; Pros. 1st O. Conf., II, 1922, 305-18; Majumdar, J.P.A.S.B., 1921, 231f; J.B.O.R.S., IX, 419-20

⁵H.C. Das Gupta, J.P.A.S.B., 1921, 210-12; Chanda, J.B.O.R.S., IX, 262-65; also B. Svarup, J.B.O.R.S., VIII, 46-64; 99-109; IX, 347f. ⁶A.C. Das Gupta, J.D.L., X, 173-88; G.S. Ojāh, Prācīn-lipimālā, 1-16; Bühler, p.5.

⁷S. Kataki, Ancient Assamese script, p.8.

known script of Assam was Devanāgarī, and the art of writing in Assam was known as early as the 6th century A.D., if not earlier, as proved by the grants of Bhūti-varman. Beginning with a gradual change in the Kāmarūpī dialect, which according to Yuan Chwang differed only a little from that of Mid India,¹ the process of evolution of both the script and the language continued until it had an individualised and independent script of its own, the final form of which existed at the latest during the 12th - 13th century A.D. This is substantiated by existing Sanskrit and Assamese works. Even after the evolution, the parallel development and the use of both languages may have continued throughout the ancient period. The evidence of the existence of any Mon-Khmer Khāsi and Mongolian scripts is lacking, nor is it known when and how their dialects were differentiated. The Mon-Khmer speech had perhaps an earlier growth, though no written literature of the period has come down to us. The substratum of both the Mon-Khmer and Tibeto-Burman speech in the Assamese language points definitely to the early evolution of their dialects; but for want of written specimens, our treatment of the subject will have reference to the Assamese language alone.

2. The Assamese Language and Literature of the period:

Though the script was derived from the Devanāgarī and though the language itself belongs to a branch of the Neo-Indo-Aryan languages, or rather the outer bank of the Indo-Aryan groups, with a definite admixture of the Dardic speech of the

¹Watters, Yuan Chwang, II, 185f.

Alpines,¹ its vocabulary is not entirely based on the Sanskrit. The epigraphs, though written in Sanskrit, prove that as early as the 7th century A.D. and later, some of the Assamese formations are found even in their present forms and used in the same sense. To cite a few instances, the name of a man 'Kālīā', used at present in the same form, occurs in the Nidhanpur grant; 'Dumbarī' of the same grant is used now as Damaru; 'Nākka' (nose) of the Tezpur Rock inscription of Harjjara, in modern Assamese nāka; 'kūā' (well) of the Tezpur grant of Vanamāla, now used as kūā; 'āli' (dam in rice field) of the Nowgong grant, is used in the same form and sense in modern Assamese; 'joli' (a small stream) of the Guākuchi grant is used now as julī; 'jān' (a channel) of the Ruspabhadra grant is also so used.² These instances show that the Assamese language is not entirely based on the Sanskrit and its evolution on independent lines began very early. Its origin, therefore, 'is not to be found in the Sanskrit or Vedic literature any more than the sources of Italian are to be traced to the classical literature of Rome. Its origin is to be found in the popular dialects of Assam or of a part of India - Like Hindusthāni, Assamese is Vedic or Pre-Vedic Sanskrit in a new form although it has greatly assimilated various other elements into its body, notably of the Boḍo group of the Tibeto-Burman family.'³ In fact, the vernacular languages of India are derived from apabhraṃśas, based not on Sanskrit but on old

¹Grierson, Ency. Br. XIV, p.488; G. Howell, Soul of India, p.20.

²K.R. Medhi, Assamese Grammar and the Origin of the Assamese Language, Intro. pp. LXXIIIIF.

³Ibid, Introduction.

prākṛts. These 'must be considered as the descendants not of grammatical sanskrit, nor of the grammatical prākṛt but of the various apabhraṃśas, spoken in different parts of India -¹ It is evident that Assamese originated from the same group as the Bengali, Oriya and Bihari, derived from the Eastern variety of the Magadhan prākṛt.² It is perhaps due to this common origin and the similarity of alphabets that a claim has been made that Assamese is nothing but a dialect of Bengali.³ But not only in vocabularies but also in grammar and accent, the two languages have a marked difference; a few of the instances that we have quoted from our epigraphs definitely point to the independent origin of both the script and language of the Assamese. It is certain that both 'started on parallel lines with peculiar dialectical predispositions and often developed contradictory idiosyncracies.'⁴ Assamese, therefore, was never 'an offshoot or patois of Bengali, but an independent speech, related to Bengali, both occupying the position of dialects with reference to some standard Magadhan apabhraṃśa. Modern Assamese in certain respects shows a clear approximation to the forms and idioms preserved in the Dohās.'⁵ S.K. Chatterjee rightly points out that 'Assamese - became an independent speech, although her sister dialect, North Bengali occupied the vassalage of the literary speech of Bengal.'⁶

¹Max Müller, Science of Language, I, pp.179-80.

²Grierson, L.S.I., I, I, pp.126f; A. Macdonell, India's Past, pp.200f; Grierson, Indo-Aryan Vernaculars, B.S.O. Studies, London I, 1917, pp.72f; S.K. Chatterjee, Origin and Dev. of Bengali Language, p.140.

³C.D. Sen, History of Bengali Language and Literature, pp.110-12.

⁴Kakati, Assamese - Its Formation and Development, pp.7f.

⁵Ibid, pp.9-10. ⁶O.D.B. Lang., p.139.

This independent position of Assamese may also be attributed to the extensive literary works of the period. As Macdonell points out, the Assamese 'possesses an important literature - Its literary style does not suffer like Bengali from the excessive use of sankritisations. The literature goes back to an early date, is varied in character and especially abounds in historical works.'¹ The dialect prevalent in places like Koch Bihar and Rangpur, which were under Kāmarūpa, was the old Kāmarūpī, and the aphorisms of Dāka, who was from Kāmarūpa, found its way to Bengal and even to Orissa in the past.² Even today the speech of these parts of Bengal bears close similarity to modern Assamese. In fine, Assamese literature is as old as the Bengali. 'Like Oriya, Assamese is a sister, not a daughter of Bengali. It came from Bihar, through North Bengal, not through Bengal proper.'³ As Nicholl remarks, the language 'is not, as many suppose a corrupt dialect of Bengali, but a distinct and coordinate tongue, having with Bengali a common source of current vocabulary. Its sanskrit did not come to it from Bengal, but from the upper provinces of India - this all who carefully examine the matter will readily admit.'⁴

The origin of Assamese literature, therefore, goes back to antiquity, and it is as rich as other provincial languages of India. Its 'literature is as old, if not older than that of Bengali - Assamese literature is essentially a national product. It always has been and it is so still. The genius of its people

¹India's Past, pp.200f, 212. ²D.N. Bharali, J.A.R.S.,VII,pp.41-48

³Grierson, L.S.I., I, I, pp.156-57. ⁴Assamese Grammar, p.72.

has led it along lines of its own and its glory - history - is a branch of study almost unknown to the indigenous literature of Bengal. Whether the nation has made the literature or the literature the nation, I know not,' writes Grierson, 'but as a matter of fact both have been for centuries and are in vigorous existence. Between them they have created a standard literary language, which, whether its grammar resembles that of Bengal or not, has won for itself the right to a separate, independent existence.'¹ This independent character is shown by the fact that though it had its origin in the eastern variety of the Magadhan apabhraṃśa and ultimately in Sanskrit, it contains more non-Aryan words. It has also close similarities with the western group and even the Mārāthī language. It retains some important peculiarities of the western group to which Sindhī and Gujarātī also belong. Nay, it retains also a few peculiarities of the language of the Zend Avesta.'² So Assamese 'is a mixture of Saurasenī and Māgadhī apabhraṃśas'³ or a mixture of the Eastern and Western groups of the outer band of the Indo-Aryan languages, containing many Dardic elements. To show a few instances of similarities, the Assamese word 'āi' (mother) is the same in Mārāthī and found in dialects near Gujarāt; 'jon' (moon) is the same in Kāśmīrī and 'jui' (fire) in Avestan.⁴ The close cultural and linguistic affinities with Mithilā and Kalinga throughout the centuries are well known. The contributions made, however,

¹Grierson, L.S.I., V, I, p.394; Also J.D.Anderson, Assamese and Bengali, Calcutta, 1896; Grierson, Assamese Literature, I.A., XXV, pp.57f; Nicholl, G.F., Manual of the Bengali Language, including an Assamese Grammar, London, 1894.

²K.R. Medhi, Assamese Grammar, etc., Intro, pp.XXf. ³Ibid.

⁴D.N. Bharali, J.A.R.S., VII, pp.41-48.

by the non-Aryan elements to the formation of Assamese are far greater than those of the Aryans. In short, the Aryans and non-Aryans like the Austric and the Tibeto-Burmans have contributed to the richness of the Assamese vocabulary.¹ B.K. Kakati rightly points out the various influences of the Austric, Kolarian, Malayan and Bodo elements. Like the composite character of the Assamese culture, the language has also absorbed these various elements and like the Bodo 'the Austric elements seem to constitute an essential substratum of Assamese vocabulary.'²

We may corroborate our findings by citing a few instances. The Assamese 'āpā' (boy) has its Mundari equivalent in 'appu'; Assamese 'dādā' (elder brother) in Santali, 'dādā'; 'bāi' (elder sister) in Gond, 'bāi'; 'beli' (sun) in Juong, 'belā'; 'kābu' (convenience) in Khāsi, 'kābu' (good luck, opportunity); 'litikāi' (attendant) in Khāsi, 'laitkāi' (to wander about)³. The Tibeto-Burman elements are more predominant than any other. The Assamese 'ālahi' (guest) in Mikir, 'ālahi ārleng' (guest); 'khang' (anger) in Chutiā (khang); 'tekeli' (earthen jar) in Gāro, 'tikli'; dalong (bridge) in Kachāri, 'dalang'; 'dong' (irrigation channel) in Kachāri and Mikir, 'dong'.⁴ Some Assamese words have even similarities with words of other Indo-European languages. The Assamese 'ābu' (grandmother) has the Latin equivalent, avia; 'ātā' (grandfather) in Greek, atta; 'āl' (nursing) in Latin, alo (to nourish); 'ōp' (end) in Latin

¹S.K. Bhūnyā, (Publisher's note, pp.VII-VIII) to Kakati's Assamese - Its Formation and Development.

²B.K. Kakati, Assamese, etc., pp.32-53.

³Medhi, Assamese Grammar, etc., Intro. p.LXVII. ⁴Medhi, LVIII f.

ora; 'jaharā' (bastard) in Zend, jahi (a courtesan).¹ All these justify our conclusion that Assamese had an independent evolution and in course of time absorbed many non-Aryan words than those of Sanskrit.

The earliest specimens of the Assamese are supplied by the Buddhist Dohās and the writings of the Tāntrik-Buddhist siddhas, most of which were composed in old Kāmarūpī and were current in Bengal and Bihar. The testimony of Yuan Chwang that the speech of Kāmarūpa differed only a little from that of Mid India, can be justified by the close cultural contact between Videha, Magadha and Mithilā and the province. 'It is not, therefore, at all strange that the language of the Buddhist dohās, composed in Kāmarūpa during the tenth and the eleventh centuries, should be a mixed Maithilī-Kāmarūpī language bearing close resemblance to modern Assamese, the direct offspring of the old Kāmarūpī dialect.'² It took, however, a long time for its final evolution. For the present status of the Assamese language and literature we owe a great deal to the European missionaries of the middle of the 19th century A.D.; for it was they who really contributed to the literary renaissance of the Assamese and raised it to the status it is occupying now. Ancient Assamese literature consists of much unwritten poetry, such as pastoral songs and ballads like the Bihu songs, cowherd and boat songs, incantations and mantras used in magic and sorcery to propitiate the cure of snake bite, and to drive away the evil influence of ghosts during illness, riddles, maxims, proverbs, etc. In fact,

¹ Ibid, XXIII f. ² E.H.K., pp.164, 318.

it contains a rich mine of riddles and proverbs, some of which, like the songs and ballads, have now been reduced to writing, and Gurdon has collected some of the best specimens.¹ Assamese language is very rich in proverbs, and nothing perhaps can better illustrate the cultural achievement of a people than these proverbs. 'They are the richest store of a nation. What is more they are the most faithful chronicle of events.'² The best specimens of wise sayings are contained in a work, 'Dākabhaṇitā', attributed to Dāka, written in old Kāmarūpī dialect.³ The work provides an important specimen of the ancient literature of Assam. It is, however, too early to ascribe the work to the 6th century A.D., as done by D.N. Bezbarua.⁴ It may have been composed about the 8th century A.D.⁵ It is true that Dāka flourished at a time when the written literature of Assam had scarcely taken its birth.⁶ The place of the nativity of Dāka is given in the work, which states that he was the native of Lohidaṅgarā near modern Barpetā.⁷

Ancient Assam produced literature both in Assamese and sanskrit; but only a few manuscripts have been brought to light⁸ and even some of these are now lost. Reference may be made to Haōlata by Aniruddha Bhaṭṭa, who according to K.L. Barua flourished during the 12th century A.D.;⁹ Kīsaka Vadha by Nītivarman who flourished about the same time and Hārāvalī by Puruṣottama Vidyāvāgīśa, who was a Buddhist writer of the 11th century A.D.¹⁰

¹Some Assamese Proverbs.

²B. Rajkhowa, Historical Sketch of Old Assam, Intro., VI-VII.

³Des. Cat. Ass. M.S. (N.35). ⁴Assamese Language and History of Assamese Literature; Medi, Assamese Grammar, Intro. XCIII (for different views). ⁵E.H.K., pp.326-26. ⁶Goswami, Des. Cat., p.41.

⁷Ibid; E.H.K., 325-6. ⁸Des. Cat. of Ass. M.S.

⁹J.A.R.S., VII, pp.75f. ¹⁰Ibid.

The sanskrit compositions included, besides the epigraphs of the period, works relating to astrology, astronomy, palmistry, arithmetic, medicine and voluminous Tantrik works, some of which, as we shall show, definitely belonged to our period. The settlement of Brāhmaṇas and other high class Aryans and the royal patronage of Brāhmaṇical culture and of learned paṇḍits in the court, contributed largely to the culture of the sanskrit literature. Kāmarūpa, as testified by Yuan Chwang, was a noted centre of learning.¹ The epigraphs both in prose and verse are written with stately diction and poetic style and some of them may be compared with any other compositions of the period from ancient India. Some of the verses in the epigraphs contain passages from Kālidāsa and Bāṇa and the scribes tried to imitate their style. The Nowgong grant for instance, contains passages from the Raghuvamśa.² As noticed by T. Block, the writer of the Bargāon grant imitated the style of the Harṣacarita.³ These facts indicate that the composers were well-versed in sanskrit literature.

The rulers were also noted for their sanskrit culture. The Gauhāti grant (V. 18) credits Purandarapāla with the epithet 'sukavi'. The Nītikusuma, a work on statecraft, based on Śukra-nīti, was composed by him. In the anthology of the 'Kavīndra-vacana-samuccaya',⁴ Harṣapala, who was the King of Kāmarūpa, is credited with the composition of a verse.⁵ This king is described in the grants of Dharmapāla as being favoured by the

¹Watters, II, pp.185f. ²Hoernle, J.A.S.B., LXVI, I, pp.288-89.

³J.A.S.B., LXVII, I, pp.99f. ⁴Ed. E.W. Thomas; pp.47-48.

⁵N.N. Das Gupta, J.A.R.S., IV, pp.56-57.

goddess of learning.¹ The anthology of Śrīdharaḍāsa, the 'Saduktikarṇāmr̥ta',² presents us with no less than ten verses of Dharmapāla, who was no other than the King Dharmapāla of Kāmarūpa.³ In his Puṣṭpabhadra grant (V. 8) Dharmapāla is described as 'Kavīcakravāla cūḍāmaṇi' and eight verses of the said grant were composed by him.

An important sanskrit work of an earlier period is the 'Kāmarūpa Nibandhanīyakhaṇḍasādhyā', dealing with planetary worship and attributed to about A.D. 665.⁴ Some writers attribute the composition of the Ratnāvalī to Harṣadeva of Kāmarūpa during the 8th century A.D. In the prelude to the work, the authorship of the work is attributed to one Śrī Harṣadeva and Wilson identifies him with the King of Kāsmīra of the 11th-12th century A.D.⁵ This view is not tenable as quotations from the work have been noticed in the Sarasvatīkhaṇḍāvaraṇa of Bhoja (A.D. 1019-1049), the Daśarūpa of Dhanānjaya (10th century A.D.), Dhvanyāloka of Ānandavardhana (A.D. 857-884) and other works. Some writers identify the author with Harṣa of Kanauj on the basis of a passage from the Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā of Rājasēkhara, quoted by Ettinghausen.⁶ One Dhāvaka Bhāsa, a court poet of ŚrīHarṣavikrama has been credited with the authorship of the work along with Nāgānanda, Prīyadarśikā and others, and it is supposed that he passed off these works under

¹Khonāmukhi Grant, V.9; Śubhaṅkarapāṭaka Grant, V. 9.

²M.M.R. Sarmā, The Punjab Oriental Series, XV, 1933(No.162), p. 63.

³Das Gupta, J.A.R.S., IV, pp.56-57.

⁴Puruṣottoma Bhattacharya, J.A.R.S., X, pp.73f.

⁵J.A.R.S., III, p.5.

⁶Intro. to S.R. Roy's edition of the Ratnāvalī, p. 9.

the name of his patron. Rājasekhara here has confounded the wellknown Bhāsa, the author of the Svapna-Vāsavadattā with Dhāvaka Bhāsa; Harṣasītāditya, the author of Nāgānanda with Śrī Harṣavikrama, the patron of Dhāvaka Bhāsa and with Śrī Harṣa, the author of the Ratnāvalī. The clue to the identification of Śrī Harṣa is found in the verses in the beginning of the work:

jitamuḍupatinā namah surebhyo,
dvijavrṣabhā nirupadravā bhavantu.¹

The expression 'jitamuḍupatinā' refers to Kṛṣṇa. As given in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa (V, 29, VV.16-21) Muḍu was the defender of the city of Prāgjyotiṣa and when Kṛṣṇa killed him, Narakāsura resisted the attack of Kṛṣṇa, in which the former was killed. The reference is significant, as we know the King Harṣa of Kāmarūpa, belonged to the family of Naraka. The identification of Śrī Harṣa, the author of Ratnāvalī with Harṣadeva of Kāmarūpa, the conqueror of Gauḍa, Kalinga, Kośala and other lands seems also to rest on other evidence. In the fourth act of the drama we find a description of the conquest of Kośala. Bāṇa in his Harṣacarita (III, 141) speaks of the wine-flushed cheek of the Mālava women. This is depicted also in the first canto of the Ratnāvalī. This shows that the drama was written about the 7th - 8th century A.D. and not later than the 9th century A.D. as it is quoted in the Dhvanyāloka. The chronology, therefore, fits in with the period of Harṣadeva of Kāmarūpa.²

The Mūdrārākṣasa of Viṣākhadatta, patronised by Avantivarman

¹S.R. Roy, Ratnāvalī, pp.18-19.

²J.C. Ghosh, J.A.R.S., III, pp.5-9.

was probably composed in Kāmarūpa.¹ Abhinavagupta, a Kāmarūpa Buddhist scholar of the 9th century A.D., who was engaged in a controversy with Śaṅkarācārya², was the author of two works, Tantrāloka and Tantrāsāra.³ Perhaps the greatest contribution to the Tantrik literature, written in sanskrit, a work of much historical and cultural value, is the Kālikā Purāṇa, classed among the ~~upa~~-Purāṇas.⁴ It contains 91 chapters dealing with varied subjects. J.C. Roy and P.K. Gode place the work in about A.D.1000.⁵ On the basis of Hemādri's quotation from the work in his 'Caturvarga Cintāmaṇi, it is held that there was an earlier work than this, written by Smārta Śākta and this earlier work might have been written between A.D. 650 - 900; as the present work was composed in Assam about A.D.1000 - 1100.⁶ In any case, it is evident that the present Kālikā Purāṇa was composed in Assam, probably during the reign of Dharmapāla.⁷ The Dākāṛṇava⁸, another Vajrayāna work was compiled in Eastern India, most probably in Kāmarūpa. In the opinion of G. Tucci, the work is devoted to the cult of Dākinīs and Yoginīs⁹. H.P. Śāstrī

¹J.C. Ghosh, J.P.A.S.B., XXVI, pp.241f.

²C.N. Aiyar, Śrīsaṅkarācārya - His Life and Times, p.56.

³According to Bühler Abhinava Gupta died in A.D.982. Weber places him in the beginning of the 11th century A.D. (History of Sans. Lit. p.322). Mac. holds that he wrote his Dhvanyāloka in about A.D. 1000 (India's Past, p.103). One Abhinava Gupta is associated with the teaching of Śaivism in Kāśmīra about A.D.1100, and wrote the Paramārthasāra (Barnett, J.R.A.S., 1910, pp.707-747; Grierson, Ibid, pp.1334-38). Perhaps he was a different person.

⁴V. Raghavan, J.O.R. Madras, XII, pp.331-360; Eggeling, India Office Cata. VI, pp.1189-92 (No. 3339;) p.1192 (No. 3343); Keith, Ibid, II, pp.907-8.

⁵Bharātavarṣa, XVII, II, p.677; J.O.R. Madras, X, pp.289-94.

⁶Hazra, A.B.O.R.I., XXI, pp.38f; XXII, pp.1-17. ⁷I.H.Q., XXIII, p.322. ⁸Ibid. N.N. Chaudhury. ⁹J.P.A.S.B., XXVI, p.157.

attributes the authorship of the work to Dāka, the writer of wise sayings (aphorisms).¹ But this is wrong. Dāka, the writer of Dākabhanitā, whom we have already mentioned, was a quite different person and has nothing to do with the Dākārṇava, which is a Tantrik work, dealing with the propitiation of Dāks and Dākinīs (male and female evil spirits.)² Nāgārjuna, the disciple of Saraha and one of the Vajrayāna teachers who flourished about the 10th century A.D.³ composed two works, the Yogasāta, a medical work dealing with one hundred prescriptions and the Boddhicittavivarṇana.⁴ He is mentioned also by Alberuni as having flourished about 100 years before his time, i.e., about the middle of the 10th century A.D. He was, therefore, quite a different person from the great Nāgārjuna of the Majayāna school.⁵ The Kaulajñānanirṇaya,⁶ Akulavīratāntra and Kāmākhyāguhyasiddhi, all Tantrik works, ascribed to about the 11th century A.D. are attributed to Mīnanātha or Matsyendranātha, who hailed from Kāmarūpa.⁷ It is likely that these works were written here, which was the scene of most of his activities. Mīnanātha's disciple Gorakṣanātha also wrote important Vajrayāna works like the Gorakṣasamhitā⁸ and the Kāmaratnatantra.⁹ Sahajayoginīcintā, who also belonged to Kāmarūpa, wrote an important work, entitled, the Vyaktabhāvānugatattvasiddhi; a m.s. of this work is preserved in the Oriental Library of Baroda.¹⁰ Most of these works

¹Report on the Research of Sans. M.S., 1895-1900.

²E.H.K., pp.325-26. ³Ibid, p.159 (f.n.).

⁴P. Patel, I.H.Q., VIII, pp.790-93; Bagchi, Ibid, VII, pp.740-41.

⁵See Sec. 4, p.687 ⁶Ed. P.C. Bagchi. ⁷G.Tucci, J.P.A.S.B.XXVI.p132f

⁸Ed. P.K. Kaivarta. ⁹Des. Cat. of Ass. M.S. (No. 70).

¹⁰See., B. Bhattacharya, Intro. to Buddhist Esoterism.

were written in a mixture of old Kāmarūpī-Maithilī dialect rather than in prākṛt and pure sanskrit. Some of these works like the Yoginī Tantra and the Hara-Gaurīvaṃvāda, however, belong to a period later than the 12th century A.D.; but their importance lies in the fact that they preserve historical traditions of an earlier period. The Yoginī Tantra, written in sanskrit in Assam, is really a mine of historical information like the Hara-Gaurīvaṃvāda, written both in sanskrit and Assamese.¹

Among the sanskrit and Assamese manuscripts of a later period, but recording the traditions of an earlier period, devoted to Tāntrikism, astrology and astronomy, palmistry and medicine,² mention may be made of the Adbhūtasāra, a Tantrik sanskrit work, dealing with propitiatory rites for ascertaining mischief likely to be caused by the occurrence of strange events; the Āpaduddhāraṃmantra (prayer to Bhairava) written in sanskrit in Assamese characters; Śītalāstava in sanskrit, based on the Skanda Purāṇa; the Aparājitastava (prayer to Durgā) written in sanskrit, based on the Viṣṇudharmottara (Canto III); the Mantra Prakāśa; and the Maṇḍalādhyāya, all Tantrik works. The astronomical sanskrit manuscripts are the Jātakacandrikā of Jagadīśvara, containing some Assamese explanations, the Yudhajayārṇavadaśā in sanskrit; Jyotiṣa in sanskrit; the Jyotiṣacakra in sanskrit; the Jyotiṣadarpaṇa in sanskrit, composed by Bhūtaratnākara; the Jyotiṣamuktāvāṇī in sanskrit, composed by Baṅśivādana Dviija; the JyotiṣaRatnamālā; Sāmudrika;

¹Des. Cat. of Ass. M.S. (No. 54).

²H.C. Goswami, Des. Cat. of Ass. M.S.

Aṣṭavargīdasā; the Dvādaśarāśī nirṇaya; the Grahavijajñāna, written in sanskrit with Assamese characters; and the Hastamuktāvalī of Śuvaṅkarakavi,¹ in sanskrit with an Assamese translation. Two important works on medicine are the Ghorānidāna of Sāgarakhari, dealing with the treatment of horses, and Hastīvidyārṇava of Sukumāra-Barkāyastha, dealing with the treatment of elephants. There are others which are yet to be catalogued. Those that we have mentioned are the best known. In any case, the number of sanskrit and Assamese manuscripts of the time gives us some idea of the literary activity of the people and indicates that this was by no means small or insignificant.

3. Materials used for writing and the Preservation of Manuscripts

The existing manuscripts of our period give us some idea of the writing materials used. These consisted of the inner bark of the bhūrjapatra, aloe wood and cācīpāṭ (aquilaria agallocha), tulāpāṭ (leaves made by pressing cotton) or cotton cloth, wooden-board, palm leaves, animal substances,² clay, metal, stone, brick, etc.³ The Yoginī Tantra makes an important reference to writing and engraving on materials like clay, bark, leaves, gold, copper, and silver.⁴ The use of clay, copper and stone as materials for writing is shown by the existing epigraphs of the period, as for instance the clay seals of Bhāskara, the Tezpur Rock inscription of Harjjara and the Nidhanpur copper plates of Bhāskara.

¹B.K. Barua, J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.71f.

²D'Alwis reports that the Buddhist works mention skins among the materials (Bühler, Indian Palaeography, pp.8f).

³See Bühler, Indian Palaeography, pp.8-19. ⁴II/VII, 14-16.

Winternitz points out that the Bodleian Library contains a manuscript on wooden board from Assam.¹ The use of aloe bark is evidenced by Bāṇa who states that among the presents from Bhāskara to Harṣa contained 'volumes of fine writing with leaves from aloe bark and of the hue of the ripe pink cucumber.'² But the most common materials were tulāpāt and cācīpāt.³ A scientific method was adopted in the preparation of the cācībark to make it fit for writing and it was really an arduous task.⁴ Most of the sanskrit and Assamese manuscripts, so far discovered, have been found written on this material and some of them are in their original condition with fast coloured ink.

The use of ink was common. The word 'maṣi', the Assamese, 'māhi', occurs as early as the Gr̥hyasūtras and there are number of references to its preparation.⁵ The Buddhist and the Jain works mention inkpots (maṣipātra). In Assam ink was usually prepared from śilikhā (terminalia cibrina) and bull's urine. The use of the sap of earthworms for invisible writing is also found.⁶ As the existing manuscripts show, ink is marked by its lasting and glossy character.

Pen and pencils were made of bamboo, wood, reed, animal horns, metal, chalk, etc., and were commonly known as lekhaṇi or varṇaka. In Assamese they are known as 'kalama'. The Yoginī

¹See Büyler, Indian Palaeography, pp.8f. ²H.C. (Cowell), p.214.

³S.K. Bhūñyā, Intro. to Des. Cat. of Ass. M.S., pp. XVf.

⁴Gait mentions the procedure followed during the Āhom period for the preparation of cācīpāt (History of Assam, pp.375f).

⁵See R.L. Mitra, Indian Prescriptions for preparing ink in Gough's Paper, etc., pp.18f; Kāśmīra Report., pp.30f.

⁶Des. Cat. of Ass. M.S., Intro. pp.XVf.

Tantra refers to holders and pens of bamboo, reed, copper, bellmetal, iron and even of gold.¹

It is not known whether the manuscripts were kept in something like a modern library. We find, however, references to writers and other officers who may have been associated both with their composition and preservation. The keeper of grants was commonly known as akṣapāṭalika and the engraver lipikāra. The writers were known as kāyasthas, karaṇas or karaṇikas and lekhaḥakas. The temples and courts, like the Buddhist monasteries and universities, served the purpose of libraries. The court pandits were moreover entrusted with the work of both composition and care of the manuscripts. Brāhmaṇical, Buddhist and Jain sources, however, testify that the rich and the learned made donations of books to the temples and monasteries. The Vaiṣṇava sūtras of Assam even today contain some original works written by the reformers, during the 14th - 15th century A.D. The Āhom kings at a later time appointed officers to write about contemporary events and something like a separate establishment was created for the preservation of the records of all kinds.² But no systematic and scientific method was adopted during our period for the preservation of manuscripts. That is why we find that many of them have been destroyed and lost owing to lack of care. The rise and fall of dynasties, apathy of the public and natural causes were in no small measure responsible for the destruction of such valuable treasures. 'If an exhaustive search

¹III/VII - 5 - IX.

²Des. Cat. of Assamese M.S., Intro. pp. XVII-XVIII.

is made for Assamese manuscripts and even if the manuscripts hitherto discovered and traced are thoroughly catalogued, we have a firm belief that a far greater percentage of the Indian masterpieces will be found translated into Assamese than in any other vernacular literature - Some manuscript hunter in Assam may come upon a manuscript which will be as momentous as the Artha-sāstra of Kāuṭilya, the dramas of Bhāsa and the Samarāṅgana of King Bhoja.¹ All that have so far been brought to our notice, are found in their most part wrapped up in pieces of cloth or enclosed in wooden boxes.²

4. Centres of Education and the Curriculum of Studies.

Individual attainments, state and social service, and a preparation for the realisation of the higher ends in life were the main aims of education in ancient times.³ The emphasis on the moral and spiritual aspects of life greatly shaped the nature of education and studies and it was, therefore, fundamentally based rather on theory than on practical vocational training. In spite of the various methods employed by the state and individuals, education hardly touched the masses, producing thereby a gap between the learned few and the general public; and it could not produce a literate mass on a large scale. It was perhaps culture and not literacy which was the highest aim. Speaking of the value of education among the ancient Indians,

¹S.K. Bhūñyā, Assamese Literature, Ancient and Modern, pp. 2, 5; Preface to Des. Cat. of Ass. M.S.

²H.C. Goswami, Des. Cat. of Ass. M.S., Intro. pp. XVf; also Bühler, Indian Palaeography, pp.98f.

³See S.K. Das, The Educational System of the Ancient Hindus, pp.18-23.

Venkatesvara rightly points out that the common 'objective of education was cultural, rather than utilitarian, as in the case of Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia - Indian education had much more in common with that of the Hebrews. It was next door to the Persian where also dharma and satya were the social ideals. It resembled the Chinese in that it saw education in every art - The main point of contrast with the Greek was in the relative importance given to art and religion.'¹

With all the attainments of the Hindus in different branches of learning and the spread of literacy,² therefore, there has always been an underlying current of religious feeling and a firm faith in traditional structure. This faith in the past 'made the Hindu scholar narrow, bigoted and conceited.'³ In other words, the 'system which made great contributions to the science of grammar and philosophy and other subjects became in course of time stereotyped and formal, unable to meet the needs of a progressive civilisation.'⁴

The division of society on the basis of the varnāśrama dharma created a system of gradations and differences in the imparting of education to individuals, resulting in a narrow vocationalism.⁵ Such being the aim, the greater bulk of the non-Aryans in Assam had perhaps to remain beyond the pale of education. The nature of the literary works of the period, mainly dealing with religion, astronomy, astrology, medicine

¹ Indian Culture Through the Ages, pp.305f.

² Altekar, Education in Ancient India, p.323. ³ Ibid, pp.347f.

⁴ S.K. Das, pp.447f.

⁵ S.K. Das, Educational System, etc., pp.447f.

and allied subjects gives us an idea of the aim and the level of education that obtained in the period.

Before the introduction of the art of writing, learning was transmitted orally in gurugrhas,¹ hermitages and forests rather than in the towns,² though all subjects could not be taught there.³ Even when the art of writing was introduced, oral transmission of learning went side by side with it. The subsequent growth of schools, universities and the establishment of monasteries in ancient India helped in the diffusion of learning of all kinds. There were besides, sanskrit ṭolas, temples and places of discussion near the sites of sacrificial ceremonies, wandering scholars, clubs, etc., which also served the purpose of educational centres. Though there is evidence of the existence of schools as early as the 5th century B.C.⁴ in the texts, education in ancient India on a larger scale, not to speak of Assam, did not begin even before the time of Āśoka, and it was certainly Buddhism, particularly during Maurya times, that paved the way for the growth of popular elementary schools.

In Assam neither epigraphs nor literature supply us with definite information regarding the existence of regular schools except the gurugrhas, sanskrit ṭolas, and village schools provided mainly by the agrahāras, created and patronised by the rulers on behalf of and for the maintenance of the Brāhmaṇas. In fact, the royal patronage of the Brāhmaṇical culture greatly helped

¹Grant of Balavarman, V. 31.

²Sec. R.N. Tagore, Viśvabhāratī Quarterly, April, 1924, p.64.

³Altekar, Education in Ancient India, pp9f.

⁴See Bühler (for the beginning of specialisation) S.B.E., XXV, pp.XLVIf.

in the propagation of learning. Those who were endowed with the agrahāras, maintained village schools and were keen in discharging their sixfold duties, one of which was adhyāpanā (teaching)¹. Their system of education was based mainly on the study of sanskrit literature and religious works. The maintenance of a tola or chattrasālā is indicated by the fact that Śāṅkaradeva received all his instruction from Brāhmaṇa guru Mahendra Kāndali in one such educational centre. The royal court which was the abode of many learned poets and scholars was another centre of learning. Temples and religious establishments like those of the Vaiṣṇava satras of Assam, organised on the system of Buddhist monasteries, where discussions of all kinds were daily held, contributed more than any other centre to the spread of social education. The temples were the places of occasional festivals, attended by people of both sexes, young and old, who took part not only in the performance of drama, music and dancing, but also listened to important religious discussions. All these activities helped a great deal in the interchange of ideas and the diffusion of knowledge among people of all walks of life, irrespective of colour or creed. We have further evidence of the wandering vairāgīs (monks) and visits of scholars to and from Assam, who held discussions with scholars, professing different faiths and of different culture, and who helped to a great extent in the spread of education. Not only the Brāhmaṇa scholars but a number of Tāntrik-Buddhist siddhas from Kāmarūpa

¹Bargāon Grant (J.A.S.B., LXVII, I, pp.99f).

through their preachings and literary contributions helped in educating the people.

Whether in the schools or ṭolas or in the gurugrhas, the guru was considered essential. Mādhavadeva, one of the chief Vaiṣṇava reformers of Assam could become a guru only after his training under Śāṅkaradeva. There were probably both Brāhmaṇa and non-Brāhmaṇa gurus and students.¹ Śāṅkaradeva who took his instruction under Mahendrakandali was not a Brāhmaṇa, but he was given instruction in all branches of learning including the religious lore. There were rules for admission and for the guidance of teachers and taught, and the students received more individual attention than under a modern system. Students in their gurugrhas had usually to work for their teachers instead of paying fees. Beginning their learning from their seventh year, they were required to remain with their gurus till the completion of the period of Brahmacharya. The Nowgong grant (V.31) mentions the Samāvartana ceremony which was performed after the completion of the Brahmacharya period. The Dharmaśāstras give a detailed description of the ceremonies.²

Ancient Indian literature makes a voluminous reference to the study of the Vedas, Vedāṅgas, Upavedas, besides Sarpavidyā, Piśācavidyā, Rakṣavidyā, Asuravidyā, Itihāsa, Purāṇas, etc., including all vocational training, arts and crafts. The Vedic learning included Śikṣā, Chandos, vyākaraṇa, nirukta, jyotiṣa

¹C.f. Manu, (II,X); also Altekar, Education in Ancient India, pp.50-51; Bokil, The History of Education in India, Pt. I, p.151

²Altekar, pp.38-42; History of Dharmaśāstra, II, pp.408-415.

and kalpa including the study of the self and God.¹ The local epigraphs mention the study of vidyā and kalā; vidyā includes the four vedas, four upavedas, consisting of the Āyūrveda, Dhanurveda, Gandharvaveda and the Tantras, the six Vedāṅgas, Itahāsa, Purāṇas, Smṛtis, Arthasāstra, Kāmasāstra, Śilpasāstra, Alaṅkāra, Kāvya, etc. Inscriptions mention the study of the Vedas. The Tezpur grant (V. 30) states that Bhijjaṭa studied the Yajurveda with all its accessories - (sāṅgayajurvedam-adhītavān). The Bargāon grant (V. 16) states that Devadatta was the chief of the Vedic scholars and the vedas had their aims fulfilled in him. The Ruṣpabhadra grant (V. 14) mentions a Brahmana well-versed in Śrūti, Smṛti, Mīmāṃsā and Cāṅkya (Arthasāstra). Indoka, the donee of the Tezpur grant was well-versed in the Vedas.² Rāmadeva of Śrāvasti, the grandfather of the donee of the Śubhāṅkarapāṭaka grant was chief among the Brāhmaṇas, who were well-versed in the Vedas. His son Bharata was skilled in all the six Karmas, enjoined for Brāhmaṇas.³ Not to speak of the Brāhmaṇas, even some of the rulers were noted for their knowledge of the Vedas and various sāstras.⁴ Even Śaṅkara-deva, a sūdra, as stated in his biography, studied the four Vedas, fourteen sāstras, eighteen Purāṇas, eighteen Bhāratas, fourteen vyākaraṇas, eighteen kāvyas, eighteen koṣas, Saṃhitās, Amara, Cāṅkya and Yoga sāstra.⁵ He was really an erudite scholar.

Besides the study of the Vedas, the Brāhmaṇas cultivated

¹See, S.K. Das, Educational System, etc. pp.18f.

²J.A.S.B., IX, II, pp.766f. ³K.S. pp. 168f. ⁴Chap.IV, Sec.5, pp

⁵KathāGurucarita, pp.28-29.

the arts and sciences. The grant of Dharmapāla states that the grandfather of the donee possessed like the donor a knowledge of the five arts (samyak kaṭābhityutāh)¹. The study of the Arthasāstra is shown by the epithet taken by the Brāhmaṇa: (cānakya-mānikyabhū).² Titles like Śrūtidhara, Pandita and Kathānistha, borne by the Brāhmaṇas, indicate that they acquired efficiency in the study of the different branches of the Vedic learning.

The study of the Tantras is best shown by the voluminous manuscripts of the period and it is certain that this branch of study was extensively studied by a number of Tāntrik-Buddhists. Tantra as a subject of study is mentioned in the Gauhāti grant of Indrapala, (V. 16) who was conversant with the lore.

The study of the Jyotiṣa-Vedāṅga (astronomy and astrology) was widespread. The origin of the science in India goes back to a remote antiquity.³ The study of the science in Assam in all its branches is indicated not only by place names like Prāggyotiṣa, Navagraha, etc., but also by the existing manuscripts; the earliest work on the subject, as we have mentioned, is the 'Kāmarūpa-nibandhaniya-Khaṇḍasādhyā'. It is certain that Prāggyotiṣa was a great centre of jyotiṣa under the influence of the Magians. Epigraphy also proves that the rulers maintained astrologers (dvaivajñas)⁴.

The study of Itihāsa and Purāṇa is shown by the existence of a number of chronicles and Purāṇas. Even the Tāntrik works

¹Puṣpabhadra Grant, V. 14. ²K.S., p.180.

³Macdonell, India's Past, pp.181f; Weber, History of Sanskrit Literature, p.261.

⁴Kamauli grant, V. 8.

like the Kalika P., the Yoginī. T. and the HaraGaurīsamvāda contain both historical and religious information.

The study of Āyūrveda or medicine, concerning both human beings and animals, was widespread. In ancient India the beginning of the science goes back to remote antiquity. In the Atharva V. and the Kauśitakī Sūtra for instance, we have mention of medicinal herbs and the healing art. Indian literature mentions Charaka, Suśrūta and Vāgabhaṭṭa whose works are based on the Saṃhitās. Nāgārjuna, who according to Weber flourished during the 2nd Century B.C. is said to have revived Suśrūta Saṃhitā.¹ In Assam the name of another Nāgārjuna is associated with the compilation of a medical work, Yogasāta. As we have stated, he belonged to the Vajrayāna school and was quite different from the earlier person of the same name. He was probably a contemporary of Ratnapāla. Even today the Assamese have great faith in his herbs, prescribed by medicine men (ojāhs). This Nāgārjuna, therefore, was a physician.² The two important manuscripts dealing with animal diseases are Ghorānidāna of Sāgarakhari and Hastīvidyārṇava of Sukumāra.³ The Doobi grant (V. 4) states that even rulers were conversant with the science of both elephants and horses. An important earlier work, dealing with the elephant medicine (Hastyāyūrveda) was compiled by one Pālakāpya, most probably in Assam.⁴ This is an extensive work, containing 160 chapters. In spite of the use of herbs, Kāmarūpa remained as a

¹History of Sans. Lit., p.287; Macdonell, India's Past, pp.175f.

²E.H.K., 159; J.A.R.S., II, 44-51.

³Des. Cat. Ass. M.S.

⁴J.B.O.R.S., V, p.311; Ānanda Śarmā Sans. Series (No. 26).

noted centre of magic and mantras, and the public in general believed and cultivated the science of incantation to cure all kinds of illness, including snake-bite.

The study of various arts (*kalā*), Śilpāsāstra and music and dancing (*Gandharvavidyā*) is indicated by the remains of art and architecture. The rulers took particular care in the erection of temples and the fostering of other fine arts including painting; we have dealt with the subject in another place.¹ It is doubtful, however, whether artists in general were properly trained in these arts in schools.

Of the gandharvavidyās, music and dancing formed part of a fine aesthetic culture, and these like other allied arts and sciences have great antiquity in India.² Both literature and epigraphs point to their cultivation in Assam. Assamese music consisted mostly of pastoral songs, accompanied by dancing, of which the folk dance occupied an important place. The use of various instruments and the playing of tunes, particularly during the Vaisṇava Reformation point to widespread musical culture. The existing material on the subject seems to reveal a distinctive non-Aryan tribal influence. This is noticeable not only in the music, dancing, and various instruments like the jew's harp,³ bamboo flute, horn, trumpet, etc. which closely resemble those used by the tribes, but also in the 'Bihu' festival (harvesting ceremony) of the Assamese, the chief features of which are pastoral ballads, folk songs and dancing. In fact,

¹Sec. 5, pp. 762-63

²Weber, Hist. Sans. Lit; S.W. Jones, A. Res., III, 329.

³A.W. Young, J.P.A.S.B., IV (N.S.) 233-37; Parry, Lakhers, 185.

the tribes are distinguished by their frequent amusements and festivals, the most notable feature of which consists of music and dancing of all kinds, and this not in a small measure contributed to the Assamese music and dancing.

Yuan Chwang makes an important mention of singing and dancing at the court of Bhāskara when the pilgrim was entertained.¹ Singing, accompanied by musical instruments and dancing, took place during dramatic performances and religious ceremonies. Epigraphs mention both music and musical instruments, and the playing of instruments is shown in a number of sculptures of the period. Early Assamese literature contains many kinds of rāgas (tunes). The grant of Vanamāla (V. 29) refers to singing to the tune of musical instruments. The sculptured specimens show musical instruments, such as vīṇā, reed flute (vāhī), double pipe (Kāli), conch-shell, drums, small drums (damaru) and many others.² Early Assamese literature³ gives an exhaustive list of musical instruments.

Both music and dancing formed part of the Vaiṣṇava culture of Assam. Even Śaṅkaradeva was a great musician and dancer. He taught his followers music, dancing and acting in order to spread Vaiṣṇavism in the different satras of the province. All religious music was in the hands of a particular class of people called Gāyana-Bāyana, whose technique was based on Kīrtana, Baragīta, Nāmagoṣā and other musical works of the Vaiṣṇava preachers.

¹Watters, II, 185f. ²Sec. 5.

³Mādhava Kandalī, The Rāmāyaṇa; Śaṅkaradeva, Uṣā Harāṇa; Rukmiṇī-Harāṇa; Sūryakhari, Darrang-Rāja-Vaṃśāvalī.

Musical instruments¹ may be divided into tata yantra (stringed); ghana yantra, including cymbals, gongs, bells, etc.; ānadhā yantra, including drums, tabors, etc., and suṣira yantra consisting of all the wind instruments. As we have stated, the long list of musical instruments in our works,² points to the wide cultivation of the art of music.

Like music, dancing was greatly practised. The Tezpur grant refers to dancing girls in the temples. The sculptures of the period also show dancing poses (nṛtyamūrtis). An old Assamese manuscript, Hastamuktāvalī, to which we have already referred, deals with 39 kinds of dancing.³ Dancing formed part of the Vaiṣṇava culture, and on religious occasions even today Vaiṣṇava dances are performed in the temples. The 'Bihu' dance is still an important part of the Assamese folk-culture and is evidently a non-Aryan contribution to it. It is, however, doubtful whether before the Vaiṣṇava period organised instructions in both music and dancing were given to a considerable number of people. The subject probably attracted a small professional class.

5. Spread of Education; Effects upon the Country.

The study of the varied subjects and the existing manuscripts point to the nature and the spread of education in ancient Assam. It would be a mistake to hold that only the rulers and the Brāhmaṇas helped in the diffusion of learning;

¹See Rowbatham, History of Music, I; A.J.Hipkins, Musical Instruments, Historic, Rare and Antique, 87f.

²Mādhavadeva, Rāmāyaṇa (Ādikāṇḍa).

³J.K. Mīśra thinks that the work belongs to the Mithilā School of Music (A Hist. of Maithilī Lit. I, 34-35).

the Tantrik learning of the land was certainly due to non-Aryan elements, and it is also likely that the Tāntrik-Buddhist siddhas were mostly non-Aryans.¹

The settlement of the Brāhmaṇas and other Aryans in the land under the patronage of rulers was largely responsible for the spread of education, as in other parts of India, and Kamarupa, as reported by Yuan Chwang in the 7th century A.D., was a noted centre of learning. 'Men of high talents,' writes the pilgrim, 'visited the kingdom.'² Bhāskara, he states, was fond of learning and the people followed his example. His association with the university of Nālandā, one of the noted centres of learning in the period, and with the pilgrim and Harṣa, one of the most enlightened monarchs of Northern India, indicates his (Bhāskara's) desire for the acquisition of knowledge, which he spread among his people. In fact, Assam owes a great deal to the personality of Bhāskara.

The creation of agrahāras for Brāhmaṇas, was due to the fact that the rulers were attracted by Brāhmaṇical culture. To mention a few instances, the Khonāmukhi grant records that Dharmapāla made a gift of land to a Brāhmaṇa from Madhyadeśa, 'the well-known place of residence of Brāhmaṇas, who constantly performed sacrifices and were reluctant to accumulate riches.'³ Jayapāla made a similar gift to Prahāsa of Puṇḍra in North Bengal.⁴

¹Sec. 4, pp 686f ²Watters, II, 185f; Beal, II, 195f.

³J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.113f. ⁴Silimpur Grant, V.22.

Some well-known paṇḍitas from Kāmarūpa were honoured with similar gifts by the contemporary rulers. The biography of Yuan Chwang states that a learned scholar from Kāmarūpa went to the Nālandā university to engage in a controversy with the Buddhist scholars there. It was he who informed Bhāskara of 'the high qualities of the Master of the Law'. He was formerly a heretic, but being defeated in a discussion, was converted to Buddhism by the pilgrim.¹ The name of a Brāhmaṇa, Viṣṇu-somācārya from Śṛṅgaṭikāgrahāra of the Kāmarūpa viṣaya, belonging to the Parāśara gotra and well-versed in the Veda and Vedāṅga, occurs in a copperplate grant of the Gaṅga King, Anantavarman of Kalinga (922). The King's brother is stated to have made a gift of land to the Brāhmaṇa at the time of his daughter's marriage.² In the opinion of R.K. Ghosal, Śṛṅgaṭikāgrahāra may be an unknown district of Kalinga.³ But, as N.N. Das Gupta rightly points out, the evidence of other grants 'make a strong case in favour of supporting that it was from the Kāmarūpa viṣaya of Assam that Viṣṇusomācārya hailed.'⁴ That he was from Kamarupa is expressly stated in the grant itself. It is likely that Śṛṅgaṭika, where according to the Kālikā Purāna existed a liṅga, was the same as Śingri in modern Darrang.⁵ Among the twenty-six donees to whom the Paramāra King Vākpati Rāja (987) granted lands some, like Śābara of Kulañca, Śankara of Śāvathikadesa and Vāmanasvāmī of Pauṇḍrika in Uttarakūladesa, hailed

¹Life, pp.161-165. ²R.D. Banerji, History of Orissa, I, pp.232-41; J. Andhra, H.S., II, pp.271-76.

³E.I., XXVI, pp.62-68. ⁴J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.134-37.

⁵A.C. Āgarwallā, Āvāhana, III, (No. 4).

from Eastern India.¹ Krodañja or Kroṣañja, identified with Kulañca and Sāvathi, finds mention in the epigraphs of the kings of Kāmarūpa. Sāvathikadeśa of the Paramāra grant may be kings of Kāmarūpa. Sāvathikadeśa of the Paramāra grant may be Sāvathi of Indrapāla.² The Nowgong grant of Balavarman and the grants of Ratnapāla and Indrapāla mention Uttarakūladesā and Dakṣiṇakūladesā. The land granted by the Guākuchi grant of Indrapāla is known as Paṇḍaribhūmi in Mandi viṣaya of the Uttarakūladesā.³ On the basis of these identifications and similar references, it is possible to hold that some of the donees of the Paramāra grant hailed from Kāmarūpa and Vāmanasvāmī, was evidently a Brāhmaṇa from Puṇḍra, which at the time was under Kāmarūpa.⁴ The fact that a Paramāra King donated lands to so many Brāhmaṇas from Eastern India and Kāmarūpa seems to indicate that they were noted for their learning and education, which they no doubt spread over their native land.

Moreover, some well-known scholars of India are associated with ancient Assam. Some writers like K.L. Barua believe that even Kaṇṭilya, whose knowledge of Kāmarūpa was intimate, may have belonged to Kāmarūpa.⁵ But the contention is unlikely as the writer of the Arthasāstra had equally good knowledge of other parts of India. During the rule of the Śālastambha line some noted Buddhist and Brāhmaṇa scholars flourished in Kāmarūpa. As we shall show, Abhinava-Gupta, a Buddhist scholar of the 9th

¹K.N. Dikṣit, E.I., XXIII, p.109. ²Political History, Section 4, pp.398-99

³K.S. pp.130f.

⁴K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S., V, pp.112-115; also K.S., pp.78,98-99, 122, 136-137.

⁵J.A.R.S., VII, pp.83-86.

century A.D. belonged to Kāmarūpa¹ and it was perhaps due to the reputation of Kāmarūpa that Śaṅkarācārya (788-820) came to engage with him in a religious discussion.² Kumāritabhadda, another Brāhmaṇa scholar of about the same period may have belonged to Kāmarūpa.³ This, as we shall show, is based on the Śaṅkaravijaya of Mādhavācārya.⁴ Viṣākhadatta, who was patronised by Avanti-varman (alias Śālastambha), was also from Kāmarūpa.⁵ Most of the Tāntrik-Buddhist scholars of Eastern India, who contributed so much to the spread of Tāntrik culture, including Mīnanātha, were from Kāmarūpa. They were largely responsible for maintaining contact between this land and Nepal, Tibet, Orissa and Bengal.⁶ Even at a later time the reputation of Kāmarūpa as a centre of culture continued.

Evidence of educated women of the period is very scanty. We have mentioned that the epigraphs describe in a conventional style the qualities of the head as well as of the heart of queens,⁷ and one reference is made to the appointment of an old lady to take care of the royal harem.⁸ We find, however, reference to women as rulers in the Kingdom of Kadali in Nowgong,⁹ and in the spread of Tantrik culture they took as important a part as men. The name of Sahajayoginīcintā may be cited as an example.¹⁰

¹Section 4, p656

²C.N.K. Aiyar, Śrī-Śaṅkarācārya - His Life and times, p.56.

³Ibid, p. 26. ⁴Chaps. I, 53, 55, 93; VII, 101.

⁵J.C. Ghosh, J.P.A.S.B., XXVI, pp.241-48; K.L. Barua, E.H.K., p.162

⁶Section 4, pp 686f ⁷Section I, pp 536-37 ⁸Chap. IV, Sec. 5, p443

⁹Ibid, Section 4, p690

¹⁰above, p 699.

The literary education of women is also indicated by the fact that the Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva was composed by Manoratha in conjunction with his wife Padmā.¹ It was again the practice of the womenfolk in Assam to listen to the contents of the Epics and the Purāṇas, read out to them by the paṇḍitas. But, in spite of these stray references, it is only reasonable to conclude that the general level of culture of Assamese women in the period before the Vaiṣṇava Reformation was in no way high.

It is worth noting that not only women but also the Assamese in general, who adopted Hindu culture, even though without any education in a school, have been quite accustomed to a type of education, which may be called popular. As Bhūñyā writes, in the province 'was to be found what is called an 'illiterate literacy' of a form unknown in any part of India. An Assamese villager of the older type still carries his tradition about him'; once he is made to speak, we find that he is well acquainted with the contents of the Epics and the Purāṇas.² None the less, because of the absence of the proper organisation of schools on a wide scale, the great bulk of the population were illiterate and uneducated. Formal education in ancient Assam, therefore, was not so wide as to touch the general public and was confined to a narrow circle. The non-Aryan tribal elements did not enter the picture at all, and there was a wide gap between the level of culture of the learned few and the ignorant masses. Had there been a spread of general education among all, irres-

¹E.I., II, pp.347-58; Gaudalekhamālā, pp.127-46.

²Assamese Literature - Ancient and Modern, pp.2f; also Preface to Des. Cat. of Assamese M.S.

pective of their racial origin and faith, present day conditions would have been quite different and Assam would probably have achieved cultural homogeneity at an early period of her history. Wider Assam, far away from the activities of the court and the few individual educational enterprises, remained outside the pale of literary education, so essential for the wider diffusion of knowledge. The true Aryan culture may have attracted a few; but the Tāntrik education and culture that swept over Kāmarūpa, attracted far more adherents and took them away from the right path, until, under the benign influence of Vaiṣṇava education of the 15th century A.D. under Śaṅkara and Mādhava, they were restored to their rightful place in the main body of Hindu culture.

Section 4.

Religion.1. Non-Aryan cults and their Contributions:

We have already pointed to the evolution of the cults of fertility, head-hunting and human sacrifice, Mother Goddess, Saktism and other animistic beliefs which laid the foundation of Hinduism.¹ We have also discussed the probable contribution made by different races in building up the socio-religious fabric of ancient Assam.² One element of the worship of the phallus is fetishism, a belief in crude magic, associated with objects, such as stones and trees. This lay at the root of the religious system not only of the non-Aryans of Assam as in other parts of India, but also of the Hindus in general.³ The fetish worship supplied the materials for the foundation of Tāntrikism in Assam, with its centre at Kāmākhyā, the temple of the goddess of the yoni, developed by the austic and other elements.⁴ The phallic megaliths of Assam also point to the same idea.⁵ The worship of both liṅga and yoni is proved by the Kālikā Purāṇa.⁶ The Yoginī Tantra refers to the existence of a million liṅgas in Kāmarūpa.⁷ The image worship originated from that of the

¹Section I, pp. 507f

²Ibid, pp. 509-12

³W.G. Aston, E.R.E., V, pp.894-898; Spencer, Sociology, I, p.313; R.C. Temple, E.R.E., V, 903-906.

⁴Kakati, Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā, pp.35f.

⁵Chap. III, pp. 15-17

⁶Chap. 38.

⁷Bk. I, XI, V.36.

phallus.¹

Fetishism in fact formed part of animism, which lay at the root of the various cults in Assam as elsewhere, contributed to in the main by the non-Aryans. This is based on the attribution of spirits to all things, with which man had a close kinship, for which he felt awe and from which he sought to derive benefit through rites.² It is the foundation of every faith and of all people, and in its final analysis, it 'includes the belief in souls and in a future state - these doctrines practically resulting in some kind of active worship.'³ The Aryan Hindu worship of the elements of Nature, which developed into the worship of images, is based on the same belief. So is the case with the creation of myths, found everywhere among all classes of people.⁴ As remarked by A. Lang, among primitive and advanced minds 'there coexist the mythical and the religious elements in belief. The rational factor is visible in religion; the irrational is prominent in myth.'⁵ The Hindu religion is based on both, or it 'is animism more or less tempered by philosophy or magic - The Vedas themselves are one source of the manifold animistic practices,

¹Tylor, Primitive Culture, II, pp.143f, 169.

²Tiele, Outlines of the History of the Ancient Religions, p.9; R.K. Mookerji, Theory and Art of Mysticism, pp.27f, 50-52, 81f, 224. Tylor, Primitive Culture, I, pp.285f, 417-26; II, pp.184f; Lang, Myth, Ritual and Religion, I, pp.52-59; D'Alvielle Count Goblet, E.R.E., I, 535-37.

³Primitive Culture, I, 426-7.

⁴Myth, etc., I, pp.163f, 238f, 254.

⁵Ibid, pp.328f.

which may now be traced all through popular Hinduism.¹

All the elements of the cult of fertility, head-hunting, human sacrifice, faith in reincarnation, ancestor worship, and the rites connected with the dead, belief in heavenly bodies, magic and sorcery are based on the same animistic belief. The existing materials, though meagre regarding ancient Assam, explain these cults. We have already mentioned the cult of fertility in connection with the phallic megaliths. There is little to separate the cult of head-hunting from human sacrifice and even from cannibalism, all of which form part of the same fertility rite. Headhunting rests on a belief that the soul is located in the head; this belief is found the world over, as among many tribes of Assam. This is attributed to the lithic stage of human culture.² The prevalence of the practice in Assam from ancient until recent times, as in the Oceanic world and other regions, may be inferred from some ancient monuments of Assam, where carvings of human heads occur.³ The evidence of human sacrifice, which may have had its origin in the Mediterranean region⁴, is also reported from other regions of the world,⁵ as among the Aryans of India⁶ and various tribes of Assam like the

¹Risley, C.R.I., 1901, I, pp.350f; B.C.R., 1901, p.151; also Barnett, Antiquities of India, p.182.

²Hutton, Man in India, X, 207f; J.R.A.I., LVIII, 399f; J.R.A.S.B. (N.S.) XXVII, pp.231-239; C.R.I., 1931, I, I, 398f; Caste in India, 203f; Hodson, F.L., XX, 132-43; T.J. Westroff, F.L. XXXIV, p.235; Barkitt, Our Early Ancestors, p.101; Hose, Natural Man, p.145; C.W. Bishop, Antiquity, VII (No. 28).

³Chap. III, pp.105, 115

⁴Hutton, C.R.I., 1931, I, I, 392f.

⁵Crawley, E.R.E., VI, pp.840f; Lubbock, Prehistoric Times, p.176.

⁶Taylor, The Origin of the Aryans, 183f; Lang, Myth, etc. I, 267f; Wilson, J.R.A.S., XVI, 96f; GAFF, E.R.E., VI, 849-53.

Khāsis,¹ Nagās,² Lushāi-Kukis³, Gāros,⁴ Kachāris⁵, Rābhās,⁶ Chutiās,⁷ Ābars⁸ and others.⁹ Some of these references are, however, based on traditions. The Kālika Purāṇa mentions human sacrifice in the temple of Kāmākhyā and the Copper temple of Sadiyā.¹⁰ It was definitely contributed to by the Austric and Tibeto-Burmans, and formed the basis of Tāntrikism in Assam, which passed on into the Hindu and later Buddhist faiths. It is doubtful whether the practice was prevalent in the Buddhist-Vaiṣṇava temple at Hājo and other places¹¹, but it continued to prevail in Kāmākhyā until recent times. In any case there is little to differentiate between the head-hunters and the sacrificers of human beings. Animals and birds have now taken place of human beings at Kāmākhyā. It was in the name of religion that the worst horrors of the world were committed by the so-called primitives, and the civilised Hindus have inherited those rites with little or no difference at all.

The disposal of the dead or ancestor worship, associated with the megaliths of the tribes or the funeral rites of

¹Gurdon, Khasis, 98f.

²Hutton, J.R.A.I., LVIII, 399f; J.P.A.S.B., (N.S.) XXVII, 231f; Man, 1923, 177-78; Hodson, F.L., XX, 132f.

³Lewin, Wild Races, etc., 273f; Shakespeare, Lushai-Kukis, 84f.

⁴Playfair, Garos, pp.76f, 102f.

⁵Soppitt, Kachari tribe, etc., p.31.

⁶Pereira, A.C.R., 1911, III, I, 141f.

⁷Waddell, J.A.S.B., 1900, III, 42.

⁸Dunbar, Trontiers, 161f.

⁹Gait, J.A.S.B., LXVII, III, 56-65; E.T.D. Lambert, J.A.R.S., VI, 65-67.

¹⁰Kakati, Mother Goddess, 35f; Blockman, J.A.S.B., XLII, 240f.

¹¹P. Bhattacharya, J.A.R.S., VI, 53-55; K.I. Barua, J.A.R.S., VI, 4-11.

the Hindus, is also intimately connected with the cult of fertility and the theory of reincarnation. These cults must have been a legacy of the non-Aryans in Assam as elsewhere.¹ The evidence for the nature of the disposal of the dead in ancient Assam is lacking. It is likely that various methods, such as exposure, burial and burning were known, as in other parts of India.² It is possible that exposure and burial preceded burning,³ and both burial and burning were practiced even by the Aryans in ancient India.⁴ The practice of burning, particularly by the Khāsi-Syntāngs, Mikirs and others, is proved by some ancient megaliths of Khasi-Jaintia Hills and North Cachar, where human remains were found.⁵ These remains are associated with the cult of fertility and ancestor worship.⁶ Dalton⁷ noticed a few human bones and ashes in earthen pots among the ruins of Tezpur, of not later than the 12th century A.D.⁸ The practice of stone cist burial of the skull, as among the Konyaks⁹,

¹C.R.I., 1931, I, I, 401f; Caste in India, 209f.

²Crooke, E.R.E., IV, 479-84.

³Crooke, J.R.A.I., XXIX, 276-94; Aiyanger, Stone Age in India, 10f.

⁴Dixit, PreHistoric Civilisation of the Indus Valley, 36f; R.L. Mitra, Indo-Aryans, II, 138f; Keith, J.R.A.S., 1912, I, 470f; Macdonell, Vedic Myology, 165; Hillebrandt, E.R.E., IV, 475f.

⁵Chap. III, pp. 100, 104, 112f

⁶Ibid, pp. 112f

⁷J.A.S.B., XXIV, 12-18. The evidence is significant, as it proves the Hindu practice of the burning of the dead from early times.

⁸A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25, 94f.

⁹Hutton, M.A.S.B., XI, p.39; Man, 1927, 61-64; 1929, 201-202.

or of urn burial of the remains, as done by the Khāsis,¹ suggests the local Aryan Hindu practice of keeping the bones in an earthen pot at least for sometime after burning. The practice of keeping bones, as done by some Kukis,² or throwing these into water, as done by some Kachāris,³ or the burial of bones, as done by the Gāros⁴ and the Mikirs⁵, or digging graves in a rice-field or near water, as done by the Rengmas,⁶ has a parallel in the same Hindu practice; all these are associated with the cult of fertility and ancestor worship. The platform burial of the Āo Nagās⁷ may also suggest the Hindu practice of placing the dead on a raised funeral pyre at the time of burning. It is reasonably to be doubted whether practices of these kinds did not arise from those of the non-Aryans in Assam, as a contribution to the Hindu funeral rites as a whole,⁸ though it may be that some of them were developed by the Hindus on independent lines. Whatever the ideas associated with these practices,⁹ the custom of offering food to the dead, like the erection of

¹Gurdon, Khasis, pp.132f.

²Shakespeare, Lushai-Kukis, 84f; J.R.A.I., XXXIX, 382; Hodson, Ibid, XXXI, 304-5.

³Endle, Kacharis, 46f; Soppitt, Kachari Tribe, etc., 39f.

⁴Playfair, Garos, 105f.

⁵Stack and Lyall, Mikirs, 37f.

⁶C.R.I., 1931, I, I, 401.

⁷Mills, Ao Nagas, 277f.

⁸Cf. C.R.I., 1931, I, I, 401f; Caste in India, 209f.

⁹See Crooke, J.R.A.I., XXIX, 271-94; Briton, Myths of the New World, 257; Crooke, E.R.E., IV, 479f.

memorial stones by the Assam tribes, shows that besides the cult of fertility and ancestor worship, they had a belief in life after death, which is universal throughout the world.¹ The practice of giving offerings to the dead is shown by some ancient monoliths with cavities from Assam.² The Hindu Śrāddha ceremony in fact must have arisen from the same idea of feeding the dead,³ and it is likely that this, like the Pūjā as opposed to the Aryan homa, was a contribution made by non-Aryans in Assam as in other parts of India.⁴

The variety of taboos (restrictions) and rites guiding the life of an individual and the community among the tribes of Assam⁵ most probably lay at the root of the customary restrictions and rites of the Assamese Hindus of the plains. Much like the tribes, an Assamese household is put under a period of uncleanness during child-birth, death of a member, and the menstruation of a woman, when certain rules are followed by the individuals or the family concerned. Even today a person suffering from small-pox puts his household under a taboo, just like the tribes. The worship of the goddess Śītalā (small-pox) by the Hindus suggests the tribal practice of worshipping deities of illness. The worship of

¹Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, I, 426f, 479f; *Ibid*, II, 9f; M. Williams, *Brāhmanism and Hinduism*, 277.

²Chap. III, pp. 112f

³Crooke, *E.R.E.*, I, 450-54; *Caste in India*, 205f; Alger, *Future Life*, 81.

⁴S.K. Chatterjee, *Indo-Aryan and Hindi*, 131f.

⁵Hodson, *J.R.A.I.*, XXXVI, 92-103.

the snake goddess (Manasā) by the former has a parallel in the latter's worship of snakes. The stoppage of field work on certain days by the tribes compares well with the same Hindu restrictions on days like the ekādaśī or the saṁkrānti. In fact, most of the tribal agricultural rites lay at the foundation of the Assamese Hindu harvesting festival, Bihu, which in its origin was nothing but a solar cult and a cult of fertility, contributed by the non-Aryans, such as Austric, Alpine and Tibeto-Burman.

Most of the rites, which formed the basis of the Assamese religious life, therefore, other than the orthodox Brāhmāṇical ceremonies were non-Aryan. The various pīṭhas (holy places) of Assam had for the most part a non-Aryan origin. This will be substantiated when we deal with the origin of the worship of the deities like Śiva and Devī. Even the very basis of the theory of incarnation of Viṣṇu, traces of which we find from our period, was probably supplied by totemism, believed to have been introduced by the Proto-Austroloids.¹ Evidence of totemism is found among some tribes of Assam.² It has 'left its mark on the mythologies of the civilised races.'³ It is

¹C.R.I., 1931, I, I, 443f.

²Hutton, Caste in India, 225f; Gurdon, Khasis, 65f, 159f; Mills, Ao Nagas, 13f; Hutton, Sema Nagas, 85, 128; Angami Nagas, 91f, 117, 373f, 390-97; Emdle, Kacharis, 24f, 81f; Hodson, Naga Tribes, App. II; Meithei, 118; J.R.A.I., XXXI, 303; Trazer, Totemism and Exogamy, II, 327; Parry, Lakhers, 233; Dunbar, Frontiers, 208f; Furness, J.R.A.I., XXXII, 448; B.N. Datta, Man in India, XIII, 97f.

³Lang, Myth, etc., I, 60; Frazer, Totem and Taboo. p. 5.

found among the Vedic Aryans.¹ As stated by Hopkins, as a survival it 'may be suspected in the 'fish' and 'dog' peoples of the Dig Veda, as has been suggested by Oldenburg.'² The 'Matsyas', according to Macdonell and Keith were Aryans.³ The avatārs (incarnations) of the Hindus like the fish, tortoise, boar, etc., therefore, show the influence of the system, and the traces of the worship of animals and trees, personified as deities also point to the same conclusion.⁴

It is well known that Prāggyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa are associated with astronomical beliefs, magic and sorcery, omens and even the practice of lycanthropy, which is traced among some tribes.⁵ The worship of the heavenly bodies,⁶ and the myths of their origin, go back to a remote period, when man first had to depend upon sunshine, rain, etc. for his agriculture. It is associated with Egypt, Asia Minor, China and the Pacific region.⁷ The prevalence of the faith in Assam is proved not only by literature and temples dedicated to the sun, but also by the occurrence of heavenly bodies on some ancient monoliths, attributed to the Austric,

¹Mac. and Keith, Vedic Mythology, 153; Risley, Asiatic Quarterly, No. 3, 537.

²Religion of India, p.537.

³Vedic India, I, 378.

⁴Hopkins, Religion of India, pp.43D, 464; Macdonell, History of Sanskrit Literature, p.111; B.N. Datta, Man in India, XIII, pp.97f.

⁵Hutton, J.P.A.S.B., XXVII, 231-39; F.L. XXXIV, 234; J.R.A.I., I, 41-51; J.A. MacCulloch, E.R.E., VIII, 206-220.

⁶Primitive Culture, II, 248f.

⁷C.R.I., 1931, I, I, 392f; F.L. XXXVI, 113f; T.C. Das. J.D.L. XI, 87f; Quaritch Wales, The Making of Greater India, p.69.

Tibeto-Burman and other elements.¹ It is likely that the cult was developed by the Alpine-Iranians, coming into contact with the earlier elements. Similarly the belief in magic and mantras, associated with Kāmarūpa-Kāmākhyā, the survival of which may be found in a place like Māyang, may have been contributed by the various elements. All these have formed the basis of the Assamese Hindu culture. Like magic and sorcery, omens and divinations are but the 'relics of the savage mental state', though found among all, whether primitive or civilised.² Even today an Assamese, whether Hindu or non-Hindu, is very superstitious. The way in which a dream is believed to bear fruit or an omen is taken to indicate impending good or evil, or a snake bite is cured by charms, and a man possessed of a ghost is relieved by a medicineman, only justify the origin of the name of Kāmarūpa and its reputation as a land of magic or necromancy. In fact, every people is more or less superstitious, but the Assamese are more so, and it is natural that these black arts formed the ground work of Assamese religious life.

Before the introduction of the Aryan faith, therefore, the foundation for the evolution of various cults in Assam was laid by Austric, Alpine and Tibeto-Burman elements. It was natural that Brāhmanism had to be modified to a great extent by these cults, and, by a process of absorption, had to incorporate into its fold not only a number of non-

¹ Chap. III, pp.102f

² Lang, Myth, I, 122f; Hodson, Primitive Culture of India, pp.4f.

Aryan deities, but also to introduce various local myths and rituals. Even after the spread of Hinduism, the non-Aryan cults continued to survive and assimilate with each other, with the result that in a single religious centre like Hājo, we find a meeting place of all the Aryan and non-Aryan faiths. A detailed treatment of these will give us an idea of such assimilation.

2. The Ārya Dharma and Brāhmanical Rites:

The origin of the Brāhmanical religion goes back to the Vedas. It consisted of the worship of the elements of Nature, but later on it was developed into the worship of personified deities, in the midst of which, something like a doctrine of monotheism was worked out with many philosophical ideas.¹ How and in what form it was introduced in Kāmarūpa is not known; but some earlier references to the study of the Brāhmanical literature and the composition of Brāhmanical works both by the Brāhmaṇas and the rulers² indicate that the Aryan religion had gained some ground in the land at least by the 5th - 6th century A.D. The worship of Brāhmanical gods is proved both by records and remains. We have discussed elsewhere the question of the introduction of the Aryan culture on the basis of the Brāhmaṇas,³ the

¹ See Barnett, *The Heart of India*, p.19; *Antiquities of India*, p.4

² Section 3, pp. 616f, 625

³ *Sātapatha*, I, IV, I, 14-15; J. Eggeling, *S.B.E.XII*, Intro. pp. XLIf, 104f; Weber, *Indian Studies*, I, pp.17Of; *Aitareya*, 1,3,7; *Dikshitar*, *I.H.Q.*, XXI, pp.29-33.

the Gr̥hya Sūtras¹ and the Epics.² Even the Buddhist Nikāyas make an important mention of two Lauhitya Brāhmaṇas,³ indicating that as early as the Buddhist literature, the Brāhmaṇical religion had gained a strong hold in the Lauhitya region or Kāmarūpa.⁴ We have also shown reasons to believe that the first political dynasty, founded by Alpines chiefs, such as Naraka and Bhagadatta, came under the influence of the Aryans and that they were responsible for the establishment of high class Aryans in the land.⁵ The Arthasāstra,⁶ the Br̥hatsamhitā,⁷ based on the Parāsara tantra,⁸ the Raghuvamśa (IV, 81-84) and other works definitely point to the spread of the Aryan culture in ancient Assam. The Aryanised names Prāgiyotiṣa and Kāmarūpa, which find mention as early as the Brāhmaṇas and the Gr̥hyasūtras, also point to the same conclusion.⁹ Yuan Chwang's testimony that hundreds of Deva temples, evidently of Brāhmaṇical gods, existed in Kāmarūpa,¹⁰ indicates that during the 7th century A.D. Brāhmaṇical culture was widespread in the land. This is confirmed by the Nidhaupur grant, which states that Bhāskara spread the Ārya dharma by dispelling the darkness of the

¹Sāṅkhyāyana Gr̥hya Saṃgraha, II, 38.

²Rāmāyaṇa, Ādikāṇḍa, 35; Kiskindhyā Kāṇḍa, 42.

³Dīgha Nikāya, I, 224; Saṃyutta Nikāya, IV, 117.

⁴B.M. Barua, I.H.Q., XXIII, 203-5.

⁵Chap. III, pp. 168f

⁶(S.S.tr.) pp.82f.

⁷XIV, 6; XVI, I.

⁸Kern, Intro. to Br̥hatsamhitā, p.32.

⁹Chap. III, pp.167f

¹⁰Watters, II, pp.185f.

Kali age.

The spread of Aryan culture was largely due to the settlement of Brāhmaṇas in the land. We have already stated that it was the systematic policy of the rulers to create agrahāra villages for them. This royal patronage helped in the spread of Brāhmaṇism. The earliest known instance of this was in the reign of Bhūti-varman as early as the 6th century A.D., who donated lands in North Bengal to as many as 205 Brāhmaṇa families.¹ Similar grants were made by Bhāskara and his successors throughout the ancient period. 'It is remarkable,' writes P. Bhattacharya, 'that while in the neighbouring province of Gauḍa (Bengal) the alleged import by Ādiśūra of five Brāhmaṇas from Kanauj or the mythical creation of the saptasāti (700) Brāhmaṇas is not attributed to a period earlier than the eighth century A.D. there should be so many Brāhmaṇas found in a single village in Kāmarūpa two centuries earlier.'² The kingdom in his opinion 'appears to have been a refuge of the Brāhmaṇas of the neighbouring kingdoms - that most of the Brāhmaṇa families in the neighbouring province of (modern) Bengal are the descendants of those Brāhmaṇas from Kāmarūpa.'³ This he writes on the basis of the donees of the Nidhanpur grant. The land was donated in Bengal, not in Kāmarūpa proper, and we have reasons to believe that most of these

¹The last Plate.

²E.I., XIX, p.116.

³Ibid, p.246.

Brāhmaṇas belonged to a stock of the Alpines.¹ It may be, as held by Bhattacharya that there were Brāhmaṇas in Kāmarūpa as early as the 6th century A.D. or even earlier, but it is unlikely that most of the modern Brāhmaṇas of Bengal are the descendants of Kāmarūpa Brāhmaṇas. Both pure and Alpine Brāhmaṇas might have settled in North Bengal as in Kāmarūpa almost about the same period. Coming to Kāmarūpa again, epigraphs make other references to the creation of agrahāras and the settlement of Brāhmaṇas of various gotras.² The Khanāmukhi grant states that Dharmapāla made a gift of land to a Brāhmaṇa from Madhyadeśa.³ Similar donation was made by Jayapāla to Prahāsa.⁴

The spread of the Brāhmaṇical culture is also proved by the fact that a number of noted Brāhmaṇa scholars flourished in Kāmarūpa and some of them were honoured with land grants by contemporary rulers. We have already stated that a Brāhmaṇa scholar from Kāmarūpa went to Nālandā to engage in a controversy with the Buddhist scholars there.⁵ The grant of the Gaṅga King Avantivarman (A.D. 922) proves that he granted lands to Viṣṇusomācārya from Kāmarūpa.⁶ Another grant of the Paramāra King Vākpati Rāja (A.D. 981)

¹ Chap. III, pp. 158 f

² Tezpur grant, V.30; Nowgong grant, V.26; Bargāon grant, V.16; Suālkuchi grant, V.16; Gauhāti grant, V.21; Guakuchi grant, V.21; Subhāṅkarapātaka grant, V.17; Puṣpabhadra grant, V.12.

³ J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.113f.

⁴ Silimpur grant, V.22.

⁵ Life, pp.161f.

⁶ E.I., XXVI, pp.62-68.

proves that he granted lands to Vāmanasvāmī of Kāmarūpa.¹ We have also shown that noted scholars like Viṣākhadatta² and Kumāritabhaṭṭa³ may have belonged to Kāmarūpa.⁴ These are some of the instances to prove that Brāhmaṇical culture and their religion had already gained some ground in the land.

The spread of the religion is revealed by a number of yajñas and rituals, associated with the orthodox Brāhmaṇical Hinduism, performed by the rulers, Brāhmaṇas and other classes. We have already referred to the study of the Vedas, which constitutes one of the five great sacrifices.⁵ Puṣyavarman was equal to Indra in sacrifices.⁶ Mahendra performed many yajñas,⁷ and 'was the repository of all sacrificial rites.'⁸ Balavarman performed many liberal sacrifices.⁹ Indrapāla performed many yajñas and was the foremost among all who performed religious ceremonies.¹⁰ There were utterances of prayers and hymns in temples.¹¹ Ratnapāla 'studded the earth with white-washed temples - the sacrificial courtyards with immolating posts, the sky with the smoke of burnt

¹E.I. XXIII, p.109.

²J.C. Ghosh, J.P.A.S.B. (N.S.) XXVI, pp.244f.

³C.N.K. Aiyar, Śaṅkarācārya - His Life and Time, p.26.

⁴Section 3, p.23.

⁵Barnett, Antiquities of India, pp.145f.

⁶Doobi grant, V.5

⁷Ibid, V.19.

⁸Nidhanpur grant, V.12.

⁹Doobi grant, V.12.

¹⁰Śubhāṅkarapātaka grant, V.7.

¹¹Tezpur grant, V.8.

offerings -¹. The Puspabhadra grant states that the Brāhmaṇa Madhusudana hailed from Khyātipali which was inhabited by religious Brāhmaṇas. In that village the smoke of sacrifices overcast the sky and the sound caused by the reciting of the Vedas there was like the sound of ripples from the junction of the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā.

The Brāhmaṇas practised the sixfold duties of Yajana, yājana, adhyāpanā, adhyayana, dāna and pratigraha.² Bharata, the father of the donee of the Śubhaṅ-Karapāṭaka grant was skilled in the six duties, enjoined for Brāhmaṇas.³ The Agnihotra sacrifice, one of the Śrauta rites,⁴ required to be performed by the Brāhmaṇas throughout their life, was performed by Devadatta's son.⁵ The Agniṣṭoma, one of the seven Soma sacrifices,⁶ was performed by a Brāhmaṇa donee of the Khonāmukhi grant.⁷ Devadhara as an adhvaryu priest performed the Vaitānika rites (relating to three sacrificial fires) properly and without confusion.⁸ Epigraphs also prove that the rulers performed the abhiṣeka, Aśvamedha and other sacrifices in the manner prescribed by the texts.⁹

Both literature and epigraphs further prove the performance of other orthodox rites, such as Tapas,¹⁰ Yapa, Tīrtha,

¹Gauhati grant, V.10.

²Bargāon grant.

³E.H.K., p.337.

⁴History of Dharmasāstra, I, II, pp.998-1,008.

⁵Bargāon grant, V.17.

⁶History of Dharmasāstra, I, II, pp.1133-1203.

⁷J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.113f.

⁸Nowgong grant, V.27.

⁹Chap. IV, Section 5, pp. 435f

¹⁰Nowgong grant, V.26.

Snāna and Dāna, all of which formed an important part of the life of a Brāhmaṇa. These rites were practised also by rulers. Balavarman III 'having bravely endured the rite of (religious suicide through) starvation became absorbed into the light of the Divine Being.'¹ The Brahmanas also practised sandhyā and yapa thrice daily according to the injunctions of the sāstras.² Tīrthas were associated both with temples and rivers. It was considered meritorious to go on pilgrimage to sacred places.³ The Yoginī Tantra classifies the tīrthas into vīthi, upavīthi, pīṭha, upapīṭha, siddhapīṭha, mahāpīṭha, Brahmapīṭha, Viṣṇupīṭha and Rudrapīṭha. Most of the tīrthas were situated either on the banks of rivers or on hill tops. Both the Kālikā P. and the Yoginī Tantra mention a number of them, such as Kāmākhyā, Hayagrīva, Aśvakraṇta, Urvaśī, Maṇikarneśvara, Siddhesvarī, Apunarbhava, Pāṇḍunāṭha, etc. There were besides the Kāmapīṭha of the tantras and Hemapīṭha in Kāmarūpa of the Raghuvamśa.⁴ The existing evidence proves that most of them are associated rather with Tāntrik-Buddhism than with orthodox Brāhmaṇism, and in some cases we find an admixture of both the faiths.

In the Mahābhārata we find Karatoyā, Prabhāsa, Puṣkara, Naimiṣa and others among the sacred streams. The Purāṇas mention the Lauhitya shrine (Parasurāmakūṇḍa)⁵. The Kālikā Purāṇa states that mere bath in the Lauhitya

¹ Ibid, V.17.

² Puṣpabhadra grant, VII.

³ Kamauli grant. (E.I. II, pp.247f).

⁴ IV, 84.

⁵ Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa.

leads to emancipation: (Lauhitya-toye yah snāti sa kaivalyam avāpnuyāt).¹ The Yoginī Tantra states that it purifies all sins: (Lohitya - nāma tattīrtham snānān naśyati pātakam)². Other rivers were also considered sacred.³ Epigraphs mention ritual baths on different occasions; the Nowgong grant, for instance, refers to Kriyāngasnāna.⁴

The practice of dāna by rulers is proved by epigraphs. Almost all of them made donation of lands. The gift of land was considered meritorious, as the donor thereby was believed to obtain rebirth in heaven.⁵ Kings also made special gift of lands, houses and other provisions to Brāhmaṇa youths after the completion of their period of education (samāvartana) in the gurugrhas.⁶ Aparārka quotes from the Kālikā P. in dealing with this naivesīkadāna. By such provisions the donor was believed to enjoy all religious merits, and he lived in heaven in quiet happiness. The Kamauli grant records 'that the gifts and donations to Brāhmaṇas' were meritorious.'⁷ The grant of Vallabhadēva makes an important reference to this religious merit, attached to such donations, and sets an example for others to follow by the erection of an alms house (bhaktasālā).⁸

Certain religious gifts were known as great gifts

183,38.

2II, 6-9.

3Ibid, I, 11-24.

4V.32; Subhāṅkarapāṭaka grant, V.11.

5Nidhanpur grant, V.27.

6Nowgong grant, V.31.

7V.20.

8V.27.

(māhādāna).¹ Some Purāṇas mention sixteen kinds, of which tulāpuruṣa is the most important.² The Tezpur grant records that Vanamāla made gifts of lands, houses, elephants, maids, gold, etc., to the deserving.³ We have stated in another place that Jayapāla made a tulāpuruṣa gift of 900 gold coins and lands, yielding an income of 1,000 coins to the Brāhmaṇa Prahāsa.⁴ Hemādri in Dānakhaṇḍa deals with the māhādāna, accompanied by sacrifices and other gifts to Brāhmaṇas.⁵ All gifts were made according to Hindu texts, and particularly after snāna,⁶ and on auspicious days. The Nowgong grant was made on the day of Caitra-Samkrānti.⁷ The Bargāon grant was issued on the day of Viṣṇupadi samkrānti.⁸ The Kamauli grant was made on the ekādaśī day of Viṣṇuvati in Vaiśāka.⁹ The grant of Vallabhadeva was made on an auspicious moment of the sun's movement.¹⁰ It is noteworthy that samkrānti days have special significance among the Assamese, and unlike other parts of India, these are observed as Bihu days.

The foregoing references show that orthodox Brāhmaṇism made a stronghold in Kāmarūpa, though some of the rituals underwent recognisable changes through the process of time, coming into contact with the non-Aryan cults, which predominated

¹Agni Purāṇa, 209, 23-24.

²Ibid, 210; Matsya P, 274-289.

³v.29.

⁴E. I., XIII, pp.289f.

⁵M.A.S.B., V, p.105.

⁶Nowgong grant, V.32.

⁷K.S. p.89. (f.n.7).

⁸v.20.

⁹E. I., II, pp.347f.

¹⁰v.16.

in the land. This was quite natural as the agrahāra settlements were situated mostly among the non-Aryans.¹

3. Buddhism:

It is generally believed, for instance by B.K. Barua,² that Buddhism was not introduced into Kāmarūpa, and there are few or no indigenous images of the Buddha. But we shall show that his contentions are not borne out by actual facts. Das Gupta contends that the rulers of Kāmarūpa did not patronise Buddhism, and Kāmarūpa, though lying close to Bengal, remained free from the influence of the faith.³ Majumdar holds the same view and contends that 'Kāmarūpa retained the Brāhmaṇical religion to the last.'⁴ Bhattasali opines that up till the time of Yuan Chwang there was no trace of Buddhism in Assam which remained as the last stronghold of the Brāhmaṇical religion.⁵ We have examined the nature of the spread of Brāhmaṇism in the land and have tried to show that the religious life of the people was fundamentally based on pre-Aryan or non-Aryan cults. As regards Buddhism we shall show that long before Yuan Chwang's visit there were traces of the faith in the land. P. Bhattacharya's contention is more sweeping, for he asserts that neither Buddhism nor Vajrayāna prevailed in Kāmarūpa, and that the grants of the period indicate only a change of faith from

¹Political History, Sections. 2, 3, 4.

²Cultural History of Assam, I, p.161; M.M.D.V. Poddar C. Vol., 1950, p.26.

³I.H.Q., XXVI, pp.333f.

⁴Ancient India, pp.270-71.

⁵I.H.Q., XXII, p.252.

Śaivism to Vaiṣṇavism.¹ This has been rightly criticised by A. Roy, who holds that Buddhism flourished both in Kāmarūpa and Śrīhaṭṭa.² Gait, though he finds 'no trace of this religion in the old records and inscriptions,'³ points out on the contrary that Buddhism was widespread in Assam 'at some previous period of its history.' This is based on the remains of Buddhist temples throughout Assam.⁴ As L.W. Shakespeare rightly points out, the faith prevailed in the land even before Hinduism and many old temples might have been built on the old Buddhist sites.⁵ There is, however, no reason to believe that Bhagadatta's family was Buddhist.⁶ In any case, 'if Tārānātha is to be believed, Buddhism existed in that country as early as Aśvaghōṣa.⁷ Before he took up the Buddhist faith he is said to have visited as far as Kāmarūpa and defeated his Buddhist opponents there.'⁸

An examination of the materials will show that the faith prevailed in Kāmarūpa long before Yuan Chwang's visit. The controversy arose because Kāmarūpa is not mentioned in early Buddhist works and in the inscriptions of Aśoka; nor is it likely that the land was included within his empire.⁹ This is proved by the absence of any Aśokan monument. But we have

¹J.A.R.S., 1936, pp.115f.

²J.A.R.S., IV, pp.18-22.

³History of Assam, p.26.

⁴A.C.R., 1891; also Hunter, Statistical Account of Assam, I, p.39; Butler, Sketch of Assam, p.134.

⁵History of Upper Assam, etc., pp.71f.

⁶B. Powell, Indian Village Community, pp.134f; C.R., 1868, pp.77-101

⁷He flourished during the 2nd century A.D. (History of Bengal, Ip377)

⁸J.C. Ghosh, J.A.R.S., IV, pp.47-48; I.C., III, p.133.

⁹Majumdar, Ancient India, pp.271-72.

noted that as early as the Nikāyas, the Lauhitya (Pāli-Lohicca) was known to the people of Mid-India as the name of the country.¹ The texts (Dīgha Nikāya, I, 224; Saṃyutta Nikāya, IV, 117) preserve the tradition of two Lauhitya Brāhmaṇas, one figuring as the head of a Vedic college (Mahāsālā) at the village of Śālāvati in Kosāla, which was maintained on a royal fief, and the other as residing in the kingdom of Avanti. The one was a believer in the wisdom of keeping his spiritual lore secret, and the other was opposed to the Śramaṇa teachers and openly abused them. The evidence proves that the Kāmarūpa Brāhmaṇas from the Lauhitya region had contact with the Buddhist Śramaṇas, though this does not definitely point to the early introduction of the latter faith.

There are traditions in Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan and Assam that the Buddha died in Kāmarūpa. On the basis of this Waddell writes that the nirvāṇa took place in west Assam in Suālkuchi near the Buddhist temple of Hājo². This is confirmed by the Hungarian traveller Csomade Köros.³ Shakespeare, on the basis of these traditions, writes that not only the Buddha died in Kāmarūpa, but also that the Second Synod of the Buddhists was held there and that Assam was known to the Buddhists by another name, 'which goes to prove that this religion must in those far-off days have had a certain

¹B.M. Barua, I.H.Q., XXIII, p.203.

²Buddhism of Tibet, pp.307f; K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S., II, pp.39f.

³A. Res., XX, p.295.

amount of hold on the country reaching as far as the Sadiyā tract where Major Hannay states, are to be found ruins of temples of undoubted Buddhist origin.¹ The tradition is unfounded, for it is established that the Buddha died in Kuśinagara² in modern Gorakhpur, where an image of the master was found in a reclining posture. So the nirvāṇa did not take place in Assam; but the Tibetan tradition may indicate that the land, known by another name, was associated with the faith from early times. It is likely that some relics of the Buddha were carried to Assam and enshrined in or near Gauhāti.

According to other traditions, the older shrine at Hājo was a great Chaitya, erected over the cremated relics of the Buddha's body. The main image of the shrine, called Mādhava, is still visited by Tibetan Lamas, who take it as Mahāmuṇi; the minor images are also known to them by other names. The rock, which is pointed out by the Buddhists as the cremation ground of the Buddha, and where there is the figure of a four-armed Viṣṇu, bears a Tibetan inscription with the famous Buddhist mantra: 'Om maṇi padme hum'. The liṅgayoni symbols of the Kedārnātha are also associated with the Buddha by the Tibetan and Bhutanese pilgrims. Tārānātha mentions a great Chaitya as being situated in Kāmarūpa; but Waddell believes that any chaitya erected there must be subsequent to the 7th century A.D.³ Whatever its original significance, Hājo

¹History of Upper Assam, etc., pp.73f; C.R., 1867, pp.509-532.

²Cunningham, Ar. S. Rep., I, XVIII, XXII; W. Hoey, J.A.S.B., 1900, I, pp.74f; 1901, pp.29f.

³Waddell, pp.307f.

attained a great celebrity in Maḥāyāna Buddhism, and might have contained some relics of the Buddha. In fact, the place became a centre of many cults, such as those of Sūrya, Hayagrīva Mādhava, the Buddha and others, and is visited even today by people of all faiths. The place subsequently became a great centre of Tāntrik-Buddhism, like Kāmākhyā, where also, according to traditions, stood a Buddhist shrine.¹

Kalhaṇa states that Amṛta-prabhā (the daughter of a Kāmarūpa King of probably the 5th century A.D.) wife of Meghavāhana of Kāśmīra brought with her a Tibetan Buddhist guru of her father, called Stunpā, who built a viḥāra in Kāśmīra (Lo Stoupā).² This monastery was also noticed by Ou Kung. Stein points out that this is based on a genuine foundation.³ The evidence not only points to cultural relations between Kāmarūpa, Tibet and Kāśmīra, but also gives reasons to believe that about that time Buddhism was prevalent in Kāmarūpa and was patronised by its rulers.⁴

The accounts of Yuan Chwang open a new chapter in the religious history of Kāmarūpa. The invitation sent by Bhāskara to Śīlabhadra, asking him to send the pilgrim to Kāmarūpa discloses that though he had 'not yet learnt the converting power residing in the law of Buddha,' he was overjoyed that this would be done through the pilgrim.

Śīlabhadra at last requested the pilgrim to go to Kāmarūpa,

¹M. Neog, I.H.Q., XXVII, pp.144f.

²Rājataranṅiṇī, III, 9-10.

³Kalhaṇa's Rājataranṅiṇī, I, pp.81-82.

⁴It is believed that the faith was carried to Burma and China through Assam (Bagchi, India and China, pp.7f).

saying that Bhāskara was earnest about the faith and 'within his territories the law of Buddha has not widely extended.'¹ The evidence indicates that Bhāskara had a deep respect for the faith and the pilgrim, and that the faith had at least some hold in the land. When Harṣa asked Bhāskara to send back the pilgrim, the latter refused in the beginning, but subsequently he agreed to accompany the pilgrim in his pilgrimage to Prayāga and Kanauj.² Bhāskara's active participation in the ceremonies³ and his association with the pilgrim and Harṣa make it clear that he had a special attachment for the faith. The prevalence of Buddhism also becomes clear from the pilgrim's accounts, who states that 'whatever Buddhists there were in it (Kāmarūpa), performed their acts of devotion secretly.'⁴ Bhāskara's devotion to the faith becomes evident from his last request to the pilgrim to stay in his kingdom: 'If the Master is able to dwell in my dominions - I will undertake to found one hundred monasteries on the Master's behalf.'⁵ It is also indicated by his help to the Wang Heuentse mission against Arjuna,⁶ and the reception of two Chinese envoys, Li-Yi-Piao and Wang-Hinan-Tse, through whom Bhāskara asked for a portrait of Lao Tsen and a sanskr̥t translation of Tao-to-king.⁷ Devavarman expressed

¹Life, pp.165f; Watters I, p.348.

²Ibid.

³Life, pp.177-78, 185f; Beal, I, p.215.

⁴Watters, II, pp.185f; Beal, II, 195f.

⁵Life, pp.187f.

⁶J.A.S.B., VI, p.69; I.A. IX, p.14.

⁷Bagchi, India and China, pp.200f.

his desire to bestow the Mrgasikhāvana agrahāra near Nālandā to the priests from China,¹ evidently out of his respect for the faith.

Tārānātha describes how Dhītika, who succeeded Upagupta to teachership, became responsible for the spread of Buddhism in Kāmarūpa.² He further states that Aśvabhava preached the Mahāyāna cult in the land.³ The Taṅgyur contains the Tibetan translation of a tract, entitled, 'dhyānasad-dharma-vyavasthāna' by Avadhūtipāda, identified with Ratniśītā of Kāmarūpa.⁴ The Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa states that later Buddhism was effective in Hārikela, Karmaraṅga and Kāmarūpa. It is noticeable that King Harṣadeva finds mentions in that work. During the rule of the Śālastambha line there were Buddhist scholars in Kāmarūpa, such as Abhinavagupta, to defeat whom Śaṅkarācārya (A.D. 900) came to Kāmarūpa.⁵ The evidence proves that during that time the faith had considerable hold in the land.⁶ Mādhavācārya in his 'Śaṅkaravijaya'⁷ states that Kumārila was born to defeat the Buddhists and clear the path for Śaṅkarācārya to re-establish Brāhmaṇism; Buddhist scholars from Kāmarūpa found an ardent supporter in Sudhanvan, a king of the Deccan in whose country they are said to have

¹I.A., 1881, 109-11, 192-93; J.R.A.S., 1881, pp.558-72.

²I.H.Q., V, p.720.

³History of Buddhism, p.199.

⁴N.N. Dasgupta, I.H.Q., XXVI, p.334.

⁵C.N.K. Aiyar, Śaṅkarācārya - His Life and Time, p.56.

⁶See E.H.K., pp.155, 160.

⁷Chap. I, 52, 55.

sustained a defeat from Kumāṛila, after which the king ordered the killing of all Buddhists.¹ The story is taken to be fictitious.² It is, however, wrong to hold, as done by P. Bhattacharya³ that Śaṅkarācārya completely swept Buddhism out of India.⁴ Kāmarūpa we know, became a stronghold of later Buddhism and, in fact, no sharp distinction remained between the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist gods. In the Tāntrik-Buddhist days Kāmarūpa was one of the important pīṭhas in Eastern India and the faith was patronised by the Pāla rulers of Assam.⁵ It became associated with the noted siddhas. It is, therefore, wrong to conclude with Das Gupta that during the times of Śālastambha and Brahmapāla we do not 'come across any evidence as to any established seat of Buddhistic learning and culture anywhere in Kāmarūpa.' He further wrongly states that 'neither epigraphy nor literature gives us any information of the Buddhist celebrities of the land.'⁶ But as we shall see, the existing materials prove on the contrary that both Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna prevailed in the land and many siddhas hailed from the place.

The prevalence of the faith is confirmed by epigraphy. The word 'dharma' occurs in the Nidhanpur grant and the

¹Ibid, 93; VII, 101.

²Aiyar, The Three Great Ācāryas - Śaṅkarācārya, p.30.

³J.A.R.S., III, pp.115f.

⁴Nath, J.A.R.S., IV, pp.31-39.

⁵See S.C. Goswami, I.H.Q., III, pp.747f.

⁶I.H.Q., XXVI, 333-36.

Puṣpabhadra grant. The former states thus: 'Victorious is (also) Dharma, the sole friend of the creation - whose form is the good of others, unseen (yet) whose existence is inferred from the results.'¹ Some writers believe that the word 'dharma' refers to Buddhism.² P. Bhattacharya asserts that Bhāskara adopted the faith in order to gain popularity in Karnaśuvarṇa.³ But the reference here is hardly to any faith; nor does the passage contain an invocation of Śiva, as suggested by Das Gupta.⁴ The Puṣpabhadra grant referring to the glory of dharma states thus: 'O, future Kings, listen to this prayer of Dharmapāla. The glory of sovereignty is uncertain like the flash of lightning and is, therefore, to be shunned, but 'dharma', the root of eternal bliss, is never to be given up.'⁵ This probably indicates the influence of Vajrayāna upon Dharmapāla.⁶ The grant of Indrapāla mentions a śāsana connected with 'Tathāgata.'⁷ Das Gupta's explanation of the word as referring to a temple of the sun,⁸ is wrong. It is likely that near the land donated by the King existed a Buddhist chaitya over some relics of the Buddha, for which an endowment was formerly made.⁹ In the Khonāmukhi grant, Bharata is compared with Śākya (Buddha).

¹Nidhanpur grant, V.3.

²E.H.K., 151-52.

³E.I., XII, 71-72.

⁴I.H.Q., XXVI, 333-36.

⁵V.7.

⁶E.H.K. ? 152.

⁷Gauhāti grant.

⁸I.H.Q., XXVI, 333f.

⁹E.H.K. ? p.152.

The reference to the death of Vanamāla by religious suicide,¹ and the abdication of Jayamāla in favour of his son, as he considered this world to be vain and human life as a water drop,² may indicate that they had come under the influence of later Buddhism; because during this period (A.D. 900) the faith had already gained some ground in the land.

The prevalence of the faith is also supported by the existing ruins of temples and icons of the Buddha. Among the remains, we find traces of Buddhist temples not only in Hājo, but also at Sīngri and in Tezpur.³ It is likely that some Hindu temples were built on the sites of and with the materials of old Buddhist shrines. Besides a few Buddhist icons,⁴ we have other remains in Goālpārā. One fragment of carved stone from Dekdhozā shows the engraving of a lotus or dharmacakra of the Buddhists. A slab of stone from Pañcaratna in Gōālpārā shows similar engraving of a dharmacakra. The remains from Goālpārā indicate that Vajrayāna Buddhist temples existed there.⁵ There are besides, many others belonging to the Tāntrik-Buddhist period.⁶

4. The Solar cult: Sun worship in Assam is of great antiquity. We have examined the possibility of the

¹Nowgong grant, V.17.

²Ibid, VV. 22-23.

³Dalton, J.A.S.B., XXIV, pp.10f.

⁴See Section 5 pp. 30-31

⁵S. Katakī, J.A.R.S., April, 1934.

⁶Section 5, 31

introduction of Alpine-Iranian or even Magian culture in Prāggyotiṣa,¹ who were largely responsible for the growth of the cult and planetary worship in the land. The antiquity of the cult is indicated by the very name Prāggyotiṣa, which finds mention as early as the Gr̥hysūtras and the Epics,² and others like Navagraha and the Sūryapāhār. The prevalence of the cult is also proved by a number of existing manuscripts of the period like the one, 'Kāmarūpa - Nibandhanīya Kāṇḍa-sādhyā' of the 6th - 7th century A.D.³ The earliest reference to Prāggyotiṣa as a centre of worship is found in the Gr̥hyasūtras. The Sāṅkhyāyana Gr̥hyasaṃgraha states that a student should visit the sacred country of Prāggyotiṣa before sunrise: (tato niṣkrāmya Prāggyotiṣaṃ punyadeśaṃ upāgāmya anudita āditye).⁴ Here Prāggyotiṣa is the same as the land of sunrise (Udayācala) of the Mārkaṇḍeya P. (58). Udayācala was another name of Prāggyotiṣa - Kāmarūpa, where, according to the same purāṇa (109), stood a temple of the sun. The same reference is found in the Bṛhat-saṃhitā, based on the geography of the Parāśara Tantra⁵ of the first century A.D.⁶ The evidence proves that Prāggyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa attained celebrity of its sun worship from early times.⁷ The Varāha

¹Chap. III, pp. 159f

²Chap. II, pp. 33f

³Section 3, pp. 606, 620.

⁴II, 38 (Benares Sans. Series).

⁵Kern, Intro. to Bṛhatsaṃhitā, 32.

⁶H.C. Chakraborty, Studies in Kāmasūtra, p.72.

⁷J.C. Ghosh, J.A.R.S., V, pp.117-18.

P. (177, 31f) mentions Udayācala, Kālapriya and Mūlasthāna in connection with solar worship. This Udayācala was another name of Udayādri of Somadeva's Kathāsaritsāgara and both the names stand for Prāgjyotiṣa.¹

The Mārkaṇḍeya P. (66), while relating the solar cult in Kamarupa, states that Svarocis gave to his son Vijaya a noble city on a hill in Kāmarūpa. In relating the story of the restoration of youth to the King Rājyavardhana, the purāṇa (109) states how the Brāhmaṇas of his kingdom went to Guruviśāla in Kāmarūpa where stood a temple of the sun and the deity was worshipped by them and thereby they had their desire fulfilled. On the basis of this and other evidence it is clear that the solar cult had a great hold in Kāmarūpa, perhaps through Iranian - Magian influence.² The Kālikā P., referring to the cult writes that the Śrī Sūrya mountain in Goālpārā was the perpetual abode of the sun: (Yatra deva ādityaḥ satataṃ sthitaḥ)³. The Purāṇa also mentions the Citrasāila where the nine planets (Navagrahas) were propitiated,⁴ We have already stated, as described by Tārānātha, who is of opinion that the people of Kāmarūpa were formerly worshippers of the sun prior to the introduction of Buddhism by Dhītika, who had to convert the people under the pretence that he was a follower of

¹R.C. Hazra's location of Udayācala-Udayādri in Orissa (Bhāratīya Vidyā, IV, 212-16) is wrong.

²Pargiter (Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa); K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S., V, pp.8-14.

³Chaps. 76f.

⁴Ibid.

the solar cult.¹ The Ādicarita (Śaṅkaradeva)² gives a description of the prevalence of the cult during the Vaiṣṇava period.

There is mention of the deity in epigraphs, though no definite invocation is found. In the Gauhāti grant occurs the expression āditya-bhaṭṭāraka, which has been explained by Hoernle as the sun god.³

The prevalence of the cult is proved by the existing remains of temples dedicated to the sun, and many icons of the deity, found in Dah Parvatīā, Gahpur, Tezpur, Pāṇḍu, Sadiyā, Śukreśvara, Sūrya-Pāhār and other places of the province.⁴ R.D. Banerji noticed a beautiful figure of the deity in a panel from the ruins at Tezpur, and, on the basis of other remains in the area, he rightly concluded that a gigantic Sūrya temple existed there.⁵

The solar cult and fire worship in Assam later on came to be divested of their original meaning, and were no longer associated with the Viṣṇu cult. In some form or other sun worship may be noticed even today not only in the harvesting rites of the tribes, but also among the people of the plains, particularly in their national festival 'Bihu', associated both with the fire cult and harvesting rites. It is significant that under the influence of Vaiṣṇavism, these

¹History of Buddhism, p.199; I.H.Q., V, p.720.

²Ādicarita (Published by M.N. Bhattacharya)

³J.A.S.B., LVI, I, pp.113f.

⁴Section 5, ...

⁵A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25, pp.94f.

festivals were given more national character than they had before and became a part and parcel of Assamese Vaiṣṇavism, the treatment of which faith in Assam will show how intimately it is connected with the solar cult and fire worship.

5. Vaiṣṇavism: The origin of the cult in Assam is uncertain, and the antiquity of the origin of Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa in India is disputed. Some ascribe the origin of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa to the Mediterranean - Dravidian element¹ and even to the stone age,² while others point to their non-Brāhmaṇic or non-Vedic origin.³ Those who support the Dravidian origin of Vaiṣṇavism find support in the contention that the cult of bhakti belongs to that element.⁴ Hopkins deals with the evolution of Vaiṣṇavism through successive stages, by which Viṣṇu came to be identified with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa.⁵ In any case the worship of Viṣṇu is as old as the Rig Veda, where she is called one of the Ādityas, and Grierson rightly holds that the Bhāgavata doctrine was a development of the sun worship, common to both the Iranians and Indians.⁶ But Viṣṇu was only a minor god during that period and Vaiṣṇavism as a faith is not found until the Mahābhārata. There is in fact

¹Pre Aryan and Pre Dravidian in India, p.8; Slater, Dravidian elements in Indian Culture; C.R.I., 1931, I, I.

²Aiyanger, Stone Age in India, pp.48f.

³Chanda, Indo-Aryans, pp.99f.

⁴Camb. History of India, I, pp.42f; Barnett, Antiquities, pp.4f; A.C. Das, Rig Vedic Culture, pp.157f.

⁵J.R.A.S., 1905, 385-86; Religion of India, p.431.

⁶I.A., 1908, p.253; Wilson, Intro. to the Rig Veda Samhitā, p.20.

little connection between the cult of Viṣṇu of the Vedas and the bhakti cult or true Vaiṣṇavism of later times.¹ The name Vāsudeva finds mention in later Vedic literature and in pāṇini as a name of Viṣṇu; the earliest reference to the Bhāgavatas is found in the Brahma Sūtras.² The name Kṛṣṇa is mentioned in the Chhāndogya Upaniṣad (III, 17, 6). The Vṛṣṇi family to which he belonged is mentioned in the Brāhmaṇas.³ All these prove the historical character of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, who flourished at the time of the Kuru-Pāṇḍavas, mentioned also in the Brāhmaṇical literature.⁴ Even Buddhist works like the Avadānaśataka mention Nara-Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu.⁵ The antiquity of the cult of Śaṅkaraṣaṇa-Vāsudeva is also proved by epigraphs from Besnāgar and Nānāghāt of 2nd and 1st century B.C. respectively.⁶ In any case, the divine character given to Kṛṣṇa was a later development; Vāsudeva had little connection with Viṣṇu of the Vedas and the origin of sectarian Vaiṣṇavism cannot be traced to the Viṣṇu cult of the Vedas.⁷ But, with the incorporation of the idea of incarnation into the system, the two cults became identified under the name of Vaiṣṇavism, and with the passage of time,

¹Ray Chaudhuri, Materials for the study of Early History of the Vaiṣṇava sect, pp.6f, 17f; R.G. Bhandarkar, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc., pp.33f.

²Ray Chaudhuri, pp.6f, 17f; Bhandarkar, pp.12-13.

³Ray Chaudhuri, pp.39f.

⁴Chanda, pp.99f.

⁵Avadāna-Śataka, I, 37.

⁶Lüder's List of Brāhmi Ins. Nos. 6, 669.

⁷Ray Chaudhuri, pp.6f, 17f; Bhandarkar, pp.33f; Chanda, Indo-Aryans, pp.99-111.

Viṣṇu of the Vedic period, Nārāyaṇa of the Pañcarātras, Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa of the Satvats and Gopāla of the Ābhiras came to be worshipped under the unified name of Viṣṇu, or his different manifestations.

Vaiṣṇavism was established in Assam at a time when Brāhmanical culture made considerable progress, and, as the evidence shows, the worship of both Viṣṇu and his incarnations was prevalent in the land from early times. The association of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa with Prāgjyotiṣa is well-known. In the Mahābhārata Viṣṇu is called Prāgjyotiṣa-Jyestha¹. The Kālikā purāṇa mentions the first incarnation of Viṣṇu, who was worshipped in the region of the Matsyadhvaja mount to the east of Maṇikūṭa; Mādhava in the form of Bhairava named Pāṇḍumātha, and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa were worshipped in the Dikkaravāsini region. The same work mentions that Viṣṇu was worshipped in his Boar incarnation in the Cūtra-vaha mount, east of Pāṇḍu.² The mode of worship given in the work is almost similar to the rules laid down in the Pañcarātra Saṃhitās.³ The Varāha P. states that in the Himalayas there was a temple of Kokāmukhasvāmin, the abode of Viṣṇu, which contained his best shrine and image. The Brahma P. (114-15) states that Naraka, the lord of Prāgjyotiṣa was born in the Kokāmukhatīrtha.⁴ In fact, the

¹Śānti P., 348.

²Chaps. 76f.

³Kakati, Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā, pp.74-75.

⁴Chap. 140, VV.72, 75.

story of the birth of Nāraka through the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu, as given in the Viṣṇu P. (Bk. I, V) and other sources, and the claim of the rulers of ancient Assam to trace their descent from him, point to an early belief in the incarnation of the god, whether in the form of Kṛṣṇa or any other form; this idea of incarnation is as old as the Rig Veda (VII, 100, 6).¹ The association of Kṛṣṇa with the story of Bāṇa and Bhīṣmaka also points to an early belief in the divine character of the god. Yuan Chwang states that Bhāskara was descended from Nārāyaṇadeva (Viṣṇu).² Bāṇa describes that king as belonging to the Vaiṣṇava family (Vaiṣṇavavaṃśa)³. The Epics and the Purāṇas also show that Bhagadatta had a particular devotion to Kṛṣṇa. This is confirmed by the Tezpur grant of Vanamāla.⁴

The antiquity of the cult of Viṣṇu in one of his incarnations is associated with the Hayagrīva-Mādhava worship in Hājo. The horse cult in fact is found in the worship of Dadhikrā or Agni in the form of a horse, which later on came to be identified with the Hayagrīva-Mādhava.⁵ This incarnation is described in the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, and its worship originated in the worship of Agni or the sun. The Matsya P. (53) relates that this incarnation preceded even the Matsyāvatāra. The Śānti Parva (349) relates that Viṣṇu assumed the Hayagrīva form to

¹Macdonell, J.R.A.S., 1895, p.188.

²Watters, II, pp.185f.

³H.C. (Cowell), pp.211f.

⁴v.5.

⁵J.C. Ghosh, J.A.R.S., V, pp.79f.

recover the Vedas from the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha. According to other accounts and the Purāṇas like the Kālikā it was Viṣṇu in his Hayagrīva form who killed Hayagrīva on the Maṇikūṭa, where stood a temple of Hayagrīva Viṣṇu (76). There is another mention of the killing of Hayagrīva near Viśvanātha by Viṣṇu who migrated then to Maṇikūta.¹ The Harivaṃśa (V.P., 64) states that Kṛṣṇa, after killing Naraka, Niṣuṇḍa and Hayagrīva, went to Maṇiparvata. The Padma. P. (47, 36) describes the Hayagrīva sālagrāma, and the Garuḍa P. (34) gives the mode of worship of Hayagrīva, which was but a mixture of the Paurāṇic and the Tāntrik faiths. In the Skanda P. (XIV-XV) and the Devī p. the story of the origin of the Hayagrīva incarnation is given; an almost similar story is narrated in the Vāmana P., Viṣṇu P. (IX, 2) and others, where Viṣṇu is said to have taken the head of a horse in the Bhadrās'vavarśa. We know that the Mārkaṇḍeya P. (58-59) and the Vāyu P. (45) include Mandara, Karatoyā, Lauhitya and Prāggyotiṣa in Bhadrās'vavarśa. The Vāyu P. (36) again attributes the name of Bhadrās'va to the white horse of Viṣṇu, meaning the Hayagrīva incarnation. In the Buddhistic accounts Bhadrās'va is replaced by the name Pūrvavidha² and the limits of Bhadrās'va included the regions from Videha to Lohita. The Kālikā P. includes the Karatoyā region within Kāmarūpa. The evidence proves that Kāmarūpa formed part of Bhadrās'va, and that the Hayagrīva worship of

¹Mother Goddess Kāmārkhyā, pp.71-72.

²Watters, I, pp.31-36.

Viṣṇu, originally associated with Agni, was prevalent in the land, at least in the two famous centres of Hājo and Kāmākhyā.¹

Of the inscriptions of the period, the earliest reference to Viṣṇu worship is found in the Baḍgaṅgā epigraph of Bhūti-varman (A.D. 553-54) and the king is here mentioned as 'Paramadaivata-Paramabhāgavata.'² Bhāskara is said to have been created by the holy lotus, issuing from the navel of Viṣṇu, (Nidhanpur grant, L.34). Ratnapāla is compared with Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Puruṣottama and Janārdana, (Gauhati grant, V9; Bargāon grant, L.46). The assumption of the epithet 'Vārāha' by that king, (Gauhati grant), like Harṣapāla (Khonāmukhi grant, L.10) and Dharmapāla (Puṣpabhadṛā grant), points to the fact that they were devoted to Viṣṇu. All the records of the period refer to the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu not only under the name of Viṣṇu (Nidhanpur grant, V.4; Tezpur grant, VV. 3-4; Puṣpabhadṛā grant, V.1) but also of Hari (Gauhati grant, VV. 4-5; Bargāon grant, V.3; Nidhanpur grant, V.19), Upendra (Nowgong grant, V.3), Nārāyaṇa (Khonāmukhi grant, V.2), Achyuta (Guākuchi grant), Kṛṣṇa (Tezpur grant, VV. 4-5) and others. But there is no particular invocation of Viṣṇu, except in the Puṣpabhadṛā grant of Dharmapāla, which opens with an invocation of the Boar incarnation. The contention of P. Bhattacharya that Dharmapāla embraced Vaisnavism at the time of the issue of the grant³ is doubtful.

¹J.C. Ghosh, J.A.R.S., V, pp.79-85.

²Lines 1-2.

³K.S. p.170.

The name Dharmapāla, is, however, mentioned by the biographer of Śaṅkaradeva in association with the faith.¹ The donee of the said grant is mentioned as the worshipper of the lotus feet of Mādhava from his birth: (Yo bālyataḥ pravṛti Mādhava-pādapadma-pūjā-prapañca-rocanaṃ suciraṃ) (Puṣpabhadṛā grant, V. 18). Epigraphy also mentions different consorts of Viṣṇu, such as Lakṣmī, whose perpetual abode is the bosom of Nārāyaṇa (Nidhanpur grant, VV. 17, 19.). She is also the goddess of wealth and splendour; she is Śrī, Kamalanivāsini (Hāyuntāl grant,), Kamalā, Bhāratī (Śubhāṅkarapāṭaka grant, V.9), Śyāmā (Nowgong grant, V.20), Sarasvatī (Śubhāṅkarapāṭaka grant, V.9) and many others. She is said to have been favourably disposed towards the rulers.

The worship of Viṣṇu and his incarnations is also proved by epigraphy. We have already mentioned that the purāṇas point to the worship of Mādhava, Vāsudeva, Varāha, Hayagrīva, Nārāyaṇa and the like, and that epigraphs make particular mention of the Boar incarnation. The other incarnations are Paraśurāma, 'who washed his blood-stained axe in the water of the Lauhitya'; (Gauhāti grant, V.13); Narāsimha and Rāma (Guākuchi grant), 'who crossing the ocean killed Rāvana' (Gauhāti grant, V. 9; Kamauli grant, V. 4); and Kṛṣṇa (Gauhāti grant, V. 9; Tezpur grant, VV. 3-5), who was the most popular of all incarnations. Epigraphs also mention the sportive Bālakṛṣṇa or Gopāla who was brought up by Yaśodā (Guākuchi grant, V. 24) and was the delight of the Gopīs (Tezpur

¹Nath, J.A.R.S., 1938, pp.23f.

grant, V.13). Some writers hold that even the personal names of persons, such as Vanamāla and those of the Brāhmaṇas like Mādhava, Keśava, etc. indicate faith in Viṣṇu.¹ But such conclusions are inconclusive, because the name of a person has little to do with any particular faith. Vanamāla himself was devoted to Śiva. (Nowgong grant, V.12).

We have extensive archaeological remains of temples, dedicated to Viṣṇu and his incarnations and icons of the deity throughout Assam.² The remains show that beginning at least with the 5th and 6th century A.D.³ Viṣṇu was worshipped in his iconographic representations, and Vaiṣṇavism was widespread in the land.

Both literary⁴ and archaeological sources, therefore, point to the conclusion that the worship of Viṣṇu and his incarnations was established in the land from early times. It is wrong to support the contention that the faith had its origin in Assam only with the Vaiṣṇava reformers. It is denied even by the biographer of Śaṅkaradeva.⁵ Having its origin in the solar cult of the Alpine-Iranians and Magians, the cult was gradually developed into the worship of Viṣṇu and his incarnations, under the Brāhmaṇical influence that was responsible for the Bhāgavatism of the Gupta period.⁶

¹B.K. Barua, Cultural History, I, p. 150.

²Section 5, p. 10.

³Dikṣit, A.R.A.S.I., 1922-23, pp.119f; Ibid, 1928-29, pp.45f.

⁴Kāmarūpar Burañjī, (ed. S.K. Bhūñyā), pp.118-132.

⁵Nath, J.A.R.S., 1938, pp.23f.

⁶Ray Chaudhuri, p.104.

But with the extinction of Pāla rule during the 12th century A.D., and while the Tāntrik-Buddhist system became strong, there was a period of chaos in the land, marked by revolting rites, until these were temporarily suppressed by the Vaiṣṇava reformers.¹ It is remarkable, however, that many Tāntrik-Buddhist rites crept into Vaiṣṇavism, in course of time, through a process of absorption. In fact, the Vaiṣṇava preachings and the satras have fundamentally been based on those of the Buddhists of an earlier period.²

6. Origin of Śaktism and Tāntrikism - Worship of Śiva and Devī.

The cult of fertility or the worship of the phallus, liṅga and yoni, personified later on as Śiva and the Mother Goddess or Devī, which formed the basis of Śaktism and Tāntrikism, is found not only in the prehistoric finds, such as Neoliths³ and Megaliths which are so extensive in Assam, but also from the Indus valley remains⁴ and Vedic literature.⁵ The cult is to be associated with the pre-Aryan element; even the word liṅga has been attributed to an Austric origin.⁶

Phallic worship definitely formed part of the religious life

¹Nath, J.A.R.S., 1938, pp.23f; Ibid, IV, pp.36f.

²S.C. Goswami, I.H.Q., III, pp.747f.

³B. Föote, Prehistoric and Protohistoric Antiquities, pp.20f,61; Aiyanger, Stone Age, pp.48f; K.R. Subramanian, Origin of Śaivism and History in the Tamil land, p.23.

⁴Marshall, Mahenjodaro and Indus Valley Civilisation, I, pp.52-6, 66-67; Mackay, Further Excavations at Mahenjodaro, I, pp.265, 336; Excavations at Harappa, I, pp.42, 304; Dikṣit, Prehistoric Civilisation of the Indus Valley, pp. 32f.

⁵J.N. Banerji, Dev. of Hindu Iconography, pp.47, 69.

⁶Pre-Aryan and Pre-Dravidian, p.8; C.R.I., 1931, I, I, pp.236f, 392f.

of the non-Aryans and Aryans in Assam. The Śakti as a cosmic energy, personified as a female, is one of the oldest faiths in India and some of the names of the goddess like Durgā, Kālī and Umā occur in the Vedic literature.¹ But it is almost certain that Śaktism had a non-Vedic origin and Umā or Kālī was probably a female mountain ghost, which was later on identified with the wife of Rudra, or brought into line with the Brāhmaṇic thoughts.² Even Rudra is called Girīśa (mountain god). The names like Umā and Durgā of the Vedic literature can hardly be identified with Devī or Śakti of the Śākta faith.³ But with the development of the faith these names of the goddess, whether Hindu or Buddhist in origin, came to be taken as manifestations of the same female principle or Devī, like her consort Rudra, Śiva or Mahādeva, known under various names. As the following treatment will show Śaktism had a stronghold in Assam from early times, contributed more by the non-Aryans than the Aryans.

Tāntrikism is also definitely of non-Aryan origin.⁴ All its elements - the use of magic and charms, the revolting rites, the use of wine, the belief in the efficacy of mantras and sex worship are found in other primitive cultures all the world over⁵, and the high antiquity of the cult is pointed

¹Jacobi, E.R.E., V, p.217.

²Chanda, Indo-Aryan Races, pp.148f, 153-56.

³Indo-Aryan Races, 123-25; Jacobi, E.R.E., II, p.813.

⁴Quaritch Wales, The Making of Greater India, p.122.

⁵Tylor, Primitive Culture, II, pp.410f; Spencer, Sociology, I, 262f; Frazer, Golden Bough, I, p.10f; E.R.E., III, pp.392f; E.H. Hartland, E.R.E., IX, pp.815-31.

out by all. The Aryans only systematised it.¹ The elements of the faith are found not only in the Atharva Veda but also in the Rig Veda and in other religious and secular works.² According to the Kaulārṇava Tantra (II, 10) even the revolting Kaula rites are represented as being the essence of the Vedas. The origin of mantra, yantra and cakra is, therefore, to be traced back to the Vedas.

The Tantras are broadly divided into orthodox and heterodox, the former including the āgamas and the yāmālas with their supplements and the latter, both Hindu and Buddhistic are represented by different schools of Kulācāra, Vāmācāra, Sahayāna, Vajrayāna, etc. P.C. Bagchi points out that the mystic character of the latter was due to a foreign element, and that, while Mid-India was the centre of the orthodox system, outer India was that of the heterodox one, of which the famous centres were Kāmarūpa, Pūrṇagiri, Odḍiyānā and Jālandhara. Most of the writers on the subject believe in the foreign origin of Tāntrikism.³ H.P. Śāstrī quotes from the Kubjikā Tantra⁴ to show its foreign origin. The Tārā Tantra writes that the cult of Cīna Tārā came from Mahācīna. Lévi finds in Cīna Tārā an echo of secret societies in China.⁵ Mahācīna Tārā is identified with Ekajātā whose

¹C. Chakravarti, I.H.Q., VI, pp.114-126; M. Bose, Post-Chaṭtyanya Sahajra Cult of Bengal, C. University, pp.98f.

²I.H.Q., VI, pp.114-126; S. Śāstrī, I.A., 1906, pp.274f.

³B. Bhattacharya, I.H.Q., III, pp.733-46; E.R.E., VI, pp.705f.

⁴Cat of M.S. etc., 1905, LXXIX.

⁵Nepal, I, pp.346f.

cult is said to have been taken by Nāgār-juna from Tibet.¹ In Sanmoha Tantra, found in Nepal, the same origin of the Mahācīna Tārā is given and it is stated that Ugratārā was born in Cīnadesā. A number of Tāntrik centres from outside India find mention in the same work, including Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, Mahācīna, Media, Persia, etc., along with the non-Aryan centres from Southern India.²

But Tāntrikism has been intimately associated with Kāmarūpa-Kāmākhyā from early times. As Hutton believes, it probably arose from the incorporation into Hinduism of a fertility cult which preceded the faith in Assam as the religion of the country.³ It is also believed that the cult travelled from Assam and Bengal to Dravidian India.⁴ Some attribute the origin of the faith to Orissa or Bengal rather than to Assam.⁵ As N.L. Dey writes, the Tāntrik faith as an offshoot of later Buddhism developed about the 9th century A.D. under the Pālas of Gauḍa. The Buddhist university of Vikramaśīlā, founded by Dharmapāla became a famous centre of the Tāntrik faith, whence it spread to Kāmarūpa.⁶ Wilson believes 'that Assam, or at least the north-east of Bengal, seems to have been in a great degree the source from which the Tāntrik and Śākta corruption of

¹I.H.Q., VI, pp.484f; Sādhānāmāṭā (No. 127).

²Bagchi, I.H.Q., VII, pp;1-16.

³Man in India, VIII, pp.228-32.

⁴S.C. Roy, Man in India, XIV, p.92.

⁵K.L. Barua, E.H.K., pp.157-58.

⁶J.P.A.S.B. (N.S.) X, p.346.

the religion of the Vedas and Purāṇas proceeded.¹ Eliot holds the same view.² It may be that some elements of the faith had a foreign origin, but that Assam was one of the great centres of Tāntrikism is proved by the Tantras themselves. It is quite likely that the province, with her non-Aryan elements, contributed to the origin and growth of the system, and we need not go to Orissa, Bengal or elsewhere to account for its introduction. It is associated more with the non-Aryans than the Aryans, and the Alpines or the Magians perhaps greatly contributed to its development in Kāmarūpa-Kāmākhyā.³ The Austrics and the Tibeto-Burmans, as shown by the phallic megalithic remains, really laid the foundation of the system,⁴ the final form of which was given by the assimilation of both Hindu and Buddhistic ideas. In short, the origin and later growth of some of the important elements of Tāntrikism are to be attributed to the non-Aryans in ancient Assam, one of the fertile fields in Eastern India for the development of those ideas.

A. Worship of Śiva: The worship of Śiva in his different manifestations, and both in his phallic and iconographic representations, has a great antiquity in Assam. This is shown by literature and archaeology. The Kālikā P. mentions fifteen centres of the faith and describes that before the

¹Preface to the Viṣṇu P., LVII.

²J.R.A.S., 1910, pp.1153f.

³Spooner, J.R.A.S., 1915, II, p.435.

⁴Chap. III, pp. 116-117

introduction of Devī worship in Kāmākhyā by Naraka, Śiva was recognised as the guardian deity of the land, which was his own domain: (saca deśaḥ svarājyārthe pūrvam guptaśca Śambhūnā)¹. Even during the time of Naraka, Śiva was worshipped in secrecy: (Śabhūrantar-guptaḥ sa me pure)² by the former inhabitants. It is rightly held that Śiva worship in some form was prevalent among the Kirātas.³ Traces of the faith are found among Tibeto-Burman tribes, such as the Koches. The faith was perhaps popular among them, and even among the Khāsis, who were the authors of some ancient megaliths of Assam.⁴ As we have shown, the worship of the principles of procreation, representing Śiva and his consort, is to be attributed to the non-Aryans in the land. The Skanda P. relates how the King Jalpa became a Śiva worshipper.⁵ It is believed to have been introduced by Jalpeśvara from Jalpāiguri, who also built a temple of the same name there.⁶ But, as we have stated, the faith prevailed in the land even before Naraka. Bāṇa refers to Bhāskara's devotion to 'the lotus-feet of Śiva.'⁷ The Yoginī Tantra mentions the worship of the deity in his liṅga form.⁸ According to the Purāṇas, Bāṇa and his family were great devotees of Śiva.⁹

¹Chap. 38, V.96.

²Ibid.

³Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā, p.17.

⁴Chap. III, pp. 99f

⁵Chap. 66.

⁶G. Barua, Asam Burāñjī, pp.39, 45-46.

⁷H.C. (Cowell)., p.217.

⁸I, XI, V.36.

⁹Viṣṇu, P., I, XXI; V, XXXIIIf; Kumāra-Haraṇa.

Epigraphs refer to the worship of the deity by the erection of temples. Vanamāla repaired the fallen lofty temple of Haṭaka Śūlin (Śiva) (Tezpur grant, V.24). Ratnapāla 'studded the earth with white-washed temples enshrining Śambhū.' (Gauhāti grant, V.10). The grant of Vallabhadēva refers to a temple of Mahādeva (V.13). Bhagadatta, who was so devoted to Kṛṣṇa, worshipped Śiva with penance (Tezpur grant, V.5). Vajradatta had an unblemished faith in Śiva (Nowgong grant, V.8). The Doobi grant begins with an invocation to Śiva in his concrete form: He 'is lovely with the moon as the headgear, the holder of the bow, decorated with particles of ashes.' (V. 1). The same grant describes Bhāskara as a follower of the doctrine of Mahādeva (V. 55). The Nidhanpur grant describes Śiva's concrete manifestation (V. 2). In the Tezpur Rock inscription Harjjara is described as a Paramamāheśvara, (L. 2). That Vanamāla had a faith in Śiva is shown by his erection of a Śiva temple (Tezpur grant, V. 24). His Tezpur grant opens with an invocation to the god: 'May Śiva, on whom the waters of Gaṅgā cast up by the wind are, as it were, the stars on the firmament, sanctify you.' (V.2.) In the Nowgong grant, Vanamāla is described as having great faith in Bhāva (V. 12). The grant opens with an invocation to Rudra (V. 1). The Bargāon grant gives a description of Śiva's tāṇḍava dance, stating that the water of the Lauhitya was made beautiful by the reflection falling

on it from the dancing figure of Śaṅkara who was engaged in marking quick time music in his primeval form, who assumed numberless forms for the welfare of the world (VV. 1-2). The reference shows that Śiva was conceived as a benefactor of all and a supreme lord in his concrete form. The Gauhāti grant opens with an invocation to Śambhū and Paśupati along with the consorts Gaurī and Gaṅgā (V. 1). Śiva was also identified with Viṣṇu, 'May Paśupati be glorious, the lord of the creation (who is) the famous great Boar of a wonderful bodily form and she also the Earth, the mother of him (Naraka)' (Ibid, V.2). In the grants of Dharmapāla, Śiva is conceived, probably under the influence of Tāntrik-Buddhism, as the embodiment of two unifying principles, called Ardhayuvatiśvara (Khonāmukhi grant, VI; Śubhāṅkarapāṭaka grant, V. 1). The Kamauli grant states that Śiva was worshipped by the Brāhmaṇa Śrīdhara undergoing penance and starvation (V. 20).

Epigraphy further testifies to the widespread prevalence of the faith and the worship of Śiva in his different mythological manifestations. He was also conceived both in his abstract and concrete forms, to some of which we have already made reference. The concrete representation will also be evident from the study of his sculptures. As has already been indicated, he stood both for creation and destruction, explained by his various names. He is Ādideva (Khonāmukhi

grant, V.1), Paramamāheśvara (Tezpur Rock. Ins. I.2),
 Maheśvara (Doobi grant, V. 55; Nidhanpur grant, V. 2),
 Īśvara (Tezpur grant), Mahādeva (Grant of Vallabhadeva, V.13),
 Śiva (Tezpur grant, V. 5; Kamauli grant V. 20) ^{Mahāvarāha (Gauhāti Grant)} Prajādhinātha
 (Ibid), Śambhū (Ibid, V.10), Śaṅkara (Bargāon grant, VV.1-2),
 Paśupati (Gauhāti grant, VV.1-2), Bhāva (Nowgong grant, V.12),
 Īśa (Ibid, V.8), Piṅākapaṇi (Doobi grant, V.1; Tezpur grant,
 V.2), Rudra (Nowgong grant, V. 1), Haṭakasūlin (Tezpur grant,
 V. 24), Gaurīpati (Grant of Vallabhadeva), Hara (Bargāon
 grant), Kāmeśvara (Tezpur grant; Guākuchi grant), Padmanātha
 (Kamauli grant, V. 26), Kiṭava (Gauhāti grant, V.1)
 Ardhanārīśvara (Khonāmukhi grant, V. 1; Śubhankarapāṭaka
 grant, V. 1) and others.

The worship of Śiva in his various forms is confirmed by the extensive ruins of temples and icons of the deity throughout the province. The evidence shows that as early as the 5th century A.D., if not earlier, he was worshipped by his iconographic representations in temples¹ and the faith was popular among all classes of people.

B. Worship of Devī: We have already discussed the origin of Śaktism and Tāntrikism of a later time. That Kāmarūpa was an important centre of Devī worship both in her symbolic and iconographic representations under various names, and along with her companion Śiva, is proved by literature and archaeology. The extant Purāṇas point to the antiquity of

¹Section 5, p. 1.

the cult in connection with the worship of Kāmākhyā or Yoni pīṭha of the Tāntriks, where the genital organ of Satī fell. The tradition is described in detail in the Devī P., the Kālikā. P., the Yoginī Tantra and other works. The Devī P. states that the Devī was worshipped in her different forms in centres like Kāmarūpa, Kāmākhyā, Bhottadēsa and other lands.¹ The austic formation of the names Kāmākhyā and Kāmarūpa indicates that the deity was formerly a goddess of spirits or ghosts, who were worshipped in a cremating ground.² It is possible that the Yoni goddess migrated to Assam with the migration of Austriacs and that Naraka became responsible for the founder of the Devī worship in Kāmākhyā; but with his death, Kāmākhyā was no longer the Mother Goddess but became the amorous wife Pārvatī of Śiva. Subsequently Pārvatī was assimilated to a virgin goddess of sex and beauty, Tripurā. The cults of virgin goddess and of the sexual aspect of Devī worship seem to have been derived from the cult of Tripurā.³ The Purāṇas and the Tantras also state that Naraka was placed in charge of Kāmākhyā, and, as Kakati rightly remarks, the word Kāmarūpa (Kāmākhyā) symbolises a new cult, and in exaltation of it the land itself was rechristened. The very names Kāmarūpa - Kāmākhyā, therefore, suggest that the cult is derived from some Austriac divinity.⁴ The Alpines had perhaps their part to play in the

¹39, 14; 42, 9.

²Kakati, Assamese - Its Formation and Development, pp.53f; N.I.A., I, pp.1-23.

³Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā, pp.35-70.

⁴Ibid.

later development of the cult, which received new orientation when they came into contact with the Śāktas. It was natural that Kāmarūpa, where non-Aryans were numerically predominant, constituted one of the famous centres of Śākti worship. We have already made it clear that the foundation of both Śāktism and Tāntrikism was laid largely by the megalithic culture of the tribes of Assam.

As early as Kālidāsa¹ we find mention of Hemapīṭha, standing for Kāmarūpa-Kāmākhyā.² The Kāmapīṭha of the Tantras was no other than Kāmarūpa and Kāmākhyā. Among texts composed in Assam, the Ācārya Saṃhitā, based on the Sūta Saṃhitā and the Rudrajamālā-Tantra, contains a dialogue between Śiva and Pārvatī.³ The Garuḍa P. (89) mentions both Kāmarūpa and Kāmākhyā as great places of pilgrimage; (Kāmarūpaṃ mahātīrthaṃ, Kāmākhyā tatra tiṣṭhati). The worship of the deity is also proved by the fact that Kāmarūpa is included among countries having Devī worship. It finds mention in 'Saptapañcāśad-desāvibhāga', based on the Śaktisaṃgama Tantra. Similar divisions are found in the Chandragarbhasūtra of Narendrayaśa (A.D. 566) and the Sanmoha Tantra.⁴ The Kāmarūpa Yātrā, based on the Yoginī Tantra, the Kālikā P. and the Kulārṇava, deals with the rules in connection with the pilgrimage to Kāmākhyā.⁵ The Tikṣakalpa deals with the mode of the worship of Tārā.⁶ The Kāmākhyā Tantra mentions the glory of the Śākti faith. The

¹IV, 81-84.

²J.C. Ghosh, J.A.R.S., V, pp.117-18.

³Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam, 1897.

⁴D.C. Sircar, I.C., VIII, pp.33-64.

⁵Report on the Progress, etc.

⁶Ibid.

Yogini Tantra, the HaraGaurīsamvada¹ and other tantras give detailed accounts of the Devī worship. The latter work mentions four important centres of Tāntrik worship, such as Ratnapīṭha, Kāmapīṭha, Svarnapīṭha and Saumārapīṭha. The worship of Kāmākhyā in Kāmakūṭa or Nīlācala was the most important of all. In the Kālikā P. (37, 144) the worship of no other deity than Kāmākhyā is enjoined. Nīlācala stands for the body of Śiva, which turned blue when the genital organ of Satī fell there. Kāmākhyā, therefore, had the reputation of Devī worship with bloody sacrifices, details of which are given in the Kālikā P.²

The temple of Tāmesvarī (copper temple) at Sadiyā was another noted centre of Devī worship in a different form, but with the same bloody sacrifices, even of human beings. She was the same goddess as Dikkaravāsini of the Tantras and Purāṇas, such as the Kālikā. She assumed two forms: Tīkṣṇa-Kāntā (fearful appearance) and Lalitā-Kāntā (graceful appearance). The former was Ekajātā (single matted hair) and was known as Ugratārā, with her attendants, such as Cāmundā, Vikalā, Bhīṣaṇā, etc. The worship of the Tāntrik-Buddhist goddess Ugratārā³ was established in Kāmarūpa in the Ugratārā temple during the time of the Pāla rulers.⁴ The place is traditionally associated with the Nābhipīṭha. In the

¹Des. Cat. of Assamese manuscripts (No. 54); Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā, p.8.

²A. Res. V, pp.371f; E.R.E., VI, pp.849f; Blochman, X.II, pp.240f.

³Levi, Nepal, I, pp.346f; Bagchi, I.H.Q., VII, pp.1-16; Ibid, VI, pp.485f.

⁴K.I. Barua, J.A.R.S., II, pp.44-51.

Mañyus'rimūlaKalpa (V.900) Kāmarūpa is mentioned as a pīṭha where the worship of Tārā led to siddhi. So Tārā or Ugratārā, having a Buddhist origin, was later on assimilated into the Tāntrik system. 'The modern cult of Tārā', as remarked by Chanda, 'seems to be a Brāhmaṇic Śākta adaptation of the Mahāyāna Buddhist cult of Tārā', and she 'was evidently admitted to the Mahāyāna pantheon from the older śākta pantheon.'¹ All these forms of the goddess were worshipped in Assam with bloody sacrifices, and under the Tāntrik system they were taken as manifestations of Devī, Durgā or Kāli, As the Yoginī Tantra states, Tārā, like Kāmākhyā, is the same as Kāli and the embodiment of love. Under the influence of the Hindu and Tāntrik-Buddhist doctrines, therefore, the original goddess Devī or Kāmākhyā came to be known as Kāli; Ugratārā, Cāmuṇḍā and the like to the worshippers of the faith in general, and was worshipped under these names on different occasions.²

The worship of Devī is also proved by epigraphy. The King Indrapāla is mentioned as versed in the Tāntrik lore.³ The Tezpur grant⁴ and the Gauhāti grant⁵ point to the prevalence of the cult of MahāGaurī. The former Grant states that the mount Kāmākūṭa was inhabited by Kāmeśvara and MahāGaurī. There are other references to Pārvatī (Gauhati grant, V. 14), Gaurī (Ibid, V.1; Doobi grant, V. 40), Gaṅgā (Gauhati grant, VI)

¹ Indo-Aryan Races, pp.138, 142.

² Mother Goddess, pp.35f.

³ Gauhāti grant.

⁴ K.S. p.63.

⁵ Ibid, p.138.

Girijā (Khonāmukhi grant, V 11) and the like.

The extensive ruins of temples dedicated to Devī along with Śiva and their icons have been noticed from a number of places in Assam.¹ This confirms our belief that the faith had an important stronghold in the province from early times.

The existing materials, both records and remains, therefore, point to the widespread prevalence of the faith;² even after the Vaisṇava reformation a great bulk of the population remained śāktas and the temple of Kāmākhyā is still one of the great centres of Hindu pilgrimage for all sects from all parts of India, and hundreds of animals and birds are sacrificed at the altar of the Devī in the name of religion.³ With the incorporation of later Buddhist ideas into the system, Kāmarūpa remained a noted centre of the Tāntrik-Buddhists.

7. Later Buddhism or Vajrayāna:

That ancient Assam was a great centre of later Buddhism is shown by a number of sources. This was known as Vajrayāna or Tāntrik-Buddhism, and grew from the incorporation of Śakti worship into Mahāyāna. In the opinion of the Vajrayānists it is coextensive with 'Dharma'.⁴ It is 'a queer mixture of monistic philosophy, magic and erotics with a small admixture of Buddhistic ideas.'⁵ Both the Hindu and

¹Section 5.

²Elot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, II, 288-90; *J.R.A.S.*, 1910, pp.1153-86; *A.C.R.*, 1891, I, p.80; 1901, I, pp.39f.

³Shakespeare, *History of Upper Assam*, etc. pp.74f.

⁴B. Bhattacharya, *I.H.Q.*, III, pp.733-46.

⁵Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, II, p.388.

the Buddhist siddhas contributed to its growth, and Kāmarūpa, with so many non-Aryan cults, constituted one of the fertile fields for the development of the faith.¹ Speaking of Tāntrikism and Vajrayāna L. De La Vallée Poussin writes that Tāntrikism is not merely a pagan worship but also a way to liberation. It is constituted of three elements, tantra, mantra and vajra. Vajra stands for the divine energy, identified with intelligence, and its followers ultimately attain prajñāpāramitā (perfect truth).² Vajra also stands for the liṅga as padma for the yoni. Two interpretations are applied by the right and left handed worshippers; the latter conceives vajra according to Śaiva pattern and the former is related to the Vedantist or the Yoga tradition. The left handed worship was a Buddhist adaptation of Śaivism and Śaktism; in order to realise divine nature, the followers had to perform the rites of union with a woman (yoginī mudrā); but the purification of body and mind before such enjoyment constituted the Tāntrik-Vajrayāna of the right-handed worship.³ It is likely that the cult was influenced by the Magians. The worship of deities in their embrace was a symbol of the mahāsukha in Śūnyatā.⁴ Vajrayāna, in any case, with its magic and rituals, means an 'adamantine path', or the 'vehicle of the diamond' and it drew its inspiration from a Tāntrik work, known as 'Guhyasamāja', attributed to

¹I.H.Q., X, p.16.

²B. Bhattacharya, Buddhist Esoterism, pp.32f.

³E.R.E., XII, pp.193-97.

⁴N.N. Law, I.H.Q., (H.P.S. Mem. No.) March, 1938.

Asaṅga.¹ The Sahajcā cult or Sahajayāna was an offshoot of Vajrayāna and based on the similar union between two sexes, leading to final liberation².

According to the Sāadhanāmālā³ the four centres of Vajrayāna were Kāmākhyā, Śrīhaṭṭa, Pūrṇagiri, and Oḍḍiyānā. The Kālikā P. mentions Oḍṛāpīṭha, Śālasāila, Pūrṇapīṭha and Kāmarūpa. In the Sahajayāna the siddhas associated the nerve centres with Oḍḍiyānā, Jālandhara, Pūrṇagiri and Kāmarūpa.⁴ The origin of the cult is associated with Oḍḍiyānā by Pag Som Zon Zan, which states that the first siddha was Rāhula or Saraha. Oḍḍiyānā is associated with Laṅkāpurī, and on the hint of Jacobi, B. Bhattacharya places the former in Assam, identifying Laṅkāpurī with Laṅkā in Nowgong.⁵ According to Pag Som Zon Zan, Saraha was born of a Brāhmaṇa and a Dākinī in Rājñī and flourished during the time of Chandrapāla of Eastern India.⁶ He is said to have performed miracles in the presence of the King Ratnaphāla and his minister, and to have converted them to Vajrayāna. G. Tucci points out on the basis of Grub'tob that Rāhula was a Sūdra from Kāmarūpa; but in the Bka Abab Bdun Idan he is said to have been a Brāhmaṇa from Oḍḍiyānā (Oḍḍiṣa)⁷. The

¹Vidhuśekhara Bhattacharya, M.R., 1930, pp.39f; B. Bhattacharya, I.H.Q., III, pp.733f; A.B.O.R.I., X, pp.1-24.

²R.K. Mookerji, Theory of Art and Mysticism, pp.166f, 210-18.

³Sāadhanāmālā, pp.453f.

⁴Bagchi, Some Aspects of Buddhist Mysticism of Bengal, Cultural History of India, I, pp.312f.

⁵I.H.Q., III, pp.733f; Indian Buddhist Iconography, Intro. XXVII; Nath, J.A.R.S., VII, pp.48f.

⁶Intro. to Buddhist Esoterism, p.46.

⁷J.A.S.B., 1930, p.141.

actual origin of the siddha is uncertain; but it appears probable that he was born in Odḍiyānā, which, as suggested by H.P. Śāstrī is to be located in Orissa,¹ as Oḍra, another name of Orissa is similar to Odḍiyānā; but later on Rāhula's all activities were confined to Rājñī or modern Rāñī in Kāmarūpa. It is of interest that Rāhula converted Ratnapāla, who was probably a king of Kāmarūpa, and the former, therefore, flourished towards the end of the tenth or the beginning of the 11th century A.D.² So Rāhula, the founder of the faith, found support in the royal patronage of the Pālas of Assam. Rāhula or Saraha's disciple was Nāgārjuna, who is associated with two sādhanās,³ one for Vajrayāna and the other for Ekajaṭā, who is identified with Mahācīna Tārā, and whose cult is said to have been recovered by Nāgārjuna from Tibet.⁴ In the Sanmoha Tantra the origin of Ekajaṭā is given, and Ugratārā is said to have been born in Cīnadesā.⁵ There is still a temple of Ugratārā in Gauhāti, which is believed to have been built by Ratnapāla or Indrapāla, after the worship of Ekajaṭā was introduced by Nāgārjuna in Kāmarūpa. Nāgārjuna was, therefore, the contemporary of Ratnapāla⁶ and can hardly be placed in the 7th century A.D.,

¹ See I.H.Q., III, pp. 733f.

² K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S., II, pp. 44-51; J.A.R.S., II, p. 84; M. Sahidulla, J.A.S.B., 1898, p. 102; N.N. Das Gupta, I.H.Q., XXVI, pp. 335f.

³ Sādhanāmālā, pp. 193f, 265f.

⁴ I.H.Q., VI, pp. 584f; Bagchi, I.H.Q., VII, pp. 1-16.

⁵ Bagchi, I.H.Q., VII, pp. 1-16.

⁶ E.H.K., p. 159; J.A.R.S., II, 44-51.

as suggested by G. Tucci,¹ B. Bhattacharya² and others.

One Savaripā was the disciple of Nāgārjuna and his disciple was Luipā. There are many traditions about the origin of both Luipā and Mīnanātha or Matsyendranātha. Some identify them as one but others take them as two or even three persons. In Pag Som Zon Zan, Luipā is called a fisherman from Odḍiyānā.³ The name is associated with Rohita (King of fish) or the eater of fish.⁴ Nath associates Luipāda with the Lohita (Luit) river in Sadiyā.⁵ Luipā resided in the court of Indrabhūti of Odḍiyānā. The identification of this prince with Indrapāla⁶ is hardly correct, as Odḍiyānā is to be located in Orissa.⁷ The Tibetan works Grub'tob and Bka Abab Bdun Idan mention that the siddha Mīnanātha, a fisherman, was from Kāmarūpa. Tārānātha describes him and his son Maccindra as disciples of Carpati,⁸ who was probably identical with Savaripā. The Caryāścaryavinīśaya⁹ and Buddha Gān O'Dohā begin with an invocation to Luipāda, and there is reference to Mīnanātha in these works. In the 'Nityāhnikā-Tilakaṃ' in the preface to the Kaulajñānanirṇaya,¹⁰ there is a description of one Matsyendranātha, who was

¹J.P.A.S.B., XXVI, p.142.

²Intro. to Sāadhanāmālā, II, XLIII f.

³Ibid, XLVII.

⁴Kaulajñānanirṇaya, pp.22-24.

⁵J.A.R.S., VII, pp.19f.

⁶Ibid.

⁷See above; K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S., II, pp.44-51.

⁸See B.N. Datta, Mystic Tales of Lāmā Tārānātha, p.56.

⁹Ed. H. P. Śāstrī.

¹⁰Bagchi, Preface, p.68.

originally a Brāhmaṇa and who, when he practised yoga, came to be known as Matsyendra. Nath thinks that the siddhas took the name of nātha, deva, etc,¹ like Matsyendranātha.²

Tucci identifies him with Luipā and holds that Matsyendra or its synonym was only a title of certain siddhas and was given to Luipā.³ There are other legends about the name of Matsyendra. The Skanda P. (263) relates how he was released by Śiva from a fish, his name being, therefore, associated with the fish.⁴ The same work mentions that his original home was in an island of Kṣīrasāgara. In the Tantrasāra of Kṛṣṇānanda, Mīnanātha was one of the gurus, associated with the worship of Tārā. S.C. Sil thinks that he was so named, because he was from Matsyadeśa. J.C. Ghosh, supporting Bagchi, holds that he was born in Chandradvīpa and attained siddhi in Kāmarūpa.⁵

On an examination of the relevant sources it appears that Luipā from Odḍiyānā or Orissa was different from Matsyendranātha,⁶ who had other names, such as Mīnanātha, Maccindra, etc. This will be evident from the following consideration. Mīnanātha, who composed a work on Kāmasāstra, Smaradvīpikā⁷ was the same person as Matsyendra. The association of the name with fish,

¹Kulārṇava, Chap. IX.

²J.A.R.S., VII, pp.48-57; S. Sarasvatī, Guru Pradīpa, p.73.

³J.P.A.S.B., 1930, pp.133-35.

⁴J.A.S.B., 1838, p.138 (f.n.); Sāstri, B.S.P.P., XXIX, p.52; Gorakṣavijaya, p.13; A.B. Vidyābhūṣan, Pravāsi, 1328, II, pp729f.

⁵I.H.Q., VI, 562-64.

⁶Barua, J.A.R.S., II, pp.44f.

⁷I.H.Q., VI, 562f.

water and Kāmarūpa indicates that he was a fisherman from Kāmarūpa. The difference in teachings between Luipā and Matsyendra also confirms that they were different persons. The latter was a Haṭhayogī,¹ unlike the former; Gorakṣanātha, Matsyendra's disciple, introduced a new type of meditation,² which differs from that of Luipā, as given in the Prājā-Pradīpa³ and Ghenendra Saṃhitā.⁴ On these differences it appears probable that Luipa was different from Mīnanātha, and the latter may have flourished before the former.⁵ It is wrong, however, to suggest that he was from Bengal or other places, as suggested by many writers.⁶ The constant association of Matsyendra with Kāmarūpa and its various places confirms our belief that he was from Kāmarūpa.⁷

In Pag Som Zon Zan and the Gorakṣavijaya⁸ there is a reference to Kadali in Nowgong, where Matsyendra was entrapped by the queen, Kamalā. Gorakṣa went there and released his guru.⁹ Tārānātha states that in the 12th century A.D. many Tāntriks went to the land of the Kukis in Assam,¹⁰ The Kaulajñānanirṇaya mentions a number of places in Assam,

¹B. Vidyāratna, Haṭha Pradīpa, p.100.

²Gorakṣasaṃhitā (ed. P.K. Kaivarta), IV, pp.192-98.

³S. Saraswatī, Pūjā Pradīpa, II, pp.80f.

⁴Ed. K.P. Vidyāratna.

⁵Nath, J.A.R.S., VII, 48-57.

⁶Sāstrī, B.S.P.P., XXIX, p.52; Das Gupta, I.H.Q., XXVI, pp.333f.

⁷C. Chakravarti, I.H.Q., VI, pp.178-81.

⁸Ed. A. K.S. Viśārada; Māināmatir Gān (ed. Bhattasali and Sircar).

⁹Gorakṣavijaya, p.197.

¹⁰J.A.S.B., 1898, I, p.20.

associated with the activities of the siddhas.¹ In any case, both Matsyendra and Gorakṣa confined their activities to various places of Kāmarūpa.² Yayārtha's commentary on the Tantrāloka of Abhinavagupta³ quotes a verse from an earlier tantra to the effect that Kaulajñāna was transmitted to Mīnanātha through Bhairava and his consort in the mahāpīṭha of Kāmarūpa.⁴ He, therefore, flourished before or about the time of Yayārtha, who is placed in the 11th century A.D.⁵ He promulgated the Yoginī Kaula doctrine in Kāmākhyā. We have mentioned elsewhere the composition of a few works by Matsyendra in Kāmarūpa.⁶ The composition of another work, the Bāhyāntara-bodhicitta-bandhopadeśa, is also attributed to him, and it is remarkable that the language of his works corresponds to the old Kāmarūpī dialect.⁷ In the Śābaratantna Mīnanātha is included among the 24 Kāpālika siddhas.⁸ He was probably the contemporary of Ratnapāla and Purandarapāla. According to Grünwedel, Indrapāla, known as Mārikapā was a disciple of Luipā,⁹ and he was no other than the king of the same name of Assam.

We have already stated that Gorakṣanātha was the

¹Ed. Bagchi.

²Nath, J.A.R.S., VII, 19-23.

³Trivandrum Sans. Series, pp.24f.

⁴Tantrāloka, pp.20-25; C. Chakravarti, I.H.Q., VI, 179-81.

⁵See J.C. Chatterji, Kāśmīra Śaivism, I, p.36.

⁶Sec. 3, p.609

⁷K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S., II, pp.44f; E.H.K., p.159 (f.n.).

⁸Tucci, J.P.A.S.B., 1930, pp.133-41.

⁹Nath, J.A.R.S., VII, pp.48-57; also Das Gupta, I.H.Q., XXVI, pp.335-36. Tibetan works mention one Mahidhara from Kāmarūpa (E.H.K., p.159).

disciple of Mīnanātha and his activities were also confined to various places of Assam. Nath thinks that there were probably two persons of the name of Gorakṣanātha, one of them being like his preceptor a Hathayogī, whose teachings are embodied in Gorakṣasaṃhitā.¹ But the inference is doubtful. It appears that Gorakṣa had two other names, Anaṅgavajra and Rāmavajra.² Tārānātha writes, on the basis of the Tāntrik works, that Anaṅgavajra was a son of a certain king of Eastern India, Gopāla, who was probably the king of Kāmarūpa, and Anaṅga was perhaps the younger brother of Harṣapāla.³ Padmavajra, another siddha was the disciple of Anaṅgavajra and Hādipā, another pupil of Gorakṣa was a person distinguished in the time of Dharmapāla of Kāmarūpa, as stated by Buchanan, and his other name was Jālandharipā. As Anaṅga was another name of Gorakṣa, Padmavajra and Hādipā may have been the same person, and as Gorakṣa or Anaṅga was the contemporary of Harṣapāla, Padmavajra or Hādipā was that of Dharmapāla. The next siddhas were Indrabhūti of Oḍḍiyānā and Padmasambhava who were probably contemporaries of both Dharmapāla and Jayapāla.⁴

It appears from the accounts that most of the Vajrayāna siddhas were associated with Kāmarūpa and the Pāla line of kings, who not only patronised the system but also some of

¹J.A.R.S., VII, pp.48f.

²Śāstrī, Buddha Gān O'Dohā, Preface, p.16; J.A.S.B., 1898, I, p.20.

³J.A.R.S., VII, pp.48f.

⁴K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S., II, pp.44-51.

whom became converts and attained the status of preceptors. The widespread prevalence of the faith is proved also by voluminous Tāntrik works of the period, dealing with magic and sorcery. But the mystic character of their works and the revolting rites of the followers, mostly addicted to wine and women, created an epoch of moral degeneration in any part of India where the faith had its stronghold.¹ It is again due to the mystic character of their works and practices, that the followers have been painted in the darkest colours. G. Tucci finds in the Tāntrik literature as a whole 'one of the highest expressions of Indian mysticism, which may appear to us rather strange in its outer form, chiefly because we do not always understand the symbolical language in which they are written.'² In any case, the revolting practices of the followers can hardly be justified on a moral standard. It is an enigma how such a faith as Buddhism, based on a high moral code, could be carried so far as to find liberation only in the union of the two sexes, as conceived by the Vajrayānists. In spite of their suppression in Assam by the Vaiṣṇava reformers of the 15th century A.D., their hold could not be entirely wiped out, and the faith continued to be practised under the name of the 'Rāti-Khowā sect' (Practisers at night), as the followers performed their rites in secrecy at the dead of night.³ The fundamental principle of the cult, fertility, in fact, imperceptibly crept into

¹See Barnett, Antiquities of India, p.17.

²J.P.A.S.B., 1930, pp.133-141.

³Barua, J.A.R.S., II, 44f.

Vaisnavism itself, as shown by the Assamese national festival, 'Bihu' (harvesting rite).

8. Conclusion: There were other minor deities; but their followers were perhaps very few; nor is it probable that they represented distinct sects. The worship of deities like Gaṇeśa or Gaṇapati,¹ Kārtikeya, Indra, Agni, Kuvera, Brahma, Manasā, etc., is, however, indicated by epigraphs and sculptures. Most of them were worshipped as consorts of other deities, such as Śiva, Devī, Viṣṇu and the like. The Kamauli grant bears the seal of Gaṇapati,² and the grant of Vallabha-deva invokes him as Lambodara.³ The figures of Gaṇeśa and Kārtikaya are found on the side of Devī.⁴ Images of Kuvera with his consorts, Yakṣas and Kinnaras are found from the existing ruins, and he was worshipped under various names.⁵ The worship of Abja (Brahma) is shown by the grant of Vanamāla.⁶

In spite of the prevalence of so many Aryan and non-Aryan cults, there was perhaps a spirit of toleration among their adherents. The ruins indicate that at a single place images of different deities were set up and temples, dedicated to deities of different sects were erected on the same site.⁷ The best example is furnished by the shrines at Hājo. Yuan Chwang saw hundreds of Deva temples and shrines of different

¹S. Barua, J.A.R.S., III, pp.39-47.

²E.I., II, pp.347f.

³v. 1.

⁴Section 5, p. 1.

⁵See Endle, Kacharis, pp.37f.

⁶v. 29.

⁷Section 5, p. 1.

faiths during his visit to Kāmarūpa.¹ Even a Tāntrik work like the Kālikā P. deals with the mode of worship of these deities along with Devī.² Though Naraka's origin is associated with the legend of Viṣṇu's incarnation, he is said to have introduced Devī worship in Kāmākhyā,³ Bhagadatta, who was devoted to Kṛṣṇa, worshipped Śiva with penance.⁴ Bhaskara, a devotee of Siva,⁵ claimed to be descended from Viṣṇu and was of Vaiṣṇava family, and, though he was not a Buddhist, he respected the Buddhist Śramaṇas.⁶ His close association with Yuan Chwang and Harṣa, and his participation in the ceremonies at Kanauj and Prayāga, where the images of the Buddha, Śiva and Āditya were given an equal place,⁷ testify that the Kāmarūpa King had a catholic mind, and, like Harṣa, had an equal respect for other faiths. Though Vanamāla was devoted to Śiva,⁸ it is likely that like Jayamāla, he came under the influence of later Buddhism.⁹ In fact, all the Pāla rulers, though they had faith in Śiva, patronised Vajrayāna and Devī worship. Indrapāla invokes Śiva, who is identified with Viṣṇu,¹⁰ but in the Guākuchi grant, though he invokes the same deity, the plate bears the Vaiṣṇavite symbols.¹¹ Dharmapāla showed his devotion

¹Watters, II, pp.185f.

²Chapt. 38, 79.

³Chap. 38; Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā, pp.35f.

⁴Tezpur grant, V.5.

⁵Doobi grant, V.55; H.C. (cowell), p.217.

⁶Watters, II, pp.185f; H.C., pp.211f.

⁷Life, pp.165f; Watters, I, p.348; Beal, I, p.215

⁸Nowgong grant, V.12.

⁹Ibid, VV.12, 22-23.

¹⁰Gauhāti grant, VV.1-2.

mālā, pp.164-66.

¹¹P. Bhattacharya, 'Adbhūta Tāmra sāsana', H.P.Sambardhana Lekha-

not only to Śiva and Devī or Arəḍhayuvatīśvara,¹ and 'dharma'² under the influence of Tāntrik-Buddhism, but also to Viṣṇu.³ Vaidyadeva was a devotee of both Śiva and Viṣṇu.⁴ The tolerant mind of Vallabhadeva is proved by his invocation of Bhāgavata-Vāsudeva and Lambodera.⁵ Under the patronage of rulers, therefore, the subjects could profess any faith they liked.

Another important feature of the religious history of Assam is that many non-Aryan elements particularly of the plains were gradually brought within the fold of Hinduism, and most of them given a divine ancestry. The Manipurīs were perhaps the first people to come under its pale. The land of Manipur is associated with Arjuna's exploits. The rulers claim Hindu ancestry and all their gods are Hindu gods.⁶ The Koch Kings trace their origin from Śiva and have gradually become completely Hinduised.⁷ Similarly the Kachāris were converted, and their rulers trace their origin from Bhīma and Hidimbā.⁸ The Chutiās, who established their kingdom in the Sadiyā region not later than the 13th century A.D., claimed the same Hindu origin after conversion to Hinduism.⁹ The Āhoms, who established their kingdom in Eastern Assam in

¹Khonāmukhi grant, V. 1; Śubhāṅkarapātaka grant, V. 1.

²Puṣpabhadra grant, V. 7.

³Ibid, V. 1.

⁴Z.E.L II, pp.347f.

⁵E.I., V, pp. 181f.

⁶See Syed S. Ahmed, J.A.R.S., III, pp.66-69.

⁷E.H.K., p.288.

⁸Gait, History of Assam, pp.48-49; A.C.R., 1891, p.93.

⁹E.H.K., p.192.

the beginning of the 13th century A.D., traced their origin from Indra, and within a short period they adopted Hinduism.¹ As a result of this conversion, the number of the Hindu population increased, which resulted in the fusion of different races. Even though the inhabitants of both the hills and plains continued to profess different faiths, the harmony was not lost, and the followers of all sects thrived here equally well, and contributed to the building up of the socio-religious fabric of ancient Assam.²

¹*Ibid.*, p. 288; *Yoginī Tantra*, I, XIV.

²N.N. Vasu, *Social History of Kāmarūpa*, I, pp.1-2.

Section 5.

Monuments.1. Introduction.

The early history of art in Assam is still dark. We find today huge heaps of ruins, lying scattered throughout the province, but not a single ancient temple or building is found in its original condition. The treatment of the subject, therefore, from a chronological standpoint seems difficult. Natural causes and time have done great havoc to all our monuments. The materials used for the construction of temples and other edifices, as appears from the ruins, consisted of stone, brick and even clay, for many earth embankments have been traced. The remains included architecture and fortifications, sculptured designs, icons, and a few specimens of painting.

Both literature and epigraphy point to the artistic activities of the rulers and the ruled. Besides the temples at Hājo, Kāmākhyā, Sadiyā, etc., mentioned in the Purāṇas and the Tantras, we find an earlier reference to the temple of the Sun in Kāmarūpa in the Mārkaṇḍeya, P(109). Yuan Chwang¹ refers to hundreds of deva temples during the 7th century A.D. The erection of temples as early as the 5th-6th century A.D. is proved by the remains of Dah Parvatīā. Epigraphy makes further references not only to the erection of temples but also to buildings of a secular nature. The

¹Walters, II, p.186.

Tezpur grant of Vanamāla (V24) states that the King repaired the fallen lofty temple of Śiva, and adorned it with the images of domesticated elephants and fair men. Ratnapāla "studded the earth with white-washed temples, enshrining Śambhū".¹ Vanamāla erected a row of palaces "which though having no equal in the world, stood equal on its ground, though not limited in rooms, possessed many rooms, and though gay with several ornamentation, were also finished with realistic pictures".² The city of Durjayā possessed such lofty buildings that the disc of the sun was hid (from view) by the thousands of plastered turrets which were rendered still whiter by the nector-like smiles of the love-drunk fair damsels standing on them".³

All types of art depended upon architecture;⁴ though the basis of architecture was religion,⁵ it would be a mistake to hold that no work of art or building was produced except to the service of deities. The reference we have made to the palatial buildings and the extant ruins, some of which may have belonged to secular art, do not justify the conclusion arrived at by B.K. Barua that "we have thus no information of the secular architecture of the period".⁶ It is worth noting that the remains that have so far been discovered from the province, point to the conclusion that no sharp distinction was drawn between temples dedicated to Viṣṇu,

¹Gauhāti Grant, V10.

²Nowgong Grant, V14.

³Bargāon Grant, Lines 31-32.

⁴Smith, E.R.E.C., pp.740-43.

⁵Ibid; also Grünwedel, Buddhist Art in India, p.1;

⁶Foucher, The Beginnings of Buddhistic Art, pp.10-13.

⁶Cultural History, I, p.168.



distinction was drawn between temples dedicated to Vishnu, ...
... Grant, VI. ...
... Grant, Lines 51-52. Smith, K. S. ...
... also Grunewald, Buddhist art in India, ...
... the beginning of Buddhist art, ...
... Cultural History, I, p. 108.

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Śiva, Devī and the like. Not only do we find remains of temples dedicated to different deities in a single spot, e.g. in Hājo and Tezpur, but also in a single structure, dedicated for instance to Śiva, we find sculptures and images, showing other deities. In Assam, as in other parts of India, therefore, hardly any distinction can be made between a shrine dedicated only to Śiva and one dedicated to Viṣṇu. In other words, the water-tight divisions of architecture into Śaivite, Viṣṇuite and the Buddhistic or the conception that the Viṣṇu shrine was only confined to Northern India and that of Śiva to Southern India, or that the Viṣṇu shrine is Indo-Aryan and the stupa Dravidian,¹ cannot be justified² on the basis of the ruins of Assam from our period.

2. Description of Architectural Remains.

A. Darrang: Ruins at Dah Parvatīā: The temple ruins at Dah Parvatīā provide one of the earliest specimens of architecture and stone carving in Assam, ascribed to the 5th-6th century A.D. The nature of the remains indicates that the temples were dedicated both to Śiva³ and Viṣṇu.⁴ The following specimens are important:

(i) Door-jams, containing in the lower part the beautifully executed figures of Gaṅgā and Yamunā, attended by females. At bottom of the jamb on the right are two female figures, one standing with a Cāmara and the other kneeling in

¹Ferguson, History of Architecture, Intro. p.14.

²Havell, Ancient and Medieval Architecture of India, pp.94,104.

³Dikshit, A.R. A.S.I. 1922-23, 119-20; Ibid, 1928-29, pp.45-46.

⁴R.D. Banerji, Ibid. 1924-25, pp.94-102; also K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S. II, pp.104-5.

front, with a flat receptacle containing flowers. A third female figure is seen with a Cāmara behind or to the right of the main figure. To the left of the halo there is a nāgī kneeling and to the right two geese flying towards the main figure. In the left jamb two similar figures of a nāgī and geese are depicted.

(ii) The upper part of each of these jambs is separated into four vertical bands, two of which are continued in the lintel. Each of these bands contains human figures, floral and foliage decorations.

(iii) Each of these bands at the top ends in a vase with ornamental foliage, hanging from its corner. A pilaster, square in section, rises from the vase and ends in a cruciform capital with a sprawling gaṇa on each side of its arms.

(iv) The lintel, which is also beautifully sculptured, appears to be larger in size than the door frame.

(v) Two of the inner bands of carving on the jambs are continued as horizontal bands at the bottom of the lintel. In the centre there is a beautiful flying figure holding a garland in his hands, representing Garuḍa.

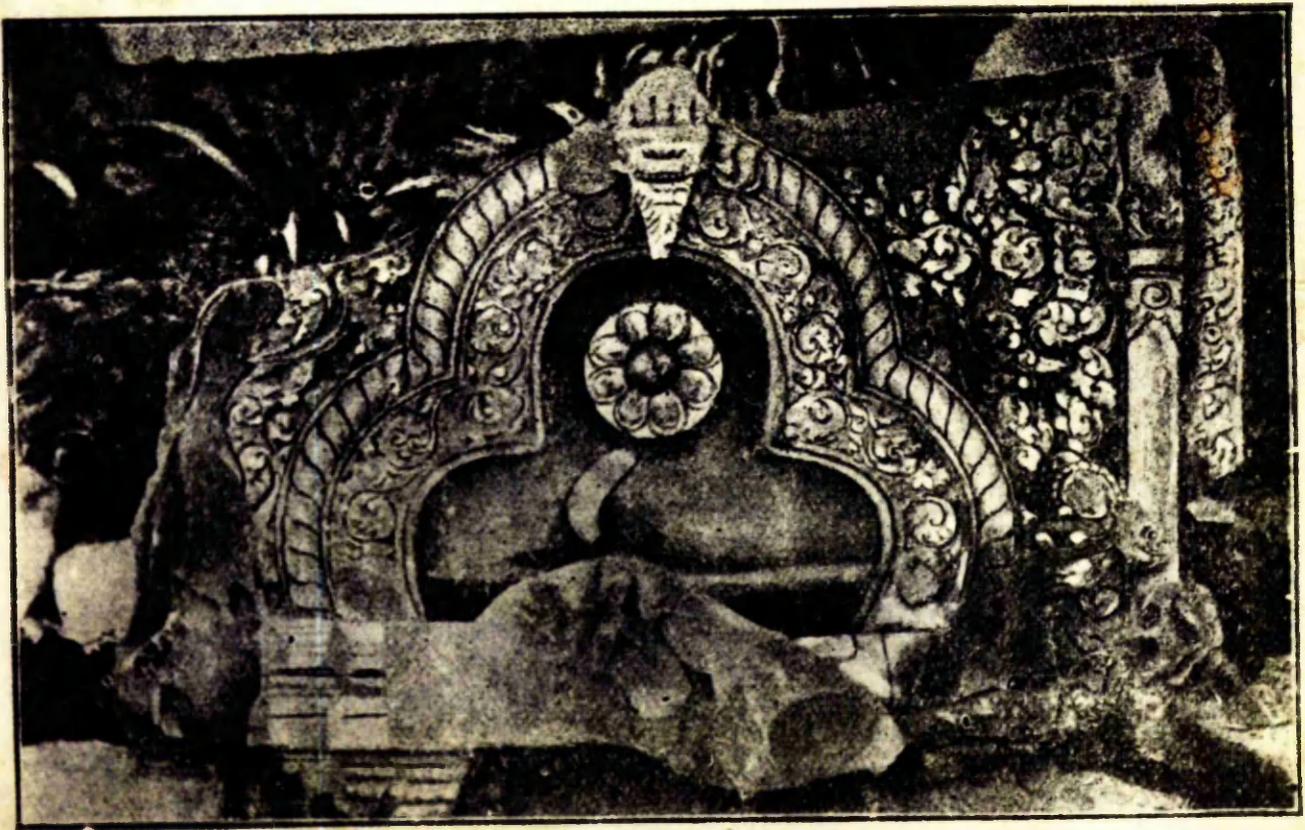
(vi) Above these two bands there is another, containing Chaitya window patterns and showing figures of Śiva, Kṛṣṇa and Sūrya.

(vii) In the vicinity of Dah Parvatīā there are a large number of mounds containing images of Viṣṇu, Bhairava, Hara-Gaurī and other deities.¹ The remains in the area

¹Diksīt, A.R.A.S.I., 1922-23, pp.119-20.

front, with a line receptacle containing flowers. A third
lower figure is seen with a female deity on the right
of the main figure. To the left of the main figure is a male
figure and to the right two female figures. In the left hand
figure. In the left hand two female figures of a male and

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(vi) Above these two there is a small, seated figure, containing
Chaitya window pattern and showing figures of five, four
and three.
(vii) In the vicinity of the Chaitya there are a large
number of niches containing images of Vishnu, Brahma,
Ishvara Gauri and other deities. The remains in the area

belong to the Gupta School of Art.¹

Bā Muni Hill Remains: Another important spot of varied archaeological interest is the Bā Muni Hill, lying near Tezpur, and the area still contains ruins of temples and specimens of sculptures of not later than the 8th-9th century A.D. Like those at Dah Parvatīā, the temples of this area were dedicated to different gods like Viṣṇu, Śiva, etc.² The remains belong to as many as seven shrines. The important specimens are as follows:

- (i) Some pavements inside the garbhagrhas of the larger shrines are still intact.
- (ii) An antarāla belonging to a larger temple, with a circular sculptured door step, intervenes between its sanctum and its maṇḍapa, which was gigantic in size like the shafts of pillars.
- (iii) A cross-shaped bracket and a huge lintel ornamented with horned Kirtimukhas.
- (iv) Door jambs with miniature temple patterns, floral and other designs.
- (v) Panels containing human figures and other ornamentations. The central panel contains the figures of the incarnations of Viṣṇu, Narasimha, Paraśurāma, Balarāma, Bour and Rāma.
- (vi) Many square brackets with oblong panels and bas-reliefs. One of them bears the figures of a male and a female.

¹R.D. Banerji, Ibid. 1924-25, pp.92-102.

²T. Bloch, A.R.A.S.I., 1906-7, p.18; R.D. Banerji, Ibid. 1924-25, pp.94f; Diksit, Ibid. 1928-29, p.44; Banerji, Ibid. 1925-26, pp.115-16.

(vii) There are other specimens with various decorative designs.

Tezpur Ruins: The modern town of Tezpur contains some of the most ancient and best remains of temples and buildings. Here also the shrines were dedicated to gods such as Sūrya, Śiva and even to the Buddha.¹ T. Bloch² rightly pointed out that the civil station of Tezpur, like that of Gauhāti, stands on large mounds which must have contained ruins of temples and ancient cities. The earliest reference to the remains was made by Westmacott.³ Dalton, describing them, came to the conclusion that the shrines were either left incomplete or demolished. He noticed some beautifully executed and decorated blocks of stone, which led him to remark that "the art had reached its culminating point".⁴ These may be assigned to temples dedicated to different deities, ranging from at least the 10th to the 12th century, A.D. The important specimens, divided into three sets of buildings, are as follows:

(i) The most remarkable sculptures of the first group are two shafts of pillars and a huge lintel. The shaft of one pillar is sixteen sided, indicating that the temple to which this belonged was a Śiva temple, as this kind of pillar is associated with a Śiva shrine.⁵ In the second pillar, the

¹Dalton, J.A.S.B., XXIV, p.19. ²A.R.A.S.I., 1906-7.

³J.A.S.B. IV, pp.186f.

⁴Dalton, J.A.S.B., XXIV, pp.10f.

⁵Havell, Ancient and Medieval Architecture of India, pp.55f.

upper part of the shaft is dodecagonal and near the top is divided into three horizontal bands. Both the pillars contain floral and other designs and in style belong to the same temple of the same period. The lintel is divided into two parts; the upper part contains miniature temple patterns with the phallic emblem of Śiva in each. The lower part is decorated with the figure of Gaṇeśa and other sculptured designs. The nature of the carvings indicates that the temple to which these remains belong was built during the 10th century A.D.¹

(ii) The second group of sculptures consists of specimens from a gigantic temple. The door sill and the lintel, which is huge in size, determines the size of the door frame. There are three raised panels on it, each of which is divided into a larger niche in the centre with a smaller one on each side. The panels contain the figures of Brahma, Sūrya and Śiva. The space between the raised panels depict six divine figures. The sill of the door frame is also gigantic in size, and shows a vase in the centre flanked by two lions. Each end is occupied by a niche showing a male and a female and flanked by a smaller and narrower niche on a corner depicting a human figure. The nature of the remains shows that a gigantic temple dedicated to Sūrya existed there.²

(iii) A number of carved stones or pieces of pillars, belonging to another temple. Most of the carved stones are from the plinth mouldings and string courses of a gigantic temple. The

¹R.D. Banerji, A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25, pp.90f.

²A.R.A.S.I. 1924-25, pp.90f.

string courses contain beautiful ornamentations. In the centre of some of the stone pieces there is a projecting niche flanked by round pilasters with divine figures. In some of the niches we find figures of Sarasvatī, Śiva and Durgā seated in their conventional style so common in North India. The outlines of plinth mouldings contain beautiful sculptured designs. The most remarkable specimen of the collection is a slab from the upper part of the plinth mouldings. It is divided into sunken panels by means of circular pilasters, each containing a male or a female, two males or two females. The figures are a man fighting with a lion, another man playing on a couch, another playing a drum and a female dancing, a man playing on a drum and another dancing. Another slab contains Chaitya window patterns. The second group of sculptures belong to a temple of the 12th century A.D.¹

(iv) Two other specimens from the area appear to belong to another temple. One of them is a stone jamb from a door and the second a slab with three sunken panels occupied by human or divine figures.²

Remains from Singri: The extensive ruins of temples at Singri belong to Buddhist, Śiva and Durgā shrines of about the 9th century A.D. and some of the specimens bear close resemblance to those at Deopānī and Numaligarh.³ Dalton noticed some of the remains and came to the conclusion that new shrines had

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³S. Katakī, J.A.R.S. IV, pp.93-95; Nath, Ibid, V, pp.109-112.

been built with the old materials belonging to a Buddhist shrine. The interior of the temple gives us an idea of the original plan.¹ The specimens from the area include carved stones, door frames, pillars, lotus carved stone blocks and other slabs, some containing amorous scenes, which indicate the influence of the Tāntrik-Buddhists on the sculptures.

Remains at Negheriting and Other Places: As at Singri, the nature of the ruins at Negheriting shows that new temples have been built with the old materials. The remains belong to a Śiva temple of about the 11th-12th century A.D.; there were probably other minor shrines dedicated to deities like Viṣṇu, Sūrya and Devī. A number of sculptural specimens were found in the locality.²

From Viśvanātha, Bihāli, Gomiri and the neighbouring places similar ruins of temples dedicated mainly to Śiva and Devī with their emblems and other sculptured specimens have been noticed.³ Almost similar ruins are found in Māyāpura and Ratnapura.⁴ In Chārduār remains of temples, blocks of stone, pillars and capitals with carvings were found.

Westmacott remarked on the basis of the extensive ruins that "the spot must have been the capital of a sovereign prince or a principal seat of the Hindu religion and enjoyed a large

¹Dalton, J.A.S.B. XXIV, pp.10-12.

²A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25, pp.94-102; Diksit, Ibid, 1923-24, pp. 34-35; 1928-29, pp.45-46.

³A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25, pp.94-102; Dalton, J.A.S.B., XXIV, pp. 20-21; Westmacott, J.A.S.B., IV, pp.190-91; W.N. Edwards, J.A.S.B., 1904 (Ex. No.) pp.16-19.

⁴D.N. Das, J.A.R.S.VIII, pp.43-49.

share of prosperity at some remote period".¹

B. Remains at Gauhāti and the District of Kāmarūpa:

The modern town of Gauhāti (ancient Prāggyotiṣapura) and its neighbouring places still contain remains of varied archaeological interest. The importance of the town is proved by the existing remains of temples and fortifications in a greater area, extending over miles. "The zeal and devotion of the age decorated every prominent point in this beautiful scene with a shrine or Chaitya in honour of the divinity or saint that hallowed it".² The city was well guarded by long walls and fortifications, with gateways of stone and brick. The old temples have been destroyed and new ones have been raised. The present hospital compound appears to have been the site of an old shrine of a gigantic dimension.³ Most of the remains now lie buried underground; but a few of the existing sculptured stones and images give us an idea of the immense number of structures that were built in the capital city under the patronage of the ruling families.

The antiquity of the shrine at Kāmākhyā is well known. The place lies at a distance of about two miles from Gauhāti. Though the original shrine has been destroyed, some of the older remains show the archaeological importance of this

¹J.A.S.B. IV, pp.186f.

²Dalton, J.A.S.B. XXIV, pp.1-4.

³Ibid.

small hill of Kāmā-Khyā. The temple held a high position among the religious centres of ancient Assam. The remains belong to different periods of history beginning with the 7th-8th century A.D. Some of the capitals of pillars are of gigantic size, indicating that the temple to which these belonged was as large as the sun temple of Tezpur.¹ The ancient remains² consist of the following:

- (i) Carved blocks of stone and well decorated capitals.
- (ii) The lower part of the sanctum of the temple, still in good preservation, consists of sunken panels with beautiful carvings.
- (iii) The pit at the back of the shrine contains ruins belonging to different periods of history beginning with the 8th century A.D.
- (iv) The remains include well decorated stone blocks and rock-cut images. Beautiful carvings on the western gateway of the temple depict domestic scenes, such as a householder doing his worship, while his wife is suckling her child, and a woman worshipper is kneeling and pouring water from a vessel into the mouth of an animal.³

About three miles from Kāmā-Khyā lies Pāṇḍu which also contains remains of temples and images.⁴ Temple ruins and

¹A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25, pp.100f.

²Diksīt, Ibid, 1923-24, pp.80-81; Ramachandran and Diksīt, Ibid, 1930-34, p.129; Ramachandran, Ibid, 1936-37, pp.54f.

³A.R.A.S.I. 1924-25, 100f.; 1936-37, 54f.

⁴Diksīt, Ibid, 1923-24, 80-81.

sculptured specimens lie scattered in Umānanda, Aśvakrānta, Urvaśī, Maṇikarṇeśvara, Śukreśvara, Navagraha and other places near Gauhāti.¹

Lying at a distance of 14 miles from Gauhāti, the Madan-Kāmadeva Parvat, contains ruins of shrines which, in the opinion of Dalton contained as many as eighteen in number.² The main shrine was dedicated to Śiva. The basement of the old temple is all that is now found. The important specimens in the area include stone images of Madana and Rati, seated in a position of embrace, recalling the influence of Tāntrikism; other specimens are decorated slabs, stone walls, brick pieces, broken pillars, capitals and bases, some containing human figures in obscene attitude, animal and floral designs.³

The shrine at Hājo, dedicated to various Hindu and Buddhist deities has as great an importance as Kāmākhyā in the religious and art history of Assam. An early reference to a Buddhist shrine there was made by Dalton, who noticed that the present temple of Hayagrīva was built with old materials and upon an old Buddhist site. The temple ruins at Hājo, like that of Kedāranātha contain beautifully executed sculptures with animal and floral designs.⁴ The nature of the remains makes it certain that Hājo was an ancient site of the worship of the

¹Ibid, 1924-25, 100f.; Dalton, J.A.S.B. XXIV, 4-5; K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S. II, 104-5; S.Kataki, I.H.Q. VI, 364-72.

²J.A.S.B. XXIV, 7-8. ³T.K. Sarma, J.A.R.S. X, 82-83.

⁴J.A.S.B. XXIV, 8-10; Kataki, J.A.R.S. II, 92f.

sun, Hayagrīva Mādhava, the Buddha and other deities of Śaktism.

Extensive ruins of temples, along with sculptured blocks, probably three in number lie scattered on the bank of the Seese river. Dalton noticed figures of the Buddha along with those of Durgā and Gaṇeśā among the ruins and came to the conclusion that the site originally contained Buddhist shrines, but subsequently it formed a centre of the Śakti faith.¹

About 30 miles to the south west of Gauhāti in South Kāmarūpa there are remains of a group of temples, probably three; a large number of well decorated stone slabs are lying in the area. The first temple was built of granite with a pyramidal roof. The sculptures consist of human, animal and floral designs. The nature of the remains indicates that the spot contained Śiva and Durgā shrines.²

C. Ruins from Goālpārā: The modern district of Goālpārā contains scattered remains of temples and buildings. The place called Yogīghopā still contains some relics recalling the influence of Tāntrik-Buddhism. These appear to be contemporary with the specimens from Kāmākhyā and Pāṇḍu of the 9th-10th century A.D.³ There are remains of Buddhist shrines in the area.⁴ In Dekdhowā there are some stones

¹J.A.S.B. XXIV, 21-24.

²Ibid, 5-7.

³A.R.A.S.I, 1928-29, 143-44.

⁴Kataki, J.A.R.S. (April), 1934

with the carvings of Viṣṇupada and Dharmacakra. In Dekāidol there are remains of large stone cooking vessels. In Marnai there are remains of a brick built structure; one stone piece shows Nandi. In Pañcaratna there are ruins of an old Buddhist shrine. In Tukreśvari, Dudhnāth and Mahāmāyā there are ruins of Śakti shrines. In Sūrya Pāhār there are relics of Sūrya temples, including those of Viṣṇu, Śiva and Devī.¹ The remains from the district point to the influence of the non-Aryans on the Hindu and Buddhist art.

D. Nowgong Ruins: The present district of Nowgong contains enormous ruins of temples and buildings, which may be placed between A.D. 600 and 1200. The remains in the area show that the shrines were dedicated to different deities, and some of the specimens indicate strong non-Aryan influence.² The following areas reveal architectural remains:-

Gosāijuri. The place contains 8 mounds and each of them shows various ruins of temples, built of stone and bricks, and blocks of stone which depict beautiful specimens of sculptures, containing human figures and animal and floral designs. The nature of the ruins indicates that the area contained shrines dedicated to Śiva and Viṣṇu.

Ākāsīgāṅgā. The place lies at a distance of seven miles from Davāka. The area contains ruins of pillars, capitals, door lintels, perforated windows, āmalakas, sills, jambs, pedestals, etc. some containing beautifully executed divine,

¹Kataki, J.A.R.S. (April) 1934.

²A.R.A.S.I., 1936-37, 54f.; J.A.R.S., V, 14f.

human, animal and floral designs. One door piece shows a dvārapāla, a dancer and a female worshipper. The nature of the ruins shows that the spot contained shrines of Śiva and Viṣṇu.

Gāchtala. The place lies at a distance of two miles from Davāka and contains remains of two Śiva shrines, ascribed to the 10th-11th Century A.D. The remains include beautifully executed pillars, bases, capitals etc., containing divine, human, animal and floral designs.

Mikir Āti: The remains in the place belong to seven shrines, dedicated to both Viṣṇu and Śiva and contain blocks of stone bearing divine figures.

Śitajakhali and Mahādeocal. Both the places contain remains of Śiva shrines and blocks of stone bearing divine and human figures and floral designs. One door piece shows three figures, a dvārapāla, a female worshipper and a dancing figure; an architrave is seen with the facsimiles of temple śikharas or cupolic domes on the top layers, with foliage decorations.

Vasundharī and Mathorbari. There are similar remains in both the places and the nature of the ruins indicates that a Viṣṇu temple existed there.

Chāngchauki. The remains from the places include variously carved blocks of stone; one door-piece contains figures of a dvārapāla, a dancer and a female worshipper; another slab shows a pair of mithans in embrace.

Kāwaimāri. The remains from the area reveal the existence

of a big temple and include stone pieces bearing various human, animal and floral designs.

Yogījān. The place contains extensive remains of temples, probably five, of Śiva (Pañca Rudras).

Āmtala. The place is near Hojāi and contains ruins of Śiva temples along with a number of sculptured blocks of stone, bearing divine, animal and floral designs. Similar ruins are lying in Ḍavāka.

Moudaṅgā.¹ About ten miles to the east of Ḍavāka is Moudaṅgā and in its neighbourhood is Maṭhorbari. The area contains extensive remains of temples, dedicated to different deities, and blocks of stone bearing various sculptural designs. All these remains, including those from the different places of the valley of the Kapili and the Yamunā may be ascribed to a period between the 9th to the 12th century A.D.

Urdhagaṅgā. In the area there are remains of varied archaeological interest with tanks. The nature of the ruins indicates that a Devī temple existed there.²

Badgaṅgā.³ Another place of archaeological interest is Badgaṅgā. The remains in the area indicate that both Śiva and Viṣṇu shrines existed there; a number of carved blocks of stone, bearing divine and human figures and floral designs, are lying in the area.

Mahāmāyāthān. The remains in the area include stone pieces with variously decorated designs; one square pillar bearing

¹J.A.R.S., VI, 34-37

²J.A.R.S., V, 14f.

³Ibid.

the engraving of a lotus is found. Such pillars are associated with a shrine dedicated to Brahma.¹ There are others with decorations. The nature of the remains indicates that temples, dedicated to both Viṣṇu and Devī, existed in the area.²

Similar remains are found in Hōjai, Budhāgosāithān and Hātīmurā.³

Nabhaṅgā and Kendugurī. Throughout the area and further east at Dekāpati there are extensive ruins of temples and brick edifices.⁴ There are others in the Bhoi-Parvat and Tetelipukhuri; about 7 miles to the south east of the Mahāmāyā Hill there are remains of earth embankments, ruins of temples and tanks. There are blocks of stone with decorative designs. One door-lintel depicts scenes similar to those from Tezpur and Dah Parvatīā. The remains in the area, therefore, may be ascribed to the 9th century A.D. if not earlier.⁵

Tarāvasā. The place contains remains of temples, which include broken pillars and other stone pieces with decorations.

Phulanī and Dīghalpānī. There are remains of temples, brick embankments and tanks in the area. Some blocks of stone show various divine figures and other designs.

¹Havell, Ancient and Medieval Architecture, 55f.

²J.A.R.S., V, 14f.

³K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S. II, p.12.

⁴Nath, J.A.R.S., VI, 34-37.

⁵Nath, J.A.R.S. VIII, 85f.

B. Sivasāgar. Deopānī and Numaligarh Remains.

The existing remains of temples, brick-built edifices and others in the area show that extensive temples and buildings, dedicated to different gods like Śiva and Viṣṇu existed here, ranging from the 9th to the 12th century A.D.¹ Some of the important sculptures appearing on stone blocks, pillars, capitals, bases, toraṇa gateways, etc. show divine, human and animal figures and floral designs. Some stone friezes in the area depict epic stories and interesting domestic scenes. One frieze with panels shows Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, and Sugrīva kneeling before Rāma; Hanumān and another monkey are watching the scene with reverence with their folded hands. Another frieze shows a royal archer shooting a couple of deer in coition. The scene recalls the story of Pāṇḍu, who was cursed to die with his sexual desires unfulfilled.² It is really a sage and his wife in the guise of deer. The third frieze shows a woman in her toilet, a man dragging a fallen woman where another is thrashing her, while another woman is dissuading him, and a man shown with a raised mace. Another frieze with four panels shows an ascetic pushing a goat before him, another ascetic is dancing, and a seated woman in an ecstatic mood. In the sixth frieze worshippers are shown sitting with folded hands, or in viṣmaya, or holding flowers. Another frieze with two panels

¹A.R.A.S.I., 1936-37, 54f.; Hannay, J.A.S.B., 1948, 460-70; Nath, J.A.R.S., VIII, 130-134.

²A.R.A.S.I., 1930-37, 54f.

depicts a fight between two warriors; other scenes in the frieze are a horseman, a seated woman, another playing a flute, a bearded dvārapāla, elephants, plants, foliage and bead courses, conch, flowers, a seated man, caring for his family, and worshippers in different poses.

Remains of pillars, bases, brick pieces, capitals, etc. with various designs are lying scattered in and around Deopānī and Numaligarh. Two of the carvings from Numaligarh are specimens of local art. One represents a lion, which has on the top an inscription in Nāgarī characters. One pillar piece shows a Garuḍa, advancing towards an ascetic in a threatening attitude. The scene depicts the story of the garvabhaṅga of Garuḍa as given in the Mahābhārata.¹

F. Dimāpur Ruins. We have mentioned elsewhere some of the monuments of this non-Aryan centre of culture; we have also pointed to the influence of Hindu art on some of the remains.² Besides the monoliths, the ancient Kachāri capital Dimāpur contains other ruins of temples and buildings, embankments and tanks. "It is a strange sight to see," remarks Johnstone, "the relics of a forgotten civilisation in the midst of a pathless forest."³ The entrance gateway was beautifully executed and the palatial building of the capital was in good preservation till recent times. There are scattered blocks of stone and brick pieces with various designs.⁴

¹A.R.A.S.I., 1936-37, 54f. ²Chap. III, pp. 105f.

³My Experiences, etc. pp.8f.

⁴Godwin Austen, J.A.S.B., 1872, I, 2-3; A.R.A.S.I., 1906-7, 19f.; Grange, J.A.S.B., IX, II, 954 f.; Brown Wood, J.A.S.B., XIII, II, 772.

G. Ruins at Sadiyā. In the extreme north east region of Assam lies Sadiyā, ancient Kundīna, where remains of temples and buildings, including the Copper Temple dedicated to Devī, are yet to be found.¹ On the walls and buildings of temples there are various sculptured designs, including human figures, animals, birds, flowers, geometrical designs, and some are depicted in erotic style like those at Dimāpur. Another link connecting the ruins with those at Dimāpur is noticed in the capitals and bases of pillars.²

One of the jambs of the gateway of the temple has the carving of a Śiva līṅga and a number of carved stones contain figures of various designs, recalling the medieval art of India. The area was probably occupied by Hindus before its occupation by the Tibeto-Burmans or the Chutiās, and it is likely that an advance section of the Alpines or early Aryans inhabited the area. The influence of non-Aryan art and the human sacrifice associated with the Copper temple were perhaps due to the migration of Tibeto-Burmans to the region. In fine, the relics of the Sadiyā region show the mixture of the Aryan and non-Aryan elements in some early period. Bloch is right in suggesting "that the country, east of Sadiyā was at former time better known to and in closer touch with the Aryan population of North India than at present."³ In the neighbourhood of Sadiyā lies the Parasurāmakunda and the sanctity of the

¹L.W. Shakespeare, History of Upper Assam, etc., 82-84; Rowlatt, J.A.S.B., XIV, II, 478-79, 494; Hannay, J.A.S.B., XVII, I, 559-62, 571.

²Bloch, A.R.A.S.I. 1904-5, 7-8.

³Ibid, 1906-7, 25f.

place "dates from a time when the ancient city of Bhīṣmaka-nagara was inhabited and formed perhaps the seat of the governor of one of the frontier provinces of Assam".¹

3. Other Remains. There are besides ancient relics of pottery, terra cotta figurines and remains of fortifications, embankments, tanks and stone-bridges from different parts of the province. We have mentioned a few specimens of earthen pots and plates in dealing with prehistoric archaeology. The best specimens from the historical period are found in Dah Parvatīā. The terra cotta plaques from the area show a close similarity with the art of Bengal. They resemble those from Birhāt, Rāyपुर and Pākārpur in the Rājshāhi district. The best one shows a human figure in each case. "The moulding of the torso and the general technique proves beyond doubt that these plaques are contemporary with, if not older than, those discovered at Pākārpur and cannot be later than the sixth century A.D. One fragment shows that human figures reveal the existence of a modified form of acanthus motif in this distant corner of Assam. This device has been noticed in the Gupta temples at Bhumara, Nachnakuthara and Deogarh".² Dalton noticed from the ruins at Tezpur some urns of black pottery ornamented with flowers.³ Specimens of earthen wares were

¹Ibid.

²R.D. Banerji, A.R.A.S.I., 1925-26, pp.115-16; Charu Chandra Das Gupta, J.A.S.B. (Letters), IV, pp.67f.; The Age of the Imperial Guptas, pp.207-8.

³J.A.S.B. XXIV, pp.12-17.

discovered from the ruins of the Sadiyā region, which bear close similarity to those found in the Gangetic valley.¹

We have several specimens of megalithic stone bridges from the Jaintiā Hills, North Cāchār and other places.² They were made of a huge block or blocks of stone, requiring considerable engineering skill for the removal from one place to the other and permanent setting. One of the finest ancient specimens is from North Gauhāti, an early reference to which is made by the historians of the invasion of Bakhtiyar.³ It is an extraordinary piece of stone work, "a stone carpentry; we have posts, beams and planks represented by columns, architraves and slabs".⁴ It "is of solid masonry, built without lime or mortar. There are no arches, the superstructure being a platform with a slight curve, 140 ft. long and 8 ft. in breadth".⁵ In the opinion of Hannay "the work is one of great strength and solidarity. The design and style of architecture of this bridge evidently belongs to a remote period - and in its original structure at least must be coeval with the Brāhmanical temples, the remains of which we find so widely scattered throughout the length and breadth of Assam".⁶

Remains of ancient tanks, fortifications and embankments have been traced in places like Gauhāti, Tezpur, Dimāpur,

¹Hannay, J.A.S.B., XVII, I, pp.459f. ²Chap. III, pp 101f

³Raverty, pp.569f.

⁴J.A.S.B.,XXIV, pp.1f.

⁵Hannay, J.A.S.B.,XX, pp.291-94.

⁶J.A.S.B., XX, pp.291-94.

Nowgong, Sadiyā and the like. We have discussed elsewhere the fortifications from our period.¹ The fortress of Agniparvat in Tezpur, attributed to Bāṇa throws "a sidelight on the method of architecture or the skill of the masons in those far away days of antiquity".² Extensive ruins of an ancient fortification, known as Vaidargarh still lie in Betnāmouzā in Kāmarūpa, attributed to Ārimatta (alias Vaidyadeva)³ In the Dhamdhamā mouzā in Kāmarūpa there are traces of another embankment, called Pheṅguāgarh, attributed to Pheṅguā. Pr̥thu, another king of Kāmarūpa, built an extensive fortification as a defence against the invasion of Bakhtiyar in Jalpāiguri.⁴

A tank of the name of Kubhāṇḍa, minister of Bāṇa, still exists in Tezpur; Harjjarapukhuri, is another tank, paved with stones, recalling the name of the King Harjjara of the 9th century A.D.⁵ At a little distance from the latter tank are the remains of stone temples, pillars and slabs and to the north-west of Harjjarapukhuri is another tank, known as Balipukhuri. All these, including the Dīghalī tank at Gauhāti belong to an early period.⁶ There are a large number of tanks and earthen embankments in the Viśvanātha area, attributed to Ārimatta. The embankment ran from Pratāpapura to the Dafalā range for about 12 miles. There are other fortifications at the foot of the Dafalā Hills, consisting of stone walls, carved

¹Political History, Sec. 5, pp. 482 f.

²P. Bhattacharya, V (N.S.) pp.19-20.

³A.C. Bhattacharya, J.A.R.S., III, pp.12f.

⁴Glazier's report on the District of Rangpur, p.8.

⁵S. Katakī, I.H.Q. VI, pp.364-372. ⁶K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S., II, pp.104-5

with marks resembling those at Sadiyā. Among the ruins at Pratāpgarh there are remains of earthen embankments extending over miles. In the centre of the enclosure of about 2½ miles there is a large fort consisting of exceedingly high earth-works. It appears that this was the citadel of the town; to the north-east of the citadel is an enclosure of about 100 ft. square laid with bricks with carved stones inside.¹ Similar remains of fortifications are lying in Māyāpura and Rātnapura, ascribed to Rāmachandra. This is in confirmation of a Dafalā tradition that an ancient King of Assam built a fort there and it is said that Ārimatta attacked the fort and killed his father. Māyamatta or Rāmachandra's kingdom extended from Bhālukpong to Mājuli.² In the Sadiyā region there are similar remains of ramparts of stones, bricks and earth. These, like those at Visvanātha and Ratnapura "were intended to enclose the tableland at the foot of the hills and thus form a place of refuge in times of invasion".³ The whole work of the rampart, laid without cement or fastening, shows great skill in masonry and engineering. The ruins cover an area of about ten to twelve miles.⁴

All these remains indicate that the masons, engineers and artisans of ancient Assam showed skill equal to that of the artists in the erection of their monuments and the

¹W.N. Edwards and H.H. Mann, J.A.S.B., 1904, I, pp.254-261; W.N. Edwards, J.A.S.B., 1904 (Extra No.) pp.20-21; Dalton, J.A.S.B. XXIV, pp.20-21; Westmacotta, J.A.S.B. IV, pp.190-91.

²Dwarika Nath Das, J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.43-49.

³Hannay, J.A.S.B., XVII, I, pp.459f.

⁴Ibid.

execution of artistic designs.

4. Some Important Sculptural Designs.

As the description of the extensive remains proves we have evidence of different structures and designs such as dome-like stupas, pyramidal roofs, sikhara and arch or chaitya window patterns, pillars, capitals, shafts, āmalakas, bases, foliages, rosettes, trefoils, floral designs like those of the lotus, acanthus, meandering creepers, scroll-work, geometrical designs and other devices depicting divine and human figures, animals, makaras, kīrtimukhas, birds, serpents, insects, etc. An attempt has been made to trace the origin of these various structures and designs, like Viṣṇu's Sikhara, Siva's stupa, Chaitya windows, etc. to the Vedic rituals, sacrificial altars and houses, mounds and the like.¹ In the opinion of Havell, Vedic thought, philosophy and rituals have determined the art and architecture of India. The stupa for instance is derived from Vedic rituals such as the pitṛmedha. The sikhara stands for the chimney at the top of the sacrificial chamber. It is derived from the bamboo construction, having its origin, like the stupa, in the valley of the Euphrates where a section of the Aryans once dwelt.² But opinions differ on the origin of these designs.³ Whatever their origin, it is

¹P.K. Acharya, Hindu Architecture in India and Abroad, pp.44f. 409f.; Indian Architecture, pp.7, 127-28; Dictionary of Hindu Architecture, pp.588f.; I.C. VIII, pp.89f.; I.C.I, pp.393-94; I.H.Q., I, pp.188-218.

²Havell, A Handbook of Indian Art, pp.7, 12-13, 56f.; The Ideal of Indian Art, pp.1f.; Ancient and Medieval Architecture of India, pp.42f., 63f.; Indian Architecture - Its Psychology etc. p.98.; C. Batley, Architecture (Oxford Pamphlets on Indian Affairs) No. 35, pp.20f.

³Smith, Fine Art in India and Ceylon, p.23; Macdonell, J.R.S.A., March, 1909.

certain that the non-Aryans made a substantial contribution in the evolution of both architectural and sculptured designs.¹ This is substantiated from the nature of the remains of Assam, we have described. Not only in the remains of places like Dimāpur and Sadiyā but also those from Tezpur, Nowgong and Deopānī, we have traced the influence of non-Aryan art.

Pyramidal domes and roofs, associated with the shrine of Śiva have been noticed among the temple ruins in South Kāmarūpa, remains on the bank of the Seese river, Tezpur² and other areas. Miniature temples of the Śikhara type are noticed in Kāmākhyā.³ Stone architraves from Ākāśi-Gaṅgā⁴ and Śitaja-Khali⁵ in Nowgong show beautiful specimens of Śikhara temple designs.

A Chaitya window in its origin represents a shrine or place of worship or any image including a religious inscription;⁶ the remains from Assam provide a number of instances of the type. Chaitya window-patterns occur on many temple ruins. It is like the shape of a lotus leaf or the leaf of a pipal tree, standing symbolically for Brahma or Śiva, and is associated with the figure of a deity.⁷ Chaitya window

¹Kramrisch, *Ancient Indian Sculpture*, pp.127f.; A.K. Coomeraswami, *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, p.107; *A History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, Chap. I.

²Dalton, *J.A.S.B.*, XXIV, pp.5-24. ³*A.R.A.S.I.*, 1923-24, pp.80-81

⁴*Ibid.*, 1936-37, pp.54f.

⁵*J.A.R.S.* V, pp.14f.

⁶Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, pp.21,91; Codrington, *Ancient India*, p.23; Smith, *Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, p.23; Havell, *Ancient and Medieval Architecture of India*, pp.63f.; Dikshitar, *I.H.Q.*, XIV, pp.440-451; B.C.Law, *Geography of Early Buddhism*, (App.); Stevenson, *History of Jainism*, p.280.

⁷~~*A.R.A.S.I.*, 1924-25, pp.94f.~~ Havell, *Ancient & Medieval Architecture* pp 63f

patterns are shown on the door jambs of Dah Parvatīā. The central Chaitya window from the place is the largest of all which is occupied by the figure of Śiva and has a suparna, a mythical deity on either side.¹ A slab from Tezpur bears on it a conventional representation of the Chaitya window pattern.² Stone pieces of what are called toraṇa gateways are lying scattered in Deopānī; one consists of a pyramidal bracket with a bold design of sinuous lines; another is in the shape of a śikhara, formed by a kīrtimukha and foliage issuing from it. The third one shows a śikhara of foliage with āmalaka and lotus-bud finial flanked by deities.³

Opinion differs about the origin of the designs of pillars, āmalakas, capitals, shafts, abacus, vases, bases, etc. of which we find a large number from the scattered ruins with various ornamentations. Square shafted pillars are associated with the shrine of Brahma, octagonal with that of Viṣṇu and circular or sixteen sided with Śiva.⁴ Capitals represent the inverted petals of a lotus so as to enclose the fruit or the seed-vessel which has a special significance as the hiranyagarbha or the womb of the universe. The base stands for the sacred jar or the fruit of the lotus and just as the śikhara stands for Viṣṇu's shrine, representing the holy mount Meru, āmalaka is also the blue lotus of

¹A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25, pp.94f. ²Ibid, pp.90f.

³Ibid, 1936-37, pp.54f.

⁴Havell, Ancient and Medieval Architecture of India, pp.55f.

Visnu.¹ The lotus is associated with all deities and used as an ornamentation in all sculptured specimens of Assam as in other parts of India. It symbolises the idea of the divine birth.² It is perhaps unnecessary to ascribe the origin of the so called bell-shaped capital to Persian or Hellenistic influence as done by some writers.³ Not only the capital,⁴ but also pillars, bases, shafts, etc. can be explained with reference to the application of the lotus symbol. The vase forming the base of a pillar stands for cosmic water; the shaft is the stalk of the flower; the capital is the universe itself, unfolded by the petals of the sky; the fruit is mokṣa and the altar is the heaven.⁵

As we have stated, the lotus is associated with every work of our sculpture, either as the āsana of deities or as ornamentation. This, as well as other floral designs including the rosettes, foliages, meandering creepers, trefoil and scroll-work ornamentations are best illustrated from our extensive remains. The floral patterns of the bands on the door jams of Dah Parvatīā show their excellent execution. The upper part of each of the jambs is separated into narrow

¹Havell, *Ancient and Medieval Architecture*, pp.42f. 55f. 63f.; *A Handbook of Indian Art*, pp.42f.

²Macdonell, *E.R.E.* VIII, pp.142-44; Waddell, *Ibid*, p.144.

³Fergusson, *Indian and Eastern Architecture*, I, p.59; Marshall, *Ibid*, 56-61; A.K. Roy, *I.H.Q.* V, pp.693-99; R.L. Mitra, *Antiquities of Orissa*, I, p.17; Chandra, *M.A.S.B.* No. 41, pp.34-35; A.K. Mitra, *I.H.Q.* VII, pp.213-44.

⁴Coomeraswami, *I.H.Q.* VI, pp.373-75; *Early Indian Iconography*, II; *Lakṣmī in Eastern Art*, I, pp.178f.; O.C. Ganguly, *I.H.Q.* XI, p.135.

⁵Havell, *A Handbook of Indian Art*, pp.42f.

vertical bands. The first of these shows a meandering creeper with beautiful foliage in the interspaces, and the second of a straight vertical stem from which issue a number of lotus leaves and other flowers.

The third band is made up of four superimposed panels bearing ornamental foliage. Each of the bands on the top ends in a vase with ornamental foliage hanging from its corner. The fourth band consists of a vertical row of ornamental rosettes.¹ The band on the left jamb from the Bāmunī Hills bears a meandering creeper pattern and that on the right a row of rosettes, alternately square and round, showing excellent execution.² A band on a shaft of pillar from Tezpur contains a series of diamond shaped rosettes. The door lintel from Tezpur in its lower part depicts vertical bands containing meandering creepers and two others consisting of rosettes.³ Some carved stones from Tezpur contain sunken panels containing ornamental rosettes and meandering creepers.⁴ The ornamentations in the plinth mouldings from the same place show diamond shaped and circular rosettes.⁵ On one side of the pit at Kāmākhyā there is a slab with the beautiful carvings of a meandering creeper issuing from the hands of a dwarf.⁶ A stone piece from Ākāśī-Gaṅgā shows beautiful courses of rosaries over a tilaka design placed in its line between two leaves.⁷ A piece of a cornice from Āntala shows

¹A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25, pp.94f.

²Ibid, 1925-26, pp.115-16.

³Ibid, 1924-25, pp.90f.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid, 1923-24, pp.100f.

⁷Ibid, 1936-37, pp.54f.

the designs of bead and acanthus foliages.¹ The ceiling slab from Deopānī bears in artistic finish the carving of an embossed lotus, and its seed vessel bears in relief the figure of a beautifully executed Vidyādhara.² Stone fragments from Numaligarh show clusters of lotus bands with long stalks and a central full-bloom lotus, the whole issuing from a pond.³ Some panels on the door jambs from the Bāmūnī Hills show trefoil arch designs with lotus leaves and scroll-work mouldings and schematic tracery.⁴ Stone pieces from Gosāijuri bear frontal friezes with the design of foliages inset between rosaries. Another pillar piece shows designs of gavākṣas (circle windows), surmounted by trefoils.⁵

Another important ornamentation is the geometrical design on the walls and jambs of temples. The design with its three sides stands symbolically for the three powers of will, knowledge and action or three aspects of the one, embodied in a divine form. The two triangles intersecting each other make the six petalled padma symbol of the mystic divine embrace, indicating the act of creation.⁶ It is like the Yantras of the Tāntrik-Buddhists, who held a position of influence in the province. The motif occurs not only on the monoliths of the non-Aryan centres like Dimāpur, Kasomāri and Sadiyā,⁷ but also in other Brāhmanical and Buddhist art.

¹J.A.R.S. V, pp.14f.

³Ibid.

⁵Ibid. 1936-37, pp.54f.

⁶Havell, Indian Sculpture and Painting, pp.29f.

⁷Bloch, A.R.A.S.I., 1904-5.

²A.R.A.S.I., 1936-37, pp.54f.

⁴Ibid, 1925-26, pp.115-116;
1928-29, p.44.

Dalton made an early reference to a ceiling decoration with this design in Tezpur, which bears a pattern of circles within circles.¹ The interior of the sunken panels from Tezpur is entirely covered with geometrical patterns with a half-rosette in the centre.²

In the execution of the divine, human, animal, bird and other figures the sculptors showed their sense of proportion and skill. A brief reference may be made to the makara and kīrtimukha design, so common in the sculptures of Assam as in other parts of India.³ The origin of the motif is given in the Skanda P.⁴ A huge lintel from the Bāmuni Hills is ornamented with horned kīrtimukhas.⁵ The shaft of one of the pillars from Tezpur is ornamented with kīrtimukhas at the top and the lower with dentils. The bands on the shaft of another pillar contain the same designs, and the carved stones from the same area are ornamented with kīrtimukhas.⁶ The same motif is found in Yogījān and Chāngchauki,⁷ Sīngri⁸ and other places. It is common also in Java and China.⁹ Those from the ruins of Deopānī "bear a strong resemblance to the kīrtimukhas of Java, while those occurring on the coping pieces are remarkably akin to the Javanese ones and provided like the latter with eyes having hornlike sockets".¹⁰ The

¹J.A.S.B., XXIV, pp.12-17.

²A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25, pp.90f.

³See Rupam, No. I, 1920.

⁴Basumati Ed., II, pp.1182-1183.

⁵A.R.A.S.I. 1925-26, pp.115-6.

⁶Ibid, 1924-25, pp.90f.

⁷J.A.R.S., V, pp.14f.

⁸J.A.R.S., V, 109-112; IV, pp.93-

⁹A. Marchall, J.I.S.O.A., VI, pp.97-105; Stutterheim, Indian Art and Letters, III, pp.27-52.

¹⁰A.R.A.S.I. 1936-37, pp.54f.

makara ornamentation occurs on the Chaitya windows from Dah Parvatīā¹ and other ruins.

5. Icons.

The worship of deities in their iconographic forms goes back to an early period in India;² whatever its antiquity, both iconism and aniconism went side by side, and even after the introduction of image worship, the deities were represented in their symbols, like the footprint or tree representing the Buddha, the liṅga and yoni for Śiva and Devī, etc. In Assam both these representations are found, and the earliest evidence of icons of the 5th century A.D. is known from the ruins of Dah Parvatīā and other places.

Ancient Indian texts mention icons of various deities in their different poses and mudrās,³ and the specimens from Assam show almost all these varieties.

Most deities are found with more than their usual heads and hands. This indicates the symbolic nature and attributes of deities and the same symbolism lies in the weapons or articles held in their hands.⁴

¹Ibid, 1924-25, pp.94f.

²Marshall, M.I.V.C., I, 52-59, 66-67; MacKay, Further Excavations at Mahenjodaro, I, 258f, 336; Vats, Excavations at Harappa, I, 42, 129, 304; Chanda, Medieval Sculptures in the B. Museum, p.9; Muir, Sans. Texts, 453f.; Keith, Religion of India, 60f.; Hopkins, Religion of India, 370f.; Rao, Elements, I, I, 2; Bollenson, J.G.O.S., XXII, 587f.; A.C. Das, Rig Vedic Culture, 145-146; H.J.N.Banerji, Dev. of Hindu Iconography, 47-69; Venkatesvara, J.R.A.S., 1917, 587-92; 1918, 519-26; Bloomfield, Religion of the Veda, 89.

³Rao, Elements, I, I, Intro. pp.14f.

⁴Codrington, Ancient India, Intro. p.5; Kramrisch, Ancient Indian Sculpture, p.7; Venkatesvara, I.H.Q., III, 298f. Coomeraswami, M.R, 1912, 482f.; Rao, Elements, I, I, Intro. 27-30; (contd. on p. 730)

It will appear that most of the icons are not based on all details given in the texts, and, like the architectural designs and sculptures, they are sometimes represented independently of the texts.¹ Moreover, their representation varied from place to place, according to such local usages as are described in the Brhatsamhitā. This is illustrated from different icons of the province. In view of the damaged condition of most of the images, we may not be in a position to ascribe a definite date to them and some of our identifications may not be certain.

A. Icons of the Buddha. The Buddhist remains from ancient Assam are no doubt few, and only a few icons of the Buddha have been discovered. Nonetheless the statement of B.K. Barua that the Buddhist faith did not prevail in the land and that archaeology has not produced any evidence of importance², is not supported by the existing materials. We have shown elsewhere on the basis of both literature and remains that the faith existed in Kāmarūpa.³

At least two icons of the Buddha ascribed to the 10th-11th century A.D. have been found. One of them is a distinct image on a thin stone slab, showing abhaya mudrā.⁴ In our

4 (contd) Havell, The Ideal of Indian Art, Intro. XVIII f., 67; Handbook of Indian Art, 162f.

¹Rao, Elements, I, I, Intro. 47-48; Dev. Hindu Iconography, pp.1-18; A.Tagore, Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy, p.3; M.R. 1912, 482-84; Smith, I.A. XLIV, 90-91.

²Cultural History, I, p.161.

³Section 4, pp. 65 of.

⁴P.D. Chaudhury, J.A.R.S., 1944, 39f.; E.H.K. pp.155-56.

view this aspect of the Buddha belongs to Amogha Siddhi, one of the five dhyānī Buddhas, born of Ādi Buddha (male) and Ādi Prajñā (female) principles.¹ The second is a terra cotta votive tablet with the image of the Buddha stamped on it in his bhūmiṣparsa mudrā.² This aspect of the deity is called Akṣobhya.³ There are besides some rock cut images and sculptures representing the Buddha. In Pañcaratna hills (Goālpārā) there are two figures of the deity in bhūmiṣparsa mudrā.⁴ In Urvaśī there is a rock-cut image of the Buddha seated on a padmāsana, showing bhūmiṣparsa mudrā⁵ and some figures of the dhyānī Buddhas are noticed from the temple ruins on the bank of the Seese river.⁶

B. Brahma Images. Brahma is symbolical of the rising sun and his active principle is Sarasvatī whose lotus petals open at the touch of the rising sun and her lotus stands for the hiraṇyagarbha, hidden in the depth of the ocean from which Brahma sprang. Iconographically he is shown seated in yoga upon the lotus and riding on a swan. His four heads facing the four quarters stand for the four vedas, four yugas and four varṇas.⁷ The following specimens of the images of the deity have been noticed.

¹N.K. Bhattasali, Iconography of the Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum, pp.16f.

²F.D. Chaudhury, J.A.R.S., 1944, pp.39f.; E.H.K. pp.155-56.

³N.K. Bhattasali, Iconography etc. pp.16f.

⁴S.Kataki, J.A.R.S., April 1934.

⁵K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S., II, pp.104-5.

⁶Dalton, J.A.S.B. XXIV, pp.21f.

⁷Rao, Elements, II,II,pp.503f.; Havell, Handbook of Indian Art, pp.162f.

(i) One black stone image from Gauhāti, standing on a pedestal, decorated with lotus petals with his vāhana, the swan. He is wearing a sacred thread and a jaṭāmukuṭa on his head, having four heads and hands, the upper right hands holding weapons, but the lower ones are broken. There are two female attendants, one on either side and at the top there is a kīrtimukha and flying vidyādhara on either side.¹ The sculpture is based on the details of the texts; the consorts are probably Sarasvatī and Sāvitrī as given in the Viṣṇu P.²

(ii) Another image from the Gauhāti Museum. It has eight hands, seated on a padmāsana in yoga with a swan below paying homage to the deity. The palm of one of the lower left hands exhibits the varadā mudrā and one of the right shows the abhaya. One right hand is holding the sacrificial ladle and the other a sacrificial spoon. The details are in keeping with the texts.³

(iii) A panel from the Tezpur ruins contains a beautiful standing figure of the deity with attendants on either side, having a long beard and wearing a long conical cap.⁴ The Rūpamaṇḍana prescribes beards for Brahma;⁵ so the representation is not unusual. The consorts here again are Sarasvatī and Sāvitrī.

¹S.Kataki, J.A.R.S. IX, pp.88-92.

²Rao, Elements, II,II, pp.503f.

⁴A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25, pp.94f.

³Rao, Ibid.

⁵Rao, Elements, II,II,pp.503f.

C. Sūrya Images. The deity should be represented with two hands, each holding a lotus and surrounded by a halo, wearing a karaṇḍa mukuṭa on his head, kuṇḍalas, hāras and a sacred thread. He should stand on a padmāsana or be placed in a chariot drawn by seven horses and on his sides should be Uṣā and Pratyusā. Some texts prescribe four consorts while still others state that there should be a dvārapāla on either side. The Matsya P. prescribes four hands holding usual weapons and wearing ornaments and attended by Daṇḍa and Piṅgala.¹

The following specimens from our period are important:

- (i) A sandstone image of the deity from Gahpur with two hands holding lotuses, in front of which are seven horses. At the centre there is a wheel with a horse inside. There are other attendants of the deity.² The details approximately correspond to those in the texts.
- (ii) One beautiful image of the deity found on one of the Chaitya windows from Dah Parvatīā, ascribed to the 5th-6th century A.D. He is seated cross-legged and holding lotuses in both his hands, with an attendant on his left holding a pen and an inkpot, and on his right there is another holding a staff of the orthodox description.³ The attendants are perhaps Daṇḍa and Piṅgala.⁴
- (iii) One rock image of Sūrya from Pāṇḍu.⁵
- (iv) One carved image of the deity was noticed near Sadiyā

¹Ibid, I, II, pp.302f.

²S.C. Goswami and P.D. Chaudhury, J.A.R.S., X, 35-37.

³A.R.A.S.I. 1924-25, pp.94f.

⁴Cf. Rao, Elements, I, II, p.305.

⁵Diksīt, A.R.A.S.I. 1923-24, pp.80-81.

in a chariot drawn by seven horses.¹

(v) The central panel of a stone lintel of the sun temple at Tezpur contains a beautiful image of the deity with two attendants. The sculpture may be ascribed to the 8th century A.D.²

(vi) A fine representation of the deity is noticed in the temple of Śukreśvara (Gauhati), standing with two hands and holding lotus in both, and wearing Kirīṭa mukuṭa, kuṇḍalas, hāras, girdle, uttariya vastra, sacred thread and boots on his feet. In point of style and execution the sculpture may be ascribed to the 9th century A.D.

(vii) Similar sculptures are noticed in the Sūrya Pāhār.³

D. Images of Viṣṇu and his Incarnations. Viṣṇu was represented under various names, and in different positions such as sthānaka, āsana and śayana, classified into yoga, bhoga, vīra and ābhicārika varieties, each having again uttama, madhyama and adhama representations. The deity has twenty four incarnations, each having different attributes;⁴ the specimens from Assam include most of these forms. He is often represented carrying Śankha, cakra, gadā and padma, called Āyudhapuruṣas or minor incarnations of gods.⁵ Symbolically Viṣṇu stands for ākāśagarbha or the sun at midday and midnight, reposing on the coils of the eternal serpent. He is represented as a warrior with his usual weapons and the

¹A.R.A.S.I., 1905, p.4. ²R.D. Banerji, A.R.A.S.I. 1924-25. pp.94f.

³S.Kataki, J.A.R.S., April, 1934.

⁴Rao, Elements, I, I, pp.73f. 227f.

⁵Rao, Elements, I, I, pp.287f.

PL. V.



Visnu Image with 9th century Inscription

Garuḍa.¹ His active principle is Lakṣmī or Uṣā. His four usual hands symbolise the rays of the sun. His sthānaka variety symbolises the pillar of the universe or the holy mount Meru.² His śāṅkha indicates pride and destroys ignorance; cakra is the wheel of life and the destroyer of all enemies; gadā stands for intelligence and destroys adharma and his blue lotus stands for the viśvapaḍma.³ The following specimens of the deity and in his incarnations are important:-

(i) A fine representation of Viṣṇu in his sthānaka variety is found in Deopānī. The image contains an inscription of four lines in characters similar to those of the Tezpur inscription of Harjjara of the 9th century A.D. The deity has four hands, the left upper hand holding a śāṅkha and the lower left a gadā. He has all the usual ornaments, the kaustubha, śrīvatsa symbol on the breast, the sacred thread and a garland reaching to the knees. There appears to be an influence of the non-Aryans on the sculpture. This is proved by the "expression of the face and the treatment of the lower lip". This is confirmed by the fact that the find spot of the icon lies close to Dimāpura and Kasomāri "where still exist the ruins of the peculiar culture associated with the Kachāris".⁴

¹Mythologically Garuḍa is the son of Kāśyapa and Vinatā and represents the sun, associated with Viṣṇu. (Rao, Ibid, pp. 283f.)

²Havell, Handbook of Indian Art, pp.162f.

³Rao, Elements, I, I, pp.287f.

⁴Diksit, A.R.A.S.I., 1923-24, pp.80-81; E.I. XVIII, 329-30; Nath, J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.130-34.

(ii) Two other Visnu images from Deopānī: One has four hands, the upper right is in varadā and the left holding a conch; the lower right is holding a cakra and the left a gadā. The other image also has four hands, the upper right holding a cakra and the left a gadā, the lower right a lotus and the left a conch.¹

(iii) Another Visnu image from the Gauhati Museum is the standing figure of the deity in black basalt. In the back right hand, he is holding a gadā, the back left a cakra(?) and he holds the śaṅkha and padma in his front right and left hands. The image is mutilated. This aspect of Viṣṇu is called Trivikrama.²

(iv) One sthānaka variety in bronze from Dibrugarh has four hands, all of which are in the tribhaṅga pose and the Kartarī mudrā. The deity is standing on bhadrāsana, wearing a short close-fitting loin cloth, makarakuṇḍalas, mukuṭa and sandals. Of the two female attendants, the one on the right holds a bud and a dagger(?) and the other on the left has her hands in a dancing posture. They are probably Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī. The image is a fine specimen of bronze art of the 11th-12 century A.D.³

(v) Figures of Viṣṇu from various ruins: One figure is found on an architrave from Mahādeocal; three small figures

¹Nath, J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.130-34.

²Cf. Rao, Elements, I, I, pp.227f.

³Dikṣit, A.R.A.S.I. 1923-24, pp.80-81.

with four hands, holding śaṅkha, cakra, gadā and padma are found on a stone slab from Chāṅgchauki; from Mahāmāyāthān and three sets of Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī on a lintel from Budhāgosāithan.¹

(vi) A stone pillar piece from Numaligarh shows an image of the deity in his āsana variety with four hands, seated in rajālīṭā pose on a padmāsana, the upper hands holding gadā and śaṅkha and the lower right in upadeśa mudrā; the lower left is holding a rosary and kuṇḍalas adorn his ears.²

(vii) Another interesting yogāsana variety is with four hands, the front hands being in yogamudrā. The deity is surrounded by a prabhāmaṇḍala and outside this are the four figures of other deities: Mahiṣāmardini, Kārtikeya (?) Gaṇeśa and another cross-legged figure. Garuḍa is shown below the āsana. The representation is perhaps intended to show Viṣṇu in the centre of the pañcādevatās.³ A slight variation is found in the texts.⁴

(viii) A beautiful specimen of the śayana variety of Viṣṇu of exquisite workmanship is still to be seen in the temple of Aśvakraṅta, North Gauhati. Inside the temple there is a Garuḍāsana and on each corner of the throne there are kneeling figures, having the heads of birds, representing Garuḍas. The image is carved on a black stone, having four hands and sleeping on the hoods of a serpent. The lower left hand is thrown on the body of the serpent and the lower

¹Nath, J.A.R.S. V, pp.14f.

²A.R.A.S.I. 1936-37, pp.54f.

³K.L. Barua, E.H.K., p.180.

⁴Rao, Elements, I, I, pp.73f.

right is stretched along the right thigh. Brahma is shown seated on a lotus issuing from the navel of Viṣṇu. Mahāmāyā and two demons Madhu and Kaitabha are shown standing on one corner. The female kneeling figures on his feet are nāgīs. The sculpture is surrounded by a prabhāmaṇḍala. The carving indicates the theory of creation.¹ The variety is either a bhoga or viṣmaya śayanamūrti of Viṣṇu,² with a slight variation in details.

(ix) A number of icons show Viṣṇu in his different incarnations, of which the most common is the Vāsudeva variety. Texts give a detailed description of this aspect.³ A stone piece from Gosāijuri shows the deity standing in samabhaṅga, wearing kirīṭamukuta, patrakuṇḍalas and hāras, one with an attached kaustubha pendant. The upper hands and the lower left are missing. The lower right is in varadā and holding a padma. The vanamāṭā is arranged as in the Deopānī Viṣṇu image with which the sculpture is related. Śrī and Sarasvatī are standing on either side in tribhaṅga and both wearing kirīṭamukutas, patrakuṇḍalas, hāras with pendants, arigadas and wristlets. Śrī is holding a rosary and Sarasvatī is showing abhaya by her right hand and holding a lyre in her left.⁴ The variety is taken to be of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu.⁵

(x) Another fragmentary image from the same area shows the deity wearing patrakuṇḍalas, arigada, kirīṭamukuta and the

¹Gurdon, J.R.A.S., 1900, pp.25-27. ²Rao, Elements, I, I, pp.73

³Ibid, pp.239f.

⁴A.R.A.S.I., 1936-37, pp.54 f.

⁵Nath, J.A.R.S. V, pp.14f.

upper right hand holding a gadā as in Bengal and Bihar sculptures. The deity has a halo with dentil edge which shows a carving of a hovering vidyādhara with a scarf held in his hands in the ethereal regions, indicated by a circle with indented edges as in Pāla representations.¹

(xi) Another fragment from the same area shows the deity holding a padma by the stalk as in Bihar sculptures.²

(xii) In Davāka the image of Vāsudeva is shown with his consorts Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī.³

(xiii) The stone image of the deity from Tarāvaśā is mutilated. He is wearing a mukuṭa and at its bottom there is a carved halo; kuṇḍalas adorn his ears. On the top of the image there are two flying vidyādharas playing on horned flutes and just below them are two small gandharvas, the right one with wings, playing on a flute and the left one is dancing.⁴

(xiv) Another interesting variety of the deity is shown seated on a serpent under a canopy of its hoods. The legs are resting on the coiled body of the serpent; the front hands are holding śarikha and cakra and the back ones, gadā and padma.

(xv) From various places of Nowgong, groups of Vāsudeva images are found with his consorts. The image from Ākāśī-Gaṅgā ruins is shown seated, with Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī standing on either side.

¹A.R.A.S.I. 1936-37, pp.54f.

²Ibid.

³J.A.R.S. V, pp.14f.

⁴J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.85f.

(xvi) A block of stone from Mikir Āti shows a portion of the deity with flying vidyādharaś at the top with folded hands. The image appears to be a colossal sculpture of Vāsudeva.

(xvii) A door piece from Madādeocal shows a carved figure of Vāsudeva.¹

(xviii) Sets of Vāsudeva images are found from Phulanī and Dighalpānī. The central figure is that of Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva with his attendants. In between the Vāsudeva panels, there are small panels with the figure of a Vāsudeva, seated on a padmāsana.²

(xix) A stone frieze from Baḍgarigā depicts the deity on a pedestal with Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī and Jayā and Vijayā on either side of the latter.³

(xx) A fine specimen of the Janārdana aspect of Viṣṇu is found on a rock behind the Śukreśvara temple, Gauhati. The deity is 6 ft. 5 ins. in height. The representation indicates also the Nārāyaṇa aspect of Viṣṇu. The figure is shown seated with his legs crosswise in the vajraparyāṅka mudrā. The figures of Gaṇeśa and Sūrya are shown on the right side and those of Śiva and ten-armed Durgā on the left of the image.

(xxi) Specimens of the deity as Kṛṣṇa are found in different places. Nine images of the deity are noticed from the temple ruins at Chārduār, playing on flutes as Muralīdhara

¹J.A.R.S., V, pp.14f.

²J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.85f.

³J.A.R.S., V, pp.14f.

or Venugopāla with attendants on either side.¹ Images of Kṛṣṇa along with Balārāma and Subhadrā were noticed from the temple of Jagannātha at Khetri.² Kṛṣṇa as Venugopāla is seen sculptured on the western gateway of the Kāmākhyā temple; the deity is wearing a necklace of maṇis and an undergarment with central and lateral tassels adorning his body. The head-dress is a conical cap, in the shape of flames. The sculpture "is a rare specimen of anatomical perfection".³

(xxii) A stone frieze from Deoparvat depicts the story of the Rāma incarnation of Viṣṇu with his brother Lakṣmaṇa and other figures.⁴ Martin found traces of a temple at Kaldaba (Dhubri), dedicated to Rāma.⁵

(xxiii) A fine specimen of the Bhū-Varāha incarnation was noticed. The deity has the face of a boar and the body of a man; the right leg is slightly bent and made to rest on the head of the Ādiśeṣa (serpent).⁶

(xiv) From the ruins of Chārduār, figures of Matsyāvatāra and other incarnations were noticed like those at Tezpur.⁷

(xxv) A sculpture from Kāmākhyā depicts the story of the Madhusūdana incarnation of Viṣṇu to kill the demon, Madhu.

(xxvi) The temple at Hājo contains the images of the Hayagrīva Nādhava, Narasiṃha and the Buddha avatāras of Viṣṇu.⁸

¹J.A.S.B., IV, pp.186f.

²S. Katakī, I.H.Q. VI, pp.364f.

³Rama-Chandran, A.R.A.S.I., 1936-37, pp.54f.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Eastern India, III, p.473.

⁶Cultural History, I, (fig. No. 63).

⁷J.A.S.B., IV, pp.186f.

⁸A.R.A.S.I., 1903, p.18.

(xxvii) The Narasiṃha figure from Gauhati shows him in his ugra aspect. The lion-head has a long mane and fine ornamentations; the deity has four hands and with the front ones he is piercing Hiranyakaśipu who is shown lying on his thigh. Another broken figure is shown standing on a padmāsana; the demon is disembowelled on the thigh of the deity.

(xxviii) The central panel from Bāmuṇi Hill remains contains the figures of Narasiṃha, Paraśu^rāma, Balārāma, Boar and Rāma incarnations.¹

(xxix) Like those at Tezpur, the ten avatāras are found engraved on the rock at Urvaśī.²

E. Śiva images. The icons of Śiva are found in his sthānaka, āsana and nr̥tya postures, sometimes with his consort, but on most occasions he is sculptured independently. Texts deal with various aspects of the deity.³ Śiva represents the destructive and the procreative power of the world and has the setting sun and the waning moon as his emblems. He is often sculptured as the great yogī. As a dancing Śiva he is a symbol of the lord of creation and destruction and Bhairava signifies his terrible aspect. His vāhana, the Nandi, stands both for the principle of procreation and spiritual aspect of Śiva. The Ganges coming out of his jaṭā is associated with purity.⁴ His trisūla stands for the three guṇas of Prakṛti; his Paraśu is his divine strength,

¹Ibid, 1925-26, pp.115-116. ²K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S.,II,pp. 104-105.

³Rao, Elements, II,I, pp.105f

⁴Havell, The Ideals of Indian Art, p.67; Handbook of Indian Art, pp.162f.

Khadga, his valour, and agni symbolises his destructive power.¹ The following specimens of the deity are important:

(i) An image of the deity in his aspect of Lakulīśa Śiva is sculptured on a chaitya window from Dah Parvatīā, seated with a rope tied round his leg. A female is holding a cup to his left and another standing to his right.²

(ii) A fine specimen of the Mahesā aspect of Śiva is found in Gauhati. According to texts he should have five heads, each having three eyes, ten arms and two legs; two right hands should be in varadā and abhaya and the remaining four holding sūla, parasū, vajra and khadga; the left ones should hold khetaka, ankusā, pāsā and ghaṇṭā. He should wear silk garments, sacred thread and ornaments. By his side should be Śakti with three eyes and four arms, two in varadā and abhaya and the other two holding nīlotpala and akṣamālā.³

The present image is within a full-bloom lotus. The deity has exactly five heads and ten hands seated in his dhyānāsana. Two of his hands are in varadā and abhaya and holding in one of his right hands a sūla and an ankusā in one of his left. He is wearing a jaṭā, hāra, keyūra, karikaṇa, kuṇḍala, sacred thread and other ornaments. Nandi is depicted below.⁴

(iii) Dikṣit noticed a ten-armed Śiva on a stone-slab in a private residence at Gauhati and another four-armed Śiva image holding a ḍamaru, trident, gadā and rosary in his hands flanked by female attendants.⁵

¹Rao, Elements, I, I, pp.287f. ²A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25, pp.94f.

³Rao, Elements, II, II, pp.379f. ⁴J.A.R.S., VI, pp.101f.

⁵A.R.A.S.I., 1917-18, p.50; 1920-21, pp.37-38.

(iv) A panel from Tezpur shows the deity with two hands standing in his samāpada-sthānaka pose.¹ According to texts this is the Īśāṇa aspect of Śiva. The Rūpa-maṇḍana states that he should have a colour like crystal with a jaṭā and chandrakafā, the hands carrying akṣamālā, trisūla, kapāla and abhaya.²

(v) From the ruins at Nowgong various aspects of the deity are found. In Mikir Āti we have a seated figure of the deity on his Nandi. From Gāchtala we find a sthānaka variety with a rosary in his right hand and a trident in his left and another with four hands seated on yogāsana.³ Panels from Ākāśīgāṅgā show figures of dhyānī Śiva and one beautiful sculpture as Śūlapāṇi appears from the same area, showing abhaya, with two attendants, one holding a chāmara and the other with her hands in añjali, standing with bent knees on the back of an elephant.⁴ Another image from Deopānī with two hands is indistinct.⁵

(vi) Śiva as Bhairava is found in different places. According to texts he assumed this form to cut off the fifth head of Brahma.⁶ The image from Madana-Kāmadeva Parvatā shows this aspect of the deity by the side of a liṅga, with four arms, wearing a garland of skulls round his waist and an image of Nandi.⁷ Two rock-cut figures of Bhairava are found

¹A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25. pp.94f.

J.A.R.S. V, pp.14f.

⁵J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.130-34.

⁷T.K. Sarma, J.A.R.S., X, pp.82-83.

²Rao, Elements, II, II, p.376.

⁴A.R.A.S.I., 1936-37, pp.54f.

⁶Rao, Elements, II, I, pp.174f.

in Kāmā-khyā, one with eight hands and the other with four with a flabby belly, a garland of skulls, and flames coming out of his head. The deity is without garments and standing on a prostrate body.¹

(vii) Śiva as Naṭarāja (nṛtya mūrti) is found from several places. This aspect of Śiva is one of the best creations of the artists, and he dances the dance of the cosmic rhythm beating the time beat of the universe.² The deity in this aspect should have ten hands, and as given in the Matsya P. (259, 4) the right hands should carry khadga, śakti, daṇḍa and trisūla and the left khetaka, kapāla, nāga and khaṭvāriḅa. Of the two remaining hands, one should show varadā and the other hold a rosary. He should be shown on the Nandi. An unfinished image of Śiva on a stone slab from Deoparvat, though dancing, shows his aspect of Tripurāri, with four hands, the main ones holding bow and arrow, with a tiara on his head and circular patrakunḍalas in ears.³ According to texts Śiva assumed this form to kill the three sons of Tārakāsura.⁴

(viii) The image from the Gauhati Waterworks has ten hands, seated on a bull⁵ as given in the texts.

(ix) An image of Naṭarāja Śiva with a single head and six hands was found in the Bāmuṅi Hill remains.⁶

(x) A beautiful specimen of dancing Śiva was found on the bank of the Brahmaputra near Gauhati. The image is carved on a

¹A.R.A.S.I., 1923-24, pp.80-81; 1930-34, p.129.

²Codrington, Ancient India, Intro, p.5; Havell, Indian Sculpture and Painting, pp.29f.; Rao, Elements, II,II, p.249.

³A.R.A.S.I., 1936-37, pp.54f. ⁴Rao, Elements, II, I, pp.164f.

⁵K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S. II, pp.104-5. ⁶A.R.A.S.I., 1925-26, pp.115-116.

stone with a circular border with floral designs. He is dancing on Nandi, having ten hands, the left foot resting on the bull and the right one is raised in a dancing pose. The bull is wearing a ghaṇṭā.

(xi) Another interesting sculpture is the Andhakāsuravadha aspect of Śiva, preserved in the Gauhati Museum. The deity is shown with three eyes and four hands; he is holding a trisūla by two of his hands and piercing the asura; the lower left hand is holding a kapāla. The whole story of the killing of the demon, as given in the texts, is beautifully depicted.¹

(xii) One rare specimen of sculpture is the joint icon of Hari-Hara or Śiva-Viṣṇu from North Gauhati, now preserved in the Gauhati Museum. The figure has two attendants, one on either side. The right part of the image is holding trisūla and ḍamaru representing Śiva, and the left one, with Karaṇḍa-mukuṭa is holding cakra and gadā, representing Viṣṇu. The sculpture is well-executed and is a fine illustration of the union of two cults in the religious history of Assam.

(xiii) A composite figure of Ardhanārīśvara Śiva was found from Maṭhorbari.² The mutilated condition of the image makes it difficult to give a detailed description of the deity.³ The specimen indicates the influence of the Tāntrik Buddhist faith.

¹Rao, Elements, II, I, pp.192f.

²J.A.R.S., VI, pp.34f.

³Cf. Rao, Elements, II, I, pp.321f.

(xiv) The Umā-Maheśvara aspect of Śiva as given in the texts, is not rare in Assam. A fine specimen is noticed among the Tezpur ruins. Śiva with four hands is embracing Umā by one of his right hands, holding a trident by the other, with jaṭāmukuṭa and patrakunḍalas. Umā is seated by his side, with her left leg pendent.² An exactly similar specimen is found in Badgarigā; at the foot of Umā are Nandi and a lion, the former with folded hands. Bhr̥ngi lies at the foot of Śiva and both the deities have consorts.³ From Deopānī a beautiful image was found. Uma is seated on Siva's thigh, holding in her upper right hand a trident and in the lower right a lotus, the upper left a shield and the lower left is in varadā. She is wearing a snake round her neck, a necklace of jewels and a close-fitting garment.⁴ Such sculptures may be attributed to the influence of Tāntrikism.⁵

F. Icons of the Devī.

(a) Śakti Images. Śakti was represented under various forms, such as Umā, Durgā, Cāmundā, Caṇḍī, Mahiṣāmardinī, etc. She was represented both independently and as a consort of Śiva and sometimes with her own attendants, Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeya. As given in the Mārkaṇḍeya P. she assumed different forms according to her qualities in killing demons. She became Mahiṣāmardinī for killing Mahiṣāsura, Cāmunda for killing Subha and Niśumbha and Durgā for killing

¹Ibid. ²A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25, pp.94f. ³J.A.R.S. V, pp.14f.

⁴Nath, J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.130-34.

⁵Figures of Śiva are also found on the temple rocks of Umānanda and Urvasī (A.R.A.S.I. 1924-25, p.101; J.A.S.B., XXIV, pp.4-5; J.A.R.S. II, pp.104-5.)

Durgamāśura. Nine forms of Durgā are given in the Āgamas, of which Mahiṣāmardini is one. The texts give details of this aspect of the deity.¹ The following specimens of Durgā are important:

(i) The Mahiṣāmardini Durgā from the temple of Hātīmurā (Nowgong) compares well with the details of the Āgamas. The deity has ten hands holding a number of weapons with a slender waist and broad breasts. She is placing her right leg on the lion and pressing the shoulder of the Mahiṣāśura with the left. She is holding a trident, piercing the body of the asura. The representation of the lion is similar to that of the Tezpur ruins of the 9th-10th century A.D. A big sword, probably used for sacrifice, was found in the place. It is likely that the sculpture, associated with the Tāntrik worship of the temple, which was dedicated to Durgā, belongs to the 9th-10th century A.D.²

(ii) The Mahiṣāmardini from the Bhoi Parvatī (Nowgong) shows a slight variation from her usual representation. She is in tribhāriga with her right leg on the back of the beheaded Mahiṣāśura and the left on the lion. A number of weapons are held in her hands; she is wearing a crown, a hāra, and a set of girdles on the waist. The sculpture is ascribed to the 9th century A.D.³

(iii) Another variety of the deity is that of Cāmunda from Nabharigā. The Mārkaṇḍeya P. relates that Kāli took the name of Cāmunda after killing Gaṇḍa and Muṇḍa. The Devi P.

¹G. Rao, Elements, I, II, pp.345f. ²K.L. Barua, J.A.R.S., II, p.12.
³Nath, J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.85f.

(37, 17) referring to the killing of Rusu, describes the origin of Cāmuṇḍā. According to the Mātribheda Tantra (VI) Cāmuṇḍā is worshipped during calamities. The image from Nabharigā is of her terrible appearance with emaciated body, and she wears human skulls round her matted hair, waist and neck. She is seated on a corpse; on her right side is a vulture and on the left a jackal and further below are heaps of bones. The deity has six hands. The sculpture may be ascribed to the 11th-12th century A.D.¹

(iv) A similar image of Cāmuṇḍā with four hands is found in the Kāmākhyā Hill, with a terrible look, protruding teeth, long tongue, emaciated body, erect hair, withered belly and sunken eyes. The pedestal is covered with ghosts. The deity holds a trident in one hand and a cap of skulls in the other.²

(v) The image of Durgā from Deopānī shows her as Caṇḍī. The Viṣṇudharmottara describes Mahiṣāmardinī under the name of Caṇḍikā with twenty hands, holding different weapons. But the present sculpture from Deopānī has only four hands, holding a trisūla in her upper right and a mirror in the upper left; the lower ones are in varadā. On either side of the deity stands a female with joined hands, and above them are the images of Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeya riding on a peacock.³

(vi) Figures of Pārvatī occur on many temple walls. A fine specimen is found in Gauhati with a sword in her right hand

¹Nath, Ibid, pp.35-37.

²A.R.A.S.I., 1923-24, pp.80-81.

³Nath, J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.130-34; Bloch, A.R.A.S.I. 1905; Diksit, Ibid, 1923-24, pp.80-82.

and a mirror in the left.¹ Near Dibrugarh some figures of the deity were noticed from the temple ruins.²

(vii) Images of Durgā are found from other places. Of the rock-cut images from Pāṇḍu, one is that of Durgā.³ One basalt image of the deity from the remains at Bāmuni Hills is a fine specimen of Assam's carvings.⁴

(viii) Two figures of the deity were noticed, one in her terrible aspect from the Seese river remains, and another in south Kāmarūpa, 30 miles to the south-east of Gauhati.⁵ Similar sculptures were noticed from the Singri temple,⁶ ruins at Chārdūār,⁷ and Tezpur where she is seated in her conventional style.⁸

(b) Images of Mahā-Lakṣmī and Lakṣmī. These icons are found either independently or as consorts of Viṣṇu. They also appear on some of the sculptured specimens. According to the texts the Devī, conceived as a girl of thirteen, is known as Mahā-Lakṣmī;⁹ of her eight forms only Gaja-Lakṣmī was sculptured in Assam.

(i) In a niche of the stone slab from Tezpur a beautiful carving containing "the well-known group of Kamalātmikā or Gaja-Lakṣmī" was found, "in which the two elephants pour

¹A.R.A.S.I., 1920-21.

²Dalton, J.A.S.B. XXIV, p.22

³A.R.A.S.I., 1923-24, pp.80-81. ⁴S. Katakī, I.H.Q., VI, pp.

⁵J.A.S.B., XXIV, 5f, 21f. ⁶S. Katakī, J.A.R.S., IV 362-72. pp.93f.

⁷J.A.S.B., IV, pp.186f.

⁸A.R.A.S.I. 1924-25, pp.94f.

⁹Rao, Elements, I, II, pp.332f.

water over the head of a goddess from vases held in their trunks".¹

(ii) On a stone panel near Maṭhorbari there is a figure of Mahā-Lakṣmī in the centre with two elephants on either side, pouring water from the pitchers held in their trunks.² In the Gauhati Museum there is another specimen of the deity.

(iii) We have stated that Lakṣmī occurs in most of our icons and sculptures as a consort of Viṣṇu. The texts state that she should be represented as seated upon padmāsana, holding lotus in her hands and with a lotus garland; on either side should be an elephant pouring water on her head from pitchers, presented by her attendants. She should wear all ornaments and carry in her right hand a lotus and a vilva fruit in her left. According to some texts, she should have four hands, if worshipped separately.³ The description almost tallies with the representation of the deity in Assam. A panel from Maṭhorbari shows a seated figure of Lakṣmī.⁴

(iv) Westmacott noticed a figure of the deity, attended by two females from the Chārduār ruins.⁵

(c) Sarasvatī. She is associated as a consort with both Brahma and Viṣṇu; in Assam she is found sculptured along with the latter deity and on rare occasions independently. The texts state that she should have four hands and be seated on a padmāsana; in one of her right hands she should hold an

¹A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25, pp.94f. ²Nath, J.A.R.S., VI, pp.34-37.

³Rao, Elements, I, II, pp.372f. ⁴J.A.R.S., VI, pp.34-37.

⁵J.A.S.B., IV, pp.186f.

akṣamālā and the other right should be in vyākhyāna mudrā; in her left she should hold a book and a white padma. She should wear a jaṭāmukuta, sacred thread and a number of ornaments. According to other texts, she should stand on a padma, holding kamaṇḍalu and vīṇā in samabhariga pose; still others make her carry ankuśa, vīṇā, akṣamālā and puṣṭaka.¹

The specimens from Assam include the following:

- (i) A crude figure of the deity from the ruins of the Copper temple at Sadiyā,² like that of Chārduār.³
- (ii) Another figure in her tribhariga pose was discovered from Śivasāgar, wearing a ratnakunḍala, hāra, anklets and girdles. This is one of the most beautifully executed sculptures of Assam.
- (iii) On a niche of the stone slab from Tezpur, an image of the deity with a vīṇā in her hands was found.⁴
- (iv) Three sets of the images of the deity along with those of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī were discovered on a stone lintel from Budhāgosāithān.⁵

(d) Jagaddhātrī (Earth Goddess): In the texts Bhūmi is given as a consort of Viṣṇu. She should be represented as wearing a karaṇḍamukuta and various garments and ornaments. According to one text she should have two hands, each carrying a padma or nilotpala flower and either standing or seated on a lotus; while another represents her as wearing a sacred thread, with

¹Rao, Elements, I, II, pp.377f.

²Bloch, A.R.A.S.I. 1905, p.2

³J.A.S.B., IV, pp.186f.

⁴A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25, pp.94f.

⁵J.A.R.S., V, pp.14f.

four hands, carrying a ratnapātra, śāsypātra auśadhipātra and a padma, seated upon an elephant.¹ Only one sculpture of the deity was found from Vasundharīthān (Nowgong). The image is mutilated and has four hands, one of which is probably in varadā and another holding a padma. The deity is standing upon a figure which appears to be an animal, standing upon another.²

(e) Manasā: The snake goddess, Manasā is iconographically represented as a beautiful female, with golden colour, a serpent-hood over her head and a number of snakes over her body along with her vāhana, a snake.³ Only two specimens of the deity have been found.

(i) The bronze image of Manasā has on her lap a child. The pair is taken by some as representing Yaśodā and Kṛṣṇa.⁴ The sculpture is ascribed to the 12th-13th century A.D. The deity has two hands, seated on a lalitāsana. The right hand is holding a fruit in varadā and in the left she is holding her child. There is a serpent hood over her head and a snake is coiling round her right arm. A small indistinct figure is seen below on the back of the deity. On the basis of the texts the sculpture may be taken as that of Manasā with her child Āstika.⁵

(ii) Another interesting specimen is found at Śilghāt in Nowgong where the deity is sculptured on an elephant (Nāgendra). A number of snakes are covering her body and forming a canopy

¹Rao, Elements, I, II, pp.377f. ²Nath, J.A.R.S., V, pp.14f.; A.R.A.S.I., 1920-21, p.39.

³N.K. Bhattasali, Iconography, etc. pp.212-227.

⁴Pros. and Trans of the 7th Oriental Conf., Baroda, Dec. 1933, pp.13-16. PP 775f

⁵P.D. Chaudhury, J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.13-16.

over her head.

Garigā and Yamunā: These two deities are associated with the makaras.¹ In the opinion of Smith "they were tree spirits like the Yakṣīs at Bhārhut and only became river deities later".² In Assam they appear as sculptured ornamentations. The following specimens are important.

(i) The finest representation of both is found on the door jamb from Dah Parvatīā. "In the lower part of each of the jambs is the figure of a female deity whose divine nature is indicated by the halo behind her head. Each of the goddesses stands with a garland in her hands in an elegant posture and these two figures appear to represent Garigā and Yamunā, so common in door jambs of ancient Gupta and medieval temples".³

(ii) An independent image of Garigā occurs on a black piece of stone from Nabharigā (Kendugurī).⁴

G. Other Icons:

Ganeśa: Though mainly found associated with the icons of Durgā, Ganeśa⁵ appears as an independent deity in a number of temples and as images from various parts of Assam in his different poses.⁶ Though a son of Śiva, he was worshipped by people of all sects. He may be depicted on the doorway of every temple and seated either on a padmāsana, a mouse or a

¹Codrington, Ancient India, p.59, (f.n.4).

²Fine Art in India and Ceylon, p.79.

³A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25, pp.94f.

⁴Nath, J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.35-37.

⁵See Getty, Ganeśa, pp.5-9.

⁶See S.K. Sarasvatī, Dancing Ganeśa, C.R., LXVII, 77-80.

lion or standing, with two or three eyes and four, six, eight, ten or sixteen hands, wearing a snake as sacred-thread. He has varieties like Bāla Gaṇapati, Taruṇa, Bhakta, Vīra, Śakti, etc. with different representations.¹ The following specimens are important.

(i) An early image of the deity, ascribed to the 8th-9th century A.D. is from Pāṇḍu. The image is of sandstone and standing, with four hands and wearing a jaṭāmukuṭa; the right back hand is holding a parasú and the left back a padma.² Of the five rock-cut images from the same place, four represent Gaṇeśa.

(ii) In Vasundharī there are two rock-cut images of the deity, seated on a mouse. The one is holding in his right hand a necklace of beads and the end of the trunk is resting on the palm of the left hand. The other is wearing a vanamālā and both are wearing sacred threads of snakes.³

(iii) There is an image of the deity carved on a boulder in Nowgong to the east of Bhoiparvat in the main range of the Mikir Hills. He is seated on a mouse, holding in his four hands a fan, padma, gadā and sweets.⁴

(iv) The rock-cut image from Tezpur is 3 ft. in height to the top of the trefoil arch, holding sweets, flowers or sprouts and pāsá in three hands, the fourth one being in varadā. The other remains in the area point to the 9th-10th century A.D. as the probable date of the sculpture.⁵

¹Rao, Elements, II, I, pp.35f. ²J.A.R.S., X, pp.35-37

³J.A.R.S., V, pp.14f.

⁴J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.85f.

⁵Dikṣit, A.R.A.S.I., 1928-29, pp.45-46.

(v) The figure of the deity occurring in a niche from the ruins at Vasundharī is interesting. On the top there is a kīrtimukha with a necklace of pearls coming out of its mouth. The deity is wearing a jaṭā and lotus buds in the ears, and holds in his hands a blue lotus, paraśu, rosary and eatables, swallowing the last with his trunk. The mouse is depicted below.¹

(vi) Many rock-cut images are noticed on the bank of the river Brahmaputra. Dikṣit ascribes the rock-cut figure at the landing ghat near Tezpur to the 9th-10th century A.D.²

(vii) Another figure of a squatting Gaṇeśa appears on a stone from Numaligarh.³

(viii) Other specimens from various places are from the door jamb of Dah Parvatīā;⁴ a seated figure from the remains of the Seesee river, carved in high relief;⁵ from south Kāmarūpa;⁶ rock-cut images from Umānanda and Urvaśī;⁷ a seated Gaṇeśa from Chārduar;⁸ a miniature type of the deity from the niche of a door lintel from Tezpur;⁹ from a panel in Maṭhorbari; on a window lintel from Mahāmāyāthān; a seated figure from a door lintel in Tetelipukhuri; similar figures are found on stone friezes from Kāwaimārī, Yogījān and Gāchtala.¹⁰

(ix) A dancing rock-cut image of the deity with four hands

¹A.R.A.S.I., 1920-21, pp.39f.

²A.R.A.S.I., 1929-30, p.14.

³Ibid, 1936-37, pp.54f.

⁴Ibid, 1924-25, pp.94f.

⁵J.A.S.B., XXIV, pp.21f.

⁶Ibid pp.5f.

⁷J.A.R.S., II, pp.104-5.; A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25, 101.

⁸J.A.S.B., IV, 186f.

⁹A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25, 94f.

¹⁰J.A.R.S. V, pp.14f.; VI, 34f.; VIII, 85f.

occurs in the Kāmākhyā Hills. He is seated on a rat.¹

(x) Some panels from Ākāsīgaṅgā show the image of dwarfed Gaṇeśa seated and dancing.²

Kārtikeya: Another son of Śiva, known also as Skanda, his birth story is given in the Bālakhaṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Vana parva of the Mahābhārata. He is sculptured as seated or standing, with or without Śakti. When seated on a padma or a peacock, he should have two hands; if standing, four; and if seated on a peacock he may have six, eight or twelve hands, holding his usual weapons.³ In Assam of our period he is sculptured with Durgā and independently, but the specimens are very few.

(i) In Sadiyā was found an image of the deity, riding on his mayūra and holding in his hands a staff and a bow.

(ii) In an image of Caṇḍī from Deopānī, the deity occurs riding on his vāhana with Gaṇeśa.⁴

Indra: In Hindu mythology, the deity is a guardian of the Eastern Quarter.⁵ Iconographically he is to be depicted with two eyes, two hands, wearing a mukuṭa, hāra, kuṇḍales, keyūra and other ornaments. He should carry in his right hand a śakti and in the left an aṅkuśa; he may be represented standing or seated on a siṃhāsana or seated upon an elephant. He should have Indrānī as his consort and accompanied by two female gandharvas. Some texts prescribe for him a third eye and three

¹A.R.A.S.I., 1930-34, p.129. ²A.R.A.S.I., 1936-37, pp.54f.

³See Rao, Elements, II, II, p.415.

⁴A.R.A.S.I., 1923-24, pp.80-81.

⁵Rao, Elements, II, II, pp.517f.

hands carrying a vajra, nīlotpala and padma.¹ The following icons of the deity are important:

(i) The image of the deity from near the Chatrākara temple (Gauhati) is one of the finest representations. He is standing on a pedestal with the figure of an elephant below and on either side of the animal there are carved lotus buds in three rows. He is wearing hāras, kañkaṇas, keyūras, scared thread etc. A canopy of five hoods of a snake is shown over his head; above the canopy is a kīrtimukha and below it are two flying vidyādharas, one on each side. On either side of the deity there are attendants - a female on the right and a male on the left. The male is holding a kamaṇḍalu and kuśa and wearing a jaṭā. The only difference from the text is that his hands are showing varadā and abhaya.² The sculpture is a good example of early Assamese art and is peculiar in the sense that Indra is not associated with a canopy of serpent hoods. The elephant, his vāhana, makes it possible to identify the deity with Indra and "it is possible that an attempt has been made to identify Indra with Balarāma, the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa, who is always represented with such snake hoods. In fact, the appellation Upendra given to Viṣṇu indicates Indra as an elder brother of Viṣṇu and thus identifiable with Balarāma, the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa".³

(ii) The rock-cut image of the deity from Pāṇḍu has two hands showing samabhaṅga; there are two female attendants, one on

¹Ibid.

²S. Katakī, J.A.R.S., IX, pp.88-92

³Ibid.

each side, and his vāhana, the elephant, is carved below. The right hand is holding a vajra and the left, a padma.¹

Agni: He is the guardian of the south-east. The texts represent him with two heads, seven hands, three legs and four horns. He is sometimes identified with Rudra or Śiva, having four hands and three eyes, wearing a jaṭā and seated upon a ram. The front two hands should be in varadā and abhaya, while the back right should hold a śruk and the back left, a śakti; if sculptured with two hands, one should carry śruk and the other śakti. According to other texts he should wear a sacred thread and should carry akṣamālā and kamaṇḍalu, and, if with four hands, he should carry flames of fire and trisūla in his right hands and akṣamālā in one of his left, the other left embracing his consort Svāhā. In this aspect he should have four tusks and his chariot should be drawn by four parrots, the driver being Vāyu. There are other details in texts.²

Only one image of the deity is preserved in the Museum at Gauhati. He is standing with a long beard, holding a kamaṇḍalu and tridaṇḍa in his two hands, wearing a sacred thread and a small garment, kaupīna. The sculpture does not correspond to the details in the texts.

Kuvera: He is the lord of the north. Iconographically he should be represented as wearing a karaṇḍa mukuṭa, hāra and kuṇḍalas, having two or four hands; if two, the hands should be in varadā and abhaya, or the left one may hold a gadā; if

¹A.R.A.S.I., 1923-24, pp.80-81.

²Rao, Elements, II, II, pp.517f.

four, he should embrace his two consorts by two of his hands and the other two should carry a gadā and śakti. He may be seated on a padmāsana, or driving a chariot, or seated on the shoulder of a man, having as his vāhana either an elephant or a ram.¹ An image of the deity in the Gauhati Museum depicts him as having a pot belly and carrying a vessel in his hand.

Vidyādhara, Kinnaras and Dvārapālas: In almost every work of sculpture, Vidyādhara and Kinnaras appear as attendants of other main deities. The Mānasāra describes the Gandharvas and the Vidyādhara in their flying position, depicted standing, playing on instruments or dancing. Both the Gandharvas and the Kinnaras find mention as early as the Vedas. According to the Viṣṇu P. they are to be depicted as attendants of Brahma, Viṣṇu, Śiva and Indra, hovering in the sky with their wings. They are shown also in the Buddhist and Jain shrines.²

Vidyādhara are found depicted on various sculptures from different places. There is the carving of a hovering Vidyādhara on a stone image of Viṣṇu (Gosāijuri) with a scarf held in hands in the ethereal region, indicated by a circle with indented edges as in the Pāla representations.³ On the top of the image of Vāsudeva from Tarāvaśā, there are two flying Vidyādhara with flutes in the hands of each and just below them are two Gandharvas, the right one with wings and playing

¹Ibid.

²R.S. Pañcamukhi, "Gandharvas and Kinnaras in Indian Iconography", Pros. and Trans. of the 10th Oriental Conf., 1940, pp.553f.; J.N. Banerji, "Vidyādhara", J.I.S.O.A., IV, pp.52-56; W.J. Wilkin, Hindu Mythology, Chaps. X-XI.

³A.R.A.S.I., 1936-37, pp.54f.

on a flute and the left one dancing.¹ Two flying Vidyādharas are depicted on the top of the images of Brahma and Indra from Gauhati.² A stone slab from Deopānī shows the figure of a Vidyādhara, holding a scarf or a necklace in both hands and hovering in the sky.³ Flying Vidyādharas are also noticed from the ruins at Badgaṅgā, Mikir Āti and Mathorbari⁴ and several figures of Gandharvas and Kinnaras appear as ornamentations on the door jambs of Dah-Parvatīā,⁵ Śingri temple,⁶ Kāmākhyā,⁷ Chārduār⁸ and other places. A Kinnarī from Gauhati is seen with a bow in her hand, and, though the figure is mutilated, the sculpture shows elegant execution.

The dvārapālas are found depicted on temple walls from various ruins. Some figures are seen in a Viṣṇu temple at N. Gauhati. A figure of a dvārapālikā occurs in a Viṣṇu temple from Śivasāgar. Another figure of the dvārapālikā, now in the Gauhati Museum, is depicted in her tribhaṅga, wearing circular kuṇḍalas, necklaces, a girdle and a garment with folds. Some door jambs from Deopānī show female door keepers with coronets on their heads and huge perforated patra kuṇḍalas.⁹ The dvārapālas from the ruins of Ākāśī Gaṅgā show them holding śūla and pāśa; others are seen holding a kaṇḍalu, and are shown either with two or four hands.¹⁰ The ruins at Mahādeoal and

¹Ibid.

²S. Katakī, J.A.R.S., IX, pp.88-92.

³A.R.A.S.I., 1936-37, pp.54f. ⁴J.A.R.S., V, pp.14f; VI, 34f.

⁵A.R.A.S.I., 1923-24, pp.119-20; 1924-25, pp.94f.

⁶J.A.R.S., IV, pp.93-95.

⁷A.R.A.S.I., 1923-24, pp.80-81.

⁸J.A.S.B., IV, pp.186f.

⁹A.R.A.S.I., 1936-37, 54f.

¹⁰Ibid.

Budhāgosāithān show them with bows and arrows.¹ More or less similar figures are found from the ruins of Chāngchauki, Āntala, Moudaṅgā, Maṭhorbari and other places.²

6. Painting: The art of painting in India goes back to remote antiquity.³ Both the Brāhmanical and Buddhist literature refer to painting and painted halls.⁴ The details are given in Vātsāyana's Kāmasūtra, which mentions six principles: rūpabheda, pramāṇam, bhāva, lāvanyayojanam, sādhāsya and varnikbhāṅga. The same reference is made by Yaśodhara's commentary on the Kāmasūtra and the Śilparatna (64) of Śrī-Kumāra.

When painting was introduced into Assam is hard to guess. The epigraphs make only vague references to pictures. The Nowgong grant (V14) mentions that the palace in the city and rooms were ornamented with realistic pictures. An incidental reference is found in the Tezpur grant of Vanamāla (V24). An earlier reference is made by the Nidhanpur grant of the 7th century A.D., which refers to portraits hung on the walls of the royal palace of Bhāskara. The drawing of realistic pictures is found in the Guākuchi plates of Indrapāla.⁵

¹J.A.R.S., V, 14f.

²Ibid, VI, 34f.

³Rao, M.R., 1918, 557-67; P. Brown, Indian Painting, Intro. 7, 15f.; Smith, Fine Art in India and Ceylon, 92f.; Rhys Davids, Buddhist India, 96; Goldstücker, Paṇini, 228f.; Havell, Handbook of Indian Art, 86f.; Indian Sculpture and Painting, 155f.

⁴Mahāvamsā, LXX, 83; Uttararāmacarita, III, Chaps. 2, 27, 34-43.

⁵K.S., pp.130-45.

The archaeological ruins, however, do not provide us with any definite information on the subject. This is probably because of the fact that not a single structure is found in its original condition. Literature no doubt makes a number of references to paintings on both paper and cloth. The earliest mention is made by Bāṇa, who refers to painted cloth with patterns of jasmine flowers (jātīpatṭikāḥ); "drinking vessels, embossed by skilful artists"; "carved boxes of panels for painting with brushes and gourds", and "gold painted bamboo cages".¹ The nature of the painting is uncertain. Portrait painting is found in the border painting of some old Assamese manuscripts before and after the 14th century A.D.² Harihara Bipra (14th century A.D.) for instance in his "Babruvāhana-Parva" refers to painting on walls. For painting the illustrations of the Assamese manuscript, Hastīvidyārṇava, two expert painters were employed. Similar specimens are found in some manuscripts of the Pre-Āhom and Āhom period, particularly in "Gīta-Govinda" and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa".³ The art was developed during the Āhom rule and some manuscripts and chronicles depict scenes from the Āhom court life. Śaṅkaradeva himself painted scenes mainly of heavenly figures, on papers and cloths for dramatic performances (Cihna Yātrā); even the masks used for the purpose were beautifully painted. In fact, the art of painting reached a stage of perfection during the

¹H.C. (Cowell), 212f.

²Des. Cat of Ass. N.S., Intro. XVII-XVIII.

³Des. Cat. of Assamese Manuscripts, Intro. XVII-XVIII.

Vaiṣṇava Reformation. But the absence of any important remains of painting from our period prevents us from assessing the achievement of the ancient Assamese painters as we may do in case of architecture, sculpture and icons; it is, however, likely that the painters did not fall short of the artists in other allied subjects.

7. Conclusion:

The above description of the fine arts of Assam gives us an impression that the masons, sculptors and painters from the province of our period had a reputation to their credit. The remains are by no means small. Close parallels have been noticed between Assamese art and those from Pāṭaliputra and Benares schools of the Guptas, Bihar, Orissa, Central and Southern India (Chālukyan), Ceylon and even places beyond India such as Java.¹ This can be substantiated by a brief reference to a few of the best specimens from Assam.

The carvings of Gaṅgā and Yamunā on the door jambs with other decorative designs from Dah Parvatīā, attributed to the 5th-6th century A.D. are the best of all sculptures from ancient Assam. Door frames with similar designs are known also from North Bengal.²

But the carvings are characteristic of the style of the early Gupta schools of sculpture. The lintel appears to be larger in size than the door frame, as in the Gupta temples at

¹A.R.A.S.I., 1936-37, pp.54f.

²Diksīt, A.R.A.S.I., 1923-24, pp.119-120; Ibid, 1929-30, pp.45-46.

Bhumara, Nachnakuthara and Deogarh. The Chaitya window patterns on the jambs show close resemblance to those of the Gupta temples of the same places. As Banerji points out "the sculptors' sense of proportion, the beautiful symmetry of the figures and ornamental devices and the excellence of execution tend to prove that this door lintel belongs to the same period as the great schools of sculpture which existed at Pātaliputra and Benares in the fifth and sixth centuries".¹ The beautifully decorated door jambs from the Bāmuṇi Hills, attributed to the 9th-10th century A.D. also are of a type not found elsewhere in Assam.²

One stone fragment from the Kāmākhyā temple is a beautifully carved frieze in which the upper band represents a series of garlands and the lower, scroll work, in which some highly spirited representation of animals such as a buffalo, a deer, a lion and a tiger are noticed; the quality of the sculpture is unsurpassed in Assam.³ Some rock-cut images and friezes from the western gateway of the temple reveal exceptional sculptural skill. The carving of the veṇu Gopāla for example, recalls the decorative details of Gupta and Pallava art.⁴ Flowers, creepers, animals, birds and serpent designs occurring on one of the door jambs from Gāchtala in Nowgong are beautifully executed in a style recalling the Pāla school of Art.

¹A.R.A.S.I., 1924-25, pp.94f.

²Diksit, Ibid, 1928-29, p.44

³Ibid, 1923-24, pp.80-81.

⁴Ramachandran, Ibid, 1936-37, pp.54f.

Other important motifs are vases flanked by lions and foliage flanked by elephants, which strongly suggest later Gupta influence.¹ Elegantly sculptured blocks of stone from the ruins at Deopānī also recall late Gupta art.² One ceiling slab from Deopānī contains the figure of a Vidyādhara within the seed vessel of a padma, showing close resemblance to Gupta and Pāla sculptures. While the facial expression of the figure is local, the decorative and anatomical details of the sculpture recall late Gupta and Pāla styles.³

The outlines of the plinth mouldings from the ruins at Tezpur show that the medieval architects of Assam employed the same motifs and figures as those in other provinces of Northern India; the ornamentation of the plinth mouldings shows marked similarity to the same designs from Orissa.⁴ Some temples of the śikhara type from the Kāmākhyā Hills bear the same designs as the temples in Orissa.⁵

One beautifully carved stone slab from Tezpur, with the pattern of Chaitya windows, bears similarity in design to those from Central India, especially from the Rewā state and Khājuraho.⁶ The lower part of the sanctum of the shrine at Kāmākhyā, which is still in good preservation, consists of sunken panels alternately with pilasters and below them the plinth mouldings of an older temple of the same design as that

¹Ibid.

³A.R.A.S.I., 1936-37. pp.54f.

⁵Ibid, 1923-24, pp.80-81.

²Ibid.

⁴Ibid, 1924-25, pp.90f.

⁶Ibid, 1924-25, pp.90f.

discovered in Tezpur. The designs are like those of the dados of Khājūrahō or the Central Indian type.¹

One of the shafts of pillars from Tezpur shows marked similarity with the Chālūkyan columns. The shaft is decorated beautifully with a band at the upper end and over it the shaft is round and appears to be lathe turned like the upper parts of the Western Chālykyan columns.² Beautifully sculptured stone blocks from Ākāśī Gaṅgā show designs resembling the Chālūkyan style.³ Stone pieces from Gosāijuri showing Yavaṅikā and other designs, recall in shape and sculptures the art of South India and Ceylon.⁴

These are some of the best specimens of carvings and fine arts from our period, showing similarities with those from contemporary India. But the interpretation of the fine arts of Assam as of other parts of India is rather a difficult question. This is specially the case as we are to pass our opinion on a heap of scattered ruins. The meaning of any work of art lies not in our outer taste but in a true understanding.⁵ For a critical estimate the interpreter should not only "be fully alive to the situation into which he is placed in space and time - but that while seeing he should contemplate - Having participated in the urge, in the compulsion that had brought forth - art and stepping aside into the mental sphere of one's knowledge and awareness, it will be possible to study Indian

¹Ibid, pp.100f.

²Ibid, 90f.

³1936-37, pp.54f.

⁴Ibid..

⁵Coomeraswami, C.R., XLVIII, pp.143-46.

art as that living form of the Indian mind, which utters what words cannot communicate in a consistent language of its own".¹ Though the heaps of ruins of our period do not help us much in giving us an exact idea of the aesthetic achievement of the Assamese artists, it is evident that the fine arts of Assam tended to be closer to the art of the Guptas and the schools of Bihar and Orissa, to which Assamese culture bears a marked resemblance, rather than to the contemporary Pāla school of Bengal.²

Though the fine arts of Assam were fundamentally based on the Indian traditional system, generally following the lines laid down in the śilpasāstras, on most occasions we find that Assamese art exhibits marked peculiarities.³ This, however, does not mean that something like a Kāmarūpa school of art and architecture was developed in our period. The peculiarities and differences between the Assamese art and those of other parts of India were mainly due to the non-Aryan influence in Assam, which was more effective than other parts of India. This influence is seen not only in the ruins from places like Dimāpur and Sadiyā, the centres of Tibeto-Burman culture, but also in Nowgong and Deppānī, to which we have made some references in the description of the ruins. An outstanding example of this influence of the non-Aryans on the Brāhmanical or the non-Aryan art is the Deopānī Viṣṇu image of the 9th

¹Kramrisch, C.R., 1933, pp.61-65.

²Diksit, A.R.A.S.I., 1927-28, pp.112-113.

³S. Katakī, J.A.R.S., VIII, pp.38-43.

century A.D.¹ This is proved by the Mongolian expression of face and the treatment of the lower lip. This is confirmed by the fact that the find spot of the icon lies close to Dimāpur and Kasomāri, the centres of the Tibeto-Burman culture. In fact this non-Aryan influence was felt in every part of India to a greater or smaller degree and each school of art developed some local characteristics as in Assam. Kramrisch rightly remarks that like plasticity and naturalism, dynamic characteristics, influenced by various racial factors, determined the art history of India as a whole.² Similar changes took place in Bengal, South India and other places, as in Assam, where the foundation of culture was mainly laid by the Austric, Alpine and Tibeto-Burman elements.

The peculiarities and changes, therefore, in Assam were not only due to the influence of the Tāntrik system. These were developed long before the introduction of that system. We can hardly support the conclusion arrived at by B.K. Barua that from the 12th century A.D. "for the first time we find the rebirth of the provincial or national art language arising out of the traditional Indian and indigenous local conceptions".³ Because, as we have stated, the changes in the art history of Assam were not merely introduced by the Tāntrik influence, and moreover the origin of the system, as we have shown elsewhere,

¹Diksit, E.I., XVIII, pp.329-30.

²Ancient Indian Sculpture, pp.127f.

³Cultural History of Assam, I, p.196.

goes back to the phallic fertility cult of the Austric and other non-Aryan elements.¹ There were peculiarities before the 12th century A.D. and these remained operating also after the close of that century. At no period in the art history of Assam, in fact, was a purely national art evolved. We are to judge Assam's art therefore, from the standpoint of the achievement of the Indian artists, with whom, at all periods those of Assam had affinity, and whose imaginative contemplation produced works of art, which were at once realistic and idealised, spiritual and mystic, symbolic and transcendental,² and which raised rhythmic waves in a sculptured scene or an image, reminiscent of the rhythms of music.

¹See 4, pp. 674-75

²Havell, Indian Sculpture and Painting, pp.10f, 29f, 41

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