Chapter II

POLITICAL BACKGROUND AND GEOGRAPHICAL EXISTENCE OF PRĀGJYOTIṢA-KĀMARŪPA IN THE EARLY PERIOD

Ancient Assam has been referred to as Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa in the early Sanskrit literature as well as in age-old inscriptions. The name Prāgjyotiṣa is more ancient than Kāmarūpa. Both the early Vedic and the later Vedic literature throw important light on the gradual expansion of the Aryans to the Eastern India but the earliest mention of the city of Prāgjyotiṣa is traced in the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, the two great Indian epics.

The Rāmāyana is the earliest work where the kingdom of Prāgjyotiṣa is mentioned. The Rāmāyana2 ascribes the founding of this kingdom to Amūrtarāja, one of the four sons of a great king Kus'a. Amūrtarājas, the name generally written in the Mahābhārata3 is mentioned there simply as father of the famous king Gaya. The Kiṣkindhyā Kāṇḍa (XIII) refers to Naraka's city of Prāgjyotiṣa in the Varaha mountain.

Dr. Mankad says the locality of Prāgjyotiṣpur to be near a hill called Gop in the Gujrat state. Though Mankad's description

2. j Adi Kanda; XXXV.
3. Vana Parva; Drona Parva.
of Prāgjyotiśpur is not supported by any authentic document, yet having found some similarities to the description of the Rāmāyana's content, it can be said that, the Prāgjyotiśpur was same to that of in Gujrat. But it is not the Prāgjyotiśa with which we are presently concerned.

The references to the city and the country of Prāgjyotiśa and Naraka and his family, along with the Kirātas, Cīnas and different people are found in the Sabhā (XXVI-XXX), Asvamedha (IXXV-IXXVI), Udyoga (XVIII), Drona (XXVI-XXX), Bhīśma and Karṇa (V) Parvas of the Mahābhārata. The references to it however, are rather perplexing for in some passage it is called a Mlechcha kingdom ruled over by king Bhagadatta who is always spoken of in respectful and eulogistic terms (Sabhā; Udyog; and Karṇa) and in other passage it is called a Dānava or Asura kingdom ruled over by the demon Naraka and Maru (Vana; Udyoga; Harivaṃsa; Rāmāyana), while still in some other passage the allusions seemed mixed e.g. Sabhā seems to call Bhagadatta a Yavana. Prāgjyotiśa was placed in the north region (Sabhā, Vana) but was also considered to be in the East. North of it seemingly lay tracts called Antārgiri, Vahirgiri and Upagiri (Sabhā) which appear to be lower slopes of the Himalayas and the Terai and it was close to mountains. Bhagadatta is called Śailālaya (Strī). It bordered on the Kirātas and Cīnas for they formed his retinue (Sabhā, Udyoga). He drew his troops from among the people who dwelt in the marshy regions.
near the sea, sagaranupa (Sabhā, Karaṇa) and it is even said he dwelt at the Eastern ocean (Udyoga); these marshy regions can only be the alluvial tracts an island near the mouths of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra as they existed in the remote past. These data indicate that Prāgjyotiṣa comprised the whole of North Bengal proper. A part from these two great epics, casual references to Prāgjyotiṣa are made in the Purānic works also. The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa (Kūrmavibhāga Ch. 58.) places Prāgjyotiṣa on the face of the tortoise. It is also mentioned Prāgjyotiṣa along with Udayācalā, Lauhitya and Kāmarūpa as countries in the east. The Brahmapurāṇa (27) mentions Prāgjyotiṣa as a kingdom. The Vāyu Purāṇa (45) includes Prāgjyotiṣa and the Lauhitya along with other countries in the east. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa refers to Prāgjyotiṣa when counting the story of Naraka (B.K. XII). The Brahmapurāṇa (114-15) relates the story of the birth of Naraka in Kokāmukhatirtha. But, of all the Purāṇas, the most important work is the Kālikā Purāṇa which is invaluable for the political and cultural history of Ancient Assam.

All the Tantrik Buddhist works make important statement and mention of Kāmarūpa-Kāmākhyā and other pīthas of Assam. The Hevajra Tantra of the 7th - 8th century A.D. mentions Kāmarūpa as one of the four pīthas of India. Kāmarūpa finds mention in the Śatparaṅcāsaddeśa based on the Śaktisaṅgama Tantra5. Similar

5. Sircar, D.C., Geography of Ancient & Medieval India, PP. 68.
divisions are found in an earlier work, mentioned in the Candragarbhā Sūtra by Narendrayasa, who flourished in about A.D. 566 and similar names, including Kāmarūpa are found in the Sanmohā Tantra. The Kāmrūpa Yātra, a Sanskrit work composed in Assam based on the Yogini Tantra, the Kālikā Purāṇa and the Kulārṇava, deals with the mode of worship of Kāmākhyā. It also records the origin of the names of Prāgjyotīṣa and Kāmarūpa. The Tikṣākalpa, another Tantrik work, deals with the worship of Tārā and the ancient geography of Kāmarūpa. The Kāmākhyā Tantra also deals with the account of Naraka-Bhagadatta.

No definite mention of either Prāgjyotīṣa or Kāmarūpa is made in the early Buddhist or Jain records and it is not included among sixteen Mahājanapadas. Lohicca, indentified with the Lauhitya, finds mention in the Nikāyas from the country of the Lauhitya. The evidence proves that as early as the period of the Nikāyas, the Lauhitya region, which probably included Prāgjyotīṣa, entered into the domain of the Buddhist geographical knowledge and attained a fair reputation as a centre of Brāhamaṇical cultrue. Hājo is connected with the tradition of Mahāparinirvāṇa of the Lord Buddha in the Buddhist literature of Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan.

Prāgjyotīṣa is mentioned in the secular works also. Attention has also been drawn to the mention of certain articles in the Kautilya

6. Dīgha Nikāya, I. 224
Arthasastra which were the products of various localities of the Kāmrūpa Kingdom according to commentators like Pārasamudra, Pāralauhitya, Antaravati, Jonga, Turupa, Grameru, Suvarnakunda, Purnadipa etc. There is no doubt that the name and meaning of some territory beyond the Brahmaputra also included in Assam; but nothing is known about the other above mentioned names from any other sources.

Kalhana's Rājatarāṅgini also throws some light on ancient Assam. The work is attributed to about A.D. 1148-49. It refers to Amṛtaprabhā, the daughter of a Kāmrūpa king, married to Meghabāhana of Kāśmirā. It also mentions Lalitāditya's campaigns as far as the Lauhitya.

Rajaśekhara in his Kāvyamīmāṃsā, while describing the location of different countries, mentions Prāgyotisa as one of the Janapadas of the Purvadesa.

Kālidasa in his Raghavaṁśa while describing the universal conquest of king Raghu refers to the ruler of Prāgyotisa dwelling by the side of the river Lauhitya. The king of Kāmrūpa worshipped

7. A Ś, II, XI, PP. 82.
8. M.A. Stein, R T, I, P. 6 ; Macdonell, India's past, P. 246.
10 Kāvyamīmāṃsā, ch. 17, line 21.
Raghu's feet with presents of jewels instead of flowers on a golden foot stool as if they were his presiding deity.\textsuperscript{11}

The Brhat saṁhitā of Varāhamihira, ascribed to about the fifth century A.D.\textsuperscript{12} refers to both Prāgjyotiṣa and Lauhitya, along with Maghadha, Cīna and Kambhoja.

Purusottama, the writer of Trikānda who probably flourished during the 7th century A.D. states that Prāgjyotiṣa is in Kāmarūpa.\textsuperscript{13} The reference is to Prāgjyotiṣa as a smaller area, included within the kingdom of Kāmarūpa or the former stands for the capital city.

Yādavaprabakasa who flourished about the 10th century A.D.\textsuperscript{14} in his Vaijayanti mentions Prāgjyotiṣa and Kāmarūpa as lying in the east.

Hemacandra, who flourished between 1088-1172\textsuperscript{16} mentions in his Abhidhānacintāmani (IV, 22) Prāgjyotiṣa and Kāmarūpa and agree with Yādavaprabakasa in taking Prāgjyotiṣa as another name of Kāmarūpa.

\textsuperscript{11} Raghuvamśa, ch. 4. V- 81.
\textsuperscript{13} Trikānda, P. 31.
\textsuperscript{14} Macdonell, P. 14.
\textsuperscript{15} D.C. Ganguly. I. H.Q. XIX, PP. 214-224.
\textsuperscript{16} Weber, History of Indian Literature, P. 287.
Yasodhara, the author of the Jayamaṅgalā, whose work is ascribed to the 13th century A.D. places Kāmarūpa among the countries in the east along with Gauḍa.

The Harsācaritra of Bānabhatta, ascribed to the early part of the 7th century A.D. contains much historical material for the period of Bhāskararvarman. Both for political and cultural history, the work is of great value for the study of the 7th century Kāmarūpa.

As regards the Chinese sources Kāmarūpa is chiefly mentioned in connection with the visit of Hiuen-Tsiang during the 7th century A.D. Commercial and cultural relations are testified by earlier sources like the accounts left by Chang Kien of the 2nd century B.C. The accounts of the Shung Shu (A.D. 420-79) record the sending of two embassies from India to China, of which one was sent by Yuchai in A.D. 428 from the Kapili Valley. The Tang-Shu mentions Kāmarūpa as Kamopo or Komelu. Besides these, the account of I-Tsing throws a flood of light on the period of Bhāskararvarman and on the subsequent years. Classical writers from about the 5th century B.C. onwards seem to refer to the people and place-names of ancient Assam. Hecataeus of Miletus (500 B.C.) mentions such

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17. Macdonell, India's past, P. 174.
18. Bagchi, P.C. India and China, A Thousand years of Cultural Relations. PP. 7 - 16.
20. Waters, II, PP. 185.
21. Life, Intro, PP. XXXVI-XXXVII.
people as Indoi, Kakatiai, Opiai etc. of India. Herodotus mentions the Kakatiai along with Gandarioi and Padaioi. Kakatai or Kalatiai mentioned by Hecataeus and Herodotus have been tentatively identified with the Kalitas of Assam. Moreover Megasthenes, Strabo, Curtius, Arrian, Pliny mention the people and place-names of ancient India in their writings. Most important classical sources are the 'Periplus of the Erythrean Sea' of the first century A.D., Ptolemy's Geography of the 2nd century A.D. From all these references it appears that the land and her people were known to the classical writers from the 5th century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D.

Among Muslim historians Alberuni mentioned Kāmarūpa lying to the east of Kanauj, the mountain of which stretches as far as the sea. Minhājuddin Sirāj, who wrote his Tabaqāt-i-Nasiri during the 13th century A.D. gives us valuable information regarding Kāmīrū, Kāmrūd or Kāmrūpa in connection with the invasions of Bakhtiyar in (S.E.1127= A.D.1205- 6)

In almost all the inscriptions, the rulers of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa have been called Prāgjyotiṣadhūpati (Lord of the Prāgjyotiṣa country), and some mention Prāgjyotiṣapura as the capital city of Naraka. Description of the city of Prāgjyotiṣapura is

22. Mc Crindle, J.W. Ancient India as described in Classical literature, Intro.XIV.
found in several inscriptions. Ulubāri copper plate inscription and Nawgaon copper plate inscription of Balavrman III (Verse 5-6) says 'there were areca-nut-trees, which covered by encircling betel leaf creepers, and the black sandal trees which were encircled by the cardamon trees. Having resided in that place (i.e. Prāgjayotisa) where, in the parks, the peacocks danced in consonence with the beating-time of the movement of the ears of the intoxicated elephants of the best variety, that king Naraka, ever eager to fight, became struck by the wheel of Viṣṇu and retired to the heaven.'

The Bargāon copper plate inscription and Suālkuchi copper plate inscription of Ratnapāla (Verse 5) describe the city of Prāgjayotisapura as "Prāgjayotisa, which seemed to have many moons because of the (the presence of) the illustrious warriors, moving along with the glory of his arms in this city, he (Naraka) earned the (Royal) fortune in a more beautiful manner."

Prāgjayotisa is described in the Gachtal copper plate inscription of Gopāla (verse 8) as follows "he (Naraka) had a capital city named Prāgjayotisa, which could vie with the city of gods whose high ramparts were touched by the waves of the eastern sea and wherein even to day, in the night, the reflection of the moon falling at the top of white washed palaces assumes the rising beauty of a pitcher of gold."
Origin of the name: Prāgjyotiśa-Kāmarūpa

Scholars have propounded different theories regarding the origin of the name Prāgjyotiśa-Kāmarūpa.

R. M. Nath suggests that a branch of the Chao-Theius people of China migrated to India on some ancient date and established three important centres in the sub-continent in India, Assam in the east, in the centre at Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh and in the north west in Afghanistan. These centres were called Prāg-Zuthis, Madhya Zuthis and Uttar Zuthis, respectively, those who came to the North-East were known as Prāg Zuthis in India. The term 'Zuthis' in course of time got Sanskritised to 'Jotiśa'. However, this theory lacks evidence.

The Kālikā Purāṇa, a work of the 10th century A.D. describes "Formerly Brahmā staying here created the stars; so the city is called Prāgjyotiśapura-- a city equal to the city of Indra." This etymological explanation given by the Kālikāpurāṇa has been followed by the historians of Assam.

Among the modern scholars, Sir Edward Gait writes, "Prāg"

means "former" or "eastern" and "Jyotisa", "a star", "astrology", "shining." Prāgjyotiṣapura may be taken to mean the 'City of Eastern Astrology'. The name is interesting in connection with the reputation which the country has always held as a land of magic and incantation and this view holds that it was in Assam that the Tantrik form of Hinduism originated.

Rai Bahadur K.L. Barua accepts the etymology but reads it in a different connotation. "It is significant that to the immediate east of the town of Gauhati there is a temple on the crest of a hill known as Citrācala and this temple is dedicated to the Navagrahas or the nine planets. It is probable that this temple is the origin leading to the name of Prāgjyotiṣapura.

According to Dr. B. K. Kakati Prāgjyotiṣa may be Sanskritisation of a Non-Aryan formation. Considering the topography of the land, he suggested that the name Prāgjyotiṣa was derived from an Austric phrase: Pagarjuh (Jo) tic (c =ch) meaning a region of extensive high hills.

It may be observed that Edward Gait and K.L. Barua have explained the term in connection with the city called Prāgjyotiṣapura.

while B.K. Kakati explains the term taking it to be the whole country. It is quite likely that the country derived its name from the name of the capital city; or reversely, the capital city derived its name from the name of the country.

**Location of Prāgjayotiṣa-Kāmarūpa**

Since the geo-physical boundaries of States and Countries have undergone changes even with the ancestral names in some cases, it demands a minute and careful studies of books by writers of repute in the line to establish a physical location of a country or state of the past, and so is the case with an attempt to locate the physical existence of Prāgjayotiṣa-Kāmarūpa in the long past.

After having studied different sources on the topic, I accept the view of S.L. Barua regarding the physical location of Prāgjayotiṣa-Kāmarūpa. According to S.L. Barua "there is a tendency amongst a group of scholars to locate the kingdom of Prāgjayotiṣa-Kāmarūpa in regions other than Assam. They are perhaps under the impression that as the Mahābhārata locates Prāgjayotiṣa-Kāmarūpa in the west or north, it must be somewhere in these parts of India. But the evidence from the Mahābhārata is somewhat confusing. The Sabhā Parva describes Bhīma's campaign in the north and his fight with Bhagadatta of Prāgjayotiṣa, but the same Parva and also the
Aswamedha Parva narrate Bhima's campaign in the Lauhitya in the east. This 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 local epigraphs of the early period preferred the names Prāgjyotisha and Prāgjyotishadhipati, while referring to the rulers. The capital city of Prāgjyotisha was Prāgjyotishapura, identified with modern Dispur, the capital of Assam at present, though often Prāgjyotisha stood for both the country and the capital city. The references to Prāgjyotisha-Kāmarūpa in literary sources are varied and numerous. In epigraphic sources, the name Prāgjyotisha occurs in the Bhagalpur grant of Narayanapāla, while Kāmarūpa finds mention for the first time in the Allahabad pillar prāśasti of Samudragupta to be followed by other epigraphs like Belava grant of Bhojavarman, the Silimpur grant of Prahāsa, the Deopārā inscription of Vijayasena, the Mādhāinagar grant of Lakshmanasena, the Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva. The Mandaśor grant of Yaśodharman and the Aphsad epigraph of Ādityasena make mention of the Lauhitya. These references confirm that Prāgjyotisha-Kāmarūpa and the Lauhitya were contiguous and stood for the same region30.

Extent of Prāgjyotiṣa:

The extent of the kingdom of Prāgjyotiṣa varied from time to time. There is no doubt that its northern and south-western limits extended much beyond the modern state of Assam. The references in the epics indicate that the country stretched as far as the sea and that it was at least, partly a hilly country. The Rāmāyana (kiśkindha kāṇḍa) locates the city of Prāgjyotiṣa on a gold-crested mountain called Varāha, which was 64 yojanas in extent and "which stood or abutted on the fathomless Varunālaya (sea)"\(^{31}\).

The Mahābhārata calls Bhagadatta, the king of Prāgjyotiṣa as Śailālaya (dwelling among the mountain)\(^{32}\), Parvatapati (Lord of the mountains)\(^{33}\) and Purvasāgaravasi (inhabitant of the eastern sea)\(^{34}\) and refers to his troops as consisting of the Chīnas, the Kirātas and the dwellers of the sea-coast\(^{35}\). The Varāha mountain mentioned in the Rāmāyana was the Assam Range and the Sea lay to the south of the hill which was perhaps connected with the Bay of Bengal by the estuary of the Brahmaputra. This sea was the Lauhitya (Lohita) Sāgāra. It is almost certain that part of Sylehet, Mymensingh and neighbouring lands were under water at least in the Epic Age and

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32. Śtri Parva.
33. Drona Parva.
34. Udyoga Parva.
35. Sabha Parva, Aśwamedha Parva, Udyoga Parva.
the Brahmaputra fell into the Lauhitya Sāgara taking a southern course round the Gāro hills, as it does today. The Kirātas meant the Mongoloid or Indo-Mongoloid people (the Bodos) and the Chinas probably stood for the Bhutanese and the sea-coast were the people living in the marshy regions of Sylhet, Mymensing and Tripura. It is also to be mentioned here that the Rāmāyana ascribes the founding of the kingdom to Amurtaraja, one of the four sons of the great king Kuśa, and grand father of Viswāmitra, who performed his austerities on the bank of the Kausika. It is therefore possible that Prāgjyotīṣa extended up to the river Kausikā. On the basis of these references, Pargitar concluded that the kingdom of Prāgjyotīṣa in the period of the Epics included the greater portions of modern Assam, along with Koch-Behar, Jalpaiguri, Rangpur, Bogra, Mymensing, Decca, Tripura, portions of Pabna and probably a portion of Nepal. It seems therefore that Prāgjyotīṣa included, in ancient times, the modern district of Purnea in Bihar and extended on the north-west, as far as the Kosi.

It appears, therefore, that the Kingdom of Prāgjyotīṣa-Kāmrūpa covered the major portions of Eastern India. Varying fortunes brought about by conflict with the neighbouring powers in the west sometimes pushed back her boundary across the river Karatoya and sometimes extended it beyond that river. But in any case it is

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36. Ādi Kāṇḍa.
37. JASB, 1887, P. 106.
clear that Prāgjyotiṣa or ancient Kāmrūpa was a much larger kingdom than most other kingdoms mentioned in the Mahābhārata and also the sixteen Mahājanapadas existing during the time of Gautam Buddha³⁹।

Kāmarūpa :

Reference of Kāmarūpa in Place of Prāgjyotiṣa :

The Kingdom of Prāgjyotiṣa as discussed above came to be known as Kāmarūpa in later days. It can not be exactly ascertained why the kingdom was called so. The name Kāmarūpa found mentioned for the first time in the Allahabad stone pillar inscription (Prasasti) of Samudragupta (4th century A.D.) and in the early Purāṇas⁴⁰।

It has been described in the Kalikā Purāṇa that immediately after Naraka of Mithila became the king and was placed in charge of the goddess Kāmīkhyā, the name of the land was changed from Prāgjyotiṣa to Kāmarūpa. The term Kāmarūpa symbolised a new cult, and in exaltation of it the land itself was rechristened⁴¹।

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The name Kāmarūpa according to the Purānic legends is associated with Kāmādeva, the god of love. It is said that Kāma was sent by the gods to put an end to Śiva's mourning, after the death of his consort and to awaken in him again the passion of creation. He was burnt to ashes by the angry glance of the great God, but later recovered his original form (ṛupa). Hence the name Kāmarūpa.

During the medieval period Kāmarūpa became a centre of Tantrik worship and came to be considered a most sacred place, especially the temple of Kāmākhyā, where the Devi was adored. This worship of the goddess and the very names of Kāmākhyā and Kāmarūpa have led Dr. Kakati to consider that the cult was probably derived from some Pre-Aryan divinity. He further connects Kāmarūpa with such Austric formations as Kāmru or Kāmrut which in Santali is a name for a lesser divinity42. The term Kāmarūpa or Kāmru the alternative form of Kāmarūpa is attested in the Buddhist caryas and also in Haragaurīśaṅvāda.

This reference suggests that Kāmarūpa was the name of a particular holy place which is now known as Kāmākhyā. Kāmākhyā is a small temple town at the top of the Nilāchala hills covering an area of 1sq. k.m., within the larger area of greater Guwahati. But it is significant that even today the holy place of Kāmākhyā is called

42. Kakati, B.K. Assamese, its formation and Development, PP. 53-54.
Kāmarūpā-Kāmākhya by the pilgrims hailing from places like Bengal and Nepal. This shows that Kāmarūpā was originally the name of the holy place of Kāmākhya and the same came to be applied to the whole kingdom only at a later stage.

The point of time from when Kāmarūpā came to be called so is not precisely known. Kālidasa in his Raghuvamśa43 gives Kāmarūpā as the last country to be subdued by Raghu in his northern expedition. This reference does not help in fixing the date from when Kāmarūpā became the name of the kingdom. Among the earliest epigraphic records the Allahabad stone pillar inscription of Samudragupta (c 360 A.D.) mentions Kāmarūpā as one of the frontier kingdoms along with Samatata, Davāka, Nepal and Kartipura. On the basis of this inscriptional reference, it is definitely clear that the kingdom of Prāgijyotisa came to be known as Kāmarūpā as early as in the middle of the 4th century A.D. if not earlier.

Extent of the Kingdom:

Kāmarūpā as narrated in the Allahabad stone pillar inscription of Samudragupta appears to be a small kingdom. It shows Davāka as a separate kingdom. Davāka stands for the present Davāka region, a particular area in modern Nagaon district centering which the

43. Raghuvamśa, IV. 81-84.
kingdom of Ḍavāka of the Allahabad stone pillar inscription, probably existed. So at the time of composing the Allahabad Prasasti a part of Nagaon district comprising the kingdom of Ḍavāka was not within the boundary of Kāmarūpa.

According to both Kālikāpurāṇa and the Yogini-Tantra, Kāmarūpa was triangular in shape (trikona-kāram) and hundred yojanas in length spreading over an area of thirty yojanas (trīṁsādyojanavistīrṇam dirghena Satayojana). The Viṣṇu Purāṇa states that the country extended around the temple of Kāmarūpa (which was in the centre of Kāmarūpa) in all directions for 100 yojanas.

The Yogini Tantra (I / II) describes the boundaries thus:

Nepālasya Kāñcanādritam Brahmaputrasya saṁgamaṁ
Karatoṭan samārabhya yāvad Dikkaravāsiniṁ
uttarasayāṁ Kañjamagiriḥ Katasayā tu paścime
ṭīrthasreṣṭhā Dikṣunadī pūrvasayāṁ giri-Kanyakale
dakṣine Brahmaputrasya Lākṣayah saṁgamāvadhiḥ
Kāmarūpa iti khyātah sarvasāstreṣu niś citaḥ


"Form the mountains Kañcana in Nepal up to the confluence of the Brahmaputra, from the Karatoya to Dikkaravāsini the northern limit is the mount Kāṇja, in the west the Kartoyā, in the east the Dikṣu, (daughter of the mountains) in the south the confluence of the Lāksā with the Brahmaputra; this is the territory which all treatises call by the name of Kāmarūpa". Thus Kāmarūpa included roughly the Brahmaputra valley, Bhutan, Rangpur and Cooch Bihar

A later Sanskrit work called Haragaurī-Saṁvāda divides Kāmarūpa into four pithas with clearly marked river boundaries; viz.

1. Ratnapītha, between the Karatoya and Svarṇakośa.
2. Kāmapītha, between the Svarṇakośa and the Kapilī.
3. Savarṇapītha, between the Puṣpikā and the Bhairavī.
4. Saumārapītha, between the Bhairavī and the Dikrang river.

The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsiang who visited the court of Bhāskaravarman in 1643 A.D. stated that the country of Kāmarūpa was more than a myriad li or 1667 miles in circuit. The pilgrim travelled from Pun-na-fa-tan-na (Puṇḍravardhana or north Bengal) on the east more than 900 li or 150 miles; crossed a large river and reached ka-mo-lu-p'o (Kāmarūpa). The T'ang-Shu referred as

ka-lo-tu, by which probably was intended Karatoya. The pilgrim says that to the east of Kāmarūpa was a series of hill and hillocks without any principal city stretching to south-western China\textsuperscript{45}.

In the T'ang-Shu Kāmarūpa is described as being 1600 li to the west of upper Burma beyond the black mountain. It was situated in Eastern India 600 li to the South of Puṇḍravardhana (North Bengal) with the river Ka lo tu between the two countries\textsuperscript{46}.

On the basis of these references, and especially the reference to Kāmarūpa in the Allahabad stone pillar inscription, it is conjectured that Kāmarūpa in comparison to Prāgjyotiṣa, was a smaller kingdom.

**TRADITIONAL RULERS OF PRĀGJYOTIṢA-KĀMARŪPA:**

The political history of Ancient Assam, associated with the rulers of Prāgjyotiṣa- Kāmarūpa, is wrapped up with legends. The accounts are very few and limited. The main difficulty lies in the absence of archaeological corroboration. According to tradition the earliest known king of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa was a non-Aryan ruler

\textsuperscript{45.} Watters, Vol. II.

\textsuperscript{46.} Cited in ACHA. P. 15
named Mahiranga Danava. He had his capital at Mairanka. This is the legendary accounts but no records have been found for the probable historical character of the king and seems to be indicated by the existence of a hill Mairanka parvata in Beltola near Dispur, capital area of present Guwahati. How and when the kingdom was established was not known. But there is no doubt that he was a Kirata chief because the Kālikā Purāṇa, (ch 38, V.112, V. 121) tells us that the region was originally inhabited by Mlechchas and Kiratas, who were driven by Naraka to the hills and the marshy land on the sea coast. He was followed by Haṭakasura, Sambarasura, Ratnasura and Ghaṭakasura. Ghatakasura was supplanted by a prince from Videha named Naraka with Kṛṣṇa's help, when Naraka established a new line in Prāgyotisa. Mahiranga is called a Danava but his descendents are called Asuras. This shows that epithets like Danava and Asura were applied indiscriminately to all non Aryans.47

Naraka is an epic figure, mentioned in both the epics. Besides, several Purāṇas, the Kālikāpurāṇa and the Harivaṃśa give a detailed account of his life. The Kīṣkindhā kāṇḍa of the Rāmāyana (ch 42) refers to Naraka and his city of Prāgyotisapura which, however, is said to have been situated on the bank of the western sea. This very piece of information has been kept aside by the scholars as 'totally vague and misleading'. The Mahābhārata story about Naraka tallies well with those of other sources even though it is a confusing one.In

the Tirtha-Yātra-Parva of the Vana-Parva (ch 142), the Pāṇḍavas are said to have seen a hill, rather a heap of bones belonging to a demon named Naraka, but doubts remain as to the identification of this Naraka with the Naraka of Prāgjyotisa. The Udyoga-parva (ch 48, vv.80-85), the story reads thus:

"In a citadel named Prāgjyotisa, Naraka with the epithet Bhauma (son of Bhūmi or earth) used to live, who stole away the ear-rings of Aditi. Not a single god, not even Indra, could defeat him. At last Krīṣṇa killed Naraka and also Mura or Muru, his commander-in-chief, and recovered Aditi's ear-rings. The same parva also relates that for several yugas, Naraka used to live in Prāgjyotisa with other Dānāvas. But eventually, they all were overpowered by Krīṣṇa. Naraka lost his life, Krīṣṇa recovered Aditi's ear-rings and also thousand of Naraka's damsels". However, the Mahābhārata says nothing about Naraka's birth from Viṣṇu. The Kālikāpurāṇa and the local epigraphs, on the other hand, repeatedly say that Naraka was born from Viṣṇu in his Boar (Varāha) incarnation through Bhūmi or Prithvī. It is for this reason that he is called Bhauma (born of earth) and on account of his supposed divine origin, all ruling families in ancient Assam claimed descent from him. P. Gohain Barua has placed his reign in B. C. 150048.

The Kālikāpurāṇa version is quite lengthy. Naraka was the
adopted son of Janaka of Videha. When he was sixteen years old, he left Videha in search of his fortune. He came to Prāgjyotisa and killed the Dānavas, when he established a strong kingdom and settled dvija or twice-born people in Prāgjyotisa, his rule extended from the Karatoya on the west to the Dikrang on the east. He drove away the Kirāta people as far as the sea coast.

After becoming king, Naraka married Māyā, the princess of Vidarbha. It is stated that Gautama, the priest of Janaka, performed the keśavapana ceremony of Naraka according to Vedic rites. Naraka himself was well-versed in the Vedas. In his early career, Naraka was devoted to Viṣṇu and Kāmākhya. But later on, after coming under the influence of Bāṇa, the king of Soṇitapura, he started doing a number of misdeeds, like proposing to marry the goddess Kāmākhya, and stealing away the ear rings of Aditi, the mother of the gods and the umbrella of god Varuṇa.

At last, Kṛṣṇa came from Dvāraka, defeated and killed Naraka and placed his son Bhagadatta on the throne of Prāgjyoṭiṣa. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa states that Naraka's capital was well fortified in all directions and Muru was in-charge of defending it. Kṛṣṇa first killed Muru and his son, and entered the city and then killed Naraka. He recovered Aditi's ear-rings and took away along with him 16,000 damsels imprisoned by Naraka and also 14,000 elephants and horses.

Naraka was succeeded by his son Bhagadatta whose reign was placed in the middle of 1500 B.C., who was described as a contemporary of the heroes of the Mahābhārata who fought in support of Kauravas (Mhb. Dronaparva). Bhagadatta was commonly known in Bengal and Assam as the father of Bhānumati, the wife of the eldest Kaurava Duryodhana. It is also of historical importance that the prince of the then powerful kingdom of Hastinapur settled a marital alliance with Prāgjyotiṣa. It is said that an old tank namely Dighali Pukhuri in the heart of Guwahati city was excavated on the occasion of the marriage between Duryodhana and Bhānumati. Due to this relationship Bhagadatta participated in the great Mahābhārata war on the side of the Kauravas where he lost his life at the hands of Arjuna. The Sabhāparva of the Mahābhārata relates the story of Bhagadatta's (the king of Prāgjyotiṣa) eight days resistance of Arjuna who was in his northern expedition in connection with Yudhīṣṭhira's performing the Rājasūya-yajña (ch-26. vv7-16). The same Parva again relates the story of Bhīma's eastern expedition when he reached the Lauhitya region and forced the Mleccha kings and inhabitants of the sea shore to pay taxes. (ch30, vv26-7). In ch,51,vv 14-16 of the same Parva, Bhagadatta again comes with many precious items (horses, jewellery and swords

51. 'Jugal Das- Guwahatir Parivartan', Paura Bichitra, edit. by Sri Ramesh Ch. Kalita, P. 89
with hilts made of ivory) to present to the Pāṇḍavas. Here he is accompanied by the Yavanas. In the Udyoga-parva, he joins the Kauravas with one aṅkṣauhīṇī soldiery, mostly Cīnas and Kirātas endowed with golden complexion in the side of the Kauravas. Bhagadatta's heroism displayed in the war and the qualities of his elephants named Supratik, are described in a full chapter containing 86 verses in the Bhīṣma-parva. Four chapters in the Droṇa-parva (25-28) describe Bhagadatta's fight first with Bhīma and then with Arjuna in whose hands he lost his life. It is stated that this great grey-haired hero was so old that his eye-lids drooping down like a lobe, covered his eyes and for this reason, he had to tie a strap to keep the drooping muscles fixed up his eyes. As Kṛṣṇa instigated, Arjuna cut down the strap covering his eyes and thus, when blindfolded, he was killed with arrows.

According to the Mahābhārata (Karṇa-parva ch.5, vv 15-16), Bhagadatta's son, named Kṛtaprajña, was also killed in the Kurukṣetra war in the hands of Nakula. However, the local epigraph does not refer to this son of Bhagadatta. But they have mentioned Vajradatta as the successor of Bhagadatta as in the Aśvamedha-parva. Harṣacarita's Puṣpadatta who is described as Bhagadatta's son may be indentical with Kṛtaprajña, who could not became the king due to an early demise in the battle and as such could not also find any mention in the later records\textsuperscript{52}.

\textsuperscript{52.} KS, P. 1 of.
The next important king of Prāgjyotiṣa was Vajradatta, mentioned in the Dubi grant of Bhāskaravarman (v. 4), Nidhanpur grant of Bhāskaravarman (v. 5) and Gauhati grant of Indrapāla (v. 8). The lineage of the rulers after Vajradatta is vague and perplexing. The Nidhanpur grant of Bhāskaravarman states that a period of three thousand years elapsed between the death of Vajradatta and the accession of Puṣyavarman, the founder king of the Varman dynasty. Hieun Tsiang, the Chinese pilgrim who visited Kāmarūpa in the seventh century also records that there were three thousand generations between Viṣṇu, the progenitor of Naraka and the birth of Bhāskaravarman, the pilgrim's patron king53. The exact political history of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa during this period is still shrouded in obscurity. Hara-Gauri-Saṁvada, Yogini Tantra and other Assamese chronicles name a host of kings, who appeared to have ruled before the rise of the Varmans.

According to Hara-Gauri-Saṁvada, Bhagadatta was succeeded by Dharmapāla, Kāmapāla and others extending for 19 generations with 24 or 25 kings54. Yogini Tantra mentions about two kings. One was a Sudra king named Debeśwara, who ruled Kāmrūpa in the beginning of the Saka era and the other was Nagāśaṅkara, founder of the Nāgākhya dynasty, who flourished towards the end of 4th century and made his capital at Pratāpagarh

54. Hara-Gauri Saṁvada, Chps. VI-VII.
in Viśvanātha. Kamarūpar Buranji mentions a Kshatriya king named Dharmapāl who is said to have come from the west and founded a kingdom in west of Gauhati and was succeeded by Padmanarayan, Chandranarayan and others ending with Ramchandra, whose capital was at Ratnapur in the Majuli. According to another account, Suvalī, Padmanārāyan, Chandranārāyan, Mahendranārāyan, Gajendranārāyan, Pranārāyana, Ksovanārāyan and Ramchandra belonged to the family of Jitāri who came from Drāvida country. One Ārimatta was said to be born in the house of Ramachandra, whose capital was at Baidargarh near Betna in Kamrup, where a high embankment forming a square each side of which is about four miles long is still in existence.

A number of traditions centered round Ārimatta. It is said that his mother was raped by Brahmaputra and consequently Ārimatta was born. Later on Ārimatta unwittingly killed his foster father and for the sin of Patricide, he committed suicide. But the lineage and name of Ārimatta and his mother are confusing. The genealogy of the Rājās of Dimarūa states that Ārimatta's mother's Harmati was the daughter of Harabinda, a descendant of Irabhatta of Saumara and wife of Somapala of Pratāppuriya, a descendant of Mayūrdhvaj, Tamradhvaj of the race of Śiva, who ruled the territory.

57. JASB 1848; Choudhury, P. C., HCPA, P. 464.
between Viśvanath and Suvaṇširi and had the capital at Ratnāvatipura. Kāmarūpar Buranji mentions Chandrāprabha as Ārimatta's mother who was married to Pratap Singh, whose ancestors were Dharmapāla, Ratnapāla and Somapāla. According to another account, Chandrāprabha, also called as Kamala kumari, was married to Ramachandra, who belonged to the family of Jitāri.

The cause of the death of Ārimatta also remained a mystery. We have already mentioned that he committed suicide due to the sin of patricide. But an account narrates that he was defeated and killed by an army of Meches and Koches led by a king named Phengūā, belonging to the house of Kamatapur, who built a fortification called Phengūagarh in Dhamdhamā Mauza in Kāmarūpa. Ārimatta first defeated Phengūa, but later with the conspiracy of Ārimatta's wife Ratnamala, spoilt the bowstrings of Ārimatta's soldiers, defeated and killed him and he captured his (Ārimatta's) kingdom. Phengua in spite of taking Ratnamala as his wife put her to death saying that as she was faithless to her husband, she would probably ditch him also if he marries her. Ārimatta's son Ratnasingh or Gajarika killed his father's murderer, Phengūa. In the Sahārī mouza in Nowgaon area the remains of a fort, known as 'Jangalgarh', attributed this act to Jangalvalāhu, another son of

59 | Choudhury, P. C., HCPA, PP. 119-120.
61 | JASB, 185, P. 191
63 | Ibid. P. 17.
Arimatta. He is said to have been defeated by the Kacharis and drowned himself in the Kalang river. It may be that Ratnasimha, Jaṅgalvalāhu and Gajāṅka stand for the same person⁶⁴. Gajāṅka was succeeded by Sukrāṅka and Mṛgaṅka, with whose death, Kāmarūpa was divided into many parts.

Other than the above mentioned rulers of Prāgjyotiṣa Kāmarūpa, we find the names and some details about the two legendary kings, Bhīṣmaka of Vidarbha and Bāṇasura of Śoṇitpur. The Bhāgavat mentions Vidarbha as the kingdom of Bhīṣmaka, which according to the popular belief is the place around the present Sadiya region in the extreme northeast corner of Assam. Many archaeological remains in the area are attributed to Bhīṣmaka and Śisupāla. Bhīṣmaka's capital was at Kuṇḍina, situated on the bank of the river Kuṇḍil, which flows through Sadiya. About 24 miles north of Sadiya, between the ravines of the Dikarang and Dibang rivers, the remains of an extensive fort are found, which Hannay has described as the remains of Bhīṣmak's capital⁶⁵. However, T. Bloch has expressed no opinion as to the builders of this remains or the time of construction⁶⁶. In the same locality, four large tanks and brick foundations are found, which according to the historians might be of some extensive buildings⁶⁷. The story of Bhīṣmaka and

⁶⁴ Choudhury, P.C., P. 120
⁶⁵ Hannay, JASB Vol XVII-I, PP. 459f
Rukmini is narrated in Bhagavat\textsuperscript{68} and the Viṣṇu Purāṇa\textsuperscript{69} as well as in the Rukmini-Haran of Sankardeva. King Bhīṣmaka had five sons and a beautiful daughter named Rukmini, who inspite of her being betrothed, was kidnapped and married by Kṛṣṇa. The Chutiyas, who came into power towards the close of the 12\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. traced their descent from Bhīṣmaka\textsuperscript{70}. According to P. C. Choudhury Bhīṣmaka was probably a king from Kalita desa and Bhīṣmaka's capital was located in a place, where a colony of the Kalita was believed to have settled\textsuperscript{71}.

Another legendary king named Bāṇasura is mentioned in Bhagavat\textsuperscript{72}, Kālikāpurāṇa\textsuperscript{73} and Viṣṇupurāṇa\textsuperscript{74}. Bāṇasura was said to be the contemporary and friend of Narakāśura. Bāṇa's kingdom was extended in the east as far as the modern district of Lakhimpur and in the west probably to North Bengal\textsuperscript{75}. His capital city was Šonitpur (the city of blood) presently known as Tezpur. Bāṇa was an asura king or non-Aryan king and a devout worshipper of Śiva. The Śiva temple of Mahabhāratab in the modern town of Tezpur is attributed to him. He is said to be the son of Bāli of Marichi's family. Bāṇa had many sons but one daughter named Ęsā. The story of

\textsuperscript{68} Srimad Bhagavat, X th Skanda
\textsuperscript{69} Viṣṇu Purāṇa, B.K. V. Chap XXVI.
\textsuperscript{70} Baruah, S. L. ACHA, P. 86.
\textsuperscript{71} Choudhury, P.C. HCPA, P. 120.
\textsuperscript{72} Srimad Bhagavat, X th Skanda.
\textsuperscript{73} KP. Chap. 39.
\textsuperscript{74} Viṣṇu purāṇa, B.K. V, Chap. XXXII.
\textsuperscript{75} Choudhury, P.C. HCPA, P. 114.
Usā's gandharva marriage with Aniruddha, the grandson of Śrī Krṣṇā with the help of Usā's artist and magician friend Chitralekha is narrated in a well-known Assamese poetical work Kumār-Harān by Sankardeva. Bāṇa's fort is supposed to have been at the same site, where the Tezpur court is situated today. Some ancient ruins lying scattered in the area are ascribed to him. The Agnigarh hill (where some ancient relics of a temple or a building lie scattered along with frescos) is said to have been the place, where Bāṇa concealed his daughter. About a mile from Tezpur town towards the west are seen two tanks, one of which is attributed to Bāṇa and the other to his prime minister Kumbhanda. Bāṇa's grandson Bhāluk made his capital at Bhālukpung near Balipara where the remains of an old fortification are still seen.

Like Sadiya and Sonitpur, there are historical evidences of the existence of kingdoms like Manipur, Kadali, Davāka, Hiḍimba and Tripūra. It seems that these independent kingdoms accepted the sovereignty of the larger kingdom of Kāmarūpa and consequently brought under the hegemony of Kāmarūpa.

82. Choudhury, P.C., HCPA. P. 126.
The Mahābhārata mentions about Manipur, which was the kingdom of king Chitravahana⁸³, the father of Chitrangada. Many historians believe that Manipur mentioned in the Mahābhārata is the modern Manipur of the North East India⁸⁴. Arjuna came to this land and married Chitravahana's only daughter Chitrangada. They had a son named Babrubahana, who later became the king of Manipur. There was a traditional belief among the rulers, chiefs and nobles of Manipur that they were the descendants of Arjuna. Maharaja Surachandra (1886-90) claimed for himself the direct descent from Babruvahana in his letter to the viceroy⁸⁵.

Hidimba was another kingdom mentioned in the Mahābhārata⁸⁶. Hidimba was named after the name of Hidimba, wife of Bheema, one of the Pandava princes. Hidimba and Bheema had a son named Ghatotkocha. According to some historians, modern Dimapur or Hidimbapur as Hidimb, the brother of Ghatotkocha's mother and Bheema's wife Hidimba, established it⁸⁷. According to certain traditions, Hidimba is said to be the Kachari princess and the southern branch of the Kachāris claimed their descent from Ghatotkocha⁸⁸. It was also proved from the fact that

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⁸³. Mahābhārata, Adi parva and Ashwamedha parva.
⁸⁶. Mahābhārata, Adi parva.
the king since the closing years of the century was styled "Lord of Hidimbā" and since then the name 'Hidimbā' frequently occurred in their inscriptions and other records of the period\textsuperscript{89}. From this it has been suggested that 'Hidimbā' was the actual name of the Kachāri kingdom and Dimapur is a corrupt form of Hidimbāpur\textsuperscript{90}.

From the Buddhist tantric work of Pag Som Zon Zan and Gorakshavijaya, we get the name of the kingdom of Kadali, which states that the kingdom of Kadali was also known as Nārirājya as it was ruled by a woman ruler named Kamalā with the help of her sister and ministers in the end of the 10\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th} century A.D\textsuperscript{93}. This Kingdom of Nārirājya was located by some Historians in Manipur or Burma\textsuperscript{92} or Cāchār or even in the north-western frontier\textsuperscript{93}. But it is rather to be located in the Kadali in Nowgong, ruled probably by a Kachāri or a Jaintiā queen\textsuperscript{94} who enjoyed the liberty accorded to women by the Tantrik-Buddhists. According to P.C. Choudhury, the queen was ruling the kingdom possibly as feudatory of the Pālas of Assam\textsuperscript{95}.

\textsuperscript{89} Barua, S. L. ACHA, P. 189.
\textsuperscript{90} I bid.
\textsuperscript{91} Choudhury, P.C. HCPA. P. 229.
\textsuperscript{92} Mainamatir Gan. P. 22 (f.n. 2).
\textsuperscript{93} Chakladar, H. C. Social life in Ancient Indi.a, PP. 59.
\textsuperscript{94} R. M. Nath, JARS, VII, PP. 19-23.
\textsuperscript{95} Choudhury, P. C., HCPA, P. 229
Dāvāka was a kingdom mentioned in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta. It is associated with the Kapili Valley in modern Nowgong in Assam, because even today it contains a place called Dāvāka96. According to P.C. Choudhury, Dāvāka was not as old as Prāgjyotisā and may have been founded shortly before the 4th century A.D97.

All the above mentioned accounts prove that Prāgjyotisā-Kāmarūpa was an important kingdom in the early period though the chronological political history or evidences of the period before the fourth century A.D. are found to be missing.

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96 | Smith, V., Early History of India, P. 316.
97 | Choudhury, P. C., HCPA, P. 134.