The study of "Political Geography of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa" is a very important topic of the History of Eastern India of ancient time. My sincere effort is to find out the "Political Geography of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa" along with various places of importance during the period from 4th century A.D. to 12th century A.D.

Assam, the Eastern part of India, was known in ancient times as Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa. Assam situated in the north-eastern province of India is a region of breath taking scenic beauty. The state is decorated with rare floras and faunas, lofty green hills, fertile valleys, mighty water ways, emerald and dense forests and numerous rivers. Besides, the region also has some regional and cultural idiosyncrasy and uniqueness, where people of diverse races were synthesized and transformed into the colourful Assamese people. No wonder, such perfect fusion of culture and heritage of numerous races, tribes and sub-tribes gave birth to Assamese culture, a rich tapestry woven with multicoloure yarns of distinct heritages, traditions, life styles, faiths and beliefs. Since the days of Hiuen-Tsiang, Assam has fascinated thousands of travellers with her aura of myth and mystery, history and folklore, art and painting, music and dances, handloom and handicrafts. Panorama of nature and a plethora of rarest wild lives roaming through her vast and verdant forests.
The modern state of Assam lies between latitudes 28°18' and 24° North and longitudes 89° 46' and 97°4' East. The natural surroundings on all sides have separated Assam from the rest of the country giving the region a distinct cultural identity.

Assam is bordered on all sides by hill states of Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagāland, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura and Meghalaya. The North and North-Eastern side of the state is bordered by the hills of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh, inhabited by a host of tribes having distinct cultures of their own. The Pātkāi range that bordered Burma forms the South-eastern boundary being inhabited chiefly by the various tribes of Nagās and Manipuris and the South-Western is girdled by the mountain chains of Assam range comprising of Gāro, Khāsi, Jayantiā, North Cāchār, Mikir and the Nagā hills. The first three hills form the state of Meghalaya. The Nagā hills together with eastern portion of Pātkāi range form the state of Nagāland. The North Cāchār and the Mikir hills forming two districts of North Cāchār and the Karbi Anglong (the Mikir hills) is a part of the state of Assam. To the south of the Assam range lies the Barak valley, which includes the present district of Cāchār. To the South of Cāchār and Nagāland lies the state of Mizoram (Lushāi Hills) and Manipur. On the South-West of the Barak plains, Assam is bounded by the Hill Tippera forming the state of Tripurā and to the west of Cachar is the country of Bangladesh. In ancient period, the boundaries were at times

1 Choudhury P.C., HCPA P. 24
extended beyond the modern geographical limits, particularly in the west and south-west towards Bengal.\(^2\)

The present state of Assam is divided broadly into two river valleys, the Brahmaputra valley is watered by the Brahmaputra throughout its length from Sadiyā in the North-East to Dhubri in the West and by its tributaries on both sides of its bank. Second is the Suramā valley mainly, watered by the Suramā river. The Brahmaputra valley is divided into three regions, the Uttarakula, the Dakshinakūla and the Mājuli to the North of modern Sivasāgar, formed by the Brahmaputra. Geographically, the land is conveniently divided into two parts - the plains and the hills.

The Brahmaputra is also known as Lohit or Luit. (Derived from Lauhitya in Sanskrit meaning the red river) It is so called perhaps because the river takes this colour during the rainy season, when it flows through the red soil and embankments \(^3\) It is the chief water highway of Assam. The history and culture of Assam or Prāgjyotiśa-Kāmarūpa is very intimately connected with the Brahmaputra. In its mid course in the Kāmarūpa portion, the river touches Nilāchala or Kāmākhyā, the seat of Tantric or Sakta culture. The valley of Brahmaputra is a compact geographical unit of present Assam. In ancient time i.e. in the period of our study at times Prāgjyotiśa-Kāmarūpa included the greater portion of modern Assam, along with Koch-Bihar, Jalpaiguri, Rangpur, Bogra,

\(^2\) Ibid. P. 25
\(^3\) Barua, H., The red river and the blue hill, P. 7
Mymensing, Decca, Tripura portions of Pabna and probably a portion of Nepal. It seems therefore that Prāgjyotissa-Kāmarūpa included in ancient times, the modern district of Purnea in Bihar and extended on the north-west, as far as to the Kosi.

Prāgjyotissa-Kāmarūpa was a famous historical kingdom known by different names in different periods. The name Prāgjyotissa is more ancient than Kāmarūpa. The earliest mention of the city of Prāgjyotissa is traced to the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, the two great Indian epics. The name Kāmarūpa is mentioned for the first time in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta, the Gupta emperor, referred to a frontier state. The date of the inscription has to be assigned to the middle of the 4th century A.D. Other literary sources like the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, Ptolemy's Geography, the Śāṅkya-grihyasaṅgraha, Kautilya's Arthasastra etc. have made references to Prāgjyotissa.

Scholars have propounded different theories regarding the origin of the name Prāgjyotissa. 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 the North-west in Afghanistan. These centres were called Prāgzhithis, Madhya Zithis and Uttar-Zithis respectively.

4. JASB, 1887. P. 106
5. Barua, K.L., EHK. P. 2,
6. Ibid P.I.
Those who came to the North East known as Prāg-Zuthis in India. The term 'Prāg' means former, Zuthis in course of time got Sanskritised to ‘Jotisa’\(^7\). However this theory lacks evidence.

Among the modern scholars; Sir Edward Gait writes, “Prāg” means former or eastern and “Jyotisa” a star, Astrology”, shining.

Prāgjyotisapura may be taken to mean the “City of Eastern Astrology”.\(^8\)

According to K.L. Barua, at Citrāchala hill, the temple is dedicated to the Navagrahas or the nine planets gradually became known as Prāgjyotisa.\(^9\)

Prāgjyotisa according to Dr. B.K. Kakati seems to be connected with topographical features of the land rather than any religious cult, because Prāgjyotisa or Prāgjyotisapura was situated on an extensive hill. This topographical feature of Prāgjyotisa corresponds to an Austric formation like Pagarjuh (Jo) - tic (\(c = ch\)) meaning extensive high hills. Thus Prāgjyotisa may be a Sanskritisation of a non-Aryan formation \(^{10}\).

Prāgjyotisa was renamed as Kāmarūpa during the 4th century A.D. to continue onwards. The Allahabad pillar inscription is its great evidence. It was also known as Kāmarūpa - Kāmākhyā, as we have found that Mother goddess Kāmākhyā was

\(^7\) Nath R.M., The Background of Assamese Culture.P- 4.
\(^8\) Gait, E.A, AHA, p.15
\(^{10}\) Kakati, B.K., the Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā p.6.
worshipped at the Nīlāchala hill in the place.

The Name Kāmarūpa according to the Purāṇic legends is associated with Kāmadeva, 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 (rupa). Hence the name Kāmarūpa.

According to tradition, the earliest Known king of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa was a non-Aryan named Mahiraṅga Dānava. He had his capital at Mairanka. This is the legendary accounts but no records have been found for establishing the probable historical character of the king which seems to be indicated by the existence of a hill ‘Mairaṅka - Parvata’ in Beltola near dispur, the capital area of present Guwahati. Both Dānava and Asura rulers ruled this kingdom. After few generations Naraka’s group of kings took over the ruling power of the region.

Naraka, the founder of the Bhauma Naraka dynasty was the first historical ruler in this region. Naraka was an epic figure, mentioned in both the epics. Besides, several Purāṇas, the Kālikāpurāṇa and the Harivamśa give a detailed accounts of his life.
Naraka was succeeded by his son Bhagadatta known as Prāgjyotiṣadhipati in the Mahābhārata. His reign placed in the middle of 1500 B.C. was described as a contemporary of the heroes of the Mahābhārata, who fought in support of the Kauravas. (Mahābhārata, Dronaparva). For few generations there is a dark period of Kāmarūpa and the historical geneology starts from Varman dynasty with Puṣyavarman.

Hiuen-Tsiang, the Chinese pilgrim who visited Kāmarūpa in the 7th century A.D. also records that there were three thousand generations between Viṣṇu, the progenitor of Naraka and the birth of Bhāskaravarman, the pilgrims patron king. Hara-Gaurī Saṃvāda, Yoginitantra and other Assamese chronicles name a host of kings who appeared to have ruled before the rise of the Varmans.

The real political history of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa began with Puṣyavarman, the founder of the Varman dynasty in the middle of the 4th century A.D. and ended with the Pālas and subsequent rulers in the 12th century A.D. After this, in the middle of the 13th century A.D. the Ahoms had established a new political set up in Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa and ushered in a new era with a completely different political trend.

The boundaries of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa did not remain static or constant throughout, but under-went changes under different
ruling dynasties for political or other reasons. According to most of the Purāṇas, the kingdom of Prāgijyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa extended up to the river Karatoya in the west and included Manipur, Jayantia, Cāchār, part of Mymensingh, Sylhet, Rangpur and portions of Nepal and Bhutan. The Kalikāpurāṇa stating that Kāmarūpa lay to the west of river Karatoya, mentioned that it was triangular in shape, 100 Yojanas in length and 30 yojanas in breadth and that it was bounded by the Dikkaravāsini in the East. The kingdom was given in the Yoginītantra was divided into Ratnapītha, Bhadrapītha, Saumarpītha and Kamapītha bounded by the river Karatoya in the West, and Digāru in the East, the Kanda hill in the North and the Navalaya in the South. The same divisions are given in the Har-Gauri-Samvāda. It appears therefore that the kingdom of Prāgijyotiṣa-Kāmrūpa covered the major portions of Eastern India. That during the 7th-8th century this kingdom with Gauḍa-Vaṅga before the rise of the Pālas constituted one political unit, dominating the political and cultural affairs of Eastern India.12

A study of the three dynasties the Varman, the Śālastambha and the Pāla reveals that during this period the capitals have been shifted at least four times. The epigraphic records like the Dubi copper-plate grant and Nālandā clay seal of Bhāskaravarman and Uttarbarbil and Nowgaon grant of Balavarman etc. show the evidences that the kings of Varman dynasty had their capital at Prāgijyotisapura upto the middle of the 7th century A.D. or even later. Harjjaravarman

12. Choudhury, P.C., Assam Bengal Relations. P. 40
of Śalastambha dynasty shifted it to Hāruppesvāra or Haḍappeswara which was located somewhere near Tezpur. The inscriptions of the Śalastambha dynasty are fairly clear that Hāruppesvāra had been the capital since the reign of Harjjaravarman till the end of this dynasty. Again in the inscription of Ratnapāla and Indrapāla of the Pāla dynasty the name of the capital city is given as Durjaya. The third grant of Dharmapāla, the Puṣpabhadrā grant stated that he ruled at Kāmarūpanagara.

Again Vaidyadeva, a subsequent ruler of the Pāla dynasty had ruled from Haṁsakoṇḍi, situated within the area of modern Kamrup District, Assam. The archaeological records testified their Capital cities and Royal headquarters. It is interesting to note that the inscriptions of Prāgjyoṭiṣa-Kāmarūpa mentioned some other places of names which had played important role in the polity of the kingdom. One of them was Karḥasuvṛṣa which was a victory camp of Bhāskaravarman. Besides these, the inscriptions belonging to this period have mentioned some names of places which have importance economically, culturally or historically.

Thus Prāgjyoṭiṣa-Kāmarūpa occupies an important position in the history of Eastern India. The scope of the study is however limited in this period but yet tried to find out all the historical events, evidences from the records, inscriptions and monuments.
Objectives:

It is proposed to reconstruct the history of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa on the basis of its literary and material remains i.e. archaeological sources. The objectives of the present study are the following:

(i) To study the geographical existence and extension of Prāgjyotiṣa- Kāmarūpa.

(ii) To study the important names of the places of Prāgjyotiṣa- Kāmarūpa.

(iii) To study the political status and importance of Prāgjyotiṣa- Kāmarūpa.

Methodology:

In preparing this dissertation, original records such as inscriptions and similar other records concerning the ancient kingdom of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa are primarily studied. Together with these, original Sanskrit works, both traditional and creative ones are also studied. We have also consulted the available foreign accounts, such as of Chinese, Greek, Latin, Persian travellers and literary references relating to Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa. Modern works dealing with subjects similar to that of our concern are also studied and necessary help is taken with proper acknowledgement. In the course of the study, libraries of Gauhati University, North-Eastern Hill University, Department of Historical and Antiquarian studies,
Assam, Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti, Assam State Museum, Directorate of Archaeology, Assam, besides the National Library, Calcutta are visited and rare and other important books of varied authors and on topic not available locally are consulted. In the process historically and archaeologically important places and sites related to our area of investigation have been visited for field study.

So far no serious study on this subject has been made or seems to have been undertaken by any scholar; here in this dissertation endeavours have been made towards that end and results are organised and presented in the following manner.

Chapter I - Introduction

Chapter II - Political background and geographical existence of Prāgyotisa-Kāmarūpa in the early period.

Chapter III - Extension of the boundary of Prāgyotisa-Kāmarūpa during the rulers of various dynasties in ancient times.

Section A - Kings of Varman dynasty
Section B - Kings of Śālastambha dynasty
Section C - Kings of Pāla dynasty

Chapter IV - Various places of importance

Chapter V - Political status and importance of Prāgyotisa-Kāmarūpa.

Chapter VI - Conclusion
Chapter - II

In the 2nd chapter detailed account has been given on political background and geographical existence of Prāgjyotiśa-Kāmarūpa in the early period.

Chapter III

The 3rd chapter is on extension of the boundary of Prāgjyotiśa-Kāmarūpa during the rulers of various dynasties in ancient time.

The Kāmarūpa kingdom which started its growth as a legacy to the Gupta empire forsaken its subordination and became independent under Mahendravarman that continued under the Varmans, Śālastambhas, Pālas till 12th century A.D. It is a glorious history for the line of kings of these dynasties, who maintained their royal hold in a very emphatic way by extending its western end upto Nālandā during the Varmans, upto Kosala during the Śālastambhas, upto Purnea during the Pala rulers.

Chapter IV

4th chapter is a most important chapter of this research study which gives an illustration of the names of the various places. The main intention of this chapter is to mention the names of the capitals, cities or the local names of the places found in the inscriptions and literatures of ancient Assam.

Inscriptions of Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa testified six names of
places where the kings of Prāgjayotisa-Kāmarūpa established their Capital cities and Royal headquarters. Besides these, the inscription belonging to this period have mentioned some names of places viz-Kulācala, Kailasa, Kamakuta, Lauhitya, Gaṅgini, Kausika, Hapyaca, Kāmarūpa, Mandi, Haposagrama, Haṁsākonchī, Chandrapuri, Hensiva, Abhisuravataka etc. All these names of the place are important for its historical perspective.

**Chapter V**

The 5th chapter has been devoted to the political status and importance of Prāgjayotisa-Kāmarūpa in the different period according to the ability and disability of the rulers.

**Chapter VI**

The last chapter is the concluding chapter where the gist of the study has been focused with discussion and the opinion and findouts of the subject.

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