CHAPTER - V

ECONOMIC LIFE
Both the economic structure and urbanization have the effect upon each other. Economy plays the great role for emergence, sustenance and development of urbanization. Economic factors like surplus food production, development of trade and commerce, rise of industry etc. play the role for emergence of the cities and the towns. Development of iron technology and large-scale agricultural farming led to the surplus production and to channelise the production and to maintain the social order the political set ups like janapadas, kingdoms were emerged in the society. As the seat of the government and administration of the janapadas and the kingdoms the capital cities were emerged. Some cities like the coastal cities of India were emerged centering trade and commerce. Thus urbanization had been started in the society.

For the purpose of channelizing the surplus production and to maintain the social order the kingdoms were started in ancient Assam and as the centre of the government and administration the
different capital cities were emerged. Although the cities and capital cities were the administrative centre prospect for trade and commerce was also look into consideration in establishing a cities in ancient Assam. Most probably due to this consideration that the cities of ancient Assam were built on the banks of the big rivers like the Brahmaputra where there were the good facilities for trade and commerce. The inscriptions of ancient Assam indicate this interest of the city planners. Thus the inscriptions indicate that the cities of ancient Assam were the centre of business having the nipani (shops) where the valuable jewelleries were kept decoratively which attracted the foreign traders. Thus the economic factors played the role for emergence of urbanization in ancient Assam.

Urbanization greatly influences to the economic life of the people of both the cities and the neighboring villages. Urbanization signifies a new form of economic structure within and surrounding the cities. The cities where live the people of elite and wealthy classes require the materials like different clothings, jewelleries, utensils and other items which are different from the ordinary people. To supply the required materials of the city people there necessitate the skilled craftsmen. These skilled craftsmen produced their products not only within the city walls but also in the surrounding rural areas of the cities. Thus urbanization plays a vital role for economic development of a place or a country.

A good economic condition is essential for development and sustainability of a country or a city or any particular
place. From the study of different sources it is found that a sound economic life prevailed in the cities of ancient Assam having good transport system, industries and facilities of trade and commerce. Most of the cities of ancient Assam were situated on the banks of the big rivers like the Brahmaputra (Lauihitya) while others were along the banks of its tributaries like the Kapili and the Dhansiri. All these rivers were broad, deep and navigable rivers which could be used as the way for transportation.

From the point of occupation the city dwellers of ancient Assam may be categorized into two groups- those connected with productive activities and those which were not connected with productive activities. The craftsmen and the men in industries were the productive group and administrative officials and the tertiary section belonged to the non-productive group. The king, his administrative staff and the merchant class although belonged to the non-productive group, they played the vital role in managing the law and order situation of the country enabling the city dwellers to enjoy the peaceful life and smooth running of the system of management and distribution of the production.

In ancient Assam commodities produced both by state and private enterprises. The craftsmen employed in the court for construction of royal palaces, buildings and other constructive activities of the king were controlled by the state, whereas the craftsmen involved in the production of articles for trade were done by the private enterprises. The reference of various attractive articles in the accounts of Huen Tsang
and in Harsacarita indicates that there were skilled and specialist craftsmen in ancient Assam.

The two main aspects of urban economy are (i) Specialization of crafts and commodity production and (ii) the trade – both internal and external. Sources indicate that the urban economy of ancient Assam evolved around two main factors- namely the industry and the trade.

Industry was an important aspect of the economic life of the urban centres in ancient Assam. The accounts of the Chinese Traveler Huen Tsang, the Harsacarit of Bāna, Kālikā Purāṇa etc. indicate the various industrial products that produced in ancient Assam. Like the literary evidences the archeological and the epigraphic sources indicate the industrial products that produced in the cities of ancient Assam. The archeological discoveries that made in different parts of Assam and its neighboring places in the forms of pottery, terracotta objects and figurines, metal objects, coins, stone objects, plaques, ornaments etc. have confirmed the production of various crafts and industrial products in ancient Assam. Moreover various inscriptions that issued by the kings of ancient Assam in different times indicate the crafts and the industrial products along with the people that engaged in the crafts and the industries like Suvanakāra (Goldsmiths), Sekyākara (Coppersmiths) etc.

For the systematic discussion, the urban industries of ancient Assam can be classified into the following heads:
1. Textile Industry
2. Carpentry and wood cutting
3. Metal working
4. Stone working
5. Glass industry
6. Bone and ivory working
7. Perfumery
8. Liquor and Oil manufacturing
9. Leather industry
10. Clay working like pottery, terracotta figurine making, modeling, brick making etc.
11. Other miscellaneous industries

Textile or weaving industry was an important and popular industry of ancient Assam. Generally there were three varieties of cloth products produced in ancient Assam viz. cotton, woolen and silk. In early Assam cotton was not only used for manufacture of cloth but also used for preparing paper sheet, which was called as Tulāpūl. The paper sheets were prepared by pressing cotton so as to make it into something likes a paper sheet. The uses of Karpāsa (Cotton) garment indicate in the Kālikā Purāṇa of 6th century A.D. and Harsacarita of 7th century A.D. The professional weavers of early Assam in 9th century A.D. were called the Tanturāyās. Although the sources of early Assam do not indicate the detail picture of cotton weaving industry the good reputation and widely
prevalence of cotton manufacture during the Ahoms period (mediaeval period) indicates that cotton industry was a great industry in ancient Assam. The usual process of the cotton manufacture was the treating cotton threads with some gummy substances like a pounded rice to make them hard so as to make them use as loom.

From the Kālikā Purāṇa it is known that along with the cotton garments the woolen garment (Kamhala), bark cloth (Kosāka) and hemp cloth (Sānavastam) were used in early Assam in 6th century A.D. Since the time of Mahābhaṭṭaraṭṭa there is the information of using of bark cloth in ancient Assam. In the Mahābhārata refers to the use of bark cloths by the Kīrātas who form the army of Bhagadatta. It is known that among the presents that were sent by Bhāskaravarman of Kāmarupā (594-650 A.D. to Harsavardhana of Kanouj there was the cloth as smooth as birch bark. The bark cloths were made of the fibres of the trees or plants.

Manufacture of silk was a well-known industry in ancient Assam, and it got a great patronization from the royal authority. The art of manufacture of silk cloth was known in ancient Assam from the time of Rāmāyana where it is mentioned as the cocoon reared country along with Magadha, Anga and Pundra. Periplus of the Erythian Sea, and the work of Pliny in 1st century A.D. also indicate the producing of Pāt (Silk cloth) in ancient Assam and indicate the silk trade that was going on in and through the land. The work also refers to the both raw and manufactured silk from Thinā, which is identified with Assam.
Kautilya refers to Cinnabumla of China country (Cinābhūmijaḥ) along with the three Indian verities of silk cloth namely ḍākulā of Vangas, Pundras and Suvarnakunda (Assam), kshaumā from Kasi and Pundras and patronā silk from Magadha, Pundras and Suvarnakunda. Harsacarita indicate that along with the various materials that sent by Bhaskaravarman of Kāmarupa to Harsa of Kanouj, there was an Anogha umbrella, which was wrapped by ḍākulā cloth and other variety of silken objects like patronā. Dākulā cloth is also referred in the Grants of ancient Assam. Again among the various presents that sent by Bhaskaravarman to Harsa there was the Kshaumāni, a silken towel. These references indicate that in ancient Assam different varieties of silk cloths like ḍākulā, patronā, kshaumā etc. were produced and exported.

The three varieties of silk cloths that produced in Assam are known as pāṭ, edi and muga. Pāṭ and edi have the Sanskrit term pāttajā and erāndajā but muga has no Sanskrit term. It indicates that ‘muga’ silk was a complete indigenous product of Assam.

Like the cotton and the silk products woolen products also produced in ancient Assam. Kālikā Purāṇa refers to the kambula (Woolen garment) that produced in ancient Assam. Other specie of woolen product of ancient Assam was the cape made of fur. It is mentioned that Bhāskaravarman offered a cape of fur to Huen Tsang when the latter prepared to leave for his country.
Along with the weaving industry dyeing industry was also developed in ancient Assam. Different sources indicate the information of the existence of the dyeing industry in ancient Assam. Bāna, the author of Harsacarita indicates the reference of the coloured and painted cloth of the time of Bhaskaravarman, which were as smooth as birch bark with the pattern of jasmine flower. Kālikā Purāṇa refers to the use and manufacture of various coloured cloth for the worship of the different deities.

Raktain koushayabastrancha nilani deyani kaḍāpi na | | 24

The dyeing was generally produced from lac, indigo and various other ingredients like roots, leaves and barks of trees like khoir (acacia catechu), acanthaceae etc. Inscriptions indicate that the 'madhurasvattha' tree was used for breeding of lā-poka or lac insects. But Ctesias and Aelien refer to the people of Seres who had the habit of rearing lac insects on Siptachora (tree) producing purple dye. Seres is identified as Asia. So the practice of colouring of cloth with lac in Assam came from the other countries. Both the art of embroidery and the manufacture of dyeing materials were known in ancient Assam.

Dyeing in cloths was done in two processes - (i) Dyeing the threads before use in the looms (ii) Dyeing in the finished cloth.

Carpentry or wood cutting was a popular and big industry from the Rig Vedic times and the term taskan was used to denote a carpenter. From the sources it is known that the carpentry and wood
cutting industry was an important industry that flourished in ancient Assam. Inscription references that King Vanamālā erected rows of palaces which had numbers of rooms decorated with carvings⁹, and king Ratnapāla constructed magnificent buildings (soudhu) in the city of Durjāyanagara⁰. These references in the inscriptions and literature of the beautiful and decorative structures of Prāgjyotisapura and other cities of ancient Assam and absence of the ruins of the structures of the cities indicate that the skillful carpenters and woodcutters of ancient Assam did the structures of the cities with the wooden materials. As the wood is a perishable material wooden structures of the ancient Assam were perished in course of time without leaving any noticeable mark. One important reference that to be made in this respect is that, literature and accounts of the foreigners inform of the magnificent buildings constructed in northern India during the Mauryans’ times using the wooden materials. As for instance Strabo indicates that the city Pataliputra was girt with a wooden wall, pierced with loopholes for shooting arrowsⁱ¹. And again Arrian states that all the cities situated on the banks of the river or on the Sea-shores were constructed with wood instead of bricksⁱ². But all of the buildings were later perished leaving no ruins. The only reason behind is that wooden materials are perishable one which could not survive forever like stones and bricks. Similarly the construction of buildings in the capital cities of ancient Assam as mention in the literature and inscription was done most probably with the perishable materials consisting of woods,
cane and reeds etc. as like of the Mauryan times which were completely ruined in course of time without leaving any noticeable remains.

Reference of ‘rathyā’ as a type of road constructed in the cities of ancient Assam and Brahmin scholar Himānga as a rathika indicate that the Rathas (Chariots) were used as the vehicle for transportation as well as in warfare in Assam in ancient times. Although there was no reference of the makers of the Rathas (Chariots) in ancient Assam, in the Vedic works they were called as Ratnakāras. Another class of vehicle that made by the carpenters and woodcutters of the early Assam was the Palanquins (Sivika), which was greatly used by the high born people. Dolā which is another name of Sivika (Palanquins) was greatly used by the Ahom kings, their queens and their nobles in Assam during the medieval period.

Another noteworthy carpentry work of ancient Assam was the making of boxes, which proved by inclusion of “Carved boxes with panels” along with the various presents sent by Bhāskaravarman to Harsavardhana.

The superb carpentry and wood cutting work of early Assam was the boat (paukā) making industry. In the Tezpur Grant of Vanamālā mentions the rows of boats curved with designs and using decorative ornaments as like the prostitutes were waiting in both bank sides the river of Brahmaputra. This reference in the inscription indicates
that there were rich and developed boat making industries in ancient Assam with skillful carpenters and woodcutters.

Besides the above furniture and wooden articles for household purposes was done in ancient Assam. The beds of the palaces were looked like the golden works.

Side by side with the carpentry and wood cutting industry the bamboo, cane and reed industry was developed excellently in ancient Assam. Inclusion of the articles like baskets of variously coloured reeds embossed by skilful artists, cane stools, gold painted bamboo cages among the presents of Bhāskaravarman to Harsa indicate that various attractive articles of bamboo, cane and reeds were skillfully produced by the skilled bamboo and reed producers of early Assam in 7th century A.D. The forest products like bamboos, canes and reeds were abundantly found in the forest of Assam. So a rich and developed industry of the forest products was suitably developed in early Assam.

Metal whether gold, silver, copper or iron had been played the great role in the growth of human civilization. The discovery of iron gave a new direction to the world. In fact one of the fundamental factors responsible for the second phase of urbanization of India was increasing use of iron. The use of iron revolutionized the production by helping the people to extend the agricultural land by clearing the forestland and providing agricultural tools. The use of iron made easier the transportation by making the wheels and body of the carts and chariots.
stronger and strengthened the protection of kingdoms by making weapons and other protective measures.

Reference of king Bhagadatta of Prāgyotisa in the different chapters of Mahābhārata and the role that he played in the great war of Kuruksetra against the Pândava with the weapons like bows and arrows, spears etc. indicate that iron was used in ancient Assam from long past. The indication of Pliny that the iron of Sercā (Assam) was considered to be the best and mention of merchandise articles by Ammian Mercellinus from early Assam consisting of skin, iron aloe, musk and rhinoceros horns, indicate that iron working was done in Assam in the classical period. From the reference in the epigraphs of Assam it is known that the metals like iron, was used for making weapons such as arrows, saktis, chakra (wheel), prāsas, swords, tomaras etc. in ancient Assam. Some other iron implements that used in Assam in ancient times were spades, sickles, ploughshares, chains, iron plates and pans, swords and various other weapons.

There is the reference of gold metal in early Assam in the classical works. It is known from different sources that gold was found abundantly in ancient Assam. Arthasastra refers Suvarnakunda, a reverine tract of Assam, where gold was produced. Megasthenese states that underneath the mountain of the country of Derdāi, located in the east of India there was the mines of gold worked by the ants. This region must refer to any mountains of Ancient Assam. Schoff on the basis of the
Periplus states that gold was brought to India through Tripurā from the rivers of Assam and the North Burma. The abundance of gold in ancient Assam was indicated by the inscriptions of ancient Assam. The Silimpur Stone Slab inscription of the time of Jaypaladeva indicates the offering of 900 gold coins to Brahmin Prahāsha by king Jayapala of Kamarupa. Kālikā Purāna refers to the gold-bearing water of the river Subansiri. The abundant production of gold led the kings and the wealthy people of the kingdom to lavishly use the gold in different occasions. Thus the king Vanamālā rebuilt the fallen golden temple of Lord Siva (Hataka Sulin) in Hāruppeswara.

Dhurīhe nāhupasya yena patitaṁ kālāntarādālayain
soudhyāṁ bhaktinatā khilaṁravaratnativaṁclālimihreḥ punah|
prālayāchhasringatungamatiulāgrāmhaheshaḥyajane-
yuktain hātakashulinah kshitiḥbhujā bhaktyā navanā chakrāṣā|

The same king made gifts of gold and silver on different occasions. It is stated in the Tabīt-I-Nasiri that after facing a great disaster, Bakhtier Khiliji took refuge in a temple of Kāmapupa where there was a huge gold image of a god.

Though it is rare to find it is known from the different sources that gold was also used for minting the coins in ancient Assam. Periplus significantly mentions the gold coin callis, which K. L. Barua associates with countries of the Kalitās of the Brahmaputra valley. Another reference of gold coins of ancient Assam is in the Silimpur Stone Slab Inscription where it is indicated that king Jayapala of Kamarupa.
offered 900 gold coins to Brahmā Krishna Prahāsha. But no such coins have been
discovered till the date. However few gold coins have discovered at
Paglātek, 15 km from Goalpara town in 1972, which have the similarity
with the Gupta coins (Appendix, Plate 181).

Gold was abundantly used for making of ornaments in
ancient Assam. Members of the royal family including kings and their
queens, highborn people of well to do families who lived in the cities
abundantly and skillfully used the gold ornaments. Thus the jewellery
industry was greatly developed in the urban centers of ancient Assam. The
valuable stones like the gajamukta, pādmarūga etc. were used in the
ornaments and in the jewellery shops (Vipani) the jewelleries including the
Topaz were sold, which attracted the foreign traders.

The abundance use of silver in ancient Assam is
known from different sources. Like gold, silver was also used for making
different kind of ornaments in ancient Assam. It was known that the
kings of ancient Assam donated silver along with gold.

Baluhemaroupyagajabājimalipranadādiratnamichyāni bhūshā |
pradārṇavāramanishain nigadan pranitāksharopi bhūvagabhavat | 63

Silver was also used in ancient Assam for manufacturing pitcher. The silver
pitcher was used for carrying water in the auspicious occasions like the
coronation ceremony. The reference of using of silver in ancient Assam is
interesting for silver is hardly an indigenous products of India and that the
silver used in ancient Assam came from Bulkh and Ceylon.
Another notable metal industry that developed in ancient Assam was the copper industry. Copper was abundantly used in making ornaments, weapons, utensils, and inscriptions in ancient Assam. Most of the kings of the three main ruling dynasties (the Varman dynasty, the Śālastambha dynasty and Pāla dynasty) of ancient Assam issued land grants inscribed in the inscriptions which were made of copper. The person who produced the articles using copper metals was known as Sekyākara or Kamalākāra. Discovery of copper coins at Dhulāpādun tea estate indicates the using of copper metal for making coins in ancient Assam (Appendix, Plate 183). Copper was also used to make bells as evidenced by the inscribed copper bell found in the Narakāsur Hoard which is now preserved in the Assam State Museum, Guwahati.

The craftsmen of Assam were also adept at creating alloys like bronze. The Assam State Museum houses a number of bronze plaques and icons made from bronze and recovered from different sites of Assam. They include miniature sculptures of Brāhmanical and Buddhist gods and goddesses like Indra, Surya, Tārā, Durgā and those of Epic heroes like Arjuna and Krisna and so on.

The stone working industry was an important industry in ancient Assam. The discovery of both ancient secular as well as religious stone structures and stone images in different sites of Assam like Sūrja Pāhār in Golapārā, Da-Parvatiā in Tezpur, Mikir Āti, Chāngchouki in Nāgāon, Deopāni and Deopāhār in Golāghāt, Madan Kāmdev near
Guwahati, Ambāri in Guwahati and many other places of Assam indicate that stone working was a big industry in ancient Assam. Another stone cutting example of ancient Assam was the issue of stone inscriptions by the kings of ancient Assam. The Nagājari-Khanikargāon Fragmentary Stone Inscription, Umāchal Rock Inscription and Tezpur Rock Inscription are the example of this kind. Dedication of a cave temple by king Surendravarman for Lord Balabhadra in the Umāchal rock Inscription, indicates the example of making of cave temple cutting the stone in Ancient Assam. One of outstanding example of stone cutting work in ancient Assam was the construction of the stone bridges. One such stone bridge was on the channel of the Barnadi River, which Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khilji and his Turkish army crossed in the year 1206 A.D. These ruins and remains of ancient Assam which were made of stone indicate that stone working was a big industry in ancient Assam. The stone cutters were known as ‘Pasānakuttakas,’ who were skilled in their work.

Most of the territories of Assam are covered with hills and the forest. Therefore it is rich for sylvan products from time immemorial. The abundance of elephants in the forest of ancient Assam was known from the inscriptions. About the abundance of elephants, ivory and rhinoceros horns in ancient Assam was known from the works of the classical writers also. Kalidāsa indicates the abundance and capture of elephants in the jungle of Assam. The Chinese pilgrim Huen Tsang in his
account also indicates about the abundance of elephants that found in ancient Assam.

This abundance of elephants and rhinoceros in ancient Assam led to the development of the ivory industry in the land from long past. The reference of Bāna in his Harsacarita that among the presents that sent by Bhāskaravarman to Harsa there was the rings of hippopotamus ivory, encrusted with rows of huge pearls from the brows of elephants indicates the developed ivory industry of ancient Assam.

Cities and towns of ancient Assam were lived by the people of rich aristocratic classes and members of the royal families who lived the life of luxurious and comfort, and therefore they were trying to be attractive by using some of the perfumery articles. The city people of ancient Assam thus had given importance on using the articles like scents, toilet and aromatic products. Using of these aromatics in Assam was known from the epic period. Bhimasena, the 2nd Pāṇḍava after conquering Assam received Sandalwood and aloe wood (agaru) as presents. In the Rājāsuya Sacrifice, the kirātas of Prājīyotisa (ancient Assam) offered the presents of aromatics like Sandalwood and heaps of other aromatics to king Yudhisthira. Epigraphs of ancient Assam also indicate the using of perfumes. The use of perfume by women is testifies by the inscriptions of Ancient Assam.

Classical writers also make important references of aloe and mask from Assam. According to Commentator Bhattasvami
some of the best verities of Sandalwood like Jongoka, Grāmeruka, Aupaka or Jāpaka and Tanrupaka as refers by Kautilya were from Kāmarupa. Of these Jongaka and Tanrupaka were red or dark red, soft in structure and scented smelt like lotus; Gāmaruka was also red and dark red but smelt like goats urine and Jāpaka was red colour and scented like lotus flower.

Agaru (aloe wood), which was used as incense as well as perfumes in ancient times, is considered as valuable product of Assam even to day. It was also of different varieties. In the epigraphs the Kalāgaru (black aloe) was specially referred. Kālidāsa and Kalhan also refer about the aloe wood of Assam in their works. Harsacarita indicates that among the various presents sent by Bhāskara to Harsa there were a bundle of dark aloe as pounded collyrium, black aloe oil in thick bamboo tubes and kākkolā sprays.

Besides the forest products the animal products were also used as scented products in ancient Assam. Among the animal scented products the most mentionable were the mask of deer (kusturikā mrigamārī) and mask of oxen. In the classical literature also there is the evidence of mask of Assam. The inscription of Balavarman indicates the using of mask deer in ancient Assam. Bāna mentions that among the presents from Bhākaravarman to Harsavardhana there was “scented bags of mask-oxen and mask deer which scented the space all around them”.

The literature like Kālikā Purāna indicates the using of different types of perfumes in different ways in ancient Assam. Some of
such perfumes were *curnikrita* (powder), *ghrista* (paste), *dahākrista* (ashes), *samardājarasa* (juice), *pranyāmodbhāva* (mask).89

Kautilya indicates ten kinds of aromatics oil (*Tailaparnika*) out of which many verities were found in Assam. Some of these are *asoka grāmika* - the product of *Asoka grāma* which was of meat coloured and smelt like a lotus flower, *jongoka* - reddish yellow coloured and smelt like a blue flower or like the urine of cow, *grāmaruka* was of greasy coloured and smelt like cow’s urine, *suvarnakundya*, was of reddish yellow coloured and smelt like *matulunga* (the fruit of the citron tree or sweet lime), *purnadvipaka* - the product of the island of Purnadvipa, which smelt like lotus flower or like butter, *bhadrasiya* and *pāralouhityaka* were of the colour of nutmeg, *anarvatya* was of the colour of cuscus, *kaleyaka* which was the product of Suvarnabhumi was of yellow and greasy coloured and *uttamaparvata* - product of northern mountain was of reddish and yellow coloured.90

From literary evidences it is known that in ancient India liquor industry was thrived in large scale. It had become commodities of common consumption. Kautilya indicates the using liquor and intoxications and differentiates the both by paying duty. Thus the liquor paid the duty of 1/10 or 1/15 while the intoxicant (*Madya*) 1/20 or 1/25.91 The Jatakas refers to the liquor and the liquor shops and states that the festive occasions and the parties were marked by the drinks.92 Liquor
also abundantly produced and used during the Gupta period. Kālidāsa indicate the using of drinks by both men and women of his times.

In ancient Assam also liquor was produced and used by its people in different purposes. It is indicated in the Harsacarita that among the various presents that sent by Bhāskaravarman to Harsavardhana there were the cups of ‘Ullākā’ diffusing a fragrance of the sweetest wine and thick bamboo tubes containing mango saps. The reference of ‘madhumada’ in the inscription of Assam proved the production and consumption of liquor and intoxication in ancient Assam. The Yogini Tantra refers to the worship of Goddess Kāmeswari with wine, meat and blood. This indicates that wine was offered to the deity for worship in ancient Assam. The Kālikā Purāṇa regards wine as an ideal thing and mentions ‘madaka’ along with pistaka, pāyasa and madhu.

Inscriptions of ancient Assam indicate that the ordinary people were away from drinking wine. It indicates that there was restriction among the common people in using the wine in ancient Assam.

Leather work was an important industry of human society from remote past. Skins of different animals like antelopes, deer, cows etc. were used as the leather. Besides shoes articles for domestic and day-to-day use were also manufactured from the leather. Thus Jātakas refer to leather jerkins, leather sacks, ropes, straps, parachutes and shoes made of leather.
Sources indicate the manufacture of leather works in ancient Assam. In the list of the presents that sent by Bhāskara to Harsa there were the items of pillows made of *Samaraka* leather and bucklers made of *Kardaranga* leather.\(^{101}\)

Clay working was a popular and important industry in ancient times. The various objects that made from the clay were pottery of different types and shapes, terracotta objects and figurines, beads, rings of wells, toy-carts, decorative pieces and various household objects. The discovery of the terracotta products in different sites of Assam namely in Bhismaknagar, Ambāri etc. witnessed the popularity of this industry in Ancient Assam. The clay seal of Bhāskaravarman discovered at Nālandā is one of the significant clay working examples of ancient Assam. The Clay Seal bears the genealogy of the kings of the Varman dynasty of Ancient Kāmarūpa kingdom and is witnessed the using of the earthen seal as the object of keeping record in ancient Assam. The discovery of huge number of terracotta figurines along with other articles in Ambāri in Guwahati, Cotton College campus and other sites of Assam witnessed the developed terracotta producing as a part of clay working industry in ancient Assam.

The epigraphic and archeological evidences indicate the clay-working activities flourished in ancient Assam. Thus the Nidhānpur Grant indicates the *Kumbhakāragarta* (Potter's pit)\(^{102}\) and the Kamauli Grant and the Bargaoon Grant refer to the *kumbhakāras\(^{103}\), who were the professional potters. There is the reference of special villages of
ancient Assam where potteries were produced. Such a village was *Dijaratihādi* \(^{104}\). This indicates that the potteries in ancient Assam were produced in guild system. Some of the unique specimens of clay working that witnessed the artistic and decorative designs, which dated the 5\(^{th}\) and 6\(^{th}\) century A.D. have been discovered from Dah-Parvatiā in Sonitpur district and near Sadiyā in Dibrugarh district. The reference in the Harsacarita of “drinking vessels embossed by skillful artist” and “molasses in earthen pots”\(^ {105}\), are also the suitable citation of the clay working activities that developed in ancient Assam. This also indicates the on going patronization that received by the producers of clay products from the kings of ancient Assam like king Bhāskaravarman.

The existence of the ruins of temples and other remains in different parts of Assam namely Sri Surjya pāhār, Hājo, Madan Kāmdev, Guwahati, Davakā and its adjoining places, Deopāni and Deoparvat in Golaghat, Tezpur and its adjoining places, Sadiyā etc., and inscriptional references indicate the on going bricks and stones work that flourished in ancient Assam. This indicates the development of brick making industry in ancient Assam.

The issuing of the both copper-plates and stone inscriptions in different places and making of sculptural works and architectural designs in the temples and other buildings indicate that the act of engraving was greatly flourished and developed and was regarded as an important industry in ancient Assam. This industry was patronized
by the royal authority of ancient Assam because engraving of the inscriptions and decorating of the buildings which were done for wellbeing and establishing the dignity and popularity of the kings of ancient Assam.

Trade and commerce is an important aspect for development of a country. It is the earmark to measure the prosperity and success of administration of a country. Trade is of two kinds - the internal trade and external trade.

Both internal and external trade was prevalence in ancient Assam. There were certain factors for the development of trade and commerce in ancient Assam. They were as the followings-

- Availability of economic resources like mineral and forest products, agricultural and industrial products,
- Location of the state in the trade routes between China, Burma and rest of the countries of East Asia in the one side and rest of the territories of India and other countries of the west in the other.
- Extension of Kāmarūpa kingdom towards the eastern and northern India especially during the 7th and 8th century A.D. Thus during the reign of king Bhāskaravarma (A.D. 594-650) of Varman dynasty the kingdom was extended towards Pundravardhana bhukti, Karnasuvarna, etc. and under the king Sri Harsa (A.D. 725-750) of Salastambha dynasty towards regions like Gauda, Udra, Kalinga, Kosala and others.
facilitated the establishment of cultural and commercial relation between Kamarupa kingdom and those conquered territories in northern and eastern India.

- Location of the cities and towns of Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarupa like Prāgjyotisapura, Hāruppeswara, Kāmarupanagara, Durjyanagara etc. on the banks of the big rivers like Brahmaputra, having all facilities for communication of the kingdom with the outside world taking the cities as the centres.

- Availability of navigable rivers of the kingdom which were suitable enough to drive even the big size of boats throughout the year, as witnessed by the inscriptions 108

- Availability of various types of roads like Mahā-ṛaṇa- mārga109, Vīlī, Caturpatha110, Brihad Ali, Khetra Ali111 etc. in the cities of ancient Assam,

- Dwelling of the merchants and wealthy classes of people in the cities of ancient Assam112.

- Availability of the business establishments like Vipanis in the cities of ancient Assam113, and indicating the capital cities of ancient Assam as the market places as mentioned in the inscriptions114 etc.

- Production of the attractive ornaments and the valuable articles like topaz that exhibited in the shops (Vipanis) of the cities of the land, which attracted the attention of the foreign traders115.
Patronization of trading community by the ruling authority in ancient Assam. The inviting of the merchant class by king Hajjaravarman to take part in the auspicious function of the court like the coronation ceremony along with members of the royal family indicates the ongoing patronization that shown by the kings of ancient Assam.

External trade of ancient Assam was conducted through the different routes in the form of land and water ways. However the main routes for the trade were through the waterways. The mighty river Brahmaputra which flows through the land from east to west and its navigable tributaries had been offered ample scope for communication towards every direction from the time immemorial. The excellence Assam’s water communication certainly facilitated trade in every direction. That there were routes between early Assam and the countries of northern India is known from the time of the Epic Mahâbhârata. It is mentions in the epic that after slaying Nisunda and Naraka, Krishna rendered the path to Prâgjyotisa city again. This indicates that there were routes between Prâgjyotisa and the territories of northern India from the time of the Epic age. The Si-Yu-Ki informs that when Huen Tsang came to Kâmarupa with the request of Bhâskaravarman he used the route through Magadha, Champâ and then through Kajangala and Pundravardhana. The ‘Life’ indicates the routes connecting Nâlandâ and Ganjâm with Kâmarupa. Further it states that Harsa sent a messenger from Kongodâ (Ganjâm) to
Kāmarūpa\textsuperscript{120}. It is stated that a courier dispatched by Bhāskaravarman from Kāmarūpa reached Nālandā after only two days\textsuperscript{121}. This indicates that the distance of Kāmarūpa and Ganjām was of two days only.

P.C. Bagchi points out the routes connecting the northern Indian cities like Pātaliputra (Pātņa) with China through Assam and Burma. He indicates three routes connecting Assam with Burma, which were finally connected with Yunānfū (Kunming), the chief city of southern China\textsuperscript{122}. Tucci refers to the biography of Buddhagupta, a sixth century Indian Buddhist monk who indicates to the existence of well known land route connecting Kāmarūpa with Burmā and the monk himself used the route\textsuperscript{123}.

The Chinese writer Shung-Shu mentions that a king of Kapili valley (Assam) sent an embassy to China\textsuperscript{124}. This embassy most probably went through the eastern routes. This indicates that there were the land routes between early Assam and China as early as the fourth century A.D. These routes were used both political and trading purposes. From the account of Huen Tsang the existing land route between China and Ancient Assam can be known. According to him the land route was of two months journey “but the mountains were hard to pass and that there were pestilential vapours and poisonous snakes and herbs”\textsuperscript{125}. He also referred a song of Mahācīna which narrate the victory of the second son of emperor Kāo-tson over general Liu-Won Chou in 619 A.D., which was popular during the visit of the Chinese traveler\textsuperscript{126}. This story indicates the
on going trade and cultural relations between Kāmarūpa and China through the land route.

In the account of Huen Tsang it is mention that when the Chinese pilgrim prepared to leave India, the Kāmarūpa monarch Bhāskaravarman assured him that if he preferred to go through sea route, then he (Kāmarūpa monarch) would sent some officials accompanying him. This indicates that the sea route leading to China from Kāmarūpa was quite known to the people of the land and was frequently used.

One of the important aspects of trade is the medium of exchange. It is rare to get coins that issued by the kings of ancient Assam. Neither the inscriptions nor literature directly refer to the issue or circulation of coins in ancient Assam. Rather inscriptions indicate the measurement of land or determine the value of article with the amount of commodities mainly the rice (dhānya). This indicates that trade was done with the barter system. However the Tezpur Rock Inscription of Hajjaravarman indicates the using of cowries in ancient Assam in the place of coin. This indicates that cowries were also used in ancient Assam as medium of exchange. The Periplus refers the gold coin kaltis which Benfey associates with Kalita and can be connected with Kalitas (a caste) of Assam. But no such coin discovered till now. There is a reference that Kāmarūpa king Jayapāla (First part of 12th century A.D.) offered a tulāparsha gift (gold equal weight of a person or 900 numbers of gold coins) to Brahmana Prabāsa which was refused to accept. But not single
coin of the king has been discovered till the date; so it is doubtful how far
the statement of the inscription is based on actuality.

However the recent discovery has been successful in
finding out some coins that issued in ancient Assam. But very less number
of coins of ancient Assam has been discovered so far. Till now two hoards
of coins of the pre-Ahom period of Assam have been discovered. The first
hoard of coins (gold coins) was discovered at Paglātek, about 15 km. west
of the Gōālpara town in 1972\(^{133}\) (Appendix, Plate-181). The second hoard of
coins (copper coins) was discovered in the Dhaulāpādung Tea Estate, about
27 km. north of Tezpur near Rangāpārā, in the last part of 1973\(^ {134}\)
(Appendix, Plate-183).

It is reported that a good number of gold coins were
also discovered at Paglātek bazaar when digging up earth to fill up the
market place. However only 14 numbers of coins could be recovered which
have been now preserved in Assam State Museum.

All the 14 coins are circular in shape but vary in their
thickness and weight between 5.8070 and 5.0220 grams\(^ {135}\). All the coins
have uniform motifs. On the obverse of the coins there is a male figure
standing in the tribhanga posture, holding a bow in left hand and an arrow
in his right hand. On the border of the coins some crude letters are seen.
On the reverse of the coins within a circular of dotted border, there is some
crude device (Appendix, Plate-182). Although it is not clear it may
represent a female figure standing in the right and two or three curved
lines at the back of the female figure. Thus the figure shown in the obverse would represent an archer and the reverse represents goddess Lakshmi. The coins thus made in imitation of the archer type coins of the imperial Guptas which have been now preserved in Assam State Museum.

The discovered coins at Dhulāpādung Tea Estate are of 33 numbers and all have been now preserved in the Assam State Museum. All the coins except a few are broken pieces. Although the coins are round are not uniformly circular (Appendix, Plate-183). All the coins bear a letter on the obverse. Twenty six of the coins are bearing the letter ‘Va’ and four of the coins bearing the letter ‘Ha’. The reverse sides of the all coins are blank (Appendix, Plate-184). The measurement and weight of the coins are varied from one to other. ‘Aryamaniyasrimulakalpa’, a work of 8th century A.D. indicates the use of the initial letter against the name of kings. The Haragaurisambād, a work of medieval Assam also indicates the same. So “Va ” most probably stands for Vanamalā (A.D. 835-865) and ‘Ha’ for Harjaravarman (A.D. 815-835) both of them belonged to the Sālastambha dynasty that ruled in the 9th century A.D.

Two more such types of coins, which are not recorded in the Assam Coin Cabinet, are now in the Assam State Museum.

Thus although the Silimpur inscription indicates the availability of large number of gold coins in ancient Assam especially during the time of Kāmarūpa king Jayapāla (1st part of 12th century A.D.) it cannot be acceptable because not single coin of the king has been traced out.
till the date. On the other hand reference the using of cowries as the medium of exchange in the Tezpur Rock Inscription and the reference of rice (ḍhāṅya) as the commodities for measurement in other inscriptions and the discovery of only few coins recently till the date indicate that the cowries-cell and the barter system played the vital role as the medium of exchange in the pre-Ahom period of Assam. The gold coins and copper coins were circulated in a limited way only.

Articles of trade in Ancient Assam were consisted of both manufactured and non-manufactured goods. Among the manufactured products silk was the most mentionable one. This is known from the reference in the Periplus where it is recorded that both raw and manufactured silk were brought by land through Bactria to Barygaza or else from the river Ganges and then by the sea to Limurikā or the coast of Malābār. Pliny also indicates that the silk trade had done in and through Assam. Another valuable manufactured article for trade in ancient Assam was the ornaments made of gold or other valuable metals. Inscriptions of ancient Assam indicate that the attractive ornaments were placed decoratively in the ṛṣipanīes (Shops) of the cities of ancient Assam which attracted the attention of the foreign traders. Another important exported article of ancient Assam was oil and other perfumery articles like āgaru (aloe wood), various kinds of aromatics oil.

Seals and other terracotta products were also the items that exported from ancient Assam. The finding of a clay seal of the times of
Bhaskaravarman's time at Nalanda region indicates that such products were exported from Assam to the places of northern India in ancient times. Discovery of huge collection of terracotta products at Ambāri in Guwahati in March and April, 1969 nearby the river Brahmaputra indicates that such products were exported from or imported to the land through the waterway of the river Brahmaputra.

Like the manufactured products, large numbers of non-manufactured raw products were also the articles of trade in ancient Assam. Some of such merchandise articles mentioned in the classical works are lac, buffalo and rhinoceros's hide and horns, iron, aloe, musk etc. Pliny indicates that the countries of Ceres exported skin, iron and cloth. The iron of Serica (Assam) is considered to be best in India.

One of the widely mentioned exported article from ancient Assam to western countries was *tejpūt* which was mentioned in the Periplus and other classical writers as mālāborthrum. Fish trade was a flourishing business of ancient Assam and the *Kārmānta* class was vested to the trade.

Gold was also a valuable article of trade of ancient Assam. Periplus refers that gold was brought to India from the rivers of Assam and Burma. Travanier indicates that gold and silk were sent over land to China.

Developed road and communication system is one of the important phenomena of urban system. It is one of the factors for
development of trade, economic prosperity and political success of a
country. The capital as well as other cities of ancient Assam had suitable
road and communication facilities. The capital cities of ancient Assam had
the royal roads that crowded with the visitors like the sāmanta (feudatory
chiefs) who came to the capital city to pay their homage to the king sitting
on the colourful elephants, horses and sivikās (palaquins or litters). To
ensure the safety of the royal roads every quarter of the cities always
remained well guarded with innumerable military forces in the form of
elephants, horses and soldiers. The transportation mainly consisted of
elephants, horses, palanquins and chariots.

The cities of early Assam also had the other types of
roads viz. Mahārājunārāga (great public roads), Vithi, Rathyp, and
Caturpatha. The capital cities like Sonitapura and Kundiha had the
suitable public roads so as to drive the chariots comfortably. Besides the
royal roads outside the cities there were two other types of roads - the
high way (Brihad Ālī) and the Field dividing roads (Khetra Ālī).

Another form of transportation from one city to
another was by boat. The big river Brahmaputra that flows through the
land from east to west facilitated the use of boats abundantly. Thus
inscriptions of the time described that both the banks of the river
Brahmaputra were embellished with rows of boats. The bodies of the boats
were decorated with varieties of embellishments "exposed like the limbs of
the body of the prostitutes that were adorned with many ornaments so as
to attract the users and were endowed with garlands of twinkling bells as like small girls and the boats were moved in high speed with a challenge to defeat the hard stroke of the waves” 156. Hwui-Li in his Life of Huien Tsang describes in details how Bhāskarvarman along with the Chinese pilgrim Huien Tsang sailed from his capital, most probably Prâgjyotisapura, on a flotilla of 30,000 ships with an army of 20,000 elephants, down the Brahmaputra and up the Gangâ to meet Harsa at Kajangalâ157.

The boats were also used for fishing. Tezpur Rock Inscription of Hajjaravarman indicates that there were both royal and private boats that used for fishing. Due to the overcrowding of the boats sometimes there occurred disputes on the matter of using the waterways. The inscription mentions such a dispute, which was settled by king Hajjaravarman’s Mahãsàmanta (great feudatory chief) and Senâdhyaksā (military commander) Sri Sucita on his behalf158. Certain officers were also entrusted to look after activities of the officials like Kaivarta, Naukâjosa, Naurâjâ159 who were related to the sailing of the boats. The inscription also indicated the prevalence of rules and regulations of driving the boats and the jurisdiction of the different categories of people that plied boats on the river160.

Economic prosperity is an important aspect of a city. For the both material, spiritual and other development of a city the economic soundness is earnestly required. Although there were certain restrains in the economic system in ancient Assam the authorities of the
cities and the government was successful in maintaining sound economic prosperity of the cities of the land. The industrial production, prevalence of trade and the proper management of the economic system of the cities by the authority were the main factors for the economic prosperity of the cities especially the capital cities of ancient Assam. This economic prosperity enabled the king of ancient Assam to play the magnificent role in political success of the kingdom and cultural development of its people.

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