CHAPTER - I

GEOGRAPHICAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF EARLY ASSAM
GEOGRAPHY OF EARLY ASSAM:

Modern Assam, which was known as Prāgjyotisa and Kāmarūpa in ancient times lies between latitudes 28°18' and 24° North and longitudes 89°46' and 94°4' East. It is bounded in the north by the sub- Himalayas range extending from Bhutan on the west to the Paśākā range in the east, inhabited by the tribes of Akās, Daśās, Miris, Abars and Mismis which area is now formed the state of Arunāchal Pradesh. In the east the country is bounded by the Paśākā range, on the south east by Nāgāland, on the south by Manipur and Mizorām, on the south west by Tripurā and Maimensingh (Bangladesh) and on the west by Meghālayā and the river Soukosh.

The topography of Assam is uneven, consisting of both hills and plains. There are two river valleys - the Brahmaputra valley, which is traversed by the Brahmaputra River from Sadiyā in the east to Dhubri in the west and is intersected in the valley by its tributaries; and the Surmā (Barāk) valley, which is crossed by the river Surma from east to west in the southern part of the land and have intersected by its tributaries.
Between the two river valleys there are two hill districts - Karbi-Anglong and North Cachar Hills inhabited by the different Hill Tribes.

In the historical period the land was known by different names and had varied extensions. In the Epic period the land was known as Prāgiyotisa and from the reigning period of kings of Varman dynasty the kingdom was also called Kāmarūpa, and from the advent of the Ahoms to this land it was known as Asama. The anglicized form of Asama is Assam.

Thus Prāgiyotisa, Kāmarūpa and Assam are the different geographical names of the same land in different times with varied extension. There are different views regarding the origin of the different names of the land that used in different times. Brief descriptions of the origin of the different names of the land are given below.

Prāgiyotisa was the earliest name of Assam, which appears both in the epigraphs and literature. There are disputes among the scholars regarding the origin of the name of Prāgiyotisa. One interesting fact is that the name stands for both the capital city and the kingdom. It is believed that the name was a Sanskritisation of some non-Aryan formations ².

Kālikā Purāṇa indicates a mythological derivation of the word Prāg- jyotisa. According to this Purāṇa Brahma, the creator created the stars sitting in this city of the east.

Asyā madhye sthito brahma pranganakshatram sasarjāh |
According to R. M. Nath the people who were called as the Chão-This of China, after coming to India were known as Zuthis. They occupied three important places in India. The branch that came to east that is Assam was known as Prâg-Zuthis, which later changed to Prâgjyotisa. According to E.A.Gait, the city of Prâgjyotisapura was related to astrology (jyotisa) and it means the 'city of eastern astrology'. Gait’s view is confirmed by the existence of a temple at Citrâchala hill in the east of Guwahati dedicated to the Navagraha (nine planets). K. L. Barua also accepts this etymology.

But Dr. B. K. Kakati relates the name of Prâgjyotisa with the topography of the land. His view is that the word was derived from an Austric phrase “Prâgar-Juh-Tik” meaning ‘the region of extensive hills’. Existence of a number of hills in and around present Guwahati, which is identified with the city of Prâgjyotisapura, appears to confirm this statement.

The name Kâmarûpa was closely associated with the word Kâmakhyâ. Both the words suggest an Austric and Alpine origin. Regarding the origin of the name of Kâmarûpa the Gopattha Brâhmaṇa relates the story of Kâmadeva’s revival in this place after being burnt by Lord Siva. According to this story, Kâmadeva was sent by the gods to put an end to the great meditation of lord Siva that he started after the death of his consort Sati and awaken in him again the passion of creation. Lord Siva was greatly
angered with the breaking of his meditation and his angry glance burnt Kāmadesa to ashes; but later, due to the prayer of Rati (Kāmadesa's wife), Kāmadesa recovered his original form (Rupa). Hence the land came to be known as Kāmarūpa or the land where Kāma recovered his original form.

Legends identify the present Umānanda Island in mid-Brahmaputra, which is also known as Bhasmāchal, as the place where Kāmadesa was burnt to ashes. The story thus relates the origin of the name with the cult of magic or sorcery. Dr. B. K. Kakati's view in this regard is that the name is the formation of the words like Kāmu or Kāmru. The words Kāmu or Kāmru are the names of lesser divinity in Sāntvālī and thus the name is associated with magic or necromancy. He also states that the word symbolized a new cult and the words Kāmarūpa and Kānakhyā are derived from some Austric divinity. The Buddhist and Muslim sources also support this view. In the Buddhist Chāryas, the Hara-Gauri Sambād and the Muslim sources like the Tabakāt-I-Nāsiri, the Ruʿız-us-Sālahīn mention the name is as Kāmu or Kāmru. Hīuen Tsang mentions it as Kāmolup'ō and Tsang-Shu mention it as Kāmepo and Komelā.

The name Assam is the Anglicized form of the Assamese word Asma. E. A. Gait's view is that the term 'Assam' was used in the sense of "Unequalled" or "Peerless" which applied to the Chāns (The Ahoms) by the local people of the land.

According to B. K. Kakati the term Asama (Peerless) is the Sanskritisation form of 'Acham'. In Tai Cham, means to be defeated.
With the Assamese prefix 'A' Asaun' means ‘undefeated’. At first the name was applied to the Clans (the Ahoms), later it applied to the country 14.

The view of Baden Powel is that the name is a Bodo formation and it is derived from Bodo formation ‘Hā-Com’ meaning the low level country15. If this view is accepted as etymology of the land then the origin of the name of Assam may go back to long before the coming of the Ahoms to this land.

The territorial extension of Prāgīyotisa - Kāmarūpa kingdom was not fixed for the entire period of the study. It varied from time to time. It appears that the kingdom in addition to the territory of present Assam included south east Bengal and the Bengal Delta; because the Mahābhārata mentions the Kirālas and the Cinas as the followers of Bhagadatta, who dwell in the hilly regions of the Himalayas and the marshy regions near the sea.

Sa kirātāusc ca cinausc ca vritah prāgīyotisa bhuhat |
Anyaisca bahubhir yodhāh sāgarānupavanībhuh | 16

Thus P. Bhattacharjiya indicates that Prāgīyotisa under Bhagadatta extended to the confines of China, Nepal or the Himalayan regions17. But the classical writers of Periplus of the Erythrean Sea and Ptolemy’s Geography do not refer to Prāgīyotisa at all, although they do refer to Khirrhādāea or the land of the Kirātas18. In the 4th century B.C. there is the mention of the kingdom of Gangārīdāi or Gangārāstra, and the Nikāyas mention Anga and Vanga among the sixteen Mahājanapadas in the 6th
century B.C. Thus it is appeared that Prāgjyotisa included those portions of South East Bengal, which were not included in the boundary of Aunga and Vanga.

During the period of the Mauryan rule in Northern India (4th century to 2nd century B.C.) boundary of Kāmarūpa kingdom was reduced to the present boundary in the west. From the beginning of the 1st century A.D. the western boundary of Prāgjyotisa kingdom was extended towards the river Kausika or Karatojā and included the territories like Sylhet, Tipperāh and Noākhali district of present day Bānglādesh, and extended up to the sea coast. The Purānas besides supporting this extent of the land indicate the inclusion of Manipur, Jayantia, Cachar, part of Maymansingh, Sylhet, Rongpur and portion of Nepal and Bhutan.

From the beginning of the 4th century A.D. due to the expansionist policy of the Imperial Guptas the western boundary of the Kāmarūpa kingdom was pushed back to the east of the river Lauhitya or Brahmaputra. But from the reign of Bhutivarman (middle of the 6th century A.D.) due to the decline of the Guptas, the Kamarupa kingdom expanded in the west and included Pundravardhan (North Bengal) and a part of South east Bengal including Samatata, Tipperah, Noakhali and Sylhet. During the reign of Bhāskaravarman, the illustrious king of the Varman line, the Kāmarupa kingdom included Karnasuvarna, Pundravardhana and the eastern part of the Nālandā region.
In the 8th century A.D. during the reign of Harsadeva (815-835 A.D.) of the Sālastambha dynasty of Kāmarūpa included Gauda, Magadha, Kalinga, Kosala and the other land for at least a period of short time. After his death Kāmarupa lost many of its territories in the west. However, the donation of land to the Brahmins on the bank of river Trisrota (Tistā) near Chandrapuri during the reign of king Vanamālā indicates that Kāmarūpa reasserted its influence in the North and the south-east Bengal. This Chandrapuri can be placed in the Rangpur District of Bangladesh, which stands on the west of the river Tista. During the reign of Dharmapāla (1095-1120 A.D.), the accomplished ruler of the Pāla line of Kāmarupa donated land in the Dijjīnā Visaya. This Dijjīnā Visaya is identified by P. C. Chaudhury with Dinajpur district in North Bengal.

But from the reign of Jayapāla, Kāmarupa was reduced territorially. The Rāmacarita of Sandhyakara Nandi states that Ramapāla, the king of Gauda conquered Kāmarūpa. The conquered king of Kāmarupa was most probably Jayapāla, the last ruler of the Pāla line of Kāmarupa. Yet the adoption of the title Mahārājadhārāja by Vaidyadeva (1126-1140 A.D.), who was previously Kumārapāla’s general and feudatory chief and now the king of Kāmarupa after the death of Jayapāla indicates that the kingdom again prospered in 12th century A.D. and succeeded in extending its territories in the west during the reign of the king Vaidyadeva.

The physical geography of a land has left great influence upon the growth of its history and civilization. It is also
applicable in the case of Assam. Assam is a land consisting of both hills and plains. The great river Brahmaputra flows through the land from Sadiya in the east to Dhubri in the west. Its numerous tributaries numbering over a hundred intersect both the north and the south banks of the river. On the other hand the river Surmā or Barāk flows through the southern Assam from east to west and is being intersected by its numbers of tributaries. The number and magnitude of rivers in Assam exceed that of any other country in the world of equal extent. This river system of Assam had been playing a great role in the growth of the history and civilization of the land since times immemorial. Many of the rivers of Assam including the Brahmaputra are deep and big enough for navigation and were used as means of communication, there by leading the country to have trade and other relations with foreign lands. This is one of the factors of the country for having close relations with Bengal and the other territories of Northern India from long past. The rivers also played the role of not only making the land fertile enough but also providing irrigation facilities to produce its abundant crops in historical times. Moreover the mountains of Assam are pregnant with precious stones and silver, its streams carry gold dust, and the marshes have solid metals and its climate is cold, healthy and congenial and its soil is well adapted for all kinds of agricultural purposes.

Besides the rivers, its abundance hills and the forests is also a noticeable physical feature of the country. The country is
surrounded on three sides by the hills with dense forest, thereby protecting the country from coming of the enemies from these directions. Thus, the fertility of the soil, its immense production, and the rich mineral resources and other physical features attracted the foreigners of different countries to come and settled in the land in different phases, thereby leading to form the heterogeneous demography and cosmopolitan culture of the land.

Physical features of the land also foster certain disadvantages upon the land. The mineral deposit of the land leads to the occurrence of frequent earthquakes, which have buried underground, some historical monuments of the early periods. The frequent floods and the humidity of the land also are two great factors that are responsible for damage and loss of many valuable historical materials of the land. The luxuriant vegetation of the land like the pipal tree is another factor for the destruction of many of the monuments. Moreover the fertility of the land and abundant crops make the people ease loving and weak which facilitates the different invaders to conquer the land easily by defeating its inhabitants in different periods of history.

The existing communication between Assam and rest of the Indian territories through river Bramaputra and its tributaries from the time immemorial is also an important physical feature of the land. Thus although the Prāgyotisa-Kāmarupa kingdom was a geographically separated kingdom, existed in the north east of India, politically and culturally the kingdom had close contact with the rest of the Indian
territories with the existing communication facilities. This contact effected to the growth and development of history and civilization of the land. The relation left many influences towards the urbanization of the land also.

It is known from the local traditions of the land that Mairânka was the first known capital city of ancient Assam. It was the capital city of the first dînava king Mahiranga Dânava. The city is identified with Mairânka parvat (Mairânka hill) near Beltolâ in modern Guwahati35.

Inscriptions and literature of ancient Assam indicate that during the reign of the kings of Naraka-Bhagadatta and the Varman dynasty (From Pre-Bhârata wartime to 650 A.D.) city Prâgjayotisapura was the capital of ancient Assam36 and from the reigning period of the kings of the Sâlàstambha dynasty (650 A.D. to 990 A.D.) the capital of the kingdom was shifted to the city of Haruppeswara, near present Tezpur37. Later during the reign of the kings of Pâla dynasty of Prâgjayotisa- Kâmarûpa (990 A.D. to 1130 A.D.) the capital of the kingdom was shifted to the cities of Durjjayanagara and Kâmarûpanagara. Thus during the reign of king Ratnapâla the capital of the kingdom was Durjjayanagara.

Mānaniyamane kama napatisārthānāṁ yathārthābhidhānāṁ
praṭiyotisesu dujjayākhya prayāramadhyahāsā | 38

Again during the reign of Dharmapâla the capital of his kingdom was at Kâmarûpanagara.

Kâmarûpanagare uripobhavaddharmapâla iti sāntvayāhayah | 39
The Adikānda of the Rāmāyana refers to the foundation of the city of Prāgjyotisapura by Amurtarāja, the grandson to Kusa. Prāgjyotisapura was the capital city of Prāgjyotisa kingdom during the time of Naraka. It is known that Naraka occupied Prāgjyotisapura from Ghatakāsura, the last dānava ruler of Ancient Assam. So the city of Prāgjyotisapura existed prior to the establishment of Naraka’s rule in Ancient Assam.

Prāgjyotisapura was located within modern Guwahati. The existence of two villages namely Jatia and Dispur in Guwahati and another village with the name of Narakāsur Gaon and a hill with the name Narakāsur Pahār near the village indicates that the city of Prāgjyotisapura was in Guwahati. Mention of the city as Giri Durga (Mountainous fortress) and Jala Durga (Water fortress) in the Kālikā Purāṇa indicates the location of the city in present Guwahati, which is surrounded by hills and the mighty river Brahmaputra. The Doobi Grant of Bhāskaravarman refers the building of a new city on the bank of the river Brahmaputra along with his friends and followers by Sthiravarman.

Srimānapure svisthiravarmananāmade tvai cha tasmāt katicchihinātti

Sapurabhirityeh (sala) va(nlīn) bhisra punye nade solha

puromakāsit ||

This indicates that the city of Prāgjyotisapura was extended towards the river Brahmaputra from the reign of king Sthiravarman. Prāgjyotisapura most probably remained as the capital city.
of ancient Assam during the time of the kings of the Varman dynasty because although the contemporary account refers to the kingdom as Kāmarūpa the kings of this dynasty called themselves as the lord of Prāgiyotisa (Prāgiyotisādhipati). ⁴⁶

Discovery of ruins in different places in and around present Guwahati witness the existence and flourishing of the city of Prāgiyotisapura in present Guwahati. At Ambāri in Guwahati considerable remains of great archeological and historical value were brought to light during March and April of 1969 by some labourers when they were working for the building of the Guwahati branch of the Reserve bank of India. The remains are consisted of old brick structure, varied specimens of potteries and a numbers of icons.

There just 60/90 c. m. bellow the ground, a straight brick wall measuring about 26 meters in length and 45 c.m. in thickness was unearthed. The discovery of icons, potteries and other remains related to worship indicates that it was either the plinth of a temple mandapa or side wall of a temple enclosure. At the western end of the said wall there is a plinth of semicircular shape structure and rest of the portion constitutes the circular shape of temple structure ⁴⁷. Just to the northern side of the structure, there are a few block of stone, of which few are chiseled resembling to a staircase most probably were used as the pavement of the entrance to the temple.
Besides the structure the entire area covering 33X26 metres is full of old burnt bricks, broken pieces of potteries of different sizes and designs. On the basis of the evidences of the potteries and other antiquities that discovered from the site, the Ambāri culture can be divided into two periods. The earliest period approximately dated from 7\textsuperscript{th} century to 12\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.\textsuperscript{48}.

Besides the discovered ancient monuments at Ambāri, Guwahati, ancient monuments are discovered at Saraniā hill, Narakāsur hill, Navagraha, Sukleswar, Umānanda, ruins of the fortification at Rājgarh and the like. Existence of a magnificent temple at Saraniā hill is proved by the discovered ruins which assigned to 8\textsuperscript{th} to 10\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. One of the notable witnesses of the temple is the finding of a huge amalaka that covered the sikhara of the temple. An elegantly curved panel collected from the site is preserved in the Museum of the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University. The panel is carved in grey sandstone.

In the Narakāsur hill situated in the south of the Guwahati discovered a number of antiquities. The area is surrounded by natural barriers and is supposed to be the ancient capital of Assam. The hill has been guarded in four sides by rock cut images of god Ganesha. In this place also discovered some bronze and stone sculptures. Among the bronze images there is a bell where inscribe that it was gift of king Kumāra (Kumār Bhāskaravaran).
One of the important features of the cities of ancient Assam was its fortifications. The ruins of a massive rampart and a moat of city Prāgjyotisapura is found along the Rājgarh road in the eastern part of Guwahati. The present name of the Rājgarh (royal fort) road is also indicates that the road derived its name from the rampart constructed for the fortification of city Prāgjyotisapura. The rampart extended from Navagraha hill to the Narakāsura hill. The discovered ruins indicate that the rampart was built of baked bricks measuring 24X19X6.5 c.m. which is now completely destroyed and partly buried under the present Rājgarh road.

The city of Karnasuvarna, which was formerly the capital city of king Sasānka of Gaud, became a part of Bhāskara Varman’s (594-650 A.D.) kingdom. This happened, in all probability, during the period 619-643 A.D., and can be ascertained with the proceeding of Bhāskaravarman with his vast army consisting of 20,000 elephants and 30,000 ships along with the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang to meet Harsa, the king of Kanouj at Kājangalā near Rājmabal 49. Had this region been not under him it would not be possible for him to pass through it with his army. Moreover, this ruler of Assam issued his Nidhānpur copper plate grant from his victorious royal camp (jayaskandāvāra) at Karnasuvarna. This indicates the political and administrative authority of Bhāskaravarman over Karnasuvarna, which was equipped with splendid ships, elephants, horses and foot soldiers.

\textit{Muhānauhastasvapatisanapatyapāt jayasahdantuvarthasauhāvarāt}
The ruins of the city of Karnasuvarna had been discovered at Rajbāridāngā, six miles south west of Berhānpur, the head quarter of Murshidābād district. Karnasuvarna is at present a station of Eastern Railway 192 mile away from Howrah.

During the reign of the kings of Sālastambha dynasty (750-910 A. D.) the capital city of Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa was shifted to the city of Hāruppesvara. In the Tezpur Rock inscription the name of the capital city was given as Hāruppesvara.

\[Hāruppesvaraparāvasthiastvatbhuvajvala(mada)darppe gurvita mahā-rajadhāraḥ paramesvaraparamabhātāraḥkaparamanāhārāvarṣi hajjarā varnadevasya varddhamāna vijayārājye \ldots \]  

But in the Hayunthāl Grant the name is given as Hātappesvara.

\[Srimān hātappesvarāvāṣi jayaskandhāvār aparameṣvaraparaṇa-parābhuttārakaparamanāhāvarṣi maṭāprapādānudhyāla \]

Hajjaravarnadevah |  

In the Nagaon Grant of Balavarman III (1040-1065 A.D.) the name of his capital is given as Hādappesvara--

\[Tattraśrīnātijādaḥ papesvaranāmanikatake kritva satiruttbātāmarichinichayamechakiteva vahumā | \]

But in the Gachtal Grant of Gopaladeva the capital city of his kingdom is called Hādapyaka--

\[Girbāraḥcāruḥchharitekṣuṣānesvinnāpobyā divyāṅganākritbhurujvalā \]
The city was stated to be the capital city of king Harjaravarman (1\textsuperscript{st} half of 19\textsuperscript{th} century), Vanamalādevavarman (Middle of 19\textsuperscript{th} century) Balavarman (885-910 A.D.) all of whom belonged to the family of Sālastambha. Association of the city with the River Lauhitya (the Brahmaputra) has been emphasized by the grants of both Vanamalādevavarman and Balavarman. This indicates that all the names Hāruppeswara, Hātapeswara, Hādappeswara and Hadapyaka stand for the same city Hāruppeswara and the city is now located at the site of modern Tezpur\textsuperscript{56}. In his grant, Balavarman described the capital city as the ancestral city—

\textit{Abhavajjaya karikam bhaskhalitomneramalavāridhestasya |}

\textit{Lauhityasya samipe tareva petāmahaṁ Katakam |} \textsuperscript{57}

So it can be said that Hāruppeswara was the capital city of Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa kingdom since the beginning of the Sālastambha line.

The inscriptions of Ratnapāla (1010-1040 A.D.) and Indrapāla (1040-1065 A.D.) mention their capital city as Sri Durjjayanagara. The inscriptions also refer to embellishment of the beauty of the city by the river Lauhitya (the river Brahmaputra)—

\textit{Keśapakarindukula kalasikāpate(nā) nekanākekashakāminivahrman-
manidarpanena lauhiṃbhodhinā virāja janānaṁ} \textsuperscript{58}
Therefore it is reasonable to believe that Durjaya was identical with the old capital city of Prāgjyotisapurā.\(^{59}\)

Gopāladeva (1065-1085 A.D.), the son and successor of Pāla king Indrapāla mentioned Hādapyaka as his capital city in his Gāchtal grant, which can be identified with Hāruppeswara:

\[
\text{Tasyabhlavunaripavarasya hadapyaketi punyā puri}
\]

\[
\text{Sunripateramarśatvā} \quad ^{60}
\]

This indicates that during the reign of Pala rulers Durjayanagara could not last for long as a capital city of Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa for it was shifted to Hādapyaka (Hāruppeswara) during the reign of Indrapala’s son Gopāladeva.

In the Puspabhadra Grant of Dharmapāla it is stated that Dharmapāla (1095-1120 A.D.) ruled at Kāmarūpanagara.

\[
\text{Kāmarūpanagare nripoblavaddharmapāla iti sannāyāhāyah} \quad ^{61}
\]

It is significant that none of the inscriptions of Dharmapāla have any reference to the river Brahmaputra. Due to this some scholars seek to locate the city Kāmarūpanagara somewhere outside of Assam. Thus N. N. Vasu locates the city at Kāngur in the Rongpur district of Bengal.\(^{62}\) With the availability of ruins of a city at a place 14 miles southeast of modern Cooch Bihār, P. N. Bhattacharya attempts to locate the city at Kamatāpur.\(^{63}\) But the Kānāi Barasi Bowā Rock Inscription at North Guwahati refers to the massacre of the Turks under Bakhtiyār Khilji who came to attack Kāmarūpa in saka 1127 or 1205 A.D.
Had Kamatapur been the capital of the Kāmarūpa kingdom in the 12th century A.D. the Turkish invaders would not have been allowed to proceed into the heart of Kāmarūpa to be routed by its army at North Guwahati in the early part of 13th century A.D. Again in the middle of the 12th century A.D. king Vaidyadeva of Kāmarūpa issued his land Grant from Hansakochi. This Hansakuchi must be within Kāmarūpa because numbers of names of places in this region ended with the term 'kuchi' like Suālkuchi, Guākuchi, sanekuchi etc. Thus it indicates that capital of ancient Assam was continued within the present district of Kāmarūpa until or after the middle of 13th century after which it was shifted to Kamatapur. K.L. Barua locates Kāmarūpanagara in North Guwahati near the temple of Asvaklantā. The eastern part of North Guwahati is still known as Rājāduār (the royal gate). Near the same place there is another locality called as Rangnuval (pleasure palace). Moreover numerous structural ruins of the pre-Ahom period is being scattered in the area. These appear to indicate that the city of Kāmarūpanagara was indeed located at modern North Guwahati.

The Kamauli Grant of Vaidyadeva refers to the granting of land in the Kāmarūpa Mandala of Prājyotisa bluuki from his skandhavāra situated at Hansakochi.

Hansākochisamāvāśitasrimājayaśaskndhavārāta
It is known that \textit{skandavāra} means the victorious camp as well as a capital city, since Hāddapesvara, the capital city of the Sālastambha kings is referred to as \textit{skandavāra} in their land grants. 

\begin{quote}
\textit{Srimān haruppesvarāvāsi jayasandhavāraramnesvararamabha}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Hārakaparamamahesvarasamātipitrīpadanudhyātalahajaravarmanādeva} \textsuperscript{68}
\end{quote}

So Hansakoñchi was a capital city or place of administration of ancient Assam during the time of king Vaidyadeva. The name suggests its location in the present Kāmarūp district because many places of the district ends with the word \textit{konchi} or \textit{kuchi} like Suwalkuchi, Guwākuchi, Sanekuchi, Betkuchi, etc.

\begin{quote}
\textit{Yogini Tantra} refers to the city of Apunarbhava, which is identified with modern Hājo\textsuperscript{69}. This city was developed as the centre of religion.
\end{quote}

The Kālikā Purāṇa, an Upa-Purāṇa composed in Assam, locates the Barāsana city in the east of Durjaya hill and further west of Barāsānā there was the hill named Kshovokā, which is identified with Dobakā.

\begin{quote}
\textit{Dujjyakhyāśya purvaśhyāś purāṇā nāma varīṣavānā}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Tuddakshīn mahāśailya kshavako nāma nāmatalaḥ} \textsuperscript{70}
\end{quote}
Davāka is mentioned in the Allahābād Pillar Inscription as the bordering tributary kingdom of Gupta emperor Samudra Gupta along with Kāmarūpa, Samatata, Nepāla and Kirtipura⁷¹. This Davāka kingdom is identified with present Dobaka town and its adjoining areas, situated on the bank of the river Jamunā, which falls on the Kapili River at Jamunāmukh, a railway station of N. F. Railway. The present Dobaka is 24 miles away from Nagaon and 9 miles away from Hojai. During 6ᵗʰ and 7ᵗʰ century A.D. this kingdom was absorbed to Kāmarūpa kingdom for when Huen Tsang visited Kāmarūpa during the reign of King Kumār Bhāskaravarman, the Kapili valley was within Kāmarūpa kingdom⁷².

The association of Barāsana city with the Dobāka (Kshavoka) hill in the Kālikā Purāṇa and existence of a shrine of a goddess (Goddess Kamlādevī) and five tanks near Dobakā town as mentioned in the Kālikā Purāṇa⁷³ indicate that the city of Barāsana was within the kingdom of Davaka.

Sonitapura was the capital city of the kingdom of the same name ruled by king Bāna or Bānāsura, who according to traditions and the Purāṇas was the son of Bali, and grandson of Prahlād⁷⁴. Sonitapura at present is identified with modern Tezpur. In Assamese both the words ‘sonit’ and ‘tez’ means blood and ‘pur’ means city. Thus both the words Sonitpur and Tezpur mean the city of Blood. According to tradition Ushā, the only daughter of king Bāna had fallen in love with Anirudha, the grandson
of Sri Kishna of Dvārakā who secretly married Ushā with the help of her friend (sakhee) Chitralekhā. As the marriage was held against the wish of Bāna he stood on the way and made arrest Anirudha. For safety of his grandson Krishna involved in the conflict. On the other hand to save his staunch devotee Bāna lord Siva joined in the war in the side of king Bāna and the war that occurred between Bāna and Krishna converted to the battle of Hari (Krishna) and Hara (lord Siva). In the terrible fighting the place of war was turned into the place of blood for which the city derived the name Sonitpur (the city of blood).

There is a controversy regarding the location of city Sonitapura. N. N. Vasu locates the city somewhere in Sindh. D.R. Bhandarkar locates the Bāna’s capital at Dinājpur in North Bengal. On the basis of the availability of the archaeological materials R. C. Mazumdar places the city in the southern part of Dinajpur district (now in Bangladesh). But in the Kālikā Purāṇa indicates the kingdom of king Bāna on the bank of the river Louhitya i.e. the Brahmaputra (Mahāvītu lauhitasyambusannidhau), where he constructed the fort of fire (Agni garh).

\[
\text{Tasyāgudurgairm nagaarain sa cha sīambhusakho bali} | \\
\text{Sahasrabahudurthasah priyah putrah sabai baleh} | \| 81
\]

Besides the said Purāṇa indicates that king Bāna of Sonitapura instructed his friend Naraka of Prāgyotisa to worship Brahmā, the father of mighty Louhitya.

\[
\text{Tasmat Brahma Samārdhya basanatara mitraka} | \\
\]
These references in the Kālikā Purāṇa help us to locate the city in modern Tezpur. Besides the remains of Agnigarh, Agniparbat and other structures found in Tezpur all of which associated with the legend of king Bāna confirm that Bāna’s capital Sonitapura was in present Tezpur.

Kundilnagara (modern Sadiya) was located in the extreme north east of Assam. It was the capital city of king Bhismak, so it was also known as Bhismaknagar. Towards the end of 13th century A.D. the Chutiás of Assam who belonged to the Tibeto-Burma race were ruling in the region. The Chutiyas of Assam claimed themselves as the descent from Bhismak. According to the Paurānic lore and local legends, Rukmini, the daughter of Bhismak, was stolen away and later married by Sri Kishna of Dvāraka. The kingdom of Bhismak was known as Bidarbha and the capital as Kundilnagara, which stands on the river of the same name. The ruins of this city were discovered by Hannay, which were consisted of ruins of temple, buildings, copper plates and tanks. On the walls of the buildings and temple there are various sculptural designs of human figures, animals, birds, flowers and some other designs.

Dimāpur was the capital city of the Dimāsās. The Dimasās established their capital at Dimāpur in the Dhansiri valley of Assam during the pre-Ahom period. When the Ahoms established their kingdom in upper Assam, the territory west of river Dikhow till the river Kallang in the south bank of the river Brahmaputra was ruled by the
Kachāris or the Dimāsā Kachāris. It is believed that the name Dimāpur was derived from the word Hidimbāpur. According to a legendary account the Dimāsās claimed to be the descendents of Ghatotkacha, the son born of the wedlock of the second Pāndaṇa Bhima of Mahābhārata fame and the Dimāsā princess Hidimba. Late Sonaram Thaosen, a reputed Dimāsā scholar states that the capital of Dimāpur was established about the year 1086 A.D.

Political history of Early Assam may be divided in two periods—(i) the period of the Epics and Purānas and (ii) the Historical period.

From the reference in the two epics - the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, and the Purānas and also from the traditions the reign of different kings of the Epic and Purānic period of Pragjyotisa kingdom can be known. The reign of the Kings of this period can be categorized in two dynasties - (i) the Dānava Dynasty and (ii) the Bhouma Dynasty.

Early rulers of ancient Assam are known only from myths and legends found in the two Epics namely, the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, and the Purānas as well as oral traditions. According to the legends the earliest ruling dynasty of the Pragjyotisa kingdom was the Dānava or Asuma dynasty, which was founded by Mahiranga Dānava. He was a Kirāta chief of Mongolian affinity having admixture of Alpine blood. His historicity has been proved by the existence of the Mairānga parvat
(hill) near Beltola in Guwahati. Hatakásura, Sambarásura and Ghatakásura succeeded him \(^2\). Naraka, a prince hailed from Videha, established a new dynasty in Prāgjyotisapura, after killing Ghatakásura, the existing last Dānava king of the land.

*Tatohasau bhallamādāya yajoyitvā dhanurgunaiḥ*

*Shirahi kirātarājasya�िचिचेदहनराकाबलि | \(^93\)*

The dynasty founded by Naraka in Prāgjyotisapura was known as the Bhauma dynasty. He was born and brought up at Videha under the care of king Janak \(^4\). Inscriptions state that Naraka was the son of Bhumi (the Earth) from Vishnu in his Boar Incarnation (*Varāha Visnu*) \(^5\) due to which the dynasty founded by him in Prāgjyotisa was known as the Bhumi dynasty. The records refer to three rulers of the dynasty namely Naraka, Bhagadatta and Vajradatta \(^6\) while the *Harsacharita* of Bana Bhatta refers to Vajradatta’s successor Puspadatta \(^7\).

Bhagadatta took an active part in the Mahābhārata war on the side of the Kaurava and died at the hands of Arjuna \(^8\). Bhagadatta was succeeded by Vajradatta. From the reference of Harsacarita it cac be said that after the death of Vajradatta Puspadatta ascended the throne of Pragjyotisa.

In the historical period kings of three dynasties ruled in Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa. These three ruling dynasties are (i) the Varman Dynasty (ii) the Sālastambha Dynasty and (iii) the Pāla Dynasty.
According to the land grants of early Assam, after three thousand years end from the rule of the kings of Naraka’s family, Pushyavarman became ruler of Prāgjyotisa kingdom.

\[ Vansyesu tasya uripatisu varsahasratrayam padaśavāpya | \]
\[ Yātesu devabhuyāṁ kṣititsvāra(h) pushyavarmāḥhu | \]

With the foundation of the Varman dynasty by Pushyavarman in the 4\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. the historical period started in Assam. He was said to be the descendent of the Naraka-Bhagadatta dynasty.

\[ Abām bamsakramena kṣitinathā uikhilaṁ bhuvajatāṁ nārakamāṁ \]
\[ rājā (m)mlechchadhinātho bidhičalanabāsādeva jagrāha rājyaṁ | \]

He was the contemporary of Samudra Gupta, the great Gupta ruler and ruled during A.D. 355-380. The Nidhanpur Grant gives the following details about the genealogy of the kings of the Varman dynasty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the kings</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Pushyavarman</td>
<td>4\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Samudravarman</td>
<td>4\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Balavarman</td>
<td>4\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Kalyānavarman</td>
<td>5\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Ganapativarman</td>
<td>5\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Ganendravarman, according to Doobi Grant)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Mahendravarman</td>
<td>5\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Surendravarman According to Umachal Rock Inscription)

7) Narayanavarman 5\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.
8) Mahābhutavarman(Bhutivarman) 6\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.
9) Chandramukhavarman 6\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.
10) Sthitavarman (Sthiravarman) 6\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.
11) Susthitavarman 6\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.
12) Supratisthitavarman 7\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.
13) Bhāskaravarman 7\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.\textsuperscript{102}

Mahendravarman (450-585 A.D.) and Bhutivarman (510-555 A.D.) were two prominent rulers of this dynasty during whose reign the kingdom of Kāmarūpa extended towards more territories. Bhāskaravarman (594-650 A.D.) was the last and the greatest ruler of the dynasty. From the account of Hiuen Tsang, who visited Kāmarūpa during his reign and the Nidhanpur Grant, which was issued during the reign of the king, it is known that the Kāmarūpa kingdom expanded towards Karnasuvarna in the west, the Bay of Bengal in the south and the borders of China in the east. The using of the epithets Kumāra\textsuperscript{103} and Kumārarājā\textsuperscript{104} indicate that the king was a bachelor so the dynasty came to an end with his death and one Sālastambha established a new dynasty in ancient Assam\textsuperscript{105}.

With the end of the rule of the kings of Varman dynasty in Kāmarūpa, a great chief of the Mlecchās (Mlecchadhinātha)
became the king in Kāmarupa whose descendents ruled for twenty-one generations. This was king Sālastambha (650 A.D. to 990 A.D.).

Abhā tuṣṇeśvaratā kṣhītirātita niḥśilāṁ bhūmjatāṁ nārakaṇāṁ
rajat(m) ničečchadhināthō bidhičchalanabāsādeva jagraha nijyātin |
Nirbaśhātin uripamekabinusati tamaṇā srityāgasinhābhūdhante-
sambidha dibangatain punaraho bhauno hi no yujyate | 106

This new dynasty was known as the Sālastambha dynasty of Prāgyotisa-Kāmarupa kingdom. Although the Bargaon grant of Ratnapāla refers to twenty-one kings of this dynasty, from the grants of the kings of this dynasty the names of only fourteen kings can be trace out. They are as follows—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the kings</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Sālastambha</td>
<td>Middle of 7th cen. A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Vijaya (Vigrahastambha)</td>
<td>Later part of 7th cen. A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Pālaka</td>
<td>Later part of 7th cen. A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Kumāra</td>
<td>8th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Vajradatta</td>
<td>8th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Harisa (Sri Harsa)</td>
<td>8th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Balavarman</td>
<td>8th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Cakra &amp; Arathi</td>
<td>Did not reign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Pralambha</td>
<td>9th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Hārijara</td>
<td>9th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Vanamālā</td>
<td>9th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Among the rulers of the Sālastambha dynasty Sri Harsa was a prominent ruler who allegedly conquered Gauda, Odra, Kalinga and Kosala (Gaudoddradikalingakosalapati sriharsadeva). Thus Kāmarūpa became a great kingdom in the northern India during the reign of King Sri Harsa of the Sālastambha line. Hajjaravarman (801-839 A.D.), Vanamālāvarman (835-865 A.D.) and Balavarman III (885-910 A.D.) were also the important rulers of this dynasty during whose reign Kāmarūpa kingdom was prospered in many ways.

The next ruling dynasty of Prāgyotisa-Kāmarūpa was the Pala Dynasty. When Tyāgasimgha, the 21st ruler of the Sālastambha dynasty died without leaving any issue Brahmapāla, a kinsman of the Bhauma dynasty who had the all fitness to become a king, chose by the people Kāmarupa as their king,

\[
\text{Nirbhausāhūn urupanekebimśati tamān svātīyagāsinbhābhindhante-}
\text{sāmbhidya dibangataṁ punaraṁ bhumo hi no yuyjate |}
\text{Śvāmīti pravichritya tatprakritayo bhūbhārarakshākshanam}
\text{sāgandhyātparichakrīv narapati(m) sribrhamapālaṁ hi thau |}^{109}
\]

His reign may be placed during A.D. 990-1010. The records of the kings of the dynasty give us the names of eight rulers. They are as follows -
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the kings</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahmapāla</td>
<td>Later part of 10th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratnapāla</td>
<td>Early part of 11th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purandarapāla</td>
<td>(Died as a Crown Prince)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indrapāla</td>
<td>Early part of 11th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gopāla</td>
<td>Later part of 11th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harsapāla</td>
<td>Later part of 11th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharmapāla</td>
<td>12th century A.D. 111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jayapāla</td>
<td>12th century A.D. 112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dharmapāla (1095-1120 A.D.) was the last important ruler of the Pāla dynasty in Kāmarūpa. After his death the Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa kingdom started to be declined. Kāmarūpa kingdom became the target of the Pāla and Sena rulers of Bengal at this the time. The kingdom was thus again and again attacked by Tingadeva and Vaidyadeva with the instructions of king Rāmapāla (1085-1130 A.D.) and Kumārapāla (1130-1135 A.D.) of Bengal113. After defeating Rajyapāla, the last Pāla ruler of Kāmarūpa Vadyadeva occupied the throne of Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa kingdom and donated land in Prāgjyotisa by 1138 A.D. 114.

In Dayang and Dhansiri valley of Assam another political development was emerged most probably from 2nd century A.D. At Duborini, near Sarupathar in the Golāghāt district of Assam there found the remains of brick temples, and secular buildings, sculptures, water tanks, ramparts, water ditches and water towers115. These remains
indicate the growth and flourishing and well-protected capital city in the Dayāṅg-Dhansiri Valley of Assam. The antiquity of the kingdom can be pushed back as far as 2nd century A.D.

Inscriptions mention names of four kings of the kingdom namely –

1) Sri Ratnavarman
2) Sri Vasundharāvarman
3) Sri Jivara
4) Sri Diglekhāvarman

Sri Rājmālā, chronicle of Manikya dynasty of Tripura mentions the kingdom of Kapili Valley. According to it Pratārddana, one of the ancestors of the Tripura kings founded a kingdom called Trivanga with its capital on the bank of the river Kapili. K. P. Sen locates this kingdom in the Kapili valley in Nagaon district. K. L. Barua identifies this kingdom with Hedembā kingdom of 5th century A.D. R. M. Nath also supports this identification. The Davāka kingdom mentioned in the Allāhābad Prasasti of Samudragupta also can be placed in the Kapili Valley.

Sri Rājmālā informs of 16 kings who ruled in the Kapili Valley kingdom. They were - Pratardana, Prāmath, Kalinda, Mitrāri, Baribārha, Karmmuka, Kalanga, Bhishan, Bhanumitra, Daitya, Tripur, Triluchan, Sudaksin and Dharmapāl. Although no date was mentioned in the work, on the basis of the reference to the Davaka kingdom in the
Allahabad Prasasti it can be said that the kingdom flourished prior to 5th century A.D.

Bargangā Inscription of Bhutivarman refers to the construction of an *āsrama* (a hermitage or the abode of an ascetic) by Avaguna, a *Visayāmātya* of Bhutivarman. As Bargangā located 14 miles away from present Dabakā this indicates that the *Dvāraka* kingdom or the *Dvāraka* area was absorbed in the Kāmarūpa kingdom before or during the reign of Bhutivarman (510-555 A.D.).

In the conclusion it can be said that the province Assam has a distinct geographical phenomenon which has greatly been affected to the growth of its history and civilization. Its uneven topography, river valleys, river system, hilly terrains that have surrounded river valleys have been played the role to build up a distinct civilization in the land. On the other hand the existence of the land on the route between the East Asian countries in the east and the rest of the Indian territories in the west and having the river like Brahmaputra as the great communicating links with the outside world played the great role in enabling the land to use as the meeting place of the different races from the time immemorial. This physical and geographical distinctiveness led the kingdom of Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa to play the significant role in history and civilization of India from the epic age and to grow the distinct culture of the land. As the apex centres of the urban settlements of the land the different capital cities namely Prāgjyotisapura, Kannasuvarna,
Hāruppeswara, Durjayanagāra, Kāmarupanagāra, Sonitapura, Kundilanagāra and others were developed in ancient Assam. During the period of study that is from 5th century A. D. the land was ruled by the kings of the Varman, the Salastambha and the Pala dynasty and others who contributed to the development and prosperity of the urban centres of the land.

Notes and References

1. Chaudhury, P.C., History and Civilization of the People of Assam, Guwahati, 1958, p.24
2. Kakati, B.K., Mother Goddess Kāmakhyā, Guwahati, 1989, p.6
3. Kalika Purana, Chap. 38, V. 119

12. Ibid


33. Ibid


35. Chaudhury, P.C., op. cit.,, p.109

36. In the Udyogaparvan of the Mahabharata (Chap. 48, VV. 80-85) it is stated that in a great citadel named Pragjyotisa, there used to live the valorous Naraka with the epithet Bhauma (i.e. the son of Bhumi, the Earth) Regarding the rule of the kings the Varman line in Pragjyotisa mention in the inscriptions like the Tezpur Grant, V.6, Sarma, M.M., Op. Cit., p.97, Bargaon Grant, Sarma, M.M., Op. Cit., V. 5, (Plate-38)

37. Tezpur Grant, L.21, Sarma, M.M., Op. Cit., p.98; Here Hāruppesawara is mentioned as the capital city of king Vanamāla who belonged to the dynasty of Sālastambha.
40. Ramayana, (Adikanda, Chapter XXXV), Kamarupasasanavali, P.N.

   Bhattacharya, Benaras, 1931, Bhumika, p.1

   henceforth as K.P
42. K. P., chaps. 39, VV-106-114; Yogini Tantra (Ed.) Calcutta, p.81
43. Chaudhury, P. C., op. cit., p. 36.
44. K P. Chap.84, V.115

   punye nade (Holy River) indicates the river Brahmaputra existed in

   the south of Pragjyotisapura.
46. Nalanda Caly seal and other land grants of Assam
49. Barua, K. L., op. cit., p.45,
51. Majumdar, R.C. History of Ancient Bengal, 1, Dacca University, 1943, p.7
64. Kānai Barasi Rock Inscription, Devi, L. Asom Deshar Buranji, Guwahati, 1984, p.100
65. Barua, K. L., op. cit., p. 179
66. Ibid, p. 93
70. K. P., chap. 82, V.16
73. K. P., Chap. 79, VV. 166-167

37
74. Vishnu Purana, V; Bhagavata Purana, X, Chap. 62-64; Kālikā Purāṇa, Chap. 39; Harivansā (Visnu Purana), Chap. 116-128; Agni Purāṇa, Chap. -12, 41-52

75. Visnu Purana, Bk. I

76. K. P., chap. 39, VV. 2-3; Ananta Kandali, Kumar Haran Kavya, Guwahati, 2002, p. 61


78. Ancient Geography of India, Publication Board (reprint), 1971, p. 67


80. K. P., Chap. 39 V. 69

81. K. P., Chap. 39, V. 3

82. K.P., Chap. 39, V.69


84. Sankardev, Op Cit


88. Barkakati, S. Tribes of Assam, New Delhi, 1969, p. 65

89. Bhuyan S.K. (Ed.) Kachari Buranjī, Guwahati, 1974, p. 3


92. Kakati, B.K. A Cultural History of Assam, Guwahati, 1951, p. 17

93. K. P., chap. 38, V. 104
94. K. P., Chap. 37 VV. 22f.


97. Cowell and Thomas (Trans), Harsacarita, London, 1897, p. 217

98. Mahābhārata, (Drona Parvan, XXVI-XXX)


102. Barua, B. K., Cultural History of Assam, Guwahati, 1951, p. 21

103. Ibid,


(Plates-38 & 39)


Fleet, C.I.I., III, Intro., pp. 178f. In this inscription it is mentioned that king Jayadeva II married the daughter Sri Harsa, who was the king of Gauda, Udra, Kalinga and Kosala who belonged to the family of king Bhagadatta. This king was most probably king Sri Harsa of Sālastambha dynasty of ancient Assam because the time of Srisarsa of Pasupati inscription and Sriharsa of Kāmarupa is same.


112. Silimpur Stone Slab Inscription, E I, xiii, pp.283f.


114. J.A.R.S., III, pp.21-22


117. Ibid.


119. Ibid. p. 312.

120. Sen, K.P. Sri Rajnālā, Agartala, 1967; Palit, P.K., History of Religion in Tripura, p. 12, New Delhi, 2004

