CHAPTER IV

Race Movement and Political History.

As elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent the earliest epoch of human civilization in Arunachal Pradesh is but vaguely known. Certain significant indications are, however, gradually forthcoming in recent years which reveal some aspects of the peculiar pattern of development in this regard.

Geologically, the mountains of Arunachal are of much later origin than the peninsular India which originally belonged to the continent known as Gondowana (supra, Ch.III.). The Himalayas on the eastern fringes of which Arunachal is situated, was formed gradually due to the rise of the bed of the ocean known as Tethys. Free movement of species in this ocean is evident from the similarity of fossil remains between different countries like Burma, China and North India including Arunachal. It is believed that man appeared on the earth simultaneously with the geological transformation leading to the rise of the Himalayas.

The birth of human race, on the other hand, appears to have taken place in this region much earlier than many other parts of India. As yet no proper skeletal remains have come to light to indicate the evolution of early man, autochthonous to the land, on Indian soil. The so-called human skull preserved in the collections of the Asiatic Society of Bengal having been lost long since, no other similar relics have been detected so
far. Nevertheless, the discovery of the molar of Bos from the upper tertiary horizon in the Ramghat area of the Lower Subansiri district in course of geological exploration in 1974-75 has opened up a new vista of knowledge (infra, Ch.III). On the one hand, it indicates continuation of the Siwaliks from the western parts of the Himalayas to the Arunachal region and, on the other, it implies hominid evolution and existence of palaeolithic men in the locality. Fossil remains have also been noticed earlier in Nagaland, Tripura and Garo hills. Discovery of palaeolithic remains since the latter half of the sixties from Meghalaya, West Bengal and finally from Arunachal Pradesh itself have also necessitated modification of the earlier notion of lateness of culture of North-Eastern India.

Together these relics, although still not sufficient to attest any definite assertion, strengthen the possibility, already occurring in the field of palaeo-anthropological research of the Siwaliks, of the Western or Eastern Himalayas ultimately proving to have played a key role in the birth of human race upon the earth. It also appears likely that the hominids like other mammals in the Miocene Period, after their origin in Arunachal Siwaliks moved, in course of time, into the adjoining parts of North-East India, viz., Meghalaya, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura as well as China, Burma and other parts of South-East Asia. This affinity and inter-relationship with the above regions in the earliest phase of human culture is also suggested by the
strong link existing between these areas in all the later periods of history. Races and peoples crossed and re-crossed the present mountainous frontiers of India time and again and communication routes ran through the western and eastern parts of present Arunachal Pradesh across its lofty hills to Bhutan, Tibet, Burma and beyond to the farther lands of China and South-East Asia serving as pathways for movement of peoples by way of expansion and extension or search for refuge at times of troubles encountered in any of the countries. Missionaries and traders, too, followed the same courses in their endeavour to spread their philosophy or move with their merchandise to their brethren settled in the different territories of the region politically segregated from one another, but geologically, geographically or culturally always remaining akin to each other.

This close affinity with the Far Eastern countries does not, however, necessarily imply the isolation of the region from the rest of India lying to its west. Rather, waves after waves of fresh bands of immigrants marched across the vast expanse of Northern India and extended their sway towards the east and south. Many of them ultimately proceeded beyond the easternmost limits of the country. Similarly cultural waves and bands of people moved in from the east, too, and influenced Indian life and civilisation in different phases of its history. Thus the both-way migration, emigration and immigration, went on uninterruptedly over the ages across the frontier tracts of India in the north-east, a large part of which is now included in the union territory
Ethnological investigation into Arunachali population needs to be further intensified before definite assertion regarding details of different ethnic and cultural stocks and their movements in the territory can advance beyond the present state of uncertainty and help remove the mist prevailing over the earliest phase of its history.

The close ethnic, linguistic and cultural affinity of the present tribes of Arunachal with the different peoples of the neighbouring countries of South and South-East Asia are generally taken to indicate a common Mongoloid origin in distant past. But below this apparent identity may also be gleaned some other strains, no less vivid to the penetrating eye, although somewhat subdued by glitter of the exterior. These traits afford us insight into the degree of miscegenation of earlier cultures with those of the latecomers at different stages of their contact. The process obviously started right from the first appearance of human race on its soil. The course of events may be visualised to have followed some pattern as postulated hereinafter.

Indications of glaciation and fossil remains of early mammals have been noticed since long (1828) in the region around present Arunachal Pradesh (supra, Ch.III). The recent discovery of vertebrate fossil from the upper tertiary rocks within the territory and establishment of correlation between Western Siwaliks with Arunachal Siwaliks has revealed that its history
can be traced right from the stage of hominid evolution. The picture is, however, far from clear due to the paucity of evidence. And its clarity is evidently dependent on the advancement of knowledge resulting from intensive researches.

All that we have next to fall back upon are the meagre evidences of stone age cultures available in the region. Although now we can with greater confidence than before postulate existence of old stone and microlithic cultures in this north-eastermost corner of the country including the present Arunachal Pradesh it is not yet possible to ascertain authorship of these cultures more than vaguely suggesting that they were perhaps no other people than the Australoid autochthons of the land. Most European scholars and their Indian followers formerly used to suggest an extraneous origin of all these early inhabitants of India, but A. B. Keith, S. S. Sarkar and others have clearly demonstrated the weakness of their arguments based on nothing more than hypothesis which would have India as a void concerning human existence prior to the advent of these folks.

This earliest population of this union territory seems to be the same as the primitive speakers of the Austroic languages who represent the oldest aborigines of the entire Indian mainland as well. Although in course of time they were overwhelmed and submerged by later immigrants remnants of their physiological, linguistic and other cultural characteristics are still to be noticed as persisting below the surface of the present tribal
pattern of culture. This continuation in itself may be held as an indicator of the vigour and extent of its domination over the length and breadth of the country during its heyday. Here, as elsewhere in India, they may be identified as the authors of stone are cultures at least in the earliest phase.

The broad physical characteristics of this people consisted medium height, long head, broad nose and dark complexion. They are supposed to have been originally food-gatherers and introduced agriculture in India with digging stick and hoe, terrace cultivation on hills and also taming of elephants. They are further supposed to have contributed elements like the totemism, the doctrine of transmigration and karma or birth cycle in accordance with deeds to the Indian culture. Certain common cultural features of the Arunachal tribes, such as bachelors' dormitory or common sleeping house, extreme popularity of chewing of betels etc., are also in all probability remnants of this earlier cultural stock. The terrace cultivation and taming of elephants by some Arunachal tribes also could be traced to the same original source. Domestication of fowl seems to have started with them as also counting by twenties computing of time by days of moon (ttithis).

1. S.K. Chatterji, Kirata-Janakṛti, Calcutta, 1974, pp. 7f., 57. Tambula or betel vine, guvaka or betel nut, kadala or plantain, narikela or coconut, hāridrā or turmeric, śringavera or ginger, vātingana or brinjal and alābu or pumpkin all are Austric words. It is interesting to note that most of these fruits and roots are produced by the tribes of Arunachal.

2. The History of Bengal, I, (ed. R.C. Majumdar, Patna, 1971, p. 562.)
The use of Austro words by the Wanchos and their Australoid ethnic features are also quite significant. In this regard the pocket of Austro language in Meghalaya among a people with physiological characteristics connecting them clearly with the Mongoloids, later immigrants of yellow complexion, affords some clue to the course of events. The dominant position of the early inhabitants was rudely shaken as elsewhere in India by the more vigorous newcomers. Here the invaders were apparently the yellow people. The more advanced sections of the older communities wielding authority and at the helm of affairs were naturally the first victims of the onslaught. They were either completely routed through initial violence or became subjected to peaceful transformation after the subsidence of the doldrums. The weaker backward sections and commoners sought refuge in remote hills and wildernesses. There they remained comparatively free from the fury of the invading hordes. But in course of time they, too, could not altogether ignore for long the mighty cultural impact of the victors surrounding them. In certain strongholds, however, the older culture maintaining its existence for longer period left more vigorous strains of its character on the successors. In other words, here the two opposing forces met each other somewhat on equal footing and neither could totally obliterate the other. The process of miscegenation continued over the ages and waves after waves of newcomers ultimately succeeded in transforming physiological features of the older

1. B.M. Das, 'Some Aspects of Physical Anthropology of the Tribes of Northeast India', The Tribes of North East India, p. 40.
inhabitants almost beyond recognition but the inexorable traces of the original culture are still discernible through this external veil.

These original inhabitants of Arunachal Pradesh and north-eastern region may well be held responsible, as in the case of other parts of India, for the old stone age and microlithic cultures evidence of which are gradually being revealed through recent researches in this area. Regarding the neoliths of the region including Arunachal Pradesh a period around the first millennium B.C. has been suggested for their introduction on the basis of their correlation with Chinese neoliths and those of Burma and other South-East Asian countries although possibility of a much earlier beginning in some more remote past cannot be precluded altogether. The arguments advanced by various scholars bringing down this date line have little real basis to be accepted as final (supra, Ch.III). In the lower side, however, this culture along with the practice of raising the megaliths or big memorial stones and tombs as are noticed in Meghalaya and also in the Kameng and Subansiri regions of Arunachal might have continued till very recent times.

It is a matter of great controversy whether the Austro-speakers or the yellow people succeeding them should be regarded as authors of the neolithic culture in North-East India and any definite conclusion will have to await unravelling concrete evidence through future investigation. However, Haimendorf's
views explain the position better than that of Wheeler since in both Meghalaya and Arunachal as elsewhere we find both Austro culture and Megaliths.¹

As evident from the foregoing discussion the next important ethnic group to hold sway over the region were the Mongoloids, or the Sino-Tibetan speakers of yellow complexion. They appear to have been firmly established in the sub-Himalayan India including Arunachal Pradesh and the adjoining regions of Assam, Meghalaya, North and East Bengal, North Bihar, Nepal etc. before the tenth century B.C. when the Vedas are generally supposed to have been compiled. Their spread in North-East India went on simultaneously with or could have started even before the advent of the Indo-Aryans in the north-western corner.

They were presumably a food-gathering people, mostly hunters and often dwelling in caves, with yellowish complexion, scanty hair on face, flat face and oblique eyelids. Older groups of them were characterised by long head and dark skins met with in Nepal and north-eastern region of India including Assam and Arunachal, while a short headed advanced type is mostly prevalent in Burma, Arakan and Chittagong. A third variety with lighter skin and tall stature is found among the Tibetans. The occurrence of the various characteristic features of these different groups among the present population of Arunachal Pradesh suggests the extent of their spread

and existence in the territory. Language, cultural relics and tradition prevalent among the present tribal people of Arunachal themselves as well as old records also indicate waves of migration from Bhutan, Tibet, China, Burma and other parts of South-East Asia entering this corner of the country over the ages till recent times.

The Aryan-speaking Nordics penetrating the country from around the middle of the second millennium B.C. had to contend all these peoples in their endeavour to gradually master the country. References to these different ethnic groups in literature under various designations would indicate their hold over the entire country where the Aryans were but new infiltrators. Description of the flourishing state of their cultures which were in many respects superior to that of the Aryans may be occasionally gleaned. But following their reverses at the hands of the invading hordes on the North India plains commenced an era of miscegenation between the contestants, while a stagnation and resultant degeneration set in among the residents of the remote areas. These latter groups were gradually driven back to the hills and forests and shunned contact with plains. They seem to have thus continued in the same primitive stage for centuries and further lost their original brilliance in that process.

The expansion of the Aryan-speakers or the mixed Hindu population and culture in this part of the country was presumably a phenomenon of the later Vedic and post Vedic periods,
although faint knowledge and initial association might have started even earlier. This is suggested by the nature of references to the various pre-Aryan settlers of this area contained in the early indigenous literature which seem to corroborate ethnological and linguistic evidences.

These aboriginal peoples have been referred to by the Aryans as Niṣādas, Savaras, Pulindas, Bhillas, Kollas, Dāsas, Dasyus, Kirātas, Cīnas etc. The different appellations are held to denote various ethnic groups. Earliest of them to have dominated the region could be the Niṣādas or Austro- speakers, who appear to have held their sway over entire North-Eastern India including Bengal, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh even in the Rgvedic age. Although definite use of the nomenclature is noticed in the later Vedic literature, the term could very well be applied to denote the non-Aryan tribes of the Rgvedic period too. Some of the other groups like Savaras, Pulindas, Bhillas and Kollas may have evolved out of the same stock in the later period. Alternatively, greater association in succeeding ages made possible classification of the various minor groups. This might have been also due to their growing prominence in later periods to the exclusion of other groups of the parent stock known earlier.

The terms like dāsa and dasyu are generally applied to the speakers of the Dravidian languages. The worship of Śiva, Uma,

Visnu, Sri and the Yoga philosophy are supposed to be their contributions to Indian culture.\(^1\) Whether they also originally belonged to the same Austro stock and represent a group that developed as a result of absorption of various ethnic elements is a disputed point. But their presence in the outlying regions of the Eastern India is indicated by the use of the term *dasyu* to denote the non-Aryans in the region.\(^2\)

In the *Sunahsepa* story of the *Altareya Brähmana* (VII. 13-18), *Vājasaneyi Samhitā* of the *Yajurveda*, the *Mahābhārata* (XIII) and *Rāmāyaṇa*, we do get references to these people inhabiting the frontier and forest regions of Bengal and other adjoining areas outside the pale of Aryandom. Early Jaina tradition contained in works like the *Ācārānga sūtra* (I. 8.3) also corroborates the contention.\(^3\)

Several constituent elements of the present cultural pattern of Arunachal Pradesh may be traced back to the different branches of the Austro-speakers, who seem to have introduced a primitive system of agriculture in the hill-side with a digging-stick and terrace cultivation on hills. Cultivation of the coconut, plantain, betel vine and betel nut were also their contribution. Growing of turmeric, ginger, brinjal, pumpkin etc. also possibly originated from them. Aversion to milk, taming of elephant, rearing of fowl, counting by twenties and calculating time by days

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2. The History of Bengal, I, p. 36.
3. Ibid., p. 35f, etc.
of the moon are also characteristic of their culture. Many of
these characteristics are noticed among the tribal people of
Arunachal. Anthropometric and genetic studies have also detected
strong Austro and Mongoloid elements in the population of the
area and their affinity with neighbouring peoples of South-East
Asia.

The earlier groups were ultimately supplanted here by the
Sino-Tibetan speakers with yellow complexion referred to in the
literature as Kiratas and Cinas.

As already noted, the similarity of remains suggests affinity
and similar development of human civilisation in this corner of
India and the adjoining regions of South and South-East Asia.
Various movements in all these countries naturally affected the
present Arunachal Pradesh and vice versa which process continued
even in modern times. Penetration of different waves of the Sino-
Tibetan speakers in the regional fall in the same line. They appear
to have entered India in course of their southern and westward
movement from China since pre-historic times. Their large-scale
immigration, however, took place possibly around the first
millennium B.C. All the dialects of the present tribal people of
Arunachal broadly belong to this speech family. Only the language
of the Tai Khamtis, who entered the territory very late, belongs
to the Siamese-Chinese branch. All other dialects come under the
Tibeto-Burman branch of the parent stock.

The waves of early Sino-Tibetan speakers could have entered
both through the north-western corridors as well as through the north-eastern parts as across the Nepali, Bhutanese, Tibetan and Burmese frontiers hill tracts of which have served as communication routes, though in limited scale, even in recent times and till now are being used as such by local tribal population. In the absence of other definite evidence, linguistic and ethnic materials available have been taken together to suppose that a number of these primitive peoples most probably entered these territories in prehistoric times from across the Tibetan borders. In the process the river course of the Tsangpo which is known as Siang or Siyam in Arunachal Pradesh and ultimately as Brahmaputra when it enters Assam may have played an important role. Courses of the Salween and Irrawaddy in the Burmese sector of the region also could have provided home to many of the groups some of which, again, entered the Indian territory from the east. Similarly the Tai or Siamese tribes moved from the eastern provinces of China such as Yun-nan into Burma and South-East Asia and thence entered Arunachal Pradesh and Assam over different ages in later times. Such movements are also suggested by myths of origin prevalent among the different tribes of Arunachal Pradesh who possess rich traditional accounts and stories orally transmitted from generation to generation.

It would thus seem from all evidences that from around the first millennium B.C. these Mongoloid speakers of the Tibeto-Burman languages were in a dominant position in the Himalayan region of North-Eastern India including Arunachal Pradesh. We are, however, not in a position to determine their specific relation
with the other earlier inhabitants of the area during this period. But available indications from contiguous regions would suggest their co-existence for quite some time till through the process of miscegenation and absorption by waves after waves of the newcomers vestiges of the independent existence of the earlier settlers were largely obliterated.

It seems that the earlier bands moving in during prehistoric times gradually settled over different parts of the territory. But the process of immigration continued till recent times. The latecomers entering from the frontiers gradually pushed back the earlier inhabitants to more centrally situated areas and the external pressure thus set in motion chain reaction leading to gradual movements of the northerly tribes towards south. The freshers naturally settled near the border areas and maintained greater contact with their earlier habitats beyond the borders. This is evident in case of the Buddhist tribes, the Monpas and Sherdukpen of the west, the Membas and Khambas of the north and— the Tai Khamtis and Singphos immigrating in recent times in the eastern parts of the territory. On the other hand, the southern region was in closer contact with the Brahmaputra valley and subjected to the impact of the developments of the adjoining areas of North-East India. Under such pressure from all sides the more primitive and weaker people were circumscribed and receded to the hilly tracts of the interior. In this process the primitive culture of the Austro—speakers had to give place to the later culture of the Sino-Tibetan speakers. The latter during its heyday spread over
extensive parts of the mainland of India as well. But following Aryan invasion this expansion was held in check by the more powerful hordes of the newcomers who gradually overwhelmed all their predecessors in the northern plains of the country and pushed towards the east. As a result of mixture of the different elements the composite culture of the Hindus evolved on the Indian plains. This culture gradually advanced to North-East India. But its power obviously decreased proportionately with the distance from its epicentre. Still, at times, certain powerful hands could penetrate the hills of Arunachal and move northwards to some extent as suggested by the legend regarding Krsna’s invasion recorded in the Kālikā Purāṇa as well as the Mahābhārata and the Ramāyana. Remnants of this culture are found in the foothills. But the territory did not offer adequate sustenance for extensive kingdoms to continue for long. Natural calamities in quick succession as well as southward movements of the tribes pushed down by the newcomers from the north added to the privations of the rulers. Experience taught later potentates to leave the mountainous territories for the more resourceful plains in its south. They remained contented with mere show of allegiance or friendly relations by the people of the interior parts of the mountainous Arunachal Pradesh. But this southern contact, too, left certain impress on the tribal folks some of which would claim ancestry from Puranic and legendary heroes like Bhāluka or Bhūsmaka of plains. The archaeological and religious sites of the southern part of the territory bear testimony to this extension of mixed Hindu culture in early periods of Indian history.
Right from the days of the Vājasaneyī Samhitā of Sukla Yajurveda (XXX, 16) we find references to the life and activities of the Mongoloid people who are commonly designated Kirātas. In this book we also find mention of the Niṣādas and Bhillas. The Kirātas are associated there with the caves. The Athārva-veda (X, 2, 2, 14) gives a more specific account narrating how a young Kairātikā or Kirāta maiden digs out medicinal herbs above mountains with golden spades. The Tāndya Brāhmaṇa and the Mahābhārata also refer to them.¹ Description of the Cinas and Kirātas as degraded Ksatriyas in the Manusmṛti (X, 44) may be held as an indication of their advancement in culture and powerful position. The could not be totally ignored as barbarians and at least some sections of them were accorded a respectable position in the Hindu social structure.

The word kirāta could have originated from some Sino-Tibetan tribal name like Kiranti, a Tibeto-Burman people of Eastern Nepal which has been somewhat Sanskritised by Indian writers. As the name of a non-Aryan tribe possibly the term later on acquired some derogatory sense among the Aryan speakers. A Kirāta prince finds mention in the Brhat-samhitā of Varāhamihira (XI, 60).² The Raghuvamsā (XVI, 57)³ describes a woman of low caste carrying a fly-flap or something to remove flies a Kirāti. All these indicate an identical attitude of the writers. On the other hand, use of the

². Monier-Williams, at loc. cit.
³. Ibid.
term as names of Durgā in the Harivamsa (X, 248), worshiped by robbers, and Gaṅgā is due perhaps to their association with the Himalayan region, the abode of these people. Similarly Kirāta-tikta used by Sūrata is the name of a bitter medicinal plant Cirāvita which reminds us of the account of the Kirāta girl in the Atharvaveda noted above. The Mishmi tita of present Arunachal Pradesh may also be referred to in this connection. It shows the continued practice of a tribal people of this group, viz., the Mishmis, of collecting and trading in bitter herbs as before.

In most of these early works the Kirātas are principally associated with the hilly tracts in the northern and north-eastern parts of India, especially the Eastern Himalayas.

Bhāma is described in the Mahābhārata (II, 27, 13) as having proceeded towards east and defeated seven Kirāta kings after crossing the Videha country near the Indra Mountains. The spread of the Kirātas in other areas, too, is also attested by Nakula's encounter with them in the west or north-west.

There are other passages indicating location of the strongholds of these people and their resources and ways of life and customs. Duryodhana while describing the pomp and grandeur of Yudhiṣṭhira (Mahābhārata, II, 48, 8-11) mentions together the kings

1. S.K. Chatterji, op. cit., p. 32.
3. Ibid.
4. Mahābhārata, (II, 31) (Kaliprasanna Simha's translation);
on the other half of the Himalayas, the eastern mountains or mountains associated with sunrise (Suryodavagiri), in Kārūsa, on seashore and beside the Lāhnītya and the Kirātas. The latter lived on fruits and roots, wore dresses of leather, appeared ferocious with their weapons and cruel in their disposition. All of them together brought presentation of sandal and agallochum wood, black pepper, skins, jewels, gold and aromatic shrubs. Kirāta maidens as servants or slaves, animals of remote region, birds and hiranya or gold acquired from mountains are also mentioned.

The Kirātāparva section of the Āranyakāparva gives an account of Arjuna's encounter with Śiva who appeared in the guise of a Kirāta along with Uma also disguised as a Kirāta woman. Here we come across specific description of the physical features of the Kirātas who are said to have had golden complexion.¹

In the Harivamsa the robbers are said to worship Durgā who is given the epithet Kiratī. The Mahābhārata often associates the Kirātas with the foreign tribes like the Yavanas, Śakas, Pahlavas etc. But they are found to be specially grouped with the Cīnas or the Chinese. Arjuna (II, 23, 17-19) is said to have defeated Bhagadatta, king of Prāgjyotisa or Assam, who later took part in the Kurukṣetra war and was killed there. Bhagadatta was surrounded by the Kirātas and Cīnas and other warriors of seashore. He had his abode in the hills (Striparvan, 23).²

¹. Mahābhārata, II, 40, 2.
². Kaliprasanna Simha's translation.
The Mahābhārata elsewhere describes the Kirātas and Cīnas as having yellow complexion which is dear from the account of the army of Bhagaddāta consisting of Kirāta and Cīna soldiers appearing like gold and resembling a forest of Karnikāras with yellow flowers.

The Rāmāvana (IV, 37, 13) mentions Mandāra Parvata and Himalaya and collection of the best medicinal herbs from Himalaya (IV, 37, 32). Sugrīva sent monkeys in search of Sītā to the east, full of hills, forests and gardens (gāile, vana and kānana) to search amid forests, forest fortresses (vanaśurgesu) and caves (IV, 40, 17-18) in Śaka, Pulinda and Kaliṅga countries (IV, 40, 21), near the great river Lauhitya adorned with hills and kānana and the city called Timira, where there was gold mine (kanakakāra) and habitat of the makers of golden vessels (IV, 40, 26).

We find here description of the Kirātas living in cities near seashore and on hills, in the foothills of Mandāra. They had very big ears and wore big ear-ornaments, had big bodies, black-face and were strong. They had sthūla or tīkana, i.e., wide, big or pointed top-knots, golden hue and were pleasant looking. There were Kirātas who lived on islands, ate raw fish, moved under water and caught hold of human beings (IV, 40, 28-31).

The same work also refers to the Sudarśanā river (IV, 40, 46), Hayamukha Bari (IV, 40, 49) and golden Udāya mountain (IV, 40, 54).

The Mahābhārata in the account of Bhāma's conquest in the

Sabhaparvan describes the wealth of the Kirātas living on hills and eastern mountains and all the Mlechas living near the seashore and other people living near the Lauhitya river. He defeated seven Kirāta kings, took tribute from them and went to Lauhitya. He collected tribute from all Mlecha kings living on seashore or island inside sea and collected tribute, viz., various jewels, sandal wood, agollochum, cloth, gems (rubies), pearls, blankets, gold, silver, vajra or diamond (i.e., vajrakāntamani), precious or very hard vidruma or lapis-lazuli.

The Vismu Purāna and the Mārkandeya Purāṇa locate the Kirātas in the east of the middle country or the central part of India.

The Milindapañha (IV, 8, 94) refers to Cīna-Vilāta, corrected as Cīna-Cilāta, meaning Cīna-Kirāta as associated peoples like Śaka-Yavana, Kāśi-Kośala etc. The same expression occurs also in the Nagarjunikonda inscription of Virapurasadatta of the Regnal year 14 belonging to the third century A.D.

The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea of the first century A.D. describes Kirrhadai meaning the Kirātas among the barbarous tribes living beyond Desarene in the north. They were wild people with flat noses. Among their neighbours were Bargusoi and Hippioprosopoi (Horse faced) or Makraprosopoi (Long faced) who were said to be cannibals.

2. S.K. Chatterji, op. cit., p. 34.
3. Epigraphia Indica, XX, p. 22.
The Kiratas thus seem to have settlements at this time north or north-east of Daśārṇa in Orissa, somewhere in Bengal and adjoining regions in the east. The Bargusoi are regarded as the Bhargas described in the Vīṣṇu Purāṇa as neighbours of the Kiratas. Aśvamukha or Aśvavadana occurs as the name of the people in the Brhatsāṁhitā of Varāhamihira and Hayamukha as that a country in the Buddhist literature which were apparently translated by the Greeks. The use of the Hayamukha is noticed in the early Jain literature in the sense of a Mleccha or barbarian people associated with the Kiratas. Aśvavadana occurs in the Vara-Sāṁhitā Purāṇa as a people living in the mountains to the east of India. The Kiratas, known to the Greeks in the 1st century A.D., possibly lived in the delta of the Ganges and a stream of trade flowed through their country from China to the ports of Gangetic India. Tribes allied to them were Besatai or Sesatal, who brought malabathrum from China in baskets carried on their backs. There were other Mongoloid peoples living in areas lying to the north of the habitats of the Kirrhadai. They included various groups described in the literature as the Horsefaces and the Longfaces. Chang K'ien the Chinese general who explored Central Asia in the 2nd century B.C., also testified to the existence of a trade between North-Eastern India and South-Western China which ran through the countries of the barbarian peoples of the South (i.e., South of China). It was purely unofficial and not recognised by the Chinese classes with

1. Monier-Williams, p. 115.
their headquarters in the capital city in North China. The items of the trade included Chinese silk cloth, Chinese bamboo flutes etc. These articles were brought into Eastern India. The commodities were then transported across the North Indian plains to the countries as far as Afghanistan and Central Asia. The Sino-Tibetan speakers of India living in this region including apparently the tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh, who were the kinsmen of the Chinese obviously participated as intermediaries in this trade and not only did they carry materials goods from China, but also at times brought Ideas down to the second half of the first millennium A.D. Ptolemy also refers to Airrhadoi standing for Kirātas in the Gangetic Gulf beyond the mouth of the Ganges.¹

The name Kirāta continued to be used even in late medieval times to denote the Mongoloid people of the eastern frontiers of India. Thus the Nāga-Mālā of Tripura kings, a Bengali chronicle of circa 16th century A.D., connects the local dynasty with the Kirātas. The Yoginītantra, a post sixteenth century work giving account of holy places of Sākta form of worship states that in the Yoginī pīṭha or Kāmarūpa the rituals have originated from the Kirātas.²

From all these above references it seems that the Kirātas were known to the compilers of the Vedas as a powerful group of non-Aryan people. The early Hindu writers knew them to reside in the Himalayas and particularly in Eastern India including Assam.

¹ J.W. McCrindle, Ancient India as described by Ptolemy, 1885, p. 191.
² S.K. Chatterji, op. cit., p. 36.
and present hilly territories of Arunachal Pradesh from where the Brahmaputra flows into the plains of Assam. They lived in mountains, on the banks of the Lauhitya and spread up to sea-shore of Bengal in the days of the Epics and the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*. Their yellow complexion, top-knots, their mastery in weaving cloths, and carrying of articles in baskets on their backs remind us of the characteristics of the tribes of North-East India, particularly the present Arunachal tribes with similar features and habits. Their cotton and woolen fabrics were quite popular among the Hindus of the plains. They had enough of jewels, silver and forest products, herbal medicine, gold etc, which they supplied to the plains. Their descendants in the territory at present are also famous for many such materials and crafts. Especially, their rich tradition of weaving, and use of silver ornaments, smoking pipes of silver etc. may be noted in this connection. Colourful heads which now they use also may be compared with the old literary accounts of the Kiratas. Many of these items they used to import from Tibet till recent times. Their consumption of dried fish and practice of capturing people of the plains at the time of raids even in recent past also recall old description of the Kirātas.

Their account in the works of the foreigners like the author of the *Periplus* and Ptolemy also help locate them and allied tribes in the Eastern India and indicate the association of the people of the other parts of India with them although their separate entity is clearly acknowledged. A fairly intimate knowledge of their life, habitats and activities is betrayed in all these accounts. In this respect the faint reference in the
Periplus of the trade between people of this region with China is significant. The corroboration of this account from Chinese records makes it amply clear that people of North Assam and Arunachal possibly took part in the trade that was carried on between India and China through different routes across this territory at the beginning of the Christian era or even before. This trade link with countries like China and Tibet continued in later times down to the modern period. Obviously such contacts assisted cultural exchange, too.

Hsüen Tsang's accounts of the territories of Bhāskaravarman may also be recalled in this context which fits in nicely with that of the Periplus and other earlier indigenous texts. The territory known as Kāmarūpa, over which Bhāskaravarman ruled, appears from its location and description in the Purāṇas, which occasionally include territories as far as the temple of Dikkaravāsini in it, to have included at least some parts of the present Arunachal Pradesh if not the entire territory. Hsüen Tsang has described the country to the east of Kāmarūpa till the south-western borders of Szechuan in China as being full of hills without any big city. The territory was full of poisonous snakes, herbs, mountains and rivers difficult to cross and there lived south-west barbarians and people akin to the Mān and Lao. While confirming the difficulties of the tract some idea of its geography and inhabitants is given which the pilgrim gathered from the people of Kāmarūpa. Here the reference to the territory is, however, more direct. The extent of Kāmarūpa mentioned in the work is also significant which
would suggest that Arunachal Pradesh or its greater part was also included in that kingdom.

The later accounts of the area as are gleaned in texts like the Kālikā Purāṇa are more elaborate in this regard. It mentions different rivers of the territory like the Kāmā identifiable with the Kameng, the Svārnaśrī, obviously the Subansirī, the Dikkarikā or probably modern Dikrang. The Svarnadi, a river flowing by the temple of Dikkaravāsinī may be present Deopani and the Dīpāvatī could be same as the Dibang river. The relative position of the rivers, however, indicates some confusion (30, 15, 17-20, 29ff. etc.). All these rivers are now flowing through Arunachal Pradesh. The temple of Dikkaravāsinī has been identified on the basis of an inscription with the Tāmresvara temple in the Lohit district. Dikka or Dikkarikā appears to be a variant of the present name of the river Dikrang which is not far away from the temple. Another sacred site of the territory, viz. Brahmakunda and Lohit river also finds mention in the work (83, 30ff. etc.).

Arunachal may represent major portions of Indradvīpa of the Puranic tradition, if the latter is identified with the Trans-Brahmaputra region.

1. According to this tradition Bhāratavarṣa consisted of nine dvīpas (navabhedaḥ), viz. Indradvīpa, Kaserumāt, Tāmraparṇī, Gabhastimat, Nāgadvīpa, Saumya, Gandharva, Varuna and Kumāri. While most scholars (e.g. H.C. Raychaudhuri, Studies in Indian Antiquities, Calcutta, 1932, pp. 85ff.) are inclined to place eight out of these nine dvīpas outside India identifying Kumārīdvīpa with the Indian subcontinent proper, S. M. Ali has located all of them within the subcontinent (The Geography of the Purāṇas, New Delhi, 1966, pp. 126ff.).
From around the latter part of 1st millennium A.D. the archaeological remains afford a more concrete indication of the history and culture of the territory although the details of political developments remain still a matter of conjecture.

In the southern part of the territory we find relics of the Brahmaputra valley culture with mixed Hindu influence. This along with evidences of earlier period would suggest extension of different dynasties of the adjoining kingdom of Kamarūpa or Assam right from the days of Bhagadatta, king of Prāgjyotisa, mentioned in the Mahābhārata. Whether the famous imperial dynasties of North India like the Mauryas or the Guptas had advanced upto this corner of the country is not clearly known. But reference to Samudragupta's influence over the frontier state Kamarūpa in the Allahabad pillar inscription may suggest some contact with the region. The discovery of a Gupta record from the Kāmākhya hill in Gauhati and the Gupta style of the ruined temple at Da Parvatia near Tezpur and other such evidences of Gupta influence in Assam may also be noted in this context. The expansion of these centrally situated empires to the north-eastern region indicates in a way greater association and importance attached to the region with passage of time which went on increasing in later periods. Traditions recorded in the inscriptions of Assam and dynastic history of this adjoining state also cast some interesting lights on the developments in Arunachal Pradesh which, however, are yet not enough to indicate anything more than some fragmentary outlines.
Still in this untrodden field these outlines may help further investigation. For the present, however, they demonstrate at least some aspects of Arunachali history which cannot be ignored in the current state of our knowledge.

The glimpses through early indigenous and foreign accounts would indicate that Arunachal and its adjoining region was dominated by non-Aryan settlers among whom the Sino-Tibetan speakers seem to have had a leading role since about the 1000 B.C. The empire of Bhagadatta, king of Prāgyotisa, whose capital was situated in mountainous regions, seems to have comprised at least the southern parts of the territory which may be presumed from the account of his subjects or soldiers including the Kirātas and Cinas. The Vedic literature, the Epics, the Purāṇas and the Periplus as well as early inscriptions like the Nagarjunikonda inscription of Viṟapurusadatta of the Regnal Year 14 belonging to the third century A.D.\(^1\) appear to corroborate the anthropological and linguistic findings in this context. Together they throw light on the variety of ethnic and cultural elements of the region since pre-historic times. The region seems to have been known as abode of the Nisādas, Kirātas, Cinas etc. These non-Aryan peoples speaking the Austric and Sino-Tibetan languages were sometimes also broadly designated āśvaśus, who inhabited the frontier and outlaying parts of Bengal apparently including the north-eastermost regions where Arunachal Pradesh is situated. The Dravidian-speakers also could have spread to the farthest limits of India in this direction prior to their later reversal

\(^1\) *Epigraphia Indica*, XX, p. 22.
and recession. Description of different varieties of non-Aryans living in the hills, near sea-shore, near the Lohit river, in the hill-towns, caves, and forest-forts in the Great Epics and the Periplus compares well with even the archaeological finds of hill-forts and cities of Arunachal Pradesh which seem to reflect a continuation of the culture as depicted in the literature. The tradition of seaving, collection of medicinal herbs, transaction in jewels, previous metals, forest products, cloth etc. as mentioned in the Mahabharata also can be compared with the rich heritage of weaving, leather industry, woodwork etc. still continuing in Arunachal. Import of previous metal objects, beads, cloth etc. from Tibet was carried on by the tribal people even in recent past.

Anthropometric, genetic and linguistic findings of recent years also appear to indicate existence of the speakers of the Austro and Sino-Tibetan languages or Australoid and Mongoloid ethnic elements in the population of Arunachal Pradesh and adjoining regions. The North-Eastern India right upto Nepal, especially the sub-Himalayan region apparently was the refuge of all these non-Aryan tribes at the time of distress. Pronominalisation in certain Nepali dialects have also indicated fairly early contact between the Austro and Tibeto-Burman speakers on the soil. The name and culture of the Licchavis, Ānātrikas, Śākyas etc. regarded as Vṛṣala or Vṛatva by the lawgivers thereby indicating their non-Aryan origin, their political and administrative set up, certain peculiarities of Buddhism and Jainism may also be recalled in this context. All these characteristics together mark the
entire region as strongholds of non-Aryans, speaking the Austric and Tibeto-Burman languages, arround the sixth century B.C. Spread of Krsna legends and tendencies of different tribal peoples and dynasties to seek origin from Epico-Puranic heroes reveal how gradually Hindu culture advanced in the region and priestly class and panegytrists helped inclusion of tribal peoples within Hindu social structure by according them some respectable status and heredity.

The political history of the earliest period of Arunachal Pradesh can be traced only in vague outlines due to paucity of materials at our disposal. In ancient literature the territory appears to have not been clearly distinguished from Assam known as Pragjyotisa in the Mahabharata and as Kamarupa in the Puranas and Tantras. This may be partly due to vagueness of knowledge of the region on the part of the early writers. But the extension of political power of the kings of ancient Assam over this territory may also be one of the reasons of application of the various nomenclatures of Assam to denote whole or parts of this area. But as we have seen earlier, the area was known in the Vedic and Epic literature as abode of various non-Aryan tribes from the earliest period of Indian history. These tribes lived amid forests and on hills in small groups under their chiefs perhaps with village councils as are found at present among their descendants. The different waves of the Austric and Tibeto-Burman speakers and perhaps others, too, may have entered the territory from time immemorial and given birth to these tribal groups. They settled
over different parts of the territory and also perhaps participated in trade with Tibet and China that was carried on through their territories. Reference to the goods brought by the Kirātas to Yudhīṣṭhira in the Mahābhārata, the Chinese accounts and the Periplus seem to suggest such a state of affairs. It is quite understandable that these tribes from time to time acknowledged a loose over-lordship of the powerful potentates ruling in the adjoining parts of Assam to the south of their territories. Alternatively, their friendship and non-aggression might have also been held as signs of submission. The outsiders writing these accounts were apt to consider them as subjects of the Assam kings. Similarly developments across the Tibeto-Bhutanese and Burmese borders also influenced their life and activities from time to time. Lack of their own records compel us to fall back on accounts of Assam for their early history which to some extent give the story from the viewpoint of Assam.

The earliest kings of Prājyotisa and Kāmarūpa according to legendary tradition were Mahirang Dānava succeeded by Hatakāsura, Sambarāsura and Ratnāsura. Apparently they were non-Aryan chiefs ruling over territories including present Arunachal or at least its southern fringes while host of similar other chiefs ruled in the interior. Existence of republican tribes cannot be ruled out either. Chatakāsura, a later chief of the line, ruling over the Kirātas, was defeated and killed by Narakāsura, son of Viṣṇu and Bhūmi or Earth. Naraka founded a line of kings known as Bhauma-Narakas mentioned as predecessors of the Varman kings of Assam in their inscriptions. Naraka is described as an eminent ruler in the Kālikā Purāṇa (Chapters 36-40), the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (X, 55)
The appellation Asura of both Ghataka and Naraka indicates them to be non-Aryan chiefs. The Kalika Purana describes Naraka as having pushed the Kiratas to the east of the Dikkara or Dikrang river. This makes evident that his kingdom extended over at least southern parts of Arunachal, while the Kiratas ruled in his time inside Arunachal beyond his boundaries. Naraka's descendants, too, appear to have wielded suzerainty over Arunachal where various tribes were known to reside. These people living in forests and hills are mentioned in the Epics. They did not have big cities, but possessed hill-forts, hamlets and pattanas of goldsmiths etc. referred to in the Ramayana. The Mahabharata also alludes to many of them in the accounts of the conquests of Bhima whose forces reached Lauhitya.

Bhagadatta, son of Naraka, having his capital on the hills had numerous Kirata and Cina tribes around him. Some of them could be his subjects or autonomous tribes under him, while there might have been others who remained independent as may be inferred from the accounts of the Mahabharata. But definite details of such relationship cannot be delineated at present. Despite legendary nature of these accounts, continuity of the tradition in the Mahabharata, Ramayana, Purana, Kalika Purana and other texts including Buddhist, Jaina and Chinese accounts as well as inscriptions and local memory affirms historicity at least of the principal figures.
The *Kālikā Purāṇa* narrates that Naraka was finally killed by Kṛśna, an incarnation of Viṣṇu, who put Bhagadatta on his throne. Bhagadatta after his death in the Kurukṣetra was succeeded by Vajradatta, his son or brother. Kṛśna's invasion possibly referred to an expedition by some Hindu king from the west. In this respect the association of Brahmā and sage Sāntana as well as Parasurāma with the Parasurāma kūnda and Brahmakūnda in the Lohit district also indicates extension of Hindu culture to the region.\(^1\) Accounts of the *Mahābhārata*, *Periplus*, Chinese records, *Milindapañha* and *Nagarjun-Konda inscription* regarding this region, mentioned earlier, may be taken to refer to the period of the Bhauma-Narakas. As already noted, these accounts refer to various tribes like the Kirātas, Cinas, Asvavadanas or Horse-faced etc., as residing in territories which apparently included present Arunachal. Through their habitats Indo-Chinese trade was carried on. These people also produced various types of embroidered cloths and collected medicinal roots, herbs, gems and precious metals like gold and silver which they supplied to the mainland India.

After the Bhauma-Narakas the Varman kings of Kāmarūpa also extended their sway over large parts of Arunachal and perhaps claimed suzerainty over almost the entire territory as can be inferred from Huen Tsang's account of the extent of the kingdom of Bhaskaravarman to Harsavardhana like the female *samara* deer\(^2\) and the fur cap presented to Huen Tsang remind us of certain

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1. *Kālikā Purāṇa*, Chapter 82.
characteristic animals and products of present Arunachal Pradesh. These were perhaps equally reared and produced by the ancestors of the present people of Arunachal. The eastern frontier of Kāmarūpa under Bhāskaravarman extended to the hills. It was adjacent to the land of the barbarians residing in the south-west of China. The people were akin to the Māns and the tract was full of hills and rivers difficult to cross and dangerous snakes, herbs, etc. All these details mentioned by the Chinese pilgrim indicate inclusion of Arunachal in Bhāskaravarman's dominion. This also perhaps was a loose control as noted before in case of earlier potentates.

The Sālastambhas ruling between the seventh and tenth centuries A.D. and the Pālas who succeeded them presumably held similar authority over at least southern parts of the territory. Under direct or indirect patronage of these rulers, or their subordinate chiefs and dignitaries were constructed the Śaiva temple at Mālinithāna, vividly depicting art tradition of the Pāla school. Influence of these dynasties may have been instrumental in the introduction of Śaiva and Brahmanical culture in Arunachal.

From around the latter half millennium A.D. the archaeological ruins along the southern parts of Arunachal give some idea about the political developments. In the westernmost part the fortress of Bhālukapung suggests the existence of some Hinduised kingdom there between the tenth and twelfth centuries A.D. Whether this represents an outpost of some Assamese dynasties like the Sālastambhas or Pālas of Assam in the region or the seat of power
of some independent dynasty is at present a purely matter of
conjecture. Assamese legends connecting it with Bhāluka, a
grandson of Bānasura who ruled over Tezpur in the adjoining area
of Assam, according to the Bhāgavata and the Kālikā Purāṇa, may
have originated heroes. A Hrusso legend claiming Bhāluka to be
their ancestor suggests that the kingdom or monuments existed
prior to their advent in the locality. They are said to have
immigrated from the plains owing to pressure of their neighbours. In
any case the ruins evince strong affinity with the culture of
the Brahmaputra valley suggesting a close link. The ruins of
Kālinithāna also belong to a contemporary period and appears to
likewise represent political and cultural influence of Assam.

In the further east, the original construction of
Tāmresvarī temple may be ascribed to even an earlier period. The
reference to the shrine in the Kālikā Purāṇa suggests its promi-
nence even in the eighth-ninth centuries A.D. In the adjoining
region we come across ruins of Bhismakanagara, Rukmininagara,
Sīsupālagada etc. These appear to have been the relics of a
Hindu dynasty which according to the Cutiya tradition flourished
there prior to the rise of the Cutiyas. In this connection, if
Bloch's suggestion that the Tāmresvarī temple was originally a
family chapel of the Hindu dynasty ruling at Bhismakanagara is
accepted, the beginning of the kingdom may also be ascribed to a
period around the eighth-ninth centuries A.D. Here, again, we
are quite in the dark as to the independent or subordinate status

1. C.H. Hesselmeyer, 'The Hill-tribes of the Northern
Frontier of Assam', JASB, XXXVII, 1868, pp. 192ff.
of the dynasty. The architecture and materials used, however, indicate connection with the plains of Assam and Bengal. Possibly this led to the development of legends at a later date connecting them with Puranic stories and heroes. It is quite likely that these principalities were originally outposts of Assamese kingdoms and became independent during the decline of the Sālāstāṃbhas or Pālas. Compared to them the Iṭānagāra and Naksāparvata remains perhaps represent the developments of a later period around the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries A.D. The tentative dates suggested for those remains would indicate that in the days of decline of the Pālas the regions around Bhālukapung, Mālinīthāna and Bhīmsaka-nagāra perhaps witnessed rise of local kingdoms.

During the so-called Tibetan campaign in 1205 A.D. and especially at the time of his return Muhammad ibn Bakhtyar Khalji could have passed through some such principalities in the western part of Arunachal Pradesh. The description of the Tabagat-i-Nasirī and Riyāz-us-Salātim of his journey through the country of the Koch Mechand Tharu tribes to the hills suggest that the account relates to the western parts of Arunachal and adjoining territories. These people were perhaps the ancestors of the Koches who established a powerful kingdom here at a later period. The real objective of the expedition could have been to gain control over the flourishing trade between Tibet and Assam which was carried on through Arunachal. Among the Muslim governors of Bengal Ghiyāsuddīn is known to have invaded Assam in C.1227 A.D. and advanced as far as Sadiya in C.1257-8 A.D. Malik Ikhtiyaruddīn
Yuzbak Tughril Khan also invaded Kamarupa. These narratives of the Tabagat-i-Nasiri may be regarded as referring to some parts at least of Arunachal Pradesh. This may be inferred from reference to the Sadiya region and the hills where the king of Kamarupa retreated during his discomfiture. In a way these accounts seem to suggest the continued control of Assam rulers over the adjoining territories of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Hindu dynasty of Bhismakanagara region ultimately gave way to the Cutiyas, as already noted before. The Cutiyas, in their turn, were ultimately overwhelmed by the Ahoms. They appear to have been a section of the eastern Bodos of Assam. In their habitats in Sadiya and Lohit districts of Arunachal they appear to have come under a strong influence of the Brähmana priests which led to the evolution of traditions connecting them ultimately to the Puranic heroes like Bhismaka. Their earlier religious rites of human sacrifice was assimilated with the Tantrika form of Hinduism. The Tamesvarī temple of Lohit district got renewed life under them as is evident from the construction of a boundary wall around it in 1442 A.D. by a prince with a name suggesting cutiya lineage, viz. Muktādharmanārayana.

Their kingdom, said to have been founded by a chief called Virapāla, included Sadiya and adjoining parts of Lohit district at the beginning of the thirteenth century A.D. A number of legendary kings after Virapāla find mention in their traditions some of whom were powerful enough to lead successful expeditions

against distant kingdoms like that of Kamatapura. During the invasion of the Ahoms they seem to have been quite powerful in the Sadiya and adjoining regions of the Lohit district. The contiguity naturally led to conflicts between the two kingdoms. Finally Subungmung (1497-1539 A.D.) completely overwhelmed them and annexed their kingdom. From now on the region formed a part of the Ahom territory administered by an officer called Sadiya Khowa Gohain.

Almost contemporaneously with the Cutiyas another kingdom appears to have flourished in the Subansiri region around the ruins of Itanagara, near the present capital of the territory. It has been identified with Mayapura of Assamese legends where Ramacandra, a scion of the Jitari dynasty of Dharmapala, established in the eleventh century A.D., and his son Arinftatta ruled in the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries A.D. R.M. Nath has placed Ramacandra in 1375 A.D. The ruins of Itanagara also have been ascribed to a period between the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries A.D. He is said to have ruled over an extensive kingdom from Majuli to Bhalukapung with two capitals at Ratanapura in the Majuli island and Mayapura in the Subansiri district. His reverses in the conflict with the Cutiyas and Varahis or the advances of the Ahoms perhaps compelled him to retreat to Mayapura. The name of the city is said to have been derived from his epithet Mayamatta. Nisi legends are also said to refer to him as 'refugee

king'. According to the legends recorded by Galt, Rāmacandra was killed in a battle by his son Arimatta who succeeded him.

These kingdoms perhaps rose to prominence like many other principalities under petty chiefs called Baro Bhuiyans during the troubled days of Assam which witnessed Muslim inroads from the west and Ahom penetration from the east. Baro Bhuiyans of the period between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries A.D. may have also extended their sway over the southern fringes of Arunachal to the east of the Cutiya kingdom. Ultimately establishment of the Koch and Ahom kingdoms may have sounded death knell of their independence. Pressed between the aggression of the imperialist powers of the south and the southward movements of the tribes in the north who were in their turn pushed inside by the new bands of people entering the territories across the Tibetan and Burmese frontiers, they gradually withered away. This led to the establishment of direct contact between the various tribes with the Ahoms in later years as is revealed by their mention in the Burañjīs.

In the interior parts of the territory, however, a number of tribes seem to have resided. They had most probably their chiefs and village councils as their descendants of present days. Near the western and northern boundaries of the territory adjoining the Bhutanese and Tibetan borders, Monpa, Sherdukpen and Memba traditions assert that the famous Buddhist monk Padmasambhava visited their territories in the eighth century A.D. and preached

2. Ibid., p. 40.
Buddhism among them. Monastic records also confirm construction of Buddhist monasteries in these areas at least in the twelfth century A.D. or even before that period. This may have led to the introduction of monastic organisation and consequent changes in the political set up with gradual acquisition of a dominant position by the monastic order over the years. Details of the developments, however, cannot be narrated in the present state of our knowledge. But a long drawn conflict between the earlier religious and temporal authorities and the Buddhist orders is hinted at in the tribal legends of struggle between their earlier Bon-po deities and priests with the Lamaist orders. They were finally subdued by the Buddhist monks and were perhaps incorporated in the new religious doctrine. Different sects of Buddhism that arose in later period also came into clashes. Arunachal, too, witnessed some such rivalry which were occasionally settled with the assistance of military power. In course of these conflicts the Mongol leader Sokpo Jonkhar or Gusri Khan seems to have invaded the territory twice between 1642 and 1647 A.D. Ultimately after the establishment of the Tawang Monastery in the seventeenth century A.D. (between 1642-47 A.D. or in 1680 A.D.) it wielded supreme authority over the adjoining parts of the West Kameng district sending monks to various monasteries and collecting tributes from them. Along with the village councils and chiefs it looked after administration of the monasteries and villages with a number of subordinate organisations like the dzongs and minor

1. N. Sarkar, 'Introduction of Buddhism among the Monpas and Sherdukpens, Resaran, I, p. 20.
monasteries under it. In the central council of Tawang called Trukdri, however, presence of two representatives of Tsona Dzong of Tibet in later years, might indicate some influence of Tibetan authorities. But the nature of that influence is far from clear as has been asserted by Pandit Main Singh who pointed out that Tawang monastery was completely independent and neither Tsona Dzong nor Lhasa had any control over its affairs. 1

In the extreme east, the tribes like the Noctes, Wanchos and Tangsas who reside in the Tirap district or their ancestors described in old accounts as Nagas seem to have controlled the region long before the advent of the Ahoms. Little is known of their ancestry apart from some vague reference to the Kiratas of the area in ancient literature. As pointed out by Robinson they represent perhaps a mixed population born of the descendants of a number of tribes of North-West China, who migrated here during the days of conflicts between the Chinese and Tartar dynasties in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and the earlier aborigines of Assam and Bengal who took refuge there being pursued by later invaders in the plains. That their ancestors lived here prior to the Ahom invasion is suggested by reference to subjugation of the Nagas near the Patkai hills by Sukapha (1228-1268 A.D.). 2 They were perhaps divided into different groups as at present under a number of chiefs. Details of their political history cannot be postulated


in the present state of our knowledge owing to lack of any literature of these tribes. Some information of their relationship with the Ahoms and British are, however, known from the Buranjis and British records.

The various groups of Mishmi tribes of the Dibang valley and Lohit districts appear to have been already in occupation of their present habitats prior to the sixteenth century A.D. They appear to have entered the territory in various waves from Burma as suggested by J.P. Mills. Earliest of them were the Idus. The separation of the Digarus from the Idus and their entry into the present homeland has been conjecturally dated back to about the fifteenth century A.D. by J.P. Mills. The Sadiya stone pillar inscription of Dihingia Baragohain (supra, Ch.III) also seems to confirm the control of the Mishmis in the region in the early part of the sixteenth century A.D.¹

The various other non-Buddhist tribes of the territory like the Hrussos, Mijis, Misis, Miris, Apa Tanis, Adis, Gallongs etc. also appear to have been settled in the interior parts of the territory long before the Muslim wars. The tribal legends of origin do not furnish any definite idea as to the period of their immigration. But, in general, these suggest that they settled there since very early period and lost clear memory of any other

² There is, however, some uncertainty regarding the date of the record.
earlier homeland. They refer to some areas which cannot be identified at present and may simply denote some places within Arunachal itself where they stayed immediately before shifting to their present habitation sites. The apparently conflicting stories of their origin, as in case of the Monpas pointing out different lands like Bhutan or Sikkim and Darjeeling as their earlier homeland are interesting in a way. Their stories of contact with the plains of Assam as also the legends of origin of some of the tribes like the Khasis point out that many of them absorbed different cultural and ethnic groups at different times leading to the evolution of their present identity. They may be rather regarded as descendants of the Kiratas of ancient literature and other tribes referred to in the Periplus and Huen Tsang’s accounts. Obviously different waves of immigration from north as well as south led to a miscegenation which is evident from admixture of various linguistic and cultural traits. These developments seem to have taken a more or less final form by the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries A.D. This is evident from more and more clear references to them as are found in the Burmese and Muslim records. From about the beginning of the thirteenth century A.D., the Ahoms invaded Assam and their Burmese often refer to the various tribes of Arunachal and their relation with the Ahoms from which can be guessed the contemporary political situation of Arunachal Pradesh.

It was through the lands of the Noctes, Wanchos, Tangsas etc., living on the Patkai hills in the Tirap district that the
Ahoms first descended in the plains of Assam. Gradually they extended their sway over entire Assam valley and asserted supremacy over the tracts along the foothills of Arunachal. In this regard their achievements resembled that of the earlier imperial dynasties of Assam whose glory they revided. Like them the Ahoms also tried to assert some sort of loose suzerainty over the tribes of the foothills of Arunachal who were otherwise left to themselves as regards their internal affairs. The initial contact with the tribes was violent in nature. But years of experience taught the Ahom rulers to evolve some wiser policy towards these peoples.

The hill tribes of Arunachal often invaded the plains adjoining the hills and the life of Ahom subjects were in constant danger. It was quite evident that most of the tribes were deficient in certain necessaries of life and labourers. Naturally, therefore, the affluence of the fertile plains below allured them. They supplemented their economy through hunting, fishing, rubber-tapping and elephant catching in the foothills. This led often to conflict with the plains people.

In order to put an end to this continual trouble the posa system was introduced during the reign of Susengpha or Pratapsimha (1603-1641) in respect of the Bhutias of Charduar (identifiable with the present Sherdukpons of Western Kameng), Hrussos, Nisis and Miris. The duare or passes through which these tribes entered the plains were allotted to them. The paiks or agricultural labourers of the surrounding villages were to meet the demands of
the hill tribes which were fixed. For this the paiks enjoyed a corresponding remission from the state demand. Somewhat analogous arrangement was made with regard to the Adis as well. Similarly, Naga-khats or revenue free lands and fishing waters along with paiks were granted to the tribes of Patkai region like the Noctes.

In return for these privileges the hill tribes were to refrain from raids in the Assamese villages. They had also to acknowledge Ahom suzerainty and pay annual tributes. Ahom officials known as Duarias used to control the passes. In case of any serious outrage on the part of the tribes, when all measures failed to persuade them to submit, these passes were blocked.

The Mishmis, as well as the other tribes of the interior areas, did not enjoy any such facility. But all of them were allowed opportunities of trade with the plains of Assam. Shihabuddin, who accompanied Mir Jumla on his invasion of Assam, refers to the Miris, Mishmis, Nisis etc. in his account of the expedition. He even notes down the independent nature of these tribes. Muhammad Kasim, a contemporary writer, re-affirms the statement when he says: "The Daflas (Nisis) are entirely independent of the Assam Raja and plunder the country contiguous to their mountains whenever they find an opportunity."

The Khamtis and Singphos immigrated from Burma to their present habitats in very recent times. The Khamtis first immigrated

in Sadiya in large scale about the middle of the eighteenth century and were permitted to settle on the Tengapani river in 1751 A.D. The Singphos, on the other hand, became prominent during the reign of GaurināthaSingha (1780-95) A.D.). They expelled the Khamtis from the lowlands of the Patkai hills and established themselves on the upper reaches of the Buri Dihing.

In general, the Ahoms adopted the principle of appeasement towards all these people. But whenever necessary they also did not abstain from demonstration of force. They remained satisfied with allegiance of the hill people and never attempted to completely annex their territories, nor to control the management of their internal affairs.

Following the dismemberment of the Ahom power, when the British Government finally took over the administration of Assam in 1838, they also broadly pursued the same policy towards the hills. In the event of any serious aggression by the tribes, blockades of the passes were ordered, or occasionally punitive expeditions were sent to bring them to submission. Otherwise, the tribes were left to themselves so far as their internal management was concerned and nothing more than external fealty was expected from them. Different explorers entered the hills from time to time. Trade relation of the tribes with the people of the plains was also encouraged. The Government also took the initiative to organise some annual fairs like those at Udalgiri and Sadiya since the sixties of the nineteenth century.
But with gradual extension of British administration some sort of control was felt necessary to avoid frequent clashes between the British subjects of Assam and the hill tribes. The matter gained more importance following the opening out of tea-gardens in the hills and beginning of competition in rubber trade. Thus, through Inner Line Regulation of 1873 movement to the hills was restricted beyond a certain line without specific permission.

The system of administration was totally changed following the murder of Williamson, Assistant Political Officer of Sadiya, Dr. Gregorson and party by the Adis at Pangi, north of Pasighat in 1911. An extensive survey of the territories was undertaken. As a result, the entire hill area was divided in 1919 into Sadiya and Balipara frontier tracts, which were placed under two Political Officers. In 1943, Tirap Frontier Tract was curved out of Sadiya Frontier Tract. Balipara Frontier Tract was divided into Se-La Sub-Agency and Subansiri Area in 1946.

Further change occurred after India gained independence in 1947. The remaining area of Sadiya Frontier Tract was divided into Adi and Mishmi Hills in 1948. In 1951, Naga Tribal Area was attached with North East Frontier Tract as Tuensang division. In 1954, the North East Frontier Tract was renamed as North East Frontier Agency having six frontier divisions, viz. Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, Lohit, Tirap and Tuensang. In 1957, Tuensang was again merged with Naga Hills district. In 1965, the frontier divisions were declared as districts. Finally, the North East
Frontier Agency became a Union Territory and re-designated as Arunachal Pradesh on the 21st January, 1972.

On the 6th October, 1972, Arunachal Pradesh Council was started with five councillors and twenty six members. On the 15th August 1975, the Union Territory Government was given the designation, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, and started functioning under the supervision of the Lieutenant-Governor and Ministry. The five districts of the territory have again been renamed and rearranged on the 1st June, 1980, into nine units, viz., West Kameng, East Kameng, Lower Subansiri, Upper Subansiri, West Siang, East Siang, Dibang valley, Lohit and Tirap.