CHAPTER II

TEZPUR AS A POLITICAL CENTRE

The gradual emergence of a state eventually leads to the rise of political centres. This is because, with the formation of a state, the power factor also comes into play. Power is generally exercised from a specific territory that is deemed suitable for defensive purpose for maintenance of territorial integrity. A political centre also has to be economically viable for the proper maintenance of the state. The concept of emergence of early state is in itself a historical process which can be traced way back to the writings of Friedrich Engels in 1884. According to him, “….At a certain stage of economic development, which necessarily bound up with the split of society into classes, the State became a necessity owing to this split.” ¹ It was, according to him, with the gradual emergence of private property that the process of State formation began. A broad explanation of state formation was also propounded by Claessen and Skalnik in their work titled “The Early State”. These scholars were of the view that “the early State is a centralized and hierarchically organized political system in which the central authority has control over the greatest amount of coercive force in the society. Sub-units are tied into the hierarchy through their relations to officials appointed by and responsible to a ruler or a monarchical head of State. These officials maintain the administrative structure of the system and attempt to ensure its continuity by having among them a set of electors who choose and/or legitimate a new monarch”.² Nearer home, the study of State formation in early India was carried on by scholars like D.D. Kosambi, R.S. Sarma and Romila Thapar amongst others. According to Romila Thapar, “A State has been described as a sovereign political entity and its rise assumes a

complex network of conditions. These would include a density of population with a concentrated drawing on resources, agricultural or other; control over a defined, recognized territory; an urban centre as the location of authority, which would also be the location for craft activities that were produced for both local consumption and commercial exchange; diverse communities coming within a network of stratification and accepting unequal statuses; a political authority managing the incoming revenue from taxes and their redistribution through at least a minimal administration; the assertion of authority through a monopoly of the agencies of coercion, both of armed force and the imposition of regulations and obligations; the awareness of diplomacy; and the sovereignty of the State being represented in the King as the focus of authority. The emergence of a State system frequently coincides with unequal power relations and access to resources and some social disparity. Such changes would also have sought support from various ideological justifications.\(^3\) These theories relating to formation of State also holds ground in case of the formation of the early State of Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa. Thus the rise of the State of Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa, also led to the growth of political centres, in which were stationed the authorities that looked after the maintenance of the State, the government being one of the most important elements of a state.

During the rule of the first historical dynasty of the Varmans in ancient Assam, Prāgjyotisapura became the seat of the coercive authority that controlled the complex network of conditions, conducive for the smooth functioning of the state. However, with the demise of King Bhaskarvarman, the line of the Varmans came to an end and along with it Prāgjyotisapura also lost its earlier importance. A new dynasty was started by Sālastambha who has been referred to

\(^3\) R.Thapar, *Early India*, p.138.
as a *mlechacha*,\(^4\) indicating no direct ties with the preceding rulers. He had his seat of government at Haddapesvara or Haddupesvara, identified with modern Tezpur, and it continued to be an important political centre even during the rule of the succeeding Pala dynasty. Brahmapala, the founder of the Pala dynasty continued to rule from Hadappaka (identifiable with Haddupesvara) and it was only during the time of Ratnapala that we find the seat of government been shifted to Durjjaya, that too only after his twelfth regnal year. However, later we find his successor, Gopala transferring the capital to Hadappaka.

Although scholars hold divergent opinions regarding the political status of the city of Hadupesvara or Hadapesvara, there are strong evidences which suggest that the city of Hadupesvara/ Hadapesvara and Hadappaka was the capital city of the Salatambhas and also of the Palas respectively. The Hayunthal Copper Plate grant of Harjjara refers to the city as a ‘*jayaskandavara*’\(^5\) or a victorious camp. But from the *Silparatna*, a work of unknown date, *skandhavara* meant a military camp, at the vicinity of which an actual fight between two kings took place.\(^6\) This might suggest that a battle may have been fought between the king of the Sālastambha dynasty, Harjjara with a ruler of the neighbouring land, in which Harjjara must been victorious, after which he took the title *jayaskandhavara-paramesvara-paramabhattaraka*. M.M Sarma is of the opinion that initially the city was associated with some military victory but subsequently it turned into the administrative headquarters of the Sālastambha dynasty, with Vanamala and Balavarman also issuing charters from this very city referred to as Hadappesvara.\(^7\) From inscriptions evidences like the Nidhanpur Copper Plate Inscription of Bhaskarvarman,\(^8\) we

\(^4\) Bargaon grant of Ratnapala (verse9); M.M Sarma, *IAA*, p.161  
\(^5\) Lines 21-22, *ibid.*, p.91  
\(^6\) *Ibid.*, p.58  
\(^7\) *Ibid.*, p.58  
\(^8\) M.M Sarma, *IAA*, p38f
find that the term *skandavara* implies a royal city or seat of government. In Apte’s *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (p.1003), it specifically mentions that the term *skandhvara* denotes not only an encampment but also an army, division of an army or a royal residence; and in this case it might have been all three. Again, in the inscriptions of Balavarm, Hadappesvara is described as his ancestral city (paitamah katakam). According to M.M Sarma, the term probably meant that Hadapesvara was his ancestral city probably since the days of Sālastambha and more probably since the days of his great-grandfather, Harjjara. Interestingly, the Gachtal Copper Plate Grant of Gopala also calls it a *kataka*. The term *kataka* is significant, standing for ‘a military camp or a royal city’. This may suggest that during the time of Harjjara it was a military camp turned into administrative headquarters (*skandavara*), but by the time of Balavarman, it became a full-fledged capital, well fortified with an army. Moreover had it not been the capital city, the inscriptions of Vanamalavarman would not have provided a detailed illustration of the city of Hadappesvara. The Caratbari Copper Plate Grant of Ratnapala also provides a description of the city of Hadapyaka in its plate II A which goes on to establish that Hadapyaka or Hadapesvara was the capital city of Ratnapala till the early part of his reign. According to P.C Choudhury, the name Hadapyaka occurs in line 26 of the said grant and the same city is referred to once again in line 36 by the name Hadapesvara. From this M.M Sarma conjectures that “Hadapyaka was identical with Hadapesvara and the same continued to be a second seat of government for the kings of the Pala family who ruled from Durjjaya. Gopala’s

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9 Nirode Barua, *Early Assam*, p.199
10 M.M Sarma, IAA, p.222
grant refers to Hadapyaka as a holy city possibly because of all the temples that are found, even today, at and around Tezpur.”

In fact, Tezpur had all the requisite characteristics for becoming a political centre. It is surrounded by a range of hills which forms a natural barrier for any invader. The Bhairabi hill, the Bhomoraguri hill, the Bamuni hill, the Agnigarh, the Dhenukhana hill, Ouguri hill, Rudrapad and the Singri hill stand as the guardians of the town. To the north of Tezpur town is the Dafala Parvat. The Tezpur Rock Inscription of Harjjaravarman makes reference to the ‘Abor hills’ as forming the northern boundary of the areas around Hatappesvara. The river Brahmaputra also flows along the Tezpur town, adding to its defense. The inscriptions of Vanamalavarman and Balavarman describe the proximity of the river Lauhitya to the city of Hadappesvara. Probably Sālastambha who might have been the governor of this region during the time of Bhaskarvarman, found the place most suitable to establish his seat of government which was so well fortified by nature. The presence of the river must have strengthened the naval force of the state besides helping in irrigating the fields and earning of livelihood by the fishing communities. The reference to the royal navy and to the fisherman in the Tezpur Rock Inscription further lends credibility to this point. The rich yield of crops in the northern bank (uttarakula) of the river Lauhitya is mentioned in the inscriptions which indicates that the region was very fertile; thus indicating economic stability, so vital for the sustenance of the kingdom. This economic stability must have led to diversification of crafts leading to the growth of an urban centre. According to the Tezpur Grant of Vanamala, the city of Hadappesvara or Haduppesvara was an urban centre filled with people of all asramas who were very happy. There were broad royal roads which

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14 Ibid., p.223
15 Ibid., p.84
were crowded with scholars, and kings who came to pay homage to the monarch seated on colourful elephants, horses and palaquins.\footnote{16}

Being a political centre, the city witnessed vigorous political activity. It was the seat of administration at the head of which was the king. Monarchy was the usual form of government and the kings claimed divine origin tracing their descent from the legendary king Naraka who was the son of the Boar incarnation of Vishnu and Bhumi Devi. Inscriptions also describe the valour and numerous qualities of the kings. Verse 12 of the Tezpur grant of Vanamala describes the qualities of Harjjarva as “a Yudhisthira in the discussions on \textit{dharma}; a Bhima amongst the enemies; a Jisnu (i.e., Arjuna) in the battle field”.\footnote{17} His charming manners even endeared him to the goddess of prosperity, Lakshmi.\footnote{18} Verse 26 of the same grant also refers to the qualities of Vanamalavarmadeva who because of his “truth, profundity, height, prowess, sacrifice and valor, surpassed the son of Dharma (i.e., Yudhisthira), the ocean, the mountain, the sun, Karna and the son of the wind (i.e. Hanuman or Bhima) respectively.\footnote{19} Similarly, the Gachtal plates describe Ratnapala as ‘as valorous as Indra’ (verse 19) and Gopala is referred to as “enthused with strength, and was reminded of the lordship of Rama, the vanquisher of Ravana, over the whole world…” (verse 24).\footnote{20} The rulers also prefixed their name with titles denoting divinity like \textit{paramesvara}, and \textit{paramabhattaraka}. King Harjjaravarman is denoted as \textit{Maharajadhiraja Paramesvara Paramabhattaraka Parama Mahesvara} in the Tezpur Rock Inscription.\footnote{21} In the Kuruvabahi Grant of Harjjarva, the king is described as \textit{Sri-varaha-}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\footnotetext{16}{\textit{Ibid.}, p.103-104}
\item\footnotetext{17}{\textit{Ibid.}, p.102}
\item\footnotetext{18}{\textit{Ibid.}, p.102}
\item\footnotetext{19}{M.M Sarma, \textit{IAA}, p.103}
\item\footnotetext{20}{\textit{Ibid.}, p.215}
\item\footnotetext{21}{Lines 1-4, \textit{ibid.}, p.85}
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paramesvara-paramabhattaraka-maharajadhira-srimat-Harjaradeva.\(^{22}\) These high sounding titles in fact gained the fear and reverence of the people for their rulers who were considered as authoritative as the gods.

The king was the head of the administration who ruled according to the law of Dharma. The rulers were expected to maintain stability in the kingdom based on the varnasramadharma. It was Bhagadatta who was the champion of all these divisions (varnasramanam gururekavirah).\(^{23}\) In his inscriptions, Vanamala is said to have gratified the appetite of the people of all class and stages of life: prapita-samasta-varnasramad.\(^{24}\) It was the duty of the king to look after the smooth functioning of the state machinery and maintain the rule of law. The Tezpur Rock Inscription was a royal decree issued in the name of king Harjjaravarman by his mahasamanta and Senadhyaksha Sri Suchitta, which strictly stated that one who deviated from the royal order had to pay a fine of five butikas equivalent to a hundred cowrie shells. This clearly indicates that any transgressions were duly punished. However, the imposition of capital punishment is not indicated from the sources known till date. But this does not carry the impression that the rulers of ancient Assam lacked the interest of their subjects at heart. The Hayunthal grant of king Harjjaravarman is a good evidence of the paternal interest shown by the king to his subjects. It specifically mentions that the king though constantly engaged in works pertaining to the welfare of his subjects; always spared time to make himself accessible to others without any disgust.\(^{25}\) The tank, known as the Harjjarapukhuri (after king Harjjara) still today stands as a reminder of the works of public utility undertaken by the king. King Vallabhadeva is

\(^{22}\) D.Chutia, Kuruvabahi (Nagaon) copper Plate Grant of Harijara(Varma)deva, Journal of the Assam Research Society, XXVI, 1981-82, p.4
\(^{23}\) Nowgong grant (verse7), P.C Choudhury, HCPA,p.311
\(^{24}\) Tezpur grant,verse30, Parbatiya plates, Lines32,ibid.,p.312
\(^{25}\) verse12, M.M Sarma, IAA , p.92
likewise credited with the establishment of an alms house for the benefit of the hungry and granted a number of villages for its maintenance.\textsuperscript{26} In the early states the “economic surplus acquired from the direct producers was used by the ruling hierarchy not so much for simple consumption as to serve political ends.”\textsuperscript{27} The welfare works undertaken by the king depicted him as the source of charity and made him command the loyalty of his subjects. The king was all powerful, the sole authority in all aspects. All lands belonged to the state represented in the person of the king, and he could donate land at his own will. Inscriptions of the period bear evidence to the numerous grants of lands made by the kings to the Brahmanas. In fact most of the inscriptions issued from this region (Hadapesvara or Haduppesvara/ Hadapyaka) were royal orders relating to donations of lands to Brahmanas, except the Tezpur Rock Inscription which is a royal decree. However, the Tezpur Copper Plate inscription deals with grants of temple girls and villages for the maintenance of the renovated temple of Hetukasulin while the Assam Plates refer to donation of land for the maintenance of an alms house.

The king was usually helped by the crown prince or \textit{Yuvaraja} in administering the state. This virtually helped the crown prince in gathering practical knowledge in tackling day to day affairs of the state and prepared the ground for his future expertise in administering the state. In this respect, reliable information may be gathered from the Hayunthal Grant where the charter was issued by the \textit{Yuvaraja}, Vanamala on behalf of his father, the king Harijara. Moreover, powerful feudatory chiefs like Sri Suchita were also permitted to issue decrees in the name of the king as evidenced in the Tezpur Rock Inscription discussed earlier. That a feudatory chief was

\textsuperscript{26} Assam Pates of Vallabhadeva, verses 13-17, \textit{ibid.}, p.298

\textsuperscript{27} Henry J.M. Claessen and Pwter Skalnik ed, \textit{The Early State}, The Hague,1978, p.610
allowed to exercise this right in the capital city itself indicated a certain amount of decentralization in administration initiated during the reign of the Sālastambha dynasty.

The epigraphs mention a number of officials who helped the king in administering the kingdom. Those entrusted with palace duties and responsibilities included the *mahadvaradhipati* or chief gate-keeper that controlled access to the interior of the palace and was in charge of the palace security. Another officer was *mahapratihara* who acted as the chief usherer of the court or the palace.\(^{28}\) The Nagaon Grant of Balavarman III refers to an official called *mahallakapraudhika* who was most probably an elderly lady in charge of the royal harem.\(^ {29}\) There were also a host of other officials who were entrusted with other specific duties of the state. The Hyunthal Grant mentions *maha-amatyas*, Sri Govinda and Madhusudāna. These *maha-amatyas* were the chief counsellors of the king who must have advised the king on all important matters relating to state-craft. In the Nagoan Grant of Balavarman III, the order in respect of the grant of land was issued to the citizens of the area together with the Brahmanas and officers of the district as well to the king’s subordinates and officers. The list included the *raja* (ruling chief), *rajni* (queen of the ruling chief), *ranaka* (lesser chief) and others associated with them like the *rajanaka* (minor lord), *rajaputra* (son of the chiefs), *rajavallava* (courtiers) and *mahallaka-praudhika* (watchmen of the harem). The land donated was also freed from the collectors of taxes on catching of elephants and from the boatmen at landing places (*hastibandhika-naukabandhika*), police officers for catching thieves and the recovery of stolen articles (*chauroddharanika*), prefect of the policemen (*dandika*), policemen (*dandapasika*), collectors of minor taxes or taxes from temporary tenants (*auparika*), collectors of revenue

\(^ {28}\) Hayunthal Grant, *ibid.*, p.298

\(^ {29}\) Lines 33-38, *ibid.*, p.147
(autkhetika) and chhatravasa (royal umbrella bearer). It is most likely that these officials who formed the central bureaucracy were accorded land for their maintenance in lieu of their service. Besides this they were allowed to exercise certain rights over the land and hence had to be informed by the king while making a grant of land which resulted in these rights devolving to the new land owner, the state in most cases, relinquishing its rights over the land donated.

In the Tezpur Rock Inscription (lines 1-4) reference is made to Mahasamanta (great feudatory ruler) Succhita. Again the rajanakas referred to in the land grants were also probably minor feudatory lords who also had to shoulder administrative responsibilities. These feudatory lords probably formed the landed aristocracy who were required to provide the king with men and materials when called to service. They also enjoyed both magisterial and judicial powers in their own territory as indicated in the Tezpur Rock Inscription where Sri Suchita is described as settling a dispute that occurred in the land within his jurisprudence.

All these indicate that although the ruler enjoyed absolute right in his land, there were also marked signs of decentralizing tendency in the administrative set up. This system worked well in a state where the king had to manage the administration of a vast kingdom that encompassed with rivers, hills and forests creating grave transport and communication difficulties. In such a situation the decentralization of power helped in actually generating control over the areas which otherwise would have caused a huge drain on state recourses. Secondly, the decentralization of power helped in lessening the administrative burden of the king which was seen exercised by the feudal lords. Thirdly, it generated the creation of a group loyal to the king who could be called for during times of exigency with men and resources. When the ruler was strong, this system undoubtedly proved very beneficial. However, there were occasions when the

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30 Lines 33-38, *ibid.*, p.147
common people had to suffer the brunt of their oppressive rule. The land grant charters of the period shows the superior rights that these feudal elements enjoyed in relation to the land held by the common people.

The king also had a number of vassal rulers under him. These vassals were probably those rulers who were defeated in war or those who submitted without getting into any sort of conflict by display of strength. The Hayunthal grant refers to vassal rulers who came to witness the coronation ceremony of king Harijjaravarman.\(^{31}\) The Gachtal Plates mentions the king as “the upholder of the burden of the world, the rays of the nails of the feet of whom used to touch the heads of the vassal kings…” \(^ {32}\) These vassal rulers probably exercised a certain amount of liberty and authoritative power in the area under their control, subject to acknowledgement of the sovereignty of their overlords. As R.S Sarma puts it, “the process of conquest, by which smaller chiefs were reduced to subordination and reinstated in their positions, provided they paid regular tributes and did homage, contributed in large measure to the growth of feudal relations”. \(^ {33}\)

A strong standing army is an essential element of state machinery and Tezpur being a political centre during the pre-Ahom period boasted of a regular standing army with soldiers and horses and elephants. The army consisted of four wings – infantry, cavalry, elephants and the navy. The grants of Vanamalavarman while describing the city of Hadapesvara, refers that it was “completely filled up by the armies consisting of innumerable elephants, horses and foot soldiers.”\(^ {34}\) The city also had a strong naval fleet to guard the waterways of the kingdom. The regions adjoining both the banks of the river Lauhitya were embellished with rows of boats

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\(^{31}\) Verses 13-14, *ibid.*, p.92  
\(^{32}\) Verse 23, *ibid.*, p.215  
\(^{33}\) R.S Sarma, *Indian Feudalism*, p.19  
\(^{34}\) Tezpur Grant, lines 1-4, Parbariya Grant, lines 33-47
which were extremely speedy and well decorated with a variety of ornaments.\textsuperscript{35} Weapons of war mostly included swords and sharp arrows as can be known from the epigraphs although spears, mace and javelins might also have been used.

There seems to have a good co-ordination among all the wings of the army. The \textit{mahasenapati} was the supreme commander of the army and the combat force was under his control while the organizational wing was looked after by the \textit{badalhyaksha}. The Hayunthal Grant mentions Sri Guna as the \textit{mahasenapati} under King Harijaravarman.\textsuperscript{36} Again in the Tezpur Rock Inscription, \textit{mahasamanta} Sri Suchita was also the \textit{senadhyaksha} or commander of the fighting force while \textit{samanta} Silakuttavaleya was the \textit{baladhyaksha}.\textsuperscript{37} It was also the duty of the \textit{samantas} and \textit{mahasamantas} to assist with men and materials in time of war as stated earlier.

However, it was the king who was the supreme commander of all the forces. The inscriptions describe the military qualities of the king. The Tezpur Copper Plate states thus: “Out of fear for his (i.e., Vanamala’s) prowess some of even those kings who have themselves defeated many enemies, ran away to various quarters and others took the path to the sky”.\textsuperscript{38} The Gachtal Copper Plates of King Gopala refers to the military exploits of Ratnapala who defeated the ruler of Gauda, Rajyapala with the valour of his arms.\textsuperscript{39} The same grant also mentions a naval warfare between the Pala King Indrapala and Kalyanachandra, son of Srichandra of Gauda. Accordingly, Indrapala “took his place at the head of a cluster of boats, covered by fluttering

\textsuperscript{35} Tezpur Grant, lines 14-20; Parbatiya Grant, lines 33-47
\textsuperscript{36} M.M Sarma, \textit{IAA}, p.92-93
\textsuperscript{37} Lines 4-7, \textit{ibid.}, p85
\textsuperscript{38} Verse 21, \textit{ibid.}, p.102
\textsuperscript{39} Verse 15, \textit{ibid.}, p.214
golden wheels and chowries and in no time defeated him (i.e., Kalyanachandra) and annihilated him along with his fame”.\textsuperscript{40} This shows that the rulers were also very skilled in naval warfare.

The epigraphs found in this region also indicate that the state was divided into different units for better administration. Thus the Parbatiya Plates of Vanamala mentions the grant of a village called Hapos grama (a village) which belonged to the Svalpamangoka visaya (a district) situated in Uttarakula, i.e. on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra.\textsuperscript{41} In the Uttar Barbil Grant of Balavarman III, reference is made to Vappadeva pataka, belonging to the Varasepattana visaya or district.\textsuperscript{42} Here pataka refers to a hamlet. The donated land seems to have been sliced off from the hamlet named Vappadeva.\textsuperscript{43} In the Nagaon Plates of the same king, the grant was made of a piece of land called Hensiva, situated in Dijjina visaya in the Dakshinakula (i.e. on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra).\textsuperscript{44} In the Gachtal Plates of Gopala the donated land was taken out from the Kharikonakonchibhumi, that belonged to the visaya of Barasrojambuba.\textsuperscript{45} The term konchi might indicate modern kuchi which is a part of a village or a small village inhabited by members of a class or caste.\textsuperscript{46} In the Dighaligaon Copper Plate Grant of Harijara, the epigraph records the gift of a khandala of land in the pradesha called Purjjiaka which is situated on the Dakshinakula.\textsuperscript{47} According to D.Chutia, the purjjiaka pradesa appears to be identical with Puruji-visaya (Khanamukh copper plates) and Puraji-visaya (Puspabhadra copper plates) of king Dharmapala. The expressions pradesa, visaya etc. are generally used to indicate territorial units, sometimes big, and at other times small. The term visaya is generally used to mean a territory

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\item verse20, \textit{ibid.}, p.215
\item Lines 48-51
\item Lines 36-40
\item M.M Sarma, \textit{IAA}, p.138-139
\item Lines 23-33
\item Lines 60-65
\item P.C. Choudhury, \textit{HCPA}, p.325
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
equivalent to a modern district, within a pradesa, i.e. province. However the term pradesa is also used to mean a district.\textsuperscript{48} Here, the term pradesa may be taken to mean a territorial unit equivalent to a district (visaya).\textsuperscript{49} The term khandala is equivalent to khanda, khandala etc. and is used sometimes to indicate a territorial division or sub-division of desa. In this epigraph, it is however used to indicate a sub-division of a district, or even a smaller territorial unit, like a revenue circle, the extent of which is not known.\textsuperscript{50}

Being a political centre, Hadapesvar or Hadupesvar and later Hadappaka became the hub of art and architectural activities that were undertaken definitely under royal patronage. The Uttar Barbil Grant of Balavarman III refers to rows of palatial buildings with sloping beams, which were large, consisting of many rooms, containing pictures within, matchless in beauty and devoid of non-uniformity in colour.\textsuperscript{51} Many structural ruins found in the Tezpur region suggest the high level of technical expertise attained during the rule of the Sālastambhas and Palas. They also indicate the successful organization and movement of labour in the kingdom. The recent excavations by the Directorate of Archaeology, Government of Assam, in the Garh D’ol area near Da-Parbatiya in Tezpur has revealed huge brick structures with elevated walls which are divided into what appear to be rooms and corridors. The excavations have unearthed the structural remains of an enormous brick fortification that may be portions of a palace or used for defensive purposes for stationing the army. The excavations when completed, will surely throw new light on the status of Tezpur as a political centre in ancient times. Further, the sculptures in the Da-Parbatiya doorway which reflects the Gupta style of art suggests the initiative taken by the kings of ancient Assam as early as the 4\textsuperscript{th} century C.E in attracting sculptors and architects

\textsuperscript{48} vide Sircar, D.C., \textit{Indian Epigraphical Glossary}, p.253
\textsuperscript{49} G.N. Bhuyan and D. Chutia, \textit{Benudhar Sarma Conmemoration Volume }, Assam Research Society,1987, p.212
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Ibid.}, p.212
\textsuperscript{51} verse14, M.M Sarma, \textit{IAA }, p.134
from outside the region. The use of black basalt rock in many of the sculptures found in this region suggests that they were transported from the quarries of the Rajmahal hills in Bihar, the nearest source of this stone. This definitely indicates the presence of an efficient administrative structure that was capable of successful mobilization of labour for the construction of temples and ponds, as well as transportation of huge stone blocks using the river route (Brahmaputra) all the way from Bihar. That this was commonly used is also indicated by the testimony of both Hiuen Tsang and Hwui Li who record the journey of Bhaskarvarman from his capital, sailing down the river Brahmaputra and up the river Ganga to Kajangala in the seventh century.\(^{52}\)

The temple ruins dedicated to different deities, the grant of land and villages for maintenance of the temples as well as the numerous sculptural remains discovered in the region of Tezpur, indicate that the kings actively patronized the religion of their subjects. Many times it also showcased the personal leanings of the rulers to a specific deity. Thus, the temple of Hetukasulin was renovated by Vanamalavarman and endowed with matchless villages, elephants and prostitutes.\(^{53}\) Almost all the inscriptions of the Sālastambha dynasty begin with an invocation to God Siva. In the Gachtal plates of Gopala, invocation is made to both Siva and Vishnu. The sculptural remains of gods and goddesses like Brahma, Ganesha, Saraswati, Parvati, Durga, Yamuna, Ganga, Tara, Siva, Vishnu and the latter’s \textit{avatara}, (incarnation) Krishna, etc. shows that they were the most popular deities worshipped by the people. The religious toleration showed by the rulers and the extension of royal patronage, equally, to the adherents of different religious denominations is vividly reflected by the religious sculptures found during the period which shows that along with the Brahmanical deities, even Buddhists gods and goddesses were sculpted and worshipped. Yet, the land grants of the rulers generally begin with an invocation to

\(^{53}\) Parbatiya Plates, verse24, M.M Sarma, \textit{IAA},p.122
different forms of Siva, indicating the personal leanings of the kings. Only a single inscription each invokes the river Lauhitya (Brahmaputra) and the Varaha incarnation of Visnu. This, in spite of the fact that all the three main ruling dynasties of Kāmarūpa, namely the Varman, Sālastambha and Pala, all trace their origin from Varaha Visnu.

Thus in conclusion we can say that Hadapesvara or Hadupesvara and later Hadappka witnessed vigorous political activity from the middle of the seventh century onwards. It was the seat of the government which looked after the proper functioning of the state administration with the help of numerous officials that were appointed and awarded certain privileges by the ruling authority. Absolute monarchy was the norm and the king was the master of all resources of the state. The king was also the controller of the armed forces of the state which functioned according to his dictation. It was occasionally the king who led his army in times of war. The capital city also witnessed a flowering of art and architectural forms. The rulers were also very religious minded and built a great number of temples in the city. Above all, the rulers had the concern for the welfare of their subjects at heart and they also initiated works for public welfare.

This definitely must have had its impact on the society at large. Good governance and political stability had its manifestations in the flourishing economic activities that were undertaken by the people. This indirectly had a bearing on the social structure of the society which forms the basis of our discussion in the next chapter.