Chapter- I

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF
THE BODO SOCIETY
Chapter-1

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1:1 The Kiratas with different names and pedigrees pre-eminently figured among the tribes described in the ancient Indian and classical Greek and Roman literature. Kirata is a generic term referring to different sections of people belonging to Mongoloid origin living in classical Indian sub-continent. The Bodos are only one of the sections of greater Kirata group. In fact the study of the Bodo is quite impossible keeping it in isolation from Classical Indian literature in general and Kirata history in particular. The classical Indian writers, as well as, classical geographers and historians, while dealing with the primitive races of India, have accorded prominence to the Kiratas. The Kiratas constitute one of the major segments of the population of Indian sub-continent in ancient time living in the Himalayan and Sub-Himalayan regions, Eastern and North-Eastern India, Nothern and North-Western India, forests, tracts, mountainous areas and the Gangetic plains, valley and deltas of India. In classical literature they are referred as Danavas, Asuras, Rakshasas, Daityas, and Gandharvas etc. Hundreds of Danavas, Asuras, Rakshasas, Daityas, and Gandharvas are mentioned in the Epics, Puranas and Bhagavata. They hardly find any place in Indian history. Their contribution to Indian history and civilization is ignored.
Pointing to the lapses in the construction of Indian history, G.P. Singh said that, the reconstruction of the Kirata history needed scientific analysis on all the informations stated in the Epics, Puranas and other classical Indian literature with the help of archaeological evidences.\(^1\) No serious attempt has been made to provide trustworthy account on the study of Kirata contribution to ancient Indian history and civilization. Rather the scholars in favour of Aryanism mishandle the facts relating to Kirata history and civilization. The sources available on their history and culture have not yet been properly and thoroughly investigated. It is true that anthropologists have taken the lead in the field of the study of ethnography of India and made proportionately greater contribution than others to the discovery of primitive culture, but the data furnished by them particularly about the origin and antiquity of ancient Indian tribes are, professedly, not of sufficiently reliable character from the historical point of view.

Remarkably different scholars have profusely dealt with the history and culture of the Aryan, but the non-Aryans with particular reference to the aboriginal tribes have not been assigned the place they deserved in our ancient history. We have often acknowledged the contributions made by the Aryans to ancient Indian history and culture, but do not give much recognition to the non-Aryan primitive races. Only the partial assessment of the subject concerned will not help us to overcome the related problems. Such approach can be considered as tantamount to an attempt at glorification of one group of people and the neglect of other. Many interesting mysteries with regard to the history of the non-Aryan races are yet to be unraveled. While dealing with early history of India, particularly the proto history—and historic periods it is the primary task of classical historian to strike a balance between divergent arguments concerning both groups of races. The fact remains that both the Aryans and non-Aryans, par excellence, are the joint makers of history and culture of Indian sub-continent. In fact, the whole superstructure of early history of India has been erected on the foundation collectively laid by the primitive inhabitants belong to different categories of races. Here in this study, honest efforts will be made to depict the ethno-historical background of the Bodo society and the changes that has been taking place since the time of Epics and Vedas.

1:2 India was a meeting ground of diverse races, cultures, civilizations, religions, languages, ethnic groups and societies. Streams of human races and groups of Austro-Asiatic, Negritos, Alpines, Nordic Indo-Mongoloids, penetrated into India through different routes and, migrated
and settled in different parts of India making their own history, culture and civilization and contributed to the structuring of the great Indian culture, history and civilization. The Tibbeto-Burman people are predominant in whole North-Eastern region. The Bodos are one of the sections of the Tibbeto-Burman family. The Bodos are one of the earliest settlers in Assam. The term 'Bodo' was for the first time used by B.H. Hodgson as an ethnological terms to refer the Meches, the Bodo speaking people of Darjeeling district in 1846 while writing about them. Since then the word ‘Bodo’ has been used as a generic term to denote the different branches of the Bodo language group. G.A.Grierson says, "The generic term 'Bodo' was first applied to these languages."

Regarding the migration of the Bodos into India there are diverse opinions among the scholars. As the Bodos racially belonged to the Mongoloid, they surely and certainly migrated from the Central Asia, the mainland of the Mongoloid people. Most of them agreed that the people of Bodo origin migrated into India about 5000 B.C. and the Bodos or the Kiratas are the latest migrants after the Aryans. According to N.N. Acharyya, "The Kacharis are the earliest known indigenous habitants of Assam. They are known under different names in different places and ages throughout the North-Eastern corner of the Indian sub-continent. In Goalpara and North Bengal they are called Mech, in the north Cachar Hills, Dimasa. In the Brahmaputra Valley, the Kacharis are called ‘Bodo’ or ‘Bodo-fisa’ (son of the Bodo or Man). They were known to the Ahom as Timasa, clearly a corruption of Dimasa and therefore, this name must have been applied to them when they were ruling the Dhansiri Valley." The idea is based on the contemporary ethno-demographic structure and distributions of the Bodo people laying in North Bengal and Assam, which is very partial. Over and above he has not come across to the historical part of the Bodo people. In addition to the Kacharis proper S. Endle has classed the following tribes of Boro, Rabha, Mech, Dhimal, Solanimiyas, Mahaliyas, Phulguriyas, Sarniyas, Dimasas, Hojais, Lalungs, Garos, and Hajongs within the fold of the great Bodo race." To this Endle says, "may be one or two smaller communities e.g. the Morans, the Chutias of Upper Assam, whose language not altogether extinct as yet though apparently dying out rapidly, would seem to prove them to be closely akin to the Kochari (Bodo) race. The Bodos or Meches of Bengal called themselves as ‘Bardhanari’ or Bardwnari. The term Bardhanari might be suggestive to that section of the Bodo people who might have been the subjects of Harsha Vardhana, the great King of Northern India who was contemporary to Kumar Bhaskar Varmana, the king of Asura dynasty of ancient Kamrupa.
On the basis of the ethnographic description of Hien Tsang of the 7th century AD Kamrup and the historical and other archaeological evidences, Sunity Kumar Chatterjee, R.M. Nath, Padma Nath Vidya Vinod, say that almost all the subjects of the Kamrupa were Bodos, and the first King of Varman dynasty, Pushya Varman the founder of Varman dynasty was the descendent of Mairang Danav. After the death of Bhaskar Barman, Salstambha came into the power and founded Salstambha dynasty. By examination of copper plate grant of Ratnapal, Sunity Kumar Chatterjee affirmed that Salstambha was Bodo Chief of Mech Tribe. Padmabhya Vidya Vinod, K.L. Baruah is also agreed with S.K. Chatterjee and reaffirmed that, Salstambha was the descendent of Bhagudatta.

After the death of Tyagashimha, the last ruler of Salstambha dynasty, Pal dynasty rose into power. According to another inscription of Ratnapala, the first king of Pala dynasty was the relative of Tyagashimha of Salstambha.

Minhaj-Ud-din, in his work, 'Tabaqot-i-Nasiri stated that, the country (Kamrupa) between Gaud and Tibbet was inhabited by three Races, i.e. Koch, Mech and Tiharu. Khara Vana, a Mech Chief founded a kingdom in Sylhet and he was also completely Hinduised and his dynasty traced their descendent from Bhima-Hiddimba. The Mech Kings of Sylhet were given "the same pedigree as the ruling house of Kachar, as they had the same speech Bhima-Hiddimba’s son Ghatat Kacha was made their ancestor." The southern Maches or Bodo, who ruled over the old kingdom of Patti Kera (Commilla) were entirely Aryanized in speech. The Meches known as Tipra in Tripura were under the title of Manikya who also had been hinduised at an early period.

Eastern Bodos were known as Kocharis. They established Kingdom at Dimapur and later shifted to Kachar. Chutiyas, Borahi & Moran in upper Assam they also established Kingdoms of their own. In different parts of Assam archaeological sites have been discovered to ascertain their society, culture and race, a systematic study is further required.

Haria Mech established a Koch Kingdom. This Kingdom flourished into a great empire under Nara-Narayan and his kingdom comprised of north-Bengal, Western Assam up to Darrang district, Khasia & Jaintia Hills, Sylhet, Tripura, Rongpur, and Dinaspur. King Viswa Singha adopted Hinduism and created a new genealogy tracing his origin to God Siva. Along with mass Bodo
people he converted to Hinduism. “It is said that when the Mech Raja of Koch Bihar, became Hindu and assumed the title of Rajbonshi and began to declare himself as the son of Siva, during his time large number of Bodo Mech people adopted Hinduism and caste status of Koch Rajbonshi. The process of Hinduisation continued without any disruption throughout the tracts inhabited by Meches-Bodos in Bengal and Assam.

The present day Bodos of North-East India were of course not known by the name of the Bodo by the others. During the time of epics and Puranas the present day Bodos were known as Danavas, Asuras, Rakshasas, Daityas, Mlecsas, Kiratas, etc. The people whose life and culture were structured around the Vedic system gave these names. It appears that the presence of the various Mongoloid groups of Sino-Tibetan speaking people were noted by 10th century B.C., when the Vedas were compiled and the composite Hindu culture and civilization reached the Mongolian peoples of North and North-Eastern mountains and plains from about that date. S.K Chatterjee proposed the name 'Indo-Mongoloid' as an equivalent to what the ancient Hindus was understood by the term Kirata. In the history of Assam the Mlecs or the Meches were the most important people as these people had molded and shaped the history of ancient Assam then known as Pragjyotishpur or Kamrupa. Sunity Kumar Chatterjee writes, “One may say that, the Bodos who spread over the whole of the Brahmaputra valley and North Bengal as well as East-Bengal, forming a solid block of North-Eastern India, were the most important Indo-Mongoloid people in eastern India, and they form one of the main basis of present-day population of these tract. Judging from the wide range of extinction of their language, the Bodos appear first to have settled over the entire Brahmaputra valley, and extended west into North Bengal (in Koch Bihar, Rongpur and Dinaspur district). They may have pushed towards north Bihar also, and the Indo-Mongoloids who penetrated in the north Bihar might equally have been Bodos or Himalayan tribes allied to the Newars”. T.C. Sarma stating the distribution of Bodo people says thus, “From the records in the Epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata (dated c.1000-800 B.C) it is known that the north eastern frontiers kingdom of India, a Mlecs territory ruled by the Bodo kings, referred to as Danavas and Asuras by Aryans of the Ganga Valley, was known as Pragjyotishpura (the eastern land of astrology) and later as Kamrupa with its Central shrine of mother Goddess Kamakhya on Nilachal hill overlooking the mighty Brahmaputra within the present metropolitan complex of Gauhati.” He also goes on to say that, North Bengal and parts of east Bengal were ethnically and politically an extension of the Bodo land of Assam.
The description provided in Rigveda, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas, Brahmana and other classical Indian literature indicates that the Kirata settlements in different parts of ancient Indian sub-continent were as old as the civilization of the Vedas and epics, even earlier. Ancient Indian classical literature depicts the socio-cultural interaction between the Kiratas and Non-Kiratas, i.e., Aryan, Dravidian, Austric etc. Vedic literature indicates the Kiratas as the people of low status, and living outside the Aryan fold during the Vedic age. The Pulindas, Sabaras and Mutibas and other cognate sub-groups of Kiratas who lived together in the extensive forest tracts of the Vindhya region much later with each other are said to be the offsprings of the cursed elder son of Viswamitra. They were outside the Brahminic community and were called Dasyus. During the Sutra period there were massive interaction between Aryans and Non-Aryans. The Kiratas living beyond the Aryandoms in western, northern and eastern sides were represented by other countries, refers one section of Kiratas of the eastern region were gold complexioned and of extra-ordinary strength, nomadic, cannibals, and fair looking with sharp pointed hair knots or conical heads, whereas, the another section were island dwellers, raw fish eaters and fierce by nature. From this picture depicted in the text, it appears that they were none but the ancestors of Kiratas of North-Eastern India and the eastern land, which, according to R.D. Banerjee and Buddhayana, this area referred to Anga, Vanga, Kolinga, Magadha. In ancient time there were no clear-cut geographical boundaries between Bengal and Assam. They might have shared common socio-cultural zone with similar racial and socio-cultural features, which were different from the Aryans.

According to Hodgson, the basin of the Sapta Kusika or the country of the seven Kosis was the original homeland of the Kiratas of Nepal, who were once very powerful and the dominant race, though they have long since succumbed to be politically supreme. This clearly indicates that, the people of Kirata origin inhabited the Sapta kosika regions. Some Orientalists say that Aryans drove out these people to Nepal. The process of extension of Aryan culture and civilization indicates that the Aryan culture and civilizations extended to all directions of India from Aryavartta. War and invasion were not essential part of the extension of Aryan culture and civilization. The Non-Aryan people accepted it because the social institution of the Aryans proved to be far better in comparison to that of their own. Rajanya system, as an instrument of governance developed by the Aryan civilization allured the non-Aryan chiefs and they accepted the system after conversion to Hinduism. And like other Hindu kings, myth was created connecting his genealogy with one Hindu God and assumed the status of Kshatriya. These new Kshatriyas were not given equal
status along with other Hindu Kshatriyas. As their Kshatriya origin is not racially based on Aryan, for that reason Manu referred them as debased Kshatriyas.

The views of Hodgson was also supported by S.K. Chatterjee; and he says, “The Aryan speech with the Vedic fire-cult does not appear to have been established over northern India beyond north Bihar-Bidegha or Mithila before 700 B.C. prior to that, in the area of North-Bengal and Assam, a powerful non-Aryan, possibly Tibeto-Burman, state may have arisen, with a mixed population of Austitics, Dravidians, and Tibeto-Burmans, the last, representing a group who were aggressive invaders from the east, perhaps being the dominant ruling class, as has happened many centuries later when the Ahoms came to Assam. This non-Aryan state, possibly ruled over by Indo-Mongoloids, was susceptible to upper Gangetic Brahmanical influence from the beginning. Traditionally, a ruler of this early Indo-Mongoloid state, Bhagadatta, took part in the Kurukshetra battle (c 950 B.C).”

The Kiratas are to be found in northern and southern slopes of Himalaya, i.e., in Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. They inhabited much of the areas to the eastern side of Aryabatta. Uttar khandha, extending from Kali on the east and to the Tong river on the west comprising Garwal and Kumaon region are inhabited by the people of Kirata origin. Since time immemorial, they lived in these regions. In the epic age, Uttarakhanda formed a part of Kosala. Some scholars including S.K Chatterjee say that, Kassas, Kunidas, Nagos, Saka Gurjaras and allied tribes living in between the Satlaj and the Beas in the Punjab hill; the tribes living in East-Punjab and North-West United Province Hills, all belongs to Western groups of complex pronominalised Himalayan Tibeto-Burman dialect. They were hinduisied long before and had completely given up their ancestral dialect for the Aryan language

The original home of the Sino-Tibetan speaking tribes or the people of Mongolian race were the northwestern China. They spread from the upper reaches of the Yang-tse-Kiang and the Hoang-Ho or Yellow river in different directions. They infiltrated into India partly from Tibbet down the valley of Brahmaputra and partly from China through Burma by the Mekong, the Chindwin, Salween, and Irrawadi. Gradually they spread into different parts of Assam, Bengal, and sub-Himalayan tract of Nepal and down to the Ganges valley. Tibeto-Burman group of Sino-Tibetans speaking tribes dispersed in some groups to the west and north of Tibet (the present day Chinese
province of Si-Kiang) from where they begin to spread east and south. Some of these early Tibeto-Burmans had penetrated within the frontiers of India either along the southern slopes of the Himalayas through Assam or by way of Tibbet and further crossing the Himalayan barriers they established themselves into Nepal and Garwal-Kumaon. According to some historians all categories of Mongoloid people cannot be brought under the category of Kirata, because the very term Kirata was meant only for those who settled in India extending from pre Vedic age down to the tenth century AD. This argument is not tenable, because the concept of the Kirata or Indo-Mongoloid is based on race not on time or place.

Greek and Roman classical literature mentioned about the ‘Kirados’ or ‘Kirhodoeis’ (Kirhadai) located on the northern side of Ganga and Brahmaputra delta. Greek classical literature mentioned about the Nonos, who are identified as Kiratas settling near Arriana or Aryabarta to the northwestern side. The Kiratas, on the whole, as described in the classical literature, can be identified with those tribes of northwestern and northeastern India, including Assam, Bengal, Tripura, Orissa, and Sikkim and of Nepal, Tibet and Burma who had settled in the plains, valleys and hills between the epic age and the fifth century A.D. But classical literatures show that there were also Kiratas settled in other parts of India such as in Vindhya ranges, deltas, Ganga basin etc, with different names and biological features or physiognomy. Just because they are physically black, we cannot exclude these people from the category of Kiratas. We should examine the hypothesis from the point of bio-dynamics and influence of geographical conditions and natural environment. From the known zoological record it is said that, Africa is the original homeland of human beings. Geological evidence of human settlement before 60000 years has been discovered in Africa. With what skin and physical traits did they migrate to the other parts of the world? Obviously it was with black skin, similar types of physical features that a Negroid possessed. So, the biological and socio-cultural differences among different Kirata groups demand a special discussion which will be dealt in another chapter.

According to the lexicographer Amar Sinha- Kiratas, Sabaras and Pulindas are the three different branches of the Mlecchas. According to him there is no basic difference among these three groups. Kautilya also refers to the Sabaras, Pulindas, Candalas and other wild tribes together. The Kiratas and the Sabaras have been mentioned by Dandin again and again as the same people. The identification of Kiratas with Bhils, the aboriginal tribes of Vindhya hills and Rajputana also
corroborated by the accounts of Kalhana. It is generally held that the name Kirata was applied to the numerous fair complexioned or yellow coloured hills tribes of Mongoloid race who lived in all parts of the Himalayas. But on the basis of the description of their physical features available in the epics and Puranas, we find that they were of both yellowish and darkish complexion.27

Grierson observed that the dialects of so called Kiranti group are closely related to dialect spoken by tribes, who have never claimed to be Kiranti.28 The historians and philologists have never paid any attention in this regard. Comparative studies of the languages spoken by different groups may be helpful to find out the truth. Hodgson with classical ‘Cirhadai’ or Kirata has correctly identified the Kiratas living between the Sapta Kausaki and Sapta Gandagki. The Kiratas of Nepal, a very powerful people in the neighborhood of the tribes on the northern frontier of the Himalayas are said to have held dominion down to the delta of the Ganges.29

In Bengali the term Karat or Kiret is applied disparagingly to moneylenders, extorting from poor debtors, to an exceedingly miserly person and to those, who were noted for their cruelty. ‘Kirad’, a common caste name in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Berar in Mahrastra is used in the sense of a (Hindu) merchant. In Buddha’s time people of non-Aryan origin conducted trade in the areas of sixteen Janapadas including Mithila, Kusola and Magadha. These merchants were identified as Kiratas. These Kirata traders, later on, might have developed in to a homogenous group forming a common caste category. In western Punjab, the Hindus who were in majority were scornfully scalded by their Mohammedans neighbours as Kirad. This fact indicates that, a large group of Hindu people living in western Punjab once might have been Kiratas and at some point of time they became Hindus.

The Kiratas of south are mainly identified with Bedars or Boyas inhabiting mostly in the Hilly regions, forest tracts and outside areas in Mysore and Andhra Pradesh. They are found in Bellary and Karnool districts. They are believed to be the descendent of the old Kirata class as forest tribe, hunters, mercenaries or fighters. The census of 1891 and 1901 showed that there was a district named ‘Kirataka’ which is a clear indication that this land was once inhabited by Kiratas. (The Boya Tilari, on subversion of Vijayanagara dynasty seized various other districts Karris, another Kirata group were found in existence in the Madras Census Report; 1891 and 1901, in northern Taluka of North Arcot and in the adjoining district of Cuddapa.30 The Bedars also figure
in the early epigraphic records of Mysore. In ancient time they were regarded as Mlecchas and in course of time, they came under the great impact of Sanskritisation and consequently attained a higher grade of culture. As a result of their gradual cultural transformation, most of them joined the fold of Hindus and assumed the Hindu names. That is why, at present they mostly represent the Hindu caste.  

1:3 The names of Pragjyotishpura and Kamrupa appear in the classical Indian literature as well as in the epigraphic description made by Indian and foreign writers. Regarding the origin of the name and location of Kamakhya and Kamrupa there are still debates. Different writers suggest different ways of emerging of this name. Bani Kanta Kakati says that, the term Pragjyotishpura is derived from Austric phrase: Pagar juh (jo)-tic (c'=ch), the meaning of extensive hills. But, we think that the word Pragjyotish is derived from Bodo origin. So, for the attention of the historians and philologists it may be suggested that the term Pragjoutisa is compound Bodo term, which can be simplified with clear meaning. In Bodo: Phrao=many, uncountable; jwngthi=illuminating or star; pur=city; Full meaning is land or city of astronomy. Another Bodo derivation may be Ha+jou+thi+phwr. Complete meaning is the land of many high hills. It represents the similar meaning as explained by Kakoti. But, definitely, it is not a Khasi or Senteng derivation. Bodo derivation of the term, 'Pragjyotispur' is nearer to truth. The term Pragjyotishpur is a Sanskrit term. The term may be sanskritised in either ways in particular stage of Indian history. It was quite obvious that the languages of the eastern countries were quite different from the mainland India, i.e., basically they were the speakers of Kirata or Sino-Tibetan language. They did not know and understand the Aryan language. They definitely utter the names of the places, rivers, Kings and Kingdoms in their own language. The Aryan-speaking people did not know to utter the Bodic (Tibeto-Burman) terms. In most time, they might have not maintained the indigenous ethnological taxonomy in naming a place, person, river, hill etc. The British also uttered the names of Indian places, rivers and other toponomy in their own way in English, as they could not pronounce in Indo-Aryan terms. The existence of a number of Pragjyotisas in different parts of India itself indicates that how strong the process of Hinduisation or Sanskritisation was in ancient India.

Pratap Chandra Choudhury quoting from R M. Nath said, "The name appears to be Sanskritisation of some non-Aryan formation. It suggested that the people called Chao Theius of
China, after coming to India, came to be known as Zuthis and occupied three important centres; the branch coming to Assam was called Prag Zuthis, which was subsequently sanskritised into Pragjyotisa.” According to Buddhayana and R.D. Banerjee, the eastern India was tabooed land for the Aryans who were not permitted to undertake any sort of journey into the eastern countries. Buddhayana says, “He who visited the countries of the Pundras, Vangas, and Kalingas shall offer Punostoma or Asarvaprishtha (ishti). R.D. Banerjee says that during the time of compilation of the Buddhayana, the aboriginal tribes of Vanga and Magadha used to practice their own religion and held the glories of their ancient gods and goddesses high. Hence the Aryans were prevented from entering into that lands. If this remarked is accepted as true, we cannot imagine a kingdom with a King named Naraka with Pragjyotishpura as his capital in Assam who was Aryan by race. Another factor attributing to tabooed relations maintained with the people of Eastern countries by the people of Aryandom was that, the people of the Eastern countries followed a religion that was different from Vedic Hinduism. Their social customs, traditions and practices were rather contrary to Aryan caste Hindu traditions; they also speak different language which was not understood by the Aryans; the serious factor was that they practiced totally different types of food habits, i.e., pork, beef, all kinds of animals, insects, birds and fishes etc which the Aryans regarded as taboos or impure foods. For these reasons the people of Eastern countries were called by the Aryans as Kuvasas, the speakers of bad language. The Tandya or Pancavimsa Brahmana stating how the Vratyas were different from the people of mainland India linguistically, says as: ‘aduruktavakyam duruktamahuh...adiksita diksitavacam vadanti.’ According to this Brahmanical text, the Vratyas, though they are not initiated into the Vedic religion, even then they talk the language of the initiated with difficulty. Which was not actually difficult? Patanjali in his Mahabhashya stating the similar story of the Asuras (Kirata-Vratyas) of the East says that they mispronounced the Sanskrit word ‘arayash’ (enemies) as ‘alayo’ or ‘alavo’ is an evidence which indicates that how the people of Eastern countries were different from the mainland India linguistically.

Non-availability of archaeological evidence of the epic age in Assam, late advent of Hindu religion, culture, language etc towards Eastern and Northeastern India also does not support the existence of Pragjyotishpura in ancient Assam before Buddha, at least by Sanskrit name. Because Sanskrit language attained written form only long after Pali. According to P.C. Choudhury, “If Pragjyotisa was known to the authors of the Pre-Buddhists and Buddhist Literature, it was merely a name. It is difficult to determine the extent of the Kingdom of Naraka of the age of Janaka or of his successors.”
R.C. Majumder says that certain Patoladeva Sahi ruler of Gilgit, claims in an inscription from Hatum (may be a Bodo term), that he was the descendent from Bhauma dynasty; on the basis of this he asserted that there was a Pragjyotisa Kingdom in ancient Orissa or Darshrana and that the name of this dynasty along with the place name was later carried to Assam. K.V. Athavale says that Naraka and his successor ruled at Pragjyotisa in Kathiawad. He identifies the location of Pragjyotisa at Raivataka Hills in Bihar. He identifies the original location of Pragjyotisa at Raivataka hills, and holds that Vajradatta carried the name of the place and dynasty to Kamrupa. B.C. Law, on the basis of the Kiskindhyakanda of the Ramayana (chap. 42) and the Brahmana Purana (27) holds that there was another Pragjyotisa on the bank of the river Vetravati or Betwa. B.M. Barua locates Pragjyotisa in Punjab. Wherever might have been the location of original Pragjyotisa, but it is true that there were numbers of Pragjyotisa in different parts of ancient India. In ancient times Assam or the eastern countries might have been called by the Aryans as Pragjyotisa, but, definitely the indigenous people called it in their own names as stated by P.C. Choudhury.

The very important terms associated with the history of ancient Assam are Kamrupa, Kamakhya, Louhitya and Assam etc. Most of the philologists and historians of Assam say that the term Kamrupa and Kamakhya are of Austric origin. Banikanta Kakati associates the origin of these terms with the legend of Siva Purana and suggests the following Austric formation:

- Ke-moyd=ghost (Sem)
- Ke-mut, ke-muyt=grave (Bes.Sep)
- Khmoch=corpse (Khmer)
- Khmoch=corpse (Stieng)
- Kamoi=demon (old Khmer)
- Komui=grave (Tareng) Ka-met=corpse (Khasi)

Kambru or Kamru= name of a lesser divinity worshipped by the Santals. According to him the formation of Kamakhya or Kamasksi may be a Sanskritisation of such non-Aryan formation of Austric words. The Puranic legend makes it the burial ground of a part of Sati’s dead body.

Regarding the origin of Kamrupa he suggested a number of approaches. He associates Puranic legend of Kamadeva, the god of love. Kamadeva regained his form (rupa) in this locality after having been burnt to ashes by Siva. Kakati also suggests that the term Kamrupa might be derived from the Santali word Kamru. This research fellow, tried to find out the Santali root of the
term Kamru, Kamru-t, and consulted a number of Santali scholars, but found no such type of word associated with the name of place, belief, god and goddesses.

History says that, Kamrupa or Pragjyotisa was the land of the Kirat-Bodo ruled by Heramba-Bhadadatta dynasty. Therefore, the languages of the locality should gain priority in this type of study. The terms 'Kamrupa' and 'Kamakhya' may be examined from the Bodo philological perspective. Worship of mother goddess was a tradition among the Bodos. Still mother goddess is worshipped by some of the allied Bodo groups. The Chutias in upper Assam, worship mother goddess in the form of 'Kesaikhati, ' eater of raw flesh; Koch-Rajbonshis worship in the form of Marai, Makali, and Mansha; and Bageswari in Bongaigaon, blood sacrifice is still in practice.

Deoidini worship and dance performance during Kherai puja of the Boro society is the symbol of Mother worship. Similar types of shrines are still in existence in the Koch-Rajbonshi inhabited areas in which female goddesses are worshiped in the form of Mother Goddesses. The Shrine of 'Mahamaya' at Bagribari in Gouripur that was built by the Jaminder of Gouripur, the tradition of blood sacrifice is still regularly in practice. Prem Saran stated that, the worship of mother goddess in different parts of India slowly gained momentum as all Indian Tantric features, which evolves systematic rituals with full of symbolism and which utilizes yogic techniques for their achievement of traditional Indian religious goals, namely the mystical experience. \[^{42}\] Tantrism involves five principles of 'M', i.e., modya (alcohol), mangsha (meat), matchya (fish), perch grains and sex, \[^{43}\] and observation of ritual goes through a certain steps. \[^{44}\] Accordingly, Bolle says that Tantricism in India gained complete pan Indian character and achieved its peak around 1000 A.D. Worship of mother goddess in the form of sakta worship is not the sole property of Austric but also developed among the Kiratas of East, North and North-East India. D.D. Kosambi stated a number of non-Aryan goddesses of fifth and sixth century A.D living under the foothills of Himalayas during the time and areas of Lord Buddha, which were originally worshiped by local Non-Aryan tribes belonging to the Vratyas eg, Rummini, Mammodai, Mengai, Mandhraai, Songjaai, Udalai, Kumbajai, Jhanjhani, Bolhai etc. \[^{45}\] The termination of 'ai' means mother. After Buddhism faded away thousand years later these goddesses retained their original names. Many a time the god is identified, when worship becomes widespread and popular, with Parvati or Lakshmi and some other Hindu deities. Such names often represent some tribe or clan group. The 'Kamakhya' might be the Kirata or Bodo goddess, and the term may be derived from the Bodo language.

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The term 'Kamakhya' may simplify in Bodo with their meaning as: kam or kham = to burn; ai = mother goddess, Kha = structuring. Complete meaning reads as, mother goddess, being structured out of burnt ashes. Siva and Parvati or Sati is regarded as Kirata God and Goddess Siva Purana says that to escape from the insult done against her husband Siva by her father Dakhsva, Sati had jumped into the burning fire of yajnas and died.

It is already stated that the terms Kamrupa, Kamakhya are closely associated with one another and related to the legend of Siva-Parvati and Dakhsva yajnas. According to legend, Kamadeva was burnt into ashes by the anger of Siva while he was trying to break his meditation. He was burnt into ashes and later on reborn or restructured. The term 'Kamrupa' may be of Bodo origin. It may be explained in Bodo as; Kam or Kham = to burn; bru or brud or ru = dust into ashes. Complete meaning is, restructured after being completely burnt into ashes. Kamrupa and Kamakhya might have been the sanskritised forms of Kam+ai+kha and Kam+bru or brud of later time. The actual name is found as Kamru or Kamrud in the Buddhist Carya as stated by P.C Choudhury.46

Hiuen T's'ang called Kamrupa as Ka-mo-lu-p'o. T'ang-shu mentioned as Kamopo and Komelu.47 The ancient toponomy of different parts of Indian subcontinent also indicates the extension of Bodo population and their history and civilization in different parts of ancient Indian subcontinent. The most important term associated with the civilization and history of Assam is, 'Louhitya'. According to Bani Kanta Kakati the term Louhitya is Austric origin.48 And he without indicating the original source or name of the language, just stated numbers of suffixes and prefixes and concludes that the suffixes and prefixes are of Austric origin. Most of the terms mentioned by him are surely and ceratinly of Bodo origin, commonly used in Bodo to mean river or water and defining the nature of the river. For example, hong, chang, khong, khrong, bang, khiou, bru or bro, sa, ma, lao, chrao, po, poi etc terms are very commonly used by the Bodos as a suffixes or prefixes with river or water to indicate its nature. For example.

Di-hong = wide river.
Di-chang = overflowing river.
Di-khong = river with deep edges.
Di-khrong = river with high edges lying waterbed too below.
Di-bang = river with much water.
Di-khou = deep river with the storage of much water.
Di-bro or bru = river or area with shallow water.
Di-sa = sub-river or tributaries.
Di-ma = river or big river.
Di-lao or ti-lao = long river.
Di-chrao or ti-chrao or chrao-ti; di or dwi-chrai; chrao-ti = river with shallow water with beautiful current.

Jam-poi or phwi = water stream, channel.

Bani Kanta Kakti stated that, in Ahom Burunji, written in the Ahom language and published by the Government of Assam (1930), the river Brahmaputra has been frequently referred to as ti lao. It clearly indicates that, at the time of the arrival of the Ahom, the Bodo speaking population inhabited the Brahmaputra valley and Ti Lao was then the became established name of the Brahmaputra. History of Assam supports this fact that at the time of Ahom’s arrival Dimacha, Chutias, Barahis and other Bodo groups had already established their kingdom in Upper Assam and in different parts of the Brahmaputra valley. In Bodo language, Lao means long and ti means river or water. At the time of Hiuen Tsang’s visit to India, the name of river Brahmaputra, particularly, the part lying in Greater Bengal must have been known as Lao-tu. The Lao-tu might have been sanskritised into luita>Lauhitya. This is not impossible because, till then, the eastern countries, the tabooed land, maintained their distinct socio-cultural identity with pride and glory. Lao ti or Lao-tu (chu) must have been the popular name of Brahmaputra uttered by the common masses of the people of Kamrupa. The terms Louhiya or Brahmaputra, Pragjyotisa etc. might have been used by the Brahmin pandits in their classical literature. P.C Choudhury rightly stated as, “In discussing the ancient geography of Assam, we refer to this land by its ancient name Pragjyotisha and Kamrupa, because the word Assam does not find mention either in early literature or in epigraphs. It is likely that during the Buddhistic period, as we have already stated, the land was known by another name Examining the classical sources, we have reasons to believe that this land was in the ancient days known by different names, which were different from the Sanskrit language.” The term Brahmaputra might have been coined much later than the time when Hiuen Tsang arrived in India.

Most of the river names of Assam and North-Eastern region indicate that this region was inhabited by the the great Bodo people, such as tista, diphu, dikhou, digaru, tihu, namti, daijiri.
(Dhansiri), Samphai (Champavati), Bwrli (Bharali), Bwrladi (Barnadi), Munglidi (Mangaldoi), Dikrai (Dikorai) etc.

Alexander Cunningham in his study of the areas inhabited by the Kuninda-Kunet people suggested the presence of Sino-Tibetan (Tibbeto-Burman) and Austric (Kol) elements in the names of rivers and physical features of northern India. Thus the Tibbeto-Burman, ‘ti’ or ‘di’, refers to water and river. The names have been found to occur at the tributary level, e.g., Rawati = Ravi, Nyung-ti = Beas, Zang-ti = Satluj, Para-ti = Para river etc. Most of the names of the feeder tributaries of the main rivers of north India end with ‘ti’, like

- **Plear river**: Gumoti, Kasiati, Matre-ti, Supe-ti, Chu-ti, Andre-ti.
- **Giri river**: Chigaon-ti, Chehi-ti, Uret-ti.
- **Tons river**: Hamal-ti, Buraha-ti,
- **Satluj River**: Ghai-ti, Manyao-ti, Khanyao-ti, Wal-ti, Ti-dong,
- **Nangal-ti**, Kha-ti, Nare-ti
- **Spiti river**: Kyok-ti, Ling-ti,

Cunningham suggested that, these are Tibeto-Burman terms, which appeared in Sanskritised names of many rivers of northern India, like: - Iravati (Iravadi), Gomoti (Gwmw-ti), Paravati (Parati), Sraisrai-ti (Saraswati), Tapti, Betrati (Betwa), Bigrai-ti (Bhagirathi), Tisa (Tista), Sindwi (Chindwin or Sindhu) Gagaridai (Ganga) etc. These names of rivers lying northern India indicate that, an Indo-Mongoloid (Bodo-Sub-stratum) is quite possible in both of the Sindhu and the Ganges Valley, from among the first best of Himalayana Indo-Mongoloid. Definitely the process of Sanskritisation of the names of the rivers of northern India took place from the time Aryans established their civilization in Aryavarta. And from the above fact we can presume that prior to the establishment of Aryan Civilization a sub-stratum of Kirata-Bodo people had already settled and established their own culture and civilization in north India.

Greek and Roman classical literature also indicate the Kirata settlement in different parts of India. The importance of the Greek and Roman classical literature is as important as the epics and Puranas of India. The writings of Miletus (B.C. 549-486), Herodotus (B.C. 484-431), Ktesias (B.C. 398), Megasthense (B.C 305-298), Strabo, (64 B.C-19 A.D.), Pliny (A.D. 23-70), the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea (C.1st A.D.), Journals of Marco-polo, Columbus and Vespucci and the geographical discoveries of Ptolemaios etc. depicted the settlement of Kirata people in different
parts of Indian sub-continent. Toponomy stated in the Greek and Roman classical literature are rather purely non-Sanskritic or non-Aryan terms, like, Chrysie (name of place), Gangaridai (Ganga river), Kilties (gold coin), Thish (people), Limurica, Barigaza (name of places), Sesatae, Kirrhadae, Besatae (people), Thinae, Besadae, Seres, (country), Sirate, Hyperchos, Oidanes, Dyardanes (rivers), Sere and Sinae (people), Serica (country), Occardes (river), Bautes, Annubi, Casius, Thaguras, Nazovoiun (hills), Essendon, Asparata and Sera (town), Arlington, Kuldon, Zamirai, Mairangdos (country) etc. From ethnological and philological point of view these toponomical terms have not yet been examined.

Nagendra Nath Basu has stated a number of terms likely to be non-Aryan (Tibeto-Burman?) names from the large numbers on ancient copper-plates of Bengal. These are: - Auhagaddi, Naddina, Moralondi, Ballohita, Soubari, Khogali, Swmlajoli, Jougolo, Thwisadubi, sakkojan, Dijomokajuli, Lacchubara, Kunthaihara, Unwipula, Ojhoracchoubwlo, Namundika, Nekkadebwri, Jwsa, Dijjina, Koppa, Naokuba, Haruppa, Didesa, Nauki, Sandenauki, Kuntavita, Kamakuti, Digjumma, Digdola, Sobadi, Badijjuraibhudi, Dijamokka, etc. In lower Assam many Bodo and Garo villages have similar types of names without Sanskrit philology and phonetics, e.g., Molandubi, Roinadabri, Hokradoba, Bhelakhoba, Gobsa, Jaldob, Dangra-khuti, Samokha, Digola, Khorkila, Gendrabil, Chakhma, Bhumka, Hogoma, etc. Hiuen Tsang and other Chinese travelers also refered, ‘Kamrupa’ and its people and places with different names.

A critical evaluation of the treatise in general and about the Kirata in particular, reveals striking facts about geography, toponomy, society, language, culture, religion, race, and ethnology etc that did not find place in Indian classical literature. We can safely rely on them for making sociological, anthropological, ethnological, philological, racial and historical enquiry into the origin, migration, settlement, and expansion of the Kiratas in pre and post Christian era as well as their relationship with other groups. Many of the facts stated in these literatures have not yet been examined scientifically.

Greek and Roman classical literatures also stated many societies, locations, and taxonomies, which are different from Aryan language. Discoveries of facts stated in these literatures will definately help to reconstrcut the Kirata history in particular as well as of the history of India in general.

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Archaeological evidence constitutes a very important aspect in the reconstruction of ancient history. The historians of the pre-independent period, particularly of the period of the national movement were to a large extent guided by classical literature and European method of historiography without supported by essential archaeological evidence. Due to absence of archaeological bases, the history of ancient India suffers from a number of shortcomings, for which frequent changes have been made time to time as and when new archaeological evidences are discovered. Epigraphical record and inscriptions constitute very important part of archaeology. Their value as historical facts in the reconstruction of history, culture and civilization of the past is unimpeachable in nature. They form the firm foundation on which the edifice of history of ancient India can further be built-up.

Many archaeological evidences have been discovered from different sites of Assam. According to Archaeologists, the remnants prior to century 1000 A.D. is less in number. Some of the important inscriptions discovered showing ethnological links with the Asuras or the Kirata people of Assam may be mentioned:

a) The Bandaganga epigraph of Bhutivarman.
b) The Doobi grant of Bhaskarvarman.
c) Nidhanpur grant of Bhaskar Varman.
d) The Hayuynthal grant of Harjjarvarman.
e) Kurubahi Copper Plate of Harjjaravarman.
f) Tezpur rock inscription of.
g) Uttarbari grant.
i) Bargaon grants of Balavarman III.

These are only some of the specimens out of numerous archaeological evidences in present Assam and neighbouring countries.

Most of the inscriptions identified the rulers with Asura or Bhagudatta dynasty. And some of the rulers are identified with the Varaha or Bhouma dynasty. Vishnu or Vorah was the father of Narkasur and archaeological evidences say that they were worshiper of Siva. These inscriptions give a clear picture about the culture and civilization of the Assamese society basically Aryan in character standing on the foundation laid by the indigenous non-Aryan people of Bodo or Kirata origin. In ancient times these group of people spread scattered in other parts of Indian sub-continent.
The rock-edicts discovered in Girnar in west Kathiawad, Kalsi near Dehra Dun, Yerragudi in the Kurnool district, Shahbazgarhi near Peshwar, etc. enlighten us about the Kirata settlement in all these areas. B.M Barua stated that, these inscriptions provide some clues about the nature, manner and habits of the Kiratas living in Uttarapatha or northern India and Buddha’s effort to bring these people within the pale of Buddhism. Some specimen of Asoka’s inscriptions has been found in Nepal, which indicates the impact of Buddhism in Nepal.

The Hathigumpha cave inscriptions of King Kharvela of Kalinga (contemporary of the Sungas) dated first century B.C, which was obtained from Udaygiri on the Kumari Hill, located in Bhubaneswar (Orisa) refers to Cina and Kiratas. Some of the inscriptions are found in defaced forms. Considerable portions of these inscriptions have not been properly deciphered. Despite all these, it reflects the truth that Kiratas were his subjects and living peacefully during the time of Kharvela. One of the stone railings enclosing Great Stupa of Sanchi bears the following inscription; “Chiratiya Bhicchu-nodanam”, which commemorate the visit and lends grace to Kirata Monks or Bhiksus to this place. This inscription indicates that Kirata people settled there enjoying the status of priestly class in the Kingdom.

One of the Nagarjuna Kunda inscriptions of the Iksvaku kings, Virapurusadatta, ascribed to the third century A.D., which was founded on the right bank of the Krishna river in Andhra Pradesh, stated about Kilatas or Kiratas. The people are fairly identified with Cina and Yavanas. These inscription records tell that the Kiratas of Nagarjuna Kunda and its surrounding areas came under the pale of Buddhism. H.D Sankalia also stated that, these inscriptions candidly depicted about the Cinas-Kirata settlement and their religious faith and expansions. Cham inscription of Champa in Indo-China the Kiratas have been associated with Vrilah race, “Vrilah Kirata Vita”, of Champa. A number of Sanskrit inscriptions going back to the middle of the first Millenium A.D in ancient Kamrup or Pragjyotishpur and Anga, Vanga, Kalinga, Magadha clearly stated the Kirata settlement in these areas.

The Pandukeswar Copper plate inscription and grants of ‘Lalitasura’ of 9th century A.D. and the grant of Padmata of 10th century A.D have addressed to Kirata people of Kumaon and Garwal, which testify to the settlement of Kiratas in these region. One of the inscriptions of Pandukeswar provides information about the kingdom of princely Kiratas (Raji Kirata) in Kumaon and Kartikeyapur.
The old city of 'Kiradu', now in dilapidated condition with twenty-seven temples, situated with the Jodhpur state in western Rajasthan near Khaidan railway station an inscription of Samvatera of 1235 A.D. century founding the Siva temple, refers to Kiradu which stand for Kirata-kupa (Kirata well) on the Kirata Kuta (Kirata hillock). This inscription indicates the Kirata settlement in this area of Rajasthan. An inscription dated AD 1007, it appears that the great Chola King Raja Deva destroyed the race of hill chiefs probably of Kirata race.

The stone inscription of Yasovarman (c.725-752 A.D) of Kanauja shows the extension of his political sway over the Kiratas of the Vindhyas region as well as their nature of habitations. Some of the Kannada inscriptions falling in between 8th and 17th century A.D. are also very important for the study of the Kiratas in ancient India. Actually, they are the trustworthy contemporary records of the South. The Kiratas distinctly figure in the annals of the ancient Karnataka kingdoms, the Pallava records, etc. of the south the details inscriptions concerned are highlighted below:

An inscription dated A.D., 973 ascribed to a king Satya Vakya Konguni Verma Dharmmaharaja of the Ganga dynasty records the dwelling of the Kiratas in Vindya ranges in tenth century A.D and their destruction by the said Ganga King. Ganga king might have been the descendent of the ruler of Gangaridai. According to Radha Kumud Mookherji, stated that Gangaridai kings were on the other hand Aryanised people of non-Aryan origin (Licchavi dynasty) When Ganga king attacked Kiratas of Vindhya region they still maintained Kirata socio-cultural identity The attack of Ganga king might initiate the process of Sanskritisation of the Kiratas in Vindhya region From records dated A.D. 1007, it appears that the great Chola King Raja Deva destroyed the race of hill chiefs probably of Kirata race.

A record dated A.D. 943 of the Pallava King Diliparasa of Kanchi shows that Nolombadhiraja or Nolambadi rulers conquered some of the Kirata kings. An inscription dated A.D 1117 records how the Puisa, the powerful general of the Hayasala Kings, Vishnuvardhana
Bitti Deva, ousted the Kirata chiefs and gave protection to some of them who were left with no power. The grant of Virbhadra Nayaka, dated A.D. 1641 reveals that his grandfather (A.D. 1582-1629) came into conflict with the Kiratas and there after, how the later penetrated into the Kingdom of Kiladi. The Kiladi rulers are believed to have vanquished the Kiratas.

Venkatapa Nayaka, Keladi ruler and his grandson Virabhadra Nayaka inflicted a crushing defeat on the Kiratas. Then the celebrated monarch of Mysore, named Cika Deva, grandson of Campa Raja won over the Kiratas after having defeated them in several battles as described in an epigraphic record dated, A.D. 1680. Both the Kiratas were allied groups who belonged to the same racial origin. The conflict was basically political, not social and cultural.

The epigraphic records of Southern India in between eight-century A.D and sixteenth century A.D. shows the emergence of greater Kingdoms submerging the smaller kingdoms ruled by the chiefs of small communities belonging to different racial origins. These records confirmed the Kirata settlement in different parts of Southern India, emergence small Kingdoms and Chieftainships, and the emergence of bigger kingdoms submerging the chiefdoms or kingdoms within it. Emergence of Kingdoms coupled with Hinduization and regional language absorbed the existence of smaller communities including the Kiratas and other allied tribal groups. The Kirata groups of South India lost their ethnological feature in the similar way the Kiratas of Bengal and Assam lost their ethnological identity in favour of Bengali and Assamese linguistic society.

The inscription found in Hanumandhaka reflected Kirati domination in old Nepal and northern India. The script belonged to 7th century A.D. The transcription of this inscription reads as, “Kirata Varsadhara and Chirantanam Licchaviraja Kari tam Puratanabritti bhuja rupeksam.” This is a monumental example of Kirata rule in Northern India. There are some inscriptions in northern India contemporary to Licchavis that testify the Kirata settlement in different parts of northern India and subsequently these people came under the influence of Hinduism and completely hinduisised and became the integral parts of Hindu social structure. The process of Sanskritisation or Hinduisation was started since the days of Rig-Vedas and continued unabated up to the arrival of the British people in India.

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