Location of Assam:

Assam, one of the north-eastern states of the Indian Union, lies between the latitudes 24°10'N and 27°57'N and the longitudes 89°50'E and 96°2'E. It comprises an area of 78,529 sq.km. To the north of Assam lie the territories of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. To the east lie a part of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur. On the south and the south-west it is bounded by Mizoram, Tripura, Bangladesh and Meghalaya. To the west there lie Bangladesh and West Bengal.

Physical Features:

Assam is encircled by the high Himalayas in the north, by its branches, such as the Patkai, Naga and the Manipur hills in the east, and by the hills of Mizoram and the plateau of Meghalaya to the south. The state of Assam consists of four physiographic units. They are the Brahmaputra plains bordering the Himalayas, the Karbi plateau made of the eldest igneous and metamorphic rocks, the North Cachar Hills of young sedimentary origin, and the Barak plain encircled by low hills on three sides.

The Brahmaputra plain is relatively larger and is about 600 km. long and 60 km. to 100 km. wide. The plain has an
extremely gentle gradient from the north-east to the south-west and the west. The mighty Brahmaputra along with its innumerable tributaries has built up this plain by depositing sediments. Because of this slope being very gentle, most of the rivers have gentle current, zigzag course and shifting nature; very often, after heavy rainfall in the summer when the flood water overflows, the rivers here and there change their course causing devastation and breaches.

The Karbi plateau, as stated above, is very old and geologically it forms a part of the Deccan plateau. It is worn down and highly desiccated. For example, one can very easily move Dabaka in the west of the plateau to Dimapur in the east across the plateau along the Yamuna valley without experiencing any perceptible gradient.

To the south of the Karbi plateau there are the North Cachar Hills, which are of Himalayan origin. Through the middle of the area runs the Barail range, the highest range of the area. At places it rises to more than 2000 metres. It stands as the backbone of the region for the hills. Towards the south it is lower again.

The Barak or Cachar plain is a funnel shaped plain created by the Barak and its tributaries. Like the Brahmaputra Valley, it slopes very gently towards west and has many rivers with their winding courses and marches.
Climate:

The Assam region falls within the tropical monsoon climate. But, because of its location encircled by hills and mountains on three sides, it has a climatic type of its own. The most important characteristic of the climate of the area is very heavy rainfall for about four months, extreme drought in winter and high humidity throughout the year.

Rainfall:

Because of its geographical location the rainfall in Assam is usually heavy. To illustrate the point we may take into account the available statistics of 1976 to 1980, which are — 1861.8 millimetres, 2194.12 millimetres, 1742.9 millimetres, 1460.9 millimetres and 1087.4 millimetres respectively. ¹

Population:

The total population of Assam according to 1971 census was 14,62,5152. ² It has risen to 19.9 million by 1981 as estimated by the census report of India.

It is difficult to divide the population of Assam into different racial groups because of a process of racial


² Ibid.
intermixing since time immemorial. However, a general survey reveals that the people of the area belong to Proto-Austroloid, Mongoloid, Mongolo-Aryan racial stocks. It is more scientific to divide the people of Assam into ethnolinguistic divisions. On this basis, the people can be divided into three major groups, viz. those speaking Austro-Asiatic languages, those speaking Tibeto-Chinese languages and those speaking Indo-European languages.

The River Brahmaputra:

The Brahmaputra has its origin from the northern slopes of the Himalayas, just east of the Mansarovora Lake in Tibet. It has a total length of 2,800 km. It traverses for its first 1,600 km. through Tibet, where it is known as Ptsangpo. Thereafter, reversing its course westwards, it flows through Arunachal Pradesh for about 160 km., as Siang. In the southern part, it is known as Dihang. It meets with Dibong and Lohit near Sadiya, becomes vast, enters the valley of Assam and takes the name Brahmaputra. From this point, it flows south-west for about 640 km., over a wide bed, sometimes, as wide as 10 km. Turning south beyond Dhubri, it flows through Bangladesh for its last 480 km., joining the Ganga at Goalundo. After the confluence with Ganga the united rivers flow under the

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3Heintzelman and Highsmith, *World Regional Geography*, 2nd edn., p. 84.
name of Padma reaching the Bay of Bengal through Meghna estuary. The river has a braided course with many temporary islands and chars on its bed. It has many tributaries, large and small, carries an enormous volumes of water and silt.

**Administrative Divisions of Assam:**


**A Brief History of Ancient Assam:**

Assam was known by different names in different periods. For example, in very early times, it was called Pragjyotisa which changed to Kāmarūpa in subsequent days. In course of time, several kingdoms grew out of the body of the kingdom of Kāmarūpa of early times. Two of such kingdoms, viz., Saumāra in the east and Kāmatā in the west were more important.

**Pragjyotisa:**

The Rāmāyana is the earliest work where Pragjyotisa is
found to be mentioned. In the Kīśkindhā-kānda there is a reference to the city of Prāgjayotsa and to Maraka. Sugrīva asks Suśeṇa to set out in a mission to the west in search of Sītā. While describing the various places to be visited by Suśeṇa and his party, Sugrīva describes the city of Prāgjayotisa situated on the Varāha mountain, surrounded by the deep sea and inhabited by Maraka.

yojanāni catuhāśaṣṭitvarāho nāma parvataḥ/
suvarṇaṇḍīgeha suvṛūmāṇagāḥde varaṇālaya//
tatra prāgjayotisām nāma jātarūpamayam puram//
yasminvasati duṣṭātma narako nāma dānavaḥ//

(Ch. 41, VV. 24–25)

D.R. Mankad says that once during a visit to the Gujarat state he came across a place called Gop at which the famous Gop temple of the Gupta age was situated. He had been told by some old men of this locality that there had been a city called Prāgjayotiśpura near the hill of Gop.⁴ Though Mankad's description of Prāgjayotiśpura is not supported by any authentic document, yet having found some similarities to the description of the Rāmāvana's content it can be said that the said Prāgjayotiśpura was somewhere in Gujarat.

Thus, Prāgjayotiśa as found in the Rāmāvana is more

reasonably located in the west. It is not the Prāgjyotisa with which we are presently concerned.

Of the two great epics, the Mahābhārata seems to have been more closely and more dependably familiar with the situation, surroundings and inhabitants of Prāgjyotisa. In the Sabhā Parvan, in connection with the northern expedition of Arjuna, it is related that Bhagadatta, the king of Prāgjyotisa, resisted the Pāṇḍava hero, being accompanied by Kīrāta and Cīna soldiers and many others drawn from the sea-shore:

sa kīrātaīḍca cīnaīḍca vṛtaḥ prāgjyotisō bhavat/
anyaisḍca bahuḥbhir yodhaiḥ sāgarāṇupavāsibhiḥ//

(Ch. 26. V. 9)

The 75th Chapter of the Āsvamedhika Parvan is fully devoted to the description of the fight between Arjuna and Vajradatta, the King of Prāgjyotisa. Here Vajradatta is said to be the son of Bhagadatta and the lord of Prāgjyotisa.

prāgjyotisamathābhysyetya vyacaratasya hayottamaḥ/
bhagadattātmajāstatra nīryayau raṇakarkasah//
sahayāṃ pāṇḍuputrasya viṣayāntamupāgatam/
yuyudhe bharatasreṣṭha vajradatto mahīpatih//

(VV. 2-3)

Apart from these two great epics, casual references to Prāgjyotisa are made in the Purānic works also. The Mārkandeya
Purāṇa (37. 44) mentions Prāgjyotisā and describes it as a 'Prācyā janapada'. The Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa (Ch. 27) mentions Prāgjyotisā as a kingdom. The Vāyu Purāṇa (77. 95) refers to Prāgjyotisā as an eastern country.

Prāgjyotisā is mentioned in the secular works also. Rajasekhara in his Kāvyamīlāmā while describing the location of different countries, mentions Prāgjyotisā as one of the Janapadas of the Pūrvadesa. Kalidāsa in his Rāghuvaṃśa (Ch. 4. V. 81) while describing the universal conquest of king Raghu refers to the ruler of Prāgjyotisā dwelling by the side of the river Lauhitya.

Among the modern scholars, Sir Edward Gait says, "Prag means former or eastern, and jyotisha, a star, astrology, shining. Pragjyotishpur may, therefore, be taken to mean the city of Eastern Astrology." K. L. Barua says, "It is significant that to the immediate east of the town of Gauhati there is a temple on the crest on a hill known as Citracala, and this temple is dedicated to the Nava grahas or the nine planets. It is probable that this temple is the origin of the name Pragjyotisapura." According to B. K. Kakati the derivation of the term Pragjyotisā is intimately connected with topographical features of the land rather than with anything like astrological

5 Kāvyamīlāmā. Ch. 17, Line 21.
6 A History of Assam, 3rd edn., p. 15.
7 LHK, 2nd edn., p. 9.
study. Kakati conjectures that Prāgjyotiṣa may be a Sanskritised form of a non-aryan formation. To him "Pragjyotisa correspondences to an Austic formation like paper-juh (jp)-tio (g = gh) meaning a region of extensive high hills."

It may be observed that Edward Gait and K.L. Barua have explained the term in connection with the city called Prāgjyotiṣapura, while B.K. Kakati explains the term taking it to be the whole country. It is quite likely that the country derived its name from the name of the capital city; or reversely, the capital city derived its name from the name of the country.

**Extent of Prāgjyotiṣa**

In the Sabhā Parvan of the Mahābhārata, it is described that Bhagadatta, the king of Prāgjyotiṣa, joined in the battle of Kurukṣetra with kīrāṭa and cīna soldiers and also many others dwelling in the sea-shore.

On the basis of this, it may perhaps be presumed that Prāgjyotiṣa extended to, and included at least some portions of, the Chinese territories in the north and the sea in the south.

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8 Vide *The Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā*, p. 6.
Kāmarūpa:

The kingdom of Prāgjyotīṣa as discussed above came to be known as Kāmarūpa in later days. It cannot be exactly ascertained why the kingdom was called so. The Kālikā Purāṇa (ascribed to 9th century A.D.)⁹ gives the explanations of the term Kāmarūpa in the following manner:

Kāmadeva has been burnt up by the fire (i.e., sight) of the third eye of Śiva and subsequently through the favour of Śiva himself he regained his life and original form. The particular place where these two incidents took place and particularly the miracles of Kāma regaining his rūpa or form occurred came to be known as Kāmarūpa.

śambhunāīnīragnīdagdhā kāmaḥ sambhoranugrahāt/
tatra rūpaṁ yataḥ prāpa kāmarūpaṁ tato bhavat//

(Ch. 51. V. 78)

This shows that Kāmarūpa was the name of a particular holy place and the kingdom later on assumed the same name through transference of epithet.

This is further corroborated by what is given in the Gauda Purāṇa according to which Kāmarūpa was a great tīrtha

where Kāmākhyā has been located - kāmarūpa mahātīrtham
kāmākhyā yatra tiṣṭhati (Ch. 81.16). This reference suggests
that Kāmarūpa was the name of a particular holy place which
is now known as Kāmākhyā. Kāmākhyā is a small temple town at
the top of the Milācāla hills covering an area of 1 sq. km.,
within the larger area of greater Gauhati. But it is significant
that even today the holy place of Kāmākhyā is called Kāmarūpa -
Kāmākhyā by the pilgrims hailing from places like Bengal and
Nepal. This shows that Kāmarūpa was originally the name of the
holy place of Kāmākhyā and the same name came to be applied
to the whole kingdom only at a later stage.

The point of time from when Kāmarūpa came to be called
so is not precisely known. Kālidāsa in his Rāghuvaṃśa (IV.81-84)
gives Kāmarūpa as the last country to be subdued by Rāghu in
his northern expedition. This reference does not help in
fixing the date from when Kāmarūpa became the name of the kingdom.
Among the earliest epigraphic records the Allahabad Stone Pillar
Inscription of Samudragupta (C. 360 A.D.) mentions Kāmarūpa
as one of the frontier kingdoms along with Samataṭa, Īḍavāka,
Nepāla and Kārtṛpura. On the basis of this inscriptive
reference, it is definitely clear that the kingdom of Prāgjyotisṭa
came to be known as Kāmarūpa as early as in the middle of the
4th century A.D. if not earlier.
Extent of the Kingdom:

Kāmarūpa as narrated in the Allahabad Stone Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta appears to be a small kingdom. It shows Davāka as a separate kingdom. Davāka stands for the present Davāka region, a particular area in modern Nagaon district, centering which the kingdom of Davāka of the Allahabad pillar Inscription probably existed. So, at the time of composing the Allahabad prasasti a part of Nagaon district comprising the kingdom of Davāka was not within the boundary of Kāmarūpa. In the Kālikā Purāṇa the extent of Kāmarūpa is described as follows:

\[
\text{karatoyā nadi pūrvam yāvad dikkaravāsinīṁ/}
\text{trimśad yojanavistīrṇam yojanaikadatāyatam//}
\text{trikōṇam kṛṇavarnaṁ ca prabhūtācalapūrītaṁ/}
\text{nadiśatasmāyuktāṁ kāmarūpaṁ prakīrtitaṁ}//
\]

(Ch. 51. V. 76-77)

The Yognītāntrar (generally ascribed to the 16th century A.D.) describes the boundary of Kāmarūpa as follows:

\[
\text{nepālasya kāṇḍaśanadriṁ brahmaputrasya saṅgamam//.}
\text{karatoyāṁ samāśritya yāvaddikkaravāsinī/}
\text{uttarasvaṁ kaṇjaśagiriḥ karatoyāttu pasceṁ/}
\text{tīrthasṛṣṭhadikṣunadī pūrvasyāṁ girikanyake//}
\]
On the basis of these references, and especially the reference to Kāmarūpa in the Allahabad Stone Pillar Inscription, it is conjectured that Kāmarūpa, in comparison to Prāgjyotisa, was a smaller kingdom.

**Royal Dynasties of Ancient Assam**

**The Bhauma-Varman Dynasty:**

Epigraphical evidences show that the Bhauma-Varman dynasty is the earliest of the ruling dynasties of ancient Assam. The dynasty is also known by the epithets of 'Bhauma', 'Naraka', and also 'Avanikula'. At the end of a rule of three thousand years by the descendants of Naraka, as stated in the Nidhanpur Copper Plates Grant, there appeared Puṣyavarman, the first historical figure in this line of kings. From the reign of Puṣyavarman till the time of Bhaṅkavivarman, we get an uninterrupted list of the rulers of this dynasty. On the basis of three different sources, viz., the Margasaratī of Bāṇabhaṭṭa,

10 Bāryāon Grant, V. 10.
11 Bāryāon Grant, V. 9.
12 Bāryāon Grant, V. 12.
13 vaṇwódvaśu tasya nrpatiṇu vṛc̄gōmahāratreṇyam padamavāpya/ yateṣu devaśhuyam kaśīlavāraṁ puṣyavarmmahbhuṭ// V. 7.
Dubi and Midhanpur Copper Plates of the king himself and the account left by the Chinese traveller Yuan Chwang,

Shāskaravarman's reign has been placed in the 7th century A.D.¹⁴ Taking the period of his reign as the basis, scholars have tried to determine the reign periods of his predecessors as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of the rulers</th>
<th>Tentative dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pueyavarman</td>
<td>Middle of the 4th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samudravarman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belavarman (1)</td>
<td>Middle of the 4th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalyānavarman</td>
<td>5th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaṇapativarman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahendravarman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nārāyanavarman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahābhūtavarman (Bhūtivarman)</td>
<td>6th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹⁴Shāskaravarman is ascribed to the period 594-650 A.D. Vide Choudhury, P.C., HCPA, p. 164.
The Mleccha Dynasty (or the Line of Sālastambha):

The rule of the Bhauma-Varman dynasty came to an end in the middle of the seventh century A.D. at a turn of fate (vidhicalanavasādeva) when Mlecchādhinātha Sālastambha captured power and established a new line of rulers in the throne of Kāmarūpa. Like the Bhauma-Varmans, the rulers of this dynasty claimed their descent from Naraka. But, the dynasty is generally known as the Mleccha dynasty.

The designation mlecha, applied to the said line of rulers is controversial. Hoernle suggests that the word

15 evam vāmsakramena keśimatho nikhilāṃ bhūnjatāṃ nārakānām rājñām mlecchādhinātho vidhicalanavasādeva jagratha rājyaṃ/sālastambhah kramasyāpi hi naraṇapāṭaya vigrha-stambhamukhyā vikhyātāṃ samvabhūbudhīṅguṇī daśāta samkhyāyā samvibhinnāḥ// (Bargāon Grant of Ratnapāla, V. 9.)
"mlechha" means a foreigner. Identifying the Meccanæ, K.L. Barua says, "We think the word undoubtedly means the non-Hindu Mongoloid people of the kingdom. A tribe of these people is still known by the name Moch which is clearly the abridged form of Mechha". To P.C. Choudhury, "The designation, mlechha is a very wide term, which was used by the Arayan Brahmanas to stand for all non-Aryans. It was used in the same sense as the Greeks used the word 'barbarians' for the non-Greeks. It is difficult to find that the term stood merely for the Mongolians. It may stand for the Buddhists, so-called by the Brahmanical writers of the epigraphs". While showing the origin of the mlechhas he further says, "The probable connection between the Waran and Salastambha lines seems to point to their common descent from the Ghauma dynasty, established by Alpine chiefs, and not to the fact that they were separate Mongolian groups". Whatever may be the relation of the mlechhas with the Varman dynasty, it appears to be correct to say that they both originated from non-Aryan stocks.

Inscriptions are silent about the king of the Varman dynasty from whom Salastambha captured the throne. M. M. Sharma

16 JASS, Lxiv, pp. 103-4.
17 EHUK, 2nd edn., p. 67.
18 HCPA, 2nd edn., p. 191.
19 ibid., p. 191.
rightly says, "If he were a king as great as Bhāskaravarman, the fact would have been stated in the records of the kings of the Sālastambha dynasty in very clear words with great pride". To find out the immediate successor of Bhāskaravarman a reference may be made to the Bharatavākya (i.e., the final benedictory verse) of the Sanskrit play Udrārāksasa of Visākhadatta, who is supposed to have belonged to ancient Assam. In the final benedictory verse of the drama there is a reference to the patron king, for whose name we have four variant readings, viz., pārthiva candra gupta, pārthiva dantivarmā, pārthiva rantivarmā and pārthiva vantivarmā. The most probable reading here refers to the king as Avantivarmā (Avantivarman).

While, placing Avantivarman as the immediate successor of Bhāskaravarman, K.L. Barua says, "Bhāskaravarman’s continued stay in Karnasuvarna and absence from Kamarupa proper, during the latter part of his reign, facilitated the fomenting of the revolt and when he died it appears that Sālastambha, the leader or governor of the Mechaas, usurped the throne by deposing Bhāskaravarman’s immediate successor. The danger which the author of the Udrārākhasan feared actually materialized. It seems to us that Avantivarman or Avanti-varma-Deva, as the direct successor of Bhāskaravarman, did not reign for more

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20IAA, Intr., p. 0.31.
21Ibid., p. 0.31.
than five years at the longest and that Sālastambha occupied the throne of Kāmarūpa about 655 A.D. after dethroning and probably killing him.\textsuperscript{22} P.C. Choudhury quotes some of the variant readings of the name of Avantivarman, and the correct reading of the name, to him, rests on the date of \textit{Mudrārākṣasa}.\textsuperscript{23} On this ground, he says, "In any case, the ornate style of the work suggests that it is appreciably later than the plays of Kālidāsa, and it is likely the Visākhadatta flourished during the 7th century A.D. It is also probable that Avantivarman was his contemporary, in which case, the correct reading of the name as Avantivarman, appears likely.\textsuperscript{24} While, referring to this Avantivarman as the king of ancient Assam, he says, "The reference in the play to the Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu seems to indicate that Avantivarman was a Kāmarūpa ruler."\textsuperscript{25} He refutes the view of K.L. Barua and suggests that "The existing materials do not confirm the view that Āhāskara was in danger of revolt at any time, and the actual interpretation of the stanza of the play will prove the contrary. It means that Avantivarman was destined to fight the Alleccha revolt and

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{22}EHK, 2nd edn., p. 69.
\item\textsuperscript{23}HCPA, 2nd edn., p. 189.
\item\textsuperscript{24}ibid., p. 190.
\item\textsuperscript{25}ibid., p. 190.
\end{itemize}
save the kingdom just like Viṣṇu, who in his Boar incarnation lifted up the earth from universal dissolution.²⁶ He places Avantivarman as the immediate successor of Bhāskaravarman and says that "The statement appears to refer to the period immediately after Bhāskara's death, who probably did not leave any direct heir to the throne; hence the question of the dethronement or murder of Avantivarman does not arise. In all appearance, it appears reasonable to hold that Avantivarman was the immediate successor of Bhāskara."²⁷ M.A. Sharma takes Avantivarman as a king of Kāmarūpa and also conjectures him to be the immediate successor of Bhāskaravarman.²⁸

From the above discussion it appears to be quite plausible to say that Avantivarman was a king of Kāmarūpa and was also the immediate successor of Bhāskaravarman.

A few epigraphic records are discovered of this line of rulers and these records help in fixing their dates. On the bank of the river Brahmaputra, near the modern town of Tezpur, a rock inscription has been discovered where the name Harjara and the date 510 in Gupta era are engraved. This proves that the king Harjara was in existence in 829–30 A.D. Further,

²⁶ibid., p. 190.
²⁷ibid., p. 190.
²⁸IAA, Intr., pp. 0.31–0.32.
Copper plate grants of Harjaravarnan, Vanamāla, Balavarman and Ratnapāla extend help in support of the dates of the Mleccha rulers. On the basis of these epigraphs, the genealogy of this line of rulers may be prepared as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of the rulers</th>
<th>Tentative dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sālastambha</td>
<td>Middle of the 7th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vijaya or Vigrahastambha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palaka</td>
<td>8th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumara</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vajradeva</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harsavarman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balavarman (II)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cakra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29 In the Grants of Harjara, Vanamāla and Balavarman III, the word is found also as Sālastambha. Both Sāla and Sāla mean a kind of tree. Hence both the readings are correct.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of the rulers</th>
<th>Tentative dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arathi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aratha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prālambha</td>
<td>9th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harjara</td>
<td>Gupta 510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(≈ 829–30 A.D.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanamāla</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jayamāla</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Balavarman (III)</td>
<td>10th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyāgasimha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An Obscure Period: Successors of Balavarman:

The immediate successors of Balavarman III are not yet known. The Bargāon Grant of Ratnapāla (V. 10) reveals that there were 21 rulers of the family of Śalastambha, the last being Tyāgasimha, who was succeeded by Śrāmatpāla, founder of a new line of the Pālas. Tyāgasimha is approximately placed in between 970–90 A.D. According to the chronology given above,
Salavarman III's reign presumably came to an end in 910 A.D. Since, there occurs a gap of 60 years between Salavarman and Tyāgasimha, it is presumed that in this period certain unknown rulers came to power. This gap of 60 years cannot be bridged over unless new grants happen to be brought to light.

The Brahmapāla Dynasty:

After the death of Tyāgasimha, the subjects decided that a ruler from the Bhauma dynasty would be more suitable for them and accordingly they made Brahmapāla the king. This parallel tradition is found in Magadha and Gauda where the people of those countries elected Gopāla, the first Pāla ruler of Magadha, as their king about the end of the eighth century A.D. This seems to give us the impression that there was a system of democracy and a system of popular election even in those ancient days. But more probably the fact is that both Gopāla in Magadha and Brahmapāla in Kāmarūpa finding the thrones vacant proclaimed themselves as kings. As there was none equal to Gopāla or Brahmapāla the people had no other choice but to accept them as their rulers. There is reason to believe that when Brahmapāla occupied the throne it was declared that he was a king chosen by the people, like Gopāla, and in the manner of the Pāla rulers of Magadha and Gauda, he assumed the surname Pāla.

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30 Vide The Bargaon Grant of Ratnapāla, V. 10.
31 Vide EMK, 2nd edn., p. 86.
The genealogy of this line of rulers runs as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of the rulers</th>
<th>Tentative dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahmapāla</td>
<td>Last decade of the 10th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratnapāla</td>
<td>11th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purandarapāla</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indrapāla</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gopāla</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harapāla</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharmapāla</td>
<td>12th century A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jayapāla</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The genealogy of the Pāla rulers came to an end with Dharmapāla. In the Silimpur Stone Slab Inscription e. Kāmarūpa- nṛpati of the name of Jayapāla is mentioned. The inscription was found in the Silimpur mouza of the Kethal thana of the district of Bogra. The purpose of this inscription was to record the erection of a temple over the image of Amaranātha built by

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32 Vide Kāmarūpasāgasanaivalī, Bhūmika, p. 36.
a Brāhmaṇa, named Prahasa. It mentions a tulāpurana gift, made to that Brāhmaṇa by Jayapāla. K.L. Barua says that the rule of the Pāla monarchs ended with Jayapāla.33 P.N. Bhattacharyya holds the same view, and conjectures Jayapāla to be either the son or the grandson of Dharmapāla.34 This Jayapāla is taken to be the immediate successor of Dharmapāla.

Later Rulers:

Sandhyākaranandini's Rāmāgarīta (first half of the 12th century A.D.) records that an ally or feudal chief of king Rāmapāla of Gauda conquered Kāmarūpa and became highly honoured by the later.35 This conquest has been accomplished obviously on behalf of Rāmapāla. K.L. Barua says that Rāmapāla had a very long reign and that he continued up to the second quarter of the twelfth century A.D.36 He also says that Rāmapāla's son Kumārapāla had a very short reign. On the basis of the palaeographic evidence of the Kamauli Grant, which was recorded very soon after Kumārapāla's death (middle of the 12th century A.D.), K.L. Barua rightly says that the conquest of Kāmarūpa by Rāmapāla took place in about 1125 A.D., when Dharmapūpa could not have been reigning.37 There

33EHK, 2nd edn., p. 95.
34Kāmarūpasasanāvalī, Bhūmikā, p. 36.
35IAA, Intr., pp. 0.12 - 0.13.
36EHK, 2nd edn., p. 94.
37ibid., p. 94.
is room to believe that it was Jayapāla, the son of Dharmapāla, who was overthrown by Rāmapāla.

During the reign of Kumārapāla, Tingyadeva ruled over the eastern region of the Pāla kingdom as a feudal ruler. When Tingyadeva started a rebellion, Vaidyadeva came to the eastern region as the general of the Pāla monarch, put down the rebellion, and subsequently himself became an independent ruler of the eastern region. Prāgjyotiṣa was a bhukti and Kāmarūpa was a mandala in his kingdom and his seat of government at Hamsākāśi was decidedly situated within the area of the modern Kamrup district. These points justify the recognition of Vaidyadeva as a king of Kāmarūpa.

The date of the Assam Plates of Vallabha is 1188 A.D. Vallabha does not declare himself as a king of Kāmarūpa, nor does he name his capital. Yet, on the basis of his inscription, there are reasons to believe that he was an independent ruler and he ruled over the modern districts of Kamrup and Barpeta and adjoining areas.

The Assam Plates of Vallabhadeva give the following genealogy:

Bhāskara

RAYARIDEVA TRAILOKYASIMHA
Twenty years after the date of the Plates of Vallabha in 1206 A.D., the army of Muhammad-ibn-Bakhtiyar came to Kāmarūpa and faced complete annihilation. This is narrated in the Kānāi-barasū-bovā rock inscription. The date of the inscription is 1206 A.D. (1127 Saka), and with this inscription we enter into the medieval period of the Assam history and of the inscriptions of Assam.

Invasions from Bengal:

In about 1198 A.D. Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khilji overthrew Lakshmaniya, the last Sena king of Bengal and consequently started his expedition to the north. Muhammad Bakhtiyar marched northwards through a country inhabited by the Koch, Mech and Tharu tribes. He disturbed the inhabitants of the country and was ultimately checked by an army of Mongul horsemen. He then reached the plains of Kāmarūpa with the troops but the king was found ready to attack him. Muhammad Bakhtiyar with the help of the Mech inhabitants found the way to Dinajpur.

In the early part of the thirteenth century A.D., Ghiyāṣ-ud-dīn, a governor of Bengal is said to have reached as far

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as Sadiya, but he was defeated and was sent back to Gaur.

In the year 1257 A.D. Ikhtiyar-uddin Yazbak Tughril Khan attacked Kāmarūpa. The Sultan was killed in the battle and his army was defeated and only a few succeeded in escaping to Bengal.

In 1337 A.D. Muhammad Shah sent 100,000 horse-men but the whole force perished in the land of Kāmarūpa. He had attempted to attack Kāmarūpa for a second time also and on reaching the territory of Bengal he had to give up his plan.

From the above discussion it is gathered that in between the period eleventh century A.D. to the thirteenth century A.D., the sубедаrs of Bengal made successive attempts to subjugate and establish themselves on the throne of Kāmarūpa. But all their attempts had been foiled. Kāmarūpa or ancient Assam during the said period was divided into several kingdoms, big and small, which were ruled by the independent rulers. A brief account of these kingdoms are given below:

Chutiya Kingdom:

In the eastermost corner a line of kings belonging to the Chutiya tribe ruled over a small kingdom situated to the east of the river Subansiri. To the south and south-east of the Chutiya kingdom there lived several independent Bogho tribes. The Chutiya kingdom is said to have been founded by one Birapāla who claimed descent from Bhismaka (Bhirmaka) and ruled over
sixty families on a hill called Sonāgiri. His son Nārāyana built a capital at Ratnapura and assumed the name Ratnadhvajapāla. He was followed by nine kings of his line. At the beginning of the thirteenth century A.D., the Chutiya kings were reigning at Sadia. There were frequent clashes between them and the Āhoma, and subsequently the later subdued them. 39

Kaehari Kingdom:

From the west of the Chutiyas, on the south bank of the Brahmaputra, there lay the Kaehari kingdom covering parts of present Nagaon, North Cachar Hills and Cachar districts. The Kaeharis are a branch of the Bodos and they established themselves and ruled as an independent dominant tribe. While referring to the clashes between the Āhoma and the Kaeharis, the Buraṇīlas of the Āhoma, here and there, mention this tribe. Edward Gait believes that the Kaeharis survived as a separate nation till the early part of the nineteenth century A.D. 41

Bhuyan Kingdom:

On the south bank of the Brahmaputra, to the west of the Kaeharis were a number of chiefs called Bhuyans. Edward Gait

40 The chronicles of the Āhoma are locally known as Buraṇīla. They were originally written in Ahom language and subsequently written in Assamese language as well.
is of opinion that the boundary between the tract ruled by these Bhuyans and the kingdom of Kāmarūpa varied from time to time. In Assamese legends these Bhuyan chiefs are called "Bāra (twelve) Bhuyans" a title which was coined on the model of an aboriginal tribe of the same designation in Chota Nagpur. To Edward Gait, the word Bhuyan has nothing to do with the caste, but is concerned with the profession and in that manner it is an equivalent of the Persian word "Zamindar". It is nowhere found why the number "twelve" should always be associated with them, both in Chota Nagpur and in Assam. He conjectures it to be connected with the practice in these parts of India for kings to appoint twelve advisers or governors.

Kāmatā Kingdom:

In the western part of the Brahmaputra valley from the tracts ruled over by the Bhuyans up to the river Karatoya formed another kingdom under the title Kāmatā. According to Edward Gait, the Muhammadan historians used the terms Kāmarūpa and Kāmatā to mean the same kingdom, but sometimes, maintained a distinction also.

The only ruling dynasty of the Kāmatā kingdom was the

42 ibid., p. 39.
43 ibid., pp. 39-40.
44 ibid., pp. 43-44.
Khena kings and Nīlāmbara was the last king in this line of rulers who was overthrown by Husain Shah in 1498 A.D. The founder of this dynasty, as traditionally believed, was a cow-herd, whose master is said to have been a Brāhmaṇa, who helped him to dethrone the last ruler of the Pāla family. On ascending the throne he embraced Hinduism and assumed the title Nīladhvaja and appointed the Brāhmaṇa as his minister. As Edward Gait says he is celebrated for having imported many Brāhmaṇas from Mithila. A later important king of Nīladhvaja's line, Nīlāmbara enhanced the territory of the Kāmatā kingdom as far as the Bārmati to the east and the Kāratoyā to the west. In 1498 A.D. Nīlāmbara was defeated by Husain Shah and thus the Kāmatā kingdom came under the Muslim dominance. After the departure of the Muhammadans the whole kingdom was ruled by a number of independent chiefs. After a few years' rule by these chiefs, the Kooches under the leadership of Visvāsimha occupied the throne of Kāmatā and thus established the rule of the Kooches.

The Kooche Rulers:

In the early period of the fifteenth century A.D., the Kooches came into power under a chief called Visvāsimha in the

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45 *ibid.*, pp. 43-44.
46 *ibid.*, p. 44.
western part of ancient Assam. He subdued the chiefs of Phulguri, Dijní and other places, and gradually extended his rule as far as the Karatoyā in the west and the Barnadi in the east.

In the Yoginātendra, the Koches are mentioned as Kuvācas, as one of the ruling groups of Kāmarūpa.

\[
\text{yavanasa'ca kuvācas'ca saumāras'ca tathā plabāh/} \\
\text{kāmarūpādhipo devi sāpamadhye na cānyakah/} \\
\text{( I. 12. 54. )}
\]

Visvasimha (the founder of the Koch kingdom) was a great patron of Hinduism. He revived the worship of Kāmakhyā, rebuilt her temple on the Nilāgala hills near Gauhati, and imported numerous Brāhmaṇas from Kānyakubja, Vārāṇasi and other centres of learning. The genealogy of this line of rulers as given in the Stone Slab Inscription of Hayagrīva Mādhava Temple of saka 1608 (1683 A.D.) covers the names of three rulers as follows:

Visvasimha

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Malladeva</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raghudeva</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Edward Gait mentions altogether eight rulers of the Koch dynasty. Gait, it seems, prepared the history of the earlier
rulers from the inscriptional evidences and collected the information about the later rulers presumably from the Persian chronicles and Āhom Buranjīs. He says that the rule of the Koch royal family came to an end with Sundara Mārāyana. 47 As a remainder of this kingdom there survives the modern district of Koch Behar in West Bengal.

A Note on Saumāra

According to the Yacīnītantra, Kaṃarūpa or more appropriately early medieval Assam was divided into four portions, viz., Kaṃapīṭha from the river Karatoyā to the river Sonkoṣa, Ratnāpīṭha from the river Sonkoṣa to the river Bharalī, Suvaṃapīṭha from the river Rupāhi to the river Bharalī and Saumārapīṭha from the river Bharalī to the river Dikrang. These four divisions (of early medieval Assam) made on the basis of the river boundaries is related to our present study. In some of the inscriptions of the medieval period (Āhom period), the kings are designated as Saumāresarva or Saumārapīṭha-Purandara 48 (i.e., the ruler of Saumārapīṭha). The identification of Saumāra is given by the Yacīnītantra as: aṣṭakaṇāca Saumāraṃ yatra dikkaravāsīni/ II.I.41.

47 Ibis., p. 70.
The Ahom Rule:

In the early part of the 13th century A.D. the Ahoms, a branch of the Shans from Upper Burma entered into the valley of the Brahmaputra and established themselves in its eastern extremity by founding a kingdom of their own. They gradually extended their sway over the whole of the valley and ruled over it till the coming of the British in 1826 A.D. According to the Ahom chronicles, Sukaphā, the leader of the Ahoms was a prince of Mae royal dynasty who ruled over a great chunk of territory of Upper Burma. Sukaphā left his native state of Maulung, about the year 1218, according to some accounts, as a result of quarrel with his kinmen. After a long journey over the hilly and inhospitable terrain often camping at one place for more than a year, he reached the upper region of the Brahmaputra in about 1228 A.D. This date has been universally accepted to be the date of Sukaphā's entry into Assam. 49

During their long rule of six hundred years, the Ahoms came into contact with the inhabitants, the majority of whose persuasion was Hinduism. It was, therefore, natural for them to have been influenced by Hinduism. According to some writers, Hinduism first entered into the Ahom court during the reign of king Sudāngpha (1397-1407 A.D.) who had been brought up in a

The influence of the Brahmāṇa priests increased considerably during the reign of Pratāpasiṃha (1603-1641 A.D.) who built several temples including those at Dergāon and Bisvanāth for the worship of Śiva and offered land grants to the Brahmāṇa priests for their maintenance. But it was king Jayadhvajasiṃha (1648-1663 A.D.) who first accepted formal discipleship of a Hindu Geśāi.

Since then, Hinduism began to receive increasing patronage of the Āhom monarchs who made large grants of land and men to all sorts of Hindu religious institutions. The royal grants were made in the form of charters, deeds, etc. in several languages such as Sanskrit, Assamese and Āhom.

The following is the list of the Āhom kings (shown in chronological order) whose inscriptions have been discovered.

1. Pratāpasiṃha (1603-1641 A.D.)
2. Jayadhvajasiṃha (1648-1663 A.D.)
3. Chakradhvajasiṃha (1663-1670 A.D.)
4. Gadādharasiṃha (1681-1696 A.D.)
5. Audrasiṃha (1696-1714 A.D.)
6. Sivasimha (1714-1744 A.D.)
7. Pramattasiṃha (1744-1751 A.D.)
8. Rājasvarasiṃha (1751-1769 A.D.)

50 ibid., p. 18.
9. Lakshmisimha (1769-1780 A.D.)
10. Gaurinathasimha (1780-1795 A.D.)
11. Kamalsvarasimha (1795-1811 A.D.)
12. Chandrakantasimha (1811-1818 A.D.)

In the foregoing pages a hurried survey of the geo-political condition of Assam as relating to different periods has been made for providing a background for the proposed literary study of the Sanskrit inscriptions of Assam. The chapter that follows contains an objective survey of the available Sanskrit inscriptions which belong to a period ranging from the beginning of the 5th century A.D. up-to the advent of the British in the first quarter of the 19th century A.D.