CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF ASSAM

2.1 Introduction:

Assam, situated in the northeastern province of India is a state of breath taking scenic beauty. The state is decorated with rare floras and faunas, lofty green hills, fertile valleys, mighty waterways, emerald and dense forests and numerous rivers. Besides, the region also has some regional and cultural idiosyncrasy and uniqueness, where people of diverse races were synthesized and transformed into the colourful Assamese people. No wonder, such perfect fusion of culture and heritage of numerous races, tribes and sub tribes gave birth to Assamese culture – a rich tapestry woven with multicoloured yarns of distinct heritages, traditions, lifestyles, faiths and beliefs. Since the days of Hieun-Tsang, Assam had fascinated thousands of travellers with her aura of myth and mystery, history and folklore, art and painting, music and dances, handloom and handicrafts, panorama of nature and a plethora of rarest wild lives roaming through her vast and verdant forests.

2.2 Physiography of Present Assam:

On its geographical side, the state lie between latitudes 24° to 28° North and longitudes 89° 42’ to 96° 30’ East. The natural

5. Dr. Jeuti Baurah, Single women in Assamese Hindu society, p 22
surroundings in all sides have separated Assam from the rest of the country giving the region a distinct cultural identity. The present state of Assam can be divided into two river valleys, the Brahmaputra valley and the Barak Valley. After the reorganization of Assam in 1971, the map of Assam shows that it is almost bottled up in all its sides, except the west between the mountain ranges inhabited chiefly by the primitive tribes, mostly of Mongoloid stock and the foreign countries of China and Tibet on the north, Burma on the east and the south and Bangladesh on the west.

Assam is bordered in all sides by the hill states of Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura and Meghalaya. The north and north-eastern side of the state is bordered by the hills of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh, inhabited by a host of tribes having distinct cultures of their own. The Patkai range bordering Burma forms the south-eastern boundary being inhabited chiefly by the various tribes of Nagas and Manipuris and the south-west is girded by the mountain chains of Assam range comprising of Garo, Khasi, Jayantia, North Cachar, Mikir and the Naga hills. The former three hills form the state of Meghalaya. The Naga Hills together with eastern portion of Patkai range form the state of Nagaland. The North Cachar and the Mikir hills forming two districts of the North Cachar and Karbi Anglong (the Mikir hills) is a part of the state of Assam. To the south of the Assam Range lies the Barak valley, which includes the present district of Cachar. To the south of Cachar and Nagaland lie the state of Mizoram (Lushai Hills) and Manipur. On the south-west of the Barak plains, Assam is bounded by the Hill Tippera forming the state of Tripura and to the west of Cachar is the country of Bangladesh.
2.3 Origin of Pragjyotisha and Kamarupa:

Historically, the name “Assam” is relatively speaks of quite a later origin. Prior to that, the land was known as Pragjyotisha and Kamarupa from the dawn of its history. Beginning from the 1st or 2nd century A.D., i.e. from the days of Naraka-Bhadadatta down to the 12th Century A.D., we find these two names were used to denote this land. The name ‘Pragjyotisha’ is more ancient than the name Kamarupa. The name Pragjyotisha is referred to in epigraphs and epics of Ramayana and Mhb as well as in some of the principal Puranas. In classical Sanskrit literature, both Pragjyotisha and Kamarupa occur as alternative names of this country.

The name Pragjyotisha stood for both the city and the country. Inscriptional references to Pragjyotisha were found in the Howraghat plates of Balavarman III of Kamarupa, India office plate of Laksmanasena and Bargaon grant of Ratnapala. KP describes the origin of Pragjyotisha. According to KP, Brahma made the first star in Pragjyotisha. The historians of Assam have followed this etymology. Gait means to say that Pragjyotishapura means the “City of Eastern Astrology”. K.L. Barua refers to the Citracala temple dedicated to the Navagraha or Nine planets, which is situated on the crest of a hill in the east of

7. B.C. Law, Historical Geography of Ancient India, p. 299.
   (For details vide EI, XXXII part VI)
8. B.C. Law, Historical Geography of Ancient India, p. 299 (vide EI, XXVI)
9. B.C. Law, Historical Geography of Ancient India, p. 299
   (vide EI, XII, pp. 37ff; JASB, Vol. LXVIII, 1898, pp 99ff)
the present Guwahati and this temple is the origin of the name of Pragjyotishapura. However, it is clear from the evidence that astrology or astronomy was popular in Pragjyotishapura.

The same region came to be known as Kamarupa in the later part of ancient and early medieval period. By this name it is referred to in KP, YT and Haragauri-Samvada. The earliest epigraphic reference to the kingdom of Kamarupa first occurred in the Allahabad Pillar of Samudragupta (c. 380 A.D). Here Kamarupa along with Samatata, Davaka and Nepal, is mentioned as Pratyanta or frontier state outside the Gupta empire but evidently in friendly and sub-ordinate relation to it.

The traditional origin of the name Kamarupa is associated with many legendary stories. The story of Gopatha Brahmana relates the name Kamarupa with the genital origin of Sati. It is said that when Sati died of vexation, her consort Siva, overwhelmed with grief, wandered about the world carrying the dead body of Sati. In order to stop his penance, Vishnu lopped away the body piecemeal with his discuss. It fell into earth in fifty-one different pieces. Her genital organ fell on Kamagiri (Nilachal hill near Guwahati) and the place was henceforth held sacred to Kamakhya, the Goddess of sexual desire.

The name Kamarupa, according to Puranic legends is associated with Kamadeva. It is said that Kama was sent by the Gods
to break Siva’s penance and rouse passion of creation and as a result, Kamadeva was burnt to ashes by the fiery glances of Siva, but later on regained his original form (rupa), hence the name Kamarupa. KP associates the name Kamarupa with Kamakhya. It states that when Naraka of Mithila became king and in charge of the Goddess Kamakhya, the name of the land was changed from Pragjyotisha to Kamarupa and it was king Naraka who introduced Devi worship in the land16.

2.4 Origin of the name Assam:

This land was known as ‘Assam’ in the thirteenth century, when the Ahoms entered the region. The words Assam, Asam or Ahom were originally applied to the country ruled by the Ahoms, a Shan people who migrated from upper Burma at the beginning of the thirteenth century and gradually extended their rule throughout the Brahmaputra valley. Gait opines that the name ‘Assam’ is derived from the term ‘Asam’, which was first applied to the Shan invaders by the local people in the sense of “the unequalled” or “the peerless”, people as they conquered the country with their superior might17. The conquering tribe’s new appellation ‘Asama’ itself later on degenerated to the word ‘Ahom’. B.K. Kakati suggests that the word Asama (peerless) may be a later Sanskritisation of some earlier form Acham18. According to him, in Tai language, ‘cham’ means ‘to be defeated’. With the addition of an Assamese prefix ‘A’, it became ‘Acham’ to mean ‘undefeated’, ‘conquerors’19. Baden Powell

16. K.P., chapter, 38.95, 96.
17. Dr. B. Kakati, Assamese, Its formation and development, p. 2.
18. Dr. B. Kakati, Assamese, Its formation and development, p 1-3.
19. Dr. B. Kakati, Assamese, Its formation and development, p. 4.
thinks that ‘Assam’ may be derived from earlier Bodo form Ha-Com, meaning the low-levelled country. But there is no doubt that the name of this land Asam (Assam) has its connection with the Ahoms or the Shan invaders only. It is only after the entry of the Ahoms, the land got its name Asam or Assam. The Vamsavali of the Koch kings, the Buranji and the Vaisnava literature apply this term to the Shan conquerors rather than to the country, which they occupied. In the SAB, it is said that the local Barahis and the Morans called them Ahom (Asam), i.e. unequal to others. They (Ahoms) are heavenly beings and not the descendants of human beings. Hence the name Ahom (Asam) became prevalent. In Darrang Rajvamsavali, a chronicle of the Koch Kings, written by Daiyuan Thakur, the word Asam has been all throughout used to mean the Shan invaders. In Kamarupar Buranji, the term Acam was used to refer to the Shan invaders. Therefore, it is clear that the word Asam was used for the Shan invaders or Ahoms and gradually it came to be used as the designation of the whole land ruled by these people.

2.5 Inhabitants of Assam:

Assam, the homeland of heterogeneous racial strains and cultures of both hills and plains people, had been considered as the museum of races by the Anthropologists. All the major races of the world, the Austro-Asiatic, the Indo-Aryans, the Tibeto Burmese, the Mongolians, the

23. Dr. B. Kakati, Assamese, its formation and development, pp. 1-2.
Negriods, the Dravidians, the Alpine, the Tai or Shan all combined to make the great Assamese people. Dr. S.T. Das rightly says, "The region with her diverse population speaking different languages and professing divergent faith, may be regarded as an epitome of India. From time immemorial, people of different races and languages and cultures came to Assam, and in course of time had settled down here for a peaceful comingling and cultural as well as racial fusion with their predecessors. These migrating hordes came to this land in the different intervals, made their settlement, intermingled with each-other so thoroughly that it became very difficult to distinguish one from another, thus contributing the building up of heterogeneous Assamese society and culture. Thus, Assam is one of the few places in India, which may be "looked upon as a federation hall, where the most ancient and the most modern, the most antiquated and the most up-to-date, are found to meet together upon terms of perfect cordiality. The followers of all the schools of philosophy – the Vedic, the Pauranic and the Tantrik have thrived here equally well, and people of all races, Aryans and non-Aryans, Hindus and non-Hindus, have equally contributed to the building up of the social fabric of Kamarupa."

2.6 Climate and Rainfall:

The climate of Assam is mild and moderate i.e. it is neither so hot in summer and nor so cool in winter season. Dry cool winter and summer with extreme humidity characterize the climate of Assam. About the climate of Assam, Robinson comments, "Comparatively speaking,

25. Dr. S.T. Das, Tribal life of Northeastern India, p 36.
Assam enjoys a far more peculiar temperate climate with a greater equality of temperature, than in general throughout India. In other words, "perpetual humidity, frequent and heavy rainfall and moderate temperature changes of a warm summer and cool winter especially distinguish the valley of Assam." Frequent showers and thunderstorms check the rise of temperature in Assam. There is heavy rainfall during the spring and summer.

The moist summer season begins in early June and continues up to late September. Temperatures ranging between 28°c and 36°c characterize this season. The temperature tends to slightly decreases but humidity increases towards the later part of this season, because of copious rainfall occurring between June and September. About 65% of the total annual rainfall is received during this season. The total rainfall in Assam is always the maximum. Shihabuddin Talish, the historian of Mir Jumla, who invaded Assam in the middle of the 17th century, correctly said about the abundant rainfall in Assam "it rains for eight months in the year and even the four months of winter are not free from rains."

The cool weather season is confined to the months of December, January and February and is characterized by low average temperature between 15° c – 20° c and very low rainfall not exceeding 2% of the total annual average.

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27. W. Robinson, A Descriptive account of Assam, p. 18.
29. S.L. Barua, A comprehensive history of Assam, p. 10
In between the two broad seasonal divisions mentioned above, there are two transitional periods. The pre-winter period of the months of October and November is comfortable because neither temperature nor rainfall is high. This season is suitable for producing green vegetables and oil seeds on soil, since it remains moist after long summer but with prevailing dry atmosphere.

The post winter period starts in March and continues up to late May. The earlier part of this period continues to be dry. Temperature begins to rise from March and the mango showers of cyclonic origin fall in April. The occasional pre-monsoon rain occurs in late April and May. The high temperature prevailing in later part of this period with occasional rain provides a climatic basis for the seedlings of the main crops of the State.

2.7 Agricultural crops:

The rich soil and the monsoon help luxuriant growth of vegetation and crops in Assam. Agriculture was the chief means of livelihood of the people of ancient and medieval Assam and all people irrespective of caste and creed were engaged in agriculture. According to Hieun-Tsang, “the land lies low but is rich and regularly cultivated”30. The climate of Assam was suitable for rice cultivation. Many varieties of rice such as Sali, Bao, Ahu, Lahi, Baro etc. were cultivated at that period. Besides rice, other major crops were mustard, sugarcane, potato, pulses, maize, spices, jutes, oranges, mangoes, jackes, limes, pine apples, betel nuts.

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etc. Thus, the climate and monsoon of Assam was boon for the agriculture of certain types of crops.

2.8 Detrimental diseases:

The climate of Assam was always not a boon for the people of Assam especially regarding many diseases related to the climate. Due to the damp and humid climate of the rainy season, the health of the people was affected and they suffered from many epidemic diseases. The most harmful diseases which affected the people of this area were Malaria, Smallpox, Dysentery, Kala-azar (Black fever) etc. Shihabuddin records that a large number of soldiers, who came to Assam with Mirjumla in the second half of the 17th century, during the rainy season to invade Assam, had to suffer from fever and dysentery and few of them lost their lives also due to the disease. Shihabuddin comments, "the climate of the parts on the banks of the Brahmaputra affects the natives and strangers alike. But at the distance from the river, though the climate agrees with the natives, it is rank poison to foreigners"31. Another harmful disease of infectious nature was Cholera, which broke out in the province many times taking the lives of many innocent people. The Buranjis record some of the instances of Cholera, which took thousands of lives. The Ahom Buranjis records that during the reign of Jayadhvaja Singha alias Shutamala (1648-1663), the province was twice attacked by Cholera. The Cholera attacked the people at the time of Mirjumla’s invasion, when almost twelve thousand Assamese soldiers had to lose their lives32. Smallpox, another epidemic

31. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan, Mirjumlar Asam Akraman, pp. 64, 65.
disease affected and took the lives of many people in the province in 1574, during the reign of Chaopha Shukham, alias Khoraraja (1552-1603)\textsuperscript{33} and in the year 1832\textsuperscript{34}. Most of the people of Assam suffered from a common disease i.e. Dysentery. People who were addicted to opium were the worst victims of Dysentery\textsuperscript{35}. During the reign of King Gaurinath Singha (A.D. 1780-1795) Cholera and Dysentery broke out simultaneously in the country and many people died\textsuperscript{36}. The other diseases prevalent in the province were Fevers, Bowel complaints, Pulmonic affections, Verminous diseases, Venereal and Cutaneous complaints, Rheumatism, Enlargement of the spleen, Goitres, Elephantiasis, Bronchitis, Asthma, Pneumonia and Leprosy\textsuperscript{37}. Besides human beings, animals also suffered from the diseases. One such reference is recorded in the \textit{Buranji}. Many cows and buffaloes died of the Pestilence during the reign of Pratap Singha alias Chaopha Shuseng (A.D. 1608-1641)\textsuperscript{38}.

2.9 Natural catastrophe:

Due to the heavy rainfall, floods were the very common and frequent natural catastrophe for the people of Assam. Every year people had to suffer a lot for flood especially the people of the riverside villages. The crops, animals and other valuable articles were washed away by the floodwater and thousands of inhabitants living in the riverside villages became homeless. One such devastating flood occurred in Assam during

\begin{itemize}
\item[33.] G.C. Barua, \textit{Ahom Buranji}, p. 82.
\item[34.] W. Robinson, \textit{A Descriptive Account of Assam}, p. 26.
\item[35.] G.C. Barua, \textit{Ahom Buranji}, p. 23; W. Robinson, \textit{A Descriptive Account of Assam}, p. 26
\item[36.] Gunabhiram Barua, \textit{Asam Buranji}, p 162.
\item[37.] S. Rajguru, Medieval Assamese Society, pp. 24-25.
\item[38.] Gunabhiram Barua, \textit{Asam Buranji}, p. 268; G.C. Barua, \textit{Ahom Buranji}, p. 105.
\end{itemize}
the reign of King Rajeswar Singha due to the rise in the river Dihing. It is said that the distress of the flood not only crushed the whole of the province but also changed the topography of the land and the courses of the river.

Additional to flood, people of Assam suffered from another natural catastrophe, Earthquake. It is one of the disastrous calamities that was found to be very frequently occurring in the province. Robinson opined that, since the land is connected with volcanic sources, earthquakes in its severe form frequently occurred here from the ages and hardly a month passed without a tremor. Sometimes it came in a terrible form and destroyed everything including the lives of the people. Gunabhiram Barua records that one terrible earthquake occurred in the province in 1759 during the reign of Rajeswar Singha and another disastrous earthquake occurred just before the first Burmese invasion.

2.10 Political History:

The Political history of ancient Assam actually begins from 4th century A.D. when the rule of Varman dynasty began. Before 4th century A.D., the political history of Pragjyotisha and Kamarupa is connected with legends and mythology. The earliest known king of Kamarupa was Mahirangadanava, who had his capital at Mairanka and he was succeeded by Hatakasur, Sambarasur, Ratnasur and Ghatakasura. Ghatakasura was described as the ruler of Kiratas who was killed by Narakasura with the help of Vishnu (who is said to be his father) and established a new line.

39. Dr. B. Kakati, Kalita Jatir Itibritta, p. 7.
40. Gunabhiram Barua, Asam Buranji, p. 5; G C. Barua, Ahom Buranji, p 283
in Pragiyotisha. All these rulers from the appellations Danav and Asur indicated that they belonged to Non-Aryans. Names of these kings are found in the later works like KP, YT and Hara-Gauri Samvada. Narakasura is an interesting character and many stories are narrated about him in the Puranas and the Tantras.

2.10.1 Kings of mythological period:

KP narrates that Naraka was born to Prithvi (the Mother Earth), through Vishnu in his boar incarnation. It is for this reason that he is called Bhauma (born of earth) and on account of his supposed divine origin, all ruling families in ancient Assam claimed descent from him. P. Gohain Barua has placed his reign in B.C. 1500. His rule extended from the Karatoya on the west to the Dikrang on the east. He settled twice born people (Aryans) in his kingdom.

Naraka was succeeded by his son Bhagadatta whose reign is placed in the middle of 1500 B.C., who is described as a contemporary of the heroes of Mahabharata, who fought with his huge army of Cinas and Kiratas in the war of Kurukshetra in support of Kauravas. Bhagadatta is commonly known in Bengal and Assam as the father of Bhanumati, the wife of the eldest Kaurava Duryodhana. It is also of historical importance that the prince of the then powerful kingdom of Hastinapur settled a marital alliance with Pragiyotisha. It is said that an old tank namely Dighali tank

41. Gait, A History of Assam, p. 11.
42. Naraka episode is narrated in KP in chap. 36-40; also in Bhagavat. Bk X. chap. 59.
46. Mhb, Drona Parva.
in the heart of present Guwahati city was excavated on the occasion of the marriage between Duryodhana and Bhanumati47. For this relationship Bhagadatta participated in the great Mbh war on the side of the Kauravas. The different chapters of Mbh narrate the story of Bhagadatta's exploits and courage in the war of Mbh and his bravery was compared to Arjuna and Indra48. He rescued Duryodhana from the clutches of Bhima and at last Arjuna killed him after a fight lasting for eight days49.

The next important king of Pragjyotisha was Vajradatta, which was proved by Doobi grant of Bhaskarvarman (v. 4), Nidhanpur grant of Bhaskarvarman (v. 5) and Gauhati grant of Indrapala (v. 8). The lineage of the ruler after Vajradatta is vague and perplexing. The Nidhanpur grant of Bhaskarvarman states that a period of three thousand years elapsed between the death of Vajradatta and the accession of Pushyavarman, the founder king of the Varman dynasty. Hieun Tsiang, the Chinese pilgrim who visited Kamarupa in the seventeenth century also records that there were a thousand generations between Visnu, the progenitor of Naraka, and the birth of Bhaskarvarman, the pilgrim's patron king50. The exact political history of Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa during this period is still shrouded in obscurity. Hara-Gauri-Samvada, YT and other Assamese chronicles name a host of kings, who appeared to have ruled before the rise of the Varmanas. According to Hara-Gauri-Samvada, Bhagadatta was succeeded by Dharmapala, Kamapala and others extending for 19 generations with 24

47. 'Jugal Das – Guwahatir Parivartan', Paura Bichitra, edt. by Sri Ramesh Chandra Kalita, p. 89
48. Mbh, Udyoga Parvan; Sahha Parvan
49. Mbh, Udyoga Parvan; Sahha Parvan.
or 25 kings. YT mentions about two kings. One was a Sudra king named Debeswara, who ruled Kamarupa in the beginning of the Saka era and the other was Nagasankara, founder of the Nagakhya dynasty, who flourished towards the end of 4th century and made his capital at Pratapagarh in Visvanath. Kamarupar Buranji mentions a Kshatriya king named Dharmapal who is said to have come from the west and founded a kingdom in west of Gauhati and was succeeded by Padmanarayan, Chandranarayan and others ending with Ramachandra, whose capital was at Ratnapur in the Majuli. According to another account, Suvali, Padmanarayan, Chandranarayan, Mahendranarayan, Gajendranarayan, Prananarayan, Ksovanarayan and Ramachandra belonged to the family of Jitari, who came from Dravida country. One Arimatta was said to be born in the house of Ramachandra, whose capital was at Baidargarh near Betna in Kamrup, where a high embankment forming a square each side of which is about four miles long is still in existence.

A number of traditions centered round Arimatta. It is said that his mother was raped by Brahmaputra and consequently Arimatta was born. Later on Arimatta unwittingly killed his foster father and for the sin of patricide, he committed suicide. But the lineage and name of Arimatta and his mother is confusing. The genealogy of the Rajas of Dimarua states that Arimatta’s mother’s Harmati was the daughter of Harabinda, a

51. Hara-Gauri Samvada chaps. VI-VII
52. P.C. Choudhury, The History of the civilization of the people of Assam to the twelfth century A.D., p. 117; Gait, A History of Assam, p. 16.
descendant of Irabhatta of Saumara and wife of Somapala of Pratappuriya, a descendant of Mayurdhvaj, Tamradhvaj of the race of Siva, who ruled the territory between Visvanath and Suvansiri and had the capital at Ratnavatipura56. Kamarupar Buranji mentions Chandraprabha as Arimatta’s mother, who was married to Pratap Singh, whose ancestors were Dharmapala, Ratnapala and Somapala57. According to another account, Chandraprabha, also called as Kamala kumari, was married to Ramachandra, who belonged to the family of Jitari58.

The cause of the death of Arimatta also remained mystery. We have already mentioned that he committed suicide due to the sin of Patricide. But an account narrates that he was defeated and killed by an army of Meches and Koches lead by a king named Phengu, belonging to the house of Kamatpur, who built a fortification called Phenguagarh in the Dhamdhama Mouza in Kamarupa59. Arimatta first defeated Phengu, but the latter with the conspiracy of Arimatta’s wife Ratnamala, spoil the bowstrings of Arimatta’s soldiers, defeated and killed him and captured his kingdom. Phengu in spite of taking Ratnamala as his wife put her to death saying that as she was faithless to her husband, she would probably ditch him also if he marries her60. Arimatta’s son Ratnasingh continued the war and took the revenge and killed Phengu but Ratnasingh lost his kingdom due to the curse of that Brahmin, with whose wife, he had illegal

56. P.C. Choudhury, The History of the civilization of the people of Assam to the twelfth century A.D., pp. 119-120.
58. IASB, 1835, p. 191.
60. Gait, A History of Assam, p. 17.
relationship\textsuperscript{61}.

Other than the above-mentioned rulers of \textit{Pragyotisha-Kamarupa}, we find the names and some details about the two legendary kings, Bhismaka of Vidarbha and Banasura of Sonitpur. \textit{Bhagavat} mentions Vidarbha as the Kingdom of Bhismaka, which according to the popular belief is the place around the present Sadiya region in the extreme northeast corner of Assam. Many archeological remains in the area are attributed to Bhismaka and Sisupala. Bhismaka’s capital was at Kundina, situated on the bank of the river Kundil, which flows through Sadiya. About 24 miles north of Sadiya, between the ravines of the Dikrang and Dibang rivers, the remains of an extensive fort are found, which Hannay has described as the remains of Bhismaka’s capital\textsuperscript{62}. In the same locality, four large tanks and brick foundations are found, which according to the historians might be of some extensive buildings\textsuperscript{63}. The story of Bhismaka and Rukmini is narrated in \textit{Bhagavat}\textsuperscript{64} and the \textit{VP}\textsuperscript{65} as well as in the \textit{Rukmini-Haran} of Sankaradeva. King Bhismak had five sons and a beautiful daughter named Rukmini, who in spite of her betrothal, was kidnapped and married by Krishna. The Chutiyas, who came into power towards the close of the 12\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. traced their descent from Bhismaka\textsuperscript{66}. According to P.C. Choudhury, Bhismaka was probably a king from \textit{Kalita desa} and Bhismaka’s capital was located in a place, where a

\textsuperscript{61} Gait, A History of Assam, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{62} Hannay, \textit{JASB}, vol. XVII, i, pp. 459f.
\textsuperscript{63} Gait, A History of Assam, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{64} Srimad Bhagavat, Xth Skanda.
\textsuperscript{65} Vishnu Purana, Bk. V, chap., XXVI.
\textsuperscript{66} S.L. Baruah, A comprehensive history of Assam, p 86.
colony of the *Kalitas* was believed to have settled.\(^{67}\)

Another legendary king named Banasura is mentioned in *Bhagavat*,\(^ {68}\) KP\(^ {69}\) and VP\(^ {70}\). Banasura was said to be the contemporary and friend of Narakasura. Bana’s kingdom was extended in the east as far as the modern district of Lakhimpur and in the west probably to North Bengal\(^ {71}\). His capital city was Sonitpur (the city of blood) presently known as Tezpur. Bana was an *asura* king or non-Aryan king and a devout worshipper of Siva. The Siva temple of Mahabhairab in the modern town of Tezpur is attributed to him. He is said to be the son of Bali of Marichi’s family. Bana had many sons but one daughter named Usha. The story of Usha’s gandharva marriage with Aniruddha, the grandson of Sri Krishna with the help of Usha’s artist and magician friend Chitralekha is narrated in a well-known Assamese poetical work *Kumar-Haran* by Sankaradeva.

Bana’s fort is supposed to have been at the same site, where the Tezpur court is situated today. Some ancient ruins lying scattered in that area are ascribed to him. The Agnigarh hill (where some ancient relics of a temple or a building lie scattered along with frescos) is said to have been the place, where Bana concealed his daughter. About a mile from Tezpur town towards the west are seen two tanks, one of which is attributed to Bana and the other to his Prime Minister Kumbhanda. Bana’s grandson Bhaluk made his capital at Bhalukpung near Balipara at the foot of the Aka hills.

\(^{67}\) HCPA, p. 120.
\(^{68}\) Srimad Bhagavat, Xth Skanda.
\(^{69}\) KP, chap. 39
\(^{70}\) Vishnu Purana, Bk. V, chap. XXXII.
\(^{71}\) P.C. Cloudbury, The History of the civilization of the people of Assam to the twelfth century A.D., p. 114; D.R. Bhandarkar, Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, vol. XII, pp. 103f.
where the remains of an old fortification are still seen. The Aka tribe of Arunachal Pradesh claims its descent from this prince.\(^\text{72}\)

Like Sadiya and Sonitpura, there are historical evidences of the existence of kingdoms like Manipur, Kadali, Davaka, Hidimba, and Tripura. It seems that these independent kingdoms accepted the sovereignty of the larger kingdom of Kamarupa and consequently brought under the hegemony of Kamarupa. Let us go through these kingdoms briefly.

Mbh mentions about Manipur, which was the kingdom of king Chitravahana, the father of Chitrangada. Many historians believe that Manipur mentioned in the Mbh is the modern Manipur of the Northeast India. Arjuna came to this land and married Chitravahana’s only daughter Chitrangada. They had a son named Babruvahana, who later became the king of Manipur. There was a traditional belief among the rulers, chiefs and nobles of Manipur that they were the descendants of Arjuna. Maharaja Sura Chandra (1886-90) claimed for himself direct descent from Babruvahana in his letter to the viceroy.\(^\text{81}\)

\(^{72}\) Gait, A History of Assam, p. 16.
\(^{73}\) S.S. Ahmed, JARS, III, pp. 66-69
\(^{74}\) R.M. Nath, JARS, VII, pp. 19-23.
\(^{75}\) V. Smith, Early History of India, p. 316; R.M. Nath, JARS, 1937, p. 15.
\(^{76}\) S.S. Ahmed, JARS, III, p. 67.
\(^{77}\) K. L. Barua, JARS, III, pp. 92-98.
\(^{78}\) P.C. Choudhury, The History of the civilization of the people of Assam to the twelfth century A.D., p. 126.
\(^{79}\) Mbh, Adi Parva and Ashwamedha Parva.
Hidimba was another kingdom mentioned in the Mbh\textsuperscript{82}. Hidimba was named after the name of Hidimba, wife of Bheema, one of the Pandava princes. Hidimba and Bheema had a son named Ghatotkacha. According to some historians, modern Dimapur was the capital city of Ghatotkacha. The place was formerly known as Dimapur or Hidimbapur, as Hidimb, the brother of Ghatotkacha's mother and Bheema's wife Hidimba, established it\textsuperscript{83}. According to certain traditions, Hidimba is said to be the Kachari princess and the southern branch of the Kacharis claimed their descent from Ghatotkacha\textsuperscript{84}. It was also proved from the fact that the king since the closing years of the century was styled "Lord of Hidimba" and since then the name 'Hidimba' frequently occurred in their inscriptions and other records of the period. From this it has been suggested that 'Hidimba' was the actual name of the kachari kingdom and Dimapur is a corruption of Hidimbapur\textsuperscript{85}.

We get the name of the kingdom of Kadali in the Buddhist tantrik work of Pag Som Zon Zan and Gorakshavijaya, which states that the kingdom of Kadali was also known as Narirajya as it was ruled by a woman ruler named Kamala with the help of her sister and ministers in the end of the 10th and 11th century A.D\textsuperscript{86}. This kingdom of Narirajya was located by some Historians in Manipur or Burma\textsuperscript{87} or Cachar or even in the

\textsuperscript{82} Mbh, Adi Parva.  
\textsuperscript{83} Mbh, Adi Parva, 67; Gait, A history of Assam, p. 246; N.N. Vasu, The social history of Kamarupa, Vol. I, pp. 43-44, 97-98.  
\textsuperscript{84} Gait, A history of Assam, p. 240.  
\textsuperscript{85} S.L. Barna, A comprehensive history of Assam, p. 189.  
\textsuperscript{87} Mamamati Gan, p. 22 (f.n. 2).
North-Western Frontier. But it is rather to be located in the Kadali in Nowgong, ruled probably by a Kachari or a Jaintia queen, who enjoyed the liberty accorded to women by the Tantrik-Buddhists. According to P.C. Choudhury, the queen was ruling the kingdom possibly as feudatory of the Palas of Assam.

Davaka was a kingdom mentioned in the Allahabad pillar inscriptions of Samudragupta. It is associated with the Kapili valley in modern Nowgong in Assam, because even today it contains a place called Davaka. According to P.C. Choudhury, Davaka was not as old as Pragjyotisha and may have been founded shortly before the 4th century A.D.

All the above-mentioned incidents prove that Pragjyotisha or Kamarupa was an important kingdom in the mythological period though the chronological political history or evidences of the period before the fourth century A.D. are found to be missing.

2.10.2 Political history of Varman dynasty:

The reliable and chronological political history of ancient Kamarupa begins with the foundation of the Varman dynasty. With the rise of the kings of Varman dynasty, disappeared the uncertainty, which enveloped the early history of the land. During the period, Kamarupa also

88. H.C. Chakladar, Social life in Ancient India, pp. 59f.
91. V. Smith, Early History of India, p. 316.
emerged as an important political power in the history of India after a long period of oblivion following the great Mhib war. The history of the Varman dynasty is known from the account of Hien-Tsiang as well as from the Nidhanpur grant93, the Doobi grant94 and the three clay seals of Bhaskarvarman95. The Nidhanpur grant contains the names of thirteen kings and ten queens belonging to Pushyavarman’s family. Pushyavarman, the founder ruler of Varman dynasty ruled the kingdom of Kamarupa in the middle part of the 4th century A.D96. He was succeeded in the direct line in turn by the following kings, the names of their queens being added in brackets: -Samudravarman (Dattadevi), Balavarman (Ratnavati), Kalyanavarman (Gandharvavati), Ganapativarman (Yajnavati), Mahendravarman (Suvara), Narayanavarman (Devavati), Mahabhutavarman (Vijnavati), Chandramukhavarman (Bhogavati), Sthitarvarman (Nayanadevi), Susthitavarman alias Mriganka (Shyamadevi), Supratishtitavarman and Bhaskarman (it is not known whether the last mentioned two kings were married or not).

Pushyavarman was succeeded by his son Samudravarman. The assumption of the title of Maharajadhiraja suggests that, like his father, he ruled as an independent king97. Samudravarman was followed by Balavarman I, who was a great warrior98. Balavarman is however considered to be the father of princess Amritaprabha99, who was married

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93. EI, Vol. XII, pp. 65-79.
97. Clay seals of Bhaskarvarman, line 2.
98. Nidhanpur grant, V. 9.
to king Meghavahana of Kashmir and for whose marriage an *swayambara* was held at which Meghavahana, king of the Kashmir married her in the presence of all\(^{100}\). Kalyanavarman became the successor of Balavarman. According to P.C. Choudhury, it is possible that Kalyanavarman took the Kapili valley under his control, ousted its king who was perhaps the lord of Tripura and signalized his victory by sending a diplomatic mission to China\(^{101}\). The successors of Kalyanavarman were Ganapativarman, Mahendravarman and Narayanavarman. Except Mahendravarman, nothing important is recorded in the reigns of other rulers. Mahendravarman was the first important ruler of the Varman dynasty, who was the repository of all sacrifices\(^{102}\). According to Doobi grant, he “conquered the earth with the ocean as her outskirts, subjugated his enemy through his power, and performed many sacrifices like Indra\(^{103}\). The references prove that he extended his kingdom up to Bengal. “He was the first ruler of *Kamarupa*, who not only shook off the last vestiges of the Gupta influence or allegiance, but also tried to carve out an empire at the cost of his neighbours”\(^{104}\). His independent status and political influence over his neighbours are also indicated by the performance of his two *Asvamedha* sacrifices\(^{105}\). He appears to be the first *Kamarupa* king to celebrate horse sacrifices, which is no doubt of much political importance\(^{106}\).

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102. Doobi grant, v. 12.
105. Nalanda clay seal of Bhaskara, Line. 5.
106. In the opinion of D.C. Sircar, IHQ, vol. XXI, pp. 143-45, the credit of performing the first *Asvamedha* in Kamarupa should be given to Narayanavarman. But the text in the Nalanda Clay seal makes it clear that it was Mahendravarman, who performed two horse sacrifices.
The next important ruler of the Varman dynasty was Mahabhutivarman or Bhutivarman, the grandson of Mahendravarman, who continued the territorial expansion of the kingdom. His reign forms a brilliant chapter of military glory in the early history of Kamarupa. On the basis of his Badaganga epigraph dated GE. 234 = 553-54 AD, his reign may be placed between 510-55 AD. In this long reign of 45 years, he conquered the neighbouring kingdoms and made the Kamarupa kingdom one of the important political powers in the Eastern India. The grants praise the power of the arms of this king. Fleet mentions that Bhutivarman might have contested with the Later Guptas, petty chiefs of Southern and Eastern Bengal, and Yasodharman of Malwa, who is said to have conquer India up to the river Lauhitya. As evidenced in Nidhanpur and Doobi grants, Bhutivarman donated lands to more than 200 families of Brahmanas in Pundravardhana bhukti (roughly north Bengal) lying to the west of Trisrota or Teesta, which proves his conquest in the territories in Pundravardhana and also of his patronage of learning and education. The importance of these conquests made and the extension of the kingdom under Bhutivarman become evident from his performance of an Aswamedha yajna referred to in the Badaganga epigraph. He was the first king of Kamarupa to extend the western frontier of the kingdom beyond the river Karatoya and ruled over North Bengal and the outlying regions of Samatata, Tripura, Sylhet, Cachar, Davaka including the greater portions of modern Assam in the east.

108. Fleet, C.I.I., III, p. 142 (line 4-5)
Bhutivarman was followed by his son Chandramukhavannan (A.D. 555-65). His reign has not been marked by any important activities. He was followed by his son Sthitavarman, who was a man of knowledge and was well versed in the various *Sastras* and *Vedas*\(^\text{10}\). He performed his coronation ceremony according to the *Vedic* rites\(^\text{11}\), the first of its kind in the early history of *Kamarupa*. The Doobi grant (v. 49) speaks that he constructed a capital city on the bank of the Brahmaputra along with his friends and followers. According to P.C. Choudhury, the new city was the extension of *Pragjyotisha* and he had under him a large number of feudatory rulers, who might have been the rulers of Tripura, Sylhet, Davaka, Cachar or even of southeast Bengal\(^\text{12}\). The Nalanda clay seal (Line 7) credits him of performing two horse sacrifices, which indicates the growing power and prosperity of the kingdom. Sthitavarman was succeeded by his son Susthitavarman, who was renowned as Mriganka. The Harsacarita mentions him as a powerful monarch and gives him the title of *Maharajadhiraja*\(^\text{13}\). It appears from the Apshad inscription of Adityasena that the later Gupta monarch Mahasenagupta led an expedition against Susthitavarman. It is also recorded that he was defeated by Mahasenagupta\(^\text{14}\). The Nidhanpur grant (v. 19) also contains a vague reference to this defeat of Susthitavarman, wherein it is said that he “gave away the goddess of royal fortune, like the earth to supplicants”. As a result of the defeat,

\(^{10}\) Doobi grant, v. 50.
\(^{11}\) Doobi grant, v. 40.
\(^{12}\) P.C. Choudhury, *The History of the civilization of the people of Assam to the twelfth century A.D.*, p. 156.
\(^{13}\) Harsacarita, edt. by Cowell & F.W. Thomas, p. 217.
\(^{14}\) C.I.I, III, pp. 200-08.
Kamarupa lost her possessions in North Bengal and the western boundary of Kamarupa was pushed back to the Karatoya.

Susthitavarman had two sons, Supratisthitavarman and Bhaskaravarman. Supratisthitavarman had a premature death after a very short reign. He was succeeded by his illustrious brother Bhaskaravarman, whose long reign of more than 50 years (A.D. 594-650) formed a brilliant chapter in the history of early Assam. He was not only the greatest king of this family but also a remarkable ruler of ancient India. He was a contemporary of Harsavardhana (606-648 A.D.), the most powerful king of northern India of the time. Bhaskaravarman's grants reveals about his kingly qualities, devotion towards duties and love towards his people. He also contributed to the proper organization of the State and the enhancement of the glory of the kingdom, both by peaceful means and wars. Bhaskaravarman's activities were not confined to the bounds of his kingdom; he played an important role in the political history of northern India in the first half of the 7th century A.D. He had political relations with the leading powers of his time by means of war and diplomacy. The most memorable event in the career of Bhaskaravarman was his alliance with Harsa, made at the beginning of his reign. This alliance proved to be prolific for Bhaskara as it helped to bring fresh glory to Kamarupa and enabled it to participate in pan-Indian politics. This alliance was made to campaign against Sasanka,

115. HCPA, p. 162. P.C. Choudhury believes that when Mahasenagupta invaded Kamarupa for the second time both Supratisthita and his brother Bhaskara opposed him, and immediately after the war. Supratisthita died, perhaps from a wound received while fighting, at which Bhaskara became king.
116. Nidhanpur grant, vv. 22-25.
the ruler of Gauda, who was the common enemy of both Bhaskara and Harsa.

During the reign of Susthitavarman, Kamarupa had already lost Pundravardhana to Mahasenagupta, which was under the suzerainty of the kings of Kamarupa for nearly half a century ago. This incident had greatly blemished the political and military glory of the kingdom and Bhaskara wanted to enhance the prestige of Kamarupa not only by the retrieval of the lost Pundravardhana but also extending the limits of his kingdom. During the reign of Bhaskara, Pundravardhana was ruled by Sasanka, who was also the rival of Harsavardhana. Sasanka, in league with Devagupta of Malva had killed king Grahavarman Maukhari of Kanauj and imprisoned the widowed queen Rajyasri, who happened to be Harsha's sister. Immediately after, Sasanka treacherously murdered Rajyavardhana, the elder brother of Harsavardhana. After the assassination of Rajyavardhana, Harsa had to ascend the throne at Thaneswara and his first intention was to avenge his brother's murder and rescue his sister Rajyasri by driving away Sasanka from Kanauj.

The removal of Sasanka was also of immediate concern for Bhaskara to achieve the lost possession of Pundravardhana. Hence to seek Harsha's alliance, Bhaskara immediately sent his ambassador Hamsavega with the proposal to meet Harsha, when the latter was marching (606 A.D.) against Sasanka. Hamsavega met Harsa, when the latter had completed only one day's march from Kanauj, on the bank of the river Sarasvati with rich presents including the famous parasol
of Varuna. Harsha had indeed, for some time past been desirous of becoming Bhaskara’s friend, he was also in need of an ally at that moment. He therefore, heartily accepted the offer and sent the ambassador with valuable presents as well as compliments to king Bhaskarvarman. Thus was formed an offensive and defensive alliance between two independent monarchs of northern and eastern India, which the author of the Harsacarita compares with the traditionally famous alliance between Kuvera and Siva, Dasaratha and Indra, Dhananjaya and Krishna and between Karna and Durjyodhana. It is believed that the new alliance proved to be a source of apprehension to the Gauda king, for while Harsha’s cousin and general Bhandi attacked him from the west, Bhaskara fell upon him from the east. It appears that unable to face this two-fold attack, Sasanka fled to the south and consequently Gauda with its capital city Karnasuvarna, came to the possession of Bhaskara. This is also proved by Nidhanpur grant of Bhaskara, issued from his victorious military camp at Karnasuvarna in Bengal.

Another event which crowns the career of Bhaskara and adds luster to the history of ancient Assam is the visit of the reputed Chinese pilgrim Hieun-Tsiang to Kamarupa in 642-43 A.D. Hieun-Tsiang left a valuable account of Kamarupa, which throws much light on the

118. Harsacarita, p. 218.
119. R.G. Basak, History of North Eastern India, p. 223
120. Harsacarita, pp. 218.
121. Harsacarita, p. 218.
122. K.L. Barua, Early History of Kamarupa, p. 67-68; P.C. Choudhury, The History of the civilization of the people of Assam to the twelfth century A D., p. 171; Basak, History of North Eastern India, p. 226 opines that Harsha wrested Gauda either from Sasanka or his yet unknown successor in a second attempt and made it over to his ally Bhaskarvarman who might have annexed it to his kingdom, which does not appear to rest on any foundation
accomplishments of Bhaskara, condition of the kingdom and social life of the people. Bhaskaravarman was perhaps the most illustrious of all the monarchs of ancient Assam. Inscriptions bear testimony to his many sided qualities and accomplishment. Because of his patronage, Kamarupa became a noted centre of learning, attracting students from outside. The Doobi grant (vv. 54-55) records that his intellect was matured by listening to the essence of the meaning of the various sastras. It is learnt from the Chinese sources that Bhaskara evinced keen interest in philosophy and literature of China and wanted to read some great Chinese classics in Sanskrit translation. He asked the envoys of Li-Yi-Piao and Wang-hiuen-tse during their visit to India, to send him a portrait of Lao-tse and a Sanskrit translation of the Tao-the-king¹²³, in which the teachings of Lao-tse are enshrined.

Bhaskaravarman perhaps died as a celibate because no successor of him was mentioned in any inscription or literature. We do not get any reference to his wife or his marriage from Harsacarita or the accounts left by Hiuen Tsiang or any of the contemporary records. It also appears that disorder and chaos emerged shortly after Bhaskaravarman's death, and taking the advantage of the anarchism, the kingdom of Kamarupa was usurped by Salastambha, who founded a new line of kings. That Salastambha took advantage of an anarchical situation is indicated in the text of the Bargaon grant of Ratnapala (v. 9), the second in the Pala line of kings who succeeded the Salastambhas.

2.10.3 Kings of Salastambha family:

Salastambha was a powerful king. This is clear from the text of a grant of Harjaravarman, where he has been described as 'a tiger-like king'. From the Bargaon grant of Ratnapala (v. 9), we come to the conclusion that Salastambha was an mleccha chief (mlecchadhinatho vidhicalanavasadeva jagraha rajyam). According to the above epigraph (vv. 9-10), a line of 20 kings ending with Tyagasingha succeeded Salastambha. The genealogy given in the records of the family traces its descent from the ancient Bhauma dynasty. It was probably Salastambha, who shifted the capital city Pragjyotishpur to the present Tezpur area and named it after the name of his tutelary deity Hataka or Hetuka Sulin as Hatakeswara or Haruppeswara. We have only scanty records of this family amongst which only one is dated. (Tezpur Rock Inscription of Harjaravarman, dated GE. 510 = A.D 829-30). Salastambha was followed by Vigraha (Vijaya), Palaka, Kumara and Vajradeva, about whom all available records are silent. Nothing important is recorded of their reigns.

After these insignificant rulers came Sri Harshadeva, also known as Sri Harsha or Harsavarman, whose reign forms another glorious chapter in the history of Kamarupa. The Hayunthul grants (v. 6) mention him as a king of great proficiency and piety, who protected his subjects as his own children and never ill-treated them. The Pasupati epigraph of the Nepal king Jayadeva II mentions a king named Sri Harshadeva, who

124. Hayunthul copper plates of Harjaravarman, v. 3
125. B.K. Barua, A cultural History of Assam, p. 36.
126. Hayunthul grant, vv. 4-5.
has been described as *Gaudradi-Kalinga-Kosala-pati* or lord of Gauda, Odra, Kalinga, Kosala and other lands and whose daughter Rajyamati, a descendant of Bhatta's race was married to the said Nepal king\(^{127}\). Therefore, after Bhaskaravarman, kingdom of *Kamarupa* under the leadership of Harshadeva once again became powerful and held its sway over the distant lands of Bengal, Orissa, Kalinga and Kosala. This was the highest peak of the military glory of ancient Assam, when its arms extended its sway to, besides Gauda, a great part of Orissa, part of Magadha and the northern part of Madras state (present Tamil Nadu), including south Kosala\(^{128}\). Even though for a brief period, *Kamarupa* did become "the suzerain power over nearly half of northern India from Sadiya in the east to Ayodhya in the west and from Himalayas on the north as far as the Bay of Bengal and Ganjam to the south"\(^{129}\).

Harshadeva was succeeded by his son Balavarman\(^{130}\). His achievements are not mentioned in the inscriptions. The period after Balavarman is obscure, the records of the family do not give a continuous genealogy, nor do they throw light on his immediate successor. The Hayunthul grant mentions two princes, Chakra and Arathi, who perhaps did not reign\(^{131}\). The names of two more kings are found namely Jivara and Diglekhavarman from two stone inscriptions discovered from the Deopani site in the present sub-division of Golaghat\(^{132}\). The next important

\(^{127}\) IA, IX, p. 179; Fleet, C.I I. III, Intro, p. 179.
\(^{129}\) K.L. Barua, Early History of Kamarupa, p. 71.
\(^{130}\) Hayunthul grant, v. 7.
\(^{131}\) P.C. Choudhury, The History of the civilization of the people of Assam to the twelfth century A.D., p. 207.
\(^{132}\) For details, vide, IAA, pp. 310-12
ruler of the dynasty was Pralambha or Salambha. The grants of Vanamala speaks highly of his qualities and war-like activities. But the enemies and territories conquered by him are difficult to be identified. Pralambha was succeeded by Harjaravarman. Harjara was perhaps the first of this line of kings to perform his coronation ceremony according to Vedic rites and probably also the first of the Kamarupa kings to assume high-sounding epithets like Maharaja-dhiraja Parameswara Paramabhattacharak. It may be conjectured that Harjaravarman wielded great power. Harjara built a lofty temple for Hetuka Sulin and rows of stately buildings in the capital city at Haruppeswara. Extensive ruins of temples and buildings in and around Tezpur along with the existence of a big tank called Harjjjarapukhuri bear testimony to Harjjara's patronage of art and architecture and his attention to public works.

Harjjara was succeeded by his son Vanamala. The latter was a very powerful ruler and ruled for a longer period from A.D. 835-65. In his Tezpur grant and Parvatiya plates he is given the high-sounding epithet Parameswara Paramabhattacharak Maharaja-dhiraja. Vanamala granted land to a Brahman near Candrapuri, on the west of Trisrota river (Tista), which indicates his victory and recovery of Kamarupa's lost possessions in Bengal. The Tezpur grant (v. 17) refers to his territory as "extending to the lines of forests as far as the seashore", which indicates the extension of his dominion over the hilly regions in the north and east as well as over south-east Bengal, including Sylhet, Mymensingh, portions of Dacca, Samatata and the neighbouring lands. Vanamala encouraged trade and

133. KS, p. 52 fn. 3.
commerce as well. Regular payment of tributes by the feudatories is indicated by the Nowgong grant (vv. 16-19). Vanamala abdicated the throne in favour of his son Jayamala and fasted unto death\textsuperscript{135}. Jayamala’s another name was Virbahu, who married a princess named Amba, who was equal to him “in point of family, beauty and age”\textsuperscript{136}. \textit{Ranastambha} and \textit{Sangramstambha} is said to be one of the thirty-two \textit{birudas} of Jayamala, which indicates his warlike activities\textsuperscript{137}. But his conquests are not mentioned in the grants. Attacked by a serious disease, he abdicated the throne in favour of his son Balavarman III\textsuperscript{138}, who was the last important ruler of this family. Balavarman, according to his grants assumed the title of \textit{Maharajadhiraja Paramesvara Paramabhattacharaka}, which indicates his power and domination. His grants referred to about his enemies, whom he conquered\textsuperscript{139}. But the identification of the enemies is missing. He probably made fresh conquests in Bengal defeating the Pala ruler Narayanpala\textsuperscript{140}. This is proved by his land donation in Hensiva within the Dijjina-visaya lying to the west of Teesta or Karatoya in Purdravardhana\textsuperscript{141}. No account is available of the successors of Balavarman III.

There is a long gap in the historical account of the period between the reign of Balavarman III and Tyagasingha, the last king of the family. We do not know anything about the reign of Tyagasingha, who is simply called

\begin{itemize}
\item [135.] Nowgong grant, vv. 16-17.
\item [136.] Nowgong grant, v. 18.
\item [137.] P.C. Choudhury, The History of the civilization of the people of Assam to the twelfth century A.D., p. 221.
\item [138.] Nowgong grant, vv. 21-23; Uttarbarbil plates, vv. 22-24.
\item [139.] Nowgong grant, vv. 24f.
\item [140.] P.C. Choudhury, The History of the civilization of the people of Assam to the twelfth century A.D., p. 223.
\item [141.] P. Bhattacharya, KS, p. 165; JARS., II, pp. 82-84; P.C Choudhury, The History of the civilization of the people of Assam to the twelfth century A.D., p. 223
\end{itemize}
an illustrious chief in the Bargaon grant of Ratnapala. Tyagasingha perhaps
died childless and left no successors, which is evident from the Bargaon
grant of Ratnapala.\

2.10.4 Kings of the Pala family:

After Tyagasingha, the kingdom of Kamarupa passed into the
hands of a new line namely Pala which was founded by Brahmapala. It
seems that Brahmapala was made king by the people and ministers of
Kamarupa, which is indicated in the Bargoan grant. It states that "When
Tyagasingha the 21st king of Salastambha family, departed from this world
without leaving any of his race to succeed him, the subjects thinking it
well that a Bhauma (i.e., Naraka's race) should be appointed as their lord,
chose Brahmapala, a kinsman of the deceased ruler, on account of his
fitness to undertake the government of the country". He married a lady
who by reason of devotion and affection for the subjects assumed the name
Kuladevi. Seven kings in the line succeeded Brahmapala. He is described
as a great warrior and called Maharajadhira in the epigraph of his son
Ratnapala.

Ratnapala was the first powerful king of this dynasty, which
is indicated by his imperial title Paramesvara Paramabhattacharaka
Maharajadhira. He ruled for a long period that is evident from his
Sualkuchi grant, which was issued, in the 26th year of his reign. His
epigraphs mention about his war-like activities, which probably refer to

142. Bargaon grant of Ratnapala, v. 10.
143. Bargaon grant of Ratnapala, v. 10.
144. Bargaon grant of Ratnapala, v. 12.
his suppressing the rebellious chiefs within Kamarupa proper or in North Bengal. In the land grant of his grandson Indra Pala, he is described as the mighty crusher of his enemies. Ratnapala had beautified and well fortified the city of Hadapayaka and renamed it as 'Durjaya', the impregnable one. His Bargaon grant records that the excellent fortification of Durjaya was a source of anxiety to a number of contemporary Indian powers like the ruler of Gurjara, Gauda, Kerala and Deccan. Some scholars opine that Ratnapala actually came into conflict with these powers. That he defeated a king of Gauda named Rajyapala is evident from an inscription belonging to one of his successors Gopala. Some Deccan princes also led an expedition against Kamarupa. Katare suggests the Deccan king was no other than the Chalukya prince Vikramaditya Kalyani. The capital city of Durjaya was inhabited by hundreds of wealthy people and was a place of resort for the learned men, religious preceptors and poets. This indicates that Ratnapala greatly encouraged trade and commerce as well as learning and education.

Indrapala, the grandson of Ratnapala succeeded him because the latter’s son Purandarpala died as Yuvaraja. Indrapala ruled for a longer period, as he issued his Guakuchi grant in the 21st year of his reign. Indrapala was addicted to study and during his reign the country enjoyed

146. Gauhati grant, v. 15.
147. Bargaon grant, Lines 34-36.
149. Gauhati Inscription, v. 16.
152. Gauhati grant, v. 13; Guakuchi grant, vv. 11-12.
peace and prosperity so pronounce his Gauhati grant\textsuperscript{153}. At the same time, he vanquished the enemy by dint of his might and could command respect from his numerous vassal chiefs\textsuperscript{154}. He defeated Kalyana Chandra, son of Sri Chandra of Vanga, who was the vanquisher of a king of Gauda\textsuperscript{155}. The land donation in the area of Pundravardhana\textsuperscript{156} indicates that North Bengal was probably under the suzerainty of Indrapala. He established relations with Rashtrakutas by marrying a princess of that dynasty\textsuperscript{157}. Indrapala was succeeded by his son Gopala. The king had personal charm, merit and intelligence, munificence as well as success in war to his credit\textsuperscript{158}. It appears that he consolidated his father's conquests in Pundravardhana\textsuperscript{159}. Gopala's son Harshapala was a man of learning who is credited with composition of some verses in the \textit{Kavindra vachana samuchchaya}\textsuperscript{160}. Harshapala was a weak ruler. He was defeated by Jatavarman of Bengal resulting to the loss of an important portion of the kingdom in Pundravardhana\textsuperscript{161}.

Harshapala's son Dharmapala was the last important ruler of the Pala dynasty. Dharmapala was a powerful king. He restored the lost glory of the kingdom by conquering Pundravardhana and granted lands as a mark of his victory. His Khonamukhi grants (vv. 12-14) and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{153} Gauhati grant, vv. 15-16.
\item \textsuperscript{154} Khonamukhi grant, v. 7; Subhankarapataka grant, v. 7.
\item \textsuperscript{155} Gachtal inscription, v. 21.
\item \textsuperscript{156} Guakuchi grant
\item \textsuperscript{157} Gachtal inscription, v. 23.
\item \textsuperscript{158} Khonamukhi grant, vv. 8-9; Subhankarapataka grant, vv. 8-9.
\item \textsuperscript{159} P.C. Choudhury, The History of the civilization of the people of Assam to the twelfth century A.D., p. 239.
\item \textsuperscript{160} \textit{Kavindra vachana samuchchaya}, ed. F.W. Thomas, pp. 48, cited in P.C Choudhury, The History of the civilization of the people of Assam to the twelfth century A.D., p 239
\item \textsuperscript{161} P.C. Choudhury, The History of the civilization of the people of Assam to the twelfth century A.D., p. 240.
\end{itemize}
Subhankarpataka grants (vv. 12-14) state that he was the lord of the region girdled by the ocean. This points to his political sway towards southeast Bengal adjoining the sea\textsuperscript{162}. Dharmapala thus succeeded in pushing back the western boundary of the kingdom beyond the river Karatoya. Dharmapala was also a great patron of religion and learning. He was also a poet. He composed the first eight verses of the Puahpabhadra grant\textsuperscript{163}. Ten verses in the \textit{Sadukti Karnamrita} of Sridharadasa are attributed to him\textsuperscript{164}. It is also said that the famous \textit{Kalika Purana} was written under his patronage\textsuperscript{165}.

Jayapala, whose name occurs in the Silimpur stone slab inscription probably succeeded Dharmapala\textsuperscript{166}, wherein it is mentioned that Brahmana Prahasa did not accept the gift of 900 gold coins and grant of a land in Pundravardhana from the Kamarupa king Jayapala\textsuperscript{167}. On the basis of Sandhyakara Nandi’s \textit{Ramacarita}, which states that a general of Ramapala named Mayana, conquered \textit{Kamarupa}\textsuperscript{168}, it is believed that this \textit{Kamarupa} king was Jayapala\textsuperscript{169}. But it is not clear that whether Ramapala absorbed \textit{Kamarupa} as a part of his kingdom or not, but he appointed one Tingyadeva as a ruler of \textit{Kamarupa}. The Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva does not mention Tingyadeva as the ruler of \textit{Kamarupa}, but refers to him as a prince who ruled to the east of the Pala dominion (\textit{Gauda}).

\textsuperscript{162} P.C. Choudhury, The History of the civilization of the people of Assam to the twelfth century A.D., p. 243.
\textsuperscript{163} Pushpabhadra grant, v. 8.
\textsuperscript{164} E. Ramavatara Sarma, Punjab Oriental Series, XV, no. 162, 1933, Intro, p. 63; According to A.A. Macdonell, History of Sanskrit Literature, p. 379, the said work might have compiled in about 1205 A.D.
\textsuperscript{165} K.L. Barua, Early History of Kamarupa, p. 105.
\textsuperscript{166} KS, Intro, pp. 36-37.
\textsuperscript{167} E.I., XIII, (v. 22), pp. 283.
\textsuperscript{168} Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, V., pp 93.
\textsuperscript{169} K.L. Barua, Early History of Kamarupa, p. 148
2.10.5 Later kings of Kamarupa:

Vaidyadeva succeeded Tingyadeva as the feudatory ruler of Kamarupa. When Tingyadeva revolted against Kumarapala then the latter sent his minister Vaidyadeva to suppress the revolt, who after defeating and killing Tingyadeva became the ruler of Kamarupa. Vaidyadeva however, did not remain a feudatory ruler. He soon declared himself independent, possibly after the death of Kumarapala and assumed the imperial title Maharajadhiraja Paramesvara Paramabhattaraka after occupying the throne of Kamarupa proper. Vaidyadeva was thus the first from Gauda to conquer Kamarupa and to establish his rule in the kingdom. Vaidyadeva was a devout worshipper of Vishnu and a Brahmaṇa. He thus established, though for a short time, a Brahmaṇa dynasty in Kamarupa.

The successor of Vaidyadeva is uncertain. Dr. H.C. Ray believes that his brother Budhadeva, who helped and supported Vaidyadeva in capturing the throne of Kamarupa, succeeded him. Another inscription of the period namely the Assam plates of Vallabhadeva dated SE 1107 (A.D. 1185) refers to a new line of kings consisting of Rayarideva, Udaykarna and Vallabhadeva. Among these kings, Vallabhadeva was a powerful king, being eulogized as a great hero. At the end of 12th century, Lakshmanasena of Bengal invaded Kamarupa by defeating Vallabhadeva as recorded in the Madhainagar grant. None of these rulers was powerful enough to

170 E.I., II, p. 347.
171 B.K Barua, A cultural History of Assam, p. 40.
172 Dr. H.C. Ray, Dynastic History of Northern India, I, p. 258
174 Kamauli grant, V. 10.
175 P.C. Choudhury, The History of the civilization of the people of Assam to the twelfth century A.D., p. 255.
hold the large kingdom of Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa intact. Consequently disintegration of the powerful kingdom of Kamarupa began and it split up into several parts.

2.10.6 Disintegration of the kingdom of Kamarupa:

A number of independent or semi-independent kingdoms or principalities of the feudatory ruler and Mongoloid chiefs emerged both in the eastern and western part of Kamarupa. Amongst the new kingdoms or independent territories that sprang up were the kingdoms of Kamata, the Koches the Bhuyan chieftains, the Morans, the Barahis, the Kalitas, the Chutiyas, the Kachharies and the Ahoms. But an accurate historical account of each of these kingdoms except that of Ahoms and the Koches is not possible due to the dearth of materials and unsettled nature of the period. Whatever historical account is available about these kingdoms, it is mainly from the Ahom chronicles and the Vamsavalis of the Koch kings.

2.10.6.1 The Kamata kingdom:

The Kamarupa kingdom was called Kamata kingdom when the capital was shifted from Gauhati (Kamarupanagar) to Kamatapur, a few miles away from the present Kochbehar town. Henceforth the Kamarupa kings came to be known by the designation Kamateswar or Kameswara also and their “kingdom included only the Goalpara and Kamrup districts of the modern Assam valley, besides a portion of northern Bengal and a portion of Mymensing to the east of the Brahmaputra then flowing through that district”\textsuperscript{176}. The credit of shifting the capital to

\textsuperscript{176} K.L. Barua, Early History of Kamarupa, p 242.
Kamatapura goes to King Sandhya of *Kamarupa* and he was the first king of the kingdom so designated. Going a step ahead, K.L. Barua supposes that the Kamata Kings styled themselves as *Gaudesvar* also, as a part of *Gauda* was within their kingdom. Many rulers came in succession to rule the Kamata kingdom, but none of the rulers could rule for a longer period. Due to the continuous attack of the Turko-Afghan rulers on one hand and the internal disintegration due to the growing power of the Bhuyan chiefs on the other hand; the throne was continuously captured by the usurpers one after another. This process was continued up to the end of the 15th century. The significant rulers were Dharmanarayan, Durlabhnarayan, Tamradhvaj and Indranarayan.

The kings of Kamatapur patronized literature and culture. The famous Assamese poets Harihar Vipra, Ram Saraswati, Hema Saraswati, Chandivar were patronized by Durlabhanarayan (c. 1330-50) for their works. Rudra Kandali wrote the Satyaki Prabesh of the Drona Parva of *Mhb* under the patronage of Tamradhvaj. The Kamatapur kings had diplomatic relations with the Ahom and Chutiya kings and some of them married off their daughters to these kings.

2.10.6.2 Khan or Khen dynasty:

Taking the advantage of anarchical position of the kingdom during the rule of weak rulers, the Bhuyans became independent everywhere, styled themselves as *Rajas* and entered into mutual clash for supremacy
in the region. At last one Niladhvaj Khan (or Khen), uniting the strength of several Bhuyans, established his authority over the whole of Kamata assuming the title *Kamateswara*\(^{180}\). This dynasty was called Khan or Khen dynasty and the life of this dynasty was very short. Only three kings of this dynasty were able to rule the kingdom due to the attack of Hussain Shah of *Gauda* in 1498 A.D. during the reign of Nilambar. In the beginning, due to the stubborn resistance by Nilambar’s army, Hussain Shah could not even enter the capital Kamatapur; but resorting to subterfuge, the invaders finally seized it; captured and took Nilambar to *Gauda*, who, however, subsequently escaped and fled towards the hills\(^{181}\). The rule of the Muslims was soon overthrown by the united attack of Bhuyans, who ruled the kingdom till the rise of the Koches in 1515.

2.10.6.3 The rule of the Bhuyans:

In the beginning, the Bhuyans were the feudal lords under the Kamata-*Kamarupa* kings when the latter were strong enough, and when they grew weak, they became the independent ruler of their own tracts. Their main source of income was the revenue paid by the cultivators and in order to facilitate the assessment of their income of a particular area, they grouped the villagers together in units of twelve or less than twelve. Each of these units was called *Chakla* and placed under an officer called *Bhuyan*\(^{182}\). If the unit consisted of twelve villages, the officer-in-charge was called a *Baro-Bhuyan* and if less than twelve he was called *Chota-*

\(^{180}\) K.L. Barua, Early History of Kamarupa, p. 267.
\(^{181}\) K.L. Barua, Early History of Kamarupa, p. 264.
\(^{182}\) M. Neog, Social History of Kamarupa, p. 48.
Bhuyan, Saru-Bhuyan or simply Bhuyan. The Bhuyans, who had close relationship with the cultivators and determined the fortunes of their overlords, found it easy to set aside the authority of their masters, when they grew weak and acted like kings. Some of them bore titles like Raja, Chota-Raja, Gomatha, Kshatriya Samajpati and so on. Each Bhuyan was independent within his own domain known as Bisaya and had arms under his control. Each one of them “had a court called Karkhana, a Persian word meaning literally a house for work, where they performed magisterial duties, perhaps assisted by Panchayat”\(^{183}\). The Bhuyans acted like self-governing chiefs in the eastern and western Assam till the Bhuyans of eastern Assam were subjugated by the Ahoms in the early part of the 16th century and the Bhuyans of the western Assam were subdued by the Koches. Apart from the political aspect, the part played by the Bhuyans in the cultural milieu of Assam, is also very important. They constitute a powerful link between the early and the medieval period. In the medieval period they were the pioneers of the cultural renaissance in the country. The great Vaisnavite saint Sankardeva, who belonged to the Bhuyan family, introduced a new cult based on the Bhagavatapurana, known as Bhagavati Vaisnava Dharma in Assam.

2.10.6.4 The Koch Kingdom:

The Koch kingdom was founded by a Bodo leader, Bisu, son of Haria Mondal, who after proclaiming himself as the king of Kamata, assumed the name Bisva Singha at about 1515 A.D. The Koches are a

\(^{183}\) K.L. Barua, Early History of Kamarupa, p. 278.
branch of the Tibeto-Burman people or of a greater family called Indo-Mongoloid. They came into contact with the Hindu world, long before in the early centuries of the Christian era. The Koches are referred to in KP and YT as Kuvaca. When the Kamata kingdom after the rule of Nilambara was facing some sort of mayhem and the Bhuyan chiefs, who were once established by the Kamarupa-Kamata kings, became independent in their area of domain, a tug of war began to continue amongst them for supreme power. At this moment Bisu of the Koch tribe became very powerful and brought all the Bhuyan chiefs under his control\textsuperscript{184}. But Biswa Singha could not rule for long as an independent ruler as he has to accept the sovereignty of Ahom ruler Suhungmung (A.D. 1497-1539), who in the east became more powerful by consolidating the petty kingdoms one after another. Though Biswa Singha considered it a great stigma on the Koches, but he could not defeat the Ahoms and remove this slur in his lifetime. Before his death, he asked his son Naranarayana to remove this disgrace as soon as possible\textsuperscript{185}.

Naranarayana (A.D. 1540-1586), with the help of his brother Chilarai, who was also the minister and great commander-in-chief of Naranarayana’s army, soon became more powerful and succeeded in eliminating this dishonour not only by making themselves independent of the Ahoms, but also extending their territory upto Narayanpur, in the far-east corner of modern North Lakhimpur Sub-division, (now Lakhimpur district) having inflicted defeat on the Ahoms. Chilarai, by defeating the

\textsuperscript{184} K.L. Barua, Early History of Kamarupa, p. 286.
\textsuperscript{185} Kamarupa Buranj\i, pp. 11-12.
Ahoms twice, brought under the control of him the neighbouring tribal kingdoms like Manipur, Kachhar, Khasia & Jayantia and the Tippera. Thus, the Koch kingdom under the reign of Naranarayana included the territories up to the Saumarpitha, which formed the Ahom kingdom and in the west it crossed the river Karatoya; on the south-west it included Rangpur district and part of Mymensing and on the south-east it "included the whole of Dakhinkol or South bank of the Brahmaputra as far as Mayang and Dimarua including modern Gauhati and its neighbourhood"186. The great dignity achieved by the two brothers for the solidarity and the integrity of the Koch kingdom could not be retained by the successors of Naranarayana and Chilarai.

After the death of Chilarai, his son Raghudeva Narayan rebelled against his uncle king Naranarayana demanding half of the kingdom on the eastern side, taking the river Sonkos in the centre. Naranarayana accepted the demand and handed over the eastern portion to Raghudeva. On the death of Naranarayana in A.D. 1586, his son Lakshminarayana became king of western portion with the capital at Kochbehar. The things started growing worser after the death of King Raghudeva, who was succeeded by his son Parikshit. A fratricidal war broke out between Pariksit and Laksminarayana and they had to seek help respectively from the Ahoms and the Moguls. Consequently the eastern portion came under the protection of the Ahoms and the western portion of the Moguls. This is how the Koches within a very short period lost their recognition from the pinnacle of glory.

The rise of the Koches was notable much for their cultural triumph in comparison to their military glory. It was the beginning of the renaissance in Assamese culture. Kochbehar was at that time literally swarming with cultural workers under the patronage of the Koch kings. King Naranarayana’s reign was greatly noticeable for his patronage to Assamese literature and other cultural activities. Under the lavish patronage of this noble king, the Neo-Vaishnavite movement under the shadow of great Vaisnavite preacher and reformer Sri Sankardeva rapidly spread in the whole of Assam and served it with activities ranging over various fields — handicrafts, art, architecture, sculpture, literature, music, dramaturgy and so on. The great literary talents and scholars, including Sri Sankardeva, who rendered monumental services for the growth and development of Assamese culture, ornamented the court of King Naranarayan. All this made a lasting impact on the Assamese society.

2.10.6.5 The Chutiya kingdom:

The Chutiyas came into prominence in the middle of the 13th century and established a small kingdom in the northeastern region of Assam. The exact location of the Chutiya capital cannot be ascertained. It is generally held that it was situated on the bank of the river Kundil and that it was known as Kundil Nagar or Bhismak Nagar. According to an account of the Chutiyas incorporated in the DAB, Birpal alias Gayapal, the founder king of the Chutiyas, had his headquarters on the Sonagiri hill (near the source of the Suvansiri river), but his son and successor Gaurinarayan alias Ratnadhvajapala shifted it to Ratanpur or Ratnapur after
subduing a king named Bhadrasena. The location of this place is not known, though generally it is held to lie somewhere in the north bank in the present Lakhimpur district or in the Majuli area of the Sibsagar district. Popular tradition ascribes the foundation of another new city at Sindhukhetra to this king, which subsequently came to known as Sadiya and appears to remain the permanent headquarters of the Chutiyas. Extensive archaeological ruins of buildings, fortifications etc. in the foothills region of present Arunachal are ascribed to the Chutiyas. Nothing is definitely known however about the chronology and genealogy of the Chutia kings. The DAB gives a list of ten kings only, who ruled after Birpal from the early part of the 12th century to the early part of the 16th century. Birpal was succeeded by his son Gaurinarayana and assumed the new name Ratnadhvajapala. He had relations, both matrimonial and diplomatic, with the Kamata kings and send envoys to the Sultan of Gauda. In the middle of the 14th century A.D., the Chutias were engaged in the clash with the Ahoms, which was started by the Chutiyas. The Chutia king in the year A.D. 1376 treacherously murdered the Ahom king Sutupha, while he was amusing himself in the regatta. The Chutiya king was chastised by the Ahom king Tyao-khamti, successor of Sutapha, but the Chutiya king fled to the hills. After this, there was no clash between the two kingdoms, for a period of more than a century, when in A.D. 1523, the Ahom king Shuhungmung conquered and annexed the Chutia territory to his own kingdom. At that time, Chutiyas were ruled by an inefficient king Nitipal.

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187 S.L. Barua, A comprehensive history of Assam, p. 183.
2.10.6.6 The Kachharis:

The Kachharis are the most aboriginal or earliest known inhabitants of the Brahmaputra valley, but due to the dearth of written records, a detailed and organized account of the Kachharis cannot be given. However, Dr. S.K. Bhuyan tried to bring the history of the Kachharis in an organized manner by collecting it from different Buranjis. According to Kachhari Buranji, the Kachharis were divided into two main families, Sadial Kachhari and Hedambial Kachhari. The Sadial Kachharis inhabited the territory of Sadia and its neighbourhood and their western boundary was perhaps extended up to the Dikhau River in the modern Sibasagar Sub-division. The Hedambial Kachharis inhabited the modern territory of Dimapur and its neighbourhood. When Sadial Kachharis were driven back to the west, they mixed with the Hedambial Kachharis and it seems that after the fusion of the two families, the Kachharis became more powerful and a strong Kachhari Kingdom emerged.

Coming under the influence of Hinduism, the Kachhari kings traced their origin from Ghatotkacha, son of Bhima, the second Pandava and his non-Aryan wife Hidimba. Some of the historians believe that they named their capital Hidimbapur as a mark of respect shown to Hidimba and the modern term Dimapur is no other than a variation from Sanskrit Hidimbapur. The Kachharis of North Kachhar, according to Fisher,

believe that they once ruled in *Kamarupa* and their royal family traced its
descent from the Rajas of that country of the line of Ha-Tsung-Sa\(^{192}\).

The Kachharis in the beginning seemed to be very weak and
they swung their area of territories and capital time to time. But at last
a powerful section of the Kachharis emerged and established a kingdom
for themselves with their capital first at Dimapur and then at Maibong
and Khaspur. The Kachharis had to shift from one place to another because
of the strong pressure put upon the Kachhari kings by the Ahoms, their
most powerful neighbours and rivals\(^{193}\). About the extent of the Kachhari
kingdom in the 13\(^{th}\) century, Gait says that it covered nearly the entire
tract from the Dikhau to the Kalang, and also the valley of the Dhansiri
and the North Cachar subdivision, but at the end of the century, before
the advance of the Ahoms, the Kachharis had to withdraw to the west
of the Dikhau river, because of their quarrel with the Nagas\(^{194}\). The river
Dikhau formed a boundary between the Ahoms and the Kachharis for some
time. Many skirmishes took place between the Ahoms and the Kachharis
and the latter after every defeat lost some portions of their territory and
had to shift their capital from Dimapur to Maibong, then to Khaspur, but
ultimately the Kachhari kings came under the vassalage of the Ahom kings
for ever. Though the Kachhari king Tamradhvaja tried to become independent
by rebelling against the supremacy of Ahoms but he along with the Jayantia
king, was subjugated by the Ahom king Rudra Singha (1696-1714)\(^{195}\). When

\[^{192}\text{E.A. Gait, A History of Assam, p. 237.}\]
\[^{193}\text{Kachhari Buranji, p. 1.}\]
\[^{194}\text{E.A. Gait, A History of Assam, 1926, p. 237.}\]
\[^{195}\text{TB, pp. 31-34; Kachhari Buranji, p. 86.}\]
the Ahoms became weak due to Moamaria insurrections and Burmese invasions, the Kachharis had to struggle hard with their new adversaries, the Manipuris and the Burmese. At last the areas under the Kachhari rule in the Nowgong district came under the British rule in 1826 A.D. and the Kachhar Zila in 1854 A.D\textsuperscript{196}.

The Kachhari kings patronized art, architecture, learning and education. The remains at Dimapur and Maibong bear testimony to their engineering skill and to their expertise in sculpture and architecture. It is believed that Mahamanikya, under whose patronage Madhav Kandali translated into Assamese verse the whole of the Ramayana in the 14\textsuperscript{th} century, was a Kachhari king. There were many professional people and most of the gold washers, known as Sonowal, appointed by the Ahom kings were Kachharis. The Kacchari kings had matrimonial and diplomatic relations with the Ahom kings.

2.10.6.7 The Barahis and the Morans:

Two more tribes, the Morans and the Barahis hold the independent territories in the eastern regions of Assam. From the scattered information, it is difficult to determine the boundaries of the tracts under their respective control. However, during the advent of the Ahom chief Sukapha, the chief of the Barahis was Thakumtha, who had his headquarters round the Charaideo hill, and the Moran chief Badaucha ruled from Kaktal to the south of Sadiya\textsuperscript{197}. The Ahoms at the first knock vanquished both Morans and the Barahis and established its capital at Charaideo, the headquarters

\textsuperscript{196} R.M. Nath, The Background of the Assamese culture, 1948, p. 76
\textsuperscript{197} SAB, p. 5.
of the Barahis. The Morans though surrendered to the Ahoms, did not leave their original home; but the Barahis fled from one place to another and thus scattered all over Assam. Subsequently the Ahoms crushed their power and their territories were incorporated into their own. Towards the later part of the Ahom rule, the Morans being offended by dishonour shown to their religious head of the community at large, rebelled against the Ahoms and for a negligible period they occupied the Ahom throne. These two tribes had matrimonial and diplomatic relations with the Ahoms.

2.10.6.8 The Kalita Kingdom:

The existence of a Kalita kingdom at a distance of fifteen days' journey from Sadia is known from KGC198, Captain J.B. Neufville's article published in the Asiatic Researches, volume XVI, in the year 1828 A.D199. The ruler of this kingdom claimed their descent from Bhismaka, the father of Rukmini and king of Vidarbha. The Kingdom of Kalitas "extended up to the Subansiri River and included the present Lakhimpur district and a portion of the Majuli"200. As stated by Gait, Kalitas were first defeated by the Chutias, and were driven to the northwest of the eastern region of Assam. Subsequently, the Ahoms completely defeated them and annexed their territories to their own201.

2.10.6.9 The Ahoms:

The Ahoms are the members of the Shan branch of great Tai or Thai family of South-East Asia, who entered Assam through the

198. KGC, pp. 249-250;
199. Dr. B.K. Kakati, Kalita Jatir Jitbratta, pp. 6, 7.
200. R.M. Nath, The Background of the Assamese culture, p. 64.
201. Gait, A History of Assam, p. 139.
mountain passes of northeast Assam under the leadership of one Sukapha in 1228 A.D. by subjugating the local tribes such as the Nagas, the Barahis and the Morans. It took 13 years for Sukapha to subjugate the war-like tribes who inhabited the region extending from the Hukong valley to the Patkai range till he settled at Charaideo in 1253. Sukapha and his men called their small kingdom Mung-dun-sun-kham, meaning a country full of golden gardens – gardens that they kept smiling through their own toil. The Ahoms within a period of two to three centuries consolidated their power with great struggle and became the supreme power of the whole of Assam, who ruled the country for about six hundred years.

After the death of Sukapha in 1268, his son Suteupha (1268-81) succeeded him and extended the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom to the river Namdang. After the reign of Suteupha, the Ahom kings made no fresh invasion in the next two hundred years. Suhungmung (1497-1539) was the first powerful king of the Ahom kingdom, whose reign marks a new era in the political and cultural history of Assam. It was during his reign that the first Buranji in Assamese entitled Sri Sri Swarganarayan Maharajar Janma Katha was written. He could be credited as the real builder of the Ahom kingdom and converted the small kingdom of Mung-dung-sun-kham into a big and powerful one extended in all directions. It was to his credit that he could subjugate both the Chutiyas and the Kachharis and bring the eastern Bhuyans under his control. He also took vigorous measures to put down Naga raids. He proved the strength of the Ahom power by becoming the monarch of a vast territory extending from Sadia in the east up to the river Karatoya in the west by smashing and repulsing three Mohammedan invasions sent by the Nawab of Gauda.
The next two successors of Suhungmung were Suklenmung (1539-53) and Sukhampha (1553-1603), who had to devote much of their time in fighting the Koch king Naranarayan, who was rapidly becoming the most powerful ruler of the northeastern India. Sunsengpha or Pratap Singha (1603-41) was another powerful and remarkable ruler. Although a great part of his reign was distracted by wars with the Kachharis and Mohammedans, he was still able to devote much attention to the internal organization of his kingdom. He is well known for the systematic introduction of Paik system with the help of his Barbarua Momai Tamuli.

From the reign of Pratap Singha, the history of the Ahoms is full of their clash with the Mughals. The mighty Mughals, who had almost entire India under their control, could not easily conquer this small kingdom. Repeated attempts of Mughal imperialism were thwarted by the Ahoms. Even Mir Jumla, the greatest general of Asia of the period, could not achieve anything, and Raja Ram Singh, the most trusted and efficient general of Emperor Aurangzeb after Mir Jumla, had to retreat after having sustained a complete defeat.

The Mughals invaded Assam as many as seventeen times, but they succeeded only thrice in bringing under their control the districts of Kamrup and Goalpara, and only on a few occasions the Mughals could advance up to the eastern boundary of the modern district of Kamrup. In the reign of Jayadhvaja Singha (A.D. 1648-1663), the Ahoms extended their kingdom up to the river Sonkos, the western boundary of Goalpara district; but it was only for a short time. After a lapse of about three years, the Mughals under the command of Mirjumla led an expedition to Assam.
and occupied the Ahom capital Gargaon. The Ahom king Jayadhvaja Singha was compelled to pay tribute to the Mughal Emperor of Delhi, according to which with other terms, he had sent one of his daughter to Imperial harem, who was later on married to Prince Muhammad Azam in 1668.

Chakradhvaja Singha (A.D. 1663-1669) and Udayaditya (1669-1673) wanted to restore the lost glory of the Ahoms by removing the slur inflicted through the treaty of Mir Jumla. During the reign of Udayaditya, the Mughals were defeated very badly in the famous battle of Saraighat (March 1671) under the leadership of Atan Burhagohain and Lachit Barphukan. The glory of the Ahom kingdom was reinstated by extending the boundary of the Ahom kingdom up to Hadira, opposite to Goalpara.

But the prestige of the Ahom kingdom could not be protected by the weak successors of Udayditya. The Ahom kingdom was affected by various court intrigues and conspiracies, which led to political instability. The Ahom nobles used their power and position for the fulfillment of their selfish ends and the Ahom throne became a plaything at their hands. During the reign of Sudaipha (A.D. 1677-1679), the Barphukan of Gauhati, namely Laluk Sola made a malicious design to be the king of Assam and hence entered into a treasonable pact with the Nawab of Bengal to surrender Gauhati to the Mughals. The Barphukan then proceeded to Kailabor. King Gadadhar Singha (A.D. 1681-1696) after ascending the throne, to recover Gauhati, marched against the Mughals with an army and defeated the latter in the battle of Itakhuli (1682 A.D.) and driven them beyond the river Manaha.
This was the last expedition of the Mughals and henceforth, both the parties accepted the river Manaha as the boundary between them in A.D. 1682. Since 1682, this boundary continued to exist till the year 1826 A.D., when the rule of the country passed to the hands of the Britishers. Gadadhar Singha devoted his whole reign, to restore the waning prestige and power of the Ahom monarchy and established it on a strong foundation. He suppressed the internal troubles with a strong hand after recovering Gauhati from the Mughals with immense gain.

Gadadhar Singha was succeeded by his son Rudra Singha (1696-1714), who was said to be the most illustrious of the Ahom kings and his reign witnessed the Zenith of Ahom power and glory. It was during his reign that the Ahom nobility was far better organized than ever before. He is said to have received the submission of all the hill tribes. Rudra Singha encouraged intercourse with other kingdoms and sent envoys to visit the contemporary rulers of the other parts of India\(^2\). He had to his credit many construction works, such as brick city at Rangpur, masonry bridges over the Namdang and Dimau rivers, the great tanks at Jaisagar and the temple at the same place, the tank and temple at Rangnath, and the Kharkatiya, Dubariyam and Meteka roads\(^3\).

Rudra Singha was succeeded by Siva Singha (1731-1744), who was under the influence of Brahmana priests and astrologers, who to avert the threatened calamity of ending his rule, handed over the royal power to his chief queen Phuleswari by making her Bar-raja. Phuleswari was

\(^2\) E.A. Gait, A History of Assam, p. 171.
\(^3\) E.A. Gait, A History of Assam, p. 171.
even more under the influence of the Brahmans than her husband. Over zealous of Sakta Hinduism, she committed an act of oppression with the Mahantas and Gosains, which was destined to have far reaching and disastrous consequences. Phuleswari was succeeded as Bar-raja by Draupadi and Enadari.

Siva Singha was succeeded by his brothers Pramatta Singha (1744-1751), Rajeswar Singha (1751-1769) and Lakshmi Singha (1769-1780). Pramatta Singha's reign saw a large construction works. He had the Rang-ghar rebuilt with bricks as well as the structures in the old Ahom metropolis of Garhgaon. The temples of Rudreswar and Sukreswar at Gauhati were also built during his reign. Rajeswar Singha was successful in subduing the rebels of the Daflas, Mikirs and the Kacharis. He helped the Manipuri king Jay Singh by sending an expedition to recover his throne, which the latter lost after the Burmese invasion in Manipur. It appears that the reign of Rajeswar Singha was comparatively peaceful. But the "signs of the approaching decay"204 was seen. During the last part of his reign, he was fully under the influence of his Barbarua Kirti Chandra, whose arrogance and domineering attitude created much antagonism among the nobles and the Mayamara Mahanta, who was insulted by the Barbarua. The influence of the latter increased during the reign of Lakshmi Singha, as the latter was placed in the Ahom throne by the Barbarua in spite of his alleged illegitimacy205. The reign of Lakshmi Singha witnessed the Maomariyan rebellions, which started on a religious pretext, but soon

204. E.A. A History of Assam, p. 179.
assumed great political dimensions and grasped the whole of the Brahmaputra valley. The rebels shook the decaying roots of the Ahom monarchy and the kingdom of Assam was rapidly immersed in a series of civil wars, which precipitated the inroads of the Burmese and led to the intrusion of the British, as a result of which the kingdom lost its independence and suffered annexation to the British India in 1826.