CHAPTER - 4
IMPACT ON THE SOCIETY

ŚAKTI CÜLT UNDER THE KIRĀTAS: The aboriginal Fertility cult, Mother cult and Yōni cult had great impact on the Kirāta social and cultural life and later on, as Śakti had changed the scenario not only of the socio-cultural aspects but also of the political, literature, art, architecture and sculpture in the human world. Śakti, as one of the important branch of the Hindū religion\(^1\), occupied a dominant place among the Śākta class. But before the Hindūnisation of Kāmarūpa, there existed some non-Aryan cults among the aboriginals, living in hills, which were later on modified as common cult with ascribing disciplines. The original inhabitants of Prājīyotisha were the Kirātas who were matriarchal in nature. The identification of earth with women pervades the thought of all stages of culture\(^2\). They laid the establishment of the Yōni cult or the cult of Mother Goddess in the land which led to the emergence of ‘Śakti’ in the form of various heavenly bodies by the Pūrūnas and Tantras. So it may be called, the religion of the Kirātas is the religion of the Pūrūnas and Tantras, which focussed the deities, rites and rituals, system of worship etc. of the Kirātas with some modified form and imaginary accounts. The subject matter of the Pūrūnas and Tantras are of the Kirātas and the

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\(^1\) Religion means the belief in the existence of a supernatural power and the activities that are connected with the worship of the power. Oxford dictionary.

\(^2\) Briffault, Mother VOL-III P-56
story is of the Aryans. The Kīrātas were in nature strong, barbarian, ferocious and addicted to meat and wine. In course of time, they came to the assimilation with the civilized groups coming from outside, of certain disciplines, and new ideas and concept were included in their aboriginal systems which underwent a great change in the field of political, social, religion and artistic domains.

The original religion of the Kīrāta tribes was popularly known as animism, a non-symbolic form of religion. This is the crude form of religion in which magic is the predominant element. Thus started the worship, based on magic-religious system. The geographical boundary of Kāmarūpa separated the Kīrātas of Kāmarūpa with more advanced ideas of philosophy, art and religion which constitute the life and culture of the Kīrātas. Thus they developed a very religio-philosophical system. Primitive magic and feticism (an object that some people worship), animal worship and belief in demons were often continued with the worship of more or less personal gods and goddesses. The Kīrātas of Kāmarūpa believed in the existence of the Supreme Being. They believed in the existence of spirits residing in hills or in rocky dales or in graves and tutelary deities in the villages. They erected memorial stones for the practice of propitiation of spirits. For example, the Gārōs believed in the spirits of the hills, rivers and forests and other evil spirits which, later on, came to be known as Pārvatī, Dūrgā etc. Every village and every clan had their own Gods and

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3 Worship of souls, spirits, future life.
4 G.P. Sing, Kiratas in Ancient India P-227
5 G.P. Sing Kiratas in Ancient India, P-228.
Goddesses as their village deities or tutelary deities. The Kirātas of Tripūrā worshipped various Gods and Goddesses and the Earth Goddess.

The early stage of the Kirāta religion was based on superstition and was connected with the practice of sorcery, exorcism and magic. The worship of Earth-Goddess, the cult of Mother Goddess or Yōni Goddess in the form of Phallus, played an important role in the Kirāta families. The influence of the gods and goddesses was strong in the village of the Kirātadesa and they were held in high esteem and venerated in large scale even by the Brahmanas in ancient times. Even the Brahmanas were to participate in the ceremonies held in connection with village goddesses like Kirātadevi. The Grāmadevataś like Kirātadevi, Yōginis and various kinds of Śaktis were made of wood, stone and clay. These village Goddesses were turned later on, into a national deities of the non-Aryan Kirātas in Prāgjyotisha. In fact, the Kirāta concept of Grāmadevata means the female deity. After the coming of the Aryans, both Aryan doctrines and aboriginal tenets were mingled together which resulted in a significant change in the form, method and practice of worship of the village Goddesses. The village Goddesses of the Kirātas occupied an important place in the Brahmanical pantheon. Thus, gradually, the Kirātas turned into the fold of Hinduism. G.P. Sing, comments that the Kirātas of Assam were brought within the fold of Hindu religion and culture by the end of the 7th century.

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6 G.P. Sing, Kiratas in Ancient India, P- 234.
7 Sing G.P, Kiratas in Ancient India, P- 235.
A.D. Before the 6th century B.C. or Buddha’s birth there was no Hindu religion in Pragjyotisha, there was an aboriginal religion called Kirata dharma.

Sarbeso yoginipithe dharma kairatajan matang

Y.T, C-9 V-13 P-506

Hunter remarks that Hinduism, though now general throughout the entire valley is not indigenous in Assam, but of the creed of inhabitants prior to its introduction, nothing is known. There are no traces of Buddhism or any other religion which could have supplanted. There existed many local Kaulika Dharma among the non-Aryan tribes. The invention of agriculture not only changed the way of living but it had great impact on the spiritual ideas of the aboriginals. They used to regard earth as Mother Earth. Before the starting of cultivation the aboriginals performed ritualistic institution to propitiate Mother Earth. Thus worship of the goddess of fertility prevailed among the Kiratas in haory past which occupied an important place in their village cults. Goddess of fertility is the symbol of Mother-Earth. Agriculture infused a new idea of settlement in a village which was mother based society. The ancient Indian traditions testify to the evolution of the cult of Mother-Goddess on the principle of mother right in the matriarchal society of the Kirata tribes. In the primitive Kirata society the concept of paternity was indistinct, but in case of mother the idea was clear.

8 Sing G.P Kiratas in Ancient India, P-236.
10 Kakati B.K. P.K.Dh P-11.
11 Kakati B.K. Mother Goddess Kamakhya P-246.
The women and her organs and attributes became the object of propitiation. Since then the followers of Śakti school started looking upon women as the symbol of goddess\textsuperscript{12}.

The Kirātas entered Prāgjyotisha and lived on the mountains, in the caves and in the forest area. So they were known as mountaineers, Aranyāni and cave dwellers in the Classical literatures. Accordingly, the deities were known as Pārvati, Dūrgā, Gūhādevi, Aranyadevi etc. After observation it is identified that most of the original pithas of Assam were stationed either on the hill or in the Gūhā (Cave, Dūrga and Fort) or Kandara. The Kālikā Pūrāṇa and the Yōgini Tantra mention Parvatakanyā, Parvatasutā, etc. The Yōgini Tantra mentions the cave, where the Yōni mandala of Kāmākhya existed, as Manōbhabagūhā\textsuperscript{13}. The Śakti pitha Dirgheswari is found in a cave\textsuperscript{14} called Kūṇḍasthāna. It was believed that Mārkaṇḍeya came to this land and chose the place for meditation to attain his goal. The Devikūnda of Dirgheswari is situated in a hidden cave called Gūpta Kāmākhya. Kāmākhya had eight Yōgini-Gūptakāmā, Koteswari, Vanāsthā, Pāḍadūrgā, Kūṣmānda, Bhūbaneswari and Dirgheswari. The Asta-Yōginis were fond of fishes, meat, soma, and maithūna. All these local items were included in the worship of Śakti.

The Kirātas had their own Kūla devatās or racial devatās who were called Kūladevataḥ and Kūladevis. They were Kirāta-kirātani, Mikirā- Mikirani, Būrhā- Būrhi, Kūndi- Māmā, Mechā- Mecheni etc.

\textsuperscript{12} Kakati B.K. Mother Goddess Kamakhya, P- 246.
\textsuperscript{13} Y.T c- I V- 36 P- 36
\textsuperscript{14} P.J.Dirgheswari, D.D.Publishing committee, P- 18
who were regarded later on, as Śiva Śakti. The Kirātas performed the worship of these deities in their villages or in their locality. The Yōgini Tantra contains that the local cult was of the Kirāta origin (2/9/9). The habit of eating fish, meat, free association with women were men’s regular practices in normal life and they were adorned in the local cult as customs\textsuperscript{15}. The customs, excercised in daily life, were connected with the cult.

The Kirātas brought the germs of the Śakti cult from outside the land. The idea of mother cult, Yōni cult or the fertility cult did not originate in Prāgijyotish- Kāmarūpa, it was only brought up in Kāmarūpa. Kāmarūpa was the fertile land for the growth and development of Śakti cult. The earliest inhabitants of Kāmarūpa were the Kirātas, Chinā and other primitive tribes. They entered India through the Brahmapūtra valley about three thousand years ago. They lived earlier along the Himālayan slopes towards Himāchal Pradesh. The Kirātas were known to the Aryan settlers as a cave –dwelling people. During the time of the Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata when a great synthesis was taking shape between the Aryan and Drāvidian cultures, the Kirātas had occupied the southern tracts of the Himālayas and the whole of north eastern India including the Brahmapūtra valley, Bengal and north Bihār\textsuperscript{16}. They were associated with the Chinese. As a geographical and ethnic notion include the Himālayan tribes- the Bodos, the Nagās, the Kūkis, the Āhōms, the Indian Tibetāns, the Khāsis and the

\textsuperscript{15} Kakati .B.K Mother Goddess Kamakhya P- 46
\textsuperscript{16} Saigal Omesh Tripura P-68
earlier tribes who have now become absorbed in the plain population of northern and north-eastern India\textsuperscript{17}. So it is known from the various myths that the ancient aboriginal tribes, including the Indo-Mongolian tribes, are regarded as the Kirātas. So the Aryan speaking race called the eastern living people as Kirāta\textsuperscript{18} N. N. Basu calls them as Kūvācha, Pāni-Kōch, Joldhā Tata Hājang. R. M. Nath on the basis of the Vājasenaya Samhitā and the Atharvaveda comments that the Kirātas lived on the Himalayan borders and also in Assam\textsuperscript{19}. The great epic Mahābhārata mentions several principalities all along the borderland of the Himalayas, ruled by the Kirāta kings. However, the Kirāta had great influence over Prāgjyotisha-Kāmarūpa. R.M. Nath refers to some terms- Syrites, Cirradiai, Kirrhades, Cilatā indicate same people who are described as the Kirāta in Indian records. The earliest text of the Vedas inform us that in that dim past, about 6000 years back a powerful race of traders known as Pānis had made themselves master of Northern India, from the bank of Sarasvati to Kāmarūpa. They were the first to worship the Goddess Bhadrakāli\textsuperscript{20}. Among the hill-tribes, with which the Vedic Aryans came into contact in Eastern India and the Himalayan region, the Kirātas are the most prominent. The Yajūrveda and the Atharvaveda contain the first references to them, the former

\textsuperscript{17} Saigal Omesh Tripura P-68
\textsuperscript{18} Sarma S. Goalpara Jilar Itihas P-29
\textsuperscript{19} Sarma S. Goalpara Jilar Itihas P-29
\textsuperscript{20} Basu N.N. Social History of Kamarupa P-23
speaking of them as ‘living in caves’\textsuperscript{21}. We get a rough idea from the Vedas, the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata that there were two classes of Kirātas, one of them lived in the mountain caves and were charming in appearance\textsuperscript{22}. In the East of Nepal this race still goes by the name of Kirāta and after its name, a part of Nepal is still called ‘Kirānti’\textsuperscript{23}. Kālidās mentions Pārvati a dynastic name. Kālidās in his work Kūmār Sambhava mentioned that Himālaya and Menakā had a child and the kinsmen gave her name Pārvati after the dynastic name. Mother called her lovely Úmā\textsuperscript{24}. This identifies that Pārvati and Úmā was one Goddess of two names, worshipped by the Kirātas as their local Goddess. Thus each section of the Kirāta tribes had their own faiths, mythological beliefs, philosophical conceptions and idealistic imaginations regarding their gods and goddesses, life and soul and after material and immaterial aspects as accepted by all celebrated anthropologists, ethnologists and classical historians\textsuperscript{25}.

During the time of Alexander’s invasion of India, in 327 B.C, the political situation of Prāgijyotisha must have been under various chiefs in small principalities and the Kirātas being the main population, the country was described as Cilata in the Nāgārjūni Kûjda inscription of

\begin{verbatim}
21 Basu N.N. Social History of Kamarupa (quoted from white Yajurveda, XXX 16) P- 92
22 Ibid P- 92
23 Ibid P- 95
24 Barua Ananda Chandra Ed. Kumar Sambhav, P- 11
25 Sing G.P. Kiratas in ancient India P- 227
\end{verbatim}
the 2nd century A.D. As they were the original inhabitant of Prāgjyotisha, they extended to all over the land, which meant that Mother or Yoni goddess was reckoned as their principal deity all over Prāgjyotisha. Śakti drew the attention of the Kirāta Royal family and acquired royal patronage as well. Myths and inscriptions refer to the monarchical kingdom in the land where mother was the King, mother was the Minister and mother was the Laskar. Allāhābād inscription refers to a kingdom named Davakā, where there existed a Kirāta kingdom. There are also found another three kingdoms namely Kadali, Garūchar and Pramilā. Another kingdom existed in the western part of Kāmarûpa and on the south bank of the Brahmaputra but its name is not known till now but it may be surmised that most probably the kingdom belonged to the Gāros who were dwelling in the south of Gōālpārā. Like the Khāsīs of Davakā, the Gāros also had to leave their kingdom under the pressure of the Aryans. But the Austrics were the earliest inhabitant of that area. It has been said that the name of a river ‘Kapili’ is from the Austric speaking Khāsīs.

The original religion of the Kirāta tribe was popularly known as animism, which mean the worship of souls, spirits, future life etc. This was the crude form of religion in which magic was the predominant element. Thus started the worship, based on magic-religious system. This system of worship prevailed

26 Nath R.M. Background of Assamese culture P-31
27 Kalita N. Kapilipar Kacharipar P-11
28 Sing G.P. Kirata in Ancient India P-228
among the Khāsis, Syntengs (Jaintias) and the Gārōs, who believed in the Earth Goddess. But after the coming of the Aryans, the tribal customs were greatly influenced and were modified by the Hindū Aryans. This modification led to the final transformation of the Kirāta pantheon, which mainly consist of a group of 14 gods and goddesses, chiefly based on superstition and mythological tradition\(^\text{29}\) into the orthodox Hindū Pantheon of the Pūrānic antiquity. The 14 deities\(^\text{30}\) was belonged to the Brahmanical pantheon, which included the goddesses like Ùmā and Dūrgā. These deities broke out as the outcome of the admixture and transformation of the Kirātas under the inspiration of the Hindū Aryans. The non-Brahman high priests, the contois, ministered to the old pre-Hindū deities and retained the old rites and rituals. The important Brahmanical deities and their national pantheon were included by the non-Hindū tribes and these deities came to be known as Caturdasa-devata\(^\text{31}\). According to Tripūrā-Būranji before the installation of 14 deities, various animals and birds like buffaloes, methons or wild bisons, pigs, ducks, pegeons, goats, deer etc were sacrificed in non-Brahmanical way. But after the assimilation with the Aryan Brāhmaṇa priests, the Kirāta rites and rituals were modified and the 14 deities were identified with

\(^{29}\) Sing G.P. Kirata in Ancient India, P. 231

\(^{30}\) Fourteen deities were Hara, Durga, Hari, Laksmi, Sarasvati, Kartikeya, Ganesha, Chandra, Brahma, Abadhi (God of Ocean), Ganga, Agni, kama (God of love) and Himadri

\(^{31}\) Sing G.P. Kiratas in Ancient India P- 232
Brahmanical deities\textsuperscript{32}, which have been compared with the 14 deities of Greek pantheon\textsuperscript{33}. The Nagās also believed in the existence of Supreme being, the most ancient frontier Kirāta tribes - Mishimis and the Akās were chiefly based on animistic belief.

The Kirāta families of Prāgjyotisha- Kāmarūpa worshipped the Goddess Earth, Mother Goddess and worshipped stone in the form of Linga and Yōni. The Kirata concept of Grāmadevatā, particularly the female deity was intimately connected with the veneration of evil spirits. Every village contained a shrine dedicated to Kirātadevi, the female village deity of the Kirātas\textsuperscript{34}.

With the development of Śakti cult, there existed a class of priests to perform the duties of the worship of Mother Goddess or Yōni Goddess. In the beginning there was no recognized order of priests, The priesthood system gradually developed among the Kirātas. The office of the priest became hereditary. The Kirāta priest was called Nakehong. The Kirātas believed in all kinds of sorcery, witchcraft, exorcism, etc. They worshipped without building temples or making images of their deities but propitiated the Goddesses by sacrificing animals. Goddesses or Śaktis were newly designed or manifested in the Pūrānas and Tantras, and Śakti Tantra became undividable part. As a result, Śakti was worshipped in the tantric methods. After the Hindūnisation of the Kirātas, a large section of their population began to worship the Goddess

\textsuperscript{32} Sing G.P. Kiratas in Ancient India (Quoted from Tripura-Buranji) P- 332
\textsuperscript{33} Zeus, Hero, Isis, Ares, Demeter, Dionusos, Hermes, Athene, Hephaistos, Poseidon, Apollon, Aphrodite and Eros.
\textsuperscript{34} Sing G.P. Kiratas in Ancient India P- 235
or Devi on Tāntric methods. Tāntric cult greatly influenced the Royal authority of Prāgjyotisha- Kāmarupa and royal patronage was extended to the Śakti cult as a result of which idea of mother cult was extended as a popular cult to other parts of the land. It is worthy to note that Śakti cult flourished as the co-existence of Śaiva cult. Śiva was worshipped as Father God while Śakti *was worshipped as Mother Goddess by the Kirātas. Mother Goddess had been manifested and took varied new names in different groups and different families, as Kūladevi, Grāmadevi, individual deity etc. They were independent of each other and had no relation with each other but they are identified as being one in the Pūrānas and the Tantras. The Harivamsa refers to a deity called ‘Kirāti’ rightly considered as the tribal deities originally worshipped by the Kirātas. The name ‘Kirāti’ is mentioned in the Harivamsa has been taken as an epithet of Dūrgā or Ūmā worshipped by host of Kirātas and others35.

An aboriginal goddess, identified with a black or fierce aspect of Śiva’s spouse, popularly known as Caṇḍī was worshipped by the Kirātas. It is generally held that goddesses like Caṇḍikā, Devi, Kāli, Bhairavi and Dūrgā are not the products of purely Hindū imagination, but represent earlier stages of amalgamation in which both Hindū and aboriginal Kirāta ideas are compounded36.

The Kālikā Pūrāṇa, Yōgini Tantra, Mahābhārata, Rāmāyana and

* Some scholars comment that Mother Goddess was the Śakti of Siva, no spouse.
Theoritically she is one but assumes many forms.
35 Sing G.P. Kiratas in Ancient India P- 244.
36 Ibid P- 245
even the Rigveda mention the Kirāta as the forest dwellers, mountaineers, cave dwellers, etc. It is known from various sources that the name of the Goddesses were connected with the place of settlement, race, nature, appearance and their behaviour. As for example, the dwellers of the mountain (parvatavāsi) worshipped the goddess pārvati or Parvatadevi, the people who lived in the caves, kandaras, dūrgas, forts and holes, worshipped the goddess called Dūrgā. So also the people who were black in appearance, they worshipped the Devi called Kāli or Kali, while the white people worshipped the Devi called Gauri. In the Vedas Dūrgā is mentioned as Aranyāni or Aranya Devi, which means that the Aranyavāsi worshipped the Devi of Aranya. There is also reference to the Goddess Earth or Bhūmi Devi. Kautilya refers to the Devi, in his Arthaśāstra, as a ‘spirit of Vegetable’ in connection with the sowing of seeds. Bondopadhyaya refers to the word ‘Dūrga’ as the presiding deity of an unexplorable region. The name Kāli was derived from Kālinjara mountain, Çaṇḍikā from Makaraṇḍaka and Vindhyāvāsini from Vindhya mountain. The chief Chalukya monument (550-642 A.D) in the series of a cave temples of Bādāmi, was the Goddess Dūrgā. The monumental relief of Mahisamardini in the Rāmeswara cave at Ellorā belong to 650 A.D. The Märkaṇḍeya Pūrāṇa gives a clear picture that mythological

37 Bondopadhyaya P. Mother Goddess Durga P-10
38 Bhattacharya N.N. History of Sakta religion P-76
39 Ibid P-82
Parvati, Durga, Ambika were existed only on the Himalaya and sheltered in the kandaras. 

Revatyukhyanca patitaṃg kūmūḍādrou saṃantarātah, 
Bhāṣayāmāsa sahasā vana- kāndara- nirjarama.

The names of Durga and Parvati are connected with inaccessible mountain region and these Goddesses were originally worshipped by mountaineers (Sādristā tāta devīḥ tuhimācalasangsthitām). Kāmākhyā or the Yōni Goddess existed in a cave and called Manōbhava Gūhā, Dirgheswari, the second Kāmākhyā or Gūpta Kāmākhyā was situated in the cave and a large number of caves are discovered at Gōālpara in the Sūrya Pāhār and in one of the caves there existed an image of Durgā along with Śiva. The Kenā Ūpanishad refers to Umā as knowledge, later known as Saraswati and Haimavati as daughter of the Himālaya. On the other hand the Kālikā Pūrāṇa entrusted Śakti many epithets as Śailapūtri (daughter of the mountain peak), Girisūta (daughter of the mountain), Śailarājaputri (daughter of the king of the mountain or Girirāja Himālaya), Himālayasūta (daughter of Himālaya). The epithets of Śakti proved that Śakti belonged to the dwellers on the mountains. There was in Kāmarūpā a class of person called bhogi, who were voluntarily victims of a Goddess named Āi, who dwelt in a

40 M.P C-83 V- 22 P- 333
41 Sarma D.c Sakti Pithas P- 3
42 Kena Upanisad C- 3 V- 26 P- 52 Ed Atul Sen & M Ghose, S Tattabhasa.
43 K.P C-44 V- 69 P- 433
44 K.P C-44 V- 81 P- 434
45 K.P C-44 V- 70 P- 433
46 K.P C-45 V- 81 P- 437
cave\textsuperscript{47}. There existed a large number of caves in Chera, Syndai in Mikir Hills and North Cachar. All through the Bharali area in Cachar there found the remains of caves, fortifications and villages of a vanished people called Siemi\textsuperscript{48}.

Originally the Kiratis were the worshippers of Śiva but later on they were influenced by Śakti with its various forms. Sometimes they worshipped Śiva - Śakti jointly. Śiva and Śakti were worshipped not only in the human form but also in the symbolic form of Āniga and Yōni, the former representing procreation and virility and the latter as fecundity or fertility. The seat of Śakti worship also became famous for the centre of Śiva worship\textsuperscript{49}. Both deities were worshipped by the Kirātas on the basis of aboriginal and latter Tāntric rites. Bāna (7\textsuperscript{th} century A.D), has also addused proof of the worship of Dūrgā by the Kirātas, Sabāras and mlecha tribes of the Vindhyas\textsuperscript{50}. Caḫdikā or Dūrgā was originally a Kirāta deity and originated in the Kirātadesa as War Devatā (rāna devata). G.P Sing mentions that Indo- Greek ruler Minandar and Kūshāna ruler Kanishka between 2\textsuperscript{nd} century A.D worshipped the Kirāta Devi Caḫdikā, who was the most popular during that time. By referring the description of Dandin and Bānabhatta, Sing comments that the Kirāta used to worship Caḫdikā, enshrined in a beautiful temple located in the Vindhyāyan region resorting to human sacrifice to ensure success of their wild

\textsuperscript{47} Gait E.A History of Assam P- 58
\textsuperscript{48} Choudhury P.C H.C P A P- 51
\textsuperscript{49} Sing G.P Kirata in Ancient India P- 247
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid P- 248
Bānabhatta also refers to the temple of Goddess Cāndikā. The Kirāta kings were instrumental in popularizing the worship of Śakti. The Kālikā Pūrāṇa refers to the Kirātas as strong, ferocious, ignorant and addicted to meat and drink. Their ferocious nature is depicted in the Śakti called Kāli, Úgracaṇḍā, Cinnamastā, etc., and their habit of meat eating and drinking were included in the system of Paṇca-Maṅkā. The Kirātas extended Śakti cult all over the land. On the Nilācala Hill they were the worshippers of Yōni Goddess in aboriginal method. The Yōni worship was strong under the Kirāta rule. The Kirāta kings extended royal patronage and they introduced Yōni worship on the Nilācala Hill. The Devī Bhāgavata and the Mahābhārata attest to the importance of Kāmarupa-Kāmākhyā as one of the premier Śakti Pithas in the Yōni Symbol.

The Jayantiās belonged to the Kirāta tribes. They were dispersed to different places in different groups from prāgijotisha after having been defeated at the hand of Naraka. With them they carried away the cult of Yōni or mother goddess as a replica of their past life to the newly settled areas. One of their groups settled in the Hills now called the Khāsi-Jaintiā hills. They constructed a shrine in the southern slope of the Jaintiā Hills, known as Griva-Kāmākhyā. Jaintiā, (7th Century A.D) one of the Jaintiā kings, built another Kāmākhyā temple on the South-eastern part of the kingdom and named it Bāma-Jaṅga Pitha. The Gāros, who settled near the Khāsi-Jaintiās, were the followers of Śakti cult in

51 Sing G.P Kirata in Ancient India. P- 251
52 Sing G.P Kirata in Ancient India P- 255
the form of Yōni. They had immense faith on Yōni as the symbol of regeneration. As a sign of honour to mother Goddess or Yōni, Gāros made their houses on the Yōni stone\textsuperscript{53}. All these are discovered in the excavation at Baitbāri, Meghālaya. There discovered a gold image of Astabhūja Dūrgā and a Yōni belonged to the Kirātas. Another group sheltered in the Śadiyā region where they introduced the worship of Śakti cult in the form of Dikkaravāsini or Tāmreswari Goddess. They built a temple, which contained an image of Goddess. Later on, the Goddess was worshipped in Tāntric Vāmācāra system by local Brahmanas offering various sacrifices among which human sacrifices were regarded as the most significant. The Deoris, Misimis, Singphos, Ābors, Khāmtis and the like tribes were influenced by Kirāta Śakti cult\textsuperscript{54}. Most of the Kirātas who were the followers of Yōni cult, remained in Prāgjyotisha. They stood as a great menace to the newly settlers and their king Naraka. To establish a strong colonial rule and to pacify the remaining Kirātas, Naraka acknowledged the cult of Yōni or Mother Goddess and he accepted the Yōni Goddess as the presiding or tutelary deity of the Royal family. So Naraka was called responsible for the spread of Śakti cult in the east, south and in his capital.

The Kirāta rulers were great patron to the Yōni and Mother worship. The Yōni cult was assimilated with their original cult Śiva, the presiding deity of the Kirātas. Reffering to the Purānas,

\textsuperscript{53} Sharma A.K, Emergence of Early culture in N.E India,1993 P- 18
\textsuperscript{54} Bordoloi Rajanikant, Tāmreswari Mandir. P- 36
B. K. Kakati describes that the aboriginal Kirātas were under the protection of Śiva. They were expelled to the eastern Sea with the consent of Sambhū by Naraka. Naraka killed the Kirāta king Ghataka and settled the twice born people in Prāgjyotisha. The founder of the Kirāta rule, Mahiraṅga Dānava was the follower of Mother Goddess. He assumed the title ‘Mahiraṅga’, lover of earth or mother earth and encouraged the Kiratas to perform mother or Yōni cult in his kingdom.

VILLAGE GODDESS OR LOCAL GODDESS:

The Village and villagers of ancient Kāmarūpa played the most significant role in the emergence of Śakti cult. The aboriginal tribes settled in Prāgjyotisha in various groups in certain localities or in any other villages. Very probably, the village cults developed at the Neolithic age when the tribal aboriginal people settled in agricultural communities. The certain area of settlement was a particular village, mountain, cave, etc. The remains of temples of Prāgjyotisha-Kāmarūpa are found in a certain locality where the non-Aryan people lived. There were different tribes who propitiated Mother earth, Yōni cult or Mother Goddess. The original form of Śakti evolved as the village or local Goddess. The aboriginal people venerated the invisible supreme spirit, along with various other evil spirits and minor deities. The Village Goddesses were held high esteem and revered in large scale in Prāgjyotisha-Kāmarūpa. Even the earlier Aryan Brahmanas were bound to

55 Kakati B.K Mother Goddess Kamakhya P- 14
56 Bhattacharya N.N. History of the Sākta Religion P- 58
propitiate openly with the non-Aryan tribes. Kirātadevi was one of the Village Goddesses, who was worshipped in the ceremonies and festivals held in connection with the reverence of Village Goddess. The concept of Village Goddess or Grāmadevatā, particularly was the female deity, which was intimately connected with the veneration of evil spirits. Every Village contained a shrine dedicated to the female Village deity. The Village people feared that the Goddesses were the cause of diseases, pestilences and other natural calamities. So, with a view to evert the impending danger the villagers intended to propitiate the Goddess. After the settlement of the Aryans during the dynastical period, under the royal patronage, Aryan doctrines spread among the non-Aryans. The Aryans, with a view to peaceful settlement and to preach Aryadharma, adopted the policy of give and take, which resulted a great fusion in both sides and a new mixed disciplined cult came into existence. This mutual contact underwent a significant change which led to the emergence of new forms, methods and practices in the worship of Village Goddesses. On the basis of the settlement, local Goddesses were divided into three sections- Gūhādevi, Pārvati devi and Aranyadevi. On the other hand Devi was worshipped in the family or Kūla, individually, racially, and as national deity under the royal patronage. Kūladevi, in the form of Goddess Śakti, was worshipped particularly in the family or a caste or race, which was called Kaulika dharma, it was

57 Sing G.P, Kiratas in Ancient India P- 235
hereditary custom of a family. In ancient Kāmarūpa around 1st and 2nd century A.D, the family was automatically divided into Kūlas or Grihas. The family was run by the head of the family called Kūlapati or Grihapati. Before the composition of the Pūranas and Tantras there were no existence of 51 holy Pithas. People were associated with the Grāmadevatās all over India and these 51 holy pithas originally were the centre of the Grāmadevatās. In Prāgyotisha-Kāmarūpa the aboriginals worshipped the Devis in their own local custom. The important Village or local deities, relating to the phallus and fertility cult were identified latter on as Śiva-Śakti and mother earth respectively. They were originated by the non- Aryans. But the stories regarding the origin of Śaktis, were imaginative of the authors. The local goddesses were turned into Heavenly bodies in the myths about which the primordial tribes had no idea regarding the existence of Divine or Heavenly bodies.

The ancient families were bounded by a Kūla or in dynasty. The members of the family or Kūla maintained their own customs. They had their own deities and they worshipped them by following the rites and rituals of the elders which they considered as their Gūrū. The Yōgini Tantra mentions him as Kūlapūrūsa (kūlagūrū), and the systems performed by them in the worship of deity was secret.

58 Kakati B.K, P.K.D. D P- 15
59 Meiti P. Studies in Ancient India P- 274
60 Y.T. C-1 V- 55 P- 15
Iti te kathitaṅg devī rahasyaṅg gurucharam,
Gopaniyaṅg prajaten svakiyaṅg kulapaurusam.

Y.T C-1 V-55 P-15

The Kūlagūrū was equal to paramabrahma*. Each and every member of a Kūla should obey him. No other was superior to Gūrū in the Universe. The Yōgini Tantra gives a detailed description of Gūrū Māhatmā. Every Kūla had their deity suited to the family and She had been worshipped according to the Kūla rites.

Grāhyā kūlarasaih pujaṁ bhaktibhāben kāmini.

Y.T, C- 4 V- 37 P- 54

The Yōgini Tantra lays impressions on the Kūlācāra to attain siddhi. It divided the devotees of a Kūla into three types viz. Divya, Vīra and Posū. Of course the Yōgini Tantra admits only Divya and Vīra pūrūsa for Sādhanā. Sādhaka, who thinks his soul as parambrahma or thinks his soul as istadeva that was Divyayōga (Y.T. C-6 V-4-6 p-79). Virayōga is the fond of all Devatas. According to S.C Banerjee, one who follows the way of Pūja, knowledge of Śāstras, Japas, Tapas and Mantras as a means of achieving siddhi is called Vīra62. They were to perform worship of Śakti with the Ācāra of Madya, Māmsa, Matsya, Mūdrā and Maithūna. The Yōgini Tantra mentions that Kauladharma cannot exist without Mahāmadya63.

Mahamadya binā kaulah khanādūrdhang na tistati I

* Supreme in knowledge, who is the supreme in knowledge is called parambrahma.
61 Y.T C-6 V-3 P-78
62 Banerjee S.C, Tantra in Bengal P-9
63 Y.T, C-6 V-17 P-81
The Yōgini Tantra mentions that where there is a Divyayōgi or Virayōgi in a Kūla or in a place, the Kūla or the place is regarded as the best holiest place. The place, where a Divya or a Vira yōgi lives, that is regarded as the place of siddhi (siddhikhetra) up to 10 Yōjanas. The Kūlasrestha pūrūsa becomes the Gūrū of a Kūla by maintaining the Kūla-Dharma and Kūla-Karma.

\[ \text{Kūladharmaprasāden te sarve kulnāyakāh I} \]

The Yōgini Tantra refers to the significance of Kūlayōga. It describes that Kūladharma is performed everyday and attains peace and prosperity in life\(^\text{64}\). The Kūlayōga is the weapons of knowledge by which all kinds of Pasūbhāba or evils can be removed with pure contact of Kūṇdalini, with the soul\(^\text{65}\). In Kāmarūpa there existed two kinds of Pitha - Gūpta Pitha and Mūkta Pitha (secret and open pitha). The Gūpta Pitha was more frightful, it was only to those person, who belonged to Divya and Vira in the Kūla. They were called as the supreme devatas of the Goddess in the Village\(^\text{66}\).

The Śakti, who was acknowledged as national deity in the royal age, was the Village Goddess in ancient times or in the non-Aryan Villages. The Kāmākhyā, Dirgheswari, Dikkaravāsini and other various Goddesses were originally Village Goddesses. They were named after the place of settlement or race. The people who worshipped the deity in the cave, dūrga and fort is called Dūrgā.

\(^{64}\) Y.T C-6, V-70 P-90
\(^{65}\) Ibid C-6, V-70 P-90
\(^{66}\) Y.T C-6 B-56 P-155
The names or epithets of the Goddesses were connected with the name of place and devotee\textsuperscript{67}. Before the origin of the Divine Goddess or Śakti in the Tantra age there prevailed the worship of local Grāmadevi in various places of Kāmarūpa\textsuperscript{68}. B.K.Kakati remarks that by the imaginary story of different parts of Sati’s body, the Divine figures were evolved out and created 51 holy pithas and identified that the Grāmadevatās were of the various forms of Satī or Pārvatī. Every woman of a Kūla, extended proper allegiance to the Goddess of the Kāla and performed all kinds of duties related to the family Devi or Goddess which resulted the purity of the houses. So women were called Devi.

\begin{verbatim}
Anyatra birāla devi kāmarūpar grihe grihe I
Y.T C- 6, V- 152, P- 427.
\end{verbatim}

The people of the mountain were called Parvatavāsi, who worshipped Pārvatī or Parvatakanyā. Another group worshipped the daughter of Himālaya called Himavatī, which is discussed in the previous chapter.

These village Goddesses occupied prominent place in the Brahmanical pantheon and were the source of subject matter of the Brahmanical Śāstras. The Village deities were brought within the fold of Hindū religion and culture by the end of the 7\textsuperscript{th} century A.D\textsuperscript{69}. The aboriginal Śakti cult moulded to a great extent after coming within the fold of Hindūism. The pre-vedic antiquity of the

\textsuperscript{67} Kakati B.K., P.K.D.D P- 24
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid P- 33
\textsuperscript{69} Sing G.P Kiratas in Ancient India P- 236
Mother- Goddess cult first flourished among the mountain tribes as a local Goddess.\textsuperscript{70}

The system of the worship of Kuladevi was secret.\textsuperscript{71} According to the customs of Kûlacrâ Kâli, Târâ, etc. were worshipped, otherwise a Kaula must go to the hell. (Y.T. C-19 V-43 P- 260). The Yûgini Tantra refers to the Yûni Pitha of Kâmâkhyâ as a Kûladevi of the non- Aryan race. Mahâkâl Bhairava suggested Karâlabhairava to visit the Devisikhara where the Yûnipitha was existed and propitiate Her with Kûlacrâ method, which means that Kâmâkhyâ or Yûnipitha was belonged to a Kûladevi or a Village deity of a certain family.

\begin{quote}
Gachcha sighra yonipyâng devisikharamâstriteh,  
Bhajakâli kûlacârabhâbabesâ parâyanah.
\end{quote}

Y.T C- 19 V- 64 P- 264

The other Kûladevis or Village (local) Goddesses on the Devisikhara of the Nilacala Hill were Ûrvaśi, Menakâ, Rambhâ, Tilôttamâ and Pañçachûrâ who were propitiated by her devotees (Y.T- C- 19, V- 68, P- 266). The Yûgini Tantra gives more stress on the Kûlacâra by referring messages to the Kaula, who worships Kâli, he must be alike her son (Kûlacâren jah kohapi nâmarcharchhayati pûtrak).\textsuperscript{72} Different Ācâras of Kûlas were practised in different Pithas. Kûlacâra were also varieties in different land.

\begin{quote}
Pratipithe prithagdharma ācârasya prithak prithak,  
Dese Dese Kûlacâro mantabyâni sa hetubhih.
\end{quote}

Y.T- C- 1, V- 11, P- 271

\begin{itemize}
\item [70] Sing G.P Kiratas in Ancient India, P- 250
\item [71] Y.T, C-19 V-49 P- 261
\item [72] Y.T C-19, V- 77, P- 267
\end{itemize}
The above description of the Yōgini Tantra identified that in Kāmarūpa there existed many Kūlas and many Kuladevis. According to various sources, there existed 51 holy pithas all over India in connection with the parts of Sati, spouse of Śiva. These 51 Pithas were originally worshipped by the local aboriginal tribes as Grāmadevatās. Every member of the Kūla was to maintain the Kūladharma, introduced by their predecessors or by the head of the Kūla, who was regarded as Kūlagūrū and Kūlapati. All the customs practised by the Kūla was certainly secret. The Yōgini Tantra refers to the importance of the Kūlagūrū. Kāli and Tārā, were worshipped by different Kūlas with different rites and rituals. A member of a Kūla should worship Kāli and Tārā on the basis of Kūladharma or Kulacustoms otherwise he would go the hell.

Kālitārāmahāmantraḥ vidyāmantranca boi dhrūbaṅg ı
Kūlācāraṅg binā johi japaṅg sa nārakā ıı
Y.T C-19, V-43, p- 260

The Yōgini Tantra refers to the importance of individual worship and its impact on the devotees. A devotee, who worship Mahākāli with Mahāvidyā Mantra for thousand times, he would attain nirvana by the grace of Devi and those, who worship Kāli regularly, he would be able to be a son of Kāli. After the Hindūnisation, every Hindū family of consequence especially in villages has a shrine in the compound dedicated to the Kuladevatā. Here the deity is daily worshipped by the members of the family. But

73 Y.T C- 1 V- 55 P- 15
74 Y.T C- 2 V- 48 p- 17
the poor cannot construct a shrine for their tutelary deities, they keep their statues (of stone, wood ) locked up in boxes and take them out when they are to be worshipped. Some have niches in their rooms for the Kûladevi. The worship of the Istadevata is entirely personal affairs. The Istadevata is almost always worshipped in private place. The Kaulikas ( follower of Kûlûcara ) are extremely esoteric. If Kûlûcara is revealed during its performance he loses its siddhi. So a Kaulika performed his worship in a house without man, beach of a river, mountain, graveyard for the individual line. The worship of individual deity was done with Täntric vāmâcâra system. These rites, of course, included the five makaras.

Śakti has many aspects of which two are important. One aspect is gracious and the other aspect is frightful. The Goddess of terror was worshipped secretly. Secret worship of Śakti is usually devoted to the terror aspect with its undesirable practices and rituals. Secret worship of Śakti is connected with ‘mysteries’. The Yûgini Tantra refers to the Secret worship in the Gûhyapitha in Kâmâkhyâ. N. P. Bardoloi remarks that secret worship continued from 8th century to 10th century. With the inception of Täntric Sâdhanâ, Devi worship was increased in Täntric system secretly. The Devi Bhâgavata mentions that all the Grâmadevi were belonged to the part of Kâmâkhyâ.

75 Thomas P Hindu religions, customs and manners. P- 32
76 Pal pratapaditya. Hindu religion and iconography. P- 14
77 Thomas P. Hindu Religion, Customs and Manners. P- 32
78 Bordoloi N.P, Devi P- 184
79 Ibid P-185
The tribes of Kāmarūpa worshipped these three principal deities- Grāmadevatā or Village Gods and Goddesses, Kūladevatā or tutelary deity of the family and Istadevatā or personal deity. According to P. Thomas, Grāmadevatās and Kūladevtās were fixed for him by birth and Istadevatā or personal deities were selected for himself from the many of the pantheon. A man may have one more devatas. He may choose one for Grāmadevatā, one for Kūladevatā and one for his personal or Istadevata. During the reign of Brahmapāla or Ratnapāla in the early part of 11th century A.D. there was a tributary king named Dhaval Ghosh. Dhaval Ghosh had a Kūladevi Mahāmāyā. A Gold image of Mahāmāyā was found near the remains of Devi Thān at Śīngimāri in Gōālpāra. Besides the family of the non-Aryan society, the Royal family also maintained or performed Kūladrāma. The Mārkaṇḍeya Pūrāṇa refers to the Kūladrāma of the King Sūratha, who was dethroned by his corrupt ministers. He had been performing Kūladrāma. But he was banished by his ministers and he took shelter in the jungle where he thought that whether his son performed the Kūladrāma or not.

Tāntric texts mention seven Ācāras (ways)- Vedācāra, Vaisnavācāra, Śaivācāra, Daksinācāra, Vāmācāra, Siddhantacāra and Kaulacāra. Of the seven ways Vāmācāra and Kaulacāra are practised for Śakti worship in Tāntric method.

80 Thomas P. Hindu Religions, Customs and Manners. P- 32
81 Sarma S. Goālpāra Jilār Ithihas P- 14
82 M.P Pancanan Tarkaratna Ed. P- 322
83 Banerji S.C Tantra in Bengal P- 17
The concept of a tutelary deity of the village is as old as Neolithic times, when settled habitation first came into being. India is basically known as the land of villages. The tradition and culture of this land had their origin and gradual development in the villages. Manna mentions that in almost every village of India, there is a Grāma-Devatā or village deity who is later on identified with one of the different forms of the Mother Goddess. The cosmological jurisdiction of village Goddess covers both the domestic and extra-domestic spheres. They also cure epidemic and animal diseases and guard the villages against natural and supernatural enemies. From the Šākta point of view, Tāntric aspirants belong to three categories - Pośū, Vira and Divya, each representing a stage of Sādhanā. Pośū denotes individual soul ( jīva and jivātmā ), i.e., human being, in general. By the culture of good qualities a Pośū is transformed into a Vira. An individual aspiring for upliftment in the Vira stage should follow the way of justice and truth, work for social welfare, control his senses, feel equality and respect towards women and fight for the cause of the oppressed. In other words he must become a perfect man. Any one of these categories, irrespective of caste ( Šākta, Šaiva and Vaisnava ) may worship Šakti according to his own choice. The Yōgini Tantra refers to an aspirant of these categories may perform Sātkarma,(seven duties) Śānti, Stambhan, Baishya, Bidvesan, Úchchātan and Māran. According to their own power ( Šakti ), they may worship Rati, Rani, Ramā,

84 Manna S. Mother Goddess Chandi, P - 12
85 Bhattacharya N.N, History of Tāntric Religion. P - 317
Jyestha, Matangi, Kulakamini, Durga, Bhadrakali in the empty house, deep forest or in the temple to attain their siddhi with sixteen items. Of course, they were to wear their attire (dress) according to the objects. Different dress for different objects\(^{86}\).

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ratirbāni ramajesthā mātangi kūlakāmini} & \quad \text{I} \\
\text{Dūrga chaīra bhadrakāli karmādot karmasidhayē} & \quad \text{II} \\
\text{Sorasairūpasāraisyā yajedvivah svasaktītah} & \quad \text{I} \\
\text{Sūnyāgāre mahāranye devatāyanēhapi bā} & \quad \text{II}
\end{align*}
\]

Originally, all local and personal Goddesses were independent. They were not known to any name. They were not associated with Divine figures or parts of human body or not subordinated to any Supreme Being and had no idea about incarnation. The name of the place, race, family is entrusted to the Goddess. Goddesses were not known to the spouse of Śiva or had no connection with Śiva. Originally, Śiva and Pārvatī were separate in relation. The aboriginal tribes worshipped their deities locally or personally under the trees, in the forest or in a secret places. They were independent in nature and had no relation with any other Goddesses. But after the advent of the Aryans and composition of the Tantra Śāstras and the Pūrāṇas, they were adorned with a special name, nature and character, and connected with Divine figures. Thus the local or village Goddesses like Kāli, Ēmā, Karāla, Cāmūndā originally independent, came to be regarded as manifestations of Dūrgā in different circumstances\(^{87}\). For the system of worship, some special methods, rites and rituals were formulated. The followers of the

\(^{86}\) T. C= 4 V- 3-8 P- 47-48

\(^{87}\) Kakati B.K, Mother Goddess Kāmākhya P- 64
Goddesses turned into a special sect that was the Śākta sect. The process of assimilation went on until in the Devi Bhāgavata, it came to be declared that all village Goddesses should be regarded as partial manifestations of the Goddess (9/1/136). Thus the concept of Mother Goddess assumed a cosmic proportion and all unconnected local numina were affiliated to her along with the local deities, local tribes and customs also came to be recognized and tolerated. The Yōgini Tantra lays down that the local customs of a particular pitha should be regarded as having canonical sanctions. The local laws and customs governing drink should not be violated. So it would be called that Śakti is the invention of Tantra Age. The Yōni symbol (village deity) turned into Goddess in the Tāntric literature. The mythological description of the Goddesses, its refined and modified system, customs, rites and rituals of the village or local tribes contributed much to the development of Śakti cult in Kāmarūpa. The Kālikā Pūrāṇa is said to have changed the land of Kāmarūpa into the Aryan Śakti Pithas. Despite the number and variety of Grāmadevatās, several typical characteristics of the village or local deities have been noted. Firstly, the Grāmadevatās, usually were exclusively female with some few exceptions. Although, there were other devatās, the female deities were distinctly and widely worshipped. Secondly, these deities were usually represented by uncarved stones, trees, or small shrines that did not contain an anthropomorphic image. Thirdly, the Grāmadevatās reflected

88 Kakati B.K, Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā P- 64
89 Y.T C- 9 V- 9 P- 505
90 Bordoloi N.P Devi P- 186
the primary interest of the Villages. The appearance, nature, character of the village deities were belonged to local tribal people. She was perceived to be their deity and to be concerned specially with their well-being and that of their village. Fourthly, the Village deities were often directly associated with diseases, pestilences, epidemic, natural calamities and Śakti is said to have protected the villagers from these perils.

Before the Aryanisation of Kāmarūpa, there had not been co-relations among the aboriginal tribes. So their habits and culture were seen different. They stressed always on local customs, rites and local foodings. They observed religious functions relating to Grāmadevi without or excluding outsiders. The exclusion of outsiders from the festivals locally observed for the honour of the deities, seems to be associated with the idea that they might be benefited from the power of the Goddess, which was intended for the local village, not for outsiders. Bhattacharya comments that the village Mothers are related not to the great world forces but to such simple matters as cholera, small pox, cattle disease etc. They were worshipped with animal sacrifices. He again said that the deities worshipped in one village are quite unknown to other villages.

Thus, the background of the Śakti cult laid down in the village by the aboriginal tribes, connecting local Ācāras* or

* Ācāras: Local behaviour, character, rites, customs and laws of a particular race, caste or family.
treatment of the local people in Prāgjyotisha- Kāmarūpa. The Austrics, for the first time, lived in the village or Grāma on the bank of the Luit. They had contact with Greece, Rome, Ārab, and Bactria which had great contributions to the development of culture in the land. In this connection, mention may be made of some important places, which were originally village area, comprised the remains of early village Śakti culture. These places were Davakā, Mangaldoi, Madan-kāmadeva, Baitbāri, Śadiya, Tezpūr, Mālinithān, Sūrya Pāhār, etc. which were the witness of the early village culture. These village areas were the basic plinth of the emergence and development of Śakti cult in Assam.

ŚAKTI CÛLT UNDER THE ROYAL DYNASTIES: Śakti cult originated in the primordial period in the form of fertility cult, mother Goddess and Yōni cult. Śakti was worshipped in Kūlas, families and individually. But there had no formulated rites and rituals and common form of Goddess in the society. But Śakti found its special shape and discipline under the royal authority. The traditional and historical rulers of Prāgjyotisha- Kāmarūpa extended royal support and patronage to the non-Aryan cults and encouraged the masses to accept and worship the existing cults and thereby helped in the development and extension of Śakti cult to all directions of the land. At the same time aboriginal cults turned into national cult under the auspicious zeal of the kings of Prāgjyotisha- Kāmarūpa. Śakti cult became a predominant cult during the non-
Aryan period. The Kirāta royal authority was responsible for the firm establishment and extension of Śakti cult in Kāmarūpa. As a scion of the matriarchal group they worshipped Mother Goddess and Yōni Goddess in various forms and in various places in Prāgjyotisha. The Kirātas established their kingdoms in Prāgjyotisha. Mahiraṅga Dānava was the founder of the Kirāta rule in Prāgjyotisha. He was the follower of Mother Goddess. Under his royal patronage, the Kirātas worshipped the Yōni Goddess, on the Nilācala hill. Under him, the position of Yōni Goddess became strong. The Asūra king assumed the royal title ‘Mahiraṅga’, the lover of the Earth. His religious policy continued by his successor Ghataka. He was the head of the Asūra Kūla. Under him the Yōni was worshipped widely. Ghataka means Kūlachārya\(^92\), the head or Gūrū of the Asūra Kūla. So Ghataka maintained the Ācāras (customs) of the Asūra Kūla.

Naraka, the prince of Mithilā, invaded Prāgjyotisha and killed the Kirāta king Ghataka, usurped the throne with the help of Bishnū, king of Dvārakā. With the coming of Naraka, the history of Kāmarūpa turned into the period of illumination. His reign may be called a period of transition not only in political history but also in religio-social field of the land. Naraka was called the champion of Śakti worship. There are enough informations regarding Śakti cult under the Royal dynasties in Prāgjyotisha- Kāmarūpa. But it is very strange the Kālikā

\(^{92}\) Sarma Kiran, Sanskrit-Assamese Dictionary P- 197
Pūrāṇa, the Yōgini Tantra and other historians like P.C. Choudhury, B.K. Barua and K.L. Barua refer to the Śakti cult under Naraka, but they are silent about the prevalent of Śakti cult under the Varman, Śalastambha, and Pala dynasties, who claimed themselves as the successors of Bhauma - Naraka dynasty. The inscriptions, images, architectures, sculptures and the scattered remains supply sufficient informations, on which it is proved that the aboriginal Austrics, Kirātas, and Drāvidas origin Śakti cult continued as before in strong force in Prāgyotisha- Kāmarūpa. The Kālikā Pūrāṇa asserted that Naraka was the originator of Śakti worship in Kāmarūpa under the royal patronage. Of course, some forces led him to introduce Śakti worship in Kāmarūpa. Naraka was brought up under Kātyāyani, a name of Dūrgā. His wife's name was Māyā, a form of Mahāmāyā. Māyā is identified with Dūrgā and Naraka was born within a human skul, an important pot for drink in the Tāntric Śakti cult. After the annointment of Naraka on the throne of Prāgyotisha, the name of Prāgyotisha turned into Kāmarūpa and the Yōni Goddess turned into Kāmākhyā. Naraka, who was brought up under Kātyāyani, paid due regards to Mother Kātyāyani as divine force. He came to know that Yōni Goddess was the presiding deity of the Kirātas, so Naraka followed a policy of conciliatory measures towards them. Although he drove away the Kirātas to Dikkaravāsini, but a majority of the Kirātas remained in Prāgyotisha. They were belonged to the

93 Kakati B.K. P.K.Dh P- 52
matriarchal group and were the followers of Śakti cult. Naraka, with a view to win over the support and for peaceful settlement among the non-Aryans Naraka followed an appeasement and liberal policy towards the Kirātas. He not only appointed them in his army but also adopted their Yōni Goddess as his tutelary deity. On the other hand, Bishnū advised Naraka to worship Kāmākhya94 the guiding deity of the Kirāta kingdom. Bishnū also forbade Naraka to worship other Gods and Goddess except Kāmākhya.

Kāmākhāṅg Tvaṅg binā pitha nanyadevaṅg majibyasi
Y.T, C- 39, V- 144 P- 323

Naraka introduced the worship of Kāmākhya in order to win over the support and allegiance from the remaining Kirātas. Thus, the non-Aryan origin of Yōni Goddess acquired the Royal recognition and patronage, which established Kāmākhya in firm footing. Naraka brought with him a large number of Brahmans and other high castes people and granted them land on the Nilācala Hill95. With the coming of the Aryan Naraka, the name of the kingdom was changed from Prāgijyotisha to Kāmarūpa96. Naraka brought the village or local Goddess ‘Yōni Goddess’ to the Royal palace and the village goddess was regarded later on as Divine energy in the Pūrāṇa and other Tāntric literatures composed by the Aryans. The Kālikā Pūrāṇa and the Yōgini Tantra clearly refer to the introduction of Śakti worship by Naraka in the Nilācala Hill. Naraka himself was the chief priest and

94 Kakati B.K Mother Goddess Kāmākhya, P- 14
95 Basu N.N S. H.k p- 38
96 K.P C- 28, V- 126 P- 326
he himself worshipped Kāmākhyā. He became a stounce worshipper of Śakti. Naraka did not allow Basistha into the Devigriha. Basistha, being infuriated, cursed the Kāmākhyā and Naraka. The Yōgini Tantra discusses a lot about it. The Purāṇas and the Tantras make no mention about Bhagadatta and Bajradatta's religious policy. The Doobi and Nidhānpūr Copper Plate Grants of Bhāskarvarman refer to Bhagadatta and Bajradatta as the follower of Vedic religion and performer of horse sacrifices but none about Śakti. But it does not mean that Śakti was not prevailed in Kāmarūpa. Śakti cult had already gained ground and became a dominant cult in Kāmarūpa. The chief purpose of the colonization of the Aryans was the settlement and spread of Arya dharma in Kāmarūpa. To fulfill this object they adopted the non-Aryan cults, mixed up with the aboriginal tribes and the kings appointed them in the army. So, in this connection, it was not possible for any ruler to neglect the predecessors policy. Not only Bhagadatta and Bajradatta, but also any other ruler of this dynasty made no attempt to violate the non-Aryan cult.

The rulers of the Bhauma-Naraka dynasty like Varman, Śālastambha and Pāla respectively, followed the policy of appeasement and liberal towards the religious cults. They never interfere on the religion of tribal people. Each ruler from Naraka onwards made attempt to win over the support of the tribal people and became popular among the masses. The rulers chief object

97 Doobi C.P V-4.5 Nidhanpur C.P V- 6
was to Aryanise the tribal people of Kāmarūpa. The Inscriptions mention that most of the rulers of Kāmarūpa was the worshiper of Śiva. But they were seemed to be the follower of Śakti cult as they extended to the Śakti cult all possible royal support. The inscriptions contain the names of various Śaktis and iconographical description of the Goddesses. Images of various Śaktis are found in different places of Kāmarūpa and the temple has been bearing a large number of sculptures, which identify Kāmarūpa as the land of Śakti cult during the royal dynastical period in strong force as before.

Bāna, a traditional king of Tezpur in ancient times, was a stoune devotee of Śiva. But he was liberal to other Gods and Goddesses. His reign was famous for the revival of Śiva-Śakti worship. Bāna, not only built the Śiva temple but also built the Śakti temple on the North bank of the Louit known as Mahābhairava and Mahābhairavi temple, which are still standing now bearing the glory of Bānāsūra. His daughter Ŭshā introduced the Śakti worship in the Mahābhairavi temple. She regularly worshipped and danced before the Devi, as a result of which she had gained the blessings of the Goddess. Thus under the royal support and patronage Śiva-Śakti worship spread among non-Aryan people. The Kālikā Pūrāṇa and the Yōginī Tantra refer to the Devi Dikkaravāsini. According to the traditional account, prevailed among the Chūtiyās, the Goddess (Tāmreswari or

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98 Gohaibarua Padmanath. Assam Buranji. P- 12
Kesāikhāiti) was the Tutelary deity of King Vishmaka, king of Kūndila. The Chūtiyā king worshipped the Devi Tāmreswari and gave royal patronage. It is known that there was a system of human sacrifice under the royal support. The prisoners of the war and the accused person were sacrificed before the Devi. This system of human sacrifice continued upto the Āhōm period. Of course, the process of worship was performed by the local priests of the Chūtiyās and Deoris.

The real political history started with the accession of Pūshyavarman to the throne of Kāmarūpa. There are enough evidences of the prevalence of Śakti worship of the period. It is true that the epigraphic sources and the historians mention that Śiva was the presiding deity of the Vauma-Naraka successors upto the end of the Pāla line. But there is also enough informations whatsoever, regarding the prevalence of Śakti cult among the people of Kāmarūpa. The epigraphic sources, of course, do not directly mention about the worship of Śakti, but it mentions the names of various Śaktis, their gracious and frightful nature, virtues and motherlike character. The great Goddesses were compared to their queens, with the popularity and influence of the Śakti cult in the land as well as in the royal Hārem. It also confirmed that Śakti cult as an national deity continued as it were earlier, without any obstruction from the royal authority. There was no other king of Kāmarūpa who worshipped Śakti or Kāmākhya.

99 Bordoloi Rajanikant Tāmreswari Mandir, P-1
Only King Valavarman and Indrapāla’s names were associated with the deities Kāmeswara-Mahāgauri, who were identified as Kāmākhya.

Although the inscriptions are silent about the Śakti Pithas and system of Śakti worship but mention about the Tāntric rites and Yōgic practices which were regarded as an essential part of Śakti worship. On the other hand, the Goddesses, mentioned in the inscriptions, had similarity with the iconographical description that of the Goddesses mentioned in the Pūrānas and the Tantras. These are sufficient evidences to prove that during the Vauma-Naraka dynasty from 4th to 12th century A.D, Śakti cult was a dominant cult in the kingdom.

Pūshyavarman, the founder of the varman dynasty, established the real political history in Kāmarūpa. But his kingdom was politically weak and the political condition of the Kingdom was not favourable for him. There were a number of petty chiefs in various places in the kingdom. The Allahābād Pillar inscription of Samuḍravarman justified the existence of petty kingdoms in the land. In this situation Pūshyavarman had nothing to do any way but to accept the peaceful and liberal policy towards the people of the land. So, whatever his religion, he never interfere in the affairs, religious cults, customs, rites and rituals of the people, which will cause the impending danger to his unstable kingdom. With a view to organize the society, he attempted to do away with the period of ‘Matshyanyaya’, created conditions for the welfare of all and attempted to strive for the
realization of three aims of life. He followed the liberal and moderate policy towards the religions of the people so as to unite them for the sake of the greater interest of the Kingdom. There existed the cults of Śaiva, Vaisnava, Būdha and Śakti but he was a devotee of Śaiva cult. He extended royal support to other cults also. The attitude of the king towards the cults led his subject to be co-operative with each other cult. There began co-relation among the various cults. As a result a devotee of a cult extended his allegiance to other cult, which focussed in the holy places or temples. A temple of Śiva contains the images of other Gods and Goddesses. The excavation in the various places of Kāmarūpa and the remains found there indicate that the complex contains various types of images like Śiva, Dūrgā, Ganesā etc. The Allāhābād Pillar Inscription mentions that Kāmarūpa and Davakā were under the overlordship of Samudragūpta for a long time. As a result the influence of Gūpta art and Culture fell on Kāmarūpa and Davakā. The Gūpta art and culture encouraged the Varman rulers and they constructed permanent temple architecture in the kingdom. In that period, the stone temple architectures of the Gūptas reached the highest peak of glory.

To find out the real picture of the Śakti cult of the Varman dynasty, we must discuss the inscriptions of ancient Assam. In this connection, the Doobi and Nidhānpūr Copper Plate Grants are regarded as the most reliable and authentic sources. The Doobi Copper Plate

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100 Three aims- Dharma, Artha, Kāma to attain Mokshya
101 Datta J.C. Malinithan P-12
mentions that Samudravarman performed the practice of Yōga, an indispensable element of the Śakti-Tāntric system and he retired to heaven with the help of Yōga (V-13). Verse 28, 29 indicate that the idea of Heavenly bodies has been already existed in Kāmarūpa. It has mentioned the daughter of the mountain (Pārvati) and Nārāyanvarman’s wife Devamati who were compared to Pārvati. Devamati gave birth to a son named Mahendravarman as Pārvati gave birth to a son Kārtikeya. In this context, Devamati was compared to supreme deity Pārvati so also her son was compared to Kārtikeya in beauty, power and fame. Verse 35 of the Doobi copper Plate and verse 16 of the Nidhānpūr copper plate mention Bhōgavati. Bhōgavati is a name of Dūrgā (Śakti). Bhōga means woman and so it means the female Goddess. The queen Chandramūkhavarman assumed the name Bhōgavati equal to Dūrgā. In the verse 51, reference is made of Dūrgā. The queen of Sthitavarman was compared to Dūrgā in virtue. Sūsthitavarman’s queen was like the daughter of the king of mountain (Pārvati) in verse 53 of the Doobi C.P. In verse 70, Śakti is mentioned as a type of weapons of Bhāskarvarman.

The Nidhānpūr Copper Plate Grants refers to the existence of the joint worship of Śiva and Śakti in the form of Pūrūsha and Prakriti (V-14) which mean that the relation of Pūrūsha and Prakriti is inseparable. So also the relation of Mahābhūtavarman and Devavati is like that of Pūrūsha-Prakriti. The union of Pūrūsha-Prakriti is responsible for the regeneration of the universe. The Pūrūsha-Prakriti is referred to as Śiva-Śakti. The Nidhānpūr
Copper Plate of Bhāskevarman (V-20) refers to the Goddess Syāmā. Syāmā is identified with Kāli. The queen of Sūsthitavarman was regarded equal in virtue, with Goddess Syāmā and she adopted the name Syāmādevi.

However, it is obviously proved that during the Varman rule Goddesses like Kāli, Dūrgā, Pārvati, Bhōgavati were widely worshipped. Of course, Śakti cult already became the dominant cult in the land. The kings had nothing to do but to the development of Śakti cult. Śakti cult was the most popular and powerful cult which had great impact on the royal palace and so most of the queens were known to the name of the Goddesses. Only the kings maintained the duty to protect the dharma of his subjects. The king chief duty was to protect Dharma, Artha, Kāma to attain mokshya by the people. Queens were compared to the Divine Goddess in power, beauty, virtue, and in motherlike nature, which meant that Devi adorned the royal family. So the Yōgini Tantra refers to the Śakti existed in each family of the society. On the other hand, it focuses the liberal attitude of the rulers not only to the subjects but to the members of the royal family. That is why all cults developed equally side by side.

The evidences relating to the reign of Bhāskevarman, viz two inscriptions the Doobi and the Nīdhānpūr copper Plate, the Harshacharita of Bānabhatta clearly suggest that Śaktism was prevailed in Kāmarūpa in strong force. Of course, Saivism received far-reaching attention to the kings of the Varman rule. So also Śakti cult continued without stepping down. Goddesses
like Dûrgâ, Pârvati, Kâli etc. were mentioned as Supreme powers in the inscriptions. If there was no Śakti or Goddess, the name of them would not have mentioned in the Plates of the Varman, Śâlastambha and Pâla rulers.

Varman dynasty came to an end but the impact of the Goddesses remained as it were before and it fell on the next successors viz. Śâlastambha dynasty. During the reign of Śâlastambha dynasty the bulk of the Śakti cult was extended. It was during their reign, the Tāntric ideology was disseminated into the region. In the “Early History of Kâmarûpa”, K.L.Barua refers to the kings of Śâlastambha dynasty, who were the worshippers of their tutelary deities ‘Kâmeswara - Mahâgauri’ mentioned in the inscription of Vanamâlî. The Tezpur Copper Plate of Vanamâlâvarmâdeva refers to the temple of Kâmeswara and Mahâgauri on the Kâmakûta Hill (V- 11-13). Mahâgauri and Kâmeswara are no other than Kâmâkhyâ and Śiva, which identified later on as Śiva-Śakti worship under the royal patronage. Śakti was so popular that a tank was dug in the name of Candikâ, which is referred to in the Parvatiyā Plates of Vanamâlâvarmâdeva (V- 25, 26). He also built the second Kâmâkhyā temple near Silghat due to worship of Kâmâkhyâ nearby his capital. Some remains of Biswanâth identified the high regards of the Śâlastambha kings to the Śakti cult. The structures of the complex suggest that there might have been a group of temples but remained incomplete.

102 Datta J.C Malinithan P- 13-14
There are some attractive symbols of some holes on the rock which personified Gods and Goddesses. The holes are identified as the temples like- Biswanāth temple, Umā temple, Cāndi temple and Kāmeswara temple. The holes of the temples are said to have been the images of these temples\textsuperscript{103}. According to local tradition, earlier Bāna, the king of Śonitpūr intended to establish in Biswanāth a second Kāśidhām. But due to non- Co-operation of two sages Kumūd and Kaustav his ambition was not fulfilled and Biswanāth came to be known as Gūpta Kāsi (secret Kāsi). But historians suggest that it was not Bānasūra but Vanamālāvarmādeva, who attempted to construct lots of temples to make it second Kāśidhām in Kāmarūpa\textsuperscript{104}.

The glory of Art and Culture reached its zenith during the Pāla Dynasty. A great number of images of Śaktis and temples are discovered in various places of Kāmarūpa. Most of them are still existed. We have references to the Kūladevi (Goddess of the family) that was the female deity in ancient Kāmarūpa, as family Goddess called Kūladevi, which was reflected in the royal family. The queen of Brahmapāla of the Pāla line, assumed the name ‘Kūladevi’ that was the Goddess of the family. Hence, the queen is supposed to be an embodiment of the presence of the Goddess of fortune of the family. During the reign of Ratnapāla there existed Tāntric rites. Ratnapāla himself was famous for Tāntric lore (Śūālkūchi C.P Grant, Ratnapāla).

\textsuperscript{103} Gogoi N. Buranjiye Parasā Visvanāth Prāntar. P- 10
\textsuperscript{104} Gogoi N. Buranjiye Parasā Visvanāth Prāntar. P- 14
A mangala verse is noticed for the first time in the Gauhati Copper Plate Grant of Indrapāla. As a mangala verse ‘Gauri’ is depicted in the Grant in which Gauri is prayed at the outset as their spiritual deity. At the same time Goddess Earth with the Great Boar, was penanced (V-1, 2). In verse 14, it is stated that the Pāla kings displayed great pompous by comparing their queens with that of Pārvati (Śakti). Verse 16, indicates the prevalence of Tāntric lore in the Pāla rule. Verse 71, contains Haragirijācaranaṇapānkajaraṇajitāmāṅgā, Which refers to one whose head is decorated with the dust of the feet of God Śiva and Goddess Durgā. The reign of Indrapāla finds its importance for the Śakti worship and Śakti was worshipped largely with the practice of Tāntric rites. Pārvati was acknowledged in this Grant by the Royal authority (V-1). The Copper Plate Grant refers to the introduction of Tāntric rites and study of Tāntric lore by Indrapāla (V-16). The Guākuchi Copper Plate of Indrapāla mention ‘Mahāgaurikāmeswarah’ in the context of the boundaries of the donated land and the reference to the king as a devotee of Śiva and Śakti. The Tezpur and Parvatīyā Copper Plate of Vanamālā refer to the worship of Śiva-Śakti. During the period of Indrapāla Śiva-Śakti was worshipped in the form of Kāmeswara-Mahāgauri. Śakti cult was associated with the Śaiva cult and became very popular in Kāmarūpa in the 2nd half of the 11th century.

The Gāchtal Copper Plate Grant of Gopālavarmādeva (V-9) refers to ‘bhūbhridbhūvah’, which means one who is born of the
Mountain i.e the daughter of the Himalayas (Parvati). Just as Śiva had got a son by marrying the daughter of the Mountain Parvati, so also Naraka married Māyā, who was beautiful and desire fulfilling Devi like Dūrgā. Verse 5, mentioned the Goddess Earth as the mother of Naraka.

The Khonamukhi Copper Plate Grant of Dharmapāla mentions a maṅgala verse—

‘Bonde……..

‘I salute to that Ardhayūvatiswara, who is the foremost of all Gods…..’ this very maṅgala verse occurs in the Subhaṅkarapataka Copper Plate of Dharmapāla (V - 1). The concept of the Ardhanāriswara i.e. Ardhayūvatiswara form of Śiva is a more developed form of the concept of the duel of Śiva-Śakti105. But in the Kālikā Pūrāṇa an entire chapter (Chapter- 45 ) containing 189 verses and entitled ‘Ardhanāriswaracarita’, connected with the origin of this form of the deity Śiva-Śakti106. The Copper Plate also mentions Pārvati, Gauri as creator and virtuous deity.

The Kachāries (plain tribal people of Assam) were greatly influenced by the Śakti cult. The Kachāri kings worshipped the Goddesses or Śaktis and extended royal patronage to the development of Śakti culture. The king built temples and installed there Śakti images with great pompous. R.M.Nath refers to a Kachāri king, named Vikramāditya phā who shifted his capital from Brahmāpur (present Nagaon) to north-east to the slope

105 Sarma M.M. Inscription of Ancient Assam. P- 234
106 K.P P- 404
of Mikir Hills. He built a new capital named Sōnāpūr. He built a temple in the new capital and installed a golden image of Goddess Dūrgā. An image of Dūrgā was carved out at Deopāni in a stone pillar. Thus the Kachāri royal authority encouraged the people to worship Śakti cult. The Kachāries worshipped the image of Ranachandi Dūrgā and built the Kāli temple. They worshipped the Goddess by human sacrifice.

The epigraphical records of the Pāla reign inform us that the Pāla rulers constructed different temples in Kāmarūpa. Art, Architecture and Sculpture and the system of worship in Tāntric methods reached its zenith during this rule. The north-Indian architectural and sculptural designs had fully dominated the art and culture of Kāmarūpa. The salient features of the Pāla period were the construction of group temples, a ratha type ground plans and presence of erotic figures etc. One of the most important contribution of this type of group temple was the Mālinithān (now in Arunachal Pradesh). The temple contains an image of Dūrgā along with other Gods. Here Dūrgā has been performed in the form of Mālini (female gerdaner).

ORGANISATION OF A PRIESTLY CLASS:

The foundation of the Śakti cult was laid down in the Villages, jungles and mountains, where the aboriginal tribes lived. Śakti cult was originally worshipped locally. As there was diverse races, there were various Goddesses, naturally diverse in character and ritualistic.

107 Nath R.M. Background of Assamese Cliture P- 71
108 Ibid P- 72
function. There was no common deity among diverse races and no common rites and rituals, also the system of worship. During the non-Aryan period there were individual deities, family deities and Kūla deities and they were worshipped in different methods by different priests. Originally the tribes were independent and so their Goddesses were also independent. Each division performed the system of worship independently and secretly. In that situation there could not have common and regular priests among the tribes. Sakti was worshipped by some individually in the secret places. In the individual method of worship the devotee himself became the priest and performed the ritualistic institution. In the Vedic worship also there were no regular priests. In the domestic worship, the head of the family officiated as priest and in public gathering, the military leader. Originally, every caste or group had their own priest in different names. The race or the Villagers appointed their local people as priest to worship Śakti. Men of all castes became priest or perform the deities, but after the function is over they became a mere people as before. The locally recruited people was acquainted with the systems of the worship of Śakti and they were regularly appointed to serve the Goddess. As a result they became permanent and hereditary priests. They became a mostly reputed class in the society. After the composition of Tāntras the Gods and Goddesses turned into the fold of Hindū systems. The process of worship of Devi became tuft one due to the inclusion of Vāmācāra.

109 Thomas P. Hindus Religions, Customs and manners. 1949. P. 24
Sūrasopōsāra, Maṇḍalas and Yantras etc. and the activities of worship developed and increased. The priest was to follow certain rules and regulations ascribed to him in the Tantras. In course of time, the priests of all races became the spiritual Guru of a particular Villagers. The priests were to involve in the shrines for a long time for the purpose of the preparation of the worship of Devi. So the villagers afford to pay the priest. With the starting of the real political history the position of the priests were changed and they occupied a high position in the kingdom. The king of the Bhauma- Naraka dynasty imported Brahmanas to Kāmarūpa and appointed them in the temples and granted them a huge plot of land for the maintainance of their families. The inscriptions of Assam mention the national deities and different names of Brahmanas of various Gōtras. P.Thomas inform us that especially in the village shrine dedicated to the Kūladevā, was to daily worshipped by the members of the family. Those who could afford to pay the priest, maintain a Brahmana priest for the daily service of the deity.  

In Kāmarūpa, there existed female priests in the performance of Śakti worship. In the matriarchal societies we generally come across the superiority of the priestess over the priest based on a corresponding superiority of the Goddess over the God. Provisions of female priests are found among the Khāsis. The Khāsi priest is usually called Lyengdoh. The Lyengdoh must be assisted at the time.

110 Thomas P. Hindu Religions. Customs and Manners. P. 32
111 Bhattacharya N.N. History of Tāntric Religion. P. 120
of performing sacrifices by a female priestess called Kā-sah-blai. Kā-sah-slā or simply Kā-Lyngdoh. The priest merely acts as her deputy. A priest has to vacate his office if he has no woman of a proper relationship to assist him in the performance of his secret duties.

There was no recognized order of priests in Kāmarūpa. The head of the family and the Kūla performed the duties of the priest. In all region no record have been found of ancient Brahmanic settlement. There was no any centre of Vedic and Pūrānic learning. The non-Aryans performed their worship with the help of their own priest acquainted with local customs. The priesthood system gradually developed among them. The office of the priest became hereditary. There was a priest among the Kirātas settled on the hills and mountains lying on the boarderline. So they had no contact with the Aryan Brahmanas. However, the aboriginal tribes of the Hills remained out of the Aryan Brahmanical pale. Vamsi Gōpala Deva refers to the 'Misumi Brahmanas' who recited the deity in the caves. According to Robinson Sāhā, "the Kalitās performed the service of the Brahmanas of the Koches in ancient Kāmarūpa. But later on the vedic Brahmanas replaced the Kalitās. The Chūtiyas and Deoris had their own local priests. The priest, who performed the

112 Bhattacharya N.N. History of Tāntric Religion P- 120-121
113 Eliot Charles Hinduism and Buddhism P- 279
114 Kakati B.K. Mother Goddess Kamakhya P- 60
115 Sarma Sivananda, Goalpara Jilar Itihas P- 28
worship of the Goddess Tāmreswari, was called Deori. There is an Assamese folk song which refers to the Deori priest:

Sadiyā rājate chārisāl Gosāni
Deorie pūje ki nā

Quoted from 'Deori Sanskriti' of S. Deori.

E.A. Gait comments that the region of the Chūtiyās was a curious one. They worshipped various forms of Kāli with the aid, not of Brahmanas, but of their tribal priests or Deoris.

The historical ruler had their great ambition to Aryamise Kāmarūpa and had an objective to oust the Kali Age from Kāmarūpa. So they imported Aryan Brahmanas to Kāmarūpa, settled them to look after the temples, granted them lands and bestowed upon them the holy duties of the temples. Royal support and patronage were extended to the Brahmanas and thus the position of the Brahmanas gained ground under the royal dynasties. The kings of Kāmarūpa donated lands all over Kāmarūpa only to spread Aryadharma so as to civilize the non-Aryan people of the land. Thus the Aryan Brahmanas under the Royal protection extended their claws to bring them under their new disciplines. The Brahmanas earlier, took charge of religious institutions with the non-Aryan priests in the villages without modifying their character and essentials. The aboriginal deities turned into the Aryan deities.

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116 Deori S. Deori Sanskriti P- 32
117 E.A. Gait History of Assam P- 42
after the Aryanisation of Kāmarūpa with new Hindū names. The non-Aryan deities took new shape and appearance as divine figures from the village aboriginal racial figures. Various mythological stories came into light regarding the village Goddess and a new system of worship was set with the Tāntric methods. The Tantras and the Pūrāṇas established Brahmanas Supremacy in the society as the possessor of supreme knowledge of the Universe. But the Aryans did not exclude the non-Aryan elements. Instead of that a new system of Vāmācāra or Pañca- Makāra brought into existence with the non-Aryan element like Matsya, Māmsa, Madya (Sōma ), Mūdrā (posture ) and Maithūna, which were the essential part of Śakti Tāntric system of worship. There emerged a new priestly class of the non-Aryans and Aryans. But the Aryan Brahmanas, in fact, began to take the leading part in the process of worship. Gradually the non-Aryan priest turned into assistant priest. In the hilly tribes the system of non-Aryan priestly class remained as it were before, as they remained outside the pale of contact with the Aryans, So even today the Hill tribes, although some of them were Hindūs, performed their religious functions with their own priests. In course of time after the emergence of mythological Divine figure, the Brahmanas became the mediator of the common devotees and Gods and Goddesses. They turned into the spiritual guide of the Śākta devotees and the people led their spiritual life under the control of the orthodox Brahmana class.
The pre-Hindu or the pre-Aryan tribal religion of the Kirātas, of the Hill-Tipperāh was greatly modified after the coming under the pervasive Hindu influence and inspiration. The Tipperāh had their own priests- the Conis, who ministered to the old deities with old rites and rituals. But under the inspiration of the Hindu Brahmanas, the Kirāta pantheon of a group of fourteen, transformed into Brahmanical deities with the name ‘Catūrdaśa devatā’119. The Assamese Tripūrā Būranji inform us that after the coming into close contact with the Aryan Brahmana Priest, their rites and rituals were also modified. N.N. Basu remarks that Mlecha kings of Kāmarūpa officiated as high priests120.

120 Basu N.N. Social History of Kamarupa P- 128-29