CHAPTER-VI

Administrative Set up of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa: Political Structure

The traditional accounts, the epigraphic records and the writings of the foreign visitors confirm that monarchy was the main base of the political structure of Kāmarūpa. There were 7 (seven) component parts of the State structure (saptāṅga). The head of the administration or Ruler (svāmin), the Minister (amātya), Territory (janapada), Fort (durga), Treasury (kośa), Army (danda) and Ally (mitra) were the seven limbs of the state structure. The divinity of the king was the integrating force, bringing the divergent elements into close relation. The Boar Incarnation of Viṣṇu has accorded that to the ancestors of the rulers. Some of these are accorded the status of deities. Puṣyavarman, like Viṣṇu and Nārāyana was the divine Cakrapāṇi in human form. Bhūtivarman is compared to Indra in power and fame, and so also are Susthitavarman and Brahmāpāla. Rāmapāla, emulating the good deeds of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, was like Puroṣottama and Janārdana. The law of primogeniture worked in the selection of the crown prince as the ruler. Bargāon Inscription, however, refers to the
election of Brahmapāla by high officials and important members of the state as of Gopāla of Gauḍapāla family. The Kāmarūpa king sometimes nominated his successors in the presence of the people as was done by Gaṇapati varman for his son Sthitavarman when the latter had finished his education. The rulers also sometimes voluntarily abdicated for some personal reasons as Jayamāla or Vīrabāhu has done in favour of his son Balavarman-III, Brahmapāla for Ratnapāla.

It was a fact that the crown prince is supposed to be well-versed in the śāstras, the Vedas and the Āṅgas, such as the science of politics and fine arts, besides proficiency in physical training and volour and the use of weapons and the training and breeding of elephants and horses.

Purohita, the chief agent of the consecration, held an important position. We find a large number of Purohitas in the inscriptions, e.g. Srikānta was the purohita of Harjara and Murāri for Vaidyadeva. The coronation (abhiseka) of Sthitavarman was performed according to Sastric rites. Religious and legal sanctions were thus accorded for accepting responsibilities. As the wielder of rod of Dharma, it was ruler’s responsibility to maintain the divine social order, varṇāsrama, as of Bhāskarvarman. Dharmapāla was the protector of Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa to avoid
Mātsyanyāya. We find the Kāmarūpa rulers taking high-sounding titles, e.g. Paramabhaṭṭaraka, Parameśvara, Mahārājādhirāja etc. which were quite common among North Indian rulers as a mark of paramountcy. We have reference to the performance of Aśvamedha sacrifice by several rulers, e.g. Mahendravarman, Sthitavarman and Bhūtivarman. This implies fresh conquests made by these rulers and the acknowledgement of their suzerainty by others.

The ruler was assisted by his Council of Ministers popularly known as the ‘Mantri Pariṣad.’ Bhāskarvarman in his meeting with Harṣa was accompanied by ministers. Vaidyadeva is mentioned in the Kamauli grant as shining in the assembly of his Sacivas; Amātya and Mantri are the two other terms for the ministers. Post of Mahāmātyās, Viṣayāmātyās are different high functionaries. The actual strength of the minister is not known and the appointment is from Brāhmaṇ families and are hereditary. The clearcut distinction of Mantris, Sacivas and Amātyas are not found.

Besides these ministers, in the higher echelon there were a number of officials in the autocratic set up, mostly borrowed from the machinery under Purohitas and their successors in the north. The court official in the centre with the prefix ‘Mahāmātra’
has access to the king. Mahāllakapraudhikā controlled entrance to the female apartments. The other officers with the same prefix mentioned in the same record are Mahāsainyapaṭi and Mahāmātya. Mahāsāmanta also figures in the set up. Official functionaries, know as Pañcamahāśabda also occurs in Kāmarūpa records of the Sālastambha rulers.

Besides these officials and the council of ministers, the Kāmarūpa rulers intended on the services of the royal princes and others connected with the ruling families. These included Rājaputra, Rāṇaka, Rājanyaka and Rājaballabha. Rājaputra was undoubtedly the crown prince while the Rāṇaka and Rājanyaka were probably minor feudatories inferior to Rājā. Rāṇaka is noticed in many records from different places and it is sometimes associated with the Mahāsandhivigrahika and also with the Mahākṣapatalika thereby symbolising his association at the administrative machinery. He also figures as the Dūtaka of records. It is very likely that all those who were associated with central administrative machinery might have been given some territory for their upkeeps. Rājavallabhas are taken to be king’s favourites, of the followers. Rājanyakas along with the Sāmantas are supposed to represent land-holding-aristocracy who supplied the king with men and materials. The terms Sāmanta and
Mahāsāmanta suggest different gradation of feudatories who could as well be required to man other offices of greater responsibility, e.g. the Mahāsāmanta of Tezpur Rock Epigraph who was also Senādhyakṣa, and the Sāmanta Chitradharadakṣa Bhaṭṭa Jiva of the same record was also Balādhyakṣa, one in-charge of forces. The feudatories also sometimes could head provincial set up of which the detailed working is not available.

The Kāmarūpa kingdom was divided into several administrative units in descending order-Bhuktis, Maṇḍalas, Viṣayas, Puras, Agrahāras, Kuchis constituting groups of villagers and Grāma or villages. The geographical division of the kingdom to the north of the Brahmaputra called Uttarkūladeśa and that to the south Dakṣiṇakūladeśa are also noticed in several inscriptions. The term Bhukti as usual represented the biggest administrative division like Puṇḍravardhana of the Gupta times or Tirakbhukti comprising Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga division. At the same time, the Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva mentions Prāgjyotīṣa as Bhukti while Kāmarūpa as a Maṇḍala, definitely, a lower administrative division. Kāmarūpa is also called a Viṣaya in the 10th century A.D. Viṣaya sometimes also denoted Deśa, Janapada and Rāṣṭra. We find reference to Prāgjyotiṣapura and Kāmarūpanagara in records. Grant of Vallabhadeva mentions
Hāpyočā Maṇḍala lying east of Kirtipura. Hapyochā is located in modern Darrang. The Viṣayas included in the Kāmarūpa inscriptions are Chandrapuri, Dijjinna, Hāpyomā. Puraji, Vāḍā, Mandi etc. The head of these units was known as Viṣayapati or Viṣayanāyaka. Śriksikunḍa was incharge of Chandrapuri and he had his office (ādhikarana) at the headquarters (ādhīsthāna). The king’s communications or Śāsanas were conveyed to the Viṣayapati as well.

The smaller unit in the political structure of the Kāmarūpa rulers were the Grāmas and the Puras, Abhisuravāṭaka, Heṁśivā, Trāyodaśa, Hāposā, Bhaviśā, Kaṇjiyā, Guheśvara, Dīgdola, Chaḍi etc. There are also references to Agrahāras, such as Mayūraśāmalāgrahāra and Srṅgātikāgrahāra which were made up of many village settlements. Some other terms, a few being probably of local connotation, are also noticed. These are Pāṭaka, Koṇci, Palli, like Kāśi-pāṭaka, Vāmadeva-pāṭaka Vappadeva, Devunakoṇci, Khyātipalli etc. A village as usual consisted of Vāstu (land for building purposes), Kṣetra (arable land), Khila (waste land), gopracāra-bhūmi (cattles pasture), besides land fit for cultivation. The towns including Skandhāvāras or camp of victory are noticed in inscription s. These were well fortified and were properly laid out connected by roads and streets. People of
all shades, — learned men, preceptors, poets, artisans and the like
lived in these cities. Here a separate dealing of the political struc-
ture of Puṇḍravardhana is necessary. Puṇḍravardhana had
changed hands from time to time; being the western border of
Prāgjyotiṣa-Keśavapura Puṇḍravardhana sometimes was within
Kāmarūpa under vigorous rulers of imperialistic designs and
sometimes outside the kingdom of Kāmarūpa under weak rulers.

It is mentioned also in the Gupta epigraphs, ranging from the
years 124 to 224, i.e. from 444 to 544 A.D. In the records of the
Pāla-Sena age, it is variously styled, — Puṇḍra or Puṇḍravardhana
or simply Puṇḍra-bhukti. It seems to have been the biggest ad-
ministrative division or province of the Guptas as well as of the
Gauḍa empire or Prāgjyotiṣa kingdom. It extended from the
summit of the Himalayas in the North and Khāṭī in the Sundarban
region in the south. The Bhāgirathi (-Jāṭhavi) separated from the
Vardhamāna-bhukti in the west. The Madhyapāda plate of
Viśvarūpasena extends its boundary to the sea, apparently the
Bay of Bengal and the estuary of Meghnā. According to the
Mehār copper plate, dated 1234 A.D. it comprised even a part of
the district of Tipperā.

The Puṇḍravardhanabhukti was divided into several Viṣayas
and Maṇḍalas of which twenty four are mentioned in the epi-
graphs. The well known ones are:

1-2. Vyāghratati-maṇḍala to which was attached the Mahānta-prakāśa.

3-5. Sthalikkata Viṣaya to which was attested Amra Shandika-maṇḍala near the Udragrāma-Maṇḍala.
(The Khalimpur copperplate inscription of Dharmapāla)


7-9. Koṭivarṣa-viṣaya in which were included the Gokalika and Halāvarta maṇḍalas

10. Brāhmaṇigrāma-Maṇḍala

11. Nāvya-Maṇḍala


14-15. Ikkadasi-Viṣaya which included the Yola-Maṇḍala.

16-17. Sātatapadmāvati-Viṣaya in which was included the Kumaratālaka-Maṇḍala.


19. Adhahpattana-Maṇḍala.

20. Khāḍivīṣaya or Maṇḍala.

21. Vārendra or Vārendri Maṇḍala.

22. Vaṅga which included Bikramapura-bhāga and Nāvya.

Puṇḍravardhana administrative divisions are also shown in a different chapter.

**Kings of Kāmarūpa:**

Dr. D. K. Bhandarkar prepared genealogical lists of various ruling dynasties of India and appended these lists to Vol. XXIII, part III, of the *Epigraphia Indica* (July 1935). He divided the Prāgjyotisā rulers into (1) the family of Puṣyavarman of Prāgjyotisā, (2) The Bhaumas of Hārūpeśvara, (3) the early Sālastambhas of Hārūpeśvara, (4) the later Sālastambha families of Prāgjyotisā and (5) Brahmapālas of Durjayānagara. Against this view K. L. Barua established that, “The kings of Prāgjyotisā from Puṣyavarman in the 3rd or the 4th century A.D. to Jayapāla in the 12th century actually falls into three dynasties founded by Puṣyavarman (Varman dynasty), founded by Sālastambha (Sālastambha dynasty) and founded by Brahmapāla (Brahmapāla or Pāla dynasty). Sālastambha dynasty and Brahmapāla dynasty should not be divided on the basis of capitals as they belonged to Bhauma-Nāraka dynasty. They are placed below chronologically approximately and the kings of the first three dynasties were known to be belonged to the Bhauma-Nāraka dynasty:
Pusyavarman 380-400 A.D.
Samudravarman 400-420 A.D.
Balavarman 420-440 A.D.
Kalyanavarman 440-460 A.D.
Ganapativarman 460-480 A.D.
Mahendravarman 480-500 A.D.
Narayanaavarman 500-520 A.D.
Mahabhutivarman 520-540 A.D.
Chandramukhavarman 540-560 A.D.
Sthitavarman 560-580 A.D.
Susthitavarman 580-600 A.D.
Kumār Bhāskaravarman 600-650 A.D.
Avantivarman 650-655 A.D.

Sālastambha dynasty:
Sālastambha 655-675 A.D.
Vijaya 675-685 A.D.
Pālaka 685-700 A.D.
Kumāra 700-715 A.D.
Vajradeva 715-730 A.D.
Harṣavarmādeva 730-750 A.D.
Balavarman-II 750-765 A.D.
Chakra -Arathā: did not rule
Pralambha 800-820 A.D.
Harjaravarman 820-835 A.D.
Vanamālavarman 835-860 A.D.
Jayamālavarman 860-875 A.D.
(Viravāhu)
Balavarman 875-890 A.D.
Tyāga Singha 970-985 A.D.

Brahmapāla Dynasty:
Brahmapāla 985-1000 A.D.
Ratnapāla 1000-1030 A.D.
Purandararpāla (did not reign)
Indrapāla 1030-1055 A.D.
Gopāla 1055-1075 A.D.
Harṣapāla 1075-1090 A.D.
Dharmapāla 1090-1115 A.D.
Jayapāla 1115-1125 A.D.

Later kings of Kāmarūpa:
Tiṅgyadeva 1125-1131 A.D.
Vaidyadeva 1131-1150 A.D.
Rāyārideva 1150-1165 A.D.
Udayakaṇa 1165-1175 A.D.
Vallabhadeva 1175-1200 A.D.
Prthu 1200-1228 A.D.
Sandhya 1225-1270 A.D.
Rūp 1285-1300 A.D.
Singhadvaj 1300-1305 A.D.
Pratāpddhvaja 1305-1325 A.D.
Dharmanārāyaṇa 1325-1330 A.D.
Durlabhanārāyaṇa 1330-1365 A.D.
Indranārāyaṇa 1350-1365 A.D.

Administrative set up:

Epigraphs of the early kings of Assam indicated that seven component parts, called prakṛties in the Hindu law books, was the basis of the prevalent monarchical system. These are: king (svāmin), minister (amātya), territory (janapada), fort (durga), treasury (kośa), army (daṇḍa) and ally (mitra). A significant reference to these elements (prakṛtayaḥ) is made in the Bargāon grant, in connection with the election of Brahmapāla when there was nobody to succeed Tyāga Singha who died without leaving any heir. Prakṛtyā is both subject or ministry of the seven elements of the state. Kingship was both divine and elective, although law of primogeniture normally prevailed. The king was the executor of daṇḍanīti. In a sense, kingship is based on taxā-
tion and protection which was a trust and the monarchy was but a limited one. The king is expected to strive for people's welfare.

The king was helped by a set of officials. Besides, the rājaguru, the court was adorned by poets, learned men and physician. The important officials were Mahā-dvārādhipati, Mahā-pratihāra, Mahallaka-prauḍhikaraṇa (old lady in-charge of harem), Duttaka, Lekhahāraka and dirghadhavaga_who communicated royal orders to local officers. In day to day administration, the king was helped by the prince who was also appointed as Governors of Provinces.

In another set of names the following are put up —

Jayamālavarman 860 - 875 A.D.
(Viravāhu)
Balavarma III 875 - 890
Tyāga Singha 970-985

Brahmapāla dynasty:
Brahmapāla 985 - 1000 A.D.
Ratnapāla 1000 - 1030 A.D.
Purandarpāla (did not reign)
Indrapāla 1030 - 1055 A.D.
Gopāla 1055 - 1075
Later kings of Kāmarupa:

Tingyadeva 1125 - 1131 A.D.
Vaidyadeva 1131 - 1150
Rāyārideva 1150 - 1165,
1165-1175 (Udayakarna)
Udayakarna 1175 - 1200 A.D.
Vallabhadeva 1175 - 1200
Prthu 1200 - 1225 or 1228
Sandhyā 1225 - 1270 A.D.
Rūp 1285 - 1300
Singhadhvaja 1300 - 1305
Pratāpdhvaja 1305 - 1330
Dharmanārāyaṇa 1325 - 1330
Durlabhanārāyaṇa 1300 - 1360
Indranārāyaṇa 1350 - 1365

The revenue administration during that period was very extensive. The various types of land included arable-land (kṣetra), waste-land (khila), interior-land (apakṛṣṭabhūmi) and the vāstu-
land. This classification is evident in Dāmodarpur Copperplate inscription. The grant of land were made individually as well as for a group of persons which is mentioned in Tezpur grant of Vanamāla and Nidhanpur grant of Bhāskarvarman. The reference to the terms Bhūmichidra-nyāya also occurs in Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva. It is clear from the expression following that no rent was due on it (ākinicītkara grāhyam). Literally it should mean ‘unarable land brought under cultivation for the first time.’ Land donated to Brāhmaṇas was governed by a special kind of land tenure system, called ‘Brahmādeya’. These grants could be for small plots of land or groups of villages, called Agrahāras. Nidhanpur grant confirms that such Agrahāras with all kinds of revenue were given perpetually to the donee. The fresh Sāsanas or rescripts had to be issued to make the land immune from payment of revenue. The grant had to be registered. Periodical examination of claims and titles of landgrants were made.

In the principle of the Mahābhārata, the Sukranitisāra, the Arthaśāstra etc. the king was assisted by a Mantripariṣad or council of Ministers. Hiuen Tsang also confirm it, but could not give the actual number. Mantrins, Amātyas and Sacivas were called Ministers according to the inscription. Amātyas are to report to king
on four means of Govt. after due consideration. The four means are peace, corruption force and discussion. The Amātyas were entrusted with supervision of land and collection of revenue from cities, villages etc. The Sacivas were in-charge of the war department. Collectively, they were to give proper advice to the king. That the king sat in Council is proved by epigraphs and there are references to kind of feudatories and other important members of the community attending the meeting.

Revenue was derived from taxation and other sources. Brāhmaṇas of the Agrahāras were exempted from taxation. Land given to Brāhmaṇas were free from all taxes and official harassments. Wealthy classes were the main tax payers.

The reference to the types of land officials connected with the realization of revenue, settlement and alienation might help in visualising. Religious institutions also received rent-free lands for their maintenance and promotion of spiritual concept.

The lands forming the subject were properly demarcated on right sides which are given in the Nidhanpur grant of the Mayūraśālmalāgrahāra. The boundary was marked by ponds, tanks, river bed and trees, which were sometimes planted for proper demarcation. The Simāpradātā was the officer in-charge of the boundaries. He could be the nāyaka, the head of the
village. The capacity of land was assessed in terms of Drona and Pāṭaka, which are ancient terms of weights and measurements. There were witnesses referred in the register of documents written by the Kāyasthas. There was also reference to composer and engravers. Adhikaraṇa is the general term for the District office or Court where the documents were kept.

*Kara* is noticed in Nidhanpur and Kamauli records. It was levied on the tillers of the soil and was realised by the collectors of revenue. The name of the tax collector was also referred to in Nidhanpur grant. The grant mentioned about extra-revenues, Uparikara, Utkhetana and the dues to be paid by cultivators in connection with the entry of Chauradhaṇa and Chātabhāta Bhāṇḍāgarādhikartā and Koṣṭhāgārikā were in-charge of the royal store-houses and treasury. The Kaivartas or fishermen collected tolls or *sulka* which was another source of revenue to the State. The Tezpur Rock Inscription of Harijara mentions the collection of duties on merchandise which was carried on boats (p. 84, last para, *Inscriptions of Ancient Assam*, M. M. Sharma). The mineral resources were also tapped and the Bargāon grant refers to profit from copper mines. (*kamalākara*). There is no reference to realisation of road cess etc. or the machinery involved therein.
The Kāmarūpa rulers were conscious of strong defence necessary for preserving the integrity of their kingdom. There was reference to the war like qualities of a king. We do have some information on their military organisations. The rulers were not dependent on the Mahāsāmantas and Sāmantas who were required to render military assistance, but their personal services were required along with several others.

The Mahā-Sāmanta Sucita was also the Senādhyakṣa and Sāmanta Chitragharadakṣa Bhaṭṭa-Jiu of Tezpur rock inscription of Harjjara (p. 629-30) was also the Balādhyakṣa. The Mahasāmanta Divākara was also appointed as Bhāṇḍāgārīka by king Bhāskaravarman. The army consisted of different wings. Infantry, cavalry, elephants and big boats for ferrying the troops. These are mentioned as forming part of the military camp of Bhāskara at Kṛnasuvarna. There are references to naval fights as in Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva. The Hāyuntal grant mention Śrīgaṇa as Mahāsenāpati, the Supreme Commandar of army under Harjjara (p. 92, last para, *Inscriptions of Ancient Assam*, M. M. Sharma). The information adduced by the records on the question of law and justice centres round the remuneration of a few officials. Caurodhāraṇīka, Dāṇḍika, Daṇḍa-pāśīka and Mahadaṇḍanāyaka seem to be connected with detection of crimes, punishment of
the guilty and the prevention of recurrence of crimes. The Kamauli grant refers Govinda Gonadana as the Dharmādhikāra, one who had a command over dharma, through whom the royal order was communicated. Several other officials ordinarily residing at the headquarters of a district (viṣayādhikaraṇa) are also noticed in records. These include Nyāyakaraṇika, the Vyavahārika and the kāyastha. The chātas and bhātas are mentioned in Kāmarūpa records with the task of arresting robbers and persons guilty of high treason. The Nāgāon, Bargaon and Gauhati grants refer to the taxes paid by the cultivators for the entry of Caurodhāraṇikas, Cātas and Bhātas. It appears that these police officials were sent to the villages for apprehension of thieves and maintainance of law and order. Dāndika, Dāṇḍapāśika and Dāṇḍanāyaka were officers who could be traced even in early administrative patterns. They had both police or executive and judicial functions to perform. There was no division between the executive and judiciary. Nyāyakaraṇika and Vyavahārika were primarily judicial officers with other duties to perform. In the Nidhanpur grant, the term ‘Adhikaraṇa’ is mentioned, which is construed by scholars as an administrative Board of a district, or the royal tribunal in the city, or the office and probably the court of a district officer and a Secretariat and advisory council, vyavahārī, the
other term, is taken as an administering agent, or a man of business, the superintendent of land and commerce, or in the sense of judicial administration. Vyavahārin is mentioned in the list of officials connected with the execution of land grants; as for instance, Haradatta of Nidhanpur grant. The Kāmāuli grants of Vaidyadeva mention Govindagonandana as the Dharmādhikāra through whom Vaidyadeva communicated the royal order. It may be mentioned that the dūtaka of the Nālandā inscription recording the grant of five villages at the request of Balaputradeva of Suvarṇa-dvipa by the Pāla ruler Gopāladeva calls himself Dharmādhikāra. The entrusting of revenue matters in the hand of the judicial offenders was not an unusual nature in the administrative set up in Assam. The reference to the types of land and officials connected with the realisation of revenue settlement and alienation might help in visualising the revenue administration in that period. The various types of land included arable land (kṣetra), waste land (khila), inferior land (apakṛṣṭabhūmi) and the vāstu (Household) land. These classifications are evident in Dāmodarpur Copper plate Inscription. The grants of land were made individually as well as for a group of persons, e.g. Tezpur grant of Vanamāla and Nidhanpur grant of Bhāskaravarman. The reference to the term ‘Bhumichidra’ in the Nidhanpur grant
suggests that it was a free tenure land for the Brāhmaṇas.

Religious institutions also received rent free lands for their maintenance.

The lands belonging to the subjects or to the donees were properly demarcated on eight sides which were given in the Nidhanpur grant of the Mayūraśālmalāgrahāra. The boundary posts included ponds, tanks, river beds and trees, which were sometimes planted for proper demarcation. The Simāpradāta was the officer in-charge of the boundaries. He could be the nāyaka, the headman of the village. The capacity of land was assessed in terms of droupa and pātaka which are ancient terms of weight and measurements. There were witnesses referred in the transactions of land grant of Nidhanpur. Karanika was the register of documents written by the Kāyasthas. There was also reference to the composer and the engravers. Adhikaraṇa is the general term for the district office or court where the documents were kept.