CHAPTER IV
SECTION - A

THE RULE OF THE SALASTAMBHAS

It is an established fact that the dynasty to succeed the Varmans was the Sālastambha dynasty founded by one Sālastambha. A valuable information has been given in the Bargāon copperplate inscription of Ratnapāla, “Thus, as a course of destiny, the kingdom, ruled by the kings of the family of Naraka in succession, has been occupied by Sālastambha the lord of the mlecchas. In his (i.e., Sālastambha’s) line also there were famous kings like Vigrahastambha numbering two times ten” (i.e. twenty) (v 9, IAA, p. 61). Verse 10 is also worth quoting in this connection: “When the twenty first king of that line, named Tyāgasimha, retired to heaven without an heir, his subjects, thinking ‘once again a king of the Bhauma dynasty would be more suitable for us’ nominated Śrī-
Brahmapāla, capable of shouldering the burden of the world, as the king, because of his relationship (with the family of Naraka)" (IAA, p.161). Thus, Sālastambha has been remembered by a king of posterity belonging to a different dynasty, and that too, after 200 years.

This fact is really very important. It definitely shows that the Pālas of Prāgjyotisa -Kāmarūpa had knowledge of past events and also provided due importance to historical events.

Now, Sālastambha had been called the 'lord of the Mlechchas'. The term Mleccha generally denotes the Non-Aryans, while the name 'Sālastambha' indicates clearly that this non-Aryan chief belonged to an Aryanised tribe. It seems that this chieftain or his predecessors were under the suzerainty of the Varmans. Political influence of the Varmans definitely gave a fillip to the Sanskritisation process among the other indigenous tribes and communities, Sālastambha's tribe being one of them.

Popularity of Naraka's legend, like the Varmans, also tempted the Sālastambhas to link their dynasty with this
epic hero who was invariably connected with this land. It seems that all the three Kāmarupa ruling dynasties racially belonged to the same branch. In every possibility, they belonged to different Mongoloid branches. If the Pālas racially belonged to a different branch, they certainly would have traced their origin from other source. In this regard, another fact may be taken into consideration. If we go a little further down the dynastic history of Assam (uptil the entrance of the Tai-Ahoms,) except the Khêm dynasty (which ruled in Kmatāpura) and the Bhūyān principalities, various Aryanised Mongoloid ruling families were ruling all over the Brahmaputra valley. This was evidently because of the predominence of the Mongoloid races in the Brahmaputra valley. Thus, this process began as early as the establishment of the Varman kingdom in Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa and the trend of associating the ruling family with the legendary figures of Naraka and his two successors gained ground with the Sālastambhas and the Pālas. The process of Sanskrisation in its turn, helped in giving birth to rather founded a solid platform for the growth of the
composite Assamese culture. Further, the way, SāLASTAMBHA'S connection with the 'Bhaumas' has been described in the Bargāon grant, only shows the intimacy of the Pālas with the SāLASTAMBHAS. In this case, it points out that the SāLASTAMBHAS and the Pālas belonged to two different branches of the same race, thus possessing the same racial elements. As a matter of fact, v-10 of the aforesaid grant clearly reveals Brahmapāla's so-called connection with Naraka. N. Lahiri suggests that the term mleccha may also imply the fact that the SāLASTAMBHAS came from outside.¹ But in that case, the SāLASTAMBHA grants could surely have mentioned about their place of origin. Instead, the Háyuñthal grant very clearly designates the SāLASTAMBHAS as 'mleccha' and simultaneously also connects them with Bhagadatta as his scions.

Next important issue with regard to the SāLASTAMBHAS was the question, how and when SāLASTAMBHA founded a new dynasty in Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa of the once mighty Varmans. K. L. Barua, imagines of a Mech or Mleccha

¹ Lahiri, N., PA, p. 72
revolt which had placed its leader Sālastambha on the
throne on the death of Bhāskaravarman and, in doing so,
identifies Avantivarman of Viśākhadatta's Mudrārākṣasa
with Bhāskara's immediate successor. He has taken
Sālastambha to be the governor of a supposed Mech
country. On the other hand, P. C. Choudhury, though
concludes that Mudrārākṣasa's Avantivarman was the
Devavarman of I-Tsing's account and that Devavarman
(described as a king of Eastern India like Bhāskaravarman)
was a relative of Bhāskara or belonged at least to a
collateral branch of the Varman family who had been ruling
in the Nālandā region as a governor of Bhāskaravarman,
rules out that Sālastambha's becoming the king of
Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa was the result of a Mech revolt.
Because, the word 'Mleccha' does not essentially denote a
tribe called Mech. On the basis of the evidence of I-Tsing,
Choudhury puts him in the Nālandā region as its ruler allied

2. Barua, K.L., EHK., p. 69
3. ibid
5. ibid p.205
to the Varmans or a governor of that area appointed by Bhāskaravarman. Even though Mudrārākṣasa indirectly points out that Avantivarman was a Kāmarūpa (Bhauma) ruler through the mention of the expression varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu, Choudhury takes Devavarman to be a Varman ruler on the basis of the similarity of the surname ‘Varman’ and has concluded that Avantivarman who was initially in the Nālandā region, after Bhāskara’s death came to Kāmarūpa and ascended the throne as Bhāskara did not have a direct heir to succeed him. Now, regarding the origin and rise of Sālastambha, he says that Sālastambha was also a Bhauma—the ‘Bhauma dynasty established by Alpine chiefs.’ P. C. Choudhury again identifies Sālastambha with Mādhava of Hara-Gaurī Saṁvāda, a 18th century local literary work. Mādhava is described as having come from the west. Thus, Sālastambha, alias Devavarman, alias Anantivarman, alias Mādhava was not an

6. ibid, p.206  
7. ibid, p. 207  
8. ibid, p. 208  
9. ibid, p.209  
10. ibid, pp. 204-206
usurper but the immediate successor of Bhāaskaravarman. N. N. Vasu takes Sālastambha to be the founder of a new dynasty who, too, claimed descent from Bhagadatta. D. C. Sircar describes Sālastambha as an aboriginal chief who founded a new dynasty named Mleccha dynasty. Sircar takes Sālastambha’s claiming descent from Bhagadatta as a common act of the Hinduised ruling families in the early medieval period of claiming descent from a famous ancient ancestry. He negates the theory that Sālastambha and Devavarman were the same person on the ground that Devavarman of I-Tsing’s account was most probably a king of Malda region. (Mṛgasthāpana = Mi-li-kia-Si-kia-po-no, a place belonging to Malda region) and hence we cannot identify him with a Kāmarūpa king. R. C. Majumdar identifies Devavarman of I-Tsing’s account with Devakhadga of South-East Bengal. He again views that this particular Chinese evidence leads also to the tentative

11. Vasu, N.N., SHK p. 155
12. TCHA Vol., p. 124
13. ibid
14. ibid, pp. 123-124
15. IIB., Vol-I, p. 87
conclusions that the Khadga dynasty ruled approximately between 650-700 A.D. and their kingdom comprised nearly the whole of Eastern and Southern Bengal.\textsuperscript{16} This Devavarman has also been identified with Devagupta of the Later Gupta dynasty of Magadha by some Bengal scholars like R. G. Basak.\textsuperscript{17} However, majority of them do not support this view on the following grounds:\textsuperscript{18}

(i) According to I-Tsing, who visited Eastern India about the last quarter of the 7th century A.D., Mahārāja Śrīgupta built a temple of China (for the Chinese priests) about five centuries back and granted a plot of land and revenues of 24 villages for its maintenance which were situated in Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no, about 40 \textit{yojanas} to the east of Nālandā following the course of the Ganges. As mentioned above, this place has been identified with Malda of North Bengal. Again he says that Devavarman of Eastern India, who by that time enjoyed the land would give it back to the temple on arrival of any Chinese priest.

\textsuperscript{16} ibid
\textsuperscript{17} ibid
\textsuperscript{18} ibid, TCHA, Vol-I p. 124
(ii) I-Tsing himself places the home territory of the Later Guptas in mid-India and not Eastern India.\textsuperscript{19}

D. C. Sircar also opposes the idea that Devakhaḍga was the king in question as South-east Bengal of the Khadgas did not definitely comprised of Malda in North Bengal.\textsuperscript{20}

The above analysis seems to be enough to conclude that Devavarman of I-Tsing’s account was a different king ruled in the last quarter of the 7th century A.D. in Eastern India.

P. C. Choudhury’s contention that Devavarman, Anantivarman and Sālastambha was the same person, the king of Eastern India of I-Tsing’s account, however, is difficult to accept mainly because of want of evidence. In tradition, there is vaguely anything that proves his theory. Sālastambha, as is mentioned earlier, was a powerful chief of non-Aryan blood who took the advantage of the unstable political condition which had plunged the country at the death of Bhāskaravarman. Although in no available records, it has been mentioned that Bhāskaravarman’s death was

\textsuperscript{19} TCHA Vol-I p. 124
\textsuperscript{20} ibid
followed by anarchy, but it seems to be quite reasonable to hold that a big king like Bhāskara’s might, when left the throne open for contention among the possible candidates, an anarchical situation would naturally arise. We really do not know whether the Varman dynasty came to an end immediately after the death of Bhāskaravarman but one thing is certain that Bhāskaravarman was a celibate as the epithet. ‘Kumāra’ had always been added to his name. D. C. Sircar has not given any conclusion regarding I-Tsing’s Devavarman’s identity. I-Tsing visited in the last quarter of the 7th century A.D. after Bhāskara’s death. It is probable that this Devavarman was the immediate successor of Bhāskara’s large kingdom. Thus, it appears that it was during the reign of this king, or in the reign of his successor, Sālāstambha revolted, ended the rule of the Varmans and began the rule of his family. It may be presumed that the Sālāstambha appeared in Kāmarūpa politics by the beginning of the 8th century A.D. (700 A.D). If we take the *Mudrārākṣasa*’s information as a historical fact, then it appears that Avantivarman was a different
ruler, most probably a Varman who apparently ruled in Prāgjyotiśa, the eastern part of Bhāskaravarman’s large territory. And it was Avantivarman who faced the Mleccha revolt launched by Sālastambha. It is evident that Avantivarman could not withstand the Mleccha onslaught and Sālastambha sat on the throne of Prāgjyotiśa. It is highly possible that in the post-Bhāskara age (within 50 years of his death), Bhāskaravarman’s territory got divided into several divisions, each being ruled independently by a Varman prince. Avantivarman was one such prince who, however, could not save his kingdom from the onslaught of the Mlechhas under Sālastambha. Even though it was a sad event, as it ended the rule of the Varmans in Prāgjyotiśa-Kāmarūpa, this event at the same time also heralded a new age of glory, basically in the military side in the history of ancient Assam under the Sālastambhas. Besides, Ratnapāla’s grant, Sālastambha has been mentioned in the inscriptions left behind by his three illustrious successors, namely Harjjarvarman (mid 9th century A.D.), Vanamālavarmadeva and Balavarman III (last quarter of the 9th century A.D.)
"All are powerful and high-spirited (v-1) Oh! Parthiva, your future descendants will, for this reason, be called mlecchas. (v-2).......... of king Bhagadatta.......... After this, Śālastambha, the killer of enemies, became the ruler of the earth (v 3). After the tiger-like king retired to the heaven, his very strong son Vijaya.......” (v-4) (Hāyuṇṭhāl copperplate inscription, IAA, p. 91).

In Uttarbarbil grant, Śālastambha is said to have ascended the throne after a number of kings of Vajradatta’s family, (v 9, IAA. p. 133).

Thus, in all these grants, Śālastambha has been praised as the great founder of this dynasty in the same manner as Puṣyavarman in the Dubi and the Nidhanpur copperplate inscriptions. He has been called a scion of the legendary Bhauma family of Naraka-Bhagadatta-Vajradatta. Another common thing is that he has been praised as a great conqueror and an able ruler. One significant aspect is that Śālastambha and his descendents are credited with having the lordship over Uparipaṭṭana which they had got from
their progenitor Vajradatta. It is said that Vajradatta got the right over ‘Uparipattana’ from Lord Śiva as a kind of boon so that his progeny could rule this place and Prāgjyotīṣa in future. Uparipattana is identified with the hilly regions (upari-Upar=above) lying on the northern (upari) boundary of Kāmarūpa, however, its literary meaning is ‘the other town above’ or it can be said that its meaning is the other town. This place may also be said to have situated in an area lying outside the traditional boundaries of Prāgjyotīṣa-Kāmarūpa (upari : extra or additional). Thus, Śālastambha seems to have ruled over Prāgjyotīṣa-Kāmarūpa proper and as the Śālastambha capital was at Haḍappēśvara (modern Tezpur), this area was under the control of Śālastambha. Evidently, Śālastambha may be said to have hailed from Tezpur region where he made his capital. Under these circumstances, it is possible that ‘Uparipattana’ was identical with Haḍappēśvara. In that case, its literary meaning also suits this identification. That is, Haḍappēśvara was the other biggest city of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa besides Prāgjyotiṣpura, the old capital.
Nothing more can be ascertained about Sālastambha from the available sources.

Vijaya and other Rulers

The Hāyuṅthal grant describes Vijaya, the second king to ascend the Sālastambha throne as the 'very strong son...... who subdued the enemies, became a great king of the earth.' (v-4, (IAA, p.91). While the charters of Vanamālavarmadeva do not mention about this king, the grants of Balavarman III do have a reference to this king, of course in a casual manner.

"After the demise of several kings of his (Sālastambha) like Pālaka and Vijaya, there appeared on earth a moon amongst the kings, named Harijjara, a veritable meance to his enemies." (v 10, Uttarbarbil and Nowgong grants, IAA, p. 134).

Ratnapāla’s Bargāon grant has the following lines:

"Thus, as a course of destiny, the kingdom, ruled by the kings of family of Naraka, in succession has been occupied by Sālastambha, the lord of the mlecchas. In
his (Sālastambha) line also there were famous kings like Vigrahastambha numbering two times ten." (v 9, IAA, p.161).

This line does not specifically suggest Vijaya as the ‘famous’ king although it is possible that Vigrahastambha was Vijaya only. We may presume that the epithet ‘stambha’ (pillar) suffixed to the name of the king was a fashion among the mlecchas in 7th-8th centuries. King Vijaya might have taken another name ending with ‘stambha’, e.g. Vigrahastambha. The name ‘Vigrahastambha’ (the pillar of war) indicates ‘vijaya’ or victory only. It appears that the Sālastambhas started using the title ‘varman’ or ‘varmadeva’ only lately from the time of Śrī-Harṣavarmadeva. This also shows that the Varmans and the Sālastambhas were two different families. On the other hand, the names of even the earlier Sālastambha rulers like Vigrahastambha or Vijaya and Pālaka, suggest their amalgamation with the Aryan culture. The Hāyuṇṭhal copperplate grant also
records the three successors of Vijaya, namely Pālaka, Kumāra and Vajradeva, who “became kings and disappeared in succession.” (v 5, IAA, p. 92). This casual reference to these three kings and also the absence of their names in the other grants indicate that they ruled more or less peacefully, no major event occurred in this period.

Śrī Harṣa or Harṣavarmadeva.

Śrī Harṣa or Harṣavarmadeva ascended the Śālastambha throne after Vajradeva. This king has been called Harṣavarmadeva in the Hāyuňthal copperplate inscription of Harjjaravarman and Śrī-Harṣa or Harṣa in the Tezpur and Parbatīya copperplates of Vanamālavarmadeva. That Harṣavarmadeva was a prominent ruler is clear from this line in the Hāyuňthal inscription:

“The virtuous and highly qualified king, who became famous with his own children and never oppressed them”, (v 16, IAA, p. 92). The terms ‘virtuous’ and ‘highly qualified’ definitely means that Harṣavarmadeva mastered
himself both in military and administrative aspects. It has also been indicated that Harṣavarrmandeva was a famous king. That is, Harṣavarmadeva was quite a familiar name in other parts of India. This line gives weight in the identification of Śrī-Harṣadeva of the Paśupatināth temple inscription of Jayadeva II of Nepāla, dated 748 A.D. and Śrī-Harṣa of the Saṃgad inscription of Rāstrakūṭa king Dantidūrga (S.E.674=752 A.D.) with Harṣavarmadeva, the Sālastambha king.

The Paśupatināth temple inscription of Jayadeva II states thus: “The king (Jayadeva II) wedded, as if she were Fortune, queen Rājyamati, possessed of virtues befitting her race, the noble descendant of Bhagadatta’s royal line (Bhagadattarāja-kulajā) and daughter of Śrī-Harṣadeva, lord of Gauḍa, Odra, Kaliṅga, Kośala and other lands, who crushed the heads of hostile kings with the club like tusks of his rutting elephants.” Though in this passage Śrī-Harṣadeva has not been described as the king of

21. Choudhury, P.C., HCPA., p. 219
22. ibid, p.215
Prāgjyotisā-Kāmarūpa, from the chronological point of view it is quite clear that he was the king of Pragjyotisā only. Pasupatināth temple inscription is dated 748 A.D., while the reign of Harṣavarmdeva has been placed between 730 A.D. and 750 A.D. We have already mentioned that Harṣavarmadeva was a prominent ruler as is evident from the inscriptions of the Sālastambha rulers. Bhāskaravarman had already built the platform of an aggressive Prāgjyotisā-Kāmarūpa, and it was Harṣavarmadeva who approximately within ninety years of Bhāskaravarman’s death once again showed Prāgjyotisā-Kāmarūpa’s ambitious aggressive designs to the contemporary Indian States. Harṣavarmadeva had a role model in Bhāskaravarman, and must have used North Bengal as the base for his operations in North-Central India. Due to want of any dated record, we cannot say conclusively that North Bengal was under the control of the earlier Sālastambha rulers. It seems, Harṣavarmadeva tried to revive the lost glory of Prāgjyotisā-Kāmarūpa by conquering territories in North India. He won over the rulers
of Gauda, Odra, Kaliṅga, Kośala and also some other lands. No doubt, these were his great victories. Unfortunately, however, it seems that, he had to cut short his ambitious military project as very soon he would get the sour taste of defeat at the hands of Kīrtivarman, the Western Chalukya king sometime in the first half of the 8th century A.D. P. C. Choudhury opines that it happened before 748 A.D., the date of Paśupatināth temple inscription. But in our view, this defeat occurred between 748 A.D. and 752 A.D., the date of Saṁgad inscription. In this inscription, it is stated that Dantidūrga overcame the powerful army of Kīrtivarman II of Badami which had been expert in defeating “the lord of Kānci, the king of Kerala, the Cholas, the Pāṇḍyas, Śrī-Harṣa and Vajrata.” Kīrtivarman II succeeded Vikramāditya II whose viceroy Avanijanāśraya Pulakeśīrāja of Lāṭa, the northernmost province of the Chālukyas, had earned the credit of saving southern India from falling into
the grip of the Arabs in 725 A.D. Thus, this may be held that Kirtivarman II ruled sometime in the middle of 8th century A.D. Now, it is clear that this Chalukya king was a contemporary of Harśavarmadeva. Besides this similarity in chronology, one more thing is to be taken into consideration is that in 752 A.D., Śrī-Harṣa has been placed above the rulers of Kāñcī, Kerala, the Cholas and the Pāṇḍyas as the names of these rulers are not mentioned in the said inscription. On the other hand, it appears that Śrī-Harṣa was a famous personality having control over a number of States, and that is why the scribes of both the Paśupatināth temple and the Samgad inscriptions had not deemed it necessary to mention his paternal kingdom. Hence, we may draw the conclusion in the following manner. Harśavarmadeva, although conquered a number of important States in his expedition, he faced defeat at the hands of the Chalukya prince, Kirtivarman II between 748 A.D. and 752 A.D. and soon after this defeat the conquered

25. Majumdar, R.C., *AI*, pp. 267-279
territories raised themselves up against Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa's suzerainty and regained their independence. It is likely that Harṣavarmadeva, in course of his expedition, reinstated the defeated kings after making them acknowledge Kāmarūpa's suzerainty. One single defeat coupled with the vast distance between Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa and the conquered territories brought Harṣavarmadeva's downfall. However, no State dared to invade Kāmarūpa even after Harṣavarmadeva lost his conquered territories. Harṣavarmadeva died as a great ruler as it is evident from the above mentioned inscriptions. It may also be explained that as Harṣavarmadeva lost his conquests within a short span of time, the scribes of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa of later years did not name the conquered territories; they have simply projected Harṣavarmadeva as a great ruler having expertise in both warfare and administration. That Harṣavarmadeva was a great administrator is also proved by the fact that even after his loss in his ambitious expedition, he had managed the administration of his State well and left
behind him a well organised and powerful State for his son Balavarman II. (Balavarman I being the third Varman ruler of ancient Assam history) Considering chronology of the contemporary events mentioned above, and the date of the Tezpur Rock inscription of Harjharvarman (510 Gupta era = 829/830 A.D.), it can be presumed that approximately he ruled for some forty years from 730 A.D. to 770 A.D.

Balavarman II

Harṣavarmadeva’s son and successor Balavarman II has been mentioned only in the Hāyuṇṭhal grant of Harjjaravarman. In the other inscriptions, he has not found a place among the successful ancestors of the Sālastambhas. The Hāyuṇṭhal grant states thus: “When this monarch (Harṣavarmā) ascended the Heavens, his powerful son Balavarman became the king, but he also had to be subject to death’. (v 7, IAA, p. 92). From this single line, it is too difficult to draw the life-sketch or the career of Balavarman II. The absence of his name in the other inscriptions and

26. Lahiri, N., PA., p. 74
this little information may motivate us to draw one conclusion that Balavarman was the worthy successor of Harṣavarmadeva, but ruled for a year or so. It seems that this king had to bow down before death, due to some incurable disease, or it is also possible that as Harṣavarmadeva ruled for a fairly long period, Balavarman II ascended the throne at an advanced age and soon he died due to old age. Whatever be the reason, one thing is certain that Balavarman left behind him a secured state for his progeny though he had ruled for a very short period.

A NOTE ON SOME SĀLASTAMBHA PRINCES

The Hayunthal grant speaks of two unworthy Sālastambha scions by the name of Cakra and Arathī in v 8 after writing about Balavarman II in v 7. Verse 8 reads thus: “Alas! in that family, which was as white (i.e. pure and famous) as the lily, the moon and milk, there were born two princes, named Cakra and Arathī, who were both ill-tempered and who were skilled in the act of disrespecting the words of their preceptors. The
sovereignty was therefore, exercised by the son of the younger brother,” (IAA, p.92) Thus, according to this genuine source, Cakra and Arathi who seem to be direct heirs to the throne were not given the right to rule because of their sheer misdeeds. Instead, the son of the younger brother (Arathi) was made the king. The next two verses (vv 9-10, IAA, p. 92), have vehemently praised one lady, named Jivadevi. In the 11th verse it has been declared that Jivadevi gave birth to Śrī-Harjjara, ‘the would be king of the world, who was pleasant-looking and powerful like a lion” in the same way as Kunti and Subhadrā, gave birth to Yudhiṣṭhira and Abhimanyu, respectively. The next three verses (vvv 12, 13, 14) describe the illustrious career of Śrī-Harjjara. Thus, a study of the Hayunthal copperplate inscription indicates that after Balavarman, the throne was offered to Śrī-Harjjara who appears to be the son of Jivadevi and Arathi. But according to D. C. Sircar, and others, the above-mentioned son of Arathi was one
Pralambha, about whom the Tezpur and the Parbatiyā copper plates of Vanamālavarmadeva have referred to. The translation of the concerned verses are quoted below:

"In his (Bhagadatta) family there occurred a king with the wonderful name Prālambha, who was the slayer of the heroes of the enemy force and whose foot-stool used to be illumined by the rays of the head-jewels of the (defeated) kings." (v 7, Tezpur copperplates) (IAA, p. 101).

"He used to delight the ends of the quarters with good qualities like his predecessor kings beginning with Sālastambha and ending with Śrī- Hariṣa." (v 8, Tezpur copperplates) (IAA, p. 101).

"Āratha, the brother of this king, who was supreme amongst all kings by virtue of being matchless in respect of valour and spirit of sacrifice, who having an occasion to face the enemies, all alone, retired to the heaven like a hero." (v 9, Tezpur copperplates, IAA, p.101).
Here it is to be noted that in the light of the Parbatīya plates, which are very clear, it is now generally held that Prālambha stands for Sālambha and Āratha for Arathī. Similarly, in this record, Jivadevi has been referred to as Śrī-Jivāda. While Harijaravarman’s, queen appears as Śrīmattarā in the Tezpur plates, but as Śrīmaṅgalā in Prabatīya plates.

The necessary verses from the Parbatīya plates are as follows:

“In his (Vajradatta) family was born a king of Prāgjyotiṣa, with the majestic name Sālambha, who destroyed the warriors of the enemy side and whose foot-stool used to shine with the luster of the jewels in the head crests of the kings.” (v 7, IAA, p. 121).

“Now there become a king named Arathī, unparalleled in valour and magnanimity, who proved an warrior for many an enemy and who was the brother of the king (i.e. Sālambha) who was rich with the line of kings (i.e., with the lineage of his predecessors) beginning with
Sālastambha and ending with Śrī-Harśa, who have coloured (i.e., brightened) all the quarters upto their boundaries with their own rāga (colour or love) for the whole host of the good kings of the good kings of the past.” (vv 8-9, IAA, p. 121.). Verse 10 Verse 11 have declared that Jīvadevi was the queen of Arathī and they were proud parents of Harjjaravarman. (IAA, p. 121)

Thus, we have seen that the informations left behind by Harjjaravarman and those of Vanamālavarmadeva do not seem to tally with each other. The Hāyuṁthal grant places a powerful king named Balavarman on the Sālastambha throne at the death of Harṣavarmadeva, whereas, the two grants of Vanamāla places one powerful king with the wonderful majestic name Prālambha or Sālambha on the throne after Harṣavarmadeva. Again, according to the Hāyuṁthal grant, sovereignty was bestowed upon Harjjara instead of Cakra and Arathī; but the grants of Vanamāla, have placed two brothers, first Prālambha or Sālambha and then Arathī successively on the throne after Harṣa’s death.
They have also stated that after Arathī's death in the battlefield, his son Harjjara ascended the throne. This disparity in the available data may be explained in the following way.

Harṣavarmadeva most probably had three sons- (i) Prālambha or Sālambha, (ii) Cakra and (iii) Arathī. At Harṣa's death, Prālambha or Sālambha ascended the throne and took the name, Balavarman. As mentioned earlier, the Sālastambhas initially had short names. It was Harṣa, who in the course of his ambitious expeditions, took a majestic name like Śrī-Harṣavarmadeva. Hence, his son, Prālambha or Sālambha who has been described as very powerful, also took the majestic name of Balavarman. But as he died after a short period of reign (most probably he was issueless), the throne was decided to be offered to Harjjara, who had every quality of a 'king.' The way, Cakra and Arathī (Harjjara's uncle and father, respectively) have been criticised in the Hayunthal grant, they were certainly not the persons who would abide by that decision without any
opposition. Hence, it is probable that both Cakra and Arathī were sent in a mission of conquest of some petty rulers before formally declaring Harjjara as the new king. Luckily, they died in the course of the supposed conquest. When, Harjjara's son Vanamāla issued the said grants, these had already been events of the past and the scribes with the permission of Vanamāla, tried to cover this bitter truth about his grandfathers by simply utilising one particular fact only. It is also possible that Arathī's elder brother Cakra also died with Arathī in the 'battlefield' as mentioned above, or it had become easier for Harjjara to subdue his ill-behaved uncle with an iron hand after Arathī's disappearance from the scene. By the way, Vanamāla's two inscriptions are silent about Cakra. However, all the three aforesaid inscriptions agree with each other that Śrī-Harjjara was the son of Arathī and Jīvadevi, a chaste lady.

Thus, it can be said that Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa witnessed a short period of instability after Hārṣavarmadeva's death.
Thanks to Harajjaravarman and his ministers and officers that they successfully overcame a possible catastrophe in the history of ancient Assam.

Harjjaravarman

Harjjaravarman ascended the throne by the last decade of the 8th century or the first decade of the 9th century A.D. Both the Hāyuṇṭhāl copperplate and the Tezpur Rock inscription of Harjjarā time have established that Harjjarā was a king of great repute. In addition, the Tezpur and the Parbatīyā copperplates of Vanamālavarmā have given quite a vivid and straight cut description of Harjjaravarman’s personality and career to doubt its authenticity. The Tezpur copperplates states thus:

“H(e) (Arathi) had a son from her, named Harjjarā, who was a king of kings (i.e. nṛpendra), whose feet used to be worshipped by the heads of the kings and who used to be embraced by Laksīmī herself.” (v 11, IAA, p. 102).

“He was a Yudhiṣṭhīra in the discussions on dharma; a Bhīma amongst the enemies, a Jiṣṇu in the battle-
field. Even being one, he was thus associated with many and he thoroughly attained the status of a man of polity” (v 12, IAA, p. 102).

“This (king has all the qualities of my husband. Cakrapañi (Viṣṇu) .......”(v-14) (IAA, p. 102)

“Lakṣmī having thought like this became the chief queen of the king, being fully agreeable to his mental make-up and being the best amongst the women with the name Śrīmattarā” (v 15, IAA, p. 102).

“This king, the stool for the resting of whose lotus-feet used to be rubbed by the crests of all the (subordinate) kings, had from this queen a son illustrious like the moon, a king being famed with the name Vanamāla.” (v 16, IAA, p. 102).

The Parbatīyā plates state thus :

“That king had a son born to her (i.e. to Jīvadevī); he was the greatest of kings, Śrī-Harijāra, whose two feet used to be adorned by the rays issuing from the heads of the kings, and who was embraced by Śrī (i.e., the goddess of fortune) out of her own accord” (v 11, IAA, p. 121).”
“He was (identical with) Yudhīśṭhīra in religious discourses, and with Bhīma to the host of enemies and (with) Jiṣṇu (in the battlefield). Thus, even being one, he gained identity with all the sons of Kuntī by virtue of several good qualities as stated above.” (v 12, IAA, p. 121).

“Lakṣmī (the goddess of fortune), having left, like a jealous woman, the breast of Viṣṇu, whose mind is enamoured with the milk-maids and having assumed the beauty of one and all the women, has come here to become the heart-gratifying chief queen of that king (i.e., Harījara), with the name Śrīmaṅgalā, the best of the best among the women, thinking thus: ‘This person (i.e. Harījara) bears all the qualities, beginning with the complexion of my husband, Rathāṅgapāṇi (i.e. Viṣṇu), who is matchless in valour. Hence, by being the chief queen of this ruler of the world, I donot become the object of disrespect in the world.” (vv 13-15, IAA, p. 121).
"This king, the stool for whose lotus-feet used to have friction with the crowns of all the kings got a son in that queen who became the king, named Vanamāla." (v 16, IAA, 122).

Both the grants of Vanamālavarmadeva thus highly speak of Harjjaravarman. The most noticeable fact of these descriptions is that he has been praised not only as a valorous king but also as a subject-loving good administrator and a diplomat. That is why, he has been compared to Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma and Arjuna all at a time in their respective fields of efficiency—exactly a man of polity. Again this has been clearly stated that king Harjjaravarman had a whole host of subordinate kings whose crowns used to have friction with the 'lotus-feet' of this king. He has been, described as the 'greatest of kings' whom Śrī, the goddess of fortune embraced of her own accord.

The Hāyuṇthal grant provides a solid information regarding the prowess of Harjjaravarman. It states,"The
kings anxious to conquer territories, having fought against one another in sub-mountain tracts, accepted him as the mediator" (v 12, IAA, p. 92).

These kings were obviously the tribal chiefs ruling over the hilly tracts in the North-Eastern side of the Brahmaputra Valley.

The 13th and 14th verses too indicate the illustrious position of Harjjaravarman—"That illustrious Harjjaravarman ascended the throne being surrounded by the vassal rulers as Indra is surrounded by the gods. He was sprinkled, at the time of coronation, with the waters of all sacred places, contained in a silver pitcher by the merchants and the princes of noble birth." (IAA, p, 92)

The next part of the same verse is worth-mentioning in establishing the fact that he was a good administrator, too. It states thus, "He is possessed of all the virtues in equal proportion and though constantly engaged in works pertaining to the welfare of his subjects, he always spared time to make himself accessible to others without any disgust." (IAA, p, 92).
It is sad that the Häyuṅthal grant could not be recovered fully. Only the middle one of the three plates has so far been discovered and deciphered. Because of the absence of the first and the last plates, the purpose of the charter cannot be determined. However, the incomplete lines in the middle plate clearly indicate the power and prosperity of Harijaravarman and his kingdom. This charter, however has been issued by Vanamāla on behalf of his father Harijara who might have been at that time old and refrained himself from active administration. It is noted below:

"At the royal capital of Haḍappesaḷa parama-parameśvara-parama bhaṭṭāraka parama-maheśvara-Śrīmān-harijaravarmadeva, who meditates on the feet of his parents, is prospering." There, his queen Maṅgalāśrī, like Lakṣmī, (i.e. who dwells on the lotus) displays her beauty and qualities. Born from her, Vanamāla, who is bright like the full moon, without blemish, having the light of his sun-like father shed upon him, who is possessed of numerous virtues, hereby commands: let it be known to all of you
thus, these lines clearly indicate that Harjaravarman was the head of a well organised administrative set-up, which in addition to the usual high officials like the Commander-in-Chief, Chief Gate-keeper, Chief Usherer, Chief Counsellor, also consisted of the brähmaṇādikāra. No doubt, the Brahmaṇas; like in any other contemporary Indian State exerted much influence upon the royalty and the society. It also shows the responsibility of a Crown Prince or yuvarāja in the administration of the country.

The Tezpur Rock inscription presents a royal order directing rowing of boats in the mighty river Brahmaputra. A literary translation of the record is quoted below:
“Om: Let there be welfare to all. A straight dispute has been presented on a day when Śrī Sucitta the great feudatory king and chief of the army staff, was on the chair of the judge (for judgement in the court) of the prospering victorious kingdom of Mahārājādhirāja paramēśvara Paramabhāṭṭaraka Paramamahēśvara Śrī Harjīraravarmadeva, who has the pride of the valour of the prowess of his own army who is stationed in the city of Hadappēvara. (lines 1-4, IAA, p. 85).

“The fisherman Naukuksi, Svabhākṣasādhani, Naurajja, the owner of (the place named) Nākkajosa, (etc, on one side) and Sāvarni, Śrī Chitrāgharadatta, Bhaṭṭajīu, Dinaji, Lāhilī Jhā and Dālākavavā of the southern direction (i.e., southern bank of the river) ........ These army officials, the feudatory Śilākūṭṭakavaleyā, Somadeva, the son of Śaṅkarabhaṭṭa of the family of Paṅcakula and others (on the other hand were involved in the dispute in respect of a right to use the water-ways). (lines 4-7)

“This charter determines the boundaries as follows: In the east the region of the hill called Salilakṣārabhaṅga and
the west Nākkajosa. In between these two boundaries there lies the water passage for free rowing of boats. Five butṭikās should be realised (as a fine or as a tax) from him who would make any movement (i.e., would row the boat) outside this water-area specified for rowing (of the civilians).” (lines 7-9, IAA, p. 85).

This is the only instance of royal order inscribed on a rock or any other material which has come to light. Regarding the importance of this source, we may quote M. M. Sharma: “......... engraving of a royal order on a rock just by the side of the river Brahmaputra publicly further warrants the conjecture that the inscription was of the nature of a public notice in respect of a toll-tax or prohibition relating to the movement of civilian boats. This was possibly necessitated by the strategic situation of the capital just on the bank of the river concerned.”

Considering the importance that had been laid on water way

27. IAA, p. 88
of the Brahmaputra, one more thing comes to light, that this water way had been utilised to full extent for both military and business purposes. This definitely points out that Prāgjayotīśa-Kāmarūpa under Harjjara maintained close politico-economic contacts with the rest of India. It seems that Harjjara did not take any such ambitious military venture, but maintained his hegemony well all over his kingdom and its larger number of vassal states, and used the high sounding imperial title of mahārājadhirāja-parameśvara-paramabhaṭṭāraka-parama-mahēśvara-Śrī-Harjjjaravarmadeva. It is noticeable that Harajjaravarman was the first king of this dynasty to use this kind of imperial titles. In fact, no such imperial title has been used with the name of any other Sālastambha king, not even Harṣavarmadeva. Definitely, this policy of taking imperial titles together with actual power helped Harjjjaravarman in raising the prestige of the Sālastambha royal house in the minds of the subjects as well as the neighbouring principalities.
One more aspect is to be noticed in this connection. The high officials mentioned in both the Tezpur Rock inscription and the Hāyuṅthal inscription are generally the vassal kings called the sāmantas or the mahāsāmantas. The Master of the treasury mentioned in the Nidhanpur copperplate inscription of Bhāskaravarman was also a mahāsāmantā named Divākaraprabha, the only one mentioned in Bhāskaravarman’s inscription. Contrary to this, altogether six high officials are named in this record most probably vassal kings (mahāsainyapati Śrī-Gaṇa, who delights the whole world and who is like an ornament of the circle of vassals, mahādvārādhipati or Chief Gatekeeper Śrī-Jayadeva, mahāpratīthāra or Chief Usherer Janārdana and mahāmātya or Chief Counsellor Śrī-Govinda; IAA, p. 93). In the Tezpur Rock inscription two feudatory kings have been named in the list of state officials. One was the great feudatory king and Chief of the army staff Śrī-Śucitta and other was one Śilākuṭṭakavaleyā, under whose jurisdiction possibly the area concerned was situated.
From this observation, we may say that the influence of the vassal kings increased in the administration of Prāgjyotisā-Kāmarūpa with the passing of time, or we may say with the rise of the Sālastambhas.

Two different commanders, viz, Śrī-Sucitta and Śrī-Gaṇa have been named in the Tezpur Rock inscription and the Hāyuṇthal inscription, respectively. It is possible that Śrī Gaṇa was the son of Śrī Sucitta. As the Hāyuṇthal grant had actually been issued by Vanamāla on behalf of Harjjaravarman (possibly due to the old age of the latter), this may be held that the Hāyuṇthal grant was issued on a later date. Regarding the mention of a new Commander-in-Chief who was like a jewel amongst the vassal kings in the Hāyuṇthal grant may be taken to suggest that either Śrī Gaṇa was the son of Śrī-Sucitta or he belonged to a different family who by that time had emerged as the most powerful sāmanta.

The Hāyuṇthal grant is important for another reason also. It discloses the fact that the Sālastmbha kings made
their capital at Hadapesvara leading to the conclusion that this royal family belonged to the region around modern Tezpur.

**Vanamālavarmadeva**

Harjjaravarman’s son and successor was Vanamālavarmadeva. Harjjaravarman’s Tezpur Rock inscription has been dated 829 / 30 A.D. Since Harjjaravarman’s reign was an eventful one, it may be ascertained that he had a long period of reign covering 25 to 30 years. On this basis, it can be said that Vanamālavarmadeva ascended the throne in mid 9th century A.D. As the Häyuňthal grant indicates, Vanamālavarmandeiva took the reins of administration on behalf of his aged father, even when he was a Crown Prince. Needless to say, when he ascended the throne, he had sufficient experience in administration and must have had some novel ideas to put into form. He has left behind him three important inscriptions, viz. the Dīghalīgaon copperplates found at village Dīghalī in Kaliabor in Nagaon
district, the Tezpur Copperplates and the Parbatīyā copperplates. However, the original plates of Tezpur charter have been lost. But these inscriptions have the same characteristics as are seen in any other land grant inscriptions of ancient India, like giving a detailed description of the ancestry and speaking highly of the king and his ancestors etc. However, as is mentioned earlier, the scribes of these inscriptions had attempted to cover up the shameful acts of Arathī and his elder brother Cakra unlike the Hāyuṇṭhal inscription of Harjjaravarman.

Anyway, regarding his achievements, Vanamālavarmadeva has been described, unlike his father Harjjara in Hāyuṇṭhal inscription, simply as a mahārājadhīrāja in the Tezpur copperplates. But in the Parbatīyā plates, he has been described as a parameśvara-parama-bhaṭṭāraka-mahārājadhīrāja. However, in both the inscriptions, he is described as a Śaiva and a dutiful son who ‘meditates upon the feet of his parents.’ The mention of the simple mahārājadhīrāja in the Tezpur plates clearly indicates that
Vanamālavarmadeva had not adopted the greater imperial title when the grant was made. It is, therefore, clear that before adopting this title, he won a number of battles. While discussing about the location of the donated land, Mayūraśālamalāgrahāra in Chandrapurī-विशया in the Nidhanpur grant, we have argued that this area was situated in the Pūṇḍravardhana-भुक्ति which is generally taken to have comprised of the districts of modern Dinajpur, Maldah, Rajshahi and western parts of Bogra and Rangpur. This has also been argued that Candrapurī-विशया of Bhāskara’s time was much larger than that of Vanamāla’s time and incorporated in itself a portion of eastern Mithila. This contention is reasonably based on the identification of the dried up river Kauśikī or Kauśikā with Kośi of eastern Purnea. Absence of the name of the dried up river Kauśikī or Kauśika in the Tezpur inscription makes it quite difficult to hold that like Bhūtivarman and Bhāskaravarman, Vamamāla also occupied a part of Purnea. But certainly, the whole Pūṇḍravardhana-भुक्ति or a large part of it was
under the control of Vanamālavarmadeva. In the Tezpur inscription, it is said that the donated village, (Abhisuravātaka) was situated on the western side of the river Trisrotā (modern Teesta), and had Candrapuri as its south-eastern boundary. (v. 33, IAA, p. 105) However, it is difficult to say when exactly Vanamāla adopted the second imperial title. The most important thing about Vanamālavaranman that has come to light is that he abdicated the throne in favour of his son Jayamāla, alias Virabahu due to old age. This information has been supplied by the grants of Jayamāla’s successor Balavarman III. “That valorous, illustrious, lotus-eyed king Vanamāla also observing his son to have attained youth and to be endowed with modesty handed over to him the (Royal) umbrella, as white as the moon, along with the pair of chowries and became merged in the (heavenly) glow of Maheśvara (i.e., retired to heaven) through the process of fasting’ (vv 16-17, IAA, p. 134). It may be presumed that Vanamālavaranman or Vanamālavarmadeva died quite an old man, and must have ruled for a fairly long period.
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SÄLASTAMBHA POWER IN POST-HARŞA OR HARJJARA-VANAMÅLA PERIOD:

In the Tezpur Rock inscription which is a kind of public notice regarding prohibition of the movement of civilian boats outside a specified water-area (in the river Brahmaputra), Harjjaravarman adopts the high sounding imperial title of mahārājādhirāja-parameśvara-paramabhataṭṭāraka-parama-mahēśvara (IAA. p. 85). By adopting this title, he introduced pomp and grandeur in the Sālastambha polity. He also seems to have built the new capital city of Haḍappesvara on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra from where he is said to have issued the royal order. This rock is found just by the side of the river and this definitely points to Haḍappesvara’s identification with modern Tezpur area. He is also said, in this inscription, to be the king of a prospering victorious kingdom. “vardhamāna-vijaya-rājye.” But lack of sufficient data makes it difficult to presume anything about his conquests. Most probably, he did not make any ambitious venture like
Harṣavarmadeva. Because, it had been already proved in Harṣa’s time itself, that too, distant conquests were meaningless for Prāggyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa, the eastern most part of India. To note, Harṣavarmadeva was too far away from his base to provide lasting meaning to his victories. It is said that we cannot give a full account of his wonderful military campaign. Further, in Harjjavarman’s case, the growing power of the imperial Pālas of Bengal is to be taken into account. The Pāla dynasty of Bengal had already heightened its power and prestige through the efforts of Dharmapāla (770 A.D., 810-15 A.D.)\(^{28}\) and had attained the imperial status in all-India context, covering a large portion Northern India. However, at the same time, this can also be well-presumed that pre-occupation of the Pālas with their North Indian enemics, i.e. the Pratihāras and Rastrakūtas definitely left the Sālastambhas to earn a name in local politics quite easily. The great imperial assembly held by Dharmapāla at Kanauj\(^{29}\) were attended by several vassal

\(^{28}\) Majumdar, R.C., AI., p.285
\(^{29}\) ibid, p.284
kings, like the kings of Bhoja, Matsya, Madra, Kuru, Yadu, Yavana, Avanti, Gāndhara, Kīra besides the king of Kaṇauj. That means, his empire included Central Punjab (Madra) and extended up to the Indus. The Yavanas, evidently indicate the Muslim rulers of Sindh and Multan while Gāndhara refers to the upper valley of the Indus and a part of North West Frontier Province. It also covered the Kangra valley (Kīra), east Punjab (Kuru, Yadu), Jaipur (Matsya), Malwa (Avanti) and probably Berar (Bhoja). After Dharmapāla, Devapāla ruled as the 'undisputed' master of Northern India for nearly forty years.30 Later the death of Devapāla and the pacific policy of his weak successors invited invasions from both the Raṣṭrakūṭas and the Pratihāras, the old rivals of the Pālas of Bengal.31 Coming back to Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa, it seems that the Sālastmbha kings, too, beginning with Harjjaravarman, took the tradition of adopting high-sounding imperial titles. They were under the impression that they had been enjoying the

30. ibid, p.285
31. ibid, 286
same status as the Pālas in the great country of India. It is possible that both Harjaravarman and Vanamālavarman had control over Pūṇḍravardhana. The pre-dominant position of the Sālastambha kings in this part, also checked the ambition of the Bengal Pālas to try their luck in the neighbouring Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa. The Bhagalpur grant of Nārāyaṇapāla of Gauḍa speaks of diplomatic relation between his grandfather Devapāla and Kāmarūpa. Devapāla is said to have ruled between 810 or 815 A.D. and 850 or 855 A.D. He was a contemporary of both Harjjaravarman and Vanamālavarman. It is really an important fact that an ambitious powerful king like Devapāla maintained diplomatic relationship with Kāmarūpa.

Most probably, after Devapāla’s death Vanamāla conquered Pūṇḍravardhana. Devapāla’s successor Vīgrahapāla ruled for a short period and led an ascetic life. His successor, Nārāyaṇapāla, again was a weak ruler. His long reign of more than half a century saw the decline of

32. ibid, p.285
the great imperial power of the Pālas of Bengal. Now, both the Tezpur and the Parbatīyā copperplate grants of Vanamālavarmadeva speak of the extent of Vanamāla’s kingdom up to the limits of ‘the rows of forests (vanamālā) lying on the shores of the ocean,’ (v-17, Tezpur grant, IAA, p. 102, Parbatīya plates, IAA, p. 122). After the death of Devapāla, Vanamāla must have conquered some parts in south-east Bengal, too.

That Vanamālavarman was a powerful king is also discernible from the fact that his Parbatīyā plates gives vivid description of the Sālastambha capital city Hadappēśvara. The description goes thus: “......... the illustrious Hadappēśvara, which is inhabited by fully contented people of all the varṇas and the āśramas, which is the home of innumerable good soldiers, virtuous and learned men; the royal roads of which (city) are crowded by the great kings, seated in beautiful elephants, horses and palanquins, engaged in the act of coming and going back for the purpose of serving (or saluting) the lord of the earth

33. ibid, p. 286
(i.e. Vanamāla), which has whole of it completely filled up by the armies consisting of innumerable elephants, horses and foot soldiers (and which is situated on the bank of the river Lauhity) ......." (IAA, pp, 122-123). This description very clearly shows that Haḍappesvara was just like any other prosperous capital of ancient time. This can also be well inferred that as against Prāggyotisapura, the traditional capital of ancient Assam as well as that the of Varmans, the Sālastambhas had built an equally important and prosperous city on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra in central Assam.

Location of Haḍappesvara

It is quite strange that the Sālastambhas who were devout Śaivas and who are said to have established their seat of administration in and around modern Tezpur, the seat of legendary Uṣā-Aniruddha romance and the famous Hari-Hara Battle,—the battle between Lord Kṛṣṇa (fought to rescue Aniruddha from Bāna’s prison) and Lord Śiva (of whom Bāna was a great devotee), had never attempted any linkage with Lord Śiva or his disciple Bāna, father of Uṣā
and king of Šoñitatapura. The Kalikāpurāṇa, a local literary work of the 10th Century A.D., also has not identified Šoñitatapura with any part, city or place within ancient Prāgjyotisa; it simply speaks of Bāṇa and Šoñitatapura. But strong local traditions together with the presence of a number of ruins connected with Uṣā and Bāṇa including those of Agnigarh (where Uṣā and Aniruddha are said to have been imprisoned) on the nearby Bamuni Hills, points to the fact that Bāṇa’s Šoñitatapura was situated in the Tezpur area only. Again, on the other hand, the name ‘Haḍappēśvara’ itself indicates its closeness to Saivism. (Haḍa = Hara = another name of Lord Śiva). To note, even though the Sālastambhas had claimed their descent from Viṣṇu’s son Naraka and his successors, their inscriptions show that they were devotees of Lord Śiva. All the three epigraphs of Vanamāla refer to the lofty temple of Hetuksulūn (Śiva, i.e., Śiva styled Hetuka)34 which has become dilapidated due to age. This fact certainly shows

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34. Benudhar Sharma Com. Vol. p.207
the influence of Saivism in the Tezpur region. The Sālastambha inscriptions tell us that Haḍappēśvara was a beautiful city having proximity to the Lauhitya.

"There stood the same ancestral capital on the bank of river Lauhitya of pure waters, where in the waves used to strike against the foreheads of the victorious elephants" (v 25, Uttarbarbil copperplates of Balavarman -III, IAA., p. 135).

The Parbatīyā copperplates of Vanamāla presents itself as a good testimony to Haḍappēśvara's identification with Tezpur. Here, the composer while describing the beauty of the city of Haḍappēśvara, has also given a vivid description of the Lauhitya and the picturesque hills and mounts situated within the capital city, "...... which (Lauhitya) has its water perfumed by the pollens of all the flowers which have fallen down from the numerous creepers shaken by the wind of the hissing sound of the host of serpents which are frightened by cackling of the intoxicated peacocks resting in the clusters of tall trees rising from the hills belonging
to its either banks; which flows with the fragrant floodwater showered by the clouds arising from the smoke of the black-sandal (agaru) trees which burnt in the forest-fire occurring in the pleasure-gardens (adjoining the) same (city of Haḍappēśvara); which has its current in full with such a (rush of) water, which is purer on account of constantly washing the slope of the Mount Kāmakūṭa, the top of which is the abode of the glorious (Lord) Kāmeśvara and the (goddess) Mahāgaurī......"(IAA, p. 122)

"........ which is characterised by the people living in the whole neighbourhood of its banks delighted by the fragrance of the musks of the musk-deer, that graze in the shoots of the durvā grass belonging to the bowers of the hills standing on its two banks......"(IAA, p. 122)

Thus, Haḍappēśvara was situated on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra. To note, as mentioned earlier, the find spot of the Tezpur Rock inscription on a rock just by the side of the Bramaputra is a strong point in identifying Haḍappēśvara with Tezpur. The temple of lord Kāmeśvara
and goddess Mahāgaurī was the most prominent place of pilgrimage as Lord Śiva and of course his consort Pārvatī were the tutelary deities of the Sālastambhas. It is possible that the Sālastambhas built the temple of Kāmeśvara-Mahāgaurī on the top of the Bāmuni Hills, the place of ancient Agnigarh. With the downfall of Sālastambhas, the name “Haḍappesvara” most probably went into oblivion and the ancient name of Śoṇitapura had again come into practice. It is also very much possible that in the 11th-12th century A.D., when the local language, i.e., Assamese had taken a definite shape, the very much Assamese name “Tezpur” came into being. It is unfortunate that we cannot produce any proof that the name “Tezpur” is being translated from the old Śoṇitapura; but the former is really the Assamese equivalent to the latter. The present Tezpur town is located at 26°37' north latitude and 92°47' east longitude, on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and is adorned with numerous lotus tanks, green hillocks and natural rivulets falling into the mighty Brahmaputra caused
by its slightly undulating topography which make the town all the more beautiful. The small ranges of hillocks which are 100 to 135 meter in height, run almost parallel to the Brahmaputra. Even on the southern bank, at a little distance opposite the Tezpur town, the presence of a series of hills further proves that the historical town of Haḍappēśvara is the modern town of Tezpur. Nowhere we are to find such a sight of the Brahmaputra. Incidentally, it is said that 'in the remote past, the ḍola being divided into three or four branches formed the estuary of the river Bharali which has now about 15 km. east of the town and they now appear to remain as branchlets of the Mara-Bharali (the abandoned course of the Bharali) falling into the Brahmaputra and serving as natural drainage of the town.'35 One more thing may be noticed here is that the geographical position and topographical features of Tezpur really makes it a place for a naturally fortified administrative centre of the ancient times.

Jayamalavarmadeva

As mentioned above, Jayamala succeeded his father Vanamala in the latter's life time. As no record has so far been found left behind by this king, we are solely dependent on the grants of his son and successor Balavarman III who ruled, it appears, in the last quarter of the 9th century A.D. It is said that 'after assuming the kingship, Jayamala married a lady named Amba who was similar to himself in respect of lineage, beauty and age' (v 18, the Uttarbarbil grant, IAA, p. 134). The fact that he married after becoming king, makes it clear that kingship was conferred on him by his aged or sick father on a comparatively young age. The v 23 of the said grant reads thus: 'Then on an auspicious date the king (Virabahu or Jayamala) placed on the throne his son (Balavarman -III) who was similar to a lion-cub with his robust figure' (IAA, p. 135). This means that Balavarman must have been a young lad in his teens. In other words, Jayamala ruled for a maximum fifteen to sixteen years. We may presume that
during these years, Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa maintained a low-profile. But the fact that Balavarman-III succeeded from his father a large kingdom (v 24, Uttabarbil grant, IAA, p. 135) proves that Jayamāla had maintained territorial integrity of the state.

It appears that soon after ascending the throne, Jayamāla took the viruda Virabābu (a man of strong or powerful arms) and married Ambā (v 18, IAA, p. 134). Most probably, some vassal kings had created troubles; but Jayamāla thwarted their attempts and adopted the viruda.

Balavarman III

A study of the Uttarbarbil, Nowgong and the Ulubārī copperplates show that Jāyamāla’s son Balavarman was a worthy king. We quote the necessary verses below:

“After receiving (that kingship) of the large kingdom, Balavarman also began to shine, like a fire that has received a pour of ghee, having dispelled the darkness in the form of all his enemies” (v 24, IAA, p. 135).

From this verse, it may be understood that although
faced with confrontation, Balavarman-III who was an inexperienced young lad at the time of his coronation, solved his problems quite efficiently.

"That paramesvara-paramabhattaraka-maharajadhiraja, the illustrious Balavarmadeva, who has conquered the entire horizon with his arms that have been coloured by the rays issuing out of his open sword, who is steady in the battle field, afraid of disputation, fierce to the enemies mild enough to the superiors, truthful and not crafty, not used to boasting after the performance of a work, magnificent and free from all sins through the worship of the feet of the parents, resides in that illustrious city of Had&ppesvara and is in good health" (lines 32-36, IAA, p. 135).

Balavarman-III adopted the imperial title like Harjjarvarman and Vanamalavarman. We have shown earlier that Harjjarvarman and particularly Vanamalavarman conquered the whole or part of Puṇḍra-vardhana taking the advantage of the preoccupation of the Pālas of Bengal with
North India. As weak Narāyaṇapāla seems to be the contemporary of Balavarman-III, it is very much likely that Balavarman had acquired some territories at the cost of the erstwhile Pāla empire or maintained Kāmarūpa’s control over Pūṇḍravardhana.

The three grants of Balavarman-III are land grants. The accounts regarding his lineage, prowess and other kingly qualities in all the three grants are basically common to each other. Only the portions describing the location and productivity of the land, the donee, the occasion for issuing of the charter and the boundaries of the land donated are different. Of these, the Uttarbarbil grant was issued in the 5th regnal year and the Ulubari grant in the 13th regnal year of Balavarman-III.

Balavarman-III’s inscriptions regarding donation of land are so complete that it also obviously points to his powerful position among the contemporary rulers of the region.

An Analysis of Three Stone Image Inscriptions Relating to the Political Condition in Upper or Eastern Assam

The Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa and the Hari-Hara stone image Inscriptions found at Deopani in Golaghat district of Upper
Assam provide us with two more names of the Sālastambha kings, viz., mahārāja dhīrāja Śrī-Jīvara and mahārāja dhīrāja Diglekhavarman, not available in the genealogy of the Sālastambha kings given in their inscriptions discovered so far. Palaeographically these two image inscriptions have been assigned to the 8th century A.D.⁶⁶ Scholars like P. C. Chaudhury and M. M., Sharma, on this very ground, have placed these two kings as successors of Balavarman-III.⁶⁷ But we have already shown that Balavarman II was the adopted name of Harṣavarmadeva’s eldest son Prālambha or Sālambha who immediately succeeded the latter. He did not rule for a long period and for being issueless, after him, his younger brother Arathī’s son Harjarvarman who unlike both his father and uncle, Cakra (the second son of Harṣavarmadeva) possessed all the kingly qualities, had ascended the throne. Moreover, both these kings have not also given any clue to this fact that they belonged to the

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⁶⁶ Choudhury, P.C. *Journal of Indian History*, XL VIII. Part. 7. p.97, IAA pp. 310-312.
⁶⁷ IAA, pp. 310-312
Salastambha house. Again, there is no reason to explain as to why these two kings, both of whom appear to be quite religious do not appear in the list of the ancestors of the Sālastambhas. Interestingly, the Viṣṇu image inscription found at the same site of Deopani which is also placed palaeographically in the 8th-9th century A.D., does not contain the name of any sovereign or for that matter any other donor. M. M. Sharma even though has not drawn the conclusion that this image inscription is also a Sālastambha inscription, but observed that its script is similar to that of the Tezpur Rock inscription of Harajjarvarman. But simultaneously, this has also been observed by him that its script is not so similar to that of the Hayunthal plate of the same king.

In our view, it appears that these three inscriptions originally belonged to the Deopani site, and Deopani itself

appears to be an important religious centre, wherein both Lord Viṣṇu and Lord Śiva were worshipped together. Some lines from these three inscriptions deserve mention here:

“(After the auspicious aūji) (Homage is paid) to Hara, the lord of the three worlds,.......Adorable is the goddess (Devi) and the goddess (Bhagavatī) is indeed identical with Viṣṇu (Guhya)......(This is a)Stone image of Lord Nārāyaṇa for the devotees” (The Deopani Viṣṇu Image inscription) (IAA, p. 309).

“........In the beginning (there was) the chanting of the names of Śaṅkara and Nārāyaṇa..............”(Saṅkara-Nārāyaṇa Stone Image inscription) (IAA., p. 311).

“(After the aūji and the benedictory words namah and svasti) In the kingdom of Mahārājādhīrāja Śrī-Diglekhavarman (this) image of Hari-Hara has been given to the son of Kākhya with (the chanting of) hundred names of (lord) Hari.”(Hari-Hara Stone Image inscription) (IAA, p. 312)

All the above-mentioned lines quoted from these inscriptions introduce us to the existence of the spirit of
toleration and the trend of syncretism in the field of religion in ancient Assam. Of course, besides these inscriptions, all the other ancient land grants of Assam right from the Dubi and the Nidhanpur grants make one thing clear that the Assam kings were not religious fanatics, being devoted to both Lord Viṣṇu and Lord Śiva. However, it appears that Deopani temple complex flourished as the centre of a separate Hari-Hara cult which had propagated the chanting of the name of the ‘Lord’ (nāmasaṅkīrtana) by the devotees or the Bhaktas. Scholars have already given their views regarding the origin of the Bhakti movement in Assam as early as the 8th century A.D. on the basis of these image inscriptions. Further, the Kalikāpurāṇa, a Śākta upa-purāṇa, also attaches much importance to both Śiva and Viṣṇu. The Bhakti movement under the propagation of Mahāpuruṣa Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Mahāpuruṣa Śrī Mādhavdeva attained the status of a popular religion in the 15th-16th century A.D. Some points may be noted here: (i) the devotion of Viṣṇu as worshipped by the twice born
classes and the Śūdras as well as the women folk alike indicates tolerance in the field of religion. “The clear mention of the bhaktas shows that the cult of Bhakti was already gaining some ground in the religious life of ancient Assam.” (IAA, p. 309) Bhagavatī-Ṭārāyaṇasya śaila pratimā bhaktānāṁ—“This is a stone image of Lord Nārāyaṇa for the devotees.” (Deopani Viṣṇu Image inscription).

(ii) ādau nāma śaṅkara-nārāyaṇa kīrtanam.—“In the beginning (there was) the chanting of the name of Śaṅkara and Nārāyaṇa.” (Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa Image inscription). Clearly, the cult of nām-saṅkīrtana, the basic feature of Bhakti religion was prevalent in Assam as early as the 8th century. A.D. (IAA, p. 361)

(iii) Śrī-Diglekhavarmanarājyaṁ kākhyaputra śata/ Harināmenaḥ/Hari-Harah/pratimā datteti // “In the kingdom of Diglekhavarman, (this) image of Hari-Hara has been given to the son of Kākhyā with (the chanting of) hundred names of (lord) Hari” (Hari-Hara Stone Image Inscription).
This inscription also champions the cause of the tradition of 'namakirtana'.

All the aforesaid points strongly defend our statement that the cult of Hari-Hara flourished in the Golaghat region of Upper Assam. As against this, in the Sālāstamha inscriptions, there is no such indication as to the growth of a cult that had propagated the worship of both Viṣṇu and Śiva, simultaneously together with their respective consorts. On the contrary, they clearly pronounce that Śiva was the tutelary deity of the Sālāstambhas. Considering all these points we may hold that the two kings concerned ruled in the Golaghat region who most probably had belonged to the same dynasty. The recent discovery of an inscription which records the creation of a permanent endowment by a king called Vasundharavarman in a nearby place called Dubarani further strengthens the above statement. What is noticeable is that all of them are designated Mahārājādhirāja confirming their independent status. At the same time, anyone can notice the fact that all the three kings do not bore the
imperial title of paramesvara-paramabhattaraka maharajadhiraaja which had been so common to the Varmans, Sālastambhas and the Pālas. All of them boasted as the lords of Prāgjyotiṣa. Hence, it can safely be said that the these independent kings were local rulers. It is very much likely that local rulers whenever there was a slackness of authority in the kingdom of Prāgjyotiṣa had claimed their independence.

A Discussion on the Last Years of Sālastambha Rule as Appeared from the Bargāon copperplate grant of Ratnapāla (c. 1035 A.D.)

According to the Bargāon inscription of Pāla king Ratnapāla that the house of the Sālastambhas had twenty-one kings ruling in Prāgjyotiṣa and that the last of them was Tyāgasimha. The verse goes thus: “When the twenty-first king of that line, named Tyāgasimha retired to heaven without an heir, his subjects, thinking ‘Once again a king of the Bhauma dynasty would be more suitable for us,’ nominated Śrī-Brahmapāla, capable of shouldering the
burden of the world as the king because of his relationship (with the family of Naraka)” (v 10, IAA, p. 161)

This information regarding the Sālastambhas found in the inscription of a king belonging to the succeeding dynasty seems to be true. This inscription may be ascribed to c 1035 A.D. Taking this view into consideration it has been generally concluded that Brahmapāla might have assumed the lordship of Prāgjyotisha by the end of the 10th century A.D.\(^9\) Now, the last known ruler of the Sālastambhas was Balavarman-III who had ruled in the last quarter of the 9th century A.D. and was the 11th king in number. That is another ten kings were to rule within hundred years before Brāhmapāla’s assumption of power. Logically this has to be accepted that the last ten unknown rulers ruled for average ten years each or we may say that these rulers each ruled for a brief period. This might have been due to internecine feuds among the possible claiments which was sure to weaken the dynasty. But strangely

39. Lahiri, N., PA p.80
enough. Ratnapāla’s copperplate inscription does not hint at such occurrences in the last decades of Sālastambha rule. However, we may presume some kind of unrest in the last years of Sālastambha rule. As is evident, Tyāgasimha died issueless and that is why, the subjects, rather the nobles chose an efficient noble or a powerful man named Brahmapāla as the future king of the state who was also supposed to be related to the legendary Bhaumas. The question is, if Tyāgasimha died issueless, there must have been some other calamities belonging to the ruling family. But the subjects chose a man belonging to a different family. No doubt, this man was powerful. It is also highly possible that Brahmapāla himself influenced the selection process indirectly through his power and influence. And as mentioned earlier, the other excuse that he was related to the legendary Bhaumas was simply an act of contemporary royal fashion, so dearly followed by the two preceding dynasties.
CHAPTER-IV

SECTION-B

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SĀLASTAMBHAS

In respect of administration, the basic mode was same with that of the Varmans or in that case with any other contemporary state of ancient India. However, certain peculiarities are to be seen in many respects.

Like the Varmans, as we have seen, the Sālastambhas were non-Aryans. They belonged to an aboriginal race of Mongoloid origin. Theirs was also a of spread of Sanskritisation or Aryanisation process.

As usual the Sālastambha state was a monarchical state. The king ruled despotically but in consultation with his Council of Ministers. An efficient bureaucracy was maintained to carry out the works of the state. We are lucky enough to have the Tezpur Rock inscription which appears
to be a kind of public notice. Besides it, several other inscriptions belonging to this dynasty have also come to light.

A Discussion on the Tezpur Rock Inscription:

The Tezpur Rock inscription reads thus:

"Om : Let there be welfare to all. A straight dispute has been presented on a day when Śrī Sucitta the great feudatory king and chief of the army staff, was on the chair of the judge (for judgement in the court) of the prospering victorious kingdom of Mahārājādhirāja Parameśvara Paramabhaṭṭāraka Parama Māheśvara Śrī Harjaravarmadeva, who has the pride of the valour of the prowess of his own army and who is stationed in the city of Haḍappesvara. (lines 1-4).

The fisherman Naukuński, Svabhakṣasādhani, Naurajja, the owner of (the place named) Nākkajosa, (etc. on one side) and Sāvarṇī, Śrīcitragharadatta, Bhaṭṭajīu, Dinajī, Lāhilī Jhā and Dalākavava of the southern direction (i.e., southern bank of the river
Brahmaputra) .......These army officials, the feudatory Śilākuṭṭakavaleyā, Somadeva, the son of Śaṅkarabhaṭṭa of the family of Paṅcakula and others (on the other hand were involved in the dispute in respect of a right to use the water-ways). (lines 4-7).

“This charter determines the boundaries as follows. In the east the region of the hill called Salilakṣārabhakṣa and in the west Nākkajosa. In between these two boundaries there lies the water passage for free rowing of boats. Five butṭikās should be realised (as a fine or as a tax) from him who would make any movement (i.e., would row the boat) outside this water area specified for rowing (of the civilians).” (lines 7-9).

(To note, as the inscription is quite illegible, the above translation is tentative ....... (Ref. IAA, p. 85.).)

From the above description, it appears that the issuing of this public notice became necessitated by a dispute involving three parties as described above. It appears that some fishermen and other persons belonging to both the
banks of the Brahmaputra started the quarrel apparently on the petty cause of rowing of boats in a particular water area. Šilākuṭṭakavaleya, a feudatory and an army officer himself, some other officers and his political adviser Somadeva got themselves entangled in the dispute because most probably, the disputed area fell under his jurisdiction. To note, besides Śrī-Sucitta, the Hāyuṇṭhal copperplate inscription also provides us with the name of another Commander-in-Chief (Mahā-Sainyapati) whose name was Śrī Gaṇa (IAA, p. 92). Both of them were feudatory kings. It is highly possible that Šilākuṭṭakavaleya belonged to the southern bank. At this development seeing a breach of central authority, king Harjjaravarman at once interfered in the matter and on his behalf, his Commander-in-Chief mahāsāṃanta Śrī-Sucitta gave a prompt hearing to the parties and issued this public notice as a solution to the problem. The strategic situation of the capital just on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra might have further precipitated the problem. Śrī Sucitta, the high-profile judge gave
the ruling that the civilians could row boats free of cost in the area between Salilakṣārabhakṣa hill in the east and the place called Nākkajosa in the west, and five buṭṭikās should be realised (as fine or as a tax) if any civilian rowed otherwise. This judgement certainly safeguarded the interests of all the parties involved in the dispute, besides upkeeping the authority of the centre, at the same time. It shows that Harjjarvarman chose the right person for the right job which itself was a great personal quality of a king.

The mention of the term "mahāsāmanta" presupposes the existence of a large number of sāmaṇṭas, which in turn indicates the full feudalisation of the administrative apparatus. The mahāsāmantas were either some powerful local rulers or members of the royal family. Here Śrī Sucitta has been described as a great subordinate king. N. Lahiri maintains that from the 7th century onwards, the polity of Kāmarūpa under the Sālastambhas had been increasingly organised along feudal lines which is evident from the fact that several Sālastambha rulers were glorified in terms of
their enjoyment of an overlord relationship with other kings.¹ This point is discussed in details in Chapter-II, Sec.-B(ii). The Hāyuṭhal copperplate inscription of the same king supplies us with the names of a number of high officials. They are —mahāsainyapati (Commander-in-Chief) Śrī Gaṇa, mahādvārādhipati (Chief of the Gatekeepers) Śrī Jayadeva, mahāpratihāra (Chief Usherer) Janārdana, mahāmātyya (Chief Counsellor) Śrī Govinda and Madhusūdana, brāhmaṇadhikāra (officer-in-charge of the welfare of the Brahmāṇas) Bhaṭṭa Śrī-Kaṇṭha etc. (IAA., p. 133). This list of high officers, no doubt, first of all proves that the administrative system was an organised one, which had even a separate department under a high Brahmaṇa officer to look after the welfare of the Brahmaṇas, the most esteemed class in the society. However, the non-Aryan rulers of ancient India used wonderfully this esteemed class to suit their political convenience as is shown in the second Chapter, Sec.-B(II). In fact, their relationship was based on

¹. Lāhiri, N., PA, p. 77
mutual benefits to each other. However, one point to be noticed here is that the growing tendency of the kings to empower the Brahmaṇa donees, in the long run would weaken the central authority to dictate these high-profile subjects and ultimately the other subjects as well as high and low or rich and poor.

Generally, the highest grade of the state bureaucracy was mostly constituted by the nobles. Among the high officials mentioned above, except Janārdana, the mahāpratihāra and Madhusūdana, one of the mahāmātyas, the names of all the high officers have been mentioned with the prefix Śrī. The same is the case in other inscriptions including the Tezpur Rock inscription of the same king. This differentiation in describing the officers of the same level may be explained thus: those officers who did not belong to the nobility but were recruited on the basis of personal merit did not use the prefix ‘Śrī’ to their names. To note, both Śrī-Sucitta and Śrī-Gaṇa, the two Commanders-in-Chief of Harjjaravarman were feudatory kings. It is
therefore, possible that both of them belonged to the same family; Śrī-Gaṇa succeeding his predecessor, Śrī-Sucitta, perhaps at his retirement or death. But the king was by no means bound to make appointments to these keyposts only on the basis of heredity. In that case, an amātya or a mahāpratihāra would not have been appointed outside the nobility. Even in the first type of appointments, personal merit must have counted a lot.

It is also noticeable that in the Nidhanpur grant of Bhāskaravārman, while granting a plot of land to a group of Brāhmaṇa donees, nyāyakaraṇika (dispute settlers) has also been addressed along with a host of high officers. But in the Sālastambha grants, we do not find the term nyāyakaraṇika or any other equivalent term for the dispute-settler. In the Sālastambha grants, we notice that all, like the Brāhmaṇa scribes, officers and others, duly present on the occasion of granting a plot of land to a donee, are addressed under the general term “administrators.” Besides them, those associated with the rājā (king), rājū (queen)
and the *rāṇaka* (most probably close royal family members) and other persons such as the *rājanaka*, *rājaputra* and *rājavallabha* etc. have also been addressed in the grants. It can, therefore, be said that the king personally looked after the matters relating to dispute, or justice. Sometimes, the king nominated some high officer to settle a particular dispute, as Harjjarvarman nominated his Commander-in-Chief Śrī-Sucitta to settle the tri-partite dispute regarding the use of a specified water-way in the Tezpur Rock inscription. Generally, persons related to justice were men of high moral character. Although, the Sālaṣṭambha kings are praised highly by their scribes for having high moral character, and their subjects described as ‘fully contented people,’ the kings and their officers were after all, men of politics. No doubt, in possible cases, political gains got the upper hand in the settlement of disputes.

Again, we are to notice a fact that the Sālaṣṭambha kings made several land grants to Brāhmaṇa donees with considerable curtailment in their coercive rights apparently
for their own merit as well as for the merit of their parents. This is visible particularly in the inscriptions of Balavarman III. It is a fact that the Brāhmaṇas and the kings of non-Aryan origin gained mutual benefits from each other by this practice. In lieu of the grant, the Brāhmaṇas used to legitimise a ruling family. To retain their respective coveted positions and attached privileges, they used to serve each other. But this act was not totally a political one. Religion was very much a part of it. The kings certainly granted lands to Brāhmaṇas of repute to attain merit both for themselves and for their parents in good faiths. The mass people were generally too religious to question the many sided privileges enjoyed by these two upper classes. Certainly, credit goes to the Brāhmaṇas in injecting the indomitable spirit of religion in the minds of the people, high or low, rich or poor. The royalty was regarded as divine. But the sad part of the whole thing is that, however, the kings tried to be religious and dutiful to the office they had been holding, under the fervour of religion, high-
handedness was certainly there in the administrative system to make it class-oriented. Thus, in a class-ridden society, under a class-oriented administration, plight of the general people, especially that of the Śūdras (mostly tillers of the soil, labourers and small artisans) who were neither rich nor belonged to the high varṇas, was not that satisfactory.

Nevertheless, the king was expected to be extremely virtuous, loving, dutiful and qualified. The ‘famous’ Harṣāvarṇadeva protected his subjects like his own children and never oppressed them (v 6, Hāyuṇṭhal copperplate inscription) (IAA, p, 92). Harjjaravarman has been compared to Yudhiṣṭhira in matters of dharma; to Bhīma in dealing with the enemies; to Arjuna or Jiṣṇu in the battle-field; in this way, by associating with many, he thoroughly “attained the status of a man of polity” (v-12, Tezpur copperplates of Vanamālavarma). In the same manner, Vanamālavarma, also, has been compared to Yudhiṣṭhira, Karṇa, Hanumāna and even with a great ocean, and a mountain in possessing a number of personal merits that adore a king. Balavarman
III has been simply described as possessing all the good qualities that make an illustrious monarch in his Uttarbarbil and Nawgong grants. All this goes well with the general rule of ancient Indian polity that monarchy ruled by a virtuous, competent as well as a shrewd ruler was the ideal norm of governance. But as we have already pointed out, this is only theoretical, practically the picture was a different one.

In spite of that, what is praiseworthy of the Sālastambhas is that they have recorded one such unusual event as debarring two direct heirs to the throne from becoming the king, viz., Cakra and Arathī. Because, both these princes were "ill-tempered and skilled in the act of disrespecting the words of their preceptors." Instead of them, sovereignty was bestowed on Arathī's son Harjjaravarman. It shows one more thing that the rank and file of the society, if not the masses, wielded considerable power in the act of governance of the country. Again, we must admit that these king-makers were not power-mon-
gers. By choosing Harjjaravarman, who had all the qualities of a king, they simply did their duty to the State.

What was the income of the State? Hiuen Tsang has confirmed that economic conditions of Kāmarūpa under Bhāskaravarman was satisfactory. The kingdom of Bhāskaravarman was larger than that of the Sālastambhas having easy access to mainland India which again had definitely contributed towards the growth of trade and commerce. Then, the vast fertile (cultivated) land in Bengal and Eastern Bihar also assured of a good amount of revenue in addition to that of the homeland. Now, only the Tezpur and the Parbatiya copperplate grants of Vanamālavarmadeva refer to the ‘ocean’ as boundary of his kingdom. However, as we have earlier mentioned (Chapter IV, Sec-A), it was purely a temporary conquest. We have also referred to Vanamāla’s granting of a plot of land to a Brāhmaṇa in Pūṇḍravardhana which may also cover a portion of Eastern Bihar. But we cannot say conclusively whether it was a fresh conquest made by him or he had inherited the area
from his predecessors, i.e., Harṣavarmandeva and Harjjarvarman. As we know, Harṣavarmandeva though conquered several territories in the mainland of India, soon afterward he had to relinquish almost all of them. Anyway, it appears that after Vanamālavarm an and to some extent Balavarman-III, the kingdom contracted considerably. Absence of any drastic change in the economic pursuits, as is noticed in the land grants belonging to both the Sālastambhas and the Varmans, points out that sources of State income were the same in both the cases. Contraction of the kingdom of course, indicates, lesser income to some extent.

The inscriptions draw a palmy picture of the kingdom. The city of Haḍappesvara is described thus: ‘There the people belonging to all the castes and all the stages of life are extremely happy. This is the place of residence of innumerable fortunate and honest scholars where the broad royal roads remain crowded with kings who come to pay homage to the monarch............’(lines 1-4, Tezpur copper-
plates, *IAA*, p. 103). The State income must have been adequate. Tributes paid by the vassal rulers were a good source of the State income. But as usual, a faulty (unequal) distribution system together with the growing practice of donating tax-free land grants hampered welfare of the masses.

The Tezpur copperplates further testifies to the fact that the Sālāstambhas paid much attention to the maintenance of an efficient water transport network having easy access to other Indian states. The following lines are worth-quoting in this regard. "The regions adjoining both the banks of this river (Brahmaputra near the capital city) are embellished with rows of boats" (line 20, *IAA*, p. 104). "They (the boats) always desire to remain in a higher position (i.e., higher level of water) like the gods who happen to have a downfall" (line 14-20, *IAA*, p. 104).

The taxation system was an organised one as the Śālaṣṭambha state was essentially a military state. Taxes were collected on several grounds and occasions by both
the State collectors and the feudal lords (*śāmantas*). There were different collectors to collect different taxes, like *ḥastibandhika* to collect the tax on fastening of elephants (*haṣṭibandha*), *naukābandhika* to collect tax on fastening of boats (*naukābandha*), *auparikarika* to collect the *uparikara* (presumably extra-taxes besides the regular ones), *autkhetikas* to collect taxes connected with *nānā utkhetana* duties for different causes. (*IAA*, pp. 125, 150).

The kingdom, for administrative convenience, was divided into several divisions. These divisions, such as *bhūkti* (a higher division), *viṣaya* (district) and *grāma* (village) were the same as those in the time of the Varmans. It appears that from the time of the Sālastambha onwards, the use of the two terms *Uttarakūla* (northern bank of the Brahmaputra) and *Dakṣiṇakūla* (southern bank of the Brahmaputra) became widespread. Unlike the Varmans, they had their Headquarters in the *Uttarakūla* and also donated several plots of land in the *Uttarakūla* to Brāhmaṇa donees.
Much importance was given on the coronation ceremony. "That illustrious Harjjaravarman ascended the throne being surrounded by the vassal rulers as Indra is surrounded by the gods. He was sprinkled, at the time of coronation, with the waters of all sacred palces contained in a silver pitcher, by the merchants and the princes of noble birth." (vv 13-14, the Hayunthal copperplate inscription, IAA, p. 92). Thus, the coronation ceremony was used as a good means of exercising suzerain power over the vassal states as well as showing power and prestige of the new king in front of his subjects.

Another specialty was that several Sālastambha kings formally consecrated their heirs on the throne before their death. It indicates the fact that the Sālastambha kings wanted both administration and religion go hand in hand. For personal merit as well as on public interest, they used to build temples and also granted them with large areas of land and labour for their maintenance. The temples of Kāmeśvara-Mahāgaurī and Lord Hetukaśuśin were two such
temples. This kind of activities naturally established a good rapport with the Brāhmaṇas. They even appointed a special officer to look after the matters of the Brāhmaṇas.

The mention of rājñī (queen) as a trouble maker together with the rāja, rājaputra and rājavallabha indicates the power and influence of the queens in matters of the State.

The rāṇaka, rājanakas, rājaputra and rājavallabhas so frequently mentioned in the ancient Assam inscriptions in connection with the granting of land to Brāhmaṇa donees seem to belong to the nobility who used to own land and get it cultivated by the tenants.