In the introduction itself, we have expressed our unhappiness over the dearth of archaeological materials for the ancient period of Assam's history. "The nature of the soil, climate, rainfall, flood and erosion and earthquakes occurring at intervals has been responsible for decay and destruction of the culture of the valley, that struck the eyes of the Europeans for its magnificent past. The conditions were created by the changes in the topography of the valley, caused by the Brahmaputra and its turbulent tributaries. The causes of flood and widespread havoc caused by it almost annually in the land are to be found in the conditions of the courses of the rivers and the rapid silting of their beds. Accumulation of snow at the upper course of the Brahmaputra and the monsoon period, starting
from April, causing heavy rainfall bring about flood and erosion. The danger is further increased if during the rainy season, earthquakes occur. The tremor of 1950 changed, for instance, the topography of the upper valley. There had been land slides, the river beds became shallow and its carrying capacity got reduced, with the result that there had been on-rush of water during rains, inundating the plains and causing destruction to forests and cultivation and to human and animal life.¹ This drawback in the topography of the land is fundamentally responsible for the destruction of the work of art and culture of the region.

While discussing every issue related to this work, we have mentioned the respective sources. However, our basic help has always been the epigraphs. The epigraphs, both local and from outside, noticeably provide us with a nearly continuous history of the land relating to our period. The ancient kingdom of Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa was an out and

out Indian Hindu kingdom. It never went unaware and uninfluenced by any major movement in politics as well as in the socio-economic arena. Similarly, adverse affects in some respects also had their repercussions in ancient Assam which is so clearly visible in trade activities as well as in currency system. Here a question arises as to the contribution of this land in the spread of Indian culture in the areas beyond this valley, or in other words, the neighbouring hills. It is generally held that owing to the isolated location of their habitats the neighbouring hill-tribes, living for centuries in isolation have completely been outside Indian, rather Aryan influence. But it was not total isolation. Because, there was really economic link between the hills and the plains. This is corroborated by literary sources. In Chapter-VII we have shown that the Roman writers of the early Christian era have actually referred to the hill people of the North-East. Considering this vital point, it is difficult to accept that these people had never come into cultural contact with the plains people. This
observation is applicable even in case of the Arunachal tribes.

**Impact of Aryan or Indian Culture upon the Arunachal Tribes:**

The frequent mention of the Himalayas and the Lauhitya in Sanskrit literature, including the Yajur-Veda, the Rāmāyāna and the Mahābhārata, may be taken as 'very plausible indications of a familiar knowledge of the Arunachal Pradesh.' The mention of king Bhagadatta as ruling also over ēśalāaya in the Mahābhārata has been taken to indicate his control over a big hilly region outside the traditional boundaries of Kamarūpa. In the Mahābhārata (Sabha-prava, Ch. XXVI, vv 7-16), it is mentioned that in the course of Arjuna's Northern expedition in connection with Yudhiṣṭhira's Rājasūya-yajña, Bhagadaṭṭa came into conflict with the former. His army consisted of the Kirāta and Cīna soldiers along with many others belonging to the sea-shore. In the same parva, (Ch

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34, v. 9b-10a) it is again mentioned that Bhagadatta, the king of Prāgjyotisa, accompanied by Yavanas, brought fine horses, jewelled ornaments and swords with hilt made of ivory as gifts for the Pāṇḍavas. Later, at the time of the Kurukṣetra war, Bhagadatta is mentioned for the third time, when, accompanied by the Cīnas and the Kirātas, he joined the war on the side of the Kauravas (Udyoga-parva). The Yavanas must be some people of the northern side of the North-East akin to the Cīnas and the Kirātas, or it is also possible that Cīnas and the Kirātas themselves were termed as Yavanas, which generally referred to the foreigners in Āryavarta. In the chapter on economy (Chapter-VII), we have mentioned that transportation of horses from Tibet to Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa was a regular feature throughout the ancient period. In the said parva, the Cīnas and the Kirātas are described as having golden complexion—

“bhagadatto mahīpālaḥ senāmakṣuhiṃ dadau /
tasya cīnaiḥ kirātaisca kāṇcanairiva samvṛtam //
vabhau valam anādhiṣyaṃ karṇikāraṇaṃ yathā /’

It is a general feature that mostly the Arunachal tribes possess a golden complexion like the Bhutanese and the Tibetans. To note here, the North East hill tribes generally possess a bright yellowish complexion. At any rate, in the same chapter, we have also mentioned several hill passes in Arunachal Pradesh, which made short-cut routes to Tibet and China. The antargiri, bahirgiri and upagiri, meaning the inner hills, outer hills and the foothills which are said to be located towards the northern direction adjacent to Prāgjyotiṣa, may be taken to refer to the Duar-hills and the lower and upper slopes of the Eastern Himalayas which comprise the western end of Arunachal Pradesh consisting of the West Kameng and Lower Subansiri districts of the province.4

Like the Indian sub-continent on a broader scale, and Assam in a bit lesser scale, the State of Arunachal, too, presents unity in diversity. In the sphere of religion, the

people here follows a fairly uniform spiritual pattern as well as material cultural. Racially they are of the Indo-Mongoloid stock.

Arunachal presents us with the highest number of typically Hindu architectural remains besides Assam, proving the existence of certain Aryan or Aryanised colonies in ancient times. We have come across several stones in the shape of Śiva-liṅga which are also consecrated in modern temples with the belief that these are natural ones.

To the east of Sadiya in Assam at the foot of the Mishmi Hills, near Roing in the Lohit district of Arunachal, lies the fortress of Bhīṣmaknagar. The fortress is standing high in the dense forest, protected by an earthen rampart on the three sides and by the mountain in the north, covering an area of four square miles. At the centre, the fortress contains the ruins of a large brick-built palace covering 20,000 sq. feet in area. It has two impressive brick-built

5. ibid
gateways on the eastern and the western direction. The selection of the site, based on intimate knowledge of the terrain, the engineering skill, the sense of geometry, the consideration given to the heads of defence and water supply, and the remarkable pottery—all indicate the high standard of civilization that one prevailed at Bhīṣmaknagar.6 The Tāmreśvarī (tāmra = copper) temple, famous for its alleged human sacrifice (dedicated to goddess Durgā) has been observed by T. Bloch, an archaeologist of the British era in the first half of the last century, that it was a small family chapel used by the unknown ancient rulers of Bhīṣmaknagar for their private devotion. Lord Śiva has been carved upon a jamb as a dvārapāla or gatekeeper of the temple. T. Bloch further observed here a number of carved tiles, all fixed into the inner side of the city wall leaving the eastern one. They depict figures of men, animals, birds, flowers and

geometrical patterns. "The style is of the semi-barbarian kind, as in the carvings at Dimapur and other places in Assam. An instance of this, I may refer to the figure of a tiger or lion, which is very similar in treatment to the figure of a lion mounting on an elephant, seen on the broken V-columns from Dimapur. The types, of course, is Indian and only too common in medieval Indian Art, but the design, especially of the mane and tail in the Assam figures, is peculiar. The peacocks of which two are represented on another tile, with their bodies twisted around each other, are also a favourite device on the Dimapur columns..........." 7 The full blown rosette depicted in one of the tiles, also occurs on some of the V-columns at Dimapur. 8 These ruins lead us to believe only one thing, that there was close cultural connection among the tribes of the region. They had been influenced by each other in socio-cultural spheres whether Aryanised or not. The

7. T. Bloch's report on 'Bhismaknagar', AASNI, P. 9
8. ibid
Dimapur monuments belong to the Kacharis, who deserted it (their erstwhile capital) after being defeated and chased away by the Ahoms in 1536 A.D. These monuments consisting of gateways, an earthen wall surrounding the city, raised upon an underlying brick structure, the two groups of Chessman-figures, two groups of V-shaped columns, and the buffalo-horn columns, while the gateway in the eastern wall around the city in its carved battlement, its narrow, pointed arch over the entrance, and its clumsy, octagonal corner turrets, indicates the too common characteristics of the 14th-15th century Muhammadan architecture of Bengal. The columns, particularly the buffalo-horn columns, illustrate upon themselves too prominent non-Aryan style in their general shapes as well as in the patterns of ornamentation of their carvings. It is generally held that these were memorial stones. The look-alike columns at Kasomari Pathar adjacent to the Doyang river in Nagaland also come under the same category. Persons like Bloch, Sir Bampfylde Fuller, a chief
Commissioner of British Assam, observed similar wooden memorial pillars and shields erected by certain Naga tribes and the Garos of Meghalaya. Sir Fuller also noticed that the ‘Shields’ in the Sema villages were all faced to the east; to the rising Sun.⁹

Bloch discovered 16 tiles depicting various pictures in Bhîsmaknagar. The pictures of certain tiles draw our attention. One tile depicts a couple of dancers, holding up by their right hands some sort of musical instrument, while their left hands are holding a stick, resting on the hip. They have perforated ears, eyes and mouths wide open, while their noses are snub-shaped and hair arranged in strands ending in spirals. It appears that these dancers are doing some acting. Generally, the local tribal dances lack abhinaya or acting which is more or less present in all Indian, rather Aryan or Aryanised dance forms. Thus, these dancers were dancing an Aryanised dance form. Their snub-noses strongly indicate their non-Aryan but Mongoloid

⁹. ibid, p.7
origin. Further, largely perforated ears is very common among the women folk of Arunachal. One more tile depicts a single dancing figure, face resembling the above mentioned two.

All together, there are four tiles in the this group of 16 tiles, which suggest a close intimacy of the authors with wild life. These are — (a) two peacocks with their bodies twisted around each other with small tree on each side; (b) a lion standing against a tree with four legs uplifted and his tongue outside his mouth; (c) a falcon carrying a heron with some designs resembling either clouds in the sky or some creepers creating a wild environment; (d) an unidentified huge bird with pointed crest. Two tiles,—one depicting a horse with saddle and bridle, the other depicting a beardless man with conical cap, running and holding a spear in his right hand while a dagger fastened to the left side of his girdle, indicating a soldier either hunting in the jungle or fighting against some enemy in a fierce mood,—may be treated as two evidence proving the existence of a State in
the region. One tile depicts a bearded man holding a staff in his right hand while his uplifted left hand is holding two small bags. He is wearing a full knee-length dress with a crown. He is also wearing ornaments in his arms, hands and ankles. He seems to be in a walking posture. This depicted man may be a dancer or the king of this State. The above discussed tile-pictures definitely prove the fact that the people inhabiting this area more or less came under the Sanskritisation process.

The Idu Mishmis of the Dibang valley believe that Rukmiṇī belonged to their tribe. Furthermore, they have given Bhīṣmaka, Rukma and Śiśupāla, local habitation. In a later period, it is said that the Mishmi Brāhmaṇas looked after a Vaisnava saint named Vaṁśīgopāla (c 1548-1668) during his meditation in a trance.

Malinithan near Likabali in Siang district is the ruin of another big temple complex ornamented with several Hindu deities, such as Durgā, Gaṇeśa, Nandi etc. Maithuna carvings are a significant feature of this architectural ruins.
Tradition defines the name of this temple complex as the resting place of Kṛṣṇa and Rukminī, on their way to Dvāraka from Bhīśmaknagar (Vidarbha) as guests of Lord Śiva and his consort Durgā, who greeted them with garlands of her choicest flowers, thus earning for herself the sobriquet of “Mālinī” (female garland-maker) from Kṛṣṇa and her abode came to be known as Mālinīthan (thān = abode). The local Ādi people call her ‘pupani’, meaning ‘the ‘Divine Mother’.

In addition to the Mother cult, Tantricism and crude form of Saivism existed in Arunachal Pradesh. This can be inferred from the discovery of a stone liṅga at Paya on the Sadiya-Tezu road, with the round base of black stone. Twelve lines of brick at the site obviously prove the existence of a temple over there ascribed to an unknown date. The accidental unearthing of a huge Śiva-liṅga (stone) near a place called Kimin in the Lower Subansiri district adjacent to Lakhimpur district of Assam, also equally indicate the existence of a Śiva temple in the site sometime
in the bygone days. Parasuramkunda (sage Parásurāma is held as an ardent follower of Šaivism) near Paya has been telling for generations, the intimacy of Arunachal with Sanskrit or Aryan culture of the plains. The Akas of Kameng district trace their descent from Bāna of Šonītapura (near Tezpur). In the medieval period, the Noctes of Tirap embraced Vaiśṇavism initiated by Mahāpurusa Śaṅkaradeva.

The Khamptis and Singphoes, originally from Burma are Theravādi Buddhists. Similarly, the Monpas and Sherdukpen of Kameng are Mahāyāna Buddhists, subscribing to Tibet. They believe that they were initiated to the faith by the great Padma Sambhava in one of his later incarnations. Even today they come to the Hayagrīva Mādhava temple at Hajo, near Guwahati to pay their homage to the Lord. The famous Tawang Monastery is the best example of the mixing up of Indian Buddhism with the culture of the East across the Himalayas (Chinese and Tibetan). This is really a wonderful realisation that:
Arunachal felt the impact of all the important religious movements of India.

From the early part of the 12th century to the early part of the 16th century (1523 A.D.), the Chutiyas, a Mongoloid tribe of the Bodo group ruled in Sadiya. Evidently, they had the most powerful kingdom in the upper Brahmaputra valley. Their kingdom, known as the Sadiya kingdom, was bounded on the west by the river Sisi, a tributary of Suvañśiri, on the east by Brahmakūṇḍa, on the north by the hills and on the south by the river Burhi Dihing. Their capital was at Kūṇḍil or Bhīṣmaknagar on the bank of the river Kūṇḍil to the east of modern Sadiya. Their tutelary deity was Kubera. However, they were also ardent devotees of the Mother Goddess, called Kechāi-Khāti (the eater of raw flesh) to whom, animals and birds, even human beings, were offered. The Ahom monarch Gaurinath Singha prohibited the practice of human sacrifice (1780-90 A.D.).

10. Barua, S. L., ACHA(SLB), P.183
11. ibid., P. 182
They performed this practice in the copper-roofed temple, called the Tamresvari temple. They claimed their descent from Bhīṣmaka, king of Vidarbha and father of Rukmini. Thus, the location of the Chutiya kingdom, the period of their rule, their Monogoloid origin, their association with the Śakti cult and Tantricism, their claimed descent from none other than Bhīsmaka—all prove that the discovered ruins in the Arunachal Pradesh, belonged to this tribe. With the rise of neo-Vaiṣṇavism ushered in by Mahāpuruṣa Śrī Śrī Śakaradeva, almost all Chutiyas, except their priestly class, the Deoris, embraced the new faith. With them, the hill tribes like the Idu Mishmis and the Noctes also came under the influence of Vaiṣṇavism.

Now, the question arises concerning the ushering in of the Aryan Brāhmaṇical culture of the Hindus in the region, more particularly the hilly region of the extreme north-east inhabited by a large number of tribes with their distinct way of life and cultural traits. Considering the antiquity of

12. ibid
the kingdom of Prāgjyotiṣa (including the Prāgjyotiṣa kingdom of Naraka and Bhagadatta), it is reasonable to believe that the upper Brahmaputra valley came under the pale of the Hindu Brāmanical tradition on a very early date. It is unfortunate, however, that no concrete evidence has come to light so far except a very very strong tradition to link up the easternmost corner of Assam with Dvārakā through the much venerated marriage between Kṛṣṇa of Dvāraka and the Princess Rukmīṇī of Kuṇḍila, identified with the present Sadiya region. It is quite likely that it was an old tradition of the region surviving through the ages. On the other side, the Chutiyas were also not neo-converts to Hinduism, since the name of the founder of their kingdom was Birpal, an out and out Sanskrit name. Hence, it is quite probable that Birpal and his successors utilised the popularity of an already existing local tradition to consolidate their kingdom. To note, it is also claimed that the Kalitās also ruled over the Lakhimpur region before the rise of the Chutiyas. However, this claim lacks evidential proof.
At any rate, the Idus, in addition to claiming decent from Bhīṣmaka through his son Rukma, make a hairstyle that is traced to an incident related to Krśṇa-Rukmiṇī episode. The Padams and the Minyangs of Pasighat also claim that a village, named Ruksen, was founded by Rukma. The layout on the construction and its siting seem to conform to the specifications prescribed for a vanadūrga, described in the Arthasastra of Kauṭilya, a fact which would imply that the Chutiyas were in close touch with the polity and the architectural tradition of classical India, professed a form of Hindu religion, worshipped Hindu deities and so had a purely Hindu culture.

An interesting fact to be noticed here is that whatever remains supposedly belonging to the Chutiyas have been unearthed so far, are in the various Duar-hills inside Arunachal Pradesh, and not in the plains. Further, as we have observed, all the big temples dating back to the first

14. ibid,
millennium and first part of the second millennium, had been constructed on the top of the hills or hillocks obviously to preserve the dignity and sanctity of religious places. Therefore, the Chutiyas, too, built the temples invariably on the hills.

In establishing the independent kingdom of Prāgjayotisa-Kāmarūpa as an integral part of the Indian sub-continent, the contribution of the kings of this land was tremendous. They did it through conquests, by establishing diplomatic relationship and marriage alliances with other Indian States. In the first category occur the names of kings like Mahendravarman, Bhūtivarman and Bhāskaravarman of the Varman dynasty and Śrī Harṣvarmadeva and Vanamālavarmadeva of the Sālastambha dynasty, particularly. In the second category, occur the names of Puṣyavarman, Samudravarman, Balavarman I, and again Bhāskaravarman of the Varman dynasty, Śrī Harṣvarmadeva of the Sālastambha dynasty and Indrapāla of the Pāla dynasty. Patronage they extended to the process of
Aryanisation or Sanskritisation proved to be a great help in this regard. To note, spontaneous waves of migration from the west must have also occurred continuously over the period.

On the other side, ambitious kings and princes of Southern and Northern India, right from the time of Samudragupta, took the conquests of this part as essential for their career. Besides, Samudragupta, we may mention the names of Yaśodharman of Malwa, Mahāsenagupta, Chālukya prince Kīrtivarman, Jātavarman of Vikramapura and some other kings. Relations of ancient Assam with Gauḍa and Vaṅga were especially a strained one, both sides always trying to overpower each other. As a matter of fact, all these conquerors tried to follow the footsteps of epic hero Yudhiṣṭhira who at the times of performing both the Rājasūya and Aśvamedha sacrifices sent successful expeditions to Prāgijyotiṣa. Again, in the same manner, the ancient Assam kings like Naraka and Bhagadatta, whenever it is possible, tried to check North Indian imperialism and
in opposite circumstances sticked to the policy of maintaining good rapport with the imperial powers. In some cases, the Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa kings (the early Sālastambha kings) followed a policy of isolation so that they could maintain the integrity of the State.

Anyway, while studying this topic we have seen that in every aspect, Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa retained its uniqueness. It was a seat of numerous Mongoloid chiefdoms and these definitely helped in the growth of the State of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa, be it under Naraka or Puṣyavarman. Again, the existence of these numerous Mongoloid tribes, each under a hereditary chief feudalised the State apparatus. Tax-free land grants to Brāhmaṇas provided the additional support for its growth. The royal family attained divinity in the eyes of the subjects and the Brāhmaṇas came to influence tremendously both the administration and the society.

The twin processes of economic interaction and cultural assimilation, associated with the process of State formation achieved a new height in the Brahmputra valley and the
surrounding hills. A careful study shows that Hinduisation (though partly) of the various Arunachal tribes took place very early, as we have just seen in this discussion.

Thus, North East India, maintaining its uniqueness was never cut off from the rest of India, neither the hills were isolated from the plains. The linkage between Assam plains and the neighbouring hills had been in existence from the very archaic times of Bhagadatta who had soldiers recruited from the unknown hill tribes of the North-East. The long existence of the Assam-Burma route is another solid example of this linkage between the plains and the hills. Horses from Tibet used to come to Assam through the hill passes of Bhutan and Tibet. In the medieval age, the Ahom monarchs used to establish Duars to keep the hills-plains linkage under their control. In ancient times, the kings or chiefs ruling in areas adjoining to the hills must have maintained some kind of control like the Duar-system of the Ahoms. Several inscriptions, i.e., the Hari-Hara Stone Image inscription, the Śaṅkara-
Narayana Stone Inscription found at Deopani. and the inscription and the seal of Vasundharvarman found at Dubarani—all in the Golaghat district prove the existence of kingdoms in the Golaghat region adjoining to the Naga Hills. Bakhtyar Khalji's belief of the existence of a convenient route to Tibet and China through Assam says nothing save the existence of linkage between Assam and the neighbouring hills. During the three Muslim Islamic invasions in the 13th century A.D. twice, the kings of the kingdom of Kamarupa, firstly, Prthu and secondly, Sandhya in proper understanding and with full cooperation of the hill people, made offensive strikes on the Muslims and wrested victory. Extensive study of ethnology and folklore of the region accompanied obviously by extensive archaeological explorations and excavations will surely unearth many facets of the somewhat missing link between the people of the Brahmaputra valley and the rest of India as well as between the Assam plains and her neighbouring hills.

'Being a confluence of people, many of whom still live
the folkways of life, the region is rich in folklore material. Folklore is still a living part of cultures of the peoples of north east India. Besides the fact that it deserves to be studied in its own right as an important aspect of social process and culture, a systematic analysis of its contents can tell us a good deal about some of the imponderables of social situations, relationships, attitudes and operative belief and values.¹⁵

But at the same time no one can deny its vast distance from North-Central India and an overwhelming tract of difficult access between the Assam plains and the hills. Consequently, respective links were not uniformly intimate through the ages. Varieties of ethnic elements have had mixed up with each other, thereby producing diverse cultural and social elements. In the process, the phenomenon of unity in diversity has reached a new height alone in this region. The different ecological

patterns viz. arctic, temperate, tropical, wet, dry, monsoon, mountains, deserts, marshes, forests with vegetation, flora and fauna, suitable for each pattern are also to be counted here. We, the people of India as Nature wishes, have always made adjustments and tried to modify our culture to suit the respective environments.