

## SUBJECT 32 : ARUNACHAL PRADESH PART OF ANCIENT PRAGJYOTISHPUR

# GEO - 40%, H - 30%, M - 10%, P - 20%

The reference material highlights the extent of state of erstwhile Pragjyotishpur-Kamaraupa which covered present day Arunachal part Part of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sikkim and other NE states of India. The Mythological of Naratcasur and bear incarnation of Vishnu with the State of Kamarupa further affirms close linkages of present day Arunachal Pradesh with mainland India.

### Reference:-

1. Boruah, Nirode (2010) Historical Geography of Early Assam: DVS Publishers; pn- 39 to 42
2. Osik; N.N.(1996); A Brief History of Arunachal Pradesh (From Earliest Times to 1823 A.D.): Omsons Publications; pn - 27 & 28

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- GEO - Geography
- H - History
- M - Mythology
- P - Political

## SUBJECT 32 : ARUNACHAL PRADESH PART OF ANCIENT PRAGJYOTISHPUR

### Refer Attachment 1

(Boruah, Nirode (2010) Historical  
Geography of Early Assam: DVS  
Publishers;  
Pn - 39 to 42)

The State of Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa

39

of international understanding for borderlines in those days that is found only in case of modern-states.

This Chapter reviews the geography of Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa which is being developed in historiographical milieu and revisits the map of historical geography of the state emphasizing territorial changes and identification of the territories, administrative units etc. It further deals with the issues of the boundary of the state vis-à-vis the territorial changes and growths with some theoretical understandings which, contesting the reflections of the historical writings may also show different aspects of geography of the state.

Most of the scholars while dealing with the geography of early Assam have treated the same region for the state of Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa. The scholars even, sometimes, have used these two terms viz. the 'early-Assam' and the 'Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa' as synonym. To them, the state comprised a vast tract of land of north-east and eastern India covering roughly present Bhutan, entire north-eastern states, north-Bengal and a bigger part of north-Bangladesh. But the fact is that Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa was one of the bigger and long lasted states of early Assam. Evidences lead us to surmise the fact that some other states contemporary to the state of Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa had emerged and existed for considerable time in different regions of early Assam. In short, the map of 'early Assam' consisted of the regions belonging to some bigger and smaller states including Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa. The copper plate land grant inscriptions which speak of some administrative divisions such as *bhukti*, *mandala*, *visaya*, *grama* etc. where the lands were granted to the Brahmanas give us an idea to draw the map of the core areas under the administration of the rulers of Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa in different points of time. These administrative divisions show a different picture of the geography of Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa which is not as large as reflected in

Scholars like K.L. Barua,<sup>1</sup> B.K. Barua,<sup>2</sup> B.Kakati,<sup>3</sup> P.C. Choudhury,<sup>4</sup> D.C. Sircar,<sup>5</sup> analyzing sources<sup>6</sup> belonging to the period from the Pre-Buddhist to the 16<sup>th</sup> century AD have tried to trace out a major part of the north-eastern and eastern India for Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa. According to P.C. Choudhury,<sup>7</sup> the state comprised of Bhutan, Tibet and other hilly tracts in the North and the whole NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh) in the Epic age. Referring to the data of *Periplus of Erethrean Sea* and Ptolemy's *Geography* he further opines that the boundary of the state could touch sea in the south, Karatoya River in the west and the Sadiya region of far upper Assam in the east. An uncompromising effort has been made by him throughout his thesis that the rulers of Varman, Salastambha and Pala dynasty could maintain the vast tract of land comprising "the whole modern Assam, including Sylhet, Cachar, Tripura, parts of south-east Bengal and



made to study the histories of smaller geographical areas of India. It was the Nationalist approach at the regional and local level that created the enthusiasm among the scholars to develop such type of phenomenon. Writings of K.L. Barua reflects it very clearly. To him, "In any case it is clear that Pragjyotisa or ancient Kamarupa was a much larger kingdom than most of the other kingdoms mentioned in the *Mahabharata* and most of the sixteen *mahajanapadas* existing during the time of Gautama Buddha."<sup>11</sup>

Though the scholars dealt with various sources in finding out the boundary of the state, they finally had drawn their conclusion from the *Yogini Tantra*, a 16<sup>th</sup> century composition. The boundaries of the state as mentioned in the *Yogini Tantra* are: the Kanchanjanga in the north, the river Karatoya (flowing in the present Jalpaiguri district of North Bengal) in the west, river Dikshu (present Dibang river of the Sadia region of upper Assam) in the east, the confluence of the Brahmaputra and the Lakhya (near the border between the Mymensingh and Decca districts of Bangladesh) in the south. (The sketch map No. II.1 in the next page shows the tentative boundary of the state as projected by the aforesaid scholars.)

The boundary of the state except the western one mentioned in the *Yogini Tantra* is highly doubtful because of the facts that (i) It can not be corroborated with any historical documents, (ii) The *Kalika Purana* mentions the eastern boundary of the state as Lalita-Kanta (identified with small streams at Vasistha temple of Guwahati)<sup>12</sup> which seems more tenable on the ground of degree of reliability of these two sources (*Kalika Purana* and *Yogini Tantra*). The *Kalika Purana* is a 10<sup>th</sup> century composition, a contemporary work of the period of our study while the *Yogini Tantra* was composed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century AD – a much later date when the region has already witnessed several socio-political turning points, territorial

CHINA

Xigazé

Kanchanjanga

754 m

JICHE DORJI

Thimphu

BHUTAN

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Sadiya

Dibrugarh

North Lakhimpur

Jorhat

Tezpur

Guwahati

NAGALAND

Kohima

INDIA

MEGHALAYA

Shillong

Sylhet

Jamālpur

Silchar

Imphal

MANIPUR

BANGLADESH

Tangail

Pabna

Agartala

Mizawl

Tropic of Cancer

MIZORAM

Dhaka

Dacca

Comilla

Māgura

Jessore

Khulna

Rasichāt Barisal



MYANMAR

Map No. II.1

Map No. II.1



**Refer Attachment 2**

(Osik; N.N.(1996); A Brief History of  
Arunachal Pradesh (From Earliest  
Times to 1823 A.D.);  
Omsons Publications pn - 27 & 28)

**6. Pragjyotisha :** The Kalika Purana describes the inhabitants of Pragjyotisha or Kamrupa as the Kiratas with shaven heads and yellow skinned. The Kishkindya Kanda of Ramayana describes the people of Kamrupa as wearing thick top-knot. The Adis of East Siang, Idus of Dibang valley, Nokte-Tangsa-Wanchos of Tirap and the Nagas of Nagaland shave their heads till today and are yellow skinned. The Bangnis, Sulungs, Nishis, Apatanis and the Hill-Miris wear thick top-knot (called PODUM) even today. Most probably, the Arunachalese, Nagas, Bodos and the Garos formed the ancient population of Pragjyotisha.

The earliest mentioned king of Pragjyotisha was Mahiranga Danab who was succeeded in turn, in direct line, by Hatak Asur, Samber Asur and Ratna Asur. No details are given regarding these rulers but the appellations 'Danab' suggest that they were non-Aryans. These kings were succeeded by a chief, called Ghatakasura (or Ghataka Kirat) who is described as the ruler of the Kiratas. Probably, he belonged to the same dynasty to which Hataka, Sambara and Ratna belonged. Ghataka was overthrown and slain by the famous Narakasura.

Narakasura was the most powerful and prominent king of ancient Pragjyotisha. His name is associated with numerous legends. According to Kalika Purana, Naraka was born of the Mother Earth (Bhumi) by Vishnu, in his boar incarnation and was brought up by king Janaka of Videha (North Bihar). He became well-versed in the vedas and a devotee of great God Vishnu. He slew Ghataka, the king of Pragjyotisha with the help of Vishnu and occupied the throne. Naraka made Pragjyotishpur (modern Guwahati) his capital. There is a hill near Guwahati which is still known as the Narakasur hill. His kingdom

extended from the river Karatoya in the west to the Dikrang in the east. Naraka settled the people of Aryan race in his kingdom after driving out the Mongolian Kiratas from the land.

Narakasura was pious and was greatly favoured by Vishnu who taught him to worship the Goddess Kamakhya. Naraka was at first respectful to the Aryan gods and goddesses and protected the Aryans properly. But subsequently he became irreligious and asked Goddess Kamakhya to marry him. He came under the influence of Ban Asur, king of Sonitpur (modern Tezpur) and became proud. He ill-treated the Aryan settlers of Pragjyotisha and incurred displeasure of both Kamakhya and Vishnu. He was eventually slain by Vishnu in his boar incarnation who installed Bhagadatta, the eldest son of Naraka's four sons on the throne of Pragjyotisha.