

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

SECTION I

Darrang and Udalguri districts are situated in the central part of Assam and stands on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra. Darrang and Udalguri districts were a part of the ancient kingdom of Kāmarūpa. In the post Pāla period the area was a part of the Darrangi Kingdom. Though present Sonitpur district was also included in old Darrang, it was separated in 1983. The proposed study will focus on the area of Darrang district according to the boundary demarcated in 1983 which also includes present Udalguri district. In this research study the researcher shall be using the word “Darrang district” to mean present Darrang and Udalguri districts of Assam.

The early history of the region is obscure. Though we have a few chronicles and works of local composition that refer to Darrang, most of the occurrences mentioned in them, especially those relating to the more ancient history, are intimately blended with what is fabulous and uncertain, so that we are obliged to accept them with greatest diffidence. The Āhom chronicles known as “*Buranji*”, have no separate literature to depict the history of their vassal Darrangi kingdom. Besides, the rulers of the vassal kingdom also did not leave any comprehensive work to provide their history. The *Darrang RājVamsāvali*, a chronicle of the Darrangi kingdom is also found incomplete. However, there are some valuable sources in the form of temple ruins, architectural

pieces, sculptures, epigraphs, tanks, ramparts, roads, *satras*, pottery etc. to study the history of the area. The study of the remains of this area leads one to believe that socio-religious, political and economic activities were thriving in this area during the time of the Varman, Sālastambha, Pāla, Āhom, Koch dynasties and the like. The archaeological wealth that has now come to light indicates the activities of the past. All the districts of Assam were studded with various types of archaeological remains such as temple ruins, architectural pieces, sculptures, *satras*, land grant charter, earthen works like tanks, ramparts or fortifications etc. Some of them are illustrious and important and some are not so prominent. But all have a history of their own, which reflect the past. They not only reflect the architectural and sculptural activities, but also reflect the socio-religious, political and economic life of the people. They indicate the presence of a highly cultured people who contributed to the development of a definite culture and tradition of Assam. The present study seeks to study the history of Darrang and Udalguri area on the basis of archaeological remains. It reflects a systematic study of the different aspects of the archaeological remains; viz. social, religious, political and economic and attempts to shed light on some aspects of the history of the study area. In constructing socio-religious, political and economic history of the region the remains are the clear indicators of a prosperous people since early times. The change and development of socio-religious and political systems of the Brahmaputra valley was also witnessed in the area. So far, no concerted study has been made by scholars in this direction, although materials and sources are available in different books, journals, land grant charters, and manuscripts and notably the archaeological remains.

Statement of the Problem:

The Darrang and Udalguri region was a part of Prāgijyotisha-Kāmarūpa in early period and a part of the Darrangi Koch Kingdom in the medieval period. However, prior to the Koch rule, since the 4th century C.E. the Varmans, Sālastambhas, Pālas, Jitāris, Bhuyāns etc. had their titular sovereign authority. The material remains of their rule are still found in various parts of Darrang and Udalguri Districts. That the area has a rich and variegated cultural heritage is proved by the archaeological remains found in the districts in the form of temple ruins, *satras*, architectural components, sculptures, epigraphs, pottery, roads, earthen works like water tanks and ramparts etc. All of them have a history of their own, which reflect the past. Although the efforts of unearthing the past culture were much encouraged at the national level, work in north-east India, Assam in general and, Darrang and Udalguri in particular are very insignificant. Again many of the remains are not in the same condition in which they were a decade or two back. The remains are progressively being spoiled, both by nature and by man. As such, there is the most urgent need to explore the whole area. Such exploration will not only widen the horizons of the knowledge of our past but shall also enable us to preserve them for posterity. To preserve our culture it is the need of the hour to collect all the materials lying scattered all around and document and study them. So far, no concerted study has been made by scholars in this direction, although materials and sources are available in different secondary sources, and particularly in the form of archaeological remains.

Survey of Literature:

Many scholars have made broad studies in the history and archaeology of Assam as a whole, wherein the history and archaeological remains of Darrang District have found mention. For example, E.A. Gait's (1963) *A History of Assam* deals with the history of Assam as a whole. K.L. Barua's (1966) *Early History of Kāmarūpa* deals with the history of Assam up to the sixteenth century C.E. Satyendra Nath Sarma's (1966) *Neo-Vaishnavite Movement and the Satra Institution of Assam* is a detailed study of the evolution and development of the *satra* institutions of Assam but it does not contain any special reference to the *satra* institutions of the Darrang region. *Pabitra Asam* (1969) by Maheswar Neog gives details of the temples and *Satras* of Assam district wise. *Darrang Rāj Vamsāvali* edited by N. Sarma (1973) contains some aspects of the history of Koch rule. Dineswar Sarma's (1974) *Mangaldair Buranji* is an important source for the reconstruction of the history of Darrang. Maheswar Neog's (1974) *Prāchhaya Sāsanāvali* is a comprehensive work that deals with almost all the inscriptions discovered in Assam in the post-Pāla period. The *Kāmarūpasāsanāvali* (1981) edited by Dimbeswar Sarma contains a total of twenty-six inscriptions. N.P. Choudhury's (1985) *Historical Archaeology of Central Assam from the Earliest Period to the 12th century* deals with only a part of the remains found at Nagaon and Tezpur and does not provide any information about Darrang. *Darangar Itihās* edited by Dimbeswar Saikia gives valuable information about the history of Darrang. R.D. Choudhury's work (1985) *Archaeology of the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam* gives a detailed study of archaeological remains of the Brahmaputra Valley. However, it is confined to the period ending in the twelfth century C.E. P.D Choudhury's (1985)

Archaeology in Assam contains the list of only sixteen numbers of monuments of Darrang district without any detail. S.L. Barua's (1985) *A Comprehensive History of Assam* contains some references to the archaeological remains of Assam. B.K. Barua's (1986) *A Cultural History of Assam Volume -I* throws light on a few archaeological remains. M.M. Sarma's (1987) *Inscriptions of Ancient Assam* contains twenty-seven inscriptions, which form important sources for reconstruction of the history of Assam. P.C. Choudhury's (1987) work *The History of Civilization of the People of Assam to the Twelfth century C.E.* has an appendix that deals with the archaeology of Assam. In it we find a reference to the early remains of Darrang District. P.C. Sarma's (1988) *Architecture of Assam* makes a detailed study of the evolution and development of the temple architecture of Assam. *Sculptures of Assam* by Manoranjan Dutta (1990) contains the sculptures of Assam as a whole. *The Comprehensive History of Assam (Vol-I, 1990; II, 1992; III, 1994)* edited by H.K. Barpujari contains many references to the archaeological remains of Assam as a whole. Kesabananda Devagoswami's (2000) *Satra Sanskritir Ruprekha* is a comprehensive work on the *satra* institutions of Assam, but does not throw light on the *satras* of the area under study. *Hydronymy of Assam* by Sarat Phukan (2003) gives details of the hydronymy of Assam. *History and Archaeology of North-East India* of P. Das (2007) contains a study of the archaeological remains of Guwahati city of Assam. H.N. Dutta's (2012) *History, Art and Archaeology of Doiyang Dhansiri Valley, Assam* discuss the archaeological remains of Doiyang Dhansiri Valley.

A large number of books and articles have already been published on the *satra* institution of Assam. Many scholars have made broad studies on *satra*

institution of Assam as a whole. Pioneers in this regard were Banikanta Kakati, Rajmohan Nath, Dimbeswar Neog, Maheswar Neog, Satyendra Nath Sarma, Kesabanand Deva Goswāmi and the like. But no concerted research work on the *satra* institutions of Darrang district has been undertaken so far. Tirtha Nath Sarma and Benudhar Sarma in their books *Auniāti Satra* and *Dakshinpāt Satra* discuss only the religious aspects of the movement. Birinchi Kumar Barua's *A Cultural History of Assam, Volume-I* also throws light on the *satra* institution. In *Pabitra Asam*, Dr. Maheswar Neog gives an account of the *satras* of Assam District wise. Dineswar Sarma's *Mangaldair Buranji* as stated earlier is an important source for the reconstruction of the history of Darrang. But no adequate information has been made in this work regarding the *satra* institutions of the area. E.A. Gait's *A History of Assam* deals with the history of Assam as a whole. S.L. Baruā's *A Comprehensive History of Assam* contains some reference of *satra* institution of Assam. However, none of the above scholars have made an in depth study of the area regarding the importance of the *satras*' cultural and archaeological heritage. Hence it is proposed to do so. The archaeological remains are an important primary source material for the study of the history and culture of the people. A systematic study is necessary to preserve the ancient heritage. No research work has been done so far to highlight the archaeological remains of the Darrang area. The present research work will thus fulfil an academic need.

Objectives:

It is proposed to study

- the history of the archaeological remains of Darrang and Udalguri districts of Assam and their present status.

- the nature, types and significance of the remains.
- the socio-economic, political and religious life of the people as reflected by the remains.

Scope of Study:

The study aims to focus upon some aspects of the archaeological remains of Darrang and Udalguri district. Archaeological wealth of the study area such as temple ruins, sculptures, land grant charter, *satras*, earthen works like tanks, ramparts, roads etc. bearing historical significance are studied to uncover these aspects, namely the social, religious, political and economic history of the Darrang region. The period of study is from 5th century C.E. to 1826 C.E. However, archaeological remains dating from the 9th century C.E. onwards only are found available. No archaeological remains belonging to prehistoric period has so far been found in the study area.

Methodology:

- The research is mainly based on library work and field study.
- Historical method has been followed.
- Archaeological sources form the basis of the study.
- The primary sources, i.e. temple ruins, *satras*, sculptures, epigraphs, ramparts, water tanks, roads, pottery etc. are supplemented by a study of the secondary sources consisting of published works of different authors throwing lights upon the area under study.

- Articles in newspaper, books and journals were also utilized to carry out the study. Libraries of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam; Kāmarūpa Anusandhāna Samiti, Assam State Museum, District Museum, Darrang, K.K. Handique Library of Gauhati University, District Library, Darrang; Indian Council of Historical Research, Northeast Centre, etc., have been accessed. Material remains of Darrang and Udalguri preserved in the A.S.M. and districts museum have also been studied.

ORGANISATION:

The information thus collected has been organized in the following manner:

Chapter I is an introduction to Darrang and Udalguri districts as well as the archaeological remains of the study area. This chapter also contains the physiographic and historical background of the districts. The objectives of the study, methodology, scope etc are also included in the chapter.

Chapter II deals with the details of structural remains of the districts, the temples and *satras* and their present status.

Chapter III details the sculptural remains of the study area and discusses the socio-religious condition of the people.

Chapter IV consists of a discussion of the epigraphs and other remains such as water tanks, coins, ramparts, road, *deul* mound and pottery of the study region. It also contains the socio-religious as well as political and economic life of the people.

Chapter V contains the summary of the previous chapters and the major findings of the research study.

The Study Area:

Location and situation:

The district of Darrang in central Assam is situated on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra. Modern Darrang District extends from 20°9' and 26° 95' of North Latitude and 91° 45' and 92° 22' East Longitude. It is surrounded by the Udalguri district in the north, Sonitpur district in the east, the mighty Brahmaputra, Morigoan and Kāmraup district in the south, and Kamrup district in the west. As per 2011 census the geographical area of the district is 1,849 Sq. kilometres.¹ The population of the area is 908,090.² Density of Population is 491 per square kilometers.³ Udalguri district (26°44'43''N 92° 05'46'' E) is bounded by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh in the north, Sonitpur district in the in the east, Darrang district in the south and Baska district in the west. Geographical area of the district is 1852.16 square kilometres. According to the 2011 census the total population of the district is 7,56,671⁴. People of different religion like Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist and Sikh and of other faith live in the districts. Both the districts together comprised 16,64761 population in a geographical area of 3701.16 sq. kilometers.

Physiography:

Physiographically, Darrang and Udalguri districts are a part of the Brahmaputra Valley. It is constituted by alluvial deposits brought down by the river Brahmaputra and its

¹ www.census2011.co.in/census/district/146-darrang.html 30.12.2013.

² *Ibid:*

³ *Ibid:*

⁴ udalguri.gov.in 29.01.13

tributaries coming down from the Himalayas. The configuration of the region is that of a large open and stretched plain but a general slope appears towards the south. The south western corner is occupied by some low hills of maximum height up to 200 metres only above mean sea level.⁵

Although natural phenomena are far from explaining everything yet slopes, soil, climate and hydrographic conditions have very important effects and are responsible in general for the order of human phenomena.⁶ Darrang and Udalguri have an uneven topography, with low lands, small hills, and a number of water bodies big and small.

Climate:

An important element of the physical environment is climate which determines the soil, weather, and vegetation etc. of an area. In general the climate of the study area is tropical. Being a part of the Brahmaputra valley, the climate of the area is same as that of the rest of the valley. The climate of the districts is characteristically monsoonal with a rhythm of changing seasons. The changes occur with respect to the climatic elements which effectively control the whole agricultural setting and the arrangement of the crop seasons. Summers are fairly hot and very humid; on the other hand, the winters are moderately cool and foggy. Spring seasons are dry and dusty. During winter season ground level inversion of temperature is a common phenomenon.

The average rainfall in the four month of the summer season is 1394 mm. The spatial variation of climate characteristic is distinct in the district. The average winter

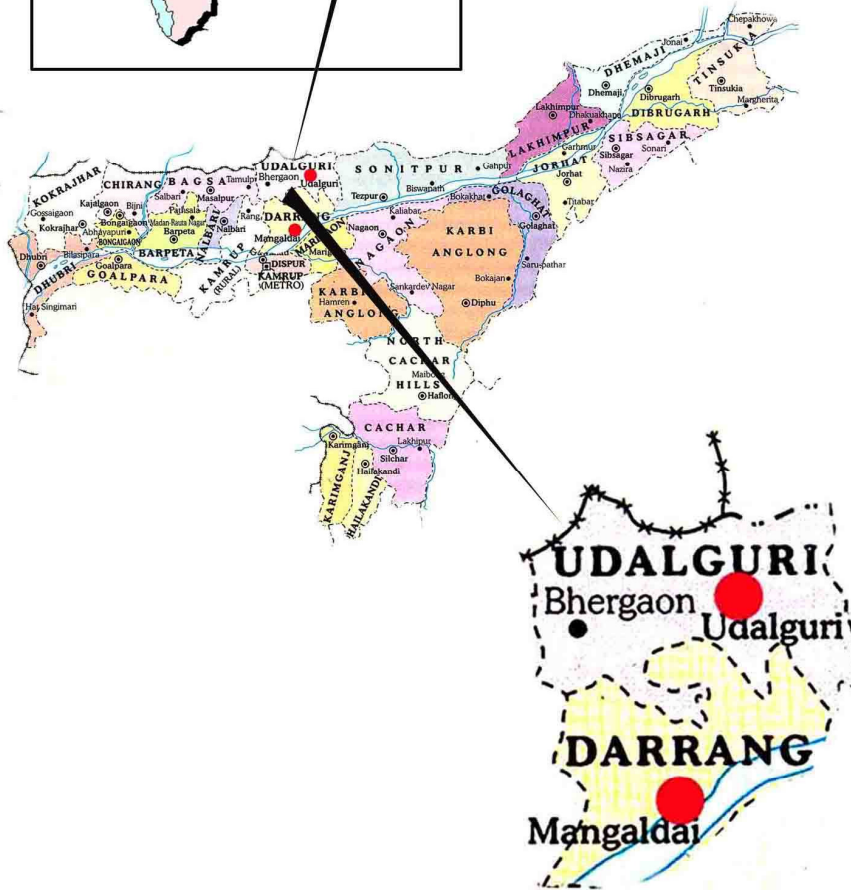
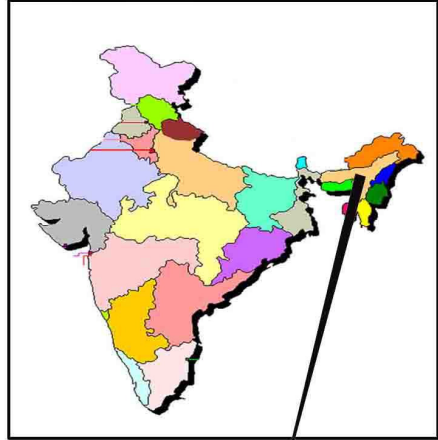
⁵ Nath. L.,: *Darrang District through the Ages*, Karuna Medhi, Dhekiajuli, 2005, 1st edn. p.2.

⁶ *Ibid*: p-2.

temperature is 18.2° c. and that of summer is 28.6° c. There is little variation in the distribution of relative humidity in the area.

On the basis of variation of temperature, rainfall and wind the weather of Darrang can be summarized as given below-

Map of the Study Area



(a) Cool Winter Season:

The temperature begins to fall from the end of November and is lowest in January. December and January are the cool winter months with cold day and morning fog. The cold and dry winds blow from north-east to south-east over the plain area. Some time light showers may further lower the temperature. The total seasonal rainfall varies from 16.8 to 68.8 millimetres in the area.

(b) Hot spring season:

Spring season covers the month of February to March. This is a season of retract of winter and dust storms almost regularly envelop the whole area. The hot season starts from the month of April to May. It is a transition period between a dry winter and a wet summer. The amount of rainfall gradually increases with frequent showers in this period. Frequent storms and gale locally known as '*Bordoichila*' blows during this period⁷. The average monthly temperature ranges between 21°C to 31°C.

(c) Rainy Season:

The period from June to September is the season of summer monsoon. During this period heavy rainfall occurs as a result of the winds of the south-west monsoon. With the burst of the monsoon, the weather changes abruptly. Temperature falls gradually from June to August due to increase of relative humidity. The amount of rainfall rises from April (164.7mm) onwards and in the month of June it reaches the peak. From 488.2mm of rainfall occurring in the month of June, it decreases to 424.5mm in the month of July and 281.6mm in August. The rainfall of September is still lower (227.3mm) than that of

⁷ *Ibid*: p.11.

August.⁸ August is the hottest month in the season as also in the whole year, with temperatures hovering above 30°c and reaching 35°c or beyond.

(d) Autumn Season:

This season covers the month of October and November. The south-west monsoon continues to the middle November after which fog commonly occurs in the mornings. The intensity of rainfall and the number of rainy days decrease during the season.⁹

Drainage and Water Bodies:

The river Brahmaputra and its tributaries are the natural drainage channels. Besides, there are numerous swamps and tanks. The mighty Brahmaputra flows from east to west through the southern part of the district. The Brahmaputra remains navigable throughout the year.

The general slope of the land surface of the district is from north to south towards the Brahmaputra. All its tributaries and the streams rising in the Himalayas flow from north to south towards this river. The tributaries are cross-cross over the plain areas of the district. Some of the important rivers of the districts are Jeā Dhonsiri, Marā Dhonsiri, Begā, Mangaldai, Noānoi, Sāktolā, Nanoi and Barnoi. The river Mangaldai and Begā flow through the heart of Mangaldai, the district headquarter¹⁰. The river Bega has become choked due to accumulation of garbage thrown into its water. Industrial wastes thrown into its water also pollutes it. Besides, the channel and banks of almost all the rivers are often encroached upon by illegal occupants.

⁸ *Ibid*: p.11-12.

⁹ *Ibid*: p.12-13.

¹⁰ *Ibid*,p.16.

SECTION II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the absence of any concrete evidence, scholars dealing with the history of this part are left to their assumption, presumptions and imagination. All these, together with the study of the archaeological remains of the area lead one to believe that religious and cultural activities were thriving in this area since remote past. Due to the paucity of source materials, it is very hard to trace the antiquity and the etymology of the word “Darrang” with precision. It is held by some that the word “Darrang” is a combination of two Sanskrit word, *dayu* (heaven) and *rang* (amusement, merriment), implying thereby “a place of merriment for the Gods and other heavenly bodies” (Dauranga<Devaranga<Darrang). According to the famous linguist Dr. G.A. Grearson, the word Darrang is derived from “Durong”, which means the low laying plain territory that is noticed from the hills. The word “Darrang” seems to have originated from two Sanskrit word “Dwaram” (door way, gate way), implying thereby the number of *Duars* (like Khaling duar), i.e. the passes existing in the foothills of Bhutan, to the north of the territory. The present word name of the district Darrang may have been borrowed from the Daflas or the Bhutias whose main *Duar* or pass for coming to the plains from the Himalayan ranges lay along the course of the Barang River which they called Duar-gangā or Duarang leading to the present form Darranga or Darrang. Udalguri district was formed on 14 June, 2004, by bifurcating earlier Darrang district as one of the four districts under Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District. The district is bounded by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh in the north, Darrang district in the south, and Baska in the east and Sonitpur district in the east. The name of Udalguri district is derived from its head quarters, Udalguri. There are many traditions regarding the etymology of the word Udalguri. According to one tradition, the name is

derived from *Odal* (a tree) and *Guri* (root or surrounding) and it was named because originally two towns developed around an *Odal* tree. According to another tradition, this town derived its name because this place was originally a hermitage of sage Uddalaka. But it seems more appropriate to believe that after the Bodo words 'ORDLA+GUNDRI' the name became ORDLAGUNDRI> ORDLAGUNDRI>ODALGURI>UDALGURI. Bodo people still pronounce the name as odalguri. In Bodo language ORDLA means wide and spacious and Gundri means powdered object¹¹.

The extent of Darrang district was much larger in ancient times and formed a part of ancient Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa. According to oral traditions, Darrang was a part of the kingdom of Bana, the early traditional ruler of Sonitpur. Then it was brought under the jurisdiction of Prāgjyotispura during the rule of Bhagadatta, the famous ally of Duryodhana in the Mahābhārata war. From the literary and archaeological sources it is proved that Darrang was a part of Kāmarūpa during the rule of the dynasties like Varmana (355-650 C.E.), Sālastambha (655-990 C.E.), Pāla (990-1138 C.E.), and the Bhuyāns till the 13th century C.E. In the medieval period of her history Darrang was a part of the 'Darrangi' kingdom of the Koch Kings. With the establishment of the British rule in Assam, after the treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, Darrang was also brought under colonial rule.

Prior to the installation of Dharmanārāyan as the ruler of Darrangi kingdom in 1616 C.E. there was no political headquarter in Darrang and Udalguri region. Hence it is very difficult to get a systematic history of the study region. As per literary and epigraphic evidence and on the basis of material remains it can be safely presumed that the region was an integral part of Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa in ancient period. The Darrang *RājVamsāvali* and the '*Buranjis*' reveal that in the post Pāla period it became a part of

¹¹ www.assaminfo.com/districts/26/udalguri.htm 19.11.12, 9.31.pm.

the Koch kingdom of Koch Bihar. On the basis of literary and archaeological evidence it is unanimously held by the scholars that the ancient kingdom of Prāgijyotisa-Kāmarūpa included a vast area of north-east India. A fairly detailed account of the topography of the land is found in the *Kālikā Purana* and *Yogini Tantra*, both the works being devoted to the religious history of medieval Assam. The *Kālikā Purana* says that Kāmarūpa is to the east of Karatoyā River. According to *Yogini Tantra* the country lying to the east of Karatoyā as far as Dikkarvāsini is called Kāmarūpa. Places of Udalguri like Kukurākāta, Harisingā etc. are associated with the legendary rulers like Bāna of Sonitpur and Naraka of Prāgijyotispur. Thus one may safely assume that Darrang and Udalguri region were situated at the heart of the kingdom of Naraka, Bhagadatta and their successors. In this connection the observation of B.C. Allen is significant. According to him, “It was (Darrang) originally included in the ancient kingdom of Kāmarūpa, which is mentioned in the Mahābhārata (as Prāgijyotisa) and which at the time occupied North Eastern Bengal and a part of which is now known as the provinces of Assam¹².” It remained so under the three successive dynasties, viz, the Varman, the Sālastambhas and the Pālas. The Tezpur Rock epigraph of Harjara 815-835 C.E. and the Hāyunthāl grant prove that during the early part of the 9th century C.E. both Darrang and Nagaon were within their kingdom. The Tezpur grant (v.17) of Vanamāla 835-865 C.E. refers to the territory as extending as far as the seashore¹³. In this regard H.K. Barpujari states, “By the beginning of the thirteenth century when the

¹² Allen, B.C.: *Assam District Gazetteer. Vol. V. Darrang* Allahabad Pioneer Press. p.15.

¹³ Sarma, M.M: *Inscriptions of Ancient Assam*, Gauhati University, Assam, p.102.

Turks occupied Bengal, the kingdom of Kāmarūpa extended from Karatoyā in the west to modern Darrang and Nagaon district in Assam¹⁴.”

“The area now known as Darrang once provided different peoples an important migration route to this part of the world. The mountain passes north of the district which we now call *Duārs* are believed to have been important migration routes connecting Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet with the Brahmaputra Valley”.¹⁵ P.C. Choudhury, however, doubts if these routes helped much in the migration of racial elements; but believes that these mountain passes were important trade routes.¹⁶ However, being a part of the Brahmaputra valley the area was inhabited by the people of various racial elements. It is now confirmed by scholars who have carried out extensive research on the history of Assam, that the principal races who migrated into Assam in the remote past are the Austro-Asiatic, the Dravidians, the Tibeto-Burmans, the Mongoloids and the Indo-Aryans speakers. Although the area was the abode of various racial elements, the Tibeto-Burmans of Indo-Chinese stock were predominant in the early part of her history. Even Bana, the earliest known king of the tract, was a “non-Aryan, or probably an Alpine chief who founded another kingdom in Sonitapura, modern Tezpur and took to non-Aryan habits.¹⁷” The Indo-Aryan stock is represented by the Brāhmins, Kāyasthas, and Kalitās and a few other offshoots from these communities who settled in this tract at different periods of history. A large number of Bodo-Kachāris still inhabit certain areas of the region. They belong to Indo-Chinese group which includes the Kachāris, Koches, Rābhās, Meches, Chutiās and the like.

¹⁴ Barpujari, H.K.: *The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol-II*, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati, 1992,p.35.

¹⁵ Dutta, M.C.; *Darrang District Gazetteer*, 1978,p.52.

¹⁶ Choudhury, P.C.: *The History of Civilization of the People of Assam to the twelfth Century A.D.* 3rd edn. (revised), Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1987,p.75.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: p.114.

Legendary rulers of Kāmarūpa:

The Bhāgavat Purāna, Vishnu Purāna and other mythological accounts mention the names of different rulers of Ancient Assam. One such ruler Bāna was associated with Sonitpur, Agnigarh, Agni-parvata, and the Mahābhairav temple. Bāna ruled over Sonitpur which was a part of old Darrang. The Kālikā Purāna and a number of other sources refer to Bāna as a contemporary of Naraka, the ruler of Pragjyotispura. Bāna was a worshipper of Siva and dedicated the temple of Mahābhairav to Siva. As per tradition Bāna had a beautiful daughter named Ushā. The love episode of Ushā and Aniruddha, (the grandson of Lord Krishna) dragged Bāna into a bloody war with Lord Krishna¹⁸. The place Harisingā of Udalguri district is associated with the battle of Hari Hara, where Lord Krishna sounded the war cry to his followers to fight with king Bāna of Sonitpur who was aided by Lord Siva himself¹⁹. King Naraka is closely associated with the temple of Kāmākhya in Guwahati²⁰. Kukurākāta a place of Udalguri is associated with Naraka, where he killed the Kukurā (Cock) connected to the story of the construction of the Kamakhya Temple. As per tradition Naraka came under the influence of of Bāna of Sonitpur and became irreligious. Krishna killed him and installed Naraka's son Bhagadatta on the throne of Prāgjyotisapura. The Nidhānpur Copper Plate states that Naraka's son was Bhagadatta and the latter's son was Vajradatta²¹.

The Varman Dynasty:

¹⁸ DDG.: p. 55-56.

¹⁹ Acharyya, N.N.: The legends and Remains of Darrang: A critical Study in *Bulletin of the ASM No. VIII, 1986*, (ed) Choudhury, R.D., p.26-27.

²⁰ Das, P.: *History and Archaeology of North-East India*, Agam Kala Prakashan, New Delhi, 2007, p. 11.

²¹ KS.: p.161.

The reliable political history of Assam begins with the foundation of the Varman dynasty²². It is noteworthy that the founder of the Varman dynasty Pushyavarman claims his descent from the legendary Naraka. The Dubi Copper Plate inscription of Bhāskarvarman while giving the genealogy of his family clearly states that Naraka was succeeded by his son Bhagadatta. Vajradatta succeeded the latter. He in turn was followed by a long line of illustrious kings, and then came Pushyavarman²³. The Nidhānpur Copperplate grant of Bhāskarvarman gives us the names of thirteen kings and their queens. Bhāskarvarman (594-650C.E.) is regarded as the greatest ruler of the Bhauma-Naraka dynasty.

The Sālastambha Dynasty:

Since Bhāskarvarman died issueless, Avantivarman, probably a near relative of his, followed him as the king of Kāmarūpa. He assumed the title Sālastambha, meaning one who is as powerful as a pillar of *Sāla* wood²⁴. As mentioned in the Bargāon Copper Plate Inscription, after the descendents of Naraka had ruled for several generations, Sālastambha, ascended the throne of Kāmarūpa, and established a new line. He was a powerful ruler and ruled from Hārappeswara or Tezpur. He was succeeded by Vijaya, Pālaka, Kumara, Vajradeva, Harsadeva, Balavarman II, Harjjaravarman, Vanamalavarmādeva, Jayamāla, Balavarman III and Tyagasimha²⁵. The rule of Harsa (725-750 C.E.) marked the prosperity and territorial expansion of Kāmarūpa. Some of the structural remains belonging to the Sālastambha period are also found in the study area.

²² Das,P.: *Op Cit.*p.12.

²³ *KS.*: p.152.

²⁴ Das. *Op cit.* p..15.

²⁵ *DDG.*: p.61.

The Pāla dynasty:

After the Sālastambhas, Brahmapāla founded a new dynasty in Kāmarūpa known as Pala dynasty towards the end of the 10th century C.E. He was succeeded by Ratnapāla, who fortified the capital Durjaya. According to B.C. Allen, Durjaya was located at the site of present Tezpur²⁶ though most modern historians generally locate it at Guwahati. He was followed by the rule of Indrapāla, Gopāla, Harsapāla, Dharmapāla and Jayapāla. The house of the Pālas ruled for about 150 years, the last ruler Jayapāla having died in 1138 C.E. Jayapal *pukhuri* excavated by king Jayapāl still exist in Darrang. Temple ruins such as Tāmreswar ruins of Udalguri, Jaljali ruins of Darrang of the Pāla period are still found.

Jitāris:

Dharmapāla of Jitari dynasty ruled in Kāmarūpa in 1100 C.E. Dharmapāl shifted his capital from Guwahati to Darrang in the north bank of the Brahmaputra. After his death Sompāl, Rāmachandra or Bhālukupeng or Pratāpchandra or Māyamatta, Ārimatta (1365-1385 C.E.), Ratnasingh or Sukarānka (1385-1400 C.E.), Srikalanka or Sutarānka(1400-1415 C.E.), Mrigānka or Jongālbahahu (1415-1440 C.E.) became the king of the Jitāri Dyanasty. The territory of Rāmachandra was extended from west of Darrang to Biswanāth of Sonitpur district²⁷. Ārimatta ruled over the territory extending from Betanā of Kāmarūpa to Rahā of Nagaon district²⁸.

²⁶ *Ibid.*: p.62.

²⁷ Gohain Barua, Padmanath : *Asamar Buranji*, 3rd edn., Publication Board Assam, Guwahati, 2004,p.14-15.

²⁸ *Ibid.*:p.15.

Bara-Bhuyāns:

After the fall of the Jitāris, the Bhuyān rulers ruled in the different parts of the north and south bank of the Brahmaputra²⁹. The *Bara* Bhuyāns set up numerous petty kingdoms on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, extending from Subansiri in the east, down to the Barnadi of Darrang in the west³⁰. The great grandfather of Sankardeva, Chandibar, ruled the land of Kāmarūpa under king Dharmapāla. Chandibar finally settled at Rowtā in present Udalguri district. The stronghold of his second son Gadādhara Bhuyān was at Singri in present Sonitpur district which was earlier a part of Darrang district. As per tradition, Kusumbar Bhuyān, the father of Sankardeva found a Sivalinga at Singiri hill and he began to worship Siva here. During the childhood of Sankardeva, Mādhav Doloi, a Bhuyan chief ruled at Singiri³¹. Rowtā was the capital city of the ancestors of Sankardeva, who were earlier the worshipper of Siva³². The Gupteswar Devālaya of Singri is a sacred place of pilgrimage. The increasing atrocities of the hill tribes compelled the Bhuyāns to shift their capital from Rowtā to Bhurārgarh or Bhuyānr garh. Till acquisition of Darrang *rājya* (kingdom) by the Koch, the Bhuyāns ruled their territory from Bhuyānrgarh³³. The Bhurārgarh, places like Bhuyānkhāt etc. still recalls the activities of the Bhuyāns of the region.

Darrang under the Āhom:

The Āhom king Suhungmung or Dihingia Rajā (1497-1539 C.E.) occupied the territories of the *Bara*-Bhuyāns, on the north bank of the Brahmaputra in 1505 C.E. One

²⁹ Gohain Barua, Padmanath : *Asamar Buranji*, 3rd edn., Publication Board Assam, Guwahati, 2004, p.19.

³⁰ *DDG.*: p. 65.

³¹ *DDG.*: p.65-66.

³² *MB.*: p.43.

³³ *Ibid.*: p. 41.

garrison was stationed by the Āhom at Rowtā Temani in Darrang to prevent invasion from the Bhutan hills and from the west. Thus the Āhom became the the supreme power in the eastern part of Darrang, although the Bhuyāns still had a few semi independent principalities in Darrang³⁴. The Āhom territory on both banks of the Brahmaputra was exposed to the Koch and Muhamaddan invasion. Many decisive battles of Āhom-Mughal conflict were fought in Darrang from 1527-1531 C.E. During the reign of Koch king Naranārāyan the territory of the north bank of the Brahmaputra up to the river Dikrāi was annexed to the Koch kingdom. Chilārāi, the brother of Naranārāyan re-asserted their over lordship in these area in 1563 C.E.³⁵ During their march against the Āhom, Gohāin Kamal, the brother of Naranārāyan constructed a road from Koch Bihar to Nārāyanpur of Lakhimpur district which was known as Gohāin Kamal Āli the remnants of which are still found in Udalguri. However, Darrang did not remain under the Koch rule for long. In 1564 C.E. the Ahom again recovered the lost territory.

Koch Rule:

During the last part of his reign Naranārāyan divided his empire between his son Lakshminārāyan and Raghudeva, the son of his deceased brother Chilārāi. Raghudeva got the eastern part of the Koch territory known as Koch Hājo. The internal struggle of both the houses resulted in the temporary occupation of Koch Hajo by the Mughals. Hence after the death of the Koch king Parikhit Narāyan, his brother Balinārāyan left Koch Hajo and sought Āhom assistance in 1615 C.E.³⁶. The Āhom king Pratāp Singha along with Balinārāyan, the fugitive prince of Kāmṛūp, recovered the whole tract from

³⁴ *DDG.*:p.71.

³⁵ *Ibid.*:p. 72-73.

³⁶ Devi, Lakshmi.: *Asam Desar Buranji*, 4th edn., L.B.S. Publication, Guwahati, p.186-187.

Bharali to Barnadi from the Mughal occupation and renaming Balinārāyan as Dharmanarayan, installed him as autonomous ruler of Darrang with the title Rājā³⁷ in 1616 C.E. At the same time three thousand Chutiya *pāiks* (servitors) were sent from Upper Assam to settle at Mangaldai sub-division as *pāiks*³⁸. Thus a new line of Koch dynasty was founded in this region which came to be known as the Darrangi kingdom (1616-1826 C.E.). It is mentioned in the *Darrang Rāj Vamsāvali* as follows:

Suniok mahāmati *pāse swarga narapati*
Bole bhāi Dharmanārāyan
Bangālak māri jāi, *katowā gangā pāi*
Tabē khanda karibā khylān
Rājya dilo āji dhari *chaturdise seemā kari*
Satye satye kahilo nichayi.
Pubate Bhairabi Debi *pachime Kartiya nadi*
Jāk sebi nare mukta hoi.
Uttare gamār giri *dakhinat parbat siri,*
*Ahi chaturhade dilo bhumi*³⁹.

(The Ahom King called Dharmanārāyan brother and established him as the rājā in the territory bordering Bharabi Devi temple in the east and river Korotoya in the west and Gamar hill in the north and Siri hill in the south.)

Dharmanārāyan established his first capital at Kherkheriā, but a few months later due to some inconvenience he transferred his capital to Mohanpur of Darrang⁴⁰.

³⁷ *ACHA.*: p.314., *AHA.*:p.68.

³⁸ *AHA.*:p.68.

³⁹ *DRV.*: p157.

⁴⁰ *MB.*: p.57.

Kherkheriā is located at the foothills of Himālaya, some 35-40 Kilometre away from Tangla⁴¹ (Udalguri). Darrang had a high strategic importance to the Āhom. It was a buffer territory between the Āhom and, the Mughals and the Bhutias. The Darrang Rājās had to check inroads of the Bhutiās, Akās and Daflās into the Āhom kingdom but were not required to pay tribute to the Āhom government. Dharmanārāyan played an important role in the Āhom-Mughal conflict from 1616 till his death in 1637 C.E. The conquered tract of Kāmṛūp was placed under the Darrang Rājā. But realising that the autonomy of Darrang Rājā could be injurious in the near future, with a view to curtailing this power the Ahom king Pratāp Singha instructed Mahendranārāyan(1637-1643 C.E.), the son and successor of Dharmanārāyan to consult the Barphukan of Gauhati on all important matters⁴². According to E.A. Gait, from this time the eastern-Koch kingdom lost its independent status⁴³. Mahendranārāyan was succeeded by Chandranārāyan (1643-1660 C.E.), Suryanārāyan (1660-1682 C.E.), and Indranārāyan (1682-1725 C.E.).

The Darrang Rājās continued to be tributary kingdoms till 1725 C.E. when Āditya Nārāyan became the king of Darrangi Kingdom. With his death Darrang was beset by internal dissensions, bringing into existence a diarchy, consisting of a *Burhā* Rājā and a *Dekā* Rājā. Owing to internal schisms Darrang became wholly subservient to the Ahom. Though still 'Rājā', the Darrang ruler became an official maintained by rent-free land grants. Darrang came under the Salāl Gosāin. The hereditary vassal Rājās and petty chiefs of the Brahmaputra valley, mostly while enjoying internal autonomy, were required, according to usual Ahom pattern of *pāikan* land to supply a fixed quota of

⁴¹ Sarma, Komiram: *Vaishnava Jeevan Charita(2nd part)*, 1st edn. Sarma, Amal Et. All, Sirajuli, 2006,p.3.

⁴² *ACHA*.:p.314.

⁴³ *AHA*.: Ibid,p.70.

paiks to serve the Ahom state or to remit the commutation money in lieu of services⁴⁴. Ādityanārāyan was succeeded by Madhunārāyan (1775-1778 C.E.), Dvajnārāyan, Dhirmārāyan, Mahatnārāyan, Durlavnārāyan and Hanshanārāyan. Towards the end of the eighteenth century C.E. when the Āhom king Gaurināth Singha was sheltering in Gauhati due to the unrest caused by the Moāmoriā rebellion, Hanshanārāyan, the *Dekā Rājā* conspired against the Āhom king protesting against the interference of the Āhom in their internal matters. But he was killed by the Āhom and Gaurināth Singha installed one Bishnunārāyan as the *Dekā Rājā* by depriving Krishnanārāyan, the son of the deceased Rājā of the post. Krishnanārāyan strongly protested the decision of the Āhom king and went to the British for help against the Āhom king. Failing to get British assistance Krishnārāyan himself collected a force of Hindusthānis and Bengalis in Rangpur and Koch-Bihar, who were popularly known as *Barkāndazes*. With this force Krishnanārāyan conquered his lost territory in Darrang and annexed a part of Kāmrup including North Gauhati. Failing to suppress his rebellion Gaurināth Singha sought British assistance against Krishnārāyan. In response to his appeal the East India Company deputed Captain Welsh against Krishnārāyan. Captain Welsh was successful in suppressing the rebellion of prince Krishnanārāyan. However, Gaurināth appointed Krishnanārāyan as the Darrang Rājā. But the Barphukan remained in charge of the political and administrative matters of Darrang⁴⁵. Although Krishnanārāyan acknowledge the suzerainty of the Ahom government, he was not faithful to them. Hence during the reign of Kamaleswar Singha (1795-1811 C.E.) with the help of the Moāmoriās, he again stood against the Āhom. As a result of which the Āhom king deposed him from the throne and installed Samudranārāyan as the Darrang Rājā in 1805

⁴⁴ *CHA, Vol-III*: 2004, p.98-99.

⁴⁵ *DDG*.: p.77-78.

C.E. He remained as the ruler of Darrang till British occupation of the region⁴⁶. After the treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 C.E. the British annexed Lower Assam and Darrang also became a part of the British Empire. Thus the embittered relation of the Āhom kings with the Darrang Rājās ultimately resulted in the intervention of the British in the internal affairs of the Ahom government and subsequently led to the British occupation of Assam. A good number of chariot wheel, *bartop*, swords, shields, Sivalingas, brass-metal and bell-metal utensils are still found in the residence of the descendents of the Koch Royal family at Mangaldai.

Thus it is seen that Darrang was a part of the ancient Prājyotisa and Kāmarapūa. Prior to the advent of the Koch there was no political headquarters in Darrang. A systematic history of the region is found only from the Āhom period. “The Epigraphic term *savadhanejana* (know with caution) that appears in many copper plate inscriptions, in fact a notice served by the king to all the people and officers in Kāmarūpa and Darrang to observe the condition laid down by the grants. However, there is no such notice in the inscriptions of upper Assam, as it was directly ruled by the king. Kāmarūpa, Darrang and other petty states had enjoyed autonomy under officers like Baruā, Choudhāry, Pātvari, Tāludār and other feudatory chiefs (*Dātiyaliā rajāpowali*) whose authority was recognised by the Āhom government”⁴⁷. The person to be the king must possess good character and conduct. He must possess good health and be a good warrior. The king was the supremo in the administration of the state. He kept a strict vigil on the administrative activities of the officials. He was assisted by a council of ministers. The main duty of the king was to protect the life and property of his subjects

⁴⁶ Devi, Lakshmi.: *Asam Desar Buranji*, 4th edn., L.B.S. Publication, Guwahati, p.190-91.

⁴⁷ *Studies in Some Aspects of the Ahom Kings*, Ph.D. Thesis by Niva Rani Devi Bhgawati, 1997, G.U.

from internal as well as external threats. He had to maintain peace and order in the state. The Koch rulers of Darrangi kingdom were liberal patron of art and learning. It was under the patronage of the Koch king Samudranārāyan that the Darrang *Rāj Vamsāvali* was composed by Baldev Suryakhari Daivgnya.