

## Reassessing Kirata Identity and Territoriality in Ancient Texts

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### Abstract

*The Kiratas are mentioned as Himalayan tribes in many ancient texts. However who ancient Kiratas were and where their territory was located are much contested topic among historians, academicians, and common folks. Thus this research was carried out to answer the questions in consideration. After careful examination of theoretical and empirical literatures, social constructivism was found an appropriate philosophical foundation. Whereas hermeneutic theory was selected as theoretical lens to make meaning on Kiratas out of ancient texts. Ancient texts associated to Kiratas were collected and analyzed thematically to answer the questions. The texts considered for the purpose were from a Lichchavi stone inscription, the Vedas, the Puranas, Vedic epics such as the Ramayana, and the Mahabharata, and works of Megasthenes and Claudius Ptolomy. Those ancient texts were utilized as textual data to explore the historicity of Kirata. At the end the result of the analysis is that Kiratas were a reality in historiography in the Himalayan region. They were of East Asian descent spreading from Mount Kailasha region to the coast of East Sea, the Indian Ocean. They were the conglomerate of many tribes and in multiple countries. Moreover they were literate, civilized, powerful, and prosperous people in ancient period in the Himalayan region. Thus the Kiratas of Himalayan region was a historical reality not a myth.*

**Keywords:** Civilization, Inscription, the Purana, the Vedas, East Asian

### Introduction

Kirata is a real phenomenon for common populace in the Himalayan region. It is equally valid for scholars and academics in the historicity of the Himalayan region. Kirata was Himalayan tribes and Himalayan Region itself was considered the territory of Kirata (Chatterjee, 1951; Chemjong, 2003). Generally people of yellowish appearance of East Asian descend living around Himalayan region were regarded as Kirata. However, who exactly Kiratas were and where Kirata territory lay are highly contested issues in contemporary academia. That was what the main research problem of this article is. Hence this research was undertaken to answer the questions associated with the problem by analyzing ancient texts available so far.

Although there are number of relevant literatures available, clear and concise statement of who were Kirata and up to what extent was the territory of Kirata are not addressed yet in a scholarly manner. Furthermore such study and analysis were not based on any philosophical foundation, and were not supported by any theoretical lenses. Thus this research had attempted to answer the questions in consideration using primary and secondary evidences from ancient texts. These texts were analyzed and interpreted on social constructionist philosophical stance and hermeneutical theoretical approach.

As the above questions were not answered academically and in systematic way, there is confusion, and misunderstanding among academicians, common population and state machineries too. This has hindered state policy formulation, social cohesion maintenance, and nation building at large. Current research article revealed the meaning of the ancient texts which answered the questions in consideration in ancient context. General

understanding is that some ethnic groups of eastern Nepal are considered as Kirata (Livi, 1980). However analysis and interpretation of evidences had indicated that bulk of the population of East Asian descend in the south of Himalaya were Kirata. Similarly their homelands were regarded Kirata too. This finding might become a useful knowledge for state crafting and maintaining social harmony as a whole. Further it can be an addition of knowledge in academia as the article is based on factual evidences and methodological rigor.

The research article focused only on ancient texts as sources of evidences. Thus it had some limitations and delimitations. The paper fairly considered ancient period of Nepalese historiography but geographical extent covered beyond Nepal as per contexts. Contemporary concept of Kirata people and territory were not under the scope of the study. Only textual data collected from ancient period like mythological sources as Vedas, Puranas, Vedic epics, a Lichchhavi inscription and texts from ancient foreign sources were considered for analysis and interpretation. Thematic analysis and interpretation of data were done using hermeneutic cyclic model on the basis of the evidences collected. Then the results were discussed and concluded at the end.

### Literature review

The objective was to explore the meaning of the word Kirata by analyzing the ancient texts as data in the context of people and territory. For proper guidance of the research, a brief theoretical review on social constructionist philosophy and hermeneutic theory was carried out. And then the empirical review of the selected literatures were conducted. The literature review was done to confirm methodological suitability and theoretical stances, assess credibility of previous studies, and find the gaps on them.

Ontologically, social constructionism (constructivism) argues that the social reality is socially constructed from history, culture, and social interactions through languages and discourses (Burr, 1995). Hence epistemologically, it aligns with interpretive knowledge production method. It fairly represents the desired philosophical stand point for the intended research article.

Hermeneutics subsequently developed by Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur is a theoretical lens which searches the meaning in a body texts from existing preconceptions, individual words, then compares it with full texts. It goes back and forth until meaning making process of a social phenomenon is saturated. This is called a hermeneutic cycle which is fairly accurate on meaning making out of ancient texts (Barrett et al., 2011).

Empirical review of literatures was carried out to find the gap on the study and empirical evidences. The study objective was set, the study questions were formulated, and the meaning making process were formulated with the ideas extracted from the literature review. Empirical literature review of relevant available literatures are as follows.

Chemjong (2003) stated that the hilly region of Nepal was called *Kiratadesha* (the country of Kirata). A section of East Asian people to whom Vedic people called Kirata arrived to plains of Ganga as per epic of Mahabharata. Vedic people were the one who called the people of East Asian appearance, the Kiratas.

Gopal *Rajbansavali* (a royal chronicle) of Nepal was believed to be the most authentic chronicle in Nepal. It stated *Elang* as the first Kirata king followed by 27 other Kirata kings (Vajracharya, 2009). However the chronicle was written much later than the event happened and might have been out of historical context due to those long years elapsed. Still it gives valuable evidence that there was Kirata people in Nepal in ancient period.

Regmi (2012) had collected quite number of Kirata words inscribed in many Lichchhavi era stone inscriptions in Nepal. Beside one having the word “Kirata” in Hanumandhoka inscription, others did not have any direct reference to Kirata. However those words were from the Kirata language family and considered to be the ancient form of Newari language (Regmi, 2012). Which obviously fell under the broader category of Tibeto-Burman language family. Still most of the scholars dealing with the subject agreed on that proto Newari was a Kirata language.

Hanumandhoka inscription which had a word “Kirata” on it was considered as an authentic evidence for this research article. Rest were also very important to validate the antiquity of Kirata against some claims that Kirata historicity is just a junk of myths. There were hundreds of administrative and other Kirata words like *Lingwala*, *Kuthera*, *Solla*, *Brahmung*, *Mapchok*. Those words were related to administrative and judicial offices (Regmi, 2012). They had large historical significance in the antiquity of Kirata historicity. Even after so many years of the end of Kirata rule, the name of the administrative offices were kept continued during Lichchhavi period. That meant it was so rooted to the public that it could not be uprooted easily, even though there were alternative Sanskrita names for those offices. Please note that Sanskrita itself was the official language of the Lichchhavi court at that time. Having so big significance of those words, they did not directly state the word Kirata itself beside one mentioned above. Thus that gave only contextual reference to the article and hence treated accordingly.

Levi (1980) made reference to Vedic literatures and reported the existence of Kirata in ancient Nepal. He had documented chronicles of 29 Kirata kings from Yalambara to Gasti (Levi, 1980). Although list of the name of the kings were not under the scope of the article, it also gave a historical reference for this study.

From the literature review of selected ancient works on Kiratas as people and territory of ancient time, the synthesis indicated that no single academic study was done on it systematically. Whatever books and references were available were also based mostly on Vedic literatures. Those books and references lacked methodological rigor whereas philosophical foundation and theoretical lenses were missing too. The main study gap was the lack of methodological transparency on the study questions which was who Kirata were, and where their territory was in ancient time. This gap was picked up and the study was carried forward as described in following sections.

### **Method and Methodology**

Social constructivism as philosophical stance and hermeneutics as theoretical lens were deemed appropriate for the study during literature review. It demands qualitative method as the reality is socially constructed and the knowledge can be articulated interpretively. Thus exploratory and descriptive narration was incorporated thematically.

Objectivity was maintained during data collection, analysis and interpretation of the results in the article. Personal and intentional biases were avoided to the best possible extent. However qualitative research design cannot be completely free of biases. That could be due to social, cultural, political and religious perspective.

Other than some scientific sources like inscription and foreign accounts, mythical sources like the Vedas, the Puranas and the Vedic epics were used in the article. Though one could find historical facts in myths also, contextual consideration, meaning extraction and fact finding were challenges to be addressed in such situation. Hermeneutic cycle was adopted where some degree of personal reflection would be acceptable in the current study.

## Data Collection

Objective of the research was to explore the meaning of ancient Kiratas as people and territory on the basis of ancient textual data. Thus ancient texts contemporary to the time of origin of Kirata were used as the study data. They were comprised of the followings.

### Primary data

- a) Lichchhavi inscription of Hanumandhoka
- b) Yajurveda
- c) Atharvaveda
- d) Kalika Purana

### Secondary data

- a) Other Puranas and Epics
- b) Reference of Megasthenes, and Claudius Ptolemy on Kirata

Authenticity, credibility, and reliability of the data, as well as exaggeration, and reflection of the ancient authors were criticized externally and internally so far. The data were analyzed and interpreted side by side in line with hermeneutic cycle.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis was started from the textual interpretation of Hanumandhoka inscription. It is because it is the most authentic data available as it was of Lichchhavi period of Nepalese historicity. Further Vedic references were interpreted. It is also because it is generally believed that the Vedas are fairly authentic and ancient one. These were done to establish the antiquity of Kirata.

Longer texts were available from Kalika Purana which contains the references to the Kiratas. This facilitated thematic analysis of larger textual data. The purpose of the thematic analysis is to establish the ideas associated with Kirata as people and territory in ancient historicity. The codes and themes developed during thematic analysis is as follows.

### Theme 1: Characteristics

Cruel and foolish

Lacking knowledge

Addicted to wine and meat

### Theme 2: Features

Strong

Looked like golden column

Ghataka like a golden column and dazzling like burning fire

### Theme 3: Strength

Powerful Kirata king Ghataka

Ghataka with fourfold mighty army

Ghataka attacked Vishnu and powerful Naraka

### Theme 4: Prosperity

White huge elephant with four tusks of Kirata king

Elephant equal to Airavata in strength and Garuda in speed

25 thousands of superior breed tuskers of Kirata king decorated with cloth

Innumerable gems, jewels, decorating objects, ornaments, flags

The army, horses

### Theme 5: Fall of Kirata

Naraka cut the head of Kirata King

Naraka killed prominent Kirata and generals

Some Kirata fled, others surrendered

Annihilation, drive away and protection

### Theme 6: Territory

Region River Karatoya in the west up to the east Ganga where Goddess Lalitakanta resides

Region where Kamakhya

Region where Lauhitya flows

Finest and secret land

The land Pragjyotisapura

Kirata rehabilitated all along up to eastern sea coast

Country of Kamarupa

Ultimately triangulation of the results of thematic analysis was done with the data of other Vedic literatures and references of Megasthenes and Claudius Ptolemy. Those triangulations were to improve the validity of results deducted from the thematic analysis.

### Results and discussion

The most of the textual data were from Vedic religious scriptures like the Veda, the Puranas and Vedic epics. Whether they were original, copy, or translated, mostly they were the same. Thus there was mostly no question of authenticity of the sources. Only the credibility of the author and reliability of the data were scrutinized

during analysis. It was noted that these sources are of mythical in nature but it bears a lot of importance in history writing. It is because the origins of the sources that date back to ancient time and are rich in content are available on them.

Other data were Lichchhavi stone inscription and reference of Megasthenes and Claudius Ptolemy which were believed to be authentic and scrutinized its credibility and reliability during analysis too. Kalika Purana did have relatively longer texts. That is why a thematic analysis of the texts was carried out to find the proper meaning of the texts itself. Data analysis and interpretation were done side by side and in cyclic manner under the framework of hermeneutic interpretive theory.

Sources of evidences from Lichchhavi inscription, and the Vedas were used for initial context building and establishing antiquity of Kirata. Whereas Kalika Purana was extensively used for theme development as it has rich and wide textual data. At the end other evidences of Puranas, Vedic epics, and the works of Megasthenes and Claudius Ptolemy were used as data and interpretation triangulation purpose. This was how the data analysis and interpretations were concluded as follows.

### Lichchhavi Inscription

Till date, only one ancient Lichchhavi stone inscription inscribed “Kirata” has been found in Nepal. Kirata and Lichchhavi era is generally regarded as ancient period in historiography of Nepal. The stone inscription was found in the pedestal of Degutale Temple of Hanumandhoka at Kathmandu as shown in Figure 1 (Ingnam, 2024). Only fragments of it was there due to deterioration of the stone itself. Attention of the study was on the word, *Kiratabheshadhara* inscribed in the stone as shown in rightmost word of top line in Figure 1. The inscription had paramount importance to justify that the ancient Kirata was a factual history not a myth in the context of Nepal.



**Figure 1: Lichchhavi inscription with Kirata** (Ingnam, 2024)

(Photo: Sunil Dangol, Hanumandhoka, Kathmandu)

The inscription was in Lichchhavi script similar to Gupta script and the language used was Sanskrita. The portion on the inscription with word *Kiratabheshadhara* is shown in Figure 2 along with decipherment according to the Lichchhavi script collected by Rajvanshi (1964).



किरातभेधरा

Ki ra ta bhe sha dha ra

**Figure 2: Kiratabheshadhara from the Hanumandhoka inscription**

It was making sense although it had not matched exactly. For example, there was no vertical line left of first letter 'Ki' for 'i' vowel symbol and 'bhe' was also not matching properly. Lichchhavi script and Gupta script were alike and there were many variations. Because 'Ki' of the inscription exactly matched with the Gupta script, some discrepancies were accepted as it was of data of long time back.

It was clear from decipherment that it was Kiratabheshadhara. Vajracharya people (1973) did not talk about the meaning of it but appreciated that at least an ancient stone inscription which mentioned Kirata was found. It was about repair and maintenance of dilapidated palace built by a Lichchhavi king. Dilapidation was due to the negligence of retired armies (Vajracharya, 1973). One guess could be whether those armies were Kirata themselves. However satisfactory connection of this statement could not be established as limited remaining inscription is available due to deterioration and fragmentation. According to his guess this inscription might have been by Amshuvarma as per pattern of the script used. His reign was in 7<sup>th</sup> century CE, and the inscription should had been of the period too. Whatever the case, the existence and the influence of Kirata was there at the time of the inscription inscribed.

The literal meaning of the word Kiratabheshadhara in Sanskrita is "dressed like Kirata". Lord Shiva was often mentioned to disguise as Kirata in Vedic literatures and hence he was also called *Kirateshwara* (lord Kirata). As per myth of Bhasa Bansavali, once he disguised as Kirata to elude Parvati at Pashupati area of Kathmandu. Other time he disguised as Kirata to elude Arjuna at Mahabharata war (Chamling, 2012). However whatever inscription was remaining, there was no clear indication of the reference of the Lord Shiva. Whatever the case the Kirata mentioned in the inscription was related to the ancient Kirata people at least. This proved that the Kirata was a historical phenomenon not mythical one.

### Vedic References

Vedas are regarded as the oldest Vedic scriptures. They are thousands of years old at least in the oral form. We did not find any reference of Kirata in Rigveda, believed to be the oldest among all Vedas. However Yajurveda and Atharvaveda do have some references about Kirata. Although the Vedas are regarded as myth, they have significant evidences of history and very important for historiography of illiterate history like Kirata. Furthermore careful examination of ancient scriptures using hermeneutic cycle could give valuable contextual evidences of history. Thus they were used in this article as sources of evidences.

Yajurveda, Chapter 30, Verse 16 contains the word Kirata as shown in a phrase "*....guhabhya kiratam....*(....गुहाभ्य किरातम्....)" (Vyasa, 2015). According to the verse, it was recommended who should had been employed for which responsibility. Out of them Kirata was recommended to be employed for caves. That was what the meaning of the phrase reflect.

Most probably Kirata were recommended to be employed for caves so that they could take care of it or they could assist in case of dealing with caves. It indicated that Kirata were cave dwellers or expert on cave. The caves are generally on Rocky Mountains which confirmed that the Kirata were basically mountain people.

Atharvaveda, Part 10, Hymn 4, Verse 14 mentioned Kirata as, “*Kairatika kumarika saka khanati bhesajam. Hiranyayibhirabhrirgirinamupa sanushu.* (कैरातिका कुमारिका सका खनति भेषजम् । हिरण्ययीभिरभिर्गिरीणामुप सानुषु ॥)” (Sharma, 2005). It translates as, “Kirata girl digs herbs in the peak of a mountain with shiny golden hand held hoe.” This statement showed that Kirata were already practicing herbal medicine. Also they were using golden hand held hoe. It might not have been made of gold but were using bronze with yellow appearance. This indicated the Bronze Age. As it said the Kirata girl was digging herbs at the peak of a mountain, it confirmed that the Kirata were obviously the mountain dwellers. They were also in the civilized stage as they were practicing medicine and metallurgy, the proofs of civilization.

Thus the Vedic data confirmed that Kirata were hill people living in caves. Furthermore, they were already in a stage of civilization which was indicated by herbal medicine practice and use of metallurgical technology.

### Kalika Purana

Puranas are believed to be written in hundreds of years ago. The Puranas are also regarded as myth but a lot of historical senses and evidences are available on them. It was equally important to reconstruct the history of the Kirata. Out of many one of them is Kalika Purana where substantial texts related to Kirata is available. Chapter 38, Verses 101 to 136 are solely dedicated to an incident with Kirata (Shastri, 2008). Due to substantial amount of texts were available, they were analyzed thematically and analyzed and interpreted hermeneutically. The codes and themes were developed results were discussed as below.

### Theme 1: Characteristics

Theme 1 was about the “characteristics of the Kirata” which showed that they were cruel and foolish. They were regarded to be lacking in knowledge and addicted to wine and meat. Obviously the Kalika Purana was written by a Vedic scholar. We could clearly see that there was cultural differences. Having wine and meat was regarded as bad according to Vedic culture but for the Kirata it was normal. So cultural context gave conflicting meaning. Surely the Kiratas were not conversant in Vedic culture. That was why they were regarded as foolish and with lack of knowledge. Nonetheless they were definitely equipped with their indigenous knowledge and world view but that did not match with Vedic ones. Cruelty was also a relative term. If somebody come to snatch your wealth and land, anyone can become cruel to his enemy. The label of cruelty also was interpreted accordingly by considering the context. In conclusion the characteristics of Kirata mentioned did not represent the reality which was confirmed by iteration of words and full text as per hermeneutic cyclic method. It was because so much of powerful and prosperous Kirata people could not be so ignorant and foolish.

### Theme 2: Features

Theme 2 dealt with “outer appearance of Kirata people”. The Kiratas were mentioned strong, looked like column, and they were gold like in appearance. Their king Ghataka further was dazzling like burning fire. In this way those descriptions confirmed that they were yellowish people surely of East Asian descend. Furthermore they were hard working, well fed and healthy people so that they were as firm as column.

### Theme 3: Strength

Theme 3 was about “how strong were the Kiratas”. The Kiratas were regarded as physically very strong people. Kirata king Ghataka himself was very powerful and had fourfold mighty army compared to that of Naraka. That was why he dared to attack lord Vishnu himself and his ally Naraka. Thus the strength of the Kirata was so immense and they were very powerful.

### Theme 4: Prosperity

Theme 5 talked about “how prosperous was the Kirata country” of the time. The Kirata king had huge elephant having four tusks equivalent to Airavata in strength and Garuda in speed. He had 25 thousands superior breed tuskers with decorated cloths and their drivers. Innumerable gems, jewels, decorating items, ornaments and flags were with the Kirata king. Furthermore he had mighty army and horses too. If they had 25 thousands tuskers, one could imagine the population of Kirata itself. It could have been millions to sustain such numbers of giant animals and wealth. This showed that how prosperous and powerful were the Kirata kings and the country, although they lost their wealth and country to Naraka. This confirmed that such prosperity, power and wealth was not possible without literate and civilized people and the country. However one should be aware that some degree of exaggeration could have been implanted whoever wrote the texts.

### Theme 5: Fall of the Kiratas

Theme 5 talked about the “fall of the Kiratas” beside their power and strength. Naraka cut off the head of Kirata king Ghataka, killed prominent Kiratas, and their army generals. Some some Kiratas fled away and remaining surrendered to Naraka. At the end the Kiratas were annihilated, drove away, and those who surrendered were protected. That was how the Kirata rule was brought to an end.

### Theme 6: Territory

Theme 6 was about the “country of the Kirata”. This country was from Karatoya River in the west where east Ganga was. In the meantime the point of west border was up to where Goddess Lalitakanta resided. That much of western border of Kirata country was captured by Naraka. Where Karatoya River was unknown but it was sure that east Ganga was around eastern Bihar of current India. The goddess Kamakhya and Lauhitya River which are in Assam these days were in the Kirata country. The country was the finest and the land was secret. This land was called Pragjyotisapura which was like capital of the country. The Kiratas who surrendered were rehabilitated in areas extending up to eastern sea coast which indicated that the country of the Kirata extended up to the Indian Ocean in the east. Indeed the name of the Kirata country was Kamarupa.

### Other Puranas and Vedic epics

Selected references of Kirata from other Puranas and ancient texts as secondary source were collected from a book of Rai (2009) named *Heritages of Kirata*. The purpose of those data collection and analysis was for data and interpretation triangulation for previous data and thematic analysis. Quite number of such sources were mentioned in the book. Those sources relevant to the article were collected and analyzed as follows:

- The Kirata living in forest of mountain and killed antelopes (Taitiriya Brahmana, 3.4.14).
- The Kirata lived in the east and the Greeks lived in the west (Markendeya Purana, 57.8).
- Hemajata Kiratas were living at Himadri Khanda near Kailasha Mountain. Their king Suraghu was terrible (Bashishtha Ramayana, 58.1).

- The Kiratas looked beautiful and golden in appearance. They moved around above and under the water and lived in islands. They wore a dress covering leaps and ears. Their face were bright and they were strong and dangerous like tiger (Ramayana, Kishkindha Kanda).
- Yudhishthira performed Rajasuya Yagya.
- The Kirata kings of all directions attended the Yagya with numerous presents. Some of them were kings of the mountain of Himalaya where the Sun rose and others were from Lauhitya who had a country up to the sea. They brought sandalwoods, incenses, diamonds, pearls, gold, jewelries, minerals, and perfumes as presents. They also presented 10,000 Kirata girls as slaves (Mahabharata, Sabha Parva).

Data analysis was done on thematic line as follows:

### Theme 1: Characteristics

Referring to theme 1, it again qualified that the Kiratas were mountain dwellers. They were also hunters as they used to kill antelopes for meat basically.

### Theme 2: Features

Again the Kirata were looking beautiful and golden in appearance. It is now sure that they were of East Asian descend.

### Theme 3: Strength

Their faces were bright and they were strong and dangerous like tiger. It confirmed their strength, power and bravery.

### Theme 4: Prosperity

Their prosperity was again could be measured by the presents they offered to Yudhishthira. Their number could again be estimated to be in millions after recounting that ten thousands Kirata girls were presented to Yudhishthira as slaves.

### Theme 6: Territory

The Kiratas were living in the east and Greeks were living in the west according to Markendeya Purana. However subsequent explanations confirmed that Greeks and the Kiratas were living side by side on the west and the east section of the Himalaya. It was because Hemajata Kiratas were living in the vicinity of Mount Kailasha. West to it obviously were Greeks to occupy the territory. So the territory of Kirata extended from Mount Kailasha region to the Far East up to the Indian Ocean.

They were going round above and under the water and lived in islands. They obviously were living in the islands of Bramhaputra, Bay of Bengal, and Eastern coast of the Indian Ocean.

Many Kirata kings from different regions attended the Yagya of Yudhisthira. That meant there were numerous countries for Kirata. Vast area of the Gangetic plain, including the Himalayas up to eastern end of Asia was the land of the Kirata. There were number of tribes under a collective Kirata Nation.

### Megasthenes and Claudius Ptolemy on the Kiratas

Another data triangulation was done with the literatures of the Greek and the Roman scholars, Megasthenes and Claudius Ptolemy. Interpretation of the data on thematic line are as follows:

#### Theme 2: Features

Megasthenes was a Greek ambassador to Magadha. In a compilation of fragments of his book *Indica*, Scyritae was mentioned referring to the Kiratas. They were nomadic, they had nostrils like orifices and their legs were contorted like snakes (McCrindle, 1877). Megasthenes was the Greek scholar who resided in Pataliputra during Mauryan Empire of Magadha. It was very close to the territory of the Kiratas. Those Kiratas whoever he encountered or heard about were obviously of common nomadic folks and were of short stature. The Kiratas were with small and flat nose which just looked like small orifices to Megasthenes. The hard working mountain nomadic Kirata had obviously had hand and legs bowed. The most important of Megasthenes' work was that the Kiratas constituted a history not a myth again.

#### Theme 6: Territory

Claudius Ptolemy a Greco-Roman geographer who lived in second century CE had written a geography book as, "Treatise on Geography". The references related to India was translated by J. W. McCrindle. Reference of Kirata people as Kirrhadaï and Kirata territory, Kirrhadia were found in the translation (McCrindle, 1885).

The location of Kirrhadia was indicated from Pentapolis (Patna) to Arakan River. McCrindle (1885) doubt whether the location of Kirata territory was mistaken. This was because he regarded Kirata only of eastern Nepal and did not appreciate the concept of pan Kirata. The Kirrhadia proper as per Ptolemy was at Silhet, Asam and Rungpur, the center of Kirata country (McCrindle, 1885).

Data triangulation both way confirmed the previous interpretation and validated the findings.

## Findings

Social constructionism (constructivism) as the philosophical foundation and hermeneutics as the theoretical lens were the best suited for methodical choice, data analysis, and interpretation. It was because creation of meaning out of ancient text using hermeneutic cycle is the one which permits iteration. Further it examines the cultural, historical, social, and political context in temporal and spatial dimensions.

The findings from the analysis and interpretation were that wine and meat was integral part of Kirata culture and diet which Vedic people had misconception of inferior quality. That was why Vedic people regarded them as inferior and foolish. Although Kirata were not literate to Vedic knowledge system, they had their own indigenous world view and knowledge system. However data and analysis showed that they were literate and cultured people as they were very strong, prosperous, widespread and in large number.

Kirata were strong people and yellowish in appearance. Hence they were of East Asian descent. Obviously they were of short stature with flat nose. However they were as strong as column and in golden appearance. Those features surely qualified them as so called Mongoloid stock of people in Himalayan region.

The Kirata king Ghataka and Kirata people were powerful and had mighty army. They had elephants and horses, gems and jewelries among other wealth. Thus the Kirata country and Kirata people were prosperous. Even they were in millions in number. For example twenty five thousands elephants were with Kirata King Ghataka. It was only in one country of Kirata. There were many countries and one can guess how large population was required to sustain the number of elephants and other businesses. Similarly ten thousands Kirata girls were presented to Yudhishthira as slaves. One can imagine how many girls were there in Kirata countries beside those presented. That showed their number, extent and variation among themselves.

However they were defeated by Naraka. So many of them killed, some fled and others surrendered. The reason why they were defeated was not known clearly but according to belief system of Vedic people Bishnu is one of the mightiest

God As the mighty lord Bishnu was on the side of Naraka, speculative reason could be the favor of the lord Bishnu itself was the cause of defeat of Ghataka.

The country of Kirata was Kamarupa with the Pragjitsapura as center. It bordered to east Ganga up to the Ocean. Such a vast and powerful country of Kirata was grabbed by Naraka but still some of the Kirata people remained there. That area was the center of gravity of Kirata people in ancient time was confirmed by the current study.

Data triangulations were done from other Puranas and Vedic epics followed by references of the works of Megasthenes and Ptolemy. Puranas and epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata confirmed the ideas of the themes from the Kalika Purana and extended the western territory up to Mount Kailasha area. Furthermore Kirrhadaï was translated to Kirati as commonly Kirata people were also called Kirati. Interpretation of data triangulation by iteration with hermeneutic cycle confirmed that the center of gravity of Kirata geography was in the area of Bramhaputra and Ganga Rivers proper.

## Conclusion

Social constructionism with social constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology fitted well with the current study. Similarly hermeneutics as the theoretical lens was perfect for data analysis, and interpretation on thematic model. This study confirmed that the Kiratas were ancient people of yellowish appearance that was of East Asian stock spreading from Mount Kailasha area to the coast of East Sea that is the Indian Ocean. They were generally spread to the plains of Ganga and Bramhaputra to the Himalayas. Centre of gravity of them was present day Bengal and Assam proper. The Kiratas were the people of different tribes united in the concept of pan Kirata nation. Not only they were in millions in number and they were not a single tribe in one country too. There were many countries and formed a confederation of many pan-Kirata tribes.

They could be foolish and barbarous according to the Vedic norms and values. But they were prosperous, literate, and civilized as per their indigenous world view, knowledge and belief system. The conclusion was drawn from authentic primary and secondary data and the methodological rigor. It reflected that ancient Kiratas constituted both the people and the land. It had given learned and informed academic knowledge regarding

ancient Kirata people and Kirata territory with respect to ancient texts. It can thus be concluded that Kirata was a reality in ancient historiography of Himalayan region.

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