

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Chopra Police Station : A General Description*

The Police Station of Chopra is located at the extreme north of the district of Uttar Dinajpur. It was a part of the Purnea District of Bihar, and had merged with West Dinajpur in 1965. According to the Census Report 1991<sup>21</sup> it covers an area of 378.4 acres with a population of 165,720. Its encircled by Bangladesh from middle of the north to the entire east, it is bounded by the district of Darjeeling in the north-west and the police station of Islampur in the south. It has a common boundary with Bihar in the west. Its width rarely exceeds ten miles.

Of the rivers that flow through Chopra, Mahananda is the most important. But the river Doak, is the longest in the station and flows north to south, dividing the area it into two equal parts.

Chopra is a rurally oriented area. There is no town in the police station. It has more than 120 villages. By religious faith it is a Muslim dominated area, Urdu is the most important language spoken. The Hindus form the second largest community. However, Bengali is spoken most widely. A little Hindi and Santhali are also spoken.

Its rural character demonstrates, that agriculture is the base of its economy with rice as the main staple food. The land is also famous for pine-apples. Very recently tea gardens are growing apace, converting agricultural lands into tea-estates.

The National Highway 31 runs through the station. The Bus service is the principal transport system. It has certain places of interest, like Babuguch, Narayanpur, and Naknahar. A short description of these places are given below.

### *The Antiquity of Narayanpur*

Narayanpur (J.L. No. 34) about 5 km. North-East of Chopra Police Station is renowned for its of Durgapuja (festival of goddess Durga) supposed to be the oldest in this locality, performed by one family. The original record of the family traces it back to 146 years ago. The Zamindar of the estate is one *Mishra* who

claims to have come from Kanauj. It seems that one *Misra* of Kanauj got married to a daughter of the Zaminder, of this village. After the death of the latter Zaminder the bridegroom and bride came to settle in this locality and the entire Mishra family had come along with them. The family claims that their ancestor, the founder of their estate, had come here about 150 years ago. Migration is not uncommon here. It is stated in the Gazetteer of Bengal and North East India : "There is also much migration of a temporary character from Bihar and United Provinces"<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the claim of the family tallies with the said report. The local people say that fifty years ago, it was a well populated village. People comprising of various communities had lived at this place. Gradually Marwaris have outnumbered the others. However, later on due to some unknown reasons they had migrated and left the place. The ruins of the old palace of the Zamindar are still there. The ruins are approximately spread over an area of five bighas.

### *Naknahar*

About 10 km. south west of Chopra, there is a forest-cum reservoir called Naknahar. It is in between Chopra and Ramganj. Both Hindu and Muslims attach religious sanctity to this huge reservoir. On one side, it is said that there was a mosque, on the other a temple. No trace of the structures are there, at present, although scattered debris indicate some construction work.

### *Hussain dighi of Babugachh*

Babugachh (J.L. No. 103) is an interior village in Chopra Police Station. The police station of Chopra is 5km. to its south. Dashpara is its nearest important market. The village has 188.17 hectares of land with population of 379<sup>23</sup>. It is a Muslim dominated village. The nearest town is Islampur. To approach the village there is a *Kuchha* road. It is a frontier village, having a common boundary with Bangladesh. The river *Karotoya* flows to the east of the village which forms the natural boundary between the village and Bangladesh.

Here lies an old pond, called *Hussain Dighi* (pond of Husain Shah). The local people say that it was built by *Sultan Hussain Shah* of Bengal (1493-

1519 AD). The pond covers more than 4 acres and its water covers three and half acres of land. There is a *Mazar* of a *Pir*. Many folk tales are associated with the pond. But no remains of archaeological importance is found. A fair (*mela*) is held on 1st *Baishak* (the first day of Bengalee calender). The fair carriers an old tradition.

### *An Important Metal Image from Chopra Police Station*

One extraordinary metallic image is lying in the store room of Chopra Police Station. Three tiny images on horse back are placed on an ornamented *asana*. It weighs 3kg. and 150 gram. The image was discovered from Kaliganj tea garden which is 3 and  $\frac{1}{2}$  km. away from Chopra in a place called Telibhita. While the garden management were setting up boundary posts, the workers came up with the image from about a depth of 4 feet.

The three figures slightly vary in measurement :

The central figure 6.5" x 2"

The figure on the right - 5" x 2"

The figure on the left - 4" x 1.5"

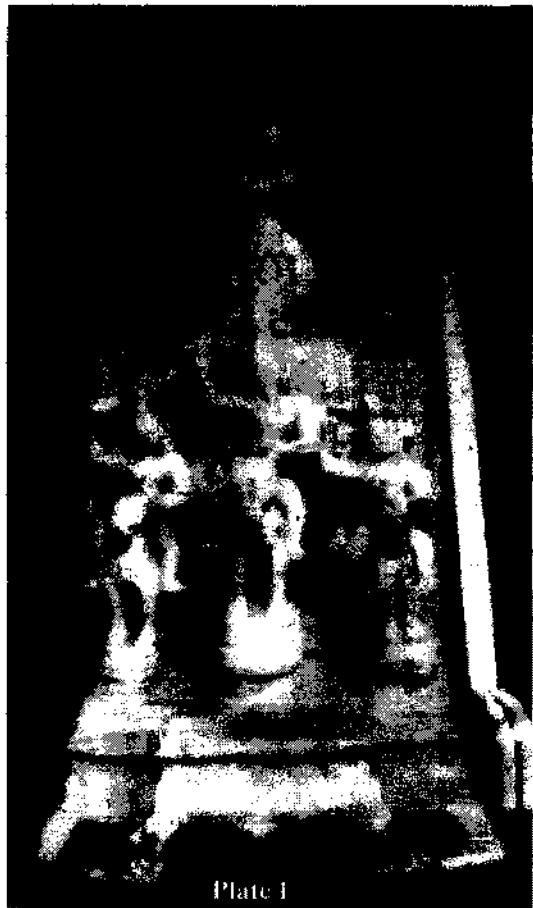


Plate I

The central figure, therefore, is bigger than the other two. The height does not alone make it different from other two, the figure has a small beard. What is common, is their style of sitting. All the three figures hold *kripana* in their right hand which is raised above and behind the head. They express a stance that show that they are rushing. There is no sign of any stirrup. The figures on horse back are skilfully accommodated on three separate double petalled lotuses. Therefore, the lotus pedestals are slightly elongated. All the three figures are set on a *triratha asana*. At the back, the *asana* is raised like a stela, the top of which is pointed. There is a floral design on the back. The sides of the *prabhabali*

are intricately designed. There are two flying *Vidyadharas* on either side, placed between two birds facing, each other. The colour of the entire piece is greenish. This figure has been identified by a scholar with that of *Kalki*<sup>24</sup>.

### *Images of Nandiganj*

Three more images have been found from Nandiganj (J.L. No. 100) 4 km east to Dashpara. A few years ago these three stone images (i) icon of *Ganesa*, (ii) *Vishnu* and (iii) *Hanuman* have been discovered while a tract was excavated for being a graveyard. The images of *Ganesa* and *Hanuman* are made of sand-stone and icon of *Visnu* made of black stones. These are now housed in a temple in the market place of Daspara. The details of those images are given below.

1. Icon of *Ganesa* 10"x7"
2. Icon of Lord *Visnu* 14"x6"
3. *Hanuman* - 16"x13"

The photography was not allowed by the local people.

### *Visnu* Image

Height : 14"

Width : 06"

It is a standing image of *Visnu* with *triratha* pedestal. The pedestal consists of some floral designs at the centre and two devotees in *anjali* mudra. The god has four hands. He holds a *Shanka*, *Chakra* and *Gada* (from lower left hand). A lotus is incised in his lower right palm. He is supported by *Sri* and *Saraswati* standing in *abhanga* pose. Two more standing female figures are also shown.

The god is standing on a full petalled lotus placed on this pedestal. He has usual ornaments — necklace, wrist bands and armlets. He is clad in a *uttariya* on his body. He wears a *dhoti* which has a beautiful knot at the navel. The *dhoti* has a belt like fold on the waist.

However, this god is handsome, with broad shoulders, expanded chest, thin waist and graceful face. His nose is mutilated. There is a gorgeous head-dress. Moreover, there are two *vidhyadharas* at the top. The stela is pointed at the top. There is an inscription on the pedestal. It is placed in the 11/12th century A.D.

## *Police Stations Goalpokhar and Chakulia : A General Description*

Police stations of Goalpokhar and Chakulia, situated at the centre of the district are the most backward, from the industrial point of view. While Chakulia is the lowest in extent, 266 sq. k.m. with a population of 149,824, Goalpokhar on the other hand covers an area on 338.78 square k.m. and a population of 212,643.<sup>25</sup>. The places are, therefore, not over-populated. There are no towns and municipalities, no colleges or technical institutions. The literacy rates of both the places are very poor and lowest in the district. Only 17.62 are literate in Goalpokhar and 18.62 in Chakulia<sup>26</sup>. Education, therefore, is confined to a smaller section of the society. The *thanas* are not well connected with the district headquarter and not even well linked with the villages within their jurisdiction. The roads are mostly *Kuchha* and plying of vehicles are very rare. In Chakulia, there is hardly any bus services.

The two places still retain its rural character. Agriculture is the only basis of economy. Though river system is not notable, mention may be made of Sudani, Nagar, Sherwani and Pitanu etc. Two big *bils* (marsh) are also there. Irrigational facilities are very rare. Inspite of these limitations, the land is fertile and rich. Rice and jut are the main product. One remarkable aspect is the production of mat reed which is grown in large scale in the area.

Main languages spoken are Urdu and Hindi. Bengali is also spoken by a large number people. A substantial portion of the population is Muslim by religion. Both the police stations formed the part of Purnea District of Bihar and was transferred to West Bengal in 1965 under the Islampur sub-division.<sup>27</sup>

The area is not historically renowned. Asuragarh in Chakulia is the only place of historical importance. In Goalpokhar, there is no such place of interest. However, I have got one image of *Manasa* in Goalpokhar. This image has been found form one Kathaldah village under Goalpokhar P.S. and now kept in this police station. One small metallic images has been found from one Sonarpur village under Chakulia P.S. and now kept in that police station. A detailed description of Asuragarh and these two images are given below.

## *Asuragarh*

A forgotten archaeological site of the district is *Asuragarh*, (J.L. No. 84) a village just beside the National Highway 34 on the bus route between Dalkhola and Kishanganj, under Chakulia police station and Block II of Goalpokhar. It was a part of Purnea district of Bihar<sup>28</sup>. At present the village is bounded by Dumuria in the south, Shikar in the North; it touches the railway track (connecting Dalkhola and Kishanganj) in the east and NH 34 in the west. The river Mahananda flows 1 k.m. away in the west. The village has a population of 876 and an covers an area of 84.17hectres<sup>29</sup>.

It is a place of archaeological interest. Tradition says the Pandavas, while moving towards the east had taken shelter in *Madhyadesa* of Virat Raja. There, they kept their weapons in a tree in a village called Panchbhaiya and “killed the demon in the villages Asuragarh and Bhimbar”<sup>30</sup> The village offers important archaeological specimens most of which, however, have disappeared. It is not possible to state the period to which these ruins are related. O’ Malley writes : “a ruined fort in the south-west of Krishanganj sub division situated close to the eastern bank of the Mahananda about 12 miles south of Kishanganj and 4 miles east of Dulanganj. The fort which is about 1200 yards in circumference raises from surrounding plain to the height of 10-12 feet. It is enclosed by earthen ramparts, and inside are the debris of many buildings, the lower chamber of which have been found under the surface. The story locally current as to the origin of the fort is that there was five brothers-Benu, Barijan, Asura, Nanha and Kanha, who each built a *garh* or fortified residence and named it after himself.”<sup>31</sup>

O’ Malley’s report was published in 1911 and years after I visited the land in May 1998. But I have found no traces of the fort. It is reported that the place was covered with trees under forest and no one ventured to enter into the forest. Later on a pious muslim saint came and settled there. It was followed by the migration of the people into the area. Gradually the area was deforested and cultivation began. The entire village, approximately comprising 100 acres, is devoid of all remains, the only certainly worth mentioning is a brick structure. At the centre of the village, there is a pond about 5 *bighas* in area which has a long history. The local people says that there was a *Mazar* of a *pir*, while others are of the opinion that there was a magnificent building on its bank. At present there is a *Mazar*, a muslim place of worship. Nearer the pond, about 100 yards



*Brick structure, Asuragarh*

south of it, the land is higher. It vertically slopes down. It consists of a block of solid brick wall which is clearly visible. The common size of the brick is 8.5 x 10 x 1.25 inches. A narrow *kuchcha* road which goes to the south carries fragments of old bricks.

### *The image of Manasa*

Height : 16"

Width : 8.5"

It is a small size image of *Manasa* built of black stone, found in one Kathaldah village under Goalpokhar police station and now in the same P.S. The pedestal is *Pancharctha* and covers one third of the entire composition. One votary is shown beside her right leg in *anjali mudra*. The right leg is placed on a lotus, left leg is in *lalitasana*. The goddess is sitting on a lotus throne placed on the pedestal. She has two hands. Her right hand is placed on her right knee. She holds a snake in her left hand. The goddess is under the canopy of a seven hooded snake. The dress and ornaments show exquisite taste. She wears a delicate sari and beautiful jewellery. The *Prabhabali* has no other decoration except a slight beaded line. The body is sensuous. The breast are rounded and full. The waist is thin. The navel is pointed. The face is charming.

The stela is slightly pointed but basically cresent like in shape. It may be placed in the 11/12 century A.D.



Plate 2

## *A metallic Image from Chakulia P.S.*

Length : 6.7"

Height : 2.5"

Width : 0.1"

This is a tiny metal image. The metal is probably octoalloy. It is a small panel of five images of equal size. The central figure has four hands. She sits in a *yogasana* posture. Her lower hands are placed on her knees. Upper two hands hold a mace (in her right hand) and a lotus (in her left hand). She carries a jar in her lower left hand and the object in her lower right hand is indistinct.

The central figure is flanked by four more figures on her left and right. But the most pleasant aspect of those side figures is that all of them are seated in the same style in *lalitasana* pose. The second figure from the left has a pot-belly.

Another striking feature is that while the left two figures look like male, the right two figures are female. All the five figures are very sparsely ornamented from waist to the neck. The *hara* which is very distinct, is made of tiny beads.

An *upasaka* is shown on the extreme left. The stela is, moreover, inscribed behind. The whole image, however, is not well kept. The figure on extreme left has been detached. It is difficult to identify the image and, can not be dated properly.

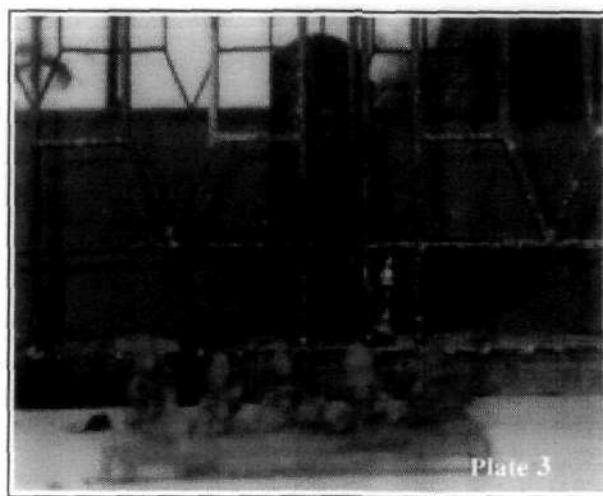


Plate 3

## *Islampur Police Station : A General Description*

Islampur Police Station is located in between Chopra and Goalpokhar police stations. It was under the Purnea District of Bihar and was included into former West Dinajpur in 1956.<sup>32</sup> It is bounded by Bihar in the west and Bangladesh in the east. It is the second largest populated area in the district with an overwhelming population of 230,326 and occupies an area of 345.20 sq.k.m.<sup>33</sup> Economically and educationally it is better than other police stations. The literacy rate at the block level is only 23.22% in rural areas and in urban areas 65.43%<sup>34</sup>. Like many other sub-divisions in Bengal it is agricultural and village oriented. Rice is the main staple food. Pineapple is cultivated in substantial quantity. Recently small tea gardens are growing. Betel (*pan*) is also cultivated. There are few streams, but no principal rivers. The irrigation facilities in the sub-division are far from satisfactory. The Teesta Canal Project has not yet been completed. Therefore, the cultivators are mostly dependent on rainfall or on tanks. The National Highway 34 goes along its western boarder and connects it with the district headquarter, Raiganj in the south and Siliguri, in the north. Though well-served by roads a few k.m. of railways runs through the sub-division. The Muslims form the majority of the population and Urdu is the principal language of the people. Bengali and Hindi are also spoken by a large number of people.

The early history of Islampur is not well known. It seems that it belonged to *Pundravardhana* and was probably under the Palas. The discovery of Buddhist, and Brahmanical images show that the Pala rule was extended to this area<sup>35</sup>.

The town itself is not only the chief administrative centre of the subdivision, but also is the store house of images found from hither and thither. The antiquities are mostly preserved in Islampur police station, Islampur Higher Secondary School and in the store-room of S.D.O's office. These were mostly collected by people from in and around the town. According to the teachers of the local school the new construction of buildings at various places had revealed the antiquities. The antiquities preserved in S.D.O's office are (i) one grey stone image of the Buddha, (ii) one black stone image of Visnu and (iii) one fragmented seven snake hooded of *Manasa* image. All these are dated in the 11th century. They were collected from the nearby area and were deposited here at the office. The exact find place of these are unknown.

## *The Buddha Image*

It is an image of the Buddha in *Dhyani Mudra*. The god is seated on a *visvapadma* which is placed on a *triratha* pedestal. On the pedestal we see the famous Mrigadava forest scene i.e. the place where the Buddha had delivered his first sermon. The two deer are placed opposite to each other with the wheel of law in between. The stele is simple and plain with a pointed top. The most important aspect of the image that it is made of grey stone — the only specimen of its kind discovered in the district. It may be placed in the 10th century A.D.



Plate 4

## *Visnu Image*

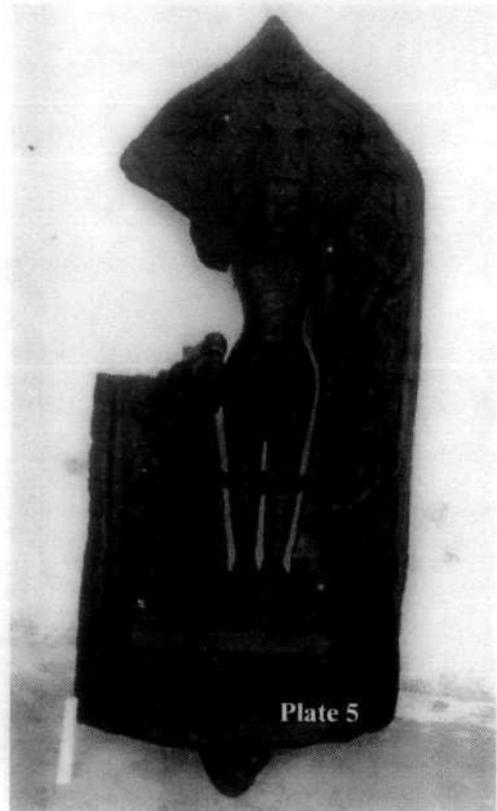
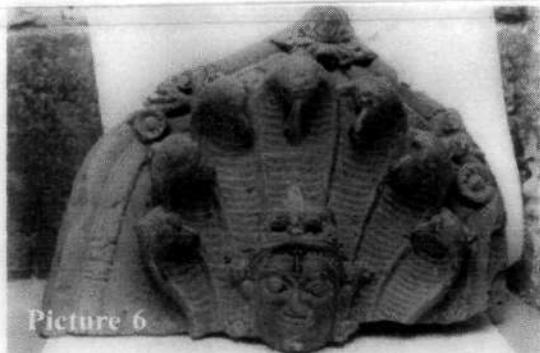


Plate 5

It is a standing Visnu image partly fragmented. The god probably had four hands. Since the left part of the stela is damaged his right hands are also missing. However, the palm of the lower right hand is visible. The upper left hand carries a *chakra* and lower left hand holds a *sankha*. Clad in *dhoti* and *uttariya*, the god has the usual ornaments. The attendants are also visible. The *maladharis* and *kirtti mukha* are placed in appropriate places. The pedestal is *pancharatha* and two worshippers in *anjali mudra* are engraved on it. The image has been dated to the 11th century A.D.

## *Manasa Image*



Picture 6

It is a snake goddess or the image of *Manasa* or *Nagini*. The image is damaged. Only the upper part has been found. The head is also visible which is covered by a seven hooded snake. Among the attendants only the flying *Vidhyadharas* are visible.

## *Antiquities in High School*

When the school committee was excavating in their premises, various parts of mutilated iconographic specimens were discovered. News also arrived that in



Picture 7

the new station area, several pieces of antiquities were dug out. All these are preserved in the school. Along with stone pieces of images, the teachers have also collected terracotta pieces with floral designs. The school authorities in their enthusiasm had published a small booklet which mentions some antiquities discovered from the region<sup>36</sup>.

## *Ruins of Durgabari*

Of the two sites of archaeologically potential in Islampur Durgabari is one. It is one such place from where 3 images of *Visnu* were recovered by the police. The place is about 4.km. south of Islampur. There is a small but high mound. Soil erosion has caused much damage to the mound. It has exposed brick structures. These images were imbedded under earth in a nearby paddy field. At present the mound is full of brick bats on the surface. The villagers are mostly Muslims. Some Tribals and Rajbanshis also live nearby. The latter has high veneration for the mound. During the Durgapuja festival, they visit the mound with flower and incense. All images according to the scholars belong to 10/11th century A.D. These are preserved in the police station.

## *Visnu Image from Patagara*

Height : 48"  
Width : 28"

An interesting iconographical specimen has been found in a small village named Patagara in Agdimiti gram panchayet (J.L. No. 37) It is 8/10 k.m. east away from Islampur town in the district of Uttar Dinajpur. The village has a overwhelming population of 2793 with an area of 282.88 hectares.<sup>37</sup>

The iconographic specimen mentioned above is a four-armed standing *Visnu* image of black stone. The god is standing on a full blown lotus which is placed on a *saptaratha* pedestal. Beautiful floral design is engraved on it. The image could be divided into four parts — the lowest part i.e. from feet to knee is bare. The next part is from knee to the waist which is covered by a *dhoti*. This is

well arranged and its folds are very artistically made in parallel rows. The third part is the body from waist to the neck. A long scarf is thrown loosely on the body which goes

parallelly from right to the left. Therefore, the body is partly clothed and partly bare. The fourth and upper-most part is the face. The upper part of the stela is damaged.

Excessive fondness in displaying the ornaments is one important feature of this image. Practically all parts of the body has various appropriate ornaments. He has a beautiful set of necklace. There are also ear-rings, armlet and wrist band. A long chain of garland (*vanamala*) hangs upto the knee. The sacred thread comes down from his left shoulder and touches the waist. The attributes in his hands are usual — *sankha* (Conch-shell) *chakra* (wheel), *gada* (mace) and probably (as the lower right hand is broken) incised *padma* (lotus) on it.



Plate 8

*Visnu from Patagora : Before stealing*



*Visnu, Patagora Islampur*

The stela is beautifully decorated with several figures on both sides. The god is flanked by *Sri* and *pusti* standing in slightly *abhanga* pose on his left and right side respectively. Two more female attendants are also visible. There is a hollow space between his two legs and in between the stela and both sides of the body. It belongs to *upendra* form of *Visnu* and may be dated in the 10/11 century A.D.

It may be noted here that the image was preserved in a thatched room. Dr. Mandira Bhattacharya had visited the village and saw it in the room from where it was stolen and then recovered by the police. At present it is preserved in Islampur police station.

The village is not only important for this image, but also for other antiquities. They are (a) *Alingana-murti* of *Siva-Parvati* made of metal; (b) three seated *matrikas* also made of metal; and (c) a tiny stone image of *Bodhisattva padmapani*. These are at present preserved in the A.K.M. Museam, University of North Bengal.<sup>38</sup>

The place is also important as primary explorations in a place near the graveyard mound shows extensive brick alignment at a corner of the mound. In the school, some antiquitis found from this area are said to have been preserved. Here the people pay their respects to a deceased *pir* and his *mazar*. Annual festivities are held during the month of *Baisakha* (April-May). The keepers of the *mazar* and the mosque claimed descent from the Chistiya saints. There is a miniature *Quran* preserved in the family. It is a beautifully decorated octagonal hand-written piece. But careless handling shall destroy the delicate antiquity in no time.

In addition to those above mentioned antiquities, some image of black stone are preserved in police custody which are described below.

## Inscribed Visnu Image (i)

Height : 43"

Width : 20"

Another beautiful iconographic specimen has been found from Islampur. It is a Visnu image and a masterpiece for its peerless beauty.



Plate 9

The entire image can be divided into three distinctive parts — the pedestal, the central figure and the stela. The pedestal is *saptaratha*. Three *upasakas* (devotees) are shown on either side. At the centre it contains some floral designs. One inscription is carved on its border.

The main figure is the image of Visnu. The god is standing on a full-petalled lotus (*Visvapadma*). He has four hands which carry conch-shell, discuss, club and a lotus from lower left hand. He wears two pieces of cloths. The lower part is very artistically arranged from waist and hangs upto the thigh. The drapery

is clearly visible. The upper part has a long scarf thrown loosely over the body, But the belly and right chest are bare.

The ornaments are numerous. He has three sets of *hara* (necklace). He has armlets which are marvellously designed. He has ornaments on wrists too. Two ear-rings are hanging from the ear that almost touch the shoulders. The deity has a gorgeous head-dress. Moreover, there is a big garland (*Vanamala*) that hangs up to his knees. The central figure is detached from the stela from his feet to shoulder which makes a gap between the stela and the deity.

The main figure is made exceedingly beautiful and highly charming as well. His mood is spiritual but the body is sensuous with broad shoulders, narrow lion-waist and graceful face. The eyes are slightly closed down and the nose is sharp.

The stela is beautifully decorated with other images on both sides. At the bottom there are two female figures *Sri* and *Pusti* in a stylized form—one holding a *veena* and the other a *gada* like object. Just beside them there are two more female attendants. Above *Sri* and *Pusti* there is a panel of images—an elephant, a standing horse and a person on its back and a head of *Makara*—on both sides of the stela. The stela is pointed at the top with a *Kirttimukha* and *gandharvas* flying in the midst of clouds. The whole image is made of a single black stone. The *Kirttimukha*, the gorgeous *Prabhabali* and three dimension effect leaves no room for doubt that it belongs to 11/12th century A.D.

### *Inscribed Visnu Image (ii)*

Height : 21.1"

Width : 10"

Here is a standing *Visnu* image, made of black-stone. The pedestal is *Pancharatha*. Two devotees are engraved on either side of the pedestal. The centre of the pedestal is marked by a floral design. The god is standing on *Visvapadma*. He carries *Sankha* (conch-shell), *Chakra*, *gada* (mace) and *Padma* (lotus) in his four hands (clockwise from the lower left hand). The lower part of the image is covered with a light fitted *dhoti*. The *dhoti* is very beautifully worn with a belt-like fold at the top and a knot hangs in between his legs. There is an upper garment, the drapery is well visible. The ornaments are moderate. He has one set of necklace, ear-rings, wrist-band, and arm-lets. The god is attended by *Sri* and *Pusti* standing slightly in *Abhang* style on full-petaled lotus. The stela contains a panel of images at the middle. The stela is pointed at the top with *Kirttimukha* flanked by two flying garland bearers. The central figure is detached from the stela from his waist to feet. One extraordinary feature of the image is the inscription which is engraved on the upper part of the pedestal. It contains two words. It has been unearthed from a site called Dimrulla about 4k.m from Islampur P.S. and is now preserved in the same P.S.



INSCRIBED *Vishnu, Isiampur*



*Vishnu, Isiampur*

### *Visnu Image (iii)*

Height : 19"

Width : 10"

Here is another *Visnu* image of black-stone. In many respects, it is identical like the the images already mentioned. The four handed standing *Visnu* is flanked by his attendents, holding similar attributes, the panel of images on the *prabhabali*, the *Vidyadharas* and *Kirttimukha* finial — all these give a complete shape of the image. Only the pedestal offers a striking contrast. The *Pancharatha* pedestal contains floral design at the middle. Two devotees are seen in the left. The Lord's vehicle, *Garuda* is also engraved at the corner.

The deity may be placed in the early medieval period.

### *Icon of Siva-Parvati (i)*

Height : 20"

Width : 10"

A small image of *Hara-Parvati* in *alingana* form is described below. This image has been found from Islampur sub-division. The region of the district Dinajpur (North and South) is rich with Visnu images. Only a few *Saivaite* images are found. This one is one such rare icon.

On a *pancharatha* pedestal lord *Siva* is seated in *Lalitasana* along with *Parvati* on a full blown lotus. *Siva*'s right leg is in hanging form and rests on a seated bull. The left leg is in a folded pose. The god is four armed. In the upper right hand he holds an indistinct object. With his right hand he holds the chin of his consort with love and care. The upper left hand hold a *trisul* and embraces her. His lower left hand is not visible. This is undoubtedly a striking feature. The dress is not well marked.



Plate 10

The goddess *Parvati* is seated on the lap of lord *Siva* in *lalitasana* form. She is two armed. She embraces *Siva* with her right hand and carries an indistinct object in her left hand.

The *pancharatha* pedestal has four figures — a male devotee, a bull, an indistinct figure and a dancer from left to right. The pointed stela, on the other hand, is well decorated with flying *gandharvas* and marked around the halo and their is a *kirittimukha*. The ornamentation is simple. Both the lord *Siva* and *Paravati* wear ornamented headdresses of *Jatamukuta*. Both have broad necklaces. *Siva* has also some other ornaments. He has broad bracelets, ear-rings, and even anklets. The image belongs to 11/12th century A.D.

### *Siva-Parvati (ii)*

Heigh : 8.5"

Width : 5"

A similar *Hara-Parvati*, much more smaller than the other mentioned above, has been traced in the same locality. The image resembles the earlier one. The face of the lord is slightly different from the other one. Both the god and the goddess sit in the same pose. The pedestal is *triratha* and simple. A devotee in *anjali mudra* is shown with the bull on the pedestal. It is not a *visuapadma* on which the two figures are set. Only one set of petal of a lotus is visible. Ornamentation is very simple. *Siva's* locks of hair come down upto his shoulders. The *prabhabali* is not attractive. There is no decorations, no figures like the *maladharis* and no *kirittimukha* finial. But the stela is pointed at the top. The image belongs to the typical Pala school of 10th century A.D.

### *Ganesa*

Heigh : 12.5

Width : 10.5

One of the iconographic specimens found from a small village of Islampur is the idol of lord *Ganesa*. It is really curious because the image of *Ganesa* is really rare in the district, where as most of the images are



Plate II



*Siva-Parvati, Islampur*

that of *Visnu*. The icon is small. He has four hands and three eyes. He is seated in crossed-leg (*padmasana* style). The trunk is unfortunately missing and right portion of his belly is damaged. He holds a conch shell in his lower right hand, a *chakra* type object in upper left hand and a lotus in his lower left hand. The upper right hand is not visible. The ornamentation is simple. There are wrist bands and one set of necklace only. In between the chest and the belly, there is a belt.

The image is made of black stone of inferior quality. It does not claim any elegance from artistic point of view. There is no pedestal; no stela. Probably it is a folk-style *Ganesa*. Therefore, its approximate date is not clear.

## *Karandighi Police Station : A General Description*

Karandighi is a historical name which might have had a dual origin. It comes from King *Karna* of *Mahabharata* as many local people believe, while it is suggested that *Kalachuri King Karna's* eastern campaign might have extended to this area and therefore, the name comes after him.

Whatever might have been the origin of the name, it is situated at the middle of the district which is surrounded by Bihar in the west and Bangladesh in the east. It touches Chakulia and Goalpokhar in the north and having a common boundary with Raiganj Police Station in the south. Centrally located under Islampur Sub-Division this area is also important as the National Highway 34 passes through it following the western boundary of the station. Its area and population are remarkable. It has an area of 389 sq.km. with an overwhelming population of 230,121.<sup>39</sup> The literacy rate, however, offers a dismal picture. Only 21.59% people are literate in the rural areas.<sup>40</sup>

Basically an agricultural village, it has no industry. Most of the people depend on agriculture and large number of people are engaged in trade and commerce. Though many popular stories centre round it, at present it offers no historical objects except certain iconographic specimens found here and there and now preserved in police custody. Now, there are four *Visnu* images of various sizes kept in the Police Station. Two of them were discovered from Rasakhoa, while the other two are of unknown origin. A short description of those images is here attached with. Very recently some coins of Sultante period have been discovered. These are preserved in personal custody.

### *Bricks of Kshetrabari*

Kshetrabari (J.L. No. 166) is the only village under this Police Station which provides some old ruins. The village is bounded by Panchpir, Basantaganj, Panchloha Tunivita and Dalmadho in the north, south, east and west respectively. A small stream *Sadhani* or *Sudhani* passes 7 km. south-west of the village. The village formed a part of Purnea district of Bihar earlier. A few years ago, it is said, that there were few mounds. When I visited the land no traces of mound were found, but a large number of bricks could be seen on the walls of some houses. It seems vandalism and invasion of the local people might have destroyed the mounds. The common size of the brick is 14"x12"x1.5"

## *The Antiques of Paniha*

A small village in the interior of the district also focuses on some ancient aspects of the region which has immense value to the students of history. Paniha (J.L. No. 70) as it is called is situated 15 km. north-east from Domohana. The village occupies 180.89 hectares of land with a population of 752.<sup>41</sup> It is under Karandighi Police Station which is the nearest place for communication. Dalkola, however, is the nearest non-municipal town. The village settlement is based on agriculture. Rice and Jute are the main crops. There is no industry.

The village offers two stone pillars. One is very simple plain and has no artistic beauty. It is made of sand stone and is now posted in Pataltuli, a small sub section of Paniha. the second one is lying on a mound. The mound is approximately 10 feet high and located besides a pond called, Namaj Ghara. The land comprises quite some bighas. A small stream called Pitanu flows like a big drain on the west. A small newly grown up bush of teak trees is just beside the pond. The tract contain two pillars, partly imbedded under ground. The larger one is a carved pillar of black stone. It is an elegant piece of sculpture. The second one has its head raised only, nothing else is visible. One more sand-stone pillar is lying a few yards away. Fragmented brunt bricks are lying on the track. No full size brick was available.

### *Images from Karandighi Police Station*

#### *Visnu (i)*

Height - 22.5"

Width - 11"

It is a standing *Visnu* image of medium size. The god is shown on a *pancharatha* pedestal. The Lord *Visnu* is the central figure of the stela. There are two tiny figures of *Upasakas* in *anjali mudra*. He is flanked by many more figures. He has four hands. He holds an inscribed lotus in his front right hand, carries a club in his upper right hand, a *Chakra* in upper left hand and a conch-shell on lower left hand. The clothing is not unusual. He wears a *dhoti* which has a beautiful knot at the navel and hangs upto the half of the thigh. He has one upper garment shown on his body, that goes parallelly from right to left. Both the garments are transparent and fine. The drapery is visible and vivid. He, has some moderate ornaments, wears a necklace, bracelets and wristlets. There is a



*Imbedded stone, Paniha*



*Highland with Imbedded stone*

*padma* respectively (from lower left hand clockwise). It may be placed in the 11/12th century A.D.

### *Visnu Image (iv)*

Height : 20"

Width : 12"

This is a unique small standing *Visnu* image on a *triratha* pedestal, carved in black-stone. The pedestal is simply carved with floral design at the centre. Two *upasakas* are also sculptured on both left and right of the pedestal.

The lord is standing on a lotus. He holds *sankha*, *chokra*, *gada* and *padma* (clockwise from lower left to the lower right hand). He wears a *dhoti* (lower garment) with a beautiful knot below the navel, with wavy bands from waist downwards. The ornaments are moderate, but brilliantly planned and artistically executed. The ear-rings, arm-lets, waist-band and the *Vanamala* are shown clearly. The image is detached from the stela from waist to the feet.

The god is flanked by his two attendants - *Sri* and *Pusti* whose height is just half of the central figure. They stand in *Abhang*a pose. Two garland bearing flying *Vidyadharas* are placed on the top of the crescent shaped stela. Other wise there is no decorative motif on the stela. The overall impression it gives is that of a simple rather of crude quality. It may be placed in the 9/10th century A.D.



## *Raiganj Police Station : A General Description*

Police Station Raiganj has the largest area in the District under its jurisdiction. Located in the south of the district the area has a population of 428,203 with an area of 482.80 square Kilometre.<sup>42</sup> Bounded by Bangladesh in the North and Itahar police station in the south, it has a common frontier with Hemtabad and Kaliyaganj police stations in the west east; and to the east it borders with Karandighi police station and Bihar. From any point of view the area is developed and better than the rest of the police stations and has been elaborately mentioned in the accounts of the travellers of the 19th century. Buchanan writes, " This is (Raiganj) the most considerable mart in the district of Dingepoar, although it has arisen since 1780. The streets are narrow, dirty, and confused. But it is a place of great bustle, and crowded with boatmen and drivers and oxen of which last the inhabitants allege 5000 loaded arrive daily".<sup>43</sup> Buchanan's version found echo in Hunter's Statistical Account which described Raiganj "as an important trading centre."<sup>44</sup> Even in the Mughal period "the principal village in Pargana Tajpur is Raiganj"<sup>45</sup>. That Raiganj is an important business centre is also supported by one indigenous texts of the 20th century which referred to it as an important centre of jute.<sup>46</sup> The term *bandar*, a locality of the town situated in the bank of the river Kulik, still carries such memory. River Kulik is the principal source of water for irrigation. River Nagar is another river of the station. These rivers along with other marshes and ponds have enriched its land and made it very suitable for agriculture.

The area is not only renowned for commerce, but also is the chief political and administrative centre as the district headquarters itself is located here. The National Highway no 34 passes through it which enters into Raiganj from Itahar in the south and goes to Islampur in the north. The state highway no.10 joins the town with Kaliyaganj. It is connected by N.F. Railway which links it with Barsui (Bihar) and Kaliyaganj. But it is chiefly the buses of North Bengal State Transport Corporation (NBSTC), a Govt.. of West Bengal undertaking carry the passengers and their loads to every corner of the district. The area's educational scene gives a better picture. There are two degree colleges, one teachers' training college, one polytechnic and one technical institution. Obviously the literacy rate is better, 78.66% in urban and 34.25% in rural areas.<sup>47</sup> The area is historically significant. Binol, Baliyatdighi, Tenahari, Karajora, Mirual, Tajpur and Panchbhaiya are some important places of historical interest.

## Bindol

Bindol (J.L. no. 40) a simple agricultural village, stands 22 K.m. away from the district headquarter, Raiganj. It is the only historical site, taken over by the Archaeological Deptt. of West Bengal, in the District of Uttar Dinajpur. Situated north to the district, the village has a common border with Ratanpur in the east and Baje Bindol in the west. It touches the area under Kaliaganj police station in the north and Sadipur in the west. It covers only 55.82 square Kilometres of land and has a population of 393,<sup>48</sup> most of them are Hindus by religion.

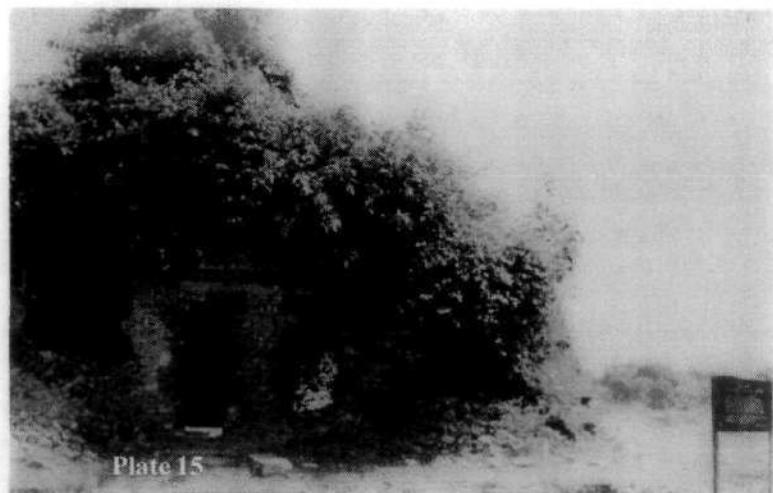


Plate 15

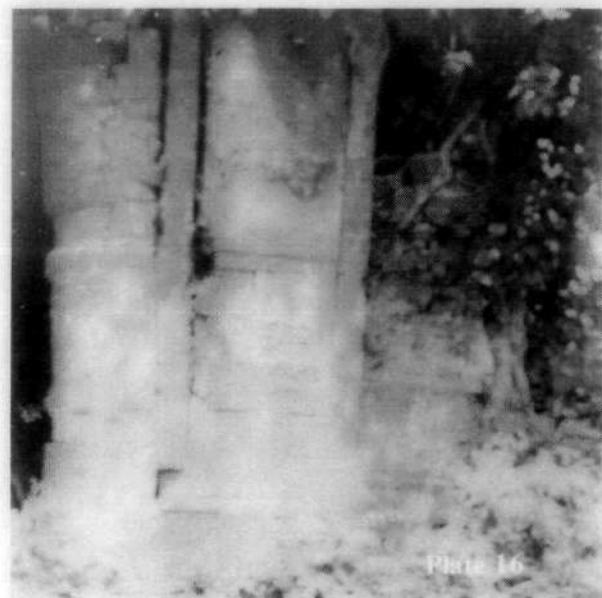
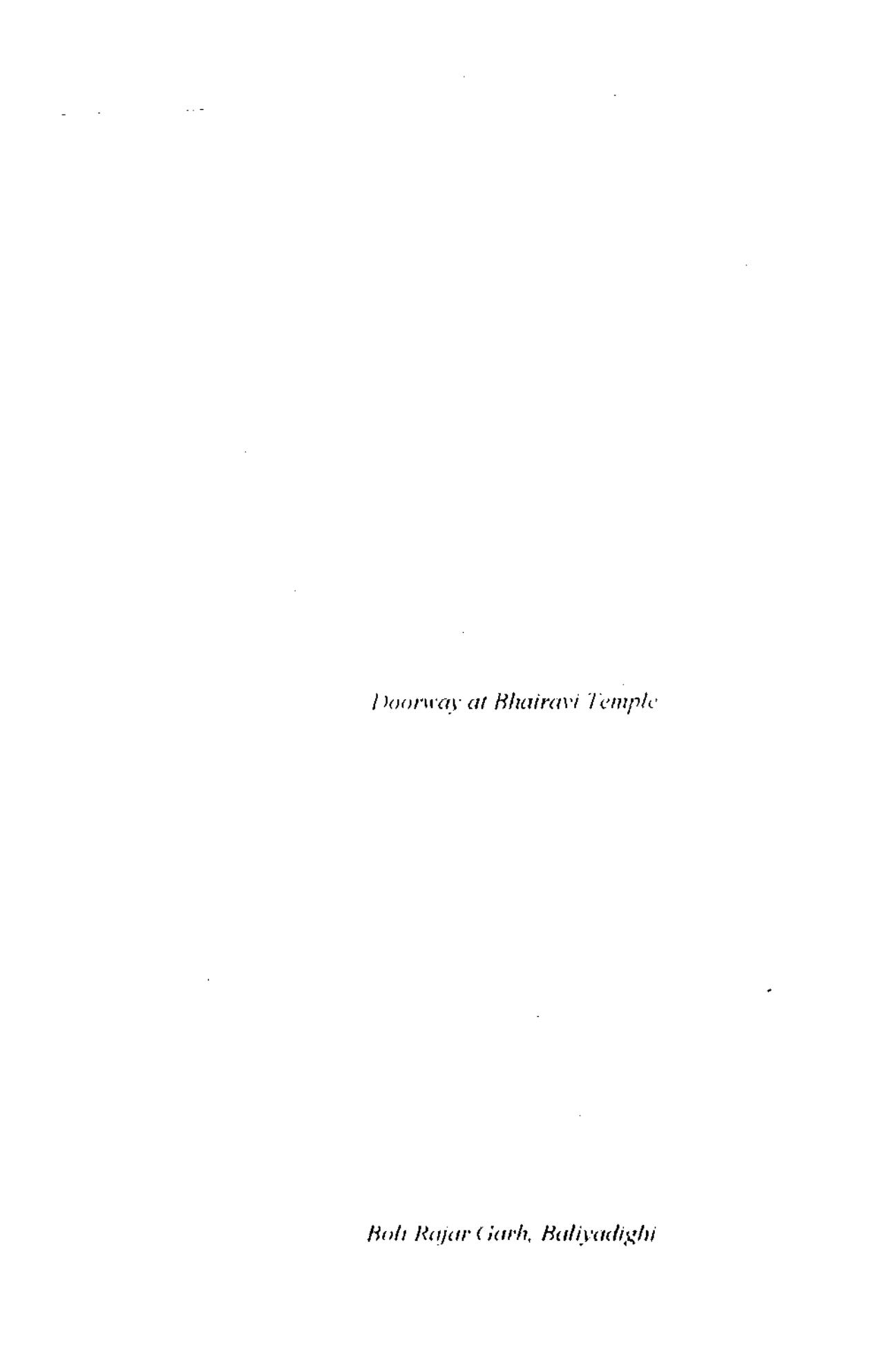


Plate 16

Terracotta on the wall of the Temple

The village comes to our notice due to the dilapidated temple. It is a medieval structure with a vaulted roof. The hall is square in shape. The corners have projections from where brick built pillars rise. These ultimately result in a semi-circular dome. There are projected *verandas* on two sides. The door way was set by black stone pieces with designs on them. It is almost like the Temple of Telkupi district of Manbhum. But in case of the latter two images are

engraved on them which is absent in Bindol<sup>49</sup>. These were probably procured from some Brahmanical temple. The varanda is adorned with decorative bricks, mostly with geometric designs. Some however, had floral motifs. The structure carries a happy mingling of *Hindu-Muslim* art tradition. Somewhat carved wall,



*Doorway at Bhairavi Temple*

*Boh Rajar Garh, Ballyadighi*



*Doorway at Bhairavi Temple*



*Boli Rajar Garhi, Bauliyadighi*

pillars and entrance demonstrate a hindu style of architecture, while vaulted roof represents *Muslim* style of architecture.

At present, it stands on a platform virtually square shaped which is 1.5 feet above the ground. The front space is 40 feet; the length of one side is 38 feet. The main entrance is 6.5 feet high. Its 2 feet 3 inches wide with the circumference of the pillar is 8 feet 7 inches. The condition is very deplorable. Thick growth of vegetation covers the structure. Very soon the entire structure shall collapse into a heap of medieval bricks. The common size of brick is 7.5 x 6.5x1.5 inches. Decorative bricks are also available in large number. The local people call it the *Bhairavi temple*, as there is an image inside called *Bhairavi*, which is probably procured from elsewhere and put within the structure. The temple has been dated in the 15th century A.D.

### *The Image of Bhairavi*



Plate 17

The image of so called *Bhairavi* is made from a single black stone and may be placed in the 10/11th century. The image is badly damaged. A close scrutiny shows that it has a *saptaratha* pedestal. The deity sits on a double-petaled lotus. in a *lalitasana* pose. It has many hands, but unfortunately all the hands are broken. The stela has the marks of flames around the head. Seven horses are depicted at the middle of the pedestal, which shows that the god is on movement. "This makes identification clear. It is a rare type of seated sun god".<sup>50</sup>

### *The ruins of Baliyatdighi*

About 7 km. east from Bindol, there is another dilapidated medieval two storied structure, in a village named *Baliyatdighi* (J.L. NO. 42). Just beside it on

the same track of land, there is a mosque and a *mazar*. Adjacent to the building there is a large water reservoir comprising 17 *bigha* on the western side. The building is built of thin bricks. The local people call it a *jelkhana* (prison-house). At the time of survey I have come across thick vegetation which has covered the entire building. Low doorways and serpentine stairases at the ground level are still visible. At one section, a wooden support of the roof, more or less engulfed by creepers was seen. Another smaller brick structure, probably once attached to the main building by a corridor lies close to it. A few *Kulungis* decorated with lime plaster still exist. The structure is plain and simple. Only some moulded bricks decorated the outer surface at the corner. The track of land on which the entire structure is stands is slightly higher.

The land was also visited by Buchanan Hamilton in the beginning of the 19th century. He wrote, "At Baliyadighi, there is a mosque near a tank which has an endowment of 1000 bighas of land; the Fakir who has the hereditary charge, lives in a brick house, and in a decent manner. There is no Hindu place of worship of any note.<sup>51</sup>"

The incomplete work of Hamilton was carried forward by Martin a couple of decades later, who gave a different picture "At a great interval (pointing the end of the story of Rama of the Ramayana), but still in the most remote antiquity, a personage named *Boli Raja* governed in this country (Dinajpur). He was an 'Osur', a person who opposed the worship of the gods, and is now suffering the punishment of his heresy in a place under the earth called *patal*.

The pandits of the survey had no doubt, that this was the *Boli raja* of whose house's ruins are shown, but some tradition place him only a few hundred years ago.<sup>52</sup> The *mazar* is probably mentioned in a medieval *sanad* of Prince Shuja while he was the governor of Bengal (from 1639 - 1647 and 1642 - 1660). The *Sanad* was issued in 1659 in favour of the great *Madari* saint Shah Sultan Hasan Murja Burhana.<sup>53</sup> The *Sanad* lies in the Rajshahi court.<sup>54</sup> The *mazar* is still there attached to the mosque. The dilapidated building probably served some administrative purpose. Thus the entire structure may be placed in the 2nd half of the 17th century. Local people also call it *Bali Rajaar Garh* (fort of King Boli).

## *Tenahari*

Another interesting village in the District of Uttar Dinajpur is Tenahari (J.L. No. 143) situated on the bank of the river Kulik. It is surrounded by Hatia in the south; Nurpur Garna and Abhar in the west, in the east Kasba and Itahar. It covers an area of 355.54 hectors with a population of 2941<sup>55</sup>. The District headquarter Raiganj is about 8 miles away.

Tenahari is also famous for two reservoirs. One is the *Ballal dighi* and the second one is *Nehali bill*. The former has a long antiquity and according to local inhabitants it goes back to the time of the King *Ballal Sena* of Bengal. (Sena Dynasty, 1158-79 A.D.). It comprises 42 *bighas* of land. A flight of steps of brick has been found at the time of digging a pond near the *dighi*. The second one is the *Nehali bill*. The gigantic reservoir is very suitable and important for pisi culture and chief source for supply of water for agriculture as well. It covers 500 *bighas* of land. The government of West Bengal has undertaken it for pisciculture.

Basically an agricultural village situated in the north of the district headquarter it has come into limelight very recently. A few years ago some local people while digging a pond found several images made of black stone. The images are extraordinary as they are huge in size and all found from a single spot and also are not mutilated. All these probably belong to the 10/12th century A.D.

At present there are three images being honoured and worshipped by the local people - two *Visnu* and one *Narasimha*. A stone pillar was also unearthed from the same tank.

### *Visnu Image - (i)*

Height : 70"

Width : 25"

Of the interesting iconographic specimen found here one is a standing *Visnu* image. It is one of the largest *Visnu* images found in the district. It has a small *triratha* pedestal and a *upasaka* is carved on it.

The god in his four hands hold *sankha*, *chakra*, *gada* (clock wise from his lower left hand). A small *padma* is incised on his lower right palm. The face is very graceful with an elongated nose and big eyes and almost with a smiling

countenance. There is a crown set on the head which is supported by a circular floral design. There are two holes besides the crown, intentionally made to highlight a three dimensional effect.

The god has two sets of clothes, the lower garment is a *dhoti* which comes down to the knee. It has a very beautiful and artistic knot at the navel which also descends to the knee. The upper garment is transparent as if there is no cloth on the body. The ornaments are not extravagant. There are two long ear rings, one necklace two armlets and the *vanamala* is also visible.

The lord is flanked by two female attendants standing on the stela. At the top of the stela, there are two garland bearers flying towards each other. The central figure was cut deep into the stela which almost separated it from arms to the feet and thus created a gap between the body and the stela. The figure is made exceedingly beautiful and charming as well.



Plate 18

### *Dasavatara Visnu*

Height : 60"

Width : 37"

This is one interesting and unique type of Visnu image, similar in height but its width is larger than the earlier one.

The figure of *Visnu* covers two-third of the entire sculpture and occupies the middle positions of the entire composition. *Visnu* is proportionately carved out from the huge black piece of stone. The body can be approximately divided into four equal portions. The god is standing on in a *sampada* pose. Curious enough there is no lotus placed at his feet. The feet are however, placed close to each other and is in *trivikrama* posture. His dress is usual, but very beautifully worn. The *dhoti* covers the body from below the naval upto the knee. The folds of the *dhoti* are very systematically arranged in half circles running on the opposite direction. The knot of the *dhoti* is arranged like a flower which also comes down to the knee. The ornamentation is not extravagant. There is one set



*Dasavatara Visnu, Tenahari*



*Narasimha Avatar, Tenahari*

of necklace on the chest. In addition, he has arm-lets. The ear-rings touch the shoulders of the deity.

The figure is plain, smooth and emanates vitality. The shoulders are straight and broad. The waist is thin and can be compared to that of a lion. The head may be divided into two parts consisting of face and the *mukuta*. The eyes are elongated and wide. The lips are thick and sensuous. The deity has a *kiritt amukuta* finial finial. There is a circular floral design behind the head.

But the most interesting aspect of the image is the *prabhabali* or the stela which consists of *dasavatara*, very beautifully engraved on it and artistically laid out by the master artist and tiny images encased in borders display the ten *Avataras* of the god. Five on each side of the central figure in the following order - Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parasurama, Dasarathi, Rama, Bala Rama, Buddha and lastly Kali on horse back. [from the bottom right side]. The pattern exactly followed the *Dasavatara sloka* mentioned by Jayadava in his *Gitagovinda*. It is interesting to note that the image probably belongs to the 11th or 12th century A.D., when the Sena Kings ruled over Bengal. This type of image is not unknown in Bengal. But its discovery in this district is unique and there are no such images found from around.

There are two female attendants standing on the left and right of the deity. Two more female figures are also visible. This extremely superb uncommon iconographic specimen characterise this well-carved avatars as one of the most outstanding artistic remains of ancient Bengal of the early medieval period.

### *Narasimha Avatara*

The third iconographic specimen from Tenahari is a small, partly damaged image of *Narasimha Avatara*, made of black stone. As "the *Narasimha Avatara* was always represented in a hybrid form"<sup>56</sup> if itself a compound of man and lion. The upper part of the stela is broken and the face is mutilated. The god is shown as a man-lion form, one of the avatara of *Visnu Killing Hiranya Kasipu*, a King who had no faith on god, as described in the *Puranas*. The pedestal contains some floral design and some images are engraved on left of the *Prabhabali*.

## *The Stone Pillar*

Height : 6'3"

Circumference - 39"-30"

The village offers a pillar, found from the same pond. It is not unique from artistic point of view, but significant from historical point of view. It is octagonal in shape and gradually tapers from the base to the summit. The circumference of its upper position is 30" while the lower part is 39". At present it is set at the veranda of the temple. Three other similar pillars have also been constructed by the devotees. The village also offers to an interesting another historical site. Nearer the temple, there remains a place named *Sannyasi-bhita* (abode of a saint). It is a square shaped plot of land, approximately 8 feet on each side, and bricks are thickly scattered on it. It occupies 1.5 bighas of land. Huge fragmented stone pieces are piled on the ground. The local myth says, that there was a factory where images were made. According to it them, these black-stones had been imported into the area by water route. Moreover, some the foundation of walls have also been traced here.



Plate 19

**N.B.** It is to be noted here that the site was visited by Dr. Mandira Bhattacharya of the University of the North Bengal. According to her, there were two other smaller images of *Visnu* at the temple. On enquiring it was revealed that those two were stolen from the temple sometime in 1993-94.

## *Archaeological findings from Karnajora*

One of the popular places in the District of Uttar Dinajpur is Karnajora (J.L. No. 157). All roads of the district lead to this small locality as most of the district's offices are located there. The place is 5 k.m. away from the town of Rajjanj and is situated beside the Raiganj-Balurghat State highway. Its proximity to Kamalabari and Mirual which are renowned historical places of interest, adds to its importance.

Among the findings most significant are two stone slabs, the first one is a smooth one without any decorative details. Its length is 2 feet 6 inches while the width is 1 feet, and 6 inches in depth. There is a square shaped hole at the middle of the reverse. It is at a black stone slab, probably was some sort of base of another structure or a pillar which was rectangular in shape.



Plate 21

evident from the good number of terracotta specimen that have been discovered from different parts of Bengal. Karnajora, therefore, deserves special mention because it is the only major site of the district which possesses some special terracottas.

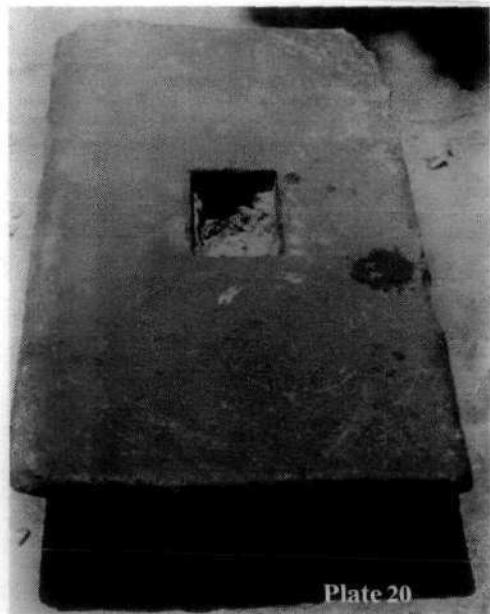


Plate 20

The second stone piece is not smooth. It is roughly hewn. Its length is 2 feet 3 inches and 1 feet 2 inches. It has no brightness; no architectural beauty. Both these slabs are laying in one Mr. Ajit Sarkar's house, a few yards north from the Karnojora High school campus. They were parts of a building. The carefully excavated rectangular hole in it must have been the base of some structure.

Terracotta forms the most popular medium of the artistic expression of the people from the time immemorial. This is



Plate 22

*Terracotta Bricks of Karnajora*

A few days before my survey began, a large number of bricks were found from a small mound, a few yards south to the school campus. The bricks have beautiful designs on them. These terracotta pieces have realistic floral designs. In one piece on elegant peacock is

perching on a branch. In another, a creeper is rising from the centre of the bottom line. Fully blossomed flowers hang out in between tiny leaves. Others have stylized floral motifs. The shape of the bricks vary from one to another. One of the terracotta plate (6x5.5x2) depict a turbaned person on a horse. He is carrying a flask on a rod. He has raised his right hand. He is holding the shaft and the rein with his left hand. The turban has a thick tassel which comes upto his shoulder. The entire composition is bold and lively. Two other terracotta bricks have human figures. But since the bricks are damaged it hampers proper identification. The smaller one is probably a Hanuman gazing. The other is a seated figure (6.5x6.5x2) on a animal. Its face is mutilated. This is probably a figure viewed from the back with outstretched legs. The figure had special attention from the artist. The plate is thicker and the central scene is decorated with an additional stripped line. Another one is crescent shaped (6x1) with three tier of hooded snakes. All these must have decorated some medieval Brahmanical temple that existed around the school.

### *The Tomb of Hussain Shah at Mirual*

The village Mirual, (J.L. No.174) located beside Raiganj-Kaliayaganj state highway preserves another important historical treasure of the District. The village occupies an area of 144.13 hectares with only 498 population.<sup>57</sup> It is under the Raiganj Police Station and the District headquarter is its nearest town. It touches Govindapur, B.S.F. Camp, Sonabari and Maheshpur in the north, south, east and west. The river Kulik flows one K.m. north Here lies the *Mazar sharif* (tomb) of Hussain Shah as local people believe. The District Census Report of 1971 also describes it as a place of historical importance and confirms the fact that there is a tomb of Hussain Shah.

Hussain Shah or Alauddin Hussain Shah (1493 - 1519) is a renowned personality of Bengal History. The identification of this tomb with that of the Sultan of Bengal is probably not tenable. This Hussain Shah and his comrade Chand Shah may not be the same as believed. The tomb of Hussain Shah and his family lies at Banglakot outside the famous "Baisgazi" wall.<sup>58</sup>

At present, there is a mound, approximately 40-45 feet, high and comprises roughly one acre of land. There are two tombs - one belonging, to Hussain Shah and the other tomb is of his comrade Chand Shah, A few feet below his guru's body. There is a big pond (excavated by Hussain Shah as the local people say) comprising 18.5 acres of land. The mound consists of huge heaps of bricks almost square size varying from 6.5 inches to 5.5 inches.

## Tajpur

Another interesting archaeological site in the District of Uttar Dinajpur is Tajpur (J. L. No. 4) situated in the north of the District Uttar Dinajpur. Located under No. 1 Bhatol gram Panchayt, it offers striking historical antiquities. It is a small village with a population of about 1601 and an area of 328.20 hectares.<sup>59</sup>

It is situated, near the border of Bangladesh, on the bank of the old Nagar river. The present river flows 1 km. away from the village. There is an old river bed. In the rainy season the old stream merges with the main river. The village is surrounded by Karandighi (one of the Police Stations of the district) in the north; villages Gopalpur, Sarua in the south; in the east Karandighi and village Kuliara and Anantapur and Mallick in the west. The nearest town is the district headquarter, Raiganj.

With such usual characteristics, the village is significantly interesting and archaeologically potential. The most important archaeological site of this village is a mound which is on the west of the village and on the bank of the old river bed of Nagar. In fact, it is a high mound which slopes down (from north to south). In the south as it slopes down it slowly merges with the surrounding agricultural field. It is not like the mounds as found in Sonapur, another archaeologically potential village of the district. The mound is covered by thick jungles and is strewn with brick bats.

It is approximately 25 feet in height from the river bed. It covers an area of about 5 bighas. The rectangular shaped mound is 326 feet long in the north and 155 feet in breadth. A brick structure like a wall is visible in the north of the mound (from the river side). It can not be seen from the surface, but from the bank of the river. The brick structure is plain without decoration as visible from outside. On the surface, huge, broken bricks are lying here and there.

A black stone piece which seems to be a part of a pillar, is laying on the bank of the river nearer the mound. The pillar is 4 (four) feet and 6 inches in length, 12 feet and 5 inches in high and 9 inches wide. The frontal part has three distinctive phases. Three parallel lines divide the pillar into three parts. The middle is simple and plain, slightly designed. The third part is more decorated than the others. This part has also three well marked parts with three well-marked areas.



*High-land with brick structure, from River side, Tajpur*



*Carved Pillar, Tajpur*

This pillar is laying a few yards away from the mound. It seems that it was a part of the structure imbedded in the mound. During floods the river water must have drained parts of the mound and had either and carried the pillar to the present place, or had exposed it.

Another archaeological specimens of Tajpur is a small piece of stone, laying at present in a house of the village. This is a black stone piece 22 inches in length and 10.5 inches width and 7inches deep. A lotus shaped design is engraved on it.



*Carved stone, Tajpur*

It supposed to be the part of a structure or broken away from some other part. But of all the, other one most certainly worth mentioning is the magnificent monolithic pillar. It is very beautifully designed and curved. It has two parts, the lower part is much more decorated than the upper part. It has three well decorated designs below. The part above is sculpted and is well marked by a circular ring. On the upper part two bells are partially visible which are in a hanging position.

The whole pillar is virtually circular in shape. It is also black and made of a solid single stone. At preset it is laying in the Bhatol Shimandir, 1 km. north-east to the Bhatol Market. This pillar was undoubtedly, part of a building or a structure which is remarkable from architectural point of view. It was probably taken from the mound.



*Decorated brick, Tajpur*

The bricks found in Tajpur are not less interesting, rather offers striking features. Some bricks are moulded with different beautiful designs on it. One sample is given here which is 8 inches in

length 3.5 inches wide and two inches thick. Plain bricks are also available in the mound. These are 6 inches long, 5.1 inches wide and 1.5 inches thick.

Tajpur is also renowned as a sacred place of the Muslims. A 'mazar' of a *Fakir* is there. The local myth says that once a *pir* came to the king and begged for a piece of land for shelter. The later replied diplomatically and said that he would not give him an inch of land, but had no objection, if the *pir*, by dint of his magical powers could occupy land in that area, he could establish his '*Mazar*'. The *Tajbaj* as the *Fakir* was called put down his cap and by magical powers turned it into an eagle. Then the *Fakir* ordered the eagle to fly over the land. The land over which it flew was granted to him by the king.

According to Mughul records (*Ain-i-Akbari*) Tajpur was a Sarkar under Bengal subah at least from the Mughal period if not earlier.<sup>60</sup> However, except the brick structure and a few stone slabs no other objects have been found belonging to the Mughul period.

### *Panchbhaiya*

There is a village, 10km. to the west of Baliyatdighi, named Panchbhaiya. "Tradition says that the Pandavas moved to this part of this country and on their journey towards north they kept their weapon inside the trunk of a big tree in a village named Panchbhaiya and killed the demons in the villages Asurgar and Vimbhar"<sup>60</sup> The Panchbhaiya of tradition is identified with the Panchbhaiya of the district, nearer Baliyatdighi. But I failed to discover any mound or antiquity from the place. However, mention may be made of a small rectangular black stone base for a linga in a newly constructed Siva temple.

### *Archaeological Specimen from Khoksa-Astal*

Another unknown, interior and small village, of the district, Khoksa (J.L. No. 166) provides one interesting site. There is a place in the north of the village named Astal where an old dilapidated temple is located. Khoksa is under 5th Sherpur mouza. The village is bounded by village Bannyagara and

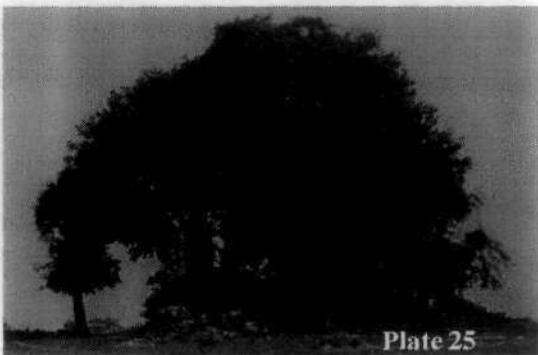


Plate 25  
*Temple at Astal, Raiganj*

Shovanpur in the north; Sherpur in the south; Shivpur in the east and; Brahmmapur in the west. River Kulik flows 3 km. south to the village. The temple is totally



*Dilapidated wall, Khoksa-Astal*



*Dilapidated wall, Khoksa-Astal*

— destroyed only one side of the wall is somehow standing. Huge bricks are heaped on the ground. It is very difficult to give some idea about the structure.

In addition to above mentioned sites some sculptures are preserved in the Raiganj P.S. A descriptions of some images are discussed in the next page .

### *Manasa*

Height : 11"

Width : 8.5"

The snake goddess usually called *Manasa* associated with many elements of strange power, is an important deity in the Hindu pantheon. Its sculptural representation is not rare in the district. One such figure is now preserved in Raiganj police station.

This two armed *Manasa* sits on a double petalled lotus. the pedestal is in *Pancharatha* style and a pitcher is engraved at the centre. Her right leg which hangs down to the pedestal in *lalitasana* is placed on a small lotus. Her folded left leg, however, is placed on the lotus seat. The goddess holds a conch shell in her right hand and a snake in her left hand.

The face is not intact. The nose is mutilated but the lips are broad and sensuous. Her breasts are bulging which are tied up by a breast-band. The waist is thin with a pointed navel. The ornamentation is excessive. Above her breasts, there is a beautiful broad necklace. A garland forming a circular line comes down to her breasts. She is also decked with a waist band, armlets, wristbands and ear-rings hang down to her shoulders. Her garments are very delicate and fine. The lower garment comes down to the ankle and upper one embraces the breasts. The stela is damaged. The image is made of black stone and may be placed in the 11/12th century A.D.



Plate 26

## The Image of Yamuna

Height : 45"

Width : 24"

"The river goddess, Ganga and *Yamuna*, so frequently shown on the temple doors of the Gupta and the early medieval periods"<sup>61</sup> but the individual images of them are not unknown.

A superb iconographic specimen of the goddess *Yamuna* is now kept in the Raiganj Police Station. Like many other iconographic specimen, the stela comprises a central figure which is flanked by other attendants. The central figure i.e., *Devi Yamuna* stands in a very graceful but slightly *abhanga* pose. She stands on a *Kurma* (tortoise) set on a full-petalled lotus. The head of the tortoise is damaged. Her front foot is flatly placed on her vehicle while the back foot is slightly raised on the toes. This exposes that the goddess is as if on a perpetual movement.



Plate 27

The *devi* is flanked by two female attendants, standing on small *visvapadma*. One of them holds an umbrella and other a *ghata* (pitcher) sort of thing. They follow the same scheme of undulating lines. The shaft of the umbrella (semi-circular) is set in an eighty degree angle to the pedestal and top of the stela. The deity vibrates with good health, two developed breasts and has a thin slender waist line. She wears moderate ornaments. Just above her breasts, there is a beautiful necklace. Her body above the waist is bare except a loose flowing *uttariya*. She has also armlets and wrist-bands. She wears a lower garment which comes down just above her ankle. The drapery is very beautifully carved.

The semi-circular stela also contains some other figures. Two female figurines in sitting posture are carved on. One is that *Sarasati* (goddess of learning) and other has not been identified but probably was *Sri*. There are two *maladharis* placed above the shaft of the umbrella. The central figure has been cut deep into the stela which detaches the body from waist to the ankle. The stela is round shaped at the top and made of black stone. It belongs to 10th/11th century A.D. This is one of the very few charming representations of Bengal art.

## *Ganesa*

Height : 18"

Width : 08"

An interesting image of Ganesa has been found in the district and is now preserved in the Raiganj Police Station.

The image, not so big, stands on a *triratha* pedestal. At the lowest stage of the stela, there are two *upasakas* (worshippers) on extreme left and right side of the main deity. The pedestal has also some floral designs. There is an inscription. Besides his two legs, there are two more figures in jubilant mood—one playing.... . The stela has a tree foil design. It is pointed at the top. The *Vidyadharas* are shown flying in the midst of clouds in playful manner.

The chief figure is lord Ganesa. He is in a dancing mood. He stands on a rat which is placed on a lotus. The deity has eight hands. He has a pot belly. The cap of the knee is missing. One finest feature of the image is that it stands in a *abhangā* pose which reminds us the famous *Ganapati* image of Khiching, Mayurbhanj, Orissa.<sup>62</sup> The figure is made of polished black stone and may be dated in 10/11th century A.D.

## *Chamunda*

Height : 37"

Width : 13"

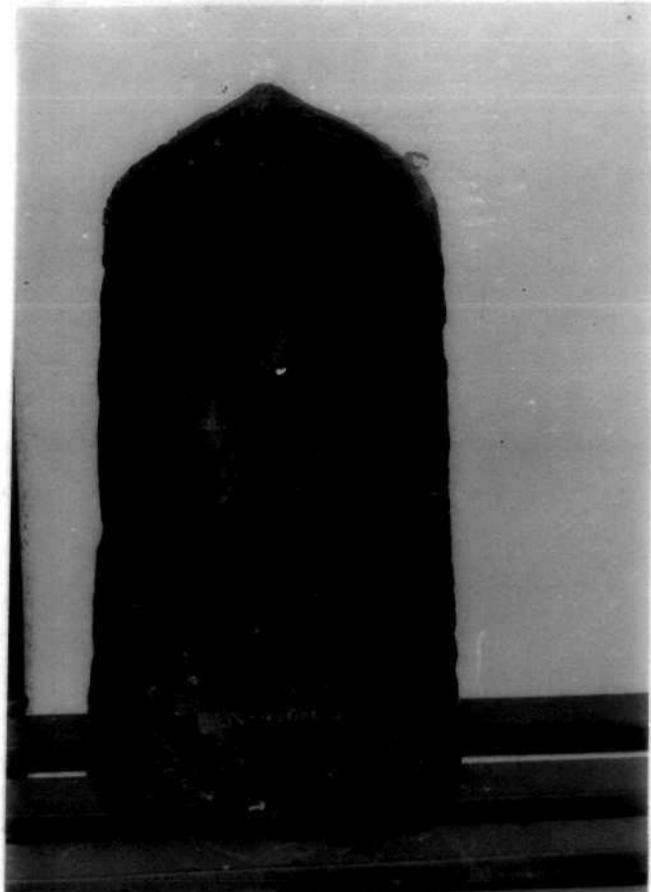
This is a remarkable iconographic specimen found in the district and now kept in Raiganj Police Station. It is the icon of *Chamunda*, one of the terrific forms of goddess.

The figure is beautifully sculptured on a stela, made of black-stone. The central figure of the stela is the image of *Chamunda*, but there are several other figures engraved on the *Prabhabali*.

The image stands on a *pancharatha* pedestal. There is a single *upasaka* on the right side of the image. In the extreme right, a jackel is depicted who is in search of drops of blood from the *munda* (skull) lying scattered. The pedestal is again etched by the picture of a vase holding five human heads. "This vase probably stands for the '*Panchamundi* Asana so often referred to as a part of tantrik ritual."<sup>63</sup>



*Chamunda, Raiganj P.S.*



*Ganesa, Raiganj P.S.*

The central figure is the *devi chamunda*, an emaciated eight armed female deity standing in an *atibhanga* gesture, almost in a dancing form. The toe of her right leg is slightly raised which gives it a dancing *mudra*. The left leg unfortunately damaged has vanished from the knee. There is a very thin silk like garment on the upper part of the body. This cover has small dot like floral designs. But inspite of this upper garment her ribcage is distinctly visible. The belly is thin and apparently empty. The body is emaciated and the breasts are dangling. Even the bones of the chest are visible. A tiny ascending scorpion is engraved in between her breasts. She has an ornamented waist band which covers half of her things. A short skirt hangs below. A garland, studded with tiny skulls hangs upto her knees. Her hair is arranged in a top knot with a snake ribbon. The head of the snake hangs like tikli on the forehead. A tiny skull is placed on her tiara. Deep scars cover the face. The eyes are set deep inside the sockets. The above mentioned description makes her a blood thirsty image which is further strengthened by the objects she holds in her 8 hands.

The goddess has eight hands. The top most two hands are shown as lifting an elephant. She bears a knife, a vessel of blood and a *damaru*. She wears a *mundamala*. She holds *trisula* and *naramunda* in her left hands. She has a pleasant and remarkable *vismaya mudra* in her proper left hand.

The central figure is surrounded by other figures. The *devi* itself stands on a naked male. The body is stretched on a long snake. The most extraordinary part of the figure is the decoration of the stela. Six *matrika* figures, three on each side, are set with extraordinary details. The *matrikas* are set in the following pattern - *varahi*, *Narasimhi*, and *Brahmani* on the right hand side from below. On the left from below - *Sivani*, *Kaumari* and *Vaisnavi*. "To this scheme if we add the central figure, the pattern of *Saptamatrika* becomes complete."<sup>64</sup> It is to be noted here "Chamunda has been described both as a *matrika* and a *Yogini* in Indian literature. She is invariably shown in a *saptamatrika* panel."<sup>65</sup>

There is another interesting portrait on the stela. On its highest point there is a tiny figure of dancing *nataraja* on a tiny *nandi*. Both the figures stand on an outstretched winged Owl, so often found associated with Chamunda figures.

One more interesting feature of the icon to be noted that the figure has been cut deep into the stela which makes it almost detached from the stela from feet to the arms. The entire pictures is beautifully and artistically engraved on a reverse 'U' shaped single polished black stone slab. It may be dated in the 11th century.

## *Boar Incarnation*

Height : 23.5"

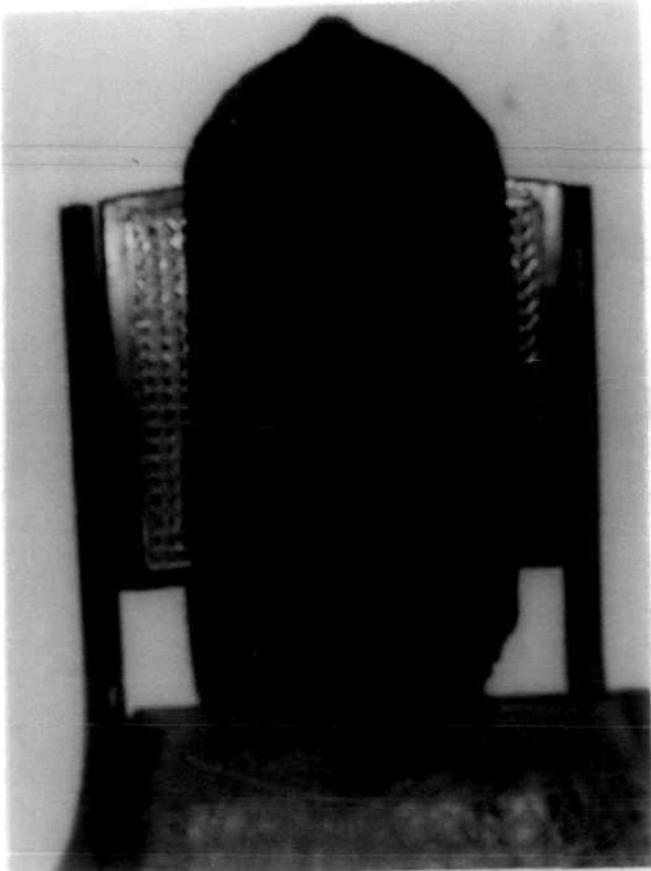
Width : 10.5"

The *avatars* carved in a row on stone slab were usually placed in different Vaishnava temples as decorative slabs. But "separate representation of many of them are also known."<sup>66</sup>

An image representing the Boar Incarnation of *Visnu* (*varaha*) has been found from Rampur, Raiganj and is now kept in the police station. Besides, the central figure i.e., *varaha* which is larger in size and dimension and occupying permanent position, there are a number of minor composition as parts of a total decorative design.

The pedestal is *pancharatha*. There are two worshippers on both left and right side of the pedestal. There are two more female figuriness which are half of the size of the chief figure, standing left and right of the god. The female attendant at the right side of the image is holding the shaft of an umbrella. The attribute of the left female attendant can not be recognised. Another peculiar feature of this illustration is an umbrella which is very beautifully carved on the stela, and is placed just on the head of the central figure. The two *Vidyadharas* (garlad bearers) are flying in a careful manner on the top of the stela. And at the apex the *kirittimukha* is engraved. In between the two legs of the god, there is a boar and a female figure.

The central figure i.e., *Varaha* is standing on a *Visvapadma*. The god stands in an archer's posture with left foot forward and holding up a female figure (the goddess earth) on his left fore arm. The story goes like this : "when the earth, unable to bear the burden on her surface, was submerged in water, Visnu in the form of *varaha* raised her with his task"<sup>67</sup> The god has four hands. He carries a *chakra* in his upper right hand. He holds nothing in the upper left hand and a conch-shell in the lower left hand. The entire composition leaves no room for doubt that it is the hybrid form of boar incarnation of *Visnu* - hybridity lay in the head alone, all the rest of the body being shown as human. He has moderate ornaments and a big garland descends upto his knees. The entire figure is sculptured on a black stone. The image may be dated in the 10/11th century A.D.



*Boar Incarnation, Raiganj P.S.*



*Avalokitesvara, Raiganj P.S.*

## *The Icon of Avalokitesvara*

Height : 48"

Width : 24"

Lokesvara, the only one Buddhist icon is preserved in Raiganj Police Station. The image is made of black stone and is partially damaged. It has two hands. Unfortunately both his hands are broken from the elbow, therefore, the attributes are missing. One interesting feature of the deity which deserves notice is that it has a third eye on his head. A single female attendant stands to the right of the image. On the right side of the stela i.e., the left side of the image a triangle like stylised leaf is carved with finite details. Six full blown flowers (probably lotus) three on the right and three on the left can be seen. There are also other usual decorative details - the *Vanamala* hanging above his knee, the sacred thread hanging upto the waist, the usual moderate ornaments on chest and his cloth i.e., the stylised *dhoti*. The central figure is isolated from the stela from feet to the armpits. The pedestal is also damaged. Obviously his *Vahana* or Vehicle can not be detected. When represented, *Loknatha* is generally alone and is occasionally accompanied by *Tara* and *Hayagriva*.<sup>68</sup> No Buddhist symbol is visible on the stela. The figure can not be *Siva* as it is not *urdhavalinga* and can not be that of *Visnu* as it is devoid of the usual symbols. It may be, therefore, the representation of *Lakanatha* or *Avalokitesvara*. It may be placed in the 10th/11th Century A.D.

## *Visnu Image*

Height : 21"

Width : 11"

A strange image of Visnu is now preserved in Raiganj Police Station. It stands on a *triratha* pedestal on a lotus throne. The deity is flanked by two female attendants - *Sri* on his right and *Sarasvati* on his left. Both stand in an *abhanga* pose. At the top of the stela two *Vidhyadharas* are in flying and playful mood.

The central figure is *Visnu* who is almost detached from the stela from the arms to the ankle.



Plate 28

He has four hands. The most peculiar aspect of the deity is that all his four hands are placed below and two back hands are very close to the front hands. His back hands which are partly visible hold nothing. The right front hands carry a lotus in his palm and left hand holds a conch-shell.

Among the other decorative details of the deity the following features deserve notice. Firstly, he wears a *dhoti* which is tied round the waist. The folds of the garments are well-marked. The part of the body from waist upward is bare. Secondly the ornamentation is gorgeous from top to bottom. There are anklets, bracelets, wrist ornament, ornaments on chest and a gorgeous *Karanda* crown. Moreover, he wears a thick *Vanamala* which, goes beside the arms and them comes down to the knee. The sacred thread is also very brilliantly placed on the body. Locks of hair touch his shoulders on both sides. The appearance is healthy. The face is charming. The shoulders are broad. The waist is thin.

The stela is rounded but slightly pointed at the top and made of a single black stone slab. It is a magnificent creation of the Pala school of art.

### *Inscribed Visnu*

Height : 41"

Width : 23"

A rare blackish inscribed *Visnu* standing on a full blown lotus and hewn out of a black stone slab, along with other common attendants and objects is found and kept in the Raiganj police station. Its pedestal is *pancharatha* with donors kneeling down on either side of the



Plate 29

*The inscription*

feet. His vehicle *Garuda* is shown in *anjali mudra* under his feet. Another interesting aspect of the icon is the inscription which is carved at the middle of the pedestal. It is yet to be deciphered.

Lord *Visnu* is attended by four figures the smallest two on extreme left and right respectively are standing on double petalled lotuses. Both are standing stylistically and gracefully with left hand (*Kati hastamudra*) on their waist and right hands are placed on the belly.

The other two attendants are *Sri* and *Sarasvati*, more than double in size than the smallest attendants. Both the goddesses are standing on *Visvapadma* and their poses represent a perfect gem of art. Their graceful *abhanga* pose, supple waist, bulging hips, drapery and ornaments convey rare charm and beauty. *Sri*, to the left of the main deity holds an unknown object and *Sarasvati* plays on her *veena*.



Plate 30

*Inscribed Visnu*

stela is pointed at the top with *maladharis* and *kirttimukha* at the centre. It is placed in the 10th century A.D.

### *Siva-Paravati*

Height : 31.5"

Width : 19"

It is image of *Siva-Parvati* in *alingana* - mudra. The pedestal is simple. There is no *ratha*. It contains two devotees on the left side. Siva's followers *Nandi* and *Vringi* are shown on it. The couple sits in *lalitasana* on a lotus while the god's right leg rests on a bull. They have four arms. Siva holds a *trishul*

in his upper right hand and places his lower right hand on the chin of *Parvati*. He embraces her consort by his left hand. Similarly, the goddess keeps her right hand on god's right shoulder. She holds an indistinct object in her left hand. Both *Siva* and *Parvati* are decked with moderate ornaments. *Siva* has two sets of necklaces armlets wrist bands and even anklets. *Parvati's* ornaments are not clearly visible. The faces of the images are mutilated. The stela is pointed at the top and is made of black stone. It may be placed in 10th / 11th century.

### *Visnu Image*

Height : 22"

Width : 11"

It is made of fine black stone with the usual fashion. The execution of this iconographical details and the super artistic skill projected in the making of this image makes it a wonderful specimen of art. The main figure is *Visnu* who is shown very tall and handsome. He is well clothed. His lower garment is a *dhoti* which hangs upto his knee. The *dhoti* is a fine and delicate one. It has a beautiful knot at the navel. On the upper part a *uttariya* goes parallelly from right side of the waist to the left shoulder. He is provided with a crown. His ornaments are usual. The setela is a *pancharatha*. Two votaries are shown on the either side of the stela. There are close floral design in between them. The god is standing on the lotus which is placed on the pedestal. He is flanked by *Sri* and *Saraswati*. Two more figure are engraved. There is a gap between the feet and arms. At the top it is pointed. Two garland bearers are shown. At the top, there is *kirittimukha* final. The body is separated from arms to feet from the stela. It is placed in the 11/12th century.



*Siva-Parvati, Raiganj P.S.*



*Vishnu, Raiganj P.S.*

## *Itahar Police Station : A General Description*

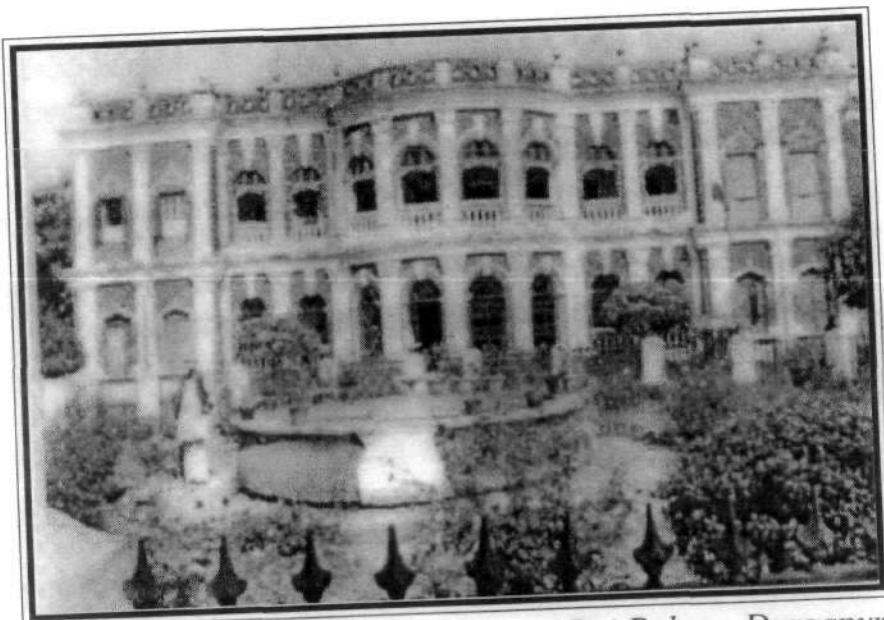
The southern most Police station in the district is Itahar. It is the second largest stations in the district with an area of 427.6 sq. kilometres and a population of 181,971<sup>60</sup>. Its northern boundary touches Raiganj and Kaliyaganj; eastern boundary have a common border with Kushamandi and Banshihari police stations of Dakshin (south) Dinajpur district. In the south and west it borders with Malda.

Itahar, like most of the other police station of the district has fertile agricultural land. The principal rivers which enrich its soil are Gamari, Sui and Chhiramati (Shrimati). The area is also famous for trade and commerce. The transport system basically depends on bus. The National High way 34 goes absolutely straight north to south, dividing it into two equal parts. Therefore, it is joined with Raiganj and Malda on two sides. Another metalled road divides it into two equal parts runs west to east. This road joins Itahar with Malda to the east and Kaliyaganj to the south. Thus, these two roads divide it into four blocks.

Most of the people here are mainly Hindus by religion, though a large section is also Muslim. Bengali is widely spoken. The area is backward. There is no industry. Literacy rate is not praiseworthy. Only 32% are literate<sup>70</sup>. Historically, it is very important. Located in between Amavati and Sonapur in the north and south respectively it is also bounded by Patirajpur and Porsa in the east and west respectively. Save those chequered historical sites, Durgapur Palace, Hasua and Khamrua are other important places of interest. Churaman, (situated on the bank of Mahananda, in the west), is an important ancient port, not identified<sup>71</sup>. Martin wrote "In this division (Kaliyaganj) are 19 market places. The only mart is Churaman, a tolerable town, better built and cleaner than Rayganj".<sup>72</sup>

### *Durgapur Raj Palace*

In between Raiganj and Itahar there is a *zamindari* estate and a palace in Drugapur which is about 10k.m. from Raiganj along the National Highway 34 towards Malda. It is an estate of one Roychowdhury family,a Tily family by caste. The palace is not an old one and was built in the 2nd half of the 19th century. It seems that the family had close alliance with the British and was entitled Roychowdhury. It appears that the palace was built under British patronage. The structure



*Raj Palace, Durgapur*

completely represents British style and similar to many of the houses in Calcutta. There is a courtyard at the centre. The family has their own patron god, housed in a place called Hasua, 3 k.m. west of Durgapur.

### *The Temple at Hasua*

The temple at Hasua called, *Svaminather Mandir* by local people is not an old edifice. It newly constructed by the Rochowdhury family. The *Garbhagriha* is surrounded by a long Varanda which is enclosed by several pillars. The structure is square. There is a dome above on the roof of the shrine. The *garbhagriha* is not according to the strict sense of the term. The main deity is kept at the centre of the elongated to provide wooden *Asanas* for a large number of metal and stone (small) images on the left and another set of wooden *Ram*, *Laksmana* and *Sita* images on the right. The name of the temple, *Svaminatha* is interesting. It reminds us of the several early *Visnu* temples and images mentioned in the Gupta inscriptions of Bengal. Mention may be made of *Govindasvami*,<sup>72a</sup> *Kokamukhasvami*,<sup>72b</sup> *Svetavarhasvami*,<sup>72c</sup> all varieties of the lord *Visnu*. The chief of the temple, *Svaminatha* is the *Vamana Avatara* of *Visnu*. Artistically the image however belongs to the *Pala-Sena* school when *Svami* ending names decreased e.g. the temple of *Nava Narayana*,<sup>72d</sup> *Pradyumanesvara*<sup>72e</sup> etc. replaced the earlier names.

The temple has a big courtyard where the annual fair (mela) is held. On the right hand-side there are two brick built *Siva* temple with two black stone Lingas at the centre. The structures are the typical *Siva Deul* type. These may be dated to the medieval period (Sultanate period) of Bengal history. A good number of images are preserved in this temple. Some could have been inherited by the family from their ancestors, others were probably gathered from around the area. A list of the antiquities preserved in this temple are discussed and given below.



*Temple at Hasua*

## Vamana visnu

Height : 41"

Width : 21"

The deity is Visnu in *vamana* form. The image is of outstanding importance from iconographic point of view. It is carved out from a fine grained black stone slab. The entire plate can be divided into three distinctive parts — the pedestal, the stela and the main figure. The pedestal is *pancharatha*. At the centre of the pedestal two small but double petalled lotus are shown coming out from water. On the left side three votaries are displayed in *anjalimudra*. On the right his vehicle *Garuda* is shown in the same kneeling *mudra*.

The stela is beautifully decorated. At the bottom, there are two female attendants *Sri* and *Pusti*, standing on the left and right side of the main idol. Above it, there are stylised lions on either side of the *prabhabali*. One interesting aspect is that the two *Vidyadharas* are shown in standing position bearing two garlands. The stela is designed under a big tree foil design. A similar stela adorns the image of a Rishi already found from the same district.<sup>73</sup> The tree foil design is more sharp in this image. It may be of some interest that both the images were discovered from the present Dinajpur district of West Bengal. The stela is semicircular at the top.

The lord is standing with four hands holding *Sankha*, *Chakra*, *Gada* and *Padma* is inscribed on his palm. The face is an elongated one with a sharp pointed nose and full lips. The shape of the face is oval. It is very charmingly smiling. The eye balls are replaced by the patron with two tiny silver plated eyes. The lord stands in *samapadasthapanaka* pose.

Another striking feature of the deity is the full blown up belly of the god. It is like a pot bellied *Ganesa* with a clear cut navel at the lower edge of the belly. Another significant aspect of the image is his clotted hair. He wears a



Plate 31



*Vamana Visnu*

matted hair dress, curling round which creates seven steps in a cylindrical barrel. Mandira Bhattacharya has identified it as *Vamana* incarnation of Visnu<sup>74</sup>. J.N. Banerjee writes “separate figures of Vamana are very rare, and such figures almost always are four armed, with four hands holding the usual emblems.”<sup>75</sup>

Thus, this unique and uncommon iconographic specimen stands as an outstanding artistic remain of ancient Bengal. It may be dated in the 11/12th century A.D.

### *Dancing Ganesa*

Height : 21"

Width : 11"

The temple of *Svaminath* at Hasua provides another important iconographic specimen — the dancing *Ganesa*, also known as *Ganapati*, the elephant headed deity.

The icons of *Ganesa* are not too many in the district, though he is a fairly popular divinity in Indian religion and art. The god is invoked for good luck and hence was the patron of merchants.<sup>76</sup>

The present deity is small, made of black stone. The stela is a *saptaratha* one. On its pedestal, there is a *upasaka* on the left and a mouse (his vehicle) on the right. Two more female attendants are standing on the left and right of the lord. The lord is standing on *Visvapadma* along with those female attendants. The god is standing very gracefully in an *abhanga* pose. The elephant head, the dwarfish form and the pot-belly (now covered by a white cloth) are distinctive. What is remarkable is his eight hands which are rare. However, the attributes in his right hands are mostly distinctive. He holds an axe and *akṣya-mala* in his two left hands. His third right hand is in *varada mudra*.

The attributes in his left hands are quite indistinct. One hand is placed on his tusk. There are two *maladharis* at the top of the stela.

The stela is plain, has no artistic beauty but has a tri-foil design like a bas-relief. The central figure is detached from it on both sides and belongs to the early medieval period.

## *Manasa Image*

Heigh : 19"

Width : 9.5"

Another image kept in the temple at *Svaminath* at Hasua is the image of *Manasa* or snake goddess. It is a small icon made of single slab of black stone. Its pedestal is *pancharatha* with no decoration but a jar is shown at the centre. Below on the left side a devotee is shown, on the other side, there is a standing male figure. The *devi* is seated in *lalitasana* on a single petalled lotus. She rests her right leg on another *kalasa* or pitcher and her left leg is folded. The goddess holds nothing in her right hand which is placed on her knee. She holds a snake in her left hand. There are two more figures engraved on the stela — a bearded male on the left and a female figure on the right side. At the top there are usual sculptures of *maladharis* in the midst of clouds, but they do not carry any garlands. She is protected by a seven hooded snake on her head. Unfortunately two hoods in the left are missing.

The goddess is seated elegantly. Her breasts are well developed and the face is slightly stooping. Her ornaments are moderate. The belly is thin with pointed navel. The stela is pointed at the top without any decorative design. It may be dated in 11/12th century A.D.

Except those stone images, there are a few metallic images in the temple. The first one is *A devi riding a ram*. The metal is probably octoalloy. The goddess is sitting on the ram. The ram has coiled horns which are pushed backward. It shows that the goddess is moving on the ram.

There is *a seated female figure*. She has a typical head dress. She is two armed. The right hand is in *abhaya mudra* and left hand indistinct pose. The attributes in her hands have not recognised. The entire composition is 2.5" tall.

There is a tiny plaque of *Mahisasurmardini* (about 2" x 1.5"), a figure of a sitting *Ganesa* and a broken *Visnupatta*.



*Dancing Ganesa*



*Manasa, Hasua*

## *Archaeological Findings from Sonapur*

Sonapur, (J.L. No. 30) a small village in no 4 Durlavpur *anchal panchayet* under Itahar police station, is in very close proximity to Kukurakunda, another place of historical interest in the district. It is situated about 2k.m. away from Sripur bus-stand and only 17 k.m. from Raiganj. N.H. 34 passes along its border. A small river Gamari flows to the eastern side of the village. There is a low lying area *bill* (water -reservoir on the west) There are approximately 50 ponds in the area.

As an unknown place, even to the people of this district, it emerges as an important historical place of interest. The most striking feature are the mounds whom the local people call *dham*. There are approximately 15 *dhams*, big and small, lying on the both sides of the central *kuchcha* road of the village.

The mound no 1 which is 2 k.m. from Sripur bus stand, stretches on the south west corner. It is about 5 feet in height and 15 feet in width. It forms almost a rectangle. On the western side of it a brick structure is visible. The bricks on the surface however are too eroded to preserve its originality. It is covered by a small bush. A few yards away to the north of this mound, two more mounds still exist like a small plateau. The bricks on both the mounds are lying on the entire area. All the three mounds, however, even a few years ago were higher and full size bricks were available. All the houses nearby, are made of bricks taken out of the mounds.

Of the two exceptional sites of the village the mound on which three *Sivalingas* are set on a platform is striking. Apparently, the platforms on which the lingas are placed look like the part of a building. Two-

third of the mound is still intact. The platform is approximately 4 metres in length, 3 metres 60 inches wide and 43 inches high from the surface. In front of the platform, there is a staircase which has 8 stairs. The sizes of the *lingas* are not same. The bricks used in very remarkable - 12x10x1.75 inches.



Plate 32

*Brick structure with Sivalinga, Sonapur*



*Brick Structure, Sonapur*



*Brick Structure, Sonapur*

The villagers told the present writer that while they were cutting down an old *neem* tree, large number of bricks came out. They began to dig and the platform with three Sivalingas was exposed. The villagers dug more about 3 to 4 feet deep, but could not separate the *lingas* from the platform. Thus the *lingas* remained in the same place. At present, it is a sacred place where *samkirtan* is held from time to time. It is also reported that at the time of the excavation inhabitants found a door on the northern side of the mound. Arches were also observed.

About a few metres north of this area one more mound adds a significant interesting view. It is the highest mound in the village. The mound spread over an area of more than 200 meters in circumference. Its height is 2 metres. During my second



Plate 33

*Mound after excavation*

visit, I have found that the local people had excavated the *dham* and taken away all the bricks.

Another interesting specimen found from this village is a ring-well. Sonapur is the only place of interest in the district which provides such wells. Several antiquities are reported from the area. However, only are large size *Visnu* image remains. There are innumerable pieces of decorated black stones, probably parts of images scattered all over the entire village. Pieces of '*makara-mukha*' drains are also visible at places. At one of the dhams portions of pillars made of black stone raise their heads among the brick debris. The *dhams* are covered with pottery sherds. The brick used by the villagers have different sizes. The biggest one is 35x28x5.5 cm. The second one is 24x20.5x7 cm. The most common variety is the second one.

As the exploration has not been able to discover the remains of icons of any other religions save the Brahmanical ones, it seems that the site belonged to either a *Saiva* sect or a *Vaisnava* sect or it could be a settlement of people who worshipped both *Vaisnava* and *Saiva* deities. Only a proper excavation at the

site shall reveal the true nature of the area. But as the people are more interested in extracting bricks from the mounds the site might soon disappear from the archaeological map of Bengal.

### *Visnu Image from Sonapur*



Plate 34

There is a standing figure of Visnu made of black stone. It has a *triratha* pedestal. The deity is flanked by two female figuriness — *Sri* and *Sarasvati*. Two more female attendants are visible. The deity is handsome with broad shoulders and a narrow lion waist. The face is spiritual but the body is sensuous. The figure is remarkably beautiful and highly charming. Below the deity there is the lotus throne placed on the pedestal. He has four hands and carries the usual attributes. He wears an elaborately jewelled crown and a long garland of flowers placed from behind the shoulders over the arm. He wears a *dhoti* which has a beautiful knot. A piece of cloth is spread over his body.

Ornaments like necklace, armlets, wrist bands tastefully decorate the person of the divinity. The main figure is cut off from the arm to the feet from the stela. The stela is pointed at the top. It belongs to 11/12 th century. A.D.

### *Images from Kukurakunda*

The village Kukurakunda, (J.L. No. 29) in the district of Uttar Dinajpur, is situated at a distance of 15 K.M. to the south of the district headquarter, Raiganj and about 3 k.m north of Itahar police station. The village is bounded by Paharajpur in the north; Sadapur and Banbol in the south; Sonapur is the most

archaeologically potential village in the east and west and Paharajpur in the west. The National Highway 34 passes through the village and divides it into two parts. It is under Itahar police station. The village offers some exquisite pieces of sculpture which are preserved in one Bhanu Bose's house. According him, these specimens have been discovered approximately 100 years ago when his predecessor was excavating a tank. There are in all 4 images : *Visnu*, *Ganga*, *Surya* and a *Bodhisattva*.

### *Visnu Image*

Heigh : 26"

Width : 12.5"

The Visnu image of Kukurakunda resembles many other stone images of the very deity found in different places of the district.

It is a black-stone four handed standing Visnu image, in a *samapadasthapanaka trivikrama* form. The god holds *padma*, *gada*, *sankha* and *chakra* in clock-wise form lower left hand, which is broken at the elbow. He stands on a *Visvapadma*. The pedestal is in a rectangular shape in a *pancharatha* style. The stela contains some floral designs. Two *upasakas* are engraved in *anjali mudra* at the pedestal.



Plate 35

The central figure is detached from the stela from the feet to the shoulders. The ornaments and the dress are usual. The so-called *Vanamala* and sacred thread with moderate ornaments are visible. He wears two pieces of upper and lower garments. The drapery is transparent.

The lord is accompanied by *Sri* and *Sarasvati* in opposite *abhangas* pose. Both are just half of the central figure. At the middle of the stela a panel of images - elephant, horse, an unidentified figure are sculptured from bottom to

top. The stela is pointed at the top with the *kirittimukha* flanked by two flying *Vidhyadharas*. It may be placed in the 11th century A.D. It has one live inscription at the bottom of the pedestal.

### *The Image of Ganga*

Heigh : 30"

Width : 14"

Of all the iconographic specimen of the village the image of Ganga is one of exceptional beauty with intense expressions. The image has a *pancharatha* pedestal. She stands on a cocordile (*makara*) which faces to the right. She stands bending slightly in an *abhanga* style. It is projected in such a manner that the goddess is on a perpetual movement. She holds a pot in her left hand and the shaft of the umbrella by the other hand. Her breasts are fully developed and the waist is thin. She wears a sari which is beautifully bound at her waist and comes down to her knee. The drapery is visible. The ornaments are also very impressive. She has wrist bands, ornaments on feet and neck. The ornaments and designs of the garments though not lavish, yet are very tastefully displayed.

The central deity is attended by two female representatives on both sides of the *devi*. The attendant on the left holds an umbrella above her head which is very skilfully carved above her head. The attendant on the right is in dancing pose. Beside *devi*'s waist at the centre some images are engraved. Between her two legs, there is a small gap within the stela. Beside the umbrella, there are two *maladharis*. The stela is beautifully shaped. It may be placed in the 11th / 12th century A.D.

### *Image of the Bodhisattva Padmapani*

Height : 27"

Width : 13"

The village offers one non-brahmanical deity, a black-stone image of the *Bodhisattva*, which is rare in the district. The lord is seated on a full-petalled lotus. The stela contains two lions, engraved at the extreme left and right of the stela. A bud with a stalk of lotus is also engraved on the stela beside his right hand. He wears a dhoti. He is provided with a head-dress. The ornamentations



*Ganga, Kukurakunda*



*Bodhisattva Padmapani, Kukurakunda*

are moderate. He has arm-lets, ear-rings, ornaments on waist and a necklace. The upper part is bare except a flowing *uttoriya* hanging over his left shoulder. The nose and part of his face has been damaged. Two *Vidhyadharas* are also shown on the top of the stela in between a rich floral design. It is a *Bodhisattva* and also called *Avalokitesvara*. It is and ain *Nispannyayogavali* “*Avalokitesvarah* is white in colour he displays the *Varada mudra* in the right hand and in his left he holds the lotus.<sup>77</sup> The attributes in his hands - a lotus in his left and *Varadamudra* in the right, leave no room for doubt that it is a *Avalokitesvarah* and may be placed in 10/11th century A.D.

### *Surya Image*

Height : 28.5"

Width : 13"

Another interesting specimen of the village is an image of the Sun god. It is a standing Surya image and unlike the other images found from Kukrakunda, is made of whitish sand stone. The image stands in a *samapadasthapanaka* posture. With his two hands, it holds two full petalled lotuses. He wears a pair of boots. He wears a *dhoti* (cloth) which hangs upto the thigh. There are two cross-bands at the centre of the *dhoti*. The ornamentation is moderate with necklace, earrings that touch the shoulders. There is a breast plate.

The face is broad. The eyes are drooping. On the head, there is a *Mukuta* with a flat top. The forehead is separated by two bow like eyebrows. The stela is a semicircular disc attached to the rectangular back plate of this image. The circular halo in some of the Gupta sculptural art is here transformed into a rectangular bottom and semicircular style of *prabhabali*. The *Prabhabali* is plain without decoration except a single beaded line around the semicircular halo. The pedestal is missing. Therefore, the *vahanas* are not visible. However, the two figures of *Dandi* and *Pingala* are sculptured standing on either side of the image. It may be placed in the Post-Gupta but pre-Pala times.



*Surya, Kukurakunda*

## *The Antique of Porsa*

The village called Porsa (J.L. No. 110) is also archaeologically potential. It is situated under Itahar Police Station in Uttar Dinajpur. The village is located about 3 km. south Itahar Police Station which is also the nearest centre of the locality. It has population of 1151<sup>78</sup> which compresses both Hindus and Muslims. The standard of life in Porsa is very low, though it does not reach the extreme misery. The staple food consists of rice, Jute, with some sorts of vegetables.

The village is bounded by Itahar in the north, village Digna in the south; in the east Chapad and Khamrua in the west. It is situated beside Itahar-Churaman road which links the National Highway 34 in Itahar to in the North and Churaman in the south. A small stream called Gamari passes to the west of the village.

There are two places in the village where antiques are lying. These places are a little bit higherer and has a length of 300 to 400 ft. from each other. In the first antiquities are lying in one a hamlet nearer the Churaman - Itahar road. There are a few

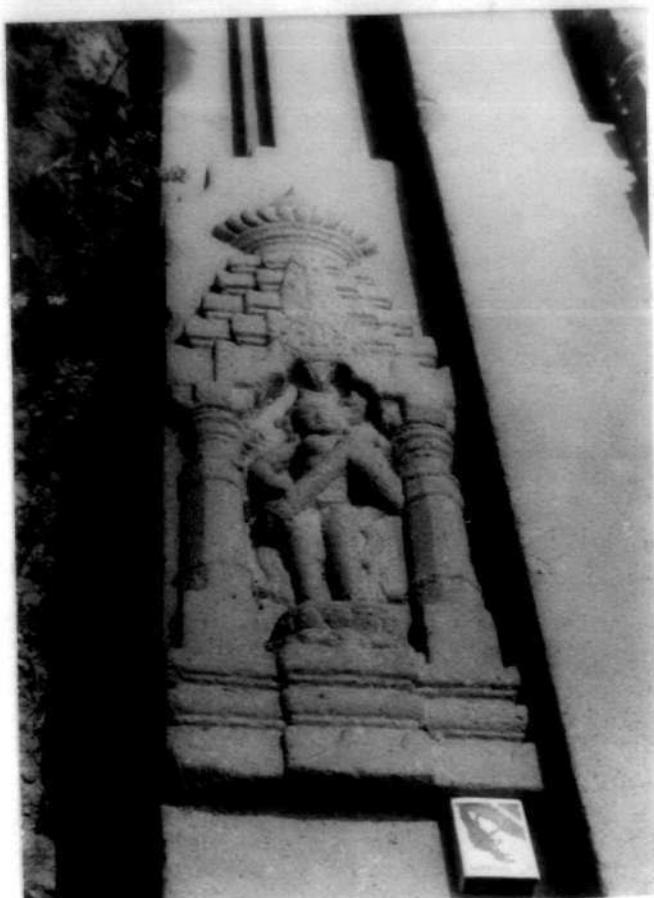


Plate 36

*Mound with fragmented stone*

pieces of scattered big stones. There are both ordinary and carved pillars. In one such stone which was probably a pillar of a temple has a beautiful design of dvarapalas curved on it. It is 49 inches long and the width is 19 inches. In the middle there a panel of dancers. Two bells in hanging position are also designed on it. The mound is full of bricks both full sizes and broken. The bricks are equal in size and square. The average measurement is 8.5 inches.

The second mound is more interesting and significant from archaeological point of view. The mound is located in the east of the village. In one part of a broken pillar a temple is engraved It is a *Rekha Deul* with a beautiful *Amlaka* top. The temple is very beautifully carved with two pillars. Inside of the temple a standing figure of Saraswati, on a full petalled lotus, and Veena in her hands, is shown. In another stone a similar temple is sculpted. It represents a standing Buddha image. The temples depicted on the two pillars have architectural affinity.



Lakshmi-Saraswati inside a rekha deul, Porsa.



*Carved pillar, Porsa*



*Carved pillar, Porsa*

## *Khamrua*

*Khamrua* (J.L. No. 127) is another site of my survey which provides two important specimen related to our research. The village is well populated. It is under the Itahar Police Station and the nearest town is Raiganj, the headquarter of the district of Uttar Dinajpur. The village is situated about 4 km. from Itahar and is bounded by Gothlu in the north; Soaich in the south; Paikpara and Algram in the east and Dhulahar in the west. The Churaman-Itahar road passes through the south. About two K.M. south a small stream called sui flows away. The river Mahananda, one of the important rivers of the North Bengal passes about 5/6 km. in the west. Of the two iconographic specimen one is a *Surya* image and another is a *Navagraha* panel.

### *The Surya Image*

Height : 48"

Width : 33"

The central figure is the Sun god, having two hands, both broken. He is standing on a lotus which is placed on a female figure.

The god is tall and handsome. The face is oval. The waist is slim. The chest is wide and expanded. The naval is pointed. He stands on a lotus which is placed on a female figure. The feet are covered with distinct boots. The image wears a *dhoti* which is very nicely claded from waist to the shoes. The drapery goes parallelly. The entire lower part is covered. The ornamentation is also remarkable. He has a beautiful necklace and waist-band. A *Vanamala* is also appropriately placed. There is a headdress or crown. There are hollow places beside his waists.

The central figure is accompanied by a few more figures. The two figures *Dandi* and *Pingala*, are flanked on either side of the image. There is a circular halo behind the central figure and his attendants. Between the two legs of the god stands the *sarathi* Aruna or the driver of the chariot.

The whole figure is polished. The artist, in an attempt to bring a three dimensional effect, has carved out the stela at the waist of the god. But the was not quite successful. It is now located under a mango-tree in the village. This marvellous sculptural specimen may be dated in 11/12th century A.D.



*Surya, Khamrua*



*Navagraha Panel, Khamrua*

## *Navagraha Panel*

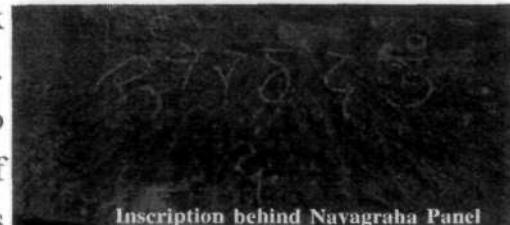
Another piece of stone which is preserved in fragment was found in a house of the villages. On the surface of this plate ten images are displayed. To the extreme left the god of Ganesa, next the lord Surya, the last one is a hybrid figure, upper part human and lower part like a fish. The rest are not identified. On the reverse there is one inscription. It is interesting to note that the image of Sun and the *Navagraha* panel have been found from the same locality. A similar *Navagraha* panel is preserved at the Ashutosh Museum, Calcutta.<sup>79</sup>

## *Archaeological Findings from Patirajpur*

Patirajpur (J.L. No.56) is another significant site of historical importance. Located 26 k.m. from the district headquarter Raiganj on Itahar-Kaliyaganj road under Itahar P.S., it offers some important historical specimen. The area covers 129.20 hectors square kilometres with a population of 935<sup>80</sup>. It is surrounded by the village Ujalpur in the north, Bhelpati in the south, Dehabondh in the east and Sivrampur in the west. A small stream called Shrimati or Chhiramati flows from the east to the south. The place is also celebrated for the *hat* (market) which occurs once in a week.

The village contributes an important feather to archaeological data to the district. A couple of years ago a few stone images have been discovered from this area. The largest stone image of *Visnu* with a three hooded snake has been found from a big pond called Patharghata recently. Another eight armed *Ganesa* almost totally broken is laying near the *hat*.

The area offers one more significant data. There are two mounds in the south-west corner of the village. The biggest mound is, however, found in Dehabondh bordering the district of south Dinajpur. It is approximately 15 feet high from the paddy fields. All the mounds consist of blocks of huge brick work and broken bricks are lying here and there. The sizes of the bricks varies from one to another. The largest size of the brick found in *Patharghata* is 14x11.5x2 inches. Soil erosion has caused much damage to the layer of bricks of the mound. Layers of brick alignments have been exposed. Rows



Inscription behind *Navagraha* Panel



*Fragmented Bricks, Patirajpur*



*Brick structure with mound, Patirajpur*

cover the mound. The bricks are smaller than the average bricks discovered from Jagjivanpur.<sup>3</sup> The weather condition has further deteriorated the structures. Some of the mounds are covered by thick vegetation. One important aspect is that the bricks are not yet stolen in large scale. Architectural pattern however could not be determined. The images found from the area show Pala affiliation. Therefore, the mounds may be dated in the early medieval period.

## *Visnu Image*

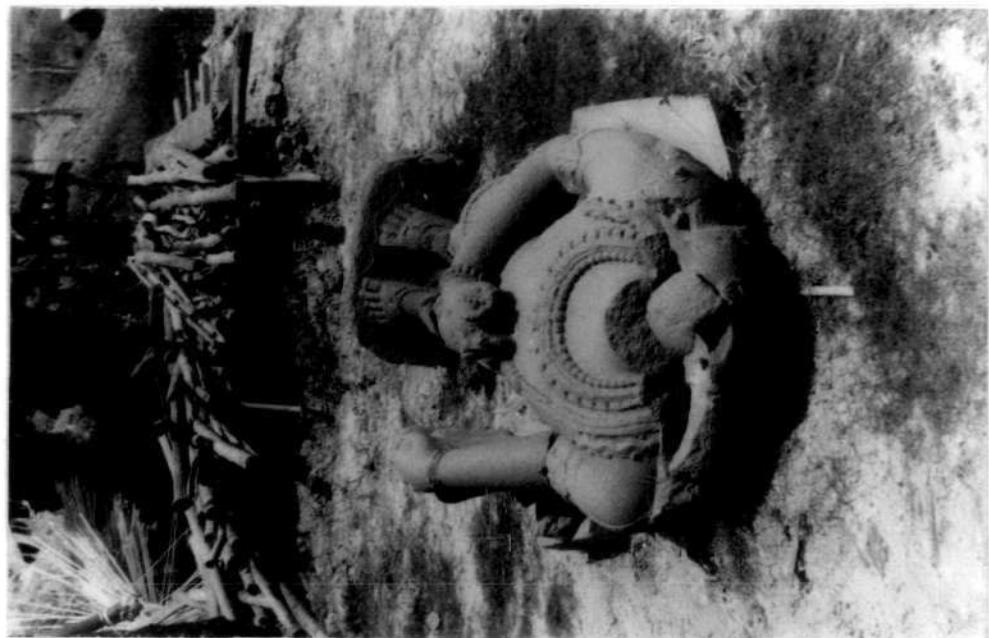
Height : 94"

Width : 32"

Of all the iconographic specimen found in the district the Visnu image of Patirajpur is the largest and an elegant piece of sculpture. It is a standing form of Visnu made of sand stone. The deity is standing on a double petalled lotus. He has two hands. The left hand rests on a lotus and the right hand artistically is placed on his chest in an *abhaya mudra*. Unfortunately, the head is missing and the left leg is broken from thigh to the knee.

The deity is adorned with most gorgeous ornaments. Almost all parts of the body has their ornaments. A kind of jewelled disc hangs round the neck. He has bracelet on both of its arms. There are wrist bands. There are ornaments on his feet. The dress of the deity is simple but very distinct. It consists of only one part i.e. lower garment. It is tied round the waist with a beautiful knot which hangs upto the knee. The dress is roomy and ample which is evident from the enormous folds. The upper part of the body is bare.

One interesting aspect of the image that at the top of his head there is a snake having three hoods Its eyes are very vivid. There is no stela, no decorated pedestal. This is the only specimen of its kind found in this district. It seems it was placed in some temple. At present it is lying on the bank of the pond. Snake hooded *Visnu* images are reported from other parts of Bengal like Surohor in the old Dinajpur District.



*Snake hooded Vishnu, Patirajpur*

## *The Antiquity of Amavati*

The most chequered archaeological site in this district is Amavati, a village under Kasba mouza (J.L. No. 230), 12 km. south of Itahar under Itahar Police Station. The village is surrounded by Purba hat, Uttarhat, Madhaihat on the east, north and west respectively. It has an area of 69.75 sq.km. with an appreciable population of 521.<sup>81</sup>

Many scholars have identified the place as Ramavati, the capital of the later Palas of Bengal, founded by King Ramapala. The land was well populated in medieval times and is mentioned in one *sloka* of one medieval sanskrit text, *Sekhandabhadaya*.<sup>82</sup>

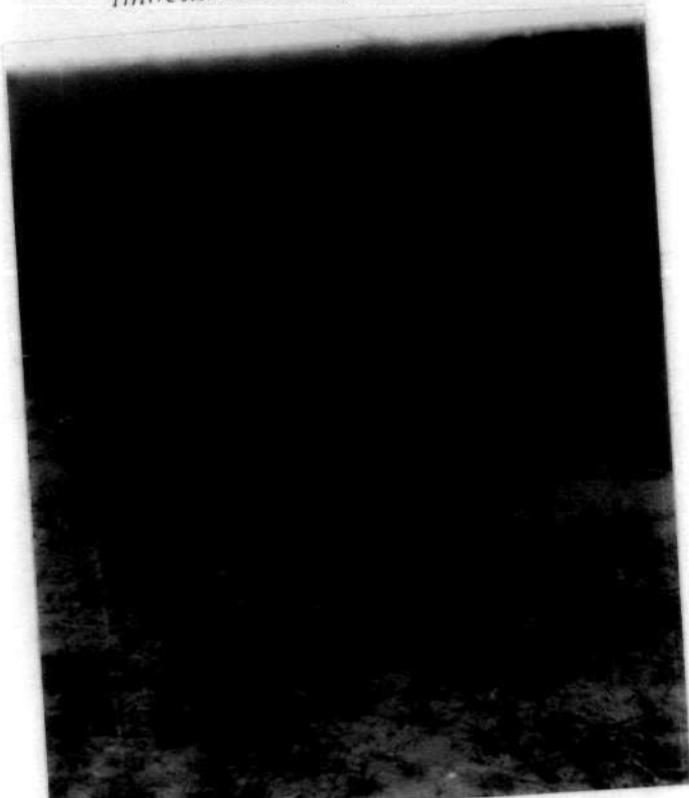
However, the village Amavati offers large scale archaeological remains which are spread over an area approximately 16 sq.km. The entire area is uneven and ruins of brick structures are visible. Beside the metal road that leads towards Purbahat, the ruins of brick structure are lying. Systematically arranged brick structure are also visible in a pond in Tuntunia village near by. It seems these are parts of a high drain which served as an outlet to pass water from the city to the ponds. Similar brick structures are also available in many other ponds in the village, as local people say. The pond east to the Tuntunia offers similar structure. By side a bamboo bush, there is a heap of huge bricks. In one side a portion of a pillar, made a black stone, raises its head. There is a large old pond near *Jaggadal village*. Two more big ponds are situated just opposite to the above mentioned big pond. Many of its ruins have been lost. Some images found from this area are kept in Balurghat Museum. The discovery of an incomplete image from the place suggests that it might have been a centre of image-making.

The ruined structures leave no room for doubt that it was a prosperous area. This conclusion is further authenticated by the term Kasba which has an Arabic origin meaning a small centre

The ruins at Amavati have variously been identified with the capital city of Ramapala. The other village near it is still called Jagaddala. In the Ramacharita of Sandhyakaranandi we find a flowery description of the city of Ramavati [III V, 31B, III V. 48]. Further we find the name of Mahavihara Jagaddala where there were images of Bodhisattva Lakesa and Tara. This *Mahavihara* has not yet been



Imbedded stone pillar, Amavati



Brick-laid Floor

unearthed. No excavations has taken place. Neither has the city of Ramavati been properly identified. It is quite possible that the ruins of the city are lying in this village of Amavati and the great monastery lying under earth in the Jagaddala village of North Dinajpur.

A few Images are also kept in the Itahar Police Station some of these icons are well kept in the police custody and are described here.

### *Visnu Image*

One such icon is lord *Visnu*. It is a standing image of *Visnu*, having four hands, and made of a single slab of black stone. Its pedestal is *saptaratha* which contains some floral design along with two votaries in sitting posture on either side of the pedestal. The lord is attended by two female figurines. At the top, he is attended by two garland bearers and a *kirittamukha* final. The image is one of exceptional beauty and intense expression. He is tall and handsome and is placed on a double petalled lotus. His attributes in his right hands are not visible as these are partially damaged. He carries a mace and a lotus is incised on his lower right palm. His waist is thin; shoulders are broad. His ornaments are moderate but gracefully arranged over his different limbs. He is clad in a *dhoti* very beautifully tied at the navel and making rooms on thighs. The upper garment is very delicate and transparent. He is provided with a gorgeous head dress. The stela is pointed at this top and image is dated in 11/12th century A.D.

### *A Jaina Column*

A unique sculptural specimen is preserved in Itahar P.S. which is cemented at *Kalimandir* (temple of goddess Kali). It is a small column, only 26 inch tall. It is square and at the bottom it is 2.5" and at the top 18 inches only. It seems a votive Jaina pillar. Four Jaina *tirthankaras* are standing in *kayotsarga* poses. Above the figures, there is a small *rekha deul* with a decorated *amlaka* at the top. The column, therefore represents the only specimen of Jaina sculpture in the district.



Plate 37

## *Hemtabad Police Station : A General Description*

Police station of Hemtabad is located in between Raiganj and Kaliyaganj police stations and is well connected between these two municipalities. It is the smallest P.S. in extent in the district with an area of 191.6 sq.km. and a population of 95,157<sup>83</sup>. The area, however, is renowned since the beginning of this century as it was visited by Buchanan Hamilton and Montgomery Martin. Both of them conducted elaborate survey of the area and mentioned its rich archaeological remains. Of the 17th *thanas* into which (undivided) Dinajpur was divided Hemtabad was one of them<sup>84</sup>. Located on the bank of Kulik, it serveses a link between Raiganj and Kaliyaganj. At present it is an important rural trading centre supported by some villages. Obviously it is based on agriculture and the land is on the whole fertile. Irrigational facilities is not remarkable. Agriculture depends on rainfall. Except the river Kulik, the chief source of water, there are a few ponds and a big marsh (*bil*). There is no remarkable agricultural crops except rice, jute and mustard. The area is lagging behind in all aspects. The spread of education is not satisfactory. There is only one Higher Secondary School. Literacy rate is, therefore, not progressive, only 41.71% are literate.<sup>85</sup>

The antiquities of the area are interesting. The most attractive place of interest is Kamalabari and Kasba-Mahasho which probably trace back their history to the Sultanate period. Kothagram and Baharail are the other important places from where stone images have been found.

### *Kamalabari and Kashba-Mahasho*

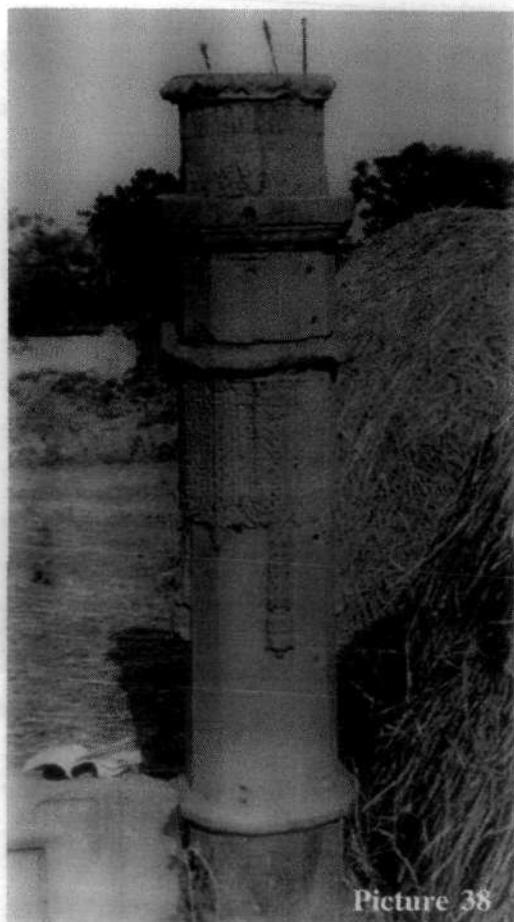
One of the interesting villages, from historical point of view, in the district of Uttar Dinajpur, is *Kamalabari* and *Kashba-Mahasho*. These are situated on the eastern side of Raiganj-Balurghat state highway. The three villages Kashba-Mahasho, Kamalabari and Ganeshpur stand on a line to the north-east of the district headquarter Raiganj. This assembly of villages is surrounded by a number of small villages like Minal, Noabari, Khadimpur in the West; Barabaru in the south and Sonabari in the north.

Like many other villages it has an agricultural based economy with 557.73 square Kilometres in area (comprising Kashba-Mahasho and Kamalabari) and a population of 2365<sup>86</sup>. The villages are inhabited by the Muslims, Rajbansi, Kshatriya Palia and Santals . The nearest police-station is Hemtabad which is 1 km. away to the north and three km. to north Bangalabari railway station (a metre-guage railway track under N.F. Rly. which runs from Barsui, Bihar to Radhikapur in Indo-Bangladesh border). Although the two villages are known as Kasbha Mahasho and Kamalabari, at present, Kamalabari is 1 km. away from Kashba Mahasho. In fact the whole area is known at present as Kamalabari. A narrow rivulet called Bagral, passes 3 km. away to the north which falls into the river Kulick. The village is situated at a distance of 7km. to the north of Raiganj. In its close vicinity, there is a site of considerable archaeological interest, which has not yet been professionally explored.

A few years ago one woman had traced a structure of building underground while removing a trunk of a tree. She saw the roof a building. The local people later on dug the area and found a complete room. The digging demonstrated that there was another storey underground which was not excavated. The villagers, as they told, thought that there was a temple above the room. A number of large carved pillars have been found after digging with variety of decoration on them.

That Kamalabari and Kasba-Mahasho carried the memory of a kingdom is attested by several archaeological remains laying here and there. After a thorough survey I have found two mounds - one in this Kamalabarihat and second one in Kashba-Mahasho.

The first mound is in the Kamalabarihat and in the south of the village. The mound is approximately four feet high and rectangular in shape. The rectangular-shaped area is about 33 feet in length and 30 feet width. Twelve pillars in three rows, made of stone, raise their heads. The height of the pillars varies - the highest 24 inches from the ground and lowest is 9 inches. The stone used, is pale in colour. The apparent view indicates that it was a building. A number of square-shaped stone structures are lying here and there. These are probably the head of the pillars. The mound was composed of bricks now heaped confusedly together.



Picture 38

Decorated Piller at *Ganes Rajar Dhipi*,  
Kamalabari.

Another mound has been found in Kashba-Mahasho, half-a-km away from Kamalabari towards north. It is called '*Ganesh rajar dhipi* (mound of King Ganesh who is identified with king Ganesh of Gauda who came to power in 1404 A.D.). Regarding *Ganesh rajar dhipi* Dr. H.C. Debnath makes reference that the palace of *Ganesh raja* is situated nearer the *hat* in Kamalabari. The ruins of the palace can be seen among the thick bushes and is inaccessible. It has become a heap of bricks and stones. The author of the above mentioned article had visited the land in 1957. The land had been travelled by Dr. Buchanan Hamilton in 1808-9 who never mentioned the terms '*Ganesh Rajar Dhipi*' rather gave a vague picture which reads like this...

"South from that (Public office of Mohesh raja), about 100 yards is a still larger heap of ruins. This ruin is said to have a raja's house."<sup>87</sup>

One hundred and ninety years after Dr. Hamilton's visit and forty years after Mr. Debnath's tour, I have visited the land and found the following picture of the above mentioned mound.

There are now two mounds which is 10 feet in height and huge bricks are heaped on them. A track of plain land is attached to it. A pillar structure, like the entrance of a temple is put up by the people. The pillars are remarkably clumsy, quite in the early style; and being all of different forms and lengths, possibly was not originally intended for the places which they now occupy. The pillar in the left side is 6 feet and 1 inch in height with 40 inches in circumference. A hanging bell is carved on it which suggests early style of architecture. The second pillar on the right hand side is plain and simple, except the upper part which has

a moderate design on it. The most interesting is the third pillar lying on the ground between the two pillars which must had been used as lintel. It has no artistcc design but contains engraved images of lord Ganes on both sides. In one side the god is sculpted in normal form and on the other side it is reversed i.e. head below and the body above.

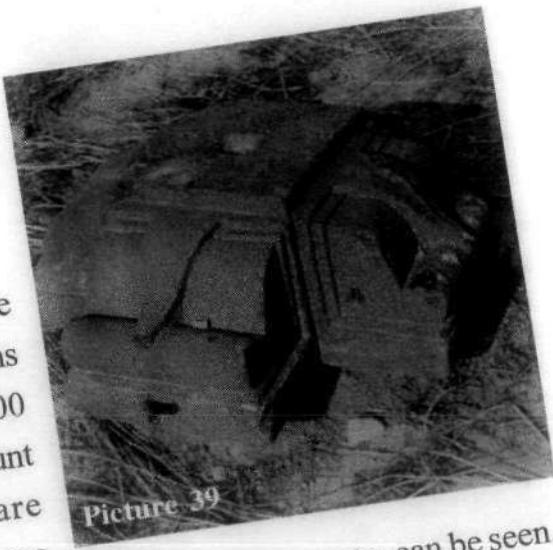
A square-shaped pillar whose upper part is also visible, lies on the ground. The local inhabitants, the santals worship the goddess *Kali* here.

The bricks found in the area are interesting and varied. The road which runs from Thakurbari to Kamalabarihat - 800 metres long - is thickly filled up with brunt bricks. The sizes of the bricks are different, the highest is 10' x 9 x 2.5. These are beautifully carved on with several designes like lotus, rose etc. can be seen.

A mosque is situated in Kamalabarihat nearer the first mound. It has a 500 years old history. There are four pillars inside the mosque. Moreover the outer walls contained some decorated plants. Two large stone pillars are lying there one of which 5 feet long and 11 inches width.

The mosque was built by one 'Pir' who came to the place along with certain followers. It is believed that one certain Pir named Mukhdami Goyadul Hussain come to this place along with his followers during the region of King Ganesh. He was accompanied by his nephew, named, Shah Kutb Alam who was equally possessed with some sorts of divine power. However, Pir Mukhdumi defeated the King and started preaching the Muhammedan faith in the area. Dr. Hamilton, however, narrated a slightly different picture :

"By far the most celebrated Muhammedan place of worship, either here or in the vicinity is near Hemtabad, and is a (Durga) monument, dedicated to Mukhdun Dokorposh, where the saints tomb is shown, and where there is a small rude mosque of stone, adorned with pillars and carvings, which, it is evident form their containing human figures, have been taken from Hindu buildings".



Picture 39

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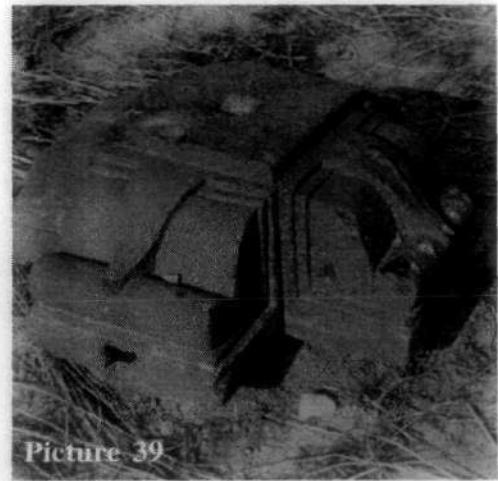
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Picture 39



*Fragmented stone structure, Kamalabari*

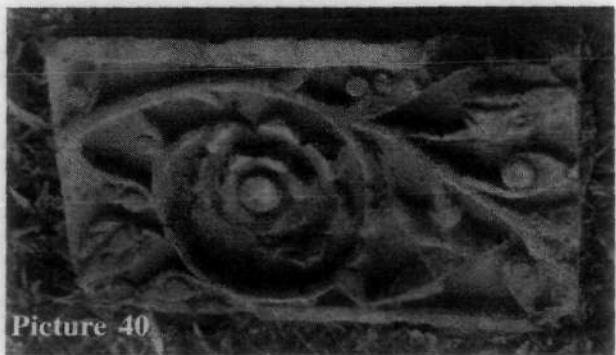


*Inscribed Ganesha on the structure, Kamalabari*

".....It is said that formerly there governed at this place, a Hindu raja, named Mohes During his government a certain muhammeden saint (pir) named Buzerudin, came and sat down at his gate, where he seems to have been but coldly received. Soon after came more celebrated person, Mukhdum Ghuribal Hoseyn Dokorposh and the raja immediately fled."<sup>88</sup>

In fact the tract, known an Kamalabari-Keshba-Mahasho is a part of Bhaturia estate (now in Bangladesh) in the district of (undivided) Dinajpur, held by a local baron, called, 'Raja Ganesh'. He is mentioned in Persian chronicles as 'Kans' or 'Gans' and identified with Kansa or Ganesa. This fact is corroborated by 'History of Bengal' which writes :

"Ganesh was a hindu Zamindar having extensive landed property in the region, this is known as Bhaturia, in the district of Dinajpur."<sup>89</sup> His ability and resources made him the most powerful noble in the court of Ghiyas-ud-din A'zam Shah, (one of the Ilyas Shahi Kings of Bengal



Picture 40

*Decorated brick, Kasba-Mahasho*

who ruled from and obviously played a crucial part in making and unmaking Kings after death of Ghiyas-ud-din A'zan Shah. Taking advantage of the situation he usurped power. His rule lasted for four years (1404-1418 A.D.). Later on his son Jadu (?) occupied the throne and converted into Muslim. He is popularly known as in the area as 'Kalapahar' who destroyed a large number of idols and temple". The history of the area, therefore, goes back to 15th century A.D..

This view was earlier categorically rejected by Dr. Buchanan Hamilton who was of the opinion that the King Mohes was independent and was not under the Kingdom of Gauda. Later on Sultan Hussain Shah of Gauda conquered it and brought it under Gauda's control. There is another belief that Ganes and Mahesh were the same person. Many others believe that Mahes was the father of Ganes and from his father's name the place come to be known as Maheshpur. The village Kamalabari also derives its name from his (Ganesh) mother's name Kamala, hence came to be known as Kamalabari.

## *Baharail*

A small village called Baharail (J.L. No. 41) is situated in the district under Hemtabad police station. It is located besides the Hemtabad-Bishnupur road. The nearest town is Kaliyaganj which is 14 km. away from this area. 2 km. away a small stream Kahalai, a tributary of the river Kulik flows from Bangladesh through this area and merges with this the Kulik. There are twelve big ponds scattered around the village. There is a large low land area called a *bil*. A newly created forest is coming up. Baharail, though closer to Hemtabad, is not renowned for archaeological objects, except a stone image of *Ganesa* nothing has been discovered.

## *Ganesa*

Height : 57"

width : 33"

This icon has two hands. The body from his elbow is not visible as the idol is cemented with the floor of a temple where it is housed by the local people. It is a sandstone object. There is no stela and no artistic beauty. Nothing outstanding is visible except the sacred thread. Between two arms, there are hollow portions.

The statue has been found from a nearby pond called Hatiduba. The local tradition says that there was a King in this locality whose elephant by chance sank down in that very pond. Hence the pond is called Hatiduba - a place where a *hati* or elephant sunk down. Later on it took the form of Ganesa.

## *Image from Kothagram*

Height : 60"

Width : 24"

About 2.5 km. west of Nowda bus stoppage, on Hemtabad-Bishnupur bus route, there is a village named Kothagram. It is a very interior place. A narrow Kuchcha road connects it with the Nowda bus stop. The vast low land called Nowda *bill* is lying to the north-west. An image has been found from the village which is now placed in a small cottage.



*Ganesa, Baharail*

The central figure stands on a full-blown lotus. The lower portion of the stela is imbedded underground and is not visible. The deity has four hands, but only the upper right hand exists, the three others are damaged. Two lotus are imprinted on his feet. The main figure is flanked by two more standing figures - on the left *Ganesa* and on right a female figure. Besides his right side of his this crown there is a figure in sitting posture. A lotus is engraved in the left. The stela is slightly pointed at the top : The *Maladharis* are not visible. The central figure is detached from stela to his armpit. It has not been identified. It may be placed in the 11/12 century.

## *Kaliyaganj Police Station : A General Description*

The extreme south-east police station in the district is Kaliyaganj. Like a parallel rectangular, it separates North Dinajpur from South Dinajpur. It has a common boundary with Hemtabad Police Station in north-west and Itahar P.S. in the south; to the north, it touches the international boundary with Bangladesh. Though rural in character, it is an important business centre and was one well known business centres of the East India company. Purnea District Gazetteers mentions : "Kaliyaganj is a business centre of jute trade and an agent of East India Company used to live there for the purchase of gunny bags"<sup>90</sup>. The area is found in Hunter's account which referred Kaliyaganj along with Raiganj is an important trading mart.<sup>91</sup> Dhankol is an important centre of commerce chiefly remembered for rice oil and chilli.

In extent, Kaliyaganj is one of the smaller police stations with an area of 311.60 sq.km. and a moderate population of 187935.<sup>92</sup> Though it is backward from the industrial point of view, the literacy rate in urban areas is better than the rural areas. In urban areas it is 73.60%. There is one degree college and one technical institute. There are few rice and oil mills along with certain saw mill, ply wood factory, brick vat, bakery and some cottage industries for handicrafts.

The town itself is well connected by road and railways with the district headquarter. The State Highway no 10 connects it with Raiganj and Balurghat. A metre-gage line of N.F. Railways goes through it towards Bangladesh Gamari and Chhiramati are two important rivers that flow through the station.

Historically it is nearer *Kotivarsha* (Bangarh). But at present it offers no remarkable archaeological remains. However, at Ratan a small village near Kaliyaganj, located at the south-east corner of the town, has provided two images of black stone. One is damaged. The central figure is missing from the stela. the *prabhabali* is intact, while the second one is a complete Visnu image. Both of these icons were found from a small mound which still contains huge bricks. The common size of the brick is 9x9x1.5inches. The icons have been placed in one Pranab Deb Sharma's house. There are few images kept in the Police custody. But all these are piled up in such a manner that it was not possible to take a picture or study and even see the icons precisely. Fortunately, one

Manasa image was shown by the officer-in-charge. These two images - Visnu image at Ratan and Manasa image at Police custody are discussed below.

## ***Visnu Image***

Height : 56"

Width : 26.5"

One big size masterpiece of a Visnu image, discovered from Ratan and is housed in the same village. It is made of black stone basalt and famous for its peerless beauty. The image is divided into four stages - the stela, the pedestal, the panel of images on the stela and the central figure.

The stela is a *navaratha* one which makes it different from other iconographic specimen of the district. The pedestal contains three figures two devotees in *anjali mudra* on the lord's right side and one devotee on the left. The pedestal is also decorated with floral designs.

Above the figures, there are two female figurines - Sri and Saraswati standing in *abhanga* pose on the lord Visnu's left and right side respectively. Two more female figures appear on the extreme left and right side of the stela.

The stela is well decorated by the following figures - a bull ox, a standing horse, a dancer holding one leg of the horse in circustic form and just above it there is the mouth of a Makara. The depiction of standing horse and dancing female is really very brilliant. One man is shown on the horse back just like a rider. Above the panel, two smaller figures, slightly damaged, are engraved.

At the pivot lord Visnu is standing on a full blown lotus with four layers of petals which makes it different from the rest of the icons found in the area. The lotuses which are engraved and shown on stela of different images mostly are of two petals or single petal. However, the god has four hands holding *sankha*, *chakra*, *gada* and *pada* respectively from below left hand in a clock wise from. The handle of the *gada* is longer and touches the pedestal.

The lord wears two pieces of cloths. The lower garment is a *dhoti* which has a very beautiful knot at the naval. The *dhoti* is gathered in a long plait which goes down between legs in wavy curbs reaching below to the knee. The upper part is spread over his body parallelly. The ornaments are the usual ones.

There is a tendency to detach the chief figure from the stela to give it a three dimensional pose. The stela is pointed and built from a single slab of black stone. It may be placed in the 11/12 century A.D. It is a masterpiece in iconography. Photography was not allowed by the present devotee.

### *Manasa Image*

Height : 25"

Width : 10"

A superb two armed image of *Manasa* (snake goddess) or Nagini ,is now kept in Kaliyaganj P.S. It is a black stone iconographic specimen The stela has an attempted *pancharatha* pedestal. Two upasakas in *anjali mudra* are engraved on it. There is a jar at the centre of the stela.

The deity seats on a double petalled lotus in *lalitasana* pose. Her right leg hangs on and is placed on the jar. She wears various ornaments among which a set of *hara*, armlets, anklets and breast band are well visible. Her lower garment hangs almost to the ankle. which has a very beautiful knot at the navel. She wears ear ring also "Her husband and son respectively according to the epic and Puranic tradition, are seated on either side of her."<sup>93</sup> The goddess carries a snake in her left hand a conch-shell in her right hand. She has two well-developed breasts and a slim belly with pointed navel. Her graceful face with sharp pointed nose and seven-hooded snake (spread over the head) give a very pleasant view.

At the top, there are two *Gandharvas* whose upper part is human like and lower part look like tails. The stela is triangular in shape and belongs to the 11th/12th century A.D.



*Manasa, Kaliyaganj, P.S.*

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