

## APPENDIX

### Brief History of Uttar Dinajpur District

In ancient times the area of undivided Dinajpur was a part of 'Pundravardhan' *Bhukti* (Kingdom). Pundravardhan was the land of the Pundras. The land is mentioned in both our Epics and Purans. As per the Mahabharat, Karna once vanquished the Pundras. Krishna also defeated the Pundras. Paundrak-Vasudev who united Vanga, Pundra and Kirat in order to establish a powerful Kingdom, had made an alliance with Jarasandha of Magadh and thus invited the wrath of Krishna. As per the Ramayan, when all-round search for Sita was on, the search parties were asked to visit the land of the Pundras.

The discovery of a seal in 1931 amidst the ruins of Mahasthangarh (now in Bangladesh) and a few clay seals found during excavations at Bangarh (now in Dakshin Dinajpur) in 1937-41 containing writings in Brahmi character on them, all point to the fact that the district was included in the Mauryan empire and came under Jain and Buddhist influence. That Pundravardhan maintained its relations with the rest of India during the reigns of the Sungas and Kushans is ascertained from the discovery of terra-cotta figurines and gold coins of the respective periods. Historical evidences taken together indicate that it was either a part of the Gupta empire since its inception or was included in it during the reign of Chandragupta-I and the sway of the Guptas over Pundravardhan during later Gupta periods is well-established from various copper-plate inscriptions. The sway of later Guptas continued over North Bengal till the reign of Mahasengupta. Gupta power disappeared from North Bengal towards the end of the 6th century AD when Gour was subjected to attacks by Yashodharman of Malwa and Isanvarman, the Maukhari King. The next King of Bengal was Sasanka. During his lifetime Gour was secure. After his death (sometimes between 619 and 637 AD) however, Gour was subjected to successive attacks by Bhaskarvarman, the ally of Harshavardhan, by Lalitaditya of Kashmir and also by Yashovarman of Kanauj. They all conquered Gour at different times. These successive attacks from outside completely shattered the existing system of administration and paved the way for the so called 'Matsyanyay' during which the strong oppressed the weak unopposed. It was at this critical time in the history of Bengal,

Prakritipunja (the general populace) elected Gopal to rule over Bengal sometime towards the middle of the 8th century AD. From Gopal the Pal dynasty began its journey which lasted for nearly four hundred years. What is foremost notable thing about these Pal kings is that they were truly indigenous as they hailed from Varendri, a part of North Bengal.

The Pal dynasty came to an end in Bengal during the reign of Madanpal. Madanpal was defeated by Vijaysen of the Sen dynasty. Pundravardhan*bhukti* formed a part of the Sen Kingdom in Bengal, but the extent of it was bigger than that of the Pals. At the time of Lakshmansen, Pundravardhan*bhukti* included almost the whole of North Bengal and East Bengal upto Chittagong and the districts of the Presidency division situated to the south of the Padma.

In 1201 AD Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji defeated Lakshmansen by a surprise attack. But he stayed at Nadia only for a shortwhile and advanced northward to Gour where he established his headquarters. He appears to have gained sufficient control over parts of Varendri as he started his expedition to Tibet in 1206 AD from here (undivided Dinajpur) and while lying ill was also assassinated here (Devkot, that is Bangarh, now part of Dakshin Dinajpur) by Ali Mardan Khalji. But soon Ali Mardan was defeated and imprisoned by Muhammad Shiran Khalji, one of the officers of Bakhtiyar, who came from Lakhnor or Nagar in Birbhum. Ali Mardan succeeded in escaping and fleeing to Delhi. There he instigated the Delhi Sultan Qutb-ud-din Aibak to take over the control of Bengal. On Qutb-ud-din's endeavour the power of the Delhi Sultanate over Bengal was re-established. In 1210 AD Ali Mardan obtained the vice-royalty of Lakhnor from Qutb-ud-din Aibak but soon got killed by the Khalji nobles who elected Hasham-ud-din Iwaj as ruler. This Hasham-ud-din ruled for about 14 years under the title of Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din. It was he who transferred the seat of Government from Devkot (Bangarh) to the historic city of Gour-Lakhnawati. His independent rule was challenged by the Delhi Sultan Iltutmish, but somehow survived. Finally he was defeated at the hands of Nasir-ud-din, the eldest son of Sultan Iltutmish in 1227 AD. The history of next 60 years, from 1227 AD to 1287 AD "is a sickening record of internal dissensions, usurpations and murders which the Court of Delhi after the death of Sultan Iltutmish could not punish" (The History of Bengal by Acharya Jadunath Sarkar, Vol. II, Chapter III). The indifferent subjects of this period stayed loyal to the masnad, and the

persons occupying it were never their concern. There was recurrence of rebellions and to put an end to this, Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din Balban of Delhi himself had to come to Bengal. He left his son Bughra Khan as the Governor of Bengal in 1282 AD. But he also declared independence of Delhi under the title of Sultan Nasirud-din. It was reduced to a province of Delhi empire again by Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq Shah. Muhammad Bin Tughlaq began his reign in 1328 AD. He divided Bengal into 3 parts to administer-Lakhnawati, Satgaon and Sonargaon. But soon internal dissensions and warfare started again and one Haji Ilyas Shah succeeded in establishing himself as the master of the whole of Bengal. The Ilyas Shahi dynasty ruled over Bengal till 1487 AD. There was a briefinterregnum in Ilyas Shahi dynasty during which one Raja Ganesh, who was one of the nobles in the court of the then Ilyas Shahi King, captured the throne of Bengal. It was about 1414-15 AD. In the history he is known as Danujmardandeb. This Hindu Chieftain was a generous and an influential landlord. He was the Messiah of the lower echelon of the society. He eventually became popular as Dinraj. The undivided district derived its first name Dinrajpur from the name Dinraj. Hence the erstwhile name Dinajpur.

Ala-ud-din Hussain Shah ascended the throne of Bengal in 1493 AD after six years of turmoil since Ilyas Shahi dynasty ended in 1487. He was a popular king. His name symbolised good governance. He was great patron of Bengali literature. Hussain Shai dynasty came to an end in 1538 AD and Bengal passed into the hands of Sher Shah, the Afghan. The intermittent independence from control of Delhi continued until Akbar's General Munim Khan defeated chieftain and later the Sultan of Delhi Daud Karrani and drove him to Orissa in 1574 AD. It signalled the Mughal supremacy over Bengal, although the conquest of Bengal by the Mughal power can not be said to have completed before 1587 AD. This was the year when the imperial officers like the Sipaha Salar the Diwan, the Bakshi etc were posted to Bengal. Finally Raja Man Singh was appointed as Viceroy of Bengal in 1594 AD. During the reign of Akbar, the district of West Dinajpur was probably within the sarkars of Tajpur and Pinjara.

The East India Company obtained Diwani of Bengal from Mughal Emperor Shah Alam-II in the year 1765. They did not think it necessary to bring about any change in the administrative machinery, as the surplus revenue of Bengal was their only concern at that moment. In 1786 Dinajpur got the status of

the district for administrative convenience. Dinajpur was subjected to first administrative change only when the infamous Bengal partition was proclaimed in 1905. Dinajpur became a part of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam as per 1905 proclamation. However, it became again a district of Bengal in 1912. West Dinajpur was carved out of the erstwhile Dinajpur district in 1947 at the time of partition of India. The rest of Dinajpur is now in Bangladesh. West Dinajpur was subsequently enlarged in 1956 with addition of some area of Bihar and was bifurcated into Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur on 01.04.1992. This was followed by subsequent readjustment by merging of Saiyadpur and Gokarna gram Panchayats of Itahar Block of Uttar Dinajpur with Bansihari CD Block (now the two GPs come under Harirampur CD Block) of Dakshin Dinajpur. Islampur, which is a sub-division of Uttar Dinajpur was the area of Purnea district of Bihar state before 1956.