

Chapter 4

Political Scenario and Power Structure in

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It is very difficult to examine the history of ancient Puṇḍravardhana, because we have scanty archaeological and literary sources of ancient time. The discovery of a fragmentary stone inscription of Mauryan Brāhmī script from Mahasthangarh (Bhandarkar, 1932, pp. 83-90) (Bogrā district of Bangladesh) is the earliest inscription of this part of the land. The description of the inscription is as follows: ‘Some ruler of the Mauryan period, whose name is lost, had issued an order to the *Mahāmātra*, stationed at Puṇḍranagara, with a view to relieve the distressed caused apparently by a famine to a people called *Samvaṅgiyas* who were settled in and about the town. Two measures were adopted to meet this contingency. The first apparently consisted of the advanced of a loan in *gaṇḍaka* coins, and the second of the distribution of *dhānya* or paddy from the district granary. A wish is expressed that the *Samvaṅgiyas* will thus be able to tide over the calamity. With the restoration of plenty they were asked to return the coins to the Treasury and the corn to the granary.’ (Bhandarkar, 1932, p. 123)

This inscription reveals some facts as follows:

1. It establishes the identity of the present Mahasthan with the ancient Puṇḍranagara.
2. The use of Brāhmī alphabet, which was the court language of the Mauryan Empire is clearly indicated that the North Bengal formed an integral part of the Mauryan dominions.
3. The word ‘Samvaṅgiyas’ can be taken as a conglomeration of ‘Vaṅgiyas’ under a collective term of that the Puṇḍras also belong to the *Samvaṅgiya* confederacy.

Bangarh is another site of the Mauryan origin. The excavation of this site has revealed some key facts of the history of North Bengal. The stratum V is associated with the Mauryan period. NBP ware, punch marked coins, beads, architectural

remains and so on have been discovered from this stratum. (Goswami, 1948, pp. 1, 5, 11, 14, 24-24, 34)

Śuṅga Period

The political history of this period, particularly in the Northern Bengal, is in obscurity due to scarcity of the historical facts. But recent discoveries of artefacts along with the other findings are able to shed some light on this obscurity of the history of Bengal. One terracotta plaque of the Śuṅga period (c. 2nd century BCE) found from Mahasthan in 1928-29. (Stapleton, 1932, p. 133) Goswami recovers a terracotta female figure of Śuṅga period from his Bangarh excavations. It has a bird (parrot) in her right hand, probably a duck (*hamsa*) on the right side and a deer on her left. (Goswami, 1948, p. 19) New discovery of terracotta fragment from Bangarh showing the head of a female figure with typical Śuṅga hairstyle. (Picture 16) One coin of 15 gram has been recovered from Shivbari, Bangarh which bears obscure images of Sun, rectangle, circle and half-moon shapes. (Picture 17) The coin has been categorised by the expert with the coins of the Śuṅga period. (Adhikary, 2012)

Kuṣāna Period

It is very difficult to include Puṇḍravardhana in the Kuṣāna Empire because of paucity of Kuṣāna coins and other artefacts. One gold coin from Malda and one copper coin from Nopara, Brajavallavpur send a faint light on the history of this part of the land at that time. The coin from Malda is similar to the Rajshahi Museum coin of Vasudeva (c. 185 to 220 CE). The coin 'bears on the obverse the profile figure of king standing with a trident in left and making an offering with right hand on an altar near which another trident is posted. He wears a peaked cap or helmet, a coat of mail and trousers, and a sword hangs down from his waist. The halo is represented only in part by an arch is a regular feature of the portraits of Kushan kings later than Kanishka. A symbol which looks like a *Nandipada* occurs below the king's left arm. The Greek legend along edge of the coin reads – *Shaonano-Shao Bazodeo Koshano*. The reverse bears the device of two armed Shiva standing by the side of his bull. He holds a trident in his left hand and a noose in his out-stretched right hand. He has also halo as a sign of his Godhood. Above the right arm, there is a four-pronged symbol. To the left of the figure occurs in Greek Oesho which is taken to be the transliteration

of a Sanskrit word denoting Shiva. There is a series of dots along the border of the coin.’ (Majumdar, 1932, pp. 127-28). In the second coin from Bangsihari bears on the obverse a standing figure of the king, whose left hand is holding the sword that hangs down from his waist and making an offering by his right hand on an altar near which another trident with *damaroo* is posted. (Picture 18) The attire is also same as that of Malda coin. *Nandipada* like symbol is visible under the kings left arm. A legend along the edge of the coin in Kharashti script says ‘Maharajes Rajadhiraj Sarvalog Eswares Mahasivares Bhima Kadfises’ and the Greek legend ‘Basileus Basileuon Soter Megas Ooema Kadphises’ means ‘king of kings Vima Kadphises the great savior.’ (Adhikary, 2013, pp. 151-64)

Gupta Period

The Gupta period, in Indian history, is known as the golden era of Indian civilization. But there is debate regarding their original homeland. Mainly three theories are there in the debate. The whole debate is centred around the identification of the Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no *stūpa*. In the vicinity of which the ‘Temple of China’ was built by Mahārāja Che-li-ki-to (Śrī-Gupta). (Sharma, 1989, pp. 36-40) I-Tsing (671-72 to 693-94 CE), (Chavannes, 1894, pp. 82-83; Beal, 1914, pp. Introduction XXXVI-XXXVII) a seventh century Chinese Pilgrim, records one old tradition of Śrīgupta. According to this Maharaja Śrīgupta built a temple for the Chinese priest known as the ‘Temple of China’, near the sanctuary of Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no and granted twenty-four villages for the maintenance of the temple. The temple was situated at a distance of forty *yojonas* (240 km approx.) to the east of Nalanda, following the course of the river Ganges. Scholars like D. C. Ganguly translate Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no as Mṛigaśikhāvana and indentifies Mahārāja Śrīgupta with the founder of the Gupta dynasty. Ganguly, keeping in mind the direction of the temple from Nalanda, placed this temple at Murshidabad. He also mentions that, the early home of the imperial Guptas is to be located in ‘Murshidabad, Bengal and not in Magadha.’ (Ganguly, 1938, pp. 533-35) R. C. Majumdar, taking Foucher’s translation of Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no with Mṛigasthāpana as correct, mentioned about a picture of a *stūpa* of ‘Mṛigasthāpana *Stūpa* of Varendra’ from an illustrated Cambridge Manuscript, dated 1015 CE. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 69) Sudhakar Chattopadhyay hinted that, this *stūpa* was situated in the Malda district.

(Chattopadhyay, 1959, pp. 137-38) Sources ascertain the facts that, the southern boundary of Varendra was the river Ganges and Murshidabad district was in the Rāḍhā region. Therefore, the search for the current location of Mṛigasthāpana and the ‘temple of China’ can be made in the Varendra region only. As I-Tsing suggests, the Mṛigasthāpana *stupa* was situated forty stages east of Nalanda, descending the Ganges. (Chavannes, 1894) But no ruins of the Gupta period suitable to be that of the sanctuary or of the Chinese temple have so far been found in Varendra region. H. Sarkar suggests the Ekdala-Bairhatta region as the current location of these sites. (Sarkar, 2015, pp. 88-109)

The present work wants to draw attention to two sites of Malda district regarding the location of Mṛigasthāpana *stupa*. One is the Pichli-Gangarampur region and secondly the Kandaran-Sanjib region. However, the present work wants to concentrate in the Kandaran-Sanjib region. The distance between Nalanda and this region is approximately 250 km along the course of the Ganges. This region includes the sites named Kandaran, Sambhunagar, Caitanpati, Anandaganj, Govindapur, Gourhanda, Vangapal, Damanviti, Virasthali, Daksinsahr and Sanjib. The settlements cover an area not less than 10 km. The ruins of Kandaran gave Rajanikanta Chakrabarty the impression that a large Buddhist *stupa* lay buried in its mounds. (Chakrabarty, 1982, p. 32) In the list of ancient archaeological sites of Varendra arranged by the Varendra Research Society, Kandaran figures due to its mounds. (Maitreya, 1949) A good number of Gupta sculptures were found from these sites. Two terracotta heads of the second/third century were recovered from the Kandaran mound. (Bhattacharyya, 1995, pp. 64-69) It might be suggested that in this region Śrīgupta of I-Tsing’s record, built the temple of China and donated twenty-four villages for its maintenance. The distance between Nalanda and Kandaran matches I-Tsing’s description. It might also be concluded that the present study area was under Śrī-Gupta’s control.

Samudragupta

The **Allahabad pillar inscription** (Fleet, 1888, pp. 1-17) mentions Samataṭa, Ḍavāka, Kāmarūpa and Nēpāla as frontier (*pratyanta*) states of Samudragupta’s empire.¹ Samataṭa was the land that lies in the east of the river Brahmaputra to the Tripura, Garo and Khasi hills. On the south, it extends up to the Bay of Bengal.

Davāka is identified with the land of the northern part of the Dacca, south-western Mymansingh and Rangpur district. Kāmarūpa is obviously Assam. Nēpāla still exists with its uncorrupted name. Therefore, the entire land of Puṇḍravardhana had already been in the territory of Samudragupta. (Stapleton, 1932, p. 135) The study area might be the core area of the Guptas.

Chandragupta II

During the time of Chandragupta II, the control of the Gupta Empire over Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* was strong. Though, no inscription of his time have so far been found from this area, but few coins, viz, three coins of Śrīvikrama (Archer) type found from Bogra district, Bangladesh. (Sanyal, 1928, p. 1.i) Same type of coin was found from Patisar, Rajshahi, Bangladesh. (Majumdar, 1932, P. 135) A fifth century Buddha image was recovered from Biharoil (Tanor, Rajshahi). (Rahman, 1998, p. 4)

Kumāragupta I

Dhanaidaha CPI (Basak, 1923-24, pp. 345-48; Sircar, 1948, pp. 280-81) of 113GE (432-33 CE) of Kumāragupta I (113 GE – 135 GE) is the oldest inscription found from North Bengal. In this plate, a plot of land measuring one *kulyavāpa* was bought and donated to Varāha-svāmin, a Chhandyōga (*charaṇa* of the Sāma-vēda) Brāhmaṇa, an inhabitant of the Koṭaka. The donated land was situated in the Khādā(ṭā?)pāraviṣaya of Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. Here Kumāragupta I is described as *parama-daivata parama-bhaṭṭaraka*, which suggests his sway over Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*.

The **Sultanpur CPI** (dated 121 GE = 440 CE) (Sanyal, 1960, pp. 57-66) has no mention of the king's name. But, the date of this inscription was in the time of Kumāragupta I. The inscription records the gift of land of nine *kulyavāpas* to three Brāhmaṇas, namely, Devadatta, Amaradatta and Mahāsēnadatta, who belong to Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* and were students of the Vājasanēya (school of Yajurveda) school and well versed in the four *Vēdās*, to enable them to perform the five great sacrifices (*pañchmahāyajña*). The donation was made in four villages named Hastiśirsha, Vibhītakī, Gulmagandhikā and Dhānyapāṭalikā, all lying within Gōhāli, in the Śrīngavera Vithī. The present Singra PS in the Natore district, Bangladesh, identified by Basak as the current location of Śrīngavera Vithī.

Five Damodarpur CPIs (Basak, 1982, pp. 113-45) of the Gupta era have been discovered from Damodarpur village of Dinajpur district (now in Bangladesh) rendered huge knowledge of Gupta chronology and other important historical data for the history of the Gupta period. In the **Damodarpur CPI** of 124 GE (444 CE) (plate #1) and In the **Damodarpur CPI** of 129 GE (448-49) (plate #2) (Basak, 1982, pp. 113-45), Kumāragupta I is adorned with an eloquent title of *parama-daivata parama-bhaṭṭaraka-mahārājadhīrāja*. By the deed of plate #1, Karpaṭika, a Brāhmaṇa, purchased one *kulyavāpa* of land on the northeast of the Ḍōngā village to perform *agnihotra* rites and by the deed of plate #2, a plot of land of five *dronavāpas* in Airāvata was sold to perform *pañchamahāyajña*.

The **Jagadishpur CPI** of 128 GE (447-48 CE) (Sircar, 1973, pp. 8-14) was issued by the Āyuktaka Acyuta from the Pūrṇakauśikā *adhīkarana* of Śrṅgavera-vīthī. But here no mention have been made of the name of the emperor, but Acyuta is described as devoted to the feet of the lord (*bhaṭṭāraka-pād-ānudhyātaḥ*), which might be the Gupta Emperor Kumāragupta I. The copper-plate records three persons, namely, Kṣemaka, Bhoiyala and Mahīdāsa (*kutumbins*), who purchased one *kulyavāvapa* of land for donation of three religious establishments. These are 1) built a *vihāra* (Buddhist monastery) for ‘the worship of Arhats’, 2) built a *vihārika* (small monastery) for Arhats and 3) built a temple for Sahasrarasmi (the Sun god) and to provide *bali* (offering to creatures), *caru* (offering to the manes) and *sattru* (reception of guests). Most important fact of the grant is that Bhoiyala established a temple of the Sun god on the Gulmagandhika village in which lay a Buddhist *vihāra*. He also donated to both the Buddhist *vihāra* and the Sun temple. This is a clear indication of religious tolerance that was prevailed in the Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* during the Gupta rule.

The **Baigrama CPI of 128 GE** (447-48 CE) (Basak, 1931-32, pp. 78-83; Sircar, 1948, pp. 342-46) of the Gupta Emperor Kumāragupta I’s reign was issued by Kumāramatyā Kulavṛiddhi, who meditated on the feet of his Majesty (*Bhaṭṭaraka-pāda*). It records that a person named Śivanandin previously built a temple of Govinda-svāmin, but the endowment was not sufficient. For the daily worship and repairing of the temple, his two sons Bholiya and Bhāskara, applied to the local

authority for a land of three *kulyavāpas* and two *drōṇavāpas* at the rate of two *dināras* in Trivṛita and Śrigōhālī village.

A **fragment of CPI** of Baigrama (Griffiths, 2018, pp. 15-57) from the website of Indian Museum, Kolkata (accession number A20050/9085) has been reported by Griffiths in 2018. (Picture 19) The inscription is mentioned under the heading of ‘fragment of an inscription from Baigram’ in the website of Indian Museum.² This plate records the toponym of Śīgo^ouli and name Śīvanandin. In the Baigrama CPI of 128 GE, find mention of two toponyms, Vaṭagōhālī and Śrigōhālī, and name of Śīvanandin as father of the purchasers Bhoyila and Bhāskara. It might be possible that, these two inscriptions was a ‘part of a hoard that would have contained two or more plates forming the archive of a particular shrine or family, like the Damodarpur plates.’ (Griffiths, 2018, p. 40)

Budhagupta

The **Mahatī-Raktamālā CPI** (Griffiths, 2015, pp. 15-38) is a recent discovery, which come under the radius of our study. This grant was issued during the reign of the Gupta Emperor Budhagupta in 159 GE (478 CE) from the Mahatī-Raktamālā *agrahāra*. By this grant, Nandabhūti, a Brāhmaṇa of Vājasanēya (School of Yajurveda) purchased two *kulyavāpas* of uncultivated land in the village of Govardhanaka and donated to the Brāhmaṇas of Dugdhaṭikā to perform *pañchamahāyajña*. In exchange of this land, he gets two *kulyavāpas* of land in Khuḍḍi-Raktamālā village. The grant contains one primary seal of ‘Of the council of appointees of the territory of Madhyamaṣaṇḍika’ (*maddhyamaṣaṇḍikavīthyāyuktakādhikaraṇasya*) and a secondary seal, which contain the name of the Yūthapati (*kumārāmātya*). This grant was not issued by the emperor himself, but by the *kumārāmātya* Yūthapati, who meditated on the feet of the king. (*paramabhaṭṭarakapādānuddhyātaḥ*) Notwithstanding, the absence of name of the emperor Budhagupta, his role in the present grant is more observable than that of any king in any other Gupta inscription of Puṇḍravardhana. (Griffiths, 2018, p. 25) The key points of this grant are

- 1) for the first time it attached a secondary seal, (Picture 20)

- 2) It mentions an officer styled *deśoparika*, who's name is Svāmicandra, mediating between *uparika* and *kumārāmātya*, and
- 3) This grant, for the first time, looked after the interests of individuals between the policies of local and central authorities.

The **second Mahatī Raktamālā CPI** (Griffiths, 2018, pp. 55-57) was issued from (?)lavilintīagrahāra by *kumārāmātya* Gopāla, who meditated on the feet of the emperor. The application was made by a noble man (*kulaputra*) Gaṇadatta of Mahatī-Raktamālā *agrahāra* for a land of one *kulyavāpa* in exchange of two hundred *rūpaka* coins. He purchased the land and donated to Yaśobhūti, a Brāhmaṇa from Mahatī-Raktamālā *agrahāra*. The exact date of this grant is not possible to decipher. But Griffiths suggest it in the 'second century of the Gupta era and on the thirteenth day of an indeterminable month'. (Griffiths, 2018, p. 25) It has exactly the same seal like the previous grant. Most notable points of this grant are

1. for the first time the term *paṇa* and *kārṣāpaṇa* were used in the Gupta inscriptions of Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* and
2. this is the oldest occurrence of *kārṣāpaṇa* in the history of Bengal.

The **Paharpur CPI** of 159 GE (479 CE) (Dikshit, 1933, pp. 59-64; Sircar, 1948, pp. 346-349) issued by the *nagara-śrēṣṭhīn* at Puṇḍravardhana. Nātha-Śarmma and his wife Rāmī purchased land of one and a half *kulyavāpas* of land and donated to Guhaṇandin (*Śramaṇ-āchāryya*) of a *vihāra* of the Nirgranthas of *pañchastūpanikāya* sect. The lands were given in four *drōṇavāpas* in Pṛishṭhima-pōttaka, four *drōṇavāpas* in Gōshāṭapuñjaka, two and a half *drōṇavāpas* in Nitva-Gōhālī, and one and a half in *drōṇavāpas* Vaṭa-Gōhālī. The name of the emperor is missing here. But in the line 16th line, mention has been made of *parama-bhaṭṭaraka-pādānām* and give him a sixth share of the religious merit accruing from this endowment. This type of grant shows thereligious tolerance of the times. (Mookerji, 1989, p. 115)

The **thirdCPI of Damodarpur** of 163 GE (482-83 CE) (Plate #3), (Basak, 1919-20, pp. 134-37) issued during the reign of the Gupta emperor Budhagupta, who also adorned with *parama-daivata parama-bhaṭṭaraka-mahārājadhirāja* title,

mentions the purchase of one *kulyavāpa* of land by Nābhaka, the *grāmika* (village headman) of the village of Chaṇḍa-grāma, for the purpose of settling some Brāhmaṇa.

The **fourth CPI of Damodarpur** (Plate #4) ((Basak, 1919-20, pp. 137-41) issued during the reign of the Gupta Emperor Budhagupta (476-494 CE), who praised as *parama-daivata parama-bhaṭṭaraka-mahārājadhirāja*. Here, Ṛbhupāla, the *nagara-srēṣṭhin* of the Kōṭivarṣa had previously donated four *kulyavāpas* of land for the Kōkāmukha-svāmin and seven *kulyavāpas* of land for the Svētavarāha-svāmin in Dōṅga-grāma in Himavachchhikhare. By this grant, Ṛbhupāla purchased some more land for the construction of two temples and two store-rooms for the supreme gods Kōkāmukha-svāmin and Svētavarāha-svāmin (and?) one *Nāmaliṅgam* (?) by the side of the land previously donated by him.

The **Nāgavasū CPI** of 198 GE (518 CE) (Griffiths, 2018, pp. 35-39) issued from Puṇḍravardhana, mentions Nāgavasū purchased two *kulyavāpas* of land in exchange of four *dīnāras*. He donated it to Jinadāsa and Karṇaka (*kṣamanācāryya*) for the regular performance of *bali*, *caru*, *nivedya* etc. to the two monasteries at Śiṣīpuṅja and Madhyamasṛgālikā as well as the monastery founded by a Brāhmaṇa in Grāmakūṭagohālī. The details of the land measuring a half *kulyavāpa* of waste land at Śiṣīpuṅja, one *kulyavāpa* of waste land at Madhyamasṛgālikā and a half *kulyavāpa* of waste land at Grāmakūṭagohālī. The name of the emperor is not found in this plate.

Next in this list is the **Nandapur CPI** (Majumdar, 1940, pp. 52-56; Sahai, 1983, pp. 40-41) of the time of the Gupta Emperor Budhagupta, which is recovered from Monghyr district of Bihar. N. G. Majumdar mentioned some similarities of this grant with the Damodarpur CPIs and particularly with Baigrama CPI in respect of the script, phraseology, price and use of 8 x 9 *nala* (reeds) in measurement, which make him to decide that ‘the document was drafted, engraved and issued from Bengal, or more precisely from North Bengal’. (Majumdar, 1940, p. 54) By this grant the *viṣayapati* Chhatramaha purchased four *kulyavāpas* of fallow land in the village of Jaṅgōyikā. This grant is quite different from other Gupta grants from this region. Here, the grant is issued by the *viṣayapati* Chhatramaha, not by the emperor Budhagupta. This grant can be taken as an example of decentralisation of the Gupta power in Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*.

The **fifth Damodarpur CPI** issued in the 214 GE (533-534 CE) (Basak, 1919-20, pp. 141-45) records Amṛīṭadēva, a nobleman (*kulaputra*) from Ayōdhyā purchased five *kulyavāpas* of land in exchange of 15 *dīnāras* for donation to the temple of Svētavarāha Swāmin for repairing, etc., for the continuation of *bali*, *caru*, *sattra* etc. and the materials for daily worship of the god. Sircar, stated his view about the identity of the donor, who is mentioned as *Ayōdhyā-kulaputrak-amṛīṭadēda* explained as Amṛīṭadēda born in a noble family hailing from Ayōdhyā near modern Faizamad district. (Sircar, 1948, p. 338, foot note 1) This opinion seems to be doubtful. It is quite fascinating that someone coming from Ayōdhyā had purchased some land to repair the temple at Kōṭivarṣa in the sixth century CE. On the contrary, a place named Ayōdhyā with ancient ruins is in the Balurghat PS of South Dinajpur comes to our mind. This Amṛīṭadēva might belong to this place. (Sarkar, 2015, p. 107) The donated lands of this grant belonged to five villages, measuring two *kulyavāpas* with *vastu* in Svachchhandapāṭaka and Lavaṅgasikā, one *kulyavāpa* with *vastu* in Saṭuvanaśramaka, one *kulyavāpa* with *vastu* in Pañchakulyavāpaka and to the east of Jambūnadī and one *kulyavāpa* to the east of Pāṭaka in Puraṅavrindikahari. This grant contains a seal which bears the symbol of a trident in relief with the legend of *kōṭivarsha-ādhiśṭhan-adhi(karanasya)*. This inscription also mentions Dēvabhaṭṭaraka, the king's son, as *uparika-mahārāja* of the Puṅḍravardhana *bhukti* and the emperor as *parama-daivata parama-bhaṭṭaraka-mahārājadhirāja*.

Post Gupta Period

The **Mastakaśvabhra CPI** of Pradyumnabandhu (Griffiths, 2015, pp. 15-38) is an interesting discovery in the history of Puṅḍravardhana. The copper-plate has a primary seal and a secondary seal also. The primary seal bears a Gajalakṣmī device and a legend of 'of the council in the Ghoṅādvīpaka district' (*ghoṅādvīpaka-viṣaye°adhikaraṇasya*) and the second seal contains the name of *pradyunmabandhoḥ*. The script used in the grant is a variety of late Eastern Brāhmī. The grant was issued in the fifth year of the victory of the great king Śrīpradyunmabandhu. In this grant, Avadhūta (*mahāpratihāra*) purchased the village of Mastakaśvabhra along with its citron-grove in exchange of thousand *cūrṇikā* (cowrie-shells) and donated to Jayadeva, a Brāhmaṇa of the *Vājasaneyā* (school of Yajurveda) and son of Bhogadeva, for the purpose of the regular performance of the *pañchamahāyajña* (five

great sacrifices). The grant was issued from the council of Ghoṇādvīpaka *viṣaya*. Firstly the land was purchased, through the district council, from the individual Brāhmaṇa, the temples and monasteries of the region. The key points of this grant as follows

- 1) This grant confirms the complete abolition of the Gupta power from North Bengal.
- 2) It mentions for the first time, in any copper-plate inscriptions of Puṇḍravardhana, some administrative evolutions like the Great Chamberlin (*mahāpratīhāra*), great notables (*mahāmahāmāttara*), hamlet notables (*paṭaka mahattara*). (Table 2)
- 3) This grant is more than a donation deed; it is a decree by the administrator. It imposed an annual additional tax (*uparikara*) of forty-five *kārṣāpāṇas* to the village of Mastakaśvabhra. It dictates that the land, which were previously donated to the Brāhmaṇas, temples and monasteries can be purchased once again and could be donated for the benefit of the king.
- 4) This grant also pictured the poor economic condition of that time and sheds more light on the monetary system of early post-Gupta time of North Bengal. The taxes were calculated in *kārṣāpāṇas*, but the price of the land was paid in *cūrṇikās*. This can be taken as an instance of early use of cowrie shells in the economy of North Bengal.
- 5) This grant records some more personal names along with their belonging places. Such names include Ādityadeva, Jayadeva Śivabhadra; Śarvadeva; Pavittrasoma Kṣemadeva (*mahāmahattarā*) of Ṣaṇḍa dvīpa (island); Gaurakakiraṇasvāmi Rudrasvāmi of Pravara dvīpa, Śambhusvāmin of Pippalivanikā, Bhākideva of Pātravāṭa, Gopasoma of Śaṅkarapallika, Bhaṭṭadharmmasvāmin of Śivanagara, Bhadrasvāmin, Śrīcandra and Kṣemaśarman of dvīpaka, Amṛtaśāntanu of Varahakoṭṭaka, Dharmmakunḍa of Śivaguptakhataka, Jalla of Ardrala, Jalacandra and Śyāmadeva of Audumvarika, Abhinandana and Malayarudra (*mahamahattara*); Yaśodeva, praśastarudra, mittradeva of Bhilota, Śāntirudra and Dharmarudra of Varṣagrīma (*pāṭaka mahattara*); Nātharudra (*mahattara*); Guhayaśas (Brāhmaṇa); Naradatta, Eḍita(nu), Devasena (*karaṇika*); Śambhudatta, Kṛṣṇadatta, Paurudatta (*viṣayaadhikaraṇika*). These personal names and the

toponyms are a treasure for the history of early late-Gupta period of Bengal. (Table 2)

In the sixth century CE, the Gupta power in Bengal became lean particularly in the Samatāṭa and the Rādhā region. During that time, Bengal witnessed the rise of small dynasties in these regions. In various inscriptions of that time mention has been made of Dharmāditya, Gopachandra and Samāchāradeva as *Mahārājādhirāja*. (Pargiter, 1910, pp. 193-216; Sircar, 1948, pp. 350-359). It is hard to figure out their reigning territories. But it can be figured out from the inscriptions that the whole of Northern Bengal were evidently outside of their dominions. From the fifth Damodarpur CPI, some coins and the Chinese traveller's records it can be assumed that the later Gupta Emperors could hardly have any independent sway in these parts before 600 CE. (Bhattachali, 1927, p. N 3)

Rise of Gauḍa

The **Harara inscription** of Išānavarman (Sastri, 1917-18, pp. 110-120) informed that, he compelled the kingdom of Gauḍa, who were strong on the sea, to remain within its proper limits.³ The verse 13 of the inscription gives two presumptions. 'First, that by 554 CE Gauḍa was an independent power, secondly, that it had not only become independent but was trying to overstep its natural frontiers. Three kings of Bengal who must be ascribed to this period are known, viz. Dharmāditya, Gopachandra and Samāchāra. These are all styled *Mahārājādhirāja* in their Faridpur plates.' (Bhattachali, 1927, p. n 5)

Śaśāṅka

It might be possible that, Samāchārādēva was succeeded on the throne of Gauḍa by Śaśāṅka, who had his capital at Karṇasuvarṇa.⁴ (Bhattachali, 1927, p. N 5) Śaśāṅka, in the beginning of his reign, appears to have been compelled to bow before the Maukhari overlords and acknowledge himself as Mahāsāmanta; but his seal discovered on the Rohtasgarh, on the west bank on the river Son, shows that he was powerful enough to hold the whole of Eastern India lying roughly between the rivers Śon and Brahmaputra. (Bhattachali, 1927, p. N 5)

The round shaped stone **seal-matrix of Rohtasgarh** is divided into two parts. In the upper part of the seal, a recumbent bull takes place and in the lower part, it contains two lines as mentioned hereinunder:

1. Śrī-mahāsāmanta
2. Śaśāṅkadēvasya

Translation: of the illustrious Mahāsāmanta Śaśāṅkadēva. (Fleet, 1888, pp. 283-284) Śaśāṅka came into power in not less than 619 CE. The copper-plate grants of Śaśāṅka of 300 GE (619-20 CE) describe him with a figurative title of *Mahārājadhirāja Śaśāṅkarāja*. This plate mentions a grant to a brāhmaṇa by the Mahārāja Madhavarāja II of Śīladbhava family, son of Yaśobhūta and Madhavarāja I in 300 GE, while ‘the *mahārājadhirāja-Śrī-Śaśāṅkarāja* was rulling the earth’. (Hultzsch, 1900-01, pp. 143-146)

The Chinese pilgrim **Hiuen Tsang** mentions that, Rājyavardhana, king of Pusyabhūti dynasty and elder brother of Harṣavardhana, was treacherously murdered by Śaśāṅka (*She-shang-kia*), ‘the wicked king of Karṇasuvarṇa (*Kie-lo-na-su-fa-lana*)’ in East India. (Watters, 1904, p. 343; Beal, 1884, p. 210.). In the *Harṣacarita*, Bāṇabhaṭṭa echoed with Hiuen Tsang and mentions that the king who slew Rājyavardhana was Śaśāṅka, king of Gauḍa (*Śaśāṅkanāmā Gauḍadhipatiḥ*). (Cowell & Thomas, 1897, p. 178)

After the death of Śaśāṅka his kingdom possibly passed into the hands of Harṣa, who was then in the zenith of his power. It is only on the dismemberment of the great empire of Harṣa shortly after his death, that it was possible for a time being, Bhaskarabarmān of Kāmṛūpa to get any holds over Karṇasuvarṇa. The Nidhanpur copper-plate inscription of Bhaskara Barman was issued from Karṇasuvarṇa. (*skandhāvārāt Karṇasuvarṇa-vāsakāt*) (Bhattachariya, 1913-14, pp. 65-79) However, it seems that, the control of Bhaskaravarman over Karṇasuvarṇa or Gauḍa was short-lived. One gold coin (*dināra*) of Śaśāṅka of 9.2 gram weight has been recovered from Siol village of Bangshihari PS, South Dinajpur District. (Adhikary, 2013, p. 158) (Picture 21) Description:

Obverse: Śiva, nimbate, reclining to left on bull (Nandi) with left hand uplifted, holding uncertain object; moon (Śaśānka) above on left side. Śrī-Śa written is Brāhmī on right and jaya on below.

Reverse: Goddess (Laksmī), nimbate, seated facing on lotus, holding bhāndara (treasure) in left hand which rests on knee, and with outstretched right hand holding a lotus. Śrī-Śaśānka is written on left.

This discovery unhesitatingly proved Śaśānka's control over the area under study.

Jayanāga appears to have been risen to power sometimes after the death of Śaśānka. John Allan, after examining the coins of Gupta Emperors and Śaśānka, describes coins of a king whose name began with *Jaya*. He unhesitatingly connects the coins of *Jaya* with those of Śaśānka. The *cakrastandard* on his coins is very likely an indication that he did not belong to the line of Śaśānka, who was staunch Śaiva by faith. (Allan, 1914, p. Introduction Lxi)

The **Shahpur stone image inscription** of Ādityasena of the year of 66 of the (671-72 CE) reflects the fact that he was an independent ruler of Magadha during that time. (Fleet, 1888, pp. 208-10)

The **Ragholi plates** of Jayavardhana II of the Śailavaṃśa, issued from Śrīvardhanapura, mentions one of the three sons of Souvardhana killed the king of Pauṇḍra, who is described by his enemies as skilful in destroying his enemies. (Lal, 1907-08, p. 42) At the beginning of the eighth century CE, the land of Pundravardhana was probably governed by Yaśovarmana of Kanauj, who ascended the throne of Kanauj between 725 and 731 CE, in or about 728 CE. (Smith, 1908, p. 775) Lalitāditya-Muktāpīḍa, king of Kashmir, who ascended the throne about 724 CE, was in alliance with Yaśovarmana in his early years. But, some years later, probably about 740-745 CE, he attacked the kingdom of Kanouj and uprooted Yaśovarmana entirely. (Smith, 1908, pp. 776-77; Stein, 1900, pp. 132-34) Lalitāditya-Muktāpīḍa, after crushing Yaśovarmana, probably conquered Gauḍa. Kalhana, in his *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* mentions '(v. 323) This was, that he killed by assassins the king of *Gauḍa* (Bengāl) at *Trigrāmī*, though he had made the glorious [image of Viṣṇu] *Parihāsakeśava* a surety [for the guest's safety]'. The followers of the Gauḍa king travelled to Kashmir to avenge the assassination and to destroy the favourite object of

Lalitāditya's devotion the image of Parihāsakeśava. Kalhana mentions them as 'dark coloured (men)'. (Stein, 1900, pp. 152-53)

The **Pasupati inscription** of Jayadēva of 153 HE (758-59 CE) mentions Jayadēva as lord of the Gouḍa, Oḍra, Kalinga, Kosala and other lands, who crushed the heads of hostile kings with the club-like tusks of his rutting elephants. (Indraji & Buhler, 1880, pp. 178-83)

The Pāla Empire

The seventh century and the first half of the eighth century CE was comparatively a dark period of the history of Bengal and North Bengal as well. This period shows political turmoil and foreign invasions of many powerful monarchs from different parts of India and outside world. After the collapse of the Gupta empire, Bengal suffers the absent of one powerful force, which could safeguard the subjects of Bengal from the outer world. One more reason for this was that time the Magadha lost its political valour as a capital city and Kanauj (*mahodaya*) became the symbol of political suzerainty of North India. From that time, the crown of political gravity of Magadha was sifted to Kanauj for a time being. It was the Pāla rulers, under whom the former get back her reputation back. Thaneswar under Pusyabhuties, Kanauj under Maukharies and Kamrupa under Varmanas, these neighbouring kingdoms became more powerful and on the other hand the small and fragmented political units of Bengal became their open field for showcasing their heroism and valour. Another reason for such condition was lack of unity among the political powers of the then Bengal. During that time Gauḍa, Rādhā, Harikela and Samataṭa were divided and governed by small kingdoms. None of them was able to conquer the entire eastern India. It was Śaśāṅka, who gave a strong resistance to them. But shortly after his demise the practice of fishes started in Bengal.

Gopāla (c. 750-74 CE)

The **Khalimpur CPI**, (Kielhorn, 1896-97, pp. 243-53) issued in the 32nd regnal year of the Pāla king Dharmapāladēva, is a hoard of information for the early history of the Pāla Empire. This grant refers:

mātsyanyāyam apohitum prakṛitibhir lakshmyāḥ karaṅgrāhitah |

Śrī-Gopāla iti kshītīśa śirasām chūḍāmaṇis tat sutah | | (v. 4)

Kielhorn's translation: "His (Vapyāta) son was the crest-jewel of the heads of kings, the glorious Gopāla, whom the people made take the hand of Fortune, to put an end to the practice of fishes."

So according to this grant Gopāla was made king in order to get rid of the state of anarchy which prevailed in Bengal during the first half of the eighth century CE. The word *prakṛitibhir* in simple sense means 'subject'. It might be possible that the decision was originally made by the leading chiefs or officials and was subsequently endorsed and acclaimed by the people. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 97) Here in this chapter an attempt should be made to figure out any possible clue of them.

Inscriptions, so far discovered from Northern part of Bengal, in other word from Puṅḍravardhana *bhukti* or Varendra hinted some powerful and privileged families, who possibly became key factor for decision making. First of all, this discussion can be start with the persons having *datta* suffix in their name. In the Kalaikuri-Sultanpur grant, the applicants were Dēvadatta, Amaradatta and Mahāsēnadatta, and one artisan Sambhadatta. Chirātadatta is mentioned as *uparika* in Damodarpur plate #1 and plate #2. While Ṛsidatta and Vibhudatta were the record keepers of plate #2. The Jagadishpur plate mentions two *kuṭumbiṅs* namely Śrīdatta and Bhavadatta. One *pustapāla* of Baigrama plate was Durgādatta. Suvarcasadatta as *mahāmātra* and Brahmadata as *uparika* were mentioned in Mahati-Raktamālā plate #1, while Mahati-Raktamālā plate #2 mentions Gaṇadatta as *kulaputra* and Keśavadatta as *pustapāla*. In the Damodarpur plate #3, Brahmadata is mentioned again with an additional title of *mahārāja* with *uparika*. The *uparika* of Damodarpur plate #4 is Jayadatta, and Varadatta is chief *kulika* and Viṣṇudatta is *pustapāla*. The Nāgavasū plate mentions Jayadatta and Rāmadatta as primary record keepers (*ādyapustapāla*). This list is even longer in the Mastakaśvabhra grant, where four officials, viz. Naradatta as *karaṅika*, Sambhadatta, Kṛṣṇadatta and Purudatta as *viṣayaadhikaraṅika*, are mentioned.

Second in this list is the name with *pāla* suffix. The *mahāttaras* of the Dhanaidaha grant are Varggapāla, Gōpāla and Sōmapāla. Dhritipāla as guild president (*nagaraśreṣṭhiṅ*) and Sāmbhapāla as chief scribe are mentioned in both the

Damodarpur plate #1 and plate #2. In the Mahati-Raktamālā plate #2, the *kumārāmātya* is again a Gōpāla. But it could not be possible to mention that the Gōpāla of Dhanaidaha plate and Mahati-Raktamālā plate #2 is same person or not. The Damodarpur plate #3 mentions Sthāya(ṅ)pāla as *pustapāla*. R̥bhupāla, the *nagara-śreṣṭhin* and the applicant of the Damodarpur plate #4, want to purchase more land on the neighbouring areas of the Kōkāmukha-svāmin and Śvētavarāha-svāmin temples, where he previously purchased 11 *kulyavāpas* of land.

Third in this list is the *nandin*. Simhanandin is the record keeper (*pustpāla*) of Kalaikuri-Sultanpur grant, Jayanandin is the *pustapāla* of Damodarpur plate #2 and the *pustapālas* of Damodarpur plate #4 are Vijayanandin and Sthānanandin. Most important among the *nandins* is Śivanandin of Baigrama plate and Baigrama fragment plate. Śivanandin built the temple of Govindasvāmin and his two sons, Bhōyila and Bhāskara purchased some land for this temple again. Bhōyila, one of the *kuṭumbins* of the Jagadishpur plate is seems to be same with him. The names with *dāsa* suffix seem to be important personnel of that time.

A close look at the list of these personals and their designation indicates that most of the official posts were become hereditary. In four inscriptions, the *uparika/uparikamahārājas* are of *datta* suffix in their name. According to R. S. Sharma the surname *datta* of the *uparikas* in charge of the *bhukti* belonged to same family. (Sharma, 2013, p. 16)

The Badal pillar inscription is a laudarity account of Guravamiśra and his ancestors. It mentions six generations of this family, who were serving the Pāla kings and enjoyed great power and reputation. Concrete evidence is that, his ancestor Garga was a minister and a great warlord of Dharmapāla. Similar importance was paid to Garga's successors also. Darvapāni, a son and Kedāramiśra, a great grandson of Garga was commander-in-chief and minister of Devapāla, while Guravamiśra, son of Kedāramiśra enjoyed same power and prestige during Nārāyaṇapāla's reign. In the first verse of this inscription mention have been made of [Viṣṇu?], of Śāṅḍilya *gōtra*; in his lineage was Vīradeva; in his family Pāñchāla; and his son was Garga the adviser of Dharma (or Dharmapāla). (Kielhorn, 1894b, pp. 160-67) After examining their importance in Pāla administration and the attention paid by the Pāla rulers to them, the present scholar's humble suggestion is that the top three personals in the

list, i.e. a person having Viṣṇu suffix in his name, Vīradeva and Pāñchāla might be contemporary of Gopāla and possibly a part of the *Prakritis*.

Whatever it might be, but the Khalimpur CPI rendered some facts of Gopāla are that he was son of Vapyāṭa (*khanditārati*, i.e. killer of enemies) and grandson of Dayitaviṣṇu (*sarva-vidyāvadāta*) and the ‘prakritis’ of Bengal made him king of Bengal. (Kielhorn, 1896-97) Possibly, Gōpāla was belong to Varendra only. In the *Rāmacaritam* of Sandhyākarnandin, Varendra is mentioned as the fatherland (*janakabhū*) of the Pālas. (*Rāmacaritam*, 1.88; 1.50) There is lot of controversies over the caste of the Pāla emperors. Many inscriptions of the Pāla emperors mentioned them as Kshatriyas. *Manjuśreemūlakalpa* mentions them as śūdra, *Rāmacaritam* of Sandhyākarnandin mentions them as *kshatriyas* and Āin-I-Akbari mentions them as *kāyasthas*. In the word of P.L. Paul, (1940, p. 33) the non-mention of the caste in every Pāla records ascertains the reason of their Buddhist faith.

The selection of Gopāla as a king by the *prakritis* might not be the first attempt. Possibly, before him many chiefs were elected as king, but only Gopāla was able to survive and established the rule of law by putting an end of the practice of fishes. In the record of Taranath mentions have been made of that, ‘every morning somebody was appointed king, who was killed during night.’ (Chattopadhyaya, 1990, p. 258) We may take the information as a metaphor of the then situation.

The record of Taranath reflects some facts of the consolidation and extension of the newly established empire of Gopāla. During the first part of Gopāla’s rule, he ruled Bangala (*Bhaṃgala*) and later he conquered Magadha where he had built a *vihāra*. (Chattopadhyaya, 1990, p. 258) In the Munghyr copper-plate of Devapāla, Gopāla is said to have conquered the earth as far as sea. (Barnett, 1925-26, pp. 304-307). From this grant, it can be assumed that Gopāla extended his empire up to the Bay of Bengal. Otherwise it would not been possible for his successor Dharmapāla to extent his empire up to the Punjab, unless he had inherited a consolidated kingdom from his father. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 102)

Dharmapāla (c. 774-806 CE)

Gōpāla was succeeded in c. 770/75 CE by Dharmapāla, the greatest king of the dynasty. That time the Deccan already had the powerful Rāstrakuṭas and the Pratihāras were strong enough in the Northern India. He assumed the title of *paramēśvaraparamabhaṭṭarakamahārājadhirāja*. (Kielhorn, 1896-97, pp. 243-253). Shortly after the accession to the throne, he was engaged in a tripartite struggle with the Gurjara-Pratihāra king Vatsarāja of North India and Rāstrakuṭa kings Dhruva and Govinda III of South India. These struggles can be called as quadripartite war since the Āyudhas also played an important role in these conflicts. (Sircar, 2017, p. 58-59)

After acquiring the sovereignty of Kanauj (*Mahodaya*) by defeating enemies like Indrarāja and installed his own protégé Chakrāyudha with the ready approval of the Bhōjas, Matsyas, Madras, Kurus, Yadus, Yavanas, Avantis, Gandhares and Kiras. (v. 12, Khalimpur CPI). The Munghyr copper-plate inscription reveals the fact that Dharmapāla proceeded far beyond Kanauj and performed religious rites at Kedāra and Gokarṇa.⁵ Kedāra is undoubtedly the famous holy place of Himalaya, Uttarakhand and Gokarṇa is not yet identified. During that time onward Dharmapāla practically overrun the northern India. Soḍḍhala, a Gujrati poet of eleventh century CE, in his *Udayasundarī-kathā*, a *champū-kāvya* describe Dharmapāla as *Uttarāpathasvāmin* or lord of Uttarapatha. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 108) Newly discovered Jagajjivanpur copper-plate of Mahendrapāla mentions that Dharmapāla had conquered the land of Sindhu. (v. 21, Jagajjivanpur CPI)

Dharmapāla received a great challenge from Nāgabhaṭa III, the successor of Vatsarāja. He tried to recover the lost grounds by making an alliance with the kings of Sindhu, Andhra, Vidarbha and Kalinga, which are the states, situated on the border of his enemies, i.e. the Pālas and the Rāstrakuṭas, and presumably put himself as their champion against both. The Jodhpur grant of Bāuka, Pratihāra chief, mentions his father Kakka's achievement against the Pālas in a pitch battle at Mudgagiri (Munghyr). (Debiprasad, 1894a, pp. 1-9). Śaṅkaragaṇa and Vāhukadhavala, the chiefs of Pratihāras, claimed that they conquered the Gauḍa country (of Dharmapāla) and presented it to his Pratihāra master. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 111). Though, these campaigns hardly caused any loss to Dharmapāla, because this triumphant carrier of Nagabhaṭa III was crushed by Govinda III, the hereditary enemy of the Rāstrakuṭa

kingdom. After expelled Nagabhata from his territory, Govinda III returned to Deccan. That time Dharmapāla again controlled the entire North India. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 112)

Dharmapāla is regarded as the most successful and greatest ruler of the Pāla Empire. He expanded the empire in the north up to the Himalaya, in the west up to Punjab. The empire of Dharmapāla was not like that of the Mauryas and the Guptas. Bengal and Bihar were regarded as the nuclei of his empire. The land between Bihar and Punjab was under his dependency of Kanauj. R. C. Majumdar (1943, p. 109) states 'While a large number of principalities in the Punjab, Eastern Rājputāna, Malwa, Berar, and probably also Nepal formed the vassals state, enjoying internal autonomy but paying homage and obedience.'

Dharmapāla is credited with the founder of Vikramaśīla *vihāra* in Magadha, Odantapuri *vihāra* and Somapura *vihāra* in Varendra. The Paharpur seals mentions the legend of *Śrī-somapure, Śrī- Dharmapāladeva, Mahāvihārīya-ārya-bhikṣu-samghasya*, which means issued by the community of monks belonging to the *vihāra* at Somapura founded by Dharmapāla. (Dikshit, 1938) Though he was Buddhist by faith, but was not hostile to Brahmanical religion. His appointment of Garga, a Brāhmaṇa, as his minister, his donation for Nunnanarayana temple, (Kielhorn, 1896-97) and his establishment of Chaturmukha Mahādēva (Chakravarti, 1908, p. 101; Maitreya, 1912, p. 29) testified his religious tolerance. Love and respect of his subject to his is reflected from the verse 13 of the Khalimpur copper-plate inscription.

Devapāla (c. 806-45 CE)

Devapāla succeeded the throne thornlessly (*nirupaplavam*) (Kielhorn, 1892a, pp. 253-258) after king Dharmapāla. He was son of Dharmapāla and Niti. (v. 6. Jagjivanpur CPI) He was a successful heir of king Dharmapāla and inherited the prowess and other qualities of his father. The Nālandā Bronze image inscription of third regnal year of Devapāla described him as the 'destroyer of the Kalachuris'. (Sastri, 1923-24, pp. 310-327; 1942, p. 87) He not only maintained his father's empire intact, but even expanded it. The Badal Pillar inscription mentions Devapāla's empire as the whole of Northern India, from the Himālaya (Gauri's father) to the Vindhya (Reva's parent) mountains and from the Eastern to the Western seas. (v. 5. Badal

Pillar Inscription) Devapāla with the help of his minister Kedāramiśra defeated Utkalas, Hunas, Dravida and Gurjara lords. (v. 13) (Kielhorn, 1894b, pp. 160-167; Maitreya, 1912, pp. 70-85) The Bhagalpur grant of Nārāyaṇapāla records that out of fear of Jayapāla, brother and general of Devapāla, the king of Utkala fled from his capital city, and the king of Pragjyotisa surrendered to him. (Maitreya, 1912, pp. 55-69; Hultzsch, 1886, pp. 304-310) The Nālandā copper-plate of Devapāla reveals the fact that Devapāla also mentioned a good relation with the Śailendra dynasty ruling in Suvarṇadvīpa (i.e. Java, Sumatra and Malay Peninsula). The *mahārāja* Bālaputrādēva asked for a grant of five villages with which he proposed to endow a monastery he had built at Nālandā. (Shastri, 1923-24, pp. 310-327) It will be worth mentioning of the fact that, Hārvarsha was a son of Vikramaśīla, mentioned in the *Rāmacarita* of Abhinanda mentioned in Soḍḍala's *Udayasundari-katha*. He referred as the ornament of the Pāla family. (*pāla-kula-chandra*, *pāla-kula-pradīpa* etc). Vikramaśīla was another name of Dharmapāla. It is not unanimously granted by the historians that this Hārvarsha was Devapāla or any other Pāla ruler. (Majumdar, 1943, pp. 122-24) The interesting fact is that, as stated in the Badal pillar inscription, the Brāhmaṇa minister Darvapāṇi and his grandson Kedāramiśra became powerful in his time. (Kielhorn, 1894b, pp. 160-67)

Mahendrapāla (845-60 CE)

The discovery of Jagajjivanpur copper-plate throws new lights on the history of Pāla Empire. After the discovery of this inscription researcher come to know about unknown or little known Pāla king, Mahendrapāla, the eldest son of Devapāla, who became king after Devapāla. (v. 12. *devaṃsutottamanasūtamahendrapālam*). His mother was Māhaṭādevī, daughter of Durlabharāja, the king of the Cāhamāna dynasty. (v. 11) This grant was issued in the 7th regnal year of Mahendrapāla. This inscription reframes the chronology of the Pāla kings and placed the accession date of Śūrapāla, younger brother of Mahendrapāla and the *dūtaka* of this grant, in 855 CE not 847 CE. According to this grant, Mahendrapāla conquered a vast territory from the river Sindhu to river Brahmaputra, i.e. up to Assam, and from the Himalayas up to the territory of Lankā. But this can be imagined as tall claim as it is not supported by any contemporary or later records of any kings. So no historical value should be added to it. It may be presumed that the glories and conquests of his father Devapāla and

grandfather Dharmapāla have only been maintained by him and conceived of as his son. (Sastri, 1991-92, pp. 205-214)

Śūrapāla (860-72 CE)

R. C. Majumdar believes that after the death of king Devapāla the glory and brilliance of the Pāla Empire did not survive. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 25) Devapāla was succeeded by Śūrapāla, who was earlier identified by the historians with Vighrahapāla I. But this confusion become clear after the discovery of an inscription on the slab of twelve Ādityas from the Rajauna village of Munghyr issued in the fifth regnal year of the Pāla king Surapāla. (Sircar, 1950a, p. 141) The Badal pillar inscription describes the achievement of Śūrapāla in very general way. It describes that, he ‘destroyed the forces of his enemies’, he attended sacrificial ceremonies and poured holy water over his own head for the welfare of his empire. (v.15. Badal CPI)

Gopāla II (872 – 77 CE)

Recently, three copper-plate inscriptions of Śūrapāla’s son Gopāla have been recovered. Among which, one is discovered from Bogra district of Bangladesh and the find spots of other two are unknown. This Gopāla was the son of Surapāla and Mānikyādevī, and he should be regarded as Gopāla II in the genealogy of the Pala Emperors. First Copper-Plate was issued in the first regnal year of Gopāla II and other two in the fourth regnal year. These three Copper-Plate inscriptions reflect lights on the dark history of the Pāla records. These grants proved that the genealogy of Pāla have four king of Gopāla name, not three as history know before. The Badal pillar inscription of Guravamiśra, mentions about this king also. In the seventeenth verse, the word *Gopāla Pṛiyakāra* is mentions about this Gopāla. The Devaki of this verse can be regarded as his mother and Yaśodha as Vavvadevī, another queen of Śūrapāla. (Sircar, 2017, pp. 7-10)

Vighrahapāla

History of Vighrahapāla is in mystery, because no record of his time has so far been found. Before the discoveries of the Śūrapāla’s CPIs, historian believes that Śūrapāla, son of Devapāla and Vighrahapāla, father of Nārāyaṇapāla are same person. But now, it has been proved from the epigraphic records that Śūrapāla was the son of

Devapāla and Vighrahapāla was grandson of Vākpāla, younger brother of Dharmapāla and son of Jayapāla. Scholars like R. C. Majumdar believes that, after a succession dispute after the death of Devapāla, the general Jayapāla might have placed his son on the throne with the help of his army. (Majumdar, 1943, 126) D. C. Sircar doubted that Vighrahapāla might dethroned Śūrapāla. (Sircar, 2017, p. 71) Some rare information, which we have from the epigraphic records are he married Lajjādevī, princess of Kalachuri, Nārāyaṇapāla was their son and he abdicated royal throne for his son.

Nārāyaṇapāla (878 - 932 CE)

Nārāyaṇapāla succeeded Vighrahapāla. He was not such ambitious like his great ancestors. In spite of this, he ruled for not less than fifty-four years. A small brass image bearing votive inscription from Bihar town bears some information about him.⁶ He was son of Vighrahapāla and Lajjadevi. Vighrahapāla abdicated the throne in favour of his son Nārāyaṇapāla and retired to lead a religious life.⁷ The stone image inscription of Rajauna clarifies the fact the Vighrahapāla and Surapāla is not the same person. The Badal pillar inscription is not mentioned the name of Vighrahapāla. In the Bhagalpur copper-plate, Vighrahapāla is mentioned as a son of Jayapāla, not as king. So it can be conclude that after Surapāla, Vighrahapāla left the chance of getting the throne for his son and choose the religious path. After the seventh year of Nārāyaṇapāla's reign, the Pratihāra king managed to acquire a part of the Eastern India, at least up to Magadha, but Uddaṇḍapura and Eastern Magadha continued to be ruled by the king of the Pāla dynasty. (Banerji, 1918, p. 110) Not only the Pratihāras, but also the Rāṣṭrakuṭas and the Śulki king Mahārājadhiraṅga Raṇasthambha of Orissa managed to acquire some territories of the Pāla Empire. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 128)

Rājyapāla (932-64 CE)

Nārāyaṇapāla was succeeded by his son Rajyapāla (932 - 64 CE), who is regarded as a powerful king and recovered the past glory of his ancestors. Most parts of the Pāla Empire were seized by the Pratihāras and other rulers of Narayanapāla's time. Malla I, a mediocre chief of Velanāṇḍa, a contemporary of Narayanapāla claims to have conquered the Vaṅgas, Magadhas and the Gauḍas, possibly accompanied by Kṛishṇa II. (*Kuntalakeralakṣitipatīṅgaudānsapāṇḍyādhipān*) (Hultsch, 1896-97, p. 40) Rajyapāla was married Bhāggadevī, the daughter of the Rāṣṭrakuṭa king Tuṅga,

which brought a temporary cessation of hostilities with the Rāṣṭrakuṭa power. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 131) The Bhaturiya plate of Rājyapāla rendered huge information of Rajyapāla's reign. The verse eight, lines 10-12 of this inscription mentions

*Mlēcchhair=uchchhanna-kalpaiḥ parijana-ni(vi)kalir=Aṅga-Kaliṅga-
Vaṅgir=Ōḍḍair =uḍḍīna-jīvair=apagata-kapaṭaiḥ Pāṅḍva-Karṇṇāta-Lāṭaiḥ |
Suhmaiḥ s-ōpapradānair=asi-bhaya-chakitair=Ggurjjara-Krīta-
Chīnair=yasmīs-tantr-ādḥikāram=vidadhati dadhirē bharttur=ājñās-śirōbhiḥ ||*

They were identified as Mlēcchha with Arab Muslims, Aṅga with Munghyr-Bhagalpur, Kaliṅga with Kalinganagara in the Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh, Vaṅga with South-Eastern Bengal, Ōḍras with Orissa, Pāṅḍva with Madurai, Karṇṇāta with Rāṣṭrakuṭas of Mānyakhēṭa, Lāṭas with Nausāri-Broach region Gujrat and Suhmas with South West Bengal, Gurjaras with Gurjara-Pratihāra of Kanauj, Krītas with the Himalayan people and the Chīnas with the Sino-Tibetans. (Sircar, 1959-60, pp. 150-54) The Bharat Kala Bhavan copper-plate of Rājyapāla, issues in the second regnal year, mentions Mammā, the daughter of Rāṣṭrakuṭa chief Govindrarāja, as the queen of Nārāyaṇapāla and mother of Rājyapāla. (v. 9) this grant also mentions 'Gauḍa, Mālava, Khaśa, Hūṇa, Kulika, Karṇāṭa, Lāṭa, cāṭa, bhāṭa and sevaka and other unnamed dependents on the royal feet.' (Furui, 2016, pp. 41-56)

Gopāla III (964 – 76 CE)

Rājyapāla was succeeded by Gopāla III⁸ and ruled for at least seventeen years. Some inscriptions of him are discovered from Bihar and one from North Bengal proves his possession in Northern Bengal and Bihar. During the period of Rājyapāla and his two successors, Gopāla III and Vighrahapāla II, Bengal suffered badly in the hands of Yaśovarman and Dhaṅga of Chandella. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 132) The Jajilpara grant was found from the Jajilpara village situated on the border of Malda and South Dinajpur district. The grant was issued from the victorious camp (*Jayaskandhāvāra*) at Baṭaparvatika in the sixth regnal year of the king Gopāla III, *parameśvara, paramabhaṭṭaraka, mahārājadhirāja*, who meditated on the feet of the *Mahārājadhirāja* Rājyapāla. The tenth verse of the plate indicates the victorious campaign of Gopāla III. (Majumdar, 1951, pp. 137-44)

Vigrahapāla II (976 – 77 CE)

Gopāla III was succeeded by his son, Vigrahapāla II. No record of his time has so far been recovered. During this time there were three well defined kingdoms, viz, the Chandra kingdom in east and south Bengal, the Kāmbōja-Pāla kingdom in north and west Bengal and the Pāla kingdom in Anga and Magadha. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 135)

Kāmbōj-ānvayaja Gauḍapati

After the reign of Rājyapāla, his empire was possibly faced a succession dispute among his heirs. The Irdā CPI (Majumdar, 1933-34, pp. 150-59) and Dinajpur pillar inscription (Sanyal, 1930, pp. 24-31; Ghosh, 1933, pp. 789-91) bound the scholars to think on the two lines of Pāla lineage. One line was of Gopāla III. The Jajilpara grant establishes the fact that Gopāla III ruled in North Bengal at least up to his sixth regnal year. The second line is of Nayapāla of Irdā CPI. The Irdā grant mentions Nayapāla as the son of Rājyapāla and Vagyadevī. Rājyapāla of this grant has the epithet *Kāmbōja-vamsā-tilaka*, i.e. ‘an ornament of the Kāmbōja clan’ and described as *parama-saugata, paramesvara-paramabhaṭṭraka-mahārājadhirāja*. His brother’s name is Nārāyaṇapāla. (vv. 6-20) The grant was issued from Priyaṅgu, the capital, to the *Paṇḍita* Aśvatthaśurman. The object of the grant is to record the gift of the village of Bṛihat-chhattvarnā within the Daṇḍabhukti *maṇḍala* of the Varddhamāna *bhukti* (vv. 20-21). The Rājyapāla of Jajilpara grant and Irdā grant seems to be same person, because in both cases his queen’s name is Vagyadevī. According to R. C. Majumdar there was a partition of the Pāla Empire after the death of Rājyapāla between two branches of Pāla family, in the second half of the tenth century CE. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 134) Presumably, after the death of Rājyapāla, the Pāla kingdom was divided in two parts, of which Gopāla possessed North Bengal and Anga, and Nārāyaṇapāla having the same name of his grandfather, possessed the western Bengal. Another Kāmbōja ruler of Bengal is the ruler of Dinajpur pillar inscription of the tenth century CE. It records the establishment of a Śiva temple by a king of Gauḍa (*Gauḍapati*), whose name is not mentioned but contains the epithet of *Kāmbōja-ānvayaja*, i.e. ‘born in the Kāmbōja line’. The name of the king read by Ramaprasad Chanda (Chanda, 2014, p. 55) as Kuñjaraghaṭā, but R. C. Majumdar take the expression of *Kuñjaraghaṭā-varshēṇa* of this inscription as an epithet of the

Gauḍapati. (Majumdar, 1933-34, p. 152 Footnote) Probably this pillar inscription rendered the fact that, for a time being the formal Pāla line in the Varendra region was ousted by the Kāmbōja power. R. Chanda dated this inscription in 966 CE (Chanda, 2014, p. 56) and the Irdā grant was issued in the thirteenth regnal year of Nayapāla. The theory of partition seems to be authentic because Gopāla III of Jajilpara grant and Nārāyaṇapāla of Irdā plate was contemporary rulers. Possibly the king of the Dinajpur pillar inscription might be Nārāyaṇapāla of Irdā plate, who was contemporary of Vighrapāla II. Most importantly the verse 12 of the Bangarh plate of Mahīpāla I mentions ‘people who had no claim to it’ (*ānadhikṛita*) reflects the sense of legitimacy. (Banerji, 1917-18b, pp. 324-30)

Mahīpāla I (977 – 1027 CE)

After Vighrapāla II the legacy of the Pāla Empire came in to the hand of Mahīpāla I, who credited to recover his paternal kingdom and re-established it. The Bangarh grant of the ninth regnal year of Mahīpāla I mentions the recovery of his paternal kingdom from the hand of *anadhikṛita* (‘people who had no claim to it’). The verse twelfth of this inscription is “From him (Vighrapāla) was born, the protector of the earth, the illustrious Mahīpāla-dēva, who, slaying all enemies, (and) having obtained his paternal kingdom, which had been snatched away through pride of prowess by people who had no claim to it, placed his lotus-like feet on the heads of kings.”(Banerjee, 1917-18b, pp. 324-30). Two images of Viṣṇu with inscription of the third and fourth regnal years of Mahīpāla I from Bagura and Narayanpur of Comilla districts proved that he recovered eastern India from the hands of the Candra kings. (Sircar, 2009, pp.93-95) Mahīpāla I also recovered Bihar and not less than the northern India up to Sārnāth. The Sārnāth stone inscription of Vikramasamvat 1083 (1026 CE) records the renovation and reconstruction of a number of sacred structures by the order of Mahīpāla I the king of Gauḍa, in the supervision of his two brothers, Sthirapāla and Vasantapāla (Maitreya, 1912, pp. 104-109) He is also remembered through the Mahīpāla Dighi in South Dinajpur, Mahipāla, a village with some ruins in Murshidabad district and many towns in Bengal and Bihar.

Nayapāla (1027-43 CE)

Nayapāla succeeded his father Mahipāla I and ruled for at least fifteen years (1038-55 CE). His great rivals were the Kalachuris. The Kalachuri records mentioned that the Tīrthika king Karṇa's encounter with the chiefs of Vaṅga and Gauḍa. (Kielhorn, 1894b, pp. 11, 15) Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna arbitrate between them and a treaty was concluded between the two hostile kings on the basis of the mutual restitution at all conquest and plunder. (Majumdar, 1943, pp. 144-45) The Tibetan chronicles mentioned Nayapāla as Buddhist by faith. But the Bangarh stone inscription mentions Śaivācariya Sarvaśiva as his spiritual guru. (v. 12) (Sarkar, 2009, p. 96-109)

Vigrahapāla III (c. 1043-70 CE)

Vigrahapāla III succeeded his father Nayapāla. One of his copper-plate is recovered from Amgachhi village of Dinajpur. (Banerji, 1920b, pp. 293-301; Maitreya, 1912, pp. 121-26) He destroyed the Paramāras and the Chandelles and conquered the upper valley of Mahānadī. (Sinha, 1977, p. 779) The *Rāmacaritam* informs us that Vigrahapāla III defeated Karṇa and an alliance was cemented by the marriage of Yauvanaśrī, daughter of Karṇa with him. (*Rāmacaritam* I. 9) Scholars like R. C. Majumdar mentions that the series of foreign invasions from the west and south must have disturbed the Pāla rule to its very foundation during this time. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 148) But D. C. Sircar encounter this fact and mentions that the Brāhmaṇa vassals of Gaya, viz, Śūdraka and Yakshapāla son of Viśvāditya were tributaries of the Pāla king in this time and the border line of Mahipāla's empire remained safe. (Sircar, 2009, pp. 80-81)

Mahipāla II (1170 – 71 CE) and the Kaivartya Revolt

Vigrahapāla III was succeeded by his elder son Mahipāla II, whose reign was full of troubles. *Rāmacaritam* of Sandhyākarnandin mentions two events about the reign of Mahipāla II. First, when Mahipāla II get smell of possible conspiracy, particularly from his brother Rāmapāla, he threw his two brothers (Rāmapāla and Śūropāla) in to prison. Secondly, when large number of vassal chiefs (*ananta-sāmanta-cakra*) started revolt, the king disregarded the advice of the ministers and advanced to fight, which resulted his death and defeat, and Varendra (North Bangal) became an independent kingdom under the Kaivarta leader Divvoka (Divya).

(Majumdar, Basak, Banerji, 1939, pp. XIV-XV Introduction) The *Rāmacaritam* mentions Divya as a high official (*Mamsabhujā*) under Mahīpāla II. (*Rāmacaritam*, I. 38) There are lots of controversies regarding the caste of the Kaivartas. The *Rāmacaritam* mentions Divya as a *Dasyu* and *upadhi-vratī*, (I. 38) the *Brāhmavaivarta Purāna* states that the Kaivartta is born of *kṣatriya* father and Vaisya mother, *Jātaka* refers them as fisherman.

According to R. C. Majumdar, “Divya was prompted to seize the throne by the highly patriotic motive of saving the country from the oppressions of the ruling king, or that like Gopāla, the founder of the Pāla dynasty; he was called to throne by the united voice of the people to save them in a great crisis.” (Mamujdar, 1943, p. 153) He was succeeded by Rudoka, his younger brother and Rudoka was succeeded by his son Bhīma unbreakably. (*yathokta-kramena*) Sandhyākarnandin praised Bhīma for his royal qualities, riches and strength in full exaggerated manner. (II. V. 21-27) These three kings ruled for nearly 25 to 30 years. (1071-1100 CE) This revolt paved the way for the fall of the Pālas and the rise of the Senas, who rose after the event. (Furui, 2014, p. 93)

Rāmapāla (1072-1126 CE)

The after scenario of Śūrapāla and Rāmapāla’s imprisonment is shrouded in mystery. Possibly before the rebellion, as mentioned by Sastri, their friends rescued them. (*Rāmacaritam*, 13) The Manahali copper-plate inscription of Madanapāla mentions Śūrapāla as a king. (Verse 14) (Maitreya, 1912, pp. 147-58) Possibly he was king for a small period of time. When Varendra was captured by Divya, Śūrapāla and Rāmapāla were ruled over the remaining part of their kingdom in upper Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh region. (Majumdar, Basak, Banerji, 1939, p. Introduction XXIII) In fear of losing the remaining part of the empire, Rāmapāla had tried to get help from all possible corners. (*Rāmacaritam*, I. 43) By presenting of land and enormous wealth, he managed to his side a number of powerful chiefs (Sāmantas) who possessed great cavalry, elephants and infantry. (*Rāmacaritam*, I. 45) Most important among the chiefs was his maternal uncle Mathana (or Mahāṇa), the Rāstrakuṭa chief, with his two sons, Mahāmāṇḍalika Kāhṇaradeva and Suvarṇadeva. Next important name in this list was Bhīma-yaśas, the king of Pīṭhī. According to *Rāmacaritam*, other allied chiefs of Rāmapāla were as follows:

1. Vīraguṇa, king of Koṭāṭavī
2. Jayasīmha, king of Daṇḍabhukti
3. Vikramarāja, ruler of Bāla-Balabhi
4. Lakshīsūra, lord of Aparā-Mandāra
5. Śūrapāla, ruler of Kujavāṭi
6. Rudraśikhara, ruler of Tailakampa
7. Bhāskara or Mayagasīmha, king of Uchchhāla
8. Pratapasīmha, king of Dhekkarīya
9. Narasīmharjuna, king of Kayaṅgala-maṇḍala
10. Chaṇḍārjuna of Saṅkatagrāma
11. Vijayarāja of Nidrāvalī
12. Dvorapavardhana, ruler of Kauśāmbī
13. Soma of Paduvanvā

A pitched battle between Bhīma, the Kaivarta ruler of Varendra and Rāmapāla on the bank of the river Ganges is described in nine verses of *Rāmacaritam*. (II.12-20) Finally Rāmapāla was able to rescue Varendra by defeating Bhīma and established a new capital at Rāmāvātī. After consolidating his empire, Rāmapāla captured Kāmrupa and Utkala. He was successful to expand his empire up to Kaliṅga. (*Rāmacaritam*, III. 45) After establishing stability in Varendra, Rāmapāla fought against Anantavarma Chodaganga of south, and Chalukyas and Gāhaḍavālas in west. (Bagchi, 1993, p. 46)

Successors of Rāmapāla

There were internal troubles during the period immediately after the death of Rāmapāla. During this time, the Senas were, consolidating their power under Vijayasena in Rāḍhā and Vaṅga. The sources ascertain the fact that, Rāmapāla had at least four sons, namely, Kumārapāla, Bittwapāla, Rājyapāla and Madanapāla. In *Sekshubhadaya* we find some stories of woman molestations. (Sen, 2006, p. 269) One of which is about the son of Great Rāmapāla, who raped the wife of a merchant. The victim lodged her complain to the royal court and Rāmapāla declared death penalty to his own son. Sir Durgacharan Sanyal mentions his name as Yakshapāla. He further mentions that, the raped victim humbly described the incident and she wanted permission for taking poison. Immediately after that, she took poison and died in front of the king. Being insulted from that incident, Rāmapāla ordered death sentence to

Yakshapāla. Yakshapāla's mother, the queen of Rāmapāla, begged life of her son from the king, but for the sake of law the king was not able to change his decision. After the death of Yakshapāla, his mother and wife committed suicide. Finally, Rāmapāla, the great, sacrificed his life by entering into the sacred river. After that incident, Rāmapāla became a legend adored by the people for his duty and sacrifices. (Sen, 2006, p. 269) Bittwapāla and Rājyapāla played important roles during the tenure of Rāmapāla but never ascended the throne. (*Rāmacaritam*, II. 36; IV. 6). The rest two sons, Kumārapāla and Madanapāla became ruler of the Pāla Empire.

Kumārapāla I (1126-28 CE)

After Rāmapāla, Kumārapāla I achieved the throne of Pāla Empire. The Kamauli copper-plate, issued in the fourth year of Kumārapāla I's reign refers Vaidyadeva, son of Bodhideva, the beloved friend and favourite minister of Kumārapāla I, who achieved a victory in a naval fight in South Bengal. Vaidyadeva again put down a revolt in the east, which was leaded by Timgyadeva. But possibly after the death of Kumārapāla I, Vaidyadeva practically obtained independence. (Maitreya, 1912, pp. 127-46; Vasu, 1901, pp. 66-73) It is possible that Kumārapāla I had to fight with the Varmana dynasty of Eastern Bengal, the later Chālukyas and the kings of Kalinga. (Majumdar, 1943, pp. 168-69)

Gopāla IV (1128-43 CE)

Gopāla IV, son of Kumārapāla inherited his father's empire along with its troubles and war-risks. His reign and demise is a matter of debate among scholars. *Rāmacaritam* mentions, in a single verse, the death of Gopāla IV happens through his attempts at killing his enemy (*śatrughnopāya*). (v. 12) The verse 18 of Manahali copper-plate reflects some lights on his reign. (Maitreya, 1912, p. 158) The Rajibpur (Bangarh) Sadaśiva image inscription of Gopāla IV (Furui, 2015, pp. 39-63) proves that Gopāla IV ruled for not less than fourteen years. This Sadaśiva image was consecrated by his minister Purosottama in the fourteen regnal of Gopāla IV. (Law, 1941, p. 218) The Nimdighi (Manda) stone inscription of Gopāla IV (Bhattashali, 1941, pp. 207-16) is a huge source of Knowledge about the demise of Gopāla IV and the fight for supremacy between the Pālas and the Senas. This inscription mentions that Gopāla IV died at a very young age in a battle against the Senas. (Lines 1-4). This

fact is also attested by the inscriptions of Vijayasena and Lakṣmaṇasena. Possibly after his death Varendra was captured by the Senas. Madanapāla and Govindapāla ruled even after his death, the former in Western Varendra and Bihar, the latter at least Bihar.

Madanapāla (c. 1143-61 CE)

Madanapāla succeeded his nephew Gopāla III, and ruled for at least eighteen years. (Sircar, 1950b, pp. 137-45) He is the last known emperor of the great Pāla Empire lineage. During his time the Senas possibly, occupied a part of Varendra. But Madanapāla at least ruled over Varendra up to his eighth regnal year. This fact is justified by one copper-plate of his eighth regnal year, which was discovered from Manahali village of present South Dinajpur and it was issued from the *jayaskandhāvāra* Rāmāvatī. (Maitreya, 1912, pp. 127-46) This grant is also mentioned that he was son of Rāmapāla and Madanadevī. (v. 19)

Madanapāla had to face many hostile powers like the Senas. The Eastern Gaṅgas and the Chālukyas in the south, and the Gāhaḍavalas in the west, also took advantages of the weak Pāla forces tried to expand their empires. The Lar copper-plate inscription mentions that, by 1146 CE the Gāhaḍavala king Govindachandra occupied Monghyr. (Kielhorn, 1902-1903, pp. 98-100) The *Rāmacaritam* mentions (IV. 27) a battle on the river Kalindi and Madanapāla had driven back to Kalindi the vanguard of the forces that had destroyed a large number of his soldiers. This was possibly the conquest of Vijayasena who had already captured Southern and Eastern Bengal. This invasion weakened or destroyed the Pāla power in North Bengal. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 170) The Manahali CPI shows that, Madanapāla, up to the eighth year of his reign was included at least a considerable portion of North Bengal. The Joynagar image inscription of Madanapāla, in the 14th year of his reign, he rescued the Monghyr district. (Majumdar, 1941, p. 216) During the reign of Madanapāla, the great Pāla Empire, was confined to Central and Eastern Bihar, and possibly included a portion of North Bengal.

Govindapāla (1161 – 65 CE)

Madanapāla, possibly, is the last king who known to have belonged to the Pāla dynasty. Majumdar mentions that, names of some kings with *-pāla* suffix are known

from the records from Bihar, but their relationship with the Pāla Emperors has not yet been confirmed. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 171) The Gaya stone inscription of Vikrama-Samvat 1232 (1175 CE) was issued in the 14th expired regnal year (*gata-rājye*) of Govindapāla. (Sircar, 1966, pp. 225-238) This is the first known evidence in the whole range of North Indian inscriptions of an ‘expired regnal year’ being used to express a date. The expression ‘gata-rajya’ possibly mean that Govindapāla’s reign had ceased at Gaya; but he was still continuing at some other part. (Sahai, 1983, p. 108) R. D. Banerji after discussing the manuscripts of Govindapāla’s time, i.e. (1) Aṣṭa-sāhasrikā Prajñāpāramita, (2) Amarakoṣa, (3) Guhyāvalī, (4) Pañcākāra, (5) Yoga-ratna-māla, (6) Aṣṭasāhasrika Prajñāpāramita and (7) Prajñāpāramita, mentions that, the use of ‘Parameśvaretyādi Rājāvalīpurvvavat’, ‘gata-rājye’, ‘atitarājye’ make it certain that the king Govindapāla was alive in the 37th year from the date of his consecration. These words signified that the reign of the king ended in that particular locality, but that it was still continuing at some other place. The word ‘Vinaṣṭa’ possibly signified that his authority was destroyed by Bakhtyār-Khilji. Govindapāla ruled the lower part of the Eastern Magadha, close to Nālandā and bore the title of Gauḍeśvara. (Banerji, 1915, p. 112)

Palapāla (1165 – 1200 CE)

There is debate among the scholars about the identification of Palapāla as a successor of the great Pāla Empire, whether he belonged to the great Dharmapāla and Devapāla’s Pāla family or not. Champanagari (near Bhagalpur) image inscription in the in the thirty fifth regnal year of a king named Gauḍaśvara Palapāla has been identified with Palapāla. (Sircar, 2017, p. 89) An inscription of Ballālasena, in the ninth regnal year, discovered from Sanokhar near Bhagalpur proves his occupation in this region. Therefore, possibly, Palapāla perhaps was a subdued friend of the Sena king. (Sircar, 1958, pp. 78-82) Another image inscription of Yashapāla (Yakshapāla?) has been found from the village Lai near Lakṣhmīsarai described Yakshapāla as the *Vāsāgarika* or a royal official and adorned with title ‘Raṇaka’. On the palaeographical ground, Sircar identified Yaśaḥpāla’s suzerain was probably the Pāla monarch Palapāla. Furthermore, he identifies Kawāyā-Jaynagar (ancient Champā) as his capital city. (Sircar, 1958, pp. 82-84)

Meanwhile, a contest between Jayachandra, the Gāhaḍavāla king and Lakshmaṇasena, the Sena king occurred on the supremacy of Bihar. The Gāhaḍavāla succeeded in occupying Gaya temporarily and the Senas achieved Varanasi and Prayaga. But Jayachandra in 1193 CE and the Senas in 1205 CE lost their control in Bihar, and Rādhā and Varendra respectively in the hand of Turko-Afghan rulers.

The Sena Empire

After the Pālas, Varendra was in the strong hands of the Senas, who have originally belonged to Karṇāṭa in South India. The Deopara inscription of Vijayasena (Kielhorn, 1892b, pp. 305-315; Majumdar, 1929, pp. 68-80) mentions, in the lunar race (v. 3) were certain rulers of south (*dākṣhiṇāṭya*), Vijayasena and others (v. 4), in whose family, called the Sena family. Sāmantasena was first of the Karṇāṭa-Sena family to migrate from the south and settle in Bengal. But the Naihati copper-plate mentions (Banerji, 1917-18a, pp. 156-163; Majumdar, 1929, pp. 68-80) that Sāmantasena was born in Rādhā region of Bengal after the settlement of Sena power in this region. (vv. 2-3)

Taking the advantages of the Kaivarta revolt in Verendra, Hemantasena, the son of Sāmantasena, probably to have been a ruling chief, who set up an independent principality in Rādhā region. He is mentions as Mahārājadhirāja in the Barrackpur CPI of his son Vijayasena. (Majumdar, 1929, pp. 57-67; Banerji, 1919-20a, pp. 278-286)

Vijayasena (c. 1096-1158 CE)

Hemantasena was succeeded by his son Vijayasena and ruled for more than sixty years. (Majumdar, 1929, p. 59) The verses 20-21 of Deopara CPI mentions that Vijayasena defeated Nānya, Vīra and the kings of Gauḍa, Kāmrūpa and Kalinga, and imprisoned Nānya, Rāghava, Vardhana and Vīra. (Majumdar, 1929, p. 53) He also made a naval expedition along the Ganges to conquer the western part of the Varendra region (*pāśchāṭya-cakra*). (v. 22) After defeating the king of Gauḍa, possibly Madanapāla, the Pāla monarch, he founded a new capital on the northern bank of the Ganges and named it after himself. He also built a temple of Pradyumneśvara of great height and grandeur. (vv. 26-28) Maitreya identifies this capital city with Pudumsahr in Varendrī. (Maitreya, 1933-34, pp. 28-39) Ramaprasad Chandra identified

Vijayasena's capital with Vijayanagara (legend says 'Vijaya Rājār Bārī' or house of Vijaya Rāja) in the south-western part of Varendra. (Chanda, 2014, p. 79) Varendra Archaeological Society has identified the current location of the temple with the village of Devapārā or Deopara, which is about ten km distant from Vijayapur Milik, which is situated on the banks of the river Ganges. (Banerji, 1915, p. 104) The engraver of the Deopara inscription, Rāṇaka Śūlapāni is mentioned as 'the crest-jewel of the guild of artisans of Varendrī' (v. 36, *Vārendraka-śilpigoshṭhī-chuḍamaṇī*)

Vallalasena (c. 1159 – 79 CE)

Vijayasena was not able to conquer Varendra entirely, though he achieved eminent success in this region. He was succeeded by his son Vallalasena who seems to have been an aged man when he came to the throne. (Banerji, 1915, p. 105) The capital of Vallalasena is identified with the Vallalabāti of present day's Gaur, Malda. Recent excavation exposed the foundation of the palace on the bank of an old riverbed of the river Ganges. (Picture 22) His name is famous in Bengal as the founder of Kulinism, which has no historical importance at all. (Banerji, 1915, p. 106) The only inscription of Vallalasena has so far been discovered from Naihati, which does not contain any record of victory and only bestows vague praises of his valour. (Banerji, 1917-18a, pp. 156-63) But he had some success on Govindapāla, the ruler of Magadha. The references in *Adbhutasāgara* mentions that the arms of Vallalasena were pillars for chaining the elephant, viz., the lord of Gauḍa, which refers to his success with the *Gauḍeśvara* and this may possibly be Govindapāla of Magadha, who took the title of *Gauḍeśvara*. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 216) He had also a great educated mind, and two of his works are *Dānasāgara* and *Adbhutsāgara*. He married Rāmdevī, the daughter of Chālukya king Jagadekamalla II. This marriage alliance proves the reputation of the Sena political power and their relation with their ancestral land Karṇāṭa. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 216)

Lakshmaṇasena (c. 1179 – 1206 CE)

Lakshmaṇasena, son of Vallālasena and Rāmdevī, succeeded his father in 1179 CE. At his time of accession, he was old enough, not less than sixty, according to *Tabaqāt-i-Nāsirī*. (Roy, 1941, pp. 92-96) Eight records of Lakshmaṇasena have so far been discovered.

1. Govindapur Copper-plate Inscription. (Second regnal year) (Majumdar, 1929,p. 92)
2. Tarpandighī Copper-plate Inscription. (Second regnal year) (Majumdar, 1929,p. 99)
3. Bakultalā (Sundarban) Copper-plate Inscription. (Second regnal year) (Majumdar, 1929, p. 169)
4. Ānuliā Copper-plate Inscription. (Second/third regnal year) (Majumdar, 1929,p. 81)
5. Dacca Image Inscription. (Third regnal year) (Majumdar, 1929, p. 116)
6. Śaktipur Copper-plate Inscription. (Sixth regnal year) (Ganguly, 1931-32, p. 211)
7. Bhowal Copper-plate Inscription. (Twenty seventh regnal year) (Randle, 1941-42, pp. 1-13)
8. Mādhāinagar Copper-plate Inscription. (Majumdar, 1929,p. 106)

Lakshmaṇasena became a devout Vaiṣṇava although his predecessors were follower of Śāivism. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 219) After his accession, he defeated Govindacandra, the king of Benaras and conquered Kāmarūpa. (Majumdar, 1929, pp. 106-115) The copper-plate grants of his sons, Keśavasena and Biśvarūpasena, mentioned that he have planted a pillar of victory on the southern ocean, which possibly means that he conquered some southern kings. (Banerji, 1917-18a, p. 107) These inscriptions also mentioned that Lakshmaṇasena also conquered Kaliṅga and Kāśī, and also planted pillars to commemorate his military victory at Puri, Benaras and Allahabad. (Majumdar, 1943, p. 220) Probably, his empire consisted of Eastern, Western and Northern Bengal, the eastern part of Magadha and a part of Mithila also. (Banerji, 1917-18a, p. 107)

The Tarpandighi CPI (Majumdar, 1929, pp. 99-105) of Lakshmaṇsena, issued in the second year of his reign from the *jayaskandhāvāra* of Vikramapura, was discovered from Tapan village of South Dinajpur. A plot of land in the Velahishṭī village of Varendrī within the Paṇḍravardhana *bhukti* was donated to Ísvaradevaśarman. (Lines 33-48) Sanyal has identified the current location of Velahishṭī village with present Belasthali village in the Gangarampur PS. (Sanyal, 2010, p. 112) The Anulia Copper-plate inscription (Majumdar, 1929, pp. 81-91) of Lakshmaṇsena was issued in his third regnal year from the *jayaskandhāvāra* of

Vikramapura. By this grant, a plot of land of the village of Mātharaṇḍīyā of Vyāghrataṭī *maṇḍala* belonging to the Pauṇḍravardhana *bhukti* was granted to the *Paṇḍita* Raghudevaśarman. (Lines 34-46) Even though the copper-plate inscription was found from Anulia, but present scholar's humble suggestion is that the donated place can be identified with the Methrānī village of Gajol PS, Malda, which proves that the Sena sway in Varendra was expanded by Lakshmaṇasena than that of Vallālasena.

Lakshmaṇasena was the last Hindu king, who ruled over Varendra. After him, the Mohammedan rulers captured Varendra. Towards the end of his life, he continued his rule from Eastern Bengal. After his death in 1205 CE, his successors, Viśvarūpasena and Keśavasena ruled in southern and eastern Bengal at least for about 20-25 years which attested by their three inscriptions.

Notes

1. Allahabad pillar inscription. Line 22: ‘Samataṭa-Ḍavāka-Kāmarūpa-Nēpāla-Kartṭripur-ādi-pratyanta-nṛipati-Mmālav-Ārjunāyana-Yaudhēya-Mādrak-Ābhīra-Prārjuna-Sanakānīkas-Kāka-Kharaparik-ādibhiś-cha sarvvakaradān-āmākarana-pra.....gamana’. (Fleet, 1888, pp. 1-17)
2. http://museumsofindia.gov.in/repository/record/im_kol-A20050-9085-18. Accessed in June 2019.
3. Harara inscription of Isānavarman, translation of verse 13. “Who, being victorious and having princes bending at his feet, occupied the throne after conquering the lord of the Āndharas, who had thousands threefold rutting elephants, after vanquishing in battle the Śūlikas, who had an army of countless galloping horses, and after causing the Gauḍas, living on the seashore, in future to remain within their proper realm.” (Sastri, 1917-18, pp. 110-120)
4. Kānsonā, a few miles south of Berhampur, in the Murshidabad district.
5. v.7. *kēdārē vidin=ōpayukta-payasām Gaṅgāsamēt-āmvu(mbu)dhau Gōkarṇṇ-ādishu ch=āpy=anushṭhitavatām tirthēshu dharmmyāḥ kriyāḥ*.
6. ‘Om Deya-dha[rmmey] am Śrī-Nārāyaṇapāla-deva-rājye Samvat 54, Śrī-Uddaṇḍapura-vās-arya Rāṇaka Uchaputra Ṭhārukasya’. Translation: “The pious gift of Ṭhāruka son of the Rāṇaka Ucha (Utsa), (dedicated) in the year 54 of the reign of the illustrious Nārāyaṇapāladeva.”(Banerji, 1918, pp.109-111)
7. (v. 17)- ‘Let penance be mine, and the kingdom thine’. (Hultzch, 1886, pp. 304-310)
8. The sequence of the emperor having Gopāla name in the Pāla genealogy is changed after the discovery of three CPIs of Śūrapāla’s son Gopāla. Now Gopāla II of Jajilpara CPI is recognized as Gopāla III and previous Gopāla III as Gopāla IV.

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