

**A STUDY ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES OF MĀLDĀ,
DAKSHINDINĀJPUR AND UTTAR DINĀJPUR: LINKING
ARCHAEOLOGY WITH GEOGRAPHY, SOCIETY, ECONOMY AND
POLITY IN THE CHANGING PERSPECTIVE (C. 3RD CENTURY B.C.
TO 12TH CENTURY A.D.)**

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I declare that the thesis entitled ‘A Study on the Archaeological Sites of Māldā, DakshinDinājpur and Uttar Dinājpur: Linking Archaeology with Geography, Society, Economy and Polity in the Changing Perspective (c. 3rd Century B.C. to 12th Century A.D.)’ has been prepared by me under the guidance of Dr. Anita Bagchi, Professor, Department of History, University of North Bengal. No part of this thesis has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.



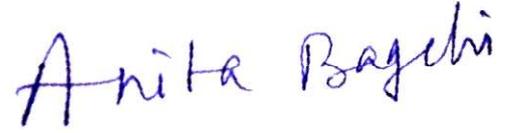
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ABSTRACT

The study area is well-known formed part of the ancient region called Puṇḍravardhana. The sources ascertain the fact that the region became quite prosperous as early as in the Mauryan period. There were towns of considerable size grown up. Archaeological excavations at Bangarh near the modern town of Gangarampur in South Dinajpur district have unmistakably confirmed the existence of a walled city of a considerable size in the area during the Mauryan period. Present scholar want to mention that Asuragarh near Dalkhola town of North Dinajpur is also an ancient site of the pre Mauryan and Mauryan origin.

Study Area

The ancient and medieval archaeological sites of northern Bengal are located mainly in three districts, viz. Malda, North Dinajpur and South Dinajpur. So the present study is based to a great extent on findings from the sites and remains of these three districts of west Bengal. Discussion of our area of study would not be complete without mention of the fact that the districts we have taken up for investigation do not alone constitute the ancient Puṇḍra region. Dinajpur (East), Rajshahi, Bogra, Pabna and Rangpur districts of Bangladesh, also formed part of the ancient Puṇḍra region. These districts are contiguous to our area of study. In ancient times, they shared the same socio-economic and political environment. The ancient river Mahananda forms the western boundary of the region and extends up to the river Karatoya in the East. This region is almost identical with the Varendra region of the Pāla and Sena inscriptions of early medieval times. The Ganges forms the southern boundary of Puṇḍravardhana. Puṇḍranagara on the Karatoya (Bangladesh), Bangarh on the Punarbhava, Asuragarh on the Mahananda and Gouḍa on the Ganges and several other urban centers owed their life and prosperity to the swift and navigable rivers connecting them with vast regions in northern, eastern and north-eastern India. The suggestion is that there was continuous maritime link between Puṇḍra and the ancient port of Tāmralīpta near the shores of the Bay of Bengal is not at all farfetched since it is the Ganges that flows down to the sea washing the regions like Magadha, Mithilā, Puṇḍravardhana and Rādhā.

Scope of Research

The scope of the study extends of several aspects of the regions; growth in terms of economy, society, politics for a millennia and a half years. If the Maurya, Sun̄ga and Kuṣāna periods witnessed the dominance of the cities like Puṇḍravardhana, Koṭivarṣa, Kandaran and Asuragarh, the Gupta period saw the rise of Gauḍa on the Ganges. The flow of urban life in Puṇḍravardhana did not come to an end there. Thus Rāmāvātī on the river Mahananda, Madnāvātī on the Brahmani, Kandaran on the Mahananda continued to cater to the requirements of the flourishing populace of *Puṇḍra* with their geo-political thrust.

The unique position of *Puṇḍra* provides us with wide scope of study and research. It is a region which is served by network of rivers like the Ganges, Mahananda, Atreya, Puṇarbhava, Karatoya, Kalindi, Tangan, Nagar, Chiramati, Kulik etc. that contributed to the growth of civilization in the fertile delta of Bengal. The works of some eminent scholars as well as the Archaeological Survey of India led to the discovery and identification of some important archaeological sites: 1) Paharpur (Rajshahi), 2) Vasubihar (Bogra), 3) Bangarh (South Dinajpur), 4) Mahasthangarh (Bogra), 5) Nandadirghi, 6) Gauḍa, and 7) Pandua (Malda) etc. within the geographical boundary of ancient Puṇḍra.

Though macro level works on archaeology of this area have been made, micro-studies are still meager in respect of the little known ancient sites of these three districts. Even where such studies have been carried out, little attention has been given to the informal knowledge of history of this area. In view of the above deficiencies, this study has been undertaken. The present work is expected to explore the untold and even neglected history of the area.

OBJECTIVES OF RESEACH

Objective of the research is to reveal the settlement pattern in the three district of North Bengal (Malda, North and South Dinajpur). This study also intends to focus on the central place aspects of Bangarh (South Dinajpur), Amati (North Dinajpur) and Asuragarh (North Dinajpur). The excavated ruins from Bangarh put Bengal on the archaeological map of ancient regions of India where civilization flourished quite early.

Known variously as *Koṭivarṣa*, *Soṇitapura*, *Umāvana* and *Devikoṭa*, this city rose to prominence in the Mauryan period. Amati, seems to be the site of the capital city of Bengal founded by Rāmapāla, the Pāla king in the late eleventh century. The findings from Asuragarh and the morphology of Asuragarh proves that it was a contemporary site of Bangarh and Mahasthangarh. These settlements are encircled by many minor sites flourished at deferent point of time. In this thesis, the central place theory was applied on these three different archaeological sites to pursue the relevant factors of central place issues in archaeological context.

Time Limit

The time limit of the thesis is from c. 300 BCE to 1200 CE. The entire ancient time, particularly the Hindu period, has been taken as time limit of the dissertation. The study starts with the finding of the Mauryan Brāhmī inscription of Mahasthangarh to the end of Sena power. Further, the time span of the proposal is bigger one, because of its archaeological leaning. Extant remains of archaeology always, it is seen, take longer span of time for indicating any changes in the form and nature.

Previous Study

The colonial masters as part of their official duties brought the archaeological remains of the study area under discussion in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the subject of archaeology, the colonial administrators were interested in translating of ancient epigraphs, not in field archaeology. Wilkins first read the inscriptions of the Pāla period found from Bengal and Bihar. He was followed by Broadly, Beglar, Kittoe, Cunningham, Anderson, Bloch, Buchanan, Addinson, Westmacott, Blochman, Kielhorn, Marshman, Strong, Creton, Monahan, Dalton, O'Malley, Stapleton and so on. Some scholars of Indian origin, R. Chanda, A. K. Maitra, R. Chakravarti, R. D. Banerjee, R. C. Majumdar, K. N. Dikshit, K. G. Goswami and so on, also made valuable contributions in the study. In the post colonial period systematic studies were carried out by D. C. Sircar, N. R. Roy, B. C. Law, P. Niyogi, S. Hossain, D. K. Chakravarti, D. C. Sen, M. S. Bhattacharyya, M. Bhattacharya, G. Sengupta, S. Panja and so on. Little but valuable efforts have been made by the regional historians like H. Sarkar, A. Roy, A. Basak, D. Roy and many more.

Methodology

The present study is designed to bring to light hitherto neglected archaeological sites of the ancient and early medieval period of the three districts of North Bengal (Malda, North and South Dinajpur). For the purpose of this research work, many materials and sources are collected through field survey and from the government museums, private collections and printed materials. For this, present scholar visited some archaeological sites, Indian Museum, National Museum, State Museums, collection of the private collectors. Oral traditions of the inhabitants of the sites have also collected through interview. The secondary sources for the study have been collected through bibliography.

The **introductory** chapter explains the limit of the study area, aims and objectives of the study, time frame, limitations of the previous study and the need of this thesis.

The **second** chapter explains the historical geography of the study area. In this chapter, an attempt is made to discuss the changes in territorial divisions, nomenclature, administration and their impact on the social life of the people. The study area was anciently known by different names in the changing scenario of time. Puṇḍravardhana, Matsya, Gauḍa and Varendra were the old name of our study area. Right from the time of the Vedas, this part of land was an important centre of human activities, till today. In respect of the ancient geography of our study area that even in medieval times a part of the area was known as Matsyadeśa. We ought to throw lights on this interesting issue as there are different claims about the identification of *Matsya*, regarded as a Mahājanapada.

It has now become possible to correctly identify the Vyāghrataṭi *maṇḍala*, which was wrongly identified by the scholars till date with the Sundarban region. This study suggests the land lying between the river Kosi and Mahananda was in all probability known as the Vyāghratati *maṇḍala*.

In the **third** chapter, the process of urbanization and geopolitics of the study area have been discussed. Here the central place theory is applied to identify the urban patterns of the archaeological sites. The process of urbanization, as the archaeological sources suggests, was started right from the time of the period of second urbanization of India. The archaeological data identified that the study area was a part and parcel of the ancient

Gangetic valley urbanization of North India. In this chapter, the process of Aryanization has been examined as a tool of urbanization.

It would appear that a number of big cities of Bengal were built in our study area. These were Koṭivarṣa, Gauḍa, Rāmāvati, Pānduā, and Tāṇḍa. The study area, as like as the remaining part of Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* was full of urban centers. Some of the settlements were quite big, viz, Bangarh, Asuragarh, Gauḍa, Maheṇḍra and Rāmāvati, which were also surrounded by numerous minor urban centres.

The study area have two central places of the second urbanization period, viz, Bangarh and Panchbibi and four central places of third urbanization period, viz, Kandaran, Amati, Pichli, and Ekdala-Bairhatta.

The **fourth** chapter deals with the political scenario and power structure of the study area. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to fill up the gaps of the obscure sides of the political history of North Bengal. The study area, at least from the beginning of the Vedic age, was an important political centre in the pan-Indian concept.

This thesis dealt with 5 new inscriptions (A fragmented Baigrama CPI, Nagavasu CPI, Mahatī-Raktamālā CPI, Second Mahatī Raktamālā CPI and Mastakaśvabhra CPI of Pradyumnabandhu) along with previous inscriptions.

Chapter **fifth** is the backbone of this thesis. This chapter is the result of the scholar's years long field survey reports. A site-to-site survey has been made to examine the local legends, topography, lethropedo character, spatial effects, treasures of antiquities and many more. In this chapter scholar tried to focus on the new findings only, which have not yet been discussed. This chapter dealt with such kind of archaeological sites, which are lying completely unprotected and have become an open field for the antique smugglers. The archaeological sites of this part of land have been destroying not by these morons only, the growing population, lack of awareness of the people about the historical values of the artefacts and encroachment of population on the archaeological sites are also responsible. Here an example of ignorance can be relevant. When a sculpture is recovered from a place, the busybodies of that place usually arrive and take possession of the antique to collect donations from the godly rural people. Because of this condition, the district authorities fail to take the sculpture in their custody. After some days, when

the enthusiasm and donation of the godly people become wane, the sculpture remains unprotected and taking advantage of the situation, the antique hunters become active. The Baragram site is the best example. Now not a single artefact is left. But fortunately present scholar takes some pictures of the antiquities of Baragram. In this chapter an attempt has been made to identify the present location of Jagaddala Monastery.

The **sixth** chapter is the conclusion of the thesis, which summarizes the important findings of the study area. It also discusses the value of the study and also the weaknesses.

Though the research work revealed many important information of the study area, like other scientific field research this time-bound project also have limitations. As we have mentioned heretofore that the study is based on the surface collections from the archaeological sites, sometimes access to some of these sites become difficult due to some unavoidable situations. In some cases, accesses to the private collectors become troublesome due to collectors' unfair motives. The most important lacuna for not only this work but for the entire research world is that, the unawareness of the inhabitants of the study area regarding their culture and history. For this reason the unholy personnel make selling of the artefacts as their way of livelihood. Another important weakness of the study is that the unavailability of large-scale archaeological excavation reports. We have only a portion of the mound of Bangarh and Ballalhati have been excavated so far. Most of the sites of the study area, particularly the Asuragarh mound, Ganeshvita, mounds of the Kandaran region, will be vanished by the encroachment of increasing population and agricultural works. In respect of the manuscripts of the study area, lack of initiatives of preserving and reading, are going to be vanished completely from the realm of history.

In this context, however, more detailed scientific excavations can be carried out at different sites on the basis of their importance which may reveal more information of the human activities of the past. These efforts will help us to understand the epigraphic data and the interpretations of the sites with more accuracy. The future excavations will also increase the possibility of tourism. If the accurate identification of the Jagaddala

monastery after excavating the proposed areas has been done, then this area can be a great place of interest for the Buddhist world.

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GLOSSARY

abhaya-mudrā – pose of hand offering protection, in which the palm of the right hand, facing the devotee, is held with fingers upwards.

ācārya –title of a religious teacher; used commonly by the Buddhists and Jains. P. 4

ādhavā – also called *āḍhakavāpa*, ‘an area of land requiring one *āḍhaka* measure of seed grains for being sown’; a land measure which was not the same in all ages and localities.

adhikaraṇa – an office; cf. *rājakule* =’ *dhikaraṇsya*, apparently referentially referring to an office, a court or department, a law-court, a class of law courts; probably the chief court, an administrative office or a board of administration.

adhiṣṭhāna – the capital or headquarters of an administrative unit; a city or town; the chief city.

adhiṣṭhāna-ādhikaraṇa – administrative office or board at the headquarters of a territorial unit; office of the administrators of a city; the city office.

agnihotra– offering to fire; a particular sacrifice, often mentioned as one of the five sacrificialrites (*mahāyajña*) which are the daily duties of a *Brāhmaṇa*.

agrahāra – rent free land given to *Brāhmaṇas*; a rent-free village; a *Brāhmaṇa* village; sometimes suffixed to names of localities especially in South India. It was primarily, ‘a rent-free village in the possession of *Brāhmaṇas*’.

ayuktaka – the governor of a district or subdivision

chhandyōga-charaṇa of the *Sāma-vēda*.

cūrṇikās – one hundred cowrie-shells

deśoparika – country’s royal governor, who mediating between *uparika* and *kumārāmatya*.

gaṇḍaka – name of a coin prevailed in the Northern Bengal during the Mauryan period.

Jayaskandhāvāra – ‘camp of victory’; the royal camp or capital; epithet of royal camps or residences.

kārṣāpaṇa– name of gold, silver or copper coin one *karṣa* (80 *ratis*) in weight; name of a silver coin of 32 *ratis*, same as *purāṇa* or *dharāṇa*.

mahāpratīhāra – the office of the high chamberlain.

nīvī-dharma – permanent endowment

nagara-śrēṣṭhīn– administrator of town

Pañca-mahāśabda – refers to the privilege of enjoying the sounds of five musical instruments, or five titles beginning with *mahat*; five official designations or musical instruments mentioned in connection with feudatories; five official designations beginning with the word of *mahā* in the North and five kinds of musical instruments in the South India.

Pañchmahāyajña- *adhyāpāna*, *hōma*, *tarpaṇa*, *vali* and *atithī-puja*

uparikara – explained as ‘additional taxes’, ‘unfixed taxes’, ‘minor taxes’, or ‘tax paid by the temporary tenants’.

vājasanēya - school of Yajurveda.

vāsāgarika - officer in-charge of the bed chamber or the inner part of the palace of a king

ABBREVIATION

ABORI - Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute

AIS – ART IN STONE

ASI – Archaeological Survey of India

BCE – Before Common Era

BS – Bangla Sal

CASTEI – Centre for Archaeological Studies and Training, Eastern India

CE – Common Era

CII – Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum

CPI – Copper Plate Inscription

EI– Epigraphia Indica

HE – Harṣa Era

HQ – Historical Quarterly

HR – The Historical Review

IA – Indian Antiquary

IHQ – The Indian Historical Quarterly

IIOSR – Indian Institution of Oriental Studies and Research

JASB – Journal of the Asiatic Society

JASB (NS) – Journal of the Asiatic Society Bengal (New Series)

JESI – Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India

JPASB – Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal

JPASB (NS) – Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, New Series

JRASB – Journal of Royal Asiatic Society Bengal

JRASGBI – Journal of the Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland

PS – police station

THR – The Historical Review

VS – Vikrama Samvat

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

It is worthwhile to begin by having a brief look back at the history of ancient Bengal and also about the history of North Bengal. Ancient Bengal certainly formed a part of the *Prācyadeśa* or the eastern country. Although it is not at all easy to define the geographical expanse of the region *Prācyā* in terms of the modern demarcations that we are acquainted with, we do have some classified historical data to draw a rough sketch. Ancient literary sources differ with each other over the boundaries of the eastern country constituting sub-regions that could or could not have formed a part of this region. Sources like Boudhyāna's *Dharmasūtra* (Olivelle, 1999) and Manu (Dutt, 1909) concedes *Prayāga* as the western boundary of the *Prācyā*, while the commentary on the *Vātsyāyanasūtra* (Burton & Arbuthnot, 1985) pushes it farther east to the sub-region named *Aṅga*, which roughly corresponds to *Bhāgalpur* in *Bihār* and its adjoining areas. The *Mahābhāgya* and the *Divyābadāna* mention *Kajāṅgala* as the western boundary of the *Prācyā*. (Cowell, & Neil, 1886) The inhabitants of this region were the *Puṇḍras*. The term *Puṇḍra* means both; a cast of ancient Bengal and a place, which was inhabited by the *Puṇḍra* caste. The Greek classical writers mention the people of the *Gangāridae* and *Prāsii* as the *Puṇḍras*. The first literary reference of *Puṇḍra* is found in *Taittirīo-Brāhamaṇa*, (Sastry, 1921) it describes them as the demons living at the extreme east of the *Aryanland*. The *Śhunḥa-śepa* legend describes the *Puṇḍras* as the neighbor and tribe relative to the *Andhras*, *Shabar*, *Pulind* etc.

The region as is well-known formed part of the ancient region called *Puṇḍravardhana*. Even during the life time of the Buddha *Puṇḍradeśa* was known to the people of other regions of India. An ancient Buddhist work named *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpālātā* claims that the Buddha himself had visited *Puṇḍra* as he was invited by *Sumāgadhā*, one of his early female disciples married to a man from *Puṇḍra*. (Vaidya, 1959, p. 93) In the *Mahābhārata* we find mention of king *Bāsudeva* of *Puṇḍra* who sided with the *Kauravas* during the great *Bhārata* war. *Puṇḍra* figures in the *Jātaka* stories, the *Arthaśāstra* of *Kouṭilya*, the *Purānas* and several other

literary sources. As to the question of archaeological sources throwing light on the ancient region, present scholar would humbly mention that the present study itself essentially deals with numerous such sources. The sources ascertain the fact that the region became quite prosperous as early as in the Mauryan period and this had also set in motion the process of urbanization quite early in the region and by the time Mauryan overlords established their hold over Puṇḍravardhana. There were towns of considerable size grown up. Archaeological excavations at Bangarh near the modern town of Gangarampur in South Dinajpur district have unmistakably confirmed the existence of a walled city of a considerable size in the area during the Mauryan period. Present scholar pointed out that Asuragarh near Dalkhola town of North Dinajpur is also an ancient site of the pre Mauryan and Mauryan origin.

Study Area (Map 1)

The ancient and medieval archaeological sites of northern Bengal are located mainly in three districts, viz. Malda, North Dinajpur and South Dinajpur. So, the present study is based to a great extent on findings from the sites and remains of these three districts of west Bengal. Discussion of our area of study would not be complete without mention of the fact that the districts we have taken up for investigation do not alone constitute the ancient Puṇḍra region. Dinajpur (East), Rajshahi, Bogra, Pabna and Rangpur districts of Bangladesh, subdivided into several smaller administrative units in recent times also formed part of the ancient Puṇḍra region. These districts are contiguous to our area of study. In ancient times, they shared the same socio-economic and political environment. The ancient river Mahananda forms the western boundary of the region and extends up to the river Karatoya in the East. This region is almost identical with the Varendra region of the Pāla and Sena inscriptions of early medieval times. This region is washed by several ancient rivers, mostly tributaries of the rivers which ultimately pour out their water to the Ganges forming the southern boundary of Puṇḍravardhana. Such rivers were the lifeline for the urban centers engaged in trade and commerce, and rendered fertile the vast agricultural fields by their silt deposits. So Puṇḍranagara on the Karatoya (Bangladesh), Bangarh on the Punarbhava, Asuragarh on the Mahananda and Gouḍa on the Ganges and several other urban centers owed their life and prosperity to the swift and navigable rivers

connecting them with vast regions in northern, eastern and north-eastern India. The suggestion is that there was continuous maritime link between Puṇḍra and the ancient port of Tāmralipta near the shores of the Bay of Bengal is not at all farfetched since it is the Ganges that flows down to the sea washing the regions like Magadha, Mithilā, Puṇḍravardhana and Rādhā. (Map 2)

Scope of Research

The scope of the study therefore extends of several aspects of the regions; growth in terms of economy, society, politics for a millennium and a half year. If the Maurya, Suṅga and Kuṣāna periods witnessed the dominance of the cities like Puṇḍravardhana, Koṭivarṣa, Kandarana and Asuragarh, the Gupta period saw the rise of Gauḍa on the Ganges. The flow of urban life in Puṇḍravardhana did not come to an end there. Still more cities flourished in the region. Thus, Rāmāvati on the river Mahananda, Madnāvati on the Brahmani, Kandarana on the Mahananda continued to cater to the requirements of the flourishing populace of *Puṇḍra* with their geo-political thrust.

The unique position of *Puṇḍra* provides us with wide scope of study and research. It is a region which is served by network of rivers like the Ganges, Mahananda, Atreya, Puṇarbhava, Karatoya, Kalindi, Tangan, Nagar, Chiramati, Kulik etc. that contributed to the growth of civilization in the fertile delta of Bengal. The works of some eminent scholars as well as the Archaeological Survey of India led to the discovery and identification of some important archaeological sites: 1) Paharpur (Rajshahi), 2) Vasubihar (Bogra), 3) Bangarh (South Dinajpur), 4) Mahasthangarh (Bogra), 5) Nandadirghi, 6) Gauḍa, and 7) Pandua (Malda) etc. within the geographical boundary of ancient Puṇḍra.

Though macro level works on archaeology of this area have been made, micro-studies are still meager in respect of the little known ancient sites of these three districts. Even where such studies have been carried out, little attention has been given to the informal knowledge of history of this area. In view of the above deficiencies, this study has been undertaken. The present work is expected to explore the untold and even neglected history of the area.

Objectives of Research

Objective of the research is to reveal the settlement pattern in the three district of North Bengal (Malda, North and South Dinajpur) in terms of history, geography, society, culture etc. This study, primarily, intends to focus on the central place aspects of Bangarh (Dakshin Dinajpur), Amati (North Dinajpur) and Asuragarh (North Dinajpur), West Bengal. Bangarh, situated 23 km north-west of Balurghat (Head quarter of South Dinajpur District), the excavated ruins from this place put Bengal on the archaeological map of ancient regions of India where civilization flourished quite early. Known variously as *Koṭivarsa*, *Soṇitapura*, *Umāvana* and *Devikoṭa*, this city rose to prominence in the Mauryan period. Amati, situated about 37 km south from Raiganj (Head quarter of North Dinajpur District), seems to be the site of the capital city of Bengal founded by Rāmapāla, the Pāla king in the late eleventh century. The findings from Asuragarh and the morphology of Asuragarh proves that it was a contemporary site of Bangarh and Mahasthangarh (Bangladesh). These settlements are encircled by many minor sites flourished at deferent point of time. In this thesis, the central place theory was applied on these three different archaeological sites to pursue the relevant factors of central place issues in archaeological context.

Time Limit

The time limit of the thesis is from c. 300 BCE to c. 1200 CE. The entire ancient time, particularly the Hindu period, has been taken as time limit of the dissertation. The study starts with the finding of the Mauryan Brāhmī inscription of Mahasthangarh to the end of Sena power. Further, the time span of the proposal is bigger one, because of its archaeological leaning. Extant remains of archaeology always, it is seen, take longer span of time for indicating any changes in the form and nature.

Previous Study

The colonial masters as part of their official duties brought the archaeological remains of the study area under discussion in the first half of the nineteenth century. The study in the colonial period was started in the 1780s with Charles Wilkins, who

published translation of *Bhagavat-geeta* or 'Dialogue of Kreeshna and Arjoon'. In the subject of archaeology, the colonial administrators were interested in translating of ancient epigraphs not in field archaeology. Wilkins first read the inscriptions of the Pāla period found from Bengal and Bihar. He was followed by Broadly, Beglar, Kittoe, Cunningham, Anderson, Bloch, Buchanan, Addinson, Westmacott, Blochman, Kielhorn, Marshman, Strong, Creton, Monahan, Dalton, Edwards, O'Malley, Stapleton and so on. Some scholars of Indian origin, R. Chanda, A. K. Maitra, R. Chakravarti, R. D. Banerjee, K. N. Dikshit, R. C. Majumdar, K. G. Goswami and so on, also made valuable contributions in the study. In the post colonial period systematic studies were carried out by D. C. Sircar, N. R. Roy, B. C. Law, P. Niyogi, S. Hossain, D. K. Chakravarti, D. C. Sen, M. S. Bhattacharjya, M. Bhattacharya, G. Sengupta, S. Panja and so on. Little but valuable efforts have been made by the regional historians like H. Sarkar, A. Roy, A. Basak, D. Roy and many more.

Methodology

The present study is designed to bring to light hitherto neglected archaeological sites of the ancient and early medieval period of the three districts of North Bengal (Malda, North and South Dinajpur). For the purpose of this research work, many materials and sources are collected through field survey and from the government museums, private collections and printed materials. For this, present scholar visited some archaeological sites, Indian Museum, National Museum, State Museums, collection of the private collectors. Oral traditions of the inhabitants of the sites have also collected through interview. The secondary sources for the study have been collected through bibliography.

In the present work, an attempt is made to study

1. How archaeological exploration can help us to locate the Jagaddala Mahāvihāra with more accuracy, keeping in mind the earlier hypothetical observations of some scholars.
2. What were catering factors to the genesis and development of urban sites as evident from the archaeological sites?

3. How the changes in the river courses and water flows brought changes in the morphology of the urban settlement pattern of the region?
4. The history of North Bengal has not yet been framed in chronological manner, particularly after the Suṅga period. Why North Bengal lost its importance during this time?
5. What were the linkages between different settlements? (both waterways and land routes)
6. Why the political epicenters of Puṅḍravardhana had been changed with the span of time?
7. How and when the archaeological sites as mentioned above turned from a vibrant to a moribund state in this part of Bengal?

Scheme of Chapters

The thesis consists of six chapters including the introduction and conclusion. The chapters are

I Introduction

II Historical Geography of Ancient Lower Northern Bengal.

III The Wheel of Urbanization and Geopolitics.

IV Political Scenario and Power Structure in Puṅḍra-Varendra.

V The Remains of Cities and Monastic Establishments.

VI Conclusion

The introductory chapter explains the limit of the study area, aims and objectives of the study, time frame, limitations of the previous study and the need of this thesis.

The second chapter explains the historical geography of the study area. In this chapter, an attempt is made to discuss the changes in territorial divisions,

nomenclature, administration and their impact on the social life of the people of the study area. The study area was anciently known by different names in the changing scenario of time. Puṇḍravardhana, Matsya, Gauḍa and Varendra were the old name of our study area. Right from the time of the Vedas, this part of land was an important centre of human activities, till today. In respect of the ancient geography of our study area that even in medieval times a part of the area was known as Matsyadeśa. We ought to throw lights on this interesting issue as there are different claims about the identification of *Matsya*, regarded as a Mahājanapada.

In the third chapter, the process of urbanization and geopolitics of the study area have been discussed. Here the central place theory is applied to identify the urban patterns of the archaeological sites. The process of urbanization, as the archaeological sources suggests, was started right from the time of the period of second urbanization of India. The archaeological data identified that the study area was a part and parcel of the ancient Gangetic valley urbanization of North India. In this chapter, the process of Aryanization has been examined as a tool of urbanization. This area was full of rivers. Among them, some rivers are already lost (like river Kanchan) and some are going to be dead (like river Chiramati). But in ancient time this area was well connected with rest of the subcontinent. Ecology of the Himalayan region has been of great importance in such changes in the natural system. The relation between river and civilization is going to be scanned in this research work.

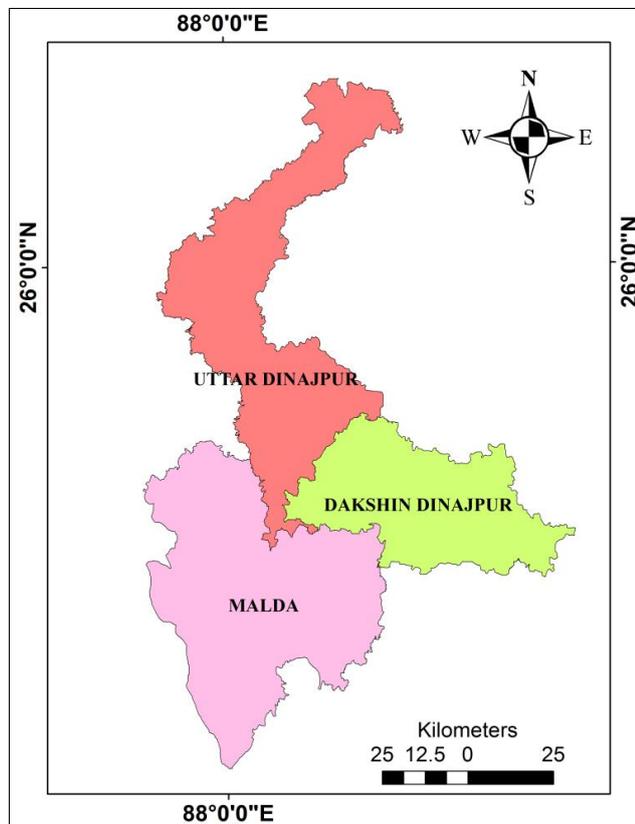
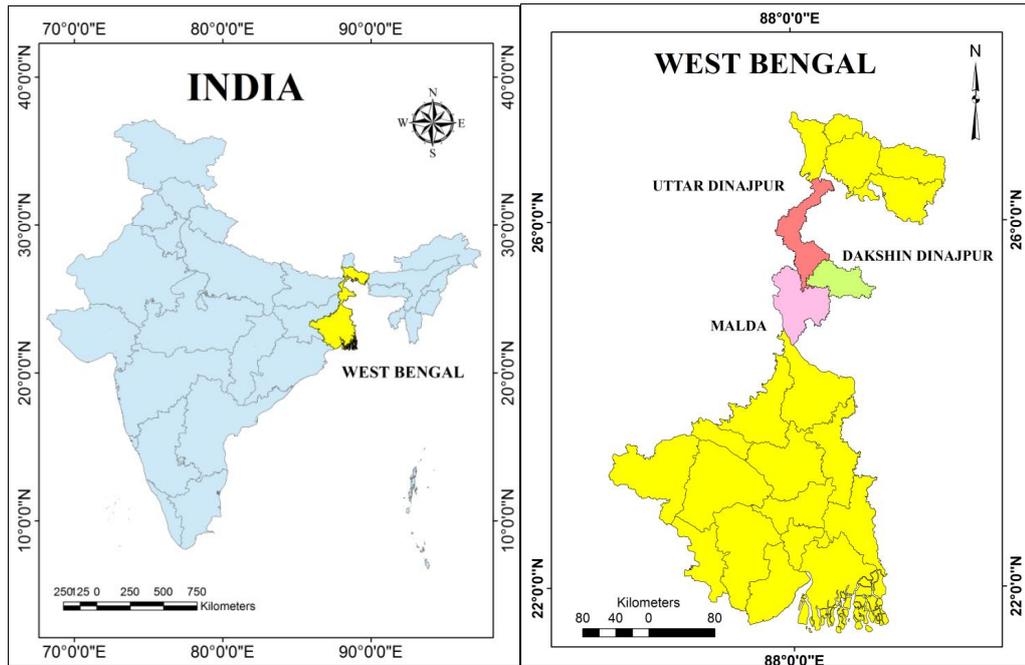
The fourth chapter deals with the political scenario and power structure of the study area. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to fill up the gaps of the obscure sides of the political history of North Bengal. The study area, at least from the beginning of the Vedic age, was an important political centre in the pan-Indian concept. This region had shown many political upheavals and sifting of political centre with the span of time. In the Mauryan period, we found Kōṭivarṣa and Mahāsthāngarh as important settlements. But after Śuṅga period this place were abandoned for quite some time. In the sixth–seventh century CE, under the stewardship of Śaśānka city like Pichlī took the place of political gravity in respect of its counterparts. In the twelve century CE after the Kaivartya revolt under Divyok, the political epicenter was changed from Gauḍa to Rāmāvātī, a newly set up city by emperor Rāmapāla. The reason, for this type of changing political scenario clearly

indicates the typical anti-incumbency tendency of the people of the region. Anti-incumbency force perhaps was a common factor in the history of all ages.

Chapter fifth is the backbone of this thesis. This chapter is the result of the scholar's years long field survey reports. A site-to-site survey has been made to examine the local legends, topography, lithopedo character, spatial effects, treasures of antiquities and many more. In this chapter scholar tried to focus on the new findings only, which have not yet been discussed. In eastern India, especially in Bengal we find several villages with similar name like *Jagadala*, *Jagaddal*, *Jaggadal*, and *Jagaddalla*. In the vicinity of Rāmavati, the last Pāla capital, we have three villages namely *Jagaddal*, *Jagadala*, and *Jagaddalla*. In the present work an attempt would be made to identify the location of the *Jagaddal Mahāvihāra* of twelve century CE. The said area had many urban centers. Some sites like Bangarh, Mahasthangarh, and Paharpur are already in focus. But some sites like Raniganj, Kandarān, Nandadirghi, Madnabati, Daharol, Kachra, Eshnail, Aminpur, Katashan, Dehabandh, Patiraj, Adhyakhanda, Ganeshvita, Mahatur, Jagdalla, Mahendra, Surohor, Harirampur, Tapan, Itahar, Bhadrashila, Bankur, Sonapur, Tamasari Mathbari, Yogipara, Baigungaon, Shadea, Dhulohar, Dwiprajar Dighi, Bindol, Barogram, Tapan Dighi, Bhaior, Mahipal dighi, Asuragarh, Bairhatta and Karan Dighi, Ketrabari are still either unexplored or little explored. It seems that, these sites with their system of communication were linked through net work of road and waterways.

The sixth chapter is the conclusion of the thesis, which summarizes the important findings of the study area. It also discusses the value of the study and also the weaknesses.

Map 1: Study Area



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Chapter 2

**Historical Geography of Ancient
Lower Northern Bengal**

Chapter 2

Historical Geography of Ancient Lower Northern Bengal

Historical Geography is the investigation of human, physical, anecdotal, hypothetical and the investigation of geographic change in a spot or region over some undefined timeframe. Historical Geography contemplates a wide assortment of issues and subjects. Numerous Historical geographers have learned about the geological patterns through time, including how population have cooperated with their conditions and made a cultural identity. Historical Geography tries to decide how cultural features of different social orders over the planet emerged and evolved, by understanding their cooperation with their spatial condition and encompassing. (Hoiberg, 2016, pp. 17202-17203)

The historical geography of our study area presents some ticklish problems. In ancient and medieval times, the sub-regions of our study area had different names, now erased out of public memory in the modern times. Ancient Bengal was known to the classical Greek writers as *Gangaridae* and *Prasii*. (Mukharjee, 2004, p. 37) They mentioned the people of the region as the *Puṇḍras*. The nomenclature of the study area has been changed to Puṇḍravardhana during the time of the imperial Mauryas. During the Gupta period, this area became an important part of their empire and to be known as Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. Most part of the region as is well-known formed part of the ancient region called Puṇḍravardhana. During the early medieval time, particularly after the fall of Śaśāṅka, the first independent king of Bengal, the northern Bengal region was known as Varendra. The ancient river Mahananda forms the western boundary of the region which extends to the southward course of the Karatoyato the east. This region is washed by several ancient rivers, mostly tributaries of the rivers we have named heretofore and ultimately pour out their water to the Ganges forming the southern boundary of Varendra. Such rivers were the lifeline for the urban centers engaged in trade and commerce and rendered fertile the vast agricultural fields by their silt deposits. So Puṇḍranagara on the Karatoya (Bangladesh), Bangarh on the Punarbhava, Gauḍa on the Ganges and several other

urban centers owed their life and prosperity to the swift and navigable rivers connecting them with vast regions in northern, eastern and north-eastern India. The suggestion is that there was continuous maritime link between Puṇḍra and the ancient port of Tāmralipta near the shores of the Bay of Bengal is not at all farfetched since it is the Ganges that flows down to the sea washing the regions like Magadha, Mithilā, Puṇḍravardhana and Rādhā. The epigraphs of the Sena's write the name of the study area as Varendrī.

1. Puṇḍravardhana

No less confusing is the fact that the land of Puṇḍra also seems to be synonymous with Varendra and includes the district of Rajshahi, Malda, Dinajpur, Pabna, Bogra and Rangpur. This land according to Xuan Zang's account had its capital at Puṇḍravardhana. The site of Puṇḍravardhana has been identified with Mahasthangarh on the bank of the river Karatoya in the district of Bogra (Bangladesh). A Mauryan Brahmi inscription mentioning a city called *Puṇḍranagara* forms the basis of this identification. (Sircar 1942, pp. 82-83; Bhandarkar, 1931-32, pp. 83-91)

In Gupta land records, Puṇḍravardhana is described as a *bhukti* or province of the Gupta Empire. As late as the Sena period Puṇḍravardhana retained its status as a *bhukti* of the Sena kingdom. Curiously enough, the ancient *bhukti* in the Sena inscriptions included Vyāghrataṭī *maṇḍala*, wrongly identified by the scholars with the coastal region of lower Bengal infested with *Vyāghra* or tiger.

Nonetheless, the present dissertation seeks to define its study area as the territories in the districts of North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda. The reason is that the area of ancient Matsya, Varendra and Puṇḍra forms part of West Bengal as full-fledged political entities. To highlight the importance of this sub-region, present scholar would like to add that it was for several centuries known as the capital region of the Pāla-Sena era. The most important archaeological sites located in this sub-region being Gauḍa, Amati, Bangarh and Asuragarh.

In the *Śunahsepa* legend of the *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa*, *Puṇḍras*, who among the hundred sons of Visvāmitra had been cursed by his father to have the lowest caste for their descendants. 'Therefore are many of the most degraded classes of men, the

rabble for the most part, such as the *Andhras*, *Puṇḍras*, *Sabarās*, *Pulindas* and *Mūtibas*, descendants of Visvāmītra'. (Haug, 1922, pp. 469-470) The same legend we also find in *Sāṅkhyāyana-śrauta-sūtra* with alteration to *Andhrāḥ Puṇḍrāḥ Sabarā Pulindas* and *Mūcipā* iti. (Ch. XV, 26) In the *Sabhā-parva* of the *Mahābhārata* (Ch. XXX) mention has been made of *Puṇḍras* while describing the hill tribes defeated by Bhīma in the battle against Karṇa (the king of *Aṅga*).

In the *Mahābhārata* and the *Harivaṁśa*, (*Mahābhārata*, *Ādi-parvan*, ch. CIV, vv. 52-55; *Harivaṁśa-parva*, Ch. XXXI. vv. 33-42.) the *Puṇḍras* is said to be a descendent of the blind sage Dirghatamas (born of the queen of the demon Bāli) along with *Aṅgas*, *Vaṅgas*, *Suhmas* and *Kalingas*. In the epic period, the name of the *Puṇḍra* tribe uttered with many variations, viz., *Puṇḍraka*, *Paṇḍra*, *Paṇḍraka* and *Paṇḍrika*.

The **Damodarpur CPIs** and **Dhanaidaha CPI**, dating from 143 to 214 of the Gupta era, prove that *Puṇḍravardhana* was the name of a large territorial division in the possession of the Guptas at least from the second quarter of the fifth century to about the middle of the sixth century CE. (Sen, 1942, p. 104) From the time of Dharmapāla it was an important province of the Pālas. During a long period extending from the eighth to the twelfth century CE *Puṇḍravardhana* witnessed political vicissitudes of different dynasties. The metropolitan district of the *Puṇḍravardhana* territory was situated in this area. The *Tarpandighi Grant* of Laxman Sena (12th century) assigns *Varendrī* to *Puṇḍravardhana*. (Sen, 1929, pp. 116-39) The *Madhainagar Grant* of Laxmansena and the *Selimpur inscription* of the Kamrupa king Joypāla also proved the inclusion of *Varendrī* within *Puṇḍravardhana*. (Sen, 1942, p. 111) As was usual in old days, this tract was probably bounded by natural barriers like mountains or large rivers. The capital city of *Puṇḍravardhana bhukti* is identified with the ruin of fortified city at Mahasthangarh (presently 8 mile north to Bogra, Bangladesh) on the bank of the river *Karatoya*, whose antiquity has been established by the ancient text of *Karatoyā-mahātma*. The north-eastern boundary of *Puṇḍravardhana bhukti* was the river *Karatoya*, which according to the *Yoginī-Tantra* was also the western boundary of *Prāgjyotiṣa*. The river *Brahmaputra*, which should for all purposes, would be taken as the eastern boundary of *Puṇḍravardhana bhukti*. A line drawn straight eastwards from modern Rangpur to meet the *Brahmaputra* would be an excellent imaginary boundary between this portion of *Prāgjyotiṣa* and

Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. It will be presently shown that the districts of Dacca, Faridpur and Bākargañj were included in Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. (Bhattashali, 1935, pp. 73-114)

The northern boundary of the *bhukti* was formed by the Himalayas. The word *Himavachchhikhara* of Damodarpur plate #4 verifies this point. (?) Previous scholars framed the southern boundary of the *bhukti* was extended up to the sea on the basis of wrong identification of Vyāgrataṭi *maṇḍala* with the Sundarban region. But the problem is with the western boundary. The Tīra *bhukti* and Śrīnagara *bhukti* were placed on the western side of the Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. So the problem is to find out the boundary between the Tīra *bhukti* and Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* on the north of the river Ganges. (Bhattashali, 1935, pp. 75-76) Here is some support for the point.

i) The Kauśikī, modern Kosi river, is always regarded by the inhabitants of Tirhut as forming the eastern boundary of their country, as the following couplet of Chaṇḍa Jhā, a modern poet of Mithilā, would show:-

“Gangā Bahathi Janika Dakṣṇadeśi Pūrvva Kauśikīdhārā ।

Paścima Bahathi Gaṇḍakī Uttara Himavat Valavistārā ॥” (*Vidyāpatir Padāvali*)

Translation:-

“(Mithilā is that country) on whose south flows the Ganges, on the east the waters of the Kauśikī, on whose west flows the Gaṇḍakī, and on whose north the Himālayas spread in might.”

ii) The late Mr. Manomohan Cakravarti also gives the same boundary for Mithilā. (Chakravarti, 1915, pp. 407-8)

iii) Francis Buchanan, writing about 1807, observes:-

‘It must, however, be observed that the Kosi is more usually alleged to have formerly been the boundary (between north Bengal and Mithilā).’ (Martin, 1838, p. 37)

iv) If to this is added the probability of the Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala*, included in Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*, lying in the district of Purnea, it will be clear that the Kosi is to be regarded as the boundary between Tira *bhukti* and Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*.

We have much archaeological evidence that the entire course of the River Bhagirathi formed the boundary between Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* and Vardhamāna *bhukti*. So the land between the river Karatoya, Brahmaputra, Ganges, Bhagirathi, Kosi and Himalaya would be identified with the area of Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. This *bhukti* was also divided in several *viṣayas* and *viṣayas* into *maṇḍalas*.

1.1. Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala*

The location of Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* is wrongly identified so far. Here we will try to identify the present jurisdiction of Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala*. *Vyāghra* is a Sanskrit word, means tiger. So as the name suggests Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* was a land of tigers. We come to know about this piece of land from two Pāla and one Sena inscriptions. Niharranjan Roy gives an etymological description of the word ‘Vyāgrataṭī’ and allude the Sundarban region (India and Bangladesh) as the present location of Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* with *Bāgḍi* as the center point. (Roy, 1414 BS, p. 85) Now this place is identified with the tiger infested *Bāgḍi* of Sundarban region. R. C. Majumdar has some doubt regarding the identification of Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala*. The theory that equates the Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* with *Bāgḍi* is not based upon any convincing evidence (Majumdar, 1943, p. 24) According to the previous research works, all the places mentioned in KhalimpurCPI (Kielhorn, 1896-97, pp. 243-254) are identified with the places of northern part of Bengal. But only Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* is placed in the far south at *Bāgḍi*. So, the question is where it was. We find another mention of Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* in Nālandā CPI (Shastri, 1923-24, pp. 310-327) of Dēvapāla. Here we also find the mention of Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* and its ruler Balavarmana, who acted as *dūtaka* on behalf of Magadhan king. Generally, *dūtaka* of an inscription has to be a *Yuvarāja*. The *dūtaka* of Khalimpur CPI is *Yuvarāja* Tribhuvanapāla; (Kielhorn, 1896-97, p. 245) the *dūtaka* of the Mungir plate of Dēvapāladēva also was a *Yuvarāj* Rājyapāla. (Kielhorn, 1892a, pp. 253-258) The Nalanda plate highlights the importance of the ruler of Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* in its v. 22 and v.23. (Shastri, 1923-24, pp. 310-327)

V.22. The illustrious Balavarman who was the right hand of the king, as it were, and who never depended on (others') help for crushing hostile forces, acted as messenger in this religious function.

V.23. In this religious undertaking Balavarman, the illustrious ruler of the Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala*, acted as a messenger of the illustrious (Emperor) Dēvapāladēva.

During the reign of Dēvapāladēva, Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* was governed by a district ruler called Balavarmana. The way he is praised in this epigraph, as the right arm of the Emperor, would show that he had a higher rank even though he was one of the feudatories of *Dēvapāladēva*. (Kielhorn, 1896-97, pp. 243-254) He was so important personality that he had his importance not only to his own territory, but to his neighbour's territories also. He also acted as a *dutaka* in the Rajauna image inscription of Śūrapāla. (Sircar, 1950, p. 139)

All the places mentioned in the plate are identified with some villages of the district of Nalanda, Rajgrha and Gaya districts of Bihar. It would appear from this plate that the Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala*, not a big area of itself, was an important piece of land from a political point of view and probably lay on the frontier. The Khālimpur CPI records that the king Dharmapāladēva, at the request of his *Mahāsāmantādhipati* Nārāyaṇavarmana, granted four villages to a temple of the God Nunna-Nārāyaṇa, which had been founded by Nārāyaṇavarmana at Śubhasthalī. This inscription of Dharmapāladēva mentions Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* before Mahantaparakash *viṣaya*.

V.31. *śri-Puṇḍravardhanabhukty-antaḥpāti- Vyāgrataṭī Maṇḍal-
samva(mba)ddha-Mahantāprakāsa viśa(sha)yē Krauñchaśvabhra-nāma-
grāmō*

Trans: in the Mahantāprakāsa district (*viṣaya*), which belongs to the Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala*¹ within the prosperous Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*, is the village named Krauñchaśvabhra. Here a *maṇḍala* (Vyāgrataṭī) is responsible for a *viṣaya* (Mahantāprakāsa), which is not familiar in the Pāla administration. The Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* might be placed on the frontier of Mahantāprakāsa *viṣaya*. It would be possible that during that time Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* played a great role on behalf of the central government like present Chandigarh city. After studying these two Pāla inscriptions, it can be concluded that Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* was placed on the east of

Nālandā *viṣaya* and on the west of Mahantāprakāsa *viṣaya*. The head quarter of this *maṇḍala* was probably laid in the undivided Purnea district. So from the discussion it is clear that the Khāri *viṣaya* or *maṇḍala* and the Vyāghratati *maṇḍala* were separate geographical entities in early medieval Bengal. Otherwise, their names would not be figured separately in the inscriptions. Therefore, the tiger infested eastern part of the district of Purnea, lying between the two great ancient rivers, the Kosi and the Mahananda, was in all probability known as the Vyāghratati *maṇḍala*.

The district of Purnea also fulfils the reason of the name of the *maṇḍala*, i.e. Vyāgrataṭī. If we go through the district gazetteer of Purnea, can find that

“The tiger is the best known of the large animals of Purnea, and is found in all parts of the district, but particularly along the banks and among the sandy islands of the river Kūsi, where it finds shelter in the high grass jungle with which the country is covered. Another tract much frequented by tigers in the scrub jungle that runs along the north of the district. A few also come from near Gaur in Malda, and from the *Sal* forest of the north Bārendra in Dinājpur.” (Hunter, 1976, p. 236)

Depredation² of tigers was so severe that the authority had declared prize money to kill those tigers.

“... in 1788, the collector, in reporting on the reveges committed by this animals in *pargana Kadba*, stated that £ 600 was annually paid out of his office for tigers killed in Purneah, at the rate of £ 1 per head...of late years, also, the rewards given for the destruction of tigers and leopards have been large.”(Hunter, 1976, p. 236)

Leopards are very common along the Dinajpur frontier, and are killed in the same manner as tigers. In the same tract, and near the Terai, tiger cats (*Felisviverrina*), leopard cats (*F. Bengalensis*), and wild cats (*F. Chaus*) are abundant. The Hyaena is occasionally seen in the north of the district.

The main river of Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* was the river Kosi. The Kosi River changes her course frequently with the time and left huge fertile river beds for crops and high grass, which is ideal for a civilization and for the tiger also. So it can easily be assumed the reason behind the name of the *maṇḍala*.

Anuliya CPI of Lakshmaṇasena also mentions about Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* and its some places, viz., *Māthraṇḍiyā*, *Mālāmancha-vāṭī*, *Jalapilla* and *Sāntigōpī-śāsana*. The identification of these places will not be possible until proper identification of Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala*. However, an effort should be made in this dissertation to identify these toponyms. This grant mentions,

(Line 34-46): “Be it approved by you that a plot of land (of the village of) Māthraṇḍiyā within Vyāgrataṭī, which is situated in the Puṇḍavardhana *bhukti*, having for its four boundaries of follows, viz., the banyan tree as its boundary on the east, Jalapilla as its boundary on the south, Sāntigōpī-śāsana as its boundary on the west of and Mālāmancha-vāṭī on the north.”
(Majumdar, 1929, pp. 81-91)

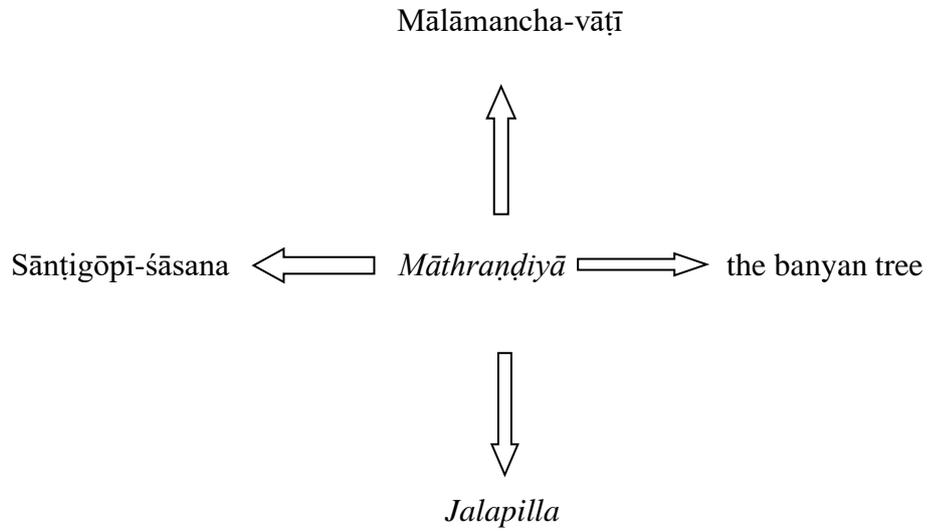


Diagram 1: Plot donated through Anulia CPI

It was discovered from the Anuliya village near Ranaghat in Nadia district of West Bengal. The places of the inscription are not yet identified. The donated village Māthraṇḍiyā can be identified with the Mēthrāni village of Gajol subdivision of Malda district of West Bengal on the basis of archaeological remains and corrupted names of its and its surrounding villages. It can easily be assumed that the word *Mēthrāni* is a corrupted form of *Māthraṇḍiyā*. The place yielded many artefacts of Pāla-Sena period. There is a pond, now called by the villagers as *Pirpukur* have pucca bathing *ghats*, (Picture 1) facing four directions, with a temple like structure on the east. (Picture 2) On the southeast of Mēthrāni, a village namely Jājilpārā³ is situated,

which also have huge antiquities of that time. This Jājilpārā village might be the Jalapilla village of the inscription. On the north of Mēthrāni, two villages, viz., Mālanipur, Manchāmpur are situated, which altogether could be the Mālāmancha-vāṭī of the inscription. The place of Sāntigōpī-śāsana in the west has not yet been found. If we agree with that identification, then we should realize the reason behind placing the Āmrasandika *viṣaya* under Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍal* in Khalimpur CPI. The ariel distance between the Amshol, which bears the legacy of the name of Āmrasaṇḍikā, and Mathrāni is 10.10 km.

The Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍal* had close tie with the family of the *Varmana*. From the inscriptions of eighth and ninth centuries, we find two powerful personalities having same surname of *Varmana*, i.e. Nārāyaṇavarmana of Khalimpur CPI of Dharmapāladēva and Balavarmana of Nalanda CPI of Devapāladēva. Probably they were of same family. As our study goes, it has already been proven that the Varmanas of that time was so powerful. This study suggest, as we know the study area, which was the fatherland (‘Janakabhu’ of *Rāmācaritam* of Sandhyakarnandi.) of the mighty Pāla emperors, had a powerful and effective role in the rise and consolidation of the Pāla Empire. This Varmana family might have a great role in that process. They achieved the important position in the administration and the land of their jurisdiction had also enjoyed great power. It is not possible to ascertain the lineage of this family but later on, we find another powerful personality with similar surname. Niharranjan Roy mentions about Kalyāṇavarma, author of an astrology book *Sārābalī*, which have also been quoted in the writings of Mallināth (*Śiśupālabadha Tīkā*), Utpal and Al-Biruni. Kalyāṇavarma describe himself in his manuscript as *Vyāghrataṭīswara*. Roy undoubtedly identified this Vyāghrataṭī with the Vyāghrataṭī *maṇḍala* of Khalimpur CPI. (Roy, 1414 BS, p. 699.) The title *Vyāghrataṭīswara* tentatively proves that this Kalyāṇavarma of this astrology book was a descendent of the family of Nārāyanavarmana and Balavarmana. This family enjoyed a great power during Pāla period for a long time. And the entire Varmana caste of this region had played crucial role against the scathing attack of the Delhi Sultans.

1.2. Mahantāprakāśa *viṣaya*

KhālimpurCPI of Dharmapāladēva mentions:

In the Mahantāprakāśa district (*vishaya*), which belong to Vyāghrataṭī *maṇḍala* within the prosperous Puṇḍavardhana *bhukti*, is the village named Krauñchaśvabhra. Its boundary on the west is Gaṅginikā; on the north it is the small temple of Kādambarī and a date tree; on the north-east the dike made by the Rājaputra Dēvaṭa; it goes to and enters a citron grove (?); on the east it is the dike of Viṭaka, Also the village named Mādhāsāmmalī. On the north its boundary is Gaṅginikā; from there, on the east; from there again, on the south is the small island Kāṇā; on the east the river Koṅṭhiā; on the north Gaṅginikā; on the west Jēnandāyikā. On the island the funeral rites of this village are performed (?). Of the village Gōpippalī, which is within the Āmrasaṅḍikā *maṇḍala* belonging to the Sthālīkkaṭa district (*vishaya*), the boundaries are, on the east the western boundary of the Udragrāma *maṇḍala*, on the south a jālaka (?), on the west the Khāṭikā (?) named Vēsānikā, on the north the cattle-path running on the borders of the Udragrāma *maṇḍala*. (Kielhorn, 1896-97, pp. 243-254)

From this inscription, we come to know about many place names, water bodies and flora of the study area. Comparatively Mahantāprakāśa was a small *viṣaya* in the Pāla Empire. It was situated on the southern side of the Sthālīkkaṭa *viṣaya*. The northern boundary of Sthālīkkaṭa *viṣaya* was possibly northern portion of the Gajol PS. So, the search for Mahantāprakāśa *viṣaya* can be done on the southern part of the Gajol PS. Possibly Old Malda on the bank of the river Mahananda is the present site of this *viṣaya* of Dharmapāla's time. This *viṣaya* consisted of present Malda PS and southern part of the Gajol PS. We have not yet found mention of any *maṇḍala* or sub-division of this particular *viṣaya* from any sources. Inasmuch it was a small *viṣaya*, so the administrative control of this *viṣaya* was under the powerful Vyāghrataṭī *maṇḍala*.

The Krauñchaśvabhra village of Khalimpur CPI of Dharmapāladēva can be identified with the Bṛddhi Kāmach mauza of Gajol, Malda, West Bengal. In the settlement survey of 1929-30, the present Kāmānch mouza was created adding two mauzas, viz, Ārazī Kālwarī and **Kāuch**. This view is also supported by renowned historian Rajanikanta Chakravarti, who identified the Kāuch village as the Krauñchaśvabhra village of Dharmapāla's time. (Chakravarti, 1405 BS, p. 139) As we can see, according to the Khalimpur CPI of Dharmapāladēva, the village Krauñchaśvabhra had its boundary formed by many Gaṅginikās. We find many villages in its vicinity named as Gaṅginak, Gābtalī Gaṅginak, Gongra, all of which

bear the memory of the name of Gaṅginikā of the inscription. A huge number of stone fragments can be seen on the mentioned places. On the south of Krauñchaśvabhra the **Rañjubil** can be identified as the *Grāma* Bilba of the inscription. The northern boundary of the Krauñchaśvabhra village is demarcated by the temple of Kādambarī. Though it is not possible to find out the temple at present day, but on the north of Bṛddhi Kāmach mauza a village named **Kāluarī** is situated, which may be a corruption of the name of *Kādambarī*. In the inscription, we find mention of Khātaka-yānikā[ṛ]. On the east of Bṛddhi Kāmach mauza, a marsh land named Khāṭiā-kānā exists and farther east of it, **Khātiakān** village is situated. On the south-east of Bṛddhi Kāmach mauza we also find a marsh land named **Nalbōnā** of Nalkhāgra mauza, which has resemblance with Nalacharmmaṭat of the inscription.

We have another village in this inscription, i.e. Mādhāsāmmalī of Mahantāprakāśa *viṣaya*. This village can be identified with the **Mādhavpur** mauza of Gajol PS, which is situated a few km away from Bṛddhi Kāmach mauza. In the settlement survey of 1929-30, former Mādhavpara, Gopālbāti and Śilimpur mauza were incorporated into a single mauza of Mādhavpāra.

1.3. Sthalikkata-*viṣaya*

The Khālimpur CPI mentions Sthālīkkaṭa, another *viṣaya* of Dharmapāla's time. (*Sthālīkkaṭavishaya-samva(mba)ddh-Āmrashaṇḍikāmaṇḍala-Āntaḥpāti-Gōpipalī-grāmasya*) (Kielhorn, 1896-97, p. 249) The present location of this *viṣaya* can be identified with the **Thīlikat** village of Itahar PS. This village possibly catered to the administrative need as a centre place of this *viṣaya*.

1.3.1. Āmrashaṇḍikā-*maṇḍala*

Āmrashaṇḍikā was a *maṇḍala* under Sthālīkkaṭa *viṣaya* during Pāla period. The **Amshol** village of Gajol PS of Malda district can be taken as the present location of Āmrashaṇḍikā *maṇḍala* of the Khalimpur CPI of Dharmapāladēva. This village is situated on the bank of the river Chiramati and has yielded ample artefacts of the Pāla period. The name of the village Amshol has clearly a corrupted form of the word *Āmrashaṇḍikā*. In the Khalimpur CPI, another village of Gōpipalī of Āmrashaṇḍikā *maṇḍala* belonging to the Sthālīkkaṭa *viṣaya* had also been donated. It can be identified with the village named **Piplān**, situated on the southeast of Raiganj PS

with the **Gopālpur** village in its vicinity. Both these villages together can be identified as the Gōpippalī village of the inscription. The boundary of this village has been described in the inscription. The Pipplān is situated at a distance of 20 km from Amshol. So, if we take the Amshol village as the centre of Āmrasaṅḍikā *maṇḍala*, the Pipplān village was surely under its jurisdiction. From the description of Khalimpur CPI and identification of the above mentioned place, it can easily be taken that the area of Āmrasaṅḍikā *maṇḍala* was spread within north-western side of present Gajol PS, the entire Itahar PS and southern portion of Raiganj PS.

1.3.2 Udragrāma- *maṇḍala*

Of the village Gōpippalī, which was within the Āmrasaṅḍikā *maṇḍala* belonging to the Sthālīkkaṭa district (*viṣaya*), the boundaries are, on the east the western boundary of the Udragrāma *maṇḍala*, on the south a *jālaka* (?), on the west the Khāṭikā (?) named Vēsānikā, on the north the cattle-path running on the borders of the Udragrāma *maṇḍala*.

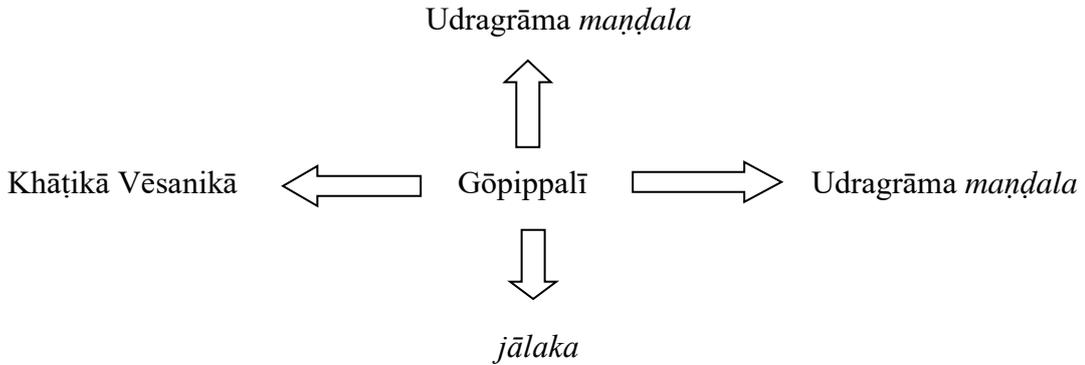


Diagram 2. Boundaries of Gōpippalī

While describing the boundary of Gōpippalī village, mention has been made about the Udragrāma *maṇḍala* as the northern and eastern boundary of Gōpippalī village. A village namely **Udgram**, now under Kaliyaganj PS, is situated at a distance of 33 km from the Pipplān village (Gōpippalī) and can be identified as the Udragrāma *maṇḍala* of the Khalimpur CPI. This village is full of archaeological remains of the Pāla period. This place might be the headquarters of Udragrāma *maṇḍala*. The name of the village Udgram is clearly a contortion of the name Udragrāma.

1.4. Pañchanagarī viṣaya

In the inscriptions of the Gupta period found from North Bengal, we find mention of three *Viṣayas* of Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*, likely the Kōṭivarṣa of the Damodarpur grants, the Khāḍā(rā)pāra of the Dhanaidaha plate and Pañchanagarī of the Baigrama inscription as the important *viṣayas* of the *bhukti*. The Baigrama CPI mentions about Pañchanagarī *viṣaya*. The central place of this *viṣaya* can be located at **Panchbibi** village of Bangladesh. (Firdousi, et al., 2012, pp. 1-15) This village is full of archaeological fragments, scattered here and there. Hamilton (1833, p. 57) described the antiquity of this place which was then a part of Lalbazar subdivision. He talked about the monument of Nimay Shah as the principal place of Muslim worship. He observed that the stone pieces lying on the land around the monument and other places were taken from a Hindu building. (Hamilton, 1833, p. 57.) Reference of this site can be found in the survey report of E. V. Westmacott. (Westmacott, 1875, p. 190) He mentioned the difficulties in reaching Patharghata owing to dense jungle. However, he identified the shrine of Nimai Shah as situated on the buried remains of a Buddhist stupa. What is common in the descriptions of these two colonial surveyors is the mention of this place with numerous monumental remains of ancient period. (Westmacott, 1875, pp. 190-91; Sen, 2012, pp. 1-15)

While identifying the correct location of Vāyigrāma place of the inscription, Radhagovinda Basak (1931-32, pp. 79-80) comments, “I cannot say for certain if the village named here as Vāyigrāma is the village of the same name that is mentioned in No. 4 of Damodarpur grants. If they are identical, the village must have been situated somewhere on the boundary line between Kōṭivarṣa and Pañchanagarī. That Baigram, where this plate was unearthed, is the ancient Vāyigrāma mentioned in this plate (1.2) cannot be doubted. Consequently, it may reasonably be assumed that the localities mentioned in the inscription were situated somewhere near Hili in Bogra (the then). The name Śrīgōhālī, however, reminds us of the names Vaṭa-Gōhālī and Nitva-Gōhālī of the Pāhārpur inscription.” The places mentioned in the Baigrama CPI are Chaṇḍagrāma and Palāśvṛindaka. At a distance of half km to the north of Baigrama there are two Mauzas lying side by side named **Bara Changram** and **Chhota Changram** both in Nawabganj PS of present Bangladesh. These two villages were once definitely a single village and may be identified as Chaṇḍagrāma of the Gupta Era. **Palasbari** village, situated at a distance of six km. to the north of Changram, may be taken as the Palāśvṛindaka of the

inscription. About the identification of correct locations of Śrīgōhālī and Trivṛitā, Sarkar has some hypothetical observations. The Baigram plate mentions two places of Pañchanagarī *viṣaya* named as Śrīgōhālī and Trivṛitā which were contiguous to the Vāyigrāma. **Hili** is a town situated on the eastern edge of South Dinajpur district and is very close to Baigram. The corruption of Śrīgōhālī may be happened this way:

Śrīgōhālī > Śīualī > Hiualī > Hili.

Tripura is situated at a distance at a distance of one km from Hili in Panchbibi PS of Bogra district (Bangladesh). **Tripura** may be derived from Trivṛitā in this way:

Trivṛitā > Trivīrā > Tripirā > Tripurā

The headquarters of this *viṣaya* may be located at the Panchbibi village of Bangladesh. (Sarkar, 2009, pp. 14-15.)

The Nandapur plate (Majumdar, 1940, pp. 52-56) of Surajgarh, Munghyr, Bihar have some similarities with Baigram plate in respect of script, phraseology and the standard measuring reed, which proves that both the places mentioned in this two plates are about same *viṣaya*. So the hypothesis is that, the places have been mentioned in the Nandapur CPI must be found in Pañchanagarī *viṣaya*. The Nandapur plate mentions two places, viz; Āmbilagrāma and Jangoyika. Āmbilagrāma can be located in **Āmail** village, situated at a distance of five km south-west of Panchbibi PS. We find another village named **Jangoi** in the Nawabganj PS of Dinajpur PS (Bangladesh), which can be identified as the Jangoyika village of the inscription. The Belwa CPI (Sircar, 1957, p. 4) also mentions about Pañchanagarī *viṣaya* and three other plots of donated land. Gaṇēśwara, one among the three gift lands, can be identified with present village of **Ganeshpur**, situated at a distance of three km west of Panchbibi PS. (Sarkar, 2009, pp. 14-15.)

1.5. The Kuddālakḥātaka *viṣaya*

The Kuddālakḥātaka *viṣaya* of the Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* was an important unit of ancient North Bengal and an important *jayaskandāvāra* (victory camp) of the Pāla Empire. The Jagajjivanpur CPI, the Jajilpara CPI and Raktamāla CPI mention some spatial facts about this *viṣaya*.

The Jagajjivanpur (Tulavita) plate (Roy, 2002, pp. 551-611) records the grant of some land in a ‘locality marked with/abounding in water bodies’ (*udraṅga*) called Nandadīrghikā in the Kuddālakḥātaka *viṣaya* within the Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* to a Buddhist monastery belonging to the Avaivarttika subsect of the Mahāyāna school named after the tank (i.e. Nandadīrghikā) in the same name locality’. It was issued in the seventh year of Mahendrapāla’s reign. Subsequent digging at the provenance has provided clinching evidence, in the form of a brick-built Buddhist monastery named Nandadīrghikā *vihāra*, towards authenticity of the statement.

The Jagajjivanpur (Tulavita) plate of the time of Mahendrapāla was issued from *Nandadīrghikodraṅge* in the Dardaraṇḍī *maṇḍala* of the Kuddālakḥātaka *viṣaye* in Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. (*śrī-Puṇḍravardhana-bhuktau Kundā[la]khātaka-vishayē Na[n]dadīrghik-ōdrangē*) The boundary of the granted land described as

...sīmā | Tatra pūrvvena Taṅgila-nady=ardha-śrotaḥ parichchinnā
dakshinēn=āpi Kuvja-ghaṭik-ārddha-śrotikayā Kasiggara-Vammaka-
madhyena Nārāyaṇa-vāsīya-pūrvva-sīm-avadhiḥ | Paśchimēn=āpi Gōlaṭi-
nirjjharēṇ-Āja[ga]ra-vasak-āvakhātēna vālmika-stūpēn=āśvattha-
vrikshēṇavijjagavandha kam paśchima-Shaṇḍāl-āntar-āmalakī-vriksha-
paryantaḥ Uttarēn=āpy=ataḥ pūrvvamukhō=’ttarakuṇḍā dakshinēna
Nandāsurālpā... (Roy, 2012, p. 21)

Translation:- “The boundaries (of the town) are on the east – the river Taṅgila; on the south the half way of the stream of the sameflowing hear Kubjajoṭikā; on the east, Nārāyaṇavāsīya (the abode of a certain Nārāyaṇa, or the shrine of God Nārāyaṇa ?) lying near the middle of the embankment of Kāsiggara; on the west, the water-fall of Golaṭi, the ant-hill and the aśvatthva tree in Jambhavāsaka (mud house); on the western part of the Nandā-tank, at a little distance, the *vilva* tree, the Vijjaga embankment and *āmlaki* tree on the western part of the Nandā lake and up to the half-stream of the Tangila.” (Mukherjee, 1997, pp. 58-70) It is tempting to identify this river with modern Tāngan. The **Nandagarh** or **Nādgarrh** bill (Nandadirghī) of Jagajjivanpur, Malda has been identified as the Nandadīrghikā Lake and modern **KāsiDighi** as Kāsiggara-bandhaka of the plate. (Mukherjee, 1997, pp. 68-70)

The Jajilpara CPI of Gopāla IV was issued from Vaṭa-Parvatikā *jayaskandhāvāra* of Kuddālakḥātaka *viṣaya*. The toponyms of the plate are Kāstagrha, Mahārājā of Ānandapur *agrahāra* and Sīha *grāma* along with Muktvāvstu *grāma*.

According to Misra and Majumdar, (1951, p. 139) “There is a village named ‘Sihali’ or ‘Sihole’ on the Gajol-Dinajpur road, in Banshihari police station, Dinajpur district. At present, it is a very small hamlet, but according to the local tradition it was formerly a big village inhabited by large number of learned Brāhmaṇas. Even now, some Varendra Brāhmaṇas reside in a village called **Mahāgrāma**, about less than a mile from this village. It is situated on the south-eastern bank of the Tangan river and, as a result of the erosion of the river, foundations of many brick-built houses have been exposed to view. Its distance from the find-place of the present copper-plate is about 7 or 8 miles. It is probable that the site of this village represents the old ‘**Siha**’ village.”

The Raktamāla CPI of the 159 GE was salvaged from a scrap metal shop in Dhaka and was said to have been found in Bogra district of present Bangladesh. It had first come into light through the pen of D.P. Dubey and S. K. Acharya in 2014. (Dubay & Acharya, 2014) (Griffiths, 2015, pp. 15-38) This inscription mentions Kuddālakḥāta *viṣaya* under the jurisdiction of Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* (II. 21-22: *śrīpuṇḍravardhanabhuktau kuddālkḥātaviṣayasambaddha*). The place from which a grant was issued from the Kuddālakḥāta *viṣaya* (II. 28-29 *kuddālakḥātakasamāvāsitaśrīmajjayaskandhāvārāt*) of Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. The Kuddālakḥāta (*kuddālakḥātadhivāsābhyantara*) of this grant must correspond with Kuddālakḥātaka in the Jagajjivanpur plate of Mahendrapāla. (II. 30-31, *śrīpuṇḍravardhanabhuktau kuddālakḥātakaviṣaye*) It is also mentioned as a *viṣaya* in the Jajilpara plate of Gopāla IV (*śrīpuṇḍravardhanabhuktau kuddālakḥātakaviṣayambaddha*) (Majumdar, 1951, pp. 137-44). In the Raktamala grant mention has been made of villages of Kuddālakḥāta *viṣaya*, viz. Mahatī-Raktamālā, Khuḍḍī-Raktamālikā, Govardhanaka, Dugdhotikā and Madhyamaṣaṇḍikā. The toponym of Madhyamaṣaṇḍikā of this grant is phonetically similar with the Āmraṣaṇḍikā toponym of the Khalimpur grant. This grant was issued from *agrahāra* named Mahatī-Raktamālā like the Nandapur plate, which was also issued from a *agrahāra* named Āmvilagrāma. Though the correct location of these places is not yet ascertained, but understanding the similarities of this grant with other grants, one can further search somewhere east of the present Malda district in West Bengal, south of the present Panchbibi PS and west of the river Jamuna of Bangladesh.

1.6. Koṭivarṣa viṣaya

Of the five Damodarpur CPIs, four make specific mention of the Kōṭivarṣa viṣaya. The Kōṭivarṣa has been doubtlessly identified with present Bangarh in the Gangarampur PS of South Dinajpur district. The jurisdiction of Kōṭivarṣa is identified with the tract of country, consisting the northern part of the modern district of Rajshahi (presently in Bangladesh), South Dinajpur in West Bengal, including perhaps a portion of Bogra (presently in Bangladesh) and some parts of Malda district in West Bengal. The Bangarh CPI of Mahipāla I of late tenth or early eleventh century, recovered from the famous remnants of Bāṅgarh in the Gangarampur PS of South Dinajpur district. It was issued from the administrative headquarters of Vilaspura, recorded the gift of a plot of land in the village of Kurāṭapallikā with the exception of Cūṭa pallikā with low ground, within the Gokālika maṇḍala of the Koṭivarṣa viṣaya in the Puṇḍravardhana bhukti.

*Śrī-Puṇḍravardhana-bhuktau | Kōṭivarṣa-vishayē | Gōkālīkā-maṇḍala-
āntaḥpāti-sva-samva(mba)ddha-āvachchhinnatal-ōpēta-chūta-pallikā-
varjita-Kuraṭa-pallikā grāmē.* (Bannerji, 1982, pp. 324-30)

No detailed boundary of the granted land is specified in the epigraph. Another important toponym is found from this grant, i.e. Poṣalī from where hailed the artisan and engraver of this grant named Mahīdhara.

Two plates of Madanapāla's time (second and twenty second/thirty second ruling year) (Mukherjee, 1990-91, pp. 27-37; Sanyal, 2010, pp. 107-34) were recovered from Shibbari village near Rajibpur in the Gangarampur PS of South Dinajpur district. Both these grants were issued from the royal headquarters located at Rāmāvātī. The plate #1 of ruling year two records the donation of land at the Buddhavaḍā grāma in Halāvartta maṇḍala of Koṭivarṣa viṣaya in the Puṇḍravardhana bhukti, while the second plate records donation of the same land Buddhavaḍā though by then it came to be known as a pallī attached to the Koṣṭhāgāra of Devikoṭa in the same administrative area. No detailed boundary of the village Buddhavaḍā is specified in the first plate, but a brief narrative provided in the second plate in connection with the location of this village. Two neighbouring localities called Vareṇḍa pallī attached to Vaṅgaḍī and Viduṣa ballī (pallī) are mentioned in the inscription. The Buddhavaḍā grāma of the inscription has been identified with

Budhura village (now more popular as Raghampur), in the Tapan PS. (Sanyal, 2010, p. 112)

It is quite fascinating for the study of the inscription of Bengal, because in most of the Pāla inscriptions found from Bengal, the grant receiver and his successors has the right of donated plot as the Sun and the moon lasts. Even it was also cursed to reside in hell. But here the same Buddhavaḍā *grāma* was first issued to Muraripu Rāta in the plate #1 and this same village was also granted to his son Mahādeva Rāta with an addition of the suffix *pallī*.

The Tarpan Dighi CPI (Banerji, 1913-14, pp. 6-10) of the third year of the reign of Lakshmanasena lights on some obscure sides of the history of the study area. The plate was unearthed in course of re-excavating an old tank during the scarcity of 1873-74, to the north of Tarpandighi, which is the largest tank in the Gangarampur PS of South Dinajpur district. It was issued from the illustrious ‘camp of victory’ situated in Vikramapura.

That the land belonging to the village of Velahistī in Varendrī within the Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*, having for its four boundaries (as follows): To the east, the eastern boundary wall of (one) *āḍhāvāpa* of rent-free plain land (?) belonging to the deity of the Buddhist monastery, particulars of which are contained in the words *Vuddha-viharī-dēvatā-nikara-dēyāmmaṇa-bhūmyāḍhāvāpaparvvāliḥ*. (Majumdar, 1929, p. 104) The Southern boundary was the tank named Nichaḍahāra; to the west, the Nandiharipākuṇḍī and the Northern boundary was the ditch known as Mollānakhāḍī. (Banerji, 1913-14, pp. 6-10)

However, it is tempting to identify, though tentatively, the Velahisti of the Tarpandighi grant with the present village named Belasthali, not far from the provenance of the plate, to the east of Bangarh and northeast of Tapan in the Gangarampur PS of the district of South Dinajpur. Belasthali is reported to have possessed numerous bronzes and stone images of the early medieval period besides pottery and structures of later periods. It may also be rewarding to inquire in terms of an intensive field survey, if the area around the village possesses any trace of a structural ruin/associated archaeological material that might be taken as a monastic mound or part/s thereof. In that case, it will be a solid corroboration of the epigraphic

statement that lands belonging to the organization of a Buddhist monastery formed one of the boundaries of the granted land. (Sanyal, 2010, p. 112)

The Manahali CPI of Madanapāla (Maitreya, 1319 BS, pp. 147-58) records the gift of a village, situated in the Halāvartta *maṇḍala* of the Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya* in the Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*.

The Amgachhi grant of Vighrahapāla III issued from the victorious camp of Haradhāma, was discovered from the Amgachhi village of Dinajpur district, which records the grant of part of the village of Vishamapura together with Daṇḍatrahēśvara in the Vrā(brā)hmanī-grāma *maṇḍala* of the Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya* in the Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*.

Śrī-Puṇḍravardhana-bhuktau Kōṭivarṣa-vishay-āntaḥpāti-Vrā(brā)hmanī-grāma-maṇḍala [-āntaḥpāti-sva] ... Danda(?)trah-ēśvara-samēta-Vishamapur-āmśē (v.24-26) (Banerji, 1919-20, p. 292)

2. Matsyadeśa

The historical geography of our study area presents some ticklish problems. In ancient and medieval times, the sub-regions of our study area had different names, now erased out of public memory in the modern times. To start with we can refer to Matsyadeśa a sub-region that roughly corresponds with the territory lying between the river Mahananda on the west and Jamuna⁴ on the east before joining the Padma in its lower reaches. The smaller Jamuna was known as the lower channels of the Tista like the Punarbhaba and the Atreyi. The relics of the famous monastery of Somapura (Paharpur) stand on its bank in the undivided Rajshahi district of Bangladesh. The Matsyadeśa consists of large part of the Purnea district of Bihar, almost entire part of North Dinajpur and South Dinajpur and northern part of Malda district that includes the police stations of Kharba and Harishchandrapur. The district of Dinajpur in Bangladesh and parts of northern Rajshahi possibly formed part of the Matsyadeśa.

Several authorities and surveyors had mentioned some local legends, which identified this territory as the Matsyadeśa. Francis Buchanan Hamilton, (1833, pp. 19-20) in his Dinajpur District Gazetteer, mentions

... Virat Raja, king of Motsyodes, a name which is still retained by the whole of this district, except a small portion east from the proper Korotoya, for that river separated Motsyo from Kamrup, which was then governed by a prince named Bhogodotto. The boundaries of Motsyo, towards the south and west, I have not yet exactly learned, as they certainly included, at least, portions of Rajshahi and Purniya, which I have not visited. In the war which took place between Yudhishtir and Duryodhon for the throne of Hostinapur, and the supremacy of India, Virat raja assisted the former or successful side, while his neighbour, as usual, joined with the opposite party. The mother of Virat raja happened to be impregnated by means of a fish. The circumstances being very indecent, shall not be mentioned; but it is on this account, that this vicinity has been called Motsyodes, or the country of the fish.

F.W. Strong (1912, p. 18) has echoed the view of Francis Buchanon Hamilton.

This monarch (Virat Raja) was a contemporary of Bhagadatta, king of Kamrupa, and the Karatoya formed the boundary between the two kingdoms. In his days Dinajpur was called Matsya Desha, or the fish country. He is said to helped Judhisthir, the eldest of the Pandavas, in his fight for the supremacy of India. There is considerable doubt as to whether this monarch proceeded or followed Ban Raja. Traces of Virat Raja are to be found at Kantanagar in the Birganj thana, where the remains of an old fort are pointed out as the place where he kept his cattle, while Ghoraghat, in the south-west corner of the district, derives its name from the fact that Virat Raja kept his horses there. Some nine miles south-west of Ghoraghat are the ruins of his palace. Bhim the warrior hero of the solar race, and brother of Judisthir, appears to have visited the district in Virat's reign and some stone implements of agriculture attributed to him are still preserved near Parvatipur.

Authorities like B. C. Law has raised some doubts about the conventional identification of Matsyadeśa with Jaipur in Rajasthan. Referring to the *Rāmāyana* (*Kiskindhyākānda*), Law mentions, when Sugrīva sent his monkeys in search of Sītā, those under Angada are said to have made their enquiries throughout the countries of the Matsyas and the Kalingas. (*Kiskindhyākānda*, 43, II) Thus according to Law, the search for the missing heroine of the epic could not logically be directed to two isolated regions far off from each other. Kalinga is undisputedly identified with parts of modern Orissa and Angada's search for Sītā could only be led to a contiguous and

neighbouring region. And in our opinion this neighbouring territory could possibly be the *Matsya* country that formed part of modern Bengal and Bihar not far from Kalinga.

Historians agree that the *Matsya* was an ancient caste and tribe of the Indian subcontinent. It had come into light much before the rise of the great Māgadha Empire. We find mention of *Matsyas* in the *R̥gveda*. Thurvaśa, a famous king of Vedic times attacked the *Matsyas* for wealth (probably for the cows).

*Puroyo itturvaśo yakkharāsīdrāye Matsyāyo niśitā apīva, śruṣṭim cakrubhṛgava
druhyavaśca sakhā sakhāyamataraviṣūḍoḥ.*(*R̥gveda*, vii. 18 6.)

It was a wealthy country during that time. *R̥gveda* also mentions two other tribes of western India, like Druhyas and the Bhṛgus, side by side with the *Matsyas*. In the *Ādiparva*, (chap. 63) mention has been made of birth of a king called *Matsya* from the womb of a fish along with Matsyagandhā Satyavatī of the epic fame. The *Vāyu Purāna* (chap. 99) also refers to this king *Matsya* born of Uparicara Vasu and a fish. In the epic age, king Suśarmā of the Tr̥garttas says addressing Duryodhana, ‘we have been defeated before more than once by the *Matsyas* and *Sālvas*.’ (*Matsya Sālveyakaith*)

*Atha rājā Trigarttānam suśarmā rathayūthapaḥ, |
prāpatakālamidaṁ vakyamuvāca tvarito valī, ||
asakrinnikritāḥ pūrvam Matsyaśvālveyakaith prabha, |
sūtenaiva ca Matsyasya Kīcakena punaḥ punaḥ ||*

(*Mahābhārata, Virataparva, 30, 1-2.*)

According to the *Manusamhitā*, the *Matsyas*, it appears, occupied a pre-eminent position both by the purity of their conduct and customs as well as by their bravery and prowess on the battlefield. According to this text, the *Matsya* country formed part of the *Brahmar̥ṣi-deśa*, a country of the holy sages. Nowhere in the *Rāmāyana*, the *Matsyas* were described as important people possibly due to their diminishing importance after the Vedic age.

It is also established fact that Matsyendranath was associated with Nepal and considered there as an incarnation of Avolokiteśvara in Buddhist circles, as the presiding deity of the country. (Sensharma, 1994, p. 29) The Dpag bsam Gon bzams, a Tibetan work, mentions Lui pā (na-eto-pa), a Buddhist sage hailed from fisherman

caste. The sanskrit meaning of Na-eto-pa is *matsyodara* and possibly identified with Matsyendranath. (Sensharma, 1994, pp. 27-29)

Mention may now be made of the fact that in many Indian lexicons *Matsya* has synonyms like *Machchha* (which is only a corruption of formal *Matsya*) i.e. fish. Undoubtedly, the land known as *Matsya* is supposed to have some connection with fish. Interestingly, the Jaipur sub-region of Rajasthan had never been known as a country where fishes were in plenty. Instead, the sub-region known as *Matsya* in eastern India, that includes parts of Purnea, Dinajpur and Malda are known for their rich yield of fishes. The ancient rivers like the Kosi (*Kauśiki*), Mahananda, Punarbhaba, Tangan, Jamuna, Chiramati (*Śrīmatī*), Nāgar, Kulik etc. always yielded great amount of fish. It may be of interest to note that several fisher communities lived in this sub-region from time immemorial. Many of these communities are extinct till now. But in the early nineteenth century, Buchanon Hamilton had listed scores of such communities eking out their livelihood catching and selling fish. No less interesting is the fact that boatmen communities were also numerous in the region. (Hamilton, 1928, pp. 230-257) Contrarily such communities had never inhabited the Jaipur region of Rajasthan. (Table 4)

The practice of the people of using a metaphor to express something, it is believed, is always a part of their livelihood or their experiences. The condition of anarchy, which was prevailed in Bengal before the election of Gopāla by the *Prakritibhir*, had been described as *matsyanyaya*. (Kielhorn, 1896-97, pp. 243-53) Whereas, in the *Rājtarāṅgiṇī*, we find mention of similar type of election of Jalauka as king by a group of seven officials called *Prakritis*. (Stein, 1900, I. 113-151; Majumdar, 1943, p. 98) It will not be out of place to refer here to the rebellion of Kaivarta community in this region, which resulted in their capturing of political power dethroning the reigning Pāla emperor Mahipāla III. The Kaivartas were basically a tribe of fishers and boatmen from very ancient times.

Legend has it that the principal city of the Matsyadeśa was *Virāṭanagara* of which the king was Virāṭa of the *Mahābhārata* fame. One is tempted to identify this Virāṭanagara with the present day town of Biratnagar situated in southern Nepal, a little to the north of the border of the Purnea district with Nepal. The people of Biratnagar still now consider the town as the site of the ancient capital of king Virāṭa

of the epic. The people of southern Nepal, particularly those living in the Terai plains, are called *Madhesi*. Legend has it that the name *Madhesi* was derived the name from the word *Matsyadesi* (inhabitants of the Matsyadeśa).

Matsyadesi > Machchhadesi > Madesi > Madhesi

Interestingly, according to some legends, *Upaplavya* was known as the second city of the kingdom ruled by Virāṭa, and one is tempted to identify a village named Piprithān with the Upaplavya of the local legends, which is not far from modern Biratnagar (Nepal). Piprithan is famous for its mounds. The biggest mound is called by the local inhabitants as the ‘Bhīm-Bālis’. (Field Survey, 08/02/2019)

The controversy about the identification of Matsyadeśa very likely generated from Cunningham (1871, pp. 344-345) statements.

Its precise boundaries cannot be determined; but they may be fixed approximately as extending on the north from Jhunjnu to Kot Kāsim, 70 miles; on the west from Jhunjnu to Ajmer, 120 miles; on the south from Ajmer to the junction of the Bānas and Chambal, 150 miles and on the east from the junction of Kot Kāsim, 150 miles; or altogether 490 miles.

Nundo Lal Dey (1899, p. 55) also commented

“... the country around Jeypur. It was the kingdom of Rājā Virāta of the Mahābhārata, in whose court at Vairāt Yudhishtira and his brothers resided *incognito* for one year during last of their banishment. Vairāt or Bairāt is in the Alwar state of Rajputana-Machheri, which is a corruption of Matsya, is the present town of Alwar, which formerly appertained to the territory of Jeypur.”

Having thus describing the Matsyadeśa and the problems related to its identification we may proceed to the ancient land called *Varendra* which has territories that overlap Matsya country to a considerable extent. Varendra is conventionally described as the land between the Mahananda in the west and the Karatoya in the east, while the Ganges forms its southern boundary. In no ancient text, however Varendra includes the upper part of the present northern Bengal consisting of the modern districts of Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar and the Terai region of the Darjeeling district. So this ancient land included the district of Malda, Pabna,

Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Bogra and Rangpur. But the territory to the west of Mahananda in Malda district is known as *Tāl*.⁵ While the eastern part of the river in the same district is locally known as *Barind* which is a corruption of Varendra. So it would be logical not to include the territories lying west of the Mahananda within Varendra or even Matsya.

3. Varendra(ī)

In the early medieval period the land of Puṇḍra came to known as Varendra, particularly the land between the river Karatoya in the east and the river Mahananda on the west. Varendra is assigned as one of the *maṇḍalas* under Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. The earlier form of the name was Varendrī, as found from the epigraphical sources; the form of Varendra seems to have been a later innovation, used mainly in the genealogical with our inscriptional documents. (Sen, 1942, p. 112) The Tarpandighi inscription of Lakshmaṇasena assigns Varendrī to Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. (Majumdar, 1929, p. 102) The Madhainagar inscription of Lakshmaṇasena (Banerjee, 1913-14, pp. 6-10) mentions *Śrī-Puṇḍravardhana-bhukty-antaḥpāti-Varendryām*. (II. 39-40) The Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva (Venis, 1894, pp. 347-358; Sharma, 1978, pp. 273-290) records a grant to a brāhmaṇa family hailing from Varendrī. (v. 22) The Deopara inscription of Vijayasena mentions of a guild of artists, which flourished in Varendra. (*Vārendraka-Śilpigoshṭhi*) (Majumdar, 1929, pp. 42-56)

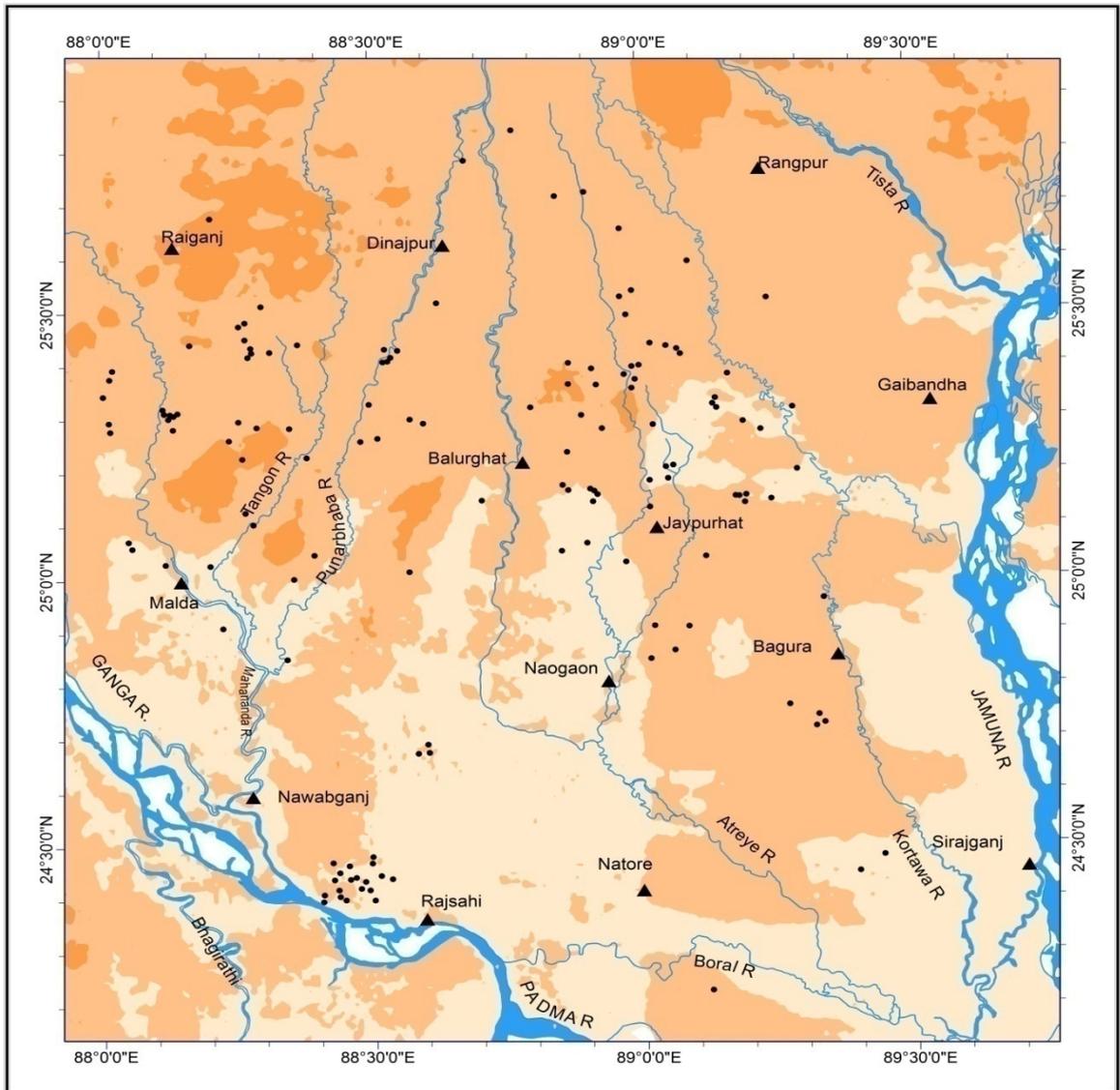
Although, Varendrī was a name of a metropolitan district of the Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* territory, but eventually a large portion of this *bhukti* came to be known as Varendra in the early medieval period. The stretch of the area of Varendra from the river Ganges and Mahananda to the Karatoya on the east, which encompasses the districts of undivided Dinajpur, Malda, Rajshahi, Bogra and Rangpur. (Monahan, 1914, pp. 97-105) Practically, it was identical with the area of ancient land of Puṇḍra or Puṇḍravardhana. The Madhainagar inscription provides few toponyms of Varendra like Kāntāpura-āvṛitti, Dpaṇiyā-pāṭaka, Rāvaṇa-sarasi, Chaḍaspāsā-pāṭaka, Gayanagara, Guṇḍisthirā-pāṭaka and Guṇḍī-Dāpaṇiya. The toponyms mentioned in the Tarpandighi grant are Velahishṭī, Buddhavihārī-devatānikara, Nichadahāra tank, Nandiharipākuṇḍī and Mollāṇakhāḍī. The Silimpur stone-slab inscription of Jayapāla mentions Vāla(Bāla)-grāma as an important village

of Varendra along with Tarkāri and Sakaṭī river. (Basak, 1982, pp. 283-95) The Kamauli plate refers a village named Bhāvagrāma of Varendrī. (Venis, 1894, p. 352) The Deopara inscription of Vijayasena mentions Rāṇaka Śūlapāni as *Varendraka-śilpigosthi-chūḍāmaṇi*. (Kielhorn, 1892b, p. 305; Majumdar, 1929, p. 46)

The historical geography of our study area is quite fascinating since the region comprised of some sub-regions almost obscure in our times as their names suggest. It would not be unjust to say that the entire region known as northern Bengal now, was anciently known either as Puṇḍravardhana or Varendra. Puṇḍravardhana was a *bhukti* or province under the Gupta Empire. Later on the name Varendra was applied more frequently as the nomenclature without giving up the use of more ancient name Puṇḍra. Even in the post-Gupta period, Puṇḍra was commonly used in literary sources. Xuan Zang, the seventh century Chinese traveller used the name in his accounts, as widely known. In all probability Varendra was a later addition as it is found in the Pāla and Sena records. Curiously enough, a part of the region was also called as Gauḍa, tentatively identified with the Pichhli-Gangarampur area of the district of Malda.

The Mastakaśvabhra grant of Pradyumnabandhu of 159 GE (650 CE?) (Griffiths, 2015, pp. 15-38) is an important piece of information for the historical geography of the study area. This grant bridges the gap in the history of Puṇḍravardhana between the last Damodarpur plate (224 GE, i.e. 544 CE) and the first plate of Dharmapāla in the eighth century. It is the first specimen from North Bengal of a specific group of land-sale grants, datable to the sixth century and the beginning of the seventh, none of which however contains any internal absolute date, all being dated in regnal years of kings whom it is generally impossible to date with a degree of precision comparable to that of the land sale grants of the Gupta era. The plate which is on the whole very well preserved, measures 37 × 24 cm and is engraved lengthwise, on one side, with twenty-one lines of text. A seal, which measures 5–7 cm in diameter, is affixed to the left margin of the text, bears two lines of text and is stamped with a secondary seal. Almost the whole of the text is preserved. The script, which is identical on plate and seal, is a variety of Late Eastern Brāhmī that may paleographically be assigned to about the sixth century CE. It was issued by a later Gupta king (?) Pradyumnabandhu.

Map 2: River System



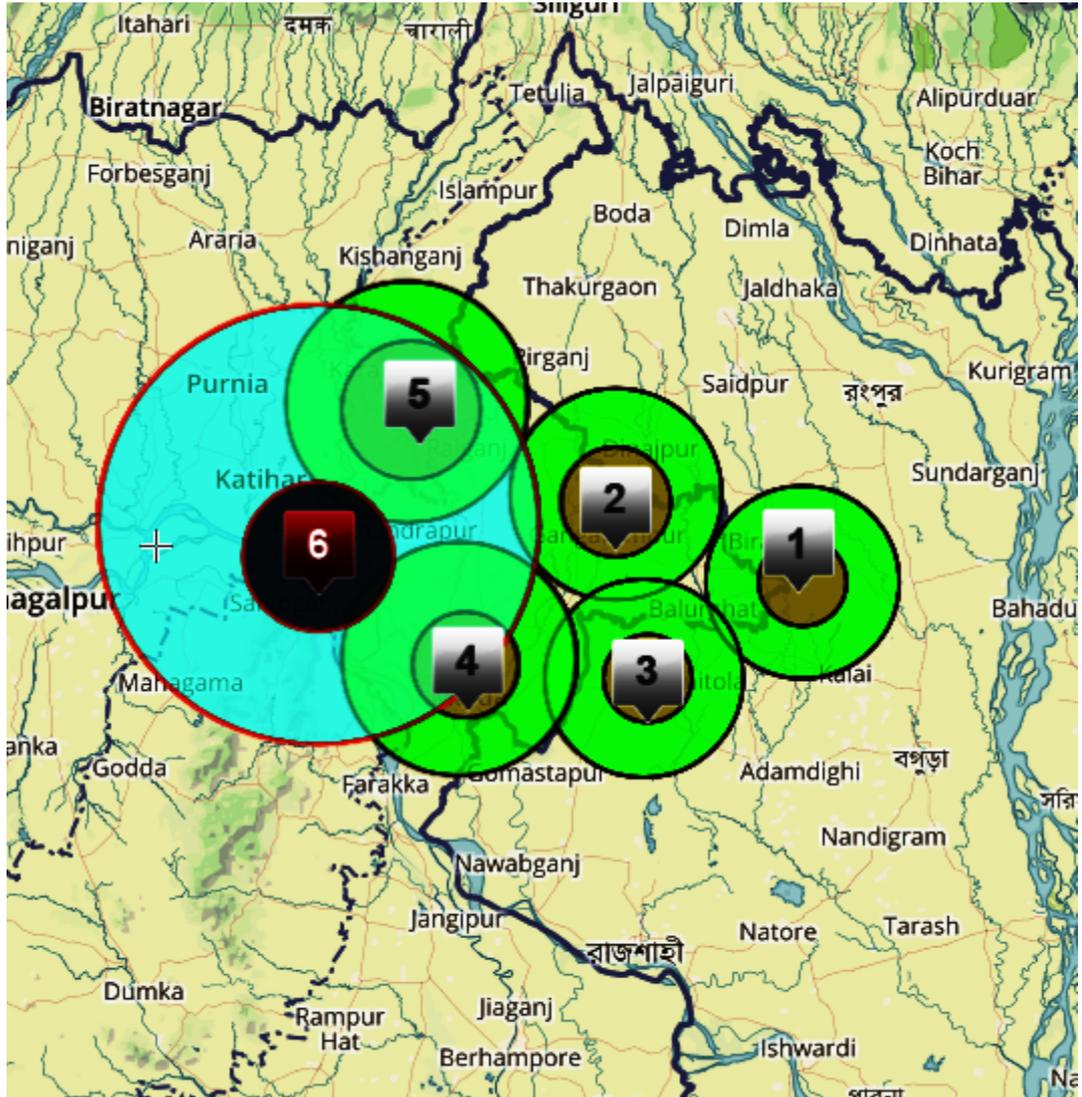
Elevation in meters

- Less than 18
- 18 - 35
- 36 - 52
- More than 52

Others

- Towns /Cities (Major)
- Location of Sites
- River
- River Deposits

Map 2: Territorial Division of the Study area



1. Pañchanagarīviṣaya
2. Koṭivarṣa viṣaya
3. Kuddālakḥāta viṣaya
4. Mahantāprakaśaviṣaya
5. Sthalikkata viṣaya
6. Vyāghrataṭi maṇḍala

Notes

1. Since a *maṇḍala* forms a part of *viṣaya*, as can be seen in the Dinajpur plate of Mahipāla the sequence is *bhukti, viṣaya, maṇḍala*.
2. Death, caused by wild beasts from 1863 to 1875 are turned by collector as fallow: - 12 in 1863, 39 in 1864, 8 in 1865, 13 in 1866, 9 in 1867, 30 in 1868, 7 in 1869, 11 in 1870, 13 in 1871, 23 in 1872, 10 in 1873, 15 in 1874 and 28 in 1875. Total for the thirteen years, 184, or an annual average of 14. (Hunter, 1976, p. 37).
3. Another copper plate grant of Lakshmaṇasena has been found from this place.
4. This Jamuna is not same with the much larger lower course of the mighty Brahmaputra River that flows through lower Assam and enters into eastern Bengal. (presently Bangladesh)
5. The river Mahananda divides the district of Malda into two parts. The eastern part is known as *Varind* (a derivative of Varendra) while the western part is called the *Tāl*.

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Chapter 3

The Wheel of Urbanization and Geopolitics

Chapter 3

The Wheel of Urbanization and Geopolitics

This chapter of the dissertation will deal with some methods, which have not conventionally been used in the writings of Indian history. The close study of the urban farrago of our study area can be explained through the **Central Place Theory** (CPT), which is unfamiliar in the archaeological context in Bengal. Central Place theory is an attempt to explain the spatial arrangement, size and number of settlements. The theory was originally published in 1933 by a German geographer Walter Christaller who studied the settlement pattern in southern Germany. (Christaller, 1966) By examining and defining the functions of the settlement structure and the size of the hinterland an attempt should be made to find a model or pattern of the settlements. The core area is called as central place, while the immediate surrounding as its threshold and its periphery as range.

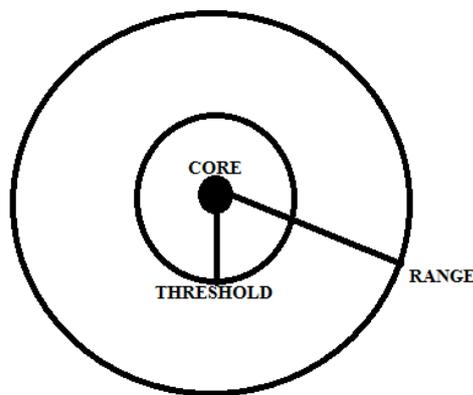


Diagram 3. Cetral Place Theory

To identify a central place, we should examine some condition of archaeological perspective, such as fortification, place of religious interest, place of education, amount of artefacts such as sculptures, potteries, metals etc; secondly a central place can be arranged on the basis of marketing, transportation and administrative principles; thirdly, the development of time or chronology is crucial in the identification of any central place. Because in analysing the urban character of a site

of our study area we have to deal with different spatial models of centralization of different time frame. The spatial effect of any central place can be different in chronological perspective, because the ancient ideal borders of the time of second and third urbanization of India are not same. A central place can overlap another central place's area of influence and can be shifted to other places with the passage of time or with the changing political scenario. It can also be sifted by the newly created security issues also.

The study area can surprise any reader, who is interested in the process of urbanization of any ancient sites, by its spatial factors, geopolitical effects and anti-incumbency factors of the subjects. The study area had numerous large and small urban centers, which catered the needs of the people of the time. It is not very common in the study of regional history that such number of large urban centers has been treated duly in close proximity. It would appear that a number of big cities of Bengal were built in our study area. These were Koṭivarṣa, Gauḍa, Rāmāvati, Pānduā, and Tāṇḍa. No less fascinating is the fact that several other large and small urban centres came up in the region during the ancient and medieval periods. Strategic importance of the region was due to its commercial and agricultural prosperity as well as its geographical location. At the outset, we should briefly describe the locations of the towns and its spatial effects on the minor surrounding urban foci in respect of geopolitics, agriculture, economy and communication. The study area, as like as the remaining part of Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* was full of urban centers. Some of the settlements were quite big, viz, Bangarh, Asuragarh, Gauḍa, Mahēṇḍra and Rāmāvati, which were also surrounded by numerous minor urban centres.

For the sake of better understanding, it is justified to discuss in brief the definitions of 'urbanization' and 'geopolitics'. 'Urbanization' according to Britanica Global Edition, 'the process by which large numbers of people become permanently concentrated in relatively small areas, forming cities.' (Hoiberg, 2016, p. 17202) 'Proper concern should not be with cities as such but with complex societies, in which cities and their hinterlands are interwoven into light political and economic webs.' (Bashan, 1974, p. 51) The available research on the ancient and early historic period of ancient India reveals two most distinct phases of urbanization, to which a third may now be added for the early medieval period. (Chattopadhyaya, 1974)

Reasons behind the urban growth on any settlement are, '(i) the holding of fairs; (ii) the emergence of religious centers; (iii) commercial activities centered around ports; (iv) the bestowal of urban status on rural settlements; (v) initiatives taken by the kings and ministers in the creation of urban centres and so on.' (Rao, 1975, p. 125) It is worth mentioning that the factors responsible for the growth of any urban centres - (i) the geographical location, (ii) trade, (iii) importance as a centre of political activities and (iv) religious importance – has been regarded as 'four major criteria'.

It is generally accepted by our historians that in ancient and early medieval India, there are three phases of urbanization. To begin with, the '**first urbanization**', i.e. the Indus Valley urbanization, it is unnecessary to examine here about the Indus Valley civilization, which is far from our examination zone. (Pande & Ramachandran, 1971) It is additionally for the most part acknowledged that the primary phase of urbanization, i.e. the Indus Valley urbanization, left no inheritance past beyond the middle of the second thousand BCE. (Ghosh, 1973, p. 30) Also, the 'second urbanization', i.e. the early historical phase speaks of a long stretch of urban development extending from the 6th century BCE to the third century CE. R. Champakalakshmi framed the 'second urbanization' between sixth century BCE to the third century CE. (Champakalakshmi, 1999) But V.K. Thakur placed it in between 6th century B.C. to the 6th century CE. (Thakur, 1986, pp. 175-184) So, India needed to sit tight for her 'second urbanization' over a thousand years after the vanishing of the Indus cities – till the middle of the 6th century BCE. The second or the early historical stage speaks to a long stretch of urban development extending from the 6th century BCE to the third century CE. With its epicentre in the Ganges valley, it spread over the entire of North India by the third century BCE, and over Central India, Deccan and the Andhra region between the second century BCE and third century CE. It must be focused; nonetheless, that it is the latter part of this long chronological order that saw the most unmistakably obvious appearances of this urbanism. (Champakalakshmi, 1999, p. 25) This period of urbanization occurred in the whole north India, central India and in the Andhra region specifically.

The second period of urbanization related with a gradual maturation of the Iron Age. In other word, it can be rehashed that iron assumed a noteworthy part for the improvement of the Indian cities of the period. Iron revolutionized the economy of

the general population in regard of agriculture, exchange, transport, horticulture and so on in the way of urban life. The iron tools did up the basic needs for clearing of primeval forests, development of farming and for technical use. While depicting the use of iron and the second phase of urbanization in north India, A. Ghosh (1973, p.13) mentions,

“The story in the rest of India is simple. To central India and the upper Deccan iron went from the north with the other equipment of the early historical culture. So also is the case with eastern India, where the local people do not seem to have exploited its rich iron-ore deposits, owing to lack of demand or technical knowledge; the exploitation must have started with the increase of demand from the more advanced regions that lay to the west, from which the technology itself may have been borrowed.”

This statement of Ghosh evokes controversy. Because, if the people of eastern India did not have enough technical knowledge about the use of iron-ore, it would not been possible for Magadha to rise as an imperial power by defeating or managing the rest of the *Janapadas* in the sixth century BCE. As we know that, long before the rise of Magadha as an imperial power, it emerged as a ‘super- *maha-janapadas*’ along with Kosala, Vatsa and Avanti. Magadha was part and parcel of eastern India. The Asuras, who were a small tribe in eastern India did ‘live almost entirely by iron melting’ and the Asuras were ‘the more civilized mining and temple building people’ of whom traces are found throughout Chota Nagpur. (Risley, 1982, p. 25) The cities like Bangarh, (Goswami, 1949) Asuragarh, (Adhikary, 2015, pp. 110-117) Chandrakhetugarh, (De & De, 2006) and Mahasthangarh (Bhandarkar, 1932, pp. 123-126) rose into prominence at least not later than the third century BCE. The people of Eastern India were well aware of iron melting much before the rise of Magadha as an imperial power. (Banerjee, 2005, pp. 153-168) This list will be broader if we take the possibility of identifying the Matsya *janapada* (details in the second chapter of the dissertation) in the territory between the river Kosi and the river Mahananda, and the modern Viratnagar (now in Nepal and Bihar border) as the capital city of Matsyadeśa.

The ‘third urbanization’, took place in the early medieval period; shows the growth of huge urban centers. Earlier researchers recognized only two distinct phases of urbanization, but during last few decades, many research works have been done on the third phase of urbanization of Indian history. According to B.D. Chattopadhyaya

the concept of ‘third urbanization’ has been applied to the late 10th to 13th century CE. (Chattapayaya, 1986, pp. 8-33) In opposite, V.K. Thakur margined this phase from post Gupta period to the 10th century CE. (Thakur, 1986, p. 184) Among the three phases of urbanization in Indian history, the third phase, i.e. ‘third urbanization’ has been an unsettled issue for a long time to the scholars. Most of them are trying to search either similarity or dissimilarity of the key facts or patterns of the rise and growth of the cities of early medieval India with the earlier phases of urbanization. However, on the whole, it may be stated that after the fall of mighty Gupta Empire or the so called last pan-Indian empire of ancient India, the culture, urban pattern, politics and society came to be fragmented and possibly from this time on, India had achieved its different regional identities.

Though, the dimension and nature of the settlements are different, they have some similarities in patterns, characters and typologies. The categories of the settlements, as revealed from the land grants and literary sources of that time, are those of *grāma*, *nigama*, *pura*, *nagara*, *mahānagara*, *puṭa bhedana*, *sthānīya* etc. *adhiṣṭāna*; another category of settlement signifies as an urban center in Gupta and post-Gupta times. (Bloch, 1906, p. 109) Furthermore, *agrahāra*, (Choudhury, 1971, pp. 42-49) can be treated as *grāma* with some administrative responsibilities bestowed on them.

The meaning of the word *pur*, in the Vedic literature, is ‘rampart’, ‘fort’, ‘stronghold’ derived from the word *pura*. The word *nagara*, (Williams, 1986, p. 525) meant a city, town. *Pattana*, in other word *Sthāniya*, literally ‘a place to stay at’, gave the birth of the modern word *thānā*, ‘a staying-place’, ‘police station’. (Ghosh, 1973, p. 45) The word *puṭa-bhedana* means a market town, more explicitly ‘opening place of parcels of salable commodities’. (Kangle, 1963, p. 70) The word *nigama* means a market town, a market place by nature a permanent settlement – not periodical. (Ghosh, 1973, p. 46) According to Kautilya ‘a *sthāniya* was to be located in the midst of eight hundred villages; in times of emergency, when no *durga* was available; a *sthāniya* was to be the place of royal residence with the treasury. Perhaps the *durga* itself was a *sthāniya* with the distinction of being the capital. Besides, Kautilya envisages a *droṇa-mukha* at the centre of four hundred, a *Khārvaṭika* of two hundred and a *saṁgrahaṇa* of ten villages.’ (cited in Ghosh, 1973, p. 47) On this context another suffix of the toponyms of the study area, i.e *garh* means rampart.

Durga literally means fort. But according to Kautilya, *durga* was more than a fort ‘with the King’s palace and his offices at the centre, roads, temples with Brahmanas, merchants, workmen and citizens – almost similar with a capital.’ (Kangle, 1963, p. 4)

The process of Aryanization was also catalysed the process of urbanization. Before the advent of the Aryan culture in the eastern India, this part of the Indian subcontinent was governed by the non-Aryan tribes like the Asuras, Kirātas and so on. In the 6th century BCE Magadha came to be incorporated into the Aryandom. It was about this time a few sections of Bengal likewise started to be Aryanised. (Bhandarkar, 1931, p. 105) The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* mentions, Viśvāmitra cursed his sons ‘to live in the borders’ of the Aryan country. The relatives of the descendants of Viśvāmitra, the *Brāhmaṇa* lets us know, shaped the more noteworthy greater part of the Dasyus and were differently known as Andhras, Puṇḍras, Sabaras, Puliṇḍas and Mūtibas. (Burgess, 1984, p. 338) The disappointment shows from the lines of *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*, (II. 1. 1. 5) which mentions the people of the Vaṅgas, Vagadhas and Cerapādas as *vayāṃsi* or birds. The process of Sramanization, like Aryanization, played an important role to urbanized an area. The process of urbanization through Aryanization did not hampered by Sramanization, because the Buddhist and Jain faiths allowed their followers to perform their earlier practices. The *Kalpasūtra* notices a *śākhā* of the Godāsa-Gaṇa of Jaina monks as *Poṃḍavaddhaṇiyā*, called after Puṇḍravardhana in North Bengal. This is extremely the third *śākhā* of that Gaṇa, the first and the second being named after Koṭivarṣa and Tāmralipti respectively. Of these branches, Koṭivarṣa is same as Bangarh in the South Dinajpur District of West Bengal. There is nothing astonishing in this, in light of the fact that the *Divyāvadāna* discusses Asoka having killed various Nirgrantha (Jaina) religious ascetics at Puṇḍravardhana for having indicated lack of regard to an image of the Buddha. (*Puṇḍavardhananagare nirgranthopāsakena Buddhapratimā nirgranthasya pādayor nipatitā citrāpitā*) (Cowell & Nell, 1888, p. 427)

That the territories of Eastern India were Aryanised, which demonstrated likewise by a statement of the *Baudhāyana-Dharmasūtra*. It initially indicates the extent of Āryāvarta, at that point says the basic outskirt regions, which contained *saṃkīrṇa-yonis* or mixed castes, lastly ends up by naming the flanking regions outside the Āryāvarta not considered admirable for the travels of the Vedic Aryans. As for the limits of Āryāvarta we are informed that it was limited on the east by the Kālaka-

vana, on the south by the Pāriyātra range, on the west by Ādarśana and on the north by the Himālayas. The eastern most boundary of the Āryāvarta, i.e Kālaka-vana has been identified in the present day Jharkhand by Bhandarkar. (Bhandarkar, 1931, pp. 103-116) According to Baudhāyana, thus, there were many areas into the outer fringe of the Āryāvarta (Arattas, Kāraskara, Puṇḍra, Sauvīra, Vaṅga, Kalinga etc.) were not yet been fully Brahmanized and the Aryans were prohibited from travelling to these regions, if otherwise; they should perform purificatory rites like *Punaṣṭoma* or *Sarvaprṣṭhi*.

It is historically proven that the study area, much before the advent of the Aryans, was governed by the non-Aryan clans like the Asuras. In this regard, we have many references of the tribe who administered this region much before the advent of the Aryan culture. The traces of the sway of the Asura tribes can be found in the present Asuragarh, Barijagarh, Benugarh, Sikligarh, Bangarh and many places of North Bengal.

The style of Aryanization of this part of land can be searched with a critical analysis of the Vedic literatures and folklores of this region. **First**, the words ‘*mleccha*’, ‘*vayāmsi*’ of the Vedic literature reflect a sense of hatred for the people, whom they were unable to conquer. In Vedic sources both *devas* and *asuras* are described as the descendants of Prajāpati and the *asuras* now and again are approached with deference however inevitably come to speak to malevolent, threatening powers. This basically etymological refinement in any case, between the Aryan and the *mleccha*, isolating the speakers of Indo-Aryan from others, goes up against a social undertone also, with *mleccha* meaning a brute or one outside the pale of Aryan land or culture and ritually sullied. (Thapar, 2013, pp. 130-131)

Secondly, after conquering of some new lands, they superimposed their stories into it and present them as an uncultured, uncivilized, relentless race of human beings, e.g. Paulomas, Kālakeyas, and they must be Aryanized. We have an oral tradition from Sikligarh, Bihar, which is not far away from our study area, about Hiranya Kāshyapa and Prahladha, a devotee of Viṣṇu. The story is getting momentum from a pillar of a very ancient time, lay on the site and said to had a lion sculpture surmounted at the top, which is now missing. King Hiranya Kāshyapa, it is claimed, lived in the connecting fortress of the pillar of Sikligarh and conveyed his child to be

bound to this column and put to death here, when on the prayer of Prahladha to his divinity Viṣṇu embodied him as Narasimha in the lion-figure surmounting the capital and spared his devotee. (Waddell, 1891, p. 245) The fort of Asuragarh (North Dinajpur district of West Bengal) is associated with the Asura king Kichak, brother-in-law of Rāja Virāṭa, an ally of the Pāṇḍava brothers in the great Mahābhārata war. Bhīma, the third Pāṇḍava, killed Kichack and took possession over it. Bangarh of Bānarāja, another fort of the non-Aryan tribe, also bears the memory of Asura tribes. The legends of Bānarājā have been recorded by Buchanan in his writing on Dinajpur district. (Hamilton, 1833, p. 18) The land of Bangarh was governed by Bāli, an Asura king, who opposed to worship the Aryan god followed by his descendent Bāna. Bāna was a devotee of Lord Śiva and refused to worship Lord Kṛṣṇa, an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. Lord Kṛṣṇa defeated the Bāna king in the place called Narayanpur. The place Kardaha in the vicinity of this fort is said to recognize as the place where Lord Kṛṣṇa burned 998 hands of the Bāna king. The Kāla dighi and Dhala dighi in Bangarh are said to have been built by the Bāna king in love of his two wives. Here is another legend of *Ushāharaṇa*, i.e. the story of Aniruddhya (grandson of Kṛṣṇa) and Usha (daughter of Bānarāja). Bānarāja was a great worshiper of Lord Śiva as like as the other Asuras, like Rāvana, the Lankesh. The *Vāyu-Purāṇa* (Chap. XXIII) portrays a record of the twenty-eight incarnations of lord Śiva. The last in this list or twenty-eighth is Lakulīśa. However one incarnation which preceded him is called *daṇḍi Munīśvara*, and incarnated in Koṭivarṣa⁴ which has been identified with Bangarh. If about the middle of the third century CE a town in the North Bengal could be so well known as to be the place of an incarnation of Śiva, the conclusion is inevitable that even the fringe part of Bengal was brahmanised at this time. (Bhandarkar, 1931, p. 111) This process can also be witnessed in the case of another great rampart or *garh* of North Bengal, i.e. Mahasthangarh (presently in the Bogra district of Bangladesh). The name ‘Mahāsthān’, literally translated, means the ‘great rampart’, which now becomes a place of religious importance for the Muslims. Buchanan Hamilton (1833, p. 18) mentions, the district was traditionally linked with the Hindus. It was under the administration of Paraśurāma, an effective ruler who inhabited at Mahāsthāngarh in Rajshahi and is stated to have been the sixth incarnation of the god Viṣṇu. The locality of Mahāsthān is surrounded by a considerable city and some minor sites. O’Donnell (1875, pp. 183-84) quotes

All around it, however, there are shrines, holy wells and embankments connected with the name of Bhīma, one of the Pandava brothers. The legend runs that at the end of their great contest with the Kauravas, they went into the forests of Kamrup to perform the penitential ceremony, called *banabās*, for a year, at the end of which time Bhīma settled in the country of the King Virāṭa, who ruled in Matsya Desha, or the land of the Fish, which included much of the present Bogra District,..... Bhīma is said to have made a large fortified town south of Mahāsthān, which is marked by great earthworks altogether about eight miles long, and still in places as much as twenty feet high. ... These earthworks are called by the people *Bhīma-jangal*. After Bhīma a dynasty of Asuras is said to have reigned in the surrounding country, and to have the shrine at Mahāsthān one of its most holy places.

Surprisingly, this place, in ancient time, was a great centre of Śīva worship. The legend of *Bhīma-jangalis* very much popular in the entire Varēndra region, where such type of earthwork existed. Another legend, in this list, is *Shami Briksha* (*Prosopis cineraria*) of the *VirataParva* of the *Mahābhārata*(IV. 5. 12) is prevailed in Itahar (North Dinajpur, West Bengal). In *Mahābhārata*, it is said that the Pāndavas in incognito, took shield in the royal residence of King Virāṭa, remains of which can be seen at Bairhatta – a village in Harirampur PS (South Dinajpur). It is likewise said that here Kichaka, the brother-in-law of King Virāṭa was executed by Bhīma, the third Pāndava, when the former attempted to set up impermissible relations with Draupadi. A tank at Bairhatta is still called *Kichaka-kunḍa*. Dehābandh a region full of mounds, around 15 km from Bairhatta is said to be royal residence of Kichaka. An ancient Shami tree a rare kind species in this area, is observed at the passage of the village, in which Nakula is said to have kept the arms of the Pāndavas before entering the royal residence. A village in the area has been named Panchbhaya (five siblings) after the Pāndavas. Various villages like Karandighi, Karnajora, Karanji in the neighbouring zone remind their connection with the great warrior Karna of the Epic fame.

Second Urbanization

As the available archaeological sources suggest, the history of urbanization in North Bengal was started in the second phase. Excavations on several sites and discoveries of some copper plate inscriptions of Bengal highlight some cities of ancient Bengal, like Bangarh, Mahasthangarh, Asuragarh, Chandraketurgh, Dantan,

Panchanagari, Pichli etc. which proves undoubtedly its urban character. Geopolitics played an important role in the rise and growth of these urban sites. Furthermore, geopolitical importance prolonged life of the older cities and sustained the trend of formation of new urban centers. The most interesting feature of the second phase of urbanization is NBPW, (Sing, 2015, p. 260) which appeared in circa 500 BCE, the earlier part of its floruit coinciding with the later part of that of the Painted Grey Ware. (Ghosh, 1973, p. 14) This type of ware has already been found from Chandraketugarh, (Ghosh, 1973, p. 66; Mandal, 1987) Mahasthangarh, (Ahmed, 1981) Bangarh (Goswami, 1949) and so on in Eastern India.

The study area have two central places of the second urbanization period, viz, Bangarh and Panchbibi and four central places of third urbanization period, viz, Kandaran, Amati, Pichli, and Ekdala-Bairhatta.

Now we are going to search the pattern or typology of the urban sites of our study area and should follow the reasons of the rise and growth of them. First in the list is Asuragarh a site of the second phase of urbanization, explicitly of not later than 3rd century BCE. **Asuragarh** (87°51'20.72"E 25°57'31.59"N) is situated at the distance of 12 KM from Dalkhola, West Bengal. (Picture4) As the name suggests, this site is a settlement of the Asuras. It is in vogue in Indian history that the Asuras were very ancient clan of the Indian subcontinent. We get the reference of the Asuras right from the R̥gveda. The land of northern Bengal is an old address of this Asura clan. (Ghosh, 2016, pp. 121-136) But a brief description of this fort can be find in the writings of the imperial masters. Buchanan (1928, pp. 42-43) writes

... Matsya, of its sovereign Virat, and of his brother-in-law Kichak. Concerning this last personage some doubts have arisen in my mind, from what I have here seen. In Ronggopur I have mentioned a tribe of the same name, and here I shall also have occasion to recur to the same race, who seem at one time to have been very powerful in Kanpur, Matsya, and Mithila, and who are still very numerous in Nepal. It may be supposed that Virat married a sister of the Kichak Raja, and not of an individual of that name. As however the Kichak are an infidel (Asur) tribe, the Pandit of the mission will not allow that Virat could so far degrade himself. The ruin of the house of Kichak, which has been a very large building, is now shown, and is called Asurgar, or

the house of infidel, to whom however many of the neighbouring Hindus still offer worship.

W.W. Hunter, in his surveys at the districts of Munghyr and Purniyah observes some striking information about Asuragarh and its antiquity. Erstwhile, Asuragarh was under the administrative control of Kishanganj subdivision of Purnea district. The three huge sites in the Krishnaganj Subdivision (now Kishanganj, Bihar) are Benugarh, Barijagarh, and Asuragarh. Parts of walls and establishments bear witness to the way that forts once existed, however their history is in nebulosity. Rocks and bits of columns with figures and engravings are to be seen lying about the locales. The story locally current with regards to the starting point of these strongholds is that there were five siblings, Benu, Barijan, Asura, Nanha and Kanha, who each constructed a *garh* or rampart, and named it after himself. The fortresses of Nānha and Kānha are brought up, yet are hardly traceable.

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Buchanan Hamilton (1933) expresses that these siblings were for the most part represented to be Domkata Brahmanas. There are tanks inside the fortified areas; and the most preposterous tales are current and believed by the villagers, regarding the tank at Barijan, known as Dak-pakhar. One the rundown extreme of these stories is that the earth of the tank, if taken to some other tank, has the energy of quickly drawing forward the fish it contains. The five siblings are said to have lived in the Vikramaditya period and the fortresses, it is included, were altogether worked in a night. At Thakurganj (Thakurgaon in Bangladesh) and west of Kaliaganj, stones with

inscriptions were uncovered by the Great Trigonometrical Surveyors quite a while prior. They were said to stamp the site of the ‘chief residence’ of a Rājā Virāt, whose domain lay along the river Kūsī, and incorporated the most of land of Rongpur and Dinajpur districts. Rājā Virāt offered safe house to Yudhistira, head of the Pāndavas, and his four siblings, during their fourteen years’ exile, after they had been force out of Hastinapur by the Kauravas, ‘the other branch of the Lunar Race’. (Hunter, 1877, pp. 267-68)

Here, in Asuragarh, we find an ancient settlement, which spread minimum in four square kms on the bank of the river Mahananda. It rises all on a sudden from the encompassing plain to a stature (earthen rampart) of 10 to 12 feet, and gives off an impression of being the earthen bulwark of a post. It's anything but a characteristic rise, in any case, yet is framed of the trash of numerous structures, the lower assemblies of which are still now and then found under the surface. The general population on the spot detail that somewhere in the range of hundreds of century prior the place was secured with trees; and that no Hindu would dare to live on it, keeping in mind that Asur Deo ought to be irritated. Finally a heavenly Musalman came, and, slaughtering a cow, collected, which his relatives hold. They have cleared and developed the entire place, and appreciate extensive reputation. Hindus come once in a while and influence offering to Asur Deo. The Muhammadans, then again, adore the courageous holy person by whom the rampart was cleared; and around 1500 of the unwavering gather, after the fair of Nekmard, in Dinājpur, to commend his memory.(Hunter, 1877, p. 268)

This rampart (*prākāra*) is encircled by a moat (*parikhā*), clearly visible from the bird’s eye view, connected with the nearby river Mahananda. The height of the boundary wall from the moat is 10-15 feet; in some places it is much higher. In spite of the fact that the prolixity of the depictions rise a couple of actualities about the early urban areas – no less than a couple of highlights which they were required to have. The most diligent elements are the *parikhā* (moat), at least one, and *prākāra* (rampart) with towers and gateways. That the moat and bulwark were the after effect of a similar task, to be specific the piling up of the material scooped out to form the moat, has been perceived at all uncovered site where the bulwark can be recognized, with the exception of those where the safeguards are of brick or masonry. (Field Survey, Asuragarh, 15.03.2012)

Inasmuch, it is a newly discovered site and the archaeological remains are inadequate, notwithstanding where archaeological remains are silent, the topology of the settlement may help in conceptualizing the exact arrangement. This mound is now an open field for the land-tiller and almost half portion of it is already vanished.

At the centre of the settlement there is clear sign of a deep water tank (Picture5) called Rajpukur. It is encircled with masonry work. The water tank with its shore measured 90 mtrs in north to south and 120 mtrs from east to west. But now, the interior land of the *garh* brought by local people under cultivation, has destroyed several ancient buildings and antiquities. At many places the plough-share has played havoc among the constructions and rain water helped the exposition and loss of the minor antiquities. The whole area is filled up with architectural devastations scattered here and there. (Field Survey, Asuragarh, 04.02.2016)

Some interesting artefacts like terracotta figurine, potteries, beads, bricks etc. have been collected from the site. (Field Survey, Asuragarh, 05.02.2016) The accessible earthenware of various sorts demonstrate its history of long time. From the site, the most intriguing finding is an unidentified terracotta head (Picture6) of 60 cm long. The face is in good state. The face has two big earrings and the eyes are exceptionally striking. Thick lips and nostrils are additionally conspicuous. The eyebrows are intertwining toward the end; the nose is short and snub. The head is red in colour and sparkingly polished. The second terracotta object is of a Shivalinga (Picture7), little in size, and measuring two inches. It has no additional colour offered to it. The third terracotta figure is another Shivalinga of black colour with a snake (Picture 8). This pottery is sumptuously polished. These terracotta figurines are by all accounts possibly comparable with NBP ware. We don't know how precisely the gleaming surface was accomplished? May be some ferruginous compound was applied to the potteries before they were fired, and that the black colour after effect of firing the pottery in diminishing condition. Upinder Sing's perspective about the reflexive surface of NBP ware is that the gleaming surface was accomplished by applying some material, for example, oil or plant juice, on the potteries after they were fired, while they were still hot. (Sing, 2006, p. 260) Among the potsherds (Picture9) found from the *garh* is of great interest. Two of them are black in colour with glossy surface.

If anyone attempt to examine in the array of these forts will find, each one of them have practically identical kind of archeological features. At first, they are established on the river side; secondly, a spill channel from the canal formed a trench; thirdly, a water tank on the fort included by brick work with pucca bathing ghats; fourthly, the artefacts like monolithic columns, blocks, beads, pottery pieces etc. are of same kind; lastly a legend have been related with every ramparts. In this length, somewhere else of same interest is Sikligarh, ‘the chain of fortress’, organized at an ariel detachment of 82 km from Asuragarh, revealed a monolithic column surmounted by a lion shaft of Asoka's time (?) and in a split second under this segment was found a gold coin of Indo-Scythic character of ‘the lord of rulers Vasudeva the lord’. (Buchanan, 1928; Wadell, 1891; Roy Choudhury, 1963) Surprisingly, this part of land has numerous forts of very ancient time; most of them are connected with the legends of the great Indian ancient literature. As like as, Asuragarh, Barijagarh, and Benugarh have borrow the legend of Bhima, (Buchanan, 1928) the second Pāndava brother and Rāja Virāt of the *Mahābhārata* fame and Sikligarh with the legend of the *Narśimha avatāra*. (Wadell, 1891) All of the ramparts might have been originated at the same time and later on most of them were abandoned.

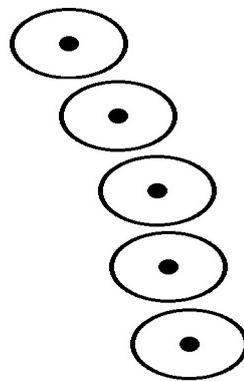


Diagram 4: CPT Pattern of Asuragarh Region

It is difficult to find out the central place in the orbit of these fortified centers of these five Asura siblings. All these forts were built up on a river bank with a distance of 10-11 km. It is hard to conclude any decision about their settlement pattern unless further research is undertaken. Among the five forts three have already been identified, viz, Benugarh, Barijagarh and Asuragarh, but two other forts, i.e. Nanhagarh and Kanhagarh are completely untraceable. But if we make a tentative assumption on the

basis of distance between these forts on the right direction some places like Masirgarh (26°7'25.35"N 87°52'14.04"E), Charaiyya (26°7'17.40"N 87°52'18.07"E) and Bāhādurganj (26°15'48.32"N 87°49'58.61"E) of Bihar state can put under the research scanner. All these sites have an evenly distributed threshold areas.

The second site in the list of urban centers of the period of second urbanization is the famous mound of **Bangarh**, (25°24'47.60"N 88°31'46.62"E) situated on the bank of the river Punarbhaba in the Gangarampur PS of South Dinajpur district. (Picture10) The archaeological pattern of the rampart of Bangarh is almost similar with the fort of Asuragarh. It was an important center of eastern India in respect of politics, economy, art and so on. The mound of Bangarh is encircled by a moat or ditch (*parikhā*) (Picture 10a) on north, east and southern side and the western side is occupied by the river Punarbhaba. The high mound or citadel area of the mound is spread in an area of approximately two square km. (Picture 10b)The area of Bangarh is a network of mounds of different sizes. In the centre of the rampart, the highest mound called by the local people as royal palace or *Rājbari*. On the eastern side of the mound there is a gate and a causeway about 200 ft. long leading across the ditch into the city. About the ditch, Buchanan mentions that it has been 'obliterated or destroyed by the Punarbhaba'. The first excavation was carried out by K.G. Goswami of Calcutta University in 1940s. Goswami (1948, pp. 4-5) states

The main mound or the citadel has the appearance of a table land dotted with mounds of different sizes here and there. Of these the mound of the Rajbari or the royal palace is the largest and highest. It occupies almost the central position and is about 15 ft high at places from the surrounding land, which again was about 4 ft high from the border level, and 11 to 12 ft higher than the road level. The main mound is more or less rectangular in shape, but not exactly in orientation with the cardinal points. Its length appears to be from north east to south west and breadth from south east to north-west. The whole Main Mound is now roughly parallel to the present and probably old course of the Punarbhaba. The ancient city of Kativarsha was apparently planned to accord with the course of the river just as modern architects build roads and houses and plan cities by the side of the rivers.

The excavation report reveals three phases of cultural history in the time frame of 'second urbanization', i.e. phase I corresponds from the Maurya to the early Suṅga

period, phase II the heyday of Gupta Empire and phase III is from the later Gupta to post Gupta epoch. The excavation report shows that this site was an important one during Maurya, Suṅga, Kuṣāna and Gupta periods and never been abandoned. It was in the centre of political, economic and cultural activities in the early medieval period also.

Some epigraphs also mentioned the city of Bangarh as an important political centre. The Damodarpur copperplates of the Gupta era mentions Koṭivarṣa as an *adhishthāna*. The first epigraphic reference of Koṭivarṣa has been found in the first Damodarpur grant of Kumāra -Gupta I of 124 GE (443-44 CE), (Basak, 1919-20, pp. 113-145) where the Koṭivarṣa, placed as a *viṣaya* (district) of the Puṇḍravardha *bhukti*, mentioned as ‘ever-prospering’ (*anubahamāna*) district under the administration of *Uparika* Chirātadatta of Puṇḍravardha *bhukti*. This word *anubahamāna* proves that it was already a fully developed city much before their reign. In the fifth Damodarpur grant of Bhānu(?) -Gupta of 214 GE (533-34), (Basak, 1919-20, pp. 141-45) this city again has been described with more illustration as *kōṭivarshsh-ādhishtān-ādhi[karaṇa]sya*. Probable reason behind the increasing importance of the city was during the time of the Gupta, the occupation of Bengal seems to have shifted its political focus from the Bhagirathi basin to the alluvium of Varendra. Stretching from the north, reaches to the flood plain of the Ganges to the alluvial plain of the Nepal foot-hills, Varendra show the growth of Koṭivarṣa as an important administrative city during the Gupta period. (Ghosh, 1990, p. 157)

As the epigraphs suggest, this metro-polis had been surrounded by many towns and catered to the political, cultural and economic needs of these towns. The Damodarpur plates (Basak, 1919-20, pp. 12-32) indicate names of many towns and villages. In the first plate of 124 GE (443-44 CE), a plot of one *kulyavāpa* on the north-west region of Ḍōṅgā was given to Brāhmaṇa Karppatika within the Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya* for *Agnihotrā* rites. The second Damodarpur CPI (Basak, 1919-20, pp. 132-34) of Kumāra -Gupta I of 129 GE (448-49 CE), rendered a plot of five *drōnavapas* (8 *drōnas*=1 *kulya*) on the west of Airāvata (?) to a brahmana (name undecipherable) in the Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya* to perform *Pañcha-mahāyajña*. In the fourth Damodarpur CPI (Basak, 1919-20, pp. 137-41) of Budha-Gupta of 214 GE (533-34 CE) a plot of eleven *kulyavāpas* in the Ḍōṅgā-grāma in Himāvacchhikharē was sold to R̥bhupāla, Guild President of the town of Koṭivarṣa for building of two temples (four *kulyavāpas*

for Kōkāmukha-svāmin and seven *kulyavāpas* for Śvētavarāha-svāmin) with two store rooms and other religious rites. In the fifth Damodarpur CPI (Basak, 1919-20, pp. 141-45) of Bhānu-Gupta of 214 GE (533-34 CE) five *kulyavāpas* of land was sold to Amṛitadatta, a noble man from Ayōdhyā. Two *kulyavāpas* in both Svachchhandapāṭaka and Lavaṅgasikā, one *kulyavāpa* in Sāṭuvanāśramaka, one *kulyavāpa* to the north of Pancha-kulyavāpa and the east of Jambunadi⁵ and one *kulyavāpa* to the east of Paraspāṭikā in Pūraṇavṛīndakahari. Unfortunately, the present locations of most of the toponyms of these inscriptions have not yet been found.

The plot Dōṅgā of plate #1, probably, has been repeated in the plate #4 with an addition of suffix *grāma* (Dōṅgā-grāma in Himavacchikhare). The temple of Kōkāmukha-svāmin of Dōṅgā-grāma in Himavacchikhare (lit. summit of the Himālaya) is placed by the scholars in the Himālayan region in Nepal and identified with Vārāhakshetra on the confluence of the Kokā and Kauśikī. (Sinha, 1977, p. 43) In this case, it would be quite interesting to mention that the applicant of the plate #4 was Rbhupāla, Guild President (*nagara-srēshṭhin*). Then the question may arise, why should he buy any plot to build two temples in such a distance from his jurisdiction? In the plate #5, five *kulyavāpas* of land was allotted for the repairing work of these two temples. What was the legitimate reason for such type of grant? Whereas, we find a number of villages in the vicinity of Bangarh having names like Dānga, Dāngi, Dōngi etc. with ancient relics. The word *Himavacchikhare*, during that time, might be used as a metaphor for a high mound of the area. In spite of such debate, one conclusion can be done, in the matter of Dōṅgā, that it was an important urban site of Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya* with an immense religious value.⁶ In the plate #2, the plot was on the west of Airāvata (?) with *haṭṭa* and *pānaka*. This type of evidence is rare in North Bengal where a plot of a market place (*haṭṭa*) has been granted. The mention of *haṭṭa* is a clear evidence of that the place Airāvata (?) was definitely an urban centre. Any market place (*haṭṭa*) which might be generating or growing is a firm indication of an emerging urbanization of a settlement. (Niyogi, 1962, p. 120) The word *pānaka*, Basak says, means drinking-places having Persian Wheels (*arahatṭa?*). (Basak, 1919-20, p. 134) In the Sanskrit lexicons the word *pānaka* means ‘drink’ or ‘beverage’. Plate #5 is quite different from the others. It gives five *kulyavāpas* of land from five different places, which indicates the scarcity of available land due to population density. Similar type of instance we can find in the Paharpur grant of 159 GE, where

one *kulyavāpa* and four *drōnavapas* of land were purchased from four different villages. (Dixshit, 1929-30, pp. 59-64)

The analysis of epigraphs of the Gupta emperors has revealed the fact that this area gained much importance with the passage of time. The growing influence of the Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya* in the Gupta administration can be assumed from the use of titles in these Damodarpur grants. The plate #1, #2 and #4 mentioned the Koṭivarṣa with *anubahamāna* while the plate #5 mentioned with a grandiloquent title of *Kōṭivarshsh-ādhishtānādhi[karaṇa]sya*. The plate #4 described the *bhuktipati* Jayadatta as the *Uparika-mahārāja*, but in plate #1 and #2 the *bhuktipati* Chiratadatta is mentioned as the *Uparika* only. In the fifth plate, this post was given to a *rajputra* (king's son) namely Dēvabhāṭṭaraka.

Another important *viṣaya*, on the neighbourhood of Koṭivarṣa, is Pañchanagarī*viṣaya*, which was a newly formed district at the time, to cater the growing density in population of the then Koṭivarṣa. The **Panchbibi** (25°11'11.56"N 89° 1'13.25"E) is identified as the present location of the core urban area of the then Pañchanagarī *viṣaya*. The Baigrama CPI(Basak, 1931-32, pp. 78-83) of Kumar-Gupta I of 128 GE (447-48 CE) mentions, Kulavṛiddhi, *Kumārāmātya* of Pañchanagarī *viṣaya*, sold three *kulyavāpas* and two *drōnavapas* of land to two Brāhmaṇa, Bhōyila and Bhāskara two sons of Śivanandin, for the repairing work of the temple of Gōvindasvāmin built by their father in the region of Trivṛita, Śrīgōhālī. Interestingly, the plate #3 of Damodarpur is quite different from the rest of the four plates. Here, the standard prevalent rate of the land is two *kulyavāpas*, which was the rate of Pañchanagarī *viṣaya*, while the standard prevalent rate for land in Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya* is three *dināras* per *kulyavāpas*. Second, the process of measuring land is same in these two grants (Baigram grant and plate #3 of Damodarpur), i.e. 'measuring 8x9 reeds'. Third, the mention of Vāyi-grāma as a boundary of the sold land is indicating the fact that the plate #3 is a subject of this *viṣaya*. Palāśavṛindaka, as Basak suggested, is the head quarter of this *viṣaya*(Basak, 1919-20, p. 114.) The place name (*Palāśa+vṛinda+ka*), the suffix *-ka* and *-vṛinda* revealed of the fact that it is 'doubled in conjuncture'. So, two or more places have been emerged into a one urban unit in that place. Chaṇḍa-grāma and Vāyi-grāma, two other toponyms of the plate, was probably important urban centers. The description of Chaṇḍa-grāma and its citizens in

the grant make this place as an important one.⁷ It is clear, from the epigraphic records that the Vāyi-grāma continued as a significant centre of human activity at least for 35 years, from Kumāra-gupta 1 to Budha-gupta's reign. The place of Pañchanagarī, itself, was another urban centre in this region. As the name suggests, it is a compilation of five towns into one unit, like a modern day metropolis. It was situated on the eastern side of Koṭivarsa *viṣaya*.

Next in this list of our study area, the **Kuddalākhataviṣaya**,⁸ is full of urban sites. The tentative location of this *viṣaya* was on the south of the Koṭivarsa *viṣaya*, on the south-west of Pañchanagarī *viṣaya* and on the east of Āmraṣaṇḍika *viṣaya*. The toponyms, as reflected from the Mahatī-Raktamālā plate (Griffiths, 2015, p.15-38) of Budha-Gupta of 159 GE (478 CE) are Mahatī-Raktamālā, Khuḍḍī- Raktamālā, Govardhanaka, Dugdhotikā and Madhyamaṣaṇḍika. The plate was issued from the *agrahāra* of Mahatī-Raktamālā, which can be regarded as the urban or semi-urban centre of the *viṣaya* on the basis of its importance as depicted in the plate and also for Brāhmaṇa settlement. The demand of its urban identity becomes stronger with the presence of the *adhikarana* (*adhikaranañ*) of the *kumārāmātya* Yūthapati. The name of the counter part of this site, i.e, Khuḍḍī- Raktamālīkā (*Khuḍḍī* means small) proves that it was quite a large settlement. The next site, Govardhanaka, from where two *kulyavāpas* of plot was donated to the Brāhmaṇas by this grant, have religious importance. The memorial pillars with surmounted sculpture are known as *govardhana* or *govardhandhvaja*. (Chattopadhyaya, 2012, p. 125) This place might have some kind of theory or story behind its name. Next site is Dugdhotikā; the residing Brāhmaṇas of this village get the grant might be an urban place. It is unfortunate that the current locations of this plate have not been found yet.

If we go through the names or the personalities, mentioned in these grants, it will give us an idea of some powerful personalities and the powerful families. First in the list is the surname of *datta*. Chirātadatta of the plate #1 and Plate #2, Brahmadatta of plate #3 and Jayadatta of plate #4, the *uparika/uparika mahārājas* of Pundravardhana suggest that they are 'probably belonged to the same family'. (Sharma, 2013, p. 16) Out of three record keepers of plate #1 and plate #2, mentioned two names having the same suffix of *datta*, i.e. Ṛsidatta and Vibhudatta. Not only in Koṭivarsa but also in the Baigrama grant of Pañchanagarī *viṣaya* one of the record

keepers (*Pustapāla*) is Durgādatta. Furthermore, the *mahāmātra* of the Mahatī-Raktamālā plate of Budha-Gupta is Suvarcasadatta. Though we have not enough knowledge to draw any conclusion, but, we have a list of members of powerful Pāla family/s (?) from these grants. The Guild President (*nagara-srēshṭhin*) Dhṛtipāla of plate #1 and plate #2, Ṛbhupāla, in plate #3, who became so powerful in polity and economy that he managed the central government through the local government of Koṭivarṣa to get eleven *kulyavāpas* of land to erect two temples of Kōkāmukha-svāmin and Śvētavarāha-svāmin by spending thirty three *dināras* for acquiring religious merit. The genealogy of this Pāla family will be more certain after mentioning the name of the Guild President of plate #4 of Damodarpur i.e. Aryya Ṛbhupāla. The list of the Pāla name is quite lengthy. The Chief Scribes of these grants are Sāmbapāla, plate #1 and plate #2, Viprapāla, plate #4 and Skandapāla, plate #5. The plate #3 is not mentioned any local body, but the grant is received from the hand of three persons and one of them is Sthāya(ṇa?)pāla.

The Baigrama inscription demonstrates a nearer individual connection between a *viṣayapati* (*kumārāmātya*) Kulavṛiddhi in Bengal and the Gupta Emperor Kumāra Gupta I, and it is recommended that the *kumārāmātya* of Pañchnagarī, who is portrayed as *bhaṭṭāraka-pād-ānudhyātaḥ* (devoted to the feet of the ruler), was installed directly by Kumāra Gupta I. In any case, his three prior Bengal inscriptions he is portrayed as *parama-daivata*, *parama-bhaṭṭāraka*, *mahārājādhirāja pṛithvīpatī*. This is likewise found in two different inscriptions in which the Gupta ruler Budha Gupta is depicted in exactly similar terms. Hence the critical section suggests that the *kumārāmātya* of Pañchnagarī was devoted to his immediate lord who may have been the leader of the Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. (Sharma, 2013, p. 14) The situation of the *kumārāmātya* Kulavṛiddhi here must be precisely the same as that of the *kumārāmātya* Vētravarmana of Koṭivarṣa appointed to his post by the *uparika* Chirātadatta, who himself appreciated the favour of the supreme ruler Kumāra-gupta I, as said in plate #1 and #2 of Damodarpur grants separately. Kulavṛiddhi enjoyed similar power in Pañchnagarī *viṣaya* as like as Chirātadatta enjoyed power in Koṭivarṣa. The awarded grant is so powerful that, it is mentioned in the grant that can also prove its close tie with the king. (Basak, 1931-32, p. 83)

The Mahatī-Raktamālā plate, like Baigrama plate, mentions *kumārāmātya* of Kuddālakhāta as *parama-bhaṭṭāraka-pād-ānuddhyātaḥ* (devoted to the feet of the ruler) was also directly appointed by Budha-Gupta, who is designated as *paramabhaṭṭāraka* and *paramadeva*. Despite the absence of explicit mention of the name Budha-Gupta, this king's role in the present inscription is more prominent than that of any king in any other Gupta-period inscription of Puṇḍravardhana, none of which are concerned with direct royal intervention in local affairs. The present inscription for the first time provides evidence of a royal land grant in the area, and for the first time it gives an impression of how the interests of individual citizens could become caught between policies of local and central administration. (Griffiths, 2015, pp. 16-27) Here, in this grant, for the first time found from this region, a secondary seal of the *kumārāmātya* Yūthapati ([yū](tha)pate[h]) (Griffiths, 2015, p. 19) has been used along with the royal seal. Use of secondary seal found in the Kotalipada plate, the Tripperah plate of Lokanātha, the Kailan plate of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta, the Kalapur plate of Maruṇḍanātha and Mastakaśvabhra copper-plate of Pradyumnabandhu.

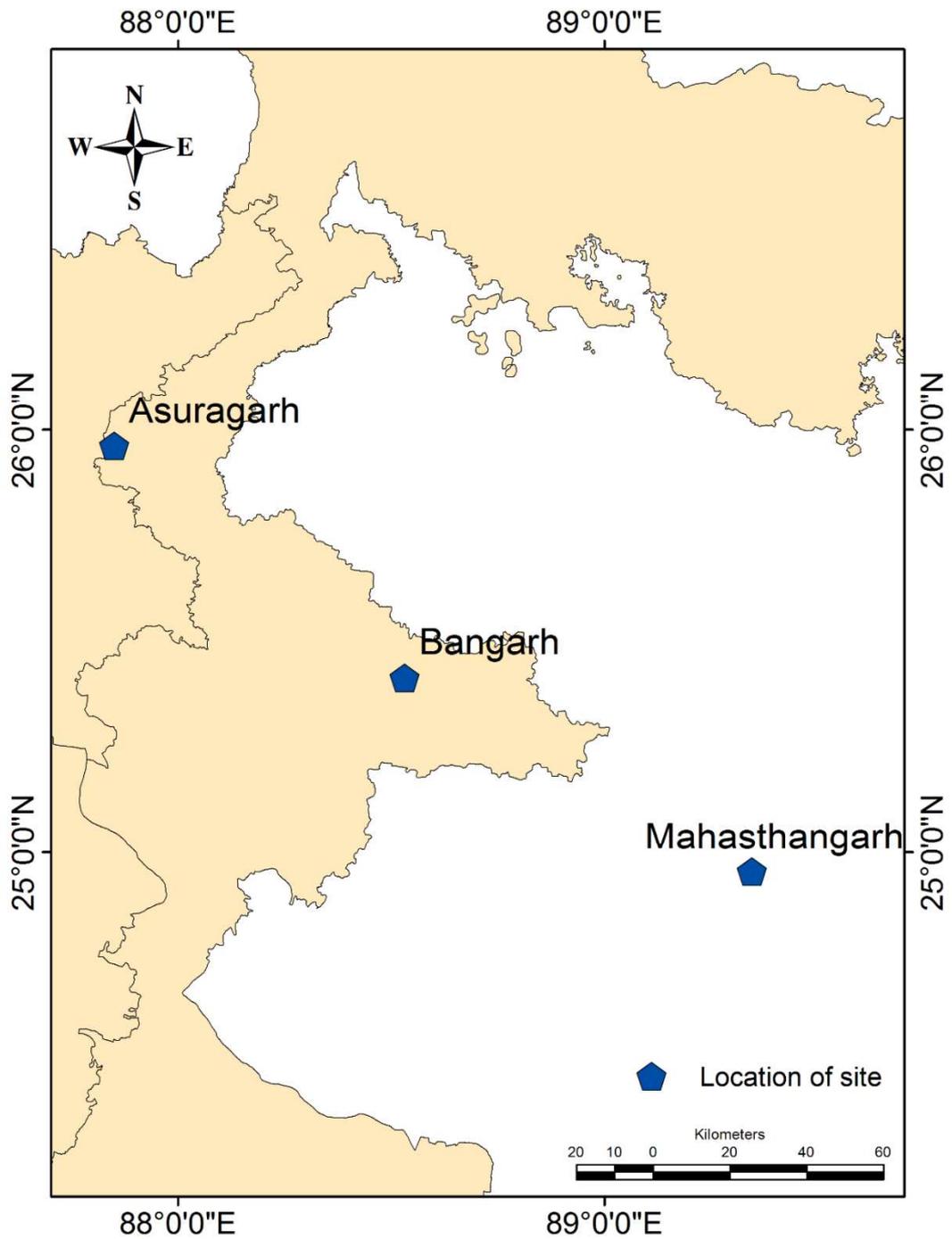
One of the main weaknesses of constructing early history of the area is paucity of coins. The excavations of Bangarh have unearthed a small quantity of coins. Goswami (1948, pp. 30-31) mentions

...two varieties of coins, viz, punch-marked and cast, have been found at Bangarh, both coming from a lower level (about 8½ to 21 ft.). The punch-marked coins are generally of silver and the cast coins are of copper. Of the former square, oblong, hexagonal and round shapes are found while of the latter the shape is more or less square and oblong. At Bangarh, Tr. 5 has brought out almost all the coins except one punch-marked silver coin of irregular shape which was found in Tr. 8 at 8.90 ft. below the datum line. Majority of the coins come from a level 14 ft. to 21 ft. (B.D.L.) and they were scattered over a wide area. So it may be presumed that these coins were in currency at the time to which this level would be attributed. Punch-marked and cast coin are usually believed to be the currency of the Maurya and Sunga periods. From our study of the other antiquities of this level, we came to the conclusion that this level should be attributed to the Sunga period. The evidence of coins also confirms this to a great extent.

It is interesting to note that a copper object (No. 1432) of almost square shape bears three symbols one of which is a complete wheel and the other, part of the wheel (broken) and the third is like. [PL. XXIV (a) 16] Apparently it looks like a coin and is in a fragmentary condition. The punch marks are very deep. It was discovered in Tr. 5, 9.26ft. (B.D.L.) and was probably used as a seal.

Thus, after the discussion of the urban sites of the study area it can be concluded that the study area had an urban character of its own from very ancient time. The discovery of the Neolithic tools from the excavations at Bangarh indicates its antiquity far behind. The area had an equal participation in the second phase of urbanization of India by the rise of such number of urban sites like Asuragarh, Bangarh and Mahasthangarh. The use of iron-ore technology did not come from the west, it was well known to the people of eastern India. A heuristic relation can be found among three major urban sites of North Bengal, viz, about the Mahasthangarh, (Picture 11) Asuragarh and Bangarh, of that time. All of these sites were well connected through the network of rivers of the area. In all the *garh* the use of rivers for both communication and security purposes were same. Mahasthangarh is on the bank of the river Karatoya, Koṭivarṣa on the Punarbhava and Asuragarh on the Mahananda. However, with the passage of time the rivers lost their mighty glory. But during their heyday, the forts were surrounded by spill channels from the rivers. The traces of the spill channels are very clear till today. Another point is that, the distance between these three sites are quite reasonable. The distance (as the crow flies) between Asuragarh to Bangarh is 90 mile, while 94 mile between Bangarh to Mahasthangarh. (Picture 12) It is unfortunate that we have not yet find any inscriptions or seals from Asuragarh, but on the basis of antiquities found in surface exploration and geography, a primary assumption can be made that Asuragarh is also a Mauryan site and contemporary of Bangarh and Mahasthangarh.

Map 4: Mauryan sites.



The word *anubahamāna* (ever-prospering) in the Damodarpur copper plate proves that the head quarter of Koṭivarṣa, i.e. Bangarh was a developed city much before the Gupta regime. From the archaeological explorations, it has already been established that this site was well developed during the Mauryas and Suṅgas. The

fourth stratum, i.e., Maurya-Suṅga period, of Bangarh shows distinct sign of the prosperous condition of the city. (Goswami, 1948, p. 11) If we have a close look at the Allahabad pillar inscription (Fleet, 1888, pp. 1-17) will find that North Bengal was core area for the Guptas. So the city of Koṭivarṣa was a central place for long time to the people of this area. The heyday of this site was possibly in the Gupta period. But the abstract excavation report reveals stark contrast of the fact.

“The buildings of this stratum (III) can be supposed to belong to the Gupta age in consideration of the associated objects. The structural evidence so far discovered does not vouch for a high class architecture at this time in these parts of the site. So far as the construction is concerned the buildings of the fourth (Maurya and Sunga age) and the second (Pala) strata are far superior to those of the first (Turko-Afgan period) and the third (Gupta).”(Goswami, 1948, 35)

The weakness of the excavation report of Bangarh is that, it was done only on some places of the mound. So we have to wait for a full scale excavation to conclude the debate. During Gupta period, as the facts come out from inscriptions, this site gained much political power and its jurisdiction was much wider. This place also had immense religious value because of so many temples erected and also repaired the older temples. Bangarh was famous for its temples, as quoted by Sandhyakarnandi in the *Rāmacaritam*. (III, 9)

Bramha kulodbhavām skandanagareṇa murchchhitāmitapachiti (m)

Tairati gurutpa(lā)vāsair asvapnair-bhari(ta) śoṇitapurāmcha.

-(Varendrī) which was the birth place of Brāhmaṇa families, which flourish on account of its town Skanda-nagara, and (as such) was held in high esteem and which contained in it the city of Śoṇitapura crowded by the (images of) Gods, installed in temples, (which looked quite gay) with lotuses of very large sizes. Goswami (1948, p.35) reported “The extensive area covered by the floor probably marks the site of a large quadrangle by the side of some temple where people perhaps used to assemble for the purpose of religious, social or commercial activities.” Some Kuṣāna artefacts, viz, a female figure with nimbus around along with two female figurines on both side and some other terracotta found which show characteristics of Kuṣāna period but no building of that time is found yet. (Goswami, 1948, p. 37) The copper 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. The attire is also same as that of

Māldācoin. *Nandipada* like symbol is visible under the kings left arm. A legend along the edge of the coin in Kharashthi 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) As we have already mentioned that the study area is well blessed by rivers and water bodies. These rivers played a key role in the development of the cities of North Bengal. As like Ganges in the development of the cities of North India, Punarbhaba did the same in the development of Bangarh in respect of irrigation as well as trade network. The other nearby rivers, viz, Tangan, Atrai and Jamuna might also have contributed in the development of Bangarh as an important trading center between Northern India and Eastern India in relation with the river system. This city was connected with Gangatic valley as well as the North Indian culture. Because the excavations revealed punch marked coins, NBP ware, terracotta of Suṅga and Kuṣāna periods, beads etc, which is typical sign of cultural influence of North India. This theory is vouchsafed by the plate #5 of Damodarpur plates, where Amṛitadēva, a noble man (*kulaputra*) from Ayōdhyā, approached the local Government of Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya*. (Basak, 1919-20, p. 115) Bangarh city might have some inland trade routes among its depending towns, villages and hamlets.

Another central place, i.e., Palāśavṛindaka of Pañchanagarī*viṣaya* was under political, administrative, economic sway of the Koṭivarṣa. The Pañchanagarī*viṣaya* had at least two metropolises, i.e., Palāśavṛindaka and Pañchanagarī, and four towns, Vāyi-grāma, Chanda grāma, Trivṛita and Śrīgōhālī. These towns were probably connected with each other through inland routes and with the metropolises also.

Third Urbanization

In the third urbanization period, Northern Bengal witnessed the rise of many urban centers as well as metropolises. Most of the urban sites of the second urbanization period continued their development in this period also. Here, for the better understanding of the timeframe of these two phases, end of mighty Gupta Empire is taken as the watershed between these phases. So, in this part of the dissertation, the process of urbanization between the end of the Gupta power and to the rise of the Turko-Afgan rulers, is treated as the period of third urbanization.

The Mastakaśvabhra copper-plate of Pradyumnabandhu, a recent discovery added in the list of the inscriptions found from north Bengal, is a new addition in research of the history of north Bengal. The grant bears primary and secondary seals of which the former one mentions ‘*ghoṇādvīpakaviśaya adhikarāṇasya*’, i.e. was issued from the *adhikarāṇa* (council) of Ghoṇādvīpaka *viśaya* and the secondary seal is undecipherable but Griffiths (2015, p. 29) makes a hypothetical reading of it as *pradyumnabandhoḥ*. The village of Mastakaśvabhra, along with its citron grove is given to the Brāhmaṇa Jayadeva through the hand of *mahāpratīhāra* Avadhuta after it has been purchased from the Brāhmaṇas by *mahāpratīhāra* Avadhūta.

The inscription has revealed names of toponyms and water bodies of this time. The grant was issued from the Ghoṇādvīpaka district council (*ghoṇādvīpaka viśaya adhikarāṇasya*), which has been mentioned twice in the primary seal and in the first line of the plate as a *viśaya* of Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. (*puṇḍravardhanabhuktau vyavaharati tatsamvaddhaghōṇadvīpaka-viśaye*). Its importance can be assumed from the fact that, ‘it had been obtained as fief’ (Griffiths, 2015, p. 31) by the *mahāpratīhāra* Avadhūta. The plate mentions names of twenty-fourbrāhmaṇas along with their places. (Table 2) But some of them, the most influential personalities (*mahāmahattarā*) Ādityadeva, Jayadeva and Śivabhadra, are not mentioned with their place. Probably they belong to this *adhikarāṇa* and for that reason their native places in not mentioned in the grant. The *mahāmahattarā* Jayadeva is the receiver of the plot of Mastakaśvabhra *grāma* of the grant.

Next important urban centre is the Mastakaśvabhra *grāma*, which has been donated along with its citron-grove. The boundaries of the donated Mastakaśvabhra *grāma* are, (*yatra*) in the East and Northern side is the river Trighaṭṭikā and cremation ground, in the Western side the Opra (?) canal, in the Southern side the Śṛṅgāṭaka (‘Crossroad’) pond and the Bṛhacchaṅkajoṭā (‘Great-Conch-Jota’) and the rest by the stream near the silk cotton tree of Kapalati. (Line 16-18). The present location of these places and water bodies not yet identified. An attempt to search for their present location can be done in the present Malda district or its vicinity. Their names are similar with the geography, toponyms and water bodies of the Khālimpur copper-plate of Dharmapāla. Griffiths suggests the present locations can be found in the places of the east of few miles of the citadel of Gaur (Malda). (Griffiths, 2015, p. 31) The important of these places will be discussed below. Other toponyms are hamlets

(*pāṭakas*) Varṣagrīma (?), Bhilota and *grāma* Ṣaṇḍadvīpa, Pravaraadvīpa, Navadevakula, Pippalivanikā, Pātravāta, Śaṅkarapallika, Śivanagara, Khātaka, Varahakoṭṭaka, khataka, Ardrala, Audumvarika, Kapalati.

According to Griffiths, the name of the ruler *ma(hā)rājādhirā* ‘Pradyumna’ is a synonym of Kṛṣṇa and suffix ‘bandhu’ means a friend/associate of him, (Griffith, 2015, p. 32) which may be a result of growing popularity of lord Kṛṣṇa in this region, started from the rivalry between Śaiva and Vaisnva forces in Bangarh. Noteworthy to mention here, Vijayasena, the Sena king, established a temple of Pradyumneśvara at the Varendrī region in the eleventh century CE. (Majumdar, 1929, pp. 42-56; Kielhorn, 1892, pp. 305-15) Here the image of Pradyumneśvara is a combine image of lord Viṣṇu and Śiva. (Bhattacharya, 1987, pp. 297-307) The Mastakaśvabhra grant was issued in the fifth year of his *vijayādhirājya* (Sircar, 1966, p. 7) mentions his victory and declaration of independence over a certain power (may be over the weak Gupta power). All of the above, the use of title *mahārājādhirā*, clearly mentions him as the suzerain of great kings. In this context, we should remember that the might of the Gupta Empire was faded or completely demolished from this region after 544 CE. We have some clear indications of that this was probably a newly established empire under the stewardship of Pradyumnabandhu with the help of others. **First**, the grant was issued just after five year of the victory (*vijayādhirājyasamvatsar[e] pañcama āśvayujamāsasya dvāvīmśatime divase*) of the suzerain of great kings Śrī Pradyumnabandhu. **Second**, the plots of old grants have been purchased from many Brāhmaṇas with the help of state machinery, which is a probable an indication of anti-incumbency sentiments of the people of this region. **Third**, as we know, this region was core centre of the Gupta Empire. So, it was not possible for two powers to rule at the same place. The growing influence of the personalities of *datta* surname from the Gupta plates have mentioned heretofore. Their importance was still remaining during the time of Pradyumnabandhu. Only three members (*viṣayādhikaraṇika*) of the district council (*viṣayādhikaraṇa*) of Ghoṇādvīpaka *viṣaya* is mentioned in the plate and they had *datta* surname, i.e. Śambhudatta, Kṛṣṇadatta and Paurudatta. Probably the scribe Śambhudatta and the record keeper (*pustapāla*) Kṛṣṇadatta is same of the district councilors of same name. Another scribe of this plate has surname of *datta*, i.e. Naradatta. The dutta family or personalities might have played an effective role in the rise of Pradyumnabandhu. Date of this plate is impossible to define until more

discoveries. Griffiths, after analysing palaeographic perspective, placed its date later than 650 CE. (Griffiths, 2015, 33) But, if the indications are correct then this inscription should surely be placed later than 550 CE.

Next powerful personality is the great chamberlain **Avadhūta**, his designation of *mahāpratīhāra* is a clear indication of the rise of infeudatory ('fief') in this region. His power and responsibility can be seen from the lines 13-14 of the grant, where he is the responsible person for the purchase and accumulation of the lands from the brāhmaṇas, who might get lands from earlier grants. The unique feature of this grant is, here twenty-four brāhmaṇas along with the district councillors (*viṣayaadhikaraṇikaṇikas*) and the scribes (*kaṇikas*) 'after having spoken together' considered that the lands, which have been given by previous land grants, can be sale and 'once again' should be made an 'object of donation'. Because the land rendered no benefits whatsoever to the king as long as it is lying fallow.' It has also been informed by the plate that forty-five *kārṣāpaṇas* additional taxes (*uparikara*) will be collected annually. The additional income from the land should be 'divided and borne' by the Brāhmaṇas through the 'humble act' of the great chamberlain Avadhūta. (Griffiths, 2015) Though the sources of additional income are not mentioned in the grant, but while we analyse the donated land and its boundary, some hypothetical facts will arise. Additional taxes or income of the brāhmaṇas may be collected from the water ferries, water resources (like fish, conch shell etc.) of the streams, rivers, canals and roads of village Mastakaśvabhra. Ghoṇādvīpaka played the character of central place in the development of this urban set up. Importance of the Mastakaśvabhra justified its urban character and can be characterized as town. The grant mentions the means of transportation. So, all the mentioned places of this inscription were well connected with each other by roads and water ferries.

Pichli (25°3'29.46"N 88°2'53.97"E), a town situated on the banks of the river Kalindi 12 km east of English Bazar, is in fact the most established site of the city of ancient Gauḍa. It was well developed by the rich resources of the river Mahananda–Phulahar–Kalindi system and the Chhota Bhagirathi–Umri Nala–Pagla system. The archaeological remains of Pichli are scattered over a huge zone and incorporate the towns of Amriti, Fulbaria, Pichli, Gangarampur and so on disclosure of relics datable to the later Gupta period lead us to hold that sifting of the Ganga toward the south bit by bit caused the decay of the decline of the antiquated town. Two Buddha images

(now in the Malda District Museum) of later Gupta period were recovered from Pichli. (Bhattacharyya, 1982, number BGB1 and BGB2) It can be identified as the site of ancient Gauḍa. (Chakrabarty, 1982, p. 52) This place is named as *Kānthāl*. The word *Kānthāl* means possibly a forested high land or a site with abandoned ancient buildings. We find two places with *Kānthāl* suffix in the close proximity, viz, *PichhlīKānthāl* and *ĀmātiKānthāl*. Though *Kānthāl* in Bengali means jackfruit but here it cannot be taken as jackfruit. But to the local people of Pichli called *Kānthāl* because of its archaeological artefacts. Another village named Nahatta in the vicinity of Pichli might get her name from a derived form of Navahaṭṭa (New market place). Amid the Pāla period, Pichli was perhaps the most overcrowded part of the city and toward the end of the Pāla rule and the start of the Sena's lead the town area sifted to the zone immediate south, which is known to the local people as Ballalbatī. Legend says that Ballalbatī was the residence of Ballāla Sena, the Sena king. With the progression of time, it shifted to the territories further south referred to the Turko-Afghan conquerors as Lucknowty or Lakṣmaṇāvati. At last in the late sixteenth century the city was forsaken by the Mughals. Then a little town named Tāndā came up on the shores of the Ganga around ten km toward the south which filled in as the capital of the Karrānī tradition, the last line of the Turko-Afghan leaders of Bengal. (Chakrabarty, 1982, pp. 257, 265) The excavations revealed five cultural phases between seventh and nineteenth centuries. (Panja, Nag and Bandyopadhyay, 2005, p. 91)

In this examination, we would limit our investigation to Pichli and the urban areas in its neighbourhood i.e. the stretch of land between Pichli proper on the confluence of the Mahananda and the Kalindi and Amriti-Fulbaria in the east. The Kalindi, a tributary of the river Mahananda was known even in the eleventh century. Sandhyākaranandi (*Rāmacaritam* IV, 27) informed us about a pitched battle on the shores of the stream by Madanapāla against his adversaries who had potentially progressed on the city of Gauḍa strategically situated on the Kalindi.

Two Dhyānī Buddha images, dated ninth and tenth century respectively housed in the Malda Museum are noteworthy. A four-sided column with four ornamented specialties on four niches, each demonstrating a sitting picture curved within it is unparalleled of its kind. The sand stone column, potentially a compositional section is impressively destroyed. This object, recouped from Fulbaria has some important features. The column being settled to the wall of the house of a

villager who recuperated it from the bed of the river it is not conceivable to inspect it from each of the four sides. (Bhattachariyya, 2008)

Kandaran(25°16'59.68"N 87°59'50.35"E) is another urban site of the study area located at Shamsi, Malda. While commenting on the 'division of Kharwa', Francis Buchanan Hamilton states 'the whole is reckoned in Matsya, and it is said belonged to Kichak, the brother-in-law of Virat'. (Hamilton, 1928, p. 90) Modern historian like D. K. Chakrabarty, (Chakrabarti, 2001, pp. 73-74) M. S. Bhattachariya (Bhattachariyya, 1995, pp. 64-69) already shed some lights on this site with an antiquity of not later than the Kuṣāna period. It has chain of large and small mounds with full of archaeological remains, which already faced much destructions by the construction of railway line, modern buildings and agricultural activities. The mounds are Kandaran, Sambhunagar, Caitanpati, Anandaganj, Govindapur, Gourhaṇḍa, Vangapal, Damanviti, Virasthali, Dakshinsahar and Sanjib. Kandaran is the southernmost *mouzā* of the enormous site while the *mouzā* of Sanjib forms its northernmost tip. The distance between Kandaran and Sanjib is over ten km. Rajanikanta Chakrabarty in his celebrated work the *Gouder Itihas* mentions, Kandaran and its neighbouring settlements like Gourhaṇḍa, Alihanda, Vandar, Kusidha, Bhaluka etc. once formed part of the ancient kingdom of Kauśikī Kachcha and were eventually incorporated into the larger kingdom of Puṇḍravardhana. The ruins of Kandaran gave him the impression that a large Buddhist *stūpa* lay buried in its mounds. (Chakrabarty, 1982, p. 32) In the list of ancient monuments and settlement sites of Varendrī prepared by the Varendra Research Society, Kandaran figures owing to its mounds. (Maitreya, 1949)

An investigation of this immense settlement site was taken up for the first time by the Malda Museum in 1981. The site has in excess of twelve mounds. Four of these are very huge, each having a height of in excess of 50 ft. At the highest point of a large mound, somewhat away toward the west of the Samsi rail station, a bungalow was worked by the railroad experts around a couple of decades back while another mound toward the north of the bungalow mound was picked as the site for the Samsi Degree College. Going further north we run over another mound on which a little temple has been raised. The fourth extensive mound named as the Daksinsahar mound by the investigation group after the *mouzā* of Dakṣinsahar. These mounds are arranged on the bank of a dead channel of the stream Mahananda, locally known as

Mara-mahananda. In Major Rennel's guide this channel figures as the primary channel of the Mahananda. Potsherds strewn everywhere throughout the surface of the mounds persuades that the region was once thickly populated. In fact, antiquated relics can be followed on the surface of the mounds which are discovered scattered over the length and expansiveness of this wide tract. From the college mound sections of an expansive urn have been recouped. The thickness of the sections proposes its pre-established root. Couple of wonderfully cast terracotta male heads has been found. The terracotta male head was recouped from 15 feet under the mound. Each of these, around 8 cms long, has an alluring hairdo with a raised best bunch befitting an austere. These articles have a pointed lower part, which recommends that the heads were balanced with middles independently arranged. It has been likely recommended that these terracotta objects have a place with the second or third century CE. (Bhattacharyya, 1995, 64-65)(Picture3)

A black basalt image was discovered from a spot close to the bungalow mound in 1982. Near the bungalow mound was unearthed a beautifully carved sandstone image of Garura, the vehicle of Viṣṇu. (Bhattacharyya, 1995, 67) The pedestal of the image has four holes on its edge which suggest that this was placed on a pillar possibly in front of a lord Viṣṇu in the temples of the God. The Vaiṣṇavas of India followed the ancient custom of erection of pillars in honour of lord Viṣṇu temple. The beautiful carving, high relief and sparse decoration suggest that the image in question is the product of a period when the plastic art of Bengal had reached its apex. Other findings include a slab made of black stone containing a figure (measuring 20 cms x 36 cms) of a four armed figure of Ganeśa (*AIS*, RGN-3) carved on it, fragment (56 cms x 36 cms) bearing the image of Umā Maheśvara (*AIS*, RUMH-7), a Viṣṇu image measuring 30 x 15 cms. (*AIS*, RVS-42) of black stone, a *dvāra pāla*, an arch made of black stone measuring 90 cms x 60 cms, a Bṛhaspati image (*AIS*, RBR-1) and so on. It can be assumed that the mounds of Kandaran-Sanjib have underneath of their surface the relics of the early centuries of the first millennium CE.

An effort was made by the department of history, North Bengal University, under the supervision of Prof. Mandira Bhattacharya to discover and surveyed some sites in the Malda district in 1999 CE. In this report Bhattacharya made a surface collection in the Kandaran region. Apart from the heretofore sites, she explored some

other sites like Bangapala, Damanbhita, Kaimar and Madhubana, and some water reservoirs called Kajaldighi, Ranidighi, Bauldighi, Laldighi and Ballabhasagar. (Bhattacharya, 1999)

The settlement has continued to flourish for many centuries thereafter. **Suryapur** of old Malda is another urban area of the study area. Rajanikanta Chakrabarti mentions, in the middle of the forest of Suryapur we can see a place called Yogibhavan. Here traces of a ruined temple existed, which as the legend had that it was the seat of the Jain monk Gorakshanātha. The local people worshipped this temple as that of Maa Gōlaknāth (mother Gōlaknāth). Chakrabarti again mentions Ganipur and Chate, two other urban sites in its vicinity. The Jain monastery has been mentioned as Gani in the Jain scriptures. This might be the reason behind the name of Ganipur. The word *Chate* is a corrupt form of the word *chaitya*. Chakrabarti hinted that once there was a colossal *chaitya*. Probably it was destroyed and the ruins were reused in the building of Adina mosque. (Chakrabarty, 1982)

Next, in the **Ekdala-Bairhatta** region in South Dinajpur a well-planned township can easily be traced between the dried rivers Chiramati and Baliya and enclosed on north and south by east and west canals joining two rivers.

Map 5: Plan of the ruined city of Bairhatta (Ekdala), Courtesy: Stapleton, 1932, Plate 4.



This urban area was first noticed by the Colonial historian H. E. Stapleton and Pandit Sarasi Kumar Saraswati. (Saraswati, 1932a, pp. 173-183; 1932b, pp. 185-195; 1938, pp. 9-20) In the *Notes on a Third Tour in the District of Dinajpur- chiefly along the Chiramati River* Saraswati indicates sites like Daharol, Kachra, Eshnail, Aminpur, Katashan, Dehabandh, Patiraj, Adhyakhanda, Mahatur, Jagdalla, Mahendra, Surohor, and Harirampur, for their rich archaeological treasure and gives a clear indication of the existence of a fully flourished urban society and culture of the past. Though the Ekdala had become a place of political stretch between Firoz Shah, the Sultan of Delhi and the Sultans of Bengal (Ilyās Shah and Sikandar Shah) in the 14th century as informed by the principal Muhammadan authorities like Ziya Barani, Shams-i-Sirāj

Afif and Gulam Husain. But it was a fully flourished township much before the advent of the Muslim rule in this part of the world. Stapleton in his account of Dinajpur refers the local traditions of the 'country residence' of Virāt Rājā in the region. Stapleton collected a rare seating Surya image with inscription during his tour in 1930 CE, which was dated as one of the early images of eighth century by N. Chakrabarty and S. K. Saraswati. (Chakrabarty and Saraswati, 1932, pp. 147-151) M. S. Bhattacharyya, curator made an extensive survey of Bairhatta-Badarpur area in the then West Dinajpur between 1977 and 1981 and recovered more than twenty sculptures of the Pāla-Sena period and presented to Akshay Kumar Maitra Museum, North Bengal University and Malda Museum. (Bhattacharyya, 1982, p. 4) The uniform brick size of the Ekdala-Bairhatta region, at least at the basement level, is 30 x 24 x 6-7 cm. (Field Survey, June 2014)

Bairhatta-Badarpur has a huge number of water bodies. Some of them are quite big in size. Biggest of them is Malyan dighi, measuring 1262 mtr north to south and 306 mtr east to west. The second one is Gordighi, measuring 1262 mtr east to west and 358 mtr in north to south. The third largest is Altadighi measuring 1258 mtr north to south and 300 mtr east to west. Of these three, Gordighi is a Hindu work and Malyandighi and Altadighi are Mahamadan works. (Buchanan, 1833) Worthy to note, S. Panja recently reported an image of Candi of 10th century, a silver *tanka* of Sher Shah Suri, a seal of 17th century and an image of Shivacarya of very remote time. (Panja, 2018, pp. 27-62)

The biggest mound in this area is **Mahendra** locally known as *Gadādhūm* or *Kadhūm* on the bank of the river Chirāmatī (corrupted form of Śrīmatī). The mound is 200 feet wide, 180 feet long and 30 feet high. Here a legend is current about this mound, i.e. a hugely built hero namely *Gadā* once fishing in the river Chirāmatī seated atop the mound with palm tree as his fishing rod and an ox as his bait, saw *Behulā* with the dead body of her husband *Laxmindar* (the famous *Behula Laxmindar legendary*) sailing through the River. *Gadā* overwhelmed by the beauty of *Behulā*, stopped her on her way and tried to catch her. From the name of the hero *Gadā*, this mound got its name *Gadādhūm*. Tentative observation about the name of the mound (*Mahendra*) it might have come from the name of the prince *Mahendra*, son of Raja Ganesh of the first half of the 15th century. After conquering the throne, Raja Ganesh placed his son *Mahendra* as Governor of the moat city of Ekdala-Bairhatta.

(Stapleton, 1932, pp. 151-171) This mound is looks like a hillock from the plain. Here we also find the same type of bricks. Some pillars are found of black stone. Many of them are lavishly curved with bow and arrow design. First one is of 163 cm x 32 cm, with two bows curving of the same size of 12 cm. (Picture 13) The second one is of 110 cm x 50 cm in size. (Picture14) Just near *Gadādhū* another mound is also situated (53 feet x 110 feet). It has also thrown up same type of architectural fragments, like bricks, potsherd and stone pillars. Two of the pillars are of same in size, i.e., circumference of 93 cm and height of 160 cm with beautiful curving. (Picture 15)

Next to **Gadadhū** mound, the Jagaddala mound is situated just on the other bank of the river. The distance of Gadadhū from Jagaddala is less than 1 km. The name of the mound (Jagaddalā) is intriguing in relation to the debate on the identification of Jagaddala monastery. As the crow flies, this Jagaddalā Village is not very far from the famous city of Rāmāvātī (presently Amati village of Itahar PS) with an approximate distance is 15 km. This site was well connected through rivers with Rāmāvātī during that time. One can sail to Rāmāvātī from Jagaddala through Chiramati and then onto the Mahānandā.

At **Jagaddala**, a mile to the south of Māhātur, there are further evidences of ancient settlement. Just close to the road a North South tank called *Bāghā Muzra Dighiis* situated, which has traces of a pucca bathing Ghat on each of its four sides. The high embankments are strewn with bricks, and there are three small mounds to the east of the tank known to the people as *Deul* (temple). Bricks may be had in abundance in the mounds, and in one mound can be seen several huge architectural stones, most probably still in their respective places. Saraswati witnessed a sandstone image of Chāmundā dancing on Mahākāla. (Saraswati, 1932b, p. 190)

The mound of **Dehabandh**, which lies on the Durgapur-Kaliaganj road, is of two tierat least visible from the plain. (Picture 83) Though the mound is almost destroyed by the locals but the principal mound is in good condition. S. K. Saraswati recovered a sand stone Liṅgam of very rare iconographic character, two exquisitely decorative colossal images of Viṣṇu of 12th century CE and a pedestal with an inscription of Ardhanārīśvara. (Saraswati, 1932b, p.189) The present scholar finds a large gargoyle, (Picture87) two decorative doorjambs with a temple curving,

(Picture86) pedestals and many more unidentified images. Most important feature of this mound is its construction pattern. Here, in this mound, the use of stone chips in between the bricks is rare example of architectural pattern, at least in this area.

Rāmāvati, the last Pāla capital, was founded by the great Rāmapāla in the twelfth century CE. He established a new capital city on the bank of river Mahananda after reoccupying Bengal from the Kaivartya rulers. After a long debate, the present location of the last Pāla capital, i.e., Rāmāvati has been settled. The Amati village in the Itahar PS has been identified as the location of Rāmāvati. (Sarkar, 2009) The name of the village, i.e., Amati is a corrupt form of the word Rāmāvati. Rāmāvati became Rāmāuti in Muslim pronunciation just like Lakshmanavati was being written as Lakhnauti in Arabic script by the Muslims. And Rāmāuti became Rāmāti and finally Āmāti in the local dialect.

Rāmāvati > Rāmāuti > Rāmāti > Āmāti

But another village called Amṛti located in the immediate vicinity of the older site of the city of Gauḍa at Pichlī-Gaṅgārāmpur does not seem to be acceptable as a capital city. Renaming a part of the old city after himself and making it his capital would not seem to be logical proposition for Rāmapāla since in all probability his predecessor and older brother Mahīpāla II was evicted from this city by the Kaivarta rebels. It would be expedient for him to build a new city giving due consideration to the question of security. Further, Rāmapāla had instructed some of his trusted men to select a suitable location for a new capital city to be built.

Amati and its surroundings, protected by the river Mahananda on the west and the smaller streams like the Srimati and the Balia within its limits and the Ṭangan, a larger tributary of the Mahananda on the eastern periphery was geopolitically an excellent choice. This concern for security is also expressed in the *Rāmacaritam*. (Chapter III, V. 48) Where the return of Rāmapāla to Rāmāvati a ‘secured’ city is expressly mentioned. At a much later date the invincible Ekdālā fort was built by the Turko-Afgan rulers in the same area. The Amati settlement has several sites full of archaeological artefacts, viz, Koṭbāri, Pañchadevati, Paramesvaravātī, Ghṛtatala, Malañchi, Madhuban, Kālīgañj, Baragrām, Joṭ Narattam, Betnābaj, Pūrbahaṭ,

Uttarhaṭ, Madaihaṭ, Kāṭābāri, Golhāt, Jāgdal, Chhaghāṭi, Joyhāt, Aminhāt, Koṭbāri, Shāsan, Bāhādol and Pāthar Bhiṭā.

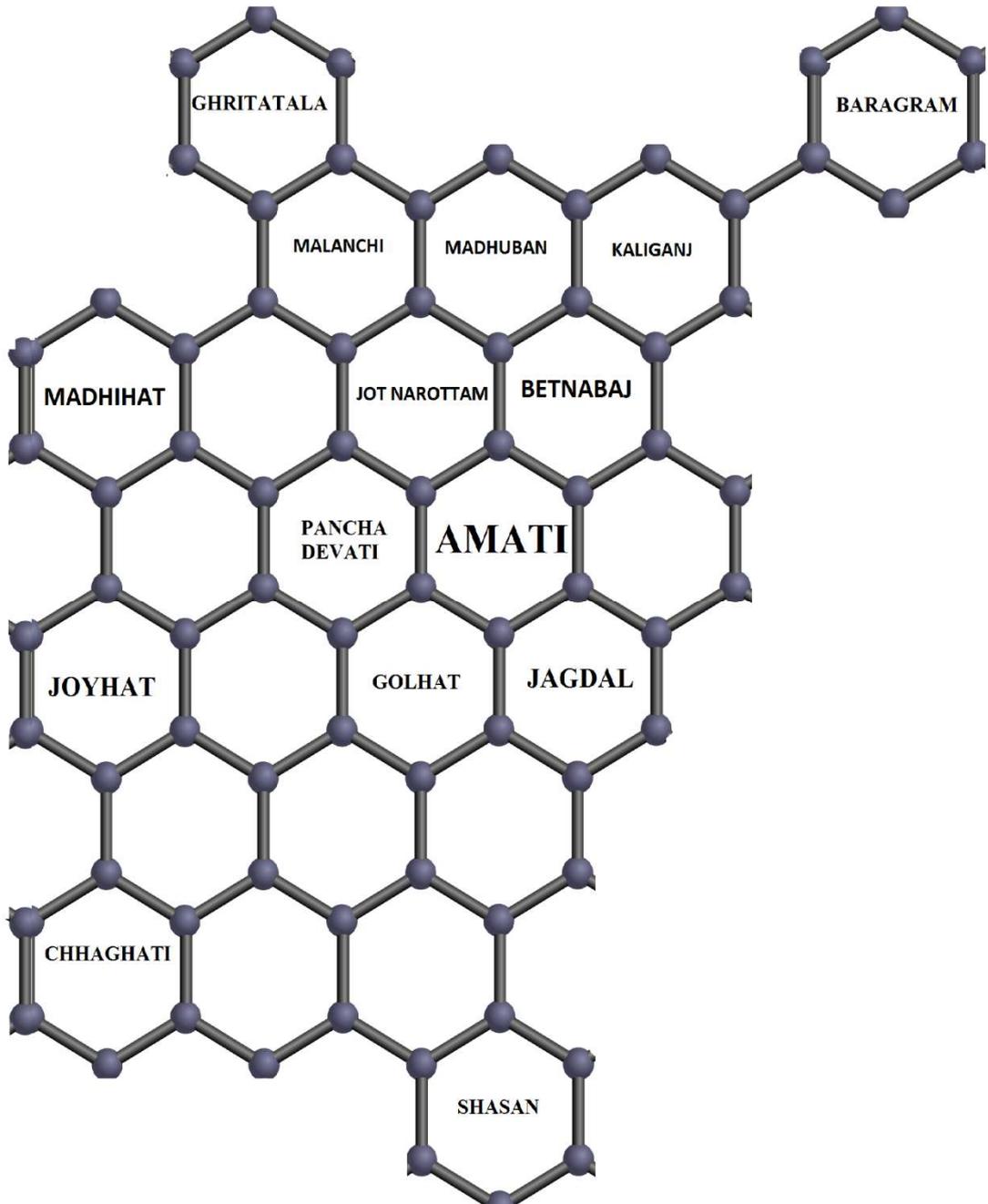


Diagram 5: CPT of Amati

In a medieval text, namely the *Sekoṣubhodaya*, recovered from Paṇḍua, three villages as well as market places (*haṭṭa*) have been mentioned along with the famed city of Rāmāvati. These are Pūrbahaṭṭa, Uttarhaṭṭa and Madaihaṭṭa. Interestingly these

have been identified with three villages named Purbahat, Uttarhat and Madhaihat, all in the neighbourhood of Amati. No less fascinating is the fact that some more villages in its vicinity are named with suffix *hāt*, viz, namely Golhaṭ, Joyhaṭ and Aminhaṭ within a km or so. These villages, no longer known as market places are of fairly ancient origin and the suffix *hāt* applied to them denote their status as market places in some remote past.

Kotbari village at the centre of Amati complex settlement probably was the royal palace of the great city of Rāmāvati. The term *koṭṭa* or *koṭa* means fort and it might be the royal encloser of the city with some other major buildings that lie buried in this area. The Kotbari mound strewn with bricks of 19 x 6 cm size. One traceable brick wall is 30 mtr long at the southern site. Pancadevati and Paramesvaravati in its close proximity have yielded numerous stone and terracotta artefacts and probably had some of temples. Most of the artefacts have already been looted or destroyed by the local inhabitants but some stringed of this grant treasure can be traceable till date. A gigantic stone with three male figures lay on roadside in this area. Another ornamented back slab (122 x 51 cm) of a black stone shows the head of a deity while the torso is missing. A black stone pillar of 150 cm, a pot-bellied deity (24 x 18 cm) and huge mutilated pieces of sculptures have been found from this area. (Picture 32)

Jagdai mound (Picture 34) is situated just one km east of Amati. The name of this mound, i.e., 'Jāgdal' are again evoked the debate of identification of the present location of the Jagaddala monastery, which will be discussed later. The mound of this village is about 100 x 80 mtr in measure. During a visit in winter of 2014, author found a part of colossal gargoyle (Picture 35) with *Makarmukha* design. Sandhyākarnandi in the *Rāmacaritam* highlights Varendrīas the fatherland of the Pāla emperors and mentions the importance of Jagaddala Mahāvihāra. (*Ramacaritam*I,38;ii,28;iv,3) In 2015, in another visit was found an approximately 12 feet wide road (Picture 36) with approaches towards Amati in the north and *Chhoghati* (largest water tank in this area) in the south.

Interestingly enough, like the ruins of Pichli, the ruins of Amati is also called the Amati Kanthal. Still now the word is pronounced in the same way in both the areas. *Kānthāl* may be a corrupted form of *Katakhal*, i.e. excavated water course or canal for inland navigation or irrigation. (Unique Oxford Dictionary Bengali to

English, 2007, p. 255) Another suggestion of the word *Kānthāl* is that, it is a corrupted form of *Ghāṭāl* or *Ghāṭ* meaning jetty. (Bhattacharyya, 2008, p. 90) As we have already mentioned the Amati settlement is well blessed by the rivers and water bodies. But if we have a close eye at the water ferry system of this settlement, we can trace a dried spill channel, which starts from Amati and ends up in the confluence of the river Mahananda and Chiramati (Śrīmatī). More interestingly, the meeting place of the channel is named as Pahari Bhita, which also has also yielded a good number of artefacts. This place was probably the jetty of that time. This spill channel probably was the lifeline of trade and commerce of then Rāmāvati Township.

Map 6: Maritime network of Amati settlement



It would be interesting to note here that battles were fought in the region between armies of rival king. Sandhyākarnandin mentions a pitched battle fought on the bank of the river Kalindri near the ancient site of Gauḍa i.e. Pichli Gangarampur. This emphasizes the geopolitical importance of the region. On the strength of the

above finding we would safely presume that Amati, so rich in archaeological assets was appropriately chosen as the capital city of the Pāla Empire.

To analyse the CPT of Amati we have to define a plausible regional boundary by invoking both of cultural and political arguments. To sketch a normative study area the rivers of the area explicitly mark the boundary. The metropolis of Rāmāvati was located at the confluence of the river Mahananda and Chiramati. The western boundary of the Rāmāvati was well marked by the river Mahananda, while eastern and southern boundary by the river Chiramati. In the northern boundary was possibly Baragram, which had cultural similarity with the Rāmāvati. The central place or core area of this urban farrago was Rāmāvati, which was surrounded by a huge number of urban sites and many market places (*haṭṭa*). The site of Jagdal in the threshold area of Amati deserves some more attention. Rāmapāla built the great Jagaddala monastery in the vicinity of the capital city of Rāmāvati, as quoted by Sandhyākarnandin in the *Rāmacaritam*. So, this site of Jagdal can be taken as an educational centre of that time. The dependent sites like Ghṛtatalā and Madhuban possibly get their names from their specialty in producing *Gṛta* and *madhu* (honey). The artefacts revealed from the Baragram characterized it as a workshop of sculpture. (Field Survey, 26.03.2015) The rivers like Mahananda, Chiramati, Baliya and Tangan were perfect means of security and trade network. We have already mentioned about the inland routes among these towns.

Bangarh was evenly important in the early medieval and medieval period as revealed from the archaeological sources. The Bangarh copper plate inscription of Mahipāla I of c. late tenth or early eleventh century was discovered from Bangarh mound. It was issued from the royal camp of Vilāsa-pura, which donated Kurāṭa-pallikā with the exception of Chuṭa-pallikā of the Gōkalkā *maṇḍala* of Kōṭivarśa *viśaya*. Another toponym is also mentioned here, Pōshalī, the residence of Mahīdhara, the inscriber of the grant. Unfortunately, the current locations of the toponyms have not been located.

Two copper plates respectively of Gopāla IV and Madanapāla were recovered from Rajibpur of Gangarampur PS, which have been issued from the royal head quarter of Rāmāvati. These plates recorded sites like Vudhavaḍākhāma *grāma* in the Halāvartta *maṇḍala* of Kōṭivarśa *viśaya*. The Vudhavaḍākhāma *grāma* has been

identified with the village of Budhura, now known as Raghampur in Tapas PS. (Sanyal, 2010, p. 112) In the plate #1 the village of Vudhavaḍākhāma *grāma* is mentioned as ‘production of three hundred by standard of ploughed land and house’, (plate #1, vv. 37-38) which indicates that the production of the village is measured at three hundred is some unit according to size of cultivated tracts and number of households. (Furui, 2015, p. 57) From this type of description of the place Vudhavaḍākhāma *grāma* it seems to be very clear that this place can be treated as an important and possibly an urban center. The toponyms of the plate #2 are Vaṭhuṇḍavallī, Kusumuṇḍā, Piśacakuleya, Vivudhapallī, Vaṅgaḍī and Vāṭṭaḍavattī. (plate #2, vv. 33-35) Identifications of these places have not yet been possible. But there is a police station called Kushmandi in South Dinajpur can be identified as the location of Kusumuṇḍā.

It can be concluded from the above discussion that the study area had yielded numerous urban sites in several time slices and it cannot be treated as a separate pearl from the necklace of the second and the third urbanization of India. The urban sites of the study area not only served with their specialized services like administrative, judiciary, education etc. and simple basic services like market place, grocery stores etc. of the people of its threshold. They also left its spatial effects to its range areas and peripheries. The study area revealed cities like Bangarh, Pichli, Amati, Ekdala-Bairhatta etc., which played a key role in the development of its threshold and influenced the minor urban areas in administrative, economic, social and cultural respect. Some minor urban sites like Asuragarh, Madanavati, Dwipnagar etc., stand alone for a time while and were became a place of attraction for the people of that time.

The State of the Society in the Study Area During 3rd Century BCE and 12th Century CE

Sometime in the first millennium BCE small settlements on the shores of the big rivers gradually evolved into cities in our area of study. The process might have taken a few hundred years or less than that. But in the Mauryan period there were as many as three large cities dominating the trade and commerce as well as society of the region. These cities were Koṭivarṣa, Puṇḍravardhana and Asuragarh. The last named in our opinion had a different name obscured with the passage of time and came to be

known as the fortress(*garh*) of the demons(*asura*) as per the choice of the local people.

Interestingly, these cities survived for more than a millennium and joined by several other big and small urban centres scattered over the length and breadth of our area of study. Most prominent among them was Gauḍa(Gour),Skandanagara (Kandaran), Rāmāvati etc. A host of others like Kumarpura, Madnavati, Mahendra(pura), Laksmaṇavati also flourished at about the same time. Among those mentioned last the city of Gauḍa was built in the Gupta period as supported by several evidence while the rest flourished in the Pala-Sena era.

Now these large and small urban centres contributed to the growth of urbanised societies which were essentially different from the rural ones comprising farmers, small artisans and other classes like potters, blacksmiths, weavers, cattle rearers, boat drivers etc. occasionally joined by itinerant traders and monks obliged to travel through even the remotest of the villages.

The society in the urban centres was completely different. As we learn from various literary sources like *Kāmasūtra* of Vatsyana, (Sastri, 1929) *Daśakumācharita* of Dandi, (Parab, 1889) *Rāmacaritam* of Sandhyākarnandin, (Sastri, 2012)*Pavanadūtam* of Dhoyi (Chakravarti, 1926) and a host of others. Mention may also be made here of the account of several foreign travellers like Xuan Zang, (Beal, 1914) I-Tsing (Chavannes, 1894) et al. A number of Gupta and Pāla inscriptions in particular richly contribute to our knowledge of the urban society in ancient and early medieval periods. The archaeological finds even the stone, metal and terracotta sculptures and artefacts reflect interesting facets of the society, both urban and rural, of the ancient and medieval periods. The terracotta plaques and stone sculptures recovered from the monasteries of Paharpur and Jagajjivanpur reveal slices of contemporary urban and rural life.

The cities naturally had their share of the affluent professional classes residing in them. Royal personages, traders or *sresthis*, high military and civil officials, artists, architects, entertainers like the dancers and musicians thronged the cities. The artisans were gainfully employed either by the state, the monastic establishment or the affluent people. As their benefactors lived in cities, the artisans preferred to live in cities also. The *Rāmacaritam* and the *Kāmasūtra* present varied descriptions of the urban life, its

amusements, the entertainers especially skilled in their trades and the leisurely lifestyle of the rich. The stone and terracotta artefacts corroborate the accounts found in the literary sources.

The *Sekasubhodaya* on the other hand reveals the attitude of some adulterous member of the Royalty and sufferings of the common people due to their acts. The king as a fountain of justice punishes the offender who happens to be his brother-in-Law.

The society, particularly the urban had the presence of various grades of priests of the Brahmanical faith and a large body of Buddhist monks living in the monasteries. These classes were engaged in academic exercises which included study and practice of medicine and surgery, researches in the fields of philosophy, astronomy etc. Even technique of art was studied sincerely and books were authored on such subjects. So, the intellectual environment of cities was contributed by poets, authors, artists, theologians etc. earning their livelihood from cities.

There were rich traders influencing the economy of the state at times coming into conflict with the autocratic kings. They however, wanted security from the monarch at the time of war while the monarch sought their help while confronting an enemy. So, the relationship between the king and the trader was one of mutual dependence. When the dependence was broken, both sides had to suffer as Rajanikanta Chakborty mentioned in his *GouderItihasa*. (Chakrabarty, 1982)

With the passage of time, the bureaucracy grew in size. The Pāla inscriptions describe a huge number of officials, both civil and military, serving the king and essentially living in the capitals and big or small towns. They were an important component of the urban society.

So, to conclude we can say the society during the period was multi-layered and prosperous depending on the villages for the supply of much of their need. The villages were primarily dependent on agriculture.

Notes

1. A. Ghosh, mentions only three categories for the development of an urban centres, viz, 'political and administrative centre', 'centre of trade and commerce', and 'religious centre'. Forth factor, i.e. 'the importance of geographical location' has been added by R. Champakalashmi. (1979, pp. 1-29) and B.D. Chattopadhyaya (2012).
2. The writer believes that, the Matsya *janapada* of 6th century BCE was placed in eastern India, notin present Joypur region of Rajasthan. This hypothesis is based on the archaeological sources, literary evidences and local legends.
3. As for the limits of Āryāvarta we are informed that it was limited on the east by the Kālaka-vana, on the south by the Pāriyātra range, on the west by Ādarśana and on the north by the Himālayas. The eastern most boundary of the Āryāvarta, i.e Kālaka-vana has been identified in the present day Jharkhand by Bhandarkar. (Bhandarkar, 1931, pp. 103-116)
4. 'The *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, Chapter XXIII, vv. 196-97. Translation of Verse 196-97: 'When the twentyfifth revolution arrives in due course, and Śakti, son of Vasiṣṭha becomes the Vyāsa, I will be born as the lord Muṇḍīśvara with a staff in the city Koṭivarṣa honoured by devas.' (Tagore, 1987, p. 149).
5. The Jambunadi river has not yet been identified. Possibly it was a spelling mistake by the inscriber of the plate. A tentative identification is that, it can be identified with the Jamuna river on the east of Bangarh.
6. ... among the multitude of settlement names mentioned and very infrequently described in any detail in epigraphs, it is hazardous, without applying further tests, to try and locate urban centres and comprehend their structure. (Chattopadhyaya, 2012, p. 169)
7. 'This has nothing to do with the mention of a place as a *grāma* or a *nagara* ; it is the relevance of how much is described in the context of what is being recorded that will finally count in assessing the character of each settlement.' (Chattopadhyaya, 2012, p. 171)
8. This *viṣaya* is also mentioned in some copper plate grants of the Pāla-Sena age, like Nandadirghika inscription of Mahendrapāladeva, Jajilpara Inscriptions of Gopal III.
9. Use of secondary seal found in the Kotalipada plate, the Tripperah plate of Lokanātha, the Kailan plate of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta, the Kalapur plate of Maruṇḍanātha and Mastakaśvabhra copper-plate of Pradyumnabandhu.

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Chapter 4

Political Scenario and Power Structure in

Puṇḍra-Vareṇḍra

Chapter 4

Political Scenario and Power Structure in Puṇḍra-Varendra

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 Kadphises’ 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 Rādhā 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 Samatāṭa, Davāka, Kāmarūpa and Nēpāla as frontier (*pratyanta*) states of Samudragupta’s empire.¹ Samatāṭa 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 **Jagdishpur 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, Bhoyila 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 Bhoyila 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 Kumāramatya Kulavṛiddhi, who meditated on the feet of his Majesty (*Bhaṭṭāraka-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 Damodarapur 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-srēsthin* 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 **Nāgvasu CPI** of 198 GE (518 CE) (Griffiths, 2018, pp. 35-39) issued from Puṇḍravardhana, mentions Nāgvasu 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 Amṛitadēva, 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-amṛitadēda* explained as Amṛitadēda 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 Amṛitadēva 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°adhikaraṅasya*) 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 (*mahāmahattara*); 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 Isānavarman (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’. (Hultzch, 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 (Śaśāṅka) 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-Śaśāṅka is written on left.

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

Jayanāga appears to have been risen to power sometimes after the death of Śaśāṅka. John Allan, after examining the coins of Gupta Emperors and Śaśāṅka, describes coins of a king whose name began with *Jaya*. He unhesitatingly connects the coins of *Jaya* with those of Śaśāṅka. The *cakrastandard* on his coins is very likely an indication that he did not belong to the line of Śaśāṅka, 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 Śailavaṁśa, 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 karaṅgrāhitāḥ |

Śrī-Gopāla iti kshītīśa śirasām chūḍāmaṇis tat sutāḥ | | (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 Rāṣṭrakūṭas 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 Rāṣṭrakūṭa 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 Rājyapāla'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 I
Suhmaiḥ s-ōpapradānair=asi-bhaya-chakitair=Ggurjjara-Krīta-
Chīnair=yasmīs-tantr-ādḥikāram=vidadhati dadhirē bharttur=ājñās-śirōbhiḥ II*

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 Vighrahapāla 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 Vighrahapāla 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 (Vighrahapāla) 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 Tiṅgyadeva. 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 Kaliṅga. (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, Kāmṛūpa 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 Śaivism. (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 Vyāghrataī *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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Chapter 5

The Remains of Cities and Monastic Establishments

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The Remains of Cities and Monastic Establishments

Here in this chapter, the researcher will make modest attempt to throw light on the archaeological remains which have been lying scattered in the concerned field. The information and analysis in this chapter are outcome of surface explorations and subsequent examinations of the materials collected from the surface collections of the archaeological sites of the study area. This chapter dealt with such kind of archaeological sites, which are lying completely unprotected and have become an open field for the antique smugglers. Some educated personalities of this region have played an important role in protection of such archaeological remains. The archaeological sites of this part of land have been destroying not by these morons only, the growing population, lack of awareness of the people about the historical values of the artefacts and encroachment in the archaeological sites are also responsible. Here an example of ignorance can be relevant. When a sculpture is recovered from a place, the busybodies of that place usually arrive and take possession of the antique to collect donations from the godly rural people. Because of this condition, the district authorities fail to take the sculpture in their custody. After some days, when the enthusiasm and donation of the godly people become wane, the sculpture remains unprotected and taking advantage of the situation, the antique hunters become active. In this chapter, mention of such sites or antiquities, which have already been discussed by the previous scholars, would be avoided so far as possible. The archaeological patterns and the central place theory of the archaeological sites have already been discussed in previous chapter. Almost all the sites are situated on the banks of the river courses of the region.

Aminhat

Aminhat (25°16'48.7"N 88°07'08.2"E) is situated in the vicinity of Amati. The entire village stands on the debris of an ancient urban site. This site is full of archaeological fragments. A big water tank, called *Chhaghāti* measuring 330m x 670m, is the most important place in this site. The water tank has six pucca bathing *ghats* on its four sides (two each in northern and southern sides). (Picture 23) Other important remains are:

1. A modern temple is there, which house many mutilated parts of sculptures. The modern temple stands on the remains of an old building structure. (Picture 24)
2. First discovery in this list by the present researcher is a broken pilaster of a giant sculpture, which is densely carved with floral designs and human figures. Possibly, it is the right portion of the sculpture. The pilaster rises on a square base which shows in the middle of each sides with tiered decorative motifs surmounted by lotus rosettes and leaves. More than half of the shaft is octagonal, the rest being cylindrical. The two sections are demarcated by a projecting octagonal part with a sharp edge. At the base of the pilaster, the shaft is decorated with abstract floral motifs. Above this portion, five female figures are placed. Two of them are playing drums and rests are holding *chāmara* and flowers for offering. These two portions of the shaft are divided with by a circular *āmalaka* design. The portion above is embellished with festoons and bells hanging from a chain. At the bottom of this portion, five abstract floral designs take place. Above this portion, the abstract design of flowers is going around the shaft. Near the top section of the shaft, we find a figure on an abacus of octagonal shape supported by three *āmalaka* designs. The abacus has geometrical designs of triangles carved in relief with their apex pointing downwards. At the top, a composite bulky female figure takes place. The attributes in her hands are not recognizable. A full-blown lotus is placed at the left side of the figure.

The bevelled left side of the pilaster is rich in carvings. We can visualise the entire lost sculpture by analysing a miniature temple design placed at the extreme bottom of the fragment. The sculpture is of a trefoil arch supported by two monolithic pillars and surmounted by a *śikhara* with *āmalaka* at the top. In the middle of the temple, an image of female divine figure takes place, which carries a *chāmara* in her right hand and the left hand rests on her waist. The image is standing in *ābhanga mudra* on a full-blown lotus. The image is densely ornamented. She wears a cloth for her lower part only, carries a scarf, which is hanging from the elbows. Above this, a horse rider is pulling up the rein of a horse, which is placed on a crouching elephant. Near the top, a

kneeling male figure is placed in *anjali mudra* facing the principal image. (Picture 25)

3. Next finding is a Viṣṇupaṭṭa, (Picture 26) which bears an image of Viṣṇu on the one side and his ten incarnations on the other. However, it is a damaged specimen; the principal figure is in good state of preservation. The slab is carved in low relief on both sides with various figures. The obverse seems to be divided into nine compartments. The arrangement of the figures in the compartments is shown below-

(mostly damaged) Vidyādhara (?)	(partly damaged) Image of Śri (?) sitting on a <i>padmāsana</i> , two elephants (one is visible) are pouring water over her from either side.	Lost
(partly damaged) Image of Laxmi (?) standing on a <i>padmāsana</i> with lotus in her left hand.	Image of Viṣṇu, sitting with cross legs on a <i>padmāsana</i> holding <i>cakra</i> , <i>gadā</i> , <i>padma</i> and <i>saṁkha</i> (clockwise).	Lost
Lost	Lost	Lost

Diagram 5: Viṣṇupaṭṭa, obverse

The reverse contains a thick circle with a lotus in low relief within it. On each petal, there is an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Only four incarnations can be visible properly and two partially. The arrangement is clockwise 1. Matsya (partly visible), 2-5 are missing, 6. Trivikrama (?) with mace, 7. Rāma with bow and arrow, 8. Balarāma with plough, 9. Buddha with lotus and 10. Kalki on horseback.

Joyhat (25°17'11.5"N 88°06'46.8"E)

Joyhat is situated at the east of Amati and on the confluence of the rivers Mahananda and Suin (সুই).¹The site was definitely a Buddhist site of the Pāla-Sena period. The findings are

1. Two votive *stūpas* along with a Nandi house in a modern temple near the confluence of the rivers. First votive *stūpa* is of wide-shaped. The dome (*aṇḍa*) is placed on a base of single inverted lotus shaped pedestal. The dome is not hemispherical, rather of flat top design and divided into three sections by two round circles. Another circle at the bottom from where four geometrical designs of triangles, carved in four sides with their apex, running from top to bottom of the dome by piercing the circles. The dome is perforated and placed on a monolithic octagonal column, which holds the abacus and *chhatra* at the top. The abacus has eight conical points in eight directions. (*pūrva, paścim, uttar, dakṣin, isāna, agni, nirṛti*) The *chhatrābali* is like a *āmalaka* design with rounded top. (Picture 27)
2. Second votive *stūpa* has vigintuple four-layered pedestal. The dome (*aṇḍa*) is missing but the monolithic pillar is there, which ends with a round *chhatrābali*. (Picture 28)
3. Third votive *stūpa* is discovered from a house nearby. It has double pedestal of vigintuple four layered tapering based. The dome has four niches on cardinal sides containing figures of Buddha seated in different *mudrās*. The *hārmika* and *chhatrāvalīs* as same as v.1. (Picture 29) some fragments (*chhatrāvalī*, pedestal etc.) of votive *stūpa* has also been recovered from this site. (Picture 30)

Jot Narattam (25°18'47.3"N 88°08'07.7"E)

Jot Narattam is another archaeological site situated in the north of Amati. It has good number of mounds, which contain brick and stones. A heap of mutilated sculptures has been found from this site. (Picture 31) Saraswatī holding a *bīṇā* (harp), some *Vidyādhara*s, *kr̥ttimukha*, a male god possibly Viṣṇu, because it still have the lotus in his left upper hand and *kiriṭmukuta* on his head, which is a typical feature of Viṣṇu iconography. (Picture 32) The eyes are closed in deep meditation and an

aesthetic smile of his face clearly indicates the development of Bengal Art of that time.

Kotbāri (25°18'30.2"N 88°08'14.4"E)

Legend has it; Kotbāri is the site of the palace of Rāmapāla, the great Pāla ruler. The mound of this village is covered with dense forest, but big brick built walls are still visible. A round piece of stone, possibly a part of a Votive *stūpa* has been recovered from here. The round shaped piece of stone has four niches with four Buddha images, seated on full-blown double petalled lotuses. (Picture 33)

Jagdala (25°17'15.5"N 88°08'27.4"E)

This site of the Amati range inspires one moot question of the history of Bengal, i.e. identification of the present location of the Jagaddala Monastery. Here an attempt should be made to find out the answer of such type of hypotheses of the history of Bengal. The present study is based to a great extent on findings from the several sites and remains of the villages named as Jagaddala in undivided northern Bengal.

However, before setting out on this journey it is worth taking a brief description of Jagaddala Monastery and its glory. Haraprasad Sastri in his presidential address of the *Bangiya Sahitya Sammelana* in 1321 BS referred to the Jagaddala Monastery and to Bibhutichandra, a celebrated scholar of that Monastery, as one of the twenty resplendence of ancient Bengal. As Nalanda *Mahāvihāra* is in Magadha, *Kanishka Vihāra* in Peshwar, *Dipadattam Vihāra* in Colombo, so is Jagaddala *Mahāvihāra* in Bengal. In a lamenting tone, he mentioned our deficiency of knowledge about the location of this Buddhist University. Ancient relics are being brought to light through archaeological excavations in different parts of India but not an inch of earth was dug to identify the location of this great university of Bengal. For this Sastri expressed his deep sorrow. Since then about a century is elapse, but no attempt from any corner has so far been taken for this. (Sarkar, 2009, pp. 16-24) Among the five universities of the Pāla period, Jagaddala *Mahāvihāra* was a prestigious and glorious monastery during that time. We know the present locations of other monasteries like Vikramaśilā, Nālandā, Somapura and Nandadirghi. However, the location of Jagaddala University has not yet been identified. Tibetan sources reflect that all of the monasteries formed a network; all of them were under state

supervision and there existed a system of co-ordination among them. Towards the end of the Pāla rule the fame of Jagaddala Monastery as a seat of learning spread throughout the Buddhist world. Many Buddhist luminaries from all over India came here as teachers and thousands of students from various parts of the country and abroad thronged here to learn the Buddhist scriptures. Some of the gems of Jagaddala Mahavihara were Ācārya Bibhūticandra, Dānaśilā, Moksakaragupta, Dharmakara, Abhayākaragupta etc. Moksakaragupta was the high priest of this monastery. (Vidyabhusana, 1921, p. 346) Sakya Śrībhadrā, a learned monk from Kashmir, came to Magadha in 1202 CE and visited all the Buddhist centres of learning. When he found that both Odantapuri and Vikramasila had been destroyed by the Muslims, he proceeded to Jagaddala, which was still in existence, where he stayed for three years and found many pupils, prominent among them being Dānaśilā and Vibutichandra. The learned monk Subhakaragupta accepted him as his pupil. (Cordier, 1914, p. 293) After the devastation of Odantapuri and Vikramaśilā Mahāvihāra by the Muslim invaders, many Buddhist scholars like Sākya Śrībhadrā and his disciple took asylum at the Jagaddala Monastery.

Jagaddala Monastery had a close connection with Tibet and for this reason; much of the translation from Sanskrit to Tibetan language was done in Jagaddala Monastery. Some of the great literary works of this great monastery is Bibhutichandra's five books on Buddhist scripture and their translation to Tibetan language. Dānaśilā translated sixty books, Mokshakaragupta's wrote *Tarkabhāṣa*, which was translated by Sthīramatī into Tibetan language. Subhakaragupta's *Siddhika Viratantraṭīkā*, Abhayakaragupta's commentary on *Aṣṭa-sāhasrikā Pajñāpāramitā* and Vidyakara's *Subhāṣitaratnakosa* are worth mentioning.² The Muslim invaders destroyed this great centre of learning of Eastern India approximately by 1210 CE. The invasion of Muhammad Bakhtyar gave a severe blow to Buddhism but it could not sweep away that religion altogether. Some of the Buddhist scholars and their followers were bound to flee from this monastery too with their lives and books to keep Buddhism alive. Sastri quotes (1897, p. 27) 'this explains the discovery in Nepal of a number of Buddhist manuscripts of the 12th and 13th centuries, written in proto-Bengali script that was then prevalent both in Bengal and Magadha. Buddhism became very popular there, having lost its hold on Bengal.'

The most valuable and authentic description about Jagaddala Monastery we find from the *Rāmacaritam* of Sandhyākarnandi, the court poet of Rāmapāla, in the 7th *sloka* of the third chapter of this book the description of Jagaddala Mahavihara.

মন্দাগাং স্থিতিমুঢ়াং জগ-দল- মহাবিহার-চিত-রাগাম।

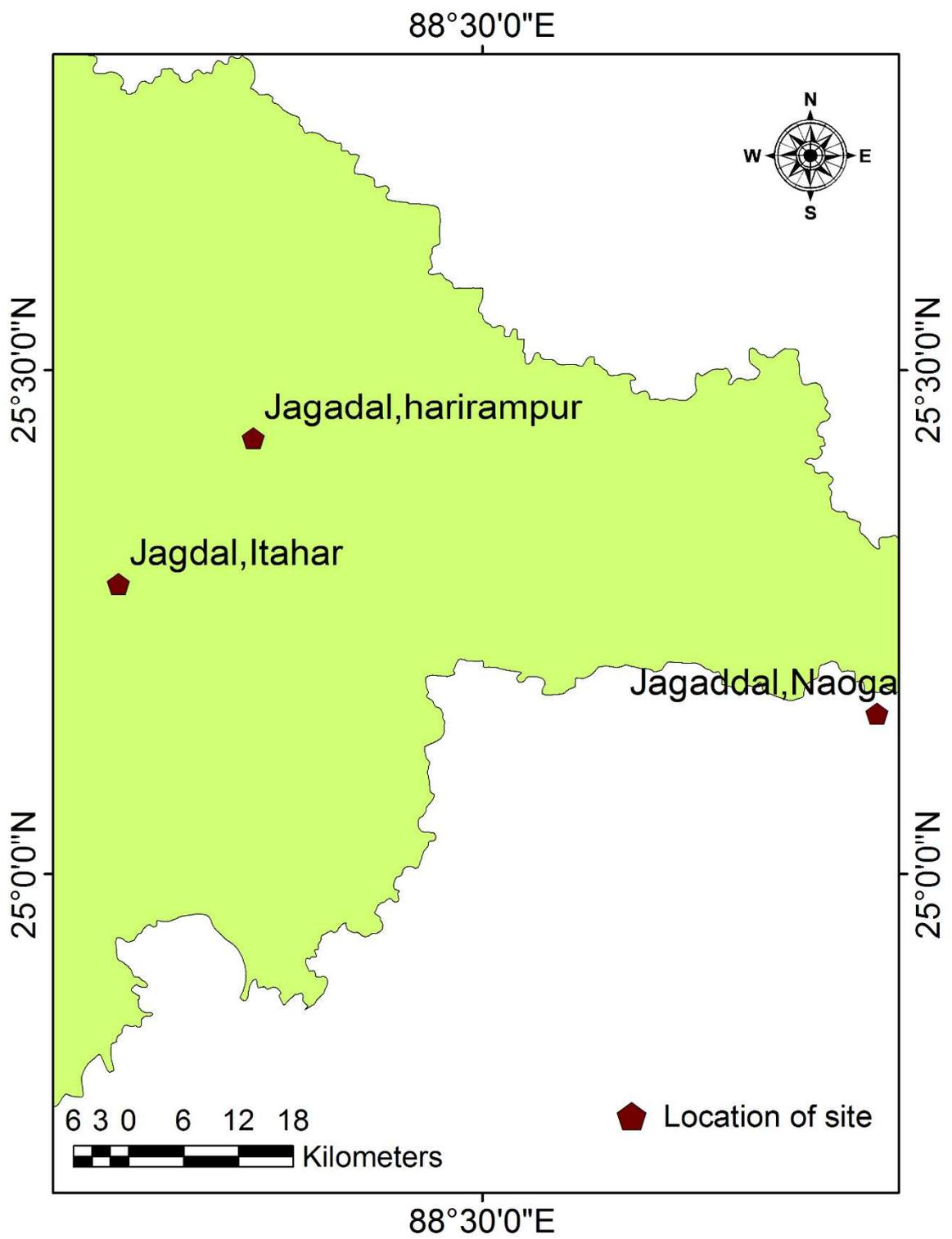
দধতীং লোকেশ-মপিমহত্তা-রোদি-তোরু-মহিমানম।। (III, 7)

‘(Varendri) – which had elephants of the Mandra type imported (into its forest) – where in the great monastery at Jagaddala kindly love for all was found accumulated – which country bore (in its heart) the image of (Bodhisattva) Lokeśa – and great glory was still more increased (or pronounced) by (the presence of) the great (heads of monasteries) and the (images of) Tārā (the Buddhist goddess)’ . (Sastri, 2012, p. 62)

Probably it was established by Rāmapāla, the great king of Pāla dynasty of Bengal, in the second half of the 11th century CE. Erudite historians like HaraprasadSastri, Rakhal Dasgupta, Nalininath Dasgupta, Rahul Sankrityana have undisputedly stated that Rāmapāla was the founder of the Jagaddala Mahāvihāra. After the victory against the Kaivartya rebels Rāmapāla set up a new capital city at Rāmāvātī. Before setting up the city, the coronation ceremony of Rāmapāla was done in this *Mahāvihāra*. Avalokitesvara was the dwelling god of Jagaddala Monastery and its dwelling goddess Mahattāra. (Roy, 1414 BS, p. 605) The important reference to Jagaddala monastery can be found in the Catalogue of Cordier. Here mention has been made of Rāmapāla as *Jagaddalanivāsin*. Scholars like P. Niyogi are not sure about the exact location of the Jagaddala Monastery. Niyogi (1980, pp. 59-60) mentions, ‘there is confusion about identification of Jagaddala. In my opinion the site of the *Vihāra* should be identified with a village named Jagaddala in the district of North Dinajpur, located near Āmātī or Rāmāvātī.’ Niyogi mentions about another village which also bears the same name Jagaddala, situated near Rāmāvātī at a distance of one km in the east. Scholar like M. Bhattacharjee (2008, p. 15) is in tune with Niyogi and added ‘As the surge of ecclesiastical and academic activities went on many more like Jagaddala were added to their number which subsequently dominated the academic world for centuries.’

There are differences of opinion regarding the actual location of Jagaddala Monastery. (Mookerji, 1947, p. 595; Sastri, 2012, xxxvi (Introduction) Evidently while referring to the reputed monastery, Cordier in his catalogue locates Jagaddala in Varendrī (*Jagaddalaen Varendra*). (Cordier, 1914, p. 122) From the

references in the *Rāmacaritam* it is not clear when and by whom it was founded, although it appears from it to have been a flourishing institution in Rāmapāla's time. It must have existed at least for about a century after Rāmapāla. King (*nṛpati*) Rāmapāla is said to have resided at Jagaddala (*Śrī Jagaddalanivasin*). (Cordier, 1914, p. 285) In this chapter an attempt should be made to identify the location of Jagaddala monastery on the basis of three conditions; **1) archaeological remains:** As the sources suggests, the Jagaddala Monastery might had colossal architecture, which in the course of time was destroyed. So the present location of Jagaddala Monastery might have huge archaeological remains. **2) Distance from capital city i.e. Rāmāvati:** Presently, Amati of Itāhār PS of North Dinajpur district has been identified as its present location. From the sources it is clear that the Jagaddala Monastery was situated in the vicinity of the capital city of Rāmāvati. (Sarkar, H., 2009, pp. 1-3) So search can be done on the neighbouring places of Amati, and **3) the epithet ŚrīJagaddalanivasin of Rāmapāla:** from this epithet it is clear that Rāmapāla, very likely, spent some time at the monastery regularly which earned him the epithet. As we know Rāmapāla defeated the Kaivartya rebels and re-established the Pāla empire with capital at Rāmāvati (Amati). So it was not possible for an emperor to go far from the capital city, because the rebels were still active. We have lots of villages, particularly in Malda, North Dinajpur and South Dinajpur, having same type of names like Jagadal, Jagdal, Jagdalla, Jagaddala e.t.c.³ After surveying the vicinity of Rāmāvati (Amati), considering many possible sites having the same name, we concentrate only on two villages with high probability. First, Jagdal village of Itahar PS, North Dinajpur, situated just one km east to Amati (Jagaddala 1) and second, Jagaddal near Mahendra, South Dinajpur district (Jagaddala 2).



Map 7: Jagaddal villages

The Jagaddala1

Here we come first on the discussion on the Jagaddala village near Rāmāvati. (Picture 34) Jagaddala 1 is situated just one km east of Amati. The mound of this village is about 100x80 mtr in measure. During a visit in winter of 2014, present scholar found a part of a colossal gargoyle with *Makarmukha* design. (Picture 35) Sandhyākarnandi in the *Rāmacaritam* highlights Varendrīas the fatherland of the Pāla emperors (*Jakakbhu*) and mentions the importance of Jagaddala Monastery. (*Rāmacaritam* I,38; ii,28; iv,3) In 2015, during another visit present researcher finds a road (approximately 20 feet wide) between Amati (Rāmāvati) and Jagaddala 1. (Picture 36)

The archaeological remains of this mound are not fit for such a colossal structure of a Mahavihara. The question of the epithet of *Śrī Jagaddalanivasin* is also relevant with the Jagaddala 1. The epithet suggests that, Rāmapāla got this epithet because of his frequent visits or as the permanent and impermanent dweller of Jagaddala. And the distance from capital city is very short.

The Jagaddala2 (25°25'16.8"N 88°15'42.0"E)

Sarasi Kumar Saraswati had much interest in the archaeological sites of Dinajpur. The present researcher made a tour along the river course of Chiramati in winter, following the footprints of S.K. Saraswati. Saraswati indicates sites like Daharol, Kachra, Eshnail, Aminpur, Katashan, Dehabandh, Patiraj, Adhyakhanda, Mahatur, Jagdalla, Mahendra, Surohor, and Harirampur, which prove the richness of the area and gives a clear indication of the existence of a fully flourished human society and culture of the past. (Saraswati, 1932, pp. 185-95)

The biggest mound (Picture 37) of this area is **Mahendra**. Mahendra, known to the local people as *Gadādhum* or *Kadhum*, is situated on the bank of river Chiramati (or Śrīmatī). The mound is 200 feet wide, 180 feet long and 30 feet high. Here a legend of *Gadadhūm* is current. A hero namely Gadā once fishing on Chiramati from the mound with palm tree as his fishing rod and an ox as his bait, saw Behulā with the dead body of her husband Laxmindar, the famous *Behula Laxmindar legend*, sailing through the river Chiramati. Gadā overwhelmed by the beauty of Behulā stopped her on her way and tried to get her.⁴ Anyway, this mound looks like a

hillock from the plains. Potsherds, bricks, stone fragments and stone pillars are scattered everywhere. The pillars are lavishly carved with bow and arrow design. First one is of 163 inches x 32 inches, with two bow carvings of same size. (Picture 38) The second one is of 110 inches x 50 inches in size. (Picture 39) Just nearby Gadadhūm another mound measuring 53 feet x 110 feet is also visible. It has also same type of architectural fragments, like bricks, potsherd and stone pillars like other Pāla sites. Two of the pillars are of same size, i.e., circumference of 93 inches and height of 160 inches with beautiful carving on them.

Next of Gadadhūm mound of Mahendra, we can see, the Jagaddala mound (Jagaddala 2), situated just opposite side of the river. (Picture 40) The distance of Gadadhūm with Jagaddala is less than 1 km. The name of the mound 'Jagaddala' is stirring the debate of the identification of Jagaddala monastery. The crow fly distance between Jagaddala 2 and the capital city of Rāmāvati is not more than 15 km in the present measurement. This site was well connected through the rivers with Rāmāvati during that time. One can sail to Rāmāvati from Jagaddala through the river Chirāmāti to the river Mahānandā/Suin. Therefore, the meaning of the epithet, i.e. *Jagaddalanivāsini* of Rāmapāla seems to be applicable to this site also. The Jagaddala 2 of Chiramati is colossal and accompanied with many more architectural sites. As it is already mentioned, the way to Jagaddala and Rāmāvati are not so far to an emperor. At **Mahatur**, a mile to the south of Jagaddala, there are further evidences of ancient settlement. Just close to the road a tank stretch north to south called **BaghaMuzraDighi** is situated, which has traces of a pucca bathing Ghats on each of its four sides. The high embankments are strewn with bricks, and there are three small mounds to the east of the tank known to the people as *Deul* (temple). Bricks are in abundance in the mounds, and one mound has several huge architectural stones, most probably still in their respective places. Saraswati witnessed a sandstone image of Chamunda dancing on Mahākāla. (Saraswati, S., 1932b, p. 190) **Surohor**, another neighbouring mound on the course of the river Chiramati, strengthen the claim of identification of Jagaddala monastery with this Jagaddala 2 mound. So in respect of geographical location and archaeological fragments this village appears to be the tentative location of Jagaddala monastery. The Jagaddala 2 assumes to be more capable to accommodate such a good number *Ācāryas*, students and other associates.

Another place in the district of Naoga, Dhamoirhat in Bangladesh also has the same name, i.e., Jagdalla, where a monastery like structure of 45x45 feet in measure still exists with many architectural remains, which shows Buddhist architectural features. But the theory of *Śrī Jagaddalanivāsin* and the distance from Rāmāvati is far. This monastery is also not colossal in respect of its counterpart.

Full-scale excavations of these sites can help us to identify the present location of this great monastery. Otherwise, it will be very difficult to reach any decision. The Jagaddala near Rāmāvati fulfilled the condition 2nd, i.e. closeness to Rāmāvati, but the 1st condition, i.e. the archaeological remains, are not adequate. The Jagaddala 2 near Mahendra fulfilled the 1st condition very well but it is quite far from the capital city. And the third Jagadala is far from the capital but have a monastery like structure. So, in this context, we can conclude that, the Jagaddala monastery might have many campuses like present day's universities. As all clauses suggest it might had its head administrative unit at Jagaddala near Mahendra village.

Bangarh

Bangarh (25°24'47.5"N 88°31'51.2"E), also known as *Koṭivarṣa*, *Soṇitpura*, *Umāvana* and *Devikoṭa*, is identify with the extended ruins of Gangarampur, situated at a distance of 23 km from Balurghat, district headquarters of South Dinajpur. During 1938 to 1941 CE, K.G. Goswami discovered various strata of habitations of different periods of Indian History. (Goswami, 1948) The excavations made some impressive discoveries like, remains of houses, temples, public buildings, rampart walls. And other engrossing discoveries are NBP ware of Mauryan period, punch-marked and cast coins of the Śuṅga period, pottery jugs, shell, terracotta, copper bangles, rings made of copper, glass and paste, ornaments like amulets and pendants made of gold and copper, beads made of stone and glass, collyrium sticks of copper, combs made of ivory and bone, spindle whorls, whet stones, plumbing bobs of alloy metal, flesh rubbers, clay sealings, iron implements like nails and chisel, weapons like daggers, swords and spear-heads and stone images and architectural fragments. As we know, this effort of Goswami was not a full-scale excavation of this great site, which it actually deserves. Goswami himself believed that this was 'only a fringe of her past glory to the notice of the civilized world.' (Goswami, 1948, p. 39) Goswami recovers a terracotta female figure of Śuṅga period. 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) this plaque can be hung by a hole at the top of it.

This site yielded many stone sculptures of Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain god and goddess. Some inscriptions also discovered from this site or its fringe. Many scholars already mention most of them. Here, present researcher will discuss his own findings collected through fieldworks.

1. A figure of couchant bull (*nandi*) adorned with a garland acting as a horn ornament, a bell (*ghaṇṭā*) tied to the neck besides, is placed at the Siva temple. (Picture 41) It is simple in ornamentation and difficult to assign its time.
2. A Bhairava image is find from Hāṭkhōlā of Gangarampur. This image has six arms, holding a *cakra*, *khaṭvāṅga*, *kapāla* in the left and a *damaroo*, *pāśa* and (unidentified object). The god has flabby belly and a long garland of skulls. Flames are coming out of his body. The eyes are round and rolling and the lips are parted in a horrible smile. The figure is not naked. This description categorizes it as the **BatukaBhairava**. The god is standing on an animal (unidentified). Iconographically, Batuka Bhairava is shown with dog as his *vāhana* (vehicle). Between his legs and on the back of the animal a human figure, possibly a defeated demon appears. This human figure holds a sword in his left hand and right hand is stretching upward in direction of the god, seeking mercy. Irrespective of some odd features, like the *cakra* and the animal it can be identified with Batuka Bhairava in local form. The entire figure is placed on a full-blown double petalled lotus. (Picture 42)
3. A recent discovery of a Vajrasattva (Picture 43) sculpture is worth mentioning. This discovery placed this region in the realm of Esoteric Buddhism. Vajrasattva images are found wherever Esoteric Buddhism spread, both in its earlier and later forms. (Linrothe, 1999, pp. 3-9, 306-8, 325-31) This is a unique type of sculpture – not frequently discovered from India. It is discovered from a nearby water tank of Rajivpur. The image is measuring 27 inches X 14 inches. The principle deity is seated on a *padmāsana* in *Bajrāsana* posture (cross legs). Though as per iconographic prescription, Vajrasattva should seat on *siddhāsana*. The posture of *siddhāsana* is the right leg on the

left calf or thigh. The later Tibetan images of Vajrasattva are represented as cross legged. (Linrothe, 2014, p. 10 foot note) He holds a *vajra* (thunder) in his right hand at his chest and a *ghaṇṭā* (bell) with *vajra* shape handle in his left hand at his proper left hip. So, the image might have some Tibetan influence. He wears *jaṭāmukuta* and also a bejeweled crown.⁵ The image is heavily ornamented.

The image has many other figures. At the top of the stele, an image of the Tathagata Buddha (?) takes place. Here he is seated on a full blown lotus in similar posture. Four other female deities appear, two on each side, in similar posture and attributes. This is a unique feature of the image. Nowhere in India Vajrasttva is represented with such type of female attendants. Iconographically, the principal deity of Vajrasttva should be represented with four inner offering deities⁶ with perfume, incense, a lamp and flowers in their hands. Here, they hold *vajra* and *ghaṇṭa* like the principal deity. Not only that, the pedestal of the sculpture has four other images and an altar in the middle. A Vajrācāriya, who holds *vajra* and *ghaṇṭa* in his respective hands, is placed at the right side of the altar. On the left an image of devotee, possibly the donor of the sculpture, takes place. He is kneeled near the altar and his both hands are in *namaskāra* posture. And two dancing figure is giving support to the *padmāsana* of the god on each corners.

4. A colossal Viṣṇu (Picture 44) image is placed in the custody of Gangarampur PS. This image is a clear example of highly developed iconoplastic art of the Pāla-Sena period. The sense of anatomy of the artist/s can surprise any scholar of Bengal art. The image is in damaged condition. The remaining part is 8 feet long. It lost its three hands. The top left hand holds a *cakra*. The face, slightly damaged, has an aesthetic smile. (Picture 45) This could be one of the best examples ever of the plastic art of Bengal.
5. Another Viṣṇu (Picture 46) image is placed at the temple of the Police Station. It has *samkha*, *cakra*, *gadā* and *padma* in his four hands. The conical topped stele is simple in carving. Two *vidyadhara* is placed on both sides of the deity. One male god on the left and female god on the right of the principal figure is placed. Here Viṣṇu wears a *karaṇḍamukuta*.

6. This site has yielded a huge variety of sculptures. We can find traces of the workshop in the threshold of the great city of Bangarh. At Dargah Para, near Alta Dighi, fragments of stones vouchsafe this statement. (Picture 47)
7. A fragment of a pillar (Picture 48) is found from Rajibpur, measuring hight 54 inches x periphery 52 inches, which shows class of Bengal art. The pillar is round in shape except its middle portion, which is densely carved. From the bottom, the pillar has beautiful floral design hanging from a chain. Over this portion, an abstract floral design is placed. The middle portion is square in shape. Four composite male figures with wings are placed on four corners. In the middle portion *āmalaka* design is placed between the designs of two lotuses. The craftsmanship is hard to believe that someone creates it without the help of any machines.

Bindol

Bindol (25°46'1.19"N 88°10'45.96"E), an obscure village of Uttar Dinajpur district, is famous for the Bhairavi⁷ temple of Mārtaṇḍa Bhairava. (Picture 49) The temple is situated on the bank of the river Kanchan.⁸ Here both the Hindus and the Muslims worship the Bhairava.

1. The temple was in very worse condition. Some restoration work has been done already. Nevertheless, the original structure was different. It has some beautiful terracotta works of floral design (Picture 50) all over the temple.
2. The idol is iconographically recognized as the Martanda Bhairava. The *Rāmāyana* describes, when whole universe is waiting for the result of Rāma-Rāvana war, just on the eve of the Great War Rāma was confused about his future plan of action against Rāvana. Ṛsi Agasthya enlighten Rāma like what Kṛṣṇa does with Arjuna in *Mahābhārata*.

rāmarāmamahābāhoṣṛṅguhyāmsanātanam |
yenasarvaanariinvatsasamarevijayishhyasi ||
ādityahṛdayampuṇyaṃsarvaśatruvināśanam |
jayāvahamjapennityamākṣayyaṃparamamśivam ||

(Ramāyana, yudhyakhanda, 107, ‘Āditya Hridayam)

Mārtanda is a form of the sun god. According to Prof. Macdonell, (1897, p. 43) in respect of number of Ādityas ‘in the last book of the R̥g-Veda, the number is once stated to be 7 and once 8.- Aditi at first representing to the gods that she has borne only 7 children and afterwards bringing in eight, viz: Mārtanda.’ In the later *Purānas*, this number is varied and the following comparative lists of the names of the Ādityas will be an interesting study. (Table 5)

Bhairava is a form of Siva. The *Siva-Purāna* calls Bhairava the *puṇnarupa* or the full form of Sankara, because he protects the universe (*bharana*) and because he is terrific (*bhisana*). The description of Bhairava is also found in *Vishnudharmottara*. Gopinath Rao mentions eight different forms of Bhairava, viz: *Asitaga, Ruru, Chada, Krodha, Unmatta, Kapāla, Bhiṣaṇa and Samhāra*. Each one of these forms is divided further into eight subordinate forms, thus making sixty-four in all. In this respect, Mārttanda Bhairava is under *Asitānga* group. (Rao, 1916, p. 180) So Mārttanda Bhairava is a composite form of the Siva and Surya. Mārtanda Bhairava, who is described in the *Agni Purāna* (301), as red in colour: his right half is Īshāna / Shiva and the left half is Ravi / Sūrya. He has four faces (connected with four cardinal points).

The figure in the temple is measuring 1.3 mtr X .7 mtr. The image in well state of preservation, all the hands of principal deity and faces of all accompanied deities are damaged. T.A. Gopinath Rao (1916, p. 177) mentions, ‘Bhairava should have a flabby belly, round yellow eyes, side tusks and wide nostrils, and should be wearing a garland of skulls. He should be also adorned with snakes as ornaments. Beside these, there should be other ornaments also. The complexion of Bhairava is dark as the rain clouds and his garment, the elephant’s skin. He should have several arms carrying several weapons. He should be represented as frightening Parvati with a snake.’ The principal figure is sitting on the center over three storeyed *ratha* in the *Ardhaparyanka* attitude over a double petalled lotus (*padmāsana*) supported by a *saptaratha* pedestal which carved with the figure of seven horses of the sun chariot. Prof. Macdonell, (1897,p. 31) of his ‘Vedic Mythology’ says that Surya’s horses represent his rays, which are seven in number. The position of the horse in the middle, the wheel and the position of Aruna,⁹ the charioteer of the Sun god, on the

Makara head is effaced. The principal figure is placed on a full blown lotus over a *shayitapurusa*. Here the principal deity has 14 hands. Though all the hands of the deity are broken but it is not too hard to count the number of hands it possessed. The portion of protruding belly is also affected. It has three eyes, a fierce look with curly beard and crude smile on his face. He wears a *JataMukuta* (crown of matted hair) and his curly hairs fall in locks over the shoulders. In ornamentation, it has *keyurabāhuband*, comparatively big *karnakundala*, *vaijayantimālā*, *aksamālā*, *hāra*, *upabita*, *udarabandhya*, the girdle which holds his cloth tight round the waist, is profusely ornamented and is further decorated with artistic hangings, *keyurabahubandh* (two each), *kankana* and so on. Though, the front portion of the image is damaged. The snake, which he wears, is clearly visible. The backslab, which is flat¹⁰ at the top and partially broken at left side, is too much crowded with the accompanying deities and floral designs. The entire backslab is well carved with flower design in its edges. It started from the middle lower point and finished it at the same point. At the top of the backslab *kṛtimukha* is placed with two female figurines, of which the right one is reverse and the left one is in obverse. Just next from the *kṛtimukha* a garland bearing flying Vidyādhara with another accompanied deity is placed on a circle of the garland. *Agniṣrava*, just back of the principal figure, is filled up the entire blank space of the backslab.

At the left lower part of the principal deity stands Niksubha, the earthy double of Sun god, raises her right hand with a flywhisk and left hand, which holds a *kapāla* (?), resting on her waist. At the right lower of the principal deity stands Rajni,(?)¹¹ daughter of Visvakarma, bent her right hand at the elbow with a flywhisk and left hand raises up with a *pustaka*(?). Above the figure of Aruna and just in front of the principal deity, an effaced miniature female figure of Mahasveta(?) is sited on *sukhasana*. In each side of Mahasveta, Usa and Pratyusa stands respectively in *pratyalidha* and *alidha* posture with bows and arrows. Pingala is placed on sitting posture, though partly damaged but can still be identifiable through his protruding belly and beard. Just opposite side of Piṅgala, a sitting figure can be seen. But it is in

bad state of preservation. According to the iconography of Sun god, this image may be that of Daṇḍi.

All the deities are positioned in separate full-blown lotus. It is interesting to note that all accompanied deities are separated from the principal deity. All of them are figured out of the *ratha* except Aruna, the chariot bearer, and Mahāsveta. Another interesting feature is about the boots of the accompanied deities. All accompanied deities, two figures of *krttimukha* and *Vidyādhara*s in this sculpture are booted while the principal deity is not. But iconographic prescription is that the Sun god and his accompanying deities is that, all the figures, except the two females shooting arrows at the edges, wear boot like the Sun god. (Bhattashali, 2008, p. 149) But here the shooting figures is also booted.

We can see some minor remains in the temple complex. Some stone pillars, blocks, pedestal, and lotus designed stone blocks are worth mentioning. (Picture 51)

Dwip Rajar Dighi

Dwip Nagar (25°40'57.04"N 88°05'32.02"E) is situated on the course of the river Kānchan¹¹ at a distance of 8 km from the district head quarters Raiganj and beside NH34. Some Muslim and Santhal families now populate this area.

1. Here a big water tank (Picture 52) of rectangular size measuring approximately 200 mtr (N-S) x 400 mtr (E-W) is situated, which seems to be very ancient with the evidences of considerable settlements of the past. An annual fair is held around this tank on the 1st day of Bengali calendar. This site has good number of ponds with pucca bathing *ghats*. The bricks measure 8x8x2 inches and are in a good state of preservation.
2. A terracotta-disc (Picture 53) of 9.5 inches with a hole at the center is found. Probably this is a part of a toy cart.
3. One sand stone image of Jambhala (Picture 54) of late 12th century is recovered from this site. The pot-bellied god carries the *jambhara* (lemon) in

his right hand and in his left hand holds the mongoose vomiting jewels. The god has three eyes and wears a five-peaked tiara, a single neckwear and heavy earrings. His lower garment is well patterned, as may be noticed in the back view. He is seated on a lotus and his right leg with pendent rests in a jewel pot.

4. Next finding is a giant slabs with bow designs of which one bears a seated image of a four-armed Viṣṇu. (Picture 55) He holds clockwise from the right lower *padma*, *gada*, *cakra* and *samkha*.

Tamasari Mathbari

Tamasari Mathbari (25°32'42.39"N 88°17'12.35"E) is located at the distance of 21 km from Raiganj by road. The approaching way to *Tamsari Mathbari* is from Raiganj-Durgapur to Itahar- Kunor- Tamasari Mathbari. The particular mound is known to the local people as *Patalsiri*. Tamosari is known for her relics; possibly of a Buddhist monastery. The name *Tamasari Mathbari* is very interesting as well as confusing. The shape of the mound and its mutilated archaeological remains suggest that it was a Buddhist settlement probably a monastery. The word *Tamasari* itself is curious. Whether this name is derived from *Tamachar*, (meaning adultery) or *Tama+chari*, (*Tama* = meaning darkness and *chari* means to live or practiced), which means leaving the darkness is often debated. And the word *Mathbati* means monastery. Probably it was a centre of Tantric Buddhism.

1. The mound is situated on the bank of the river Rohitā, which was once a navigable river and now completely dried up. The Sanskrit names of the river and the area i.e., *Varuna* are quite fascinating and points to a time when Sanskrit was a state language. The mound is round in shape, built with 10x12x2 inches bricks. The name of the mound, i.e., '*Patalsiri*', (Picture 56) has probably come from the stairs of the monastery which led to the river. Moreover, in the architectural designs of Buddhist monasteries, stair is a common feature.
2. On the mound, some pillars are still visible. The first pillar measures 41x20 inches, the second one is of 49x27 inches, the third one is of 67x20 inches and the fourth one is of 26x36 inches. All of them have same type of carving. But

most significant among them is the third one. It has an iron bar inserted in it as we can see in the architecture of *Nalanda Mahavihara*. It was a chief feature of the Pāla architecture. To keep the stone blocks together iron rods or bars were inserted through perforations on the stone blocks. (Picture 57) Probably the pillars were part of a massive structure. The use of iron in Patalsiri distinguishes itself from its counterparts of the study area. Such perforations are found in some stone blocks discovered from Amati (the last Pāla capital). But iron spikes or rods have not yet been spotted elsewhere. This feature also indicates that the settlement of Tamasari Mathbari is of later times compared to the other Buddhist sites of Dinajpur. The extant piece of iron measures 1.4cm x 12.7 cm and 7cm x 1.2 cm.

Kamlabari

Kamlabari (25°40'10.79"N 88°11'45.89"E) is situated on the bank of the river Kulik at a distance of 12 K.M from Raiganj. It is very interesting to see a large number of architectural fragments and a good number of bricks is scattered in this remote village, where the villagers still live in mud houses. We can see a good number of mounds in one square km area. (Adhikary, S., 2010, pp. 49-52)

1. One of them is known as Ganesh Bhita, the most important and quite large in measure. Legend says that this place is known as Ganesh Bhita because of the Ganesh image (Picture 58) found from this mound. Another myth of Ganesh Bhita is that, it evokes the memory of king Ganesh, the only Hindu king of the sultanate period of Bengal. Five pillars are found from this mound, all of them are made of black stone. (Picture 59) Two of them are 77 inches long with circumference of 40 inches. One of them has inscribed words of ten letters altogether. (Picture 60) The inscription is so indistinct that it is quite hard for decipher. This mound looks like a courtyard or hall of audience in a ruined state with an area of 210 square meters. Small ponds are also there on the eastern side of the mound.
2. Another mound is situated at a distance of 200 meters from the Ganesh Bhitā. A well-decorated Dashdala mosque (Picture 61) was constructed over a Hindu architecture. Some pillars of the earlier structure are also visible inside the mosque. The mosque was built by 6"×6" bricks. The pillar of the mosque is

well decorated. The rectangular mosque is measuring 42 feet X 25.5 feet at the outer side with four corner towers. It has ten domes. Four obtuse type of arches face the east. All of them are measuring 7.5 feet X 6.4 feet.

3. On the southern part of the mosque, the third mound is situated. Its 21 pillars, all made of black stone, standing in three rows create a structure of a big building. The mutilated pillars cover an area of 450 square feet. All the pillars are of the same size. On the eastern part of this structure, a big pedestal of a pillar stands separately. The circumference of the pillar is 9 feet. (Picture 62)

Other important findings from this site are a fragmented sculpture, (Picture 63) an Islamic inscription (Picture 64) and a giant *kalasa*. (Picture 65)

Tenohari

Tenohari (25°34'47.4"N 88°06'11.6"E) a village, borrowed her name from three Lord Viṣṇu images (Tin Hari) found from this area, is situated at a distance of 7 KM from Raiganj, the district headquarters of North Dinājpur. All the three images were found from a pond nearby namely Patalghorā.¹² (Picture 66) The findings from this site are:

1. The first image is the Dasavatāra Viṣṇu image, (Picture 67) measuring 1.905 mtr high and 0.9144 mtr in length. The principal deity stands on *samapadasthānaka* posture on a full-blown lotus with four hands holding *gadā/mushala* (mace) in right upper, *padma* (lotus) at lower and in left upper *cakra* (wheel), lower *śaṁkha* (conch). Conch-shell is symbolical of eternal space; the wheel is symbolical of eternal time; the mace is symbolical of eternal law and the unflinching punishment, consequent on its breach; the Lotus is symbolizing the ever-renewing Creation and its beauty and freshness. (*Varāhapurānam*, chap. 31) According to *Rupamandana*, regarding the attributes, description is made for *Caturvimsati Murtaya* of *Sthanaka murti* or standing images of Viṣṇu. (Table 6)

In this respect it is categorized as *Trivikrama* type of Viṣṇu. In ornamentation it has *Kirit Mukuta*, *Makara Kundala*, *Vaijayantīmālā*, *Akshyamālā*, *Hāra*, *Upabita*, *kaṭibandhya*, *Keyura Bāhubandh* (two each), *kankana* or bangles (two each), *Vanamālā*, *bindi* (sandal work) on forehead etc. The half-closed

eyes show the sense of deep meditation. The curly hairs fall in locks over his shoulders. The stele of the image is crowded with many designs. In the place of *kr̥ttimukha* appears the figure of separate lotuses.

The most remarkable feature of this image is the miniature figures of ten incarnations of Viṣṇu represented around the central figure. It is interesting to note that the figures of the incarnations of Viṣṇu are supposed to be represented in chronological order in accordance with the different stages of evolution of the animal world and civilization. (Bhattashali, 1929, pp. 93-107) In many Bengal sculptures, Viṣṇu is represented with ten incarnations in proper order. But in this image the chronological order is not properly followed.

The following couplet is found in the *Mahābhārata* (Hopkins, E., 1915, 217):-

Matsyaḥkūrmovarāhaś ca narasiṁhothavāmanaḥ,

RāmoRāmaś ca Rāmaś ca Buddhaḥ Kalkītitedaśa,

Ordinarily, the order is as follows: 1. *Matsya* (fish), 2. *Kurma* (tortoise), 3. *Varāha* (boar), 4. *Narasimha* (man-lion), 5. *Vāmana* (dwarf), 6. *Parasurāma* (the ideal warrior), 7. *Rāma* (the ideal ruler), 8. *Balarāma* (the ideal ploughman), 9. *Buddha*¹³ and 10. *Kalki*. This is the list followed in Bengal with slight variations here and there, and it is an oft-quoted *Sloka* in the mouth of Bengali *pandits*. Jayadeva, (circa 1170 CE) in his *Gita-Govinda*, (Telang & Pansikar, 1899) in the famous hymn to the Ten Incarnations, follows the same list. (Bhattashali, 2008, p.95) In this image, five incarnations from the beginning take place at the right side of the principal image and in the left the rest. But the problem arises in the identification of the eighth figure (Picture 68) (clockwise from the left). Each *avatāra* is placed on a separate lotus pedestal and separate stele with a long lotus stem. *Matsya* and *Kurma* are represented in their respective animal forms. The figure of *Varāha* is effaced. *Narasimha* is shown as engaged in ripping open the belly of the demon *Hiranyakāsyapa*. He has a lion face as usual. *Vāmana* in the fifth position is pot-bellied and dwarf. Next to him is *Parasurāma* carrying his *Kuthāra* in his right hand. *Rāma* in the seventh carries his bow and arrow. The unidentified figure depicted in the eighth position has his right hand raised in *abhayamudrā*

while his left hand carries the *kamandalu*. His hair is tied up in a knot on the top of his head and supported with a *ratnamukuta*. *Buddha* comes next with his right hand raised showing the *abhayamudrā*. His left hand is broken. The curls of his hair cannot be overlooked. The last *avatāra* i.e., Kalki riding a horse is shown in profile. He holds his weapon in his right hand. The matter of interest is the eighth one. The eighth figure cannot be identified with Balarāma since it has no weapon like *Mushala*, *Hāla* or *lāngala*.¹⁴ Its identification as *Krishna* is also ruled out for he is not supposed to carry a *Kamandalu*. T.A. Gopinath Rao (1914, p. 203) mentions, “*Krishna* should be made to have a *kirita* on the head or it should be shown that the hair is tied up in a knot on the top of the head. In the right hand a peculiarly carved stick should be carried, and the left arm should be lifted up and bent at the elbow: the palm of the left hand has to be facing downwards. This hand may carry a *śaṅkha* also.” Ramesh S. Gupta (1972, p. 33) also repeated the same “The right hand (of *Krishna*) holds a carved stick, while the left is lifted and bent at the elbow. He may carry a conch in this hand.” It will be quite understandable that the sculptor of this image has shown his caliber in the making of the principal deity. M.S Bhattacharyya mentions that “in all probability the mysterious figure indicates an error committed by the tenth century sculptor.” (Bhattacharyya, 2002, p. 39)

Here Viṣṇu has Laxmi on his right and Saraswati on his left. Both of them stand on separate full-blown lotuses. They wear *Jatāmukuta*, *karnakundala*, *Vaijayantimālā*, *Akshyamālā*, *Hāra*, *kaṭibandhya*, *Upavita*, *Keyura* *Bāhubandh*, *kankana* or bangles. Laxmi in her right hand holds *Cāmara* and the left hand is stretched downward. A comparatively small figure of *Cakrapuruṣa* stands with her. He has a *Cakra* at his head, *Sarpakundala* and other ornaments. His right hand raised on *abhayamudrā* while the left is resting on his waist. Saraswati holds *vīṇā* (lute) with her two hands. *Sanṅhapuruṣa* stands with her.

2. The second image (Picture 69) is also an important one. The image is 1.88 mtr high and 0.966 mtr wide. Decoration and carving is simple. The principal deity stands on *Samapadasthānaka* posture on a full-blown lotus with four hands holding *Gadā/Mushala* (mace) in right upper, *Padma* (lotus) at lower and in left upper *Cakra* (wheel), lower *Shankha* (conch). Regarding the

attributes this image is considered as Trivikrama. Śrīdevī is placed in the right side and Bhūdevī in the left. Here two Vidyadharas are placed at the upper portion of the stele. Ornamentation is similar to the previous one. The rounded top of the stele, scanty ornamentation and low relief work of the sculpture lead us to assign it to c. 10th century.

3. A Śiva linga (Picture 70) is also placed in the temple of Tenahari. The Gaurīpaṭṭa is measuring 3 feet 2 inches x 1 feet. The Linga is 15 inches long and 16 inches in round. Most important feature of this Linga is that, a bust image of Viṣṇu takes place at the left side of the *Gaurīpaṭṭa*. this is possibly the Liṅgodbhava-murti. (Gupte, 1972, p. 40)

Karandighi

Karandighi (25°48'34.9"N 87°55'59.9"E) is another place of archaeological interest. This place is situated at a distance of 33 km from Raiganj. The place gets its name from the water body named as Karṇa Dighi, where legend is current that the great warrior Karṇa of the Mahabhārata fame performed *tarpaṇa* (offerings to god). So many sculptures of Pāla-Sena period has been recovered so far from this site. Karan Dighi PS recovers one Gauri image of 11th 12th century. The principal deity stands on *Samapadasthānaka* posture on a full blown lotus with four hands holding *padma*, *śankha*, *darpan* and the left bottom hand is broken. As ornamentation, it has *jaṭamukuta*, *karnakundala*, *vaijayantīmālā*, *akshyamālā*, *upabita*, *kaṭibandhya*, *keyurabāhubandhand kankana*. The principal deity is accompanied by a dancing Ganesha in her right side and Saraswati(?) on her left. The stele of the sculpture is pointed at the top and densely decorated. Two *vidyadharas* appears at the top on each side. Kirtimukha is placed on its respective place with *datura* flower (*daturastramonium*) design. In the right side of the pedestal the image of donor and on the left a *śamkha* with floral design, take place. The middle portion of the pedestal is blank where the name of the donor is supposed to be carved.

Sonapur

The Sonapur village (25°30'33.5"N 88°11'03.7"E) of Itahar PS is full of archaeological materials. In the 1930s scholars like S.K. Saraswati visited this site. He wrote, 'At Sonapur there are several smaller mounds and the area is undulating

throughout. The village shrine is known as the Navadurgarsthan (i.e. shrine of Navadurga) and contains a number of ancient images, such as Uma-Mahesvara, Visnu, Gauri, Mother and child etc.’ (Saraswati, 1932b, p. 193) Findings from this site are:

1. A dancing image of Ganeśa, measuring 30 X 17 inches, is housed in a temple nearby. It has six hands. The right upper hand holds a *Kuthāra*, middle hand holds a *bāla* and the lower right hand is broken. In the left upper hand holds *nagapaśa*, middle hand holds is broken but iconographically it might had a *laddu* (tunnelers) and the lower hand holds a *muśala* (mace). The trunk is bending in *edampuri* posture right on the *laddu*. The dancing pose of the principal god is well supported by the Tabla player positioned at his right side. The figure at his left is indistinct. The principal deity is placed on a full-blown lotus. The stele is very simple. It has three mangoes at the top of the stele, which is a common feature of the sculptures found from Dinajpur and Malda. (Picture 71)
2. A fragment of the figure of a goddess (80 inches X 82 inches) can be seen on the shore of Ena Dighi. The image is heavily damaged. It had ten hands. Five hands on the left are still visible. (Picture 72)
3. Another image of goddess is also there. It stands on *āvanga* posture and holds a *chāmara* (fly whisk) in her left hand. (Picture 73)
4. One sand stone bust image of Ganeśa is kept in the temple nearby. It looks like an early image of the Pāla-Sena school of sculptures. (Picture 74)

Other important findings are two pedestals of same size, and three Śiva Linga respectively 23X74, 16X51 and 11X13 inches in measure.

Raiganj

1. An image of Khasarpaṇa (Picture 75) was dug out from Raiganj (headquarters of North Dinājpur district), while laborers were working for some construction work in college Para region. The image is not in well state of preservation. The right side of the backslab is missing. But in spite of the damage, the sculpture is an excellent piece of example of Bengal art, as well as, Buddhist

art. The principal figure is sitting on the center in the *ardhaparyāṅka* posture over a double petalled lotus (*padmāsana*) supported by a *pañcharatha* pedestal. He wears a *jatāmukuta* (crown of matted hair), curly hairs fall in locks over the shoulders, *akshamālā*, *baijayaṅtimālā*, *karṇakundala*, Armlets, bangles, *ratnaūpabita*, long bejeweled Dhoti etc. with a calm face make a great sense of splendor, supported on the back with three circle of *pravābali*. At the center of the *pravābali* a diamond like shape is placed just behind the top of the principle figure. The principal figure exhibits the *varada* pose by his right hand and holds the lotus with a stem in his left hand. The principal figure is accompanied by four divinities Tārā, Sudhanakumāra, Bhṛkutī and Hayagrīva. In his right side stands Tārā, who is densely ornamented on a separate *padmāsana* with the right hand shows *abhayamudrā* and the lotus flower with a stem held in her left hand. Sudhanakumāra is placed on a separate lotus in *lalitāsana* on the feet of Tārā, also densely ornamented. His two hands joined in *anjalimudrā*. He carries the book under his left armpit and is decked in all ornaments. On the left of the principal deity stands Bhṛkutī on a separate *padmāsana*. It has four hand, three eyes and matted hair. She carries the staff of three horns in upper left hand and the *kamaṅdalu* on her lower left hand. The right upper hand shows the *mudrā* of bowing and the rosary in the lower right hand. A seated image of Hayagrīva is placed in front of Bhṛkutī on a separate *Padmāsana*. He has a protruding belly. His hair rises upwards in a shape of a flame, and he has a snake as his sacred thread. A pair of high and curly mustaches and two big round eyes recognize his face. The lower portion of this image is mutilated that is why the tiger skin, which he normally clad, is not visible. He holds a *Daṇḍa* in his left hand and right hand exhibits the act of bowing. All these deities are meditating on as disposed in a befitting and artistic manner, with their eyes directed towards the face of the principal deity.

Above the top of the backslab appear on separate lotuses, miniature figures of five dhyani Buddhas with Amitābha at the apex with a separate stele. Though the face of this deity is damaged but the *mudrā*, i.e., two hands with palm open lie on his lap, one upon the other forming the Dhyana or the meditative *mudrā*, proves its identity with Amitābha. The form of Amitābha is described in the Pañcākāra section of the *Asvayavajrasaṅgraha* thus: ‘Paścimadale

Ravimaṇḍaloparu rakta-Hrīḥkārasambhū toraktavarṇo Amitābhaḥ padmacinhaḥ samādhimudrādharah samjñāskandhasvabhāvo rāgaśarīrah śukrātmakeḥ padmakulī pratyaveksaṇājñānalakṣaṇo grīṣmartūrupahā mlarasaśarīrah ṭavargātmā pradoṣavān.’(Bhattacharya, B., 1958, p. 49) On the left of Amitābha two Dhyani Buddhas are placed. The first one from the left is also of damaged face, but the *mudrā*, i.e., left hand rest on the lap while the right rests on the right knee with tips of the fingers touching the ground with palm down inwardly; make us clear with its identification with Aksobhya. The second from the left of Dhyani Buddha is in well state of preservation. It is Amoghasiddhi. His left hand lies open on the lap and the right hand exhibits the *Abhaya* (protection) *mudrā*. The right upper side of the backslab is missing. There might be placed the rest of two *Dhyani Buddhas*, i.e., Vairocana and Ratnasambhava.

At the bottom of the principal deity under the *pancharatha* pedestal, which is carved in the middle with lotus rosettes contains at the right the kneeling figure of *Pritā Suchimukha* with an uplifted face, protruding belly and with very pale appearance. At the left of the rosettes, one male and one female figure take place on a separate single *padmāsana*. The male figure has smiling face with beard, clean shaved head and protruding belly.

All of the accompanied deities have separate back slab and *padmāsana*. They played a stereotype role to make the sculpture very artistic. In this art, the shape of men and all subsidiary figures are ordered in order of *śilpāśāstra*. They serve as its symbols and carry out its rhythms.

2. A Viṣṇu image of tenth/eleventh century (Picture 76) is kept in a temple at Kharmujaghat area of Raiganj Municipality. Here Lord Viṣṇu is stands on a full-blown lotus on *Samapadasthānaka* posture. In ornamentation it has *kiritmukuta*, *makara kundala*, *vaijayantīmālā*, *akshyamālā*, *hāra*, *upabita*, *kaṭibandhya*, *keyurabāhubandh* (two each), *kankana* or bangles (two each), *vanamālā*, *bindi* (sandal work) on forehead etc. The half-closed eyes show the sense of deep meditation. The curly hairs fall in locks over his shoulders. The stele is broken in the upper and left upper portion. One flying Vidyadhara is placed on a separate stele at the right upper portion. On the middle of both

sides of the principal figure, standing images of lion appear; their mane coming to their torso and tails are very thick. Below this portion, two goddesses are placed. The goddess on the right side is identified as Laxmi and the left one as Saraswati. Both of them is standing on separate full-blown lotuses and have separate steles. The steles are round in shape with simple dotted designs take place at the edges. From the shape of these steles we can easily assume that the main stele was also round in shape. Right hand of Laxmi is broken. She holds a lotus with long stem in her left hand. Saraswati holds *Bīnā* (harp) with her two hands. At the bottom of the sculpture two separate images is placed. Garuḍa, the *vāhana* of lord Viṣṇu, is placed with *namaskāramudra* on the left and an image with *namaskāramudra*, possibly the donor is placed on the right.

3. A broken image of Khasarpaṇa (Picture 77) has been recovered from a pond of Udaypur. This image is now installed in the temple of a household. As it is already mentioned that the image is broken, only the lower portion is there. But the iconographic features of the remaining part indicate it as an image of Khasarpaṇa. Here the principal figure is sitting on the center in the *ardhaparyāṅka* posture over a double petalled lotus (*padmāsana*) supported by a *saptaratha* pedestal. At the bottom of the principal deity the lotus rosettes contains at the right the kneeling figure of *PritāSuchimukha* on a *padmasana* with an uplifted face, protruding belly and with very pale appearance. At the left of the rosettes, one male and one female figure take place on a separate *padmāsana*. Only few part of right hand of the principal figure, which exhibits the *varada* pose. In his right side of the principal deity only the legs of a seated image (*lalitāsana*) possibly of Sudhanakumāra on a *padmāsana* is visible. On the left of the principal deity, here also, a separate *Padmāsana* with legs is visible. Iconographically this place belongs to Hayagrīva and Bhṛkuṭī. At the bottom of this sculpture, an inscription takes place. (Picture 78)
4. Chanditala region of Raiganj is in news for several times for its archaeological yields. Many sculptures of the Pāla-Sena period have so far been discovered from a pond near Durgatala.

- a. A basement of temple is recovered from the pond. The bricks are categorized of the Pāla-Sena time. (Picture 79)
- b. The second discovery is a 29 feet long wood, which is possibly a part of a giant boat. (Picture 80)
- c. The third finding is an image of Mahiṣamarddinī (Picture 81) of black stone measuring 42x24 inches. The name of this place, i.e. Chanditala was come for this goddess. The sadly mutilated state in which the image is discovered makes it difficult to identify its weapons in her ten hands. The probability appears to be in favour of the former assumption. Clockwise, the following are the attributes of the goddess. 1. A pointed weapon, the *sūchī* ? 2. Discus. 3. Arrow. 4. Sword. 5. Javelin (*Śūla*). 6. The locks of the demon. 7. Buckler. 8. Bow. 9. Axe. 10. *Añkuśa*, (elephant-goad). The goddess is stepping to the right and impetuously attacking the demon Mahiṣa to her right, who has just come out of the decapitated buffalo, his previous form. The figure of the demon is depicted fully emerged out of the decapitated Mahiṣa, but the right leg still remains within its trunk. The head and left hand of the demon is lost. The upper left hand of the goddess is lost. Possibly, it has seized the locks of the demon and is piercing his breast with a *Śūla*, held in her upper right hand. The left leg of the demon takes place on the head of the buffalo. The lion, the vehicle of the goddess, is absent here. Towards the left of the piece, a demon is seen retreating, fighting with sword and buckler. To the right, a female attendant similarly armed, is advancing to battle. There is no space of decoration in stele. Though the upper portion of the stele is damaged, but possibility is that, it has conical top. A male devotee to the left and a female devotee to the right are depicted below the lotus seat.
- d. Next in this list is a broken image of Manasā. (Picture 82) Only the upper portion of the image remains intact. It has conical top stele with a *kirtimukha* at the center followed by two Vidyadharas. Though the principal image is missing, the snake canopy consists of seven snakes are visible. On its left, an image with crown is visible. Possibly, it may be taken as Āstika, son of the goddess, but the crown on the head may be an

indication that he is to be taken as Vāsukī, the Nāga king, brother of the goddess.

Dehabandh

Dehabandh (25°28'40.09"N 88°15'32.65"E) is situated on the bank of the river Chiramati. This is the biggest mound of this area. It is almost completely destroyed by the villagers. In a visit on April 2012, the present writer had captured some photos of the mound. The remaining mound was circular and 20 feet high. It had two storeys. (Picture 83) Stone chips were used between the layers of burnt bricks as building material. (Picture 84) The use of stone chips as a building material was not known in this part of land. A tentative suggestion is that, it was Buddhist *stūpa* of the Pāla-Sena period. The mound of Dehabandh and its surroundings have huge archaeological remains, which scattered at least over half a square km. The archaeological remains reflect the fact that this site was multi-religious and evolved through long span of time.

1. A strange shaped archaeological fragment of two feet is there. Possibly, it was a part of a colossal *āmalaka* design. (Picture 85)
2. A doorjamb (Picture 86) of 5x2 feet is lying on this site. It has a beautifully carved design of a temple of that time. The temple has *śikhara* type of style. At the top, a *kalasa* is placed on a *āmalaka* design. A circular floral design is carved at the *śikhara*. A standing male god of four hands is carved at the center of the temple design. The god stands on avanga posture. The attributes of this image are not distinct. But *cakra* (wheel) and *gadā* (mace) are clearly visible. Iconographically this image is of Viṣṇu, because the unique feature of Viṣṇu image, i.e. the *vanamālā*, is clearly visible. This image is surrounded by two small human carvings on its each side. A female image is placed beside the temple. The image stands on a *makarāsana* with a *kalasa* on her right hand and a *padma* on her left.
3. A 6 feet long gargoyle is there. The condition is very poor. (Picture 87)

Baragram

Baragram (25°20'47.8"N 88°11'51.3"E) is situated on the bank of the river Chiramati in Itahar P.S. The location of this site can be taken as the peripheral area of Āmātī. Once, this site was covered with huge archaeological remains. Most of them are mutilated and some of them are unfinished sculptures. As we know, the sites of the study area are unprotected and open field of the antique smugglers. This site heavily damaged by the Turko-Afgan rulers and the final devastation have been done by the smugglers. The present writer had visited the site in the summer of 2008 and able to capture some photos. Presently all the artefacts have been lost.

1. A broken Viṣṇu image (Picture 88) is first in this list. A kneeling Garuḍa is placed on a full-blown lotus seat (*padmāsana*). On the left of the Garuḍa, goddess Saraswati stands in a *padmasana* with a Bīnā. A Cakra Puruśa is also placed in separate *padmāsana* on her left. On the right of the Garuḍa a *padmāsana* is still visible. Possibly an image of Laxmi with Śaṅkha Puruśa was there. Here the lotus is so beautifully carved that each petals look like real one. Here sculptor/s carved the stem of the lotus beautifully. It seems that the stem is coming from the mother Earth and the lotus supports the main sculpture. Two subordinate stems coming from each side of the origin of the primary stem and support three designs on each side.
2. A torso of an image, about two feet in length was there. Identification of this torso is not possible. *Vaijayantīmālā*, *Akshyamālā*, *Hāra*, *Upabita* and *kaṭibandhya* are there. But these features are quite common in many Hindu and Buddhist images. (Picture 89)
3. A *chhatrāvali* could also be seen. Probably this was a part of a votive *stūpa*. It had eight layers and a *āmalaka* at the top. (Picture 90)
4. Next is a portion of a stele. Upper portion of Garuḍa can be seen. It has four hands spread uniquely. His two wings are well carved. Above this, kneeling elephant is on the ground and a warrior on its back holding a shield in his right hand. A horse shown just behind the elephant. Its right-back leg is placed on

the head of the elephant, left-back leg is on the platform and its front two leg is busy in fighting with that warrior. And an image of a male figure in *namaskāramudrā* is placed on horseback. The entire image makes a sense of war in peace in the end. (Picture 91)

Other important discoveries are a head of a god, (Picture 92) a mutilated *padmāsana* with a female devotee, (Picture 93) a male figure wearing *vanamāla*, (Picture 94) and a Śivalinga with *yonipṭṭa*. (Picture 95)

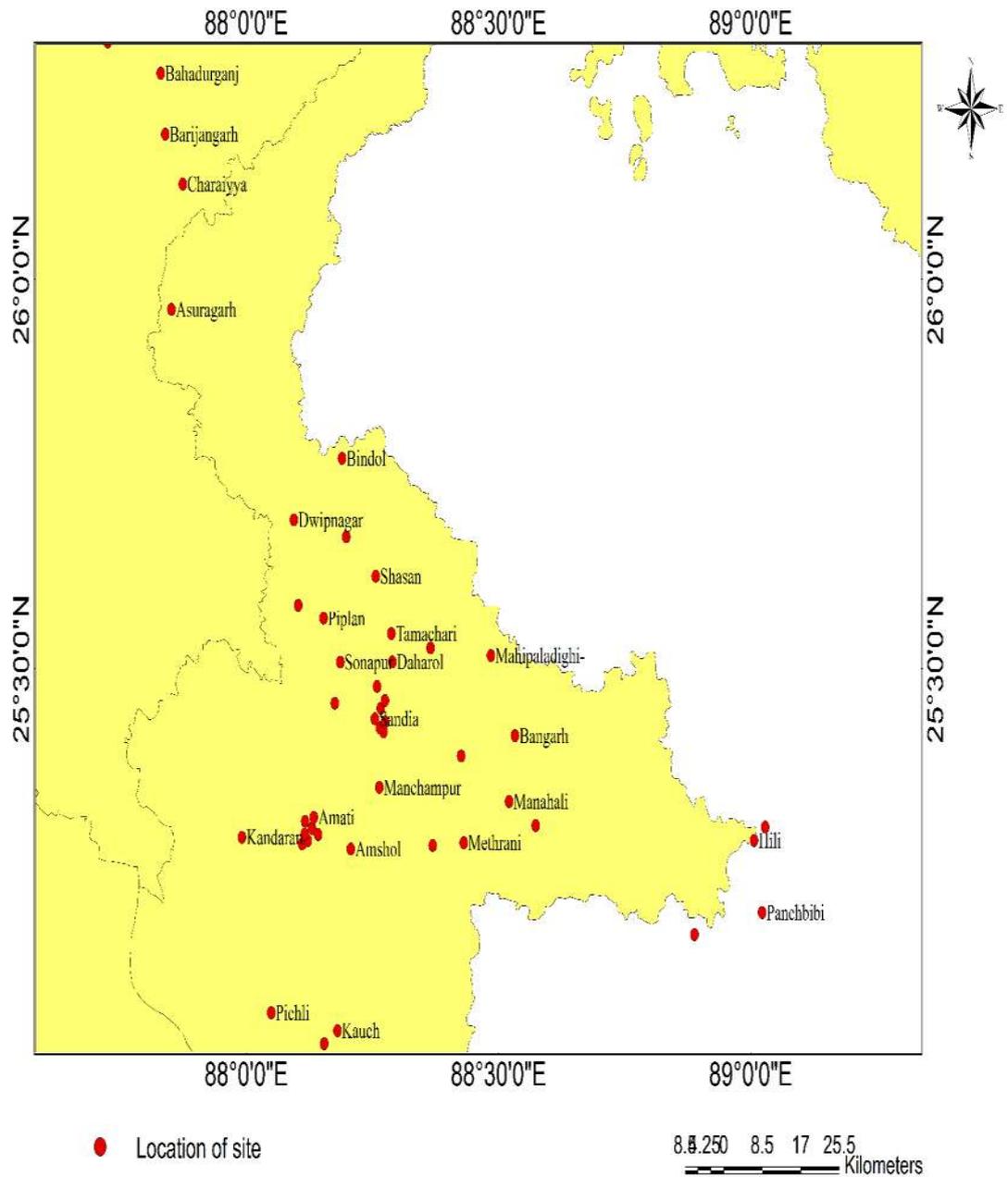
Pauti

Pauti (25°55'22.8"N 88°04'44.4"E) is situated on the bank of the river Nagar. It is an isolated site. No such archaeological remains have so far been discovered from this site. But some small mounds can be seen here and there. This place not yet attracted the attention of the scholars. A small Viṣṇu image of 3.5 x 1.5 feet has been recovered from a pond nearby. (Picture 96)

The principal figure stands on a full-blown lotus on *Samapadasthānaka* posture. In ornamentation it has *kirit mukuta*,¹⁵ *makara kundala*, *vaijayantīmālā*, *akshyamālā*, *ratnaupabita*, *kaṭibandhya*, *keyurabāhubandh* (two each), *kankana* or bangles, *vanamālā*, *tilaka* (sandal work) on forehead etc. The half-closed eyes show the sense of deep meditation. The curly hairs fall in locks over his shoulders. The stele is conical at the top, which is a common feature of eleventh/twelfth century's Pāla-Sena sculpture. Here is placed the *kirtimukha*. Two flying *vidyadharas* are placed on floral designs at both side of the god. Just down to the *vidyadharas*, the *gajasimha* images are carved on both sides. Below this portion, two goddesses are placed. The goddess on the right side is recognised with Laxmi and the left one with Saraswati. Both of them are standing on separate full-blown lotuses and place with separate stele. The steles are round in shape with simple dotted design take place at the edges. From the shape of these steles we can easily assume that the main stele was also round in shape. Right hand of Laxmi is broken. She holds a lotus with long stem in her left hand. Saraswati holds *Bīnā* (harp) with her two hands. At the bottom of the sculpture, two separate images are placed. Garuḍa, the *vāhana* of lord Viṣṇu, is placed with *namaskāramudrā* on the left and an image with *namaskara mudra*, possibly the donor is placed on the right.

This study would not be completed without the analysis of the Hindu artefacts used in the Islamic architecture. First in this list is a monolithic column bearing a warrior hero image holding bow and arrow and followed by another warrior. (Picture 97) Second, one beautifully carved monolithic columns is there. At the bottom of the column four replicas of temple are placed in four sides. The *śikhara* of the temples are covered with floral and *āmalaka* designs and at the top a giant *āmalaka* and a *kalasa* take place. These carvings can be treated as the best example of Pāla-Sena art. (Picture 98) Third, a monolithic block of 30 inches X 42 inches in measurement is looks like a modern toilet. This block is slope-sided at the back with two footsteps and a cut-line in between. (Picture 99) These images are representing the artefacts used in the Islamic architecture of medieval Gour. In the Mohammedan buildings of Pandua, we can see an image of dancing Ganeśa, (Picture 100) an image of dancing female figure is placed in a circle, (Picture 101) an image of Ganeśa seated in a temple structure, (Picture 102) and a male image of garland bearer can be seen with two *kirtimukha*. From the mouth of these *kirtimukha* branches of floral design are coming out. The male image have beard and wears a snake halo, which resulted in an outrageous look. (Picture 103) These carvings can be treated as the best example of lost Pāla-Sena school of art.

Map 5: Location map of the archaeological sites.



Notes

1. The river Suin is a small stream of the river Mahananda, comes out from Khasra (25°30'29.03"N 88° 4'43.80"E) and enters in the Mahananda in Joyhat region.
2. The exact date of the Anthology is not known, but it has been reasonably assigned to a period between 1100 to 1130 CE. It appears to have been compiled in Bengal, probably at Jagaddala *Vihāra*, during the declining power of the Pāla kings. Srīdharadāsa naturally uses it as a source book for his *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*.
3. In the village directory of west Bengal we find a good number of villages having the same name, like *Jagadalla/Jagadal/Jagaddala*. In Bamongola PS of Malda district, we have two mouzas, one named Jagdal and the other named PatharJagdal. In Kaliachak PS of the same district there is a mauza named Jagdulla. In Nachol PS (now in Bangladesh) there is a village named as Jagdail we also find a mauza named Jagdalla in Bansihari PS of South Dinajpur district and in North Dinajpur district we find one mauza named Jagadal in Itahar PS and one in Jagdal village of Kaliaganj PS.
4. Interview of the villagers, 26.12. 2014.
5. Usually Vajrasattva wears a crown with the five directional Buddhas depicted on it. Here, the four layered with one knot at the top of *ḥjaṭāmukūṭa* representing this.
6. The Inner Offering Deities – often male in China and Japan but usually female in India and Tibet.
7. The local people worshiped the deity as Bhairavimata.

8. The river Kanchan is now completely dried up. It is a spill channel between the river Nagar and the river Kulik. Only in rainy season, we can see some water, which come from the river Kulik and fall in the river Nagar.
9. Aruna is the elder brother of Garuḍa, the famous bird-vehicle of Viṣṇu.
10. This type of backslab, which is flat at the top, is not frequent in Bengal art.
11. The object in the left hand is indistinct.
12. The reason behind the interesting name of the pond is that, once a horse (*Ghorā* in Bengali) went down to this pond and never returns that mean the horse reached *Pātāl* (means somewhere under soil surface). (Source: oral tradition)
13. Buddha is the remarkable example of the capacity for assimilation, characteristic of the brahmanical revival during the period of the Gupta supremacy.
14. ‘The figure of Balarāma should carry the *musala* in his right hand and the *hāla* in his left..... according to *Agni Purāna*, Balarāma is required to carry the *gadā* and the *hāla*.....’. (Rao, 1914, p. 201).
15. Here the *kiritmukuta* is unique in respect of the counter parts. This *mukuta* looks like a *kalasa* with a *āmalaka* at the top.

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Chapter 6

Discussion and Conclusion

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Discussion and Conclusion

The present research on ‘A Study on the Archaeological Sites of Malda, DakshinDinajpur and Uttar Dinajpur’ has been carried out with some objectives; to understand the historical geography of the study area; secondly to examine the urban character of the major and minor sites, and the relationship between them. An endeavour has been made to fill up the gaps of the political history of the study area with the help of new archaeological findings of epigraphy, numismatics and sculptures. Apart from this, a micro level study and surface exploration have been made of the major and minor sites of the study area on village-to-village basis. As a result of this, many sites were explored of which some sites were placed for the first time on the archaeological map. A large number of artefacts were surveyed/collected, which helped us to reconstruct various facts of different periods. This effort leads to the identifications and locations of the lost archaeological treasures of ancient Bengal. The summary of the research findings, observations, interpretations and scope for further research are discussed below.

6.1. Historical Geography

The historical geography of the study area shows some new discoveries of the area under study. It shows rise and fall of some important sites in time spans. Sometimes small political units have overtaken the political hegemony of the bigger political units, as we can see in the case of Vyāghrataṭī *maṇḍala* and Mahantāprakāśa *viṣaya*. The formal political sequence was *bhukti*, *viṣaya* and *maṇḍala*, but in this case, Vyāghrataṭī *maṇḍala* had the political supervision of the Mahantapraakaśa *viṣaya*. For reconstructing the historical geography of the study area, epigraphic records have an important role. These records bear a unique feature to demarcate the boundaries of the donated land with accurate measurement and distinct borderlines and landmarks (*sīmacinha*), which can be taken as novel achievement in this part of Bengal. Even to the extent of marking a date tree, a banyan tree or a small water body as the natural landmark for demarcation of a plot of land. (Khalimpur CPI: 1/32, ‘*uttarēnaKādamva(mba)rī-dēvakulikākharjjūra-vṛikshas=cha*’) After scrutinizing the facts of epigraphic record, this study framed the boundary of the Puṇḍravardhana

bhukti between the rivers Mahananda on the west and the Karatoya on the east; the Ganges on the south and the foot hills of the Himalayas on the north. This land has several other large and small rivers like the Kosi (Kauśikī), Atreye, Punarbhaba, Tangan, Nagar, Kalindi, Chiramati (Śrīmatī), Jamuna (*chota*), etc.

It has now become possible to correctly identify the Vyāghrataṭi *maṇḍala*, which was wrongly identified by the scholars till date with the Sundarban region. The Vyāghrataṭi *maṇḍala* is identified by this study with the land east of Nālandā *viṣaya* and west of Mahantāprakāśa *viṣaya*. The study also tentatively suggests its head quarters in the undivided Purnea district. The Anulia CPI of Lakshmaṇasena provides valuable information in this regard. The donated plot of land of this grant, i.e. Māthraṇḍiyā of Vyāghrataṭi *maṇḍala*, has been identified by this study with the village of Methrani of Gajol, Malda.

In this chapter an endeavour is made to tentatively identify the present locations of the territorial divisions mentioned in the epigraphic records.

Places mentioned in the inscription	Tentative Location
Khalimpur CPI	
Mahantāprakāśa	Southern part of the Gajol PS and Old Malda
Krauñchaśvabhra	BṛddhiKāmach
<i>Grāma</i> Bilba	Raṅjubil
Temple of Kādambarī	Kāluarī
Khātaka-yānikā[m]	Khātiakān
Nalacharmmaṭat	Nalbōnā
Māḍhāśāmmalī	Mādhavpur
Sthālikkaṭa	Thīlikat
Āmrashaṇḍikā	Āmsol
Gōpipalī	Gopālpur and Pipplān
Udragrāma	Udgram

Places mentioned in the inscription	Tentative Location
Baigrama CPI	
Panchanagari	Panchbibi
Chañdragrāma	Bara Changram and ChhotaChangram
Vāyigrāma	Baigram
Palāśvīndaka	Palasbari
Śrīgōhālī	Hili
Trivṛitā	Tripura
Nandapur CPI	
Āmbilagrāma	Āmail
Jangoyika	Jangoi
Belwa CPI	
Gañēśwara	Ganeshpur
Jagajjibanpur CPI	
Nandadīrghikā	Nandagarh or Nādgarrh bill
Kāsiggara-bandhaka	KāsiDīghi
Anulia CPI	
Māthraṇḍiyā	Methrani
Jalapilla	Jājilpārā
Mālāmancha-vāṭī	Mālanipur, Manchāmpur

Among the recent discoveries of the epigraphic records, the Mastakaśvabhra grant of Pradyumnabandhu of 159 GE (650 CE ?), Nāgavasū Grant and two grants of Mahati-Raktamālā and their toponyms have similarities with the toponyms of the Khalimpur grant of Dharmapāladēva and many other grants of north Bengal. Particularly the nomenclature of toponyms of the Mastakaśvabhra grant and the Khalimpur grant are very similar.

<u>Suffix/pref</u>	<u>Khalimpur Grant</u>	<u>Mastakaśvabhra Grant</u>	<u>Nāgavasū Grant</u>	<u>Mahati-Raktamālā Grants</u>
-śvabhra	Krauñchśvabh ra	Mastakaśvabh ra		
-khātaka	Khātaka- yānikā[ṛ]	Śivaguptakhata ka		
-ikā	Jēnandāyikā,	Śaṅkarapallika, Audumvarikā	Madhyamasṛgāli kā	Dugdhotikā
-pippali-	Gōpippalī	Pippalivanikā		
-saṅḍikā	Āmrasaṅḍikā	Ṣaṅḍadvipa	Saṅḍikā	Madhyamasāṅḍi kā

In Khalimpur inscription mention has been made of the ‘Kāṇā-island’, while in the Mastakaśvabhra inscription it is mentioned as after the latter (Bṛhacchankajoṭā), down again to the stream near the silk cotton tree of Kāṇālatī. Both these inscriptions also mentioned many water bodies, islands, marshlands etc.

<u>Khalimpur grant</u>	<u>The Mastakaśvabhra grant</u>
Kāṇā-island	Ghoṇā-island, Ṣaṅḍa-island, Pravara-island
Koṅṭhia river	Trighaṭṭika River
Ganginikās, dike of RājaputraDēvaṭa, dike of Viṭaka	Optra (?) canel, Śṛṅgāṭaka pond, Bṛhacchankojoṭā, Kāṇā stream

Last but not the least both these grants have similarity in respect of flora also. Example, ‘it goes to and enters a citron grove’ in the Khalimpur grant and ‘the village Mastakaśvabhra along with its citron-grove’ in the Mastakaśvabhra grant. So the

search for the toponyms of the Mastakaśvabhra grant and other three grants can be done in or out side of the identified places of the Khalimpur grant.

The present study locates the Matsya *janapada* in eastern India, in spite of its previous identification with Jaipur region of Rajasthan. This identification is made on the basis of the facts of ancient texts, epigraphic records, archaeological fragments and local legends. Matsyadeśa roughly corresponds with the territory lying between the river Mahananda on the west and Jamuna on the east. The Matsyadeśa consists of large part of the Purnea district of Bihar, almost entire part of North Dinajpur and South Dinajpur and northern part of Malda district that includes the police stations of Kharba and Harishchandrapur. The western part of the district of Dinajpur is in Bangladesh, while another part of Matsyadesa is also in Bangladesh forming part and parcel of Rajshahi district.

6. 2. Urbanization and Geopolitics

The earlier phase of urbanization of the study area is quite similar with the Gangetic valley urbanization. This study tried to understand the process of urbanization of the study area through the Central Place Theory, which is not conventionally used in the study of archaeology. It would appear that a number of big cities of Bengal were built in our study area. These were Koṭivarṣa, Gauḍa, Rāmāvati, Pānduā, and Ṭānḍa; sometimes they were used as capital city of certain powers. As we know, the urbanization of India have three distinct phases, of which two phases are concerned with our study. The process of Aryanisation played an important role in the development of the urban sites of the study area. The study area had a number of urban settlements during the phase of second urbanization. Important sites of this phase are Bangarh, Asuragarh, Kandan, Panchbibi and Mahatī-Raktamālā. This study differs with the previous views about the degradation of the sites like Bangarh particularly during the time of the Guptas. After examining the archaeological remains and the epigraphic data this study proposes that the importance of the city of Bangarh was further increased during that time. The word *anubahamāna* (ever-prospering) in the Damodarpur copper plates, population density and the rise of the eminent personalities with *dutta*, *pāla*, *nandin* etc. suffix in the Gupta administration proves our point.

During the third urbanization period, the study area witnessed many political upheavals and became an important part of Indian civilization. This time under the great rulers like Śaśāṅka, Dharmapāla, Devapāla and so on Bengal gained its separate regional identity. Some of the cities like Pichli (ancient Gauḍa), Kandaran, Suryapur, Ekdala-Bairhatta, Amati, Madanavati gained in importance.

6.3. Political Scenario

In this chapter of the dissertation, we have tried to fill up the gaps of the political history of North Bengal as far as possible with the help of the archaeological findings. It had continuous political holds right from the time of the Mauryas to the Senas of Bengal. This study also proclaims the paucity of source materials for the Śuṅga and Kuṣāna period. Newly discovered terracotta plaques and coins from the study area throw some lights on this time. This study also discusses the fact of the original homeland of the Guptas. This study proposes the Kandaran region of Malda as the tentative locations of the Mrigasthapana *stupa* and the ‘temple of China’ constructed by Śrī-Gupta of I-Tsing’s record. Newly discovered inscriptions like two Mahatī-Raktamālā CPIs, the second Baigram CPI, Nāgavasū CPI, and Mastakaśvabhra CPI have been scanned in this chapter which rendered huge sources of information about this time.

This study, for the first time, tries to find out the *Prakritis*, who select Gopāla as their leader to put an end of the practice of fishes (*matsyanyāya*). In this chapter, the chronology of the Pāla king is scanned on the basis of epigraphic records and proposed a tentative chronology.

6.4. The Remains

‘Mr. India’, ‘Double Dekker’, ‘Bon Jhakri’, ‘Der Futia’, ‘Chhota Bachcha’, – these are the code words of the antique hunter/smuggler active in this region. ‘Mr. India’ means the Buddha image; ‘Double Dekker’ means the Uma-Maheswara image; ‘Bon Jhakri’ means any kind of tribal mask, ‘Der Futia’ means miniature sculpture on any varieties and ‘Chhota Bachcha’ means the sculpture of Gopāla. These are the code words of the antique smugglers of the study area. This chapter dealt with such kind of archaeological sites, which are lying completely unprotected and have become

an open field for antique smugglers. This chapter is the result of scholar's years long field surveys.

In this work, present scholar has extensively surveyed many archaeological sites of our study area and briefly discussed the finding of those sites. The data collected from the archaeological sites surveyed by present scholar, are compared with the data of epigraphic and literary sources. These sources have been discussed in relevant chapters in this study.

Here in below some of the sites surveyed for the study have been listed

Sl. No.	Place Name	Tentative Period
1.	Batun, DakshinDinajpur	Pala-Sena
2.	Bansihari, DakshinDinajpur	Kuṣāna, Pala-Sena
3.	Jagaddal, Bamongola, Malda	Pala-Sena
4.	Jagjivanpur, Malda	Pala-Sena
5.	Kandaran, Malda	Kuṣāna, Gupta, Pala-Sena
6.	Madanabati, Malda	Pala-Sena
7.	Pandua, Malda	Pala-Sena
8.	Panisala, uttarDinajpur	Pala-Sena
9.	Piprithan,	Gupta
10.	TungiDighi, Uttar Dinajpur	Pala-Sena
11.	Amati	Pala-Sena
12.	Asuragarh	Maurya, Gupta
13.	Bangarh, DakshinDinajpur	Maurya, Suṅga, Kuṣāna, Pala-Sena
14.	Baragram	Pala-Sena
15.	Bindol	Pala-Sena
16.	Chanditala	Pala-Sena
17.	College Para	Pala-Sena
18.	Dehabandh	Pala-Sena
19.	Kamlabari	Pala-Sena
20.	Udaypur	Pala-Sena
21.	Sonapur	Pala-Sena

22.	TamachhariMathbari	Pala-Sena
23.	Tenahari	Pala-Sena
24.	Kharmuja-ghat	Pala-Sena
25.	Pouti, Uttar Dinajpur	Pala-Sena
26.	Tapan, DakshinDinajpur	Pala-Sena
27.	Kushmandi, DakshinDinajpur	Pala-Sena
28.	Budhura, DakshinDinajpur	Pala-Sena
29.	Methrani, Malda	Pala-Sena
30.	Narayanpur, DakshinDinajpur	Pala-Sena
31.	Kardaha, DakshinDinajpur	Pala-Sena
32.	Mahipala-dighi, DakshinDinajpur	Pala-Sena
33.	Itahar,	Pala-Sena
34.	Bhadrashila,	Pala-Sena
35.	Dehabandh	Pala-Sena
36.	Pichli	Gupta, Pala-Sena
37.	Panchanagari	Gupta, Pala-Sena
38.	Masirgarh	Maurya, Gupta
39.	Charaiyya	Maurya, Gupta
40.	Bāhādurganj	Maurya, Gupta
41.	Danga	Gupta, Pala-Sena
42.	Sambhunagar	Gupta, Pala-Sena
43.	Caitanpati	Gupta, Pala-Sena
44.	Anandaganj	Gupta, Pala-Sena
45.	Govindapur	Gupta, Pala-Sena
46.	Gourhanda	Gupta, Pala-Sena
47.	Vangapal	Gupta, Pala-Sena
48.	Damanviti	Gupta, Pala-Sena
49.	Virasthali	Gupta, Pala-Sena
50.	Dakshinsahar	Gupta, Pala-Sena
51.	Sanjib	Gupta, Pala-Sena
52.	Alihanda	Gupta, Pala-Sena

53.	Vandar	Gupta, Pala-Sena
54.	Kusidha	Gupta, Pala-Sena
55.	Bhaluka	Gupta, Pala-Sena
56.	Suryapur	Gupta, Pala-Sena
57.	Ganipur	Pala-Sena
58.	Chate	Pala-Sena
59.	Daharol,	Pala-Sena
60.	Kachra,	Pala-Sena
61.	Eshnail,	Pala-Sena
62.	Aminpur,	Pala-Sena
63.	Katashan,	Pala-Sena
64.	Dehabanḍh,	Pala-Sena
65.	Patiraj,	Pala-Sena
66.	Adhyakhanda,	Pala-Sena
67.	Mahatur,	Pala-Sena
68.	Jagdalla,	Pala-Sena
69.	Mahendra,	Pala-Sena
70.	Surohor,	Pala-Sena
71.	Harirampur	Pala-Sena
72.	Raikhandighi	Pala-Sena
73.	Dhana-ManarBhita	Pala-Sena
74.	Bamongola	Pala-Sena
75.	Bangapala	Pala-Sena
76.	Damanbhita	Pala-Sena
77.	Kaimar	Pala-Sena
78.	Madhubana	Pala-Sena
79.	Tenohari	Pala-Sena
80.	Bindol	Pala-Sena
81.	Swaminath	Pala-Sena
82.	Kukrakunda	Pala-Sena
83.	Sonapur	Pala-Sena
84.	Karandighi	Pala-Sena

85.	Tungidighi	Pala-Sena
86.	Chopra	Pala-Sena
87.	Kajaldighi	Pala-Sena
88.	Ranidighi	Pala-Sena
89.	Bauldighi	Pala-Sena
90.	Laldighi	Pala-Sena
91.	Ballabhasagar	Pala-Sena

Limitations of the Research

Though the research work revealed many important information of the study area, like other scientific field research this time-bound project also have limitations. As we have mentioned heretofore that the study is based on the surface collections from the archaeological sites, sometimes access to some of these sites become difficult due to some unavoidable situations. In some cases, accesses to the private collectors become troublesome due to collectors' unfair motives. The most important lacuna for not only this work but for the entire research world is that, the unawareness of the inhabitants of the study area regarding their culture and history. For this reason the unholy personnel make selling of the artefacts as their way of livelihood. Another important weakness of the study is that the unavailability of large-scale archaeological excavation reports of the ancient sites of the area. We have only a portion of the mound of Bangarh and Ballalhati have been excavated so far. Most of the sites of the study area, particularly the Asuragarh mound, Ganeshvita, mounds of Kamalabari, mounds of the Kandaran region, will be vanished by the encroachment of increasing population and agricultural works. In respect of the manuscripts, found from the study area, lack of initiatives of preserving and reading is going to be vanished completely from the realm of history.

In this context, however, more detailed scientific excavations can be carried out at different sites on the basis of their importance which may reveal more information of the human activities of the past. These efforts will help us to understand the epigraphic data and the interpretations of the sites with more accuracy. The future excavations will also increase the possibility of tourism. If the accurate identification of the Jagaddala monastery after excavating the proposed areas has been done, then this area can be a great place of interest for the Buddhist world.

Table

Table 1: Gupta Inscriptions found in North Bengal dealt with in this thesis

	King	GE corr espo ndin t AD	Issued from	Seal	Applica nt	Donat ed/Sol d to	Purpose	Land : Measur ement & rate	officials	Toponyms	Other
Dhanaid aha	Kumaragupta I (<i>Parama- daivatapara ma- bhaṭṭāraka</i>)	113 GE(4 32-33 CE)	Khādā(ṭa ?)pāra	no seal preserved	-	Varāhas vāmin	<i>Nivī- dharma</i>	One <i>kulyavāp a</i> and 8 x 9 reeds, @2 <i>dināras</i>	Mahattaras - Dēvakīrti, Kshēmadaṭṭa, Gōshṭhaka, Varggapāla, Piṅgala, Suṅkuka, Kāla..., . . .viṣṇu, Dēvaśarman, Viṣṇubhadra, Khāsaka, RāmakaGopāla, Śrībhadrā, Sōmapāla, Rāma. Scribes -Śrībhadrā, written by Stambhēśvaradāsa, Brāhmaṇas -Śīvaśarman, Nāgaśarman	Khādā(ṭa?)pāra	Basak, 1920, 345-48
Kalaikur i- Sultanpu r	Not mentioned	120 GE <i>Vaiśā kha</i> 1 (440 CE)	Śrīngaver avaithēy a - Pūrṇakau śikā	no seal preserved	<i>Kulika</i> Bhīma and others	Dēvada tta, Amarad atta and Mahāse nadatta	Religious merit, To perform five great sacrifices	Nine <i>kulyavāp as</i> , @2 <i>dinār as</i>	Āyuktaka -Acyutadāsa, scribes -Prabhucandra, Rudradāsa, Artisan Bhīma, Lakshmaṇa, Kāntidēva, Śambhudatta, Kṛishṇadāsa, record keepers - Śirṇhanandin and Yaśōdāman	Vātā river, Gulmagandhikā, Tāpasapōttaka, Dayitāpōttaka, Hastiśirsha, Chitravātāngara, Vibhītaka, Pūrṇakauśikāvīthī,	
Damoda rpur 1	Kumaragupta I (<i>Parama- daivatapara ma- bhaṭṭāraka, m ahārājadhira ja</i>)	124 GE Phālg una 7 (444 CE)	Kotivarṣ a	no seal preserved	Karpaṭika	Karpaṭi ka	To perform agnihōtra rites	1 <i>kulyavāp a</i> and 2 <i>dronavā pas</i> @2 <i>dināras</i>	Chirātadatta (Uparika), Vētravarman (kumārāmātya), Dhṛitipāla (guild president), Bandhumitra (marchent), Dhṛitimitra (chief artisan), Sāmbhapāla (chief scribe), Karpaṭika (Brāhmaṇa)	Dōngā	
Jagadish pur	Not mentioned (dated Kuāragupta I)	128 GE Chaitr a 20(44 8 CE0	Pūrṇakau śikā	no seal preserved	<i>kuṭumbin</i> (s) Kṣemaka, Bhōyila and Mahīdāsa	6 drona out of 1 kulya entruste d to Balaku ṅḍu (Śrama ṇa- ācārya)	1) built a <i>vihāra</i> for Arhats, 2) built a <i>vihārka</i> for Arhats and 3) built a temple for Sahasraras mi (Sun god)	1 <i>kulyavāp a</i> / @2 <i>dināras</i>	Vīthī-mahattara : Kuāradeva, Gaṇḍa, Prajāpati, Jyeṣṭhadāman. Kuṭumbin : Yaśōviṣṇu, Umayaśas, Hariśarman, Sarpapālita, Hiranyagupta, Kumārayaśas, Kumārabhūti, Śivakuṇḍa, Śiva, a second Śiva, Somaviṣṇu, Salyaviṣṇu, Kaṅkaṭi, Nandadāman, Vīranāga, Nārāyaṇadāsa, Rudra, Bhava, Guha, Acyuta, Kubera, Śarvanāga, Bhavanāga, Śrīdatta, Bhabadatta, Dhanaviṣṇu, Guṇaratha, Naradeva. Pustapāla : Śirṇhanandin&Yaśōdāman. Kulika : Bhīma. Written by Rudradāsa, engraver-Susirṇha	Gulmagandhika, Samgōhālīka, Mūlakavastukā, Mecikāmra, Sambapura, Mecikāmra, Pūrṇakauśikā (head quarter of Śrīngavera-vīthī.	

Damodarpur 2	Kumaragupta I (<i>Parama-daivataparama-bhaṭṭāraka, mahārājadhira</i>)	129 GE Vaiśākhā 13 (448-49 AD)	Kotivarṣa	no seal preserved	-	-	To perform pañchamahāyajñas	5 <i>dronas/2 dināras (kulyavāpa @3 dināras)</i>	Chirātadatta (<i>Uparika</i>), Vētravarman (<i>kumārāmātya</i>), Dhṛitipāla (guild president), Bandhumitra (marchent), Dhṛitimitra (chiefartisan), Sāmbhapāla (chief scribe), Risidatta, Jayanandin and Vibhudatta (recordkeepers)	Airāvata,	
Vāyigrāma fragment	-	-	-	-	Śivanandin	-	-	-	-	Śṛīgōhālī, Vaṭagohālī	
Vāyigrāma	Not Mentioned	128 GE Māgha 19 (447-48 CE)	Pañchanagarī	no seal preserved	Bhōyila and Bhāskara	-	Daily worship and repair of Gōvindasvāmin temple	3 <i>kulyavāpas / @3 dināras/ 8 x 9 reeds</i>	Kulavṛiddhi (<i>kumārāmātya</i>), Durgādatta and Arkkadāsa (<i>pustapāla</i>), Bhōyila and Bhāskara (<i>kuṭumvin</i>), Śivanandin (father of Bhōliya and Bhāskara)	Pañchanagariviśaya, Vāyigrāma, Trivritā, Śṛīgōhālī	
Tāvira		159 GE Jyesthā 1			Varāhasoma	Guhādāman	Nīvī-dharma	22 <i>kulyavāpas / @2dināras/ 8 x 9 reeds</i>	Nandabhūti (viśayapati), notables – Brahmasena, Viṣṇudeva, Satyaghoṣa, Sattvarakṣita, Vanadāman, Jayaviṣṇu and Prabhudāman; land holders - Satyaviṣṇu, Skandaviṣṇu, Praiyaviṣṇu (?), Balapāla, Guṇadeva, Guṇāsarman, Bhavadeva, Kuṇḍakṛṣṇa, Ā...cirātaviṣṇu (?), Śāmbhukīrtti, Bhaktidāman, Manaḥkṛṣṇa, Kṣemarudra, Bhavadāman, Lakṣmaṇa, Mitrasoma, Baladāsa, Jayadāsa, Śuṅgadāman, Vyāgraśarman, Yaśodāman, Dāmodaradāman, Sthāvaradāman, Kumāradāman, Ga...dāman (?), Adbhutaviṣṇu, Rājyasīmha, Upendrapāla, Premasīmha, Kṛṣṇasoma, Rājyasoma and Bhavadāman. Record keepers – Sumati and Vīrasīmha	Vidalaka and Sannāhakuṭumbaka	

Mahati-Raktamala 1	Budha-Gupta (<i>paramabhāṭṭāraka, paramadeva</i>)	159 GE =478 CE, <i>Jyeṣṭhā</i> 8	Mahati-Raktamala <i>laagrahāra</i> , Kuddāla <i>khātaviṣaya</i>	Primary seal- 'Of the council of appointees of the territory of Madhyamaṣaṇḍika'. Secondary seal- 'of Yūthapati'	Brāhmaṇa Nandabhūti	Brāhmaṇas of Dugdhatikā	To perform pañchamahāyajñas	2 <i>kulyavāpa</i>	Yūthapati (<i>kumārāmātya</i>), Suvarcasadatta (<i>mahāmātra</i>), Brahmadata (<i>uparika</i>), Svāmicandra (<i>deśoparika</i>), Āryadāsa (<i>scribe</i>), Manorathadāsa (<i>pustapāla</i>)	Kuddālakhāta (<i>viṣaye</i>) Mahati-Raktamālā (<i>agrahāra</i>), Khuḍḍi-Raktamālā, Govardhanaka, Dugdhatikā, Madhyamaṣaṇḍika, Kuddālakhāta, Mahati-Raktamala <i>agrahāra</i>	
Mahati-Raktamala plate2	<i>paramabhāṭṭāra</i> <i>arakapādānu</i> <i>ddhyātaḥ</i>	1xx, day 13, x	_lavilintī <i>agrahāra</i>	Primary seal- same as plate #1. Secondary seal- indistinct	Gaṇadatta (<i>kulaputra</i>)	Yaśobhūti (Brāhmaṇa)		1 <i>kulyavāpa</i> /100 kāṛṣāṇa/ 8x9 reeds	Gopāla (<i>kumārāmātya</i>), Keśavadatta (<i>pustapāla</i>),	Mahati-Raktamālā (<i>agrahāra</i>), Khuḍḍi-Raktamālā,	
Paharpu r		159 GE, Māgha 7, 478 CE	Puṇḍrava <i>rdhana</i>		Brāhmaṇa – Nāthaśarma an and his wife Rāmī.	Monastery of Vaṭago hālī		1 <i>kulyavāpa</i> and <i>four</i> <i>drōṇāvāpas</i>	Maintenance and worship of Arhats	Vaṭagohālī, Prṣṭhimapottaka, Goṣātapuñjaka, Bilvagohālī, Dakṣiṇāmsaka- <i>vīthī</i> , Nāgiratta- <i>maṇḍala</i>	
Damodarpur CPI 3	Budha-gupta (<i>paramadaivata, paramabhāṭṭāraka, mahārājādhirājaprihvīpatī</i>)	163 GE, <i>Āṣāḍha</i> 13 (482- 83)	Palāśavṛndaka	no seal preserved	(<i>Grāmika</i>) Nābhaka		Settling some Brāhmaṇas	1 <i>kulyavāpa</i> @2 <i>dināras</i> / 8 x 9 reeds	Brahmadatta (<i>Uparika-mahārāja</i>), Sthāya(ṇ)pāla, Kapilā, Śrībhadrā, Patradāsa (<i>pustapāla</i>)	Palāśavṛndaka, Chaṇḍagrāma Vāyi-grāma	
Nandapur CPI	Not mentioned	169 GE vaiśākha 7 (488 CE)		no seal preserved	Chhatramaha (<i>vishayapati</i>)		A Brāhmaṇa, whose name ended with ..svāmin	4 <i>kulyavāpa</i> a/ 8x9 nalas (reeds)/ 2 <i>dināra</i>	Chhatramaha (<i>vishayapati</i>), Pradyōta-sirṃha and Bandhudāsa (<i>pustapāla</i>), Darvvikarmma (of Baigram CPI)	Nanda-vīthī, Khaṭapūra <i>agrahāra</i> , Gōrakshita and Gōpālibhōga (village)	

DamodarpurCPI 4	Śrīgupta (<i>Parama-daivataparama-bhaṭṭāraka, mahārājadhira</i>)	-Lost-		no seal preserved	Ribhupāla	To build two temple of Kōkāmukhasvāmin and Śvētavarāhasvamim and their two store room	Ribhupāla	4 + 7 = 11 kulyavāpa/3 dināra	Jayadatta (<i>Uparika</i>), Śaṇḍaka (<i>āyuktaka</i>), Ribhupāla (<i>nagara-śrēṣṭhin</i>), Vasumitra (marchent), Varadatta (chief kulika), Viprapāla (chief scribe), Viṣṇudatta, Vijayanandin and Sthāṇanandin (<i>pustapālas</i>)	Ḍōṅgā-grāma in Himavachchikhara	
Nāgavasu CPI		198 GE Śrāvāna (518 CE)		no seal preserved	Nāgavasu			2 kulyavāpa/2 dināra	Śarva (<i>prathamapustapāla</i>), Prīti, Viṣṇudhara, Jayadatta, Rāmadatta, Sudarśanaśrīdāsa and Bhavadāsa (<i>ādyapustapāla</i>)	Śiṣīpuṅja, Madhyamasrgālikā, Grāmakūṭagohālī, Ārya (village) falling under Abjatāpagaccha, Śaṇḍika (division)	

Table 2: Two Early Medieval Inscriptions of North Bengal

Mastakaśvabhra copper-plate Inscription of Pradyumnabandhu											
King	Seals	Bhukti pati	Vishaya	Vishayapati	Receiver	Purpose	Toponyms / water body/ies	Brāhmaṇa	viṣayadhikarāṇika	Pustapāla (record keeper)	Price and quantity
ma(hā)rājādhirā Pradyumnabandhu	Primary <i>Ghoṇādvīpaka viṣaya adhikaraṇasya</i> '(Seal) of the council in Ghoṇādvīpaka district' Secondary 'pradyumnabandho'	Uporika Cellaka	Ghoṇādvīpaka (viṣaya adhikaraṇasya)	<i>Mahāprati ihāra</i> Avadhūta	<i>Brahmana</i> Jayadeva through the hand of <i>Mahāprati hāra</i> Avadhūta	regular performance of the five great sacrifices	Ghoṇādvīpakaviṣaya, Mastakaśvabhra <i>grāma.pātaka</i> Varṣagrīma, Śaṇḍa dvīpa, Pravara dvīpa, Navadevakula, Pīppalivanikā, Pāttravāṭa, Śaṅkarapallika, Śivanagara, Varahakoṭṭaka, Śivaguptakhataka, Arḍrala, Audumvarika, Kāpalati, Trighattika (river), Opra (?) canal, Srogataka pond, Brhacchaokajota	Mahāmahattarā- Ādityadeva, Jayadeva, Śivabhadro, Śarvadeva, Pavittrasoma, Kṣemadeva Mahattara- Gaurakakiraṇasvāmi, Rudrasvāmi, Śambhusvāmin, Bhākideva, Gopasoma, Bhaṭṭadharmmasvāmin, Bhadrasvāmin, Śrīcandra, Kṣemaśarman, Amṛtaśāntanu, Dharmmakunḍa, Śivagupta, Jalla, Jalacandra, Śyāmadeva, Abhinandana, Malayarudra Brāhmaṇa- Guhayaśas	Śambhudatta, Kṛṣṇadatta, Paurudatta and others	Naradatta, Eḍita(nu), Devasena	The entire village of Mastakaśvabhra, 45 kārsāpana annual additional tax collection

Khalimpur Copper-plate Inscription of Dharmapāla

King	Date	Vishaya	Seal	Applicant	Donated /Sold to	Purpose	Land : Measurement & rate	officials	Toponyms	Other
Dharmapāladēva (<i>ParamaēśvaraPar amabhaṭṭāraka, mahārājādhirāja</i>)	32 regnal year of Dharma pāladēva		<i>ŚrīmānDharm apāladēvaḥ</i>	<i>Mahāsāmantādhipati Nārāyaṇavarman</i>	The temple of N[u]nna- Nārāyaṇa and the LāṭaBrāh maṇas, priests and other attendants			<i>Yuvarāja</i> Tribhuvanapāla (Dūtaka) Shashthādrikṛita, Daṇḍasakti, Khōla, Jyēshtakāyastha, Dāśagrāmika, Vapyāṭa, Dayitavishṇu, Gōpāla, Dēddadēvi, Dharmapāla, Nārāyaṇavarman, Tribhuvanapāla. Scriber- Tāṭaṭa son of Subhata and grandson of Bhōgata	<i>agrahāra</i> of Pāṭliputra, Śubhasthali, Krauñchaśva bhra, Mādhāśamma li, Pālitaka, Gōpipali, Vyāghrataṭim <i>aṇḍala</i> , Āmrashaṇḍik <i>āmaṇḍala</i> , Mahantāprak <i>āśaviśaya</i> , Sthālikkaṭaviś <i>aya</i> , Udragrāmam <i>aṇḍala</i> , Kalikāśvabh ra, Gaṅginikā, Jēnandāyikā, Kāṇā island, Kōṇṭhiyā river	Kings attended= Bhōja, Matsya, Madra, Kuru, Yadu, Yavana, Avanti, Gandhāra, Kira

Table 3: Land measurement

8 <i>mushtisor</i> handfuls	1 <i>kuñchi</i>
8 <i>kuñchis</i> (64 handfuls)	1 <i>pushkala</i>
8 <i>pushkalas</i> (256 handfuls)	1 <i>ādhaka</i>
4 <i>ādhakas</i> (1024 handfuls)	1 <i>drōṇa</i>
8 <i>drōṇas</i> (8192 handfuls)	1 <i>kulya</i>

Source: Maity and Basham, 1957, p. 103.

Table 4: Boatmen and fisherman communities

CASTE	FIRST PROFESSION	SECOND PROFESSION	THIRD PROFESSION
Musahor	Fisherman	-	-
Kol	Fisherman	-	-
Bindu	Fisherman	-	-
Bagdi	Fisherman	-	-
Suraiya	Fisherman	-	-
Malo	Fisherman	Boatman	-
Keot	Fisherman	Boatman	-
Gangoar	Fisherman	-	-
Gangothi	-	Boatman	Wood Cutter
Kharowar	Fisherman	Palanquin bearer	Cultivators
Kuri	Fisherman	-	-
Chai	Fisherman	Vegetables seller	Boatman
Chabi	Fisherman	-	-
Markendeo	Fisherman	-	-
Hrishi	Fisherman	-	-
Barhai-kandol	Fisherman	-	-
Toraha	Fisherman	-	-
Tior	Fisherman	-	-
Muriari	Fisherman	Cultivator	Boatman
Chandal/Chanral	Fisherman	-	-
Patni (Mainly in Rongpur)	-	-	Boatman
Kandar/Kandal	Fisherman	-	Ferryman

Source: Bhattacharyya, M. 2018, p. 111.

Table 5: Ādityas

No. of the Adityas	Vedic Literature	Bhavisya Purāna	Kurmma Purāna	Bhagavata	Sabda-Kalpa Druma
1	<i>Mitra</i>	Do	Do	Do	Do
2	<i>Aryaman</i>	Do	a)Do b) <i>Bhaskara</i>	Do	Do
3	<i>Bhaga</i>	Do	Do	Do	Do
4	<i>Varuna</i>	Do	Do	Do	Do
5	<i>Daksa</i>	<i>Parjjanya</i>	a) <i>Parjjanya</i> b) <i>Ravi</i>	<i>Savita</i>	<i>Savita</i>
6	<i>Amsa</i>	Do	Do	<i>Rudra</i>	<i>Bidhata</i>
7	<i>Surya</i>	<i>Pusa</i>	<i>Pusa</i>	<i>Surya</i>	<i>Pusa</i>
8	<i>Mārtanda</i>	<i>Tvasta</i>	Do	Do	Do
9	<i>Dhata</i>	Do	Do	Do	Do
10	<i>Indra</i>	Do	Do	<i>Pusa</i>	Do
11	<i>Vivasvat</i>	Do	Do	Do	Do
12	<i>Viṣṇu</i>	Do	Do	Do	<i>Urukrama</i>

Source: Bhattashali, N., 2008, p. 155.

Table 6: Caturvimsati Murtaya of Lord Viṣṇu.

No	Name of the Murti	Back right hand	Back left hand	Front left hand	Front right hand
1	<i>Kesava</i>	<i>samkha</i>	<i>cakra</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>padma</i>
2	<i>Narayana</i>	<i>padma</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>cakra</i>	<i>samkha</i>
3	<i>Madhava</i>	<i>cakra</i>	<i>samkha</i>	<i>padma</i>	<i>gada</i>
4	<i>Govinda</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>padma</i>	<i>samkha</i>	<i>cakra</i>
5	<i>Viṣṇu</i>	<i>padma</i>	<i>samkha</i>	<i>cakra</i>	<i>gada</i>
6	<i>Madhusudana</i>	<i>samkha</i>	<i>padma</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>cakra</i>
7	<i>Trivikrama</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>cakra</i>	<i>samkha</i>	<i>padma</i>
8	<i>Vamana</i>	<i>cakra</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>padma</i>	<i>samkha</i>
9	<i>Sridhara</i>	<i>cakra</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>samkha</i>	<i>padma</i>
10	<i>Hrisikesa</i>	<i>cakra</i>	<i>padma</i>	<i>samkha</i>	<i>gada</i>
11	<i>Padmanabha</i>	<i>padma</i>	<i>cakra</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>samkha</i>
12	<i>Damodara</i>	<i>samkha</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>cakra</i>	<i>padma</i>
13	<i>Samkarsana</i>	<i>samkha</i>	<i>padma</i>	<i>cakra</i>	<i>gada</i>
14	<i>Vasudeva</i>	<i>samkha</i>	<i>cakra</i>	<i>padma</i>	<i>gada</i>
15	<i>Pradyumna</i>	<i>samkha</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>padma</i>	<i>cakra</i>
16	<i>Aniruddha</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>samkha</i>	<i>padma</i>	<i>cakra</i>
17	<i>Purusottam</i>	<i>padma</i>	<i>samkha</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>cakra</i>
18	<i>Adhoksaja</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>samkha</i>	<i>cakra</i>	<i>padma</i>
19	<i>Narasimha</i>	<i>padma</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>samkha</i>	<i>cakra</i>
20	<i>Acyuta</i>	<i>padma</i>	<i>cakra</i>	<i>samkha</i>	<i>gada</i>
21	<i>Janardana</i>	<i>cakra</i>	<i>samkha</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>padma</i>
22	<i>Upendra</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>cakra</i>	<i>padma</i>	<i>samkha</i>
23	<i>Hari</i>	<i>cakra</i>	<i>padma</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>samkha</i>
24	<i>Srikr̥ṣṇa</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>padma</i>	<i>cakra</i>	<i>samkha</i>

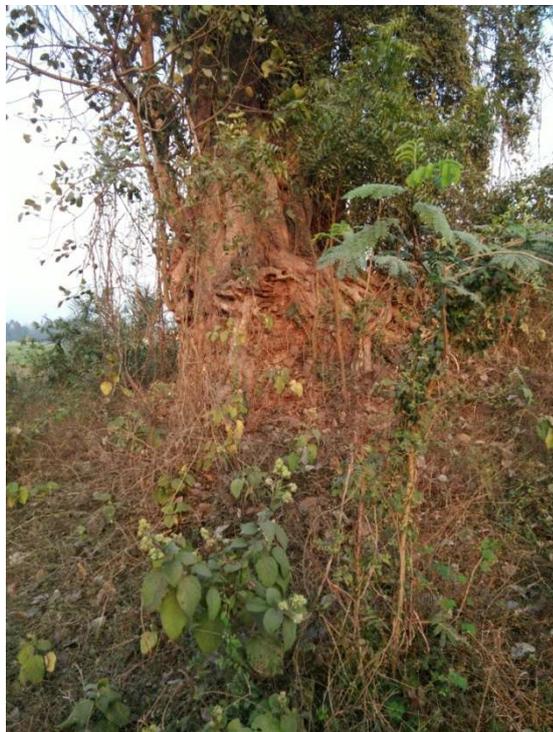
Source: Rao, T., 1914, pp. 229-230.

Picture



Picture 1: Northern *ghat* of Pirpukur, Methrani, Gajol, Malda.

(photo collected by researcher)

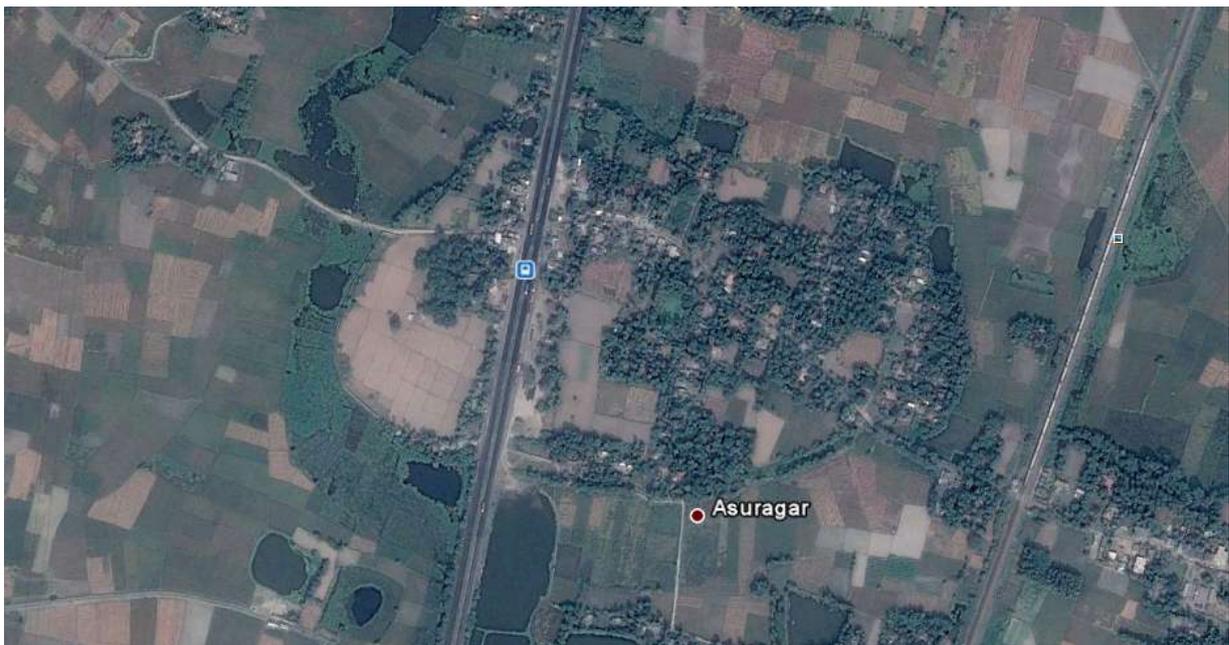


Picture 2: Temple like structure, Methrani, Gajol, Malda.

(photo collected by researcher)



Picture 3: Earthenware Male Head, Kandaran, Malda. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture: 4. Ariel View of Asuragarh. (photo collected from goole.earth by researcher)



Picture: 5. Rajpukur, Asuragarh, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture: 6. Curious Terracotta Head from Asuragarh, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture: 7. Terracotta Śivalinga, Asuragarh, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture: 8. Terracotta Śivalinga (2), Asuragarh, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture: 9. Potteries, Asuragarh, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



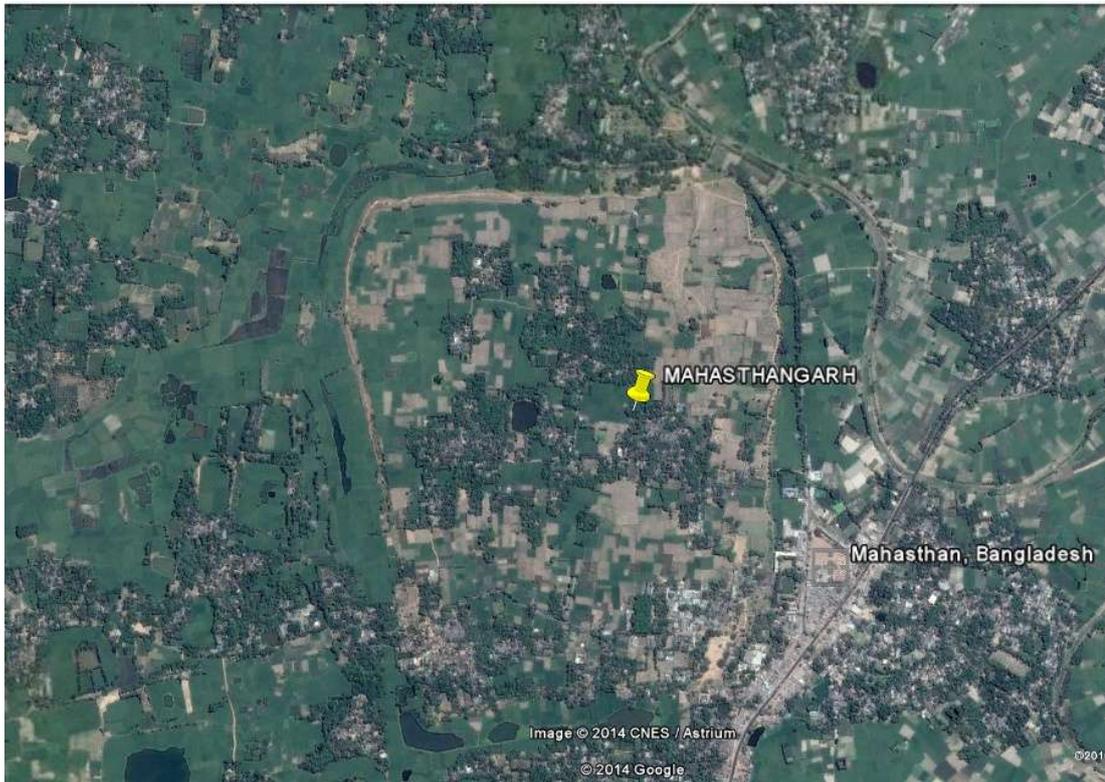
Picture: 10. Ariel View of Bangarh Mound



Picture 10a: Moat and mound of Bangarh, Dakshin Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 10b: Bulwark of Bangarh, Dakshin Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture: 11. Ariel View of Bangarh Mound



Picture: 12. Ariel View of the Mounds



Picture 13: Bow curving from Mahendra. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 14: Pillar from Mahendra. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 15: Pillar from Mahendra. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 16: Terracotta Plaque from Bangarh. Courtesy: ASI, Patna Branch



Pictr 17: Suṅga Coin from Bangarh. Courtesy: S. Adhikary.



Pictr 18: Coin of Kuṣānaking Vima Kadphises from Bangsihari. Courtesy: S Adhikary.



Picture 19: Fragment Baigram CPI. Courtesy: Indian Museum Website, Kolkata.



Picture 20: Mahatī-Raktamālā CPI of 159 GE. Image of secondary seal. Courtesy: Griffiths.



Picture 21: Gold coin of Śaśānka, Banshihari, South Dinajpur. Courtesy: S. Adhikary.



Picture 22: Ground plane of Ballalabati, Gaur, Malda. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 23: Chhaghati, Aminhat, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 24: Basement of temple, Chhaghati, Aminhat, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 25: Pilaster from Aminhat, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 26: Viṣṇūpaṭṭa from Aminhat, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 27: Votive Stupa from Joyhat, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 28: Votive Stupa (2) from Joyhat, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



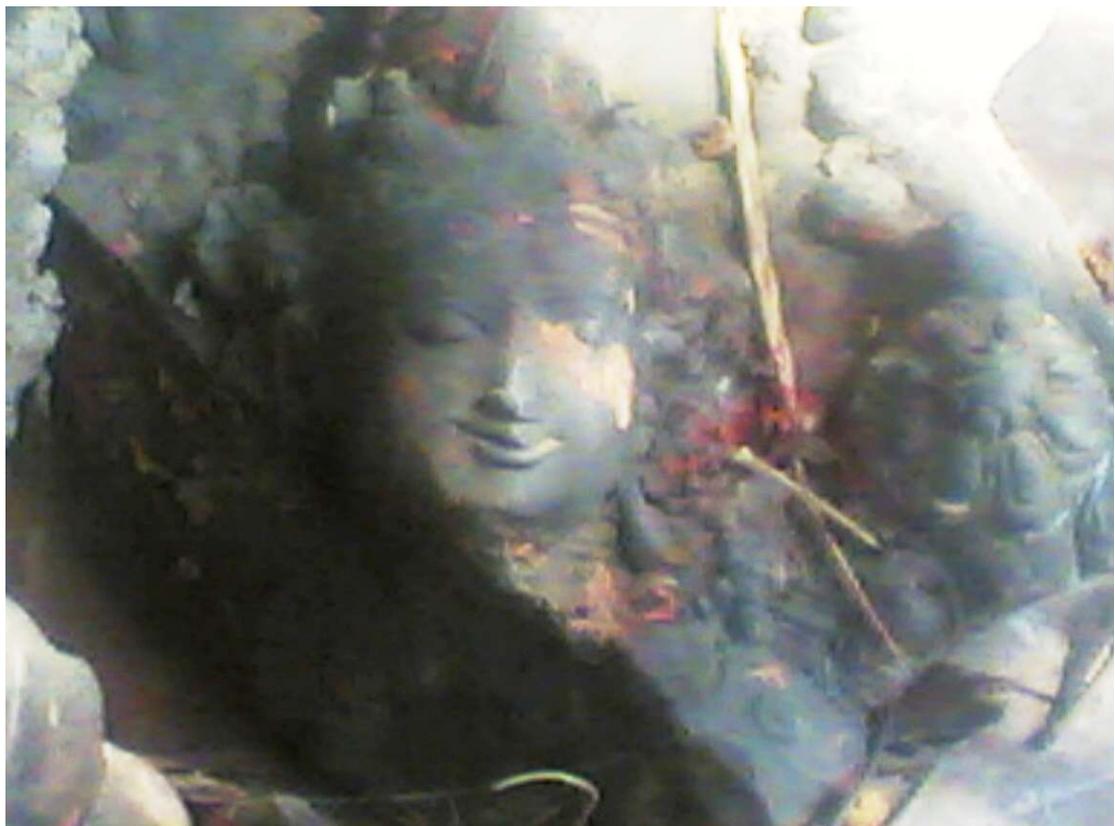
Picture 29: Votive Stupa 3 from Joyhat, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 30: Votive Stupa 5 from Joyhat, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 31: Heap of fragmented Sculptures, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 32: Head of a Viṣṇu Image from Jotnarottam, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 33: A part of Votive stupa, Kotbari, Amati, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 34: Mound of Jagdal (1) near Amati, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 35: A colossal gargoyle with *Makaramukha* design, Jagdal, Uttar Dinajpur.
(photo collected by researcher)



Picture 36: Brick road between Amati and Jagdal, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 37: Mound of Mahendra. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 38: Pillar from Mahendra. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 39: Decorative pillar from Mahendra. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 40: Brick wall of Jagaddala near Mahendra. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 41: Couchant bull (*nandi*) from Bangarh, Dakshin Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 42: BatukaBhairava from Bangarh, Shivbari, Dakshin Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 43: Vajrasattva from Bangarh, Dakshin Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 44: Colossal Viṣṇu from Gangarampur PS, Dakshin Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 45: Face of the colossal Viṣṇu image, Dakshin Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 46: Second Viṣṇu image from Gangarampur PS, Dakshin Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



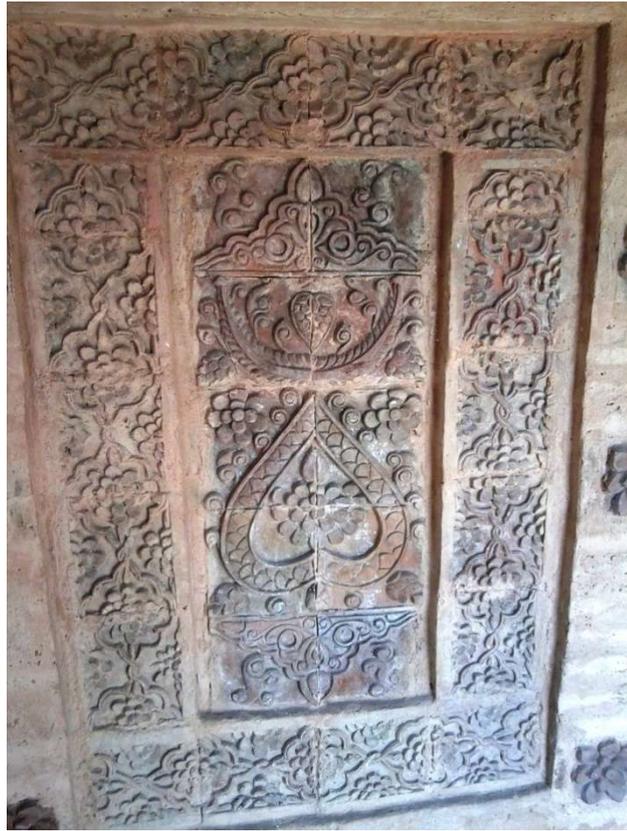
Picture 47: Fragment from workshop, Bangarh, Dakshin Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 48: Fragmented decorated pillar, Rajibpur, Dakshin Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 49: MartandaBhairav, Bindol, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 50: Terracotta, Bindol, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 51: Remains in the temple, Bindol, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 52: DwipRajarDighi, Panishala, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 53: Terracotta disc from Panishala, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 54: Jambhala, Panishala, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 55: Stone slab with Viṣṇu image from Panishala, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 56: Mound of Tamasari Mathbari. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 57: Use of iron bar in architecture, Tamasari Mathbari. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 58: Seating Ganesh image, Ganeshbhita, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 59: Pillars from the mound of Ganeshbhita, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 60: Inscription, Ganeshbhita, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 61: Dashdala mosque, Kamlabari, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 62: Mound of 21 pillars, Kamlabari, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 63: Fragment of sculpture, Ganeshbhita, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 64: Islamic inscription, Kamlabari, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 65: Giant kalasa, Kamlabari, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



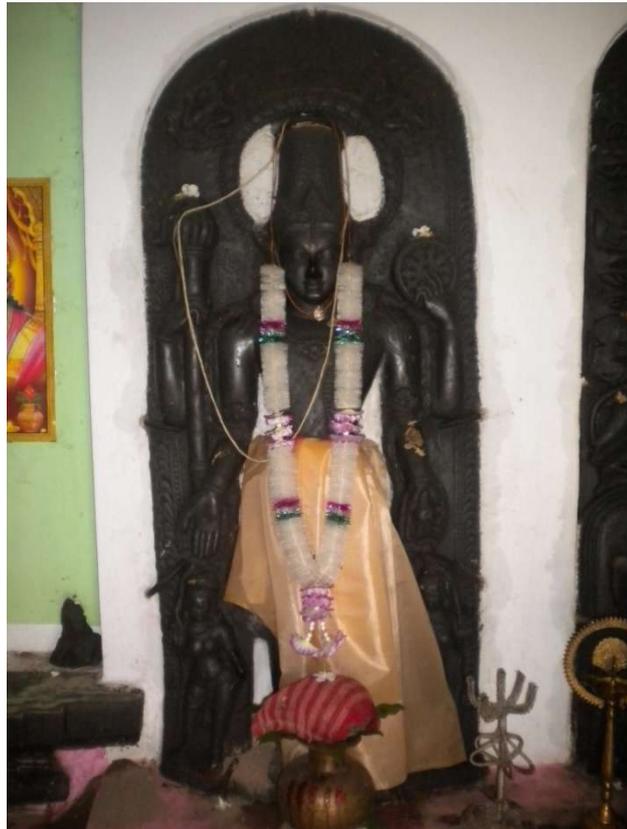
Picture 66: Patalghora pond, Tenohari, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 67: DasavatāraViṣṇu image, Tenohari, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 68: the eighth figure, DasavatāraViṣṇu, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 69: Second Viṣṇu image, Tenohari, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 70: Śiva linga with yonipaṭṭa, Tenohari, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 71: Dancing Ganeśa, Sonapur, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 72: fragment of the figure of a goddess, Sonapur, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 73: Fragment of a Goddess image, Sonapur, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 74: Sand stone of Ganeśa image, Sonapur, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 75:Khasarpaṇa image, College para, Raiganj, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 76: Viṣṇu image, Kharmujaghat, Raiganj, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 77: Fragmented Khasarpaṇa image, Udaypur, Raiganj, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 78: Inscription of the Khasarpaṇa image, Udaypur, Raiganj, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 79: Basement of temple, Chanditala, Raiganj, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 80: Wood of a giant boat, Chanditala, Raiganj, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 81: Mahiṣamarddinī image, Chanditala, Raiganj, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 82: Manasā image, Chanditala, Raiganj, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 83: Mound of Dehabandh, Dakshin Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 84: use of stone chips as building material, Dehabandh, Dakshin Dinajpur.
(photo collected by researcher)



Picture 85: colossal *āmalaka* design, Dehabandh, Dakshin Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 86: Doorjamb, Dehabandh, Dakshin Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 87: Gargoyle, Dehabandh, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 88: Fragmented Viṣṇu image, Baragram, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 89: Torso, Baragram, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 90: *chhatravali*, Baragram, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 91: Broken image of Garuḍa, Baragram, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 92: Fragmented head, Baragram, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 93: Fragment, Baragram, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 94: Fragment, Baragram, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 95: Śivalinga, Bagram, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 96: Viṣṇu image with inscription, Pauti, Uttar Dinajpur. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 97: Warrior image in a monolithic column, Gour, Malda. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 98: Monolithic Column, Gour, Malda. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 99: Monolithic block of toilet (?), Gour, Malda. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 100: Gancing Ganeśa, Pandua, Malda. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 101: Dancing female figurine, Pandua, Malda. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 102: Ganeśa image, Pandua, Malda. (photo collected by researcher)



Picture 103: Garland bearer, Pandua. (photo collected by researcher)

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Sanat Adhikary *

Report On Surface Collection Of Antiquities From Some Important Sites Of North Dinajpur

Ancient Bengal formed a part of the *Prācyadeśa* or the Eastern Country.¹ The *Pracya* or *Eastern Country* of the Puranas may be broadly defined as the basins of the lower Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers. The western boundary of this major region may be taken roughly as the course of the river Gandak from the Himalayan foothills to its confluence with the Ganges; then along the river Son from its mouth, which was formerly near Patna, to the latitude of Rohtas. Thereafter it followed the crest of the Hazaribagh plateau across Bihar and then continued along the south-western boundary of the present State of West Bengal to the sea.² The district of *Dinajpur* is situated on the old track of *Barind* region. *Puṇḍras*, a principal caste of Barind, were associated with the *Aṅgas*, *Vaṅgas*, *Kaliṅgas*, *Magadhas*, *Sumhas*, etc. in ancient literature, e.g. the *Mahābhārata*, the *Harivamśa* and the *Puraṇas*. Rājaśekhara (*Kāvyamīmāṃsā*) places the *Puṇḍra* country in the east along with *Prāgjyotiṣa* and *Tāmralipta*. On the authority of Hiuen Tsang, Cunningham had identified its capital with *Mahāsthān*, 8 miles north of the modern town of *Bogra* (now in Bangladesh). The *Puṇḍra* country may therefore be identified with that portion of the Gaṅga-Brahmaputra Doab which was bounded by the *Mahānandā* in the east and the *Kārātoya* in the west, the *Gaṅga* on the south and the ancient *Barind* forest in the north.

We are surprised by the changing nomenclature of the northern part of Bengal through the passage of time. From the works of the Greek and Latin writers we came to know that ancient Bengal was formed by some part of the *Prācyadeśa* or the Eastern Country. *Q. Curtius Rufus* in his book *Historiarum Alexandri Magni Macedonis* mentions that Alexander learnt about the king *Agrammes* of the people of *Gangaridae* and *Prasii*, i.e., the eastern part of the Gaṅga river, who prepared for him 20,000 cavalry, 200,000 infantry, 2000 horse chariot and 3000 war trained elephant to save his country.³ The Greek classical writers mention the people of the *Gangaridae* and *Prasii* as the *Puṇḍras*. The term *Puṇḍra* means both, a caste

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of ancient Bengal and a place, which was inhabited by the *Puṇḍra* caste. The first literary reference of *Puṇḍra* was found in *Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa*.⁴ It describes them as the demons, which lived at the extreme east of the Aryanland. The *Shunya-Khep* legends describe the *Puṇḍras* as the neighbour and tribe related to *Andhras*, *Shabar*, *Pulind* etc.⁵ The Greek classical writers mention the people called *Gangaridae* and *Prasii* who, according to them, were under the Nanda kings.⁶ It is possible that the Mauryas who stepped into the imperial shoes of the Nandas had hoisted their flag over the rising city of the *Puṇḍras*.⁷ In the *Arthaśāstra* mention was made of a type of silk called *Puṇḍraka* which was very fine and lustrous in texture.⁸ It is very difficult to frame out the territorial limits of the *Puṇḍra Janapada*, because in course of time, the geographical format of the whole area underwent a vivid change. Nevertheless the land between the river *Mahananda* in the west and the river *Karotoya* in the east was the area of the then *Puṇḍra Janapada*. Present Bagura, Rajshahi, and Dinajpur districts formed part of the then *Puṇḍra Janapada*.⁹

During the 5th and 6th centuries *Puṇḍra* became *Puṇḍravardhana* and became an important *bhukti* of the Gupta Empire. We get the reference of *Puṇḍravardhana bhukti* from the *Dhanaidaha*,¹⁰ *Baigram*,¹¹ *Paharpur*¹² and *Damodarapur*¹³ copper plate inscriptions and from the account of *Xuan Zang*, who called it *pu-na-fa-tanna*.¹⁴ It is worthwhile to begin by having a brief look back at political and socio-economic history of eastern India referred to as *Prācyā*, during the ancient and early medieval period.

The present area of the study is also a part of *Barind* or old *Varendra* tract of undivided Bengal. If we take a broader historical and archaeological view of the *Barind* tract as a whole, we find that the area is a significant core area of historical development in Bengal. *Bangarh* or ancient *Koṭivarṣa* was an administrative unit under the larger unit of *Puṇḍravardhana bhukti* with its capital at *Mahasthangarh*. It served as the centre of many sites around it. About eight inscriptions of the fifth and sixth centuries AD (the classical Gupta period) have been found in the *Barind* tract and many more inscriptions of the later *Pāla-Sena* period have also been found all over the region. In the later period, during the rule of the emperor *Rāmapāla* in the 12th century, *Ramāvātī* became the *Pāla* capital. On the whole, the district is full of rich historical sites, as we have already mentioned and the richness of the antiquities found in the district is immensely alluring to the researchers. The district of *Dinajpur* is a very rich destination for the researchers, especially the scholars of archaeology and history of ancient Bengal, because the study area has a huge number of archaeological sites and artifacts of different times, most of them were from the *Pāla-Sena* periods but there are older examples as well, which

remain almost untouched, unseen and undiscussed by the historians. Sarasi Kumar Saraswati, the eminent scholar, had much interest in the archaeological sites of Dinajpur.¹⁵ Washed by a number of navigable rivers it had many urban settlements like *Bāngarh (Koṭivarṣa)*,¹⁶ *Rāmāvātī* (the capital of *Rāmapāla*)¹⁷ etc. The scattered architectural evidences from these areas prove its glorious past. Some important archaeological sites of ancient times are *Daharol, Kachra, Eshnail, Aminpur, Katashan, Patiraj, Adyakhanda, Ganeshvita, Mahatur, Jagdalla, Mahendra, Surohor, Harirampur, Itahar, Bhadrashila, Bankur, Sonapur, Tamasari Mathbari, Yogipara, Baingungaon, Shadea, Dhulohar, Dwiprajar Dighi, Bindol, Barogram, Tapan Dighi, Bhaior, Mahipal dighi, Bairhatta, Asurgarh, Karan Dighi*, etc. All these urban and minor settlements of this area conclusively proved that this region was developed both economically and politically. Here an attempt is made to highlight some obscure sites of this area only.

Asurgarh

This site is situated at a distance of 12 KM from Purniya More. Here we find an ancient settlement site about 2 squares KM in area. As WW Hunter¹⁸ mentions, the remains of three large forts bear the names Benugarh, Barijangarh, and Asurgarh. Portions of walls and foundations attest the fact that the forts once existed, but their history is involved in obscurity. There are ample materials for archaeological researches, such as rocks and portions of pillars with figures and inscription are to be seen lying about the sites. Summarizing the views of Hunter & Buchanan-Hamilton we can state:

The local widespread story of the origin of these forts is that there were five brothers, Benu, Barijan, Asura, Nanha and Kanha, each of whom built a garh or fortified residence, and named it after himself. The forts of Nanha and Kanha are pointed out, but are scarcely traceable. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton states that these brothers were generally represented to be Domkata brahmanas. There are tanks inside the enclosures; and the most absurd stories are told, and implicitly believed in by the villagers, in connection with the tank at Barijan, known as Dakpakhar. One of the least extravagant of these stories is that the earth of the tank, if taken near any other tank, has the power of immediately drawing forth from it all the fish it contains. The five brothers are said to have lived in the Bikramaditya period, that is to say, about 57B.C. ; and the forts, it is added, were all built in a night. At Thakurganj in the northern part of the district (now in Bangladesh), and west Kaliaganj, stones with inscriptions were dug up by the Great Trigonometrical Surveyors several years ago, when the triangulation of the district was being affected. They were said to mark the site of the chief residence of a Raja Virat, whose territory lay along the Kushi, and included the country round about as far as Rongpur and Dinajpur. Of this Raja Virat, it is related that he gave shelter to

Yudhistira and his four brothers, the chiefs of the Pandavas, during their twelve year's exile, after they had been driven out of Hastinapur by the Kauravas, the other branch of the Lunar Race.

The fort of Asurgarh rises suddenly from the surrounding plain to a height of 10 to 15 feet and appears to be the earthen rampart of a fort. Here also a spill channel from the R. Mahanada was created around the garh. It is not natural elevation, however, but is formed of the debris of many buildings, the lower chambers of which are still sometimes found under the surface. The people on the spot state that some hundred and twenty-five years ago the place was covered with trees; and that no Hindus would venture to live on it, lest Asur Deo should be offended. At length a holy Musalman came, and, killing a cow, took possession, which his descendants retain. They cleared and cultivated the whole place. Hindus came occasionally and make offering to Asur Deo. The Muhammadans, on the other hand, venerated the intrepid saint by whom the ruin was cleared; and Buchanan Hamilton mentions 'about 1500 of the faithful assemble, after the fair of Nekmard, in Dinajpur, to celebrate his memory'.

At the centre of the settlement a deep water tank called Rajpukur takes place. It is encircled with masonry work. The water tank with its shore measured 90m from north to south and 120m from east to west. But now, the interior part of the *garh* brought by the local people under cultivation, has lost several ancient buildings and antiquities. At many places the plough - share has played havoc among the constructions and rain water helped the exposition and loss of the minor antiquities. The whole area is filled up with architectural fragment scattered here and there.

The present writer visited the site several times and found some interesting artifacts like terracotta figurines, potteries, beads, bricks etc. The available potteries of different types evidence its long history. Surprisingly, we have not found any stone fragment there. From the site, the most interesting finding is a terracotta figurine about 60 cm long. It's a male head with an extended neck. The face of the figurine is uplifted with two big ear rings, the eyes are very large, lips thick, and nostrils prominent. The figurine is red in colour and well polished.

The second Terracotta is of a Śivaliṅga very small in size. The third terracotta figure is yet another Sivalinga formed by the coiled figure of a snake. This pottery is also lavishly polished, as we see in the picture. We don't know exactly how the glossy surface was achieved? May be some ferruginous compound was applied to the potteries before they were fired, and that the black colour was the result of over firing the pottery. Upinder Sing's view about the glossy surface of NBPW is

that the shiny surface was achieved by applying some material, such as oil or plant juice on the potteries after they were fired, while they were still hot.¹⁹ The present writer thinks these two objects are from the Mauryan period. The potsherds found from the garh are of great interest. Two of them are black in colour with glossy surface.

Here the present writer wants to express the similarities of Asurgarh with Bangarh and Mahasthangarh in many respects. In all three cases the use of rivers for both communication and security purposes are same. Mahāsthāngarh was beside the river Karatoya, Koṭivarṣa was on Punarbhava and Asurgarh had the river Mahananda as its lifeline. However, with the passage of time the rivers lost their glory. But during the heyday, the forts were surrounded by spill channels of rivers. The traces of the spill channels are very clear still. Another point is, the short distance between these three sites. The distance between Asurgarh and Bangarh (as the crow flies) is 90 miles, while it is 94 miles between Bangarh to Asurgarh. Yet, we have not yet found any inscriptions or seals from Asurgarh, but on the basis of antiquities and geographical proximity with the other sites a primary assumption can be made that Asurgarh is also a Mauryan site and contemporary of Bangarh and Mahasthangarh.²⁰

Dwip Rajar Dighi

Dwip Nagar is situated on the course of the river Kanchan²¹ at a distance of 8 km from the district headquarters Raiganj on the NH34. The area is now populated by some Muslim and Santhal families. Here I found a big water tank of rectangular shape measuring approximately 200m (N-S) x 400m (E-W), which seemed to be very ancient with the evidences of a considerable settlement of the past. An annual fair is organized around this tank on the 1st day of Bengali calendar. Not only that, this site has a good number of ponds with pucca bathing ghats. The bricks measure 8"x8"x2" and are in a good state of preservation. My second important sample is a terracotta disc with a hole at the centre, of which the circumference is 9.5 inches. Probably this is the wheel of a toy cart.

Kamalabari

Kamalabari²² is situated on the bank of the river *Kulik* at a distance of 12 km from Raiganj. It is very interesting to see a large number of architectural fragments and a good number of bricks in this remote village, where the villagers still live in mud houses with corrugated tin roof. Not less than one square km. area of this place has good number of mounds. One of them is known as *Ganesh Bhita*, the

most important and quite large in measure. Legend says that this place is known as Ganesh Bhita because of the Ganesh image found from this mound. Another myth of Ganesh Bhita is that, it evokes the memory of king Ganesh, the only Hindu king of the sultanate period of Bengal. According to R. C. Majumdar, Raja Ganesh was an Amir in Sultanate period and the Zamindar of Bhaturia. S. K Saraswati in his "*Notes on Two Tours in the Districts of Malda and Dinajpur*" mentions "*Ganespara and Kans Rajar Pujar Than* lending support to the local tradition. He opines that in the district of Dinajpur *Karanji* was the native village of Raja Ganesh.²³ *Karanji* is not far from Kamalabari. However this area might have some link with *Danujmardana Dev* or Raja Ganesh. The structure of the mound is made of typical bricks of the Sultanate period. Five pillars are found from this mound, all of them are made of black sand stone. Two of them are 77 inches long with a circumference of 40 inches. One of them has on it some inscribed words of ten letters altogether. The inscription is so indistinct that it's quite impossible to decipher. This mound looks like a courtyard or hall of audience in a ruined state with an area of 210m². Small ponds are also there on the eastern side of the mound. I found a good number of terracotta pieces from this mound. Probably it was a granary of that time.

Another mound is found at a distance of 200m from the Ganesh Bhita. A well decorated Dashdala mosque was constructed over a Hindu temple of which architectural fragments lie scattered in and around the mosque. Some pillars of the previous structure are also found inside the mosque. The mosque was built by 6"×6" bricks. The pillar of the mosque is well decorated. The rectangular mosque is measuring 42 ft.×25.5 ft. at the outer side with four corner towers. The number of domes is 10. Four obtuse type arches face the east. All of them are measuring 7.5ft.×6.4 ft.. Within the boundary of the mosque one big and three small 'Mazars' can be seen.

On the southern part of the mosque the third mound is situated. Its 21 pillars, all made of black sand stone, standing in three rows create a structure of a big building. The mutilated pillars cover an area of 450 ft². All the pillars are of the same size. On the eastern part of this structure a big pedestal of a pillar stands separately.

During my survey I found some terracotta works, such as a flower vase, a well decorated brick and a giant mud pot (*kalasa*). The flower vase is well furnished. Some cement like material is visible at the bottom of the pot. The brick is lavishly decorated on both sides with the motif of a tree carved on it. The brick is measured

4"x8"x1". The *kalasa* is 35 inches high and its circumference is 83 inches. The *kalasa* is also simply decorated.

Tamasari Mathbari

Tamasari Mathbari is located at the distance of 21 km from Raiganj by road. The route direction to *Tamasari Mathbari* is from Raiganj-Durgapur to Itahar- Kunor-Tamasari Mathbari. The particular mound is known to the local people as *Patalsiri*. Tamosari is known for the relics of a Buddhist monastery.²⁴ The name *Tamasari Mathbari* is very interesting as well as confusing. The shape of the mound and its mutilated archaeological remains suggest that it was a Buddhist settlement, probably a monastery. The word '*Tamasari*' itself is curious. Whether this name is derived from two Bengali words ('Tama' = meaning darkness and '*chari*' meaning to quit), cannot be ascertained definitely. And the word '*Mathbari*' no doubt means monastery. Probably it was a center of Tantric Buddhism.

The mound is situated on the bank of once navigable and now completely dried up river the *Rohita*. The Sanskrit name of the river and the area i.e., *Varuna* are quite fascinating and points to a time when Sanskrit was a court language. This is supported by the copper plate inscriptions in Sanskrit found in the Varendra region. The mound is round in shape, built with 10"x12"x2" bricks. The name of the mound, i.e., '*Patalsiri*', has probably come from the stairs of the monastery which led to the river. Moreover in the architectural designs of Buddhist monasteries staircases were a common feature.

On the mound some pillars are still visible. The first pillar measures 41"x20", the second one is of 49"x27", the third one is of 67"x20" and the fourth one is of 26"x36". All of them have same type of curving. But most significant among them is the third one. It has an iron bar inserted in it as we can see in the architecture of *Nalanda Mahavihara*. It was a chief feature of Pala architecture. To keep the stone blocks together iron rods or bars were inserted through perforations made on the stone blocks. Probably the pillars were part of a massive structure. The use of iron in *Patalsiri* distinguishes itself from its counterparts of the study area. Such perforations are found in some stone blocks discovered from *Amati* (the last Pala capital). But iron spike or rods have not yet been spotted elsewhere. This feature also indicates that the settlement of Tamasari Mathbari is of later times compared to the other Buddhist sites of Dinajpur. The extant piece of iron measures 1.4cm x 5inches and 7cm x 1.2 cm.

In the conclusion I would like to say that the study area hides a huge dipository

of knowledge of our history, which is immensely fascinating. The other part of Dinajpur (Bangladesh) has already been far ahead in intensive research of the historical sites. Slowly but steadily our area of study is also becoming a place of interest for the researchers of different fields of study due to the huge number of antiquities recovered from the region.

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An extant wall of Asurgarh Fort



A bird's eye view of Asurgarh



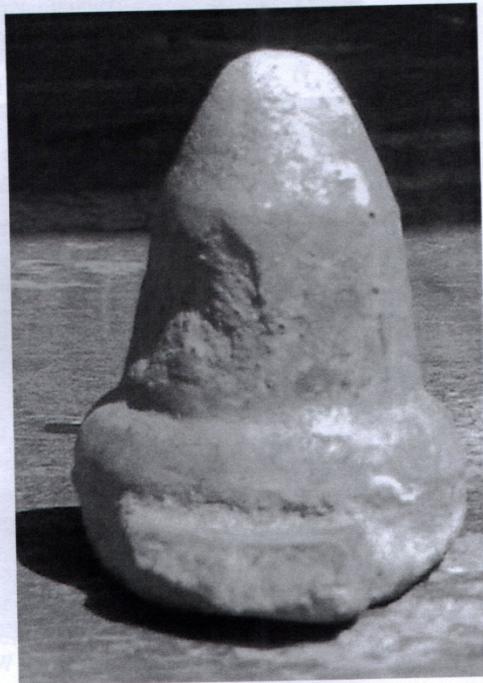
Water Tank of Asurgarh



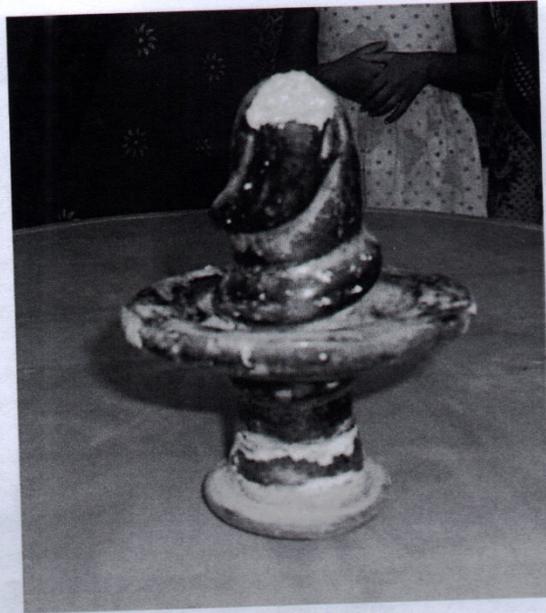
Brick Wall



Terracotta Figurine 1



Terracotta Figurine 2

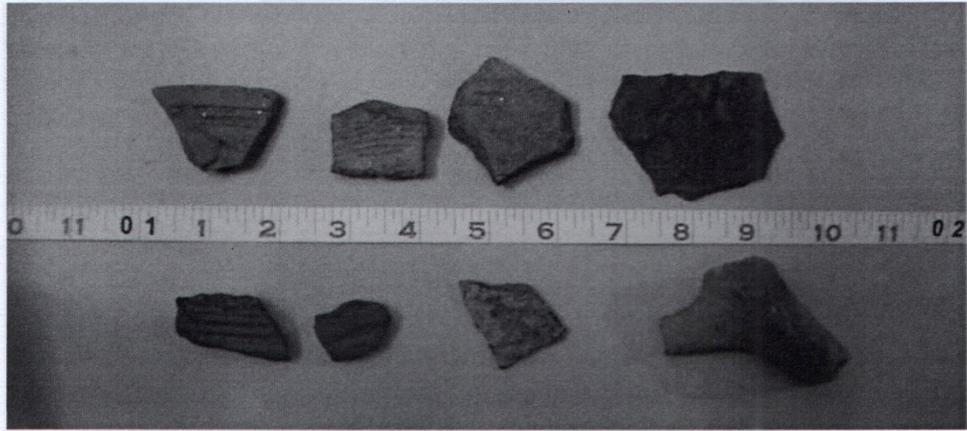


Terracotta Linga



Terracotta Disc

Terracotta Disc



Potsherds from Asurgarh



Dwiprajar Dighi



Ganesha Image (Stone) from Ganeshvita



Terracotta Hoard



Inscription



Use of iron spike



Dashdala Mosque



The Patalsiri mound