

# Chapter: 1

## Geo-political History of Bengal

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### 1.1. Physical Setting

The land of Bengal has historically had a distinct ‘regional entity’. The land is considered as a definite ‘geographical region’ in the entire sub-continent with distinct geo-features.<sup>1</sup> Bengal is the name given to the eastern part of the Indian sub-continent which formed a single province of British India. It extended up to the Himalayas in the north and the Bay of Bengal in the south. Its eastern and western limits were Brahmaputra, the Kaṅsa, the Surmā, the Sajuk rivers and the Nāgar, the Barākar and lower reaches of Suvarnarekhā respectively.<sup>2</sup> The above area was located roughly between 27°9' and 20°50' north latitude and 86°35' and 92°30' east longitude.<sup>3</sup> There were deep forests, highlands and mountains in the east, west and north, and the Bay of Bengal in the south. This way Bengal was surrounded by these natural girdles. As Niharjan Roy rightly puts, “At one extreme are the very high mountains, at the other the sea, and on both sides the hard hilly country, within, all the land is a plain. Such is the geographical fortune of the Bengali people.”<sup>4</sup>

In the early period of Indian history, the region of Bengal covered a large territorial area including the modern state of West Bengal and some parts of the adjoining districts of Assam and Bihar and also included most of present day of Bangladesh. In Assam the area included under the provinces of Bengal were Goālparā, Sylhet and Cachar. The districts of Mānbhūm, Sāntāl Pargāñās and Purnea of Bihar, also formed the part of the territory of Bengal. The *sarkārs* of Sylhet and Purnea, the *parganā* of Ākmahal (now Rājmahal) and the famous pass of Teliagarhi, now in Sāntāl Pargāñās, formed the integral parts of the *subāh* of Bengal in the days of Ākbar.<sup>5</sup>

The internal area of Bengal mostly depended on its river system which formed the most characteristic physical feature of the land. Satish Chandra precisely

states that as we have veins and arteries in our body, Bengal is also vivified by its numerous rivers.<sup>6</sup> N.R. Roy also mentions that the course of the history of Bengal has largely been dictated by its numerous and diverse rivers and streams. These waterways have developed as the life-force of the country through the ages. They have determined its appearance and nature, as they continue to do still.<sup>7</sup> These waterways, however, have sometimes been a boon to Bengal and sometimes a curse. Since time immemorial, they played a very important role in the formation of deltaic land, which, in turn, moulded the nature and character of human inhabitants. Amongst all the rivers that drenched the region, Brahmaputra was the greatest, stretching approximately 1800 miles.<sup>8</sup> The second largest river was the Ganges, over 1200 miles long in the delta. Other rivers included Bhāgīrathī, Padmā, Meghnā, Surmā, Ichhāmati, the Mathābhāngā and the Garāi, the Betnā, the Rupsā, the Kumar, the Bhairab, Ajay, Dāmodar, Kāsāi or Kapiśā, Dvārakeśvar, Rūpnārāyaṇ, Tistā, Torsā, Karatoyā, Ātrāi, Punarbhavā, Kouśhikī (the modern Kośī) and more. All these rivers repeatedly have changed their courses over the centuries. The process of destruction and reconstruction is still active.<sup>9</sup> M.H. Rashid comments that it was indeed the tangled network of these rivers and their countless branches that formulated this geographical entity.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately most of the above mentioned rivers have disappeared in modern Bengal. Apart from rivers, canals, streams, *bils* and *haors* also formed significant elements of the historical geography of Bengal.<sup>11</sup> The total area of the region of Bengal is approximately 80,000 sq. miles (2, 07,000 sq km).<sup>12</sup> Nafis Ahmed and M. Harunur Rashid are of the opinion that the area should be extended to 84,832 sq. miles (30,691 sq. miles in West Bengal and 54,141 sq. miles of present Bangladesh).<sup>13</sup> Two other prominent researchers like B.M. Morrison and Abdul Momin Chowdhury have indicated the extension of territory as 80,000 sq. miles on the basis of Spate, Bagchi and Strickland. So it is too tough to verify the exact geographical area of Bengal.

The different areas of what was known as Bengal in pre-partition days carried different geographical designations in ancient times. It is, therefore, very difficult to ascertain anything definite about the geography and local areas of ancient Bengal. It can be said that in ancient Bengal and present day, the natural boundary of an area was usually the river, whose beds changed constantly<sup>14</sup> and the area adjoining the river changed its geographical boundaries accordingly. The difficulty is further enhanced by the rise and fall of the political circumstances also. It can be clarified from an example that Tāmralipti (modern Tamluk) was included in Vaṅga and Kotivarṣha (modern Dinajpur) is mentioned as the chief city of Rāḍha since the early period of the zenith of Vaṅga and Rāḍha. But in the era of the Pālas and the Senas, there were two general and broad geographical divisions: Gauḍa and Vaṅga. These were the two broad politico-geographical divisions of the ancient and medieval era, and can be roughly identified with west and eastern Bengal respectively. From the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries onwards, Gauḍa and Vaṅga gradually became interchangeable terms owing to their political unification under the same sovereign, styled both Vaṅgapati and Gauḍeśvara, and the process was completed in the Mughal and the British periods. Thus the other geographical names of Bengal in olden days included Puṇḍravardhana and Varendrī (North Bengal), Suhma (Hooghly district), Rāḍha (the Birbhum-Bankura-Hooghly-Howrah and portions of Medinipur districts, thus including at times the ancient Suhma region), Tāmralipti or Tāmralipta (modern Tamluk in the Medinipur district) and Daṇḍabhūkti (Danton and its adjoining regions in the Medinipur district, sometimes including northern portions of Orissa), Samataṭa (comprising Chittagong, Comilla and Noakhali districts of present day Bangladesh), Harikela (Comilla, Śrīhaṭṭa and Chittagong districts of Bangladesh), Chandradvīpa (Barisal district of present Bangladesh) and Vaṅgāla (Chittagong, Noakhali and Barisal districts of present Bangladesh)(Map-1).<sup>15</sup> These names have come to us from ancient epigraphic and literary records. The detailed analysis of the relevant information shows that they were geographically associated with Gauḍa or

Vaṅga, that is, Western and Eastern Bengal. No two of them are mutually exclusive. In other words, some geographical boundaries are known to have overlapped and not remained restricted in the same region, and have assumed different names in different historical period. Thus it is proven that the well-known area has shifted boundaries from time to time, assuming a new shape and a new name each time.

The province of Bengal is given its present name by the British, and this name does not find place in ancient and medieval literature. So the question that naturally comes to our mind is how Bengal received its present name. In Bengali, the term employed in modern times to denote the province is Bāṅglā, of which the English rendering is Bengal. The term ‘Bāṅglā’ or ‘Bāṅgālā’ is derived from ‘Vaṅga’ which is so frequently used in early and medieval Indian epigraphy and literature. The English have adapted it into their own language as ‘Bengal’. Before the partition of India in 1947, ‘Bengal’ or ‘Bāṅglā’ was introduced as the name of the province of Bengal in British India. Due to the division, the area was divided between the provinces of West Bengal and East Pakistan. In 1971, East Pakistan region became the Republic of Bangladesh. The word ‘Bāṅglā’ or Bengal is still in use in the areas of West Bengal (India) and Bangladesh. However, these conditions are largely at a private level aimed at strengthening the cultural unity between West Bengal and the people of Bangladesh. These names have been culturally consolidated and kept alive in West Bengal, Bengali speaking areas of Bangladesh and adjacent areas. Two terms, phonetically akin to Bengal or Bāṅgālā occur in epigraphic and literary documents of the ancient and medieval periods. They are Vaṅga and Vaṅgāla. The famous historian Abul Fazl in his *Āin-i-Ākbarī* made the following remark, “The original name of Bengal was ‘Baṅg’. Its former rulers raised mounds measuring ten yards in height and twenty in breadth throughout the province which were called *al*. From this suffix, the name Bengal took its rise and currency.”<sup>16</sup> Under Akbar's rule, the entire area from Chittagong to Teliagarhi pass was known as ‘Subāh Bāṅgalāh’. Sources of still earlier periods refer to a tract known as Vaṅgāla. Its existence as a geographical

entity can be traced from the 8th century AD onwards. But epigraphic and literary references to Vāṅgāla amply bear testimony to its existence territorially distinct from a region called Vaṅga. Marco Polo describes Bāṅglā as a province in the south, its people speaking a strange language and being ‘wretched idol worshipers’. It is further described as ‘a favorable stop for India’.<sup>17</sup> According to Yule, Marco Polo’s Bāṅgālā was the Pegu. However, this note may also apply to the Noākhāli-Chittagong-Tippura region of south-eastern Bengal. It is corroborated by the account of Ovington. It runs, “Aracan is bounded by the kingdom of the Bay of Bengal, some authors making Chaṭigam its first border city”.<sup>18</sup> It is thus clear that the *subāh* of Bāṅgalāh during Akbar’s paramountcy time marks the entire area which was equivalent to the undivided province of Bengal. Bengal is referred to as the Bengal country by Ralph Fitch, and denotes the same region. But the term Vāṅgāla is used in a restricted sense. If Abul Fazl is to be believed, the term Vāṅgāla is derived from the word Vaṅga. Thus from the above discussion we may conclude that Bāṅgalā came from the word ‘Baṅga’. It includes the entire Bengali-speaking area of the eastern part of the Indian sub-continent. Though in early period of history ‘Baṅga’ denoted a part of Bengal, that is, south-eastern Bengal, after the assumption of power by the British the term ‘Vaṅga’ or ‘Bāṅgalā’ converted to ‘Bengal’ linguistically.

From the pre-historic time to the Medieval Age Bengal was divided into different *janapadas* such as Gauḍa, Puṇḍra, Varendra, Rāḍha, Sumha, Tāmralipta, Samataṭa, Vaṅga, Vāṅgāla etc, as already mentioned before. These *janapadas* did not emerge as powers at the same time. In different courses of time, a certain portion of the entire area emerged as a supreme power and it extended its territory over a large area. Sometimes it included the other powerful states mentioned above within its territory. These *janapadas* had separate existence. It was during the time of *gauḍadhīpa* Śaśāṅka in the eighth century AD and afterwards that the *janapadas* of Puṇḍra, Gauḍa and Vaṅga became identical with the whole of Bengal. Apart from the existence of different *janapadas*, new divisions of Bengal like Vāṅgāla, Harikela,

Chandradwipa, and Samataṭa emerged and they had further sub-divisions also.<sup>19</sup> Gradually, however, those sub-subdivisions ceased to exist. There was an endeavour to integrate the different areas in the name of Gauḍa from the period of Śaśāṅka to the rise of the Pālas, but it proved to have been a failure.<sup>20</sup> The whole of Bengal assuming the name of Vāṅga emerged in the Muslim period. The culmination was reached during the time of Ākbar when the *subāh* of Bengal came into prominence. Bengal came into existence with more complete form during the time of the British. Although it was cut to size from what it was during the time of Ākbar. From the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD onwards, the chronological periods are satisfactorily datable on the basis of epigraphical records. These help us to trace more clearly the chief political or geographical divisions and administrative units of Bengal. Therefore, at the present state of our knowledge, it would perhaps be appropriate to enumerate the more important divisions along with short explanatory notes on the various connotations of the names gleaned from epigraphic and literary sources.

### 1.1.1. Puṇḍravardhana

Puṇḍravardhana was an ancient earmarked kingdom from the Indian sub-continent. According to P.L. Vaidya, the name Puṇḍravardhana occurred for the first time in the Buddhist text *Divyavadana*.<sup>21</sup> It was composed between A.D. 200 and 350 A.D. Generally, the home of Puṇḍra, a group of people speaking a language different from those of the Indo-Aryan family, was known as Puṇḍravardhana.<sup>22</sup> There are various theories about the origin of the word ‘Puṇḍra’. According to a theory, the word ‘Puṇḍra’ is derived from a disease called ‘Pāṇḍu’. The majority of the people in the area who were suffering from this disease were known as Puṇḍrakṣetra (land of Puṇḍra). Another theory indicates that Puṇḍra is a species of sugarcane. The land which cultivated a large quantity of sugarcane was known as Puṇḍadeśa (Land of Puṇḍa). It is said in a legend that Ṛṣi Dīrghatamas, who gave

birth on the queen of the Asura king Bāli five sons Aṅga, Vaṅga, Suhma, Puṇḍra and Kaliṅga. They established five kingdoms after their own respective names.

The earliest reference to the Puṇḍras as a group of people goes back to the *Aitareya Āryaṇaka* in 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. along with other peoples like Andhras, Śavaras, Pulindas and Mutivas .They lived in the east of the Sadānirā river (Gandakī river).<sup>23</sup> Patañjali also mentions Puṇḍra along with Aṅga, Vaṅga and Suhma. There is also mention in the Epics and the *Purāṇas*, the later *sūtras* and the *Dharmaśāstras* of the Puṇḍras as allied to the *dāsas* and the *dasyus*.<sup>24</sup> In the *Dronaparvaṇ* of the *Mahābhārata*, Vāsudeva is said to have defeated the Puṇḍras along with other allied peoples. Vāsudeva has also been described as a sovereign ruler over the Puṇḍras.<sup>25</sup> None of the texts, however, mention anything about the geographical denotation of the term Puṇḍra or Puṇḍravardhana. The Digvijaya section of the *Mahābhārata* located the Puṇḍras towards the east of Monghyr. In the above text, the epic hero Bhīma in his East Indian campaign is said to have killed the king of Modagiri (Monghyr) and conquered Puṇḍra and Kauśikī-kaccha.<sup>26</sup> The name Puṇḍra gradually developed into that of a territorial unit. Puṇḍra subsequently shaped into a regional unit. Puṇḍravardhana, land of the Puṇḍras, was placed by epigraphs of the Gupta period and the ancient Chinese writers in North Bengal.

Puṇḍranagara or Puṇḍravardhanapura, the capital of ancient Puṇḍravardhana, is identical with the ruins of Mahāsthāngarh. These ruins were discovered on the right bank of the river Karatoya in the Bogra district in Bangladesh.<sup>27</sup> Puṇḍranagara was the first ancient urban center with politico-economic and religious importance.<sup>28</sup> It continued to be an important place up to the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD, as it is proven by the *Karatoyā Māhātmya*.<sup>29</sup> However, Puṇḍranagara as also Puṇḍravardhana, came to be designated as Mahāsthān.<sup>30</sup> An inscription of the third century BC found in Mahāsthāngarh indicates that the inhabitants of area imbibed many elements of Aryan culture<sup>31</sup>.The scholars are unanimous in identifying this administrative division with northern Bengal and

deriving its name from the well-known ancient tribal name, the Puṇḍras, and also in identifying their capital Mahāsthān in Bogra district. But when the question comes to the extent of the jurisdiction of the *bhukti*, no definite answer can be offered. Moreover, the variations of its extent of jurisdiction at different periods of history would be worthy of investigation. There is need to answer these points by tabulating and collating the data available in the epigraphs.

The unit originally included the northern part of Bengal, i.e., Rājshāhi- Bogrā- Dinājpur areas of Bangladesh and parts of northern section of present West Bengal and subsequently extended in a large area to the east of the Bhagirathi up to Chittagong and Sylhet. It means that it included a wide part of Bengal which extended from Sylhet to Rājmahal, from the mountain region of North Bengal to the sea-shore, and from Comilla to the 24 Parganas.<sup>32</sup> It also means that about 75% of the area of Bengal was under the jurisdiction of one administrative division, whereas in the remaining 25 %, we know of the existence of even three *bhuktis* in the later period.<sup>33</sup> Collating the information of the Gupta epigraphs and Hiuen-Tsang's account, the boundary of Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* in the Gupta age and the succeeding centuries may be fixed with a fair degree of certainty. Thus it comprised the whole region of northern Bengal from the Rājmahal, the Ganges and the Bhagirathi to the Karatoya.<sup>34</sup>

So far no reference has been found of Puṇḍravardhana in any record of the kings who ruled northern and western Bengal during the period between the Guptas and the Pālas. The five Dāmodarpur Copper-plate Inscriptions issued from 128 to the year of 224 (of the Gupta Era) inscribed Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* as an important administrative division of the Gupta Empire. Seven Pāla Copper-plates refer to the Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti*.<sup>35</sup> The internal evidence could suggest that the land granted by them might have been located in northern Bengal.<sup>36</sup> Thus it would appear that the Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* of the Pāla records should also be taken to imply an area similar to that mentioned in the Gupta records, i.e., northern Bengal.<sup>37</sup> There is no

doubt that this geographical division was transformed into an administrative unit under the imperial Guptas. The rulers of Chandra dynasty, who ruled in south-eastern Bengal, have mentioned ‘Paundra’ or ‘Paundravardhana-bhukti’, and not Paundravardhana-bhukti as a *bhukti* in their records. Four plates of Śrichandra, one plate of Kalyāṇachandra, two plates of Laḍahachandra and one plate of Govindachandra refer to records of land granted within Paundra-bhukti.<sup>38</sup> From these plates, it appears that the land granted by kings included the Dacca-Faridpur, Comilla-Noakhali and Sylhet areas of south-eastern Bengal. Therefore, the Paundra-bhukti of the Chandra records should reasonably be taken to connote an area falling in south-eastern Bengal.<sup>39</sup>

Paundra-bhukti is also found in the records of the Varmana rulers who ruled in south-eastern Bengal in the late 11<sup>th</sup> and early 12<sup>th</sup> century AD. The records make it clear that the place must have been in south-eastern Bengal and there is no possibility of its having been in northern Bengal. We know that in the said period North Bengal was first under the Kaivarta rulers and later on retrieved by Rāmapāla.<sup>40</sup> Later, the Senas ruled the whole of Bengal including northern and south-eastern Bengal under one patron. In the records of Senas, too, there is mention of Paundravardhana-bhukti, but the precise location of the land is in question. The Bārāckpur plate of Vijayasena also records a land grant in Khādi *vishaya* of Paundravardhana-bhukti.<sup>41</sup> The Sundarban plate of Lakṣmaṇasena is about a land grant in Khādi *maṇḍala* of Paundravardhana-bhukti.<sup>42</sup> The Tarpanadighī<sup>43</sup> and Mādhāinagar plates<sup>44</sup> of Lakṣmaṇasena are records of land grant in Paundravardhana-bhukti. Both the plates have an additional phrase *vārendryam* (Varendrī), which unquestionably place the lands in northern Bengal. The Madanapāra<sup>45</sup> and Edilpur plates<sup>46</sup> of the successors of Lakṣmaṇasena also mention Paundravardhana-bhukti and its location with the additional phrase, *vānge-vikramapura-bhāge* while the Sāhitya Parisat plate<sup>47</sup> has the phrase *vānge nāvye*. Thus, from the Sena records it would appear that the Paundravardhana-bhukti

included northern, south-western as well as south-eastern parts of Bengal.<sup>48</sup> The *bhukti* under the Senas, therefore, can be said to connote a very wide area.

From analyzing the above data of the epigraphs it can be safely concluded that the ‘Puṇḍravardhana’ in the Gupta and Pāla records and the ‘Pauṇḍra-*bhukti*’ of the Chandras and Varmanas cannot be considered to be one and the same.<sup>49</sup> The Gupta plates locate the lands of Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* unquestionably in Rājshāhi, Bogrā and Dinājpur districts or broadly in the region of north Bengal. The Pāla records also largely locate it in the same location except for the deviation found in the Khālimpur plate. The plate mentions Vyāghrataṭī-*maṇḍala* and if its suggested location in south-western Bengal is accepted then we have to decide the extension of its jurisdiction in south-western Bengal. The Chandra and Varmana epigraphic sources clearly indicate the location of Pauṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* in south-eastern Bengal with headquarter at Vikramapura and their contemporary Pāla rulers ruled in north, north-western and south-western parts of Bengal. Hence, it is obvious that the Pauṇḍra-*bhukti* of the Chandras and the Varmanas was definitely different from the Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* of the Gupta and Pāla records.<sup>50</sup>

So there can be two suggestions regarding the repetition of this name. The first one is that the names are apparently the same. This can only be the case of duplication of place names. It is not something extraordinary in ancient India. The other explanation is that the two names are derived from the tribal names ‘Puṇḍra’ and ‘Pauṇḍra’, the latter being an offshoot of the former.<sup>51</sup> In view of the fact that the origin of the name of the *bhukti* in the Chandra epigraphs cannot be explained by the extension of Pāla rule in the region of south-eastern Bengal .The Senas established their control on the entire area of Bengal with their headquarter at Vikramapura. It is to be said that they took possession of south-eastern Bengal before they completely ousted the Pālas from northern Bengal. After that they adopted the term Pauṇḍra following the tradition of south-eastern Bengal and applied it in their records and thus Pauṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* came to denote a very

wide territorial unit including the regions of northern, south-western and south-eastern Bengal. With the occupation of this region, they realised that the names of two areas are almost the same, and so they chose to use only one. But at the same time, the need for laying down the conditions for identifying the location of the lands was also felt.

The Mauryas first established a large empire spread across Ancient India, with its capital at Pāṭaliputra. It was very near to Puṇḍravardhana. After the fall of the Mauryas, the Guptas built a vast territory across India including Puṇḍravardhana. Most copper-plates in the Gupta period refer to her eastern region as Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti*. It was the core territory of the Guptas until the end of their rule.<sup>52</sup> In the 6th century A.D., the Gupta Empire decayed and the region was ruled by the Tibetan ruler in 567-579 AD named Sambatson. Thereafter, Bengal was divided into two empires, Samataṭa in the east and Gauḍa in the west. Gauḍa became a part of Śaśāṅka's kingdom in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>53</sup> From Pala epigraphical sources it also appears that Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* was included in a region of north Bengal, similar to that of the Gupta period, but it was not a power centre any more.<sup>54</sup> It was the part of the empire of Chandra Kings and Bhoj Verma. Finally from the Sena records it would appear that Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* included northern, south-western and even some parts of south-eastern Bengal.<sup>55</sup> Its identity gradually faded and it became a part of the surrounding area.

### **1.1.2. Varendra**

Another geographical unit came into prominence since the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>56</sup> It was co-extensive with large tracts of North Bengal and areas now in Bangladesh. This unit was Varendra or Varendrī or Bārind, currently in Rangpur and Rājshāhi division of Bangladesh included in the Puṇḍravardhana or Puṇḍra Kingdom of the ancient period. Most of the historians believe Varendra is identical with Puṇḍravardhana or Puṇḍra-*desa*. It is stated in the *Rāmacharita* of Sandhyākaranandī in the 12<sup>th</sup> century

that Varendra-*maṇḍala* forms the best part of the world and Puṇḍravardhana is its crest-jewel (Varendrī-*maṇḍala-cūḍāmaṇi*).<sup>57</sup> The third chapter of the *Rāmacharita* gives an account of the land of Varendrī—its geographical denotation, topography, flora and fauna and mentions its location with the streams of Gaṅgā and Karatoya flowing on either side.<sup>58</sup> Cunningham located the boundary of Varendra to the Ganges and Mahananda on the west, the Karatoya on the east, the Padmā on the south and the land between Coochbehar and the Terai on the north.<sup>59</sup> Sandhyākaranandī mentions Varendra as the homeland of the Pālas. In the Sena period Varendra constituted an administrative unit under the political division of Puṇḍravardhana.<sup>60</sup> The Mādhāinagar Inscription of the reign of Laṅkmaṇasena records the grant a village named Dāpaṇiyā Pāṭaka near Kāntapura in Varendri within Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti*. The *Tābāqat -i- Nāsirī* mentions Bārind as a wing of the territory of Lakhnauti on the eastern side of the Ganges.<sup>61</sup> Morrison writes that Varendra might be described as a ‘buffer zone’ between the North Indian dynastic territories and the dynastic territories of the Kingdoms centred further down the Gaṅgā-Padmā rivers at Vikramapura.<sup>62</sup>

An important part of Varendri was apparently known as Sāratthi or Śrāvasti. The territory included Baigrām near Hili in the Dinajpur District, Krodanja, Kolacha and Tarkari.<sup>63</sup> Among other localities of Varendrī may be mentioned Bhagvagrama, Belāhishti, Kāntapura and Nātari. The first two localities cannot be identified satisfactorily, while Kāntapura and Nātari can be identified with Kāntanagara in the Dinajpur District and Nātor in the district of Rājshāhi respectively.<sup>64</sup> According to H.C. Raychoudhuri, the Gupta dynasty originated from the Varendri region. According to the Khālimpur Copper-plate Inscription,<sup>65</sup> the first Pāla emperor Gopāla was the son of a warrior who was known as Vapyaṭa. The *Rāmacharita* admits that Varendra was the fatherland (Janakabhu) of the Pālas.

### **1.1.3. Gauḍadeśa**

Gauḍa was home to many ancient kingdoms for many centuries after the establishment of the territory. There are several opinions about the precise location of Gauḍa, mainly due to the obscurity associated with the references made by ancient literatures. Pāṇini<sup>66</sup> mentions ‘Gauḍapura’ in his book. Kauṭilya also mentions the name of Gauḍa along with Vaṅga and Puṇḍra.<sup>67</sup> In certain ancient records, there is a reference to Puṇḍravardhana, being a part of Gauḍa.<sup>68</sup> The country was also known to Vātsyāyana, the author of the *Kāmasūtra*. Varāhamihira in his *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* distinguishes Gauḍaka from Pauṇḍra (North Bengal), Tāmraliptaka (part of the Medinipur district), Vaṅga (central and eastern Bengal), Samataṭa (Noakhali, Comilla and Chittagong), and Vardhamana (Burdwan) etc.<sup>69</sup> The Haraha Inscription states that Iśanavarman caused “the Gauḍas living in the sea-shore, to remain within their proper realm in the future”.<sup>70</sup> The *Bhavishya Purāṇa* indicates that on the north the Gauḍa country was washed by the river Padmā and on the south by Burdwan.<sup>71</sup> Murāri in his *Anargharāghava* written in the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD mentions the capital of the *janapada* of Gauḍa as Champā. Murāri identifies Champā with the city of Champānagarī. It stood on the left bank of the river Damodara, north-west of Burdwan town. It was included in *sarkār* of Māndāran mentioned in *Āin-i-Ākbarī*. Kṛiṣṇa Miśra in his *Probadha Chandrodaya* mentions Rāḍha and Bhuriśreṣṭikā as included in Gauḍa-*rāṣṭra*.<sup>72</sup> In a broader sense, on the basis of the evidence of the Ānandabhaṭṭa’s *Vallālacharita*,<sup>73</sup> Gauḍa corresponds with the greater part of northern India including Saraswata (Punjab), Kānyakubja (Kanauj), Gauḍa (Bengal), Mithilā (Darbhanga) and Utkala (Orissa). In Kalhana’s *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*<sup>74</sup> we find the expression of *Pañcha-Gauḍa* signifying five divisions of Gauḍa itself. Hence the sources mentioned above prove its antiquity.

But it does not provide us with any clue as to when Gauḍa-*pura* or Gauḍa-*deśa* emerged, and its location is also obscure till now. The name Gauḍa is derived from the word *guḍa* meaning ‘sugar’. The country, of which Gauḍa was the chief city, was also known by the same name possibly because it was famous in ancient times for

its production of sugar. But whether the name of the city was applied to the country or that of the country to its chief city cannot be determined in the present state of our knowledge.<sup>75</sup> In 7<sup>th</sup> century Śāśāṅka, the Gauḍa king, had undoubtedly his capital at Karṇasuvarṇa, represented by the ruin of Rājbādīdaṅgā six miles (9.6 km.) southwest of present Berhampur, headquarters of the Murshidabad district.<sup>76</sup> Hiuen-Tsang is also of the view that the capital of Gauḍa was Karṇasuvarṇa situated not very far from the Raktaviṭi (Lo-to-wei-chi) monastery.<sup>77</sup> Raktaviṭi is identified with Rāṅgamāti in the Murshidabad district. So it seems to suggest that the centre of Gauḍa was formed by the territories in and around the Murshidabad district. There is a story linking Gauḍa with Rāḍha region. The Haraha Inscription of 554 AD reveals the fact that Īśānavarman Maukhari defeated the Gauḍa people who lived near the sea.<sup>78</sup> This information is also supported by two Medinipur Copper-plate grants of Śāśāṅka (595-619AD)<sup>79</sup> and the Gurgi Inscription of the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>80</sup> Another fact is that the city of Gauḍa was built in its present site to the south of Malda after some time, probably in the age of the Pālas.

In modern times, the name Gauḍa is often used in Bengali literature in order to denote the whole region inhabited by the Bengali speaking people. It is likely that a little unit of Murshidabad was initially called as Gauḍa. Afterwards the entire kingdom was renamed as Gauḍadeśa. Thus the area overlaps with most of the area of Uttar-Rāḍha, as is going to be mentioned below. Kṛiṣṇa Miśhra, an 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century author in his book *Prabodha-chandrodaya* mentions that Gauḍa-rāṣṭra includes Rāḍha and Bhuriśreshthikā, identified with Bhurshut, Hooghly and Howrah districts.<sup>81</sup> The country became very popular during the period of Śāśāṅka. However, in a sense, the Gauḍa country seems to have comprised with the present district of Murshidabad together with the southern most areas of the Malda district of Bengal. The location of Gauḍadeśa and Puṇḍravardhana always kept overlapping. *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* has given a satisfactory solution in this regard. Puṇḍravardhana comprised of seven *deśas*, viz., I) Gauḍa II) Varendra (Malda-Rajshahi-Bogra region), III) Niviti IV)

Suhma-deśa V) Jhārikhaṇḍa (Santal Parganas District) called *jāṅgala* apparently meaning ‘jungly’ VI) Varāhabhūmi (Barabhum in the Purulia District) and VII) Vardhamāna (Burdwan).<sup>82</sup> The localities forming the Gauḍa country according to the same tradition are: 1) Navadvipa (in the Nadia District), 2) Santipura (in the Nadia District), 3) Maulapattana (Mollai in the Hooghly District), 4) Kantakapattana (Katwa in the Burdwan District).<sup>83</sup> The tradition would imply that the Gauḍa country comprised the present Murshidabad district together with parts of the Nadia, Burdwan and Hooghly districts of West Bengal. It extended into Malda during the time of Pāla and Sena kings. Thus, from the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, Gauḍa also appears as a unit of the Puṇḍravardhana.

Hiuen-Tsang who travelled to India in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. describes Karṇasuvarṇa as the name of both the kingdom and the capital of Śaśāṅka. At the same time Bāna, the court poet of Harṣa, who ruled in the same time of Śaśāṅka, calls her patron as the ‘Lord of the North’ and *gauḍādhīpa*. There is no doubt that Gauḍa was the usual name of Hiuen-Tsang’s kingdom of Karṇasuvarṇa.<sup>84</sup> The Chinese pilgrim distinguishes the above country from Puṇyavardhana or Puṇḍravardhana in north Bengal, Samataṭa in south-east Bengal and Tāmralipti in south-west Bengal. Indian literature also separates Gauḍa from that of other parts of Bengal. The *Arthaśāstra* describes the textile products of Vaṅga and Puṇḍra alongside Suhma, Samataṭa, Lauhitya (the Brahmaputra valley), Gauḍaka (Gauḍa), Pauṇḍra (Puṇḍravardhana), Tāmraliptika (Tāmralipta) and Vardhamāna.<sup>85</sup>

It is known that after the fall of the Guptas the Gauḍas established an independent monarchy in the sixth century A.D. Gauḍa became famous under the leadership of Śaśāṅka. He extended his territory across a vast area of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Besides Śaśāṅka, four other names of kings who ruled over Gauḍa consecutively before Śaśāṅka, are also yielded by the inscription. The kings are Jayanāga, Dharmāditya, Gopachandra and Samāchāradeva, who ruled in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>86</sup> Under the vigorous rule of these monarchs, Gauḍa appears to have

extended its power over the neighboring territories. One of the kings of Gauḍa mentioned above fought with the Maukhari King Iśānavarman about the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Another conquered and annexed Kāmarupa to his empire around the close of that century.<sup>87</sup> After the death of Śaśāṅka the sun of Gauḍa can be said to have extinguished and it became a territory of the Pāla Empire. The Pāla emperors were said to have been known as *vaṅgapati* (Lord of Vaṅga) and *gauḍeśvara* (Lord of Gauḍa). The Sena kings also called themselves *gauḍeśvra*. Since then, Gauḍa and Vaṅga were considered to be interchangeable names for the whole of Bengal. In the early Muslim period, Gauḍa used to be a city of Lakṣmaṇāvatī and has been renamed as Lakhnauti in present-day Malda.

In order to determine the limits of Gauḍa, various cities, which served as the capital of the state of Gauḍa from time to time should also be mentioned. The first capital of Gauḍa was probably Karṇasuvarṇa established by Śaśāṅka. A detailed description was given by the Chinese pilgrim in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. The identification of Karṇasuvarṇa has recently been made on impeccable archaeological evidences found at Rājbāḍidāṅgā in the district of Murshidabad as already mentioned. The last reference to Karṇasuvarṇa can be found in *Karpūramāñjari*.<sup>88</sup> Thereafter no information is available on how the grand old city of Karṇasuvarṇa came to an end.

Next to Karṇasuvarṇa, Champa has been referred to as the capital of Gauḍa in the *Anargharāghava* of the poet Murāri in the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. At that time, the Pāla Empire had already been established and they had founded the capital city of Champa. The city was located in present Bhagalpur (same as Champānagarī in the Āin-i-Ākbarī) in ancient Aṅga-Magadha country, and was ruled by Dharmapāla and Devapāla who had assumed the title of *gauḍeśvara*. Pāla king Rāmapāla founded another capital on the north of Ganges and named it Rāmāvati (referred to in the Āin-i-Ākbarī as Ramāuti). Moreover, the water-fortress (*jaladūrga*) mentioned in the Gurgi inscription might have been another Gauḍa-capital. The modern Samudragarh near Navadvipa has been identified with *jaladūrga*. Dhoyī in his *Pavanadūta* has

mentioned Vijayapura, a royal residence of Gauḍa.<sup>89</sup> It was in all probability a new capital of Gauḍa. It has been suggested that perhaps Vijayapura might have been built on the very site of the present Samudragarh, where the previous capital of *jaladūrga* was located. Along with Vijayapura, Lakṣmaṇasena established another capital and named it Lakṣmaṇāvatī which is identified with present Gauḍa.<sup>90</sup> The Gaṅgā ran between the cities of Rāmāvatī and Lakṣmaṇāvatī which lay to the north and the south of the river respectively. Both of them were around modern Malda.

About a century after the establishment of the Gauḍa kingdom under Śaśāṅka, Gauḍa's name was used in general sense to indicate the countries of Eastern India. In Daṇḍin's *Kāvyadarśa* written in the seventh century A.D., we find Gauḍa as Prācya, i.e., Eastern India. Daṇḍin draws a distinction between the Gauḍa or eastern and the Vaidarbha or southern styles. The application of the name in the general sense of Āryāvarta or North India can also be traced elsewhere in literature. There is a tradition regarding king Bhoja (circa 1000-55 A.D.) of the Paramāra dynasty of Mālava which claims that he ruled over both Gauḍa and Dakṣināpatha for a little over 55 years. This description often confused the scholars. Scholars concluded that Bhoja extended his territory over Gauḍa which indicates the whole of north India and over Dakṣināpatha or south India. It can be said from the above statement that Bhoja ruled over the whole of India including both its northern and southern halves. Thus in a limited sense it can be said that Gauḍa is an ancient division of Bengal among many others. The term initially denoted a small area, but it came to denote a larger area in subsequent times. Sometimes it overlapped with the other divisions of Bengal, which was quite the norm in that period.

#### 1.1.4. Rāḍha

Rāḍha or Rāḍhā is another territorial unit frequently referred to in both literary and epigraphic records under various names such as Rāḍha, Raḍa, Lāḍha, Laḍa, Lāṭa, Lāla, Rāla, Rāḍhī, Rārā, Rāl, Sumha etc. The unit falls to the west of the

Bhagirathi. The present districts of Birbhum, Bankura, Burdwan, Hoogly, Howrah and Medinipur in West Bengal were under the territory of Rāḍha. The old lateritic alluvium formed the historic land. This area was situated on the rich banks of the rivers such as Ajay, Damodar, Rupnarayan, Kasai and Bhagirathi-Hughli Rivers, with rich alluvium soil and mature deltas.<sup>91</sup> It is bounded by the Rājmahal and Chotanagpur plateau on the west and Padmā and Bhāgīrathī rivers on the east. The region hosted an ancient civilization though not much of its ancient history is available.<sup>92</sup>

The variations of the name Rāḍha are found in different sources. The name of an ancient Indian people, Gaṅgāriḍai has been referred to in Greek literature. It is sometimes considered to be a Greek corruption of ‘Gaṅgā-Rāḍha’. The Greek writer Diodorus Siculus has mentioned that the river Ganges constituted the eastern border of Gaṅgāriḍai. Based on this statement and the identification of the Gaṅges with Bhāgīrathī-Hoogli, Gaṅgāriḍai can be identified with the Rāḍha region. However, other writers like Plutarch, Curtius, and Solinus mention that Gaṅgāriḍai was located in the eastern part of the Gaṅgā river. In addition, Pliny writes that Gaṅgāriḍai occupied the entire territory in the mouth of the Gaṅges.<sup>93</sup> From this, it is understood that the Gaṅgāriḍai region comprised West Bengal and the greater coastal region of Bangladesh, from Bhāgīrathī-Hughli River in West Bengal to the Padmā River of present day of Bangladesh. However according to D.C. Sircar, the word ‘Gaṅgāriḍai’ is simply the plural for ‘Gaṅgāriḍ’ and it is derived from the base ‘Gaṅgā’. It means Gaṅgā people.<sup>94</sup>

The earliest literary reference to Rāḍha, Lāḍha, and Laḍa is to be found in Jaina chronicle *Āchāraṅgasūtra*. Here we find that Mahāvīra travelled the pathless country of Vajjabhūmi and Subbabhūmi in the 6th century BC aiming to promote his religion.<sup>95</sup> During his journey the people treated him very badly. They provoked their dogs to bite him. These two names Vajjabhūmi and Subbabhūmi were replaced by Dakṣhiṇa-Rāḍha and Uttara-Rāḍha in the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. The fact indicates

that the people of Rāḍha of western Bengal were very savage and barbaric at that time. *Dipavarmśa* and *Mahāvarmśa* refer to the tradition that Vijaya, who hailed from Siṁhpura in Lāla, conquered Srilanka .This ‘Lāla’ is identical with Rāḍha.<sup>96</sup>

The earliest epigraphic reference to Rāḍha is possibly found in an inscription from Mathura. It indicates the erection of a Jaina image at the request of a Jain monk, an inhabitant of the territory of Rāra.<sup>97</sup> Scholars have identified this location with Rāḍha or Western Bengal.<sup>98</sup> The succeeding reference has been found in the Khajuraho inscription of 1059 V.S.<sup>99</sup> It claims that the queens of Kāñchī, Andhra, Rāḍha and Aṅga were imprisoned by the Chāndella king, Dhaṅgadeva. It is known from the Naihāti Copper-plate Inscription of Vallālasena (1160-1178 AD)<sup>100</sup> that Rāḍha was the ancestral settlement of the Senas. The Deopāra Inscription of Vijayasena also provides us with the fact that Sāmantasena, the founder of the royal Sena Dynasty, took shelter in a hermitage on the bank of the Ganges in his old age.<sup>101</sup> The hermitage was located in Rāḍha. The Bhūvaneśvara Inscription of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva<sup>102</sup> records that Rāḍha was a waterless, dry and forested region. The description is very similar to the weather of parts of West Bengal such as Burdwan. A tradition mentioned in *Digvijaya Prakāśa* locates Rāḍha to the north of the river Damodara and to the west of Gauḍa. *Tābāqat-i-Nāsirī* also suggests that the territory of Rāḍha was located to the west of the river Gaṅgā and formed the left wing of Lakhnauti.<sup>103</sup>

The unit of Rāḍha is further divided into two parts- Dakṣiṇa Rāḍha (South) and Uttara Rāḍha (North) with the Ajaya river as their border.<sup>104</sup> Tirumālāi Rock Inscription of the 13<sup>th</sup> regnal year (1025 A.C) of Rājendra Chola of Chola dynasty refers to the two divisions of Rāḍha, northern (Uttira Lāḍam) and southern (Takkana-Lāḍam).<sup>105</sup> The earliest reference to Uttara Rāḍha is found in Indian Museum Plate of the Gaṅga King Devendravarman in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>106</sup> The Belāva Copper-plate of Bhojavarman<sup>107</sup> mentions that Siddbāla was a village in Uttara-Rāḍha. The Naihāti Grant of Vallālasena<sup>108</sup> also describes Uttara Rāḍha as *maṇḍala* of *bhukti* of

Vardhamāna. Śaktipura grant of Lakṣmaṇasena<sup>109</sup> mentions Uttara-Rāḍha as a territorial unit denoting an area which at least partly included the Mayuraksi Valley flowing through the Birbhum district. Among the sites belonging to Uttara-Rāḍha are Rājbaḍidāṅga and Gītagrāma in Murshidabad, Paikar, Batikar, Bahiri Kags and Kotasur in Birbhum, and Vallala Rājār Ḏhibi in Nadia.

The mention of Dakṣhina-Rāḍha is also found in the Gaonri plates of Vākpati Muñja (981 AD).<sup>110</sup> In the well-known Tirumālāi Rock Inscription of Rājendra Chola,<sup>111</sup> Takkana-Lāḍam (Dakṣina-Rāḍha) was separated from Daṇḍabhukti, Vāṅgalādeśa and Uttara-Rāḍha. The 10<sup>th</sup> century author Śridhara Bhaṭṭa who composed the famous philosophical work *Nyāyakandalī* in the year 913 A.D. was born in a village called Bhūrisṛṣṭi. This Bhūrisṛṣṭi is identified within the territory of Dakṣiṇa Rāḍha.<sup>112</sup> *The Prabodhacandrodāya* of Kṛiṣṇa Miśra<sup>113</sup> suggests that Bhuriśreṣṭhikā, identified with modern Bhusrusut on the Damodar in the Hoogly district, belonged to Dakṣiṇa-Rāḍha. Rupendra K. Chattopadhyaya<sup>114</sup> therefore claims that a large part of West Bengal belongs to what was formerly Dakṣiṇa Rāḍha, placed between Ajay and Damodar river. It includes a large section of Burdwan, Howrah, Hooghly and Burdwan districts. Dakṣiṇa Rāḍha's southern boundary could have extended up to the Rupnarayan river, and its western border crossed Damodar river and is now in the Arambagh subdivision. The well-known archaeological sites like Betor in Howrah, Saptagrām and Garh Mandaran in Hoogli, Bharatpur and Mangalkot in Burdwan and possibly Dihar and Puskarana in Bankura, belonged to Dakṣina Rāḍha. On the other hand sites such as Rājbaḍidāṅga and Gitagram in Murshidabad, Paikar, Batikar, Bāhiri, Kagas and Kotāsur in Birbhum, and Vallāla Rājār Ḏhibi in Nadia were in Uttara Rāḍha. From 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. we encounter the name of Rāḍha in Bengali literature. All poets have written about the glorious past of Rāḍha from Vrindābon Dāsa and Lochana Dāsa up to Bhārata Chandra and Narahari Chakravarti of 18<sup>th</sup> century AD.

### **1.1.5. Suhma**

Generally the region of Suhma is sometimes identified with Rādha. According to the *Āchāraṅga Sūtra*, Suhma formed a part of the Rādha country.<sup>115</sup> Patañjali in his *Mahābhāṣya* refers to Sumha along with Vaṅga and Pundra.<sup>116</sup> The epic description of the eastern conquests of Bhīma makes the country of the Suhmas distinct from Vaṅga, Tāmralipta as well as the sea-coast region.<sup>117</sup> Suhma is also distinguished from the sea-coast and the country of the Vaṅgas lying within the streams of the Ganges, in the *Raghuvamśa* of Kālidāsa.<sup>118</sup> From these two accounts, it is clear that the Suhma country was situated on the northern side of Tāmralipta (modern Tamluk in the district of Midnapore). It lay a little to the interior but not very far from the sea-coast and to the west of Vaṅga, apparently on the other side of the Bhāgīrathī. But this information is not enough to identify Suhma more accurately. The boundaries of the Suhma country, like those of all other states, changed from time to time. In the *Daśakumāracharita* Tāmralipta is mentioned as a part of Suhma.<sup>119</sup> In the *Raghuvamśa*, Tāmralipta is omitted, but apparently it was then a part of Vaṅga which seems to have extended up to the river Kapisa, the modern Kāsāi flowing to the east of modern Tamluk. Therefore, Suhma might have been included in the large kingdom of Karnasuvarna during that time. Thus it can be assumed that the ancient settlement of Suhma extended over the southern stretch of the west bank of the Gaṅgā-Bhāgīrathī comprising the southern part of modern Bardhaman, most of Hoogli, and Howrah.<sup>120</sup> In later times the area came to be known as southern Rādha; indeed, Nilakantha, the commentator on the *Mahābhārata*, said that Suhma and Rādha were one and the same.<sup>121</sup> Still later, the name Suhma disappeared and gave way to the more comprehensive name of Rādha.

### **1.1.6. Vaṅga**

Vaṅga was an ancient *janapada* or human settlement in the history of eastern Bengal of history.<sup>122</sup> This unit was mainly restricted to Dhaka-Faridpur-Munshiganj and Barisal areas of present Bangladesh. B.N. Mukherjee suggests that the area covered the modern districts of 24-Parganas (both north and south), Hoogli, Howrah, Medinipur, and parts of Burdwan (and also of Birbhum, Bankura and Nadia). He also adds that the coastal region of present Bangladesh up to the mouth of the Padmā during the first three or four centuries AD were included under the unit.<sup>123</sup> Geographically, it was composed of the Ganges Delta. The rivers such as Bhāgīrathī, Padmā and Meghna surrounded the unit and its boundaries have changed from time to time.

The name Vaṅga, indicating a people and also a state, is mentioned for the first time in *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*.<sup>124</sup> Here they are represented as a group of people who were associated with the Magadhas. Vaṅgas have been mentioned in the *Baudhāyanā Dharmasūtra*<sup>125</sup> as a group of people who lived in areas beyond the pale of the Aryan civilization. In the *Purāṇas*, other people are mentioned along with Vaṅgas, such as Aṅga, Magadha, Mudgaraka, Puṇḍra, Videha, Tāmralipta and Prāgjyotiṣa. The earliest reference to Vaṅga as a territorial unit is found in the *Arthaśāstra*. Here we find an area famous for and enriched with white and soft cotton fabrics.<sup>126</sup> The references in the *Mahāniddesha* (2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.) and the *Milindapanho* (c 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Century A.D.) indicate that there was a coastal area approachable from the sea in the territory of Vaṅga. Some indication of its location and its political power can also be gleaned from Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa*. Raghu, the hero of *Raghuvamśa*, came to Vaṅga after having defeated Sumha. Then he set up a pillar to mark the victory in the islands situated between the channels of the Ganges where people fought in their boats.<sup>127</sup> So the story indicates that the location of Vaṅga is on the eastern side of the Hooghly branch of the Bhāgīrathī. The Sumha lived on the other side. Mehrauli Inscription of Chandra indicates that the King Chandra extirpated his enemies from the Vaṅga country in battle.<sup>128</sup> According to

Yaśodhara, a commentator on the *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana, Vaṅga lies to the east of the Lauhitya (the Brahmaputra).<sup>129</sup> Thus it may be inferred that the location of Vaṅga was in the triangular deltaic land between the two main streams of the Ganges—the Bhāgīrathī and the Padmā. This was probably what the Classical Greek and Latin writers referred to by the term Gangāriḍai or Gañge. The inhabitants of this area naturally were well-known for their naval power.<sup>130</sup> The Chinese text *Wei-luch* (3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD) referred to Pan-Yech, i.e., Vaṅga, as the country of Han-yuch (*Xan-gyat*) or the Gaṅga.<sup>131</sup>

According to the Great Epic,<sup>132</sup> the sage Dīrghatamas and Sudeṣṇa, queen of Bali, gave birth to five sons who were named Aṅga, Vaṅga, Kaliṅga, Puṇḍra, Suhma and the lands conquered by them came to be known after their names. This story is loosely supported by the *Purāṇas*. Among them, Vaṅga, Puṇḍra and Sumha formed three important principalities over Bengal's territorial area in the early stage.<sup>133</sup> This story attests to the fact that the kingdom of Vaṅga as a *janapada* existed in the Epic period extending roughly from 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. to 4<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>134</sup> The story of Dīrghatamas also indicates that in ancient India, ṛṣis and saints used to take an active role in spreading the Aryan civilization to remote areas.<sup>135</sup>

In the Mehrauli Iron Pillar Inscription of King Chandra,<sup>136</sup> dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD Vaṅga has been mentioned for the first time as a *janapada*. The name of Vaṅga used as *Vāngalādeśam* in the Tirumālāi Rock Inscription of Rājendra Chola, dated 1025 AD.<sup>137</sup> Like the other *janapadas*, with the change of power, the regional jurisdiction of Vaṅga expanded at times beyond its boundaries or contacted within its boundaries. So it is a very difficult task to demarcate the exact boundary of any *janapada* like Vaṅga in the ancient period. But the available sources help us to hypothesize that at least in the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD, Vaṅga (in some accounts Bang or Bāṅgālāh) generally related to the eastern and southern Bengal,<sup>138</sup> lying on the western side of the Bhāgīrathī including Chittagong and Dacca Division.<sup>139</sup>

The epigraphical sources reveal that there were two sub-divisions of Vaṅga named Vikramapura-bhāga and Nāvya-bhāga.<sup>140</sup> In the later Pāla period we find Vaṅga divided into two parts: northern and southern (Anuttara). The Kāmāuli Copper-plate of Vaidyadeva distinctly refers to Anuttara-Vaṅga or southern Vaṅga.<sup>141</sup> It implies sharply the existence of Uttara-vaṅga (Northern Vaṅga). It has been suggested that Gaṅgā served as the boundary between north and southern Vaṅga. The two divisions of Vaṅga implied in Vaidyadeva's Grant might have been identical to the two *bhāgas* of the same territory mentioned in the later Sena inscriptions, namely the Vikramapura-*bhāga* and Nāvya.<sup>142</sup> King Vallālasena (c 1058-117AD) divided his territory of Bengal into five principalities or divisions. The divisions are Rādhā, Bāgdi, Vaṅga, Varendra and Mithilā.<sup>143</sup> Thus, the fact is that during the Sena period Vaṅga was assimilated within the Sena Kingdom, but it existed as a separate administrative unit.

Vaṅga rose as an independent kingdom in the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Gopachandra (525-540), Dharmāditya (540-560 AD) and Samāchārdeva (560 AD) were powerful rulers of this unit. They issued seven copperplates which suggest that the territory extended over an area from Baleswar in Orissa, through the southern part of West Bengal (*Vardhanamāna bhukti*) to the southern part of Bangladesh (*Navyāvakāśikā* and *Varakamaṇḍala*). These include three copper plates from Jayarāmapura, Mallasarul and Faridpur issued by Gopachandra, two Faridpur copper plates issued by Dharmāditya, and two others, the Kurpala and Ghugrahati copper plates, issued by Samāchārdeva.<sup>144</sup> From the 10<sup>th</sup> to the middle of 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Vaṅga was under the rule of the Chandras, the Varmanas, and finally the Senas.

From the above discussion it is very difficult to ascertain the exact location of Vaṅga in different periods of history because its territorial areas changed from time to time. Though it extended over a vast area, but in the Sena period the territorial jurisdiction of Vaṅga had contracted, and on the eve of the Muslim invasion, the name Vaṅga was in vogue denoting a small portion of Bengal. But it gradually

extended its territorial jurisdiction and ultimately came to denote the entire land with the name of Bengal.

### 1.1.7. *Vaṅgāla*

Another territorial unit sometimes considered identical with *Vaṅga*, named *Vaṅgāla*, was a well-known division of ancient Bengal. The unit phonetically similar to *Vaṅga* denotes south-eastern Bengal in general. The location of *Vaṅgāla* and its relation with *Vaṅga* deserve special attention. It might have had a separate existence at a certain period of time. *Vaṅga* no doubt is older than *Vāṅgalā* and it can be traced back to the Epic Age.<sup>145</sup> Dr. H. C. Roychowdhury is of the opinion that ‘*Vaṅga*’ and ‘*Vāṅgalā*’ are two separate countries and he suggests that *Vāṅgalā* was probably identical with *Chandradvīpa*.<sup>146</sup> Several inscriptions of south India and the *Tārikh-i-Firuzshāhi*<sup>147</sup> mention *Vaṅga* and *Vaṅgāla* separately.<sup>148</sup> On the other hand, P.L. Paul states that *Vaṅga* and *Vaṅgāla* cannot be counted as two separate countries.<sup>149</sup> *Vaṅgāla* is probably thought to be an etymological variation of *Vaṅga*, possibly made by southerners and foreigners.<sup>150</sup> We do not find any mention of *Vaṅgāla* before 10<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Originally *Vaṅgāla* denoted the coastal areas of south-eastern Bengal.<sup>151</sup> Thus the territory overlapped with the *Nāvyā* sub-division of *Vaṅga*. This area may be co-extensive with *Chandradvīpa* (present Barishal division in Bangladesh). This was the stronghold of the Chandras before the expansion of their rule over the whole of *Vaṅga*. Thus the terms gradually superceded *Vaṅga* in ordinary use and at a certain point, started denoting the entire land comprising all the previous *janapadas* or divisions in its jurisdiction in subsequent times. Thus *Vaṅga* proper was now included in the new kingdom of *Vaṅgāla*. As a result of this, the name *Vaṅgāla* could be optionally used in an expanded sense to indicate a large area in east Bengal that formed part of the kingdom of Śrīchandra (of the Chandra dynasty) and his

successors. By this time, Vaṅga and Vaṅgāla apparently signified more or less the same territory.<sup>152</sup>

The earliest reference to Vaṅgāla is found in the Nesari plates (805 AD) of the Rāṣtrakūṭa king Govinda III. It speaks of Dharmapāla as the king of Vaṅgāla.<sup>153</sup> The name is often used in records and works later than 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The Tirumālāī Inscription (1025 AD) of Rājendra Chola speaks of king Govinda Chandra of Chandra dynasty as the Lord of Vaṅgāladeśa.<sup>154</sup> In the Āblur Inscription, Vaṅga and Vaṅgāla have been mentioned as two separate countries.<sup>155</sup> Lāmā Tārānātha, a great Tibetan Buddhist monk used the term Bhāṅgalā instead of Vaṅgāla to differentiate it from Rāḍha and Varendra.<sup>156</sup> After a vivid observation, Abul Fazl comments, Bāṅgāl's (Vaṅgāla) original name was Bang (Vaṅga). Its former rulers raised hillock. It was ten yards in height and twenty yards in breadth, throughout the province. These were called *al*. The name of Bāṅgāl might have come from this suffix.<sup>157</sup>

It is recorded in the *Raghuvamśa* that the Vaṅga people were defeated in the land watered by the lower streams of the Ganges.<sup>158</sup> From the epigraphic references it is revealed that Vaṅga comprised the Vikramapura region of Dacca and Faridpur<sup>159</sup> and the Nāvya region most probably the Faridpur and Buckergunge districts.<sup>160</sup> Thus it indicates that Vaṅga certainly includes at least the part of present Dacca, Faridpur and Buckergunge districts.<sup>161</sup> Thus it is clear that the southern part of the Vaṅga region became known for the first time as Vaṅgāla, as known from many references. In course of time the region acquired a separate identity as Vāṅgalā.

European writers of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries mentioned a city of Bengala near the Meghna estuary i.e. the confluence of the Padmā and the Meghna. This estuary extends over the wide area between the districts of Buckergunge and Chittagong in East Pakistan. Here Bengala is evidently a foreign corruption of Vāṅgalā. R.C. Majumdar, in this connection, has suggested that this late medieval city of Bengala which was situated near modern Chittagong was the capital of the ancient Vāṅgalādeśa. The city of Bengala was also famous for its sea port.<sup>162</sup>

Thus, the above discussion shows that the two words ‘Vaṅga’ and ‘Vāṅgalā’ are indiscriminately used in various sources. Sometimes both are mentioned together. Most probably the term Vaṅgāla first became popular in South India. From the references of the South Indian inscription, it can be seen that the word ‘Vāṅgalā’ used to refer to a part of Vaṅga and does not refer to a separate unit of Vaṅga. In this connection, D.C. Sircar stated that the Chandras of south-east Bengal are sometimes represented as lords of Chandradvīpa and sometimes as lords of Vāṅgalādeśa. The connotation of the name began to expand with the expansion of the Chandra Kingdom of Vaṅgāla over wide areas of south-east Bengal.

#### **1.1.8. Samataṭa**

Samataṭa is another ancient regional unit of south-east Bengal, whose name is not ethnic, but descriptive. Since Samudragupta’s time the unit had a distinct identity and was well-known and well-recognised. It was located at mouth of the Brahmaputra River (near Comilla) in the south-east of Bengal. It includes the areas of Noakhali, Comilla, Chittagong and adjacent areas in present Bangladesh and some parts of present Tripura in India. Geographically it was a low-land constituted by delta and flood plains made by the activities of the rivers Surma and Meghna. It was on the surface of Tripperia, with the low hill range of Lālmāi as its eastern end.<sup>163</sup> Practically the river Meghna formed the western boundary of Samataṭa separating her from the rest of Bengal. This separation makes her distinct geographical entity from Vaṅga as well as its close proximity with Devaka and Kāmrupa as frontier belt of Samudragupta's empire.<sup>164</sup> Cunningham is of the opinion that Samataṭa is to be identified with the delta of the Ganges including the Sunderbans between the Huranghata river and Bukerganj.<sup>165</sup> He further added that Samataṭa is a place covering 200 or 217 miles to the south of Kāmarūpa and 150 miles to the east of Tāmralipti.<sup>166</sup>

In the Allāhābād Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta Samataṭa is mentioned as a frontier state along with Dāvaka, Kāmarūpa, Nepala and Karttrpora.<sup>167</sup> Varāhamihir who lived in the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD also mentions Samataṭa as geographical unit.<sup>168</sup> The Chinese pilgrim named Hiuen-Tsang, who visited India in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D., described it as a low and moist sea-side area with Buddhist monasteries. He mentions that he reached Samataṭa after a southward journey of 1200 or 1300 *li* from Kāmarupa and that the country was more than 3000 *li*(about 800kms) in circuit.<sup>169</sup> He indicates that the land was a Buddhist centre. On the basis of the statement of Hiuen-Tsang, it may be assumed that Samataṭa was bounded on one side by the sea, and concluded that ‘the districts of 24Parganas, Khulna, Buckerganj etc, standing near the sea, were incorporated into Samataṭa’.<sup>170</sup>

Further information for the location of Samataṭa is provided by I-tsing, who mentions the king Rājbhaṭa ruling over Samataṭa. This king is identified with Rājarājabhaṭa of the Khaḍga dynasty, mentioned in Ashrafpur Copper-plate.<sup>171</sup> The king ruled from the capital of Karmānta-Vāsaka. On the basis of above sources M. Harunur Rashid suggested that Karmānta-vāsaka was the 2<sup>nd</sup> capital of Samataṭa.<sup>172</sup> The capital is identical with modern Baḍkamtā in the district of Tipperah (present Tripura), situated twelve miles west of Comilla.<sup>173</sup> The fact testifies that Samataṭa extended up to Tipperah (present Tripura).<sup>174</sup> Further information is corroborated by Baghaura and Nārāyanpur Image Inscriptions of the reign of Mahīpāla I and the Mehār Copper-plate of Dāmodaradeva.<sup>175</sup> It refers to also a place named Vilikāndhaka in Samataṭa. It has been identified with the present village of Bilakindhuai in the Tippera district. The Kailan Copper plate of Śridharana Rāta also refers to Devaparvata as the headquarter of Samataṭa,<sup>176</sup> now styled *sārvatobhadraka* (square or rectangle-shaped), encircled by the river Kṣīrodā like a moat. Elephants played in its water, and its banks were adorned by a cluster of boats.<sup>177</sup>

Samataṭa was created after the fall of the Mauryan Empire, sometime after the death of Aśoka in 232 B.C. Thereafter it has been incorporated into the Gupta Empire by Samudragupta, around 335 A.D. After the fall of the Gupta dynasty political unrest arose in north India and also in Bengal. Depending on the scope and the situation, some small dynasties ruled here, sometimes independently and sometimes under someone else's control. Not much is known about the kingdom's history. But it is known that it was ruled by Buddhist kings in 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Thus we find here five capitals of Samataṭa in five different consecutive phases of history from 6<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, namely Kripura,<sup>178</sup> Karmānta-vāsaka,<sup>179</sup> Vikrampura,<sup>180</sup> Devaparvata,<sup>181</sup> and Paṭṭikera.<sup>182</sup>

#### 1.1.9. Harikela

Another geographical unit in ancient Bengal that existed in the tracts of south-east Bengal was Harikela or Harikeli or Holikola. There is some controversy among the scholars on the issue of the exact location of the area. Some scholars locate the division as a neighbour of the Samataṭa and identify it with Śrīhaṭṭa or Śrīhaṭṭadeśa now known as Sylhet.<sup>183</sup> After careful observation, Adhir Chakravarti identifies Harikela with Noakhali, Comilla, parts of Tippera and Chittagong districts, but claims that it did not extend up to Śrīhaṭṭa, at least not before the reign of Śrīchandra.<sup>184</sup> I-tsing, the 7<sup>th</sup> century Chinese traveler, has defined its position as the eastern limit of the eastern India.<sup>185</sup> The evidence of this information is supported by that of the *Karpūramāñjari* of Rājśekhara<sup>186</sup> written in 9<sup>th</sup> century AD. It mentions girls from Harikela among women of eastern Bengal.<sup>187</sup> The most confusing statement appears in two late manuscripts now in the collection of Dhaka University Library named the Rudrakṣa Māhātmya<sup>188</sup> and Rupachintāmaṇikoṣa.<sup>189</sup> They take 'Harikela' as a synonym for Sylhet, without mentioning any source or evidence. This has created a lot of confusion. Another confusion comes from Hemachandra, the 12<sup>th</sup> century lexicographer. In his book *Abhidhanachintāmani*, he equates Harikela

with Vaṅga.<sup>190</sup> This, however, has been contradicted in the *Mañjusrīmūlakalpa*,<sup>191</sup> where Harikela, Vaṅga, and Samataṭa are cited as separate units.

The most reliable document is supplied by an incomplete copper plate of Kāntideva who lived around 9<sup>th</sup> century AD. It was discovered in an old temple in the Nasirabad area of Chittagong. The source clearly points out that Kāntideva was the ruler of Harikela.<sup>192</sup> But unfortunately no further information has been found from this source. The epigraphic sources such as the Rāmpāl Copper plate Inscription describe Trailokya Chandra (belonging to Chandra dynasty of eastern Bengal) as the mainstay of the royal family of Harikela,<sup>193</sup> who became the king of Chandradvīpa (Bakarganj district). Two other copper plate inscriptions of the Chandra ruler Śrīchandra (930-975 AD), the Dhulla and Madanpur Copper-plate inscriptions, also furnish the fact that the Chandras belonged to the landowners of Rohitagiri under the kings of Harikela.<sup>194</sup> The above facts indicate that first Trailokyachandra inherited his feudatory position, gained more power and became the mainstay of the Harikela king.<sup>195</sup> But unfortunately the Chandra inscription does not provide any information needed for the location and identification of this kingdom. However, after careful analysis of the Chandra inscription and the conquests of the Chandras in Bengal, it can be clearly mentioned that this region was located in the Chittagong region of the Arakan border. The discovery of Kāntideva's copper plate inscription supports this view.<sup>196</sup> However, the view is also supported by reliable evidence furnished by Harikela coins discovered at Maināmati. It includes about 400 coins, including 3 hoards consisting of 227 coins.<sup>197</sup> A number of silver coins at Maināmati which are palaeographically to be placed in the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>198</sup> prove the existence of Harikela in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. It is strongly indicated by the discoveries that this Harikela was situated in the neighbourhood of Samataṭa and towards the direction of Arakan. Further evidence has been provided by the discovery of the Jobra coin hoard in the very heart of Chittagong. These were 36 'Bull and Triglyph' type thin

silver coins, 35 of them with the ‘Harikela’ legend and one with the ancient Arakan king ‘Prītichandra’ legend.

Though confusion prevails, it may be stated with sufficient information that Harikela was an important kingdom of ancient Bengal. Of all such kingdoms in this area, Harikela has been the best for her contribution, but least documented. Possibly its situation in an obscure corner of the country is responsible for this neglect. It is a complicated matter that Noakhali, Comilla used to be a part of both Samataṭa and Harikela. As a solution to this problem it can be said that when a powerful dynasty emerged in these two regions, the regions overlapped under their rule. Therefore, it may be concluded on the basis of these observations that Vaṅga, Samataṭa and Harikela were separate entities in ancient Bengal. But in some places their identity presumably used to overlap due to their close proximity.

#### **1.1.10. Tāmralipta**

Tāmralipta was also a distinct division in ancient Bengal. The main centre of Tāmralipta was also a famous ancient port city. It is identified with modern Tamluk in the modern Medinipur district.<sup>199</sup> It is justified to say that Tāmralipta was the exit or entry point of Mauryan trade route for south and south-east Asia. It was located near Rupnarayan River. Tāmralipta has been referred to in the ancient literatures under various names such as Tāmalites,<sup>200</sup> Dāmalipta,<sup>201</sup> Tāmalipta,<sup>202</sup> Tamalini,<sup>203</sup> Tāmalipti,<sup>204</sup> Viṣhnugriha,<sup>205</sup> Stambapura,<sup>206</sup> Tāmralipti,<sup>207</sup> Velakula,<sup>208</sup> Tamalika,<sup>209</sup> Tāmraliptakas<sup>210</sup> and Tāmraliptika.<sup>211</sup>

Tāmralipta is mentioned for the first time in Kūrma-vibhāga section of the *Atharva-veda Parisīṣṭa*.<sup>212</sup> According to the Sabhā-parva of the *Mahābhārata*, Bhīmasena fought and defeated the eastern countries including Tāmralipta.<sup>213</sup> Tāmralipta was one of the tribes mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* who paid tribute to the Pāṇḍavas.<sup>214</sup> They also fought for the Pāṇḍavas in the Kurukṣetra war.<sup>215</sup> Again in the Sabhāparva of the *Mahābhārata*, Tāmralipta is mentioned as a political unit

separate and independent from northern, eastern and central Bengal, and also from Suhma.<sup>216</sup> But according to Jaina texts, it was one with either Rāḍha or Suhma. Sometimes it might also have formed a part of the *janapada* of Vaṅga.<sup>217</sup> Varāhamihira in 6<sup>th</sup> century AD mentions Tāmralipta as a town.<sup>218</sup> The *Daśakumāracharita* (6th century AD.) refers to Tāmralipta as situated very close to the sea and not far from the river Ganges.<sup>219</sup> The *Kathāsaritsāgara* refers to it as situated near the eastern sea.<sup>220</sup> The territory maintained a trade relation with China, Ceylon and the rest of the eastern coast.<sup>221</sup>

The name of Tāmralipta as a port city is also found in the accounts of the foreign writers and pilgrims. Tāmralipta is mentioned by Ptolemy as Tāmalites<sup>222</sup> and by Pliny as Tāluctae.<sup>223</sup> P. C. Dasgupta finds no less than fifteen textual references to Tāmralipta in ancient literary texts.<sup>224</sup> In the Chinese book *Shui-Ching-chu*, an envoy was sent from Tan Mei (Tāmralipta) to Yellow Gate (Chinese royal court).<sup>225</sup> Fā-hien who visited India between 405 A.D and 411 A.D during the administration of Chandragupta Vikramāditya described it as a kingdom at the sea-mouth nearly fifty *yojanās* east from the city of Champā.<sup>226</sup> He himself lived there for two years and then embarked on a merchant vessel and sailed to Ceylon. This fact has been confirmed by Ptolemy in his book *Geography*, where Tāmralipta is described as a place on the Ganges under the name of Tāmalites. The 7<sup>th</sup> century AD marked the visit of the Chinese travellers Hiuen-Tsang and I-tsing. In the account of Hiuen-Tsang Tāmralipta is recognized as a separate political division. He stated, "The Kingdom of Tan-mo-li-ti, or Tāmralipta, is 1400 or 1500 *li*, about 250 miles in circuit, the capital is about 10 *li*. It borders on the sea. The ground is low and wet. It is regularly cultivated and produces flowers and fruits in abundance. The temperature is hot. The manners of the people are quick and hasty. The men are hardy and brave. There are both heretics and believers. There are about ten Saṅghārāmas with about 1000 priests. The Deva temples are 50 in number in which various sectaries dwell mixed together. The coast of this country is formed by a recess of the sea, the water and the land

embracing each other. Wonderful articles of value and jems are collected here in abundance and therefore the people of the country are in general very rich".<sup>227</sup> He mentions that it lay near an inlet of the sea where land and water communications met.<sup>228</sup> He also mentions four kingdoms within the territory of Bengal viz. Puṇḍravardhana, Karṇasuvarṇa, Tāmralipti and Samataṭa.<sup>229</sup> The geographical position of Tāmralipta has been described in the book of I-tsing. He said, Tāmralipta is located 50 *yojanās* south of India's eastern boundary and is about 60 *yojanās* from Mahābodhi and ŚrīNālandā. He noticed five or six monasteries there. This is the place where he embarked on his return voyage to China. The kingdom of Tāmralipta survived for several centuries but was eventually absorbed in the kingdom of Daṇḍabhukti or South Rāḍha i.e. western Bengal.<sup>230</sup>

In the 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Tāmralipta had acquired importance from a commercial point of view because of its port city, Tāmralipta. The port of Tāmralipta was probably known at that time as Surama. On the basis of a Ceylonese chronicle, Kern points out that two merchants, Tapussa and Bhāllika came from Utkala(Okkalara) through the port of Surama for offering honey and other articles of food to the Buddha.<sup>231</sup> Another legend in the *Mahāvaṁśa* mentions that during the reign of Tissa, king of Laṅkā, who ruled over in between 307 and 267 B.C, Devānāmpriya celebrated his coronation, many wonders came to pass. In the whole island of Lanka treasures and jewels that had been buried deep rose up to the surface of the earth. King Devānāmpriya decided to send pearls to his friend king Dhammāśoka, and sent four ambassadors. They voyaged from Jambukola and in seven days they reached Tāmralipta and from there in seven more days they arrived at Pāṭaliputta, and gave those gifts to king Dhammāśoka.<sup>232</sup> It is not properly known exactly when Tāmralipta emerged as an International trade centre. But excavations carried out at Tamluk in 1951-55 and later on, indicate that the site was under occupation from the Neolithic to modern times.<sup>233</sup> It may be inferred from the evidences furnished by *Mahāvaṁśa* that the Maurya King Aśoka had established a

sea-route between Tāmralipta and Srilanka.<sup>234</sup> In the Maurya period, Tāmralipta lay within the Maurya kingdom. But the decline of Maurya power led to the shifting of the political power from Pāṭaliputra to Vidiśhā. Thus a political disintegration occurred in India and under these circumstances Tāmralipta either rose to an independent status or might have merged with the *janapada* of Vaṅga or Rādha. It seems that with the emergence of the Gupta Empire some parts of Bengal were included in the Gupta Empire. In this period Tāmralipta became famous for the growth of flourishing trade and industry. In the post-Gupta period, the region fell under the territory of Śaśāṅka. This information is attested to by the discovery of two copper plate grants of Śaśāṅka found at Medinipur.<sup>235</sup> It is engraved that Śaśāṅka was controlling Daṇḍabhukti through his feudatory Somadatta. Daṇḍabhukti may be reasonably identified with Danton in the Medinipur district. Śaśāṅka seems to have enjoyed his authority over the coastal parts of south-west Bengal from his capital Karnasuvarṇa. The period from the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. to the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. witnessed the age of political chaos caused by constant change of government and instability in the administrative set up of the country. Due to the lack of central forces, Vaṅga emerged as a separate unit in south-eastern Bengal and the region of Tāmralipta could also have been included in it. From the above discussion it may be concluded that Tamralipta played a vital role in maintaining connection with the neighbouring countries since the remote past. The kingdom maintained a peace and prosperity in the region. Moreover, it is also clear that in ancient times Tāmralipta was either independently ruled or was included in other states. It can be assumed that the *janapada* or kingdom of Tāmralipta never rose into prominence in the politics of Bengal.

#### **1.1.11. Chandradvīpa**

Probably the name Chandradvīpa comes from the name of Chandra dynasty. The dynasty ruled over the area corresponding to the entire coastal region including

the island of Sandvipa, a part of the Noakhali district. In a few copperplates of Śrīchandra,<sup>236</sup> a well-known Chandra king Chandradvīpa has been mentioned. From the copper plates, it appears that Trailokyachandra became the king of Chandradvīpa towards the beginning of the 10th century AD. There is a geographical name, which fragmentarily occurs as *-ndradvīpa* in the Madhyapada (Bakharganj district, Bangladesh) Inscription of Viśvarūpasena.<sup>237</sup> Scholars have variously read this fragmentary name as Kandradvīpa, Indradvīpa, and Chandradvīpa. If the last reading is accepted, the modern Bakharganj district was once included in Chandradvīpa. The famous Buddhist deity Tārā found at Chandradvīp is illustrated in a manuscript dated 1015 AD.<sup>238</sup> It is believed that Chandragomin, the grammarian, composed his famous hymns of Tara while he was living in Chandradvīpa in the 5th or 6th century AD. It appears from the South Indian texts and *Āin-i-Ākbarī* that Chandradvīp was called as Vāṅgalādesa. It is now agreed that Sarkār Bākla (now Barisal, formerly Bakerganj) of *Āin-i-Ākbarī* and Chandradvīpa were same and identical.<sup>239</sup> It is also known that this Chandradvīpa or the area of Bakerganj was within Vaṅga in the 13th century A.D.

Thus, from the above discussion, it is clear that the different areas of what was known as Bengal in pre-partition days carried different geographical designations in ancient times. The boundaries of these territorial divisions varied in different epochs of history owing to the rise and fall of the political powers under which they were subjected. These divisions were Gauḍa (Western Bengal), Vaṅga(Eastern Bengal), Puṇḍravardhana and Varendrī (North Bengal), Suhma(Hooghly), Rāḍha(the Birbhum-Bankura-Hoogly-Howrah and a portion of Medinipur district), Tāmrālipti or Tāmrālipta (modern Tamluk in the Medinipur District) and Daṇḍabhukti (Danton), Samataṭa (South-Eastern Bengal comprising Chittagong, Comilla and Noakhali district of present Bangladesh), Chandradvīpa(Barishal district of Bangladesh) and Vāṅgalā(Chittagong, Noakhali and Barishal districts of Bangladesh). Gauḍa and Vaṅga were the principal

among these and roughly denoted western and eastern Bengal. All these have come down to us from different epigraphical and literary records and a careful analysis of the relevant data would show that they were geographically connected with either Gauḍa or Vaṅga, i.e. Western Bengal and Eastern Bengal. In other words, there was some geographical overlapping and not the same region was always denoted a particular name in different historical epochs.

## 1.2. Historical outline

The geographical boundaries of Bengal have changed from time to time. The heart of Bengal is one of the largest deltas in the world, and it consists of a great plain of moist silt drawn by the river Ganges and Brahmaputra from the Himalayan Mountains. But it is very difficult to determine when the first humans settled in Bengal. Stone tools provide the earliest evidence of human settlements which may date back to a period of ten thousand years ago. The original inhabitants were non-Aryan ethnic groups- Niṣādas or Auṣtric or Austro-Arieties. They are now represented by the primitive peoples named Kol, Bhil, Santal, Sabara, Pulinda etc.<sup>240</sup> Stone Age equipments or pre-historic stone tools have been discovered in various parts of West Bengal in the districts of Medinipur, Bankura and Burdwan. But it is difficult to determine that when people using them first settled in Bengal. The remains of the Copper Age settlements of the Bengal region may be dated to a period 4000 years ago. In the 1960s, archaeological discoveries in some parts of Bengal testified to the existence of civilization in the first millennium BC. Archaeological discoveries at Pāṇḍu Rājār Ḍhibi in the valley of the Ajay River in Bardhaman district and in different sites on the river of Ajay, Kunar and Kopai give a new light in the pre-history of Bengal. Pāṇḍu Rājār Ḍhibi represents the ruins of the trading townships. It maintained trade relations with the countries of the Mediterranean region, over and the remote regions within India itself. But from the fourth century onwards, the history of ancient Bengal that appears to us in a more

or less clear light is gradually the history of the Aryan peoples and Aryan occupation in Bengal.

However, due to the lack of evidence for the era before the Muslim invasion, reconstruction of Bengal's history is very difficult. The difficulties are felt more intensely for the previous period down to the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. when Bengal came under the rule of the Guptas. For this period we have to depend on very rare written records such as epigraphs and literary texts. Prior to the Guptas, there exist some stray references to Bengal in Indian and foreign literatures. Thus it is not possible to write a chronological history of Bengal in connection with authentic events before the Gupta period. Thus the early history of Bengal is almost totally shrouded in mystery and, to some extent, mythology.

There is no reference to Bengal in *Rigveda*. *The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* furnishes some information about some of the peoples of the regions in question. Puṇḍra, Andhras and Śabaras are described as living in the territory of the Ārya country and they are termed as Dasyus.<sup>241</sup> The text ‘Vayāṁsi Vaṅga-vagadhas-Cerapadah’<sup>242</sup> appears in the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka* mentioned. Some scholars opine that the current reading of ‘Vaṅga-vagadhas’ should be Vaṅga-Magadha, which indicate the peoples of Vaṅga and Magadha. *The Āraṇyaka* refers to them as folks, who were guilty of transgression. Most probably the expressions in the *Āraṇyaka* signify old ethnic names. The *Āraṇyaka* also derogatorily compares the language of Vaṅga and Magadha with ‘bird language’. *The Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* mentions the outermost belt of Āryavarta which comprised the Ārattas of the Punjab, the Puṇḍras of north Bengal, the Sauviras occupying parts of southern Punjab and Sind, the Vaṅgas of central and eastern Bengal, and the Kaliṅga of Orissa and adjoining tracts. The inhabitants of these regions were considered completely outside the pale of Vedic culture. *The Baudhāyana* provides expiatory rites after a journey to the land of the Puṇḍras and Vaṅgas. The *Mahābhārata* mentions Pauṇḍraka Vāsudeva as the lord of Puṇḍra, who allied with Jarāsandha against Kṛiṣṇa. In the *Mahābhārata*, the

inhabitants of Bengal's coastal regions were described as outcastes. The *Mahābhārata* further mentions that ancient Bengal was divided into different tribes or kingdoms. Various *janapadas* were named after the tribes, such as Vaṅga (southern Bengal), Puṇḍra (northern Bengal), and Suhma (western Bengal). In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*,<sup>243</sup> the people of Suhma are described as a peevish race along with the Kirātas, Hūṇas, Andhras, Pulindas, Pukkasas, Ābhiras, Yavaṇas and Khāsas. They are also mentioned in the *Matsya Purāṇa*<sup>244</sup> and the *Vāyu Purāṇa*.<sup>245</sup> Kālidāsa mentions that Raghu defeated a coalition of Vaṅga kings. The Jaina text *Achāraṅgasūtra*<sup>246</sup> mentions Rāḍha inhabited by a rude barbarian people whose food was disgusting to the ancient monks. These sources seem to suggest that the people of Bengal were not Indo-Aryans. However, many Jain scriptures identify Vaṅga and Aṅga as Indo-Aryan communities in Bengal. As part of Magadha, western Bengal became a part of the Indo-Aryan civilization by the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

The literary references in the Vedic, Epic, and Sūtra texts both Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical, are not sufficient to make a definite chronological arrangement about the period of study. For a chronological treatment of the subject, it is necessary to turn to the testimony of literature, both Indian and foreign assignable to well-known epochs, and to that of early epigraphs. The first reference found in foreign literature is that in the writings of Greeks. The Greek writers who accompanied Alexander mention that there was a powerful kingdom named 'Gaṅgāriḍae' whose people were known by their dominion stretching over the five mouths of the Ganges. Ptolemy,<sup>247</sup> the famous geographer, refers to five distributaries of Ganges namely, Kambyson(the most western), Mega, Kamberikhon, Pseudostomon and Antibole which are most likely to be identified with modern Kapiśā (Kāsāī), Hoogly, Kumara (branch of Mathabhanga),the estuary of the Padmā and Meghna and the old (Buri) Gaṅgā respectively.<sup>248</sup> He clearly states that all the country up to the mouths of the Gaṅges was occupied by Gangaridai whose capital was Gaṅge. Diodorus writes that Alexander received a description of the country

(beyond the Indus) from Phegetffe. First, he came to a desert, which would take twelve days to traverse; beyond this was the river called Gaṅges. It had a width of thirty-two *stadia* and it was deeper than any other Indian river. Beyond this again were situated the dominions of the nation of the Braisioi (Prāsii) and the Garidarldai.<sup>249</sup> Almost the same view is mentioned in the account of Cartius where we find two peoples inhabiting in the banks of Gaṅgā are named as ‘Gaṅgāriḍae’ and ‘Pharrasii’.<sup>250</sup> Strabo also mentions that Gaṅgā lay through the Gangāriḍae forming the eastern boundary of the latter.<sup>251</sup> According to the Greek authors, these two nations could be assumed to have carried arms against Alexander under the leadership of the same dynasty. The king has generally been identified with Mahāpadmananda of the Nanda dynasty, who seems to be the ruler of both the nations. Just after the departure of Alexander, Chandragupta founded Maurya Dynasty over a vast region of India. It is not yet certain that Chandragupta Maurya, who supplanted the Nanda dynasty from Magadha, brought Gaṅgāridai under his authority. He is sometimes called king of Prasii, but no where that of Gaṅgāriḍae. His grandson, the great Aśoka extended his territory in North Bengal as is known from his Brāhmī Inscription found at Mahāsthāngarh in the district of Bogra (now in Bangladesh).<sup>252</sup> The region became a province of the Maurya Empire under the name of Puṇḍravardhana and Puṇḍranagara was the capital of this province. In addition to North Bengal, Maurya rule was established in Karnasuvarṇa (Murshidabad), Tāmrapiṭa (Hoogli) and Samataṭa (south-eastern Bengal). After the Mauryas, the Suṅgas and the Kaṇvas appeared in the history of Magadha. But they ruled over a small area. After that a number of foreign invaders came to India, but it is unknown whether they came up to Bengal. Among them, Greeks, Śākas, Pallavas and Kuṣāṇas are noteworthy. Thereafter the Guptas came to power in the history of Magadha. A considerable number of sources are available to rebuild the history of the Guptas and their activities in Bengal. Some portion of North Bengal came under the possession of Chandragupta II. Though the whole of Bengal was conquered by

Samudragupta, Samataṭa and Ḏavāka became vassal kingdoms. Moreover, from the inscription of Mehrauli Iron Pillar of Chandra,<sup>253</sup> we know that he had defeated the ‘Vaṅga host in the battlefield’. So in this inscription, it is clear that various parts of Bengal were ruled by many independent kings, who had taken up arms against the Gupta kings. They were also defeated by Chandragupta II. The Dhanāidaha Copper-plate<sup>254</sup> and the two Dāmodarpur Copper-plates of Kumāragupta I<sup>255</sup> and the Baigrām Copper-plate<sup>256</sup> of the Gupta year 128 (AD 448) indicate that Kumāragupta I mightly retained his control over the region of Bengal. Northern Bengal formed an important administrative division of the Gupta Empire under the name of Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti*. The inscriptions also prove the fact that Skandagupta ruled over Bengal.<sup>257</sup> The successors of Skandagupta also ruled in Bengal.<sup>258</sup> The Dāmodarpur Copper-plates of Buddhagupta indicate that the northern Bengal formed an important part of the Gupta Empire down to the end of 5th century A.D.<sup>259</sup> Like the Mauryas, Puṇḍranagara of Mahāsthāngarh was the capital of the province of Gupta Empire. Of Suhma and Rāḍha, the remaining parts of Bengal we have no detailed information for the period during which it was subject to Gupta rule.

By the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the Gupta Empire came to an end. Due to the collapse of the Gupta Empire, several independent states emerged in northern India. The most important of them were the Maukhari of Kanauja, the Puṣyabhūtis of Thaneswar, the Maitrakas of Vallabhi and the later Guptas of Mālava. The various dynasties also appeared in different parts of Bengal found in these independent kingdoms. Among them, Vaṅga and Gauḍa were prominent ones. Their location was at eastern and western Bengal respectively. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, a little scope to unite the whole area of Bengal emerged under the leadership of Śaśāṅka, the king of Gauḍa. He even attempted to dominate the political efforts of northern India by conquering Mahodoyaśrī (Kanauj) and formed an alliance with Devagupta of Mālava. Thereafter

the Pālas and the Senas also tried to create a large territory in the eastern side of Indian sub-continent.

### **1.2.1. Kingdom of Eastern Bengal**

#### **1.2.1.1. Vāṅga Kingdom**

The Vāṅga Kingdom was the first powerful seafaring nation of South Asia, especially Bengal. The earliest mention of the term Vāṅga has been found in the *Aitareya Āranyaka*<sup>260</sup> of the 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. Other important sources about Vāṅga are found in the *Bodhāyana Dharmasūtra* (4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.), the *Rāmāyana* (2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.-2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.) and the *Mahābhārata* (4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.-4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), the *Milinda-pañha* (1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.), the Nāgārjunakonḍa Inscription (3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.) and the Meherauli Pillar Inscription of 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Historical evidences prove the fact that an imperial power first developed in Vāṅga region. A copper plate inscription discovered at Gunāighar in Tipperah district mentions Maharājā Śrī Vainyagupta, a member of the imperial Gupta family who had assumed the title of Mahārāja and had founded a kingdom.<sup>261</sup> He issued gold coins with the *biruda dvādaśāditya* dated in the 507-508 AD. It is therefore reasonable to hold that Vainyagupta was initially a de-facto independent ruler. Subsequently taking advantage of political crisis he set up himself as an emperor. But the region got importance by the succession of three kings- Gopachandra, Dharmāditya and Samāchārdeva, as proven from the inscriptions.<sup>262</sup> On paleographic basis, these inscriptions can be placed in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>263</sup> This fact testifies to the disappearance of the last vestige of the authority of Imperial Guptas over the Vāṅga-Samataṭa region of ancient Bengal on the one hand, and the emergence of a new kingdom therein on the other. But there is a controversy regarding the line of succession of the three independent rulers of Vāṅga-Samataṭa. While Pargeter<sup>264</sup> is of the view that Dharmāditya preceded Gopachandra, Dr. R.C.Majumder<sup>265</sup> and others have put forward arguments in favour of the reverse. Setting aside all

disputes, it is perhaps reasonable to say that Gopachandra, and not Dharmāditya, was the earliest of the three kings known to us from the Faridpur Copper plate.<sup>266</sup> But we are in the dark about the relationship of these three kings. Chronologically, the rule of Gopachandra, Dharmāditya and Samāchāradeva were placed between 525 and 575 AD. It would also seem that their kingdom stretched from Vardhamana to Tripura and had two divisions: one was Vardhamānabhukti and the other was Navyāvakāśikā.<sup>267</sup> It appears from numismatic evidence that after Samāchāradeva, a few other kings ruled in these regions, among them Pṛithujavira or possibly Pṛithuvīra or Pṛithivīrāja and Sudhānya or Śrīsudhanyaditya being far. It is difficult to determine how this kingdom of eastern Bengal came to an end. It is a notion that the king of the ruling dynasty of Chālukya Kīrtivarman brought the fall of the independent Vaṅga kingdom. The fact is attested to by the Mahākūṭa Inscription<sup>268</sup> dated 602 AD. Here we found that Kīrti Varman I, son of Pulakeśin I, defeated the kings of Aṅga, Vaṅga and Kaliṅga. It is also speculated that in the first half of the seventh century Vaṅga might have been included in Śaśāṅka's kingdom of Gauḍa in western Bengal. The rise of some feudal chiefs was also responsible for the decline of the rule of the independent Vaṅga kingdom, as it is evident that before the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. independent and feudal chiefs attached to Bhadra, Khadga, and Rāta dynasties rose in the same region or adjoining area.

#### 1.2.1.2. **Bhadra Dynasty**

In the post- Śaśāṅka period Vaṅga again emerged as an independent territory ruled by a line of Brāhmaṇa kings. Hiuen-Tsang refers to the kingdom of Samataṭa which seems to have included the major part of Vaṅga proper. There are two names found in literary sources. They were Jyeṣṭhabhadra and Śīlabhadra.<sup>269</sup> Hiuen-Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim, who came to Bengal in 637-38 A.D., mentioned Śīlabhadra. He served as the patriarch of Nālanda and member of a Brāhmaṇa family.<sup>270</sup> The ending name 'Bhadra' might be considered to suggest the connection of the dynasty with

the Bhadras, a royal family. But due to paucity of sources, it is very difficult to identify their relations with each other. It is also very difficult to trace the date and duration of their rule in Vaṅga. It could be assumed that they enjoyed a semi-independent feudal status under the rulers of Karṇasuvarṇa in the first half of 7<sup>th</sup> century. A vassal chief named Nārāyaṇabhadra is also named in the Vappaghoshavāṭa grant of Jayanāga.<sup>271</sup> Thus, the name also hints at a relation with the Bhadra family. But it is very difficult to draw any satisfactory conclusion about it. It is also difficult to suggest the actual date and duration of this rule in Samataṭa. But it may be inferred that this minor royal family with Bhadra-ending names appeared in Samataṭa or south-east Bengal in the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. It can also be presumed that the Bhadra dynasty flourished in Samataṭa almost simultaneously with the well-known Khaḍgas and Rāṭas. It is the observation of P.L. Paul that the claim that the Bhadras and the Khaḍgas ruled about the same time in eastern Bengal seems to be unwarranted,<sup>272</sup> and that the Bhadras had been overthrown by the Khaḍga dynasty, a line of Buddhist kings.

#### **1.2.1.3. Khadga Dynasty**

In the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, a dynasty was founded that ruled over Vaṅga and Samataṭa areas of ancient Bengal. This was the Khadga dynasty. This information can be gathered from two copper plates found at Ashrafpur<sup>273</sup> (30 miles north-east of Dhaka) and a short record inscribed on the pedestal of an image of Śaṅvanī recovered at Deulbāḍi<sup>274</sup> (14 miles south of Comilla). They have revealed the names of four generations<sup>275</sup> -Nṛpadhirājā Khadgodyama ruling between 641 and 656 AD, his son Jātakhaḍga between 656 and 671 AD, the latter's son Devakhaḍga between 671 and 695 A.D., and Rājarāja (or Rājarājābhaṭa) between 695 and 710 AD. But unfortunately they hardly furnish any further historical information. The Chinese traveler Seng-chi<sup>276</sup> spoke of a Buddhist king of Samataṭa called Rājabhaṭa, and I-tsing<sup>277</sup> reported an eastern king called Devavarma and Rājabhaṭa. The scholars have

taken Devavarma and Rājabhata as Devakhaḍga and Rājarājābhaṭṭa respectively. All of these were followers of Buddhism. It is to be noted that Khaḍgodyama was the founder of the kingdom. The Khaḍgas were politically dominant in the region of Vaṅga. Therefore, it seems that Devakhaḍga extended his power by overthrowing Rāta king Śrīdharana Rāta from Vaṅga to Samataṭa. This is epigraphically supported by the Deulbādi Inscription of Queen Prabhāvati. Devakhaḍga is also described in the inscription as benevolent and powerful and victorious against all enemies. Rājarājābhaṭṭa was perhaps succeeded by Balabhaṭṭa whose name has been found in a copper plate as well as in a few gold coins founded at Maināmati.<sup>278</sup> Another ruler named Udirnakhaḍga is mentioned in the Ashrafpur grant.<sup>279</sup> The last part of his name may indicate that he too probably belonged to the Khaḍga dynasty, but the period of his reign is yet to be determined. The Khaḍga kings did not use any paramount title like *parameśvara*. This indicates that they were local rulers. It is difficult to confirm the extent of their kingdom. The Āshrafpur plates refer to Talapataka and Dattakataka, which may be identified respectively with Tālpāra and Dātgaon villages under Rāipura upazila in Narsīngdi.<sup>280</sup> Their capital was ‘Karmānta-vāsaka’.<sup>281</sup> Probably, ‘Karmānta-vāsaka’ was the ancient name of Badkamta, a police station in Tippera district.<sup>282</sup> The possession of the Khaḍgas was extended to Tripura and Noakhali region. It is very difficult to ascertain when and how the rule of the Khaḍgas ended. The Copper-plate Inscription of king Bhavadeva of the Deva dynasty shows that the Khaḍgas could not keep control over the heart of Samataṭa for a long time and were eventually driven out by the Devas sometime at the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>283</sup> This was possible due to the collapse of the Khaḍga power which happened as a result of the invasion of Yaśovarmana of Kanauj in the second quarter of the same century.<sup>284</sup> It also paved the way of establishing Gopāla’s power in the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. But it is not clearly known when Samataṭa was annexed to the Pāla Empire.<sup>285</sup> We can learn from sources how the Pālas first achieved success in Vaṅga.<sup>286</sup> According to the Tibetan tradition, Gopāla was

originally the king of Bhāṅgāla (Vāṅgalā) and later on he annexed the neighbouring kingdom of Samataṭa.<sup>287</sup>

#### 1.2.1.4. Nātha Dynasty

There is indication of the existence of another vassal dynasty in the 7<sup>th</sup> century inscription found in Tripura district. The rulers of this dynasty had names ending in 'Nātha', they came to power at an unclear date. They appeared between Harṣa's death and the rise of the Khaḍgas in Eastern Bengal.<sup>288</sup> The founder of the Nātha Dynasty also is unknown, but seems to have assumed the title *adhimahārāja*, or *mahārājādhirāja*. We also do not have any clear idea as to when he asserted his independence. The second king of this dynasty was Mahāsāmanta Śivanātha. His son Śrīnātha was the next ruler who was a hero and known in history for courage in battle. The next king Bhavanātha was too much involved in religious rituals and gave up royalty in favour of his brother's son, whose name is untraceable. The succeeding king Loknātha probably was the ablest ruler among the Nātha kings. There is some confusion regarding Lokanātha's rise to power as the scholars are in the dark about the date of the Tripura grant. R.G.Bhandarkar places the date as 144 Harṣa Era which roughly corresponds to 750 A.D.<sup>289</sup> According to R.G. Basak, the date was 344 Gupta Era, which corresponds to 663-64 AD.<sup>290</sup> The dating is corroborated by the paleographic evidences.

D.C. Sircar believes that Śrīdharaṇarāta mentioned in the Kailān grant was more or less a contemporary of both Lokanātha of the Tippera grant and of the Khaḍga kings.<sup>291</sup> It is evident that Lokanātha was a very able king<sup>292</sup> and his soldiers depended for victory on their own swords and on the intellect of his ministers.<sup>293</sup> It has been referred to in verse 7 of the Tippera Copper-plate that a large number of soldiers of the paramount sovereign (*parameśvara*) were seriously defeated in the battle. But it is not certain whom the paramount forces fought and by whom they were defeated .According to D.C. Sircar, Jayatūṅgavarṣha and Jivadharana were two

refractory feudatories of the ruler titled *parameśvara*, of whom Loknātha was a faithful subordinate. Jayatūṅgavarṣa was defeated by Lokanātha on behalf of his master and thereafter *parameśvara* sent him against Jīvadhāraṇa of the Rāta family, but failed to subdue him completely. But probably he had to placate Loknātha and also *parameśvara* by surrendering a territory and by the payment of a large sum of money or by an offer of his acceptance of a subsidiary alliance with *parameśvara*. The title *parameśvara*, under whom Loknātha was a feudatory, most probably belonged to the ruler of Gauḍa. And the name Jayatūṅgavarṣa might have been used in place of Jatakhadga, the Khaḍga ruler, because of his victorious career.<sup>294</sup> Another view is that Loknātha was a feudatory of the Khaḍga dynasty, and rebelled against his suzerain Jayatūṅgavarṣha, and got initial success by defeating an army sent against him by his suzerain (*parameśvara*). But ultimately he was defeated by Jivadharana, another feudatory chief of Jayatūṅgavarṣha. He (Loknātha) then submitted to his suzerain, and his dominions were restored to him. Loknāth was succeeded by his son Lakṣmīnātha, whose details are also little known to us.

#### **1.2.1.5. Rāta Dynasty**

The history of Rāta dynasty of Samataṭa is found from the solitary record of the Kailān Copper-plate issued by king Śrīdharaṇa Rāta discovered in a village of south-west Comilla and 13 miles west of the Lālmāi Railway station. The plate may be dated to the second part of 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It is supposed that the Khaḍgas of Vaṅga and the Rātas of Samataṭa emerged almost around the same period in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD as feudatories of the Gauḍa king. They began ruling semi-independently after Gauḍa had been temporarily defeated by the kings of Kanauj and Kāmarūpa in the second quarter of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>295</sup>

The founder of the dynasty was one Jīvadhāraṇa Rāta. But he did not assume any imperial title as he was a semi-independent feudatory. However, in the Kailān

Copper-plate grant, we find no reference to the king to whom Jīvadhāraṇa served as a vassal. He was not endowed with any other imperial titles. But he is known to have assumed even the title of *nṛpa* or king in the Tipperah Copper-plate grant of Loknātha.<sup>296</sup> Jīvadhāraṇa started his life as a feudatory chief under Gauḍa, as has already been mentioned above, and achieved independence after Gauḍa had been brought under the authority of the kings of Kanauj and Kāmrūpa in the second quarter of 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>297</sup> Two other members of the family were Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta and the Yuvarāja Baladhāraṇa Rāta. The Kailān grant mentions that Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta assumed the titles, *samatāśvara* and *prāpta pañchamahāśabda*. Baladharana Rāta is also known to have assumed the titles *prāpta pañchamahāśabda* and *bhaṭṭāraka*. In case of Baladharana, the use of the title Yuvarāja seems to imply that his father was still alive.<sup>298</sup> From the Ashraful plates, it can be determined that in the 13<sup>th</sup> regnal year king Devakhaḍga of the Khaḍga dynasty, had extended his power from Vaṅga to Samataṭa after dislodging Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta, and perhaps owing to the latter's death.<sup>299</sup> The third ruler Yuvarāja Baladharana Rāta ruled over a reduced territory.

#### **1.2.1.6. Deva Dynasty**

Deva Dynasty ruled in Samataṭa with Devaparvata as their capital. The rule of the Devas was indeed a period of peace, prosperity and creative excellence. The rule of this dynasty also has been designated as the 'Golden Age' of Vaṅga-Samataṭa (South-East Bengal).<sup>300</sup> The grand achievement of the Devas was in the field of art and architecture. The dynasty is often confused with the other Deva dynasty, which belonged to the 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D. But the recent discoveries attest to its separate existence. It is very difficult to determine their first arrival in history as none of the plates clearly indicates the tenure of the dynasty. D. C. Sircar holds that they might be placed, on the ground of paleography, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>301</sup> On the other hand, F.A. Khan has stated that the Devas flourished in a period between the last

part of the 7<sup>th</sup> century and the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>302</sup> On the ground of close resemblance of the Maināmati plate scripts with the later Gupta scripts, the Devas might be located to a period between the last part of the 7<sup>th</sup> and the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>303</sup> How the dynasty came to power and how long they kept their hold are also obscure. We know that the Rātas of Samataṭa and Khaḍgas of Vaṅga showed their independence in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. But shortly after that Khaḍgas captured Samataṭa, as is evident from the testimony of Chinese traveler I-tsing, who saw Samataṭa under the rule of the Khaḍga dynasty.<sup>304</sup> Khaḍgas also failed to retain their hold over Samataṭa as they were ousted by the Devas sometime around the beginning or the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It is not possible to assert the exact time when the Devas ruled as sovereign kings. But it may be presumed that they were contemporaries of the early Pālas who came to power in the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Thereafter, the four rulers belonging to the Deva family might have ruled for 50 to 60 years in south-eastern Bengal during 750-800 A.D.<sup>305</sup>

Greater details about the family are furnished by the Maināmati excavations. Five copperplates and one stone plaque inscription of the Deva period have been recovered from Maināmati. Among them only two have so far been deciphered and published. These are: I) The Maināmati plate of Ānandadeva with an endorsement of the grant by his son and successor Bhavadeva on the reverse and II) The Calcutta Asiatic Society plate of Bhavadeva.<sup>306</sup> It is known from the Maināmati Plates that Śāntideva was the first ruler of the dynasty with Devaparvata as his capital. There is little scope to know more about him. The succeeding rulers were Śrī Viradeva (735—750 A.D), son and successor of Śāntideva, Śrī Ānandadeva (750-775 A.D.), son and successor of Vīradeva by his wife Somadevī, and Ānandadeva's son Śrī Bhavadeva (775-780 A.D).<sup>307</sup> It is very difficult to ascertain the date of plates as none of these clearly indicate the ruling tenure of the dynasty. The Devas were mostly known for their three great Buddhist monasteries in Śālvan Vihāra, Ānanda Vihāra and Bhoja

Vihāra. Finally, the dynasty was assimilated into the Pāla Empire. No other fact is available about them.

#### 1.2.1.7. Dynasty of Kāntideva

In the 9th century, there was struggle for supremacy among minor powers to retain control over the north-eastern part of Bengal, but the one which succeeded best was the Pāla dynasty. They grew to rule most of the territory of Bengal. The emergence of the kingdom of Harikela near the Samataṭa region of south-eastern Bengal can also be noticed around the same time. The region was located on the eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal. I-tsing, the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Chinese traveler, refers to Harikela as the eastern boundary of eastern India.<sup>308</sup> An inscription found near Chittagong has brought to light the existence of a new dynasty.<sup>309</sup> According to one view, the dynasty is assigned to 750-850 AD.<sup>310</sup> On the basis of paleographic sources, R.C. Majumdar places the dynasty in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>311</sup> Keeping aside all the confusions, it can be concluded that Harikela was an important kingdom of ancient Bengal. Though among all the kingdoms in this region, Harikela was one of the best known, it is one of the least documented. But its position had been indicated by It-sing quite clearly.<sup>312</sup> It may be assumed, therefore, that like other geographical terms Harikela was used both in the broader sense as a synonym of Vaṅga and in a limited sense to denote various parts of the latter. However, a line of three generations of kings has been mentioned in an inscription. These are Bhadradatta, his son Dhanadatta and the latter's son Kāntideva, who only assumed the full royal titles. Kāntideva did not use the name -ending of his father and grandfather. It is suggested that Kāntideva inherited the kingdom of Samataṭa from his father and he ruled sometime between 800 and 825 AD. Kāntideva had assumed the title *paramasaugata*, *parameśvara*, and *mahārājādhīrāja*. Present Sylhet was included in the kingdom of Kāntideva. The name of his capital was Burdwanpur. At present there is no existence of any region by this name. A new power known as the

Chandras rose in South-east Bengal after Kāntideva. The kingdom built by Kāntideva was destroyed by this Chandra dynasty.

#### **1.2.1.8. Chandra Dynasty**

The dynasty of Kāntideva was succeeded by the Buddhist Chandra dynasty from the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., ruling in south-eastern Bengal (Vaṅga-Samataṭa) for about a century and a half. The Tibetan historian Lāmā Tāraṇāṭh in his *History of Buddhism* has mentioned a long line of kings in Bengal whose name ended in –Chandra and they might have had connections with the Chandra dynasty.<sup>313</sup> In fact, it was the only dynasty in Bengal, before the Pālas, which is referred to by Tāraṇāṭha in his book. But the proof of the existence of the Chandra dynasty ruling between 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. in eastern Bengal was not yet provided by any reliable testimony other than the one written by Tāraṇāṭha. However, it may be stated in this connection that inscriptions, coins, and Burmese articles also corroborate the existence of a long line of rulers with names ending in -Chandra in the Arakan region. On the other hand, thirteen inscriptions found in East Bengal have helped historians to reconstruct the history of a family of kings, whose names ended in ‘Chandra’. They ruled between 825 and 1035 AD. A long list of kings along with their periods of reign has been inferred from these inscriptions. Each of these kings was the son of his predecessor.<sup>314</sup>

| Name of the ruler | Reining period(Years) | Approximate Date           |
|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Pūrṇachandra      | ?                     | Exact date is not recorded |
| Suvarṇachandra    | ?                     | „                          |
| Trailokyachandra  | 30                    | 875-905 CE                 |
| Śrī-chandra       | 44(46)                | 905-955 CE                 |
| Kalyāṇachandra    | 24                    | 955-985 CE                 |
| Laḍahāchandra     | 18                    | 985-1010 CE                |

|                |    |              |
|----------------|----|--------------|
| Govindachandra | 23 | 1010-1035 CE |
|----------------|----|--------------|

The above table is also corroborated by A.H. Dani.<sup>315</sup> Thus the history of the south-eastern part of Bengal is now much clearer than before. The epigraphic records are now clear evidence of continuous rule by the dynasty for five generations in Vaṅga and Samataṭa, while the Pālas were in power in northern and western Bengal and Bihar simultaneously.

The origin and early history of the family is known from a passage contained in a verse occurring in several inscriptions.<sup>316</sup> The verse reads, “In the family of the Chandras, who were rulers of Rohitāgiri, and were possessed of enormous fortune, Pūrnachandra, who was like the full moon, became illustrious in this world”. This verse confirms that Pūrnachandra was an independent king. His forefathers were said to be rulers of Rohitāgiri .The natural presumption is that Pūrnachandra also ruled there. His son Suvarṇachandra was also the king of Rohitāgiri. R.D. Banerjee<sup>317</sup> and N.G. Majumdar<sup>318</sup> identified Rohitāgiri with Rhotāsgarh in the Shahbad district of Bihar. But N.K. Bhattachari<sup>319</sup> related it with Lālmāi Hills in Tippera and H.D.Mitra<sup>320</sup> with Rāṅgāmāti in the Hill Tippera. Thus it can be concluded from the discussion that the Chandras who ruled in Rohitagiri did not come from outside and they were surely native.

But perhaps Pūrnachandra and Suvarṇachandra were petty local rulers or landlords in Rohitāgiri and ruling as vassals of the Harikela rulers. It was Trailokyachandra, son of Suvarṇachandra, who laid the foundation for his family's greatness. He established his sovereign rule in the region of Samataṭa and gradually spread it in different parts of Chandradvīpa, Harikela and parts of Vaṅga and took the title of *mahārājādhirāja*.<sup>321</sup> He established Devaparvata as the centre of his power. Trailokyachandra had been described as *ādhāro-harikela-rāja-kakuda-chchhatra-smitānām-śriyām*,<sup>322</sup> which would mean that Trailokyachandra was both the de-facto and the de jure king of Harikela. The rule of Trailokyachandra probably

coincided with the rise of Kambojas in western and northern Bengal, and with that of the Pala Empire. He ruled supposedly for 30 years. It is a well-known fact that Trailokyachandra's deserved son Śrīchandra had been styled as *parama-saugata*, *parameśvara*, *paramabhaṭṭāraka*, and *mahārājādhirāja*.<sup>323</sup> He ruled as an independent king. During his rule honour and power of the Chandra dynasty reached the pinnacle of success. Śrīchandra moved his capital to Vikramapura in Vaṅga. The king was credited with the spreading of his empire over the entire region of Vaṅga and he also campaigned towards Kāmarūpa in the north-east. He also battled against the Gauḍas (either the Kamboja Gauḍapatis or the Pālas). Undoubtedly he might be regarded as the best ruler of his dynasty. He ruled for thirty-five years.<sup>324</sup> But most of the evidences go on to imply that Śrīchandra ruled forty-six years.<sup>325</sup> It is also known that he removed barriers created by Prithivīpāla against Gopāla and helped Gopāla to be restored to the throne. It is possible that Gopāla and Prithivīpāla were brothers and they fought for the Pāla Kingdom. So he played a vital role in saving the tottering Pāla power restoring Gopāla to the throne. This Gopāla was undoubtedly the same as Gopāla II who ruled between 940 and 960 AD. It has also been suggested by some that Śrīchandra himself defeated the Pāla king and then helped him to be restored to the power.<sup>326</sup>

The subsequent rulers were Kalyāṇachandra (son of Śrīchandra), Laḍahachandra, and Govindachandra. In verse 7 of the Maināmati plate of Laḍahachandra, Kalyāṇachandra has been referred to as 'pure or purifying like water of the Ganges'. In verse 8 of the same plate, it is said that he gave women sorrow in Mleccha and Gauḍa. It thus indicates his success against the Mleccha king of Prāgjyotiṣha and the Pāla king of Gauḍa. It seems that he increased his power in Kāmarūpa and the deltaic region of Bengal. He might be responsible for delivering the final blow to Kamboja power in Northern and Western Bengal and thereby passing the way for the revival of Pala power under Mahīpāla I. We can say that

during his reign, the kingdom of Chandra continued to enjoy prosperity and happiness. It is clear from the records that he had ruled for 24 years.

Laḍahachandra, son of Kalyāṇachandra was the succeeding king. The two copper plates assigned to Laḍahachandra refer only to his religious activities and do not mention anything about his military activities. It is speculated that the Chandra Empire was firmly settled and that he devoted himself to peaceful religious activities. In verse 13 of the Maināmati plate, he is described as the Lord of the whole universe surrounded by the ocean, and he was the master of all *vidyās* or sciences.

Govindachandra is the last known king of this dynasty. He ascended the throne after Laḍahachandra, son of the latter. It was during his rule that ‘Vāṅgalādeśa’ suffered from a Chola invasion.<sup>327</sup> It was Govindachandra or his unknown successor who suffered an attack by the Kalachuri king Karṇa. This attack might have brought about the fall of the Chandras.

#### 1.2.1.9. The Varmanas

The Chandras were succeeded by the Varmanas in eastern Bengal. In the last quarter of the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the Hindu Varmana dynasty, having taken advantage of the weakness of the Pāla Empire, established their independent rule in south-eastern Bengal. They ruled for less than a century. The Belāva Copper Inscription of Bhoja Varman<sup>328</sup> is the only inscription furnishing any information about the Varmanas. Their capital was Vikramapura. The Varman kings claimed to be the descendants of the Yādava dynasty, who at the same time ruled in Siṁhapura. But there are different views regarding the exact location of Siṁhapura. Some scholars locate it in the Punjab,<sup>329</sup> some identify it with modern Siṁhapuram in the Kaliṅga country<sup>330</sup> and the rest identify it with Singur in Hoogli falling under the Rāḍha country. The first one is too far away, and no evidence is available that it

existed after the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The third is only known from the legendary account of Vijayasimha, contained in Mahāvarmaṇa, which can hardly be accepted as authentic history. On the other hand, the kingdom of Simhapura in Kaliṅga was famous from 5<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>331</sup> Thus the original homeland of the Varmanas was probably in Simhapura and certain Varman kings also ruled Simhapura in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>332</sup>

It is unclear whether they had any connection with the previous Varman kings of Assam. It is also not clear from the inscriptions how the Varmanas of Simhapura came to establish their kingdom in eastern Bengal. From the Belāva Copper-plate, it appears that Vajravarman was the founder of the dynasty and the next ruler Jātavarman brought the dynasty to significance in south-eastern Bengal through his military conquests. The activities of Jātavarman were recorded in the Belāva plate of Bhojavarman, his grandson. He gained success over western Bengal with the help of the Kalachuri king Karṇa due to anarchy created by Kaivartas in the Pāla Empire.<sup>333</sup> He married Vīraśrī, daughter of Karṇa, whose another daughter Yauvanaśrī got married to the Pāla king Vigrahapāla III. Thus it is evident that Jātavarman was the contemporary of Kalachuri king Karṇa ruling between 1041 and 1070 AD<sup>334</sup> and of Vigrahapāla III reigning from 1058-1075 AD. Jātavarman was also a contemporary of the Kaivarta chief Divya and of Mahīpāla II, who ruled between 1075 and 1080 AD. Thus, the tenure of Jātavarman may be placed between AD 1055 and AD 1073. It may be inferred from the Belāva Copper-plate<sup>335</sup> that Jātavarman had been famous for his mercy, heroism and charity and expanded his paramount power, by putting many heroes to shame and conquering the province of Kāmarūpa.

Subsequently, Harivarman, Sāmalavarman, and Bhojavarman formed a series of rulers, who ruled over the territory. Harivarman, the eldest son of Jātavarman ruled for 54 years at a stretch.<sup>336</sup> From the reference in verse 15 of Bhubaneśvarapraśasti of Bhaṭṭabhadra, it may be inferred that Harivarman or his son conquered Utkala by destroying the Nāgavāṁsi Sindas ruling from Barasura in Bastar in Central Provinces in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.<sup>337</sup> He was on good terms with

the Pāla kings. He extended his kingdom to Nāgabhūmi and Assam. Harivarman was succeeded by his brother Sāmalavarman. There is little information about the rule of Sāmalavarman. Bhojavaravarman succeeded him. The Belāva plate does not mention any achievement of Bhojavarmana. He was probably the last king of the Varman dynasty as after the end of his reign there is no account of his dynasty. Perhaps in the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Vijayasena of the Sena dynasty led to the decline of the Varman dynasty and started the rule of the Sena Dynasty in south-eastern Bengal.

#### **1.2.1.10. The Later Deva Kingdom**

During the ruins of the Sena Kingdom, the later Deva dynasty rose in Eastern Bengal. It had a series of rulers. The history of this dynasty is known from the Mehār Copper-plate, the Sobhrāmpur Copper-plate, the Chittagong Copper-plate of Dāmodaradeva, the Ādāvāḍī Copper-plate, and the Pākāmoda Copper-plate of Daśarathadeva. It is known from the Sobhrāmpur copper plate<sup>338</sup> that the later Deva Kingdom began with Puruṣottama. He rose to power from the position of a village headman and finally dealt a blow to the Sena dynasty. On the other hand, it is known from the Mehār plate<sup>339</sup> that Puruṣottama has been called *dev-anvaya-grāmaṇī* i.e., ‘leader of the Deva family’. It indicates that he was only a *grāmaṇī* and not a ruler. His son and successor Madhumathana (Madhusūdana of the other plate) rose to eminence as a king and assumed the title of *nṛipati* or ‘king’. Madhusūdhanadeva was called ‘Lord of the earth’ and *devavamśodadhīndu*, viz., ‘moon in the ocean of the Deva dynasty’ and is credited with having snatched away the wealth of the enemies in war. These verses established that Madhumathana got success against his contemporaries and carved out a principality for himself. The subsequent rulers were Vāsudeva and Dāmodaradeva, who would destroy the rule of Paṭṭikerā. Vāsudeva had also been called ‘the lord of the earth’ and ‘a great archer’. He was well-versed in all the śāstras and all the military skills. Dāmodaradeva, the

son of Vāsudeva, was the most powerful ruler of this dynasty. He was well-versed in polity and took the title of *gajapati* and *arirāja-chāṇūra-mādhava-sakala-bhūpati-chakravartī*. In the Chittagong plate<sup>340</sup> he is referred to as the overlord of all kings. The plate also mentions that he defeated many kings and brought them under subjection. He extended his dominion after the death of Viśvarūpasena, the Sena King over Tripura, Noakhali and Chaṭtagrām. But at the same time Paṭṭikera kingdom of Tripura maintained an independent existence even in the heyday of the Deva Kingdom in eastern Bengal. The name of the successor of Dāmodaradeva and the history of the family after him are really obscure. But the inscription features one more name ending in ‘deva’, and that is Daśarathadeva.<sup>341</sup> He also extended the empire further and set up his capital at Vikramapura. He incorporated the Dhaka region into his domain. He was called *paramesvara*, *paramabhaṭṭāraka*, *mahārājādhirāja*, *arirāja-danuja-mādhava*. The title *arirāja-danuja-mādhava* assumed by Daśaratha is largely identical with that of king Danujamādhava, mentioned in the genealogical records of Bengal, and also with that of Danuj Rāi, the Rājā of Sonārgaon, near Dacca.<sup>342</sup> According to Yahya-bin-Ahmad in his *Tārikh-i-Mabārakshāhi*, Danuj Rāi made an alliance with Ghiyās-ud-din-Balban in 1281.<sup>343</sup> The two copper plates discovered at Bhāṭerā also give us the names of a number of rulers after Daśarathadeva ruling under the Deva dynasty. The names are as listed below:<sup>344</sup>

1. Kharavāṇa( or Navagīrvvāṇa)
2. Gokuladeva(Gokulabhūmipāla)
3. Nārāyaṇa (Nārāyanadeva)
4. Govinda-Keśava-deva(Keśava-deva)
5. Iṣānadeva

There is a difference between the Devas of the 8<sup>th</sup> century and those of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The earlier ones were devoted to Buddhism, while the latter were Vaiṣṇavas. However, more details are not available about this dynasty, and later

kings are almost completely obscured. After the conflict with the Iliyas Shahi rulers of Bengal who were busy consolidating a single kingdom in the region, this dynasty took a back seat in the mid-fourteenth century.

#### **1.2.1.11. The Kingdom of Paṭṭikerā**

The evidence of the existence of Paṭṭikerā kingdom can be found in the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The manuscript of *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, now preserved in Cambridge University Library, and containing the picture of a sixteen-armed goddess with the label *paṭṭikeri chunda-varabhavana chundā*, is the earliest source of its existence. It is evident from this that the image of the Buddhist goddess Chundā in Paṭṭikerā was widely popular in the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

Determining the status of the Paṭṭikerā Kingdom during the Pāla and the Sena periods is not always easy. It is difficult to ascertain whether the extreme districts like Noakhali and Chittagong were included in the Pāla or the Sena Kingdom. There is no evidence to prove the expansion of Sena power in the Chittagong Division. Harikaladeva, who founded he kingdom, came to the throne in 1203-04 AD. If he was the first of his dynasty and this rule overlapped with that rule of the Senas, it seems that after the fall of the Sena kingdom in Gauḍa an independent kingdom arose in East Bengal. Harikāladeva Raṇavaṅkamalla who ascended the throne in 1204 A.D and ruled till 1225 A.D was, no doubt, an independent king. Another family, named Deva family ruled in eastern Bengal in an area adjacent to the kingdom of Raṇavaṅkamalla. It can be assumed that both of them perhaps took the advantage of the Sena power and created independent states for themselves together.

The Copper-plate of Raṇavaṅkamalla<sup>345</sup> engraved in around 13th century furnishes evidence about significant events in the history of this dynasty. It donates a grant of 20 *dronas* of land by Dhadi-eba, the prime minister of Śrī Harikāladeva in the 17th year of his reign (1202) to a Buddhist monastery, which was situated in the village named Bejakhaṇḍa in the city of Pattikera. There is no doubt that this

Paṭṭikerā was the state capital, which is mentioned in Burmese chronicles as Paṭikkarā or Paṭeikkarā. Although no city today is named as Paṭṭikerā, it must have been located in Tripura district, for an important *parganā* in this district, which was situated to the west of Comilla, from the Maināmati hill, and extends up to the hill of Māyāmati, is still known as Paṭikarā or Pāitkarā, which is closely, reminiscent of the old name.

### **1.2.2. Kingdoms of Western Bengal**

#### **1.2.2.1. Kingdom of Śaśāṅka**

Apart from eastern Bengal, the western side of Bengal also got prominence in ancient times. Historically, the northern part of western Bengal and the whole of North Bengal were evidently outside the domain of Gopachandra and his successors. From this period, these territories came to be known as the kingdom of Gauḍa, though this geographical term sometimes denoted an area that comprised the whole of western Bengal. From this time onwards, throughout the Hindu period, Gauḍa and Vaṅga loosely denoted the two prominent political divisions of Bengal, the former comprising the northern and either the whole or part of western Bengal, and the latter, southern and eastern Bengal. Although actual political boundaries varied in different times, this rough geographical division persisted throughout the ages. However, the names Puṇḍra or Varendrī (northern Bengal), Rāḍha or Suhma (western Bengal), Samataṭa or Harikela (eastern Bengal) were also used.<sup>346</sup>

After the fall of the Guptas, Gauḍa got independence under the rule of Śaśāṅka, who extended his territory in a vast area including whole of western Bengal and even also some part of eastern Bengal. Historians view Śaśāṅka as the first independent ruler of Bengal including Gauḍa. Two dated inscriptions, issued in his 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> ruling years from Medinipura, and another undated inscription from Śaśāṅka's subordinate king Mādhavavarmā of Gañjām (Odisha), Harṣavardhana's Bānśkherā and Madhuvana Copper-plates and the Nidhānpur Copper-plate of the

Kāmarūpa king Bhāskaravarmanā, contain information about Śaśāṅka. Some historians mark his rule approximately between 600 and 637 AD. His capital was at Karṇasuvarṇa, 9.6 kilometres south-west of present Baharampur, headquarter of Murshidabad district.<sup>347</sup> The Chinese traveller Xuanzang (Hiuen-Tsang) travelled from the country of Karṇasuvarṇa to a region in the present-day state of Odisha ruled by Śaśāṅka.<sup>348</sup> From some ancient records, it appears that Śaśāṅka was a contemporary and adversary of king Harṣavardhana of Thāneśwar. Śaśāṅka and his allies fought in battle with the then emperor of Thāneśwar, Harṣa and his allies. The result of the war was inconclusive because Śaśāṅka is documented to have retained his authority over his lands. It is known from the sources that the king of Mālava, Devagupta, bore enmity towards the ruler of Kanauj, Grahavarmana who was also the brother-in-law of the Vardhana princes, by his marriage with Rājyaśrī, the princess of Thāneśwar. Devagupta attacked Kanauj and killed Grahavarmana in the battle and imprisoned his wife Rājyaśrī. After the death of his father Prabhākaravardhana, Rājyavardhana became king of the kingdom in Thāneśwar. Rājyavardhana went to Kanauj to take revenge on the death of his brother-in-law. The battle was followed by a sudden assassination of Rājyavardhana. There is no conclusive evidence, but it is possible that Śaśāṅka, who was involved in the war as an ally of Devagupta, killed him. After the death of Rājyavardhana, his brother Harṣa became the king of Thāneśwar and rebuilt the army and attacked Kanauj. It is evident that Devagupta and Śaśāṅka had to retreat from Kanauj. Śaśāṅka continued to rule in Gauḍa, facing frequent attacks from Harṣa which he bravely encountered. Śaśāṅka himself also extended his territory. It is stated that as a follower of Saivism, Śaśāṅka destroyed the Buddhist *stupas* of Bengal and was an oppressor of Buddhism.<sup>349</sup> Śaśāṅka is known to have cut the Bodhi tree beneath, which the Buddha is believed to have found enlightenment in the Mahābodhi Temple of Bodhgayā.<sup>350</sup> Following his death Śaśāṅka was succeeded by his son, Mānava, who ruled the kingdom for eight months. However his weak successors could not retain their control over the Gauḍa territory, and therefore

subsequently Gauḍa was soon divided amongst the Harṣa and Bhāskaravarman of Kāmarūpa, the latter even managing to conquer Karṇasuvarṇa.<sup>351</sup> After a turbulent hiatus, the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century saw the emergence of a new line of kings in Bengal: the later Guptas in Gauḍa and ancient Magadha (western Bengal and southern Bihar) and the Khaḍgas in Vaṅga and Samataṭa (southern and south-eastern Bengal). In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, a Buddhist dynasty called the Devas emerged in south-eastern parts of Samataṭa. Neither of these, however, succeeded in establishing a strong rule in Bengal.

At this point, we find another king named Jayanāga who ruled in Gauḍa from the source of *Ārya-mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa*. R.G. Basak declined to accept any connection between Jayanāga, a king of Karṇasuvarṇa, and Śaśāṅka.<sup>352</sup> The title *mahārājādhīrāja* assumed by Jayanāga of the Vappaghosavāṭa grant indicates that Jayanāga was an independent king.<sup>353</sup> He was also styled as *paramabhāgavata*. But *Ārya-mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa* places Jayañaga after Śaśāṅka. It has been stated in the work that there was a Gauḍa King whose name began with ‘Jaya’ and ended with ‘Naga’. It is difficult to say anything definitely on the chronological position of these two kings on the basis of paleographical sources,<sup>354</sup> as the interval between them appears to have been very short. But judging from his coins and inscription, Jayanāga might be placed within the period from 550 to 650 A.D. It may be presumed on the basis of *Ārya-mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa* that when anarchy and confusion caused by the invasion of Bhāskarvarmana, the king of Kāmarūpa, ended, and when the attempt to ascend the throne by a son of Śaśāṅka ended in vein, the kingdom went to the hands of Jayanāga. But it is very tough to ascertain any conclusion regarding the reign of Jayanāga.

#### 1.2.2.2. The Pālas

After the death of Śaśāṅka, Bengal descended into a period marked by disunity, anarchy, mutual distrust, jealousy and intrigue once more.<sup>355</sup> It is

mentioned in the *Ārya-mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa* that the death of Śāśāṅka paralysed the Gauḍatantra (system). It describes, “After the death of Soma (Śāśāṅka) the Gauḍa political system (Gauḍatantra) was reduced to mutual distrust, raised weapons and mutual jealousy-one (king) for a week, another for a month, then a republican constitution- such will be the daily incident of the country on the bank of the Ganges where houses were built on the ruins of monasteries”.<sup>356</sup> During the reign of one king named Śiśu, it is said that the influence of women was felt and that he ruled for a fortnight before getting killed. To crown the misery of the people, it is predicted that a severe famine would visit the eastern country. This certainly points to the absence of any stable government in Gauḍa. Might was right and there was disorder and anarchy, and this is just the state of things which had been very appropriately described in the Khālimpur Copper-plate of Dharmapāla<sup>357</sup> as Mātsyanyāya. In the plate it is engraved in the following manner:

*mātsya-nyāyam=apohitum prakritibhir-*  
*lakṣmyāḥ karaṇ grāhitah*  
*Śrī-gopāla iti kṣhitīśa śirasāṁ chūḍāmaṇis=tat-sutah*

The term *mātsyanyaya* is vividly discussed by the thinkers and historians. Some ancient writers used it to express the extreme state of anarchy and chaos. Tārānātha describes the condition of Bengal just before the election of Gopāla I in the following way, “In Bengal and in the other five provinces of the east, each Kṣatriya, Brāhmaṇa, and merchant constituted himself king of his surroundings, but there was no king ruling the country.”<sup>358</sup> From the various discussions, it may have concluded that in the absence of a strong and centralized government, every man considered himself stronger in his own surroundings and engaged himself in acts of self-aggrandizement at the cost of his weaker neighbours. This situation prevailed in Bengal for one hundred years.

The weakness of the political power of Gauḍa naturally invited many foreign invasions by the neighbouring powers. Three or four invasions of this period are

definitely known. It is stated in the Ragholi Plates<sup>359</sup> assigned to 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. that a king of Śailavāṁsa named Jayavardhana killed the king of Pañḍra (Bengal and Bihar). But it is uncertain whether the unnamed Śaila prince established himself on the throne of Northern Bengal.

Thus the minds of the people of Bengal were embittered with long-awaited anarchy and disorder. In order to get rid of such extreme sufferings, the various regional chieftains or little rulers elected one chieftain named Gopāla, a resident of Gauḍa as their overlord in 750 AD. Thus the Pāla rule started in the territory of western Bengal. With the accession of the Pāla king in the throne of Bengal to the middle of the eight century the period of anarchy and disorder which lasted for one hundred years came to an end. The period lasted for the succeeding four hundred years and the Pālas proved to be a formidable dynasty, not just in Bengal but in the surrounding area as well. But by this same time a number of petty states ruled at different parts of Bengal. Nothing is clear about the origin of the Pāla dynasty and their native abode. It is known from the Pala epigraphs that the father of Gopāla was Bapyaṭa, also known as a ‘destroyer of enemy’.<sup>360</sup> His grandfather was Dayitaviṣṇu. It is presumed that they were ordinary persons as no royal title was seen before their names. After coming to power, Gopāla paid attention to extension of his kingdom. He brought the whole region of northern and eastern Bengal under his rule. Under the leadership of Gopāla, south-eastern Bengal came under the suzerainty of the Pālas.

Gopāla was succeeded by his son Dharmapāla (770-810) who was successful both as a conqueror and as a ruler. Dharmapāla engaged in a struggle with the Pratihāras of Kanauj and Rāshṭrakūṭas of south over the control of Kanauj. In history, the fight is known as ‘the tripartite struggle’. In this struggle, he achieved little success. Yet Dharmapāla conquered quite a number of regions beyond Bengal. He extended his kingdom to the region between the Ganges and Jamunā, conquering Varanasi and Prayāga. He assumed the highest sovereign titles *paramesvara*,

*paramavaṭṭaraka mahārājādhīrāja*. Dharmapāla was also a great patron of art. His son Devapāla (810-850 A.D.) was able to build the Pāla Empire as one of India's greatest empires. It was Devapāla who took the Pāla Empire to the position of a regional empire. He was an able successor of his father. Like his father, he was able to expand the kingdom. Devapāla directed successful military expeditions against Pratihāra and the Rāṣṭrakūṭa kings in northern India. He occupied a large region of northern India. He was also able to exercise his domination over Orissa and Kāmarūpa. After all, it was under his rule when the Pāla Kingdom expanded the most. Devapāla also patronized the Nālandā University and he built a number of Buddhist monasteries. The Pāla Empire temporarily declined after the death of Devapāla. After his death some chickenhearted and good for nothing heirs ascended the throne. They could not maintain the glory and power of the Pāla kingdom. As a result, the Pāla Empire progressed gradually towards decline. Names of a number of weak rulers who ruled after Devapāla are as follow.<sup>361</sup>

1. Vigrahapāla I or Surapāla I (c 850-854 AD)
2. Nārāyaṇapāla (c 854-905 AD)
3. Rājyapāla (c 905-940 AD)
4. Gopāla II (c 940-960 AD)
5. Vigrahapāla II (c 960-988 AD).

By the time of these weak successors, the boundary of the empire started to shrink. During the time of Vigrahapāla II, the power of the Pāla kings was limited only to Gauḍa and its adjoining regions. During this period, the destruction of the Pāla kingdom was greatly enhanced by the invasion of the Chandellas and the kings of the Kalachuri dynasty from northern India. As a result, there emerged the Kamboja dynasty in the region that lay in the north-west part of the Pāla Empire.

The glory of Bengal was restored with the accession of Mahīpāla to the throne. He ruled between 988 and 1038 AD. He managed to recover his ancestral paternal kingdom. The most notable achievement of his life was the reconstruction

of the Pāla Empire after occupying East Bengal from the Kambojas. Then he concentrated on conquering other kingdoms. His empire expanded from East Bengal to Varanasi and Mithilā. He could maintain his own domination in most of the places in the kingdom, and successfully defended the attacks of two strong royal powers of that time, the Tamil king Rājendra Chola and the Chedi king Gāṅgeyadeva. After a temporary revival under Mahīpāla I, decline set in once again in the fate of Bengal as the king could not leave any capable successors. Therefore, as soon as he died, the empire started to be divided. After the time of Mahīpāla I, his son Nayapāla who ruled between 1038 and 1055 AD, and grandson Vigrahapāla III who ruled between 1055 and 1070 AD, ascended the throne. During the reign of these weak kings, the Kalachuri kings, Chālukya king of Karnataka, and the kings of Orissa and Kāmarūpa attacked Bengal. These Pāla rulers failed to resist those attacks bravely. When the Pāla Empire was exhausted from facing overseas attacks one after another for a long time, opposition and disagreement were noticed inside the country. With this chance, small independent kingdoms came into being. Bihar which was beyond Bengal started to secede from the control of Pāla kings. Thus, during Vigrahapāla III, the Pāla Empire of Bengal got divided into many independent parts.

Mahīpāla II, son of Vigrahapāla III, ascended the throne after his father. During his reign the disastrous condition got more intensified. At this time the Zamindars openly declared revolt in the Varendra region of North Bengal. This revolt is known as the ‘Kaivarta Revolt’ in history. The leader of the Kaivarta Revolt was Divvoka or Divya. He occupied Varendra by killing Mahīpāla II and established his own rule. Thus the rule of the Pālas had been interrupted for a short time in the history of Bengal. Divya was an able and powerful ruler. He made his position quite secure in Varendrī and repeatedly rendered Ramapāla’s efforts to recover Varendrī futile. He was succeeded by his younger brother Rudoka, but nothing concrete is known about him. The next king Bhīma, the son and successor of Rudoka, was highly praised as a ruler by the author of *Rāmacharita*.

Under Rāmapāla (c.1077-1120AD), the Pāla empire once again revived, though temporarily. The author of Rāmācharita, the biography of Rāmapāla, states that Rāmapāla just after taking the responsibility of the kingdom, made attempts to regain Varendra. To this end, the kings of fourteen countries came forward to extend their support to Rāmapāla with soldiers, arms and money.<sup>362</sup> The allies mentioned in *Rāmācharita* are as follows:<sup>363</sup>

1. Mahaṇa, the Rāshṭrakūṭa chief and his two sons, Mahāmaṇḍalika Kahnaradeva and Suvarṇadeva, and his brother's son Mahāpratihāra Śivarajadeva.
2. Bhīmayśas, the king of Pīṭhī and lord of Magadha
3. Vīraguṇa, king of Koṭāṭavī in the south
4. Jayasimha, king of Daṇḍabhukti (Medinipur district)
5. Vikramarāja, ruler of Bāla-Balabhī
6. Lakṣmīśūra, lord of Apara-Māndara, and head of the group of feudal chiefs of the forest (*samast-āṭavika-sāmanta-chakra-chūḍāmaṇi*)
7. Śūrapāla, ruler of Kujavatī (Sāntāl Parganas)
8. Rudraśikhara, ruler of Tailakampa(Manbhumi District)
9. Bhāskara or Mayagalasimha, king of Ucchala
10. Pratāpasimha, king of Bhekkariya (Dhekuri near Katwa in the Burdwan district)
11. Narasiṁhārjuna, king of Kayaṅgala-*māṇḍala*(south of Rājmahal)

In this battle, the Kaivarta king Bhīma was defeated and killed. Then Rāmapāla set up a new capital named 'Rāmāvatī'. During the rule of subsequent kings 'Rāmāvatī' became the capital of the empire. After establishing the supervisory power over Varendra, he established authority over Magadha, Orissa and Kāmarūpa so that the lost glory of the empire was restored. The bad luck of the Pāla dynasty was that the subsequent rulers of Rāmapāla were very weak. As a result they failed

to retain control over the empire. After Rāmapāla, a series of rulers ruled. They were as follows:

1. Kumarapāla( 1120-1125 AD)
2. Gopāla III (1125-1140 AD)
3. Madanapāla (1140-1155 AD)
4. Govindapāla (1155-1159 AD)

The internal disruption and foreign invasions finally gave a blow to the Pāla Kingdom and it collapsed. Govindapāla was the last ruler known from the tradition, but not mentioned in *Rāmacharita*. But the identity of the names of some kings ending with –pāla found from records in Bihar, has not yet been established. Pālapāla and Indradymnapāla are the examples found from this tradition.<sup>364</sup> The Pāla dynasty was replaced by the Sena dynasty,<sup>365</sup> the last powerful Hindu kingdom in Bengal. The following table may be drawn up to tabulate the names of the Pāla rulers reigning in different times:<sup>366</sup>

| Sl.<br>No. | Name of the kings           | Probable<br>reigning period | Year<br>of<br>Accession |
|------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1          | Gopāla I                    | -                           | 750 AD                  |
| 2          | Dharmapāla                  | 32 years                    | 776-810 AD              |
| 3          | Devapāla                    | 39(or 35),,                 | 810-850 AD              |
| 4          | Vigrahapāla I or Surapāla I | 3 years                     | 850-855 AD              |
| 5          | Nārāyaṇapāla                | 54                          | 855-910 AD              |
| 6          | Rājyapāla                   | 24                          | 910-935 AD              |
| 7          | Gopāla II                   | 35(?)                       | 935-970 AD              |
| 8          | Vigrahapāla II              | -                           | 970 AD                  |
| 9          | Mahīpāla I                  | 48                          | 980-1030 AD             |
| 10         | Nayapāla                    | 15                          | 1030-1045 AD            |
| 11         | Vigrahapāla III             | -                           | 1045-1072 AD            |

|    |             |       |              |
|----|-------------|-------|--------------|
| 12 | Mahīpāla II | -     | -            |
| 13 | Surapāla II | -     | -            |
| 14 | Ragmapāla   | 42    | 1080-1123 AD |
| 15 | Kumarapāla  | -     | -            |
| 16 | Gopāla III  | 14(?) | 1125-1139 AD |
| 17 | Madanapāla  | 19    | 1139-1158 AD |
| 18 | Govindapāla | -     | 1162 AD      |

### 1.2.2.3. Śūra Dynasty

Raṇasūra of Dakṣiṇa-Rāḍha suggests the existence of the Śūra dynasty. This dynasty is much heard of in the genealogical books and other sources, but very little is known from reliable documents. The first member of the dynasty is called Ādiśūra, who was one of the central figures in the social history of Bengal. We have tried to show that he (Ādiśūra of *Kūlaśāstras*) can be identified with Śrī Ādisimha of Magadha mentioned in the Dudhapāni Rock Inscription of the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>367</sup> Hereditary books preserve a tradition that after the establishment of Buddhist Pāla power, the Brāhmaṇ Śūra was forced to take shelter in Rāḍha. The names of Bhuśūra, Mādhavaśūra, Ādityaśūra, Yāminiśūra, Varendraśūra, Pradyumnaśūra, Anuśūra and Vanuśūra are found in *Kūlagranthas*. This reconstruction of the Śūra dynastic history based on the account of hereditary books is not reliable. Occasionally, the names of the Śūra rulers are found in inscriptions and contemporary literature. A pillar of Rājaona carries the word 'Rānā-Surasya' in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. Lakṣmiśūra of *Rāmачarita* was the ruler of Aparamandāra. Vijayasena was married to Vilāsadevī, who has been described as Śūrakulāmbodhi. All of this will indicate the existence of Śūra family, although we do not know the extent of their region or their political condition. This evidence of Tirumālai Inscription and *Rāmачarita* indicate that they

raised their heads during the rule of weak Pāla kings, but when a powerful Pāla king came, they were forced to take a backward position in Samataṭa.

#### 1.2.2.4. The Kambojas

The Kamboja aggression was the first blow to the Pālas. It compelled them to leave their ancestral region of Varendra and gave Kambojas the title *gauḍapati*. The Kamboja dynasty ruled over a part of Bengal from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. Now the question that definitely arises is to who were the Kambojas? Were they native to Bengal or were they outsiders? And how did they rise to prominence?

An ancient Iron Age of India tribe called the Kambojas is, frequently mentioned in Sanskrit and Pāli literature. The tribe changed their status to become a part of the *śoḍasa* (sixteen) *mahājanapadas* of ancient India mentioned in Buddhist and Jaina literatures. The earliest reference to the Kambojas is found in the works of Pāṇini around the 5th century BC. They are referred to as *kṣatriyas* (warrior caste) in the *Manusmṛiti* (2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC) and the *Mahābhārata* (1<sup>st</sup> Century BC). Subsequently, they degraded from their caste position through a failure to abide by Hindu sacred rituals.<sup>368</sup> The ancient Kambojas were probably the descendants of the Indo-Iranians popularly known later on as the Sasanians and the Pārthiāns. In the first and second centuries BC, they occupied a part of north-western India. They are, however, sometimes described as Indo-Aryans<sup>369</sup> and sometimes having both Indian and Iranian affinities.<sup>370</sup> They are also described as a royal clan of the Śākas. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century and 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, many clans of the Kambojas entered India along with Śākas, Pahllavas and Yavanas and spread into Indus, Saurāshṭra, Mālava, Rajasthan, Punjab and Śūrasena.<sup>371</sup> They established independent rule in western and north-western India.<sup>372</sup> A branch of the same community moved eastwards and entered the Pāla domains in the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. They took Gauḍa and Varendra (north-west Bengal) from the Pālas and established the Kamboja-Pāla dynasty of Bengal in eastern India.<sup>373</sup> Earlier they were employed by the Pālas following Devapāla's

conquests due to the lack of native cavalry in Bengal. It is to be mentioned that the Kambojas were famous as cavalrymen and also for their horses (*kambojesku yena vāji-yuvabhiḥ*).<sup>374</sup> ‘Aśvakas’, ‘horsemen’, was the term popularly applied to them. The Aśvakas inhabited eastern Afghanistan, and were included within the more general term Kambojas.<sup>375</sup>

A Kamboja country on the north-eastern frontier of India is known to have existed. In the edicts of Aśoka, Kambojas are mentioned along with ‘Yona’ and probably they enjoyed autonomy under the Maurya Empire.<sup>376</sup> The Tibetan work *Pag-sam-jon-zang* mentions the country in the north-east region of Lusāi Hills and calls it Kām-po-tsa or Kamboja. It is also correct to think that Kām-po-tsa of the Bāngarh Inscription and Kamboja of the Irdā Inscription were one and the same.<sup>377</sup> It is likely that a branch of Kambojas migrated eastwards towards Nepal and Tibet in the wake of the Kuṣhāṇa (1<sup>st</sup> century) power or else Hūṇa pressure (5<sup>th</sup> century). Hence they were noticed in the chronicles of Tibet and Nepal. The 5<sup>th</sup>-century *Brahma Purāṇa* locates the Kambojas around Prāgjyotiṣha and Tāmraliptika.<sup>378</sup>

There are several ancient inscriptions which are assigned to the rule of the Kambojas in Bengal and Bihar. The most important are the Dinājpur Pillār Inscription,<sup>379</sup> Irdā Copper-plate of Nayāpāla,<sup>380</sup> and Bāngarh Grant of Mahīpāla.<sup>381</sup> It is evident from Mahīpāla’s charter that the Kambojas seized the northern parts of Bengal from Gopāla II or Vigrapāla II of the Pāla dynasty.<sup>382</sup> The names of a series of rulers have been found Rājyapāla, Nārāyaṇapāla and Nayāpāla.<sup>383</sup> The Copper-plate Inscription<sup>384</sup> indicates that the founder of the Kamboja dynasty was Rājyapāla. He has been referred to as *kambojavamśatilaka paramasaugata mahārājādhirāja parameśvara paramabhaṭṭāraka-Rājyapāla*.<sup>385</sup> R.C. Majumdar states that the expression *Kuñjaraghātavarṣana* of the Dinājpur Pillar indicates that Kuñjaraghātavarṣana is the personal name of Kambojanvaya Gauḍapati. If this bears out, then this Kambojanvaya Gauḍapati was the fourth known king of the Kamboja

dynasty of Bengal. However, some scholars believe that the Kambojanvaya Gauḍapati of the Dinājpur Pillar Inscription is the same as Kambojavamśatilaka Rājyapāla of the Irdā Copper plate. This, however, does not appear to be correct, since Rājyapāla of the Irdā Copper Plate has been described as a devotee of Buddha (*parama-saugata*), whereas Kambjanvaya Gauḍapati of Diājpur Pillar has been described as a devotee of Siva. But perhaps Kambojānvaya Gauḍapati was the same as the Kamboja king Nayāpāla of the Irdā Copper-plate, since king Nayāpāla is also said to have been Saivite in the Irdā Copper-plate.

Dharmapāla is known to have been the last known ruler of the Kamboja dynasty who ruled in Daṇḍabhukti in the first quarter of the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Bāngarh charter of Mahīpāla I asserts that Mahīpāla had recovered nearly the whole of north and east Bengal after defeating the intruders who had seized his ancestral kingdom.<sup>386</sup> It is engraved in the inscription as follows:

*hata-sa (ka) la vipakṣah saṅgare vā(bā)hu-darppād  
anadhikṛita-viluptam rājyam=āsādya pitryam  
nihita-charaṇa-padmo bhū-(bhṛitām)  
mūrdhni (tasmād=a) bhavad=avani-pālah ŚrīMahīpāla-devah*

The intruders are likely to be identified<sup>387</sup> with the Kambojas of north Bengal. There is no specific information available regarding the specific geographical area of the kingdom of Kamboja in Bengal. According to the Irdā Copper-plate, the Kamboja kingdom definitely comprised Varadhamāna-*bhūkti* *maṇḍala* and Daṇḍa-*bhūkti* *maṇḍala*. The last known ruler of the Kamboja dynasty was Dharmapāla who was ousted from Gauḍa by Mahīpāla I of the Pāla kingdom. He continued his rule in the first quarter of the 11<sup>th</sup> century in Bengal and Bihar. The capital of the Kamboja Pāla kingdom was probably Pryanigu which is not yet satisfactorily identified.<sup>388</sup> However, some scholars tend to identify Pryanigu with an old village known as Pingvani located in Thana Garbeta.<sup>389</sup>

#### **1.2.2.5. The Dynasty of Īśvaraghoṣha of Dhekkārī**

The decline in power of the central authority of the Pāla Empire naturally gave an opportunity to the feudal chiefs to assume prerogatives.<sup>390</sup> There is probably no doubt that the major part of the Pāla Empire was destroyed due to the Kalachuri invasion by Karṇa. The Pāla ruler Nayapāla and Vigrahapāla III were gradually losing their control over western Bengal. A land grant probably dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD mentions a chief named Īśvaraghoṣha, who called himself *mahāmaṇḍalika*, and took an independent royalty. Vigrahapāla III was in power when Īśvaraghoṣha rose to prominence. It happened in Dhekkārī, probably situated in Burdwan district.<sup>391</sup> It is stated by Atul Sur that Īśvaraghoṣha came into prominence in the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD and he was a contemporary of Vigrahapāla III in AD 977-1027. But the information is still not confirmed. The plate mentions the genealogy of Īśvaraghoṣha. It mentions Dhūrtaghoṣha and his son Balaghoṣha. Balaghoṣha was a warrior by profession and his son was Dhavalaghoṣha. The son of Dhavalaghoṣha was Īśvaraghoṣha. No other information is available about them.

#### **1.2.2.6. The Sena Dynasty**

The Sena family ruled in Bengal after the Pālas. They originally migrated from Karnāṭa in South India in the time of the invasion of Vikramaditya VI (1076-1126),<sup>392</sup> the famous ruler of the Western Chālukya dynasty. Subsequently, they rose to power in Bengal. The Senas started as feudal vassals in the Rāḍha region of the Pālas after coming to Bengal. In their family records, they are stated as ‘Brahma-kṣatriya’, but they became full Kṣatriyas after changing their occupation. They attained their rule in Bengal under the leadership of Sāmantasena (1060-1080 AD), mainly confined in the Rāḍha region. But he did not assume any royal title. He was succeeded by his son Hemantasena (1080-1095 AD) who had been given the title *māhārājādhīrāja* in the Barrackpur Copper-plate.<sup>393</sup> It assumed that he just founded the independent

principality, but no other achievement is attributed to him. The real founder of the great dynasty was Vijayasena (1095-1158 AD), son of Hemantasena. He assumed the imperial titles *parameśvara*, *paramabhaṭṭāraka*, *mahārājādhirāja*, and the proud epithet *arirāja-vrishabha-śaṅkara*. That he had to fight with several independent chiefs is expressly referred to in the Deopārā Inscription. All of the regional chiefs were probably aspirants for the Pāla throne. He ousted the Varmanas from East Bengal. Therefore, it is justified to say that south-eastern Bengal, which was included in the domains of the Varmanas, became an integral part of the Sena Kingdom sometime in the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD. During the Kaivarta Revolt, Vijayasena helped Rāmapāla. He was recognized as an independent ruler in exchange of helping Rāmapāla to regain Varendra. Again, Rāḍha came under the possession of Vijayasena due to a nuptial relation with the Śūra dynasty of South Rāḍha. Then Vijayasena brought south and east Bengal under his possession. Taking advantage of the weaknesses of the last kings of Pāla dynasty, Vijayasena extended his lordship by defeating Madanapāla and driving away the Pālas from south and south-east Bengal. Then he launched an attack on Kāmarūpa, Kaliṅga and Mithilā. Vijayapura situated in Triveni of Hooghly district was the first capital of Vijayasena. The second capital was established in Vikramapura in the district of Munshiganj.

Vijayasena was succeeded by his Vallālasena (1158-1179 AD), who assumed the imperial title of *arirāja-niḥśaṅka-śaṅkara*. He not only protected his father's kingdom, but also expanded it to a large extent and established Sena rule on a strong foundation. It has been pointed out that Vallālasena ousted Govindapāla, the last Pala ruler of Magadha in 1162 AD, from his kingdom. Thus, Magadha came under the suzerainty of Vallālasena. It is stated in the *Vallālacharita* (1520 AD) of Ānanda Bhaṭṭa that his kingdom comprised five provinces, viz. Vaṅga, Varendra, Rāḍha, Bāgṛī<sup>394</sup> and Mithilā.<sup>395</sup> He was a great scholar and an author of repute, and two of his works *Dānasāgara* and *Adbhutasāgara* are highly impressive. During his reign, the caste system was re-organised and he introduced the tradition of *kulinism*

among Brāhmaṇas, Vaidyas and Kāyasthas. He used to practise Brahmanical Hinduism and favoured the Tantric form of religion. He sent several missionaries among the Brāhmaṇas to Magadha, Bhutan, Chittagong, Ārākān, Orissa and Nepal.<sup>396</sup> He married the Chālukya princess, Rāmadevi. It proves the growing strength and prestige of the Senas as a political power and also shows that they had still retained contact with their ancestral land Karnāṭa.<sup>397</sup> In his old age, he handed over the charge of running the kingdom to his son Lakṣmaṇasena and passed the rest of his life by following Vānaprastha with his wife near Triveni on the Ganges, and finally ended his wife's life and his own by drowning themselves voluntarily in the holy water of the Ganges.

Lakṣmaṇasena, the son and successor of Vallālasena, was the last great king of the dynasty. It appears from the epigraphs of Lakṣmaṇasena that he was the first king to assume the title of *gauḍeśvara* and also of imperial title *arirāja-madana-śāṅkara*. He also took the title of *parama-vaiṣnava* or *parama-narasimha*. He was a great warrior like his father and showed his skill in the battlefield. He brought Prāgjyotisha, Gauḍa, Kaliṅga, Kāśī, Magadha and other regions under Sena Empire. It appears from the available sources that Lakṣmaṇasena carried on military expeditions far away from the frontiers of Bengal in all directions. It was a great achievement on the part of Lakṣmaṇasena as no other ruler since the days of Dharmapāla and Devapāla in Bengal had carried on such wide and extensive military campaigns.<sup>398</sup> Lakṣmaṇasena was famous for his extraordinary qualities and proverbial generosity which attracted Minhāj-i-Sirāj, author of *Tābāqat-i-Nāsiri*. He designated him as “the great of Rae of Bengal”. Siraj adds that he was respected as the hereditary Khalif (Caliph) or spiritual head of the country.<sup>399</sup> But although Lakṣmaṇasena began with a brilliant career of conquest, his reign ended in a sea of troubles that shrouded him and his empire. Towards his later career, he became inattentive to the running of his kingdom, probably due to long-standing warfare, old age disability and for other reasons and started to reside in his second capital

Navadvīpa on the Ganges like his father. At this time, in different parts of the Sena kingdom, a number of chiefs emerged who broke off from the empire and paved the way of its downfall. An inscription found in western Sundarbans, shows that Ḏommaṇapāla had set up an independent realm in the eastern part of Khāḍi (in Sundarbans) in 1196 AD.<sup>400</sup> The Deva family also established an independent kingdom to the east side of the river Meghna around the same time. Gauḍa turned into a playing ground of fearful intrigue and mutual conflict and there grew internal disorder. Muhammad Bakhtiyār Khalji, a Turkish general gave the final blow to the Sena Kingdom. In 1204 AD, he suddenly attacked the royal palace at Nadia where Lakṣmaṇasena had taken refuge.<sup>401</sup> Lakṣmaṇasena managed to escape to east Bengal and took shelter in Vikramapura of the pre-Sena Munshiganj district, sailing all the way. He ruled there for a few more years. Bakhtiar Khalji easily occupied north and north-west Bengal. In this way, Muslim Empire was established in Bengal centering round Lakṣmaṇābatī (Gauḍa). After Lakṣmaṇasena's death, his two sons, Viśvarūpsena and Keśavasena, ruled one after another for some time. It is evident from the epigraphic records that southern and eastern parts of Bengal were under their domain for a period of nearly twenty-five years and it means that they kept the kingdom under their control until 1230 AD. There is no evidence that the Senas ruled Bengal after Keśavasena. We found in *Tābāqat-i-Nāsirī* that the descendants of Lakṣmaṇasena ruled in Bengal at least up to 1245 AD. Thus, it is almost certain that Viśvarūpasena and Keśavasena were succeeded by other members of the family.<sup>402</sup> In the Buddhist work, *Pañcharakṣhā*,<sup>403</sup> the name of one Madhusena, who was given the title *gauḍeśvara*, is recorded. Madhusena, with a 'Sena' -ending name, was the last known ruler of the Sena dynasty. In the third quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, the Devas supplanted the Senas from their hold over Vikramapura. By the end of the century, the whole of Bengal came under the control of the Muslims. R.D. Banerjee has drawn up a chronology of Sena Kings furnished by the literary works written

during the reigns of Vallālasena and Lakṣmaṇasena, and this chronology is now accepted by all. The table is as follows:<sup>404</sup>

| Name of the Kings | Probable duration of rule | Year of accession and last year of reign |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Sāmantasena       | -                         | -  |
| Hemantasena       | -                         | -  |
| Vijayasena        | 62 years                  | 1097-1159 AD (1125)                      |
| Vallālasena       | 19                        | 1159-1178 AD                             |
| Lakṣmaṇasena      | 27                        | 1178-1205 AD                             |
| Keśavasena        | 3 years                   | -  |
| Viśvarūpasena     | 14 years                  | -  |

#### 1.2.2.7. Ḏommaṇapāla of Rakṣakāli

Getting opportunity from the weakness of Lakṣmaṇasena, the last powerful Sena ruler, an independent kingdom rose to prominence in the Sundarban region under *mahārājādhirāja Śridommanapāla* in 1196 A.D.<sup>405</sup> D.C. Sircar seems to indicate that Dommanapāla was a feudal chief of Lakṣmaṇasena. It is known from the inscription that the Pala family to which Ḏommaṇapāla belonged migrated from Ayodhya and took the possession of Pūrva-Khāṭikā either by conquest or by other means. It refers to two rulers. The proper name of the first ruler of this line is unknown to us. But sources highlight that he was styled as *parama-maheśvara-mahāmaṇḍalika*. He was succeeded by Dommanapāla, who is called *mahāsāmantādhipati*, *mahārājādhirāja* etc. The subsequent history of the family is unknown.

#### 1.2.2.8. Mallabhūma Kingdom

Mallabhūma was the kingdom ruled by the Malla kings of Viṣhṇupura. It comprised primarily the present day area of the Indian state of West Bengal from the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. The area of Bankura, a part of Burdwan, Birbhum, Santhal Parganas, Medinipur and also a part of Purulia were under the kingdom. The Rājās of Viṣhṇupura were also known as Malla Kings. ‘Malla’ is a Sanskrit word meaning wrestler, but there could also be some links with the Mal tribes of the area, who had intimate connection with the Bāgđis.<sup>406</sup> The Malla Rājās ruled over the territory in the south-western part of present West Bengal and a part of south-eastern Jharkhand.<sup>407</sup> Right from 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. till around the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for around a millennium, the history of Bankura district is largely identical with the rise and fall of the Hindu Rājas of Viṣhṇupur.<sup>408</sup> The legends of Vipattāriṇī Devī are associated with the Malla Kings of Viṣhṇupura.<sup>409</sup> The kingdom was founded by Ādi (Raghunāth) Malla and the last ruler was Kālipada Singha Thākura. The kingdom’s contribution is its famous terracotta temples.

<sup>1</sup> Spate, O.H.K, A. T. A. Learmonth & B.H. Farmer., *India, Pakistan & Ceylon: ‘The Bengal Delta’* (Region XII), London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition Revised & completely reset, 1967, pp.571-599; Morgan, J.P & W. G. McIntire., ‘Quaternary Geology of the Bengal Basin, East Pakistan & India’, *Bulletin of the Geographical Society of America*, Vol.LXX, 1959, pp.319-342; Rashid, Haroun. Er., *East Pakistan, A Systematic Regional Geography & its Development Planning Aspects*, Sh. Ghulam Ali & Sons, 1965; Abdul Momin Chowdhury, ‘Bāṅglār Bhaugolik Porichaya’ in Anisuzzaman (ed.), *Baṅgia Sāhityer Itihās*, (in Bengali), Dhaka: Bangia Academy, 1987, pp. 1-48.

<sup>2</sup> Majumdar, R. C, (ed.), *The History of Bengal*, Vol. I, Hindu Period, University of Dacca, Dacca, 1943, p.1; Mukherjee, R., and S.K.Maiti., ‘Introduction’, *Corpus of Bengal Inscriptions bearing on History and Civilisation of Bengal*, Calcutta: Firma K.L.Mukhopadhyay, 1967, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Majumdar, R. C, (ed.), *op.cit*, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Hood, John ,W.,(tr.) *History of the Bengali People(From Earliest Times to the Fall of the Sena Dynasty)*,Translated from original Bengali Bāṅglār Itihās of N.R.Roy, Kolkata: Orient Blackswan, 1994, p. 53.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 52.

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- <sup>6</sup> Mitra Satish Chandra, *Yashohār- Khulnār Itihās*(in Bengali), Calcutta: Chakravarti, Chatterji & Co, 1922, p. 12.
- <sup>7</sup> Hood, John, W., (tr.), *op.cit*, p. 53.
- <sup>8</sup> Morrison, B.M., *Political Centres and Cultural Regions of Early Bengal*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1970, Reprint: Jaipur-Delhi, Rawat Publications, 1980, p. 10.
- <sup>9</sup> Hood, John, W., (tr.), *op.cit*, p. 56.
- <sup>10</sup> Rashid, M.Harunur, 'The Geographical Background to the History and Archaeology of South East Bengal', *Journal of Asiatic Society Bengal*, Vol.XXIV-VI, 1979-81, p. 164.
- <sup>11</sup> Chakrabarti, Dilip Kumar., *Ancient Bangladesh — A Study of the Archaeological Sources*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 20; Rashid, M.Harnur, 'The Geographical Background to the History and Archaeology of South East Bengal', p. 170.
- <sup>12</sup> Spate, O.H.K., A.T.A. Learmonth., and B.H. Farmer., *op.cit*, pp. 571-72; Bagchi, K., *The Ganges Delta*, Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1944, Chapters. 1-3; Strichland, C., *Deltaic Formation with special reference to the Hydrographic Processes of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra*, Calcutta: Langsmans, Green, 1940, p.8.
- <sup>13</sup> Ahmed, Nafis, *An Economic Geography of East Pakistan*, London: Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 2; Rashid M. Harunur, 'The Geographical Background to the History and Archaeology of South East Bengal', p. 160.
- <sup>14</sup> Paul, P.L., *The Early History of Bengal*, Vol. I , Calcutta: The Indian Research Institute, 1939, p. I.
- <sup>15</sup> Majumdar, R.C. (ed.), *op.cit*, pp. 17, 2 3.
- <sup>16</sup> Jarett, H.S., (tr.), *Āin-i-Ākbarī* of Abul Fazl, Vol. II, Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1894, p. 120.
- <sup>17</sup> Yule, Henry, (tr. & ed.), *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, Vol. II, London: John Murray, 1873, Chap. LV, pp. 97, 98 and p. 80.
- <sup>18</sup> Ovington John, *A Voyage to Suratt, In the Year 1689*, London: Jacob Tonfan, 1696, pp. 553-54.Chatgaon has been described as 'a big city in the sea and a wooden belt' in *Ain-i-Akbari*. Jarett, H.S., (tr.), *op.cit*, p. 125.
- <sup>19</sup> Roy N.R., *Bāṅgālīr Itihās: Āadi Parba*, Kolkata: Dey Publishing, 1359(BS), pp. 108.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid*; Majumdar, R.C., (ed.). *op.cit*, p. 77.
- <sup>21</sup> Vaidya P. L., *Divyavadāna*, Mithilā: Mithilā Vidyapitham Prakasitam, Śakābda 1880, p. XL.
- <sup>22</sup> Hossain, Md. Mosharraf, *Mahāsthān: Anecdote to History*, Dhaka: Dibyaprakash, 2006, pp.69-73; Majumdar, R. C., (ed.), *op.cit*, p. 10.
- <sup>23</sup> *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*, VII. 13-18.

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<sup>24</sup> Kane, P.V., *History of Dharmasāstra, Ancient and Medieval Religions and Civil Law*, Vol.II, Part-I, Chapter-2, Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1930, p. 47.

<sup>25</sup> *Mahābhārata*, Sabhā-parva, Chapter-XXX, 22-23; Cf. Majumdar, R.C.,(ed.), *op.cit*,p. 20; Chakravarti, M, ‘Notes on the Geography of Old Bengal’, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. IV, No.5, N.S.1908, p. 269.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Bhandarkar, D.R., ‘Mauryan Brāhmī Inscription of Mahāsthān’, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.XXI, No-14, 1931-32, p. 85-87; Sircar,D.C., ‘Mahāsthān Fragmentary Stone Plaque Inscription’, *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilisation* , Vol. I, Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1965, p. 82-83.

<sup>28</sup> Chattopadhyaya, B., ‘Urban Centres in Early Bengal: Archaeological Perspectives’, *Studying Early India: Archaeology, Texts and Historical Issues*, Delhi: Permanent Book, 2003, p. 74.

<sup>29</sup> Sen, P.C. (ed.), *Karatoyā Māhātmya*, Rājshāhi, Varendra Research Society, 1929, Monograph No-2.

<sup>30</sup> Mukherji, R. and S.K.Maity, ‘Mahāsthān Fragmentary Stone Plaque Inscriptions (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC)’, p. 39-40.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*; Bhandarkar, D.R., ‘Mauryan Brāhmī Inscription of Mahāsthān’, pp. 85-87; Sircar, D.C., ‘Mahāsthān Fragmentary Stone Plaque Inscription’, pp. 82-83.

<sup>32</sup> Chowdhury Abdul Momin, ‘Geography of Ancient Bengal: The Puṇḍravardhana Bhukti’, *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol.XXII, No-3, 1977, p. 177.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Morrison, B.M, *op.cit*, p. 23-34.

<sup>35</sup> Kielhorn, F., ‘Khālimpur plate of Dharmapāladeva’, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.IV, 1896-97, p. 243 ff.; Misra, P.N., and R.C.Majumdar, ‘The Jājilpārā Grant of Gopāla II Year 6’, *Journal of Asiatic Society. Letters*, Vol. XVII, 1951, p. 138 ff. ; Sircar, D.C., ‘Belāva plate of Mahīpāla I’, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXIX, 1951, p. 1ff.; Banerjee, R.D., ‘Bāngarh Grant of Mahīpāla I: the 9<sup>th</sup> Year’, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.XIV, 1917-18, p. 324 ff.; Sircar, D.C., ‘Belāva plate of Vigrahapāla III’, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.XXIX, 1951, p. 9 ff.; Banerjee, R.D., ‘Āmgāchi plate of Vigrahapāla III: the 12<sup>th</sup> Year’, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.XV, 1919-20, p. 293 ff.; Mukherjee, R.K. and S.K. Maity., ‘Mānhāli Copper-plate Grant of Madanapāladeva’, pp. 209-218.

<sup>36</sup> Morrison, B.M, *op.cit*, p. 37 ff.

<sup>37</sup> Chowdhury Abdul Momin, ‘Geography of Ancient Bengal: The Puṇḍravardhana Bhukti’, p. 177.

<sup>38</sup> Basak, R.G., ‘Rampal plate of Śrīchandradeva’, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XII, 1913-14, p. 136 ff ; Majumdar, N.G., ‘Rāmpāl Copper-plate of Śrīchandra’, *Inscriptions of Bengal*, Vol. III, The Varendra

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Research Society, Rājśāhi, 1929, p. 1. b) Sircar, D.C., 'Dhullā plate of Śrīchandra', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.XXXIII, 1959-60, p. 134 ff ; Majumdar, N.G., 'Dhullā Copper-plate of Śrīchandra', pp. 165-166. c) Basak, R.G., 'Madanpur plates of Śrīchandra, Year 44', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXVIII, 1950, 149-50, p. 51ff. d) Gupta, K., 'Paśchimabhāg plate of Śrīchandra', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.XXXVII, 1967, p. 289 ff. e) Dacca plate of Kalyāñchandra (unpublished)The information collected from A.H. Dani, who discovered the plate. f) Sircar, D.C., 'Maināmati plates of Lañchachandra', *Epigraphic Discoveries of East Pakistan*, Calcutta, Sanskrit College, 1973, pp. 75-77. g) Sircar, D.C., 'Maināmati Plate of Govindachandra', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXXVIII, 1969, pp. 197-214.

<sup>39</sup> Chowdhury Abdul Momin, 'Geography of Ancient Bengal: The Puṇḍravardhana Bhukti', p. 179.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p. 179-180.

<sup>41</sup> Banerjee, R.D., 'Bārrāckpur Grant of Vijayasena: the 32<sup>nd</sup> Year', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XV, 1919-20, p. 278 ff; Majumdar, N.G., 'Bārrāckpur Copper-plate of Vijayasena', p.37 ff. Khāḍi has been identified with Khāḍi *pargāñā* of the Diamond Harbour sub-division of the district of 24-Parganas. Chowdhury, Abudul Momin, 'Geography of Ancient Bengal: The Puṇḍravardhana Bhukti', p. 180.

<sup>42</sup> Majumdar, N. G., 'Sundarban Copper-plate of Lakṣmaṇasena', p. 169 ff.

<sup>43</sup> Majumdar, N. G., 'Tarpanadighī Copper-plate of Lakṣmaṇasena', p. 99.

<sup>44</sup> Majumdar, N. G., 'Mādhāinagar Copper-plate of Lakṣmaṇasena', p. 106.

<sup>45</sup> Majumdar, N.G., 'Madanpāla Copper-plate of Viśvarūpasena', p. 132 ff.

<sup>46</sup> Majumdar, N.G., 'Edilpur Copper-plate of Keśavasena', p. 118 ff.

<sup>47</sup> Majumdar, N.G., 'Calcutta Sāhitya Parishat Copper-plate of Viśvarūpasena', p. 140 ff.

<sup>48</sup> Chowdhury, Abdul Momin, 'Puṇḍra/Pauṇḍra-vardhana Bhukti in Early Bengal Epigraphs', in D.P.Chattopadhyaya (ed.), *History and Society* (Essays in Honour of Prof. Niharranjan Ray), Calcutta, K. P. Bagchi, Calcutta, 1978, p. 298-304; Chowdhury, Abdul Momin, 'Geography of Ancient Bengal: The Puṇḍravardhana Bhukti', p-180.

<sup>49</sup> Chowdhury, Abdul Momin, 'Puṇḍra/Pauṇḍra-vardhana Bhukti in Early Bengal Epigraphs', pp. 295-310.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 181.

<sup>51</sup> Pargiter, F. E., 'Ancient Countries in Eastern India', *Journal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. LXVI, Part-I, 1897, p. 85 ff.

<sup>52</sup> Chowdhury, Abdul Momin, 'Geography of Ancient Bengal: The Puṇḍravardhana Bhukti', pp. 183-84.

<sup>53</sup> Banerjee, R.D., *Bāṅglār Itihās* (Bengali), Vol. I, Kolkata Nababharat Publishers, 1960, p. 101.

<sup>54</sup> Hossain, Md. Mosharraf, *op.cit*,pp-69-73.

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- <sup>55</sup> Chowdhury, Abdul Momin, 'Puṇḍra/Paunḍra-vardhana Bhukti in Early Bengal Epigraphs', p. 298-305.
- <sup>56</sup> Roy, N.R., *op.cit*, p. 116.
- <sup>57</sup> Majumdar, R.C., R.G.Basak & N.G. Banerjee,(eds.), *Rāmacharitam of Sandhyākaranandī*, Rājshāhi, The Varendra Research Musuem,1939, p. 153; *Ibid*.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10.
- <sup>59</sup> Cunningham, A., *The Ancient Geography of India*, London, Trubner & Co., 1871, p. 504.
- <sup>60</sup> Majumdar, N.G., 'Tarpandighi Copper-plate Inscription of Lakṣmaṇasena', p. 104.
- <sup>61</sup> Lakṣmaṇavati came to be known as Lakhnauti under the Mulim rulers in medieval 'Bengal'. It was named after Lakṣmaṇasena most probably in imitation of Rāmāvatī (Ramuti of the *Āin-i-Ākbari*) founded by Rāmapāla in the area of Gauḍa. Lakhnauti stood on the west bank of the Gaṅgā close to its junction with the Mahananda, about twenty five miles below Rājmahal. Raverty, H.G., (tr. & ed.) *Tābaqat- i- Nāsirī* of Minhāj-ud-din-din-bin-Sirāj-ud-din al – Juz- jani, Vol. I, Calcutta, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1881, p. 584-85.
- <sup>62</sup> Morrison. B. M., *op.cit*, pp. 28-34.
- <sup>63</sup> Basak, R.G., 'Baigrām Copper-plate Inscription of the (Gupta) Year 128', *Epigraphia Indica*,Vol. XXI, 1931-32, pp-78-82; Archaeological Survey of India,1930-34,Part-II, pp. 257-258.
- <sup>64</sup> Majumdar, R.C., (ed.), *op.cit*, p.20.
- <sup>65</sup> Mukherji, R. and S. K. Maity., 'Khālimpur Copper-plate Inscription of Dharmapāla', pp. 110-113.
- <sup>66</sup> Vasu, Srīsa Chandra,(tr.), *Aṣṭādhyayi* of Pāṇini, Sutra No-VI, Vol. II, Allahabad, Satyajnana Chatterjee, 1877, pp. 99-100.
- <sup>67</sup> Jolly, J (ed.), *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya, Vol. I, Lahore: Punjab Sanskrit Book Depot, 1923, p. 51.
- <sup>68</sup> Banerjee, R.D., *op.cit*, p. 101.
- <sup>69</sup> Kern, J. H. K.,(ed.), *Bṛihatsaṁhitā* of Varāhamihira, Vol. XIV, Calcutta,1865, p. 7.
- <sup>70</sup> Sastri, Hirananda, 'Haraha Inscriptions of Isānavarman: Vikrama-Samvat 611', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XIV,1917-18, p. 117.
- <sup>71</sup> *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XX, 1891, p. 419 f.
- <sup>72</sup> Miśra Kṛiṣṇa, *Prabādhachandrādaya Nātaka*, Bombay, 1904, Act.II, p-49; *The Indian Historical Quareterly*, 1928, p. 230.
- <sup>73</sup> Ānandabhaṭṭa, *Vallālacharita*, Bibliotheca Indica, p. 7.
- <sup>74</sup> Kalhaṇa,*Rātaranigīṭī*,IV, p. 468.
- <sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, p. 119.

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- <sup>76</sup> Furui, Ryosuke, 'Rural Society and Social Networks in Early Bengal from the Fifth to the Thirteenth Century AD', *Unpublished Thesis*, New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2007, p. 37.
- <sup>77</sup> Beal, Samuel. (tr.), *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World tr. From the Chinese of Hiuen Tsang (AD 629)*, Vol. II, London, Trubner & Co., 1884, p. 202.
- <sup>78</sup> Sastri, Hirananda, 'Haraha Inscriptions of the Isānavarman', p. 115-119; Shastri Ajay Mitra, 'The Haraha Inscription of Isānavarman: Some Observations', *Cultural Contours of India*: Dr. Satya Prakash Felicitation Volume, edited by Srivastava, Vijaya Shankar ,New Delhi, Abhinav Publications, 1981, pp. 109-13.
- <sup>79</sup> Majumdar, R.C., 'Two Copper-plates of Śāśāṅka from Midnapore', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal Letters.*, Vol. XI, 1945, pp. 1-9.
- <sup>80</sup> Chakrabarti Amita, *History of Bengal (c.550 AD to c.750 AD)*,(thesis), Burdwan, University of Burdwan, 1991,pp-1- 5; Banerjee,R.D., 'The Gurgi Inscription of Prabodhaśiva', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXII, 1933, pp. 127-134 .
- <sup>81</sup> Misra Krishna, *op.cit*, p. 49.
- <sup>82</sup> Majumdar, R.C., *Bāṇglādeśher Itihās* (Bengali), Prāchīn Yug, General Printers and Publishers Ltd. 1352 (B.S), p. 6; *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXXVII, pp. 25ff.
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>84</sup> Sircar, D.C., *Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsi das, 1971, p. 121.
- <sup>85</sup> Shamasastry, R., (tr.), *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya, Ch. XI, Bangalore, Government Press, 1915, p. 110.
- <sup>86</sup> Sircar, D.C., *Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India*, pp. 123-124.
- <sup>87</sup> Sircar, D.C., Sircar, D.C., *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, Vol.II Calcutta: University of Calcutta,1965, pp. 530-31.
- <sup>88</sup> Konow, Sten (ed.) and C. R. Lanman (tr.),*Karpūra-Mañjarī* of Rājaśekhara, Harvard: Harvard University,1900, p. 9
- <sup>89</sup> Lienhard, Siegfried, *A History of Classical Poetry Sanskrit, Sankrit-Pāli-Prākṛit*, Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, 1984, p. 121; Cf. Majumdar, R.C., *op.cit*, p. 32-33.
- <sup>90</sup> The reason for transferring the capital to Gauḍa was to locate the city on the main course of the river Gaṅgā as the previous capitals situated on the course of rivers had began to be gradually less important as a change of watercourse. There is another story regarding shifting the capital in Gauḍa in Malda. Since the establishment of the kingdom, the Pālas had kept Gauḍa as an administrative unit. After the Pālas, the Sena Dynasty established her domain in the vast areas of Bengal including Gauḍa. Then the Senas felt the need for a new administrative capital to reduce

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the Pāla influence. So the process could have started with Vijaya or Vallāl Sena, and the final shape was given by Lakṣmaṇasena. Lakṣmaṇāvati or Lakhnauti emerged as the new capital of Gauḍa after the name of Lakṣmaṇasena. Sircar, D. C., *Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India*, p.120.

<sup>91</sup> Spate, O. H.K., Learmonth, A.T.A & B.H. Farmer., *op.cit*, pp. 586-88.

<sup>92</sup> McCrindle, John W.(tr.), *Ancient India As described in Classical Literature*, Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1901, p. 201; Majumdar,R.C.,*The Classical Accounts of India*, Calcutta: Firma,K.L.Mukhopadhyay, 1960, p. 103-128, 170-72, 198, 234.

<sup>93</sup> Holland, Philemon,(tr.),*Pliny's Natural History*, Vol.I, George Barclay, 1847-48, p. 120.

<sup>94</sup> Sircar, D.C., *Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India*, p. 171-173,213-215; Majumdar, R.C.(ed.), *op.cit*, pp. 41-43.

<sup>95</sup> Jacobi, Harmann, (tr.), *Jaina Sutras, Part. I (SBE 22)*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1884, p. 84-85. In Buddhist tradition it is Lāla while Jaina tradition refers to Lāḍha or Lāḍa.

<sup>96</sup> Geiger Wilhelm (tr.), *The Mahāvarīsa or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, London: Pāli Text Society, 1912, pp. 53-58; cf.Hoque, Enamul, 'Maritime Activities and the Indigenous Traditions of Boat-building in Ancient and Medieval Bengal', *Journal of Bengal Art*, Vol.3, 1998, p. 246; cf.Chowdhury,Abdul Momin, 'Bāṅglār Bhaugolik Parichay', pp. 16-18.

<sup>97</sup> Bandyopadhyaya, R., 'Mathura Inscriptions in the Indian Musuem', *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, New Series, Vol. V, 1909, p. 239.

<sup>98</sup> Banerjee, R.D., *Pālas of Bengal*, Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1915, p. 72.

<sup>99</sup> Kielhorn, F., 'Khājurāho Stone Inscription of Dhaṅgadeva of the Year 1059', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. I, 1892, pp. 137-347.

<sup>100</sup> Banerjee, R.D., 'Naihāti Copper-plate of Vallālasena', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XIV, 1917, pp. 156-163.

<sup>101</sup> Majumdar, N.G., 'Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena', pp. 44-67.

<sup>102</sup> Majumdar, N. G., 'Bhuvaneśvar Inscription of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva', p. 40.

<sup>103</sup> Elliot, H.M., and Dowson, John,(ed.),*The History of India As Told by its Own Historians*, Vol-II, Londonk, Trubner & Co., 1869,pp-309-311;Raverty,H.G.(tr. & ed.), *op.cit*, pp. 584-585.

<sup>104</sup> Bhattacharyya, Amitabha, *Historical Geographical of Ancient and Early Medieval Bengal*, Calcutta, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 1977, p. 51.

<sup>105</sup> Hultzsch, E, 'Tirumālai Inscription of Rājendra Chola I', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.9, 1907-08, p. 229.

<sup>106</sup> Chhabra, B.Ch, 'Indian Museum Plate of Gaṅga Devendravarmana', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.XXIII, 1935-36, p. 74.

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- <sup>107</sup> Basak, R.G., 'Belāva Copper-plate of Bhojavarmadeva: the fifth year', *Epigraphia India*, Vol.XII, NO-8, 1913-14, pp. 37-43.
- <sup>108</sup> Majumdar, N.G., 'Naihāti Copper-plate of Vallālasena', pp. 68-80.
- <sup>109</sup> Ganguly, D.C., 'Śaktipur Copper Plate of Lakṣmaṇasena', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.XXI, No-37, 1931-32, pp. 211-220.
- <sup>110</sup> The inscriptions mention how the Brāhmaṇas migrated from various parts of the country to Mālava. Some Brāhmaṇas also come from the Bengal. Thus we find a Brāhmaṇa named Donāka, hailing from Vilvagavāsa falling within the southern Rāḍha country. Dikshit, K.N., 'Three Copper-plate Inscriptions from Gaonri', *Epigraphica Indica*, Vol.XXIII, 1935-36, p. 101.
- <sup>111</sup> Hultzsch, E., 'Tirumālai Inscription of Rājendra Chola', p. 232.
- <sup>112</sup> P. C. Sen, 'Some Janapadas of Ancient India', *The Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. VIII, 1932, p. 521-534.
- <sup>113</sup> Kṛiṣṇa Miśra, op.cit, Canto II, pp. 52, 58, 59.
- <sup>114</sup> Chattpadhyaya, Rupendra K, Ahmed A Jamal (ed.), Islam Sirajul, 'Banglapedia: Rāḍha', 2nd Edition, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2012, p. 12.
- <sup>115</sup> Sen, P.C., 'Some Janapadas of Ancient Radha', p. 532.
- <sup>116</sup> Franz, Pāṇini (ed.), *Mahābhāṣya* of Pāṇini, Vol.2, Bombay: Government Central Book Depot, 1883, p. 281; Bṛihat Saṁhitā, V. 37, XIV.5, XVI. 1; Cf. Chakravarti, M., 'Notes on the Geography of Old Bengal', p. 284.
- <sup>117</sup> *Mahābhārata*, Chapter- XXX. 16. 25.
- <sup>118</sup> *Raghuvamśa*, IV, 35.
- <sup>119</sup> Wilson, H.H., (ed.), *The Daśa Kumāra Charita or Adventures of Ten Princes: A Series of Tales by Sri Daṇḍin*, London, Oriental Pexts, 1846, pp. 223,140.
- <sup>120</sup> Roy, N.R., *op.cit*, p. 117.
- <sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>122</sup> Pargiter, F.E, 'Ancient countries in Eastern India', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. LXVI, Part-I, 1897, p. 85; Saha, Radharaman, *Pābnā Zillār Itihasa*, Vol. I,Pabna: Dey's Publishing Edition, Kolkata,2004(Reprinted), p. 1.
- <sup>123</sup> Mukherjee, B.N., *Post-Gupta Coinages of Bengal*, Calcutta, Coins Study Circle,1989, p. 1; Banga Bāṅgalā O Bharat(in Bengali), Kolkata, Progressive Publishers, 2000, pp. 3-8; 'Kharoṣṭhī and Kharoṣṭhī-Brāhmī Inscriptions in West Bengal (India)',*Indian Museum Bulletin*, Vol. XXV, Calcutta: Indian Museum, 1990, Appendix III (The earliest Limits of Vaṅga).

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- <sup>124</sup> Keith, A.B., (ed. and tr.), *The Aitareya Āraṇyaka*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1909, p-200.
- <sup>125</sup> Olivelle, Patrick. (ed. & tr.), *Dharmasūtras: The Law Codes of Apastamba Gautama, Baudhāyana & Vaśiṣṭha*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsi das, 2000, p-198.
- <sup>126</sup> Shamasastrī, R.(tr.), *op.cit*, pp. 83-84; Cf. Bhattacharyya, Amitabha, *op.cit*, p. 58. It is mentioned as Vaṅgakam śvetam-snigdhans-dūkulam.
- <sup>127</sup> Devadhar, C.R., (ed.), *Raghuvamśa* of Kālidāsa, Chapter-4, Verse-36, Delhi: Motilal Banarsi das, 1985.
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- <sup>130</sup> Majumdar, R.C., (ed.), *op.cit*, p. 2.
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- <sup>132</sup> *Mahābhārata*, Ādi Parva, Ch-CIV, 52-55; Harivamśa, *Harivamśa-parva*, Ch. XXXI, pp. 33-42.
- <sup>133</sup> Sen, B.C., *op.cit*, p-2; Sen, Sukumar. *Vāṅgalā Sāhityer Itihāsa*, Vol.I, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers, 1970, p. 12.
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- <sup>169</sup> Watters, Thomas, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1904, pp. 187-188.
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- <sup>184</sup> Chakravarti Adhir., 'Harikela's Contacts with Outside World', *Journal of Ancient Indian History*, Vol. XIX, Parts. 1-2, 1989-90, pp. 2-3.
- <sup>185</sup> Takakusu, J.,(tr.), *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practiced in India and the Malay Archipelago (AD 671-695 )*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896, 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Edition, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers: New Delhi, 1982, introduction, p. XXXIII,XLVI.
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<sup>188</sup> Dhaka University Library Manuscript No-21 ,415.

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<sup>191</sup> Ganapati, T., (ed.), *Ārya-Mañjuśrī-Mūlakalpa*, Sanskrit Series, No. LXX, Trivandrum, Bhaskara Press, 1920; Jayaswal, K.P., An Imperial History of India in a Sanskrit Text, With a special commentary on Later Gupta Period, Lahore: Motilal Banarsi das, 1934, pp. 68, 232-33.

<sup>192</sup> Majumdar, R.C., 'Chittagong Copper-plate of Kāntideva', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.XXVI, No-45, 1941-42, pp. 313-318.

<sup>193</sup> Basak, R.G., 'Rāmpal Copper Plate Grant of Śrīchandradeva', pp. 136-142.

<sup>194</sup> Sircar, D.C., 'Dhulla Plate of Śrīchandra', pp. 134-140; Basak,R.G., 'Madanpur Plate Śrīchandra ,Year 44', pp. 51-58;Sircar,D.C., 'Madanur Plate of Śrīchandra ,Year-46', p. 337-339.

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