

CHAPTER – I

Introduction:

Murshidabad (23 43' and 24 52' north latitude and 87 49' and 88 44' east longitude) lies in the middle of West Bengal and is presently in Maldah Division of West Bengal. The district is called after the name of the metropolis (on the eastern side of the river Bhagirathi), Murshidabad, which was the capital during the last days of the rule of the Nawabs of Bengal. After the battle of Plessey, Berhampur (six miles below Murshidabad and 117 miles from Calcutta) was first made a cantonment and, later on, the headquarters of the district.¹ The district has an area of 2,143 square miles and contains 5 subdivisions and 26 blocks.

Historical Background:

From the pre-historic period Murshidabad district has a glorious past which is evident from several archaeological exploration and the excavation reports and the artifacts found on the surface helps us to prove archaeological potential of the area and help us to prove that human habitation had existed here. The earliest site is that of Gitagram under Bharatpur police station with in Kandi sub-division. Huge number of Stone Age tools was noticed here and red wear, gray wear BRW also found during the exploration. In the year of 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 the excavation conducted by Directorate of Archaeology & Museums, West Bengal in Hatpara with in Jangipur sub-division. During the excavation they discovered the Microlithic tools and the other artifacts which help us to discuss the pre-history of the district.² The antiquities that were found during the digging of Feeder Canal at Farakka proved that this district region was inhabited since pre-historic period. In this region we also notice Mauryan Punch marked coins.³ We found gold coin hoard of the Gupta rulers which is discussed in the coming

pages. Not only that several times we noticed Gupta coins from that region.⁴ The ancient history of this region received light with the excavations of Rajbaridanga in 1962-1972. This excavation helped to locate the famous Buddhist monastery Raktamrittika mentioned by the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang is in this district. Number of seal and the sealings proved it.⁵ The Chinese pilgrim mentioned that this was the site of Karnasuvarna, the capital city of Sasanka. From the accounts of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang we find a vivid description of Karnasuvarna. It is known from the travels of Hiuen Tsang that the pilgrim proceeded from Tamralipta to Karnasuvarna. According to him the country was about 4450li in circuit and its capital was about 20 li in circuit. The country was well inhabited and the people were very rich. There were more than ten Buddhist monasteries, and above 2000 brethren who were all adherents of the *Samatiya* school. There were several temples and the followers of the various religions were numerous. He further mentions, 'Beside the capital was the lo-to-wei (or mo) chih monastery, a magnificent and famous establishment, the resort of illustrious brethren. Near this monastery were several *topes* built by Asoka at spots where the Buddha had preached and also a shrine where in the past Buddha had sat and walked for exercise'.⁶

We found the Vappaghoshavata Grant of Jayanaga. From this Grant we know the name of Jayanaga who is the only ruler associated with the early Gauda sector after Sasanka and his administrative center is located at Karnasuvarna.⁷ The kingdom of Gauda played a vital role in deciding the political progress of a vast region of Bengal. The ascendancy of the Pala rulers, who ruled for a few centuries, paved the way towards building a solid cultural and political base in Murshidabad, Malda region. Discovery of archaeological remains and antiquities from this region prove this point.⁸ From the Nidhanpur copper plate issued by Bhaskaravarman, the king of Kamrupa of 7th century A.D. from his camp at Karnasuvarna. From these records may be that Bhaskaravarmon

also ruled over this area.⁹ Pala rulers also ruled over this district. Huge number of archaeological materials supports this point. We have to mention the Karnasuvarna copper plate, here we found that Pala ruler Dharmapala (770-810 A.D.) ruled over a vast area of which Bengal and Bihar formed the nucleus. This plate was issued by Dharmapala during the 26th regnal year of his reign. This land grant is also known as Murshidabad copper plate in which the Pala king is granting land for the extension of the Buddhist monastery at Karnasuvarna.¹⁰ Huge number of religious and non-religious sculptures, architectural remains, seals and sealings prove that the Pala rulers ruled over this region. After a brief decline of Pala power, the Palas revived their strength in the 10th century under Mahipala I. There is within Sagardighi police station a village named Mahipal village. According to local legend Sagardighi or lake (measuring 500 × 300 yards) was actually dug at the instructions of the Pala king Mahipala.¹¹ The Palas were succeeded by the Sena rulers in Bengal in mid twelfth century. The Shaktipur copper plate which has been recovered from Shaktipur in Berhampore subdivision of Murshidabad district was issued by the Sena king Lakshmansena.¹²

In 1206 A.D. after the conquest of Nadiya by Malik Ikhtiaruddin Muhammad bin Bakhtyar Khilji, he sent the expedition first to the Radha region of modern Murshidabad district was brought under the domination of the Sultan of Gauda-Lakhnauti. In the second half of the thirteenth century, he conquest Bagri region of modern Murshidabad. In this way came to be ruled by Muslims rulers who had their base in Gauda-Lakhnauti, which lay probably in present Malda district of West Bengal.¹³

In the seventeenth century, modern Murshidabad district, not then created, lay within the *sarkars* of Satgaon, Tandi and Sharifabad, three of the nineteen *sarkars* into which the whole of Mughal Bengal was divided. In 1722 Murshid Quli Khan redistributed the *subah* of Bengal into thirteen larger territorial divisions called *chaklas*. The *chakla* of

Murshidabad comprised the whole of the present district of Rajshahi, Bogra, Pabna and Murshidabad together with parts of Birbhum, Malda and Nadia. During the late eighteenth century, the *chaklas* came to be superseded by smaller units, the districts whose names still survive, though the areas to which they apply have been subject to much rearrangement in the course of time. One of these districts was Murshidabad. Being the seat of Government of the Mughal Nawabs from its administrative control extended over a wider area than that of any other district. As the *Naib Diwan* argued in 1771 Murshidabad district had to be more extensive than others in order to maintain the proper dignity of the Nawab in the eyes of the people.¹⁴

After 1772, when revenue administration passed into English hands a variety of changes took place in the boundaries of the district. In 1786 the Collector of Murshidabad writing to the Board of Revenue at Calcutta “The Zillah of Moorshedabad is so changed from what it formerly was, that had I all the plans, which at various times have been made there of before me, it would be difficult to point out with any degree of accuracy my mutilated chief ship.”¹⁵

In 1772, Murshidabad included the neighboring zamindaris of Birbhum and Bishnupur and much of Bankura. These were notoriously noted for lawlessness, created by armed dacoits during the period of the decline of the Nawab’s authority. In 1787, therefore, they were finally separated from Murshidabad, so as to secure a more efficient administration of justice. Other *parganas* and *mahals* were later interchanged with those of the neighbouring districts of Nadia, Jessore, Birbhum and Burdwan, mainly with an eye to the ease of communication with administrative headquarters. The transfer of Deogram, Baminpara, Belgram and Sultanpur to Birbhum district in 1793 were examples of such changes. Geographically several of these had been either entirely or partly enclosed within the boundaries of Birbhum, and all were much nearer to Birbhum

than to Murshidabad. The district of Murshidabad was thus reduced almost to its present size by the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁶

Hills of the District:

In this district there are no hills ranges but there are some hillocks, of which the best known is called Dhuli Pahari, covered with small Sal Mahua trees and surrounded at the base by stony jungle land. It may be that the Rajmahal hills played an important role to supply basalt rock to make the huge number black basalt icons found in various parts of the district.¹⁷

River system of the district:

This district consists of a very interesting river system. The Ganga is the main river and its distributaries, of which the most important are the Bhagirathi, Jalangi and Bhairab. The Ganga or Padma, as it is called in this part of its course, first touches Murshidabad at its extreme northern point, and then flows about due south - east, forming the eastern boundary of the district, and dividing it from Malda and Rajshahi. Every year the Ganges is forming and cutting away land along its course by a constant alternation of alluvion and diluvion. Sometimes large islands are continually rising in the channel. In this regard Captain Sherwill stats that he has seen such islands 'became inhabitant, cleared and cultivated; the population increases large villages start up: the land revenue is collected for ten or twelve years; and then the whole fabric will disappear within one rainy season.'¹⁸

The main branch of the Ganga is Bhagirathi River. The river divides the modern Murshidabad in two almost equal portions. The western bank of the river is situated most of all the archaeological sites. All the explorations and the excavations are held in this side of the river. The river almost all the year contain water. Bhagirathi branches off

from the Ganga at Nurpur, 25 miles below Farakka and runs almost parallel to it for about two miles as far as Biswanathpur near Suti police station. Here we noticed long strip of *char*-land between two rivers. Living before the Biswanathpur the river Bhagirathi is very winding flows down southwards beyond Viswanathpur and finally leaves the district below the village, Vidhupada, north of Palashi, part of which it has swept away.

The bank of the river Bhagirathi is usually sloping on one side. These changes of slope are due to the current, and occur on the same bank by regular alterations from reach to reach. The river frequently shifts from side to side for that the direct effects of human habitation is noticed in this district. In the rainy season the Bhagirathi River have always a tendency to overflow its left or eastern bank, and wander over the country in the old river beds towards the Jalangi river.¹⁹

Another important river is Bhairab which means the “Terrible” is an offshoot of the Ganges. It is also an old river of Murshidabad district. It takes off from the Ganges in Lalgola police station within this district, opposite to the place near where the, Mahananda flows into the Ganges. It is believed that before the Padma started carrying the main flow of the Ganges it used to be the continuation of the Mahananda. Gradually, with growing current strength along the Padma, its importance was cut off. The Mahananda started to pour her waters into the Padma and the course of the Bhairab further deteriorated.²⁰

Next important river of the district is Jalangi river. It is also an important branch of the Ganga River. It leaves the main stream a short distance above the village Jalangi and flows in a south–westerly direction, with many windings, until it finally leaves the district with an abrupt turn near the village of Bali. During this part of its course it

forms the boundary between Murshidabad and Nadia for about 50 miles. The river is also known locally as the Kharia.²¹

Another important channel is Gobra Nullah, which is running from the Bhagirathi to the Jalangi at Bali, a distance of about 50 miles. It was probably originally an effluent of the Bhagirathi, and it is, in fact, the natural drainage channel for the country east to that river. The action of nature, however, has been interfered with by the construction of a marginal embankment along the left bank of the Bhagirathi River, called the Lalitakuri or Naltakuri embankment, which extends from Jiaganj to Bhagwangola via Kalukhali and has cut off its connection with that river.²²

Various other rivers also flow through the district. Like Dwaraka or Babla, which flows throughout the south-western corner of Murshidabad and Bansloi also the considerable tributary of the Bhagirathi. It enters the district from Birbhum district near the village of Husainpur and pursues on the whole an easterly course, until it falls into the Bhagirathi a little to the north of the town of Jangipur, and we notice that Saimari river, which is also an offshoot of the river Ganges, which like Bhairab, it leaves opposite Rampur-Boalia.²³

Now the main river of the district Bhagirathi, which flowing from north to south through Murshidabad district and divides into nearly two equal parts. The western side, the high and dry part, was locally known as *Rahr* and the eastern portion, the deltaic part as *Bagri*-names which represent the old divisions of Bengal under the Sena kings.²⁴

Geographical Division of Murshidabad District: -

There are three natural division of Murshidabad District: Rahr, Hijol, Bagdi.

Rahr/Radha:

The western part of Murshidabad is the part of Uttar Radha, which is the earliest part of the land formation. This part was known as the Radha or Ladha. The 'Ladha' term was derived from the Radha. The several archival and the archaeological documents gives us the reference of the term Radha. The Jain texts like Ayarangasutta, and the Buddhist text like Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa there we find the term Radha was used as the geo-cultural unit, whereas the Jain texts explained the 'Radha' term as a janapada. Another Jain text which is written in sixth century B.C. Bhagavatisutta there also the term Radha as one of the janapada of the sixteen janapadas. The term is also noticed in the inscriptional documents such as Tirumalai inscription (first half of eleventh century A.D) of Rajendrachola. We notice the terms Uttirradham (Uttarradha) and Takkanladam (Dakshin Radha). We noticed the term Uttarradha in the ninth century A.D. also in the inscription of Gangaraj Debendrabarman. After that we notice it in the eleventh century inscription of Tirumalai of Rajendrachola. In the important Naihati copper plate inscription of Sena king Vallalasena the term Uttarradha and some name of the villages are inscribed. At present some of the villages are located in Murshidabad and Bardhaman district. In Saktipur copper plate inscription of Lakshmanasena we noticed the Uttarradha and some village names. From this inscription we come to know that Kandi subdivision of present Murshidabad is included in Uttarradha region. In Gaonri inscription we notice the term Dakshin Radha and Uttar Radha. Anyway, the river Ajoy was the south border of Uttarradha and north of the Dakshin radha.²⁵

The tract on the west of the Bhagirathi, or *Rahr*, was substantially a continuation of the sub-Vindhyan region of late rite clay and nodular limestone. The land was high and slightly undulating, but was interspersed with numerous swamps and beds of old rivers. It had the greatest elevation along the western boundary of the district towards

Birbhum, but there were places where the eastern limits of this clayey tract were marked by banks of bluffs, fifteen and twenty feet high. The cliff of Rangamati on the Bhagirathi, six miles south of Berhampore (district headquarter of Murshidabad District), was forty or fifty feet above the ordinary level of the river. The soil is grayish or reddish, mixed with lime and oxide of iron; and beds of nodular limestone (kankar) were scattered here and there. The rivers in this part, having their sources in hill torrents, were liable to sudden freshets, but they never lay the country under water for any long space of time. The fields, therefore, did not possess the extraordinary fertility of a deltaic country. The chief crop in the central and more elevated portions of the *Rahr* was the winter rice, which was not dependent upon early rain for a successful harvest, but required a steady downfall between July and October.²⁶

Hijal:

Archaeologically important part of the district is the Hijol area. North Hijol and South Hijol. Geographically the northern part comprising the Suti, Samsergunj and Farakka police station known as Hijol. The land of this area is low lying. Having the area 150 sq. miles extends northwards from Mirzapur until it blends with the basin of the Bansloi river. This portion of the district is second none fertility zone. During rainy season the area of the district is flooded. Most of the agricultural product like early rice, wheat, grain, oil seeds peas etc. is cultivated here.²⁷ The construction of the Farakka barrage during the years 1962-70 has changed the landscape of the Hijol area. During that period huge number of the archaeological remains discovered from this region and after that we noticed that different type of artifacts was recovered from that region at several times.²⁸

South Hijol which is also an important part of the district. South Hijol is situated in the south – west of the district near the confluence of the Mor and the Dwaraka, and about 50 square miles in area, offers a different aspect. The zone has large stretches of thatching grass cover an almost treeless plain. During the rains the Hijol is inundated with water, which varies in depth from twenty feet to three feet. The whole of this tract becomes dry during the cold weather, and a large portion of it, which is yearly increasing in extent. It also affords a considerable area of pasturage and grassland, and is known for its toughness and durability.²⁹

Bagri:

The *Bagri*, or the eastern tract, differed in no material respects from the ordinary alluvial plains of Bengal. It lay almost entirely between the Ganges, Bhagiathi and Jalangi rivers, and was permeated by several other offshoots of the great river. The whole area lay low, and was exposed to annual inundations, which occasionally caused widespread suffering, but usually did no more than deposit over the land a top dressing of almost inexhaustible fertility. In variety of crops, this portion of the district was not surpassed by any part of Bengal. The *aus* or early rice crop was largely cultivated and forms the bulk of the food supply of the inhabitants; and that harvest was supplemented by the *chaitali*, a name given to the whole series of cold weather crops from the fact of their being harvested in *Chaitra*, or March. They were cultivated after the *aus* was harvested and on the same fields, as well as on the higher lands where rice would not grow. For these two harvests early rains were wanted in April and May, and a few showers in the cold weather.³⁰

Now we are going to discuss the geography of the Bagri region. The Bagri can be divided into five tracts, such as municipal areas, the riverine tract of Bhagirathi, the

central tract between the Bhanderdaha and Bhairab, the eastern tract between the Bhairab and Jalangi and the Kalantar. The riverine tract of the Bhagirathi is the belt of five to ten miles from the present channel of the river. The central tract is slightly higher than that on either side. The eastern tract of Hurshi (present Raninagar and Domkol police station) is low, especially in the south, where there are many bills. The Kalantar is a very low region lying along the south of the district. It has an area of about 50 miles in the district. the region spreads also for some distance into Nadia. The soil of this land is black clay, when it is dry it is extremely hard.³¹

Flora, Fauna and climate of the district:

The flora resembles those of the deltaic districts of West Bengal. We notice huge number of bamboo shrubs in all parts of the district. during our surveying time we noticed different varieties of Mangos and jack fruit tree are commonly found here. Both trees and the *Aswattha* tree can be found along the sides of the old roads. Basically we notice this type of trees are worshiped by the villagers. It may be the medieval custom of the habitats of this region. Some *Segun*, *Sal*, *Simul*, *Mahua*, *palas Kul*, *Babla* are also noticed in this region. Many other exotic palms are grown in the gardens. The flowering plants like *champa*, *jaba*, *bak phool*, *kunda*, *bel*, and different species and varieties of rose also noticed in this district region. Rice, wheat, barley is occasionally cultivated, potato, pumpkin, tomato, onion, radish is the common vegetables are grown here. In Berhampur, Islampore, Beldanga Mulberry is well grown that's the reason way these areas famous for sericultural activities.³²

Wild animals of bigger type have disappeared. Once the wild animals like antelopes and deer were found but at present they have completely disappeared. Monkeys (the black faced *hanuman*) still noticed in all of the region of the district. Few numbers of jackals

and fox can be found in this district. Domestic animals like dog, goat, cow, horse sheep is still found in villages and urban areas. Different type of birds we noticed in winter, but throughout the year we noticed the birds like. Among birds we notice wild ducks, pigeons, teals, geese, and some time parrots etc. *Darrashes*, *cobras*, *Karaitis* are commonly found in this Murshidabad district.

The climate of this district is characterized by an oppressive hot summer, high humidity almost all the year round. The year we have four seasons. The period from March to May is the summer season, the monsoon season from the beginning of June and September, post monsoon is may be from October to 1st half of November month and cold season is from about the middle of November to the end of February. .³³

Present Administrative divisions of the district: -

Sl. No	Jangipore Sub-Division	Berhampore Sub-Division	Kandi Sub-Division	Lalbagh Subdivision	Domkal Subdivision
1	Farakka	Baharampur	Kandi	Bhagabangola I	Jalangi
2	Suti I	Beldanga	Khargram	Bhagabangola II	Domkal
3	Suti II	Rejinagar	Burwan	Jiagunj	Raninagar I
4	Samsergunj	Naoda	Bharatpur	Murshidabad	Raninagar II
5	Sagardighi	Hariharpara	Bharatpur II	Nabagram	
6	Raghunathganj I				
7	Raghunathganj II				

The table shows the division of the Murshidabad district.³⁴

The study of the geological and natural division of the district is the prelude to reconstruct the history of the Murshidabad district based on archaeological remains of pre-Muslim period, which we need to documented and critically analysis because the

chronological history of the district in our study period has not been written as yet. The Radha area of this district is most important region where we find the artifacts of pre-Muslim period. In the next chapters of this thesis, we are trying to discuss the chronological catalogue and analysis the archaeological materials that have been discovered at various places in this district by excavation or the digging activities or lying on the surface or in different museums as well as Murshidabad district Museum.

Murshidabad district is a place where local history writing started quite early. In 1864, Shyamdhan Mukhopadhyay wrote the first history of Murshidabad- *Murshidabad er Itihas*. This was followed by a rich culture of history writing on Murshidabad since the early part of the twentieth century. This history writing had as its focus the Nawabi period in Murshidabad which flourished during the first half of the eighteenth century. This has still attracted the attention of scholars and historians up to the present.

Though the Nawabi period has been the focus of attention for most historians and scholars, there is however no denying the fact that Murshidabad district region had a rich history and culture even during the pre-Muslim period. This is attested by the rich archaeological remains that have been unearthed in this region. The efforts undertaken in the past by scholars like Joseph David Beglar, David Mac Acheson, Ramdas Sen, S.R. Das, N.K. Dikshit, have also indicated that the district region had a rich history even in the pre-Muslim period. Literary evidences like Thomas Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, (vol-I & II) unmistakably points to the importance of the district on the historical map of India.

It is unfortunate that a chronological history of the district in the pre-Muslim period has not been written as yet. In order to accomplish this work, it is necessary to chronologically catalogue and analyses the archaeological materials that have been

discovered at various places in the district. Some of these are displayed in Murshidabad District Museum whereas others are lying in local police stations or BDO offices. This study primarily wishes to undertake this task of chronologically catalogue and analyses the archaeological remains of pre-Muslim period found in this district. This will pave the way for future scholars, historians and researchers to work towards reconstructing the history of pre-Islamic Murshidabad region.

Overview of Literature:

Interest in local history of Murshidabad district generated quite early. History writing on Murshidabad began in the second half of the nineteenth century with Shyamdhan Mukherjee writing *Murshidabader Itihas* in 1864. It was published from Dhuma Sindhu press, Berhampore. It is one of the first works in Bengal on local history writing. This book deals mainly with the Nawabi period in Murshidabad.

1. Ray, Nikhil Nath, *Murshidabader Itihas*, which was published on 8th *Asvine*, 1309 B.S. (1902-03 A.D.), Calcutta

The first chapter of the book is on ancient Murshidabad, that is, Murshidabad in Hindu and Buddhist times. The author tried to throw light on ancient Murshidabad but he couldn't explain from the point of archaeology. He explained the myths regarding some archaeological sites of Murshidabad district like Karnasubarna, Mahipala and Sagardighi. Another book of the same author is *Murshidabad Kahini*, published on 12th *Sraban*, 1304 B.S. from Berhampore, which covered eighteenth-nineteenth century. The two books are not based on data and are not analytical. These books are not of much value to this study.

Four books were edited by S.R Das, University of Calcutta, Department of Archaeology, published by The Asiatic Society, Kolkata.

2. Das, S. R., *Rajbaridanga 1962 (Chiruti:jadupur) Excavation Report*, 1968, Calcutta.

The book based on excavation report of Rajbaridanga, the field session (1962-1972) the summary report of this excavation at Rajbaridanga is presented in three parts. Part-1 Rajbaridanga -1962 (Chiruti: Jadupur) an interim report on excavations at Rajbaridanga and terracotta seals and sealing's contain introduction to Chiruti in its geographical and historical perspectives. The three chapters furnishing a very brief account of the land, flora, fauna, climate and people of Chiruti and neighborhood making a comparative study of the condition prevailing in the 7th century A.D.as described in the accounts of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang.

Chapter two furnished a short account of the mounds and legends in the neighborhood of Chiruti. Chapter three and four presents a brief resume of archaeological relics recovered from the neighborhood of Chiruti and the results of previous excavation , selection of site for excavation, Rajbaridanga excavation area and layout, summary of cultural sequences and chronology, structural remains finds and observations. Accurate details of the facts of the excavation are attested by the plan and section drawings, photographs etc. which has been presented in the book.

3. Das, S. R., *Archaeological Discoveries from Murshidabad*, 1971, Calcutta

Part II- Archaeological discoveries from Murshidabad district presents a discussion of the most important finds inscribed terracotta seals and sealing dealing with their making types, sizes, impression, contents legends, sequences and dating and purpose.

Part-III- contains other small antiquities recovered during the field work. There is also detailed discussion about archaeological and historical importance of the Radha tract of the district.

4. Das, S.R., *Karnasuvarna Mahanagari: Vangadesher Bismrita Rajdhani*, West Bengal State Book Board, Calcutta, 1992.

All the above maintained books of S.R .Das throw light on Rajbaridanga excavation and the excavated materials discovered from there. Here discussed all the findings but it needs proper interpretation.

5. Banerji, Amiya Kumar and Banerji, Bijoy kumar edited, *Paschim banger Purasampad: Murshidabad*, 1982

The book based on field work. It contains police station wise discussion. But proper interpretation or systematic work is, however, absent in this book.

6. Banerji, Bijoy kumar, *Prachin Murshidabad: Karsuvarna o Mahipala*, Radical publishers, Kolkata, 2002.

The first chapter of the book is *Prachin Murshidabad: Gaur- vanger Rajyasima o Bartaman Murshidabad*. The second chapter is *Karnasuvarna*. The third chapter is *Pala Rajotta o Mahipala* and fourth chapter is *Sagardhigi : Itihaser Anusandhane*, but the book does not contain any new interpretation or any new information. The author just repeatedly states the same thing.

7. Haque, Enamul, *Bengal Sculpture: Hindu Iconography up to C.1250 A.D*, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka, 1992.

The book is most important for the young scholars. The book contain seven chapters dealing with the iconography of the Hindu icons but not in analytical and chronological order and its treatment and arrangement are mostly in the manner of a catalogue. The book do not contain sufficient and satisfactory discussion on the sculpture or images of the Murshidabad District. Few numbers of the images he covered in his book. There is

small scope to discuss the images of this District. Anyway the book is important source material to complete the proposed work.

8. Majumdar, R.C., (ed) *Bangladesher Itihas (prachin jug)* Kolkata, Poush1352 B.S.

No doubt this is an epoch making book for ancient Bengal but in few places of this book the author gives information about the archaeology of Murshidabad. There was small scope to focus the light on the archaeological materials which is scard here or there in this district. The proposed work will add some pages on the archaeology of Murshidabad and fill up the gap of this book.

9. *Banerjee, J.N., Development of the Hindu Iconography*, 4th ed., New Delhi, 1985

This is a basic book to study iconography. The book discusses briefly the development of the iconography on stone, seals, coins etc. The author does not mention regional influence on iconography. Huge numbers of the Hindu icons were discovered from Murshidabad district. There is some scope to search the regional influence on the iconography of these icons.

10. Chaudhuri, Jajneswar, *Radhrer Samskritic Itihash*, Nadia, 2008.

The book contains information on geography, demography, archaeological remains of the *radha* region. It mentions some archaeological materials which were discovered from this region. But there is huge scope to discuss it systematically. A part of Murshidabad is situated is in *Utter Radha* where rich archaeological materials are available. The proposed study will look at these materials and add to information on the *Radha* region.

Research Questions:

1. To find out since when human beings inhabit this region and was this region continuously inhabited till the coming of the Muslim rulers.
2. To trace the development of iconography in this region as demonstrated by the icons that were found either on the surface or during excavations. What were the building materials of these icons? Who patronized the building of these? Did any iconography specific to this region develop or did the icons follow an overall pattern?
3. To similarly analysis the sculptures that have been found in this region. The paucity of sculptures in comparison to icons will be looked into.
4. To analysis the structural remains that have been found in the district during excavations. Here also the question arises that were these architectural patterns specific to this place of did they follow the overall pattern of the day.
5. To analysis the coins that have been found at different times in the district region. How far the history of this region can be reconstructed out of these coins.
6. To analysis the different inscriptions that have been found in the district. The script, purpose and materials on which the inscriptions are inscribed are to be looked into.

Hypothesis:

1. The Murshidabad district region is probably inhabited by humans since the lithic period. Megaliths and microlithic tools unearthed during the Hatpara excavations point to this direction. Black and Red ware was found in Gitagram in Kandi subdivision of Murshidabad, which indicates that during

the chalcolithic period humans inhabited this region. Since then till the twelfth-thirteenth century icons, sculptures, coins, inscriptions, architectural remains have been unearthed in this district region which shows that this region was continuously inhabited during this long period.

2. A number of Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain icons have been found in the district region. This shows the influence of all these religions in this region. These icons belong to the circa eighth to thirteenth century A. D. This was the Pala-Sena period and making of these icons were probably patronized by the Pala-Sena rulers. The icons were mostly curved on black stone.
3. Apart from icons, sculptures have been found in this region, though in much smaller number than icons. There may be various reasons for this which will be discussed in the course of this study.
4. The main pre-Islamic structural remains have been found at Rajbaridanga and Rakshidanga, Hatpara, Giashabad, Hari Rajar Garh etc. These materials have not been properly analyzed. If proper analysis of these were done then new dimensions of the history of Murshidabad will come to light.
5. Recently early Gupta coins have been found in Jungipore subdivision Gupta rulers ruled over this region or probably this region was an of Murshidabad district. From this it may be assumed that either early important trading center. Apart from deciding on what exactly was the case, the materials of the coins, the images inscribed on the coins and the inscriptions on them will constitute important aspects of this study.
6. Inscriptions are another important source of archaeological studies of the region. Inscriptions have been found on seals, sealing's, icons, stone slabs, coins etc. The inscriptions are inscribed in a variety of scripts like Gupta

Brahmi, Siddhamatrika etc. These are to be properly analyzed in course of this study.

Methodology:

The method to be used for this study is descriptive as well as analytical consisting of external and constructive critical examination of a wide range of archaeological materials which were discovered in this district. This would be corroborated with data which is written by the scholars and researchers. The aim of the study is to categorize, analyze, and interpret the archaeological remains of Murshidabad district in verbose language and to be exact in furnishing information with high degree of objectivity and perfection. Visits would be made to excavation fields, museums where the archaeological objects are housed and of course archives and libraries. In addition, field survey wherever necessary were undertaken to utilize the yet-unrecorded sculptural and architectural specimens. Comparative study were also be undertaken. Suggestion, guidance and help of distinguished scholars of archaeology, as and when necessary, were secured as much as possible.

Objectives:

1. To chronologically document, analyze and categories all the archaeological materials found in the district of Murshidabad which will be of great advantage to future scholars.
2. To trace the gradual development of iconography, sculpture and architecture in Murshidabad district region in the pre-Islamic period.
3. To make a comparative study of architecture, iconography and sculpture of different periods so as to find out the defining characteristics of each age.

4. To analysis whether the icons, sculpture, architecture of this region develop any uniqueness of their own or were there a common pattern for the whole of north India.
5. To interpret the rich inscripational and numismatic finds of this district which will reveal many interesting details.

Overview of Chapters:

This study consists of 5 chapters apart from an introduction and a conclusion. The chapter on iconography is the biggest chapter which discusses the iconography of Murshidabad district in pre-Muslim times in details. Then there is a chapter on the sculptures of Murshidabad. The next chapter deals with archaeological remains of pre-Muslim period that have been found under ground or over ground in various places in the district. This is followed by a chapter on epigraphy. The last chapter is on numismatics which is followed by the concluding chapter.

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