

The Historical Geography of Pre-Colonial Bhagalpur

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It has been rightly observed that¹, “the limits of the present district of Bhagalpur being purely artificial, no connected account of the territory that now bears this name can be expected. Its history must be sought for in the history of the large areas of which it forms a part.”

In length about 140 miles and breadth varying from 14 to 45 miles,² and situated in the rich and fertile valley of the Ganga and it is divided by it into two almost equal portions kingdoms of *Anga* and *Mithila*. During this period it was bounded on the north by Nepal; on the east, north of the Ganga, by the district of Purnea; on the south and east, south of the Ganga, by the Santahal Parganas and on the west by the districts of Darbhanga and Mongyr. The northern and the southern portions of the district, afford different physical characteristics. The north is the playground of rivers that flow from the Nepal hills, and the south has old alluvium soils, laterite uplands and hills. The northern portion is, therefore, subject of floods and the changing beds of the capricious hilly rivers, whereas the south is more stable, except the north-eastern corner, which is subject to occasional excesses of the two hill streams.

In his journal (P. 73) Buchanan observes..... (the name) “is said to have been given by the Mughal officers who collected a number of fugitives and defended them in the plains from the violence and depredations of the disorderly chiefs of the interior”.

The people of *Anga* unknown to the *Rig veda* are mentioned in the Atharaveda.³ There is lack of evidence in Vedic literature that *Angas* were non-Aryan people that came overseas to eastern India. They were, in fact, the district's the earlier Aryan immigrants⁴ *Titikshu*, the second son of *Mahamanas*, who was seventh in descent from *Anu*, founded the Kingdom of *Anava* in the East and named it after his ancestor.⁵ The *Asura* King *Bali* begot by his wife *Sudesna* five *Ksetraja* sons, viz., *Anga*, *VAnga*, *Kalinga*, *Pundra* and *Sumha*, and the *Anava* kingdom that expanded and developed under the asura king was named after his sons, and the five kingdoms thus formed were named *Anga*, *Vanga*, *Kalinga*, *Pundra* and *Sumha*. Separated from *Magadha* by the river *Campa*, *Anga* comprised the modern districts of Bhagalpur and Monghyr. The capital of *Anga* was *Malini*, also called *Campa Malini* in the *Puranas*⁶ situated at a distance from the pilgrimage centre⁷. No particulars are available about the kings in the *Anga* genealogy till we come to *Lomapada*, also called *Romapala*, who is placed seventh in the genealogical list. *Lomapada* was a well known archer, and a great friend of king *Dasarath* of Ayodhya. *Lomapada*'s great grandson *Champa* gave the name *Chapa* to the *Anga* capital, which was till then known as *Malini*, *Champa*, also called *Champapur*, was surrounded by groves of *Champaka* at the time of the *Mahbharata*.⁸ The Buddhist works mention one queen *Gaggara* as

having excavated an artificial lake⁹, containing groves of *Champaka* trees on its banks. From the *Ghampaka Sreshthi Katha* a Jaina work, it appears that the town was in a flourishing condition. There were perfumer, spice-seller, weaver, washer man, etc. this fair and fortified city, with its ramparts, gates and watch towers was regarded as one of the six great cities of northern India. *Champa* was a very sacred place to the Jainas and the Buddhists. *Parsva*, the immediate predecessor of Mahabir, is associated with *Champa*. It was visited by Lord Mahavira who spent here three *parjjusanas* (rany season retirement). It was also birth place of Biraja-Jina author of *Tankavatara Sutra*, and also that of Palakapya Muni¹⁰; birth place and the place of death of Basupujya,¹¹ the 12th Jaina *Tirthankara*. Sona Kolaviza, the author of one of the *Theragathas* was a resident of *Champa*. At the time of Buddha, *Champa* was regarded as one of the six great unities of northern India, the other five being *Rajagriha*, *Sravasti*, *Saketa*, *Kausambi* and *Benares*. Ananda, the first and favourite disciple of Buddha, exhorted the later to give up his earthly body in one of such cities. *Subhadra*ngi, the mother of Asoka, was born at *Champa*. Her father was a poor Brahmin who took her to Pataliputra and presented her to Bindusara, King of Magdha (347 to 319 B.C.). *Champa* is also traditionally the abode of Chand Sadagar the story of whose son Lakhindra and his wife Behula is graphically mentioned in the Benglai poem called *Mansar Bhasan*. Snake worship and Behula Puja are still performed and a big *Champa* mela. The king of *Champapuri* had two beautiful places, one called Gandalata at Kuruchatter now called Karpat, seven miles east of Bhagalpur, near the *Goghna*la, and the other at Kridasthali near Pathargata on the confluence of the Ganga and the Kosi¹². A number of *Jakata* stories¹³ mention merchants taking ships at *Champa*, and then either coasting to Ceylon or adventuring many days without sight of land to *Suvarnabhumi*. *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* proves that Bengal (which included Bihar) maintained an active overseas trade with south India and Ceylon in the first century A.D. The commodities exported are said to have consisted of Malabathrum, pearls and muslins of the finest parts.

After *Lomapada* the next famous king of *Anga* was Karna who built and held his court in *Karnagarh*. Major Welford¹⁴ and Buchanan Hamilton, being lost in the maze of the royal dynastic list with about half a dozen of kings having the name of *Karna*, failed to determine *Karna* of the Bharat war and the builder of *Karnagarh*. Karna was a faithful ally of the *Kauravas* and a sincere friend of *Duryodhana*, the chief of the *Kauravas*. He was a pathetic victim of misfortune throughout his whole life. In reality the eldest of the *Pandavas*, he was never regarded as such by the *Pandava* brothers. Being deserted just after his birth by his mother *Kunti*, because he was born during her maidenhood by the Sun God, he was brought up by a worker in wood, who adopted him as his son. In spite of the social stigma of birth out of marriage, *Karna* was admitted to be one of the great heroes of the epic age almost unrivalled in war and bravery. It was not for the want of ingenuity in war, or lack of bravery, but out of sheer adverse fortune he was killed by the third *Pandava*, his adversary.

II

During the Buddhist age, we learn that Satanika Parantap, the king of the *Vatsyas*, whose capital was *Kausambi*, near Allahabad, attacked *Champa*, then under the rule of

King *Dadibahana* but particulars about the results of which are not known. It, however, transpires that sometime later, *Anga* grew powerful and there was no love lost between her and *Magadha*. For sometime *Magadha* remained an integral part of *Anga*. King Bhattiya of *Magadha* was defeated in war by Brahmadata of *Anga*. But at a subsequent date the Goddess of Fortune frowned upon *Anga* and her prosperity was on the wane. Bimbisara (C. 603-551 B.C.), son of Bhattiya, revenged his father's defeat by putting Brahmadata to death and annexing *Anga* to his empire. *Champa* passed to the hands of the *Magadhan* victor and remained as an appendage for centuries to come. After the death of *Bimbisara*, *Ajatsatru* (*Kunika*) (C. 551-519 B.C.) made *Champa* his capital but his son *Udayin* (C. 519-503 B.C.) transferred the seat of Government to Pataliputra. With the loss of independence, the people of *Champa* lost all their morals and strength of character so much so, that in course of time they became notorious for their bad character.¹⁵

As a province of *Magadha*, *Anga* witnessed along with the other parts of the Empire, vicissitudes of fortune and an change of ruling dynasties. The *Sisunagas*, the *Nandas*, the *Mauryas*, the *sungas* and the *Guptas* ruled in chronological succession over *Anga*. The country must have felt the brunt of *Kalings*, *Satavahana*, Greek (*Menander*) and *Kushana* invasions. The end of the *Kushana* rule towards the first half of the 2nd century A.D. synchronizes with the rise of the *Bharasiya Naga*, who originally issued from *Bagahelkhand*, set up their rule in the *Uttar Pradesh* and east and west *Bihar*, of the or *Champa*. The *Gupta* rule that extended over *Anga* witnessed the renaissance of Indian art and a brilliant development of works in metals, such as iron and copper. A copper statue of Buddha about 2½ feet in height, delicately executed, discovered at *Sultanganj*, testify to the place and its vicinity as producing marvellous specimen of handiwork in bronze and other metals. *Fa-Hien*, the Chinese pilgrim, who visited *Magadha* in the beginning of the 5th century A.D. while following the course of the *Ganga* descending eastwards, found on the southern bank the great Kingdom of *Champa*.¹⁶ With the break up of the *Gupta* Empire, the later *Guptas* of *Magadha*, whose connections with the imperial *Guptas* have not been ascertained till now, established supremacy over *Magadha*. *Adityasena*, son of *Madhava Gupta* and the eighth king of the line possessed administrative talents and military skill that won for him the title of the "guardian of the world, by whose white umbrella the whole circuit of the earth was covered". An inscription of *Adityasena* discovered on the *Mandara Hill*¹⁷ relates that both he and his queen *Shri Kondadevi* installed an image of *Narahari* (*Man-lion*), an incarnation of *Vishnu*, on the hill, and that the queen performed an act of piety by excavating a tank named *Papaharini*¹⁸ at the foot of the said hill. *Adityasena* was, as stated in the aforesaid inscription, "a ruler of the earth up to the shores of the oceans and a performer of *Aswamedha* and other great sacrifices". His kingdom included *Magadha*, *Anga* and *Vanga*. The political destiny of *Anga* next passed to *Sasanka*, the king of *Karnasuvarna* (near *Berhampur* in *Bengal*). Originally a military adventurer and a feudal chief entitled *Mahasamanta*, he extended his sphere of political influence in south *Bihar*, *Benates* and *Ganjam* (south *Orissa*).

After *Sasanka*, the sovereignty of *Anga* passed to *Harshavardhana*, of *Sthanisvara*, who possessed undying reputation for warlike and peaceful activities. *Hieun-Tsang*, the Chinese pilgrim, visited India during the rule of this monarch and visited main Buddhist

centres. He had visited *Champa*, or Chen-po as he calls it, situated at a distance of 300 li or 50 miles east of Monghyr. About *Champa* he writes¹⁹ the Capital has the river Ganga to the north, the soil is level and fertile, regularly cultivated and productive; the temperature is wild and warm; the manners of the people are simple and honest. There are several sets *sangharamas* (Viharas) mostly in ruins, with about 200 priests. They follow the teaching of the little Vehicle (*hinajana*). There are some twenty Deva temples. The walls of the capital are built of brick, and are several feet high. The foundations of the wall are raised on a lofty embankment, so that by their high escarpment, they can defy the attack of enemies.

To the east of the city 140 or 150 li the south of the river Ganh Ganga is a solitary detached rock, craggy and steep and surrounded by water²⁰. On the top of the peak is a Deva temple.

From what lie read in Hiuen-Tsang's account Cunningham concluded, that the political boundary of *Anga* then extended from Lakhiterai (Lakhisaai) to Rajmahal on the Ganga, and from Paresnath Hill to Kalna on the Bhagirathi²¹.

At this time *Champa* was under the rule of the Khetauris of Malorigin and was a powerful kingdom²².

Gopala (C. 750—770 A. D.) the elected Pala King of Bengal, conquered Magadh and South Bihar in the third decade of the eighth century. Under Dharmapala (C. 770 A.D.) the son of Gopala the frontier of the empire extended to the west of the Sone river. As a Buddhist and a patron of education and scholarship, the Emperor of Bengal founded Shri Vikramsila Vihara on a hillock on the bank of the Ganga in Northern Magadh²³.

Surrounded by a strong wall, the Vihara was constructed after a good design. With the central temple adorned with Mahabodhi image, there were all told 108 teachers inside the enclosure²⁴. The outer wall surrounding the whole monastery was embellished with artistic work, with a painted portrait of the famous scholar Nagarjuna adorning the right hand side of the principal entrance and that of Atisa on the left. The University of Vikramsila, also founded by Dharmapala included six colleges, and a central hail. Called the House of Science with its six gates opening on the six colleges. The gates of the University like those of *Nalanda*, it is said, were guarded by most learned scholars called D'vara-Pandits, who were the custodians of scholarship. Students were admitted to the university on the recommendations of these erudite gatekeepers. We come across the names of these six keepers of the gates, who worked as such, during the period 955—83 A.D. Ratna-kara Santi, E. Gate: Vagisvarakirti of Banaras, W. Gate: Naropa, N. Gate: Prajnakaramati, S. Gate: Ratnavajra of Kashmir, First central Gate: Janasrimitra of *Gauda*, Second Gate. The ,President of the University was not only a scholar of outstanding merit but also a religious sage. Buddha-Jnana-pada, was the President during the time of Dharmapala: Dipankara of Srijnana Atisa was the head of the institution between 834—38 A. D. As an important feature of the administration of the University it should be noted, that the teaching was controlled and conducted by a Board of prominent teachers and that there was one joint Board for both the Universities of Vikramsila and *Nalanda*. The utility of maintaining one

uniform standard of teaching in the different Indian Universities that form the chief problem of the- present day educationists was very ably solved in India more than one thousand years ago. Thus we find there was an exchange of teachers between the Vikramsila and Nalanda University and scholars like Dipankara and Abhayakara working at both the places. As regards the working of the university, the rules and regulations governing the daily life of the resident studies and allied matters, nothing definite in details may be said. Nalanda is better off in this respect, the detailed working having been laid down by Hiuen Tsang, who was supplemented by I-Tsing. But no similar account of Vikramsila is available. Nevertheless, it goes without saying that “the success of the work of Vikramsila as a seat of learning is amply demonstrated by the quality and quantity of its output, the prodigies of piety and learning it produced, and the profound contributions they made to knowledge and region by their numerous writings which practically built up the culture and civilization of another country, Tibet.”²⁵

It is worthwhile to refer to those eminent scholars of the Vikramsila University who were deputed to Tibet for working, and wrote outstanding works in Tibetan. *Acharya Buddha Jnanapada*, who held the post of, *Acharya* for ordination at Vikramsila, developed the study of *Mantra-VajrAcharya*, that was taught only at this University and nowhere else. The nine works that he wrote in Sanskrit on Tantra are lost but are preserved in Tibetan: *Vairachana Rakshita*, who wrote several works in Sanskrit and translated into Tibetan several Tantrika works, accompanied his Guru Padmasambhava to Tibet about 750 A. D. He was known as *Mahapandita* and *Mahacharya*: Jetari, an inhabitant of Varendra, and originally a student and later a professor won the title of *Pandita: Prajnakaramati*, already referred to as the keeper of the south gate, wrote several works in Sanskrit and Tibetan: *Ratnakara*, the keeper of the East Gate, having first obtained ordination at Odantapura University,²⁶ entered Vikramsila as a pupil of *Jctari*. He was the author of thirteen works in Sanskrit, and went to Ceylon at the invitation of the King to preach Buddhism. *Jnana Sri*, a native of *Gauda* and the keeper of the second Gate mentioned before, wrote several works in Sanskrit, that were later rendered into Tibetan by him; Ratnavajra of Kashmir, another gate-keeper, came to Vikramsila at the age of thirty-six or so, and by virtue of his scholarship won the title of *Pandit*: Vagisvara of Banaras, also a gate-keeper of the University wrote in Sanskrit, and his famous work *Hrityubanchanopadesa* was translated into Tibetan. Dipankara Sri *Jnana*, also known as one of the greatest of Indian scholars, was born in 980 A. D. in a wealthy family of *Gauda*. Having renounced his riches at an early age of 19, he entered a monastery at *Odantapuri*, and completing his education and obtaining mastery over Hinayana, Mahayana, Vaisesluika and Tantras sailed off to Suvarnavipa (in Pegu) for further studies. There he passed the next twelve years of his life and then returned to India and was elected Head of the community of Buddhist Monks of *Magadha* and *Gauda*, as a result of the victory that he had won over the monks in a discussion held at Bodhgaya. In reward of his merit King Nayapala made him the head of the Vikramsila University. At the invitation of the Tibetan King Ohm Chub, Dipankara proceeded to Tibet to purge Tibetan Buddhism of its many corruptions. He thus worked in Tibet for 13 years (1040—1053 A. D.) and passed away near Lhasa at the age of 73. Some 200 works on Tibetan and Buddhism

are ascribed to him. Viryasimha was an associate of Atisa and he helped the latter to translate his works in Tibetan. *Athayakaragupta*, a native of *Gauda* and a monk, began his life as the family priest of the King Rampala. A great writer in Sanskrit and a translator in Tibetan, he obtained the title of Arya-Mahapandita. He was present at Vikramsila at the time of the first Turkish invasion of *Magadha*. Tathagata Rakshita, a native of Orissa, and a Kayastha by birth, was at first a student and then a professor of Vikramsila, obtained by dint of merit the titles of “*Mahapandita*” and “*Upadhyaya*”. He wrote on Tantra shastra in Sanskrit and later translated them into Tibetan. Ratnakirti, was a student of Vikramsila who was known as Updhyaya, Pandit and Mahapandit. His Tibetan translations are an asset to Tibetan literature. Manjusri, was another celebrated Pandit of Vikramsila who produced Tibetan translations of Sanskrit works. Dharmakirti, was a native of Tibet and a student of Vikramsila University. He translated many Sanskrit works into Tibetan: Sakya Shri Bhadra, was native of Kashmir and a reputed logician. He was at Vikramsila when the Muslims destroyed it.

By virtue of their military conquests the Palas became the inheritors of *Vanga* (Eastern Bengal) and *Gauda* (Western Bengal). *Anga* forming a component part of the latter in those days. The Anargha-raghava of Murari, who flourished in the latter part of the eighth century A.D., refers to *Champa* as the Capital of *Gauda*. This connection of *Champa* with a Pala King of *Gauda* has been inferred from the study of the Jaynagar image inscription also²⁷. The glory of the Pala empire won under *Gopala* and his two immediate successors, *Dharmapala* and *Devapala* (C. 810—815 A.D.) suffered a wane after the death of the last named sovereign, and during the reign of *Narayanpala* (C. 854—908), *Anga*, *Vanga* and *Magadha* paid homage to the *Rastrakuta* King *Amoghavarsa* I (814—877 A.D.)²⁸ and to his son Krishna II (877—913 A.D.)²⁹ In addition to this defeat *Narayanpala* had also to eat the humble pie at the hands of the Pratihara King *Mahendrapala* I (C. 885—910 A.D.). An attempt however, was made by *Narayanpala* to regain his lost prestige, and for sometime at least, he recovered north Bengal and Bihar and acquired sovereignty over Kanauj.³⁰ An inscription dated the sixth year of the reign of *Gopala* II, the successor of *Narayanpala*, found at Jajilpara, in Maldah District, refers to the victorious camp of the King at Vataparvatika on the *Ganga*, referring obviously to *Vateshwarasthana* at *Patharghata*, near *Colgong*. There are epigraphic references to some Chandella³¹ and Kalachuri incursions into Bengal in the 11th century A.D. In the 11th Century as well, Bagal and *Anga* suffered at the hands of Jatavarman the founder of the *Jadava* dynasty of East Bengal,³² and the Gangeya King of Dehala (C.P.)³³. Mathana also called Mahana, the maternal uncle of Rampala, the king of Bengal, became the feudatory ruler of the principality of *Anga*, paying obedience to the ruler of Bengal³⁴. Lakhman Deva, the Paramara king of Maiwa, and the great grandson of Bhoja, is said to have defeated them³⁵.

Under the suzerainty of the Palas, *Anga* was influenced by the culture that developed under them. The Vedic culture that gathered strength in Bengal, received an impetus in *Anga* as well. Brahmins well-versed in the *Vedas* and the *Vedangas*, and adept in the performance of sacrifices received stipends and royal grants³⁶. Saivism or the cult of Siva, which developed in Bengal in those days, was that of the *Pasupata* sect³⁷

It was by means of conquest that the Senas, who were originally Karnata Kshatriyas coming to Bengal in the train of *Vikramaditya VI*, Chalukya, became the legal successors of the Palas in Bengal and *Anga*. *Lakshmansena* (1185—1206), the son of *Ballalsen*, and an important and powerful king consolidated the Sena Kingdom. But the last days of his rule were unhappy and tragic. Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khilji, a follower of Muhammad of Ghor, being attracted by the prevalent conditions in Bihar, than almost unprotected as a result of the fall of the Gahadvllas, marched his Turkish troops to Bihar and Bengal and brought them under Muslim sway. The effects of this conquest over the country and particularly over Nalanda, and Vikramsila Universities has been fully narrated by the author of *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, and need no reiteration here. In fact, the two Universities stated above were levelled to the ground, their students were either put to sword or scattered pell-mell and a great number of books put to the flames.

Thus were by, *Vanga* and *Anga* brought under the sway of the Muslim rulers of Delhi, and were ruled by the Turko-Afghans, Saiyyads, Lodis and the Mughals in chronological succession. Bhagalpur formed part of *Sarkar* Monghyr, one of the seven *Sarkars* into which Bihar was divided at the time of Muslim conquest. Towards the close of the 14th century, Bihar was incorporated to the kingdom of Jaunpur and remained as its appendage for about a century when it was conquered by Hussain shah of Bengal and later by the rulers of Delhi.

III

The geography of this region played a significant role in pacing up the growth and development of the urban centers. The mushrooming of the marketing centers owes its allegiance to the keen interest shown by the Mughal rulers because of its strategic location. This region was the only military route from western India to Eastern India. The Uniqueness was the two Hill passes one connecting Sarker Munget via the the Kharaghpur hill and the other leading to Bengal called Sakrigali.³⁸

Bengal was considered to be a prized *subha* during the Mughal times. The only route to enter this area was through Bhagalpur via *Teliagarhi* fort. This fort stands on a plateau on the lower slope of the Rajmahal hills at the foot of which the Ganges flowed. Owing to its positions it was a place of great strategic importance's and was known as, "The key of Bengal".³⁹Ives gives the following account of *Teliagarhi* fort as it appeared in 1757—"This is the only a wall carried on from the brink of the river which at this places is prodigiously rapid to the foot of the mountain and is almost un passable, like that at *sicarigully*, with thick woods and jungle and hat this further impediment, that very near to the wall runs a rivulet, on the side of the will, seemingly in practicable to pass over. The bastions are without parapets, having eight sides that are not eight feet wide and they have contrived to guild the walls so artfully, that the rivulets serves for a ditch in front. The bastion wall, which is alert 14 feet high and 50 yard long, entirely commands the river, which though it be thee fourth is a mile broad here, yet the current is such as the carry all boats close under the platform.

In *Siyar ul Mutakharin* it is mentioned that "*Telia-Garry* is a fort that shuts up the passage into Bengal. It consists of a wall, strengthened with towers that expand from the

foot of the rocky bank of the Ganges. It was neither ditch nor rampart, and yet answers well enough the purpose in a country where they know nothing of sieges, and hardly any artillery.”⁴⁰In the 16th and 17th Century Man Singh led his troops and made Bhagalpur military headquarter.⁴¹

The geographical location was also a boon for the traders. The Jain traders concentrated on the western outskirts of the towns. This was due to *Champa Nala* which flows on the western boundary of the present city near Nathnagar.⁴² The geographical location of *Champangar* was significant since it was an important transit point for traders coming from North East Bihar and Nepal.⁴³

Another important advantage was that Bhagalpur was attached to jungle area inhabited by santhals. The first ruler who passed this route was Shershah in 1538 AD. The importance of the route is that it is considered as the neck which connects southern portion of Bihar and west Bengal. The new immigration of the hilly people was through this route who got settled in the out skirt of Bhagalpur.. The fort was been described by Howell in his book “Interesting historical events.”

In the medieval times the availability of good transport facility in Bhagalpur was an important feature that barged trade and commerce. There was a chain of good roads. An important highway from Delhi to Lakhanauti passed through Bhagalpur. Another important route that touched Bhagalpur was from Varanashi via sahabad. A road also originated from Bhagalpur that connected Bengal. Caption sherwill gives the prescription of an old Mughal road located on the banks of Ganges leading from Calcutta Via Rajmahal, Bhagalpur, Munger to Patna.⁴⁴ George Dickinson in his report dated August 31, 1794 AD gave observation on the condition of road rout in Bhagalpur. He writes that the first road went ward to the banks of river kiul. He also gives communication between Bhagalpur and Rajmahal, the road constructed by Prince Shuja.⁴⁵ In the 18th century, the Marathas used this pass and invaded Bhagalpur.

Until the recent modern age, the best means of transport was the waterways compared to the other modes of transport. All the world civilization flourished on the banks of great rivers.⁴⁶ In case of Bhagalpur, the Principal River was the Ganges flowing on the Northern side of the town. Most of the travelers between 1640 and 1810 sailed at Bhagalpur as a break journey. The Mughals were not very much interested in the maintaining Navy, however during the Mughal period *Golaghat* was the chief station of Bhagalpur town. The martime activities led to the emergence of a small *sarai* near this *Ghat* Mayaganj and Barari were the two important *ghats* but afterwards due to the change of the river course Barari came to occupy the principal position.

A survey of the English document also reveals us important of the *ghats*. An important *Ghat* described by Ann Deane as “the best one in the town” was located at Bilri Gunj⁴⁷. The judicial records of the English East India Company mentions Khunjapur as a Prominent *Ghat* in the town⁴⁸. The concept of “*Nallas*” was unique for Bhagalpur. Many *Nallas* connected the interior of the town with the river. These *Nallas* acted as the network of

transport in the town. The breadth of the *nalla* was quite large enough to accommodate large boats and small ships. One such example is the stream christened *Chandei*. To the south of the Ganges small stream descended from the highland to the south and flow in the north direction into the Ganges. One such stream called *Chandu*, was used for transport and communication purpose.⁴⁹

The climate of Bhagalpur to assisted in the growth of urban culture in the town. The round season started from June and Continued until September. The prevailing North Eastern wind tempted the travellers from Calcutta to sail in this direction. The season from October to March was very much suitable for the Europeans.⁵⁰ This type of climate boosted the cultivation of rice. The surpluses production of rice was used for export purpose.

The bank of Kankar was ten miles broad and had dense growth of mango, bamboos, Jack, Palm, date trees etc.⁵¹ these dense forests was also a great boon because it allowed the immigration of the hilly people. These new immigration settled in the outskirts of the town and established their household out of the wooden material. A European visitor described the town Bhagalpur as a "great town of thatch houses and a place of bows and arrows."⁵² Another important advantage was the network of hills that surrounded Bhagalpur.⁵³

In retrospect we can say that the past is not a dead past, but a past which is still living in present.⁵⁴ However, in case of Bhagalpur the rich and juicy ancient past awaits for the scholars and historians of Ancient-India. Believed to be the old Hindu Kingdom of *Anga*, with its capital *Champa*, it is identified with modern *Champa* nagar.⁵⁵ That historian who identifies, the plateau known as Karnagarh with the site of the ancient Capital, question this association of the capital with Champanagar. It is stated to have been built by a Raja Varma, but nothing definite is known about him, as Kings of these names are numerous in the lists of kings of *Magadha*.⁵⁶ Major Wellford, tries to reconstruct the names of the kings of *Magadha*. As the name Karna occurs frequently in this list, at eras varying from thirteen or fourteen century BC to four or five centuries.⁵⁷ AD, it is obviously impossible to determine from which the fort of *Karagarh* took its name. Buchanan-Hamilton Concluded that there were at least seven important kings named *karna* who began to reign not long after the downfall of the Mauryan dynasty founded by Chandragupta Maurya,⁵⁸ who rendered *Magadha* the beading province of India. It is believed that the Chinese traveller. Heaven Tsang, after his term of years in the Buddhist monastery at *Nalanda*, travelled through South Bihar in the 7th C. A.D. Omitting the purely will tracts of to the south, of which we have little or no mention in ancient times, the country land which Buchannan has surveyed. Called as *Angadesh*, the land of Aug as of *Atharva* Veda, the territory of King Lomapada of the Ramayan, of king *Karna* of Mahabharata, saw the rule of the Pala dynasty in the first half of the 9th Century. The Sen Kings gradually ousted them from Bengal and ultimately conquered Mithila, only to be vanquished by the Muhammandans under Muhammad Bakhtayar at the end of the twelfth century. About 1197 we conquered Bihar and about 1200 took possession of Gaur. When Babar's son Humayan tried to invade Bengal Shershah in the narrow defile between the Ganges and Rajmahal Hills, must have traversed Bhagalpur on this expedition, which ended in his disastrous retreat and flight to Persia where he remained

in exile till 1555 AD.⁵⁹ From onwards continuous war fare were raged till the defeat of the last Afghan King, Daud khan, near Rajmahal in 1576 AD. The history of these areas is one of constant vicissitude. Order is restored to great extent under the strong hand of a great soldier-administrator, Man Singh and there fort these districts from part of the *suba* Bihar under the emperor Akbar. The *Sarkar* of Munger, with its 31 Mahals, which developed into the revenue *parganas*, as described in the Ain-i-Akbari from the details, given in todar Mal's rent roll of circa 1582, practically covered the ancient Kingdom of *Anga*, that is to say, it extended from the kiul river on the western boundary of Mahal surajgarh to the "strong wall.....extending from the Ganges to the hills... became restricted to the pass of Garhi (the modern *Telyagarhi*).⁶⁰

The history of a place owes very much to the geographical patterns. The growth of urbanization in Bhagalpur was attributed to the political patronage given by Akbar. However, it goes well to an English proverb that there is peace only after war. During the reign of Akbar this town on several occasions was made military station to conduct military expeditions for example in 1575 AD, Munim Khan and Raja Todar Mall, to flush out the Afghans from this region, carried out a military expedition.⁶¹

Notes and References

- 1 J. Byrone Bengal District, Gazetteer Bhagalpur, Calcutta, 1911, p.26.(also referred in P.C. Roy Chaudhary, Bihar District, Gazetteer Bhagalpur, Patna 1962).
- 2 *Ibid.* p.1. 4,226 square miles in area. Towards the beginning of the 19th century at the time when Buchanan visited it, the district comprised an area of 8,225 square miles.
Referring to the extent of the district, Cap. Sherwill in his *Geographical and Statistical Report of the District of Bhagalpur* (1869) remarks that it comprised of the larger portion lying to the north of the river.
In Murphy's Report on the *Survey and Settlement Operation in the Bhagalpur District (1902-10)*, the total area of the district given is 4,158 square miles of which 2,374 are comprised is North Bhagalpur and 1,784 in south Bhagalpur.
Rennell's map of the south-east part of Bihar drawn in 1773AD portrays the district of Bhagalpur, and is the earliest of its and so far known. Next comes, the map drawn by Francis Buchanan in 1811, and published in *Buchanan's Journal*. There is another map of Bhagalpur town drawn in 1824, 1st November, by one Gopinath with sites indicated in a Persian Script. The map has been preserved in the Magistrate's Record Room, Bhagalpur. N.S. Sherwill's map of the district of "Bhagalpur" on 4m.=1 inch and drawn in 1852 and his map of Rajmahal Hills on a scale of 2 miles=1 inch and drawn in 1855 are also preserved in the above record room. *The Survey of Bhagalpur* by Major J. Macdonald and Capt. N. J. Steward was published in 1902. This map deals with the civil station and the environments in the 1866-67, 1869 and 1870.
- 3 P.C. Roy Chaudhary, Bihar District Gazetteer, Bhagalpur, Patna 1962. pp. no. 35.
- 4 *Vedic Age*, by Mozumdar and Pusalker, George Allen, Unwin, 1951, p. 256.

- 5 *Ibid*, p.279
- 6 P.C. Roy Chaudhary, Bihar District Gazetter Bhagalpur, Patna 1962. pp. no. 35
- 7 P.C. Roy Chaudhary, Bihar District, Gazetter Bhagalpur, Patna 1962. pp. no. 35 also see The Mahabharat, Vana Parva Chap. 85.
- 8 Bihar District Gazetter, op.cit pp. no. 37 *Anusasana Parva*.Chap. 42.
- 9 May be identified with the large silted up tank called sarovara.
- 10 Palakapaya Muni was the author of Hasty-Ayurveda, also called *Gajachikitsa*, etc. (Anandasrama Sanskrit series), a work on elephant ivory. After the maner of Puranas and in the form of a dialogue hle in Champa between king Lomapada of Anga nd the Sage, Plalkapaya gives in 4 secs. an elaborate account of the aliments peculiar to elephants.
- 11 At Nathnagar, a quarter of Champanagar, exists a temple of Digambara sect which is dedicated to Basupujya.
- 12 *Geographical Dictionary of Ancient and Medieval India* by N. Dey, London, 1927, p.44.
- 13 *Maha-Janaka-Jataka: Jatska* VI, 34, no. 539.
History of Bengal, Vol. I, Edited by Mazumdar, Dacca, 1943, p.661.
- 14 Asiatic Researches, Vol. IX, Buchanan, p.74.
- 15 Champa has ben described in the Dasakumara Charita as abounding in rogues.
- 16 *Travels of Fa-Hien*. J. Legge. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1886, p-100.
- 17 Mandar Hill or Mandargir, is situated near Baunsi in the Banka subdivision, and at a distance of 30 miles south of Bhagalpur, the head quarters station. Besides being a place of pilgrimage, the hill on account of many interesting ruins possesses value in the eye of the antiquarian.
According to the Pauranic version, Vishnu defeated the notorious giant Madhukaitab in a battle that had continued for 10,000 years, and ultimately piled the Mandar hill over his body, for preventing the monster from doing any harm to the world. There is also a story in the Mahabharata to the effect that the hill was used by the Gods and the Asura in churning the ocean.
- 18 At first called Manohar Kund. The tradition runs that a Raja of Kanchipur called Chola was cured of his leprosy by taking a dip into its water. In gratefulness, the Raja windened and deepened the tank, and since his days, a fair is held here every year in the month of Pous.
- 19 Buddhist Records of the Western World. S. Beal, Vcl. II, p.191.
- 20 Cunnighum identifies it with the picturesque rocky island off Patharghata with its temple-crowned summit. See *Ancient Geography of India*, p.477, also *Archaeological Survey*, Vol. XV, p.34.
- 21 Cunningham's *Ancient Geography of India*, Edited by S.N. Mozumdar, Calcutta 1924, p.546.

- 22 *Bhagalpur District Gazetteer*, p.27.
- 23 Cunningham identified it with the village of Silao near Baragaon. (A.S.R. VIII, 75) Dr. S.C. Vidyabhusan with Sultanganj in Bhagalpur District; N.L. De with Patharaghata hill near Colgong (J.A.S.B. VI. 7) Dr. Banerjee shastri takes it to be Keur, near Ausalgunj, "Indirect line with Nalanda (within a distance of 15 miles) and Adantapur. J.B.C.S XV, p 276. Some favour the modern villages of *Oriap*, *Antichak* and *Modhorampur near Vatesharsthan*, 6 miles north of Colgong Railway station, as being the site.
- 24 R.K. Mookerji, *Ancient Indian Education.*, Macmillan & Co., London, 1947, p.587.
- 25 *Ibid*, p.589.
- 26 Located in Bihar Sharif, Patna district.
- 27 J. N. Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, vol. I., Dacca 1943, P.31.
- 28 This line of Kings usually described as Rastrakutas of Manyakheta (Mankhed, in the Nizamis dominions). Their original home was Karnataka, and their mother tongue Kanarese. Narayanpala's submission to the rastrakutas has been referred to in the Nilgundans Sirar stone inscriptions of Amoghavarasa, See *Dynastic History of N. India*, Vol. I, 301.
- 29 The Deoli grant of Krishna III. *Dynastic History of N. India*, Vol. I, 301.
- 30 Bhagalpur Copper plate of Narayanpala.
- 31 The Khajuraho epigraph tells us that the wives of the kings of Kanchi, andra, Radha and angaligered in the prison of King Dhanga, son of Yasovarman of Jeja Bhukti (Bundel Khund). *Ibid*, p.678.
- 32 The Belava Copper plate of Bhojvarman, *Ibid*, pp. 331-33, Jatavarman was a Rajput of the Yadava class, and he migrated from the Punjab.
- 33 P.C. Roy Choudhary op. cit. pp. no. 45 See *Dynastic History of N. India*, p.772.
- 34 Saranath inscription of Kumardevi, queen of the Gahadvala King Govinda Chandra (C.1114-55 A.D.).
- 35 P.C. Roy Choudhary op. cit. pp. no. 45, See *History of the Paramara Dynasty* by D.C. Ganguly.
- 36 See Bhagalpur Copper plate of Narayanpala in R.K. Mookerji, *History of Bengal*, Vol. I, p.396.
- 37 *Ibid*.
- 38 William Hodges, *Travels in India*, (London 1793) pg-24 Sakrigali: was famous for its fortifications called teliagarhi. Hodges mentions the remains of the strong wall and gate of Tellyagarhi fort.
- 39 W.W. Hunter, *Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XIV, (Delhi, 1976) Pg-284.
- 40 H. Beveridge, *Sahibganj and Rajmahal*, *Calcutta Review*, Vol., XCVI (1893) pp 67-70.
- 41 Abul Fazl's, *Akbarnamah*, Eng tr. Beveridge vol III, Cal (1912) pp 143-144 and 251-256.
- 42 Bhagalpur had a big harbor on the Ganges River at a place called Champanagar, now called as Champanala.

- 43 Surendra Gopal, "Jains in Bihar in 17th C", Proceedings Indian History Congress (Muzaffarpur, 1972) p-323.
- 44 Capt Sherwill's report Published in "Some old accounts of Bhagalpur," K.K. Basu Ed. 'Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research society Vol. XXI, (Patna) 1936 pp 144-172.
- 45 George Dickinson's report referred in K.K. Basu, "Some old Accounts of Bhagalpur", Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research society Vol. XXI, (Patna 1936).
- 46 The Mesopotamia civilization flourished on the banks of Tigris and Euphrates the Indus valley civilization flourished on the banks of river Indus.
- 47 Extracts of An Deane's "A tour Through the Upper province of Hindustan", published in the journal of Bengal Past and Present, Vol. XXI (Cal 1926) pp 1-9.
- 48 Selections from the Judicial Records of the Bhagalpur District, K.K. Dutta ed (Patna 1968) p-343.
- 49 K.K. Basu (ed.) "Some old accounts of Bhagalpur in Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research society, Vol XXI (Patna 1936) pp 146, 154.
- 50 Capt. sherwill Report "some old accounts of Bhagalpur", in K.K. Basu ed, Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research society, Vol XXI (Patna 1936) pp 145.
- 51 S.A. Khan (ed) "John Marshal in India", London (1927) P-154, 55, Ref-9.
- 52 Ibid. p 121-133.
- 53 Ibid. p 96
- 54 R.G. Collingwood, The Idea of History,
- 55 See "Ancient Countries in Eastern India: Journal, Asiatic Society, Bengal Vol. LXUI, Part I, No. 2, 1897, P 85.
- 56 See Asiatic Researchers, Vol. IX.
- 57 Ibid Vol. IX.
- 58 Chandragupta, grandfather of the famous Ashoka (reigned B.C. 271-231) was, it will be remembered, a refugee at the time of Alexander. The Greek called him *sandrakothos*. Possessed the crown of Magdha with the help of Kautily he married the daughter.
- 59 See Bengal Secretariat, Bengal District Gazetteer, Pg 185.
- 60 Abul Fazl, Ain-i-Akbari, Eng trans., Jarrett, Vol. II, Pg-152.
- 61 Ibid; pp-143,44.