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A Study on Urban Centres in Eastern India: A Special Focus on Bengal (C. 9th Century A.D. – C. 12th Century A.D)

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Abstract:

The Paper deals with an exhaustive and extensive account of urban centres which existed in eastern India between the period 9th century A.D.-12th century A.D. The geographical contour consisting of Orissa, Bengal (undivided), Bihar and Assam, have been given the necessary focus, and the political scenario as well as the nature of state in the period has been duly given importance and briefly discussed in this paper. The debate on the theory of de-urbanization and Third urbanization has also been analytically treated in this paper. A critical review of both the views have been done by us. We have discussed in total thirty-four urban centres of this period, of which eighteen are from Bengal only, as this region formed the political hub of eastern India during this period. Our significant sources include Archaeological excavation and exploration reports, inscriptions as well as contemporary Literature (both indigenous and foreign). In this paper we have whole-heartedly tried to bring out a realistic picture of existing urban centres of the day. We have neither denied de-urbanization nor have we accepted the theory of third urbanization in toto. We have given our utmost endeavour to prove that urban centres existed in this period against a feudal backdrop.

Keywords: *Urban-centre, de-urbanization, third urbanization, jayaskandhāvār, maṇḍapikā*

1. Urban Centres: Definitions from Different Perspectives

At the outset, we will ponder on the different definitions of urban centre from different viewpoints and also on the several factors essential for the process of urbanism. Historians would consider urban centre as a unit of settlement, established by man and influenced by several historical factors. The Archaeologists would assume any settlement as urban which exposes few streets and one or two public buildings and also brick-built drains. The Anthropologists and Sociologists take into account population and ecological factors as of prime importance in the growth of towns. Similarly, an Economist would look into the growth of towns mainly through economic factors.

Childe has listed monumental building, large settlements with dense population, non-food producing classes (including rulers, artisans and merchants) and the cultivation of art, science and writing as the basic traits of the urban revolution which took place in the bronzeage.¹ According to him, craft specialists as well as role of surplus which supported non-food producing classes were important to enliven a city. But according to Adams,² increased size and density of population are crucial to urbanism and the contribution of specialized crafts is negligible to primary urban needs. Among Indian historians, A. Ghosh was one of the pioneer archaeologists to tackle the problem of urbanization in early historical times. He considered an administrative and mercantile organization to be the pre requisite for a city.³ In R.S. Sharma's opinion, a town is not distinctified by mere size and population, but also by the quality of material life and nature of occupations.

Though agrarian surplus from hinterland is needed to boost city life, concentration of crafts and prevalence of money based exchange are equally important features of urban life.

2. The Debate

Though studies in the field of urban history had started in the sub-continent in the early decades of the last century, serious research had gained momentum only a few decades ago, especially in the early medieval period. The pre-dominant theory of 'de-urbanization' has been looming large on the urban scenario of early medieval period. The main advocate of this theory is R.S. Sharma,⁴ according to whom several factors were responsible for this wide range of de-urbanization⁵ in this stipulated period.⁶

2.1. View of R.S. Sharma (Protagonist of the theory of Urban Decay)

Sharma has tried to attribute the cause of decline of urban centers to decline of long-distance trade.⁷ He has sought the reason for the flourishing of the Sātavāhana and Kuṣāṇa empire in their trade relations with Central Asia and Roman empire. He surmises that due

to prosperous trade relations, towns grew and thrived on both the sides, i.e., on the north western frontier of India and in Central Asia.⁸ Based on information from the works of Prof. A.H. Dani and Prof. V. Masson, he has come to the conclusion that the urban centers that grew prosperous due to flourishing trade relations between the Kuṣāṇa empire and Central Asia, declined after the fall of the Kuṣāṇas.⁹ The Gupta period towns, he argued, did not suffer marked decline owing to its geographical location in mid-India or Madhyadesh. But its periphery regions such as Punjab and western Uttar Pradesh and the north western regions has exhibited few Gupta coins and inscriptions. Therefore, Sharma is inclined to think that the Gupta connection with Central Asia was either feeble or totally absent.

A substantial change in the money economy occurred during the post-Gupta period as the Roman empire and Central Asia stopped the supply of gold and the Hūṇa invasions in the 5th century A.D. struck a final blow to the trade contacts between Central Asia and India. Archaeological finds attest the evidence of trade of peninsular India with Roman empire. Several sites in peninsular India have revealed Roman pottery, coins, glasses and bullae. Roman finds generally occur in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamilnadu, and also in Gujarat and the coastal belt of Orissa and West Bengal. That the trade was favourable and hugely profitable is also corroborated by Pliny and Strabo.¹⁰

But by the beginning of the fourth century A.D., a division of the Roman empire and eventually its fall radically changed the situation. The eastern Roman empire i.e. Byzantium empire had trade contacts with Gupta empire but not on the same scale as it thrived previously. India exported silk but by the middle of the sixth century, Byzantium had learnt the art of spinning silk thread by rearing silk worms on mulberry leaves. So it might have been cause of the decline of trade between India and the eastern Roman empire. According to Sharma, trade with the middle-east revived again towards the end of the eleventh century, chief items of import being textiles and clothing, and export items being iron and steel. Sharma also opines that de-forestation and wearing away of the landscape of the town may have been one of the reasons for de-urbanization.¹¹

He cites references from literature to explain urban decay. The *Purāṇas* and the *Bṛihat Samhitā* describe periods of widespread unrest and both seems to be familiar with the ongoing process of de-urbanization. And the early law givers such as Manu (2nd century A.D.) prescribed grants of town as rewards. Therefore, Nārada, in later times (5th century A.D.) speaks of disputes arising out of grant of towns. The accounts of Hiuen Tsang and inscriptions corroborate the law books. Hiuen Tsang mentions that towns were donated to monasteries. For that reason, town began to lose its essence where tradesmen were unable to play their normal role in economy. According to Sharma, these land grants restricted the economic operation of a town and gradually feudalize it. Sharma seeks the help of literature (e.g. *Jātaka*) and inscriptions (Charter of the Chālukya ruler Bhogaśakti & Mālkāpuram inscription of 1261-62 from Andhra Pradesh) to supplement his theory. He argues if traders were assigned land managements, then obviously their trading activities were reduced to a minimum.¹²

To sum up Sharma's view, urban centres declined in the early medieval period primarily due to decline in long distance trade. The fall of Roman empire had an adverse effect on the favourable trade relations between India and Central Asia. Next, when Byzantium empire learnt the art of rearing silk worms on mulberry leaves, demand for silk (chief export item of India) from India decreased, as a result of which trade suffered. During the early medieval period, several monasteries sprung up which received direct state help through land grants. Huge areas of land usually in the form of towns were granted to them for their subsistence. These grants normally restricted the economic functions of a town and the townsmen to an agrarian expansion, the role of merchants transformed from traders to landed beneficiaries. The beneficiaries established direct ties between the producer and the consumer and compelled the artisans to produce articles of daily use. Sharma argues that donation of land grants was a widespread phenomenon and reflections of it can be found in the inscriptions of the Gupta and the post Gupta period. The period 600-1000 AD was the first phase of classical feudalism in India. He concludes that the nearly decaying towns were converted into either religious or military or administrative establishments and thereby ceased to be centres of technology, craft production and commodity exchange based on money. Therefore, in the post-Gupta era, land-grants and dispersal of townsmen to the country side gave a boost to a feudalistic model of state structure.

2.2. Third Urbanization: View of B.D. Chattopadhyaya

B.D. Chattopadhyaya has come up with a totally different view from that of R.S. Sharma in his book 'Making of early Medieval India' (1994), which is a compilation of his papers on the concerned subject in different journals. He asserts that an overview of the period from 600A.D-1200 A.D may seem to be very different from that of early period, but that should not be taken as a collapse of the early order, instead this period should be taken as shaping of regional societies.¹³ Chattopadhyaya is reluctant to agree with Sharma that paucity of urban centres in the post-Gupta period was due to decline of long-distance trade. That trade was present in early medieval India can be seen in his selected works on i) the Indo-Gangetic divide, ii) the upper Ganga basin, and iii) the Malwa plateau. He has sought the help of epigraphy to establish his standpoint.¹⁴

B.D. Chattopadhyaya¹⁵ is reluctant to give importance to foreign trade as major criteria for boosting up of trade centres. Though it is archaeologically proved that there was a decline in the Indo-Roman trade from the first century onwards, that cannot be taken as a proper cause for urban decay. India lost its principal source of gold just before the beginning of the Christian era and therefore she established relations with south-east Asia. The Gupta period saw a spate of gold currency throughout, despite its debasement. If the chronology of the Roman hoards is to be followed, then the Indo-Roman trade had already declined by that time. According to Chattopadhyaya, India has never been a serious contender in the international trade scenario, be it the pre-Christian era or the post-Gupta period. But he contends that the Tājikas and the Turuṣkas were present in the markets of India (as confirmed by literary sources) and then commercial motivations sometimes turned political as is confirmed by their occasional raids in the central and western parts of India.¹⁶ B.D. Chattopadhyaya opines that trade and power structure are essential factors in urban growth. As goes with foreign

trade, it was never an essential factor with early urban centre, and so it cannot be held responsible for urban decay in post-Kuṣāṇa and post-Gupta period.¹⁷

It is true that the account of Hiuen Tsang refers to the decay of a number of cities e.g. Kauśāmbī, Śrāvasti, Kapilāvastu, Rāmagrāma, Kuṣīnagara and Vaiśālī. Side by side, he has also mentioned cities like Vārāṇasī and Kānyakubja which were thickly populated and were great centers of commerce. He has also mentioned centres like Kui-pi-shwang-na (Kashipur in Nainital district) which were densely populated.

In order to establish the relationship between trade, urban centres and a stable political structure, Chattopadhyaya opines that the latter is necessary but not essential for boosting urban growth. There are numerous instances in literature as well as epigraphs where it is found that rulers are establishing townships in widely distant regions as Kashmir, Rajasthan and Bengal. Tattānandapura, Sīyaḍoni and Gopagiri were not founded by any ruler but they emerged along with the rise of the Gurjara-Pratihāra empire.¹⁸

Again Chattopadhyaya argues that the rise of a power structure would not necessarily bring in trade and urbanism. He has sought the example of eastern Chālukyas in this case. There are urban centres according to him, which survived despite political vicissitudes e.g. Vārāṇasī. This centre survived not because of political stability but because of its location on a traditional artery of trade, the Gaṅgā and also it was an important centre of textiles and ivory products from the early historical times down to early medieval times.¹⁹

2.3. Review of Both the Views of Sharma and Chattopadhyaya: A Critical Analysis

After reviewing both the views, one is tended to conclude that both Sharma and Chattopadhyaya have powerful stand points. Sharma has sought evidences from literature as well as Archaeology to show urban decline in early medieval period. He has tried to establish his view from a feudalistic standpoint. Due to lack of long distance trade (decline of distant trade started from 1st century onwards and it totally terminated with the fall of the Gupta empire. The Muslim period saw the emergence of urban centres again after a span of 600 years), urbanization suffered. Sharma argues that de-urbanization gave space to agrarian expansion as a result of which merchants transformed into landed beneficiaries. He gives references of numerous land grants of the period which speaks loud of land donations to monasteries by the state, even sometimes towns were donated to monasteries. Donation of lands and dispersal of townsmen to the countryside gave boost to a feudalistic model of state structure.

While Sharma is so loud in asserting his theory of de-urbanization in a feudalistic model of state structure, Chattopadhyaya brings in a new lease of life to this period and terms this phase as third urbanization of India. He locates a new spurt of urbanism different from the earlier phase, and takes the early medieval phase for shaping of regional societies.

Sharma while speaking of de-urbanization highlights only on the places which were previously occupied and totally overlooks the point of emergence of new urban centres. It is true that archaeological excavations exhibit total desertion of previously occupied sites, but Chattopadhyaya by drawing instances from epigraphs have curbed a new picture of urban centres. While Sharma is busy befitting the European model in Indian state structure, B.D. Chattopadhyaya has tried his level best to explain the situation from an Indian Perspective. The urban situation prevailing in the post-Gupta period is termed by him as third urbanization as it was in some way different from the earlier period.

After evaluating both the views, it stands out that a total negation of the existence of urban centres would be wrong. Urbanization and civilization are related terms. So denying urbanization means denying civilization. We don't glorify the Neolithic farmers by calling them civilized. But the Harappan people were civilized as they had cities and they led sophisticated lives as city folks do. They had granaries, brick-built buildings, terracotta indoor games and used exotic designed ornaments- all these are traits of city life!

Likewise, if we think that the early medieval period saw decline of previous urban centres, then we have to assume that new exchange centres emerged which were different from the previous ones. B.D. Chattopadhyaya has rightfully asserted that the decline of long distance trade or absence of a central political power does not matter in the process of urbanization. He has cited the example of four urban centres from inscriptions which emerged between 9th and 10th century during the times of Gurjara-Pratihāra period - Pṛthūdaka, Tattānandapura, Sīyaḍoni and Gopagiri - the inscriptions reveal certain common features of these place through which they can be given urban status. All these centres were primarily busy market centres. The inscriptions mention these centres having shops, residential buildings and haṭṭas and Sīyaḍoni had a mint and a customs house also.

Archaeology is not a very reliable source to prove urban decline, especially in the context of Indian subcontinent where field works conducted are not regular and the process of digging is often unscientific. Most of the sites are vertically excavated and through this type of excavation, one cannot prove urbanization or de-urbanization in a concrete way. Vertical excavation is very useful to ascertain the stratigraphy of a site, otherwise to confirm an urban site, area excavation is needed. Unfortunately, very few sites in India have received area excavation. Therefore, to deduce any inference through vertical excavation will be incorrect. A very important parameter that should be taken into account while digging a site is the prevailing geographical condition of the place. Humid and moist weather plays tremendous destructive role over a site. Many a times, bricks are robbed out from the site for constructing buildings by the local people (as in the case of Chandraketurgarh and Pañchakoṭ). Many a times, digging comes to a halt because of huge subsoil water. Therefore, we see Archaeology has its own limitations and will not prove very helpful to infer urbanization.

On the other hand, Epigraphy lends a helping hand to the historian on this aspect of study. The inscriptions are reflections of the period they represent; the material they provide can quench many of our queries-therefore they are much more reliable informative source than Archaeology.

Chattopadhyaya has chosen the second source to establish his theory, rather than Archaeology or Literature, and therefore his interpretations are much more reliable and therefore acceptable than those of Sharma's. He has added a new dimension to early medieval Indian urban study- because of him many historians have started taking keen interest in this aspect of History.

3. Urban Centres in Eastern India (C. 9th – C. 12th century A.D.) – A Profile

In our study on urban centres in eastern India, we have considered the region of Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, Bengal proper (undivided Bengal) including the Gangetic delta together with Sambalpur, Orissa and Gañjām. Our focus has been mainly on Bengal (both east and west) as this river-abounding land formed the political hub of the day.

3.1. Our Sources

To reconstruct the urban history of early medieval eastern India, our sources have been mainly epigraphical, though Archaeology and Literature have contributed as well. Our literary sources include Sanskrit texts written during the period i.e. from the 9th to the 12th century A.D. Some of these works include Vākpatis *Gauḍavāho*, Somadeva's *Kathāsaritsāgar*, Kalhaṇa's *Rājatarāṅginī*, Bilhaṇa's *Vikramañkadevacharita* etc. From these works, we catch a glimpse of the political and economic condition of the period concerned. More relevant works include the *Rāmcharita* of Sandhyākaraṇḍī, the Arab and Persian accounts of the 9th and 10th centuries A.D., and the account left by the celebrated Venetian traveller Macro Polo (late thirteenth century). Other related sources include *Tabaqāt-i-Nasirī* by Minhāj-ud-din, *Rihālā* by Ibn Battuta, *Chu-fan-chi* by Chau-ju-Kua (an officer supervising foreign trade under the Sung dynasty, AD 1225), the *Yuktikalpataru*, attributed to Bhoja Narapati and some information have also been accumulated from the *Pavandūta* of Dhoyī and *Karotoyā-māhātmya* by an anonymous author.

The inscriptions of the period have proved very helpful as they often mention their place of issue, which many a times happened to be the capital of a ruling dynasty. The inscriptions of Orissa have furnished information regarding the changing capitals of different dynasties which were thereby significant urban centres of the period. The inscriptions of Bengal, Bihar and Assam in the period under review, mentions *jayaskandhāvārs* or royal camps which were most probably military establishments and were located in strategic positions, thus providing protection to the ruling power. These *jayaskandhāvārs* finds mention especially in the Pāla period inscriptions. Some of the cities of the period are eulogized in the inscriptions.

Archaeological reports of various sites incorporated within our period have also served our purpose to a certain extent. Against this general picture of available sources, we give below a comprehensive account of the political scenario between the period 9th century – 12th century A.D.

3.2. A Brief Account of the Political Scenario

In Bengal, the Pālas were still continuing, and new powers of the like of Candras and Varmans emerged in the political scene of Eastern Bengal. The Varmans were followed by the Senas. In Assam, the Śālasthamba dynasty was succeeded by the Pālas. The latter ruled for more than over a century and was then ousted by the Devas. Orissa was occupied by the Somavaṃśīs who hailed sway over this region for over two centuries. The Nāgas, a Telugu-Choḍa ruling family and the contemporary Gaṅgā ruler brought about the disintegration of the Somavaṃśī family during the rule of Janamejaya II. Around 1100 A.D, Anantavarman Choḍagaṅgā invaded the Somavaṃśī kingdom and ousted the last ruler Kaṇḍadeva. Then onwards the history of Orissa was the history of the Gaṅgā dynasty.

All these dynasties ruled for more than a century, provided political stability to their kingdoms, and enhanced their power and prestige through their imperialistic designs. It was during this period that Bengal faced invasions from the Kalachuris, the Chālukyas, the Somavaṃśīs and the Cholas. The Pālas had to bear the brunt of these invasions. The Kalachuris invaded the kingdom of the Candras also. The mighty Sen dynasty was shaken by muslim invasion led by Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khilji. Just alike, the Somavaṃśī kingdom was weakened by the repeated invasion of the Gaṅgās, Nāgas, and the Kalachuris.

3.3. The Nature of State

Before entering into the main subject matter, a brief look on the nature of state in the concerned region is important, as it will help us to understand how it worked in the growth of urban centres in this phase of History.

In this phase of History, we find that significant ruling personalities were often closely associated with the establishment of the state's regional hegemony, e.g. King Dharmapāla of the Pālas, King Anantavarman Choḍagaṅgā of the Gaṅgās of Orissa.

A decisive characteristic of this phase of state development was the considerable extension of the directly controlled area far beyond the 'natural' frontiers of the original nuclear areas of the early kingdoms.²⁰

The new 'imperial dynasty', after setting up the kingdom by conquest, annexation of neighbouring kingdoms and the initiation of the process of intermediary zones, was soon confronted with the question of enlarging, shifting or re-establishing its capital.

In this phase we find a change in the ideology of the Hindu Kingship. They were elevated from the position of 'great kings' (*mahārāja*) to 'imperial Lords' (*mahārājādhirāja*). The king of the early kingdoms was praised in the prasasti eulogies of their inscriptions, but in an allegorical way.²¹ The kings of the imperial kingdoms, on the other hand, rose more and more to the status of earthly representatives of the tutelary deity of the kingdom (*rāṣṭradevatā*).

Against this brief survey of the political condition and the nature of state of this period, we will now focus on the thriving urban centres of the day.

3.3.1. Bengal

3.3.1.1. Puṇḍravardhan

In the Gupta and Pāla-Sena copper plates, there is copious mention of Puṇḍravardhana bhukti of which Puṇḍravardhana or modern Mahasthan was the capital. It is clearly recorded in the Damodarpur copper plate inscriptions of the time of Kumāragupta I that

Chirātadutta was the provincial viceroy of the province of Puṇḍravardhana bhukti and he was appointed by the emperor himself. The bhukti of Puṇḍravardhana finds mentions in the Pāla inscriptions in various places. Even in the terminal phase of the Sena dynasty, Puṇḍravardhana bhukti is referred to in the Calcutta Sahitya Parishad copper plate inscription of Viśvarūpasena (end of 12th century A.D.).²² The text called *Karatoyā-Māhātmya*²³ deals actually with the topography of Puṇḍravardhana. Many of the referred sites can be located in the adjacent areas of the present village of Mahasthan.²⁴

Puṇḍravardhanabhukti was one of the most distinct politico-administrative units of ancient Bengal. In this regard H.C. Raychaudhury's statement is important.²⁵ He has stated that it seems to have been the biggest administrative division or province of the Gauḍa empire. It extended from the summit of the Himalayas in the north to Khāḍī in the Sundarban region of the south. The Bhāgirathī separated it from the Vardhamāna bhukti in the west.

This ancient province as well as its capital city was eminent in the pre-Christian era also. The Mahasthangarh stone plaque inscription names this place as Pundranagara or Pundanagala and it was probably the only known provincial capital of the Mauryas to the east of Pāṭāliputra.²⁶ That Puṇḍranagara was a prosperous city as early as 3rd century B.C. can be deduced from this inscription. From the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* it is learnt that there was a group of people known as Puṇḍra who lived to the east of Monghyr in Bihar and were associated with the prince who ruled on the banks of the Kośī river. The twelfth century text *Rāmcharitam* by Sandhyākar Nandī located Puṇḍravardhana in Vārendrī or the modern Barind tract of Bengal.²⁷

Two votive inscriptions at Sāñchī record the gifts of the inhabitants of Puṇḍravardhana. Therefore, there is ample evidence to suggest that Puṇḍravardhana was a major urban centre of the subcontinent beginning as early as the 3rd century B.C. and lasted for many centuries significantly. Going through the writings of P.C. Sen,²⁸ we find that the name frequently occurs in the Buddhist literature. In the story of Sumagadhavadana in *Avadānakalpalatās* of Kṣhemendra (eleventh century A.D.), it is told how Buddha travelled from Jetavana to Puṇḍravardhana nagara. In Kalhaṇ's *Rājatarāṅginī*, the wealth of the citizens of Puṇḍravardhana is referred,²⁹ and Hiuen Tsang's account has provided much information.

The site of Mahasthangarh is located about 8 miles to the north of the district town of Bagura. Situated on the west bank of the river Karatoyā, the site is a large and fortified enclosure. It measures 5000 feet from north to south, 4500 feet from east to west and rises to an approximate height of 15 feet above the surrounding plain. At the corner bastions, the rampart rises to a height of 35 feet. The area as a whole has been reduced to agricultural fields though there are a few isolated mounds surrounded by brick ramparts. There are more than 30 mounds of various sizes within a radius of 5 miles from Mahasthangarh. This feature tends to mark the site a prominent one as Nazimuddin Ahmed writes,³⁰

'the present extent of its ruins with its suburbs is unparalleled by any other ancient site in Bengal'.

The Karatoya was once a major river and a twelfth century text named *Karatoyā māhātmyam* (greatness of the Karatoyā) sings the praise of the river and the sacredness of the site of Mahasthan.

'The place is still held sacred by the Hindus and visited by thousands of pilgrim for a bath in the Karatoyā at a certain conjunction of the planets, known as Nārāyaṇ Yoga, which occurs in the month of Poush or December once in about twelve years. A fair is also held here every year, on the last day of the Bengali year about the middle of April'.³¹

The eastern side of the site was protected by the Karatoyā and the other three sides by a moat, the remains of which are still visible. Presently the moat on the south is known as Baranari Khal, that on the west as the Gilatala Khal, on the north is called Kalidaha Sagar-which is an off shoot of an extensive bill of that name. In Bengali Khal means a canal whereas a bil means a swampy tract.

The individual mounds which have been excavated at Mahasthangarh have revealed structure dating not earlier than the late Gupta period. In fact, most of the structures belong to the later periods.

Systematic archaeological excavation of Mahasthangarh was started in 1928-29 under the guidance of K.N. Dikshit of the Archaeological Survey of India. The areas around Jahajghata, Munir Ghon and Bairagir Bhita were explored. Excavation was resumed in 1934-36 at Bairagir Bhita and Govinda Bhita. Excavation was carried out in 1960s by the Pakistan Department of Archaeology around the Mazhar, Parasuramer Prasad, Mankhalir Dhap, Jiyat Kunda and in a part of the northern rampart. In the next phase, excavation was carried out sporadically in parts of east and north ramparts but the final report is yet to be published. Since 1993, Bangladesh-France joint venture is carrying out annual excavation in the place with an intention to bring about a chronology of the site. In 2001, the first interim report on the scientific results of this site was published in Dhaka which provided a detailed stratigraphy of this site from fourth century B.C. to thirteenth century A.D. Since 2001 onwards, excavation is being carried out in the area around the mazar, which is in the south-eastern corner of the ancient city. Several noticeable structures have been unearthed from this place.³²

A 5th century Buddha stone sculpture have been recovered from Vasu Vihara, a Lokeshvara stone sculpture showing blending of Visnu and Avalokitesvara have been salvaged from neighbouring Namuja village, a number of sand-stone door frames, pillars and lintels (datable to 5th-12th century), numerous Buddha bronze sculpture datable to 10th-11th century, a terracotta Surya discovered at Mankhalir Bhita, and numerous other pieces.³³

3.3.1.2. Bangarh

The site identified with ancient Koṭīvarṣa is located in the modern district of South Dinajpur. The ruins are spread over an extensive area covering a large number of mounds of different sizes surrounded by a moat on north, east and south sides, and the river on the (Puṇarbhavā) west itself. From a guesswork done on the area of the town, it seems that the town was 1800 feet in length and 1500 feet in width. The main entrance of this walled city was over the eastern side and remains of the bridge on the moat still exists which once helped people to move from the town to the suburban area.³⁴ The University of Calcutta conducted a brief excavation at this site

during 1938-41 and laid bare five levels of occupation. The site had its core in the form of a citadel surrounded by mud ramparts which dates from the earliest phase of the site. The earliest phase remains uncertain as the excavations could not reach the natural soil.³⁵ The citadel area revealed five cultural phases dating from the time of the Mauryas to the medieval period. The initial phase (the Mauryan period) indicates that the city had a modest beginning in which it probably had a mud rampart wall. The following phase was the Kushāṇa phase (200 BCE- 300 CE) where a brick built wide rampart wall is found with drains, cesspits and residential buildings made of burnt bricks of very large size, showing distinct signs of prosperity and burgeoning urbanism. The excavated materials of the Gupta period are not comparable with the richness and diversity of those belonging to the previous phase i.e. the Kushāṇa phase. Though the late Gupta phase of Bangarh is marked by decadence, particularly in terms of buildings, the Pāla phase (mid-8th century-12th century) in sharp contrast, indicates a picture of efflorescence. This phase is marked by rampart walls, compound walls, residential quarters, temples with ambulatory path and its enclosing walls, damp proof granaries, bathrooms, drains and ring wells which suggests a prosperous condition of the city during this period.³⁶ The 2nd stratum or the Pāla period followed a definite plan so far as building construction is concerned. The size of the bricks varied according to requirement, for instance, wedge shaped bricks were used in ring wells. For the construction of lotus shaped Kuṇḍa (Tr.5), 8¹/₂" x 8¹/₂" bricks were required. The size of the bricks of the ramp, platform and bathroom differed accordingly. In some of the buildings of the Pāla period stone pillars were used, placed on stone basement set on a few courses of bricks, door jamb, door sill and lintel were made of stone and intricately decorated, Bangarh reached a high water mark in lithic art during the Pāla period, as can be understood from the presence of innumerable objects of art at the house of the Mahārāja of Dinajpur and elsewhere. Apart from plastic art in stone, Bangarh was equally noted for terracotta art. The Pāla period antiquities from Bangarh present a good collection of different motifs in bricks used for the buildings, the motif comprised of the conventional lotus, dentil, line and wave, lotus, petals, creeper, stepped pyramid, creeper and leaf and likewise various other motifs. These decorative bricks were essentially used for the cornices, brackets and mouldings of the buildings.³⁷ Bangarh saw stone and terracotta go hand in hand for the art expression in Bengal. Large sized terracotta plaques were used for the decoration of the walls and facades of the temples. These terracotta plaques bore various images usually depicting the flora and fauna of Bengal. Terracotta was also used for making iconic figures. As goes with pottery, thanks to human and natural agencies, evidence of its existence is meagre at this stratum. But remains of colossal or storage pottery reflects their utility at this age. Shell and glass were used for making bangles and other ornaments. Coins are absent in this period. But people lived lavishly in brick houses of finely finished walls with spacious doorways, the same being provided with door jambs, sills and lintels. Apart from bricks and stones, woods may have been used for building purposes (as beam etc.), though evidence of its existence is scarce.³⁸

The site of Bangarh yielded several important pillars, architectural stones and images and these are at present found at the Dinajpur Rājbarī. Mr. Dikshit while visiting the place in 1921-22 picked up a fine terracotta head (height 9") of the early Pāla period from a modern Śiva temple of Bangarh.³⁹ A stone image of Śadāśiva with an inscription of Gopāla III is also among the discoveries from this site. The image is now housed in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.

The huge mound of over 140 acres and nearly 1,000-acre area in the vicinity came to the special attention of T.J. Vaidya, Superintending Archaeologist of ASI's Kolkata circle in 2009. Under his supervision, excavation was conducted for two years and various stratas of History, starting from the pre-Mauryan to Pala period was unearthed from the ruins. During the excavation, archaeologists have discovered seven bastions towards the north-eastern side. A huge moat encircling the entire fortified area was revealed. There is evidence of the moat being connected to a tank and the tank being connected to the nearby river Punarbhava. Excavations have also revealed an elaborate drainage system as well as a water supply system, providing evidence of Bangarh being a unique town.⁴⁰

Bangarh or ancient Koṭivarṣa finds mention in various books such as in Hemchandra's *Abhidhāṇachintāmaṇi*, Puruṣottama's *Trikāṇḍaśeṣ* in various names such as Devīkoṭ, Bāṅpur, Umāban and Śoṇitpur. According to lexicographers, the glory of Koṭivarṣa was in no way less than cities of the repute of Kauśāmbī, Prayāg, Mathurā, Ujjayinī, Kāṇyakubja, Pāṭalīputra and etc. In *Vāyupurāṇa*-Koṭivarṣa nagaram is mentioned. In Yādavaprakāś's *Vaijayantī* of 11th century AD, Koṭivarṣa and Devīkoṭ are synonymous terms. In the *Kalpasūtra* of Bhadrabāhu,⁴¹ a class of Jainas of eastern India is mentioned as Koṭivarṣiya (Koṭivarshiya). A city named Śoṇitpur finds mention in the Vishṇu Purāṇa,⁴² Śrīmad-Bhāgavata⁴³ and in Nārāyaṇa's commentary on verse 32 of canto I of Śrī Harsha's *Naiṣādhā Charita*. The Gupta period inscriptions hail Koṭivarṣa as the headquarters of a district as well as a district (Vishaya) itself which formed part of Puṇḍravardhana bhukti. During the Pāla period, Koṭivarṣa was reduced to the status of a Vishaya only.⁴⁴ In the *Rāmcharita* of Sandhyākar Nandī,⁴⁵ Śoṇitpura or Koṭivarṣa is mentioned as a prosperous and magnificent city. This city remained occupied till the coming of the Turks in 13th century AD. The invaders named the place as Devī-koṭ or Dev-koṭ and it possesses some muslim records dated between 13th to 16th centuries. According to Dr. Bloch, the place was an important frontier post in the Muslim period.⁴⁶ The Koṭivarṣa of Hemchandra and the names of Bāṅpur, Balirājputra, Bāṅnāsūr and Ushā-Aniruddha mentioned in Purāṇas are all names of present Bangarh in Dinajpur district. The remains of the prosperous town can still now be found at present Bangarh and its neighbouring villages. Two inscriptions, one of Kamboja dynasty and the other of Pāla dynasty, numerous images and ruins of temples and royal palace, broken stones and bricks, broken stone pillars, foundation stone, temple articles of various sizes etc. are all the antiquities discovered from the ruin scattered over a large area. Sandhyākar Nandī at the end of eleventh century or at the beginning of twelfth century eulogized in a descriptive manner the hustling and bustling of the temples of the town, including the priests and devotees and of the lakes smiling with full bloomed lotuses.

3.3.1.3. Bhitargarh

This site is located around 16 km north-east of Panchagarh in modern Bangladesh. The site is actually transnational because portions of its outer enclosure on the northwest, the north and the northeast lie in Jalpaiguri district, West Bengal, India. It is believed that this ancient fort city was ruled by Prithu Rājā but the time period of his reign has still not been determined. Anglo-Irish author and civil servant Robert Montgomery Martin in his book 'Purāṇiya, Rongopoor and Assam' writes that Prithu Rājā governed Bhitargarh before the Pāl dynasty. Recent excavations also suggest that Bhitargarh was an independent city state governed by a sovereign administration between the 6th and 10th centuries.

In an attempt to learn more about the biggest fortified ancient city of the country, extending over an area of about 25 square km, excavation was being carried out at the site since 2008 to date under the able guidance of Dr. Shahnaj Husne Jahan who led a team of students from the University of Liberal Art Bangladesh (ULAB) in a series of archaeological explorations, research and excavations of Bhitargarh. Findings suggest that the Bhitargarh fortification was built in the sixth or the seventh century. What makes Bhitargarh exclusive is its well-planned internal lay-out and public architecture! Bhitargarh was an urban settlement as during excavation, it was found enclosed within four concentric quadrangles, surrounded by ramparts and moats. This fort city, built on important trade routes had trade links with Tibet, Bhutan, China as well as with West Bengal, Bihar, Sikkim and Puṇḍravardhana. Sahnaj thinks that two rivers Karatoya and Tista played a very important role in the trade of the ancient city-state.⁴⁷

3.3.1.4. Khana-Mihirer Dhipi

The site (district North 24-parganas) is situated at a distance of 37 km north-east of Calcutta. The chronological span of the site ranged possibly from pre-Maurya to post-Gupta times. The remains of the pre-Gupta levels indicate that the structures had been of mud, bamboo and timber with tiles for the roof. It was in the Gupta phase of occupation that burnt bricks were introduced. The remains of a stupendous polygonal brick structure belonging to the Gupta period was brought to light by excavation conducted at this site by the Archaeological department of Calcutta University in 1956-57. The excavation, on the basis of the fully exposed building complex and the re-entrant angles, concluded that it was a temple. Unlike the occupational pattern of the sites of other parts of the country, the Gupta phase marked the beginning of meaningful structural activities at this site.

The Pāla period revealed abundant signs of prosperous habitation. The western side of the upper part of the massive wall of the polygonal temple built during the earlier period underwent repair and renovation with bricks of different sizes and sometimes ordinary bricks being replaced in with decorative bricks.⁴⁸ The construction of a rough and massive brick structure was also exposed during the excavation. This structure had its foundation starting at a lower level and was found covering a building of the earlier period. A small brick temple 5.94 m square with a central pit showing descending off sets to the paved floor, 40 centimetre square in area was another important structural discovery of this site. These Pāla relics along with others makes it certain that this site enjoyed urban status during the Pāla period. Post Pāla relics have also been noticed, but they are too few to arrive at any conclusion.⁴⁹

3.3.1.5. Savar

This place, situated about 24 km north-west of Dhaka metropolis on the Dhaka-Aricha road, at the confluence of Bangshi and Dhaleshwari rivers, was important in the early period exclusively for its river trade. Savar had a long and glorious past and early human occupation took place at Savar right from the 7th-8th century A.D. onwards. Local legends associate one Raja Harish Chandra with this area.⁵⁰

The old section of modern Savar located on the banks of river Bangshī is linked with the large waterways of Bangladesh, and still is commercially important as it draws a respectable number of traffic. The old river bank, bazaar deals mostly in timber, rice, pulses, etc. and a preliminary investigation suggests that in earlier times, this place was commercially linked with far off places such as Barishal, Sylhet and Rajshahi. A total of 13 ancient Archaeological sites have been discovered at Savar. These are Raja Harish Chandrer Bari, Rajsan, Kotbari, Gandaria, Karnapada, Kalma, Sulia, Dagar Mura, Mathbari, Madanpur, Fulbadi, Konda and Pathalia (Jahangirnagar University Campus).⁵¹ The cultural remains discovered from these sites are pottery, brick stupas and monasteries, bronze images, gold and silver coins, iron spear-heads and a dao (iron-knife), stonequerns and mullers, terracotta plaques, weights, dabbers, balls and decorated bricks. The potteries of these sites represent red, black and grey wares. The common shapes are bowl dishes and small to medium sized pots and jars. The ceramics are both plain and painted. The pottery is decorated with black slips on red wares and painted horizontal bands and geometric designs on body and neck. A few potsherds have also been found decorated with mat and cord impressions.⁵² (Banglapedia).

The ancient occupation of Savar can be proved by the still surviving Kotbari mound, which is largely eroded now but stood, even in 1925, up to 25' high in places. Now only potsherds characterized it as an ancient occupational area.⁵³

There is another ancient occupational area located close to the modern channel of the river, about a mile to the north along the river and known as Mathbari. While clearing, this land revealed ancient bricks and potsherds. About a mile to the east of the occupational area is situated the Buddhist monastic remains of Savar. The physiography of the Savar country side is somewhat undulating and covered by reddish clay belonging to the Madhupur-Pleistocene uplands. There are numerous śāl trees and jackfruit trees around. The second Buddhist establishment at Savar, known as Harish Chandra Rajar Bari, is located in Majidpur village, about 2 furlongs to the east of the Savar bus stand market. The present height of the mound is about 18'-19' and measures 160' by 130'. Archaeological excavations have been conducted recently at this site. The Rajasan mound to the east of Harish Chandra Rājār Barī, was explored by some local antiquarians in 1913, leading to the discovery of a large number of terracotta plaques containing the images of Buddha. In 1925-26, the Archaeological survey of India unearthed traces of four structures in the area, along with some lintels made of terracotta.

An inscribed Vishnu image along with a number of votive reliefs with images of Buddha were found. The evidences can be dated to seventh-eighth century AD. N.K. Bhattasali opines that there was a Buddhist monastery at Rājāsan.

Another mound which has revealed a 126'6" square stupa complex is the Rājbaṭī mound. Excavations conducted in 1989-90 has also revealed a silver 'Harikela' coin, a gold coin and a number of Buddhist bronze figures. This mound can also be dated to seventh-eighth century AD on the basis of archaeological finds.⁵⁴

The ruins from Savar have unearthed six post-Gupta coins. Two of the coins bear the legend *Śrī Krama* and the third coin figures the legend *Sudhanya*. These coins do not help much to reconstruct the political history of Savar, rather two inscription reported from this place are much more useful for the purpose. The first one, found incised on a burnt brick fragment, contains the name of a king named Harish Chandra Pal. The second inscription was found by Bhattasali in a Hindu temple and was issued by a king Mahendra who listed his genealogy here. The genealogy provides the information that Dhīmantasena, a son of the kind Bhīmsena was worshipper of the Buddha, and after a quarrel with his brother, he went to a place known as Bhāvaline where he established a kingdom upto the Himālayas and set up his capital at Sambhar or Modern Sabhar. Ranadhīrsena's son was Harish Chandra Sen who was a saintly king and spent most of his life in Buddhist monasteries. His son Mahendra founded a math in the year 791 shakabda (equivalent to 869 AD).⁵⁵ (Banglapedia) It may be that during the troubled phase of the Pāla kingdom, one of the member chose the secluded and forested area of Savar to set up a new kingdom.

The most important ruler of Candra dynasty, Sri-Chandra (c.AD925-75), issued the Madanpur copper plate charter from Vikrampur, where the gift of a plot of land to one Brahmin Sukradeva by Sri-Chandra is recorded. The plate was first edited and partly translated by R.G. Basak and was later commented by D.C. Sircar.⁵⁶ The area where the donated plot was situated was called Vangasagar-Sambhandariyaka in Yolamandala (mandala, an administrative unit smaller than a province) included within Pundravardhanabhukti.⁵⁷

Now it is necessary to analyze the connotation of Vaṅgasāgar Sambhāṇḍāriyaka. According to Ranabir Chakravarti, the term Sambhāṇḍāriyaka may stand for a place where items (bhāṇḍāra) could be appropriately stored. The stored items may logically be associated with commercial activities at a given centre of exchange. This type of exchange centres could also have offered warehousing facilities (sambhāṇḍāra). The Sambhāṇḍāriyaka, being a non rural centre of commerce may correspond to puṭabhedana, which literally means a place where lids (of merchandise) were broken (by merchant for sale). Therefore, we find that a puṭabhedana and a sambhāṇḍāriyaka performed similar functions of a particular type of trade centre which offered facilities of warehousing of commodities.⁵⁸ The other component of the term Vaṅgasāgar denotes the sea of Vaṅga. Ancient Vaṅga covered the central part of deltaic Bengal (Dhaka-Vikrampur-Faridpur region) alongwith occasional inclusion of coastal areas variously known as Vaṅgāla and Anuttaravaṅga.⁵⁹

3.3.1.6. Achinghat

This site in the Bagmara P.S. of Rajshahi district, in Bangladesh has revealed traces of ancient brick built roads and fragments of Brahmanical images were found. It was quite a popular place in the eleventh-twelfth century AD.⁶⁰

3.3.1.7. Vijaynagar

The village of Vijayanagar in the Godagiri P.S. of Rajshahi district, is a neighbour and lies east to Kumarpur, which again is about 1½ miles to the south-west of Deopara. The village Vijaynagar is said to contain a large number of ruins and has been identified with the Sena capital Vijaynagar. In the words of Mukhlesur Rahman: the ruins of Vijaynagara are truly extensive. During the construction of a government poultry farm at the site, traces of later construction were found to have superimposed those of a much earlier period. From the site has been collected a large number of architectural numbers, such as pillars(both sculptured and plain), columned bases, as well as sculptures.⁶¹

3.3.1.8. Nawadah-Rahanpur

The place (nearRohanpur P.S., Gomastapur P.S.) on the banks of Puṅarbhavā holds a significant place in History as known from Mukhlesur Rahman. To express it in his words: "A place of considerable antiquity, Nawadah, with its adjoining areas, measures about 15 squares miles, bearing traces of extensive ruins, suggesting of its having been the site of a large city. No monument at this place has survived. There are instead brick bats, potsherds and innumerable and derelict tanks. The present Rohanpur town appears to have been built on the site of an ancient city, most probably as a part of Nawadah is testified by old bricks and potsherds, found underneath the surface almost everywhere. The city extended at one time up to Prashadpur, 4 miles to the southwest of Nawadah and was big enough for the capital of Lakshmaṇasena, mentioned as Navadvīp by Minhāz. A large number of Hindu sculptures of tenth-twelfth century AD has been collected from this place."⁶²

3.3.1.9. Trivenī

Situated on the confluence of Yamuna-Saraswati and Bhagirathi, this city was once among the chief pilgrimage centres of ancient Bengal. Niharranjan Ray contends that the city earned fame as an important trade and religious centre, right from the time of Senas to at least the time of the Turk.⁶³ At present the Sarasvatībed is dry, the Yamunā is also a matter of scrutiny. But whatever it may be, the past glory of Trivenī as a pilgrimage centre still remains, though in the form of a remote village.

3.3.1.10. Vijayapura

In the Pavandūta of Dhoyī, an epic description of Vijayapura is furnished.⁶⁴ [Ray,298]. This place is referred to as the royal encampment (Skandhāvāra) and the capital of Lakshmaṇasena. According to the description, it appears that the city stood on or near the Ganges,⁶⁵ [Ray,298] and was located within a reasonable distance from the point where the Yamunā and the Sarasvatī emanate from the Bhagirathī. M.Chakravarti has identified Vijaypurī with Nadiyā.⁶⁶ Some identify Vijayapura with Navadvīp, Nadiāh or Vijaynagar of Rajshahi district.⁶⁷ [Ray,298].

3.3.1.11. Bhūrīśreṣṭhikā

Śrīdhara in his Nyāya-Kandali (tenth century AD) refers to Bhūrīśreṣṭhikā as a centre of learning along with a seat of Śreṣṭhīns or merchants and bankers.⁶⁸ This place name also occurs in the Prabodhacandrodaya of Krishṇamiśra (Act II, 49) of eleventh century AD and in the Satya Pīṭer Kathā of Bhārat Chandra Rāyā (18th century AD). Bhūrīśreṣṭhikā has been identified with the present village of Bhursut on the right bank of the Damodar in the Hooghly district.⁶⁹

3.3.1.12. Vikrampur

Vikrampur served as an important Jayaskandhāvār of Candra, Varman, Sen and Deva rulers. This city finds mention in the Rāmpāl copper plate of Śrīcandra;⁷⁰ the Belava copper plate of Bhojavarman;⁷¹ the Barrackpore inscription of Vijayasena⁷² and it was from this city that one inscription of Vijaysena, one of Ballālsena and five of Lakshmaṇasena (in the first six years of his reign) was issued. The queen of Vijaysena named Virāṭ performed a tulapurusha mahādānayaṅga from the Vikrampur Jayaskandhāvār. Therefore, it can be deduced that Jayaskandhāvārs were not merely temporary royal camps.⁷³

The ancient city of Vikrampur is represented by most probably the ruins of Rāmpāl, now a village in the Vikrampur pargaṇā of the Dacca district of Bangladesh. Rāmpāla is situated near the famous Vajrayoginī and Paikpara village in the Munshiganj town under Munshiganj block. Over 17 to 18 villages stand over the ruins of this city covering an area of fifteen square miles.⁷⁴ A famous site near Rāmpāl is Ballālbaṭī, a mud fort (900 sq) with 200 ft wide ditch around it. A large number of tanks, mostly from the pre-muslim period are still found at Rāmpāl. But no monument of ancient Vikrampur has survived, what has survived is a large number of temple ruins. N.K. Bhattashali(1929) observed the ruins of thirty temples in the neighbourhood of Rāmpāla alone. These ruins in many cases exhibit splendid sculptured pieces, one such unique find in the sub-continent being a sura-sundari or a divine nymph (c. eleventh century AD) hewn out of a long wooden pillar and forming a part of a column from Qazi Kasba (now in the Dhaka museum). While engaged in a clearance work at Raghurampur, R.D. Banerjee in 1924-25 revealed a bathing ghat and some structures. At a temple site called Dhīpur, Bhattasali exposed the foundations of some buildings.⁷⁵

The geo-morphological location of this place is important. To the north of Rāmpāl is river Ichāmātī which has now lost its separate identity and has joined the Dhaleswarī river. A rampart wall can still be seen standing parallelly to the old course of the Ichhāmātī. To the east lies the old course of the Brahmaputra. That this river once flowed touching the eastern fringes of the city can be proved by the old course of the Brahmaputra. There are two moats lying on the western and southern sides, these two are known as Mirquadim canal and maquhati canal respectively. The place was probably a low land and for purpose of elevating it, numerous big and small tanks were excavated. In the large enclosed city, remains of the royal palace on an elevated level is prominent, local people call it Ballālbaṭī, though this name reflects Ballālsena's memory, the place Rāmpāl denotes the Pāla king Rāmpāl who was perhaps responsible for the fame of the city, if not its foundation. In the northern most as well as the southernmost boundary of the city are two gateways named Kapalduar and Kachkiduar respectively. Traces of the main road is seen emerging from the dried up bed of Ichāmātī and stretching up to the southern boundary of the city, dividing it thereby into two halves. Many streets bifurcated from this main street towards the east and west and touched the eastern and western boundary. Traces of these paths are still present. The name of Vikrampur Jayaskandhāvār finds mention from the time of the Candras, (from the first half of the eleventh century).⁷⁶

3.3.1.13. Samandar

In the Arabic accounts, a port named Samandar finds mention in the country 'Dhm' (it is pronounced as Dhaum and probably refers to the kingdom of the famous Pāla king Dharmapāla). The name Samandar appears to be named after samudra or sea, which implies its location being on or near the coastal regions in Bengal.⁷⁷ Al-Idrisi⁷⁸ on the basis of the accounts of Ibn Khurdadbeh (C. AD 882) has informed us that an island lying close to Samandar was visited by various types of merchants. The island of Ibn Khurdadbeh's accounts has been identified with Sandwīp island and the port Samandar, with its location near the Sandwīp island, may logically be identified with a port in or near modern Chittagong. Both Ibn Khurdābāh and Al Idrisi are highly in praise of Samandar, the situation of the same according to Al Idrisi being on a Khawar or creek like formation.⁷⁹ The situation of Samandar on a khawar made it conducive for ingress and egress of vessels.

Ibn Batutā during his visit to Bengal in the first half of the fourteenth century (1334 AD) arrived at a port on the Bengal coast named Suḍkhāwān. Suḍkhāwān is described as being very close to the great sea and that Ibn Batutā undertook a northern journey from Suḍkhāwān by a boat along the Blue river (most probably the river Meghnā). The description of Suḍkhāwān strongly suggests its location near Chittagong.⁸⁰ Samandar and Suḍkhāwān of Ibn Batutā's account are identical as their location suggests. Both of them were situated in the Samataṭa Harikela region of early Bengal. From the regular mention of Samandar as a major port in Arabic texts, a little room is left for doubt about the flourishing maritime trade on the Bengal coast in the early medieval period.

Arabic texts also establish Samandar's sea-borne contacts with Uranshin (Orissa coast), Kañja (Corjeeveram in the northern part of the coronandel coast) and Serendib (Sri Lanka).⁸¹ Ibn Batutā, having planned to come to Bengal from the Maldives hired a ship, and

reached Suḍkhāwān via Serendīb and mālabar (coromandel coast).⁸² On his return journey, he sailed from Sunurkāwān (Sonargaon, 24 km from Dhaka) for Jawa (Java) in a Chinese Junk. Thus in the fourteenth century,⁸³ the Bengal coast was incorporated into the overseas network with maritime south east Asia, in addition to its trade with the Maldives. The evidences from the account of Ibn Khurdādbāh and Al-Idrisi and also from the travelogues of Ibn Batutā (author of *Rihālā*), one can deduce that this port rose impressively from ninth to the fourteenth century and reached its zenith in the sixteenth century.⁸⁴

3.3.1.14. Ramāvati

This city finds reference in the Manahali grant of Madanapāla⁸⁵ and the *Rāmcharita* of Sandhyākarnandīn.⁸⁶ In Verse 31, Canto III of the *Rāmcharita*, a glowing description of the city is presented as “carrying an immense mass of gems” and as “liked by all as the city of Gods and wealthy residents”. Again in verse 48, we are told that “having occupied that country (Varendri)”, Rāmapāla: “reached the city of Ramāvati which was unassailable and appeared like Alakā.....”.

According to H.P. Sastri, it was Rāmapāla who founded the city of Ramāvati. In verse 29 of Canto III, it is said that Rāmapāla built the city in order to rival Amarāvati.⁸⁷ Ramāvati is identified with the ruins of the village of Amriti in the district of Malda. Ramāvati was established by Rāmpāla, the son of Vīgrahapāla III.

Ramāvati was situated on the confluence of Gaṅgā-Mahānandā nearby Lakshmaṇāvati town. Today Ramāvati’s remains are found scattered near Lakshmaṇāvati’s ancient building ruins. But from Sandhyākār’s description it is known that Ramāvati was a prosperous town.⁸⁸

3.3.1.15. Lakshmaṇāvati

During the last years of the Sena rule, Lakshmaṇasena established a large city named Lakshmaṇāvatinear Ramāvati (known as Gaur-Laknauti by Muslim historians). This town was spread over 14/15 miles on the banks of Ganges and situated on the Gaṅgā-Mahānandā confluence about 25 miles from Rajmahal. The ancient city has been identified with the ruins of Gauḍa in the Malda-Laknauti. Both Gaṅgā and Mahānandā had changed their courses and shifted to a great distance. The ruins of Gauḍa-Laknauti still remains and we can have an idea of the prosperity of ancient Lakshmaṇāvati from the ruins. From Gauḍa-Lakshmaṇāvati, the capital was shifted to Pandua. But still the pomper of Gauḍa-Laknauti remained till the reign of Humayun-Akbar. The Mughals renamed it Jannatabad. As Gaṅgā and Mahānandā changed their courses, Laknauti turned into an unhealthy marshy land and was abandoned at the end of 16th century.⁸⁹ But whether the city was founded by Lakshmaṇasena or his immediate predecessor is a question under speculation.⁹⁰

3.3.1.16. Dhanora

This site in district Rajshahi in Bangladesh, is situated about a mile and half to the west of Madaripur. Of the remains, a number of tanks exist (some of them of fairly large dimensions) along with a number of mounds, two of which, e.g. the Rājbarī mound and the Buruz mound, are quite conspicuous being some 8’ to 10’ and 12’ to 15’ respectively above the level of the surrounding land. Investigations made in this locality has revealed ancient routes that connected old cities and sites. The remains of two ancient embanked roads which acted as important thoroughfares in those days, were found in the neighbourhood of Dhanora. One of these is an old Muhammadan road which passes from Gaur to Dacca and Sonargaon. This road might have existed from pre-muhammadan days. Local people believe that it went to Mahasthan or Puṇḍravardhana towards the east. A number of ancient sites between Madaripur and Nachoul are tapped by this road, the prominent among which is Paotal which was the find spot of the black basalt door jamb with bold serpentine ornamentation, now preserved in the Rajshahi museum. Another old embanked road runs from Dhanora to Rajapur, near Thakur Manda. This place too has yielded extensive ruins. It seems that Dhanora was an important settlement site in pre-Muhammadan and Muhammadan days.⁹¹

3.3.1.17. Garh of Nagrai

Situated about eight miles from Malda, on the left bank of the river Kalindī, a large mound overhanging the river rises steeply to a height of 45 to 50 feet above the level of the water during the winter months. For its size, it is conspicuous from a long way off and is locally

known as Garh, Kanthal or Pul of Nagrai. The existing ruins are spread over an area of one and half miles, though large portions of it have already been washed away by the river. The vertical section of the mound as exposed by the action of the river shows that about 4’ to 5’ below the highest point of the mound occurs a stratum full of bricks, potsherds and other small antiquities of pre-Muhammadan date.⁹² The level of the mound gradually descends elsewhere with the result that the antiquity bearing stratum is almost on the surface. The extreme south east of the mound has shown signs of early Muhammadan occupation, as pieces of painted and glazed bricks are to be seen in the vicinity of a Muhammadan tomb. This site is interesting as it is situated in the vicinity of Gauḍa and Pāṇḍua. The artifacts exposed resemble it as an early medieval urban centre.

3.3.1.18. Kankandighi

This site is situated near modern Diamond Harbour (South 24-Parganas) and the ruins are spread over Raydighi, South Vishnupur, Khadi, Mathurapur, Kashipur, Govardhanpur and Chhatrabhog, apart from Kankandighi. Very recently, giving special attention to the antiquity of the place, the Department of Archaeology of the University of Calcutta, under the able guidance of Archaeologist Durga Basu, have started excavating the site to bring out a clear cut statigraphy of the site.

Archaeologists of repute after exploring the site have opined that the site enjoyed a very prosperous condition during the early medieval times. Situated on the banks of Mani river, the site has exhibited Buddhist Tara deity made of stone as well as a navagraha figure on a stone plaque of the door frame of a temple. Looking at the large scale use of stone during a particular time bracket (9th-12th century), it is assumed that stone was carried to this place through waterways and that master sculptors also made their way to Kankandighi through waterway. According to the ex-Director of the Archaeological Survey of India, eastern zone, Professor Gautam Sengupta, the particular site must have been a very prosperous one in the early medieval ages because the amount of stone used for building purposes needed a powerful political and economic state structure. But he wants to take the help of contemporary literature and inscriptions to establish his viewpoint.

According to maritime expert Swaroop Bhattacharya, in the early medieval ages, there were two types of boats which sailed in the Bhagirathi. The smaller one was *merely* and the bigger one was *goloiya*. He thinks that both *merly* and *goloiya* carried cargos to Kankandighi.

The site, according to some historians, finds mention in the Khalimpur inscription of Dharmapala. We also gather some information of land grants and the condition of agriculture in those days in this area from three copper plate grants of Lakshmanasen.

The inscription of Dommanapala, a local feudatory of the Senashave been found here. The Archaeological importance of the place was first brought to notice by Kalidas Dutta of Joypur, Majilpur in the first part of the twentieth century.⁹³

3.3.2. Assam

3.3.2.1. Āmbarī

Salvage digging was carried out at Ambari (Gauhāī, district Kāmṛūp) in Assam by the Department of Anthropology, University of Gauhati in collaboration with the State Department of Archaeology.⁹⁴ The site is located on the bank of an old channel of the Brahmaputra, the present course of the river being one kilometer to the south of it.

Salvage operations revealed over forty stone sculptures from the second layer. Images of Vishṇu, Śūryā, Nandī, Durgā and Agnī with Svāhā and Svādha and līngas and yonis of various sizes, stylistically ranging from ninth-tenth century AD had been unearthed. A stone structure of which the foundations were made of dressed stone blocks of various sizes ranging in elevation from 60x50 cm to 47x30 cm belonged perhaps to the same layer.

Excavation also revealed a brick structure, pierced by a conduit, showing a brick paved drain, with side walls of dressed stone blocks and partly dressed stone cover slab. To the north-west of the structure was found a burnt earth patch indicating its probable use as a fire place. A noteworthy brick structure, about 50 cm in thickness was partly exposed to the west of it. Some structures of flat bricks, large quantities of tiles and drain pipes were also obtained from the area.

On the basis of surface colours, potteries have been grouped into five classes; i) Kaoline white; ii) buff; iii) red; iv) grey and v) dark grey to black. All these potteries were wheel made. A fragment of Chinese celadon ware sherds of local glazed ware, showing green, silver, cream and red surface colours were also found. Among other finds include a highly finished shallow dish with a flared rim, a cornucopia shaped lamp stand, beads and bangles variously of terracotta and glass, terracotta figurines, a terracotta seal showing a human head, an iron arrow head, a few rings of copper and iron and a small copper coin minted by the East India Company.

On the basis of pottery, four phases of occupation have been determined, the period ranging from the early centuries of the Christian era to medieval period. The period of our concern is phase III which ranges from circa seventh to thirteenth century AD. The site was an early medieval urban centre of Assam, which was situated on the banks of the Brahmaputra.

3.3.2.2. Durjaya

It was Ratnapāla who built his capital on the banks of the Brahmaputra, most probably somewhere in Kāmṛūpa. He fortified the same and named it Durjaya or impregnable. Brahmapāla shifted his capital from Haruppeśvara to Durjaya, which was further fortified and strengthened by Ratnapāla.⁹⁵ In the Bargaon grant of Ratnapāla, it is described as “though the capital was crowded with a dense forest as it were, of arms of his brave soldiers who were hankering after the plunder of the camps of all enemies, yet was it fit to be inhabited by wealthy people (merchants). In it the disc of the sun was hidden from the view by the thousands of plastered turrets, which are rendered still whiter by the nectar like smiles of the love drunk fair damsels standing on them. It is adorned by learned men, religious preceptors and poets who have made it their place of resort-Like the cloth which protects the king’s broad chest, its boundaries were encompassed by a rampart, furnished with a fence strong like that used for the game birds of the Sakas, fit to cause chagrin to the king of Gurjara, to give fever to the heads of the untameable elephants of the chief of Gauḍa (Gauḍendra), to act like bitumen in the earth to the Lord of Kerala, to strike awe into the Bahikas and Taikas, to cause discomfiture to the master of the Deccan country (Dakshinātya). It is rendered beautiful by the river Lauhitya- such is the town in which the Lord of Prāḡjyotiṣa took up his residence and which he called by the appropriate name Durjaya”.⁹⁶

3.3.2.3. Kāmarūpanagar

Scholars hold different opinion regarding the location of Kāmṛūpanagar. N.N. Vasu, who places it in Rangpur, has opined that in order to save the kingdom from the wrath of Shan and other non-Aryan tribes in the east and from the Gauḍas in the west, Dharmapala (of the Pala dynasty of Assam) removed his capital towards the west.⁹⁷ According to Bhattacharya, Dharmapāla and Jayapāla were liberally inclined towards the people of Śrāvasti (Puṇḍravardhana).⁹⁸ K.L. Barua located Kāmarūpanagar at North Guwahati. (Dr. P.C. Choudhury also thinks alike).⁹⁹ According to Sivananda Sharma,¹⁰⁰ Kāmarūpanagar may be placed in the ruins of Balujhora Mouza in

the west Garo hills district bordering Dhubri district of Assam. This city continued as the capital since Dharmapāla's reign till the latter part of the 13th century AD. The seat of Government was transferred to Kamtapur after this period.

3.3.3. Orissa

3.3.3.1. Suvarṇapur

Identified with modern Sonepur in the Bolangir district of Orissa, it was the capital of the founder of the Somavaṁsī dynasty, Janamejaya, from where he issued his land grants.¹⁰¹

3.3.3.2. Vṅitapur

Yayāti I, the next Somavaṁsī king who ruled from c.A.D. 922-955, shifted his capital from Suvarṇapur to Vṅitapura. He issued his earlier charters from the aforementioned city but the later charters in his twenty fourth and twenty eighth regnal years were issued from Yayātinagar. Yayāti I renamed the city of Vṅitapur to Yayātinagar, after his own name, Pandit Binayak Misra has identified Vṅitapur with Binka, about 20 miles from Sonepur, situated on the river Mahānadī. Ancient remains of the town indicate that Binka was the capital of the Somavaṁsīs.¹⁰²

3.3.3.3. Abhiṇava Yayātinagar

We learn about this city from the Madala Pañjī, the temple chronicle of Jagannāth at Purī. This text mentions Abhiṇava Yayātinagara in connection with the events stated to have taken place during the reign of the Gaṅgā king Anaṅga Bhīma III. This city was the capital of the Bhaumakaras under the name of Virajā. Identified with modern Jajpur situated in the Cuttack district, this city was chosen as capital by the Somavaṁsīs as successors of the Bhaumakaras. In Dhoyi's Pavanadūtam, the wind messenger is asked to proceed to Suhma from Yayātinagarī. The latter has been identified with Abhiṇava Yayātinagar of Orissa,¹⁰³ since Orissa and Suhma or modern Midnapur form contiguous territories.

3.3.3.4. Maragoda

This site situated in the district of Kālāhaṇḍī of Orissa, revealed structures with a drainage system datable to c.11th –c.12th century AD. Through trial trenching of the mounds, the lower portion of a ruined sand stone temple of Siva was also exposed. The temple, dated to c. twelfth century AD, have yielded a beautiful Kārtikeya image and a copper coin of Kalachuṛi period.¹⁰⁴

Exploration in the Maragoda valley and the Sunabeda plateau brought to light four important sites rich in historical and cultural antiquities. The sites are as follows:

- a) Jumlagarh near Kharaldhas fall of the Jonk river;
- b) Trisul mound 10 kms from Godhas on the left bank of the Jonk at the slope of the Trisul hill;
- c) The Mahal mound; and
- d) The Ranimahal mound.

The site of Jumlagarh was the seat of political power of south Kośala in the sixth-seventh century AD. Excavations at Mahal mound revealed a double storeyed building having twelve rooms of different dimensions.¹⁰⁵ On the basis of evidences obtained, the building is taken for a court house of the early medieval period. The dias meant for the judges (Vyāvahāraks) had a back wall designed in a weavy semicircular manner and having decorated with six marlon symbols. Similar symbols are noticed in the Ananta Gumpha cave of the Khaṇḍagiri hills and also in the Paraśurāmeshvara temple, Bhuvaneshvar. A rectangular hall existed in front of the dias (measuring 6.10m x 4.60m), probably meant for the persons presenting the cases. The court room was on the first floor and there were provisions to reach it directly. Two side chambers, in one of them a small image of four armed Viṣṇu (25 cm high) along with a pedestal was found and in the other a small plaque having a lotus symbol, were maintained with religious sanctity. It seems that these sacred chambers were used for the purpose of the swearing of the under trials. The building had two prison cells for culprits under trial. These cells had high walls, no entrance and were without any provision for light and air. Also bronze anklets for chaining the feet were found. A copper coin of the Kalachuri King Jājalladeva (AD 1090-1120) was recovered from one of the chambers of the court building and three pieces of heavy iron staff were unearthed from the guard room in front of the court building.

At Trisūl mound, the first three tiers were systematically unearthed, the third floor being about 90m from the bed of the river. A beautiful brick temple was found perched on the first two ridges, the main shrine along with the porch on the second ridge and the approach path along with some other chambers being on the first ridge. The Garbha-griha did not consist of any image, except the Śaktipīṭha. The entrance to the sanctum was marked by beautiful stone pillars.

The second ridge exposed residential buildings built on a square plan. The building lied to the left of the temple. The rooms of the building were single bedded, arranged around a big square hall and exposed interesting articles including ancient coins, one sword, precious stones, iron buckles for horse or elephant were found from these chambers. Another beautiful temple was unearthed in the third ridge along with extensive residential buildings.¹⁰⁶ The rooms were finely built and arranged in an L-shaped manner. An image was found enshrined on a beautiful pedestal (1.25m high) inside the sanctum of the temple. The image is of a Goddess who is two armed and stands in an archer's pose facing right. She is mounted on a lion who is facing left. An inscription incised on the pedestal in the script of the fifth century AD reads thus '*Maheśvarī Bhavade*'. A stone seal bearing the name '*Dhīmīteśvara*' is found in one of the chambers in the residential buildings. The upper part of an iron sacrificial post has been found. The monastery consisted of temples, residential buildings and recreation ground. It was a gigantic complex built in five tiers. The antiquities recovered through

excavation, such as coins, seals, etc., clearly indicated (on the basis of architectural style) the date of the monastery not later than 5th century AD. The name of one of its chancellors was Dhīmiteśvar as found from the seal.

The Ranimahāl mound, through excavation has brought to light a huge hall (15.25 m x 12.20m) having high walls 6.60m in height. Another hall of this dimension, adjacent to the previous one, is now in underground. Excavation has unearthed large sized double ramparts which surrounded these halls. A big stone wall was also found encircling the structure. Most probably, these two halls were assembly halls meant for administrative and political purposes. One copper coin of the Kalachuri king Prithvideva, son of Jājalladeva, was recovered from the excavated site.

The court building of the Mahāl mound as well as the assembly halls of the Rānimahāl mound belonged to the Kalachuri dynasty, who ruled over this region from the middle of the ninth to the end of the twelfth century AD, when they were defeated by the Gaṅgā king Anaṅabhīmadeva III.

The four sites discussed above, certainly focuses on the urban traits of this region. This region was in occupation from the 5th century AD to the thirteenth century (from the period of the Nalas to the Kalachūri period). There are evidences of these halls being used as late as the sixteenth century AD.¹⁰⁷

3.3.3.5. Kaṭak

The Somavaṁsī kings issued their charters from Kaṭak. According to Fleet, Kaṭak, a city on the banks of Mahanadi seems to have been their capital.¹⁰⁸ Kaṭak may be identified with Cuttack, the chief town of the Cuttack district of Orissa.

3.3.3.6. Priyaṅgu

The Kalanda copper plate charter of Nayapāladeva dated 10th century AD,¹⁰⁹ has mentioned the name of Priyaṅgu, which was according to K.V. Ramesh and S. Subramonia Iyer, the capital city of the Kamboja kingdom. The Irda copper plate grant of king Nayapāladeva,¹¹⁰ was issued from the capital city of Priyaṅgu, which according to N.G. Mazumdar was founded by king Rajyapāla. The inscription describes the golden rampart walls of the city of Priyaṅgu to be as resplendent as fire. That means the walls were built of red laterite stone. Red laterite stones abound in Dakṣiṇ Rāḍha, in the district of Midnapore. The district in question lies on the border of Balasore district from where this copper plate has been obtained. Some forts built of laterite stones are still to be found in this region.¹¹¹ The remains of a ruined fort with some very fine old tanks have been found in the village of Nārāyaṅgarh in the sadar sub-division of the Midnapore district. According to N.G. Mazumdar there is every possibility that Nārāyaṅpāla of this plate founded it.¹¹²

3.3.3.7. Ekāmra

This place finds mention in the Bhuvaneshvar inscription in the Royal Asiatic Society.¹¹³ The inscription is in an incomplete state and therefore its purpose is not clear. It speaks volumes of praises for king Choḍa-Gaṅgā, whose empire extended from the Godāvarī to the Ganges, (V 2) and of his descendant Anaṅga Bhīma, who overcame a yavana army, followed by praises of Anaṅga-Bhīma's daughter Chandrikā, who was married to the valiant Haihaya Prince Paramardin. This inscription has described vividly the construction of a Viṣṇu temple at Ekāmra by princess Chandrikā, the dedicatory inscription of which was written by the poet Umāpati. Barnett has identified Ekāmra with modern Bhuvaneshwar in Orissa, the temples of which according to him, are amongst the finest example of the northern style of Indian architecture.

3.3.3.8. Śvetaka

This city finds mention in Gautamī plates of Gaṅgā Indravarman year 4,¹¹⁴ from where the plates were issued. As regards the location of Śvetaka, Mr. Tarini Charan Rath has placed Śvetaka adjoining Kaliṅga to the west. Some other scholars have identified it with Chikiti or Chikati in the Gaṅjām district.¹¹⁵ The name of this place also finds reference in Indian Museum plates of Gaṅgā Indravarman.¹¹⁶ The Pherava grant of Sāmantavarman, king of Kaliṅga, year 185,¹¹⁷ also mentions Śvetaka as the victorious camp from where the inscription was issued. R.C. Majumdar opines that the site of Śvetaka is to be looked for in the northern part of the Gaṅjām district.¹¹⁸

3.3.3.9. Khijjiṅga

The Ādipur copper plate of Narendra Bhañjadeva,¹¹⁹ mentions the name of a place named Khijjiṅga, which was undoubtedly the capital of these kings. Identified with modern Khiching in the Mayurbhanj district, the ruins of Khijjiṅga, situated about ninety miles to the west of Baripada have revealed a large number of fine medieval sculptures (pp 147-153). The Bhañjas of Mayurbhanj may be placed between 850 and 950 AD.

3.3.3.10. Jayapura

This name finds mention in the Baripada museum plate of Devanandadeva.¹²⁰ This place, according to K.C. Panigrahi was presumably the capital of the Nanda family.¹²¹ The place is identified with a village named Jaipur, situated in the Dhenkanal district of Orissa. As the name suggests, this capital was possibly founded by Jayananda, the first ruler of the Nanda family. The Jurerpur plate of Devanandadeva was issued from the city of Jayapura by King Devanandadeva of the Nandodbhava family of Orissa.¹²²

3.3.4. Bihar

3.3.4.1. Chirand

The site of Chirand in Saran district of Bihar is an old representative of urban Centres. A new occupational stratum was discovered in 1968-69 and coins of Gāṅgeyadeva and other metal objects were revealed that marked it as the early medieval phase of the site.¹²³

3.3.4.2. Gayā

During early medieval times, Gayā in Bihar emerged as one of the most important centres of Brahmanical religion. During the Pāla period, the ancient township of Gayā (Andar-Gayā) was renovated and beautified.¹²⁴ Contemporary epigraphic records furnishes us with the fact that most of the temples, images, tanks, etc., were built, installed and dug during this period.¹²⁵ The inscriptions are silent on the legend of Gayāsura or Viṣṇupada or on the present sanctity of Gayā as a place propitious for the offering of the piṇḍa to the manes, but they attest the prevalence of Vishṇu worship at Gayā. Sankarāchārya (AD 788-820) was the first important Hindu religious personality to visit Gayā,¹²⁶ followed by reputed Vaiṣṇava leaders of the like of Rāmānujachārya (AD 1017-1107), Mādhavachārya (AD 1238-1317) and Vallabhācharya (AD 1478-1530). The eminent Arab scholar Alberuni (AD 997-1030), the Persian traveller, Gurdyi (12th century AD), the well reputed Maithilī poet Vidyāpati and the erudite scholar of 14th century AD Chanḍeśvara Ṭhakkara have also left vivid accounts of their visit to their place during the period in question. May be that Gayā gained in importance due to the evolution of dāna and tirthayātrās as dominant religious ideas.¹²⁷

3.3.4.3. Krimilā

Located near modern town Lakhisarai (a district headquarter of Bihar), and situated about 125 kms east of Patna, the state capital. The area around 25-30 sq kms of the city exhibits large number of historical monuments, particularly Buddhist stupas and Brahmanical temples. Both Beglar and Cunningham in the 19th century explored the area and reported about the existence of Buddhist stupas and Brahmanical temples in the area. In the 1950s and 1960s, D. C. Sircar and subsequently R.K. Choudhury visited the region and came across a few inscriptions of early medieval period. Recent exploration has yielded six image inscriptions and more than hundred Buddhist and Brahmanical sculptures. Stylistic analysis of these sculptures suggest early medieval dates, and different phases of construction activities. More than thirty mounds are lying unexcavated between Valgudar and Rampur in Lakhisarai District of Bihar. Few brick structures over the mounds lie exposed, may be due to natural calamities or due to human encroachment. A thorough survey of the area and decipherment of the found inscriptions suggest that there existed a large religious and administrative centre in the early medieval times.¹²⁸

A map showing urban centres of the period which are both Archaeologically and literarily corroborated is attached at the end of this paper. We have cited twenty-two sites in the map which motivated the political and economic condition of the day.

3.3.4.4. A Brief Recapitulation

In this article we have discussed about thirty-four urban centres in our concerned period of study, of which eighteen is from Bengal, as it forms the thrust area of our study. Many of the sites are both archaeologically and literally corroborated, while some of the sites are only excavation or exploration reports. In this period, we find port-cities (Samandar, Kankandighi, Savar), market centres (e.g. Krimilā), *jayaskandhāvārs* or royal camps (e.g. Vikrampur), capital cities (e.g. Suvarṇapur), religious centres (e.g. Gayā), administrative centres (e.g. Puṇḍravardhana, Bangarh), and centre of learning (Bhūrīśreṣṭhikā). So we find cities constituting of variable components in this period. There is also the archaeological site of Dhanora which has revealed ancient routes. This place was probably a junction of ancient trade routes. At Ambari has been found fragments of a Chinese celadon ware which is a proof that early medieval Assam had trade links with China. Also coins of King Gāṅgeyadeva have been found from Chirand which bears evidence of a political and economic connection between the two regions of Bihar and Orissa. Traces of brick built roads and fragments of Brahmanical images have been found from Achinghat which shows that this place was a trade route in the early medieval period. The site of Maragoda have several mounds which through excavations have revealed a brick built drainage system, a court house, a copper coin of Kalachuri king Jājalladeva (A.D 1090-1120), assembly halls, residential buildings. The evidences prove that the site was a very important seat of administration of the day.

In this period, *maṇḍapikās* had their presence felt in the trade circuits of early medieval India.¹²⁹ These *maṇḍapikās* acted as local exchange centres that acted as an intermediate level between the small, periodical markets (*haṭṭa*, *haṭṭikā*) and larger trade centres (*paṭṭana*). The *maṇḍapikās* had a large rural hinterland which functioned as modes of exchange for various types of edible staples and cash crops. They also acted as centres for the collection of commercial tolls and duties. In this paper we have mentioned several sites which can be designated as *maṇḍapikās* or market centres. In an agrarian society, these market centres must have played a vital role (e.g. Lakhisarai, Krimilā, Dhanora etc.). For urban centres to flourish in a given period, trade and political stability is necessary. Our review on urban centres on a whole does provide stimulus to both these aspects of state life.

Our study has revealed that urban centres of the period played the role of economic bases of the region, be it pilgrim centre, administrative centre or port-towns. An urban centre must subsist on a strong economic base, trade and commerce being an essential feature of it. The townsfolk must be engaged in various profitable crafts and industry in order to provide a sustainable base for an urban centre. Many urban centres grew up as a mark of augmentation of the power and prestige of the concerned rulers. In this period, we find frequent changing of capitals by the rulers, the result being that the life of a capital was sometimes reduced to only one generation (e.g. Suvarṇapura). The reason behind this was the expansionist policy of the rulers, for which they had to shift their

dynastic capital to a more favourable and strategic position catering to the needs of their expanding frontiers. In contrast, the administrative centres as well as the pilgrim centres were long lived. Puṇḍravardhana, Koṭṭivarṣa (administrative centres) and Gayā (religions centre) were ancient towns and they were continuing with equal vigour in the early medieval period too. Similarly, the port-towns too thrived for a long period as their survival totally depended on the navigability of the river as well as their accessibility to the sea. Both these factors were essential for a port town to flourish, nonetheless of which they declined.

We have followed the footsteps of Professor B. D. Chattopadhyaya and have tried to establish the existence of urban centres following the theory of Third Urbanization. We find the existence of a spurt of urban centres in this period and in this region which had typical characteristics very much complying with the politico-economic situation of the day. So one theory comes to the forefront in this period- urban centres existed against a feudal backdrop.

4. Note

1. Gordon, 'The Urban Revolution' in *The Town Planning Journal*, pp 12-17
2. Adams, R.M., 'The Natural History of Urbanism' in Possehl (ed) *Ancient Cities of the Indus*, pp 18-26
3. Ghosh, *The City in Early Historical India*, pp 19
4. Sharma, *Urban Decay in India*, pp5
5. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism* ;
6. Sharma, *Urban Decay in India*
7. *ibid*, pp 134-7
8. *ibid*. pp 135
9. *ibid*. pp 135
10. *ibid*. pp 135
11. *ibid*. pp 136
12. *ibid*. pp 136-137
13. *ibid*. pp 139-140
14. Chattopadhyay, *The Making of Early Medieval India*, pp 34
15. *ibid*. pp 132
16. Chattopadhyaya, pp 146
17. *ibid*. pp 146-7
18. *ibid*. pp 148
19. *ibid*. pp 153
20. Kulke, Hermann, *The state in India.....*, pp 250-51
21. *ibid*.
22. Madhyapādā CP of Viśvarūpasena, *IHQ II*, pp 77; *IB*, 140; *IHQ IV*, pp 760
23. Edited by P.C. Sen, *VRS monograph*, no. 2.
24. *Ibid*, Introduction, pp 11
25. Chakrabarti, *Ancient Bangladesh* , pp 47
26. *ibid*, pp 48
27. Majumdar, Basak and Ghosh, pp 153; Chakrabarti, *Ancient Bangladesh*, pp 48
28. Chakrabarti, *Ancient Bangladesh*, pp 48
29. Chakravarti, *The History of Bengal*, Vol I, ch 16 ; Chakravarti, *Ancient Bangladesh*, pp 49
30. Chakrabarti, *Ancient Bangladesh*, pp 45
31. Chakrabarti, *ibid*, pp 48
32. Hossain, pp 21-23
33. *ibid* 56-65
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