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The Early History of South-East Bengal

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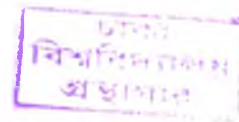
by

Shariful Islam

Dissertation submitted to the University of Dhaka for the
award of the Ph.D degree in History, 2013.



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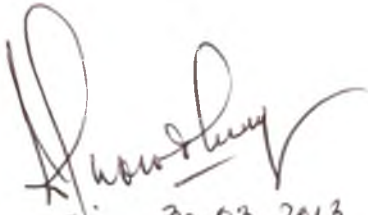
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Certificate of the Supervisor

It is my pleasure to certify ^{that} Mr. Md. Shariful Islam bearing Reg. No. 84, 2008-2009, has prepared the Ph.D dissertation entitled "*The Early History of South-East Bengal*", under my guidance and supervision. This is his original research work. This dissertation or any of its part has not been submitted to any other academic institution or organization for any degree or publication.



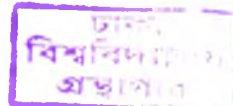
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Declaration by the Researcher

I hereby declare that the Ph.D dissertation entitled "*The Early History of South-East Bengal*" has been prepared by me. It is an original work done by me under the supervision of Professor Abdul Momin Chowdhury. I myself take all the responsibilities for all comments, statements and opinions articulated in the dissertation. This dissertation or any part of it has not been submitted to any other academic institution for any degree.

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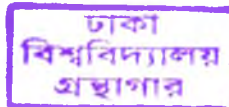
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Shariful Islam

The Early History of South-East Bengal

Abstract

South-East Bengal in geographical context may be demarcated to contain the whole of present Bangladesh minus its northern part. This area of Bengal is, in fact, a conglomeration of three distinct sub-regions, which in the earliest times, were known as Vaṅga, Samatāṭa and Harikela. Politically, this region has developed largely in isolation, partly due to its remoteness from the north Indian politics and partly due to its geographical location. As a result, from the disintegration of the Gupta Empire down to the coming of the Senas this area of Bengal seems to have maintained an independent political entity. During this period, many local dynasties established their rule; many urban, trade and political centers were developed; well-ordered administration, economy, society and culture flourished. But very little detailed historical research has yet been done on the early history of this area. The present work is an attempt to reconstruct the political history of South-East Bengal in ancient period incorporating many new materials that have come to light in the last half a century or so.

South-East Bengal has a history of its own from early times. Long before the rise of the Mauryan Empire, Vaṅga became prominent as a *janapada* (state). The discovery of *janapada* punch-marked coins from Wari-Baṭeśwar is highly significant. It clearly suggests that during the 5th - 4th century B.C. a well-ordered administrative system was developed in the heart of Vaṅga. The mention of Gangaridac/Gangaridai in the Greek and Latin sources of the 3rd century B.C. to the 1st century A.D. clearly hints at the existence of a strong political and economic entity in the area. However, it is not known whether Vaṅga-Samatāṭa sub-regions subsequently formed a part of the Mauryan Empire or not. It is most likely that during the Mauryan period South-East Bengal was outside the Maurya domination.

Samatata is referred as a frontier kingdom (*pratyanta rājya*) in the Allahabad inscription and it became a tributary state of Samudragupta. It apparently suggests that Vaṅga was included within the Gupta Empire during the rule of Sumudragupta. The discovery of a number of gold coins of Sumudragupta from South-East Bengal corroborates this fact. On the other hand, the discovery of Gupta copper plates, Gupta silver and gold coins from Maināmati and Gunāighara in Comilla district indicate that Samatata could not remain independent for a long time. Probably it was included in the Gupta Empire during the rule of Candragupta II, son of Samudragupta. So, the separate political entity of South-East Bengal had been collapsed with the rise of the Imperial Guptas and this area was integrated with their empire. The Gunāighar copper plate revealed the name of a king Vainyagupta. The Gupta appellation of the king and the Gupta Era referred to in the inscription apparently suggest that he was a member of the Gupta family. On the basis of some gold coins, it has been established that he was styled with the epithet Dvādaśāditya. But it appears to us that these coins were wrongly attributed to him by the scholars in the past. Actually, Dvādaśāditya was another Post-Gupta king of South-East Bengal, whose existence has been determined on the basis of a newly discovered copper plate from Koṭālipāḍā. It also appears to us that subsequent sculptures, coins, land system and administration of South-East Bengal were developed following the Gupta tradition. In fact, the impact of Gupta rule in this region was profound and far-reaching. Chapter I deals with Gupta rule in South-East Bengal and the place of Vainyagupta has been reviewed in the light of some new materials.

Chapter II focuses the history of South-East Bengal in the Post-Gupta period. After the fall of the Gupta Empire, an independent kingdom was established in Vaṅga during the 6th century A.D. The existing history of ancient Bengal refers to three post Gupta kings of the sub-region - Gopachandra, Dharmāditya and Samāchāradeva. Dvādaśāditya, a newly discovered king on the basis of a recently published copper plate, has been incorporated of this line. Sudhanyāditya was not identified in the past, whose existence was known on the basis of a coin. A number of unpublished gold coins of this king are preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum which was discovered from Koṭālipāḍā, Sābhār, Comilla and Mahasthan. Now it seems to us that there was a Post-Gupta dynasty in South-East Bengal with their names ending in 'Āditya'. Dharmāditya, Dvādaśāditya and

Sudhanyāditya were the kings of this dynasty. The copper plate of Dvādaśāditya has much similarity with the two copper plates of Dharmāditya and it suggests that they are the kings of the same line. Gopachandra and Samāchāradeva possibly formed another line of kings. The present author has found two unpublished gold coins of Gopachandra in the collection of the Bangladesh National Museum, which was discovered from Comilla and Dhaka district. The unpublished gold coins of Gopachandra and Sudhanyāditya have been incorporated in our review of the post-Gupta history of South-East Bengal. The find places of these coins clearly suggest that an extensive kingdom was formed during the 6th century A.D. including large portion of South-East Bengal and Vārakamaṇḍala of Koṭālipāḍā area flourished as capital city of this kingdom, as also it's trading and administrative center. The chronology of the Post-Gupta kings, a long standing controversial subject in the history of ancient Bengal, has been revised in the light of the newly found epigraphic and numismatic sources.

B. N. Mukherjee has drawn the attention of scholars to a gold coin of Śaśāṅka, which was discovered from southern Tripura. There are three more similar unpublished gold coins are preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum which were discovered from Comilla district in 1973 and 1975. On the obverse, the coins bear the symbol of Siva on bull and on the reverse the figure of *padmāsana* Lakṣmī. To the left side of the head of Lakṣmī, there is the legend “Śrī Śrī Śaśāṅka” in Brāhmī script. At the bottom ‘jaya’ is mentioned in Brāhmī alphabet. It is interesting to note that one such coin bears ‘vijaya’ in place of ‘jaya’ legend (Bangladesh National Museum accession no. 73. 1795). Mention may be made that the normal coin of Śaśāṅka has no dots but these coins bear the large dotted boarder like the other coins of Samataṭa. Most of Śaśāṅka’s coins weight 9.4g. ; but in particular the weight of these coins are around 5.7g. However, the symbolic representations of the coin is common with the other gold coins of Śaśāṅka found from Midnapur and Orissa, but an additional legend ‘vijaya’ (victory) is found in the above mentioned coin, which appears to be significant. The innovation and local features are more prominent in Samataṭa type coins of Śaśāṅka. It is probable that these gold coins were locally minted and issued by king Śaśāṅka as a mark of victory (*vijaya*). So, it may be stated that South-East Bengal was included within the kingdom of Śaśāṅka, at least for some time, though there is no evidence to confirm it by other corroborative sources.

The Nidhānpur copper plates of Bhāskaravarman state that the king granted lands from his royal camp at Karṇasūvarṇa, the capital of Gauḍa. It implies that after the death of Śaśāṅka, Bhāskaravarman captured parts of South-East Bengal and extended his empire up to Karṇasūvarṇa. A large number of gold coins of Bhāskaravarman (*Śrīkumāra* legend), Vāsuvarman and Devavarman have been found in South-East Bengal. These numismatic evidences and the Baḍagaṅgā rock inscription of Bhutivarman support the view of Varman's assertion in this region. It seems to us that the Nāthas and the predecessors of the Rātas were the feudal kings under the Varman rulers of Kāmarūpa. But the rule of both Śaśāṅka and the Varmans of Kāmarūpa was short lived. Probably Jivadhāraṇa Rāta raised his head against the Varmans of Kāmarūpa and established an independent kingdom in Samataṭa.

The history of the Rātas of Samatata has been elaborately dealt with in the Chapter III. On the basis of the Kailan copper plate, D. C. Sircar mentioned that the Rātas were the feudal kings of Samataṭa. But we are not inclined to accept this suggestion. The history of the Ratas has been reconstructed in the light of a recently published copper plate of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta which was discovered in 1979 from the village Uḍisvara in Comilla district. The gold coin of Jivadhāraṇa Rāta and Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta has also been published. The gold coins of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta have been found from Sābhār, Comilla, Noakhali, Tripura, Sylhet and Kāmarūpa. On the basis of the new epigraphic and numismatic sources, it seems to us that both Jivadhāraṇa and Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta were independent rulers and they formed an extensive kingdom, which included Samataṭa-Harikela sub-region and some parts of Vaṅga during the second half of the seventh century A.D. The Nātha kings were quite contemporary with the Rata and their history has been dealt in Chapter IV.

The Rātas were supplanted by the Khaḍgas, who established an independent kingdom in South-East Bengal and seven generation of kings ruled successively. Many newly discovered unpublished and recently published gold and silver coins of the dynasty have been incorporated in our reappraisal of their history. It is interesting to note that the silver coin of Rājabhāṭa and Balabhāṭa has been found for the first time and these are the unique type of Samataṭa silver coins. The history of Pṛthubhāṭa and Sarvabhāṭa, the two

later Khadga kings, has been incorporated in their dynastic history. Many existing ideas and established facts regarding the Khadgas have been revised in the light of the new materials. The newly found facts clearly suggest that the Khadgas were not Buddhists and they were actually Brahmin or Saiva rulers. Now it is clear that Bhattasali's identification of Karmānta with Kāmta was not correct. It is known from the copper plate of Balabhaṭṭa that his father Devakhaḍga ruled from their royal palace Katakashilā located at Devaparvata. On the other hand, the kingdom of the Khadgas was not limited to only Samataṭa. Their coins have been found in Sābhār, Koṭālipāḍā, Dhaka, Sylhet, Noakhali, Comilla, Chittagong, Tripura and Kāmarūpa which may be taken to mean that their kingdom included large areas of Vaṅga-Samataṭa-Harikela sub-regions. Balabhaṭṭa, the fifth ruler of this dynasty, assumed the eloquent epithet 'Vaṅgaśrī' and this may be taken to mean that their kingdom included Vaṅga along with Samataṭa-Harikela from the second half of the seventh century up to the first half of the eighth century A.D. The history of the Khadgas is the subject matter of Chapter V.

The history of the Early Devas of Samataṭa and Harikela forms the subject matter of Chapter VI. The Khadgas were succeeded by the Early Deva kings of Samataṭa. Śāntideva was the first member of the Deva family of Samataṭa. Probably he was a feudal king having no extensive dominion. But Vīradeva obtained the '*bhūmi-īśvaratvaḥ*', to have authority over a land or kingdom and he assumed the title '*Mahārājādhirāja*'. B. N. Mukherjee speculates that the '*Bāla-mṛgāṅka*' coin may have been issued by Vīradeva. He was the real founder of the Early Deva dynasty of Samataṭa, who carved out an independent kingdom, issued gold coins and assumed imperial titles. Ānandadeva was the third king of his line. During his rule, Devaparvata had to be abandoned and Vasantapura was established as a new capital for the imminent foreign invasion, probably by a ruler of Kāmarūpa. But Bhavadeva reestablished his capital at Devaparvata. This fact shows that the Early Deva kings protected the independence of Vaṅga-Samataṭa sub-region from an external attack. During their rule, the kingdom of Samataṭa flourished and reached its zenith. The remains of Ānāndavihāra and Bhavadevavihāra still stand as a landmark of their achievements. Ānandadeva assumed the eloquent epithet 'Vaṅgālamṛgāṅka' and it apparently shows

that some parts of Vaṅga or Vaṅgāla (the coastal region of Vaṅga) were included within their kingdom. On the other hand, we observe that when the Early Deva kings were ruling in Samataṭa, side by side Harikela emerged as a separate political entity. A line of kings with their names ending with 'Deva', such as Devātideva, Kāntideva were ruling in Harikela and Vardhamānpura was their capital. Vardhamanpiura was not identified properly by the scholars in the past. Now it has been identified perhaps correctly, with the present Bara Uthān or Borodhān village of Patiya Upazila in Chittagong.

The history of the Chandra rulers of South-East Bengal has been revised in Chapter VII. The Early Deva kings were supplanted by the Chandras, who raised their head from feudatory position under the Harikela kings, captured Samataṭa and Chandradvīpa, established a paramount kingdom in Vaṅga-Samataṭa sub-regions and ruled successively, uninterruptedly for five generations from Trailokyachandra to Govindachandra. The history of the Chandras has been reconstructed in the light of many new findings. Rohitāgiri and Harikela, the original home of the Chandras, was wrongly identified by scholars in the past. Now it has been possible to locate Harikela correctly. B. N. Mukherjee has shown that it was located in Chittagong area and Rohitāgiri was located somewhere adjacent to Chittagong region. Some silver coins were wrongly attributed to the Chandras by A. H. Dani. But no coin has yet been found bearing the legend related to the Chandra kings. It was reported wrongly in the past that the Chandras of South-East Bengal were the offshoot of the Chandras of Ārākān. But it appears to us that there was no relation between the Chandras of Ārākān and the Chandras of South-East Bengal. During the rule of the Chandras, it was an important event that they transferred their capital from Devaparvata to Vikramapura at the beginning of the 10th century A.D. Probably it was necessary to shift the capital for the sake of better administration of the extensive Chandra kingdom. On the other hand, when the Chandras were ruling in South-East Bengal, the Palas were ruling in north, north-western Bengal and Bihar.

Three Pala image inscriptions have been found in South-East Bengal and on their basis some scholars indicate the existence of Pala rule in this sub-region for a short period of time. But this idea conflicts with the continuous Chandra rule in this region, as revealed

by their epigraphic records. It would not be unreasonable to hold that these images were brought to South-East Bengal by someone from north Bengal at a later time. All the images are made of black basalt stone, available in the Rajmahal hills. No Pala copper plate has so far been found in South-East Bengal. Hence it is difficult to accept the idea of Pala domination in this area just on the basis of three portable image inscriptions. It is quite probable that the images were transferred to South-Eastern Bengal at a later time when their owners migrated to the area from somewhere within the Pala empire. The Chandra records refer that Śrīchandra and Kalyāṇachandra led expeditions against the ruler of Gauḍa. But the Pala inscriptions are silent about this. When the Chandra power was expanding, the Palas were in a precarious position. At that time they were facing the attack of the Chāndellas, Kalcuris and the uprising of the Kambojas from within their empire. This situation probably offered an opportunity for the Chandras to interfere in the political affairs of Gauḍa. But it is very difficult to determine the extent of Chandra success over the Palas due to the panegyric nature of the verses of the inscriptions. It is clearly known that Gopala II was reinstated on the throne by Śrīchandra. This fact suggests that the Buddhists Chandras helped the Buddhist Palas to survive in their difficult days and maintained a friendly relation with them.

The Chandra records also report that both Śrīchandra and Kalyāṇachandra took aggressive policy and came into conflict with the rulers of Kāmarūpa. It is probable that Śrīchandra's success was temporary in the difficult mountainous region, which gets water logged during the rainy season. On the other hand, it is clear that when the Chandras were ruling in Vaṅga-Samataṭa sub-regions, Harikela formed a separate political entity. It seems to us that Attākaradeva was the member of the Ākara dynasty. A coin of Attākara has been found, which is symbolically same as the other Ākara coins. The Ākaras were ruling in Harikela and some parts of Tippera-Ārākān hilly region during the 10th century when simultaneously the Chandras were ruling in Vaṅga-Samataṭa area. The ancestors of Trailokyachandra were probably feudal chiefs under the Ākara kings of Harikela and the mainstay (*ādhāra*) of their power. It seems to us that the Chandras maintained friendly relation with their previous overlords when they were almost paramount rulers of South-East Bengal.

Chapter VIII deals with the rule of the Varmans and the Senas of South-East Bengal. After the Chandras, South-East Bengal was ruled by the Varmans and the Senas successively. The copper plates of the Varmans were issued from Vikramapura after the Chandras and this indicates that the Chandras were extirpated by the Varmans. It seems to us that the Varmans came to Bengal along with Karṇa's invasion, shared his victory and in an opportune moment set up an independent kingdom in South-East Bengal. Though Vajravarman was the first member of the dynasty, it appears to us that Jātavarman was the real founder of the dynasty, which lasted till the reign of Bhojavarman (c. 1055-1145 A.D). The Varmans were relatives of the Palas as both Jātavarman and Vighrahapala III was son in laws of Karṇa. It seems to us that the Varmans maintained a friendly relation with the Palas following the Chandras. All the Varman records have been discovered in Vaṅga and it is probable that the kingdom of the Varmans was mainly limited to Vaṅga and some parts of Samatāṭa, while the Ākaras still preserved their separate political entity in Harikela.

The Varmans were ousted by the Senas and during their rule all the sub-regions of ancient Bengal were merged into one political unit. Almost all the copper plates of the Senas were issued from Vikramapura, which indicate that it was their main political hub. It is known from the Barrāckpur copper plate that the royal palace of Vijayasena was located in Vikramapura, where his queen Vilāsadevī had performed *Tūlāpuruṣa-mahādāna* sacrifice. In 1204 the Muslims conquered west and north Bengal, while the rule of the Senas was confined to South-East Bengal and Lakṣmaṇasena and his successors ruled this region for some time. The Mādhāinagara and the Bhowal copper plates of Lakṣmaṇasena were issued from Dhāryagrām. On the other hand, the Madanapāḍā and the Edilpur copper plates of Viśvarūpasena were issued from the *Jayaskandhāvāra* Phālgugrāma or Phasphagrāma. These facts apparently suggest that during the later Sena rule, Vikramapura may have been abandoned as a capital. When the later Senas ruled in South-East Bengal, the Muslim power of north-western Bengal made attempts to annex this region. But this region is well-guarded by its numerous rivers which had natural barrier for the advancement of the Muslim cavalry into this area.

Chapter IX focuses the history of the Later Devas of South-East Bengal.

The Muslim conquest weakened the Sena power. They not only lost their territories but they also lost their power and prestige. In this situation, the feudal chiefs raised their heads and started to rule almost independently. The later Deva rulers ruled in Samataṭa-Harikela sub-regions and finally captured Vikramapura by ousting the Senas. Puruṣottamadeva, Madhumathanadeva, Vāsudeva, Dāmodaradeva and Daśarathadeva ruled successively in South-East Bengal. After Daśarathadeva, Harikaladeva and Vīrdharadeva ruled for some time in Samataṭa. During this period Paṭṭikerā developed as a separate political entity which maintained close relation with Ārākān, while Śrīhaṭṭa was ruled by another line of local rulers (c. 1190-1250 A.D), known from the Bhatara copper plates. Navagīrvvān, Goṅgunādeva, Nārāyaṇadeva, Keśavadeva and Īśāndeva ruled independently and successively in the Śrīhaṭṭa area. This political disintegration of South-East Bengal made the way of Muslim occupation of this region easier and finally they captured it at the beginning of the 14th century A.D. It seems to us that for most of the time of ancient period, South-East Bengal formed a separate political entity. During this period we now find the existence of many local dynasties who established their political supremacy over parts or whole of the sub-region of South- East Bengal. After the Muslim conquest of north and west Bengal, this area preserved its independent political entity for nearly a century. The numerous rivers and the consequent inundation of the whole area made this region inaccessible for the Muslim cavalry.

In Chapter X, we have dealt with the relationship of South-East Bengal mainly Gauḍa, Kāmarūpa and Ārākān.

Chapter XI deals with the early urban, administrative and trade centers that grew in South-East Bengal. The conclusion sums up our findings in the light of the new materials that we could lay our hands on.

Because of the independent political entity, many administrative, cultural and trade centers grew up in this region. Because of its expansive sea board, this area could take part actively in the overseas international trade. Monetized economy was developed which supported the flourishing economy of the local dynasties. The fertile land and its rich agriculture, favorable climate and inland river route network - all helped the

development of this region as a separate economic zone. On the other hand, this area formed a separate cultural entity as local and unique features clearly appear in the architectures, bronze and stone sculptures, and terracotta plaques of the sub-region. Thus we may safely conclude that South-East Bengal was fairly a well-defined geographical sub-region with a distinctive separate political identity and, in turn, evolved its own economic and cultural ethos.

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Introduction

It is necessary to refer first to the geographical location and features of South-East Bengal for the proper understanding of its history, as they can be considered the primary determinants in shaping the history and culture of the sub-region. South-East Bengal denotes the whole area of Bengal (of pre-1947 period) excluding its northern and western portions. Or more precisely this region may be demarcated to contain the whole of present Bangladesh minus its northern part. South-East Bengal is, in fact, a conglomeration of three distinct sub-regions, which were in the earliest times known as Vaṅga, Samatāṭa and Harikela. The geographical features and location of these sub-regions are discussed below.

Vaṅga

Ancient Vaṅga is the heart-land of the Ganges delta. This sub-region lies between the Bhagirathi on the west and the Meghna on the east. The land of this deltaic part is formed by the deposition of silt carried down by the Ganges and the Brahmaputra and their tributaries. In the opinion of K. G. Bagchi, the Ganges delta is confined within the limits of the two farthest distributaries of the Ganges-the Bhagirathi-Hooghly and the Padma-Meghna.¹ The Ganges delta is further subdivided by Bagchi into three distinct categories: a. **moribund delta**- this region is in the north-west, comprising the districts of Murshidabad, Nadia and Jessore. b. **mature delta**-parts of 24-Pargana district and Khulna, c. **active delta**-the Sundarbans consisting of the southern half of the districts of 24-Parganas and Khulna, and between the Madhumati and Meghna, comprising the greater districts of Faridpur and Barisal.

From epigraphic records it appears that ancient Vaṅga was divided into a few more sub regions such as Chandradvīpa, Vikramapura, Nāvya and Vaṅgāla etc. Chandradvīpa is identified with greater Barisal district. It was one of the Pargānās in which Sarkār Bāklā

(Bākerganj) was included in the time of Todarmal's assessments. It seems that Abul Fazl used Bāklā as a synonym for Chandradvīpa.² Vikramapura included southern part of greater Dhaka district and some portions of Faridpur. Nāvya was another subdivision of Vaṅga denoting the southern boundary of the former Dhaka division which abounds in creeks and rivers and is navigable (Nāvya) all the year round. On the other hand, Vaṅgāla is generally identified with the coastal region of Vaṅga.

Vaṅga is mentioned both in the early literary texts³ and numerous epigraphic records. Of all the early ethnic groups of Bengal, perhaps the Vaṅgas were the most ancient. They played a vital role in the ethno-cultural history of ancient Bengal. This geographical unit gradually developed into Vaṅgāla or Bāṅgālā and has now taken final shape in Bangladesh. The people of Bangladesh are now called 'Vāṅgālī', which is a derivation from Vaṅga.

Samatāṭa

Samatāṭa means a flat coast land, which was a well-demarcated ancient sub-region of South-East Bengal. It was formed of the trans-Meghna territories of the Comilla-Noakhali plains jointly with the bordering hilly region of Tripura in the east, while the Bay of Bengal flanks the southern boundary. To the north, the Meghna river sets off the region, while to the west the Meghna is joined by the river Padma. Harunur Rashid proposes the following physical divisions of Samatāṭa:

- a. **Area to the North of the Meghna:** This division is defined by the Gāro hills on the north and the Jamuna, Padma and the Meghna on the other three sides.
- b. **Comilla-Noakhali plains:** It is formed by the extended area of the Meghna on the west and the more or less straight line of the Tripura hills on the east. Though practically separated, the plains of Tripura state should be included in this division.
- c. **Chittagong and Sylhet hills:** This is the only hilly region of South-East Bengal. The Chittagong and Sylhet hills run in generally north-south direction enclosing the longitudinal river valleys and merge generally with the Ārākān and Lushāi

range. But there are also a few low ranges running along the Chittagong coast line. The narrow coastal plain backed by these low ranges and drained by a number of hill streams is extremely fertile.⁴

Samataṭa is referred to in a number of ancient epigraphic records, foreign accounts and literary texts as a well-known kingdom of South-East Bengal. Devaparvata was its capital, which was located on the bank of the river Kṣīrodā, a dried up river branching off Gomati, an offshoot of the river Meghna. It was a river-side port city and Buddhist cultural center of South-Eastern Bengal. Its identification is not yet certain, but it can be said that it must have been somewhere in the vicinity of the archaeological remains of Mainamaṭi-Lālmāi area.

Harikela

Harikela was another distinct sub-region in the Trans-Meghna region separated from Samataṭa. It was wrongly identified with Śrīhaṭṭa by the scholars in the past on the basis of the Sanskrit manuscripts *Rūpacintāmaṇikoṣa* and *Kalpadrūkoṣa*. But B. N. Mukherjee has clearly shown that the kingdom of Harikela included the present day Chittagong region with some adjacent areas.⁵ It formed a separate political entity in the coastal tract of Chittagong and its neighboring areas. Epigraphic records report that Vardhamānapura⁶ was the capital of Harikela and the place has been identified with the present Vara-Uthān or Borodhān Village of Patiya Upazila in Chittagong.⁷ With the growth of political power the limits of the kingdom of Harikela extended to incorporate at least the areas of Noakhali, Comilla, Tripura and Sylhet regions. Harikela coins have been discovered in different areas including Mainamati, Zobra (Chittagong district) and Belonia subdivision in Tripura.⁸ All these areas were possibly within the limits of the ancient kingdom of Harikela. The inclusions of these territories within Harikela gave it a fairly well-defined natural frontier. It had the Bay of Bengal on the south, hill tracts of Chittagong, Tripura, Cachar and Lushāi hills on the east, Khāsi and Jaintiā hills on the north, Meghna and Surma in the west.

It is, of course, not possible to enunciate any water tight distinguishing limits between Samatāṭa and Harikela. It is generally considered that Comilla-Noakhali region was the core territory of Samatāṭa, while Harikela was included within the coastal tract of Chittagong. But in different times their boundaries overlapped and one territory incorporated the other. Thus the Trans-Meghna region stands for the present lands of Comilla, Noakhali, Chittagong and Tripura which may be recognized as Samatāṭa-Harikela region. Beside these two sub-regions, there is another contiguous geo-political track of South-East Bengal known as *Aṭavikhaṇḍa* or *Śrīhaṭṭa maṇḍala* in ancient time. This sub-region is located on the Surma River which was under various political authorities both from the north-west like Kāmarūpa and south-east like Samatāṭa-Harikela and at times under local rulers too. Śrīhaṭṭa and Kāmarūpa were incorporated in the network of interaction with Samatāṭa and Harikela.

Rivers with their branches are the most characteristic feature of the physical geography of South-East Bengal. This region is the gift of the three great rivers-the Padma (Ganges), the Yamuna (Brahmaputra) and the Meghna. These mighty rivers and their distributaries have played significant role in shaping the pattern of life and destiny in the land and people of this sub-region. A large portion of this region has been formed by silt carried down by these rivers. The lands on the banks of the rivers and rivulets are very fertile, which is suitable for many crops, especially rice. They also carry an immense number of fish which provide a ready source of food. As a result, rice and fish are the staple food for the people of this region. Though rivers have made natural boundaries of the geographic division of Vaṅga-Samatāṭa-Harikela, they did not act as dividing forces among the people of these regions; rather they have always made communication easy between each other. Moreover, these rivers have provided the vital linkage between the sea coast and the interior of South-East Bengal. On these rivers again grew cities and towns, centers of trade and commerce which regulated not only the political destiny of this area but also flourished overseas trade. Monetized maritime economy flourished and made this region as a separate economic zone, when north and west Bengal was developing as a completely agro-based economic region outside the zone of regular coin circulation. This possibly explains the complete absence of Pala and Sena coinage.

On the other hand, this region has full advantage of the monsoonal climate. The moist wind blows in the summer from the Bay of Bengal causing heavy rainfall, which saves the ground from becoming parched by the tropical sun. In winter north-easterly wind blows, which preserves a clear sky and gives the crops the benefit of the sun in the season when its warmth is required. This climatic condition was also very favorable to the development of this region as a separate economic and commercial zone.

If we closely observe the physical features and the land formation of Bengal, it will be clear to us that there are two separate geographical entities in Bengal, the north-western entity and the south-eastern entity. A. M. Chowdhury⁹ has recently described clearly the two distinct geographical entities of Bengal which in turn evolved two separate cultural zones. South-East Bengal is mainly formed by the submerged flood plains while most of the parts of northern, western and south-western Bengal are formed by Pleistocene land. Delta formation is still active in South-East Bengal due to the activity of the three major river system- the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna, while the process of deltaic formation in northern and western part is a thing of the past. The physiographic features of the north-western part of Bengal offer the inhabitants the facility of easy communication and thus it flourished as a separate cultural zone. South-East part of Bengal remains isolated half of the year owing to annual flood of the three major river system. The impact is lack of homogeneity in the cultural milieu. So, it appears to us that geo-physical condition has contributed to the formation of the dual entities in the greater geographic 'region' of Bengal.

South-East Bengal was well-guarded by its numerous rivers which made this region rather safe from external invasion. Politically, this region has developed largely in isolation, partly due to its remoteness from the north Indian powers and partly due to its geographical location. As a result, from the breakup of the Gupta Empire down to the coming of the Senas this area of Bengal seems to have maintained an independent political entity. During this period, many local dynasties were established; many urban, trade and political centers were developed; well-ordered administration, economy,

society and culture flourished. But very little detailed historical research has yet been done on the early history of this area.

By far the best work on ancient Bengal is *History of Bengal*, Vol. 1, edited by R. C. Majumdar, published by the University of Dacca (now Dhaka) in 1943. But the history of South-East Bengal found a scanty treatment in this book in only a few pages. This was mainly due to the absence of sources shedding light on the sub-region. After the publication of this book, many new materials have come to light which demand fresh interpretation of many of the ideas of this book. Though R. C. Majumdar published his *History of Ancient Bengal* (Calcutta 1971) updating the accounts of his earlier work (*History of Bengal*, Vol. 1), but many of the recent finds since then demand a fresh reappraisal of the history of South-East Bengal.

Nihar Ranjan Roy's *Bāṅgālir Itihāsa*, published in 1949, is another authoritative and exhaustive research work in this field. But the main focus of this work has been on socio-cultural and economic history of ancient Bengal. As he himself admits in the Preface, he did not attempt to incorporate any new materials. He only devoted himself to reinterpret the existing historical ideas and facts.

D. C. Sircar wrote two books - *Pāl Pūrba Yuger Vamśānucharit* and *Pāl Sen Yuger Vamśānucharit*, published in 1982. But the books have the same shortcomings, as the new materials have not been included. Moreover the genealogical account of the dynasties of South-East Bengal is presented very briefly in these books.

A. M. Chowdhury's *Dynastic History of Bengal*, published in 1967 by the Asiatic Society of Pakistan, may still be considered as an important work in this field. But he has only furnished two short chapters in this book on the early history of South-East Bengal. In the light of the new materials the chapters in this book need to be rewritten, or rather it can be said that the history of the region can now be presented in a much more elaborate manner with the help of the materials that have come to light since 1967.

Barrie M. Morrison has also written two important books on this subject: 1. *Lālmāi, A Cultural Center of Early Bengal*, University of Washington Press (Seattle and London

1974). 2. *Political Centers and Cultural Region in Early Bengal*, University of Arizona Press, (Tucson 1970). His first book is mainly focused on the cultural importance of the archaeological artifacts discovered from Maināmati, while the second book is concerned mainly on the epigraphic data contained in the copper plates discovered from South-East Bengal. Political history has not been the main attention of the author in these two works. Moreover, Morrison also could not lay his hands on many of the recently discovered materials.

Harunur Rashid's *The Early History of Southeast Bengal in the Light of Recent Archaeological Materials*, a Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the University of Cambridge in mid-1960s, and published by the Itihās Academy, Dhaka in 2008. But he has based his work purely from the archaeological point of view. This is mainly an inventory type work on the basis of the archaeological materials discovered from the Maināmati excavation. Though he established the fact that this area is a separate cultural zone, he did not attempt to furnish political evolution of ancient South-East Bengal. Moreover, the new materials should also necessitate revision of many of his findings.

Many scholars have done great work to reveal the history of Bengal but the history of this sub-region still remains incomplete. No attempt has yet been made to undertake the reconstruction of the political history of this area. Some new materials have come to light in the last few decades, but many are awaiting the attention of researchers. A brief description of some recently published and unpublished epigraphic and numismatic sources are mentioned below:

1. Epigraphic Sources

- a. **Koṭālipāḍā Copper plate of Dvādaśāditya**: The copper plate was discovered in 1980 at the village of Rāmashil under Koṭālipāḍā police station in Faridpur district (now Gopālganj). A cultivator during an accidental digging at the village of Rāmashil discovered it. The plate was deposited to the Dhaka Museum (now Bangladesh National Museum) and its accession no. is 80.513. It is a single plate, measuring 29cm in length and 14cm in breadth. The plate contains in total of 34

lines, inscribed on both the sides. A Gajalakṣmī symbol is attached to the top of the plate as its seal. The seal bears two lines of legends in its lower portion. The legend runs as follows: *Vārakamaṇḍala-viṣayādhikaraṇasya*. The language of the inscription is Sanskrit prose except in the five imprecatory verses found in lines 28 to 32. The script belongs to the North-Eastern variety of the Gupta alphabets. The present author has recently published the inscription in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society* (Kolkata).¹⁰ The record reveals the name of a Post-Gupta king Śrī-Dvādaśāditya, who is styled as Mahārājādhirāja, hitherto unknown in the history of ancient Bengal. The content of the inscription not only deserves to be incorporated into the history of ancient Bengal but it also demands a fresh assessment of the chronological order of the Post-Gupta kings.

- b. **Uḍiśvara Copper plate of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta:** The copper plate inscription was discovered in 1979 from the village Uḍiśvara under Murādnagara police station in Comilla district. The plate is preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum and its accession no. is 79.65. It is a single plate, measuring 10 inches in length and 8 inches in breadth. The plate has in total 39 lines, inscribed on both sides, the obverse containing 29 lines and the reverse 10 lines of writing. The script is northern class of Brāhmī of the 7th century. The language of the inscription is Sanskrit prose. A weighty brazen seal of Gajalakṣmī is affixed at the top of the plate. Two lines of legend appear under the Gajalakṣmī symbol. These are as follows:

1. *Śrīmat-Samataṭeśvara-pādāmudhyātasya*
2. *Kumārāmātyādhikaraṇena.*

The present author has recently published the inscription in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh*.¹¹ The plate was issued by *Samataṭeśvara Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta*, son of *Jivadhāraṇa Rāta*. The history of the Rātas of Samataṭa was known first from the Kailān copper plate, which was discovered in 1945 and published by D. C. Sircar. This was hitherto the only source for reconstructing the

history of the Rātas. The Uḍiśvara copper plate is going to add new information for writing the history of this dynasty. It reveals many new facts about this dynasty. The existing idea of the Rātas needs to be revised in the light of this new copper plate.

- c. **Sujānagara Stone Inscription of Bhojavarman:** The inscription on a sandstone slab consists of nine lines covering a space of 18X13 inches. The language of the inscription is Sanskrit and it is written in prose. The inscription was discovered by accidental digging in 1967 from the village Sujānagara in Munshiganj (Vikramapura) and it was brought to the collection of Dhaka Museum by Enamul Haque, the then director of the museum. The museum accession no. is 67.232. The inscription was unpublished but the present author has recently published it in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh*.¹² The inscription was issued by Avadeva, the great feudal lord, and Bhojavarman was his overlord. It was a dated inscription which was issued during the 7th regnal year of Bhojavarman. The inscription also bears the title of king Bhojavarman as *Mahārājādhirāja*. This inscription is going to add new information for the reconstruction of the history of the Varman dynasty of South-East Bengal.
- d. **Maināmati Copper plate of Balabhaṭṭa:** The inscription was discovered in 1956 during excavation at Sālvan Vihāra. The plate was partly deciphered by Kamalākānta Gūpta and published in 1979 in the *Journal of Bangladesh Archaeology*.¹³ The record contains some details regarding Balabhaṭṭa, king of Khaḍga dynasty. The plate demands a fresh assessment of the history of the Khaḍgas.
- e. **Maināmati Copper plate of Ānandadeva:** The copper plate was also discovered during excavation at Sālvan Vihāra at Maināmati in 1955. The plate was deciphered and published in 1979 by Kamalākānta Gupta in the *Journal of Bangladesh Archaeology*.¹⁴ The plate bears the emblem "Dharmacakra" as a seal and it bears an interesting legend: "*Vaṅgāla-mṛgāṅkasya*" (the moon of Vaṅga). The inscription has been deciphered partly but the present author has gone

through the plate comprehensively and it discloses important facts of the history of the Early Deva dynasty of South-East Bengal. However, the inscription opens up a fresh ground for the reconstruction of the history of the Early Deva kings of Samatāṭa.

- f. **Maināmati Copper plate of Vīradharadeva:** The copper plate was discovered from Charpatra Muḍā at Maināmati in 1956. Now the plate is preserved in the Department of Archaeology, Government of Bangladesh. It was published by Swapan Vikash Bhattacharjee.¹⁵ The record reveals hitherto unknown king named Śrī-Vīradharadeva, who issued it on the 9th day of Kārttika in the 15th year of his reign. The information of the plate needs to be revised the history of the Later Devas of South-East Bengal.
- g. **Two Recently Published Copper plates of Śrīchandra:** In 1977 two more copper plates of Śrīchandra were discovered from Comilla district. Both the plates are preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum (Museum accession No, 77.1477 and 77.1478). Recently one Comilla copper plate of Śrīchandra has been deciphered and published by E. M. Mill in *South Asian Studies*.¹⁶ Flemming Benjamin has recently published another copper plate of Śrīchandra in the *Bulletin of SOAS*.¹⁷ These two copper plates reveal some new facts about the history of the Chandras and these facts need to be incorporated in the history of the Chandras.
- h. **Copper Vase Inscription of Devātideva:** The Dhaka Museum collected an inscribed metal vase in 1968 from a shop at Dhāmrāi, near Dhaka. The exact find spot of the vase was not known. But it was reported that the vase was found somewhere in Chittagong region. Now it is preserved in the reserve collection of the Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka. The inscription on the vase has recently been deciphered by Gouriswar Bhattacharya.¹⁸ The record reveals a hitherto unknown ruler of ancient kingdom of Harikela named Devātideva. The history of Harikela needs to be revised in the light of this recently published inscription.

- i. **Copper Vase Inscription of Attākaradeva:** Another metal vase inscription has recently been published by Gouriswar Bhattacharya in the *South Asian Archaeology* in 1993.¹⁹ The inscribed metal vase was offered for sale in Sotheby's sale catalogue (London) of 12th October, 1989, lot-38, p. 39. The exact find spot of the vase is not known. The description of the vase given in the catalogue is as follows: 'An Eastern Indian Sanskrit Inscribed Bronze Vase, Pala, and c. 10th century A.D.' But from the content of the inscription, it may be suggested that the record might have been discovered from the Chittagong region in Bangladesh. The inscription discloses a king named Attākaradeva, who is styled as 'Rājādhirāja' (king of kings). He has been designated with another epithet "Samaramṛgānka". This newly discovered king needs to be incorporated in the history of Harikela.
 - j. **Two Unpublished Copper plates of Kalyāṇachandra:** A copper plate of Kalyāṇachandra was collected in 1966 for the Dhaka Museum by A. H. Dani, the then curator of the museum. Now the plate is preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum and the accession no. is 66.41. The inscription is still unpublished. The present author has gone through the plate. The content of the inscription is very important to reconstruct the history of the Chandras. Another copper plate of Kalyāṇachandra was discovered from Brahmanbaria in 1975. The plate is badly corroded and some section is readable. However, the information of these two copper plates needs to be included to reconstruct the history of the Chandras.
2. **Numismatic Sources:** Harunur Rashid²⁰ and B. N. Mukherjee²¹ have published a large number of ancient gold coins of South-East Bengal. These gold coins may be used as corroborative sources to reconstruct the ancient history of South-East Bengal. The present author has recently published two papers on ancient gold coins of South-East Bengal.²² But there are a large number of ancient gold and silver coins preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum to which the attention of scholars needs to be drawn.

- a. Unpublished Gupta Gold and Silver Coins:** There are a large number of Gupta gold and silver coins preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum and in the Department of Bangladesh Archaeology. Most of the coins are still unpublished. The present author has closely observed these coins. These are the coins of Sumudragupta, Chandragupta II, Kumaragupta, Skandagupta and Purugupta. These coins were discovered from Maināmati, Koṭālipāḍā, Dhaka, Gunāighar and Sylhet region. These Gupta coins may be used as corroborative source to write the history of Gupta rule in South-East Bengal.
- b. Unpublished Post-Gupta Gold Coins:** There are four unpublished gold coins of Śaśānka preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum. Among these, three gold coins were collected from Comilla district in 1975-1976. It is interesting to note that these are the Samataṭa type gold coins of Śaśānka. Another gold coin is the normal coin of Śaśānka which was purchased from Dhaka. Two unpublished gold coins of Gopachandra and ten unpublished gold coins of Sudhanyāditya are preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum. These coins demand a fresh assessment of the Post-Gupta history of South-East Bengal.
- c. Rāta, Khaḍga and Early Deva Unpublished Gold Coins:** There are a large number of gold coins of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta, Rājabhāṭa, Balabhāṭa, Sarvabhāṭa, Pṛthubhāṭa and the Balamṛgānka gold coins of the Early Deva dynasty of Samataṭa preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum. These coins have been used for reconstructing the early history of South-East Bengal.
- d. Khaḍga, Ākara, Harikela, Paṭṭikerā and the Samataṭa Silver coins:** It is interesting to note that one silver coin of Rājabhāṭa has been discovered recently from Chittagong and the coin is preserved in the collection of Nurul Islam, a coin collector of Dhaka. There are also eleven silver coins of Balabhāṭa preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum. These silver coins of the Khaḍga dynasty are known for the first time. Beside these, there are a number of Harikela and Ākara silver coins preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum. Recently silver coins of Samataṭa and

Paṭṭikerā has been published.²³ These silver coins supply us important data to reconstruct the history of South-East Bengal.

The above noted epigraphic and numismatic materials raise many new points of view, which have opened up a fresh ground for further research. Moreover, a critical examination of the published records, along with the new found facts, show that many of the established ideas are rather fanciful, unfounded and need to be reassessed. As history has to be rewritten from time to time in the light of new materials, a fresh attempt has been made to reconstruct the history of South-East Bengal incorporating these new materials. The present work is a humble attempt to look at all the fresh materials and reconstruct the history of the region in their light.

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Chapter I

South-East Bengal in the Gupta Period: Place of Vainyagupta Reviewed

During the 4th century A.D, the Guptas built a mighty empire in India. The Gupta age received its strength and validity from the continuous rule of more than two centuries successively under Chanrdagupta I, Samudragupta, Chandragupta II, Kumāragupta I, Skandagupta and others. Gupta copper plates, coins and sculptural specimens have been found in Bengal which bear the testimony that Bengal was a stronghold of the Gupta administration. Someone says¹ that the original home of the Guptas was in Bengal though it is a matter of controversy among scholars. Eight Gupta copper plates have been discovered from North Bengal and these records bear the evidence that this region was permanent seat of the Gupta rule from the beginning of the dynasty. Bengal was divided into a number of small distinct sub-regions which were separate political entities before the Gupta age. This regionalism of Bengal had been collapsed with the rise of the Imperial Guptas and these small states were integrated under their rule.

But it is not exactly known when South-East Bengal was included under the Gupta rule. It is reported to the Allahabad inscription that King Candravarman of Puṣkaraṇa (in Bankura district of modern west Bengal) was defeated by Samudragupta. It suggests that some parts Vaṅga sub-region was annexed to the Gupta Empire during the rule of Samudragupta. A fort of Candravarman (*Candravarmākoṭ*) is mentioned to the Ghugrāhāṭi copper plate of Samāchāradeva² and this fort is identified with the old mud fort of Koṭālipāḍā. From this reference, it may be conjectured that Candravarman was a great king who ruled over a large kingdom extending from Bānkura to Faridpur (ancient Vaṅga). It is also known to the Allahabad inscription that Samataṭa was the frontier kingdom during the rule of Samudragupta, but it had acknowledged to the supremacy of the Gupta monarch, and became a tributary state. But Samataṭa could not remain independent for the long

time. Probably, it was captured to the Gupta Empire during the rule of Candragupta II, the son of Samudragupta. The Meherauli Iron Pillar Inscription of king Candra (Candragupta II) and the '*Raghūvaṃśa*' of poet Kālidāsa³ mentions to the conquest of Vaṅga-Samataṣa area (land watered by the lower streams of the Ganges). It should be noted here that Raghu first subjugated the Suhmas and then entered into Vaṅga. It is, therefore, more probable that in the days of Kālidāsa Tāmralipta belong to Suhma and littoral Vaṅga by between the extreme mouths of the Ganges. R. C. Majumdar suggests that Candragupta I, the father of Samudragupta, had already added Vaṅga to the Gupta Empire. In the later case, it must be presumed that Vaṅga had shaken off the yoke of the Gupta Empire and the son of Samudragupta had to re-conquer the province by defeating the combination of the peoples of different states of Bengal⁴. Probably, since the time of Candragupta II, North Bengal as well as South-East Bengal continued to be an integral part of the Gupta Empire even during the reign of Budhagupta and others.

A copper plate was found at Gunāighar under Devīdvār Police Station in the district of Tippera (now Comilla). The plate is deciphered by D. C. Bhattacharyya and published to the *Journal of the Indian Historical Quarterly*.⁵ The inscription disclosed the existence of a king called Vainyagupta. The identity of this king has been the subject of a lot of controversy since then. But the history of this king is not reported to the right perspective by the scholars in the past. Some gold coins were wrongly attributed to him by the scholars in the past. But these coins as well as the history of Vainyagupta need to be revised with the light of a new material.

A Fresh Assessment of the Coins Assigned to Vainyagupta in the past: Vainyagupta is introduced to history with the title 'Dvādaśāditya' and hence he is styled as an epithet 'Vainyagupta Dvādaśāditya' to the existing history of ancient Bengal. This existing idea regarding Vainyagupta needs to be reviewed with the light of a recently deciphered copper plate. First I would like to draw the scholar's attention about this copper plate inscription. The copper plate was discovered in 1980 from the village of Rāmashil under Koṭālipāḍā police station in Faridpur District (now Gopālganj). Now the plate is preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum. Recently, the present author has published the inscription to the *Journal of the Asiatic Society* (Kolkata). The character of the script and the writing style of the

plate have much similarity with the other Faridpur copper plates, especially with the copper plates of Dharmāditya. However, the record reveals the name of a hitherto unknown king Sri-Dvādaśāditya⁶, who is styled as *Mahārājādhirāja* and he may be regarded as a Post-Gupta king in the line of Dharmāditya. Now, a pertinent question may be arisen; did Vainyagupta assume the title 'Dvādaśāditya'? Or did he issue the gold coin, at all, which have been assigned to him by the scholars in the past? In the convenience of discussion, the coins which were assigned to Vainyagupta in the past, need to be reviewed first as he was titled 'Dvādaśāditya' on the basis of these coins.

John Allan referred to three gold coins in his catalogue in Plate XXIII, numbered 6, 7, and 8.⁷ They are exactly similar in type to the coins of Candragupta II and Kumāragupta I. These coins are as follows:

Obverse: King standing to left; left hand holding a bow, the right hand holding an arrow. Garuḍa standard bound with fillet is on the left. Between the feet is the letter 'bha'. Beneath the left arm two letters 'ca' and 'ndra' (Candra) with crescent above.

Reverse: Goddess Lakṣmī, nimbate, seated facing on lotus, holding fillet in right hand and lotus in left hand; border of dots. The legend is *Śrī-Dvādaśādityaḥ*.

John Allan reads the first letter of the obverse as 'ca' and the second as 'ndra' (Candra). He remarks that "the name beneath the king's arm on the obverse is Candra, undoubtedly for Candragupta, while the reverse legend is not Śrī-Vikramāḥ or Śrī-Vikramāditya, but 'Śrī-Dvādaśādityaḥ'".⁸ Smith conformed the reading Dvādaśāditya but he is not determined to the reading 'Candra'.⁹ Rapson doubts that the name is really Candra. The 'ca' is certainly like 'va' but what appears to be vowel marks above it is the usual crescent; on no. 588, it is difficult to say whether the second akṣara is 'tya' or 'ndra', but it is certainly 'ndra' on no. 589 and 590 and there is no reason to doubt the reading Candra. He has come to the conclusion that these coins do not belong to Candragupta II, but to a later ruler whom we may call Candragupta III Dvādaśāditya.¹⁰

But D. C. Ganguly does not subscribe to the above views. He reads the two letters of the obverse as 'vai' and 'nya' (Vainya) and he is interested to assign these coins to

Vainyagupta. He differs with Rapson that there is no king to the name of Candragupta III. He came to the conclusion that Vainyagupta, the Imperial ruler of the Gupta dynasty of Magadha, had issued these gold coins and it was he, who had assumed the title 'Dvādaśāditya'.¹¹

R. C. Majumdar accepted to D. C. Ganguly's view. He wrote a paper to the same journal supporting to D. C. Ganguly and suggested that these coins legend as '*Vainya*' instead of '*Candra*'.¹² N. N. Dasgupta, who has made an important work on Vainyagupta, also accepted D. C. Ganguly's reading without any hesitation and remarked "things have nevertheless been rendered easier by the ascription doubtless correctly, of the three coins in the British Museum to Vainyagupta".¹³ Since then, it has been established in the history of ancient Bengal that Vainyagupta issued gold coin and he assumed to the title Dvādaśāditya, who was introduced to as 'Vainyagupta Dvādaśāditya'.¹⁴

But with a close observation, and on the basis of the copper plate of Dvādaśāditya, it seems to the present author that these coins are neither of Chandragupta III, nor the coins of Vainyagupta. These coins may more appropriately be assigned to the coins of Dvādaśāditya, who is our newly discovered Post-Gupta king. The present author does not subscribe to the D. C. Ganguly's view for the following reasons:

- (i) If Vainyagupta assumed the title Dvādaśāditya, certainly it would be referred to the Gunāighar copper plate and to the Nalanda clay seal of Vainyagupta. But both the records are silent at this regard.
- (ii) It cannot be supported to the religious point of view of the king Vainyagupta. Ancient king generally used to the dynastic emblem or insignia according to their religious beliefs. They attached to the symbol of their dear god and goddess to their copper plates and coins authenticating these as a seal.¹⁵ The Gunāighar copper plate of Vainyagupta bears '*Bṛṣabha*' (bull), as a dynastic symbol. We know that 'bull' is generally used to as a symbolic representation of Siva. Moreover, it is mentioned to the Gunāighar copper plate that Mahārājā Vainyagupta was a devotee of Mahādeva. A professedly Saiva (follower of the Siva) king must not use Garuḍa instead of bull as a royal insignia to his coin.

- (iii) The obverse of these coins bear Garuḍa symbol, which is a symbolic representation of Viṣṇu. So, it is ascertained that the issuer king of these coins will be Vaiṣṇava (follower of Viṣṇu). The Gajalakṣmī seal of the present copper plate and the Lakṣmī symbol of the coins are related to the Vaisnava's sect. Dvādaśāditya legend and the symbolic similarity between the coins and the copper plate may indicate that these coins were issued by Dvādaśāditya, another Post-Gupta king on the basis of our recently discovered copper plate, not Vainyagupta. It may be reasonable to attribute him to these coins when we come to know of a contemporary king Dvādaśāditya by name, whose copper plate inscription has been discovered. It appears to the present author that these coins furnish proofs of his existence and reign.¹⁶

From the above noted discussion, it may indicate that the coins, which were assigned to Vainyagupta, were probably not issued by him. It is most likely that these coins were wrongly attributed to Vainyagupta by the scholars in the past. Off course, then it was not possible to identify these coins correctly for the lack of authentic corroborative source material. The copper plate of Dvādaśāditya has opened up a fresh ground to attribute more correctly about these coins. At the same time, the present record has made it clear that 'Dvādaśāditya' was not the title or epithet of Vainyagupta. *Mahārājādhirāja* Dvādaśāditya was another Post-Gupta powerful king in the line of Dharmāditya, who ruled in ancient Bengal, especially in Vaṅga sub-region after the Gupta rule. So, the existing idea about the coins of Vainyagupta and his title 'Dvādaśāditya' should be reassessed with the light of the copper plate of Dvādaśāditya.

Review the Place of Vainyagupta: Now we would like to discuss various issues raised by the Gunaighar copper plate¹⁷ of Vainyagupta. The cognomen or appellative 'Gupta'; the Gupta Era referred to the Gunaighar plate; and the Gupta era 188 (506-507 A.D.) while the Guptas were ruling in India including North Bengal; are mainly responsible for that he is supposed to belong to the Imperial Gupta dynasty. But no absolute indication about this is found to the Gunāighar copper plate as the record does not bear any genealogical description of this king. The record reveals the title of Vainyagupta as 'Mahārājā' that is generally applied to ancient times in the case of

feudatory chiefs or small kings those of having no extensive dominion. The second point is that the Imperial Guptas of Magadha were *Vaiṣṇavas* by religion, while Vainyagupta was a professedly Saiva king. The Gunāighar copper plate bears a bull seal which is the symbolic representation of Siva. Moreover, it is referred at the beginning of the plate that he is meditating at the feet of the Mahādeva (*Bhagavān-Mahādeva-pādāmudhyāta*). So, Vainyagupta of the Gunaighar copper plate was undoubtedly a Saiva (follower of Siva) king. But in the later a very small fragment of a baked red clay seal was discovered amid the ruins of Nalanda.¹⁸ The seal contains only a very small portion of the last four lines but it has got great historical value. The seal was found along with those of the other kings including Budhagupta and have a similar nature with the seal of the other Gupta monarchs. The only line of the seal that can be read in full and with certainty to the last which has '*Parama-bhagavato-Mahārājādhirāja-Śrī-Vainyagūptaḥ*.' The first point is raised by the seal that Vainyagupta is represented here as the title *Mahārājādhirāja*. The second point is that he is introduced with the epithet *Parama-bhagavato* (follower of *Vishnu* or *Vaiṣṇava*). The evidence thus runs counter to the identification of the Vainyagupta of the Gunaighar copper plate with the Vainyagupta of the clay seal.¹⁹ The dissimilarity of the title and religious faith between the seal and the copper plate grant pertinently raised a question, was Vainyagupta of the Gunāighar grant a member of the Imperial Gupta family? Or was there another Vainyagupta who was a local king of South-East Bengal?

How do we explain different titles used in the two source materials? Or the title '*Mahārāja*' is referred to the Gunāighar plate and it may indicates that he was not a great king, but in the case how can we explain his assumption of the title of *Mahārājādhirāja* to the Nalanda seal? Does it indicate that he regain his full power and became a great monarch by occupying other parts of Bengal and a part of Vihar in the later days of his career?²⁰ But this idea may not be supported to the ground that such instances are widely seen in the case of other Gupta monarchs. Budhagupta is styled as *Mahārāja* in the Sāranāth inscription dated 477 A.D., while in the other sources he is represented as *Mahārājādhirāja*. Candragupta I²¹ and Samudragupta are presented as *Mahārāja* in the Radhapur Plate.²² But we know that both of them were the great kings and they had a vast empire. The other sources report them as

Mahārājādhirāja; just as Kumāragupta I, is called *Mahārāja* in his Mankuwar stone image inscription. Probably same thing is appeared to the case of Vainyagupta. In this connection, another important point may be noted here. One *Mahārāja* Vijayasena was the *dūtaka* of the Gunāighar grant, the great leader of his elephant force and he was the superintendent of five administrative offices. Another one *Mahārāja* Rudradatta was a vassal king under Vainyagupta. How did it possible to work of these two *Mahārājās* under another one *Mahārāja*, whose status were the same? It is clearly enough to indicate that Vainyagupta was more powerful than *Mahārāja*, and there is leave no any doubt that he was certainly an overlord of feudal kings whose titles were *Mahārājā* and he was a powerful emperor. Probably, it was responsible for the persons those who composed the records or the concerning persons of the office of *Adhikaraṇa* from where the record was issued. So, the title ‘*Mahārājā*’ referred to the Gunaighar copper plate cannot be an obstacle to establish him as an emperor or member of the mighty Gupta family.

Now, it may be discussed about the question of religion. Why did he accept Saivism instead of Vaiṣṇavism like the other Vaiṣṇava Guptas? N. N. Dasgupta has made an attempt to represent him the follower of both the Saivism and the Vaisnavism. He has suggested, “The evidence of these coins, if the standard to the left on the obverse be really Garuḍa standard, shows that Vainyagupta was a worshiper of Viṣṇu as well, just as, for instance, Vaidyadeva of Kāmarūpa is represented in the Kamauli inscription as both *Parama-Maheśvara* and *Parama-Vaiṣṇava*”.²³ This suggestion is reasonable and he may be follower both the Vishnu and Śiva. In ancient time, kings of the same dynasty might be the follower of different gods and goddess. In this connection, mention may be made that the *Parama-Maheśvara* Harṣavardhana was the brother of the *Parama-Saugata* Rājyavardhana or the son of *Paramāditya-bhakta* Prabhākaravardhana; that the *Parama-Narasimha* Lakṣmaṇasena was the son of the *Parama-maheśvara* Vallālasena and father of the *Parama-Saura* Viśvarūpasena and Kesavasena; that the *Parama-bhagavati-bhakta* Bhojadeva was the son of the *Paramāditya-bhakta* Rāmabhadradeva, and so on²⁴. So, religion may not be a factor of Vainyagupta to become a member of the Imperial Gupta family.

The Gupta appellation with his name, the Gupta era referred to the Gunāighar copper plate, and in the light of the Nalanda clay seal, it is almost certain that Vainyagupta

was a member of the Imperial Gupta family of Magadha. One silver coin of Chandragupta II and one silver coin of Skandagupta have been discovered from Gunāighar which are preserved under a private coin collector of Bangladesh named Nurul Islam. Gupta gold coins have also been found from the excavation at Mainamati. More Gupta gold coins have been found from Koṭālipāḍā²⁵ and Mohammadpur²⁶ in present Magura district. These numismatic evidences bear the testimony that South-East Bengal was included under the Gupta administration. The Gupta silver coins of Gunāighar may also be taken as corroborative evidence of the Gunāighar copper plate. So, there is leave no any doubt that Vainyagupta of the Gunaighar grant was a member of the Imperial Gupta family. But what will be his chronological order or position with the other Gupta monarchs? Nothing is reported about his predecessors to the Gunāighar Copper plate, even it is not known to how he came to power. Another one copper plate of this king has been discovered from the Salvan Vihara reported by B. M. Morrison²⁷ but the record is still unpublished. The portion of the Nalanda Terracotta seal, in which the name of his parents is incised, is broken and lost. In terracotta seal of Kumāragupta II discovered at Nalanda, Pandit Hirananda Śāstri read the name of Purugupta's queen as Vainyadevi instead of Vatsadevi.²⁸ N. N. Dasgupta suggests that Vainyadevi, the queen of Purugupta, may be the mother of Vainyagupta. He suggested, "...for the naming of a son after the name of his mother is not an uncommon feature in ancient Indian history". He has made references to support his view that in a Nāgarjuni-koṇḍa inscription, the son of Budhimnaka is Budhimnaka, the husband of Bodhiśrī; in the Manhali copper plate of Madanpala, his mother is *Madanādevī*; in the Karitālāi plate of *Mahārāja* Jayanatha, the son of Kūmāradevī is Kumāradeva etc.²⁹ R. C. Majumdar has referred to an interesting point that may be taken into consideration at this regard. He closely observed the Nalanda seal of Vainyagupta in which line 3 contained the name of his father, but unfortunately, this part was broken just at the point where the proper name of the father was written. He finds that immediately before the letter 'gū,' there is a sign of a hook-like curve opens to the left at the bottom level of the line. So, he is sure that the preceding letter ended with a 'u-kāra'. Thus the name of the father of Vainyagupta must have ended in 'u'-kāra. Now there are only two names which may be considered in this connection, namely, Puru (gupta) and Vishnu (gupta). The letter is inadmissible on two grounds. In the first

place, as 'ṣṇ' is a conjunct consonant, *u-kāra* sign would naturally be much below the bottom level of the next letter as it is actually the case in the seal of Viṣṇugupta himself. Here, however, the *u-kāra* sign is a little above the bottom level of the next letter. It indicates that the name of Vainyagupta's father may be Purugupta. R. C. Majumdar has further argues that as Vainyagupta reigns in 506 A.D. and the Budhagupta's last known date is 495 A.D. So, we can scarcely expect Visnugupta to be the father of Vainyagupta, for Visnugupta was great-grand-nephew of Budhagupta. For these reasons, it may be regarded as almost certain that Purugupta was the father of Vainyagupta.³⁰ R. C. Majumdar's view is reasonable and may be accepted. Probably Purugupta had, at least, three sons- Budhagupta, Vainyagupta and Narasimāgupta. The last known date of Budhagupta is 495 A.D. and Vainyagupta may come to power after sometime of this date.

N. G. Majumdar suggests that Gopacandra was the posterior of Vainyagupta³¹ on the basis of *Mahārājā* Vijayasena who is mentioned to both the Mallasarul copper plate and the Gunāighar plate. But the Jayārāmpur plate of Gopacandra does not support to this view. The record states that the king Gopacandra was the son of Dhanacandra through his wife Giridevī and his father does not bear any royal title.³² This has proved that Gopacandra had no any royal origin and he was another line of king. So, in the present state of our knowledge, it is not possible to determine whether the Gupta rule was continuing in South-East Bengal after Vainyagupta. The clay seal as well as the Gunaighar grant clearly indicates that he was not only a member of the Imperial Gupta family but his kingdom was also extended from South-East Bengal to eastern Vihar (Magadha-Nalanda). At the same time, the seal clearly suggests that Vainyagupta was not a simply Mahārājā, but a Mahārājādhirāja or a powerful monarch.

The Gupta age is remarkable for a high watermark of culture and civilization. The impact of the Gupta rule in South-East Bengal was profound and far-reaching. The administrative units or divisions, the designations of the officers and their functions, the land measurement and land system, tax system, even above all, the whole Post-Gupta administrative system of South-East Bengal was developed following the Gupta tradition. The use of Śrī-paṭṭa, the seal of the provincial governors of the Gupta administrative system, by both Lokanātha and Śrīdhārana bears witness to the fact

that Gupta sway had spread over the district of Tippera, Noakhali, Sylhet and Cachar. The copper plate charters, which have been discovered from South-East Bengal, were incised and issued following the Gupta tradition. Though the sculptural art of South-East Bengal has a character of its own, primarily it had been developed following to the artistic style and execution of the classical Gupta academic tradition. The coins of South-East Bengal were issued following to the Gupta archer type coins which are being assigned to the Gupta imitation coin. A large number of such Post-Gupta coins have been discovered from different parts of South-East Bengal and these are preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum and in the Directorate of Archaeology, government of Bangladesh. This coinage tradition helps to flourish trade and commerce in this area. Gupta rule paved the way in South-East Bengal (and also of North Bengal) shaping and flourishing its trade and commerce, administration, society and culture.

The coin should be attributed Dvādaśāditya



Obverse



Reverse

References

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5. D. C. Bhattacharyya, 'A Newly Discovered Copper plate from Tippera' , *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. VI (1930), pp. 45-60.
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The copper plate of Dvadasaditya is total 34 lines, inscribed on both the sides, the obverse containing 17 lines and the reverse 17 lines of writing. The language of the inscription is Sanskrit prose. The scripts belong to the Northeastern variety of the Gupta alphabet. From the paleographic point of view these scripts assigned to the early part of the 6th century A.D. The plate bears a Gajalakṣmī seal and the seal bears a legend *vāraka-maṇḍala-viṣaya=ādhikaraṇasya*. It indicates that the seal was issued from the office of Adhikaraṇa of the district of Vārakamaṇḍala. It was issued during the 4th regnal year of the king. The first two lines describe the king to the following style :

*Svastyāsyām-prthīvyām-apratiratha-yayātyamvariṣa-samadhrtau-ma
hārājādhirāja-Śrī-Dvādaśāditya-bhaṭṭāraka-rājye.....*

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22. N. N. Dasgupta, 'On Vainyagupta', *op. cit.*, p. 296.
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31. N. G. Majumdar, 'Mallasarul Copper plate of Vijayasena', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXIII, 1935-36, pp. 155-61.
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Chapter II

South-East Bengal in the Post-Gupta Period

Three copper plates of similar nature were discovered from Koṭālipāḍā in Faridpur District (now in Gopalganj) in 1891 and 1892. F. E. Pargiter deciphered and published them in the journal of *Indian Antiquary*.¹ The records revealed two Post-Gupta kings named Dharmāditya and Gopachandra; the former issued two of the three plates, and the other by Gopachandra. In 1960 another copper plate of Gopachandra was found in Jayārāmpur village of Balasore District in Orissa. The plate was published first by S. N. Rajaguru and re-edited by P. R. Srinivasan in the *Epigraphia Indica*.² The Mallasarul copper plate³ of Vijayasena, issued in the 3rd regnal year of the king, also refers to the name of Gopachandra. Another copper plate was discovered at the village of Ghugrāhāti under Koṭālipāḍā police station of present Gopalganj District. The plate was collected to Dhaka Museum and the record was published by N. K. Bhattasali.⁴ This inscription disclosed another king named Samāchāradeva. Another copper plate of the same king was discovered from Kurapala⁵ village in Faridpur District, which is dated in his 7th regnal year.

Thus, the aforesaid records revealed the identity of three Post-Gupta kings of South-East Bengal, who ruled mainly in Vaṅga sub-region. The find places of these plates are common, the Koṭālipāḍā area of Faridpur District (now Gopalganj). It is believed that these three kings ruled in ancient Vaṅga region one after another without any intervention. But the problem is that these plates do not record the predecessors or the successors of the ruling king, who issued the plate. Hence, it is very difficult to determine their chronological order, and it is not possible to establish their relationships and the order of their succession. So, the history and chronology of the Post-Gupta kings in Vaṅga region is not only a matter of uncertainty but also a subject of keen controversy among scholars.

In 1980, another copper plate was discovered from the village Ramashila under Kotālipādā police station in Gopalganj district. The present author has published the plate⁶ and the record revealed an unknown king named Mahārājādhirāja Śrī-Dvādasāditya. This newly discovered king demands a fresh assessment of the Post-Gupta history of ancient Bengal.

A brief description of this newly discovered copper-plate would be very pertinent here. The plate was discovered in 1980 from the village Ramashila-Pirerbādi under the Kotālipādā Police Station in Gopalganj District (former Faridpur) and it is now preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum (accession no. 80. 513). There are in total 34 lines of writings, inscribed on both the sides of the plate, which measures 29cm. in length and 14cm. in breadth. The language of the inscription is Sanskrit prose except five imprecatory verses, which are in poetry. The scripts belong to the North-Eastern variety of the Gupta alphabets. From the paleographic point of view, the form of the scripts belongs to the early part of the 6th century A.D. The writing style of the plate is similar to the other Faridpur Post-Gupta copper plates. The inscription bears a Gajalakṣmī seal, affixed at the top of the plate with the legend *Vārakamaṇḍala-viṣayādhikaraṇasya* in it. It indicates that the plate was issued from the (office) of Adikaraṇa in Vārakamaṇḍala Viṣaya (district).⁷

The plate reveals the name of a King, *Mahārājādhirāja Śrī-Dvādasāditya*, who is stated to be without a rival in this earth. He is also compared to the traditional powerful kings Yayāti and Amvarīṣa. The record also discloses the name of a great feudal lord Vindāpati (king of Vindā)⁸ Haradatta, who had gained his dignity (from the *Mahārājādhirāja*) through his favour and washed his legs by the water of the Eastern Sea (Bay of Bengal).

Rājānaka⁹ Sāma, the Viniyūktaka of Vārakamaṇḍala, applied to the king that he would like to purchase some plots of land to be bestowed to some Brāhmanas. He also requested to give him the lands fixing up the boundaries in the district and for this he would pay the proper price. In response to this request, the record keeper Jayasena informed that the rule of sale of land in the district at the rate of four Dinaras for each

Kūlyavāpa, a custom established in countries bordering to the Eastern Sea. For such sale one-sixth share of religious merit accrues to the king. Rājānaka Sāma paid 8 Dināras and two Kūlyavāpas of land were sold to him, according to the custom of granting copper plate charter, after measuring them out by 8x9 *nalas* by the hands of Sivacandra.¹⁰ Then Rājānaka Sāma distributed these lands to a number of Brāhmins, for the merit of his parents, desirous of enjoying benefit in the next world. The last eight lines of the inscription contain usual imprecatory verses and the boundaries of the gifted land. In the narrated boundaries, the river Ghāgar has been mentioned and on the bank of the river the Ghugrāhāṭi (hat on the bank of the river Ghāgar) the Copper Plate of Samāchāradeva was found. This is actually the subject matter of the copper plate.

Some issues raised by the inscription need to be discussed in greater details. The first point is the determination of the identity of the hitherto unknown king named Dvādaśāditya, who is styled as *Mahārājādhirāja* (king of the kings). The king was certainly not of the Gupta lineage, because he did not use the Gupta Era in the plate and at the same time, no Gupta appellation or cognomen is attached to his name. He may well have been a successor of the Guptas in the area where the Guptas once held sway.

In this connection, numismatic evidence in support of determining the existence of the newly discovered king Dvādaśāditya may be mentioned. Some coins have already been discussed in the previous chapter regarding Vainyagupta. Now these coins are being preserved in the British Museum. The exact provenances of these coins are not known. Probably they came from the Kalighāt hoard. John Allan first included these coins to his catalogue.¹¹ They are Gupta archer type gold coins like those of Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I. The obverse of the coins bear Garuḍa standard symbol and the two letters 'cha' and 'ndra', (Chandra), while the reverse bears Lakṣmī and the legend Śrī-Dvādaśādityaḥ. But the reading of the obverse legend of the coins is a matter of controversy among the scholars. Allan, Smith¹² and Rapson¹³ generally ascribed the coins to 'Chandra' or Chandragupta II or Chandragupta III. But D. C. Ganguly does not subscribe to their view. He reads the two letters on the obverse as 'vai' and 'nya' (vainya) and attributed these coins to Vainyagupta.¹⁴

Scholars generally accepted the reading of D. C. Ganguly¹⁵ and since then it has been established in the history of ancient Bengal that Vainyagupta issued these coins and assumed the title Dvādaśāditya.¹⁶

But after a close observation of the coins, and on the basis of the present copper plate, it seems probable that these coins may more appropriately be assigned to Dvādaśāditya, the newly discovered Post-Gupta king of the Ramashila copper-plate. The assumption that Vainyagupta issued these coins no longer holds good. Firstly, if Vainyagupta had assumed the title of Dvādaśāditya, certainly it would have been referred to in the Gunāighar copper-plate and in Vainyagupta's Nalanda clay seal. Secondly, it cannot be supported on the religious ground of the king Vainyagupta, whose Gunāighar copper plate bears 'bull' in its seal and it is the symbolic representation of Siva. Moreover, it is mentioned in the Gunāighar copper plate that *Mahārājā* Vainyagupta was a devotee of Mahādeva (*Bhagavān-Mahādeva-pādāmudhyāta*). A professedly Saīva king must not use Garuḍa instead of bull as a royal insignia in his coins. Thirdly, the obverse of these coins bears the Garuḍa, which is a symbolic representation of Viṣṇu. Hence, it is certain that the king who issued these coins was a follower of Viṣṇu. The Gajalakṣmī seal of the present plate and the Garuḍa symbol of the coins are related to the Vaiṣṇava sect. Dvādaśāditya legend and the symbolic similarity between the coins and the copper plate sufficiently suggest that these coins may be issued by Dvādaśāditya, not by Vainyagupta. It may be confirmed when we come to know of a contemporary king Dvādaśāditya by name, whose copper plate inscription has now been discovered.

It appears that king Dvādaśāditya issued gold coins, he assumed the title *Mahārājādhirāja* (king of the kings) and he is said to be the overlord of the feudatory chiefs like *Mahāsāmanta* (great feudal lord) Haradatta. He has been presented in the plate as '*prthivyaṁ-apratiratha*' (without a rival in this earth); he has also been compared to the traditional powerful kings like Yayāti and Amvarīṣa. All these points may be taken to consider him that he was a powerful and independent king. So this newly discovered king deserves to be incorporated in the history of ancient Bengal and the Post-Gupta history of ancient Bengal need to be revised in the light of the facts offered in the present copper plate.

So far we know seven copper plates,¹⁷ a terracotta seal¹⁸ and a number of Gupta imitation gold coins relating to the Post-Gupta history of Bengal have hitherto been discovered and published. These sources revealed the existence of three Post-Gupta kings named, Dharmāditya, Gopachandra and Samācharādeva. Now Dvādaśāditya is going to add another Post-Gupta king.

The name of another Post-Gupta king may be mentioned on the basis of numismatic evidence. Three Gupta imitation gold coins, preserved in the British Museum¹⁹ provide us the name of Sudhanyāditya. Two of the coins bear the legend Sudhanyā and one bears the legend Sudhanyāditya. Besides, six gold coins from Savar (Dhaka district), one from Dhaka district (the exact provenance is not known), one from Koṭālipādā in the Gopalganj district and one from Bagura district bear the legend Sudhanya.²⁰ Some unpublished gold coins of this king are preserved in the reserve collection of the Bangladesh National Museum. Most of them were found from Dhaka, Faridpur and Comilla Districts. All these gold coins certainly bring to light the existence of another Post-Gupta king named Sudhanyāditya.²¹

It is interesting to note that the copper plate of Dvādaśāditya has much similarity with the two copper plates of Dharmāditya. These three copper plates have a common find place, the Koṭālipādā area of Faridpur district. They bear a common royal seal *Gajalakṣmī* and their formats and writing styles are common in many respects. The seal in all the three plates bear a common legend, 'Vārakamaṇḍala-*viṣayādhikaraṇasya*', and it indicates that their places of issue were possibly same, the office of *Adhikaraṇa* in the district of Vārakamaṇḍala. They refer to a common surveyor Sivacandra, common land measurement Kūlyavāpa, and a common rate of sale of four Dināras for each Kūlyavāpa land in the countries of the Eastern Sea (the Bay of Bengal). Their writing styles are also similar in many respects as they begin with the expression '*svastyāsyam-prthīvyām-apratiratha...*

Both Dharmāditya and Dvādaśāditya assumed the title *Mahārājādhirāja*, *Paramabhaṭṭāraka* and both of them compared themselves with such traditional kings-*Nrga*, *Nahuṣa*, *Yayāti* and *Amvarīṣa*. Both the names end with 'āditya'. With a close observation, one can easily see that most of the sections of these three plates have very much common description except the names of persons responsible for the

issue of the plates and the names of the Brahmans to whom lands were bestowed. The common nature of the plates and the common writing styles tend to include them in one single group. In this connection, mention may be made that the name of Sudhanyāditya also ends with *āditya*. Moreover, the coin of this king has also been discovered from Kotālipādā. These two points may indicate that he was another king in the same line of Dharmāditya and Dvādaśāditya. And, hence, this period demands revision by including Sudhanyāditya in the same line of kings.

Some scholars think that Dharmāditya, Gopachandra and Samāchāradeva are the kings of the same line.²² They came to this conclusion considering some common points referred to in their plates. In this connection, mention may be made that all the Post-Gupta kings styled themselves as *Mahārājādhirāja* and compared themselves with the traditional kings like Nrga, Nahuṣa, Yayāti and Amvarīṣa etc. all the plates begin with the same writing style as “*sastyāsyam-prthīvyam-apratiratha-Yayātyamvarīṣam...*” But if we closely observe the plates, it will be clear to us that there is also much dissimilarity between the plates of Dharmāditya and Gopachandra. Reference may be made that some technical terms, such as, *tāmrapaṭṭa-dharma*, *akṣayanīvidharma*, *dharmasadbhāglābh*, *kṛtakalana*, *dr̥ṣṭimātra-pravandhā*, *prasādalahdhāspada*²³ etc. are referred to in the copper plates of Dharmāditya and Dvādaśāditya. But these terms are not referred to in the Faridpur plate of Gopachandra and Samāchāradeva. On the other hand, the imprecatory verses are not common in these plates. References may be made that: (i) ‘*sāmantarājābhi-samadhiṣata-śastra-dharmābhi-bhūmidāna-amupālana-kṣepānumodanesu-samyaga-dattānyapi-dānāni-rājābhiranaiḥ-pratipālaniya-pratyāvagamya-bhūmi-dāna*’; (ii) ‘*pūrvva-dattā-dvijātibhyo-yamādrakṣa-yudhiṣṭhirah-mahī-mahīmatām-śreṣṭha-dānāt-śreyomupālanam*’. These two imprecatory verses are only referred to in the copper plates of Dharmāditya and Dvādaśāditya. On the other hand, only one imprecatory verse is used in the plates of Gopachandra and Samāchāradeva and this is ‘*sva-dattām-paradattām-ye-hareta...*’ Their writing style is quite different from those of the plates of Dharmāditya and Dvādaśāditya. Hence, it is clear that all the Post-Gupta kings of Bengal do not belong to the same line. Dharmāditya, Dvādaśāditya and Sudhanyāditya may be the kings of one single line. But Samāchāraveda and Gopachandra seem to belong to another line of kings though all of them ruled in the same area one after another.

Now we would like to discuss the long standing controversial issue of the history of ancient Bengal: the comparative chronology of the Post-Gupta kings. The Post-Gupta copper plates, which had been discovered so far from the greater Faridpur district, did not refer anything about the predecessors or the successors of the ruling kings. This aspect of the plates naturally raised some questions: how and when did they come to power? Or who came earlier and who came later? What was their relationship? These questions were raised regarding the three Post-Gupta kings-Dharmāditya, Gopachandra and Samāchāradeva and scholars were divided in their opinions regarding all these points. Now a newly discovered king, Dvādaśāditya by name, has been added to this line. Where will be his chronological position? Sudhanyāditya may also be taken into discussion in this regard. So, the question of chronology of these Post-Gupta kings may turn into a complicated and controversial subject now.

Pargiter, who first edited the Faridpur plates, propounded the view that Dharmāditya was the first king and Gopachandra succeeded him with none intervening, unless it was for a very short interval.²⁴ Firstly, he made an attempt to solve this problem from the paleographic point of view. He refers to two types of 'ya' (bipartite and tripartite) and indicates that the earlier form of 'ya' (tripartite) has been detected in the plates of Dharmāditya, while the later form of 'ya' (bipartite) has been incised in the plate of Gopachandra. Secondly, the surveyor of land has been referred to the plate of Dharmāditya as Śivachandra, while he has been referred to the copper plate of Gopachandra with an additional epithet as '*Pratita-dharmasīla-Śivacandra*'. These two reasons might have prompted Pargiter to think like that.

But R. C. Majumdar does not accept this view. He has criticized Pargiter and put forward an opposite view.²⁵ He has offered the following reasons in favour of his view:

- i. He comments that paleography (use of later form of 'ya' in the plate of Gopachandra) cannot settle the comparative chronology for a short period of time. He has argued that the earliest form of 'ya' has also been used in the Mallasarul copper plate. He further added that rather later form of 'śa' has been found in the copper plate of Dharmāditya.

- ii. According to him, '*Pratita-dharmasīla*', the additional epithet of Śivachandra, may have been used due to the personal predilection of the writer of the record and not due to his seniority.
- iii. He put forward an opposite view referring that the identity of Vijayasena both in the Gunāighar and the Mallasarul plate can give priority to Gopachandra over Dharmāditya.
- iv. On the basis of the Jayārāmpur copper plate, he commented, "For, if we accept the statement that the father of Gopachandra had no royal title and he was raised to the supremacy by the people, there can be hardly any doubt that Gopachandra was the founder of this royal family and Dharmāditya came to the throne after him"²⁶

S. C. Mukherji,²⁷ who has recently added an important work on this subject, supports Pargiter on paleographic ground. He follows Pargiter and goes into details of the paleographic explanation of the different forms of the test letter 'ya' "...having (a) tripartite shape with an opening on the outer side, and (b) a curve turning to the left without forming a loop, and (c) a well-developed bipartite shape preferring the shape of (b) above, in latter records. In the copper plate of Gopachandra we find a third form of 'ya' for the first time, the bipartite one besides the old tripartite form of 'ya', which is commonly met with in the grants of Dharmāditya. In the copper plate of Samācāradeva, the bipartite form of 'ya' which reaches almost it's fully developed form has been used in all cases..." On the other hand, he is not interested to take '*Pratita-dharmasīla*' as an epithet of Sivachandra. He thinks that there are two surveyors, viz. Dharmasīla and Sivachandra in the two Faridpur copper plates. He further added that in the first plate of the former, only one surveyor, i.e. Sivachandra has been mentioned without any epithet attached to his name. Moreover, the third case-ending singular has been used there, but in the other two records where names of the two surveyors have been mentioned, the third case ending has not been used. This may also throw a welcome light on settling the comparative chronology of the two kings and of the plates.²⁸

Both Pargiter and S. C. Mukherji has pointed out the variations of alphabets and shown the later development of the test letter 'ya'. But the scholars believe that there

was not much gap between the dates of issue of the two Faridpur copper plates of Dharmāditya and the plate of Gopachandra. On the other hand, all these post-Gupta copper plates were written in the eastern variety of the Gupta script. These types of scripts were used in the 4th, 5th and in the early part of the 6th century A.D.,²⁹ and now it is actually very difficult to detect their variations. Hence, this paleographic analysis should not be taken as a safe ground unless it is not supported by other facts.

Śivachandra is mentioned in both the copper plates of Dharmāditya and the plate of Dvādaśāditya. But he is referred to in the copper plate of Gopachandra as '*Pratita-Dharmaśīla-Śivachandra*'. '*Pratita-dharmaśīla*' may be an additional epithet of Śivachandra. Why was this epithet used in the plate of Gopachandra? Does it indicate anything else? However, it must be admitted that it is very difficult to determine.

R.C. Majumdar has propounded the case of Vijayasena, a feudal king mentioned in the Gunāighar plate, to settle the comparative chronology. At the same time, the Mallasarul copper plate, which was issued during the 3rd regnal year of Gopachandra, bears the name of another Vijayasena, and whose title is also Mahārājā (great king). R. C. Majumdar thinks that these two Vijayasenas are one and the same person. On the basis of this information, he came to the decision that Gopachandra came to power after Vainyagupta and hence, Gopachandra was the first king of this line.

But it is interesting to note that the find places of the two plates, Gunaighar and Mallasarul, are far apart. One was issued during the rule of Vainyagupta, and another was issued during the reign of Gopachandra. Their designations are different; one is introduced by only Mahārājā, while another is introduced with five additional titles along with Mahārājā, like the Royal Ambassador, leader of the elephant force, Chief Police officer and so on. There is not a single reference in ancient history of Bengal that one feudal king leaves one area and settled himself in a far away place. Hence, a question may be raised, were these two Vijayasenas the same person? We are not certain on this point. So, the case of Vijayasena should not be taken as a safe ground to solve this problem.

D. C. Sircar thinks that Dharmāditya, having 'āditya' as name-ending like many Gupta kings, was a scion of the Imperial Gupta family.³⁰ He refers to the literary text '*Ārya-Manjusri-Mūla-Kalpa*'³¹ to strengthen his view. It refers to the rule of a king

called 'va' (initial) and of his successor or younger brother called 'dha'. D. C. Sircar took 'va' to stand for Vainyagupta and 'dha' for Dharmāditya. This indicates that Dharmāditya came after Vainyagupta and he was the first king of this line. But this view cannot be accepted without any hesitation as the Gupta Era has not been referred to in Dharmāditya's plate. On the other hand, no Gupta appellative or cognomen has been attached to the name of Dharmāditya. Moreover, the writing styles, technical terms, seals and the format of these plates are different from those of the Gupta copper plates discovered from northern Bengal. Dvādaśāditya, Dharmāditya and Sudhanyāditya may have had some connection with the Guptas as their vassal chiefs, who captured power during the decline of the Gupta Empire. Probably, they assumed the 'āditya' titles, as though they wanted to establish themselves as powerful as the mighty Gupta kings. But in the absence of any authentic record, there is no scope to come to a definite conclusion.

It is interesting to note that Nāgdeva, who served both Dharmāditya and Gopachandra, bears two designations. In the copper plate of Dharmāditya he is mentioned as *Mahāpratihāroparika* (*Mahāpratihāra*=chief of palace guard and *uparika*=local governor). But in Gopachandra's copper plate he is mentioned as *Kumārāmātyoparika*. *Kumārāmātyoparika* is a higher post than *Mahāmātyoparika* and it may indicate that he served both the kings and was promoted during the reign of Gopachandra. This point is sufficiently strong enough to prove that Dharmāditya came before Gopachandra.

I have already discussed that there is much similarity between the copper plates of Dharmāditya and Dvādaśāditya. It may be taken to indicate that they are the kings of a single group. The writing style of their plates, the common technical terms, even some of the sections of these two plates are similar – all these are sufficient to suggest that they came to power one after another. But in the present state of our knowledge, it is not possible to determine their exact chronology or relationship. With the common 'āditya' name-ending, Sudhanyāditya may be included in the same line. But he is known only on the basis of coins and hence we have no scope to fix up his position until more corroborative evidence is discovered. It is certain that he is not a king of the Gupta lineage, at all, as his coins have been discovered only in Bengal and these

coins were issued imitating the Gupta device. So, there is leave no doubt that Sudhanyāditya was a Post-Gupta king.

The writing style of the copper plates of Gopachandra and Samāchāradeva are different nature than the plates of Dharmāditya and Dvādaśāditya, which indicates that they belong to another line of king although they ruled in the same region and their ruling period was near about. Scholars have generally accepted that Samāchāradeva was the last of this line of kings. Hence, their chronological order may be: Dvādaśāditya or Dharmāditya, then Sudhanyāditya, while Samāchāradeva was the last king of this line. It is very difficult to determine the position of Gopachandra. It is almost certain that he was a different line of king and he was not the royal origin as his father Dhanachandra was not a king conformed from the Jayārāmpur copper plate. The present author has found two unpublished gold coins of Gopachandra in the collection of the Bangladesh National Museum. These coins are the Gupta imitation gold coin. There is no Āditya ending title in these coins like Sudhanyāditya, or Narendrāditya title of the coin of Samāchāradeva. So, it is almost certain that he is different line of king, who may come either to the first of this line or in the last. But it does not seem an improbable conjecture that all these post-Gupta kings formed a dynasty that took place of the Guptas in Eastern India³²

Kotalipada Copper plate of Dvādaśāditya



Obverse



Reverse

Gold Coin of Gopachandra



Obverse



Reverse

Gold Coin of Sudhanyāditya



Obverse



Reverse

References

1. F. A. Pargiter. 'The Faridpur Copper Plates'. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XXXIX, 1910, p. 193.
2. P. R. Srinivasan. 'Jayarāmpur plate of Gopachandra'. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXXIX, pp. 142-148.
3. N. G. Majumdar. 'Mallasarūl Copper plate of Vijayasena'. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXIII, 1935-36, pp. 155-61.
4. N. K. Bhattasali. 'The Ghugrāhātī Copper Plate of Samāchāradeva'. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 77-86.
5. The Kurpālā copper plate is badly corroded and still unpublished. D. C. Sircar has published a very short description of the plate. D. C. Sircar, *Pāla Pūrva Yugera Vamsānucharit* (Bangla), Kolkata, 1982, p. 112.
6. Shariful Islam. 'Koṭālipadā Copper plate of Dvādaśāditya'. *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Vol. LIII, Number 4, 2011, pp. 71-82.

The Rāmashila copper plate of Dvādaśāditya contains 34 lines, inscribed on both sides, the obverse containing 17 lines and the reverse 17 lines of writing. The language of the inscription is Sanskrit prose. The scripts belong to the North-Eastern variety of the Gupta alphabets. From the paleographic point of view, the scripts are assigned to the early part of the 6th century A.D. The plate bears a *Gajalakṣmī* seal which bears the legend 'Vāraka-maṇḍala-viṣayādihikaraṇasya'. It indicates that the seal was issued from the office Adhikaraṇa of the district of Vārakamaṇḍala. The plate was issued during the 4th regnal year of the king. The first three lines describe king in the following style:

Line 1: *Samvata 4 Vaiśākha dine 10 svastyāsyām-prthivīyām-apratirathayayātyamvarīṣa-samadhrtau-ma*

Line 2: *hārājādhirāja-Śrī-Dvādaśāditya-bhaṭṭāraka-rājye-tadprasāda-labdhāspade-pūrva-samudrāmbu-prakṣālita-charaṇe*

Line 3: *Śrī-mahāsāmanta-bindāpati-Haradattasyādhyāsanakāle-Vārakamaṇḍale-tadviniyuktaka-rājānaka-akṣa-Śāmodhika...*

(Samvata 4 Vaiśākha day 10, let there be welfare to all of you. While the Mahārājādhirāja (king of the kings) Śrī-Dvādaśāditya, who is without a rival in this earth and who is equal in prowess to Yayāti and Amvarīṣa, the great feudal lord Vindāpati Haradatta, who washed his legs in the water of Eastern sea (Bay of Bengal), gaining his dignity through his favour, is governing.)

7. 'Vāraka' was originally the name of a *maṇḍala* (subdivision), but it afterwards became the name of a *viṣaya* (district). Pargiter's translation 'a district in the province of vāraka' is wrong. The seal belong to the board of administration of the *viṣaya* called *Vārakamaṇḍala*, which seems to have included parts of the Goalundo subdivision of the Faridpur district (D. C. Sircar, *Select Inscription*, University of Calcutta, 1942, p. 368). But according to N. K. Bhattasali, the word 'vāraka' means obstructing, opposing; 'maṇḍala' means a collection of small areas. So, the word *Vārakamaṇḍala* should be taken to mean 'an area of land consisting of smaller areas lying between the separating rivers; 'Vāraka' may also be taken in the sense of 'the deltaic land that obstructs and alters the current of a river; 'Vārakamaṇḍala' would then be the district

- round Kotālipādā area in the present Gopalganj district (N. K. Bhattasali, 'Ghugrāhāti Copper Plate Inscription of Samacharadeva', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XVIII, p. 84).
8. 'Pati' is a Sanskrit word meaning 'king', such as *narapati*, *ksitipati* etc. *Vindapati* possibly means the king of Vinda area. Haradatta was the great feudal king of this area. As king Haradatta washed his legs by the water of the Bay of Bengal, it may be taken into account that this place was somewhere near to the sea. The present Bhandaria of Pirozpur district may be identical with 'Vindā'. This place is quite close to the Bay of Bengal as well as it is not very far from Kotalipada.
 9. It has been suggested that the term '*rājānaka*' which occurs in the Chamba inscription is a Sanskritised rather than a real Sanskrit word. The expression in Chamba corresponded, as Vogel suggested (*Antiquities of Chamba*, pp. 110, 121.) to Rānā and was applied as a title to the vassals of its Rājās. The *Rājatarangini* used the word '*rājānaka*' in Kashmir almost in the same sense as it is denoted by the word 'minister'. B. C. Sen thinks that the word Rānaka that is widely used in the later period inscriptions has been derived from Rājānaka. Rājānaka and Rānaka convey the same meaning.
 - B. C. Sen, 'Administration under the Pālas and the Senas', *Indian Culture*, Vol. VII, 1940, p. 212.
 10. Śivacandra was the name of a surveyor. He is also referred to in the other inscription as the '*Pratita dharmastha*'. Probably he introduced a system of land measurement by the *aṣṭaka-navaka-nala* (8x9 reeds), which is recognized by his name.
 - V. Lakṣinarayana, '*Aṣṭaka-Navaka-Nalā*', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XIX, pp. 264-266.
 11. John Allan, *Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasties and of Śaśānka, King of Gauḍa*, published by Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 54, Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi-110055, p. 144.
 12. V. A. Smith, *Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum Calcutta*, Vol. I, Oxford 1906, pp. 106-107.
 13. E. J. Rapson, *Numismatic Chronicle*, London 1891, p. 57.
 14. D. C. Ganguly, 'Vainyagupta Dvādaśāditya', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, September, 1933; F. A. Pargiter, 'The Faridpur Copper Plates', *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XXXIX, 1910, p. 193.
 15. R. C. Majumdar, 'Vainyagupta Dvādaśāditya', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, December 1933, pp. 989-991; see also N. N. Dasgupta, 'On Vainyagupta', *Indian Culture*, Vol. 5, No. 3, January 1939, pp. 297-303.
 16. R. C. Majumdar (ed.), *History of Bengal*, Vol. I, University of Dacca, 1943, p. 49.
 17. Two copper plates of king Dharmāditya: one undated and the other dated in his 3rd regnal year, found in Kotalipādā in Gopalganj district. Three copper plates of king Gopachandra: 1. Gayārāmpur copper plate, regnal year-1 from Balasore district, Orissa, India; 2. Mallasarul copper plate, regnal year 3, Burdwan district, West Bengal; 3. Kotālipādā copper plate, regnal year 19. And two copper plates of king Samāchāradeva: 1. Kurpālā copper plate, regnal year 7, Faridpur district. 2. Ghugrāhāti copper plate, regnal year 14, Kotālipādā, Gopalganj district.
 18. Hirananda Shastri, 'Terracotta Seal of King Samāchāradeva discovered from Nālānda (Bihar)', *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No. 66, p. 31.
 19. J. Allan, *Catalogue of Coins of the Gupta Dynasties and of Sasanka, King of Gauḍa*, London 1914, pp. 154(pl. XXIV, pp. 17-19).

20. M. Harunur Rashid. 'The Maināmati Gold Coins'. *Bangladesh Lalitkala*, Vol. I, No. 1, January 1975, p. 45.
21. Firoz Mahmud. 'Fresh Assessment of the Post-Gupta Gold Coins', *Jadughar Samachara*, News Letter of the Bangladesh National Museum, December 1906, p. 3.
22. B. N. Mukherji, *Coins and Currency Systems of Post-Gupta Bengal (C. AD. 550-700)*, published by Munshirama Monoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1993, p. 4.
23. F. A. Pargiter. 'The Faridpur Copper Plates'. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XXXIX, 1910, p. 193.
24. *Ibid*, p. 193; Ramaranjan Mukherji and Sachindra Kumar Maity, *A Corpus of Bengal Inscriptions*, Firma K. I. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta 1967, pp. 74-83.
25. R. C. Majumdar, *History of Bengal*, Vol. I, University of Dacca, 1943, p. 53.
26. R. C. Majumdar, 'A Note on King Gopacandra of Bengal', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XIII, No. 1-4, 1971, pp. 189-91.
27. S. C. Mukherji, 'Some Glimpses of Independent States in Bengal in the Gupta Period and After', *Journal of Bengal Art*, Vol. 8, 2003, pp. 83-94.
28. *Ibid*, p. 87.
29. R. D. Banerji, 'The Evidence of the Faridpur Grants', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, June 1911, p. 296.
30. D. C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, Calcutta University, Calcutta, 1942, p. 369.
31. T. Ganapati Sastri (ed.), *Ārya-Manjusri-Mūla-Kalpa*, Sanskrit Series, No. LXX, Trivandrum 1920, pp. 844-46.
32. N. K. Bhattasali, 'The Ghugrāhāti Copper Plate Inscription of Samāchāradeva and connected questions of Later Gupta Chronology', *Dacca Review*, Vol. 10, Number 2 and 3, May and June 1920, p. 55.

Chapter III

The Rātas of Samataṭa

The history of the Rātas is so far known from a single copper plate, which was discovered from the village of Kailan under Chandina Police Station of present Comilla (former Tippera) District in Bangladesh. The plate was published by D. C. Sircar in the Bangla journal *Bhāratavarṣa*, Vol. II, Vaiśākha, 1353 B.S. (March-April 1946).¹ He re-edited the inscription with its detail historical importance in 1947 in the *Indian Historical Quarterly*.² The inscription revealed a line of kings with their names ending with Rata, who ruled in Samataṭa, a distinct sub-region and political entity of ancient South-East Bengal. The record was issued by the reigning king Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta. He states that Jivadhāraṇa Rāta, his father, was the founder king of the dynasty. Baladhāraṇa Rāta is named as the crown prince. The Rātas assumed the epithet '*Samataṭeśvara*' (the lord of Samataṭa). On the basis of the '*Pancha-prāpta-mahāśabda*' epithet (generally considered as the title of a feudal lord) referred in the inscription, D. C. Sircar suggested that the Rātas were feudal chiefs of South-East Bengal and their sway was only within the boundary of the ancient kingdom of Samataṭa, which included the present Comilla and Noakhali districts. And nothing was known about their coming to power or their decline. This is mainly the history of the Rātas so far known to us.

In 1979, three copper plates were discovered while digging a canal in the village Uḍiśvara under Murādnagar Police Station in Comilla District, and the plates are now preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum. The museum accession numbers of these plates are respectively 79.63, 79.64, and 79.65. Among these plates, Plate-A (79.64) does not bear any inscription. A seal is only attached to the plate which bears a legend. The

seal is badly corroded and it is not possible to determine about the legend. Probably, the plate was prepared for granting land but ultimately the charter was not incised on. Plate – B (67.65) is badly corroded and fragment. Some portion of the plate is lost. But the size of the plate may indicate that it was issued by the Rāta king, possibly Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta.

Plate-C (67.63) is more or less decipherable though some sections are badly affected by corrosion. Fortunately, these sections contain the description of the plots of lands and their boundaries. The present author has published the inscription to the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh*³. Now we draw the attention of scholars to this recently published copper-plate and some gold coins which demand a fresh assessment of the history of the Rāta dynasty. Moreover, some suggestions made by previous scholars need to be reviewed in the light of these new materials.

The plate records that Samanta (feudal king) Vappa Simha approached to the king Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta for the granting of a piece of land which he wished to dedicate to the Uḍvihāra (a Buddhist monastery). King Śrīdhāraṇa was pleased to accept his petition and granted permanently to him 30 *droṇavāpas* of land, situated in the Guptinātana *Viṣaya* (district) lying within the jurisdiction of the *Kumārāmātya* of Devaparvata. Except the boundaries and the description of the plots of land, the genealogical portion and the imprecatory verses are quite same as that of the Kailan copper plate. So, we can be more certain about the facts disclosed by the Kailan copper plate, or in other words we may say that this record may be considered as a corroborative evidence of the Kailan copper plate.

B. N. Mukherjee⁴ refers to a Gupta archer type imitation gold coins bearing the legend 'Śrī-Jiva' which have been attributed to Jivadhāraṇa Rāta, king of the Rāta dynasty of Samatata. One specimen of this type was in the Paglātek hoard. This attribution fits perfectly into our consideration. It is probable that Jivadhāraṇa captured Samatata and emerged as an independent ruler when he struck these coins. A relatively common group of coins follows 'Śrī' both to the left of the king's head and under his arm. These pieces are similar in style with the coins of Jivadhāraṇa, but are distinctly cruder, particularly looking at the traces of legend to the right of the deity on the reverse. These pieces have been attributed by B. N. Mukherjee to Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta, son of Jivadhāraṇa Rāta. This is a

very sensible attribution. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that they are nameless, struck during a period when the ruler of Samatata was uncertain. The present author had the opportunity of examining 23 pieces of gold coins of the same type preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum. Most of them were found from South-Eastern Bengal. These numismatic evidences form corroborative sources shedding fresh light on the history of the Rātas.

Both the Kailan and the Uḍiśvara copper plates record that Jivadhāraṇa Rāta was the first king of the Rāta dynasty. But nothing is known to both the records about the early life of this king and his predecessors. In this connection, mention may be made that the Tippera plate of Lokanātha⁵ bears the name of a Jivadhāraṇa, who is mentioned as *m̐pa* (king). It is also stated there that a violent conflict took place between Jivadhāraṇa and Lokanātha. Scholars are unanimous in accepting that this Jivadhāraṇa of the Tippera copper plate and the father of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta are identical.⁶ So, there is hardly any doubt that Jivadhāraṇa and Lokanātha were contemporaries.

Lokanātha was a feudal king. So, it is reasonable to surmise that he had an overlord. It is pointed out that Lokanātha may have been sent against Jivadhāraṇa by his overlord. It is most likely that both the Lokanātha and Jivadhāraṇa were feudal kings under a same overlord. But Jivadhāraṇa may have had the inclination to assume independence or he may have rebelled against his overlord. In this situation, Lokanātha may have been sent against him (Jivadhāraṇa) by the overlord of Lokanātha. Hence, a question may be raised, who was this overlord of Lokanātha? D. C. Sircar speculated that this overlord might be the king of Gauḍa.⁷

Śaśāṅka, the king of Gauḍa, issued gold coins from Samatata⁸ and the coins bear the word *'jaya'*. This legend is not seen in the normal coins of Śaśāṅka. Most of the Śaśāṅka's normal coins have no any dotted border and weigh is about 9.4 g. but the Samatata coin of Śaśāṅka is the large dotted border and the weigh is 5.7g. It is interesting to note that the goddess on the obverse, who is presumably Lakṣmī, is while seated on a lotus, is holding a lotus flower in her left hand, and an object in her right hand that is very similar to the object in the hand of the deity depicted on the normal gold coin of

Samatata.⁹ The same type of three unpublished gold coins is preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum which was discovered from Comilla and Dhaka District. This coinage is assigned by B. N. Mukherjee as 'Samatata designed coin of Śaśānka. A significant point of contention in this context is the possibility of the inclusion of Samatata in Śaśānka's realm. But Professor Sircar's suggestion cannot be supported from paleographic considerations. The Rātas ruled Samatata, at least, after 50 years of Śaśānka. After the death of Śaśānka, Bhāskaravarman (the rival of Śaśānka and the king of Kāmarūpa) issued the Nidhānpur copper plates from Karṇasūvarṇa, the capital of Śaśānka. So, it may be suggested that the territory from Kāmarūpa to Karṇasūvarṇa was included within the kingdom of Bhāskaravarman. The coins of Bhāskaravarman (the legend Śrī-kumāra), Vasuvarman and Devavarman, the Varman kings of Kāmarūpa, have been found in South-East Bengal¹⁰ and these numismatic evidences indicate that subsequently the Varman kings of Kāmarūpa ruled South-East Bengal. It is probable that the overlord of Lokanātha was the Varman ruler of Kāmarūpa. So, it may be pointed out that at the beginning of his career, Jivadhāraṇa Rāta may have been a feudal king under the Varman king of Kāmarūpa, but he gradually became powerful and assumed an independent status by overthrowing the suzerainty of his overlord and may have defeated other feudal kings who were sent against him by the overlord. Thus, he carved out an independent kingdom in South-East Bengal.

D. C. Sircar comments that Jivadhāraṇa Rāta was a feudal king.¹¹ But the present author thinks that at the beginning of his career he may have been a feudal king, but he certainly assumed for himself an independent position. Though he is not endowed with any imperial title before his name like *Mahārājādhirāja*, but he is introduced to both the plates with the epithet '*Samatateśvara*' (the lord of Samatata). This epithet alone suggests that he was a paramount king of Samatata kingdom. Moreover, the gold coins bearing the legend 'Śrī-Jiva', have been attributed to Jivadhāraṇa by B. N. Mukherjee, and this numismatic evidence further confirms that he was an independent king, as it is not possible to issue gold coins without having sovereign status.

In this connection, we may mention that he is referred to both the records with the epithet 'Pratāp-upanata-sāmanta-cakra' and the phrase suggests that an allied group of powerful feudal kings had to bow down their head to him. This epithet indicates that he defeated the allied powerful feudal kings and they had to show their allegiance to him, or he had acquired such a sovereign status that made him an overlord of a number of powerful feudal kings.

Jivadhārana Rāta was a very intelligent (*kausalam-atisāya*)¹² king to achieve his goal. He was a pious king too. He used to gift (probably to Brāhman) cow, gold coins and land (*go-hiranya-bhūmi-dāna*)¹³. He used to do good deeds (*pūnyā-kīrtera*). It may apparently indicate that he established temples or installed images or gifted lands to the Brāhman. Jivadhārana gave up his kingdom voluntarily to his son when he got old, as his son Śrīdhārana Rāta claimed that his sovereignty had reached him from his father 'pitra-svyama-arpitādhirājya'.¹⁴

Śrī-Śrīdhārana Rāta, the son and successor of *Samatāteśvara* Śrī-Jivadhārana Rāta, became the king after his father. He was born of Bandhudevī, the chief queen (*agramahisī*) of King Jivadhārana Rāta. Both the Kailan and the Udiśvara copper plates, issued by Śrī-Śrīdhārana, refer to his exceptional and distinguished qualifications (*sva-sva-guṇ-viśeṣa*). He is presented to the inscriptions as a poet (*kavi*) and an author of excellent songs conspicuous by their sweetness (*ati-madhura-citra-gīter-utpādayitā*).¹⁵ He was an intelligent (*buddhira*) and a good orator, who could speak charmingly (*priya-vachana-jātasya*). He was a very learned man in grammar and lexicography (*Śabdavidyā*) and the other sciences and arts. D. C. Sircar suggests that the love of the Rātas for grammar and lexicography seems to have been due to their love of literature.¹⁶ Probably, Sanskrit language took the place of official language from the Gupta rule in South-East Bengal and it was highly flourished during the seventh and eighth century. It is probable that Śrīdhārana Rāta was taught this language consciously from his boyhood to become an efficient or learned king.

Śrīdhārana Rāta also learnt the science of taming and managing elephants and horses as well that of arms. It suggests that he was adept in the art of fighting, especially with

elephant forces and cavalry. Both the copper plates refer to the fact that elephants bathed and played in the river *Kṣīrodā*, which encircled round their capital city at Devaparvata. This information clearly suggests that the Rātas had a strong and large elephant forces and cavalry. Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta may have been taught the art of taming and managing elephants and horses from his boyhood to become an efficient warrior and the future ruler of the kingdom. His habitual riding on horses and elephants made him attractive, sound and possessing a strong physical figure. In this connection, it is referred to the inscriptions that the handsomeness of his figure laid in pits muscularity which was the result of constant association with horse and elephant (*gaja-turaga-śatata-pīḍana-krāmocīta-śrama-valīta-tanu-vibhāga-ramya-darśana*).¹⁷

King Śrīdhāraṇa is also introduced to the copper plates with an epithet '*Prāpta-panca-mahāśabda*.'¹⁸ The epithet has two meanings: (a) the privilege of enjoying the sounds of five musical instruments, and (b) five titles beginning with *Mahā* (great), such as, *Mahāpratihāra*, *Mahāsandhivigrahika*, *Mahā-aśvasālādhikartā*, *Mahā-bhāṇḍagārika* and *Mahā-sādhanika*.¹⁹ D. C. Sircar²⁰ on the basis of the epithet '*prāpta-panca-mahāśabda*' came to the conclusion that both Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta and his father Jivadhāraṇa Rāta were feudatory kings. He has offered a suggestion to strengthen his comment that a counter signature was attached to the seal of the Kailan copper plate like the Tippera copper plate of Lokanātha and hence Śrīdhāraṇa was a feudal king like Lokanātha. According to him, "Actually the seals belong to the Adhikaraṇa of the Kumārāmātya who was usually a provincial governor. The names of Śrīdhāraṇa and Lokanātha were written on the seals apparently to indicate that they had countersigned the original documents afterwards incised on copper plates. The importance attached to the counter signature by Lokanātha and Śrīdhāraṇa may suggest that they were feudatory rulers risen to an almost independence status and they were eager to demonstrate their absolute authority over particular region in defiance of the overlord."²¹

The seal of the Tippera copper plate of Lokanātha clearly bears a counter signature and anyone can easily identify this. But the seal of the Kailan copper plate has not yet been published. D. C. Sircar has only published the Kailan copper plate without the seal.

Probably, the seal had been lost when the plate was discovered. So, there is no scope to observe whether any counter signature had been attached to it or not. The present author has closely examined the seals of the Uḍiśvara copper plate of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta. It is interesting to note that no counter signature has been seen to be attached to them like the seal of the Tippera copper plate of Lokanātha. Hence, we are not inclined to agree with the learned lamented scholar and eminent epigraphist D. C. Sircar. Anyone can observe in the photograph of the seal of the Urisvara copper plate and easily find out that there is no counter seal like the seal of the Tippera copper plate (see the photograph at the end of this chapter). So, D. C. Sircar's suggestion that the Rātas were feudatory chiefs on the basis of the seal cannot be taken as correct.

D. C. Sircar has taken the epithet '*prāpta-panca-mahāśabda*' as a feudatory title of the Rātas. In this connection, a pertinent question may be asked: why was the same epithet attached to the name of Baladhāraṇa Rāta? It is clear from the Kailan copper plate that Baladhāraṇa Rāta was not a king, but a *yuvarāja* (crown prince). So, it is almost certain that the epithet '*Prāpta-panca-mahāśabda*' was not attached to his name in the sense of a feudatory title. Actually, it is not clear in what sense this epithet is attached to the names of all the Rāta kings and even a crown prince. We should bear in mind that the epithet has another meaning. '*Panca-mahāśabda*' means the sound of five musical instruments. It has already been mentioned that Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta was an author of excellent songs and he was a musician. So, the epithet may have been connected with the musical sounds or instruments. Or it may be suggested that the '*Prāpta-panca-mahāśabda*' was their forefather's title, who were feudatory kings before Jivadhāraṇa and the successor kings felt honoured to use their ancestor's title when they were almost sovereign kings. Whatever it may be, the epithet cannot be accepted as a feudatory title, especially in the case of Śrīdhāraṇa and Baladhāraṇa Rāta.

Though the Rātas were not endowed with any imperial titles like *Mahārājādhirāja* (king of the kings) and *Paramabhaṭṭāraka*, they have been mentioned in the copper plates as *Samataṭeśvara* (the lord of Samataṭa). This title alone is enough to consider them as paramount kings of Samataṭa. Further, both the Jivadhāraṇa and Śrīdhāraṇa issued gold

coins. These coins have been found from different areas of South-East Bengal including Sabhar, Sylhet and Comilla Districts and such 23 unpublished gold coins are preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum. These coins have already been discussed above. Scholars have accepted these coins as the coins of the Rāta dynasty. It is not possible to issue gold coins without being in sovereign power. On the other hand, it is referred to in the Udiśvara copper plate that a feudatory king named Sāmanta Vappa Simha, applied to king Śrīdhāraṇa for granting land.²² How could a feudal king apply for granting land to another feudal king?

It is also stated to the same copper plate that *Pancādhikaraṇa* (title of a feudal king) Vāskaraçandra prepared the grant and it means that he worked under Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta. So, it is almost certain that Śrīdhāraṇa himself was an overlord of a number of feudal kings. Moreover, the Kailan copper plate refers to two *viṣayas*: Gūptinātana and Paralāyika, while the Udiśvara copper plate of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta refers to two other *viṣayas* (district): Jayanātana and Peranātana.²³ So, there is no doubt that Śrīdhāraṇa had an extensive kingdom, which is not possible to be ruled by a feudal king. Considering the find places of the gold coins of the Rāta dynasty, it may be suggested that the kingdom of the Rātas was not limited only within ancient Samataṭa area. It is probable that Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta expanded his kingdom in the Dhaka, Sylhet and Tippera regions; as gold coins of this king have been found in the above places, though most of the coins are unpublished now.

Some scholars like A. M. Chowdhury,²⁴ Shahanara Hussain²⁵ and Harunur Rashid,²⁶ following D. C. Sircar, and referred that the Rātas were feudatory kings. Even some of them have gone so far as to attempt to identify the overlord of the Rātas, and suggested that the Khadgas may have been the overlord of the Rātas. But there is no historical basis to a suggestion like this. The Khadgas were another line of independent kings, who flourished in South-East Bengal after the Rātas.

Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta seems to have been a benevolent and popular king. He is said to have been like a father to his subjects (*pit-eva-pālayaitā*).²⁷ He was a very pious king. He was a devout follower of the *Vaiṣṇava* religion. He is mentioned as '*Parama-Vaiṣṇava*' in the copper plates and a devout worshiper of god *Purūṣottama* (an epithet of *Viṣṇu*). He is

also presented to the copper plates as a *Parama-kāruṇika* (very merciful and kind hearted)²⁸ and stated to have disliked the destruction of living beings which is not approved by the *śāstras* (religious books) and granted life to thousands of creatures (*śata-sahasra-jīvitasya-pradāyaka*).²⁹ In this connection, D. C. Sircar has correctly suggested that the *Vaiṣṇava* kings were averse to the slaughter of animals in connection with the worship of the deities and as a *Vaiṣṇava* King Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta was merciful to the living beings. Moreover, he had also a very liberal attitude to the followers of other religion. In this connection, reference may be made to his gift of tax free land to the Buddhist monasteries and Vihāras. Through his Udiśvara copper plate, he donated 30 *dronavāpas* of land to the Udvihāra.

The above discussion clearly shows that Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta was a sovereign king like his father. He issued both the Kailan and the Udiśvara copper plate and a large number of gold coins. He was a very learned, cultured and enlightened king and a patron of learning, arts and music. He was also a benevolent king, who did many things for the welfare of his subjects. He appears to be a cultured and exceptional king not only in the history of ancient South-East Bengal but in the whole history of ancient Bengal also.

Another member of the royal family by the name of Baladhāraṇa Rāta is referred to the Kailan copper plate, where he is mentioned as *yūvarāja* (crown prince), *Prāpta-panca-mahāśabda-Śrī-Baladhāraṇa Rāta-Bhaṭṭaraka*. But his relation with Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta is not specified in the record, though it is related: '*pitṛ-caraṇa-śusrusanaika-śila*' and this phrase are suggestive of the fact that possibly he was a son of King Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta. It has also been recorded in the same copper plate: '*apayāpita-pitāmah-ākramocita-pravayas*'³⁰ and on the basis of this D. C. Sircar commented that he was middle aged at the time when the Kailan copper plate was issued. He is also mentioned in the plate as an expert in *Śabdavidyā* (Lexicography) and the science of taming and managing elephants and horses (*hastāśva-praharaṇa-vidyā*) as well as that of arms. It is probable that he was an adept warrior like his father and he was brought up as a learned man and a warrior from his boyhood to make him a proper successor of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta. It is mentioned to this record that he conquered the contiguous villages of the four sides of the kingdom

(*'vijīta-caturādi-karaṇa-grāma-tayā'*)³¹ and it may suggest that he played a vital role in extending the sway of the Rāta kingdom by conquering neighboring villages on four sides of the kingdom, when probably his father was the ruling king. No copper plate and coin of Baladhāraṇa has yet come to light. So, it is not possible to know whether he became a king after his father or not. Now a pertinent question may be raised why has the epithet '*Prāpta-panca-mahāśabda*' been used with his name? D. C. Sircar has accepted to this as a title of a feudal king. But Baladhārana Rāta was neither a king, nor a feudal lord. Hence this epithet should not be taken to connote a feudal title. Baladhāraṇa is a prince (*Yūvarāja*) and not a king. It is difficult to say in what sense this epithet has been applied to the name of a crown prince. Baladhāraṇa is not mentioned to the Udiśvara copper plate, which was issued earlier than the Kailan plate, and at that time probably he was not an important person in the royal administration.

Both the copper plates of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta refer to the regnal year of the ruling King; the Udiśvara copper plate was issued in the 5th regnal year, while the Kailan copper plate was issued in the 8th regnal year. Hence, regnal year cannot help us in fixing the date of the Rātas. An attempt has been made by some scholars to fix the date of the Rātas on paleographic ground. D. C. Sircar has carefully examined the script of the Kailan plate and compared those with the inscriptions of Śaśāṅka, Lokanātha and Devakhaḍga. He placed the Rātas between Śaśāṅka (c. 600-625 A.D.) and Dharmapāla (c. 769-815 A.D.). From paleographic point of view, he is of the opinion that the Kailan plate may be placed about the second half of the seventh century A.D.³² On the other hand on paleographic considerations, A. H. Dani has fixed the date of the Kailan inscription in the first half of the seventh century A.D.³³ But paleography can only indicate an approximate date, not a definite date.

Another attempt has been made to fix the date of the Rātas on the basis of the Tippera copper plate of Lokanātha, where it is mentioned that Lokanātha came into a violent conflict with a king named Jivadhāraṇa. This Jivadhāraṇa is considered to be identical with the *Samataṭeśvara* Jivadhāraṇa Rāta, and their sons Lakṣmīnātha and Śrīdhāraṇa similarly were contemporaries. But the date portion of the Tippera copper plate has not

been deciphered successfully as this portion of the plate is badly corroded. R. G. Basak, who edited the plate, reads the date portion '*dhāke-catuṣcatvāriṅsat-samvatsare*'.³⁴ Sanskrit '*catuṣcatvāriṅsat*' means 44 and on the basis of this date some scholars have commented that it refers to the Harṣa Era. But there is no evidence of the expansion of Harṣa's empire in South-East Bengal. N. K. Bhattasali³⁵ speculated correctly that the reading would be *śatādhike*. So, he suggested that the date must be preceded by *eka* (one), *dvi* (two) or *tri* (three). He reads confidently the date '*dvi-śatādhike-catuṣcatvāriṅsat-samvatsare*' (two hundred and forty four), and thus reads the date of the Tippera copper plate as 244 and opined that it must be in the Gupta Era. Hence, N. K. Bhattasali fixed the date c. 564 A.D. for both Lokanātha and Jivadhāraṇa. D. C. Sircar³⁶ has accepted N. K. Bhattasali's reading as '*śatādhike*' but he has differed with the preceding numeral. He has suggested that the preceding numeral will be *tri*-(*śatādhike*) in place of *dvi*-(*śatādhike*) and hence the date will be (344+320) c.664 A.D. Ayub Khan has supported Bhattasali without furnishing any reason.³⁷

The date of Lokanātha and Jivadhāraṇa is thus a matter of controversy among scholars. D. C. Sircar's view seems to be correct as it is corroborated by the paleographic evidence. Distinct and developed form of some letters, especially medial *a*, *i*, *e*, *ya*, *pha*, *la*, palatial *sa* and *ja* etc. are found in both the Kailan and the Uḍiśvara copper plates and they are definitely developed than the same letters as found in the Midnapore Copper plate of Śaśāṅka. So, the Rātas and Lokanātha may be placed after Śaśāṅka and thus they may be placed in the second half of the seventh century A.D.

Uḍisvara Copper plate of Sridharana Rata



Obverse



Reverse

Gold coin of Jivadharana Rata



Obverse



Reverse

Gold coin of Sridharana Rata



Obverse



Reverse

Samataṭa design gold coin of Śaśāṅka



Obverse



Reverse

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Chapter IV

The Nāthas of South-Eastern Bengal

A copper plate inscription was discovered in 1903-04 from somewhere in the Tippera District of East Bengal. The plate was deciphered by R. G. Basak and published in the journal of the *Epigraphia Indica*.¹ It introduces us to a line of feudatory chiefs, whose names end with "nātha", who ruled some parts of South-East Bengal in the Post-Gupta period. It is interesting to note that the Gajalakṣmī seal of the Tippera copper plate bears two legends simultaneously. Just below the pedestal of the Goddess, there is the legend in relief "*kumārāmātyādihikarāṇasya*", indicates that the seal was issued from the office of *Adhikarāṇa* under a Kumārāmātya (probably 'an Amātya enjoying the status of a Kumāra'² or prince). The second legend "*Lokanāthasya*" is inscribed as a counter sign in the document and it indicates the name of the ruling king, who issued the grant. The plate also records a grant of land to Brāhmaṇa Pradoṣhśarman, who applied to the king through his (Lokanātha's) son Lakṣminātha for granting him a plot of land in the forest region in the Subbuṅga *Viṣaya* (district), whereupon he wanted to erect a temple of Anantanārayaṇa (Viṣṇu) and he desired to meet the recurring expenses of all materials for daily worship. The prayer was granted and the land was donated to him by the feudal king Lokanātha.

The name of the founder of this family has been lost due to corrosion and decay in the copper plate. The plate only contains name ending, 'nātha', and his title was '*Adhimahārājā*.' It is difficult to determine whether the title is of an imperial or feudal king. In this connection, mention may be made that, as no other member of this family had any title indicating independent rule, the title may be considered as feudatory.

The second ruler of the family was *Mahā-sāmanta* (great feudal lord) Śrīnātha, a hero, and is said to have acquired much fame in the field of battle. His son, Bhavanātha, had a religious turn of mind, and forsook his royalty in favor of his brother's son. So, it may be thought that the son of Bhavanātha's brother certainly became a feudal king,

but his name is not referred to in the plate. The next member of this family was Lokanātha, who issued the Tippera copper-plate grant. His title was *nṛpa* (king). Probably Lokanātha was another nephew of the aforesaid Bhavanātha. In verses 6-9, the achievements of Lokanātha have been described briefly. He is reported to be a very powerful feudal king, whose soldiers depended for victory chiefly on their own swords and on the intellect of his ministers. His maternal grandfather, Keśava, was in charge of the army.

Verse 7 of the Tippera copper plate records: '*yasin=chhri-parameśvarasya-vahuso-yātam-kṣayam-sainikam*'. R. G. Basak translates this verse as follows: 'large number of soldiers belonging to the chief sovereign (Parameśvara) met with annihilation in a battle.' With who did Parameśvara's army fight and met annihilation? Or, what was the role of Lokanātha in that battle? These have not been stated clearly to the inscription. In this connection, R.G. Basak comments, 'a large number of soldiers belonging to the paramount sovereign met with annihilation in a battle and fought on his (Lokanātha's) behalf.'³ Actually, such a comment does not bear any clear meaning. Dasharatha Sharma differs with Basak's translation of the verse; he translates the verse as 'the frequent destruction of the paramount sovereign's armies against Lokanātha.'⁴ On the other hand, D. C. Sircar suggests that the *Parameśvara* (Lokanātha's overlord) lost heavily in men in his struggle with Jayatuṅgavarṣa and Lokanātha achieved conspicuous success against that enemy.⁵ Sircar's opinion is reasonable and may be accepted tentatively, though, however, it must be admitted that the meaning of the 7th verse of the Tippera grant is rather vague.

Lokanātha's success against Jivadhāraṇa in a battle has been recorded in verses 8 and 9 of the Tippera grant. This Jivadhāraṇa has been identified with the Rāta king, the father of Śrīdhāraṇa. This identification is probably correct and has been unanimously accepted by scholars. It is stated that Jivadhāraṇa gave up military action and, being humble, offered a viṣaya (district) or territory together with wealth (sādhana) considering that speedy action had to be taken by him in his fight against Jayatuṅgavarṣa and that he was loved very much by his subjects. It is likely that Jivadhāraṇa was a willful or headstrong feudatory of the Parameśvara (overlord of Lokanātha); while Lokanātha was a faithful subordinate and he was sent against Jivadhāraṇa. Probably a battle took place between Jivadhāraṇa and Lokanātha.

Jivadharana had tried to oust Lokanātha from certain territories, but failed to do so in spite of repeated efforts. Then he conciliated, when he was reminded of Lokanātha's previous success against Jayatuṅgavarṣa. The above discussion clearly suggests that Lokanātha was a very powerful feudal king and he had played an important role in the battle field on behalf of his overlord.

In 1963 another copper plate was discovered from Kalāpur village in Sylhet District (now Maulvibāzār). The plate was deciphered and published by K. M. Gupta.⁶ The Gajalakṣmī seal, which is same as that of the Tippera grant, is affixed to the Kalāpur copper plate. It is interesting to note that the seal bears the two legends simultaneously like the Tippera grant. The seal bears the legends 'Kumārāmātya-adhikaraṇasya' and 'Śrī-Maruṇḍanātha.' The record reveals another feudal king of this line of feudatory kings named Maruṇḍanātha. The plate also records the name of *Sāmanta* (feudal king) Śrīnātha, who was the ancestor of Maruṇḍanātha. Land was donated by the plate to the temple of the Anantanārāyaṇa (Vishṇu) in the forest region (*aṭavi-bhūkhaṇḍe*) which was the same region in which land was granted by the Tippera copper plate. Maruṇḍanātha is reported in the Kalāpur grant as *Sāmanta* and is mentioned as 'Bhaṭṭāraka'. The same title was assumed by Lokanātha in the Tippera grant. The find places of both the copper plates are in the same region. The common Gajalakṣmī seal in both the copper plates of Lokanātha and Maruṇḍanātha, the common ancestor, Śrīnātha, and the same nature of two legends, the common appellative ending with 'Nātha', the same types of scripts as well as the same nature of land grant clearly indicate that both Lokanātha and Maruṇḍanātha were the members of the same feudatory family. But the plate of Maruṇḍanātha was badly corroded and could only be partly deciphered. From the deciphered section, the actual relationship between the two feudal kings, Lokanātha and Maruṇḍanātha, is not known; though both the feudal kings came from the family of *Sāmanta* Śrīnātha. So, in the present state of our knowledge it is not possible to determine the chronological position of Maruṇḍanātha. Similarly his achievements are also not known from the plate. The Kalāpur copper plate may be considered just as a corroborative evidence of the Tippera grant besides introducing to us a new feudatory king of the family.

As the Nāthas were feudatory chiefs, they must have had overlords. In this connection, a question may be raised: who were the overlord of Lokanātha and

Marundanātha? The epithet of Lokanatha's overlord is referred to in the Tippera copper plate as '*Parameśvara*'. But unfortunately his name is not found in the record. D. C. Sircar thought that the name of Lokanātha's overlord was actually mentioned to the Tippera grant in the obliterated portion, immediately preceding the passage containing the date (line 27-29). However, scholars have speculated the name of Lokanātha's overlord on the basis of the Post-Gupta political situation in South-Eastern Bengal.

N. K. Bhattasali suggests that the Varman rulers of Kāmarūpa may have been the overlord of Lokanātha. It is known from the Baḍaganga Rock Inscription of Mahārājā Bhūti-varman of Kāmarūpa that he had performed an *Aśvamedha* sacrifice; and a subsequent date to that event in his reign was 234 Gupta Era, which corresponds to 554 A.D.⁷ Gupta power was declining in Eastern India during this period and it finally collapsed in 551 A.D, when Bhūti-varman established an *Agrahāra* in the district of Sylhet. The cessation of Gupta rule by 551A.D. and the creation of an *Agrahāra* in Sylhet district by Mahārājā Bhūti-varman of Kāmarūpa (554A.D) was a significant fact. N. K. Bhattasali identified Subbuṅga Viṣaya with Cachar and Sylhet districts, in which land was granted by the Tippera copper plate in the *Aṭavi-bhūkhaṇḍe*. He indicates that this area was under the Varman dynasty of Kāmarūpa in the Post-Gupta period. Hence, he opined that the Varman rulers of Kāmarūpa were the overlords of Lokanātha.⁸ This suggestion may be correct as a large number of coins of Vasuvarman, Devavarman and Bhāskaravarman (*Śrī-Kumāra* legend) have been found from South-East Bengal. Most of the coins are unpublished and preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum.

But D. C. Sircar did not agree with Bhattasali about the overlord of the Nāthas. He argued that there is little evidence to the fact that South-East Bengal ever formed a part of the kingdom of Kāmarūpa. Even if any part of Bengal was brought under the supremacy of Kāmarūpa, it appears to have ended with the extirpation of Bhāskaravarman. The kingdom of the Varman dynasty of Kāmarūpa was occupied by the Mleccha or Tibeto-Burman barbarians about the middle of the seventh century, almost immediately after Bhāskaravarman. Hence, he speculated that the *Parameśvara* of Lokanātha was probably the imperial ruler of Gauḍa. He has furnished the reason that the Gauḍas destroyed Imperial Gupta rule from South-Western, South-Eastern

and Northern Bengal. He has pointed out that Harṣha's empire had vanished immediately after his death, while the Kāmarūpa kingdom was occupied by the Mlecchas probably with the demise of Bhāskaravarman.⁹ It is thus possible to think that the king of Gauḍa had an opportunity to recover this region.

D. C. Sircar's view may be re-assessed in the light of one recently published coins of Śaśānka discovered from South-Eastern Bengal. Jahar Acharjee¹⁰ and B. N. Mukherjee have recently published a unique type of gold coin of Śaśānka which are preserved in the Rajendra Kirtishāla Museum in Tripura. On the obverse, the coins bear the image of Siva with the bull and on the reverse the figure of *Padmāsana Lakṣmī* and to the left side of the head of Lakṣmī inscribed "Śrī Śrī Śaśānka" in proto Bengali type of script. At the bottom is inscribed the word 'jaya' in pure Brahmi script. Most of the Śaśānka's normal coins have no any dotted border and weigh is about 9.4 g. but the Samataṭa design coin is the large dotted border and the weigh is 5.7g. It is interesting to note that the goddess on the obverse, who is presumably Lakṣmī, is while seated on a lotus, is holding a lotus flower in her left hand, and an object in her right hand that is very similar to the object in the hand of the deity depicted on the normal gold coin of Samataṭa. The same types of three unpublished gold coins are preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum which was discovered from Comilla and Dhaka District. This coinage is assigned by B. N. Mukherjee as 'Samataṭa designed coin of Śaśānka. One such coin preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum bears the legend 'vijaya'. This coin may have been issued as signs of victory, 'vijaya'. However, these pieces suggest that Śaśānka, the king of Gauḍa, led an expedition in South-East Bengal, probably against Bhāskaravarman of Kāmarūpa and issued gold coins from Samataṭa as a mark of victory. D. C. Sircar's speculation seems to be correct on the basis of these recently discovered coins. It is true that the Gauḍas became powerful destroying the Maukharics and extirpating later Gupta rule from Magadha. Subsequently Śaśānka became more powerful and extended the kingdom of Gauḍa probably to North and South-Eastern Bengal. During this time, the king of Gauḍa may have been the overlord of Lokanātha's predecessors. But after his death, it is almost certain that this area was occupied by Bhāskaravarman as we find him issuing the Nidhānpur copper plates from Karṇasūvarṇa, the capital city of Śaśānka's Gauḍa Empire. It implies that the larger portion of Gauḍa, which was situated in between Kāmarūpa and Karṇasūvarṇa, was within the kingdom of Bhāskaravarman.

These two references clearly show that after the rule of the Guptas, South-East Bengal was dominated first by Śaśānka and subsequently by the Varman rulers of Kāmarūpa. But we should bear in mind that the Varman domination was for a very short time. After the death of Bhāskaravarman, the empire of the Varmans was captured by the Mlecchas. The Nāthas ruled some parts of South-East Bengal for quite a long time as feudatory chiefs. It is probable that the Nāthas had more than one overlord. But in the present state of our knowledge, it is very difficult to determine exactly who they were.

The date of Lokanātha is also a matter of controversy among scholars. The Tippera grant bears a date. But it is not possible to decipher the date correctly as the date portion is badly corroded and obliterated. R. G. Basak reads the date as '*dhāke-catuścatvāriṅśat-samvatsare*'. The first word '*dhāke*' does not carry any meaning. N. K. Bhattasali speculated correctly that the numeral word in the beginning should be '*śatādhike*'. He suggests that it must have been preceded by either '*eka*', '*dvi*' or '*tri*'. He indicates confidently that the word preceding the numeral '*śatādhike*' will be '*dvi*' and the reading of the date portion will be '*dvi-śatādhike-catuścatvāriṅśat-samvatsare*' i.e., 244. He suggested that the date must be in the Gupta Era, which corresponded to (244+320) 564 A.D.¹¹

D. C. Sircar accepted Bhattasali's reading '*śatādhike*' but he differed with Bhattasali about the word preceding '*śatādhike*'. He suggested that the preceding word will be '*tri*' (*tri-śatādhike*), in place of '*dvi*'. According to D. C. Sircar the date of the Tippera grant will be in the Gupta Year 344, corresponding to 664 A.D.¹² Some scholars attempted to fix the date of the Tippera grant on paleographic grounds. R. G. Basak refers to 'the characters belonging to the northern class of scripts of the seventh century A.D.'¹³ From the paleographic point of view, A. H. Dani suggested that the Tippera plate of Lokanātha falls in the first half of the seventh century.¹⁴ N. K. Bhattasali mainly contributed to the reading of the date of the Tippera grant of Lokanātha. On the basis of his reading, D. C. Sircar suggested the date correctly, as it is supported by the paleography of the inscription.

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Chapter V

The Khaḍgas

Two copper plates were discovered in 1884-1885 at Aśhrāfpur, a village in Raipur police station in Dhaka district (present Narasingdi district) in East Bengal. One of the plates, called Plate-A, was deciphered and published by Rajendra Lal Mitra in the *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*,¹ together with a facsimile and a tentative reading. The other plate, which is called Plate-B, was shortly noticed by him. But his reading contains several apparent inaccuracies. In 1905, these plates were comprehensively re-edited by G. M. Laskar in the *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*.² These two records revealed a line of kings with their name ending with 'Khaḍga', who ruled in ancient South-East Bengal. These plates disclosed four generations of kings of this dynasty named Khaḍgodyama, Jātakhaḍga, Devakhaḍga and Rājarāja.

Two more copper plates of Devakhaḍga were found in 'situ' in cell 75, third period, at time of excavation of Śālvān Vihāra in Mainamati. Now these plates are preserved in the Department of Archaeology, Bangladesh. Barrie M. Morrison has reported about these plates in his book and designated them as Plate-C and Plate-D. Both the plates bear "bull symbol", the royal seal of the Khaḍga dynasty like the Āśhrāfpur copper plates and the legends 'Śrīmat-Devakhaḍga'. Beside these, in line twenty-seven there is a reference to prince (*Rājputra*) Śrī-Balabhaṭṭa. These plates are badly corroded and still remain undeciphered.³ In 1956 another copper plate of this dynasty was found during excavation at Śālvān Vihāra. The plate was partly deciphered by Kamalākānta Gupta and published in the *Journal of Bangladesh Archaeology*.⁴ The record contains some details on the history of Balabhaṭṭa, another king of this dynasty.

With the passage of time, some gold coins were found in Mainamati and Comilla region, which were published by Harunur Rashid⁵ and Prof. B. N. Mukherjee.⁶ In 1993, a number of gold and silver coins were discovered from Comilla District. These

coins were collected and preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum. Moreover, there are a large number of Khaḍga coins preserved in the reserve collection of the Bangladesh National Museum and the Directorate of Bangladesh Archaeology which were found from different parts of South-East Bengal. Some of these coins have been published by the present author in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh*.⁷ Moreover, it is for the first time that some interesting silver coins of the dynasty have come to light. However, all these coins clearly bear the names of a number of kings of the dynasty, such as, Rājabhaṭa, Balabhaṭa, Sarvabhaṭa and Pṛthubhaṭa. Though these coins contain very limited information, they supply us important data, which demands a fresh assessment of the history of the Khaḍga dynasty.

But while studying the published records of the dynasty, it seems to us that they have not been used in the right perspective by scholars in the past. Hence, an exhaustive attempt may be undertaken to reconstruct the history of the Khaḍgas in the light of these new materials as well as reviewing the hitherto published epigraphic records of the dynasty.

Khaḍgodyama

Khaḍgodyama was the first king and founder of the dynasty. But previous scholars merely mention his name, though there are scopes in the published epigraphic records to reconstruct his history. He is referred to in the Āśhrāfpur copper plate (B) as '*kṣitiriyam-abhūta-nirjita*'⁸, meaning he conquered this world (*kṣiti*) fearlessly (*abhūta*). Ancient kings generally introduce themselves as *kṣitipati* (king). So, here the word '*kṣiti*' (world) may be used in the sense of a kingdom. Probably, he conquered a kingdom by fighting fearlessly.

The Mainamati copper plate of Balabhatta bears interesting information about him, where he is referred to as '*aprameya-ākhyāśakta-vidyā-khaḍga-khyāta-unnatir-eka-śatata*'.⁹ Hence, the word '*khaḍga-khyāta*' indicates that he was well-known as '*khaḍga*', meaning the sword. He had immense devotion (*aprameya-āsakta*) to learn (*vidyā*) the brandishing of sword, which was a constant source of improvement of his position (*unnatir-eka-śatata*)¹⁰. In the Deulbaḍi image inscription he is mentioned with the title '*nṛpa-adhirāja*',¹¹ which means an overlord. The title indicates that many feudal kings like *rājās* or *mahārājās* were under him and he was their overlord.

The above noted information of the copper plates sufficiently suggests that Khaḍgodyama improved his position through defeating his neighboring feudal kings in the battle field. At the beginning of his career, he might have been a feudal king, but he was a very proficient warrior, especially in sword fighting. He defeated his neighboring kings and extended his kingdom. Thus he carved out a kingdom and assumed a semi-independent position that laid the foundation of a strong independent dynasty in the Vanga-Samatata region.

Jātakhaḍga

The next king of the Khaḍga dynasty was Jātakhaḍga. But it is not clearly indicated in the Āshrāḍpur copper plates whether he was a son of Khaḍgodyama or not. The inscription simply mentions '*tajja-jātakhaḍga*'¹² meaning from him (Khaḍgodyama) and it is obvious that he was a successor of Khaḍgodyama.

The Āshrāḍpur copper plate mentioned him as '*sarvāri-saṅgha-vidhastā-sūrabhāva-tṛṇam=eva-maruta*'¹³ and the phrase means that he destroyed the multitude of his enemies (*sarva=ari-saṅgha*) through heroism (*sūrabhāva*), as if a piece of straw is blown by the wind (*tṛṇam=eva-maruta*). It is further referred to in the inscription that he destroyed a large number of horses of his enemies by only an elephant.¹⁴

The above noted references clearly suggest that he was a proficient warrior like his father. At the same time, it also suggests that he had an elephant force which was used in the battle field against his enemies. Probably, he had to fight a lot against his enemies to consolidate and protect his father's kingdom and to extend it.

He is also introduced to the inscriptions with the title *ksitipati* (king). No paramount title like '*Mahārājādhirāja*' is attached to his name and it clearly suggests that he was a feudal lord or semi-independent king like his father. It is not possible to determine about the extent of his kingdom. Probably he was a local king of Vaṅga-Samatata with not a very extensive dominion.

Devakhaḍga

Devakhaḍga, son and successor of Jātakhaḍga, was the next king of the Khaḍga dynasty. Four copper plates¹⁵ and gold coin¹⁶ of this king have so far been discovered, and these help us in reconstructing his history. The seals of the copper plates of

Devakhaḍga bear *bṛṣabha* emblem and the legend 'Śrīmat-Devakhaḍga'.¹⁷ The legend clearly indicates that the seals belonged to the ruling king Śrī-Devakhaḍga.

Devakhaḍga is referred to the Āshrāḍpur copper plate (A) as *ksitipāla* (king),¹⁸ while the plate (B) bears his title as '*narapati*' (king).¹⁹ But it is interesting to note that in the copper plate of Balabhaṭṭa his name is mentioned as 'Svāmī-Devakhaḍga'.²⁰ 'Svāmī' may be taken to mean chief, commander, master.²¹ Probably here the title 'Svāmī' is used in the sense of a king. He is also mentioned in the copper plates as '*nṛpatijit-ari*'.²² The meaning of this expression is that Devakhaḍga, the king (*nṛpati*), won over his enemies. It is also stated that he defeated numberless rulers those who had to bow down their heads to his feet (*praṇata-uttamāṅga*).²³

The above mentioned information suggests that he was a more powerful king than his predecessors. Though he does not bear any paramount titles like '*Mahārājādhirāja*' or '*Paramabhaṭṭāraka*', it is sufficiently indicated that he was a powerful independent king, who could issue gold coins. Without having a sovereign position, it is not possible to issue gold coins. Khadgoḍyama and Jātakhaḍga did not issue any coin. He was the first Khaḍga king whose coins have been found. Probably he issued the coins following the Gupta tradition like the Rātas. These coins may be considered as a sign of him being a more powerful king than his predecessors. It is almost certain that the Khaḍgas obtained paramount position in Vaṅga-Samataṭa region during the rule of Devakhaḍga.

The Āshrāḍpur plates report that his capital was 'Karmāntabāsaka'. But the copper plate of Balabhaṭṭa reports that Devaparvata was the capital of Devakhaḍga and the name of his royal palace was Kaṭakaśilā.²⁴ When the copper plate of Balabhaṭṭa was issued, he was a prince. Hence it is almost certain that his father Devakhaḍga was the ruling king and Kaṭakaśilā was the royal palace of his father. It has already been mentioned that two more copper plates of Devakhaḍga were discovered from Śālvan Vihāra. The coin, which is attributed to Devakhaḍga by B. N. Mukherjee, was also discovered from excavations at Mainamati. Even the land which was donated by the Āshrāḍpur copper plates, were located near the monasteries of Mainamati. These evidences clearly suggest that Devaparvata was the main political hub of Devakhaḍga. So it may be concluded that the previous capital city of the Khaḍgas was Karmāntabāsaka, but Devakhaḍga became powerful, captured Samataṭa kingdom and

transferred his capital to Devaparvata. It is probable that the Rātas ruled Samataṭa before the Khaḍgas and they were supplanted by Devakhaḍga. It is most likely that the Khaḍgas were originally the rulers of Vaṅga, but Devakhaḍga captured Samataṭa and established an independent kingdom, which included major portion of Vaṅga-Samataṭa sub-regions. Khaḍga coins have also been found from Sabhar, Koṭālīpādā and these are being preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum. Moreover, B. N. Mukherjee has mentioned a coin of Balabhaṭṭa bearing the legend '*Vaṅgaśrī*'. These two references further confirm that the whole of Vaṅga-Samataṭa sub-regions was within the kingdom of the Khaḍgas and it was Devakhaḍga who was the real founder of the extended Khaḍga kingdom in South-East Bengal. He consolidated his position and peace and order was firmly established by him, as mentioned in the Āshrāḍpur copper plate that he had removed fear from the three worlds (*tribhava*).²⁵ His gold coins may be taken to bear testimony to the fact that during his rule, trade and commerce and a well-ordered economy was flourished.

Rājabhaṭṭa or Rājabhaṭa

Devakhaḍga's queen was Prabhāvatī and he had two sons Rājārāja alias Rājabhaṭṭa and Balabhaṭṭa. There is mention of another person named Udīrṅkhaḍga in the Āshrāḍpur copper plate. He was probably connected with the royal family; but his exact relation with the family cannot be ascertained. Devakhaḍga's son called Rājārāja (*tata-suta-Rājārāja*) mentioned to the Āshrāḍpur copper plate²⁶ and he was possibly also known as Rājārājabhaṭṭa or Rājabhaṭa.²⁷ When the Āshrāḍpur copper plates were issued, he was a prince (*Rājaputra*) but nothing is reported more than that in the plate. But numismatic evidence as well as a foreigner's account provides us some information to enable us to reconstruct his history.

B. N. Mukherjee refers to a number of gold coins bearing the legend Rājabhaṭa.²⁸ The present author has published recently two more gold coins of this king.²⁹ It is interesting to note that a silver coin of this king has been found recently from Chittagong. Now this coin is preserved to a private coin collector named Nurul Islam who purchased this coin from a person of Chittagong. Mr. Nurul Islam informed me that this unique silver coin was discovered from a village near Chittagong city. This is for the first time silver coin of this king has been found, though the coin is still unpublished. The obverse of the gold and silver coin bears clearly a legend in two

lines: line 1. *Rāja* and line 2. *Bhaṭa*. The letters of the legend are very clear and distinct. All these coins of Rājabhāṭa are metallurgically, symbolically and stylistically the same as the other Khaḍga coins. It is interesting to note that the 'bull', the royal seal of the Khaḍga dynasty, can also be seen in these coins. The Āshrāfpur copper plates merely refer him as a prince, but these coins sufficiently indicate that he was a successor of Devakhaḍga and was certainly an independent king, who was powerful enough to have issued gold and silver coin.

A Chinese monk traveler, Sheng-chi, visited Samataṭa during the seventh century A.D. He mentioned that the name of the ruling king of Samatata was Ho-luo-she-po-to.³⁰ Chinese 'pa' is pronounced like Bangla 'bha'. Hence, 'po-to', the name ending referred to by Sheng-chi, may be considered as Bengali 'bhoṭo' or 'bhaṭa', the last part of the names of Rājabhāṭa, Balabhāṭa, Sarvabhāṭa and Pṛthubhāṭa, the kings of the Khaḍga dynasty. Most of the scholars have identified this king, mentioned by Sheng-chi, with Rājabhāṭa or Rājabhāṭa. No copper plate grant of this king has yet been found. So, very little is known about him.

Balabhāṭa

Balabhāṭa, another son of Devakhaḍga, possibly became the king after his brother Rājabhāṭa. He issued a copper plate, which was discovered from excavation at Śālvan Vihāra. The plate bears the 'bull' seal, the royal emblem of the Khaḍgas, as we see in the Āshrāfpur copper plates of Devakhaḍga and in the Khaḍga coins. He also issued coins which have been discovered from the Comilla region and published by M. Harunur Rashid³¹ and B. N. Mukherjee.³² B. N. Mukherjee has drawn our attention to an interesting piece of gold coin bearing an epithet 'Vaṅgasrī' (glory of Vaṅga). The present author has published a number of gold and silver coins of this king bearing the legend *Balabhāṭa*.³³ It is interesting to note that silver coins of this king have been found for the first time. These are the unique type of silver coins among the Samataṭa coins, and such Gūpta archer type silver coins have not hitherto been discovered from South East Bengal. Hence, Balabhāṭa was an exceptional ruler from the other Samataṭa kings in the matter of issuing coins. All the coins bear the legend 'Balabhāṭa' and stylistically and symbolically these are same as the coins of Rājabhāṭa. It is also interesting to note that all the coins bear the 'bull' symbol, the

dynastic emblem of the Khaḍgas. The above noted copper plate and the coins form important sources for reconstructing his history.

The Śālvan Vihāra copper plate of Devakhaḍga refers to Balabhaṭṭa as Devakhaḍga's son.³⁴ But the Mainamati copper plate of Balabhaṭṭa does not introduce him as the son of Devakhaḍga; rather it simply records the name of Devakhaḍga as 'Svāmī-Devakhaḍga', not mentioning him as father of Balabhaṭṭa. On the basis of this reference, some scholars thought that the relationship between the father and the son was possibly estranged. According to Harunur Rashid, "...the relationship between them still remains unknown and mysterious. Balabhaṭṭa is widely regarded as estranged, rebellion son."³⁵ According to Kamalākānta Gupta, "this indicates that he had an unusual ascendance to the throne at the expense of his father who might have been removed by this prince or by any outside agency not favoring the continuance of his father who might have been disagreed or degraded for some undiscovered reasons."³⁶ But this view does not seem to be correct as his copper plate refers to him as '*mātā-pitra-pādāmudhyāto-rājputraḥ*' (the prince who was meditating at the feet of his parents).³⁷ So, he cannot be regarded as a rebellious son.

It has been referred to in the copper plate of Balabhaṭṭa that Hari (an epithet of Siva) protected him while he was fighting with his enemies.³⁸ It suggests that Balabhaṭṭa initiated or was involved in war with neighboring kings. Probably he fought in order to extend the sway of the Khaḍga kingdom.

The copper plate of Balabhaṭṭa refers to Kaṭakaśilā as the name of his royal palace and Devaparvata is mentioned as his capital city, which has been identified in the Mainamati area in Comilla district.³⁹ Devaparvata was the political hub of the ancient kingdom of Samatata. In this connection, a question may be raised, why did Balabhaṭṭa use the 'Vaṅgaśrī' (glory of Vanga) epithet in his coin? It may be pointed out that the Khaḍgas were originally the kings of Vaṅga, as the Āshrāfpur copper plates had been found within the limits of Vaṅga. They extended their kingdom by capturing Samatata. Then the whole Vanga-Samatata area or South-East Bengal came to be recognized as the kingdom of Vaṅga or the Khaḍga's kingdom came to be known as the kingdom of Vaṅga. Hence, it is not unlikely that as a king of Vaṅga, Balabhaṭṭa assumed the title 'Vaṅgaśrī'. It may be suggested that he was the most powerful sovereign king of the dynasty and he expressed the power and prestige of

the Khaḍgas through issuing this type of coins. Though he issued coins following the Gupta tradition, he wanted to attach the eloquent epithet with his name to express his sovereign and paramount position. Balabhaṭṭa was certainly a great king among the rulers of South- East Bengal, as we see him issuing different types of gold and silver coins. The silver coin of Balabhaṭṭa is symbolically similar of the silver coin of Rājabhāṭa except the legend. These coins clearly indicate that well-ordered economy prevailed and international maritime trade and commerce flourished. Devaparvata, thus, was a flourishing capital city. On the other hand, the flourishing economic condition is indicative of a stable political condition of the kingdom; order and peace was firmly established in the society.

Two Later Khaḍga Kings

B. N. Mukherjee has referred to one Gupta archer type gold coin bearing a legend in the obverse which he doubtfully reads as '*Prṭhubala*'.⁴⁰ But the present author has published recently two other same type of gold coins.⁴¹ The coin bears a legend in two lines in the obverse and it is read as: 1. *Prṭhu* 2. *Bha(ṭa)*. The word '*Prṭhu*' and the next letter '*bha*' of the legend is very clear and distinct. Metallurgical, symbolical and typological considerations make these coins similar to the coins of Rājabhāṭa and Balabhaṭṭa. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the 'bull' symbol, the dynastic seal of the Khaḍgas, is also attached to these coins. Hence the legend of the coins can logically be read as *Prṭhubhāṭa*, instead of *Prṭhubala*. Considering the stylistic affinity and with the '*bhāṭa*' ending legend like the other Khaḍga coins of Balabhaṭṭa, Rājabhāṭa and Sarvabhāṭa, *Prṭhubhāṭa* may be identified as another king of the Khaḍga dynasty. R. C. Majumdar referred to a king named *Prṭhu* or *Prṭhuvirāja* on the basis of a coin.⁴² This *Prṭhu* was unidentified for a long time, but actually he was none but *Prṭhubhāṭa*, who was probably a king of the Khaḍga dynasty. Probably, he was a successor of Balabhaṭṭa. According to B. N. Mukherjee, "*If Prṭhubala [Prṭhubhāṭa] was a regular king of Samatāṭa; he must be placed after Balabhaṭṭa.*"⁴³

Harunur Rashid drew the attention of scholars to a Gupta archer type gold coin, found at Mainamati while excavating at the Śālvān Vihāra. The coin bears a legend in two lines and Rashid reads the legend as '*Sarvanara*'.⁴⁴ B. N. Mukherjee includes this

coin in his book and he does not accept the reading of Rashid. He reads the legend as 'Khaḍgadeva'.⁴⁵ But recently, the present author has published two more coins of the same type bearing the same legend, which is read as 'Sarvanāda'.⁴⁶ But at that time the legend was read from photographs. But very recently the present author has closely examined the original objects and it seems that the correct reading will be 'Sarvabhāṭa'. However, B. N. Mukherjee's reading is found to be incorrect, as the word 'Sarva' is very clear and distinct. Rashid read the first letter of the last line as 'na', but the correct reading will be 'bha' and this 'bha' is similar to the 'bha' in other Khaḍga coins of Rājabhāṭa, Balabhāṭa and Pṛthubhāṭa. From metallurgical, stylistic and symbolic considerations these coins are same as the other Khaḍga coins. The coins also bear 'bull', the dynastic symbol of the Khaḍgas. So, the issuer king of these coins may be considered to be one in line of the Khaḍgas. At the same time, with the similarity of 'bhāṭa' ending like the other Khaḍga kings – Rājabhāṭa, Balabhāṭa, Pṛthubhāṭa – 'Sarvabhāṭa' reading seem to more acceptable. Sarvabhāṭa may thus be considered to be a king of the Khaḍga dynasty on the basis of these coins.

Some Unanswered Questions regarding the Khaḍgas

Now some of the controversial issues in the history of the Khaḍgas may be reviewed. When the Āshrāḍpur copper plates were published, scholars were curious to know many aspects of this forgotten dynasty. Among the questions those arose, mention may be made of some: when did the Khaḍgas begin to rule? How and when did the rule of the dynasty come to a close? How far did their sway extend? What religion did they follow? Where was their capital city 'Karmāntabāsaka' located? But the epigraphic records of the Khaḍgas contain very scanty historical information, which are not enough to satisfy the curiosities of scholars. Ultimately these questions turned into nothing but matters of controversy among scholars. In some of the cases, these issues were not viewed in their right perspectives. On the other hand, with the passage of time, some new materials have come to light and provided some new points. Hence, these controversial issues need to be reviewed in the light of the new materials as well as intensive study of the published epigraphic records.

Religion of the Khaḍgas

Scholars in the past reported that the Khadgas were Buddhists. They came to this decision considering the following points:

1. Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha have been praised in the Āshrāḥpur copper plates.
2. Land was donated by the Āshrāḥpur copper plates to Buddhist Vihāras and Stupas.
3. Land was gifted by the copper plates of Balabhaṭṭa for establishing Vihāras.

Now it is an established fact in the history of ancient Bengal that the Khadgas were Buddhist. Eminent scholar N. K. Bhattasali was the first to remark that the Khadgas may be Brahmin and not Buddhist.⁴⁷ Bhattasali's comment, though correct, but it is interesting to note that he did not furnish any reason or explanation in support of his view. Hence this subject demands a fresh assessment and this may be propounded for further discussion.

Some scholars⁴⁸ report that Khadgaodyama, the founder of the dynasty, was a Buddhist. But nothing is actually mentioned in the Āshrāḥpur copper plates in this regard. The word '*vaktīma-gurbi*' (very respectful) towards Buddha is referred to in the inscription⁴⁹ and it clearly suggests that he had a deep respect towards Buddhism, and it may not be taken to mean that he himself was a Buddhist. Generally the Buddhist kings introduce themselves in epigraphs with the epithet '*Paramasaugata*' or '*Paramatathāgato*' (a devout worshiper of *Sugata* or *Tathāgata*, i.e., Buddha).⁵⁰ But it is interesting to note that the Khadga kings did not use these epithets with their names in their copper plates. Moreover, the Buddhist rulers generally affix *Dharmacakramudra* (the Buddhist wheel of law)⁵¹ to their copper plates as a seal or symbol. In this connection, reference may be made of the Pala, the Candra and the Early Deva kings of ancient Bengal as well as the other Buddhist rulers of India attached '*Dharmacakra*' to their copper plates as a royal symbol. But the Khadgas did not do so. They attached the 'bull' symbol to their copper plates as a royal seal. The bull emblem also appeared to their coins. 'Bull' is the *bāhana* (vehicle) of Siva and it is also considered to be a symbolic representation of Siva. It is observed in ancient Indian history that generally the Śaiva kings (follower of the Śiva cult) attached 'bull' seal to their copper plates and coins. In this connection, reference may be made that Śaśānka, the king of Gaḍa, being a Śaiva, attached 'bull' symbol as a seal to his

copper plates and coins. Probably the Khaḍga kings, being Śaiva, had done the same thing in their copper plates and coins.

The religion of the Khaḍgas will be further clear if we carefully read and analysis the copper plate of Balabhaṭṭa. He is presented in the record as '*Parama-maheśvara-rājaputraḥ*'.⁵² It indicates that prince Balabhaṭṭa, son of Devakhaḍga, was a devout worshiper of Maheśvara (an epithet of Śiva).⁵³ The epithet '*Paramamaheśvara*' was generally used in ancient times by Śaiva kings. It is further stated to the same inscription that *Viśvapā Hari* (an epithet of Śiva) protected him while he was fighting against his enemies.⁵⁴ These references in the copper plate leave little doubt that Balabhaṭṭa, the fifth ruler of the Khaḍga dynasty, was truly a Brahmin or a devout worshiper of Śiva.

It is known from the Deulbāḍī stone image inscription⁵⁵ that Devakhaḍga's queen Prabhāvati installed an image of Sarvāni (an epithet of Dūrgā). Hence, it suggests that *Devakhaḍga's queen had a close attachment to Śaivism. In this connection, mention may be made that the coins of Devakhaḍga, Rājabhaṭṭa, Balabhaṭṭa bear a six or eight armed deity which may be taken as representation of the Sarvāni or Lakṣmī, while the coins of Pṛthūbhaṭṭa bears an eight-handed deity (Sarvāni) that holds the representation of elephant headed child Ganesa. Lakṣmī is called the daughter of Śiva and Ganesa is the son of Śiva. It is interesting to note that the coins of the Khaḍgas also bear the 'bull' symbol, which is the symbolic representation of Śiva. The symbolic representation and the pantheons that appear to the Khaḍga coins clearly indicate that the Khaḍgas were not Buddhists, but Brahmins or Śaivas.*

Now a pertinent question may be raised; why was Buddha praised in the Āshrāḍpur copper plates? Or why was the land donated to Buddhist Vihāras or Stupas by the Khaḍga kings? Probably Buddha was praised in the Āshrāḍpur copper plates for the personal predilection of the writer of the charters. In this connection, it is very interesting to note that the writer of the plates introduced himself as *Parama-saugata-Puradāsa*.⁵⁶ Hence, it is clear that the writer or composer of the charters was a Buddhist or the devout worshiper of the Sugata (Buddha) and Buddha may have been praised at the beginning of the plates due to his personal interest, not the interest of the Khaḍga kings, as we find that no Khaḍga king introduced himself with the epithet *Paramasaugata*.

Another pertinent question needs to be clarified: why did the Khaḍgas donate lands to the Buddhist monasteries? It may be pointed out that the Khaḍgas were very much liberal in their attitude towards the religion of their Buddhist subjects. During the period under discussion, a large portion of the population of South-East Bengal was Buddhists. So, the Khaḍga kings prudently showed respect towards other religions. Actually communal harmony and respect for other religions was a common phenomenon or feature during early medieval Bengal. In this connection, reference may be made that being Buddhists, the Pala and the Chandra kings donated land to Brahmans or established Hindu temples or installed Brāhmaṇical images. The Khaḍgas might have done the same thing; donated land to Buddhist Vihāras, though they were Śaivas.

The Capital of the Khaḍgas

Āshrāḍpur copper plate (B) refers to '*Jayakarmāntavāsaka*' as the capital city or administrative centre of Devakhaḍga and both the Āshrāḍpur plates were issued from there. But where was the place located? This is a matter of controversy among the scholars. N. K. Bhaṭṭasali identified '*Karmāntavāsaka*' with Kāmṭa, a place in Comilla district. In support of this identification he has referred to an inscribed image. He writes, "I chanced upon an inscribed image of Naṭarāja Śiva, and on examining the inscription; I found that it was an inscription of a king of 'Karmānta', no doubt the same 'Karmānta' from which the Āshrāḍpur copper plates were issued. The place is still called 'Kāmṭa'."⁵⁷ In general, scholars accepted to this identification and it was an established conclusion for a long time in the history of ancient Bengal. But recently Harunur Rashid⁵⁸ and A. K. M. Zakaria⁵⁹ differed with Bhaṭṭasali and both the scholars have identified 'Karmānta' with Noapāḍā and Ishānchandraṅgarā, at present two villages in the Comilla district, which are 6 km. south of Deulbāḍi.⁶⁰ They furnished the following reasons in support of their views:

1. The sculptural specimen (the image of Naṭarāja Śiva, which was referred to by Bhaṭṭasali) was discovered from Baḍakāmṭa, could not be assigned to a date earlier than 10th century (Chandra period). According to Harunur Rashid, "it could not conceivably have any relation with the Khaḍga capital 'Karmānta' (in the 7th century)"⁶¹

2. Two copper plates of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta have been found from Uḍiśvara village under Muradnagara police station in Comilla district (now these plates are preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum). On the other hand, the Kailan copper plate was issued from Devaparvata. Hence, it is clear that the area from Mainamati to Uḍiśvara was under the sway of the Rāta dynasty. 'Kāmṭa' is located between the two places and 'Kāmṭa' is only 8 km. from Devaparvata. How is it possible to accept that the Khaḍga capital was located in the interior of the territory of the Rata dynasty? It could only be possible if we accept the Khaḍgas as feudatory rulers under the Rātas. But there is no evidence to support this assumption.

3. A. K. M. Zakaria has pointed out that the land, which was gifted by the Āshrāḍpur plates, was located in the Peranātana viṣaya. The land was donated to the Vihāras of Mainamati (Devaparvata). Similarly, land was donated to the Vihāras of Devaparvata in the Peranaṭana viṣaya by the copper plates of Bhavadeva⁶², Ladahachandra and Govindachandra.⁶³ Devaparvata or Maināmati area was located within the Peranātana viṣaya. But 'Kāmṭa' was located under Guptinātana viṣaya, far away from the donated land.

Both the scholars have come to the conclusion that Bhattasali's identification of 'Karmānta' with 'Kāmṭa' is not correct. They think that 'Karmānta' was somewhere near Deulbāḍi, where Prabhāvati (queen of Devakhaḍga) installed an image of Sarvāni. Hence, they put forward Noapāḍā as a probable political hub of Devakhaḍga, which was only 6 km. from Deulbāḍi. Noapāḍā and Ishānchandrānagara are the couple of modern villages which now lie almost totally covering and obliterating the extensive brick ruins and other ancient remains underneath. There is still an ancient water tank and a stupa, which are assigned to the Khaḍga period by Harunur Rashid. In this connection, he also refers to a sealing (which was discovered from Noapāḍā) which has been attributed by him to the Khaḍga dynasty.⁶⁴ Considering the aforesaid evidences, both the scholars have come to the conclusion that Bhattasali's identification of 'Karmānta' with 'Kāmṭa' is not correct and they put forward the view that the brick ruins of Noapāḍā represent the remains of the ancient city of Karmānta.

The suggestion of the above noted scholars seems to be reasonable to give up Bhattasali's identification of Devakhaḍga's capital Karmānta with Kāmṭa. But at the

same time, there is no authentic ground to propose Noapāḍā as Devakhaḍga's capital instead of Kāmṭa. Harunur Rashid has also referred to a sealing which has been assigned to the Khaḍga period in support of his view. But the sealing has never been published; even nobody knows where it is now. Rashid himself has acknowledged, "In spite of our best efforts, we could not procure the Khaḍga period sealing recovered from Noapāḍā stupa sites by the owners."⁶⁵ On the other hand, Rashid has assigned the Buddhist stupa of Noapāḍā as a relic of the Khaḍga period. But, perhaps, this is not correct. He thinks that the Khaḍgas were Buddhists and the Stupa was constructed during the rule of the Khaḍgas. But we have already shown above that the Khaḍgas were not Buddhists. Hence, this stupa cannot be accepted as an authentic evidence to prove Khaḍga's relation with Noapāḍā. This stupa may have been constructed in the time of the Early Devas or of the Chandras; both the dynasties are recognized as Buddhists. So, the views of the aforesaid scholars regarding the identification of the capital of the Khaḍgas, Karmānta, with Noapāḍā and Īshānchandraṅgarā cannot be accepted beyond doubt.

On the basis of the above discussion, it may be suggested that neither Baḍakāmṭa, nor Noapāḍā-Īshānchandraṅgarā may be taken as identical with Khaḍga capital *Karmāntavāsaka*. 'Karmānta' may be located somewhere within the limits of Peranātana Viṣaya, certainly somewhere near Devaparvata, as the lands were donated by the Āshrāḍpur copper plates to the religious institutions which were located in Devaparvata. If we closely observe the copper plate of Balabhaṭṭa, we can get some positive indication to identify the political hub of the Khaḍgas. The record refers to '*Śrīmajjayaskandhāvāra-bāsaka-bhavanād-Devaparvata*.'⁶⁶

This reference indicates that the name of the *Jayaskandhāvāra* (camp of victory) of Balabhaṭṭa was at Bāsaka and the name of their royal palace was Kaṭakaśilā which was located at Devaparvata. 'Karmāntabāsaka' and 'Bāsaka' may be identical. The copper plate of Balabhaṭṭa clearly mentions that the capital city and the royal palace (Kaṭakaśilā) of Balabhaṭṭa were located at Bāsaka in Devaparvata. When the plate was issued, Balabhaṭṭa was a prince and his father Svāmī Devakhaḍga was the ruling king. This fact clearly indicates that Devakhaḍga ruled at least for sometime from Devaparvata. Two more copper plates of Devakhaḍga had been found in situ in cell 75, third period, during excavation at Śālvan Vihāra. Moreover, almost all the Khaḍga

coins have been found in Mainamati region of Comilla district. No coin or copper plate of the Khaḍgas, not even a single relic, has been found in Baḍakāmta or in the Noapāḍā area. Hence, it is most likely that the capital city of Devakhaḍga may be located at Devaparvata and Karmānta was certainly somewhere near by Devaparvata.

Date of the Khaḍgas

A date is found in the last line of the Āshrāḍpur copper plate (B), but its exact reading is a matter of controversy among scholars, as it is very difficult to decipher the date due to corrosion. G. M. Laskar, who re-edited comprehensively the Āshrāḍpur copper plates, read the date *samvat* (year number) 13 and day Pauṣa 25. He commented that the date is the regnal year of the ruling king. But R. C. Majumdar differed with G. M. Laskar, and read *samvat* 73 or 79 and the day 28 Pauṣa. He also referred the date to the Harṣa Era. D. R. Bhandarkar does not agree with the above readings of the date; he reads *Samvat* 63 and the day 25. But he assigned the date to the Harṣa Era and has supported R. C. Majumdar in this case.⁶⁷ On the other hand, D. C. Ganguly does not accept the aforesaid views regarding the reading of the date of the record. He observed that there is only one numeral figure expressing the *samvat* (year number) and it is clearly 7. He has further commented, "the date of the Āshrāḍpur copper plate should read neither 73 nor as 63 but as 7, which is obviously the regnal year of the king Devakhaḍga, during whose reign the inscription was issued."⁶⁸

B. N. Mukherjee supported R. C. Majumdar's view and accepted the date as Harṣa Era. Even he has gone so far as to fix the date of Devakhaḍga by converting 73 Harṣa *Samvat* into *Christian era*. According to him, "the date of one of the Āshrāḍpur inscription of Devakhaḍga is to be read as the year 73, assignable to the era of AD. 606 and so to AD.679. In that case Devakhaḍga could have begun to reign by AD. 679."⁶⁹ But we are of the opinion that the date is not in the Harṣa Era. There is no evidence of the expansion of Harṣa's empire in South-East Bengal. Harṣa's empire did not survive after his death. Not even a single copper plate has been found in Bengal bearing Harṣa *Samvat*. Hence, the views of R. C. Majumdar and D. R. Bhandarkar are not tenable. On the other hand, D. C. Ganguly's view seems to be correct. The date of the Āshrāḍpur copper plate is actually in the regnal year of the king. The unpublished *Śālvan Vihāra copper plates of Devakhaḍga bear the date in the regnal year of the ruling king*. The copper plate of Balabhaṭṭa also bears the regnal year. Regnal year is only a particular year of the reign of a king. Hence, it is not possible to fix the date of

Devakhaḍga or the other Khaḍga kings on the basis of the regnal year referred to the Khaḍga plates.

An attempt has been made by scholars to fix the date of the Khaḍgas on paleographic ground. But this is also a matter of dispute among scholars. According to G. M. Laskar, "Paleographic consideration would lead us to place these inscriptions in the eighth or ninth century A.D..."⁷⁰ Rajendralal Mitra, who first edited the plates, holds the same view.⁷¹ R. D. Banerjee also agreed with G. M. Laskar and placed the Āshrāfpur plates in eighth or ninth century A.D.⁷² N. K. Bhattasali held the view that the Khaḍgas ruled during the later part of the seventh century and the beginning of the eighth century.⁷³ R. G. Basak agreed with N. K. Bhattasali.⁷⁴ A. H. Dani, who has done a thorough work on Indian Paleography, has placed the Khaḍgas in the seventh century AD.⁷⁵

N. K. Bhattasali's view seems to be correct as it is supported by a foreigner's account. Chinese monk traveler Sheng-chi visited Samatāṭa during the seventh century A.D. He mentioned the ruling king of Samatāṭa as 'Ho-luo-she-poṭo',⁷⁶ who is identifiable with Rājabhāṭa, a son of Devakhaḍga, referred to in the Āshrāfpur copper plate. As it appears from the Kao-Sheng-Chuan that Shen-chi came to Samatāṭa in 685 A.D., when Rājabhāṭa was the ruling king of Samatāṭa and it is reasonable to hold that his father Devakhaḍga started to rule sometime before 685 A.D. On the basis of this dating scheme, D. C. Sircar has made an attempt to fix the approximate dates of the Khaḍgas.

D. C. Sircar⁷⁷ has fixed tentatively the following chronology of the Khaḍgas: Khaḍgodyama c. 615-35 A.D.; Jātakhaḍga c. 635-55 A.D.; Devakhaḍga c. 655-75 A.D.; Rājabhāṭa c. 675-700 A.D. But D. C. Sircar has fixed the dates up to Rājabhāṭa. There are three more Khaḍga kings - Balabhāṭa, Sarvabhāṭa and Pṛithubhāṭa, whose dates have not been fixed. So, it would be safe to conclude that the Khaḍga dynasty ruled for more 50 years, from the second half of the seventh century up to the first half of the eighth century A.D.

How far did their kingdom extend?

In the present state of our knowledge it is very difficult to determine the exact extent of the kingdom of the Khaḍgas. It is observed from the aforesaid discussion that Khaḍgodyama was probably the first king of the dynasty. He was a very efficient sword fighter and carved out a kingdom for himself through fighting with his enemies, probably neighbouring feudatories. But he did not assume any royal title nor

did he issue any coin. It indicates that he was possibly a pretty feudatory chief having no extensive dominion. Jātakhadga was also a *Kṣitipati* (king), who had a strong elephant force, but he also did not assume any imperial title and he did not issue any coin. It suggests that he was also a feudatory king like his father Khadgodyama. Though Devakhadga does not assume any imperial title like *Mahārājādhirāja*, he issued copper plates and coins. The gold coins of Devakhadga suggest that he was an independent king and he had a more extensive dominion than his predecessors. As the Āshrāfpur copper plates were found within the limits of Vaṅga, it may be reasonable to think that the extent of his sway included some parts of Vaṅga. The legend 'Vaṅgasrī', which appeared on the obverse of the coins of Balabhaṭṭa, may be taken to indicate that his sway included a large part of Vaṅga, situated contiguous to Samataṭa. Khadga coins have been discovered from Sabhar, Koṭālipādā, Dhaka, parts of Vaṅga sub-regions, and this evidence supports that some parts of Vaṅga were an integral part of the Khadga kingdom. It is most likely that the Khadgas may have been originally local feudal kings of Vaṅga. But during the rule of Devakhadga, they became powerful and captured Samataṭa ousting the Rātas. Thus he may have established a large kingdom including the Vaṅga-Samataṭa region and this independent position is evidenced by his coins. During the reign of Balabhaṭṭa, their kingdom may have extended further; even a large tract of land in Vaṅga region came under his control, which may have been recognized and celebrated by issuing coins with the eloquent legend 'Vaṅgasrī'. Different types of gold and silver coins of Balabhaṭṭa clearly suggest that he had a vast independent kingdom including the whole of Vaṅga-Samataṭa regions and perhaps, some parts of Śrīhaṭṭa, Tippera and also Harikela, as the Khadga coins have been found in these regions.

Gold coin of Rājabhāṭa



Obverse



Reverse

Gold coin of Balabhāṭa



Obverse



Reverse

Gold coin of Balabhaṭṭa



Obverse



Reverse

Silver coin of Balabhaṭṭa



Obverse



Obverse



Reverse



Reverse

Gold coin of Sarvabhaṭa



Obverse



Reverse

Gold coin of Pṛthubhaṭa



Obverse



Reverse

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13. *Ibid*, Plate-B, Line 5-6, p. 90.
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Professor B. N. Mukherjee refers to the gold coin of Devakhaḍga. But the present author has closely examined all the Khaḍga coins preserved in the Bangladesh national Museum and the Department of Bangladesh Archaeology. But there is no a single coin of Devakhaḍga. N. G. Rhodes and S. K. Bose refer Khaḍga gold coin except the coin of Devakhaḍga. (*The Coinage of Assam*, Vol. I, Pre Ahom Period, Calcutta 2010, p. 77). The present author has doubt whether Devakhaḍga issued any gold coins or not like his successors, though the reference has been made on the basis of the eminent scholar B. N. Mukherjee.
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Chapter -VI

Early Devas of Samatata and Harikela

The Early Devas of Samatata

The history of the Early Devas of Samatata is so far known from two published copper plates, a number of coins, a terracotta sealing, and the archaeological remains at Mainamati. At the beginning we may make a brief appraisal of these sources before we go into details of the history of the dynasty.

A copper plate inscription was discovered in 1950 by an inhabitant of a village in the Tippera district (now Comilla) of East Bengal. The plate bears a '*Dharmacakra*' (Buddhist wheel flanked by two dears) seal. Below the emblem, there was a legend which was restored and read as "*Śrī-abhinava-mṛgāṅka*". The inscription recorded grant of land to the *Ratnatraya* (Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha) of Vendāmati Vihārikā under Peranāṭana Viṣaya (district) in response to an appeal made by Mahāsāmantādhipati (vassal of higher status) Nandadhara.

The plate was deciphered by D. C. Sircar and published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society*.¹ The record disclosed a line of kings of ancient South-East Bengal, whose name ended with 'deva'. This was the only source for the history of the Early Devas for the long time. But another copper plate of this dynasty was discovered during excavation at Śālavana Vihāra at Maināmati in Comilla in 1955. The plate is deciphered and published by Kamalākāntagupta in the *Journal of Bangladesh Archaeology*.² The plate also bears the same dynastic emblem "*Dharmacakra*". But the seal bears an interesting legend: "*Vaṅgāla-mṛgāṅkasya*" (the moon of Vaṅga). Land was donated to a temple under Peranāṭana Viṣaya (district). An interesting aspect of the inscription is that the plate contains two documents, at the same time. The first document contains 44 lines, which was issued by king Ānandadeva. But on the vacant space of the reverse of the plate,

probably at a later period, another land grant of Bhavadeva was inscribed. The plate may be designated as 'Mainamati copper plate of Ānandadeva-Bhavadeva'. However, the plate may be considered as a supplementary source for the history of Bhavadeva.

Three more copper plates were discovered during the excavation at Śālvan Vihāra in cell 5, period three. These plates bear *Dharmacakra*, the dynastic symbol of the Early Devas. It is thought that these plates were issued by the Early Deva kings of Devaparvata.³ But these plates still remain unpublished. Now the plates cannot be traced. It is surmised that the plates were stolen from the Maināmai site museum.

F. A. Khan reported in 1963 the discovery of a number of gold coins in cell 13 at Śālvan Vihāra.⁴ M. Harunur Rashid also referred to these coins.⁵ These are the 'Archer: seated goddess' gold coins with high purity of metal. These coins have been elaborately discussed and properly attributed to Early Devas of Samatāṭa by B. N. Mukherjee.⁶ He described the coins as follows:

Obverse: Within a border of dots a male figure stands to front with the face turned to left; his half raised left hand holds a bow and the right hand clasps an arrow pointing downwards; behind the right hand is a small pot and topped by a full blown lotus; the legend on the obverse can be read as 'Śrī' and (in the upper left field in front of the head of the male) the legend is "*Vaṅgāla-mṛgāṅka*"

Reverse: Within a border of dots a goddess sits to front on a fully blown lotus; she holds a noose in her right hand; in the upper right field a pot is noticed with leaves issuing out of it; the letter Śrī appears in the upper left field.

'*Vaṅgāla- mṛgāṅka*' epithet appeared in the royal seal of the copper plate of Ānandadeva. It is likely that King Ānandadeva issued these coins.

B. N. Mukherjee⁷ has described another gold coin, found at Maināmati area in Comilla district and now in a private collection in Kolkata, as follows:

Obverse: Within a border of dots a male figure standing in a *dvibhaṅga* posture and with his head turned to left; wearing a necklace, bangles and close fitting garments; holding a bow by his half raised left hand and a lotus by his right hand; the legend 'Śrī' in the upper

left field, 'Jaya' in front of the right, 'jarujya' and 'Bāla-mṛgānka' legend to the left of the king and below his left arm.

Reverse: Within a border of dots a female (goddess) sitting to front upon a lotus, her bent legs touching each other; the hair on the head is tied to top knot and crowned with a head dress; she is wearing a garment, earrings and ornaments, and holding the stalk of a flower by the left hand.

'Bāla-mṛgānka' was certainly an important epithet of the king, and it is similar to the epithet of 'Vaṅgāla-mṛgānka' and 'Avinava-mṛgānka' assumed respectively by Ānandadeva and his son Bhavadeva, the two Early Deva kings of Samatāṭa known from their copper plates. The find place has been within the limits of Samatāṭa and it is paleographically datable to the 7th century A.D. B. N. Mukherjee suggests that 'Bala-mṛgānka' is the epithet of the kings who issued the coins and who could have been a scion of the family of Ānandadeva. According to B. N. Mukherjee this king may be Vīradeva, the father of Ānandadeva. But there is no other corroborative evidence to support it.

B. N. Mukherjee has referred to the date of the coins to the seventh century A.D. on paleographic ground. But N. G. Rhodes suggests that these coins may be dated to eighth century. According to him, "The coins 'Balamṛgānka' and 'Vaṅgālamṛgānka' are very different in artistic treatment, and have dies engraved by a very competent hand. The calligraphy is very beautiful and we reserve judgment as to whether the letterforms can be dated to the eighth century, rather than the seventh century..."⁸ Probably the later view seems to be correct as the artistic style is different and more developed letter-form has been engraved on these coins than those of the Khaḍga and Rāta coins. However, scholars generally accepted that these coins were issued by the Early Deva kings of Devaparvata on the basis of the epithets 'Vaṅgāla-mṛgānka' and 'Bāla-mṛgānka', as the same type of epithets are appeared to the copper plates of the Early Devas. Besides these coins, there is one terracotta seal discovered from excavation at Maināmati which bears the legend 'Śrī -Bhavadeva Mahāvihāra- Ārya- Bhikṣu Saṃghasya'. The seal, the coins and the huge archeological remains at Maināmati may be considered as the

supplementary evidences of the copper plates for reconstructing the history of the Early Devas of Samatāṭa.

Now an attempt may be made to fix the following genealogy of the Early Devas of Samatāṭa and to reconstruct their history taking into consideration the evidences discovered so far:

Śrī Śāntideva

Śrī Vīradeva

Śrī Ānandadeva

Śrī Bhavadeva

Śrī Śāntideva

Śāntideva is referred to as the first member of the Deva family of Samatāṭa. He is only mentioned in the Maināmati copper plate of Śrī -Ānandadeva. But nothing is known about him from the copper plate except his name. Kamalākāntagupta⁹, who edited the plate of Ānandadeva, has mentioned that the copper plate is deciphered partly, and his report is a preliminary one. He has acknowledged that the first 6 lines of the record contain the achievements of Śāntideva and Vīradeva, but it is not possible to decipher the portion due to corrosion. He has further stated that if the record is re-edited comprehensively, it will possibly disclose more important facts about Śāntideva and Vīradeva. No royal titles have been attached with the name of Śāntideva. So, it is not possible to determine whether he was a king or not. It is probable that he was a feudal king of not having an extensive dominion.

Śrī Vīradeva

Vīradeva, son of Śāntideva, was the second king of his line. He has been referred to in both the copper plates of Bhavadeva and Ānandadeva. But it has been possible to know very little about him from the copper plates as the records are badly corroded. The first half of the verse 1 of the copper plate of Bhavadeva refers to him obtaining '*bhūmi-īśvaratvaḥ*', which means to have authority over a certain territory. This may be taken to indicate his kingship over a kingdom. The second half of the verse says how he extirpated his enemies as the sun dissolves darkness (*ripu-timir-onmulane-tigmā-teja*).¹⁰ It clearly suggests that he had to fight a lot with his enemies to carve out a kingdom or to consolidate it. In verse 2 of Bhavadeva's copper plate it is mentioned that he resembled Acyūta (an epithet of Viṣṇu) in the matter of subduing mighty foes. He is also compared with the '*Jina-muni-dharma-rāja*' (i.e. the Buddha), who followed the profession of righteousness (*nyāya-ājiva*). In the copper plate of Ānandadeva, he is described as one who is 'opulent by prowess' (*prakrāmadhanya*).¹¹ No royal titles appear with his name in the copper plate of Bhavadeva, but it is interesting to note that Ānandadeva (his son) has been mentioned as '*Mahārājādhirāja-sutaḥ*' (son of Mahārājādhirāja).¹² So, there is no doubt that he assumed the title '*Mahārājādhirāja*' and, in all probability, he was an independent king.

The above noted information indicates that Vīradeva established a kingdom for himself and obtained the '*bhūmi-īśvaratvaḥ*', to have authority over a land or kingdom. It is probable that he was a feudal king at the beginning of his career. But he may have risen to an independent position at the weakness of his overlord. Or, he may have fought with neighboring feudal kings to capture land and thereby curving out for himself an independent kingdom. At the time of his settled condition as an independent king, he may have assumed the title '*Mahārājādhirāja*'. B. N. Mukherjee speculates that the '*Bāla-mṛgāṅka*' coin may have been issued by Vīradeva. It is most likely that after establishing a kingdom, it was needed to mint coin, especially due to the flourishing international trade and commerce in South-East Bengal. According to B. N. Mukherjee, "in that case Vīradeva can be considered to have been responsible for establishing a kingdom and for

minting coins.”¹³ The term '*Jārujyā*,' referred to in the '*Bāla-mṛgānka*' coin, may be taken as an additional personal name of Vīradeva. B. N. Mukherjee has compared Vīradeva with Chandragupta II, who assumed the second name of Devarāja.¹⁴

Ānandadeva

Ānandadeva was the son and successor of Vīradeva (*tasya-ātmajāh*). His mother's name is referred to in both the copper plates of Ānandadeva and Bhavadeva. But it was not possible to read her name correctly from Bhavadeva's plate due to corrosion of that section of the record. D. C. Sircar read, '*...māṅgadevi*' and he suggested that the reading may be *Syāmāṅgadevi*.¹⁵ But it has now been possible to read the name correctly from the copper plate of Anandadeva in which the name has been clearly incised as *Somadevi*.¹⁶ It is mentioned that she was glorified by special qualifications and she has been compared with Gaurī (an epithet of Dūrgā)¹⁷.

Ānandadeva's capital was located at Vasantapura (*Vasantapura-avasthita-Śrīmajjayaskandhāvārāt*) from where his copper plate was issued. In this connection, it is also reported in the record that Vasantapura was the recently set-up capital and the previous capital city had to be abandoned due to the invasion of a strong enemy force. But the name of the previous capital city of Ānandadeva is not mentioned in the record. His son Bhavadeva issued his copper plate from Devaparvata. Hence, it may indicate that the capital city of Ānandadeva was originally located at Devaparvata, but it had to be temporarily transferred to Vasantapura due to an imminent invasion of a strong enemy. It is probable that Devaparvata was regained and re-established as a capital city either at the last stage of his rule or at the beginning of the reign of his son Bhavadeva.

Now a question may be raised, who was the enemy of Ānandadeva? The name of Chandradeva Varmā appears in line 20 of the copper plate of Ānandadeva. This section of the plate contains Ānandadeva's assertion of superiority over the king of Kāmarūpa, the Mleccha chief and the king of Śrīkṣetra (Puri in Orissa). The coins of Devavarmān and Vasuvarmān have been found in Samataṭa region.¹⁸ It is probable that Devavarmān and Vasuvarmān were the successors to Bhāskaravarman's territory in South-East Bengal

including Samatāṭa in the Post-Saśāṅka period. Then Samatāṭa probably acknowledged the suzerainty of Kāmarūpa for short period of time in the second half of the seventh century A.D. Subsequently, the Mlechha chief captured the Varman's territory in Kāmarūpa. It is probable that the Mlechha chief became powerful and turned into a possible threat to Ānandadeva. In this situation, the capital city of Ānandadeva may have been transferred to a safer place. But it is likely that ultimately Anandadeva was able to defeat the Mlechha chief and thereby regain their old capital city of Devaparvata. The influence of Kāmarūpa over Samatāṭa probably ended during the rule of Ānandadeva.

It is reported in the copper plate of Ānandadeva that he had asserted superiority over the king of Orissa (Śrīkṣetra). But nothing is known as to how it was possible for Ānandadeva to dominate the king of Orissa. Ānandadeva was a great warrior as he is referred to in the inscription as '*samara-dūrnivāra-dordaṇḍa*'.¹⁹ He is also compared with Bhīma and Rāmachandra, whose sword blazes spark of fire (*khadga-jvalada-anala*) while fighting with his enemy. It suggests that Anandadeva was a powerful king and efficient warrior. It is not impossible for a powerful king like him to defeat the king of Kāmarūpa and Orissa and extending the sway of his kingdom.

The royal epithets '*Parameśvara, Paramabhaṭṭāraka* and *Mahārājādhirāja*' are attached with the name of Ānandadeva. These epithets clearly suggest that he was a paramount sovereign king. He issued gold coins following the Gupta tradition. These coins further confirm that he was an independent king. But he was not satisfied to issue the coins copying merely the Gupta tradition and he had the eloquent epithet '*Vaṅgāla-mrgāṅka*' engraved on his coin expressing his prowess and sovereign entity. This epithet may indicate that his kingdom had spread beyond the limits of Samatāṭa. His kingdom may have included a large tract of Vaṅga and Vaṅgāla, which was contiguous to Samatāṭa. According to Amitabha Bhattacharyya, "The epithet '*Vaṅgāla-mrgāṅka*' assumed by Ānandadeva, the son of Vṛadeva, does indicate his family's authority over at least the Vaṅgāla, section of Vaṅga, if not over the whole of it."²⁰

Samatāṭa kingdom became famous during his rule as the copper plate reports '*sakala-bhūvana-prakaṭa-Samatāṭa*'.²¹ The ruined palace of king Ānandadeva (Ānandarājārvāḍī)

and the Ānandavihāra still bear the vestige and testimony of his achievement. The Mainamati copper plate of Ānandadeva was issued in his 39th regnal year and this clearly indicates that he ruled for a long time the kingdom of Samatāṭa and its adjacent regions. His gold coin and the architectural remains at Maināmati bear the testimony of a well-ordered society, economy, and administration of the country.

Bhavadeva

The next king of the Early Deva dynasty was Bhavadeva, the son and successor of Ānandadeva, who is said to have meditated at the feet of Mahārājādhirāja Ānandadeva. His deeds are described in 10 verses in the copper plate, but unfortunately this section of the plate is badly corroded. Lines 24 to 40 have been deciphered quite accurately, but this portion contains usual vague praises of his achievement that do not bear any historical importance.

The seal of the copper plate of Bhavadeva bears the legend '*Śrī-Abhinava-Mṛgāṅka*'. The same epithet has been referred to in line 33 of the Maināmati copper plate of Bhavadeva. The meaning of the legend may be "the fortunate, new deer marked one" or "the fortunate new moon."²² *Śrī-Abhinava-mṛgāṅka* was apparently a *viruda* of king Bhavadeva, who was responsible for issuing the plate with the seal. Devaparvata is referred to in line 42 of the inscription as a capital city of king Bhavadeva. The description of the city is recorded here in greater details than the Kailan and the Uḍiśvara copper plates of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta. Probably, during his rule, the capital was shifted from Vasantapura to Devaparvata.

The ruler, Bhavadeva, designated himself as '*Mahārājādhirāja*' (king of the kings), '*Parameśvara*' and '*Paramabhaṭṭāraka*'. The use of the conventional imperial titles clearly indicates that he was an independent king with aspiration towards an imperial status. Land was donated by the copper plate at the request of Śrī-Nandahara, who was a *Mahāsāmantādhipati* (the great feudal lord). This suggests that he was an overlord of many feudal kings and great feudal kings. Probably, he issues gold coins like his father Ānandadeva, though none of his coins has yet been found.

'*Dharmacakra*' symbol is affixed to the copper plate of Bhavadeva, which is the symbolic representation of Buddha. He donated land to a Buddhist Vihāra. He assumed the title of '*Paramasaugata*' (the devout worshiper of Sugata, an epithet of Buddha). All these clearly suggest that he was a Buddhist. He was very sympathetic to Buddhists and patronized Buddhist teachings. There is terracotta sealing that simply records '*Śrī-Bhavadeva Mahā Vihāra-Ārya-Bhikṣhu-Saṃghasya*' which can be translated as 'of the order of noble monks of the monastic establishment of Śrī Bhavadeva.'²³ The implication would be that the monastery was constructed or at least generally supported by *Mahārājādhirāja* Bhavadeva. The Śālvan Vihāra of Maināmati is considered to be identical with Bhavadeva Mahāvihāra.

The inscriptions of the Early Devas are not dated in any regular era. Date is referred to in regnal years of the ruling kings. In the copper plate of Bhavadeva, the date is given as the 18th day of apparently the solar month of Vaiśākha. But the date is not verifiable and the day on which the charter was issued cannot be determined. Hence, an attempt has been made to fix the date of the Early Devas on paleographic ground. S. N. Chakravarty²⁴ classifies the transitional forms of the test letter '*Śa*' in Eastern Indian epigraphs. According to this theory, the third and fourth transitional form of '*Śa*' is observed to the Early Deva inscriptions. If we accept the theory, the Early Deva inscriptions will be assigned to a date later than the middle of the ninth century. But D. C. Sircar does not accept the theory of S. N. Chakravarty to fix the date of the Early Devas. He has suggested that Chakravarty has ignored the numerical symbol. According to D. C. Sircar, the numerical figure for 1, 2 and 8 occur in the copper plate of Bhavadeva. The number 18 is not written with the symbol for 10 and this point to a date later than the seventh century when the decimal system of writing numbers did not become popular in Bengal. He has concluded that the characters of the inscription of Bhavadeva may be assigned to the eighth or ninth century A.D.²⁵ D. C. Sircar²⁶ has fixed the following approximate date of the Early Deva kings: Śāntideva, c. A.D. 720-735; Vīradeva, c. A.D.735-750; Ānandadeva, c. A.D. 750-775; Bhavadeva, c. A.D. 775-800

The date of Anandadeva that has been fixed by D.C. Sircar seems to be incorrect. The Maināmati copper plate of Anandadeva was issued in the 39 regnal year of the king. So it

seems certain that Ānandadeva ruled Samatata for at least 39 years. But D. C. Sircar assigns him a reign period of only 25 years (c. A.D. 750-775). A. H. Dani has examined the Early Deva inscriptions for his study of Indian Paleography and placed the Early Devas in the eighth century A.D.²⁷ Harunur Rashid suggests that the monastic quadrangle was built by Ānandadeva and his successor Bhavadeva some time during the eighth century.²⁸ N. G. Rhodes has commented considering the artistic treatment and letter-form of the Early Deva coins that their reign period may be placed in the eighth century, rather than to the seventh century A.D.²⁹ Scholars generally assign the Early Devas to the eighth century A.D. More developed letter-forms are observed in the Early Deva inscriptions than those of the Khaḍgas and the Rātas. Their coins are very different in artistic treatment, and had dies engraved by very competent hand, which is indicative of being issued in a period later than the Khaḍgas. Hence, it is reasonable to place the Early Devas after the Khaḍgas, who ruled in Samatata successively during the eighth century A.D.

Now a pertinent question may be raised, how did the Early Devas come to power? Or how did their rule come to a close? It is observed that after the Khaḍgas, the Early Deva rulers issued copper plates and coins from Devaparvata. Hence, it is almost certain that the Khaḍgas were supplanted by the Early Devas. The Khaḍga power may have weakened or collapsed, especially in Vaṅga, as a result of an invasion led by king Yasovarman, the king of Kanauj. The Early Devas may originally have been the feudal kings under the Khaḍgas. They may have captured power in Samatata region during the weakness of their overlord. Consequently, the Khaḍgas could not retain their hold on the heart of Samatata. B. N. Mukherjee has suggested that either Bhavadeva or more probably his father Ānandadeva finished the rule of the Khaḍgas in Samatata.³⁰ But we would rather think that the rule of the Khaḍgas was brought to an end not by Ānandadeva or his son Bhavadeva. It may be Vīradeva, who captured Devaparvata from the Khaḍgas as he is mentioned to have attained *bhūmi-īśvaratvaḥ* (to have authority over land) defeating his enemies.

After the Early Devas, it is found in the Chandra inscriptions that land was donated in the Peranātana Viśaya of Samatata. Hence, it is surmised that the Early Devas were supplanted by the Chandras in the Vaṅga-Samatata sub-regions.

The Early Devas of Harikela

Very little was known in the past about the rulers of Harikela, except the name of Kāntideva. Now we are in a position to reconstruct the history of the Deva rulers of Harikela in a little more greater details, as new materials have come up since the discovery of Kāntideva's plate in 1920.

Devatideva

The Dhaka Museum collected an inscribed metal vase in 1968 from a shop at Dhāmrāi, near Dhaka. The exact find spot of the vase was not known. But it was reported that it was found somewhere in Chittagong region. Now it is being preserved in the reserve collection of the Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka. The inscription on the vase has recently been deciphered by Gouriswar Bhattacharya.³¹ The record reveals a ruler of ancient Harikela kingdom, Devātideva, who belonged to the non-Aryan Khāsha tribe. It is interesting to note that the kingdom, in which he ruled, is introduced as *Khāsha-māka* and his officer is described as '*aśeṣha-khāsha-māka-adhikaraṇa*'. The *Khāshas* are mentioned in the Pala epigraphic records with other ancient tribes who were perhaps in the royal service together with the royal officials, royal servants and others.³² The Bhagavata Purāṇa (2.4.18) refers to the *Khāshas* along with the Kirātas, Huṅas, Andhras, Pulindas, Pukkasas, Abhirās, Suhmas and Yavans, who are called *pāpas* or sinners, and who were purified by embracing Vaisnavism.³³ But Devatideva was converted to Buddhism, not Vaisnavism. The metal vase inscription is the earliest epigraphic record of Devātideva, a Buddhist Khāsha king of the ancient Harikela kingdom.

The metal vase inscription was a land grant. It records the gift of several *pāṭakas* of land by the chief administrator and chief minister, the illustrious Nayāparākramgomin. The various royal officials had been instructed by the honorable chief administrator (*Mahāpradhāna*), the *Dauvārika Saubhāgya kīrti* and the donor, Nayāparākramgomin.

The king Devātideva gifted 33 pāṭakas of land to the Haritaka-Dharmasabhā Vihāra in the presence of royal officials for the enjoyment of the multitude of noble Buddhist monks who were engaged in worship of the Buddha, Dharma and for the renovation work of the monastery. A second donation was made by Pṛthudāma, Jishnudāma, Sambhudāma, and Gaurīdāma for the religious merit of all which was treated as *Sarvātibhoga-bhogya*. Another land transaction was made on the thirteenth day of the dark half of the month of *Pauṣa* of the *Āśvina samvatsara* by Dharmadatta and his son Bhadradatta. In the given boundary of the land a *Mahāyāna-Vihāra-Kṣetra* is mentioned as its eastern boundary. A list of royal officials of the ruler are reported in the inscription those who are related with the administration of the king. They are: *Kumārāmātya* Sūryabhadra, *Mahābalādhikartā* Jishnudāma, *Mahattara* Bhadra Rudraghoṣa, Dharmapatha Rudrapāla, Bhaṭṭa Bhadradeva, *Sandhivigrahika* Dyutidatta, Jivadatta, *Jyeshṭha* Bhogadeva, *Mudrāpāla* Prītidatta, *Kāyastha* Prītidāsa, *Mahāvārika* Valosvāmi. Nothing is reported in the inscription about the predecessors and successors of king Devātideva. Even no royal title like *Rājā* or *Mahārājādhirāja* is attached to his name in the inscription. But in line 1, he is mentioned as *Śrīmad Devātideva Bhaṭṭāraka*. On the other hand, in line 6, he has been called *Paramabhaṭṭāraka Śrīmad Devātideva*. Though he does not assume any royal title, the '*Bhaṭṭāraka*' and '*Paramabhaṭṭāraka*' epithets and the well-ordered administrative set up clearly suggest that he was a powerful king. The gifted land was located within the boundary of the Harikela maṇḍala. Probably he was the king of the Harikela kingdom. Except narrating the gifted lands, the related administrative set up and the Buddhist institutions to which these lands were gifted, no other political activities are referred to in the record. Hence, we do not know any details about the king and his genealogy.

It is important to note that the record is dated. The date is given in the lines 1-2 of the inscription as follows: '*Śrīmad-Devātideva-bhaṭṭārakasya-pravardhamāna-vijaya-rājye-sapta-saptate-mārggaśiṛṣa-samvatsare*'. According to Gauriswar Bhattacharya, the year 77(*sapta-saptate*) perhaps refers to the Burmese era starting from A.D. 638 and hence the date of the record should be equivalent to c. A.D. 715. This era was known as Chulasakarāja, and it was a Twelve Year Cycle starting with Mārggaśiṛṣa.

Kāntideva

A copper plate was found, sometime about 1920, by J. N. Sikdar, in an old temple in Chittagong, locally known as *Bara-ākhara*. This is an incomplete copper plate. It was deciphered first by D. C. Bhattacharya and J. N. Sikdar in the *Modern Review*.³⁴ But the plate was re-edited comprehensively by Left. Colonel R. C. Majumdar in the *Epigraphia Indica*.³⁵ A very interesting and unique seal is affixed to the top of the plate. The upper portion of the seal bears in relief the figure of a seated lion inside a temple. The seated lion is represented with mouth open and all the four paws in front. The seal is supported by two serpents with raised hoods. Across the lower panel of the seal is the legend 'Śri-Kāntideva', certainly the ruling king who issued the plate. However, the inscription contains the genealogy of Kāntideva, a ruler of the ancient kingdom of Harikela.

The first member of the lineage is Bhadradata, who was a Buddhist. The name of his son was Dhanadata, who married Vindurāti, a devotee of Siva and a daughter of a great king. His son was Kāntideva, who is styled as *Paramasaugata*, *Parameśvara* and *Mahārājādhirāja*. It is also reported in the inscription that the record was issued from the city of Vardhamānapura. The ruler Kāntideva addressed the future kings of Harikela *maṇḍala* to honour the charter.³⁶ In fact, this copper plate was made ready for recording a land grant, but this was actually the content of the inscription.

From the aforesaid reference, it is clear that the father and grandfather of king Kāntideva were not rulers as there are no royal titles attached to their names in the inscription. Only Kantideva is given full royal titles. Hence, a question may arise, how did Kāntideva become a king? In this connection, R. C. Majumder, who has re-edited the plate, has remarked rightly, "neither the father nor the grandfather of Kantideva was a king, and he must either have inherited his throne from his maternal grandfather or curved out an independent kingdom for himself."³⁷ D. C. Sircar has supported this view and has gone to identify this maternal grandfather of Kantideva. According to Sircar, " It is tempting to

identify Kāntideva's maternal grandfather with Bhavadeva of the inscription [copper plate inscription of king Bhavadeva] under discussion or with one of the latter's immediate successor and to suggest that Kāntideva belonged originally to a petty ruling family of the Sylhet region (Herikela) but that he inherited a big kingdom in South-East Bengal as an heir to his maternal grandfather who was a ruler of Samataṭa,"³⁸ But this suggestion is basically a conjecture. Moreover, his identification of *Herikela maṇḍala* with Sylhet region is also not correct. Now it is an established fact that *Herikela maṇḍala* was located in the Chittagong and its adjacent area.³⁹ B. N. Mukherjee has identified correctly that Herikela was a separate independent political entity, which was located in the Chittagong region.

Kāntideva assumed the title of *Mahārājādhirāja* and it indicates that he was an independent ruler. His capital city was located at Vardhamānpura. R. C. Majumdar identified the city with modern Burdwan in West Bengal. He has gone further that the kingdom over which Kantideva ruled must, therefore, be located in Vaṅga. He has further suggested that as no other city of this name is known in ancient Bengal, Vardhamānpura should be identified with the city of Burdwan. In this connection, he has referred to the Vardhamānbhūkti, a territorial division of the ancient Bengal.⁴⁰ N. K. Bhattasali identified Vardhamānpura with Vikramapura in the Dhaka district,⁴¹ while D. C. Sircar is of the opinion that Vardhamānpura was located in South-East Bengal and possibly in the Sylhet region.⁴²

Vardhamānpura has not been identified correctly by scholars in the past. Certainly its location should be searched within the territory of the Harikela, somewhere in the Chittagong region. The metal vase inscription of king Attākaradeva⁴³ discloses very important fact in this regard. In this vase inscription, Attākaradeva is said to have ruled from his capital city of Vardhamānpura which was situated in the *Harikela maṇḍala*. Vardhamānpura has been identified by Suniti Bhusan Kanungo, perhaps correctly, with the present Bara-Uthān or Borodhān village of Patiya Upazila in Chittagong.⁴⁴ This identification appears to be more acceptable than Vikramapura or Burdwan in West Bengal on geographical considerations. Harikela was a small independent state which was separate from Samataṭa and located in the Chittagong area. B. N. Mukherjee⁴⁵ and

Debala Mitra⁴⁶ have clearly shown that the kingdom of Harikela included the present day Chittagong region with some adjacent area. Vardhamānpura was the political hub of that kingdom.

Kāntideva's grandfather Bhadradata was a Buddhist, so also his father Dhanadatta. But it is interesting to note that his father is reported in the record as well-versed in the *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyana* and *Pūrāṇas*, in lieu of *Tripiṭaka*. On the other hand, Kāntideva has designated himself as '*Paramasaugata*' (devout worshiper of Sugata, the Buddha). Generally the Buddhist kings use the '*Dharmacakra*' in the seals attached to their copper plates. But why did he attach 'seated lion inside a temple seal' to his copper plate? Or, why did he add serpent figures in the seal?

'Lion' is a very sacred emblem to both the Buddhists and Hindus. *Simha* (lion) has been referred to in the Rigveda as very powerful and superior. Durgādevī chose lion for her vehicle in the battle against the demon. Pandava hero, Bhīma carried a lion emblem in the Mahābhāratan war.⁴⁷ According to Matsya Pūrāṇa the sun and moon god bear golden lion as an emblem in their banner or *dhvaja*.⁴⁸ But, as Kāntideva was a Buddhist king, lion emblem may be represented here from the point of view of Buddhism. According to Buddhist tradition, the lion is the symbolic representation of the Buddha, the lion of the Sākyas or Sākyasimha.⁴⁹ It is generally observed that the lion exactly in the same pose is carved under the images of Bodhisatva (Buddha). Longhurst mentions that Buddha himself is seated on a serpent couch and in the instance is flanked by a lion on each side.⁵⁰ But we may suggest that snake is affixed to this seal not in the Buddhist religious sense. It has already been referred earlier that Vindurāti, mother of Kāntideva, was a devotee of Siva. Snake is a symbolic representation of Mahādeva (an epithet of Siva). Hence, the snakes might have been attached to this seal from the religious point of Saivism. In this connection, mention may be made that his father Dhanadatta may have been influenced by his wife to be well-versed in *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and the *Pūrāṇas* instead of the *Tripiṭaka*. May be, being influenced by his mother's religion, Kāntideva attached a composite Hindu-Buddhist emblem to his copper plate. R. C. Majumdar commented on the same line and wrote, "It was perhaps, to preserve each other's tolerance that neither had the other converted to his or her own religious creed.

Viewed in this light, the composite character of the seal, affixed to the copper plate, exhibiting both Buddha and Saiva emblem, become plain".⁵¹

There is no date in the Chittagong copper plate of Kāntideva, not even the regnal year of the king. Scholars attempted to fix the date of Kāntideva on paleographic ground. D. C. Bhattacharya and J. N. Sikdar, who first edited the plate, assigned the date of Kāntideva in between 750 and 850 A.D.⁵² R. C. Majumdar, who re-edited the record, has commented that the inscription is earlier than the time of Devapala and placed it in the Ninth century A.D. But D. C. Sircar has placed Kāntideva just after Bhavadeva (775-800 A.D.) of the Early-Deva family of Devaparvata. D. C. Sircar has taken the decision on the ground that Bhavadeva was the maternal grandfather of Kāntideva and hence he has placed Kāntideva just after Bhavadeva. He has assigned c.800-825 A.D. as the reign period of Kāntideva. But his decision is based on a conjecture. We have compared the forms of the scripts as found in Kāntideva's plate with the scripts of the Early Deva plates of Samataṭa and are of the opinion that the form of the scripts is more developed. So, on paleographic grounds, Kāntideva may be placed in the last half of the ninth century A.D.

Attākaradeva

Another metal vase inscription has been deciphered by Gouriswar Bhattacharya and published in *South Asian Archaeology* in 1993.⁵³ The inscribed metal vase was offered for sale in Sotheby's sale catalogue (London) of 12th October, 1989, lot-38, p. 39. The exact find spot of the vase is not known. The description of the vase given in the catalogue is as follows: 'An Eastern Indian Sanskrit Inscribed Bronze Vase, Pala, and c. 10th century A.D.' But from the content of the inscription it may suggest that the record might have been discovered from the Chittagong region in Bangladesh.

The inscription discloses a king named Attākaradeva, who is styled as '*Rājādhirāja*' (king of kings). He has been designated with another epithet "*Samaramṛgāṅka*". Gouriswar Bhattacharya has suggested that the name Attākara is not Sanskritic and hence he will

perhaps be a Ārākānese who ruled over Chittagong area of Bangladesh. But the inscription does not record any information about Attākaradeva's predecessors or successors. In line 3 of the inscription, Attākaradeva is said to have ruled from his capital city Vardhamānpura. The name of the city was known to us earlier from the copper plate of Kāntideva. The identification of the capital city remained a matter of speculation among historians. R. C. Majumdar had identified this city with modern Burdwan in West Bengal, while N. K. Bhattasali identified the place with Vikramapura. But it has been clearly stated to the vase inscription that Vardhamānpura was located within the limits of the *Harikela maṇḍala*.⁵⁴ Vardhamānpura has been identified perhaps correctly, with the present Bara Uthān or Borodhān village of Patiya Upazila in Chittagong by Kanungo.⁵⁵ Now it is an established fact that Harikela was a separate independent state which was located in Chittagong region.

Attākaradeva assumed the title of '*Rājādhirāja*' (king of kings), not *Mahārājādhirāja*. According to Gouriswar Bhattacharya, the epithet '*Rājādhirāja*' denotes, most probably, that he was a subordinate ruler and not paramount sovereign king.⁵⁶ But the present author does not subscribe to this view. The title *Rājādhirāja* or king of kings means that he was an overlord. In this connection, mention may be made that silver coin of this king has been found from South-East Bengal. The silver coin with recumbent bull on the obverse, tripartite symbol on the reverse and above the bull there is a legend Attākara.⁵⁷ Without sovereign position, it is not possible to issue coin. Hence the coin confirms that Attākaradeva was an independent king. Attākaradeva assumed the eloquent title of '*Samara-mṛgāṅka*' like the Early Deva kings of Samataṭa, who assumed the title of '*Vaṅgāla-mṛgāṅka*' and '*Bala-mṛgāṅka*'. The Early Deva kings of Samataṭa were independent kings. Hence *Rājādhirāja* '*Samar-mṛgāṅka*' Attākaradeva may be considered as an independent king of Harikela. In line 6 of the metal vase inscription the name of Śrī-Sahadeva is referred to as the *Mahāpratihāra* under Attākaradeva. Śrī-Sahadeva's name is mentioned in the inscription with the title '*Prāpta-panchamahāsavda*', which is considered as a feudatory title. So it is apparent that Attākaradeva was an overlord of feudal kings. Therefore, it is beyond doubt that *Samara-mṛgāṅka* Attākaradeva was an independent king who ruled in the Chittagong region, in the

kingdom of Harikela. According to Gouriswar Bhattacharya, the meaning of the 'Samar-mṛgānka' is "moon in the battlefield". 'Mṛgānka' means "deer-marked" i.e. moon, but, at the same time, this also means the name of a sword (as in *Kathāsaritasāgara*).⁵⁸ If we accept the meaning of this expression as a sword, we may take king Attakaradeva was an efficient warrior.

Rājādhirāja Attakaradeva is mentioned in the inscription as a '*Paramasaugata*' (the devout worshiper of *Sugata*, i.e., Buddha). So, he was a Buddhist king. But, why did he use 'bull' and 'trident' symbol in his coin? Bull and trident are the symbolic representation of Siva and certainly related with Saivism. It may be identified that Attakaradeva was the ruler of the Ākara dynasty on the basis of the suffix 'ākara'. All the Ākara coins bear the bull and trident emblem, same as the coin of Attakaradeva. Probably his predecessors were Śaivas and later they were converted to Buddhism. Or it may be noted that bull and trident was the dynastic symbol of the Ākara kings. It is probable that Attakaradeva changed his religion, but he did not change the patron symbol of the dynasty. In this connection, reference may be made that the Ārakanese [Chandra coins bear bull and the trident symbol](#). It may be that the Harikela kings copied the Arakanese coins.

There is no date in the vase inscription of king Attakaradeva, except the expression, '*caṭṭa-samvat*', which appeared in the text written on the rim of the vase. It has not been possible to determine the date of Attakaradeva from this expression. Hence, an attempt has been made to fix the date of Attakaradeva on paleographic ground and the date assigned to this king is in the 10th century A.D. by Gouriswara Bhattacharya.⁵⁹

A large number of silver coins have been discovered from South-East Bengal, especially in the Chittagong region. Silver coins with recumbent bull on the obverse, tripartite or trident symbol on the reverse, with the legend having the suffix 'Ākara' above the bull; have been known from many years. These coins are in the names of the rulers of Ākara dynasty. The names of the Ākara rulers known from the coins are: Lalitākara, Āryākara, Attākara, Antākara(?), Bhadrākara, Kalyāṇākara, Pradyumnākara, Dharmākara, Rāmākara, Sadākara, Bappākara, Mahendrākara and Ratnākara.⁶⁰ On the basis of these coins, it may be suggested that there was a Ākara dynasty in South-East Bengal. The Ākara kings ruled mainly in the Chittagong region or Harikela Maṇḍala and probably

some parts of Tippera-Ārākan hilly area. Attākaradeva was the member of that dynasty and this vase inscription is the only epigraphic record of that dynasty. All the Ākara kings were perhaps independent as they issued coins. They ruled Harikela and some parts of Tippera- Ārakan region for a long time.

Gold coin of the Early Deva Dynasty of Samatāṭa



Obverse



Reverse



Obverse



Reverse



Copper Vase Inscription of Devātideva



Copper plate of Kāntideva

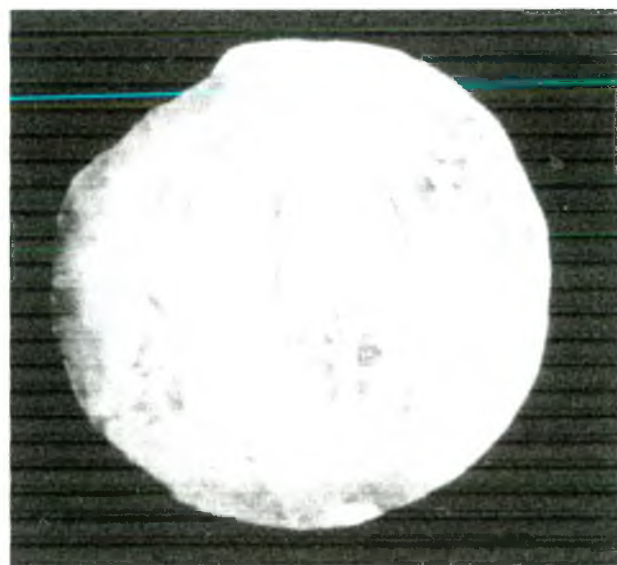


Copper Vase Inscription of Attākaradeva

Silver coin of Attākaradeva



Obverse



Reverse

Silver coin of Harikela



Obverse



Obverse



Reverse



Reverse

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Chapter VII

The Chandras

Of all the dynasties that ruled in Vaṅga-Samataṭa area, the history of the Chandras was known to us in rather greater details than the others. This was mainly because a number of copper plates of the rulers of this dynasty have come down to us, which enabled historians to reconstruct their history and they appeared to have ruled South-Eastern Bengal for more than a hundred years with prowess and stability. But further new materials are now available which demand a reappraisal of their history and that is what we shall attempt in this chapter.

In 1912, a copper-plate inscription was found in a house of a rich man of village Edilpur in Faridpur District. G. M. Laskar wrote a note on its content from a hurried study of the plate, which was published to the *Dacca Review*.¹ For the first time, the inscription disclosed a line of Buddhist kings with their names ending with 'Chandra' those who ruled in ancient South-East Bengal with Vikramapura as their capital. Soon after, a second copper plate of this dynasty was discovered at Rampal in Munshiganj subdivision (now district) of the then Dacca (now Dhaka) district in April 1913.² Subsequently, Chandra epigraphic records were constantly found one after another. A copper plate was found in 1919 from the village of Kedarpur³ in the then Faridpur district (now in Madaripur district), another plate was found in 1925 from Dhulla⁴ in Dhaka District, and in 1946 a plate was discovered at the village Madanapur⁵ near Savar in Dhaka district. Thus within the course of 34 years (1912-1946) the historians of Bengal could lay their hands on five full length copper plate inscriptions to reconstruct the history of the Chandra dynasty. But it may be mentioned that all these above noted inscriptions were issued by a single Chandra king, Śrīchandra. These plates revealed four generation of the Chandra kings including Śrīchandra, the ruling king. All these epigraphic records very little historical facts about the Chandra dynasty because all the plates follow more or less the same style of description. As a result, in the *History of*

Bengal, Vol. I, edited by R. C. Majumdar and published by the University of Dhaka, in 1943, the history of the Chandras covered only two and a half pages.

The sixth copper plate of King Śrīchandra was discovered in 1958 at the village of Paśchimbhāg under Rājanagar Police Station in Maulavibazar sub-division (now a district) of the then Sylhet District. The plate was edited and published by Kamālakānta Gupta Chowdhury.⁶ This record contains many new facts of historical importance than those of the earlier records of this dynasty. However, the discovery of the Maināmati plates of the Chandras was very significant. These plates were discovered in 1954 from Maināmati and these were edited and published by Ahmed Hasan Dani⁷ in 1966. Among these plates, two of them were issued by Ladahachandra and the other was by the last known Chandra king Govindachandra.

Another copper plate was discovered in a shop in Dhaka in 1966 by Ahmed Hasan Dani and the record revealed the name of one more king of this dynasty named Kalyāṇachandra.⁸ These newly discovered inscriptions disclosed very interesting facts for historians to reconstruct the history of this dynasty. Prior to these, the history of this **dynasty** was incomplete and uncertain and the genealogy was known only up to the fourth generation, i.e., up to Śrīchandra. But the discovery of the Maināmati plates along with the Dhaka plate of Kalyāṇachandra brings down the genealogy of the Chandra rulers up to their seventh generation.

Before these discoveries, it was not possible to know the exact position of the Chandra kings, their individual achievements, military activities and their relations with the neighboring kingdoms. But these newly discovered records provide very interesting facts regarding the history of the dynasty. Moreover, these huge epigraphic records of the Chandras offer information regarding the ancient society, economy, politics, administration, and the religious condition of the history of South-East Bengal, which was hitherto shrouded in mystery to the scholars in the past. These new materials gave further impetus to the historians to have a fresh look at the history of the Chandras. A fresh attempt was made first by the eminent scholar and paleographer A. H. Dani to reconstruct the history of the Chandras incorporating these newly discovered materials as well as the earlier published epigraphic records. Though Dani has made brilliant

contributions to the reconstruction of the history of the Chandras, his readings of the Maināmati plates contain some apparent inaccuracies. The Maināmati copper plates were comprehensively re-edited subsequently by the eminent epigraphist D. C. Sircar.⁹ Hence A. H. Dani's work should be revised in the light of D. C. Sircar's reading of the Maināmati plates. Moreover, some of the suggestions of A. H. Dani were not right perspectives and his work needs a fresh assessment.

Another attempt was made by A. M. Chowdhury to reconstruct the complete history of the Chandras in his authoritative work, *Dynastic History of Bengal* (published in 1967). Though his work is much more analytical and informative than those of the previous works, the same shortcoming is apparent in his work, because he has followed A. H. Dani's reading of the Maināmati plates. Moreover, some of his suggestions, when considered in the light of the available new materials, are found not to be in the right perspective. As such the history of the Chandras demands a fresh study. Harunur Rashid made another attempt to review the history of the Chandras in the light of these newly discovered epigraphs.¹⁰ But some of his suggestions need to be revised. The recently published coins and inscriptions of the Harikela kings demand a fresh review of some of his conclusions. Moreover, as he also followed A. H. Dani's reading, his work should also be revised in the light of D. C. Sircar's reading of the Maināmati plates of the Chandras.

In 1974, another copper plate of Kalyāṇachandra was found from Brahmanbaria subdivision (now a district) in Comilla district of Bangladesh. The plate is now preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum (Museum Accession No. E-74.234). But the plate is still unpublished. The present author has closely gone through the plate and found that it contains the same style of description as the Dhaka plate of Kalyāṇachandra. In 1977 two more copper plates of Śrīchandra were discovered from Comilla district. Both the plates are now being preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum (Museum accession No, E-77.1477 and E-77.1478). Recently one Comilla copper plate of Śrīchandra has been deciphered and published by E. M. Mill in *South Asian Studies*.¹¹ But the other Comilla copper plate of Śrīchandra is still unpublished. The present author has also had gone through the plate and it bears the same facts like the other plates of Śrīchandra. Flemming Benjamin recently published another copper plate of Śrīchandra in the *Bulletin of*

SOAS¹² Beside these, recently one coin has been published by Nicolas Rhodes and the coin bears the legend 'Kalyāṇa'. The coin is attributed to the Chandra king Kalyāṇachandra.¹³ Moreover, a large number of coins have been discovered from Chittagong region bearing the legend 'Harikela' which demand a fresh assessment about the identification of Harikela, from where the Chandras emerged as a sovereign power in South East Bengal. Hence, an attempt is made here to review the history of the Chandras by incorporating the facts revealed in the new materials as well as on the basis of a critical examination of the published epigraphic records.

Before we go into detailed the history of the Chandras, it is necessary to mention certain characteristics of the Chandra epigraphic records. All the Chandra copper plates bear 'Dharmacakramudra' as a dynastic symbol or seal. It consists of a number of concentric circles, the innermost of which has in its upper part representation of a wheel flanked on two sides by two deer. According to Buddhist tradition, the *cakra* is the symbolic representation of Buddha and the two deer are portrayed as if they are listening to his teachings. This representation suggests the preaching of the first sermon i.e. *Dharmacakra-Pravartana*.¹⁴ It is the usual *Dharmacakra-mudra* adopted by the other important Buddhist royal family of Bengal, the Palas. The seals of the Chandra plates bear legends of the ruling kings those who issued the plates. All the Chandra copper plates were issued from Śrī-Vikramapura, the capital city of the Chandras. This was evidently the Chandra capital from the time of Śrīchandra to Govindachandra. Another characteristic is that the genealogy recorded in the inscriptions gives the details of the listed kings but not their full titles. The ruling king is reported with the full imperial titles of *Parameśvara*, *Paramabhaṭṭāraka* and *Mahārājādhirāja*, but his immediate predecessor is mentioned only with the title *Mahārājādhirāja*. In the Dhaka plate of Kalyāṇachandra, Śrīchandra is given only the title of *Mahārājādhirāja*, while Kalyāṇachandra is given full regal titles. In the Maināmati plate of Ladahachandra, his father Kalyāṇachandra is simply mentioned as *Mahārājādhirāja*. Similar is the case in the Maināmati plate of Govindachandra.¹⁵ Other peculiar characteristics of the Chandra epigraphs are that no individual copper plate of the Chandra kings bears a complete genealogy. A. H. Dani observes, "While in the inscriptions of Śrīchandra the ancestry is traced from Pūrṇachandra, in that (Dacca plate) of his son Kalyāṇachandra, it is traced

from Sūvarṇachandra, and in those (Nos. 1 and 2) of Ladahachandra, it is done from Trailokyachandra, and finally in that (No. 3) of Govindachandra we get only from Śrīchandra. This practice could suggest that the earlier history of the Chandras may be obtained, if we could recover the records of Trailokyachandra and his predecessors."¹⁶ Another interesting fact appears in the three Maināmati plates and in the two copper plates of Kalyāṇachandra that they do not adopt any stanza from the earlier charters of Śrīchandra who was the father of Kalyāṇachandra and grandfather of Ladahachandra. This does not of course mean that there is absolutely no trace of any influence of Śrīchandra's copper plates on these charters. At least the passage '*dhavala-chhatra-smitānam-sriyām*' in verse 5 of Govindachandra's grant reminds us of '*Harikela-rājaka-kakuda-chchatra-smitānam-sriyām*', a well-known stanza in the charter of Śrīchandra. The expression '*kaulina-bhīru-hṛdaya*' in verse 8 of the same inscription of Govindachandra likewise reminds us of '*kaulina-sa-bhayaḥ*' in verse 5 of Śrīchandra's Paśchimbhāg plate.¹⁷ Moreover, the genealogical portions of the copper plates are very much allegorical and metaphorical which makes it difficult to know the exact position of the Chandra kings.

Though we have copper plate inscriptions from the reigns of only four generation of kings, we are able to draw up their genealogy extending back to further three generations:

Pūrṇachandra

Sūvarṇachandra

Trailokyachandra

Śrīchandra = Śrīvarṇa

Kalyāṇachandra = Kalyāṇadevi

Ladahachandra = Saubhāgyadevi

Govindachandra.

Pūrṇachandra

The copper plates of Śrīchandra report that Pūrṇachandra was the first member of the royal family. He was born in the family of the Chandras (who were) rulers of Rohitāgiri (*Chandranām=iha-Rohitāgiri-bhūjām-vaṁśe*).¹⁸ The new born Pūrṇachandra is compared to the full moon (*Pūrṇachandra-sadṛśaḥ*). So, he was known to the world as the illustrious Pūrṇachandra, meaning the full-moon. No royal titles are attached to his name. Even he is not referred to in the inscriptions as a king. Hence it is difficult to determine about his exact position. Verse 2 of the Kedārpur copper plate records that he was favored by the goddess of fortune, the bold canopy of dust raised by whose vanguard (in battle) was welcomed by the wives of the Sun God.¹⁹ From verse 2 of the Paśchimbhāg copper plate, we further learn about him, "whose shameless enemies took shelter under the strange umbrella formed by the dust raised by his army."²⁰ These verses may be taken to mean that he had a large force; he was involved in wars with his enemies and defeated them. In this connection, it may be proper to quote A. H. Dani: "If these references have any real meaning, it can be inferred that Pūrṇachandra initiated wars of conquest and achieved some laurels of victory over his enemies."²¹ On the basis of these verses, R. G. Basak comments, "Pūrṇachandra's parasol in the form of a canopy of dust raised by his vanguards being restored by his enemies; make it possible to presume that in his own land, he behaved like an independent ruler, though not declared as a formal king."²²

This is also reported in the Dhullā, Rāmpal and Madanpur copper plates of Śrīchandra that Pūrṇachandra's name appeared on the pedestal of images (*pada-piṭhikāsu*), his eulogy (*praśasti*) was inscribed on pillars of victory and on plates of copper (*utkīrṇa-nava-praśastisu-jayastambhesu-tāmresu-ca*). The verse may indicate that he installed

images and his name was inscribed on the pedestal of these images. He also issued copper plate grants and built pillars of victory on which his panegyrics were engraved. But none his pillars of victory nor any image, nor any of his copper plate grants have been discovered yet.

However, the aforesaid references apparently suggest that Pūrṇachandra was not an ordinary person, though he is not mentioned as a king. He was born in a family who were enjoying land in Rohitāgiri (*Rohitāgiri-bhūjām*). The Rampal plate states that he was well-famed and was in possession of immense fortune. He was definitely an important land-lord, if not a king. But as indicated above, he may not be regarded as the founder; for the line may have started a generation earlier. We have noticed that the Chandra records mention only three generations earlier than the reigning king. As no record before Śrīchandra's time has yet been found, nothing is known before Pūrṇachandra.

Sūvarṇachandra

Sūvarṇachandra, son of Pūrṇachandra, was the next member of the lineage of the Chandras. He is referred to in all the copper plates of Śrīchandra, but very little is known about him. He is compared with gold which is by nature endowed with value, though it may not be purified in fire (like gold or king) or weighed in balance (like gold or king).²³ The people gave him the name Sūvarṇachandra as his mother during her pregnancy had a desire (natural to a pregnant woman) to see the disc of a rising moon on a new moon day as she was satisfied by (having) a golden moon.²⁴ An interesting verse regarding him appears in the copper plates of Śrīchandra. The verse runs as follow:

'Buddhasya-yah-śāsakajātakaṁ-aṅka-samsthāṁ-bhaktya-ibhartti-bhagavān-amṛta-kāraṅsuḥ-chandrasya-tasya-kūlajāta-iti=eva-Buddhaḥ-putrāḥ-śruta-jagati-tasya-sūvarṇachandraḥ ||

E. M. Mill translated the verse thus:²⁵, ' Sūvarṇachandra was celebrated as one who had been born into the family of the divine moon which devotedly carries in its curve the Buddha's hare birth story in the form of a mark²⁶ and whose rays are the source of Soma

(moon).' But why has Sūvarṇachandra been called '*Buddha-putraḥ*' (son of Buddha)? The verse as well as the epithet may bear the meaning that Sūvarṇachandra was a follower of Buddha. But on the basis of this epithet, R. G. Basak comments, "So it is clear that he was the first in the dynasty to embrace Buddhism."²⁷ While R. C. Majumdar has gone so far as to say, "It is probable, therefore, that until his time the family followed Brahmanical religion. But henceforth the family was undoubtedly Buddhist."²⁸ Such comments are purely conjectural. A. H. Dani does not accept these suggestions and comments, "Actually in all the inscriptions this king's noble qualities are praised and hence the title Buddha is deliberately applied to him. There is nothing in any of the inscriptions to suggest that his father followed the Brahmanical religion."²⁹

The meaning of the verse is somewhat uncertain and doubtful. In the present state of our knowledge, it is difficult to say in what sense the epithet '*Buddha-putraḥ*' has been applied. But there is no doubt that he was a Buddhist and he had an unblemished virtuous character. He is not mentioned in the inscriptions as a king. At the same time, his no other political or military activities have been stated to the Chandra epigraphs.

It is most likely that the first two members of the Chandra dynasty were feudatory rulers of Rohitāgiri, the original home of the Chandras before Trailokyachandra, the third member of the dynasty. Where was this Rohitāgiri located? There is no definite clue in the Chandra records to identify this place and this uncertainty has given rise to controversy among the scholars. N. G. Majumdar identified this place with Rohtāsgaḍh in the Shāhbād District of Bihar. He comments that the Chandras do not seem to have originally belonged to Bengal. They migrated to Bengal taking advantage of the weakness of the declining Pāla power and carved out a kingdom for themselves.³⁰ In this connection, he has furnished the reference of the Tuṅgas of Orissa. The copper plate of Jayatuṅga refers that he has migrated from Rohitāgiri (*Rohitāgiri-nirgata*). Majumdar further comments, "... that both the Chandras of Eastern Bengal and the Tuṅgas of Orissa came from Rohitāgiri. To prove that Rohitāgiri is same as Rohtāsgaḍh, we are of course, not yet in possession of any definite data, but this identification may be provisionally adopted until a more suitable one is forthcoming."³¹

D. C. Sircar³² and B. C. Sen³³ accepted this identification with Rohtāsgaḍh in Bihar and brought the Chandras from that region into South-East Bengal. But there is no corroborative evidence of the Chandras ever having ruled in Rohtāsgaḍh. If Rohtāsgaḍh is identical with Rohitāgiri, the family-seat of the Tuṅgas, it must be accessible from Orissa. But it is the most difficult proposition to prove. It was always very difficult to communicate by land between Rohtāsgaḍh and Orissa. So, this identification is also very doubtful and untenable.

Haridas Mitra has put forward a different suggestion. He comments that Rohitāgiri must be a mountain area contiguous to Eastern Bengal from where both Chandradvīpa and Harikela are accessible. He says that the word '*Rohita*' has been derived from '*lohita*'=red. So, he has identified Rohitāgiri with '*Raktamṛttikā*'.³⁴ This suggestion is also purely on conjectural basis. Now it has been possible to know the exact location of the ancient kingdom of Harikela, which was far away from Raktamṛttikā located in ancient Gauḍa. So, this suggestion may also be rejected.

N. K. Bhattasali thinks that Rohitāgiri is some hill range of South-East Bengal and he offers the suggestion that this place may be located in the Lālmāi Hills near Comilla. According to him, "I have a close personal acquaintance with the topography of this hill and I have no doubt that the plateaus at the top were thickly inhabited and studded with Buddhist and Brahmanical temples in pre-Muhammadan days."³⁵ A. M. Chowdhury accepts N. K. Bhattasali's identification. According to him, "We shall see later that there are good reasons for the identification of Rohitāgiri with the Lālmāi Hills of Comilla in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) rather than with Rohtāsgaḍh in Bihar".³⁶

Bhattasali's identification has long been generally accepted by the scholars as the most probable proposition. But A. H. Dani does not support this identification on the basis of the facts disclosed by the Paśchimbhāg copper plate of Śrīchandra. The inscription revealed the fact that the army of Trailokyachandra had conquered Samataṭa where was situated the Lālamvi forest. On the basis of this reference, A. H. Dani has firmly suggested that Bhattasali's identification can no longer be maintained.³⁷ Harunur Rashid has supported Dani, while he has commented, "From the same verse (verse.7) of Sylhet

plate, we also learn that Trailokyachandra was the first Chandra king to conquer Samataṭa and Devaparvata was its capital. It is however clear that Mainamati-Devaparvata was not the original home of the Chandras. Hence, Bhattasali's identification of Rohitāgiri with Lālmāi can no longer be maintained and must be rejected."³⁸ Dani's proposition is perhaps correct. The Paśchimbhāg copper plate definitely indicates that Rohitāgiri was not within the boundary of Samataṭa or in the Lālmāi ridge. If this area was the original home of the Chandras, there was no need to conquer it by Trailokyachandra.

Rejecting Bhattasali's identification of Rohitāgiri, A. H. Dani has offered an alternative suggestion. He thinks that Rohitāgiri may lie in the Tippera-Ārākān bordering hilly region. He suggests, "South of Maināmati Lālmāi range spread out several other ranges that cross Chittagong Hill Tracts right into Ārākān. This hill ranges also show lateritic deposits...this is the real 'Roh' country (the hill part)...could we attribute the name Rohitāgiri to it."³⁹ Dani's suggestion may have been made on the basis of the following points: The first point is that the region is hilly and the colour of the soil is red. The second point is that A. H. Dani took Harikela identical with Śrīhaṭṭa (Sylhet) on the basis of the reference of the Sanskrit lexicographers. The third point is that Dani was interested to show that the Chandras of Eastern Bengal were the offshoot of the Chandras of Ārākān on the basis of Ārākāni tradition and similar type of Ārākāni coins found at Maināmati. M. Harunur Rashid has supported Dani. He writes, "This view seems reasonable to us and therefore preferable till we get more definite information." He has made geo-physical field investigation in those areas to find out archaeological remains and locate probable place for the identification of this problematic spot. He has offered the names of some places, such as, Chittagong, Deaṅg or Diāṅga, Rāmu or Rāmkot, Chakrasālā, in which Rohitāgiri may lie.⁴⁰ Rashid actually followed A. H. Dani's suggestion to find out Rohitāgiri.

In this connection, it may be mentioned that A. H. Dani has made an attempt to link the Chandras of Eastern Bengal with the Chandras of Ārākān on the basis of the similar types of coins found in South-Eastern Bengal. A large number of silver coins have been discovered from Ārākān. These coins bear bull and trident symbol, bearing the legend of Ārākāni Chandra kings. Similar types of coins have been found in South-Eastern Bengal,

especially in Comilla, Noakhali, Tippera and Chittagong regions. A. H. Dani has attributed these coins to the Chandra rulers of Eastern Bengal.⁴¹ In this connection, he suggests that the Chandra rulers of Bengal may have come from Ārākān. A. M. Chowdhury and Harunur Rashid have supported Dani on this point. But at present it is almost certain that the attribution of the silver coins bearing the trident and the bull symbol to the Chandra rulers of Bengal, as done by Dani, is not correct. At the same time, there is no definite evidence that can establish the relation between the Ārākāni Chandras with the Chandras of Bengal. The large number of Chandra epigraphic records in Bengal as well as the Ārākāni inscriptions is silent in this regard. The Chandra coins of Ārākān bear specific legend or the name of the kings those who issued those coins, such as, Devachandra, Nitichandra, Dharmachandra, Ānandachandra, Prīnichandra etc.⁴² Hence, there is no doubt that the Chandra kings of Ārākān issued these coins. But no coins of South-East Bengal bear legend related to the names of the Chandra rulers of Bengal, such as, Trailokyachandra, Śrīchandra or Kalyāṇachandra. So, A. H. Dani's attribution of these coins to the Chandras of Bengal may be rejected. Moreover, the same symbol, the recumbent bull and trident, also appeared in the coins of Harikela, Samatāṭa, Paṭṭikerā and the coins of the Ākara dynasty. Actually many kings of different dynasties of South-East Bengal as well as the kings of Harikela and Ārākān used to the bull and the trident symbol in their coins in the early medieval period. On the other hand, the same type of coins may have come to Samatāṭa region from Ārākān by way of trade, as Devaparvata, the capital of Samatāṭa, was also a port city and trade center. In this connection, a question may be asked: why the Chandras did not issue coins like the Rātas, the Khaḍgas and the Early Devas? The question cannot really be answered as no Chandra coin has yet come to light.

From the above discussion, it seems that the exact location of Rohitāgiri is still uncertain. Rohitāgiri, the home territory of the Chandras, must be located on the basis of the reference to Harikela, as it is the only definite clue available. The Chandras are stated in their copper plates as the repository or the mainstay (*ādhār*) of the kings of Harikela. This reference clearly indicates the Chandras, at least, were closely associated with the kings of Harikela, either as an ally or a feudatory. So, the first attempt should be made to find

out the exact location of the Harikela kingdom. Scholars in the past were confused about the identification of Harikela kingdom. Most of the scholars in the past identified Harikela with Śrīhaṭṭa (Sylhet) following the Sanskrit Lexicographers.⁴³ But this identification is not correct. B. N. Mukherji⁴⁴ and Debala Mitra⁴⁵ have shown clearly that the kingdom of Harikela included the present day Chittagong region with some adjacent areas. A copper plate was found in Chittagong which revealed the name of a king Kāntideva, who was the ruler of Harikela and Bardhamānapura was his capital. A vase inscription, which was discovered from Chittagong, disclosed the name of a king Rājādhirāja Attākaradeva,⁴⁶ who was also a king of Harikela and it is interesting to note that his capital was also Bardhamānapura, same as the capital of Kāntideva. This Bardhamānapura has been identified, perhaps correctly, with the present Bara-Uthān or Borodhān village of Patiya Police Station of Chittagong by Kanungo.⁴⁷ Another vase inscription was discovered from Chittagong which disclosed the name of a king Devātideva who was also the ruler of Harikela Maṇḍala. Recently Nicholas Rhodes and Swapan Bikash Bhattacharjee published a number of coins bearing the legend Harikela which were discovered from Chittagong. A number of such coins are being preserved in Bangladesh National Museum and Rajendra Kirtisālā Museum of Tripura. All these above noted references may be taken to mean that Harikela was located somewhere in the Chittagong region. So, Rohitāgiri should be searched near Chittagong or within its vicinity. Another factor should be taken into consideration that the Chandras first advanced towards Chandradvīpa (Barisal). Hence, we are of the opinion that Rohitāgiri was located somewhere between Chandradvīpa and Chittagong. There is also a hilly region between Noakhali and Chittagong region in which Rohitāgiri may be located, from where Trailokyachandra might have conquered Samataṭa and Chandradvīpa. But in the present state of our knowledge, there is no definite information to identify exactly this problematic spot, and we have to wait for some definite clue for the identification.

Trailokyachandra

Trailokyachandra, the son and successor of Sūvarṇachandra, was the third member of the Chandra dynasty. His mother's name was Kānchana or Kānchikā, who was very beautiful and compared with Dūrgā and Lakṣmī.⁴⁸ He was known to the three worlds for his own virtues and illustrated as Trailokyachandra, meaning the moon of the three worlds.⁴⁹ The copper plates of Ladahachandra report that the king, owing to his sole leadership over the world, was known as Trailokyachandra.⁵⁰ He is called the jewel or ornament of the Chandra dynasty (*vamśasya-mukta-maṇiḥ*). But A. H. Dani reads the phrase as '*Vaṅgasya-mukta-maṇiḥ*' (the ornament of the Vaṅga country) and interprets that Trailokyachandra was a leader of Vaṅga.⁵¹ Following A. H. Dani's reading, A. M. Chowdhury has gone to assert that he was a king of Vaṅga.⁵² But Dani's reading is not correct. D. C. Sircar has read the word correctly as '*vamśa*', not as '*Vaṅga*'. However, the phrase clearly suggests that he was the glory of the Chandra dynasty.

Trailokyachandra desired to conquer the whole world (*pṛthvī-jayābhilāṣī*) limited by the four seas (*chatu-payo-rāṣī*). Though exaggeration and vague praise, this panegyric phrase clearly indicates that he had an ambition to expand the territories of his kingdom. But his aim was noble as it was stated to the inscription that he had no greed of wealth and he was afraid of scandal. Hence he would like to conquer the country for the betterment of the people and for fame. He desired himself to be like the new cloud to the thirsty flock of *Chātaka* birds and wanted to be like a night-guard to sleeping people, with fames pervading the three worlds.⁵³ It is stated that he put out in battles the fire of his enemies by means of his creeper like sword (*nistriṅśa-latā-jalena-je-vairī-vaṅhi*).⁵⁴ Though allegorical, this reference sufficiently indicates that he initiated or was involved in wars with his enemies and certainly got some victory over them. But none of his enemies are mentioned to the inscriptions. Probably they were the rulers of neighboring kingdoms with whom he had to fight for extending the boundary of his own kingdom and establishing himself as a paramount king in South-East Bengal. Trailokyachandra is introduced to the copper plates of Śrīchandra with the following verse:

*'Ādhāro-harikela-rāja-kakuda-chhattra-smitānam-śrīyām
yaśchandra-opapade-babhūva-nrpatir-dvīpe-dilipopamāh'*

The verse offers three interesting facts. He has been stated to have become king (*nrpatī*) in the '*dvīpa*' (island) to which is joined the word Chandra (Chandradvīpa), implying that it was conquered by him. The territory was located in the district of Barisal. It was known as Bāklā-Chandradvīpa during the medieval period. Then it comprised within its boundaries some portion of the modern districts of Khulna and Faridpur as well.⁵⁵

Trailokyachandra is compared with Dilipa. Dilipa is described in the *Raghūvaṃśa* of Kālidāsa as an ideal king.⁵⁶ He is a member of the solar line and ancestor of Rāma. The comparison with Dilipa indicates that he was a powerful and ideal king. But the following metaphorical phrase appears in the verse:

'Ādhāro-harikela-rāja-kakuda-chhattra-smitānam-śrīyām'

The phrase hints at the position of Trailokyachandra before becoming a king of Chandradvīpa. But there is a lot of controversy among scholars of its meaning and interpretation, since the publication of the record. N. G. Majumdar translated the phrase as "(Trailokyachandra) support of the fortune goddess (of kings) who rejoiced at the umbrella which was the insignia of royalty of the king of Harikela." He has interpreted that "His kingdom was Harikela i.e., eastern Bengal, including Chandradvīpa, which was the home territory of this dynasty, and a number of other rulers were subordinate to him."⁵⁷ R. C. Majumdar suggests that Trailokyachandra was a subordinate ruler of the King of Harikela.⁵⁸

R. G. Basak comments that "Trailokyachandra acquired the royal fortune of the Harikela kingdom... He was at first a king of Chandradvīpa but later became the ruler over the whole of Harikela"⁵⁹ [He took Harikela as a synonym of Vaṅga]. Both N. G. Majumdar and R. G. Basak have identified Harikela with Vaṅga which was not correct. No Chandra epigraphic record bears any evidence that Trailokyachandra became the ruler over the whole of Harikela. Most of their suggestions are hardly justified by the epigraphic

records. D. C. Sircar has written a number of papers and offered the following suggestions on the basis of the phrase (*'ādhāro Harikela...*):

1. King Trailokyachandra of Chandradvīpa was a feudatory or ally of the king of Harikela kingdom.⁶⁰
2. Trailokyachandra flourished as a feudatory of the king of Harikela...This king of Harikela-Vaṅga, overlord of Trailokyachandra of Chandradvīpa, was no doubt the contemporary Pala king.⁶¹
3. Harikela was originally the name of the Śrīhaṭṭa region. Trailokyachandra...seems to have owed allegiance to the line of Harikela kings represented by Kāntideva.⁶²
4. Trailokyachandra of Rohitāgiri was originally a feudatory of the Pāla kings of Bengal and Bihars...But Trailokyachandra seems to have transferred his allegiance to the king of Harikela and was rewarded by the viceroyalty of Chandradvīpa.⁶³

From the above suggestions of D. C. Sircar, one point may be accepted that the Chandras were the feudatory or ally of the king of Harikela. The rest of his suggestions are not tenable in view of the contemporary epigraphic records. The huge number of Pala-Chandra epigraphic records does not refer anywhere that the Palas were the overlord of the Chandras. Actually D. C. Sircar has made this suggestion on the basis of the identification of Rohitāgiri with Rohtāsgaḍh in the Shāhbād district of Bihar, the region which was within the Pala Empire. But it has already been discussed that this identification is not at all correct. All the Chandra records have been discovered from South-East part of Bengal and it is reasonable to think that the Chandras were either original inhabitants of that area or came from an area not very far from this region.

Moreover, D. C. Sircar has identified Harikela with Śrīhaṭṭa. But we have earlier showed that this identification was also not correct. Now it is an established fact that the kingdom Harikela was located in Chittagong and its adjacent areas. It has also been suggested that Trailokyachandra seems to have had a subordinate position in relation to the Harikela kings represented by Kāntideva. But it is most likely that this suggestion is also not

correct. From the paleographic point of view, the Chittagong copper plate of Kāntideva is considered to be earlier than the copper plates of the Chandras. D. C. Sircar himself fixed the date of Kāntideva in C. 800-825 A.D.⁶⁴ On the other hand, the copper plates of Śrīchandra is considered to belong to the second half of the 10th century A.D. Recently more new materials of Harikela kingdom have come to light. Gouriswar Bhattacharya has recently published two copper vase inscriptions which revealed two new kings of Harikela kingdom, Devātideva and Attākaradeva.⁶⁵ The date of Devātideva is assigned to a period earlier than Kāntideva (715 A.D.) But Attākaradeva was a king of the early 10th century⁶⁶ and he was possibly contemporary to Trailokyachandra. A large number of silver coins have also been discovered from Comilla, Tippera and Chittagong regions, bearing recumbent bull on the obverse, tripartite symbol on the reverse, with legends ending with the suffix 'Ākara' above the bull. These coins have been known for some years. A number of such coins are also being preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum bearing the legend 'Ākara'. These coins are in the names of many rulers of the Ākara dynasty. So the coins of the other Ākara rulers constitute a series of coins struck in about thirteen different names. The names of the Ākara rulers known from their coins are: Lalitākara, Āryākara, Attākara, Antākara (?), Bhadrākara, Kalyāṇākara, Pradyumnākara, Dharmākara, Ramākara, Sadākara, Bappākara, Mahendrākara, Ratnākara etc.⁶⁷ These coins as well as the inscription of Attākaradeva bear the testimony that the Ākara kings ruled for a long time in the Harikela (Chattagong) and its adjacent areas, when the Chandra ruler Trailokyachandra was ruling in Vaṅga-Samatāṭa area, probably including some parts of Tippera-Ārākān bordering regions. Hence our suggestion is that the Ākara kings of Harikela may be closely associated with Trailokyachandra, not Kāntideva.

A. H. Dani has offered another suggestion on the basis of the above noted metaphorical phrase. According to him, "The word do not claim that Trailokyachandra was a ruler of Harikela, nor do we learn from any other inscriptions about his military advances in the region of Harikela, i. e. , Surma valley of the Sylhet district. But he was the main 'support' of the Harikela ruler... must have been on friendly terms with him and further given him a military protection...It is highly probable that Harikela rājā was a subordinate ally of Trailokyachandra."⁶⁸ A. H. Dani was perhaps correct. Because there is no

evidence to say that the Chandra rulers were feudatory of another power. The Chandra connection with Harikela may be regarded as a matter of great pride and honour for the dynasty, not a subordinate one. Trailokyachandra assumed the epithet 'Mahārājādhirāja' (king of kings). It sufficiently indicates that he was an overlord, not a feudatory king. Hence the word 'ādhāro' (repository or mainstay) may be accepted to mean an ally of the Harikela king, who got protection or military assistance from the Chandras, who were definitely not subordinate to them.

Verse 7 of the Paśchimbhāg copper plate of Śrīchandra discloses a very important historical fact regarding the history of Trailokyachandra. Kamālākānta Gupta Chowdhury, who has edited the plate, reads and translates the verse as follows:

*'Kṣīrodām-nadevaparvata- itī -śrīmattadetatpuram- yatrāgantujanasya-viṣmayarasaḥ
kambojavarttādbhutaiḥ /
Lālamvi-vanam=atra-vatikāśatairaviṣṭasiddhauṣadhivyāhārā -itiha -śrutās=
samataṭannirjītya -yat -sainikaiḥ...!'*

"In consequence of the strange news of Kamboja, the new comers to this illustrious capital like the venerable mountain (i. e. the Mandara Mountain) in the waters of the Kṣīrodā (sea) were struck with feelings of wonder, whose soldiers conquered Samataṭa where was situated the forest of Lālamvi traditionally said to have been filled with sure medicinal herbs sought for by hundreds of persons suffering from the morbid affection of the nervous system."⁶⁹

But the translation of this passage does not bear any clear meaning. A H. Dani has revised the aforesaid reading and tried to restore the meaning of the passage as follows:

" (Trailokyachandra) whose soldiers conquered Samataṭa, where was (situated) Lālamvi forest well-known for well-trieved medicinal herbs, sought for by hundreds of persons suffering from Vatikā (morbid disease), (and where) was this glorious (capital) city (standing) like a Devaparvata (venerable mountain) in the waters of the sea, where the newcomers were filled with wonder at the strange news of the Kambojas."⁷⁰

Harunur Rashid has given up the ornamental metaphors and offered the following modification of Dani's translation: "...Samataṭa where was (situated) Lālamvi forest well-known for well-trieved medicinal herbs... (and where) was standing this glorious (capital) city of Devaparvata surrounded by the waters of the (river) Kṣīrodā..."⁷¹

From the above noted translations of the verse, one thing is clear that Trailokyachandra conquered Samataṭa. This fact sufficiently suggests that Maināmati-Lālmāi region was not the original home (Rohitāgiri) of the Chandras, as it is indicated by N. K. Bhattasali. There is no doubt that Samataṭa was captured and added to the Chandra kingdom by Trailokyachandra. The references to Devaparvata, river Kṣīrodā and the Lālamvi forest mentioned in the verse are very important. Lālamvi forest is identified with the Lālmāi ridge and this identification is correct as it is supported by the archaeological discoveries of this area. Devaparvata was the capital city of the kingdom of Samataṭa and it was situated on the bank of the river Kṣīrodā. This fact is known to us from the earlier Rāta, Khaḍga and the Early Deva epigraphic records. The city is mentioned in the Kailan and Uḍiśvara copper plates of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta, the Maināmati copper plate of Balabhaṭṭa, the copper plate of Ānandadeva and Bhavadeva. So, there can be no doubt that this capital of Samataṭa was the same city of Devaparvata on the river Kṣīrodā, which figures so prominently in the epigraphic records of South-East Bengal from the seventh century onward. The reference of this city in the Chandra plate suggests that the glory and fame of the great city remained undiminished till the Chandra period (10th century A.D.). However, Trailokyachandra's soldiers have been credited with conquering this city. But, from whom was it captured? And from where was the expedition led? Nothing is known about these points from the record. We have already learnt from the copper plate of Bhavadeva that the Early Deva kings ruled Samataṭa from Devaparvata. But we do not know when and how did the rule of the Early Deva dynasty come to an end. Hence, the conquest of Samataṭa by the Chandras may be taken to have been effected from the Early Deva king, who was supplanted by the Chandras.

The other name appearing in the verse is that of the Kambojas, whose "wonderful news" had reached Samataṭa. What role did the Kambojas play when Trailokyachandra

conquered the city of Devaparvata? Nothing is clearly known about this from the Paśchimbhāg copper plate. But it is almost certain that the Kambojas were contemporary with Trailokyachandra. A. H. Dani has offered three suggestions regarding the verse:

Firstly, the Kambojas may have been defeated by the army of Trailokyachandra.⁷² Secondly, when the Palas of North Bengal were busy fighting with the Kambojas, Trailokyachandra took the chance to conquer Samatāṭa. Thirdly, the "new comers", mentioned in the verse, may be the refugees coming from North Bengal, who took shelter in Samatāṭa. It apparently indicates that the Palas were ousted from North Bengal by the Kambojas⁷³ and people took shelter in Samatāṭa.

The first suggestion of A. H. Dani is not justified from the evidence of epigraphic record. There is hardly any scope to state that the Kambojas were defeated by Trailokyachandra. The second suggestion of A. H. Dani may be accepted. Trailokyachandra may take the chance to capture Samatāṭa at the time of Pala-Kamboja conflict. It is known definitely that the Kambojas spread their rule in North Bengal during the 10th century and the Palas lost their seat in Gauḍa for some time, before Mahipala I retrieved the lost possessions. The event of the ouster of the Palas may have inspired Trailokyachandra to conquer Samatāṭa. The third suggestion of A. H. Dani may also be accepted. When the Kambojas captured some parts of North- Bengal, it is likely refugees would be going to the Samatāṭa region for shelter. The verse is obscure and in the present state of our knowledge, it is very difficult to know exactly what had really happened.

However, it may be stated that Trailokyachandra became the king of Chandradvīpa or Vaṅga and then he conquered Samatāṭa, which established him as a strong paramount king in South-East Bengal. This rising of the Chandra power in South-East Bengal makes a clash with the ruler of Gauḍa inevitable. There is a reference to such a conflict in the Dhaka plate of Kīyāṅachandra: "If (he) had seen in folded hands the fallen crest jewel of the Gauḍas, he would have placed the noose in the form of hard chain round (his enemy's) feet. If (the enemy) had not fallen prostrate all of sudden on the ground in salutation (or submission), he would have put (him) down immediately by his cruel sword raised high up."⁷⁴

Though the meaning of the verse is not very clear, it is almost certain that Trailokyachandra advanced against the ruler of Gauḍa to measure his arms. But the name of this ruler of Gauḍa is not referred to in the inscription. Who was this ruler of Gauḍa? In this connection, A. H. Dani suggests that the Gauḍas with whom he fought must be the Pala ruler, probably Rājyapāla (c. 908-40 AD.), who appears to have been his contemporary; while A. M. Chowdhury suggests that the Kambojas may have been mentioned as the Gauḍas in the Chandra plate. It is observed that when the Chandra power was steadily increasing during this period, the position of the Palas of North and Western Bengal was gradually deteriorating. Rājyapāla was a weak ruler. In this situation, Trailokyachandra may have advanced towards him. On the other hand, it is learnt from the contemporary records that the Kambojas spread their rule in North Bengal during the 10th century. Hence, this Gauḍa ruler may also be the Kamboja king. But it is not possible to determine definitely who this Gauḍa ruler was. Either the Palas or the Kambojas could be a reasonable guess.

Further military exploits of Trailokyachandra outside Bengal have been referred to in the following passage of the Paśchimbhāg copper plate of Śrīchandra: "Drinking nice coagulated milk out of curiosity in villages ensconced amidst black hills and drinking (waters of) the rivers tunneling through the forest on the plateaus girdling the Vindhya hills, the army of this victor entered Mālaya amidst the noise produced by their own tumult and the rumbling sound with which stones from the peak of the mountains were thrown down by the roaring currents of the Kāverī."⁷⁵

A. H. Dani has revised the reading and translated to the verse as follows: "The conqueror, having eaten the curds of Vaṅga in the villages of Krisṇaśikhari out of curiosity, and having also drunk (the water of) of the Sugaṅgā river, which makes a girdle round the Vindhyaforest, humbled by the help of (his) army the unmovable peak of the Himālaya, which fell down (in the form of rushing water) and make a terrible noise, mixed with loud shouts, in the stream of the Kāverī."⁷⁶

Kamalākānta Gupta reads '*chaṅga-dadhini*' (milk of goat) but Dani takes the reading as '*Vaṅga-dadhini*' meaning coagulated milk of Vaṅga, i.e. having conquered Vaṅga. But A. H. Dani's reading is not correct. The present author has closely observed the facsimile of the plate and the correct reading will be '*chaṅga-dadhini*'. The verse is clearly hyperbolic

in nature, but it may contain some historical significance. During this period the Pala Empire was very weak due to the successful raids of the Rāṣṭrakuṭa, Chandella and Kalacuri kings. Hence, the expressions in the verse apparently indicate that Trailokyachandra was involved in war against the rulers of the Vindhyaś, probably the Kalacuris, and against those of Mālaya, probably the Rāṣṭrakuṭas or some other south Indian powers. But it is very difficult to ascertain from this ornamental verse about the expedition of Trailokyachandra against the above noted powers, if, of course, it is not corroborated by any other source.

Śrīchandra

Śrīchandra, son and successor of Trailokyachandra, was possibly the most powerful king of the dynasty. His mother's name was Kānchana. Eight copper plates of this king have so far been discovered. He is highly praised in these records. His panegyrics are also repeated in his successor's inscriptions. It is reported that he was destined to be a great king, having been born in an auspicious *muhūrta* (moment) of *Rāja-yoga*.⁷⁷ Śrīchandra, a son who was born like the moon, whom the marks of a king (*Rāja-yoga*) were, pointed out by astrologers.

The Chandra epigraphic records state his special virtues and achievements. He was kind (even) towards mischievous endeavors, full of praise for others, good qualities, (but) absolutely dumb to the exposition of (others) faults; a well built figure, pleasant to the sight and repository of all virtues. He was averse to all worldly attractions (*viśayāsakti*).⁷⁸ In the copper plate of Govindachandra, he is described as more intelligent than Bāgīśa (the god Bṛhaspati) and as a master of the sciences (*vidyā*).⁷⁹ Having caused the earth to be adorned by a single canopy, he who was proof against the influence of fools and whose enemies were imprisoned perfumed the faces of the quarters with his glory. It is also reported in the copper plates of Śrīchandra that the multitude of dust particles raised by the victorious (king) in battles, met by the elephant, the lord of the (ten) quarters. These references clearly suggest that this king had to fight with enemies and was victorious in battles (*raṇesu-jayī*).

The Paśchimbhāg copper plate reports that Śrīchandra conquered Kāmarūpa. The record supplies us a lengthy graphic and scenic description of the military expedition towards Kāmarūpa through the banks of the river Lauhitya (Brahmaputra) and of the Citrasilā⁸⁰ and Puspabhadrā rivers, to the mountainous regions of Assam. We quote below some extracts from them:

(Śrīchandra's) "Whose soldiers, while conquering Kāmarūpa, enjoyed (the sight of) ...lonesome plains with drowsy chamaris (Yaks) ruminating leisurely, and the extensive forest on the bank of the Lauhitya river green with black agaru" (v. 12). "This Puspabhadrā and Citrasilā rivers flowing between the banks of beautiful stones...his educated soldiers saw during their conquest of northern regions the local deities in the mountains of permanent snow (i. e., the Himālayas)" (v. 13). "They (i. e., the soldiers) satisfied the god of war by gifts of their own valor. (In consequence thereof) the decorated design on the breasts of Yamanis...were rubbed off, paintings on the middle of the cheeks of Huns vanished because of overwhelming grief, ...the rolling of the eyes of Utkalis ... ceased" (v. 14).⁸¹

The description of the expedition clearly indicates that the composer of the *praśasti* portion of the charter was well acquainted with the region. Moreover, the fact has been repeated in the two Maināmati copper plates of Ladahachandra. We have the following information in these records:

(Śrīchandra) "Who made complete the vows, in the form of the shedding of tear-drops, of the ladies of the lord of Prāgijyotiṣa, and made the blossom-like lips of the ladies of the harem of Gauḍa king empty of smile in the shape of lotus stalk."⁸² This corroborative evidence leaves no doubt that Śrīchandra led successful expedition to Kāmarūpa. But the above noted records do not mention the name of his adversary in Kāmarūpa, whom he defeated. Happily, the name of this ruler has been supplied by the Dhaka plate of Kalyāṇachandra:

Pr̥thivīpāla-bhaya-pramānjana-vidhavaradraḥ-kāthora-kramo,
Govarnnonmathane-mahotsava-gurur-Gopāla-samropane,
Lilā--nirjjita-Ratnapāla-mahiṣī-pratyārppane-śatrapo,
Yasyaneka-rasaspadam-sukṛtino-viṣvāvalambo-bhūja.

Śrīchandra "who was moist (i.e. soft) in the act of washing away the fear of Prithvīpāla, was hard and enterprising in the churning of Govarnna, was great in the great festivity of re-instating Gopala, was a protector of sacrifices (or vows) in returning the queen of Ratnapāla, who was easily defeated, and whose arm was the universal support of the virtuous and receptacle of various sentiments".⁸³

From these references, we can definitely say that Ratnapāla was the king of Kāmarūpa. Śrīchandra led a successful invasion against him. But it is interesting to note that the contemporary records of Kāmarūpa mention his (Ratnapāla's) victory over several kings, but the name of Śrīchandra is absent.⁸⁴ Therefore, it is reasonable to think that as Śrīchandra's victorious march to Kāmarūpa has been mentioned in the several Chandra records, it has to be given some credence. Land was donated by the Paśchimbhāg copper plate in Śrīhaṭṭa (Sylhet) *maṇḍala*. Hence, there is no doubt that this area was included within the Chandra kingdom. Probably this area was conquered by Śrīchandra immediately after coming to the throne as the Paśchimbhāg copper plate was issued in the 5th regnal year of his reign, and land was granted for new settlements over a large tract of land. Therefore, it is natural for a powerful king like him to advance further to the east. On the other hand, Ratnapāla, the second ruler of the Pala line of kings of Kāmarūpa, was the founder of the greatness of his family. It is most likely that the two neighboring kings, both of whom were bent on aggressive policy, would come into clash.⁸⁵ It is likely that Śrīchandra defeated Ratnapāla but he did not annex Kāmarūpa with his kingdom. The noble way in which he kept his vow in returning Ratnapāla's queen suggests that the latter, though defeated was not removed from the throne.⁸⁶ The records of Ratnapāla bear the testimony about his war-like activities and his prosperous reign.⁸⁷ This fact apparently suggests that Srichandra returned Ratnapāla's queen and his kingdom as well. He had shown generosity and kindness towards his enemy and this noble act had been reported by his successor's records. He was a very generous and noble king. One of his inscriptions introduces him as one, "who, in the battle-field, made the host of enemies enjoy the festivity of companionship with divine ladies; ...who concentrated all his efforts in feeding and maintaining his people."⁸⁸

The Dhaka plate of Kalyāṇachandra refers to three other contemporary rulers of Śrīchandra. A .H. Dani has suggested the following identification of the rulers: "Prthivīpāla appears to have been a Pala prince mentioned in the *Rāmacharitam*."⁸⁹ It is difficult to identify Govarnna. Gopala is obviously the Pala ruler Gopala II (940-960 A.D)."⁹⁰

An image inscription has been discovered from Mandhuk in Comilla region which bears the name of Gopala (probably Gopala II). Some scholars took this as evidence of Gopala's suzerainty over South-East Bengal. A. M. Chowdhury suggests, " ...if it is taken to testify to Gopala suzerainty over eastern Bengal, his temporary conquest must have been the result of his fight against Śrīchandra, in which he may have met with some success in the earlier stages but ultimately, when he was pressed by the Kambojas, he had to establish friendly relations with Śrīchandra, whose help was necessary for keeping his own position."⁹¹

But Gopala's suzerainty over Comilla region conflicts with the information of the Chandra records. The Chandra epigraphic records bear the testimony to the fact that during this period Comilla region was under the control of the Chandra dynasty. This image inscription may be considered as of external origin, brought to the site where it was discovered at a later date. Hence, Gopala's suzerainty over South-East Bengal cannot be considered as a proved fact. In this connection, we get an apparent suggestion from a reference in the Dhaka copper plate of Kalyāṇachandra. The record mentions that Gopala was reinstated (*Gopala-samropane*) by Śrīchandra to the throne of Gauḍa. A. H. Dani suggests that if this information is combined with the arrival of the "new-comers" in Samatāṭa, as known from the Sylhet plate, it may be inferred that the new-comers could be the Pala rulers and their retinue. This supports with the description of Trailokyachandra as 'the shelter of the great ruler of the earth'. (Mainamati plates of Ladahachandra).⁹² We know that a great calamity overtook the Pala kingdom during the reign of Gopala II and his son and successor Vighrahapala I during the latter half of the 10th century A.D. The Kambojas led a successful expedition against the Palas and captured a large part of their empire. Gopala II may have lost his seat at Gauḍa for the time being and taken shelter in Samatāṭa during the rule of Trailokyachandra. But when Śrīchandra came to throne, he had taken steps to reinstate him on the throne of Gauḍa. In

this connection, reference may be made to the Gāchtāl copper plate of Gopālavarmādeva of Kāmarūpa, where he is reported as a vanquisher of Gauḍa. This information may be taken as a corroborative source of the Chandra epigraphic records. It is most likely that Śrīchandra led a successful military expedition against the ruler of Gauḍa. Hence, the ruler of Gauḍa, whom he defeated, was probably the Kamboja king. On the other hand, Gopala II may have taken military help from Śrīchandra to recover his kingdom and this fact has been referred to in the Chandra records as '*Gopala-samropane*'.

The Paśchimbhāg copper plate also records Śrīchandra's military expeditions in other directions. He is said to have pleased the war-gods "by an exhibition of his own strength, effaced the decoration of finger from the border of the bosom of the Yamana (possibly a mistake for Yavana) ladies, made the cheeks of the Huṇa ladies tormented by sorrow, and being uprooted by him, the eyes of the Utkala ladies reeling with the intoxication of toddy (became now staggered)."⁹³

The above noted verse contains the names of three peoples: the Utkalas, the Huṇas and the Yavanas. But it is difficult to determine how far Śrīchandra really extended his influence. This verse may be taken as poetical exaggeration of the composer of the inscription, which is not uncommon in such eulogies.

Śrīchandra had an extensive dominion. The Dhullā, Madanpur, Kedārpur, Idilpur copper plates have been found from Dhaka-Faridpur region. The Paśchimbhāg copper plate was found in Maulvibazar and the land donated by the plate was in the Śrīhaṭṭa maṇḍala. This plate indicates that his sway was as far as the Sylhet region in the north-east. The (former) Mymensingh district may also have been included within the Chandra kingdom. Two copper plates of Śrīchandra have been found in Comilla district. The provenances of these epigraphic records clearly suggest that this area was also within the kingdom of Śrīchandra and he was a paramount king in South-East Bengal. Though Trailokyachandra laid the foundation of the Chandra Empire, the power and prestige of the Chandras reached to the highest point during Śrīchandra's long reign. He consolidated his father's kingdom and took aggressive policy to extend the limits of the empire. He defeated both the rulers of Gauḍa and Kāmarūpa but their kingdoms were perhaps not annexed to his

empire. All the copper plates of Śrīchandra were issued from the *jayaskandhāvāra* at Vikramapura. It is probable that Śrīchandra shifted the administrative center from Devaparvata to Vikramapura. This was due to the extensive sway of the Chandras which, possibly, necessitated shifting of the capital to a more viable geographical location. In the opinion of Ranabir Chakravarti, 'this probably became necessary in order to ensure a better administrative integration of the expansive Chandra domain'.⁹⁴ Thus during the reign of the Chandras, Vikramapura loomed large as an important administrative center and Samatāta was transformed into a mere administrative division like *maṇḍala*.⁹⁵

Kalyāṇachandra

Śrīchandra's son Kalyāṇachandra was the next king of the Chandra dynasty. His mother's name was Vasumati.⁹⁶ Two copper plates of this king have so far been discovered but these are still unpublished. But he has been referred to and praised in his successor's inscriptions which supply us important facts for the reconstruction of his history. The Dhaka plate was issued in his 24th regnal year. The plate praises the noble qualities of the king. The two copper plates of Ladahachandra mention that he "was carried high on their heads by the great lords of the world."⁹⁷ The same records also describe him as 'virtuous by nature'. Verse 7 of Ladahachandra's plate introduces him as pure of purifying (*pavana*) like the waters of the *Trisrotās* (Ganges). The copper plates of Ladahachandra supply the following facts about his military expedition: He "who caused shedding of big tears in the eyes of the Mlechhas, and made the moon-like faces of the Gauḍa ladies devoid of sweet smile in the form of moon rays, and who spread spotless fame in eight directions of the globe, which became resplendent like the rays of the moon after the dispersal of the clouds"⁹⁸ Similar description is also found in the copper plate of Govindachandra: Kalyāṇachandra "who made the river Lohitya (Brahmaputra) redoubled by the tears densely dropping down from the eyes of the Mlechha ladies who were agitated owing to the killing of their husbands; and who, having by force snatched away the multitude of the army consisting of elephants, horses and foot-soldiers in the battle

field, made the face of the king of Gauḍa bend down under the weight of shame for a long while"⁹⁹

The word Mlechchha generally denotes the Mlechchha or Mecha dynasty of Assam, founded by king Salastambha about the middle of the seventh century A.D. The same achievements have also been ascribed to Kalyāṇachandra in the record of his grandson Govindachandra.¹⁰⁰ The facts mentioned here not only support but also elucidate the statement. There is hardly any doubt that here the term Mlechchha was used for the inhabitants of Lohitya (Brahmaputra) valley i.e. Kāmarūpa. But both the Chandra records do not mention the name of the ruler of Kāmarūpa, who was defeated by Kalyāṇachandra. We find confirmation of Kalyāṇachandra's warfare in Kāmarūpa in the Gāchtāl copper plate of Gopālavarmādeva of Kāmarūpa. The record reports that Indrapala, the successor of Ratnapala, defeated Kalyāṇachandra, the king of Vaṅga, in a naval encounter.¹⁰¹ While the Chandra records only mention shedding of tears by the Mlechchha ladies, thereby doubling the water of Lohitya, the Kāmarūpa record claims victory for Indrapala over Kalyāṇachandra. Both the rival records claim victory for their respective kings and hence the fact is contradictory. From the aforesaid information, it is clear that Kalyāṇachandra had undertaken aggressive policy like his father to extend the limit of his kingdom to the east. He followed the footsteps of his father and led his army into Kāmarūpa. On the other hand, Indrapala was a worthy successor of his grandfather, Ratnapala, and the Kāmarūpa records portray him as a great conqueror.¹⁰² So it appears that the Chandra rulers of South-East Bengal and the Pala rulers of Kāmarūpa went into conflict in the period of ascendancy of their respective dynasties. But it is difficult to determine about the exact result of this conflict. The invasion of Kalyāṇachandra was possibly checked by Indrapala, who claimed defeating Kalyāṇachandra in a naval war. Both the ruler claimed victory on their part. So, it is a problem to determine what really happened there. In this connection, A. M. Chowdhury's suggestion seems to be proper and reasonable. Chowdhury writes, "...if the claim in the Kāmarūpa record is taken as correct, clearly shows the result of the conflict-the Bengal army had little chance of any permanent success in the difficult mountainous terrain of Kāmarūpa, which gets water-logged during the monsoon. This was demonstrated several times during the Sultanate and Mughal period, when attempts by Muslim rulers of Bengal met with similar results.

Hence the absence of any direct claim for victory in the Chandra records is understandable."¹⁰³

It is also reported to in the above noted verse that Kalyāṇachandra led successful expedition against the ruler of Gauḍa. But the name of the Gauḍa ruler has not been mentioned. Who was this ruler? It is generally regarded that this Gauḍa ruler was the Pala king. Kalyāṇachandra was contemporary to the Pala kings, Vīgrahapala II and Mahipala I. The Palas had to face invasions of the Kambojas, and also Cāndellas and Kalacuris during the reign of Gopala II and Vīgrahapala II. The Kambojas captured a large tract of land of the Pala Empire and carved out a kingdom for themselves and they are mentioned in their records as '*Gauḍapatis*'. The Chandra ruler might have taken advantage of this opportunity and extended his dominion towards Gauḍa. But at the present state of our knowledge it is not possible to mention definitely the name of this Pāla king. On the other hand, this ruler may also be the Kambojas. The Kambojas captured Gauḍa and assumed the epithet '*Gauḍapati*' during this period. Hence, the Kamboja king might as well have been the adversary of Kalyāṇachandra. This Kamboja king may be Nayapala. If we accept this proposition, it may be thought that Kalyāṇachandra's victory over the Kamboja king facilitated Mahipala I's recovery of the lost territory of the Pala kingdom.

Ladahachandra

The next king in the lineage of the Chandras was Lahachandra. Before the discovery of the Maināmati Chandra plates, the name of this king was known to us from an image inscription of dancing Siva, which was found in a tank in the village called Bhārella, in Baḍkāmta Police Station in the district of Tippera (now Comilla).¹⁰⁴ Then the name of the king was not read correctly. N. K. Bhattasali, who edited the inscription, read the name of the king as Layahachandra and commented that the name appears outlandish. But R. C. Majumdar took this king to have preceded Śrīchandra as an independent ruler of South-East Bengal,¹⁰⁵ while B. C. Sen took him to be a successor of Śrīchandra.¹⁰⁶ But the

country was ruled by Govindachandra. The Vaṅgāla king boldly encountered the invader. But he was defeated. Ultimately he had to get down from his royal elephant and take to flight when the day went against him. The invader captured a number of women and elephants. From the Tirumalai inscription, it was established that there was a king in ancient Vaṅga or Vaṅgāla named Govindachandra who ruled in 1025 AD. This king is also referred to in a manuscript titled '*Śabdapradīpa*' (1020-55 A.D.), where it is mentioned that the father of the author was a physician of Ramapala and his grandfather was a court physician of king Govindachandra.¹¹³ This reference further bears evidence of the existence of a king of Vaṅga, who was an earlier contemporary of Ramapala.

In 1941 two image inscriptions were discovered, which were published by N. K. Bhattasali in *Epigraphia Indica* in 1943.¹¹⁴ One Sūrya (Sun god) image inscription was found at the village Kulkudī under Gosānihāt Police Station in Faridpur District. The image was installed in the 12th regnal year of king Govindachandra. Another image inscription was found from the village Betkā, in Tangibaḍi police station of Munshiganj Subdivision (ancient Vikramapura region). The image was installed in the 23rd regnal year of king Govindachandra. This latter record offers two points; firstly, it suggests that Govindachandra was a king like Śrīchandra, who ruled from Vikramapura in Vaṅga region, and secondly, the king ruled for at least 23 years. But his connection with the Chandra dynasty was not known from the aforesaid sources. The Maināmati copper plate of Govindachandra has solved all the curiosities of scholars as it discloses first that he was a member of the Chandra dynasty and his genealogy is traced from Śrīchandra. Since then it has been established in the history of ancient Bengal that Govindachandra of Tirumalai inscription was none but the Chandra king of South-East Bengal.

The Maināmati copper plate inscription only praises to his qualities, and there is no mention of his military and political achievements. As the copper plate does not bear any date or regnal year, it may be surmised that the record was issued at the beginning of his reign, when there was hardly any mentionable achievements of him. However, verse 11 of the plate records that he was born from Saubhāgyadevī, the queen of Ladahachandra. Verse 13 of the record speaks about the happy mood in Ladahachandra's palace and *hārem* at the birth of his son Govindachandra. In the same verse young Govindachandra

is compared to *Śaktimān* (strong) Mahāsenā (Mahāsenā, the holder of Śakti, i.e. Skanda-Karttikeya), while his father is compared to Siva. It is further stated in the same verse that he learnt very well in his childhood within a few days, the science (vidyā) and all the arts including the science dealing with elephants, horses and chariots.¹¹⁵ Verse 15 states that he was equal to Akhandala (Indra, the king of gods) in splendor, the sun in terrible vigour, and to Mrikanda's son (i.e., Mārkaṇḍa or Mārkaṇḍeya). Verse 16 of the plate contains a prayer to the god Svyambhū (Brahmā), Hari (Viṣṇu) and Hara (Siva), the Hindu Trinity.

From the aforesaid references, it appears that he was a very strong and handsome person. He was taught many fields of learning from his boyhood, especially dealing with horse and elephant. This apparently indicates that he had been taught to fight carriages drawn by horses (chariot) and elephant (*gaja-vāji-vāhana*). We know from the Kailan plate of Śrīdharaṇa that he was taught to fight riding on horses and elephants and other sciences and arts from his boyhood.¹¹⁶ It may be suggested that during the early medieval period young princes were taught to deal with horses and elephants and learn other sciences so that they might become capable and worthy kings in future.

In line 32 of the copper plate it is recorded that the charter was issued from the royal camp at Vikramapura by *Parameśvara, Paramabhaṭṭāraka, Paramasaugata* (devout worshiper of Buddha) and *Mahārājādhirāja* Govindachandra, who meditated at the feet of *Mahārājādhirāja* Ladachandra. The full imperial titles clearly indicate that he was an independent paramount king, during whose reign the power and prestige of the Chandra dynasty was kept up.

A popular ballad in eastern India, especially Bengal and also some other parts of India, relates the story of Gopichandra. The songs are introduced by different names; *Govichandrer Gān, Mānikchandrer Gān* or *Maināmatir Gān* etc. Almost all the versions of the ballad relate to the same story of a king of Bengal named Gopichand or Govichand, who led an ascetic life giving up his kingdom. The same story is found in Orissa and in a popular drama in Punjab. The Nātha Sannyāsis used to sing the song among the people and made it popular both in Bengal and in its neighboring regions. The majority of the ballads reveal the fact that the father's name of Gopichandra was

Mānikachandra and Maināmatī was his mother. Maināmatī was the daughter of Tilakachandra, king of Mehārkul Pargāna in the Tippera district. The archaeological remains in Comilla sufficiently suggest that the kingdom of Tilakachandra and Gopichandra are to be located in this region. N. K. Bhattasali thinks that Trailokyachandra, the father of Śrīchandra, and Tilakachandra of the ballad is the same person. He also suggests that Govindachandra of Tirumalai inscription and Gopichandra are identical.¹¹⁷ But except similarity of the two names with Govindachandra and Trailokyachandra, the story of the ballads is contradictory with the history of the Chandras, which is known on the basis of their own epigraphic records. The Maināmatī plates of the Chandras have been discovered after the death of Bhattasali and now we are very clear about the position of the Chandra king Govindachandra and Trailokyachandra. Hence there is no reason to believe these stories of the ballads are based on facts. On the other hand, the date of the ballads is difficult to determine. A. M. Chowdhury has suggested that the stories were compiled at a fairly late period, possible in the 17th and 18th centuries A.D.¹¹⁸

Three Maināmatī copper plates have raised controversy among scholars about the religious beliefs of the last two Chandra kings - Ladahachandra and Govindachandra. The copper plates of Ladahachandra begin with the Vaisnavite maṅgala: ‘*Om-namo-bhagavati-Vāsudevāya*’ and records land grants made to the name of God Vāsudeva, an epithet of Vishnu (*bhagavāntam-Vāsudeva-bhaṭṭārakam-uddisya*).¹¹⁹ The recipient of the grant was the god *Laḍahamādhava-bhaṭṭāraka*, which was installed by king Ladahachandra at Paṭṭikerā and named after him. Ladahachandra visited Vārānasi on pilgrimage, which has been narrated in his plates as a place of Śambhū (Siva) and Girisūta (Pārvati, an epithet of Dūrgā), where he took a ceremonial bath in the waters of the Ganges and offered oblations to his predecessors (verse 16-17). The king also visited the confluence of the Gangā and the Yamunā, i. e. Prayāga close to Allahabad which is a holy place of the Hindus (verse 18). Moreover, there are also several references in Ladahachandra’s records to Brāhmaṇical mythology. Verse 9 and 10 of the records report the name of Kalyāṇadevī, mother of the king, who is described as Lakṣmī in beauty, and she is like Kuntī and Pārvati for giving birth to a son (Ladahachandra himself), who is as truthful as Yudhiṣṭhira, as handsome as Mahāsenā i. e. Kārttikeya. Verse 14 of these

records again introduces the qualities of the donor Ladahachanda as “who made goddess Lakṣmī to follow none but himself, who was the best of men, whose rising power was known by victories over Bali (i.e. heroic men), who controlled his desire and brought all round prosperity, and who played the role of Bhūtesa (Siva) by receiving tributes from the hilly forts just as Siva, besmearing his body with white ashes, accepted to the hand of Dūrgā, the daughter of Giri (the Himālayas)”¹²⁰

At the same time, Hindu mythological references have also been included in Govindachandra’s copper plate. By the record land was gifted in favour of god *Natteśvara Bhaṭṭāraka* (Siva). Moreover, the Hindu Trinity, i.e., Brahmā, Vishnu and Siva have been praised in this plate instead of the Buddhist Trinity i.e. Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha. On the basis of these references some scholars have commented that these last two Chandra kings had a leaning towards Hinduism or they might have been converted into Hinduism. D. C. Sircar comments that “Mahādeva”, being a well-known name of god Vishnu, there cannot be any doubt that Ladahamādhava was a form of Vishnu and that Ladahachandra was Vaishnava even though he is called *Paramasaugata* like his ancestors apparently as a matter of convention.” He has further suggested that “while there is thus no clear Buddhist association in Govindachandra’s record, the grant is made in favour of the god *Natteśvara Bhaṭṭāraka* in the name of Lord Siva. Thus, while Ladahachandra was a Vaishnava, Govindachandra had obviously Saiva leanings. It is also possible to think that, like the followers of the Pauranic religion, these two kings received initiation respectively into the Vaishnava and Śaiva mantras, but exhibited their respect to different gods and Paurānic pantheon.”¹²¹ R. K. Sharma has published a paper about the religion of the last two kings in which he has made an attempt to prove that the last two Chandra kings were converted to Hinduism giving up Buddhism.¹²² He has referred to the mythological references from these three Maināmati plates in support of his view.

But we do not subscribe to the above suggestions. All the copper plate inscriptions of the Chandra kings bear ‘*Dharmacakramudrā*’ (Buddhist wheel of law) as a dynastic seal or *lānchana*. The ancient people did not attach any symbol whimsically. Actually the symbol had a deeper meaning. Ancient kings used to attach dynastic symbol according to

their religious affiliation or attached to the emblems of their dear gods and goddesses. Generally the Buddhist rulers of India used to affix *Dharmacakramudrā* as a seal to their official charters authenticating them. According to Buddhist tradition, the Cakra (wheel) is the symbolic representation of Buddha and the dears are portrayed as listening to his teachings. This representation suggests that the preaching of the first sermon, i. e. *Dharmacakra-pravarttana*.¹²³ The *Dharmacakra* has a very important place in Buddhist religious philosophy and culture. The Buddhists consider it as a wheel of peace (*sāma-cakra*) and this is also considered as a symbolic representation of the Buddha. The Buddhists believe that Bhagavān Buddha introduced to the *Dharmacakra* for the welfare and happiness of all men and living beings.¹²⁴ Hence, attaching *Dharmacakra* as a dynastic emblem clearly suggests that the Chandras were Buddhist. The last two Chandra kings are also introduced with the epithet *Paramasaugata*, meaning the devout worshiper of the Sugata (an epithet of Buddha) in their copper plates. This epithet of the last two Chandra kings leaves little doubt that they were the followers of the Buddhist religion. However, the question may be asked, why has there been Vaisnavite invocation at the beginning of the record? The copper plates of Ladahachandra begin with the Vaishnavite maṅgala (invocation, as *Om-namo-bhgavati-Vāsudevāya*) probably due to the scribe or composer who may have been a Vaishnava by religion.

Actually the king was not directly related to the process of issuing the land grants in ancient and early medieval period. The land grant or copper plate inscription was issued from the office of *Adhikaraṇa*, a ruler of a Viṣaya (district). King's approval was, of course, essential in the process of granting land, but actually the land administration of the state was responsible for the issuance of the copper plate grant. In most of the cases the Brahman paṇḍits attached to the royal court were involved in the preparation of the text of the charter. On the other hand, the educated Buddhists became monks who led a resigned life in remote monasteries. Hence the thoughts and beliefs of the Brahmans or Hindu Kāyasthas were reflected in the inscriptions of the charters. Mention may be made that during the early medieval period the thoughts and beliefs of the peoples were deeply absorbed in Paurānic gods and goddesses. Probably it was the main cause behind the mythological references in the inscriptions. It is a general characteristic of the early

medieval inscriptions to mention mythological personages. Hindu or Brāhmanical gods and goddess have largely been referred to in the Pala and the Early Deva inscriptions, though these dynasties are recognized as Buddhists. On the other hand, it was also a very normal practice of the Buddhist rulers to grant land for establishing temples or installing Brāhmanical deities. The same practices were followed by the Buddhist Pala rulers during the succeeding period. Most probably the last two Chandra rulers had done the same thing by granting lands for establishing the image of *Natteśvara- bhaṭṭāraka* (Siva) or *Vāsudeva- bhaṭṭāraka* (Vishnu). Or it is most likely that the Buddhist rulers were liberal enough towards their non Buddhist subjects and showed their true respect to other religions. It is referred to in the Chandra plates that Ladachandra visited Vārānasi. But it should be remembered that this place is one of the four most important places of pilgrimage of the Buddhists as well, because Buddha preached his religion for the first time at Mṛgadāva (Sārnāth), adjacent to Vārānasi. This event may have been described by the Hindu composer in the light of his own beliefs. So, Hindu mythological references in the inscriptions or installation of Brāhmanical images by Buddhist king or visit to Vārānasi on pilgrimage, perhaps do not suggest conversion to Hinduism. Hence, we can say in the tone of Harunur Rashid, “But it must be said with some emphasis that there is no evidence of any sort to prove that any member of the Chandra dynasty had ever renounced Buddhism or accepted Brahmanism formally, and the family in all probability may have remained, in its own way, Buddhist to the last like the Palas of North Bengal.”¹²⁵

The Chandra epigraphic records established the fact that the Chandra kings formed an independent entity in South-East Bengal and they ruled as sovereign rulers from the beginning of the 10th century A.D. down to the middle of the 11th century A.D. But this conclusive decision contradicts and conflicts with the Pala inscriptions discovered from Comilla district, the core territory of South-East Bengal within the time frame of the Chandra rulers. Three Pala records are found from South-East Bengal: they represent short votive inscriptions inscribed on the pedestals of images. These are:

1. The Mandhuk Ganesa image inscription of Gopala, regnal year 1,

2. The Bāghāura Nārāyana image inscription of Mahipala, regnal year 3;
3. The Nārāyanapur Vināyaka image inscription of Mahipala, regnal year 4.

These records bear the names of the ruling Pala kings and their regnal years. Thus they bear the testimony to the contact of the Pala rulers with this region. These Pala records raise a pertinent question, was there a Pala rule in South-East Bengal? But the records supply very insufficient and inconclusive information that has given rise to a lot of controversy among scholars regarding this question.

The Mandhuk Ganesa image inscription of Gopala was found at Mandhuk in Chāndinā Police Station in Comilla district in 1949. The image was made in the first year of the reign of Śrī Gopaladeva by Jambhalamitra.¹²⁶ There is no doubt among scholars that this king is no other than Gopala II. But the problem arises from the fact that the inscription was discovered in the Comilla district, the core territory of Samatāṭa which was ruled by the Chandra kings during this period. Moreover, the image inscription does not mention any geographical location in which the image was installed. How could Samatāṭa form a part of the Pala kingdom when the Chandra power was at its highest peak? Hence a controversy arose among the scholars. R. C. Majumdar comments, "Another inscription of Gopala II proves his possession of the Tippera District from the very beginning of his reign,"¹²⁷ and D. C. Sircar has expressed the same view.¹²⁸ But Gopala's suzerainty in South-East Bengal is not accepted by A. H. Dani, who considered this image inscription to be of external origin, brought to the site where it was discovered at a later date. He offers this suggestion on the basis of the Paśchimbhāg copper plate of Śrīchandra and the Dhaka copper plate of Kalyāṇachandra. The copper plate of Kalyāṇachandra records that Gopala was reinstated (*Gopala-samropane*) by Śrīchandra to the throne of Gauḍa. In this connection, A. H. Dani suggests that if this information is combined with the arrival of the "new-comers" in Samatāṭa, as known from the Paśchimbhāg plate of Śrīchandra, it may be inferred to that the new-comers could be the Pala rulers and their retinue. This agrees with the description of Trailokyachandra as found in the Maināmati plates of Ladachandra: '[he was] the shelter of the great rulers of the earth'.¹²⁹ The Pala records

report that a great calamity overtook the Pala kingdom during the reign of Gopala II and his son and successor Vighrahapala II during the later half of the 10th century A.D. The Kambojas captured a large part of the Pala Empire and carved out for themselves an independent position. A. H. Dani proposed that Gopala II may have lost his seat at Gauḍa to the Kambojas for the time being and taken shelter in Samatāṭa during the rule of Trailokyachandra. But when Śrīchandra came to the throne, he had taken steps to reinstate him on the throne of Gauḍa. A. M. Chowdhury¹³⁰ and Harunur Rashid¹³¹ agree with A. H. Dani. Actually, the image inscription does not mention the name of the place where it originated or it was installed. The image was curved in Rajmahal black basalt which indicates that either the material was imported from outside South-East Bengal or the image itself was sculptured outside the region and brought to this region some time later.

But the other two image inscriptions found in South-East Bengal bear the name of the Pala king Mahipala. Scholars think that Mahipala mentioned in the two image inscriptions are identical, but they are not unanimous whether this Pala king is Mahipala I or Mahipala II. R. C. Majumdar identified this king with Mahipala I, who was engaged in the struggle for recovering the paternal kingdom. He considered to Samatāṭa as his paternal kingdom and he conquered this region.¹³² N. K. Bhattasali thinks that this king was Mahipala I. He has furnished references from the Bangarh plate and the Dinajpur pillar inscription, which report that some usurpers had driven out Vighrahapala from the throne and that he, after losing his kingdom, took shelter in the eastern country where water abounds (*deshe-prāchi-prāchūra-payasi*). His heroic son Mahipala I recovered the lost kingdom of his father. The two characteristics, water-abounding and eastern country, agree so well with the geo-physical condition of the present districts which comprised the ancient kingdom of Samatāṭa that it is impossible to suggest any other country which answers equally to the description; and little room is left for doubt that the eastern country alluded to was the kingdom of Samatāṭa.¹³³

But D.C. Sircar thinks that this Pala king was Mahipala II. He writes, "It must, however, be admitted that there is no inherent improbability in the identification of Mahipala of Bāghāura inscription with Mahipala II (c. 1080-84) of the Pala dynasty, who was the eldest brother and predecessor of Ramapala".¹³⁴ A. H. Dani supports D. C. Sircar and

comments. “ It seems that Mahipala II established his authority in Samataṭa when probably the Chandra rule had come to an end for reasons not definitely known to us.”¹³⁵ A. M. Chowdhury and Harunur Rashid have supported D. C. Sircar and A. H. Dani. Both the scholars have made attempts to establish and strengthen this view and took Pala king of the Bāghāura inscription to be Mahipala II. A. M. Chowdhury thinks that the Chandras established a strong paramount kingdom in South-East Bengal and they ruled continuously and successively. So, it is quite improbable to establish Pala rule in Samataṭa during the reign of the Chandras. Thus, he has taken this Pala king to be Mahipala II, whose reign period was after Govindachandra. He comments, “The continuous rule of the Chandra kings as powerful independent sovereigns of South-East Bengal makes it quite improbable that Mahipala I could spread his power in this region soon after his accession. But all the difficulties can be overcome if we take these two inscriptions to belong to the time of Mahipala II, and D. C. Sircar has already suggested this identification.”¹³⁶ Harunur Rashid referring to the Bangarh grant of Mahipala I argued that till the 9th year of his reign Mahipala I was engaged in a struggle with the Kambojas for the restoration of the paternal kingdom; and this must have required his entire strength. The record leaves no doubt that in these early years Mahipala I was ruling his decadent principality. Could such a monarch possibly have the ability to lead an expedition to Samataṭa and wrest it from the powerful and well-established Chandras in the first struggling years of his reign? So, he has taken Mahipala II as the Pala king of South-East Bengal mentioned in the two aforesaid inscriptions.¹³⁷ But Ranajit Sharma¹³⁸ has referred to an interesting point to identify the Pala king mentioned in the Bāghāura and Nārāyanapur image inscriptions. He has pointed out that the Mandhuk Ganesa image was made by Jambhalamitra during the reign of Gopala II. But the Nārāyanapur Vināyaka image inscription was installed by Buddhamitra, the son of Jambhalamitra, during the 4th regnal year of Mahipaladeva. Hence, the distance between the Mandhuk inscription of Gopala II and the Nārāyanapur image of Mahipala was not more than 40-50 years, the distance between a father and son, Jambhalamitra and Buddhamitra. In this connection, it is reasonable to identify that this Pala king with Mahipala I. But on the other hand, the distance between Gopala II and Mahipala II is no less than 125-134 years, clearly known from the Pala records, and the distance is

probably of four generations and not the distance of the father and son, Jambhalamitra and Buddhamitra.

The Chandra epigraphic records sufficiently establish the fact that they ruled as paramount rulers in South-East Bengal uninterruptedly. From this point of view the suggestion proposed by D. C. Sircar, A. H. Dani, A. M. Chowdhury and Harunur Rashid seem to be reasonable. But Mr. Ranajit Sharma has clearly shown that the distance of the two image inscriptions (Mandhuka and Nārāyanapur Vināyaka image) is not more than two generations, probably 40-50 years, the distance between the father and the son. So Ranajit Sharma's suggestion is more reasonable and acceptable. Probably N. K. Bhattasali correctly commented earlier that this Pala king of South-East Bengal was Mahipala I, on the basis of the reference to '*deśhe-prāchi-prāchura-payasi*' (in the eastern country where water abounds) of the Bangarh grant. But if we accept this Pala king as Mahipala I, this certainly comes into conflict with the constant paramount rule of the Chandras in South-East Bengal. It is most likely that during the rule of Ladahachandra some portions of Vaṅga-Samataṭa region was captured for a short time by Mahipala I, the Pala king. But the huge Pala epigraphic records refer nothing about their rule in South-East Bengal. On the other hand, it is very difficult to be certain about the Pala rule in this region on the basis of these two image inscriptions. However, there is no difficulty in considering the three image inscriptions of external origin and carried to the places where they were discovered at a later period.

On the basis of the aforesaid discussion, we may conclude that the ancestors of Trailokyachandra were the feudatory rulers of Rohitāgiri, the exact location of which is yet unknown or an undecided factor in the history of South-East Bengal. It is most likely that this place was located somewhere in the Chittagong region or adjacent to or within the Harikela kingdom. But Trailokyachandra raised his head and improved his position as a king of Chandradvīpa. Subsequently, he conquered Samataṭa and became a paramount king in South-East Bengal. It is most likely that it was Trailokyachandra, who transferred the Chandra capital to Vikramapura in ancient Vaṅga. When he was ruling independently in South-East Bengal, the Harikela kingdom was being ruled by the Ākara kings, as it is clearly known on the basis of their inscription (copper vase inscription of Attākaradeva)

and coins. Now it is almost certain that the kingdom of Harikela was located somewhere in Chittagong and its capital was located most probably in Bara Uthān or Borodhān in Patiya in Chittagong. From that position Trailokyachandra became the mainstay of the Ākara kings of Harikela. It is probable that he was not a feudatory ruler under the Harikela king as Harikela was a small kingdom; rather he was an ally of the Harikela king, whom he might have given military protection. The title of the Ākara king is *Rājādhirāja* (i.e. *Rājādhirāja Attākaradeva*), but the title of Trailokyachandra was *Mahārājādhirāja*. So, he seems to have been more powerful than the Ākara kings of Harikela.

Trailokyachandra organized his strong military power in South-East Bengal and led further expedition towards North-Bengal. But this expedition was probably against the Kambojas. Both the Pala and the Chandra kings were Buddhists and they had maintained probably a friendly relation. Hence it is probable that Trailokyachandra may have extended his hands of friendship towards the Pala kings, when they were ousted by the Kambojas from North Bengal. The Pala king, Gopala II, probably took shelter in Samatata when Trailokyachandra was ruling. When the Pala power, fighting against with the Raṣṭrakuṭas and the Kalacuris, was the way of its gradual decline, Trailokyachandra might advanced on behalf of the Palas and to measured his arms against these South-Indian powers, though the fact is not supported by other sources and the result of this expedition is not known. However, Trailokyachandra may be regarded as the real founder of the mighty Chandra dynasty in South-East Bengal.

The power of the Chandras reached its zenith during the rule of Śrīchandra. He organized a powerful army and led expedition against Kāmarūpa. Probably he got victory but Kāmarūpa was not annexed to his kingdom. He possibly made an agreement with, Ratnapala, the king of Kāmarūpa and returned him his kingdom and his wife. Probably he thought that it was not possible for him to control over this hilly region for a long time. It is also likely that Śrīcandra led expedition against the Kambojas and reinstalled king Gopala II on the throne of Gauḍa. The copper plate inscriptions of Śrīchandra bear testimony to the fact that he was a strong paramount king and established a well-ordered administration in South-East Bengal.

Kalyāṇachandra was also a powerful ruler like his father who maintained the glory and prestige of the Chandra dynasty. He followed his father and led expedition against Kāmarūpa. The records of both the powers claim victory, hence the exact result is not known. Kalyāṇachandra led expedition against Gauḍa, but the result is not clear from the allegorical verse of the copper plate. The Pala records are silent about the Chandra expedition against Gauḍa.

The Chandra power gradually declined during the rule of Ladahachandra and Govindachandra. No military expedition was led during their rule and they turned their minds towards religious activities. But it is not true that they got themselves converted to Brāhmanical religion giving up Buddhism; rather, all the Chandra kings were devotees of Buddha, though they were very liberal to their non-Buddhist subjects. Probably during the rule of Ladahachandra, Mahipala I captured some portion of the Chandra kingdom which is testified by the Bāghāura and Nārāyanapur image inscriptions, if, of course these two inscriptions are taken as proof of Mahipala's suzerainty over some areas of Samataṭa. It must be said that the evidence of just the finding of two image inscriptions in Samataṭa is too tenuous a proof to come to that conclusion. It would be far more logical to consider the shifting of the two inscriptions at some later period. It should also be remembered that there is no mention of occupation of Vaṅga-Samataṭa area in the Pala records. Nor do we find any land grant made by the Pala charters in the Vaṅga-Samataṭa area.

Govindachandra is the last known king of the Chandra dynasty. Possibly the expedition of Rājendra Chola dealt the final blow to the rule of the Chandras. Finally, the Chandra dynasty was supplanted by the Varmans, who came with the Kalachuri king Karṇa and shared the fruits of his victory by curving out an independent kingdom for themselves in South-East Bengal.

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93. *Santoṣam- raṇa-devatāṅgamayatā-viryāvādanair mījair-*

unmṛṣṭāṁ- Yamānī-payodhara-tatopatrāṅguli-maṅḍanāṁ /

Śoka-prachchhana-jarjjaraṁ-vīracitaṁ-huṅṅ-kapolodaraṁ

Yenonmūlitaṁ-utkali-nayanayos-tālīsura-ghūrṇitaṁ //

A.H. Dani, 'Sylhet Copper plate of Śrīchandra', *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6 ;

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⁹⁶ Varse 10 of the Brahmanbaria copper plate of Kalyanachandra. The plate is preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum and its contents are still unpublished.

⁹⁷ *Prakhyāto-vimal-ūjjvalais-tribhūvan-ālaṅkāra-bhūtair-guṇaiḥ /*

jātyādharmaṁ-mahāvānibhṛitaṁ-tuṅgaiḥ-śirobhir=dhṛitaḥ

Sadbhiḥ-sevyatamaḥ-prāvāha-iva-yas-traistrotasaḥ-pāvanah //

A. H. Dani, 'Mainamati Plates of the Chandras', *op. cit.*, Verse 7, p. 38.

⁹⁸ *Mlechchhinām=nayanesu-yena-janitaḥ-sthūlośru-koṣa-vyayo*

Gauḍinām-smita-candrikāḥ-virahināḥ-sṛṣṭās=ca-vakr-endavaḥ |

Ātastāra-nijair=yasobhir=amalair=aṣṭāv=anaṣṭodayair

Yaś=caitāḥ-śaśabhṛt-karair=iva-ghana-tyāga-prakaśair=diśāḥ //

D. C. Sircar, 'Mainamati Plates of the Chandra Kings', *op. cit.*, Verse 8, p. 304.

⁹⁹ *Yen=āsau-dviguṇikṛitaḥ-pati-vadhād=udvejitānām-ghanair=Mlechchhinām=nayan-*
āmbubhir=vigaltaiḥ (tair)=Lohitya-nāmā-nadāḥ /

Yen=ājau-gaja-vāji-patti-bahulām-senām-grhītvā-valād

Gauḍinām-adhipaḥ-kṛtaś=ca-ciraṁ-lāji-āvanamr-ānanaḥ //

D. C. Sircar, 'Mainamati plates of the Chandra Kings', *op. cit.*, p. 305.

¹⁰⁰ A. H. dani, 'Mainamati Plates of the Chandras', *op. cit.*, line 14-15, verse 7, p. 51.

¹⁰¹ *Madyād-Gauḍa-vimarda-durddam-bhūjaj-Śrīchandra-*

sunuḥ-svayam-prāptaḥ-samgara-simni-Vaṅgapapatiḥ Kalyāṅcandro-vali /

cancat-kāncana-cakracam-racitaṁ- noucakram-atrādhisthātā-yadvijitāḥ-sahiva-

yaśaśa-dinaḥ-pralinaḥ-kvacit //

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Chapter – VIII

South-East Bengal in the Varman and Sena Period

The Varmans

The history of the Varmans is known to us from three of their copper plates and two contemporary inscriptions and two manuscripts of their time. A copper plate was found in 1911 in course of digging a plot of land at the village of Belava under Rupganj Police Station in Nārāyanganj District (then Dacca District).¹ The record revealed a lineage of kings with their name ending with Varmans, who ruled in ancient South-East Bengal with their capital in Vikramapura. *Mahārājādhirāja* Bhojavarman, the ruling king, issued the grant. Soon after two more copper plate inscriptions of the Varman dynasty were discovered. These are the Sāmantasār copper-plate of Harivarman² and the Vajrayogini copper-plate of Samalvarman.³ But the plate is fragmentary and badly corroded. These two records bear little information regarding the history of the dynasty. So, the Belava grant is the only full-length copper plate inscription and the main source for reconstructing the history of the Varmans. Beside these, there are also three supporting sources; one is the Bhūvaneśvara inscription of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva⁴ and two manuscripts:⁵ the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprañjāpāramitā* and the *Laghukalācakraṭīkā*. These are the hitherto published records regarding the history of the Varmans. But the present author has recently deciphered and published a stone inscription of the time of Bhojavarman.⁶ The stone inscription was inscribed in the seventh regnal year of the king. It was discovered in 1964 at the village Sujānagara in Munshiganj Sub-division (now a District), the region in which the Varman's capital, Vikramapura, was situated. Now the inscription is preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum.

It is almost certain that the epigraphic records of the Varmans were issued from the capital Vikramapura after the Chandras. So, it is reasonable to conjecture that the Chandras were supplanted by the Varmans. The Varman records apparently suggest that after the fall of the Chandras, the Varmans ruled in South-East Bengal until the coming of the Senas. But it is interesting to note that the Varman records do not bear any definite information regarding their conquest of Vikramapura. The Belava grant begins with the Purānic genealogy of Yadu from Brahmā through Atri, Chandra, Budha, Purūrvā, Āyu, Nahūṣa, and Yayāti. Reference is then made to Hari, of the family of Yadu, who appeared as Kṛṣṇa (Hari). Then it is stated that the Varmans were the relatives of Hari, who dominated over Simhapura. Thus it seems that the Varmans of South-East Bengal claimed their descent from a branch of the Yadava dynasty ruling over Simhapura. The above noted facts regarding the origin of the Varmans seem to be imaginary based on Purānic literature, which are hardly believable and justifiable. It is only clearly known from the record that the Varmans came from Simhapura.

Where was this Simhapura? There is no definite clue in the Belava grant to locate this place. Scholars differ in their opinions about the identification of Simhapura. It is mentioned in the Lakhamaṇḍala Praśasti⁷ that the queen of Jalandhara (Punjab) descended from a line of Yādava kings of Simhapura. Buhler identified this place with *Seng-ha-pu-lo* in the Punjab mentioned by Hiuen Tsang.⁸ On the other hand, R. D. Banerji has pointed out that there was another town of the same name; one in Malwa.⁹ But R. C. Majumdar is not inclined to accept this identification as it is far away and there is no evidence that this Simhapura existed after the seventh century A.D.¹⁰ R. G. Basak has offered another suggestion; Simhapura was “the same place as Sihāpura in Lālarāṭṭha, i.e., Rāḍha.”¹¹ This place is generally identified with Singur in the Hoogly District. But this identification has been made on the basis of the legendary account of Vijayasimha, contained in Mahāvamśa, which can hardly be accepted as sober history. It is reported in the Komarti and Bṛhatproshtha copper plates that there was a line of kings with their name ending with Varmans, who ruled at Simhapura in Kalinga.¹² According to Hultzsch, this place is identical with modern Singupuram between Chicacole and Narasannapeta.¹³ But R. C. Majumdar suggests that the kingdom of Simhapura in

Kalinga is known to exist from as early as the fifth century A.D. and to as late as the twelfth century A.D.¹⁴ H. C. Ray supports R. C. Majumdar and suggests that Simhapura in Kalinga was the original home of the Varmans.¹⁵ But D. C. Ganguly does not accept the above noted scholar's views, while he suggests that Simhapura may be located somewhere in Eastern Bengal. He writes, "...I do not find anything in the Belava inscription to suggest that the Varmans migrated to East Bengal from any place outside Bengal."¹⁶

The identification of Simhapura, the early home of the Varmans, is still a longstanding controversial subject in the history of ancient Bengal. Most of the scholars think that the place was located somewhere in Kalinga. But there is no authentic source to ascertain the connection of the Varmans of South-East Bengal with Kalinga. It is still an unsolved problem in the ancient history of Bengal.

How did the Varmans occupy political power in East Bengal? The Varmans records are silent on this matter. Scholars have made attempt to trace their emergence as a paramount power in South-East Bengal. R. D. Banerji remarked that Jātavarman of the Yādava dynasty founded a new kingdom coming in the wake of the invasion of Rājendra Cola I or Jayasimha II or of Gāṅgeyadeva.¹⁷ But D. C. Ganguly has firmly expressed the view that Jātavarman, the earliest known member of the Varman dynasty, joined Rājendra Cola I in his northern expeditions, shared his victories and ultimately carved out a kingdom in East Bengal, having overthrown Govindachandra, apparently the last known king of the Chandra dynasty.¹⁸ Probably D. C. Ganguly came to this decision on the basis of the Tirumulai inscription of Rājendra Cola, where it is stated that Rājendra Cola invaded Vaṅgāladeshā crossing the Bhāgīrathī River and the country was ruled over by king Govindachandra. The Vaṅgāla king boldly encountered the invader. But he was defeated. Ultimately he got down from his royal elephant and fled when the day went against him. D. C. Ganguly thinks that the Varmans came with Rājendra Cola's army, and in an opportune moment they set up a kingdom in South-East Bengal. His proposition is very much reasonable as Govindachandra ruled in Vikramapura before the Varmans. But the fact is that the Tirumulāi inscription neither mentions anything about the Varmans, nor the Varman's records refer to Rājendra Cola. So, D.C. Ganguly's view can be considered to be on an uncertain ground.

P. L. Paul did not agree with D. C. Ganguly; he put forward a different view about the origin of the Varmans. He suggested that the Varmans came to Bengal following the Kalachuri king Karṇa's invasion, and not with the expedition of Rājendra Cola.¹⁹ He attempted to connect the Varmans with Karṇa on the basis of the contemporary epigraphic records. The Kalachuri Cedi dynasty of Tripuri became powerful during the reign of Gāṅgeyadeva and his famous son Karṇa. The Benares plate²⁰ of Karṇa speaks that Gāṅgeyadeva had imprisoned the king of Kīra country, defeated the Kuntalas, conquered as far as the sea of Utkala (Orissa) and vanquished the king of Aṅga (eastern Bihar). But it is definitely known from the contemporary epigraphic records and literary sources that his son Karṇa invaded Bengal. The Bheraghāt inscription of queen Alhānādevi states that "while this king (Karṇa) of unprecedented luster gave full play to his heroism...Vaṅga trembled with Kalinga..."²¹ Atīśa Dipankara refers to an interesting account of Karṇa's war with the king of Gauḍa. He put the following description of a battle between Nayapāla and Karṇa:

During Atīśa's residence at Vajrāsana a dispute having arisen between Nayapāla, king of Magadha and the Tirthika king Karṇa of the west, the later made war upon Magadha. Failing to capture the city his troops sacked some of the sacred Buddhist institutions...Atīśa did not show any kind of concern or anger at it...Afterwards when the victory turned towards Nayapāla and the troops of Karṇa were being slaughtered by the armies of Magadha, he took the king Karṇa and his men under his protection and sent them away...Atīśa caused a treaty to be concluded between the two kings. With the exception of the articles of food that were destroyed at the time of wars, all other things were either restored or compensated for.²²

Karṇa's campaign against Gauḍa is also stated to the Pāikore image inscription and in the *Rāmācharitam* of Sandhyākaranandī. The Pāikore inscription records that Karṇa advanced as far as Pāikore in modern Bīrbhum District and he set up a column there as a mark of his victory.²³ It is also known from the commentary of the *Rāmācharitam* that

Vigrahapala III defeated Karṇa in a battle and Karṇa's daughter Yauvānāsrī was married to the Pala monarch. All these references clearly indicate that the Kalachuri Chedi king Karṇa invaded Bengal.

The Belava copper plate states that Jātavarman married Vīrasri, the daughter of Karṇa, certainly the Chedi king. The fact gets further confirmation from the Vajrayogini fragment copper plate of Sāmalavarman²⁴ in which the words Kalachuri and māṭṛvamśīya are appeared. However, the fact clearly suggests that the Varmans had a direct connection with the Kalachuri Chedi king Karṇa. In the Rewa inscription²⁵ of Malayasimha, son of the minister of a later Chedi king, it is stated that, "The illustrious Jāta was the adviser of his predecessors, who had been in this world, in the incantation for increasing their fame...who was carrying great weight among the religious by gifts to the twice-born; also by valour of whose arms the illustrious Karṇadeva had vanquished his foes."

P. L. Paul suggests that this Jāta may be identical with Jātavarman, the Varman king. In this connection, mention may be made that Simhapura, the original home of the Varmans, is generally located in Kalinga. It is probable that Karṇa conquered Kalinga as he assumed the epithet '*Trikalingādhipati*'. Probably Karṇa secured the active service of the Varmans of Simhapura, who were given posts of honour.²⁶ Jātavarman might have accompanied Karṇa during his expedition against the king of Gauḍa. Having provided great service to the Chedi king, Jātavarman obtained confidence of Karṇa, who was pleased to give his daughter in marriage with him. It may be surmised that this marriage of Jātavarman was a great factor in determining the political fortune of the Varman family. Both the Chedi and the Varmans claim to have belonged to the lunar dynasty. The Chedi epigraphic records also begin with the Purāṇic personages as we find in the Belava grant. Furnishing all the above noted evidences, P. L. Paul came to the decision that the Varmans were connected with the Kalachuri king Karṇa rather than Rājendra Cola.²⁷

Vajravarman is reported in the Belava grant as the first member of the Varman dynasty and as a brave warrior. He is also praised for the victorious expedition against the Yādava armies and mentioned as a god of death to his enemies. He was not only a valiant warrior, but also a learned man. He is stated in the same record as a poet among the poets and a scholar among the scholars.²⁸ D. C. Ganguly suggested that Vajravarman came with

Rājendra Cola and carved out for himself a kingdom in Eastern Bengal overthrowing the last king of the Chandra dynasty,²⁹ and R. D. Banerji³⁰ maintained the same view. Both the scholars took Vajravarman as the founder of the dynasty. But P. L. Paul is not inclined to accept this suggestion. He thought that it was not Vajravarman, rather his son Jātavarman was the real founder of the Varman dynasty. No royal epithet is attached to the name of Vajravarman. He was not an independent ruler. It is most likely that he was a feudal lord under the Kalachuri Chedi dynasty, who probably accompanied either Gāṅgeyadeva or his son Karṇa to their eastern expedition as an army chief.

Jātavarman, son of Vajravarman, is the next member of the lineage of the Varmans. In verses 7-8 of the Belava copper plate, we get the following description about Jātavarman:

Jātavarman was born from him (i.e., Vajravarman), just as Bhīṣma (the son of Gaṅgā) was born of Śāntanu; mercy was his (life's) vow, battle his pastime, and charity his chief delight. Seizing the (great) glory of Pṛthu, son of Vena, espousing Vīraśrī (the daughter) of Karṇa, extending his supremacy among the Aṅgas, conquering the fortunes of Kāmarūpa (Assam), putting to shame the strength of the arms of Divya, crippling the dignity of Govardhana, and giving away all his wealth to Brāhmaṇs, he (Jātavarman) extended his own paramount suzerainty.³¹

The aforesaid description clearly indicates the military and political activities of Jātavarman as well as the contemporary political situation of Bengal. Vīraśrī was the daughter of Karṇa, undoubtedly the Kalachuri Chedi king of Tripuri (C. 1070 A.D.)³² Another daughter of this king, Yauvanāśrī, was married to the Pala king Vigraphapala III. This marriage apparently indicates that Jātavarman accompanied Karṇa probably as an army chief and provided great service to the Chedi king, who was pleased to give his daughter in marriage with him. It is probable that this marriage was an important factor for establishing his kingdom in Eastern Bengal.

Of the defeated enemies referred to in the above mentioned record, we can easily identify Divya, the Kaivarta leader, who led a successful revolt against Mahipala II and captured Northern Bengal (Varendra). Jātavarman might have taken advantage of the political instability in North-Bengal. In this connection, A. M. Chowdhury suggested that

Jātavarman's attack on Divya must have happened when Divya was ruling in North-Bengal in the early years of Ramapala. He possibly undertook this expedition by way of trying his arms against another newly founded power.³³

Jātavarman claimed to have conquered the king of Kāmarūpa (*paribhavam-tam-Kāmarūpa-śrīyām*). But the Varman records do not bear the name of the king whom he defeated. The Chandra rulers i.e., Śrīchandra and Kalyāṇachandra came into conflict with the king of Kāmarūpa. Probably the Varman king followed the same way. After establishing his kingdom in South-East Bengal, Jātavarman might have measured his arms with the king of Kāmarūpa. During the last half of the eleventh century, the Pala rulers were ruling Kāmarūpa. The king with whom Jātavarman came into conflict was probably Gopāla (C. 1055-1075 A.D.) or Harṣapāla (C. 1075-1090 AD.)³⁴

Jātavarman also defeated the ruler of Aṅga (eastern Bihar, Bhagalpur district), but the name of the local ruler of Aṅga is not mentioned in the Belava grant. The Benaras plate of Karṇa reports that Gāṅgeyadeva, father of Karṇa, vanquished the ruler of Aṅga. Probably, Jātavarman took part in the battles of Gāṅgeyadeva or Karṇa during their eastern expedition against the rulers of Aṅga and Gauḍa. It is likely that Jātavarman played a significant role as a chief of the Yādava army fighting with the local ruler of Aṅga.

It is stated in the Belava grant that Jātavarman also defeated Govardhana, but his identity was not referred to there. This king cannot be identified definitely. R. D. Banerji drew attention to one Dvopavardhana of the *Rāmācharitam*, ruler of Kausambī, and thought that Govardhana was written in place of Dvopavardhana through copyist's mistake.³⁵ The name Govardhana also appears in the Deopara inscription of Vijayasena, a chief who was defeated by the Sena king.³⁶ On the other hand, R. G. Basak remarked that Govardhana may be the father of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva of the Bhūvaneśvara inscription. The father's name of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva is referred to as Govardhana, who was a distinguished warrior and a Brahman scholar, whose father was a *Mahāmantri* and *Sandhivigrahika* of a king of Vaṅga.³⁷ But R. C. Majumdar suggested that he was another adventurer like Jātavarman who tried to fish in the troubled waters of Bengal.³⁸

The above noted information clearly suggests that Jātavarman was a brave warrior and a conqueror. The Sāmantasār copper plate describes him as the leader (*Prāgrahara*) among the Yādavas.³⁹ He was the real founder of the Varman dynasty in South-East Bengal. It was probably he, who fought bravely to carve out a kingdom for his family and to consolidate his position as a king in South-East Bengal. He was the first independent king of the Varman dynasty, as his father Vajravarman, the first ancestor named in the Belava grant, is not referred to as a king. The Samantasār copper plate of Harivarman refers to his (Jātavarman's) titles as *Parameśvara*, *Paramavaiṣṇava*, *Mahārājādhirāja* (king of kings). It indicates that he was a paramount king. He was a devout worshiper of Vishnu. He is said to have been famous for his mercy and charity. The Belava copper plate refers to him that he used to give all his wealth to the Brahmans, although none of his record granting land in favour of the Brahmans, has not yet been found.

The Belava copper plate reports that Śāmalavarman was the son and successor of Jātavarman. But the Sāmantasār copper plate reveals that Jātavarman had another son named Harivarman, who meditated on the feet of Jātavarman.⁴⁰ Hence, it is clear that *Mahārājādhirāja* Jātavarman had two sons, Harivarman and Samalavarman. Both of them ruled the Varman kingdom one after another from their capital at Vikramapura. They issued copper plates from the same capital which bears testimony to their kingship. But among the two brothers who ascended the throne first or who was the elder brother and who was the younger brother? Unfortunately, the portion of their copper plates indicating their relationship is missing and hence the answers to the questions cannot be given with certainty. In this connection, A. M. Chowdhury has suggested that as in the broken Vajrayogini plate the achievement of Harivarman and his unnamed son are described before Samalavarman, it can be safely presumed that Harivarman flourished before Samalavarman.⁴¹ This suggestion seems to be reasonable and may be accepted. The name and achievements of Harivarman appeared before Samalavarman in the Vajrayogini plate, but nothing of his achievement is known as the plate is fragmented and the other fragment is lost. Another question has been raised, why was Harivarman not mentioned in the Belava copper plate before Samalavarman? In this connection, A. M. Chowdhury has offered the suggestion that “is it due to some bad relationship that may

have developed between Harivarman and Samalavarman which embittered the latter's son, so that he omitted any direct reference to Harivarman?"⁴² But this suggestion does not seem to be reasonable. If there was any bad relation between the two brothers, the achievement of Harivarman would not be referred to in the Vajrayogini plate of Samalavarman. On the other hand, it was a normal practice of the copper plate grant in the early medieval period that the ruling king used to mention that he was meditating on the feet of his father, but no copper plate referred to king's brother as an immediate predecessor of the ruling king. There is hardly any reference in ancient copper plates about the achievement of brother of the ruling king. Generally the royal officials who were responsible for issuing the copper plate grants were interested to praise the king and his father or his grandfather by citing their achievements, but not the achievements of the king's brother.

The name of Harivarman was known long ago from the colophon of two dated Buddhist manuscripts before the discovery of the Sāmantasāra and the Vajrayogini copper plates. The manuscripts refer to him with his paramount titles as *Parameśvara*, *Paramabhaṭṭāraka*, *Mahārājādhirāja Harivarmma*. But after the discovery of the Sāmantasār plate, it is clearly known that this king was none but the Varman king of Eastern Bengal. A manuscript of *Prañjāpāramitā*, which was discovered from Nepal and now being preserved in the Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi, records in its colophon that it was copied in the 19th regnal year of *Mahārājādhirāja* Harivarman. The title of another manuscript is '*Laghukalācakraṭīkā*', which was also discovered from Nepal and now it is being preserved in the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Kolkata. The manuscript was copied in the 39th regnal year of king Harivarman (*Mahārājādhirāja-Śrīmat-Harivarmma-deva-pādīya-samvat* 39). Mahamahopādhyaya Haraprasād Śāstrī published an illustration of the dated page of this manuscript in the journal of the *Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Parishat* of Calcutta, and read the date as 39.⁴³ But N. K. Bhattasali closely examined the date and read the figure as 32.⁴⁴ The colophon is followed by three verses written in a different hand, according to which 'when forty six years of Harivarman had elapsed', the manuscript was five times recited in seven years on the bank of the Veng River.⁴⁵ From this reference, Śāstrī seems to have read the date correctly. Moreover, the reference to 46 years is important and this must be his regnal year. Thus Harivarman is

known to have enjoyed a fairly long reign and, at least, he is to be credited with a reign of 46 years. Besides, the astronomical data given in this manuscript make this date correspond to 1119 A.D. The date of Harivarman was counted from his *vijaya-rājya* or the date of his accession. Hence if we go back 46 years from 1119, we can get his date of accession as 1073 A.D.⁴⁶

There is a reference to Hari in the *Rāmācharitam* who is mentioned to have allied himself first with Bhīma, the Kaivarta chief and then with Ramapala. It said to the *Rāmācharitam* that when Bhīma was imprisoned, Hari organized the Kaivartas and led them against Ramapala. But Ramapala's son spent a lot of money among the Kaivartas to create a conflict between Bhīma and Hari. Then Hari abandoned Bhīma and allied with Ramapala. Who was this Hari referred to in the *Rāmācharitam*? R. C. Majumdar identified this king with the Varman king, Harivarman. ⁴⁷ D. C. Sircar has supported R. C. Majumdar, and has gone so far as to say that Harivarman may have taken the chance during the rebellion of the Kaivartas in North-Bengal. Harivarman first joined the Kaivartas during their success and secured his independent position in Eastern Bengal. Thinking of the probability that Ramapala may capture Eastern Bengal before recovering North-Bengal, Harivarman allied himself with Rampal.⁴⁸ But A. M. Chowdhury has rejected R. C. Majumdar's view. He has suggested that the identification of Hari with Harivarman has no basis and is purely conjectural.⁴⁹ It is difficult to determine whether Hari of the *Rāmācharitam* and Harivarman of Eastern Bengal is the same person or not. There is no evidence of Ramapala's expedition in Eastern Bengal. But reference has been made in the *Rāmācharitam* that a Varman king of Eastern Bengal propitiated Ramapala with a gift of a chariot and elephants.⁵⁰ When Ramapala succeeded in recovering North Bengal from the Kaivartas, Harivarman propitiated Ramapala so that he could avoid Pala attack on his kingdom.

The name of Harivarman is also known from the Bhūvaneśvara stone inscription of Bhaṭṭabhavadeva.⁵¹ The inscription gives a detailed account of Bhaṭṭabhavadeva and eulogy of seven generations of his family. The record gives long description about his profound learning in various branches of knowledge. He was a remarkable personality, who was a great statesman, warrior, scholar and author. He was born of a Brahman family settled in the village of Siddhala in Rāḍha. The inscription reports that

Bhaṭṭabhavadēva was the *Sandhivigrahika* (minister of war and peace) of Harivarman and also of his son. Scholars have come to the decision that king Harivarmādeva, whose minister was Bhavadēva, is the same Harivarman who is referred to in the *Sāmantasār* and *Vajrayogini* copper plates and also in the colophon of the two Buddhist manuscripts. But the name of his son is given in the records. The name of Bhavadēva's father was Govardhana, who was also a great warrior but his position is not known. Bhavadēva's grandfather was Ādideva, who is said to have been a minister of the king of Vaṅga. But the name of this king is not mentioned in the record. R. C. Majumdar suggests that this king may be Jātavarman,⁵² while A. M. Chowdhury proposes that this ruler probably was the last Chandra king. In this connection, he has remarked that after the Varmans occupied that region, the ministerial family changed its allegiance to the new rulers.⁵³

The Bhūvaneśvara inscription introduces Bhavadēva with the title '*Bala-Valabhi-bhūjaṅga*'. The meaning of this compound title is not clear and the subject is a matter of controversy among scholars. The word '*bala-balabhi*' is generally accepted to be the name of a kingdom mentioned in the *Rāmācharitam*.⁵⁴ D. C. Bhattacharya, referring to *Sudhāsāgara* of Bhīmasena Dikṣita, suggested that the boy Bhavadēva was most intelligent among his fellow students who took their lessons in a *Valabhi* (the top most part of a house) with a sharp tongue, was a veritable terror to the other boys and hence his preceptor gave him the title '*Bala-Valabhi-bhūjaṅga*'.⁵⁵ According to D. C. Sircar '*Bala-Valabhi*' denotes the name of a city and the word '*Bhūjaṅga*' means a student. He has pointed out that Bhavadēva was the student of the city of *Bala-Valabhi*.⁵⁶ M. Ghosh has made a reference from the *Karpuramañjari* in which the word '*bhūjaṅga*' has been denoted as a ruler of the eastern region. He takes the word *bhūjaṅga* to mean a 'victor'. He suggests that Bhavadēva led Harivarman's forces against the city of *Bala-Valabhi*, the capital of Vikramarāja, referred to in the *Rāmācharitam*.⁵⁷ Actually the meaning of this title is obscure and this may indicate Bhavadēva's very distinguished quality. But at the present state of our knowledge, it is not possible to determine the meaning of the title and whether it had any connection with the history of Harivarman.

Verse 15 of the Bhūvaneśvara inscription refers to the compound word 'nāgāntakapatrin'. N. G. Majumdar has taken the verse having double application in as much as the verse refers both to Vishnu and Bhavadeva. In the case of Vishnu, it means the bird (*patrin*) who is 'the exterminator of serpents (*nāgas*), i.e. Garuḍa, the carrier of Vishnu. When it refers to Bhavadeva, the word *patrin* can only mean 'the arrow' which is taken by N. G. Majumdar as 'nāgāntaka'. He has taken *nāga* to mean the Nāgavaṃśī king of Orissa who ruled in during 11th century A.D. occupied the present Bastar state in Central Province. In this connection, N.G. Majumdar has concluded that either Harivarman or his son 'made himself master of Utkala (Orissa) by overthrowing the Nāgavaṃśī dynasty'.⁵⁸ He has provided more evidence on the basis of the verses (III.42-44) of the *Rāmācharitam* that Ramapala encountered Harivarman or his son in Orissa.⁵⁹ Hence he has offered the suggestion that Orissa was included within the Varman kingdom of Eastern Bengal and then Bhavadeva fixed the inscription on the temple of *Ananta-Vāsudeva* at Bhūvaneśvara in the Puri District of Orissa. Probably Bhūvaneśvara in Orissa, the find place of the inscription, tempted N. G. Majumdar to come into this decision. But P. C. Ācharya has clearly shown that the stone slab containing the inscription was ever fixed on any temple at Bhūvaneśvara. He has also shown the unreliable character of any literary evidence referred to by N. Vasu in favour of the supposition that Bhavadeva constructed temples and did other pious works in Orissa.⁶⁰ More information is provided in this regard by D. C. Bhattacharya. He has shown that the inscription of Bhavadeva was brought to Dacca (now Dhaka) by D. Paterson who was the judge and magistrate of Dacca during the period 1791-95A.D. It was exhibited in a learned assembly at Dacca and was deciphered by one Pandit Rājchandra. D. C. Bhattacharya has argued that verses 26-27 of the inscription show that the temple of Bhavadeva on which it was fixed could not be in Rāḍha and suggested that it was probably at Vikramapura.⁶¹ Probably the stone inscription was taken to the Asiatic Society of Calcutta from Dhaka and subsequently it was transferred to Bhūvaneśvara to fix it on the temple of Annanta-Vāsudeva. Now it is reasonable to speculate that the temple which was erected by Bhavadeva, was located somewhere in Vikramapura. All the Varman records were discovered from Dhaka- Faridpur area or eastern part of Vaṅga. Recently the present author has published another stone inscription of this dynasty which

was also discovered from Vikramapura in present Munshiganj District.⁶² Probably the Varmans did not have an extensive dominion. According to Bhattasali, “the Varman kingdom thus spread up to the Bhagīrathī on the west, while on its east was the Meghna.”⁶³ On the basis of the above noted reference, it is not reasonable to accept Majumdar’s view that Harivarman’s political supremacy extended over Orissa region. Harivarman neither encountered Ramapala in Orissa, nor did he vanquish the Nāgavaṃśī king. Orissa was never ruled by Nāgavaṃśī ruler and Ramapala met a Somavaṃśī Kesari, king of Orissa. In this connection, R. C. Majumdar has offered suggestion that for even if we endorse the view of N. G Majumdar that the verse in question refers to the defeat of the Nāgas by Bhavadeva, we should look for their territory near Eastern Bengal, and it is more reasonable to identify them with the Nāgas of Assam hills.⁶⁴

Harivarman was an independent king as he assumed full imperial titles like *Mahārājādhirāja* (king of kings). He became king as a successor of his father *Mahārājādhirāja* Jātavarman. It is not known much about his achievements for lack of source materials. His copper plate grant has been discovered but it is only a fragment and an important section of the plate is lost. Lines 4-5 of the Sāmantasār copper plate speak of Harivarman who is said to have devastated his enemies.⁶⁵ The Bhūvaneśvara inscription says that he reigned for a long time (*suchiram*), and this is confirmed by the colophon of the Buddhist manuscripts which refer that he ruled for, at least, 39 years.

According to verse 16 of the Bhuvanesvara inscription, Harivarman had a son, but his name was not mentioned. It is supported by the Vajrayogini plate in which Harivarman’s unnamed son is also referred to. He fought a battle at Jādavaṅga. N. K. Bhattasali surmises that the place was in Eastern Bengal.⁶⁶ But from the above noted sources, it is not clear whether his son ever reigned or not.

Samalavarman was the next king of the Varman dynasty, who ascended the throne probably after his brother Harivarman. The Belava grant reports that he was the son of *Mahārājādhirāja* Jātavarman and the father of Bhojavarman who issued the grant. It is not referred to in the Belava plate how he became the king. It is known that Harivarman reigned for a long time and it indicates that probably Samalavarman became king after the death of Harivarman. The Belava copper plate records that Samalavarman’s chief

queen was Mālavadevī.⁶⁷ His harem was also full with daughters of numerous kings. He had a son Udayin, who saw only his own face reflected in front in his own sword in battle fields which were full of many an irresistible heroes. But it is not referred to in the grant whether this son of Samalavarman became a king or not. The eulogistic verse in the Belava grant is very vague. According to Bisweswar Chakravarty, most probably Udayin was the elder son of Samala, but predeceased him and so the crown came down on Bhoja's head.⁶⁸ Verse 11 of the Belava grant refers to the name of Trailokyasundari (beautiful in the three worlds). But from the verse it is difficult to determine her relation with Samalavarman. N. G. Majumdar has remarked that she was the daughter of Samalavarman.⁶⁹ It is stated to the Belava grant that she was (as it were) the banner of the god of love.

A copper plate grant of Samalavarman has been discovered, but unfortunately little is known about him as the plate is a fragment. The last stanza ending in line 14 might have contained a panegyric of Samalavarman. But this section of the record has been lost. Land was granted by the plate in favour of the temple of the Buddhist goddess Prajñāpāramitā or to a Buddhist devotee named Bhīmadeva as a reward for his reading the *Prajñāpāramitā*. It is generally considered on the basis of the Belava grant that the Varmans were orthodox Brahmans. But the above fact bears testimony that they were liberal enough to grant land for the Buddhist deity and showed respect to other religions. Samalavarman had survived in local tradition. His name was prominently remembered in the genealogical account of the Vaidic Brāhmaṇs.⁷⁰ The Vaidic Brāhmaṇs claimed that their predecessors were first settled in Bengal from Madhyadesa during the rule of Samalavarman. Most of the genealogical accounts of the Vaidic Brāhmaṇs refer that the first of their line migrated to Bengal at the invitation of Samalavarman. The date of this migration is given as 1001 Saka Era=1079 A.D. and the date is approximately close to the reign of Samalavarman, although it is not supported by any epigraphic evidence. It is interesting to note that the grandfather of the donee of the Belava grant is described as *Madhyadesavinirgata* (coming from central country). So, this tradition seems to be correct.

Samalavarman was an independent king like his father as he assumes the title *Mahārājādhirāja*. He was endowed with all the virtues of a king and he had no bad

qualities, even to the slightest extent. It has been stated in verse 9 of the Belava grant that the illustrious Samalavarmandeva whose name, in this world, is the first among those who bring on welfare.

Samalavarman had another son named Bhojavarman who became his successor and was the last known king of the Varman dynasty. He issued the Belava copper plate, the main source for the history of the Varmans. Mālavayadevī was his mother, the chief queen of Samalavarman. Verses 13-15 of the Belava grant praise him. Verse 13 of the grant records that he resembled his father and was the very lamp that illuminated both the families (i.e., paternal and maternal), and who, in all circumstances, was not wanting in affection towards those that deserved it, and dispelled their sorrow. He is reported to as a great hero. He has been eulogized in verse 15 that Purūṣottama (Vishnu) extolled him, making him plunge into the great ocean, namely that of bliss, emanating from Brahman who is the same as speech.⁷¹ Vikramapura was his capital. He took the full imperial titles like the *Parameśvara*, *Paramahatṭāraka*, *Mahārājādhirāja* and these titles indicate that he was a paramount king.

The Belava copper plate was hitherto considered as the only source of Bhojavarman. But the present author has recently published a stone inscription⁷² which bears the name of Bhojavarman. The stone slab contains 9 lines of inscriptions. The record was issued during the 7th regnal year of the reign of *Mahārājādhirāja Śrī-Bhojavarman*. Śrī-Avadeva, the great feudal lord, served under Bhojavarman. The feudal king Avadeva gifted money (cowries shell) and granted tax free land with a market place to Brahman Annaḍabhatṭārakasvāmī. The gifted land was approved by the *Pāñchakūlika* (probably members of the *pañchāyet* board). The important aspect of the inscription is that it refers to the name of the king Bhojavarmandeva as well as his title '*Mahārājādhirāja*'. The provenance of the inscription is the same as the Vikramapura region, in which the Varmans ruled. So, this may be considered as a corroborative or supplementary source of the Belava grant. The stone inscription certainly indicates that Bhojavarman was a powerful king under whom there were a number of feudal lords (*sāmantas*) and great feudal lords (*Mahāsāmantas*). It indicates that Bhojavarman was unquestionably the over lord of a number of feudatory kings or vassal chiefs and himself was a paramount

Mahārājādhirāja (king of kings). He maintained an independent position which was established during his predecessor *Mahārājādhirāja* Jātavarman.

Another important aspect of the Sujānagara stone inscription is that it bears the date of Bhojavarman. The Belava grant was issued during the 5th regnal year of Bhojavarman. But the inscription was issued during his 7th regnal year. It indicates that he ruled for the long time, at least, 7 years are ascertained. The inscription informs us the name of a great feudal lord (*Mahāsāmanta*) Śrī-Abadeva, who served under Mahārājādhirāja Bhojavarman. Probably feudal system was introduced and flourished in South-East Bengal during the Gupta rule. The Gunāighar copper plate of Vainyagupta reports the name of two feudal kings – Rudradatta and Vijayasena. Lokanātha was a powerful feudal king. It is known that during the rule of Mahipala II the *Sāmantas* (feudal lords) revolted in Varendra and they were known as ‘*anantasāmantacakra*’. Ramapala, the next Pala king, recovered Varendra with the help of the *sāmantas* (feudal chiefs). The early medieval copper plates refer to *rājā*, *mahārājā*, *rājan*, *rājanyaka*, *rāṇaka* etc. all those are the titles of the feudal kings. The feudal kings paid allegiance only as long as the overlord was powerful. On the least sign of the weakness of the empire the feudal lords would try to shake off the subordination. The Sujānagara inscription bears the testimony that during the Varman-Sena period feudalism took a strong shape in Bengal.

We generally know that the feudal kings did not have any right to donate land. They acted as *dutaka* and applied to the king for gifting land. But this inscription reports that the feudal king Avadeva gifted land and money (cowry shells) to Brahman Annada Bhaṭṭāraka Svāmī. During the Varman-Sena period a large number of Brahmans hailing from the Deccan and Madhyadesa settled in Bengal. It has already been mentioned that the name of Samalavarman survived in the local tradition of the Brahmans in South-East Bengal that they were settled in Bengal from Madhyadesa at his invitation. Hence this inscription clearly indicates that not only the ruling kings but their subordinate feudatory rulers of the Varman kings gifted land and provided other facilities to the Brahmans for their establishment. This had helped flourishing of Paurānic Brahmanism in Bengal in this period.

The Sujānagara stone inscription of Bhojavarman contains an interesting term: ‘*Pāñchakūlika*’. It is recorded in this inscription that the donation of land was approved

not by the king or his feudal lord, but by *Pānchakūlika*. The term 'Kūlika' appeared in the Gupta inscriptions (*prathamkūlika*) in which 'kulika' seems to mean the artisan. According to P. V. Kane, 'kūlika' means an officer in charge of ten villages who was granted a 'kūla' (*kūlyavāpa*, the term related to ancient measurement of land) for his salary.⁷³ According to Ghoshal, '*Pānchakūlika*' means *panchāyat* board; an assembly of administration or arbitrators, usually consisting of five members; a board of administration charged with control of the custom house, with deposit of property of person dying without heirs into the royal treasury etc. also called '*Panchapa*', members of such a board.⁷⁴ Ghoshal's view seems to be correct and D. C. Sircar has supported this view.⁷⁵ So, '*Pānchakūlika*' was an administrative designation that was related to ancient local government or *Pancāyat* system. Probably they were charged with ten villages that had been referred to in the Khalimpur copper plate as '*daśagrāmika*'. It is probable that *Pānchakūlika* or *Pancāyat* system was functioned as an important administrative unit of the local government.

No coin bearing the legend of any Varman king has yet been found in Bengal. But the Sujānagara stone inscription discloses the fact that during the reign of Bhojavarman *Mahāsāmanta Śrī-* Avadeva gifted cowrie shells (*kapardaka-dānam*) to the Brahman.⁷⁶ It indicates that cowrie shells were used as a media of exchange during the Varman rule like the Pala dynasty. In this connection, references may be made that a number of Yādava Devagiri gold coins were found in the Vikramapura region in the Dhaka District. Now these coins are preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum. The Varmans of South-East Bengal thus claimed to have descended from a branch of the Yādava dynasty. But probably these Yādava coins have no connection with the Varmans and these may have come to Bengal by way of trade.

The religion of the Varman kings is not referred to in the Belava grant. The seal and symbol of the copper plate grant generally indicates the religion of the king. *Vishnu-cakra*-seal is attached to the Belava copper plate. No trace of the wheel is, however, perceptible because the central portion of the seal is completely scraped off by the finder of the plate, who thought the plate is made of gold. But it has been ascertained from line 48 of the inscription that the seal is a wheel of Vishnu, described as *Vishnu-Cakra-Mudrā* or the seal bearing the design of Vishnu's wheel. This symbol indicates that the

Varmans were Vaisnavas. The Vaisnavas used this *Cakra*⁷⁷ as a symbolic representation of Vishnu. Probably Vishnu was the patron deity of the Varman dynasty and hence this *Cakra* of Vishnu has been attached to the Belava grant.

It is not known to how the rule of the Varman dynasty came to an end. After the Varmans, the Sena epigraphic records were issued from Vikramapura. So, it is surmised that the Varmans were supplanted by the Sena kings of Bengal. The Varman epigraphic records as well as the manuscripts refer to the regnal years of the Varman kings. Regnal year is not a regular era and it is the particular year of the reign of the king. Hence, it is not possible to know the exact date of the Varman kings. In this connection, the other contemporary sources can help us to fix the approximate date of the Varman kings. Jātavarman married the daughter of the Kalachuri king Karṇa. Hence it is certain that he was a contemporary of Karṇa (1041-1070 A.D.). Vighrahapala III married another daughter of Karṇa whose reign period was 1058-1075 A. D. He was also a contemporary of the Kaivarta chief Divya and certainly of Mahipala II (1075-1080 A.D.). So, Jatavarman's reign period may probably be placed sometime between 1050 and 1075 A.D. On the other hand, it is known from the local tradition of the Vaidik Brahmans that they settled in Bengal from Madhyadesa in 1001 Saka Era, when Samalavarman was ruling. Saka Era is a known era which is equivalent to Christian Era 1079 A. D. Considering the above noted dates and at the same time counting the regnal years of Harivarman and Bhojavarman, D. C. Sircar⁷⁸ has fixed up the following dates and chronology of the Varman dynasty:

Vajravarman

Jatavarman (1055-73 A.D.)

Harivarman (1073-1127 A.D.)

Samalavarman (1127-37 A.D.)

Bhojavarman (1137-45 A.D.)

Sena Rule in South-East Bengal

Bhojavarman is the last known king of the Varman dynasty and nothing is known how the rule of this dynasty came to an end. But it appears that all the Sena copper plates were issued from Vikramapura after the Varmans. So it can be inferred that the Varmans were supplanted by the Senas, who captured their capital Vikramapura and ruled in South-East Bengal.

The Barrāckpur copper plate, the earliest copper plate grant of the Sena dynasty, was issued from Vikramapura, the capital of the Varmans in Vaṅga, in the 62nd regnal year of Vijayasena. Land was granted by this record in the village of Ghāsbhoga-baṭṭavada in the Khāḍi Viṣaya (in the present Sundaravan area) of the Pundravardhana-bhūkti. This land was donated as fee for the performance of *Homa* in connection with ‘*Kaṇaka-Tūlapurūṣa-Mahādāna*’ ceremony of the *Mahā-mahādevī* (the great, great queen) Vilāsadevī during a lunar eclipse, within the palace at Vikramapura.⁷⁹ It has also been referred to in the grant that land was measured by the *nala* (land measuring rod) standard prevalent in Samatāṭa. The record bears clear testimony to the fact that Vijayasena ruled from Vikramapura, the same capital of the Chandras and Varmans. It also suggests that Vijayasena ousted the rule of the Varmans from Vaṅga and transferred his capital to Vikramapura⁸⁰ from Rāḍha, the earliest seat of the Senas.

How did the Varman dynasty come to close? Or, how and when did the Senas capture Vikramapura ousting the Varmans? An attempt has been made by scholars to give an explanation on the basis of the military exploits of Vijayasena referred to in the Deopāḍā inscription. The Deopāḍā *praśasti* makes specific mention of Vijayasena’s victories over Nānya, Vīra, Rāghava, Vardhana, and the king of Gauḍa, Kāmarūpa and Kalinga.⁸¹ Was there name of any Varman king among these rulers mentioned in this record? D. C. Sircar suggested that it is not impossible to think that Vīra (Viravarman) was a successor of the Varman king Bhojavarman of the Belava plate.⁸² But it is difficult to agree with this suggestion in the absence of any authentic supporting source.

On the other hand, N. K. Bhattasali has offered another suggestion: Rāghava, referred to in the Deopāḍā inscription, may be taken as the last Varman king from whom Vijayasena

snatched Vaṅga.⁸³ He has furnished an explanation from the unexplained verse 14 of the Belava copper plate⁸⁴ in favour of his view. He is inclined to read this verse of the Belava plate as *śaṅkāsu-alaṅkādhīpaḥ* and translates the half verse as follows: “Oh, fie! How painful! The world is bereft of heroes today. Has this trouble of the *Rākṣhasas* appeared again? May *Alaṅkādhīpa* (i.e. opposite of *Laṅkādhīpa*, *Rāma* or *Rāghava*) fare well during this apprehended danger!”

N. K. Bhattasali thinks that *Rāmapala* was living at that time, as he died as late as 1120 A.D. *Ramapala* faced the first trouble with the *Rākṣhasas* (i.e. the *Kaivarta* usurpation of North Bengal) and he killed *Rāvana* in the form of the *Kaivarta* chief *Divya* and recovered *Sitā*, that is *Varendri*, was a favorite theme with the poets of that period, an outstanding instance is the *Rāmācharitam*. During this period the *Palas* were ruling in North Bengal. *Vijayasena*, newly risen power in *Rāḍha* by his marriage with *Vilāsadevī*, a daughter of the *Sūra* family in *Rāḍha*, was eager to attack North Bengal and East Bengal. It is probable that he had already gathered forces and people expected the upcoming *Sena* attack. But whether this expedition was led first against the *Varmans* or the *Palas*, no one could guess. The *Belava* plate granted land in the east bank of the *Bhāgirathī* River and it appears to have been granted at this period of *śaṅkā* or apprehended danger. According to Bhattasali, during this political situation the poet *Purūṣottama*, the writer of the *Belava* grant, wanted to please both *Ramapala* and one *Rāghava* by double entendre. The favour and alliance of *Pala* king with *Rāghava*, probably a scion of the *Varman* line, was sought against the rising *Sena* power. Hence, Bhattasali conjectured that *Rāghava* might be the leader of the *Varman* kingdom of this period. He may also be the commander of the forces and the guardian of *Bhojavarman*, the ruling *Varman* king. He holds the view that the meaning of the verse becomes quite clear, if we assume that the poet wanted to please *Alaṅkādhīpa* (opposite of *Laṅkādhīpa*, *Rama* of the *Pala* line or *Rāghava* of the *Varman* side). In this connection, Bhattasali further comments that “we may here recall the statement in the third *śloka* of the *Belava* plate that *Hari* manifested himself in person many times in the *Varman* line. The first *Hari* was *Kṛṣṇa* himself. The second *Hari* is *Harivarman*. The third *Hari* might be this *Varman* chief *Rāghava*...”⁸⁵ In this connection N. K. Bhattasali proposed that *Vijayasena* invaded the *Varman* kingdom by his attack on *Kausambi*, modern 24 *Pargānā* district,

and its king Govardhana, who may have been a feudal chief under the Varmans. This involved the Varman kingdom in a disastrous war with the Senas. Ramapala, though eulogized by Purūṣottama, probably dared not to interfere as he was exhausted by his recent struggle with the Kaivartas. The Varmans went down finally and Rāghava, the leader of the Varmans, became prisoner in the hands of Vijayasena. Thus fell the Varman kingdom before the onslaught of Vijayasena.

The reading of the 14th verse of the Belava copper plate is controversial. Its meaning is mysterious. Though this is reasonable, it is very difficult to accept Bhattasali's explanation on the basis of this verse. Moreover, the identification of Rāghava as a Varman king is not beyond doubt. There is no direct clue in the contemporary records to identify properly either Vīra or Rāghava as the last Varman king referred to in the Deopāḍā inscription. In the present state of our knowledge, it is not possible to determine how the rule of the Varman dynasty came to close. At the same time this is also not possible to know when and how the Senas captured South-East Bengal. This is an inexplicable gap in our knowledge of the history of South-East Bengal of this period. But it is almost certain that it was Vijayasena, who ousted the Varmans and captured their kingdom. It is rather strange that there is not a single reference to the ousting of the Varmans from Vaṅga in a large number of the Sena epigraphic records.

Vijayasena is stated to have been the son of Hemantasena and the grandson of Sāmantasena who was the descendent of Vīrasena. Their family hailed from Karṇāṭa. Probably they came to Bengal in the wake of some foreign invasions and carved out a kingdom in conquered territories. They may be the remnants, either of Rajendra Chola's army, or of the Karṇāṭa allies of Karṇa, the Kalachuri king.⁸⁶ Hemantasena and Sāmantasena had no any royal titles, which suggest that they were ruling chiefs. But the Barrāckpur copper plates states that Vijayasena assumed the title of *Mahārājādhirāja*. So, there is hardly any doubt that he was the first independent king of this dynasty. Probably he captured South-East Bengal at the last stage of his life as the Barrāckpur grant was issued in the 62nd *regnal* year of his reign. But little is known about the early career of his life. Probably he started to his career as a feudal lord in Rāḍha. He married Vilasadevi, Princess of the Sūra family, and this marriage certainly enhanced his position. From this position he captured Vaṅga and started to rule with Vikramapura as his capital.

From the above noted facts, it appears that Rāḍha was the original seat of the Sena power from where they led their expeditions to other parts of Bengal. But after the conquest of Vaṅga, Vijayasena shifted his capital to Vikramapura, the capital of Vaṅga. Vikramapura was not merely his *jayaskandhāvāra* (camp of victory) but it was also his permanent residence in which his royal palace was set up and his queen lived there. On the other hand, the reference to the '*Samataṭya-nala*' (length of the measuring rod prevalent in Samataṭa) in the aforesaid grant appears to point out that Vijayasena further extended his territory to Samataṭa region from his newly shifted capital *Śrī-Vikramapura*. These facts sufficiently suggest that Vijayasena consolidated his position firmly in Vaṅga ousting the Varmans. Next he extended his dominion to Samataṭa region. Gradually he became powerful enough to lead further expedition towards North Bengal against the Pala power. Finally he succeeded in driving out the Palas from North Bengal and assumed the title *Gauḍeśvara*. The Deopāḍā inscription refers that he also imprisoned the king of Kāmarūpa. It is probable that his expedition against the Kāmarūpa ruler was also led from Vikramapura. Thus we may safely conclude that Vikramapura was the main seat and stronghold of the Sena power from where all of their subsequent copper plates were issued.

Ballalasena, the son and successor of Vijayasena, was born at Vikramapura. Once upon a time, there was a popular tradition in Vikramapura region of about the birth of Vallalasena.⁸⁷ Beside this there are local ruins attached to the name of Vallalasena in Vikramapura region. Vikramapura was the capital of Vallalasena from where he issued his Naihāṭi copper plate grant.⁸⁸ But little is known about his activity in South-East Bengal. *Vallālacharita* bears a story about the merchants of Harikela during his rule.⁸⁹ The theme of the story is that the *Sūvarṇavaṇīks* were degraded by Vallālasena for many reasons. The chief merchant Vallabhanada once refused to lend Vallālasena one and a half crore of gold coins. The king had borrowed earlier a crore of *niṣkas* (coins) from the merchant to lead expedition against the king of Udantapura (Magadha). But the expedition failed. So, he asked again for loan to the merchants. The merchants ultimately agreed to give loan to the king, but demanded the revenue of Harikela. As a result, king Vallālasena became angry on the merchants of Harikela and degraded their position.

However, this fact suggests that Harikela was included within the kingdom of the Senas. Probably Vallālasena further extended his father's kingdom in the Harikela region and the whole of South-East Bengal was under his sway.

Lakṣmaṇasena was the son and successor of Vallālasena. He was made king by his father sometime after 1168-69 A. D., the date given by *Adbhutasāgara* and *Dānasāgara* of Vallālasena.⁹⁰ He introduced to a new era in his name known to later time as *La-sam*, *Lakṣmanabda* or *Lakṣmaṇa Samvat*. Seven copper plates of this king have so far been discovered.⁹¹ Besides these his history has been referred to in the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri* of Minhaj-us-Siraj, the Muslim historian of Delhi. These sources provide information about his rule in South-East Bengal.

The contemporary sources give rise to a controversy about the location of the capital of Lakṣmaṇasena. Minhāj reports that Nadia was the capital of the Rāi Lakṣhmania.⁹² But R. D. Banerji has opined that there is no evidence in support of the fact that Nadia was the capital of Bengal.⁹³ On the other hand, D. C. Sircar has suggested that Nadia was the place of pilgrim of Lakṣmaṇasena.⁹⁴ *Pavanadūtam* of Dhoyi, a court poet of Lakṣmaṇasena, tells us that Vijayapura was the capital of his patron king.⁹⁵ Ramāprasād Chanda is inclined to identify Vijayapura with a place called Vijayanagara in the Rajshahi District.⁹⁶ But there is not single evidence in support of this identification. It is interesting to note that all the copper plates of Lakṣmaṇasena were issued from Śrī-Vikramapura which clearly indicates that Vikramapura was the main capital and the seat of his administration. Adris Banerji has opined that it was Vijayasena who once for all established the supremacy of the Senas, and practically brought the whole of eastern India under his sway. It was he who conquered Varendri and Puṇḍra from a Pala king, described as *Gauḍeśvara* in the Sena epigraphs. It is quite possible that to commemorate the memory of his grandfather, Lakṣmaṇasena renamed Vikramapura as Vijayapura.⁹⁷ Adris Banerji's suggestion may be taken as tenable. Not only all the copper plates of the Senas but also the archaeological remains and the local tradition support that Vikramapura was the main political hub of the Senas. It is stated that the Senas had a number of temporary camps or royal residences. Nadia may be one of these or a

temporary residence of Lakṣmaṇasena, but there is hardly any doubt that Śrī-Vikramapura was his main capital.

The Muslim conquest of Bengal was the most remarkable event during the reign of Lakṣmaṇasena. When Bakhtiyar attacked Nadia, Lakṣmaṇasena had fled to Sankanat (Samatāṭa), certainly indicating that he returned to his main capital Vikramapura. Soon after Bakhtiyar captured North Bengal and established his capital at Lakhnawati. No reference is made by the Muslim historians of any further conflict of the Muslim rulers with the Senas. The Tibetan expedition of Bakhtiyar, followed shortly by his death, must have weakened the hold of Muslim rule in North Bengal. Bakhtiyar's suzerainty was confined to North Bengal and South-East Bengal was ruled continuously by the independent Sena kings. Even after the death of Bakhtiyar, it was not possible to conquer South-East Bengal within the next half a century. As South-East Bengal is well-guarded by its numerous rivers which provide a natural barrier for the Muslim cavalry to proceed further into this region. On the other hand, Lakṣmaṇasena ruled South-East Bengal, at least, three or four years after the Muslim conquest of Nadia. His presence in Vikramapura after the Muslim raid of Nadia is proved by the Bhowal plate issued in his 27th regnal year to grant land in Dhaka District. Lakṣmaṇasena ruled for at least 27 years and he died sometime after 1205 A.D. It is generally held that Hindu rule came to an end after the fall of Nadia and Muslim rule started in Bengal. But we see that when the Muslim rulers ruled in West and North Bengal, the Sena rule was continued in South-East Bengal. Minhaj rightly reports that Lakṣmaṇasena's sons were ruling in Vaṅga and Sankanat (Samatāṭa) when he wrote his account possibly in 1243-1245 A.D.⁹⁸ and the fact is supported by the later Sena epigraphic records.

So far only three copper plates of the later Senas have been published. These are: (1) the Madhyapādā copper plate⁹⁹ (also known as the Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Parisad plate, Calcutta), and (2) the Madanpādā copper plate¹⁰⁰ of Viśvarūpasena, son of Lakṣmaṇasena, and (3) the Idilpur copper plate¹⁰¹ assigned to Kesavasena and supposed to be another son of Lakṣmaṇasena. It is presumed that both the two sons of Lakṣmaṇasena came to the throne one after another after his death. But D. C. Sircar¹⁰² has offered interesting facts regarding the above noted inscriptions and the successors of Lakṣmaṇasena. Sircar has

shown in detail that there was no existence of Keśavasena in the Sena dynasty. He suggested that *Keśava* is a wrong reading for Viśvarūpa in the Edilpur plate.¹⁰³ According to him, the Madanapāḍā and Idilpur copper plates of Viśvarūpasena were originally issued by *Kumara* (prince) Sūryyasena, a son of Viśvarūpasena, in his second regnal year. But subsequently in these inscriptions the name 'Sūryya' has been erased to make place and re-engraved there four *akṣaras* (letters) of the name of Viśvarūpa. Not only the name of the king has been changed but the titles and the mother's name of the king has also been changed. In the Madanapāḍā plate the word *niśhanka* of the title *Arirājaniśaṅkaśaṅkara* has been erased and title *Arirājavarṣabhaśaṅkara* was re-engraved. D. C. Sircar stated that there are very clear traces of these changes in the Madanapāḍā plate. The only case where the person responsible for making the changes in the writing on the plate erred is that he forgot to change *Parama-saura* to *Parama-vaiṣṇava* even after changing the name of the king. Similarly in the retouched facsimile of the Edilpur plate which exhibits the same characteristics of erasure and re-engraving the name of the issuer looks like '*kisvapa*' (Prinsep misread this as Kesava, but actually this will be Viśvarūpa). In the thirteenth verse of the same plate the mother's name of Sūryyasena has been erased and the mother's name of Viśvarūpasena was re-engraved. But why these changes have been made? D.C. Sircar has offered explanation that Sūryyasena ruled the Sena kingdom for a few years before the fourteenth year of Viśvarūpa's reign. He thinks that Sūryyasena does not appear to have been a rebel against his father's authority. He probably assumed the reigns of government when Viśvarūpasena was temporarily incapacitated from ruling owing to his being attacked by a disease like madness or arrested by some enemies. But he was reinstated on the throne as soon as he recovered or obtained his release.¹⁰⁴

The original Edilpur plate has been lost and it is not possible to determine the validity of Sircar's theory on the basis of the retouched facsimile published by James Prinsep. But the present author has closely observed the Madanpāḍā copper plate which is now being displayed in the inscriptions gallery of the Bangladesh National Museum and it seems to us that D. C. Sircar's observation is correct. The name of Viśvarūpa has been apparently re-engraved erasing three or four alphabets. The fact is clear from Verse 13 of the Madanpāḍā plate in which the mother's name of Sūryyasena, the queen of Viśvarūpasena,

has been erased but the place cannot be restored. The fact that *kumāra* Sūryasena was the son of Viśvarūpasena, whose name has been mentioned in the Madhapādā copper plate of Viśvarūpasena. If we accept Sircar's theory, it indicates that Sūryasena ruled the Sena kingdom for a few years before the fourteenth year of Viśvarūpasena's reign, who originally issued the Madanapādā and Edilpur plates and there was no existence of the name of Keśavasena in the Sena dynasty, whose name has been mentioned by the previous writers of the history of the Senas.

The Madanapādā copper plate refers to Viśvarūpasena to have defeated the *Gargga-Yavana*.¹⁰⁵ 'Gargga-Yavana' means the *Yavana* descended from Gargga sage or the mythical black *Yavana* (*Krishna-Yavana*).¹⁰⁶ The ancient Greeks were known to Indians as *Yavana*, but they are not black. Hence, black *Yavana* may indicate the Muslims who defeated and ousted the Senas from North and West Bengal. It is probable that the Senas of Vikramapura further came into conflict with the Turkish Muslims of North Bengal and Viśvarūpasena may have had some success against the Muslim power. But if we accept D. C. Sircar's theory, credit should be given to Sūryasena and not Viśvarūpasena, as his name has been erased from the Madanapādā copper plate, and the name of Viśvarūpasena was re-engraved. Probably Sūryasena may have had some success against the newly settled Muslim authority of North Bengal. Or it is more probable that the Muslim ruler made an attempt to invade South-East Bengal during the rule of Sūryasena, but it was not possible for them to capture this region due to geophysical and natural barrier as the area was well-guarded by numerous rivers. This fact may have been referred to in the Madanapādā plate as the defeat of the *Gargga Yavanas* by the Sena king.

It is interesting to note that the later Sena copper plates record *Gauḍeśvara* (the lord of Gauḍa) as the title of the kings, when the Sena kingdom was only limited in South-East Bengal. It is certain that Gauḍa was captured by the Muslims during the rule of Lakṣmaṇasena, who is stated to have taken shelter in South-East Bengal. The Mādhāinagar and Bhowal copper plates of Lakṣmaṇasena were issued after the Muslim conquest of Gauḍa, but these records refer to him as '*Gauḍeśvara*'. His son Viśvarūpasena also assumed this high-sounding title when Gauḍa was definitely under the control of the Muslims. Why did the later Sena king assume this title indiscriminately

when Gauḍa was not under their control? In this connection, A. M. Chowdhury has appropriately suggested that “this clearly shows that with the decline of their power the Sena kings felt the necessity of proclaiming their greatness with renewed vigour and the only way open to them to do so was to assume high-sounding titles. Hence very little significance can be attached to these titles.”¹⁰⁷

The Sāhitya Parishat copper plate of Viśvarūpasena refers to Kumara Sūryasena and Kumara Purūṣottamasena as donors of lands to the Brāhmaṇs. Sūryasena probably became king and ruled before the fourteenth regnal year of king Viśvarūpasena as suggested by D. C. Sircar. There is no evidence to show that Purūṣottamasena, probably the other son of Viśvarūpasena, ever ascended the throne. A king named Madhūsena is referred to in the colophon of manuscript of *Pancharakṣhā*. The king is mentioned with the title of *Parama-saugato* (devout worshiper of *Sugata* or the Buddha), *Paramarājādhirāja*, *Gauḍeśvara* and the date is mentioned as Saka Era 1211 (1289 A.D.).¹⁰⁸ Though his name ends with Sena, he was probably not a member of the Sena dynasty, as he was a Buddhist. On the other hand, the region in which he ruled cannot be determined from the manuscript. However, the successor of Lakṣmaṇasena ruled South-East Bengal at least up to 1245 A.D., and probably 1260 A.D. as it is known from the *Tabqat-i-Nāsiri*.

It is to be noted, however, that the later copper plates of Lakṣmaṇasena, and those of his successors, were not issued from Vikramapura. The Mādhāinagara and the Bhowal copper plates of Lakṣmaṇasena were issued from Dhāryagrām.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, the Madanapāḍā and the Edilpur copper plates of Viśvarūpasena were issued from the *Jayaskandhāvāra* Phālgugrāma or Phasphagrāma.¹¹⁰ Whether it is merely accidental, or does it indicate a definite abandonment of Vikramapura as the capital, it is difficult to say. At present an extensive area in the Munshiganj District is known as Vikramapura. A village called Vikramapura is referred to in the old records, but it has completely disappeared. The Phasphagrāma or Phālgugrāma and Dhāryagrāma have not yet been identified. In all probability these places were located somewhere in South-East Bengal. Some scholars have opined that the Sena kings had no fixed capital, they always lived in camps.¹¹¹ Probably the Sena kings had a number of *Jayaskandhāvāras* (camp of victory)

but Vikramapura was their main capital. Phaspagrāma and Dharyagrāma may be temporary camp of the Sena kings.

The Muslim conquest of parts of West and North Bengal weakened the Sena power. Much of their territories were lost. Their kingdom was only limited to South-East Bengal. They had lost both the power and prestige and that induced the local feudal chiefs to assert independence. Dommanapāla, a feudal king of the Senas, raised his head against Lakṣmaṇasena and established an independent kingdom in the Khāḍi District. Harikāladeva proclaimed independence in Paṭṭikerā sub-region. The Later Deva kings set up an independent kingdom in the region beyond the Meghna River. Thus the rule of the Senas dissipated from South-East Bengal.



Sujanagara Stone Inscription during the reign of Bhojavarman

References

- ¹. A preliminary account of the inscription was published in the *Dacca Review*, Vol. II, No. 4, July 1912. The article contains a preface by F. D. Ascoli, a transcript by Pandit B. B. Goswami, and an English translation by S. N. Bhadra, K. K. Sen and N. K. Bhattasali. It was then edited by R. G. Basak in the Bengali journal *Sāhitya*, 1319 B.S, pp. 382-399; R. D. Banerji, 'Belabo Grant of Bhojavarman', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. X, 1914, pp. 121-129; R. G. Basak, 'Belava Copper-plate of Bhojavarmadeva', the Fifth Year, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. VII, 1913-14, pp. 37-43; N. G. Majumdar, *Inscription of Bengal*, Vol. III, Rajshahi 1929, pp. 14-24.
- ². The plate was discovered at the village of Sāmantasār, Faridpur District. The plate is fragment, almost obliterated and only some sections have been possible to decipher. The inscription was originally edited by N. N. Vasu in the *Vaṅger Jātiya Itihāsa*, Vol. II, and pp. 215-218. Mr. Vasu gave a very indistinct photograph and a tentative reading of the inscription, according to which the grant was issued Vikramapura in the year 42 of *Parama-Vaiṣṇava, Parama-Bhaṭṭāraka Mahārājādhirāja* Harivarman. The plate was lost sight of for a long time, but later traced in Sāmantasār, a village in the Faridpur District, and purchased for the Dacca Museum. The plate was evidently burnt and has become almost illegible. The name Harivarman is quite clear, and he is said to have mediated on the feet of Jātavarman. N. K. Bhattasali, 'Two Grants of Varmans of Vanga', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXX, pp. 255-266.
- ³. The plate was discovered from the village of Vajrayogini, P.S. Munshiganj (of then Dacca District). The plate is badly corroded. Both the obverse and the reverse of the fragmentary plate contain 15 lines of writing. N. K. Bhattasali, 'Two Grants of Varmans of Bengal', *op. cit.*, pp. 259-263.
- ⁴. G. T. Marshall, 'Bhūvaneśvara Inscription of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. VI, pp. 88-97 ; Kielhorn, 'Bhūvaneśvara Inscription of Bhatta Bhavadeva', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. VI, pp. 203-207 ; N.G. Majumdar, *Inscription of Bengal*, Vol. III, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-41.
- ⁵. P. L. Paul, 'The Varmans of Eastern Bengal', *Indian Culture*, Vol. VI, No. I, July 1939, p. 57.
- ⁶. Shariful Islam, 'Unpublished Stone Inscription of the Seventh Regnal Year of Bhojavarman', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (Hum.)*, Vol. 55 (1) , 2010, pp. 113-119.
- ⁷. G. Buhler, 'The Prasati of the Temple of Lakkha Mandal at Maḍhā in Jaunsar Bāwar', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. I, pp. 10-15.
- ⁸. T. Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travel in India*, 2 Vols., London 1905, pp. 248-49.
- ⁹. R. D. Banerji, 'The Belabo Grant of Bhojavarman', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, N.S., Vol. X, 1914, p. 120.
- ¹⁰. R. C. Majumdar, *History of Ancient Bengal*, 1971, Calcutta, p. 207.
- ¹¹. R. G. Basak, 'Belava Copper Plate of Bhojavarman, the Fifth Year', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. VII, 1913-14, pp.37-43.

- ¹² E. Hultzsch, 'Brihatproshtha Grant of Umāvarman', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XII, Calcutta 1913-14, p. 4; see also E. Hultzsch, 'Komarti Plates of Chandravarman of Kalinga', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. IV, Calcutta 1896-97, p. 145.
- ¹³ E. Hultzsch, *ibid.*, p. 4.
- ¹⁴ Two kings of Kalinga, *Mahārājā* Chandravarman and *Mahārājā* Umāvarman, ruling between 350-550 A.D., issued their grant from *Simhapura*. According to *Simhalese* inscription, the two kings Nissankamalla and Sahasamalla, the second, who ascend the throne in A. D. 1200, were son of Kalinga king Goparāja of *Simhapura*. According to Mahāvamsā, Tilokasundari, queen of Vijayabāhu I (c. 1059 AD.) was a prince of Kalinga, and three relatives of her came to Ceylon from *Simhapura*. E. Hultzsch, 'Brihatproshtha Grant of Umāvarman' *op. cit.*, p. 4.
- ¹⁵ H. C. Ray, *Dynastic History of Northern India*, Vol. I, Calcutta 1931, pp. 333-334.
- ¹⁶ D. C. Ganguly, 'Origin of the Varman and the Sena Dynasty', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XII, 1936, p. 608.
- ¹⁷ R. D. Banerji, *Bāngālār Itihāsa*, Vol. I, Calcutta 1321 BS (1930), p. 276.
- ¹⁸ D. C. Ganguly, 'Origin of the Varman and the Sena Dynasty', *op. cit.*, p. 607.
- ¹⁹ P. L. Paul, 'Kalicuri Karṇa's Invasion of Bengal and the Origin of the Varmans and the Senas', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, September 1936, p. 469.
- ²⁰ Rai Bāhādūr Hirā Lāl, 'Khairha Plates Yashkarṇadeva; Kalachuri Samvat 823', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XII, p. 210.
- ²¹ F. Kielhorn, 'Bhera Ghāt Stone Inscription of the Queen Alhānādevī', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. II, Calcutta 1894, pp. 11, 15.
- ²² P. L. Paul, 'Kalicuri Karṇa's Invasion of Bengal', *op. cit.*, pp. 469-76.
- ²³ D. Brainerd Spooner (ed.), 'Paikore Pillar Inscription', *Archaeological Survey of India*, 1921-22, pp. 78-80.
- ²⁴ N. K. Bhattasali, 'Two Grants of Varmans of Bengal', *op. cit.*, pp. 259-263.
- ²⁵ R. D. Banerji (ed.), 'Rewā Inscription of Malayasimha', *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No. 23, p. 133, verse-7-8.
- ²⁶ P. L. Paul, 'Kalicuri Karṇa's Invasion of Bengal and the Origin of the Varmans', *op. cit.*, p. 474.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 473.
- ²⁸ R. G. Basak, 'Belava Copper Plate of Bhojavarman, the Fifth Year', *op. cit.*, Verse 6, pp.37-43.
- ²⁹ D. C. Ganguly, 'Origin of the Varmans and the Sena Dynasties', *op. cit.*, p. 607.
- ³⁰ R. D. Banerji, *Bāngālār Itihāsa*, *op. cit.*, p. 276.
- ³¹ R. G. Basak, 'Belava Copper Plate of Bhojavarman, the Fifth Year', *op. cit.*, verse 7, 8, pp.37-43.
- ³² The date of the death of Karṇa is not definitely known, but it must have taken place in or before 1073 A.D., the earliest known date of his successor. R. C. Majumdar, *Ancient History of Bengal*, 1971 Calcutta, p.215.

33. A. M. Chowdhury, *Dynastic History of Bengal*, Dacca, 1967, pp. 189-201.
34. K. L. Barua, *Early History of Kāmarūpa*, Shillong 1933, p. 27.
35. R. D. Banerji, 'Bāngālār Itihāsa', *op. cit.*, p. 277.
36. H. C. Ray, *Dynastic History of Northern India, Vol. I, op. cit.*, p. 335.
37. R. G. Basak, 'Belava Copper Plate of Bhojavarman, the Fifth Year', *op. cit.*, pp. 37-43.
38. R. C. Majumdar, *History of Ancient Bengal, op. cit.*, p. 204.
39. N. K. Bhattasali, 'Two Grants of Varmans of Bengal', *op. cit.*, p. 260.
40. *Ibid*, p. 269.
41. A. M. Chowdhury, 'Dynastic History of Bengal, *op. cit.*, p. 194.
42. *Ibid*, p. 196.
43. Haraprasad Sastri, *Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Parishat Patrikā*, Vol. XXVII, *illustration No. 3*.
44. N. K. Bhattasali, 'Two Grants of Varmans of Bengal', *op. cit.*, p. 257.
45. According to Haraprasad Sastri, the river was located in the Jessore District.
Haraprasad Sastri, *Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Parishat Patrikā*, Vol. XXVII, *illustration No. 3*.
46. R. C. Majumdar, *Ancient History of Bengal, op. cit.*, p. 216.
47. *Ibid*, p. 210.
48. D. C. Sircar, *Pāla-Sena Yuger Vamsānucharita*, (Bangla), Calcutta, 1982, p. 138.
49. A. M. Chowdhury, *Dynastic History of Bengal, op. cit.*, p. 196.
50. Who (Ramapala) was conciliated by the Varman king of the eastern country (i.e., of East-Bengal) for his own safety, by offering his own chariots and also his excellent elephant (force). R. C. Majumdar and R. G. Basak, *The Rāmacaritam of Sandhākaranandin*, Published by The Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi, 1939, pp. 109-110.
51. Kielhorn, 'Bhūvaneśvara Inscription of Bhaṭṭabhadradeva', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. VI, pp. 203-207; N. G. Majumdar, *Inscription of Bengal*, Vol. III, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-41.
52. R. C. Majumdar, *Ancient History of Bengal, op. cit.*, p. 210.
53. A. M. Chowdhury, *Dynastic History of Bengal, op. cit.*, p. 198.
54. R. C. Majumdar and R. G. Basak, *The Rāmacaritam of Sandhākaranandin, op. cit.*, p. 189.
55. D. C. Bhattacharya, 'More Light on Sanskrit Literature', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXII, p. 136; R. C. Majumdar, *Ancient History of Bengal, op. cit.*, p. 210.
56. D. C. Sircar, 'Bala-Valabhi-Bhūjaṅga', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXVII, pp. 80-82.
57. Referred by R. C. Majumdar, *Ancient History of Bengal, op. cit.*, p. 211.
58. N. G. Majumdar, *Inscription of Bengal*, Vol. III, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
59. *Ibid*, p. 30.
60. P. C. Acharya, *Proceeding of Indian Historical Congress, 3rd Session, 1914*, p. 287.
61. D. C. Bhattacharya, 'More Light on Sanskrit Literature', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXII, pp. 134-35 and also referred to by R. C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

- ⁶² Shariful Islam, 'Unpublished Stone Inscription of the Seventh Regnal Year of Bhojavarman', *op. cit.*, pp. 113-119.
- ⁶³ N. K. Bhattasali, 'Two Grants of Varmans of Bengal', *op. cit.*, p. 256.
- ⁶⁴ R. C. Majumdar, *History of Bengal*, Vol. I, Published by the university of Dacca', in 1943, p. 202.
- ⁶⁵ N. K. Bhattasali, 'Two Grants of Varmans of Bengal', *op. cit.*, p. 260.
- ⁶⁶ N. K. Bhattasali, *Bhāratavarṣa*, 1340 B.S., p. 674.
- ⁶⁷ Mālavadevī, the queen of Samalavarman, is mentioned in the verse 9 of the Belava grant but the meaning of this verse is not clear. Moreover, there is a controversy among the scholars about her. Haraprasād Śāstri and R. D. Banerji take her as the daughter of Jagadvijayamalla, son of Udayin, while R. G. Basak thinks that she was the daughter of Udayin. (R. G. Basak, 'Belava Copper plate of Bhojavarman', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XII, p. 42). N. G. Majumdar and D. R. Bhandarkar suggest that she was the daughter of Jagadvijayamalla, and Udayin was the son of Samalavarman by another queen. (N. G. Majumdar, *Inscription of Bengal*, Vol. III, *op. cit.*, p. 191.). Haraprasād Śāstri further identified Jagadvijayamalla and Udayin, respectively with the Paramāra king Udayāditya and his son Jagaddeva. D. C. Ganguly has supported to this view in his *History of the Paramār*, Dacca 1933, p. 141. But there are no available authentic sources to connect Mālavadevī with the above noted propositions.
- ⁶⁸ Bisweswar Chakravarty, 'The Varmans of Eastern Bengal', *Indian Culture*, Vol. VI, No. I, July 1939-40, pp. 467-470.
- ⁶⁹ According to N. G. Majumdar, 'The name Trailokyasundari is by no means uncommon. One of the queen of Vijayavāhu I of Ceylon was a princess of Kalinga, name Tilokasundari' (*Inscription of Bengal*, Vol. III, *op. cit.*, p. 18). Mahāvaiṣṇava states that Vijayavāhu married Tilokasundari of the royal family of Kalinga. N. G. Majumdar suggests that if we identify *Simhapura*, the homeland of the Varmans of Bengal, with the royal city of that name is Kalinga, it would not be unreasonable to identify Tilokasundari, daughter of Samalavarman. But there is no authentic and trustworthy ground about this reference as the Laṅkā was far away from Bengal. On the other hand the fact of *Mahāvaiṣṇava* is hardly reliable.
- ⁷⁰ N. N. Vasu, *Vaṅger Jāṭiya Itihās, Brāhmaṇ khaṇḍa*, also referred to P. L. Paul, 'The Varmans of Eastern Bengal', *Indian Culture*, Vol. VI, No. I, July 1939, p. 57.
- ⁷¹ N. G. Majumdar, 'Belava Copper Plate of Bhojavarman', *Inscription of Bengal*, Vol. III, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
- ⁷² Shariful Islam, 'Unpublished Stone Inscription of the Seventh Regnal Year of Bhojavarman', *op. cit.*, pp. 113-119.
- ⁷³ P. V. Kane, *History of the Dharmaśāstra*, 2nd Edition, Poona, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1974, Vol. III, p. 975.
- ⁷⁴ U. N. Ghoshal, *Contribution to the History of the Hindu Revenue System*, Published Calcutta University, 1929, p. 289.
- ⁷⁵ D. C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, Published by Motilal Banarsidas Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 7, p. 320.
- ⁷⁶ Sariful Islam, 'Unpublished Stone Inscription of the Seventh Regnal Year of Bhojavarman', *op. cit.*, p. 117, line 5.

- ⁷⁷ Cakra is a fatal weapon of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Bhāgvata cult followers mark their body with *cakra* symbolizes Lord Kṛṣṇa, an epithet of Vishnu. This weapon is considered as powerful as the thunderbolt of Indra, the king of gods. It is also known to as 'Sudarśana-Cakra'. It has twelve spokes and nine axles. It speeds like Garuḍa to any direction or any lokas. *Vāmana Purāna* contains the following story about the origin of *Sudarśana-Cakra*. There was a demon named Śrīdāma. He challenged Vishnu to steal his Śrīvatsa. Vishnu went to Lord Siva to get his help in killing the demon. Vishnu started worshipping Lord Śaṅkara amidst the beautiful spot of Himalaya. Being pleased by the patience of Vishnu, Śaṅkara (Siva) bestowed upon him the *Cakra* weapon. (*Vāmana Purana*, 82.25-26).
- ⁷⁸ D. C. Sircar, *Pala-Sena yugera Vamśanucharita*, Calcutta 1982, p. 181.
- ⁷⁹ N. G. Majumdar, *Inscriptions of Bengal*, Vol. III, *op. cit.*, line 39-43, p. 30.
- ⁸⁰ N. G. Majumdar has drawn our attention on the basis of Barrackpur plate about Vikramapura. The record states that '*Vikramapuropakārika-madhye-sati-somgrahemahādevi-Śrīmat-Vilāsadevī-kaṇakatūlapurūṣa-mahādāne-homkarma-dakṣiṇā...*(Line-39-40, *Inscriptions of Bengal*, Vol. III, *op. cit.*, p. 60.) To this N.G. Majumdar has added a lengthy note, suggesting that this passage makes it highly probable that Vikramapura was one of the capitals of Vijayasena. He says that 'the word *upakārikā*' means only a temporary camp for royal residence, and not a fixed palace. But the very fact that the queen performed an elaborate *tūlapurūṣa-mahādāna* within Vikramapura-*upakārikā* is itself sufficient to show that Vijayasena had something like permanent residence, and not a temporary camp at Vikramapura.
- ⁸¹ N. G. majumdar, *Inscriptions of Bengal*, Vol. III, Verse 20-21, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
- ⁸² D. C. Sircar, 'New Facts about the Senas', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXX, September 1954, No. 3, p. 209.
- ⁸³ N. K. Bhattasali, 'Two Grants of Varmans of Vaṅga', *op. cit.*, p. 261.
- ⁸⁴ The reading of the verse is controversial among the scholars. N. K. Bhattasali first read this verse as *śaṅkāsu=a-labdha-dhiyaḥ* (*Dacca Review*, July 1912, p. 144.). But R. D. Banerji read *śaṅkāsu-labdha- dhiyaḥ* (*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1914, p. 127.). R. G. Basak first read *śaṅkāsu=alaṅk=ādhipaḥ* , but subsequently changed the reading as *śaṅkāsu-laṅkādhipaḥ* ('Belava Copper Plate of Bhojavarman', *Epiraphia Indica*, Vol. XII, p. 40). But R. G. Basak's translation is not meaningful. Sten Konow in an editorial note suggests that it is an exhortation to king Bhoja to engage on some expedition. N. G. Majumdar follows Basak's second reading (*Inscription of Bengal*, Vol. III, *op. cit.*, p. 22.), but is unable to arrive at any satisfactory meaning. According to Bhattasali, the passage is hitherto unexplained but he takes this as the sense of contemporary political happenings. (N K. Bhattasali, *op. cit.*, p. 261.).
- ⁸⁵ N. K. Bhattasali, 'Two Grants of Varmans of Vaṅga', *op. cit.*, p. 262.
- ⁸⁶ R. C. Majumdar, *History of Bengal*, Vol. I, Dacca 1943, p. 212.
- ⁸⁷ The legendary event about the birth of Ballālasena is reported by Sarupa Chandra Roy in his book *Sūvarṇa Grāmer Itihāsa* (History of Sūvarṇagrāma). Jatindramohan Roy mentions this tale in his book '*Dhākar Itihāsa* (History of Dhaka); Jogendra Nātha Gupta also refers to the tale *Vikramapurur Itihāsa*, p. 235. See also N. K. Bhattasali, *Pratibhā*, 1318 B.S., pp. 462-478. The fact is referred to Rājmaya Thākura in his *Vaidyākūlapaṅji*.

- ⁸⁸ R. D. Banerji, 'The Naihati Grant of Vallālasena ; The 11th Year', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XIV, 1917, pp. 156-163.
- ⁸⁹ *Vallālacharita*, edited by Mahāmahopādhyāya Haraprasād Śāstri in the *Bibliotheca Indica Series*, Calcutta, Chapter II, p. 15.
- ⁹⁰ Chintaharana Chakravarti, 'Date of Accession of King Lakṣmaṇasena', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. III, 1927, pp. 186-89.
- ⁹¹ 1. Anulia Copper plate, 2. Govindapur Copper plate, 3. Tarpanadighi Copper plate 4. Mādhanāgara Copper plate, 5. Sundarban Copper plate, N. G. Majumdar: *Inscription of Bengal*, Vol. III, 1929, Rajshahi, 6. Saktipur Copper plate, edited by D. C. Ganguly, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXI, 1931-32, pp. 211-219; The India Office Copper plate edited by H. N. Randle, published in the *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 1-13.
- ⁹² Minhaj-us-Siraj, *Tabkāt-i-Nāsiri*, translated by Raverty, pp. 157-58.
- ⁹³ R. D. Banerji, *Bāngālār Itihāsa*, Vol. I, Calcutta 1934, (2nd ed.) p. 357.
- ⁹⁴ D. C. Sircar, *Pāla-Sena Yuger Vamśānucharit*, Calcutta, 1982, p. 121.
- ⁹⁵ *Pavanadūtām* of Dhoyi, edited by Chintaharan Chakravarty, published by the Calcutta Sanskrit Sāhitya Parisat, p. 13, Sloka 26.
- ⁹⁶ Ramaprasad Chandra, *Gauḍarājāmālā*, pp. 74-75.
- ⁹⁷ Adris Banerji, 'The Capital of the Sena kings of Bengal', *Indian Culture*, Vol. II, April 1936, No. 4, pp. 771-776.
- ⁹⁸ Minhaj-us-Siraj, *Tabakāt-i-Nāsiri*, translated by Raverty, *op. cit.*, p. 151.
- ⁹⁹ The plate was discovered in 1925, somewhere in Dhaka town and it was presented to the Calcutta Sāhitya Parisat. The plate was first published by Haraprasād Śāstri and Re-edited by N. G. Majumdar. H. P. Sastri, 'A Copper Plate Grant of Viśvarūpasena of Bengal', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. II, 1926, pp. 77-86 ; N. G. Majumdar, *Inscription of Bengal*, Vol. III, Rajshahi 1929, pp. 140-148.
- ¹⁰⁰ The plate was discovered from the village of Madanapādā under the Police Station of Koṭālipādā in Faridpur District (now Gopalganj). The plate was first published by N. N. Vasu. Subsequently it was re-edited by N. G. Majumdar and D. C. Sircar. N. N. Vasu, 'Madanapādā Plate of Viśvarūpasena', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. LXV, 1886, Part-I, pp. 6-15 ; N. G. Majumdar, *Inscriptions of Bengal*, Vol. III, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-39 ; D. C. Sircar : 'Madanapādā Plate of Viśvarūpasena', *Journal of the Asiatic Society, Letters*, Vol. XX, No. 2, 1954, pp. 209-217, See also D. C. Sircar, 'Madanapādā Plate of Viśvarūpasena', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXXIII, Part-VII, 1960, pp. 315-26.
- ¹⁰¹ James Prinsep, 'Copper plate Grant from Bākerganj', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. VII, pp. 40-51; R. D. Banerji, 'Edilpur Copper plate of Keśavasena', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, N.S., Vol. X, pp. 99-104 ; N. G. Majumdar, 'Inscriptions of Bengal', Vol. III, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-131.
- ¹⁰² D. C. Sircar, 'New Facts about the Senas', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXX, 1954, No. 3, pp. 205-218.
- ¹⁰³ D. C. Sircar, 'Madanpādā Copper Plate of Viśvarūpasena', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXXIII, 1960, p. 320.
- ¹⁰⁴ D. C. Sircar, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

- ¹⁰⁵. D. C. Sircar, 'Madanpāḍā Copper Plate of Viśvarūpasena', *op. cit.*, p. 323, Line 27, verse 17.
- ¹⁰⁶. D. C. Sircar, *Pāl-Sen Yuger Vamśānucharit*, *op. cit.*, p. 136.
- ¹⁰⁷. A. M. Chowdhury, *Dynastic History of Bengal*, Dacca 1967, p. 244.
- ¹⁰⁸. R. C. Majumdar (ed.), *History of Bengal*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, p. 228.
- ¹⁰⁹. R. D. Banerji reads doubtfully the name of the *Jayaskandhāvāra* as Dhāryagrāma. In the Bhowal plate it is again doubtful and only the 'grāma' is clearly read by H. N. Randle. (Dr. H. N. Randle, 'India Office Plate of Lakṣmaṇasena', *Epigraphia Indica*, and Vol. XXVI, p. 7). But N. G. Majumdar reads 'nirgate -khalu-Dhāryagrāma.
- ¹¹⁰. James Prinsep reads the place as Phālgugrāma. James Prinsep, 'Copper plate Grant from Bākerganj', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. VII, line 38, pp. 40-51, while N. G. Majumdar also the place as Phālgugrāma, '*Inscriptions of Bengal*', Vol. III, *op. cit.*, p. 136, line 3. But D. C. Sircar reads this as Phasphagrāma. (D. C. Sircar, 'Madanpāḍā Copper Plate of Viśvarūpasena', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXXIII, 1960, p. 323, Line 31, verse 21)
- ¹¹¹. Adris Banerji, 'The Capital of the Sena Kings of Bengal', *Indian Culture*, Vol. II, 1936, No. 4, p. 772.

Chapter - IX The Later Devas

It is not definitely known how the Sena rule came to an end. But it is almost certain that the Muslim conquest of West and North-Bengal weakened the Sena power and their kingdom was limited only in South-East Bengal. They not only lost large territories of their kingdom to the Muslim invader but they also lost their power and prestige. In this situation, the local feudal chiefs raised their heads and started to rule almost independently. As a result, the Sena kingdom of South-East Bengal started disintegrating. A line of kings with their names ending with 'Deva' made their ascendancy in the territory east of the Meghna i.e. Samataṭa, Harikāla and Paṭṭikerā sub-regions. On the other hand, another line of kings ruled in Śrīhaṭṭa area whose names also ended with 'Deva', as evidenced by the Bhāṭerā copper plates. These rulers are introduced in the history of South-East Bengal as the 'Later Devas' by majority of the present day scholars. The Senas were finally supplanted by the Later Devas those who captured their capital city Śrī-Vikramapura and ruled in South-East Bengal successively until the Muslim conquest of this region. The copper plates of the Later Deva family introduce us to the following genealogical list:

Puruṣottamadeva

Madhumathan or Madhusūdandeva

Vāsudeva

Dāmodaradeva

Daśarathadeva

Five copper plates¹ of the Later Deva family have so far been discovered from South-East Bengal, which offers us information to reconstruct the history of the Later Deva dynasty in greater details. The royal family claimed to have descended from the Moon, or in other words, they professed to have been *Chandravamśīya-Kṣatriyas*. Puruṣhottama is reported as the *ādi-puruṣa*² (progenitor) of the dynasty. It is also stated in one of the plates that he is as handsome as the moon, and he is described as a friend of the three worlds and those bathed in his fame.³ No royal epithet is attached to his name. In the Mehār copper plate, he is introduced to as a '*Deva-anvaya-grāmani*', i. e., leader of the Deva family⁴. However, this epithet clearly indicates that he was merely a *grāmani* (chief of a village or headman) and not a king.

Puruṣhottama's son, Madhumathana or Madhusūdanadeva, is called '*Deva-vamśa-odādh-īndu*', i. e. moon in the ocean of the Deva dynasty⁵. The Chittagong copper plate of Dāmodaradeva refers to him with the title of '*Nṛpati*' (king)⁶, while the Sobhārāmpur copper plate describes him as the 'lord of the world' (*Avanipati*)⁷. These titles sufficiently indicate that he was a ruler. He is credited with having 'snatched away the wealth of the enemies in war.' This may reasonably be taken to suggest that Madhumathanadeva initiated wars or was involved in wars against his enemies, probably the neighboring feudal chiefs and got some success and acquired land for carving out a kingdom for himself. He might have been a feudal chief at the beginning of his career, gradually rose to the position of a king, and thus he was the founder king of the Later Deva family of Samataṭa-Harikela sub-regions.

Vāsudeva was the son and successor of Madhumathanadeva. No historical record of this king has yet been found. But he is referred to in the records of his son and grandson. The Pākkā Murā copper plate of Daśarathadeva refers to him as '*Nṛpati* (king)⁸, while the Sobhārāmpur copper plate describes him as '*Avanipati*' (lord of the earth).⁹ These titles suggest that he was a king. In this connection, mention may be made that ancient kings of Bengal generally introduce themselves as lord of the earth, whether he was a feudal lord or independent king. Hence, it is difficult to determine the exact position of a king.

However, Vāsudeva probably inherited his father's kingdom and he was a feudal king like his father. His successor's inscriptions eulogize his military skill. The Sobhārāmpur copper plate mentions that he was a 'great archer'.¹⁰ On the other hand, the Mehār copper plate describes him as a great warrior. It is recorded in the Pākkā Murā copper plate that he was victorious over his enemies.¹¹ The Chittagong copper plate of his son states that his feet were rubbed by the forehead of princes bowing down to him in homage (*nṛpatir-yen=āpi-sevānamat-bhūmipāla-lalāta-ghṛṣṭa-charaṇa: Śrī-Vāsudeva*).¹² All these panegyrics clearly indicate that he was a skilled warrior, who was involved in or initiated wars with his enemies and got some victory over them. But the names of these enemies are not mentioned in the epigraphs. It is most likely that he extended his kingdom through fighting with his neighboring kings and imposed his authority over them, which paved the way for the rise of his son Dāmodaradeva as a powerful king in South-East Bengal. No imperial titles are attached to his name. He might have been a semi-independent king or a great feudal lord. It is interesting to note that the Mehār copper plate describes him as 'vidita-sakala-śāstraḥ' (versed in all the śāstras).¹³ Probably he had a good command in the *dharmaśāstras* (religious scriptures).

Dāmodaradeva was the son (*tasya-ātmaja*) of king Vāsudeva by his wife Mitradevī. Three full-length copper plate inscriptions of this king have so far been discovered, and the information supplied by them help us in reconstructing his history in greater details. He is also referred to in the copper plate of his son Daśarathadeva. The Sobhārāmpur copper plate is the earliest record of his reign, which was issued in his fourth regnal year, corresponding to the 1156 Saka Era (=1234 A.D.), and it follows that Dāmodaradeva ascended the throne in 1231 A.D.

No imperial titles like *Mahārājādhirāja* or *Paramabhaṭṭāraka* are attached to his name. But all of his copper plate inscriptions describe him as a powerful king. In the Chittagong copper plate¹⁴ he is called 'sakala-bhūpati-chakravarty' (overlord of all the kings). It is stated further in the same inscription that the multitude of beams of the moon-like nails of his feet flashed with the brilliance of the crest-jewels of princes bowing down (*pranatarāja-śiromaṇi*) to him and he reduced them to subjection by his wisdom (*prājñā-*

praśādita-mahādayiteśvara).¹⁵ These epithets clearly suggest that he was an independent king and he was the overlord of a number of feudal kings.

The Sobhārāmpur copper plate refers to him with the title ‘*Gajapati*’. It indicates that the king had a large and strong elephant force. The Mehār copper plate praises his minister Gaṅgādhara, who was the chief of the worthy officer in charge of the elephant column of the king Dāmodaradeva. Gaṅgādhara, the chief of the elephant force, is compared to Dārūka, the competent charioteers of Kṛṣṇa. It is stated that he is also equal to the lord of Prāgyōtiṣa (Kāmarūpa) in battle.¹⁶ The minister Gaṅgādhara, the chief of the elephant force, is described in the Chittagong copper plate as triumphant in calamitous warfare. This reference suggests that Dāmodaradeva took part in wars with the other neighboring kings. He may have initiated war with the lord of Prāgyōtiṣa in which his minister Gaṅgādhara might have had some success. It is mentioned in the same record that his (Dāmodaradeva) feet was held in adoration by the crown-heads of the defeated hostile kings. This reference apparently suggests his achievement in the battle field against enemies, although none of the names of his enemies have been mentioned in this record. Probably Dāmodaradeva had to fight against his neighboring kings; may be the king of Kāmarūpa or the Sena king of Vaṅga, to protect or consolidate his kingdom.

The Chittagong copper-plate states that king Dāmodaradeva completely removed the blackness of the world, caused by the shedding of collyrium particles from the eyes of the wives of his enemies, by his bright fame. It is further stated in the same verse that the stock of his fame was never exhausted.¹⁷ This verse may be taken as little hyperbolic, but at the same time it reflects that his fame was fairly widespread.

In the Mehār copper plate, Dāmodaradeva assumes the epithet ‘*Arirāja-Chānura-Mādhava*’.¹⁸ The editors of the plate have rightly pointed out that this *birudā* cannot but remind us of similar *birudās* assumed by Viśvarūpasena and Keśavasena in their inscriptions and applied by their three predecessors Vijayasena, Vallālasena and Lakṣmaṇasena. On the basis of this epithet, A. H. Dani has correctly suggested that Dāmodaradeva came into conflict with the Sena ruler of Vaṅga, and probably won this title for himself; or at any rate, Dāmodaradeva considered himself strong enough to assume this title in opposition to the Sena king.¹⁹

The find places of the three copper plates of Dāmodaradeva, Nāsirābād (Chittagong), Mehār (Comilla), Sobhārāmpur (Tippera), clearly indicate that he was originally the ruler of Samataṭa-Harikela regions. But he made an attempt to expand his kingdom towards Vaṅga taking advantage of the weakness of the Senas after the Muslim conquest. In this connection, it is reasonable to hold that a battle might have taken place between Dāmodaradeva and the successors of Lakṣmaṇasena. Probably he got victory over the Sena ruler and that encouraged him to assume the title following the Sena kings. But it is interesting to note that he assumes this title in the fourth year of his reign, i.e. in 1234 A.D. in the Sobhārāmpur copper plate, while the Mehār plate, issued in the year 1236 A.D., mentions only the title '*Gajapati*' and in the Chittagong copper plate dated in 1243 A.D., both these titles are dropped. Naturally a question arises: why the later records did not refer to the title '*Arirāja-Chānura-Mādhav*'? In this connection, Ahmad Hasan Dani has offered a suggestion: "Does it imply that Dāmodaradeva suffered a set-back towards the close of his reign?"²⁰ But this suggestion is probably not tenable as we see in the Pākkā Murā copper plate of his son Daśarathadeva that Dāmodaradeva performed a great festival in Gauḍa (*Gauḍamahī-mahōtsava*) towards the close of his reign. It is likely that the composers of the Mehār and the Chittagong plates were responsible for not referring to this title.

An interesting verse occurs in the Pākkā Murā copper plate of his son Daśarathadeva about the achievement of Dāmodaradeva. The record reports that 'he [Dāmodaradeva] had performed a great festival in Gauḍa and he had recovered the country from its bad condition' (*khyāto-Gauḍa-mahī-mahōtsavam-cakre-pūnaśca-śrīā.*)²¹ Dāmodaradeva did not mention in any of his own inscriptions about this great festival. Hence, it may be surmised that this festival was performed towards the close of his reign. However, on the basis of this reference, R. C. Majumdar suggests that "...he must have extended his dominion or political influence to Gauḍa towards the end of his reign, and this was undoubtedly helped by the decline of the power of the Senas."²² The first point of this proposition regarding the extension of Dāmodara's kingdom up to Gauḍa cannot be accepted on the ground that this area was then under the control of the Muslim ruler. If Dāmodaradeva would have captured Gauḍa or North and West-Bengal ousting the

Muslim ruler, Minhāj could have certainly mentioned this event. But the second point of the suggestion offered by R. C. Majumdar about the extirpation of the Sena rule by Dāmodaradeva may be considered reasonable. It is more likely that Dāmodaradeva defeated the Sena king, who held the Gauḍeśvara title, and captured the Sena's capital Vikramapura where he had performed the great festival. As he defeated or ousted the *Gauḍeśvara* Senas, the event could have been reported as '*Gauḍa-mahī-mahōtsavam*'. It is more probable that by defeating the Senas, Dāmodaradeva may have considered himself as powerful as the Gauḍeśvara Sena king and claimed himself as the master of Gauḍa, although Gauḍa was lost by the Senas before this event.

But what is the meaning of claim that Dāmodara recovered the kingdom from its worse condition? Does it indicate any political anarchy and the consequential deterioration of law and order during the rule of the later Sena kings? It may be pointed out that the Senas had lost their territories, power and prestige after the Muslim conquest of North and West Bengal. During the weakness of the central government of the Senas, the feudal chiefs may have raised their heads and declared independence, which may be taken as the cause of worsening of the law and order of the kingdom. Probably Dāmodaradeva recovered the kingdom from this instable situation and this event may be stated as '*cakre-punaśca-śrīā*' in the Pākkā Murā copper plate of Daśarathadeva.

In ancient Bengal, a king generally used to affix the same royal seal or dynastic insignia to his different official records or copper plates or coins. In this connection, we may refer to Śrīchandra, the king of the Chandra dynasty, who issued seven copper plates and all the records bear the same royal seal, the *Dharmachakra*. Dāmodaradeva issued three copper plates, but these records bear three different symbols in the seals. The seal in the Chittagong copper plate shows one person being carried by another. This clearly indicates that it is the god Vishnu riding on Garuḍa. This seal may be marked as '*Garuḍāsana-Vishnu*' (Hindu god Vishnu riding on his mount Garuḍa).

In the reverse of the Mehār plate, one can obviously figure out that the seal shows one figure fallen prostrate on the ground with the right leg drawn in and face turned up, and

the other figure sitting on the back of the fallen man, with his left holding the latter's hair and the right hand raised aloft, probably with the intention of striking. The figure bears the representation of a wrestling duel between Kṛṣṇa and the demon Chānurā. The obverse of the seal bears sunset inside crescent. Kṛṣṇa and Chānurā wrestling is related to the Vaisnava sect. The story of this fighting between Kṛṣṇa and Chānurā is referred to in the *Harivaṁśa*, *Vishnu* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.²³ According to this story, Kaṁsa invited Kṛṣṇa to Mathurā and tried to kill him. First Kaṁsa wanted to kill Kṛṣṇa with the help of the elephant, Kublayapiḍā, and subsequently through his famous wrestler Chānurā. Then each holds other by hands and Kṛṣṇa seizing Chānurā's legs and shoulder. Kṛṣṇa uplifted Chānurā with a view to throw him down to the ground which is described in the *Vishnu Purāṇa* 'kṛṣhṇony-apatayād-vīraṁ-chānurām-prīthivī-tale-uthaya-gaganam-bhūyanipatya-munisattama'. The same figure has also been depicted on the wall of Pahāḍpur monastery.²⁴ The figure is considered as a symbolic representation of Kṛṣṇa, an incarnation and epithet of Vishnu. Probably Dāmodaradeva was very much devoted to this symbol and hence he assumes the title 'Arirāja-Chāmura-Mādhava' in accordance with this Vaisnava symbol.

Another symbol appeared in the Sobhārāmpur plate of Dāmodaradeva as a royal seal. A person below seems to be on his legs and his body is being squeezed between the legs of the man above, whose right hand is raised aloft while the left is drawn at the side. The figure is not clear but it is easy to identify if someone reads carefully the opening verse of the plate. The opening verse praises the wonderful deeds performed by the nails of Vishnu's hands in tearing asunder the chest of the demon-chief Hiraṇyākasipu.²⁵ The figure, on the obverse, may be marked as *Sanḡhāri-Vishnu* (incarnation Vishnu in furious form) and a half set sun with usual rays along with a crescent appears on the reverse. Actually the official seals of Dāmodaradeva were the symbolic assemblage of different incarnations of Vishnu, Sūrya and the crescent. It is difficult to say why these different forms were adopted by Dāmodaradeva, although they point out the Vaishnava leaning of the dynasty. In this connection, mention may be made that all the names of the later Deva kings are synonyms of Vishnu. The symbols used as seals to their official records and the opening verse in all of their copper plates clearly suggest and it can be safely concluded that the later Devas were Vaishnava like the Varmans.

Daśarathadeva

The next king of the Later Deva family, who was the successor of Dāmodaradeva, was Daśarathadeva. Two of his copper plates have so far been discovered, which supply us information about him. In 1924, a copper plate was discovered from the village Ādāvāḍi in Vikramapura of Dhaka District (now Munshiganj). The plate was collected to the Dhaka Museum by N. K. Bhattasāli, who edited the plate in the Bengali journal *Bhāratvarṣa* (1332 B.S., pp.78-81). The record was badly corroded and N. K. Bhattasali deciphered it partly. However, the plate revealed first the name of a king Daśarathadeva, who issued the plate. But nothing was known from the plate about his predecessors. Even it was not known what his relationship with Dāmodaradeva was. R. C. Majumdar conjectured earlier that both Dāmodaradeva and Daśarathadeva were kings of the same dynasty, but then it was not possible for scholars to determine their exact relationship. In 1947, another copper plate of this king was discovered from the village Pākkāmūrā in Tippera District. The plate was also badly corroded and it was not deciphered completely. But the record disclosed first that Daśarathadeva was the son of Dāmodaradeva and became his successor. Another important fact is known from the record that the plate was issued from his *jayaskandhāvāra* (capital) Vikramapura, the capital of the Varmans and the Senas. This fact clearly suggests that the Senas were supplanted by the Later Deva kings, either by Dāmodaradeva or Daśarathadeva. Most of the scholars think that it was Daśarathadeva who ended the rule of the Senas from South-East Bengal.²⁶

In the Ādāvāḍi copper plate Daśarathadeva assumes a number of high-sounding titles. He is called the *Sōma-vamśa-pradīpa* (lamp of the family of the moon) as the Later Devas claimed that they descended from the moon. He is also praised with some epithets i. e., *pratipannakarna*, *satya-vrata-gāṅgeya*, *saraṇāgata-vajrapañjara*.²⁷ But it is difficult to say in what sense these phrases are applied to him. He is also introduced with the titles '*Aśvapati-gajapati-narapati-rāja-trayādhipati*'. We already know these titles from the inscriptions of Viśvarūpasena. It is most probably that Daśarathadeva assumed these titles following the Sena kings. However, these titles clearly suggest that he had a large

elephant force, cavalry and infantry and the king was the lord all of these combined forces (*trayādhipati*). King Daśarathadeva is also called ‘*Deva-anvaya-kamala-vikāśa-vāskara*’ and the epithet clearly states that he belonged to what was called the Deva family. This epithet reminds us ‘*Senakūla-kamala-vikāśa-vāskara*’ of the Sena records and probably Daśarathadeva copied the epithet following the Sena kings. Daśarathadeva also assumes the imperial titles *Parameśvara*, *Paramabhaṭṭāraka*, *Mahārājādhirāja*. These imperial titles sufficiently show that he was an independent and powerful king. His father Dāmodaradeva did not attach to any such imperial titles, and hence there is no doubt that Daśarathadeva was a more powerful king than his father. Verse 6 of the same copper plate refers to another epithet of Daśarathadeva:

Arirāja-danuj-mādhava-Śrī-Daśarathadevaḥ-śriyā-śrita |
*Śatataṁ-yaśaḥ-prakurute-kurutenājau-dviṣanma-khotthena ||*²⁸

We get another epithet of this king from the above noted verse ‘*Arirāja-Danuj-Mādhava*’. We have already mentioned that his father Dāmodaradeva assumes the title *Arirāja-Chānura-Mādhava*’ following the Sena king and Daśarathadeva assumes this epithet following his father. The later Deva kings followed the Sena titles that show Daśarathadeva came into possession of the Sena kingdom in South-East Bengal. Probably capturing the Sena kingdom and their capital Śrī-Vikramapura, he might have considered himself as strong as the Sena kings and assumed their glorious titles. An interesting fact has been referred to in the following verse of the Pākkā Murā copper plate of Daśarathadeva:

“Pūrbyaṁ-kūlaṁ-chetanasya-nrpatardoṣat-parairathirtai
Rākrāntaṁ-vikalastadaiba-sakalā-lokā-bhayādā-kulāḥ |
Śrīmānadya-mahīpatir-Daśarathadeva-dyu-devopamo
*Yatpada-praṇatāstaya-pramūditā-dharmātha-kamoditāḥ ||”*²⁹

“The peoples became very afraid of attacking eastern part of the kingdom by the enemies for an unconscious and irresponsible king. But Śrīman Daśarathadeva assumed like the

heavenly god and protected the kingdom and its administration. As a result, the kingdom was enriched in its economy and religion, people bowed down to him.”

From this reference D. C. Sircar suggests that this enemy was none but the Muslim ruler of North Bengal. The Muslim ruler probably led expedition when the Sena rule was coming to an end and the people of the country became afraid. King Daśarathadeva saved the kingdom from this situation driving out the enemy. As a result, the subjects of the kingdom were devoted to him. It apparently suggests that the Senas were supplanted by the Deva family.³⁰

D. C. Sircar's suggestion may be accepted but he did not mention the name of the Muslim ruler of Lakhnawti who may have led an expedition towards South-East Bengal. It is known from the Muslim historian that three Muslim rulers of North Bengal made attempts to expand their kingdom towards South East Bengal. They are Ghiyasuddin Iwaz, Izzuddin Balban Euzbaki and Tughral Khan. Ghiyasuddin Iwaz attacked before Daśarathadeva. On the other hand, Tugral Khan led military expedition to South-East Bengal during the closing years of his reign. Thus it is reasonable to hold that it was Izzuddin Balban Euzbaki who led military expedition towards South East Bengal during 1258-59 A.D. Sukhamaya Mukherjee suggests that Daśarathadeva defeated Euzbaki.³¹ But Minhaj reports that when Euzbaki was leading this expedition, he was informed that his capital had been attacked by Tajuddin Ārsalan Khan. Then he promptly returned to Lakhnawti abandoning this expedition.³² This fact may have been narrated by the court poet of Daśarathadeva in favor of his patron king.

It is stated to the Ādāvāḍī copper plate of Daśarathadeva that he obtained the kingdom of Gauḍa through the grace of Nārāyaṇa.³³ Gauḍa is generally indicated by North and some parts of West Bengal and then those areas were under the control of the Muslim rulers. Hence it is difficult to determine in what sense it is reported that Gauḍa was captured by king Daśarathadeva. In this connection, R. C. Majumdar has suggested that “this claim need not be regarded as a fantastic one, for it is quite likely that an enterprising Hindu ruler of Eastern Bengal occasionally raids to the Muslim domains to his neighborhood...It has to be remembered also that the Muslim rulers had to carry on several military

operations in order to consolidate their rule over the whole of Bengal, and there were occasionally internecine quarrels among them. Daśarathadeva may have taken advantage of all this to seize a part of Gauḍa (North or West Bengal).³⁴ But it was difficult for him to capture Gauḍa or some parts of North Bengal crossing the mighty river and facing the Muslim cavalry. It is more likely that Daśarathadeva captured the *Gauḍeśvara* Senas and came into possession of their kingdom of East Bengal and then he may have claimed himself to be the king of Gauḍa.

The genealogical record of Bengal (the dynastic account of Harimisra) refers to a king of South-East Bengal named Danujamādhava, who flourished after the Senas. On the other hand, Ziauddin Barani, the Muslim historian, reports about a Rājā (king) of South-East Bengal named Danuj Rāi. This Danuj Rāi and Danujamādhava may have been identical with *Arirāja-Danujamādhava-Daśarathadeva*. Barani mentions that Gyasuddin Balban, the Sultan of Delhi, led an expedition against the rebellious Tughral Khan, who took shelter at fort Nārakillā in South-East Bengal. Balban met with Danuja Rāi, the *Rājā* of Sonargaon, and entered into an agreement with him to punish Tughral. It was decided that Danuja Rāi would guard against the escape of the Tughral Khan by water, while Balban would guard the land routes. However, King Danuja Rāi played an important role so that Tughral Khan could not flee crossing the river Padma, Brahmaputra or some of their tributaries. Balban killed Tughral Khan and returned to Delhi in 1280 A. D. The date is not unsuitable for Daśarathadeva as his predecessor Dāmodaradeva ruled till at least 1243 A. D. Probably Daśarathadeva ascended the throne sometime after 1243 A.D. and ruled at least up to 1280 A. D. when Balban led an expedition against Tughral Khan.

The copper plates of Daśarathadeva were issued from Vikramapura, the capital of the Senas. The name Vikramapura is now applied to a wide area round about the modern town of Munshiganj. The name Vikramapura originated from a village called Vikramapura which existed near Munshiganj, though its exact location is not known at present.³⁵ But Barani mentions that Danuja Rāi or Daśarathadeva was the king of Sonargaon. Sonargaon is located on just opposite present Munshiganj. It occupies a strategic position as it is located close to the confluence of the river Sitalakhyā, the old

Brahmaputra and the Meghna. Probably Daśarathadeva shifted the capital from Vikramapura to Sonargaon considering its strategic position.

The genealogy of the Later Devas remains incomplete and unknown after Daśarathadeva for lack of source materials. But two copper plates discovered from Maināmati revealed the names of two other kings, whose names end with the honorable title of 'Deva' and they are also regarded as the later Deva kings by the present day scholars. The names of these two kings are Harikaladeva and Vīradharadeva.

Harikāladeva

The copper plate of Harikāladeva was discovered in 1803 while digging earth for repairing the highway through the Maināmati hills in Comilla. The plate was first published by H. T. Colebrooke³⁶ and it was re-edited subsequently by Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharyya.³⁷ The record begins with a flattering stanza of one Hedi-eba. The name of his son Śrī-Dhādi-eba and he is eulogized highly in the next three stylish verses. The plate refers to that Śrī-Dhādi-eba as the chief minister (*Śrīmān-amātya-tilaka*) of Harikāladeva and held the office of a *Mahāsvanibandhika*,³⁸ a title that is not seen elsewhere. Śrī-Dhādi-eba was the donor of the grant, who gifted 20 Dronas of land in a village named Bejakhaṇḍa in favor of a Vihāra (Buddhist monastery) dedicated to Dūrgōttara (an epithet of Buddhist goddess Tārā) built in the town of Paṭṭikerā.

The record clearly mentions the name of the ruling king and the date of its issue. The name of the king is referred to as *Raṇavaṅkamalla-Śrī-Harikāladeva*. The actual name was Harikāladeva and *Raṇavaṅkamalla* (a hero in bends of battle)³⁹ was probably his *virudā*. No imperial titles are attached to his name. He is called only *nṛpati* (king). He is admired to the extent that his white fame spread in the three worlds (*tri-jagatīm-yat-tadyaśobhiḥ-sitaiḥ-prāsāde*). It is further referred that God Indra even in his own palace came to be brought down to the earth.⁴⁰ These vague praises actually indicate nothing of historical importance. It is probable that he was a semi-independent king having no extensive dominion. But it is unfortunate that the record does not bear any genealogy of

the ruling king Harikāldeva. Hence it has not been possible to know about the other members, either his predecessors or successors. At the same time there is no reference in the record regarding the political and other activity of the king Harikāladeva. Fortunately, the date is clearly mentioned in the inscription and it is a known era. The record was issued in the *Saka* year (1204), which is the 17th regnal year of king.⁴¹ It suggests that Harikāladeva ruled for quite a long time; at least certainly for 17 years.

The inscription of Harikāladeva bears the name of an ancient kingdom, Paṭṭikerā. Colebrooke failed to decipher the important reference to the town of Paṭṭikerā which was correctly given first by N. K. Bhattasali.⁴² Ladahachandra, the Chandra king built the temple of Ladaha Mādhava near Maināmati in the area of Paṭṭikerā. In this connection reference may also be made to a manuscript of *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā* preserved in the Cambridge University Library in which it is referred that a 16-handed Chuṇḍā Buddha sculpture, dated in 1015 A.D., was found in Chuṇḍā Baḍabhavana in Paṭṭikerā (*Paṭṭikerā-Chuṇḍā-Baḍabhavane-Chuṇḍā*). This reference clearly indicates that this temple of Chuṇḍā deity was situated in Paṭṭikerā. The history of Burma refers to three kings named Ānorāthā (1044-1077A.D.), Kānjith (1086-1112 A.D.) and Ālaungshith (1112-1187A.D.). It is mentioned that on the western border of their kingdom was situated Paṭṭikerā.⁴³ A number of coins have been found in Maināmati, Tippera and Ārākān published by N. K. Rhodes and B. N. Mukherjee.⁴⁴ The obverse of the coins bears the bull. The reverse bears tripartite symbol with garlands hanging from the top of its two outside prongs. Representation of sun appears above the symbol. Both the obverse and reverse devices are placed within a circle. The legend of Paṭṭikerā is inscribed above the bull. The name Paṭṭikerā may be considered to denote a region or kingdom, and possibly these coins were issued from the kingdom of Paṭṭikerā. These coins indicate that the kingdom was prosperous and it was ruled by powerful independent king, probably the later Devas. Paṭṭikerā as a kingdom developed at the very heart of Samatāta, which came to form a *mandala* under the Chandras. Probably it lost its independent identity and merged with the kingdom of the Varmans, Senas and the Later Devas. A *pargānā* of the Comilla district, which extends up to the Maināmati hills, is called Pāṭikārā or Paitkārā. In some documents of the 18th century the Pargānā is referred to as Paitkārā. Paṭṭikerā

still survives now in the name of a village, a few miles away from the western side of Comilla on the western part of the Maināmati hill to remind us of its past glory.

It is interesting to note that some peculiar names appeared in this inscription and such names are not met with in other records of ancient Bengal. The name of the donor is Śrī-Dhādi-eba and his father's name is Hedi-eba. The name of the writer of the charter is referred to as Medini-eba. So far as we know the unique appellative 'eba' is entirely unknown to any Indian dialect. D. C. Bhattacharyya has correctly shown that the name ending with 'eba' is of Burmese origin and such 'eba' ending with names appear in Burma (now Myanmar) still today. Probably Paṭṭikerā developed a relationship with Ārākān and then some Burmese family settled in the Tippera district (present Comilla district). This fact is supported by the Burmese chronicles referred to by both D. C. Bhattacharyya and A. P. Phayre.⁴⁵

Vīradharadeva

Among the four copper plates discovered from Charpatra Muḍā at Maināmati in Comilla District two plates were issued by Ladahachandra and one by Govindachandra, and the fourth plate belongs to a local Hindu ruler named Śrī-Vīradharadeva, who issued it on the 9th day of Kārttika in the 15th year of his reign. Now the plate is being preserved in the Department of Archaeology, Bangladesh. It was published by Swapan Vikash Bhattacharjee.⁴⁶

The record opens with the name of Śrī Ladhā Mādhava (an epithet of Vishnu) and simply describes the ceremonial donation of 34 pāṭakas of land to god Vishnu for the attainment of religious merit of his parents. King Vīradharadeva donated 17 pāṭakas of land in the village of Meshvabartta and Ādhabāsa under Bāṭāgaṅgā viṣaya of Samatāṭa maṅḍala and another 17 pāṭakas in Gaṅgāmaṅḍala. The Bāṭāgaṅgā viṣaya can not be identified with certainty. Swapan Vikash Bhattacharjee, the editor of the plate, thinks that Bāṭāgaṅgā viṣaya and the Gaṅgāmaṅḍala may be the same place. Gaṅgāmaṅḍala is also found during the first phase of Hussain Shah's military conflict with adjacent kingdom of

Tippera. The conflict started when Dhana Mānikya took a policy of territorial expansion by occupying Gangāmaṇḍala, Paṭṭikerā etc.⁴⁷

Genealogy of Vīradharadeva is not recorded in the copper plate. No political activity, not even any royal epithet of the king is referred to in the inscription. Hence, it is difficult to determine the exact position of the king and his predecessors or his dynasty. The date is referred to as the regnal year of the ruling king. The plate was issued in the 15th regnal year of the king which indicates that he ruled for at least 15 years. However, it is not possible to determine his exact reign period. On paleographic ground the inscription of Vīradharadeva may be assigned to the second half of the 13th century. R. C. Majumdar suggests that Vīradharadeva is supposed to be a member of the Later Deva family, who may have assumed his power after Daśarathadeva.⁴⁸ But there is no reference in the record to support this suggestion. Probably Vīradharadeva was a local Hindu king having no extensive dominion.

Vishnucakramūdrā (wheel of Vishnu) was the royal seal of Vīradharadeva. The plate depicts the wheel of Vishnu on both the sides with a pair of conch on top of the middle. A very interesting aspect of this copper plate is that at the end of the text the emblem of a running dog is engraved. But, as far as we know that the dog was not the vehicle of any Indian deity. It is not even found in ancient sculptures, inscriptions and terracotta plaques of Bengal. So, a very pertinent question arises: why did the king Vīradharadeva affix the dog symbol at the end of his inscription? The editor of the plate comments, “the purpose of representation of a running dog at the end is intriguing and inexplicable.”⁴⁹ But the present author thinks that ancient people do not attach any symbol just whimsically. In fact, the symbol carried a deeper meaning, and it was certainly connected with their religious belief. According to Oldenberg, the ‘dog’ was the totemic clan of the people of the Rigveda.⁵⁰ But this view cannot possibly be applied to this case, especially in the early medieval period. It may be suggested here that the ‘dog’ emblem may have had some connection with the Krishna legend of the great epic *Mahābhārata*, which contains the following story related regarding the mythological and religious connection of the dog symbol:

At the end of the Kurukṣetra war, the Pāṇdavas decided to go to heaven leaving the earth. While they set out on their journey from Hastināpur, a dog accompanied them and it was closely following them. Towards the closing stage of their journey, god Indra stood in front of them in his embodied form. The god advised Yudhishṭhira to abandon the dog. At this, the Pāṇdavas king Yudhishṭhira replied, “The dog is exceedingly devoted to me. It seeks my protection. My heart is full of compassion for him. So, it should go with me.” Indra further says that “there is no place in Heaven for a person with a dog. As the dog is an unholy or impure animal, the deities do not like it. Whatever gifts or sacrifices are seen by the dog, they are taken away by the deities. The ultimate result is that you would fail to attain Heaven if you stay with the dog. As Heaven is a source of all kinds of happiness, there you don’t need a dog and it should be abandoned.” Yudhishṭhira further replied, “It is infinitely sinful to give up a devoted one. It is equal to a sin that one incurs by slaying a Brahman. Hence, O great Indra, I will not abandon this dog for my happiness! I will never give up a person that is terrified, or one that is devoted to me, or one that seeks my protection. I will never give up the dog so long I will survive in this earth.” Hearing these words of king Yudhishṭhira, Devarāja (king of the deities) Indra disappeared. Then the dog transformed itself into Bhagavān Krishna and said with his sweet voice, “I was coming with you in the guise of a dog to examine you. I am pleased with you very much for your kindness to all creatures, even a small dog. There is no one in the Heaven that is equal to you. O king of the kings, now take this celestial car (*devaratha*) and go to Heaven.”⁵¹

Remembering this legendary event from the Mahabharata, king Vīradharadeva might have considered the ‘dog’ a symbolic representation of god Krishna, an epithet of Vishnu. It is interesting to refer that the dog emblem has been associated with the *cakra* (discus) and *shankha* (conch shell), which are also considered as the symbolic representations of Vishnu. Hence, the dog symbol may have a connection with the Vaisnava sect. It is confirmed from the record of Vīradharadeva that he is a Vaisnava king, as the record opens with the name Śrī-Ladaha Mādhava (an epithet of Vishnu). The Vaisnava king may have considered that the dog is a symbolic representation of Vishnu.

This idea gets further confirmation from the Sujānagara⁵² stone inscription of Bhojavarman in which a dog symbol is engraved at the end of the text as the Varmans were Vaisnava kings.

Dāmodaradeva started to rule independently in the Samataṭa-Harikela sub-regions and subsequently his son Daśarathadeva captured eastern part of Vaṅga including the Sena capital Śrī-Vikramapura supplanting the Sena dynasty. But it is not known how and when their dynasty came to an end. Harkāladeva established a semi-independent kingdom in Paṭṭikerā, while Vīradharadeva ruled Samataṭa or areas contiguous to Devaparvata, probably after Daśarathadeva. But the position these two kings still remains obscure as nothing is reported in their copper plates about their ancestors or other activities. Thus we may conclude that there was a political disintegration after the rule of the Senas in South-East Bengal. This disintegration probably welcomed foreign invasion and subsequently the region was conquered by the Muslim rulers which marked the end of Hindu-Buddhist rule in Bengal.

The same disintegrating forces may be seen in the north-eastern part of the Sena Empire, where we find evidence of independent or semi-independent rulers as in the Śrīhaṭṭa area.

Later Deva kings of Śrīhaṭṭa (Sylhet)

In 1872-73, two inter connected copper-plates were discovered at the village of Bhāterā in the district of Sylhet. The plates were found from the ruins of a fort on a hillock or *tilā*. Now the plates are being preserved in the Indian Museum, Kolkata. However, the facsimile impression of the plates were sent to Rajendra Lala Mitra, the then Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. The copper plates were transcribed by Pandita Rama Vai and her brother Srinivasa Sastri and the records were published by Rajendra Lala Mitra with a short note, English translation and facsimiles in the proceedings of the Asiatic Society.⁵³ Next the plates were discussed by Pandita P. N. Bhattacharya and K.M. Gupta in the periodical press of Sylhet and Calcutta. K. M. Gupta further re-edited one of the plates in the *Epigraphia Indica*.⁵⁴

However the records disclosed a line of kings with their names ending with 'deva', who ruled in Śrīhaṭṭa region. The first plate was issued by Kesavadeva and the second grant was issued by Īsānadeva. In the Bhāterā copper plate no. I, the royal pedigree commence from Navagirvvān and ends with Rājā Keśavadeva, while in the second plate the genealogy starts from Goṅgunādeva and ends with Rājā Īsānadeva. Both the plates refer that this royal family belonged to the famous lunar dynasty. However, the records introduce us to five generations of kings, represented by the following genealogical list:

Navagirvvān

Goṅgunādeva

Nārāyaṇadeva

Keśavadeva

Īsānadeva

Navagirvān

He is mentioned as the first king of the dynasty revealed by the Bhāterā copper plate of Keśavadeva. According to *Haṭṭanāther Pāchāli*, the traditional record of Sylhet, Navagirvān father's name was Bhūṭāvibhūvantadeva,⁵⁵ who was also a king. It is mentioned in the *Haṭṭanāther Pāchāli* that how he was named as Navagirvān. 'Nava' means 'new' and 'gīrvān' means 'whose arrow is speech'. According to this tradition, king Bhūṭāvibhūvantadeva, the father of Rājā Navagirvān, was deprived of the power of speech, but his son was endowed with the power of speaking very fluently. So, the prince was named Navagirvān. His epithet was '*kharavān*' meaning 'sharp in throwing arrows'. Probably he was a proficient warrior and an adept archer. In the Bhāterā plate no. I, he is reported as the cause of the existence of Kamala (Lakṣmī or prosperity) of the kingdom of Śrīhaṭṭa.⁵⁶ It is also stated in the same plate that he was the best among the rulers (*khmābhūjā-śreṣṭhaḥ*).

Goṅgunādeva

Navagirvān's son Goṅgunādeva was the grandfather of the ruling king Keśavadeva. It is stated in verse 5 of the Bhāterā copper-plate no. I that his prowess is like the rays of the sun (*yaśya-pratāp-ārka-rucho-api*) imposed inactivity on the kings among his enemies. In verse 3 of the Bhāterā copper plate of Īśānadeva or plate no. II, Goṅgunādeva is reported as *bhūmipāla* (king). He is also described as the ornament of the world, with glittering fames from his very rise and the wishing tree (*kalpadrūmo*) for the supplicant's viz. the circle of warrior who solicited wealth from him.⁵⁷

Nārāyaṇadeva

The next ruler of the dynasty is Nārāyaṇadeva, who is introduced to as a *Mahīpati* (king). It is stated that he raised the goddess of fortune from the ocean of the hostile king violently stirred by his arms (which were) like the Mandara (mountain), just like (god) Nārāyaṇa, who obtained Lakṣmī as a result of the churning of the ocean with the Mandara Mountain.⁵⁸ He is also eulogized in the Bhāṭerā copper plate no. II that king Nārāyaṇadeva was a distinguished warrior. In verse 6 of the same plate, he is introduced us as an ornament of the world, with full splendors and celebrated fames. He is also reported to be the abode of qualities (*nidhinām-bhavanām-guṇanām*), the paragon of heroism, the receptacle of modesty and the ocean of goodness.⁵⁹

Kesavadeva

Nārāyaṇadeva's son was Keśavadeva, the ruling king, who issued the Bhāṭerā copper plate no.1. He is eulogized highly in both the Bhāṭerā copper plates. His copper plate refers to him as '*Ripurāja-gopi-Govinda-iti-ajani-Keśavadeva-esah*'. The phrase may conveniently be broken up into two distinct but inter-related parts: (i) *Ripurāja-gopi-Govinda-iti* and (ii) *ajani-Kesavadeva-esah*, meaning that the king Keśavadeva is here regarded as having been equal in might of Govinda (lord Kṛṣṇa), the destroyer of enemies.⁶⁰ But the copper plate of his son introduces him with the name '*Ripurāja-gōpi-Govinda-vīra*'.⁶¹ This phrase may be taken to mean the brave master of the leader of the enemies as Kṛṣṇa was the lord of milkmaids of Vṛndāvana. From both the copper plates the expression '*Ripurāja-gōpi-Govinda* or *Ripurāja-gōpi-Govinda-vīra*' seems to have been a second name or *Virudā* of Keśavadeva. The name Keśavadeva with his laudatory adjective '*Ripurāja-gōpi-Govinda*', in short, is taken as '*Govinda-Keśavadeva* or *Gopi-Govinda*'.⁶² In this connection, mention may be made that the Sena kings assumed the same type of epithets. Reference may be made to the title '*Arirāja-Vṛṣabha-Saṅkara*' and '*Arirāj-niṣaṅka-Saṅkara*' etc. The same type of epithet was also assumed by Daśaratha and Damodaradeva. Reference may be made to the titles like '*Arirāja-Chānura-Mādhava*' and '*Arirāja-Damuja-Mādhava*' etc. Probably Keśavadeva followed the Sena

and the Later Deva kings. Most probably the predecessors of Keśavadeva were the feudal kings under the Senas. After the fall of the Senas, the powerful feudal kings raised their heads and proclaimed independence. It is most likely that after the fall of the Senas, Keśavadeva declared independence and felt powerful enough to assume the titles like the Sena kings, as though, he wanted to expose himself as powerful as the Sena kings.

Govinda Keśavadeva is also introduced in the copper plate of his son with another epithet, 'Drūmanātha', meaning the 'moon'. At the beginning of the Bhāṭerā copper plate, it is stated that the royal family belonged to the famous lunar dynasty. In this sense, he may have been called 'Drūmanātha' (moon), referring to their dynastic origin. He is further described as 'Haṭṭanātha' (lord of Śrīhaṭṭa).⁶³ This is corroborated by the local tradition of Śrīhaṭṭa entitled as *Haṭṭanāthera Pānchāli*.

It is reported in the Bhāṭerā copper plate no. II that Govinda Keśavadeva was a powerful king, who maintained a large army. The record mentions that this supreme sovereign king had innumerable war-boats, infantry and elephants.⁶⁴ His army is stated to have comprised 243 elephants, 243 war-boats, 726 horses and 1215 infantry. The commander Viradatta is mentioned with the title 'Pritānādhinātha'.⁶⁵ King Gopi-Govinda-Keśavadeva is praised in the Bhāṭerā copper plates for his success in the battle fields. It is referred to as having illuminated all the directions by the skillful swaying of his sword adorned with totally vanquished kings;⁶⁶ he engaged in warfare, defeated many kings and protected his kingdom.⁶⁷ His military achievements are highly praised in a verse that runs as follows:

“By the ruler of the earth, with sword in hand, of unparalleled valour, with an army of elephant riders, was the whole of the earth conquered just as (it was conquered) by his fame that like the rays of the laughing moon crossed many seas in long strides”.⁶⁸

Shorn off the poetical flourish and the exaggeration of the court poet, this verse may be taken to indicate that he initiated wars with his neighboring feudal chiefs, defeated and subjugated them. As a result, it was possible for him to extend the boundaries of his kingdom. Though he did not assume any imperial titles like *Mahārājādhirāja* or *Paramabhaṭṭāraka*, he was the overlord of a number of feudal chiefs. It is reported in his

inscription that his footstool is decorated with the crown-jewels of kings, who were illustrious and prominent among kings.⁶⁹

Raja Govinda-Keśavadeva was a versatile genius. His outstanding qualities are described in verse 8 of the same plate. It is referred that he is the abode of fame, refuge of riches, the abode of knowledge, the shelter of diplomacy, the abode of liberality, the pressure house of eloquence, the seat of goodness.⁷⁰ His fame and reputation is also described allegorically in verse 13 of his copper plate inscription in which his fame is compared with the bright moon, who illuminated the world, hampers the growth of enemy lotus. Though exaggeration, it may be taken to suggest that he was a famous king in the eastern countries having possessed various qualifications.

Bhāṭerā plate no. II of his son reports that king Gopi Govinda Keśavadeva performed *Tūlāpuruṣa-dāna*⁷¹ sacrifice and distributed gold equivalent to his own body weight among learned Brahmans. The fact is supported by the archaeological remains of the capital of the Bhāṭerā kings. Umesh Chandra Chowdhury has shown that there is a ruined hillock called *Homer-tilā* (hillock of sacrifice) beside the find place of the Bhāṭerā plates. This place marks the spot where King Govinda Keśavadeva performed sacrificial rites.⁷² This king also built a high stone temple of God *Kaṁśanisūdana* (Kriṣṇa, an epithet of Vishnu) and this is reported in the copper plate of his son. It suggests that the Bhāṭerā kings were devoted Vaiṣṇavas.

According to the local tradition, it is conjectured that Govinda-Keśavadeva is identical with Gauragovinda of North Sylhet who was defeated by Shāh Jālāl in 1384 A.D. But there is no scope to prove this tradition. The date mentioned in the copper plate of Kesavadeva has given rise to controversy among scholars about its reading. The date of the first document is given according to *Pāndava-kūlapāl=ābda* followed by four numerals. The date of the copper plate of Kesavadeva is given in the era of the first of the Pandavas, i. e., the era of Yudhishtira. Pandita Rama Bai and her brother Srinivasa Sastri, who first deciphered the plates, read the date as 2928, while Rajendra Lal Mitra⁷³ read the numerals as 4328 corresponding to 1245 A.D. But K. M. Gupta puts the date at

1049 A.D.⁷⁴ The Yudhishṭhira era is counted by deducting 3102 B.C. (the beginning of the Kali Era). It is not possible to exactly determine the date of the Bhāterā kings. Considering the tradition of the *Haṭṭanāthera Pānchālī*, the archaeological remains, and the orthography of the language and the paleography of the inscriptions may approximately be taken to indicate that the kings of the *Śrīhaṭṭarājya* (kingdom of Śrīhaṭṭa) flourished during the middle of the 13th century. The view of Rajendra Lal Mitra regarding the date of the Bhāterā copper plate may be given some credence.

Īsānadeva

Īsānadeva, the son and successor of Govinda Keśavadeva, issued the Bhāterā copper plate no. II. It is stated in the inscription of Īsānadeva that he was the son of Keśavadeva as the Kārtikeya was the son Siva. He is called *bhū-ḥṣitipāla* (lord of the earth) and the real umbrella (*chatra* or shelter) of the monarchs of the earth.⁷⁵ Though verbose in nature, it may indicate that he was a semi-independent king like his father, who also was an overlord of a number of small feudal chiefs. He also maintained a large army like his father consisting of foot soldiers, cavalry, war-chariots, elephants and war-boats (*naubāṭakas*).⁷⁶ Like his father, Īsānadeva was a *vaiṣṇava* and he built a lofty temple for *Madhukaiṭabhāri* (an epithet of Vishnu) and he granted lands for the maintenance of the temple. He issued the Bhatara copper plate No. II in his 17th regnal year. It indicates that he ruled for at least 17 years.

After Īsānadeva the history of the dynasty is not known. The dynasty continued apparently for five generations after which it became extinct, possibly due to Muslim invasion of the area. Or it may be that the last member of the line, Īsānadeva, died without leaving an issue and the dynasty naturally came to close.⁷⁷

When the Bhāterā copper plates were published, the Bhāṭṭapāṭaka (capital of the Bhāterā kings) kings were regarded as sovereign rulers of Cāchār. Some scholars conjectured that they may have had connection with the kings of Āgartala. But Umesh Chandra Chowdhury does not subscribe to this view. According to him, the people who now go by the name of Cāchāries were originally settled in the Brahmaputra valley. Driven by the rising Ahom rulers, they betook themselves to Dimapur about 1531 A.D. Being still hard

pressed by the Ahoms, they moved on to Maibong and then finally to the vast plain of Cachar, where they established their new home. They were a community of uncultured hill-people having no alphabet whatsoever and as yet entirely uninfluenced by Sanskrit language and Hindu culture. It thus appears that the kings of the Bhāterā copper plates were far too separated from each other in point of time by three or four centuries to be sure to allow us to accommodate any theory as to their being mutually related.⁷⁸

Regarding the Āgartala kings, Umesh Chandra Chowdhury has furnished the reason that the Āgartala kings originated from the Shan States of Northern Burma (now Myanmar). They entered Assam for the first time in 1228 A.D.; sometime during the 14th century some branch of them crossed the North Cachar hills and passing the Lushai and the Chittagong hills, settled at Āgartala.⁷⁹ This branch was converted to Hinduism in the 16th century. They now changed their original family title of Phān into Mānikya. Therefore, it seems implausible that the kings of the Bhatara plates had any family link either with the kings of Cachar or of Āgartala.⁸⁰

The Bhāterā copper plates were discovered from the ruins of a fort on a hillock or *tilā*. Brick structures and huge scattered brick bats appeared all around the place. There are two big tanks nearby. Towards the north of the hill-fort, within half a mile, there is a smaller hillock which goes by the name of *Homer tilā* (the mound for the performance of the *homa* rites). About two miles to the north of *Homer tilā*, there is another hillock called *Darbāri tilā*, where the royal personages of Bhaṭṭapāṭaka (the capital of the Bhāterā kings) used to sit with their courtiers. Thus it is likely that the find place is actually the ruins of the capital of the Bhaṭṭapāṭaka kings, which is now located in the northern corner of Sylhet town. Hence it is almost certain that the kings of the Bhāterā copper plates were the local rulers of Śrīhaṭṭa having no extensive dominion.

The predecessors of Govinda Keśavadeva were probably feudal lords. But during the weakness of the Senas, Keśavadeva became powerful, revolted and declared independence. He carved out an independent kingdom for himself defeating the neighboring feudal chiefs. This independent position was maintained by his son and

successor Īsānadeva. But the Muslim invaders conquered their territory and the Hindu rule came to close in *Śrihaṭṭarājya*.

References.

- ¹ . Three copper plates of king Dāmodaradeva are discovered from Nasirābād (Chittagong), Mehār (Comilla) and Sobhārāmpur (Tippera). Two copper plates of king Daśarathadeva are discovered from Ādavāḍī (Vikramapura in Dhaka District, now in Munshiganj) and the Pākkā Muḍā copper plate (TiperaDistrict). All these copper plates have been published.
- ² . B. M. Barua and P. B. Chakravarty, 'Mehār Plate of Dāmodaradeva', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXVII, October 1947, p. 184.
- ³ . *Yad-vamśa-prabhava=indu-sundara-yashonidhi-loka-trayi-vandhu*. 'Chittagong Copper Plate of Dāmodara', verse 3, N. G. Majumdar, *Inscription of Bengal*, Vol. III, Rajshahi (1929), p. 160.
- ⁴ . Ahmad Hasan Dani, 'Sobhārāmpur Plate of Dāmodaradeva, Saka 1158', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXX, p. 185.
- ⁵ . *Ibid*, line 9, p. 187.
- ⁶ . N. G. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 159.
- ⁷ . Ahmad Hasan Dani, *op. cit.*, p. 185.
- ⁸ . D. C. Sircar, *Shilālekha Tāmra Śāsanādīra Prasāṅga* (Bangla), Sāhityaloka, 32/7, Bidon Street, Kolkata(1982), p. 165.
- ⁹ . Ahmad Hasan Dani, *op. cit.*, line 10, p. 187.
- ¹⁰ . *Ibid*, line 11, p. 187.
- ¹¹ . D. C. Sircar, *op. cit.*, p. 165.
- ¹² . N. G. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 160.
- ¹³ . B. M. Barua and P. B. Chakravarty, *op. cit.*, verse 4, line 7, p. 187.
- ¹⁴ . N. G. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, verse 4, line 10-11, p. 160.
- ¹⁵ . *Ibid*, verse 4, p. 160.
- ¹⁶ . Thus runs the verse as follows: *Yathā-Mātāliḥ-devendrasya-khyātaḥ-vārāḥ-yanta=ābhut-tat-tūlyah-eva-Krisnasya-Dārukavat-Nalasya-Varṣaneya-lilādharah-samare-Prāgyotiṣhendr-opamaḥ-asya-nṛipateḥ-vārāna-ghaṭa-satpatra-mukhyaḥ-esah-kriti-Śrī-GaṅgādharaDevāḥ-abhavat*. D. C. Sircar translates this verse in the following words: "Just as Mātāli was the famous (and) excellent charioteer (Yanta) of the lord of the gods, exactly like him this illustrious GaṅgādharaDevā, who is competent, who is like Krishna's(yenta) Dāruka, who resembles Nala's (Yanta) Varsheneya, who is an equal to the lord of Prāgyotiṣa in battle (and) who is the chief of the worthy officers in charge of the elephant columns of the king, was his famous (and) excellent rider (Yanta)." D. C. Sircar, 'Mehār Plate of Dāmodaradeva; Saka 1156, Regnal year 4', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXX, p. 52.
- ¹⁷ . *Yasodaya-yaso=ujjvalena-bhūvanam-niṣkālīkam-kurvata-satru-strijana-lochananjana-kana-saram-na-tatsesitam* N. G. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 162.
- ¹⁸ . B. M. Barua and P. B. Chakravarty, *op. cit.*, verse 5, line 7-8, p. 187.
- ¹⁹ . Ahmad Hasan Dani, *op. cit.*, p. 186.
- ²⁰ . *Ibid*, p. 186.

21. D. C. Sircar, *Śilālekha o Tāmraśasanādīra Prasāṅga*, (Bangla), Sāhityaloka, 32/7, Bidan Street, Kolkata, 1982, p. 166.
22. R. C. Majumdar, *Ancient History of Bengal*, Calcutta (1971), p. 276.
23. *Harivaṁśa*, chapter 63, *Vishnu Purāṇa*, chapter 20, *Bhagavata Purāṇa*, pp. 43-44.
24. K. N. Dikshit, 'Excavation at Pahadpur', *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No. 55.
25. A. H. Dani, *op. cit.*, p. 185.
26. D. C. Sircar, *Śilālekha o Tāmraśasanādīra Prasāṅga*, (Bangla), *op. cit.*, p. 167; R. C. Majumdar, *Ancient History of Bengal*, Calcutta (1971), p. 276.
27. N. K. Bhattasali, 'Daśarathadever Ādāvāḍi Tāmralipi', *Bhāratavarṣa*, 1332 B. S. line 4-5, pp. 78-81.
28. D. C. Sircar, *Śilālekha o Tāmraśasanādīra Prasāṅga*, (Bangla), *op. cit.*, verse-8, p. 166.
29. *Ibid*, verse-8, p. 166.
30. *Ibid*, p. 167.
31. Sukhamaya Mukherji, *Bāṅglār Itihās*, 1204-1576 B.S., (Bangla), Khan Brothers and Co., Dhaka 2000, p. 106.
32. Minhaj-us-Siraj, *Tabakāt-i-Nāsiri*, Translated by Raverty, H. G., Reprint New Delhi 1970, p. 159.
33. N. G. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, line 4, p. 181.
34. R. C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 276.
35. *Ibid*, p. 277.
36. H. T. Colebrooke, 'Copper plate of Harikāladeva', *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. IX, 1807, pp. 401-6.
37. D. C. Bhattacharyya, 'The Maināmati Copper plate of Raṇavaṅkamalla Harikāladeva (1141 Saka)', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. IX, March 1933, pp. 282-89.
38. *Aśvanibandhika* literally means a groom, while Colebrooke takes it to mean 'a general commanding the cavalry; but *Mahāśvanibandhika* who happens also to be the chief minister (*amatya-tilaka*) probably denotes here a civil officer in charge of the Royal Horse.
39. 'Raṇavaṅkamalla' is taken as an incorrect form of 'raṇaraṅgamalla'. Raṇavaṅka occurring in two different places in this plate yields a good sense 'bends or crooked turns of battle. D.C. Bhattacharyya, *op. cit.*, p. 288.
40. *Kṣonindra-cūḍamaṇes=tasya –ŚrīRaṇavaṅkamalla-nṛipater-lilāpi-lokottar=ākramadbhir-itastatas-tri-jagatim-yat-tad-yasobhiḥ-sitaiḥ-praśāde-pini-je-sahasranayano-jatavaninamitah||*
D.C. Bhattacharyya, *ibid*, p. 287.
41. *Raṇavaṅkamalla-Śrī-Harikāladeva-pādanām-saptadaśa-samvatsare-bhilikhyamane-yatrankenapi-samvat 17-sūrya-gatya-phālguna-dīne 26*, D. C. Bhattacharyya, *ibid*, line 23-24, p. 287.
42. N. K. Bhattasali, *Dacca Review*, 1921-22, p. 142.
43. Foiz Ahmed, 'Coins of Paṭṭikerā of Samatāṭa', *History-Culture and Coinage of Samatāṭa and Harikela*, Volume-I, edited by Jahar Acharjee, Āgartala (2010), India, p. 110.
44. B. N. Mukherjee, 'Some observations on the Coins of Paṭṭikedā or Paṭṭikerā', *Journal of the Varendra Research Museum*, Vol. 4, pp. 19-25.
45. A. P. Phayre, *History of Burma*, pp. 49-50.
46. Swapan Vikash Bhattacharjee, 'Maināmati Copper Plate of Viradharadeva', *Journal of the Ancient Indian History and Culture (Calcutta)*, 14, pts. 1-2, 1983-84, pp. 17-28; See also *Journal of the Asiatic*

- Society of Bangladesh*, Hum. Vol. 39, No. 2, December 1994, pp. 71-75 ; Rashid , M. Harunur, 'Maināmati Inscriptions', Plate 11.17, in the *Hakim Habibur Rahman Commemoration Volume* edited by Enamul Haque.
- ⁴⁷ M. R. Tarafdar, *Hussain Shahi Bengal*, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, p. 53.
- ⁴⁸ R. C. Majumdar, *Bāngālār Itihās* (Prachin Juga), (Bangla), Calcutta 1972, p. 170.
- ⁴⁹ Swapan Vikash Bhattacharjee, 'Maināmati Copper Plate of Vīradharadeva', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh*, Hum. Vol. 39, No. 2, December (1994), p. 72.
- ⁵⁰ D. N. Oldenberg was quoted in Majumdar, 'Races and Culture of India', New Delhi, 1993, p. 359. Also see, Vedic Index, Vol. II, pp. 121, 378.
- ⁵¹ Vyāsa Krishna Dawipāyana, *Mahābhārata*, Mahāprasthānika Parva, Translated into English prose from the Original Sanskrit text by Pratap Chandra, Vol. XI, pp. 269-75.
- ⁵² Shariful Islam, 'Unpublished Stone Inscription of the Seventh Regnal Year of Bhojavaman', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh* (Hum.), Vol. 55 (1), 2010, pp. 113-119.
- ⁵³ Rajendra Lala Mitra, 'Copper plate Inscription from Sylhet', *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, (August 1880), pp. 140-153.
- ⁵⁴ K. M. Gupta, 'The Bhāterā Copper plate of Keśavadeva', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XIX, p. 289.
- ⁵⁵ K.M. Gupta, *Copper-plates of Sylhet*, Vol. I, published Lipika Enterprises Ltd., Sylhet (1967), p. 193.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid*, verse 4, p. 161.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid*, verse 3, p. 187.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid*, verse 6, plate I, line 8-9, p. 163.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid*, verse 5, plate 2; line 7-8, p. 187.
- ⁶⁰ Umesh Chandra Chowdhury, 'Some Observation on Two Copper plate Grants from Bhāterā, Sylhet District, Assam', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, letters*, Vol. VI, 1940, p. 77.
- ⁶¹ K. M. Gupta, *op. cit.*, verse-3, line 5, p. 187.
- ⁶² *Ibid*, p. 197.
- ⁶³ *Ibid*, line 29, plate I, p. 162.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 190.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid*, Bhāterā copper plate II, line 28-29.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid*, The Bhāterā copper plate I, verse 12, p. 163.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid*, the Bhāterā Copper plate I, verse 9, p. 162.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid*, the Bhāterā Copper plate no. I, verse 16, p. 169.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid*, the Bhāterā Copper plate no. I, verse 7, p. 162.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid*, verse 8, plate I, p. 162.
- ⁷¹ It is mentioned in the Purāṇas that Satyabhāmā, wife of Krishna, distributed gold equivalent to his own body weight among learned Brahmans. Following this Purāṇic event, the ancient kings of Bengal, especially the wife of the kings, used to perform *Tūlāpuruṣa-dāna* sacrifice. In this connection, reference may be made that Vilāsadevī, the queen of Vijayasena, performed *Tūlāpuruṣa-dāna* sacrifice in Vikramapura.
- ⁷² Umesh Chandra Chowdhury, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

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- ⁷³ . Rajendra Lala Mitra, 'Copper plate Inscription from Sylhet', *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, August 1880, pp. 140-153.
- ⁷⁴ . K. M. Gupta, 'The two Bhāṭerā Copper plates', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XIX, p. 280
- ⁷⁵ . K. M. Gupta, *op. cit.*, the Bhāṭerā Copper plate no. II, verse 12, p. 190.
- ⁷⁶ . *Ibid*, the Bhāṭerā Copper plate no. II, verse 13, p. 190.
- ⁷⁷ . It appears from the Bhāṭerā copper plate inscription no. II that Īśānadeva had a childless elder brother (sthaviraḥ-putrasūnyaḥ) and that he had another brother who pre-deceased him leaving a widow and a son (*Ibid*, the Bhāṭerā Copper plate no. II, line-27-28, p. 191). No record has yet been discovered of this fatherless child. Perhaps even before he grew up to manhood the whole country was engulfed by the Muhammadan invasion.
- ⁷⁸ . Umesh Chandra Chowdhury, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
- ⁷⁹ . E. A. Gait, *History of Assam*, pp. 242-43.
- ⁸⁰ . Umesh Chandra Chowdhury, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

Chapter X

Southeast Bengal and the Neighbouring Areas

(6th to 11th century AD)

Regionalism dominated the history of Bengal after the fall of the Gupta Empire. There rose a number of independent powers. Gauḍa, Vaṅga, Samatāṭa, Pundra emerged as distinct regional and political entities. Though Vaṅga-Samatāṭa-Harikela sub-regions was well-guarded by its numerous rivers which made this region rather safe from external invasion, they intervened political affairs of Gauḍa or Pundra with the growth of political powers. On the other hand, the mountainous Kāmarūpa region was incorporated in the geo-political network of interaction of South-East Bengal. With the growth of political power these two neighbouring regions time to time took aggressive policy and came into conflict. Ārākān is also contiguous to Samatāṭa-Harikela region and their each other relation should be taken into consideration discussing the history of South-East Bengal. So, an attempt may be made in the following pages to reconstruct the relation between South-East Bengal with the neighbouring areas.

Relation between South-East Bengal and Gauḍa:

The Gauḍas destroyed the rule of the Imperial Guptas from west and north Bengal and formed an extensive kingdom under the powerful king Śaśāṅka. No coin of Śaśāṅka was found in the past from North and South-East Bengal. Three copper plates and some gold coins of this king were discovered from West Bengal, especially from Midnapur District and Orissa. On the basis of the provenance of these materials, scholars in the past thought that South-East Bengal was not included within the kingdom of Śaśāṅka. But recently one gold coin of this king has been published by B. N. Mukherjee and Jahar Acherjee¹

and this gold coin was discovered from southern Tripura, the core territory of the ancient kingdom of Samatāṭa. Now the coin is preserved in the Rājendra Kīrtishālā Museum of Tripura. There are more three same type of unpublished gold coins are preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum which were discovered from Comilla district in 1973 and 1975. However, these gold coins demand a fresh assessment of Śaśāṅka's dominance in Vaṅga-Samatāṭa region.

First, we need to examine the characteristics of these coins. On the obverse, the coins bear symbol of Siva on bull and on the reverse the figure of *padmāsana* Lakṣmī. To the left side of the head of Lakṣmī, there is the legend “Śrī Śrī Śaśāṅka” in Brāhmi script. At the bottom ‘*jaya*’ is mentioned in Brahmi alphabet. It is interesting to note that one such coin bears ‘*vijaya*’ in place of ‘*jaya*’ legend. The coin was found from Comilla in 1973 and preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum bearing the accession no. 73. 1795. Mention may be made that the normal coin of Śaśāṅka has no dots but these coins bear the large dotted boarder like the other coins of Samatāṭa, such as the coins of the Rātas, the Khaḍgas and the Early Devas. Most of the Śaśāṅka's coins have weight 9.4g. but in particular the weight of these coins are around 5.7g. It is more interesting to mention that the goddess Lakṣmī of the coin is holding an object in her right hand that is very similar to the object in the hand of the deity depicted on the normal Samatāṭa coins. However, the symbolic representations of the coin is common with the other gold coins of Śaśāṅka found from Midnapur and Orissa, but it bears an additional legend ‘*vijaya*’ (victory), which appears to be significant. The innovation and local features are more prominent in Samatāṭa type coins of Śaśāṅka. It is almost certain that these gold coins were locally minted and it was probably issued by king Śaśāṅka as a mark of victory (*vijaya*). Hence these coins apparently suggest that Śaśāṅka, the king of Gauḍa, conquered Samatāṭa and issued coins as a mark of his victory. Whom did he fight with in Samatāṭa? It is known from the *Harṣacharita* of Bānabhaṭṭa and the account of Chinese monk-traveler Hiuen Tsang that Harṣavardhana was Śaśāṅka's enemy and Harṣa had entered into an alliance with the Kāmarūpa king Bhāskaravarman to punish Śaśāṅka as he had killed his elder brother Rājyavardhana. The Dubi plate of Bhāskaravarman reports

about a battle between the kings of Gauḍa and Kāmarūpa.² So it may be said that king of Gauḍa may have led military expedition against Bhaskaravarman. On the basis of the numismatic evidence, it may be suggested that a battle may take place in Samataṭa between Śaśāṅka and Bhāskaravarman or a local king of Samataṭa, who may be Bhāskaravarman's ally. Probably Śaśāṅka was victorious in that battle. The 'vijaya' legend of the coin certainly indicates the victory of Śaśāṅka in the battle. Hence it may be stated that South-East Bengal was included within the kingdom of Śaśāṅka, at least for some time, though there is no evidence to confirm it by other sources.

On the other hand, the Nīdhānpur copper plates of Bhāskaravarman state that the king granted lands from his royal camp situated at Karṇasūvarṇa, the capital of Gauḍa. It implies that the larger portion of Gauḍa, which was situated in between Kāmarūpa and Karṇasūvarṇa, was within the kingdom of Bhāskaravarman.³ Moreover, a number of coins of Bhāskaravarman bearing the legend 'Śrī-kumara' have been found in South-East Bengal.⁴ This reference apparently suggests that Śaśāṅka's dominance in South-East Bengal did not last for a long time. It is most likely that after the death of Śaśāṅka, Bhāskaravarman not only captured his territory in South-East Bengal but his kingdom and the capital city of Karṇasūvarṇa also.

The epigraphic records of the Rātas, Nāthas, Khaḍgas and the Early Devas do not bear any evidence about the relationship of Gauḍa with the rulers of South-East Bengal. This silence of the inscriptions of this period clearly indicates that Vaṅga-Samataṭa sub-region formed a separate independent entity, which was most probably outside the political sphere of the rulers of Gauḍa.

South-East Bengal came into contact with Gauḍa during the Chandra regime. The Chandra records bear a few references about the rulers of Gauḍa. The term 'Gauḍa' is generally taken to denote the Palas because they were the legitimate rulers of the Gauḍa territory and were known as such by their contemporaries. The Palas also call themselves the 'Lord of Gauḍa' in their own records.⁵ Now it is an established fact that the Chandra rulers held independent sway in South-East Bengal, while the Pala kings ruled over other parts of Bengal and Bihar with various vicissitudes. But the large numbers of the Pala

epigraphic records do not bear a single reference to the Chandras. The few allegorical references in the Chandra records and the three Pala image inscriptions found from Samatāṭa bear insufficient and inconclusive evidence about Pala suzerainty in South-East Bengal and it has given rise to a good deal of confusion among scholars.

The Dhaka plate of Kalyāṇachandra records:

Gauḍanam-upacuḍam-anjalimayo-hastesu-dṛṣṭo-na-ced

Bandhas-tārhi-kaṭhōra-sṛṅkhalāmavaḥ-padesu-samropitāḥ |

Aṅgais-sarddham=āgat-pranama-rabhasan-murddhnā-dharitrin naced

Yena-ābhyunnata-karkasena-sahasā-khaḍgena-nitas-tada ||

“If (Trailokyachandra had not seen in the folded hands the fallen crest jewel of the Gauḍas, he would have placed the noose in the form of hard chain round (his enemy’s) feet. If the (the enemy) had not fallen prostrate on the ground in salutation (or submission), he would have all of a sudden put (him) down immediately by his cruel sword raised high up.”⁶

Though this allegorical verse contains vague praises, it apparently indicates Trailokyachandra’s success against the ruler of Gauḍa. D. C. Sircar and A. H. Dani have taken the Pala kings to be the rivals of Trailokyachandra; Dani takes him to be Rājyapala⁷ and Sircar takes him to be Nārāyanapāla.⁸ Both the Pala kings were contemporaries of Trailokyachandra who rose from a feudatory position, captured Samatāṭa and established a paramount kingdom in South-East Bengal. In that way, he may have amassed enough power to endeavor further on the western frontiers.

A glance into the history of the Pala dynasty in the contemporary period would make this matter clear. The Palas had to bear the brunt of invasions of the Chāndellas and the Kalachuris during the rule of Gopala II and Vīgrahapala II.⁹ The precarious position of the Palas may have provided an opportunity for Trailokyachandra to lead expedition against the ruler of Gauḍa. So, the above suggestion may be considered tenable. But the epigraphic records of that period bear testimony that the Kambojas captured a large

portion of Northern and Western Bengal and took the title Gauḍapati.¹⁰ The Kambojas were also contemporary of Trailokyachandra as it appears from the Paśchimbhāg copper plate of Śrīchandra. Hence, this opponent of Trailokyachandra could also have been the Kamboja Gauḍapati.

It is mentioned in the Paśchimbhāg copper plate of Śrīchandra that when Trailokyachandra conquered Samataṭa, his soldiers heard the strange news about the Kambojas. A. H. Dani has offered three suggestions regarding the fact. Firstly, the Kambojas may be defeated by the army of Trailokyachandra.¹¹ Secondly, when the Palas of North Bengal were busy fighting with the Kambojas, Trailokyachandra took the chance to conquer Samataṭa. Thirdly, these "new comers", mentioned in the verse as '*āgantū janasya*' may be the refugees coming from North Bengal, who took shelter in Samataṭa. On the other hand, A. M. Chowdhury suggests that when Trailokyachandra conquered Samataṭa, he might have heard the news of the Kambojas capturing power in North Bengal and it appeared to him as strange news. Or, after defeating the Palas, the Kambojas may have advanced against the Chandras to measure their strength.¹² The first suggestion of A. H. Dani is not justified by the epigraphic record. There is hardly any scope to state that the Kambojas were defeated by Trailokyachandra. But it is reasonable to accept that the Palas may take shelter in Samataṭa ousted by the Kambojas. The copper plate of Kalyāṇachandra refers to that Gopāla was reinstated (*Gopāla-samropane*) by Śrīchandra to the throne of Gauḍa.¹³ This is known definitely to that the Kambojas spread their rule in North Bengal during the 10th century assuming the *Gauḍapati* title and the Palas lost their seat in Gauḍa for the time being. The present day scholars are unanimous that this Pala king was Gopāla II, who probably took shelter in South-East Bengal and subsequently he was reinstated or reinstalled to the throne of Gauḍa by Śrīchandra. Verse 6 of the two Maināmati plates of Ladahachandra mentions Śrīchandra's military exploits against the ruler of Gauḍa in the following words:

Prāgijyotiṣeśvara-vadhūjana-locanānām

Baspa-vyaya-vratam = akhaṇḍitam = ātatāna |

Gauḍ-āvorodha-vanit = ādhara-pallavāni

Cakre-ca-yo-vigalita-smita-kuḍmālāni ||

(Who made complete the vows, in the form of the shedding of tear-drops, of the ladies of the lord of Prāgijyotiṣa, and made the blossom-like lips of the ladies of the harem of the Gauḍa king devoid of smile in the shape of lotus stalk.)¹⁴

The reference to Gauḍa in this verse is to be understood in this light. This king, against whom Śrīchandra led an expedition, could be the Kamboja ruler. Hence, this verse may be taken as corroborative to the copper plate of Kalyāṇachandra. In the process of helping Gopāla, Śrīchandra may have had an encounter with the Kambojas. The struggle between the Chandras and the Gauḍas seems to have continued during the rule of Kalyāṇachandra. Verse 8 of the Maināmati copper plates of Ladahachandra¹⁵ recods:

Mlechchhinām = nayanesu-yena-janītaḥ-sthūlośru-koṣa-vyayo

Gauḍīnām-smita-candrikāḥ-virahiṇāḥ-sṛṣṭās = ca-vakr-endavaḥ |

Ātastāra-nijair = yaśobhir = amalair = aṣṭāv = anaṣṭodayair

Yaś = caitāḥ-śaśabhṛt-karair = iva-ghana-tyāga-prakaśair = diśāḥ ||

(Who caused shedding of big tears in the eyes of the Mleccha ladies, and made the moon-like faces of the Gauda ladies devoid of sweet smile in the form of moon rays, and who spread spotless fame in eight directions of the globe, which became resplendent like the rays of the moon after the dispersal of the clouds).

Kalyāṇachandra's military exploits against the ruler of Gauḍa is clearly mentioned in the following verse of the Mainamati copper plate of Govindachandra:

Yen=ājau-gaja-vāji-patti-bahulām-senām-grhītvā-valād

Gauḍānām-adhipaḥ-kṛtaś=ca-ciraṁ-lājj-āvanamr-ānaṇaḥ ||

(Who, having by force snatched away the multitude of the army consisting of elephants, horses and foot soldiers in the battle field, made the face of the king of Gauda bend down under the weight of shame for a long while).¹⁶

The aforesaid verse indicates Kalyāṇachandra's military success against the ruler of Gauda. His soldiers captured a large number of elephants, horses and soldiers of the Gauda king. But the problem is that the name of the ruler of Gauda is not mentioned. Who was this ruler of Gauda? A. H. Dani comments that it is "difficult to identify the ruler of Gauḍa,"¹⁷ while D. C. Sircar's suggestion is that they may be the Palas.¹⁸ But A. M. Chowdhury suggests that this ruler of Gauḍa may be the Kamboja king.¹⁹ He comments that the Irda plate, which testifies to a line of Kamboja kings, is placed in the 10th century A.D. So it is likely that the ruler of Gauda, who was humbled by Kayāṇachandra (c. 975-1000 A.D.), was one of the Pala rulers of the Kamboja family.

When the Chandra power was rising in South-East Bengal, the Pālas of northern, north-western Bengal and Bihar did not have a comfortable situation. They witnessed their loss of fortune due to the waves of foreign invasions and uprising from within of the Kambojas. This situation probably afforded an opportunity for the Chandra power to interfere in Gauda. But it is not possible to know the success of the Chandras as the verses contain vague panegyric. We get only the definite information that Śrīchandra helped Gopala II in his installment on the throne. Śrīchandra's fight against the Gauḍas, undoubtedly Kamboja Gauḍapatis, indicates the form of his help to his Pala ally. It is probable that Śrīchandra's son Kalyāṇachandra continued this policy to help the Pālas in their struggle for existence. It is more likely that the Buddhist Chandras stretched their helping hand and maintained a friendly relationship when the Buddhist Palas were ousted by the Kambojas from Gauda or attacked by the external enemies. The relation between the Varmans and the Palas at first is not known, though Vighrahapāla III and Jātavarman was son-in-law of Kalacuri Karṇa. Jātavarman came into conflict with the Kaivarta

chief Divvoka and this is also perhaps alluded to in the Nalanda inscription of Vipulasrimita.²⁰

The Madanapāḍā copper plate refers to Viśvarūpasena as having defeated the *Gargga-Yavana*.²¹ ‘*Gargga-Yavana*’ means the *yavana* descended from Gargga sage or the mythical black *Yavana* (*Krishna-yavana*).²² The ancient Greeks are known to Indians as *Yavana* but they are not black. Hence, black *Yavana* may indicate the Muslims who defeated and ousted the Senas from North and West Bengal. It is probable that the Senas of Vikramapura further came into conflict with the Turkish Muslims of North Bengal and Visvarupasena may have got some success against the Muslims. But the name of the Muslim ruler of Gauda is not mentioned in the Sena inscription. Minhāj states that Ghiyāsuddin Iwāz Shāh led a military expedition towards South-East Bengal and he was possibly contemporary of Viśvarūpasena. But the result of this expedition is not mentioned in the *Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri*.

An interesting verse is found in the Pākkā Muḍā copper plate of Dasarathadeva about the achievement of his father Dāmodaradeva. The record reports that ‘*khyātō-Gauḍa-mahī-mahōtsavam-cakre-pūnaścha-śrīā*’.²³ The meaning of the verse is that ‘he had performed a great festival in Gauda and he had recovered the country from its bad condition. On the basis of this reference, R. C. Majumdar suggests that “...he must have extended his dominion or political influence to Gauda towards the end of his reign...”²⁴ The suggestion about the extent of the Dāmodara’s kingdom up to Gauḍa cannot be accepted on the ground that at that time this area was under the control of the Muslim ruler. If Dāmodaradeva would have captured Gauda or North and West-Bengal ousting the Muslim ruler, Minhāj would have certainly mentioned this event. It is probable that Dāmodaradeva extirpated the Sena king from Vikramapura whose title was Gauḍeśvara although Gauḍa was then not under their control. Actually the later Sena kings followed their forefather’s title Gauḍeśvara when their kingdom was only limited to in the Vaṅga area. Probably Dāmodaradeva performed festival after ousting the Senas from Vikramapura and this event may have been mentioned as ‘*Gauḍa-mahī-mahōtsavamam*’ in the Pākkā Muḍā copper plate.

The Ādābāḍī copper plate of Daśarathadeva contains the following verse regarding the Gauḍa-Vaṅga relation during the Later Deva rule:

“Pūrbyam-kūlam-chetanasya-nrpate=doṣat-parairathitai

Rakrānta-bikalastadaiba-sakala-loka-bhayād-kūlah |

Śrīmānādyā-mahīpati=daśarathadeva-dya-deva=upama

Yatpad-pranatastaya-pramudita-dharmātha-kāmoditaḥ ||”²⁵

“The peoples became very afraid of attack in the eastern part of the kingdom by the enemies like an unconscious and irresponsible king. But Śrīmān Daśarathadeva assumed like the heavenly god and protected the kingdom and its administration. As a result, the kingdom was enriched in its economy and religion, people bowed down to him.”

On the basis of this reference D. C. Sircar suggests that this enemy was none but the Muslim ruler of North-Bengal. The Muslim ruler probably led an expedition when the Sena rule was coming to close and the people of the country became afraid. Probably, King Daśarathadeva saved the kingdom from this situation driving out the enemy.²⁶

Sircar’s suggestion may be accepted, but he did not mention the name of the Muslim ruler of Lakhnawti who may have led expedition towards Vaṅga. It is known from the Muslim historian that three Muslim rulers of North-Bengal made attempts to expand their kingdom towards South-East Bengal. They are Ghiyāsuddīn Iwāz Shāh, Ijjuddīn Balban Eujbaki and Tugral Khan. Ghiyāsuddīn Iwāz Shāh attacked before Daśarathadeva. On the other hand, Tugral Khan led military expedition to South-East Bengal during the close of his reign. In this connection, it is reasonable to hold that it was Ijjuddīn Balban Eujbaki who may have led military expedition towards South-East Bengal during 1258-59 A.D. Sukhamaya Mukherjee suggests that King Daśarathadeva defeated Iujbaki. But Minhāj reports that when Iujbaki was leading this expedition, he was informed that his capital had been attacked by Tajuddin Ārsalan Khan. Then he promptly returned to Lakhnawti abandoning his expedition. This fact may have been narrated by the court poet of Daśarathadeva in favor of his patron king.

The ancient Gauḍa-Vaṅga relation depended on and to a large extent was determined by the geography of the region. South-East Bengal is well-guarded by its numerous rivers which can make a natural barrier for the rulers of Gauda to extend their sway towards this region. If any ruler of Gauda came to this region, it was difficult for him to stay here for a long time. On the basis of the coins, it may be assumed that Śaśāṅka may have led an expedition towards Samatāṭa punishing Bhāskaravarman, but it is most probably that he stayed in this region for a very short time. During the period of the Rātas, the Nāthas, the Khaḍgas and the Early Devas South-East Bengal were outside of the political sphere of Gauḍa. The Chandras established a paramount kingdom and ruled successively at least after Trailokyachandra to Govindachandra. Though three Pala image inscriptions are found in Samatāṭa, these only indicate domination for a very short time in this region by Mahipāla I or Mahipāla II. It is almost certain that the Chandas maintained a friendly relation with the Pālas and helped them to survive when they were under attack by the Kambojas or other external powers. The Varmans probably followed the Chandras and also maintained friendly relation with the Pālas keeping up their independent entity of this region. Subsequently, the Muslims captured west and north Bengal from the Senas and the Sena rule for some time was limited to South-East Bengal. During the rule of the successors of Lakṣmanasena and the Later Devas, the Muslim rulers of Gauda made repeated attempts to extend their sway towards South-East Bengal, but they failed to get success due to geographical reasons as this region is guarded by rivers which were the main hindrance to the advance of the Muslim cavalry into this region. As a result, it appears that from the fall of the imperial Guptas up to the rule of the Later Devas, this deltaic part of Bengal formed almost always a separate independent entity outside the political sphere of Gauda.

Relation between Vaṅga-Samatāṭa and Kāmarūpa:

The Nidhānpur copper plates of Bhāskaravarman were issued from the royal camp situated at Karṇasūvarṇa. On the basis of this information D. C. Ganguly suggests that Bhāskaravarma's kingdom extended between Kāmarūpa and Karṇasūvarṇa.²⁷ If we accept this suggestion, it may be concluded that parts of South-East Bengal formed a part

of the kingdom of Bhāskaravarman, the king of Kāmarūpa. It is probable that after the death of Śaśāṅka, he captured a large portion of the kingdom of Gauḍa.

The Baḍagangā Rock Inscription²⁸ states that Maharaja Bhutivarman, king of Kāmarūpa, established an Agrahāra in the district of Sylhet. This reference sufficiently indicates that some portion of South-East Bengal was included within the kingdom of Bhutivarman, the Varman king of Kāmarūpa. In this connection, mention may be made that the overlord of Lokanātha is not mentioned in the Tippera copper plate. Land was donated by the record in the *Atavibhūkhaṇḍa* of the Sūbbunga Viṣaya. N. K. Bhattasali identified this place with Cachar and Sylhet Districts. Bhattasali suggested that this area was under the sway of the Varman dynasty of Kāmarūpa in the Post-Gupta period. Hence, he has decided that the Varmans of Kāmarūpa were the overlords of Lokanātha.²⁹ The coins of Devavarman and Vāsuvarman have been found in Samataṭa region. Devavarman and Vāsuvarman may be considered as the successors of Bhāskaravarman's territory in South-East Bengal in the post Śaśāṅka period. On the basis of this reference, it may be indicated that Samataṭa probably acknowledged the suzerainty of Kāmarūpa for at least sometime in the second half of the seventh century A.D.

But D. C. Sircar is unwilling to accept the Varman's dominance in South-East Bengal. He argued that there is little evidence indicating that South-East Bengal ever formed a part of the kingdom of Kāmarūpa. Even if any part of Vaṅga-Samataṭa was brought under the supremacy of Kāmarūpa, it must have been for a very short time and appears to have ended with the extirpation of Bhāskaravarman. The territory of the Varman dynasty of Kāmarūpa was occupied by the Mleccha or Tibeto-Burman barbarians about the middle of the seventh century; almost immediately after Bhāskaravarman.³⁰

The copper plate of Ānandadeva was issued from his capital of Vasantapura. It is stated in the record that Vasantapura was the newly set up capital and the previous capital Devaparvata had to be abandoned due to the invasion of a strong enemy force.³¹ Who was the enemy of Ānandadeva? The name of Chandravarmādeva appears in line 20 of this record. This section of the plate contains Ānandadeva's assertion of superiority over the Mleccha king of Kāmarūpa. However, the references apparently suggest that

Ānandadeva came into clash with Chandravarman, the last Varman king of Kāmarūpa. Subsequently the Mleccha chief occupied the territory of the Varmans in Kāmarūpa. It is most likely that the Mleccha chief became powerful and turned into a possible threat to Ānandadeva. In this situation, his capital may have been transferred to a safer place. But ultimately he was able to defeat the Mleccha chief and thus the influence of Kāmarūpa came to end during the rule of the Early Devas of Samatāṭa.

More hostile relation with the kings of Kāmarūpa appears to have existed during the rule of the Chandras of South-East Bengal. The Chandra epigraphic records report that Śrīchandra and Kalyāṇachandra led successful military expedition against the rulers of Kāmarūpa. The Paśchimbhāg copper plate of Śrīchandra offers us a graphic account of the victorious expedition towards Kāmarūpa region and this clearly suggests that the composer of the charter was well acquainted with the area.³² The 9th verse of the Dhaka copper plate of Kalyāṇachandra mentions Śrīchandra as a “protector of vows in returning the captured queen of Ratnapala, who was easily defeated.”³³ Ratnapala, the Pala king of Kāmarūpa, was the founder of the greatness of his family. The Kāmarūpa records report that he was a powerful king.³⁴ The Chandra power was also rising during the reign of Śrīchandra. It is most likely that the two neighboring kings, both of whom took aggressive policy, would come into conflict. It is probable that Śrīchandra got victory, but he neither annexed the territory nor remove Ratnapala from his throne.

Kalyāṇachandra, the son of Śrīchandra, followed his father’s policy and led military expedition against the ruler of Kāmarūpa. The Maināmati copper plate of *Ladahachhandra* speaks of his “shedding of big tears in the eyes of the Mlecchas.”³⁵ The fact is further reported in the 7th verse of the Maināmati plate of Govindachandra, which records that Kalyāṇachandra “made the river Lohitya redoubled by the tears densely dropping down from the eyes of the Mleccha ladies who were agitated owing to killing of their husbands.”³⁶ Kalyāṇachandra’s warfare against the ruler of Kāmarūpa is also supported by the Gāchtal copper plate of Gopālavarmādeva. The record reports that Indrapāla, the successor of Ratnapāla, defeated Kalyāṇachandra, the king of Vaṅga, in a naval encounter.³⁷ Both the kings claimed victory in their respective contemporary

records. In view of these claim in rival sources, it would be reasonable to conclude that Kalyāṇachandra following the footsteps of his father led his army into Kāmarūpa, but was possibly checked by Indrapāla, who claimed to have defeated Kalyāṇachandra in a naval encounter.³⁸

So it seems that the Chandra rulers of South-East Bengal and the Pala rulers of Kāmarūpa came into clash in the period of ascendancy of their respective dynasty. It is probable that Śrīchandra first extended his sway into the Sylhet region and then he became more aggressive and tried to expand his dominance further towards Kāmarūpa. Kalyāṇachandra followed the same belligerent policy like his father and his military expedition is confirmed by a record of the Kāmarūpa king. But if we take into consideration the return of the Kāmarūpa queen by Śrīchandra and the defeat of Kalyāṇachandra by Indrapāla, it will be clear to us that the Chandra army did not achieve any permanent success in the difficult mountainous lands of Kāmarūpa, which gets water-logged during the monsoon. This was demonstrated several times during the Sultanate and Mughal period, when attempts by Muslim rulers of Bengal met with similar results. Hence the absence of any direct claim for victory in the Chandra records is understandable.³⁹

Jātavarman, the 11th century king of the Varman dynasty of South-East Bengal, led an expedition against the king of Kāmarūpa. But the name of his rival king of Kāmarūpa is not mentioned in the Varman record. The Deopāḍā and the Mādhāinagara inscriptions report the victorious campaign of Vijayasena and his grandson Lakṣmaṇasena against Kāmarūpa. Most probably Vijayasena came into hostile contact with Rājyarīdeva, which, perhaps, has been referred to in the Assam copper plate of Vallabhadeva. But the name of Lakṣmaṇasena's contemporary on the Kāmarūpa throne is not known.⁴⁰

It may thus be said that in the ancient period, the relation between Kāmarūpa and South-East Bengal was confrontational. The same hostile relation even appears to have continued in the medieval period. The rulers of both South-East Bengal and Kāmarūpa used to enter into conflict in the period of ascendancy of their respective dynasties. But it was very difficult for the rulers of both the sides to maintain a permanent dominance in

each other's territory. The Chandra kings of South-East Bengal made an attempt to expand the limits of their empire towards Kāmarūpa, but ultimately they failed to maintain authority over Kāmarūpa mainly due to the geographical constraints, such as mountainous topography and seasonal inundation. The same is possibly applicable to the kings of Kāmarūpa who made attempts to extend their sway in South-East Bengal, but their success was definitely short-lived. As a result, we find that South-East Bengal almost always continued to have an independent entity, though occasionally it came under temporary influence of Kāmarūpa.

Relation between Samatāṭa-Harikela and Ārākān:

South-East of the Maināmati Lālmāi range spread out several other ranges that cross Chittagong Hill Tracts right into Ārākān. The hilly tract of Ārākān is contiguous to the ancient kingdom of Harikela, Samatāṭa and Paṭṭikerā. But there is no available historical source that can help us to reconstruct the relationship between the two neighboring areas in the ancient period.

A large number of Harikela, Paṭṭikerā and Ākara coins have been found from excavations at Maināmati and other parts of South-East Bengal. Typologically, symbolically and metallurgically these coins are closely similar to the Ārākāni Chandra coins published by Rhodes⁴¹, San Tha Aung⁴² and Phayre⁴³. A. H. Dani has attributed Harikela coins to the Chandras of South-East Bengal. He suggested that “the present Chandra rulers could be brought closer to the Ārākāni Chandra rulers and at the same time it is possible to understand why there is so much similarity in the coin type.”⁴⁴ A. M. Chowdhury and M. Harunur Rashid supported Dani. Rashid has conjectured that the Chandras of South-East Bengal may be the offshoot of the Chandras of Ārākān.⁴⁵ But the epigraphic records of the Chandras of South-East Bengal and the inscriptions of the Chandras⁴⁶ of Ārākān do not bear a single reference that can establish the relationship with Ārākān during the Chandra period. Dani's attribution cannot be held as correct since no coin has been found bearing the legend of the Chandras of South-East Bengal. The Ārākāni Chandra coins bear legend of the name of kings, such as, Nitichandra, Pritichandra, Dharmachandra and Ānandachandra etc. But the Harikela and the Paṭṭikerā silver coins do not bear any name

of the rulers of South-East Bengal. These bear only the legend related to the kingdom, such as, Harikela, Pattikera and Samataṭa. Hence there is hardly any scope to state that the Chandras of Bengal were the offshoot of the Chandras of Ārākān. Typologically and metallurgically one can relate the Harikela coins with that of the silver coinage of the Chandras of Ārākān. This dynasty ruled from the middle of the 4th century A.D. with breaks. They reigned for 230 years in all. A second dynasty continued but ended with Ānandachandra in the early 8th century. As Ārākān is contiguous to ancient Harikela region, the Ārākāni coinage tradition may have influenced the Harikela coins.

But Samataṭa-Harikela sub-region had a close cultural and trade connection with Ārākān. There are evidence of cultural relation on the basis of pottery and other objects, such as bronze objects. The scripts of 7th-8th centuries have been found in both South-East Bengal and Ārākān. This was possibly due to the usual movement of monks and traders between the two regions. Hiuen Tsang draws our attention to the trade connection between South-Eastern Bengal with Shi-li-cha-ta-lo (Śrīkṣetra in Myanmar).⁴⁷

Now we can make some concluding observations on the basis of the above noted discussion. Dharmāditya, Dvādaśāditya, Sudhanyāditya, Gopacandra, Samāchāradeva ruled Vaṅga-Samataṭa region independently. On the basis of the Samataṭa type coin, it seems that South-East Bengal was included within the empire of Śaśānka for some time. But after his death this region emerged as an independent political entity. The Rātas, the Khaḍgas and the Early Devas ruled this region outside the political sphere of Gauḍa. It is very difficult to determine about the Pala-Chandra relation as the references of the epigraphic records are allegorical. It is probable that the Buddhist Pāla and the Buddhist Chandra kings maintained friendly relation. It seems that the Chandras helped the Pālas in their evil days when they had faced external invasions. On the other hand, it is difficult to determine the Pala dominance in South-East Bengal on the basis of their three image inscriptions found from this region. The Varmans also ruled this region independently like the Chandras. When the Muslims ruled in North and West Bengal, the successors of Lakṣmaṇasena and the Later Deva kings protected their independent position in South-East Bengal as the river made natural barrier to enter the Muslim cavalry into this region.

The relation between Kāmarūpa and South-East Bengal was always confrontational. With the growth of political power, they would invade each other but it was difficult to achieve any permanent success on both the part for the difficult mountainous lands which gets water-logged during the monsoon. It is probable that the Ārākāni Chandra kings ruled some parts of Harikela but the relation between these two regions were mainly cultural and trade than political.

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Chapter-XI

Early Urban, Administrative and Trade centers of South-East Bengal

South-East Bengal is the gift of the three great rivers - the Padma, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna. The lands on the banks along these rivers and their branches are most fertile. The alluvial soil of this deltaic part is suitable for growing many crops. Consequently, this part of the delta is agriculturally richer and more prosperous than the rest of the area. These rivers and their branches made inland communications easy, which provided the vital linkage between the coast and the interior. These rivers were the main arteries of trade and communication and in proximity to them stood main cities of ancient South-East Bengal. The monsoon climate, heavy rainfall, the network of rivers and the rich agriculture of this region flourished trade and commerce. Monetized economy was flourished and well-ordered administrative system was developed in the ancient period. Archaeological discoveries and epigraphic records supply ample evidence of this. Wari-Baṭeśwar, Koṭālipāḍā, Sābhār, Devaparvata and Vikramapura were the principal early urban, trade and administrative centers of South-East Bengal.

Wari-Baṭeśwar

Wari-Baṭeśwar is an important archaeological site of ancient Vaṅga. Wari and Baṭeśwar are two adjacent villages, situated under the Belābo Police Station in the present Narsingdi District. The physiographic condition of this area is important. The site is located on the southern fringe of the Madhupur tract (old alluvium), an isolated Pleistocene terrace. The soil of this area is red. The two villages are located on comparatively highland, which make them inaccessible to flood water. This area is situated on the confluence of the old Brahmaputra and the Āriāl Khān rivers. The

Meghna flows only a few kilometers to the south-east of this area and this river at this point is joined by the Āriāl Khān.

Hānif Paṭhān, a school teacher of the village of Baṭeśwar, first drew the attention of scholars about the archaeological and historical importance of this site. He wrote a note on the silver punch-marked coins and some cultural objects, collected from the surface and chance excavation, in a Baṅglā weekly *Mohammādi* in 1933. N. K. Bhattasali collected a number of silver punch-marked coins from Wari-Baṭeśwar and referred these in the *Annual report of the Dacca Museum* in 1935-36. This report was incorporated in R. C. Majumdar (ed.)'s *History of Bengal*, Vol. I, (p. 664), published in 1943 by the University of Dacca (now Dhaka). Later Hābibullah Paṭhān, the son of Hānif Paṭhān, wrote some articles¹ on the basis of the cultural objects collected from the surface and chance excavation at Wari-Baṭeśwar. In 1973, Enamul Haque, the then director General of the Bangladesh National Museum, Nazimuddin Ahmed, then the Director of Archaeology, and A. K. M. Zakaria, the then Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Government of Bangladesh, visited this site and realized need for the exploration and excavation of this region, but no initiative was taken then. In 2000, the International Centre for Study of Bengal Arts carried out a small scale trial excavation at the village of Wari. In 2003-2005, further excavation was conducted by the Department of Archaeology, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh. Subsequently, more excavations were conducted by the Department of Archaeology of Jahangirnagar University, under the supervision of S. S. Mustafizur Rahman.²

Huge number of cultural objects has been discovered from Wari-Baṭeśwar region through archaeological excavations, chance excavations and surface finds. These include a large number of silver punch-marked coins, a large number of iron ingots similar to prehistoric stone hand axes, iron arrowheads, spearheads, copper bangles, stone amulet, terracotta beads and balls, numerous potsherds of red ware, grey ware, red slipped ware, black slipped ware, Northern Black Polished ware, Rouletted ware, fragments of high-tin bronze knobbed vessels, glass beads, semi-precious stone beads made of carnelian, agate, quartz, crystal, chalcedony, cert and jasper. The holes of the beads have been bored with remarkable skills.

The excavation of 2006 also yielded the remains of two overlying floors at Wari. The floors occupied a large area of the south-eastern part of the inner fort. There were brick structures in the north-western part of the fort but now lost due to pilferage by the local people. Similar bricks have also been discovered in a reservoir unearthed at Wari from the excavation of 2003 to 2005 by the Department of Archaeology, Government of Bangladesh. The bricks may be dated to the 7th-8th century A.D.³ During the excavation of 2006, some pieces of tiles have also been found.

Hundreds of silver punch-marked coins have been discovered from Wari-Baṭeśwar and its adjacent villages of Kāndua, Mārjāl, Joshor, Kudārpādā, Jaimangal, Chandipādā, Pātuli, Chula, Harisangan, Gotāshia, Sonārutalā and Rānggerṭek. It deserves to be mentioned that most of these coins were found in earthen containers. The coins are mostly circular, oval, rectangular and square in shape. Various symbols such as boat, fish, lobster, sun, elephant, nandipada, bird, scorpion, anchor, tree and six-armed symbol are generally seen in these coins.⁴ Indian punch-marked coins are mainly categorized into two major groups: (1) Janapada punch-marked coins and (2) Imperial series. Both types of punch-marked coins are present in Wari-Baṭeśwar. The discovery of Janapada punch-marked coins from Wari-Baṭeśwar is highly significant in the history of ancient Bengal. These coins have only been found in Wari-Baṭeśwar in Bangladesh. On the other hand, imperial punch-marked coins were found in a wide range of areas, such as, Wari-Baṭeśwar, Mahāsthān, Baigāchhā, Sāhebganj and Nāṭore.⁵ Before the rise of the Mauryan Empire, India was divided into several *Janapadas* (small states) and *Mahājanapadas* (large states) in the absence of any imperial supremacy. Among these sixteen *Janapadas* became prominent and these came to be known as '*ṣoḍaśamahājanapada*' (sixteen large *janapadas*). Vāṅga, however, is not mentioned in the *Brāhmaṇa* as a *mahājanapada* proper but possibly in the *Āraṇyaka* attached to it. These Janapada coins of Wari-Baṭeśwar may be attributed as the coins of ancient *Vaṅga Janapada* which is also the earliest coinage of Bengal. It is most likely that these coins were issued during the 5th to 4th century B.C. These coins sufficiently indicate that during the 5th- 4th century B.C. a well-ordered administrative system was developed in the heart of *Vaṅga* and certainly the authority of the ancient *Vaṅga Janapada* issued these coins. On the other hand, the

imperial series are widely known as the coins of the Mauryan Empire. These coins were issued during the 3rd century B.C. The Mahāsthān Brāhmī inscription apparently indicates that north Bengal or ancient Puṇḍra was included within the Mauryan Empire. But it is not known whether Vaṅga formed a part of the Mauryan Empire or not. These coins of Wari-Baṭeśwar either may have been issued imitating Mauryan coins by the local authority or this area may have been included within the Mauryan Empire. But just on the basis of these coins, it is difficult to arrive at such a conclusion.

Dilip K. Chakravarti has drawn our attention about a composite art specimen of Wari-Baṭeśwar, which is engraved on the oval design surface of a polished soft grey stone. A two handed deity appeared in the centre of the oval design and she sits on the mouth of a jar. She holds an undetermined object in her right hand and a wheel in her left hand. Her hair is tied in buns. The deity wears a conical head-dress and two dangling ear ornaments. Two flowers are seen in towards the back side of the deity. Two devotee or attendant figures show bulbous noses and thick lower lips. A tree is seen towards the left end of the central figure. Dilip K. Chakravarti has placed this composite and unique design of art object in the Mauryan period. According to him, "... I find no reason why this cannot be put in the Mauryan period itself. This new dating is based on the clear similarity between the two male figures on the engraved scene and the style of the male figures on ring stones made of varieties of soft stone and associated partly with the Mauryan period."⁶

Northern Black Polished Ware has been found in 415 sites from various parts of India, Pakistan and Nepal. This wide distribution has been variously ascribed to the spread of the Mauryan imperialism.⁷ The discovery of Northern Black Polished Ware in Wari-Baṭeśwar carries special significance. The presence of this ware in Wari-Baṭeśwar may indicate that this region was the eastern limit of the Mauryan Empire. The vestiges of mud ramparts at Wari-Baṭeśwar sufficiently suggest that the site was fortified. Taking into consideration the fortification it may be said that it was an administrative center like Chandraketugarh and Mahāsthān.

Thousands of semi-precious stone beads in Wari-Baṭeśwar have been found through surface finds and chance excavations. It is important to note that a reasonable number of chips, cores and flakes of such stone beads have also been discovered during the

excavations. On the basis of these evidences, it is suggested that Wari-Baṭeśwar was a manufacturing center of semi-precious stone beads. But the raw materials of these beads were not available in Bengal and certainly these were collected from outside Bengal. On the other hand, large number of iron ingots has been found in Wari-Baṭeśwar, which indicates the existence of manufacturing of iron implements. It is probable that these iron ingots were imported from outside Bengal. These references apparently indicate that this region had a trade link with other parts of India or South-East Asia. Wari-Baṭeśwar was situated on the bank of an ancient course of the Brahmaputra which may suggest that it was an estuarine port. Thousands of punch marked coins clearly indicate that there were well-ordered economy and trade flourished in Wari-Baṭeśwar. Some punch-marked coins bear the symbols like boat, fish, lobster and anchor and on the basis of these symbols Shahnaj Husne Jahan suggests that Wari-Baṭeśwar had a maritime connection.⁸

Koṭālipāḍā

‘Koṭālipāḍā’ is completely absent in all the known literary sources of ancient Bengal. Six copper plates of the sixth century A.D. have been discovered from Koṭālipāḍā region,⁹ which prove Koṭālipāḍā as an ancient administrative and trade center of South-East Bengal. Besides these, a number of Gupta and Post-Gupta gold coins have been found¹⁰ at Koṭālipāḍā and its adjacent areas which can be used as a corroborative evidence of the epigraphic records to determine its position. Before we go into the details of the epigraphic and numismatic evidences, it is worth mentioning the physiographic features of Koṭālipāḍā area.

Koṭālipāḍā is at present an Upazila or Police Station under the present district of Gopālganj. The word ‘Koṭālipāḍā’ is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘Koṭ’ meaning ‘fort’. It may be mentioned here that there are vestiges of an old mud fort in Koṭālipāḍā. According to O’ Malley’s report,¹¹ prepared about a century ago, the ruins of Koṭālipāḍā “was a great fort with mud-walls..., which have been one of the wonders of India when it was constructed”. He further noted that the mud-walls were 15 to 30 feet high and

enclosed an area of about four square miles. The present site of Koṭālipāḍā, the high land area of four arms of a square and these arms were the earthen ramparts of a fort. There are canals which once interconnected and formed the outer moat inside the rampart. There is another moat inside the rampart, traces of which can still be made out although it has almost dried up. Koṭālipāḍā is at present surrounded on all sides by big marshes; it is unbelievable that anyone can think of a royal settlement in such a water-logged area. But the fact is that there is a ruin of a big fort. N. K. Bhattasali referred to it near about a century ago, "brick constructions very often come up unexpectedly from low water-logged places."¹²

The Ghugrāhātī copper plate of Samāchāradeva refers to 'Chandravarmā koṭ' or the fort of king Chandravarmā. N. K. Bhattasali, who edited the inscription, identified the mud-fort of Koṭālipāḍā with Chandravarmā koṭ.¹³ It is reported in the Allahabad Praśasti that Samudragupta defeated Chandravarmā, the king of Puṣkaraṇa (in Bankura district of modern West Bengal). It may be that the king Chandravarmā after his defeat in the hands of Samudragūpta at Bankura fled to Koṭālipāḍā in Gopalganj, carved out a principality there, and built a fort. But it is probable that this area was annexed to the Gupta Empire by King Chandragupta II, son and successor of Samudragupta, shortly after. The Meherāuli Iron Pillar of King Chandra (Chandragupta II) and probably *Raghūvaṃśa* of poet Kālidās refer to the conquest of Vaṅga-Samatāṭa (land watered by the lower streams of the Ganges) by him. Discovery of Gupta gold coins from Koṭālipāḍā, Muhammadpur¹⁴ in Magura District, Sābhār in Dhaka district strongly support the literary and epigraphic evidence that Vaṅga was included within the Gupta Empire. It seems that in the Gupta period Vaṅga was not a part of the *Punḍravardhanabhūkti*, but it may have had one separate Governor or Viceroy stationed at Koṭālipāḍā area.

The six Post-Gupta copper plates (two of Dharmāditya, one of Gopacandra, the Ghugrāhātī and the Kurapāla copper plates of Samāchāradeva and the Rāmashila copper plate of Dvādaśāditya) were issued from the *adhikaraṇa* situated at *Vārakamaṇḍala Viṣaya* (district). According to N. K. Bhattasali, the word 'vāraka' means obstructing, opposing; 'maṇḍala' means a collection of small areas lying between and separating rivers; 'Vāraka' may also be taken to denote in the sense of 'the deltaic land that

obstructs and alters the current of a river; *Vārakamaṇḍala* would then be a group of deltaic areas. Anyway, *Vārakamaṇḍala* would then be a district round Koṭālipādā, almost in the heart of the ancient Vāṅga.¹⁵ ‘*Vāraka*’ was originally the name of a *Maṇḍala* (subdivision) but *Vārakamaṇḍala* afterwards became the name of a *Viṣaya* (district).¹⁶ The Post-Gupta copper plates of South-East Bengal bear some administrative designations, such as, Mahāpratihāra (high military or police officer), Uparika (Governor), Viṣayapati, Adhikaraṇa (district Magistrate), Viniūktaka (an official probably under the Āuktaka), Pustapāla (record keeper), Viṣaya Mahattara (member of a village council, an elder or headman of a village)etc. We also get some terms related to the land administration, such as, Tāmrapaṭṭadharmena, Kūlyavāpa, Akṣayanīvidharma¹⁷ (the nature of a permanent endowment), and the name of surveyor Śivachandra, *Aṣṭakanaṅka-nala*¹⁸ (land measuring rod), land sale rate (four Dinaras per Kūlyavāpa) etc. These aforesaid terms clearly suggests that a well-ordered local government or administrative and land system was developed in *Vārakamaṇḍala* or Koṭālipādā region during the 6th century A.D.

The Ghugrāhāṭi copper plate grant of Samāchāradeva refers to an administrative division, named the ‘Sūvarṇavīthī-Navyāvākāsikā’. In the opinion of R. G. Basak, Sūvarṇavīthī was the name of a headquarters and Navyāvākāsikā that of the province. The Governor or Viceroy (Uparika) of Sūvarṇavīthī-Navyāvākāsikā was the immediate superior officer of the Viṣayapati or Adhikaraṇa of *Vārakamaṇḍala*. N. K. Bhattasali has identified Navyāvākāsikā with the ruins of Sābhār in Dhaka district.¹⁹ But S. C. Mukherji²⁰ has identified this place with ‘Kāsiāni’, another Police Station of present Gopalganj district adjacent to Koṭālipādā. It may be mentioned here that ancient political geography of Vāṅga was divided into two divisions, viz. Vikramapura and Nāvya. It is recognized that Vikramapura is located in present Munshiganj district close to Dhaka. ‘Nāvya’ division is not only mentioned in the copper plate of Samāchāradeva but it is also mentioned in the Sāhitya Pariṣat copper plate of Viśvarūpasena. Two plots of land in the Rāmasiddhipāṭaka²¹ of Nāvya region was donated by this copper plate and this place is identified with present Gauḍanadī of the Barisal district. So the ‘Nāvya’ subdivision was located to the south-east of Vikramapura and certainly adjacent to Koṭālipādā. According to S. C.

Mukherji, “the Nāvya region is a fitting designation of the south-eastern part of the Gangetic delta which is a labyrinth of rivers and creeks. The Nāvya region seemed to have extended to the sea, i.e. to the head of the Bay of Bengal and the estuary of the Meghna to the eastern side. There is an expression styled ‘Navyāvākāsikā’ in the Faridpur copper plate grant which means an opening or a canal that is navigable. It is interesting to note that the district of Faridpur is connected with the eastern sea, i.e. the Bay of Bengal (Prāksumudra).”²² S. C. Mukherji further states, “it may be pointed out that ‘Vāraka’ means ‘sea’. So ‘Vārakamaṇḍala stands for a subdivision bordering sea and Vārakamaṇḍala viṣaya for a district – coastal subdivision or a coastal district.” Mukherji’s suggestion may be accepted and it is most likely that during the 6th century A.D., Koṭālipāḍā region was quite close to the sea this is mentioned in the copper plate of Dvādaśāditya and Dharmāditya. We find in the copper plate of Dvādaśāditya that Haradatta, a great feudal king of the Vārakamaṇḍala area, washed his legs in the Eastern Sea (*Pūrva-sumudra-prakṣālita-charaṇe*).²³ It is probable that during the Gupta and Post-Gupta period, Gopalganj and present Madaripur districts were connected by a number of estuaries with the Bay of Bengal and hence the whole region was introduced as Navyāvākāsikā which was certainly the name of a province (bhūkti) including Vārakamaṇḍala.

If we closely examine the Post-Gupta epigraphic records, we find references related to the trade and monetized economy in Koṭālipāḍā. The Faridpur copper plate of Gopachandra²⁴ refers to an administrative term ‘*Pradhāna-vyapārīna*’ (Principal trader). This term indicates that there was a merchant who was influential and important enough to take part in local administration. The Faridpur copper plate of Gopachandra refers that Nāgadeva holds two posts at the same time-*Uparika* (Viceroy) and *Vyapārāṇḍa* (customs officer).²⁵ The copper plate of Dharmāditya mentions that Gopālasvāmī was working as a *Viśyādhiniyūktaka-Vyapārakāraṇḍa* (administrative and custom officer)²⁶ of Vārakamaṇḍala under Navyāvākāsikā. These references clearly suggest that the state maintained custom officers because trade was an important function of the state.

The Ghugrahāti copper plate of Samāchāradeva mentions ‘Sūvarṇavīthyādhikṛta’. ‘Sūvarṇa’ means gold and ‘vīthi’ means market. So, ‘Sūvarṇavīthi’ means a market for goldsmith. But according to N. K. Bhattasali ‘Sūvarṇavīthyādhikṛta’ was an honorary title and the title may, however, have been ‘master of the treasury or mint.’²⁷ Bhattasali’s suggestion may be accepted as the gold coins of Samāchāradeva have been discovered from Muhammadpur²⁸ in present Magura District near about Koṭālipādā and now the coins are preserved in the Indian Museum of Kolkata. The gold coins of Sudhanyāditya have also been found in Kotālipādā²⁹ and now these are preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum. The present author has found two unpublished gold coins of Gopacandra which are also now preserved in the reserve collection of the Bangladesh National Museum. These coins were discovered from Dhaka district. The copper plate of Dharmāditya and Dvādaśāditya³⁰ refer to ‘Dināra’ as a gold coin. These references sufficiently indicate that there was a mint in Vārakamaṇḍala or Koṭālipādā region from which these coins were issued. Gold coins are of high value and it was easy to carry over a long distance. Discovering a large number of Gupta and Post-Gupta gold coins implies that Koṭālipādā was an important trading center of ancient South-East Bengal. It is interesting to note that the copper plate of Dharmāditya refers *nā-vāt-kyeni* (ship building harbor) and it indicates that there was existence of ship building technology in Vārakamaṇḍala. The epigraphic, numismatic and physiographic evidence sufficiently indicate that Koṭālipādā flourished as an administrative and trade center having a maritime port. The gold coin of Pṛthubhaṭa³¹, a Khaḍga king of Samataṭa, has been found in Kotālipādā, which suggests that Koṭālipādā had a trade link with Samataṭa through riverine network. The gold coins of Vāsuvarma and Devavarma, the kings of Kāmarūpa and the successors of Bhāskaravarman, have also been found from Koṭālipādā³² and these coins indicate trade contact with Kāmarūpa as well.

There is no literary reference to Chandravarmā-koṭ like Wari-Baṭeśwara and Gangābāndār. N. K. Bhattasali conjectured that “the fortified settlement of Koṭālipādā may be approximately dated about 315 A. D. “. But Harun-ur-Rashid³³ suggests that Ptolemy’s Tilogrāmon was indeed Koṭālipādā. If we accept this suggestion, it indicates that the port of Chandravarmā-koṭ existed in the second century A.D.

It is not exactly known when Chandravarmā-koṭ declined. Bhattasali comments that it was abandoned as a “gubernatorial head-quarter... about the 5th or the 6th year of the reign of Dharmāditya owing to an earthquake”. His decision has been made on the ground that land was granted by the Ghugrāhāṭi plate in Vyāgracoraka, which is referred to in the record as “full of pits and infested with wild beasts.”³⁴ But Shahnaj Husne Jahan³⁵ does not accept the proposition of N. K. Bhattasali. She argues, perhaps correctly, that the coins of Vāsuvarmā, Devavarmā and Pṛthubala (Pṛthubhaṭa, Khaḍga king of Samatata of the 7th century A.D.) discovered from Koṭālipāḍā implies that this ancient trade and administrative center existed at least up to 7th century A.D.

Sābhār

The ancient archaeological site and the ruins of Sābhār are located at the confluence of the Vamśāvati (Vamśāi) and the Dhaleśvari rivers, about 17 miles north-west of Dhaka. According to N. K. Bhattasali³⁶ the present name Sābhār could have been derived from Sanskrit ‘*Sambhāra*’ meaning wealth. According to the local anecdotes Sābhār had two other names- Bhavalin and Sarveśvara. G. M. Laskar refers that there were a large number of mounds, ancient ponds and tanks in Sābhār during the second half of the 19th century.³⁷ There are also archaeological treasures, numismatic and epigraphic sources to reconstruct the history of Sābhār as an ancient trade and administrative centre.

The archaeological treasures of Sābhār mark the place as one of considerable antiquity and importance. There are a number of tanks and mounds, in which a large number of archaeological objects have been discovered through excavation. A group of five mounds there by the side of a dried up water course is locally known by the name of Rājāsana. In 1913, Babu Harendra Nātha Ghosh, headmaster of a local high school, H. E. Stapleton, the honorary secretary of the Dacca Museum, started excavation at the mounds of Rājāsana. In 1926, these mounds were fully excavated by the archaeological survey of India, and a large number of terracotta plaques marked with the figures of the Bodhisattvas were discovered. Now these terracotta plaques are preserved in the

Bangladesh National Museum. K. N. Dikṣhit, the then superintendent of archaeology of the Eastern Circle, discovered a clay Vishnu inscribed with the words *Bhagavate Vāsudevāya*.³⁸ The Koṭbāḍī mound has a large rectangular area (219.5 m x 167.6 m), with a mud wall, the height of which was 7.6 m. There is also a large tank named Kāṭāgaṅgā located to the north-south of Koṭbāḍī.

Another important archaeological site of Sābhār is the Royal palace of king Hariśchandra.³⁹ This archaeological site is locally known as ‘Dogaramuḍā’. It is located two Km. north-east of Koṭbāḍī and one km. north of Rājāsana. The brick structure appears still today and the height of the brick structure is 2.90 m., which indicates the ruins of a large palace of king Hariśchandra. In 1988-89, the southern part of the palace mound of king Hariśchandra was excavated under the supervision of Archaeology Department of the Jahangirnagar University. The ruin of a Buddhist Vihāra was discovered through this excavation. The ruin of a Buddhist Stupa was also unearthed associated with the Vihāra to its north side. During this excavation a large number of the different types of potteries,⁴⁰ a spear, a Harikela coin and a Post-Gupta gold coin, a number of bronze images including the image of Buddha in meditation, Akṣhobhya, Jambhala, Tārā, Prañjāpāramitā and Avolokiteśvara were discovered. Now these objects are preserved in the Department of Archaeology, government of Bangladesh.

At Maṭhabāḍī, a place close to Sābhār, a stone inscription⁴¹ was discovered by one Ambika Chowdhury, but the inscription is now lost. Mr. Chowdhury wrote a note on the description of the inscription. Rankin, the then Commissioner of the Dacca division, collected the manuscript from Ambika Chowdhury. The description of the inscription discloses the fact that there was a Buddhist dynasty in Sābhār and five generations of kings of this dynasty ruled this region - Bhīmsena, Dhīmāntasena, Raṇadhīrasena, Hariśchandra and Mahendra. Dhīmāntasena, the second king, was Buddhist, who captured the kingdom of Bhavalin from the Kirāta. Raṇadhīrasena, the third king of the dynasty, set up his capital in Sambhāra (Sābhār) and extended the kingdom up to the Himalayas. Hariśchandra, the fourth king of this dynasty, was very pious. Mahendra was the last king of this line who issued the inscription. But there is no corroborative

evidence of the fact disclosed by the inscription except the local anecdotes about king Hariśhchandra and his palace mound. However, in the ruins of Vihāra and Stupa in Sābhār, different types of Buddhist bronze images were discovered from excavation and a number of terracotta plaques bearing the sculpture of Buddha in meditation clearly show that Sābhār was a flourishing Buddhist center during the post-Gupta period.

The archaeological site of Sābhār can be ascertained with the frequent discovery of the Gupta imitation gold coins in the archaeological ruins and its contiguous areas. At least, 56 lights-weight Post-Gupta gold coins were discovered from Sabhar in 1913.⁴² N. K. Bhattasali reported 6 gold coins which preserved in the coin cabinet of the Dacca Museum.⁴³

In 2006, a hoard of 21 gold coins was discovered from a village close to the archaeological ruins at Sābhār. These coins were discovered by a woman while she was digging in a cluster of bamboo. Rezaul Karim, the then Keeper of the museum and the present author has collected these coins from the Police Station of Sābhār and these are now being preserved in the reserve collection of the Bangladesh National Museum. These coins are still unpublished. These coins were displayed in the coin exhibition organized by the Bangladesh National Museum in July 2012. The present author has examined the coins and these are the coins of Vāsuvarman and Devavarman, the kings of Kāmarūpa, who probably ruled after Bhāskaravarman. The present author has also examined 7 more gold coins which were discovered from Sābhār and these are now preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum. These are the coins of Sudhanyāditya, Śrīkumāra (Bhāskaravarman), Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta and Pṛthubhaṭa (probably a Khaḍga king). During the excavation in 1988-89, one silver Harikela coin and another Post-Gupta gold coin was discovered from the mound of king Hariśhchandra and now these coins are preserved in the Department of Bangladesh Archaeology. These coins show that Sābhār was an important administrative and trade center of South-East Bengal in Post-Gupta period. The gold coins of Bhāskaravarman, Vāsuvarman and Devavarman of Kāmarūpa imply that Sābhār was in trade contact with Kāmarūpa. The discovery of the gold coin of Sudhanyāditya from Sābhār suggests that this area had a riverine trade link with

Koṭālipādā or Vārakamaṇḍala which was another ancient port, trade and administrative centre of Vaṅga. The discovery of Rāta, Khaḍga and Harikela coins from Sābhār indicate that this riverside port had a close trade contact with Samatāṭa and Harikela region also.

More interesting facts are disclosed by the Chandra epigraphic records regarding the history of Sābhār as a riverside port city. Ranabir Chakravarty⁴⁴ has drawn our attention to a compound expression '*Vaṅgasāgara-sambhāṇḍāriyaka*', which occurs in the Madanapur copper plate of Śrīchandra. The inscription was published first by R. G. Basak⁴⁵ and was later commented upon by D. C. Sircar.⁴⁶ Land was donated by this record to a Brahman named Sukradeva at a place called *Vaṅgasāgara- sambhāṇḍāriyaka* in Yolāmaṇḍala. N. K. Bhattasali has placed this administrative unit to the north of the river Dhaleswari in Manikganj district.⁴⁷ But Ranabir Chakravarti identified Yolāmaṇḍala with Sābhār which has yielded many significant archaeological objects.

According to Ranabir Chakravarty, the term '*Sambhāṇḍāriyaka*' may stand for a place where items (bhāṇḍāra) could be appropriately (samyaka) stored. Such storage of items may be linked with commercial activities at a center of exchange. This leads to a further inference that an exchange center could also have offered warehousing facilities (*sambhāṇḍāra*). The *sambhāṇḍāriyaka* may correspond to *puṭabhedana*, literally meaning a place where lids (of merchandise) were broken (by merchants for sale). Both *puṭabhedana* and *sambhāṇḍāriyaka*, therefore, may have had similar functions as a particular type of trade centre which offered facilities of warehousing of commodities.⁴⁸ The other component '*Vaṅgasāgara*' denotes the sea (sāgara) of Vaṅga, certainly the earliest reference '*Vaṅgopasāgara*' (Bay of Bengal). So, the compound expression *Vaṅgasāgara-sambhāṇḍāriyaka*, may therefore, speak of an exchange centre associated with the trade in the Bay of Bengal. Ranabir Chakravarty suggests that the archaeological site at Sābhār was an inland riverside port under the administration of the Chandras. He has further shown that during the early medieval period Vaṅga maintained connections with the Bay of Bengal through its many rivers and Sābhār functioned as an inland riverside port. Trade at this centre and its linkages through innumerable rivers with the

Bengal coast were largely responsible for its being considered as an administrative centre under the rulers of Vaṅga.

Devaparvata

Devaparvata was the capital of the kingdom of Samatata and an ancient trade and cultural center of South-East Bengal. It is located to the east of the river Meghna and it has been identified with some place in the Mainamāti-Lālmāi area of Comilla District. However, it must be said that the exact location of the city is still uncertain. The identification is correct as it is supported by the huge archaeological discoveries especially with epigraphic and numismatic evidences. Devaparvata figures prominently in the epigraphic records of that area from the 7th to 10th century A.D. The earliest epigraphic description of Devaparvata is recorded in the Uḍiśvara copper plate⁴⁹ issued during the fifth regnal year of king Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta. It also occurs in the Kailan copper plate⁵⁰ which was issued in the 8th regnal year of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta. These two plates record the following verse:

*Atha-matta-mātanga-śata-sukha-vigāyamāna-vividha-tīrthayā-
naubhir=aparimitābhir=upārachita-kūlayā-parikṣitād=abhimata-nimnagāminyā-
Kṣīrodayā-sarvvatobhadrakād=Devaparvvāt*

(Devaparvata was encircled by the river Kṣīrodā as if by a moat and elephant played in the water of the river, both bank of which were adorned by the cluster of boats).

Devaparvata is surrounded by the river Kṣīrodā which is identified with the modern Khīra or Khīrnai, a dried up river course, still traceable as branching off from the Gomati, just west of the town Comilla. The river flows by the eastern side of the Maināmati hills and skirts the southern end of the hills near Chandimuḍā peak, where another branch of the river meets it following by the western side of the Maināmati hills.⁵¹ Devaparvata is further reported as Sarvatobhadra, meaning either it was approachable from all the four side or it had gates on all four sides. However, Devaparvata was undoubtedly capital of the Rata dynasty from where their copper plates were issued.

Devaparvata is again referred to in the copper plate of Balabhaṭṭa, the king of the Khaḍga dynasty. The record mentions that his royal palace 'Kaṭakaśilā' was located at Devaparvata (*Śrīmajjayaskandhāvāra-bāsaka-bhavanāddevaparvata.*)⁵² From this reference, it appears that Devaparvata was still the capital city of the Khaḍga dynasty after the Rātas. It is probable that Devakhaḍga captured Devaparvata from the Rātas and abandoned his earlier capital Karmāntavāsaka. When the copper plate of Balabhaṭṭa was issued, he was a prince and his father Devakhaḍga was the ruling king.

The Khaḍgas were supplanted by the Early Devas. Devaparvata once again figured in the Asiatic society copper plate of Bhavadeva,⁵³ a king of the Early Deva dynasty of Samatāṭa. The copper plate of Bhavadeva was issued from the royal camp of victory located at Devaparvata (*Devaparvata-avasthita-Śrīmajjayaskandhāvāra*). It is evident from this reference that Devaparvata was still the capital in the Early Deva period. It is elaborately reported in this record in lines 28-42, but the inscription is badly corroded and could only be partly deciphered. Some important sections of the inscription could not be read clearly. But it is realized from the partly deciphered text that it was a very rich capital city during the rule of Bhavadeva. It is interesting to note that the capital city of Ānandadeva, father of Bhavadeva, was located at Vasantapura (*Vasantapura-avasthita-Śrīmajjayaskandhāvāra*) and his Maināmati copper plate was issued from there.⁵⁴ In this connection, it is also reported that Vasantapura was the recently set-up capital and the previous capital city had to be abandoned due to the forthcoming invasion of a strong enemy force. But the name of the previous capital city of Ānandadeva is not mentioned in the record.

His son Bhavadeva issued a copper plate from Devaparvata. Hence, it may be surmised that the capital city of Ānandadeva was originally located at Devaparvata but it was temporarily transferred to Vasantapura for the imminent foreign invasion. It is probable that Devaparvata was regained or re-established as a capital city either at the last stage of his rule or at the beginning of his son Bhavadeva. The Early Deva kings were Buddhists. During their rule Devaparvata flourished as a Buddhist cultural centre. Ānandavihāra, Śrī-Bhavadeva Mahāvihāra, Tri-Ratna-Stupa, Bhojavihāra, Charpatramuḍā Vihāra, the

ruins of Rūpvānkanyārmuḍā Vihāra, huge archaeological objects including inscriptions, coins, sculptures and terracotta plaques, potteries and the magnificent bronze sculpture of Vajrasvatta still bear the mark of flourishing Buddhist culture of Devaparvata.

Devaparvata is further referred to in the Chandra epigraphic records. The verse in the Paśchimbhāg copper plate of Śrīchandra is as follows:

Kṣīrodāma-nadevaparvvata-iti-Śrīmatad=etat-puram

Yatrāguntu-janasya-vismaya-rasah-Kamboja-varttādbhutaīḥ |

Lālambi-vanam-atra-vāṭika-śatair-anviṣṭa-siddhauśadhi-

*Vyāhārā-itihāsrutās=Samataṭannirjjitya-yatsainikaiḥ ||*⁵⁵

The meaning of the verse is as follows: 'having won Samataṭa with the soldiers of that place (Devaparvata), where was situated Lālambi forest traditionally known to have (contained) sure medicinal herbs sought for by hundreds of Vāṭikās (person affected by morbid disease), the utterances (about the wonderful news of the Kambojas) were heard.'

From this verse, it is clear that the soldiers of Trailokyachandra conquered Devaparvata, which was associated with the river Kṣīrodā, where was situated the Lālamvi forest. The references to Devaparvata, river Kṣīrodā and the Lālambi forest mentioned in the verse are very important. Lālamvi forest is identified with the Lālmai ridge and this identification is correct as it is supported by the archaeological discoveries of this area. It is probable that the Chandras captured Samataṭa from the Early Devas and they may have set up their capital at Devaparvata for the time being, but afterwards they shifted their administrative centre to Vikramapura. According to A. M. Chowdhury, "Thus it is clear that Devaparvata was a stronghold of the Chandras in the initial stage of their rise to power and afterwards they changed their headquarters to Vikramapura. The discovery of the three Chandra plates from Mainamāti lend added ground for this assumption and indirectly support the surmise that Devaparvata was situated somewhere in the Mainamāti Hills."⁵⁶ This change of capital was due to the more extensive power base of the Chandras which necessitated a shift in the capital and to a more viable geographical

location.⁵⁷ In this connection, Ranabir Chakravarty suggests that 'this probably became necessary in order to ensure a better administrative integration of the expansive Chandra domain'.⁵⁸

Ranabir Chakravarty⁵⁹ has shown that Devaparvata was a riverine port in Samatāṭa kingdom in the early medieval period. The Kailān copper plate of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta records three boat parking stations (*naudāṇḍakas*). The term *vill-vanga* (Bangla word 'bil,' moss covered with water) appears in the description of the boundary demarcation of the donated land and the term is associated with *niṣkrāntaka-praviṣṭaka* (facility of entry and exit of vessels). Terms like *nauprthvī*, *nau-sthira-vega*, etc., are mentioned to denote the boundary marks. These terms were definitely associated with the plying of boats in the inland riverine network. It is referred to in the Paśchimbhāg copper plate that Lāmbivana (same as the Lālmāi) was searched by hundreds of boatmen (Lāmbivanam=atra-nāvika-śatair=anviṣṭa). Ranabir Chakravarty suggests that this further underlines the navigability of Kṣīrodā and the role of Devaparvata as a riverine port.⁶⁰ For the early medieval period significance of trade of Devaparvata in Samatāṭa, should not be overlooked, as it is likely to have had a profound impact on the political economy of various local dynasties as well as on the socialization patterns of Samatāṭa monasteries.⁶¹

Vikramapura

Devaparvata as a capital city is not referred to in the later epigraphic records of South-East Bengal after Bhavadeva's copper plate. All the Chandra copper plates were issued from their capital Vikramapura. We learn from the Paśchimbhāg copper plate of Śrīchandra that Trailokyachandra captured Devaparvata. He may have established his capital at Devaparvata in the initial stage of his rise to power, but afterwards he changed his administrative headquarters to Vikramapura. Trailokyachandra captured Chandradvīpa (modern Bariśāl district) and set up a paramount kingdom in South-East Bengal. Probably it became essential to shift the capital for better administration of the extensive Chandra kingdom. The copper plates of Śrīchandra, Kalyāṇchandra, Ladahachandra and Govindachandra were issued from Śrī-Vikramapura. These official

records of the Chandras clearly show that Vikramapura was their political and administrative center from where they ruled successively.

The Chandras were supplanted by the Varmans who also issued their official charters from Vikramapura. Three copper plates of this dynasty have so far been found which refer to their *Jayaskandhāvāra* (capital) at Śrī-Vikramapura. The present author has recently published a stone inscription⁶² of the time of Bhojavarman which was discovered from ancient Vikramapura region of present Munshiganj district. These epigraphic records clearly show that Vikramapura was the political hub and main administrative center of the Varman dynasty as well.

The Barrāckpur copper plate, the earliest copper plate grant of the Sena dynasty, was also issued from Vikramapura in the 62 regnal year of king Vijayasena. Land was granted by this record in the village Ghāsbhoga-baṭṭavada in the Khāḍi Viṣaya (in the present Sundaraban area) of the Puṇḍravardhana-bhūkti. This land was donated as fee for the performance of *Homa* (sacrifice) in connection with '*Kaṇaka-Tūlāpuruṣa-Mahādāna*' ceremony of the *Mahā-mahādevī* (the great, great queen) Vilāsadevī during a lunar eclipse, within the palace at Vikramapura.⁶³ However, the record bears the testimony that Vijayasena ruled from Vikramapura, the same capital of the Chandras and the Varmans. It also suggests that Vijayasena extirpated Varman rule from Vaṅga and transferred his capital to Vikramapura from Rāḍha, the area of the rise of the Senas. It is almost certain that the royal palace of Vijayasena was situated at Vikramapura in which his queen lived permanently.⁶⁴ Vallālasena, the son and successor of Vijayasena, was born at Vikramapura. Once upon a time, there was a popular tradition in Vikramapura region about the birth of Vallālasena.⁶⁵ There were local ruins in Vikramapura region associated with this tradition of Vallālasena. Vikramapura was the capital of Vallālasena, from where he issued his Naihāti copper plate. It should, however, be noted that the later copper plates of Lakṣmaṇsena, and those of his successors, were not issued from Vikramapura. The Mādhāinagara and the Bhowal copper plates of Lakṣmaṇsena were issued from Dhāryagrām.⁶⁶ On the other hand, the Madanapāḍā and the Edilpur copper plates of Viśvarūpasena were issued from the *Jayaskandhāvāra* Phalgugrāma or

Phasphagrāma.⁶⁷ Whether it is merely accidental, or it does indicate a definite abandonment of Vikramapura as capital, it is difficult to say. At present, an extensive area in the Munshiganj District is known as Vikramapura. A village called Vikramapura is referred to in the old records, but it has completely disappeared. The Phasphagrāma or Phalgugrāma and Dhāryagrāma have not been identified yet. Probably, these places were located somewhere in South-East Bengal adjacent to Vikramapura. Some scholars have opined that the Sena kings did not have any fixed capital, they always lived in camps.⁶⁸ Probably, the Sena kings had a number of *Jayaskandhāvāras* (camps of victory) but there is no doubt that Vikramapura was their main capital. Phasphagrāma and Dhāryagrām may be temporary camps of the Sena kings. Thus, we may safely conclude that Vikramapura was the main seat and stronghold of the Sena power, from where most of their copper plates or official records were issued.

The Ādābāḍī copper plate of Daśarathadeva was also issued from Vikramapura, the capital of the Senas. The name Vikramapura is now applied to a wide area round about the modern district town of Munshiganj. But Ziāuddin Bārāni mentions that Danuja Rāi or Daśarathadeva was the king of Sonārgaon, which is located on the bank of the river Sitalakhyā just opposite Munshiganj. Sonārgaon occupies a strategic position as it is located close to the confluence of the river Lakhyā, the old Brahmaputra and the Meghna. Probably Daśarathadeva shifted the capital from Vikramapura to Sonārgaon considering its strategic position.

The facts disclosed by the epigraphic records are corroborated by the ruins and antiquities of Rāmpal in Munshiganj district (then Vikramapura). In 1889, Asutosh Gupta, the then sub-divisional officer of Munshiganj, mentions that there is abundant evidence in Rāmpal to show that once it was a royal city. The large Rāmpal dīghī (tank), the huge mound, to which tradition points as the palace of Vallālasena (*Vallāla rājār vāḍī*), the very broad roads and the existence of innumerable bricks which can be found buried under the earth wherever you dig in Rampal. He further reports that vast quantities of bricks were carried from Rampal to Dhaka for building purposes.⁶⁹ N. K. Bhattasali reports that there are a large number of ancient tanks and some brick ruins and high homestead lands in

Rāmpal.⁷⁰ In January 1913, Babu Paresh Chandra, a local landlord, excavated a high spot lying between two tanks at the village Raghūrāmpur near Rāmpal. A number of stone and bronze images were found through the excavation, which was presented to the newly started Dacca museum. In 1917, Babu Jaganmohan Sircar led another excavation in the ruins of an ancient temple locally known as *Deul* located under Tongibādi Police Station in Munshiganj district. A large number of brick structures were exposed through the excavation. A large number of bronze, stone and wooden sculptures were discovered from that place and these cultural materials are preserved in the Dacca Museum (now Bangladesh National Museum). The wooden sculptures are very strikingly special, referring to the Surasundari, Dhayānibuddha, Avalokiteśvara etc., which are now being displayed in Gallery No. 19 and 34 in the Bangladesh National Museum.

Atīśa Dipaṅkara, the great Buddhist scholar, was born in the Vajrayogini village of Vikramapura. Jogendranātha Gupta refers that there were some high mounds near the Vajrayogini village which were locally known as 'Vājāsana vitā'. In 1920, Nivaranachandra Das, the then Settlement Officer of Munshiganj, excavated these mounds and discovered the ruin structure of a Vihāra. Some archaeological objects were also found there, though these are not traceable now.⁷¹

Hindu and Buddhist sculptures frequently come out through chance excavation in different places in the present Munshiganj district. The present author, an officer of the National Museum, has collected a large number of such sculptures in the last ten years from Tangivādi, Śrīnagara and Rampal Police Stations and from the office of the Deputy Commissioner of Munshiganj district.

The epigraphic records as well as the archaeological evidences clearly show that Vikramapura was the capital of the Chandra, Varman, Sena and Later Deva dynasty of South-East Bengal. It was an important political and cultural center of ancient Bengal. It was located on the bank of the river Dhaleśvari and on the east of Padma. This location implies that Vikramapura was developed as an inland river side port. But it is interesting to note that no coins have been found in Vikramapura, since coins of the above mentioned dynasties have not been found yet.

Trade and Cultural Contact with the Outside World

Tamralipti and Chandrakētūgarh began to decline due to diverse factors during the seventh century onwards. An important outcome of this was the continuing shift of the maritime focus of Bengal towards the east, towards Comilla-Chittagong coast. On the basis of epigraphic, numismatic and literary evidences, it is reasonable to assume that Samatāṭa could have provided the main opening to the sea for whole Bengal. Mention may be made that Samatāṭa offers a continuation of high quality metallic coinage which is absent in the other parts of Bengal. Large number of gold, silver and copper coins has been discovered during the excavation at the Maināmati monastic complexes and in other parts of Comilla, Noakhali and Chittagong districts. Now these coins are preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum and in the Department of Archaeology, Government of Bangladesh. Most of these coins are still unpublished. Monetized economy was developed in this region due to external trading contact. There is no doubt that Samatāṭa-Harikela region was well-connected with neighboring areas by overland and maritime routes. The political, cultural and trade center of Devaparvata appears to have been well-connected with the hinterland by rivers. The river routes were useful in channelizing resources and merchandises.

The geographical location of Samatāṭa-Harikela region helped to keep up linkage with other areas. Kāmarūpa and North-Bengal acted as important hinterland for the region. The gold coin of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta has been discovered in the Pāglātek hoard, near Goalpādā in Assam. This has been found by the side of a temple which might have reached there by way of trade as a donation to the temple by a merchant from Samatāṭa. We have references to merchants from Samatāṭa area in image inscriptions. It indicates trade relation between Samatāṭa and Kamarupa.⁷²

Samatāṭa-Harikela sub-region had a close connection with Ārākān. The script of 7th-8th centuries has been found in both South-East Bengal and Ārākān. This was possibly due to the usual movement of monks and traders between the two regions. Hiuen Tsang draws our attention to the trade connection between South-Eastern Bengal and South-East Asian countries. The six areas which had contacts with Samatāṭa were Shi-li-cha-ta-lo (Śrīkṣetra

in Myanmar), Kia-mo-land-kia (Kamalanka, identified with Pegu and the Irrawaddy delta in Myanmar), To-lopoti (Daravati in central Thailand), I-shung-na-pu-lo (Ishanapura), Mo-ho-chen-po (Mahachampa in Vietnam) and Yen-no-na-chou (identification not known).⁷³

South-East Bengal had intimate trade and consequent cultural contact with South-East Asia. The contact of Samatāṭa-Harikela region with South-East Asian countries can perhaps also be indicated on the basis of historical art materials. Similar types of potteries, coins, and terracotta plaques, bronze and stone images, architecture have been found both in South-East Bengal and South-East Asian countries which indicate a close cultural interaction between these two regions. In the opinion of A. M. Chowdhury, it is conjecturable from the scattered sources that Bengal had a definite trade and cultural contact with the South-East Asia mainland and archipelago and this close intimacy had inextricably bound these two regions together.⁷⁴ An early to mid tenth century ship wreck in the Java Sea, the Intan, was excavated in 1997 by Michael Flecker and it has been found that its cargo included an assortment of metal moulds and ritual utensils associated with Mahayana Buddhism. Three metal stupa moulds and moulds for making Bodhisattva votive tablets have also been found.⁷⁵ In the opinion of John Guy, the moulds were probably imported from eastern India although these were not imitations of those found in Bodhgaya.⁷⁶ In our assumption these stupa moulds most likely bore the influence of the Jhewari bronze stupa (a big hoard of bronze images were found at the village Jhewari near Chittagong) which belonged to the 9th century according to Debala Mitra.⁷⁷

A gold coin of Abbasid Caliph Al-Mustāsim Billāh (1242-58A.D.) has been found from excavation at Kuṭīlāmuḍa.⁷⁸ More 13 Abbasid and Umayyad gold Dināras and 21 silver Dirhāms of that period are now preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum. These coins were recovered from Comilla district. Very recently these coins were displayed in the coin exhibition organized by the Bangladesh National Museum in July 2012. Discovery of these coins from Comilla region suggests that South-East Bengal was well-connected to the Arab maritime network extending from Africa and Europe in the west to

China in the east. The economy of South-East Bengal must have been benefited from this external trade and certainly it helped to develop Devaparvata as a flourishing Buddhist cultural and educational center.

The Arab maritime trade link with South-East Bengal is also supported by the contemporary Arab literary sources. From the ninth century onwards, *Sāmāndār* or *Sodkawan* (in and around modern Chittagong) was a major port of South-Eastern Bengal which had been described in the writings of Al-Idrisi, Ibn Khurdadveh, Masoodi and Sulaiman. This port was used extensively by the Arab merchants in the 10th and 11th centuries. Most probably *Sāmāndār* rose to prominence as an international port after the decline of *Tāmrālipti*. *Sāmāndār* was connected with South India, Ceylon and West Asia. *Sāmāndār*'s seaborne contact with ports like *Uranshin* (Orissa coast), *Kanja* (Conjeevaram in Coromondal coast) and *Serendip* (Srilanka) is mentioned in the Arabic sources.⁷⁹ But the Arab geographers, however, wrongly attribute this port as being located in the kingdom of the Pala king *Dharmapāla*. No Pāla copper plate has yet been found in South-East Bengal. Three later Pāla image inscriptions have been found in ancient *Samataṭa* region and in our assumption these images were brought from North-Bengal. There is no evidence that ancient *Harikela* sub-region was included within Pāla kingdom. This port held *Kāmarūpa*, *Ārākān*, and *Vaṅga* as its hinterland. It is reported in the Arab literary sources that aloe wood was brought to *Samandar* from *Qamrun*. Al-Idrisi reports, 'Aloe wood is brought hither from the country of *Kāmarut* in 15 days distance by a river of which the water is sweet. The Aloe wood which comes from this country is of superior quality and of a delicious perfume'. *Kāmarut* is certainly identical with *Kāmarūpa* which was well-known for aloe wood and the river with sweet water was certainly *Brahmaputra*. This reference clearly indicates that aloe wood was transported to *Sāmāndār* from *Kāmarūpa* through inland river-network and it was exported to the Arab world and other countries. The route which ran from *Sāmāndār* to the *Kāmarūpa* was probably under the political control of the rulers of *Samataṭa*. So the movement of merchandise through the *Samataṭa* territory must have added wealth to the treasury of the rulers of *Samataṭa*.⁸⁰ Moreover *Sāmāndār* was definitely connected with the inland river ports of *Vaṅga-Samataṭa* sub-region.

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Conclusion

South-East Bengal has a history of its own from early times. Long before the rise of the Mauryan Empire, Vaṅga became prominent as a *janapada* (state). The discovery of *janapada* punch-marked coins from Wari-Baṭeśwar is highly significant in the history of ancient Bengal. It clearly suggests that during the 5th - 4th century B.C. a well-ordered administrative system was developed in the heart of Vaṅga. The mention of Gangaridae/Gangaridai in the Greek and Latin sources of the 3rd century B.C. to the 1st century A.D. clearly hints at the existence of a strong political and economic entity in the area. However, it is not known whether Vaṅga-Samatata region subsequently formed a part of the Mauryan Empire or not. It is most likely that during the Mauryan period South-East Bengal maintained a separate political entity.

Samataṭa is referred as a frontier kingdom (*pratyanta rājya*) in the Allahabad inscription and it became a tributary state of Samudragupta. It apparently suggests that Vaṅga was included within the Gupta Empire during the rule of Sumudragupta. The discovery of Gupta gold coins from Dhaka, Koṭālipāḍā and Mohammadpur in present Magura district corroborate this fact. On the other hand, the discovery of Gupta copper plates (2 copper plates of Vainyagupta), Gupta silver and gold coins from Mainamati and Gunaighara in Comilla district indicate that Samataṭa could not remain independent for a long time. Probably, it was included in the Gupta Empire during the rule of Candragupta II, the son of Samudragupta. So, the separate regional entity of South-East Bengal had collapsed with the rise of the Imperial Guptas and this sub-region was integrated with their empire. Gupta rule paved the way of South-East Bengal shaping its administrative and land system. Subsequent sculptures, coins, land system and administration of this region were developed following the Gupta tradition. So, the impact of Gupta rule in this sub-region was profound and far-reaching.

After the fall of the Gupta Empire, an independent kingdom was established in Vaṅga during the 6th century A.D. The existing history of ancient Bengal refers to the three post Gupta kings of the region - Gopachandra, Dharmāditya and Samāchāradeva. But their sequence could not be established. Dvādaśāditya, a newly discovered king on the basis of a recently published copper plate, has to be incorporated as a king of this line. Sudhanyāditya was not identified in the past, whose existence was known on the basis of a coin. Now it seems to us that there was a Post-Gupta dynasty in South-East Bengal with their names ending in 'Āditya'. Dharmāditya, Dvādaśāditya and Sudhanyāditya were the kings of this dynasty. Gopachandra and Samāchāradeva possibly formed another line of kings. The present author has found two gold coins of Gopachandra in the collection of the Bangladesh National Museum, which was discovered from Comilla and Dhaka district. The gold coins of Sudhanyāditya have also been found from Comilla, Sābhār, Koṭālipāḍā and Mahāsthān. The find places of these coins clearly suggest that an extensive kingdom was formed during this period including large portion of South-East Bengal and Vārakamaṇḍala of Koṭālipāḍā area flourished as the capital city of this kingdom, as also it's trading and administrative center.

B. N. Mukherjee and Jahar Acharjee¹ have drawn the attention of scholars to a gold coin of Śaśāṅka, which was discovered from Comilla region, the core territory of the ancient kingdom of Samataṭa. There are more three same type of unpublished gold coins are preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum which were discovered from Comilla district in 1973 and 1975. On the obverse, the coins bear the symbol of Siva on bull and on the reverse the figure of *padmāsana* Lakṣmī. To the left side of the head of Lakṣmī, there is the legend "Śrī Śrī Śaśāṅka" in Brāhmi script. At the bottom 'jaya' is mentioned in Brāhmi alphabet. It is interesting to note that one such coin bears 'vijaya' in place of 'jaya' legend (Bangladesh National Museum accession no. 73. 1795). Mention may be made that the normal coin of Śaśāṅka has no dots but these coins bear the large dotted boarder like the other coins of Samataṭa. Most of the Śaśāṅka's coins have weight 9.4g. but in particular the weight of these coins are around 5.7g. However, the symbolic representations of the coin is common with the other gold coins of Śaśāṅka found from Midnapur and Orissa, but it bears an additional legend 'vijaya' (victory), which appears

to be significant. The innovation and local features are more prominent in Samataṭa type coins of Śaśāṅka. It is almost certain that these gold coins were locally minted and it was probably issued by king Śaśāṅka as a mark of victory (*vijaya*). Hence these coins apparently suggest that Śaśāṅka, the king of Gauḍa, conquered Samataṭa and issued coins as a mark of his victory. It may be stated that South-East Bengal was included within the kingdom of Śaśāṅka, at least for some time, though there is no evidence to confirm it by other sources.

On the other hand, the Nidhānpur copper plates of Bhāskaravarman state that the king granted lands from his royal camp at Karṇasūvarṇa, the capital of Gauḍa kingdom. It implies that after the death of Śaśāṅka, Bhāskaravarman captured South-East Bengal and extended his empire up to Karṇasūvarṇa. A large number of gold coins of Bhāskaravarman (*Śrīkumāra* legend), Vāsuvarman and Devavarman have been found in South-East Bengal. These numismatic evidences as well the Baḍagaṅgā rock inscription of Bhutivarman support the view of Varman's assertion in this region. It seems to us that the Nāthas and the predecessors of the Rātas were the feudal kings under the Varman rulers of Kāmarūpa. But the rule of both Śaśāṅka and the Varmans of Kāmarūpa did not last for a long time. Probably Jivadhāraṇa Rāta raised his head against the Varmans and established an independent kingdom in Samataṭa. D. C. Sircar mentioned that the Rātas were the feudal kings of Samataṭa. But we are not inclined to accept this suggestion. On the basis of the new epigraphic and numismatic sources, it seems to us that both Jivadhāraṇa and Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta were independent rulers and they formed an extensive kingdom, which included the Samataṭa-Harikela sub-region and some parts of Vaṅga during the second half of the seventh century.

The Rātas were supplanted by the Khaḍgas, who established a large kingdom in South-East Bengal and seven generation of kings ruled successively. The newly discovered gold and silver coins of the dynasty have been incorporated in their history. Many existing ideas regarding the Khaḍgas have been revised in the light of the new materials. The newly found facts clearly suggest that the Khaḍgas were not Buddhists and they were actually Brahmin or Saiva rulers. Now it is clear that Bhattasali's identification of Karmānta with Kāmṭa was not correct. It is known from the copper plate of Balabhaṭṭa

that his father Devakhaḍga ruled from their royal palace Kaṭakashilā located at Devaparvata. On the other hand, the kingdom of the Khaḍgas was not limited to only Samataṭa. Their coins have been found in Sābhār, Koṭālipāḍā, Dhaka, Sylhet, Noakhali, Comilla, Tripura and Kāmarūpa which may be taken to mean that their kingdom included large areas of Vaṅga-Samataṭa sub-region. Balabhaṭṭa, the fifth ruler of this dynasty, assumed the epithet 'Vaṅgaśrī' and this may be taken to mean that their kingdom included Vaṅga along with Samataṭa from the second half of the seventh century up to the first half of the eighth century A.D.

The Khaḍgas were succeeded by the Early Deva kings of Samataṭa. During the rule of Ānāndadeva, Devaparvata had to be abandoned and Vasantapura was established as a new capital for the imminent foreign invasion, probably by a ruler of Kāmarūpa. But Bhavadeva reestablished his capital at Devaparvata. This fact shows that the Early Deva kings protected the independence of Vaṅga-Samataṭa region from the external attack. During their rule, the kingdom of Samataṭa flourished and reached its zenith. The remains of Ānāndavihāra and Bhavadevavihāra are still stand as a landmark of their achievements. Ānāndadeva assumed the eloquent epithet 'Vaṅgālamṛgāṅka' and it apparently shows that some parts of Vaṅga or Vaṅgala (the coastal region of Vaṅga) were included within their kingdom. On the other hand, we observe that when the Early Deva kings were ruling in Samataṭa, side by side Harikela emerged as a separate political entity. A line of kings with their names ending with 'Deva', such as Devātideva, Kāntideva were ruling in Harikela and Vardhamānpura was their capital.

The Early Deva kings were supplanted by the Chandras, who raised their head from feudatory position under the Harikela kings, captured Samataṭa and Chandradvīpa, established a paramount kingdom in Vaṅga-Samataṭa sub-region and ruled successively, uninterruptedly from Trailokyachandra to Govindachandra. It was a very important event during beginning of the 10th century A.D. that they transferred their capital from Devaparvata to Vikramapura. Probably it was essential to shift the capital for the sake of better administration of the extensive Chandra kingdom. When the Chandras were ruling in South-East Bengal, the Pālas were ruling in north, north-western Bengal and Bihar.

Three Pāla image inscriptions have been found in South-East Bengal and some scholars² indicate Pāla rule in this region for a short period of time. But this fact conflicts with the continuous Chandra rule in this region, as revealed by their epigraphic records. It would not be unreasonable to hold that these images were brought to South-East Bengal by someone from north Bengal. All the images are made of black basalt stone, available in the Rājmahal hills. No Pāla copper plate has so far been found in this region. Hence it is difficult to accept the idea of Pāla domination in this area just on the basis of three image inscriptions. It is quite probable that the images were transferred to South-Eastern Bengal at a later time when their owners had to migrate to the area from somewhere within the Pala empire. The Chandra records refer that Śrīchandra and Kalyāṇachandra led expeditions against the ruler of Gauḍa. But the Pāla inscriptions are silent about this. When the Chandra power was expanding, the Pālas were in a precarious position. At that time they were facing the attack of the Chāndellas, Kalcuris and the uprising of the Kambojas from within their empire. This situation probably offered an opportunity for the Chandras to interfere in the political affairs of Gauḍa. But it is very difficult to determine of the extent of Chandra success over the Pālas due to the panegyric nature of the verses of inscriptions. It is clearly known only that Gopāla II was reinstated on the throne by Śrīchandra. This fact suggests that the Buddhists Chandras helped the Buddhist Pālas to survive in their evil days and maintained a friendly relation with them.

The Chandra records also report that both Śrīchandra and Kalyāṇachandra took aggressive policy and came into conflict with the rulers of Kāmarūpa. It is probable that Śrīchandra's success was *temporary in the difficult mountainous region, which gets water logged during the rainy season*. On the other hand, it is clear that when the Chandras were ruling in Vaṅga-Samatāṭa region, Harikela formed a separate political entity. It seems to us that Attākara-deva was the member of the Ākara dynasty. A coin of Attākara has been found, which is symbolically same as the other Ākara coins. The Ākaras were ruling in Harikela and some parts of Tippera-Ārākān hilly region during the 10th century when simultaneously the Chandras were ruling in Vaṅga-Samatāṭa sub-region. The ancestors of Trailokyachandra were probably feudal chiefs under the Ākara kings and the main stay of their power. It seems to us that the Chandras maintained

friendly relation with their previous overlords when they were almost paramount rulers of South-East Bengal.

Subsequently this region was ruled by the Varmans and the Senas successively. The copper plates of the Varmans were issued from Vikramapura after the Chandras and these indicate that the Chandras were extirpated by the Varmans. It seems to us that the Varmans came to Bengal along with Karṇa's invasion, shared his victory and in an opportune moment set up an independent kingdom in South-East Bengal. Though Vajravarman was the first member of the dynasty, it appears to us that Jātavarman was the real founder of the dynasty, which lasted till the reign of Bhojavarman (c. 1055-1145 A.D). The Varmans were relatives of the Pālas as both Jātavarman and Vīgrahapāla III was son in laws of Karṇa. It seems to us that the Varmans maintained a friendly relation with the Pālas following the Chandras. All the Varman records have been discovered in Vaṅga and it is probable that the kingdom of the Varmans was mainly limited to Vaṅga and some parts of Samatāṭa, while the Ākaras preserved their separate political entity in Harikela.

The Varmans were ousted by the Senas and during their rule all the sub-regions of ancient Bengal were merged into one political unit. Almost all the copper plates of the Senas were issued from Vikramapura, which indicate that it was their main political hub. It is known from the Barrāckpur copper plate that the royal palace of Vijayasena was located in Vikramapura, where his queen Vilāsadevī had performed *Tūlāpuruṣa-mahādāna* sacrifice. In 1204 the Muslims conquered west and north Bengal, while the rule of the Senas was confined to South-East Bengal and Lakṣmaṇasena and his successors ruled this sub-region for some time. When the later Senas ruled in South-East Bengal, the Muslim power of north Bengal made attempts to annex this sub-region. But this area is well-guarded by its numerous rivers which were natural barrier for the advancement of the Muslim cavalry into this region.

However, the Muslim conquest weakened the Sena power. They not only lost their territories but they also lost their power and prestige. In this situation, the feudal chiefs raised their heads and started to rule almost independently. The later Deva rulers ruled in Samatāṭa-Harikela sub-region and finally captured Vikramapura by ousting the

Senas. During this period Paṭṭikerā developed as a separate political entity which maintained close relation with Ārākān, while Śrīhaṭṭa was ruled by another line of local rulers (c. 1190-1250 A.D). This political disintegration of South-East Bengal made the opportunity of the Muslim occupation of this region and finally they captured it in the beginning of the 14th century.

From the fall of the Gupta Empire down to the coming of the Senas, South-East Bengal formed a separate political entity. During this period we are now able to find the existence of many local dynasties who established their political supremacy over parts or whole of the sub-region of South- East Bengal. After the Muslim conquest of north and west Bengal, this area preserved its independent political entity for nearly about a century. The numerous rivers and the consequent inundation of the whole area made this region inaccessible for the Muslim cavalry. Because of the independent political entity, many administrative, cultural and trade centers grew up in this region. Because of its expansive sea board this area could take part actively in the overseas international trade. Monetized economy was developed which supported the flourishing economy of the local dynasties. The fertile land and its rich agriculture, favorable climate and inland river network - all helped the development of this area as a separate economic zone. On the other hand, this region formed a separate cultural entity as local and unique features clearly appear in the architectures, bronze and stone sculptures, and terracotta plaques of the region. Thus we may safely conclude that South-East Bengal was fairly a well-defined geographical sub-region with a distinctive separate political identity and, in turn, evolved its own economic zone and cultural ethos.

By building up a chronological political history of the region, which was, from very early times, thought to be a part of the Pala Empire, we have tried to establish the fact that South-East Bengal (*Vanga, Samatata and Harikela*) formed a separate political entity. Its geo-physical conditions differed from the northern and western parts of the 'region' of Bengal and it can be said to have formed a 'sub-region' with its own history, culture and economy. The new source materials that have come to light in the last half a century or so have given us a clear understanding of a separate political entity of the 'sub-region' with its strong economic base due to its sea-trade, which it could command

due to its advantage of location. The economic strength, in its turn, gave rise to Hindu-Buddhist culture in the form of architectures, sculptures (both stone and bronze) and terracotta arts. The archaeological ruins and discovered cultural materials, especially the bronze images, hint at the close relationship of this sub-region with the nearby countries of South-East Asia. The proximity of Ārākān naturally influenced the Harikela area and it is not surprising that we can see Ārākānese influence in the script, coins and sculptures, both in bronze and terracotta. The continuity of this connection can be seen even a few centuries later, when we find the development of Bangla literature in the court of Ārākān. We have Ālāul in mind when we make this remark. We hope our attempt to build up a connected historical perspective for the sub-region of South-East Bengal will open up the possibility of exploring this 'separate entity' in further areas of history, culture and economy. We only attempted to build up a connected political history of the sub-region, which in turn will open up other dimensions for further research and investigation.

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Table of Chronology

Gupta Dynasty

Chandragupta I, c. 320-335 A.D;

Sumudragupta, c. 335-376 A.D;

Chandragupta II, c. 376-414 A.D;

Kumaragupta I, c. 414-455 A.D.(Gupta era 96-136);

Skandagupta, c. 455-467 A.D.(Gupta era 136-146);

Purugupta, c. 467-468 A.D;

Kumaragupta II, c. 468-475 A.D;

Budhagupta, c. 475-495 A.D;

Vainyagupta, c. 507 A.D.(Gupta era 188);

Narasimhagupta, c. 525 A.D;

Kumaragupta III, c. 525-535 A.D.

Post-Gupta Rulers of South-East Bengal

Dharmāditya, c. 535-540 A.D.

Dvadaśāditya, c. 540-555 A.D.

Sudhanyāditya, c. 555-565 A.D.

Gopachandra, c. 565-580 A.D.

Samācharadeva, c. 580-600 A.D.

(All dates are approximate assumptions)

Śaśāṅka, c. 595-625 A.D.

Natha Dynasty

Śrīnatha, c. 620-640 A.D;

Lokanatha, c. 650-670 A.D. (Gupta era 344, date of issue of the Tippera copper plate);

Maruṇḍanatha, c. 675-686 A.D (approximately).

Rata Dynasty

Jivadhāraṇa Rāta, c. 640-665 A.D.

Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta, c. 665-675 A.D.

(Dates are approximate assumptions)

Khaḍga Dynasty

Khaḍgodyam, c. 615-635 A.D.

Jātakhaḍga, c. 635-655 A.D.

Devakhaḍga, c. 675-700 A.D.

Rājabhaṭa, c. 700-715 A.D.

Balabhaṭa, c. 715-730 A.D.

Sarvabhaṭa, c. 730-745 A.D.

Pṛthubhaṭa, c. 745-760 A.D.

(For the dates up to Devakhaḍga, we have followed D. C. Sircar and dates of the later kings are approximated assumptions)

Early Deva Dynasty of Samatata

Sāntideva, c. 760-775 A.D.

Vīradeva, c. 775-790 A.D.

Ānandadeva, c. 790-815 A.D.

Bhavadeva, c. 815-840 A.D.

Early Deva Rulers of Harikela

Devātideva, c. 715 A.D;

Kāntideva, c. 800-825 A.D;

Attākaradeva-, early 10th century A.D.

Chandra Dynasty

Pūrṇachandra-c. 865-885 A.D;

Sūvarṇachandra, c. 885-905 A.D;

Trailokyachandra, c. 905-925 A.D;

Śrīchandra, c. 925-975 A.D;

Kalyāṇachandra, c. 975-1000 A.D;

Laḍahachandra, c. 1000-1020 A.D;

Govindachandra, c. 1020-1055 A.D.

Varman Dynasty

Vajravarman

Jātavarman, c. 1055-1073 A.D;

Harivarman, c. 1073-1127 A.D;

Shyamalavarman, c. 1127-1137 A.D;

Bhojavarman, c. 1137-1145 A.D.

Sena Dynasty

Vīrasena

Sāmantasena, c. 1060-1080 A.D;

Hemantasena, c. 1080-1096 A.D;

Vijayasena, c. 1096-1159 A.D;

Vallālasena, c. 1159-1179 A.D;

Lakṣhmaṇasena, c. 1179-1206 A.D;

Viśvarūpasena, c. 1206-1225 A.D;

Sūryasena, c. 1210-1215 A.D.

Later Deva Dynasty

Puruṣottamadeva, c. 1180-1200 A.D;

Madhumathana or Madhusudanadeva, c. 1200-1205 A.D;

Vasudeva, c. 1215-1230 A.D;

Damodaradeva, c. 1230-1255 A.D;

Daśarathadeva, c. 1255-1290 A.D.

Later Deva Rulers of Samatāṭa and Paṭṭikerā

Harikaladeva, c. 1204-1230 A.D;

Vīradharadeva, c. 1230-1250 A.D.

Later Deva Dynasty of Śrīhaṭṭa

Navagīrvāṇ, c. 1190-1200 A.D;

Gakuladeva, c. 1200-1210 A.D;

Nārāyaṇadeva, c. 1210-1220 A.D;

Kaśavadeva, c. 1220-1230 A.D;

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B. Numismatic Sources

Unpublished Numismatic Sources

List of unpublished coins (deciphered by the present author). Most of the coins are preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum.

1. Unpublished Gupta Gold and Silver Coins

- a. Three gold coins of Sumudragupta (one from Koṭālipādā, one purchased from Dhaka and the exact find spot is not known, another coin found from Comilla). Museum accession no. 84.1786, 4299, 4384.
- b. Two coins of Chandragupta II (one gold coin found from Salvanvihara, accession no. 2003.202 and other silver coin discovered from Gunāighar, persevered in the collection of Nurul Islam, coin collector of Dhaka).

- c. Three gold and two silver coins of Kumaragupta found from Gunāighar, Dhaka and Comilla. Museum accession no. 4385 and the silver coins are preserved in the collection of Nurul Islam.
- d. One silver coin of Skandagupta (purchased from Dhaka). Preserved in the collection of Nurul Islam.

2. Unpublished Post-Gupta Gold Coins

- a. Four unpublished gold coins of Śaśānka (Among these, three gold coins were collected from Comilla district in 1975-1976 and these are the Samataṭa type gold coins of Śaśānka. Another gold coin was purchased from Dhaka). Museum accession no. 73.1506, 73.1795, 75.1102, 76.1016.
 - b. Two gold coins of Gopachandra (found from Comilla). Museum accession no. 83.1552, 87.77.
 - c. Gold coins of Sudhanyāditya (discovered from Koṭālipādā, Sābhār and Mahasthan). Museum accession no. 73.1537, 73.1538, 76.54, 83.1554, 83.1551, 83.2134, 83.3642.
3. Gold coins of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta (found from Dhaka, Sābhār, Comilla and Noakhali districts). Museum accession no. 70.1265, 70.1302, 70. 1338, 71.138, 71.145, 72.318, 78.904, 73.449, 87.14, 92.622.
4. Gold and Silver Coin of the Khaḍga Dynasty
 - a. Two gold coin of Rājabhaṭa (found from Comilla district) and one silver coin discovered from Chittagong. Museum accession no. 73.668, 4408. The silver coin is preserved in the collection of Nurul Islam.
 - b. Two gold coins and eleven silver coins of Balabhaṭa (discovered from Comilla and Chandpur). Museum accession no. 86.2279, 93.317-93.325.
 - c. Five gold coins of Pṛthubhaṭa (four discovered from Comilla and one from Koṭālipādā). Museum accession no. 71.139, 72.375, 76.1268, 86.880, 87.78.
 - d. Three gold coin of Sarvabhaṭa (found from Chandpur). Museum accession no. 77.1977, 82.169, 4309.

5. Two Early Deva Gold coins (Bālamrgāṅka legend) found in Comilla. Museum accession no. 75.710, 79.1278.
6. One silver coin of Attākaradeva discovered from Chittagong. The present author has collected the photograph of the coin from Dr. Shamsul Hossain, former Curator, Chittagong University Museum.
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