

**BUDDHIST VESTIGES AT JAGJIVANPUR IN
NORTH BENGAL - A CASE STUDY OF
TERRACOTTA PLAQUES**

**Thesis submitted to Utkal University for the award of
Doctor of Philosophy in Arts
in
Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology**



2013

By

Amal Roy

Regd. No.07-AIHCA,2008-09

**Under the Guidance of
Prof. Sadasiva Pradhan
P.G. Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture
and Archaeology**

**Utkal University
Vani Vihar
Bhubaneswar - 751004**

PREFACE

The theme of the thesis has been conceived and confined on the materialistic remains of the excavated Buddhist site at Jagjivanpur in Malda district of West Bengal within the framework of the historical sources reflected through terracotta plaques.

The archaeological activities at the site began under the aegis of the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Govt. of West Bengal, followed by the chance discovery of an extremely important copper plate charter in 1987, which not only revealed the name of a hitherto unknown ruler Mahendrapaladeva, a scion of the imperial Pala dynasty, but also helped historians to rewrite the political history of Bengal and of North India. King Mahendrapala (c. A.D. 845 -860), who is described as the son and successor of Devapala (c. A.D 810-845), granted a piece of land in *Nandadirghik-udranga* in favour of *Mahasenapati Vajradeva* within the present village Jagjivanpur.

Since 1996, the extensive digging work was carried out after the shifting of the occupants from the site. Through the study of the successive deposits it has been understood that the site was not occupied prior to the Pala period and hence it has been identified as a mono-cultural site. In course of excavations, the brick built monastery, evidently the one mentioned in the copper plate, has been exposed completely.

Among the antiquities, metal image of Marichi, terracotta seals and sealings, myriads of exquisite terracotta plaques, beads of terracotta and semiprecious stones, ornamental bricks, terracotta balls, dabbers, lamps and various iron objects are noteworthy. The legend on the terracotta seals helped to identify the monastery as *Nandadirghi Vihara*.

The thesis has been divided into **five chapters** with three **annexure** on scientific analysis for reflection of the theme in this Ph.D. work entitled "*Buddhist Vestiges at Jagjivanpur in North Bengal : A Case Study of Terracotta Plaques*" through detailed study of the site with materialistic remains and intensive research on the terracotta plaques.

The **Chapter I** contains the *Introduction* part of the thesis with the discussion on Political history of North Bengal, Buddhism in West Bengal and Buddhism in North Bengal. The present study is confined within a small geographical unit of North Bengal which was included in the political divisions like Pundravardhana, Varendra and Gauda in different periods under different ruling dynasties during ancient times. Though the epigraphical and literary sources indicate that the North Bengal was under the domains of the the Mauryas, the Guptas, the Later Guptas, Sasanka, the Kaivartas, the Palas,

and the Senas, but it got its initial importance under the rule of Sasanka and touched its great glory during the rule of the Palas in the early mediaeval period.

The **Chapter II** contains the *Buddhist establishment at Jagjivanpur* with the discussion of the location and environment of the site, principal mounds within the village, geomorphology of the site, rivers, flora, legends and traditions associated with the site, political background, Buddhist rulers and Buddhism in North Bengal and socio-cultural-religious background for proper understanding of the site with other relevant aspects. Buddhism rose to importance in Bengal (West Bengal and Bangladesh) during the rule of the Palas between the 9th and 11th centuries as they were the devout followers of Buddhism. Under the royal patronage of Dharmapala, Devpala and his son Mahendrapala, Buddhism in North Bengal received a new impetus. The extant archaeological materials bear the mark of culmination process and revealing several facts relating to the religious, social and economic life. Jainism and Buddhism were the two most important forces dominating the religious life of the people and cultural fabric in eastern India.

The **Chapter III** contains the *Excavation at Jagjivanpur* with the discussions on the documented sites and antiquities like Copper Plate Charter of Sri Mahendrapaladeva, bronze image of Buddha, stone image of Buddha and archaeological sites and mounds in Jagjivanpur mouza. The deciphered text of the inscription with its historical importance is recorded here totally. The excavation part in this chapter contains the excavation method, trial diggings, cuttings, stratigraphy, date and chronology of the site through relative and absolute datings and the monastery. The detail discussion on the excavated antiquities like seals & sealings, image of Marichi, ornamental bricks, beads and other miscellaneous objects of daily use. The section ii of this chapter is also dealing with the pottery in six sub sections for discussions about mode of collection, typology, manufacturing technique, common pottery types and designs over the pottery.

The **Chapter IV** entirely deals with the terracotta plaques, unearthed in course of digging through layers two and three, mainly from the collapsed debris of the monastery walls. Some plaques have also been collected through explorations also. The plaques have been dealt exclusively in separate chapter due to its quantity, exquisite depiction of various figures and representation of terracotta art of early mediaeval period, as my topic of research is concentrated on the plaques mainly. All the plaques have been classified into several groups, after preparing the catalogue which is incorporated in this thesis. The salient features of the plaques with figurative arts and archaeological value and purpose of use have also been dealt in this chapter.


The **Chapter V** contains the resume or the conclusive part of the thesis. It is a summary on the findings of the study which has been discussed in the preceding chapters in detail. This new site deserves special mention as this is the only excavated

Buddhist monastery in West Bengal with all essential components in a regular manner like sanctum with *pradakshinapatha*, courtyard, entrance, verandah, cells, etc., like other monasteries of eastern India. Not a single Buddhist site in the state produced such myriads of exquisitely carved terracotta plaques with three dimensional figural representation of distinct indigenous variety. The Copper Plate Inscription of Mahendrapaladeva is remarkable historical evidence of Bengal as well as of eastern India.

The **Annexure** contains the scientific analysis and research on various aspects like palaeo-botanical remains with C₁₄ dating of charcoal samples, archaeo-metallurgical studies of iron nail and archaeo-technical studies on metal image of Marichi. These scientific reports have enriched the research work and made the thesis more technical and scientific.

The site with remarkable material evidence will provide primary source materials for a long term study and research. A large number of photographs of the site and antiquities with drawings, maps, figures, etc. have been incorporated in this thesis as an integral part of my research work and also for clear understanding of the site.

**Vani Vihar
Bhubaneswar
Odisha**



(Amal Roy)

**Ph.D.Student
AIHC&A Dept.,Utkal University
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

- i) A Brief Outline of the Political History of North Bengal**
- ii) Buddhism in West Bengal**
- iii) Buddhism in North Bengal**

i) A Brief Outline of the Political History of North Bengal

The present study is confined within a small geographical unit of North Bengal (Northern Part of West Bengal) which was included in the political divisions like *Pundravardhana*¹, *Varendra*² and *Gauda*³, in different periods under different ruling dynasties during ancient times. Though the epigraphical and literary sources indicate that the North Bengal was under the domains of the the *Mauryas*, the *Guptas*, the *Later Guptas*, *Sasanka*, the *Kaivartas*, the *Palas*, and the *Senas* but it got its initial importance under the rule of Sasanka and touched its great glory during the rule of the Palas in the early mediaeval period of Bengal. Buddhism rose to importance in Bengal (West Bengal and Bangladesh) during the rule of the Palas between the 9th and 11th centuries as they were the devout followers of Buddhism. Under the royal patronage of Dharmapala, Devpala and his son Mahendrapala, Buddhism in North Bengal received a new impetus. Bengal, within the scope of present study, consisted of

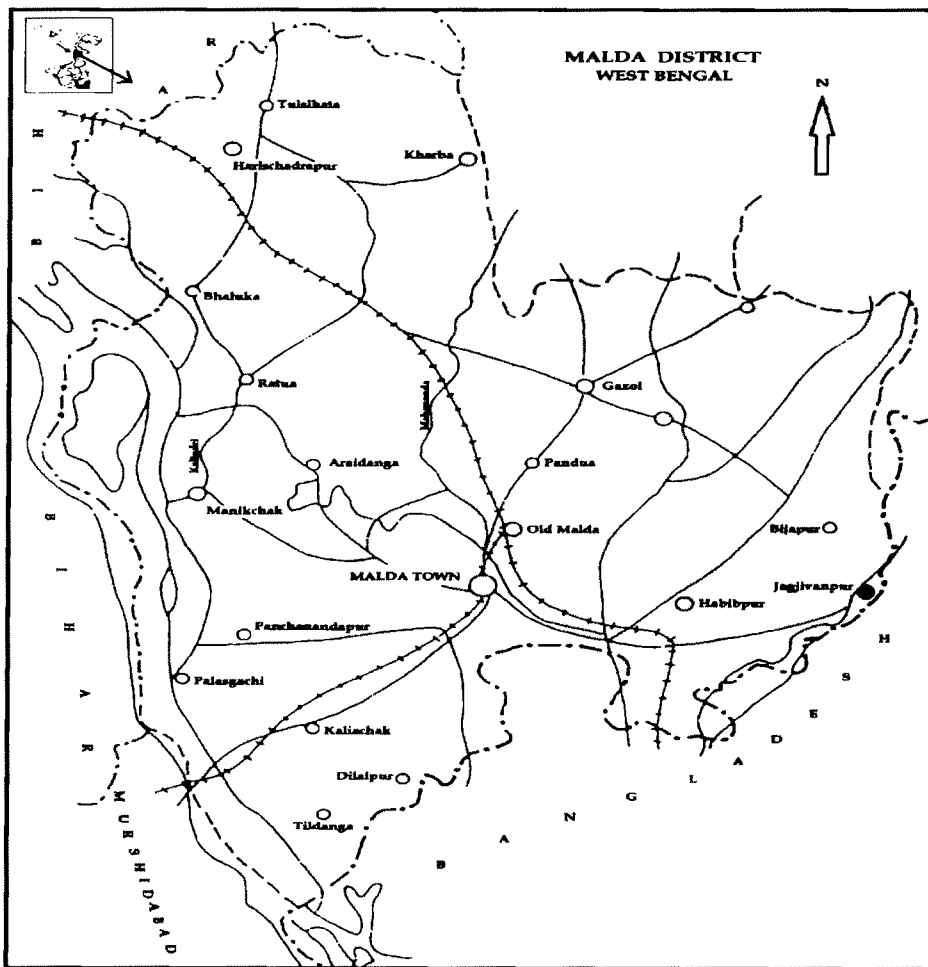


Fig. 1

present West Bengal, Bangladesh and the province of Magadha in Bihar. Two main geographical divisions, such as *Gauda* and *Vanga* were under the Palas of Bengal. *Gauda* had many sub-divisions like *Pundravardhana*, *Varendri*, *Radha*, *Tamralipta* and *Sumatata* and similarly *Vanga* had *Harikela*, *Chandradvipa*, *Samatata* and *Vangala*.

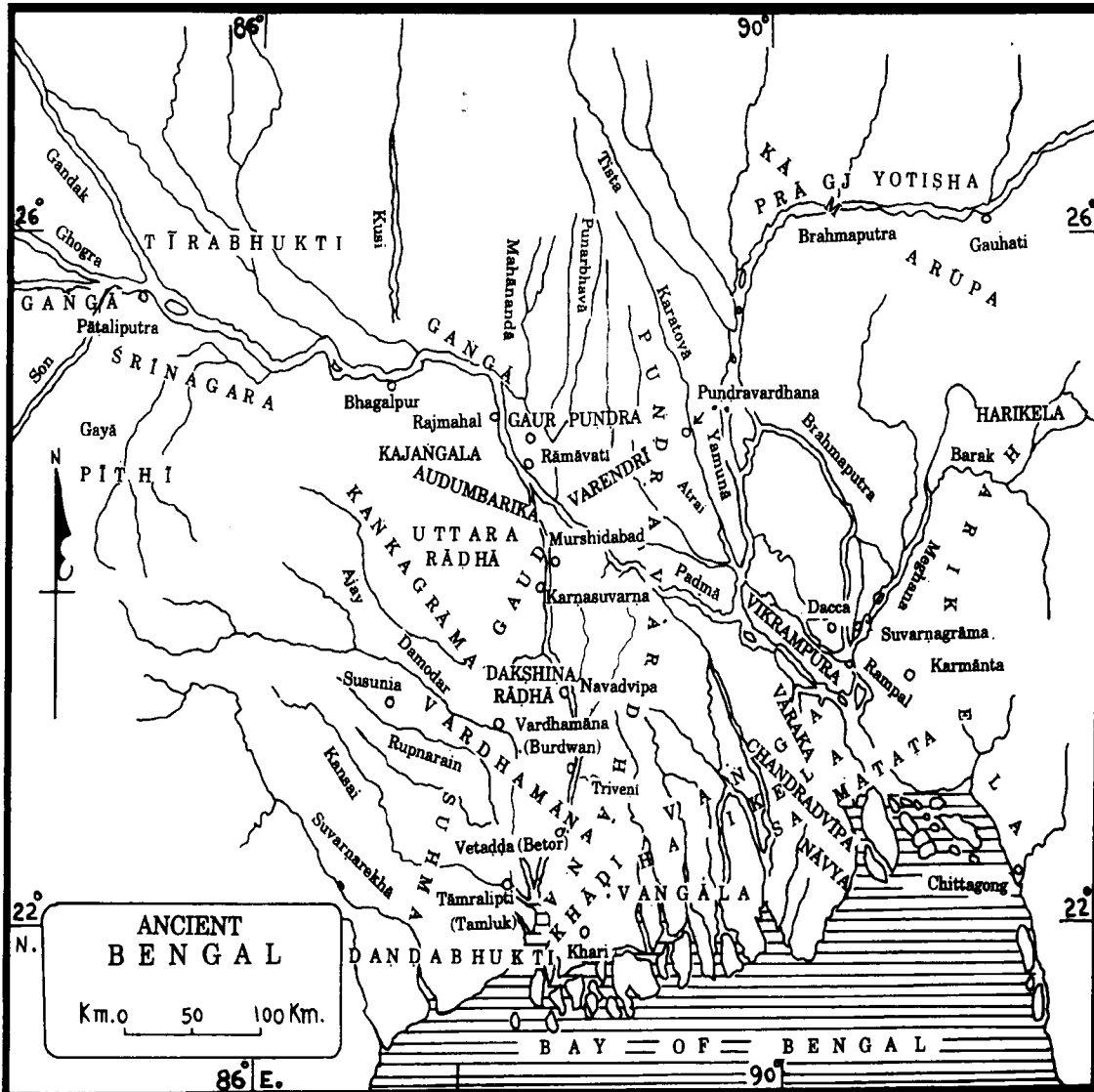


Fig. 2

The history of Bengal begins with the past human culture through materialistic remains left by the pre-historic people in the form of stone tools in Western uplands and the Himalayan region from Palaeolithic through microlithic to Neolithic periods. The Chalcolithic culture flourished with main focus in the Ajay-Mayurakshi Valley in Radha region. The only Chalcolithic site was reported from Bangarh in North Bengal. In

case of early historic settlements during the pre-Maurya, Sunga, Kushana and the pre-Gupta period, we have the references of various sites from the lower Bengal region, of which, Chandraketugarh and Tamruk are noteworthy. In North Bengal, the early historic site is rare, though some early terracottas and associated materials have been reported from Farakka on the bank of the Ganges and the excavated site at Bangarh on the bank of the Punarbhava. The political history of Bengal started at the beginning of the fourth century A.D. During this period we have the reference of a king Chandravarman on the rock of Susunia in Bankura district with his capital at Pokhanna. The account of the Chinese traveller speaks about the ruler Sri-Gupta, the founder of the Gupta dynasty who was ruling from Varendra i.e. North Bengal. The lateral evidences in Allahabad Pillar Inscription indicate that the Bengal was under the subjugation of Samudragupta. The epigraphical accounts evidently speak that Pundravardhana-bhukti was an administrative division comprising mainly the area of Northern Bengal. During the Gupta period the North Bengal was an integral part of the Gupta empire as referred in the Damodarpur Copper Plate inscription of Budhagupta. A large number of coins, issued by Vishnugupta and other evidences proved that the Later Guptas have also extended their suzerainty over North Bengal. *Maharaja* Vainyagupta was a renowned ruler of Samatata region during the sixth century AD. After the downfall of the Guptas and later Guptas, two independent kingdoms Vanga and Gauda became powerful during sixth-seventh century AD., under the rule of Gopachandra, Dharmaditya and Samacharadeva, Sri-Sudhanyaditya and Maharaja Vijayasena. The northern part of West Bengal and the whole of Northern Bengal were not included within the territory of Gopachandra and from this time this region was known popularly as Gauda. Under the rule of Sasanka (606 AD.), the Gauda was a flourishing kingdom with Karnasuvarna as the capital city. After the death of Sasanka, Bhaskarvarman of Kamarupa, captured the territory of Gauda with the capital city Karnasuvarna. Harshavardhan also annexed some parts of the Sasanka's territory. During this period so many feudatory rulers became independent and started ruling in small areas under their control.

The contemporary records provide the information regarding the *Mastyanyaya*⁴, a political uncertainty of the region in the middle of the 8th century A.D. without any central ruling authority. Gopala was the first ruler of the dynasty who came to power in 750 AD. in *Gauda* by an election. Unfortunately this historic event in the History of

Bengal is not described in detail. Only one inscription of the Pala period, i.e., the Khalimpur Copper Plate of Dharmapala refers to this event. The translation of the paragraph of Khalimpur inscription which refers to this event is as follows: "His son was the crest jewel of the head of kings, the glorious Gopala, whom the people made to take the hand of Fortune, to put an end to the practice of fishes"⁵. He reigned from 750 to 770 AD. and consolidated his position by extending his sway over all of Bengal. The Palas ruled for four centuries (750–1120 AD.) with stability and prosperity in Bengal. They constructed many temples and patronised art works and supported the Buddhist establishments at Nalanda, Vikramsila, Somapura and other Buddhist *Viharas*. *Somapura Mahavihara* is the largest Buddhist monastery in the Indian Subcontinent built by Dharmapala. The empire reached its peak under Dharmapala and Devapala. Dharmapala extended the empire into the northern parts of the Indian Subcontinent. Devapala, extended his empire from Assam and Utkala in the east, Kamboja (Afghanistan) in the north-west and Deccan in the south by subjugating the Utkalas, the ruler of Pragjyotisha (Assam), the Hunas, the Pratihara, Gurjara and Dravidas. Mahipala I recovered control over all of Bengal and expanded the Pala empire. Rampala the last great ruler of the dynasty, managed to retrieve the position of the dynasty to some extent. He crushed the *Varendra* rebellion and extended his empire further to Kamrupa, Orissa and Northern India.

According to the Kamauli Plate of Vaidyadeva, the minister of the Pala king Vigrahapala III, the Palas belonged to the solar dynasty⁶. According to the *Ramcharita*, Dharmapala was 'the light of the samudra's race, i.e., descended from the ocean'⁷. As these two records belong to a period more than three hundred years after the accession of Gopala it seems fictitious. Regarding the caste of the Palas the commentary on a verse of *Ramacharita*⁹ says that Rampala belongs to *Kshatriya* family. Taranatha¹⁰ gives us information that Gopala was begotten on a *Kshatriya* woman by the Tree-God. We have evidences about the Pala dynasty's matrimonial contacts with the other *Kshatriya* dynasties like the Rastrakuta and Kalachuris. It is very different to find out the reasons behind the silence of the Pala records about their origin or caste. It is perhaps due to the influence of Buddhism on the Pala monarchs, as Buddhism does not recognise any caste. The copper plates of the Palas begin with an invocation to lord

Buddha and several rulers of this dynasty are known to have been great patrons of Buddhism

Almost all the copper plate grants of the imperial Palas were issued from Victoria's camp in Magadha, and all the other inscription, with only a single exception, belonged to that region and therefore it may be concluded that Palas originally ruled in Magadha and subsequently conquered Bengal. But this view is not acceptable because the *Ramacharita*¹¹ refers *Varendri* as the *janakabhuh* or ancestral home of the Palas. The Badal Pillar Inscription¹² says that Dharmapala was only ruler of the east and gradually extended his domain to other directions. The Palas were originally the rulers of *Vanga* and the name came to be applied to the rest of Bengal province with the extension of their dominions. During the course of Pala rule the extent to the kingdom varied from time to time with the names like Gauda, Pundravardhana, Vanga, Vangala, Samatata, Herikela, Chandradvipa, Varendri, Radha, Tamralipta, etc.. *Vanga* and *Gauda* were broad divisions during this period. *Pundravardhana, Varendri, Radha, Tamralipta*, were parts of *Gauda* division while *Harikela, Candradvipa, Samatata and Vangala* belong to the *Vanga* division. *Magadha* region was also part of *Gauda-Vanga* during this period. The chronology of the Palas is ascertained by the Sarnath inscription¹³. The date of Mahipala I (AD 1026) is fixed in this inscription and therefore it is possible to fix the approximate dates of the predecessors and successors of Mahipala I from this fixed date, i.e. AD 1026.

The Pala period may be considered as the golden era of Bengal. The Palas were responsible for the introduction of Mahayana Buddhism in Tibet, Bhutan and Myanmar. During the Pala period Bengal became the main center of Buddhist as well as secular learning. The Universities like Nalanda, Vikramsila, Paharpur and Jagjivanpur flourished with prosperity under the royal patronage of the Pala rulers. The Palas had extensive trade as well as influence in South-East Asia as evident through the sculptures and architectural style within the domain of the Sailendras (Malaya, Java, Sumatra).

The Pala kings ruled over an extended territory in Northern India which included Bengal as a nuclear unit and as a result, several Buddhist monasteries and universities were built up within their territory covering the region of Bihar, West Bengal and Bangladesh. The Palas were the devout Buddhist and therefore their contributions

towards Buddhism are remarkable and therefore, an attempt has been made here to draw a brief note about the great Pala rulers who patronised Buddhism actively.

iii.a. Gopāla I: Nothing is definitely known about the history of Bengal in the period between the death of Harshavardhan and the rise of the Pālas. In the Khālimpur grant of Dharmapāla, it is said¹⁴ that the people made Gopāla to take the hand of fortune. Nothing is definitely known about the events of his reign. According to Lama Tāranātha, Gopāla built the celebrated monastery at Odantapura in Bihar¹⁵ and he was a pious Buddhist. It is said that Gopala was a devotee and bare factor of Buddhism¹⁶. He received the Nālandā monastery with fame, patronised new monasteries and offered gifts to the Buddhist clergy¹⁷.

iii.b) Dharmapala: Dharmapāladeva, the son of Gopāla I was the real founder of the Pāla dynasty as he consolidated the empire with a great skill. He was also a great Buddhist like his father. He is credited with the foundation of the celebrated Vikramaśilā monastery in the Bhāgalpur district of Bihar. This monastery had 107 temples and six colleges. Dharmapāla made Haribhadra, a great commentator of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, his spiritual preceptor. Tāranātha is of the opinion that the teachings of the *Prajñāpāramitā* spread widely under the auspices of this king¹⁸.

iii.c) Devapāla: Dharmapāla was succeeded by his son Devapāla, who further extended his kingdom from Himālayas in the North to the Vindhya in the south, according to the Bādāl Pillar Inscription¹⁹. From this copper-plate, discovered at Nālandā²⁰ it appears that Devapala granted five villages for various comforts of the *Bhikshus* as well as for writing the *Dharmaratnas* and for the upkeep of the Buddhist monastery, built there by Bālaputradeva, the king of Suvarnavīpa and Yava Bhumi (Jāvā-Sumātrā). Devapāla constructed many Buddhist temples and monasteries in Magadha. Thus Buddhist art and architecture got a fresh impetus during the reign of Devapāla.

iii.d) Nārāyanapāla: The most notable king after the death of devapala was Nārāyanapāla. In the Bhāgalpur copper-plate of the reign of Nārāyanapāla, the king is mentioned as a devotee to *sugata*²¹. According to a small inscription of Nārāyanapāla from Indian Museum, Calcutta, it is known about the erection of an image of Buddha in

ninth regnal year of the king Nārāyanapāla, by Dharmamitra, an inhabitant of Andhra country in the month of *Baisākha*²².

iii.e) Gopala II: The British Museum holds a manuscript of the *Ashtasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* written in the fifteenth regnal year of Gopāla II at the Vikramaśilā Monastery.

iii.f) Mahipāla I: From the Buddhism point of view the reign of Mahipala I, another ruler of the Pala dynasty, was an important one. In the seventeenth year of his reign, an image of Buddha was dedicated in or near the temple of the Mahābodhi at Bodh Gayā and in the same year the temple at Nālandā was restored, as it was burnt down in a fire²³. Under the orders of the king the wheels of Law at Banāras was being repaired and a new temple (*Gandhakuti*) built by the brothers Sthirapāla and Vasantapāla²⁴. According to Tāranatha, Mahipāla reigned for fifty two years, which is most probably correct as the Imadpur images were dedicated in the 48th year of the king. The long reign of Mahipāla I is important from the point of issuing a large number of inscriptions and manuscript records. The manuscript of *Ashtasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, now in the university Library at Cambridge is the work of Mahipāla's time.

iii.g) Rāmapāla: The reign of Rāmapāla, a Pāla ruler, was important from the point of Buddhism. He founded a new city named Rāmāvatī which had a Buddhist *vihāra* named Jagaddala *mahāvihāra*. One of the Rāmapāla's records, named Tetrāwān Images Inscription, recorded the erection of an images of Tārā by a certain Bhatta Icchāra in the second year of the king's reign²⁵.

iii.h) Govindapāla: The last important Pala King, who was recognized by the Buddhists as a great patron of Buddhism was Govindapāladeva. He took the title *paramasaugata* which clearly gives impression of his faith in Buddhism. His end in AD 1199 was practically the end of Buddhism in Bengal, though the faith continued as a lesser spiritual force till the invasion of the Muslims.

It is significant to note that though most of the kings of the Pāla dynasty were followers of Buddhism, they were never orthodox or sectarian.. This fact is corroborated from the long list of brāhmana Prime Ministers under the Buddhist Pala Kings. All the epigraphic records now show that the rulers of this dynasty endowed both the Buddhist and brāhmanical temples and establishments.

It is well-known to historians of India that the chronology of the Pāla rulers, as is the case with several other dynasties, is complex problem, and no two historians quite agree on its final form. Nevertheless to us it appears that Sircar²⁶, was most careful and meticulous in preparing the final chronology of the Pāla dynasty. Surprisingly, on the fact all the historians were unanimous, now defuted by the Jagjibanpur Inscription of Mahendrapala, that the Gurjara Pratihāra ruler Mahendrapāla defeated the Pāla ruler Nārāyapāla and ruled over south Bihar and north Bengal.

ii) **Buddhism in West Bengal:** During the rule of the Pala kings, great *Mahaviharas* flourished in Bihar and Bengal. Tibetan sources referred five great *Mahaviharas* viz. *Vikramaśīla*, Nalanda, Somapura, Odantapura and Jagaddala. It is very difficult to say when Buddhism first gained influence in Bengal. No authentic Buddhist source gives any evidence of Buddhism, flourished in Bengal during the life time of Buddha. But later texts like the Travels of Yaun Chwang and the Tibetan Monk Sumpa's *Pag-sam-Jon-Zang* referred that Buddha visited *Pundravardhana*.

According to the Buddhist Text, *Divyavadana*²⁷ Buddhism was flourishing along with the Jainism in *Pundravardhana* during Asoka's time. This text mentioned *Pundravardhana* as the eastern most boundary of the Buddhist *Madhyadesa*. Yuan Chwang attests this, as he refers to the erection of several *stupas* in *Pundravardhana* and other regions of Bengal by Asoka.²⁸ But unfortunately no Asokan *stupa* or edict of Asoka has been discovered so far in Bengal, except the Mahasthan Stone Plaque Inscription.

The existence of Buddhism in North Bengal in the second century BC may be inferred from two voice inscriptions at Sanchi, recording the gifts of two inhabitants of *Punavadhana* ie. *Pundravardhana*.²⁹ The first definite reference of *Vanga* as a Buddhist centre, occurs in Nagarjunakonda Inscriptions, datable to the second and third century AD³⁰. It includes *Vanga* in the list of well-known countries which were converted to Buddhism by the Ceylonese Monks. The Buddhist images, belonged to 3rd/4th century AD, from Chandraketurah provide evidence of the existence of Buddhism in an established form of religion by the beginning of the fifth century AD³¹.

. It is learnt from the accounts of I-tsing that Maharaja Sri Gupta of the Gupta dynasty built a temple called "Temple of China" at a place close to a sanctuary called

Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no³². The site of the temple of China was perhaps located at Maldah.³³

Fa-hien, another Chinese Pilgrim who came to India in the beginning of fifth century AD. noticed Buddhism as a flourishing religious practice at *Tamralipta* (Tamluk in East Midnapore district of West Bengal). He has mentioned about twenty-two monasteries in *Tamralipta*, which were inhabited by monks and he himself spent there for two years³⁴. It is learnt from Gupta King Vainyagupta's Gunaighar Copper-Plate Grant of 188 Gupta Era (AD. 507-8) that he donated the land to meet the expenses for worshipping Buddha³⁵. This proves that Buddhism was established in the south-eastern corner of Bengal during the sixth century AD. Buddhist sculptures from Rajshahi belonging to Gupta period speak about the strong existence of Buddhism in Bengal during the Gupta Period.

The Chinese records of the seventh century provide fair idea about the status of the Buddhism in Bengal. Among these, the account of Hiuen-Tsang is noteworthy. At *Pundravardhana*³⁶ there were twenty Buddhist monasteries and above 3000 brethren, who followed the *Mahayana* and *Hinayana* schools of Buddhism. The large establishment at *Pundravardhana* was Po-shi-po³⁷ monastery, which had big halls and chambers and had more than seven hundred brethren and many distinguished monks of Eastern India. In *Samatata* there were more than thirty Buddhist monasteries with above 2000 brethren of the *Sthavira* School. In *Karnasuvarna*, more than ten monasteries with above 2000 brethren of the *Sammatiya* school and in *Tamralipta* more than ten monasteries with above 1000 brethren³⁸. Huen-Tsang also saw a monastery Lo-to-mo-chi at *Karnasuvarna* which was a resort of illustrious brethren³⁹.

Another Chinese pilgrim Ta-cheng-teng visited India who described about the Buddhism in Tamralipta. The Chinese pilgrim Tao-lin also came to *Tamralipta* and referred about the *Sarvastivada* school⁴⁰. Sheng-chi, who visited India during the seventh century CE. has recorded about the prevailing Buddhism in *Samatata*⁴¹. Rajabhata, a king of *Samatata* used to make, everyday, hundred statues of Buddha with earth and read thousand *slokas* of the *Mahaprajnaparamita-sutra*. He was also responsible for festive-processions for paying homage to *Buddha* and *Avalokitesvara*.

This description proves the flourishing condition of Buddhism in *Samatata* region of Bengal in the seventh century CE.

Sasanka, the ruler of *Gauda* in the early seventh century CE has been alleged by Banabhatta and Hien Tsang with persecution of Buddhist activities without any substantial evidence directly of Sasanka's anti-Buddhist activities. Buddhism was confined to *Vanga-Samatata* region of Bengal at the time of death of Sasanka . The knowledge about this dynasty was provided by the discovery of two copper plates at Ashrafpur⁴² and an inscribed image of *Sarvani*, discovered at Deulbad⁴³ near Comilla in Bangladesh. The Asrafpur Copper-Plate Charters⁴⁴ were issued by the Devakhadga dynasty with the invocation of the Buddha. In another verse Khadgodyama has been credited with devotion towards *Sugata(Buddha)* and his *Sangha*. The donee of both of these plates was *Sanghamitra*, a famous Buddhist teacher. The information gained from these two Asrafpur plates confirm that the Khadgas of *Vanga-Samatata* were devout Buddhists.

The discovery of three Copper-Plates, issued by Bhavadeva, from *Salvan Vihara* of the Mainnamati region in Comilla district in Bangladesh , unveiled the history of a Buddhist dynasty called the Devas.⁴⁵This family had a four ruling members who bore the epithet like *Paramasaugata*, *Paramabhattacharaka*, etc. This ruling family like Khadgas and Ratas also propagated Buddhism.

Schools of Buddhism, prevailing in Bengal before the advent of the Palas, Huen Tsang⁴⁶ tells us that in *Pundravardhana* there were both *Hinayana* and *Mahayana*, Karnasuvarna the *Sammatiya* school in Tamralipti the *Sarvastivada* and in Samatata the *Mahayana*. I-tsing⁴⁷ refers about all the four schools viz. the *Mahasanghika*, *Sthaviravada*, *Sarvastivada* and *Sammatiya* were prevalent in eastern India.

Buddhism got new impetus under the royal patronage of the Palas. Hiuen Tsang mentioned that there were seventy Buddhist *vihāras*, accommodating eight thousand monks and no less than 300 Deva temples in Bengal proper. The number of temples and *Vihāras* increased many fold during this period. Though the Pala rules were Buddhists and their personal inclination was towards Buddhism, they were practical in giving

patronage to Brāhmanical religious faiths along with Buddhism. But in spite of the existence of different religious sects side by side, there was no sectarian jealousy. This fact of religious toleration of the kings of this period is revealed from the various copper-plate inscriptions.

Nārāyanapāla, though a follower of Buddhism, built and endowed a temple of Śiva. He not only attended the sacrificial ceremony of his brāhmana ministers, but also reverently put the sacrificial water on his head⁴⁸. Citramātika, the queen of Madanapāla regarded it as meritorious to hear the recital of *Mahabharata*⁴⁹. Similarly Prabhāvatī, queen of Devakhaga set up an image of Chandi, a brahmanic deity in her kingdom. On the other hand the Śaiva king Vainyagupta, endowed a Buddhist monastery, while a brahmana and his wife made pious gifts of land to a Jaina *Vihāra*⁵⁰.

This period produced many religious literature belonging to various religions. The literature was both in Sanskrit and Vernacular.

ii.a. Buddhist Centers in Bengal

Both *Vaisnavism* and *Saivism* derived their strength and inspiration from the magnificent temples, the Buddhists main centres of activity were the numerous *vihara* or monasteries. We may mention about some of the major Buddhist monasteries and Buddhist centres which prospered in Bengal and Bihar during this period.

ii.a.1. Tāmralipti: The ancient port town Tāmralipti (modern Tāmluk in Midnāpore district of West Bengal) was a flourishing Buddhist centre. Fahien, the Chinese Traveller who spent a span of two years in the fifth century AD, found twenty-four Buddhist monastries. A terracotta Buddha in *bhūmisparśamudrā* with the Buddhist creed in Gupta characters, found at Panna near Tāmralipti proved that it was a flourishing Buddhist centre prior to the Pāla period and continued as a centre of Buddhist activities till the end of the Pālas⁵¹.

ii.a.2. Biharail: The site has yeilded the remains of a brick built monastery at Rājbadī mound within the village Bihar-ail⁵² in Rājaśāhī district. Among the antiquities It, a standing image of Buddha of the chunar sand stone is noteworthy.

ii.a.3. Po-shih-po: This monastery in *Pundravardhana* is referred in the accounts of Hiuen-Tsang⁵³. He also referred about an Aśokan tope near this site where Buddha had preached for three months. This place has been identified with impressive mounds of Bihar and Bhasu-Vihara near Mahasthana in the Bogra district of Bangladesh.

ii.a.4. Lo-to-Mo-chih: It was stated to have been built by a king in honour of a Buddhist śramana from South India .Hieun-Tsang saw this monastery during his visit to Bengal and mentioned that there were many topes built by Aśoka near this place. *Lo-to-mo-chih* has been translated as *Raktamrittikā*, the name of which survives in Rangamātī, a locality near Chiruti in Mursīdābād district. The excavation revealed remains of a brick structure which have been supposed to have been at Buddhist establishment of about sixth or seventh century AD. The excavation of Rājbadidangā, one of the mounds of Lo-to-mo-chih, yielded a good number of antiquities including bronze images, a seal and sealings with the Buddhist creed, datable to the seventh or eighth centuries⁵⁴.

ii.a.5. Mi-li-kia-si-kai-po-no or Mrgasthāpanā in Māldāh: According to I-tsing *mahārājā Śrī Gupta* constructed a temple called “Temple of China” here for the accommodation of foreign scholars particularly Chinese scholars⁵⁵.

ii.a.6. Devaparvata: The Chinese monk Sheng-chi, a contemporary of I-tsing, found four thousand monks and nuns here. The prosperity of this establishment reached its peak under the Buddhist Devas in the eighth-ninth century⁵⁶

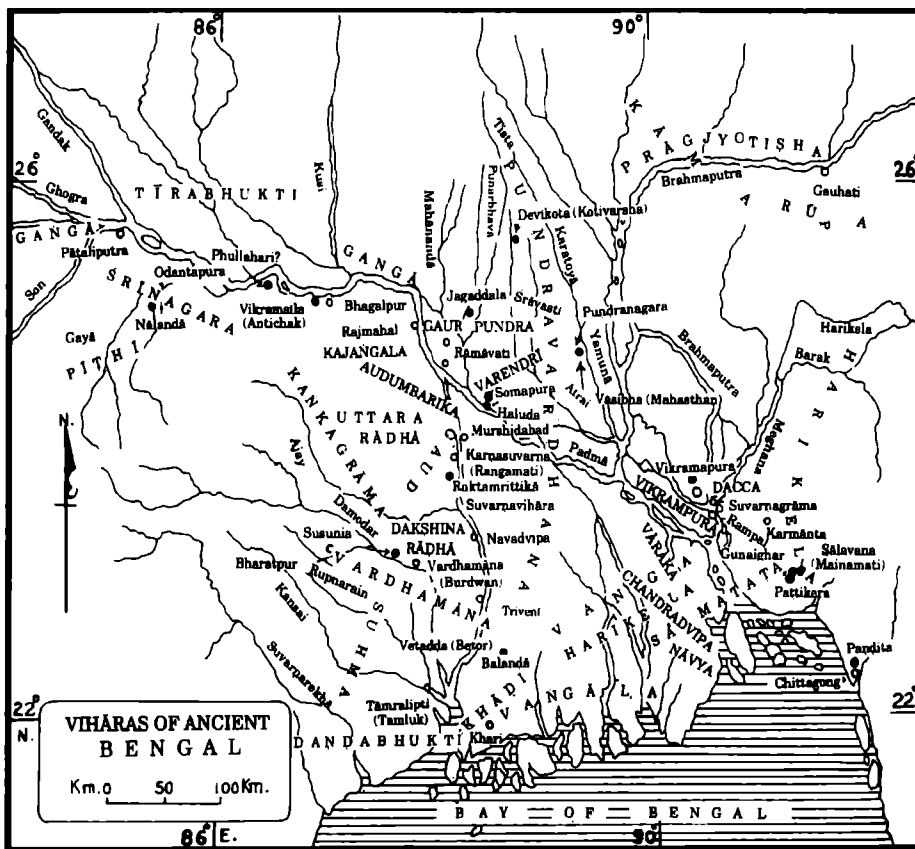


Fig. 3

ii.a.7. Somapura or Somapuri: The remains of Somapura monastery have been identified with those at Pahārpur in the Rājāsāhī district of Bangladesh, which was established by Dharmapala. This Vihara acquired a great fame and sanctity among the Tibetan Buddhist pilgrims. The great Buddhist scholar Atiśa-Dipankara translated the *Mādhymakaratnapradīpa* of Bhāvaviveka⁵⁷ to Tibetan language. This largest Buddhist establishment was well decorated with myriads of terracotta plaques.

ii.a.8. Jagaddala: The Buddhist *vihāra* of Jagaddala, was the last glorious establishment of Buddhism in ancient Bengal, patronised by Rāmpāla. The Court-poet Sandhyakara Nandi has mentioned in the *Rāmacharita* that it was located at Rāmāvati in Varendra region i.e. North Bengal⁵⁸. It may be located in the village Jagadala, near Bamangola in the Maldāh district of West Bengal⁵⁹.

ii.a.9. Maināmati (Pattikera): One of the largest centres of Buddhism in Bengal identified on Sālbanpur mound, in the Maināmati Lalmai region near Comilla in Bangladesh. The excavation have revealed the remains of Salban *vihāra*, belonging to different periods with patronage of different dynasties. A terracotta sealing with the legend *śri-bhāvadeva mahāvihāra-ārya-bhikshu-sanghasya* indicates that Śrī Bhābhadeva of the Deva dynasty of the eighth century AD, was the founder of this monastery. Apart from antiquities like coins, seals, inscriptions, the site yielded several images of Buddha and Buddhist deities like Tārā and Bodhisattvas. It was a great centre of Buddhist learning before the eleventh century, attested by the painting of a sixteen-armed Chundā with the legend *pattikera chundavara-bhavane chunda* on a manuscript of the *Ashtasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, copied in the year 1015 AD⁶⁰.

ii.a.11. Devīkota or Devakota: It was located in ancient Pundravardhanbhukti, now identified with Bangarh, near Gangarampur in South Dinājpur town in the village of Bangarh, supposedly include the site of this monastery⁶¹. The recent excavations by ASI at the site yielded several evidences of Buddhist establishment..

ii.a.12. Pandita: It was located in Chittagong of Bangladesh, which was a notable centre of Tantric Buddhism.⁶²

ii.a.13. Sannagar: According to the literary source it was an important seat of Buddhists during the Pāla period, perhaps located in Bangladesh.

ii.a.14. Vikramapura or Vikramapuri: The site was patronised by Dharmapala and was situated in Bengal towards the east of Magadha.⁶³

ii.a.15. Bharatpur: The references of this Buddhist establishment is available in the accounts of the Chinese pilgrims and also in the indigenous works. It is located near the Panagarh Railway Station in the Burdwan district of West Bengal from where a brick built *stūpa* with figures of Buddha in *bhumisparsā mudrā* were yielded through excavation.

ii.a.16. Traikūtaka: This site was associated with Dharmapala is perhaps located in *Radha* of Bengal where Haribhadra is said to have written his famous commentary on the *Abhisamayā lankārikā*.⁶⁴

iii) Buddhism in North Bengal:

The material available so far for reconstructing the history of Buddhism in North Bengal is not so extensive and as a result, it is not possible to obtain a coherent and connected history of the growth and spread of this religion at every stage with certainty. Geographically, the area of Bengal⁶⁵ denoting the eastern most province of the British empire comprises of the modern state of West Bengal, portions of Tripura and almost the whole of the present day Bangladesh.

The first reference to this part of country that occurs in the *Aitareya Brahmana*⁶⁶ (c.seventh century B.C) is about a class of people known as the *Pundras* who must have lived a specified region. These Pundras have been identified with the *Pundra* or *Pundra* tribe after which one of the metropolis came to be known as '*Pundranagara*'. Excavations at Mahasthan in the Bogra district of Bangladesh have laid bare evidence of the ruins of older habitations of *Pundranagara*. The *Vanaparvan* of the *Mahabharata* speaks of the sanctity of the *Karatoya* river which flowed past the *Pundranagara* and *Gangasagara*. At a later stage we hear of another term *Pundravardhana*. It has been taken to denote North Bengal as a whole. From the Gupta period onwards *Pundravardhana* formed a *bhuki* or province under different imperial authorities. It denoted practically the whole Bengal excepting the portion lying west of the *Bhagirathi*.⁶⁷

Another place name, *Vanga*, finds mention in the *Aitareya Aranayaka*⁶⁸ datable almost the same time as *Aitareya Brahmana*. Baudhayana Prescribes expiratory rites for those who visited *Pundra*, *Vanga* and *Kalinga*, even in connection with religious journey⁶⁹ *Vanga* corresponded roughly to the Dhaka- Vikrampur region of later times⁷⁰.

Interestingly, the *Ramayana* includes *Vangas* in a list of the people that entered into intimate political relations with the high born aristocrats of Ayodhya⁷¹. The name of the *Pundra* and *Vanga* appears in the *Mahabharata*⁷² also. While describing Bhima's campaign the great epic speaks of the lords of *Pundra*, *Vanga*, *Suhma* (the coastal region of West Bengal) as well as *Tamralipta* (modern Tamluk in the Midnapur district)⁷³ and *Karvats* (Kharwars?). A Jaina canonical text, the *Acharangasutta*⁷⁴ of about the third century B.C, speaks of the people of *Ladha* which is pathless region. The same text divides the land of *Ladha* into two parts-*Vajjabhumi* (Vajrabhumi)⁷⁵ and *Subbabhumi* (*Suhmabhumi*)⁷⁶. The *Ladha* definitely denoted the *Radha* area (Western portion of Bengal), a major part of which is composed of lateritic soil.

The historians of Alexander speak of a region, *Gangaridai* as district form *Prasi*, It is difficult to identify these two regions with certainty but there is every possibility that "Gangaridi" might have denoted the lower Gangetic region⁷⁷.

Two other place names, such as *Gauda* and *Samatata* finds mention in ancient literature. The *Ashtadhyai* of Panini⁷⁸ (assignable to Circa fifth Century B.C.) mentions a *Gaurapura* (*Gauda*?), but it's location is not stated very clearly. The *Arthasastra's*⁷⁹ information of *Gauda* is also not sufficient. It is, however, clear that the area was in eastern India as the name is found along with *Vanga* and *Pundra*⁸⁰.

The name *Samatata* is known, for the first time, from the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudragupta as a frontier state of the Gupta Empire. The region of *Samatata* is stated to have incorporated the lower part of south-eastern Bengal⁸¹.

The growth of Buddhism was closely connected with the so-called second urbanisation of India. The legendary Sources and Buddhist Literature tell us that the Buddha himself came into *Pundravardhana*⁸². But archaeologically one can be sure of the fact that by about the third Century B.C, if not earlier, the Buddhist world had definitely came into contact with *Pundravardhana*. This could be known from the *Sanskrit Vinaya Pitaka*, Which clearly states that the easternmost limit of Buddha's World (*Aryavarta*) extended upto *Pudravardhana*. The text is roughly dated as pre-Asokan.

Proceeding historically and depending on the literary and archaeological materials there does not seem to be any doubt that Buddhism gained a foothold in this part of the

country first in the *Pundravardhana* region. If the identification of B.N Barua is accepted that the *samvangiyas* of the Mahasthangarh fragmentary stone plaque inscription⁸⁴ denotes a Buddhist sect- the *Chavvaggiyas*⁸⁵, then it may easily be inferred that the region had a strong hold in that part of the country during the Maurya rule. Epigraphic documents also testify to the fact that North Bengal was a part of the Maurya empire⁸⁶. The itinerary of Hsuan Tsang states that the pilgrim had seen several *stupas* erected by Asoka at *Pundravardhana*, *Tamralipta*, *Samatata* and *Karnasuvarna*⁸⁷. Needless to say that the excavator's spade has revealed the ruins of stupas in these regions but their association with Asoka is yet to be confirmed. However, the spread of Buddhism at least in the second century B.C is well founded, since two inscriptions(datable to the same period) found in Sanchi *stupa* record grants for the Buddhist establishment of this place by two adherents coming from *Pundravardhana*, of whom one was female *Upasika*, called Dharmadatta and the second was a devout Buddhist, called Rishinandana. The fact is confirmed by an archaeological investigation laying bare remains of a monastery (*Vasuvihara*) identified that the whole region witnessed a sort of socio-cultural religious upsurge which could easily be associated with the diagnostic Maurya/ Sunga/Kushana/Gupta cultural phase of the north and cultural India.

With the extension in the *Pundravardhana* region, by the establishment of a number of monasteries, Buddhism seems to have slowly but steadily extended its sway over a considerable part of Bengal. Not only the whole of North Bengal, but also some important centres in the Gangetic valley came within the cultural orbit of this new religion. That the ancient city of Chandraketurgarh (Berrachappa, 24 Parganas) had close connections with other Buddhist centres of the country can very well be assumed from the archaeological materials including a fragmentary image of the Buddha of the Kushana-Mathura Types made in Mathura red sand-stone. Along with *Pundravardhana*, *Vanga*, extending its sway along the Ganges, seems also to have emerged and played some role in the contemporary Buddhist history of this region. A Nagarjunikonda inscription⁸⁸ assignable to the second and third centuries A.D. Clearly states that among a large number of monks who assembled in the ancient city of Vijayapuri, there were also monks coming from *Vanga*. Needless to say that the rich monastic establishments at Vijayapuri which housed a countless number of monks

belonging to number of sects and sub-sect, accommodated the monks hailing from *Vanga* who were also given their due position as was given to the monks coming from China, *Chilata* (*Kirata*), *Tosali*, *Avaramta* (*Aparanta*), *Vanavasi*, *Yavana*, *Damila*, *Palura* and of *Tambapanini* (*Tamraparni*).

The archaeological materials and significant literary records left by the Chinese Travellers, providing a true picture with lot of informations regarding Buddhism in Bengal from the Gupta period. Fa-hian, who came during the Gupta period, speaks of several *stupas* reared at *Champa* and *Tamralipta*⁸⁹. His account provides a detail description of his journey from *Champa* to *Tamralipta* through the Ganges. He also referred about a large scale monastic establishments in and around *Pundravardhana*. Fa-hian refers about *Tamralipta* as a flourishing Buddhist centre, having as many as twenty-two monasteries⁹⁰.

I-tsing, another Chinese monk referred that one Maharaja Sri Gupta constructed a temple for Chinese monks near the *Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no* (*Mrigasthapana*) in *Varendra* and made an endowment of twenty four villages for its maintenance⁹¹. The replica of the *Mrigasthapana stupa*, which has been referred to in the account of I-tsing and which according to the description was constructed by Sri-Gupta, has been represented much later in history, in the Cambridge University Manuscript.⁹²

But a direct evidence of patronage of Gupta kings towards Buddhism is furnished by the Gunaighar Copper Plate of Vainyagupta (dated Gupta era 188, i.e. 507 A.D).⁹³ The epigraph records not only the gift of some lands to the Buddhist monks for the maintenance of the *Asrama-Vihara*, but also specifically mentions *Avolokitesvara*, who seems to have been the installed deity in the temple attached to the monastery. There is thus no doubt that by that Gupta period Buddhism had developed a pantheon in which *Avolokitesvara* seems to have been a prevalent cultic form.⁹⁴

In the political history of India the end of the Gupta dynasty witnessed the breakup of an unified power in Northern India resulting in complete disintegration into several independent kingdoms.. It is found that during this period some new territories sprang up in cultural map of Bengal.⁹⁵ Needless to say that with the opening up of this new geographic horizon, Buddhism of this time, and of this region has been faithfully recorded by the itinerary of the Chinese Travellers.

Hsuan Tsang speaks of the kie (ka)-lo-na-su-fa-ta-na (*Karnasuvarna*) country. According to him there were more than ten Buddhist monasteries among which the Lo-to-mo-chih (*Raktamrittika Mahavihara*)⁹⁶ was noteworthy. Archaeological investigations have revealed the existence of the *Raktamrittika Mahavihara* around Chiruti in the Murshidabad district. Stratigraphically the earliest level of the site is found to be dated around the second or third century A.D.,⁹⁷ indicating thereby the beginning of the monastic complex. But paleographically the inscriptions found on the seals and sealings at this site from different structural levels are attributed to a period ranging from circa fifth/sixth century A.D to circa ninth/tenth century AD.⁹⁸ It should not be out of place to refer in this context to a fragmentary slate stone inscription found in the Malay peninsula stating that one navigator (*mahanavika*) Budhagupta, a native of *Raktamrittika*, had the blessing of the Buddhist *Samgha* for his safe journey and success. The inscription of Budhagupta is supposed to be palaeographically dated to circa 400 A.D.⁹⁹. There is, therefore, no doubt that the place was under Buddhist influence from the early centuries of the Christian era and continued to remain so at least upto ninth or tenth century AD.

The Kailan (situated 18miles south-west of Comilla,13 miles west of the Lalmai range) Copper Plate of Sridharana Rata (issued in the 8th regnal year of the king,i.e circa 575 AD)¹⁰⁰ records the grant of land for the reading the writing of Buddhist religious texts.

. The two Asrafpur Copper Plates of Devakhadga (7th regnal year, i.e circa 665 AD)¹⁰¹ starting the transfer of some portion of land in the *Paranatana Vishaya* (identified as lying in the western part of the Comilla district) in favour of the Buddhist monastic complex, headed by Acharya Sanghamitra, clearly indicates that the Lalmai area had a number of monastic centres.¹⁰²

Excavations at *Salban Vihara*, have yielded three inscriptions recovered from the third phase of the site,from the 6th through to the 8th century¹⁰³ of the monastic complex,issued by the rulers of the khadga dynasty Devakhadga and Balabhata¹⁰⁴

Of the other inscriptional finds of this site (i.e. the *Salban Vihara*), Morrison¹⁰⁵ refers to copper plates issued by Deva ruler Bhavadeva,which records the transfer of landed property in favour of Buddhist monasteries¹⁰⁶, identified with *Mainmati Mandir* in the

Paranatana district. Morrison quotes Rashid¹⁰⁷ who was inclined to identify this *Vendamati* with the modern villages of Gaudhamati.

The Bhavadeva was a great patron of Buddhism who erected a monastery named as *Sri Bhavadeva Maha Vihara- Arya Bhikshu Sanghasya, who ruled*, according to Dani¹⁰⁸ in the eighth century AD.

Thus the available epigraphic records, clearly indicates that *Salban Vihara* was in flourishing condition for two hundred years, at least from the time of Vainya Gupta continuing up to the Devas, a span of time ranging of the date from the sixth to the eighth centuries AD.

The Buddhism got strong impetus under the rule of the Palas. They called themselves as *Parama-saugata* and not only patronised Buddhism, but during this period a new form of Buddhism, Vajrayana, flourished in the whole of eastern India. *Vajrayana* was in fact *tantric* Buddhism in which concepts of female and male principles (*Prajna and Upaya*) were accepted along with traditional religious rites and rituals and this concept of the *Pancha-makaras* is explained in Buddhist texts, of which the *Pranopaya*¹⁰⁹, *Jnanasiddhi*¹¹⁰ and *Guhyasamaja*¹¹¹ are noteworthy..

The date of *Mahayana* Buddhism in Bengal in its revised form into a *tantrik* fold of cult cannot be ascertained with certainty though the Tibetan historian Taranatha refers an early date c.300 A.D to c.625- 675 A.D. The *siddhas* like Saraha, Nagarjuna, Padma-vajra, Arangavajra, Indrabhuti and others were the propagators of this new form of religion.¹¹²

The important transformation of idea was that of the concept of *Sunyata* (Vacuity) into the idea of *Vajra*. In the *Sadhanamala*¹¹³ *Vajrayana* is described as a path of transcendental, perfect enlightenment to be achieved through different rites and ceremonies, *mantras* and meditations. In the *Jnanasiddhi*¹¹⁴ it is compared to a raft by which one can cross the ocean of existence. In the *Guhyasamaja*¹¹⁵ it is described as the cult of five *kulas* or families of gods.

In the Pala period several monasteries are said to have grown up as a stronghold of this new form of Buddhism. Gopala, was a great patron of Buddhism. But from the time Dharmapala our knowledge is regard to their affiliations to Buddhism becomes more and more distinct. Dharmapala is credited as being the founder of famous *Vikramasila* monastery in Magadha and the *Somapura Mahavihara* (Paharpur) in North Bengal. He

is also said to have founded the *Odantapuri Mahavihara*, located in south Bihar.¹¹⁶ His successor Devapala also helped in the cause of Buddhism. He is said to have granted five villages for the maintenance of monastery at Nalanda in favour of Balaputradeva, the Sailendra ruler of Java.¹¹⁷

The Ghosrawa inscription¹¹⁸ speaks of the intense faith of Devapala in the religion of the Buddha. The Pala kings had not only built up new monasteries, but had also given patronage to the monasteries built by earlier kings. The *Somapura Mahavihara* remained the flourishing Buddhist centre throughout the Pala period. The Pala kings have patronised the monastery of *Traikutaka*. They are also credited of being patrons of several other *Viharas* located in north and south-east Bengal, such as the *Devikota* the *Pandita Vihara* Phullahari, Sanagar, Pattika and Jagaddala. A recently discovered copper plate grant from vicinity of Jagjivanpur in the Malda district has established the fact that there was a ruler in the Pala lineage named Mahendrapala who ruled after Devapala. The discovery of this plate suggests that the ruler like his predecessor, was devout Buddhist and his *mahasenapati* was also an adherent of the same religion. It records grant of *Udranga* for offerings, maintenance etc. and asks the neighbouring cultivator to provide day to day necessities for the purpose and entreats the future kings to approve his grant.¹¹⁹

The prosperity of Buddhism in south-eastern Bengal continued in the modest form after the fall of Pala dynasty. A copper plate inscription from Chittagong region shows that the issuer Kantideva and his dynasty, ruling in the *Harikela mandala*¹²⁰ were also the followers of Buddhism. The inscription is assignable to the ninth century A.D.¹²¹

The dynasty of the Chandras, ruling near Chandradvipa in the Buckherganj district were Buddhist by faith.¹²² The Chandras were great patrons of Buddhism as evident through several inscriptions (Rampal¹²³, Kedarpur¹²⁴, Dhulla¹²⁵ etc.) in which all of them invoked Buddha.

The succeeding Brahmanical dynasty of Harivarman and Syamalavarman¹²⁶, was also tolerant of Buddhism. The inscription of Syamalavarman refers to the gift to Bhimadeva for *Prajnaparamita* and other deities. A manuscript in the Cambridge University Library¹²⁷ of the *Ashtasahasrika Prajnaparamita* copied sometime in 1015 AD, contains painted illustrations of several *vajrayanic* icons. Another manuscript of AD 1701, preserved in the Asiatic society of Bengal¹²⁸ shows an image of *Buddhardhi*

Bhagavati Tara. Dr. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya is of the opinion that the village of Vajrayogini, associated perhaps with the Vajrayana deity, may be identified with *Uddiya*¹²⁹, the original home of the *Vajrayanic* form of religion.

During the rule of the Senas, Buddhist religion lost its foothold due to withdrawal of the royal patronage. The contemporary historical records state that there were at least two Buddhist rulers viz. Madhusena and Ranavankamalla Harikaladeva, who declared themselves as *Paramasaugata*. Majumder says that Madhusena was the ruler of “an obscure corner of western or Southern Bengal or had seized Eastern Bengal from Dasarathadeva or his successor.”¹³⁰ The name of the second king is referred in a copper plate inscription¹³¹ from Chittagong, which records a land-grant to the Buddhist monastery of Pattikera with the tutelary deity *Durgottara*, a popular *Tantrik* Buddhist deity of the contemporary period. The *Pandita Vihara* in Chittagong perhaps remained an active Buddhist centre of *Tantrik* practices for a long time.¹³²

It is understood through the discussions that Buddhism in Bengal was prevalent with three distinct forms of mystic religious practices viz.. *Vajrayana*¹³³, *Sahajayana* and *Kalachakrayana*. The *Siddhacharyas* of this mysticism are belong to a period between tenth and twelfth centuries AD.¹³⁴ The *Sahajayana*, derived from *Vajrayana*, means the easiest vehicle. The *Dohas* and songs associated with the *Sahajayana* cult, served as main source of inspiration to develop the regional literature.¹³⁵ In the *Charyas* and *Dohas* the name of a goddess variously known as *Nairatma*, *Chandali*, *Sabari* etc. The eminent scholar of the *Kalachakrayana* school of mysticism, Abhayakaragupta, was a contemporary of Ramapala¹³⁶. This form was associated with astronomy and astrology mainly with the aim for attainment of the truth.¹³⁷

Vajrayana, *Sahajayana* and *Kalachakrayana* flourished extensively in different parts of Bengal and practically Bengal's contribution to *Tantrik* Buddhism remarkable due to the great contributions of several renowned contemporary writers.¹³⁸ This special *Tantrik* was originated with the aim to attain *Siddhi* through the process of *Kaya-sadhana*¹³⁹ and *Hatayoga*.¹⁴⁰

Other *tantrik* teachers, the *Nathas* seems to have grown up from the religion of the *Siddhacharyas*.¹⁴¹ The *Natha* teachers exercised profound influence in northern and eastern Bengal with their esoteric practices and miraculous activities.

Thus Buddhism gradually became absorbed with the new Brahmanical *Tantrik* system in Bengal. This assimilation was started at the end of the Pala period which was completed immediately after the rule of the Senas.¹⁴²

Buddhism in Bengal would not be completed without a reference to the existence of several schools and sects which ultimately paved the way for emergence of *Tantrik* mysticism into the religion concerned. The Chinese sources are much helpful in this regard. Of these, again, the account of Hsuan Tsang *Mahayana* and *Hinayana* forms of religion. While travelling in *Samatata* he saw more than thirty Buddhist monasteries with above 2000 brethren belonging to the *Sthavira* school. He further says that the Karnasuvarna monasteries were mostly inhabited by the *Sammatiya* school. According to him *Tamralipta* was the centre of the *Sarvastivadins*.¹⁴⁷

That *Samatata* was a great centre of *Mahayanic* Buddhism and Avolokitesvara was a popular cult in the region as per record of Sheng Chi, who came to Bengal in the later half of the seventh century A.D. It is referred that Rajabhata, a king of *Samatata*, was a great worshipper of triratha. It is narrated in his account how the king used to make a hundred thousand statues of the Buddha with clay very day and used to read hundred thousand slokas of the mahaprajna-paramita-sutra. It is further known from his report that a procession in honour of the Buddha, with an image of *Avalokitesvara* at the front was taken out on special occasions.¹⁴⁸

The Mahasthan fragmentary stone plaque inscription of the Mauryas referring to the *Chhavvaggiya Bhikshus*. Gunaighar Copper Plate inscription of Vainyagupta speaks about *Avaivarttika Sangha*. The newly discovered Copper Plate Grant of Mahendrapala from Jagjivanpur in the Malda district also speaks of the enjoying patronage of the ruler as well as the commander of the army.

An inscribed image of the Buddha of 10th century AD., reported from Bodhgaya records the gift of the image by a *sthavira* viryendra of the *Somapura Mahāvihāra* who was an inhabitant of *Samatata*. He was a follower of the *Mahāyāna* Buddhism¹⁵⁰ and indicating thereby that Mahayanism was still in vogue with the practice of *Vajrayāna*.

The distinct Buddhist form *Vajrāyana* with the assimilation of all sects in its fold, played a significant role towards merging all the schools and sects as discussed earlier and as a result the later works did not mention about the existence of these schools or

sects in Bengal. The strong input of the *Vajrāyana* has completely changed the history of Buddhism in Bengal with new chapters.

A large number of Buddhist sculptures in stone and metals in several museums and sites of West Bengal and Bangladesh are attesting the flourishing state of Buddhism in North Bengal. The sculpture of Bengal (as many other regions of the rest or Northern India) up to the seventh century AD. was profoundly influenced, and to a larger extent inspired, by the traditions of the classical Gupta art, but local traditions and ideas gradually began to assert themselves from the end of the seventh or beginning of the eighth century AD. These ultimately led to the evolution of the regional school of sculpture with its own distinctive and characteristic features, which may be truly called the Bengal School of Sculpture. This art flourished from the eighth to the end of the Hindu rule at the beginning of the thirteenth century AD., covering the periods of Pala-Sena rule in Bengal. There was no doubt about transition and evolution of the artistic style during these four centuries, but the process of evolution was a continuous one through broad stages which have been clearly marked by art critics.

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65. It lay between the Himalayas in the North and Bay of Bengal in the South and stretched from the Brahmaputra, the Kangsa, the Surma and the Sajjuk rivers in the east to the Nagar, the Barakar and the lower reaches of the suvarnakha in the West.
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70. Another term, phonetically similar to *vanga*, is *vangala* which finds mention in the Nesari plates of Govinda III dated 805 A.D. *Vangala* actually denoted the coastal region of East Bengal .
71. *Ramayana*, II. 10.36-37.
72. *Mahabharata*, II. 30.
73. It is apparent that the very place Tamralipta sometimes formed a separate political unit and some times belonged to Suhma – cf. Bhattacharyya, A., op., pp. 46-47
74. I.8.3. Sacred Book of the East Series, Harvard (Jain Sutras, Part I), P. 84.
75. *Vajrabhumi* has been taken to denote parts of modern Birbhum, Burdwan and Hooghly districts- H.O.B. p. 9.
76. *Suhmabhumi* comprised of the Triveni – Saptagram-Pandua area in the Hooghly district- H.O.B. p. 9.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
78. VI. 2. 99-100
79. Ed. Jolly, Vol. I. p. 51
80. The precise location of Gauda, cannot be made before the fifth/sixth century A.D. The Brihat Samhita (XIV, 6-8) belonging to the sixth century A.D. distinguishes Gaudaka (i.e. Gauda) from Paundra, Tamraliptaka, Vanga, Samatata, Vardhamana etc. According to the Haraha inscription of Isanavarman Maukhari (E.I., XIV. P. 117), dated 554 A.D. the Gauda country was not very far from sea cost. The Bhavishya Purana (Indian Antiquary, 1891, p. 419 ff.) speaks of Gauda as lying to the north of Vardhamana and south of the Padma. From the available sources it appears that Gauda originally denoted parts of modern west Bengal and sometimes at least it stretched upto the sea (i.e. the Bay of Bengal) – Bhattacharyya, A., op. cit., p. 54.
81. Another place name, Harikela, finds mention in several literary works and inscription belonging to the sixth century A.D. onward. According to I-tsing (a Record of the Buddhist Religion as practiced in the India Malay Archipelago,

trans. Takakasu, J., XLVI) Harikela was the eastern limit of Eastern India and Jambudvīpa. It means that the south-eastern portion of present day Bangladesh was known to him as Harikela. Interestingly, he also describes Samatata which was roughly conterminous with the modern Comilla and Noakhali districts. Harikela of I-sting, therefore, denoted the region which lay to the east or south-east of these two districts. From the numismatic and epigraphic evidences it is apparent that the area in question in subsequent periods comprised of the Districts of Chittagong, Noakhali, Sylhet as well as some portions of the modern Tripura state of India.

82. In the story of Sumagadha, it is sated that the Buddha paid a visit to Pundravardhana at the request of the lady- cf. *Bodhisattvadana-kalpalata*, Bengali translation by Das, S.C., pp. 768-769.
83. This has been discussed by Pelliot in the *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient*, Vol. IV, pp. 379 ff.
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90. J.Lagge, *op. cit.*, p.108.
91. S.Beal, *Life of Hiuen Tsang*, p. XXXVI.
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93. *I.H.Q.*, vol. VI, p. 561 and pp. 45-60, Morrison, B.M., *Political Centres and Cultural Regions in Early Bengal*, p. 159.
94. An inscription from Jayarampura (Balasore district, Odisha) dated in the first year of the reign of Gopachandra (sixth Century A.D) records the gift of village named Svetabalika (situated in Dandabhukti in Midnapur district) for the construction of a

Vihara at Bodhipadraka-agrahara where the Avalokitesvara had been installed. The gift was made to the bhikshu sangha of the Mahayana school- cf. OHRJ, I,1962, PP. 206-34

95. Cf. *H.O.B.* p. 50 ff.
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98. *Ibid*, p.67.
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121. Reference to the site has been made by Debala Mitra, in the Journal of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata, 1976, Nos.1-4, Nos.1-4, p-56 ff.
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123. *E.I* XII, pp 136-142, Majumdar, N.G., *Inscription of Bengal*, p.1.
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131. *I.H.Q.*, Vol. IX, pp. 282-289.
132. *History of Ancient Bengal*, R.C.M., p.420.
133. S.B. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious.Cult.*, p.24.
134. *History of Ancient Bengal*, R.C.M., p.419.
135. M.M. Haraprasad Sastri had discovered fifty such songs, which were published in 1917 in a book entitled ‘*Bauddha Gan O Doha*’, P.C. Bagchi also collected a number of songs which are said to have been composed by Sarahapada, Kanhapada and Tillopada.
136. *History of Ancient Bengal*, R.C.M., P 421.
- 137 “The whole chapter of the Tantra-loka is devoted to the exposition of the doctrine of Kala (time) and the process of keeping oneself above the influence of the whirl of time. Here Also time (kala) in all its phases(day, night, fortnight, month, year etc.) has been explained with reference to the function of vital wind (prana and aparna) spread through whole nervous system, and process of controlling time is to control the vital wind through Yognic Practice”-Dasgupta, S.B., op.cit, pp.66-67.
- 138 *History of Ancient Bengal*, R.C.M., p. 329 ff.
139. S.B.Dasgupta, *O.R.C.*, p.192
140. *H.O.A.B.*, R.C.M. p.422
141. *Ibid.*, p. 423

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CHAPTER II

Buddhist Establishment at Jagjivanpur

- i) The Site and its environment**
- ii) Legends and Traditions of the site**
- iii) Political Background**
- iv) Socio-cultural and religious backdrop**

i) The Site and its environment

i)a. Location: The village Jagjivanpur¹ is located at Indo-Bangladesh border in Malda district of West Bengal on the bank of the river *Punarbhava*. The village lies between the latitude 25° 02' 24" North and longitude 88° 22' 82" East. It is situated at a distance of 41 km. east of the district headquarter Malda and is approachable through good motorable road via Aiho, Bulbulchandi, Habibpur and Bahadurpur. It falls within the jurisdiction of the Block and Police Station Habibpur, Gram-Panchayet Baidyapur and Post Office Agra-Harischandrapur.

The village Jagjivanpur (Mouza Jagajjibanpur², J.L.No.73, Sheet No.1 & 2) is surrounded by the following Mouzas: Pathar Dharanda (J.L.No. 65) in the north; Kuchia More (J.L.No.70); Kismat Nambahara (J.L.No.80) and Nambahara (J.L.No.81) in the south; Pathar Yugi (J.L.No.56); Pathar Sasuli (J.L.No.72) & Pathar Nandagarh (J.L.No.71) in the east; Bankail (J.L.No.76) & Dharanda (J.L.No.74) in the west

i) b. Archaeological Mounds: The following Archaeological Spots within the village Jagjivanpur have been identified through extensive exploration for preparing of an archaeological map³ to ascertain the archaeological potentiality of the area.

i) Tulabhita (also known as **Salaidanga**) Plot No.639. Mouza Sheet No.2. Extent = 87.00 metres (east-west) x 80.00 metres (north-south). Height = 5.55 metres. Govt.Land. This is the main excavated site (**JJP 1**).

ii) Akhridanga (also called **Akhirdanga**). Plot No.631. Mouza Sheet No.2. Extent = 28.28 metres (east-west) x 72.29 metres (north-south). Height = 6.5 metres. Govt. Land(**JJP 2**).

iii) Nimdanga (also called **Paschimdanga**). Plot No. 579. Mouza Sheet No. 2. Extent = 28.28 metres (east-west) X 40.86 metres (north-south). Height = 2.50 metres. Partly Govt. and partly private(**JJP3**).

iv) Maibhita (also called **Rajar Mayer Dhibi**). Plot No. 728. Mouza Sheet No.2. Extent = 22.15 metres (east-west) X 21.75 metres (north-south). Height = 3.00 metres. Partly Govt. and partly private(**JJP4**).

v) Lakshmi-Dhibi. Plot No.740 & 741. Mouza Sheet No. 2. Extent= 110.00 metres (east-west) x 78.58 metres (north-south). Height= 5.00 metres. The central

portion of this mound is more elevated and roundish in shape (35.50 metres x 32.80 metre x 2.65 metres). Private Land(JJP5)

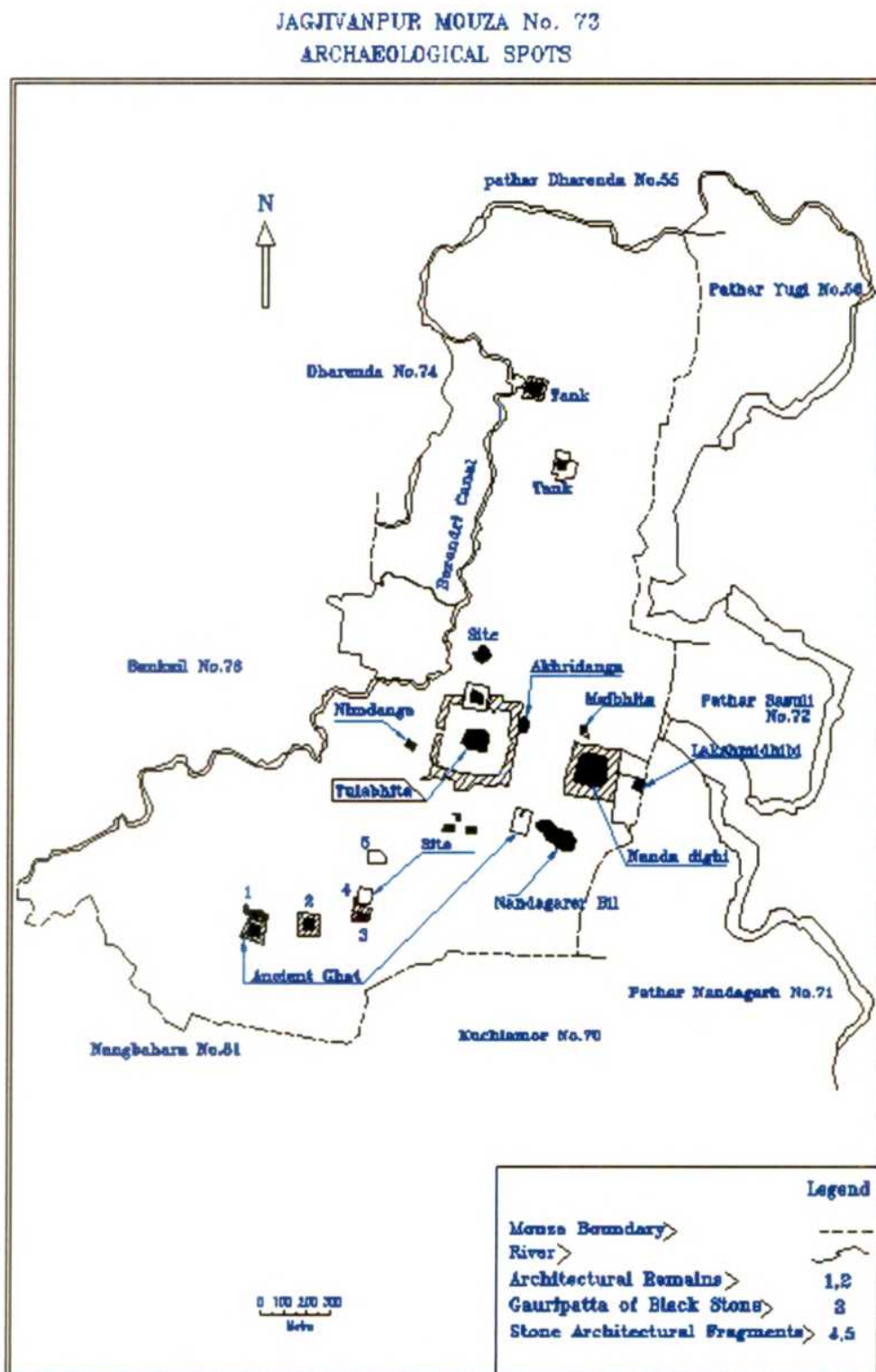


Fig. 4

Apart from these, several other sites with archaeological remains have also been recorded in the following plots in Jagjivanpur Mouza, viz. 603, 744, 918, 920, 932, 975, 1044, 1045, 1242 and 1307.

Among all these sites Tulabhita is the biggest and impressive and it yielded the extremely important Copper Plate charter of the new Pala King Mahendrapaladeva and therefore it was considered for excavation after declaring it as a State Protected Site⁴ which unearthed the monastery with various antiquities of much archaeological value. The trial excavations have also conducted in other mounds with structural remains of the contemporary period without any definite plan. The limited structural components in those mound, exposed through trial diggings, indicate that the structures of Maibhita, Lakshmidhibi and Nimdanga were constructed for residential purpose and the nature of the structure with offsets at the base on the plan of Akhridanga indicative of stupa or temple. The non-availability of super structure is the main problem to identify the structure of Jagjivanpur. The other Sites in the vicinity are having the potteries and bricks only, not providing any definite plan and nature of the structural remains of the same chronological horizon.

i)c. Geo-morphological feature: The geo-morphological feature of the whole district of Malda is divided into three distinct soil-zones, viz. the **Barind**, the **Diara** and the **Tal**. The more elevated portion at the eastern part of the river Mahananda is termed as the Barind tract. It is more than 39 metre high from the MSL. The whole area under the jurisdiction of the Blocks Old Malda, Gajol, Bamangola and Habibpur is denoted as the Barind. As the village Jagjivanpur is located within the jurisdiction limit of the block Habibpur, it falls in the Barind tract⁵ which is represented in the form of terraced-land surfaces. The Barind surface constitutes old alluvium, reddish in colour, compact in nature and contains iron and lime. This alluvium is alkaline in nature and its PH range is 42-55.

Like other instances, the geotechnical consideration for fitness of the ground for such a big monastic structure was determined by the regional geological set up. Typically the area shows a number of ponds. This tradition of pond construction, a community activity in the past is indicative of good concentration of settlements.

The area comes with in the southern extension of the Himalayan foredeep belt, the domain of Himalayan rivers viz., the Punarbhava, the *Mahananda* and the *Tangan*. Physiographically,

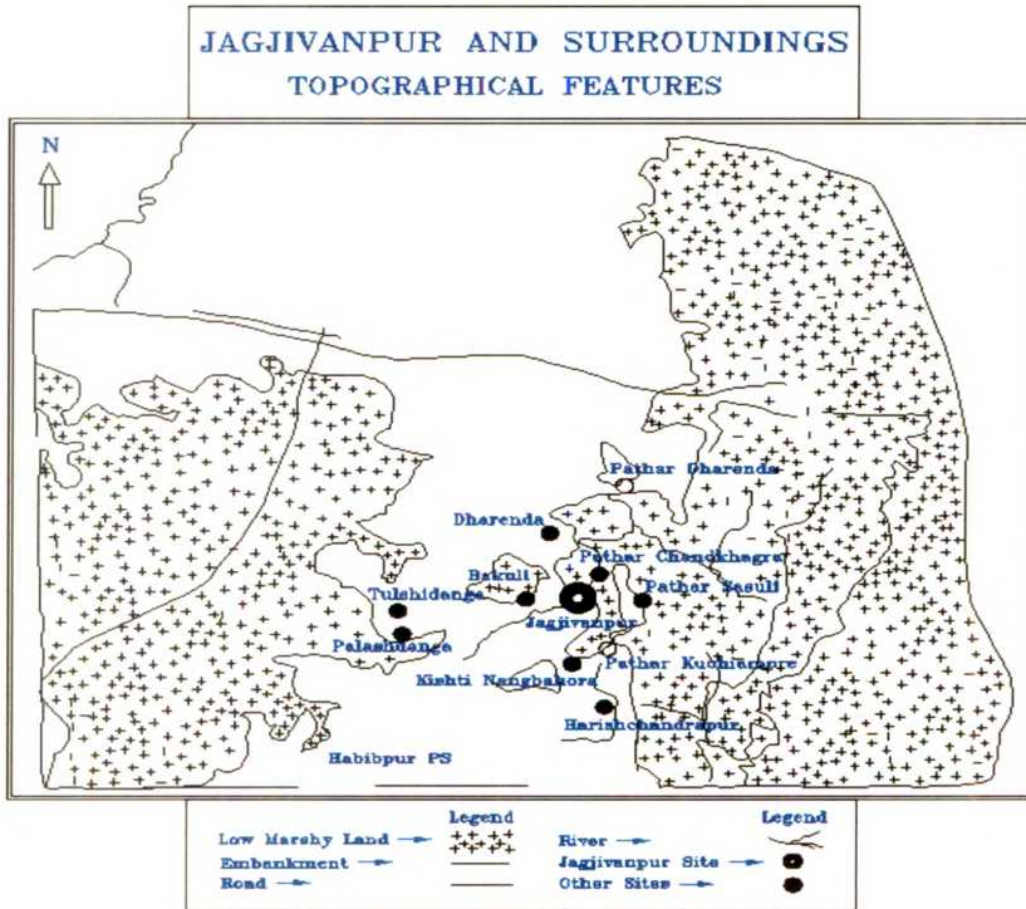


Fig. 5

this is the area of low level fans and younger flood-plain-deposits in the southerly sloping valleys. The area is located in the interflow of the *Mahananda*, *Tangan* and the *Punarbhava* river-basin. The *Mahananda* course flowing alongside the youngest terrace (**Shaugon Formation**) is flanked by distinct natural levees and flood-plains. The terrain to the east side under consideration belongs to a different set up.

The rivers of the area are antecedent, indenting the ground i.e. the Barind tract, fairly deep. The Barind Formation (morphostratigraphically equivalent to **Lalgarh Formation** of Shelf area, south of the Ganga River) is represented by an oxidised brown to yellowish brown soil (indicative of prolonged exposure to the sun) which was rarely submerged in water.

The major rivers of the area are the *Mahananda*, the *Punarbhava* and the *Tangan*. The river *Punarbhava* flows to the east of the village. A channel locally called as *Barendi* flows through the west, north and east of the site Tulabhita. Other major water-bodies in the vicinity are *Yugir-Bil*, *Sasuli-Bil*, *Nandagarer Bil* and *Nanda-Dighi* or *Kasi-Dighi*.

The notable trees and plants of this particular area are palin, persimmon, marmelos, margosa, fig, banyan, accacia, jack-fruit, guava, pomel and bamboo. Though the district Malda is famous for mango-groves, this is not abundant in this particular area. The most important agricultural crops are rice and wheat.

ii) Legends and Traditions of the site: According to local tradition the village name Jagajjivanpur originated from the name of a mediaeval Bengali Vaishnava Saint Jagajjivan Ghoshal⁶ who was residing at the village. The name of the site Tulabhita owes its origin from the twin simul trees at the site. Previously it was known as *bhita* and *danga*. It was also known as *purbadanga* and *salaidanga*. Prior to archaeological activities, the site Tulabhita came to be known through the chance discovery (on 13th March, 1987) of an extremely important copper plate charter⁷ of *Sri Mahendrapaladeva* of the Pala dynasty. Apart from the copper-plate, a tiny bronze-image of Buddha⁸ and a stone-image of Buddha⁹ have also been reported from the village.

After the decipherment¹⁰ of the copper-plate charter, the importance of the site has been revealed properly and subsequently in 1990, the site was brought under the protection of the Government of West Bengal as a State Protected Site¹¹.

It may be noted that the site was occupied by refugees came from Bangladesh in 1972. Due to their occupancy the site has suffered vandalism in the form of brick-robbing, construction of houses over the ancient remains, digging of ditches here and there, plantation of deep-rooted trees etc. The excavations (1990-1994) were disturbed due to the occupancy of the mound. However, extensive excavations have been undertaken since 1995 after the shifting of the inhabitants to a new place called Chandkhagra.¹¹

iii) Political Background: The glorious period of Buddhism in its history in eastern India was the period of the Palas who ruled over Bengal and Bihar from 8th to 12th century AD. The Pala kings ruled over an extended territory over Northern India that included Bengal. So, several large monasteries and Buddhist universities were built across their territories which reach over present-day Bihar, West Bengal and Bangladesh. The ruins of Buddhist monastery has recently been excavated near the banks of the Punarbhava river at the village of Jagajivanpur in Habibpur block, within Malda district. The sudden discovery of copper plate of Mahendrapala from Jagajivanpur has revealed the unknown king of Mahendrapala¹² in Pala dynasty.

A brief note may be presented here about the great patrons of Buddhism in the Pāla dynasty of Bengal, prior to Mahendrapaladeva.

iii.a) Gopāla I: Nothing is definitely known about the history of Bengal in the period between the death of Harshavardhan and the rise of the Pālas. This was a period of anarchy, foreign invasion and misrule ending the rule of the old royal dynasty. It was a glorious moment in the history when the chiefs, unable to deal with the existing chaotic political situation agreed to elect Gopāla¹³, the son of a successful soldier Vapyata, as the ruler of the whole of Bengal and Bihar. In the Khālimpur grant of Dharmapāla, it is said¹⁴ that the people made Gopāla take the hand of fortune. Unfortunately nothing more is known about this great incident of history. Gopāla I probably ascended the throne in about AD 750. But scholars differ about the exact date of his accession. Most probably Gopala I was an elderly man when he was called to the throne. Nothing is definitely known about the events of his reign. According to Lama Tāranātha, Gopāla built the celebrated monastery at Odantapura in Bihar¹⁵ and he was a pious Buddhist. It is said that Gopala was a devotee and bare factor of Buddhism. He received the Nālandā monastery, erected several new monasteries in his dominion and offered lavish gifts to the Buddhist clergy¹⁶.

iii.b) Dharmapala: Dharmapāladeva, the son and successor of Gopāla I was the real founder of the Pāla dynasty as he consolidated the empire with a great skill. Like his father he was a great Buddhist. He is credited with the foundation of the celebrated Vikramaśilā monastery in the Bhāgalpur district of Bihar. This monastery had 107 temples and six colleges. Dharmapāla made Haribhadra, a great commentator of the

Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra, his spiritual preceptor. Tāranātha is of the opinion that the teachings of the *Prajñāpāramitā* spread widely under the auspices of this king¹⁷.

iii.c) Devapāla: Dharmapāla was succeeded by his able son Devapāla, who further pushed his kingdom as far the Himālayas in the North and the Vindhya Hills in the south. This fact is corroborated by the Bādāl Pillar Inscription¹⁸. From this copper-plate, discovered at Nālandā¹⁹ it appears that Devapāla granted five villages for various comforts of the Bhikshus as well as for writing the *Dharmaratnas* and for the upkeep of the Buddhist monastery, built there by Bālaputradeva, the king of Suvarṇadvīpa and Yava Bhūmi (Jāvā-Sumātrā). Devapāla constructed many Buddhist temples and monasteries in Magadha. Thus Buddhist art and architecture got a fresh impetus during the reign of Devapāla.²⁰

After the death of Devapāla there was political instability in Bengal for some time and some weak rulers succeeded the throne one after another. Though these kings were devout Buddhists, they could hardly get time to propagate this faith, as they were busy in maintaining political stability.²¹

It is significant to note that though most of the kings of the Pāla dynasty were followers of Buddhism, they were never orthodox or sectarian. Their religious belief did not influence the policy of the state, which was based on long running traditions. This fact is corroborated from the long list of brāhmana Prime Ministers under the Buddhist Pala Kings. All the epigraphic records now show that the rulers of this dynasty endowed both the Buddhist and brāhmanical temples and establishments. This fact prove beyond doubt about the catholic nature of the Pala rulers.

It is well-known to historians of India that the chronology of the Pāla rulers, as is the case with several other dynasties, is complex problem, and no two historians quite agree on its final form. Nevertheless to us it appears that Sircar, was most careful and meticulous in preparing the final chronology of the Pāla dynasty. Surprisingly, on the fact all the historians were unanimous, that the Gurjara Pratihāra ruler Mahendrapāla defeated the Pāla ruler Nārāyapāla and ruled over south Bihar and north Bengal.

We get an idea about the religious conditions of Bengal from the land grant inscriptions as well as other documents of the Pala rulers. Though the Pala rulers were

staunch followers of Buddhism, they were not seetarian in their brief. In fact in pursuance of the policy of their forefathers, they in a grea extent supported the brahmanic religion. This shows the catholic nature of the Palas.

From the epigraphic records we come to know that the Pala rulers call themselves *Parama-saugata* and the Buddha is regularly invoked at the beginning of their official records. The Pala kings devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the service of Buddhism. They tried to spread the technings of Buddha not only in their sphere of Influence but also in other parts of their kingdom. During the four centuries of their rule, Bengal and Bihar remained the last strong hold of Buddhism. It was due to the concerted efforts of the Palas that Buddhism became a powerful force in the international field and exercised dominant influence from Tibet in the north to the islands of the Malaya Archipelago in the south.

Buddhism became a strong force in Bengal under the Pala rulers particularly under strong rulers like Dharmapala, Devapala, Mahipala I, Nayapala and Rampala. The foundations of many important Buddhist monasteries like Odantapuri, Somapura, Vikramasila and many others were laid by the early Pala Kings. Taranatha states that Gopala, the first king of Pala dynasty, was a great *upasaka* and attained *siddhi* by worshipping the Goddess Cunda, a Buddhist Tantric God, before his nomination as king of Bengal. It is quite natural that after the assumption of the throne Gopala must have made sincere efforts for the propagation of Buddhism. According to the Tibetan tradition Gopala was credited with the establishment of the Odantapura Mahavihara on the model of Nalanda Mahavihara, which is very near to it. But it is still difficult for us to ascertain who the builder of the Odantapura Mahavihara was, as other scholars give the credit of this monastery to Dharmapala or Devpala. From Taranatha's long list of Buddhist scholars, who flourished during the rule of Gopala, we can conclude that there was a brisk era of Buddhist activities during his reign.

Dharmapala who succeeded Gopala not only consolidated his empire, but also firmly established Buddhism in Bengal. Tibetan chronicles described in detail about the patronage of Dharmapala to the Buddhist faith. Dharmapala is credited with the establishment of the Vikramasila in Magadha. This *vihara*, which had 107 temples and six colleges and life sized image of the Buddha, was one of the greatest works of

Dharmapala. It outshone Nalanda by attracting a large number of Buddhist students from Tibet. Taranatha states that for studying Buddhist doctrine. Dharmapala built fifty centres in this *vihara*. The credit of the establishment of the Vikramasila monastery is given to Dharmapala on the basis of the second name of Dharmapala which was Sri-Vikrama-Siladeva. So also the clay seals recovered among the ruins of Paharpur in Bangladesh, reveal the name of Dharmapala as the founder of the Somapuri Vihara in Varendra. Dharmapala provided encouragement and financial help to various scholars on Buddhism for writing Buddhist philosophical texts. Thus an era of Buddhist literary works started from this period.

Devapala, the third ruler of the Pala dynasty continued the unfinished work of his father and zealously involved himself for the propagation of Buddhism. His Nalanda Copper Plate inscription throws light on his role as a patron of Buddhism. The discovery of a large number of Buddhist images or relics consecrated by the common people in Magadha during the period of Devapala shows the popularity of Buddhism in Magadha and Bengal. The Monghyr copper-plate describes, "Devapaladeva as the devout worshipper of Sugata". The Nalanda copper-plate of Devapala reveals that on the request of Balaputradeva of the Sailendra Dynasty of Java, who built a monastery at Nalanda, Devapala made grants of 5 villages for the maintenance of the monastery.

Some other small royal families also contributed a lot to Buddhism by giving patronage to it. A copper-plate inscription of the ninth century AD, revealed the existence of a Buddhist royal family in Harikela. This copper-plate was granted by King Kantideva of Harikela from the city of Vardhamapura in Harikela (Sylhet-Comilla-Chittagong region in Bangladesh). Kantideva is styled *paramasaugata paramesvara* and *maharajadhiraja*. This record also revealed the names of three successive generations: Bhadradata, Dhanadata and Kantideva. As we have very little information about this dynasty we are not in a position to discuss about the detailed progress, made by Buddhism in this region under this dynasty.

The patronage of Palas no doubt gave an impetus to Buddhism and saved that religion from the fate which overtook in the rest of the India. But this did not materially affect the position of the brahmanical religion. This fact is obtained when we notice that the period from eight to twelfth century AD had more Brahmanical images than

Buddhist images. Hiuen Tsang mentioned that there were seventy Buddhist *viharas*, accommodated eight thousand monks and no less than 300 Deva temples in Bengal proper. The number of temples and *viharas* increased many fold during this period. Though the Pala rulers were Buddhists and their personal inclination was towards Buddhism, they were practical in giving patronage to Brahmanical religious faiths along with Buddhism because this was the period of revival of Brahmanism. Of the two sects of Brahmanism, Vaisnavism seems to have been more popular than Saivism. While both Vaisnavism and Saivism derived their strength and inspiration from the magnificent temples, the Buddhist main centres of activity were the numerous *vihara* or monasteries.

iv) Socio-cultural and religious backdrop: The extant archaeological materials of the pre-Pala period and the systematic study of the development of sculptures belong to the imperial Palas bears the mark of culmination process and revealing several facts relating to the religious, social and economic life²². Jainism and Buddhism were the two most important forces dominating the religious life of the people and cultural fabric in eastern India. According to Nihar Ranjan Ray, “art activity in any traditional society, is ultimately a social activity and religion and religious cults which provide in the main, the thematic content of art in all traditional activities, were also, speaking in sociological terms, nothing but the behavioural manifestations of imaginative, speculative and religious urges aspiration and experience of a given community of people in a given time and space”.²³ The sculptural art of Bengal, particularly during the Pala period was essentially supported and patronized by the royalty and the people belonging to the higher strata of society and naturally therefore, the artist designed his objects primarily to answer to their needs and requirements. The members of this class were mostly inspired by a religious spirit and were trying to earn religious merit through the offering of these art objects. Obviously therefore, the theme of all art objects is invariably religious. The artist, the creator of these objects, however, came from a relatively lower strata of the society. He saw before him a life full of frivolous richness and material happiness that his patron led. He was deeply impressed by it and consciously or unconsciously blended with the religious flavour this contemporary life of happiness and elegance. But in all such cases the artist was circumscribed by the

strict sastric injunctions. He had therefore, very little scope to display his individual views and likings.

Buddhism, in the process of development, had evolved Tantrism at a certain stage. The abundance of Tantric images in Bengal attests to the wide prevalence of this form of religion during the early mediaeval period. This fact effected a radical change in the outlook and character of the people. Though Brahmanism was a relatively late entrant in Bengal yet several Buddhist tantric deities are having the influence and counterparts of the Hindu deities. The terracotta plaques of Paharpur give us an insight into the real social life of the people of Bengal in those days. We can not only visualize through them how the common people lived away from the courts and aristocratic environments but can also catch a glimpse of the thought content of the common people. The sculptures during the imperial Palas, besides presenting various religious trends of contemporary life also reflect the tastes, preferences and prejudices of the upper strata of the society. Incidentally, they also help us in gleaning some of the facts of the contemporary social life and provide us a glimpse into the economic prosperity of the people of those times.²⁴

The most important aspect of the images consists in the light of it throws on the social history of the region. As far as the dress of the people is concerned, our main sources of the information are the sculptures of the period. The potters of any particular period never dream of dressing the images made by them in any other costume than those worn by the contemporary inhabitants. If it be so, it clearly points to the fact that both male and female dresses underwent considerable changes. A scrutiny of the male and female figures shows the scanty garments worn by people. The men wore the short *dhoti*²⁵ and scarf thrown over the shoulder, leaving the upper half of the body practically bare. The women used to wear the sari, though the manner of wearing it appears to have undergone very notable changes. The *sari* did not cover the upper portion and finished at the waist. It will be further observed from the line-designs that the sari went round the legs thus exhibiting their contours. The upper part of the body was usually draped in an *uttariya* (shawl) diagonally covering the left breast. What, however, is almost inconceivable is that sewn garments like bodice were not in use; but example in support of this supposition are surprisingly rare in the female figures

represented in eastern Indian sculpture. A tight fitting bodice (*coli*) with short sleeves, coming down to the waist of just below the breast was also probably in fashion. Example in support of the use of a *coli*, though rare, have been found represented in eastern Indian sculpture. The *uttariya* was used by the males as well as the females. In some of the Buddha figures also the left side of the figure is well covered by an *uttariya*. The cloth covering the lower portion of the body is not short but reaches up to the ankles. The Buddhist monks always regarded as being outside the pale of socio-religious system of caste are, however invariably enveloped in the monastic costume. The robe treated diaphanously covers both the shoulders and hangs down right to wrists and well before the knees in certain cases and almost to the ankles in others. Clothes were often printed with different kinds of designs. Line designs was, however, the most common pattern, while different patterns of floral and other designs are also to be found. The fashion of wearing hair can be studied from the interesting chignon, illustrated on some of the figures of the goddesses. It appears to have been the favourite fashion as it is the one most frequently met with. On a scrutiny of the male and female figures one cannot fail to notice a decided elaboration of ornaments. Common people ordinarily did not wear headgear though men of position may have worn *mukutas*, but that too on ceremonial occasions. Women of the elite group used to wear *mukutas* like the men.²⁶

The Buddha images are, however, endowed with the traditional short curls and *ushnisha*. In certain instances, the curly locks tend to lose their features into a cap-like form covering the head. Besides, in most of the cases, the Buddha is represented without any ornament. Yet in a few later sculptural productions, he is provided with a very elaborate necklace, ear ornaments and jewelled crown, thus creating a definite impression of sumptuousness.²⁷

On an examination of the entire range of representations of the early Palas, it would appear from a comparative study that in the beginning, sparse but heavy jewellery was in use. In the later productions, however, the profusion is such as to rush and glisten over the bodies of the deities. The high excellence of the jeweller's work manifest in the delicacy and precision of workmanship, indeed points to the sense of orderliness and a conscious appreciation of wealth. Necklaces were worn both by men and women.

One or more than one necklace, all very neatly executed with precision and independent entity, were in use. As may be noted from the sculptures, the male jewellery consisted of bracelets, armlets and anklets. In the later sculptures, the wristlets in some cases acquired, the stylized flower motif and the armlets the *kirtimukha* motif. Bangles, necklaces, earrings almost touching the shoulders, tops and pendants were worn by women. Thus provided with elaborately designed crowns, an array of jewellery and hair not often dressed in loose curly locks falling playfully on their shoulders, these images exude an aroma of gracious living. Apart from dress and ornaments, sidelights of various other social and secular aspects of life too are available here and there. These include domestic articles, weapons, popular amusements, etc. The wide use of iron which facilitated the cutting of bronze images, indicated the use of utensils, but they have not been recovered in any quantity. Pitchers, flower stands and pinnacle-shaped offerings are to be found sculpted on various images. Further, we do not possess sufficient material to form an accurate idea of the means of popular amusements. In the sculptures of the period, we have representations of the *vina*. The shape of the *vina* in the hands of the *Sarasvati* reminds us of the conventional initiated by the numismatic art of the Guptas. The weapons which were in vogue amongst the people are numerous and of interesting designs, but these, the bow and arrow and the sword were perhaps the best executed.

Of the religious tolerance of the devout Buddhist kings towards other religions, evidence is furnished by the discovery of a large number of Hindu and Jaina divinities too. However, the Pala rulers played an important missionary role in the propagation of Buddhism and maintaining its influence. The Buddhist images found in excavations in South-East Asia are a sufficient proof of stylistic and iconographic influences emanating from eastern India to the countries of South-East Asia. Further, these archaeological sources provide useful insight into the social conditions of these countries. The social structure of these countries was perhaps based on the pattern of Indian society. The Buddhist monasteries or universities, however, took the lead in the spreading of Indian religion and culture abroad. We are also in a position to verify the literary accounts of monastic education to some extent from archaeological remains of the period. For, these centres of learning also produced a large number of stone as well as metal images. Besides, the Pala rule is remarkable for its growth and development of

complex forms of Mahayana which finally turned into esoteric doctrines (Tantricism). There are a large number of images vouching for the prevalence of Tantricism. As a result, the common people were lost in the repetition of mantras and spells. There is no denying the fact that these Tantric forms succeeded not only in the retarding the growth of the spiritual ideas but also undermining the sense of moral values.²⁸

The archaeological remains particularly the sculptures, found in Bengal as well as in eastern India in large numbers, provide us to form an idea of the wealth of the region and give us glimpses into the economic prosperity. We have mainly sculptures, temples and monasteries to find out the state of crafts. The vast scale of the stone sculptures suggests the considerable amount of stone sculpting including stone polishing. The eastern school also produced along with stone sculptures, numerous bronze or *ashtadhatu* images. The bronzes of the Pala period are, however, marked by a higher technical level than their stone counterparts. The majority of the Pala bronzes found at Nalanda and Kurkihar show this art at the peak of its production. Besides, furnaces for smelting metals have also been found in Nalanda monastery.²⁹ The large demand for images of gods and goddesses of different faiths must have provided employment and thus contributed to the prosperity of casting class and sculptors. Apart from stone sculpting and the art of metal casting, ivory craft was also not known to the artists. Though the use of the ivory might not have been extensive, but considering the high economic achievement and prosperity, it may not be highly improbable to assume that ivory too was used for making images. Such specimens of ivory to which a Pala date has been ascribed are now in the south Kensington Museum,³⁰ London and Seattle Art Museum.³¹ Potter's craft has also survived in terracotta images. At the same time, these images decked with elaborate jewellery, happen to be very fine indications of the art and craft of the goldsmith, the silversmith and the jeweller.

Besides, we know of Pala images cast in the solid silver from the Deul at Churain, district Dacca³² and Kurkihar. The use of the silver was also made towards the inlaying of the eyes, *urnas* and ornaments of some bronzes. Images of gold have, however, not been discovered so far in Pala period though traces of gold plating of figures are not rare. Further, the use of the gold and silver for the adornment of these icons seems to

indicate that there was a great deal of fondness for these metals in the upper strata of the society.

Clothes of fine texture and variegated designs testify to the flourishing state of the weaver's art. The artist penchant for elaboration, lavished on the stylistic depiction of the apparels and ornaments of the images, reflects the rich and ostentatious life. However, it is difficult to establish the source of these precious metals. No region in eastern India is known to have any sources of gold and silver. It is also a well-known fact that, by the time the Palas had come to power; gold and silver coins were a thing of the past. Besides, epigraphical and literary sources indicate agriculture as the mainstay of socio-economic life of the region.³³ In the light of this evidence, it may be argued that if these metals and minerals were in use in affluent sections of the society, they must have come from the accumulated hoards of the past an. However, there is also possibility of these coming from the contemporary earnings through trade and commerce, both inland and foreign. The evidence of East India's influence in the art and religious life of South-East Asia and that of cultural contacts between the pala empire and Chine, Tibet and South-East Asia also testifies to an increase in foreign trade. Unfortunately, we have no idea of its volume or the commodities involved in it. No doubt, epigraphical and literary sources indicate agricultural as the basis of socio-economic life, but even in an agricultural economy we may have sufficient agricultural surplus, which can earn a good balance, thus bringing prosperity to the region. Though we do not know the details of infrastructure of commerce of the zone, yet the possibility of trading activities at different levels cannot be ruled out. Besides, for disposing of agricultural surplus, different types of organizations are always necessary. But we have no evidence of the participation of indigenous people in the maritime trade. Nevertheless, we cannot discount its feasibility in view of the earlier evidences of voyages made by merchants from Tamralipti,³⁴ to different parts of South-East Asia. In this connection, we can refer to the great port of Samandar.³⁵ Al-Idrisi observed that, "Samandar is a large town, commercial and rich, where there are good profits to be made". He indicated that much of the international trade could have been routed through this port even after effective control over it was lost by the Palas.³⁶ From this it is not unreasonable to infer that a high level of prosperity prevailed generally among the rich agricultural and trading communities. Besides, the absence or paucity of

monetary units indicates, how the craft guilds and merchant guilds devised their own rules for maintaining their authority and for controlling the market.

Our records give absolutely no indication of towns specializing in trade and commerce. From the specimens collected so far, it is clear that Nalanda, Bodh-Gaya, Kurkihar and Odantapuri were all religious towns. Material evidence is primarily available in the numerous sculptures, architectural fragments, votive stupas, etc. A remarkable building activity is inferred from these impressive structures. The remains at Nalanda have been extensively excavated and magnificence of this establishment in its flourishing days can easily be visualized from the abundance of antiquities. Further, the excavations of Buddhist sites at Paharpur, Mainamati, Vikramsila, Karnasuvarna, Mahasthan, etc. reveal the large-scale construction of these monasteries.³⁷ All these unmistakably point to the high efficiency of the administration in almost every sphere of activity. Besides, numerous votive seals and copper plate grants show that seal making and working in copper were other developed crafts.

Notes and References:

1. Also spelt as Jagjivanpur (Topographical Map Sheet No. 78 C/8, East Bengal Province. Malda and West Dinajpur Province. First Edition, 1953, Reference, 1 inch, Survey of India) & Jagjivanpur and Jagjibanpur
2. Mouza Map, Jagjibanpur, J.L.No. 73, Sheet No. 1,2, & 3, Revenue Survey No, 211, Scale =1 mt : 396 km.
3. Amal Roy, "A Newly discovered Buddhist Monastery at Jagjivanpur, West Bengal", *Archaeology of Eastern India: New Perspectives*, Edited by Gautam Sengupta and Sheena Panja, Kolkata, 2002. pp.557-611.
4. Notification No. 23139, dated 10th December, 1990, Issued by A.K. Dutta, Jt. Secretary, Information & Cultural Affairs, Dept. Govt, of West Bengal under the purview of "The West Bengal Preservation of Historical Monuments and Objects and excavation of Archaeological Sites Act 1957 and Rules 1964".
5. R. N. Ghosh & S. Majumder, "Geology and Morphostratigraphy of West Bengal: A Data Base for Archaeological Exploration." in Asoke Dutta ed. *Studies In Archaeology*, ed. Asoke Dutta, Books and Books, New Delhi, 1991; Sambhpn Chakraborty and Amal Roy, *Geotechnical Bearing of Geomorphology And Quaternary Geology, An Example, From Tulabhita Buddhist*

Monastery, Jagajjibanpur Mouza, Malda, The Field-Survey based paper was presented in the Third Anniversary Seminar of the Centre for Archaeological Studies and Training, Eastern India, Kolkata, 5th Nov., 1998.

6. According to local people and the reference mentioned in local magazine.

7. Amal Roy, "A Newly discovered Buddhist Monastery at Jagajjivanpur, West Bengal", *Archaeology of Eastern India: New Perspectives*, Edited by Gautam Sengupta and Sheena Panja, Kolkata, 2002. pp.557-611.

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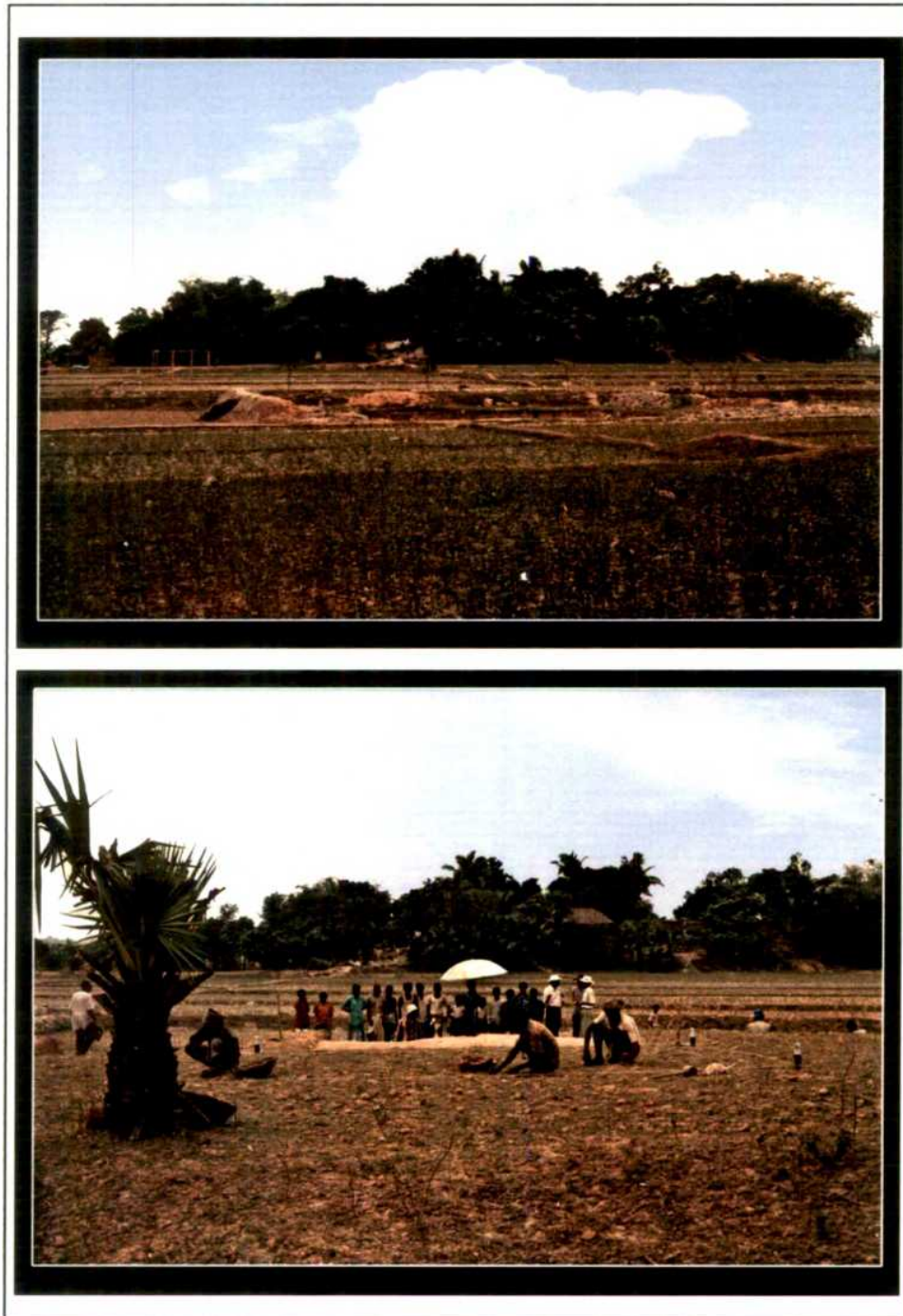


Fig. 6

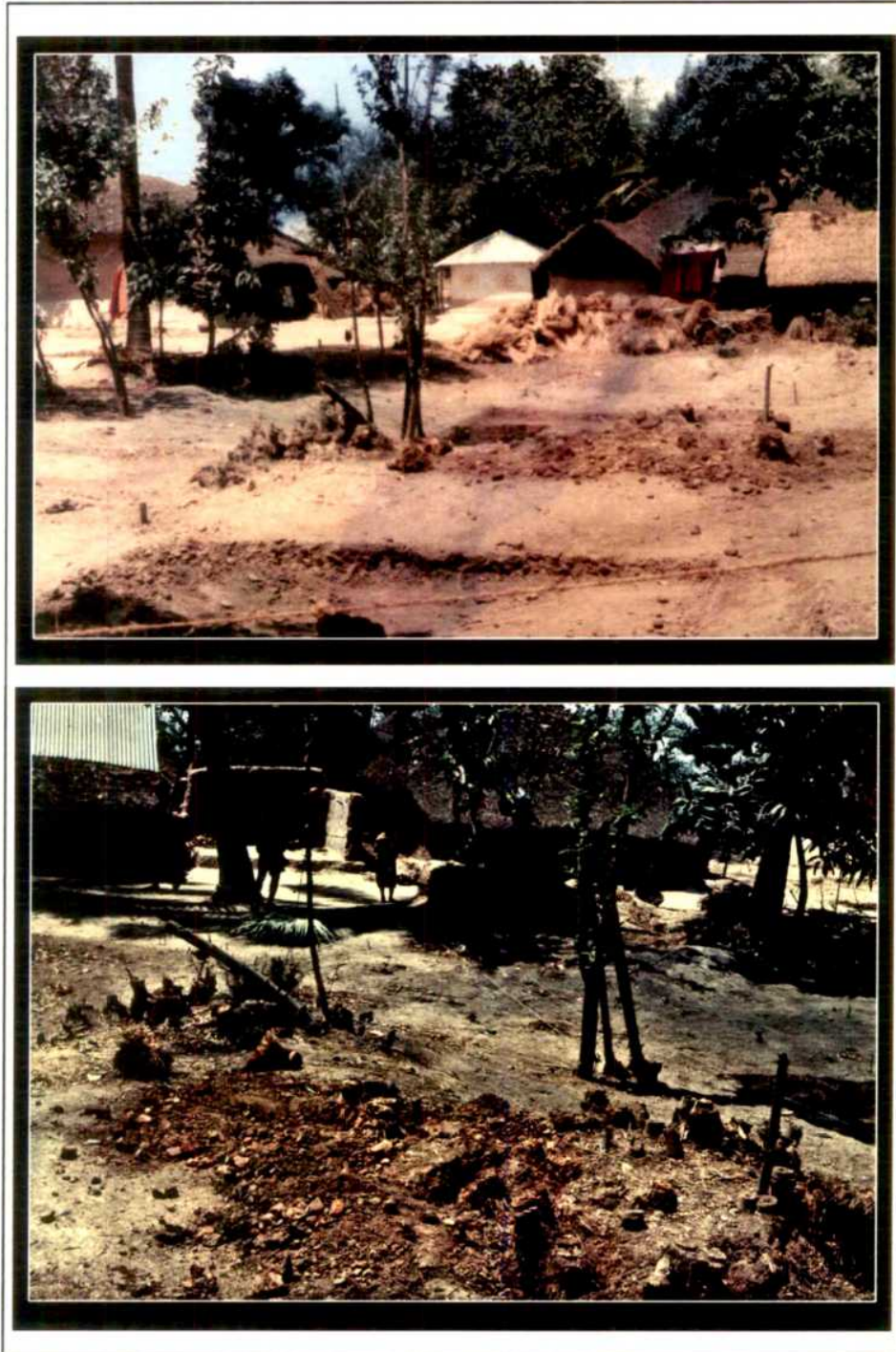


Fig. 7

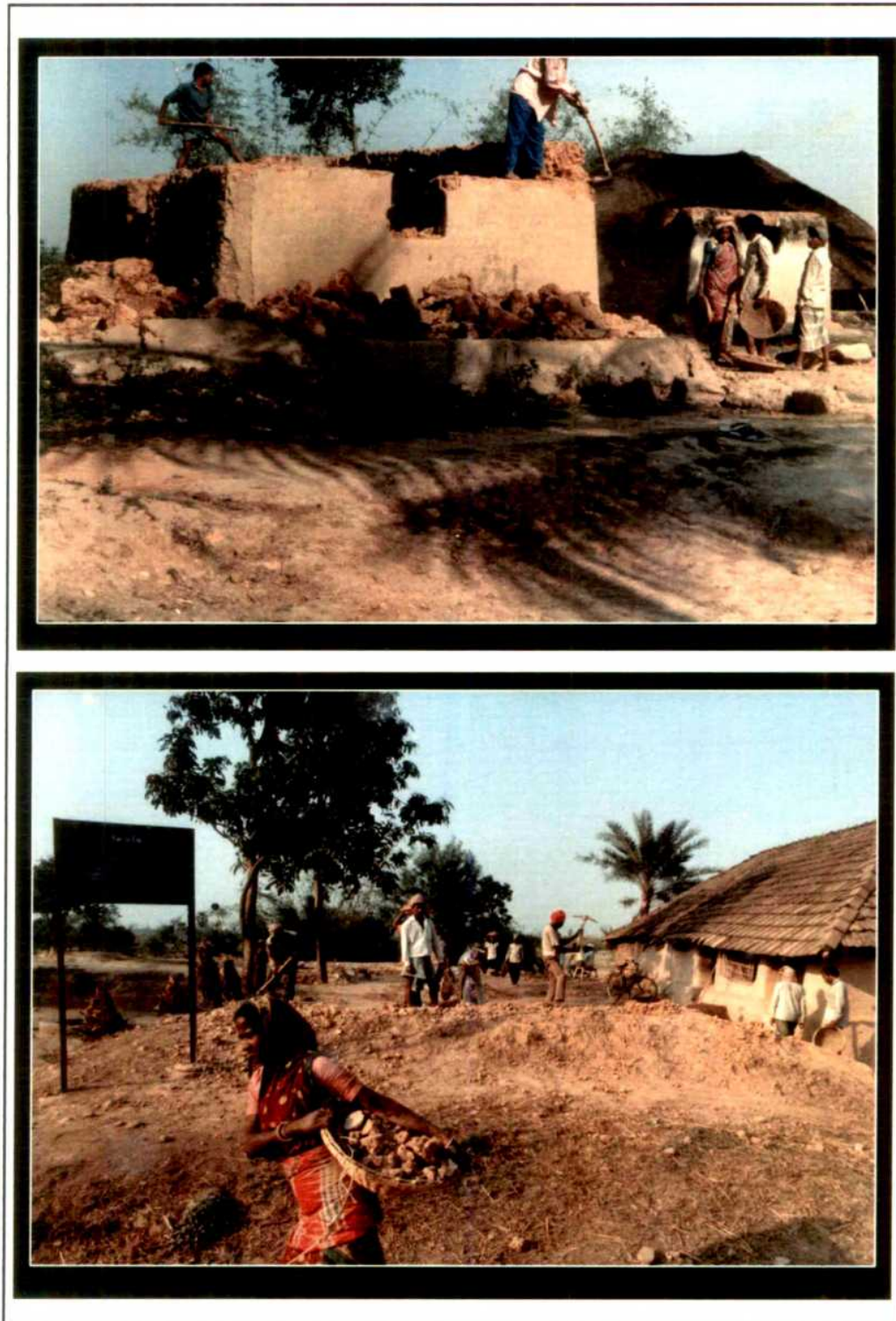


Fig. 8

CHAPTER III

Excavation at Jagjivanpur

- i) Stratigraphy & Culture sequence**
- ii) Material Evidence**
 - (a) Monastery**
 - (b) Sculptures**
 - (c) Antiquities**
 - (d) Potteries**
 - (e) Miscellaneous objects**

i) Stratigraphy & Culture sequence: The objective of the excavation at Jagjivanpur was to expose the buried structural complex completely, hence, the horizontal lay-out method was applied after following the principles of grid pattern, adopted by Mortimer Wheeler¹. Limited number of quadrants were selected for vertical excavation to ascertain the culture sequence of the site. The south facing section-cutting in the trench ZB2 within the monastery at the north-east corner of the courtyard near to circular structure and the north facing section-cutting in the trench YA5 at the north-western outer wall outside the monastery provided fairly satisfactory results for better understanding of the stratigraphy of the site. Six principal layers of deposit from the existing surface level to the natural soil (older alluvium called barind formation geologically), have been identified during the course of digging. The main layers of cultural deposits are layer 2, 3 and 4. The study of the layers, antiquities and structural activities evidently proved that the site was not occupied prior to the Palas and it is identified as a mono cultural site. It is interesting to note that out of two C14 datings of charcoal samples² from the site, one gives the date of pre-Mahendrapaladeva i.e. prior to the land-grant for the erection of the monastery (741–771 A.D. corresponds to *Devapaladeva*). Therefore, it may be assumed that the site was under use prior to Mahendrapala.

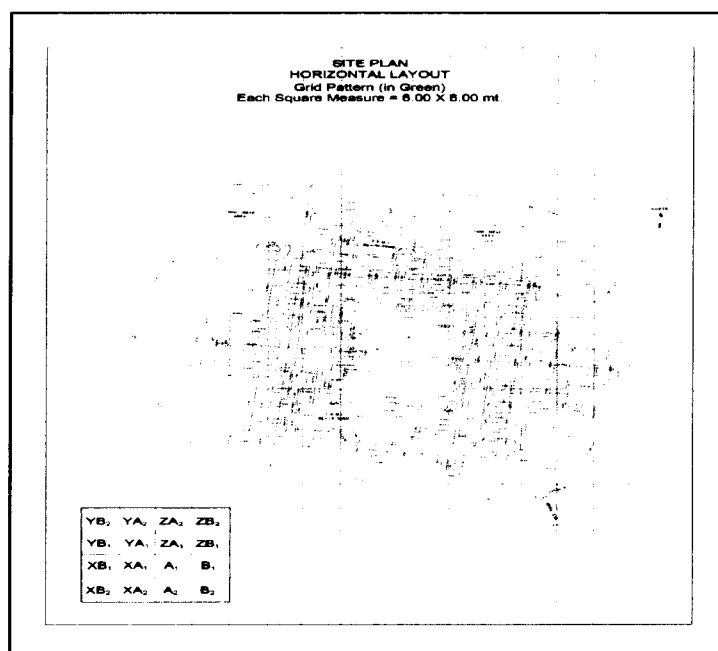


Fig. 9

Cutting³:**Trench ZB2**

Layer i): It is, characterised by loose grey earth (15-20 cm.), which is almost modern filling. In some places, patches of ash, deposited by the inhabitants of the mound, have been recorded. This deposit contains potsherds of recent times without any archaeological importance.

Layer ii): It consists of loose reddish soil (25-30 cm.), mixed by profuse with brick-bats, considerable number of potsherds, and patches of grey soil. This deposit has covered the whole of structural remain and helped to denote it as the sealing layer.

Layer iii): It is characterised by somewhat blackish earth, mixed with brickbats and contains huge amount of potsherds. The average thickness of the deposit is 1.00 m. (80 cm. - 1.30 m.). The nature of the deposit is fairly indicative of the collapsed superstructure of the monastery. A fair number of antiquities have also been recovered through the digging operation from this layer. This layer is considered as the contemporary deposit against the structural activities of the second phase.

Layer iv): This layer consists of sticky blackish earth (20-30 cm.), mixed with small brick-bats and has lesser number of potsherds. A number of antiquities have been recovered from this layer. After a careful analysis of the artefacts, structural remains and the nature of the depositions, it is considered contemporary to the first phase of structural activities at the site.

Layer v): This layer consists of yellowish alluvium, fine in nature. It is sterile and semi-compact in character. No brick-bats and potsherds were yielded from this deposit. It is observed that the structural activities started at this layer and the foundation trenches of all the components of the monastery were laid. According to geologists this deposit is defined at the 'younger alluvium' of the Holocene era.

Layer vi): This layer is defined as natural soil. It is reddish in colour and compact - hard in nature, as it contains iron and lime. It is alkaline and the pH range varies between 4.2 - 5.3. Geologically it is considered as Barind formation, constituted by old-alluvium of Pleistocene era. Any trace of human-occupation has not been encountered, though vertical digging was carried out through this deposit upto a considerable depth of 3.00 metre.

Trench YA5:

Layer i): Loose earth, grey in colour, mixed with ash and other materials including potsherds deposited by the inhabitants who were residing over the mound. Its average thickness is 15-30cm. and dump in nature.

Layer ii): Semi-compact earth, mixed with brick-bats and fair number of potsherds, grey patches consist of ashes mainly have been recorded. It is identified as sealing layer of the structural activities of the monastery. Its average thickness is 30-50 cms.

Layer iii) : Dark grey soil, consist of huge number of potsherds, brick, brick-bats, terracotta plaques and other antiquities like iron – nails, lamps, bangles etc. its average thickness is .50-1.50 mt. it is identified as the contemporary layer deposited by the residents of the monastery during the early mediaeval period. **Layer iv):** Compact earth, blackish in colour, mixed with small brick-bats, lesser quantity of pot-sherds and devoid of antiquities. Probably it was laid for the filling of the base of the walls and also used as floor material after collecting from the contemporary used materials.

Layer v): Mainly composed of alluvium soil, light yellow in colour, sterile and semi-compact in nature. The natural deposit of the Holocene period as defined by the geologist, served as the base for foundation of monastic structure at Tulabhita.

The site was established in the middle of the circa 9th century A.D, according to the inscription. The palaeography of the seals, bronze image of marichi gives the date of 10th/11th century. The C₁₄ dating of charcoals provided two dates ranging from 1) 741-771 A.D. and 2) 943-1018 A.D⁴.

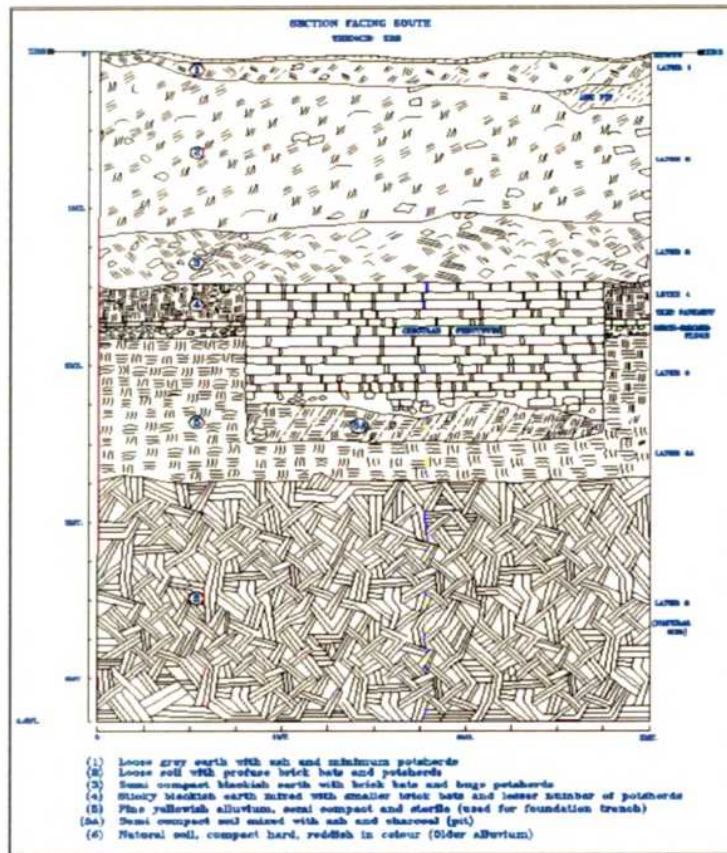


Fig.10

ii) Material Evidence

ii(a). Monastery: The main objective of the excavation was to expose the buried structural complex completely; hence, the horizontal layout method was applied. Accordingly, the trench numbers were given as A₁, XA₁, YA₁, ZA₁, etc. The excavations have yielded a considerable part of a large brick-built monastery with its components like sanctum with *pradakshapatinha*, entrance-complex with massive staircase, cells, verandah, courtyard with staircases, bastion-cum-cell etc. have been exposed through the excavations⁵.

The extensive digging operations were carried out during the field seasons 1995-96 to 2004-05 under the direction of the author, with a view to expose the buried structural complex, for ascertaining the complete plan of the monastery as well as to understand the cultural sequence of the site⁶. From the plan of the structure, it is evident that this monastery of 9th century A.D, is comparable with other monasteries of eastern India, particularly with the 'Vikramsila-mahavihara' at Antichak in Bhagalpur District of

Bihar, as it has also circular bastions, attached to the outer wall⁷. Except the corner bastions, the general construction - pattern is similar to that of the excavated monasteries at Ratnagir, Lalitagiri, Udayagiri in Orissa⁸ and monastery No.8 at Nalanda in Bihar⁹. Burnt bricks of different sizes with fine clay as bonding materials have been used abundantly for the construction of the monastic structure. The preliminary analysis of the mortar has supplied us the information that lime was also used as one of the ingredients (though the percentage is very less) alongwith other adhesive substances. The outer wall is having few courses of designed and ornamental bricks, forming complete lotus for placement of terracotta plaques on it. Though in case of the construction of other monasteries in Eastern India. where stones have been used abundantly, here we find that only bricks have been used for construction. Almost all the bricks are fragmentary. The facing bricks are large and smooth, while the core is made of courses of brick-bats of irregular shapes and sizes. The extant walls are tilted outwards in most of the cases and have several vertical and horizontal cracks. So far, three stone blocks have been encountered during the entire course of excavations, which indicates that they were used to serve as a pillar or pillar base in the frontal part of the verandah facing the courtyard, like other monasteries of eastern India. It has been noticed carefully that plasters on the walls have not been used in any instance.

The courtyard is almost square and measures 24.5 metre in north-south orientation and 23.5 metre in east-west orientation. A tiled paved path-way (width 1.70 mt.) is provided all around the courtyard, adjacent to the verandah-wall(Plate 44a), perhaps, for easy-movement of the monks, who were residing there. The entire courtyard is made with rammed brick-bats, instead of terracotta tiles or stone blocks as is in the case of other monasteries in Bihar and Orissa. Presently, the courtyard has a gentle slope towards the north-east corner, though the mouth of an opening has been exposed at the North West corner, adjacent to the western staircase in the north. Perhaps originally the slope was provided towards North West, which was disturbed after the collapse of the heavy superstructures. This original outlet perhaps helped to pass out the accumulated rainwater in the open courtyard, through the floors of the western verandah and the western enclosure wall, adjacent to the northern part of the sanctum. Several post-holes in the tiled-paved pathway, led us to think that perhaps,



Fig. 11

the pathway was covered with a temporary shed, erected with the support of the wooden posts. Here, also it is observed that different sizes of terracotta tiles have been used for the layout of the pathway, though the thickness is 2.00 cms. in most of the cases. The length and breadth of the tiles as recorded are 38 X 30 cms., 29 x 26 cms., 29 X 22 cms., 26 x 18 cms., 29 X 19 cms., 36 x 24 cms., 20 x 17 cms., 30 X 18 cms., 37 x 28 cms., 38 x 27 cms. and 35 x 2 cms.

The courtyard has two staircases, one on the eastern side and the other one on the western side. The eastern staircase has been exposed in quadrants CI and C2. It measures 3.05 mts. in north-south direction and 2.65 mts. in east-west direction. Five steps have been traced from below upwards. The width of the steps are different and measure as follows :

Step 1 = 50 cms, Step 2 = 30 cms., Step 3 = 30 cms.. Step 4 = 30 cms. Step 5 = 35 cms and the platform (may be treated as step 6) measures 90 cms in width.

The projected western staircase has seven steps with two arms i.e. side-walls in the north and the south. This staircase provides easy access to the sanctum. Each side wall measures 2.60 mts. in length and 1.60 mts. in width. The width of the steps varies in between 30 cms and 45 cms.

The deep digging in the quadrant B3 at the south-east corner of the courtyard, has yielded 2 successive rammed floors of brick-bats, which indicate 2 phases of structural activities as well as occupation of the monastery.

Out of thirty two, twenty four cells have been exposed completely through excavations, eight in the east, eight in the west, eight in the north and the remaining eight in the south have been exposed partially¹⁰. Cells No. 11 and 12 have rectangular platforms in the centre. The platform in Cell no. 11 is simple in construction, but. Cell no. 12 has a platform with tri-ratha mouldings. Though the cells are different in size, the size of the openings or the doors are 1.00 mt in width in almost all the cases. It is to be recorded here that almost all the cells are devoid of superstructures. Cell no. 1 has provided substantial indicatives to ascertain two phases of construction. The deep digging operation through Cell no.1, shows that an opening in its western wall which was in use during the earlier phase, has been blocked in the subsequent period for its re-use after raising the height. This usual phenomenon is noticed in case of all the structures. This view has also been attested by Dr. Debala Mitra during his inspection of the site. After blocking the opening (1.28 X 1.24 metres) with the burnt bricks, the cells were filled up with alluvium alongwith other dump materials for raising the height, probably indicative of submergence under water during floods, as several channels and water bodies are existing in the vicinity. All the floors of the cells have been laid with rammed brick-bats. Different type of bricks have been used for the construction of the cells, measuring 28 X 24 X 8 cms., 25 x 20 x 5 cms., 23 X 18 X 5 cms., 25 X 22 X 4 cms., 30 X 25 X 5 cms., 25 X 21 X 5 cms. The excavations have unearthed four circular bastions or bastion-cum-cells in the north-west, north-east, south-west and south-east corner at the outer walls of the monastery.. The north-west corner bastion has two niches at its inner side, which was exposed during the

digging through the filling of the core of the structure. Due to the provision of niches within the structure, it is considered as a bastion-cum-cell for using by the monks as circular cells. All these bastions have the marks of two phases of construction, as the openings of earlier phase were blocked subsequently (Plate 46b). The circumference of the bastion at the base is 19.60 metres. The entrance complex, consisting of a front porch, a rear porch and a pylon with a massive staircase has been exposed in the eastern part of the mound in fifteen trenches. Apart from the staircase, the entrance complex is formed by two rectangular chambers with a wide connecting passage. The outer chamber attached to the staircase is defined as the front-porch and the inner chamber attached to the verandah is defined as the rear-porch. The size of the front-porch is 10.39 metres in north-south orientation and 3.60 metres in east-west orientation, whereas the rear porch measures 9.60 metres in north-south orientation. The widths of the connecting passage in between the two chambers are 2.00 metres. The super structures of the entrance complex are completely missing, except a few courses, indicating brick hunting. The staircase leading to the front-porch measures 9.10 mt. north-south and 7.00 mt. east-west. The staircase consists of eight steps. The widths of the first seven steps have been recorded as 35 cms at the minimum and 65 cms at the maximum. The width of the eighth step (in the form of a platform) measures 90cms. The excavations have revealed the plan completely, similar to that of the monastery of Ratnagiri in Orissa.¹

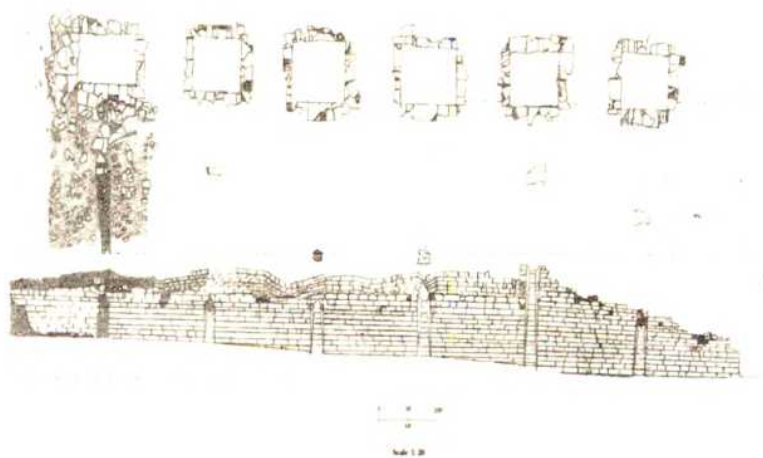


Fig.12

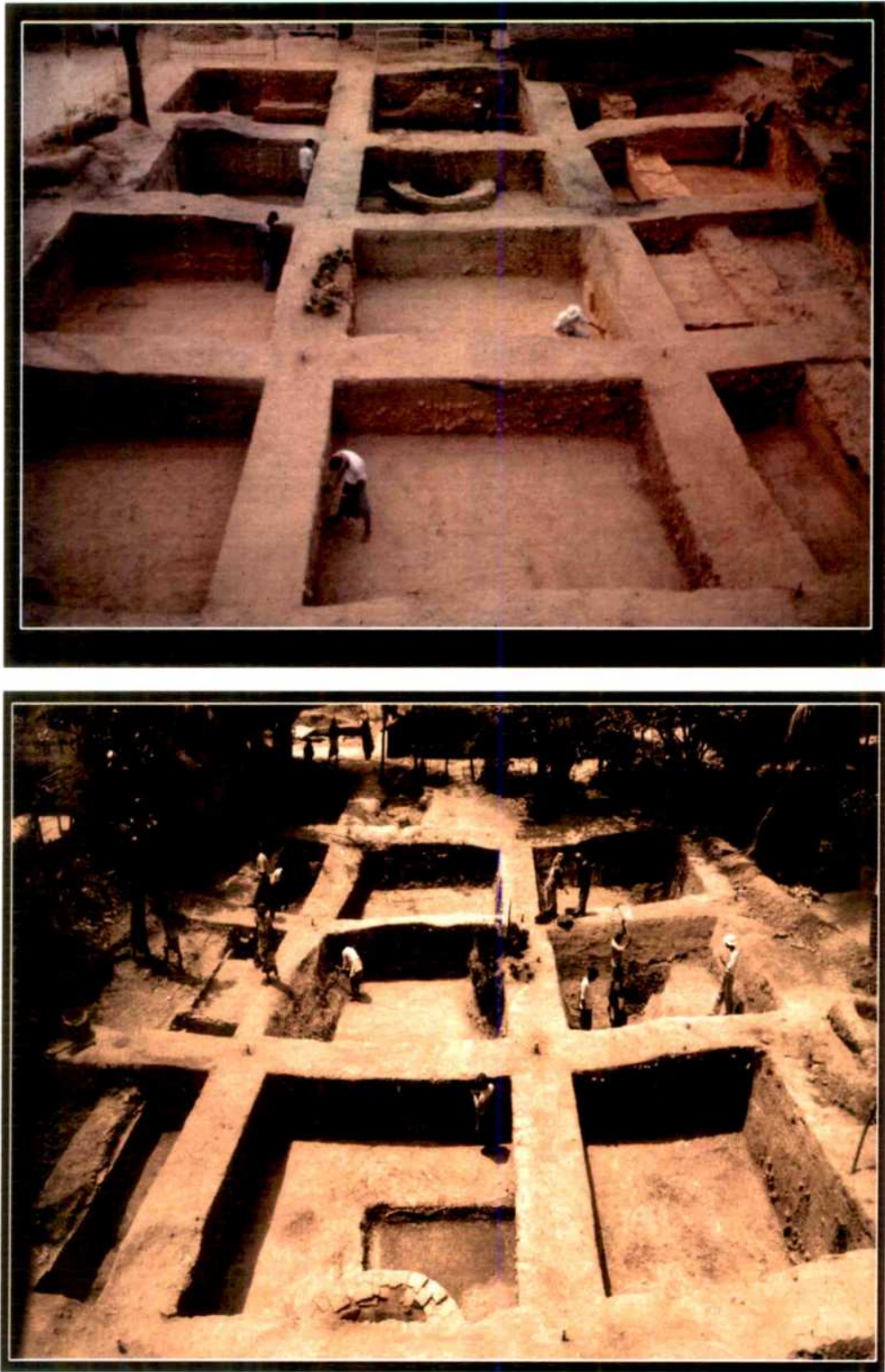


Fig. 13



Fig. 14

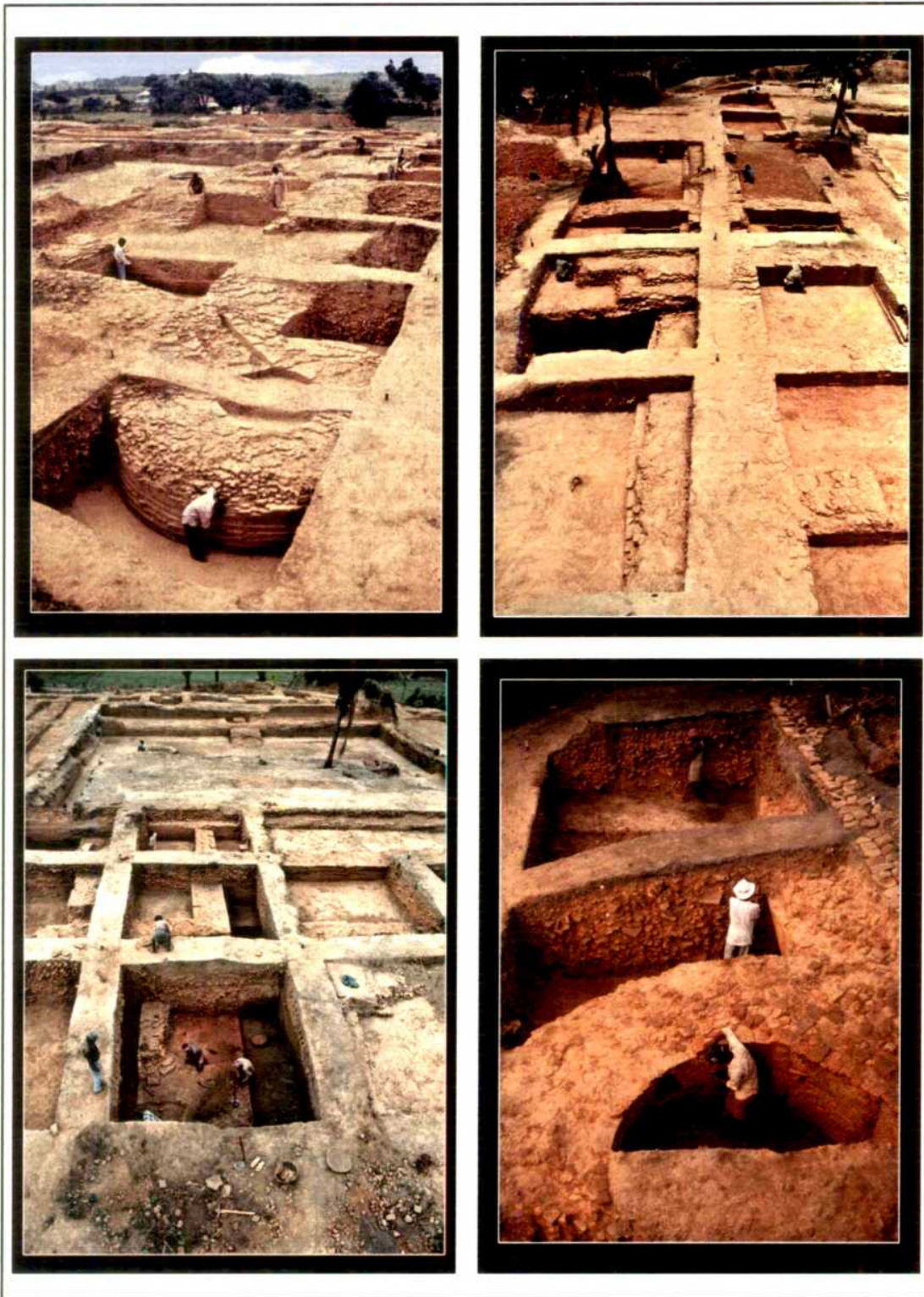


Fig. 15

The excavations in the western part of the mound have laid bare the sanctum-complex with an ambulatory pathway or *pradakshinapatha* all around like the *Simhaprasta*

Mahavihara at Udaygiri 2 in Orissa¹². The entire superstructure has completely collapsed; hence presently it looks like a platform. The sanctum was laid in the form of a square structure projecting from the centre of the outer wall at its centre. A massive wall having a width of 3.08 metres is running all around the sanctum or shrine chamber, leaving the space of 1.50 metres for circumbulatory pathway (in north, west and south). The sanctum externally measures 9.40 metres in east-west orientation and 6.90 metres in north-south orientation. From the plinth level, 18 courses of bricks in the western side, 22 courses of bricks in the northern side and 16 courses of bricks in the southern side have been found. The existing height of the sanctum wall (externally) is 2.25 metres in the north, 1.65 metres in the west and 2.05 metres in the south.

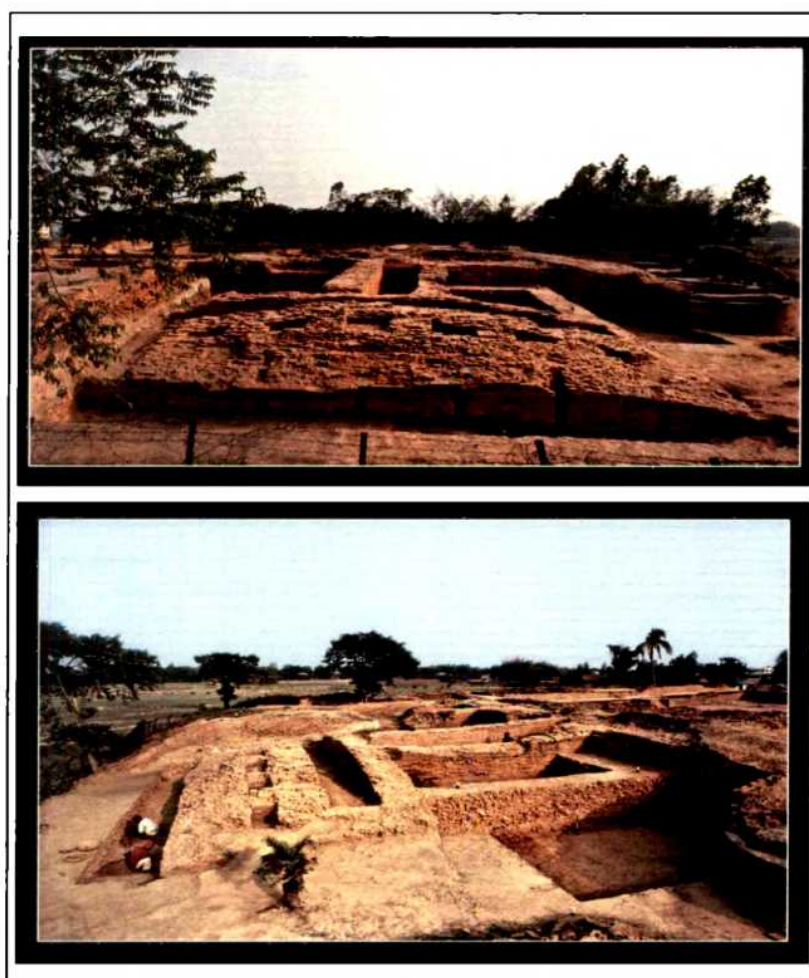


Fig. 16

The excavations have exposed an unique brick structure, projected towards north from the outer wall at its north western corner, adjacent to the bastion. The superstructure is damaged

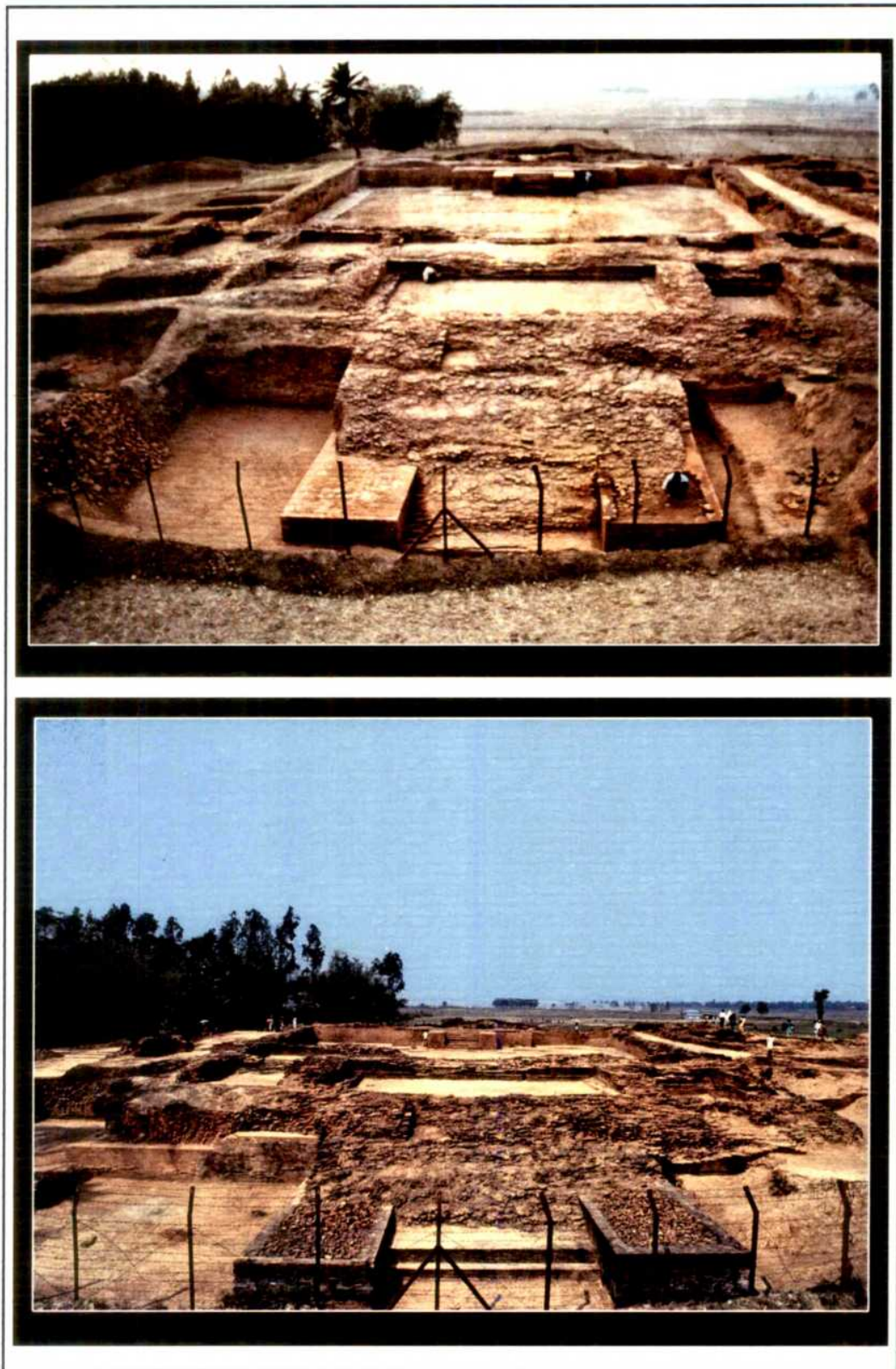


Fig. 17



Fig. 18

badly and missing. It is rectangular in shape and in east-west orientation. At the middle of the structure, there are seven square chambers and each chamber is having an outlet with acute slope towards the north. The further diggings at the northern surface adjacent to the structure, soak-pits have been found at the end of the each outlet. A large number of potteries including the fragmentary pieces of sprinklers have been recovered. The

structural pattern, the chambers with sloped-outlet and a passage leading towards the north west corner of the verandah of the monastery, helped to identify it as a bathing or toilet structure. Throughout the eastern India, such type of structural component in respect of Buddhist monastery is not available, though at Paharpur in Bangladesh the similar type of structure is also available¹³.

A circular structure at the north-east corner of the courtyard has been exposed in which may be identified with a well like the monastery No. 8 at Nalanda¹⁴. Moreover, the northern portion of the structure is provided with a pavement of terracotta tiles, though the whole courtyard is made with rammed brick-bats.

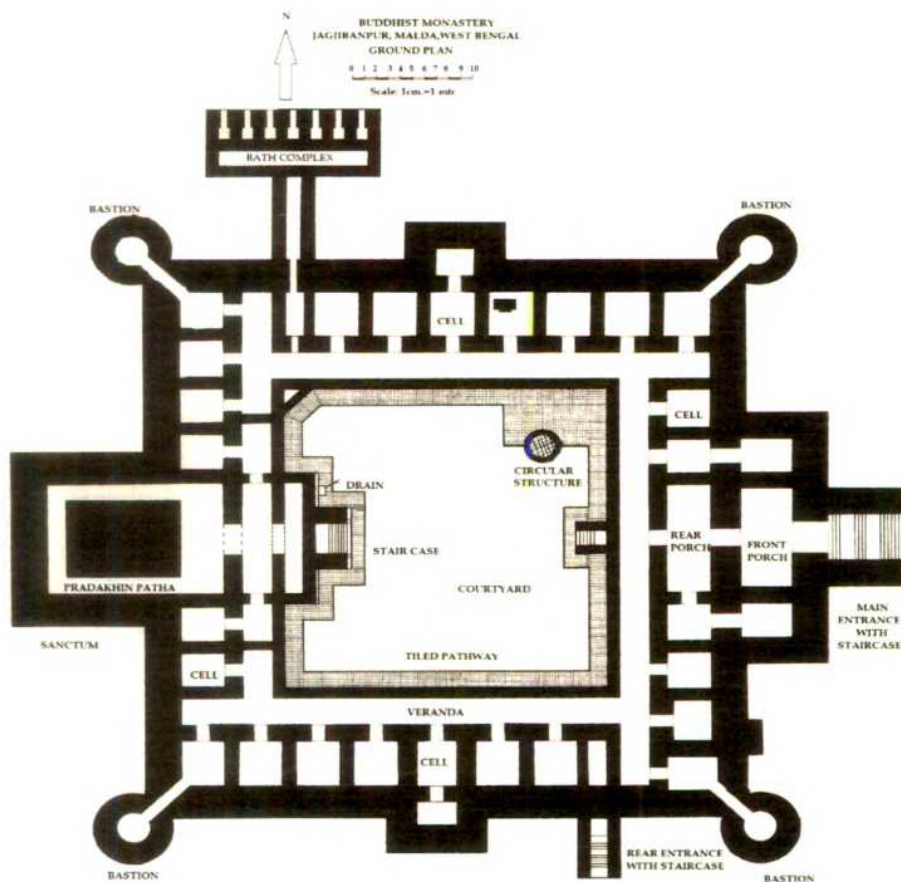


Fig. 19

The excavation at south-eastern part of the outer wall, running east-west direction, a modest staircase with seven steps have been exposed nearer to south-east corner bastion, which has been identified as rear entrance.

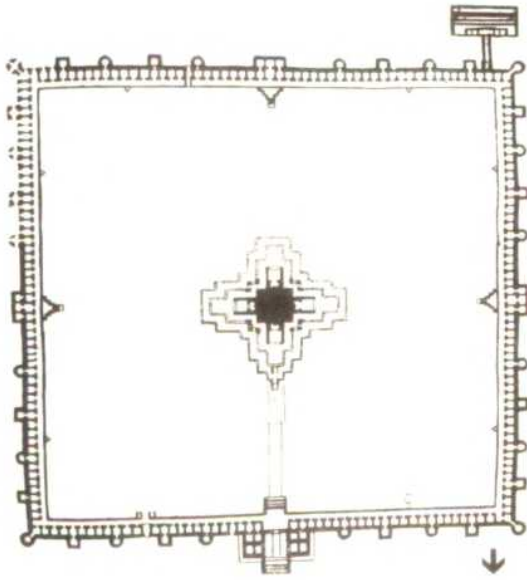


Fig. 20

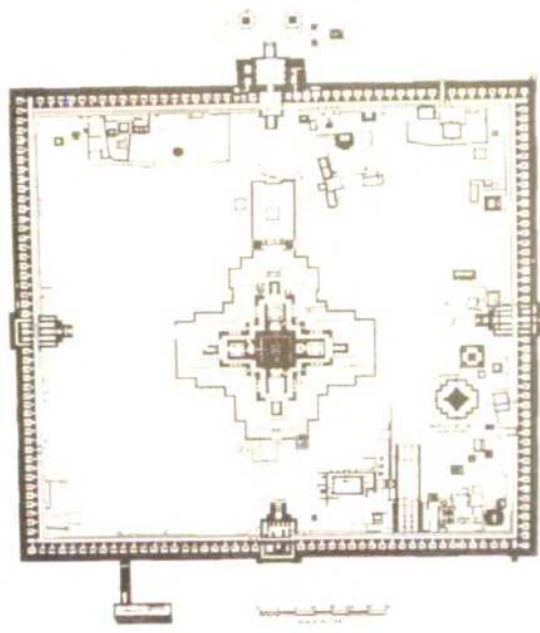


Fig. 21

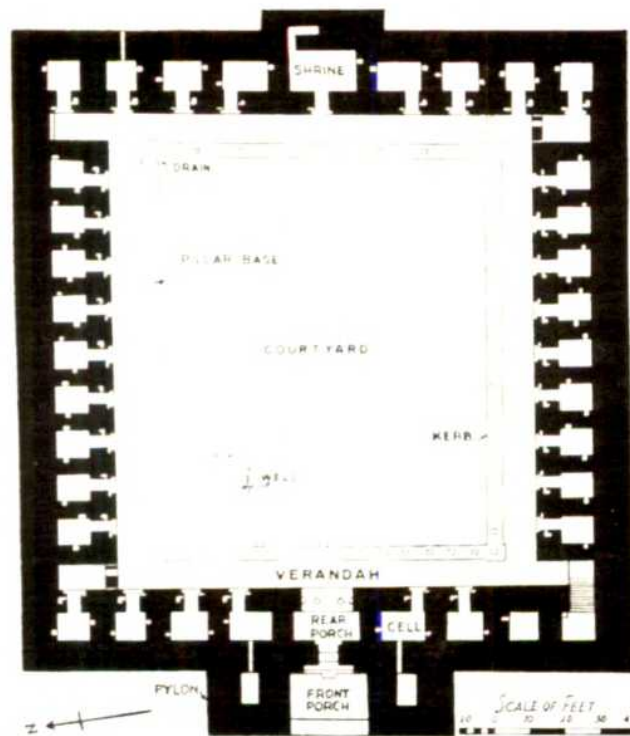


Fig. 22

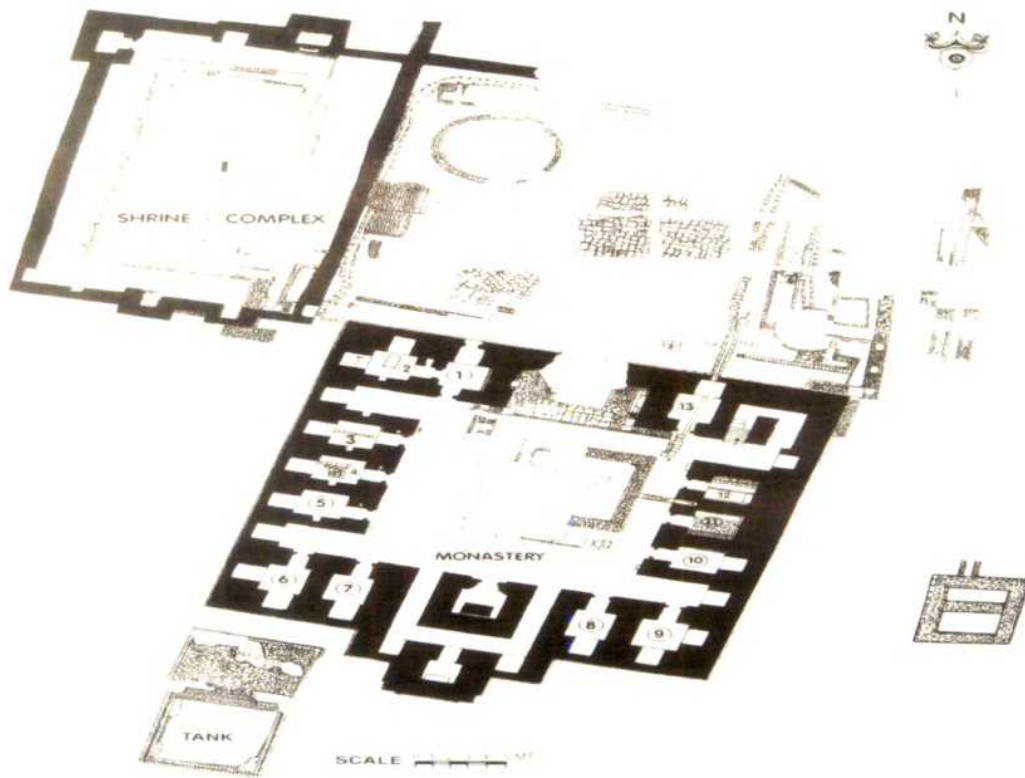


Fig. 23



Fig. 24

ii.(b) Sculptures

ii.(b)1. Image of Marichi. A bronze image of *Marichi*¹⁵ was found from cell no. 13 in the north at a depth of 1.00 metre. The image measures 17.5 cms (height) x 8.3 cms (width) x 3.6 cms (thickness). The three headed and six-armed goddess with a raised circular mark on the forehead is dressed in a *sati* (with marks of folds) held by a girdle with a flower-shaped circular clasp (ring-like with a raised disc or pellet inside and two petals edging the exterior), from the string-like girdle hang down beaded garlands and three beaded strings, each ending in an oval pendant with a raised pellet inside. A folded *uttariya*, partly covering her breasts and waist, rises on her left shoulder and after a making of loop falls by her left side with two ends cascading. It is likely that the *sati* is worn with a *kaccha* befitting an archer. *Marici* is adorned with plain anklets, an *upavita*, *valayas* (possibly beaded, one around each wrist), armlets with a leaf-shaped projection immediately above the ring-like base; in the central projection is an abraded seated figure of *Tathagata Vairocana*, the spiritual sire of *Marichi*. Some locks of hair fall on the shoulders and a part of the two topmost arms. She has three heads; her right head is that of a sow with a prominent snout. Around the three heads is a single roundish halo with a raised border. *Marichi* is six-armed image whose lowest right palm holds a needle with the thumb and the index-finger, the middle one the shaft of an arrow and the top one a thunderbolt. Of the left hands, the lowest palm carries a long string ending in a noose, the middle one a bow (now detached) and the top palm an *asoka*-bough. In the *Marichi-mandala* of the *Nispannayogavali* the goddess is described six-armed, bearing an arrow (*sara*), a thunderbolt (*Vajra*) and a needle (*suchi*) in her right palms, the left palms holding a bow (*capa*), a thread (*sutra*) and an *asoka*-bough with flowers and leaves (*sapuspasokapaaallavan*). The published *Sadhanamala* does not prescribe a six-armed form. There are sixteen *sadhanas* in which two-armed, eight-armed, and ten-armed and twelve armed forms are dealt with. In the eight-armed form (as for example, *Maricipicuva*), in one pair of hands are an elephant-goad (*ankusa*) and a noose (*pasa*), apart from a needle, a thread, a bow, an arrow, a thunderbolt and an *asoka*-bough in other six palms. The utilisation of her eight attributes are specified in the *Maricipicuva-sadhana* (*sadhana* no. 144 of the *Sadhanamala*). “ She sews up the eyes and the mouth of the wicked with the needle and secures them with the string. She strikes their hearts with the *Ankusa*, draws them

by the neck with the noose, pierces them with the bow and the arrow, and shatters their hearts to pieces with the *Vajra*, and then sprinkles water with the leaves of



Fig.25

Asoka.” While the wicked meet with chastisement and death, *Marichi* is equally benign to the good people and devotees who are protected and rewarded with peace, prosperity, removal of obstructions and difficulties and fulfilment of desires, as noted in the *sadhanas*. Her right leg slightly bent at the knee and left leg stretched, the goddess stands in the *pratyahidha* posture on the pericarp of a *sadhana* single-petalled lotus placed on an oblong chariot with mouldings at the base and top. The chariot is drawn by, apart from the central corroded figure which might be a horse (facing), six animals (three each on either flank) looking more like horses than pigs. The animals, according to the *Sadhanamala* and the *Nispannayogavali*, should be pigs. At least two of the stone drum-slabs of *stupas* and some of the monolithic *stupas* as Ratnagiri (formerly in district Cuttack, now in district Jajpur, Odisha) presents horses drawing the chariot. There are many independent full-fledged images of *Marichi*, noticed at various sites, particularly in the eastern India including Odisha. The chariots of most of these images are borne by pigs. However, in a few cases the animals are horses. Thus, seven galloping horses are seen in a six-armed image of *Marichi* from Bihar, now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. Ascribable to about the ninth-tenth century AD; this image holds attributes identical with those of the metal image (a needle, an arrow and a thunderbolt in her right hands and a long string ending in a noose, a bow and the *asoka-pallava* in the left palms). S.K.Saraswati illustrated another six-armed image on a chariot drawn by horses, from Nalanda.

Around the image is a frame, the two bottom ends of which rise from the two extremities of the single-petalled lotus. Made separately, the frame with a semi-circular top is partly welded to the image and partly supported by rods, also joined by welding. Below the halo is a flattish horizontal band joining the two flanks of the frame. The innermost plain part of the frame is bordered by two defaced beaded strings (running parallel to each other), the outer string edged by closely-arrayed leaf-shaped tongues of flames and a triangular floral pattern at the crown of the frame. The back side of the image is badly covered with sticky clay. The bottom of the chariot with a part above is hollow. The image does not appear to be earlier than the tenth century A.D. A counterpart of the Brahmanical god Surya, *Marici* appears to be the Buddhist goddess of the dawn. She is a popular divinity in the Buddhist pantheon. Her popularity is testified not only by as many as sixteen *sadhanas* dedicated to her in the *Sadhanamala*

and a mandala exclusively for her in the *Nispannayagavali*, but by the find of a large number of images at various sites and museums. Apart from these two texts, there might be other texts prescribing a somewhat variant form of *Marichi* as attested by two reliefs on monolithic *stupas* at Ratnagiri. Both the figures is single-faced, six-armed and richly adorned with ornaments. One of the two is seated in *paryankasana* on a double petalled lotus inside a niche with a projected frame simulating a *chaitya* (*chaitya-garbhashta*). Below the lotus is a row of five trotting pigs. With the bun-shaped coiffure on the top of the head, a halo behind the head and the benign face, the goddess holds a needle in her principal, (lowest) right palm displayed in *vara-mudra*, the remaining two right hands carrying an elephant-goat and a sword. The corresponding left hands hold a noose, an *asoka*-bough and the stalk of a full blown lotus. The figure of the goddess in the oblong niche of the second *stupa*, with identical attributes in hands, is seated in *vajra-paryankasana* on a *visva-padma*, below which are seven galloping pigs (the central one facing).

ii.(b)2. Bronze Image of Buddha. This tiny bronze-image of Buddha¹⁶ was collected by Dr. Gautam Sengupta and Dr. Asok K. Bhattacharyya in 1990, during their first inspection of the site, from Yugi Swarnakar, a local resident of Tulabhita. The image is now being preserved in the District Museum at Malda. The size of the image is 4.4 cm. (ht.) X 3.5 cm. (wd.) X 2.75 cm. (th.). Lord Buddha is seated on *Visva-padma* in *Bhumisparsa -mudra*. This votive image has a circular halo at the back of his head. The back of the halo contains the Buddhist creed "*Ye dhamma hetu prabhavamahasramana*" in six lines in 10th century character.

ii.(b)3. Stone Image of Buddha. An image of Buddha, made of black stone¹⁷, was collected from the village Jagjivanpur in the year 1998, which is now preserved in the District Museum at Malda. One local farmer, Satis Vallabh of the village Poali, adjacent to Jagjivanpur, found this image few years ago during the ploughing of his agricultural land. The face and the hands are broken. The size of the image is 30 cm. (ht.) X 17 cm. (wd.) X 12 cm. (th.). Here the Buddha is seated on *Visva-padma* in *bhumisparsa-mudra* on a *pancharatnasimhasana*. A *vajra* is depicted at the centre of the lotus-seat. At the base of the *simhasana*, below the lotus-seat, the forepart of an elephant at the centre, flanked by two lions on both side and two devotees in *anjali-mudra* are depicted. On either side of Buddha, two seated Bodhisattvas are

depicted. The upper part of the stele contains the figures of *Mukta-lobhi-hamsa* and flying *Vidyadharas* on either side. The top part of the stele contains five *dhyani-buddhas* on *patra-sakhas* of the *bodhivriksha*. Stylistically, the image is datable to 10th / 11th century A.D.



Fig 26

ii.(b)4. Terracotta Buddha: Fragmentary tiny piece of a standing Buddha (feet and head only) recovered through excavation, is noteworthy. The execution of facial expression and the minute carvings on the extant part of the halo and the feet on lotus pedestal, represent high artistic skill.

ii.(c) Antiquities: A large number of antiquities have been recovered so far through the excavations and explorations. The main antiquities collected from the site are Copper Plate Charter of Mahendrapaladeva, seals and sealings, bronze image of *Marichi*, terracotta plaques, beads, iron-objects, bangles, dabber, terracotta lamps, terracotta balls, hopscotch and other minor antiquities.

ii.(c)1. Copper Plate Charter: A number of articles on the charter have already been published in different journals by reputed scholars¹⁸. The copper-plate contains an epigraphic account on both obverse and reverse sides with 40 and 32 lines respectively, in the *siddhamatrika* script of 9th century in Sanskrit language. It has a royal seal, attached on the top which contains a *dharmachakra*, flanked by two seated deer and the inscription *Sri Mahendrapaladevah* within a full-blown lotus. The weight of the copper-plate is 11 kg. 800 gms and measures 52.5 cm. x 37.5 cm. The inscription is now preserved in Malda District Museum.

The charter contains 34 verses and begins with '*Siddham*' (expressed by symbol) followed by the word '*Svasti*'. The first verse bears the adoration to Lord Buddha. The genealogy of the Pala rulers is mentioned in the verses from second to sixteen. The remaining verses contain the grant pillion. The charter records in verse 34 that the king Mahendrapaladeva announced from the *Vishaya Kuddalkhataka* within *Pundravardhana-bhukti*, before the body of his officers and other persons, assembled on the occasion of a land-grant ceremony, that his army-chief *Vajradeva* intended to dedicate the land adjacent to the *Nandadirghik-Odranga*, for accruing religious merits to his (i.e. *Vajradeva's*) parents and all people of this earth for the worship of the Buddhist deities with maintenance and performance of religious rites by the *bhikshus* residing there. This copper plate charter is extremely important for various reasons—

(a) It introduces *Sri Mahendrapaladeva* as a scion of the Imperial Pala dynasty, which ruled over Bengal and Bihar during circa 8th - 12th century A.D.

(b) It also helped historians to rewrite the political history of Bengal.



Fig. 27

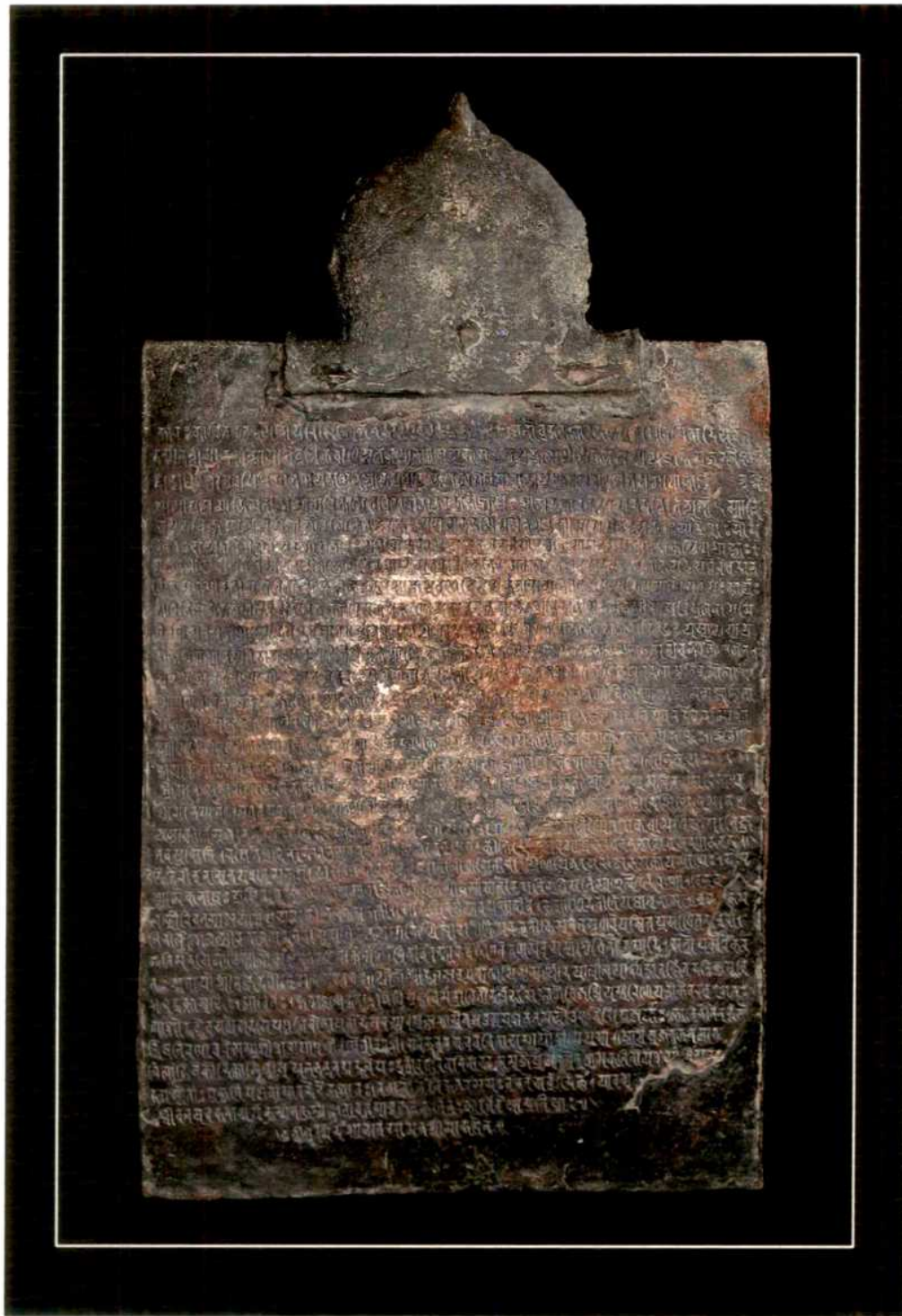


Fig. 28

(c) It refers to the name of two administrative divisions viz. *Kuddalkhataka* and *Dardarandl-Mandala*.

(d) It introduces us to the genealogy of *Mahasendpati Vajradeva*.

Text of the Charter(from *Epigraphica Indica*, Vol XLII)¹⁹

[Metres: Verses 17-19,21,23 Anushtubh; Verse 24 Indravajra; Verses 2,25,29 Malini; Verse 34 Mandakranta; Verse 20 Pushpitagra; Verses 1,4,8,10,14-15,26,31 Sardulavikridita; Verses 3,6-7,12-13,16,22,33 Vasantalatika; Verses 9,11,28,30 Upajati]

Obverse

1. Siddham [|*] Svasti | Śrīm[ā]n=mānita-śāsanō nijava(ba)-
2. Lair=adhyāsītō vīryavān |^l A[t*]y=ānanda-subhū-
3. Ti-nandita-mahā-dāna-priya □ kshāntimān | bhā
4. Svad=va □ śa(m □ śa)-bhava □ praja(jā)-hitakarō nihśēsha-bhūmīśvara □
siddhārthō bhuvanāni pātu sugata □ pātā cha dharmā-sti(thi)tē □ ||
5. Sta-dōsh-āndhakārō Ravir=iva pata-dhāmnān-dhāma Gōpāla nāmā |
aga □ ita-gu □ a-ratnam yam samāsādyā jātā hari-vasati-sukhēbhyō
6. Data-tōy-āñjali □ śrī □ || [2*] Aty=uddhata-dvis □ ad-anēka-jay-ārjjita-śrī □
śrī-Dharmmapāla iti tasya sutō va(ba)bhūva | prakshālītāni Kali-sa-
7. Ntamas=āvilāni yasy=Ēndradēva-yaśasā kakubhām=mukhāni || [3*]
Durvvārā[n*]=dvishatō vijitya samarē tān=Indrarāja(j=ā)dikān |
Sindhūnām=adhipa-
8. M=pramadhya(thya) rābhasād=unmīlita-kshmābh □ itā | dattā yēna mahī
mahōdayavatī vikrānti-bhājē nija[m □ *] nati Vāmanāya Va(Ba)linā Chakrā-
9. Yudhāy-ā[r]thinē || [4*] Rē □ un(□ ūn)=yasy=ā □ ga □ ēbhyō hata-ripu-
mahishī-śva(śvā)sa-vātā haranti sinchaty=etani madyat==kari-karata-galad=dana-
toya-pravahah [|*]
10. Rājñām □ sēvā-parā □ ām=pra □ ata-nija-śīrō-ratna-pushpa-
prata(tā)nair=ddōr=ddarpp-ānīta-lakshmī-kara-kamala-dh □ ita □ pūjita □ pāda-
padma □ || [5*] Nītēr=vilāsa-bha-
11. Vanam=priya-Vikramāyā □ śrī-Dēvapāla iti tat=tanayō va(ba)bhūva | ya □
kautukād=iva jagatpu(t=pa)davīn=did □ ikshuś=cham □ kramyatē sma bhavan-
ān □ ga □ a-līlay=ēva || [6*] Da-

12. □□-ōpanīta-kanakair=vvasudhādhipānām rājā mahā-samara-nā□aka-sūtradhāra□ | yō nirmmamē Sugata-sadma-grihañ=cha Gauryā yat=kautukañ=cha vi(ti)la-
13. Kañ=cha jagat=trayē= 'pi || [7*] Durvvār-āstra-nipāta-bhīsha□a-ra□at=sannāha-lavdhō(bdh-ō)dayam□(yam)| sākshīk□itya vibhāvassum□ ra□a-sīrō-vēdī-mahāma□□apē | kha-
14. □g-āvarjjitai(ta)-vairi-vāra□a-gha□ā-kumbh-ās□ig-ambha□-plutō yō jagrāha karam kshītīśvara-varō ni□śēsha-bhūbh□id-bhuvām□(vām) || [8*] yam□ yōdhayāmās ur=arātayas=tē yē-
15. Shām□ riram□sā sura-sundarībhi□ | tathā Vivasvad=bhrama□-āvadhīnī yai□ krētum□ ish□āny=asubhir=yaśān□si(m□si)|| [9*] Dharmmasya prasavēna yēna vipulām=bhūtiñ=chi-
16. Ram=vibhratā bhrū-līlā-huta-Kamarūpa-vibhavēn=ārōhat=ādyam=bh□isham□ (śam□)| Durggāyās=cha Himālay=achala-bhuva□ ślāghyan□=karan□=g□ihna(h□a)tā samyaktvam=pa-
17. Ramēśvaratvam=aparan=dēvēna sandarśitam|| [10*] Sa Chāhamān-ānvaya-vāridh-īndō□ sādhvīm□ sutām□ Du□llabha-rāja-nāmna□ śrī-Māha□ām□ dharma-parām□ narēndratrai(s=tra)-
18. Yīm-iv-ō[dvā*]ha salaksha□-ān□gīm || [11*] Sā Dēvak=īva naradēva-sahasra-vandyam□ saukaryatō vasumatī=bharam=udvahantam | Lakshmyā□ svayamvarapatim=Purushō-
19. Ttamañ=cha dēvam□ sut-ōttamam=asūta Mahēndrāpalam || [12*] Yasy=āsā-vijaya-prayāna-rajasām□ sāndrē samutsarppati vyūhē nirbhara-pūrit-āmva(āmba)-
20. Ratayā sampādīt-ōrvvī-drumē | sp□ish□ē pāda-talair=akā□□a-patan-āsān□kā-chamatkārīnō vidyām=utpatan=aika-hētum=ajayan=vidyādhārā□ām□-ga-
21. nah || [13*] Ā-prālēya-girēr=vṛishā□ka-vṛishabha-kshu□□-āgra-ratna-sthalād=ā-sindhōr=Ddaśakandhar-āri-viśikha-vyālō□ir=āntarjjalāt | ā-pūrvv-ā-
22. Para-di□-mukh=aika-tilakāt śaila-dvayāt=bhūbhujō nirvyāja□ nipatanti yasya charanē dūr-āntarair=mmaulibhi□ || [14*] Kha□ge-ōtkhāta-mahēbha-kumbha-vi-

23. Galat-kīlāla-dhārā-jalē jātō vairi-vadhū-vilōchana-vamad=vā(bā)shp-
āmvu(mbu)bhir=vvardhita | santīry=ādhipatīn=apām=prati-diśa yāta
sahasrair=mmukhai-
24. ś=chitram=[pāva]ka-hāra air-vilasitō yasya pratāp=ānalā |[15*] Tva
sarvvadā n ipati-chandra-jaya-śriy-ārthī svapnē='pi na pra ayinī bhavatō ='ham
ā-
25. sa(sam) | itham=bhiyā kupiyay=ēva ripūn=bhajantyā vyāj imbhire sam-
ara-kēli-sukhāni yasya || [16*] sa khalu Bhāgīrathī-patha-pravarttamāna-nān-ā-
26. dhīpa-nauvā aka-sampādita-sētuva(ba)ndha-nihita-śaila-śikhara-śrē i-
vibhramāt | niratīśaya-ghanā-ghā ā-śyāmāyamāna-
27. vāsara-lakshmī-samāravdha(bdha)-santata-jalada-samaya-sandēhāt
udi(dī)chīn-ānēka-narapati-prābh itik it-āpramēya-haya-vāhinī-dhara-khur-ōtkhāta-
28. dhūli-prasarita-dig-antarālāt Paramēśvara-sēvā-samāyāt-āsēsha-Jamvū(mbū)-
dvīpa-bhūpāla-pādān-ā-bhara-named=avanē Auddālakhātaka-samā-
29. vāsita-śrīmaj=jayaskandhāvārāt paramasaugata-paramēśvara-parama-
bha āraka maharājādhirāja-śrī-Dēvapāladēva-pād-ānudhyāta
30. paramasaugata paramēśvara paramabha ārakō mahārājādhirāha
śrīmān Mahēndrapaladēva kuśalī || śrī-Pu ravardhana-
31. bhuktau Kundā[la]khātaka-vishayē Na[n*]dadīrghik-ōdra gē sīmā | Tatra
pūrvvē a a gila-nady=ardha-śrota parichchinnā dakshi ēn=āpi Kuvja-gha-
32. ik-ārddha-śrotikayā Kāsiggara-Vammaka-madhyena Nārāya a-vāsīya-
pūrvva-sīm-avadhi | Paśchimēn=āpi Gō a i-nirjjharē-
33. Āja[ga]ra-vasak-āvakhātēna vālmika-stūpēn=āśvattha-v ikskē a
vijjagavandha
34. ka paśchima-Sha āl-āntar-āmalakī-v iksha-paryanta
Uttarē=āpy=ata pūrvvamukhō='ttaraku ā dakshi ēna Nandāsurālpā
35. a gil-ārddha-śrōtō=vadhi ēvan=niyamita-sīmni samupāgatām(tān)
sarvvān=ēva rājanaka-rājaputra-kumārāmātya-bhuktipa-
36. ti-vishayapati-| sēnāpaty=uparika tad=āyuktaka-| viniyuktaka-dā ika-
da apāsika-| chaurōddhara ika-| dau[*]sādhyasādha-

37. nika-[khō]la-duta-gamāgamik-ābhitvaramā□a-hasty=aśv=ōsh□ra-nau-
va(ba)la-vyap□itaka-gō-mahishy=ajāvīkā=va(ba)□av=adhyaksh=ādi-
rājapād=ōpajīvi-
38. nō=nyā□ch (nya□ś=ch)=āchā□a-bha□a-jātīyān | yathā-kāl-ādhyāsi-
vishaya-vyavahāri□a□sa-kara□an vrā(brā)hma□a-mānanā-pūrvvakam prativāsi-
39. nah kshētrakara□cha(rāms=cha) yathārham=mānayati vō(bō)dhayati
samādiśati cha matam=astu bhavatā□(tām) | mahāsēnāpati-śrī-Vajradēvēna dūtaka-
mu-
40. khēna vayam=vijñāpitā□ | yathā mātā-pitrōr=ātmana□ sakalasya cha satva-
rēśē□pu□y=abhiv□iddhaye Nandadīrghik-ōdra□gē mayā vi-

Reverse

41. hāra□ kārita□ tatra yath=ōpari-likhita-Nandadīrghik-ōdra□ga(□gō)
bhagavatō Vu(Bu)ddha-bha□□ārakasya prajñāpāramit-ādi-sakala-
42. dharmma- nētrī-sthānasya Āry-āvaivarttika- Vō(Bō)dhisatva-ga□asy-Āsh□a-
mahāpuruṣa-pudgal-ārya-bhikṣu-sa□ghasya yathārha□ pūjana-lēkha(pa)-
43. n-ādy-arthē chīvara-pi□□apāta-śayan-āsana-glāna-pratyaya-bhāishajya-
parishkār-ādyartha□kha□□a-sphu□ita-samādhān-ādy-artham anyē-
44. shām=api mam-ābhimatānām=mat-parikalpita-vibhāgēn=ānavadya-
bhōgārtha□śrīmad=Bha□□ārakapādā[□] dadatv=iti atō=smābhi-
45. s=tadīya-vijñāptyā aya□ yath-ōpari-likhita udra□gar□ sva-sa□va(ba)ddha-
bhūmi-samētaś=chatus=sīmā-paryanta□sa-tala□s=ōddēśa□s=ōpa-
46. rikara□sa-pa□□a-tar-ōpēta□sa-daś-apachā(rā)rā□(dha□)sa-chaur-
ōddhara-□a□parih□ita-sarvva-pī□a□achā□a-bha□a-pravēś=ākiñchit-
pragrāhya□ |
47. rājakul-ābhāvya-sarvva-pratyāya-samētō bhūmi-chchhidra-nyāyēn=āchandr-
ārka-kshiti-samakāla□that=aiva pradatta□yatā(thā) bhavadbhi[□*]
sarvvair=ēva dāna-
48. m=idam=anumōdanīya□prativāsibhi□ | kshētrakaraiś=ch-ājñāśrava□a-
vidhēyair=bhūtvā samuchita-kara-pi□□-ādi pratyāy-ōpanaya□kārya□[□*]

49. *Bhāvibhir=api bhūpatibhir=bhūmē[r*]=ddāna-phala-gauravād=apahara□ē mahān=naraka-pātaka-bhayāch=cha dānam=idam=anumōdya paripa(pā) lanīyam=i-*
50. *ti | Sa□vat 7 Vaiśākha-dine 2 tathā cha dharmm-ānuśa(śa□)nsa(sa)na-ślōkāh | Va(Ba)hubhir=vvasudhā dattā rājabhi□ Sagar-ādibhi□[|*] yasya yasya ya-*
51. *dā bhūmis=tasya tasya tadā phalam | [|*17] Shash□ir=vvarsha-sahasrā□i savarggē mōdati bhūmida□ [|*] ākshēptā ch=ānumanā(ntā) cha tāny=ēva narakē vasēt | [|18*]*
52. *Sva-dattām=para=dattām=vā yō harēta vasundharām [|*]sa vishtāyā□ k□imir=bhūtā pit□ibhi□ saha pachyatē || [19*] Iti kamala-dal=āmvu(āmbu)-vi(bi)ndu-lōlā□*
53. *śriyam=anuchintya manushya-jīvitañ=cha [|*] sakalam=idam=udāh□itañ=cha vu(bu)dhvā na hi purushai□ parakīrttayō vilōpyā□ [|20*] Śrīmat=sa□grāma-tā-*
54. *rē□a k□ita□ suk□ita-karmma□i || Saumitrir=iva Rāmē□a Śūrapālō=’tra dūtaka□ || [21*] Śrīmān kulē mahati Dēvaradēva nāmā ślā-*
55. *ghyō va(ba)bhūva dhara□ī-tala-gīta-kīrtti□ | ady=api sad-gu□a-kath-āśraya ēka ēva sa□kīrttyatē prathamam-ēva janair=mmahadbhi□ || [22*] Anyō-*
56. *nya-spardhayā v□iddham=Anaya-jana-gōcharam| tyāgas=satyañ=cha sau (śau)rayañ=cha yasya ch=aitad=gu□atraya□(yam) | [|23*]Tasy=ātmajō=bhūt=kamalā-nivāsa□ ||*
57. *Śrīmān sa Nārāya□adēva nāmā [|*] dharmā-priya□ prā□a-samāna-satyō va(ba)lēna yuktō guru□ā mahīyān || [24*] Amalinatara-vāri-sphāra-*
58. *dhārā-nipātai□ | pluta-vapur=ari=v□indam mlānayanī samantāt| api kari=vara-bhēd-ōdbhūta-rakt-ānuliptā diśi diśi sitimānam*
59. *yasya kīrttis=tatāna || [25*] Tyāgo nirbhara-pūrit-ārtha-h□idaya□ sau(śau)rya□ jit-ārātikam satyan=nirmmita-nākadhāma-dhisha□ā vijñā-*
60. *ta-vastu-sthiti □[*]| kurvanē(n=nē)tra-vinōda-dāna-chaturam śila[m*] jan=ānadak□it | kīrttir=ddik-sarasīshu kairava-vana-chchhāy=ēva yasy=ābhavat || [26*]*

61. Vahnir=vvair=īndhanānām=n□ipa-śata-muku□-ōdgh□ish□a-pād-āravinda□
pātā lōka-ssthitinām pra□ayi-jana-sarōjākar=ārkāyamā□a□| ya□ p□i-
62. thyā□ (thivyām)=ēka-nātha□ prathita-nija-gu□a-slāghayā varjjit-ātmā
chakrē śrī Dharmmapālo n□ipatir=adhipatim=ma□□āle Darddara□yā□ (□yām)||
[27*] Va(Ba)bhūva
63. lakshmīr=iva tasya jāyā vapus-t□i(s-tri)lōkī tilakam=vahantī | siddhis=tri-
varggasya vapushmat=īva Kalyā□adēv=īti yathāttha(rtha) nāmā || [28*] kula-
kama-
64. linī-līnā-lakshmīr=ut=ālaya-dēvatā sva-pati-h□idaya-grāhi□y=ēshā satī kim-
Arundhatī [|*] kim=uta vasudhar=ēyam=vita-prasādhitā-mandirā |
65. iti manasi yā vish□ā lōkā□ś=chakāra vitarkitān | [|29*]Div=īva tasyā□
Ravi□=ēva tēna Rēm=ēva samyag=vidinō(tō)ggu(gu)□=ādi | satv=ōpakār=aika-
ra-
66. ta□ pratāpī śrī-Vajradēvō vimāla-svabhāva□ || [30*] Yō
Lakshmī□=kulajān-daya(dha)t=pra□ayinīm=vīry-ōdayāl=līlayā Kha□g-āvarjjita-
danti-kumbha-vi-
67. galad-rakt-āmvu(mbu)bhi□ plāvita□ || hutvā śāstra-hut-āśanē ripu-
havir=mantr=ānvitō durllabhā□(bhām) sa□grāmē vija[ya*]-śriyam=
pari□aya□=lōkē varatva□ gata□ || [31*]
68. Tyāgō durvvō(bō)dha-satyē sadasi pa□u-girō n=āpavādē parastāt | prajñā-
śāstrē nanartta vyapagata-tamasō vañchanē=’pi praj=ārka□ | kshāntir=dīnē na
bhūyō
69. dvishati ra□avarē sammukhē śāstra-pā□au | maītrī tyāgē sthirēbhun-na tu
chala-vanitā samprayōgē=’pi yasya || [32*]Āryēshu Jahnu-tanayā-sa-
70. lil-ābhishēkō dik-kāminīshu Ghana-chandana-pa□ka-lēpa□ [|*] ddu(du)-
rvvāra-vairi-vanitā-vadan-āmvu(mb)jēshu yasy=Endra-dhāma-kalitō yaśasā□ vitāna□
[||33*]
71. Bhavyasy=aitā□ prak□iti-pa□avō yāvad=ēv=ēha gāva□ | tatvālōka□
vihata-tamasa□ tanvatē sarvva-dikka□ | yāvat=p□i-
72. thvī-valaya-vahan-āscharya-karmma(karmā)cha Ku(Kū)rmmā□ | tāvat=
tasya vrajaru k□itina□ kīrttir=ēshā pratish□hām || [34*]
73. Utkīr□□am=idam□ śāsanam□ sāmanta-śrī-Māha□ēna ||

ii.(c)2. Seals & Sealings: A large number of seals and sealings sealings have been recovered through excavations. Seals and Sealings in fair numbers (82) have been treated as an important discovery, because these helped to identify the monastery as *Nandadirghi*. Moreover it indicates that the Buddhist establishment at Jagajjibanpur was the learning centre

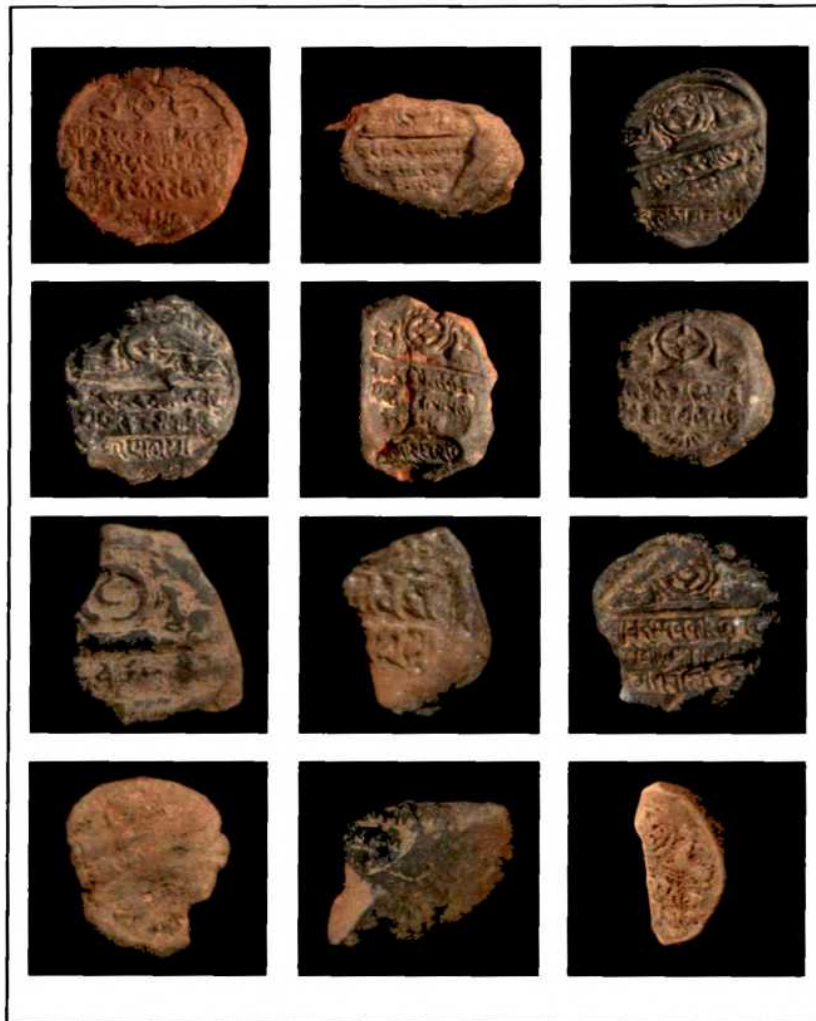


Fig. 29

with the status of a college (*Vihara*), not of a university (*Mahavihara*) like Nalanda, Lalitagiri, Ratnagiri, Paharpur in Bangladesh, Ratnagiri and other important Buddhist centres of eastern India. Most of the seals are cylindrical in shape with long handles or rudimentary butts for holding. The seals have the inscription on their flans engraved or incised, in a negative form, so as to produce the legends in relief when impressed on the soft leather hard clay-lump. The projected handle part at the back of the seal is perforated for passing a string for easy handling or for suspension and also to serve as a

means to pull it back after making the impressions. Thus, these are stamp seals, used for impressing on wet clay with pressure. The seals are made of well-levigated clay and are both red and black in colour. Though most of them are in a fragmentary state, yet the study of the sealings reveal that these were not prepared systematically and in a uniform manner. Some of them are made out of well-levigated clay and well-fired, resulting into a red colour, while the rest are ill-fired and blackish in colour. They vary from each other in size and shape and in several cases lumps of clay were used to impress and produce the sealings of an irregular shape. This feature is observed mostly in case of personal sealings and sometimes in test-pieces also. Several sealings (both monastic and personal) have double stamps, which may be treated as test-pieces. However, some uniformity may be noticed in the official-sealings, issued by the monastic authority. The monastic sealings contain 2 or 3 lines of Sanskrit legend. The legend, as reconstructed after the study of all the monastic seals and sealings including the fragments and test-pieces, is “*Sri-Vajradeva-Karita-Nandadirghi-Vihariyarya-Bhikshu Samghah(syah)*”²⁰. There is a *dharmachakra*, flanked by two seated deer at the top on these sealings. The word *nandadirghi* in the legend is significant, as for the first time we have a Buddhist monastery, named after a waterbody which is a rare phenomenon as far as the name of a monastery is concerned. It is noteworthy to mention that a waterbody called *Nandadirghi* and a palaeo-channel called *Nandagarer Bil* are still existing in the village.

Legends of the selected seals and sealings (both monastic and personal):

1. Acc.No.45 = *** *hamarachandrasya*
2. Acc.No.38 = Left: ** *rmmagupta*
3. Acc.No.173 = *Sri Vajradevakarita*****
4. Acc.No.223 = *Bhikshu Dharmabhadrah*
5. Acc.No.246 = 1) *Nandasri Vajra* 2) [D]e *** *sya* 3) *Rahulaguptasya*
6. Acc.No.170 = *Sri Tvarama [sya]*
7. Acc.No.252 = *Nandasri Vajra* *****
8. Acc.No.186 = *D[ha]rmyaguptasya*

9. Acc.No.41 = Savasi[ddhe]
10. Acc.No.193 = 1) /// deva-karita-nanda.....
11. Acc No.139 = ...Suvadataha[sya]
12. Acc.No.135 = Janarakshitasya
13. Acc.No.221 = 1) Nanda Sri Vajra.....
14. Acc.No. 12 = 1) Angapalah 2) /// Palah 3) /// [La] h
- 15 Acc.No.6 = 1) Nandasrivajra 2).....3) Janakirttih
- 16.Acc.No.117 = 1) Srivajradeva 2)
- 17.Acc. No.175 = 1) Srivajradeva karita nanda
2) dirghi vihariyar [yya-bhi]
3) kshusamghasy
18. Acc.No.42 = Tathagatagupta
19. Acc. No.59 = 1) Sri Vajradeva karita nanda-
2) dirghi.....hasya
20. Acc.No.144 = 1) /// Jradeva-karita nanda
2) dirghivihariy[aryya bhi]
- 21.Acc.No.107 = [Sri] Vajradeva.....
- 22.Acc.No.116 = Samghabhadrah
- 23.Acc.No.69 = 1) /// Va karita nanda-
2) /// hariyaryya [bhi]
3) /// Samghasya
- 24.Acc. No. 133= 1) [Dha] rmmagupta
2) Dharmmagupta
25. Acc. No. 176= 1) /// deva karita ///

- 2)
26. Acc. No. 201= 1)
- 2) [dirghi vihariyarya- bhi]
- 3).samgha [sya]
27. Acc. No. 111= 1) Sri vajradeva [Kari] ///
- 2) dir [ghi] ///
28. Sam.exp.1 = 1) [uchhikasya]
- 2) Uchhikasya

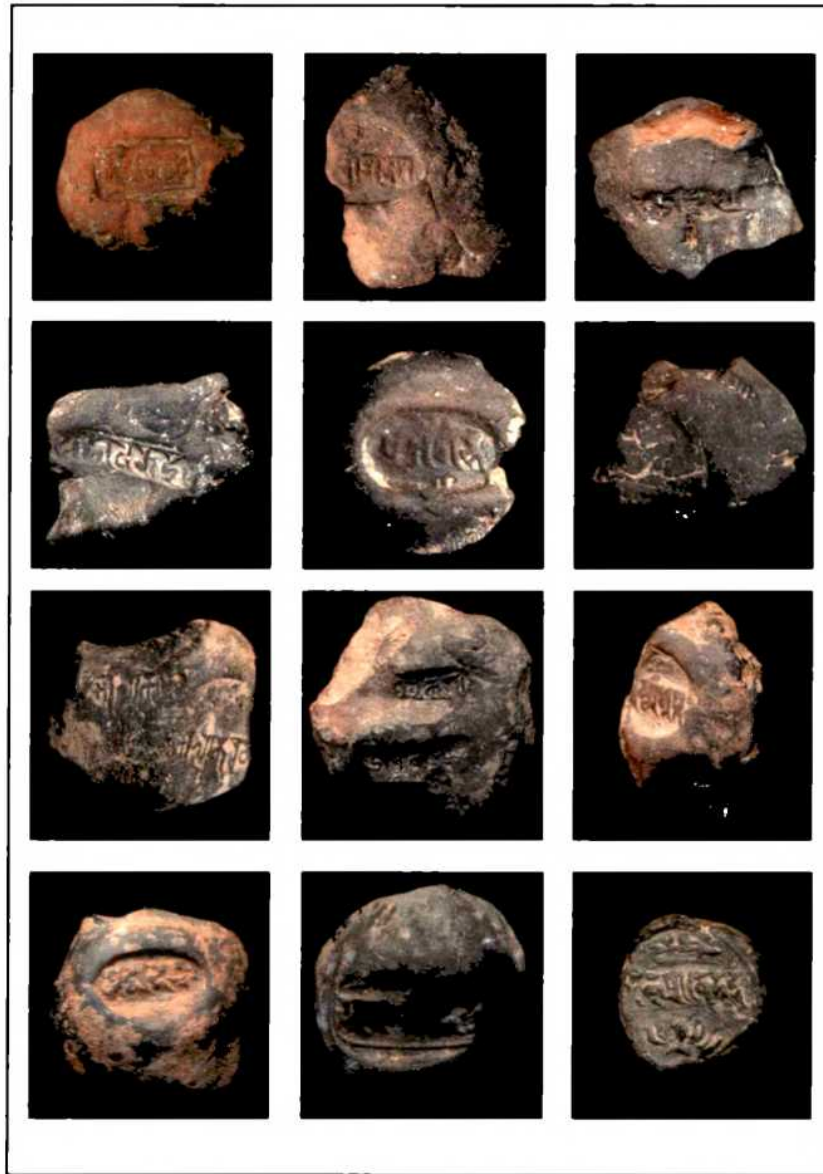


Fig. 30

ii.(c)3. Beads: The excavations at Tulabhita have yielded twenty nine beads of diverse materials from different quadrants at different levels. Out of the total collection, twenty are of terracotta, six are of semi-precious stones, two are of glass and one is of unidentified material. The identified shapes of the beads are convex elliptical, barrel-hexagonal, barrel-circular, long barrel-circular, spherical, convex- circular, concave-circular and pear-shaped. Most of the terracotta beads are dull-red in colour, of which few have a slip on the outer surface. Apart from red, few grey and black coloured beads have also been found. The terracotta beads are mostly pear-shaped.

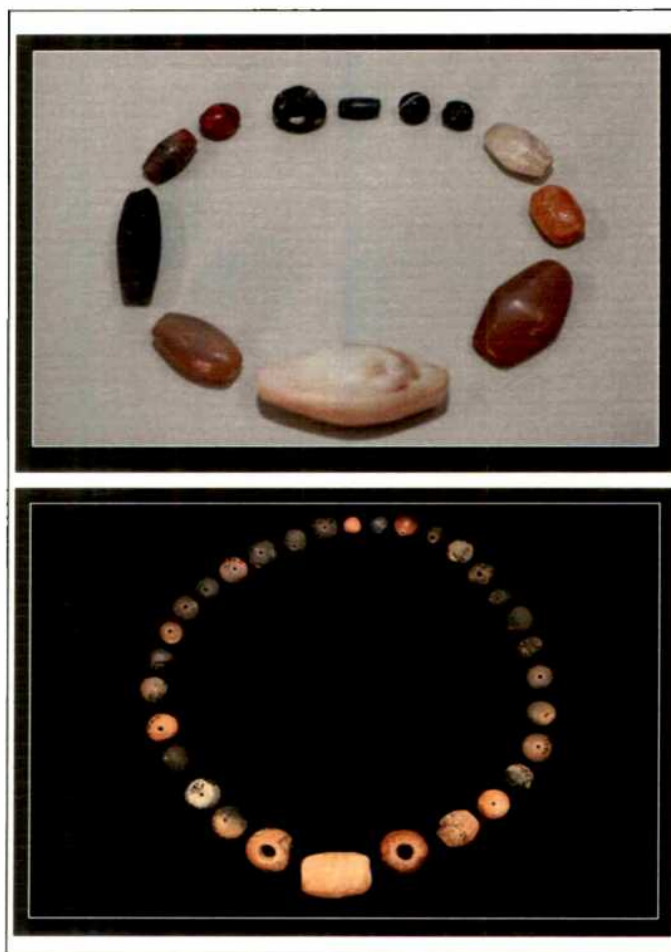


Fig. 31

The beads of semi-precious stones are limited in number. The materials used for making such beads are banded agate and chalcedony. Two small glass beads have also been recovered. One small bead of black colour has been found which has a painted design with white pigment. The glazed surface of the bead is well-polished.

ii.(d).Pottery: To study the pottery of Jagjivanpur, every fragmentary piece, recovered through excavation was taken into consideration. Careful and controlled digging has helped us to collect every piece of potsherd, found in different layers. After



Fig. 32

collection of potsherds, those have been washed in water with a soft brush to understand the actual colour, design, painting, presence of slip and incised lines on the surface of the sherds. Pieces of a particular sherds were handled with adequate care and mended with recommended adhesive. Thus some complete pots have come into our hands for better understanding. During the excavation a large number of potsherds have been recovered mainly from layers 2,3 and 4, which identified as regular deposits of archaeological interest. Layer 2 is characterised by loose reddish grey coloured earth, mixed with small and large sized brick-bats. Potsherds of dull red and buff coloured

have been found in this layer. These sherds are mainly wheel-made, medium size and in respect of shapes, bowls are most common. Layer-3 is characterised by somewhat blackish earth mixed with brick-bats and contains large number of potsherds (the depth of the layer is upto 1.30 mts.). The common shapes as recorded in layer two are continuing but increases in quantity. This layer has yielded approximately 55% of the total sherds. Some grey and light grey sherds and a few black-slipped sherds have also been found in this layer, but their percentage is minimum (only 5%). Besides the common shapes, lamps, lamp-stands, knobs, lids etc. have been found in good numbers. Layer 4 contains sticky blackish earth yielding only 5% of the total excavated sherds. No distinct variation of shapes and colour in comparison to other two layers has been noticed. But it has been noted that the *handi* and lids are almost absent.

A general analysis of the pottery, collected from different layers show no major variations in different layers. The pottery assemblage at Jagjivanpur can broadly be divided into three main groups.

Group 1: The first group comprises the dull red and buff ware which constitute the main ware type of the period. The common shapes are the *handi*, jars, bowls, shallow bowls, etc. Besides, lids, large vessels, lamps and spouts are common. Slip was mainly applied on red wares.

Group 2: The second group consists of grey coloured potsherds of which *handi*, cooking vessel, shallow bowl and basins are the common type.

Group 3: The third group constitutes a small amount of black sherds with narrow necked jar, *handi*, lid, lid-cum-bowl, frying pan, etc., as the main shapes. Some of these sherds are slipped also.

Apart from these, few white or almost white sherds, found through excavation, are having significant features amongst large number of dull-red & buff wares. The type comprises mainly shallow dish and bowls of different type, etc. All these sherds are fast-wheel turned, thin in section and of fine fabric.

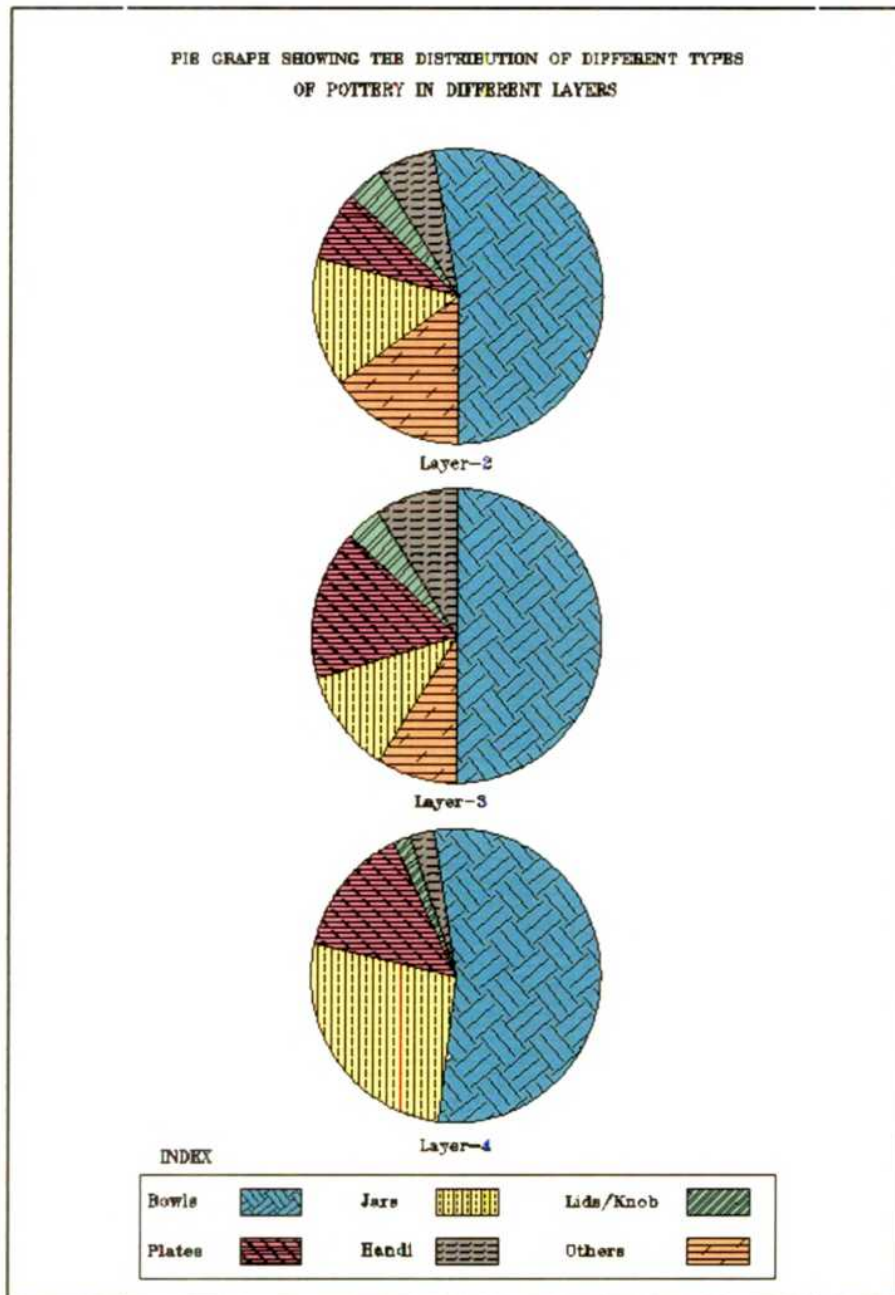


Fig. 33

The site Jagajivanpur of Malda district lies in the tract of the older alluvium which is denoted as 'Barind' region. This alluvial soil of the coarse gravel is known as the 'bhangar'. It is found in the higher reaches about 25-30 mts. above sea level. The soil is clayey and allows water to sink into the lower strata and are unsuitable for the growth of those crops which require great deal of moisture at the roots and thus they cause infertility in regions where showers are not frequent. This soil is deficient in nitrogen & humus content, but rich in potash, phosphoric acid & lime content. Potters of

Jagjivanpur used to collect this soil and further prepare the clay by mixing it with sand and mica. The presence of mica minimises the rate of firing and facilitates tempering of the clay. A different type of potsherd, though less in number, are also found from this site. They are greyish white or almost white in colour. Possibly this colour was achieved due to the presence of kaolinite in the clay. This kaolin clay is highly weathered, especially by acid-leaching and are widespread in temperate and tropical zones. They are low in plasticity and abundant in ancient sediments of fluvial origin. The colour of this soil is white. Perhaps the potters transported this soil from distant regions or the religious persons, who used to visit the monastery at Jagjivanpur, may have brought the pots for the use of different purpose. These potteries are very thin and sophisticated.

Most of the potteries at Jagjivanpur are wheel-made, but the heavy potsherds of coarse fabric are not prepared on the wheel. The base is prepared by a dabber and the other part of the body is made on the wheel. Sometimes, the neck portion is made with the help of a dabber through beating process. During the time of beating, fine-sand was used by the potters.

A brief survey of the present pottery manufacturing technique of Jagjivanpur(Kendpukur) gives us an idea of the colour composition and manufacturing technique, because some of the pottery with similar shapes & colours are still in use by the people of the locality and the potters producing bright coloured and dull red pottery. They make this red colour with the composition of *soda*, *khaer* and pieces of the bark of the mango tree with the reddish soil. After grinding these pieces of dried up barks, they stir this mixture into water and store it in a clay-pot. When the soil becomes less or drags at the bottom, then the potters use this colour on the pot (in a ring like manner on the neck of the pot). Previously the potters used clay slip on the pot and then they used colour in two to three coats. After drying or keeping those in leather hard condition they bring it for burning.

The husk of rice, dry leaves, small branches of tree etc. are used as fuel. At the kiln they arrange the pots in a compact manner, one after another and then burn them for twenty-four hours to achieve a well-burnt variety.

For producing of the black coloured pottery they concentrate mainly on the miniature pots, using slip and black colour on outer surface as per requirements of desired effects from deep grey to black. After the process of slipping and colour, those pots are generally put into a large handi along with pieces of wood, leaves, hay, small branches of tree, etc. to arrange the pots in a tight-fit manner and also to create smoky atmosphere within the container pot. The potters seal the mouth of the *handi* with a lid and then it is ready to burn in the *chullah* (kiln).

The excavated pottery of Jagjivanpur with a bright red or black in colour show the traces of almost the same trend of the referred manufacturing technique. Most of the excavated pottery are devoiding of slip, though sometimes traces of slip are available on the neck of the pot.. A few red-slipped & black-slipped sherds have also been found.

ii.(d).1. Selected Pottery Types

No.1. *Handi* with drooping round rim, out curved and thickened with carinated body.

No. 2. *Handi* with flaring mouth and beaded internally thickened rim and carinated body. It is a red coloured pottery of medium fabric.

No. 3. Fragment of a *handi* of medium fabric & dull red coloured with a flared mouth slightly drooping, internally thickened rim.

No .4. Vase with out-turned externally thickened rim and grooved shoulder. It is a buff colour pottery of medium fabric.

No.5. Fragment of a *handi* with a featureless and internally thickened rim and carinated body. It is dull red in colour and fabrication is medium.

No.6. Fragment of a buff-coloured vase with a nail-headed rim.

No.7. Fragment of a *handi* of dull red colour and medium fabric . The rim is externally grooved with a deeply grooved shoulder and carinated body.

No. 8. Fragment of a *handi* with a short featureless and slightly out turned and thickened rim. It is a buff coloured, medium fabricated pottery.

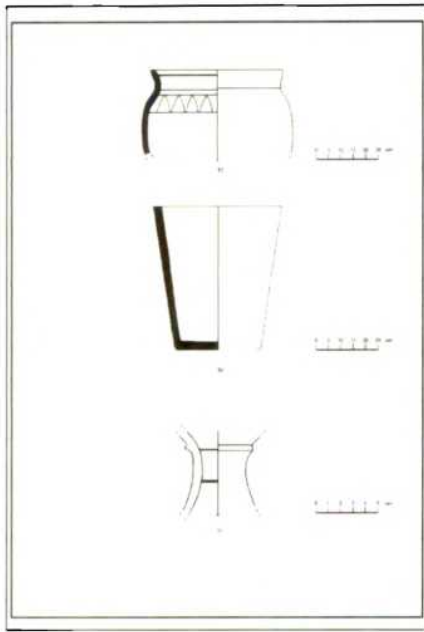


Fig. 34

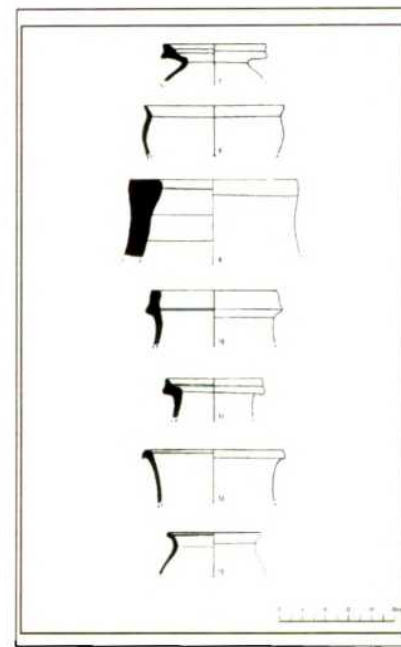


Fig. 35

No. 9. Fragment of a large sized jar of dull-red colour having a nail-headed rim and basket impression on the outer surface. It is a coarse fabricated pottery with a thick section.

No.10. Fragment of a jar with flaring mouth, nail-headed rim & grooved shoulder. Fabrication is medium and colour is buff.

No. 11. Fragment of a vase with flaring mouth, externally grooved rim. It is medium fabricated pottery of dull red colour.

No. 12. Fragment of buff colour and medium fabric with a drooping round rim, internally thickened.

No. 13. Fragment of a *handi* with a splayed out featureless rim and rounded body. It is a red coloured pottery without any slip and fine fabrication.

No. 14. Fragment of a *handi* with a splayed out featureless rim and rounded body. It is a dull-red colour pottery with medium fabric.

No.15. Fragment of a *handi* with a featureless and internally thickened rim and carinated neck.

No. 16. Fragment of a *handi* with a featureless rim with a slightly carinated neck and rounded body.

No. 17. Fragment of a *handi* of dull red colour and medium fabric with a splayed out and internally grooved rim.

No. 18. Fragment of a *handi* of buff colour and medium fabric with a drooping round rim and carinated shoulder.

No. 19. Buff coloured fragment of a vase having slightly out turned, thickened and grooved rim and a grooved shoulder. Slip on the outer surface is possibly washed out.

No. 20. Fragment of a vase of red colour having a short nail-headed rim.

No. 21. Fragment of a vase of buff colour with a nail headed, vertically straight rim and rounded body. It is well fired, finely fabricated and having thin section

No. 22. Fragment of a *handi* with slightly out turned nail-headed rim and vertically straight but a little outward neck and carinated body, well-fired and dull red in colour, inside is slipped and having deep incision.

No. 23. Fragment of a vase of buff colour and medium section having short vertical, flanged, grooved and drooping rim.

No. 24. Fragment of a vase of buff colour, having nail-headed rim and grooved shoulder. Section is thick and fabrication is almost coarse.

No. 25. Fragment of a vase of red colour with a flared rim and almost long concave neck. It is well-fired and of medium fabric.

No. 26. Fragment of a vase of dull red colour with nail-headed vertically straight rim. Fabric is fine. Tempering material is sand and mica.

No. 27. Fragment of a *handi* with flaring externally grooved rim, grooved shoulder, having rounded body. It is well-fired, medium fabric and dull-red in colour.

No. 28. Fragment of a *handi* with flaring internally grooved rim and grooved shoulder. It is wheelmade, grey in colour and finely fabricated.

No. 29. Frgment of a *handi* with flaring externally grooved rim, grooved shoulder and carinated body. It is buff in colour, having fine fabrication, well tempered and the section is medium to thick.

No. 30. Fragment of a vase of dull red colour with an out-curved thickened externally pared rim, a vertical concave neck and round body. Deep incisions are found on both the surface. The pottery is devoid of any surface treatment and section is medium, fabric is also medium.

No. 31. Fragment of a vase of buff colour with nail-headed rim & grooved shoulder. Section is thick to medium, fabrication is medium.

No. 32. Fragment of a vase of red ware with an almost vertical, thickened externally grooved collared rim and slightly concave shoulder. Fabrication is fine, section is medium.

No. 23. Fragment of a vase with featureless vertical & externally grooved rim and slightly curved in inner side. The pottery is dull red in colour, fabrication is medium and section is medium.

No. 34. Fragment of a jar having vertically straight almost featureless rim and externally grooved shoulder. Section is medium, fabrication is fine and slip is visible on the outer surface.

No. 35. Fragment of a narrow necked vessel of dull red ware with a splayed out rim. Coarse in fabrication and devoid of wash or slip.

No. 36. Fragment of a basin with an incurved externally collared rim and also externally grooved. It is finely fabricated and the section is medium. It is buff in colour.

No. 37. Bowl with knife-edged featureless rim, small flat base and vertical sharpened sides. It is dull red in colour, corrugated both internally and externally. It is well-fired and devoid of any surface treatment.

No. 38. Bowl of a comparatively smaller variety than the figure no. 37 with a knife-edged featureless rim and vertically sharpened sides and small round base. No surface treatment is visible,

No. 39. Same as figure 38, but, is corrugated externally and internally and the fabric is fine,

No. 40. Fragment of a bowl having short vertical featureless rim, weak carinated neck and shallow rounded body. It is well-fired, grey or whitish in colour and finely fabricated.

No. 41. Fragment of a bowl having a vertical featureless rim, slightly tapering externally. It is well-fired with medium fabric and corrugated internally.

No. 42. Fragment of a sprinkler with flanged and wedged rim and bottle neck, having almost conical opening with a hole. It is buff in colour and finely fabricated with medium section.

No. 43. Fragment of a knobbed lid of black colour with flared, internally corrugated rim, tapering sides and flat base. It is well-fired and finely fabricated.

No. 44. Lid of a dull red ware with a thick pointed rim and a flatfish thickened base. It has a central elongated knob on the inner side of the base. It is coarse fabric in nature and devoid of any wash or slip.

No. 45. Fragment of a spout of black colour.

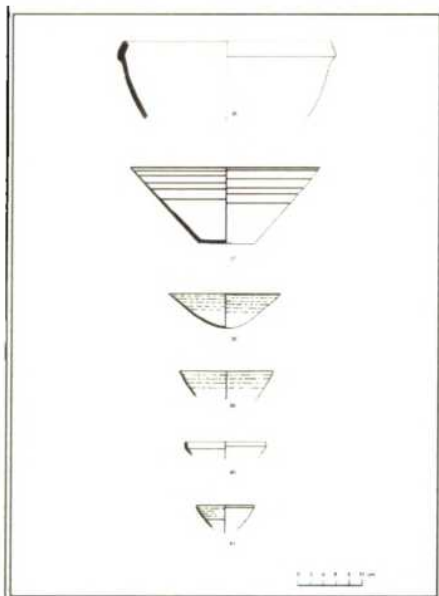


Fig. 36

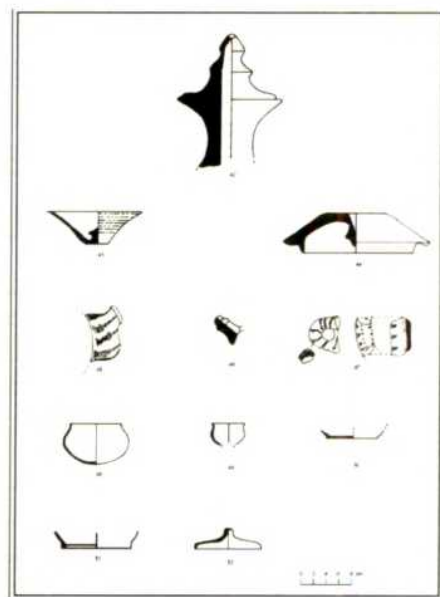


Fig.37

No. 46. Fragment of a spout of buff colour having externally round -collared -groove rim. It is finely fabricated and of medium section and well-fired.

No. 47. Handle of a cooking vessel, having round section. It is well-fired, black in colour with fine fabric.

No. 48. Small pot with black polish and flattish top. It has a featureless rim. It is well-fired and having thin section and fine fabric.

No. 49. Ware of buff colour, smaller in size, having featureless rim and globular body with almost flattish top.

No. 50. Base of a bowl with tapering sides, medium fabric and red in colour.

No. 51. Flat base of a bowl with tapering sides, medium fabric and red in colour.

No. 52. Fragment of a knobbed lid of black colour with a vertically flattened rim. It is of fine fabric with the slip on the outer surface.

No. 53. Fragment of a large sized jar with featureless rim, concave narrow neck and globular body. A deep incised line and a lotus petal motif is found on the rim and on the shoulder in the outer surface, just below the neck.

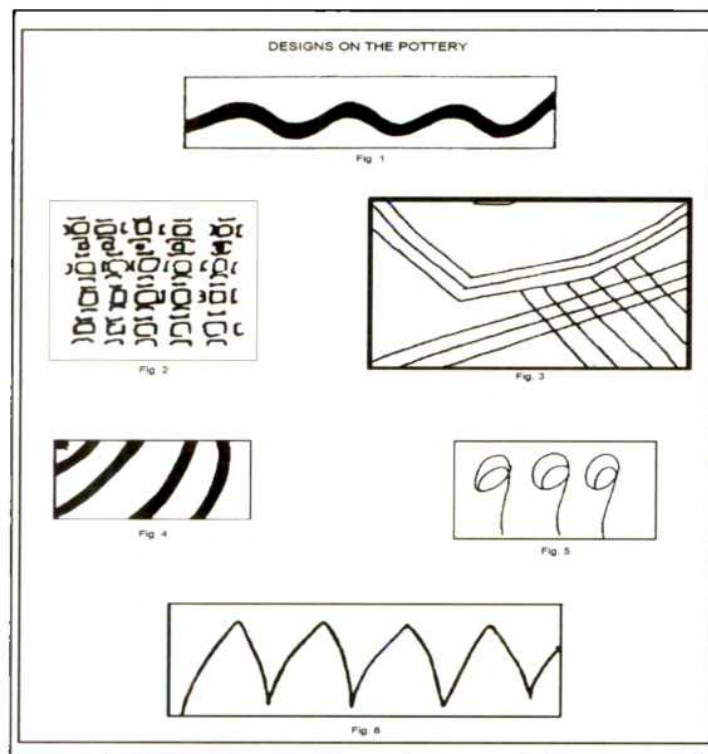


Fig. 38

No. 54. Fragment of a tumbler like vase having flaring mouth and vertical sides, It is dull-red in colour, medium in fabric and devoid of any surface treatment.

Reflection on the outer surface indicates that the mica was mixed with the clay.

No. 55. Fragment of a lamp-stand of black colour without the base. It is a hollow cylindrical stand with fine fabric and slip.

Designs on pottery :

No. 1 Continuous bold wavy lines.

No. 2 Basket-like impression.

No. 3 Mat design or criss-cross lines.

No. 4 Bold oblique strokes.

ii.(e) Miscellaneous objects: Among the miscellaneous objects, iron-nails¹¹, terracotta lamps and lamp-stands, terracotta dabbers, bangles of terracotta, terracotta crucibles,



Fig. 39

terracotta balls, terracotta hopscotches, iron objects of daily use, stone utensils, terracotta fishing-net-sinker, ornamental bricks are noteworthy. The ornamental bricks are having beautiful designs and purposefully made for preparing of panel for decoration of the outer wall of the monastery for placing of terracotta plaques

over the panel. A detail description is given here on consideration of the diversities and aesthetical depiction.

ii.(e)1. Ornamental bricks. A large number of designed bricks have been found during the course of excavation. These bricks give ample evidence that Nandadirghi Vthara, was once embellished with the designed bricks in profuse number. These bricks are in the shape of terracotta tiles and have decorations only on the front face with various ornamental motifs. Most of the bricks are rectangular, though some wedge-shaped bricks have also been found in limited numbers. These were mainly used to decorate the outer wall of the monastery at the base, above the last off-set of the plinth, as some such bricks have been found in an in situ position in different quadrants during the excavation. Most of the designed bricks were salvaged from the north-western and the north-eastern parts of the monastery, particularly from the corner cell or bastion cum cells. The designed bricks have been prepared with care as these are well-fired, hard, and heavy and with uniformity in execution of design. Apart from the chief ingredient i.e. clay, silica and husk have also been used as tempering materials for strengthening the bricks. It seems that the designs were carved with spatula or needles at the time of leather hard condition. It may be said safely that no mould was used to prepare such bricks as similar decoratives vary in size, shape or even in the execution of the designs. So far eight decorative motifs have been found with the carvings on the front face of the bricks.

ii.(e).1a. Lotus-Petal Design. Bricks with such design show three lotus petals, sloping down from the upper portion which terminates about 2 cms above the base of the decorated face. In between two bigger petals smaller petals are visible at the level where the former terminates. The tips of the bigger petals are pointed and the straight lined marks are etched to demarcate the bigger petals. Similar lines are also seen in the middle of the petals. Petals, both big and small, are carved in relief on the face of the bricks. The lower portion of the bricks where the tips of the petals are terminated, takes the form of a horizontal band of about 2 cms width.

ii.(e)1b. Wider Lotus Petal Motif. Excavations have yielded a few bricks with inverted double arched motifs closely resembling wider lotus petals. The lotus petal-arches are made prominent by deep and almost semi-circular lines.

ii.(e)1c. Rounded Lotus Petal Motif. This type of design is similar to that of type 1 as described earlier with the differences that in case of the former the face of the brick are straight whereas in the latter case it is round. Three petals slope down right to the bottom edge of the brick and between them two smaller petals are visible.

ii.(e)1d. Oblique Chain Motif. In such a case it is found that three chains run about 2 cms above the base from the lower left corner of the decorated face of the bricks to the upper right corner. The upper edges of the bricks are roundish and the chains are separated from each other by deeply oblique lines.

ii.(e)1e. Stepped-Pyramidal Design. On the decorated face of the bricks, two stepped pyramids are carved side by side. Each of the pyramids are formed by three successively diminishing projections or steps, in which the lower projection is most common. The steps are demarcated by the incised horizontal straight lines. The diminishing steps provide effective play of light and shade on the decorated faces.

ii.(e)1f. Mat Design. This mat like design is formed by three horizontal rows (leaving about 2 cms. from the upper and lower part of the decorated face) which look like interlocking mat-like bamboo strips. Deep incisions of triangular shapes are formed between every warp and woof.

ii.(d)1g. Diamond-Chain Design. In this type the face of the brick is relieved with three diamond-shaped motifs, in most of the cases, forming a chain, each one protruding about 1 cm.

ii.(d)1h. Brick with Lotus Stem at Centre. This is the brick having a part of the lotus stem carved at the centre, flanked by petals on either side.

The sizes of such ornamental bricks are 30x27x6 cms., 29x24x 6 cms., 28x23x6 cms., 27x25x5 cms., 27x23x6 cms., 27x24x5 cms., 26x24x6 cms., 26x23x6 cms. and 25x23x5 cms.

The designed bricks of Jagajjivanpur amply testify to the artistic excellence of the people of the Pala period. Such bricks remind us of the rich heritage of carving bricks

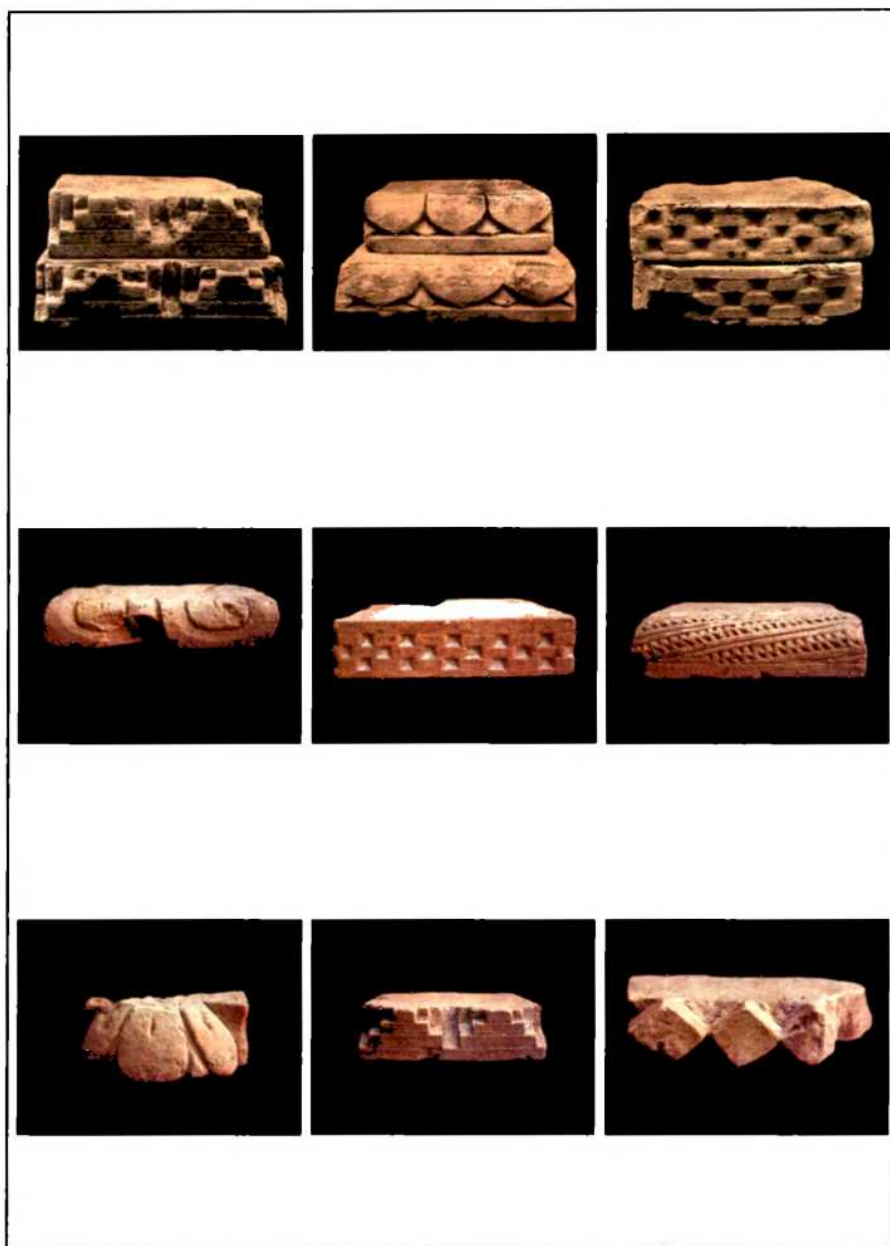


Fig. 40

from ancient times²¹. Although in the post-Gupta period the tradition of bricks with decorative motifs became prolific, nevertheless in Bengal, we find that the tradition persisted even in the Pala period as evident from the excavations at Paharpur and Mainamati in Bangladesh, Pillak in Tripura, Nalanda and Antichak in Bihar²². So far as the designs are concerned, many of the decorative motifs found at Jagajjibanpur¹³ bear

close resemblance with the bricks found at Paharpur and Mainamati. The stepped-pyramid, mat- design lotus-petal and oblique chain motifs on the bricks have also been found from Mainamati and Paharpur²³. This shows the continuity of the tradition of using designed bricks in religious architecture, particularly *vihara* and *stupa*.

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CHAPTER IV

Terracotta Plaques

- i) Catalogue**
- ii) Classification**
- iii) Purpose and Use**
- iv) Manufacturing Technique**
- iv) Art of Depiction with salient features**
- v) Comparative Study**
- vi) Historical and Archaeological Value**

i) Catalogue:

The excavated site at Jagjivanpur has yielded about five hundred terracotta plaques depicting the figures of divinities, semi-divine beings, human, animals, reptiles and birds. Most of the plaques are intact and have been retrieved during the course of excavations from the collapsed debris of the monastery along the outer wall¹. Not a single plaque has been found in-situ position, obviously due to the non-existence of the super-structure. All the plaques depict single figural representation. Narrative figures are absent in the plaques of Jagjivanpur.

Since the objective of the thesis is to highlight the significance of the terracotta plaques in terms of archaeological value with art, aesthetic aspects, techniques of manufacture and socio-cultural significance, therefore, a detailed account of the plaques have been given in the following discussion by dividing the total plaques into 13 broad categories. Apart from description, each plaque in discussion bears serial number, accession number and measurement, as has been catalogued by the State Archaeological Museum, Govt. of West Bengal and Malda District Museum, where the plaques are now preserved². Moreover, several plates containing line drawings of dress, ornaments, hair-styles, weapons, floral designs and other attributes have been incorporated in the thesis for clear understanding about the depth and devotion of the artistic depiction.

The catalogue has been prepared after studying all the plaques, now under the possession of State Archaeological Museum in Kolkata, Malda District Museum at Malda, Nabadwip Puratattva Parishad Museum at Nabadwip in Nadia, Paschim Rarh Itihas O Samskriti Charcha Kendra Museum at Bankura and Field Store at Jagjivanpur. The plaques have been incorporated carefully in the catalogue to represent the complete picture here with clear understanding of the terracotta art of the Palas during the early mediaeval period. The fragmentary and insignificant plaques have not been incorporated in the present catalogue. More than four hundred plaques (412 nos.) have been selected for this research work and detail description of each plaque is recorded here for representation of a comprehensive picture. The works of chemical conservations of all the selected pieces have been done with due care. Some of these plaques are displayed in the galleries and rests are preserved in reserve collection.

I. Palaeo-Botanical Studies and dating of charcoal samples*

Plant remains like wood charcoals, wild and cultivated seeds and food grains are throwing light on the subsistence economy and climate around the ancient monastery Nanda-Dirghi Vihara at Jagjivanpur. Due to absence of animal remains among the biological remains, their role in subsistence economy of the ancient dwellers of the monastery or the people around the monastery could not be traced.

Lithosuccession and Corresponding radiocarbon age of archaeological trench YA₅ of Jagjivanpur, district Malda with recovered biological(Plant) remains:

Lithosuccession(from top to bottom)

Surface Humus (0-15 cm)

Layer 1 (15-50 cm) ~ Plant Remains => Seeds of *Amaranthus* sp., *Chenopodium* sp.,

Solanum sp., cf. *Croton* sp.

Layer 2 (50-100 cm) ~ Plant Remains => *Oryza sativa*, *Cleome* sp., cf. *Croton* sp. cf.

Eragrostis sp., Wood Charcoals.

Layer 3 (100-155 cm) ~ Plant Remains => *Oryza sativa*, *Graninum* sp., cf. *Fabaccae*,

Physalis sp., Wood Charcoals.

■ **Radiocarbon Dates** => **Cal. AD 943-1048**

Layer 4 (155-185 cm) ~ Plant Remains => *Oryza sativa*, *Amaranthus* sp., *Chenopodium*

sp., *Solanum* sp., sp., Wood Charcoals.

Layer 5 (185-285 cm) ~ Plant Remains => Wood Charcoals.

■ **Radiocarbon Dates** => **Cal. AD 741-771**

Layer 5 (285 -345 cm) ~ Virgin soil.

Wood charcoals

A moderate but inconsistent rate of recovery of wood charcoals i.e. 20% is observed in the trench YA₅. Wood charcoals have been recovered from four cultural layers showing the traces of a monocultural period of Cal. AD 741-771 – Cal. AD 943-1018 or younger. The anatomical study of the fuel taxa could not be made and

identified due to their brittleness and fragmentary nature. Hence, recovered wood charcoals could not help in throwing light in the ancient vegetation around the site. Distribution of wood charcoals reveals higher rate of recovery in layer-3 followed by layers 2 and 5.

Macroscopic plant remains

Water floatation and subsequent screening helped in recovery of seeds of various wild taxa viz., of *Amaranthus* sp., *Chenopodium* sp., *Solanum* sp., cf. *Croton* sp., *Cleome* sp., *Eragrostis* sp., *Geranium* sp., cf. Fabaceae, *Physalis* sp. and carbonized kernels of cultivated *Oryza sativa* from the stratified cultural deposits of the ancient monastery. Frequency of distribution of the recovered plant remains along the stratified cultural layers is represented in Fig.5.4C.

Among the crop remains, presence of kernels of *Oryza sativa* (Specimen nos. JJP-YA₅ Pv, JJP-YA₅ Pxii, JJP-YA₅ Pxv) has been noticed in layers 2-4 at depths between 55 cm- 160 cm. However, rest of the taxa recovered is of wild type. It has been observed that frequencies of taxa like *Amaranthus* sp. (Specimen nos. JJP-YA₅ Pii, JJP-YA₅ Pxviii) and *Chenopodium* sp. (Specimen nos. JJP-YA₅ Pi, JJP-YA₅ Pxx) increased in higher strata than in lower.

Presence of seeds of *Croton* sp. (Specimen nos. JJP-YA₅ Piv, JJP-YA₅ Pviii) and *Cleome* sp. (Specimen no. JJP-YA₅ Pvi) has been found to rise in upper stratified layers. However, negligible frequency of seeds cf. Fabaceae (Specimen no. JJP-YA₅ Pxiii) and *Geranium* sp. (Specimen no. JJP-YA₅ Px) has been recovered only from layer-3. Seeds cf. *Eragrostis* sp. (Specimen no. JJP-YA₅ Pvii) have been recovered in high frequency from cultural deposits of layer-2. Carbonized seeds of Solanaceae viz., *Solanum* sp. (Specimen nos. JJP-YA₅ Piii, JJP-YA₅ P xvii) and *Physalis* sp. (Specimen no. JJP-YA₅ Pxiv) occurred in upper as well as lower strata. List of recovered wild taxa and their eco-climatic condition are given in Table. The taxa thus recovered is reflecting the tropical climatic condition of the site during the said ancient period.

Macroscopic taxa recovered from trench YA₅ with their affinity and eco-climatic considerations

Morphotaxa	Eco-climatic condition
Amaranthaceae	
<i>Amaranthus</i> sp.	Tropical- temperate
Capparidaceae	
<i>Cleome</i> sp.	Tropical- warm temperate
Chenopodiaceae	
<i>Chenopodium</i> sp.	Tropical- temperate
Euphorbiaceae	
<i>Croton</i> sp.	Tropical- subtropical
Fabaceae	Warm tropical-subtropical
Geraniaceae	
<i>Geranium</i> sp.	Cosmopolitan
Poaceae	
<i>Eragrostis</i> sp.	Cosmopolitan, mostly sub-tropical
Solanaceae	
<i>Physalis</i> sp.	Cosmopolitan
<i>Solanum</i> sp.	Tropical- temperate

Analysis of microscopic remains

Twenty-one sub-surface soils collected at depths between 35cm-325 cm of cultural deposits (Cal AD 943-1018 - Cal. AD 741-771) of YA₅ trench of Tulabhita and one

soil collected from humic deposit of the same trench are processed for palynomorphs and phytolith analysis.

Palynomorphs

No palynomorph has been recovered from the macerated soils. As the soil is rich in iron so sediments were highly oxidized.

Phytoliths

Few short-cell and elongated morphotypes of grass have been recovered from the analyzed sub-surface and surface soil samples. The rate of recovery is poor in 40.09%, no yield has been observed in 31.81% soils, however only 27.27% shows medium recovery. Interestingly the fossil grass phytoliths began to appear from the depth 305 cm upward. The recovered phytolith assemblage is characterized by the presence of grass short cell and elongated morphotypes. Non-grass phytoliths are absent in the soils. Dominance of the short cell phytoliths is noticed in all the yielded samples. Grass short cells are represented by cross, dumbbell, saddle, rondel morphotypes. Whereas, fan-shaped bulliform and point shaped phytoliths constitute the elongated morphotypes.

The cultural deposits below the depth of 200 cm (from the surface) exhibit a very poor rate of recovery of phytoliths. Dominance of panicoid morphotypes i.e. cross and dumbbells over chloridoids (saddles) is evident in lower cultural strata, which are gradually shifted by subsequent dominance of chloridoids in upward strata (Fig.5.4E). Rondels, the only recovered representative of Pooideae subfamily show occurrence in inconsistent and negligible frequency. Among the recovered elongated celled morphotypes fan-shaped bulliform cells are obtained in significant frequency. Gradual increase in frequency of fan-shaped morphotypes is noted from lower to upper stratified cultural deposits.

Discussion

The excavation at Buddhist site 'Tulabhita' in Jagjibanpur is significant not only for archaeological or historical perspective but it also helps to reconstruct the vegetational scenario of the site as well throw light on the food habit of the dwellers of that ancient monastery.

Radiometric dating of recovered wood charcoals suggests the chronological sequence of the site ranges between Cal. AD 741-771- Cal AD 943-1018 or later as no date is available from the uppermost strata. However, antiquities recovered during excavation and structural remains suggest that the site was a monocultural site. The data suggests that the site exhibiting existence of an ancient monocultural period ranging in age between Cal. AD 741-771- Cal AD 943-1018 or later.

The only recovered plant remains revealing the component of diet of the ancient dwellers of the monastery and the area around are carbonized kernels of *Oryza sativa*. Presence of rice in three successive strata indicates the possible cultivation of this cereal in the area and the dependence on this crop as staple food during the said period. Absence of any other crop remains in the recovered plant assemblage does not establish their nonexistence from the site. As it is well proved that the total spectrum of the plant resources exploited by the dwellers are not always represented in the assemblage due to incidental carbonization. So, considering the chance of preservation of biological remains, the complete dietary constituents of the ancient inhabitants of the monastery cannot be predicted for the present instance. The only expected dietary constituent recovered is rice.

Moderate rate of recovery of wood charcoals from four successive stratified cultural layers between depths 50 cm- 285 cm suggests their occurrence due to any human impact. In addition to the fragmented wood charcoals, burnt kernels of *Oryza sativa* have been recovered between depths 50 cm- 285cm.

The charcoals recovered in highest frequencies at the depths between 100cm-170cm (from the surface). The recovered phytolith assemblages from the above mentioned depth intervals suggest the environment of deposition as warm-humid during the said interval. As, moist climatic conditions do not influence the process of accidental firing so, the presence of burnt charcoals and burnt kernels or rice in the above-mentioned strata indicates human activity.

Relatively, lower frequency of recovery of charcoals at depths below 170 cm suggests the possible increase in the firing activity in later phase.

**(Research by Dr.Ruby Ghosh, Birbal Sahani Institute of Palaeobotany,Lucknow)*

II. Metallurgical analysis of Marichi image**

Introduction

The analysis of copper-bronze icons is a scarce phenomenon in India. The antiquities are priced that nobody dares to obtain sample from those objects. Lal (1956) was the pioneer in analyzing the copper-bronze object in India. His analyses on a few icons from Nalanda has thrown light on the bronze technology of ninth-tenth century A.D. Biswas(1996) has drawn an overall picture on Ancient works of Art in India.

The present authors attempted similar studies in the Jagjivanpur context. The Directorate of Archaeology, Govt. of West Bengal, was kind enough to provide a small filing from an icon discovered at Jagjibanpur.

An icon from this site, JJP-1, was selected for chemical analysis. The detailed description of the specimen is available in Dr. Debala Mitra's paper in this volume.

Chemical analysis of specimens

Chemical analysis is done to know the composition of the metal and its alloy content. For easy and accurate analysis, particularly when the quantity of sample is very small, '*spectrographic methode*' is most suitable. This method determines the major as well as trace elements. This methodology supported with Friedman et. al.(1966) method, also helps to identified the parent ore and correlate with the trace elements of a known mine, so that the origin of the ore can be identified or established (Agrawal 1971).

Methodology

Chemical analyses were by semi-quantitative procedure with a Hilger Watts spectrograph. The selected spectral region was 2700-4400 Å, RU being the standard. Table 1 indicates the major alloying elements in the analyzed specimen while Table 2 indicates the trace an elements.

Applying the above methods, one may establish that the parent ore minerals applied in the Jagjivanpur copper is 'native copper' (67.20%). However, probability for oxidised type ore such as malachite is 29.28%.

Comparative Studies

For comparative studies, we have obtained two corroded greenish black lumps without any core from two bronze Jain icons of Patna Museum collection. The specimens were recovered from Chausa, District Buxar, Bihar from a field in 1931. These are (a) fragments of bronze icon (SI. no. 6549), (b) headless Jain bronze icon (SI no. 6557). The details of the same has been tabulated in table-1. All these three specimens have been analysed by the same instrument following the same methodology.

Table -1

Major alloying elements in Jagjivanpur specimen and that of Chausa

Element	Symbol	C o m p o s i t i o n %		
		JJP	6549	6557
Silver	Ag	trace	0.20	0.20
Arsenic	As	0.01	0.10	0.10
Lead	Pb	trace	0.05	0.05
Tin	Sn	-	16.00	16.00
Manganese	Mn	0.01	0.01	0.01
Aluminium	Al	0.01	-	0.01
Magnesium	Mg	0.005	0.06	0.08
Iron	Fe	<0.01	0.10	0.15
Silicon	Si	0.20	trace	trace
Antimony	Sb	-	-	-
Titanium	Ti	-	-	-

Zinc	Zn	<0.01	-	-
Copper *	Cu	base	base	base
*(base-approx. %)		99.5	83.0	83.0

**Normalised
Probability**

Native Copper	67.20	0.01	0.01
Oxidized ore (malachite etc)	29.28	51.25	51.52
Reduced ore	3.52	48.74	48.74

Table -2

Distribution of Trace Elements

	Fe	As	Sb	Pb	Bi	Cu	Sn	Ni	Zn	Mn	Co	Au	Al	Cr	Mr	Zr	W	Ti	Mg	V	Si	Ca	B
JJP	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	+	+
6549	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	+	+

6557 + + + + + - - + - + - - + - - + + +

****(Archaeotechnical Studies by Manik Lal Dutta & Pranab K.Chattopadhyay)**

III. Metallographical Studies on Iron Nail***

An iron object (^-182) from this site,JJP-1, B3, layer 2, was selected for analysis. The detailed description of the specimen is as follows. The object is a nail, used by carpenters, for joining pieces of wood or fixing on wall. The length of the specimen was 9 cm long, with a head 20x8x4 mm in size. The specimen was a bent one, indicating deformation during fixing.

The basic problem of iron object in this part of the country is its high corrosion sensitiveness. The specimen was recovered in 1995 and subsequently not preserved. The specimen developed crack at its surface and was covered with thick rust. Though the corrosion was thick, upto 4mm in thickness, while sawing for subsequent analysis, the metallic core came out.

Chemical analysis

Chemical analysis was conducted by wet analysis methods, selecting particularly carbon, silicon, sulphur phosphorus and manganese. The details of the constituents are indicated at Table-1. The silicon content is higher than the normal low carbon steels possibly due to slag inclusions in the form of silicates.

Table-1

Site	C	Si	S	P	Mn
Jagjivanpur	0.2	2.4	0.01	0.03	0.01

Metallography

A portion of metal was cut and divided in two pieces and mounted in resin. One of them represented the surface and the other was showing the cross section. The specimens were polished and observed at different magnification. The specimens,

before etching, indicate the details of the nature of inclusions. The distribution of inclusions indicates the direction of forging. The inclusions are mostly silicate as fayalite with a few sulphides. The specimens were then etched with 3% nital.

The etched specimens clearly indicate that the specimen is made of low carbon (hypoeutectoid steel), inhomogeneous with large grain ferrite, coarse grain pearlite and angular Widmanstatten patterning. The latter clearly indicates that the nail was made by forging and that carburization was done during heating at charcoal furnace, keeping it for a prolonged time. The carbon concentration is more at the external surfaces, possibly for carburization. The grain size is between 1 and 4.

From the above analysis it indicates similar manufacturing techniques for iron objects as practiced by the pre-industrial iron makers of this part of the country. The provenances of iron manufacturing could not be identified. Iron smith has followed the correct technique for the end-use of the product. No unnecessary use of quenching technique had been followed.

****(Studies by Pranab. K. Chattopadhyay, published in *Pratna Samiksha* 6-8, 1997-1999*

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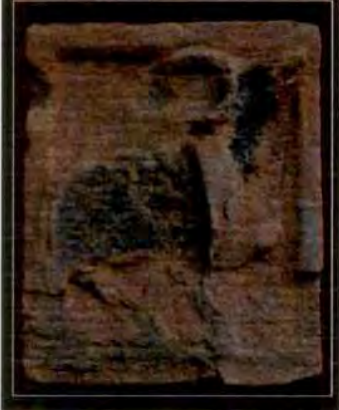

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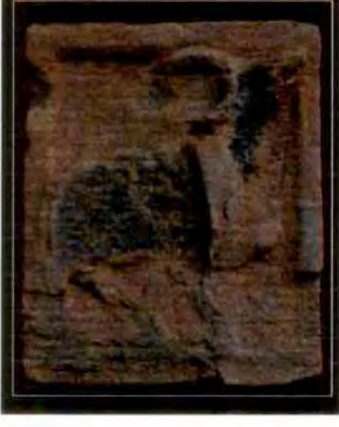

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PLAQUES	DESCRIPTION
	<p>Serial No. :292 Acc. No. : 98.337 Size (cm.) : 28.5x25x11</p> <p>The plaque depicts the figure of a spotted-deer in right lateral profile, facing towards right. Some portions of the edges of the plaque are broken and missing.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :293 Acc. No. : 98.334 Size (cm.) : 30x23.5x10</p> <p>The plaque depicts a figure of spotted-deer in lateral profile, moving towards left with raised neck. The horns and ears are well depicted. A band is placed around his neck with a bell. Some parts of the plaque are eroded.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :294 Acc. No. :98.350 Size (cm.) :29x25x11</p> <p>The plaque depicts a figure of spotted-deer in lateral profile, moving towards left with raised neck. The ears are well depicted. Some parts of the borders of the plaque are eroded.</p>




PLAQUES	DESCRIPTION
	<p>Serial No. :295 Acc. No. : 98.339 Size (cm.) : 29.5x23.5x10</p> <p>The plaque depicts a figure of spotted-deer, moving towards left, with upraised neck. A bell is placed around his neck with a band. The horns and ears are well depicted.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :296 Acc. No. :98.348 Size (cm.) :30x24x10</p> <p>The plaque is badly eroded and mutilated. The extant portions contain the impression of an animal in left profile with horns like buffalo.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :297 Acc. No. : 98.329 Size (cm.) : 29x25x11</p> <p>The plaque depicts a figure of spotted-deer in left-lateral profile. The dots at the back of the body and both of the horns and ears are well depicted. Some part of the legs and borders are mutilated.</p>



PLAQUES	DESCRIPTION
	<p>Serial No. :298 Acc. No. : 98.345 Size (cm.) :28x24x11.5</p> <p>plaque depicts a figure of spotted-deer, moving towards left but looking to back.The horns are well-depicted.The right hind-leg is broken.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :299 Acc. No. : 02.17 Size (cm.) : 30x23.5x12</p> <p>The plaque depicts a deer in lateral profile, moving towards left. The horns and ears are well depicted. A bell with band is placed around the neck.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :300 Acc. No. :FR.59 Size (cm.) :30x26x10</p> <p>The plaque depicts a figure of an animal like buffalo, moving towards right.</p>

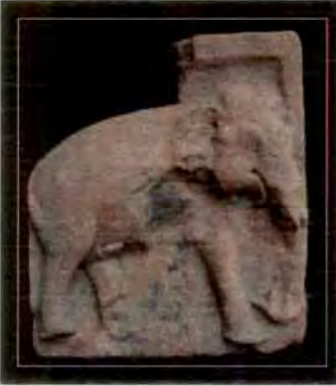
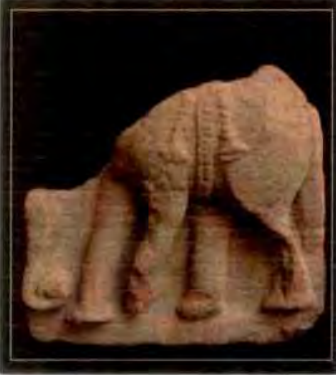

PLAQUES	DESCRIPTION
	<p>Serial No. :292 Acc. No. : 98.337 Size (cm.) : 28.5x25x11</p> <p>The plaque depicts the figure of a spotted-deer in right lateral profile, facing towards right. Some portions of the edges of the plaque are broken and missing.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :293 Acc. No. : 98.334 Size (cm.) : 30x23.5x10</p> <p>The plaque depicts a figure of spotted-deer in lateral profile, moving towards left with raised neck. The horns and ears are well depicted. A band is placed around his neck with a bell. Some parts of the plaque are eroded.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :294 Acc. No. :98.350 Size (cm.) :29x25x11</p> <p>The plaque depicts a figure of spotted-deer in lateral profile, moving towards left with raised neck. The ears are well depicted. Some parts of the borders of the plaque are eroded.</p>


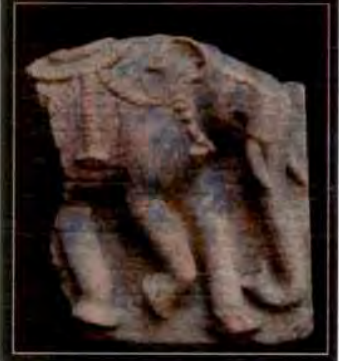
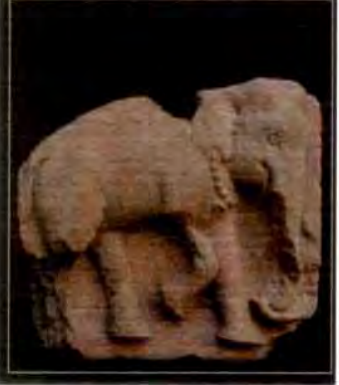
PLAQUES	DESCRIPTION
	<p>Serial No. :295 Acc. No. : 98.339 Size (cm.) : 29.5x23.5x10</p> <p>The plaque depicts a figure of spotted-deer, moving towards left, with upraised neck. A bell is placed around his neck with a band. The horns and ears are well depicted.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :296 Acc. No. :98.348 Size (cm.) :30x24x10</p> <p>The plaque is badly eroded and mutilated. The extant portions contain the impression of an animal in left profile with horns like buffalo.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :297 Acc. No. : 98.329 Size (cm.) : 29x25x11</p> <p>The plaque depicts a figure of spotted-deer in left-lateral profile. The dots at the back of the body and both of the horns and ears are well depicted. Some part of the legs and borders are mutilated.</p>

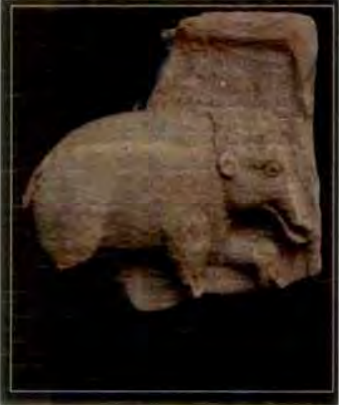
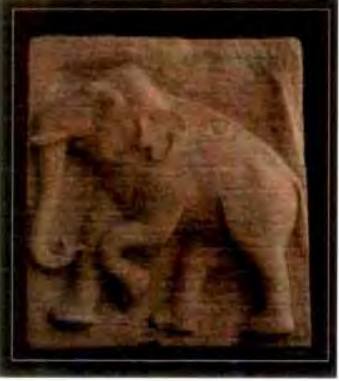
PLAQUES	DESCRIPTION
	<p>Serial No. :298 Acc. No. : 98.345 Size (cm.) :28x24x11.5</p> <p>plaque depicts a figure of spotted-deer, moving towards left but looking to back.The horns are well-depicted.The right hind-leg is broken.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :299 Acc. No. : 02.17 Size (cm.) : 30x23.5x12</p> <p>The plaque depicts a deer in lateral profile, moving towards left. The horns and ears are well depicted. A bell with band is placed around the neck.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :300 Acc. No. :FR.59 Size (cm.) :30x26x10</p> <p>The plaque depicts a figure of an animal like buffalo, moving towards right.</p>




PLAQUES	DESCRIPTION
	<p>Serial No. :301 Acc. No. : 01.75 Size (cm.) : 29.5x24.3x9.4</p> <p>The plaque depicts a deer in left-lateral profile. The horns and ears are well depicted. A bell with band is placed around the neck.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :302 Acc. No. : 01.94 Size (cm.) : 28.5x24.3x9.1</p> <p>The plaque depicts the figure of a male spotted-deer, running towards left but looking to the back, after getting injury with an arrow-head at his back. The horns and ears are well depicted. The facial expression drawn by the artist is excellent.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :303 Acc. No. :04.45 Size (cm.) :30x23x8</p> <p>The plaque depicts the figure of a barking dog in right-lateral profile. The lower right part of the plaque is eroded.</p>

PLAQUES	DESCRIPTION
	<p>Serial No. :304 Acc. No. :00.14 Size (cm.) :27x22x5</p> <p>The plaque depicts the figure of a barking dog in right-lateral profile. The figure holds a band around the neck with a bell. The upper right part of the plaque is broken and missing.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :305 Acc. No. :02.65 Size (cm.) :29x23x10</p> <p>The plaque depicts the figure of a hyaena in left-lateral profile. The major part of the plaque is mutilated.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :306 Acc. No. :FR.72(YE₁) Size (cm.) :30.5x24x8.5</p> <p>The plaque depicts the figure of a barking dog in right-lateral profile. The plaque was broken into several pieces but mended later in the Lab..</p>

PLAQUES	DESCRIPTION
	<p>Serial No. :307 Acc. No. :R.06.191 Size (cm.) :30x25.8x9.5</p> <p>The plaque depicts the figure of an elephant in left-lateral profile. The major part of the plaque is mutilated.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :308 Acc. No. :04.08.10 Size (cm.) :24x19x8</p> <p>The plaque depicts the figure of an elephant in right-lateral profile. The major part of the plaque is mutilated. The parts of the <i>hawda</i> may be traced in the extant part.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :309 Acc. No. :04.18 Size (cm.) :26.7x23.2x59</p> <p>The plaque depicts the figure of a horned-rhinoceros with in right-lateral profile.</p>

PLAQUES	DESCRIPTION
	<p>Serial No. :310 Acc. No. :04.15 Size (cm.) :29x26x10</p> <p>The plaque depicts the figure of an elephant in left-lateral profile. The major part of the edge of plaque is mutilated. The elephant is decorated with a designed cloth at the back and bells at the neck.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :311 Acc. No. :02.93 Size (cm.) :28x16.7x8.4</p> <p>The plaque depicts the figure of an elephant in with long tusks in left-lateral profile. The major parts of the plaque with hind portion of the elephant are missing. The elephant is decorated with a designed cloth at the back, tied with ropes and bells at the neck.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :312 Acc. No. :02.63 Size (cm.) :23x25x8</p> <p>The plaque depicts the figure of a young elephant with tusks, in left-lateral profile. The major parts of the plaque with the back leg and a part of the trunk of the elephant are missing. The elephant is having a bell at the neck.</p>

PLAQUES	DESCRIPTION
	<p>Serial No. 313: Acc. No. :98.381 Size (cm.) :22.5x22x10</p> <p>The fragmentary part of the plaque contains a portion of the figure of a boar, depicted in left profile.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :314 Acc. No. :02.30 Size (cm.) :29x25.6x10.6</p> <p>The plaque depicts the figure of an elephant with tusk in right-lateral profile. The trunk of the elephant holds an indistinct object.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :315 Acc. No. :96.233 Size (cm.) :27x22x10(?)</p> <p>This is a fragmentary plaque of a composite animal in left profile. It is noteworthy to mention that the body feature, horns and ears are depicted like a mesha or Taurus, but the face is like human. This figure may be identified with a zodiac sign from the <i>rasi-chakra</i>, like other depictions.</p>

PLAQUES	DESCRIPTION
	<p>Serial No. :316 Acc. No. :FR 113 Size (cm.) :29x23x6</p> <p>The plaque depicts a figure of galloping goat in back profile with the depiction of tilted head towards right to accommodate within the limited space. The lower left corner of the plaque is missing.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :316 Acc. No. :00.37 Size (cm.) :28.5x26.2x10</p> <p>The plaque depicts the figures of two rams in the action of coition. The upper right corner of the plaque is missing.</p>
	<p>Serial No. :317 Acc. No. :FR.MM.39 Size (cm.) :30x27x7.5</p> <p>The plaque depicts the figure of a horse in right-lateral profile. The upper right corner of the plaque with a portion of the face is missing.</p>

similarities with agile figures depicting the Krishna cycle on the rock surface at Jahangira and other places in Bhagalpur district of eastern Bihar. Artists and craftsman in Bengal and Bihar during the ninth century could have drawn upon the visual traditions of earlier centuries.¹¹

Jagjivanpur plaques are sensitively modelled. What characterizes them is the ease with which the figures are shown in movement. Often, the agile figures are in profile; the device accentuates the sense of movement.¹² A number of visual formulas—titled heads, raised hands, folded legs, and smooth breaks in the body axis—emphasize the dynamism of the artist's vision and signal a departure from the placid and quiet world of Gupta art. In the delineation of ornaments and jewellery, the artist's penchant for volume stands out in bold relief. Whether it is an ear ornament, a necklace, or an arm-band, the ornaments are almost invariably emphatically rendered. One of the favourite themes depicts warriors carrying swords, staff, club, and shield. They have powerful physiques accentuated by the undraped torso, brief lower garment (*dhoti*), and boldly executed ornaments. They are shown in action, with a forward or lateral thrust. Closely related to this genre is a basket-bearing woman with wide open eyes and thick lips. She wears an elaborate dress. Although the face is in frontal position, the artist successfully introduces a diagonal element in the composition by arranging the legs in a visually convincing position.¹³

Representation of divine and semi-divine figures is restricted. Among the Brahmanical deities, Siva and Surya can be recognized in Jagjivanpur plaques. The Buddhist pantheon is represented by *Manjusri*, *Maitreya* and *Avalokitesvara*. This paucity of divine images stands in sharp contrast to Antichak where both the Buddhist and Brahmanical pantheons are represented through a variety of iconic forms.¹⁴

Jagjivanpur plaques drew upon the common stylistic and thematic traditions of East Indian art of the Gupta and post-Gupta period. Many of the themes can be traced in other Buddhist centres of about the same chronological horizon. This brings us to the crucial issue about their date. As discussed earlier, the inscriptional evidence is very categorical; it gives a date by which the monastery was established, it mentions the characters involved in this act. Working on the ruling chronology of the Pala period, scholars have suggested that the seventh regnal year of Mahendrapala (the date of the Jagjivanpur copper plate) should be placed in the middle of the ninth century CE. "The monastery must have come up by this date. Accordingly, the plaques used for decorating the structures should be dated to circa ninth century. This is the broad argument on the basis of historical record".¹⁵

The excavation has not provided any conclusive evidence in respect of chronology and location of plaques. All the plaques were recovered from the debris of the monastery. Although not a single plaque has been found in situ, affixed to a particular structure on a regular alignment, it is not unlikely that the plaques were placed over

two brick courses with pearl string motif above the base of the outer wall of the monastery.¹⁶ The pattern seems to be somewhat different from the Paharpur or Antichak. At Paharpur and Antichak, the plaques are related to the stupa, which is so far absent at Jagjivanpur. On the Paharpur stupa the first course of terracotta panels is at ground level and the second course at the level of the terrace, while at Antichak terracotta panels are restricted to the level of the first terrace of the *stupa*.¹⁷ Since no *stupa* of any appreciable dimension has been found at Jagjivanpur, the terracotta panels were almost likely placed above the basal level of the monastery and were coeval with the setting up of the establishment.

An important aspect of the artistic tradition of the Pala period is a small but significant crop of terracotta panels known from different sites of Eastern India. Compared to the very large number of stone and metal sculptures, terracotta panels, in numeral terms, appear to be rather insignificant but the thematic range represented through these terracotta panels, contribute a different note to the art idioms of early mediaeval eastern India.

Pala period terracottas did not figure in most of the authoritative studies on Indian art and archaeology. A variety of factors should explain this omission. The known examples of Pala period terracottas, at least till 1938, were restricted to repeatative representations of Buddhist deities, stupas and temples on small tear-drop shaped votive plaques. Designed as Sachcha by G. Tucci, these votive plaques emulated the stone sculptures, both in theme and style. Two of the most important Buddhist sites in Eastern India – Nalanda and Bodh Gaya have yielded a good number of votive plaques, although these plaques often traveled beyond their areas of origin. Not surprisingly both J.C. French and R.D. Banerji chose to overlook Pala terracottas in their pioneering studied on Pala Art.¹⁸

This situation underwent qualitative change with the discovery of a huge brick temple at paharpur in Rajshahi district of Bangladesh. The site, known since the visit of Buchanan- Hamilton, had earlier yielded terracotta panels. Both Alexander Cunningham and R. D. Banerji had noticed terracotta panels, which according to Cunningham “.....belonged to the lines of friezes with which all the finer Hindu temples are decorated.”¹⁹ Excavations conducted by K. N. Dikshit revealed an amazingly rich array of terracotta panels depicting themes drawn from textual and folk traditions. The panels were arranged in two or three rows, with the large ones decorating the basement and the smaller ones placed on the first tier. According to Dikshit, “ no less than eight hundred complete and fragmentary plaques were discovered during the clearance of the mound and about 2000 still in situ.”²⁰ The aesthetic impact of these panels was so profound that Stlla Kramrisch observed: “ There are other panels in Paharpur, of crude execution, but full of decorative beauty and lively action, the work of local men scarcely earlier than the eighth century

illustrating the Krishna legend. No other reliefs comparable to these are known but that their unsophisticated expressiveness and bold decorative quality are local features is corroborated by paintings of the Ramayana although these are of later date.

Paharpur evidence necessitated a fresh appraisal of the Pala period terracotta tradition. But, the discovery of similar terracotta panels at Mainamati in Comilla district and Mahasthangarh in Bogra district of Bangladesh expanded the spatial horizon of this artistic medium.²¹ Cunningham's discovery of two terracotta panels were followed by Dikshit's find of *Yaksa* like figure 'similar in execution to the Paharpur example' at Mahasthangarh. Recent excavations at Vasu-Bihar site of Mahasthan has brought to light a further hoard of thirty-four terracotta plaques. In 1946, T.N. Ramachandran reported on the chance find of terracotta plaque from Mainamati have exposed a monastic complex consisting of several brick structures embellished with terracotta plaques. The stratigraphic evidence provided by 1967-68 excavation suggest that the terracotta tradition at Mainamati began sometimes after the 8th century. Not far from Mainamati, Pilak-Pathar in Tripura province, provides the similar evidence regarding the use of terracotta plaques for adornment of a Buddhist Stupa.²²

The use of terracotta panels was, not restricted to Bengal. Earlier excavations at Nalanda have resulted in the discovery of terracotta plaques of exceptional workmanship. However, the most impressive evidence came from Antichak of Bhagalpur district in Bihar where a course of terracotta panel decorates the base of massive Buddhist Stupa.²³ Even in Assam, the recently noticed brick temple at Nau-Nath of C. 9th- 10th century is adorned with terracotta panels reminiscent of Paharpur-Mainamati tradition.²⁴ Clearly, the practice of embellishment of *stupa* and temples through terracotta panels was fairly well distributed, though, by no means, very extensively employed in Eastern India during the early mediaeval period. Available evidence, though fragmentary, tend to indicate that Northern Bengal with its neighbouring tract of Eastern Bihar and South- Eastern Bengal were the areas of concentration of terracotta tradition. Another significant aspect is the cultural context of the terracotta-yielding sites. Leaving aside Nau-Nath in Assam, almost all the sites are of decisively Buddhist affiliation. This is not to suggest that the tradition of terracotta embellishment is associated with Buddhist building programme. But the practice of adorning the stupa with rectangular terracotta panels seemed to have found favour in certain areas of Eastern India; be it Paharpur, Mahasthan in Pundra Vardhana-Varendra, Antichak in Anga, Mainamati and pilak in Samatata-Harikela.²⁵ In this context, the recently acquired 53 terracotta plaques from two villages of Bogra district in Bangladesh assumes significance. Though collected from two different places, the plaques certainly belong to one cohesive group. Some of the plaques are inscribed with identification labels in 'Gupta/Post-Gupta Brahmi letters.' Rectangular

in shapes, these plaques depict scenes from Ramayana. Despite the occurrence of the inscription, the chronology of the plaques remain problematic. There is very little doubt that stylistic source of the plaques cannot Sarnath-Gupta idiom only, a strong degree of local elements must have gone into the making of the idiom represented in these plaques. Whatever may be the date of these plaques viz. Palasbadi, is 'located close to the North-Western corner of Gokulmedh near Mahasthangarh site'; thus it is not unlikely that the plaques really represent a phase contemporaneous or slightly earlier than the construction of Vasu Bihar.²⁶ Similarly, a single course of terracotta panels adorning the plinth 'just below the Bhavadeva's reconstruction' have been dated 'a great deal earlier than the long course of comparable panels that adorn the monuments at Paharpur and Vikramsila', are too generalized to be placed at an earlier date. Given the present state of information the beginning of terracotta tradition can not possibly be pushed back beyond the 7th-8th century A.D. Secondary, there appears to be a close link between renewed building programme in some of the earlier sites like Mahasthan, Paharpur and Mainamati and the use of terracotta plaques as a media of decoration. More important, though not exclusive to a particular religious complex, most of the terracotta yielding sites, known so far, have definite Buddhist connection. Finally, a distinction should be made between innumerable terracotta votive plaques known from Nalanda-Bodhgaya and such other sites and less numerous circular or rectangular panels depicting life in its varied expression.²⁷

Viewed against the background, the recent discovery of terracotta plaques, assignable to the Pala period from two different sites in the Northern part of West Bengal, assumes some significance. The two sites to have yielded terracotta plaques are Bairhatta (25° 25' N and 88° 18' E) in West (now South) Dinajpur district and Jagjivanpur (25° 2' N and 88° 24' E) in Malda district of West Bengal. Of the two sites Jagjivanpur is much better known because of the discovery of the copper-plate charter of Mahendrapala, a hitherto unknown King of the Pala dynasty.

Going by the material evidence, both Bairhatta and jagjivanpur appear to be single-culture sites, a pattern found repeated in most of the sites of Malda and South Dinajpur districts. What distinguishes Bairhatta and Jagjivanpur, from most of the Pala period sites of North Bengal, is the occurrence of the terracotta plaques.

At their present state of preservation, the plaques cannot be identified with certainty. Each rectangular plaque measures 33.00 cm x 25.00 cm. The plaques depict a warrior with a peaked cap and a shield, a bearded four-armed deity with a bird near his feet, another figure almost similar to the previous figure with its head turned to the left, four-armed deity seated on a half-man, half-bird figure, a gana like figure, and an animal seated under a tree.

Despite the uncertainty regarding iconographic features, some of the figures may be tentatively identified. The bearded figure accompanied by a bird most likely represents Brahma, the identification reinforced by the occurrence of a jar-like element in the lower left hand. There are similar other instances. If the composite figure is identified as Garuda, then the four-armed principal figure should be Vishnu. The attributes in all the four-hands are thickly coated with clay, but one on the upper left hand is probably a chakra and one on the lower right looks like a lotus. The attributes on the upper right has the shape of a sword. Equally problematic is the depiction of an animal seated under a tree. The portly figure with upraised hands may be loosely identified as a *gana*, but it may also represent a demonic character from the episode of Krishna.

Examples of plaques from Jagjivanpur are extremely significant because of the known Buddhist context of the site. Similar plaques are generally placed on the lower friezes of the brick stupas as in Paharpur and Antichak. Tulabhita site has yielded some more pieces of similar plaques, but these are damaged or defused due to lime coating. One such piece is preserved in Malda Museum.

In this connection we may refer to a terracotta plaque collected long back from Bangarh in South Dinajpur. It measures 23.22 cms x 19.63 cms and shows a jackal in profile framed against flames of fire. Identified as Nilavarma-Srgala, (?) i.e. the jackal who dived into a vat and turned blue, in the records of the State Archaeological Museum, West Bengal- it is one of the very few terracotta plaques assignable to the pala period. K.G. Goswami's excavation at Bangarh between 1938-41, brought to light a solitary piece of plaque of the 'Pala period'. Currently preserved in Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, University of Calcutta, the piece shows a fishing scene. Goswami describes the piece in the following words : " A man of robust physique is standing in knee deep water with upper part of his body bent forward catching a fish from water by both the hands. A basket is seen hanging on his back for the purpose of keeping the fish there. The indication of water by means of wavy lines is beautiful. The Modeling and expression of the scene is quite vigorous". Thus the State Archaeological Museum specimen is the only other Pala period terracotta plaque known from Bangarh..

Bairhatta and Jagjivanpur are two new additions to the list of terracotta yielded sites of the Pala period. While the historical context and structural setting of Jagjivanpur plaques can be explained, by and large, with reference to the copper-plate charter of Mahendrapala and the scattered evidence of bricks, potsherds, Buddhist bronze and stone sculptures collected from the principal mound, viz. Tulabhita. The historical context of Bairhatta remain uncertain. S.K. Saraswati's report, cited earlier, did not refer to any material remotely connected to Buddhist faith. Our exploration of the site and its surroundings did not also reveal any sculpture of Buddhist affiliation. A couple of important records from the neighbourhood of Bairhatta, viz. Bangarh charter

of Mahipala, stone inscription of the period of Nayapala, Manhali and Rajibpur charters of Mahendrapala, Yr. 8, Yr. 2 and Yr. 32, do not allude to any Buddhist establishment of the Pala period, in this area. On the contrary, all the records datable between the 10th and 12th Centuries, make categorical references to donation in favour of the Brahmanas or Acharyas, and/or Brahmanical establishments. If the 'Murtisiva-Prasasti of Nayapala' Bangarh record is any indication, then one can visualize a consistent tradition of patronage to Brahmanical shrines in this area. Morrison's study of property transfer records of Varendra area seems to reinforce such a postulate. Thus, Bairhatta terracotta plaques should be viewed, more appropriately in association with a Brahmanical shrine. The recently discovered brick temple at Nau-nath in the Bramaputra valley of Assam is similarly embellished with terracotta plaques datable to C. 9th -10th century. Similar situation might have prevailed at Bairhatta. Whatever might be the religious affiliation, terracotta plaques from both the sites, as also from Bangarh, confirm to the artistic and thematic tradition of Paharpur-Antichak-Mahasthan. Compared to the contemporaneous stone or metal sculptures, they are closer to the Gupta and Post-Gupta figural types of Eastern India, with a penchant for heavier form.

It has been suggested that Paharpur –Antichak terracottas draw heavily upon the dado-figures on the stone temple at Nalanda, popularly known as Patthar-Ghati. Stretching this argument, Frederick Asher further suggested stylistic relationship of Pala period terracottas with frolicking figures represented at the upper terrace of the Gupta period temple at Ahichhatra. The obvious problem with this assumption is that not all the figures can be described as frolicking. Despite certain amount of informality, most of the plaques depict conventional themes like deities, semi-divines, narrative scenes, animal figures etc. A more meaningful comparison can be made with the narrative panels from Krsna cycle in the rock-surface in Jahangira and neighbouring sites of river Ganga in the Bhagalpur district of Eastern Bihar. The narrative vein witnessed in these panels are not without its precedence in Eastern Bihar. Almost contemporary relics rich in narrative content are also known from Rajaona. Here, we encounter a set of highly popular narratives rendered in an informal manner. The active figures, participants in life-story of krsna or Siva, are certainly based on Gupta model but unencumbered by iconographic rigidity. The artists of the period must have drawn up to this visual tradition of Eastern Bihar. Such an assumption is supported not only by stylistic consideration, but also by the obvious geographical proximity. What strikes us most in the Bairhatta and Jagjivanpur plaques is the relative simplicity of forms. Most of the human figures are well –built and all most devoid of special type ornaments and jewelry. These are restricted to thick arm-bands and waist-bands, treated in volume. Almost all the figures are infused with a sense of movement. In certain instances as in the representation of Warrior, Gana or Vidyadhara, the movement is necessitated by the subject-matter. But, even in the

depiction of deities, this is suggested by side-way tilt of the head, or forward thrust of the body. Narrative scenes are indicated in a synoptic manner. The details of the Panchatantra story are absent in the depiction of lion, but this is probably done purposefully because of the popularity of the narrative. Similar rendering of lion is also seen in a Mainamati plaque. The treatment of the tree in a Bairhatta plaque is strongly reminiscent of the visual convention adopted in a plaque of slightly earlier date from Saralpur/ Palasbadi.

We can however, confirm that a) terracotta tradition of carved terracotta plaque of the Pala period is far more extensive than what is constructed and b) it is independent of religious affiliation and so far such evidence was unknown from northern part of West Bengal.

vi) Comparative Study: As discussed earlier in the preceding sections Jagjivanpur plaques, however, have a generic relationship with the terracotta panels of Paharpur, Mahasthan and Mainamati in Bangladesh; Antichak and Nalanda in Bihar; Pilak in Tripura; Bahirhatta, Bangarh, Malda and other places.²⁸ They were created for the embellishment of Buddhist establishments which enjoyed generous patronage between the eighth and the tenth centuries. Scholars have commented on their earthly charms and informal air. Terracotta plaques of Jagjivanpur are vibrant with human warmth. In their relatively simple compositional scheme, preference for active and agile forms, comical mood, and decorative tendency, they create an aesthetic domain largely independent of the canonically defined world of Pala-Sena art.²⁹

The people were not bound to the strict court-religion and could enjoy their own religious status³⁰. The facial expressions as depicted in the plaques indicate that the people spent a happy and peaceful life. Jagjivanpur plaques are sensitively modelled and characterised by the lateral movement with front profile, creates three dimensional effect in the figure, leaving the earlier art-tradition³¹ which is an unique experimentation and unparalleled in the terracotta art of eastern India. Representation of divine and semi-divine figures is rather infrequent in Jagjivanpur plaques. Among the Brahmanical deities, *Siva* and *Surya* can be recognized. The Buddhist pantheon is represented by Buddha, Manjusri, Maitreya, Avalokitesvara and Janguli. Apart from the classical Hindu deities, the site has yielded the figures of *Dikpalas* like Varuna, Indra, Yama and Agni. Moreover, the figures of *Grahas* like Rahu and Vrihaspati have also been recovered. The significant figures of the *Rasi-Chakras* or the zodiac signs, evidently speak of the astrological practices, which is rarely depicted in other Buddhist sites in eastern India. Among these, the figures of *Min*, *Vrischika*, *Karkata* and *Vrishabha*, have been identified. The paucity of divine images stands in sharp contrast to Antichak and Paharpur, where both the Buddhist and Brahmanical pantheons are represented through a variety of iconic forms. At Paharpur we have the reference of *Vishnu*, *Ganesa*, *Siva*, *Krishna*, *Rama* and other figures, but at Jagjivanpur

our findings are restricted. The *Siva* in *urdhalinga* form indicate that the tantrik form of saivism was popularly prevalent at that time and it may be assumed that the monastery was a centre of *Tantrik* practices, though the other tantric deities of Buddhist pantheon have not been found from the site, except the image of *Marichi*. The figure of *Janguli* proves the prevalence of the cult of snake goddess for fertility, protection and prosperity. The ritual practices for sacred objects were also prevalent in continuation of the earlier tradition, proved by the independent plaque-depiction of votive *stupa*, *dharmachakra* and manuscript (*prajnaparamita* text) on lotus.

It is notable that the other sites of eastern India including Bangladesh have yielded a fairly large number of sculptures and terracotta plaques bearing *dharanis*, the Buddhist creed and *Pratitya-samudpada-sutra*, both indicative of the *Mahayana-Vajrayana* affiliation of the establishment, but at Jagjivanpur we have a single evidence of a tiny metal sculpture which contains a *dharani-mantra* at the back of the halo.³²

Terracotta plaques of Jagjivanpur are vibrant with human warmth. In their relatively simple compositional scheme, preference for active and nimble forms, comical mood, and decorative tendency, they create an independent aesthetic domain, though the narrative representations are totally absent in the plaques of Jagjivanpur. Representation of singular figure with three dimensional effect is the main characteristic feature of the Jagjivanpur plaques. Due to depiction of many figures in a single plaque to highlight the thematic narrations, the figurative representations in Paharpur plaques are depicted in low relief with two dimensional effect without anatomical balance. In contrast, the artists of Jagjivanpur enjoyed freedom and got space to accommodate the single figure within the specified plaque-space with bold relief and produced beautifully depicted figures. The plaques were produced as per architectural requirements to embellish the monastery-walls. Therefore, the Paharpur plaques are larger in dimensions and the Jagjivanpur plaques are comparatively smaller in size due to modest dimension and therefore the narrative plaques are absent. The informal art-idioms, a deviation from the Gupta and post-Gupta tradition, started at Paharpur, Mahasthangarh, Mainamati and Antichak, reached its culmination at Jagjivanpur which may be defined as indigenous and mature form of terracotta art. "Thematically, the artists show no intention in creating a world of pantheonthese decorative plaques do not seem to have been organised harmoniously with the structural format"³³. of the monastery and perhaps due to narrow coverage of the outer wall, the size is smaller and the narrative plaques are totally absent.

The terracotta plaques of Jagjivanpur were modelled by hand in clayey condition. All moments of life are taken into consideration by the artists and a softened plasticity in depiction of hands, legs and facial expressions, demand subject of appraisal. The figures, depicted in the plaques are roundish and anatomically balanced. The artists had a thorough knowledge about nature around them. The depictions of flora, fauna, divine

and semidivine images in plaques gives a fair idea of the socio-cultural and religious life of the people in Bengal during the early mediaeval period.

vii) Historical and archaeological significance: From the study of the plaques of Jagjivanpur, several facts may be retrieved. The divine figures of both Brahmanical and Buddhist pantheon indicate that there was no discontentment amongst different religious sects, though the Palas were the followers of Buddhism. The people were not bound to the strict court-religion and could enjoy their own religious status. The facial expressions as depicted in the plaques indicate that the people spent a happy and peaceful life.³⁴

The common dress of the people as revealed through the depiction in the plaques, consists of a lower garment like a short *dhoti* as *adhavasana* or lower garment, reaching just above the knee with a scarf around the shoulders as upper garments (*uttariya*). The warrior class used to wear such type of definite dress. The dresses have floral embroidery and incised lines. The dresses as depicted in the plaques clearly substantiate the fact that weaving technology was quite advanced.³⁵

Men and women are both adorned with necklaces, ear-rings, wristlets, bangles etc. with the hair sometimes tied on the head or back of the head untied. Women had an honourable position in the society and they used to play an important part in everyday life by engaging themselves in different type of works as reflected through the plaques.³⁶

The depiction of cane-shields give evidence of the popularity of cane. Tortoise shell was also a popular material for making shields. Iron technology was known by the people, because all the weapons seem to be made of iron. Besides the *Kumhar* class, this artisan class, had a prominent existence in the society.

Education and learning had a predominant place in the society, which is evident by a residential monastery unearthed at Jagjivanpur and the manuscript-on-lotus in a plaque found from the same place.

The terracotta plaques of Jagjivanpur were modelled by hand in clayey condition. All the figures depicted in the plaques are carved in bold relief. All moments of life are taken into consideration by the artists and a softened plasticity in depiction of hands, legs and facial expressions, demand subject of appraisal. The figures, depicted in the plaques are roundish and anatomically balanced. The artists had a thorough knowledge about nature around them.³⁷

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