



Review On Archaeological Settlements In West Bengal With Special Reference To Lower Ganga Valley

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ABSTRACT:

West Bengal has not received much attention in the historiography that has already been written about the historical geography of Bengal. Yet, the diversity of textual data that is readily accessible when combined with numismatic and archaeological records clearly underlines the importance of considering historical West Bengal in terms of its various identities within the framework of the area's early settlement history. In this article, review on archaeological settlements in West Bengal with special reference to lower Ganga valley has been discussed.

Keywords: Archaeological, Settlements, Ganga, Valley, West Bengal.

INTRODUCTION:

On West Bengal's political climate in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, nothing is currently known. The Jagajjibanpur copperplate from the seventh year of a newly discovered Pala king named Mahendrapala (Bhattacharya 1988:71-3) bears the earliest inscriptional evidence demonstrating Pala supremacy precisely within the West Bengal sector of the lower Ganga valley, which is followed by the Jajilpara copperplate from the sixth year of Gopala III. Both these plates were uncovered on the Punarbhaba in the northern part of the greater Varendm tract and they correspond to rural property transfers within the Kuddalakhata visaya of the Pundravarddhana hkhukri. The Bangarh plate from Mahlpala's ninth year and the two Rajibpur plates from Madanapala's second and 32nd/22nd years make up the following group of Pala copperplates from North Bengal. All of these plates allude to land transfers in the same Pundravarddhana province's KotTvarsa visaya, albeit by this time the province had undergone a significant transformation as seen in epigraphs from the late tenth century onward.

RELATED REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

According to Jaydeep Ghosal (2018), the Kopai River is a tributary of the archaeologically significant Chhottanagpur washout river in the Rarh region. Sites from the prehistoric to the mediaeval periods have been discovered there. In order to comprehend the pattern of site distribution and the character of sites, the present article examines the distribution of archaeological settlements along the middle reaches of the Kopai River and floodplains. The current study also makes an effort to develop a system for investigating an area and emphasises that it is still possible to rebuild quite accurately even in areas missing prominent archaeological sites or towering mounds. As a result, this investigation represents a first step in our understanding of the river valley and the patterns in its archaeological record. The western plateau and highlands bordering the Chhotanagpur plateau in the west and the Ganges Delta in the east make up the Rarh region of West Bengal. This region includes portions of the districts of Murshidabad, Birbhum, Bankura, Bardhaman, Medinipur, and Nadia. The current study area is located in the Birbhum district's Western Ruhr. The district contains an extensive lateritic outcrop that is undulating. Since ancient times, the Rarh region has been a possible location for archaeological sites. The ancient villages of this region have been extensively researched by numerous previous experts. Professor Subrata Chakrabarty, who is now deceased, did particularly fascinating work looking for prehistoric settlements. There are numerous rivers that are fed by Chhottanagpur in the Rarh region. Because Birbhum is a plateau, most of its rivers run from west to east, with the cross section of the valley floor(s) being wider towards the west, or the upstream area. The majority of the district's rivers flow into the "dead delta" region beneath the higher ground along the Ganga-Bhagirathi bank, where they originate in the Santal Pargana highlands. The best places to look for archaeological sites are in river floodplains. One such area, the Kopai River, contains archaeological sites from the prehistoric to the mediaeval periods. This region's land surface, which is made up of reddish earth, was created as a result of the deposition of alluvium that had degraded from the western tableland. The geography in the area is mildly undulating, which is typical of the Rarh environment. The majority of this tract is made up of laterite, which eventually merges with the Rarh area of the Murshidabad district on one side and slopes down to the northern bank of the Ajay River on the other. [1]

According to G.P. Chapman and K. Rudra (2015), the Ganga-Brahmaputra delta is the biggest and changing the fastest on earth due to the large monsoon discharges and silt loads of these two rivers, as well as the numerous major tributaries that discharge directly into the delta zone from the Himalaya and the northeastern Deccan. The Bengali cultural and linguistic region, whose history has produced a large body of literature, much of it sensitive to the dynamic ecosystem, practically overlaps with the delta. The tropic of Cancer is crossed by the Bengal Delta. Hence, one of the most ecologically productive locations on earth is created by the interaction of water, silt, and heat. The majority of the area was covered with forests,

several large rivers, swamps, marshes, and new char land during prehistoric times. A variety of wildlife, including several top carnivores, also lived there. [2]

According to M.K. Jha (2014), this essay raises concerns about migration, settlement, and state development in the Ganga plain from the first millennium BCE to the beginning of the second millennium CE. It investigates the reasons for and exact route taken by Indo-Aryan speakers as they moved from northwestern South Asian regions to the Ganga plain around the first millennium BCE. The essay questions the value of geographers' tripartite classification of the Ganga plain and suggests a separation based on aridity and rainfall in order to better comprehend these historically significant issues related to migration and settlement. Such a distinction helps to explain why, starting at least in the middle of the first millennium BCE, the Ganga plain's transitional region—between its drier and more humid regions—became the focal point of migratory flows, state creation, and urban growth. [3]

Traditional methods of conducting archaeology have a variety of effects on the world, according to S.G. Ortman (2019), but despite current initiatives, archaeology's practical usefulness has remained modest. In this essay, I explain why this is the case and offer some ideas for improving archaeology's practical relevance. First, I contend that while archaeology's conventional emphasis on reconstructing the past is valuable, it is unlikely to increase its practical applicability since the findings are too context-specific. Second, I contend that conventional answers to the issue of historical contingency are similarly insufficient because the outcomes are too broad to be relevant to the particular problems and remedies that society demands. Finally, I offer an unexpected and possibly controversial suggestion: that a successful course of action is to revive and reformulate aspects of the New Archaeology that its proponents never fully realized. I use the settlement scaling theory as an example to show that this is both feasible and fruitful and that more research done in this vein would increase the field's practical applicability. [4]

ISSUE OF 'EASTERN EXPANSION' OF THE KOSANA POLITY: DISTRIBUTION OF 'KOSANA' RELATED COINAGE IN WEST BENGAL:

Due in large part to the discovery of numismatic evidence with obvious Kusana affinity in objects from various parts of Bengal, including many areas of modern West Bengal, the issue of the Kusana empire's expansion in eastern India gained prominence in the historiography on the early polity of Bengal.

The widespread use of die-struck Kusana-related copper coins in West Bengal and their historical ties to the region must be considered in light of the aforementioned theoretical discussion. The Kusana-related coins in West Bengal are dispersed over a larger geographical orbit, including the Chhotanagpur borderlands in the western segments of the state, comprising the districts of Bankura and Purulia, in addition to sporadic discoveries at locations in southern West Bengal. Due to the type site of Puri (Orissa), these coins are now

more commonly known as PurT-Kusana coins. The general distribution of PurT-Kusana coins in western West Bengal is found to include the following locations: (1) Bahulara, (2) Chhatna, (3) Atbaichandi, (4) Deulbhira, (5) Panchpukuria, (6) Kadamdeuli, (7) Jiarda, (8) Gobindapur, (9) Atra, (10) Naricha, (11) Hat Krishnanagar, (12) Rautara, (13) Tilab The other provenances in the district, in addition to the well-known Masubazar treasure discovered nearby the town of Purulia, are: (1) Bauridi, (2) Puncha, (3) Budhpur, (4) Suisa, and (5) Deuli. During the course of the current investigation, four PurT-Kusana coins were discovered in a small museum in Rajbalhat, Hooghly, and all of these artefacts were said to have originated from the Mahanad site in the same district. one dubious and very rusted piece. [5]

The Puri-Kusana coins show some similarities to the later Kusana coinage of north India in their design. This is the main justification for calling these coins "Kusana copycat coins." The semi-independent rulers who rose to prominence in southern West Bengal, the fringes of Chhotanagpur, and other areas of eastern India around the second or third century AD may have used these fake coins to facilitate local level exchanges within the relevant territory, according to a review of their occurrence in some parts of West Bengal.

It is important to take note of R. K. Chattpadhyay's exhaustive investigation of the archaeological and numismatic data from Bankura, which includes a thorough description of the Puri-Kusana coins' origin, chronology, authorship, mode of circulation, and historical identities in West Bengal. We can get an idea of the settlements that followed the so-called iron-bearing DRW settlements from early historical sites like Pakhanna, Dihar, Saragdihi, Kumardanga, and Tulsipur. Apart from the NBPW at Pakhanna, which illustrates its relationship with the Ganga Valley developments, there is little evidence to demonstrate a transition from a rural to a semi-urban economy. The ceramic found at the earliest historic sites appears to point to continued agrarian economic development. The coins may have been produced by a body in charge of trade and business. It is logical to assume that a temple authority may have periodically produced those coins for the purpose of paying servants' wages. It is important to note in this context that Orissan Brahmins have a good chance of migrating to Bankura's tribal settlement areas. The Orissan architecture, art, culture, and traditions, as well as the coins that were initially temple issues, were promoted by such migrations. After the eighth and ninth centuries A.D., this migration's time period could be determined. ... It is conceivable that the Orissans who had relocated to other regions of Radha, including Bankura, may have brought with them a treasure of Puri-Kushana or replica Kushana coins, which represent the riches of the household. Our ethnoarchaeological research also enables us to draw the conclusion that such currency could barely find any use in day-to-day transactions in the tribal settlement region of Bankura, where the barter system was prevalent and persisted into the British era. The Puri-Kushana or imitation Kushana coin hoards found in Bankura should be historically dated to the pre-Gupta period;

nevertheless, certain ethnographic interpretations of their findspots suggest that they may really be from the post-Gupta period (Chattopadhyay, 1982, 1989).

NATURE OF SOURCES:

The Susunia rock inscription of a king named Candravarman, son of Sirhhavarman, a devout worshipper of Caksvamin, i.e., Visnu, and the rule of this king at a place called Puskarana, identified with the modern village of Pakhanna in the district of Bankura on the river Damodar, provides the only epigraphic clue to the political history of Bengal during the fourth and fifth centuries, i.e., during (Sastri 1982, Sircar 1993, p. 351-2). This Candravarman is typically equated with the monarch of the same name described in Samudragupta's Allahabad inscription (Sircar 1985:139-40).

Notwithstanding the above sporadic evidence for the Gupta era, West Bengal's post-Gupta phase's epigraphic sources are far more distinct than those from its earlier phase. The rise and fall of three autonomous local rulers named Gopacandra, Dharmaditya, and Samacaradeva, who emerged from the waning splendour of the later Gupta monarchs of Bengal, characterised the early politics of Bengal in the sixth and seventh centuries. According to the Malla Sarul copperplate inscription of Vijayasena, a local chief who ruled with Gopacandra's political support during his third or fourth year, Gopacandra is known to have ruled over a larger territory of central West Bengal along the alluvial floodplains of the Damodar in the middle of the sixth century. As a result, a larger provincial geographical division (hhukti) was named Varddhamana for the first time (Sircar 1985:11). The Malla Sarul inscription demonstrates the concentration of local autonomy and the development of brahmanical agrarian villages in a terrain that is largely populated by groups from the lower classes of society. The list of rural representatives involved in the land transfer affair recorded on the plate provides a striking impression of how agricultural groups emerged from a non-fanning BRW-using stage of culture and economy in this region at a time that may be best viewed as a phase of transition from early historic to early mediaeval. [6]

POLITY IN EARLY MEDIAVAL WEST BENGAL: FROM THE SEVENTH TO THE TWELFTH CENTURIES:

It was only with the rise of Sasanka in the early seventh century that larger geographical territories of West Bengal came under the direct political sway of a power structure that had successfully expanded its stronghold from the southern-southwestern extremities of the region to the west of the Bhagirathi. This is despite the existence of local autonomous powers in some fragments of landmass as early as the sixth century, according to the records that are currently available. The two Antla/'Midnapuf plates and the Egra plate from Sasanka's era attest to the development of new agricultural landscapes and the colonisation of Brahmana landowners, who held a distinct functional hierarchical rank in rural agrarian activities. In the first half of the seventh century, the province known as Danda, along with

its districts (visaya), and other local level administrative units, remained the centre of political activity. We'll be concerned about another aspect of this development in a moment.

Hence, during the Pala era of dominance in the area, we have two district level administrative divisions within northern West Bengal. In the early mediaeval historiography of Bengal, it is generally acknowledged that the Palas exclusively governed in West Bengal's northern sections, which served as the centre of their dominance. One must now add that, at least for a brief period of time in the eleventh century, the rural populace in some areas of alluvial West Bengal acknowledged the supremacy of the Pala king, whose stone inscription from Sian in the district of Birbhum was already known to scholars in light of the highly contextual discovery of the Mandalgram image inscription from the time of Nayapala of the Pala family from Bardhaman.[7]

As late as the middle of the twelfth century, with the establishment of Sena authority in the region, did the politics of early mediaeval West Bengal come to be known as truly "dynastic." The majority of the Sena copperplate inscriptions that have been discovered so far come from various regions of contemporary West Bengal. The Paikore image inscription from the time of Vijayasena has also been discovered. These evidences, along with the Barrackpur copperplate from the reign of Vijayasena, the earliest epigraphic document of this family, the Naihati plate of his son Vallalasena, the Gobindapur, Tarpandighi, Sundarban, Anulia, and the Saktipur copperplates of their supposed subordinates named Dommanapala. Out of the eight inscriptions mentioned above, the Naihati and the Gobindapur plates record land transfers in the Varddhamana bhukti; by the time the Saktipur copperplate was written, a new province named Kankagrama bhukti had been formed by dividing up Uttara Radha from the Varddhamana bhukti (Gupta 1996:573); the four remaining Sena inscriptions refer to land (for all details of chronology of records discussed here, see Appendix 2 and for that of references, see V.3.2-16). The representation of administrative divisions in West Bengal's Sena inscriptions illustrates the growing significance of geopolitical divisions and their accurate citations in epigraphic records, together with information about their positions in particular ecological and physical niches. In the framework of studying epigraphic and literary materials related to the theme, issues about the widespread usage of money and their impact on local and international trade in the geopolitical divides of West Bengal's western and central sectors have also recently acquired attention (Mukherjee 1982:65-83). After reading the preceding review, it would not be foolish to claim that West Bengal experienced constant political and cultural identity change over the course of its varied geographical terrain from the third century BC to roughly the middle of the twelfth century AD.

REPRESENTATIONS AND CHANGING IDENTITIES ADMINISTRATIVE SETTLEMENTS: SOME RECONSIDERATION:

The aforementioned makes an attempt, if in broad strokes, to better grasp the problems of historical geography and the shifting currents of political history in West Bengal from the third century BC to the twelfth century AD. However, a thorough examination of the complete published corpus of Bengal inscriptions, which includes examples from both West Bengal and its adjacent territories, would reveal that early mediaeval culture had a variety of interesting aspects.

The Mandhuk picture inscription (about. AD 967–969) of Gopala III and the Baghaura and Narayanpur image inscriptions (ca. AD 986–988 and c. AD 988–990, respectively) of Mahlpala I from the Kumilla region of current Bangladesh provide empirical support for the extension of power idea (Sircar 1952:51-7, 1982a:82). The Paschimbhag copperplate of Srilcandra, which dates to around AD 930–931 (Sircar 1973:19–40), contains the term "Paundravarddhana" for the first time, more than 500 years before the inscription shown above. The area is referred to as Paundra bhukti in all subsequent Candra inscriptions up until the eleventh century. Nonetheless, the name Paundravarddhana is still used in the contemporary Pala epigraphs (of Rajyapala, Gopala III, and Mahlpala I) that discuss the donation of land in north Bengal. The epigraphs from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which largely document land transfers outside of north Bengal's physical boundaries, indisputably refer to the area as Paundravarddhana. Surprisingly, however, Paundravarddhana bhukti is mentioned in the twelfth-century copperplates of Madanapala from Manahali and Rajibpur (of year 22/32) as well as the nearly contemporaneous Tarpandighi copperplate of Laksmanasena, all of which indisputably indicate land transfer within north Bengal. Even though the name Pundravarddhana is written in the published transcripts of the two Rajibpur plates (Mukherjee 1990-91:30-7), a thorough examination of the plates makes it clear that the medial vowel associated to pa is actually au rather than u. The same thing occurs with the Charpatra Mura plate of Vradharadeva, where the location has been misread as Pundravarddhana (Sircar 1973:81 and pi. 10), despite the fact that the portion is plainly read as Sri- Paundravarddhana in the published photograph. [8]

The key empirical findings from the aforementioned review are as follows: a. the name Paundravarddhana was well established before the Palas consolidated the southern-southeastern parts of Bengal; consequently, it is currently impossible to say with certainty whether the change from Pundravarddhana to Paundravarddhana had any bearing on this consolidation of power; and b. there is no conclusive evidence supporting the "tribal movement" theory.

The second subject is the establishment of numerous administrative divisions classified by mandalas in various regions of Bengal, including many regions of modern-day West Bengal. The entire politico-administrative structure has been visualised within a specifically arranged hierarchy, where administrative settlements reach from the bhukti levels down to the grama levels through a more or less fixed ladder. This is according to current

historiography on the nature of the tiered system of early mediaeval Bengal polity in relation to contemporary rural social structure.

In rural land transaction situations, the system demonstrates an almost unilateral structural hierarchy incorporating various forms of "reciprocal interaction" amongst some of the intermediary tiers. The concentration of Gupta power in north Bengal is most likely the best explanation for the unitary nature of settlement hierarchy. But between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries, there appear to have been significant alterations in this structural structuring due to the expanding regionalization of the polity under various local power structures throughout the delta. Any attempt to image the hierarchy of settlements in this particular time period in the manner it has been imagined above will, as a result, quickly take one to some rather perplexing sets of tiered structures.

The number of mandalas in Bengal's local administrative ladders began to rise in the ninth century and peaked between the eleventh and twelfth centuries, taking the place of visayas, which had previously formed an almost ubiquitous administrative unit. There are currently 36 similar mandalas known in total. Out of these, one may tentatively demarcate the geographical limit of the seven most major such divisions, viz. the Vyaghratat mandala, the Yola mandala, the Navya mandala, the Samatata mandala, Uttara Radha mandala, Khadi mandala and the Dandabhukti mandala. The first four of these could be precisely found inside West Bengal's current geographical boundaries. Reviewing the names given to these mandalas will quickly show that the majority of them acquired unique toponyms that represent faunal (Vyaghratat), physiographic (Samatata and Khadi), pedological (Radha), or hydrographic (Navya) elements important to the landscape where they are located. Furthermore, the strategic geographical positions of these mandalas promoted their critical importance in the context of the economic profiles of these regions. The only way to determine the historical processes by which early mediaeval geopolitical units like Vanga, Radha, Samatata, and Khadi gradually integrated with them due to their locational potential in the context of local and international trade is by studying the names and geographic locations of many of the mandalas.

In a similar vein, particular attention should be paid to a number of caturaka category administrative units that are referenced in numerous Sena inscriptions from West Bengal and Bangladesh. The Vetadda caturaka, the Kantallapura caturaka, and the Kumarapura caturaka have been discovered to appear in inscriptions where grants of land in the alluvial terrains of West Bengal have been mentioned, out of the seven caturakas that have so far been noticed in the inscriptional corpus. According to a recent study on the caturakas, the Sena kings created these administrative locales in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries with specific political, administrative, and economic goals in mind (Sanyal: forthcoming). These goals were connected to the Sena dynasty's revenue administration. The exercise above may serve as a sufficient illustration of the need to analyse early

mediaeval Bengali epigraphic records from fresh perspectives in order to bring to light numerous underappreciated facets of West Bengal's historical geography and geopolitical system. [9]

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES-SETTLEMENTS AND ASSEMBLAGES:

It's unlikely that researchers studying archaeological sites from historical periods in South Asia will dispute with the statement that salvage archaeology has become a common activity in this field in recent years. Archaeological evidences on the early history of South Asia are rapidly disappearing, ranging from small village settlements in early mediaeval West Bengal like Punchra to such city sites of India and Pakistan as Kumrahar and Shaikhan Dehri, respectively (F.R. Allchin 1995:8-9, Gupta 2002: 83-84). (for many examples, see B. Allchin 1992). Because of this, archaeologists in South Asia are forced to conduct empirical surveys in order to reconstruct historical settlements in any given regional setting.

The research also attempts at a brief and comprehensive summary of the nature of archaeological evidences from excavated and studied sites of West Bengal, encompassing material assemblages datable from the third century BC and AD twelfth century. The broad bulk literature of West Bengal archaeology is also characterized by numerous accounts of artefacts from the early and later historical periods from various regions of West Bengal. The current chapter also includes a distinct analytical observation on the distribution of such explored materials from various geo-hydrographic regions of the State, followed by a broad observation on their impact on the development and subsequent spread of human settlements in the area over time.

In this larger zone, the South Twenty-four Parganas district has the highest density of known early historic and early mediaeval sites, followed by East Medinipur and North Twenty-four Parganas.

An overview of the types of early historic period archaeological remains from sites in each of the zones will demonstrate that sites, which are typically found in clusters, contain datable pottery, primarily in the form of BSW and related, and very infrequently in the form of NBPW. The early historical archaeological artefacts from West Bengal also include punch-marked and cast copper coins, terracotta figurines, beads, and sporadic early sculptural examples.

ARCHAEOLOGY OF EARLY MEDIAEVAL RURAL SETTLEMENTS:

It should be emphasised right away that no attempt has been made in this chapter to provide an entire or complete picture of rural settlements in West Bengal using epigraphic sources. Instead, the current project is a thorough effort, presented as a pair of case studies, to highlight the main issues and future directions of a study that aims to explain the archaeological framework for comprehending "rural" settlements that first appeared in

West Bengal in the early mediaeval period. It focuses on two distinct spatiotemporal contexts and makes use of epigraphic records.

Many methodological and arbitrary issues arise when dealing with "archaeology of rural communities," particularly when comparing the material assemblages of a geographic region to the epigraphic records of a particular historical era. Some of the more noticeable barriers are initially understandable, including:

1. Despite the abundance of materials that have been unearthed and studied, we know very little about the archaeological aspects of rural communities in India during any historical era. As a result, it is still incorrectly recognized how to designate village settlements through archaeological research.

2. The fact that inscriptional contents focus on events occurring at a specific point in time while artefactual remains speak more generally of a continuous and processual development presents an intriguing challenge when combining inscriptional contents with artefactual remains. Because of this, it is highly challenging to accurately define the chronological orbit, if any, in which both agencies converge.

3. Since rural settlements, either in a historical or a contemporary perspective, are highly fluid entities, concerns linked to the organization of rural area are often hard to address. In the case of epigraphic records relating to early mediaeval Bengal, it has been correctly noted that "village settlements in these documents are not uniform either in terms of regions or of eras, the documents refer more to cultivated or cultivable space than to rural habitational areas." This immediately brings up the fundamental limitation of the study of "proxemics," which is defined as "the study of the separation that people maintain from one another during social interaction and how this separation is significant" in the context of rural space organization.

4. The final point, which is somewhat related to the previous one, is that, with very few exceptions, one rarely finds in eastern Indian inscriptions a good narrative of the physical and human surroundings of rural spaces, aside from a few general statements on the ecological and topographic features of a given landscape. As a result, it might be challenging to determine how different characteristics of change and continuity in man-environment-resource networks relate to inscriptional records from this region of the country.

The extent to which rural historical settlements, in any regional context, can be demonstrated through archaeological deposits cannot be accurately estimated without "getting down to the field" in spite of all the aforementioned limitations. The challenges stated above are also occasionally enough discouraging to restrain from beginning such a study, particularly since some of these hurdles as we shall try to elucidate have their good features in these researches.

The years between 1861 (the year the Archaeological Survey of India was founded) and 1900 have been correctly referred to as the "Period of Maturity" in the most recent literature on the history of epigraphic research in India. Additionally, due to the sheer number and calibre of publications that appeared in this little period of time, the last decades of the nineteenth century have been referred to as "a type of classical age" of Indian epigraphy (Salomon 1998:220). An equally important point, however, that was given less attention in the context of the growth of Indian epigraphy is that by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, there began to be a special interest in matching up the village settlements mentioned in the inscriptions with their actual counterparts.

Research on historical Indian settlements that rely on epigraphic and archaeological sources can be split into two categories: those that use epigraphy as their primary source and those that put a lot of emphasis on these sources. H.D. Sankalia's study of specific ethnographic and social aspects of early Calukya inscriptions of Gujarat, though it wasn't done in the context of Bengal, demonstrates an archaeologist's systematic interest in the relevance of archaeological investigations with epigraphy as the primary source material for the first time, most likely (Sankalia 1949). Sankalia's research had a broader focus than just archaeology, but he placed particular emphasis on two areas: (i) the necessity of correlating spatial data in the inscriptions and artefact assemblages from the identifiable sites, and (ii) the importance of the in-depth analysis of pottery in conducting such researches. However, despite the fact that many such studies have been published to date, no study on epigraphic sources has yet been connected to the actual world in any way. The similar recommendation is made by Niharranjan Ray, who outwardly promotes an integrated investigation of empirical archaeology materials in the context of epigraphic records.

ARCHAEOLOGY OF HISTORICAL SETTLEMENTS IN BENGAL: WITHIN AND BEYOND EPIGRAPHY:

With the groundbreaking work of B.M. Morrison on the Lalnai group of sites in Southeast Bengal, the third phase of development of archaeological studies on the historical settlements in Bengal was started. Morrison made pertinent observations about the traits and classifications of significant sites in North Bengal like Gaur-Pandua, Mahasthan, and Bangarh while concentrating primarily on the distribution patterns of archaeological sites in the hill complex and surroundings. Morrison's earlier work on the political and cultural geography of early Bengal was based solely on the quantification of epigraphic data, occasionally involving issues with location and identification of villages mentioned in the epigraphs. Despite this, he paid no particular attention in a correlative study of inscriptional and archaeological data. After that, Dilip K. Chakrabarti and R.K. Chattopadhyay conducted a survey of sections of North Bengal, drawing on the location of early mediaeval sites and making notes on sculptural assemblages that had been preserved. Despite the fact that Chakrabarti had previously provided a classified list of the names of the villages that had

been identified in the early inscriptions from the Bangladesh region of North Bengal, along with a brief note on the issue of identifications, no subsequent work highlighting the archaeological situation of the sites had been produced. [10]

CONCLUSION:

The final collection of studies in this genre mainly revolves around discussions of early mediaeval India's state, polity, and society. Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya has concentrated on the structural-functional implications of rural social organization and the interrelationship between rural space, human groups, and natural resources that determine the spatial identities of settlements in the context of early mediaeval village settlements in Bengal. Thus, several recent research have specifically focused on the "archaeology of early mediaeval settlements" in northern and central alluvial regions of West Bengal in response to the long-running disagreements about historical issues relating to early mediaeval settlements.

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