



## **Tracing the Continuity of Habitation in Archeological Sites in West Bengal from 6<sup>th</sup> Century AD till Modern Period**

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### **Abstract**

Archeological sites are those places where past human activities have been observed. It has been observed that in most of the cases those past habitations were abandoned in the certain subsequent period due to multifarious reasons leaving various pieces of evidence of the presence of human settlements. But it has also been observed that there is no dearth of sites where till date there are continuous human habitations for more than thousand a years. In the article, there has been an earnest attempt to locate those habitations taking into account of the evidence we have had from different copper plate inscriptions found in West Bengal as well as searching out the reasons thereof.

**Key Words:** Archeological Sites, Copper Plate Inscription, Urbanisation, Early Urban Centres of Bengal and its Decay, Continuity of Habitation, Present Settlements in Relation to Earlier Ones

### **Introduction**

Archeological sites are those places where past human activities have been observed. From the point of view of habitation archaeological sites may be of the following types:

1. The sites where there is continuous habitation from an early point of time which is evidenced from consecutive layers of archeological cultures corresponding to consecutive historical period till date.



2. The sites where there was continuous habitation from an early point of time but abandoned later. As for example Mogolmari site. Habitation started here from 6<sup>th</sup> century AD and continued upto 12th century AD thereafter the site was abandoned.
3. The sites where there are evidences of habitation in a particular pre historic or historic period and were abandoned later on. But subsequently again human activity started in the same site.
4. The archaeological sites where human activity is found for a single cultural period.

### **Objective of the study**

- a) To identify present locations of the places mentioned in copperplates found in West Bengal
- b) To study the continuity of habitations in those particular places till date from prehistoric/historic period.

### **Null Hypothesis**

In view of above in the context of West Bengal the **Null Hypothesis** is :

**“There are no archeological sites in West Bengal which is continuously inhabited till date”**

### **Methodology to be followed:**

1. Comparative study of the names and positions of the villages and other places like forest, river etc mentioned in the copper plate inscriptions found in West Bengal with present disposition of those villages.
2. Consulting different research articles published in this regard.
3. Finding out the present location of the villages through present day postal and revenue record.
4. Consulting Google Map to find out present day location of the villages.
5. Physical verification of the villages mentioned in 2/3 Copperplates.



Before going to detailed discussion about the inscriptions of copperplates it will be relevant here to discuss about the withering away of the urban centers developed in early Bengal .

### **Urbanization of Early Bengal**

Though the process of urbanization in Bengal came later than northern and western India, from various travelogues written by foreign travelers like Fa Hien (399-413AD), HiuenTsang ( 629AD-643AD) , writings of Roman Historians Ptolemy and Periplus and from various archaeological evidences it is known that from 300BC to 200AD during Maurya ,Sunga and Kushana period 9 ( nine) important *nagaras* ( urban centres ) weredeveloped in Bengal. Those are Tamralipti, Chandraketurah, Mongolkot,Mahasthangarh, Bangarh, Kotasur, Pokhorno , Saptagram and Karnasubarna( Ray ,1987)

In Ptolemy's history and 1<sup>st</sup> Century B.C. Periplus we have another city named as Gange over River Ganga as capital of Gangahridi . Many historians opine that Chandraketurah and Gange were same but opposite view is also there (Chakraborty, 2007)

It has been observed that these cities were gradually abandoned and withered away due to various reasons.

Before explaining the factors associated with withering away of these affluent cities once vibrant with rich inhabitants, luxuriously built buildings, large number of *sangharams*, thousands of Buddhist bhikkhus chanting Buddhists *mantras*, big merchants sailing to Sinhal, Java, Sumatra, Subarnadwip with large well decorated vessels full of merchandises , we shall discuss as to why these urban centers were created.

Urbanisation is a process of development of a particular area where the life and life style of the inhabitants are different from those of rural area. V. Gordon Childehas listed monumental building, large settlements with dense population, non-food producing classes (including rulers, artisans and merchants) and the cultivation of art, science and writing as the basic traits of the urban revolution which took place in the Bronze Age. According to him, craft specialists as well as role of surplus (food grain production) in hinterland) which supported non-food producing classes were important to enliven a city( Childe, 1950)He also consideredstrong and effective administration whose political power cannot be ignored was necessary for collection of the surplus agricultural produce from the hinterland and for distribution of the surplus amongst the urban people. (Chakraborty,1991)Amalananda Ghosh supported the view strongly and also



opined that also for initiating surplus agricultural production a strong centralized political power was *sin qua non*.(Chakraborty,1991)

Now we can summarize traits of urban inhabitants and urban centres. The people are not associated with agriculture or any food producing activities. They are associated with administration, education, trades and commerce, large scale production of merchandise for trading and export, professional artisans for producing specialized artifacts for internal and external trade. The urban centres have paved road network, brick built buildings, large temples and shrines, entertainment centers, shops and establishments, art and craft centre, guest houses and inns, educational centres etc. Besides, since people from different countries and cultures come to the urban centre for various purposes like trade, education, religious activities, entertainments etc the urban area cannot preserve its own distinct culture of the particular geographic area to which it belongs. A mixed culture is created there absorbing tenets of various other cultures. brought by people coming from other countries other cultures.

Now we can discuss about the characteristics of the specific location where a urban centre might be established . The requisite characteristics might be:

1. Where there were enough surpluses in agricultural produce in the hinterland to feed the urban people as well as for trading and export,
2. Presence of sufficient no of artisans, who produced excess and specialized artifacts for trading or export.
3. Located on a busy commercial road connecting distant business centers.
4. Located on the bank of sea or a large river to facilitate large scale transportation of merchandise to other places, other countries.
5. Strategic places for establishment of capital by rulers considering i) safety and security of the king and his family, ii) ease of administration of the kingdom, iii) nearness to main revenue centre iv) minimum fear of natural calamity like flood etc
6. Development of early prehistoric settlements into urban centers due to availability of above facilities.



7. Sometimes ancient ritual places in course of time are turned into a large and famous shrines and to serve the innumerable devotees used to come there urban facilities are provided thus forming an urban centre
8. Presence of strong centralized political power in relation to the location which will channelize the surplus food production to cities as well as to distribute the same to the inhabitants. Besides the strong political power was required to formulate and implement rule of law to facilitate trading activities.

### **Early Historic urban centres of Bengal**

It has been observed that the early historic towns had more or less similar facilities which enabled those centers to be evolved as urban centers. E.g

Tamralipta, Gange, Karnasuvarna were port cities located on the Banks of Ganga, with a very rich hinterland producing various exportable surplus (Rice, muslin, silk, cotton, sugar, beetle nut etc). These two ports through Sea Routes were connected to Sinhala (Shri Lanka) and from there upto Gujrat in west coast of India and to Malay, Jabadwip (Java), Sumatra, (Indonesia) Subarnadwip (Burma) in south east Asia.

Tamralipta was connected to entire India through two traderoutes. One was as travelled by Megasthenis in 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE during Chandragupta Maurya, Tamralipta – Karnasuvarna – Kajangal – Champa – Pataliputra. Famous Chinese travellers Fa Hien in fifth century AD, travelled through this route. and another was Tamralipta – Bodhgaya – Ayodhya as mentioned by Yit Sing a Chinese traveler in seventh century. (Ray, 2009)

Bangarh and Mahasthan in Pundrabardhan (North Bengal) were connected with entire India through the trade route Pundrabardhan – Mithila – Champa – Bodhgaya – Varanasi – Ayodhya and from Ayodhya upto Sindhu – Sourashtra – Gujrat port (Ray, 2009). Another trade route to south India Pundrabardhan – Mithila – Champa – Karnasuvarna – Tamralipta – Odra – Kongod – Kalinga. Still there was third trade passing through Patliputra – Champa – Kajangal – Pundrabardhan – Kamrup – Brahma (Myanmar) ultimately reached to South China (Ray, 2009).

Mangalkot, a prehistoric chalcolithic settlement developed into urban centre in Mauryan period due to its conversion as a trading centre. It was also a port city located on the river of Ajay connected to River Ganges which was not very far away. Mangalkot had also very rich



hinterland to support the trading activities. We have ample information regarding trade of Mangalkot in our Mangalkavyas.

### **Withering away of early Bengal urban centers**

But within upto eighth/ ninth century AD all these *Nagaras* withered away. The reasons include the following

1. Sharma has tried to attribute the cause of decline of urban centers to decline of long-distance trade (Dutta, 2016). Declining of trade especially overseas trade. Two epoch making incidents happened in world history during this period –a) fall of Roman Empire b) emergence of Islam. Both the factors became instrumental in declination of trade in India. First due to fall of Roman Empire the demand of Indian merchandise was reduced to a large extent and secondly due to emergence of Islam the Arab merchants became very powerful and the Indian merchants lost the entire overseas trade to them.
1. Onset of feudalism after Gupta rule. From a trading nation India along with Bengal turned into a country dependent on agriculture only. Possession of land for conducting agriculture became more important than trading activities ‘Sharma argues that de-urbanization gave space to agrarian expansion as a result of which merchants transformed into landed beneficiaries. He gives references of numerous land grants of the period which speaks loud of land donations to monasteries by the state, even sometimes towns were donated to monasteries. Donation of lands and dispersal of townsmen to the countryside gave boost to a feudalistic model of state structure’ (Dutta, 2016). After Gupta's large empire was broken into parts. Feudal lords become kings of very small kingdoms. Trade withered away. Economy was completely dependent on agriculture and could not support large urban centers.



## Urban centers of post Gupta period

In subsequent Pal- Sena Period ( 800 to 1200AD) and beyond some urban centres namely Harikel, Bijoygarh, Bikrampur, Pattikhera were developed in eastern side of Padma by some local rulers like Chandras, Burmans Debs , Khargasetc. But Palas and Senas never established their capitals but victory sites( Jayaskandhabar) from where they ruled their kingdom. There is mention of a city of 'Ramabati' –capital of Rampal of Pal dynasty , in Sandhyakar Nandi's "Ramcharit". Similarly Lakshanabati was established by Lakshmansena. These post Gupta cities were not based on trading activities but were political and administrative centers and were *Jayaskandhabars*( victory sites) rather than full fledged cities. These were also withered away and abandoned due to change of historical disposition and want of political patronage.

In view of above fate of *nagaras* of early and medieval Bengal we will now discuss about the settlements mentioned in inscriptions of copperplates found in West Bengal.

### What are the copperplate inscriptions?

Indian [copper plate](#) inscriptions (*tamarashasana*), usually record grants of land or/and list royal lineages carrying the royal seal. Originally inscriptions were recorded on palm leaves, but when the records became legal documents such as title-deeds they were etched on a cave or temple wall, or more commonly, on copper plates which were then kept in a safe place such as within the walls or foundation of a temple, or hidden in stone caches in fields. These records were probably in use from the first millennium.

The Sohagaura copper-plate inscription, inscribed in the [Brahmi script](#), and possibly from the 3rd century BCE [Maurya Empire](#), is a precursor to the later copper-plate inscriptions. However, it is actually written on a small plaque of [bronze](#) (a copper alloy).The [Taxila](#) and the Kalawan copper-plate inscriptions (c. 1st century CE or earlier) are among the earliest known instances of copper plates being used for writing in the Indian subcontinent. However, these are not proper [charters](#), unlike the later copper-plate inscriptions.



The oldest known copper-plate charter from the Indian subcontinent is the Patagandigudem inscription of the 3rd century [Ikshvaku](#) king EhuvalaChamtamula. The oldest known copper-plate charter from northern India is probably the Kalachala grant of Ishvararata, dated to the late fourth century. The oldest known copperplate from Bengal is Damodarpur Copperplate ( 443 AD)

Most copper plate inscriptions record title-deeds of land grants made to Brahmanas, temples and Buddhist Sanghas. Copper plates also recorded title deeds of sale of lands. The inscriptions followed a standard formula of identifying the royal donor and his lineage, followed by lengthy honorifics of his history, heroic deeds, and his extraordinary personal traits. After this would follow the details of the grant, including the occasion, the recipient, and the penalties involved if the provisions were disregarded or violated. (Indian copper plate inscriptions, 2022)



Image 1,2 – inscriptions on copper plate ;image 3 -Royal seal on copper plate

### **What is the significance of inscriptions of copperplates?**

The significance of copper plate inscriptions is far-reaching to the historians and archaeologists and it is a treasure trove to reconstruct the past. The inscription not only recorded the land grant or land sale and registered it with royal seal, it reveals in relation to the extant time period

1. The script, language prevalent, stage of evolution of the language.





2. The royal lineage
3. The administrative areas of different contemporary rulers
4. The duties of the rulers to their subjects
5. The Administrative division of the kingdom
6. The socio economic condition of the society
7. The classification of society in terms of 'varna' arrangement
8. The hierarchy of the society
9. The bureaucracy
10. The religious disposition of the society
11. The classification of land e.g. *vastu* ,cultivated land , uncultivated land , barren land, waste land , marshy land etc
12. Existence of common property like community grazing land.
13. The prices of land
14. The units of measurement of land
15. Productivity of the land
16. Women's right to own land ( Asrafpur copperplate)
17. The coinage system
18. The tax system and tax rate
19. Punitive measures for violating conditions stipulated in grant
20. The procedure of grant/sale of land
21. Ownership of the king on the land



22. Extensive geographical information about the land granted /sold. It recorded the names along with the village where the land is located, of all the villages / settlements / rivers/ water bodies/ forests/fertile or barren fields existed in all four sides of the land including direction. These were made to correctly pinpoint the boundary and location of the land to avoid future dispute.

Practically the discovery of copper plate inscriptions has provided a wealth of information to historians to reconstruct the history especially social and economic history

### **Details of copper plates unearthed in West Bengal**

Till date 19 copper plate inscriptions have been unearthed in west Bengal from 17 sites (Sanyal, 2010). These are :

1. Mallasarul plate of the time of Gopchandra ( First half of sixth century
2. Antla ( Plate 1) of the time of Sasanka ( first half of seventh century)
3. Antla ( Plate 2) of the time of Sasanka ( First half of seventh century)
4. Panchrol ( Egra ) plate at the time of Sasanka (First half of seventh century)
5. Maliadanga ( Mallia) Plate at the time of Jaynaga ( Second half of seventh century )
6. Karnasubarna plate at the time of Dharmapala ( Early ninth century)
7. Tulabhita plate ( jagjibanpur) at the time of Mahendrapala ( Middle of ninth century)
8. Bangarh Plate at the time of Mahipala ( late Tenth Century)
9. Jajilpara plate at the time of Gopala (III) ( Sixth regnal year – Middle of 11<sup>th</sup> AD)
10. Sibbati ( Rajibpur) plate no 1 of the time of Madanpala ( Middle 12<sup>th</sup> Century)
11. Sibbati ( Rajibpur) plate no 2 of the time of Madanpala ( Middle 12<sup>th</sup> Century)
12. Barrackpur plate at the time of Vijaysena ( Middle of twelfth century)
13. Naihati Plate at the time of Ballasena ( early later half of 12<sup>th</sup> century)
14. Gobindapur Plate at the time of Lakshmansena ( second later half of 12<sup>th</sup> century- 1179 AD)
15. Tarpandighi plate at the time of Lakshmansena ( Second Regnal Year – 1180 AD)

16. DighirpurBakultala( Sundarban) plate at the time of Lakshmansena( Second Regnal Year)
17. Anuliaplate at the time of Lakshmansena(Third regnal year)
18. Shaktipurplate at the time of Lakshmansena( 4<sup>th</sup> regnal year)
19. Rakshaskhali plate at the time of Dommonpala-12<sup>th</sup> century

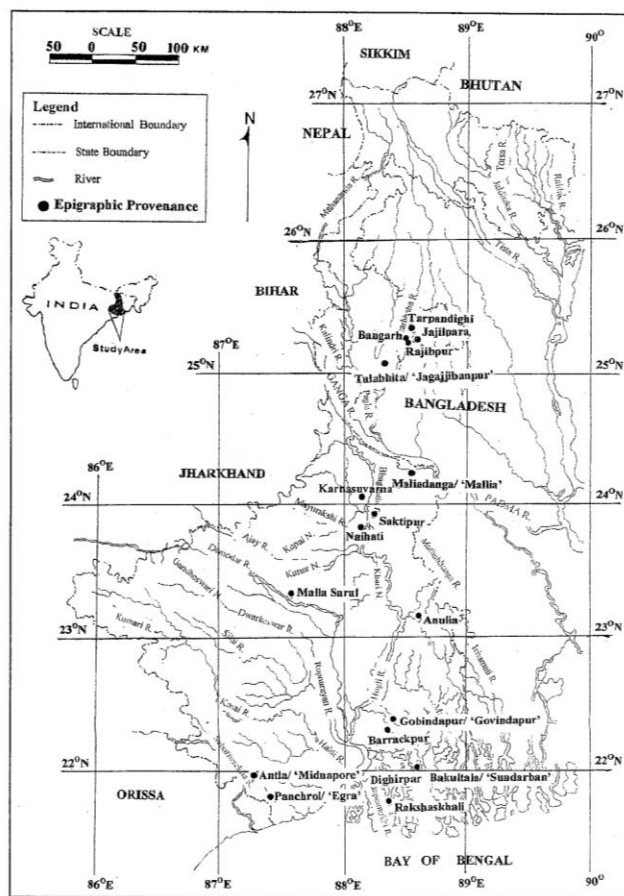


Image 4: Provenance of Copper Plates in West Bengal



## **The settlements mentioned in Different copperplates**

Now we will examine the settlements mentioned in different copperplates and compare those settlements with present day disposition. Since it will be very much laborious to take all the copperplates, we will consider 4(four) representative copperplates which, we think, will serve our purpose to prove or disprove the null hypothesis.

### **Naihati Copperplate (Sanyal,2010)**

NaihatiPlate was discovered in a village of same name the borderland of the districts of Murshidabad and Bardhaman .The inscription is dated in the 11<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Ballalsena, corresponding to second half of 12<sup>th</sup> century CE . It records the grant of a village called Valihitta in the Uttar Rarha Mandala within the Svalpadaksinabithi of Varddhamanabhukti.

It gives a complicated but detailed account of the villages and other places located around it, which in the transliteration of historian RakhaldasBanerjee are as follows:

“The village *Valihitta* is situated to the north of river *Singatia* , which lay to the north of *SasanaKhandayilla*, to the northwest of the river*Singatia* , which lay to the north of*SasanaNadicha*, to the west of river*Singatia*, which lay to the west of*Sasana of Amvayilla*, to the south of the southern boundary wall (*simali*) of*Kudumvama* , *to the south of the boundary wall(simali) on the west of Kudumvama which runs to the west (Paschim gati)*, to the west of the southern cattle track ( *Gopath*) on the south of the *Auhagaddia*, to the south of the boundary wall which issues from the northern cattle track of *Auhagaddia* runs to the west and reaches to the southern boundary wall of the*Surakonagaddia*, to the east of the eastern boundary wall of*Naddina*, *to the east of half of the cattle track to the east of the Sasana of jalsothi* and to the east of half of the cattle track to the east of the *Sasana of Moladandi*(which runs) up to the river of*Singatia*” (Banerji,1982b:158)

The boundary specification clearly shows nine other village settlements besides cattle track and a river apart from the granted village, which are *Khandayilla,Nadicha,Amvayilla ,Kudumvama,Auhagaddia,Surakonagaddia,Naddina,jalsothi and Moladandi*.



Of these Tarak Chandra Ray identified Five of the villages including the granted village with their present day names and locations.

The location of the villages as found out by Mr Ray is :Balutia is 6 miles to the west of Naihati (the finding place of the copperplate), to its north is Jalsuti, to its south is Kharulia, to the east and south of which is Ambalgram, to its west is Murundi. As regard to river Singatia Mr Ray observed that presently there is a canal to the south and east of Balutia, That might be river Singatia but not called by that name.

Further two villages *Surakonagaddia*, *Naddina*, have been identified by Dr Rajat Sanyal. These villages are now a days called as *Sonarundi* in North west of *Balutia* and *Naudinga* Field in adjacent north of *Balutia* respectively. *Naudinga* field has no settlement today but it is converted to an agricultural land. The village *Naddina* is hidden in the name *Naudinga* only. The revised map depicting modern names of villages mentioned in Naihati copperplate is as below:

In tabulated form the old and present settlements and land marks will be represented as below:

Name in Copperplate	Modern Name	Location	Identified by	PIN Code
Vallihita	Balutia, P.S Ketugram II Dist East Bardhaman	6 miles north west of Naihati, the provenance of the plate	Tarak Chandra Ray	713123
Khandayilla	Kharulia P.S Ketugram II Dist East Bardhaman	Adjacent south west of Balutia	Tarak Chandra Ray	713123
Moladandi	Murundi P.S Ketugram II Dist East	Adjacent west of Balutia	Tarak Chandra Ray	713123



	Bardhaman			
Ambayilla	Ambalgram P.S Ketugram II Dist East Bardhaman	Adjacent south west of Kharulia	Tarak Chandra Ray	713140
Jalsothi	Jalsuti PS Bharatpur II Dist Murshidabad	Adjacent north west of Balutia	Tarak Chandra Ray	742401
<i>Naddina</i>	<i>Naudinga</i>	Settlement does not exist now- converted to paddy field	Dr Rajat Sanyal	
<i>Surakonagaddia</i>	<i>Sonarundi</i> PS Bharatpur II Dist Murshidabad	North West of Murandi and west of Jalsuti. Adjacent North East of Balutia	Dr Rajat Sanyal	742401
Singatia river	*Kandor (without any name)	Adjacent south of Balutia	Dr Rajat Sanyal	

- Kandor – general name of a small stream

### **Mallasarul Copperplate (Sanyal,2010)**

Mallasarul Copperplate was discovered in the village Mallasarul in PS Galsi district Bardhaman . It is dated to the first half of sixth century , was issued from the *Adikarana vakkattaka vithi* by Vijaysena in the 33<sup>rd</sup> regnal year of his overlord Gopchandra . It records grant of land in the *Vettragarrta Gram in Vakkattaka Vithi in Bardhaman vukti*. The granted rural locality is bounded on the East and south by *Godha Gram* , on the North by *Vattavallaka agrahara* and in the west in part by *Amragarttika*. Besides a number of rural localities of different categories and their



*landholdings representatives*, figuring in the court at *Vakkattaka* are mentioned in the inscription. The names of eleven rural localities apart from *Vettragarroto grama* are *Godha grama*, *Ardhakaraka agrahara*, *Koddavira agrahara*, *Kapistha Vataka agrahara*, besides *Nivarta vataka*, *Salmali vataka*, *Madhu vataka*, *Amragorrtika*, *Khandajyotika* and *Vindhyapuri*.

### **Identification of the places by N G Majumdar.**

Most of the localities are in the neighbourhood of *Vettragarrota* Gram within *Vakkataka Vithi*, a part of which was granted to the done. *Vettragarrota* itself can not be located with certainty but *Godhagram* can be identical with *Gohogram* on *Damodar* to the south east of *Mallasarul* where the plate was found. *Amragorrtika* may be modern *Ambahula* (also called *Simasimi*) to the south of *Mallasarul*. *Khandajyotika* may perhaps be *Khandajuli* between *Mallasarul* and *Gohogram* while *salmoli* may be *Mallasarul* itself. The name of the *Vithi Vakkattaka* may survive in *Bakta*, a place immediately to the east of *Gohogram*.

Subsequently intensive exploration recently identified five other localities within the region. Thus *Kodavira* shall be identified with *Kaitara*, *Kapistha* is undoubtedly *Kashpur*, *Nirvrata* May be identical with modern *Navakhanda*, *Vindhyapuri* is modern *Bandutia* and *Ardhakaraka Agrahara* is *Adra*. Thus three settlements viz; *Madhu Vataka*, *Vataballaka Vataka* and the *Vettragarroto grama* from where the land was donated are remained unidentified.

Table of Names of copperplate vis a vis identified new names

Name in Copperplate	Modern Name	Location	Identified by	PIN Code
Salmali	Mallasarul	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman	N G Majumdar	713428
Godhagram	Gohogram	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman	N G Majumdar	713428
Amragorrtika	Ambahula(Simasimi)	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman	N G Majumdar	713428



Vetragarra	Purangaon	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman		713428
Vakkattaka	Bakta	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman	N G Majumdar	713428
Khandajyotika	Khandajuli	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman	N G Majumdar	713428
Kodavira	Kaitara	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman		713428
Kapistha	Kashpur	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman		713428
Nirvrata	Navakhanda	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman		713403
Vindhyapuri	Bandutia	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman		713428
Ardhakaraka	Adra	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman		713428

So far location is concerned all of the settlements are in P.S Galsi Dist Bradhaman on the Eastern side of River Damodar and located within an equilateral triangle –Gohagram ( Godhagram ) , Bandutia(Vindhyapuri) and Navakhanda being three corners and Mallasarul (Salmali) is almost central position. On the left arm of the triangle ,on the river Damodar , between Gohagram and Navakhanda(Nirvrata )there are Kashpur (Kapistha), Puran Gaon (Vetragarra ) and Ambahula – Simasimi (Amragarrtika). In the right arm, off river Damodar, between Gohagram and Bandutia (Vindhyapuri) there are Kaitara (Kodavira) and Adra (Ardhakaraka). Khandajuli (Khandajyotika) is in the lower middle of the triangle .Bakta(Vakkattaka) is slightly of the lower left arm of the triangle.





The modern names of the settlements against names mentioned in the copperplate may be pictorially represented below

### **Shaktipur Copperplate (Sanyal,2010)**

Shaktipur Copperplate was discovered in the village Shaktipur in Sadar Subdivision of district Murshidabad.

The copperplate was issued in 4<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Laxmansen registering donation of land in parts of *NimaPataka, VarahaKona, Vallihita, Bijharpura and Damaravadapatakas in Kumarpurachaturaka in Madhugirimandala attached to Kumbhinagara in DakshinVithi in Uttar Rarha in KankagramBhukti* having boundaries delineated as below:

The Land comprising *Varahakona, Vallihita, Raghavhatta and part of Nima* was in contiguous locality and were bounded in the east by the extensive lands of *Malikunda along with Aparajoli*; in the south by *Bhagadikhandakshetra*; in the west by the cow track of *Achhama* and in the north by *Mor river*. Two *patakas of Bijharpur and Damaravada* which were off from the above lands, were again contiguous. They were bounded by the east by *Chakliyajoli*; on the south by *Vipravaddjoli*; on the west by *langlajoli* and on the north by cow track of *Parajana*.

The names of settlement and present identified names and locations are tabulated below

Name in Copperplate	Modern Name	Location	Identified by	PIN Code
KankagramBhukti	Kankjol	Beyond the northern limit of the district of Murshidabad	D.C.Ganguly	
Madhugirimandal	Mahuagadi	22 miles to the south west of kankjol An isolated hill in	D.C.Ganguly	



		Santalpargana		
Kumbhir Nagara	Kumhira	P.S Rampurhat, Birbhum	D.C.Ganguly	
Kumarapura	Kumarpur	P.S Mayureswar 3.5 miles north of Mor( Mayurakshi) river	D.C. Ganguly	731234
Barahakona	Barkunda( Bhurkuna)	P.S Suri ½ mile north of Mor , 1.5 miles off Sainthia railway station	N K Bhattashali	731102
Nima	Nima, P S Mayureswar II , Dist Birbhum	P.S Mayureshwar	N K Bhattashali	731234
Valihitta	BalutiP S MayureswarII ,Dist Birbhum	P.S Mayureshwar , 4 miles north east from Sainthia R/S, 5.5 miles from Kumarpur	N K Bhattashali	731234
Vijaharapura	Baharpur	P/S Labpur, Birbhum	N K Bhattashali	
Acchhama	Ammo	½ mile north of Sainthia	N K Bhattashali	
Parajana	Pailijona	Both sides of River Mor in P.S Labpur and P.S Mayureshwar, 5 miles north west of Baharpur.	N K Bhattashali	



## Notes

1. The villages *Nima, Baluti and Barkunda* presently are in the north of Mor river while in the inscription it was stated in the south of Mor river. This shows how the restless Mor river has changed its course over time. A small dried up rivulet passing through the north of Nima and Baluti, called Kana is most probably the ancient course of Mor during Sena Period.
2. These identifications has some dispute. Some scholars indicate another set of villages *Nima, Baluti and Barkona in P.S Burwan of Subdivision of Kandi Dist Murshidabad*, located in North of Mor river may be the proper identification of the villages mentioned in the copperplate. However further investigation is necessary. This has also been mentioned by Nihar Ranjan Ray in his magnum opus “ *Bangalir Itihas Adiparva*’ (Ray,2009) (nr 288)
3. ‘Kankagram Bhukti’ – In the opinion of some scholars Kankagram Bhukti is the present day ‘Kagram’ in the western bank of Ganga about 10 km from Katwa (East Bardhaman) in the district of Murshidabad

The settlements mentioned in the copper plate and present probable names and locations as identified as per our observation (of course this is not final and requires further research and validation by the scholars) are tabulated below

Name in Copperplate	Modern Name	Location	PIN Code	Remarks
Kankagram Bhukti	Kagram	PS Bharatpur II, Murshidabad South east border of district Murshidabad on the western bank of Ganges near	742401	Kagram the erstwhile Kankagram bhukti is in Uttar Rarh as known in early medieval period comprising of the



		Katwa		Kandi subdivision of Murshidabad, Birbhum and north of Katwa subdivision of Burdwan. (Ray,2009)(nr119)
Madhugirimandal	Mahurakandi	About 25km west of Kagram	742132	About 3 km north of Mor( Mayurakshi river)
Kumbhir Nagara	Kumrui	P.S Kandi Dist Murshidabad	742202	About 5 km Northwest of Nima
Barahakona	Barkona	Barkona ,Panchthupi , PS BurwanDist Murshidabad	742161	
Valihitta	Balut (Mahadev Bati )	PS- Kandi Dist Murshidabad	742172	
Nima	Nima	PS- BurwanDist Murshidabad	742161	Contiguous patakas about 1-4 km distance from Mayurakshi river
Raghavhatta	Raghunathpur /Rajhat	PS- BurwanDist Murshidabad	742161	
Aparajoli	Aparajolikhil			A small rivulet between Maliandi and Nima-Raghunathpur patakas



Malikunda	Maliandi	PS- BurwanDist Murshidabad	742161	In the east of Nima and Raghunathour
Langlajoli*	Langalhatabeel	P S LabpurDist Birbhum	731303	West of Chakta
Chakliyajoli*	Chakta (East of Langalhata	P S KetugramDist East Bardhaman	713129	East of Langalhatabeel**
Biprabaddhajoli*	Brahmandihi (South of Langalhata and Chakta)	P S NanurDist Birbhum	731302	South of Langalhatabeel**

#### Notes

1. The contiguous patakas Damrabaddha and Vijaharapura existed in between Langlajoli and Chakliyajoli are not presently traceable. It is to be researched out as to whether these patakas changed its names or submerged by the Langalhatabeel and the inhabitants left the villages.
2. \*'Joli' signifies water, water body or a low land where water is accumulated.
3. \*\*Beel signifies large natural but not so deep water body formed due to depression of earth or abandoned river course.
4. Bhagadikhandakshetra as mentioned in the plate as in south of Nima, Raghavhatta Balihitta and Barahkonamay either be i) present day 'Bharawan' village which is in the south of the patakas stated above, or ii) a large area where the dead livestock and dead animals of the surrounding villages and patakas were thrown away to be eaten up by vultures and other wild animals. This area in vernacular Bengali language is called 'Bhagad'. From the word 'Bhagad' the area might be assigned the name as 'Bhagadikhandakshetra'.



5. KumarpuraChaturaka– one Kumarpur is there ( PS MayureswarDist Birbhum) but it is about 10 km NW of Mahurakandi ( Madhugirimondal) and about 5 km north of Mayurakshi river . Moreover the place has been identified as KumarpuraChaturaka by D C Ganguly in relation to another set of patakas as mentioned before.
6. Cow tracks of Achhama and Parajona require further research for their present day identification.

### **Maliadanga Copperplate (Sanyal,2010)**

The Provenance of the plate is Maliadanga, P.S SagardighiDist Murshidabad. The carter was issued from Karnasuvarna by King Jaynagain seventh century AD and recorded the grant of a village called Vappaghosavata grama in Audumbarikabishaya . A number of rural localities and other natural landmarks were mentioned in the grant portion of the inscription for delineating the boundary of the granted village. The boundary as mentioned in the plate are as follows:

On the west of the granted villageVappaghosavata ,the boundary of the grant belonging to the Brahmanas of *Kutkuta* gram ; on the north the river bed ( *Ganginika* ) ; on the east the same river bed; issuing thence and running along the western boundary of *Amalapautikagrama*,the boundary is the*Sharshapayanaka*, *it is limited by the same boundary as far as Bhatta UnmilanasSvamin's grant; from the south thereof (the boundary) turning along further by the same boundary to the north, proceeds as far as the boundary of Bharani Svamin's grant ,thence in a straight line enters the pond ofVakhataSumalika on the boundary of BhattaUnmilan's grant; and goes as far as the same boundary of Brahmanas of Kutkuta gram.*

*The names of localities and natural landmarks and present day identification by Dr Rajat sanyal are as follows*

<i>Names in Plate</i>	<i>Present Day Names</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Identified by</i>	<i>PIN Code</i>
<i>Bappaghosavata</i>	<i>Bhabki</i>	<i>P.S RampurhatDist Birbhum</i>	<i>Dr Rajat Sanyal</i>	<i>731202</i>



<i>Amalapautika</i>	<i>Ambha</i>	<i>P.S RampurhatDist Birbhum</i>	<i>Dr Rajat Sanyal</i>	<i>731202</i>
<i>Kutkuta grama</i>	<i>Kutigrama</i>	<i>P.S RampurhatDist Birbhum</i>	<i>Dr Rajat Sanyal</i>	<i>731224</i>
<i>Ganginika</i>	<i>A moribund channel in north of above settlements</i>	<i>North of Bhabki</i>	<i>Dr Rajat Sanyal</i>	
<i>Sarshapyanika</i>	<i>Sarshap canal</i>	<i>West of Bhabki</i>	<i>Dr Rajat Sanyal</i>	
<i>VakhataSumalika</i>	<i>A large pond</i>	<i>A large pond is there in nearby Mahendrapur which may be identified with vakhataSumalika</i>	<i>Dr Rajat Sanyal</i>	

*The comparative map of old settlements as identified for Maliadanga Copperplate*

## **Observation**

**From above discussion it has been observed that**

1. Most of the settlements still exist today in deformed names, changed names which is evident from i) field observations ii) supporting documents iii) analysis of linguistic evolution of the names due to elapse of time ,and iv) today's postal records of the settlements
2. Sometimes settlements have lost its character. ( egNaddina in Naihati Plate. It has turned into a paddy field)



3. Sometimes locations of settlements in relation to existing river flow have been changed. E.g. Nima, Vallihita and Barahakona of Shaktipur plate was to the south of river Mor. Now these are in the north of the river. This is due to change of course of the river.
4. Sometimes the settlement has been relocated. Eg. Jalshothi of Naihatiplate. It was southwest of the granted village Vallihita as per inscription, but at present it is located North west of Balutia (Vallihita). This is again may be due to change of the river course Singatia.
5. Some settlements are still untraceable. Eg. Madhu Vataka, Vataballaka Vataka of Mallasarul plate, Nadicha of Naihati Plate are still to be traced.
6. Disputes are also there regarding identification of settlements. Eg. Shaktipur Plate. The group of villages mentioned in inscription viz Nima, Vallihita, Varahakona have been identified in two places – one in the district of Birbhum P.S. Mayureswar, and another in the district of Murshidabad Kandi Subdivision P.S. Burwan. Scholars are of different opinion in conclusively proving the actual location of settlements.

## Conclusion

From the intensive examination of the present day locations of the settlements mentioned in all 4 (four) representative copperplate inscriptions it has been proved that our null hypothesis that ***“There are no archeological sites in West Bengal which is continuously inhabited till date”*** is not valid. The villages unlike cities and nagaras of West Bengal are continuously inhabited for centuries after centuries more or less in the same place. The reason behind is that the economic production relation of the villages has remained same for centuries. The social system of villages - firstly living on agriculture, following same simple technology of cultivating lands - bullockplowing, hoeing and harvesting by using simple instruments, depending on rain water for irrigation and secondly rural artisans like blacksmiths, potters, carpenters, weavers goldsmiths and service providers like priests, barbers, washermen etc fulfilling the entire need of the villages and villagers continued for centuries after centuries. Nihar Ranjan Ray in his magnum opus *“Bangalir Itihas – Adiparba”* stated that- *“From 4<sup>th</sup> /5<sup>th</sup> Century AD to 18<sup>th</sup> century AD the village society of Bengal remained more or less same. It has two main reasons. Firstly during these long period the production system (agricultural or small rural industrial) did not change. Secondly the land allotment and land ownership system remained same. Consequently the stratification and hierarchy of the agriculture depended society remained unchanged.”*





Villages with its production system and system of division of labour remained self contained. They were never dependent upon any outside economic or social factors for its survival. Even the villages were least bothered about the changes in ruling disposition. King comes and king goes –rural life goes on and on like still water in a quiet pond. Sometimes natural disaster or aggression and plundering by soldiers of any king disturbed the rural life but that was temporary phenomenon. As the waves generated after throwing stones in the pond and after some time the water of the pond becomes still again, the rural life becomes normal again after temporary disturbances .As a result the villages survived centuries after centuries with its self contained socio economic system.

But this did not happen to cities and nagaras of Bengal. Cities and Nagaras were dependent on trades, royal patronage or religious patronage for its survival. Consequently when these factors withered away for historic reasons cities and nagaras also withered away. Hence our null hypothesis that “*there are no archeological sites in West Bengal which is continuously inhabited till date*” is disproved.

Of course lots of changes have taken place in rural life during later half of twentieth century which is still continuing and will continue. The life of villages has become dynamic rather than static as past centuries. The economic production relations are very rapidly changing. Village and villagers are not completely dependent upon agriculture. Social hierarchy, social stratification and division of labour on which the stability of villages were anchored are falling apart. Unlike previous centuries communication and transportation system has increased. People emigrate to other places for livelihood or other factors. Industrialization and urbanization are taking place very rapidly. Some villages are grown up as towns or some villages become part of a neighboring town. But these changes do not go against our conclusion that the villages in West Bengal unlike historical cities and towns have been existing continuously for centuries in the same place until havoc changes occurred in the natural phenomena like change of course of the adjoining river or fall victim of modern day developmental programmes like large dam constructions submerging the villages etc.

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