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## RUINS HISTORICAL BANGARH: THE PRESENT STATUS

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### ABSTRACT

Among the historical places of west Bengal, 'Bangarh' is an important place of India which is situated in Gangarampur. Bangarh is located at Gangarampur city in the Eastern part of India which is about 45 km south of Balurghat city of Dakshin Dinajpur district of West Bengal state and also nearer place of boarder place of Bangladesh country and 75 Kms. north-east from Malda town in the South Dinajpur District of West Bengal. It is also located far near about 350 Kms. from north of Kolkata and is about 300 Kms. south of Siliguri. Bangarh was famous for the administrative centre of Kotivarsha Vishaya (territorial division) and also was an important part of ancient time for the wider administrative unit of Pundravardhana Bhukti with the capital, Mahasthangarh.<sup>1</sup> During the period of Chandras, Varmans and Senas.

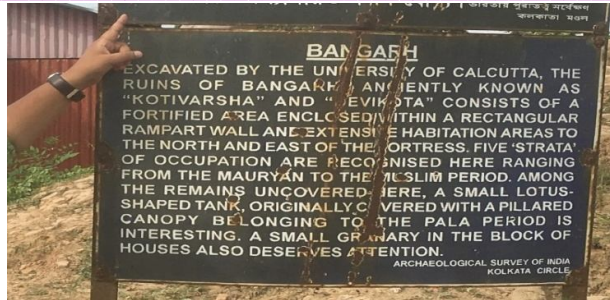


**KEYWORDS:** historical places , Pundravardhana Bhukti , Ganga River.

### INTRODUCTION

The Senas were defeated by the Muslims under Bakhtiar Khilji and 'Devkot' was established as their capital which was breathed by Bakhtir in the period of his last reign.<sup>[2]</sup> The earliest foundation history of Kotivarsha town is mentioned in different historical books like Vayu Purana (XXIII, 209) and Brihat Samhita (XI, II). Lexicographers, Hemchandra (the *Abhidhanachintamani* IV, 977) and Purushottama (in his *Trikandashsha*). The city have several names like – Uma(Usha?)vana, Banapura, and Shonitapura. Sandhyakara Nandi in his book, 'Ramacharita' described about its length of the temples and the lakes of the city.<sup>3</sup> It has various records of it as part of Pundravardhana or Rarha regions.<sup>4</sup> It is related with a Brahmin densities at Devikota.<sup>5</sup>

Bangarh is a heap or pile and situates on the left bank of *Punarbhaba*, the river of tributary of the *Ganga River*. Ruins of Bangarh are spread over surrounding areas of 1.5 Kms. towards north from Gangarampur Police Station. The evidences of different types of historical clues like terracotta tiles, stone pieces and fragment of architectural member have been found from here. During the excavation of this place many things like glazing pot sheds of Sultanat and wares of red colours are comes in fronts of it. Some antiquities like iron nails, terracotta plaques and few stone beads are the main important things which are recovered from the excavation.



**Plate 1:** The University of Calcutta has put up a notice board where has written-“Excavated by the University of Calcutta. The ruins of Bangarh anciently known as “Kotivarsha” and “Devikota” consist of a fortified area enclosed within a rectangular rampart wall and extensive Habitation areas to the north and east of the or tress. Five ‘Strata’ occupation are recognized here reigning from the Mauryan to the muslim period. Among the remains uncovered here, a small lotus, shaped tank, originally covered with a pillared canopy belonging to the Pala period is interesting. A small granary in the block of houses also deserved attention.”



**Plate2:** A big stone image of Bangarh has found during the period of excavation



**Plate:3:** The present situation of the ruined palaces of Bangarh on the heap of the place.

This place glorifies most of the entire district of DakshinDinajpur for its rich historical and cultural heritage. In the earlier time, it was a part of undivided Dinajpur district of erstwhile Bengal which was known as PundraVardhanBhukti.PurdraVardhanBhukti was a son of the famous Jain Guru of the Maurya Emperor Chandra Gupta and according to the book, ‘Brihath Katha Kosh’ he was also a son of a Brahmin of Devakota in PundraVardhan. Panchanagari was a place which was known as the eastern portion of South Dinajpur and Devakot was its capital was Devakot. It can be heard that lots of ruins are still founding from Bangarh , around itand surrounding of Gangarampur Police Station. In the centre of Bangarh is filled with a

large heap of bricks and this place is marked as the palace of Raja Bana. The brick heaps of this place are present at a little distance far from the place of Shivbari and from the northern corner of the city and it is said to be the ruins of a temple of Virupakshya Shiva which becomes very famous at the time of Shiv-puja or adoration of lord Shiva. It was known that King Bana was a worshipper of Shiva and to offer tarpana to Lord Shiva, he excavated a big pond in the 'TapanDighi' which is included within Tapan Police station. There was present a house of the palace at the distance of about half a mile west from the northern end. Here lived a daughter of king Bana in the name of Usha who was habituated also to offer adoration to Lord Shiva. She was engaged in love with Aniruddha, son of Krishna. Aniruddha fled with Usha along a road which is followed by them and for this reason; it is still called as Ushaharan Road. However, this love of Usha for Anirudh became a cause for the total destruction for her father and his empire also. On the other side of river, Brahmani is a place on the other side of river, is called as Narayanpur, where a great battle is fought between Krishna and Bana. Near about 10 miles away from Bangarh, there is a place in Tapan police station called as Kardaha where the palms of king Bana have been cut by Krishna in the battle and have fallen in this and have taken place to funeral. Some stone relics of an ancient temple are found in a river bed of the Tangon when its water recedes. Tangon is a name of a river which is situated near Bangshihari Police Station. Lots of good epic stories are combined with this place and nearer the place of district. According to the Mahabharata it has been told that Pandavas in incognito take shelter in Bairhatta which is the palace of king Birat. Bairhatta is a village of Harirampur Police station where lots of ruins are found. Here is a story also about Kichaka who is the chief army of king Birat; and he was killed by Bhima, when the former is tried to establish illicit relations with Draupadi. Here is present a tank at Bairhatta which is still known as Kichaka Kunda. The palace of Kichak is situated at Dehaban which is far near about 15 km away from Birhatta and it is filled with mounds. A unique species of ancient shami tree is also seen in this region at the entrance of the village where Nakula is said to have kept the arms of the Pandavas hidden before entering the Palace. For the names of Pandavas, a village in the locality has been named as also Pancha Bhaya (five brothers) after the Pandavas. With the name of the great warrior, Karna, reminds us with the associations of his name and lots of places are related with it like Karandighi, Karnajora, Karanjietc. in the neighbouring areas of this place.

During the period of Mauryan dynasty, this area was flourished by Jainism and the mention of it has already been made about the famous Jain Guru Bhadravahu who roamed from present Gangarampur to Pataliputra. At that time, the river, Punarbhava was the main and one of the most important river routes from Pundra Bardhan Bhukti to Pataliputra and Indraprastha. From that period, this area was become of an important centre of Jainism the name of Kotivarsa is also found in the Jain Prajna Pana. Many kings in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century were devotees of Sun God and Harshavardhan was one of them. There were many evidence of worshipping of Sun God in this region. In Tapanthana, An old sand stone image of Surya is found in Tapan police station which belongs to perhaps the 7th century AD. Another piece of carved stone of Surya was recovered at the nearer place of Bairhatta. The recovery of these places may not be mentioned recently. During digging of Bhabna Dighi by the panchayat at Kokil village in Harirampur Police Station under the scheme of JRY in June, 1994, a very nice stone idol of Sun god appeared which belongs to an earlier period around the 7th century AD. Another black stone image of Surya near about 3½ (ft) high excavated from the criminals and which has now been kept at Tapan Thana building. On seeing the beautiful idol or image, it can be said that it may belongs to the Gupta period.

Lots of people are familiar with the name of Bangarh now. This place has been declared as the protected place of Archaeological Department of Survey of India because of its historical importance. In the previous days, local people of this place neglect always casually and did not provide importance of this place. So, all the people of this place would enter into any place wherever they want and sometimes, they have destroyed lots of things related with this ancient place and the properties of the king, Bana. But, all the places are captured by government of India and declared as the protected place to all the portions of this dynasty and related with it. Now, entrance to this ancient place of general people is completely banned to these places. Even local people of the surrounding areas are also not allowed for doing these.

Different type's stone figure and baked bricks are also found even outer of the places of the surrounding areas. Three ponds are also related to this historical place. These are Kaldighi, Dhaldighi and Hatidoba. Among of them two are big and one Haidoba is small in size. Though the digging of Kaldighi pond is completed, but these two ponds are not able for their uniqueness. These two ponds are full of different types of stone figures or shapes. It has been heard that some people have found many idol figures of different God or Goddess. So, this place now becomes as attractive for its historical values and its beauties. Now, different types of club or committee are set up in the nearer places of surrounding Bangarh. Members of these clubs or committee start to care take in this place and its properties indirectly and also give some more important than earlier.



Plate 4: The picture of an excavated house, looks like a granary of palace of Bangarh.



Plate 5: The pictures of the inside places of Bangarh which looks like the pile of gathered baked bricks.



Plate 6: The images of some high places of ruined Bangarh nearby which are proving these symbols some stored baked bricks are kept for some particular purpose.



**Plate 6:** The pictures of four stone pillars which carries the symbols of banana trees of wedding ceremony of princess, Usha of BangarhKing. Now it becomes the property of protected place of Archeologicalsurvey of India, Calcutta Division.



**Plate 7:** The image of inside palace ofBangarh with different type's characteristics of suitable houses which is known as Dargah.



**Plate 8:**The beautiful stone picture of the lord Ganesha which is kept securely in a grill place.



Plate 9: The picture of a display board which is carried with the name of Dhaldighi Dargapara Cultural club.



Plate 10: The picture of a some rocks of this place related to Bangarh.

BakhtiyarKhilji first started the reign of Muslim rulers in Bengal in 1204. The kingdom of him was known asLakhnawati or Lakhnauti. The capital of this dynasty was formed sometimes at Lakhnawati and sometimes at Devkot. Within the year of 1205-06, BakhtiyarKhilji was possibly murdered by Ali Mardan at Devkot. Ali Mardan was the ruler of Naran-Koh.<sup>6</sup> Although this account of history is deemed erroneously by most of the Historians and it is made off that Bakhtiyardied of the physical wounds and mental trauma. He wasendured from his unsuccessful trip to Tibet that was cut short in northern Assam.<sup>7</sup> During the year of 1938-41, the earliest excavations at Bangarha team carried thiswork and this team was led by K.G. Goswami. The excavation of this place on the bank of the PurnabhabaRiver reflects the characteristics of urban town. The site has some cores around it's in the form of a citadel whichsurrounded by mud ramparts (area about 25 hectares) and dates from the earliest phase of the site. The excavations of earlier phase could not reach to the natural soil because of its uncertainty.<sup>1</sup> The citadel area disclosed five cultural phases dating from the time of theMauryan period to the medieval period. The initial phase of the Mauryan period indicates the city which had a modest starting and it also had probably a mud rampart wall. It was only in the following phase (the Kushana period, 200 BCE - 300 CE) of different period, baked big bricks built wide rampart wall which was found with drains, cesspits and residential buildings. Itshows distinct signs of prosperity and burgeoning urbanism. The excavated materials of the Gupta period are not compared with other periods because of the

richness and diversity of this dynasty. So, the cultural phases of this reign does not resembles with the phases of Kushana. The different ruins of Bangarh are marked by decadence, particularly in terms of building activities, the Pala period (mid-8th century -12th century), in sharp contrast, indicates a picture of efflorescence with late Gupta dynasty. The prosperous condition of the city of Bangarh proves the different types of urban qualities likerampart walls, compound walls, residential quarters, temples with ambulatory path and its enclosing walls, damp proof granaries, bathrooms, drains and ring wells etc.<sup>8</sup>

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