

**HISTORY, ART
AND
ARCHAEOLOGY**

of Doiyang Dhansiri Valley, Assam

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FROM PRE-HISTORY TO HISTORY

The hills surrounding the Doiyang-Dhansiri Valley are inhabited by a number of tribes who followed the neolithic way of life until recent times¹. The prevalence of neolithic tradition and discovery of neolithic tools in adjoining hills² are indicative of the fact that some neolithic men had inhabited this undulated fertile Valley in earlier times. Evidence of the lingering tradition of neolithic life now found in and around the Valley seems to be of Southeast Asiatic origin³. This is borne out by the fact that this region of the Dhansiri valley of Assam, although forms a part of India; geographically, historically, racially, linguistically and culturally forms a part of Southeast Asia⁴. Thus, the neolithic tradition prevailing in the surrounding hills of Doiyang Dhansiri Valley suggests a Southeast Asian cultural background⁵. However, there is no archaeological evidence as regards the migrations of the pre-historic people to this Valley. Some early men belonging to the late neolithic stage might have dwelt in some of the high lands here. But this remains hazy till some evidence is found in stratigraphical context in the Valley.

Some primitive Austric speaking people might have inhabited the Valley for some time. The terms, as found, such as *don, dong, dongā*⁶ etc., (meaning "water channel") would suggest this. When such Austric came is not known. It is presumed that they came into contact with the Aryans posterior to *BCE 1500*⁷ and they named the rivers of this region with "Śri" as suffix e.g. *Dhana-Śri, Dil-Śri* now called Dhansiri and Dilsiri respectively. Again, the availability of iron slag in the area, might have attracted groups of settlers including those of the Aryans.⁹ As a result, a process of social stratification might have taken place since the early Christian era and perhaps, this led to the emergence of a regional kingdom in the Valley.

The stone plaques bearing some abstract geometrical carvings (Fig. 5 ; Plate I) and isolated carvings of a fish in one and an indeterminate animal figure in another found at Dubarani in Barpathar¹⁰ might be taken as evidences of some primitive traditions of early men. (Fig. 5) The discovery of inscribed stone pieces in *brāhmī* character belonging to *CE 200-300* in the same cultural sequence at Dubarani (Plate II) indicates the presence of an well organized society of the Indo-Aryans in the Valley.

After the decline of the Roman trade in about *CE 200*, the Indian merchants appear to have carried on trade and commerce with the south east Asian countries¹¹. In northern India, after the fall of the Kushanas, a large number of rulers associated with one particular locality had emerged powerful¹². This confused political situation possibly encouraged some powerful monarchical families to migrate eastward. They were accompanied by followers of mercantile groups. They followed the course of the Brahmaputra and finally, reached the fertile Valley of the Doiyang-Dhansiri as early as in *CE 200-300*. The primary objective was perhaps, to establish trade and commerce. This is evident from the inscribed stone fragments found at Dubarani and at Alichiga-Tengani, at the confluence of the Dhansiri. (Fig. 7 & 9) The former bears numerical *brāhmī* characters found at Dubarani and the latter the ground plan of the fortified commercial harbour (*paṭṭana*) at Alichiga-Tengani (Fig. 7 and Fig. 9).

Since early Christian era, the Doiyang Dhansiri Valley came into contact with the ancient commercial and mercantile activity that flourished between China and Southeast Asia on one hand and Rome on the other. Ancient Indian trade with south east Asia was conducted through land route via Assam and Burma¹³, although sea route was found more convenient¹⁴. During *BCE 200-CE 200* Indian trade with Rome and China was in an advanced stage and Indian interest on trade with Southeast Asia was prioritised through land route

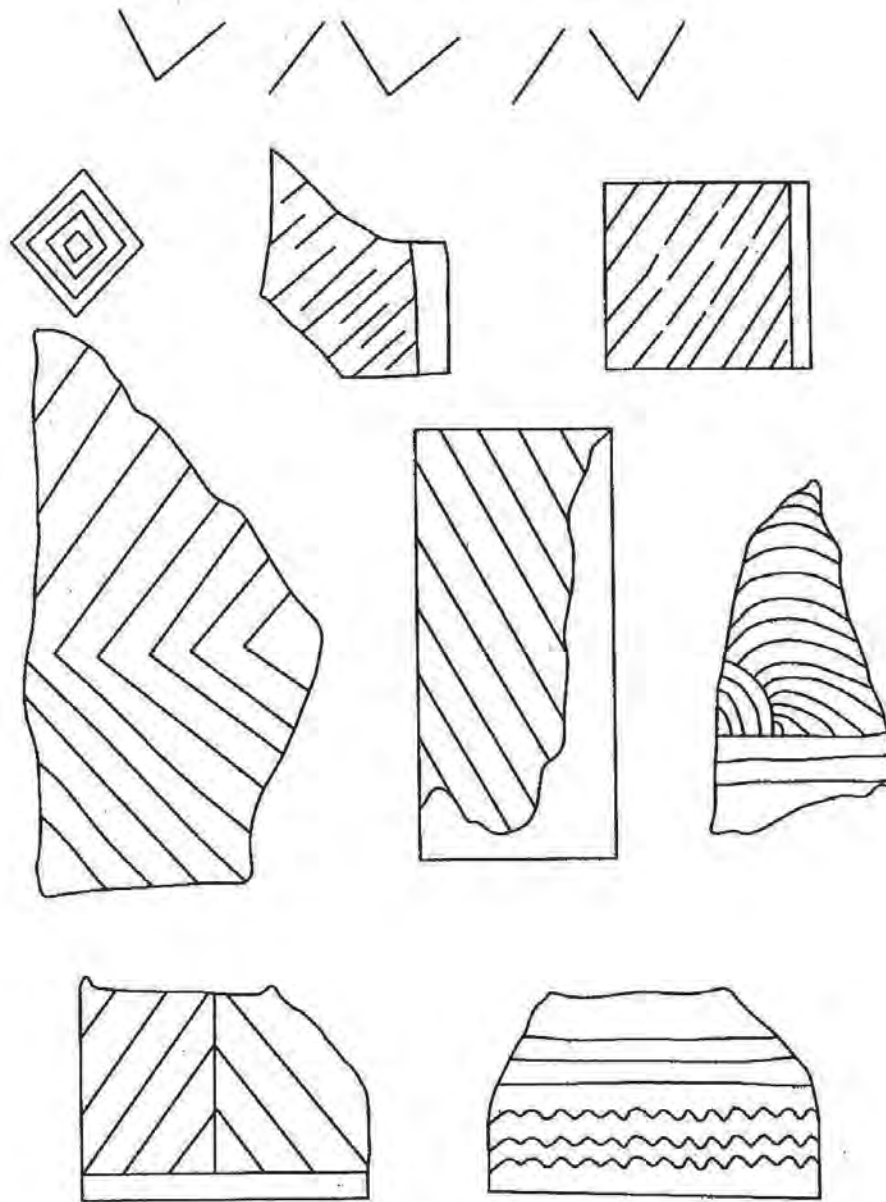


FIG-5 Incised Stone Fragments found at Dubarani, Barpathar Golaghat District

via Assam and Burma¹⁵ There existed certain traditional routes and tracks leading to Burma through the Doiyang Dhansiri Valley. It suggests that during ancient period this route *via* Dhansiri Valley seems to have formed part of an ancient trade route. The route passed through thickly populated villages with life based on agrarian economy. Existence of iron smelting trade guilds gives remote evidence of this as these are found commonly in this Valley. During ancient times, the whole of India was criss crossed by such trade routes leading through agrarian villages and centers of economic trade activities¹⁶ To this development of Indian merchantile activity, local social interests seem to have grown which generated economic and commercial interest in the rich fertile Valley for expansion of agriculture and for production of iron through native smelting process for local need and trade. The Romans imported Indian iron¹⁷ and the natural availability of iron mixed clay (*Loā-māti*) and iron (lo) in Doiyang Dhansiri Valley and existence of a process of smelting of iron at Bossapathar, Doiyang, Dhekial and at other places supported the growth of native production of iron and its use since early Christian era.

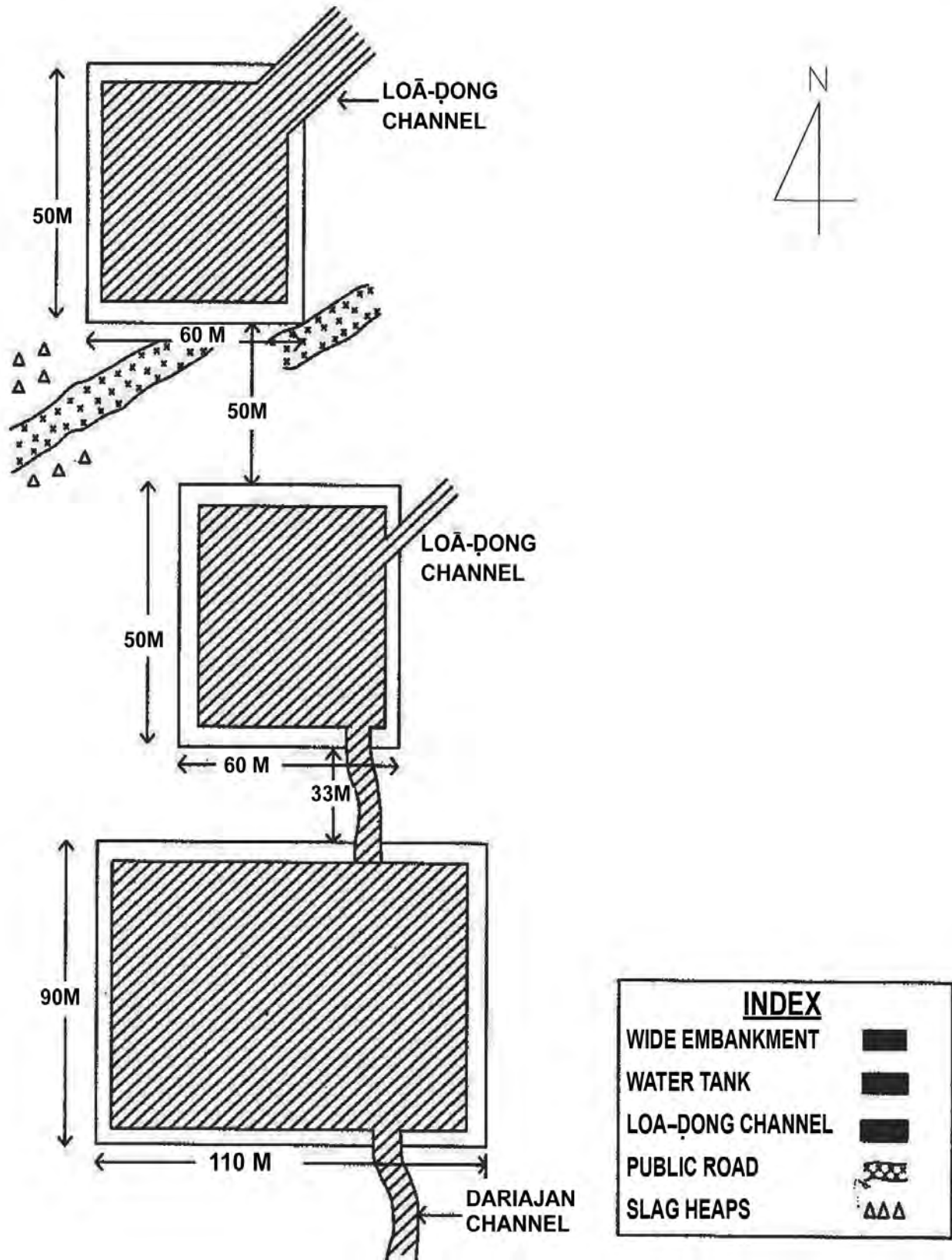


FIG-6 Iron Extracting and Smelting Site at Rahdhala Pukhuri Dhekial, Golaghat District

The ancient iron extracting and smelting site is found at Rahdhola-pathar, located at Dhekial, in Golaghat district. (Fig. 6) The Austric element found associated with *Loā-dong*¹⁸ the name of the water channel connected with Rahdhala-pukhuri suggests that the site belongs to a remote past. Slag heaps scattered over an area of about one forth of a sq.km. around Rahdhalapukhuri¹⁹ indicates the vastness of this iron extraction and smelting site. Physical appearance of the slag collected from the site show that smelting was conducted locally. Some slags are heavy in density and some are found embedded with burnt clay. The vastness of the state of ruins, found with the infrastructure of three water tanks, indicate that the industry had long historical continuity before it was finally abandoned.

The iron smelters seem to have also devised a typical clay furnace, having a globular body with an elongated neck, which has been traditionally used at Dhekial till today. The variety of globular bodied pitcher is traditionally known as *dhekyaliyā-kalah* (Plate IV) which might have been devised either as clay furnace or as decanters used in iron smelting²⁰. As such, it is not impossible that the stage of cultural advancement attained in about CE 200 in the Valley were sustained in the subsequent period as well by the local availability of iron, *kumārmāti* and development of a process for its native smelting and manufacture (Annexure VIII, IX). It is possible that certain regional patterns of the use of iron was also developed for promotion of agriculture and trade and in the process of formation of an organised society emerged in the Doiyang Dhansiri Valley.

Owing to geographical condition, there has been a tendency in North East Indian society for formation of small states under local rulers who declare their independence. Set themselves up as full-fledged monarchs. Several kingdoms such as Kāmṛūpa and Davakā emerged in ancient Assam as has been recorded by the Allahabad Stone Pillar Inscription of the Imperial Gupta Emperor Samudra Gupta²¹ Development of such a tendency for formation of a regional society with increased attention to local culture, economy, political life, local religious beliefs and practices, local craftsmanship to build monumental temples, sculptures has been found also reflected in the art and archaeological finds of the Valley.

The state of architecture developed in the Valley, e.g. at Dubarani, now in ruins, was highly advanced, where brick was extensively used. Such architectural advancement suggests that the Valley was materially rich. What seems possible is that natural availability of iron nodules encouraged a section of people to procure it through a simple process of smelting, and its employment in agriculture brought about a major change in socio-economic life in the Valley since the early Christian era. Baring a few informations of late mediaeval period details of iron manufacture including smelting, furnace and fabrication technology are not found in the historical records of Assam. But enormous slag iron (Plate V) found at Rahdhala-pathar in Dhekial, Bossa-pathar, and almost in all areas of lower Dhansiri Valley indicate the prevalence of a developed stage of the native iron smelting that flourished in the Valley since ancient times.

Capital Site at Dubarani

Evidence of dykes and ramparts, ditches laid in rectangular planning in relation to river, tanks, secular brick built buildings, inscriptions and individual scripts engraved in *brahmi* character, stone and wooden sculptures, brick temples, covering an area of about four square kilometers are found at a place called Dubarani²² within the small township Barpathar on the Dhansiri. These are the remains of a fortified brick built capital surrounded by brick wall (*prākāra*) interposed at places by watch towers (*aṭṭalaka*).

Planning of ditches, ramparts, walls and watch towers seem to have been some of the features of fortifications of this site to provide protection and security to the entire community life settled in the capital. The site was fortified by a brick reinforced earthen rampart girdled by ditches (*parikhā*), the evidence of which is clear in the northern and western boundaries. At places, deep swamp, as found in north-western part, appears to have supplemented such water fortifications. The fortification of the capital was laid down

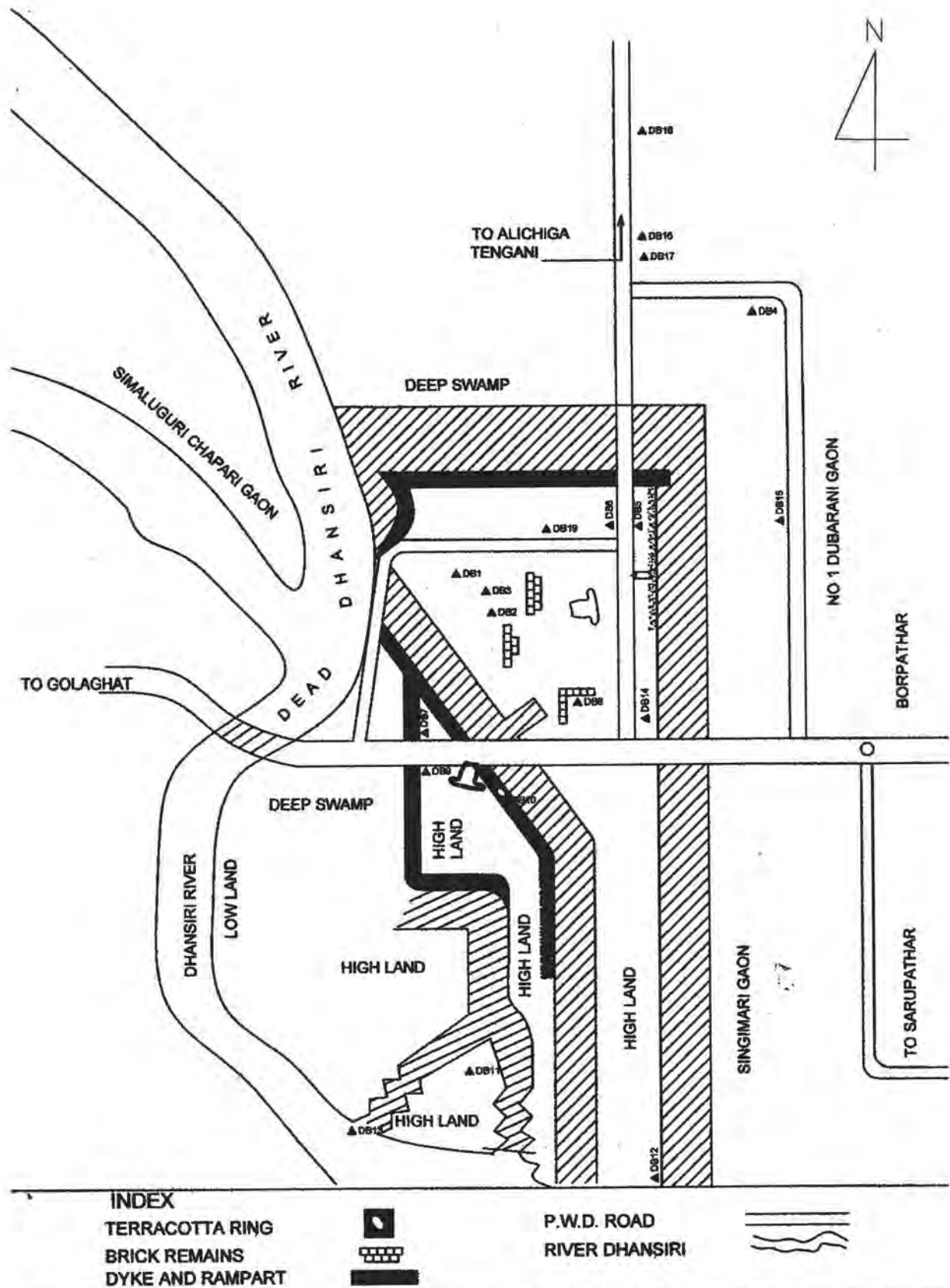


FIG. 8 Details of Fortified Capital Site at Dubarani on the Dhansiri, Barpathar, Golaghat District

in rectangular plan in the form of water fort (*jaladūrga*) in north-south alignment, and is connected with the Dhansiri by a system of canals. (Fig.7 and Fig.8) This indicates that the capital site at Dubarani on the Dhansiri had good communication and in constant touch with the other ancient Indian cultural settlements through the Brahmaputra via Dhansiri. Discovery of stone sculptures at Dubarani which bear certain similarities with the stone sculptures of the Benisagar region of Bihar²³ and introduction of the principles of ancient Indian *śilpaśāstra* while laying the ground plan of the fortifications and settlement pattern indicate such possibilities.

The entire fortification of the capital site at Dubarani resembles a water fort (*jaladūrga*) surrounded by ditches and ramparts as prescribed in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya²⁴. In its planning due attention was given to the natural lay of the land on the bank of the Dhansiri, through which communication was maintained with the river Brahmaputra and beyond. This archaeological evidence confirms that Dubarani was the fortified brick built capital of the kingdom that once existed in the Valley in the ancient period. The Dubarani Stone Slab Inscription henceforth to be called the DSSI datable to CE 400-500 has been recovered from this site at Dubarani on the Dhansiri (Fig.7, DB7)

Evidence of Fortified Commercial Harbour at Alichiga-Tengani

Structural evidence of two fortified embankments (*setubaṇḍha* with earthen passages) each surrounded by square water ditches (*parikhā*) as in the case of the ground plan (*pāda vinyāsha*) of a water fort (*jaladūrga*), are found at a place called Rajabari in Alichiga-Tengani at a distance of about 5 km to the north of Barpathar. Although water ditches form the major feature of fortifications; ramparts and watch tower (*aṭṭalāka*) have also been found constructed as other defensive measures at this site. Remarkably, the layout of both the embankments has been laid in perfect square architectural ground plan. The central platform of both the *setubaṇḍha* or embankments have been bridged with their outer banks by two narrow passages of earth work. Both the passages must have been guarded to provide security to the inner fortified area of the *setubaṇḍha*. This implies that providing of wooden bridges (*sankrāma*) across the ditch to the central fortified area has been discarded at Alichiga-Tengani. The site, located on the Dhansiri, is connected with the later by a well laid water canal facilitating navigation. Another sheet of water laid down in rectangular alignment (130m×35m) with an opening to the canal leading to the Dhansiri exists²⁵ at this site, which was used as a dock for fleet of boats (Fig.7 and Fig. 9) anchored into the site. Of the two embankments or *setubaṇḍha*, the one measuring 288m×288m is larger. The inner embankment of this *setubaṇḍha* were most possibly guarded. The bottom of the ditch is as wide as 30m which serve as a reservoir of ground water as well as rain water in form of a *setubaṇḍha*. The outer banks are sloped inward in such proportions, as if; the width of the ditches at the bottom will approximately be one third of the width in their upper part. Evidence of a few brick mounds found on the fortified embankment, indicates the existence of structures possibly of *vipani* for commercial purposes. The entire planning is found to have been executed as per the principle of *setubaṇḍha* (embankment with earthen passages) with ground plan similar to those referred to in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya²⁶. It is also not impossible that the central elevation at this site was developed into *arāmā* (pleasure garden or grove) which was surrounded by water ditches that served as fortifications as well²⁷.

The smaller fortified embankment (60m×60m) is found in north south alignment with its earthen passage (60m×8m) laid on its southern side (Fig. 7, AT 8). Here the width of the water ditch is 17m. Remains of a brick structure exist in the central platform of this embankment, wherefrom the Alichiga-Tengani Stone Inscription henceforth to be called the ATSI bearing two pairs of impressions of *mānuṣpada* (human footprints) was recovered (Plate VI). Selection of this site on the bank of the Dhansiri for laying the ground-plan of fortified embankments or *setubaṇḍha*, by controlling and utilizing natural water system, and raising

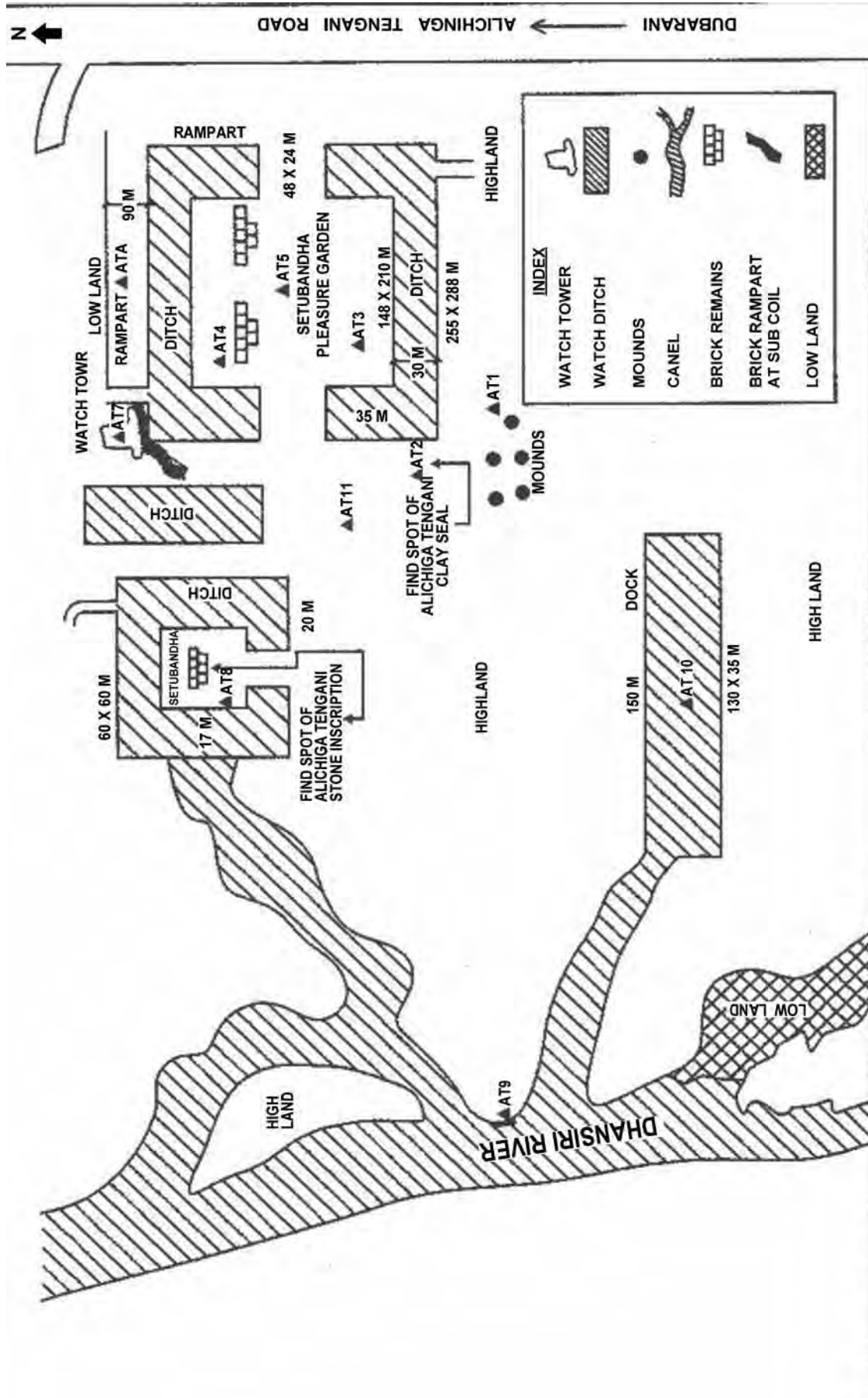


FIG. 9 Details of setubandhā port (Pattana) cum Pleasure Garden (Ārāma) on the Dhansiri at Alichiga - Tengani, Barpathar, Golaghat District (Not to Scale)

of embankments and passages, by taking full advantage of the natural lay of the land suitable for planning water fortresses duly connected with the river Dhansiri had some commercial purposes. The architectural plan found here indicates the establishment of a commercial port or harbour (*paṭṭana*) provided with a dock where trading boats could be harboured, which is a remarkable evidence of development of secular architectural planning in the Valley. It seems possible that Sri Vasundharavarman had possibly built the *setubandha* at Alichiga-Tengani during CE 400-500 since the ATSI bearing the name of Sri Ratnavarman with two pairs of foot prints was found in the smaller *paṭṭana* cum *ārāma* or pleasure garden at Alichiga-Tengani. On completion of the erection during the reign of Sri Vasundharavarman issued the DSSI as a mark of merit of his auspicious work of raising river wharf and issued ATSI, bearing the name of Sri Ratnavarman, paying respect to his parents.

The *Arthaśāstra* considers a fort as one of the seven constituent elements of a state²⁹. Architectural planning of a fortified capital at Dubarani and commercial harbour at Alichiga-Tengani, laid down as per the principle of *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya indicate the growth of a strong monarchical kingdom in the Valley under Brahmanical influence. It means that a fortified planning of both the sites at Dubarani and Alichiga-Tengani was considered indispensable to provide for the security of social life anticipating attacks from the native local tribes.

Existence of the ancient *paṭṭana* or the commercial harbour at Alichiga, on the Dhansiri directly indicate the development of trade and commerce in the Valley and growth of trade and commercial contact of this region at least during the Gupta period of ancient Indian history. The Imperial Mauryan Emperor and Gupta Emperors expanded Indian mercantile relations with south east Asian countries and China³⁰ Thus, it seems all probable that ancient trade and commercial contact flourished in the Doiyang Dhansiri Valley.

Hiuen Tsang records existence of land route and sea route connecting ancient Kāmarūpa with China which was under special control of Kāmarūpa king Kumararaja Bhaskar Varman³¹. It appears that such routes were utilized by the Indian merchants for trade with distant countries since ancient times and a number of ancient Indian settlements came up in the south east Asian countries like Java, Sumatra, Bali, Indonesia and other islands, which had link with Pataliputra via the Indo-Burma trade route.

Besides, the fortified *setubandha* which comprises the Alichiga Archaeological Site must have had trade and commercial contact with distant countries, for which this fortified *paṭṭana* in the plan of *setubandha* had been developed on the Dhansiri. There was also similar routes to Magadha. The Mauryan, and Gupta emperors during ancient times through the Indo-Burma trade route, which started in Pataliputra and ends at Burma, had maintained commercial intercourse, with south east Asian countries³². The discovery of an inscribed terracotta sealing datable to the Shunga-Kushana period (BCE 200-CE300) at Ambari Archaeological Site³³ and evidence of a brick built tank belonging to the Shunga period indicate the development of ancient Indian trade and commerce in Brahmaputra valley in ancient times. The commercial harbour which exists at Alichiga Tengani is the evidence of the growth of trade activities under the native rulers of the Valley during the Gupta period, if not earlier, of the ancient Indian history. The earliest Chinese evidence on India-China trade through south east Asia that comes from China seems to relate to the Valley and beyond.³⁴ To this ancient maritime trade activity the Brahmaputra valley seem to have been connected via the Indo Burma trade route as the number of trade items referred to in the Chinese chronicle Hanshu are commonly found in this region of ancient Assam .

The Imperial Gupta Emperor Samudragupta for such commercial interests expanded his political hegemony upon the regional kingdoms of Kāmarupa, Davakā, Samṭata and Nepāla for controlling the trade routes and protecting merchants for expansion of trade in south east Asia and China and had subdued the regional rulers of ancient Assam to the status of *pratyanta nṛpatis* of the Imperial Gupta empire as referred to in the Alahabad Stone Pillar Inscription of the Imperial Gupta Emperor Samudragupta³⁵ Under such circumstance the local ruler of the Doiyang Dhansiri Valley developed the fortified commercial harbour or

paṭṭana at Alichiga Tengani linking the river Dhansiri for facilitating and participating in such trade activity with distant countries, distant countries, under the political hegemony of the Imperial Gupta Emperors. As such the political kingdom which was at Dubarani aligned with its fortified *paṭṭana* at Alichiga Tengani, could be identified with one of the kingdom referred to in the Allahabad Stone Pillar Inscription of the Imperial Gupta Emperar Samudra Gupta, the boundary of which was extensive, possibly as far as Burma in east. The Indo Burma Trade Route between Burma in east and Pataliputra in west went via Brahmaputra valley and river Dhansiri through the capital of the Kingdom at Dubarani and Alichiga Tengani. Which could have been further continued via river Dhansiri upto Dimapur and from Dimapur it ran towards east following Manipur Road via Chumukidima, entered hills of Nagaland following the course of the river Paglanadi via places like Piphema, Merema, Kohima and advanced further through Manipur to reach Burma. The present distance from Dimapur to Moreh in Burma border via Kohima is 374km. The river Dhansiri was the means of communication of this route and beyond Dimapur Naga hills tract was followed. The distance from Dubarani to the river Brahmaputra was navigated via Dhansiri following down stream. For facilitating navigation, such as anchoring of boats, a dock was developed at the *paṭṭana* at Alichiga Tengani on the Dhansiri. The discovery of an inscribed terracotta clay sealing (6.5 x 3.5x 1.7cm) and a brick built *puskarini* datable to BCE 200-CE300, at the Ambari Archaeological Site on the Brahmaputra at Guwahati city, indicate existence of the Indo Burma Trade Route between Pataliputra and Burma via Brahmaputra river in Assam, which further continued to the kingdom at Dubarani via river Dhansiri.

Genealogy of Rulers

The reconstruction of the genealogy of kings who ruled since ancient period has become possible from epigraphical records found in the Valley. A few letters *sundhara* found in the Nagerijan Khanikargaon Stone Inscription, part II (Plate IX) datable to CE 400³⁶, henceforth to be called the NKFSI-II, may possibly be construed as Vasundhara (*varman*). From the outer bank of the large fortified embankment (288m × 288m), at Alichiga-Tengani an oval shaped Clay Seal (Plate VII) henceforth to be called the ATCS, has been recovered³⁷. The ATCS, datable to early CE 400-500, bears the name of Sri Vasundharavarman³⁸. This author has recovered another one line Stone Slab Inscription from Dubarani in Barpathar, henceforth to be called the DSSI, (Plate XI). The characters of the DSSI, engraved in one line, are paleographically (CE 400-500) and records the name of Śri Vasundharavarman. On the basis of the palaeographical similarities of both the records, it could be said that (Va) *sundhara* of the NKFSI-II, and Śri Vasundharavarman of ATCS and Śri Vasundharavarman of DSSI, was one and the same person, who might have issued the charter, the Clay Seal and the inscription. Since the Clay Seal bearing the name of Śri Vasundharavarman was found at Alichiga-Tengani, that we have identified as *paṭṭana*, there is every reason to believe that Alichiga-Tengani, near Dubarani was another administrative headquarters of Dubarani, the capital of the kingdom which was ruled by Sri Vasundharavarman. From the brick remains in this smaller embankment (60m×60m) at Alichiga-Tengani, the ATSI datable to CE 400-500 bearing foot impressions (*mānusapada*), has been recovered, (Plate VI)³⁹. This inscription records the name of Sri Ratnavarmana⁴⁰. A fragment of the Nagerijan Khanikargaon Fragmentary Stone Inscription henceforth to be called NKFSI-III (Plate X) bearing two fragmented lines of *brāhmī* character datable to CE 400-500 records the name of Sri Ratnavarman. So far, two records *viz.* the ATSI and NKFSI-III bearing the name of Sri Ratnavarman have been recovered from the region. Since the records are found from the same cultural zone and are paleographically belonging to the same time frame of CE 400-500 it is possible that Sri Ratnavarman of ATSI and Sri Ratnavarman of NKFSI-III was one and the same person. The fragmented part of the NKFSI-III records as follows; *māgha māśasya pūrnou (ma) shyang va śri Ratnavarmmaṇa putra sya...* It is possible that this fragmented part formed the eulogical part of a large inscription which the NKFSI actually was. This inscription was issued by the son of Sri Ratnavarman whose name is missing in the record after *nya...* but the name of (*va*)*sundhara* which has been invariably

the name of Sri Vasundharavarman, as discussed, as the doner of the record occurs in a broken state in the second fragment of the record. The second and the third fragment formed the executive part of the NKFSI. The second fragment of the inscription records the name of village Gourivataka indicating possibly land donated to some *Brahmanas* by Sri Vasundharavarman. Indication of the western boundary of the donated land has been recorded in the first fragment of the NKFSI. Thus it is possible that Sri Ratnavarman was the father of Sri Vasundharavarman, who succeeded him and issued the NKFSI, ATCS, ATSI and the DSSI as a ruler. Sri Vasundharavarman who seems to have raised the imperishable river wharf at Alichiga-Tengani and issued the ATCS donating land from one of his administrative Headquarters at Alichiga-Tengani. He issued the ATSI quoting verses from the epic Mahabharata and with the impression of foot prints of his parents upon the record. Sri Vasundharavarman was a saivite and issued the DSSI with the auspicious symbol of *triśūla*, after raising the *setubaṇḍha* cum *paṭṭana* or commercial harbour at Alichiga-Tengani. It seems that Sri Vasundharavarman was a powerful ruler who ruled the region during CE 400-500. The verse from the Mahabharata, records in the ATSI indicates that highest respect is to be paid to one's parents in life. Thus Sri Vasundharavarman paid his highest respect and homage to Sri Ratnavarman during his lifetime and the impressions of two pairs of foot prints as have been found laid in the ATSI seems to be of not any other person than that of Sri Ratnavarman and his wife who in all probability were parents of Sri Vasundharavarman.

However, the antecedents of Śri Ratnavarman of ATSI and NKFSI-III and Śri Vasundharavarman of NKFSI, ATCS, ATSI and DSSI are not known, as their names do not occur in any of the existing epigraphs of the time. As their names are not found in any of the genealogies of the Varmana royal houses, it seems that, Śri Ratnavarman and Sri Vasundharavarman belonged to a collateral branch of the Varmanas of Kāmarūpa, as the surname 'Varman' suggests. As such, Śri Ratnavarman and Śri Vasundharavarman appear to have been lineal descendants of Vajradatta, (the brother of Bhagadatta) who had obtained the lordship of Uparipaṭṭana⁴¹ as indicated by the Parvatiya copper-plates of Vanamalavarmadeva dated CE 900. The region of Uparipaṭṭana⁴² could well be identified with the Doiyang-Dhansiri Valley with its commercial harbour (*paṭṭana*)⁴³ located on the Dhansiri at Alichiga-Tengani (Fig.7) which is well connected with the fortified capital of Dubarani and other distant areas, via the Dhansiri.

This conjecture of the existence of two different lines of rulers i.e. the descendent of Bhagadatta and that of Vajradatta in ancient Assam, leads us to deduce the fact that the Doiyang-Dhansiri Valley was ruled by an independent line of Varman rulers (not belonging to the line of Pusyavarmana of Kāmarūpa)⁴⁴ to which Śri Ratnavarman belonged, On the basis of this discussion, it could be confirmatively said that Śri Vasundharavarman, who issued the NKFSI, ATCS, and the DSSI and Śri Ratnavarman who is referred to in the ATSI, and in the NKFSI-III were scion of the family of Vajradatta, and as such belonged to the same royal house ruling in the Valley. The names of both Śri Vasundharavarman and Śri Ratnavarman, ruling in the Valley are not found with any imperialistic title, for the reason that, during the Gupta regime, it was not customary to assume such imperial title. But it is almost clear that the Doiyang-Dhansiri Valley being ruled by an independent line of rulers did not form part of the Kāmarūpa kingdom, as believed by some earlier scholars⁴⁵. The location of the Borganga Rock Inscription of the time of Bhutivarman located at a distance of 25 km. to the north-east of Davakā in Kapili Valley was most possibly the easternmost boundary of the Kāmarūpa kingdom during CE 600.

On the basis of these recent findings the view of earlier scholars⁴⁶ that the kingdom of the Kāmarūpa included the extreme eastern portion of Assam Valley during ancient period cannot be accepted as historical fact. This kingdom known epigraphically as *Uparipaṭṭana*, flourished with its capital at Dubarani and its commercial harbour *paṭṭana* at Alichiga Tengani covering the Upper (*upari*) Assam region was in probability the ancient kingdom of Davāka found referred in the Allahabad Stone Pillar Inscription of the Imperial Gupta Emperor Samudragupta.

However, names of rulers immediately after Sri Vasundharavarman have not been chronologically

found so far. A number of stone image inscriptions, belonging to the early mediaeval period, are found with names of kings who had assumed imperial titles of *mahārājādhirāja*, meaning their imperial status⁴⁷. The Śāṅkara Nārāyana Image Inscription dated CE 800, found at Deopani records “*mahārājādhirāja, Śrī Jīvarā-rājye*” meaning in the kingdom of *mahārājādhirāja Śrī Jīvarā*⁴⁸ which in all probability refers to this Kingdom in Doiyang Dhansiri Valley. Similarly, the Harihara Stone Image Inscription dated CE 800, refers to ‘*mahārājādhirāja Śrī Diglekhavarma rājye*’ meaning in the kingdom of *mahārājādhirāja Śrī Diglekhavarma*⁴⁹ which also probably refers to this kingdom. These inscriptions, which do not mention the name of the kingdom, thus probably point to a separate kingdom in which both *mahārājādhirāja Śrī Jīvarā* and *mahārājādhirāja Śrī Diglekhavarma* ruled, since we do not find their names in any of the inscription either of the Varman, Salastambha or of the Pala dynasty of Kāmarūpa for that matter. The discovery of these two image inscriptions at one and the same spot of Deopani, where numerous other sculptures have been found indicate that these sculptures were carved at Deopani and the art activity at Deopani was under patronisation of the local rulers ruling the Valley.

The discovery of the Pathali Pahar Stone Inscription of Diglekhavarman datable to CE 800-900 at Pathali Pahar in Lakhimpur District, has significant contribution towards the reconstruction of the ancient history of Assam. Stone inscriptions issued by the same king belonging to the same period have been found in the Doiyang Dhansiri valley too. In today’s context geographically, Pathali Pahar, in Lakhimpur District in the north bank of the Brahmaputra is a far distant place from the Doiyang Dhansiri Valley. But diametrically, the region of Pathali Pahar is in the same north southern alignment. That apart, communication to this region of Pathali Pahar in ancient times was not difficult as the creation of the present Majuli island exists in between, in the river Brahmaputra, is not a matter of very long distant past. This island was created owing to flood caused by the Dihing river in the year CE 1735.⁵⁰ Thus, there are reasons to believe that the political boundary of the kingdom, the capital of which had developed in the Doiyang Dhansiri Valley was very large and included the region of Lakhimpur District in the north. Considering the largeness, of this kingdom, which had developed during the period of the Imperial Guptas, it could be identified as non other than that of the historical kingdom of Davāka referred to in the Allahabad Stone Pillar Inscription of the Imperial Gupta Emperor Samudra Gupta⁵¹ which is identical to the Uparipattana as referred to in the Parvatiya Copper Plates of Vanamalavarmadeva (CE900)⁵². The rulers of this ancient kingdom ruled from Dubarani and Alichiga Tengani. Geographically, this kingdom although was extensive covering a vast region, the names of the rulers of this kingdom are found with ‘Sri’, as assumption of the imperial royal titles like *mahārājādhirāja* or *mahārāja* was not customary during the period of the Imperial Gupta Emperors, as these regional rulers were *pratyanta nṛpatīs* of the Gupta Emperors.

Location of Uparipattana

The question of historical location of Uparipattana, as referred to in the Parvatiya Copper plates of Vanamalavarmadeva, seems to have baffled historians for quite a long time. It is said that when Bhagadatta gained the lordship of Prāgyjotisa, Vajradatta was granted the lordship of Uparipattana⁵³. M.M. Sharma held Uparipattana to be “the town above” and identified it with the northern hilly regions which form the northern boundary of Kāmarūpa.⁵⁴ Dimbeswar Sarma tentatively identified Uparipattana as a ‘port or harbour’ associated with the kingdom of Banasura, whose capital was believed to have been guarded by a naval fleet⁵⁵. Dharmeswar Chutia thinks it to be the Upper Assam region with its headquarters at Davakā⁵⁶. Dharmeswar Chutia seems to be nearer the truth, when he says Uparipattana as lying to the east of Pragjyotisa, particularly ‘Upper Assam’. But his identification of Davakā in Nagaon District, as the Headquarters of Uparipattana, seems to be based on wrong assumption, because, Davāka has already been mentioned as an ancient kingdom in the Allahabad Stone Pillar Inscription of the imperial Gupta Emperor Samudra Gupta, without mentioning it as Uparipattana. As such, the ancient fortified embankment (*setubandha*) at Alichiga-Tengani, located on

the bank of Dhansiri, connected with the latter by a canal, and found with a dock where trading boats could be anchored, was the commercial harbour, which could well be identified with the Upariṭṭana, mentioned in the copperplates of Vanamalavarman. The term Upariṭṭana seems to indicate the region in addition (i.e. Upper Assam) to *paṭṭana*, attached as hinterland. The DSSI (Plate XI) indicates that Śrī Vasundharavarmana built an imperishable wharf. This epigraph as such makes it clear that either the setubaṇḍha at Alichiga-Tengani or the capital at Dubarani connecting it by a fortified series of canal with the Dhansiri was built by Śrī Vasundharavarman during CE 400-500. It could be affirmatively said, therefore that, this kingdom flourished as a result of commercial activity, centering on the paṭṭana or harbour at Alichiga-Tengani, near Dubarani in Barpathar.

Significantly, the term Upariṭṭana which appears with reference to king Bhagadatta and Vajradatta makes it clear that the whole of the Brahmaputra valley was not included within the kingdom of Prāgjyotisa Kāmarūpa. This factor may substantiate the contention that Upariṭṭana was an additional (*upari*) territory or hinterland, not directly under Prāgjyotisa where Vajradatta was installed. This region could not be any other than the Doiyang-Dhansiri Valley, found with remains of brick built fortified capital and fortified commercial harbour, from region where Śrī Vasundharavarman and Śrī Ratnavarman and his lineal descendants ruled independently in the entire Upper Assam .

Ethnically, too, the kings of the Doiyang-Dhansiri Valley and those of Kāmarūpa were kings with a common title of 'Varman' and epigraphically introduced as brothers, belonging to the family of Naraka. Possibly for this reason the kings of the Kāmarūpa kingdom did not interfere in the political affairs of the kingdom in Doiyang-Dhansiri Valley. As such, it is quite plausible that the kings of the Valley subsequently began to assume the imperial title of *mahārājādhirāja* during the Post-Gupta period. This confirms the contention that the region of Doiyang-Dhansiri Valley lying to the east of the Kapili river did not form a part of the Kāmarūpa kingdom. For the same reason, the supposition of Kanak Lal Barua⁵⁷ P.C. Choudhury⁵⁸ and M.M. Sharma⁵⁹ that *mahārājādhirāja* Śrī Jivarā and *mahārājādhirāja* Śrī Diglekhavarman belonged to the Salastambha dynasty of Kāmarūpa, seems to be based on wrong inference. Hence on the basis of epigraphical records so far found in the Valley and until fresh data are explored, we get a tentative genealogy of rulers ruling the Valley as follows;

Śrī Ratnavarman	CE 400-500
Śrī Vasundharavarman	CE 400-500
<i>mahārājādhirāja</i> Dieghlekhavarman	CE 700-800
<i>mahārājādhirāja</i> Jivaraja or Sri Jivarā	CE 800-900
Śrī Mahendra	CE 800-900

These rulers ruled the kingdom of Upariṭṭana *sic* Davāka from their capital at Dubarani, on the Dhansiri. The rulers of the ancient period were *pratyanta nṛpatīs* of the Imperial Gupta Emperors. After the fall of the Gupta Empire, during early mediaeval period, these rulers assumed imperialistic title like *mahārājādhirāja* and consolidated the regional kingdom after the fall of the Gupta empire.

Expansion of the Kingdom

The Valley (Fig.1) is said to be a very fertile land producing rich harvest of all kinds of crops⁶⁰. It is clear that acquisition of fresh *agrahāra* land was sought for additional revenue and products. The expansion of the kingdom was slow but gradual, Dubarani and Alichiga-Tengani, was the first habitational site and gradually areas in distant places were incorporated. The NKFSI makes it clear that land grants e.g *gourivāṭaka*, were offered to Brahmanas.⁶¹ Evidence of vast remains of brick temples, sculptures, and tanks found at different places indicate a possibility of offering such land grants for management of temples. The terms like '*kūlagūru*' and '*mathapatih*' found in the Śaṅkara Nārāyana Stone Image inscription, which indicate

the head of a *matha* or the family preceptor or the 'priest in charge of the temple',⁶² further substantiate such social development. Possibly the class of '*mathapatih*' was recipient of such land grants, who seem to have transferred such grants to peasants and cultivators on payment of revenue⁶³. It seems possible that grants of such *agrahāras* to Brahmanas by kings for religious purposes contributed to the rise and growth of brick temples, evidences of which are found in the Valley at Dubarani, Deopani, Rajapukhuri, no.2 Sarupathargaon, Bongaon at Naojan, Gelabil, Oparlangtha, Telisal, Jagyapur, Kamarbandha, Kasomaripathar and Numaligarh. Archaeological remains make it clear that Dubarani was developed as a capital, of which Alichiga-Tengani was a commercial harbour, Deopani an artists' workshop, Rajapukhuri a centre of religious propagation, as well as a centre for propagating syncretistic religious doctrine and Numaligarh a fortified outpost for the defence of the kingdom from the west. Remains of a brick built temple, squarish in ground plan, tanks, ramparts, and other archaeological evidences, including that of the fortified ground plan of a capital, indicate a development towards urbanisation in the Valley. The Kacharis were conversant to the establishment of fortified settlements for safety and security of their life and raised secured settlements within fortifications of ramparts and ditches.

The political ramification of this movement seems to have reached beyond the river Dikhou which formed a traditional boundary between the Ahoms and the Kachari kingdom (Fig. 10) during the CE 1300-1400⁶⁴. In the process, not only the statecraft of a regional kingdom in hierarchical order was organised, but also Brahmanical culture was pushed into fresh regions. Discovery of evidence of stone sculptures from the Dubarani, in the regions of Rangajan TE in Tinisukia District, Namti in Sivasagar District, Ratanpur at Na-Kachari, and Barhola in Jorhat District along the border regions covering the Upper Assam region suggest expansion of the political influence of the kingdom as far as to the region of Dikhou and Tinisukia, if not beyond covering region of Lakhimpur the north bank of Brahmaputra as indicated by the Pathali Pahar Stone Inscription of Dieghlekhavarman. Evidence of stone temple door frame of temple and sculptures datable to CE 1100 have been found in such region of Upper Assam as Garmur and Silaguri than in Majuli, Kumar gaon in Dergaon, Golaghat District, Silikhaguri TE near Mariyani in Jorhat District, Khowang TE in Dibrugarh District, Singhaduar and Piyali Phukanar doul at Geleki in Sivasagar District. River names of this region with prefix *di*, such as Dikhou, Dibang, Dihang, Dibru, Dimou, Disoi, Diphu, Doigrung and others indicate predominance of the Dimasa Kacharis in this region of Upper Assam during early mediaeval period. It seems possible that the region of Upper Assam beyond the foot hills of the Nagahills in east and the region of Lakhimpur and beyond in the north bank of the Brahmaputra covering the district of Lakhimpur and Dhemaji formed a part of the ancient kingdom. The Dimasa Kacharis continued to ruled this kingdom till CE 1100-1200, which was gradually annexed by the Ahoms to their kingdoms since thirteenth century AD till the brick built capital city Dimapur of the Dimasa Kachari was occupied in CE 1536 (Fig.10)

The term *mahattara* found in the NKFSI-I⁶⁵, leads to confirm that the village administration was apparently placed under this class of village elders or Headmen of the village⁶⁶, who had considerable share in village land and were apparently responsible for its administration⁶⁷. Existence of this class of *mahattara* or village headmen during CE 400 confirm that, an well organised village administration, similar to the Gupta village administration⁶⁸ under monarchical rule prevailed in the Valley, during CE 400., if not earlier.

Social Outlook: Regionalism

The gradual fall of the Imperial Gupta Empire gave rise to regional kingdoms, based on the formation of regional societies. The region of Doiyang Dhansiri being diversified by hills and plains and bounded by the foot hills of Arunachal Pradesh in north, foot hills of Nagahills and beyond in east, North Cachar hills in south, and the river Kapili in west, seem to have contributed to the formation of a strong regional society of heterogeneous racial groups of native ethnic elements. Influence of the advanced architectural plan as

found in the lay out of the habitational sites developed in ancient India under the Gupta rulers, penetration of Brahmanical culture as reflected in the issuing of epigraphical records and discovery of large scale Brahmanical sculptures indicate that the society was organized under Brahmanical influence. A strong sense of localism or regionalism on the basis of Brahmanical order seems to have developed in the political and socio-cultural life during the early mediaeval period in the Valley. The Valley being surrounded by hill tribes all around except in the north significantly contributed to the development of regionalism in social outlook. Brahmanism during this period was considerably liberalised and numerous figures of Viṣṇu as well as those of saivite and tantric pantheon were worshipped. Numerous local cultural beliefs and practices were absorbed into Brahmanical practices and deities, subordinate gods and goddesses were adopted, sculptures were carved and worshipped. This was attempted to incorporate sub social groups to the Brahmanical society and thereby widening the agrarian society for more agricultural production and economic development. This idealism of one common society of the period also reflected in the art forms and religious life. Saivism had been however professed as principal religion. The DSSI indicates that Śrī Vasundharavarman was a Saivite and with the evidences of brick built temples with *Sivaliṅga* excavated at Dubarani, it could be said that Saivism flourished both as a religious doctrine as well as in cultural life, for which numerous figures of *caturbhujā* Siva have been found in the Valley. Syncretism appears to have become a predominating religious cult in the Valley and religious policy of toleration between numerous groups of Aryan and non-Aryan tribes were emphasized. Not only composite figures of Harihara were carved, even single sculptures have often been depicted in syncretistic character. Saivism was predominant religion of the region and *caturbhujā* sculptures of Siva in *sthānaka* and *āsana* variety, *sivaliṅga-yonipitha*, *manuṣhaliṅga*, divinities such as *triśūla* in stone and numerous other subordinate figures of saivite deities have been found in the Valley. The sculptures although bear early mediaeval art styles they represent native physiognomy in expression. *Caturbhujā* stone sculptures of Viṣṇu have also been found. The Deopani Viṣṇu Image Inscription declares Siva as worshipable by the *sudras*, *dvijavarṇa*, (twice born) and women alike⁶⁹. It appears that different social elements were fused into a cultural synthesis to promote a strong sense of local polity. This concept was also propagated to distant areas and for the purpose small and squat sculptures were carved so that these could be supplied to places far and near. As a result sculptures of this genre are found at places like Rangajan at Tinisukia, Ratanpur at Amguri, Namti in Sivasagar, Barhola in Jorhat and others. Such factors generated a strong sense of regionalism or localism, which led even to the development of a regional school of art in the Valley centering on Dubarani during the early mediaeval period. Yet, in expression of art, development of architecture, scripts, religious life, metallurgical craft influence of the Gupta art and architecture manifested in the creative aspects in the Valley. It appears that, although a spirit of localism or regionalism was professed, pan Indian cultural developments were also locally accomplished.

The history of the Valley since *CE* 900 till the arrival of the Ahoms is hazy due to want of records. It may be that Dubarani remained as the capital of the kingdom till *CE* 900 and subsequently the capital was shifted to Kasomari-pathar on the bank of Doiyang, which, according to Gait, was the capital of the Kacharis⁷⁰. The reason for such a shift from Dubarani to Kasomari-pathar is not immediately known⁷¹. It might be that some dynastical change in ruling family of the kingdom, had taken place. Evidence of a north-south alignment of brick mounds, almost in a row, large tanks, temple sculptures and other stone relics, found on the bank of a dead stream of the Doiyang, however, suggests the existence of a phase of habitation flourishing at Telisal and also at Jagyapur in Kasomari-pathar till *CE* 1000. It seems possible that during *CE* 900-1000. Kasomari-pathar was the capital of the Kachari kingdom which did not continue as capital for long. A monolithic site, at a place locally called Rajabari is found on the bank of a dead stream of the Doiyang. These monoliths indicate the co-existence of different ethnic groups such as the Nagas, under Hindu-Kachari influence. Thereafter the capital of the Kachari kingdom of the Valley flourished at Dimapur and remained so until it was occupied by the Ahoms in *CE* 1536. Dimapur was a brick-built city now in ruins. On the other hand, indications of the emergence of a strong movement of raising defensive

architecture in the form of reinforced ramparts and other natural fortifications such as deep swamps for the defence of a habitational site are found at Numali-garh. This makes it clear that Numali-garh was developed as a defensive outpost of the Kachari kingdom by the Kacharis since this region is considered strategically important, being open to the plain of the Brahmaputra valley. It seems that the Kachari kingdom which was stretched as far as the Dikhu, if not beyond during CE 1100, possibly apprehended external invasion from the west⁷² and to protect their kingdom, the Kacharis constructed⁷³ the series of brick ramparts. At the advent of the Ahoms, who had followed a policy of territorial aggrandisement in the Brahmaputra Valley, the Kacharis had to cede their entire territory both in the Brahmaputra and Doiyang-Dhansiri Valleys.

The Ahom Occupation of Dimapur

Dimapur was the fortified capital of the Kachari kingdom during the mediaeval period. Of the evidence of the city, only the surrounding brick wall with a solid brick built gateway on the east of the monolithic site is now in existence. The brick built capital of the Kacharis at Dimapur seems to have been located in some other area, which is yet to be explored for confirmation. Although the Kacharis appear to be the dominating race that ruled the Valley since remote times,⁷⁴ the Ahom chronicles record the names of only two Kachari kings viz : Khunkhura and Detsung, ruling the Valley during the mediaeval period. A series of wars fought for the Ahom occupation of Marangi and their having firm control over the lower Dhansiri Valley resulted in the dispersal of the inhabitants, mainly the Kacharis. The Ahom occupation of Dimapur in CE 1536 compelled the Kacharis to shift their capital to Maibong in North Cachar hills⁷⁵. This struggle for the control of the Dhansiri Valley led to depopulation of the Kacharis and the region relapsed in to jungles⁷⁶. Isolated Kachari settlements are still found continuing elsewhere in the Valley. It is also not unlikely that the plains adjacent to the Naga Hills fell prey to the raids of the neighbouring Naga tribes before the coming of the Ahoms to this region. In order to put a stop to Naga raids, the Ahom kings took strong measures and allowed the Nagas only to come to the frontier through certain fixed and recognized routes⁷⁷.

One such measure was the establishment of administrative control in Marangi under a regional governor called *Morongikhowā Gohāin* by Ahom king Suhungmung (CE 1497-1539). A garrison of 3000 men was also stationed at Marangi against possible Naga raids⁷⁸ and a number of outposts or *chakīs* were set up at Kalapani, Kaliyani, Rairaiya and near the Doiyāng river in order to guard the Dhansiri frontier. The oppressive conduct of the Angamis drove out many Rengma Nagas from their villages who sought asylum in the Mikir Hills to the west of the Dhansiri during subsequent period⁷⁹. But in the lower part of the Valley, places like Opar-Doiyang, Bossa Doiyang, Nam Doiyang, Dholi, Sitali, Marangi, Kacharihat, Birina-soek were populated by the Ahom kings by settling skilled *pāiks*, at the beginning of the seventeenth century⁸⁰. For effective administration, the lower Dhansiri Valley was subdivided into three large administrative areas called Opar-Doiyāng, Bossā-Doiyāng or Māz-Doiyāng and Nām-doiyāng, and each was placed under a Rajkhowa known as Opar Doiyangiya Rājkhowa, Māju-Doiyangiya Rājkhowa and Nām Doiyangiya Rajkhowā respectively⁸¹. These Rajkhowas were responsible for administration, collection of revenue and maintenance of civic amenities like construction of roads and tanks in their respective estates⁸².

Ahom King Pratap Singha (CE 1603-1641) conducted a census and introduced the *pāik* system on occupational and territorial basis. Evidence of such organisation of state craft were to be found in existence at Dhekial in Golaghat until recent years. Numerous *Vaiṣṇava sattras* were established in the Valley under the patronage of the Ahom kings. The *Kuruḍbḍhi sattrā* is such a one to the west of Bokakhat, established during the reign of king Pratap Singha.

King Gadadhar Singha (CE 1680-1696) constructed the Dhodar-Āli⁸³, connecting the principal towns of the lower Dhansiri Valley, such as Dhekorgorha-Kamargaon, *hāts* on the Dhansiri at Nagabali in Golaghat, Kacharihat, Birina-soek, Titabar, with the Ahom capital at Gargaon, in order to deal with the Nagas raiding the villages of the Doiyang-Dhansiri Valley effectively. He also settled people of different *kuri*

or *khel*, such as *Brāhman-kuri*, *Bairāgi-kuri*, *Borāhi-kuri*, *Nāṅgal-kuri*, *Kochāri-kuri*, *Lo -saliā -kuri*, *Salāl-kuri*, on the confluence of the *Kakaḍongā*, the Makrang and the Ghiladhari to take care of an old Vaishnavite shrine now renowned as *Śri Śri Āthkuriā* or *Āthkheliyā nāmghar*⁸⁴ at Makrong in Golaghat.

Out break of Sepoy Mutiny, 1857

The Ahom administration in the process considerably promoted the economic development of the Valley. Socio-economic measures undertaken by the Ahoms contributed to the development of socio-cultural and material progress, which continued in the Valley till the fall of the Ahom power and the emergence of the British rule under the East India Company. The British stationed a detachment of Assam Light Infantry locally called as *gora-chipahi* at Jamuguri in Golaghat. Jamuguri was duly connected with the road leading to Dubarani in Barpathar on the Dhansiri and from Barpathar Dimapur could be reached via Dhansiri and from Dimapur via Manipur Road laid through hill tracts of Nagaland Kohima, Manipur, and places like Burma and Rangoon could be reached. As this tract was open to south east Asian countries and to the Naga hills, the British raised this detachment of Indian sepoy at Jamuguri. This detachment entered in to a conspiracy with the young Ahom prince Kandarpeswar Singha to reinstate him on the Ahom throne and maintain the country for the Ahom monarchy. The sepoy of this regiment assembled on the quarter of their Subedar Shaikh Bhaikan on 29th of August 1857 and openly revolted against the British rule. Thus, the Indian Sepoy Mutiny broke out in the Valley in a British army camp at Na-gora (Fig.1 and Fig.10) in Kalujan-Jamuguri at 2100 hours on the night of 29th August 1857⁸⁵. The region of Na-gora-Jamuguri remains, as such, in the annals of the history of the First War of Independence of the Indian people against the British rule as a mark of glory and the spot of the revolt is now indexed at Na-gora on the Golaghat Road of the Valley.

Notes and References

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- 3 A.H.Dani, *op.cit.*, p79
- 4 H.D Sankalia, *Prehistory of India* pp. 161-62
- 5 Shifting or slash and burn or jhum cultivation, culture of erection of memorial stone column worshipping the soul of a dead as prevailed in the surrounding hills and plains of the Doiyang Dhansiri Valley are some of the lingering tradition of neolithic life that bear close resemblance with the south east Asiatic neolithic tradition
- 6 B.K Kakati, *Assamese, Its Formation and Development*, 1972, p.27.
- 7 S.K. Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, 1951 p.5.
- 8 Austric element of *serong*, *serokn* are traced in such words as *Śri*, *Sūr* found as suffix in river names in Assam e.g. *Dhana- Śri* B.K. Barua, *A Cultural History of Assam*, 1969, p.236.
- 9 It is thought that, the Aryans learned and spread the use of iron ; D.D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, 1990, p.82.
- 10 P.C.Saikia, "A Note on Some Archaeological Relics in and around Barpathar (Golaghat), Assam: "An Appraisal." *JARS*, vol. XXV, 1979-80, p.33. These stone plaques are now preserved in the Anthropology Department of Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh.
- 11 Romila Thapar, *A History of India*, 1969, pp.6-7.
- 12 R.C. Mazumdar, (ed.) *The Age of Imperial Unity*, 1990, pp.159-62.
- 13 Romila Thapar, *op.cit.*, p74, p108

- 14 Communication through Dhansiri and Brahmaputra seem to have maintained with sea coast in ancient times. From Tamralipti on Bengal delta trade with Burma and south India was controlled. Indian trade with south east Asia and west coast were regulated from Ghantashala, Tamralipti and Kadura. Indian ships were regularly traversing Chinese seas, Indian Ocean and south east Asian countries from these coastal centres Romila Thapar *op.cit.*, p.74, p.149.
- 15 Romila Thapar, *op.cit.*,p 104
- 16 Romila Thapar, *op.cit.*,pp105-06
- 17 N.R.Banerjee, *The Iron Age India*, 1965,p 161
- 18 The term *ḍong* meaning "water channel" is Austric; B.K. Kakoti, *op.cit.*, p.27. The term "Loā" (iron) may have similar Austric origin.
- 19 The term *rahdhola-pukhuri* might have been derived from *lo-dhola* pukhuri, and may mean pouring (*dhola*) of smelted (*rah*) iron (*lo*) in water (tank) or in earthen couldron possibly to acquire different standards of iron from low grade to high grade as required in such process of iron smelting or otherwise the site must have possessed the necessary skill and the infrastructure for iron smelting and clay mixed iron was either brought to this site or extracted for smelting in clay furnace. (Fig. 6)
- 20 High plasticity and oxide content of the potter's clay as confirmed by the laboratory test on clay samples from Dhekial (*Annexure VIII, IX*) seem to have yielded high grade pottery. Potters from Dhekial traditionally manufactured a variety of pitcher known as *dhekiyaliā-kalah*. The structural feature of *dhekiyaliā-kalah* indicates its possible use as clay furnace. It possibly had the utilitarian advantage of reducing small quantity of iron igniting it to maximum temperature and thereby to melt down the iron inside, facilitating unwanted gangue materials to flow out through its elongated neck. H.L. Chhibber, in his studies on "The extinct iron industry of the Neighbourhood of Mount Popa, Upper Burma", *JASB*, vol., XXII, no.4., 1926,pp 219-32, plate 15, illustrates a pit in which pounded hematite are arranged and ignited. The globular bodied *dhekiyaliā-kalah* maintain structural similarities with those illustrations of pit and furnace.
- 21 M.M. Sharma, *Inscriptions of Ancient Assam*, 1978, Introduction, p.x
- 22 The name Dubarani seems to have been derived from Dubarani meaning meadows of a variety of local carpet grass, that seems to have grown abundantly in this region. Traces of this variety of grass grown in large meadows still to be found in Alichiga-Tengani area
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- 24 Tarapada Bhattacharyya, *The Cannons of Indian Art*, 1963, pp.70-86
- 25 Brick structural evidence of the river *ghat* that was in existence at the mouth of the Dhansiri at this spot had been eroded owing to erosion during the year 1998-1999.
- 26 Tarapada Bhattacharyya, *op.cit.*, pp.70-86.
- 27 "Water reservoirs without shade on the margin are lovely, one ought to have gardens laid out on the banks of the water" P.K. Acharya, *A Dictionary of Hindu Architecture*, 1981, pp.69-70 ; Tarapada Bhattacharyya, *op.cit.*,pp.70-74;
- 28 Hemendranath Dutta, "A New Light on History and Art of Assam", a pamphlet published on 30th December, 2000 pp1-5; "Influence of Saivism in Epigraphs, Art, Iconography and Architecture; A case study of the Doiyang Dhansiri Valley in Assam", Proceedings of Indian Art History Congress, 1999, pp.25-30; Sri Vasundharavarman and the Political History of Ancient Assam during cAD 400-500" *JARS*, vol XXXIV, no 1 -2,2001, pp120-125"The Doiyang Dhansiri Valley and Its Contribution to History, Society, Art, and Culture of Assam and its Adjacent Region of Nagaland" *JARS*, vol XXXVII, 2005,pp190-99
- 29 B.K. Barua, *op.cit.*, p.71.
- 30 Romila Thapar, *op.cit.* pp 104-118

- 31 B.K.Barua, *op.cit.* p110
- 32 Romila Thapar, *op.cit.* pp104- 108
- 33 This excavation was directed jointly by Dr S.K. Manjul, Superintending Archaeologist, Archaeological Survey of India Guwahati Circle, and by this author during 2009-10. The brick built tank of the Sunga period was also exposed in the Ambari Archaeological Site during this excavation. Dr H.N. Dutta, *A Few Inscriptional Discoveries in Assam* (1980-2010), p 10. Directorate of Archaeology Assam, Ambari, Guwahati-781001, Assam.
- 34 This trade route was a sea-land-sea voyage. The historical record Hanshu (history of the (former) Han Dynasty written by Ban Gu (CE 32-92) records existence of trade between China and south east Asia from the time of Emperor Wudi (140-87 BCE) of the former Han dynasty and narrates rhinoceros, horns, elephant tusks, tortoise shells, pearls and jades, silver, copper, fruits and clothes, as among the items exchanged for silks, and gold. The Chinese traders sailed into the south China sea up to the south east coast of Thailand in Malay Peninsula and following a ten -day overland trip took them to Fugandulu, on the west coast of the peninsula and another two months sailing took them to Huangzhi (Vanga or Gange). Haraprasad Ray, *India, South-East Asia and China: Some Historical Issues*, Centre for Archaeological Studies & Training, Eastern India 1 Satyen Roy Road, Kolkata-700 034 (1999) p 8
- 35 M.M. Sharma, *op.cit.* p 0.15
- 36 Three fragments of the NKFSI, have been so far recovered. The first fragment NKFSI-I was discovered by Mohini Kumar Saikia in 1972. This fragment was in the compound of the late Luduram Saikia of Nagajari Khanikargaon, Sarupathar. The second part NKFSI-II was explored by this author with help of Sri Bhabendranath Saikia, the village headman of Khanikargaon and son of the late Luduram Saikia, the donor of the NKFSI-1, Sri Lecham Turung, a teacher and a journalist, Sri Rebakanta Gogoi, an Asstt. Engineer. This fragment was found in the compound of Sri Putul Ali, Sarupathar (Reg. no. GLGT/ASM/4020). Out of the photographic impression supplied by this author, Dharmeswar Chutia has published a report on this fragmentary stone inscription in JARS, vol.XXXIII, no.1, 1996, pp.32-40.and the third fragment NKFSI-III was recovered by this author from Sri Bhabendranath Saikia and Smti Makan Saikia of Khanikargaon, Sarupathar. The NKFSI was originally one large record, which was deliberately broken by the local people out of ignorance in about the year 1959-60. Three fragments of this inscription have been recovered so far and it is possible that at least three more fragments are yet to come to limelight
- 37 This Clay Seal (Plate VII) has been recovered by this author at Alichiga-Tengani (Fig.7 AT 2) with the help of Sri Pradip Konwar, Sri Sonaram Bharali, Barpathar, and Sri Rebakanta Gogoi, Sarupathar on 14-12-95 (Reg. no. GLGT/ASM/4021).
- 38 Dharmeswar Chutia, "A Note on a Fragmentary Stone Inscription from Golaghat District (Nagajori Khanikargaon Fragmentary Stone Inscription): Second Fragment" *JARS*, vol. XXXIII, no.1, 1993, p.34.
- 39 This stone slab inscription (Plate VI) was found at the smaller *setubandha* identified as *paṭṭana* or harbour or *ārāma* at Alichiga-Tengani. (Fig. 7, AT 8) This autor collected this inscription with the help of Sri Pradip Konwar and Sri Sonaram Bharali,Barpathar and Sri Rebakanta Gogoi, Sarupathar on 14-12-95 (Reg. no. GLGT/ASM/4026)
- 40 The ATSI records the name of Sri Ratnavarman in its line fourth in the first section from left, as pointed out by Prof. Bijan Behari Dey, Kolkata University.
- 41 M.M. Sharma, *op.cit.*, pp.101-106, 121.
- 42 Apparently for lack of archaeological information earlier scholars, could not locate the historical location of the region of Uparipaṭṭana. The *setubandha* located at Alichiga- Tengani, the ground plan

- of which has been laid on the bank of Dhansiri and as per the principle of ancient Indian *śilpaśāstra* could be well identified as a *paṭṭana* or harbour of ancient Assam. Opinions of learned scholars offered earlier on Uparipaṭṭana may be found in *ibid.*, p.121; Dimbeswar Sarma (ed), *KāmarūpaĀḍṣandḍvali*, 1981, pp. 34-35; Dharmeswar Chutia, “Umachala Rock Inscription,” *Archaeology of North Eastern India* (ed), Gautam Sengupta, Jai Prakash Singh, 1991, p.236
- 43 *Paṭṭana* is a big commercial unit, situated on sea shore or river bank and always engaged in exchange and commerce with other distant countries (*dvipḍntaras*).P.K. Acharya, *Indian Architecture According to Mānasāra śilpaśāstra*, 1927, p.40.
- 44 M.M. Sharma, *op.cit.*, Introduction, p.3.
- 45 P.C. Choudhury *op. cit.*, p.x, M.M. Sharma, *op.cit.*, 312, tried to include Deopani in Sarupathar region of Doyang-Dhansiri Valley within the ancient Kāmarūpa kingdom. But the facts are clear that the Valley was ruled by an independent line of rulers, (not belong to the Pusyavarman of ancient Kāmarūpa) and thus Deopani region was not included within Kāmarūpa. Absence of the names of Sri Vasundharavarman and Sri Ratnavarman in the genealogical list of the *Tripura Rajmala* edited by Sri Kaliprasanna Sen. in 1336, *Tripurabda*, also shows that the Kingdom of the Doiyang-Dhansiri Valley was different from that of the Tripura Kingdom of the Kapili valley in Nagaon District.
- 46 K. L. Barua, “Early History of Kamrupa from the earliest times to the end of the sixteenth century”, 2008. LBS Publications, Guwahati, p7, p31.
- 47 Dimbeswar Sharma, (ed), *op.cit.*, p.117.
- 48 M.M. Sharma, *op.cit.*, pp.310-311.
- 49 *ibid.*, p.312.
- 50 E.A. Gait, *op.cit.*, p.202.
- 51 M.M. Sharma, *op.cit.*, Introduction, p 03.
- 52 *ibid.*, pp.120-121.
- 53 *ibid.*
- 54 *ibid.*, p.108.
- 55 Dimbeswar Sarma (ed.), *op.cit.* pp.34-35.
- 56 Dharmeswar Chutia, *op.cit.*, p.236.
- 57 K. L. Barua, “Early History of Kamrupa from the earliest times to the end of the sixteenth century”. LBS Publications, Guwahati 2008, *op.cit.*, P7, pp. 27-85.
- 58 P. C. Choudhury, *op.cit.*
- 59 M.M. Sharma, *op.cit.*, p.311.
- 60 The NKFSI-II (plate-IX) records that the Valley was a fertile land producing rich harvests of all kinds of crops. Dharmeswar Chutia, ”A Note on a Fragmentary Stone Inscription, fom Golaghat District”, (Nagajori Khanokargaon Stone Inscription, Second Fragment) *JARS*, vol. XXXIII, no. I, 1993, p.34. The *agrahāra goūrīvāṭaka* and another plot of land donated by Sri Vasundharavarmana, was a fertile land referred to in the record.
- 61 *ibid.*
- 62 M.M. Sharma, *op.cit.* pp.310-11
- 63 R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism* p.37.
- 64 The political influence of this regional kingdom of *Uparipaṭṭana* 1 extended to the entire U p p e r Assam region. Discovery of the Pathli Pahar Stone Inscription at Narayanpur in Lakhimpur indicates extension of his kingdom up to the Lakhimpur District of Assam. Stone sculptures, stylistically belonging to the Dubarani School of Regional Art of the Doiyang-Dhansiri Valley are found at distant places like Sivatal pathar in Dergaon, Barhola, Ratanpur in Na-kachari, Namti and Rangajan

Tea Estate in Tinisukia covering the Upper Assam region.(fig10) The gradual advance of the Ahoms during the early 13th century A.D. pushed back the north-eastern limit of this early mediaeval political kingdom invariably of the Dimasa Kacharis first to the Dikhau river, then to Devargram or Dergaon, then to Numaligarh and finally occupied the capital of their kingdom at Dimapur.

- 65 M.M. Sharma, *op.cit.*, p.305.
- 66 A.S. Altekar, *State and Government of Ancient India*, 1972, p.230.
- 67 R.S. Sharma, *op.cit.*, 1987, p.16.
- 68 A.S. Altekar, *op.cit.* p.230 ; R.S. Sharma, *op.cit.* p.16.
- 69 M.M. Sharma, *op.cit.*, p.309.
- 70 E.A. Gait, *op.cit.*, p.303.
- 71 It may be that, owing to certain natural calamities, such as recurrent flood and epidemics, the capital was shifted from Dubarani to Kasomaripathar. Some dynastical changes might have also taken place in the ruling family for which the capital was shifted during CE 1100-1200. The *caturbhuj*a Siva Stone Image Inscription of Visnupur refers the early mediaeval name of the region as Chakpur.
- 72 The Kacharis were conversant to the establishment of fortified settlement and perhaps apprehended the advent of the Muhammadan invasion led to Kāmarūpa from Bengal to their kingdom during CE 1100-1200. The Kacharis apprehending these invasions fortified their settlements by raising ramparts.
- 73 E.A. Gait, *op.cit.*, pp.300-301.
- 74 The Kacharis claim 103 independent sovereigns commencing with Ghotokacha Narayan, the son of Bhimasena, of the epic *Mahābhārata*. But with the exception of the last few kings, the entire genealogy appears to be a brahmanical manipulation, perhaps done for the purpose of extolling the importance and pure descent of the native ruling dynasty of the Kacharis. The long list, however, indicates remote genealogy of the Kacharis ruling the Valley. W.W. Hunter listed the names of the Kachari kings in his work *op.cit.*, vol.2, 1990, p.403.
- 75 E.A. Gait, *op.cit.*, p.301.
- 76 *ibid.*, p.98.
- 77 William Robinson, *op.cit.*, pp. 384-85.
- 78 J.P. Wade, *op.cit.*, 1972, p.345.
- 79 William Robinson, *op.cit.*, p.388.
- 80 Hiteswar Barbarua, *Ahomar Din*, 1981, p.123.
- 81 Francis Hamilton, *An Account of Assam*, 1963, p.28.
- 82 Hiteswar Barbarua, *op.cit.*, p.543.
- 83 E.A. Gait, *op.cit.*, pp.173-75.
- 84 Ghanakanta Pathok, (ed), "*Stuti*" *Śri Śri Athkheia Nāmghar Mukhapatra*. 1994, pp.1-6.
- 85 At a distance of about 20 km to the south of Golaghat township on the Golaghat-Jamuguri road, the British East India Company had set up a new army camp of British Indian soldiers of the Assam Light Infantry called *gorā-sipāhi* at a place called Kalujan-Jamuguri in the Valley. The Golaghat Jamuguri Road was connected in ancient time with passages leading to Kohima, in Naga Hills and beyond to Rangoon in Burma. For this, the name of this place subsequently came to be known as "*Na-gora*". The Sepoy-mutiny broke out at this camp on the night of 29th of August 1857. H.K.Barpujari, *The Political History of Assam*, vol.,I, 1977, pp107-08; Hemendranath Dutta (ed) *Byatikram*, A book on life and works of Narayan Chandra Dutta, 2006, pp.21-23. During the World War II the Japanese soldiers advanced through this route from Rangoon and heavy fight with the British soldiers took place at Mairang in Manipur and Kohima in Nagaland.