



After the Gupta reign came the Pala dynasty founded by Gopala. The reign of the Pala kings occupies a glorious chapter in the history of Bengal. The Pala emperor had an well-organized navy. The armed forces included soldiers mounted on elephants, cavalrymen and soldiers mounted on camels. The Palas were ancient tacticians but they were taken down by other regions.

The Pala dynasty came to an end in Bengal during the reign of Vasana Pala. Vijayassena of the Sena dynasty defeated him.

The rule of the Senas over North Bengal, however, was rather short-lived as the Sena kingdom was replaced by the Muslim kingdom established by Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji in 1201 AD. Vijayassena, Vallabhasena and Anantassena were the Sena kings who ruled over North Bengal in the 12th century AD.

Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji defeated Lakshminarsena at Nadia in 1201 AD. All Muslim Khaljis assassinated him in turn, while he was lying ill at Devkot. Muhammad Shiran Khalji (one of the officers of Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji) defeated Al-Mardan and imprisoned him after which he was elected the ruler of Lakhnawati. All Mardans fled to Dakh.

All Mardans, who had been mentioned in the name of Malik Ibrahim Muhammad Shiran, reappeared in the politics of Bengal in 1213 AD. He obtained the royalty of Lakhnawati from Goutamuddin Alabak.

Mardan's reign was however short lived and he was killed in 1213 AD by the Khalji nobles who elected Husamuddin Iwaz as ruler. Husamuddin Iwaz ruled for about fourteen years and took the title of Sultan Ghiasuddin Iwaz Khalji. Iwaz was who transferred the seat of Government from Devkot (Bangladesh) to the historic city of Lakhnawati. He conducted two major frontier towns of Devkot, (Barghatta) and Lakshmi (in Barisal district) by an unusually wide and high embanked Grand Trunk Road with

forts on the big rivers like the Ganges or the Lakhnawati and the Manerama and the Farnabhera on the other.

All Mardans had flourished in a lineage to Delhi, and Sultan Ghiasuddin Iwaz Khalji ruled as an independent king in 1227 A.D. when he was defeated at the hands of Nasiruddin, the sultan of Sultan Iltutmish.

From 1227-37 AD, no less than fifteen chiefs were in authority at Lakhnawati and of them ten were Mamiks of the Imperial Court of Delhi. The history of the period is a sickening record of internal dissensions, usurpations and murders.

Akbar conquered Bengal in 1585 AD. During his reign, the district of West Dinajpur was probably with the sardars of Tapan and Parganas. No record worthy of note appears to have taken place in the district of West Dinajpur during the long period of about two hundred years, during which Bengal remained under the control of the Mughals.

The district came under control of the East India Company in 1765, the year in which the East India Company obtained the Diwani of Bengal. They appointed Muhammad Reza Khan as their Nab or deputy at Murshidabad. In order to gain control over the administration, they had forced Najm-ud-douleh Mir Jafar's son, to consent to the appointment of the same Muhammad Reza Khan as his deputy as well.

In the reign of Akbar, we find the first authentic traces of the great zamindar family of Bangladesh, which for the next two centuries took history of the district is closely interwoven.

During the latter half of the 18th century, the district was subjected to the plundering raids of the Saranyas and Sikris. Some of these saranyas settled down and acquired properties in many places including Dinajpur district. The early Muslim period was mostly palatial, less fortified and Auliyas, the holy iron of Islam,

# Museum at a Glance

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- Archaeological Heritage
- Various Sculptures
- Coins
- Inscriptions
- Manuscripts
- Plaques
- House images
- Terracotta

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## Introduction

The district of Dakshin Dinajpur has reasons to be proud of its rich historical and cultural heritage. It was a part of undivided Dinajpur district of erstwhile Bengal which was known as Pundaravardhan Bhukti in ancient times.

According to Birhata Katha, the famous Jain Guru of the Maurya Empire Chandrar Gupta was son of a Brahmin of Dovakul in Pundaravardhan. The eastern portion of Dinajpur known as Panchanagara and Devkot was the capital. The ruins of which are still found in and around Bangarh in Gangarampur PS.

In the centre of Bangarh is a large heap of bricks which is believed to be the palace of Raja Udana. At Shikhat a little distance from the northeast corner of the city heaps of bricks are said to be the ruins of a temple of Vinayakshya Shiva. King Bana was a worshiper of Shiva. He excavated Tapan Dighi in Tapan PS to offer a gift to Shiva. About half a mile west from the northern end of the palace was a house where Usha, daughter of Bana, used to live. She was in love with Anuriddha, son of a Brahmin. Anuriddha fled with Usha, the road he followed is still called Lahanaran Road. However, Usha's love for Anuriddha brought about a fatal destruction of her father and his empire. On the other side of the river Brahmanali is a place called Narayanpur where the great battle between Krishna and Bana is said to have taken place.

tried to establish a illicit relations with Druapadi. A lady at Bairhatta is still called Kichu or Kunda. Dourabard, an area full of mounds, about 15 km away from Bairhatta is said to be the palace of Kichak. An ancient Shaivism temple, known as the temple before called the Palatac. A village in the locality has been named Paricha Bhabra (brother) after the Pandavas. A number of places like Karandighi, Kampana, Kanam in the neighbouring area remind their association with the great war of Kurukshetra.

During the Mauryan period Jainism flourished in this area, a monument has of early been made about the famous Jain Guru Bhadrar Vah, who travelled from present Gangarampur to Pataliputra. The river Pundaravaha was then the main and one of the most important river routes from Pundaravardhan Bhukti to Pataliputra and Indraprastha. Hence then, this area was an important centre of Jainism. The Jain Prasa Pansa mentions the name of Kotvaras.

In the 6th and 7th century AD, many of the Kings, preceding Harsavardhan were devotees of Sun God. There is abundant evidence of sun worship in this region. In Anpanama an old sand stone image of Surya is kept which belongs to pre than the 7th century AD. At Bairhatta, another piece of stone carved in the image of Surya was recovered. Merlion may be made about a very recent recovery. During the occupation of Shubha Dey at Kailash in Haripurpur Police Station by the Panchayat under JRV in June, 1984, a very beautiful stone image of Sun God has come out, which belongs to an earlier period around the 7th century AD.

Another beautiful black stone image of Surya about 3 1/2 ft high, recovered from the or mounds, is now seen kept at Tapan Thana. It is an exquisite and beautiful image, perhaps belonging to the Gupta period.

## History

The district of West Dinajpur came into existence in August, 1947 with the partition of Bengal. The Province of Bengal was divided into two parts in accordance with the Partition. The dividing line passed through the district of Dinajpur, the portion lying to the west of the line being named West Dinajpur. There is no local tradition regarding the origin of the name Dinajpur, and it is also rather difficult to advance any satisfactory theory about the origin of the name.

The district of West Dinajpur contained an area, which in ancient times formed a part of the kingdom of Pundravardhana. The country of the Purandras. According to Birhata Katha of Lalitacharya, Udayacharya (the Jain guru of Chandrogata Mahavi) was the son of a Brahmin of Kotvaras in Pundravardhana.

According to the Jain tradition, Godasa, a disciple of Bhadracharya, founded the school called Godasa-parva, which in course of time had four schools, two of which were called Temsalika, Kivarsaha and Pundravardhanaya. Kotvaras has been identified with Devkot, which again, has been identified with Bangarh in PS Gangarampur. Both names spread in Pundravardhan at about the same time as Jainism.

The discovery of a seal in 1931, which bears the name of Mahasrangarh established the fact that Pundravardhan or Mahasrangarh was a centre of Buddhism in the Maurya period. The 'cassage' or the Mahasrangarh seal concerns the settlement of Pundravardhan and contains a mention regarding the steps to be taken to help them take over a famine. A few clay seals found during excavations at Bangarh in 1931, also were found on them, which may be assigned to the Maurya period. The district

therefore, appears to have been included in the Maurya Empire.

The discovery of terracotta figurines of the Shunga period and Kushana gold coins at Mahasrangarh and at Bangarh indicates that Pundravardhan was in its relations with the rest of India during the reigns of the Sungas and Kushans period. The terracotta figurines show that the arts flourished at that period.

The Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta mentions Samatata, Davaka and Kamrupas as the Kingdoms situated on the eastern frontier of Samudra Gupta's empire.

The discovery of a number of inscriptions of the Gupta and later Gupta periods within or near the district of West Dinajpur bears ample testimony to the sway of the Guptas over Pundravardhan. Five copper-plate inscriptions were discovered in the village of Dandoupar in police station Pitha (now in Bangladesh), and one copper plate inscription was discovered in the village of Rajgram in police station Hill.

The Bangrim copper plate is one of the two which were discovered while excavating a tank at Bangrim police station Hill. The Bangrim copper plate inscription is dated in the year 176 of the Gupta era corresponding to 445 AD and this, refers to the reign of Kumaragupta-I. Although the name of the king does not appear in this copper plate.

These copper-plate inscriptions offer valuable information about some aspects of the administration of the country during the reign of the Gupta kings. The inscriptions reveal the steps to be taken to help them take over a famine. A few clay seals found during excavations at Bangarh in 1931, also were found on them, which may be assigned to the Maurya period. The district





**9) VISHNU (TRIBIKRAM)**

Made up of Black Stone

Dimension: 29"x14"  
Period: 12<sup>th</sup> Century  
Courtesy: Kushmandi Thana

**Description:**

"Kirtimukha" on "Chaali".

"Vidyadhara", "Makara", Elephant, Horse at both sides of the "Chaali".

"Murti" standing on a Lotus with "Shankha", "Chakra", "Gada", and "Padma".

No Damages.

"Garura" at the bottom of the "Chaali".



9) VISHNU (TRIBIKRAM)

Made up of Black Stone

**10) VISHNU (TRIBIKRAM)**

Dimension: 31"x15"  
Period: 12<sup>th</sup> Century  
Courtesy: Banshihari Thana

**Description:**

"Kirtimukha" on "Chaali".

"Vidyadhara", "Makara", Elephant, Horse at both sides of the "Chaali".

"Murti" standing on a Lotus.

"Gada" on the right upper hand, "Padma" on the lower hand, "Chakra" on the upper left hand, "Shankha" on the lower hand.

Small fingers on both right and left upper hand and also the "Kirt" on the head are partly broken.

Rest of the sculpture is intact.



10) VISHNU (TRIBIKRAM)

Made up of Black Stone

**3) VISHNU (GORUR BAHANA)**

Dimension: 38"x20"  
Period: 10<sup>th</sup> Century  
Courtesy: Kushmandi Thana

**Description:**

Light designs on the "Chaali".

"Lord Vishnu" is seated on a Lotus, his one leg is on the head of "Garura" and another leg is on the right hand of "Garura".

The face, chest of "Lord Vishnu" and the face of "Garura" seem to be hurt by some spade like apparatus.

The upper right hand is holding a "Gada", lower right hand is holding a Lotus, left upper hand is holding a "Chakra" and in the left lower hand there is a "Shankha".

"Vidyadhara" and "Vidyadhari" at the bottom of the "Chaali".



3) VISHNU (GORUR BAHANA)

**4) VISHNU (TRIBIKRAM)**

Made up of Black Stone

Dimension: 38"x19 1/2"  
Period: 12<sup>th</sup> Century  
Courtesy: Tapan Thana

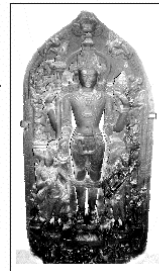
**Description:**

"Kirtimukha" on top of the "Chaali".  
Two "Vidyadhara" at bottom of the "Chaali".  
"Makara", Elephant, Horse can be seen at both the sides of the "Chaali".

The "Chaturbhaja Murti" is standing at the centre on a Lotus.  
"Devil Saraswati" and the Earth at the bottom of the left hand.

"Devil Lakshmi" at the side of lower right hand accompanying by a woman named "Vimala".

The upper right hand is holding a "Gada", lower hand is holding a Lotus, and left upper hand is holding a "Chakra" but the left lower hand is broken. Otherwise the sculpture is unharmed.  
"Garura" at the bottom of the "Chaali" greeting with "Namahaska" pose.



4) VISHNU (TRIBIKRAM)

**5) LAKHMI NARAYAN**

Made up of Black Stone

Dimension: 28"x16"  
Period: 12<sup>th</sup> Century  
Courtesy: Treasury Office, Balughat

**Description:**

"Kirtimukha" on the "Chaali".

Two "Vidyadhara" at two side with "Sings" on their hands seated on Lotuses.  
Right thigh "Lakshmi Devi" is on the left thigh of "Lord Narayana".

In the right upper hand of "Lord Narayana" there is a Lotus; in the lower hand there is a "Shankha". In the left upper hand there is a "Gada" and the left breast of "Devi Lakshmi" is guarded by the lower left hand of "Lord Narayana".

"Garura" at the bottom left of the "Chaali", a man and a woman at the right side.

The sculpture is intact.



5) LAKHMI NARAYAN

Made up of Black Stone

**7) VISHNU (TRIBIKRAM)**

Dimension: 30"x18"  
Period: 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Century  
Courtesy: Gangespur Thana

**Description:**

"Kirtimukha" on "Chaali".

"Vidyadhara" with "Sings" on their hands at both sides.

"Makara", Elephant, Horse, etc.

Standing "Chaturbhaja Murti".

"Gada" on the upper right hand, lower hand is broken up to the face of "Devi Lakshmi".

"Chakra" on the upper left hand, lower hand is broken up to the face of "Devi Saraswati".

Nose and the top part of the "Gada" are partly broken, rest are intact.

"Garura" at the bottom of the "Chaali".



7) VISHNU (TRIBIKRAM)

Made up of Black Stone

**6) VISHNU (TRIBIKRAM)**

Dimension: 28"x14"  
Period: 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Century  
Courtesy: Kushmandi Thana

**Description:**

The left and right corner of the top of "Chaali" is partially broken.

The "Chaturbhaja Murti" is standing on a Lotus.

The Lotus on the lower right hand is broken a little bit.

The lower left hand is broken up to the nose of "Devi Saraswati".

"Gada" on the upper right hand, "Chakra" on upper left hand.

Nose is a bit damaged; otherwise "Makara", Horse, Elephant in the "Chaali" along with "Devi Lakshmi", "Devi Saraswati", "Prithibi", "Vimala" are undamaged.

"Garura" at the bottom of "Chaali".

The "Kirt" on the head, "Kundala" on ears, "Vajrayantara", etc. are in a good condition.



6) VISHNU (TRIBIKRAM)

**8) VISHNU (TRIBIKRAM)**

Made up of Black Stone

Dimension: 27"x15"  
Period: 12<sup>th</sup> Century  
Courtesy: Kushmandi Thana

**Description:**

"Kirtimukha" on "Chaali".

"Vidyadhara", "Makara", Elephant, Horse at both sides of the "Chaali".

Standing "Murti" at the centre with "Shankha", "Chakra", "Gada", and "Padma".

"Saraswati", "Prithibi", "Lakshmi" and "Vimala" are there as it is.

"Gada" on the upper right hand, "Padma" on the lower right hand, "Chakra" on the upper left hand and "Shankha" on the lower left hand.

"Kirt" on the head, small finger of the right upper hand and the nose is partly broken. Rest of the sculpture is intact.



8) VISHNU (TRIBIKRAM)