CHAPTER VI
Summary and Conclusion

The present work is essentially a preliminary approach to reconstruct the settlement history of the study area (the fringe$^1$ and the core$^2$ area of the Chhotanagpur plateau) by analyzing the evolutionary process of the state formation in the bhum territories. It is an endeavour to summarize the database (though partial) discussed in the foregoing chapters to come to a conclusion regarding the settlement history of the study area.

While introducing the basic concept associated with the development of the territories identified as bhums, which actually denotes 'a territory apparently defined by the limits of political control'\textsuperscript{3}, it is an attempt to explain the process of the formation of bhums in the historical context. Although so far eighteen bhum territories\textsuperscript{4} have been identified, yet the designations of the bhums are rarely found in the current nomenclatures except in the local heritages and in the naming of some less-known villages. It may not be unwise to record that these bhums had their geographical settings in the Radha of ancient Bengal\textsuperscript{5}, which was extended in the neighboring northern regions of Orissa, and the southeastern area of modern Jharkhand in the Chhotanagpur plateau during the early-medieval-medieval periods. Mythical connotations (raised in the late$^{16}$th and early$^{17}$th century AD) regarding the creation of some new chiefdoms like the Nagabanshi dynasty\textsuperscript{6}, the Barabhum Raj\textsuperscript{7}and the Malla dynasty\textsuperscript{8} have appeared in the 'belief system of the society'. In the literary and historical records, though they are meagre in number, there appear differential hypotheses regarding the periodization of the emergence of the bhums. The reference to Vajjabhum and Subhabhum\textsuperscript{9} appears in the Acharanga Sutra\textsuperscript{10} datable to $5^{th}$ / $4^{th}$
century BC. Besides others, the *Bhavisyat Purana*\(^{11}\) datable to the 15\(^{th}\) or 16\(^{th}\) century AD also refers to the names of the royal families and some of their territorial units. The epigraphic records such as the Keonjhar inscription datable to the 5\(^{th}\) century AD\(^{12}\), the Siyan Stone Slab Inscription of Nayapalā\(^{13}\) datable to 10\(^{th}\)-11\(^{th}\) century AD, the *Ramacaritam* of Sandhyakaranandin* datable to 12\(^{th}\) century AD\(^{14}\), and a few texts and records of the 17\(^{th}\) century including *Akbarnama*, *Bahrستان-i-Ghaybi*, and *Jahangirnama*\(^{15}\), and the Mughal official documents suggest the existence of forest principalities apparently identified with the distribution zone of the *bhums*. Later, these whole territories have become, more or less, part of the Jungle Mahal, formulated in the 18\(^{th}\) century AD under the British East India Company’s administrative jurisdiction and some dependent *chiefdoms* lying in the present districts of Bankura, Birbhum, Medinipur, and the adjoining hilly areas of the Chhotanagpur plateau\(^{16}\). These *bhums* could maintain their indigenous administrative machineries in the original homelands of several autochthonous/tribal groups under the banner of the remote forest-clad terrains. Afterwards, some of the subordinate ruling families and their units like *Singhbhum*, *Manbhum*, *Samantabhum*, and even *Mallabhum* were governed by the British East India Company.

Historically, as well as archaeological remains provide some opportunity to explain the existence of some well-known principalities known as *bhum* in the forested region of the plateau. Thus, the present work tries to make a successful attempt to unfold the genesis of such growth and development of settlements in the concerned region.

Scholars are hardly unanimous in defining the term ‘state’ and its formation particularly with reference to the pre-colonial India. However, a number of state-related theories have come up highlighting the preconditions for state formations like
the necessity to protect a developing private property, the surplus production, acculturation, Rajputaization, Hinduization, social stratification etc led to the formation of a state. The traditions of studying the early form of statehood and its nature as evolved in the pre-colonial India have become the major theme of research since the beginning of the twentieth century. In this study, the emergence of statehood, the legitimization process of state power, the synthesis of the elements of political suzerainty with religious and cultural processes related to a few particular bhumi territories evolved during the early-medieval-medieval period in the fringe areas of the Chhotanagour plateau have been delineated in Chapter One.

The second chapter deals with the historiography and the major researches that highlight different issues regarding state formations during the early-medieval-medieval period. The works of Ronald Cohen, Hermann Kulke, Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, Surajit Sinha, Hitesranjan Sanyal, Mahesh Sharma, and others have been discussed in this chapter. In the existing historiography, the post-Gupta period has been visualized as the period of "...‘ruralization’ and ‘localization’ of economy, in combination with the emergence of the hierarchized layers of landed intermediaries, radically transformed the character of the economy........ At one level, the decline of urban centres as settlements of a composite population, of crafts and artisanal production, and of exchange, resulted in migration of both non-producing groups such as Brahmans as well as artisanal groups to rural areas and to expansion of rural settlements on a considerable scale. Rural expansion, assumed on the basis of references to grants of specific villages or village land to Brahmans and temples, also implied rural stratification and a parallel breakdown of its communal structure. It has been stressed that since transfer of land rights to donees specifically included rights over pastures, forest lands and other items hitherto enjoyed by the village community,
land grants completely broke up communal rights and led in many cases to the emergence of substantially larger estates, held individually or on behalf of temples or monasteries.29 According to Chattopadhyaya, ‘... the major historical processes operative throughout Indian history, including the early medieval period, were the expansion of the state society through the process of local state formation, the transformation of the tribes into peasants and caste formation, and cult appropriation and interaction’.

The said historiography has enough merit if it is applied in the context of the present study. It has been visualized that with the existing database, one could attempt to reconstruct the formation and development process of bhumi territories in the above theoretical frameworks. In the following chapters, attempts have been made to arrange some relevant database to interpret different facets of early-medieval paradigms related to the development of so-called state formation in the territories generally known as bhums. Certainly, the limitations of the present work have also been discussed in different contexts.

The subject of state formation is closely associated with the facts of geographical and cultural issues. The geo-physical identity of a particular region bears close relationship with the development of cultural patterns of the concerned space. In the third chapter, attempt has been taken to present a general picture regarding the physiography, geology, drainage, climate, metals and minerals, flora, fauna, soil, and population of the core area covering the districts of Palamau, Hazaribagh, Ranchi, Singhbhum and Santal Parganas of modern Jharkhand and the Purulia district of West Bengal. This provides a general basis of settlement dynamics31 of the districts and its peripheries comprising Birbhum, Barddhaman, Bankura, and undivided Medinipur of West Bengal32. Its resources ultimately encouraged the growth of human settlements.
obviously in the core and the fringe areas of different principalities from formative to a major unit. From the analyses of the physiographic features of the entire study area, it is evident that the extreme core region is featured by rocky and densely forested topography that did not appear favorable for the growth and development of forest principalities. Geographically, this rugged terrain gently rolls down towards the eastern and southeastern parts (Singhbhum, Purulia, Bankura, and parts of Medinipur districts) and subsequently merges with the Gangetic and coastal plains (Barddhaman, Birbhum, and parts of Medinipur districts). In this ecological ambience, reflecting the suitability for habitation, a number of bhum territories are seen to be emerged in different pockets of the easternmost parts of the core as well as in the fringe areas of the Chhotanagpur plateau. The geo-physical features of this region definitely bear influences on the politico-cultural tenets of bhum territories which were in their secondary stage of state formation during the early-medieval-medieval period in association with different tribal groups.

The fourth chapter briefly traces an outline of the political history or it is associated with the rise and growth of bhum territories with special reference to Manbhum (Purulia), Gopabhum (Barddhaman), and Mallabhum (Bankura). Rationales for selecting the three units such as Manbhum, Gopabhum, and Mallabhum as representative bhum territories include the following:

(a) These three bhums substantially provide the features of the territories identified as bhum.

(b) With the help of literary and archaeological sources the geographical limits of these bhums can be drawn.

(c) The monumental character of settlement found from these three units are pronounced, i.e., secular and non-secular (religious) edifices help
identifying administrative and other functional activities of these units.

The ‘representative’ bhums have been studied in the context of the incomplete nature of the available data. Regarding the reconstruction of the history of Manbhum, in view of partially available data, its chronological paradigm can hardly be determined. According to the Susunia Rock inscription, king named Chandravarma, the son of Singhavarma, ruled over Puskarana. It is maintained that the central, western, and southern regions of Manbhum, virtually remained in the ‘pre-state’ condition for successive years36. During the post-Gupta period, i.e., from the 6th century AD onwards the entire kingdom of Puskarana came under the jurisdiction of the independent local rulers, who might be the governors of the Gupta emperors37. The Mallasarul inscription and the Kotalipur inscription recorded the name of one Maharaja Vijayasena, an Upari or viceroy of Vardhamanabhukti under Maharajadhiraja Gopachandra. It is quite probable that the territory of Vardhamanabhukti38, apart from consisting of a large portion of the modern districts of Hooghly, Barddhaman, Bankura, Birbhum, also comprised the Damodar valley portion of the present day Purulia district39. However, from the middle of the 8th century onwards the entire tract of Manbhum often passed either to the hands of the emperors of the Pala dynasty or to its Orissan rulers. The latter had to withstand a series of assaults from the local de facto chieftains or feudatory chiefs and the territorial kings, who ruled the region under the superficial hegemony of the powerful potentates. The Ramacaritam of Sandhyakarandin furnishes a list of semi-independent and nominally independent chiefs and feudatories, the vassals who had helped Ramapala (1077-1120) to regain his ancestral kingdom from the rebel Kaibarttas. Rudrasikhara of Tailakampi may be referred to say that he perhaps
accepted the overlordship of the Palas. The vast archaeological remains recorded from Telkupi made different scholars to identify Tailakampi with modern Telkupi. So far as the medieval history of Manbhum is concerned, Sikhara dynasty, as mentioned in the Sirat-i-Firuz Shahi, might have played a decisive role in shaping Sikharabhum. There was an important fort at Pachet, or Panchet or Panchkot or Panchakot, known as the Garh Panchkot, was the seat of the Raja of Pachet. It may be that the Raja of Pachet or Panchkot or Panchakot was a semi-independent ruler. Presumably, the pressure of paying increasing peshkush imposed upon him by a ruler, superior in hierarchy, or any such reason might have compelled the Raja to depart the fort and transferred the capital to Kashipur, located in present Purulia, during 17th century. Based on the records of 1590 AD onwards, it seems that the territory on the south of the river Kansabati remained outside the domain of the Raja of Pachet or Panchkot or Panchakot. There grew up two significant semi-feudal and semi-independent Bhumij states, viz., the Barabhum Raj and the Manbhum Raj. It is assumed by Mukhopadhyaya that from the ancient time, the territory of Manbhum was a continuation of the region of Bengal, which was previously a constituting unit of the kingdom of Gauda during the period in between 580 AD and 637-38 AD.

Gopabhum, as a geo-political unit, flourished under the Sadgop ruling lineages. The territory of Gopabhum, probably extended over the parganas of Salimpur, Shergarh, and Senpahari, thrived in a period when a number of independent kingdoms began to come into existence after the dissolution of the Gupta Empire in Bengal. The political history of Gopabhum assumes a contextual relationship with Varddhamanabhukti as the focal point of study. Varddhamanabhukti was a wider tract of land incorporating different neighboring regions in different points of time. Both the divisions of Radha (i.e., Uttara Radha and Dakshina Radha)
were included, according to the Mallasarul Plate of 6th century AD, the Irdha Grant of 10th century AD, and the Naihati and Gobvindapur Grants of 12th century AD along with the region of the Damodar river valley with Vardhamanabhukti. It was extended up to the river Subarnarekha in the south in the 10th century AD and the river Ajay in the 12th century AD. In this regard, the network of administrative allotment can be visualized in the division of bhukti in such units, viz., vishaya, mandala or vithi and their sub-units, namely, khandala, avritti, and bhaga. Avritti was again subdivided into chaturakas. The chaturakas were again subdivided into patakas. There were other sub-divisions like, bhaga, grama etc. The explanatory viewpoints of the Barrackpore Grant, the Sundarban Plate of Lakshmanasena, the Khalimpur Plate of Dharmapala, and others did not present any clear and well-defined jurisdiction of these units and their functions; rather a confused and overlapping nature of the functions of the divisions of the administrative units have been presented. Whatever may be the connotations, it can hardly be denied that the existence and continuation of a process having structural and functional components of governance existed to any extent at the lowest level even after the disintegration of the Gupta Empire and afterwards in Bengal. The literary evidence visualizes the fact of at least partial inclusion of the administration of the grass root level of the society into the administrative process of the kingdom in the early-medieval period. It can precisely be presumed that such an administrative process, being a substantive precondition of state formation (in the modern sense of the term), already prevailed over there during the Gupta and post-Gupta periods (4th-8th century AD) in Bengal. The nuances of the designations, so to say, the Maharaja (Maharaja Vainyagupta) and Maharajadhiraja (Maharajadhiraja Gopachandra) symbolized ranks in the designation and independence enjoyed by the potentates in their respective spheres. It
may be inferred that *Gopabhum* had been enjoying under *Maharajadhiraja* Gopachandra some structural and functional benefits of enriched administrative procedure.

Iswar Ghosh, depicted as *Ichhai Ghosh* in the lyrics of *Mangalakavya*, under the title of *Mahamandalika*\(^{49}\), appeared as a vassal king under the Pala rule. He was an independent vassal king who belonged to the *Gopa* dynasty\(^{50}\). The branches of this dynasty got spread towards Dignagar, Kanksa, Bharatpur, and Mangalakote. The archaeological vestiges in the form of architectural members and sculptural specimens reported from Amrargarh, Kanksa, Gaurangapur, Dhekur or Trisasthigarh, Banesvar Danga, Bharatpur, Mangalakote, and other sites bear substantive credence from the socio-political and religious standpoint so far as the reconstruction of the settlement history of *bhum* is concerned. Apart from the politico-administrative approach, the religious ideologies of Brahmanism and Tantricism were practiced to impart legitimacy to the royal deeds by the Brahmans. The *kings*, belonged to the local lineages, used to follow all the nuances of religious practices honestly and the Brahmans had to depend upon the *kings* for land grants to get them engaged in the works of the court. The inter-dependence between the kingship and the religious community led to the growth of a politico-religious system of administration. However, a combination of unfriendly external pressures yielded by the entry of the Muslim invaders in Bengal, the Maratha assault in the consecutive years of 1742-1751 AD and the expansionist attitude of Barddhaman *Raj* Chitra Sen signaled the final collapse of the independence of *Gopabhum* in 1744.

*Mallabhum* was situated in the heartland of the *Radha* region\(^{51}\) in Bengal, i.e., the eastern fringes of the Chhotanagpur plateau. There evolved a series of principalities on the undulating landscape of *Radha* and among them *Mallabhum*
emerged as a powerful kingdom in western Bengal. The consolidation of the political power of the Malla princes came to be known since the 8th century AD onwards. The Malla rajas extended their boundary by acquiring the territories of modern Damin-i-Koh in Santal Parganas, some parts of present East and West Medinipur and a part of the eastern section of modern Barddhaman. According to the genealogy of the Malla dynasty, it appears that Raghunath Singh was the founder king of the Bishnupur Raj and Bishnupur or Vishnupur was the seat of the Malla ruling authority for many centuries. According to the pundit's chronicle Adi Malla, the Bagdi Raja, first became the chieftain and he reigned over Laugram for thirty-three years. His son was Jay Malla who made a greater expansion of his territory and shifted his capital to Bishnupur. The dimensions of the political authority of different rajas of Mallabhum can be discerned not only in their capability of maintaining the military might for a long period but also in the consolidation of their political power and achieving the technique of gaining consent of the people behind their rule. The rajas were engaged in the administrative works, revenue earning and in making provisions for producing agricultural surplus. Apart from that, the royal authority was engaged in the religious activities like the construction of temples, adherence of different ritualistic practices, keeping contact with the Vaisnavite centers of northern India, encouraging music and after all exhibiting preference in the redistributive performances in the society at large. The above multi-faced dimensions reveal that the processes of Hindutization and Rajputaijation were in practice for decades through the process of evolution. These factors could activate the signals of ‘stimulus diffusion’ of the state formation process in the homelands of the tribal people in Mallabhum.
The fifth chapter attempts to give a brief summary of the archaeological database recorded from the study area, following the traditional method, i.e., by giving a brief description of the sites/settlements and the analysis of the archaeological data mainly in the form of architectural and sculptural remains. It can hardly be ignored that the sites are, nevertheless, voluminous in the bhums or the districts placed in the western and southwestern region of West Bengal in relation to those found in the state of Jharkhand. The sites described here include both excavated and explored ones. The excavated sites include Baneswardanga, Bharatpur, Mangalkote/Mangalkot, Pandu Rajar Dhibi (lying in the present district of Barddhaman), Dihar, Pakhana/Pokharna (in the district of Bankura), Moghalmari/ Mughalmari and Tamluk (located in the present district of East and West Medinipur respectively) and others. Apart from this, a large number of explored sites (though not exhaustive) have been identified which indicate the presence of non-religious archaeological vestiges comprising the remnants of palace- fort- moat-well- reservoir along with architectural members and some epigraphic records. Most of the sites are strewn with sculptural remains associated with Brahmanical, Jaina and Buddhist ideologies. The cultural magnanimity of any site may well be compared with its geopolitical location and the surroundings. On the basis of the analyses of the sites some inferences can be worked out in the following way:

The remnants of the forts found in Palamau (Jharkhand) are said to belong to a period of 16th century AD. In Santal Parganas, the holy site of Baidyanath Dham belonged to 15th century AD. In Ranchi, the temples found in Tanginath, Haradih, and Bundu belonged to 8th - 10th centuries AD. The Dudpani Ghat rock inscription found in Dumduma (Hazaribagh) is said to belong to 8th century AD. The structural as well as the sculptural remains at
Itkhori and a number of Jaina and also Brahmanical sculptural images found near the Kolua Pahar region belonged to 7th century AD, i.e., the later Gupta period. A large number of Jaina sculptural remains and the Brahmanical sculptural specimens found in Chandil (Singhbhum) belonged to a period of 8th century AD. The relics of Benusagar which are often considered to be the extension of the ruins found in Khiching in Orissa have been said to be further extended over the regions of Purulia. The large number of temples and deities focusing bulks of the Jaina and Brahmanical faiths found over a wider area covering the districts of Singhbhum, Purulia, and Bankura delineate the periodization around 10th century AD. A general over-view of the relics and the ideologies behind them as well as the period of their occurrences over a wider geographic region can indicate the existence of some connecting routes persisted in this region. It is found that there are two significant pathways linking the bhum territories emerged on the undulating plains of the Chhotanagpur plateau with the larger religious centers of Benaras and Puri. In this regard, the road connecting Tamluk with Patna and the route along the River Kansabati may be considered to be the nerve centers which pass through our subject area of Ghatal in Medinipur, Bishnupur in Bankura, Raghunathpur of Purulia to Singhbhum and other districts in the north. Another road, the Calcutta-Benaras road was also there. These connecting passageways can well be referred to explain the occurrences of numerous remains of sculptural specimens found in Para, Pakbira, Anai Jambad, Boram, Budhpur, Palma, Ralibera, and other places in Purulia. In the less-fertile upland plateau region, presumably, trade and business was undertaken by the Sarak community. To consider Bankura, it appears that the temples of Bahulara, Saleswar, Sareswar,
Ekteswar, and the relics of the temple of Harmasra located in the western and southwestern region possess similarities (by virtue of nearness) with those of Purulia. At the same time, the temples of Begunia, Ichhai Ghosher Deul, Sat Deulia, and others (placed in the northern side of the modern district of Barddhaman) bear semblance with the temples mentioned which belonged to the same period. Dilip K. Chakrabarti has clearly mentioned that ‘The spread of Orissan architectural style from Tanginath near Chainpur in Ranchi to Harmasra, Bahulara and other places in Bankura-Burdwan clearly underlines... that the plateau region was not an area of isolation’. The architectural style, focused on the walls of the temples and the sikharas thereof may unfold the possibility of linking the parts of this region in its entirety to a process of ‘secondary state formation’ to a large extent. Mention may be made of the fact that the indigenous tribal potentates and the people apparently perceived the waves of socio-cultural development often generated by ‘the broader productive machinery of the Hindu society’. In spite of the occurrences of the historical plateau-plain exchange system, ‘We have no doubt to point out the archaeological evidence underpinning the element of contact right from the historic period onwards, but at the same time the archaeological assemblages of the plateau maintain a distinct identity’. It may not be unwise to point out that the people of the entire plateau region undertook at least three types of economic performances, e.g., slash-and-burn agriculture, plough agriculture, and hunting-gathering in addition to craft works and iron-smelting. The area experienced the initial phase of the formation of village farming settlement by the tribal people. It may be discerned that some sort of comprehensive economic-social-religious-cultural activities had
been concentrated in the Chhotanagpur plateau region under the *bhum* administration. This sort of activities might well bear the connotations of the preconditions of the processes of state formation there, which may be studied in some form or other in the writings of different authors of this subject. This socio-political milieu persisted over the region during the 13th-15th century AD in the *bhum* territories who underwent the transformation process from clan to territory.

The analyses of such database can be undertaken as a significant tool to visualize the growth and development of the said *bhum* territories. It has been surmised that the nature of the remains found in and around the sites of Chandil, Jayada, Telkupi, Boram, Palma, Chhara, Budhpur and Ambikanagar helped explaining the settlement dynamics of *Manbhum*. The data yielded at Bharatpur, Ichhai Ghosher Deul, Shyamaruper Garh, and even Mangalkot etc can be used for the reconstruction of the history of *Gopabhum*. The areas in and around the Bishnupur town which is generally known as the major centers of *Mallabhum* provides enormous data to interpret the core and the peripheral areas of the settlement activities associated with the said *bhum* territories.

The present study though preliminary in nature, attempts to lay a basic foundation/platform on which future investigations may be carried out, i.e., with reference to the delineation of possible state structures in the forested zones of the eastern Indian plateau (Chhotanagpur). The evolution of not only both the major and minor settlements essentially fostered by political lineages but other forms of indigenous ways of administration may also be visualized in the formation of state as traced in the present work. Unfortunately, in the archaeological survey, there are limitations to gather substantial data to explain the secular aspects of state formation,
i.e., the monumental structures related to the administrative functions, the core area of
the ruling authority, besides others, which are significant for the reconstruction of the
state power. However, the elite and royal dimensions have been expressed with
reference to the erection of temples, monasteries and legitimization of folk deities, as
well as religious ideologies.

For further investigations of the processes of state formation in the bhum
territories which emerged in early-medieval-medieval period in the core and fringe
areas of the Chhotanagpur plateau, the following tentative suggestions may be
undertaken. These include

(a) investigation of more epigraphic records,
(b) a further exploration of archaeological vestiges,
(c) analysis of other historical records/documents supporting the development
of bhum administration, and
(d) the identification of secular documents supporting/attesting the locations of
the administrative centres associated with the administrative networks of
the bhum territories.
REFERENCES


12. Ibid., p. 37.


