CHAPTER - 7:

UNDERSTANDING THE SITES IN RELATION TO DIHAR

In the preceding chapters, the investigator has tried to highlight and discuss about the explored sites, the explored artefacts and the respective contexts of the sites. Through the understanding of the location and distribution of sites, there emerges a picture of the settlement patterning of the area, which has been attempted to be discussed in this chapter. This chapter attempts to take into account all the evidences (archaeological and historical) and evaluate the relationship between the sites in the river valley, through the proper evaluation of their location and distribution. In this discussion, the investigator has also tried to highlight the importance of Dihar and its influence on the rest of the sites in the vicinity.

The development of the present day villages in their modern geographical settings can well be comprehended through ethnographic surveys which indicates how an area gradually develops from a homestead to a village and then to an agglomeration of villages with a nucleus that serves as the main centre of growth and development. The peripheral areas also develop accordingly in conjunction with the main village, located at the nucleus. Often with subsequent developments, these peripheral areas coincide and act as a new nucleus. But archaeologically it is difficult to assess the different stages of development and to establish relationship between settlements. The sites situated in the river valleys are subject to differential volumes of erosion and aggradation. Fluvial processes have the potential to obscure, expose, or even destroy portions of the archaeological record. Flood plain aggradation can bury and hide archaeological features, whereas actively migrating channels can erode them. It has to be realized that the archaeology observed is, therefore, not a complete record of human activity, but a filtered record modulated by geological processes (Clevis et al. 2006).

Archaeologists have to take into account each and every bit of evidence to construct a picture of the past cultural ecology. The location of sites, the governing ecological parameters and artefacts collected from a stratigraphic context play a dominant role in
the holistic understanding of sites. Moreover, it is necessary to understand the post-depositional factors that might have affected the artefacts by altering their original context and the overall character of the site. In this chapter, the researcher would like to put together all such evidences that will help in understanding the sites and their relationship. The excavated data being limited, the researcher had to depend solely on the explored data and the morphological built-up of the landscape in understanding the relation between sites in the river valley.

7.a. Settlement Pattern Studies

Before proceeding with the investigation it is worthwhile, if a brief overview of the work on settlement pattern is provided at the onset. Settlement pattern studies can give us an idea about the nature and relation between human beings and physical environment. The concept of settlement pattern was first put to substantial use in the field of archaeology by Gordon R. Willey in his book ‘Prehistoric Settlement Patterns in the Viru valley’ (Willey 1953). He described settlement pattern as a “Strategic starting point for the functional interpretation of archaeological cultures” that reflect “the natural environment, the level of technology on which the builders operated, and various institutions of social interaction and control with culture maintained”. Since then a considerable number of studies have been concerned with settlement pattern. The study of sites in relation to the regional landscape was found essential in order to have a holistic picture of the sites. Selection of a region according to definite ecological features was specified as one of the first criteria of studying past human cultures (Binford 1964). With such studies, the importance of context, site formation processes and regional studies gained prominence. The context and formation of sites are very much linked with the understanding of the settlements. Studies with such emphasis mark a definite departure from the culture-history approach which was in vogue in the archaeological scenario till 1960’s.

Chang defines “An archaeological settlement is the physical locale or cluster of locales where the members of a community lived, ensured their subsistence, and pursued their social functions in a delineable time period” (Willey 1968). Scholars have observed that two approaches dominate settlement pattern studies. The first is primarily ecological and often appears to be based on the assumption that the
settlement pattern is a product of simple interaction of two variables-environment and technology. The ecological approach is primarily an investigation of how settlement pattern reflects the adaptation of a society and its technology and environment. In the second kind of approach, settlement pattern are used as a basis for making inferences about the social, political and religious organisation of prehistoric cultures (Trigger 1968).

Trigger has suggested some determinants in understanding settlement pattern and in this regard has concentrated on three different levels of settlement pattern studies (Trigger 1968) starting with the individual building or structure followed by studies on the community level and finally ending with the zonal arrangement of the settlements.

Starting with the first level of settlement pattern, a house, according to him, actually represents an attempt to meet the challenge of an environment with the building materials that the same environment offers. The class divisions and the considerable variety of public buildings are often reflected through the archaeological record that helps to understand the patterning of settlements. By determining the use that was made of individual buildings, the archaeologist can recover a good deal of information about patterns of production and trade in ancient societies. He (Trigger 1968) further observes that the religious beliefs of a society may affect house types and also result in the construction of shrines, temples or tombs. But such studies can only be conducted if there is large volume of excavated data from a specific region which lends an idea of the individual buildings and the related intricacies.

Regarding the community layout, it has been observed that community size and location are influenced to a large extent by ecological factors and the layout of communities appears to be strongly influenced by family and kinship organization. In complex societies, subsistence factors, in the narrow sense, are less important as determinants of the size and location of communities. Trade gives a different outlook to the patterning of the community (Trigger 1968).

Coming to the zonal pattern of the arrangement of sites, he says, that the overall density and distribution of population of a region is determined to a large degree by
the nature and availability of the natural resources that are being exploited. In complex societies, fertile regions become centers of population and hence of political and cultural importance. Trigger states that more dynamic factors of migration and population change should also be taken into consideration while studying settlement patterns. Factors vary in importance according to both the local situation and the temporal relationship that they have to one another (Trigger 1968).

In order to discuss about the settlement pattern of the present study area, the researcher has concentrated on the zonal pattern, i.e., the third level of settlement pattern studies as suggested by Bruce Trigger (Trigger 1968). The data for interpretation comes from the field work conducted by the researcher throughout the middle stage of the Dwarakeswar river valley. The limitations in the data for understanding the first two levels of settlement pattern studies have been discussed in the following pages.

In order to deduce these diverse aspects of human behavior as mentioned above, two types of questions are primarily dealt with; distribution of settlements or settlement patterns which describes how a particular group’s sites are distributed over the landscape and the settlement subsistence system which describes how site distribution is organized relative to the exploited resources (Rafferty 1985).

The first question deals with the spatial relationship between dwellings and settlements dispersed or nucleated, linear or scattered, etc.; this takes into account the size, spacing, density, dispersion, centrality and settlement types. Rural settlement pattern studies can be used as a starting point with which to understand archaeological settlements. The major patterns are nucleated or clustered pattern, composed of villages each more or less compact where houses are clustered together to form a compact habitation area clearly demarcated from the surrounding agricultural fields, or dispersed consisting of single homesteads at some distance from each other with its own farm. In between the nucleated and dispersed type we have other forms of settlements like semi-compact or semi-sprinkled in which there is a main area of concentration surrounded by dispersed smaller areas of activity (Rafferty 1985).
Nucleation can result from the necessity of dealing effectively with a somewhat hostile environment and by the advantages of organizing a permanent system of cultivation. Dispersed settlements, on the other hand, are normal in many unrewarding highland and forested areas where agricultural opportunities are limited by a difficult terrain, a harsh climate and sterile soils. An area where water supplies are virtually ubiquitous, provided it is also reasonably productive, may also be expected to favour a dispersed population (Hudson 1970).

Coming to the second question as mentioned by Rafferty (Rafferty 1985) on how settlements are organized relative to the resources available, subsistence patterns can determine how settlements are located or organized; whether agricultural or pastoral or hunting communities or trade plays an important factor in governing the location of the sites. An agricultural population should be identifiable by the distribution of all sites in fertile areas and absence of seasonal herder campsites. However not only environmental factors, but social perceptions of the land can also structure the distribution of sites.

Some geographical models have been put forward to explain the relationship between a site, its resources and interaction with other sites. Von Thunen’s location theory recognizes the relationships between the spatial distribution of activities and land use around a centre and the law of diminishing returns with increasing distance. Weber’s locational theory considers the location of a site in terms of its outward connections and the movement of resources. Christaller’s Central Place Theory models economic behavior among many centres at a regional scale (Leong and Morgan 1997). The concept of site catchment analysis as propounded by scholars (Vita Finzi and Higgs 1970) deserves mention in archeological context, which was applied for the first time in studying the prehistoric economy in the Mount Carmel area of Palestine and can be considered to be one of the very useful models through which a relationship can be established between a site and its resource utilisation area. But in the present study, with specific limitations, it was not possible to determine the relationship of the sites and the resource utilisation areas. For discussing the site distribution and its organization relative to the exploited resources, specialised information is necessary for which data from excavations is highly essential. The investigator would thus like to highlight the limitations in discussing the settlement pattern of the study area.
In the present study, the investigator has tried to understand the location and distribution of sites in relation to the landscape. The investigator would like to highlight here some important factors regarding the nature of ‘sites’ in the present study area. The present study area has only one excavated site based on which a large part of the archaeological record has been understood. Besides this, the past habitation sites are mostly inhabited by the present people and hence quite a few sites lie below the present habitations, in which case, the extent and occupational debris cannot be estimated. The distribution of different sites belonging to three cultural periods has been determined on the basis of ceramics. Surface indications of archaeological sites having very thin habitational deposits are likely to get disturbed due to cultivation. Repeated ploughing of past habitations has caused damage to a certain extent. Moreover, the archaeological mounds in most of the areas have been dug out for utilising the mound soil for construction purpose. Natural factors have also equally damaged the sites and hence, the sites in the river valley are under massive threat of complete destruction.

As most of these past habitations have been destroyed, either due to floods or has been subject to cultivation as well as modern habitations, demarcating the exact boundaries, has been difficult. So the questions of ‘site-size’ or ‘site hierarachy’ are difficult to define in the present study area. Moreover, the sites are not uniformly distributed throughout the river valley due to which any statements regarding the spacing pattern of sites is also difficult to ascertain. The excavated data comes only from a single site whose excavation reports are unavailable. Due to these limitations, most of the models mentioned above could not be applied on the present data. Nevertheless, the investigator has tried to focus on the location of individual sites, in relation to the immediate landscape and has relied on the distribution of sites in the river valley in ascertaining the patterning of settlements. In some situations, distance from the main river or even inter-spacing between the sites has been looked upon as important indicators in understanding the settlement pattern of the area.

In order to present the data in a systematic manner and for interpretation, site distribution maps have been prepared which categorically shows the concentration of
the black and red ware, early historic and medieval sites. This gives as a preliminary idea of the settlement pattern of the study area. This pattern has been evaluated with probable reasons for the concentration of sites in a particular manner.

7. c. Studies on settlement pattern in India: A brief overview

The available literature on various aspects of settlement pattern is quite substantial which helps to understand the different ways through which scholars have tried to relate the ecological parameters with archaeological data and in turn understand their social implications. The concept of settlement pattern has been dealt from various viewpoints of geographers, archaeologists as well as historians. Understanding site-sizes and grading them according to a hierarchy has been attempted also. However, some of the works have been critiqued, where understanding the size of the settlement by surface scatter and estimating population size by the size of the settlement is, at best, found to be unreliable.

With the advancement in processual research, settlement studies have gained impetus, whereby scholars have tried to bring into focus new and more diverse aspects of settlement studies of which the regional perspective and the importance of landscape in understanding the sites deserves special mention. On the other hand, the ‘urban’ or ‘rural’ nature of the sites have been tried to be conceptualised through different literary and archaeological evidences.

Though prehistoric sites have not been covered in the present study, but it is true that the settlement studies have gained more prominence in the field of prehistoric studies. The sites have been focused on a regional context in order to gain a holistic understanding of the area. In this regard, studies conducted by Paddayya (Paddayya 1985) in the Hungi- Baichbal area deserve special mention. Coming to the chalcolithic period, the settlement studies on the hierarchy of central Indian sites also deserves a mention (Dhavalikar 1978, Shinde 1998). Dhavlikar has tried to show how large scale excavation helps us in understanding the settlement archaeology of a chalcolithic community. He has tried to understand the community pattern from the excavated data of Inamgaon. Shinde, on the basis of the study of surrounding ecological conditions and a detailed observation of the ancient settlements, has
reconstructed the site hierarchy of the sites in the Tapi basin. He has concentrated on
the zonal pattern of the distribution of sites. Together with the settlement pattern, in-
depth study of the subsistence pattern of the chalcolithic people has been attempted in
the study. Some of the facets of the chalcolithic life-style have been interpreted with
the help of ethnographic parallels (Shinde 1998).

Considerable number of studies has also been undertaken on the settlement pattern of
the early historic sites. Some instances can be cited in this regard. Understanding site-
sizes and grading them according to hierarchy was first attempted by Lal and Erdosy.
(Lal 1984, Erdosy 1985). Makhar. Lal studied the settlement history of Kanpur district
from 1200 BC to AD 300. Erdosy studied the developments in the settlement pattern
in Kausambi area from 1000 BC to AD 300. Erdosy showed that compared to the
PGW period, the number of settlements in the Kausambi district increased from
seventeen to twenty one between sixth to fourth centuries BC (NBP period). What we
understand from these works is that during the PGW period, both Allahabad and
Kanpur show two grades of settlement hierarchy. However, in the subsequent periods
their settlement histories show striking divergence. Kanpur area which did not have
any urban centre in the sixth century BC developed a two-tiered hierarchy and the
Allahabad area developed a four-tiered hierarchy simultaneously. Erdosy believed
that the importance of Kausambi lay in its location in a transitional zone between the
Gangetic plains and the Vindhyas.

Settlement pattern of the non-urban sites of the Varanasi district have been discussed
recently by Jayaswal (Jayaswal 2009). She has tried to trace the antiquity of Varanasi
from sixth century B.C. to the later Vedic times with special emphasis on the various
facets of the growth and make-up of the holy city. Contribution of the peripheral
settlements has also been highlighted in the different chrono-cultural stages. Medieval
settlement archaeology is still at its infancy and settlement pattern studies have not
been conducted in a large scale. The only study that deserves mention in this regard is
that of the Vijayanagara (Fritz and Mitchell 1984) which highlights the different
sectors of the past habitations within the excavated area. For understanding the
arrangement and the pattern of site distribution, large scale excavations of medieval
sites are essential which will help in determining the settlement pattern of the areas
concerned.
In Bengal, the study of settlement pattern of a specific area of North Bengal by Panja (Panja 1996) can be cited as the best example in this context. She has concentrated on the sites of North Bengal and adopted a multidisciplinary methodology in understanding the area within a holistic perspective. She explored the area intensively and analysed the sites in a regional context to understand the creation and perception of space in the early medieval period. For this purpose, individual location of sites and settlement distribution in relation to the micro-regional variations in landscape, have been considered to be of prime importance. Similarly, Chakraborty has emphasized on the site size/site hierarchy of the Chandraketugarh region where she has critiqued the concept of grading the sites according to the specific site-sizes (Chakraborty 2008). Chakraborty through her archaeological explorations has shown that it is not always easy to demarcate and grade the sites because they do not fall within model notions of ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ sites. She observed that grading the sites in Delatic area of Bengal is a problematic issue because most of the record is buried and has cited the example of the early historic site of Chandraketugarh and its adjacent areas in this regard (Chakraborty 2008). Settlement studies and the ‘urban’ or ‘rural’ nature of archaeological sites have also gained prominence in the writings of historians (Chattopadhyaya 1993-94). It is the concept of a ‘complex of sites’ that has gained prominence in case of the historical sites in Bengal. B.M. Morrison similarly concludes on the basis of analysis of Mahasthan, Bangarh, Gaur and Pandua that the sites were made of two parts, a large composite site surrounded by a brick wall and a dispersed array of smaller structurally simpler sites (Morrison 1977).

Besides these, presently geoarchaeological investigations related with settlement pattern studies are also being conducted on a much wider scale and scholars have understood from their studies in different sub-regions of Bengal that the dynamic terrain and the constant impermanence of life prompted the people to pattern their settlements according to particular areas they were in and the function of the settlement in the system as a whole (Panja et al. 2002). So it is always useful to study the local possibilities and study the river dynamics which have affected the archaeological record in Bengal to a large extent. Intensive geoarchaeological studies have also been conducted by Roychoudhury in the Ajay River basin (Roychoudhury 2002). Her study highlights the dynamic terrain, which has been looked upon as one of the determining factors of the settlement patterning in the Ajay river valley. Her
study of the locational patterns of sites has brought to light the settlement network in the Ajay river valley which in a way helped in understanding the beginning and spread of urbanisation process in the ‘Rarh region’.

In all the above mentioned studies it is clear that the settlement studies have been undertaken by taking into consideration the environmental parameters governing mostly, the patterning of the sites. Coming back to the study area, it is quite certain that micro-regional variations exist within the area that has been taken into consideration. The explored sites as mentioned earlier fall within two morphostratigraphic divisions (lateritic uplands and alluvial uplands) but for convenience, the investigator has divided the entire middle stretch of the river into three micro-zones on the basis of the changes in landscape and the average height from the Mean Sea Level (see chapter 3 for the micro-zones). The sites have been discussed accordingly.

7.d. Settlement pattern in the present area of study

The study of settlement pattern of the present area has been conducted keeping in view the explored data. In describing settlement pattern, the researcher has used the terms compact, semi-compact, linear and dispersed in order to describe the arrangement of sites. It is generally considered by scholars that rural settlements in the ‘Rarh’ (south western part of Bengal; study area constitutes a part of Dakshin Rarh) region follow compact and semi-compact form of arrangement of the sites. By the terms ‘compact’ and ‘semi-compact’, the investigator wants to imply that the arrangement of the sites is close to one another and in specific instances was found to center around a central site. The distance between the sites in most of these cases is uniform. The semi-compact pattern shows that there is a main area of concentration surrounded by dispersed smaller areas of activity. The linear arrangement is seen according to the channel of the main river. The dispersed pattern, in the present study, mostly applies for sites which lie away from the main river. The arrangement of the dispersed sites is haphazard; these are not at a uniform distance from one another. The terms have been used by the investigator based on evidences of the location and distribution of the sites in the river valley and the discussion has been arranged
according to the chronology, starting with the BRW sites followed by Early historic and finally Medieval.

7.d.1. BRW sites

The black and red ware sites do not show any uniform pattern of distribution in the study area. The black and red ware sites are few and hence their exact pattern could not be ascertained (See map 17). The only excavated site in this context is Dihar. The site Bhatra lies closer to Dihar at a distance of 2.5 km. But the sites Prakash and Palasi are at a distance of about 3.5-4 km from the site Dihar. The only picture which emerges from their distribution is that the sites are situated near water sources. The site Bhatra and Prakash are both situated on the left bank of Dwarakeswar and the site Palasi is situated adjacent to the Haringmuri canal. These three sites have revealed black and red ware sherds and chalcolithic red ware pottery from the surface (see chapter 3 for details) which belong to a primary context. Since black and red ware sites were very few, no particular pattern of settlement emerged from their distribution.

The study of the artefactual evidence from the site Dihar (chalcolithic phase) helps us in delineating the mixed subsistence pattern of the site maintained during the initial stages of habitation (BRW phases without and with metal respectively). Profuse amount of bone tools found from the site in association with black and red ware ceramics and other artefacts indicate a mixed subsistence pattern. The adjacent villages might have helped this site to thrive successfully. Since excavated data from the other sites is lacking, this conjecture cannot be presented with absolute certainty. The stone celts and axes recovered from the site, points to the fact that the site having no local outcrops of stone, might have maintained good communication with the upland areas of Kushadwaip and Sonamukhi, which in all probability served as the nearest source of raw material (stone). The economy must have thrived on hunting, fishing and an incipient form of cultivation that gradually led to a sedentary way of life along the flood plains. The evidences from the site Dihar, specially the bone tools found from the initial levels of habitation, are proof enough to support this argument. The analyses of the faunal data in near future will surely help in understanding the nature of the economy with more details. The rest of the sites standing in the vicinity
Map 17. Distribution of BRW sites in the river valley.
might also reflect the same cultural assemblage, if subject to excavation. The fertile alluvial soil and the availability of metal have provided the required thrust for increased form of cultivation in the subsequent periods. This was evidently backed by the location of the site (meander scroll of the river valley providing water and aquatic resources). The explored BRW sites including Dihar all fall in the second micro-zone as discussed by the researcher (see chapter 3 for details; average height is 60 m above MSL with concentration of older alluvium and with occasional lateritic outcrops). The location of these sites is in the juncture zone of lateritic and alluvial uplands which provided the facilities of both. As a result, the sites could have utilised both the fertile soil for agriculture as well as the forest resources from the extensive range of forests located in the lateritic zone.

7.d.2. Early historic sites

The designated early historic sites in the river valley exhibit a linear arrangement along the river. The sites are situated very close to the main river Dwarakeswar and most of them are on the left bank of the river. Like the BRW sites, the importance of water is well reflected from their distribution also. The early historic sites located near Dihar namely, Bhatra, Beltha, Dhangara, Rautara, Dumduma, Basantapur show a semi-compact pattern centering on the meander scroll of the river (see maps 18A, 18B). All these sites lie at a distance of approximately 1.5-2.5 km from the site Dihar. The site Dihar quite evidently acted as the main centre of attraction in this area. The concentration of sites in and around Dihar is found to have increased in the early historical period and most of the explored sites are found to be located in the older alluvium zone which clearly reflects the importance of agriculture for these sites. In the former period, only two or three sites in and around the site Dihar were noticed. But in the early historical phase, we see the concentration of around six to seven sites in this area which indicates the emergence of other subsidiary sites in and around Dihar. The average spacing of sites is less than 2 km.

On the other hand, the explored early historic sites along the Sali river revealed potsherds in an exposed context (see Dayalpur and Andra in Chapter 3). Sali being a tributary of Damodar, shows more affinity in artefactual assemblage with the sites like Pokhanna (early historic) and Bharatpur (chalcolithic). Nevertheless, these sites
Map 18 B. Distribution of Early Historic sites in the river valley

Legend
- EH Sites
- Contour
- Forests
- Canal
- Water bodies
- Developments
- Tidal
- Sand bars
- River bed
- River

Map 18 B. Distribution of Early Historic sites in the river valley.

N.O.SUS3 N.O.OUSZ
87°22'6' W 87°24'0'E 87°26'0'E 87°28'0'E 87°30'a'E 87°32'0'E 87°34'0'E 87°36'O'E 87°38'CTE 87°40'0'E 87°42'8
also reflect the importance of the river in their location. The exposed sections noted in the village Dayalpur along the bank of the river Sali exhibits early historical deposit with pottery (see Chapter 3 for details). The upper layers of these sections reveal medieval potsherds. Hence these sites had a continuous occupation till the medieval period.

The development of these sites in the Sali river valley was perhaps more analogous to the sites in the Damodar river valley. In this regard, the investigator wants to mention about an epigraphic data of sixth century AD coming from Mallasarul, a village about a mile and a half from the bank of Damodar river within Burdwan district. The object of the inscription was to record a grant of land during the reign of king Gopachandra by Maharaja Vijayasena, to a Brahmin named Vatsasvamin to enable him to perform the ‘five great sacrificial rites’. The land granted was situated in the village of Vettaragartha within the Vakka takka vihti of Vardhaman Bhukti that included a strip of the land along the northern bank of Damodar river (Majumdar 1995). The sites Andra, Dayalpur (see chapter 3) lie adjacent to the area and might have been influenced by this co-lateral development of Vardhamanabhukti. Moreover, the site Pokhanna lying close to this area (upstream area of Damodar) was already under the administration of the King Chandravarman around fourth century AD which is corroborated by the Susunia Inscription (Epigraphia Indica, Vol XIII, p 133). Since at this stage we have no definite record highlighting these facts, it can best be considered as a conjecture which deserves further investigation.

The explored early historic sites have yielded mostly pottery but from the excavated context we have cast copper coins, punch marked coins as well as semiprecious stone beads which indicate similarities in the artefactual evidences with other early historical sites like Pokhanna, Tamluk, Mangalkot, Kotasur and to some extent with the site Chandraketugarh. The beads of semi precious stones, the stone celts found from the site, in spite of the absence of local stone outcrops, might have been procured through an exchange system. The site Dihar with rest of the early historic sites in the vicinity, probably maintained a local network through which essential commodities were exchanged for regular use. From this pattern what emerges is the significance of the river and a riverine network through which these sites
communicated. However, for establishing this proposition, perhaps a detailed analysis of the material culture of some sites is highly desirable.

It must be mentioned in this context that the early historical site Pokhanna lies in the upstream areas of Damodar and the site Tamluk lies in the downstream area of the river Dwarakeswar, which is known as Rupnarayan after its confluence with Silabati. As mentioned earlier, an extant channel also has been traced by the geologists joining the rivers Damodar and Dwarakeswar. This channel has been identified as Dakshin Saraswati. The river is assumed to be present in the eighth century and was probably abandoned in the fourteenth century AD (Chakraborty and Nag 2005). According to geologists, the Dakshin Saraswati, presently a dry channel, was a possible networking route from Damodar to Tamralipta port via Dwarakeswar and Rupnarayan rivers (Chakarborty and Nag 2005). They have attributed the abandonment of the course of the Dakshin Saraswati to be the prime reason for the subsequent abandonment of the Tamralipta port. Besides this water route, an ancient land-route, passing through the Bishnupur/Dihar area was traced by Beglar (1872-73) up till the northwestern frontier. Thus the routes linking the east coast (in and around the port towns of Tamralipta and Gange) with the Ganga valley (Pataliputra, Champa etc), became part of what is generally referred to as a long distance trading network which further linked the Chotanagpur plateau ‘with loose and ever changing economic tie’(Chakrabarti 1993). According to the excavator of Dihar, the expansion of settlements along these networking routes certainly involved the people of the regions like Dihar and its surroundings (Chattopadhyay et al. 2010). According to the excavator of the site Dihar, within this probable exchange system, it is also important to take into consideration the technological aspect of the site Dihar where innovations in technology might have enhanced the exploitation of natural resources and further communication between the sites (Chattopadhyay et al. 2010).

As mentioned earlier, the designated early historic sites in the river valley, besides the Dihar area, are found to be located in a linear fashion along the main river Dwarakeswar which has evidently helped the people with a regular supply of water, aquatic resources, fertile soil and other resources. All these sites in the Dwarakeswar river valley have revealed uniform ceramic assemblage. However, some differences have been noted in the assemblage between the sites in the Sali river valley and that of
7.d.3. Medieval

There is a definite departure in the pattern of the distribution of the medieval sites in the river valley. Firstly, the medieval sites are much more in number than the early historic or BRW sites. The distribution pattern indicates that the river was no more important for the people and hence, the sites were uniformly distributed throughout the study area. Sites were not only confined to a single micro-zone but the entire middle stretch of the river. Moreover, the sites were found to be concentrated uniformly on both banks of the river unlike the earlier periods (see maps 19A, 19B). The left bank of the river has a continuous stretch of alluvium due to which the concentration of settlements has been more on the left bank since the early historical times. The improved infrastructural facilities during the medieval period might have led the people to excavate canals and tanks as a measure to combat aridity (generally witnessed in this lateritic belt area) and hence there were more or less an equal number of sites on both banks of the river. The location of the sites indicate that besides the availability of fertile soil, other factors like availability of resources and infrastructural facilities were also important for the people inhabiting these sites.

The medieval history of the area is largely based on the history of the *Malla* rulers. During the rule of the *Malla* kings the whole area is believed to have been under uniform administration. *Mallabhum*, established by the *Malla rajas* was actually one of the well known autonomous, semi-independent principalities in Bengal between fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. As mentioned earlier, *Mallabhum* appears to have spread over the entire tract between the Damodar on the north and the Silai on the south comprising the whole of Bishnupur subdivision and parts of Bankura subdivision, Midnapur and Hugli districts as well. The entire area was supposedly brought under a common administrative setup under these local ruling lineages (Sanyal 1987). Though archaeological data of this period from an excavated context is meagre, but there is evidently large scale uniformity in the style, fabric and surface treatment of the medieval potteries, established through the present explorations in this area. Interestingly, the minor differences noted in early historical pottery
Map 19 A. Distribution of Medieval sites in the river valley

Legend:
- River
- River bed
- Dry channel
- Sand bars
- Tributary
- Distributary
- Forests
- Water bodies
- Canal
- Contour
- Medieval sites
Map 19 B. Distribution of Medieval sites in the river valley
assemblage between the sites of the Dwarakeswar and Sali river valleys were not noticed in the case of medieval potteries. It is also true that during this period, we find many new ceramic wares and vessel shapes (see chapter 6 and Appendix for details) indicating innovations in the pottery making process.

The rule of the Malla dynasty is marked with a general improvement in the socio-economic milieu (Hunter 1973). The increased temple building activities during this period is largely attributed to these kings. From the location of the explored medieval sites, it is quite evident that the sites which were situated away from the river were substituted with artificial water sources like tanks and canals, which were constructed in substantial numbers during the medieval period. In this regard, it will be worthwhile repeating that a large part of the study area falls within a relatively dry zone where the amount of rainfall is quite low. When the capital of the Malla kings was shifted to Bishnupur, the Malla king Bir Singha II constructed seven tanks or *bandhs* for the benefit of common people (O’Malley 1995). It is known from the colonial records that ‘Bishnupur, was a well-protected city. About two miles to the north flowed the Dwarakeswar river and dense forest surrounded it on the other three sides, for which the city was called Ban Bishnupur (*Ban* denoting forest). At its immediate vicinity, the city was protected by the embankments of the seven reservoirs, locally known as *bandhs.*’ (O’Malley 1995). These *bandhs* are still used by the people of Bishnupur.

For sites which were close to the river, ramparts and moats were constructed for protection from the flood waters as evidenced at Parikshapara. The early historic sites were also situated along the flood plains of the river in a linear manner, but no ramparts or moats of the early historical period have been evidenced. From the census records and the gazetteers, it is known that the nature of floods was devastating in the medieval period because of the increased demand of land and increased population, which in turn led to massive felling of trees and deforestation, resulting to catastrophic floods and bad conditions of the catchment areas of the rivers (Banerjee 1968, O’Malley 1995). Hence, artificial measures to combat floods were probably devised and at the same time there was a marked shift in the location of sites away from the river. Nevertheless, it has been evidenced from the study of the exposed sections, that though the medieval sites have been affected by both high intensity and
low intensity floods, they were abandoned temporarily (see chapter 6 for details). The resourcefulness of the river and the availability of fertile soil after the floods enabled the people to re-establish their occupation in the same areas of the river valley. Hence, most of the sites were found to be reoccupied after a brief period of abandonment.

The left bank of the river having a stretch of older alluvium provided a favourable background for inhabiting these areas and hence, more sites are found to be concentrated on the left bank till the early historical period. But it is known from the records of the Malla kings that, the centres of their administration were situated on the right bank which appears to be quite surprising. In terms of resourcefulness, the right bank is less lucrative as against the left bank of the river, which has more lateritic outcrops and infertile soils. It is known from the history of the Mallas that Adi Malla reigned at Laugram for thirty three years (Malley 1995). Laugram is situated on the right bank of the river (see Chapter 3 for details). Gradually their capital was shifted from Laugram to Padumpur and then finally to Bishnupur; all the three capitals were established on the right bank. These three capitals standing on local lateritic outcrops were made inhabitable with the construction of tanks and canals which ensured regular supply of water. In this regard Sanyal (1987) writes that ‘Bishnupur, which is situated about thirty miles west of Laugram might have been acquired by the Mallas in course of their expansion towards the denser forests in the uplands on the west. It may be reasonably inferred that the Mallas had entrenched their power in more centrally located arid uplands around Bishnupur which, owing to its location in the dense forest between the Dwarakeswar and the Silai, was much less vulnerable to external aggressions from the plains from the east than Laugram or Padumpur’. The right bank was probably preferred more by the Malla kings because of security reasons. The continuous stretch of forests on the lateritic outcrops might have provided the required protection which would not be possible on the left bank. Moreover, the right bank having hard impermeable rock structure was less prone to floods than the sites located on the left bank of the river. The location of the three capitals thus represents an interesting picture; more detailed study is necessary to trace out the antecedent stages of growth and development.

In this ongoing discussion on distribution of sites along the river valley, the researcher would like to highlight some of the areas having medieval sites and exhibiting
compact and semi-compact form of settlements on both the banks of the river. These compact and semi-compact forms of settlements seen at a few areas in the river valley have been divided into two areas on the basis of micro-regional differences observed by the researcher. The first area (Area 1) lies in the second micro-zone as mentioned by the researcher where the average height is between 80 and 40m above MSL and having mostly concentration of older alluvium. Local lateritic outcrops have been noted in considerable parts of this area, and the second area (Area 2) lies in the third micro-zone where the average height from the Mean Sea Level is between 60m - 40m and below 40m. This area is characterized by the gentler flood plains of the Dwarakeswar river and does not have any lateritic outcrops. These Areas have been divided further into two or three groups: Area 1.A, 1.B and 1.C, and Area 2.A and 2.B (maps 19A, 19B).

Area 1.A: This particular area has the concentration of maximum number of sites like Dihar, Basantapur, Bhatra, Dhangara, Rautara, Beltha, Deuli, Abantika and Joykrishnapur. All these sites fall in the juncture zone of the lateritic uplands and older alluvium. These sites lie within a distance of 1.5 km from the river. The sites exhibit a compact form of settlement. The main site in this area is undoubtedly Dihar, centering which the rest of the sites have developed. The early historic sites in this area like Bhatra, Basantapur, Dhangara, Rautara as well as Dihar revealed a semi-compact pattern of settlement during the early historical period. But in the medieval period, the number of sites is found to have increased and is quite closely spaced within 2-3.5 km of each other. Of these sites, Abantika, Beltha and Deuli are situated on the right bank of the river. The rest of the sites are on the left bank. The sites are habitation of which Dihar, Dhangara, Deuli, Beltha and Rautara revealed remains earlier than the medieval period. The sites must have developed taking the help of Dihar as well as the riverine resources which provided them sufficient water and fertile lands for cultivation (see map 20). Structural sites have not been encountered in this area. In the medieval period, the site Dihar became an important seat of worship through the temples of Sareswar and Saileswar. It is known from records that the Malla Rajas were specially related with the Gajan festival of the twin Siva temples of Sareswar and Saileswar (Sanyal 1987). The people from the adjacent as well as far-off areas visited these temples to offer their pujas. This tradition is found to continue even today. The increase in the number of sites in this area through the passage of
time reflects an interesting picture and needs further investigation with the help of more excavated data.

Map 20: Distribution of sites in Area 1A

Area 1.B: This zone has concentration of sites like Baikunthapur, Patlapur, Mukundapur, Balarampur, Salkota, Naricha and Bagdahar, and Chaltakonda lying within a distance of approximately 2km from the river and again on a meander scroll. The farthest site is Mukundapur which lies at a distance of 2 km from the river. The rest of the sites are within 2 km from the river. The average inter-site spacing is about 1-1.5 km. This area exhibits a compact pattern of settlement. The remains from some of these villages have been collected from the mounds which are mostly medieval in nature. All these sites are situated on the left bank of the river in the stretch of older alluvium and hence the fertile soil must have been used for agricultural purpose. Of
these sites, Chaltakonda and Mukundapur are early historic sites and rest of the sites probably developed during the medieval period thereby exhibiting a semi-compact form. These sites are also habitational. The site Naricha in this area only revealed many early medieval sculptures as well as pottery similar to the ones discovered from the pre-Malla phase of the site Dihar. Whether the site emerged during the early medieval period is a question which needs more precise investigations.

Area 1.C: This zone has the concentration of sites like Salda, Gokulnagar and Padumpur which shows a semi-compact form of settlements dotted with numerous tanks, ponds and canals around which these sites are found to be concentrated. The channel of Amodar (tributary of Dwarakeswar) stands flows in the vicinity. The records show that Padumpur was the second capital of the Malla Rajas and during their rule quite a few temples were also constructed in this area (O’ Malley 1995). As mentioned earlier, there has been a shift in their domains by annexation of the territories starting with Laugram, followed by Padumpur and ending with the final establishment of their capital at Bishnupur (Sanyal 1987).

As mentioned earlier, the sites Salda and Gokulnagar in this area revealed many early medieval sculptures. The stylistic affinities of sculptures (viz.images of Varalia and Varahi) and the temples in this complex clearly reflect an Orissan influence (Chattopadhyay et al. 2009, see chapter 3 for details). Of them the protected temple at Gokulnagar deserves special mention. The development of the sites in this zone might be seen as a process coeval with the emergence of Dandabhuki around seventh century A.D, a major provincial administrative division under the rule of Sasanka and lying very close to this area. The territory around Dantan has often been taken to have constituted a part of the early medieval geo-political unit called Daksina-radha and Dantan has been equated with seventh century Dandabhuki (Datta 2008). The sites in this area have to be understood with with all these indirect literary sources. Subsequently with the coming of the Malla Rajas and the formation of the semi-independent principality of Mallabhum, the entire area underwent a slow and steady process of development. During the course of exploration, these sites revealed medieval potteries only. No early historic or BRW sites were encountered in this area. The sculptures reported from these sites are all early medieval and are housed in the Bishnupur Museum. Some are being worshipped by the local people in specific
shrines within the sites (Pl. VI A). Since the Malla Rajas constructed seven large tanks in the Bishnupur area for the benefit of the common people, it may be presumed that some of the large tanks seen in this area also, might have been constructed by the same Rajas, before establishing Bishnupur. In this regard, it is worthwhile mentioning that we have an image of an arid Radha/Rarh tract in the Bhuvanesvara inscription of Bhatta Bhavadeva, palaeographically datable to eleventh or twelfth century AD (Keilhorn 1981). It is said in the inscription that the Radha country was waterless (ajalasu) and here in the boundary of a village near a forested tract Bhatta Bhavadeva excavated a reservoir of water or tank for the tired travelers. This inscription by an appropriate use of only one word ‘ajalasu’ could describes the basic characteristic of the region. It is interesting to note that in the same inscription Bhavadeva is said to have constructed another tank in front of the temple of Vishnu for achieving punya or merit. Whatever may be the cause, these artificial tanks surely became a mode of survival in such arid tracts from early medieval period onwards. The present study area constitutes a part of Radha/Rarh and the above mentioned sites lie at a distance of about 7.5-8 km from the river on hard, impermeable lateritic outcrops. So the availability of natural water was a bit difficult due to which artificial process of water management might have been devised for the regular usage. However, it is important to know precisely whether the tanks in this area were constructed during the early medieval period or medieval period after the coming of the Malla Rajas.

Area 2.A: This group of sites is situated in the third micro-zone as discussed by the researcher (below 40 m, some areas have the concentration of new alluvium besides the regular older alluvium concentration). The sites situated in this area are Pantrai, Ranahat, Basubati and Patraganti lying within 3.5 km from the river. These sites are also habitational and are situated at a distance of within 2 -3 km from each other. These sites exhibit a semi-compact arrangement. The sites in this part are seen to be uniformly distributed on both the banks of the river. This area also marks a clear departure from the sites of the former zone where there were undulating lands and local lateritic outcrops. This area has fertile soil in comparison to the former zone composed of alluvium borne by the river Dwarakeswar. Taking advantage of the alluvial soil, the past habitations must have practiced agriculture in a large scale. In the present scenario also, we find that these sites practice large scale agriculture and especially due to good retention capacity of the soil, rice cultivation is practiced in
these areas extensively. From the fabric and the surface treatment of the potteries collected from the explored sites of this area, it is evident that the clay is of a much better quality than the former, where the clay had lots of inclusions as well as small stone particles. No sculptures or architectural ruins have been discovered from the sites of this area. From Basubati and Pantrai, potteries were collected from an exposed context. Of the medieval temples, those at Pantrai and Basubati deserve special mention. In fact, the temple at Pantrai has helped in preserving a large part of the big mound still standing in the southern part of the site. No early historic sites were seen in this area.

Area 2.B: The sites in this area are Parikshapara, Malakarpota, Hati and Balarampur and are at a distance of about 1.5-2.5 km from the river. Malakarpota is a prominent site in this area which has an old Siva temple in the western part of the village. Annually the Gajan festival is celebrated with grandeur and is believed to have been observed since ages. On the opposite bank of the village stands the site Parikshapara which has been designated as medieval in the present study. The site has revealed an extensive rampart wall (see chapter 3&5 for details) with a continuous moat. In all probability this was constructed during the medieval period in order to protect the village from the recurrent floods of the river (see map 19B). Hati and Balarampur are exceptionally medieval sites. These sites being situated in the older alluvium zone had strong agricultural base which led to the gradual emergence of sites through the passage of time in this zone. The sites are situated within 2-3 km from each other and reveal a semi-compact form of arrangement. Both Parikshapara and Malakarpota can be considered to be the major sites in this zone. Malakarpota is singularly an early historic site in this area.

Now coming to the medieval sites lying away from the river like Kushadwip, Bhara, Shahapur and Birsingha, the dispersed arrangement of settlement pattern is well evident. These sites are away from the water sources (approximately 7-9 km) and must have developed under different circumstances (see map 19B). These sites have been reported as palaeolithic sites after the findings of chopper-chopping tools from some of them (Datta et al. 1992). Since these sites are situated largely under forest cover and on local lateritic outcrops, the people might have utilized the locally available resources for their daily lives. The sites lying in this zone probably survived
largely on hunting-gathering and as a result were situated away from the river under forest cover. These areas, in all probability, acted as resource suppliers to the sites like Dihar and its adjacent sites near the river valley. The stone implements like ringstones and celts found from Dihar bear close resemblance to the ones found from the Kushadwip area. However, in the present situation, the celts and ringstones from the site could not be placed into a proper context since these were all found from the surface and not from an excavated context. For establishing the communication pattern, further probing is essential, but based on present evidences it can be said that Kushadwip is the only possible nearest source of raw material for the site Dihar.

The sites like Kushadwip, Birsingha are not only situated away from the river but, also at a considerable distance from one another. But, Birsingha has a magnificent medieval temple and is believed to have been inhabited by one of the Malla kings. This temple is presumed to have been built by the Malla King Bir Singha, after whom the site has been named (Banerjee 1968). These sites revealed potteries which have a different fabric and surface treatment and have been placed in the medieval period due to the similarities in shapes with other explored sites. Small lateritic particles and other inclusions are well marked in the potsherds collected from this area which indicate that the people used the locally available soil for the manufacturing the vessels. Fragmentary terracotta horses and elephants have also been found from the site during exploration which seems to be medieval. Since the Kushadwip area had a prehistoric phase, the findings of medieval remains from the sites of this area are quite interesting. It is important to understand the intermediate stages in order to note the emergence and growth of sites in this part of the river valley.

The following figure and the table reflect the distribution of BRW, Early Historic and Medieval sites in both the banks of the river respectively.

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<tr>
<td>BRW</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>EH</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
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</tbody>
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Table: 14
The Table 14 and Figure 24 show the distribution of the explored BRW, Early Historic (EH) and medieval sites (M) on the left and the right banks of the river. It is clearly reflected that the concentration of sites on the right bank increased in the medieval period. The BRW sites are completely absent on the right bank.

7.e. Observations

From the available evidences, it is very difficult to come to a definite conclusion regarding the rural or urban nature of the settlements. In the absence of exotic items, discovered from the excavated context or from explorations, it can be surmised that the sites in the river valley largely maintained a rural base. Even the site Dihar, in spite of revealing an early historical phase, cannot be labeled as an ‘urban site’. The artefacts revealed from the site indicate towards the rural nature of the site. The explored sites are mostly habitational and in most of the instances have revealed remains in the form of potteries. Structural remains are negligible and have been noted at a very few sites. In the case of early historic sites, they are found to be confined to flood plains of the river. Mounds noted at few of the sites, are mostly medieval and have revealed medieval potteries. However, the lower levels of such exposed sections of the mounds might reveal earlier remains if subject to excavation or trial digging. Much of the sites have been destroyed by the natural and
Map 21: Capitals of the Malla Rajas
anthropogenic factors. So, as mentioned earlier, it was difficult to measure the actual extent or the size of the sites. In many cases, the exact boundary of the sites could not be located. In this regard, it is difficult to talk of size and hierarchy of settlements, a common question usually dealt within settlement pattern studies. Nevertheless, it is with all these drawbacks that an understanding of the archaeological sites of the study area has been achieved on the basis of the extensive surveys undertaken in the river valley.

From the distribution pattern, it is quite obvious that the river played a major role in governing the location of sites. The past habitations of the three chronological periods were small, adjacent to each other and were concentrated near the river for water and fertile soil. From the evidences, it is clear that a substantial section of the population lived in impermanent dwellings near the river bank. The banks of the river are presently also occupied by modern houses. Most of the dwelling huts have mud walls and only the houses on the elevated and safer areas of the villages are built of bricks. Some of the sites have also been traced on the tributaries and palaeochannels of the river. These canals or the small channels are in most of the instances linked with the main river and must have assisted the habitations with regular supply of water and also suitable protection from the floods of the river.

The study area falling within two morphostratigraphic settings (lateritic and alluvial uplands) show more or less uniform distribution of sites. However, the concentration of sites is highest in the second micro-zone mentioned by the researcher (between 80-40 m above MSL). The concentration of early historic sites is found to have been greatest in the zone of lateritic and alluvial uplands. From the distribution pattern, it is also evident that there was a general tendency of the sites to be concentrated on the meanders of the river. The sites situated in Area 1 can be cited as the best example in this regard. The early historic sites situated in and around Dihar enjoyed the facilities of both the lateritic uplands having concentration of forests and the alluvial uplands providing fertile soil for the purpose of agriculture.

The concentration of the early historic sites in a linear fashion along both the river valleys (Dwarakeswar and Sali) indicates the importance of the river and the water ways that might have been the principal means of communication. This also suggests
a low energy flood regime that led to the emergence of the sites close to the main channel of the river. The medieval sites having exposed section provided evidences of both high intensity and low intensity floods during the medieval period due to which some sites might have shifted to the areas away from the river (see chapter 5 for details). Nevertheless, after a brief period of abandonment, most of the sites were found to be re-occupied. However, the medieval sites are found to be distributed, even in areas away from the river.

Most of the early historic sites revealed medieval potteries and hence may be considered to have a continuous occupation till the medieval time. From the distribution pattern of the medieval sites in the landscape, it can be presumed that the economy by that time was quite evolved which led the people to establish their occupation in any location and even away from the river valley. Sites like Birsingha, Panna are found to be situated at a considerable distance from the river. Birsingha, reported as a prehistoric site (Datta et al. 1992) is situated near the Sonamukhi forest range with a well established medieval habitation. It is presumed to have been the establishment of the Malla king Birsingha.

The location of the sites situated away from the main river is chiefly governed by the presence of surface water in the form of tanks, canals or ponds and, if not, the principal river Dwarakeswar. In the upstream areas near the confluence of Dwarakeswar and Gandheswari (sites lying 100m above MSL), sites like Rajagram, Bhadul and Ekteswar located in the lateritic uplands also indicate the above mentioned fact. Above all these, the fact which becomes worthy of consideration is the proliferation of sites in the medieval period because of which they were located throughout the middle stretch of the river.

Another area which still remains to be discussed is the Andra-Dayalpur complex of sites located on the right bank of Sali, the chief tributary of the river Damodar. This zone was not mentioned along with rest of the sites in the Dwarakeswar river valley because it falls in a separate micro-region which can be related with the river Damodar and its flood plains. These early historic sites have also revealed medieval potteries, thereby indicating a continuous occupation. The exposed section at Dayalpur has revealed a break in occupation after the early historical period and is
subsequently followed by the medieval occupation. The sites Dayalpur, Andra and Belut are also located in a linear fashion along the river Sali, indicating the pivotal role played by the river.

Though an idea has been gained about the nature of the sites and the pattern of their location along the river valley, it has to be always borne in mind that these aspects of settlement studies are being understood from the perspective of explored potteries mostly collected from the surface and also on the basis of individual location of the sites. There are limitations in understanding some specific details of settlement pattern studies. The sites designated as medieval may always have an earlier phase of occupation and hence the designated chronologies are subject to change. Besides Dihar, we have no other excavated sites in the entire river valley. Some sites need to be studied more intensively by taking test pits and by conducting systematic excavations. Moreover a considerable part of the archaeological evidence still remains buried under the mounds and present habitations, due to which demarcating the extent of the sites was difficult and hence, the data could not fit into the specific models of settlement pattern studies. For demarcating the resource utilization area, it is important to conduct provenance studies which evidently will give an idea of the areas from where resources were utilized. The area around Dihar is significant since the sites lying close to it must have acted as subsidiary sites that helped in the growth and development of Dihar. From all the evidences and the overall discussion, it can be surmised that majority of sites in the river valley were small, scattered, and flimsy with concentrated areas of semi-compact and compact habitations. The archaeological settlement pattern in this region thus seems to be a diverse one governed by the need for water, exploitation of resources and use of alluvial land for agricultural activities as well as other infrastructural facilities. The occurrence of medieval sites needs to be understood from a historical perspective and hence necessitates more research and a different methodological interpretation.
Notes

1. Broadly the rural settlements to the west of Bhagirathi (Rarh area) have been divided by scholars into a. Compact, b. Semi-compact or hamleted clusters and c. Linear emerging as a result of interplay of both physical and cultural factors. The compact and nucleated settlements are most prevalent in the Ajay-Damodar and Ajay-Brahmani interfluves and the Moribund deltas. The dry point water fronts are natural sites for compact settlements in the Delta proper. In the Rarh areas, artificial tanks also provide for such settlements (Singh 1995).

2. The influence of Orissan iconoplastic art tradition is visible in the assemblages collected from the sub region of Salda. Some remarkable specimens viz. the images of Varaha and Varahi if not other, coming from the Salda region, demonstrate the influence of Orissan characteristics. Ethno-archaeologically the presence of Orissan population particularly Utkala Brahmins and the history of movement of Orissan ruling families in this area, suggest the expansion of Orissan art tradition, if not the other aspects of socio-cultural life (Chattopadhyay et al. 2009).

3. From the early literary sources it can be surmised that the area in and around Dantan (West Midnapur) formed part of either Suhma territory or an extension of the geographical orbit of the trading port of Tamralipta. However, since seventh century, it came to be known as Dandabhukti, a major provincial administrative division under the rule of Sasanka. However epigraphic evidences suggest that by about eleventh century A.D., the area formed a part of the Dandabhukti mandala under the rule of Kamboja king Nayapala. The territory around Dantan has been often taken to have constituted a part of the early medieval geopoloitical unit called Dakshina Radha and Dantan has been equated with seventh century Dandabhukti. The early medieval prosperity of this region in terms of polity and culture is unquestionable in the light of consistent discoveries of epigraphic and archaeological remains from time to time (Datta et al. 2008)