CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: SCOPE AND METHOD OF STUDY

Introduction:

The term early medieval is widely used in recent reconstructions of Indian history by denoting an intermediate period between the ancient and the medieval. Historians are unanimous on the fact that this phase in Indian history had a distinct identity and as such differed from the preceding early historical and the succeeding medieval. The term “early medieval” has emerged in the study of Indian history to define a particular phase of social and cultural development. The development of this phase include: the emergence of new political structures, a reorganization of exchange systems and concept of urbanizations, formation of regional culture, art, architecture and literature. The early medieval phase in India is studied almost exclusively through texts and inscriptions, besides, material remains.

After the independence, the study of India’s past became less concerned with narratives of past events and was focused on the nature of societal change. An alternative model of transition from ancient to medieval was first suggested by Marxist historians, who identified important changes in state, society, and economy during the mid-first millennium CE on the basis of inscriptions recording grants of land by kings to Brahmans and the political subordinates (KOSAMBI 1956; SHARMA 1965). This practice apparently commenced during the reign of the Guptas (fourth to sixth century CE), and gathered momentum in the centuries that followed. Significantly, these inscriptions also recorded the
conferral revenue rights with the land grants. Drawing heavily from the works of European Marxist historians, such as Bloch (1939) and Duby (1952), these factors were interpreted as having contributed to a gradual decentralization of socio economic and political power, and to the creation of a more hierarchical society (HAWKES 2014: 56).

The periodization of Indian History was initially divided into ‘Hindu’, ‘Muslim’ and ‘British phases of civilization (MILL 1817). These terms were replaced by ‘ancient’, ‘medieval’ and ‘modern’ periods. The term ‘medieval’ was identified with the period between the foundations of the Islamic Delhi Sultanate in 1206 CE to the arrival of British. This concept was introduced in the early twentieth century by several Indian scholars (JAYASWAL 1918; MAJUMDAR 1925; MOOKERJEE 1926; RAYCHAUDHURI 1923). After independence the periodization of Indian history was revised and a new period of Indian history was introduced, i.e. the transition to the medieval (mainly emergence of feudal society) by Marxist historians like D.D. Kosambi (KOSAMBI 1956) and R.S. Sharma (SHARMA 1965) after the ideas of European Marxist historians. Starting from 1950’s, Marxist historians inaugurated a major change in the historiography of ancient India, making a strong case for shift in focus from dynastic history towards economic and social processes. The writings of D.D. Kosambi were especially influential in changing the agenda. This historiographical shift had profound implications for the understanding of c. 600-1300 CE. The Hindu and Muslim periodizations were firmly rejected as communal, inconsistent, and as giving unnecessary importance to superficial dynastic change. Political history became passé and dynastic labels for the Indian past were questioned. The historian’s gaze moved impatiently away from the minutiae of detail towards the big picture of modes of production and changes in economic and social
structures (SINGH 2011, 2-3). R. S. Sharma suggested that c.400-1200 CE was characterized by significant structural changes in economy, society and polity (SHARMA 1965).

This idea was based on a series of inscriptions that recorded grants of land and, importantly, the revenue of that land by kings to their political subordinates, individual Brahmins and temple institutions. This practice was interpreted as leading to the emergence of landed intermediaries, which, in turn, was perceived to have contributed to a gradual decentralization of political power and created a feudal polity. (cf. Sharma 1965, 1972: 92-104; 1982, 1987, HAWKES: 2015: 299). With the emergence of this idea of a feudal society, the start of ‘the medieval’ was effectively pushed back to long before any Islamic invasion and this emerging ‘early medieval’ period started to become a major focus of historical research.

On the other hand B.D. Chattopadhyaya (CHATTOPADHYAYA 1994), D.N. Jha (JHA 2000), H. Kulke (KULKE 1997), U. Singh (SINGH 2011: 1- 44) have made significant contributions to different aspects of early medieval issues i.e. geopolitics, social and political organization, religious institutions and economic systems. A number of critiques have highlighted various issues pertaining to questions of definition of early medieval. The role of archaeological data in the study of early medieval is rarely considered. Far from being simply a ‘handmade to history’, the early medieval period is, in fact, one of the most under-represented areas of archaeological research. (HAWKES 2014: 2018).

So far as the theorization and debates of the early medieval period are concerned, D. D. Kosambi was the pioneer for raising the different issues of the early medieval period (KOSAMBI 1956). First he introduced
the concept of feudalism from above and feudalism from below. After D. D. Kosambi, R. S. Sharama was the first historian who raises different issues of the early medieval period (SHARMA 1965; 1972; 1974a; 1974b; 1978; 1982; 1987). He and his followers discuss the cultural materials of the early medieval period from the other periods of Indian history. Sharma’s concept of Indian feudalism was supported by several scholars like D. N. Jha (JHA 2000), Lallanji Gopal (GOPAL 1965), B. P. Mazumdar (MAZUMDER 1960), N. Karashima (KARASHIMA 1984), R. N. Nandi (NANDI 1984 & 2000) and Vijay Kumar Thakur (THAKUR 1989). There are several renowned scholars like D. C. Sircar (SIRCAR 1966 & 1969), H. Mukhia (MUKHIA 1981), B. D. Chattopadhyaya (CHATTOPADHYAYA 1994 & 2003), B. N. Mukherjee (MUKHERJEE 1992) and Ranabir Chakravarti (CHAKRAVARTI 1992 & 2004 & 2007) who have opposed the concept of Indian feudalism by Sharma.

The basic characteristic of the history of the early medieval period is the introduction of the feudal system of Indian economy. There was no control on taxation system by the king. The agrahāra (revenue free land) concept of land leads to the introduction of the middle classes and the peasant community became the labour. This leads to the development of self sufficient village, and decline of industrial growth and urban centres. We are all aware that, after the Gupta period, there was political decentralization and development and emergence of regional powers. Different types of political, social, cultural and economical conditions prevailed in different regions of India. The economy of the contemporary society was based on agricultural activities only. The concept of the donation of land was introduced during the Gupta period. According to Sharma feudalism was introduced between the time phase of 300 CE and 600 CE. Between the phase of 600 CE and 1000 CE was the development
and spread of feudalism in India. The feudalism reached its zenith between 1000 CE and 1200 CE. After this phase the feudal system slowly collapsed.

The early medieval period was marked for the decline of secondary economic activities and was gaining importance so far as a primary activity of economy i.e agriculture was concerned. These systems were responsible for declining of trade and commerce. After examining these phenomena R S Sharma introduces the concept of urban decay (SHARMA 1987).

On the other hand D. C. Sircar after examining the land grants of this period opines that, there was economic decline and political confinement (SIRCAR 1969). B. D. Chattopadhyaya and Ranabir Chakravarti have worked on the inscriptions, trade and commerce of north and western India. They have mentioned different commercial centres like haṭṭa, santhe, auḍḍa maṃḍapikā etc during the early medieval period (CHATTOPADHYAYA 2003; CHAKRAVARTI 2004). Kenneth Hall (HALL 1980) and Kesavan Veluthat mentions the concept of nadu and nagaram in the south Indian context (VELUTHAT 1993, 2010).

The debate related to the early medieval phenomenon incorporates the nature of society, polity and economy of a period between 600 CE and 1300 CE. In the modern historiography the early medieval period of Indian history receives attention for different reasons. According to several historians the term Feudalism identified the period as an age marked by political fragmentation, the transformation of peasants into serfs and decline of urban centre and money economy. In the context of south India the interpreting framework of segmentary state model also received special attention to explain the history of the said period which was marked by the formation and proliferation of states at regional level. B. D. Chattopadhyaya in his ‘The Making of Early Medieval India’, made an
attempt to identify the issues related to early medieval society particularly in the context of Rajasthan, central India and eastern India (CHATTOPADHYAYA 1994). In general the archaeological findings from the period concerned are apparently adequate for framing and attesting to a general hypothesis related to settlement history. The early medieval society and its bearing with archaeological data may not substantiate different aspects of the settlement dynamics, however the study of epigraphic sources and the records associated with agrarian economy, involvement of political authority, etc. provide a better picture. On the other hand corroborations provided by epigraphic sources to archaeological findings of the entire phenomenon/paradigm give us enormous scope for the reconstruction of the early medieval society both secular and religious. B. D. Chattopadhyaya (CHATTOPADHYAYA 1990, 1993-94), Sheena Panja (PANJA 1995-96, 2002) and her associates (PANJA, NAG AND BANDYOPADHYAY 2015), R. Furui (FURUI 2013b, 2015), Rajat Sanyal (SANYAL 2010, 2013a, 2013b, 2015), Abhay Kant Chaudhari (CHOU DHARY 1971) made several attempts to explain the socio-political structure of West Bengal. On the other hand Dilip K. Chakrabarti (CHAKRABARTI 2001, 2006) and his associates explored the archaeological paradigm of the early medieval period. The extensive field survey highlights the nature of settlements i.e. urban or rural, religious or secular, the nature of structures, and the expansion of settlements. Here it may be mentioned that, with the present archaeological database it is difficult to address the major issues like feudalism, integration, segmentation, fragmentation and others referred to in the reconstruction of the early medieval society.

The temple, monastery and other religious centers were important institutions in early medieval India. So far as the literary sources are
concerned, this period was extremely rich both in Sanskrit and regional languages.

The major achievements of the past half-century of historical investigation of early medieval India include a rigorous analysis of political processes, agrarian relations, social stratification and the formation of the regional cultures. At present there are two broad kinds of scholarship on the history of religion and art in ancient and early medieval India. One emerges from the disciplines of religious history and art history and often lacks a strong historical grounding. The other is primarily devoted to connecting religion and art with changes in socio-political fabric, and is especially interested in patronage and legitimation, in function rather than content.

“The rural and urban aspects of the early medieval economy and society have both received considerable scholarly attention. But the importance of the forest and forest people, so vividly visible in ancient Indian texts of all kinds, has been seriously underestimated by most historians. It should be noted that in spite of the land clearance that accompanied the expansion of agriculture, large tracts of land in the subcontinent continued to be under forest which were home to communities of hunter-gatherers.” (SINGH 2011: 13-14)

The term feudalism has been derived from the latin word “feodum or feudum” means fief. Francois-Louis Ganshof describes feudalism as a set of reciprocal legal and military obligations among the warrior nobility, revolving around the three key concepts of lords, vassals and fiefs (GANSHOF 1962). A broader definition of feudalism, as described by Marc Bloch (BLOCH 1962), includes not only the obligations of the warrior nobility but those of all three estates of the realm: the nobility, the clergy, and the peasantry bound by manorialism; this is sometimes referred to as a "feudal society". Since the publication of Beth Elizabeth A.R. Brown's "The Tyranny of a Construct" (BROWN: 1974) and Susan
Reynolds’s *Fiefs and Vassals* (REYNOLDS: 1994), there has been ongoing inconclusive discussion among medieval historians as to whether feudalism is a useful construct for understanding medieval society.

According to R.S. Sharma “It is very difficult precisely to define the term feudalism, which is attributed to stages of historical development far removed from one another in time and place, such as the Interregnum (2475-2160 B.C.) after the Old Kingdom in Egypt and the Chou period in China (c. 1122-250B.C.); but generally it is applied to society in mediaeval Europe, from the 5th to the 15th century AD.

From the post-Maurya period, and especially from Gupta times, certain political and administrative developments tended to feudalize the state apparatus. The most striking development was the practice of making land grants to the Brahmanas, a custom which was sanctified by the injunctions laid down in the Dharmaśāastras, the didactic portions of the Epic, and the Purāṇas; the *Anuśāsana* Parva of the *Mahābhārata* devotes a whole chapter to the praise of making gifts of land (*bhūmidāna-praśaṃsā*) The early Pāli texts of the pre-Maurya period refer to the villages granted to the Brahmans by the rulers of Kosala and Magadha, but they do not mention the abandonment of any administrative rights by the donors. The same is the case with the earliest epigraphic record of a land-grant, a Sātavāhana inscription of the 1st century BC., which refers to the grant of a village as a gift in the *aśvamedha* sacrifice.” (SHARMA 1987: 1-2)

According to B.D. Chattopadhyaya the features of the early medieval period are as follows

1. Political decentralization: the newly formed states are characterized by decentralization and hierarchy, features suggested by the presence of wide range of semi-autonomous rulers, *samantas, mahasamantas* and similar categories, and the
hierarchized positioning of numerous *rajaputras* employed by royal courts.

2. The emergence of landed intermediaries: This is considered the hallmark of Indian feudal social formation and is seen to be linked both to the disintegration and decentralization of state authority and to major changes in the structure of agrarian relations.

3. Money economy to self-sufficient village as units of production, ruralization thus being and important dimension of the transition process. Due to this the process of decline of early historical urban centres and commercial networks, may be noted.

4. Subjection of peasantry: Linked sometimes to serfdom, characteristics of the subjection of the peasantry such as immobility, forced labour and the payment of revenue at exorbitantly high rates, all point to the nature of stratification in post-Gupta society.

5. The proliferation of Castes: The social stratification is marked by the proliferation of castes in the post-Gupta society.

6. The feudal dimension of ideology and culture of the period: The core of the ideology of the period is seen to be characterized by *bhakti*, which was feudal in content. (CHATTOPADHYAYA 1994: 10-12)

After the post-Gupta period social and economic systems has been markedly different from the preceding period. Therefore, the concept of feudal system has started during the post-Gupta period.
After the formulation of early medieval feudal systems, several researches were concerned about the various debates on the nature of society. Presently, the concept of feudalism, formulated by the Marxist historians has been challenged by some scholars. It was noted that many inscriptions provided evidence of villagers having some control over the means of agricultural production, which brought into question the extent to which they were controlled by either donors or clients, and could thus be equated with serfs (MUKHIA 1981). It was further pointed out that there was not necessarily a decline in international trade (GOPAL 1965), and that fluctuations in trade did not necessarily explain a decline in urbanism (CHATTOPADHYAYA 1994).

**Early Medieval Phase and Archaeological Remains**

So far as the archaeological remains are concerned the scholars have consistently neglected the significant evidences of historical remains. They were more concerned with the inscriptions, texts, society economy and other parameters of the concerned period.

“Against the historiographical background, it is clear that the early medieval period does not tend to be studied archaeologically, and that wider archaeological research continues to be geared toward the investigation of earlier and (to a lesser extent) later period. The examination of Buddhism and urbanism in the earlier historic period, as well as iron age, Indus valley and prehistory constitute the main foci of archaeological research on the periods preceding the early medieval. Relatively isolated studies of the later medieval period in North India and Vijaynagara in south India define archaeological study of later periods. Archaeological evidence dating to the early medieval period does, of course, exist; a significant number of temple, as well as
settlement with early medieval phase of occupation have been located and excavated throughout the subcontinent. Yet, the mere existence of this material does not itself represent or reflect a coherent strategy of archaeological research on the period.” (HAWKES 2015: 61)

On the basis of the Annual Reports of the Archaeological Survey of India, the Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, and the annual Indian Archaeology – A Review series published since 1953 Jason Hawkes enlisted 85 religious sites dating to the early medieval period (including monasteries, rock-cut-caves, stupas and temples) and which have been excavated (HAWKES 2014: 61). Besides these there are many more explored early medieval archaeological sites. Most of the sites are studied in the light of art, architecture and epigraphic sources. Elements relating to other sources are ignored.

A large number of early medieval archaeological sites and settlements have been identified by explorations and excavations. Jason Hawkes rightly observed that “As far as excavated sites are concerned, excavation have tended, with one or two notable exceptions, to be aimed either at fixing the entire cultural sequence of a site, or investigating earlier phase of occupation encountered on the way down to the earliest foundation of the site (HAWKES 2014: 66). Most of the excavated early medieval sites belong to urban settlements.”

Examination of the details of the excavated sites reveals a number of methodological concerns that raise questions about the identification, dating and interpretation of the early medieval remains. The historical phase of any archaeological sites may be dated on the basis of coins and key pottery besides others. This practice has been observed around the
world. But in case of the early medieval layers they are rarely dated with reference to the coins and ceramics that are found in those layers. So far as the pottery or ceramics of the early medieval period are concerned, archaeologists do not pay much attention to this parameter. Early medieval layers tend to be dated on the basis of key pottery types found in the deposits above and below them. The potteries above the Red Polished Ware (diagnostic pottery of historical phase) and below the Islamic Glazed Ware (earliest occurrences 11th century) are dateable to early medieval if there are no intervening layers. Recent research shows that the date of the Glazed Ware is earlier than 11th century CE. Excavations at Balupur (PANJA, NAG AND BANDYOPADHYAY 2015), Moghalmari (DATTA et al: 2008) and Mahasthangarh (ALAM and SALLES 2001) provide some fresh light on the early medieval archaeological remains.

Historiography

The history of Murshidabad has been focused and gradually associated with medieval history. The study of ancient history and archaeology has been somehow neglected by scholars of the archaeologist and historians. The first attempt which deals with the archaeological remains of the district was done by F. P. Layard. He visited the site of Karṇasuvarṇa and published an article entitled “the ancient city of Kansonapuri now called Karṇasuvarṇa. In this article he first identified the site Rājbāḍīdāṅgā and informed us about the sculptural remains of Rājbāḍīdāṅgā. In this context he had also described the archaeological importance of the site Giyasabad presently under Sagardighi PS. He was able to find gold coins of the Gupta period, inscriptions in Pali, sculptural
In the year 1860 J.E. Gastrell published a book entitled “Statistical and Geographical Report of the Murshidabad District”. In this book the author has given a beautiful account of the archaeological site of Giyasabad: “Gyasabad or Budrehat on the bank of the Bhagiruttee stands on hard bank of clay and kaṅkar (grit). In its vicinity are found remains of old pottery, old wells, the remains of a fort or palace and ancient stone slabs engraved in Pali characters, all demonstrating this to have been the site of an ancient city (GASTRELL 1860).

Nikhilnath Ray for the first time gives a brief outline on the history of Murshidabad in his publications. In the year 1304 (BS) and 1309 (BS) two books were published by the author. The first book Murshidabad Kahini (in Bengali) i.e. the legends of Murshidabad (RAY 2011), deals with some historical places and historical personalities of Murshidabad of 16th to 19th centuries. The second entitled, Murshidabader Itihas (in Bengali) i.e. History of Murshidabad (RAY 2009) book is divided into ten chapters of which the first chapter is entitled Old Murshidabad – Hindu and Buddhist period. In this chapter he describes old places of Murshidabad like Kirtiteswari, Rāṅgāmāṭi, Mahipal and Sagardighi areas of the district. The remaining chapters deal with the medieval history of the district. This work gives an idea about the chronological history of Murshidabad.

K. N. Dikshit (1990), of the eastern circle of Archaeological Survey of India explored and excavated some archaeological sites of the district. In the year 1928-29 he excavated the mound of Rākshasīdāṅgā of Rājbāḍidāṅgā area and published a note on the excavation in the Annual report of the Archaeological Survey of India 1928-29. He also explored the
Gitagram region and found seals, stone beads, terracotta figure and cast copper coins of pre-Gupta and Gupta period. Chunsar is another archaeological mound which also has yielded archaeological remains from the agricultural mound. Next year he also visited Panchthupi and declared it as a protected mound (DIKSHIT 1990).

In the year 1956 the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art (henceforth AMIA), Kolkata has collected two bronze icons of Viṣṇu from Sundarpur, of the district of Murshidabad. (IAR 1955-56: 62 PLATE LXXB). The Indian Museum, Kolkata has also collected two images of Harihara Pitāmaha of 12th century CE and an image of Viṣṇu of 10th century CE both from the area of Nabagram in the year 1957 (IAR 1957-58: 72, Plate LXXXIX B and LXXXIXA). A seated bronze image of Tārā has been discovered from the ruins of the Gupta temple of Rājbāḍīdāṅgā, now kept in the AMIA, Kolkata (IAR 1958-59: 77). In the next year a stone bull of 8th century CE has been found from the village of Kariya under the district of Murshidabad (IAR 1959-60: 78). A small terracotta sealing inscribed with the usual Buddhist creed in characters of about the eleventh century, as well as some stone sculptures of great iconographic significance, including a mutilated image of Lakulisa and a Nandin of about the seventh century have been reported from Rāṅgāṃāti area of Murshidabad. These remains are now in the collection of the AMIA, Kolkata (IAR 1960-61: 70 Plate LXXXI A, LXXXI B). After the foundation of the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of West Bengal (hence after DAWB), it carried out an extensive exploration in different districts of West Bengal. During this time an image of Viṣṇu has been found from the village of Manigram of Sagardighi PS (IAR 1961-62: 107). After the formation of the Department of Archaeology, University of Calcutta, it started excavation at Rājbāḍīdāṅgā in the year 1962 and this excavation

S. R. Das published an article entitled ‘Terracotta Seals and Sealings from Rājbāḍīdāṅgā Excavation During 1961-62’ in the Journal of the Asiatic Society. In this article he has discussed different aspects of the seals and sealings found from the excavation at Rājbāḍīdāṅgā. He has also deciphered the inscriptions engraved or impressed on the seals and sealings (DAS 1966).

In the year 1968 S.R. Das published a book “Rājbāḍīdāṅgā: 1962” i.e., the excavation report of the site of Rājbāḍīdāṅgā. This report is divided into two parts. Part one deals with the excavation at Rājbāḍīdāṅgā and part two deals exclusively with the terracotta seals and sealings. The report obviously incorporates consists of the photographs, plan, section drawing, illustrations and line drawings (DAS 1968).

Shri Adyanath Mukherjee of the AMIA, Kolkata explored the district of Murshidabad and collected sculptures and sculptural fragments from Murshidabad (IAR 1965-66: 96-97)

Shri P. C. Das Gupta of the DAWB explored an extensive site near Jangipore by the side of the ancient bed of the Bhagirathi. Two gold coins of Narsimha Gupta Baladitya had been obtained earlier from the surface of the main mound. The main mound is locally known as Lakshmi Hatir Danga. The pottery collected from the site includes thick storage jars, spouted vessels and decorative pan-handles and lids. Examples of pre-Mughal glazed Ware were also found (IAR 1971-72: 50)
In the year 1971 S. R. Das published another important work on the archaeology of the district of Murshidabad entitled “Archaeological Discoveries from Murshidabad District (West Bengal)”. In this book Prof Das discusses some important sites in the Introduction. The remaining ten chapters are about the different discoveries of the excavation and explorations (DAS 1971).

In the field season of 1975-76 the DAWB, conducted an exploration in different parts of the district of Murshidabad. As a result of this programme the cultural sequences of the district became quite clear. The report of the exploration states that “Gitagram (Saidur Danga), in District Murshidabad, yielded neolithic celts and chalcolithic pottery, including red, black-and-red and grey wares, besides microlithic flakes and beads of semi-precious stones. The site at Farakka, near the confluence of the Bhagirathi and the Gumani, in District Murshidabad, yielded early historical remains, including ring-wells, terracotta figurines such as Mother Goddess, mother and child, male and animal figurines, silver punch-marked coins, beads of semi-precious stones, bone and shell objects, antlers, sling balls, netsinkers, and flesh-rubbers.” (IAR 1975-76: 57).

The DAWB explored the site of Chandpara, located under Sagardighi PS on the right bank of Bhagirtahi and finds microliths from the site (IAR 1977-78: 86). A beautiful image of Viṣṇu has reported from the village of Suki under Nabagram PS and now kept in the State Archeological Museum, Kolkata. The image has an inscription on pedestal in the proto-Bengali characters of the eleventh century CE. The inscription reads “Sat-bibhu Sri Bahurupasya” (IAR 1980-81: 112)

Two trenches, E3 and E4 were taken for further excavation at Rājbāḍidāngā. The purpose of the excavation was to find out the north-
eastern side of the gateway wall which was partially exposed during last year 'n trench D'—3. The excavation yielded fragments of jars, pans, dishes, plates, sprinklers, knobs and lamps from all levels. Miscellaneous finds included beads, fragments of bangles, copper rings, cowries, iron objects, seals (PLATE. XXVI B and C) and sealings from Phase II level. Phase I revealed pieces of finely-polished red and black wares (IAR 1981-82)

The DAWB conducted an exploration at Sagardighi area and found an image of Marici by R.K. Sen of the DAWB. The icon is ascribable to *circa* eleventh century CE. (IAR 1983-84: 172, Plate 86).

Bijoy Kumar Bandopadhyay is the most pioneer for the reconstruction of the archaeological of the district of Murshidabad. Ha has visited all the sites of the district and describes them accordingly. He has also described the sculptures, local legends, sites and monuments. First time he has describes the archaeological remains of the district in a single book. The book is in Bengali and entitled Paschimbanger Purasampad: Murshidabad i.e Archaeological treasures of West Bengal: Murshidabad published in 1984. The work was done under the supervision of Amiya Kumar Bandopadhyay. The works of Bandopadhyay is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the general introduction of the district, the dichotomy of religious, social and economic scenario of Rāḍha and Bagri area. He also describes the architectural, sculptural remains of the district. The second part is the description of the sites according to the Subdivision and then Police station wise (BANDOPADHAYAY 1982).

In the year 1984 S. R. Das has published an article entitled Karṇaṣuvarṇa Name and Origin. In this article he has describe the different literary sources of the capital city of Śaśāṅka i.e Karṇaṣuvarṇa. He has
mentioned possible locations of the site of Karṇasuvārṇa. After detailed study he opined that Karṇasuvārṇa was located in the Baharampur PS of Murshidabad district (DAS 1984).

In the year 1992 another important book on the history of Śaśāṅka and Karṇasuvārṇa and archaeology of Karṇasuvārṇa was published by S R Das. The book entitled Karṇasuvārṇa - Mahanagari Bangadeser Bismrita Rajdhani i.e. The Great City of Karṇasuvārṇa: The Forgotten Metropolis of Bengal. The book deals with the etymological meaning and origin of the word Karṇasuvārṇa and the travel account of Hsuan-tsang about Rāktaṃṛittikā Mahavihara and Karṇasuvārṇa. The third chapter is about the present location of Karṇasuvārṇa and Rāktaṃṛittikā. The next chapter is dealing with the archaeology of Karṇasuvārṇa. The remaining chapters are about the king Śaśāṅka (DAS 1992).

Bijoy Kumar Bandopadhya has published another important Bengali book on the history and archaeology of the district is Karṇasuvārṇa O Mahipal i.e. Karṇasuvārṇa and Mahipala, which was published in 2002. The entire work is divided in to three parts i.e the geographical features of the district of Murshidabad, Karṇasuvārṇa and Sagradighi-Mahipala. The first part of the book deals with the geographical features of the district of Murshidabad. The second part is about the archaeology and history of Karṇasuvārṇa. He has described the location of the sites of Karṇasuvārṇa and others mound of the Rājbaḍḍīdāṅgā area. In this section he also gives brief account of the excavation at Rājbaḍḍīdāṅgā. The last two chapters are about the book has another two chapters describes the archaeological findings, history and local legends of Sagardighi and Mahipal (BANDOPADHYAY 2002).
Bimal Bandyopadhyay, Superintendent Archaeologist of the Kolkata circle of ASI conducted an excavation at Nilkuthidanga in the field season of 2005-2006. The aims of the excavation at Nilkuthi mound were to trace the stratification of the site, habitational area of Karṇasuvārṇa, the capital city of Śaśāṅka. The prime objective of the excavator was ‘to establish the link between the religious establishment and normal dwelling area of the city. A brief excavation report was published in the Journal of Bengal Art by excavator (BANDYOPADHYAY 2006-2007). He has also published the sculptural remains found from the excavation in the journal of the Ancient Indian History and Culture (BANDYOPADHYAY 2008).

DAWB conducted a series of explorations and excavations programme from the field seasons of 2007-08 to 2009-10 in the district of Murshidabad. As a result of this programme they excavated the mound of Chand Thakurer Danga at the village of Hatpara (NEWS LETTER CASTEI 2008: 16), microliths bearing site, mound of Hari Rajar Garh (also called Doilopar) at the village Dheka of under Burwan PS (NEWS LETTER CASTEI 2009: 22), and Rākshasīdāṅgā, a structural mound near Rājbāḍīdāṅgā (NEWS LETTER CASTEI 2010: 18-19). Besides these they explored a significant number of sites like Geetgram, Bharatpur, Talgram, Chandpara, Hatpara, Dogachi, Hukarhut, Mahipal, Lakshihut, Manigram, Jalbandha, Dheka, Salar, Sabalpur, Sarmastpur, Kherur, Sagardighi, Ugura, koregram, Brahmanigram, Gankar, Jibanti and Moregram all are from the district of Murshidabad (NEWS LETTER CASTEI 2009: 22).

We are all aware about the findings of archaeological remains Farakka during the construction of Farakka barrage project and consequent explorations a group of archaeologists headed by Sudhin De of the DAWB extensively explored the site and excavated at different places to unearth the archaeological remains of the area. Remains of ancient settlements were
lost to a great extent during the construction of the barrage. A brief report on the findings of the archaeological materials has been published by Tapas Banerjee in Pratna-Samikha (BANERJEE 1993-1994: 193-209).

The works of R. D. Banerji (BANERJI 1934), R. C. Majumdar (MAJUMDAR 1971), Susan L. Huntington (HUNTINGTON 1984) have referred to a considerable number of sculptural remains found from this area. Their repertoire of sculptures has been generally assigned to the Pala-Sena idiom. In his ‘Eastern Indian School of Medieval Sculptures’, Banerji had commented upon a few important images including an icon of Lokeśvara-Visṇu (BANERJI 1934: 94) and a group of Śaḍākṣarī and Tārā images, all found from the banks of the large lake (mentioned earlier) at Sagardighi (BANERJI 1934: 133). A Padmapāṇī Avalokiteśvara stylistically assignable to the Gupta Period was found from the village of Salar, and is now kept in the collection of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Museum (henceforth BSPM), Kolkata (SHARMA 2004: 247).

A catalogue has been published from BSPM Museum, Kolkata. The catalogue is all about the stone and metal images of the Museum. In this connection has documented a significant number of sculptures originally collected from Murshidabad (GANGULY 1922)

**Scope**

With reference to the earlier discussion on the early medieval paradigm, it may be noted that the present scope aims at highlighting different issues regarding the settlement matrix of the study area from the 6th to the 13th century.
The present work is a comprehensive attempt to highlight the findings from the study area with reference to the continuity of the early medieval processes into the ‘other dimensions’.

The present work has been carried out after detail documentation of archaeological sites and ancient settlements of the district. A village to village survey has been carried out. For this we had made a pre-field study. Initially we revisit the sites and settlements which were already explored by earlier scholars to understand an idea about the nature of sites and settlements. We explored a significant number of sites and settlements according to present administrative boundary of police stations of the district. In this connection we have also documented the size of the settlements, context, and cultural sequences of the sites and settlements.

During our field survey we were able to document a huge number of archaeological remains in form of sculptures, architectural fragments, bricks, coins, inscriptions, beads, polished stone tools, microliths, terracotta objects, different types of potteries and other archaeological remains of the different cultural phases. All these findings have been classified in accordance with the parameters of the concerned cultural phases. We have identified the early medieval archaeological remains of the district of Murshidabad. We visited and documented the archaeological remains now housed in the different museums especially from the district of Murshidabad. We also draw a comparative study of the archaeological materials found from the neighboring areas of the present study area.

The present study area has yielded a significant number of inscriptions. There are earlier reports of the inscriptions found from the different places of the district. Some of the important inscriptions are now missing. During our field survey we have encountered several numbers of
inscriptions in form of image inscriptions and stone slab inscriptions. In this context we visited the sites and settlements mentioned in the different land grants of the early medieval period. We also visited the find spot of the land grant of the district of Murshidabad. Here we must mention that we were able to document some Islamic calligraphy behind the sculptural fragments.

The present work also highlights the structural remains of the district. We visited the excavated sites and settlements and besides the structural mound of the district. We also tried to trace the character of the structures i.e. religious or secular. We also studied the structural materials used for constructions.

The present works incorporates necessary charts, tables, maps, diagrams, plates of photographs, drawings and an exhaustive bibliography.