CHAPTER II

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Unnao, that lies between 26°8' and 27°2' north latitude and 80°3' and 81°3' east longitude is a district bounded by Hardoi, Lucknow and Rai Barely on the north, east and south respectively. On the west it is bounded by the river Ganga which separates it from Kanpur and Fatehpur districts. The whole district covers an area of 4,586 kms and has total population of 14,84,393 inhabitants.

Structure: The region being a part of the Indo-Gangetic plain is structurally a homogeneous area. It is formed with unvarying monotony of pleistocene and sub-recent alluvial deposits of the rivers of the Ganga system. Lithologically, the region, like other parts of the plain, contains rocks of the fluviatile and sub-aerial formation, massive beds of clay, either sandy or calcareous, corresponding to silt, mud and sand, with occasional gravel beds and lenses of peaty organic matter.

Topographically, the district is divided into two main divisions—'Bāngar' (up-land) and 'Khādar' (low-land). The old terrace of the Ganga, known as Bāngar was formed at a time when the rivers of the plain flowed at slightly higher elevation and were capable of carrying large volume of sediment than at

2. India, 1975 (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Publication) P.343.
present. At a number of places, the sections of this terrace are exposed and are found to be about 3–10 metres higher than the present flood plain of the Ganga, indicating thereby that these formed the old banks of the river whence it receded southwards, making an 3–km. wide Khâdar. The exposed sections of the Bângar show a succession of four deposits from top downwards: sandy clay, plastic clays, blackish soil full of small kankar nodules and yellowish kankar. Undoubtedly, this sandy deposit capping the old formation marks the end of an epoch in the life of the Ganga and that was deposited by the river with higher flood plain. In north India these conditions prevailed during the pluvial periods of the Pleistocene. Thus, the age of Bângar can be traced back to the middle pleistocene period.

Extending eastwards from the high alluvial banks of the Ganga and its tributaries, viz. thêkâlyâni and the Naurnâ, lies the up-land of the district which goes as far as the valley of the Sai. The surface is generally even, but at places it is gently undulating. Where there are deeper depressions, lakes of more or less permanent character are found, while at other places there are shallow swamps that dry in the scorching heat of the summer.

Thus, in general terms the district consists of alluvial

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1. Indian Archaeology A Review/, P.43, Pl. XLVIA.
3. Dr. Verma, R.V.: Evolution of Settlement - Pattern in Oudh, Pp. 10-12, Fg. 4 C.
deposits the greater part of which is composed of the 'Bāngar' land through which the running water-courses of large rivers have carved out the low-lying 'Khādar' valleys to the depth of some 10 metres below the general level.

Here, it is significant to note that ancient land routes that passed through this up-land of the district had caused big towns and cities to crop up and flourish in its midst and along the old banks of the two main rivers of the district viz. the Ganga and the Sai, which form southern and north-eastern boundaries of the district respectively. The up-land tract runs parallel to the Ganga and Sai courses, and has an average width of 23 kms. These areas include all the low-lying strips in the vicinity of the rivers and are usually delimited by high bluff. They are subject to regular annual inundation during rainy season. The Ganga lowland of the newer alluvium, known as Khādar, is clearly separated from the 'Bāngar' upland by old high ridges. This low plain possesses numerous shallow depressions and sandy mounds. The phisiography of the Khādar land presents a series of alluvial plains separated, from high banks, by old channels partly silted up and partly filled with water in rainy season. The low-land of the Sai is rather narrow. This lowland is fairly homogeneous strip of loam and clay of fair quality with occasional

1. Dr. Moti Chandra : Sarthavāh, P.16.
3. Dr. Verma, R.V. : op. cit. P.6
patches of the sandy soil.

Major Rivers and Streams:

As stated above the district is bounded by two major rivers (1) The Ganga and (2) The Sai - anciently known as Syandika or Sundari-Cā. These two major rivers have played a significant role in the life and economy of the people inhabiting their valleys.

The Ganga: The river Ganga flows from north-west to the south-east of the district. It has shifted to a distance of 10 kms from its old channel during the last 500 years or so. However, in the rainy season it often visits old banks upon which stand the ruined cities in the form of high mounds lined in a string-like order right from Ganj Muradabad to Pariyar all along the Unnao-Hardoi road; and from Pariyar to Daudia-khera, which is the southernmost site of great antiquity.

A systematic survey of the old eastern bluffs in the district along the old bed of the river Ganga reveals that its old course which has shifted westwards ran down the modern towns and villages enumerated below. It appears that the Ganga coursed through the channel of modern river Kalyāni right from Ganj Murādābād touching the frings of Fateshpur Khālsa, Newal, Nasirpur and Bangarmau from where it took a sharp turn to the north-east and

2. Upadhyaya, B.: Buddhakālīna Bhūgolā, P.133.
3. Cunningham: The Ancient Geography of India, P.322.
flowing down Surseni, - Chamāran khera, Mustafābad, Sātan and Ajmat Ali khera again turned southwards washing the old mounds of Patti Jagdishpur, Ugū, Māthar, Vāsudevatila (near Kakraurā), Safipur, Atahā- and Antavā. From Atwā it again took a northerly direction and flowing about 12 kms along Lūṭāpur, Methi Tikur and Korāri took to its southern course again along Pariyar, Raokarna, Dīh, Thāna, etc. Thana Saraul and Gangāuli; then it flowed down the present stream near Pahārpur. From Pahārpur onwards it flowed down Hariharpur, Pandharpur, Banthar, Haqḥā, Anūpapur, Tikarimau (near Ruṭhai) Terhā, Sagwar, Daudiākherā and Buxar. From Buxar onwards the Ganga enters into the district of Rai Bareli.

The Sai: In the north-east we come to the valley of the Sai which forms the northern and eastern boundary of the district. It has its source in the south-western part of the Kheri District.

From Roshnābad to Kurshat it separates Pargana Bangarowāu from the Sandila Tehsil. Thence it flows in an irregular course through Pargana Aurās to Mohān, where it turns south and from that point separates Unnao from Lucknow, with the exception of a few villages of Parsandan and Asohā which lie to the east of the river. It leaves Pargana Maurāvan in the extreme south-east at Sarai Muḥārakpur and enters the Raibareli District.3

The 'Terai' area of the Sai river is comparatively smaller than that of the Ganges and this depression is quite distinct in

3. - Do - : ibid, P. 5.
the north of the Hasanganj Tehsil, where floods, occasionally, do considerable damage; otherwise, as stated above, the whole valley bears no traces of any marked difference in topography than what it was in the past. The main reason of this marked uniformity in topography during the past centuries is the presence of compact and firm clay throughout the valley.¹

It is interesting to note that this compact clay was probably responsible for the luxuriant growth of thick forests which abounded in flora and fauna and catered to the needs of the primitive tribes inhabiting there, and provided ideal retreat for the Hishis and asylum to the bandits. Secondly, thick forests contributed much to the large-scale production of baked bricks, which were freely used in Mauryan as well as later structures at Sanchānkot and Mohān, the two old magnificent towns situated on the right and left banks of the river respectively. Thirdly, the catchment area of the Sai Valley being smaller and the clay being firm the volume of water borne by the river was not so devastating as that of the Ganga. The mighty waves and swift currents of the Ganga had wiped away many an important site such as Hastināpur. Therefore, prehistoric and proto-historic deposits have better chances to remain in situ, the sites along the small rivers which are not inundated frequently on a large scale. Exploration

1. Traditionally, Asohā and Parsandan are associated with Asvaṭhama and Parasurāma respectively. They are said to have practised penances there.

2. VinayaPitak, P. 127-128 (Hindī Anuwad); Pathak, V; History of.

along the Sai has furnished significant material to throw light
on the antiquity of this region.

**Small Rivers and Tributaries:**

The other streams of the district are as follows:

1. The Kalyāni
2. The Loni
3. The Tinai
4. The Naurahi

**The Kalyāni:**

The Kalyāni rises in Hardoi and enters the district
at Lahurmau in the north of Bangarmau. Thence it flows into the
Ganges at Maraunda.¹

Generally, the Kalyāni flows into the old bed of the
river Ganga. The important towns on its banks are Newal, Bangarmau,
Bhadasar Naushahrā, Fatehpur Chaurasi, and Pariyar.

**The Loni:**

The Loni is a small stream which rises from the Pawai tank
in the district itself, and flows in south-easterly direction into
the Purwa Tehsil. It traverses the Tehsil and eventually falls in
the Ganges near Khamaon in the Raibareli district. It is joined by
another small stream called Khorai in the north-west of the village
named Bihar. This rivulet rises near Asohā and thence flows southwards
through Pargana Purwa.

² *Ibid* P.5.
The Tinai

The Tinai rises in the Kutakari jhil at Asiwan and passes down through the Parganas of Asiwan- Rasulabad. It has a small tributary known as Aurai, which rises in the east of the Asiwan- Rasulabad Pargana and joins the Tinai after a short course.

The Naurahi

The Naurahi is also called the Gordhoi, which rises in Harhā and flows beneath the old high-bank of the Ganga through Ghatampur and Daudîâkhera to join the river Ganga at Buxar.2

Though these small streams carry little volume of water except in the rainy season, yet the undulating terrain and its ravines serve as an ideal retreat for game-animals. No wonder if along these small streams primitive tribes lived and hunted their games with neolithic tools, as is evident from the discovery of a Neolithic celt at Daudîâkhera and other places.

Tanks and Lakes

The extensive areas having deep depressions in all the parts of the district have assumed the form of lakes, while ponds and tanks are caused by the whirlpools after the river or flood water withdraws, or by petty depressions in which rain-water is stored, or by human action when large quantities of earth is dug out for laying bricks or house-building.

\[1. \text{ibid : P.5.} \]
\[2. \text{Ibid .} \]
Thus, ponds and tanks are a common sight near a village or town throughout the district, but chief among them are Mawai-Bhari and Kursatha tanks in the Safipur Tehsil. Others include Hariyal Tal near Mustafabad and Surya Kund near Bangarmau. There are Kulli-Bari and Jalessar near Ajgain and Amarpur water tanks near Kāntha. Other pucca tanks are at Māurāwan, Padāri, Mohān and Kusumbhi etc.

Sometimes, the ponds and tanks are associated with certain legendary figures as in the case of Sūrya kunda near Bangarmau. Generally, their importance lies in their connection with some temple where people offer their worship after ablutions. Cult-images are often stored under a tree—in one corner of the tank. Thus, their importance in respect of studying the art, sculpture— and history of a particular place or region is self-evident.

Lakes: Besides the main rivers and their tributaries, the drainage pattern of the region includes a large number of stagnant water bodies in form of lakes and shallow depressions.

Lakes are mostly found in Hasanganj and Purwa Tehsil. While the largest lakes are in Hasanganj Tehsil and particularly in Navalaganj Block; the horse-shoe lakes are a common feature in Purwa Tehsil. In view of the archaeological importance of horse-shoe lakes they have been dealt with separately. Other important lakes include:

1. ibid
2. Garg, L.M.: 'Navadeva Kula' JUPHS (1950) PP.175-76; see also Dr. V.S. Agrawal’s note.
(1) Jhalotar jhil :

It is a large heptagonal lake in the north of Naviganj town.

(2) Ajgha jhil :

It is also a very large lake in the vicinity of Naviganj. It has the distinction of being the largest sanctuary of birds in Uttar Pradesh. It is interesting for ornithologists to know that birds of rare species living in the far-off regions of the Himalayas flock here migrating from distant places.

(3) The large lake near Kanthā is pipal -leaf-shaped and lies between Shambhookhera and Nakhhera.

(4) A cluster of five lakes around Girmāpur.

Other lakes smaller in dimension are (a) Basaha jhil near Ajgain (b) Kataghari jhil near Asiwan (c) The Sukrar jhil near Maurawan and (d) The Barela jhil near the border of Raibareli.

Horse-shoe lakes:

There is a fairly good number of horse-shoe lakes in the district. They are as follows:

(1) Near Bhikhampur surrounding Kakauha and Beharauli in Bichhia Block.

(2) Near Purwa surrounding Dhupatpur and Astoha.

(3) Near Sarvan

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
Near Sarovarkheda - Jhoratganj
Near Bidura surrounding Bhupkhera - Rasulpur
Near Pandepur surrounding Kundi Kodara.
Near Shiva Singh Khera between Shambhu khera and Līha khera.
Near Kanchanpur and Sadhauli north of Sarvan.
Near Bhagvantpur between Paharpur Pathari and Dhokarai (Sumerpur Block).
Near Unchagaon (Sumerpur Block).
Near Bhitarapār and Parsandan (Nawabganj Block).
Near Parasurāmpur (Fatehpur Chaurasi Block).
Near Rampur south of Pariyar
Near Terha between Godā dholi and Chandanpur.

As stated above the horse-shoe lakes are generally seen in the extreme east or in the south of the district. From the nature of these horse-shoe lakes it is clear that these represent the stages of the withdrawal of the Ganges (or, Saï) to its present bed. On account of the perennial source of water and availability of small game-animals and birds and reverine creatures like tortoise, shell and fish, these lake-areas probably served as ideal habitation sites for the 'Mesolithic' Man.

Woods or Forests:

As the whole district is bounded by two major rivers and watered by their small tributaries, it is but natural that a large area of the district should be covered with orchards,

1. Indian Archaeology - A Review (1971-72) P. 44.
woods and luxuriant growth of vegetation. The area under groves, in 1902, was 64,497 acres or 5% of the total area of the district. Of this nearly 30,000 acres lies in the Purwa Tehsil and a large portion of the remainder in Pargana Harhā, although almost every Pargana of the district has a fair proportion of grove land. But there are no woods worth the name; a little Dhāk & jungle is alone left to show where dense forest once stood. Some of these woods and forests have, however, been mentioned in the epics, Buddhist texts and accounts of the Chinese travellers in connection with hunting game-animals, or staying during the rainy season, or passing through them. The references of the rain-stay of Lord Buddha and the itinerary of the Chinese travellers bear testimony to their existence. Thus, there were following 'vanas' or woods as mentioned in ancient literature:

1. Mahāranya near Pariyar where Siṭā was exiled.
2. Sarven where King Dasharatha had killed Shravan Kumar.
3. Sinsipävana near Newal where Lord Buddha had seated himself on the fallen leaves of the Sisam trees.
4. Kantakivana near Sa-che (Sanchānkot) as stated by Chinese traveller Fa-Hien.
5. Asivan near Miyāganj etc.

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4. Ibid : P.113
5. Āṅguttarā Nīkāya (Hatthaka Sutta), Vol. I, P.126 (Sarnath Hindi Ed.II)
6. Upādhyaya, B; op.cit, P.21 & 237
7. Dr. Hoey : JASE, 1900, P.75:
Vegetation: This includes wild grasses, shrubs and bushes of various kinds which have considerable cultural and commercial value. In river-beds or places where the soil is not very fertile varieties of grasses grow, such as māonj (Saccharum Munja) and Kus (Desmostachya bipinnata) etc. From the fibre of these tall grasses 'bān', mats, ropes etc. are made. The various shrubs and bushes found are jhar-beri (Zizyphus jujuba), jhāu(Tamarix), Karil (Capparis aphylla) etc.

Tall grasses and shrubs provide ideal habitat for wild animals as well as raw-material for such cultural equipment as mats, fans, ropes, baskets and also thatches to protect from sun and rain.

Common trees and Plants:

Apart from mango trees, which are very common, there exist Banyan, pipal, pakar, Gular, Palas, Neem (Margosa species), Jamun (Syzygium Jambolana), Guava (Psidiura Givajra), Bel (Aegle Marmelos), Kaitha (Feronia Pimonia), Sisham (Dalbergia Sissa), Imali (Tamarindus indicus), Semul (Salmalia mala barica) Amla (Emblica officinalis),Mahua (Bassia Latifolia) etc.

The ecological factors such as the fertility of the soil, the annual climatic cycle and the congregation of annual plants has enabled man to cultivate about fifty plants.

Chief among them are: wheat (Triticum Vulgare), Paddy (Oryza Sativa), Maize (Zea mays), Barley (Hordium Vulgare), gram (Cicer aritinum), Sugarcane (Saccharum officinarum), Mung (Phaseolus Mungo), Urd (Phaseolus radiatus), Potato (Solenum tuberosum), Mustard plant (Brassica compestris) etc.

Remains of some of these grains have been found at a number of sites in the district. Their antiquity could not be ascertained in absence of palaeobotanical tests.

**FAUNA**

**Wild Animals**: The wild animals haunting the secluded areas are very few. Deer, black buck and Nilgai were seen especially in thickets and 'Khādar' areas, but at present their number has considerably reduced owing to the clearance of the jungles, the reclamation of wild tracts, the spread of cultivation and growing tendency of hunting for sport. Wolves and Jackals are the distinctive carnivora, and appear to be common everywhere in dales and dunes alike. Wild pigs are very scarce, though they were found in large numbers some time ago in the 'Khādar' area of the Ganges. The same is with the wild cattle which roamed at will in the low-lying lands in the extreme south in Pargana Daudia khera.

**Domestic Animals**: The domestic animals include cows, buffaloes, bullocks, sheep and goat which/of great use to the farmers and householders alike: Horses, ponies and donkeys are also used by the village—


folk for riding and carrying loads. Dogs are common as pet animal for keeping guard on farms and homesteads. Pigs are also reared at some places. Elephants and camels are also occasionally seen.

Birds: Birds of different species are found in fair numbers in this district. Migrating birds such as geese, ducks, cranes, whistling teal (or tree duck) are a common sight in the big jhils in the winter season. The sanctuary near Nawābganj provides natural habitat for various kinds of ducks, partridges, nightingales, peafowls, cranes etc. Pea-cocks, parrots, doves, cuckoos, domestic birds, pigeons, crows, egrets, Nilkantha are seen in considerable numbers throughout the district. Domestic fowl, the sentinel of dawn, which is one of the oldest companions of man, is also seen pecking and frequenting everywhere.

Aquatic Animals:

These include crocodiles, gharial, and tortoises which are generally found in the waters of the Ganges. Fishes of different species are seen in ponds, lakes and rivers and have served as staple diet time immemorial.

Climate:

The climate of Unnao is ordinarily the same as that of the neighbouring districts. In short, it is pleasant and healthy, except the short spell of the summer season. During the hot summer

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1. A.L. Bashani: The Wonder that was India, P.26. 'It was probably first tamed by Neolithic Indians in the Ganga Valley, whence it found its way by the Burma route to China, where it appears in the middle of the 2nd millennium. The Egyptians knew it at about the same time, as a rare luxury bird. Clearly, India, even at this remote period, was not wholly cut off from the rest of the world.'

and cold winter the temperature ranges between $65^\circ$ to $103^\circ$ C, and $45^\circ$ to $79^\circ$ C respectively. Thus, from November to May the range of temperature is considerable, being well over 20 degrees. The average annual rainfall for the whole district is 83.78 cms. and the number of rainy days being 43.4. Its distribution, however, varies in different parts of the district. Thus, those parganas that lie in the neighbourhood of the watershed of the Ganges receive, as a whole, much more rain than the inland tracts; that is why, Pariyar and chakhavansi, that comes in the first category, is called the Cherapunji of the Unnao district, while certain parts of Aurāś-Mohan suffer from dry spell. In the last famine of 1897, the part of the district which suffered most was the north of Pargana Aurāś-Mohan, which is far removed from the influence of the Ganges. Thus, those areas, which had heavy rainfall, were densely populated; for, these areas presented ideal conditions for food-gathering, farming, stock-breeding and hunting, game, and trade and commerce.

Ancient Land and - routes and Waterways:

There are many important sites in the district which have had the distinction of being associated with great personages and connected with events of historical importance. The great personages include kings, warriors, saints, teachers and traders.

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etc. Their frequent visits to different places of the district as well as of other regions and kingdoms show that a number of important places were connected with caravan-routes, highways and waterways. In this connection it would be useful to take into account the following important events that are described in epics, Brahmanical as well as Buddhist literature. Others that include are purely legendary. The events are as follows:

1. Sītā was exiled by Rāma and was abandoned by Laxmaṇa at Pariyar where she gave birth to her two sons—Lava and Kuśa—who later on ruled the kingdoms of Śravasti and Kusasthali (on the Vindhya hills) respectively.

2. The troops of Rāma were defeated in the Mahārājya near Pariyar by Lava-Kusa, who had seized the Aśvamedha horse.

3. Vālmiki took Lava-Kusa to Namiśāraṇya, where they sang a poem composed by Vālmiki praising Rāma's exploits before Rāma.

These three references amply prove that there were land-routes connecting Pariyar with Ayodhya and Namiśāraṇya.

4. King Dāshratha is said to have killed Shravān Kumar who had stayed with his blind parents at Sarvan on his way to Prayāg.

Thus, Sarvan in District Unnao was a junction from where routes diverged to two places viz. Ayodhya and Prayāg.

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1. VRāmāyaṇa: VII, 108, 13. The name itself denotes the place where Sītā was abandoned.
2. VRāmāyaṇa: VII, 66, 9; Raghuvansā, XV, 32.
(5) At Alvī, the Buddha is said to have passed his 16th rain-stay (Varṣavasa). After leaving Kannauj, Fa-Hien crossed the Ganges and went south for three yojanas when he arrived at the forest or village called A-10.

(6) Hiuen Tsang travelled south-east of Kannauj 100 li and reached the town of Na-po-ti-po-Kulo, which appears to represent Navadevakula, which was on the east bank of the Ganges and is identified with Newal.

(7) From A-10 Fa-Hien reached the great country of Sa-che, which is variously identified with Saket and Sanchankot.

(8) From Na-po-ti-po-kulo Hien Tsang went 600 li or 60 li to (Ayudhā or Ayodhyā).

(9) He also visited A-yo-mu-ka, which is identified with modern Daudīkhera, on his way to Prayāg.

In this way, in the ancient days, there was a highway from Kannauj to Prayag via Navadevakula and Hayamukha (Daudīkhera) where Ganga had to be crossed to reach Fatehpur;

1. Anguttar Nikāya, Volume 1, P.215.
7. Legge, J : 'Travels of Fa-Hien', P.54 (Delhi, 1977)
(2) a highway from Taxila to Rājgriha passed via Kannauj, Ālavi (i.e. Newal), Sa-che(Sanchankot) to Sandila, and from there to Ayodhyā; and

(3) a trade-route from Pratisthanpur to Srāvasti via Ujjain, Kosambi, Saket (Sanchānkot ?).

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