CHAPTER 10
BHŪTĀMBILIKĀ

Ghumali (21°53'N; 69°79'E) the ancient Bhūtāmbalikā was the capital of the two dynasties i.e., Saindhavas and Jethavas for over four hundred years. The Saindhava Copper plate and several late medieval inscriptions mention Bhūtāmbilikā, Bhūmilikā, Bhutambilimandal, Bhūtāmbilyan, Bhūmbhalī. Bhūbhrutpalli, Bhūmbhiliya. All above said names of Ghumali except Bhūbhrutapalli have come from Bhūtāmbilikā.

This ruined capital town, which gives a deserted look is situated nearly 4km south of Bhanvad town. Ghumali has the open area of Vartu valley and the plains of Bhanvad on the east and the north. On the west and south the mountains of Barda break the terrain into hills and valleys for a considerable distance. The northern hill has a nala that join the river Vartu which in turn meet the Arabian sea to the south of Gandhavi. In the shelter of hills where slopes merge with plain stand Ghumali flanked by two nalas and a large water stream. The central stream is known as Bhruguni-zar while eastern stream is Vaghiya-zar. Behind these streams on its south rises the hills of Sonkansari, Asapura Venu, Abhapar and Alla-all are nearly 400 mts in height.

The political and cultural history of this area is based on the discovery of copper plates stone inscriptions, coins archaeological field-work, a small excavation conducted at the spot and literary works. Like the early history of Gujarat, the early history of Ghumali is also showing inconsistency.
Therefore due to paucity of data, lacking information are collected from the general history of the surrounding region of western Saurashtra.

Evidently the history of Gujarat begins from the Mauryan period and Girinagar was the provincial capital of this Western most province of the Magadhan Empire. It is interesting to note that intensive exploration conducted in the Ghumali area by the Archaeological Research Society, Porbandar and the State Department of Archaeology has yielded early historic pottery, punch marked coins and huge Mauryan brick-structure\(^2\)(size: 120'x70'x15' height).

Around this massive brick structure (located near Bhrugukund, brick size: 20'x12'x4') there are evidences of scattered cells also\(^3\). Thus there existed a small settlement at Ghumali during Mauryan and post Mauryan period which might have continued in later period.

The Shungas and the early Satavahanas continued to rule over the early parts of Saurashtra and Kachha while the availability of Indo-Greek coins from Western part of Saurashtra indicate the mercantile relation with the north-western regions of India. The Kshatrapas had long regimes (100AD-400AD) over Gujarat and Saurashtra region as a whole which could be attested by inscriptional and numismatic evidences. All most all the Buddhist monuments so far found in Gujarat are ascribed to the kshatrapa rule. The Kshatrapa period is also characterised by kshatrap coins of copper and silver, distinct pottery known as Red Polished Ware and brick structures\(^4\). Interestingly some nine caves with having specific size, - one of them contain a chaitya griha) and brick structures have been fond near
Ranpur on the western side of the Barda hills. Moreover Kshatrap coins and fragments of Red polished ware also reported to have been discovered from Bhrugukund area. The Januzar area – (towards Mokhana village) in Ghumali two rectangular Brahmanical caves have been found which are also ascribed to the Kshatrapa period⁵.

The Kshatrapas were followed by the short regime of the Guptas which witnessed notable architectural activities in the Saurashtra region. In the Gupta period, the Junagadh inscription of AD 475-58, of the time of Skanda Gupta refers to the building of Visnu temple at or in the vicinity of Girnar. A short distance south east of the city ruins of Ghumali above 400' above ground level stands a group of temples locally known as “Sonkansāri’s temples”. There is a small artificial featureless tank alongside. In this, the central temple no. faces east and its simplicity suggests that it could be a Gupta temple devoted to Bhāgavat religion. In the last quarter of the 5th century, the mighty Gupta empire of Magadha began to crack due to internal stresses and strains. The Huna invasion forced this great empire to contract. From this upheaval there rose a principality at Valabhipur. These were Maitrakas who ruled over Gujarat from 6th cent. AD. Several temples built in the environs of Bhūtāmbilimandala – (Ghumali area) are ascribed to this dynasty. Particularly the temples and the settlement remains in the area of Sonkansāri and Bhrugukunda belonged to the Maitraka period. It is interesting to note that for a while the Gārulaka⁶ rulers (c. AD 481 - 6th cent.) who acknowledged the suzerainty of the Maitraka king Dhruvasena I ruled at Ghumali.
In the second quarter of the eighth century AD a new dynasty known now from its copper-plate grants as Jayadratha Vaṁśa or Saindhava vaṁśa owing loyalty to the Maitrakas rose in Western Saurashtra with its capital at Bhūtāmbilikā or Bhūmilikā (Ghumali) in the Barda hills. The first three kings Pusyadeva or Pustyena Kṛṣnaraja I and Agguka I flourished during the Maitraka period.

The post-Maitraka Saindhava rulers appear to have been the vessels of the Gurjara-Prathiharas of Bhillumāla — and afterwards of Kanauja). Compared to the Maitrakas, this dynasty even at its height held sway over relatively small area covered by the modern Jamnagar district and a part of Madhya-Saurashtra district and Porbandar taluka. A Brahmanical monastery — mathikā) and Hindu temples near Sonkansari are the only significant monuments noted. Saindhava rule does not seem to be very eventful. A probable attack of the Arabs repulsed by Agguka I and the petty wars of his descendants with the Chapa chieftains of Vadhavan appear to be the only incident of historical value known to us. The last date of the Saindhavas so far known is AD 920. In all some fifteen copper-plates of the Saindhava dynasty have been found so far which gives their genealogy and call them “अपर सुराष्ट्र मण्डल मण्डलं, अपर सायुक्तालिप्ति श्रीमन्नजयदर्शवंशं”. The copper plate inscription of Ranak Baskaldev of Ghumali dated AD 987 is silent about the Saindhavas as well as his predecessors. Some time between AD 920 and 987, therefore the Saindhava dynasty may be surmised to have come to an end. A fairly large number of temples belonging to the Saindhava period are now known in the territory once occupied by the Saindhavas.
Last Saindhav ruler of Ghumali was Jaik II, after his reign what happened to the Saindhava dynasty is not known but the copper plate inscription of Ranak Baskaldev dated AD 98) mention that they ruled over “Jyesthukadesha”. Perhaps he was loyal to Mularaja I Solanki of Anahilpur Patan. Ghumali continued to enjoy the status of a capital during the regime of the new line now came to be known as Jethvas. They ruled over Western-Saurashtra which was also named after their family names as “Jyesthukadesa”. Perhaps the Jethvas had a very long regime at Ghumali and its environs. i.e., AD 10th century to 16th century which could be attested by their copper plate stone inscriptions inscribed Paliyas memorial slabs and literary works like Makaradhvajvamsi Mahipamāla and Bardic chronicles. They are credited to have constructed forts, stepwells, temples, palaces, wells, etc in the beautiful green valley located between Abhapar and Venu hills at Ghumali.

TOPOGRAPHY

Ghumali (ancient Bhūāmbilikā) is surrounded by hills and jungles. Perhaps, this valley which was naturally well protected area attracted the settlements, monasteries and royal families. Thus, guarded by nature from all sides Ghumali became an obvious choice right from the early historic period (c.300 BC to 8th century AD) to the medieval period (AD 9th to 16th century). The scattered archaeological ruins and remains reveal its history of over two thousand years.

TOWN PLANNING

Archaeological exploration conducted in the eastern valley formed by Abhapar and Venu hills yielded the remains of early historic settlement
BHUTAMBIKA (GHUMALI)

Group of Sonkansari Temples

Navlakha Darwaja

Fort 2

Fort 1

Royal Enclosure

Aarha Parapt

Aashopar Hill

Bhagukut

Stream

Lake

Vaghbari Chowki

Vaghbari Darwaja

Navlakha Darwaja

Vikia Vav

Stream

Rampot Gate

FIG. 52

courtesy: SURENDRA VYAS
around Bhrugukunda area. This area located along the water streams showed a huge Mauryan brick structure. Little later State Department of Archaeology found some punch marked coins which indicate the antiquity of settlement of Ghumali from Mauryan period onwards. Besides a lot of brick structures datable to the Kshatrapa period were found in this hilly area. Moreover, the associated antiquities such as Kshatrapa coins and Red Polished Ware further suggested the continuity of early historic settlement at Bhrugukund area in Ghumali. It may be noted here that evidences of Buddhist-(nine caves) as well as Brahmanical–two caves are reported to have been found in the near by surrounding hills. Perhaps the early historic settlement at Ghumali developed on the slope along the water stream in linear pattern.

There were several scattered settlements at higher places nearby the tanks. Of these, the most famous was the plain table land situated by the Venu hills. Around the Kansariya tank there are brick structures and a group of temples today well known as “Sonkansari group of temples” ascribable to c.5th cent. AD to 9th cent.AD. The temple builders who built several temples on the hill tope and valley seem to have followed the injunctions prescribed in the Brhatsamhita. Three distinct varieties of temples were built during the regime of the Maitraka and Saindhavas i.e., a) Phamsakara: This type comprises temples that have a pyramidal roof rising in receding tiers. Temples no.4,5,8 at Sonkansari group belong to this class.

b) Vimanakar: This is one of the most popular classes where the superstructure is made of storeys (tala rising one above another with a narrow recessed band uccheda) giving emphasis to the interval belong to this class.
c) Sikharanvita: This class comprises temples which gradually transformed into Nagara Sikhara Ganesha dem located little south of Navlakha in the fortified area), temple no.3 of Sonkansari group and Celesvara/Sailesvar Sivalaya situated on the bank of Celesar tank – all belong to this class.

Looking to the tank, early group of temples, the investigator conducted further intensive explorations in this area, which yielded remains of settlement. Further, ruins of two medieval forts have been noticed.

**Fort I**: There are ruins of a fortress on the top area of Abhapar hill which is flanked by two small tanks locally known as Babrabhut and Kalubhar tanks. Perhaps this was an acropolis unit meant for royal families and the courtiers.

**Fort II**: The main rampart of the fort occupies lower level of Ghumali and covers it from Ashapura and Vaghabari hills. The fort wall is interspersed by a number of bastions. James Todd visited the site of Ghumali in 1823 who describes that the main rampart of the fort were strong and massive and were surrounded by deep ditch-moat. The main fort constructed of well placed ashar stones on the exterior and rubbles in its inner portion. The main fort had four gate i.e., Vaghabari gate, gate no.2 near Panchayat office, Navlakha gate and Ramapole gate of which only the last gate is vividly described by Tod. The brackets of the Ramapole gate were fairly well preserved when Burgess visited the site. Its sculptural decoration depicting elephants, lions, tigers, heads of warriors, musicians and dancing female figures are beautifully carved. This gate shows similarity to the gates of Dabhoi and Zinzuwada in style. The spread of the fort which measures over 1.5 kms in
length and 0.75 kms in width gives an oval shape while the ground plan of
the town resembles a widespread fan. (Figure: 52)

This valley is naturally guarded by a ridge of the Barda hills,
composed of granite boulders. These boulders sometime roll down and cause
accidents. Therefore, perhaps several retaining walls and buttresses were
built on the hill. Bhūtāmalikā the oval shape fortified capital town of the
Jethava was divided into various sectors with spider web road pattern. Roads
were designed considering traditional transport system and traffic. Roads
leading towards Navlakha temple, being the nucleus of the town and towards
"acropolis"- royal palacial unit at the Abhapar hill was partly carved from
rock bed and partly paved. Thus, principal roads were leading to acropolis
while subsidiary roads crossing such main roads were found dividing the
entire township into various sectors.

The most impressive temple of Ghumali is the Navalakha temple14. It
is of Sāndhāra type and has balconied windows in the pradaksīnā mārga. The
rangamandapa is two-storeyed. The temple stands on an ample Jagati and
had a torana as at Modhera. Moreover, the ruins of Vāniyavasi Jaina temple of
Pārśvanatha15 and two mutilated shrines in Sonkansār area are reported
have been built during Jethava regime.

The medieval township had excellent water supply system. Various
water streams running on the hills were blocked and turned into water tanks
at places such as near "acropolis". There were two tanks on Abhapar hill and
a Kansariya tank at Sonkansariya temple group. The water streams which
were running down into the town was also blocked to form Bhrugu kunda,
while the excess water was diverted into the deep moat of the main fort. Outside the Rampole gate there are remains of a pretty large artificial lake formed by an embankment thrown across the mouth of the valley, at the east of which stands a Jethava period Sivalaya known as Sailesvar. Hence this huge tank is locally known as Celesar. Perhaps this was one of the important source of water during the regime of the Jethavas. In all some seven tanks are found in the environs of Ghumali.

Stepwells: The Vikiya stepwell is situated near Navlakha area the stepwell received its names after one of the Jethava rulers Vikiyaji. It belongs to Nanda type of Vapi which shows a straight stepped corridor and three pavilion towers. The stepwell looks massive and monumental because of the short and rather thick pillars of three pavilions. Its brackets decorated with human and animal figures show stylistic similarity to the Navlakha temple.

East of the Navlakha temple, there are two public stepwells which are locally known as Jethani- Devrani stepwells. There is a skeleton of another stepwell outside the fort. On the way to Navlakha temple, there is a large stepwell known as Jetavav. The exploration of the area showed remains of some ten wells and ten stepwells. Outside Rampole gate heaps of iron slags and remains of small settlements are noticed. Perhaps it indicates working as well residential area of professional groups such as ironsmith, potters etc.

The study of the beginning and development of settlement on either side of the main stream in ribbon form is noteworthy. In subsequent centuries due to the growth of the population on both the sides it developed like an open fan in the valley well protected between Abhapar and Venu
hillocks. Its status was elevated during the regime of the Saindhavas (c. 8th cent. AD) who made it a capital town. Due to the political situation this fan like settlement was fortified. There was yet another fortress on the top of the hillock for the royal families and courtiers. Thus the location of group of temples and "acropolis" (since king was also regarded symbol of divinity\(^\text{15}\) on the top of the hill this capital town belongs to the Parvatiya nagar category. Further, according to Rajavallabha - a predominating western Indian text on Vāstuśāstra, Ghumali is identified with Daiva\(^\text{5}\) a sub-type of Parvatiyanagar.
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