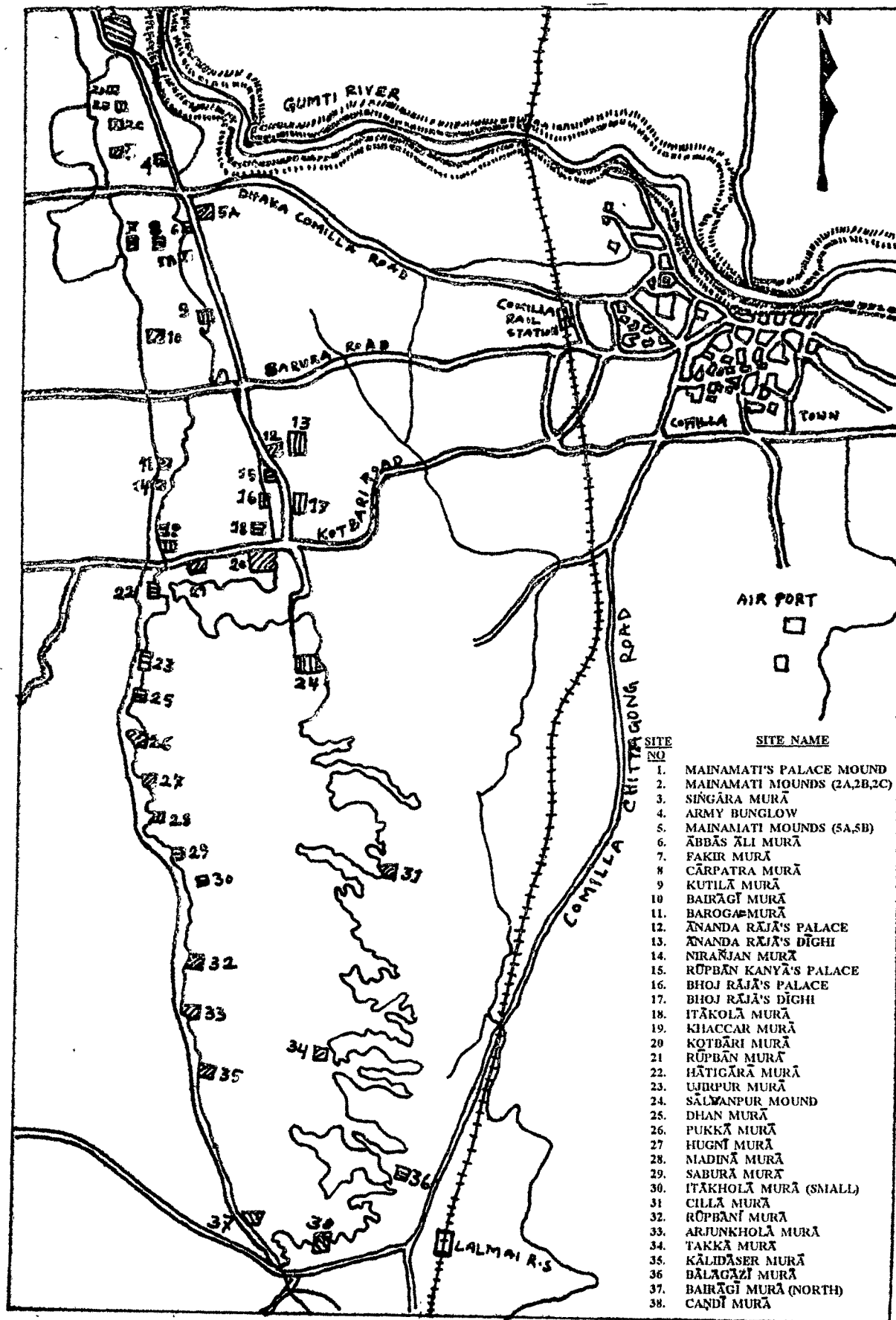


CHAPTER-II

*ASSEMBLAGE OF ANCIENT SITES AT
MAINAMATI-LALMAI HILL RANGE*

MAP NO. 6

MAP SHOWING THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES ON MAINAMATI-LALMAI HILL RANGE



CHAPTER - II

ASSEMBLAGE OF ANCIENT SITES AT MAINAMATI-LALMAI HILL RANGE

Introduction

Mainamati is a very familiar name of Comilla district in Bangladesh. This familiar name is associated with a number of local legends and ballads. It is located about five miles to the west of Comilla town and is a range of small hillocks almost abruptly erupting in the middle of a vast level plain. This range extends for about 11 miles north south from Mainamati village on the Gumati River in the north. The widest part of the range that is about three-miles east-west. Average height of the hills is only 40 feet but some peaks rise up to 150 feet or even a little more. The northern part of the range is locally known as Mainamati, which merely echoes the memory of the queen mother Mainmati, the real mother of king Govinda Candra. While the southern part is known as Lalmai or Red Mother Earth (Lal-red, mai-matri, mother) from the red colour (laterite) of the soil. The historical antiquity of this area was noticed in 1803 A.D. after the accidental discovery of a copper-plate of Raṇavaṅkamalla Harikāladeva.

There is a very large assemblage of ancient Buddhist ruins at the Mainamati Lalmai hill range. These sites were discovered during the Second World War. The British military came to Mainamati-Lalmai area at a number of points on the flat tops and slopes of these hills for setting up their advance camps. In the first hurried survey, 18 ancient sites were detected. By that time, the brick-hunters and military contractors heavily damaged many sites. After the cessation of the war, the area was regularly surveyed between 1955 to 1957 and a large number of these ruins were brought to light. About 50 of such ancient sites of varying sizes and importance were discovered of which 20 were declared protected by the Department of archaeology of the then Pakistan Government. Six of these sites, namely - Sālvanpur Mound, Ānanda Rājā's Palace, Kutilā Murā, Rūpbān Murā, Itākhola Murā and Cārpātra Murā have been excavated. Trial excavations have also been conducted at the Palace and temple of

Queen Mainamati, located on the northern tip of the Mainamati hill. Brief descriptions of the 38 sites together with the 20 protected sites are given below. The remaining 12 sites (out of 50) do not have any structural evidences

SECTION - I

MONASTERIES

1. ARMY BUNGALOW SITE (ST.-4)

This site is located on the western side of Comilla - Debidvar Road and about one-half mile north of the junction with Comilla to Daudkandi - Dhaka road. It was highly disturbed by British military construction during the Second World War and by subsequent construction on the perimeter of the site by the Pakistan Army. It is covered with bushes and trees. The site stretches for about 125 yards from east to west and about 1-40 yards from north to south. The eastern edge is longer than western one. It is nearly 200 yards on a north - south axis. This additional irregular - shaped is on the south - western corner that appears to be of a later date. The surface of the site is uneven. In the centre of the site is a series of cement slabs where the British army had built barracks, which are now removed. The top of the site is about 15 feet high from the surrounding level. The site is a gradually slopes down to the west. Ancient broken bricks, modern bricks and cement are intermixed from the British Period. Pottery is found sparsely over the surface of the site. The military authorities had dug a number of trenches. Old brick walls and pottery were revealed to the depth of 4½ feet. The configuration of the perimeter wall and the size of the site suggest a monastic site resembling Sālvānan Vihāra.

2. ĀNANDA RĀJĀ'S PALACE: (ST -12)

It is one of the largest archaeological sites, popularly known to the local people as Ānanda Rājār Bāri. After archaeological excavations from 1976 to 1978, the site was discovered as a square monastery enclosing a central shrine of multi angular form the configuration and visible remains, as well as local name, indicate that it is an ancient monastic site.

Location: This big mound is located about a furlong square and one and a half miles to south of Kutilā Murā and four miles to the south west of Comilla and at the eastern side of Comilla of Cantonment Road and is about a mile north of the BARD complex at Kotbāri, Comilla Compass bearings from the central structure of Ānanda Vihāra were read as south 10 east to the BARD water tower and north 350 west to the centre of Kotilā Murā. It is situated more than a mile and a half to the north of Sālvan Vihāra. Together with Bhojrājā Vihāra and Rūpbān Kanyā Murā, the two other archaeological sites in its immediate neighbourhood, it forms an interesting group of monuments, which seems to have a significant bearing on the history and the culture of the region. It is more then 650 feet square in size and about 15 feet higher than the plain cultivated land. It was the scene of heavy depredation for bricks during the Second World War. Cart lords of bricks were removed from this mound before action could be taken to check this ancient site.

Structural Description: T.N. Ramachandran who visited this site in 1942 noted that, "the remains revealed, however, on plan a square monastery about a furlong each side, with an arrangement, as at Paharpur, of a central temple with recessed corners and re-entrant angles. Probably, the arrangement of the central temple resulted, as at Paharpur, in a cruciform shape with one projecting angle between the arms of the cross"¹.

During his visit, a large number of terracotta plaques were recovered from the central temple enclosure. These plaques were used to decorate the outer face of the walls of the multi angular central temple.

The military contractors, brick hunters and the cantonment builders damaged

Ānanda Vihāra. The western and northern wing of the monastery together with its front facade and gateway complex, and the imposing central shrine had been damaged very ruthlessly. These are the most important and significant parts of the great establishment of the monastery. The Department of Archaeology and museums, Bangladesh, has conducted seasonal excavations at the site since 1975. During three seasons work, remains of a huge monastery has been brought to light. The out line of the 624 feet long northern wing and almost the entire western wall of equal length except a little portion which remains underneath the Cantonment road has been fully cleared and exposed. In the middle of the northern wing, the excavation has exposed the grand 99'-6" long and 45 feet wide projected front facade and monumental gateway complex. The central area of the gateway is arranged in three sections. A 17' -6" long and 7'-6" wide entrance passage with rounded corners opens on to the interior through a 5 feet wide door way which gives access to rectangular hall measuring 30' X 15'. Behind this front hall lies a second hall, 24' X 8'-6", at the same alignment of the cells. Its walls at plinth level and above have decorations of ornamental mouldings, offsets and projections. Much more work remains to be done to clear fully the inner arrangements of the gateway of several periods made more complex by the recent damages and disturbances. From the remains it appears that in the later phases, the front hall of the gateway measuring 28' - 9" X 27' - 6" was added to the main complex. Six monastic cells lying on both sides of the gateway has also been partially dug deeper. In the later periods, these cells were 10 to 12 feet in length and 9 feet in breadth.

The cells are separated from each other by a 5'-6" thick partition wall. The front wall of the cells is 6 feet thick while the back wall is 9½ feet thick. Deep excavation at some places has, however, revealed that the walls were originally 19 feet thick. Possibly, during later repairs and renovations the thickness of the walls was reduced. On the eastern side of the complex, in the area of the front verandah, a flight of six steps was provided in these late phases, apparently for easy communication between higher levels of the verandah and the gateway which itself remained lower on account of constant repairs, restoration and cleaning. A similar arrangement on the opposite,

that is western side of the gateway, is reasonably assumed, but has not yet been exposed by excavation.

The discovered facade on three sides was found in very damaged condition up to a considerable depth. However, the extant remains of the back wall, so far unearthed, shows that it had five offsets with an half round brick course on top at plinth level and three feet above this rounded brick course, lies another set of offsets marked again by a half round brick course on top. This feature has been discovered to continue on the wall-face on all sides: the west, north, south and east and the same feature has also been found on the facade of the gateway projection. This delightful feature breaks the monotony of the dreary outer facade of the monastery which is absent at Sālvan Vihāra. Excavation at the north-west corner has discovered a part of the Verandah retaining wall, which gives a valuable idea about the interior arrangements during the later phases. From the north-west corner of the two wings, the northern and western walls have been exposed eastward and southward for a considerable distance. It is decorated with moulded ornamental bricks.

The same decorative arrangement has been noticed in the exposed southwestern corner retaining wall of the Verandah which, however, was found in a bad state of preservation.

Stratigraphy: The Stratigraphy of the outer accumulation, which found against the outer face of the monastery, is given below.

Layer-1: Topsoil: grayish sandy silt mixed with brick particles. The top is marked by the present surface with humas and plant roots. The deposit represents wind blown dust accumulated after the site ceased to exist as a living monument and the broken and fallen wall also ceased to fall any more.

Layer-2: Composed of raddish brown soil mixed with fallen brick bats and brick fragments. This is the layer of last fall represented by a great frequency of fallen building material and brickbats.

Layer-2 A : This layer consists of brownish soil with sandy silt and loose soil mixed with brick particles, when the structure was probably more or less stable. This layer is

missing at places where a clear pit along the brick wall shows that the monastery was repaired and restored at the next higher stage, that is in layer (2), thoroughly disturbing or, at places, completely removing this layer.

Layer-2 B: Compact brownish soil with great frequency of brickbats and brick concrete.

Layer-3: Hard and compact brownish soil associated with brick particles, and with lesser frequency of brick fragments and brickbats, its bottom resting on a hard concrete formation mixed with fine brownish clay indicating a floor level. Most of the antiquities found in situ outside the monastery came from this level.

Excavation was stopped at the level except where deep diggings were carried out. The work done so far has revealed the outlines of a large 624² feet square monastery of the same type as exposed at Sālvan Vihār. It has similar rows of monastic cells, neatly arranged in four wing around a shrine standing in the centre of a wide, open courtyard. The only one entrance, in the centre of the northern wing, like that of Sālvan Vihār, is set in an imposing front facade with a number of guard rooms symmetrically arranged on the blanks projecting outwards. The structure of this area is so badly damaged. The building remains particularly in the lower levels are well constructed with better materials and are excellently preserved. The establishment appears to have a large number of subsidiary buildings which are yet to be uncovered. However, the archaeologically more important, better preserved and well-stratified cultural remains of the earlier periods in lower levels are still intact and undisturbed, and this has obvious significance in the context of the earlier excavation in Mainamati. As there was very little scope for systematic investigation of the earlier cultural remains at the excavated sites of Sālvan Vihāra, Ānanda Vihāra, Kutilā Murā, and Cārpātra Murā without destroying their well preserved monumental structures of later periods which lie on top more or less completely covering the early remains of those sites, this huge site with its ruthlessly destroyed upper levels expected to provide excellent opportunities for extensive deep diggings and intensive investigations of these early remains which may reveal more clearly and adequately the early history and culture of this region.

Comparative analysis: Moreover, although Mainamati excavations has provided some information about the early history of this area. We have very little information about ŚrīĀnandadeva, the third and greatest ruler and almost no knowledge at all about the earlier rulers of this powerful and prosperous eight century Buddhist dynasty of Samatāṭa and their times. The family is known from the two recently discovered copperplate grants of Bhavadeva³, son and successor of Ānandadeva, provides sufficient hints about the greatness of the latter. The Khaḍga and Rāta levels at Salvan Vihāra and Kutilā Murā have been very insufficiently investigated in few narrow and confined pits and though the Mainamati excavations have yielded a number of Khaḍga records: copperplates, coin and sealings, and the only known record of the Rāta kings of Devaparvata was found at Kailān⁴, not very far from Mainamati. The Knowledge of those two early dynasties of Samatāṭa is still very meagre and unsatisfactory. We know almost nothing about their architectural and cultural remains, though the lower levels of the Mainamati ruins are definitely known to belong to their times. It is expected that systematic digging at Ānanda Vihāra will supply valuable information regarding not only Śrī-Ānandadeva and his family, but also the Khaḍga and Rāta dynasties or even still earlier times, about all of which we have so far very little knowledge. Moreover, the apparent concentration of large and important monuments around Ānanda Vihāra, its central position together with its large size, distinctive architectural features and decorative style makes it one of the most interesting and important monuments. The suggestion by some scholars including R.C.Majumdar and T.N.Ramchandran that the site represents the city of Devaparvata of the famous Paṭṭikeraka Vihāra of ancient records⁵, which was situated in the city of that name and generally identified with the Mainamati ruins⁶, is also significant and needs a careful examination. We learn about the existence of this urban settlement (Paṭṭikeraka), undoubtedly same as Paṭṭikera of the later days, for the first time from Laḍaha Candra's Mainamati plate⁷. It is described by Raṇavaṅkamalla Harikālādeva's Mainamati plate, quite fittingly, as "adorned with forts and monasteries"⁸.

The association of the site with name of greatest of the early rulers of Devaparvata and Paṭṭikera and with myths and legends connected with both the cities

makes the investigation even more necessary for the location and identification of these two famous cities of ancient Samatāṭa, which rose and fell successively in the same general area. Though the site is very badly damaged, there are sufficient surface indications to suggest its importance in ancient times and it is quite reasonable to think that this monument played a leading role among the Buddhist establishments of Mainamati-Lalmai and was probably the centre of the last great Buddhist University of Bengal, and for that matter of the subcontinent, a worthy successor of Taxila and Nalanda.

Antiquities: A number of important antiquities have been discovered from the Ānanda Vihāra excavations which include very few Neolithic stone axes together with some unfinished specimens and raw materials, an imitation type post-gupta gold coin and silver coins; with bull and legend Paṭṭikera, bronze votive images representing the Buddha, Dhyānī Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, four to eight handed varieties of the Buddhist goddess Tāra or Cūṇḍā, bronze replica of votive stupas, a large number of terracotta plaques, a large number of ornamental bricks containing the usual designs of stepped pyramid, lotus petals, dental edge and a variety of geometric - cum - floral designs and chain motifs either on the flat body on the edge of the bricks, a large number of inscribed terracotta sealings with the Buddhist creed formula, a small baked clay tablet with fine representation of goddess Tāra in low relief, clay and baked clay votive stupas, a few semiprecious stone beads, a number of terracotta beads, a large number of iron nails, complete and broken pots, oil lamps and numerous potsherds.

3. RŪPBĀN KANYĀ'S PALACE (ST - 15):

Location: This mound is situated about a furlong south of Ānanda Rājā's Palace and north of Bhoja Rājā's Palace and is adjacent to the western side of the Cantonment Road. It is a slightly raised site built on the flat land at the eastern foot of the hill. Compass bearings from the central raised area gave readings south 560 west to BARD water tower and north 200 west to the central height within Ānanda Vihāra.

Structural Description: There is an evidence of an extensive brick structure, although

the configuration of the site has been badly damaged by the erection of modern cement - floored structures (which are no longer standing). The brick hunters plundered many bricks of this site. The mound measures about 450 feet square and is 15 feet high from the surrounding paddy fields. Though highly disturbed, the traces of the central structure and enclosing walls can be made out from the remains of the debris, scattered on the plain surface.

The edifice is a square structure measuring 250 X 250 feet and seems apparently to be a monastery. The eastern side of the mound is higher than the other three sides, which are almost at the level to the cultivated land. The overall dimensions of the site are somewhat smaller than those of the other identified monastery site though not so small as to preclude the possibility of being a monastery.

Anitqities: A stone cubical pillar base showing the design of a Caitya window on each side was found in the centre of the mound suggesting the existence of a stone maṇḍapa or shrine. Terracotta plaques and bricks of various sizes were revealed from this site. One of the large brick measuring 13" X 11¹/₂" X 2³/₄" was disclosed. Though brick depredation was heavy here, traces of a structure, perhaps a monastery with arrangement of central temple and surrounding cells can be noticed. A few plaques were also recovered which show the semi-divine Yakṣha, the hybrid Kīmpuruṣa and the wild boar in all its wild majesty.

4. BHOJ RĀJĀ'S PALACE (ST- 16) :

Location : Bhoj Rājār Bāri or Bhoj Vihāra is located hardly half a furlong to the south of Rūpbān Kanya's palace and half a mile to the south of Ānanda Rājā's palace. It is also northern side of Itākhola Murā and western side of Comilla town. This mound is locally known as Bhoja Rājār Bāri. The site was also heavily disturbed during the Second World War by the brick hunters and military contractor.

Structural Description: The shape of the mound is square with 600 feet in each side. Its sides are five to ten feet higher than the agricultural land but the middle portion is

about 10 feet higher than its sides. During the archaeological survey, damaged portion of some massive brick walls covering an area of 400 X 400 feet was discovered. Here also the walls were built enclosing a square structure, profusely decorated with ornamental bricks and terracotta plaques similar to those found in Ananda Vihara and Sālvan Vihāra. From the elevation of the central structure, it appears that the approach to the monastery is from the north. An inclined approach leads to the centre of the northern wall, where apparently a gateway opened on to a raised walkway that runs across the interior of the quadrangle to the central shrine. Various changes in the ground level within the enclosed area of the monastery suggest there were other structures. Pottery was found in heavy concentrations under the eastern wall where sand and mud have been excavated to build up the new road that passes nearby. Many pieces of pottery were lying embedded in stratified layers in the banks beside the eastern wall of the monastery. This evidence clearly suggests that it was the dump for discarding pottery. These evidences suggest that this site was probably a Buddhist Vihāra with the shrine in the centre as at Paharpur, Ānanda Vihāra and Sālvan Vihāra.

5. KOTBĀRI MURĀ (ST - 20)

Location : This site is situated about a few furlongs west of the Rūpbān Murā and north of Itākhola Murā and south- western side of Comilla town. In 1803, the site was first come to our knowledge during the construction of the Comilla- Kālir Bazar Road and erroneously identified as the remains of a fort. This mound was also heavily damaged during the Second World War by the military contractor and brick plunderer. Compass bearings were taken from the central structure that gave reading of south 84° east BARD water tower and north 7° west Comilla Cantonment water tower.

Structural Description: The diggings for bricks had been very here resulting in virtual obliteration of the structural remains underneath. One such structure had seen by late Ramachandran was a pyramidal temple with reentrant corners of walls and surrounded by rows of cells. He thought that the remains of the site to be a monastery of modest size approximately measuring 300 feet each sides enclosing a cruciform center temple with approximately one hundred feet on all sides⁹.

Nonetheless, the exterior walls once housed monastic cells of the same kind as those excavated in Sālvan Vihāra. At these places the brick walls still stand six or seven feet high. The presence of a central shrine is indicated in the center of the monastery where the land is raised approximately eight feet above the surrounding level. From this central shrine, the entrance to the monastery can be observed. A ramp passes between the two exterior structures, through the north wall, and along a raised path to the central structure within the monastic compound. The exterior structures flanking the entrance are raised three or four feet above. The surrounding agricultural level, though their elevations are difficult to determine because of the road cut at the passes close beside them. These secondary structures are about ten to fifteen yards in radius.

Antiquities: The scattered bricks were found all over the site. Large sized rectangular bricks, 14" X 9" X 2³/₄" were profuse here. There was a moderately dense concentration of pottery found along the eastern and southern edges of the exterior walls of the monastery. A few plaques were also reported from here but none could be recovered. One interesting plaque however came from somewhere nearby though the man who brought it could only declare it as from Lalmai hill. The subject of the plaque is a flying Vidyādhara in the violent movement of flight mixed with dance, in which acts the garland that he held in his hand snaps. The upper cloth, necklace, *yagnopavitā*, *aṅgadas*, brocaded under garment and lotus buds are note worthy decorative features presented on this plaque which would at once classify it among the best productions of the Pala period.

6. RUPBAN MURA: (ST - 21)

Location: The mound is located to the west of Kotbāri Murā and a furlong to the south of Itākhola mound. The mound is also situated in between the BARD and the Bangladesh Rifle's office. The compass bearings of the central mound are south 37° east BARD water tower and north 20° west cantonment water tower. Northern side of the mound meets the Comilla-Kāli Bazar road in a gentle slope but the other three

sides are steep. The mound is about two feet high from the metalloid road. Sometime towards the end of the Second World War, T.N Ramachandran the superintendent of the archaeological section of the Indian Museum toured the hills and apparently opened the top of the main mound at Rūpbān Murā. He reported that it was "a cruciform brick structure resembling in plan, the central Temple of Paharpur and of the Nandargarh temple, with its reentrant angles and recessed corners richly dressed on the out side with carved plaques and moulding bearing interesting designs"¹⁰.

The brick hunters and the military contractor had disturbed the mound, Rūpbān Murā like other archaeological sites of the Mainamti Lalmai range. The vandals for the query of bricks first disturbed it during the Second World War. The British 14th Division Army during the war had built some modern structures over the northern side of the mound whose foundations are still traceable. The mound also suffered badly during the Liberation War of Bangladesh when Pakistan army dug a number of trenches at various points of the mound. The mound is approximately 400 feet long and 400 feet width.

The excavation of the site was started in 1984 and was continued for 6 months. The next two years (i.e. 1984 and 1986), it was repeated for 4 to 5 months in every year. A small-scale excavation was also carried out in 1992 in order to expose the boundary wall of the temple and that of the gate way complex of the monastery

Structural Description: The excavation have brought to light the structural remains of a Buddhist establishment consisting of a medium sized temple together with a stupa and a square structure in front and a small monastery. Both, the temple and monastery discover three phases of building activity. Out of the three different phases of the temple, the first (earliest) phase has been exposed partly, the second fully and the third superficially. In the above mentioned two phases the temple was cruciform in plan but nothing could be ascertained about the third phase. Layout of the first and second phases of the monastery has been exposed fully while the remains of the third phase could be traced in a restricted area. In the first phase the monastery was square and larger while in the second and the third phases it became oblong and smaller.

Temple: Only a small portion of the temple structure of the first phase could be

exposed since it is mostly covered by the second phase structure. From the exposed remains, it seems that this temple was built in a cruciform plan with four image chambers. The central square of the cross has been partly exposed with its each face measuring 24 feet. But the arms of the cross along with the image chambers are found to be totally destroyed. From the remains of the arms and the four faces of the central square of the cross the width of the image chambers (4 feet) could be ascertained. A small portion of the ambulatory passage and the exterior wall of this temple have been exposed at places. The exterior walls could be discovered to a distance of 15 feet northward and southward from the central square unit. In the southern side the wall has been found to a depth of 3 feet from its surviving top. It is 3 feet wide. A portion of the ambulatory passage, laid in brick dust, was encountered along the inner face of this wall at a depth of 20" from the top of the floor of the second phase temple. It appears that the later builders raised the floor of the temple to 20" while rebuilding the temple. Probably the temple was cruciform in plan with its arms measuring 62 feet long. Probably the approach was from the eastern side as appears from the later temple.

The second rebuilding phase stands on a cruciform platform with image chamber. The entire structure was provided with an ambulatory passage engirdled by an exterior wall. The length of this temple arm to arm, is 90 feet. During this phase, the temple was extended further and was built over the ruins of the earlier one. The cruciform platform was also enlarged. The extended portion of the larger platform was built separately on four sides of the earlier platform up to its surviving heights. The builders of the second phase seems to have removed the bricks from the walls of the image chambers and the exterior walls of the first phase structure (up to the certain level) and reuse them.

While renovating this temple initially, the arms of the cross were extended up to the exterior wall on the western, northern and southern sides. In order to provide an uninterrupted ambulatory passage all around the temple there fore 3 feet area of the outer wall along its inner side was reduced. $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet also reduced the lengths of the arms of the cross, so that the ambulatory passage was widened to $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet. The image chambers were provided with brick pedestals excepting the middle one to the east,

which had a stone pedestal. Images were placed along the back walls of the chambers. It appears that the images were removed from their original places at a later stage except the Buddha image, which was left in the place. A few bronze pieces, probably fragments of bronze sculptures, were found on the pedestals of northern and southern chambers. It is likely that in the central chamber of the eastern side a colossal stone image and in other chambers bronze images were installed. Sidewalls of the image chambers were provided with corbelled niches probably for keeping lamps of rituals.

The main approach to the temple of this phase measuring 12 feet wide was provided in the middle of the eastern exterior wall. No flight of steps could be traced here for they were badly damaged and obliterated. But the remains of the projected arms indicate that the lower portion of the approach path was an infilling of earth mixed with debris. The flight of steps might have been built above that level. The approach to the shrine was built after the construction of the exterior wall, as there is no bondage between the two. Only the projected arms of the approach could be traced which measured 3 feet wide. As the monastery was built to the east south east of the temple. The main gateway of the temple was provided to its east. While the gateway of the monastery to its north. In addition to the main entrance to the temple, smaller entrances were provided in front of the image chambers on other three sides. The entrance of the eastern side is 9 feet wide. While on the other sides they are 3 feet. Moreover eight small openings were provided at various points in the exterior wall for admitting light and air into the temple.

The temple of the third phase has not survived. It is difficult to reconstruct its plan or other architectural features. It was built over the remains of the second phase. The only traceable remains were the damaged walls over the remains of northern and eastern image chambers and a part of the derelict structure overlying the central unit.

Stupā: An octagonal Stupā was built 39 feet east of the temple over a square base measuring 15 feet by 15 feet. The Stupā survives to a height of 3 feet from the square base and is enclosed by 2 feet thick wall. There is a circumambulatory passage between the stupa and its enclosure wall. It is 2.5 feet wide. Stratigraphically, it appears that the stupa is related to the second phase of building activity at the site.

Square Structure: A Square structural was found 35 feet northward of the octagonal stupa. It is discovered in a highly damaged condition with only its base surviving. Its architectural feature could not be clearly made out. Complete bricks were used at the edge while broken bricks were used in the center. It survives up to a height of 2.5 feet.

Enclosure: An enclosure wall was provided on four sides of the temple complex (temple stupa and square structure) that wall is 4.5 feet wide. An opening 4 feet wide was kept in the southern arm of the enclosure. Another opening 4 feet wide was accommodated in the northern extended wall. This extension enclosed the entire gateway complex of the monastery. Only the base of the enclosure wall survives.

Monastery: The monastery is located 100 feet east - south - east of the temple. There is also found three building phases. The layout of the establishment in the beginning was oblong, measuring 115 feet N - W and 83 feet N- S but during the construction it was further extended towards south by about 42 feet and this extension gave the monastery almost a square shape.

Several distinguishing features are noticeable in the original plan of the Vihāra and its later extension. In all 24 monastic cells have been exposed in the entire Vihāra. Of these 15 cells have been exposed in four wings of the original part and in three wings of the extended part of the Vihāra. The cells are unequal in size. In the original monastery, each of the cells shows a doorway with the average width of 4 feet, which opens on the common verandah that runs round the entire courtyard. It is noted that there was no verandah in the extended part in front of the cell. The verandah is 7.5 feet wide. The thickness of the retaining wall is 334 fat. The first oblong open courtyard measures 47.5 feet E - W by 17.5 feet N - S the second courtyard too is oblong and it measures 67.5 feet by 11.5 feet.

Some important architectural features of monastery have also been noticed during excavation. These include a staircase, a drain, platforms, niches and bricked doorways.

Stratigraphy: The cross trenches one running E- W and the other N- S were sunk through the middle of the temple area. The latter one includes a deep trench on the

southern end. A few cross trenches were also laid in the monastery area in different direction i e, N - S and E - W Besides these, deep digging was conducted in several points of the monastery like the monastic cells courtyard, verandah and the gateway complex. In both the temple and the monastery areas undisturbed natural soil was encountered. Some variations were noticed between the two areas. Minimum number of layers and floors were encountered in the monastery area viz layers 1A, 1B, 2, 2A, 3,4,5,6, and 7 of these layers 3,4,5 and 6 were overlaid by floors. All these layers and floors were not uniform in every trench or cell whereas some layers and floors were found missing.

Antiquities : Excavation at Rūpbān Murā have discovered more than five hundred antiquities, including a colossal stone image of standing Buddha, five Gupta imitation debased gold coins, three silver coins with Pattikera legend, two bronze images, a hoard of bronze ingots, a large number of terracotta plaques, ornamental bricks carved with slepped pyramid, lotus petal, dental edge motif, a variety of geometrical cum - floral designs and chain motifs, earthen oil lamps, earthen weights, sprinklers tops, red ochres, iron nail and various other miscellaneous minor objects of every day use. Most of the antiquities, e.g. stone Buddha, almost all the terracotta plaques and ornamental bricks were collected from the temple area whereas other antiquities like coins, bronze images and other objects of everyday use were recovered from the monastery area. A small quantity of pottery has been recovered from the monastery area. Except a few oil lamps no complete pots were found. They are fragments of rim, neck and base of different household wares such as pitcher, bowl, saucer, lid, sprinkler and oil lamps. The shards are very in colour and texture. Most of them are pale red and a few are deep ash coloured. Thin textured shards are common and medium textured are few while heavy textured shards are totally absent. Some shards bear herringbone decorations, reticular and incised lines.

Chronology: Though a large number of cultural materials have been found from the site but no epigraphic records could be salvaged from here. In the absence of datable evidence, it is difficult to establish any absolute chronology of this establishment. However, on the basis of the iconographic parallels, legends of the coins, and the

themes displayed in the terracotta plaques, a relative chronology of the site can be arrived at. The colossal Buddha and the coins referred to above are dated to 7th century AD. Whereas the terracotta plaques represent a time span from 7th / 8th century to 12th century. Thus the Buddha image could be placed in the first phases of the temple and was probably reinstalled in the temple of the succeeding phase. The copper - plates recovered from the locality indicate its earliest date to the 7th century during the rule of the Khadga dynasty. On the basis of the above finds, the antiquity of the site could be placed to 7th century, which also corroborates the available paleographic evidences.

Discussion: The excavation at the site has revealed a four-faced cruciform temple and a detached monastery. Both, the temple and the monastery reveals three phases of building activities, although the relationship between two could not be well established. A comparative study between the temple and the monastery provides some interesting and identical feature. The excavation of the temple reveals that the temple was smaller in the first phases and larger in the second phase. Similarly the original monastery might have been smaller in size and became larger in the second phase, as a result of its extension to the southern side. In the extended part (probably second phase) the walls were initially wider and then their breadth was reduced by abandonment of some portion of those walls as observed at the temple.

On the basis of the above evidence, it is presumed that the smaller temple and smaller original monastery might have been contemporary while the larger temple and the larger (extended) monastery might have been rebuilt simultaneously in the second phase. During this rebuilding phase the builders might have restored to similar slipshod plan in the temple as well in the monastery. So finally they had to change the alignments of both the monuments in their respective portions in order to achieve the desired shape and size. If so, the third phase of the temple corresponds to that phase of the monastery.

Conclusion : From the structural remains so far exposed at the site it may be concluded that both, the temple and the monastery presents an unusual feature in the monastery architecture. Provision of two inner courtyards is also another exceptional

feature. From the architectural feature, numismatic evidences, iconographic parallels and the themes depicted in the terracotta, art the Buddhist establishment may be dated to 7th century A.D.

7. SĀLVAN MOUND (ST - 24) :

The Sālvanpur mound is the earliest dated site in the Mainamati - Llamai hill range, still now. Excavations of this site, had been started since 1955 by the Department of Archaeology, have discovered remains of a 550 feet square Buddhist monastery. After the excavation it was renamed Sālvan Vihāra owing to its proximity to the Sāl forest in the west.

Location of the site: The ancient and famous archaeological site, Sālvan Vihāra is located almost at the middle of the Mainamati - Lalmai hill range of Comilla district. Near about a mile to the south-east of Rūpbān Murā is Sālvan Vihāra which is situated to the south-west of Comilla town and western side of Railway line.

Structural Description: The site is consisted of four distinct parts: a central shrine, minor buildings within the courtyard, an enclosing quadrilateral containing monastic cells, and a subsidiary shrine outside the monastery walls.

The front gate of the big monastery was approached from the north by a 174 feet long and $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide a brick path. The gateway of the monastery is 74 feet wide. There is an entrance hall (measuring 32 by 23 feet) is flanked by guardrooms. From the entrance hall, a short series of steps lead to the inside of the monastery courtyard. The boundary wall of the monastery, which also serves as the back wall of the monastic cells. It is 6 feet high and $16\frac{1}{2}$ feet thick. The cells, separated from each other by $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet thick walls, were provided with $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide door passages, which opened to a $8\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide verandah. The big monastery, consisting of 115 monastic cells, was built around a spacious courtyard with a cruciform shrine in the centre. From the verandah the 115 cells of the ground floor of the monastery can be entered. It has only one entrance that is in northern wing of the monastery. $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet separate the cells,

approximately 12 by 12 feet, partition walls, many of which have small corbeled niches. The entrances of the cells were probably closed by wooden door. So many things were found in the brickwork of the doorways. The cells are almost uniform in size with the exception of which measures $16\frac{1}{2}$ feet by 10 feet.

In the four corners were staircases to the roof. The remain ruins of the boundary wall of the monastery are surviving only 4 to 6 feet high. So it is difficult to ascertain whether the roof provided a second storey of walls and rooms or not. The excavators of the site supposed that the roof was supported on heavy wooden beams and was made of concrete stiffened with crushed brick. There is no known analysis with the favour of this supposition.

A few subsidiary structures have exposed in the courtyard of the monastery. One of them, a large pillared hall with two attached chambers was found at the south-east corner of the courtyard. It seems to have been the community-dining hall of the monastery in its later stages. A large number of potsherds and utensils discovered in its vicinity in association with ashes and charcoal pieces strongly suggested its use during the third period of occupation.

Another subsidiary structures in the courtyard including two small shrines were discovered on the western side of the central shrine. The larger one of these facing east is rectangular in shape, surrounded by a specious *Pradakṣiṇa path*, it consists of a rectangular hall in the front and a small cell behind on the west. The smaller one is a square structure with recessed corners, each containing three decorated brick pillars are circular shape. The smaller one of these two structures has been found on the southwestern side of the central shrine as a Stupā.

The Central Shrine: In the centre of the courtyard of the monastery is located a large shrine, built originally in the form of a cross-oriented to the cardinal point of the compass. Four periods of re-buildings have been found in the shrine. The ground plan of the first period has been clearly exposed. It was cruciform in shape. From arm to arm, the shrine stretched 170 feet. From its ground plan, some scholars think that the shrine attained a considerable height. From its disclosed structure, it is difficult to guess whether it rose up into roof. A 7 feet wide *Pradakṣiṇa path* permitted the

devotee to perambulate the central shrine and visit each of the smaller shrines in the projecting arms, facing to the cardinal points. A big bronze pedestal of an image has been found from the western cell of the central shrine. So it is easy to say that every cells of the central shrine contained big image or images of Buddha. Entire basement wall of the central shrine was well decorated with terracotta plaques and ornamental bricks, which are found in Situ in the south-western projection, and in some places of the eastern basement wall. According to Alam, these terracotta plaques faithfully illustrate the flock art of the period. Antelopes, pigs, monkeys horses, elephants, peacocks, swans, snakes and men in fighting poses, depicted all the discovered plaques. The rebuilding of the structure changed the plan from cruciform to oblong measuring 110 feet, east to west, by 168 feet, north to south with a 30 feet square pillared hall in the centre and the principal cell or the main prayer chamber accommodated at the back on south side. A procession path surrounding the hall and the principal cell also connected with other cells on east and west. There is a number of steps leading to an entrance hall in front of the pillared pavilion from the north into approach to the shrine. The drastic change in the plan has not been related to other developments at the site. As the first construction of the shrine antedates the monastery by nearly a century, according to Rashid, the change in plan of the shrine may have coincided with the construction of the surrounding monastery. The significance of the shift in plan is difficult to evaluate, but the early cruciform resembles. The great shrine at Paharpur in the Rajshahi district, and some of the shrines at Pagan in Burma and Kalasan in Central Java, while the later rectilinear plan modified it to resemble Buddhist and Hindu shrines in Bihar. The central shrine at Sālvān Vihāra is actually not one but several structures, built successively in different periods and on different plans. They provide interesting evidence of gradual transformation of the traditional Buddhist architecture and of its merging into that of the Hindu temple. There are eight rooms, four on the east and four on the west of the hall, and the main prayer chamber located on the south. These rooms were provided with wooden doors and niches and were perhaps used by the priests.

The north-western shrine : Another small shrine has been discovered at the north-

western side of the Sālvān Vihāra. It is located outside of the monastic courtyard. At present, the shrine is 12 feet high from the surrounding level. It is approachable from the east by a flight of 10 steps leading to a terrace in front of the Sanctum. A 6½ feet wide Verandah runs around the sanctuary and also served as an ambulatory path. It is originally roofed on round pillars. The walls of the shrine are of considerable thickness in the corner form the only decoration of this shrine. It is very difficult to explain why the side of the big monastery erected this small temple.

Deep diggings have revealed four repair and rebuilding phases in the monastery. The large number of artifacts were found from the first phase, which undoubtedly indicates that the monastery was thickly populated in its early years. The antiquities include important objects like copper-plates, silver ingots, a large number of bronze images of Buddha and other Buddhist Gods and Goddesses, oil lamps, decorated lids and earthen wares, storage jars etc., were also discovered from this phase. Earthen cooking pots in Situ on fireplaces and in association with charcoal and ashes were discovered from a number of cells. This indicates that the monks used to cook their food inside the cells and that there was no community kitchen in the earliest period.

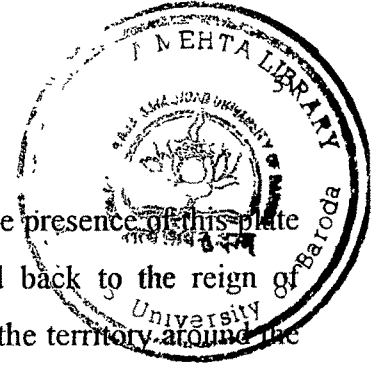
In the second period, filling the floors and door passages with bricks and new cells were constructed without changing the original plan raised the plinth level. The period is also characterized by the frequency of earthen pots, big storage jars and other household objects but less in number in comparison to the first period.

In the third period the plan of the cubicles were not thoroughly changed but some minor adjustment were made. Antechambers were added in the back walls of some cells, brick platforms were placed on the floors and staircases were constructed in the corner rooms. With the exception of a few ornamental bricks and terracotta plaques no other important antiquities were discovered from this period.

Remains of the 4th or the last occupation period are found only in the western half of the northern side of the monastery where the cells were rebuilt after reducing the thickness of the back wall from 16½ feet to 10 feet and thus the cells and verandah were pushed backwards. No antiquity was found in these cells.

Date of Sālvan Vihāra : A large number of artifacts were found during excavation besides the structural remains of this large monastery. These include copper plates silver and gold coins, bronze images of Buddha and other Buddhist deities, bronze caskets, bronze utensils and other metal objects, terracotta seals and sealings, pottery, terracotta plaques and array of various other objects accumulated over the centuries. Amongst these various antiquities, the copper -plates are the most valuable historical documents. Total eight copper plates were discovered from this site. Most of the artifacts are now on display in the Mainamati museum, Comilla. The scope of work does not permit a detailed discussion of the antiquities nor it is possible as the detailed report of the excavations has not yet been published. However for fixing a date of the monastery some important antiquities are discussed below in brief.

Out of the eight copper-plates from Sālvan Vihāra only two plates are found in comparatively good state of preservation. One of them has brought to light for the first time a new powerful royal dynasty of south east Bengal, viz, the Devas, who seems to have come to power in the closing year of the 7th century or in the early years of 8th century A.D. But others, discovered from the same occupation level, received less attention due to their decayed and highly damaged conditions. One of these is a badly creaked large plate. The text of this highly incrustated plate is illegible though an inscription on the obverse running the length of the plate can be seen and faint lines on the reverse suggest that the text continue on the back. A beautiful seal 3½ inches in width and 4¾ inches in height is fixed on top of the plate. The upper half of the seal bears a recumbent bull facing proper right below which is a singular incised name, which has been read as "*Mahārājā Srī Vainayaguptasya*"¹¹ As the appearance of the seal and the style and direction of the writing on the plate all closely resemble the published Gunaighar copper - plate of Vainyagupta. The published plate of Vinyagupta was found in Gunaighar about eighteen miles north west of Commila City and about the same distance from Sālvan Vihāra. It was issued from the camp of victory at Kripura and was dated 188 in the current era (which the editor took to be the Gupta, era and which gives a date of 508 A.D). While there is no reason for linking the Āsrama vihara of the Gunaighar copper plate with the Sālvan Vihāra. It is significant



that an inscription of the same king occurs at Sālvan Vihāra. The presence of this plate suggests that the nucleus of the Sālvan Vihāra can be dated back to the reign of Vainyagupta at the beginning of the sixth century A.D. and that the territory around the hills was under his administration. Another possibility suggested by Mr. Morrisson is that the peculiar early form of the central shrine was related to the worship of Ārya Avalokitesvara of the Gunnaighar copper plate¹¹.

The next three copper plates from Sālvan Vihāra resemble each other closely and were also recovered from the early phase of the monastery. These plates were issued by the Khadga king Devakhadga and Bālabhatta who are already known to us from the Ashrafpur copper - plate inscription found thirty miles north - east of Dhaka, approximately forty two miles from Sālvan Vihāra. The presence of these three plates of the Buddhist king whose capital was at Jayakarmantavasaka (probably the present day Badakāmtā),¹³ strongly suggest that the Khadga kings endowed Sālvana Vihāra with land - grants for its maintenance. The date of Khadga dynasty is well established by the accounts of Seng-Chi a Chinese pilgrim who visited Samatata in or about 671 A.D. when Rājarāja Bhatta (identified with Bālabhatta), son and successor of Deva Khadga was ruling. Assuming the standard of twenty years for each ruler and that Balabhatta was half way through his reign when Seng-Chi came to Samatata Mr. Morrisson has dated the copper-plates between 641 and 671 A.D. and as the plate came from the earliest phase of the monastery he has suggested that the occupation of the monastic quadrangle may be tentatively dated to the reign of Deva Khadga (circa 641-661 A.D.). The tentative dating of Morrisson is a century or more earlier than the date suggested by Harunur Rashid, the principal excavator.

Rashid attaches more importance to the Deva copper plates. As many as four copper- plates of the Deva kings have been recovered from the monastic cells. The first one came from the earliest phase and was issued by Ananda Deva and endorsed his successor Bhava Deva. The remaining three plates were recovered in badly damaged condition but the seals on their top and occasional legible lines enough to identify them as Deva inscriptions. The earlier published copper plate of Bhava Deva¹⁴ recovered from this area and these copper -plates have proved beyond doubt the

existence of the independent Deva dynasty in South -East Bengal.

Dani has suggested an eight-century date for this copper -plates¹⁵. The Sālvan Vihāra copper-plates of the Devas (not yet published) do not bear any proof of the transfer of property to a large Buddhist establishment like the Sālvan monastery. But earlier published Bhava Deva plate mentions the transfer of land to a Viharika, a small monastery situated in or around the Mainamati hill. In addition to the copper- plates there is one short terracotta sealing that says simply "*Srī Bhavadeva Mahā Vihāra Ārya Bhikṣu Saṅghasya.*"¹⁶ This can be translated as the order of the noble monks of the monastic establishment of Shri Bhavadeva. The implication would be that the monastery was constructed or at least generously supported by Bhavadeva. Similarly the distribution of the Deva inscription through the three periods of the monastic quadrangle suggests that the dynasty supported the foundation after the Khadgas and that some of the inscriptions were of sufficient importance to be preserved through the various disasters and rebuilding that the institution experienced. The date of the Deva dynasty is not fixed but in the judgement of A.H Dani, who examined the inscriptions for his study of Indian paleography. These are to be placed in the eight century¹⁷. Rashid¹⁸ suggests that Anandadeva and his successor Bhavadeva built the monastic quadrangle some time during the eighth century though this would make the presence of the Vainyagupta and Khadga plates anomalous and so further supporting evidence is needed. The architectural features of the monastery strongly support the 7-8th century date as it closely resembles the well known Paharpur monastery which was built in the late eighth or early ninth century. The copper-plates of earlier dynasties were probably connected with some earlier establishment in the area and were preserved by the inmates of the Sālvan Vihāra, built on a larger scale at a later date.

The available evidences from the inscriptions suggest a time span from the early sixth century through the eight-century for the building and use of the central shrine and monastic quadrangle at Sālvan Vihāra. Subsequent rebuilding led the excavator to suggest that the structure was in use until the wall in to the period of the Candra dynasty in the eleventh century or later¹⁹. In the absence of a systematic documented report on the excavation, his interpretation for this must be accepted.

Among the more important finds at the site were three hoards of gold and silver coins found inside clay pots buried beneath an early floor level. The first hoard contained three gold coins, one of Candragupta II (376 -415 A.D), one an imitation Gupta coin, and the third, a coin of the Devas. The second hoard contained 52 silver coins in three different denominations, while the third pot held 172 silver coins of the largest denomination only. Both the second and third hoard contain the same kind of coins, which bear on the obverse recumbent bull with the legend Paṭṭikara or Lalitakerah Dharmavijay and on the reverse trident surmounted by images of the sun and moon. These coins are the first major finds of high quality silver currency in the delta that can be dated between the Gupta and early Muslim periods. Their number, associations, find-spot and other available evidences indicate that these coins were issued locally by a sufficiently powerful and prosperous dynasty of Samatāṭa most probably, Śrī Ānandadeva of Deva dynasty. Detail description has given in chapter IV study of coins.

TABLE NO -1
MONASTERIES

Sl. No.	Name of the Mound	Dimensions in feet		Area in square feet	Present height in feet	Finding Structure	Finding Antiquities	Excavated / Unexcavated	Present Name	Datation
		N-S	E-W							
1.	Army Bungalow (ST-4)	140	125	17,500	15	Brick Wall	Pottery, old bricks	Unexcavated	-	-
2.	Ananda Rja's Palace (ST-12)	208	208	43,264	15	Wall, Gateway, cells, shrine, courtyard.	Pottery, Iron nails, Terracotta plaques Neolithic stone axes, gold coins, silver coins, bronze votive images, votive stupua, brick, sealings, terracotta beads.	Excavated	Ananda Vihara	8 th - 10 th century A.D.
3.	Rupban Kanya's Palace (ST-15)	80	80	6400	15	enclosing wall central shrine	A stone cubical pillar, terracotta plaques, bricks, pottery	unexcavated	Rupban Kanya's Vihara	-
4	Bhoj Raja's Palace (ST-16)	200	200	40,000	10	Enclosing wall, central shrine gateway.	Pottery bricks.	unexcavated	Bhoj Vihara	-
5	Kotbari Mura (ST-20)	100	100	10,000	8	Pyramidal temple, walls, cells	Pottery, bricks terracotta plaques	unexcavated	Kotbari Vihara	-
6	Rupban Mura(ST-21)	400	400	1,60,000	60	Temple, Stupa, Enclosure, Monastery	Stone image, gupta imitation gold coins, silver coins, bronze image, ingots, terracotta plaques, ornamental bricks	Excavated	Rupban Mura	7 th century A.D.
7.	Salvanpur Mound (ST-24)	183	183	33.489	12	Central shrine, enclosing wall, cells, minor buildings within the courtyard, subsidiary shrine.	Pottery, bricks terracotta plaques, copperplates, silver coins, terracotta seals and sealings, gold ornaments. Bronze images oil lamps, lids, earthenware, storage jars, cooking pot.	Excavated	Salban Vihara	7 th-8th century A.D.

SECTION - II

LARGE SHRINES

1. ĀBBĀS ĀLI MURĀ (ST-6):

This mound is located on a low prominence rising above the agricultural lands on the eastern side of the hills, fifty yards south-west of the new cantonment school that faces onto the Eastern Boundary road (south of its intersection with the Comilla-Daud Khandi road). It is twelve to fifteen feet above the land to the east and covers an area of about 25 yards north-south and 30 yards east-west. Many broken bricks and pottery were collected from surface of the site. Judging from the lay of the land and the configuration of the site, the entrance was from the east and from the location, orientation, and size, this mound appears to be a shrine like Cārpātra Murā and Kutilā Murā. Supporting this view are the dimensions of the site (25 yards north-south X 30 yards east-west) and of the enclosed area, which falls within the size range of other shrines.

2. CĀRPATRA MURĀ (ST-8) :

Location : The mound Cārpātra Murā, is located to the western side of Comilla town, southern side of Dhaka-Comilla road, and near to the Kutilā Murā and Brigade Headquarters of the Bangladesh Regiment. It is nearly 35 feet higher than the surrounding agricultural land. Excavation on this mound has completely exposed the remains of a big temple complex.

Structural Description: A salvage operation at Cārpātra Murā during a military construction work exposed the remains of an interesting shrine. Later on, the Department of Archaeology excavated it. It was found in a highly disturbed condition. The ground plan of this temple complex, measuring 105 feet from east to west and 55

feet from north to south. The approach to the shrine was from the east through a large gateway brick - paved path that led into a spacious hall. The roof of the hall was supported on four massive brick pillars. The pilgrims were led into the cell on its western side by a covered passage. In its present condition, it is not possible to explain the shape of superstructure. Compared to the Buddhist shrine farther south at Kūtilā Murā, this one is small and sparsely decorated. There is little in the way of ornamental brick - work evident. However, the site contained an abundance of pottery and most important four inscribed copper plates. Hence it was renamed as Carpatra Mura. Three of these copper-plates were issued by rulers of the Candra dynasty (i.e. Laḍaha Candra Deva & Govind Candra Deva) and one by a later ruler, Srī Vīradharadeva later Deva dynasty.

Datation : From the structural remains, which clearly indicate its function, and from all the copper plates which state that property is being transferred " to the God Srī Laḍaha Mādhava Bhāṭṭākra. " We can be reasonably sure that this is the shrine dedicated to that God. Laḍaha Candra carried out the installation of the image of Srī Laḍaha Mādhava according to the statement in this first inscription. It is not known if the shrine was first built at that time. All that is certain that property was transferred to provide support for the worship of this deity during the reign of Laḍaha Candra, (i.e. beginning of 11th century) and that a further grant of property was made during the reign of Vīradharadeva, who can be placed in twelfth or thirteenth century²⁰. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that the shrine was likely to have been used in between 11th to 12th century AD

3. KŪTILĀ MURĀ (ST-9) :

Location: Kūtilā Murā site is situated to the western side of Comilla town and southern side of Dhaka - Chittagong highway and about three miles north of Sālvan Vihārā in Mainamati-Lalmai hill range. The layout of three principal stupas and a number of subsidiary stupas have been exposed in 1956. It is an interesting stupa complex. A

massive boundary wall encloses all. This site is also situated on the hilltop. Kutilā Murā is an extensive mound about a furlong square. Fossil wood specimens were picked up in this area.

Structural Description: The excavated shrine named Kutilā Murā includes three stupas constructed on a common plinth is located on the top of a low hill on the eastern side of hills facing the plains. A massive boundary wall decorated with recessed panels encloses the entire structural complex. The three principal stupas are found side by side and are surrounded by other stupas and structures spread over an area, measuring about 280 feet from north to south and about 225 feet from east to west. The main three stupas are approached from the east by a wide staircase that ascends in three stages and crosses a massive wall and to three rectangular entrance halls. The dimension of northern hall could not be accurately measured due to its highly damaged condition. The southern hall measures 51'-6" X 37'-9" and the central one 55'-5" X 45'-7". The three main stupas, in north-south alignment with their square bases are behind the entrance halls. The measurement of these stupas are respectively 39'-9", 36'-10" and 47'-7" from north to south. The square bases support circular drums and hemispherical domes. The height of the central one is 10 feet from plinth level. The three main stupas here probably represent the three jewels of Buddhism : Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha. The ground plan of the middle stupa was laid in the form of a Dharmacakra (wheel of the law). A deep central shaft and the spokes represent the hub by brick walls, which have formed eight cells or box chambers. Inside the central shaft and the box-chambers, hundreds of enshrined miniature stupas and untaked clay sealings were found. From these, a number of broken pieces of stone sculptures in soft grey stone have salvaged. These depict, in high relief, figures of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas seated on lotus throne and attended by lay worshippers. The other two stupas, representing the Buddha and the Saṅgha are made of solid brick masonry, each with a deep central shaft, which also contained a large number of clay mainature stupas and terra-cotta sealings. The outer faces of the drums of these stupas have been discovered with a number of small corbelled niches, intended perhaps, receptacles for

oil lamps. Other nine stupas have been found behind the three principal stupas (Tri-Ratna Stupās) i.e. on the west of these nine, six small stupas are built on a common platform and aligned in north-east direction. Two slightly bigger stupas are found on both ends of this group of stupas. A remains of another stupa was also found near the southwest corner of southern most stupa of the Tri-Ratna group. Super structures of these stupas are completely damaged. In the plan, they are round with square bases ranging in size from 27 square feet to approximately 15 square feet. A number of miniature clay stupas were found from inside the deep shaft in the center of these stupas.

Two of the stone statues discovered in side the stupa shaft, representing the *Dharmachakra*, bear some inscriptions on their pedestals. Paleographical they may be dated around seventh century A.D. and thus the *Tri-Ratna stupā* may also be tentatively dated to that period. It should, however, be noted that the shrines of Kutilā Murā show three distinct phases of repairs and rebuildings. In the first phase, there were probably two entrances, one almost in the middle of the eastern wall and the other near the northern end of the small wall. In the second phase the eastern boundary wall was pushed back-wards and the one entrance was provided in the middle. The three oblong halls in front of the stupas were also extended in the second phase. These were enclosed within circumambulatory passages. There is also an antechamber at the back of the southernmost hall, which indicates that the halls also served the purpose of shrines and images of Buddha or Bodhisattvas were once installed therein for worship. Remains of the third period of the shrines are visible only in the oblong hall in front of the middle stupa and in the eastern boundary wall. A number of fireplaces discovered at the back of the main stupas probably belonged to the latest phase of the shrines perhaps those were built later for cooking food for large gatherings. The other artifact was a single gold coin recovered from upper level of this site. It was belonging to the last Abbasid Caliph, Abu Ahmad-Al Mustassim B'illah (1242-1258 A.D)²¹ While the inscribed statues give a seventh century date for the use of the shrine, the single Abbasid coin is not sufficient to establish that shrine was in active use until the middle of the thirteenth century. A later visitor to the area could easily have dropped such a

coin. From the remains of different periods we may conclude that the shrines at Kutilā Murā were in active use for a long period beginning from seventh century to at least thirteenth century A.D.

4. ITĀKHOLĀ MURĀ (ST-18)

Location: This Itakhola mound is situated at the northern side of the Kotbāri Road and two hundred yards to the south of Bhojarājā's palace and south-western side of Comila town. It is a big mound covered by thick vegetation. The brick hunters also disturbed this mound. Scattered ancient bricks are still noticeable all over the mound. Compass bearings from the central mound were south 32° east BARD water tower and north 25° west Cantonment water tower. The mound stands an estimated 60 feet above the natural ground level, though this is difficult to estimate because of the curvature of the hill upon which it is built.

The excavation of the site was started in 1986 and ended in 1992 for span of 3 to 4 months each year. It had exposed the structural remains of Buddhist temple together with the stupā and Vihāra. The temple was built once more. It reveals five phases of building activity. Two phases of building activity of Vihara are also traced. The comparative analysis of the phases of building activity of both the temple and the monastery appears that the monastery was built at the third phase of building activity of the temple.

Structural Description: First phase of building activity of the temple: A large structure measuring 43' X 43', has been exposed of the first phase of building activity. An image chamber, measuring 8' X 7' is found in the eastern wall of this large structure. The first phase is covered by the second phase structure. A stone image is discovered in the third phase. The image is not removed from the third phase image chamber. Due to this, the archaeological inquiry is stopped here. The measurement of the temple together with residential area is 111'- 6" X 43". The temple has a small

ambulatory passage, measuring 136'-6" X 82'-0". Some postholes are traced on the circumambulatory path. It appears that the roof covered the temple, probably, dry straw. Mud was used as mortar in the structure. So, it was usual for surviving the structure from the rain. There is an open ground all around the temple. It is also bounded by another wall measuring 182'-10" X 162'-0". It is 6'0" width. Two architectural evidences have been found in north-east and south-east corner of the outer surrounding walls. Both these structures measure 13' X 13'. There is a hole, measuring 3' X 3', in the middle of both the structures. It is not clear why it was dug. A floor is also traced in the first phase of building activity.

Second phase of building activity: Ground plan of the first phase is remains more or less the same in second phase. During this time, external sides of both the walls of the main passage of the image chamber were widened. In the first phase, it was 5'-0" wide and in the second phase, it is 8'-3". The passage, measuring 12'-6", in between the walls, is not changed. A large vessel and its fragments have been recovered from the second phase floor of the temple. This time, the most worth mention change is that the outer surrounding walls were reduced from 6 feet to 5 feet. Two bends and panel decoration were included on the external face of the outer boundary walls. It is noted that there is no decoration in any portion of the structure except the above-mentioned decoration. The size of the panel is very small and no terracotta plaques have been found in the excavation of the temple area. Besides this, the main temple wall measuring about 16/17 feet, has been discovered undisturbed condition without any decoration. So it appears that there is no decoration on the structure of the Itakhola Mura.

Third phase of building activity: The worth mentions change of the temple area brought into the third phase of building activity. There was a provision for residential area for the monks in the first and second phase. It was totally closed in the third phase. At this time, external sides of both the walls of the main passage of the main image chamber were widened. In the second phase, it was 8'-3" and in the third it is

11'-3". A small group of image chambers were made on the remains of residential area. A Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya image has been found in this phase. It is established on 7 feet high from the floor of first phase, on 5 feet high from the floor of second phase and on 3 feet high from the floor of third phase. Besides this, a two feet high platform together with an arched drainage was made in front of the Dhyānī Buddha. Same structures have been found in north-east and south-east corner of external boundary, which was found in second phase. Twelve re-built floors have been traced in the eastern main passage of the main temple. It appears that this passage was used heavily by the devotees.

Fourth phase of building activity: Ground plan of the whole temple had been changed in this phase of building activity. At that time, 43 feet square main temple had been extended up to 57 feet to the north south. Two-image chambers had been added in each extended portion of the temple. At the same time, front image chambers had been closed. Both the walls of the main passage of the temple had been widened up to 13'0". The arched drainage platform of 3rd phase of building activity raised in the 4th phase and it was changed as an attractive second altar. Most probably, a cruciform Stupa was made on the Western side of the temple and inner side of the external boundary wall. Moreover, three more stupas are traced on the eastern side of the external boundary wall and near to the staircase of boundary wall. They were protected by a slightly raised.

Fifth phase of building activity: Both the walls of the main passage of the temple had been widened again in the 5th phase of building activity. At this time, a new altar is included on the cruciform stupa, which is located on the western side of the temple. Another two stupas were built in between the three stupas of the 4th phase and staircase of outer boundary wall and both the side of the eastward staircase of outer boundary wall. It is noted that there is no decoration on the body of the main temple but panel decoration is seen on the body of the outer boundary wall. A large number of decoration is seen on the body of the each exposed temple and stupa. But Itakhola temple is an exceptional one.

Itākhola Vihāra: The east-faced Itākhola Vihāra is located to 160 feet due north of the Itakhola temple. It is 130' long and 130' wide. A road was essential for direct communication in between the temple, stupa and Vihara. However no passage of communication is traced. The Vihara is established on 7/8 feet height from the temple and stupa. The only way of communication of both the establishments is from the 80 feet height to direct eastward plain land. It appears that the temple is earlier than Vihāra. Only 2/3 phases of building activity are traced in the Vihāra establishment. The foundation of the Vihāra is higher than the temple. It is noted that a group of image chambers were made on the residential arrangement of the monks in the 3-rd phase of building activity. Therefore, the residential arrangement has been transferred to another place in last three phases of building activity of the temple. Actually, there are no phases of building activity in between the two establishments. So it appears to be that the monastery was made in the third phase of building activity of the temple and the monks were rehabilitated in the monastery from the residential area of the temple.

First phase of building activity of the Vihāra: A courtyard, measuring 54' X 54', is discovered in inner side of the Vihāra. Surrounding walls of the courtyard are 3'-2" wide. A well, not brick-built, is traced on the north-eastern corner of the courtyard. It is dug up to 25 feet from the top and at this level, it is stopped due to the brake down of the margin of the wall. This type of well is found on the hilltop in the small monastery for the first time. Probably, a staircase was in the middle of the western wing of the courtyard. A metaled floor is also found in the monastery. A verandah is traced around the courtyard. It is 8'-9" wide. The boundary wall measuring 130' X 130', consists of 19 small chambers in every wings. The opening of these small chambers is toward the verandah. The divider wall of the chambers is 5 to 7.5 feet wide. Front wall and back wall are 6 feet and 8'-3" feet accordingly.

Second phase of building activity: The ruins of the first phase are found on the metaled floor of the same phase that is found still now, it is uncertain how the

establishment destroyed. The bricks were removed for reuse from the ruins. Due to this fact, the 3 feet thick layer of broken bricks, brick-dust, and mud mortar are traced. Second phase of building activity is established on this layer. The width of Verandah is reduced to 6" from 8'-9". Some postholes are found on the wall. At that time, watch room of the main gate was closed and a wall was built there. A chamber of western wing is to be turned as a cash chamber in the second phase of building activity. Three gold balls were found in an earthen vessel in the cash chamber. These balls are now deposited in the local treasury. From this Vihāra, those artifacts were discovered, amongst them, eight metal images, coins, ornamental terracotta plaques etc., are especially important. It appears that there were another phases of building activity in the second phase of the monastery. From the discussion and analysis of the temple, it appears that the establishment of the temple is the beginning of architectural activity of the Mainamati-Lalmai area.

TABLE NO -2
LARGE SHRINES

Sl. No.	Name of the Mound	Dimensions in feet		Area in square feet	Present height in feet	Finding Structure	Finding Antiquities	Excavated / Unexcavated	Present Name	Datation
		N-S	E-W							
1	Abbas Ali Mura	25	30	750	15	Entrance	Bricks, Pottery	Unexcavated	May be Shrine.	-
2	Carpatra Mura	55	105	5,775	35	Entrance, Four massive brick pillars, hall rooms.	Four copperplates, bricks, pottery.	Excavated	Temple Complex	11th -12 th century A.D
3	Kutila Mura	280	225	4,6800	10	Massive boundary wall, staircase entrance halls	Bricks, pottery, sealings, miniature stupas, Stone sculptures, oil lamps, fireplaces, gold coins.	Excavated	Stupa complex	7 th -13 th century A.D
4	Itakhola Mura	150	150	22,500	10	Temple, stupa and small Vihara	Brick, pottery, eight metal images, coins, terracotta plaques, gold balls.	Excavated	Itakhola Vihara	6 th -7 th century A.D

SECTION - III

ADMINISTRATIVE SITE

1. PALACE AND TEMPLE OF QUEEN MAINAMATI (ST-1):

The mound containing the palace and temple of Queen Mainamati lies on the northern most limits of the Mainamati hill and north-western side of Comilla town. Present Gumati river flows to the eastern side of the mound. This slightly elevated flat-topped site, otherwise known as the Rānir Bungalow, spreads over an area of 700 feet by 600 feet. Excluding the comparatively lower western part and a transverse extension at the north-western corner, the main mound is square with about 550 feet in each sides. It is 40 feet high from the surrounding agricultural land.

The Pakistan Department of Archaeology during the 1965-66-excavation season had completed test excavation. Four trenches exposed parts of a perimeter wall of fired bricks. These were excavated to the depth of thirty-five feet. A 11'-6" thick boundary wall that runs 510 feet from north to south and 500 feet from east to west. A 14 feet wide passage, built into the northern enclosure wall, seems to have provided access to the inner area. Other trenches exposed a number of brick structures in the interior of the flat hilltop. The configuration of the site, with its broad approach way from the south and the evidence of a strong gateway, as well as massive walls, led the officer in charge of the excavation during the 1965-66 season, Ranajith Kumar Sarma, to suggest that the site was a fortress. Adding to the evidence is the popular name for the site, **Mainamati Mandir**. The word **Mainamati** is a proper name and the second word specifies the nature of the structure dwelling, palace, or temple; the connotation is that it is a special dwelling place for either the nobility or the gods. Since **Mainamati** is not the name of a goddess, the name of the site may be translated as the palace of Mainamati. The final element of the name, Mandir, occurs nowhere else in the whole range of hills, which indicates the uniqueness of the site in popular perception.

We found the inscriptions issued from Devaparvata. It was described in two ways. The earliest, that of Srīdhāraṇa Rāta dated second half of the 7-th century A.D, states that Kṣīroda River surrounded Devaparvata in which elephant's bathed and innumerable boats floated.²²

The inscription of Bhavadeva, dated in eighth century, was found in Sālvan Vihāra excavation. The description of Devaparvata and the river scenes are greatly amplified in this inscription. It indicates that Devaparvata has a raised mound and a temple that reaches upward as if to touch the sky. There are other literary allusions suggesting a location on a height of ground.²³

It is clear that the palace is situated on a hill, possesses lofty buildings. It is protected with boundary wall and is washed by the river Kṣīroda. N.K. Bhattasali found literary and administrative references, though he gives no details, to an old watercourse known as Kṣira, which branched off from the Gumati and ran along the eastern side of the Mainamati-Lalmai hills where it joined another stream at the southern top of the hills.

Searching for traces of this old river course, nothing was found within a quarter of a mile of the southern tip. However the old Kṣira River cut past the northern tip of the hills and drained down the western side of the hills towards the south and extensive deposits of sand were found below this mound in a broad track-heading south. About four miles south the track was about one hundred yards in breadth and at least fifteen feet deep. Furthermore, the specific designation of the inscriptions suggest a small site. It is called Kumāramātyādhikaraṇa or "the administrative office of the prince minister" in Srīdhāraṇa Rāta plate,²⁴ while the Bhavadeva inscription says that the order was issued from *Devaparvata avasthitasrimaj-Jayaskandhāvarit*, or from the blessed camp of victory established at Devaparvata²⁵. In one case, Devaparvata is called an administrative office, and in the other, a "Camp of Victory", a conventional

designation for a royal residence. Thus, the description of Devaparvata as an executive office and a camp of victory lying beside the river Kṣīroda (which can be located at northern tip of the hills), gives grounds for identifying Rānīr Bungalow Mound (ST-1) as Devaparvata.

The earliest use of the site will not be known until the excavations are completed and reported for the present, the evidence consists of the inscription and the pottery. The earliest reference to Devaparvata occurs in the Srīdhāraṇa Rāta plate, dating second half of the 7-th century A.D, and since the Bhavadeva plate is of the eighth or early ninth century. The site was in use at these two points in time and quite possibly for the intervening two centuries.

TABLE NO -3
THE HILL-TOP SMALL MOUNDS

Sr. No.	Name of the site	Dimensions in feet		Area in Square feet	Present height in feet	Finding Structure	Finding Antiquities	Excavated / Unexcavated	Present Name	Datation
		N-S	E-W							
1	Mainamati Mounds. (ST-2)	2A 2B 2C	- - -	Small " "	10 8 10	- - -	Bricks. Pottery, Broken bricks	Unexcavated	-	-
2	Mainamati Mounds. (ST-5)	5A 5B	- -	" "	10 10	- -	"	"	-	-
3	Fakir Mura (ST-7)	30	20	600	12	-	"	"	-	-
4	Bairagi Mura (ST-10)	20	20	400	8	-	"	"	-	-
5	Barogac Mura (ST-11)	20	20	400	10	-	"	"	-	Bricks are same of the Salvan Vhara,
6	Niranjan Mura (ST-14)	20	20	400	7	-	"	"	-	"
7	Khaccar Mura (ST-19)	20	20	400	6	-	"	"	-	"
8	Hatigara Mura (ST-22)	20	20	400	10	-	"	"	-	"
9	Ujipru MUra (ST-23)	350	250	87,500	15	-	"	"	-	Anand & Bhoj Raja's type Bricks
10	Dhan Mura (ST-25)	14	20	280	5	-	"	"	-	Salvan Vihara. type Bricks
11	Pukka Mura (ST-26)	20	20	400	20	-	"	"	-	"
12	Hugni Mura (ST-27)					-	"	"	-	"
13	Madina Mura (ST-28)	26	20	520	4	-	"	"	-	"
14	Salvan Mura (ST-29)	20	15	300		-	"	"	-	"
15	Itakola Mura (ST-30)	18	20	360	3	-	"	"	-	"
16	Cila Mura (ST-31)	125	100	12,500	10	-	"	"	-	"
17	Rupbani Mura (ST-32)	20	23	460	20	-	"	"	-	"
18	Arjuna Khola Mura (ST-33)	-	-	-	4	-	"	"	-	"
19	Kalidaser Mura (ST-35)	-	-	-	5	-	"	"	-	"
20	Bairagi Mura North (ST-37)	25	25	625	3	-	"	"	-	"
21	Candi Mura (ST-38)	500	200	1,00,000	15	-	"	"	-	8 th -12 th century A.D

SECTION - IV

THE HILL-TOP SMALL MOUNDS

1. MAINAMATI MOUNDS (ST-2):

No-2A: This mound is located on a hillock by the western side of Comilla-Brahmanbaria road and only a furlong or so north of Dhaka Chittagong Road. It is about 30 feet high from the surrounding agricultural land. The central portion is higher than the sides. Northern and western sides are steep but the eastern and southern sides are gradually descending down. At present, the mound is covered with grass and small trees. It is unexcavated.

No-2B: It is situated to the south of Mainamati Mound No-2A. This Mound is only a few feet high from the plain land. It is close to the Dhaka Chittagong Trunk Road. Narrow road runs north to south through this mound eastern edge of the mound is higher than the other sides. It is also covered with grass and bushes. It is unexcavated site.

No.-2C: This site is very close to mound No-1A and its southern side is very close to the Dhaka-Chittagong Trunk Road. There are found ancient bricks and potsherds on the surface of the mound. It is also unexcavated.

2. MAINAMATI MOUNDS (ST-5)

No-5A. This site is situated to the west of the Brigadier's Bungalow and is approachable by an unmetalled road from the metalled cantonment road which runs south to north following the eastern slope of the Mainmati hill. It is not a big mound but about 100 feet high from the surrounding paddy field. The top of the mound is almost flat. Bushes and small trees now cover this mound.

No-5B: This mound is located to the southern side of Mainamati mound No-5A and is close to the Cantonment Road. Northern portion is higher than the other sides but a

few new constructions by the Military have reduced its area. The southern slope extends up to the Brigadier's Bungalow.

3. FAKIR MURĀ (ST-7):

This mound is situated about 150 yards directly east of Carpatra Mura and southern side of Dhaka-Comilla Road. The measurements of the area are 30 yards north south and 20 yards east west on the top of a low hill. Some broken old bricks and a few fragments of pottery were found from this area. It is about 50 to 60 feet high from the surrounding ground level. Dense bramble bushes cover the site. Moreover, the hill had been hollowed out during the Second World War for the construction of a munition store and debris further obscured older remains. The name supplied by a resident suggests that the hill was associated with a religious ascetic

4. BAIRĀGĪ MURĀ (ST-10):

This site is located on the highest hill on the south-western corner of the Lalmai hills and one-third of a mile from the Caṇḍī Murā bazar. This small mound is six feet high and is approximately 20 yards in diameter. The hole of the hilltop has been brought under cultivation. Ancient broken bricks are distributed on the hill. No other antiquities have been found from this mound.

5. BAROGĀC MURĀ (ST-11):

This site is located on the edge of the western range of the top of the hill and western side of Ānanda Vihāra. It is cone shaped mound rising about six feet above the hill plateau. The mound is roughly circular and measures about 20 yards in diameter with a depression in its center. Bushes and grass cover the mound. Many bricks and brick bats have been found from the surface of the site. These are of the same appearance as the Sālvan Vihāra bricks. The site takes its name from a large tree (baro-large, gac-tree)

6. NIRANJAN MURĀ (ST-14):

This mound is located on the crest of the western hills and western side of the Rūpbān Kanyā Vihāra. The diameter of the circular ruins is approximately 20 yards. It is nearly seven feet high from the surrounding ground level. Ancient broken bricks have been found over the surface of the mound. These type of bricks found at Sālvan Vihāra. No other artifacts were found.

7. KHACCAR MURA (ST-19):

This site lies on the western edge of the range and western side of Itākholā Murā and northern side of Kotbāri Road. It is roughly round in shape with a diameter of 20 yards. It is about six feet high above the surrounding ground level. Top of the site has a slight depression. Old broken bricks are found on the surface of the mound. Local people reported that the site had been given its name because the Army grazed Mule (Khaccar) on the hilltop when the area was the part of the British Cantonment.

8. HĀTI-GĀRĀ MURĀ (ST-22):

Location: It lies on the west of Kotbari and southern side of the Comilla-Kalirbazar Road. Grass and creepers cover it. From the top of the site, compass readings were taken south 88° west to the BARD water tower and north 13° west to the Comilla cantonment boundary pillar number 43(C.B.P. No.43)

Structural Description: It seems to be an undisturbed site. The Hātigārā Murā site consists of the ruins of a brick structure that formed a cone-shaped mound on the top of the prominent hills. It measures approximately 20 yards north to south and the same distance east to west. This mound is about 40 feet high from the surrounding cultivated land. Numerous broken ancient bricks of the type found at Sālvan Vihāra were scattered over the crest of the hill as well as being concentrated on the raised part of the site. A slight depression is marked the center of the site. No other cultural materials could be found.

9. UJIRPUR MURĀ (ST-23):

Ujirpur site is located about a mile west of the Sālvan Vihāra and to the western edge of the Mainamati hill. It lies also in between the Hātigārā Murā and Pukkā Murā a mile to the south west of Kotbāri. The mound measures 350 yards X 250 yards and 100 feet high from the western paddy field. It is gradually slope towards the west. It seems to be intact. Some ancient bricks have found on the surface of the mound. Ordinary bricks of various sizes and potsherds, some with designs as at Ananda Raja's palace and Bhoja Raja's palace mounds, were also noticed.

10. DHAN MURĀ (ST-25):

This mound is located on top of one of the hills on the western side of Mainamati- Lalmai hill range. It lies on northern side of Pukkā Murā and northwestern side of Sālvan Vihāra. It is cone-shaped mound and is about five feet high above ground level. The mound measures approximately 20 yards north to south and 14 yards east to west. On the top of the mound a pit about 4 feet deep had been dug, revealing bricks of the Sālvan Vihārā type, lying in layers as though they had once formed a part of a wall. No other cultural material was found on the site.

11. PUKKĀ MURĀ (ST-26):

Location: This small circular mound is situated about one mile to the south of Ujirpur Murā and on the western fringe of the hill range. Compass readings of north 470 east to the BARD water tower and directly north to the Cantonment water tower were recorded. It is covered with grass and herbs.

Structural Description: This smaller circular mound, is in cone shaped on the top of one of the hills, measures 20 yards north to south and same east to west. It is more than 100 feet high from the western agricultural land. Eastern portion of the mound is under cultivation but less disturbed. On the eastern slope and continuing eastward from the

crown of the hill, thin scatters of tiny potsherds were collected. It is apparent that bricks of Sālvan Vihāra type form part of the mound.

12. HUGNĪ MURĀ (ST-27):

This site is located directly one-half mile south of Pukkā Murā and western edge of the hilltop of the Mainamati-Lalmai hill range. The grass and bushes cover it. A few scattered sherds of pottery and fragments of bricks have been found on the southern face of the hill. It marks a former building site at Hugnī Murā. A brick has been recovered from the site measures 19 to 20 inches in length. Hundreds of them are now buried under the earth where the men were working. A few brickbats are visible in nearby bushes. No other artifacts were discovered. The mound is apparently of little archaeological interest.

13. MADINĀ MURĀ (ST-28):

It is on top of the western edge of the Mainamati-Lalmai hill range and southern side of Hugnī Murā. The apex of the hill was covered with a mound of tumbled bricks. It is three to four feet high above the ground level. The mound measures 20 yards east to west and 26 yards north to south. There is a depression in the center of the mound due to brick hunting. Various sizes of old bricks have been revealed from this site. Similar bricks are also found in Sālvan Vihāra. No other cultural material was discovered.

14. SABURĀ MURĀ (ST-29):

This mound is located on the western edge of the Lalmai hills and southern side of Madinā Murā containing brick remains. The mound measures an area 20 yards north to south and 15 yards east to west. The centre of the mound has depression in the middle, while there was a profusion of bricks on the hilltop. No other cultural materials were traced here.

15. ITĀKHOLĀ MURĀ-SMALL (ST-30):

This site lies on the top of the hill on the western edge of Lalmai range and southern side of Saburā Murā. It was covered with bushes. Heaps of old broken bricks were observed among the bushes in an area about 18 X 20 yards. It was three feet high from the ground level. The name of the site indicates that it is a place where bricks (Ita) and fields (Khola) are to be found.

16. CILĀ MURĀ (ST-31):

The mound is situated about three miles south-east of Sālvan Vihāra and on the eastern side of Mainamati -Lalmai hill range. It is a small mound and is only 10 feet high from the surrounding paddy fields. The area is about 125 X 100 square yards. It is noticed that pottery and bricks are profusely scattered on the surface of the mound. A fragment of a stone image was here. This fragment suggests that this mound may be a temple.

17. RŪPBĀNĪ MURĀ (ST-32):

Location: The site is located about 5 miles south-west of Sālvan Vihāra, four miles to the south-east of Pukkā Murā and three quarters of a mile south of Adinā Murā. Rūpbāni Murā is a hill topside on the western edge of the Mainamati- Lalmai hill range. The mound measures 400 X 250 square yards, and about 150 feet high from the western paddy field and adjacent to the Nalua village. Compass bearings taken from the center of the site gave readings of north 100 east on the BARD water tower and north 90 west on the highest part of the Adinā Murā mosque

Structural description: The site is covered with grass and shrubbery. It seems to be that the brick ruins stretched about 23 yards from east to west and about 20 yards from north to south. The site rose to two separate elevations, one on the east and the other to the west. The general elevation of the built-up portion could not readily be determined. The center of the site was marked by a depression, around which exposed bricks and

part of a brick wall were observed. The mound is intact and is of sufficient promise.

Antiquities: Bricks of various sizes and potsherds were visible on the surface. No trace of any other cultural materials could be found.

Legends: Local people reported that the name of the hill was derived from a Muslim beauty by the name of Rūpbānī who retired to the hill. She was known as the daughter of an important ruler in the area. No further details were available from the people.

18. ARJUNAKHOLĀ MURĀ (ST-33):

This mound is located on the hill top on the western edge of Lalmai range. This site is about one and one-quarter miles north of Caṇḍī Murā bazar and southern side of Rūpbānī Murā. This mound has been dug up and brought under cultivation. The brick fragments that interfered with cultivation were collected and piled up around the trees and stupa on the hilltop. These types of bricks were found at Sālvan Vihāra. No other artifacts were discovered.

19. KĀLIDĀSER MURĀ (ST-35):

This site lies on a hilltop on the western side of the Lalmai range. It is southern side of the Arjunholā Murā and is about three-quarter of a mile north of Caṇḍī Murā bazar along the footpath running beside the western foot of the hills. Scattering of Sālvan Vihāra type bricks found at the western foot of the hill that had been carried down in an earth slide from the top of the mound several years earlier. About 200 feet southwest of the western foot of Kālidāser Murā, part of a broken brick wall was found and exposed in an old drainage channel. No other antiquities were discovered.

20. BAIRĀGĪR MURĀ (ST-37):

Location: The mound is located about one mile north-west of Kutilā Murā and to the west of the Mainamati Hills. The size and elevation of the mound is difficult to

determine since it is overgrown with waist bushes. It is also on the top of the hills. Compass bearings taken from the center of the mound gave the following readings - north 80 west cantonment water tower and south 300 east BARD water tower.

Structural Description: Luckily this mound has been saved from the contractors in their search for bricks at the time of Second World War. The scattered broken bricks marking the site stretches in diameter. A pit had been dug near the highest point of the site. A disturbed structure of a wall had been found in the pit up to a depth of five feet. The sizes of the bricks were of the Sālvan Vihāra type. It appears to be promising for scientific excavation.

Legend: The local people say that the hill was named Bairāgī because of its association with some reputed saint who has lived on its top.

21. CAṆḌĪ MURĀ (ST-38):

The site, Caṇḍī Murā, is located to the southern edge of Lalmai hill, south-west of Lalmai Railway station and about two miles south-east of Rūpbānī Murā. The mound is very near to Comilla -Barura Road. It is very high and extensive mound. The mound is almost 100 feet height and 500 X 200 square yards extent.

The two temples measure twelve feet square and rise to a height of about fifteen feet on the top of the mound, are side by side, facing west, each having an entrance from the west. Scattered bricks found here and there on the mound. The structures of these temples have been cracked of due to the penetration of roots of the trees. The bushes and trees cover the mound. Besides the standing temple structures, there is a brick boundary wall whose remains can be traced that encloses an area thirteen yards by fifteen yards. This is called Caṇḍī Murā after the name of Caṇḍī for whole a temple is constructed on its top.

There is a another small mound measuring five yards by ten yards, northern side of the two temples. Another mound has been found about thirty five yards to the north east of second mound. It measures ten yards by fifteen yards. Both of these mounds are enclosed by the boundary wall, are covered with broken bricks of the same type that

were found in Sālvan Vihāra.

More than these shrines the archaeologist is attracted by the large number of potsherds and bricks found in area as at Ānanda Rājā's and Bhoja Rājā's palaces and Rūpbān Murā mounds. Fossil wood abounds in this area. At the eastern foot of this mound is a tank from which were recovered some years ago two images of black basalt which are now worshipped in the temple of Caṇḍī. One represents Manjuvara, a variety of Manjusrī Bodhisttva and an emanation of the five Dhyānī Buddhas, who is highly placed in the Mahāyanist pantheon. The second was an image of Suryā, a Hindu deity. Both are judged by Ramachandran to resemble sculpture of the Pāla period, which covers four centuries, from the middle of the eighth to the mid twelfth. When the images from Caṇḍī Murā are compared with published studies of Bengal sculpture, both images appear to have been carved in the late Pala period, about the 11th or 12th century²⁶. Clearly the existing structures have consistently been used for religious devotions, though the images installed in the buildings have varied.

A temple of Caṇḍī from which the mound is known as Caṇḍī Murā seems to have once stood at this site. Only deep excavation can reveal the fact and may throw further light on the *Paṭṭikere Cuṇḍāvarabhavane Cuṇḍā* of Aṣṭasahasrikā Prajñā Pāramitā, dated 1015 A.D., now in the Cambridge University Library

SECTION - V

NON-STRUCTURAL SITES

1. SINGĀRA MURĀ (ST-3):

This mound is situated to the western side of Army Bungalow, and northern portion of Mainamati-Lalmai hills. This site is 100 to 150 yards north of the Comilla to Daudkhandi road, about one-half mile west of its junction with the Comilla-Debidvar road. The ground of this site is level with land on the eastern, northern and southern sides, and drops away to an excavated water tank to the west. It was very much

disturbed by the modern construction and is now under cultivation. A huge number of ancient broken bricks and potsherds were scattered over the surface of the site.

2. TĀKKĀ MURĀ (ST-34):

This site is located on the eastern side of the Lalmai hills and in between the Cillā Murā and Bālāgāzīr Murā. It is a large flat area covered with broken bricks, though there is no evidence of architectural remains or any built-up area. This site was heavily disturbed by the activities of the Burma Oil Company drilling crews, who reportedly sank a test hole in this location.

3. BĀLĀGĀZĪR MURĀ (ST-36):

The mound is located about 6 miles southeast of Sālvan Vihāra and south-east corner of Lalmai range and about a mile to the north-west of Lalmai Railway Station. It is a low uneven mound of irregular configuration stretching 125 yards from east to west and approximately the same distance north to south. The mound is 5 to 10 feet high from surrounding level. On the eastern slope of the mound are found an old brick wall and many scattered broken bricks. The surface of the mound is thickly covered with potsherds. It was reported that a Muslim warrior about 250 years ago had seized the land and when his descendants left, potters occupied the site, accounting for the dense distribution of potsherds.

SECTION-VI

WATER RESERVOIRS

1. ĀNANDA RĀJĀR DĪGHI (ST-13):

This Dīghī (tank) is located directly on the eastern side of the monastery, Ānanda Vihāra. It lies an estimated 100 yards east of the eastern wall of the monastery. It is a large excavated and embanked water reservoir. The rectangular tank

embankment ran for 500 yards from north to south and 200 yards from east to west, enclosing an area in excess of 20 acres. The embankment still stood 20 to 25 feet above the exterior ground level, while part of interior dropped to 25 feet below ground level and may have deeper, for water covered part of the interior. No antiquities were found nor any reported by the local people.

2. BHOJ VIHĀRA DĪGHI (ST-17):

This site is located due east of the Bhoj Vihāra. It is a large excavated and embanked water reservoir. This Dīghi (tank) is estimated 125 yards distance from the eastern wall of the monastery. The tank is approximately square, stretching 300 yards on both its north-south and east- west axes. The inside of the tank had been dug. It is difficulty to determine the original depth. At present, the thick embankment is 15 to 20 feet high above the surrounding ground level, though it is breached in various places. No cultural materials were found on the embankments or on the parts of the interior that were searched. The local people were asked if any thing had been found in the interior of the tank, they replied that they knew nothing.

SECTION -VII

THE HISTORICAL RELATIONS OF THE SITES OF MAINAMATI

No evidence has been, correctly found the peoples who lived in Mainmati-Lalmāi area. But the assemblage of the ancient and archaeological sites show its ancient historic relation with the present. Above fifty sites are traced in Mainmati-Lalmia hill range. Out of fifty, thirty-eight brick structures were traced and the Department of Archaeology, Bangladesh, excavates some of them. A number of archaeological findings have been recovered from those sites. It is known to all from Gunaighar copperplate grant of Vainya Gupta that there was a Buddhist monastery in

somewhere of Comilla district by the time of Vainya Gupta. Mainmati copperplate grant of Vīradhara Deva of 13 th century indicates that 17 pātakas of land were granted to the illustrious lord Vāsudeva. From the 6 th century A.D. to 13 th century A.D, there was a practice to donate temples and Buddhist monasteries. Due to this fact, an extraordinary rich culture was developed in Mainamati-Lalmai hill range. The greatest assemblage of ancient Buddhist remains in Bangladesh lies in Mainmati hill range.

From the sixth century through the thirteenth, two major historic phases can be distinguished. The construction and successive enlargement of Buddhist Monasteries and the inscriptions of Vainyagupta, Sridharana Rata, the Khaḍgas and the early Devas marked the first phase. The inscriptions in form to us that it was dated from the beginning of the sixth century to the end of the eight-century A.D. The second phase may be defined by the structure of smaller temples and by the Candra and later Deva dynastic inscriptions. The inscriptions range from the beginning of the tenth century to the and of the thirteenth century A.D.

In the first phase, there is a good evidence that they built a large Buddhist centre in Mainmati region. A large number of artifacts were found during excavation in various sits. These include copper-plates, silver and gold coins, bronze images of Buddha and other Buddhist deities, bronze caskets, bronze utensils and other metal objects, terracotta seals and sealing, pottery, terracotta plaques and a number of various other objects accumulated over the centuries. Out of the seven copper-plates from Sālvan Vihāra, one of the themes has been found in first occupation level, received less attention due to its decayed and highly damaged conditions. But a beautiful seal, bears recumbent bull below which is a single line of inscription, which has been read as "Mahārājā Srī Vainya Guptasya". As the appearance of the seal and the style and direction of the writing on the plate all closely resemble the published Gunaighar copperplate of Vainyagupta. This Gunaighar is eighteen miles distance from Sālvan Vihāra. This Gunaighar-plate was dated in 508 AD. The presence of the Salvan Vihara plate of Vainyagupta suggests that the Sālvan Vihāra can be dated back to the reign of Vainyagupta at the beginning of the sixth century AD.

Two gold coins are belonging to the imperial Guptas in the earliest date. One of

them, found from Sālvan Vihāra, depict on its obverse an uncaperioned horse in front of a bent post placed on reverse a female figure. This has been identified as Asvamedha coin of Samudra Gupta (c.335-375 AD). Three hoards of gold and silver coins were found inside clay pots buried beneath an early floor level. The first hoard contains one of Candragupta II (376-415 A.D) and two of imitation Gupta coins. The second hoard contained 52 silver coins and the third hoard contains 172 silver coins. Both second and third hoard contains the same kind of coins. There were found a dozen of post-Gupta imitation Archer type of gold coins from Salvan Vihara. According to the legends on the coins, this most probably were issued by the early Deva rulers of Samatata Mandala. A large number of silver coins were found from Mainmati excavations of Sālvan Vihāra and Ānanda Rājā's Place Mound with the legends of Pattikera from the evidences and their large number, association and findspot, the coins were issued by the powerful and prosperous ruler of Samatata most probably Śrī Ānanda Deva of Deva dynasty.

From the evidence of the coins it has come to light that Sālvan Vihāra and Ānanda Vihāra were the constructions and successive enlargements of Buddhist monasteries, which may be dated in 6th to 8th century A.D. From the preliminary examination and the excavation reports, there were traced seven large monasteries named Army Bungalow Vihāra, Ānanda Vihāra, Rūpbānkanyā Vihāra, Bhoj Vihāra, Kotbāri Vihāra, Rūpbān Vihāra and Sālvan Vihāra. These seven large monasteries could be dated in sixth to eighth centuries A.D. when Buddhist religion, political and socio-cultural relations were in prosperous and increasing position in Buddhist world only in Mainamati area but also in all over the ancient India.

In the second phase, the 10th to 13th century, Mainmati-Lalmati area lost its political autonomy for a time and the support for the monasteries fell away as Vaiṣṇava shrines gained in their place. The ninth century is in dark position till today for the lack of authentic informations. The copper-plate grants of Candragupta transferring property in Samatata Mandala were issued from Vikramapura forty miles to the west from Mainmati. The Candraguptas were the rulers of Vaṅga, Vaṅgala, Candradvipa, Samatata and Harikela region. But their principal seat was in Vikramapura. It seems to appear

that the Candra rulers neglected Devaparvata, Kripura, Vasantapura and Karmānta. By the time of Candra kings, the size of the buildings and the budgets were reduced. It is noted that the amount of the donated lands was also reduced. The Mainmati grants of Laḍaha Candra were recorded the lands for the small shrines. The grant of Govinda Candra was recorded the land for small shrine. The grant of Roṇavaṅkamalla Harikāla Deva was recorded the land for small monasteries. And the Vīradhara Deva grant was recorded land for the small shrine. So, no evidence has been found in second phase for the large establishment in Mainmati-Lalmai hill range till today.

An interpretation of the ruins in the Mainmati-Lalmai hill range has been built up. The representation of thirty-eight brick structures has been given in this chapter. Most of their functions were identified, using criteria of size, configuration, and location. It was argued that the early independent rulers with Mainmati hills had been generous supporters of the large Buddhist monasteries and then from the time of the Candras when Samatāṭa was incorporated for a time in a large kingdom, patronage was less generous and directed to the Vaiṣṇava shrine, Brahmins and small Tāntric monastery. From the discussion of the above mentioned sites, it has come to light that the ruins of Mainmati-Lalmai hill range were mostly used for the religious purpose from 6th to 13th century A.D.

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