

CHAPTER - II

POLITICAL HISTORY

Though the proto-historic human settlement at Tāmrālipta (present Tamluk town and its neighbouring places) is evident from the archaeological findings¹, yet the detailed political history of Tāmrālipta janapada (kingdom) is not clear to us. In the ancient period Tāmrālipta is often referred to in literature both as a city-port and a distinct janapada, sometimes as a separate one and sometimes as a part of a neighbouring kingdom or janapada. During this period this place was known by various names viz., Tāmalites,² Dāmalīpta,³ Tāmalīpta,⁴ Tāmālinī,⁵ Tāmālipti,⁶ Viśmugriha,⁷ Stambapura (Stambapu),⁸ Tāmralipti,⁹ Velākula,¹⁰ Tāmālika,¹¹ Tāmraliptaka¹² and Tāmraliptika¹³ as evident from foreign and indigenous sources.

The early reference to Tāmrālipta in Indian literature occurs in the Kurma-vibhāga section of the Atharva-veda Parisista

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1. Das Gupta, P.C., The Archaeological Treasures of Tamralipta ; For details see Chapter III.
 2. Majumdar, R.C.(Ed.), History of Bengal, vol. 1, p. 29 ; Sastri, K.A.N.(Ed.), A comprehensive history of India, vol.2, p. 438 ; Majumdar, R.C., The Classical Account of India, p. 375
 3. Hemchandra : Abhidhāna Chintāmani, Bhumi Kanda, p. 147 ; Dasakumāra Charita, Uchchhavasa, VI, p. 287
 4. Ibid.
 5. Ibid.
 6. Ibid.
 7. Ibid.
 8. Ibid.
 9. Ibid.
 10. Trikānda-sēsha of Purushottama, Quoted in History of Bengal, Vol. - 1, p. 30.
 11. Ibid.
 12. Niyogi, p. Economic History of Northern India, p. 135
 13. Somadeva : Kathāsaritsāgara, III, 4, 291

where the people of Tāmralipta are mentioned along with the people of other countries,¹⁴ which evidently throws light on the separate existence of Tāmralipta as a janapada. Indian literature such as the Mahābhārata, the Puranas and other religious works of the Hindus, the Buddhists and the Jainas and secular works, is full of references to Tāmralipta. The Ceylonese chronicles viz., the Dipavaṃsa and the Mahāvāṃsa, the writings of Greek and Roman geographers and historians and the accounts of Chinese pilgrims also furnish many interesting and useful information about the geographical location and socio-cultural history of ancient Tāmralipta.

Before we trace out the political history of Tāmralipta, we must have an idea about its location and boundary. In the Mahābhārata,¹⁵ (Sabhā-parva) it is found that Bhima while performing campaign in the different janapadas of ancient Bengal subdued the ruler of Tāmralipta along with the rulers of Vaṅga and Shūma. This and many other references in the same epic (viz., Ādiparva, Svayambara section; Sabhā-parva, Dyuta section ; Drona-parva, Yauadratha-vadha section) clearly

14. Ed. by George Melville Bolling and Julius Von Negelein, with Hindi Notes by Ramkumar Rai, Benaras, 1976.
Kṣāvadrā samatata samavardhamanakabaidhāgāndhārāh
kosalatosalabenaṭatasajjpurā madreyaṭāmolipta dakṣhīnpūrbe
hateavihanyat // (Italics mine)
15. Mahābhārata Ch. 30 (Bhima-digvijaya Section); Also see History of Bengal, vol. - 1, pp. 8f ; Raychandhuri, H.C. Studies in Indian Antiquities, pp. 266, 294; Ray, N.R. Bāṅgālīr Itihās (Ādi Parva), p. 136

indicate that Tāmrālipta was a separate kingdom in the age of Mahābhārata. Though the Mahābhārata records the separate existence of Tāmrālipta as a kingdom, yet it throws no light on its location and boundary. In his "Description of India within the Ganges" Ptolemy, a renowned greek geographer of the middle of the 2nd century A.D. refers to a town named Tamalites which was on the bank of the Ganges.¹⁶ Tāmalites is identified as Tāmrālipta¹⁷ and "The town of Tamluk to which it is taken to correspond, is on the right bank of the river Rupnārāyaṇ about twelve miles from its junction with the Hooghly".¹⁸ It is also believed that "the Pali form of the name was Tāmalitti and this accounts for this form of Greek name".¹⁹

The accounts of the Chinese pilgrims and other Indian literature also record that Tāmrālipta, the capital-city of the janapada of the same name was situated on the sea-side. Fa-hsien who visited the place in the early 5th century A.D. records that it was situated on the sea-side nearly fifty Yojanas east from the city of Chāmpā.²⁰ Another Chinese pilgrim Hsuen Tsang

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16. Majumdar, R.C., The classical Accounts of India, p. 375; History of Bengal, Vol. 1, p. 29 ; Sastri, K.A.N., A Comprehensive History of India, Vol. II, p. 438
17. Sastri (Ed.) op. cit., p. 438
18. History of Bengal, Vol. - 1, p. 29
19. Panskura Benamali College Patrika, p. 17; According to K.P. Jayaswal Tāmrālipti seems to be a Sanskritised form of Prakrit Tāmal-itti, which is equivalent to Classical Tamil Tiraminda, i.e. Dramida. The original forms would have been Tiramidatti and Dramidadatti. (The Indian Antiquary, 1914, p. 64)
20. Cunningham, A., Ancient Geography of India, p. 732 ; Fa-hsien : A record of the Buddhist Countries, Tr. by Li-Yung-hsi, p. 77

who visited the town of Tāmralipta in the 7th century A.D. records that it lay near an inlet of the sea where land and water communications met.²¹ The same authority who visited Bengal in about 638 A.D.²² shortly after the death of Sasanka, mentions the names of four kindoms of Bengal proper — Pundavardhana, Karnasuvarna, Tāmralipti and Samatata.²³ The first roughly comprises the region round the Northern Bengal, the second and the third, Western Bengal, and the fourth Eastern Bengal.²⁴ The Dasakumarachaita (6th century A.D.) refers to Tāmralipta as situated very close to the sea and not far from the river Ganges.²⁵ The Kathāsaritsāgara refers to it as situated near the eastern sea.²⁶ It is also recorded that "Tāmralipta is called the southern district of Eastern India from which people went towards Mid India, showing that it was on the South-Western border of East India."²⁷ Thus on the basis of the references cited above it may be concluded that Tamralipta was situated in Western Bengal on the border of the sea.

As regards the boundary of Tāmralipta as a kingdom at the time of Hiuen-Tsang, it is recorded that Tāmralipta was about

21. Watters, T., op.cit. Vol - 2, pp. 189 f.

22. History of Bengal, Vol. 1, p. 77 (footnote)

23. Watters, T., op.cit. Vol. - 2, p. 182; Beal, S., op.cit. Vol. 2, p. 193

24. Majumdar & Pusalkar (Ed.), The History and Culture of the Indian people, Vol. 3, p. 142

25. Uchchhavaśa, VI, p. 287

26. III, 4, 291

27. History of Bengal, Vol.- 1, p. 87 (footnote)

1400 li (one li = $\frac{1}{6}$ mile) in circumference, the capital being 10 li.²⁸ Thus according to Hiuen-Tsang, the kingdom of Tāmralipta was then about two hundred and thirty three miles in circumference, the capital being more than one and a half miles in area. Cunningham, on the basis of available data concludes that in ancient period Tāmralipta was a country lying to the westward of the Hooghly river, from Burdwan to Kālṅā on the north.²⁹

The existence of the kingdom of Tāmralipta in the early period of history is evident from the frequent references made in the Mahābhārata and from the mention of Ptolemy the word 'Tāmalites' along with Gaṅgāridai as distinct race.³⁰ The later authority states that the kingdom of Gaṅgāridai extended over the whole of the area of the basin of the five-faced Ganges which falls on the sea i.e., the present Bay of Bengal.³¹ Diodorus says in one passage that the "Ganges which is 30 stades broad, flows from north to south forming the boundary towards the east of the tribe of the Gaṅgāridai".³² These and other Greek and Latin writers also refer to another country named Prāsioi (Prāsii) along with Gaṅgāridai (Var. Gaṅḍaridai).³³ According to these

28. Beal, *op.cit.*, Vol. - 2, pp. 194 f.

29. Cunningham, *op.cit.*, p. 504

30. It was Pliny (A.D. 23-79), the Roman geographer, in his "Naturalis Historia" who while stating the races of India, mentions a tribe named Taluctae which according to Mc Crindle, the translator of Pliny's work, must be "the people of the kingdom of Tāmralipta mentioned in the Mahābhārata". (Mc Crindle, J.W., *Ancient India as described in Classical Literature*, p. 29)

31. Adhikari (Ed.), *op.cit.*, 110

32. Majumdar, *History of Ancient Bengal*, p. 29

33. *Ibid.*

combined testimonies these two nations "ruled over nearly the whole of North India from the river Beas in the Punjab to the eastern frontier of India beyond the Ganges".³⁴ The testimonies of these writers are so ambiguous that "it is not easy to determine the precise boundary line between the Gaṅgarīdai proper and the people styled the Prāsioi who had their capital at Pataliputra. The evidence of Ptolemy suggests that in his days, or in those of the writers on whom he relies, the kingdom, of which Pataliputra was the royal residence, apparently extended as far as the Ganges and may have included Tamralipti.³⁵ The Gaṅgarīdai lay beyond this territory. The exact political relationship between the Prāsioi and the Gaṅgarīdai in the days of Alexander is not free from a certain amount of ambiguity."³⁶

From the accounts of the Greek and Latin writers it appears that at the time of Alexander's invasion in India Prāsioi or Prāchya (i.e., the eastern country) and Gaṅgarīdai or the Gaṅgā-rashtra (i.e. the Gaṅgā-dēśa) were ruled by a king named Agremmes or Auḡrasainya (Indian synonym Ugrasener putra i.e. the son of Uḡrasena.³⁷ Alexander's army heard of the wealth and vast army of the son of Uḡrasena and they did not dare to proceed further

34. Ibid.

35. Italies are mine.

36. Majumdar (Ed.), op.cit., Vol. 1, p. 43

37. Maiti, P., Studies in Ancient India, P. 116 (Quoted from the Journal of Bihar & Orissa Research Society) ; Ray, N.R., Bangalir Itihas, (Adi Parva), Vol. - 1, p. 463

east after crossing the Beas ; so Alexander had to retreat. The Greek writer Curtius records the following regarding the causes of the retreat of Alexander's army. He writes : "The farther bank of the Ganges was inhabited by the nations, the Gaṅgāridai, and the Prāsioi, whose king Agrammes kept in the field for guarding the approaches to his country 20,000 cavalry and 200,000 infantry besides 2000 four-horsed chariots, and what was most formidable force of all, a troop of elephants, which ran up to the number of 3000."³⁸ Almost a similar description is given by Plutarch.³⁹ The truth of these statements is corroborated by indigenous sources which also record the enormous wealth and vast army of the Nanda ruler holding sway over the Gaṅgāridai and Prāsioi nations.⁴⁰ It is believed that the king Agrammes or Xandrames of Greek and Latin traditions is none but the Nanda King Dhana Nanda, the son of the famous Nanda King Mahāpadma Nanda or Ugrasena as referred to by the classical writers.⁴¹ Mahāpadma Nanda "is said to have subverted many contemporaneous powers, like the Ikshvākus, Kurus, Pañchālas, Kāsīs, Śūrasenas, Maithīlas, Kalingas, Asmakas, Haihayas etc., and implacably uprooted the Ksatriyas."⁴² For these conquests he is referred to in the Purāṇas as 'Sarvakshatrāntaka' and 'Ekarāt'.⁴³

38. Ma Crindle, J.W. Ancient India - Its Invasion by Alexander the Great, PP, 221 - 22

39. Ibid., p. 310

40. Ray Chaudhuri, Political History of Ancient India, pp. 188-91

41. Adhikari (Ed.), op.cit., p. 111. Ray, N.R., op.cit. p. 463

42. Tripathi, R.S., History of Ancient India, p. 110 ;
Ray, N.R., op.cit. p. 463

43. Ibid.

Dr. N.R. Ray believes that Mahapadma Nanda of the Purānas is none but Ugrasena who is also referred to in the indigenous work Mahābodhivaṃsa.⁴⁴

From all the sources cited above it may be concluded that both Prāsioī and Gaṅgāridai either as separate nations or a united one were under the rulers of Mahāpadma Nanda and Dhana Nanda who ruled between Circa 364 - 324 B.C. and that during this period Tāmralipta lost its independence as a separate janapada as referred to in the Atharva-veda Parisīsta.

There is some evidence which leads one to believe that Tāmralipta lost its independence during the Mauryan period. Chandraguṣṭa, the founder of the Maurya dynasty ascended the throne of Magadha after defeating the last Nanda ruler Dhana Nanda (Circa 324 - 300 B.C.). He became the Rāja-Chakraborti and realised the ideal of the political unification of India in a very real sense and as such Dr. H.C. Raychaudhuri has rightly remarked : "Chandraguṣṭa Maurya is the first historical founder of a great empire in India."⁴⁵ Of course the Greek writers, Plutarch and Justin, "represent him as having overrun and obtained possession of the whole of India."⁴⁶ Though the remark of Greek writers is an exaggeration, yet there is no doubt that Chandraguṣṭa

44. Ray, op.cit., p. 463

45. Raychaudhuri, H.C., op.cit. p. 37

46. Tripathi, op.cit., p. 149

became a ruler of a vast kingdom. "In the North-West his empire extended up to the Ariana and was skirted by the Persian Kingdom; in the West it was bounded by the Western sea near Saurashtra; in the East it consisted of Magadha and probably Bengal; in the South it extended up to the Chitaldrug district of Mysore and Nellore district of Madras."⁴⁷ The inclusion of Bengal including Tāmrālipta within the empire of the Nandas is attested by the Greek and Latin writers as already observed. Chandragupta who captured the throne of Dhana Nanda succeeded to the legacy of the Nanda suzerainty over the whole of Bengal.

Besides this point, we must take into consideration other historical evidence in favour of the inclusion of Tāmrālipta within the kingdom of Maurya empire. The Maurya empire included Puṇḍravardhana (North Bengal), one of the four important political divisions of the then Bengal as evident from the Jaina and Buddhist texts, the Rock-cut Inscription found at Mahāsthāngarh and the account of Hiuen Tsang.⁴⁸ It is also recorded by Hiuen Tsang that he in course of his tour in Bengal witnessed many Asoken columns in Tāmrālipta, Kamaṣuvarṇa and Samatata.⁴⁹ This also throws light on the point that besides Puṇḍravardhana, these areas or janapadas of Bengal came under the rule of the Maurya dynasty during the time of Asoka. If we accept the account

47. Maiti, op.cit. p. 161

48. Ray, N.R., op.cit., p. 463; Maiti, op.cit. pp. 471-472

49. Ibid.; Maiti, op.cit., p. 471

of Hiuen Tsang, it may be concluded with some amount of certainty that most of the areas of Bengal formed the part of Asoka's empire which, however, must have also formed the part of Chandragupta's empire as we have been informed that Asoka only added Kalinga to the first Maurya king Chandragupta's empire in eastern India. It is further to note that among the bhuktis or provinces of the Mauryan empire the name of Vaṅga along with its capital Tāmralitti (Tāmralipti) is also referred to in a Jaina text.⁵⁰ Besides other evidence cited already, this also supports the inclusion of Tāmralipta within the Maurya empire. Thus Tāmralipta in all probability, was within the Maurya empire since the time of Chandragupta and as a successor to the vast Nanda empire along with an enormous royal treasury and a vast army Chandragupta inherited the possession of Tāmralipta as this janapada was incorporated within the Nanda empire as already observed.

Again, that most of the areas of Bengal formed a part of the Asoka's missionary work is corroborated by Divyāvādāna⁵¹ which also points to the inclusion of most parts of Bengal within the Maurya empire. Moreover, the inclusion of Tāmralipta is further supported by an indirect evidence recorded in the Ceylonese chronicle, the Mahāvamsa. According to this text "Asoka sent Mahendra and Saṅghamitrā along with sapling of the sacred Bo

50. Brihatkalpasūtrabhāṣya, 3263 ff.

51. Ray, N.R., op. cit., p. 627

tree from this very port (Tamralipta) to Ceylon to propagate Buddhism in that island and it is narrated that on this occasion the emperor himself was present in the great harbour-city."⁵² V.A. Smith remarks that the Asokan empire comprised "the whole of Bengal as far as the mouths of the Ganges where Tamralipta, the modern Tamruk, was the principal port."⁵³ Almost a similar conclusion has been made by Dr. H.C. Raychaudhury who writes : "The evidence of Greek as well as Buddhist writers seems to suggest that the authority of the great Mauryas was acknowledged in deltaic as well as in northern Bengal."⁵⁴

From our present discussion it may be concluded with some amount of certainty that Tamralipta was incorporated within the kingdom of the Mauryas since the time of Chandragupta.

The political history of Bengal after the fall of the Maurya empire is somewhat obscure and we do not have any positive historical evidence whether the kingdom of Tamralipta came under the domain of the Sungas (Circa 187-75 B.C.), the Kanvas (Circa 75 - 30 B.C.) and the Kushanas (Circa 15 B.C. - 176 A.D.). As Magadha having its capital Pataliputra came under the rule of the Sungas and as there is no evidence of the independent existence of the janapada of Tamralipta, it may be presumed that the whole

52. Das Gupta, P.C., "The Early Terracottas from Tamralipta." Indian Folklore, 1958, pp. 17f; cf., Das Gupta, The Archaeological Treasures of Tamralipta, p. 1.

53. Smith, The Early History of India, p. 171

54. Majumdar, R.C. (Ed.), History of Bengal, Vol. 1, p. 44.

of eastern Indian possession of the Mauryas which comprised Bengal came under the rule of the Sungas. This hypothesis is corroborated by the discovery of a few terracotta specimens from different parts of Bengal including Tamruk sub-division (ancient Tāmralipta). The art-specimens of the Sungas found from the different areas of the spread of Sunga rule namely from Magadha and other places of South Bihar bear close resemblance to the art-specimens found at Tamruk town proper and its adjoining areas.⁵⁵ This affinity of art-specimens indicates the inclusion of Tāmralipta janapada within the domain of the Sungas. The rule of the Kanvas was very short and bears little importance in the history of northern India in general and of eastern India in particular. Though many Kushāṇa coins have been found from different parts of Bengal including Tamruk (ancient Tāmralipta), yet we cannot say definitely whether the Kushāṇa empire at its height under Kanishka comprised Bengal including Tāmralipta.⁵⁶ A few coins of the Kushāṇa king Huvishka (Circa 106-138 A.D.) have been found at Tamruk town proper in 1978 and preserved in the Tāmralipta Museum and Research Centre.⁵⁷ The discovery of the Kushāṇa coins at Tamruk may tempt one to conclude that the ancient janapada of Tāmralipta along with other parts of Bengal was incorporated within the Kushana empire. But this is not a conclusive proof as we know well that coins had been carried by

55. Das Gupta, K.K., "Rājnaitik Itihāse Prāchin Tāmralipta" in Adhikari, I.(Ed.) Itihāser Prekshāpate Tāmralipta, P. 112; Maity and Thakur, (Ed.), Indological Studies, p. 136.

56. Maiti, P., op.cit., p. 328.

57. Maity & Thakur, op.cit., p. 136

way of trade far beyond the territory of the rulers who issued them and it is more probable for Tāmralipta as it was an important trade-centre in those days. So there is no conclusive proof about the inclusion of Tāmralipta within the Kushāna empire.

From the end of the Kushana period to the rise of the Guptas at the beginning of the fourth century A.D., the political history of Bengal is obscure. During this period possibly different parts of Bengal were ruled by different rulers and it was under Samudragupta that all the janapadas of Bengal including Tāmralipta lost their independence. Of course there is no direct evidence of the inclusion of Bengal under Samudragupta. The Allahabad Prāsasti of Samudragupta composed by his court poet Harisena records that Samatata or south-east Bengal was one of the frontier kingdoms or Pratayanta-rashtras of Samudragupta. "The ruler of Samatata, to quote the conventional and characteristic court language of the Guptas, 'gratified the emperor Samudragupta by payment of all kinds of tribute, by obedience to his commands and by approach for paying court to him.'⁵⁸ Prof. R.C. Majumdar is of the opinion that "with the exception of Samatata, the rest of Bengal was definitely incorporated in the Gupta empire by the time of Samudragupta."⁵⁹ This view of Prof. Majumdar is supported by Prof. K.K. Das Gupta who holds the view that Tāmralipta janapada along with other parts of Bengal came under the direct rule of

58. Majumdar, R.C., op.cit., p. 38; cf. Tripathi, op.cit. p. 243

59. Ibid.

Samudragupta.⁶⁰ He puts forward two arguments in favour of the inclusion of Tamralipta within the domain of Samudragupta. First, among the defeated kings as recorded in the Allahabad Prasasti we find the name of Chandravarman who has been identified by scholars with the king of that name mentioned in the Susunia inscription of present Bankura district as ruler of Pushkarana.⁶¹ If this identification is accepted as true, it may be presumed that Tamralipta, a janapada of the neighbouring district of Bankura, also came under the rule of Samudragupta who came to Bengal for conquest and could not be satisfied only with the possession of a part of it. This is unusual. Secondly, we find from the Meherauli Iron Pillar inscription which stands near Kutub Minar (Delhi) that a king named Chandra defeated his enemies of Bengal who jointly offered a vigorous resistance. Scholars hold different views about the identity of this Chandra of Meherauli Iron Pillar inscription. One of the views among those is that this Chandra is none but Chandragupta II Vikramaditya. Again, if we accept this identification, it might be the case that after the death of Samudragupta who established his suzerainty over the territory of Bengal, the different rulers of the janapadas of Bengal, taking advantage of the temporary eclipse of Gupta power tried to free themselves from the yoke of the

60. Adhikari, I.(Ed.), op.cit., p. 113

61. "This Pushkarana has been plausibly identified with the village named Pokharna, 25 miles north-east of Susunia on the south bank of the river Damodar, which has yielded considerable antiquities reaching back to the Gupta period, if not earlier. Chandravarman may thus be regarded as the king of Rāḍha or the region immediately to its south, by defeating whom Samudragupta paved the way for the conquest of Bengal." (Majumdar, R.C., op.cit. pp. 39 - 40)

Gupta rule but their combined efforts suffered a defeat for the second time at the hands of Chandragupta II who again firmly established his supremacy there. It seems quite probable that among the different janapadas of Bengal the Tāmrālipta janapada was one of them and that its people along with the people of other janapadas of Bengal joined the confederacy formed to resist Chandragupta II.

Thus from the above analysis it may be concluded that either the whole of Bengal or the most parts of Bengal including Tāmrālipta was ruled by Chandragupta II (Circa 375/376 to 412/413 A.D.). Since then till the middle of the 6th century A.D. the conquered areas of Bengal remained within the Gupta empire and the centre of administration was Puṇḍravardhana or the north Bengal.⁶² As there is no historical evidence that the janapada of Tāmrālipta or the south-west Bengal became free from Gupta yoke during this period, it may be presumed that Tāmrālipta along with other janapadas of Bengal remained as a part of Gupta empire till the middle of the 6th century A.D.⁶³

Of course there is evidence that since the beginning of the 6th century the foundation of the Gupta empire became weak especially for two reasons — i) the invasion of the Hunas and ii) the tendency of the provincial governors for independence.

62. Adhikari, (Ed.), op.cit., p. 114

63. Ibid.

One Vainyagupta, a member of the ruling Gupta family ruled independently at the Comilla areas of present Bangladesh (i.e., in east Bengal) at that time as known from the Gunaigarh inscription dated 507/508 A.D.⁶⁴ His vassal Vijayasena who took the title "Maharaja" or "Mahasamanta" is believed to have ruled west Bengal, a part of his master's Kingdom which also included the janapada of Tāmralipta. The name of Vijayasena is found in two inscriptions of the Vaṅga King Mahārājādhirāja Gopachandra found at Kotalipara, Dist. Faridpur (the present Bangladesh) and at Mallasarul, Dist. Burdwan (West Bengal).⁶⁵ Again, after the fall of Vainya gupta as well as of other Gupta rulers, Gopachandra⁶⁶ became the ruler of both east and West Bengal as evident from his Kotālipārā and Mallasarul inscriptions. At that time the Gupta vassal chief Vijayasena had to change his master by taking service under Gopachandra and ruled west Bengal as before as a vassal. The inclusion of Tamralipta within the kingdom of Gopachandra is evident from an indirect inscriptional evidence. An inscription of Gopachandra has been found in the village Jayrampur, Dist. Ballesore, Orissa which suggests the extent of Gopachandra's power on that area. It is unusual for a ruler to extend his power around his centre of rule. So, it is quite

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. "Gopachandra, who probably founded the independent kingdom must have flourished not later than the second quarter of the sixth century A.D."
(Majumdar, R.C., op.cit., p. 43).

reasonable to think that before sending any expedition to Orissa, Gopachandra consolidated his power over the south-west Bengal including Tāmrālipta.

However, Gopachandra was not free from any attack of other rulers. He had to face an attack of the Maukhari ruler of Kanauj who for the time being established his suzerainty in Tāmrālipta janapada or its adjacent areas as known from the Irha inscription where it is recorded that the Maukhariraja Isānvarmā had to compel the inhabitants of Gauda to take shelter near the sea i.e., probably at Tāmrālipta situated at the sea-shore.⁶⁷ But the situation changed very soon and it was Mahasenagupta, a latter Gupta king ruling in Magadha (Circa 550-575 A.D.) who after crushing the Maukhari power established his authority over a vast area of west Bengal including Tāmrālipta.⁶⁸

Gopachandra was succeeded by Dharmāditya who is believed to have maintained the solidarity of the kingdom, though there is no positive evidence of the incorporation of Tāmrālipta within his Kingdom. Dharmāditya was succeeded by Samācharadeva who suffered a defeat at the hands of Kīrtivarman I, the Chalukya king of Vātāpī, whose reign continued upto 597 A.D. or 598 A.D. We learn from the Mahakuta inscription that the Chālukya Kirtivarman claimed to have conquered, among other countries,

67. Adhikary (Ed.), op.cit., p. 116

68. Ibid.

Āṅga, Vaṅga, Kalinga and Magadha.⁶⁹ As the reigns of Gopachandra, Dharmāditya and Samāchāradeva may be placed approximately between 525 and 575 A.D. with the margin of a few years both at the beginning and at the end, it is most likely that Samāchāradeva was defeated by Kīrtivarman. As a result Samāchāradeva had to lose the western possession of Bengal (including Tāmralipta at the onslaught of Kīrtivarmā. However, the hold of Chālukya king on the western part of Bengal) did not continue for a long period as evident from the testimony of Varāhamihira who in his *Bṛihat-Saṃhitā* (6th century A.D.) mentions the name of Tāmralipta as a janapada along with other janapadas.⁷⁰ This throws light on the fact that before the annexation of Tāmralipta janapada by Śaśāṅka (Circa 606/607, 637/638 A.D.) it enjoyed independence for sometime owing to the political turmoil in the last few decades of the 6th or the first decade of the 7th century A.D. However we find a different picture in the Dasakumāracharita of Daṇḍin who is believed to have flourished in the later half of the 6th century A.D. where Dāmralipta or Tāmralipta is mentioned within the kingdom of Suhma.⁷¹

Out of this political turmoil Śaśāṅka established an independent kingdom in west Bengal having its capital at Karnasuvarṇa in 607/608 A.D. which rose into prominence in the Northern India. The close study of three inscriptions found

69. Majumdar, R.C., op.cit., p. 44

70. Ray, N.R., op.cit., p. 141

71. Uchchhavasa, VI, p. 287

in Midnapur district helps us to conclude that the whole of the present Midnapur district along with the northern parts of Orissa was annexed by Śasāṅka.⁷² The political suzerainty of Śasāṅka was not only acknowledged in northern parts of Orissa but also in southern parts of Orissa as known from the Ganjām Inscription.⁷³ Sasanka founded a kingdom of great importance which definitely destroyed the different independent janapadas of Bengal especially of northern and western Bengal including Tamralipta janapada. It is believed that his kingdom in Bengal included Kajaṅgala, Pundravardhana, Karnasuvarṇa and Tamralipta.⁷⁴

After the death of Śasāṅka the political solidarity of Bengal was lost⁷⁵ and the different janapadas became independent as evident from the writings of Huen Tsang who while travelling in Bengal shortly after the death of Śasāṅka mentions besides Kajaṅgala (territory round Rājmahāl) four kingdoms in Bengal

72. Sircar, D.C., Silālekh - Tamrasāsanādir Prasāṅga, pp. 49-61 ; Majumdar, R.C., op.cit., pp. 49-55

73. Adhikari (Ed.), op.cit., p. 117

74. Ibid., p. 118, Ray, N.R., op.cit., pp. 458-459

75. The Ārya Manjusrī Milakalpa, a Buddhist work records :
 "After the death of Soma (Śasāṅka), the Gauda political system (Gauda tantra) was reduced to mutual distrust, raised weapons and mutual jealousy. One (King) for a week, another for a month, then a republican constitution — such will be the daily (condition) of the country on this bank of the Ganges, where houses were built on the ruins of the monasteries. Thereafter Soma's son Manava will last for 8 months." (Jayaswal, K.P., An Imperial History of India in a Sanskrit text, pp.50-51). This description relates the chaos and disunity of Śasāṅka's Kingdom after his death.

proper viz., Pundravardhana, Karnasuvarna, Tamralipti and Samatata.⁷⁶ It is believed by scholars that these different janapadas of Bengal after the death of Sasanka passed into the hands of Harshavardhana.⁷⁷ These scholars accept the statement of Hsuen Tsang who refers only to the capital of each of the janapadas of Bengal but does not say anything of their kings and gives no indication of their political status. Hsuen Tsang's silence about the political status of these territories has led these scholars to think that they were included in the kingdom of Kanauj i.e., of Harshavardhana⁷⁸ probably till the death of Harsha in 646/647 A.D. But Dr. R.C. Majumdar does not agree with the above view⁷⁹ and concludes, after citing some evidence, that "the death of Sasanka was followed by a disruption of his vast dominions and its component parts formed separate independent States. This gave the required opportunity to his life-long enemies, Bhaskarvarman and Harshavardhana,⁸⁰ who conquered, respectively, his former dominions in and outside Bengal."⁸¹ If we accept the view of Dr. Majumdar it may be conjectured that Tamralipta was included within the kingdom of Bhaskarvarman, the ruler of Kamarupa at least for sometime. After the death of Sasanka the annexation of his capital Karnasuvarna by Bhaskarvarman

76. Ray, N.R., op.cit., pp. 458-459; Majumdar, R.C., op.cit., p. 71

77. Basak, R.G., History of North Eastern India, 1967, p. 283; Tripathi, R.S., History of Ancient India, pp. 354, 299, 300

78. Ibid.; Tripathi, R.S., op.cit., p. 300

79. Majumdar, R.C., op.cit., p. 72

80. We are told by Bana that Bhaskarvarman had sought with Harsha, an enduring alliance on equal terms. (Harshacharita, ed. by Cowell and Thomas, p. 212)

81. Majumdar, op.cit., p. 73

is evident from his Nidhanpur plates⁸² issued by him from that place. This is also an indirect evidence in favour of our conclusion.⁸³

The death of Harsha was a turning point in the history of Northern India and the period "which extends roughly from 650 to 750 A.D. was marked at the beginning by political chaos and confusion in Eastern India."⁸⁴ Bengal, a part of Eastern India also suffered from this political chaos and confusion. After the death of Harsha we hear of the activities of two important kings in North Indian politics. They were Yasovarman, the king of Kanauj and Lalitaditya, the king of Kashmir. So far as Bengal is concerned, the defeat and death of the king of Gauda by Yasovarman between 725 and 735 A.D.⁸⁵ and the conquest of Vaṅga with the defeat of its ruler helped Dr. Majumdar to conclude that nearly the whole of modern Bengal passed into his hands.⁸⁶ If we accept this interpretation, Tāmrālipta jānapada also came under the sway of Yasovarman. The reference to the ruler of Gauda by Yasovarman is made in the poetical work Gauda-vāho ('Slaying of the king of Gauda) by his court poet Vākpatirāja.⁸⁷ In the same work we also find that having slain the king of Magadha, Yasovarman proceeded to the

82. Epigraphica Indica, Vol. XII, p. 62

83. Dr. K.K. Das Gupta on the basis of the remarks of earlier scholars about the inclusion of Sasāṅka's Bengal possession by Harshavardhana after the death of Sasāṅka, concludes that Harsha became the ruler of Tāmrālipta-Tamluk till his death in 646/647 A.D. (Adhikari, ed. op.cit., p. 118). But we agree with the hypothesis of Dr. R.C. Majumdar.

84. Majumdar, R.C., op.cit., p. 73

85. Ibid., p. 74

86. Ibid., p. 75

87. Gauda-Vāho, verse, 1194 ed. by Sankar Pandurang Pandit, Bombay, 1887

sea-shore⁸⁸ which may be indicative of the subjugation of Tāmralipta situated on the sea-shore.

However, Yasovarman's supremacy in Bengal was short-lived as he had to suffer defeat at the hands of Lalitāditya of Kashmir before the close of the first half of the eighth century A.D. and probably not long after 736 A.D.⁸⁹ According to Kalhan's account the whole of Northern India right upto Kalinga came under the suzerainty of Lalitāditya. There is no direct evidence in Kalhan's account that Lalitāditya invaded any part of Bengal but two incidents recorded in this work lead one to believe that the Kingdom of Gauda acknowledged his authority.⁹⁰ Most probably as an heir to the Bengal's possession of Yasovarman, Lalitāditya enjoyed overlordship over Bengal which included Tāmralipta. Of course there is neither any direct evidence of the inclusion of Tāmralipta within the kingdom of either Yasovarman or Lalitāditya nor the name of the king who was subjugated by them is recorded either by Vakpatirāja or Kalhan. This suggests that the king of Tāmralipta at that time was not a powerful or a famous king. Most probably either he was a vassal chief of Gauda or of Magadha. Practically since the death of Sasanka till the rise of the Palas the political history of Bengal is characterised by disunity and a state of power politics as evident from our present discussion.

88. Ibid., Verse, 417

89. Majumdar, R.C., op.cit., p. 75

90. Ibid., pp. 75f.

Just before the rise of the Pālas (Circa 750 A.D. onwards) a terrible anarchy overtook Bengal. Might became the right and the law of the jungle prevailed in Gauḍa-Vaṅga. No king could establish order in any part of the country because no king could establish his authority for a long period. The absence of stable government and the anarchy affected the normal life of the people. This state of confusion has been referred to as "Mātsyanyāya"⁹¹ in the Kālimpore Copper plate of Dharmapāla.⁹² This inscription refers to the event in the following couplet :

mātsyanyāyam = apohitum prakritibir = lakshmyāh
 Karam grāhitah//
 śrī-gopāla = iti kshitiśa-sīrasām chūdāmanis
 = tat - sutah /

(Kielhorn translates this passage as follows :

"His son was the crest-jewel of the heads of kings, the glorious Gopāla, whom the people made take the hand of Fortune, to put an end to the practice of fishes.)

In a footnote to the above, Kielhorn adds : "Gopāla was made king by the people to put an end to a lawless state of things in which everyone was the prey of his neighbour." The same scholar also cites authority for his interpretation of the phrase 'mātsya-nyāya'.⁹³

91. It means big fishes eat small ones. This is the nyaya or law of the fishes. That was the condition of Bengal among the human beings just before the rise of the Pālas.

92. Majumdar, R.C., op.cit., p. 95

93. Ibid.,

Tāmrālipta, a janapada of Bengal was not an exception from this general state of confusion of Bengal before the rise of the Pālas. The decline of Tāmrālipta as a flourishing port at that time is evident from the non-occurrence of any reference in literature. Moreover not a single gold or silver coin of this period (from the death of Śaśāṅka to the rise of the Pālas) has yet been found. This evidence leads one to conclude that Tāmrālipta janapada lacked stable government and that its important trading city-port bearing the same name perhaps went to decay due to turmoil.

However, the election of Gopāla as king of Bengal changed the situation and it is believed that he "consolidated his authority over the whole of Bengal"⁹⁴ and this consolidation and establishment of peace and order paved the way for the imperial expansion under his able son Dharmapāla (C. 770-810 A.D.) He was destined to be the greatest king that ever ruled in Bengal and under him Bengal played a great role in North Indian politics. His son Devapāla (C. 810-850 A.D.) was, too, a great king. There is no doubt that during these early Pāla kings (C. 750-850 A.D.) no part of Bengal enjoyed independent status. So Tāmrālipta janapada remained within the kingdom of the early Pāla kings.

After the death of Devapāla, the pala empire lost its glory and was "marked by a steady process of decline and disintegration which reduced the Pālas almost to an insignificant

94. Ibid., p. 100

political power in North India⁹⁵ till the accession of Mahipāla I (C. 988-1038 A.D.). Taking advantage of the weakness of the successors of Devapāla (C. 850-988 A.D.), the Pratihāras, the Chāṇḍellas, the Kālāchuris etc. annexed the different parts of Pāla empire during this period as evident from the inscriptional evidence of the rulers of the aforesaid dynasties.⁹⁶ During this period the political integrity of Bengal was totally lost and Bengal was then divided into many political divisions i.e., janapadas. The reference in Kālāchuri and Chāṇḍella inscriptions to the various component parts of Pāla empire such as Radha, Gauḍa, Aṅga and Vaṅgāla as separate political units may be noted here.⁹⁷ Though the name of Tāmralipta does not occur in these inscriptions, yet its existence as a distinct janapada cannot be ignored. It was then either ruled independently or included within the kingdom of others. This hypothesis may be supported from the literary evidence recorded in the Kāvya - Mīmāṃsā of Rājsekharā who is believed to have flourished in the 9th or 10th century A.D. In this work, the name of Tāmralipta along with other fifteen janapadas of Eastern India occurs.⁹⁸ It suggests that Tāmralipta was ruled independently at the time of Rājsekharā. On the otherhand there are positive inscriptional evidence of

95. Ibid., p. 119

96. Ibid., pp. 119-131.

97. Ibid., p. 126.

98. Ray, N.R., op.cit., pp. 458, 459

the Chāndellas, their rulers Yasovarman and his son Dhāṅga who annexed a greater part of Bengal including Rāḍha.⁹⁹ Again, we find from the Kālāchuri records that their ruler Lakshmanarāja who probably ruled in the third quarter of the 10th century A.D. defeated the king of Vaṅgāla (i.e., Southern and part of Eastern Bengal) and conquered Odra (i.e., Orissa).¹⁰⁰ This is suggestive enough and "it is very probable that he advanced through Orissa to the deltaic coast of Bengal".¹⁰¹ Both the inscriptional evidence of the Chāndellas and the Kālāchuris also throws light that however, temporary the possession might be, Tāmrālipta came under their dominions either as an independent janapada or as a part of either Rāḍha or Gauda.

Besides these powers, the Pālas had to suffer at the hands of the Kambojas, a hill-tribe of the North who captured Western and Northern Bengal from the Pālas.¹⁰² It is believed that the whole of the South West Bengal including Tāmrālipta was ruled by the Kamboja rulers Rājyapāla, Nārāyaṅpāla and Neṅgāpāla.¹⁰³ The Idra copper-plate grant found at Balesore District of Orissa throws light on this point. The Kamboj-Pāla kingdom in South West Bengal continued for about half a century and we do not have any

99. Majumdar, R.C., op.cit., p. 125

100. Ibid., pp. 125-126

101. Ibid., p. 126

102. "The theory of a Kamboja invasion is not supported by any positive evidence, and appears to be highly improbable."
(Ibid., p. 127)

103. "If we identify Rājyapāla of the Idra plate with the Pāla King Rājyapāla, we must hold that there was a partition of the Pāla kingdom after his death between two branches of the Pāla family. If we do not accept this identification, the most reasonable view would be to hold that Rājyapāla, an

positive evidence how this dynasty had lost its hold in that area. Possibly the Kambojas began to rule in that area during the reign of Vīgrahapāla II (c. 960-988 A.D.).¹⁰⁴ Historians are at a controversy about the Kamboja dynasty.

Though during the reign of Mahipāla I (c. 988-1038 A.D.), the Pāla glory was restored to some extent, yet his reign was marked by the invasion of Rājendra Chola (c. 1021-1023 A.D.). We are told in the Tirumalai inscription¹⁰⁵ that Rājendra Chola I subjugated Odd-Vishaya (Orissa), Kosalainadu (South Kosala), Dharmapāla of Tandabhuti (Dandabhukti, probably the district of Balesore and a portion of Midnapore), Ranāsūra of Takkanaladam (South Rādha), Govindachandra of Vaṅgaladeśa (Eastern Bengal), Mahipāla, the Pāla ruler and Uttiraladam (North Rādha). This suggests that Dandabhukti, South Rādha, Vaṅga and North Rādha were ruled by different rulers and these were not restored to the Pāla empire by Mahipāla I. For our purpose it is to be noted that during this period Tamralipta janapada lost its independence and that it was included within the kingdom of Dandabhukti or South Rādha.

The internal disruption and foreign invasions led to the collapse of the Pāla kingdom and the Sena family, that ruled

ambitious and powerful Kamboja chief, perhaps a dignitary or high official under the Pālas, had taken advantage of the weakness of the Pāla kingdom to set up an independent principality which ultimately comprised Western and Northern Bengal." (Ibid., p. 127)

104. Adhikari, I. (Ed.), op.cit., pp. 122-123; Maiti, p., op.cit., p. 510

105. Epigraphica Indica, Vol. IX, pp. 229-233

Bengal after the Palas, appears from their official records to have originally belonged to Karnāta in South India. This family might also have come in the wake of foreign invasions and established their power in some parts of Rādha. Subsequently one of the members of this family named Vijayasena (C. 1095-1158 A.D.) who must have begun his career as a chief, laid "the foundation of the greatness of his family by conquering nearly the whole of Bengal".¹⁰⁶ The supremacy of the Senas in Bengal continued during the reigns of Vallālasena (C. 1158-1179) and Lakshmanasena (C. 1179-1207). Thus it may safely be concluded that during the reigns of three Sena kings — Vijayasena, Vallālasena and Lakshmanasena — Tāmrālipta along with other ancient political divisions of Bengal came under their rule. After Lakshmanasena practically the consolidation of the Sena power throughout Bengal was lost and the successors of Lakshmanasena ruled for some time in Eastern and Southern Bengal as known from their records.¹⁰⁷ During the last years of Lakshmanasena two independent kingdoms grow up in Bengal and some time about 1202 Bengal was invaded by Muslims under the leadership of Muhammad Bakhtyār Khilji as recorded in Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri. Thus ended the ancient period of Bengal history.

Besides the references cited above in course of our discussion about the political history of ancient Tāmrālipta in particular and Bengal in general, many Purānas viz.,

106. Majumdar, R.C, op.cit., p. 224

107. Ibid., p. 236

Markandeya Purāna, Matsya Purāna, Vishnu-Purāna, Vāyu-Purāna, Padma-Purāna and Vāmana-Purāna which had been written in different times of the ancient period, refer to Tāmrālipta as a distinct territory of janapada of Eastern India. Most of these Purānas mention the people of Tāmrālipta in course of mentioning the people of eastern countries.¹⁰⁸

Thus from our survey it is clear that in ancient period Tāmrālipta was either ruled independantly or included within the kingdoms of others. As there is no mention of the name of any king who ruled in that janapada, it may thus be conjectured that the janapada or kingdom of Tāmrālipta never rose into prominence in Bengal politics. It was a small kingdom.

108. For details see the research paper of Samenta, S., in Panskura Benamali College Patrika, 1964-65, pp. 10-11.