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Emotional Geographies of Archaeological Spaces:  
Examining an Alternative Hypothesis on the  
Capital of Ancient Bengal

*Biswajit Roy, Sanjoy Kumar Sadhukhan, & Premangshu Chakrabarty*



# **Emotional Geographies of Archaeological Spaces: Examining an Alternative Hypothesis on the Capital of Ancient Bengal**

*Biswajit Roy<sup>1</sup>, Sanjoy Kumar Sadhukhan<sup>2</sup>, and Premangshu Chakrabarty<sup>3</sup>*

## **Abstract**

Geography of the past, i.e., Historical Geography, has not been given proper emphasis on solving locational disputes until satellite image processing has provided the keys for reconstructing past landscapes. Some of the eminent historians have raised controversy about the recognition of Nabadwip as the ancient capital of Bengal. Under the paradigm of spatial organization in geography, it is against the laws of location from the standpoint of the non-availability of epigraphic and archaeological evidences as well as the accessibility and connectivity aspects of the past. Adopting the methodology of triangulation of all available conventional historical geographic data sources with the application of geo-informatics, this paper puts forward an alternative hypothesis on the location of ‘the city of Nadiyah.’ The route by Muhammad Bakhtyar Khilji, who invaded the city at the beginning of the 13th century A.D., has been mapped for the perusal of archaeologists and historians along with the river route of Lakshman Sena, who left the city, in connection with presenting the alternative location. The retreat of the Hindu King is a subject of the emotional geography of the past for which Debalgarh, the fort settlement of Nadia might be a place of Dark Tourism with its archaeological remains.

**Key Words:** *Landscape, Spatial, Geo informatics, Archaeological, Dark Tourism.*

## **Introduction:**

Emotions associated with a place are more than just feelings inspired and cultivated by history and folklore. The cultural and ideological hearts usually evoke strong feelings of reverence with a sense of nostalgia that leads to the preservation of significant architectural relics (Jackson & Rogar, 1983: 94-107), otherwise depleted due to ignorance of the community. It is ethno-archaeology that provides arguments to explain past activity from character, arrangement, and interrelations of place and past events, and emotional geography is one that charts the sensory and affective

qualities of a place (Kearney & Bradley, 2009: 77-94). Recognizing emotion is highly relevant to geography's engagement with heritage while objecting is to explore the centrality of emotion in recognizing and validating the relationships to place (Ey. et al., 2017: 153-168). Debalgarh (23°09' N, 88°39'30" E) is an archaeological space located in the Nadia district of West Bengal, India (Fig:1), which represents the interconnectedness of people to place through historical and folkloristic threads of connection.

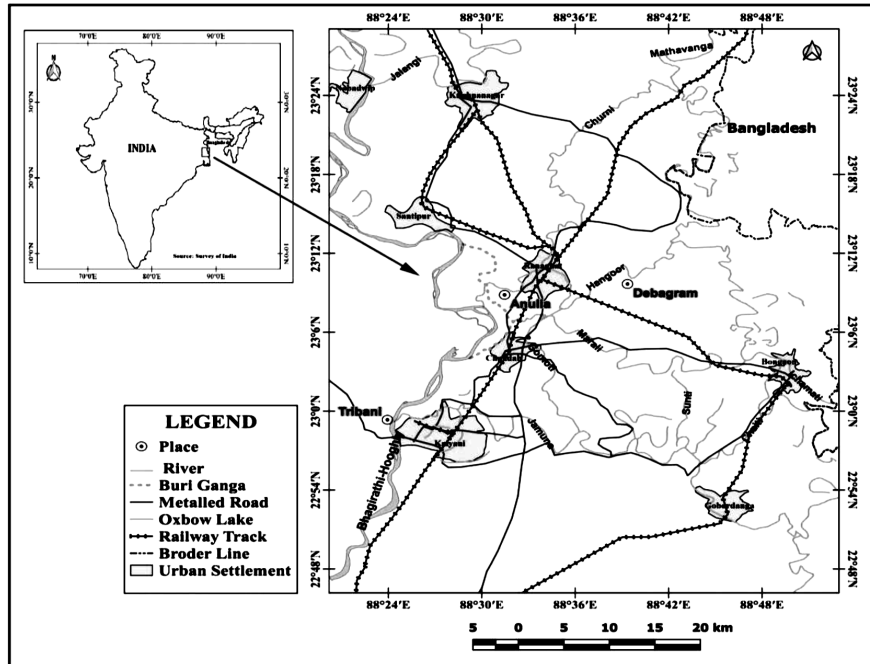


Figure 1: Location map of the study area  
(Source: Prepared by the Authors using QGIS 3.22)

Reconnecting with Your Culture (RWYC) is a worldwide mission recognizing attributes of heritage as the vital force of place-making. Heritage of Debalgarh illustrates a holistic complex and interdependent mix of historical-archaeological-folkloristic symbiosis that develops a unique identity of the place in the cultural landscape. Such uniqueness of the place creates new opportunities from a tourism perspective for various emotional interfaces and imitations that harness socio-spatial networking and historic-spatial personality (Martin, 2005). Debalgarh has the capacity to foster emotion in the place, raising collective sentiment for its protection and development. Such emotions are more than just feelings, and emotional geographies conceive emotion as a

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physical response consisting of some level of conscious awareness of history and heritage. Place attachment is a reverential and compassionate connection developed between a person and space as a synthesis of land and people in the mindscape by emphasizing connection and connectedness. The continuity of civilization in the place is evident from discrete archaeological findings by local people engaged in primary activities from which emotion emerges among the locals, which is a state of consequences on heritage in this respect that ensures human enlightenment with powerful cultural places.

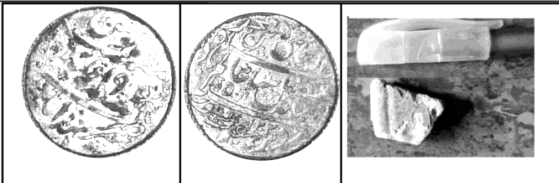
| Picture of Evidences                                                                | Historical age                                        | Archaeological evidences and features                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | Pre Gupta                                             | Pot shards, pottery                                                                                                          |
|    | Gupta Period                                          | Gold Coin of Sumudra Gupta, Pottery, terracotta beads, terracotta beads with Bramhi inscriptions.                            |
|   | Post Gupta (8 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> Century) | Silver Coin (Sahi-jital) of Sri Sthalapatidev, black slipped pottery, architectural materials and brick with floral motif.   |
|  | Pala Sena Period                                      | Blackened slipped pottery, terracotta beads, terracotta seals, architectural materials, stone sculptures, and metal objects. |
|  | Islamic Period                                        | Silver coin, laminated bricks, and slipped pottery                                                                           |

Table 1: Evidence of Early Civilization  
(Source: Prepared by Authors during field survey, 2022-23)

Debalgarh archaeological space was enlisted in the present name Debagram by the Britishers while enlisting archaeological sites of Bengal (Mukherjee, 2013: 15-29) for the presence of ruins of temples associated with a broken foot structure. Due to negligence and unawareness, the temples have been fully depleted, and only a tower of the fort, among many such previously, still exists within a protected forest. It is from collective emotions combined with logic citing historical evidence that a hypothesis has emerged identifying the place where the ancient capital of Bengal was invaded by Muslim intruders at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D. In fact, the current examination of affect and emotion recognizing a dualism within geography has stemmed from the humanistic geographies of the 1970s and 1980s (Finlayson, 2012:1763-1778). There is a deficiency of research on the emotion and effect of such archaeological spaces, and the present research is an attempt to contribute in this respect by recognizing the potency of the Debalgarh-Anulia site. It is noteworthy to mention that the Anulia (23°09'N, 88°31'E) is the place (15 km west of Debalgarh on the bank of river Churni) from where the copper plate inscription of Lakshman Sena was discovered in the year 1898 (Sarker, 1943: 5). Lakshmana Sena was the king (1178-1206 A.D ) who fled from his capital city to save himself from the attack of Mohammedan king Bakhtiyar Khilji, who might had come to Bengal from Bkahtiyarpur (the settlement named after him) of Bihar by land route, which is also a geographical puzzle to solve.

### **Background of the Study:**

The identification of the capital of Lakshman Sena in South Bengal, which was the place of attack by the Muslim invaders in South Bengal at the beginning of the 13th century AD, is still considered a research gap in the historical geography of ancient Bengal. It is generally accepted that in the year 1201 (Roy, 1980: 267) or in the year 1202 (Majumder, 1971: 227), Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khilji invaded the 'city of Nadiyah' and commenced Sultanate reign over part of Bengal. The spatial location of the city of Nadiyah is still a matter of dispute; instead, several historians (Bandyopadhyay, 1981: 288-289; Roy, 1980: 267 and Chowdhury, 2004:51) have identified Nudhiya with Nabadwip, a historical town of Nadia district in West Bengal. Neither any epigraphic nor archaeological evidence, however, could be produced to date in the context, nor does any literary record match such a claim. There are some scholars who were against identifying Nabadwip as the capital of the Sena dynasty and examined the alternative location, namely:

1. Ramaprasad Chanda, (1912, 'Gour Rajamala')
2. Akshay Kumar Maitra, (1912, 'Gour Rajamala')
3. Jadunath Sarkar, (1943, 'History of Bengal')

4. Rakhal Das Bandyopadhyay, (1981, 'Banglar Itihash')
5. Anirudhha Roy, (1999, 'Modhyajuger Bharatiya Sahar')
6. Kanailal Ghosh (2013, Sri Gouranga Abirbhav Bhumi: Reprint)

Under such circumstances, an attempt has been made by the authors of this research article to review critically the location of the ancient 'City of Nadiyah' or the ancient capital of Bengal, that was invaded by Bakhtyar Khilji in the beginning of 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D. with the following objectives:

- I) To identify and map the route of advancement of Bakhtiyar Khilji from an accessibility perspective to the capital of the Sena dynasty in ancient Bengal.
- II) To reappraise the drainage network that enabled the Sena king to leave the capital to reach East Bengal (present Bangladesh) instead of being captured by the Islamic invaders.

### **Materials and Methods:**

To address the above objectives, especially for developing the route maps Geographical Information System (GIS) has been utilized. Digital cartography has been applied to show the flee path of Lakshman Sena in order to establish the alternative hypothesis on the location of the ancient capital of Bengal in the Sena dynasty. For the present study, the following are the useful materials:

- i) **Historiographic data:** Tabaquat-I-Nasiri written by Minhaj-ud-din in the year 1256, translated by H. G. Raverty (1873: 557-558); "Pavandutam," a masterpiece of Sanskrit literature contributed by Dhoyi, the court poet of Laksman Sena in the 12<sup>th</sup> century; "Ramacharitam" by Sandhyakar Nandi edited by Sri Ayodhyanath Bidyabinod (1936:45); are among the major data sources from the available literature.
- ii) **Epigraphic data:** The copper plate of Laksman Sena was discovered from Anulia (Inscription of Bengal by Nani Gopal Majumder, 1929 and Indian Epigraphy by D.C. Sircar, 2017).
- iii) **Toponymic data:** The place names are vital sources in reconstructing the image of the past places. For the present study, the following names are noteworthy (Table: 2).

| Place Name                                | Origin                       | Significance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Anulia<br>(23°09'N,<br>88°31'E)           | Analgram                     | Analgram is a name of Buddhist influence; the place was later under the rule of the Sena dynasty, as evident from the presence of a copper plate inscription of Laksman Sena there.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Debgram<br>(23°09'N,<br>88°39'30"E)       | Debgram/ Debal<br>rajar garh | Debagram has been identified as a provincial capital of Bikramraj, who helped Pala king Rampala (1072-1126 A.D) against the Kaivartya revolt (Basu, 1914: 198-199).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Briddhakol<br>(23°08'45"N,<br>88°31'40"E) | Budhhakol                    | Near Anulia, Budhhakol is still an ancient settlement by the side of the paleochannel of river Ganga from where several artefacts during Pala-Sena period have been discovered.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Rajar Math<br>(23°03'N,<br>88°40'15"E)    | Rajar Math                   | Rajar Math is situated in between Anulia and Debgram by the side of the paleochannel of river Marali featured with several large mounds and huge architectural residuals. This site played an important node in the riverine economy and socio-cultural landscape during the Pala-Sena period. Later on, Nadia King Raghabh Ray made a fortified construction during the early 17 <sup>th</sup> century (Roy, 2021:91-113) |
| Jahaj Ghata<br>(23°03'N,<br>88°30"E)      | River Anchor                 | A place of ferry that bears an important spatial location where the ancient Devpala road from the fort of Debalgarh connects the ferry over the ancient flow of river Ganga.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

**iv) Historical data:** Among the eminent historians, the contradictions of the following are useful for the present study (Table: 3).

| Historian/ Geographer                                                                                 | Opinion in synopsis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Monmohon Chakraborty (1908, Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal)                                     | Vijaypur, the capital of Suhma, is probably another name for 'Nadiyah', which has been mentioned as the seat of government of Laksman Sena, at the time it was sacked by Bakhtiyar Khilji.                                                                                           |
| Nalinikanta Bhatyashali (1909, Presidential Lecture, XXI Annual conference, Bangiya Sahitya Sammilan) | Questions have been raised on the route of Bakhtiyar Khilji as described briefly in the text of Tabaquat-I-Nasiri, along with the location of Nabadwip as the ancient capital of Sena king so far as the past course of river Ganga doesn't match with the present spatial location. |

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|                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ramaprasad Chanda, (1912, 'Gour Rajamala')                                                 | Bijay Nagar, some 10 mile west of Rampur- Boalia town of Rajshahi District (present in Bangladesh) is the capital of Laksman Sena. The capital Vijaypur described by Dhoyi has also been identified with this site.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Akshay Kumar Maitra, (1912, 'Gour Rajamala')                                               | Nabadwip is not Bijaypur. The ancient capital of Laksman Sena 'Bijaynagar' was in Debpara village under Godagari police station, Rajshahi district (present in Bangladesh).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Jadunath Sarkar, (1943, 'History of Bengal')                                               | Nabadwip was never the permanent capital of the Sena kings. Merely, it was a holy place on the bank of the river Ganga. But, when Bakhtiyar attacked, King Lakshman Sena stayed there.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Ramesh Ch. Majumder, (1971, 'History of Ancient Bengal')                                   | Same as Jadunath Sarkar.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Nihar Ranjan Roy, (1980, 'Bangalir Itihash: Adi parba')                                    | Nabadwip was the capital of Sena king Laksman Sena and Bhakhtiyar attacked the city.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Rakhal Das Bandyopadhyay, 1981, 'Banglar Itihash'                                          | There is no evidence that Nabadwip was the capital of Sena Kings.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Anirudhha Roy, (1999, 'Modhyajuger Bharatiya Sahar')                                       | The city of Nadiyah was a notable centre of trade and commerce as Bakhtiyar entered in the disguise of a horse trader, and no one noticed. But Nabadwip was never a prominent town and trade centre at that time. Nabadwip was not the capital and the place of attack.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Jogeswar Chowdhury, (2004, 'Ekti Bismrita Rajdhani Bijaypur: Nadiyah: Nabadwip')           | Nabadwip was the capital Bijaypur of Sena king Lakshman Sena and Bhakhtiyar attacked the city. Ballalhipi at Bamunpukur, Mayapur, is the administrative center.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Abul kalam Mohammad Zakaria, (2007, 'Tabqat-I-Nasiri after Minhaz-I-siraj)                 | Nabadwip was not the Sena capital and place of invasion by Bakhtiyar Khilji but in the village Naodah of Rajshahi district (present in Bangladesh).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Biswajit Roy, (2021, 2023), 'Debalgarh-Anulia Protnokhetto: Harano ek Rajdhanir Sondhane'. | There is no evidence that Nabadwip was the capital of Sena Kings. From the text of Pabandutam by Dhoyi it is evident that the capital Bijaypur of Sena king Lakshman Sena was much nearer to Tribeni. The text Tabaqat-I-Nasiri represents the city of Nadiyah as a well-protected fortified city where external trade and commerce were traditional. The spatial location and recovered archaeological evidence from the Debalgarh archaeological site suggest its potential as the ancient capital of Sena king Lakshman Sena. |

Source: Literature review by the authors.

In the study of historical geographies, archaeological and historical data are vital. Literature triangulation is made for deriving historical data on the location of the ‘The City of Nadiyah,’ the capital of Sena kings. Minhaj-ud-din in *Tabaqat-I-Nasiri* (1256) pointed out that in disguise of horse merchants, Muhammad Bakhtyar, along with not more than eighteen associates riding horses, reached the entrance of the palace of the Sena king, without any confrontation regarding which Majumder (1971) expressed doubt with the following words ‘It is difficult to believe that even the most ordinary precautions were taken to defend the capital city, especially when the king himself was staying there.’ Nabadwip has been identified as the ancient religious centre, but no evidence is there that Nabadwip was ever the permanent capital of the Sena kings rather merely a holy place on the banks of the Ganges, where pilgrims took up their residence for religious belief (Sarkar, 1943:5).

‘*Tabaqat- I- Nasiri*’ (1206 AD) by Minhaj- ud- din is the only detailed account regarding the invasion of Bakhtyar Khilji during the reign of Sena king Laksman Sena (described as *Rae Lakshmaniah* by Minhaj). There is no mention of Nabadwip as the ‘city of Nudiyah’ or as the capital of the Sena king. After conquering Bihar, Bakhtyar attacked Bengal. It is known that he marched from Bihar with his army and suddenly appeared before the ‘city of Nudiyah’. Minhaj seems too short and inappropriate particularly in this section of narration describing the route. Bakhtiyar himself arrived desperately with only eighteen soldiers in the disguise of horsemen, the rest of the soldiers were following behind him. Arriving at the main entrance of the city, Bakhtyar did not clash with anyone. All the town people thought of them as foreign traders with materials and horses as foreign trade was a common practice there. Only after reaching the kings palace, conflict began (Raverty, 1873: 557-558). The invasion, headed by Khilji, reached up to the palace of the king through the main gate without any military confrontations is quite surprising.

It was probably because the city of Nadiyah was a wealthy city and a major center of trade and commerce, where merchants from far and wide used to come to trade with their merchandise. Khilji surely took advantage of this disguise, and no attention was given to these horse sellers. However, there is no reference that Nabadwip was ever such a famous trade center of Bengal during the Sena period or even before (Roy, 1999: 131), where the horse-selling merchants could get access without the curiosity of the people of the town.

Now, the pertinent question arises: if Nabadwip was not the Sena capital and there was no conflict between Khilji and Lakshman Sena, then where did it happen? What is the location of the city of Nadiyah? Where might be the famous centre of trade and commerce and capital of Sena in South Bengal? The famous Dutakavya literature ‘*Pavandutam*’ by *Dhoyi*, the court poet of King Lakshman Sena in the 12th century A.D, is considered a great source of knowledge regarding the

location of Sena capital '*Vijayapura*' in South Bengal. Vijayapura might be one of the capitals of Laksmanasena, like his other capitals, such as Lakshanabhati and Vikrampur (Chakraborty, 1908: 285).

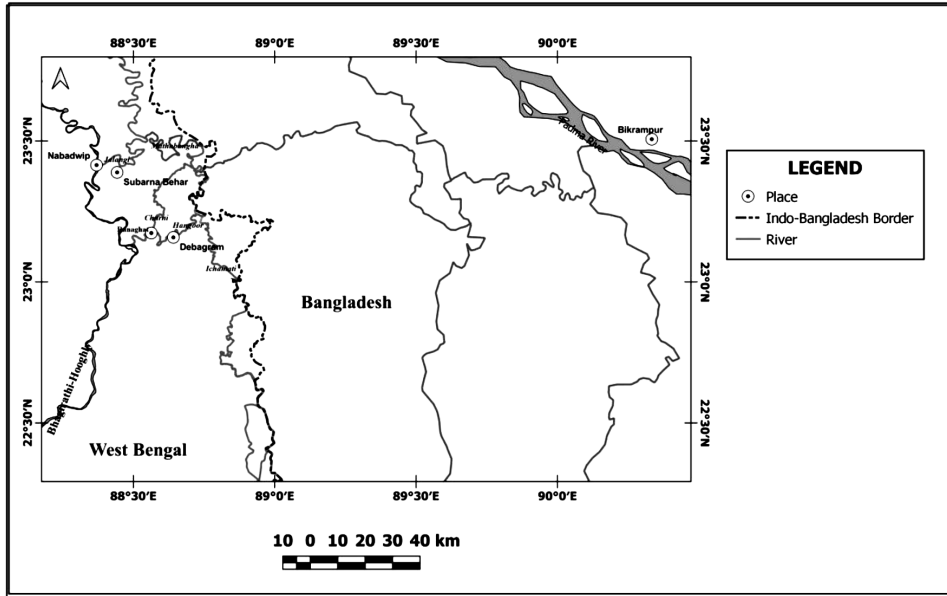


Fig:2: River route of Lakshman Sena fleeing from his capital  
(Source: Prepared by authors using QGIS 3.22)

Dhoyi has referred to Vijayapura (Chakraborty, 1926) as an administrative capital and military headquarters of great importance. Veteran historians consider Vijayapura to be the same as the City of Nadiyah (Chakraborty, 1926: 2-26; Majumder, 1971:227). On the other hand, some eminent historians identify it with Vijaynagar, about ten miles to the west of Rampur-Boalia, the headquarters of the Rajshahi district, Bangladesh (Chanda, 1912 and Maitra, 1912: 25). But since the Sena capital, as well as the military, headquarter Vijayapura is described very near the Tribeni by Dhoyi, and the city of Nadiyah appears as a traditional commercial center near a port location as well, none of the above assumptions can be regarded as the Sena capital Vijayapura.

The location of the Debalgarh site near Tribeni, archaeological findings related to centuries-old practices of trade and commerce based on the riverine network, and the residual the fort with huge protective measures boost the hypothesis that the site was the ancient Sena capital Vijayapura. The residual of the extensive palace made of decorative sandstone, Laterite blocks, and bricks, surrounded by rampart and entrenchment, evidently proves the existence of a past city

of great importance.

### **The Route of Khilji to the City of Nadiyah:**

The route of Khilji to 'the City of Nadiyah' is another research problem for historical geography. Minhaj has represented an incomplete and surprisingly short description of the route of the journey. Different probable routes of Bakhtyar have been traced by different historians for coming to the City of Nadiyah from Bihar. Khilji must have considered any one of the following three routes to reach the City of Nadiyah.

- i. The first route is from Bihar, via Bhagalpur and Munger, crossing the Ganges and reaching 'Gour.' From there, it is possible to cross the Ganges again and reach the east bank to Nadiyah city.
- ii. The second route stretches between the forest-covered plateau provinces of Chhotanagpur and Birbhum. Presently it is the road along the present Rampurhat- Bolpur Santiniketan railway line.
- iii. In the case of the third route, one can reach the left side of the Ganges by taking the route from Sahibganj. Marching along the west bank of the Ganges (Bandopadhyay, 1981:288-289). The field survey, conducted in the year 2021-22, in search of the itinerary of Bakhtiyar seems quite consistent with the third route depicted.

The most common land route to Bengal from Bihar and Northern India is the Grand Trunk Road, which has been in use since the Maurian period. This ancient land route is also considered one of the oldest roads in the world. The road extends from east Bengal through Delhi, North India, and Northwest frontier provinces to Kabul. It seems quite impossible for a Turkish warrior like Khilji to enter ancient India without this land route. Most probably, this was the reason why the route was chosen to enter the 'City of Nadiyah' from Bihar; he might have proceeded along the Grand Trunk road to the western bank of Ganga at Tribeni near Adi-Saptagrama.

As it was an ancient and widely used road, the arrival of Khilji's forces in this way might upset the military geographical conceptions of Lakshman Sena. It is also possible that the Sena military concentration was waiting for the advancement of Khilji's forces on the way across the '*Kajangala*' at Chhotanagpur. Probably, Khilji marched with the advanced force of selected warriors, leaving the main force near Adisaptagrama -Tribeni. The camping site was at the bank of Saraswati and the tomb of Zafar Khan Gazi, a Muslim religious site of the antiquity of the early

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13th century, which is evidence of an Islamic base in the area where the main troops camped. He advanced through the west bank of the Ganges near the Sukhsagar- Chakdaha region, as there was ferry as evident toponymic data available. The place name ‘Jahaj ghata’ (literally, the port for the ships), bears the evidence of the ancient Ganga ferry crossing. Just on the other side of this location, an ancient road named ‘Devpala road’ leads straight to the ruined fort of the Debalgarh, where the hypothesis of its presence as the Sena capital- the City of Nadiyah has been strengthened. Devpala was a legendary King of the Pala dynasty in Bengal who ruled the region before the rise of Senas.

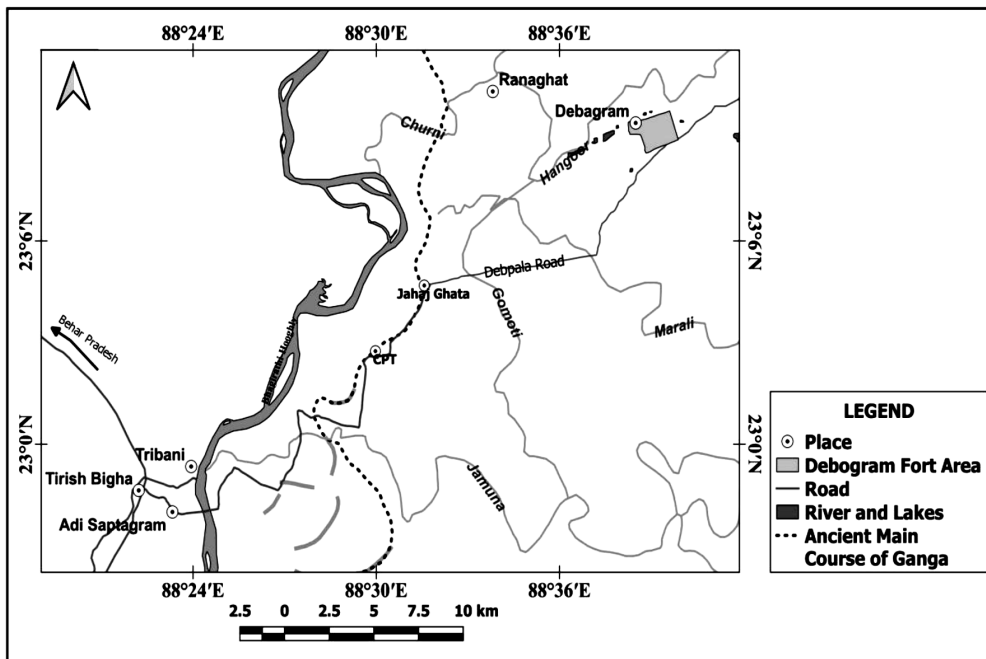


Fig: 3: Route of Bakhtiyar Khilji to the City of Nadiyah  
(Source: Prepared by authors using QGIS 3.22)

The hypothesis on Nabadwip as the capital of Lakshman Sena is largely based on the story of his escape via river route (Fig: 3), but the study on the past course of rivers, as evident from paleochannel analysis, does not support this hypothesis. The proponent of the hypothesis probably was concerned only with the present course of the river that they found in Survey of India maps, which do not bear the imprints of landscape change, particularly due to the 1865 earthquake. Ancient Nabadwip was located on the eastern bank of river Bhagirathi, while present Nabadwip town is located on the western bank. The past flow of the mighty Bhagirathi is now a paleochannel named Maraganga, flowing west of the eastern railway line, joining Kalna and Katwa. The present town is situated on the flow path of a dried-up river locally called Alakananda, from which it is evident that there might be the junction of two major rivers in the place as found today where Bhagirathi, the lower course of (Ganga), meets Jalangi. There exists a water body (part of paleochannel) named Alakananda bills, supporting the hypothesis that a river once flowed bearing the name Alakananda in the region. A religious structure named Ballalddhibi, protected by the Archaeological Survey of India, bears evidence of activities of the Sena dynasty in the region. From the structural pattern, it seems that it was originally a Buddhist monastery probably converted into a Hindu shrine on the topmost layer (Bandyopadhyay, 2014: 288-289; Mandal, 2021: 45-47). If Nabadwip was attacked by Khilji, this transport layer is very likely not to remain such intact as discovered during excavation.

When Bakhtiyar Khilji attacked and ruined the Sena capital in Bengal (Raverty, 1873), Padma was not the main flow of Ganga. It is only from the 16th century, the main course of Ganga flew through Padma (Mukherjee, 2009 and Rudra, 2019:50-51). Nowhere a description is found on crossing the mighty Ganga by the army of Bakhtiyar Khilji. It is at Devikot on the opposite side of Ganga, where the tomb of Khilji is situated; he camped before his invasion of Tibet. There is a description, however, of his conversion of Lashabati (Sena city) into Lakhnauti (Zakaria, 2007), which lies on the opposite bank of Ganga, considering the origin of Bakhtiyar's journey after destroying the *Mahabihara* (Monastery) of Oudwantapuri. It is evident from such co-incidences that marching of his army from Bakhtiyarpur via the present Delhi road to reach the confluence of Ganga, Jamuna, and Saraswati met is more realistic among the alternatives. In this part, due to the flow regime, the ferry was conducive, and he was probably supported by the local merchants called Subarnabanik, who were deprived and degraded socially by the Sena dynasty; instead, they were rich enough from the business. They acted as a fifth columnist (Sen, 1958), and this internal disruption proved an important factor in the collapse of the Sena rule in Bengal (Majumder, 1971;

Sircar, 1982). With their support, Bakhtiyar reached Debalgarh by the use of Jahajghata, a harbor on the past course of Ganga, and marched through the Devpala road, the ancient path that reached Debalgarh. Probably after ruining Debalgarh, his army marched northward for another Sena city called Lakshanabati, where Bakhtiyar formed his capital, changing the name of the city. Devikot is his next destination towards the north, from where he initiated his invasion of Tibet and where he returned after defeat and was finally killed there by his own men.

Ballal Sena revived Hinduism after the rule of the Pala dynasty in Bengal when Buddhism was the royal religion, and Nabadwip might have been the cultural capital of Senas from which the hypothesis of Lakshman Sena escape from Nabadwip to Bikrampur via the river route was developed. But from the ancient flow path of Jalangi, it appears that it was not suitable for a planned escape route for an eminent war strategist like Lakshman Sena. According to history, Lakshman Sena was a warrior king who won a number of battles from his youth to save the sovereignty of Sena kingdom. It is not possible for a king of such stature to stay in a place without fortification and escape route instead of being aware on advancing Turki troop under notorious Bakhtiyar Khilji. The geographical aspects of river dynamics and the discovery of a fortified structure at Debalgarh, along with the water course network joining Ichhamoti; clearly indicate that it was none but the Bijaynagar, the forgotten capital of ancient Bengal in the Sena dynasty. The residual morphological structure of Debalgarh Fort, which features a high watch tower in four corners and is surrounded by a deep moat, also suggests its applicability of being a military post that might experience the invasion of Bakhtiyar.

## **Conclusion:**

The location associated with the glories of past civilizations as a subject of geographical analysis presents an interesting connection between geography and history of those places not only to enhance the pride and esteem but also to contribute to the economy by the promotion of heritage tourism that relies on emotions. Emotions differentiate them from ordinary spaces; thereby, they become places of tourist interest. Particularly, domestic tourists would be encouraged to visit the place of the alternative hypothesis on the ancient capital of Bengal that could be established for Debalgarh. Archaeological excavation in the Debalgarh-Anulia area is an immediate necessity to address the entire hypothesis in this context. If the outcome is positive, the approaches of Historical Geography would be vital for rewriting a very sensitive part of Bengal's history. It is

the emotion of Bengali people that will drive them to the place for Dark Tourism, and further study could be possible on emotion and affect in heritage management. Archaeological excavation on a large scale with scientific studies on paleo-channels may not only open up the treasures of regional history that could make the community proud but also may contribute to the economy by raising the scope of Dark Tourism since the event of the flee of Hindu king still conceived as a matter of shame. Further research on the archaeological space ensuring community involvement is necessary from heritage protection and capacity-building perspectives. The present study has limitations in analyzing the response of local people by cross-sectional analysis of emotions. Such limitations could be addressed by initiating multidisciplinary research focussing on achieving sustainable development goals.

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#### **Bio Profile of the Author's:**

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor of Geography, Pijush Kanti Mukherjee Mahavidyalaya, Alipurduar, West Bengal

<sup>2</sup>Guest Faculty, Dept. of Geography, Kanyashree University, Krishnanagar, Nadia.

<sup>3</sup>Professor, Dept. of Geography, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, West Bengal

**Email:** dr.pramangshunadia@gmail.com



