

Emergence of Bangladesh

From Ancient Periods to Arrival of
Islam (up to 1204) : Locating Bengal

What is 'Bengal'?

Rather than being a geographically defined region, Bengal represented a conceptual space oriented towards the lands surrounding the rivers, particularly the Ganges, that flowed towards the Bay of Bengal



Die Länder Asie nach ihrer gelegenheit bis in India werden in dieser Tafel verzeichnet.



German cartographer Sebastian Munster drew this first printed map of Asian continent.

Bengal can be found near the river Ganges

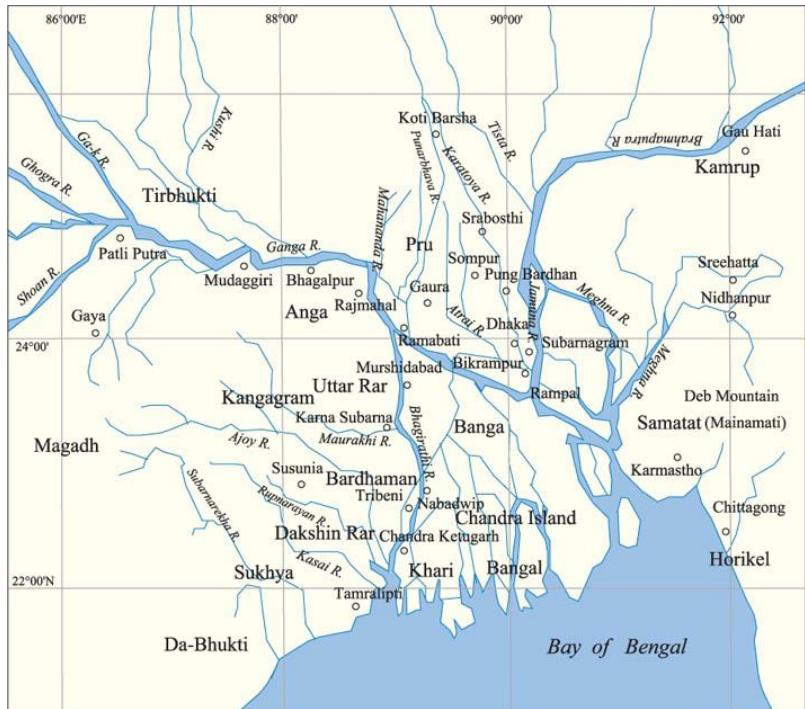
732 DESCRIPTIO BENGALE.



First printed European [map](#) with Bengal as its title.

It is taken from the miniature atlas "Tabularum Geographicarum Contractarum" by the Flemish cartographer Petrus Betrius.

Ancient Bengal



Bengal has been a place for continuous human settlement because of its **Geography and Climate**. The **rivers** are the backbone of Bengal Delta that help to yield **high crop productivity** and promoted human settlement.

A place which ensures food-security always attracts people. By 2000 BCE, people started to settle around **rivers and canals** of this delta and practiced agriculture. It was around 1000 BCE, the growth of urban **settlements** i.e. the **Mahajanapadas** are found.

Geographical and political identities

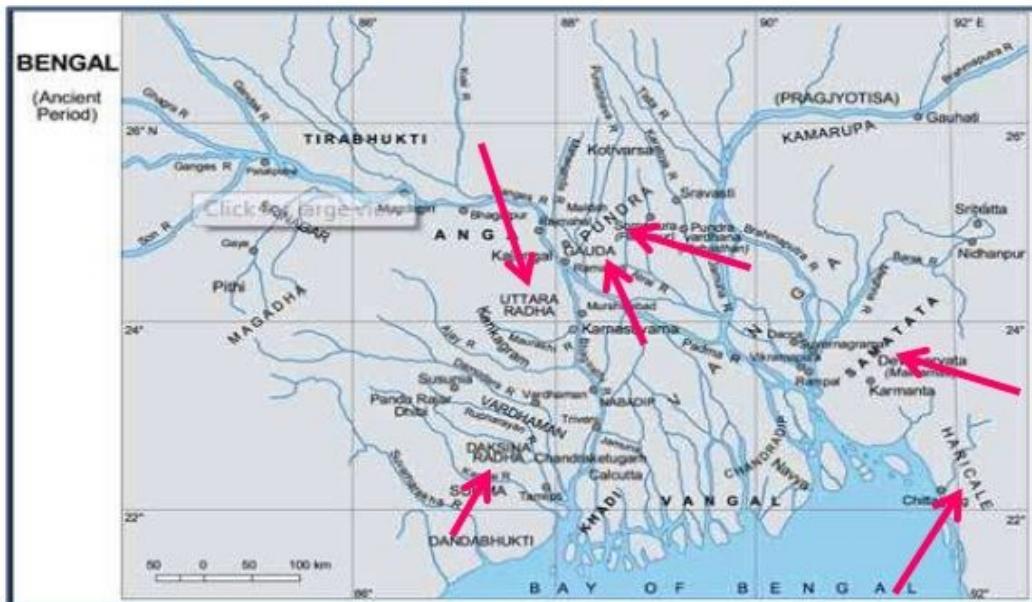
Features :

- Changing course
- Fertility and agriculture
- Natural disasters

Implications:

- Fragmented political identities
- Strategic trade route
- Defensive issues

Ancient Bengal



Wari- Bateshwar

Situated in Narsingdi, dating back to approximately 2450 years, this was the settlement of one of the ancient Mahajanapadas, an important trading centre and a river port

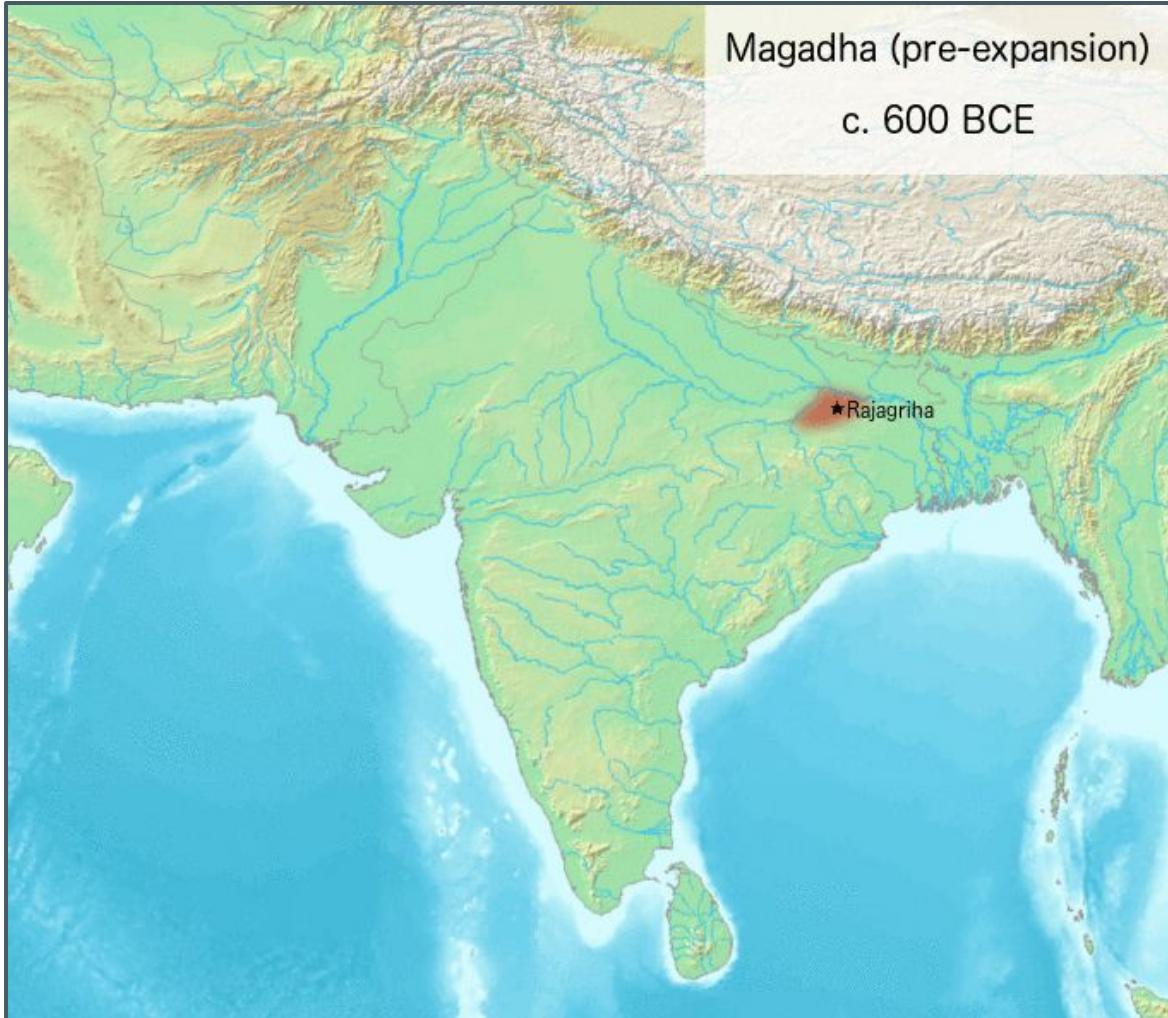


Bengal under the Mauryans

The Mauryans unified most parts of the Indian subcontinent.

During this time, the Mauryans built the Grand Trunk Road which facilitated the trade and attracted people from around the globe.

Emperor Asoka played an important role by sponsoring Buddhism. He sent missionaries, bureaucrats and trades in various places with Buddhist artifacts & doctrine. This diplomatic move connected Bengal with other regions of the subcontinent and especially south-east Asia.



Bengal under the Guptas

Bengal was an important province of the Guptas.

During this time, the Guptas enforced well-organized administrative system.

This era witnessed the development of art and sculpture.

This is the second time after the Mauryans Bengal became part of and connected to the other parts of Indian subcontinent under one administration



Local rulers from Bengal- the Pala, Sena, Deva, Chandra, Verman- helped to establish a strong regional identity of Bengal. They sponsored learning centers, excelled in trade, maintained religious harmony, instrumentalized a welcoming administrative system.

Contributions of the Rulers from Bengal

- Shashanka, the king of Gauda Kingdom, developed the Bengali Calendar - 'Bangabdo'
- The Palas directly sponsored several learning institutions such as Somapura Mahavihara, Nalanda Mahavihara and Vikramshila Mahavihara. They helped to spread Buddhism and Buddhist art in Bengal.
- During this time, Bengali as the language of this land took the central stage. Several Sanskrit and Pali texts were written and translated into Tibetan and Chinese.
- Admixture of Hindu and Buddhist doctrine into the social fabric of Bengal

Somapura Mahavihara established by Dharmapala in 6th century



Shalvan Mahavihara established by Bhavadeva in 8th century



Ancient seat of Learning

Pre-Islamic Bengal experience excellence in knowledge because of the state-sponsored learning centers.

Several scholars from Bengal contributed immensely to the field of knowledge of Philosophy, Science and Arts.



Atish Dipankar was one of the pioneers of Buddhist philosophy. He home is in Bikrampur, commonly known as *Nastik Panditer Bhita*. He was invited by the king of Tibet to teach Buddhism in Tibet. He pioneered the Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism.

King Shashanka

- Modernizing ideology
- Bengal's political assertion
- Cultural identity



Gold Coins during Shashanka's Rule

Palas and Sens

Palas,

mid-8th century to the late 12th century

CE:

- intellectual and spiritual hub
- role in the larger Buddhist world.
- linguistic identity and Bengali consciousness

Sen,

late 11th century to the early 13th

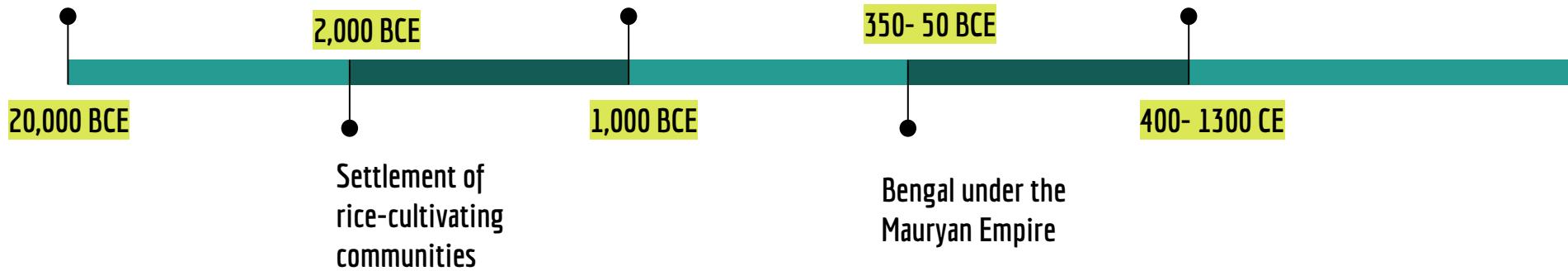
century CE:

- multiple religious traditions
- development of distinct Bengali cultural and artistic expressions
- asserted Bengal's distinct identity

Earliest
evidence of
human
settlement
in Bengal
Delta

Gradual
emergence of
Urban
Settlements

Rulers from the
Guptas, Palas,
Chandras, Devas,
Senas etc. ruled
Bengal.



Bengali Language

Evolution of Bangla Alphabet (Vowels)										
Original Alphabets	Indo- Iranian (Old Bengali BC)	Indo- Aryan (1st century BC)	Deva- Brahmi (4th century AD)	Pan- Brahmi (3rd century AD)	Assamese (4th century AD and Buddhist influence)	Pan- Brahmi (5th-6th century AD)	Assamese (5th century AD)	Deva- Brahmi (7th century AD)	Assamese (7th century AD)	Deva- Brahmi (14th century AD)
অ	କ	ଖ	ଖ	ଖ	ଖ	ଖ	ଖ	ଖ	ଖ	ଖ
ং	କ	କ	କ	କ	କ	କ	କ	କ	କ	କ
ী	-	-	ঃ	ঃ	ঃ	ঃ	ঃ	ঃ	ঃ	ঃ
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ৌ	-	-	ৌ	ৌ	ৌ	ৌ	ৌ	ৌ	ৌ	ৌ
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- Regional
- Tool of Democratization
- Epics Translation
- Literature & culture
- Vaishnavism Teachings
- Spiritual expression
- Communal Harmony

“... in this complex world of multiple and transforming religious identities a new creed, Islam, entered in two separate waves. In the first, reached coastal Bangladesh as a by-product of seaborne trade between the eighth and twelfth centuries”. Secondly, “in the early thirteenth century Islam also reached Bangladesh by land route, this time as the religion of powerful invaders.”

Arrival of Islam in Bengal

- Early Arab contact and trade
- Conquest of Bakhtiyar Khilji
- Sufi missionaries
- Bengal sultanate
- Islamic patronage of rulers and administrators



Bengal fights for autonomy

Baro Bhuiyans:

- Isa Khan (16th cen, Narayanganj)

Afghan rulers for Bengal:

- Daud Khan Kiranni (1572-76,
Bengal sultan/ foe of Akbar)

- ❖ THE RULERS OF BENGAL, REFUSE TO ACCEPT MUGHAL SUPREMACY
- ❖ BENGALI HINDUS AND BENGALI MUSLIMS JOIN TOGETHER TO RESIST THE MUGHALS
- ❖ THE ENTIRE REGION OF BENGAL DOES NOT COME UNDER COMPLETE MUGHAL CONTROL UNTIL 1584/86 AD

PL. II.

INDIA.

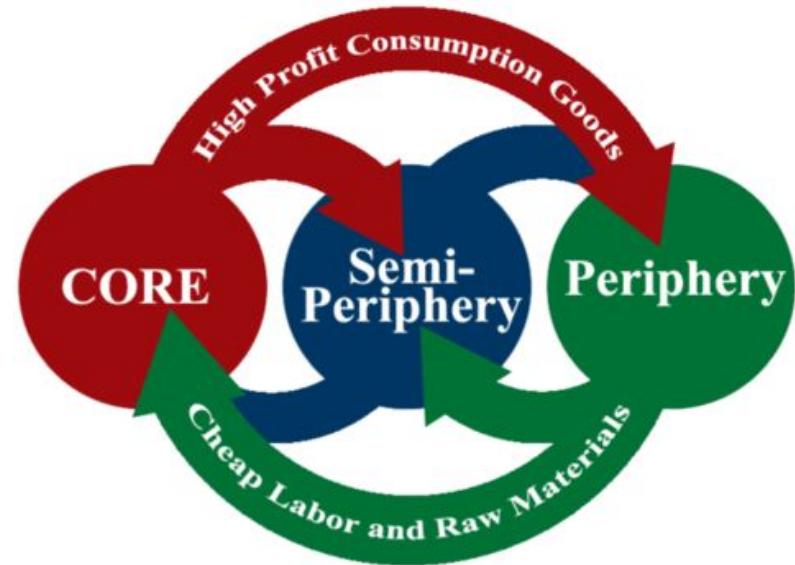


Sipahy.

A native of India, formerly in service.

Immanuel
WALLERSTEIN
WORLD-
SYSTEMS
ANALYSIS

An Introduction



Wallerstein's World System Theory Model

Suggested Readings

Required Reading:

Salahuddin, A. F. (2004). *Bangladesh National Culture and Heritage*. Dhaka : IUB.

Pages: 53-65

Recommended Readings:

Sengupta, N. (2011). *Land of Two Rivers*. India: Penguin Books

Rahim, M. A., Choudhury, A. M., Mahmud, A. B. M. & Islam, S. (2005). *Bangladeshher Etihash (History of Bangladesh)*. Dhaka: Nouruj Kitabistan.



Next Class Preview

**From Origins of Bengal Sultanates to
the Battle of Polashi (1204-1757):
Society, Religion and Politics**