

## ANIMAL (MAMMALS) REPRESENTATION IN SOMAPURA MAHAVIHARA IN SITU TERRACOTTA PLAQUES

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### **Introduction:**

Clay-modeling is a significant artistic illustration of ancient human civilization. Dynamic representation of this art is found in South Asia. Significant clay artifacts were discovered from every archaeological site of Harappa civilization. Terracotta artistry was also found in a number of archaeological sites and ancient structures in Bengal. Rock was not readily available in Bengal while the system of making metal sculpture is complex. So naturally the artists of Bengal were attracted to clay-modeling. The alluvial clay of the Indus and Ganges are suitable for this art. The availability of clay led common people to utilize it fully for making cheap artifacts for domestic use and decoration purposes. This was the reason why this industry flourished in Bengal. Though the industry started for serving everyday needs (like making utensils), it also satisfied the creative desire of artists. For this reason, the tradition of clay-art industry was a mingling of necessity and artistry of the people from the ancient time. In various archaeological sites those clay goods still remain as archetype of creative art, religious symbols and household items. Archaeological excavations have brought this clay art industry in daylight.

The huge amount of terracotta artifacts found in Bengal proves that from the dawn of its civilization, the most common medium of art in Bengal was clay-models. This artistic tradition is seen from early historical age to pre-medieval age. This custom was practiced till mid nineteenth century in some Hindu and Muslim architectures.

Terracotta plaque is the most beautiful form of terracotta art. Usually terracotta plaque was used for decoration of the ancient monuments. In this research we focused on mammal representation in terracotta plaque. The present research concentrates on the terracotta plaques discovered from Paharpur (Somapura) Vihara. At present Paharpur is a village in Badalgachi Upazila of Naogaon district in Bangladesh. This village is situated in the heart of historic Varendra>Barind Track (24°53' N. Lat. and 89°20' E. Long.). It is now well-known and it contains substantial remains of the World Cultural Heritage Somapura Mahavihara. It was built in 8<sup>th</sup> century AD by Dharmapala, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the Pala emperor of Bengal and continued to be a living

Buddhist monastery till at least the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD. In dimension it ranks the 2<sup>nd</sup> position among the historic single unit monastery ever built on the south of the Himalayas.<sup>1</sup> The Somapur Vihara has provided the widest finds of pre-Muslim terracotta art in Bengal. Both in the basement and the first floor walls, there were at least two, and at places three, rows of terracotta plaques. Several thousand terracotta plaques were found in the central temple of this great Vihara of Pala era. Flora and fauna were represented noticeably in these plaques. The artists of Pala era have summed up that era's biodiversity through their clay art creativity.

#### **Statistics of *in Situ* Terracotta Plaques with Mammals in Somapura Mahavihara:**

*In situ* Terracotta plaques were found in the first floor wall of the cruciform central temple of Paharpur. In existing 4 parts of 2 rows each, 487 plaques were found at 23 sections while plaques are missing in the remaining 9 sections. Among these plaques the numbers of flora-fauna plaques are 195 and mammal-represented plaques are 81. The shapes of the plaques were rectangular or square, and in the incised panel were figures molded with careful attention on various parts of the body and ornaments. We found in our study 27 height category of the plaques, ranging from 21.5 cm. to 41.5 cm., but the variation in breadth was much higher, ranging from 16.5 cm. to 43 cm. Nonetheless, the standard height of the studied plaques ranged from 35 cm. to 38 cm. and the standard breadth ranged from 25 cm. to 30 cm. In 487 research plaques, 36 cm. height plaques were 114 and 38 cm. height plaques were 103 in quantity.

The mammal plaques show the following statistics.

SL.	Mammals Name	Represented of Mammals <i>In situ</i> Terracotta Plaques (Qty)
1	Elephant	12
2	Lion	10
3	Tiger and Leopard	2
4	Rhinoceros	1
5	Deer	6
6	Monkey and Hanuman	17
7	Pig and Wild Boar	7
8	Horse	3
9	Camel	3
10	Cow	1
11	Buffalo	2
12	Bear	2

13	Mongoose	2
14	Dog	1
15	Rabbit	1
16	Unidentified Mammals	10
	Total	80

The animals, birds, fishes, snakes, various kinds of plants, flowers, fruits represented in the terracotta plaques to adorn the wall of the great temple of Somapur Mahavihara are surviving as signs of relationship between life and environment and the artistic perceptions of the past eras clay artists. Through these plaques, it is possible to know significant parts of biodiversity of that time by analyzing the plaques.

Below are the description and analysis of the fifteen types of mammal terracotta plaques *in situ* of Somapur Mahavihara. We have included comparative study with the other similar plaque images from the published literature cited in the references.

### 1. Elephant:

The elephant is the largest animal on land. In ancient time, elephants were used in war and transportation. It was also a symbol of royal tradition and a sign of aristocracy. There are two kinds of elephants in the world: African and Asian. Asian elephants are smaller than African elephants in size and weight. Also the ears of Asian elephants are smaller than those of the African elephants, and the trunks of Asian elephants (unlike the African ones) do not have ridges. Based on these physical characteristics we evaluated the 12 studied plaque images whether they are Asian or Indian elephants. In our identified plaques we observed that the trunks are without any ridge. Hence we conclude that these images are of Asian elephants. Considering the presence of ivory in the pictures, it was possible to determine the sex of the elephants also. In case of Asian elephants, only the male elephant has ivory, each ivory having 25-27 ridges on them. Most of the identified images show female elephants as these plaques have no sign of ivory. Only in one plaque the elephant is identified as male as the image clearly shows its erected phallus and the ivory at the back side of the plaque is intact (**Plate 15.1**) while the front side ivory is broken. Though nails are shown in each elephant foot, detail physical nature was not considered by the artists. In the plaques, nails of each foot are same in number. But in reality, the front feet of elephants have five nails while back feet have only four nails. However, it seems that the artists were attentive enough to other physical characteristics of the elephant. Physical (i.e., body parts) ratio of the elephants, depiction of physical characteristics according to sex, and expression of the

images in the plaques studied are similar to real elephants. From the image of the erected phallus and the open shouting mouth, it appears that the elephant is eager for sexual intercourse. Representation of this particular expression undoubtedly sums up the unique perception of the artist. Here the artist proved himself as an expert observer by presenting a reality of life. Besides the investigated plaques of the present research, two other plaques from Paharpur, namely a plaque with camel drawn on it and a plaque with horse show similar representation of phallus (**Plate 15.2** and **Plate 15.3**). Among 12 identified elephant pictures, 4 are with uplifted trunk in greeting style. This style is the most attractive performance of elephant to which the artists were fascinated. In one plaque, only the head of elephant with uplifted trunk is drawn, which means that the artist has tried to show the greeting style as the main subject of the plaque image (**Plate 15.4**). In one plaque, there is a flower like design in the lower part of an elephant's leg. It is mentionable that in another plaque of Paharpur, inscription or designs are drawn in each leg of a deer. The reason behind this kind of decoration is not clear. In a plaque, human and elephant in dancing mode are presented (**Plate 15.5**). The elephant is smaller than the human figure. The elephant's expression is unclear as its upper part is damaged. An elephant is not supposed to dance like this in reality. The artist used his imagination in the plaque. One reason behind this unusual presentation may be the idea of god Gaṇeśa as we find dancing Gaṇeśa in the religious literature. Sculptures of dancing Gaṇeśa are quite common.<sup>2</sup> Most probably from the mythology of Gaṇeśa with head of an elephant, the artist took the inspiration to draw that dancing figure of real elephant.

Other plaques of Paharpur show solitary elephants in different manners. None of the images have rider on the back of the elephant. One plaque shows some mice cutting the rope of a bound elephant (**Plate 15.6**). This might be a representation of the *Pañcatantra* story of "the mice that set elephants free".<sup>3</sup> A plaque with similar type of image was discovered from Ananda Vihara (**Plate 15.7**). Mahasthan museum displays a plaque of Bhasu Vihara with an image of elephant with huntsman (**Plate 15.8**). In the image, an elephant with closed eyes is presented as if it is running in fear of death. Hunters are sitting behind the elephant and two arrows in the elephant's body are clearly visible. From such kind of images, the subject of elephant hunt has come before us. Besides Paharpur, plaques with elephant images were discovered from Ananda Vihara, Bhasu Vihara, Rupban Mura and Salban Vihara. The plaques of Rupban Mura and Salban Bihar have images of elephants with drawings on their back and leg, which probably means well ornamented elephants.<sup>4</sup> A Terracotta plaque of Shunga Era in Mahasthan Museum also contains an image of



an ornamented elephant. The clay-artists were expert in depicting elephants on terracotta plaques because elephants were living in most of the forests of Bengal. Moreover, royal armies had elephants at that time. As such, the artists could watch different expressions of elephants closely which helped them to present the animal so lively on the plaques. The description of the ancient Greek historians suggests that there were a lot of elephants in our area. According to their description, Agrammes, the emperor of *Prachi* and *Gangaridi*, depended greatly on elephants for a military power. It is well known that in Pala and Sena Period, elephants and horses were predominant in the military force. *Arthashastra* of Kautilya gives us some hints about elephants. Kautilya was a minister of Emperor Chandragupta Murya. Kautilya said that the elephants of *Kalinga*, *Banga*, *Korush* and *Purbodesh* are the best. According to Niharranjan Ray, by "*Purbodesh*" Kautilya indicated to Bangladesh, especially north Bengal and *Kamrup* hill tracts. From Kalhan's *Rajarangini* it is known that ancient Bangladesh was famous for elephants. News of elephant attacks are still heard from Chittagong Hill Tracts. Anyway, influence of theological literature is also a possible reason behind selecting the elephant as a subject of terracotta plaque image. Mythological incidents are presented in a few plaque images. The elephant is present in various mythological literatures, incidents and stories which influenced the imaginations of the artists. Religion and social life made the elephant a subject of clay art and other forms of arts. That is why even in our time the elephant is present in various forms of art like wood, clay, bronze, stone etc. In Varendra Research Museum, three carved wood from 20<sup>th</sup> century represent elephants in various styles.

## **2. Lion:**

The Lion is the most ferocious beast among wild creatures. Because of its large body, huge strength, mane and some other qualities, the lion is called the king of animals. From primitive era the lion is considered as the symbol of strength and power. There are some physical differences between male and female lions. Male lions have mane but female lions are without mane. Moreover, the lioness is smaller than the lion. This research identifies 10 plaques with lion images. Depending on the presence of mane, it is identified that 6 plaques have images of the male lion and the rest 4 have lioness images. In 3 plaques with male lion image, the lion is standing on its back legs almost in similar style. In two plaques the front legs are crosswise. And in one plaque the lion is lying. The four images of the lioness are similar to the standing images of the lion. Through these plaques the artist made us aware that lions lived in this area at that time. Another opportunity for the artist to see the lion could be the circus. No matter what the source

was, the presentation of lions' paws with sharp nails, mane, tail, neck and back of the body proves that the images were made after watching lions. But mostly imagination was used to draw the images and this fact becomes clear from a plaque where the edge of the tail is like a leaf (**Plate 15.9**). In another plaque, the backside of a lion is ornamented with small flower or half-circled leaf like design (**Plate 15.10**). In this regard it is mentionable that Mainamati Museum displays a plaque found at Salban Vihara in which the artist has presented a decorated lion which is in contrast with reality (**Plate 15.11**). In the plaque the mane of the lion is like petals around its face and its eyes and eye-brows are slightly engraved. In one plaque, face and mane are ornamented in such a semicircle way that it seems the lion is sitting in a cave (**Plate 15.12**). Besides the plaques we studied, several plaques of Paharpur have this type of images. K.N Dikshit has mentioned one image as a lion at the entrance of the 'talking cave'.<sup>5</sup> According to the prevailing story, a clever fox used to tell imaginary tales standing before caves to find out whether the lion is in or out. The lion realizes the fox's trick and leaves the place. But the plaques of Paharpur do not have any image of fox; they have only face of lion. One Paharpur plaque at Varendra Research Museum and two other plaques of Paharpur have the images of lion and lioness watching their own face in well (**Plates 15.13 & 14**). This plaque may be related to the story of the clever rabbit and the arrogant lion named Madanamatta in *the Pañcatantra* where the rabbit gives the lion a lesson. The plaque does not have the rabbit's image, only the lion and the well are presented as the symbolic demonstration of the story. In one of the plaques, a lion is sleeping and a monkey is trying to wake it up by pricking into its ear. Most probably this image is also the depiction of some ancient story (**Plate 15.15**). Although K.N. Dikshit said that the so-called monkey image is actually an image of a fox, it seems to us that of the head, tail and expression of the animal indicate to a monkey.

Besides Paharpur, terracotta plaques of Salban Vihara, Ananda Vihara, Rupban Mura, Mankalir Kunda of Mahasthangarh, and Bhasu Vihara have images of lions. In these plaques, mane is spread over the neck like real lions. One plaque of Bhasu Vihara, displayed in Mahasthan Museum, has an image of a lion and a rabbit. The background of the plaque is ornamented by half-circle design to indicate a cave. Most likely, this plaque is also a representation of the rabbit-lion story. The appearance of the image gives a sense that the rabbit is feeling guilty for being late to come to the lion as his meal and the lion is listening to his excuse (**Plate 15.16**).

A corner plaque of Salban Vihara in Mainamati Museum has an image of joined headed lion couple which manifests a strange thought of the artist (**Plate 15.17**). In this plaque, the mane of

the lion is like three bunches of curly hair on both sides of the head. From its middle, two sides of the plaque seem to be mirror images. Since most of the archaeological sites of Bangladesh having terracotta plaques with lion images, the lion was a favorite symbol of art then. The pillars of Mauryan emperor have lion sculptures as a symbol of royal power. Though in Indian mythology the lion is not much discussed except Viṣṇu's man-lion form named Narasiṃha Avatāra, lion is part of some *Jataka* stories. The lion does not have much religious influence on the society, but it is famous for its beauty, strength and violent nature. So, like the common people, the artists were also interested in lions, the terracotta plaques are exclusive examples of it.

### 3. Tiger and Leopard:

The tiger is next to lion in violence and dominating nature. In Bengal, the tiger is the king of the forest. The Royal Bengal Tiger of the Sundarban is world famous. But terracotta plaques with tiger images are limited in number. Several plaques of Paharpur have the representations of tiger but none of those were identified as the Royal Bengal Tiger. This research also identifies two images of leopards with other creatures. The leopard is fighting with a bear in one plaque (**Plate 15.18**) and in another plaque; it is fighting against a human being (**Plate 15.19**). Encounter between the two beasts is natural but the face to face fighting between a leopard and a man seems unusual. It is likely that the artist wanted to focus on man's heroism and domination over the forest. In these two plaques, decoration of four dots and small marks were used. In another plaque of Paharpur, solo image of a leopard with four dotted decoration is presented (**Plate 15.20**). In that image the leopard is waiting to attack with open mouth and paws. Barandra Museum in Rajshahi has another plaque of Paharpur in which the depicted tiger has no ornamentation (**Plate 15.21**). In a plaque from Paharpur, there is a tiger image with striped decoration. In Mainamati and Mankalir Kundo of Mahasthangarh, there are some plaques of tiger image. On one plaque of Mainamati, fight between a tiger and a human being is presented. The folk tale about marriage between a woman and a tiger is represented in a plaque of Paharpur.<sup>6</sup> In Sitacot and at Salban Vihara, some bricks with marks of tiger paw are found. In Tripura Lipi of Loknath, the tiger is mentioned as well.

### 4. Rhinoceros:

The rhinoceros is not a well-known animal in Bengal. But some plaques of Paharpur do have its images. From their appearance, it can be assumed that during Pāla era rhinoceroses used to live in the northern forests of Bengal. Such terracotta plaques were not found in any other

archaeological site. In the present research we identified a rhinoceros image in one plaque (**Plate 15.22**). In this image, the artist has drawn two banana trees behind the animal, most probably to suggest a forest. In addition, among the existing plaques on the basement wall of Paharpur, one has an image of a rhinoceros (**Plate 15.23**). In that image, the rhinoceros is either drinking water or eating something with its bent down head. Its small horn is clearly visible. Along the backbone line, there are some small marks of zigzag design. In another plaque of Paharpur, there is an image with a human and a rhinoceros (**Plate 15.24**) where the thick skin of the rhinoceros is represented with wavy design carved on its body. The human is jumping down on the rhinoceros. Considering the expression, Dikshit has suggested that human as a Gandharvas.<sup>7</sup> But ornamentation, body structure and clothing of that man indicate that he is an indigenous Sarbar Man. Though the image is almost undamaged, the face of the rhinoceros is broken.

### 5. Deer:

The deer is one of the important animals of Bangladesh. Bangladesh has spotted deer and sambar. Male deer has horns. None of the identified plaques of this research has image of male deer. Most probably only female deer was drawn. Various styles of their presentation suggest that the artist made the plaques after profound observation. The plaques represent deer in various styles, such as drinking water, standing, sitting, jumping with baby deer (fawn), standing side by side etc. In a plaque, a dotted deer is hinted by giving several small marks (**Plate 15.25**). The plaque image of a jumping deer with a fawn is stylistic and beautiful (**Plate 15.26**). As human and other creatures learn many techniques from their parents, the plaque image gives the sense of a fawn learning from its mother how to run. However, the artist's selection of the deer was influenced by religion. This is proved from one plaque where the deer is ornamented by scarf like cloth around its neck (**Plate 15.27**). Possibly the artist wanted to bestow the deer a special position. Here it should be mentioned that scarf like cloth around deer's neck is found also in some plaques of Bhasu Vihara in Bogra. Three such plaques of Bhasu Vihara are displayed at Mahasthangarh Museum. In those plaques, mother deer and fawn are presented. Both the mother and the fawn have rings around their necks and the fawn is sleeping with its head on the mother deer's body (**Plate 15.28**). The female deer has scarf like cloth around its neck, with the extra part of the scarf flying in parallel. Though the deer is sitting, the floating cloth gives a sense of swiftness. This technique is seen in modern art also. Among the deer images of all the plaques, this is the most beautiful one and a sign of developed artistic method. The Bhasu Vihara plaques



are of the later period than the Paharpur and Mainamati plaques, perhaps of tenth-eleventh century. So it is assumed that these plaques got the excellence of art from Paharpur-Mainamati plaque arts. In one investigated plaque, a deer couple is depicted (**Plate 15.29**). In the image, the male deer, which is drinking water, is large in size while the female deer standing behind is smaller than the male. This image is very much realistic because an object at short distance looks bigger than an object at long distance. This plaque is a proof of the artist's profound observation, imagination, skillfulness and knowledge. The extraordinary quality of the artist is reflected by showing the deer beautifully and perfectly by representing only some part of its head and back. Dikshit called this skill as the ability of intense observation.<sup>8</sup> Varendra Museum has a plaque where a deer with horn is presented (**Plate 15.30**). This walking deer is looking behind. The most important characteristic of the image is the epistles just above the hooves of each leg. These epistles suggest that the plaque is not earlier tenth century and that the engravings were written before it was burnt in the furnace.<sup>9</sup> Examining the epistles, Dikshit commented that the plaques used for decorating the Paharpur temple were manufactured from ninth to tenth century for 200 years though the temple was built in ninth century. Engraving epistle in animal's leg is an unusual incident. The motive behind making it is not clear. From this plaque we can guess how much time it took to manufacture the huge amount of terracotta plaques of Paharpur.

Besides Paharpur and Bhasu Bihar, terracotta plaques with deer images were used to ornament the exterior parts of the constructions at Ananda Vihara and Jagaddal Vihara. Plaques of Salban Vihara with deer image are almost similar. In those image deer are running and looking behind (**Plate 15.31**). Plaques of Ananda Vihara also contain this kind of representation. In most of the Paharpur plaques, the deer is drinking water, standing or sitting.

#### **6. Monkey and Hanuman:**

The monkey and hanuman are familiar mammals in Bangladesh. Monkeys are small in size and with short tail. But the hanumans have long tails and they are bigger in size than the monkeys. They coil their tails over their back while moving from one place to another. This research has identified monkey and hanuman like figures in 14 plaques. The tails of those represented animals are shorter than even that of the real monkey. The reason behind making these short tails is ambiguous. Possibly, considering the size of the plaques, the artists wanted to focus on the body rather than the tail. To indicate monkey-like animal, the artists put small tails in the images. Therefore it can be taken for granted that monkeys are depicted here. Furthermore, the expression of the animals in the plaques is similar to that of the monkey.

In six researched plaques, similar styles of ornamentation were used to decorate the animal figures. There are some tiny zigzag marks on the hands, faces and tails of the animals (**Plate 15.32**). In most plaques, there is *dhuti* with belt around the waist of the animals (**Plate 15.33**). In body shape, these animals are similar to the human being. It is not impossible that all the plaques are made by one single artist as these monkey-like animals have similar ornamentation, size and expression. This similarity implies that all of these clay-artists followed a standard pattern. From the above discussed physical characteristics (including human shape), it can be assumed that the animals are artistic representation of the mythological Hanuman. In one plaque, the tail of the animal is gradually thin towards its end which resembles the lizard (**Plate 15.34**). It seems that the idea of metamorphic god or animal influenced the artist in making this kind of tail. The notion is based on some Paharpur plaques which have images of metamorphic animals. In these plaques, animal body is drawn combining different physical characteristics of human beings, birds, snakes, fishes etc.

In two plaques, the monkey-like animal is seated on a leaning rectangular object. The plaque seems to be the representation of *Pañcatantra* story of the wedge-pulling monkey.<sup>10</sup> The story<sup>11</sup> relates that on the outskirts of a city, a merchant was having a temple built. One day a troop of monkeys came to the half-built temple. A large *añjana* -log was standing there half-split down the middle, a wedge of acacia-wood being thrust in at the top. All the monkeys began their playful frolics upon the tree-tops, the lofty roof and the wood-pile. Then one of the monkeys thoughtlessly sat astride the *añjana* -log. He thought: “Who stuck a wedge in this queer place?” He tried to work on the wedge by pulling it out of the log. The monkey saw the disastrous result and came to grief. In the Paharpur Plaques the monkey is illustrated as perched on a beam in an inclined position as in the process of sawing. The wedge is shown in the hands of the monkey. This kind of plaque is also found at Ananda Vihara. In this research, this matter is analyzed from visual inspection without accepting it as certain. The folded left hand of the monkey is kept on the rectangle in a comfortable way and its right hand is uplifted beside forehead in salutation manner (**Plate 15.35**). This expression matches the welcoming act of circus animals. If the monkey were uprooting the wedge-pulling, its expression would have matched the deed. The idea of similarity with circus animals comes here for the reason that in several Paharpur plaques, there are acrobatic human images. There are also some plaques with images of standing bird and animal on three poles keeping balance. These pictures go with circus animals. Circus was a well known entertaining art from ancient time. Various kinds of animals were used in circus for performance. We see tigers, lions, monkeys, dogs, cats and birds in circus performance at present time also. Monkey-show is still popular in Bangladesh. Modern gymnastics has come from circus. So it is

possible that the artist saw such circus shows and presented some monkey's performance of climbing on a pole. In one plaque, most probably there is an image of the mythical Hanuman as the animal is wearing cloth and earring and fighting with a four-footed animal (**Plate 15.36**). A plaque of Paharpur, kept in Varendra Museum, has a representation of Hanuman which is very much similar to real hanuman (**Plate 15.37**). Its tail is coiled over its back like a real one. In a plaque at Mainamati Museum, a youngster is presented on an older monkey's back (**Plate 15.38**). From these images it appears that the artists of Pāla era used to see these animals frequently. Here it should be added that hanumans were seen in the west and north-west districts of Bangladesh once upon a time.<sup>12</sup> The hanumans used to come into human habitations also. As religious perception, references of the monkey and the hanuman in mythological narratives like *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Māhābhārata* occurred in the artist's thoughts as well. So the representation of the monkey and the hanuman can be considered as the combination of the artist's own imagination and real-life animals.

### 7. Pig and Wild Boar:

The pig is worshiped by the Hindus as an incarnation. But the seven identified plaques of this research, which have pig images, do not seem to be influenced by religion. In all the images, the pig is presented in eating or climbing mode with uplifted head. In nature, pigs are of two classes: domestic pig and wild boar. Usually domestic pigs are small sized; their head are longish but not too big. On the other hand, wild boars have longish heads and strange shaped "mobile noses" for which the head together with the nose appears to be long. Their legs are thin in proportion to their bodies. Both kinds of pigs are presented in terracotta plaques. But they could not be separated with certainty as the plaques are badly damaged. Presence of trees is an important characteristic of these plaque images. In three of the plaques used in this research, trees are seen behind the pigs. The tree of one plaque has been identified as plantain tree (**Plate 15.39**). The artist tried to represent the loitering ground of the pig by this kind of image. The least damaged plaque's pig image shows craftsmanship of the artist (**Plate 15.40**) as the artist has manifested the physical characteristics of the pig quite accurately. The thick fur of the pig's body is represented by small marks. The hooves of its four legs are clearly split in two. Pig-like image was discovered in another plaque of Paharpur, displayed in Varendra Museum. From the thin legs and long head of the four footed animal it seems that it is a wild boar. The upper part of the plaque is damaged from erosion. The image shows the animal's movement. Mainamati Museum exhibits a plaque of a wild boar image (**Plate 15.41**) also. In regard of its head shape, it looks like a wild boar. Wild boars are portrayed in other plaques of Mainamati.



### 8. Horse:

From early historic period, the horse is used as a vehicle and in war. In different ancient writings, references of horses are found. Ancient Indian kings have mentioned themselves as “Asshapati” (owner of Horse) and “Gajapati” (owner of Elephant) in their royal copper plate inscriptions.<sup>13</sup> Horses came into India with the Aryans who brought horses from East Europe. The scholars’ logic behind this notion is that horse skeleton was not discovered by archaeological excavations in ancient cities of Harappa civilization. Three identified plaques in this research have horse images. In one of them, a horse in standing straight on its back legs (**Plate 15.42**). In it, the left hand of a human figure is on the horse’s neck. Usually horse lifts its front legs to go over barriers or in excitement. In the plaque, possibly the person is trying to pacify the excited horse. It should be mentioned that among the still remaining plaques in the upper rows on the foundation wall of Paharpur, one has a horse image with realistic representation. In that plaque, a strong horse with mane is presented (**Plate 15.43**). The ratio of the different parts of its body is maintained near accurately by the artist. The mouth of the horse is found broken. The mane is presented very lively and attractively. In another mostly damaged plaque, the horse is walking magnificently. The splendor becomes clear from style of its front legs (**Plate 15.44**). During parade of the cavalry horses, horses can be seen in this style. Another plaque of Paharpur has representation of a powerful horse. The artist has made a representation of royal horse with strong body, rhythmic step, slightly bent head and strong phallus (**Plate 15.45**). In another Paharpur plaque, a well ornamented horse is shown standing under a tree. There is a saddle on its back (**Plate 15.46**). Using the tree, perhaps the artist wanted to indicate that the horse is resting. At Mankalir Kunda, Salban Vihara, and Ananda Vihara, plaques with horse images were found. In a plaque of Salban Vihara, two horses with saddles are represented (**Plate 15.47**). Mainamati Museum has another plaque of Salban Vihara where a simple walking horse is presented. Its legs are short in proportion to its body (**Plate 15.48**). In a plaque of Ananda Vihara, both the horse and the rider are ornamented gorgeously (**Plate 15.49**). The horseman is wearing clothes similar to trouser and full sleeved shirt or coat. These diverse representations of horses give important idea about their species and their use in ancient time.

### 9. Camel:

The camel is an animal of the desert. Bangladesh was never a ground for camels because of its climate. In ancient literature, reference of camel is found. For example, at verse no. 33, second chapter in Sandhyākar Nandī’s *Rāmacarita*, reference of horse and camel is found as parts of





Plate 15.1: (Research Plaque No-365) 32cm X 25cm



Plate 15.2: (TC plaque in Paharpur store)



Plate 15.3: (TC plaque in Paharpur store)



Plate 15.4: (Research Plaque No-338) 32.5cm X 23.5cm



Plate 15.5: (Research Plaque No-287) 35.5cm X 27cm

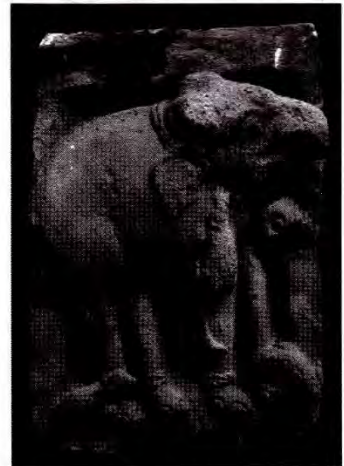


Plate 15.6: (TC plaque in Paharpur store)



Plate 15.7: (TC plaque discover from Ananda Vihara)



Plate 15.8: (TC plaque discover from Bhasu Vihara)



Plate 15.9: (Research Plaque No-409) 38cm X 18.5cm



Plate 15.10: (Research Plaque No-052) 35.5cm X 26cm



Plate 15.11: (TC plaque discover from Salban Vihara)

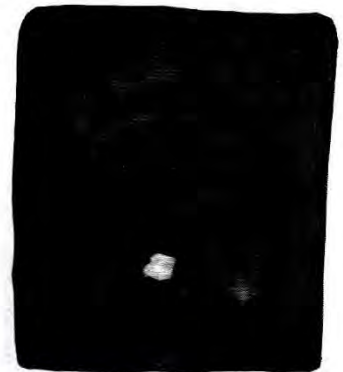


Plate 15.12: (Research Plaque No-459) 38cm X 32cm



Plate 15.13: (TC plaque in Paharpur store)

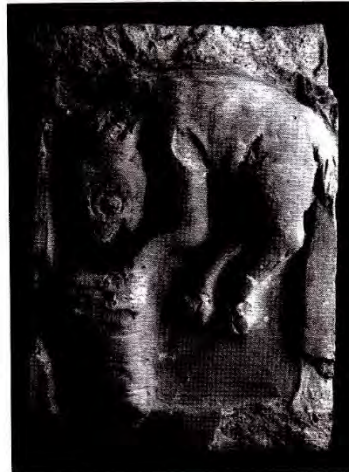


Plate 15.14: (TC plaque in Paharpur store)



Plate 15.15: (Research Plaque No-013) 37cm X 28cm

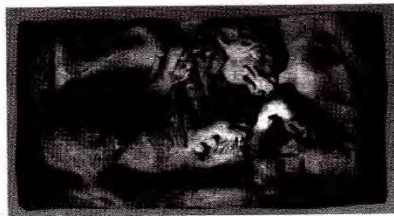


Plate 15.16: (TC plaque discover from Bhasu Vihara)



Plate 15.17: (TC plaque discover from Salban Vihara)



Plate 15.18: (Research Plaque No-022) 38cm X 37.5cm



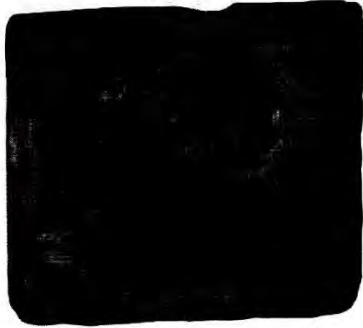


Plate 15.19: (Research Plaque No-225) 37cm X 30.5cm



Plate 15.20: (TC plaque in Paharpur store)

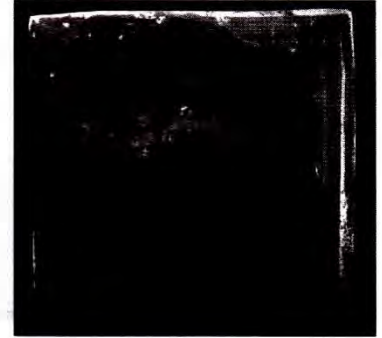


Plate 15.21: (TC plaque in Barandra Museum )



Plate 15.22: (Research Plaque No-049) 37cm X 28cm

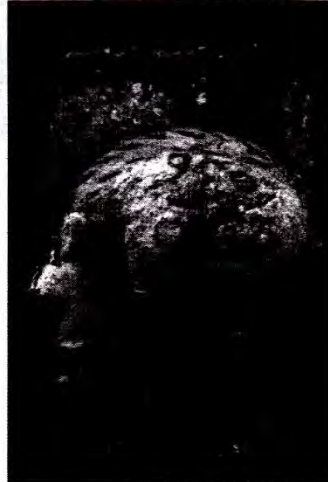


Plate 15.23: (TC plaque fix in basement wall)



Plate 15.24: (TC plaque in Paharpur)

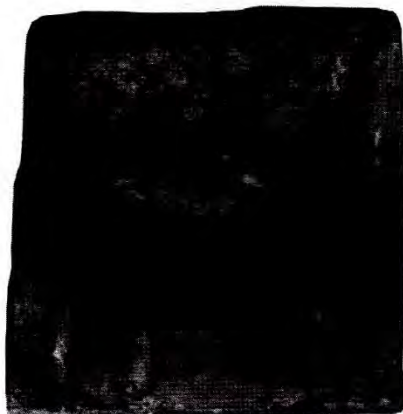


Plate 15.25: (Research Plaque No-257) 33cm X 32cm



Plate 15.26: (Research Plaque No-072) 28cm X 24cm



Plate 15.27: (Research Plaque No-107) 35.5cm X 23.5cm

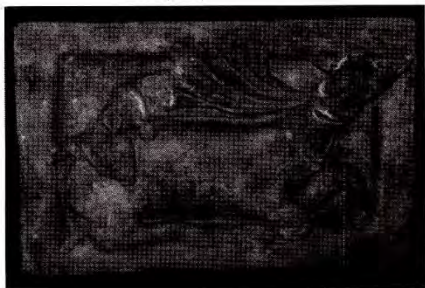


Plate 15.28: (TC plaque discover from Bhasu Vihara)

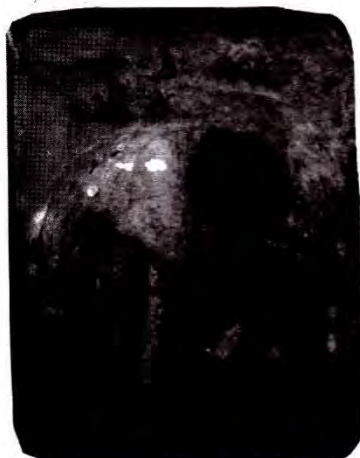


Plate 15.29: (Research Plaque No-416) 38cm X 28cm

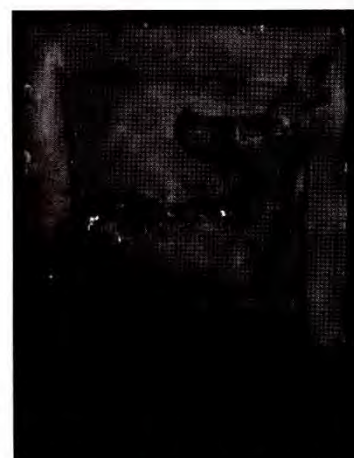


Plate 15.30: (TC plaque in Barandra Museum )



Plate 15.31: (TC plaque in Mainamati Museum)



Plate 15.32: (Research Plaque No-219) 38cm X 25.5cm



Plate 15.33: (Research Plaque No-270) 35.5cm X 27.5cm



Plate 15.34: (Research Plaque No-274) 38cm X 33.5cm



Plate 15.35: (Research Plaque No-220) 38cm X 23cm



Plate 15.36: (Research Plaque No-339) 32cm X 26cm





Plate 15.37: (TC plaque in Barandra Museum )

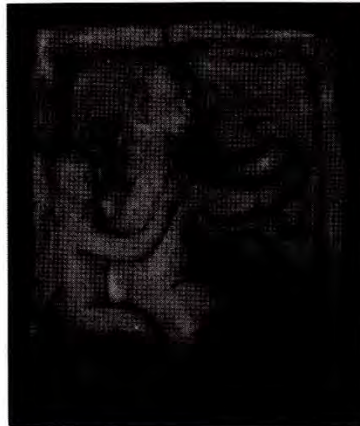


Plate 15.38: (TC plaque in Mainamati Museum)



Plate 15.39: (Research Plaque No-305) 35.5cm X 29cm



Plate 15.40: (Research Plaque No-237) 27cm X 25.5cm

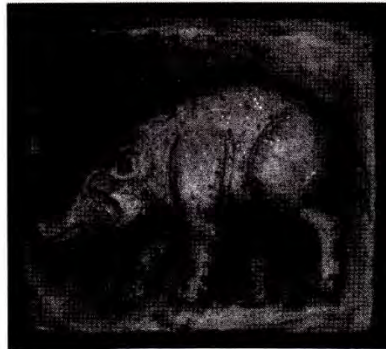


Plate 15.41: (TC plaque in Mainamati Museum)



Plate 15.42: (Research Plaque No-244) 30.5cm X 19cm



Plate 15.43: (TC plaque fix in basement wall)



Plate 15.44: (Research Plaque No-299)



Plate 15.45: (TC plaque in Paharpur)



Plate 15.46: (TC plaque in Paharpur)



Plate 15.47: (TC plaque discover from Salban Vihara)



Plate 15.48: (TC plaque discover from Salban Vihara)



Plate 15.49: (TC plaque discover from Ananda Vihara)



Plate 15.50: (Research Plaque No-292) 30cm X 18cm



Plate 15.51: (Research Plaque No-167) 35.5cm X 32cm



Plate 15.52: (Research Plaque No-380) 28cm X 25.5cm



Plate 15.53: (TC plaque in Paharpur)



Plate 15.54: (TC plaque in Mainamati Museum)





Plate 15.55: (Research Plaque No-056) 37cm X 32.5cm



Plate 15.56: (TC plaque in Mainamati Museum)

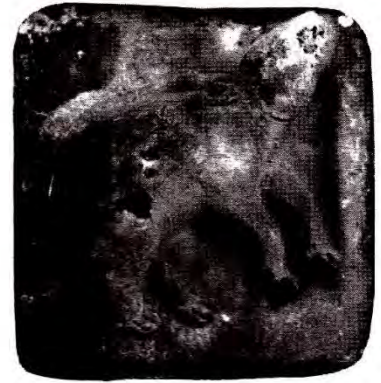


Plate 15.57: (Research Plaque No-083) 27cm X 27.5cm

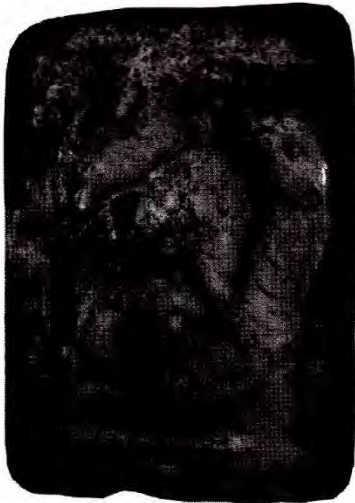


Plate 15.58: (Research Plaque No-313) 27cm X 35cm



Plate 15.59: (Research Plaque No-026) 38cm X 30cm



Plate 15.60: (Research Plaque No-053) 36cm X 28.5cm

*Vim's* vehicles. Several plaques of Paharpur, Salban Vihara, and Rupban Mura show images of camels. Camels are of two kinds; one with hump and one without hump. Among three plaques with camel image, (of which two have passengers riding on them), one image possibly shows a camel with two humps. Its back hump is clearly visible. Probably the front hump is behind the passenger's leg (Plate 15.50). In another plaque the rider is holding the reins with his left hand. This camel apparently has one hump (Plate 15.51). The raised part of the plaque is destroyed. It is identified from the impression of the animal's body. A plaque of Paharpur Museum store shows a lively camel with two humps (Plate 15.2). It has reins around its neck. But there is no plaque containing gin on the camels. These vigorous representations of camel prove that camels were not totally unknown to the people of Bangladesh. The clay artists represented camel with keen inspection, as this kind of genuine, proportional portrayal is not possible from only imagination or vague idea. Most probably the artists of this country saw the camels of foreigner businessman



who used the animal to carry merchandise. From the evidences of the plaque images, it can be said that the camel was known in both north and south Bengal.

#### **10. Buffalo:**

In present research we identified two buffalo images, where the buffalos are simply standing. There is no rope around their neck (**Plate 15.52**). Apparently the artist showed a wandering buffalo here. Another plaque of Paharpur, which does not belong to our research plaques, shows the representation of a lively buffalo (**Plate 15.53**). The special quality of the plaque is its lotus bud and a lotus leaf. By these the artist wanted to show the buffalo in water.<sup>14</sup> The buffaloes are seen to drown their body under water during hot season. The lotus is the symbol of Vishnu and the buffalo is the vehicle of Shiva. So the plaque should be analyzed to find out whether the artist wanted to focus on some religious matter or not. At Bhoja Vihara and Salban Vihara, plaques with buffalo images were found as well. Images found at Paharpur have diversity but the expressions of the plaques are almost same. In these plaques, the buffalos are itching their bodies using their legs (**Plate 15.54**).

#### **11. Cow:**

The cow is a common domestic animal in Bangladesh. We find references of cows in ancient literature. In portraying the common animals of Bangladesh, the clay artists depicted cows also. This research has identified an ox images in a plaque. In the plaque, the ox is sitting and its hump is clear. There are two lines on the neck. Possibly this ornamentation means rope around the neck (**Plate 15.55**). A plaque at Mainamati Museum shows a strong marching ox (**Plate 15.56**). Along the middle of its body, there are two horizontal and vertical lines. Small round marks are given beside the lines. As the small circles are same in size, it can be assumed that the design was done with a hollow pipe-like tool. The hump is presented nicely. In Bangladesh National Museum, there is a plaque of Paharpur which has a beautiful ox with hump. The mastery of the artist is so vivid in that plaque that the work can be compared with stone sculpture. This kind of ox image is found in the seals of Harappa.

#### **12. Bear:**

The bear is a wild animal. In their works, the clay-artists of Paharpur represented the animal alone and also together with another animal. This research has identified two such plaques among which one has a bear fighting against a leopard (**Plate 15.18**). The other plaque shows a single bear (**Plate 15.57**).



**13. Mongoose:**

Mongoose are identified in two plaques. In one of these two plaques, the mongoose is fighting against a snake (**Plate 15.58**) by which the artist has summed up the everlasting conflict between the two creatures. In other plaque the mongoose is standing on a tri-pillar or Hill (**Plate 15.59**).

**14. Dog:**

Dog is one of the earliest domestic animal. The present research has identified dog in one plaque (**Plate 15.60**). In the image dog is in running position and looking back with fear.

**15. Rabbit:**

This research also identifies rabbits in one plaque.

**16. Animals in Damaged Plaques:**

Besides the mentioned animals, the research identifies animal picture in other 10 plaques. But no certain animal is identified from them because of erosion and damage of the plaques, unusual presence of the animal, and combination of different animal organs in one animal image. However, some of these unidentified animals are identical with lion, deer, monkey, cow, rhinoceros etc.

**Conclusion:**

The terracotta plaques we studied provide a glimpse of our past culture and mammalian biodiversity in the environment of our region as viewed through the keen observations of the clay artists thousand years ago. Human beings and their cultural activities are closely related to the environment. Directly and indirectly, human being is dependent on plants and animals. That is why from primeval time, animal and plant are present in different artistic works. Analytical study of terracotta artistry images can provide important information about the reason behind making those images. It can show the relationship between people's values, creativity and the terracotta arts. It can also inform about people's social and religious life. On one hand this kind of research can discover valuable information about the ancient cultures and environment, and on the other hand it sums up the artistic notions of that time.

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# **17**

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**PUBLISHED BY**  
Professor Dr. Enamul Haque  
Chairman  
THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR STUDY OF BENGAL ART

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**PRICE**  
Taka 1,500/- (Bangladesh)  
Rupees 1,500/- (India)  
US Dollar 45 (Other countries)

**ISSN: 1607-1344**

**PRINTED AT**  
Bengal Com-Print  
68/5, Green Road, Panthapath, Dhaka-1205  
Phone : 861142, 0171300936

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