

The Location of Bhushana Fort and the Relationship between Chand Roy and Kedar Roy: A Review of Historical Sources

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Abstract

Based on various contemporary and later historical sources, it is evident that the zamindars of the Bhati region of East Bengal, who fiercely resisted the Mughals under the leadership of Isa Khan and his son Musa Khan to protect their respective zamindaris, are historically known as Barbhuiyan. Among these *Barbhuiyas* were Chand Roy and Kedar Roy, the zamindars of Vikrampur, with Sripur as their capital. Historians disagree on the exact location of the Bhushana Fort and its relationship to the zamindari of Chand Roy and Kedar Roy. According to Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama*, the Mughal army led by Himmat Singh conquered Bhushana Fort, which included the zamindaris of Chand Roy and Kedar Roy. However, Abdul Karim asserts that Bhushana pertained to the zamindari of Mukund Roy. Additionally, most modern historians, including Abdul Karim, believe Chand Roy and Kedar Roy were brothers, while some historians argue that Chand Roy was the father and Kedar Roy his son. Abul Fazl's contemporary account in *Akbarnama* indicates that Chand Roy was the son and Kedar Roy the father. Based on contemporary information, Bhushana Fort was located in Faridpur. The region of Faridpur once belonged to Mukunda Roy's Bhushana kingdom but was later incorporated into the zamindari of Chand Roy and Kedar Roy in 1595 AD. Bhushana Fort was captured by the Mughals. Despite differing historical opinions regarding the relationship between Chand Roy and Kedar Roy, it can be concluded that they were father and son, with Chand Roy being the father and Kedar Roy his son.

Introduction

The Mughal rule in Bengal commenced in 1576 AD with their victory in the Battle of Rajmahal. However, the Mughals encountered substantial resistance in establishing dominance over East Bengal, particularly in the Bhati region. During this period, the defense system of East Bengal, characterized by the strategic

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positioning of the Ganges (Padma), Brahmaputra, and Meghna rivers and their tributaries was notably robust. The zamindars of East Bengal, particularly in the Bhati region, organized a formidable resistance movement against the Mughals under the leadership of Isa Khan and following his death, his son Musa Khan, utilizing these natural defenses to their advantage.

Contemporary and subsequent historical sources, including the *Akbarnama* and *Baharistan*, suggest that the zamindars of the Bhati region, led by Isa Khan and later Musa Khan, mounted a vigorous resistance against the Mughals to defend their respective territories. They were known as *Barabhuyan*. Among these zamindars were Chand Roy and Kedar Roy, who governed Vikrampur with Sripur as their capital, located near the Padma River.

The precise location of Bhushana Fort associated with the zamindari of Chand Roy and Kedar Roy, has been a subject of debate among historians, as has their familial relationship. According to Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama*, the Mughal army led by Himmat Singh conquered Bhushana Fort, which included the zamindaris of Chand Roy and Kedar Roy. However, historian Abdul Karim attributes the conquest of Bhushana to the zamindari of Mukund Roy, creating further confusion among scholars.

Additionally, modern historians such as Abdul Karim believe that Chand Roy and Kedar Roy were brothers, whereas others, including Sri Himanshu Mohan and Ambikacharan, contend that Chand Roy was the father and Kedar Roy was his son. Conversely, contemporary sources like Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama* suggest that Chand Roy was the son and Kedar Roy the father. This discrepancy underscores the need for further research and analysis of both contemporary and later historical sources. In light of these issues, this article aims to ascertain the exact location of Bhushana Fort and clarify the relationship between Chand Roy and Kedar Roy, drawing on contemporary and subsequent historical sources.

Zamindari of Chand Roy and Kedar Roy

Contemporary sources indicate that Chand Roy and Kedar Roy were the zamindars of Vikrampur, as evidenced by references in the *Akbarnama*.¹ Additional information collected by James Wise and the second volume of the East Bengal lyricist's work, Dewan Isha Khan Masandali Pala, also mention Chand Roy and Kedar Roy in the context of Vikrampur-Sripur.² Abdul Karim's records similarly refer to Chand Roy and Kedar Roy as zamindars of Sreepur-Bikrampur.³ Thus,

1. Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, Vol. III (Eng. Tran. H. Bevaridge), Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 1921, pp. 968-969, 1215
2. James Wise, 'Bara-Bhuiyans of Eastern Bengal', *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Vol. XLIII, 1874, pp. 202-203; Dinesh Chandra Dey, *Purbabanga Gitica* (in Bengali), Vol. 1 & 2 (Combined), Day's Publications, Kolkata, 2009, pp. 679-704
3. Abdul Karim, 'Banglar Shesh Afghal Bhir' (in Bengali), *Bangladesh Asiatic Society Potrica*, Year 9, Vol. 1, June 1991, p. 38

considering both contemporary and later historical sources, it is evident that Chand Roy and Kedar Roy were zamindars of Vikrampur, with Sripur as their capital. Vikrampur was a highly prosperous pargana in the Dhaka district, bordered by the *Dhaleswari* River to the north, the Meghna River to the east and the Padma River to the west. Presently, it is located in the Munshiganj district. Historically, the Sena king Ballal Sen and numerous noble Brahmins resided in this region.

Approximately 150 years before the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar, a man named Nim Roy from Karnataka settled in Ara Phulbaria, Vikrampur. He received permission from the then ruler of Bengal to use the title 'Bhuiya' for his descendants. Although little is known about Nim Roy's later descendants, it is established that during the latter part of the Afghan rule Chand Roy and Kedar Roy established independent zamindari, with their capital at Sripur.⁴ Their residence was in Ara Phulbaria, which is still referred to as Kedar Bari. Some consider them to be the seventh-generation descendants of Nim Roy.⁵ Moreover, it is said that Sandwip once belonged to the zamindari of Chand Roy and Kedar Roy and they also held zamindari in parts of Faridpur.⁶

Based on contemporary and subsequent historical data, it is noted that Chand Roy was killed in a battle with the Afghans at Bhushana on February 11, 1593. Kedar Roy regained possession of Bhushana fort⁷ and kingdom with the assistance of Isa Khan. On June 20, 1596 Kedar Roy was injured in a battle with the forces of Mansingh's son, Durjan Singh, and fled Bhushana, seeking refuge with Isa Khan. Even after Isa Khan's death, Kedar Roy continued to fight against the Mughals alongside Isa Khan's son Musa Khan. In 1603, Kedar Roy was wounded and captured in a battle with the Mughal forces near Vikrampur, eventually dying in captivity.⁸ Known for his fierce warrior spirit and skilled military organization, Kedar Roy employed numerous Portuguese pirates in his navy. Notably, Kedar Roy never submitted to the Mughals.

Bhushana Fort

Contemporary sources, such as the *Akbarnama*, recount that following the Mughal conquest of Orissa and the defeat of the Afghans, Mughal Subadar Mansingh of

4. Habiba Khatun and Shahnaz Husne Jahan, *Isha Khan: Samakalin Itihas* (in Bangla), Dhaka, 2000, p. 38; Ananda Roy, *Faridpur Itihas* (in Bangla), Tapan Bagchi (Ed.), Boipatra, 2007, p. 49

5. Habiba Khatun and Shahnaz Husne Jahan, *op.cit.*, 2000, p. 38

6. *Ibid.*, p. 38

7. *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, pp. 968-969; Habiba Khatun and Shahnaz Husne Jahan, *op.cit.*, 2000, p. 38

8. *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, pp. 1214-1215, 1235-1236; Abdul Karim, *Banglar Itihas: Mughal Amal* (in Bengali), Jatio Grantha Prakashan, April 2007, pp. 158-159; Habiba Khatun and Shahnaz Husne Jahan, *op.cit.*, 2000, p. 339

Orissa dispatched Afghan generals to various regions to prevent their regrouping and potential rebellion. Mansingh sent Osman Khan, his brother Sulaiman Khan and other Afghan leaders to the Faridpur region. However, he soon realized that this decision was misguided, as the Afghans could exploit the distance to engage in larger conspiracies. Consequently, Mansingh rescinded his initial orders and commanded the Afghans to return to Orissa. By that time, the Afghans had already moved beyond his control and defied Mansingh's new directive. As they advanced, plundering en route, the Afghans reached the port of Satgaon. Failing to capture Satgaon, they moved towards the zamindari of Chand Roy. A confrontation ensued between the Afghans and the forces of Chand Roy and Kedar Roy, resulting in Chand Roy's death and the Afghan occupation of Bhushana Fort. Eventually, a compromise was mediated by local zamindar Isa Khan, leading to the Afghans returning Bhushana Fort to Kedar Rai.⁹ This narrative, derived from the *Akbarnama*, indicates that during this period, Bhushana Fort was within the zamindari of Chand Roy and Kedar Roy.

Further evidence from the *Akbarnama* and *Baharistan* reveals that during Akbar's reign, Bhushana was under the ownership of Mukund Roy and later his son Satrajit, who surrendered to the Mughals during Jahangir's reign.¹⁰ Conversely, the *Akbarnama* identifies Kedar Roy as the zamindar of Sreepur-Vikrampur, who subsequently engaged in conflict with Mansingh.¹¹ Additional sources, including information collected by James Wise and the 'Dewan Isha Khan Masandali Pala', a work by an East Bengal lyricist, corroborate the presence of Chand Roy and Kedar Roy in Vikrampur-Sripur.¹² Abdul Karim's records also identify Chand Roy and Kedar Roy as zamindars of Sreepur-Vikrampur.¹³

Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama* recounts the Mughal conquest of Bhushana Fort in 1595 AD, led by Himmat Singh, which was under the zamindari of Chand Ray and Kedar Ray.¹⁴ However, Abdul Karim attributes this victory to Mukund Ray's zamindari,¹⁵ creating confusion among scholars and readers.

9. *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, pp. 968-969

10. *Ibid.*, p. 469; Mirza Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, Vol. I (Eng. Tran. M. I. Borah), Gauhati, Assam, 1936, p. 18

11. *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, pp. 1215, 1235-1236

12. James Wise, *op.cit.*, 1874, pp. 202-203; Dinesh Chandra Sen, *Purbanga Gitika* (in Bengali), Vol. I & II, Day's Publications, Kolkata, 2009, pp. 679-704

13. Abdul Karim, 'Banglar Shesh Afghan Bir' (in Bengali), *Bangladesh Asiatic Society Potrica*, Year 9, Vol. I, June 1991, p. 38

14. *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, p. 1023

15. Abdul Karim, *Mughal Period*, Vol. I, Institute of Bangladesh Studies, University of Rajshahi, 1992, p. 189

Different Analyses Regarding the Location of Bhushana Fort

A geographical analysis of Bhushana and Vikrampur suggests that the Bhushana kingdom encompassed parts of modern Jessore and Faridpur.¹⁶ Since a part of Faridpur is also included in Vikrampur.¹⁷ It is plausible that Chand Roy and Kedar Roy seized the Faridpur region within Bhushana, where Bhushana Fort, as mentioned in the *Akbarnama*, was located. Chand Roy and Kedar Roy defended the fort against the Afghans, and later, Mughal forces led by Himmat Singh captured it. The precise details of how Chand Roy and Kedar Roy gained such significant power remain unclear.

Based on the above discussion, it can be inferred that the Faridpur region, where Bhushana Fort was situated, originally belonged to the Bhushana kingdom under Mukunda Ray. Subsequently, it became part of the zamindari of Chand Ray and Kedar Ray, or they may have captured it. In 1595 AD, Himmat Singh led Mughal forces to bring the fort under Mughal control.

The Relationship between Chand Roy and Kedar Roy

There is considerable disagreement among historians regarding the relationship between Chand Roy and Kedar Roy, the zamindar of Vikrampur and one of the Barbhuiyans. Based on the information provided by James Wise, most modern historians, including Abdul Karim, contend that Chand Roy and Kedar Roy were brothers.¹⁸ Conversely, research by Komal Chowdhury, Sri Himanshu Mohan, and Ambikacharan Ghosh suggests a father-son relationship, with Chand Roy being the father and Kedar Roy his son.¹⁹ However, contemporary sources, such as the *Akbarnama*, identify Chand Roy as the son and Kedar Roy as the father.²⁰ This interpretation is also supported by data from the Jadunath Sarker.²¹ Thus, a re-evaluation of their true relationship necessitates a review of the information presented in the *Akbarnama* and other contemporary sources.

Information from the Akbarnama

The *Akbarnama* provides initial insight, stating, “The Afghans went on plundering and came to the port of Satgaon... and proceeded to the house of Chand Roy.”²²

16. Jadunath Sarkar (Ed), *The History of Bengal, Vol. II*, The University of Dhaka, Dhaka, 2006, p. 237

17. Habiba Khatun and Shahnaz Husne Jahan, *op.cit.*, 2000, p. 38

18. James Wise, *op.cit.*, 1874, p. 202; Abdul Karim, *Mughal Period*, Vol. I, 1992, p. 68; Satish Chandra Mitra, *Jessor-Khulnar Itihas* (in Bengali), Kolikata, 2001, p. 541

19. *Banglar Barabhuyas O Maharaj Protapaditya*, Collected and Edited by Komal Chaudhury, Day's Publications, Kolikata, 2005, p. 55; Himangshu Mohan Chattapaddya (Collected), *Vikrampur*, Vol. 2, Vikrampur Protiva, Narayenganj, 1344 (BS), p. 428

20. *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, p. 969

21. Jadunath Sarkar (Ed), *op.cit.*, 2006, p. 210

22. *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, p. 968

This indicates that the Afghans advanced into Chand Roy's zamindari. Later in the *Akbarnama*, it is noted, "he (Cand) was killed. They plundered... By the intrigues of Isa Khan, they took shelter with him and made over the fort and territory to Kedar Roy the father of zaminder Chand Roy." This suggests that after Chand Roy's death, his father Kedar Roy assumed responsibility for the zamindari, aided by Isa Khan.²³ Such succession may seem unusual in the context of hereditary inheritance, where typically the father precedes the son in power. Although no direct or contemporary information confirms whether their succession was hereditary, a proverb referenced earlier indicates that approximately 150 years before Mughal Emperor Akbar's reign, a man named Nim Roy migrated from Karnataka to a place called Ara Phulbaria in Vikrampur. Nim Roy obtained permission from the then-ruler of Bengal to use the title 'Bhuiya' for subsequent generations. Little is known about Nim Roy's later descendants. Nevertheless, during the late Afghan rule, Chand Roy and Kedar Roy established an independent zamindari, with their capital at Sripur.²⁴ Their residence was in Ara Phulbaria, where the land is still known as Kedar Bari. Some consider them to be the seventh subordinate generation of Nim Roy.²⁵

In light of this information, it appears that Chand Roy's power was inherited. It is noteworthy that Chand Roy established an independent zamindari in Vikrampur, and after his unexpected death in battle, his surviving father assumed control. However, there are no contemporary or later historical sources that document the establishment of the zamindari in Vikrampur by Chand Roy.

Examining the Relationship between Chand Roy and Kedar Roy in the Context of the Akbarnama and Other Sources

Based on the information presented in the *Akbarnama*, it is evident that the author, Abul Fazl, never visited Bengal. He relied on oral accounts from others to document events. Consequently, it is not uncommon for oral narratives to contain errors, such as confusing the identities of a father and son. For instance, the *Akbarnama* contains inaccuracies regarding the geographical boundaries of East Bengal, specifically the region known as Bhati.

The *Akbarnama* describes Bhati as follows: "Bhati is a low country and has received this name because Bengal is higher. It is north to south. East of this country are the ocean and the country of Habsha (?). West is the hill country where are the houses of the kahin (?) tribe. South is Tanda. North also the ocean."²⁶ This description erroneously places the ocean to the east and north of the Tanda region, the sea to the

23. *Ibid.*, p. 969

24. Habiba Khatun and Shahnaz Husne Jahan, *op.cit.*, 2000, p. 38; Anandanath Roy, 'Faridpurer Itihas', Tapan Bagchi (Ed.), *Boipatra*, 2007, p. 49

25. Habiba Khatun and Shahnaz Husne Jahan, *op.cit.*, 2000, p. 38

26. *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, pp. 645-647

south, and the mountains to the west. In reality, the sea lies to the south, the mountains to the north and east, and the Tanda region's position is to the west.

In light of these inconsistencies, it is clear that Abul Fazl's documentation of events in Bengal, based on second-hand accounts, is prone to errors. This includes the misidentification of Chand Roy and Kedar Roy. Abul Fazl erroneously records the father, Zamindar Chand Roy, as the son, and Kedar Roy as the father. Such errors are not uncommon in oral histories.

Further evidence of this mistake is found in the determination of Bhati's geographical boundaries. Additionally, in works such as '*Vikrampur*' by Komol Chowdhury and Maharaj Pratapaditya, and '*Vikrampur*' compiled by Shri Himanshu Mohan Chattopadhyay, as well as the *Vikrampures Itihas* (In Bengali) prepared by Ambikacharan Ghosh, Kedar Roy is identified as the son of Zamindar Chand Roy.²⁷ On the other hand, according to James Wise and supported by most modern historians, including Abdul Karim, Chand Roy and Kedar Roy were brothers. No reliable information from contemporary sources, including the *Akbarnama* and *Baharistan*, confirms this.

Therefore, considering the accounts of contemporary historian Abul Fazl in the *Akbarnama* and corroborated by Habiba Khatun and Anandanath Roy (who document lineage with the father first followed by the son), alongside the compilations by Komol Chowdhury, Sri Himanshu Mohan, and Ambikacharan Ghosh, it is more plausible to accept that Chand Roy was the father and Kedar Roy his son.

27. *Banglar Barabhuyas O Maharaj Protapaditya*, Collected and Edited by Komol Chaudhury, Day's Publications, Kolikata, 2005, p. 55; Himangshu Mohan Chattopadhyay (Collected), *Bikrampur*, Vol. 2, Vikrampur Protiva, Narayanganj, 1344 (BS), p. 428