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# A short history of the Sena rulers basically as mentioned in the different Sena inscriptions:

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The origin of the Sena king and the first phase of their rule in Bengal have not yet been settled satisfactory. From the inscriptional records and particularly from the Deopārā inscription<sup>1</sup> of Vijaya Sena we know that Sāmanta Sena is so far the first king of this dynasty. The original home of the Sena family is believed to be Karṇātaka from where the senas migrated to Bengal. From two verses of Naihati copper-plate inscription<sup>1</sup> we gather the information that blithe Sena family coming from Karṇātaka settled in Western Bengal before Sāmanta Sena was born. It has been suggested that when the family came to Western Bengal, some of its members kept connection with their motherland. Sāmanta Sena. was probably born in Karnātaka and spent his early life in Karnataka where he successfully established his valour by fighting in various warfares and lastly in his old age he came to Bengal. The Deopārā inscription describes that Samanta Sena settled in old age on the bank of the Ganges, evidently in some parts of Rādha of modern Burdwan District.

Samanta Sena has been described in the Deopārā inscription<sup>2</sup> as Brahma ksatriya which means those who were Brahmans first and subsequently became Kṣatriyas, i.e. who exchanged their priestly performances for martial pursuits,

The Vallalacarita composed by Anandabhatta in the early part of the 16th Century A.D. describes that samanta Sena was born in the family of vira Sena, the great grandson of the Purānic hero Karna and that he ruled the earth from the Vindhya to the Setuvandha<sup>3</sup>. The references to the Purānic origin of vīra Sena has been supported by the Madhāi nagar plates of Laksmāna Sena where it is found that Sāmanta Sena was born in the family of vīra Sena which has become illustrious through the legends recorded in the Purānas . It is now confirmed that the Sena of Bengal originally belonged to the Karnāta country and the Brahma Ksatriya caste, indicating their change of professions. The term Brahma Ksatriya indicates that the Senas before becoming kings were Brahmans. In the Barrackpur grant of Vijaya Sena and the Naihati grant of Vallāla Sena, the ancestors of Samanta Sena are mentioned as Rājaputras<sup>5</sup>. It appears, therefore, that the Senas were originally Rājputs. But some scholars are of opinion that the rājaputrah cannot be taken to Rājput origin. It may be that the word 'Rājputrāḥ' simply means princes and the ancestors of Sāmanta Sena might have been connected with some line of kings or princes (chiefs). Rājputra may also denote an official title having the meaning 'a noble man'. So the term may indicate that the ancestors of the Senas were the noble men in the Deccan.

It has not yet been settled as to when the Senas came to Bengal. The Deo pārā inscription of Vijaya Sena refers to Sāmanta Sena's military exploits in South India against the despoilers of Lakṣmi (wealth) of Karnāta<sup>6</sup> and further adds that his war ballads were sung along the borders of the Rāmeswara-Setuvandha ." The first refer ences to the despoilers of Karnāta Lakṣmi against whom . Samanta Sena led a war may have been the forces of the cola king Rājendra deva. The Deo-pārā inscription mentions that after the military expeditious of Samanta Sena he often visited the sacred hermitage situated in the forest on the bank of the sacred Ganges where the parrots used to recite the hymns of Vedas<sup>8</sup>. 'Again the same inscription adds that the descendants of Samanta Sena ruled in Bengal. So it can be concluded that Samanta Sena spent his early days in Karnāta and in his old

age he came to Bengal and settled somewhere near the Ganges. A problem arises when we notice in the verses III and IV of Naihati plate of Vallāla-Sena that the Sena family though settled in Rādha

(Western Bengal), kept contact with Karnāṭa and one of his members spent his early life in his home country and in his old age came to Bengal where his descendants rose to power afterwards.

It is quite uncertain as to when the Senas came to Bengal. In the Pāla inscription from the time of Deva pāla to that of Madana pāla we often come across a phrase Gauda - Mālava - Khaṣa - Hūna - Kulika - Karnāta - Lāta - Cāta - Bhāta. It seems that the Pāla kings of Bengal had their feudatories from this country. so it is not quite impossible that the Sena kings of Karnāta took their service as feudatories under the Pāla kings. But later on when the pala kings had become weak the Sena feudatories of Karnāṭa again could gather power and influence over the subjects and gradually overpowered the pāla master resulting in the capture of the royal throne of Bengal. There are several other suggestions proposed by the eminent historians about the coming of the Senas from Karnāta to Bengal. About Sāmanta Sena no more information of historical value can be gathered from other historical records.

Hemanta Sena, the son of Samanta Sena seems to have succeeded his father and he seems to have been a very powerful chief ruling over some parts of Bengal. He lived in the last part of 11th Century A.D. and he dissociated the dependence of this family from the supremacy of pala kings. Gradually he managed to perform an independent principality in Rādha, i.e., the modern Burdwan district.

No inscriptional record of the time of Hemanta Sena has yet been discovered and it is not easy to ascertain the exact position held by him in Rādha and this sphere of his influence. In the 5th verse of the Bārrāckpur copperplate of Vijaya-Sena he is described as rājarakṣasudaksah<sup>9</sup> (skilful in the protection of kings). This epithet may imply that, Hemanta Sena held the position of feudatory in Pala empire and extended his support for the protection of his lord. It may suggest that in Hemanta Sena's time the Karnata Sena family had gained some footing in the Rādha region which succeeded in the powerful emergence of Vijaya Sena.

In the Bārrāckpur Copperplate of Vijaya Sena, Hemanta Sena is called the Mahārājādhirāja<sup>10</sup>. In the Deopārā inscription of Vijaya-Sena Hemanta Sena's wife is called Yośodevī<sup>11</sup>. Hemanta Sena was succeeded by his son Vijaya Sena who has to his credit some very important inscriptions. Vijaya Sena probably ruled for a very long time, i.e. over sixty years. The era named Lakṣmana Samvat probably started from the time of Vijaya Sena. It is believed that the era was founded by Vallāla Sena to commemorate the birth of his son Lakṣmana Sena, when he was in Mithila on an expedition<sup>12</sup>. In the Bārrāckpur copperplate inscription

Vijaya Sena is said to have his queen Vilāsadevī<sup>13</sup>, a princess of the Sena family which probably ruled over Southern Rādha. In the Naihāṭi copper plate inscription<sup>14</sup> Vilāsadevi is called Pradhānamahisi of Vijaya Sena. Vijaya Sena established his greatness by conquering nearly the whole of Bengal. It is assumed that he had ascended the throne about 1095 A.D. from which time he ruled for about 62 years. He might have entered into an alliance with Ananta Varman, Coṅganga of Kalinga and was profited by it in establishing his supremacy in Radha. Such an idea may be gathered from the expression coda ganga sakha<sup>15</sup> used in respect of him in Anandabhata's Vallalacarita.

From his Deopārā inscription we know that Vijaya Sena had to fight with several chiefs of which Nānya, vira, Rāghava, Vardhana and the Kings of Gauda, Kāmarūpa and Kalinga are worth mentioning<sup>16</sup>. of these chiefs Vardhana and Vira are identified with the allied chiefs who joined Rāmapāla of the Pāla dynasty. Rāghava was probably a king of Kalinga and he has been identified with a son (the second son) of Ananta Varman of Codaganga. Nānya<sup>17</sup> was probably a Karnāta chief who has conquered Mithilā about 1097 A.D. The King of Gauda who according to the Deopārā inscription was defeated by Vijaya Sena, was probably Madana pāla of the Pāla dynasty who was ruling at that time in some parts of North Bengal. The Deopārā inscription states that Vijaya Sena erected a magnificent temple of Pradyumnesvara<sup>18</sup> to at Deopārā which was situated about seven miles to the west of the town Rajsahi. It may be concluded here that Vijaya Sena had an effective conquest over a large part of North Bengal. The King of Assām who was defeated by Vijaya Sena was perhaps Vaidyadeva<sup>19</sup>.

While the Deopārā inscription records the victorious expedition of Vijaya Sena to the North, East and south, his achievement in the west is not properly recorded. But the long and prosperous reign of Vijaya Sena was a grand episode in the history of Bengal. He restored peace and stability in Bengal which has been beautifully described

by Umāpatidhara in the Deopārā inscription. It is a fine poetic expression of high tribute paid to a remarkable career. Vijaya Sena had uncommon courage and military genius and so the royal titles applied to his name such as Paramesvara, Parama-bhattāraka, Mahārājādhiraja and Arirāja-vrsabha-sankara<sup>20</sup> are fully justified. Vijaya Sena ruled upto 1158 A.D. which was probably the year of his death. With the successful reign of Vijaya Sena, the power of the Pāla rulers came to an end in Bengal and Bihār and with the effort of Vijaya Sena the whole of Bengal came under one supreme king.

Vijaya Sena was succeeded by his son Vallāla Sena in 1158 or 1160 A.D. We have only one single important inscription of the time of Vallāla Sena, i.e. Naihātī copper plate inscription. From this inscription we are informed that Vallāla Sena had some positive military successes to his credit. Vallāla Sena perhaps overpowered Madanapāla, the last pāla ruler of Magadha in 1162 A.D. and with this the Pālas of Magadha might have received the final defeat. Vallāla Sena, the royal disciple of Aniruddha seems to have composed four works, of which two are known to exist. His Acāra-Sāgara and Pratisthāsāgara are mentioned as already composed in verses 56 and 55 respectively of his Dāna-sāgara, and the former work is also known from citations in the Smṛti-ratnākara of Vedācārya and in the Madana-pārijāta of Visvesvara Bhatta. But these two works of Vallāla Sena have not yet been recovered. His Dāna-sāgara, according to the author's own statement was written under the instruction (guroh sikṣayā) of his Guru Aniruddha, but Raghunandana believes<sup>21</sup> that it was the work of Aniruddha Bhatta himself, Adbhuta-sāgara contains a reference to Vallāla Sena whose arms were as if the pillars for putting the elephants into chain. The term elephant used here is the lord of Gauda<sup>22</sup> and it seems that vallala Sena's successful conflict with the Gauda king is suggested here. The Vallāla carita of An an dabhata refers to Vallāla Sena's expedition against Mithilā during the reign of his father. But the authentic city of this fact has not been accepted by the scholars. The epigraphic evidences of the Sena era left the impression that Vallāla Sena's reign was chiefly marked by peaceful condition. Vallāla Sena was a very great scholar, an author of repute, a social reformer who revived the orthodox Hindu rites. He married Rāmādevī, the daughter of a Cālukya king<sup>23</sup>, probably Jagadekamalla II. He used to keep contact with his ancestral land Karnāta. In imitation of his father Vallāla Sena assumed the epithet Arirāja-niharsaka-sankara along with other royal titles. According to traditions current in Bengal, the dominions of Vallāla Sena comprised five provinces, viz., Vanga, Varendra, Rādha, Bāgaī and Mithilā<sup>24</sup>. As regards Bāgdi it is generally identified with a portion of modern Sundar bans and sometimes it (Bāgai), is identified with the boarder land of Rādha and Utkala.

A passage in the Adbhuta-sagara says that before the work was completed he, accompanied by his queen, went to 'Nirjarapura' at the confluence of the Ganges and Yamunā, leaving to his son Lakṣmana Sena the great burden of maintaining his empire and completing his literary work (Adbhuta-sagara). It is generally accepted that Vallala Sena died in 1179 A.D. Laksmāna Sena succeeded about Sena succeeded Vallala Sena in 1178-79 A.D. We have in our posse have in our possession 8 inscriptions of Laksmāna Sena which referred to various achievements of the king. Laksmāna Sena's Bhowal inscription reports that when he was a young man the king of Kalinga presented various gifts and he defeated the kings of Kāshi and Kamarūpa<sup>25</sup>. In the Mādhanagar inscription Lakṣmana Sena is described as "viracakravarti sārvaḥauma" and "Vijayi" and he is also to have crippled Kalinga and he subdued Kāmarūpa. From the copper-plate inscription of Lakṣmana Sena's son we know that he planted pillars of victory (vijaya stambha) at Puri, Benares and Allahabad<sup>26</sup>. It has been suggested that these victories of Laksmāna sena were achieved by him during his youth and possibly during the reign of his grandfather Vijaya Sena. For we have already been told that Vijaya Sena led his arms against the kings of Gauda, Kalinga, Kāmarūpa and also against the king of Kasi of a gāhaḥavāla dynasty.

It is most likely that Lakṣmana Sena as a Youngman had accompanied Vijaya Sena in these campaigns and later on these campaigns were recorded by his sons as belonging to his own type. The king of kan who was defeated by Lakṣmana Sena has been identified with Jaya Candra o Gahadavāla dynasty (c 1170--1193 A.D.), who was evidently of contemporary Laksmāna Sena. Jayacandra probably ruled over Benares and Allah abad and Laksmāna Sena and Allahabad and Laksmāna Sena wrested these territories from Jayacandra. But some his that it was quite unnatural for a young man like Laksmāna Sena to have snatched away the above mentioned territories from a powerful king like Jayacandra. so the reference to the erection of his victory pillars at Benares and Allah abad are believed to have no basis in fact.

In the Madhānagar and Bhowal inscriptions Lakṣmana Sena has been given many high-sounding epithets, one of which is the title of Gaudesvara, i.e. the Lord of Gauda<sup>27</sup>. This particular title does not occur in other records

of Laksmāna Sena and this title is not seen to have been used by his predecessors Vijaya Sena and Vallāla Sena. From these evidences it can be presumed that Laksmāna Sena got total possession of Gauda and took for himself the title. But this argument cannot be totally supported for we have evidences that Vijaya Sena established Sena authority over the whole of Bengal and there is every doubt in the statement that Lakṣmaṇa Sena conquered the whole of Bengal. So the title a not be taken in the true sense of the word. But it can be assumed this title was attached to his name only to glorify him. From Govindapur and saktipur plates of Laksmāna Sena issued respectively in the 2nd and 6th years of his reign - it had been established that Laksmāna Sena had controlled over western Bengal right from the beginning of his reign.

Towards the close of Lakṣmaṇa. te close of Laksmāna Sena's reign the Sena empire was faced with the impending danger of the Muslim invasion. But from the inscription of Laksmāna Sena and his successors we have no evidence to prove that Laksmāna Sena could challenge the Muslim successfully. But it is likely that he was successful in checking the march to Gānadavala under the king Jayacandra towards the kingdom. From the Jaina sources we know that Jayacandra attacked the capital of Lakṣmaṇa Sena, but Lakṣmaṇa Sena with the help of his skilful minister Kumāradeva was able to drive him off<sup>28</sup>.

Laksmāna Sena could have achieved some success in attacking the kings of Kāmarūpa and Orissa. From the Deopārā inscription of Umāpatidhara we know that he attained victory over the Cedi King.

Laksmāna Sena himself was a staunch follower of rom while his father and grand father are mentioned aivas. In almost all his inscriptions in their records as Saivas. In almost all his inscriptions Lakṣmaṇa Sena assumes the title of Parama-Valsnava or Parama-Nāras imha. It is very curious that in the Govindapur<sup>29</sup> and Bhowal inscription<sup>30</sup> of Laksmāna Sena, his father Vallāla Sena is also mentioned as Parama-Valsnava. It cannot, however, be explained why Laksmāna Sena changed his religious faith.

Towards the close of his reign when Laksmāna Sena himself was very old and could not look after the affairs of the Kingdom, there were signs of disintegration within the Sena Kingdom itself. Several independent kings established separate kingdoms in various parts of eastern India and the concluding part of Laksmāna Sena's reign was marked with the various types of disruptions. The rise of the independent chiefs in different parts of kingdom gradually loosened the solidarity of the empire leading to the process of decline. The death blow to the Sena empire was conducted by the Turkish invader Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji, who gradually

established his supremacy in Bihar, invaded Nadia and compelled the old king Lakṣmaṇa Sena to take shelter in eastern Bengal. He captured western and northern Bengal and laid the foundation of Muslim rule in the region. Laksmāna Sena's rule existed from 1178–1206 A.D. and he was succeeded by two kings of very minor importance.

## **Abstract**

A short history of the Sena Rulers as mentioned in the Pala Inscriptions: By- Dr. Supam Mukherjee

From the Deopara inscription of Vijaysena we know that Samanta Sena is also for the first king of the pala Dynasty. The original home of the sena family is believed to be Karnataka from where the senas migrated to Bengal. Samanta Sena has been described in the some inscription as Brahmasns first and subsequently become katriyas. Hemanta sena, son of Samanta Sena seems to have been succeeded his fathe and he seems to have been a very powerful chief rulling over some parts of Bengal.

Hemantasena was succeeded by his son vijoya sena who has to his erdit some very importance inscriptions like Barrackpur copper plate vijoy sena probably ruled for a very long time, i.e over sixty years. Vijoy sena was succeeded by his son vallasena in 1158 or 1160A.D. we have onlyn one single important inscription of the time of vallasena,i.e naihati copper plate. Inscription vallasena perhaps overpowered madanpala, the last palas of Magadha might have received the final defect. Vallasena, the royal disciple of Anirudha Valta Seems to have composed four works, of which two are known to exist. Laksmāna sena succeeded vallala sena in about 1178-79 A.D. we have in our possession & inscriptions of Laksmāna sena himself was very old and could not look after the affairs of the kingdom , these were signs of disintrgrations within the sena kingdom ifself conducted by

the Turkish in vader Mohammed bin Baktiyer Khilji, who gradually established his supremacy in Bihar invaded and compelled the old king Laksmana sena to take shelter in eastern Bengal. Laksmana sena rule existed from 1178-1206 AD and he was succeeded by two kings of very minor importance.

Key Word- Bramha Kastariya, Rajputra , Laskmi(Wealth), Rajaraksasu daksah, Ariraja-nihanka-sankara, Parama- Vaisnava.

## Notes and Reference

1. Nihati Copper Plate of Vallalasena, IB- III, Verse 3 and 4 , PP-71-72 & 76.
2. Deopara Inscriptions of Vijoyasena, IB-III, Verse – 5 PP-46 & 51 EI Vol-I 307 & 312.
3. Vallalaeharita, HP Sastri's edition, Calcutta 1904, PP-60-61, HP Santri's English translation PP-47-48.
4. Madhainagar Copper Plate of Laksmana sena , IB\_III verse 4 PP-110 & 113. CF. Madhainagar & Bhowas Plates verse 4,PP-110, EI Vol xxvi. PP-5&10.
5. i. Barackure Copper Plate of Vijoyasena, IB\_III, Verse 3, PP-62 & 64 EI Vol xv P-282.
- ii. Naihati Copper Plate of Vallalasena, IB-III Verse-3, P-72, EI Vol XIV, PP-159.  
CF- Madhainagar Copper Plate of Laksmana seba IB-III, Verse 6, PP-110 & 114.
6. Deopara Inscriptions of Vijoyasena, IB-III Verse 8 , PP-47 & 51, EI Vol -I PP-308 & 312.
7. Deopara Inscriptions of Vijoyasena, IB-III, Verse-5, PP-46 & 51, EI Vol-I PP-307 & 312.
8. Ibid, IB-III, Verse- 9, PP-46 & 51 EI Vol-I ,PP-307 & 312.
9. Barrackpore Copper Plate of Vijoyasena , IB-III, Verse -5, PP-62 & 65, EI Vol- XV, 282
10. 1 bid , IB-III, Line 23, PP-62 & 66 EI, Vol XV P-283.
11. Deopara Inscriptions of Vijoyasena , IB-III, Verse -14, PP-47 & 52 EI- Vol-I, P-309.
12. JRAS, 1930, PP-08
13. Barrackpore Copper Plate Of Vijoyasena, IB-III. Verse -7 , PP-62 & 85 , EI Vol-VX, PP-283 & 285.
14. Nihati Copper Plate of Vijoyasena , IB-III, Verse 10, PP-72 & 77.
15. Vallala Charita Text, P-61 , Trans, PP-48.
16. Deopara Inscription of Vijoyasena IB-III , Verse-20-22, PP-48 & 53-54, EI Vol-I, PP-309 & 314.
17. Upendra Thakur: History of Mithila, PP-227 ff.EC Majumder, King Nanyadeva of Mithila, 1HQ, Vol VII, PP-759 ff. E.K Choudhury: :the Karnataks of Mithila, ABORI, Vol-XXXV. PP-91ff.
18. Deopara Inscriptions of Vijoyasena, Ib-III, Verse-23, PP-48-49 & 54-55, EI Vol-I, PP-305 ff.
19. R.C Majumdar, HB-I, PP-203-214. P.C Choudhury, the History of Civilizations of the people of Assam, PP-271-275
20. Barrackpore Copper Plate of Vijoyasena, IB-III, Lines 23-24 & 48-49, PP-64,66 & 67. EI-XV , PP-283-284.
21. Ekadasi- Tattva, Ed. Jivanada Vidyasagar, Vol-II, PP-44
22. Gaudendra- Kunjaralana- Stambhaleahur-Mahipitih/ MD Jha (ED): Adhutasagara, PP-4.
23. Madhainagar & Bhowal Plates, IB-III, Verse -9 P-110, EI Vol-XXVI, P-6.
24. Vallala-Charita, Ch. I V-8
25. Madhainagar Copper Plate of Laksmana Sena, IB-III, Verse -11, PP-111 & 114, EI Vol-XXVI, PP-6 ff.
26. i. Edilpur Copper Plate of Kesavasena, IB-III, Verse- 13, PP-123 & 127-128.
- ii. Madanpara Copper Plate of Visvarupasena, IB-III, Verse 13, P-135.
- iii. Sahitya Parishat Plate of Visvarupasena, IB-III, Verse – 14 , P-144.
27. Madhainagar Copper Plate of Laksmanasena,IB-III, Lines 26 FF. P-111. Bhowal Plate, Line 26 FF. EI, Vol-XXVI, P-7.
28. Rajasekharasuri, Prabanadhakasa, snghi Jain Grasthamala, No-VI, PP-88-90(14<sup>th</sup> Century A.D).
29. Govindapur Copper Plate of Laksmana sena, Line 25, Lins – 22-23, P-95.
30. Bhowal Copper Plate of Laksmanasena , Line 25, EI VOL-XXVI, P-7.
31. Mitra, Notice, 1.191, VO-278, HP Sastri, Notice, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series , I, P-170.

## Abbreviations

1. IB- Inscriptions of Bengal
2. EI- Epigraphia Indica
3. JASB- Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

