

CHAPTER II

HISTORY

ANCIENT HISTORY

Legends and Traditions

According to popular tradition, Sitapur derives its name from Sita, the wife of Rama who is said to have sojourned in this place with him during a pilgrimage. In the days of Akbar the name of the town was Chhatyapur¹ or Chhitiapur² which might have been a corrupt form of Sitapur or it might have had no connection with Sita at all.

It is said that the two ancient kingdoms of northern India, one belonging to the Lunar race of Hastinapur and the other to the Solar race of Ayodhya, converged in this district. According to one story, Hargaoon (in tahsil Sitapur) was founded by the famous King Harishchandra of Ayodhya, but according to another legend it was the capital of King Virata, where the Pandavas spent part of their exile, although the country of Vairata is usually identified with the modern town of Bairat, forty-two miles north-east of Jaipur in Rajasthan³. One of the many places where Sita and Rama are said to have bathed, she in order to remove the pollution caused by her abduction by Ravana and he for slaying him, is Nimsar (Naimisharanya). Manwan (in tahsil Sidhauri) is described as having been built by King Mandhata of Ayodhya, and also as the Manipura said in the *Mahabharata* to be the capital of King Babhravahan a son of Arjuna. But the Manipura mentioned in the *Mahabharata* was situated on the seacoast in Kalinga.⁴ A place opposite Nimsar and called Orajhar, Oralih or Bennagar, is connected with the mythical raja Bena or Vena whose stories are current from Punjab to Bengal.

The earliest tradition of historical times relates that a fort, near Seota in tahsil Biswan, was built by Alha, the famous Banaphar hero of the court of Paramardideva or Parmal Chandella. Another place, the foundation of which is ascribed to this Alha, was Unchgaon (known later as Nawagarh) on the river Dahawar, but it was washed away by the river. One of Alha's captains was Ranua Pasi, the reputed founder of Purwa Tambolian (now known as Tambaur).⁵

¹ Adul Fazl : *Ain-i-Akbari*, Jantrett's translation, Vol. II, (Second Edition), Calcutta, 1949), p. 188

² Nevill, H. R. : *Sitapur : A Gazetteer*, (1905), p. 214

³ Chaudhuri, S. B. : *Ethnic Settlements in Ancient India*, p. 31

⁴ *Mahabharata*, (Gita Press, Gorakhpur, V. S. 2013), Pt I, p. 266 ; Dey, N. L. : *The Geographical Dictionary of Ancient and Mediaeval India*, (Calcutta, 1899), p. 54

⁵ Nevill, H. R. : *Sitapur : A Gazetteer*, (1905), p. 119

