CHAPTER-I
[A] INTRODUCTION

REGION : MEANING AND CONCEPT

Regional history has been enjoying a resurgence lately. It is evident by the works of social scientists and their interest in the formation of regional identities in South Asia.¹ Their efforts have undoubtedly generated live interest in the field called 'regional history', yet there has been no consensus on the definition of a region.

Sabyasachi Bhattacharya² is of the opinion that historians talk about region all the time but usually they do not give any thought to region as a concept. In fact, "regions" have variety of dimensions. Some of them pertain to a particular period (e.g. the Bombay Presidency, a colonial invention which did not have a past), some have deep historical roots (e.g. Oudh of the Ancient times, Ayodhya, Oudh of medieval times and Oudh of the British), some have cultural importance (e.g. Mahākośala or Jhārkhand) while some have linguistic affiliations (e.g. Maithilī or Bhojpūrī regions) etc.³

Therefore, a systematic thinking has to be devoted towards understanding a region and regionalization. What historians denote as regions are actually not immutable, that they originate in a particular period of history and may cease to be meaningful in another period. Regions are therefore, products of history. They are neither ephemeral, nor are they

³ Ibid.
unchanging and everlasting. Regions may arise and disintegrate, expand and contract. They show a diversity in the criteria of regionalization. Sometimes the criterion is linguistic (G.A. Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India 1903-27 is a famous example), sometimes politico-administrative, sometimes cultural and so on. It is, of course, quite possible that a region may satisfy more than one criterion.

When we talk of 'regional history' we attribute historical continuity and homogeneity (political, economic, social, cultural, etc.) and we delineate boundaries which are not necessarily congruent with the 'given' boundaries we started with. Thus, the 'region' in historiography is a construct historians make and employ.

Regionalization in history involves hierarchization of spatial units. On the one hand, the notion of region implies relationship to a greater whole (that may be a civilization, a nation, an empire and so on), on the other hand the notion of region subsumes that of subregions. Thus regional history chooses to concentrate at a particular level within a hierarchy of units. These fundamental and rather obvious constituents of a region are of immense use here, as we are concerned with the process of how the socially bounded space designated 'Mithilā' (roughly corresponding to some major districts of Bihar and Terai regions of Nepal) came to acquire its identity – the distinctive characteristics that mark it off as a cultural unit at a certain level of generalization.

**STUDY OF MITHILĀ AS A REGION**

In the Indian context regional history assumes added significance as India has ever been a sub-continent, a vast geographical entity teeming with a variety of cultures, religions and languages. Each fragment of this vast land mass has fostered a unique culture of its own. Regional history in India is a far more complex and absorbing subject because often a particular region has
been subject to strange pressures of time which in turn have given a certain distinct identity to it.

Mithilā is a well-marked natural region with varying boundaries in different ages. It is a land steeped in myth, song, tradition and history. It has variety of dimensions - historical, cultural and linguistic. Many records, relics, texts and traditions bear those indelible etchings of time which suggests that Mithilā was the seat of classical learning, poetics and philosophy.

The actual area of modern Mithilā on the basis of the census report of 1941 is roughly 19.275 thousand square miles in India including the modern districts of Madhubanī, Darbhanga, Samastīpura, Vaiśālī, Muzaffarpura, Campārana, Monghyr, Saharsā and Purneā and about 10,000 square miles in the Kingdom of Nepāl. Linguistically, Maithilī is spoken, apart from the above mentioned places, in the districts of Bhāgalpura, Sitāmarhī, parts of whole of Bihar. Territorially too, the extent of Mithilā from ancient to modern times is a subject of great variation as we see its different names in different periods, viz. Videha, Tirābhukti, Tughlaqpura, Tirhut, etc. It is the culture of Mithilā, that even in the changing circumstances has remained constant. Infact, although the whole face of India is undergoing a rapid change, the cultural tradition of Mithilā still continues.

The present dissertation aims at providing a broad analytical survey of the prevalent socio-religious aspects of medieval Mithilā. Although the regional perspective is predominant so far general approach towards the theme is concerned, a comparative, comprehensive perspective, reflecting a wider canvass has, too, been taken care of. The role of medieval Mithilā in the national perspective is noteworthy because the period under review marks the transition phase from the old pattern to newer one that witnessed both change and continuity.
UNDERSTANDING MEDIEVAL MITHILĀ

There has been a consensus among historians now a days regarding periodization in history in terms of ‘ancient’ or ‘early’, ‘medieval’ and ‘modern’, but there has been more than a couple of hypotheses before them as to the upper limit or the beginning of the ‘medieval’ period. The first one purports to date it from the inroads of the Hūnas, the second hypothesis signalises this beginning from the death of Harṣavardhana, the third one suggests the beginning after the doctrine of the Imperial Pratihāras and the fourth one seeks to date this upper limit in 1200 AD. Similar debate persists with regard to the lower limit, too. However, a certain period in history does not and can not begin and end on or from the particular day or in a particular year or even a decade, howsoever, significant, since causes and effect and their ramifications may extend much beyond the time limits of any given period. The concern of the present thesis is with distinctive forces and factors in operation in the history of Mithilā which distinguish the ‘medieval’ period from ‘ancient’ or ‘modern’.

As early as 1967, Niharranjan Ray had laid down the major characteristics of ‘medievalism’ in Indian history, which he traced from seventh century. These included ‘limited territorial vision’; regionalism in art, language, literature and script; supremacy of the scriptures and religious texts; proliferation of religious cults and sects; multiplication of gods and goddesses; accentuation of sectarian rivalries and jealousies; feudalization of land ownership and increasing fragmentation, etc.

The notion of ‘limited territorial vision’ may be discernible in Mithilā from seventh century onward. The totality of Mithilā as a geographical and cultural vision remains, but not as a territorial one. Mithilā from seventh century onwards represented a limited area, which did not have a permanent political

seat and its centres kept changing⁵ (Simrāongarh in Nepāl, Darbhanga, modern Šakari in Madhubanī, etc.) until it was included in the Subāh of Bihar by Akbar. Hence, the vision was limited by what is known as ‘medieval Mithilā, a much more limited areas than ancient Mithilā as recorded in text and traditions.

Regionalism from now on becomes a feature in politics and culture of Mithilā. It makes itself felt equally in the realm of script (proto-nāgarī, Mithilākṣara, proto-Bengāli), language (Maithilī, Avahaṭṭa) and literature. It came to inform the domain of literary aesthetics of the period, and we hear increasingly of local literary styles and modes of expression in the writings of Jyotirīśvara, Vidyāpati and others. Mithilā witnessed other medieval characteristics too, during this period.

Society in medieval Mithilā presented the picture of a feudal structure with the king or Rājā at its head. There was a vast difference in the standard of living amongst different classes of people. With the advent of Islam and with the fall of the old time ruling classes, the position of the legal and formal powers of brāhmaṇas had, no doubt, undergone a considerable change but on the whole, with the elimination of the moral rivalry of the Kṣatriyās, the authority and influence of the brāhmaṇas had increased among the Hindu classes.

The arrival of Muslim power made the rulers of Mithilā conscious towards their civilization and culture. Themselves the noted scholars, Karṇāta, Oinvāra and the early Khandavāla rulers were great patrons of education and learning. A number of scholars were patronized by them and under their leadership Sanskrit language and vernacular literature could flourish to a great extent. The social institutions were either reorganized or tightened and

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⁵ Bayāz of Mullā Taqiā, Text in the Urdu monthly Ma'āsir, Patna, May-June, 1949, pp.81-94
rigidity and orthodoxy dominated the social scene which had far-reaching consequences over the socio-cultural life of Mithilā.

However, in course of time, due to constant contact, neighborliness of residences, intrusive, eclectic spirit and synthesizing influences of Hinduism, the arrogant attitude of superiority and mutual contempt and antagonism on the part of the members of the opposing faiths were softened, and common grounds were found in various spheres, social and domestic life, manners, morals, economic implications, and in art, architecture, language and literature. Such a contact is bound to affect the socio-religious life of each other.

The above reasons and considerations have prompted me to study of religion and society of ‘Medieval Mithilā’ roughly between 1000 A.D. to 1700 A.D.

The connotation of the term ‘Social and Religious History’ is very vague and clarification of the term seems an essential task. Social and religious history of a country or a region generally endeavours to present the varied aspects of the daily life of the inhabitants of different faiths in past ages. It is, in fact, difficult to leave out politics altogether from the history of any people, but attempts have been made here to emphasise mainly on the fundamental features of social and religious life of people of Mithilā during the period under review. It is, however, a difficult task to give an exhaustive description of each activity of the society. However, a sincere effort has been made to present in this work as detailed an account of the important features of the religion and society of medieval Mithilā as was possible in view of the sources available for the present study.

EXISTING STUDIES, SCOPE AND HYPOTHESES

It is gratifying to note that Mithilā is under the microscope of scholars representing various disciplines. This eventful period in the history of Mithilā
has enjoyed the attention of many renowned historians who have explored it from various angles. The result is a formidable and impressive bulk of historical writings which have kept alive the various dimensions of the region in historical memory. Without undermining the importance of the past studies which are essentially of a pioneering nature, it is felt that these researches hardly describe in detail the religious and social history of medieval Mithilā. The earlier pioneering works of Manmohan Cakrawarty, K.P. Jayaswal, S.N. Singh, R.C. Majumdar, G.A. Grierson, Parmeshwara Jha, Ras Bihari Das, R.K. Chaudhary, U. Thakur, J.K. Mishra, Vijaykant Mishra, C.P.N. Sinha and others are no doubt valuable contributions but they hardly give us any coherent and connected history of the land. The canvas of History of Mithilā (Circa 3000 B.C. to 1556 A.D.) by Upendra Thakur, is so wide that it has not been possible for the author, despite his best intentions, to present a coherent picture of the issues concerned. The credit of producing the first monograph on almost scientific lines entitled History of Tirhut goes to S.N. Singh, yet his work is full of limitations as it only touches upon some aspects of a rich and complex subject. Mithilā in the Age of Vidyāpatī by R.K. Chaudhary is exhaustive study of life and culture of the people of Mithilā, but the descriptions as the title of the book suggests, are confined to a very limited period of time. Even the latest account entitled Migration and Achievements of Maithila Pandits: The Migrant Scholars of Mithilā, C. 800–1947 by J.C. Jha simply furnishes a general outline as it is evident from the title that it deals with the achievements of migrant Maithilas in various parts of India and the World.

Regarding the scope of the present study, as the title of the subject implies, its comprehensive treatment ought to examine on the one hand, (i) the religious history of Mithilā and the inter-connections between Hinduism and Islam and on the other, (ii) the social and cultural history of the land. Mithilā, with her rich socio-cultural heritage and eventful history, continues to
baffle the scholars and historians. Its ancient culture did not perish on account of the ‘onslaughts’ of the Muslims. It has been said that the Muslim rule started persecution, temples were razed to ground and brāhmaṇas were put to death, but Muslims were reasonably tolerant, and at all times Hindu chiefs continued to rule in outlying parts of the country, paying tributes to their Muslim overlords. Conversion to Islam were numerous, and in some regions the Hindus were compelled to embrace Islam, but mutual influence was inherent in the very social structure of Hindu society. There were contradictions in brāhmanical social orders, evils were inherent in the very social structure of Hindu society. The contemporary literature attest to the prevalence of elements of the process of cultural synthesis in medieval Mithilā. These aspects of the history of medieval Mithilā yet remain to be scientifically studied and analyzed.

The hypotheses of the present study may be summed up as following:

(i) The available researches do not deal with the ‘religious conflict’ if any, and the cultural and social synthesis that emerged especially after the Bhakti and Sufi cults became very popular at the grass-root level of the society. These ‘conflicts’ cannot be attributed entirely to a clash between the two religious sects – Islam and Brāhmaṇical social order. No doubt there were conflicts but these conflicts were product of the agrarian stress and strain rather than religious and cultural issues. Even if there were conflicts, the underlying socio-economic factors provided the background. One wonders how the Islamic rule continued for such a long time in medieval Mithilā.

(ii) It is generally believed that although Islam brought about social transformation in many ways in different part of the world, there was only partial change as a result of ‘conversion’ in India. Several theories have already been propounded by scholars to explain the growth of
Islam in India, but in the context of medieval Mithilā, it is yet to be probed as to why these conversions took place? Which of the theories explain the cause of conversion? What factors were working behind this issue: whether it was religious, political, economic or social compulsion that remained instrumental for the people to get themselves converted to other faith? Was there any state policy regarding the forcible act of conversion? It is high time that these factors be discussed and analysed in the context of socio-economic realities. It is yet to be examined whether the whole brähmaṇical system was rigid and obscurantist not to allow the untouchables to remain within the religious framework of the then society.

(iii) Aspects of the spread of the Sufi and the Bhakti cults do not find mention in any published work which was an epoch-making event of the period under study.

(iv) Social organizations of Hindus and Muslims, its complexities, the institution of ‘Kulinism’, adaptability of the customs, manners and beliefs of different faiths, concept of slavery, system of education, position of women in medieval Mithilā need to be analyzed with an open mind to reach a suitable conclusion. From the contemporary sources, it is evident that in the spheres of art, culture, religion, philosophy, paintings and more specifically language and literature medieval Mithilā contributed a lot to the enhancement of a civic society.

(v) The dimension of cultural synthesis needs to be analysed in the light of the contemporary Hindu and Muslim literature of the period under study.

The increasing need for a clear understanding of the history of medieval Mithilā and the ongoing researches on various inscriptions found in the region encourage us to incorporate the systematic analysis of all relevant
source materials to illumine the dark pockets of this fertile field of research. The methodology of such a persuasion can be framed in different ways. However, our basic intentions will be following:

i. Close examination of the available literary sources in different languages and their comparative study.

ii. The textual basis of archaeological findings collected from different sites of Mithilā.

iii. To trace the genesis of conflict and contradiction inherent in the Brāhmaṇical social order.

iv. A comparative analysis of Hindu and Muslim social systems in spheres of customs, manners, education, women’s position, etc.

v. Close examination of the prologues, epilogues and colophons used in the various local works and find out whether they furnish available data regarding socio-religious and cultural life of the people of medieval Mithilā.

vi. To construct the communication networks between Hindus and Muslims through which they exchanged their thoughts and customs and helped in the process of social and cultural synthesis between them.

Our basic focus is on the genesis of contact between the people of different faiths, particularly the Hindus and the Muslims and attempt to unravel the myths of ‘conflict’ and bitterness between them by presenting a coherent, comprehensive and integrated picture of the problems discussed above.

AVAILABLE SOURCES

It is relevant to take an objective view of the constraints that beset any worthwhile pioneer work on the theme that has regional dimension. Primary
sources for the captioned theme are scattered and merit processional handling. According to renowned archaeologist of Bihar, B.P. Sinha, the medieval archaeology in Bihar is completely a virgin field. It needs further relentless investigations and unbiased analysis without any preconceived theory.\textsuperscript{6}

Prof. S.H. Askari has also lamented paucity of resource material. He has stated:

"Even the Muslims who were so fond of chronicling events and who established themselves as early as 11\textsuperscript{th} Century in this land and made it very soon a centre of Islamic culture have left no cotemporary account of their political and cultural activities. An unusually thick darkness veils the chapter of Bihar history relating specially to Turko-Afghan period."\textsuperscript{7}

An attempt has been made to have an access to all available library sources. The existing source materials have been subject to critical scrutiny. Further, sequence of events and their bearing on the theme have been systematically arranged with a view to provide an integrated view of socio-religious scenario that was prevalent in medieval Mithilā. The focus of the study is to bring forth all relevant details that featured the life of the gentry and common folk of medieval Mithilā.

This work is mainly based on the contemporary vernacular literature, Sanskrit literature, i.e. \textit{Nibandhas}, \textit{Dharmaśāstras}, \textit{Nātakas}, \textit{Smṛtis}, etc., Hindī literature and Maithili literature including folk songs and lores. We have also referred to some foreign travelers including the Muslim travelers' account of the contemporary scene. However, we get some important information from the contemporary Muslim historians. Thus, Persian chronicles also, to some


\textsuperscript{7} Askari, S.H. : ‘Medieval Bihar : Sultanate and Mughal Period, Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library, p.3.
extent constitute a source of information of the present work. Lexicon works of Bihar, mainly of Sufī saints also helps us, to a greater extent, to complete this work.

The importance of contemporary literature in constructing a social history of Mithilā can hardly be overstated. Literature, in deed, is "the mirror of the age" in which it flourishes. There is, however, sufficient scope for literary exaggerations; yet, making possible allowance, it can be said that literature can throw ample light on the various fact of the life of a people. Hence, particular care has been taken in the present work to study the various aspects of the social life of the people of Mithilā during the period under review as reflected in different contemporary literatures, especially Hindī Sanskrit and Maithilī. The works of Jyotirīśvara and Vidyāpati throw ample light on the social history of medieval Mithilā. The picture presented of social life and culture in Eastern India in general and of Mithilā in particular in Varṇa Ratnākara is of inestimable value. The book in prose, described by Dr. Manmohan Cakrawarty as "the oldest work in Maithilī language of North Bihar so far known which goes back to the first half, perhaps the first quarter of the fourteenth century", was a unique achievement, being the one and the only of its type. The literary works of Vidyāpati, enormous in extent, seems to be an indispensable source.

The Puruṣa Parīkṣā (written in Sanskrit) Kīrttilatā, Padāvalī and several other works throw refreshing light upon the history of medieval India in general and Mithilā in particular. We also have some Sanskrit literature written mostly by local scholars such as Caṇḍeśwara Thākura, Vācaspati Miśra, etc., during the period. In this field Smṛti and Nibandha writers, some of whom have been mentioned earlier, are of great importance and no social historian can afford to lose sight of such an invaluable source. The manuscripts and inscriptions of Nepāl and Bengal and nearby territories give us a good account of the social history of Mithilā.
The *Panji or Chronicle* (known as *Panji Prabandha*) of the kings of Mithilā and other important people is an important document. It begins in Śaka 1235 (A.D. 1313) in the reign of Harisimhadeva (C. 1303-1326 A.D.). Not only upon genealogy, it also enlightens us on social and religious aspects of the history of the land concerned. The four volumes of Mithilā-manuscripts, edited by A. Banerji, Sastri and K.P. Jayaswal also help us in listing the names and dates of the rulers and scholars of Mithilā during our period. The writings of George Abraham Grierson are very important sources for our study.

For a student of social and cultural history, the study of folklore is extremely essential. It is true that it lacks the flourish and glamour of a court chronicle, but in its own way it professes to reconstruct a spiritual history of man, as represented by the more or less inarticulate voice of the folk. The materials for the study of the social and cultural history of Mithilā is scattered in a variety of folklore and cultural traits and can best be traced to popular religious rites, scriptures, poetry and songs. The folksongs, thus, have also been utilized in constructing the social history of medieval Mithilā in all possible strictness.

The traditional sources as preserved in the writings of Parmeśvara Jhā, Candā Jhā, etc. and in the *Mithilānka of Mithilā Mihir* (1935-36) are also very helpful. Then there are some modern works on Mithilā which constitute a reliable source of information on the period. Recently a scientific work on *Kāyastha Panji* based on palm-leaf manuscripts by Binod Bihari Verma has come out. The only foreign traveller's account to us is that of Dharmaswāmi, who actually visited Mithilā during the Karṇāta period, mentions the fortifications of Simarāongarh. All these sources taken together enable us in constructing the social history of Mithilā under the Oinvāras and Khandavālas to a possible extent.
The Muslim historical works also give significant light on social aspects of our period. We have causal references to Tirhut in Minhāj’s *Tabqāt-i-Nasirī*, Barāni’s *Tārikh-i-Firozshāhī*, Babur’s *Baburnāma*, Abul Fazl’s *Akbarnāma*, Badāoni’s *Muntakhāb-ut-Tawārīkh*, Ghulam Hussain’s *Siyār-ul-Mutekherīn*, Ghulām Hussain Salim’s *Riyāz-us-Salātīn*, Mullā Taqiā’s *Bayāz*, Ikhitisān Dehalawi’s *Basātin-ul-Uns*. Rizqullāh Mushtaqī’s *Wāqiāt-i-Mushtaqī*, and so on. Mention may be made of some of these sources that directly deal with the period under study.

Minhāj’s work is important for us because he lived in the eastern region for sometime and quotes eyewitness account of Muhammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī’s invasion of Bihar and Bengal. He refers to the names of Tirhut and Bang (Darbhāṅgā) from where Hussāmuddīn Iwāz Khaljī exacted tributes and also includes Tirhut in the list of conquest of Iltutmish, but never gives details of the conquest of the region.

Ikhitisān’s *Basātin-ul-Uns*, the rare Persian manuscript, now preserved in the British Museum and in the Leningrad Museum, Moscow, is very valuable as it gives an eye-witness, fairly detailed account of Ghiyāsuddīn Tughlaq’s invasion of Tirhut and its annexation. It has been said that the book is a Hindi tale, written in an ornate prose, copiously interspersed with Arabic and Persian verses by a native of Delhi named Muhammad Sadar Alā Ahmad Hussain Dabīr (Ikhitisān Dehalwī’s original name) who was a hereditary servant at the Delhi Court and Secretary of Chancery. The importance of the work lies in the fact that it was composed in the first year of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq’s reign. It is a good piece of literary work. The book

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also informs us about the various socio-cultural aspects of the then Indian society.

Mullā Taqī Shushtari, also named as Taqī-ud-din or Taqī Muhammad has been mentioned by the authors of *Tabaqāt-i-Akbari* and *Muntakhāb-ut-Tawārīkh*, whom the emperor Jahāngir gave the title of Muwārrikh Khān in 1608. Mullā Taqī was commissioned by Akbar to compose *Shāhnāma*. While in the service of Abdul Rahim Khān-i-Khānā, he had traveled from Jaunpur to Bengal and written a long account of his travels and the affairs of Bengal and Bihar during Akbar’s reign. His travel accounts (*Bayāz*) is based on his own observations, books consulted by him in the library of Gaur and the private papers of Nishāt Khān, a Jāgirdār of Bihar.\(^{14}\)

The evidence of this fragmentary *Bayāz*\(^{15}\), though not contemporary is specific and conclusive on some points relating to political boundaries, the Turkish invasions of South Bihar and Tirhut, conquest of Tirhut and the relations of its Karṇāta rulers with the Delhi Sultans. The *Bayāz* enables us to solve the problem created by Minhāj’s omission to indicate the relationship of Tirhut and Darbhāṅgā with the Delhi Sultanate though he includes these rather loosely among Iltutmish's conquest.

Hence, Mullā Taqī’s account is valuable to us for as it furnishes historical details of the political history of Tirhut starting from Bhakhtiyār’s invasion to Akbar's times.

Besides these, we have two valuable accounts in Urdu *Riāż-i-Tirhut* of Ayodhya Prasad 'Bahar' (1868) and *Ainā-i-Tirhut* of Bihari Lal 'Fitrat' (1883), giving comprehensive details relating to history, tradition of scholarship in

\(^{14}\) Ahmed, Qeyamuddin, *Corpus of Arabic and Persian Inscriptions of Bihar*, KPJRI, Patna, pp. 24-25.

\(^{15}\) A copy of this extremely valuable account prepared by the Mullā Taqī’s disciple, Abdul Hasan dated A.H. 1023 (1627 A.D.) was discovered by the Late Illyās Rehmāni of Darbhāṅgā, who published long extract poem in the Urdu Monthly Journal *'Maasir’*, Patna, May-June 1949. For details see Ahmed, Qeyamuddin, *op. cit.*, pp.24-25.
Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic learning, description of saints of both Hindu and Islamic faith, and society and culture of Mithilā. The Tibetan traveler Darmaswāmi’s account and the hagiographical works in the form of Malfuzāts and Makhatubāts compiled by the disciples of famous sufi saints are equally valuable to us.

Notwithstanding the central theme, a brief reference to geo-political backdrop of the medieval Mithilā region is being added to facilitate the holistic appreciation of the present study under review in the context of the panoramic view of the obtainable socio-religious setting.

MITHILĀ : LOCATION AND NAME

Mithilā also referred as videha, Tīrabhukti and Tirhut etc. denotes the tract of land that lies between 25°28’ and 26°52’ N. Latitude and between 84°56’ and 86°46’ E Longitudes.\(^{16}\)

Mithilā is bounded on the north by the Himālayas, in the south by the Gaṅgā, in the west by the Gaṇḍaki, and on the east by the Kośī. It comprises the present districts of Madhubanī, Darbhāṅgā, Samastīpura, Vaiśālī Muzaffarpura, East Campārana, West Campārana, Monghyr, Saharsā, Madhepurā, Purneā and Katihāra, and the Terai under Nepal lying between these districts and the lower ranges of the Himālayas.\(^{17}\) On north it extends to the hills, as it includes Janakpur and there bounds with Nepal, and old division of India.\(^{18}\) It is a well-marked natural region with its size varying in different ages. From the foothills of the Himālayas in the north to the Gaṅgā in the south it is a hundred miles broad and from the Mahānandā in the east to the Gaṇḍakī in the west it is 250 miles long. Its total area is about 2500 square miles.


\(^{17}\) *Darbhāṅgā District Gazetteer*, p.152.

\(^{18}\) Buchanan, Francis, *An Account of the Purneā District in 1809-10*, BORS, Patna, 1928, p.43.
The Puranic traditions suggest that from the Gaṅges to the Himālayas there exists most sacred Tīrabhukti intersected by fifteen rivers. From the river Kauśikī in the East to the river Gaṇḍakī in the West, the area in its length consists of twenty four Yojanas (192 miles) and from the Gaṅges in the South to the Himālayan forests in the North the width is sixteen Yojanas (128 miles).19 Buchanan writes that Tīrabhukti in Sanskrit and Tirhut in the local dialect are perfectly synonymous with Mithilā, and are in more common use.20

According to the Śaktisangamatantra, Videha or Tīrabhukti spread from the banks of Gaṇḍakī to the forest of Campā and D.C. Sircar further adds that the Gaṇḍakītīra formed the southern boundary, while the modern district of Campāran was the northern boundary of Tirhut.21 Alberuni refers to Tirhut as Tilwat.22 He writes that opposite to Tilwat, the country to the left is called Nepāl.

Sacred literary sources speak a lot about the name of the region, that suggests that it's origin is purely mythical. Although Mithilā is known by various names such as Videha, Tīrabhukti or Tirhut, yet the sources indicate that the name 'Mithilā' is older than others. Valmiki's Rāmāyaṇa identifies that

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19 Brhadviṣṇupurāṇa (Mithilā – Mahātmya Khand), Pt. Dharmanath Sharma, Darbhanga, 1980, Chapter XIV, Ślokas 42-44:
Gaṅgā himavatormadye nadi pañcadaśāntare
Tairabhtiriti khuato deśah paramspāvanah||
Kauśintu samārabhya Gaṇḍakīmadhigamya vai|
Yojnani chaturviśṭata vyayāmah parikirtitah||
Gaṅgā pravāhamārabhya yavadvaimavatamvanam|
Vistāra sōdaśa prokto deśasya kurunandana||
Mithīnāma nagarī namaste loka viśruta|
Pañcābhi karanaṁ punaṁ vihayāta jagafitraye||

20 Buchanan, Francis, op. cit., p.43.

21 Sinha, C.P.N. : Mithilā under the Karṇātas, Janaki Prakashan, Patna, 1979, p.3.

region as Mithilā rather than Tīrabhukti or Tirhut. Bhaviṣyapurāṇa speaks of Mithilā that came into being after the name of Mithī, a legendary figure.23

The Viṣṇupurāṇa provides the following detail of the origin of Mithilā: Nimī, the son of Ikṣvāku instituted a sacrifice and asked Vaśiṣṭha to preside. Vaśiṣṭha replied that he had already been engaged by Lord Indra in a sacrifice. Nimī made no answer and Vaśiṣṭha thought that he had agreed and went away. Nimī employed Gotama along with other rṣis and started his sacrifice. Vaśiṣṭha came in all; haste to Nimī but finding Gotama and other rṣis employed, cursed Nimī that he should thenceforth cease to exist in a corporal form. Nimī cursed Vaśiṣṭha in turn and both abandoned their human bodies. After Nimī's death the rṣis agitated his body and a boy was produced and was named Mithī—a product of churning.

Mithī succeeded his father and his country came to be known as Mithilā. Mithī was self-born and so his successors came to be known as Janaka (meaning self-born). According to Mithilākhaṇḍa of the Brhadviṣṇupurāṇa, Videha means one whose body is gone. According to Paṇinī, Mithilā is the town where enemies are crushed. The country is said to have derived its name from King Videgha Māṭhava who came from the banks of the Saraśwati.24

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Nimīḥ putraṃ tatraiva mirthinama mahāna smritah|
Prathamam bhujabaleryena traihustasya pāṛsvaitah||
Nirmitam sviyanamna cha Mithilāpurmuttamam|
Purjanāni sāmarthyāt janakah sa ca kirtitah||

- Ayodhya King Manu's descendant Ikṣvāku's son Nimī came to this ritualistic land and his son Mithī built a city and after his name the city was called Mithilā. Since he was the founder-father of the city he was also known as Janaka.

24 Sinha, C.P.N, op. cit., p.3.
According to Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, one Videgha Māthava along with his priest Gotama Rāhugāṇa came to this eastern territory beyond river Sadānīrā (Gaṇḍak) and made this region his place of residence. It is said that after his name Videgha Māthava, the region was called Videha or Mithilā. Brhadviṣṇupurāṇa gives us information about the twelve names ascribed to Mithilā. Tīrathbukti has been mentioned for the first time by Purusottamadeva in the 12th century A.D. in his work Trikāṇdaśeṣakoṣa.

It has also been suggested that the word Tīrathbukti comprises of two words – Tīra and Bhukti. Tīra means bordering on the river-side and Bhukti indicating a province. According to Cunningham, Tīrathbukti lay in the valleys of the little Gaṇḍak and Bāgmaṭī rivers. We also have evidence that during the excavations carried at Basārh, the ancient site of Vaiśālī in the year 1903

25 Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Pt. I, Chap. IV – The account is that an ambitious king named Videgha Māthava lived near the river Sarasaṇati in the Brahmavarta region of north-western India. Ambitious as he was, he started on a campaign towards the north-east region alongwith his priest Gotama Rāhugāṇa and his deity Agni Vaiṣvanara. It is said that the Agni (fire) burnt the way ahead of them till they reached the river Sadānīrā (the present day Gaṇḍak). As the water of this Himālayan river was icy cold Agni Vaiśvanara could not proceed further. Hence Videgha Māthava enquired from his deity, the Agni Vaiśvanara, that where should they reside now? He was told to inhabit the place towards the east of the river. It is also said that before that time the Brāhmaṇas had not crossed the river Gaṇḍak and the Yajñas had not burnt the places. Many rivers flowed there and the land was marshy and not habitable. But the Brāhmaṇas under the leadership of Gautamaa gradually burnt the Yajñic pyres which dried up the muddy lands making them fit for habitation and agriculture.

26 Brhadviṣṇupurāṇa (Mithilā Mahāṭmyakhand), Darbhanga, 1980, Chap. XIV, Ślokas 52, 53:
   Mithilā taibhuktisca vai dehī Nimikānanam/
   Jñānakṣetram kṛpāpitham svarṇalāṅgala paddhati||
   Jānakijanmebhūmiśca nirpekṣa vikalmaśā||
   Rāmānanda kati viśvabhāvanī nityamangalā||

   - The Twelve names are – Mithilā, Tīrathbhukti, Vaiḍehī, Nimikānan – the forest associated with the descendants of Nīmī, Jñānakṣetram, kṛpāpitham – the home of knowledge and the center of grace, Svarṇalāṅgalapaddhati – the footsteps of the golden plough used for tilling the land during a famine by king Siradhvaja Jana, Jānakī – Janmabhoomi – the birth place of legendary Jānakī (daughter of Janaka called Sitā), Vīkaḷvāsa – devoid of sins, Rāmānandakati – a place which gives pleasure to Rama being his marriage place, Viśva bhāvinī – a place which may give pleasure to the entire world, Nityamangalā – ever blissful.

   Gaṇḍakitisamaratibhya Campākaranayantakam śive|
   Videhakabhāv samākhyaṇā ābhuktabhidhau manuḥ||

28 Sinha, C.P.N., Mithilā under the Karṇātas, Patna, 1979, p.4.
A.D., several coins dated back to the 4\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. were found with inscriptions of ‘Tirabhukti’ on them.\textsuperscript{29} During the same excavations large number of seals were also discovered. These seals brought to light the fact that these seals used to be stamped on the letters addressed to the officers responsible for administering Tirabhukti. On some of the letters only the word ‘Tira’\textsuperscript{30} have been used which suggest that Tira possibly indicated a locality of this name from which Tirabhukti was derived.

The above descriptions suggest that Tirabhukti as an administrative unit could have come into existence in the 4\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. It also seems possible that with the passage of time Tirabhukti gradually got corrupted and began to be called as Tirhut which continue to be called so even upto the present day.

\textsuperscript{29} ASI, 1903-04, pp.8-12.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., pp.8-12.
[B] BRIEF POLITICAL HISTORY OF MITHILĀ

MITHILĀ FROM 4th C. A.D. TO 11th C. A.D.

The political history of Mithilā upto 4th century A.D. has been full of controversies before the advent of Candragupta-II, who is said to have ascended the throne after Samudragupta. He was a vigorous ruler and a great conqueror. It was in his reign that Vaiśalī first appears as a Gupta possession and Tīrabhukti formed one of the several Bhuktis. At that time Vaiśalī was much more powerful and most probably formed the headquarters of one of the districts of Gupta empire, evidently of Tīrabhukti.

We have evidence that from Basārh (Vaiśalī) one hundred and twenty varieties of seals and variety of coins of the Gupta Age (4th century A.D.) were discovered. The seals discovered at Basārh have been identified as those of officials, which were attached to the letters addressed by the imperial officers to the Governors or the Chiefs of that district residing at Vaiśalī. Among these are certain officers who are distinctly defined as being in-charge of Tīrabhukti which was the provincial capital of Vaiśalī and Mithilā. The province was governed by Prince Govinda-gupta, son of Candragupta-II and Mahādevī Dhruvaswāminī, having made Vaiśalī his capital.

After Candragupta-II, Kumāragupta and his successor Skandagupta had to bear the brunt of the mighty Kuśāṇa invasions. It seems that during the Gupta period Mithilā merged with Tīrabhukti, a part of the Gupta empire whose capital was at Vaiśalī.

32 Thākura, Upendra, History of Mithilā, Darbhanga, 1956, p.186.
33 ASI, 1903-4, pp.8-11.
34 Ibid., see, no. 1, Mahārājadhirāj Śrī Candragupta’s wife Mahādevī Śrī Dhruvaswāminī.
35 JASB, 1921 (NS), 253 ff.
After the Guptas Mithilā was under the sway of Harṣavardhana as he has been referred to be the lord of five India's – Punjab, Kanyakubja, Mithilā, Bengal and Orissa. Under Harṣavardhana Mithilā gained importance as a border province with Nepāl, Tibet and China. After the death of Harṣa in A.D. 647 there followed a period of confusion and disorder.

After a brief period of disorder, confusion and political disintegration, Pāla dynasty came into being. Gopāla (A.D. 756-783), the founder of the Pāla dynasty of Bengal, probably exercised some sort of influence over Tirhut, after establishing his rule in Bihar. Gopāla was succeeded by his son Dharamapāla (A.D. 783-818) who was the real founder of the dynasty. But he had to face the hostilities of two other powers namely the Rastrakūtas and the Gurjara-Pratihāras, who were trying to establish their supremacy in the North. Dharamapāla is said to have launched his career of conquest and seized the throne of Kannauj from Indrāyudh. Khalimpur grant informs us that Tirapute (Tirhut) and Gaud were conquered by him. His campaign at the foot of the Himālayas is proved by the Monghyr Copper-plate. It seems that he acquired his supremacy over Nepāl after conquering Mithilā.

Dharamapāla was succeeded by his son Devapāla (A.D. 818-850), who was the most powerful ruler of the dynasty. He not only maintained his father's empire intact but extended its boundaries also. The Monghyr grant informs us that Devapāla's empire was very extensive. We are also informed that he retained his hold on Bihar and North-Bengal. Devapāla was succeeded by Vigrahamapāla, who was a weak ruler and could not maintain the

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37 EI, I, p.122.
38 IA, IX, p.366.
39 Indian Culture, IV, p.266.
40 JIH, XXXII, p.134.
42 Ibid., XV, p.304.
glory of the Pālas. Nārāyaṇapāla (A.D. 863-916) succeeded vighrapāla and was a powerful ruler. We learn from the Bhāgalpura Copper plate\textsuperscript{43} that he made grants for Śiva temple in the Kakṣa viṣaya of Tīrabhukti which shows his sway over the whole of Tīrabhukti, besides a large portion of Bihar. Rajyapāla succeeded Nārāyaṇapāla and during his time the Gurjara-Pratihāras crossed the river Sone and in the North overran Tirhut,\textsuperscript{44} which shows that for some time the Gurjara-Pratihāras had their sway in Tirhut. But the Khajuraho Inscription of V.S. 1011 (A.D. 953-54)\textsuperscript{45} informs us that the territory of Mithilā was conquered and wrested away from the Gurjara-Pratihāras by the Candellas. The Candellas tried to establish their political supremacy in Northern India and the Pālas bore the brunt of their aggressive imperialism.

It appears that the Candella invasion was like a wave and the Pāla power was again restored in Mithilā during the reign of Mahīpāla (A.D. 988-1038) which is evidenced from the Imadpur image inscription\textsuperscript{46} found in Muzaffarpur district. After the death of Mahīpāla-I, Rāmpāla comes on the scene and during his reign the Pāla power was finally wrested by Nānyadeva in 1097 A.D.\textsuperscript{47}, who took the possession of Mithilā and carved out an independent kingdom. Thus Mithilā was freed from the yoke of the intruding force. Other powers tried to unseat the Pālas from Mithilā but the Pālas continued to rule in the eastern part of Mithilā effectively.

Coming to the Chronological sequence of events in the post Harṣa period (early medieval phase) the Pālas exercised their hegemony and overlordship over eastern India. However, in 1097 A.D. Nānyadeva founded the Karṇāṭa dynasty (replacing the Pālas) that prolonged it’s independent

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., XV, p.304 ff.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{E.I.}, I, p.123 ff.
\textsuperscript{46} I.A., XIV, p. 165, note-17.
sway over Mithilā despite Muslim inroads till 1325 when it was formally annexed to the Delhi Sultanate by the Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq who defeated Harisimhadeva.\textsuperscript{48}

**MITHILĀ UNDER THE KARṆĀTAS**

The Karnāta dynasty\textsuperscript{49} was founded by Nānyadeva in Śaka 1019 i.e. 1097 A.D. This dynasty is also known as Simrāon dynasty as he is credited to have his seat of Government at Śivarampura (modem Simrāon), a village situated in Nepāl 10 kms. north of the Purnahia factory in the Motiharī subdivision. The *Monghyr copper-plate*\textsuperscript{50} of Devapāla mentions the Karṇātas alongwith many others. The word Karṇāta finds mention in almost all the Pāla and other contemporary inscriptions. The Sena inscriptions reveal to us that originally the Karṇātas belonged to South.\textsuperscript{51} It is said that the ancestors of Nānyadeva were petty chieftains and adventurers in eastern India, and deriving advantage from the chaos and confusion obtaining in the region. Nānyadeva or his ancestors seem to have asserted independence.\textsuperscript{52} Nānyadeva was a Karṇāta (Pammar) Kṣatriya and his commentary on Bharata's *Nātyāśāstra* enables us to know that he was addressed as 'Karṇātakulabhūṣana'. K.P. Jayaswal believes that his name is only a sanskritised form of Dravidian ‘Nanniya’ meaning affectionate.\textsuperscript{53}

Nānyadeva subjugated Nepāl in 1098 A.D. and by 1118 A.D. he had brought under his sway all the three capitals viz. Pātana, Kāthmāndū and Bhattagāon.\textsuperscript{54} Nānyadeva is credited with having ruled for about fifty years from 1097 to 1147 A.D. His greatness lies not only in the fact that he was the

\textsuperscript{48} Thākura, Upendra, *op. cit.*, p.281.
\textsuperscript{49} *JASB*, IV, 1835, p. 122.
\textsuperscript{50} cf. *IHQ*, XII (611-612).
\textsuperscript{51} *JASB*, N.V. of 1909, p.471.
\textsuperscript{52} *IHQ*, VII, p.681.
\textsuperscript{53} *IHQ*, XXIII, p. 326.
\textsuperscript{54} Majumdar, R.C., *Ancient India*, Benaras, 1952, p. 375.
founder of the Karṇāta dynasty but he was one of the ablest kings of the dynasty. The undated *Andharāthārhī inscription* is the only epigraphic record of Nānyadeva in the heart of Mithilā.⁵⁵

Nānyadeva had two sons namely Malladeva and Gaṅgādeva but the scholars consider Malladeva to be a forgotten king of Mithilā.⁵⁶ Traditions also tell us that Nānyadeva’s Sons ruled in Nepāl.⁵⁷ It is very likely that Gaṅgādeva ruled in Mithilā, while the other son Malladeva ruled over Nepāl. Mithilā traditions support that Malladeva made Bheet Bhagwānpura his capital and certain villages after his name still commemorate him. Malhad, a village on the border of Purneā and Saharsā districts and Malhad in the Supaul subdivision are supposed to have been established by Malladeva.⁵⁸

Gaṅgādeva (A.D. 1147-1188) succeeded his father Nānyadeva. We have evidence that a Minister of Nānyadeva named Śridhardāsa had got fixed a statue of Kamalāditya (Viṣṇu) at *Andharāthārhī* village on which the name of Gaṅgādeva is inscribed and a big pond named Gaṅgāsāgara still exists there.⁵⁹ Gaṅgādeva was an efficient ruler. He is credited with having re-organized his administrative system on sound lines. He introduced the system of fiscal division or *parganas* for the purpose of revenue administration. A *Chaudhary* was appointed in each *pargana* to collect the revenue and a pañcāyata was there to settle all disputes.⁶⁰

Narasimhadeva (1188-1285 A.D.) succeeded Gaṅgādeva. Mithilā traditions tell us that Narasimhadeva used to visit Kanauj with his uncle Malladeva, who is said to have visited the court of Jayacanda Gahadwāla.⁶¹ It

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⁵⁶ *ABORI*, XXXV, pp.98-102.
⁵⁷ ibid., p.99.
⁶⁰ *DDG*, p.32.
⁶¹ *Puruśaparīkṣā*, I, p.3.
seems that from Kanauj Narasimha went to Delhi and fought for Shahabuddin Muhammad Ghorī.\textsuperscript{62} Vidyāpati's \textit{Puruśparīkṣa}\textsuperscript{63} throws some light on Narasimhadeva. There is a reference to a march of Delhi Sultan. In the march against the enemy the Sultan was helped by two young princes namely Narasimhadeva of the Karnāta dynasty and Cacikadeva Cauhāna, a brother of Prthvīrāja Cauhāna.

We also have information that Narasimhadeva had to face intrusions by some Muslim rulers from the neighbourhood. \textit{Mulla Taqīa} tells us that Narasimhadeva had been reduced to a subservient position under Lakṣmaṇasena of Bengal. The position of Karnāta kingdom under him had become very insecure and weak as it was sandwiched between two powerful Kingdoms of Gauda and Lakhanautī.\textsuperscript{64} Though Mithilā traditions and folklores have described Narasimhadeva as a warrior and a very brave king but the scholars have held him as a weak king.

Rāmasimhadeva (A.D. 1227-1285) succeeded his father Narasimhadeva. Various reforms in the system of internal administration was carried out by him. In every village a police officer was appointed who were like the present day chowkīdārs. It is also said that village Patwāris were also appointed during his reign. These Patwāris were entrusted with the work of maintaining accounts and were paid at the rate of Rs.10/- per month from the village funds.\textsuperscript{65} We also have evidences that a Tibetan traveller Dharmaswāmin visited India between 1233 and 1236 A.D. and on his return he had visited the court of Rāmasimhadeva at Simrāongarh. He tells us that though he was a Buddhist he was received in his court with due cordiality and courtesy. The king was gracious enough and the position of Chief-Priest was

\textsuperscript{62} Jhā, Parmeśvara, \textit{Mithilā Taṭṭva Vimarśa}, p.115.
\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Puruśparīkṣa}, (Ed. Grierson), Tale-4.
\textsuperscript{64} \textit{ABORI}, XXXV, p.110.
\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Muzaffarpur District Gazetteer}, p.18.
offered to him by the king but he did not accept it.\textsuperscript{66} Tughril Tughan had attacked Mithilā and the attack yielded him rich booty but no submission.\textsuperscript{67}

Śakrasimha (A.D. 1285-1297) also known as Śaktisimhadeva succeeded Rāmasimhadeva. He was a great warrior arid a despot. His despotism offended the nobles of his court and one of his ministers established Council of Seven Elders as check upon the autocratic powers of the ruler. He is credited with having founded the modern village of Sakri in the district of Darbhanga.\textsuperscript{68} There seems to have been some sort of Pālace uprising which deprived the king of his actual power. The palace uprising seems to have compelled him to abdicate the throne possibly in favour of Harisimhadeva, who was a minor at that time. The executive powers were vested naturally in the Council of Elders which looked after the administration as a regent till Harisimhadeva came of age to supervise the administrative machinery.\textsuperscript{69}

Harisimhadeva (1296-7-1324 A.D.) was the last great king of the Karṇāta dynasty. All contemporary literary evidences are unanimous that he was a great king and he ruled over entire Mithilā. From the Purusparīkṣā of Vidyāpati, we learn that Harisimhadeva was a contemporary of Yādava king Rāmchndra of Devgiri and the two kings were on terms of correspondence. He was also a contemporary of king Udaysimha of Gorakhpur.\textsuperscript{70} The nobles of the time had become very powerful. Ganeśvara was one of the ablest ministers of Harisimhadeva\textsuperscript{71} who used to preside over the Council of feudal nobles in Mithilā.

\textsuperscript{66} Biography of Dharmasvamin, Ed. G. Roerich, Patna, 1959, p.100.
\textsuperscript{67} Majumdar, R.C. History of Bengal, II, p.46.
\textsuperscript{68} DDG, p.33.
\textsuperscript{69} Sinha, C.P.N., Mithilā under the Karnatas, Patna, 1979, pp.77-78.
\textsuperscript{70} Purusparīkṣā, Ed. Grierson, p.47.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
We are informed that the reign of Harisimhadeva was bristling with hectic activities and within a comparatively shorter period of his rule he made some remarkable achievements in the field of social reforms. It has been aptly said that if Nānyadeva is regarded as having laid the foundation of an independent dynasty in Mithilā, Harisimhadeva, the illustrious ruler will go down in the annals of Mithilā as the "greatest social reformer who organized the Mithilā society in new set-up which is yet extant despite its adverse effects".  The Maithilas have been well known for their excessive orthodoxy and conservatism and his reforms in the fields of religion and the social order revolutionized the life and thinking of the people of the then Mithilā.

We have evidence that Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq subjugated Mithilā in the year 1324 A.D. Mullā Taqiā’s accounts in his Bayāz (diary) inform us that Ghiyāsuddin Tughluq in 724 A.H. (i.e. 1324 A.D.) after suppressing Bahādur Shāh of Bengal... undertook an expedition against the King of Mithilā because Harisimhadeva had made a common cause with Bahādur Shāh and had helped him on several occasions.  

On the authority of Basātin-ul-Ums compiled in the first year on Muhammad-bin-Tughluq's reign by Muhammad Sadr Ala Ahmad Hasan Dabir, a hereditary servant at the Delhi Court and a Secretary of the Royal Chancery, we come to know that after having conquered Lakhanauti. Sonargaon and suburbs (land and sea), acquired treasury, elephants, horses etc. he (Ghiyāsuddin Tughluq) proceeded towards Tirhut..... the Rai had a very strong army and a very strong fort as well. He was not very powerful but too proud of his might. He was a tyrannical ruler and had revolted and insulted the authority of previous kings. When he came to know of the victorious Tughluq flag, being afraid of this army the Tirhut king began to tremble. Mahawata’s forces came so rashly that the Rai had no alternative.

72 Thakur, Upendra, History of Mithilā, Darbhanga, 1956, p.92.
His kingdom failed and he left his kingdom in a state of hoplessness and did not think it wise to live there.\textsuperscript{74}

We come to know further that the Tughluq emperor stayed there in a big town for some days to make necessary arrangements... got killed those who had taken shelter there and showed liberality to those who accepted his authority. He handed over the administration to the people of the region and was thus relieved of the anxiety.\textsuperscript{75}

But \textit{Ferishta} on the authority of Isāmi’s \textit{Futuh-us-Salātīn} tells us that the government of Tirhut was left in the hands of Ahmad Khan, son of Malik Talbigha\textsuperscript{76} which is a testimony to the fact that Tirhut was brought fully under the control of Delhi. \textit{Baranī} tells us that Tirhut was one among the twelve provinces of Delhi Empire.\textsuperscript{77} We also have evidences that Muhammad-bin-Tughluq had got minted forced currency in his name in brass weighing 140 grains at \textit{Tughluqpur-urf-Tirhut} in 1329 A.D.\textsuperscript{78} Thus we see that Tirhut had become an administrative unit of Delhi Sultanate.

On the authority of \textit{Bayāz} of Mullā Taqiā we come to know that the control of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq (A.D. 1325-51) over Tirhut was effective. He appointed Kiladar Shah Sufi at Harasimhapur after the flight of the King (Harisimhadeva). He built a mosque and a fort which were destroyed by an earthquake in 1605 A.D. In 745 A.H. (A.D. 1339) on his return from Bengal, he (the Sultan) is said to have granted the kingdom to Kameśvara Thākura.

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p.50.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Elliot and Dowson, III, pp. 574-76, The Provinces were – Delhi, Kampila, Dwarasamudra, Ma’bar, Tirhut, Lakhanauti, Satgaon, Sonargaon, Gujarat, Malwa, and Deogir.
\end{quote}
and authorized Haji Ilyas of Bengal to collect tribute and supervise the administration.\textsuperscript{79}

**MITHILĀ UNDER THE OINWĀRAS**

Mithilā traditions tell us that Kameśvara Thākura was an Oinwāra because his Mūlagrāma was Oenī village, near Samastīpur, named after his ancestor Oen Thākura. He was the Rājā Pandita (Court priest) of king Harisimhadeva and commanded respect among the local populace. Muhammad-bin-Tughluq due to the prevailing circumstances handed over the reign to Kameśvara Thākura but due to some distrust towards him, he also authorized Haji Ilyas of Bengal to supervise and collect the tributes from the king.\textsuperscript{80}

The spirit of revolt was visible everywhere within the Tughluq empire on account of the capricious and whimsical policy of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq.\textsuperscript{81} Naturally Haji Shamsuddin Ilyas (1342-1357 A.D.) proclaimed himself as a King of Bengal. Isāmi in his *Futuh-us-Salatin* tells us that a rebel had proclaimed himself king in Lakhanauti in full enjoyment of the parasol and the throne. He had been supported by whole of Tirhut and Gauda, the spirit of rebellion having spread everywhere.\textsuperscript{82} We also have information that he had invaded Tirhut with success after a very daring incursion into Nepāl. On the authority of S.H. Askari, he (Ilyas) must have followed Bengal route for reaching hills of Swayambhūnātha and sacking the sacred temples of Paśupati, near Kāthmāndū, as it was much later that he overran Tirhut and advanced via Banaras upto Baharaich.\textsuperscript{83} He not only conquered Tirhut but also succeeded in stabilizing his conquests by making necessary administrative arrangements there. He divided Tirhut into two parts with


\textsuperscript{80} Thākura, Upendra, *History of Mithilā*, p.295f.

\textsuperscript{81} Elliot and Dowson, III, pp.242-43.

\textsuperscript{82} *PIHC*, (Waltair)-XVI, p.187.

\textsuperscript{83} CS, Patna, p.13 and also HMT, p.59.
Gaṇḍaka (old) as the dividing line. He is credited with having founded the city of Shamshuddīnpura (modern Samastīpur) and laid the foundation of Hajipur, which was destined to be the central point in the determination of Muslim policy in North-Bihar.⁸⁴

The activities of Haji Ilyas compelled Firuz Shah Tughluq to go on an eastward expedition in 1352 AD. The aim of Firuz’s conquest was to reannexe the territory from Kośī to Oudh. After subjugating the chiefs of Gorakhpur, Kharosa, and Tirhut he made necessary administrative arrangements for the territory from Sarayu to Kośī. Then he carried on his operations against the Fort of Ekdala, where Ilyas had entrenched his position very strongly. Alīf tells us that he did not annexe Bengal,⁸⁵ concluded peace and returned. On his way from Bengal, the emperor gave the throne to Kameśvara Thākura’s son Bhogīśvara (A.D. 1353-1370).⁸⁶ Vidyāpati tells us that Firuz called Bhogīśvara his fast friend (Piasakhā)⁸⁷ which shows that Firuz Shah Tughluq might have had some soft corner for Bhogīśvara in whom he had reposed faith preferring him against his father Kameśvara Thākura who was still alive. Firuz Shah Tughluq had to march through Tirhut for the second time in 1358 A.D. to suppress son and successor of Haji Ilyas named Sikandar Shah.⁸⁸

Bhogīśvara was succeeded by his son Ganeśvara Thākura who was treacherously murdered by Mālik Arsalān on Tuesday, the fifth day of the dark

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⁸⁵ Elliot and Dowson, III, pp.294-95.
⁸⁶ *DDG*, p.35.

*Tasu nandana bhogīśa raye vara bhoga purundara|
*Huau hutasana teja kantti kusumāuha sundara||
*Jācaka siddhi kedāra dane pancama vali jānala|
*Piya sakha bhani pairojasah saurataṇen samānala||

half of the month of Caitra L.S. 252 i.e. 1361 A.D. But some scholars consider this year to be 1371 A.D. and since then he (Mālik Arsalān) continued to rule over Tirhut till he was finally routed by Ibrahim Shah Sharqi of Jaunpur. His army reached Tirhut between 1402 and 1404 A.D., who helped Kīrttisimha regain the usurped kingdom of his father Ganeśvara. Kīrttisimha is said to have ruled upto 1406 A.D. and he as well as his two brothers Vīrasimha and Rājsimha died issueless and the succession passed on to, Devasimha son of Bhavasimha, of the collateral branch of Devakulī. Mithilā traditions tell us that Bhāvasimha alias Bhaveśa was the uncle of Ganeśvara, who had got a part of the kingdom from Ganeśvara in 1371 A.D. and had ruled from Oenī itself which was Mülagrāma (original residence) of the Oinwāra family.

Devasimha (A.D. 1406-1412) ascended the throne with the title of Garudanārāyaṇa and shifted his capital from Oenī to Devakulī near Laheriasarai. Mithilā during Devasimha's time was under the tutelage of the Sharqi dominion. Under his patronage Vidyāpati is said to have written Bhūparikramā which was later on incorporated in Puruṣaparikṣā of the same writer.

Śivasimha (A.D. 1412-16) formally ascended the throne on his father's death. Śivasimha had begun to take active part in administration at a very
early age of fifteen.\textsuperscript{97} He was a man of independent mentality and heroic spirit. Śivasimha not only revolted but also stopped payment of the stipulated tribute to the Sharqi rulers. The fact that he assumed independence is known to us from his gold coins.\textsuperscript{98}

In a short span of three and a half years, he not only asserted his independence but made Tirhut strong enough and launched aggressive campaigns against the east and the west. We cannot preclude the possibility of a contest between Ibrahim’s representative and Śivasimha. Fate did not help the Tirhut ruler and he was defeated.\textsuperscript{99} Whether Śivasimha was captured by the Jaunpur king or he was killed is not known. But we have information that his queen Lakhimā fled with the royal family, to take shelter in village Rājabanaulī in Saptārī pargana (near modern Janakpur in Nepāl). She waited there for twelve years in the hope of meeting or knowing anything of her consort. But unfortunately no trace of the king was found. Thus she is said to have laid her life as a Sati.\textsuperscript{100} It is also said that Vidyāpati had accompanied the queen during her sojourn in Nepāl. Vidyāpati was Śivasimha’s court poet who had got village Bisphī as a grant in appreciation of his scholarly achievements. Vidyāpati had praised his patron Śivasimha and his queen in more than two hundred poems he had composed.\textsuperscript{101}

Since Lakhimā died issueless Śivasimha’s younger brother Padmasimha (A.D. 1429-30) ascended the throne but was short lived. After his wife Viśvāsa Devī (A.D. 1430-1442) is said to have ruled for 12 years.\textsuperscript{102} It is said that Vidyāpati had written Śaivasarvaśvasāra on her command. She also died issueless hence a younger brother of Devasimha and an uncle of

\textsuperscript{97} Thakur, Upendra, \textit{History of Mithilā}, p.309.
\textsuperscript{98} ASI, 1913-14, p.248, plate LXVIII, 1 to 3.
\textsuperscript{99} Chaudhary, R.K., \textit{op. cit.}, pp.74-75.
\textsuperscript{100} Miśra, Vijaykant, \textit{Cultural Heritage of Mithilā}, p.75.
\textsuperscript{101} Vidyāpati-Padāvalī (in Hindi) Vol. I, Patna, 1972, Intro. 70-71.
\textsuperscript{102} I.A., XVIII, pp. 57-58.
Śivasimha named Harisimhadeva (A.D. 1442-1444) ascended the throne. Since he was very old he died shortly. After him his son Narasimhadeva (A.D. 1444-1460) ascended the throne with the title of Darpanārāyaṇa which is testified in the Kandāhā Inscription found in the Madhepurā sub-division of Saharsā.\(^{103}\)

After Narasimhadeva his son Dhīrasimha (A.D. 1460-1475) ruled over Mithilā. We have information that Ruknuddin Barbarak Shah (A.D. 1459-1474) of Bengal conquered Mithilā in 1470 A.D. and established his power at Hajipur and handed over the rest of Tirhut to Bhairavasimhadeva (younger brother of Dhīrasimha) of Oinwara dynasty For the collection of taxes and other dues Barbarak appointed Kedar Rai.\(^{104}\) We are informed that Bhairavasimhadeva (A.D. 1475-1489) ascended the throne of Mithilā and asserted his independence.\(^{105}\) It appears that after the withdrawal of Barbarak he defeated the Bengal army and established his hegemony over both the wings of Mithilā like his predecessor Śivasimha.\(^{106}\)

Bhairavasimhadeva was succeeded by his son Rāmabhadrasimhadeva (A.D. 1489-1503). He was well known throughout the country as a great patron of Sanskrit learning. He is said to have shifted his capital to Rāmabhadrapura. He is also said to have met Sikandar Lodi at Patna and the Lodi king was very much pleased with him. He had conquered parts of Bengal such as Gaur, Maldah, Murshidabad etc.\(^{107}\)

After the death of Rāmabhadrasimhadeva his son Lakṣmīnāthasimhadeva (A.D. 1503-1527) is said to have ruled over Mithilā. His title was Karāṇanārāyaṇa and was the last king of the Oinwara dynasty.

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\(^{103}\) JBORS, XX, pp.15-19.

\(^{104}\) Chaudhary, R.K., p.78.

\(^{105}\) Ibid., p.79.

\(^{106}\) Ibid.

\(^{107}\) Jhā, Parmeśvara, Mithilā Taṭṭva Vimarṣa, p.213.
PERIOD OF POLITICAL UNREST AND CONFUSION (A.D. 1527– 1556)

On the authority of Mullā Taqī ā we are informed that Nusrat Shah of Bengal invaded Tirhut in 1527 A.D. and killed Kaṁsanārāyaṇa, the last Oinwāra king of Mithilā.108 He further tells us that Tirhut from the fall of the Oinwāras to the rise of the Mughals was under the Pathan rule. Humayun and Sher Shah controlled Tirhut in their days and their routes lay through it.109

We are informed that Mirza Hindal was permitted by the emperor (Humayun) to depart from Kahalgāon to his new fief in Tirhut and Purnēā. Humayun’s hold over Purnēā and other parts of North Bihar seems to have been an established fact. In the war between Shershah and Humayun, Purnēā supplied the latter with some levies. Humayun is said to have granted to Saiyad Khan Dasatūr conferring on him: the title of Kānunago and the Zamindar of Suryapura (Purnēā) in 1545 A.D.110 Hindal headed the fief of Tirhut as a Governor. He, by evacuating Tirhut, gave Sher Khan an opportunity of extending and consolidating his territories in the region to the west of Bengal.111 Under Sher Shah (1540-1545 A.D.) the whole of Tirhut remained under him and a few coins of Islam Shah, discovered from the district of Darbhangā in 1954-55, go to show that the Surs were in full enjoyment of the parasol of sovereignty in Tirhut. It was under Islam Shah that anarchy prevailed in Darbhangā and a native Revenue Officer Keśava Majmualdar (a Kāyastha) usurped the government. He alongwith another officer Majlish Khan (a Brāhmaṇa) ruled Mithilā for some time. The Majlisha Pokhara, in the village of Upardhaha, eight miles to the east of Darbhangā, is attributed to Majlish Khan.112

109 Ibid., p.113.
110 Ibid., p.109f.n. 4; and also Current Studies, 1957, p.24 ff.
111 Tripathi, R.P., Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire, Allahabad, 1960, p.93.
112 DDG, p.36.
During the period 1526-1556 A.D., the Bihar Rajputs were also ruling in different parts of Tirhut, particularly with their capital at Bhaury, seven miles south-east of Madhubanī. Their kingdom was called Amarāvatī which extended from village Koilakh to Bazidpur (Bajipur), present day Vidyāpati Nagara. The founder of this dynasty was Bīrbala Nārāyaṇa, also called Rūpanārāyaṇa, who was probably a tributary of Babur, who had referred to one Rūpanārāyaṇa of Tirhut.

**MITHILĀ UNDER THE KHANDAVĀLAS**

After a long period of anarchy and uncertainties we find Maheśa Thākura, a Khandavāla ruler, on the scene in Mithilā. According to different traditions current in Mithilā we come to know that a farmān inscribed on the copper plate conferring the territory of Mithilā (Tirhut) was issued to Maheśa Thākura in March-April, 1576 A.D. But according to the new geneological table of Darbhanga Rāj, the date is A.D. 1556. B.P. Ambasthya tells us that the dates 1555-56 or 1556-7 for issue of farmān in favour of Maheśa Thākura by Emperor Akbar is *prima facie* wrong, for Akbar conquered Bihar in A.D. 1574. But almost all the traditions support that Maheśa Thākura got the farmān from Akbar in 1556 itself.

A great deal of controversy has been there in the absence of original sanad. Traditions tell us that a Muslim mullāh had thrown challenge to Sanskrit Pundits in general to hold discussion with him on Hindu philosophy. Thereupon Rājā Bīrbala suggested the name of Maheśa Thākura and requested the Emperor Akbar to invite him from the Court of Gadh-Katangā kingdom (in central province), where he had come into contact with him. So

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Maheśa Thākura was invited and he came to Fatehpur along with his pupil Raghunandana Jhā.\footnote{JBRS, XLVIII, pts. 1-4, 1962, p.41ff.}

Maheśa Thākura could get his interview with Emperor Akbar only through the efforts made by Rājā Mānasingh. Maheśa Thākura impressed Rājā Manasingh by reciting a couplet in his praise.\footnote{Ibid., p.48.} Maheśa Thākura when admitted to the audience of Emperor Akbar impressed the latter with the citation of his Sanskrit śloka in the praise of the emperor.\footnote{Rudrā ekadāshaikā tuhina girisutā tāmimādadānāh| Prāṇānustraṣṭukāmāḥ kalahamaharah kurvate durvineetah|| Śrādhabputāntarātmanah! Nījavimalsahas pūra karpūragoureḥ| Gājijullādīma! Twamih dāsadiśovīra! Gourīkarosī|| O lord Akbar! I am a worshipper of Dwādāśa Rūdra Śiva alongwith his consort Pārvati but my detractors are quarrelling with me day and night and are so enamoured that they are dead bent to deprive me of life. You are a great soul, who commands respect and your fame is as fragrant and clean as camphor. Your appearance itself is also a testimony to it. O Ghāzi Jullāuddīn! You are a warrior unequal in strength all over the world, you are a great benefactor, you see to my welfare.} Emperor Akbar got pleased with him and allowed him to ask his disciple Raghunandana Jhā to enter into discussion with the said Muslim muṭāḥ. It is said that the discussion lasted for three days and Raghunandanaa was victorious. He was favoured with a farmān conferring upon him the territory of Mithilā as reward which he declined in favour of his guru. As the farmān was already drawn up in favour of Raghunandana Jhā, technical difficulties stood in the way for introducing the aforesaid change in favour of Maheśa Thākura. Despite this Raghunandana refused to yield and ultimately through the intercession of the mother of the emperor, Akbar was prevailed upon to issue another farmān in favour of Maheśa Thākura.\footnote{Ibid., pp.54-55 f.n.}

\begin{verse}
O King Mānasimha! The Apasaras (heavenly dancing girls) sing songs in praise of your charitable dispositions. Even the branches and the flowers of the Kalpavrśa (a heavenly tree) are trying to bend in the honour of your greatness.
\end{verse}
Mithilā traditions tell us that Maheśa Thākura ruled for nearly 13 years from 1556-1569 A.D. and at the fag end of his life he proceeded for the pilgrimage at Kāśī where he died.\textsuperscript{120} Maheśa Thākura was succeeded by Gopāla Thākura (A.D. 1569-1581).\textsuperscript{121} It is said that after the death of his father he got another farmān issued by emperor Akbar.\textsuperscript{122} The farmān was issued to Gopāla Dāsa i.e. Gopāla Thākura which is not original but an authenticated copy dated A.H. 1082 (1672-73 A.D.). This is palpably wrong because the date should be A.H. 986 i.e. 1578 A.D. The mistake might have been due to the carelessness of the scribe as much as to be lack of proper care of the qāzfī who authenticated it.\textsuperscript{123}

The said farmān clearly shows that he was granted the chaudharai and quanungoi of Sarkar Tirhut as of old, and in return for discharging this duty to the state, given the right to realize from the raiyat the rusum-i-chaudharai (cess) at one tankāh per bighā and rusum-i-quanungoi at one-fourth of a tankāh per bighā, totalling $1\frac{1}{4}$ tankāhs per bighā. The rights conferred were in the nature of a feudal jāgir which included cesses in cash also.\textsuperscript{124}

It was during the time of Gopāla Thākura that we find Emperor Akbar having divided his empire for the first time into twelve Subāhs in his 24\textsuperscript{th} regional year (A.D. 1579-80).\textsuperscript{125} We have information that the outbreak of revolt in Bihar in 1580 A.D. led the Emperor (Akbar) to think seriously about basic remedial measures and he arrived at the decision that the recurrence of the trouble in Bihar was all because of the absence of a controlling and unifying force which only a formally appointed governor in the province could provide. He, therefore, decided to divide his empire into a number of

\textsuperscript{120} Jhā, Parameśvara, Mithilā Taṭṭava Vimarśa, (Uttarardha), p.17.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., p.24.
\textsuperscript{122} Ahmad, Q., Origin and Growth of Darbhanga Raj (1574-1666), PIHRC, XXXVI, p.II, p.90.
\textsuperscript{123} Ambasthya, B.P., Bihar in the Age of Great Mughal Akbar, Patna, 1990, p.71.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., pp.74-75.
\textsuperscript{125} Akbarnāmā, (tr.) Blochmann, Vol. III, p.282.
provinces; each province with a proper territorial limits was drawn up more or less on the line as it existed in the past under the Delhi Sultanate and the Sūrs. With this very important addition that each province under Akbar now came to be placed under the overall charge of a formally appointed regular governor as its executive head, a phenomenon which was absent in the past prior to the reign of Mughal emperor.  

Subāh Bihar was further divided into seven sarkārs, Saran, Campārana, Hajipura, and Tirhut in North-Bihar and Munger, Bihar and Rohtas in South-Bihar, Sarkār Tirhut contained 74 mahals or parganas. We also have information that Akbar had to send Rājā Todarmal and Tarsem Khan alongwith a host of officials from the Court on the 2nd March, 1580 A.D., to Bihar for the chastisement of the rebels. It was in accord with this decision that Khan-i-Azam Mirza Aziz Kokāh, a panj-hazāri noble, came to be appointed as the first regular governor of the province of Bihar on the 9th June 1580 A.D.  

Gopāla Thākura is said to have been succeeded by his son Hemāṅuka Thākura (Hemāṅgada Thākura) 1581-1660 A.D., who is said to have been taken to the imperial court of Akbar for his failure to pay the revenue to the government and where he was thrown into prison alongwith other defaulters. It is said that he could get his release from the prison, when his prophecy in the prison made to Emperor Akbar about an eclipse came true. This lends
confirmation to the fact that Hemāṅgada Thākura had officially succeeded to hold office of Chief Quanungo and Chief Chaudhary of Sarkār Tirhut till A.H. 1060 i.e. 1650 A.D.  

But another tradition in Mithilā tells us that Gopāla Thākura in his own life time had abdicated the throne and installed Shubhāṅkara Thākura (A.D. 1581-1617) on the throne, who was his step-brother. He is said to be a great scholar as well as an astute politician. He is credited to have founded Shubhāṅkarpūra on the riverside in the vicinity of Darbhangā town. A big water-tank named Shubhāṅkari in the village Ujāna stand to his fame up to the present time.  

But the fact that the predecessors of Hemāṅgada Thākura were issued farmāns by Emperor Akbar may be further testified from the original mahzarmāmah (i.e. a public statement) of Sundara Thākura of A.H. 1062 (December, 1651 – October, 1652 A.D.), preserved in the raj record room of Darbhangā.  

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133 Ambasthya, pp. 234-35.
135 PIHRC, XXXVI, pt. II, pp.92-93 – The English translation of the said mahazaramah reads thus – "... I, the humblest one, Chaudhary Sundar Thākura beseech from the venerable syeds, Shaikhs, Qazis, Muftis and other persons living in the parganas of Sarkar Tirhut to testify to the truth of the fact that the Sadar Chaudharai of Sarkar Tirhut, Suba Bihar, and the Kanungoship of the parganas of Sarkar Tirhut, have been obtained by Maheśa Thākura from the Court of Hazrat farmān remained in occupation of the Kanungoship and Chaudharai. The son of Maheśa Thākura also obtained a farmān as of old. The said son (Gopāla), Ajit (achyuta) and Parmanand were real brothers and Shubhankar Thākura was (their) stepbrother (all being sons of Maheśa Thākura). Ajit died issueless. Gopāla, Parmanand and Shubhankar, the three brothers shared the Chaudharai and kanungoship. Shubhankar Thākura possessed 1/3 share of 5 annas 6 gandāsa out of the proceeds of the full chaudharai and kanungoship. He had three wives, from the first he had Purushottam, from the second Narain and from the third, Raghuram Thākura. His sons contested to hold 1/3 share. Gunakar Thākura, son of Purushottam Thākura, and Hariram Thākura, son of Raghuram Thākura have sold their shares in the name of Narayan Thākura, my elder
Hence forth, *Tirhut* was included in the *Subāh* or province of *Bihar* which was now formed under one separate *Mughal* governor. The *Subāh* was presided over at *Patna* by a Deputy Governor (*Subedar*) of *Bengal*—the Governor (*Nawāb*) being at *Murshidabad*. There was, thus more or less complete subordination of the province under the control of the officers of *Mughal* Emperor and it was considered to be a part of *Subāh-i-Bihār*. After the acquisition of *Dewani* in 1765, the East India Company began to take active part in these areas and the political fate of *Mithilā* was linked with the British powers.

**MITHILĀ UNDER THE MUSLIM DOMINANCE : REASONS AND JUSTIFICATIONS**

To understand the process and implications of Muslim inroads in *Mithilā*, a brief discussion about the reasons behind selection of *Tirhut* by the Muslims as a route of expansion to *Bihar* and *Bengal* is a must. To begin with, we have evidence in support of occasional raids in *Tirhut* and the Muslim

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136 Miśra, V. *op. cit.* p.111.
138 We have the following evidence in support of the fact that a portion of *Tirhut*, no matter, whatever be the size, came under the control of the early Muslim invaders:

(i) “Malik Husamuddin Iwaz Khalji was a monarch worthy, just and benevolent. The parts around the state of Lakhnavati, such as Jaynagar, the countries of Bang (Darbhangā), Kanrud and *Tirhut*, all sent tribute to him; and whole of that territory named Gaur passed under this control.” (*Tabqāt-i-Nasiri*, tr. Raverty, pp.587-88).

(ii) Minhāj includes *Tirhut* among the list of conquest of *Ilutmish* (ibid., p.627).
campaign finally gave a death blow to the last flickering light of independence in Mithilā in 1324 when the region was annexed to Delhi Sultanate. The fate of Tirhut was closely linked up with Bengal or Delhi as for few hundred years it lay on the highway between Delhi and Bengal. Bengal's strategic point against any land attack from the western side was the narrow pass of Teliāgrhī near Rājmahal. North of this point, it was very easy for armies to march from Bengal towards Tirhut and Oudh along the north bank of the Gaṅges crossing Kośī and Gaṇḍak at some convenient ford. This is the reason why the name "gateway to Bengal" given to Darbhangā of the Tirhut district.\(^{139}\) Minhāj names Bihar, Tirhut and Darbhangā separately.\(^{140}\) Darbhangā in Tirhut lay on the highway and hence it acted as a major link between Oudh and Bengal.

Lakhnauti, in Bengal, during the time of Bakhtyār Khalji, was roughly bounded on the north by the north-easterly straight line from the town in Purnea\(^ {141}\) via Devakot to the town of Rangapur, on the east and south-east by the Tistā and Kāratoyā; on the south by the main stream of the Gaṅges and on the west by the lower course of the Kośī and from its mouth across the Gaṅges to Rājmahal hills.\(^ {142}\) The river Kośī, which acted as the connecting link between Tirhut and Bengal. Kośī was also regarded as indisputable boundary between Tirhut and Bengal all through the medieval period. On the other hand, the river Gaṇḍak (on the northern bank of the Gaṅges) served as

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(iii) Malik Tamur Khān-i-Krān, a governor during Raziā Sultan’s reign exacted tribute from Tirhut (\textit{ibid.}, p.639).
(iv) Minhāj refers to the raid of Tirhut by Tughril Tughān (1226-45) (\textit{ibid.}, p.737).
(v) Mullā Taqiā writes that Bakhtiyār Khalji attacked Tirhut (1202-03) and restored it to Kamāta Rājā Narasimhadeva (1187-1225) when he became tributary (\textit{Bayāz Ma'ası́r}, Patna, 1946).
(vi) Author of \textit{Riyāz-us-Salātīn} writes that “Bhaktiyār appears to have conquered Mithilā West of Mahanandā” (\textit{Riyāz-us-Salātīn}, p.47).

\(^{139}\) Sarker, Jadunath, ed. \textit{History of Bengal}, Vol.II, p.5
\(^{140}\) \textit{Tabqāt-i-Nasirī}, (tr. Raverty), Vol.I, p.629
\(^{141}\) Purneā was considered to be a part of Mithilā on linguistic and cultural grounds. For detail, refer to \textit{An Account of Purneā District in 1809-10}, Ed. F. Buchanan, BORS, Patna, 1928, p.43.
the traditional boundary between Bengal and Delhi, always claimed by the rulers of Bengal and recognized by the Delhi Emperors down to Babur.

Hence, besides the Gaṅges and the Gaṇḍak, Kośī had been the determining factor in communication all throughout the medieval period. Buchanan writes that the river proceeded from Chatrā to the eastward and joined the Gaṅges far below.\(^{143}\) Martin Montgomery, too, attests the importance of Kośī in the same fashion.\(^{144}\) Minhāj holds that Ali Mardān crossed it in 1209 A.D.\(^{145}\) and Firoz Shah Tughlaq in 1354. Subsequently it discharged its water past Tāndā, and finally in Akbar’s time flowed into Rājmahal. The river separated Bengal from Bihar and Tirhut. The list of mahāl east to this river was included in Sarkār Purnea and to the west of the river in Sarkār Monghyr. R.K. Chaudhary refers to Rennell’s Atlas which indicates that the river entered Purnea, a little over Nāthpura, and flowing between Birnagar and Purneā, fell into the Gaṅges, twelve miles west of Kārāgotā.\(^{146}\)

The Kosī has to discharge not only the water it brings from Purnea and Nepal, but also the drainage of North Monghyr, Saharsā and Darbhangā and hence the high flood, occasionally referred to in contemporary sources. The river Gaṇḍak, too, passes through Sārana, Campārana, Muzaffarpura, Darbhangā and falls into the Gaṅges in North Monghyr near G ogrī Jamālpura.\(^{147}\) Through these riverine tracts of Bhāgalpura and Monghyr, lying north of the Gaṅges, lay the highway communication between Bengal and Oudh down to the middle of the 14\(^{th}\) century A.D.\(^{148}\) Considering the importance of this route Haji Ilyās founded Hajipur on the Gaṇḍak, Firuz

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143 Ibid., pp.14-21.
145 *Tabaqāt-i-Nasiri*, op. cit., p.578.
147 Ibid., p.11.
Tughlaq appointed imperial collectors in Tirhut, Sarkār Purneā during Akbar’s time was spread over Bengal and Bihar.

Here, mention may be made of Tirhut’s division by Haji Ilyās in 1347 A.D. The portion of Tirhut on the right bank of the Burhi Gaṇḍak, consisting of the districts of Campārana, Muzaffarpura, some of the subdivisions of Samastīpura, Khagaria and Begusarai are administered from Hajipur where as the areas on the left bank consisting of the present districts of Darbhangā Saharsā and Sitamarhi subdivisions were allowed to be retained in possession of the Rājā of Tirhut. Ilyas might have assumed power upto Gaṇḍak and it would not have passed beyond Monghyr because the inscriptions of the tomb of Bihar show that the town of Bihar was under the governors of Delhi. The above division of Tirhut is remarkable as showing the boundary of the area along the banks of the river. The fact is that a road leading from Campārana to Bengal via Darbhangā and Purneā, existing even now, was the deciding factor in the settlement between the two kings of Tirhut and Bengal because it was impossible for the Tirhut king to agree to a closure of passage for going into their dominions in the eastern most limit of the district of Purneā. The Muslim invaders from the west during middle ages must have followed this route because they had to cross only small rivers or streams instead of a big river like the Gaṇges or their way to Bengal. Hence, the evidence suggests that marches and counter-marches through Tirhut were very common during the period under study.

The reasons behind the frequent shifting of the capital of the kings of Mithilā from one place to another may be understood in view of these routes used by the Muslim invaders. A plausible explanation is that the Mithilā rulers were kept in awe by the Muslim forces. Originally, Simrāon in the district of

150 JASB, 1873, p.255.
Campārana (now in Nepāl) was the capital of Mithilā and it remained so till the regime of Ramsimhadeva. The formidable fortress around Simrāon bears testimony to the fact that the ruling regime was always apprehensive of the lurking danger of Muslim onslaught. This assumption acquire additional credence on account of the evidence of an eyewitness, the famous Tibetan traveler Dharmāśwāmi who visited the Karṇāta capital in early 13th century A.D.,¹⁵² has acknowledged that despite being a Buddhist monk, he was extended a very warm hospitality.

Circumstanced as they were by the Muslim enclosure on all sides, their independence was always at stake and hence simply to preserve the sanctity of their kingdom they made various attempts to strengthen and fortify themselves. Mullā Taqiā would have us believe that the Hindu rulers sometimes purchased or bought off independence by paying handsome ransoms. Like a drowning man catching straw, these desperate rulers, in their vain attempts to remain independent, shifted their headquarters from one place to another, with the result that they could not settle permanently anywhere. That is why we do not get any substantial historical remains at any particular place. The frequency in the change of capital renders it impossible to find out their traces and hence the predominance of folklore and tradition. Darbhangā according to Mullā Taqiā, continued to be the second capital from the days of Gaṅgādeva. Darbhangā, as the second capital, was maintained by Rāmasimhadeva, whose name is associated with a number of place there. Obviously on account of being hard pressed by the Muslims on all sides Śankarasimhadeva is said to have shifted his capital to Sakkuri (modern Sakri railway station of N.E. Rly on the Darbhangā Nirmalī Section). The Bengal ruler by this time had reached upto village Maheśwarā on the Gaṅdak in Begusarai Sub-division, evident from the inscription of the time of Ruknuddin

Kaikaus, discovered there. Harasingpur in Baheera Police Station (Darbhanga district) is said to have been the second capital of Harisimhadeva. Baheera, even today, is populated by Muslims.

The same is the case with the Oinwara rulers about whose capital, too, we have little information. During the rule of the Oinwara the actual occupation of Mithilā by the Muslims was complete. They could not maintain Sugaunā, which rose after the fall of Simarāon, as their permanent capital but used to shift according to time and circumstances. Various places in Mithilā are today associated with these rulers. We do not know for certain what the original or the permanent capital of the Khandavālas was, but Bhaura, Darbhanga and Jhānjhpura are usually mentioned. It was after the battle of Kandarpighāta\textsuperscript{153} that they shifted their capital to Jhānjhpura and from there ultimately to Darbhanga, which was already the headquarters of the Faujdar of Sarkar Tirhut. Maheśa Thākura, the founder of the Darbhanga Rāj, makes a mention of Darbhanga.

Inspite of the frequent changes that had to be made, the rulers chose only these places as capital which lay on the main route – the route which existed in its primitive form till it was raged and destroyed by the onsloughts of the Košī. The route from Motihārī to Darbhanga, both capitals of the Mithilā rulers, from Darbhanga to Sakri, to Baherā (Harsingapur)- Bheet Bhagwānpura (once said to be the capital) and from there to Supaul and then to Purnā via Bangāon and Singheśwarasthān was the most important route, before the railway tracks were laid. This route was frequented by the Muslim commanders during the period under study.

It has been customary, since time immemorial, that trade routes and political aggression generally follow the convenient lines of communication

\textsuperscript{153} The Battle of Kandarpighāta was fought between king Narendra Singh of Mithilā and Alivardi Khan in 1753. Kandarpighāta is situated at the bank of river Kamlā Balān in the middle of the villages Harina and Mahrail, near Jhānjhpur in Madhubani district.
and in this respect, Tirhut has never lagged behind. The convenient lines of communication in Tirhut were mainly determined by the river channels, an account of which has already been given above. The authorities, having headquarters at Hajipur, moved along the right bank of the Gaṇḍak leaving undisturbed those, on the left bank comprising Mithilā to develop a kind of insular attitude which helped them in becoming more and more conservative in their thought and outlook. This is one of the important factors which, we shall see in subsequent chapters, accounts for the excessive rigidity, conservatism and orthodoxy in Medieval Mithilā.