Chapter II:
Geographical and Historical Background of the Pāla-Sena Rule in Eastern India
Geographical Locations of Inscribed Images from Bengal and Bihar
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The political geography of Bengal and Bihar during the period from (c 7th century-13th century A.D.) were largely under the control of the Pāla kings, and subsequently, to a more limited extent, of the Senas. In addition, the rise of the independent ruling dynasties like Rātas, Khadgas, Devas, Candras and Varmans in south-eastern Bengal, played a much more significant role in the politics and culture of the time and the territory concerned. The present chapter is divided into two sections: Section I: Geographical provenance of the inscribed images and Section II: Historical background of the region. The political authority of the Pāla-Sena rulers in the territorial domain of Bengal and Bihar is an established subscription in the historiography of early mediaeval political history of Eastern India. The term ‘Bengal’ does not exist politically for more than six decades. It was a name which referred to a province in the British regime. ‘Bengal’ now incorporates the present-day state of West Bengal in India and Bangladesh. These two territories are politically separated but share the same linguistic unity and cultural homogeneity.

The mighty Ganga divides the adjacent state of Bihar broadly into two regions. Geographically the entire landmass to the north of the Ganga was known under the broad names of Videha, Mithila and Tirabhukti and constitutes the north Bihar region. The landmass to the south of the Ganga up to the core areas of the Chotanagpur plateau marked by the east west flow of the upper Damodar is broadly designated as the South Bihar plains, constitutes ancient Magadha and modern Jharkhand which once formed part of the southern Bihar plains. In other words, the political sway of the Pāla-Sena rulers (c.8th-12th century A. D.) and the reigning kings of other minor dynasties (A. D. 7th-11th century A. D.) covered the spatial region of West Bengal, Bihar and the present state of Jharkhand in India and the neighboring country of Bangladesh (See Map I). We have for this purpose divided the landmass of Bengal and Bihar into three general
physiographic divisions.¹ Northern Bengal, the ancient Varendra or Pundravardhana, is clearly defined by the rivers of Yamuna and Ganges on the east and south, its western flank merging with North Bihar. The present-day Bogra, Rajshahi, Dinajpur districts of Bangladesh and the north and south districts of Dinajpur of West Bengal constitute the region. South or South eastern Bengal constitutes the ancient geographical units of Samatata, Harikela and Vaṅga corresponding to central, lower and eastern deltaic Bengal. Western part of Bengal includes the regions of Suhma, Rāḍha and a part of the lower delta washed by some of the branches of Ganges, and is contiguous to Orissa and southern Bihar on its western side. Needless to say the vast majority of image inscriptions included in this study is found distributed within the varied landforms of these territorial units (See Map 2).

With this brief geographical review of the region I am inclined to state that the present chapter will not probe into the topographic features or the detail of the geological formations of the region in one hand nor the purport of this summary is to trace the geo-political and historical antiquity of the territorial units on the other. The purport of this chapter is to locate the geographic provenance of the inscribed art objects viz; images, fragmentary pedestals, architectural members of both dated and undated variety from the spatial region of Bengal and Bihar that has been included in this study and correlates it with the historical perspective of Pāla-Sena rule during the four centuries. This will give a coherent account of the total developments i.e. spatial distribution of art objects with inscriptions in the region and the politico-historical situation within the geographical space. The most crucial and significant feature of the dedicatory inscriptions, prima facie, is their spatial distribution, as gauged even only from the known provenances. It is with the help of a fair idea of the geographical horizon covered by the dedicatory pieces that one precisely recognizes the territory in which the Pāla-Sena rulers and the kings of the minor ruling dynasties gained supremacy. Here lies the historical importance of the epigraphic record.

¹ The geo-political divisions of Bengal and Bihar have been a subject of discussion in major works of our period. Right from B. C. Sen, monograph entitled Some Historical Aspects of the Inscriptions of Bengal (Pre-Muhammadan Epochs) (1942); R. C. Majumdar, History of Bengal, I (1943) and later in the History of Ancient Bengal (1971); A. M. Chowdhury, Dynastic History of Bengal (c. 750-1200 A.D.) 1967; B. M. Morrison, Political Centers and Cultural Regions in Early Bengal (1970) and Sudipa Bandopadhyay, Architectural Motifs In Early Mediaeval Art Of Eastern India (Pāla- Sena Period) (2002).
In taking up the task I intend to follow a chronological sequence in order to have a clear knowledge of the inscribed art objects (images, fragmentary pedestals, architectural members, etc) both dated and undated assigned to each of the Pāla-Sena rulers and to the rulers of independent / minor dynasties that came into political prominence in south-eastern part of Bengal from the period (c.7th century-13th century A. D.). The rise of the Pāla dynasty sometime in the middle of the eighth century ushered in a new epoch in the history of Bengal as well as Bihar. But the politico-historical situation of the region predates the eighth century date i.e. the period generally designated as pre-Pāla period. The political and cultural history of the pre-Pāla period is unearthed from the territorial region of south-eastern Bengal largely known by the name of Samatata (Comilla-Noakhali plain) and Harikela (Chittagong coastal tract) in the various sources used for understanding the history of early Bengal.\(^2\) The political sway of the Rāta, in the early part of the seventh century A.D. followed by the Khaḍga in the latter half of seventh century A.D. in the region is confirmed by both literary and archaeological sources.\(^3\) However, it appears that the Rātas and Khaḍgas ruled contemporaneously in the same region before the Pālas came into political prominence. The rule of the Devas, end of the eighth or more likely at the very beginning of the ninth century followed the Khaḍgas in the south-eastern Bengal as a paramount power. The Devas were contemporaneous to the early Pāla rulers. The two independent kingdoms that established their political sway over the south eastern part of Bengal in the tenth-eleventh century were the Candras and Varmans. The Candra rulers gained supremacy over the region from the beginning of the tenth century down to the middle of the eleventh century A. D.\(^4\)

With this brief political frame of south-eastern Bengal during the pre-Pāla and the Pāla period it is needless to say that only, a single inscribed image of brāhmaṇical goddess Sarvāṇī from Deulbadi, Comilla District (south-eastern Bengal) have come to our notice. This sculpture is tentatively dated to late seventh century or early eighth century A.D. and hence pre-dates the vast


\(^{3}\) B. M. Morrison, op.cit, pp. 22-26.

\(^{4}\) A. M. Chowdhury, op.cit, pp.154-189. The political exploits of the Candra kings will be addressed below in light of the image inscriptions discovered during the ruling period of the Candras.
The find spot of the image and the identification of the administrative centre, which was called Karmānta, as the modern village of Badkamta, suggests that Devakhadga ruled over the Comilla area and at least the southern part of the Dacca district.5

There are no image inscriptions or any sculptures which may be definitely ascribed to the period of the first Pāla ruler Gopāla (I) (c.750 A. D). The history of dated and undated Pāla images begins with the reigning period of Dharmapāladeva (c.775-810 A. D) who ruled tentatively for a period of thirty-two years. The king succeeded in bringing much of both Bengal and Bihar (south Bihar region) under his direct control. The inscribed votive stūpa of the Yr 4 of Dharmapāladeva is the earliest known inscribed dated art object from Nalanda (Patna District). The Bodhgaya image inscription or the Kāśīva-prasasti as labelled by scholars is dated in the 26th year of Dharmapāla’s reign. This important document extends the ruling period of Dharmapāla to twenty-six years in the south Bihar region. The ruler is credited with two undated inscribed art specimen, viz; the Vālguḍar (Monghyr District) pedestal inscription and the fragmentary inscribed sculptured stūpa from Nalanda. Thus the find spot of art materials from Nalanda, Bodhgaya, Valgudar all from south Bihar plains during the victorious reign of Dharmapāladeva is indicative of his established hegemony over the region.

Under Devapāla (c.810-847 A. D) the third king in the Pāla line of succession, the limits of the empire created under his father, Dharmapāla, were apparently maintained as well as increased. Altogether seven image inscriptions of Devapāla have come to light, of which six images are from south-Bihar region like Nalanda (Patna District) and Kurkihar-Bodhgaya region (Gaya district). A single undated image of Viśṇu is from Bengal. The exact find spot of the sculpture from Bengal is not given in published textual sources. Of the dated images, inscription on the Pañcika image, year 3 is the earliest record of the reign of Devapāladeva discovered at Nalandā and is of immense historical value. The second dated image is Balarāma image inscription of year 9 discovered from a mound at Kurkihar (ancient Kuṅkuṭapāḍā-giri-vihāra), Gaya district, Bihar. To this may be added an undated Balarāma image from Nalanda. Two images of the 25th

5 B. C. Sen, op. cit. 1942, p. 278.
regnal year are significant dated documents assigned to the ruling king. Besides the well known Tārā image from Hilsa, Patna district, Bihar the Avalokitesvara image inscription from Kurkihar-Bodhgaya region of the twenty-fifth year of Devapāladeva is a new addition to the corpus of Pāla-Sena dated images. The historical importance of this inscription lies in the fact that, it gives an extended ruling period of twenty-five years to the reigning king. The second Tārā image of Devapāladeva dated to year 31 from Nālandā, Patna district, Bihar gives an extended rule of 31 years to Devapāladeva over Bihar-Bengal.

The Jagajjibanpur copper plate inscription, Malda district, West Bengal, dated to the seventh regnal year establishes the fact that Mahendrapāla (c.847- 862 A. D.) the son and the grandson of Dhrmampāla, preceded Śūrapāla I the younger son of Devapāla on the Pāla throne around the middle of the ninth century. This discovery most significantly discards the myth of the Gurjara-Pratihara king Mahendrapāla ruling over Varendra and south Bihar. The political authority of Mahendrapāla over Magadha in the early years of his rule was an established subscription in the early medieval political history, primarily owing to the fact that a large number of dedicatory inscriptions, eight on images and one on an undated votive stūpa record the name of Mahendrapāla, the ruling king. The epigraphic record on the stūpa reads Mahendrapāladeva-rajye. The Khasarpana Lokesvara image inscription of Mahendrapāla from Magadh, year 2, is the earliest epigraphic record ascribed to the reigning period of Mahendrapāla from Magadh, south Bihar. Two inscribed records of the 4th regnal are engraved on a Buddha image from Bihar and Bihar Sharif respectively. This suggests the continuation of his rule in the south Bihar region till the 4th regnal year. The discovery of the votive inscription on a Tārā image from Jharkhand, Hazaribagh district, south Bihar evidently proves the establishment and continued rule of Mahendrapāla in this territorial region till eight century A.D. Mahendrapāla continuous reign in the 8th regnal year is further established by the discovery of a stone slab / panel showing the ten avatāras of Viṣṇu, dated to the 8th regnal year of Mahendrapāla from Rāmgayā, Gaya district, Bihar. The inscribed image of seated Buddha from Gneri, Gaya District Bihar and the British Museum Buddhist pedestal inscription of Mahendrapāla, whose exact find spot is unknown are both dated in the 9th regnal year. The inscriptions dated to the regnal year 9 are a clear evidence of Mahendrapāla’s sway over the region of South Bihar till 9th century A.D. Finally, the Mahisantosh (Naogaon district, Bangladesh) image inscription of Mahendrapāla, is the only
image inscription from Bengal dated to the regnal year 15 i.e. the last reigning year of Mahendrapāla. The epigraphic documents of the Pāla ruler Mahendrapāla clearly suggest his stronghold in south Bihar plains and north Bengal. Some of the provenances of image inscriptions of the time of Mahendrapāla are long known to have been equally potential archaeological sites. Among prominent examples, three sites are noteworthy, Gumeri in Gaya, Itkhauri in Hazaribagh and Mahisantosh in Naogaon, Bangladesh. The twelve reigning years of Śūrapāla (I) (c.862 - 874/875 A. D.) is credited with five image inscriptions. The two inscribed Buddhist sculptures dated to the regnal year 3 of the Pāla ruler Śūrapāla, has been discovered from the monastic establishment of Uddanapura, Bihar Sharif, south Bihar. The Dvādasadātiya stone slab inscription from Rajaona, Monghyr district, Bihar is dated in the 5th regnal year of the Pāla ruler. The date mentioned in this record is of immense historical importance as it has given two-three years of extended rule to the Pāla ruler Śūrapāladeva I.6 The Kurkihar metal image inscription of year 12 of Śūrapāladeva is an important historical document for two specific reasons; the image is important because it is the only dated metal image so far known from the reign of Śūrapāla I of the Pāla dynasty. Secondly, the regnal year 12 of the epigraphic record has given seven extended years of rule to the reigning king until the last known discovery i.e. the Dvādasadātiya stone slab inscription. An undated fragmented sculpture of Śūrapāladeva from Nālanda, Patna district, Bihar records the name of the illustrious ruler Śrī-Śūrapāladeva.

Only a single dated and an undated image inscription is known from the reign of Gopala (II) (c. 874/875-878/879) the son and successor of Śūrapāladeva I. A king named Gopala (II) was a new addition to Pāla genealogical history. Gouriswar Bhattacharya’s decipherment of two new copper plate inscriptions in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art has broken fresh ground in Pāla Genealogy.7 The charters mention the name of a new Pāla ruler Gopāla, the son and successor of Śūrapāla I of the main branch of Pāla genealogy. Bhattacharya designates the new

6 Two dated inscribed Buddhist sculptures, Accession No. 3763 and 3764 in Indian Museum, Kolkata records the regnal yr 2 or 3 of Śūrapāla I. These dates were considered to be last record for fixing the reigning period of Śūrapāla I, until the discovery of Dvādasadātiya stone slab inscription.

7 G. Bhattacharya, “The New Pāla Ruler, Gopāla (II), son of Śūrapāla (I)” in Facets of Indian Culture (Gustav Roth Felicitation Volume). The charters mention the name of a new Pāla ruler Gopāla, the son and successor of Śūrapāla I of the main branch of Pāla genealogy. This Gopāla as recorded in the charter was unknown to us. Bhattacharya designates the new Gopāla as Gopāla (II), the son of Śūrapāla I, the son and successor of Rājyapāla as Gopāla (III). According to Bhattacharya, the son and successor of Kumārapāla should henceforward be known as Gopāla (IV) respectively, unless other new evidences come to light, 1998.
Gopāla as Gopāla (II), the son of Śūrapāla I. The discovery of Gaṇeśa image from Mandhuk (Comilla district, Bangladesh) suggest the inclusion of south-eastern Bengal within the territorial domain of the Pālas, during the rule of Gopāla II. The Sakrasena pedestal inscription of the reign of Gopala II from Bodhgaya region (Gaya district, south Bihar) is assigned to Gopala II. The inscription records the name of the king as Śrī Gopāla-deva-rajye.

Vigrahapāla I (c.874/875-876 A. D.) the son and successor of Jayapāla of the co-lateral branch ruled for a short period. No dated donative record is ascribed to his rule.

The Pāla ruler Nārāyaṇapāla (c.876-930 A. D.) the son and successor of Vigrahapāla I of the collateral branch is credited with two inscribed objects. The first is the pedestal inscription from Bihar dated to year 9. The second epigraphic record is engraved on a metal image of Pārvatī from Bihar Sharif dated to the 54th year of Nārāyaṇapāla. The epigraphic record reads Śrī Nārāyaṇapāla-deva-rajye Samvat 54. The discovery of the Parvati image from Bihar Sharif is indicative of the Pāla reoccupation of the region and also the re-establishment of Pāla authority over the lost dominion.

The illustrious long reign of king Rajyapāla (c.930-967 A. D.) the son and successor of Nārāyaṇapāla-deva is known from five dated image inscriptions. With the exception of the Balarāma image inscription of the year 37 of Rājyapāla Rajgir, Patna district, Bihar, the rest are from the Kurkihar, Gaya District, Bihar. The pedestal with two Nāgas of the year 28 of Rājyapāla is inscribed with the name of the ruling king Śrī - Rājyapāla is the earliest of the five dated records. The two Vasudhārā images of the year 31 or 32 of Rājyapāla from the repertoire of Kurkihar bronzes are known for excellent metallic carving. The date is recorded as Śrī - Rājyapāla-deva-rajye samvacchare 32. The Umā-Mahēśvara image inscription of the year 31 or 32 of Rājyapāla with the line Śrī Rājyapāla-deva-rajye samvacchare 31 confirms both the regnal year and the name of the ruling king. The discovery of the five dated pieces from the Patna district, south Bihar inevitably establishes Rajyapāla’s political hegemony over the region. The Balarāma image inscription of Rājyapāla records an important date of the Pāla ruler. So far it was known that Rājyapāla ruled for 32 years, but this image inscription informs us that he ruled at least for 37 years. This is well exemplified in the record sri raja yapala deva rajye samvat 37.
The Nalanda Vāgīśvāri image inscription of year 1 of Gopaladeva (III) (c.967-984 A.D.) is the only dated epigraphic record ascribed to the ruler who ruled for a period of 17 years tentatively. The name of the ruler Śrī Gopāla finds place in the text of the inscription. Secondly, the installation of the image at Nalanda, an important Buddhist establishment is significantly recorded in this inscription. It also alludes to the continuation of the successful political sway of the Pāla ruler Gopaladeva (III) in the south Bihar region after his father Rājayapāla. The undated Mother and child image in question is ascribed to the reign of Vigrahapāladeva II (c.984-989 A.D.) and is the only image inscription of the ruling king. The words rājye vigrapālasya as noted in the text of the epigraphic record mention the name of the ruling king who is undoubtedly the Pāla ruler Vigrahapāladeva II.

All the known sculptures which are inscribed with the name of Mahipāla may be assigned to the reign of Mahipāla I (c.989 - 1037 A.D.) son and successor of Vigrahapāla (II) who is known to have ruled for a long period of 48 years-V. S. 1083. The inscribed image of Viṣṇu from Baghaura (Comilla district) Bangladesh dated to the regnal year 3 of Mahipāladeva I is the earliest epigraphic record ascribed to the ruling king. The regnal year with the name of the king is given in line 1 of the epigraphic record as Sambat 3 Māghadine 27 śrī Mahipāladeva rājye. The discovery of this image from the south eastern part of Bangladesh is an indication of the political control of the Pāla ruler, Mahipāla over the region in the early years of his rule. The find spot of the Ganeśa image from Nārāyanapur in the same district of south eastern Bengal establish Mahipāla’s rule for another year as the record is dated to regnal year 4 and exemplified as Sambat 4 āśādhadine 25 Mahārājādhirāja-śrīma-mahipāladeva.

The sculpted doorframe from Nālandā, Patna district, Bihar is dated to the 11th regnal year of king Mahipāla I and finds mention in record as Śrī Man Mahipāla Deva rājye samvat 11. The historical importance of this epigraphic record is noteworthy for two reasons. The find spot of the sculpted doorframe from Nālandā, Patna district suggest to the existence of his ruling authority in south Bihar till his 11th regnal year. Secondly, it is known from traditional literary sources and inscriptive evidences that Mahipāla I had succeeded considerably in restoring the lost fortunes of the Pāla empire. This is clearly convincing from the present record which speaks
of the restoration and repair of the Bālāditya temple after it was destroyed and damaged by fire. The Buddha image from Bodhagaya is also dated to the 11th regnal year of Mahipala I. The date as well as the name of the king is recorded in the inscription Śrīmān = Mahīpāla-deva - pravardhamāna vijayarājye ekādaśame samvatsare abhilikhya. A metal Viṣṇu image from Nimdighi (Rajshahi district) year 23 of Mahipala I, the undated Shantipur image of Buddha from Shantipur district Malda, West Bengal and the image of a unique Snake-Goddess from Rajshahi attest to the establishment of Mahipala I political sovereignty over the northern region of Bengal comprising the geo-political units of Varendra or Pundravardhana.

The date and find spot of the Cunda image from Kurkihar, Gaya district, Bihar once again establishes Mahipala I continued hold in the south Bihar region till his 31st regnal year. This is given in the record as śrīman = Mahīpāla-deva-rā (jyasa *) mvat 31. A Buddhist pedestal inscription from Sarnath of Mahipala I records the date as śrīmān || Sarinva 1083. The importance of this epigraphic record is undeniable as it mentions a particular date and adds immense importance to Pāla chronology. The inscription does not specify the era in which it is recorded i.e Śaka or Vikrama era. A date in the Śaka era would give an equivalent to c.1083 + 78 = c.1161 A.D. which does not correspond to the date of either Mahipala I or Mahipala II. If we consider the date in Vikrama era, then the record can be dated to c.1083-58 = 1025 A. D. i.e. normal regnal years. The discovery of the Sarnath pedestal has given rise to historical debate.

R. C. Majumdar is of the opinion that Mahipala I extended his rule beyond Bihar i.e. as far as Sarnath as evident from the inscription. According to A. M. Chowdhury the inscription which records the construction and rebuilding of several religious edifices at Benaras by Sthirapala and Vasantapāla at the order of Mahipala I was purely a religious act initiated by Mahipala who being a paramasangata wanted to restore the monuments at the famous place of pilgrimage for the Buddhists. Thus the theory of Mahipala I extended rule over Sarnath as put forward by R. C. Majumdar is not accepted by A. M. Chowdhury.

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The two image inscriptions from Imadpur, Muzaffarpur district, North Bihar speaks of Mahipāla I long reign of 48 years which finds mention in the inscriptive evidence Šrī-man Mahipāla-Deva-Rājye Samvat 48. The discovery of the Imadpur images from North Bihar suggests that Mahipāla I had succeeded in spreading the Pāla authority in the northern Bihar region towards the closing year of his reign. Mahipāla’s long journey of political expansion which started in the 3rd and 4th regnal year as known from the Baghaura and Narayanpur image inscriptions in southeastern part of Bengal came to an end by establishing his political domain in north Bihar as evident from the Imadpur inscriptions dated to regnal year 48. Finally, a single undated inscribed Nāga sculpture from Tetrawan of Mahipāla I, Ghoraktore, Rajgir is assigned to the king. Thus this brief review on the image inscriptions of Mahipāla I fairly indicates his active political administration in Comilla-Neakhalī plain, spreading to the southern Bihar plains, extending to Varendra and Pundravardhana region in Bengal and Imadpur in north Bihar.

In order to maintain a chronological sequence it is necessary to interject a few inscribed sculptures dated in the reign of non-Pāla rulers i.e. the Candras who ruled in the Comilla-Neakhalī plain of south eastern Bengal from the 9th century or earlier to the middle of the 11th century. Three inscribed images, the Bharella Nārttēsvara image inscription of Lañahacandra-deva (c.1000-20 A. D.) dedicated in the year 18, the Kulkūti Sūrya image inscription of Govindacandra (c.1020 - 1045 A. D.) dedicated in the year 12 and the Betka Vasudeva inscription of Govindacandra dedicated in the year 23 are attributed to the rulers of this dynasty. The discovery of the Nārttēsvara image inscription from Bharella of Lañahacandra-deva suggest that the territorial region of Samatāta and Harikela were strongholds of the Candras after the ruling family of Devas. The find spot of the Kulkūti Sūrya image dedicated in the year 12 of Govindacandra from the Faridpur district of Bangladesh and the Vasudeva image from Betka (Paikpara) Dhaka District, Bangladesh dated in the 23rd regnal year of the ruling king indicates the gradual extension of their power of influence to Samatāta and Vaṅga and also incorporated the Srihaṭṭa region within their sphere of influence.

10 A possible date of the late 10th or early 11th century is suggested for the sculpture that falls in the time of Mahipāla I.
The next ruling Pala king in line was Nayapala (c.1037-1052 A. D.) the son and successor of Mahipala I who ruled for a short period of fifteen years. The Pundesvari image inscription dated to year 13 of Nayapala from Rajauna, Monghyr district, south Bihar might suggest to Nayapala political hold in the region. A single undated image of Manasa from Mandalgram, district Burdwan, West Bengal, which records the name of the ruling king Nayapaladeva as Śrī Nayapaladeva however, might suggest that Pala authority was also acknowledged for a short span of time in the eleventh century in central-western Bengal. The inscription found on the image of Śaivaite Religious Teacher Mūrtiśiva from Dogachia\(^\text{11}\) in Nadia district, West Bengal assigned on paleographical ground to the reign of Nayapaladeva further supports the political suzerainty of Nayāpāla in some parts of West Bengal.

So far, as many as seven dedicatory inscriptions of the time of Vigrahapāla III (c.1052 - 1076 A. D.) son and successor of Nayāpāla have come to light. The crowned image of Buddha from Kurkihar is the earliest inscribed sculpture dated to the regnal year 3 of the Pala ruler Vigrahapāla III reads srīma-Vigrahapāladeva-vijaya-rijye satimat 3 recorded in line 1 of the text of the inscription. The dedication made in the third regnal year of Vigrahapāla III proves the existence of the last vestiges of Pala rule in south Bihar. The dedication of a Viṣṇu image from Mandoil (Rajshahi district) Bangladesh in the year 4, also attest to the political control of the ruler over this region. Chronologically placed, the Buddha from Rohoi, Patna district, Bihar in the year 12 of Vigrahapāla III is the next object of consecration. The find spot of two images of ‘Bejeweled Buddha’ from Kurkihar, Gaya District, Bihar assigned to the same ruling year i.e. year 19 of Vigrahapāla III is an evidence of his continued political hold over the region of south Bihar. The inscribed dated image of Aparājīta of Vigrahapāla III is from an unknown provenance of Bihar. The discovery of this image inscription dated to 22\(^\text{nd}\) regnal year of Vigrahapāla III have extended the rule of the sovereign over the region for another three years i.e. from 19\(^\text{th}\) to 22\(^\text{nd}\) regnal year. The last votive object dated to the regnal year 24 is the pedestal from Naulagarh Monghyr District, Bihar inscribed with the words Vigrahapāladeva rījye Satinvata (Satinvat) 24.

\(^{11}\) According to N. G. Goswami, the paleography of the inscription affirms to 11\(^\text{th}\) century A. D. Niranjan Goswami, ‘A note on an inscribed portrait-statue of Mūrtiśiva from West Bengal’ Explorations in Art and Archaeology of South Asia: Essays Dedicated to N. G. Majumdar (ed.) Debal Mitra, Calcutta, 1996, p.270.
Thus the dedication of maximum number of images during the period of Vigrahapāla III testify to his rule and control over south Bihar region right from 3rd regnal year to the 24th regnal year. Vigrahapāla III was succeeded by his sons Mahipāla II (?) and Śūrapāla II (?) who ruled for a very short time only and there are no sculptures which may be assigned to their reign.

The long reign of Rāmapāla (c.1078 - 1120 A. D.) for 53 years lasted more than a half century. A number of inscriptions of the reign of this monarch have been noted, although one of them which occur on the pedestal of Buddha in a votive stūpa from Uren, Monghyr district Bihar does not bear a date. So far, five dated objects including image, pedestals and architectural art material like stūpa have come to our notice. Maintaining a chronological sequence the image of Khadiravāṇī Tārā from Tetrawan Patna District, Bihar is dated to the regnal year 2 or 3 of Rāmapāladeva is the earliest image inscription ascribed to the ruler. The dated votive stūpa from Uren, Monghyr district Bihar of Rāmapāladeva is ascribed to year 14 of the ruling king and recorded in the text śrimad Rāmapāla (pā) ladeva- v[ija]ya- ra- (rā) j [y] e Samvat (Sarvat ) 14. The historical significance of this dated record is to justify the existence of Rāmapāladeva sovereign rule in south Bihar territorial region. The pedestal inscription from Ārma Monghyr district, Bihar is assigned to the year 26 of Rāmapāladeva. Two inscribed Avalokiteśvara images from Chandimau and Giriyek (pedestal) in Patna District, Bihar are dated to year 42 of Rāmapāladeva. The find spot of both the image inscriptions from Patna district Bihar indicates the region to be a stronghold of the Pālas in the last quarter of the 11th century and the first quarter of the 12th century. The historical significance of these image inscriptions not only gives an extended ruling year of 42 years to the Pāla king, but the find spot of all the art material from Buddhist sites like Uren, Tetrawan, Ārma, Chandimau and Giriyek concentrated mainly in the districts of Patna and Monghyr south Bihar plains suggest the inclusion of these territories in the Pāla political domain even in the last quarter of the 11th century and the first quarter of the 12th century.

The Rajibpur (Dinajpur district, West Bengal) Sadāśiva image inscription of the 14 regnal year is ascribed to Gopāla IV (c.1122-1136 A. D.) the son and successor of Kumārapāla (c.1120- 1122 A. D.). Gopāla IV ruled for a short period of 15 years.
The dates of king Madanapāla (c.1143-1175 A.D.), (Saka 1083 - Regnal year 18) are known rather precisely due to the inscription on sculpted images which are dated to both regnal and historical eras. Chronologically the dated images are (i) Bihar Sharif Pārvatī image inscription of Madanapāla, year 3, (ii) Nongadh pedestal inscription of Madanapāla, dated Vikrama 1201 which corresponds to c.1144 A.D., (iii) pedestal of a Buddhist image of year 14 of Madanapāla, (iv) broken pedestal from Valgūdar, year 18 of Madanapāla. The Bihar Sharif Parvati image inscription of Madanapāla is dated in the 3rd regnal of the ruling king. The Maner plate of 1124 A.D. and the Lar plate of 1146 A.D. points to the presence of Gāhādaṇāvālas Govindachandra in the Patna- Monghyr region (South Bihar). The discovery of the Parvati image inscription from this region testifies to the political success of Madanapāla against his adversary the Gāhādaṇāvālas Govindachandra in the early part of his reign. The pedestal (of an unidentified image) inscription from the village Nongadh Monghyr district, Bihar is the earliest epigraphic record ascribed to the Pāla ruler Madanapāla. The present epigraphic record is dated to V.S.1201 which corresponds to c.1144 A.D. and should be dated to Madanapāla’s first or 2nd regnal year. This is the second votive record so far studied by me which records the date in Vikrama era. The inscribed pedestal from Jaynagar, Monghyr district Bihar is dated to the regnal year 14 of the Madanapāla. The discovery of the fragmented pedestal from Monghyr district, Bihar shed light on the political hold of Madanapāla over the Patna-Monghyr region, south Bihar. It also points to Madanapāla’s temporary success in the struggle with the Gāhādaṇāvālas of Kanauj who were in possession of the major portion of Bihar. Besides the historical importance, the village of Lakhisarai-Jaynagar is important since a large number of images, most of them belonging to the last period of Buddhist sculptures in early medieval eastern India, and ascribable to the eleventh and twelfth centuries have been recovered from Lakhisarai. The pedestal (the image is lost) from Valgūdar is dated to the 18th regnal year and Śaka era 1083 corresponding c.1161 A.D. of the ruling king Madanapāla. The chief interest of the Valgūdar image inscription of Madanapāla lies in its dating both in the Śaka era and in the regnal reckoning of the Pāla king and serves as the cornerstone of the Pāla chronology. The discovery of Valgūdar pedestal inscription has extended the reigning


13 The first record dated to Vikrama 1083 is the Sarnath pedestal inscription of the time of Mahāpāla I.
period from 14 to 18 years.\textsuperscript{14} The provenances of the image inscriptions from the reign of Madanapāla are spread over Patna-Monghyr region which points to his success with the Gāhadāvalas and his political hegemony over the Patna-Monghyr region.

Two dated records is assigned to the last ruler of the Pāla dynasty, Palapāla (c.1179-1214 /15 A.D.) the Lai pedestal inscription of year 32 of Palapāla and the Purnēśvari image inscription of year 35 of Palapāla from Jaynagar, Monghyr District, Bihar.\textsuperscript{15} The discovery of these inscriptions are important historical document which has proved, that Palapāla, who ruled after or contemporary to Govindapāla (c.1175-1179 A.D.) was the last ruler of the Pāla dynasty. The provenance / find spot of the inscription from Jaynagar suggest that the Monghyr region formed a part of Palapāla’s dominion during his 35\textsuperscript{th} regnal year apparently in the second half of the twelfth centuries. It is therefore not difficult to reconcile Palapāla’s rule over east Bihar for not less than thirty-five years. Secondly, the image in question was apparently installed at Champa, the capital of the ancient Aṅga janapada in east Bihar. This suggest that Champa being the place of installation formed part of east Bihar which was under the political hegemony of Palapāla, the last ruling king till the second half of the twelfth centuries.

The period from the 8\textsuperscript{th}-12\textsuperscript{th} centuries in Bihar and Bengal is generally known as the “Pāla-Sena” period and thus a discussion on the geographical orbit of the image inscriptions of the Sena rulers is a desideratum here. Properly speaking, Vijayasena (c.1097-1160 A. D.) is considered to be the first powerful king of the line. An inscribed pillar with the icon of Manasā found at Paikore in the Birbhum district of West Bengal belonged to the reign of the Sena king Vijayasena. The inscription refers to a king named Vijayasena and reads ‘Rajy-Śrī-Vijayasena’. The discovery

\textsuperscript{14} The discovery of two copper-plate inscriptions of king Madanapāla from Rajībpur in the district of South Dinajpur in West Bengal, dated respectively to his 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 32\textsuperscript{nd} regnal years have extended his ruling period from 1143/1144 to 1175 A.D.

\textsuperscript{15} It is evident from the discussion related to the date of Palapāla made in Chapter III, that Palapāla came after Govindapāla or Palapāla’s reign overlapped that of Govindapāla, the two perhaps ruled in different regions of Bihar. D. C. Sircar is of the opinion that no king with a reign of 32 and 35 years came between Madanapāla and Govindapāla. But the two dated inscriptions with the date 32 and 35 regnal years are assigned to Palapāla. The Jaynagar image inscription of Palapāla dated to regnal year 35 establishes his rule over the region of south-east Bihar, see Sircar “Inscriptions from Bihar”, EF, Vol. XXX, (1953-54), pp.78-87, and “Jaynagar Image Inscription of Year 35” JBRJ, Vol. XLI, (1955), pp.152-153 for further references.
of the pillar from Radha Bengal bears testimony to Vijayasena's connection with the Radha region. In other words, the Sena king Vijayasena had succeeded in establishing the political stronghold of the Sena rule in the western part of Bengal which later spread to the whole of Bengal. The Dacca Çaṇḍi image inscription of Lakṣmanasena (c.1178-1206 A. D. / C.1179-1206 A. D.), year 3 from Rampal, Dhaka district, Bangladesh establish his political control over the central plain of Bangladesh. A survey of locating the geographic provenances remain incomplete without referring to the Khojpur Durga image inscription of 147 of the Lakṣmanasena era from Darbhanga district, Bihar. The epigraphic record is of considerable interest as the date given, is in La-Sanṣ or the Lakṣmanasena Sanвать prevalent in Mithila (North Bihar). It is one of the earliest records dated to the Lakṣmanasena era.

The above survey of Pāla-Sena image inscriptions both dated and undated, particularly with the names of the reigning monarch engraved in the records have shed light in our understanding of the political-historical situation over the four years within the geographical space of Bengal-Bihar. The image inscriptions of the Pāla-Sena rulers clearly suggest their stronghold in both Bihar and north Bengal. Within the geographical confines of modern Bihar, they ruled in two broader provinces, viz. Tirabhukti (North Bihar) and Śrīnagara bhukti, of which the latter was more or less coextensive with the present south Bihar plains.

16 A. M. Chowdhury, op.cit. 1967, for the political history of the Sena rule in Bengal.