Recasting the Brahmin in Medieval Mithila:
Origins of Caste Identity among the Maithil Brahmins of North Bihar

by

Anshuman Pandey

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(History)
in the University of Michigan
2014

Doctoral Committee
        Emeritus Professor Thomas R. Trautmann, Chair
        Professor Madhav Deshpande
        Professor Judith T. Irvine
        Professor Mrinalini Sinha
        Professor Ronald G. Suny

Dedication

To my mother and father

Krishna and Satya Sheel Pandey

for making me who I am

and to my grandfather

Ramroop Pandey

for teaching me about who I am

Acknowledgments

This dissertation seeks to satisfy the many curiosities that motivated my study of the history of India over two decades ago. It all started with the *The Wonder That Was India* by A. L. Basham. My father found that book for me on one of our many Saturday afternoon trips to the public library. The more I read Basham, the more questions I had about India. My father patiently explained whatever he could and my grandfather would address the finer details. My interest in India was further peaked at University of Washington where I learned Indian history and culture from Professor Frank Conlon. In Seattle, my eyes were further opened to the culture of India when I studied Hindi with Professor Michael Shapiro, Sanskrit with Professor Richard Salomon, medieval Hindi with Professor Heidi Pauwels, and Urdu with Dr. Naseem Hines. At that time I wondered whether the intensive course in Bengali that I studied with the late Professor Carol Salomon was worth the daily six hours during the summer, but little did I know how useful it would be when I stumbled across Maithili when I returned many years later as a graduate student at the Jackson School of International Studies. It was there that my focus on language and the politics of language in India took shape. Professor Reşat Kasaba from the Near and Middle East Studies program taught me research methodology in the social sciences and Professor K. Sivaramakrishnan provided a

solid grounding in the field of modern South Asian studies. My efforts were further guided by Professor Anand Yang, Professor Paul Brass, and Professor Shapiro, all of whom advised me on my master's thesis regarding the politics of the Maithili language.

I had planned to return to my profession in information technology after my master's program, but Professor Lisa Mitchell convinced me otherwise. She advised me to pursue my studies and suggested that the University of Michigan would be a good place to do so, and handed me a copy of *Aryans and British India* by Thomas R. Trautmann. That interaction changed the course of my interests in India. I did not realize the extent to which Professor Trautmann would reshape and expand my ideas about India and the topics I wanted to study. This dissertation unknowingly took shape as an essay written for a seminar on kinship taught by Professor Trautmann and Professor Gillian Feeley-Harnik. I never would have imagined the lure of 'kinship'. I went to Ann Arbor wanting to write about language, nationalism, and politics in the 20th century and somehow found myself writing about genealogy, kinship, and caste in the 14th century. But, I did manage to study nationalism with Professor Ronald Suny and linguistic anthropology with Professor Judith Irvine, both of whom showed me ways of expanding my interests in these fields beyond the boundaries of the present. I never imagined I would ever have to use the Sanskrit I learned years ago, so I am thankful to Professor Madhav Deshpande for kindly helping me to remember. Professor Mrinalini Sinha, who came to Ann Arbor right before I began my research, was a source of inspiration and a treasure trove of knowledge on Bihar, and encouraged my studies of Bihar beyond the scope of politics.

My friends in India also opened my eyes to the depth of history and culture of Bihar. Professor Hetukar Jha graciously spoke with me for hours about Mithila and provided me access to numerous invaluable sources and contacts. The staff at the Maharajadhiraja Kameshwar Singh Kalyani Foundation in Darbhanga eagerly opened their doors and cabinets to me, as did the people at the Bihar State Archives in Patna. Gajendra Thakur of New Delhi provided me with digitized copies of the genealogical records of the Maithil Brahmins. My research in India would not have been as joyous or complete were it not for Tejakar Jha, who took me to Darbhanga and shared his personal knowledge and insights regarding Raj Darbhanga and all things Maithil. His own admiration for the history and culture of Mithila was itself an important primary source of motivation.

This dissertation would not have been possible were it not for Professor Trautmann. When I arrived in Ann Arbor for a visit before beginning my graduate studies, he asked me how I became interested in the history of India. I told him that it was because of Basham. He replied that he studied with Basham in London. I then informed him that it was his own book on 'Aryans' that inspired me to pursue doctoral studies at Michigan. I am honored to have been taught, indirectly and directly, by scholars of this great *parampara*. But, I offer my apologies to them, for in every bushel there is certainly a bad apple. Over the years Professor Trautmann has patiently endured my intellectual and geographical wanderings and somehow maintained confidence in me despite my long gaps in communication. "Eyes on the prize!" he constantly advised. I may have blinked a few times along the way, but it's now almost within reach.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Abstract

Recasting the Brahmin in Medieval Mithila:
Origins of Caste Identity among the Maithil Brahmins of North Bihar

by

Anshuman Pandey

Very little is known about the historical origins of Brahmin caste communities in India. The present study attempts to explain the origins of caste identity among the Maithil Brahmin community of north Bihar, taking advantage of exceptionally rich primary sources maintained by the community over a period of six centuries. I examine the development of identity of the Maithil Brahmin community through the themes of genealogy, territory, and authority. I begin my analysis by investigating the creation of a corporate 'Maithil' identity that resulted from a census of Brahmins conducted by the king of Tirhut in the 14th century. This census formed the basis of a comprehensive genealogical record known as *pañjī prabandha*, which was used for determining community identity through the enforcement of rules of endogamy by which the purity of the Brahmin caste was maintained. Genealogy was linked to territory by identifying a limited number of Brahmin patrilineages (called *mūla*) descending from founding ancestors of particular villages. The territorial basis for Brahmin identity in Mithila was based upon the genealogical record. So also was the au-

thority of Brahmins within the Maithil community, whose patrilineages were differentiated into three ranked grades, which were based upon internal criteria for measuring the status of individuals. Genealogy, territory, and authority converged to produce the fourth aspect of identity among the Maithil Brahmins: kingship. When North Bihar was conquered by the Delhi Sultanate and the ruling dynasty of Tirhut fled, the Sultan appointed a high-ranking Maithil Brahmin to rule the region. From the 14th to 20th century, two successive Maithil Brahmin families governed Tirhut, who perpetuated the state-sponsored machinery of Brahmin genealogy and the regulation of marriage. The rise of a Brahmin to the position of 'king' further expanded the notion of 'Maithil' Brahmin identity by uniting the traditional tension in the relationship between Brahmin and king within the Brahmin caste. This dissertation shows that the practical attempt to recognize an individual as a 'Brahmin' in medieval Mithila led to the emergence of a renewed notion not only of 'Maithil' Brahmin identity, but also expanded traditional ideas of Brahmin identity.

Introduction

"Of created beings the most excellent are said to be those which are animated; of the animated, those which subsist by intelligence; of the intelligent, mankind; and of men, the Brahmins."[1] This statement from the *Manu Smṛti* portrays the Brahmin as the archetype of the ideal human, born from the supreme being in order to fulfill *dharma* or the 'sacred law'. Simultaneously, the Brahmin is castigated as a plague upon humanity, on par with those animated beings that subsist not so much by intelligence, as by parasitic activity: "Blood-suckers three on earth there be, [t]he bug, the Brahman and the flea."[2] These extreme portrayals of the Brahmin within Indian society also exist in the scholarly studies of caste in India. Scholars of caste have viewed the Brahmin as the apex of the social structure as well as the source for all of its evils. In a 19th century ethnography on caste, Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya wrote, "The most remarkable feature in the mechanism of Hindu society is the high position occupied in it by the Brahmans", who "not only claim almost divine honours as their birthright, but, generally speaking, the other classes, including the great Ksatriya princes, and the rich Vaishya merchants readily submit to their pretensions as a

---

[1]*Manu Smṛti* 1.96: भूतानां प्राणिनः श्रेष्ठाः प्राणिनां बुद्धिजीविनः । बुद्धिमत्सु नराः श्रेष्ठा नरेषु ब्राह्मणाः स्मृताः ॥ (Jolly, *Mânava Dharma-Śâstra*, 10). Translation adapted from Bühler, *The Laws of Manu*, 25.

[2]Translation by H. H. Risley of a popular Hindi saying "Is dunya men tin kasai[;] Pisu, katmal, Brahman bhai." (*The People of India*, 126–127). Literally, "there are three types of butchers (or brutes) in this world, the flea, the bedbug, and brother Brahmin".

matter of course."[3] The position held by the Brahmin, whether through his honorable action or through his pretensions, have nonetheless served as the standard by which other castes are measured and by which these other castes measure themselves, a process of cultural adapation and social mobility that M. N. Srinivas termed as 'Sanskritization' in the middle of the 20th century.[4] The Brahmin, however, is stripped of his cultural capital outside of the Indian framework. Early Western investigators of caste viewed the Brahmin with suspicion. In the late 19th century, M. A. Sherring wrote that the primacy of the Brahmin in the Indian social structure is a product of his "assumed sancity", but his position remains fixed more so because he is "[e]ndowed with an extremely subtle, rather than with a powerful, mind,—which by long habit, perpetuated from age to age, and from family to family, he has trained to the utmost keenness,—dogmatic, self-willed, pertinacious, and supremely arrogant and vain, he has in turn encountered and beaten the intellects of all the other tribes, and has attained the position of a victor, with whom it is considered to be hopeless infatuation to contend."[5] Sherring's description of the hereditary dominance of the Brahmin is echoed by John Wilson, who wrote that "[t]he Bráhmans, as themselves the great authors of the preceptive parts of the Hindu Shástras, have no feeling of shame whatever in stating their pretensions and urging their prerogatives" and their "fabrications, which appear to us so ridiculous, were intended to secure to the Bráhmans veneration and awe."[6] To these Western scholars the Brahmin was a charlatan, who held fast unto his position in the caste

---

[3]Bhattacharya, *Hindu Castes and Sects*, 19.
[4]See Srinivas, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*, 30–34 for the initial description of 'Sanskritization' and "A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization" for a redefinition of the concept.
[5]Sherring, *Hindu Tribes and Castes*, 3.
[6]Wilson, *Indian Caste*, vol. I, 23, 25.

system more for selfish and arrogant purposes than for his knowledge of the *dharma* and his ability to uphold the law. Yet, despite such rather negative characterizations of the Brahmin, Western scholars conceded that the Brahmin was certainly an important figure in the social system of India. Wilson sums up the extreme sentiments: "There is an admiration and approval of the Bráhman among the people, as well as much dread and distrust of him, and contempt of him for his extravagant claims in connexion with his status and prerogatives."[7] From liturgical texts to popular customs, from colonial ethnographies to scholarly studies, 'the Brahmin' has been the object of exhaltation and denigration.

These sources and scholars, however, portray 'the Brahmin' as a monolith. Who is 'the Brahmin', who arouses admiration on account of his intellect as well as contempt equal to that held towards the bedbug? Despite the attention given to 'the Brahmin' over two centuries of scholarship on caste, there have been few very studies oriented towards explaining 'the Brahmin' as a historical individual and towards describing the historical origins of Brahmin caste communities. Colonial ethnographers may be slightly forgiven for paying more attention to the role of the Brahmin and his 'assumed sanctity' in the religious and social orders of India. Indian historical records offers very little regarding the objective details of the origins and development of the historical Brahmin. The cultural understanding of Brahmin origins, and that of the *varṇa* system, is itself mythical. The 'Purūṣa Sūkta' of the *Ṛgveda* states that the Brahmin was formed from the mouth of the *purūṣa*, or primordial sacrifical man, and that the other three *varṇa*-s were formed from the arms, thighs,

---

[7]Wilson, *Indian Caste*, vol. I, 35.

and feet, respectively.[8] Apart from the primordial creation of Brahmins, the Indian textual tradition acknowledges the existence of different kinds of Brahmins. But, the origin stories among various Brahmin communities do not contain much information that can be used for establishing an understanding about the cultural, political, and social processes by which these communities came to be identified as distinctive caste communities. The first evidence of a historical understanding about the origins of Brahmin communities appears in a text from the 12th century CE called the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa*. The *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* states that there are ten Brahmin communities dispersed across India. These ten communities are divided into two groups according to the geography of India. The northern group consists of the Sārasvata, Kānyakubja, Utkala, Maithila, and Gauḍa communities, while the southern groups consists of the Drāviḍa, Tailaṅga, Karnāṭa, Madhyadeśa, and Gurjara communities. The *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* does not offer an explanation for this classification or the basis for grouping Brahmins in these communities. However, the groupings appear to coincide with major cultural regions of the Indian subcontinent. Despite the absence of clear descriptions of these communities and their constituents, the classification remained durable such that Sanskrit texts from the 15th century assumed the classification to be authoritative. The geographical segmentation caught the attention of European colonial scholars and administrators centuries later, who assumed the divisions to be an inherent aspect of Brahmin social organization. Henry T. Colebrooke interpreted the ten-fold classification as a primordial feature of 'Hindu civilization' and found in it an approach to unify geography, language,

---

[8]*Ṛgveda* 10.90.12: ब्राह्मणोऽस्य मुखमासीद्बाहू राजन्यः कृतः । ऊरू तदस्य यद्वैश्यः पद्भ्यां शूद्रो अजायत ॥ (Müller, *Rig-Veda-Samhitâ,* vol. IV, 291).

and ethnicity in India..[9] In 1801, Colebrooke wrotes that "[t]here is reason to believe that ten polished dialects formerly prevailed in as many different civilized nations, who occupied all the fertile provinces of *Hindustán* and the *Dekhin*."[10] He found the division to be so natural that he set forth in describing the regional languages of India "in the order in which these Hindu nations are usually enumerated".[11] Moreover, Colebrooke stated that the subcontinent was divided into numerous provinces and that "[e]ach of these provinces has its peculiar dialect, which appears … to be a variety only of some one among the ten principal idioms."[12] The association of these regions applied not only to language, but also to the population. Colebrooke believed there was a connection between Brahmins of these nations and the 'dialects' of the nations. He writes "The *Sáreswata* was a nation which occupied the banks of the river *Sáraswatí*" and the "*Bráhmanas* who are still distinguished by the name of their nation, inhabit chiefly the *Penjáb* or *Panchanada*, west of the river from which they take their appellation" and "[t]heir original language may have once prevailed through the southern and western parts of *Hindustán* proper".[13] Colebrooke accepted the authority of the classification to such an extent that he offer a critique of it, suggesting that "I cannot hesitate in thinking that the *Gurjaras* should be considered as the fifth northern nation of India, and the *U'riyas* should be ranked among the tribes of the *Dacshin*."[14] Following the foundation that Colebrooke had established, other Western scholars adopted the classification and applied it towards building finer taxonomies of castes. Nearly a century

---

[9]Trautmann, *Aryans and British India*, 146–149.
[10]Colebrooke, "On the Sanscrit and Pracrit Languages," 219.
[11]Ibid.
[12]Ibid., 250.
[13]Ibid., 219.
[14]Ibid., 229.

later when Matthew Sherring produced an ethnological survey of Indian castes, he relied upon the same ten-nation theory in order to classify Brahmins into ten "principle tribes" and a number of "supplementary tribes" consisting of communities that do not fit into the traditional classification.[15] Both Colebrooke and Sherring offer detailed descriptions of all the ten nations and their languages, except for one. Colebrooke had this to say about the territory, language, and Brahmins of the 'Maithila' nation:

> Mait'hila, or *Tirhutíya*, is the language used in *Mit'hílà*, that is, in the *Sircár* of *Tirhút*, and in some adjoining districts, limited however by the rivers *Cusí (Causicí,)* and *Gandhac (Gandhací,)* and by the mountains of *Népál*: it has great affinity with *Bengálí*; and the character in which it is written differs little from that which is employed throughout Bengal. In *Tirhút*, too, the learned write *Sanscrĭt* in the *Tirhutíya* character, and pronounce it after their own inelegant manner. As the dialect of *Mit'hílà* has no extensive use, and does not appear to have been at any time cultivated by elegant poets, it is unnecessary to notice it further in this place.[16]

Sherring devoted much labor in order to describe the distinctions within each of the ten major 'tribes' of Brahmins. But, about the Maithils, which he labelled the "Fourth Tribe of Gaur Brahmans", he offered the following:

> This tribe is found in Tirhût, and generally throughout the northern part of Behar. Some members of the tribe are met with in the districts of Benares, Jaunpûr, Mirzapûr, and Allahabad; but if there be any truth in the last Census Report, not at all in the large district of Gorakhpûr, to the north-west, although lying contiguous to it. This last statistical statement, however, cannot be correct. A more careful inquiry would, I feel satisfied, reveal the existence of some families of Maithilas residing in this extensive tract. In some parts of the country, Ojha and Maithila Brahmans are considered to be one and the same. While it is quite true, on the one hand, that all Ojhas are Maithilas. In Benares, for instance, the term Ojha is used to designate the person called in to exorcise evil spirits, to allay turbulent departed spirits,—who, it is supposed, work mischief in various ways,—to destroy the power and influence of ghosts and goblins, and the like. He is sometimes a Brahman; but he may proceed likewise from any of the other castes. It is possible that there may be some connection between the Ojha, as thus employed,

---

[15]Sherring, *Hindu Tribes and Castes*, 19.
[16]Colebrooke, "On the Sanscrit and Pracrit Languages," 225.

and the Maithila Brahmans; and further investigation might perhaps show in what it consists.[17]

It is unclear why Colebrooke and Sherring did not provide details about Mithila and its Brahmins. Colonial knowledge about the Brahmins and language of Mithila would have to await the arrival of George Abraham Grierson.

Identifying the Maithil Brahmins

Shortly after his arrival in Bihar in 1873, Grierson learned of a striking disjunction between the language of command and the command of language in the province. His experience with Mithila, or northern Bihar, began after he was called from his post in Bankipore, near the capital Patna, to the town of Sitamarhi across the river Ganges in order to perform relief work during the famine of 1874.[18] "Many Bihar officials", he wrote "have complained to me of the impossibility of understanding the *gáõwárí boli* of the witnesses who come into their courts."[19] The 'impossibility' in comprehending the '*gáõwárí boli*', or 'village speech', arose from the fact that the administrative form of Hindi taught to and used by British officials was not commonly spoken in Bihar and differed significantly from the so-called 'eastern Hindi' languages spoken across the region. It appears that his empathy for the '*gáõwárí boli*' grew such during his time in Sitamarhi that he wrote an essay, one of his earliest, for the *Calcutta Review* titled "A Plea for the People's Tongue" (1880). In his 'plea', Grierson advocated against the imposition of 'book-Hindi' in Bihar, stating that it

---

[17]Sherring, *Hindu Tribes and Castes*, 71.
[18]IOR MSS EUR/E223, 'Darbhanga' file, Letter from Grierson to Bhola Lal Das, 2 October 1934.
[19]Grierson, *Seven Grammars,* pt. I, 1.

is unspoken by the vast populace and that one of the local languages should be made the administrative language of the province.[20] It was certainly within the spirit of his 'plea' that Grierson was motivated to compile a grammar and vocabulary list for the language he encountered in Sitamarhi that he would eventually call 'Maithili'. When he published *Introduction to the Maithilí Language* in 1882, he brought this rather anonymous language of north Bihar to the attention of bureaucrats and linguists. Grierson's determination to connect with the common person through the medium of the latter's native language pervades the grammar, from the selection of specimens drawn from folk songs and tales, to the methodology he employed in order to ensure the fidelity of his linguistic description of Maithili to the spoken actualities of the language. His elucidation of the common speech was based upon sources "supplied by representatives of all classes of society, from the village *guru*, who knew little more than the herd-boys he taught, to the most learned Paṇḍits of Mithilá."[21] Grierson's ambition of uplifting this vernacular of north Bihar "by obtaining for it the honour of print" is further guided by the demographic circumstances of those who speak it:

> For Maithilí *is* a language and not a dialect. It is the custom to look upon it as an uncouth dialect of untaught villagers, but it is in reality the native language of more than seven and a quarter millions of people, of whom, as will be borne out by every official having experience of North Bihár, at least five millions can neither speak nor understand either Hindí, or Úrdú without the greatest difficulty. It differs from both Hindí and Bangálí, both in Vocabulary and in Grammar, and is as much a distinct language from either of them as Maráṭhí or Uṛiyá. It is a country with its own traditions, its own poets, and its own pride in everything belonging to itself.[22]

---

[20]Grierson, "A Plea for the People's Tongue."

[21]Grierson, *Introduction to the Maithilí Language*, 1.

[22]Ibid., 2.

8

Grierson was quite insistent upon practical necessity of encouraging knowledge of Maithili, for far from being 'an uncouth dialect of untaught villagers', it is a common language spoken across religious and national boundaries:

> Maithilí is spoken by all the Hindús and Muhammadans, who inhabit the great plain which is bounded on the North and South by the Himálayas and the Ganges, and on the East and West by the Kośí and Gaṇḍak respectively. It is thus the native language, not only of the 7¼ millions of North Bihár, but also of the unnumbered millions of the Nepál Taráí, bordering on the districts of Champáran, Tirhut and Bhágalpúr.[23]

With the publication of the first grammar for Maithili, this language of north Bihar spoken by "more than seven and a quarter millions of people", by "all the Hindús and Muhammadans" of the territory, had obtained 'the dignity of print'. To be sure, Grierson's administrative work in Mithila and his philological studies of Maithili brought him into contact with 'representatives of all classes of society' to the extent that the bazaar he built in the town of Madhubani was named 'Griersonganj' in his honor.[24] Grierson wrote: "The dialect which I have adopted as a standard is that of the Madhubaní Sub-division, which is centrally situated, and which is admitted by all Bráhmaṇs to be the head-quarters of Mithilá."[25] Grierson supplied the ethnological link between Mithila, its inhabitants, and its vernacular language that Colebrooke could not provide. He also formulated a connection between the standard dialect of Maithili and its speakers, the Brahmins of Mithila.

The colonial desire for establishing a standard for languages and identifying speakers of this standard can do a lot to the "the people's tongue". Nearly a century later, the Chief Minister of Bihar, Laloo Prasad Yadav announced in February 1992 his decision to remove the

---

[23]Grierson, *Introduction to the Maithilí Language*, 2.
[24]IOR MSS EUR/E223, 'Darbhanga' file, Letter from Grierson to William Egerton, 22 January 1908.
[25]Grierson, *Introduction to the Maithilí Language*, 2.

Maithili language and its literature from the curriculum of the entrance examination for the

Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) and to strike Maithili from the list of languages

in which the examination could be written by candidates.[26] The announcement to remove

Maithili from the curriculum of the BPSC examination may appear at first glance to be the

fulfillment by Yadav of a campaign promise or a political spectacle designed as a display

of power early in his tenure as Chief Minister. This conjecture would have proved true had

Yadav's announcement regarding Maithili faded silently without additional controversy or

consequence. However, the announcement in February 1992 was merely the first step. Ya-

dav ardently kept his promise and pushed forth with his agenda against Maithili. Shortly

after the revision of the BPSC curriculum, a writ petition was filed against the state govern-

ment at the Patna High Court, which challenged the decision and sought the reinstatement

of Maithili in the examination.[27] Yadav's term as Chief Minister had ended in 1997, but

the government led by his Janata Dal party kept its stakes against Maithili firmly in the

fire. The court case continued for eight years and culminated in an order for reinstatement

of Maithili by the Patna High Court in October 2000.[28] The Government of Bihar ignored

the court order and pressed on which its resistance. An article from *The Telegraph* from

November 2002 quoted Yadav as saying the "Patna High Court has ordered inclusion of

Maithili. We have filed a petition before the Supreme Court against the high court order.

We are not going to change our position."[29] Subsequently, the Yadav government filed an

---

[26]Bihar. State Cabinet, "Memorandum."
[27]Patna High Court, "Binay Kumar Mishra Vs. State of Bihar and Ors."
[28]"HC verdict on Maithili hailed."
[29]Chakraborty, "Maithili row in govt."

appeal in the Supreme Court of India against the decision of the Patna High Court. While the appeal was being fought, the Parliament of India passed a bill in December 2003 introduced by the Bharatiya Janata Party that granted 'scheduled status' to Maithili. A month later in January 2004, Maithili was included in Schedule VIII of the Constitution of India and become the latest of twenty-two languages officially recognized by the Government of India.[30] Consequently, the Supreme Court declared that the 'scheduled status' of Maithili invalidates all state-level restrictions upon usage of the language.

Yadav made headlines when he announced his new language policy for Bihar. Writing in the news magazine *India Today*, Farzand Ahmad reported

> The man just thrives on conflict, controversy and caste wars. Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav first expanded his caste constituency by launching a "social justice" campaign for the backwards and minorities.
>
> Many more followed. The latest campaign concerns his decision to withdraw the Maithili language from the curriculum of the Bihar Public Service Commission.
>
> As expected, politicians and students in the Maithili region dominated by the powerful Brahmins took to the streets. The Opposition accused him of creating yet more caste and language troubles in a state which has too many of them.
>
> As for the BJP, it promptly jumped into the fray to create a new political base among Maithili Brahmins, particularly as Urdu was being kept in the curriculum while Maithili had been pushed out.
>
> Laloo couldn't care less about the outcry. His gameplan is clear: the more violently the Brahmins react against the decision, the stronger will be his standing amongst the backwards. And his heart lies where his votes are.[31]

An article in the *Times of India* penned by Pranava Chaudhary echoed the analysis and interpretation of the *India Today* piece:

---

[30] India. Ministry of Law and Justice. Legislative Department, "Constitution (Ninety-Second Amendment) Act."

[31] Ahmed, "Tongue Lashing."

The Bihar government's decision to abolish Maithili from the curriculum of the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) has once again stirred up a subdued movement of Maithili protagonists for their linguistic identity.

[...]

In the caste-based perception of the Janata Dal government, the decision to abolish Maithili from the BPSC curriculum seems to be aimed at preventing the upper castes of Mithilanchal, particularly Maithil brahmins from entering government service

The government's decision instead of taking into account the merit of the language, primarily stems from caste and political considerations.

[...]

Meanwhile, the Bihar unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party's call for "Mithilanchal bandh" on March 7 may generate much heat among the Maithili speaking people of Bihar. Except for the Congress and the BJP, none of the political parties have dared to comment on the matter because of its political alliance with the Janata Dal government in Bihar.[32]

Yadav's attitudes and actions towards Maithili are certainly curious. Equally as notable are the media reports regarding the circumstances, both the nature of the information contained in the narratives as well as their pragmatic underpinnings. The statements by the Yadav government and the expressions and interpretations of journalists convey an assumption about Maithili for which the rationale is not apparent. In his *India Today* article, Farzand Ahmed 'expected' protests in "the Maithili-speaking region dominated by the powerful Brahmins" and accepted the premise that Yadav attempted to weaken the dominance of upper castes by restricting the usage of Maithili, such that "the more violently the Brahmins react against the decision", the more Yadav will have a stronger base. Similarly, Pranava Chaudhary noted in his *Times of India* article that Yadav intentionally targeted upper-caste communities with his agenda for Maithili, hoping to prevent "the upper castes of Mithilanchal, particularly Maithil brahmins" from entering government service.

---

[32]Chaudhary, "Maithili protagonists resent govt. apathy," 8.

12

Moreover, the Bihar government's decision on Maithili "has again stirred up a subdued movement of Maithili protagonists for their linguistic identity."

The attitudes and assumptions about Maithili held by Laloo Prasad Yadav and the above journalists raise several questions. What explains Yadav's decision to remove Maithili from the curriculum of the public service commission? What explains the tenacity with which the Yadav regime resisted even a court order to reverse its position on Maithili? What explains a concerted effort maintained over a decade by Yadav and his supporters for the purpose of suppressing the language? Equally as curious are the manner in which journalists portrayed the events. Why did Ahmed 'expect' protests in the Maithili-speaking region? Why would Brahmins react 'violently' to Yadav's decision? Who are the 'Maithili protagonists' to which Chaudhary referred, who were concerned for 'their' linguistic identity? How exactly would Yadav provide uplift to 'backward' caste communities by restricting the usage of Maithili? What were the 'caste and political considerations' that motivated Yadav's decision against Maithili? A hint to the answer to the questions lies in Ahmed's conclusion about Yadav's decision: "The man just thrives on conflict, controversy and caste wars." This quip suggests that Yadav's decision to abolish Maithili from the BPSC examination was linked to his political ambitions, which in turn was guided by strategies of politicizing caste in order to strengthen and maintain his dominance in the political and social sphere of Bihar. Indeed, he writes that Yadav had "first expanded his caste constituency by launching a 'social justice' campaign for the backwards and minorities." Now, "[t]he latest campaign concerns his decision to withdraw the Maithili language from the curriculum of the Bi-

har Public Service Commission." Thus, as Chaudhary lamented, "government's decision instead of taking into account the merits of the language, primarily stems from caste and political considerations." The notion that Yadav 'thrives' on caste conflict, however, further mystifies his position on Maithili.

The above circumstances operate within and reinforce the discourse that Maithili is a language of Brahmins. But, what is the reality and parameters of this discourse? What explains the durability of the perceived linkage between Maithili and Brahmins? This discourse itself operates within the larger paradigm of language and caste. But, it also raises the question of what is the relationship, if any, between language and caste? The discrepancy between the attitudes held by Yadav and Grierson regarding Maithili raises several questions. How did a language spoken by 'more than seven and a quarter millions of people', by 'all the Hindús and Muhammadans' of north Bihar and 'the unnumbered millions of the Nepál Taráí' in 1882, one that was long considered an 'uncouth dialect of untaught villagers', come to be perceived by 1992 as an upper-caste language associated with a particular Brahmin community?

Perhaps the answer for the linkage between language and caste may be found in the statement made by Pranava Chaudhary, that the Bihar government's decision on Maithili "has again stirred up a subdued movement of Maithili protagonists for their linguistic identity." It is true that during the period 1910–1940 there were several attempts to gain political benefits for the Maithil language and the culture of Mithila. The most influential analysis of this 'movement' was made by Paul R. Brass in *Language, Religion and Politics in North*

India (1974), in which the eminent political scientist analyzed the Mithila statehood and Maithili language demands as a regional linguistic movement in India that failed to develop strength through the symbol of language.[33] Brass addressed the question, "why the Maithili-speaking people, objectively different from the other peoples of Bihar in language, culture, and territory, have not so far transformed their objective differences into a significant consciousness."[34] His answer was that "while the objective conditions for a Maithili regional identity exist in abundance, the major requisites for subjective regional consciousness have been lacking"[35] According to Brass, the Maithili movement failed because its leaders were unsuccessful in generating sentiment based on Maithili language and culture among the broader Maithili-speaking community. Maithili ethnic values were emphasized by regional elites, namely Maithil Brahmins and Karna Kayasthas, who failed to communicate these values to the majority of Maithili speakers. In addition to a lack of cultural mobilization, Maithili advocates lacked leadership and cohesion. Brass concluded that these structural weaknesses contributed to ineffective political action on behalf of Maithil identity. Compounding the structural problems, social mobilization among Maithili speakers was slow.[36]

Brass's conclusions have influenced subsequent political scientists, sociologists, and historians who have studied north Bihar, as well as the discursive approaches to the cultural and linguistic aspects of the region. Subsequent studies fall in line with Brass's findings. For example, the sociologist Hetukar Jha examined the 'elite-mass contradiction' in

---

[33]Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, 47.
[34]Ibid., 51.
[35]Ibid.
[36]Ibid., 51–52.

Mithila.[37] The paradigm of 'failed movement' also influenced the views of politicians in Bihar, who make use of this label for their own purposes. Yet, while Brass's findings are certainly valid, especially with regard to the terminal period of his study in early 1970s, viewing the social, intellectual, political history of Maithili and Mithila through the lens of success and failure of an elite group misses more significant aspects of the Maithili case. I believe there is more to the story of the 'Maithili movement' than the failure of elites to mobilize popular support or a lack of interest among speakers of Maithili to advocate on behalf of their mother tongue. I investigated the matter further in my master's thesis, in which I evaluated the strategy employed by the Bharatiya Janata Party in the elections of 2004.[38] Politicians promised official recognition of Maithili, but had directed this attention primarily towards the Maithil Brahmin community. An understanding of the linguistic attributes of Maithil Brahmin identity requires taking the matter of identity to a deeper level that is rooted in a much deeper chronology.

Purpose of the Study

This dissertation seeks to provide an understanding of the origins of the 'Maithila' Brahmins. The 'Maithila', or more commonly, 'Maithil' Brahmins are the dominant Brahmin community of north Bihar, which is also known as Mithila, Tirabhukti, and Tirhut in various sources. Their internal history associates them with the ancient country of Mithila, the home of Sītā, 'born of the furrow', the daughter of king Janaka, who is the bride of Rāma

---

[37]Jha, "Elite-Mass Contradiction in Mithila in Historical Perspective."
[38]Pandey, "Avenging Maithili: The Eighth Schedule and Electoral Power in Bihar, 1999–2004."

in the classical epic *Rāmāyaṇa*. The aim of this study is to peel away the mythical veil that shrouds not only the conventional understanding of origins among the Maithil Brahmins, but to describe the processes and ideologies that that established the identity of the Brahmins of Mithila as the 'Maithil' Brahmins.

In the *Linguistic Survey of India*, he wrote the following about Mithila: "For centuries it has been a tract too proud to admit other nationalities to intercourse on equal terms, and has passed through conquest after conquest, from the north, from the east, and from the west, without changing its ancestral peculiarities."[39] Furthermore, it was "a land under the domination of a sept of Brāhmaṇs extraordinarily devoted to the mint, anise, and cumin of the law".[40] Grierson does not provide details about his description in the volume on the languages of Bihar, but he alludes to these 'ancestral peculiarities' in an earlier work titled *Bihār Peasant Life* (1885), in which he wrote:

> The Soti Brāhmans of East Tirhut have several curious marriage customs which have existed for many hundred years, some of which will now be noted. The greatest care is kept in keeping up correct genealogies of members of this clan. The genealogical registers are called पाँजी *pānji*, and they are kept up by hereditary genealogists called पँजिकार *panjiyār*. Once a year or oftener there are great meetings of these Brāhmans at Saurāth, near Madhubani, and other places, where the *panjiyārs* assemble and write up the registers. They also arrange marriages after consulting their registers, and give certificates to the parents certifying that the marriage is lawful, and that the parties are not within prohibited degrees of affinity. These certificates are called अधिकार माला *adhikār māla* or असुजन पत्र *asujan patr*. The settlement of the conditions of marriage is called सिधाँत *sidhānt*.[41]

Grierson's description of the marriage customs and genealogical practices of the Maithil Brahmins suggests the existence of a basis of social identity that predates linguistic identity.

---

[39]Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India,* vol. V, pt. II, 3.
[40]Ibid., 4.
[41]Grierson, *Bihār Peasant Life*, 373.

This study offers insights into the ideological origins of the Maithil Brahmin community through the themes of genealogy, territory, and authority. The study begins by analyzing 'genealogy' within the discourse of a question that has been asked by Indian scholars since before the common era: How does one recognize a Brahmin? I use this question in order to explain a census of Brahmins conducted in north Bihar in the 14th century during the reign of Harisimhadeva, the last king of the Karnata dynasty. The census resulted in the creation of a formal genealogical system known as *pañjī prabandha*. The king appointed official genealogists in order to maintain the registers. The king also imposed new rules regarding marriage and mandated that marriages must be validated by genealogists and approved by the king. The *pañjī prabandha* established the endogamous boundaries of a new Brahmin community. Moreover, by controlling marriage and, consequently, reproduction, the system also dictated future membership in the community. In addition to establishing endogamous boundaries, the *pañjī* system defined the second foundational aspect of the caste: its territorial distribution. My analysis of the 'territorial' aspect of the Maithil Brahmins focuses upon the creation of a territorial patriline anchored to north Bihar. The founder of this patriline, known as the *mūla*, is an apical ancestor who is the earliest forefather known to have resided in north Bihar. I propose that the 'mula' represents a deliberate effort by the implementers of *pañjī prabandha* to establish Brahmin lineages connected to the Karnata kingdom. After *pañjī prabandha*, the label 'Maithil' was re-defined from a generic territorial designation to refer specifically to a Brahmin inhabiting the Karnata kingdom of Mithila. Thirdly, I apply the theme of 'authority' to an analysis of the hier-

18

archical rank system of the Maithil Brahmin community. The *pañjī* records had resolved the ancient question of 'who is a Brahmin?' as a Brahmin could now easily be identified using genealogy. But, the question did not disappear; I propose that it was reformulated to inquire 'who is the best Brahmin?' The rank system classified Brahmin lineages recorded in the genealogies into three hierarchical groups based upon the scholarly and religious merits of a Brahmin. The rank system identified the best of Brahmins as the Shrotriya. The implementation of the *pañjī prabandha* by the Karnata king was an important historical event as it established the Maithil Brahmin community as a distinctive endogamous and territorial caste group in the 14th century for the first time.

There is, however, another aspect to the origin of the Maithil Brahmin community that may appear to be extraneous to the Brahmin order, but which I explain as being quite central to its ideology and operation. In addition to establishing the 'Maithil' community, the *pañjī prabandha* placed the authority to regulate the Brahmin community of Mithila in the hands of the king. This management of the Brahmin caste by the king adheres to traditional brahminical views of the social order, but this order was disrupted shortly after the implementation of *pañjī prabandha*. In 1326, north Bihar was conquered by the Delhi Sultanate and the dynasty of the Karnata Kshatriyas was abolished. The Sultan replaced the former Kshatriya king Harisimhadeva by appointing a new authority to govern on behalf of Delhi. This new ruler was a high-ranking Shrotriya Brahmin. His social practices were not only regulated by the *pañjī* system, but now as the functional ruler of Mithila, he was also in charge of regulating the system and brahminical society. In addition to genealogy, terri-

19

tory, and status, the concept of kingship became an integral part of the caste ideology of the Maithil Brahmins as two Shrotriya families ruled Tirhut, as Mithila was formally known, from 1351 to 1947.

To date there is no comprehensive study on the origins of identity among the Maithil Brahmins. Starting in the early 20th century scholars from within the Maithil Brahmin community attempted to use *pañjī* records for discussing the history of the community. In his *Mithilā-tattva-vimarśa*, written in 1914 and first published in 1977, Paramesvara Jha writes that "the issue of *pañjī prabandha* has been largely unrevealed, so I cannot publish much about it clearly, but if I don't then it will be lost to history, so I must write a bit about it."[42] Shortly after, Maharaja Rameshwar Singh presented a detailed account of the marriage customs that resulted from *pañjī prabandha* in "An Account of the Maithil Marriage" (1917). Since that time a small body of scholarship has emerged regarding *pañjī prabandha* and its effects on the organization, social structure, and kinship patterns of Maithil Brahmin society. All of the materials published in English have been surveyed and an attempt has been made to survey contributions in Maithili and Hindi, although a complete bibliography of contributions in these languages could not be produced owing to the logistical difficulty in identifying the breadth of such articles and monographs. Rāmanātha Jhā (1972). The majority of the English-language contributions are brief journal articles that provide assessments of the origins of the system, descriptions of the caste structure and organization, and enumerations of the lineages named in the records, ie. Ugra Nath Jha (1966),

---

[42]"यद्यपि पञ्जिप्रबन्धक कतेको विषय अतिशय गोप्य अछि, तकरा हमहु स्पष्ट रुपेँ प्रकाशित नहि कय सकै छी, परन्तु किच्छु नहि लिखले इतिहासमे हानि, तेँ संक्षेपतः लिखबो आवश्यक ।" (Jhā, *Mithilā-tattva-vimarśa*, 83).

Baidyanath Saraswati (1955, 1957, 1962), Nawal Kishore Sinha (1978). Others explain the effects of *pañjī prabandha* on Maithil society, particularly the mutation of the hypergamic principle into 'kulinism', ie. Jata Shankar Jha (1981), Vijay Kumar Thakur (1979). Two monographs have been written about *pañjī prabandha*. The first, by Ugra Nath Jha (1980), provides a detailed account of the social structure and the lineage system. The second, by Abhaya Nath Mishra (1984), is a light sketch of the Shrotriya community within the Maithil Brahmin caste. Jata Shankar Jha wrote about an attempt by the Maharaja of Darbhanga in the late 18th century to curtail this practice (1981). In addition to Paul Brass, the Western scholar who shed significant light upon the Maithil Brahmins was Carolyn Brown, who wrote a series of four essays on the marriage practics of the community. The first essay (1983) assessed the rank structure of the Maithil Brahmins by borrowing the paradigm of the superiority and inferiority of 'substance' and 'code' within the Bengali kinship system offered by Ronald Inden (1976), which is aligned with David M. Schneider's 'biogenetic' analysis of American kinship. The second article (1983) is an analysis of the role of marriage in affecting rank dynamics. The third (1985) discusses the impact of the principles of endogamy upon the involution of the rank system. The fourth (1988) examines the manner in which the rank structure had to be adjusted in order to enable marriage across ranks when grade endogamy was no longer possible on account of the diminishing number of potential marriage partners within the highest rank. The *pañjī prabandha*, then, gave rise to an extreme form of polygynyous marriage, which not only wreaked havoc on the social structure

21

of Maithil Brahmin society, but which also caught the attention of scholars over the past two centuries.

The largest hinderance to a proper study of *pañjī prabandha* and other aspects of brahminical society in north Bihar during the medieval period is access to sources and the paucity of primary sources on this topic. While the *pañjī* records offer a vast amount of detail on Maithil Brahmins, the records themselves are difficult to access. The difficulty is not one of language or script or completeness of content; rather, it is one of privilege. The *pañjīkara*-s whose families have maintained these records for generations are often reluctant to allow others to persue their records. It is a matter of 'intellectual property' to them. I was fortunate enough to receive a complete digitized set of *pañjī* records from Gajendra Thakur of New Delhi in 2007. I was allow permitted to browse through transcriptions of records that are in the possession of Hetukar Jha of Patna in 2013. The second limitation is the lack of historical records about the general society, culture, and polity of the Karnata period. Several scholars have complained about this.[43] Apart from the genealogical records, there are very few sources directly related to the origins of the records. Although *pañjī prabandha* took place during Karnata rule, the kings of this dynasty left no epigraphic sources, such as copper-plate grants to Brahmins. The absence is quite curious because the *pañjī* records provide ample proof of Brahmin settlements in north Bihar. Equally curious is that there are epigraphical sources from the borderlands of Mithila slightly preceding and during Karnata rule, which show land grants being made to Brahmins in areas of north Bihar. Moreover,

---

[43] Sircar, *Studies in the Society and Administration of Ancient and Medieval India*, 140; Chaudhary, "Political History of North Bihar," 281.

textual sources from the period directly following the Karnata dynasty also provide ample information about the society and polity of north Bihar. Several historians have used these sources in order to describe facets of Karnata rule, writing with an air of such confidence that would lead the reader to assume that the narrative was more fact than speculation. Moreover, they have made statements that can neither be proved or disproved. Unfortunately, given the limited sources, any attempt at understanding the Karnata period must rely on tangential sources. I use these sources, but employ a methodology that appropriately contextualizes them with regard to their provenance. I view these limitations not as a detriment to the study, but as additional proof for the necessity of this dissertation.

Chapter 1

The Rebirth of a Brahmin

In this chapter I demonstrate that an attempt was undertaken in 14th century Mithila to verify the identity of a Brahmin through the creation of standardized genealogies and the regulation of marriages in a census called the *pañjī prabandha*. The formalization of brahminical identity was predicated upon three factors. First, the *pañjī* system established that a Brahmin was indeed a 'Brahmin' by registering him in the genealogical census. Secondly, the system classified each Brahmin based upon his ancestry into a new lineage designation called the *mūla*, which is founded upon a single, historical ancestor. Thirdly, the system enforced isogamy through genealogy by mandating that marriages be performed between individuals belonging to registered *mūla*-s, with regard to the new principle of *mūla* exogamy and the traditional prohibitions against consanguinity as enjoined by the *smṛti* texts. By limiting marriages to those individuals belonging to known *mūla*-s, the *pañjī* system controlled the identity of Brahmins in Mithila by ensuring that future Brahmins would be born to parents whose 'Brahminhood' was confirmed by the genealogical record. The registration of Brahmins, the codification of the *mūla*, and the assurance of the 'Brahminhood' of offspring established a genealogical foundation for a new endogamous *jāti* or 'caste'

of Brahmins in Mithila, in which membership was thereafter determined solely through ascription.

1.1 Perceiving a Brahmin through the Senses

"We do not know if we are Brahmins or non-Brahmins".[1] The philosopher Śabara came to this conclusion as he pondered a proposition by Jaimini,[2] the founder of the Mimamsa school, regarding the validity of recognizing distinctions between individual objects belonging to the same class when physical characteristics are insufficient for doing so. On a similar note, but within a different domain, the grammarian Kātyāyana gave the example of 'non-Brahmin' as word that could be derived from 'Brahmin' by the application of Pāṇini's morphological rule of negation.[3] These concerns regarding 'Brahmin' and 'non-Brahmin' are pedagogical tropes that appear in philosophical and philological discourses on the interpretation of reality in ancient India. It is evident, however, that Brahmins reacted to the cognative implications of being 'Brahmin' or 'non-Brahmin' in ways that were less theoretical and more personal. Śabara's concerns about recognizing a 'Brahmin' through sense perception might force one to think about how to identify an unknown Brahmin apart from a person of another *varṇa* in a crowd. Kātyāyana's creation of the word 'non-Brahmin' using grammatical transformations of Sanskrit might compel one to imagine the qualities of an antithesis for which an established definition does not exist. That the idea of the 'non-

---

[1]*Bhāṣya* 2.2.4: न चैतद्विद्मो वयं ब्राह्मणा वा स्मः अब्राह्मणा वा । (Nyáyaratna, *Aphorisms of the Mimámsá,* vol. I, 40).

[2]*Mīmāṃsa Sūtra* 1.2.2: शास्त्रदृष्टिविरोधाच्च । "And of reason of being contrary to the religious rules and sensuous perception." (Sandal, *Mîmâmsâ Sûtras of Jaiminî,* 10).

[3]*Aṣṭādhyāyī* 2.2.6: नञ् (Vasu, *Ashṭádhyáyí,* Book II, 256).

Brahmin' made a deep imprint upon the imagination of early Brahmins is further exemplified by usage of the trope in later treatises and also in the evolution of its interpretation. The grammarian Patañjali seems to have taken Kātyāyana's example of the 'non-Brahmin' quite literally. He attempted to interpret 'non-Brahmin' by entirely avoiding a definition. Instead he provided the criteria by which a 'Brahmin' is to be identified: "by virtue of his birth", but especially "by his knowledge of scripture and his ascetic qualities" and additionally "by his pure conduct, fair complexion, brown eyes, and tawny hair."[4] A 'non-Brahmin', therefore, was someone who did not possess these features and traits. It is not known whether such specific definitions reflect the personal positions of these Brahmins or if they were intentionally devised as literal responses. Some modern scholars have suggested that Patañjali had based his definition of 'Brahmin' upon actual traits he observed during his lifetime,[5] but there is little evidence to confirm or deny such claims. Moreover, the nature of these interpretations suggest that these early Brahmin thinkers were not fully convinced that their positions offered any tangible means for distinguishing between a 'Brahmin' and a 'non-Brahmin'. Patañjali might likely concede that physical traits did not always provide a sure means for recognizing a Brahmin apart from individuals of other *varṇa*-s. Would he truly insist that a Brahmin with green or black eyes, but who satisfies all of the other criteria, is a 'non-Brahmin'? Likewise, Kātyāyana might agree that other external, but non-corporeal characteristics might not accurately define a Brahmin because, as he states, someone could be "like a Brâhmaṇa and wearing the sacred thread", but that person is actually "not a Brâh-

---

[4] *Vyākaraṇa Mahābhāṣya* 2.2.6: तपः श्रुतं च योनिश्चेत्येतद्ब्राह्मणकारकम् । [...] गौरः शुच्याचारः पिङ्गलः कपिलकेश इत्येतानप्य-भ्यन्तरान्ब्राह्मणे गुणान्कुर्वन्ति । (Kielhorn, *Vyâkaraṇa Mahâbhâshya*, vol. 1, 411–412).

[5] Kosambi, "Early Brahmins and Brahminism," 37.

maṇa, but a Kshatriya or a Vaisya".[6] Thus, the wearing of the *yajñopavīta*, or the 'sacred thread', did not perceptibly set a Brahmin apart from a Kshatriya or a Vaishya, both of whom were also eligible for the *upanayana* sacrament; and a Shudra could deceptively represent himself as a Brahmin simply by wearing the sacred thread. Similarly, purity in conduct is a tenuous measure. A Brahmin who unintentionally violates a Vedic injunction and remains unaware of his trangression would surely lose his social status as a Brahmin, but if the culpable Brahmin is not aware of his wrong doing, then there is no way for him or others to know that he has lost his status. He would go about being a 'Brahmin' with no palpable repercussion, despite the metaphysical impact to him and other Brahmins. Moreover, perceiving a Brahmin by virtue of his birth is fallable as there is no means for validating an individual's claim to be born into a Brahmin family in the absence of direct personal knowledge of his parents or proof of his ancestry. The trope of the 'non-Brahmin' may have been originally presented within pedagogical discourses, but the manner in which Brahmins contemplated it suggests that the question of knowing who was a 'Brahmin' had seeped far beyond the realm of philosophical and philological theorizing and into the domain of social practice and daily existence in the centuries before the common era.

As is evident from the regulations in the *dharma* literature regarding marriage and other aspects of brahminical society, the aforementioned discussions on the definition and nature of 'Brahminhood' had practical implications for the relationships and interactions between members of this *varṇa*. The necessity of recognizing and knowing who was a Brahmin extended beyond the qualities and characteristics of an individual to that of his immediate

---

[6]Vasu, *Ashṭádhyáyí,* Book II, 258.

family and his relatives, then to the local community to which his family and other kinsmen belonged, and ultimately to a broader aggregation of groups of Brahmins. Naturally, following the criteria of Patañjali, if a Brahmin is to be known on account of his birth, then he must certainly be the offspring of a mother and a father who are both Brahmins on account of their births, and each parent must be descended from mothers and fathers who are also Brahmins by the same criteria, and so forth. Consequently, a Brahmin family would want to ensure that potential brides for its sons are daughters born from Brahmin parents, for only then will the descendants of the marriage be Brahmins as well.

It is within this practical context that Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, the great proponent of Mimamsa from the 8th century CE, pointed to the fact that reputable Brahmin families maintained genealogical records for knowing their ancestries and, thereby, to facilitate both their knowledge of their own 'Brahminhood' and to maintain the same for their descendants. Kumārila's reference to genealogical record-keeping occurs in a passage in the *Tantravārttika* (c. 700 CE) that addresses Śabara's concern about recognizing 'Brahmin' or 'non-Brahmin' through sense perception. While Patañjali insisted that a Brahmin may be recognized by his birth, appearance, and conduct, Kumārila sought to establish the more fundamental aspect of this identity, that a 'Brahmin' was foremost to be recognized on account of his birth. Below I provide the portions of his dialogue that are of relevance to the

present discussion.[7] Kumārila begins by raising a question about 'Brahminhood' (*brāh-maṇatva*):

कथम् [ब्राह्मणत्वं] लोकस्य प्रसिद्धम् । प्रत्यक्षेणेति ब्रूमः । कस्मात्पुनर्मातापितृसम्बन्धानभिज्ञाश्चक्षुःसंनि-
कृष्टेषु मनुष्येषु अनाख्यातं न प्रतिपद्यन्ते । शक्त्यभावात् [...] व्युत्पन्नोशब्दो ऽपि निमित्तन्तराद्धृते नैव प्रति-
पद्यन्ते।

How can a Brahmana be known by ordinary men? It is known by direct Sense-perception. But, then, how is it even when the person is before our eyes, if we do not know the details of his parentage, &c., we are unable to ascertain whether he is a Brahmana or not, until someone tells us of it? Well, the reason for this lies in the absence for proper faculties in us for perceiving the Brahmanahood [...] [I]n the case of the Brahmana, even when one has fully comprehended the meaning of the word, he is unable, in the absence of other means, to ascertain the fact of a particular person being a Brahmana.

He then proceeds to question the ability of perceiving 'Brahminhood' through the perception of the senses (*pratyakṣa*):

न चोपवीताध्यायनादि निमित्तं वर्णत्रयसाधारणत्वात् । अध्यापनाद्यपि भिन्नाचारक्षत्रियवैश्यप्रतियोगित्वा-
त्संदिग्धम् । सर्वं च दुष्टशूद्रेषु संभाव्यमानत्वादनिश्चितम् । यस्त्वविचारितसिद्धमेव प्रतिपद्येत स शुक्तिकामपि
रजतं मन्यमानः क्रीणीयात् ।

For instance, neither the wearing of the sacred thread, nor the study of the Veda can be a means of such ascertainment; because these two features are common to all the three higher castes; as for the work of teaching [...] inasmuch as such Kshatriyas and Vaīçyas[8] have transgressed the limitations to their duties, are also found to be engaged in that work, this can serve only as a very doubtful index. In fact, all these can belong to Çūdras[9] also, — such of them as are not mindful of their own specified duties and trangress the limitations laid down in the scriptures. Consequently none of these can serve as a sure index of Brahmanahood. And if one were to accept a man as a Brahmana, without proper consideration, such a person would, as reasonably purchase a piece of shell, thinking it to be silver?'

---

[7]The original Sanskrit text of the *Tantravārttika* and the translation presented here are derived from two different sources. The Sanskrit is from the edition by Pandita Gaṅgādhara Śāstrī (*Tantravârtika*, 5–7). The *Tantravārttika* is a work in continuous prose, but I have separated the original into phrases in order to align it with the translation for ease following the text. The translation is by Mahāmahopādhyāya Sir Gaṅgānātha Jhā (*Tantravārttika*, 7–9).

[8]More commonly transliterated as *vaiśya*.

[9]More commonly transliterated as *śudra*.

Having stated that 'Brahminhood' cannot be observed through outward appearance or activity, he offers a way to recognize a Brahmin:

कचिद्धि काचिज्जातिग्रहणे इतिकर्त्तव्यता भवतीति वर्णितमेतत्। [...] तथैवात्रोत्पादकजातिस्मरणम् । अयं चोत्पाद्योत्पादकसम्बन्धो मातुरेव प्रत्यक्षः [...] । स्वपराधात्तु दुर्ज्ञानो ऽयं सम्बन्ध इति स्वयमेव वक्ष्यति। न च तावन्मात्रेण प्रत्यक्षता हीयते । [...] न च स्त्रीणां क चिद्व्यभिचारदर्शनात्सर्वत्रैव कल्पना युक्ता लोक-विरुद्धानुमानासंभवात् ।

[A]s it has been already explained [...] there are different methods for the cognition of different classes [...] in the same manner, we could assume the remembrance of the caste of the progenitor [...] This relation of the progeny and the progenitor is directly perceptible only with reference to the mother [...] [O]n account of there being chances of the mother having misbehaved, it would be extremely difficult to ascertain the relationship of the child (with the father of the particular caste). But this difficulty cannot deprive the cognition (of the class Brahmana) of the character of Sense-perception; [...] Then again, because we may have found a certain woman to have misbehaved, that cannot enable us to assume the same misbehaviour in the case of all women; because such an assumption, being directly contradictory to all ordinary experience, could never be valid; as we find that women of respectable families always try their very best to save their character [...]

As 'remembrance of the caste of the progenitor' (*utpādaka jāti smaraṇa*) is the surest way for identifying a Brahmin, Kumārila describes the means for remembrance:

विशिष्टेन हि प्रयत्नेन महाकुलीनाः परिरक्षन्त्यात्मानेनैव हेतुना राजभिर्ब्राह्मणैश्च स्वपितृपितामहादि पार-म्पर्यांविस्मरणार्थं समूहलेख्यानि प्रवर्त्तितानि। तथा च प्रतिकुलं गुणदोषस्मरणात्तदनुरूपाः प्रवृत्तिनिवृत्तयो दृश्यन्ते।

And it is for the sake of making their respective caste duly and authoritatively recognised, that the Brahmanas and the Kings have introduced the system of writing up and preserving their genealogies trees, which serve to preserve and perpetuate the names of their forefathers. And as these records distinctly point out the particular excellences and defects of each family, it is always in accordance with these that, we find people being attached to, or repulsed from, particular families.

Genealogical records of the family (*samūha-lekhya*) are the authoritative means for knowing the caste of the progenitor. He then states that birth is definitive:

न च भर्तृव्यतिरेककृतेन वर्णसंकरो ऽपराधेन जायते। दृश्यते ह्यपराधिनीनामपि स्वभर्तृनिमित्तः। तदपराध-
निमित्तस्तु तासामशुभफलोपभोगो भवेद् न त्वपत्यानां वर्णसंकरः। न च नियोगतो वर्णान्तरैरेव सह प्रमादः।
सवर्णेन चोत्पादितस्य नैव वर्णान्तरत्वापत्तिः।

Nor is it necessary that the misbehaving of a woman should produce a child of a mixed
caste; It is quite possible that such misbehaviour might subject the woman to unpleasant
experiences hereafter; but it can it no way make the child a bastard. Nor, again, is it
necessary that the misbehaviour should be with a man of a different caste; and a child
produced by one of the same caste as the mother cannot be said to be of a mixed caste
[...]

Moreover, the descendants of a Brahmin and a woman of a lower *varṇa* may regain the

status of the father after a number of generations:

संकरजातानामपि च पुनरुत्कर्षापकर्षाभ्यां सप्तमे पञ्चमे वान्यतरवर्णापत्तिः स्मर्यते। तत्र त्वेतावन्मात्रमाग-
मिकं प्रत्येतव्यम्। न ह्ययं पुरुषेयत्तानियमो लौकिकप्रमाणगम्यः।

It is also laid down in the Smṛtis that even the bastard regains the original purity of
the caste of his either parent, by a continuous excellence, or otherwise, of conduct and
relationships, when he reaches the fifth or seventh generation downwards [...] And in
this matter, the only factor for which we cannot have any authority than that of the
scriptures, is that of the specific number of generations being five or seven; the rest is
all based upon facts of ordinary experience.

He then restates the limitations of using conduct as a measure of recognition:

[...] ब्राह्मणादीनामाचारस्तद्द्रशेन ब्राह्मणादय इति। स एव शुभाचारकाले ब्राह्मणः पुनरशुभाचाकाले शूद्र
इत्यनवस्थिततत्वम्। तथैकेनैव प्रयत्नेन परपीडानुग्रहादि कुर्वतां युगपद्ब्राह्मणत्वाब्राह्मणत्वविरोधः।

[...] rules of conduct are laid down as pertaining to Brahmanas already exist; and so if
the strict following of such rules were the cause of Brahmanahood, there would be a
mutual interdependence — the rules being based upon Brahmanahood, and Brahmana-
hood being based upon the following of the rules. And further, one and the same man
would be a Brahmana when performing a good deed and a Çūdra when doing a bad
one; and thus there would be no fixity of the castes. Similarly, when a man would be
found to be performing an action that would give pain to a person, as well as afford
him relief, the person would come to be considered a Çūdra and a Brahmana at one
and the same time, which would be an absurdity.

Finally, he concludes by establishing the criteria by which a Brahmin is to be known:

एताभिरुपपत्तिभिस्त्वयं प्रतिपाद्यते। न तप आदीनां समुदायो ब्राह्मण्यम्। न तज्जनितः संस्कारः। न तदभि-
व्यङ्ग्या जातिः। किं तर्हि मातापितृजातिज्ञानाभिव्यङ्ग्या प्रत्यक्षसमधिगम्या।

The upshot of all these arguments is this: Brahmanahood is not an aggregate of penance, nor is it a certain purification brought about by these, nor is it a caste manifested by these; what it really is, is a caste signified by the cognition of the caste of the parents; and as such, it is cognisable directly by Sense-perception.

Kumārila's discourse on the use of 'sense perception' for interpreting the identity of a Brahmin is significant for two reasons. First, it makes clear his opinion that 'Brahmin-hood' is not based upon occupation. Neither ritual practices nor the study of the Veda sets a Brahmin apart from others because these are also the privilege of Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. Moreover, action is not a sure determinant because if a Brahmin were to perform an action that 'would give pain to a person' then he would be a Shudra, and that it would be an 'absurdity' for a person to be simultaneously a Brahmin and a Shudra. The actions of an individual, whether in accordance or not with the duties and restrictions of his caste, do not alter the caste identity of that individual. The only true way to ascertain if an individual is a Brahmin is by ensuring that both of his parents are Brahmin. The importance of birth to Kumārila is further indicated by his position that a son born to Brahmin parents out of wedlock is to be considered a Brahmin. Secondly, Kumārila analyzes recognition through birth at a practical level. He states that the relationship between 'the progeny and the pro-genitor' is dependent upon the mother, for she is the only one who can actually verify the father of a child. It is for this reason that Kumārila's exposition is all the more significant for he states that it is this incentive to make 'their caste duly and authoritative recognized', with the assumption that the woman 'tries her very best to save her character', and to en-

sure 'remembrance of the caste of the progenitor' that Brahmins maintain their genealogies, or *samūha-lekhya*. Genealogies offer a way of gaining 'cognition of the caste'. The epistemological issues surrounding the method of identifying a Brahmin, then developed into means of recognizing and remembering who was a Brahmin. Kumārila's mention of the 'non-Brahmin' trope is significant because it illustrates that the issue continued to persist in the minds of Brahmins over the eight centuries that separated Kumārila from Śabara. Moreover, Kumārila's statement also suggests that Brahmins had finally developed a practical solution for easing their anxieties about their personhood instead of relying upon theoretical speculations that offered no true measure of 'Brahminhood'. After all, tangible documentation of an individual and his pedigree would be the surest means for knowing whether one is a 'Brahmin or 'non-Brahmin'.

1.2   Ideology of Genealogical Identity

Kumārila does not specify the locations in India where Brahmins were reportedly recording their ancestries. His explanation regarding genealogies might simply be a pedagogical response affirming the validity of recognizing a Brahmin on account of birth. There is, however, reason to suppose that Kumārila was referring to actual practice. The traditions of the Maithil Brahmins provide some evidence that family histories were being maintained to some extent in north Bihar. But, something seems to have gone awry with the genealogical method in this community in 1324 CE. This is the year in which an eminent Brahmin and scholar of the *dharma* named Harinātha Upādhyāya was discovered to be an outcaste.

33

Harinātha would have met Patañjali's criteria for being a Brahmin on account of his birth, asceticism, and knowledge, but it seems there was an issue regarding his conduct that made him impure: on account of genealogical oversight he had unintentionally married a woman who was a blood relative. The *smṛti* literature emphasizes that Brahmin are to marry endogamously within the *varṇa* and exogamously with regard the principles of *gotra* and *pravara*. These texts, however, also permit a Brahmin to take wives of other castes under certain circumstances. But, recognizing the impact of such marriages upon the social order, the *dharma* authorities offer numerous *jāti* designations for various grades of inter-*varṇa* offspring born of *anuloma* or 'against the grain' marriages between Brahmins and women of lower *varṇa*-s. Moreover, through the principles of *jātyutkarṣa* and *jātyapakarṣa,* or the 'rise' and 'fall' of *jāti*-s, these texts also offer a means for permitting descendants of such mixed marriages to re-enter the *varṇa* of their father after a set number of generations.

Kumārila does not describe the nature and content of *samūha-lekhya*. Based upon the fact that he refers to the father and mother of a Brahmin, it may be inferred that these early genealogical records contained information regarding the ancestry of the patriline and some degree of detail about the non-agnatic patrilines that joined the agnatic lineage at each marriage. These assumptions may be based upon the *dharma* literature, which also recognizes the importance of the mother in determining the status of a Brahmin. The *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* states that a bride should be of the same *varṇa* as the groom, for "through a proper[10]

---

[10]A proper or faultless marriage is the first of the eight forms of marriage recognized by the *dharma* authorities, ie. *brāhma*, *daiva*, *ārṣa*, and *prājāpatya* (see *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.57–59). For a comparison of the definition of the eight forms across the *dharma* authorities, see Rocher, "The Sūtras and Śāstras on the Eight Types of Marriage."

marriage between a man and a woman of the same *varṇa* are born sons of the same *jāti* who continue the lineage".[11] Here, Yājñavalkya states that the future of a man's lineage is dependent upon a male heir, who is a child born within a marital union. In addition to emphasizing that a Brahmin must take a bride from within the *varṇa* in order to produce a Brahmin son, the text further requires that the bride must not be related to the groom within specific consanguinous categories: a potential bride must most importantly be one "who is not a *sapiṇḍa*",[12] "not descended from a family having a common *arṣa* (*pravara*) and *gotra*" to the groom, and "five and seven times removed from the mother and father, respectively".[13]

Accordingly, brahminical kinship and identity is traditionally based upon three principles: *gotra*, *pravara*, and *piṇḍa*.[14] The *gotra* is an exogamous, patrilineal group that is considered to be descended from a common, but mythical ancestor, who is a *ṛṣi,* or an ancient sage associated with the Veda. On account of shared descent with this eponymous *ṛṣi*, Brahmins belonging to a particular *gotra* are traditionally viewed as members of a 'clan'; the term *gotra* itself refers to a "shelter for cows"[15] and this notion of a cloistering of kine extends its metaphor to a grouping of human kindred.[16] As every Brahmin belongs to a

[11] *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.90: सवर्णेभ्यः सवर्णासु जायन्ते हि सजातयः । अनिन्द्येषु विवाहेषु पुत्राः सन्तानवर्धनाः ॥ (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmriti*, 27).

[12] *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.52: अविप्लुतब्रह्मचर्यो लक्षण्यां स्त्रियमुद्वहेत् । अनन्यपूर्विकां कान्तामसपिण्डां यवीयसीम् ॥ (ibid., 13).

[13] *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.53: अरोगिनीं भ्रातृमतीमसमानार्षगोत्रजाम् । पञ्चमात्सप्तमादूर्ध्वं मातृतः पितृतस्तथा ॥ (ibid., 14–15).

[14] For a comprehensive explanation of these principles see Trautmann, *Dravidian Kinship*, Chapter 4 "Marriage in the Dharmaśāstra".

[15] A 'family enclosed by the hurdle' and 'tribe, subdivision' (Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 364).

[16] The meaning of *gotra* as 'clan' and its significance in exogamy has evolved and diverged across the various Brahmin communities. For example, T. N. Madan has shown that among the Brahmins, or Pandits, of Kashmir, "the *gotra* is explicitly recognized as not constituting a kin group" (Madan, "Is the Brahmanic Gotra a Grouping of Kin?," 67). More precisely, in this context *gotra*-s do not constitute 'kin categories',

gotra, individuals sharing the same designation are known as *sagotra*. A *gotra* designation is traditionally divided into a secondary level of segmentation called the *gaṇa*. Associated with each *gaṇa* or "group" are a set of additional names of *ṛṣi*-s who are considered descendants of the founder of the *gotra* and who are equally as eponymous as their ancestor. The set of names comprising a *gaṇa* is known as a *pravara*, which a Brahmin utters at the commencement of rituals in order to make his pedigree known.[17] The *pravara* is the second organizing principle of kinship because individuals possessing the same *pravara* or a *pravara* that contains even one ancestor in common are considered to be *sapravara*.[18] The connection of the *gotra* and *pravara* to Vedic textual and ritual tradition establishes them as particularly brahminical institutions. The third principle, however, is not based upon descent from sacred lineages, but is a universal specification that applies to members of all *varṇa*-s. This is the concept of *piṇḍa*,[19] which refers both to an offering to a deceased ancestor made by a group of related individuals, as well as to a notion of a shared bodily essence.[20] The principle of *piṇḍa* is delimited by a generational extent. Within its definition of being an ancestral offering, the *piṇḍa* relationship, or *sapiṇḍa*, ascends three generations

---

as the connection of *sagotra*-s is understood as a kin relationship (patrilineal descent), but there need be no active social interactions among *sagotra*-s.

[17]A प्रवर *pravara* is a "summons" or "call"; "an invocation of Agni at the beginning of a sacrifice, a series of ancestors (so called because Agni is invited to bear the oblations to the gods as he did for the sacrificer's progenitors, the names of the 4 or 5 most nearly connected with the ancient Ṛishis being then added)" (Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 693). The statement by Monier-Williams that *pravara*-s contain "4 or 5" names is inaccurate, as such designations contain anywhere from 1 to 5 *ṛṣi* names, but typically 3 or 5.

[18]Brough explains that the rule of *pravara* exogamy was created because the term *gotra* "had become elastic in its usage". In some works *gotra* was "applied to families and subfamilies as frequently as to the exogamous clans". The *pravara* offered a "clear and precise method of determining a man's position in the exogamous structure" (*Early Brahminical System of Gotra and Pravara*, 6–7).

[19]I use the term *piṇḍa* here in its abstract sense of an 'offering' or a 'body', which differs from the lexical analysis given in the *smṛti* as the compound *sapiṇḍa*.

[20]The पिण्ड *piṇḍa* is "a ball of rice or flour &c. offered to the Pitṛis or deceased ancestors, a Śrāddha oblation" and also connotes "the body, bodily frame" (Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 625).

along the patriline from an individual to his father and grandfather and descends three generations from an individual to his son and grandson. In its conceptualization as shared bodily essence the *sapiṇḍa* relationship ascends and descends seven generations along an individual's patriline and five on the matriline. Individuals sharing a relative along this extent on the patriline and matriline are considered *sapiṇḍa* because they are perceived of as sharing the same corporeal essence as that relative.

Thomas Trautmann refers to the *gotra* as a "sociocentric or public" facet of brahminical kinship, that is, it forms the basis of the relationship between an individual and the broader kin group to which he belongs. On the other hand, Trautmann interprets *sapiṇḍa* to be an "egocentric" aspect of kinship because is it determined by one's relationship to another particular individual within a limited sphere of relatedness.[21] The external and internal aspects of an individual Brahmin's kin relationships are, therefore, based upon commonality of *gotra*, *pravara*, and *piṇḍa*. Consequently, the rules of Brahmin marriage as specified in the *smṛti* prohibit marriage between individuals who are *sagotra*, *sapravara*, and *sapiṇḍa*. Or stated conversely, the rules of marriage mandate that a bride and groom do not share common *gotra* and *pravara* (*asāmāna-arṣa gotrajā*), that they be at minimum five times removed on the mother's side (*mātṛtaḥ pañcamāt*), and seven times removed on the father's side (*pitṛtaḥ saptamāt*). These requirements are obligatory for a marriage to be legitimate; a breach of these rules nullifies the marriage. P. V. Kane explains the rationale for the restrictions against marriage within the three categories of consanguinity as follows:

---

[21]Trautmann, *Dravidian Kinship*, 246.

It is a canon of the Pūrvamīmāṁsā that if there is a seen (dṛṣṭa) or easily perceptible reason for a rule stated in the sacred texts, it is only recommendatory and a breach of such a rule does not nullify the principle act. But if there is an unseen (adṛṣṭa) reason for a rule and there is a breach of such a rule, the principle act itself is rendered invalid and nugatory thereby. The rule about not marrying a woman who is diseased or who has superfluous or deficient limbs has a seen reason viz. marriage with such a girl causes unhappiness (if she is diseased) or comment (if she has deficient limbs). Therefore, if a person marries such a girl the marriage is perfectly valid. But there is no seen or easily perceptible reason for the prohibition against marrying a sagotra or sapravara girl. Therefore, such rules go to the root of the matter and are obligatory and, if there is a breach of them, the marriage is no marriage, it is null and void. So even if a person goes through a ceremony of marriage with a girl who is a sagotra or sapravara or sapiṇḍa (within prohibited degrees) she does not become his wife at all.[22]

Trautmann expands upon Kane's explanation, offering that "if there is no 'seen' reason for the rule, we are obliged to assume an 'unseen' (*adṛṣṭa*) causal connection between the rule and its effect, that is a delayed effect that may appear only in a subsequent life in obedience to the law of karma."[23] He further states that "the existence of an unseen reason allows us to posit for such a rule the existence of a genuine Vedic injunction (*vidhi*) or prohibition (*niṣedha*) that gives it authority, even if no such Vedic text is now extant."[24] In other words, transgressions of "unseen" rules are considered especially heinous because, first, they contravene Vedic injunctions, and secondly, there is no certainty that the offenders will be held accountable for their violation during the present lifetime, because punishment for breach of an "unseen" rule is governed by the operation of the equally "unseen" law of *karma* upon these culpable persons. The explanations offered by Kane and Trautmann suggest that the consequences of violating an *adṛṣṭa* rule regarding exogamy can be identified only when there is tangible evidence that indicates a *sagotra*, *sapravara*, or *sapiṇḍa* relationship be-

---

[22]Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. II, pt. I, 437–438.
[23]Trautmann, *Dravidian Kinship*, 240.
[24]Ibid.

tween two individuals. However, the philosophers of the Mimamsa school and authorities on *dharma* do not mention the breach of an "unseen" rule might be detected or what might constitute evidence of this nature. If such proof could even conceivably be produced, what might then be the potential ramifications for a bride and groom who breach these *adṛṣṭa* principles of law?

A popular legend that has long circulated within the Maithil Brahmin community provides some insight into the consequences of such a discovery: A *paṇḍita* named Harinātha Upādhyāya lived in the village of Satadhara. One day while on her way to the temple the wife of this *paṇḍita* was accosted by a man from the 'untouchable' Dusadh caste. On account of her chastity, the assailant died as he tried to seize her. Nevertheless, a rumor began to spread that the *paṇḍita*'s wife had an improper encounter with an 'untouchable'. "I have not had an illicit relationship with an outcaste" (*nāhaṃ cāṇḍālagāminī*), she proclaimed when asked about the incident. But, she was nonetheless asked to prove her innocence by grasping a heated iron rod. If she were free from guilt, her hand would not burn. Her resolution was shattered when the rod scorched her, but she knew her innocence and her conscience compelled her to resolve the matter. She approached Lakkhimadevi, a learned *paṇḍitā* and well-respected woman in the community, who advised her on the matter and urged her to request a re-trial. A few days later, she reappeared before the court and reaching again for the iron rod, she again declared "I have not had an illicit relationship with anyone who is an outcaste", but then added, "except for my husband" (*nāhaṃ svapativy-atirikta cāṇḍālagāminī*). This time her hand did not burn. She had preserved her honor,

but challenged that of her husband. The community was shocked. How could Harinātha, a scholar of the *dharma*, be an outcaste? An investigation revealed that he had married a woman who was the daughter of a daughter of a cousin. The *paṇḍita* had become an out-caste because he had chosen a near relative as a wife. Subsequently, it became known that the marriages of other Brahmins in the community were also illegitimate. The news reached Maharaja Harisimhadeva, who viewed the discovery as a threat to the fabric of the Brahmin community. In order to prevent such an incident from occurring again, Harisimhadeva or-dered all Brahmans within his realm to provide their family histories and appointed official genealogists to maintain the records. Furthermore, he mandated that all Brahman marriages be verified by the genealogers and approved by the king.[25]

The legend relates that Harinātha Upādhyāya had married a woman, who was insuffi-ciently distant in terms of the proscribed degrees of permitted consanguinity. The breach of exogamy, it seems, had gone unnoticed for quite a long time until the fateful day that its effects became known. The legend suggests that the breach affected not only the *paṇḍita*, but also his wife, who through the fate of her marriage was an accessory to the circum-stance. After all, it was in the declaration of her innocence that she unknowingly uttered a falsehood, the veracity of which became apparent when the iron rod burned her hand. Thus, the "unseen" consequence of the illegitmate marriage ultimately became "seen" when the wife truthfully declared that she had not had relations with any man who was an outcaste other than her husband. The incident has been memoralized in the following verse:

---

[25] Adapted from Rameshwar Singh, "Maithil Marriage"; Thakur, *History of Mithila*; Jha, *Genealogies and Genealogists of Mithila*.

गङ्गौरो नयनाथकस्य दुहिता तस्यां तु तारापतेश्वोद्वाहो मटिहानिसंज्ञकद्विजस्तत्कन्यका वै पुनः ।
गङ्गौरो हरिनाथकस्य गृहिणी कन्या तु सा पञ्चमी बीधूतो गणनावशाच्च स्वजनासम्बन्धचाण्डालिनी ॥[26]

Nayanātha of Gaṅgaura had a daughter, who was married off to Tārāpati. His son Maṭihāni had a daughter.

Harinātha from Gaṅgaura took that girl as a wife, who was related to him within the fifth degree, and because she was therefore a relative, she was unworthy of maintaining relationships with her own kin and was considered a *cāṇḍālinī*.

The result was that both Harinātha Upādhyāya and his wife had breached the codes of Brahmin society and had become outcastes. It was, therefore, 'in obedience to the law of karma' that the *adṛṣṭa* transgressions had a *dṛṣṭa* effect upon Harinātha and the Brahmin community. Harinātha was a Brahmin by birth and profession, but according to the norms of brahminical society in Mithila, he had become a non-Brahmin because he trangressed the laws of marriage, moreover, his breach of conduct had gone undetected and had slipped past the 'sense-perception' (*pratyakṣa*) of his community. In this way, Harinātha exemplified the anxieties of Patañjali. Harinātha had lost his status as a Brahmin and become a *cāṇḍāla* in the eyes of his community. But, the legend states that the "unseen" trangression of Harinātha led to the discovery that other Brahmins had also contracted marriages with consanguines. Whatever system the Brahmins of Mithila had been using for recording their ancestries and for verifying that marriages were being conducted in accordance with the regulations of *smṛti* had failed to prevent the illegitimate marriage between Harinātha and his wife. Moreover, following the legend it was possible that Brahmins had begun to

---

[26]Jhā, *Mithilā-tattva-vimarśa*, 84. The verse as presented by Jhā has a word 'बीदूत', which I have interpreted as बिधूत'. The usage of 'बिदूत' is erroneous and there is no such word in Sanskrit; however, 'बिधूत', or the Maithil pronunciation of 'विधूत' (the shift of Sanskrit /v/ to /b/ is common in word-initial position in Maithili), means 'removed, discarded, abandoned, 'relinquished' and 'the repelling of affection, repugnance' (Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 968), and fits the context of the verse.

entirely disregard the *smṛti* altogether. Whatever be the case, the king decided that a new mechanism of recording genealogies was necessary in order to preserve the 'Brahminhood' of the Brahmins of his kingdom.

1.3 Genealogy and Marriage

Based upon the depth and breadth of some of the recorded lineages and the detailed information collected not only upon the relationships between individuals and lineages, but upon the attributes of specific individuals, it is likely that the carrying out of *pañjī prabandha* was a significant personal event for the Brahmins of Mithila. It is said that all Brahmins in the kingdom were asked to report their paternal and maternal ancestries. The information collected was compiled and became the basis of the official genealogical record, which was known as the *mūla pañjī*, or the 'ancestral record' of every Brahmin male in the community. In addition to these primary *pañjī* records, there is a *gotra pañjī* attached to the beginning of the *mūla pañjī*, which is a brief classification of lineages according to *gotra*. Another record is the *uteṛha pañjī*, which is an enumeration of the ancestral details of a particular individual and is used primarily in the selection of a marriage partner. Those Brahmins whose genealogies were recorded were known as *pañjī-baddha* or 'bound in the registry' or simply 'registered'.

The *pañjī prabandha* codified that marriages must be made with regard to the following six considerations: a bride must not be 1) a *sagotra* or 2) *sapravara*, or 3) a *sapiṇḍa* of the mother or 4) a *sapiṇḍa* of the father, additionally she must not be related to anyone

descended from 5) her maternal grandfather or 6) her paternal grandfather, and she must not be 7) related to a step-mother of the groom. To these seven the *pañjī prabandha* introduced a new exogamous principle based upon the *mūla*. The *mūla* is the foundational principle in the social organization of the Brahmins of Mithila called the *mūla*, a term that has the sense of an "origin".[27] It is is a named agnatic lineage that is subordinate to the *gotra* and all *mūla*-s that belong to a *gotra* are by extension *sagotra* (the *mūla* is discussed in the next chapter). The genealogical records are organized according to the *mūla*. The *mūla* is a named is an agnatic lineage that descends from the apical ancestor, who is known as the *viji purūṣa* 'primal individual'.[28] The *mūla* is subordinate to the *gotra* and all *mūla*-s that belong to a *gotra* are by extension *sagotra*. The *mūla pañjī* records the ancestry of each Brahmin. It also records each marriage by specifying the *mūla* of each maternal patrline marrying into an agnatic lineage. Below is an excerpt taken from the *mūla pañjī* of the Khauāla *mūla* belonging to the Kāśyapa *gotra*:

[...] खौआल सं बिजि महामहोपाध्यय प्रजापति सुतौ महो वाचस्पति महो उँमापति ॥ (१२७/०५) वा-चस्पति सुतौ गणपति धनौज सं त्रिपुरारि दौ ॥ गणपति सुता शशिधर (२१/०४) लक्ष्मिधर सुरानन्द धर्म-धिकरणिक महामहोपाध्यय (०३/०५) हरिशर्म्मणाः ॥ शशिधर सुतौ गदाधरः मराङ सं रवि दौ ॥ [...] गदाधर सुतौ महमहो नयपाणि महो हरिपाणि महुआसं भिखम दौ ॥ महो हरिपानि सुतौ लक्ष्मीपाणि रत्न-पाणि उदनपुर जजिवाल सं शान्तिकर दौ ॥ [...] महामहो रत्नपाणि सुता महो हरादित्य महामहो भवादित्य महामहो नयादित्य महामहो धरादित्य गङ्झोली सं वंशधर दौ ॥ [...][29]

The founder of the Khauāla *mūla* is *mahāmahopādhyāya* Prajāpati, his sons are *mahopādhyāya* Vācaspati and *mahopādhyāya* Umāpati (127/05). The son of Vācaspati is Gaṇapati, who married the daughter of Tripurari of Dhanauja *mūla*. The four sons of Gaṇapati are Śaśidhara (14/04), Lakṣmīdhara, Surānanda, and the *dharmadhikaraṇika*

---

[27]Sanskrit *mūla* "root".

[28]Maithili बिजि पुरूष "primal individual" < Sanskrit बीज *bīja* "seed" + पुरूष *purūṣa* "man"; refers to "the progenitor of a tribe or family" (Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 732).

[29]*Mūla Pañjī* written by Pañjīkara Paṇḍita Modanānda Jhā, folio 203.

43

mahāmahopādhyāya Hariśarmmaṇā. The son of Śaśidhara is Gadādhara, who married the daughter of Ravi of Marāṛa *mūla* [...] The sons of Gadādhara are *mahāmahopādhyāya* Nayapāṇi and *mahopādhyāya* Haripāṇi. Haripāṇi married the daughter of Bhikama of Mahuā *mūla*. The sons of Haripāṇi are Lakṣmīpāṇi and Ratnapāṇi. Ratnapāṇi married the daughter of Sāntikara of Jajivāle-Udanapura *mūla-grāma*. The four sons of *mahāmahopādhyāya* Ratnapāṇi are *mahopādhyāya* Harāditya, *mahāmahopādhyāya* Bhāvāditya, *mahāmahopādhyāya* Nayāditya, and *mahāmahopādhyāya* Dharāditya. Dharāditya married the daughter of Vaṃśadhara of Gaṅgolī *mūla* [...][30]

From the *mūla pañjī* we learn that the *viji purūṣa* of Khauāla is Prajāpati and that two main sub-lineages began from him through his two sons Vācaspati and Umāpati. All present members of the Khauāla *mūla* are descendants of these two individuals. Although the record enumerates every male in each generation, it is evident that the focus of the excerpt is upon the lineage that proceeds from Prajāpati through Vācaspati and his sons and ends, by my editorial choice, with Dharāditya. The segment not only shows Dharāditya's agnatic lineage along an ascent of eight generations, but also provides details on his cognatic ancestry through reference to all of the marriages of his direct ascendants that led to his birth (except those of Prajāpati and Vācaspati, which I discuss later in the chapter). With regard to the affinal descendants we see that Dharāditya's great-great-great-grandfather Gaṇapati's father-in-law belongs to the Dhanauja *mūla*. His great-grandfather Gadādhara's father-in-law is of the Marāṛa *mūla*. His grandfather Haripāṇi's father-in-law is of Mahuā *mūla*. His father Ratnapāṇi's father-in-law is of Jajivāla *mūla*. Were we to examine the *mūla pañjī* further, we would see the genealogies of all males of the Khauāla *mūla* descending from Prajāpati and their affinal relationships shown in a similar fashion. The *mūla pañjī* reveals

---

[30]Several abbreviations and other shorthand conventions are used in the *pañjī*. Some of these are: *saṃ* = *saṃbhūta* 'arisen from'; *suta* 'son', *sutau*, 'two sons', *sutā* = 'more than three sons'; *dau* = *duhitṛ* 'daughter'; *ddau* = *dauhitrī* 'grand-daughter'; *maho* = *mahopādhyāya*, *mahāmaho* = *mahāmahopādhyāya*. The inline numerical references point to locations in the record where a particular lineage is described in greater detail.

that affinal relationships are recorded in terms of the patrilines brought together by marriage. It is not the name of the bride that is shown, but the name of the bride's father and his *mūla*. In some cases, the bride's father's father-in-law (or, the bride's maternal grandfather) and his *mūla* is listed as well. The bride is simply mentioned as the 'daughter' of a *mūla*. This method signifies that the general emphasis of the *pañjī* is upon the recording of the *mūla*; the naming of individuals along a particular patriline is simply to provide a convenient means for identifying the points at which a *mūla* intersects with another.

In addition to indicating affinal relationships between the Khauāla and other *mūla*-s, the genealogy of Dharāditya clearly specifies all of his *sapiṇḍa* relationships. The line of descent from Prajāpati to Dharāditya shows a depth of eight generations, but as *sapiṇḍatā* is limited to seven generations ascending and descending from ego, Dharāditya's *sapiṇḍa* relationship in his patriline ends at Vācaspati. The completeness of the Khauāla genealogy permits the *pañjīkara* to accurately determine whether the selection of a potential bride from a different *mūla* abides by the rules laid down in *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.53 that she be "five times removed on the mother's side" (*mātṛtaḥ pañcamāt*) and "seven times removed on the father's side" (*pitṛtaḥ saptamāt*). When the record indicates that Dharāditya's maternal grandfather is Śāntikara of the Jajivāla *mūla*, it is clear that his mother was not related to his father Ratnapāṇi within five generations of his own maternal grandfather Bhikama of Mahuā *mūla*, and bore no relationship to any descendant of the Khauāla *mūla* within the seven generations extending from Ratnapāṇi to Prajāpati. Similarly, the eight generations recorded for Dharāditya are one more than the seven required by the *smṛti* along the patriline

for the arrangement of his own marriage. Thus, when the record states that Dharāditya's father-in-law is Vaṃśadhara of the Gaṅgolī *mūla*, it is clear that Vaṃśadhara's daughter bore no relationship to Dharāditya's father within seven generations or to his mother within five generations. As *gotra* is implied in the *mūla* designation, it is also established that all of the affinal ancestors of Dharāditya belonged to *gotra*-s other than Kāśyapa.

As the *pañjī* records were formally maintained in order to ensure that marriages were made with regard to the rules of exogamy, it is expected that the records would contain information that would enable a *pañjīkara* to determine with ease if two individuals have a pre-existing relationship within the prohibit bounds of consanguinity. In order to specify the *sapiṇḍa* relationships of an individual absolutely clearly, such information is recorded in a document called the *uteṛha pañjī*. An *uteṛha* is a table that lists the sixteen male ancestors of a Brahmin up to the sixth generation,[31] consisting of the following individuals along the patriline and matriline:

1. father's paternal grandfather's (*pitāmaha*) paternal grandfather
2. father's paternal grandfather's maternal grandfather (*mātāmaha*)
3. father's paternal grandmother's (*pitāmahī*) paternal grandfather
4. father's paternal grandmother's maternal grandfather

5. father's maternal grandfather's paternal grandfather
6. father's maternal grandfather's maternal grandfather
7. father's maternal grandmother's paternal grandfather
8. father's maternal grandmother's maternal grandfather

9. mother's paternal grandfather's paternal grandfather
10. mother's paternal grandfather's maternal grandfather
11. mother's paternal grandmother's paternal grandfather

---

[31]Maithili उतेढ़ < Sanskrit उत्तीर्ण *uttīrṇa*. The sense conveyed by the term *uttīrṇa* is that the potential bride is 'beyond' the prohibited boundaries of relationship with the groom. However, in modern Maithili, *uteṛha* refers generically to a "genealogy" or "family tree" (Jha, *Kalyani Kosh*, 66).

46

12. mother's paternal grandmother's maternal grandfather

13. mother's maternal grandfather's paternal grandfather
14. mother's maternal grandfather's maternal grandfather
15. mother's maternal grandmother's paternal grandfather
16. mother's maternal grandmother's maternal grandfather

The *uteṛha*, also known in colloquial Maithili as *chaṭṭi* 'the sixth',[32] contains the *mūla* and name of each of these sixteen male ancestors along with that of each ancestor's father-in-law. In this way, the *uteṛha* actually records the ancestors of an individual through to the seventh generation to an extent of 32 male ancestors (see figure 1.1); but, it truly shows 64 ancestors when the wives of each male are taken into account. By extending to the seventh generation, the *uteṛha* visibly shows any relatedness that falls within the boundaries of six times on the father's side and five times on the mother's side.

The principles of *mūla* and *sapiṇḍa* exogamy are the foundation of the marriage regulations instituted by *pañjī prabandha*. When a marriage is to be contracted, the *pañjīkara* compares the *uteṛha* of the boy with those of various potential brides in order to determine any existing relationship within the prohibited boundaries. Girls who pass the test of the sixteen ancestors are recorded by the *pañjīkara* in an official list known as an *adhikāra mālā* 'certificate of permission'. The document contains the *mūla*-s and names of the each girl's father and maternal grandfather. It serves as evidence that all potential brides are authorized to marry the groom according to the regulations. When the groom's family selects a bride from the *adhikāra mālā*, the *pañjīkara* issues an *asvajana patra* 'statement of no relationship' that formally declares that no prohibited relationship exists between the bride

---

[32]The "six degrees of relationship from father's or mother's side within which marriage is not allowed" (Jha, *Kalyani Kosh*, 215).

and groom. If a decision to formalize the marriage is made, the *pañjīkara* petitions the king to approve the marriage. If the king approved he would sign a *siddhānta patra* 'marriage permit'. Upon the issuance of this permit, the *pañjīkara* would call the parties of the bride and groom together and publicly recite the *pañjī* of both lineages to a degree of six generations. After the actual marriage ceremony, the marriage would then be recorded in the *pañjī*.

On the other hand, the consequences for conducting an unauthorized marriage were quite heavy. If a marriage took place without consulting the *pañjīkara*, the two families involved in the trangression would be censured through excommunication. Although there are no rules specifying its nature, excommunication generally meant that interactions with close kin and the larger Brahmin community would cease and, more importantly, the marriage would not be recorded in the *pañjī*, even if the bride and groom were sufficiently distant in terms of consanguinity. Social exclusion may be considered self-enforcing. The erasure of the marriage from the genealogies meant that the marriage was no marriage at all. The couple might start a family and have children, but any children born of the union would be considered illegitimate and they would also be excluded from registration in the genealogies. As a result, these offspring would be prohibited from marrying within the community. Moreover, the breach of conduct would affect the families of the bride and groom as the marriage prospects for their siblings would considerably diminish. In terms of the *pañjī*, the denial to recognize the lineage of the groom in question means that he and his descendants would not be considered part of the Maithil Brahmin community. The cou-

ple might migrate outside of Mithila, but there is no certainty that they would be accepted as Brahmins wherever they chose to settle. Would the Brahmins of the new locality extend privileges of dining, marriage, and other social interactions to them?[33] After all, there is no way of truly knowing if the migrants from afar are Brahmin, especially since there is no record that proves the Brahmin parentage of either the couple or their offspring and no way of 'cognizing the caste of the progenitors'.

1.4 Genealogy and Personhood

The presence of a Brahmin in the genealogies means that his 'Brahminhood' is attested and verifiable. The basis of this validity is the association between a Brahmin and his *mūla*. The classification of individuals according to lineage and the usage of official genealogies for organizing marriages suggest that the authorities responsible for *pañjī prabandha* had given thought to the question of how to define the identity of a Brahmin within a larger concept of a community of Brahmins. To be sure, the *pañjī* system reveals that the notions of Brahmin personhood and kin-group membership are based upon an enhanced interpretation of the role of *sapiṇḍa* in the definition of kin and community in Mithila. Indeed, two centuries prior to *pañjī prabandha*, a scholar named Vijñāneśvara from what is now part of the borderland of the modern Indian states of Karnataka and Maharashtra wrote a commentary

---

[33]Adrian Mayer relates the case of families in Malwa in central India, who moved there from north India and had settled in a village for two generations: "the newcomers said they were Brahmans, but nobody would eat from them lest their claim be false." People are hesitant, he explains, because there were "many attempts to change caste status" by moving to an area where one is not known, and villagers are vigilant "having been caught before" (*Caste and Kinship in Central India*, 27). Impersonation of a Brahmin, it seems, was commonplace.

on the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* that is known as *Mitākṣarā*.[34] The *Mitākṣarā* introduced a significant redefinition of *sapiṇḍa*, which has since remained the predominant interpretation of the concept.[35] Before Vijñāneśvara wrote his commentary, *sapiṇḍa* referred specifically to the relationship between individuals of an agnatic lineage that is established by their privilege to offer or receive funeral oblations known as *piṇḍa*. Vijñāneśvara saw a deeper connection between sets of individuals and the *piṇḍa* that bound them together. He interpreted *piṇḍa* as a corporeal essence, or as "blood particles" as described by the legal scholar J. G. Gharpure.[36] Vijñāneśvara presents his view of *piṇḍa* in his commentary on *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.52, which states that a bride should be an *asapiṇḍa* of the groom. He writes:

असपिण्डां समान एकः पिण्डो देहो यस्याः सा सपिण्डा न सपिण्डा असपिण्डा ताम् । सपिण्डता च ए-कशरीरावयवान्वयेन भवति । तथाहि पुत्रस्य पितृशरीरावयवान्वयेन पित्रा सह । एवं पितामहादिभिरपि पितृद्वारेण तच्छरीरावयवान्वयात् । एवं मातृशरीरावयवान्वयेन मात्रा । तथा मातामहादिभिरपि मातृद्वारेण । तथा मातृष्वसृमातुलादिभिरप्य् एकशरीरावयवान्वयात् । तथा पितृव्यपितृष्वस्रादिभिरपि । तथा पत्यास-हपत्या एकशरीरारम्भकतया । एवं भ्रातृभार्याणामपि परस्परमेकशरीररब्यैः सहैकशरीरारम्भकत्वेन । एवं यत्र यत्र सपिण्डशब्दस्तत्र तत्र साक्षात्परम्परया वा एकशरीरावयवान्वयो वेदितव्यः ।[37]

A-sapiṇḍâ, not a *sapiṇḍâ*; *Samânaḥ* 'common' *i.e.* one *piṇḍa* body of a whom, that (one) is *Sapiṇḍâ*; not a *Sapiṇḍâ* is an *a-sapiṇḍâ*; such a one (he should marry).

Sapiṇḍa relationship arises (between two people) through (their) being connected by particles of one body. Thus the son stands in sapiṇḍa relationship to his father, because the particles of his father's body having entered (his.) In like manner (stands) the grandson in sapiṇḍa relationship) to his paternal grandfather and the rest, because through his father, particles of his (grandfather) body have entered into (his own). Just so is the son (a sapiṇḍa relation) of his mother, because particles of his mother's body have entered into his own. Likewise (the grandson stands in sapiṇḍa relationship), to his maternal grandfather and the rest, through his mother. So also (is the nephew) a sapiṇḍa relation of his maternal aunts and uncles and the rest, because particles of the

---

[34]Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. I, pt. II, 605, 609, 610.

[35]The exception, of course, is Jīmūtavāhana's retention of the original meaning in the *Dāyabhāga* (Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. I, pt. II, 599).

[36]Gharpure, *Sâpiṇḍya*, 3.

[37]*Mitākṣarā* (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛiti*, 13–14).

same body (the maternal grandfather) have entered into (his and theirs); likewise (does he stand in a sapiṇḍa relationship) with his paternal uncles and aunts and the rest.

So also the wife and the husband (are sapiṇḍa relations to each other), because they together beget one body (the son). In like manner, brother's wives are (also sapiṇḍa relations to each other), because they produce one body (the son) with those (severally) who have sprung from one body *i.e.* because they bring forth the sons by their union with the offspring of one person, and thus their husband's father is the common bond which (connects them). Therefore, one ought to know that wherever the word *Sapiṇḍa* is used, there exists (between the persons to whom it is applied) a connection with one body either immediate or by descent.[38]

Vijñāneśvara's definition transformed the *piṇḍa* from being a sacramental object shared by a group of individuals ascending and descending along an agnatic lineage to a bodily essence that an individual shares with a group of relatives on both the paternal and material sides. Trautmann writes that "[t]he examples Vijñāneśvara has given are sufficient to show that ... in the definition of *sāpiṇḍya* all cognates, collaterals as well as lineal, directly or indirectly related are included, without as yet being bounded or internally graded by the principle of propinquity."[39] By itself, the definition allows for an almost infinite scope of relatedness between individuals such that, theoretically, at some level all of humanity is infused with the same corporeal particles of a common primordial ancestor. Vijñāneśvara acknowledges the possibility that "*sapiṇḍa* relationship exists everywhere among all individuals in the world".[40] But, he states that there is a limit to the relationship and concurs with the boundaries set in *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.53, which specifies that *sapiṇḍa* ceases "beyond the fifth generation on the mother's side and beyond the seventh generation on the

---

[38]Gharpure, *Sâpiṇḍya*, 5–6.

[39]Trautmann, *Dravidian Kinship*, 249.

[40]*Mitākṣarā*: असपिण्डामित्यत्रैकशरीरावयवान्वयद्वारेण साक्षात्परम्परया वा सापिण्ड्यमुक्तं तच्च सर्वत्र सर्वस्य यथाकथंचिदनादौ संसारे संभवतीत्यत्रिप्रसङ्ग [...] (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛiti*, 15).

father's side."[41] A clear picture emerges of the *sapiṇḍa* paradigm of relatedness after Vi-

jñāneśvara draws the maximum extent of its influence. The lines of cessation, Trautmann

explains, make it "abundantly clear that an individual's *sapiṇḍas*, within the limits of seven

degrees on the father's side and five degrees on the mother's side, comprise all cognates

lineal as well as collaterial, and at least some affines as well."[42] In addition to the biological

aspect of the *piṇḍa*, Vijñāneśvara's definition is significant because, as Trautmann states,

he "introduced a new version of a shared body: that which exists between husband and wife

not by virtue of common descent but through their collaboration in the procreation of a sin-

gle body, that is, the child (*ekaśarīrārambhakatā*)."[43] Through this innovation of a 'single

body' Vijñāneśvara establishes the *piṇḍa* as a new basis of personhood.

Gharpure and Trautmann have termed Vijñāneśvara's view of *sapiṇḍa* as 'artificial'[44]

and 'forced'[45] because it gave a significance to the concept that did not previously inhere

within it. Vijñāneśvara's biological interpretation of *piṇḍa* certainly is a departure from the

original connection of the concept with the *śrāddha*, or the sacrament of offering oblations

to departed ancestors.[46] However, despite its artificiality, the new definition was readily

accepted by scholars of *dharma* after its dissemination in the 12th century. The sense of

sapiṇḍa as connoting a physical connection between individuals grounds the texts written

---

[41] *Mitākṣarā*: मातृतो मातुः संताने पञ्चमादूर्ध्वं पितृतः पितुः संताने सप्तमादूर्ध्वं सापिण्ड्यं निवर्तत इति शेषः । (Panśīkar, *Yādnyava-lkyasmṛti*, 15).

[42] Trautmann, *Dravidian Kinship*, 249.

[43] Ibid., 249–250.

[44] Gharpure, *Sâpiṇḍya*, 2.

[45] Trautmann, *Dravidian Kinship*, 250.

[46] Vijñāneśvara is adamant about his view. In addressing the issue that the meaning of *piṇḍa* be re-stricted to the offering, he states "निर्वाप्यपिण्डान्वयेन तु सापिण्ड्ये ड्ड्रीक्रियमाणे मातृसंताने भ्रातृपितृव्यादिषु च सापिण्ड्यं न स्यात् ।" (*Mitākṣarā*: Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛti*, 14).

by *dharma* authorities in Mithila around the time of *pañjī prabandha*, particularly with regard to marriage practices and inheritance. Among these is Caṇḍeśvara Ṭhakkura, who was a powerful individual in the Karṇāṭa court and served as the *mahāsāndhivigrahika*, or the 'Minister of Peace and War',[47] of king Harisimhadeva.[48] The rules regarding *sapiṇḍa* exogamy in marriage in 14th century Mithila are specified quite clearly by Caṇḍeśvara in his *Gṛhastaratnākara*. At the outset of the section titled 'Vivāhyāvivāhyakanyānirūpaṇa', or 'Marriage, Non-Marriage, and the Attributes of a Bride', he quotes *Manusmṛti* 3.5, stating that a woman must be an *asapiṇḍa* and an *asagotra* of a man on both the mother's and father's side in order to become his wife.[49] He then offers the following explanation of *sapiṇḍa* relationships:

मातुरसपिण्डा मातुलदुहित्रादिभ्यो अन्या असपिण्डेति समान् एकः पिण्डो देहो यस्याः सा सपिण्डा न तथा असपिण्डा सपिण्डता च एकशरीरावयवान्वयेन भवति । तथाहि पुत्रस्य पितृशरीरावयवान्वयेन पित्रा सह । एवं पितामहादिभिरपि पितृद्वारेण शरीरावयवान्वतः । एवं मातृशरीरावयवान्वयेन मात्रा तथा मातामहा-दिभिरपि मातृद्वारेण । तथा मातृष्वसृमातुलादिभिरप्येकशरीरावयवान्वयात् तथा पितृस्वस्रादिभिरपि । तथा पत्या सह पल्या एकशरीरारम्भकतया एवं भ्रातृभार्याणामपि एकशरीरारम्भकैः स्वस्वपतिभिः सहैकशरीरार-म्भकत्वेन । एवं यत्र सपिण्डशब्दस्तत्र साक्षात्परम्परया एकशरीरावयवान्वयेन ज्ञेय इति मिताक्षराकारः ।[50]

The daughter of a maternal uncle and such other females are the *sapiṇḍa* of a mother; she who has particles of a common, shared body is a *sapiṇḍa*; therefore, she who is 'not a *sapiṇḍa*' is an '*asapiṇḍa*'. The *sapiṇḍa* relationship (*sapiṇḍatā*) is established through the connection of particles of one body. So, a son is related to a father through the particles of the father's body. As well as to the paternal grandfather through the bodily particles of the father. And the son is related to the mother through the particles of the mother's body, as well as to the maternal grandfather through the bodily particles

---

[47]Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 1145.

[48]From the colophon following the 'Gārhasthya' section of the *Gṛhastharatnākara*: इति महामहेन्द्र महाराजाधिराज श्रीहरिसिंहदेव महासान्धिविग्रहिक वीरेश्वरात्मज सप्रक्रिय महासान्धिविग्रहिक श्रीचण्डेश्वरविरचिते गृहस्थरत्नाकरे गार्हस्थ्यतरङ्ग (Kamalakṛṣṇa Smṛtitīrtha, *Gṛhastha-ratnākara*, 6).

[49]*Manusmṛti* 3.5: असपिण्डा च या मातुरसगोत्रा च या पितुः । सा प्रशस्ता द्विजातीनां दारकर्मणि मैथुने ॥ (Jolly, *Mânava Dharma-Śâstra*, 40). As Caṇḍeśvara cites the verse in isolation, he quotes it beginning असपिण्डा तु instead of the original असपिण्डा च, in which the च links the present verse to that which precedes it in the text.

[50]Kamalakṛṣṇa Smṛtitīrtha, *Gṛhastha-ratnākara*, 8.

of the mother. And to the mother's sister and others through the bodily particles of the maternal grandfather. The same pertains to the father's sister and others. A husband and wife are connected through the creation of a single body; similarly, a brother and his wife are connected through the creation of a single body. Therefore, the word *sapiṇḍa* is to be known as a connection through one body, either immediate or by descent, says the writer of the *Mitākṣarā*.

In describing *sapiṇḍa* Caṇḍeśvara cites the writer of the *Mitākṣarā* nearly verbatim. It is clear, therefore, that Caṇḍeśvara accepted Vijñāneśvara's new definition of the concept. This new interpretation of *sapiṇḍa* as a relationship between individuals shared through bodily particles continued to gain traction among the *dharma* scholars of Mithila. Two hundred years after Caṇḍeśvara, a *nibandhakara* named Maheśa Ṭhakkura offered his views on *sapiṇḍa* in the *Dāyasāra,* which describes the customs of inheritance. In the section titled 'Sapiṇḍalakṣaṇa', or the 'Characteristics of Sapiṇḍa', he states the following:

समानं पिण्डो येषां ते सपिण्डा । सप्तशरीरं तदुक्तं गर्भोपनिषदि । अस्थिस्नायुमय्यानः पितृतस्त्वङ्मांसरुधि-राणि मातृत इति पितृमात्र्यंशशरीरं भवति । पत्नीनान्तु पत्या समं अस्थिभिरस्थीनि इत्यादि श्रुतिबलादेव सपिण्डता एवञ्चात्र साक्षात्परंपरासाधारणमिदं सापिण्ड्यं साप्तपौरुषं वीजिनमपि व्याप्यसप्तपुरुषाः स्ववंश्याः सपिण्डाः । दशमपुरुषं यावत्सकुल्याः तदन्तरं गोत्रजाः ।[51]

She who shares a body in common is known as 'Sapinda'. According to the *Garbhopaniṣad* it consists of seven bodies. Bones, nerves, and sinews from the father and skin, flesh, and blood from the mother; the body is made out of parts of the mother and father. Through the authority of *śruti*, the *sapiṇḍa* relationship is said to arise on account of the bones, etc. of the wife and husband coming together either through immediate relationship or by descent; the *sapiṇḍa* relationship extends seven generations to the ancestor and seven generations descending in one's own lineage. Ten generations constitutes the same *kula* and after that the rest are considered to be related on account of shared *gotra*.

---

[51]Maheśa Ṭhakkura, "Dāyasāra," 127. The author's use of the phrase सप्तशरीरम् 'seven bodies' is curious and is suggestive of a scribal or editoral error. Perhaps सप्तपुरुषम् 'seven generations' was intended, but this would not make sense in the given context. The author likely intended to write षड्‌कौशिकम् 'six sheaths', which make up the body of the child. It is not clear to which 'seven bodies' the phrase refers. Also, मय्या 'marrow' may be an error in transliterating the original manuscript written in the Tirhuta script into Devanagari. The correct spelling is मज्जा. The confusion of the Tirhuta graph for Sanskrit *ja* and the regular graph for *ya* is a common mistake.

It is apparent that Maheśa Ṭhakkura also accepted the new definition. He describes the core

of the *sapiṇḍa* relationship as being based upon the transmission of bodily particles, but it

seems that Maheśa Ṭhakkura was also interested in conveying the physical characteristics

of the 'shared body'. Although he does not cite the reference, his description is drawn from

another portion of Vijñāneśvara's commentary on *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.52:

अवश्यं चैकशरीरावयवान्वयेन सापिण्ड्यं वर्णनीयम् । आत्मा हि जज्ञ आत्मनः इत्यादिश्रुतेः । तथा प्र-
जामनु प्रजायसे इति च । स एवायं विरूढः प्रत्यक्षेणोपलभ्यते इत्यापस्तम्बवचनाच्च । तथा गर्भोपनिषदि
एतत् षाड्कौशिकं शरीरं त्रीणि पितृतस्त्रीणि मातृतोऽस्थिस्नायुमज्जानः पितृतस्त्वङ्मासरुधिराणि मातृतः इति
तत्रतत्रावयवान्वयप्रतिपादनात् ।[52]

The sapiṇḍa relationship is certainly to be described by the entering of the particles of a
common body. Because on account of the Śruti (Aitareya Brâhmaṇa VII.13.6) — "(In
him) the self is born out of self." Thus also Tait[tirîya] Br[âhmaṇa] I.5.5.6). "Thus thou
art born again in thy offspring.["] So also is the text of Âpastamba (II.9.24.2): "Now
it can also be perceived by the senses that the father has been reproduced separately in
the son." So also in the Garbha Upaniṣad: — "Of this body consisting of six sheaths,
three are from the father, and the three from the mother. The bones, the nerves, and
the marrow are from the father; the skin, the flesh and the blood are from the mother."
In all these passages, the entering of the particles of the body is being demonstrated.[53]

Maheśa Ṭhakkura, however, extends the discussion by placing *sapiṇḍa* within a social con-

text. He explains that the *sapiṇḍa* relationship persists through the seventh generation as-

cending and descending along the agnatic lineage, and that these seven along with the ad-

jacent three generations to the tenth are known as *sakulya* or 'of the same family', and that

those beyond the tenth generation are *gotraja* or 'born of the same *gotra*. In doing so he em-

beds the *sapiṇḍa* relationship within a definition of a kin group. The kin group is bounded at

the maximal extent by its *gotra* relationship, but at its core is the *piṇḍa* that is shared through

ancestors and descendants, which fades after the seventh generation. It is clear that Maheśa

---

[52]*Mitākṣarā* (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛiti*, 14).
[53]Vasu, *Yajnavalkya Smriti,* Book I, 95.

Ṭhakkura views *piṇḍa* as being overtly biological, agreeing with Vijñāneśvara, in that it is constructed through parts of the bodies of the wife and husband, or rather, the mother and father of a child. The description is short, but it shows an attempt to establish the relationships between individuals within a kin group through the biological medium of the *piṇḍa* instead of through the offerings made to ancestors. In fact, it is noteworthy that the original definition of *piṇḍa* as a sacramental oblation is entirely absent in the 'Sapiṇḍalakṣaṇa' section of the *Dāyasāra*. It may be also noted that Maheśa Ṭhakkura does not mention the *mūla* in the *Dāyasāra*. The likely explanation is that the text invokes *sapiṇḍa* within a general discourse on the inheritance and partition of property, while the *mūla* is a matter of *deśavidhācāra* specific to Mithila and may, in fact, be represented generically to an extent through the concept of *gotraja* as all members of a *mūla* belong to the same *gotra*.

The treatment of *sapiṇḍa* by Caṇḍeśvara and Maheśa Ṭhakkura offers insights into the acceptance of Vijñāneśvara's new definition of the concept and its interpretation in Mithila from the 14th through 16th centuries. It is possible, therefore, to see an ideology of the personhood of a Brahmin in the *pañjī* system that is based upon Vijñāneśvara's ideas of the physical descent of individuals. The fundamental purpose of the *pañjī prabandha* was to formalize genealogical record-keeping and marriage regulations for the purpose of maintaining the proper order of the Brahmin community of Harisimhadeva's kingdom in Mithila. While marriages conducted in accordance with the regulations maintain the present order of brahminical society, these marriages also determine the future order through the potential of producing future members of the *jāti*. As *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.90 states, "sons who

56

continue the lineage are born from faultless marriages". In the ideology of the *pañjī* system a son not only continues the minimal lineage of his father, but also the maximal *mūla* lineage that was established by his earliest known ancestor. The strict procedures that determine potential marriage partners according to the system is most clearly manifested in the *uteṛha pañjī*, which shows a visual map of the *sapiṇḍa* and *gotra* relationships of an individual through thirty-two lineages up to the seventh generation. The purpose of this map is to assist in identifying the limits of consanguinity. Placed within Vijñāneśvara's physical conceptualization of *sapiṇḍa*, the *uteṛha pañjī* shows the bounds outside of which a man can choose a wife in order to collaborate in the creation of a new member of the *jāti*: the *ekaśarīrārambhakatā*, or the 'shared body' that is the physical representation of the union of two lineages.

The completeness of the *pañjī* records offers the potential for a Brahmin to identify various categories of relationships specified in the *smṛti*. In addition to the *ekaśarīrārambhakatā*, Vijñāneśvara identifies other concepts of related that are based upon the notion of *sapiṇḍa* a a corporeal body shared between groups of individuals. These are six other *sapiṇḍa* relationships.[54] The *sānvaya sapiṇḍa* is a relationship that exists between persons according to lineal consanguinity, or direct descent or ascent. The *cūḍāsambandhānvaya* or *avayava sapiṇḍa* exists between persons related by lineal ascent or descent, particularly by the ability of a person to perform the tonsure ceremony. A relationship that exists between two persons who are not related by lineal ascent or descent, but by their descent from a common ancestor is known as *mukhtāhāra sapiṇḍa*, Another is the *nirvāpya sapiṇḍa*, which is

---

[54]Gharpure, *Sâpiṇḍya*, 2–4.

a relationship established by the right to offer the funeral oblation. The *sāpatna sapiṇḍa* is based upon the sharing of half bodily particles, such as that which exists between the sons of a single father born from different mothers.[55] There is also a conception of relatedness that arises through adoption, which is known as *dattaka sapiṇḍa*. The *pañjī* also establishes knowledge of kin categories that are described in the *smṛti*-s as being amorphous. In connection with the original meaning of *piṇḍa* as an offering to the deceased, Manu states that the impurity associated with death attaches to *sapiṇḍa*-s for ten days and to a group of agnates called the *samānodaka*-s for three days.[56] A *sapiṇḍa* shares in the offering of the *piṇḍa*, but a *samānodaka* offers only libations of water.[57] Manu defines a *samānodaka* as an agnatic relative beyond the seventh generation or up to the point "when the common origin and the existence of a common family name are no longer known".[58] The *pañjī* resolves the manner of not knowing the common name beyond a certain generation.

The importance of *sapiṇḍa* in the ideology of marriage in the *pañjī* system suggests a renewed vision of brahminical personhood that is based upon the principle of heredity. Recall that Kumārila Bhaṭṭa concluded that a child produced by a father of the same caste as the mother cannot be said to be a 'bastard' even if the child is born outside of marriage. Moreover, he states that the child would be a member of the caste of the parents. It would be logical to apply the *sapiṇḍa* view of personhood to Kumārila's conclusion. By extension, then, regardless of the marital status of his parents, a Brahmin child born of Brahmin

---

[55]Gharpure, *Sâpiṇḍya*, 11.

[56]*Manu Smṛti* 5.59: दशाहं शावमाशौचं सपिण्डेषु विधीयते । अर्वाक् संचयनादस्थ्नां त्र्यहमेकाहम् एव वा ॥ (Jolly, *Mânava Dharma-Śâstra*, 103).

[57]Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 1160.

[58]*Manu Smṛti* 5.60: सपिण्डता तु पुरुषे सप्तमे विनिवर्तते । समानोदकभावस्तु जन्मनाम्नोरवेदने ॥ (ibid.). Translation adapted from Bühler, *The Laws of Manu*, 178.

parents would also be an *ekaśarīrārambhakatā*. It appears that experts of the *dharma* had considered the possibility that such a justification might arise. In response, they declared that only a child born within a proper marriage between a man and woman of the same *varṇa* was to be considered *savarṇa* or *sajāti* 'of the same caste' and, therefore, legitimate (see *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.90, referenced above). These authorities accounted for offspring born of legitimate and illegitimate unions, even of the same *varṇa*, by devising a classification system for various types of sons. A *sajāti* or legitimate son is known as an *aurasa*. On the other hand, a *kuṇḍa* is the son of a woman by another man of the same *varṇa* while the husband is alive; a *golaka* is the offspring produced by a widow with a man of the same *varṇa*; and a *sahoḍaja* is a son produced by a woman who is also married to another.[59] These latter three Vijñāneśvara deems as being *asavarṇa*.[60]

With the above understanding, it is now possible to evaluate the deeper significance of the legend of Harinātha Upādhyāya. The tale states that Harinātha had become an outcaste because he violated the rules of marriage. The only evidence given in terms of explanation is that he married a woman who was the daughter of his cousin's daughter. In stating this, the legend emphasizes that the illegitimacy of the marriage arose from *sapiṇḍa* endogamy. We do not know the *gotra* of Harinātha's wife, but we do know that as being the daughter of the daughter of his cousin she was removed only four degrees from him and, therefore, was a *sapiṇḍa*. As the marriage was illegitimate any children produced by Harinātha and his wife would also be illegitimate. Although Kumārila stated that a child born outside of a

---

[59]See *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 2.128–134 for a description of the twelve categories of sons.

[60]*Mitaksara*: अतश्च कुण्डगोलककानीनसहोढजादीनामसवर्णत्वमुक्तं भवति । (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛiti*, 28).

marital union between parents of the same caste would still be of that caste, it is very clear that legitimacy of the child among the Brahmins of Mithila was dependent upon the child being born to a married couple. Taking the legend a step outside of its narrative bounds, as Harinātha's violation of the rules went unnoticed, then his sons would also not have been recognized as being born of an adulterous union, and the marriages of these sons within the community would be that between a *cāṇḍāla* and a Brahmin girl and any offspring arising from such a marriage would be not be a Brahmin, but also a *cāṇḍāla*. Recall that Kane stated that "even if a person goes through a ceremony of marriage with a girl who is a sagotra or sapravara or sapiṇḍa (within prohibited degrees) she does not become his wife at all." The importance of the restriction is conveyed in the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti*, which states that "Though it has been said that a twice-born may take a wife from a Śûdra family, yet that is not my opinion, because out of her, he is born himself".[61] The *Manu Smṛti* is even more exacting regarding the union of a Brahmin and a Shudra. It states that a Brahmin who takes a Shudra wife will "sink into hell" and that any child born of the union will "lose the rank of a Brahmin".[62] That a Brahmin 'is born himself' through his wife means that a son born of the wife is a representation of the father, and if a Brahmin produces a son with a Shudra woman, then his son would not be a Brahmin and the lineage would be affected. This verse is particularly significant as the opinion is stated in the grammatical first-person. From the perspective of *dharma* the impact of such a situation would imperil the Brahmin

---

[61] *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.56: यदुच्यते द्विजातीनां शूद्रादारोपसंग्रहः । नैतन्मम मतं यस्मात्तत्रायं जायते स्वयम् ॥ (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛiti*, 16). Translation adapted from Vasu, *Yajnavalkya Smriti,* Book I, 120. The importance may be further evidenced by the fact that the verse is in the first person. To be sure, it is the only verse in in which the author refers to himself in this way.

[62] *Manu Smṛti* 3.17: शूद्रां शयनमारोप्य ब्राह्मणो यात्यधोगतिम् । जनयित्वा सुतं तस्यां ब्राह्मण्यादेव हीयते ॥ (Jolly, *Mânava Dharma-Śâstra*, 42).

60

community. It is, therefore, for the purpose of preventing marriages between Brahmins and veritable 'Non-Brahmins' from bringing the community to ruin that Vijñāneśvara makes it very clear: only a son produced by a Brahmaṇa man and a Brahmaṇa woman within a proper marriage is a Brahmaṇa.[63] The *pañjī prabandha*, then, established that only a Brahmin born to a Brahmin man and a Brahmin woman in a marital union could be considered a legitimate Brahmin. It also abolished the principles of *jātyutkarṣa* and *jātyapakarṣa*, or 'the rise' and 'the fall' of *jāti*-s, by which descendants of such mixed marriages might re-enter the *varṇa*. The system mandated that Brahmin identity and personhood be based upon and derived from an authorized marriage.

There is another aspect of the legend of Harinātha Upādhyāya that deserves to be analyzed with the context of Kumārila's discourse. Recall that Kumārila stated that the 'misbehavior' of one woman does not apply to all women, because such an assumption is "directly contradictory to all ordinary experience" and "could never be valid" because "we find that women of respectable families always try their very best to save their character." Harinātha's oversight was identified because people accused his wife of having an illicit relationship with an outcaste man. She burned her hand the first time when she stated that she had no such relationship, but she did not burn her hand at the re-trial when she said, "I have not had an illicit relationship with anyone who is an outcaste except for my husband" (*nāhaṃ svapativyatirikta cāṇḍālagāminī*). The reasoning might be that if she were to have

---

[63]*Mitaksara*: उक्तेन विधिनोढायां सवर्णायां वोढुः सवर्णादुत्पन्नास्तस्मात्समानजातीया भवन्ति । [...] ब्राह्मणे ब्राह्मण्यामुत्पन्नो ब्राह्मण इति [...] (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛiti*, 28).

become pregant as a result of such an relationship, then Harinātha might have no idea that the child was anything but a Brahmin, as both he and his wife were Brahmins.

1.5 Genealogical Foundations of Jāti

Genealogies are written in order to validate the present by affirming the past. They contain details on the ancestry of an individual in order to establish his relationship with another person, his association with a lineage, or membership in a particular social group. I propose that the *pañjī prabandha* registered Brahmins and their ancestries not only to develop an understanding of their past, but primarily to establish a plan for their future. The *pañjī* system began with recording the details of Brahmins who were present at the time of its inception. The genealogies could do nothing about the existing marriages, but by understanding the relationships between families and lineages, these records could provide information about potential marriages. At the outset of this chapter I stated that the need for establishing the identity of a Brahmin transcended the individual and encompassed the identity of larger congregations of Brahmins. By recording individual Brahmins and grouping their ancestries into registered lineages, the *pañjī prabandha* created a community of known Brahmins. Furthermore, by requiring that marriages take place only between these lineages, the *pañjī* records established a community of known families between which marriages were either permissible or forbidden. In this sense, it may be claimed that the genealogies were a community census that established membership in an endogamous group, or *jāti* or 'caste community' of Brahmins. The system shaped the future of this group by regulating the re-

production of its members. This notion of a defined community of inter-marrying lineages corroborates Vijñāneśvara's view regarding the definition of a *jāti*, as is specified in his commentary on *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.90:

नच न्यायविरोधः । यत्र प्रत्यक्षगम्या जातिर्भवति तत्र तथा । ब्राह्मणादिर्जातिस्तु स्मृतिलक्षणा यथास्म-
रणं भवति । यथा समानेऽपि ब्राह्मण्ये कुण्डिनो वसिष्ठोत्रिगौतम इति स्मरणलक्षणं गोत्रम् तथा मनुष्यत्वे
समानेऽपि ब्राह्मण्यदिजातिः स्मरणलक्षणा । मातापित्रोश्चैतदेव जातिलक्षणम् ।[64]

> Nor is it opposed to reason, where caste (species, jâti) is cognisable by sensuous per-
> ception, there it might be so [...] But the castes (jâti) like Brâhmaṇa &c, (is not a matter
> of perception), but a matter of convention (known by Smṛiti), as has been traditioned,
> (and a man gets a caste according to the Smṛiti direction). Thus, though all Brâhmaṇas
> are equal, yet they have got various *Gotras*; as Kuṇḍinas, Vaśiṣṭha, Atri, Gautama,
> &c., known by tradition (smṛiti). So, though, all men are equal, yet the castes (jâti) of
> Brâhmaṇas &c, are defined by tradition (smaraṇa).[65]

Vijñāneśvara states that the idea of a bounded community is "a matter of convention" and that the differences between Brahmins is matter "known by tradition". The formation of a *jāti* from a community of identifiable Brahmins may be analyzed through existing studies of kinship and caste. Pauline Kolenda offers a basic understanding as she writes that "a do-mestic family combines with others to form a lineage" and a "large number of such lineages belong to a clan or sib".[66] A collection of inter-marrying lineages, by extension, forms an endogamous unit.[67] This endogamous unit may be considered a *jāti* and, as Edward Blunt states, "[t]he endogamous group, whether it be caste or sub-caste, is a factor of the great-est importance in the caste system."[68] Ravindra Khare builds upon this basic definition in his study of the Kanyakubja Brahmins of Uttar Pradesh. He writes that "[k]inship exem-

---

[64]Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛiti*, 28.
[65]Vasu, *Yajnavalkya Smriti,* Book I, 185.
[66]Kolenda, *Caste in Contemporary India*, 14.
[67]Ibid., 18.
[68]Blunt, *The Caste System of Northern India*, 47.

63

plifies the ascriptive solidarity group based on the involuntary single event of birth" and that "[i]t is the most fundamental, basic, common, and automatic system of social relationship."[69] Kinship "displays inherited as well as involuntary aspects of social relationships" and, therefore, it "characterizes a 'closed' segment of social relations".[70] Khare then connects kinship to caste by stating that caste "employs a kinship criterion and is viewed as a closed system because the incorporation of new members is entirely by birth" and any given caste is, therefore, "an ascriptive group"[71] This 'ascriptive group' consists of two essential social groupings: a non-marriageable kinship group of relatives and a marriageable group of non-relatives. According to Khare, the kin and non-kin groups share an important attribute: they both belong to the caste group "by sharing the same event (of birth)".[72] The above assessment of the kinship foundations of caste are reflected in the ideology of the *pañjī* system.

There is a cognitive limitation to the 'ascriptive group' described by Khare. He writes that a "caste group's nonkin zone is so large that it is impossible for a person to know all his nonkin at the same time."[73] All members of a caste community belong to it by birth, but the "increasing size" and "spatial disperson" serve to "severely curtail the actual knowledge about nonkin caste members."[74] Khare does not discuss the ramifications of these limitations, but I think that the issue deserves some attention because it pertains to the problem that *pañjī prabandha* was established to address. The problems inherent in the lack of knowl-

---

[69]Khare, *The Changing Brahmans*, 13.
[70]Ibid.
[71]Ibid.
[72]Ibid., 14.
[73]Ibid.
[74]Ibid.

edge about one's non-kin caste members may apply equally to members who are one's kin, especially if the 'spatial disperson' of families of a particular lineage or inter-married lineages spans several generations. Knowledge about one's own kin can easily fade when genealogies are not maintained properly or when knowledge of kin relations disappears when those possessing it pass away. We do not know the circumstances that led Harinātha Upādhāyaya to marry a close relative, but the potential for such oversight exists when lineages are dispersed. In such situations knowledge of *gotra* and *pravara* might eliminate a potential marital union, but *sapiṇḍa* avoidance requires information about one's kin relations. By placing the maintenance of genealogies in the hands of the state, king Harisimhadeva eliminated the potential for errors that may enter into genealogies maintained by each family.

On account of their institutionalization and centralization the *pañjī* records are a charter for the Brahmin community of Mithila. First, they provide a complete record of the kin and non-kin relations of each Brahmin registered in the system. Through the genealogies a Brahmin can identify all of his *sapiṇḍa*, *sakulya*, *samānodaka*, and *samūla* relationships (see figure 1.2). Through the *uteṛha pañjī* that is derived from the primary or *mūla pañjī* a Brahmin knows all of the marriageable non-kin members of the community from which he may select a bride. Second, it specifies the boundaries of the community through documentation of the fixed lineages between which marriages may take place. Third, it regulates ascriptive membership in the community. In this sense it is possible to state that the *pañjī* not only determines who is a Maithil Brahmin, but also determines potential future members. By this, I mean that the birth of future Brahmins who would contribute to the

65

population of the community is regulated by the *pañjī* in terms of the bride and groom who would be his parents. The ascriptive nature of Brahmin personhood arises from the son produced from the union of a Brahmin male and female. Furthermore, it may be stated that the purpose of the *pañjī prabandha* was to ensure that the identity of the son, the 'shared body' or *ekaśarīrārambhakatā* born from the marital union of Brahmin parents is, as Kumārila Bhaṭṭa suggested, "not an aggregate of penance", nor "a certain purification brought about by these", but that his caste is "signified by the cognition of the caste of the parents" and, therefore, his 'Brahminhood' is "cognisable directly by Sense-perception."

1.6 Conclusion

The tropes about recognizing a 'non-Brahmin' may have been initially pedagogical, but they evolved over time to reflect a real concern among Brahmins for confirming their own identity and that of other Brahmins. As indicated by Śabara and Kātyāyana there was a lack of assurance in using the senses to perceive a Brahmin based upon his physical characteristics and conduct. Patañjali attempted to offer some suggestions, but in doing so he unintentionally acknowledged the difficulties inherent such his an approach. The examples he gave for identifying conduct unbecoming of a true Brahmin are baseless: "a non-Brahmin is he who urinates while standing" and "who eats while walking".[75] Moreover, he takes the outward signs of 'Brahminhood' to a far extreme by asserting that that there is one sure way of recognizing a 'non-Brahmin': "if a person were asked to find a Brahmin

---

[75] *Vyākaraṇa Mahābhāṣya* 2.2.6: अब्राह्मणोऽयं यस्तिष्ठन्मूत्रयति । अब्राह्मणोऽयं यो गच्छन्नक्षयति ॥ (Kielhorn, *Vyâkaraṇa Mahâbhâshya,* vol. 1, 411).

in a certain place, a Brahmin unknown to the person searching, and if that person walks into a market and sees someone sitting there, as black as a pile of beans, then one would certainly know that the individual he encountered is not a Brahmin."[76] Patañjali's analysis is striking in that he conveys the possibility that the ability for positive 'recognition' may be obtained through proper instruction, for he concludes his remarks on Pāṇini's rule of negation by stating "the negative prefix *a-* arises from doubt (*saṃdeha*) and poor instruction (*durupadeśa*)".[77] The inadequacies of using analysis of physical features in order to recognize a Brahmin likely spurred further questions about Brahmin identity, ultimately leading Kumārila Bhaṭṭa to conclude that birth was the surest means for doing so, especially when verified by genealogical records.

The crisis faced by Harinātha Upādhyāya spurred Brahmins to reconsider the importance of genealogy. The *pañjī* records emerged as a response to a breach of law, which although "unseen" had quite an impact upon brahminical societyonce its effects were made known. Or, viewed from a different angle, the necessity of accurate records was addressed by the creation of formal genealogies, which could serve as tangible, visible documentation of the relationships of Brahmins. The *pañjī prabandha* eased the existential anxieties of Brahmins by providing a means for verifying their identities and for facilitating marriages between Brahmins, such that Brahmins could retain their 'Brahminhood' and also ensure the same for their offspring. It is for this reason that the *pañjī prabandha* represents the 'rebirth' of a Brahmin in Mithila. The concept of 'rebirth' is associated with the *upanayana*

---

[76] *Vyākaraṇa Mahābhāṣya* 2.2.6: [...] न ह्ययं कालं माषराशिवर्णमापण आसीनं दृष्ट्वाध्यवस्यति ब्राह्मणोऽयमिति । निर्ज्ञातं तस्य भवति ॥ (Kielhorn, *Vyâkaraṇa Mahâbhâshya,* vol. 1, 411–412).

[77] *Vyākaraṇa Mahābhāṣya* 2.2.6: आतश्च संदेहादुरुपदेशाद्वा [...] (ibid., 411).

sacrament that must be performed for a Brahmin in his adolescence. Yājñavalkya states that

a Brahmin is born first from the mother, then for the second time through the investiture of

the sacred thread made of *muñja* grass.[78] After this initiation a Brahmin is known as a *dvija*

or 'twice born'. The registration of Brahmins in formal genealogies and the usage of these

records established new identities for Brahmins in Mithila. Through the *pañjī* records these

Brahmins were 'reborn' as Maithil Brahmins.

Yet, while the institutionalization of Brahmin identity in Mithila served to preserve the

order of the Brahmin community, it also placed the centralized control of *pañjī* and the

authority to approve marriages rested with genealogists and the king. As the *pañjī* con-

trolled ascriptive membership in the *jāti*, by extension the state had effectively taken over

the management of the Brahmin community. The *pañjī prabandha* represents a new aspect

of the relationship between the state, kinship, and caste. The systemization of genealogies

and the appointment of officials entrusted with maintenance of the genealogies bound caste

and kinship with political authority and state bureaucracy. The motivation of the king, as

the embodiment of the state, to maintain the order of castes by regulating marriage resulted

in establishing of a formal institution that collected, classified, and verified kinship data in

order to authorize marriages. Such a system not only expanded the function of the state, but

also expanded the importance of marriage in not only the social organization of Brahmins,

but also in maintaining the state. The next chapter extends the discussion presented here

and shows how the continuing and changing interface between *pañjī prabandha* and the

---

[78] *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.39: मातुर्यदग्रे जायन्ते द्वितीयं मौञ्जिबन्धनात् । ब्राह्मणक्षत्रियविशस्तस्मादेते द्विजाः स्मृताः ॥ (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛiti*, 11).

state added new unexpected dimensions to brahminical genealogical record-keeping, social

structure, and community identity.
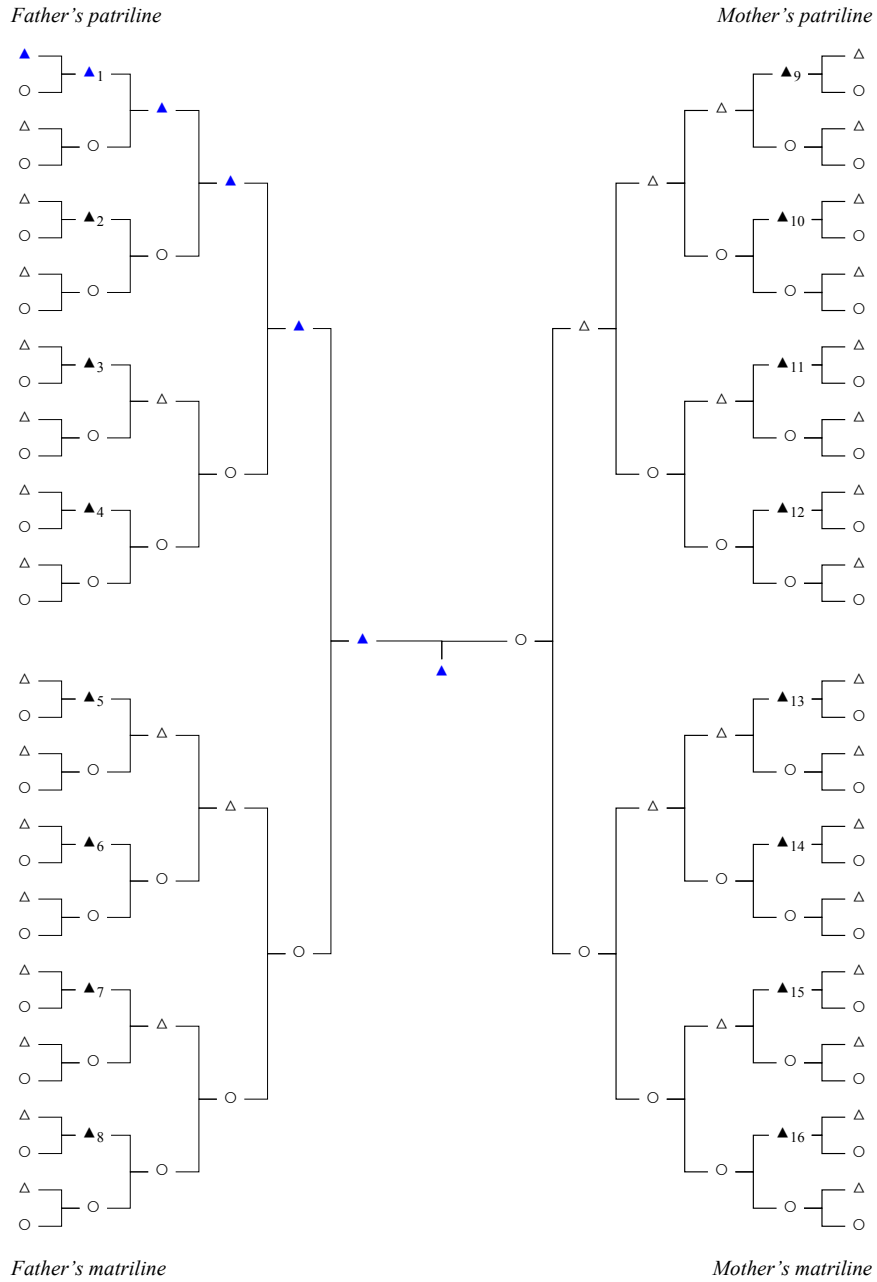
Figure 1.1: The sixteen ancestors enumerated in the *uteṛha pañjī*, consisting of the agnatic lineage (▲) and the 15 non-agnatic lineages (▲). A potential bride and groom must not be related through any of these 16 individuals. At the frontiers of the diagram are the 64 individual ancestors of ego (see section 1.3).
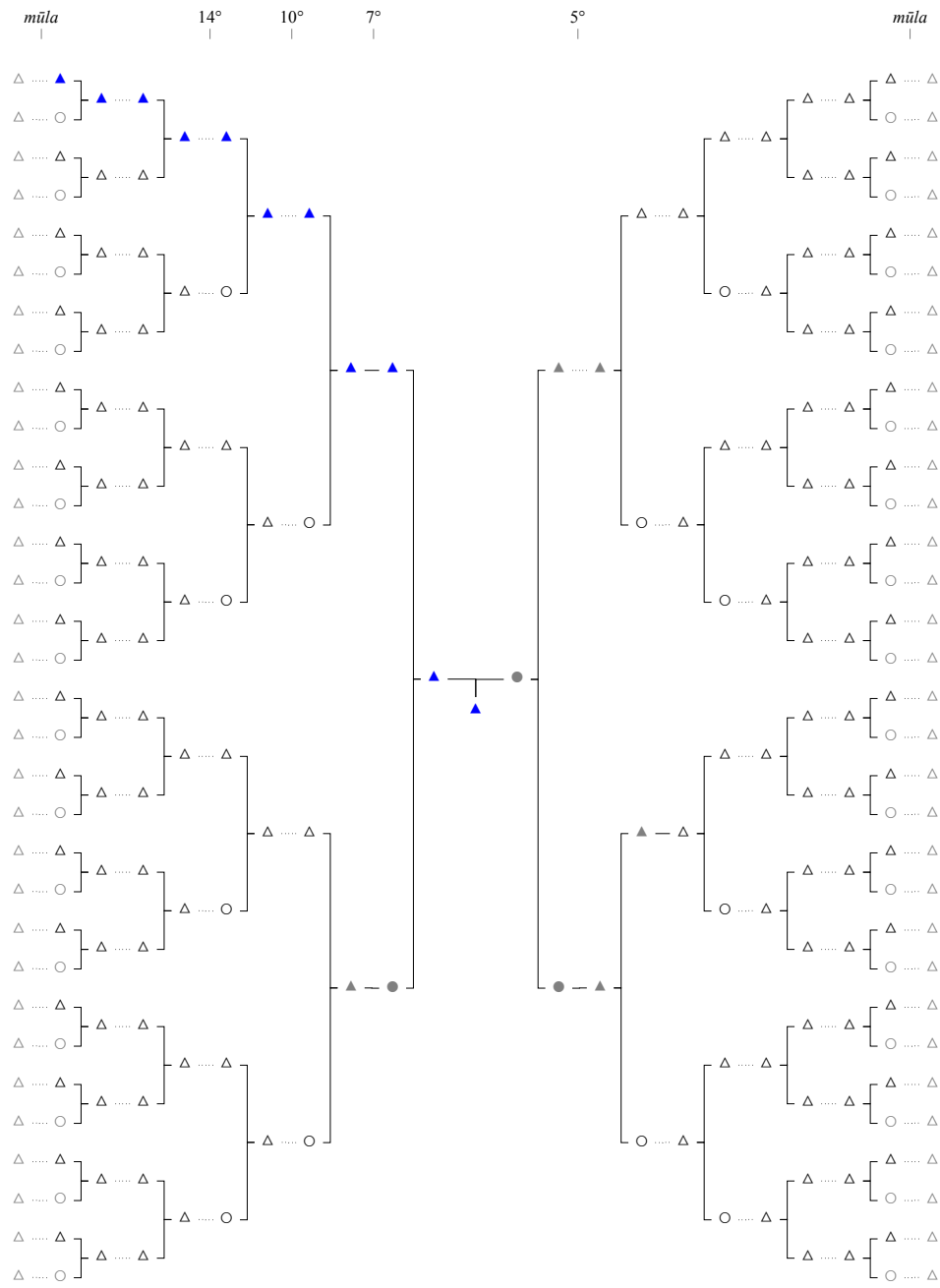
Figure 1.2: Maithil Brahmin kinship categories. Solid lines indicate direct relationships; dotted lines indicate indirect ancestry across the specified generations. Blue ▲ is the agnatic lineage; dark-gray ▲ and ● are cognatic *sapiṇḍa*-s; white △ is a non-agnatic lineage; light-gray △ indicates ancestry beyond the *mūla* boundary. The markers 7° and 5° indicate *sapiṇḍa*; 10° is *sakulya*; 14° is *samānodaka*; beyond that is *samūla*.

Chapter 2

The Making of a Maithil

In the previous chapter I explained how the *pañjī prabandha* established the genealogical identities of Brahmins and defined the ascriptive boundaries of a community by requiring marriages between brides and grooms who belonged to registered lineages. This system ensured that the Brahmins were in fact 'Brahmins' on account of their ancestries and that the offspring of such marriages would be known as 'Brahmins'. The discussion in the previous chapter focused upon the 'egocentric' aspects of *pañjī prabandha*, that is, the ideology of brahminical identity based upon *sapiṇḍa*, or the relationship that arises on account of shared bodily essence, and its role in establishing the basis of ascriptive membership in a Brahmin community, or *jāti*. I now continue by describing in greater detail the 'sociocentric' aspects of Brahmin identity in Mithila, namely the concept of *mūla* established by the *pañjī* system. At the end of the previous chapter I explained that the *mūla* is the basis of the endogamous and territorially bounded *jāti* or 'caste' community of 'Maithila' Brahmins (hereafter, 'Maithil'). The collection of registered *mūla*-s in the genealogical record intrinsically defined the conceptual and geographical parameters of an endogamous group and, in turn, established a *jāti* of 'Maithil' Brahmins. In this chapter I explain the ideological and

social principles that territorially distinguish these Brahmins of Mithila from other Brahmin communities. I demonstrate that the *mūla* established a lineage segment of the universal brahminical *gotra* affiliation that is local to Mithila. However, it was local not to any broad definition of 'Mithila', but specific to the territorial boundaries of the Karnata kingdom as existed during the reign of king Harisimhadeva. The creation of the *mūla* indigenized the Brahmins of the region bound them as a community to the kingdom. The implementation of *pañjī prabandha* also established a chronological boundary to the definition of the Maithil community. While the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* indicates that there was a sense that the Maithils were a distinctive regional community in the 11th century, it was not until the implementation of *pañjī prabandha* in the 14th century that the Brahmins of the Karnata kingdom were truly established as an endogamous, territorial *jāti* of 'Maithil Brahmins'.

2.1 Crossing the Sadānīra

Māthava the Videgha had concealed Agni Vaiśvānara, the sacrificial fire, in his mouth. His priest Gotama Rāhūgaṇa addressed him during a ritual, but Māthava would not answer out of fear that Agni would fall from his mouth. Gotama carried on with the ritual and once again invoked Agni with verses from the Veda, and again he addressed the king, "Oh Videgha!". But, Māthava still did not reply, fearing that Agni would fall out of his mouth. Gotama continued the ritual and when he finally invoked the fire as the 'one sprinkled with butter', Agni suddenly began to flare. Māthava was unable to hold back Agni as he blazed. Agni leaped out of the king's mouth and began to burn along the earth. In those

days, Māthava the Videgha lived on the banks of the river Sarasvatī. Agni began to burn eastward along the ground. The king and his priest followed as Agni went across the earth, burning over and drying up the rivers. But, Agni stopped when he reached the Sadānīra, the river that flows from the Himālaya mountains to the north. He did not burn over this river. When they reached the banks of the Sadānīra, Gotama turned to Māthava and asked why he had not replied when being addressed during the sacrifice. Māthava said that he did not want to respond because Agni was concealed in his mouth and he was afraid that if he spoke Agni would escape. Gotama then asked Māthava, "How did all of this happen?" The king replied, "when you invoked Agni with butter, he blazed forth and I could not hold him back". Seeing that the earth had been burned, Māthava then asked Agni, "Now where am I to live?" Agni replied, "Your home shall now be to east of this river." The Sadānīra is cold even in summer and it rushes quickly down from the north. The land to the east of the Sadānīra was very uncultivated, very marshy because it had not yet been tasted by Agni Vaiśvānara. For this reason the Brahmins of earlier ages did not cross over it. But, after it was tasted by Agni it became very cultivated and nowadays there are many Brahmins to the east of the river. Even now, this river forms the boundary between the Kosalas and the Videhas, these are the descendants of king Māthava.[1]

---

[1] *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.4.1.10–19: विदेघो ह माथवोऽग्निं वैश्वानरं मुखे बभार । तस्य गोतमो राहूगण ऋषिः पुरोहित आस तस्मै ह स्मामन्त्र्यमाणो न प्रतिशृणोति नेन्मेऽग्निर्वैश्वानरो मुखान्निष्पचेतइति ॥१०॥ तमग्निर्हृयितुं दध्रे । वीतिहोत्रं त्वा कवे द्युमन्तꣳ समिधीमहि । अग्ने बृहन्तमध्वरे विदेघेति ॥११॥ स न प्रतिशुश्राव । उदग्ने शुचयस्तव शुक्रा भ्राजन्त ईरते । तव ज्योतीꣳष्यर्चयो विदेघा३ इति ॥१२॥ स ह नैव प्रतिशुश्राव । तं त्वा धृतस्नवीमहऽइत्येवाभिव्याहरदथास्य धृतकीर्त्तावेवाग्निर्वैश्वानरो मुखादुज्ज्वाल । तन्न शशाक धारयितुꣳसोऽस्य मुखान्निष्पेदे स इमां पृथिवीं प्रापाद्ः ॥१३॥ तर्हि विदेघो माथव आस । सरस्वत्याꣳ स तत एव प्राङ्दहन्न् भीयायेमां पृथिवीं तं गोतमश्च राहूगणो विदेघश्च माथवाः पश्चाद्दहन्तमन्वीयतुः । स इमाः सर्वा नदीरतिददाह सदानीरेत्युत्तरादद्रिर्निर्द्धावति ताꣳ हैव नातिददाह । ताꣳ ह स्म तां पुरा ब्राह्मणा न तरन्त्यनतिदग्धाग्निना वैश्वानरेणेति ॥१४॥ तत एतर्हि । प्राचीनं बहवो ब्राह्मणास्तद्धक्षेत्रतरमिवास स्वावितरमिवास्वदितमग्निना वैश्वानरेणेति ॥१५॥ तदु हैतर्हि । क्षेत्रतरमिव ब्राह्मणा उ हि नूनमेनद्येशैरसिष्यदंतसापि जघन्ये नैदाघे समिवैव कोपयति तावच्छीतानतिदग्धा ह्याग्निना वैश्वानरेण ॥१६॥ स होवाच । विदेघो माथवः क्वाहं भवानीत्यत एव ते प्राचीनं भुवनमिति होवाच सैषाप्येतर्हि कोसलविदेहानां मर्यादा ते हि माथवाः ॥१७॥ अथ होवाच । गोतमो राहूगणः कथं नु नऽआमन्त्र्यमाणो न प्रत्यश्रौषीरिति स होवाचाग्निर्मे वैश्वानरो मुखेऽभूत्स नेन्मे मुखान्निष्प्याते तस्मात्ते न

74

The above narrative provides the traditional explanation for the first arrival of Brahmins in the area of north Bihar. It has been interpreted as describing the spread of Vedic culture from its cradle around the fabled river Sarasvatī in western India to the territories of the east, which were long considered by Brahmins as being impure.[2] The migration of Brahmins to the region beyond the Sadānīra, which was named 'Videha' after the king Māthava Videgha, was quite literally a watershed moment in the spread of Vedic culture in India.[3] The story of settlement occurs in the first book of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, a text composed in the early first millenium BCE. By the end of the fourteenth and final book, which is also known as the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, the region is portrayed as the home of a flourishing civilization. Within the mythic chronology of these texts, a city named Mithila emerged as the capital of Videha and a righteous king named Janaka ruled the kingdom.[4] The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* relates that this Janaka once set out to perform a sacrifice. Brahmins from the Kuru and Pañcāla regions to the west of Videha had flocked to Mithila for the occasion. Janaka had decided to hold a contest during the occasion to know which of these Brahmins was the most learned in the Vedas. To this Brahmin he would offer a thou-

---

प्रत्यश्रौषमिति ॥१८॥ तदु कथमभूदिति । यत्रैव त्वं घृतस्तवीमहऽइत्यभिव्याह्षीस्तदेव न घृतकीर्त्तावग्निर्वैवैश्वानरो मुखादुद् ज्वालीत्तं नाशकं धारयितु ऽस मे मुखान्निरपादीति ॥१९॥ (Upādhyāya, *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇam*, 71–72). I have adapted the translation of the text made by Eggeling (*The Śatapatha-Brāhmana*, 105–106).

[2]For a discussion of the incorporation of Videha and other regions of eastern India into Vedic civilization see Witzel, "Development of the Vedic Canon and its Schools."

[3]The name of the river Sadānīra means "abundant with water". The significance of the name lies in the hurdle of crossing such a river, as well as to the swampy land that it inundates as it courses through it. Weber wrote, "Die Sadânîrâ steckt ihm ein Ziel, nicht durch ihre Grösse und die Schwierigkeit sie zu überschreiten — sonst hätten es viel eher Yamunâ und Gangâ thun müssen — sondern durch die Unwirthbarkeit des jenseitigen Bodens, denn under dem srâvitaram v.15 „etwas sehr flüssig" ist wol der Charakter desselben als angeschwemmtes Sumpfland bezeichnet" (Weber, "Zwei Sagen aus dem Çatapatha Brâhmana," 178–179).

[4]For a synopsis of the Janaka dynasties as represented in literary sources see Mishra, "Monarchical States in Bihar up to 600," 195–201 and Mishra, "Aryanization of Bihar: Northern and Southern"

sand cows to whose horns were each tied pieces of gold.[5] While the assembly of Brahmins anxiously waited for the debate to commence, a Brahmin named Yājñavalkya commanded his disciple to carry off the cows that king Janaka had offered as the prize, thereby proving his eminence.[6] While the text suggests that Brahmins continued to arrive in Videha from across India, it also emphasizes that Mithila had its own Brahmins, who are depicted as the most learned. This Yājñavalkya is referred to as the "best of the Yogis seated in Mithila",[7] whom the great sages approached reverently to inquire about the *dharma*.[8] His discourse to them is recorded in the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti,* which is named after him. Modern scholars have interpreted the passages from *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* and *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* as attempts by Brahmin migrants to eastern India to validate Videha as a legitimate center of Vedic orthodoxy.[9] Whatever the motive, these early source provide important glimpses into the development of brahminical society in Mithila as portrayed within the cultural worldview of Vedic literature, where Videha had emerged as a new destination for Brahmins from all parts of ancient India who sought enlightenment, intellectual debate, and patronage.

---

[5]*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.1.1 (= *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 14.6.1): जनको ह वैदेहो बहुदक्षिणेन यज्ञेनेजे तत्र ह कुरुपञ्चा-लानां ब्राह्मणा अभिसमेता बभूवुस्तस्य ह जनकस्य वैदेहस्य विजिज्ञासा बभूव कः स्विदेषां ब्राह्मणानामनूचानतम इति गवां सहस्रमवरुद्ध दश दश पदा एकैकस्याः श्रृङ्ग्योराबद्धा बभूवुः ॥ १ ॥ (Vasu, *Brihadaranyaka Upanisad*, 240). Translation adapted from the same.

[6]*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.1.2 (= *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 14.6.2): तान्होवाच ब्राह्मणा भगवन्तो यो वो ब्रह्मिष्ठः स एता गा उद्जतामिति ते ह ब्राह्मणा न दधृषुरथ ह याज्ञवल्क्यः स्वमेव ब्रह्मचारिणमुवाचैताः सोम्योदज सामश्रवा ३ इति ता होदाचकार [...] ॥ २ ॥ (ibid., 241–242). Translation adapted from the same.

[7]*Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.2: मिथिलास्थः स योगीन्द्रः क्षणं ध्यात्वाब्रवीन्मुनीन् । यस्मिन्देशे मृगः कृष्णस्तस्मिन्धर्मान्निबोधत ॥ (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛiti,* 2). Translation adapted from Vasu, *Yajnavalkya Smriti,* Book I, 5.

[8]*Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.1: योगीश्वरं याज्ञवल्क्यं संपूज्य मुनयोऽबुवन् । वर्णाश्रमेतराणां नो ब्रूहि धर्मनशेषतः ॥ (Panśīkar, *Yādnya-valkyasmṛiti,* 1).

[9]For a discussion of this perspective see Black, *The Character of the Self in Ancient India*, Chapter 2.

Mithila, the name of the capital city of ancient Videha, was eventually applied to the entire kingdom. As a designation for a broader territorial expanse, 'Mithila' is traditionally described as the region bounded to the north by the Himalayas, to the south by the river Ganges, to the west by the river Gandak (commonly associated with the Sadānīra),[10] and to the east by the river Koshi. This region corresponds roughly to the northern half of the present-day Indian state of Bihar and the adjacent lands across the international border that comprise the Janakpur and Narayani zones in Nepal. This primordial regional affiliation with Videha, one of the sixteen *mahā-jana-pada* 'great country' of ancient India, continues to be upheld today by the Maithil Brahmins. These Brahmins of Mithila are named 'Maithil' because of their affiliation with or residence within this territory.[11] They are also known as Tirhutiya Brahmins, or the inhabitants of Tirhut or Tirabhukti, names by which the region was later known in the Gupta, Sultanate, Mughal, and British periods. Nearly two thousand years after the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, new sources began suggesting that Mithila had continued to grow in importance as a center of brahminical civilization. Moreover, these texts provide evidence that the Brahmins of the region were recognized as constituting a distinctive community. The formation of a regional brahminical community in Mithila is portrayed in a text from the 12th century CE associated with the history of the region between the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats, a land farther beyond the pale of Vedic orthodoxy

---

[10]For a discussion on this issue see Pandey, *The Historical Geography and Topography of Bihar*, 55–57.

[11]The term मैथिल *maithila* means "relating or belonging to Mithilā" (Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 834). It is a *vṛddhi* form of मिथिला *mithilā*.

than was Videha some two millenia earlier. The *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa*, which is traditionally considered a part of the *Skanda Purāṇa*, opens with the following narration:[12]

ब्राह्मणा दशधा प्रोक्ताः पंचगौडाश्च द्राविडाः । तेषां सर्वेषां चोत्पात्तिं कथयस्व सुविस्तरम्॥ [१॥]

द्राविडाश्चैव तेलंगाः कर्नाटा मध्यदेशगाः । गुर्जराश्चैव पंचैते कथ्यन्ते पंचद्राविडाः ॥२॥

सारस्वताः कान्यकुब्जा उत्कला मैथिलाश्च ये । गौडाश्च पंचधा चैव दश विप्राः प्रकीर्तिताः ॥ [३॥]

There are said to be ten kinds of Brahmins, five Gauḍas and five Drāviḍas. Please describe to me the origin of all of them in detail.

The Drāviḍas (= Tamils), the Tailaṅgas, the Karṇāṭas, the residents of the Madhyadeśa, and the Gurjaras, these five are said to be the five Drāviḍas.

The Sārasvatas, the Kānyakubjas, the Utkalas, the Maithilas, and the Gauḍas, these five [Gauḍas, together with the five Drāviḍas] are the ten [kinds of] Brahmins.[13]

In addition to literary sources, epigraphical records also indicate that Brahmins continued to settle in Mithila over the centuries. The Nandapur copper-plate from 488 CE records the gift of land, in the area that is in the present-day district of Monghyr in north Bihar, to a Brahmin from Kolāñca.[14] A group of priests migrated from the 'Śākadvipa' and settled in north Bihar, bringing with them practices of sun worship.[15] These priests were integrated into the Brahmin *varṇa* and became known as Śākadvipīya or Maga Brahmins. As specified in the copper-plate grants from the Pala era of the 11–13th centuries, Brahmins from regions such as Kolāñca[16] were invited by various kings to settle in Tirabhukti. On the other hand, several Brahmins associated with Mithila are reported to have migrated

---

[12]Gāyatoṇḍe, *Sahyādrikhaṇḍa*, 120.

[13]Deshpande, "Pañca Gauḍa and Pañca Drāviḍa," 34.

[14]Majumdar, "Nandapur Copper-Plate of the Gupta Year 169," 53.

[15]Upadhyay, "The Magas of Ancient Bihar."

[16]Kolāñca is often associated with Kannauj in modern Uttar Pradesh, which is also the territory of the Kanyakubja Brahmins. Monier-Williams interprets Kolāñca as a reference to the ancient Kalinga region, or the Coromandel coast along the Bay of Bengal that stretches from Cuttack in Orissa to Madras in Tamil Nadu, but also states that according to some "this place is in Hindustān, with Kanouj for its capital" (*Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 313). There is, however, no specific evidence that firmly establishes Kolāñca as Kannauj.

to other parts of India. The *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* contains cryptic evidence of the migration of Brahmins from Mithila to the area of modern Goa; it is cryptic because the text does not refer to these Brahmins as 'Maithils', but as Brahmins from 'Trihotra', a term that is suspiciously similar to other regional designations for north Bihar. In the midst of describing the ten Brahmin communities the narrative digresses in order to offer a perplexing and slightly redundant secondary definition of the 'Gauḍa' division, which refers to the Trihotrā, Agnivaiśya, Kānyakubja, Kanojaya, and Maitrāyāṇa as Brahmin sub-communities to be found within this division.[17] The story of the Trihotra Brahmins states that the epic hero Paraśurāma brought ten sages to Gomāñcala (Goa) in western India from Trihotra.[18] Moreover, the text explains that sixty-six families accompanied these ten Brahmins of different *gotra*-s from Trihotra.[19] The association of these sixty-six families with Mithila is not explicitly mentioned,[20] but, Madhav Deshpande suggests that Trihotra refers to the Tirhut region of Bihar.[21] In addition to the supposed migration of Trihotra Brahmins, it is reported that seventy-five Brahmin families migrated from Mithila westward to Mathura, Agra, and

---

[17]*Sahyādri Khaṇḍa*: त्रिहोत्रा ह्याग्निवैश्यश्च कान्यकुब्जाः कनोजयाः । मैत्रायाणाश्च पंचैते पंचगौडाः प्रकीर्तिताः ॥ (Gāyatoṇḍe, *Sahyādrikhaṇḍa*).

[18]*Sahyādri Khaṇḍa*: परशुरामेण ह्यानीता मुनयो दश ॥ त्रिहोत्रवासिनश्चैव पंचगौडान्तरास्तथा । गोमांचले स्थापितास्ते पंचक्रोश्यां कुशास्थले ॥ (ibid.).

[19]*Sahyādri Khaṇḍa*: दश गोत्रकरा विप्रास्त्रिहोत्रस्थलवासिनः [...] ब्राह्मणा दशगोत्राश्च कुलं षड्षष्टिकम् (ibid., 130). Deshpande explains that the narrative implies that "the Gauḍa brahmins from Trihotra are the ideal brahmins" ("Pañca Gauḍa and Pañca Drāviḍa," 44).

[20]The secondary classification of the Gauḍa division is interesting from a cultural perspective. The description of the food habits of the Trihotrā and the Kānyakubja specifies that the former are "fish eaters" and the latter are "meat eaters": त्रिहोत्राश्च कान्यकुब्जाश्च मत्स्यभुग्मांसभुंजकाः । (Gāyatoṇḍe, *Sahyādrikhaṇḍa*). Although it may be implausible, the common stereotype in Bihar of Maithils being piscivores and the characterization of Trihotras as *matsya-bhuj* might lend some support to the supposed connection between Trihotra and Tirhut.

[21]Deshpande, "Pañca Gauḍa and Pañca Drāviḍa," 42. Deshpande does not provide the etymology of Trihotrā (त्रिहोत्रा), but it may be a distortion of तिरहुत *tirahuta*, which is itself a corruption of तिरभुक्ति *tirabhukti*. If this is correct, then Trihotrā may be synonymous with Tirhutā or Tirhutīya, which refers to a resident of the region.

other cities in the Braja region in the early 14th century and have resided there until the present.[22]

The enumeration of the 'Maithils' as one of the five communities of the 'Gauḍa' division suggests that at the time of the composition of the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* some Brahmins perceived those members of the *varṇa* who resided in Mithila as being somehow distinct in terms of character and culture from the neighboring Kanyakubja, Utkala, Gauda, and Sarasvata communities of 'northern' India and farther removed culturally from the Dravida, Tailanga, Karnata, Madhyadesa, and Gurjara of 'southern' India. However, the text does not offer details regarding the geographical boundaries of these communities or the specific characteristics that distinguish any one of these Brahmin communities from the other nine.[23]

Who is a 'Maithil' Brahmin? When did a Brahmin of Mithila become known as a 'Maithil', and by what means? What defines a community of 'Maithil Brahmins'? On the basis of an territorial definition one might assume that the term 'Maithil' as found in the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* would refer broadly to any Brahmin residing in that region across the temporal spectrum, from the time of the crossing of the Sadānīra to the present. From this perspective, the term could apply to mythological Brahmins such as those anonymous set-

---

[22]Miśra, *Brāhmaṇotpatti-darpaṇa*, 128.

[23]In fact, the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* passes over the origins of nearly all Brahmin communities in order to focus upon specific groups. Indeed, the name of the text refers to the region between the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghat mountains, and that the classification occurs in a section titled 'Citpāvanabrāhmaṇotpattiḥ' ('Origins of the Chitpavan Brahmins'), clearly indicates that the intent of the text is to describe specific Brahmin communities of Maharashtra and Goa, and to fold these Brahmin communities of western India into the traditional Brahmin order; the sections that follow are titled 'Kārāṣṭrabrāhmaṇotpattiḥ' ('Origins of the Karhade Brahmins') and the 'Gomāñcalakṣetramāhātmya' ('Account of the Land of Goa'), which describes the settling of Sarasvat Brahmins in Goa. For a discussion of the origins and interpretations of *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* and its socio-political implications for the Brahmins of Maharashtra, see Deshpande ("Pañca Gauḍa and Pañca Drāviḍa").

tlers referred to in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, as well as to personalities such as Yājñavalkya and the other sages who presided at the court of king Janaka. It could also refer to the quasi-mythical Trihotras and the historical Śākadvipīya and other Brahmins who migrated both out of and into Mithila over the past two millenia. Yet, there is an old and conventional understanding in Bihar that although 'Maithil' is a territorial designation, it is not a label that pertains to all Brahmins. A Brahmin might reside in Mithila or might trace his ancestry to the region, but these factors do not necessarily make him a member of the Maithil Brahmin community. If the identity of a 'Maithil Brahmin' is defined neither solely by territory or even linguistic factors, then by what criteria is a Brahmin defined as being a 'Maithil'?

2.2 Formation of a Territorial Community

After enumerating the ten communities of Brahmins, the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* explains the divisions as follows:

ब्राह्मणा दशधा चैव ऋषिवंशोद्भवाः स्मृताः । देशे देशविधाचारा एवं विस्तरते मही ॥५॥
सर्वेषां ब्रह्म गायत्री वेदकर्ममयो विधिः । षड्धर्मविधियुक्ता न तत्र कार्या विचारणा ॥६॥
भुंज्याश्च भोजनीयाश्च सर्वदेशेषु ब्राह्मणाः । योनिसंबंधकृत्यं च स्वशाखासूत्रसंज्ञया ॥७॥

It is taught that the ten types of Brahmins are descended from *r̥ṣi* lineages, but are separated by country and by the customs of each country.

They all know the Gāyatrī chant, conduct Vedic rituals, and perform the six basic duties;[24] that should not be doubted.

But, the Brahmins of each country are known to have their own food habits, blood relations, and branches of the Veda.

---

[24]The six basic duties are specified in *Manu Smr̥ti* 1.88: अध्यापनमध्ययनं यजनं याजनं तथा । दानं प्रतिग्रहं चैव ब्राह्मणानामकल्पयत् ॥ (Jolly, *Mânava Dharma-Śâstra*, 10). "To Brâhma*n*as he assigned teaching and studying (the Veda), sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting (of alms)." (Bühler, *The Laws of Manu*, 24).

The narratives about the origins of the ten-fold classification and the rationale for the geographical segregation of Brahmins in the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* is unclear,[25] but they reveal two significant developments in the perception of Brahmin identity among members of the *varṇa*. As described in the *smṛti* literature, Brahmins are traditionally recognized by various hereditary attributes, such as their lineages (*gotra* and *pravara*) and their affiliations with branches of the four Vedas and their schools (*śākhā* and *caraṇa*), and they are organized by their occupational function (*jāti*). The *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* suggests that at some point after the *smṛti* period and before the composition of the text in question, some Brahmins had already begun to perceive of themselves, whether as a taxonomic fiction or through actual experience, as additionally belonging to culturally distinct communities located in either the 'northern' or 'southern' half of India and to a particular region within these longitudinal divisions. Secondly, the passage reveals that while the basic duties of Brahmins remained unchanged, further differences between them were perceived on account of the localization of Vedic schools (*sva-śākhā-sūtra*),[26] gastronomic preferences (*bhojanīyāḥ*), and kinship customs (*yoni-saṃbandha*). Moreover, the implication that distinctions were predicated upon *yoni-saṃbandha* suggests that the boundaries of these communities were determined by marriage practices, which may be interpreted particularly as the rise of local principles of endogamy and exogamy.[27] The very existence of the ten-fold classification

---

[25]See Deshpande for a discussion on the usage of the names 'Gauḍa' and 'Drāviḍa' for the geographical divisions ("Pañca Gauḍa and Pañca Drāviḍa," 29).

[26]The development of *śākhā*-s and *caraṇa*-s is a trend from the Vedic period and pre-dates the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* by more than a millenium. For further details see Witzel, "Development of the Vedic Canon and its Schools."

[27]It is possible that the division into 'north' and 'south' was based upon the differences between the Indo-Aryan and Dravidian kinship systems.

reveals an expansion of the preceved social attributes of 'Brahminhood'. It is apparent that by the 12th century the conceptual Brahmin *varṇa* had become empirically segmented into discrete territorial *jāti*-s. A Brahmin had become known not only by his affiliation with an ancestral lineage that stretched back to a Vedic *r̥ṣi*, but by the time of the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa*, he was known by his connection to a specific geographical community of Brahmins.

Yet, while the *smr̥ti* upholds *varṇa* endogamy as the normative practice and condones various ranges of *varṇa* exogamy, it is absolutely silent upon the issue of the internal segmentation of the Brahmin *varṇa* on the basis of geography and offers no rules regarding the endogamy and exogamy of such segments. The absence of rules in the *dharma* texts on such matters is likely owed to the fact that the conception of a territorial layout of the Brahmin order emerged several centuries after these texts were compiled. Indeed, as the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* states, communitarian endogamy was accepted as a matter of *deśavidhācāra* or 'regional custom'. Although not described in the text, the customs restricting marriage not only within the *varṇa*, but also within one's own territorial *jāti*, and the rules against marrying across *jāti*-s, appears to have attained the same force as statutes of the *smr̥ti*. The *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* does not mention the 'Maithils' beyond the initial enumeration in the ten-fold classification and the implication that they possessed their own food habits, localized branches of the Veda, and their own marriage customs, the text does not reveal much else about them beyond their grouping in the 'Gauḍa' division. Despite the absence of information regarding the marriage customs of the 'Maithils' when the *Sahyādri*

83

Khaṇḍa was composed in the 11th century, by the 14th century it is clear that the customs of *yoni-saṃbandha* in Mithila were defined by the *pañjī prabandha*.

The *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* states that 'the ten types of Brahmins are descended from *ṛṣi* lineages', but now the descendants have become segregated culturally and geographically. The '*ṛṣi* lineages' (*ṛṣi-vaṃśodbhavāḥ*) may be interpreted as a reference to the *gotra*. The *gotra* is the most ancient and traditional principle by which Brahmin society is organized, followed by affiliation with schools of the Veda.[28] Every Brahmin belongs to a *gotra* and in this sense every Brahmin who belongs to the same *gotra* across all regional communities is believed to share common descent. According to this principle, a Brahmin of the 'Gauḍa' division and a Brahmin of the 'Drāviḍa' division who both belong to the Vatsa *gotra* are considered to be related. Such a relationship may have existed in the ancient past before the migrations of these two families pulled them into different parts of India, but the actual relationship between these two Brahmins in terms of kinship and ancestry is likely to be fictive. As *gotra* exogamy is the fundamental rule for brahminical marriage, it is logical to assume that a groom of the 'Gauḍa' division could marry a girl from the 'Drāviḍa' division as long as they have different *gotra*-s. However, as the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* implies that the ten regional communities are endogamous, it is reasonable to assume that it also implies that the rule of *gotra* exogamy is limited to the regional community. There, however, is

---

[28]Each *śākhā* or 'branch' of the one of the four Vedas — *Ṛgveda*, *Sāmaveda*, *Yajurveda*, and *Atharvaveda* — has its own customs that are codified in manuals for domestic practices (*gṛhyasūtra*), for general codes of conduct (*dharmasūtra*), and the performance of rituals (*śrautasūtra*). The groups practicing the customs of a particular Vedic recension are known as a *caraṇa*, which may be interpreted as a "school" or "college" of priests and scholars. The *caraṇa* has no significant bearing on modern Brahmin identity or kinship. For additional details see Ghurye, *Two Brahmanical Institutions*.

no traditional means for determining such a limitation. The rules of territorial endogamy, therefore, must also have been a matter of local custom.

The *pañjī prabandha* defined a new regional custom (*deśavidhācāra*) for the Brahmins of Mithila. The basis for this local custom of endogamy was the *mūla*. The *mūla* is a named maximal agnatic lineage that is founded upon an apical ancestor or *viji purūṣa* 'primal individual'.[29] The *viji purūṣa* is the earliest ancestor of a Maithil Brahmin known to have resided in Mithila. He may be the ancestor of a single lineage or a group of patrilines. The name of the *mūla* is derived, however, not from the name of the ancestor himself, but from the name of the village in which he was known to reside. As this *viji purūṣa* was a Brahmin he certainly belonged to a *gotra*. All Maithil Brahmins who trace their ancestry to this *viji purūṣa*, therefore, belong to the same *gotra*. Accordingly, the *mūla* is subordinate to the *gotra*. All of the *mūla*-s that belong to a single *gotra* are considered to be inter-related and are by definition *sagotra*. The *mūla*, however, differs from the *gotra* in that the *viji purūṣa* is an actual historical individual to whom a Brahmin can trace his ancestry, unlike the eponymous *ṛṣi* ancestor after which a *gotra* is named or the *ṛṣi*-s whose names comprise the *pravara*. The number of *mūla*-s was fixed at some time after *pañjī prabandha*. Maithil tradition relates that the number of recorded *mūla*-s was close to one thousand at the time of registration, but several hundreds of these became defunct or extinct over the past six centuries.[30] While there have been no formal studies on the extinction of *mūla*-s, some explanations may be offered based upon the conventions of *pañjī prabandha*. A *mūla*

---

[29]Maithili विजि पुरूष "primal individual" < Sanskrit बीज *bīja* "seed" + पुरूष *purūṣa* "man"; refers to "the progenitor of a tribe or family" (Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 732).

[30]A comprehensive list of *mūla*-s is given in Jha, *Genealogies and Genealogists of Mithila*, Appendix II.

may have become defunct if the representatives of that lineage migrated elsewhere, as is the case of the aforementioned seventy-five Maithil families that left for the Braja region in the 14th century. It is also believed that some *mūla*-s may have become defunct as a result of excommunication resulting from the abandonment of the principles of *pañjī prabandha* by families belonging to these lineages. A *mūla* may also have become extinct if the members of the lineage passed away without producing male heirs. In any case, as of the 1980s there are 180 active *mūla*-s, each of which belongs to one of twenty *gotra*-s that are prevalent among the Maithils (see table 2.1).[31]

As the *gotra* is the basic principle of brahminical kinship and society, the *pañjī* records classify all *mūla*-s in terms of their *gotra* affiliation in a section of the *mūla pañjī* known as the *gotra pañjī* (see table 2.2). Shown below is an excerpt of the *gotra pañjī* that lists the *mūla*-s of the Śāṇḍilya and Kāśyapa *gotra*-s:

अथ गोत्र पञ्जी लिखयते । अथ शाण्डिल्य गोत्र । दिर्घोष सरिसब महुआ पगुलवाड खण्डवला गङ्घोलि यमुगाम करियन मोहरि सञ्झुआल मडार पण्डौलि यजुआडे दहिभत तिलेइ महव सिम्बुआल सिंहाश्रम सोदरपुर कडरिय अल्हारि होईयार तल्हानपुर परिसरा परसण्डा विरनाम उत्तमपुर कोदरिय छतिमन बरेबा मछवाल गङ्घौर भटौरा बुधौरा ब्रह्मपुरा कोईयार करहिवार गङ्घौआल घोषियाम छतौनी भिगुआल ननौती तपनपुर । इति शाण्डिल्य गोत्र ॥

[...] अथ काश्यप गोत्र । दानशौर्य्य प्रतापैश्च प्रसिद्धा यत्र पार्थिवाः ओइनिसा सर्वतः श्रेष्ठा स्वस्व धर्म प्र-वर्तिकाः ॥ ओइनी खौआल सङ्कराढी जगति दरिहरा माण्डर बलियास पचाउट कटाई सतलखा पण्डुआ

---

[31]The discrepancy in the number of *gotra*-s specified in the secondary sources on *pañjī prabandha* is an issue that needs further investigation. Rāmanātha Jhā states there are 18 (*Maithila brāhmaṇoṃ ki pañjī vyavasthā*, 13), Baidyanath Saraswati writes there are 19 ("The Web of Maithil Clanship," 31), and Jayānanda Miśra (*Pañjī byavasthāka udbhava evaṃ vikāsa*, 31) concurs with Saraswati. Gaṇeśa Rāya, however, lists 20 *gotra*-s (*Maithila brāhmaṇa evaṃ karṇa kāyasthaka pañjīkaraṇa*, 52). The inconsistency is related to the supposed extinction of the single *mūla* belonging to the Jātukarṇya *gotra*. Writing in the early 20th century, Parameśvara Jhā suggests that there are only 16 extant *gotra*-s among the Maithils (*Mithilā-tattva-vimarśa*, 138).

मालिछ मेरन्दी भदुआल पकलिया बुधवाल पिभूया मौरी भूतहरी छादन विसफी थरिया दोस्ति भरेहा कुसु-म्बाल नरवाल लगुरदह । इति काश्यप गोत्र ॥ [...][32]

The *gotra pañjī* is written. Here begins the Śāṇḍilya *gotra*. Dirghoṣa, Sarisaba, Mahuā, Pagulavāra, Khaṇḍavalā, Gaṅgoli, Yamugāma, Kariyana, Muhari, Sajhuāra, Maṛārhe, Paṇḍauli, Yajuāṛe, Dahibhata, Tilaī, Mahava, Simbuāla, Siṃhāśrama, Sodarapura, Kaṛariya, Anariye, Hoiyāra, Talahanapura, Parisara, Parasaṇḍā, Viranāme, Uttama-pura, Kodariya, Chatimana, Barebā, Machavāla, Gaṅgaura, Bhaṭaura, Budhaura, Bra-hmapurā, Koiyāra, Karahivāra, Gaṅgaula, Ghosiyama, Chataunī, Bhiguala, Nanautī, Tapanapura. Thus, the Śāṇḍilya *gotra*.

[...] Here begins the Kāśyapa *gotra*. Known for their donations, valor, and glory, the kings of the Oinī lineage are the foremost upholders of *dharma*. Oinī, Khauāla, Saṅkarādhī, Jagati, Dariharā, Māṇḍara, Baliyāsa, Pacāuta, Kaṭāī, Satalakhā, Paṇḍuā, Mālicha, Merandī, Bhaduāla, Sakala, Pakaliyā, Budhavāla, Pibhūyā, Maurī, Bhūtaharī, Chādana, Visaphī, Thariyā, Dosti, Bharehā, Kusumbāla, Naravāla, Laguradaha. Thus, the Kāśyapa *gotra*.

The *mūla* contains several minimal lineage segments. A sub-lineage of the *mūla* is known as a *grāma* or "village". The *grāma* segments of a *mūla* are recorded in a section of the *mūla pañjī* known as the *patra pañjī*. Below is an excerpt of the *patra pañjī* of the Khauāla *mūla* that belongs to the Kāśyapa *gotra*:

अथ खौआल ग्रामः । श्रीकरापत्य महनौरा । रतिकर सुधाकरापत्य महुआ । चन्द्रकरापत्य महुआ । रु-चिकरापत्य महुआ महिन्द्रपुर । स्थितिकरापत्य महिन्द्रपुर दिवाकरापत्य कोरोलि । हरिकरापत्य महुआ । आदावन परसौनी । बाछे दोढे सन्तति रोहुआ । वेणी सन्तति रोहुआ । उँमापति सन्तति नाहस । विश्व-नाथापत्य अहिल । बुद्धिनाथ रुचिनाथापत्य खड़िक । रघुनाथापत्य द्वारम । विष्णु सन्तति द्वारम । नोने जगन्नाथापत्य बुसवन । राम मुरारी शुक सन्तति पण्डौली । बाटु सन्तति ब्रह्मपुर तिरहर मौडु । साधुक-रापत्य दडिमा । हरानन्द सन्तति अहियारि । भवादित्यापत्य नाहस देशुआल । पाँखू बेहट । भवे सन्तति धर्मकरापत्य देशुआल । डालु सन्तति दडिमा । दामोदरापत्य तरहट ब्रह्मपुर । राजनापत्य यजुआल । प्रितिकरापत्य पराडीह पतौन खौआल दिवाकरापत्य घुघुआ । भवादित्यापत्य ककरौड खङ्गरैढा समेत । वैद्यनाथ प्रजाकरक रघुनाथ कामदेव मौनी परसौनी । गोपलापत्य कृष्णपत्य कुमरि खेलैइ । शशिधराप-त्य नरसिंहापत्य बोडवडी कोकडीह छतौनिय । दामोदरापत्य कोकडीह । नयादित्यापत्य बेजौली । द्वारि सन्तति जयादित्यापत्य मुराजपुर ब्रह्मपुर । जीवेश्वरापत्य दिगुन्ध । भवे सन्तति भिट्ठी सतैढ बेहट । दूबे सन्तति ब्रह्मपुर । हेलु सन्तति सतैढ रविकर सन्तति तत्रैव । प्रसाद मधुकर सन्तति बेहटा । दिवाकरापत्य

---
[32]*Mūla Pañjī* written by Pañjīkara Paṇḍita Modanānda Jhā, fol. 14.

पिथनपुरा । गङ्गेश्वरापत्य कुरमा लोहपुर । लम्बोधर सन्तति कुरमा । नाई सन्तति पिथनपुरा । राजपण्डित सह कुरमा । रामकर सन्तति भिट्ठी खङ्गरैठा गनाम । आङनि सन्तति सौराठ । मति गहाई केउँदू सन्तति सिम्हारवाड । एते खौआल ग्रामः ॥[33]

Here begin the Khauāla *grāma*-s: The descendants of Śrīkara at Manaurā. Those of Ratikara and Sudhākara at Mahuā. Those of Candrakara at Mahuā. Rucikara's descendants at Mahuā and Mahindrapura. Those of Sthitikara at Mahindrapura and those of Divākara at Koroli. Those of Harikara at Mahuā. Ādāvana at Parasaunī. The descendants of Bāche and Doṛhe at Rohuā. Those of Veṇī at Rohuā. Those of Umāpati at Nāhasa. Those of Viśvanātha at Ahila. Those of Buddhinātha and Rucinātha at Kharika. Raghunātha at Dvārama. Those of Viṣṇu at Dvārama. Those of None and Jagannātha at Busavāna. Those of Rāma Murarī and Śuka at Paṇḍaulī. Bāṭu at Brahmapura, Tirahara, and Mauḍu. Sādhukara at Daḍimā. Harānanda at Ahiyāri. Bhavāditya at Nāhasa and Deśuāla. Pāṅkhū at Behaṭa. Bhāve's son Dharmakara at Deśuāla. Ḍālu at Daḍimā. Dāmodara at Tarahaṭa and Brahmapura. Rājana at Yajuāla. Pritikara at Parāḍīha and Patuana-Khauāla; those of Divākara at Ghughuā. Those of Bhāvāditya settled at Kakarauṛa and Khaṅgaraidhā. Baidyanātha, Prajākara, Raghunātha, Kāmadeva at Maunī and Parasaunī. Those of Gopāla at Kumari and those of Kṛṣṇa at Khelaī. Śaśidhara's son Narasimha's descendants at Boravaṛī, Kokaḍīha, and Chataunī. Dāmodara at Kokaḍīha. Nayāditya at Bejaulī. Dvāri's son Jayāditya's descendants at Murājapura and Brahmapura. Jīveśvara at Digundha. Those of Bhāve at Bhiṭṭhī, Satairha, and Behaṭa. Dūbe at Brahmapura. Helu at Satairha and those of Ravikara at the same place. Those of Prasāda and Madhukara at Behaṭa. Divākara at Pithanapura. Gaṅgeśvara at Kuramā and Lohapura. The *rāja paṇḍita* Saha at Kuramā. Rāmakar at Bhiṭṭhī, Khaṅgaraidhā, and Ganāma. Āṅani at Saurāṭha. Those of Mati, Gahāī, and Keuḍū at Simhāravāṛa. Here end the Khauāla *grāma*-s.[34]

The *patra pañjī* shows that the Khauāla *mūla* was segmented into 59 descendants who left the ancestral village and established residences in 43 different villages throughout Mithila. The *patra* records show similar segmentations for each *mūla*. Below is the *patra pañjī* for the Khaṇḍavalā *mūla* of the Śāṇḍilya *gotra*:

अथ खण्डवला ग्राम । ठक्कुर हराई सन्तति भखराई । सोमेश्वरापत्य बुसवन कछवा समेत । ठक्कुर अनन्त हरि लखनौर । भोगिश्वरापत्य गोपाल सन्तति बथयी हरडी । गदाधरापत्य पौराम । रत्नाकरापत्य हलधर

---

[33]*Mūla Pañjī* written by Pañjīkara Paṇḍita Modanānda Jhā, fol. 14.
    [34]The *patra pañjī* refers to a person's descendants either by adding the suffix -*apatya* 'children' or 'son' to his name or by the term *santati* 'lineage', eg. *śrikarāpatya* "Śrīkara's sons" or *umāpati santati* "lineage of Umāpati". For sake of brevity I have translated these terms in some cases as "those of", which implies descent through a possessive context.

तेतरिया हरडी खण्डवला । ठक्कुर दूबे सन्तति भौर । लाखूमहिपति बेहट यमुगाम । योगिश्वरापत्य सोदर्पुर सरपरब करुहनि वासी डीह खण्डवला । शुभदत्तापत्य देशुआल । झाझू सन्तति रैयाम गुरदी सोनकहमेरि । वास्तु वागु हिरु चौरि । गोपलापत्य गढ । देवे सन्तति चनुआरी । पक्षधरापत्य तेतरिया । दिनकरापत्य पौराम बथयि बिहारी उमथ गोराढी । साधु सन्तति बथयी । लक्ष्मीपति सन्तति खरशा । गणेश्वरापत्य गुलदी । हल्लेश्वरापत्य बेलारी । जिवेश्वरापत्य अलय। सोमकण्थ सरपरब । रवि सन्तति गौर ब्रह्मपुर । जयकर सन्तति सजनी । भासे डीह । देवेश्वरापत्ये देशुआल । पक्षीश्वरापत्य यमुगाम । गिरीश्वरापत्य देशुआल । विन्धेश्वरापत्य वैकुण्ठपुर । शितिकण्ठ सन्तति खुट्टी । रत्नेश्वरापत्य गुलदी । एते खण्डवला ग्रामः ॥[35]

Here begin the Khaṇḍavalā *grāma*-s. The lineage of Ṭhakkura Harāī at Bhakharāī. The descendants of Someśvara at Busavana and Kachavā. Ṭhakkura Ananta Hari at Lakhanaura. The lineage of Gopala son of Bhogiśvara at Bathayi and Haraḍi. Gadadhara at Paurama. Haladhara son of Ratnakara at Tetariya and Harari. That of Ṭhakkura Dube at Bhaura. The lineage of Lakhu Mahipati at Behaṭa and Yamugama. That of Yogiśvara at Sodarpura, Saraparaba, Karuhani, and Ḍiha Khaṇḍavalā. Śubhadatta at Deśuāla. The lineage of Jhajhu at Raiyama, Guradi, and Sonakahameri. The lineage of Vastu, Vagu, and Hiru at Dyauri. That of Gopala at Garha. The lineage of Deve at Canuāri. That of Gaṇeśvara at Guladī. That of Halleśvara at Belari. That of Jiveśvara at Alaya. Somakaṇṭha at Saraparaba. The lineage of Ravi at Gaura Brahmapura. That of Jayakara at Sajani. Bhase at Ḍiha. That of Deveśvara at Deśuāla. That of Pakṣiśvara at Yamugama. That of Giriśvara at Deśuāla. That of Vindeśvara at Vaikuṇṭhapura and Śitikaṇṭha at Khuṭṭī. That of Ratneśvara at Guladī. Here end the Khaṇḍavalā *grāma*-s.

The Khaṇḍavalā *mūla* has 36 branches. The *patra* for the Khauāla and Khaṇḍavalā *mūla*-s show that in some cases a single village was settled by several kinsmen, while in other cases, the descendants of a Brahmin moved to entirely new villages. The founder of a *grāma* is known as a *grāmopārjaka* or 'village founder'. The settling of an individual at a new village is considered a segmentation of the patriline. This sub-lineage is known as a *śākhā* 'branch' and the individual responsible for the branch is known as the *ādi purūṣa* of the sub-lineage, or the earliest known ancestor to have migrated from the ancestral village and settled in a new village. As expected, all *śākhā*-s of the *mūla* have the same *gotra* as the *viji purūṣa*. For example, the *patra pañjī* shows that Śrīkara left Khauāla and settled at Manaurā and

---

[35] *Mūla Pañjī* written by Pañjīkara Paṇḍita Modanānda Jhā, fol. 12.

a new sub-lineage began with him. Therefore, Śrīkara is considered the *grāmopārjaka* of the Khauāla branch at Manaurā and the *ādi puruṣa* of the sub-lineage that descends from him. All named segments of the *mūla* are specified using a compound consisting of the title of the *mūla* and the subsidiary *grāma*. For instance, Śrīkara's descendants are known by the designation Khauāṛe-Manaurā.[36] Similarly, the descendants of both Ratikara and Sudhākara are known by the designation Khauāṛe-Mahuā. This organizational structure is known as the *mūla-grāma* system. Although segmentation of the *mūla* continued to occur after the *mūla-grāma* system was established, the formation of additional branches was no longer recorded. Just as the number of *mūla*-s is fixed, so also are the *grāma* designations. The *mūla-grāma* system is the primary basis for territorial and social organization among the Maithil Brahmins.

2.3 Ideology of the Territorial Lineage

Unlike the legend of Harinātha Upādhyāya, which explains the origins the genealogical records, there is no traditional legend about the origins of the *mūla*. Despite the fact that the *mūla* is the principle upon which *pañjī prabandha* and the Maithil Brahmin community is organized, there is no documentation about its origins or the ideology of the concept. In fact, the *pañjī* records themselves do not offer any concrete details about the origins of the apical ancestors or the territorial boundaries that demarcated the villages upon which the *mūla*-s are based. The *mūla* is viewed primordially by the Maithil Brahmins and the

---

[36]In the *mūla-grāma* designation, the former is either grammatically declined in the locative case (*-e*) or with the locative suffix *-vāla*. In both cases, according to the rules of Maithil phonology, *la* is metathesized into the retroflex flap *ṛa* on account of its intervocalic position, eg. Khauāla + *e* → Khauāṛe.

internal explanation is that it represents the ancestral home of a family. There is no notion

of an origin outside of Mithila. To date, there are no available epigraphical or other records

outside of the *pañjī* genealogies that link a *viji purūṣa* to the *mūla* village. However, there

is some disagreement among modern Maithil scholars as to whether the *mūla* existed before

pañjī prabandha or if it is was created during the development of the genealogies.[37] While

the *pañjī* records do not offer clarification, it is possible to consider both sides of the issue.

Following the evidence suggested by Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, as discussed in the previous chap-

ter, it is quite likely that some conscientious families maintained careful records of their

ancestries and were able to identify the earliest known ancestor who resided in Mithila.

On the other hand, it is also quite possible that in the course of tabulating the ancestries of

various families the *pañjīkara*-s were able to trace the inter-relationships between various

families and lineages that were inter-related back to common progenitors at various gen-

erations. These in turn could have been traced farther back to earlier ancestors, until they

arrived at a sole individual that was the originator of the various lineages and the earliest

known ancestor to have resided at a particular place in Mithila. A third possibility, which

seems to be the most plausible is that the establishing of each *mūla* involved a combination

of pre-existing information on lineages and ancestral details gathered during the census op-

erations. Despite the absence of historical records and secondary literature on the *mūla*, it

is possible to develop an understanding of its origins based upon an interpretation of the

scope and purpose of the *pañjī* genealogies. In fact, given the centrality of *mūla* to the so-

---

[37]Saraswati, "Institution of Pañjī," 266.

cial organization of the Maithil Brahmins, it is prudent for the present discussion to at least attempt to provide some insight into the origins of this lineage construct.

I propose that the *mūla* represents an effort to establish the basis for new genealogical histories of Brahmins who were registered during the *pañjī prabandha*. The creation of a *mūla* entailed two processes. The first was the indigenization of the *viji purūṣa* through the severence of any external kin, community, or geographical affiliation that the apical ancestor may have had and reassigning him as the 'seed man' of a new lineage. This ancestor may have originated outside of Mithila. He may have left his own ancestral home and migrated as early as the Gupta period or as late as the Karnata era in order to serve in the court of a king in north Bihar. He may have left behind his parents, as well as agnatic relatives consisting of grandfathers, uncles, and brothers with whom he shared personal ties, and perhaps affinal relations as well. What is certain is that among all the relatives in his agnatic lineage, this Brahmin was the earliest known member of that lineage to settle in Mithila and to reside and raise his family there. As might be expected for an apical ancestor, the *pañjī* records do not provide any details about his ancestry. However, a close examination of the genealogies of some *mūla*-s provides a means for piecing together some details about some of these apical ancestors. The excerpt of the *pañjī* of the Khauāla *mūla* given in Chapter 1 provides some details regarding the *viji purūṣa* of the lineage. As shown in the excerpt, the fathers-in-law of the *viji purūṣa* Prajāpati and his sons Vācaśpati and Umāpati are not recorded. It is at the third generation, with Vācaśpati's son Gaṇapati that the *pañjī* makes the first reference to the father-in-law of someone from Khauāla. Although not initially

self-evident, the recording of fathers-in-law is an important hint at the territorial origins of the founder of the Khauāla lineage and his sons and their affines. The *mūla pañjī* does not reveal any information about Prajāpati's father-in-law. Perhaps the descendants of Prajā-pati who participated in the *pañjī prabandha* did not have information about the wife of their apical ancestor. On the other hand, it is quite possible that Prajāpati's father-in-law was from outside of Mithila. If Prajāpati was born outside of Mithila, then it is quite possible that he had married a woman from his own ancestral locality, and emigrated to Mithila afterwards. It could also be the case that his sons Vācaśpati and Umāpati were born outside of Mithila. Their fathers-in-law are also unmentioned, so it is possible that their wives' families were also from a different territory, possibly from the ancestal home of their fa-ther. They may have been married before arriving in Mithila or they may have settled there and then sought marriages with women from their own community. It is also possible that the descendants of Prajāpati at the time of *pañjī prabandha* knew the details of their apical ancestor's own ancestry, but the genealogists excluded that information from the records because they were not resident in Mithila. As far as the *pañjī* records are concerned, the ancestry of Prajāpati and the potential of his external origins are of little concern. The very idea of *pañjī prabandha* required that Prajāpati's ancestry be forgotten. The establishment of a *viji purūṣa* meant that this individual was to be the anchor of the *mūla* that was to be founded upon him. What is of concern is his existence after his migration and settlement in Mithila. Prajāpati is the founder of the Khauāla *mūla* and as such the history of the Maithil Brahmins of the Khauāla lineage begins with him and the place in Mithila where

he resided. What is important is that at the time of *pañjī prabandha* there was at least one Brahmin included in the census that traced either traced is ancestral home to Khauāla or to Prajāpati.

Following the above, Prajāpati's last known residence in Mithila was in the village of Khauāla. For this reason he was established as the *viji purūṣa* of the Khauāla *mūla*. Although he is considered the apical ancestor of all descendants of the Khauāla *mūla*, the *pañjī* registered the lineages descending from him under the designation of his residence. Why were the Maithil patrilines named for locations instead of individuals? The process of indigenizing Brahmins involved linking individuals to locales within the Karnata kingdom. This was done by naming the *mūla* lineages after names of villages instead of the names of ancestors. The potential external origins of the *viji purūṣa* suggests why the implementers of the *pañjī prabandha* chose to name lineages after the village and not by the name of the *viji purūṣa*. As the system was formalized under the auspices of the government of king Harisimhadeva, it is likely that the king and his ministers had an interest in the Brahmins who resided within the boundaries of their kingdom. A Brahmin who lived in Mithila may certainly have come from a different region, but he was resident in Mithila. By linking the lineage of a Brahmin to the land, the *pañjī prabandha* emphasized the territoriality of the lineages within Mithila and severed the ancestors of the *viji purūṣa* from his descendants.

Through the invention of the *mūla*, the *pañjī prabandha* produced a segment of the universal *gotra* designation that was specific to Mithila. The ancestors of the *viji purūṣa* may have migrated to Mithila at some distant past or at the time of *pañjī prabandha*, but with

the formalization of the *mūla*, the outside linkage was terminated and the earliest known ancestor to have lived in Mithila was taken as the start of a new lineage local to the territory. The Khauāla *mūla* belongs to the Kāśyapa *gotra*. Just as all members of the Khauāla *mūla* are Kāśyapa on account of Prajāpati, so also is Prajāpati a Kāśyapa on account of his father and his father's agnatic ancestors. Under the rules specified in *Yājñavalkya Smṛti*, a groom of the Khauāla *mūla* could technically marry a girl from any *gotra,* provided she was an *asapiṇḍa*. But, the *pañjī prabandha* restricted the outer limit of eligible *gotra*-s to those possessed by the *viji purūṣa*-s recorded in the *pañjī*. The *mūla* represents the localization of lineages descended from the universal *gotra* patrilines that are anchored within the territory of Mithila by historical individuals who claimed descent from the ancient, eponymous *ṛṣi*-s who are the ancestors of all Brahmins.

The establishing of the *viji purūṣa* as the founder of a territorial lineage local to Mithila has significant implications for the identity of Brahmins. Although the majority of the apical ancestors were not alive at the time of *pañjī prabandha*, there might have been some cases where Brahmins who had arrived in Mithila shortly before registration were included in the genealogies. Consider a hypothetical case in which a Kanyakubja Brahmin migrates to Mithila three generations before *pañjī prabandha*. His descendants are born in north Bihar. His grandson is registered during the census, at which point he becomes the *viji purūṣa* of the lineage and the village where he last resided in Mithila is established as the *mūla*. It is likely that this great-grandson has relatives living in the ancestral home of his great-grandfather, but from the perspective of the *pañjī* records, these pre-existing relationships

are severed. The great-grandson and his descendants would be recognized as a Maithil Brahmin, by the Maithil community, but his agnatic relatives would remain Kanyakubja Brahmins. Such reassignments of identity complicate the clean division of Brahmins as portrayed in the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa*.

2.4   Lineage and Land

The codification of the *mūla* during *pañjī prabandha* has an importance beyond the anchoring of a Brahmin to the territory of Mithila. By connection a Brahmin to a particular village, the *mūla* establishes two other links between lineage and land that operate within the domain of the relationship between the king and Brahmin. The question may arise: what may be the king's interest in establishing an endogamous community of Brahmins whose lineages are anchored to the territory encompassed by his kingdom? The connection between Brahmin lineages and the king is specified in the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti*, which says that a king "should appoint ministers, who are intelligent, hereditary servants, steady and pure" and "he should administer the kingdom in consultation with them".[38] The *Manu Smṛti* is more descriptive in its specifications. It states that the king should "appoint seven or eight ministers whose ancestors have been royal servants, who are versed in the sciences, heroes skilled in the use of weapons, and descended from noble families".[39] Manu states that the relationship between king and his Brahmin ministers is crucial to the proper func-

---

[38] *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.312: स मन्त्रिणः प्रकुर्वीत प्राज्ञान्मौलान्स्थिराञ्शुचीन् । तैः सार्धं चिन्तयेद्राज्यं विप्रेणाथ ततः स्वयम् ॥ (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛiti*, 97). Translation adapted from Vasu, *Yajnavalkya Smriti,* Book I, 396.

[39] *Manu Smṛti* 7.54: मौलाञ्शास्त्रविदः शूरांल्लब्धलक्षान् कुलोद्भवान् । सचिवान् सप्त चाष्टौ वा प्रकुर्वीत परीक्षितान् ॥ (Jolly, *Mânava Dharma-Śâstra*, 131). The translation of this verse and those that appear below have been adapted from Bühler, *The Laws of Manu*, 224–225.

tioning of the kingdom. He cautions that "even an undertaking that is in itself easy may be difficult to accomplish by a single person, so it is harder for a king to govern a kingdom if he has no assistants".[40] For this reason, Manu advises that the king should confer with his ministers on a daily basis upon peace and war, revenue, protection of the kingdom, and all other pertinent matters.[41] The king should seek the opinion of each minister individually and jointly in council.[42] But, in the end the "king should deliberate upon the most important affairs of policy with the most distinguished and learned Brahmin among the ministers."[43] Moreover, the king should always entrust all matters to that Brahmin.[44] The *smṛti*-s make it clear that the king should rule over the kingdom with the close involvement of a group of ministers. These ministers should be selected from Brahmin families of high rank who have experience in governance. In addition to these ministers, Manu states that the king should appoint a *purohita*, or a personal priest, and other officiating priests in order to perform the necessary domestic rites.[45] In describing these Brahmin families, Manu uses the adjectives *maula* and *kulodbhava*. Derived from *mūla*, the term *maula* means "handed down from antiquity", but also has the specific definition of an individual "holding office from previous generations" and a "hereditary minister".[46] Similarly, *kulodbhava* carries the connotation of a person who is "sprung from a good family".[47] The recommendation for hereditary ap-

---

[40]*Manu Smṛti* 7.55: अपि यत्सुकरं कर्म तदप्येकेन दुष्करम् । विशेषतोऽसहायेन किं तु राज्यं महोदयम् ॥ (Jolly, *Mânava Dharma-Sâstra*, 131).

[41]*Manu Smṛti* 7.56: तैः सार्धं चिन्तयेन्नित्यं सामान्यं संधिविग्रहम् । स्थानं समुदयं गुप्तिं लब्धप्रशमनानि च ॥ (ibid.).

[42]*Manu Smṛti* 7.57: तेषां स्वं स्वमभिप्रायमुपलभ्य पृथक् पृथक् । समस्तानां च कार्येषु विद्ध्याद्धितमात्मनः ॥ (ibid., 132).

[43]*Manu Smṛti* 7.58: सर्वेषां तु विशिष्टेन ब्राह्मणेन विपश्चिता । मन्त्रयेत्परमं मन्त्रं राजा षाड्गुण्यसंयुतम् ॥ (ibid.).

[44]*Manu Smṛti* 7.59: नित्यं तस्मिन् समाधस्तः सर्वकार्याणि निःक्षिपेत् । तेन सार्धं विनिश्चित्य ततः कर्म समारभेत् ॥ (ibid.).

[45]*Manu Smṛti* 7.78: पुरोहितं च कुर्वीत वृणुयादेव च ऋत्विजः । तेऽस्य गृह्याणि कर्माणि कुर्युर्वैतानिकानि च ॥ (ibid., 134).

[46]Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 837.

[47]Ibid., 295.

pointments of ministers requires that royal Kshatriya families establish relationships of trust and cooperation with 'good' Brahmin families that are sufficiently stable in order to span generations of dynastic succession. The creation of such hereditary, stable relationships further requires that royal dynasties provide Brahmins with enough incentive to reside in a particular locality over long periods of time.

According to the *smṛti*-s, kings provided such incentives to Brahmins through reciprocal exchange. The Brahmin legitimized a king through the performance of rituals and the king provided the Brahmin with the material goods necessary for maintaining a life devoted to the pursuit of the six duties. The greatest gift was that of immovable wealth. Yājñavalkya states that a king should "make a gift of land" and "produce a document in order to inform good kings, who are yet to come" of that gift.[48] The importance of this gift of land is suggested by the specific details given by Yājñavalkya regarding the content and substance of the grant: "the king should make a record on a piece of cloth or a copper plate that bears his seal and an inscription containing his name and that of his ancestors",[49] then he should "describe the land and its boundaries" and "sign the grant with his signature and the regnal year".[50] On the one hand the king acquired intangible spiritual and social merit through such donations of wealth to Brahmins. Manu states that "a king shall perform

---

[48] *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.318: दत्त्वा भूमिं निबन्धं वा कृत्वा लेख्यं तु कारयेत् । आगामिभद्रनृपतिपरिज्ञानाय पार्थिवः ॥ (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛti*, 97). Translation adapted from Vasu, *Yajnavalkya Smriti*, Book I, 400.

[49] *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.319: पटे वा ताम्रपट्टे वा स्वमुद्रोपरिचिह्नितम् । अभिलेख्यात्मनो वंश्यानात्मानं च महीपतिः ॥ (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛti*, 100). Translation adapted from Vasu, *Yajnavalkya Smriti*, Book I, 401.

[50] *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.320: प्रतिग्रहपरीमाणं दानच्छेदोपवर्णनम् । स्वहस्तकालसंपन्नं शासनं कारयेत्स्थिरम् ॥ (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛti*, 97). Translation adapted from Vasu, *Yajnavalkya Smriti*, Book I, 401.

sacrifices and in order to acquire merit, he shall give away wealth to Brahmins".[51] For it is believed "that which is given to Brahmins is an imperishable treasure for kings",[52] because it cannot be stolen or lost and for that reason an "imperishable store must be deposited by kings with Brahmins".[53] The reason is that gifts made to a learned Brahmin earns a "hundred-thousand fold reward", while gifts made to a Brahmin who knows the Vedas and all the other teachings yield rewards "without end".[54] While such donations secured the material conditions of the Brahmin so that he could focus on his required duties, the king also acquired tangible benefit from such donations. The granting of immovable property, or land, by a king would enable Brahmins to settle and to establish local lineages from which a king could appoint ministers to serve the kingdom. By providing his genealogy, the king ensures that the provenance of the grant is known not only to future kings, but to the descendants of the Brahmin himself.

There are some records from north Bihar that contain evident of grants of lands made to Brahmins by various kings from the 11–13th centuries CE. The extant records are copper-plate grants. The first plate dates to 1020 CE. It was issued by a king named Saurāditya who belonged to the Malayaketu dynasty, which is believed to have ruled in the far north-west of Tirabhukti, bordering on the Gorakhpur region of the modern state of Uttar Pradesh. The donee is a Brahmin of the Sāvarṇa *gotra* named Bhaṭṭa Yaśāditya, son of Vāṭṭho and

---

[51]*Manu Smṛti* 7.79: यजेत राजा क्रतुभिर्विविधैरासदक्षिणैः । धर्मार्थं चैव विप्रेभ्यो दद्याद्भोगान्धनानि च ॥ (Jolly, *Mânava Dharma-Śâstra*, 134). The translation of this verse and those that appear below have been adapted from Bühler, *The Laws of Manu*, 228–231.

[52]*Manu Smṛti* 7.82cd: नृपाणामक्षयो ह्येष निधिर्ब्राह्मणोऽभिधीयते ॥ (Jolly, *Mânava Dharma-Śâstra*, 134).

[53]*Manu Smṛti* 7.83: न तं स्तेना न चामित्रा हरन्ति न च नश्यति । तस्माद्राज्ञा निधातव्यो ब्राह्मणेष्वक्षयो निधिः ॥ (ibid.).

[54]*Manu Smṛti* 7.85cd: सहस्रगुणमाचार्ये अनन्तं वेदपारगे ॥ (ibid.).

grandson of Aḍavi; he is from Usīya-grāma and his family is from Chela.[55] The king Saurāditya granted land to this Brahmin at Vanapalli-grāma, located in the Vyalisi-viṣaya within the Daradgaṇḍakī-maṇḍala of Tirabhukti, which is situated somewhere along the Gandak river.[56] The second plate dates to the reign of the Pala king Vigrahapala III in the 11th century CE.[57] The donee is a Brahmin of the Śāṇḍilya *gotra* belonging to the Chāndoga *śākhā* of the *Sāmaveda*. This Brahmin was named Ghāṇṭūkaśarman and he was the son of Tuṅga, and the grandson of Yogasvāmi.[58] He is described as a student of a teacher named Narasiṃha and he was a scholar of *mīmāṃsa*, *vyākaraṇa* (grammar), and *tarka* (logic). He lived at Iṭṭāhāka and his family was originally from Kolāñca. He was granted land in the village of Vasukavartta in the Hodreya-viṣaya of Tirabhukti.[59] A century later, the afore-mentioned Panichobh copper-plate of Samgramagupta was produced in order to make a grant of land to a Brahmin of the Śāṇḍilya *gotra*, who was a follower of the *Yajurveda*. The donee was from Kolāñca and his name was Śrīkumārasvami, son of Śrīkṛṣṇāditya, and grandson of Śrīrāma.[60] The frequency of land grants to Brahmins during this era may be inferred by another record bearing Saurāditya's name. This grant, containing the date cor-

---

[55]Lines 23–24: [...] Chchhela-vinirggata-Usiya-gramiya-Savarnna-sagotraya Bharggava-Chyavana-Apnavana-Aurvva-Yamadagni ete panchapravaraya Bhatta-sri-Yasaditya Bhatta-Vattho-sutaya Bhatta-Adavi-naptre [...] (Sircar, "Copper-Plate Grants from Bihar," 'Grant of Vikrama 1077', 135).

[56]Lines 16–17: [...] Daradgandaki-mandale Vyalisi-vishay-antashpati-Vanapalligrame [...] (ibid., 'Grant of Vikrama 1077', 134).

[57]Found at Bangaon in Bhagalpur District, Bihar.

[58]Line: 36–39: "[...] Sandilya-sagotraya | Sandily-Asita-Devala-pravaraya | Narasimha-sabrahmacharine | Chhandoga-sakh-adhyayine | mimamsa-vyakarana-tarkka-vidya-vide | Kolancha-vinirggataya | Ittahaka-vastavyava | Yogasvami-pauttraya | Tungaputtraya | sri-Ghantukasarmmane | [...]" (Sircar, "Bangaon Plate," 55).

[59]Line: 25: "Tirabhuktau Hodreya-vaishyika-Vasukavarttat |" (ibid.).

[60]Panchobh copper-plate, lines 11–12: "[...] साण्डिल्यासित देवल्य प्रवराय कोलाञ्चयियिविनिग्गर्त भट्ट श्रीरामपौत्राय भट्ट श्रीकृष्णादित्य पुत्राय यजुर्वेद विदुषे । आयुष्यबटुकभट्ट श्रीकुमारस्वामिशर्मणे [...]" (Choudhary, "Panichobh Copperplate of Samgramagupta," 115).

responding to April 2, 1026 CE, is important because it appears to be a template. In his analysis of the plate D. C. Sircar writes that "the most important feature of the record under study is the absence of the donee's name". The end of the grant contains a line that reads "This grant is merely an illustration", suggesting that it was "kept in the record office of the king as a sample draft for being consulted by the scribes to prepare similar other documents."[61] Despite the epigraphical evidence that shows these Brahmins being settled in north Bihar, these villages do not correlate with names of *mūla*-s recorded in the *pañjī* records.

In her study of Brahmin migration in north India, Swati Datta writes that one of the chief causes of migration among Brahmins was political instability in home regions and the desire for security and stability, and improved livelihood.[62] Although Datta does not specifically cite any cases from north Bihar, she explains that the weakening of the Pala empire of Bengal after the death of Devapala in 850 CE and the subsequent attempts by various groups to lay claim to Pala territory created a hostile environment in eastern India that led to the migration of Brahmins. Migrant Brahmins made an impact upon the new locales in which they settled. Datta explains that "[a]s they brought with them their ancient traditions, they helped to build up a society with uniform characteristics throughout Northern India".[63] In addition to cultural contributions, migrating Brahmins "played an active part in the colonization and settlement of new areas" and, therefore, the arrival of Brahmins benefitted

---

[61]Sircar, "Copper-Plate Grants from Bihar," 'Grant of Vikrama 1083', 137.
[62]Datta, *Migrant Brāhmaṇas in Northern India*, 225.
[63]Ibid., 227.

both the new migrants and their local patrons.[64] Most importantly, "[s]ome of them gradu-

ally developed into a fairly wealthy land-owning section, who enjoying the privileges trans-

ferred to them by the ruling class came to constitute a loyal element in the population, ready

to uphold and maintain the authority of the king."[65] Political turbulence may have been a

cause for migrating Brahmins, but it may also have been a draw. In her study of Brahmin

settlements, Upinder Singh writes that Brahmin migrations during the medieval period "co-

incided with the proliferation of kingdoms in various parts of the subcontinent" and may

have been driven by "new incentives" to seek out new territories rather than "pressures"

to abandon existing settlements.[66] Singh explains that the rise of new kingdoms created a

"need for organizational coherence and legitimation" that "opened up new opportunities"

for Brahmins. Migrations during the medieval period resulted in the formation of Brahmin

settlements that "achieved trans-regional renown as centres of Vedic scholarship".[67] These

settlements created "avenues of employment" for Brahmins "in the administrative structure

of an ever-expanding number of royal courts".[68] Such royal patronage "played an impor-

tant role in promoting and sustaining" scholarship and the growth of settlements through

control of land provided the Brahmin "intelligensia with the security and wealth necessary

for sustained intellectual activity."[69] The copper-plate grants from the 11th–13th centuries

indicate that rulers throughout north Bihar were actively inviting Brahmins to the region.

This period is a time of political flux in eastern India that saw the disintegration of old em-

---

[64]Datta, *Migrant Brāhmaṇas in Northern India*, 227.
[65]Ibid.
[66]Singh, "Brāhmaṇa Settlements in Ancient and Early Medieval India," 163.
[67]Ibid.
[68]Ibid.
[69]Ibid.

pires and the rise of successor states. These grants may be interpreted as attempts by these new, local rulers to legitimize their power by offering patronage to Brahmins.

The Karnata dynasty was established during this period. However, no copper-plate or other epigraphical records have been discovered that provide any indication of Brahmins receiving grants of land from Karnata rulers. This absence of such records is perplexing considering the presence of a great number of Brahmins who were resident in Mithila during the time of *pañjī prabandha*, several of whom were closely associated with the courts of Karnata kings. The lack of epigraphical evidence showing land grants may be explained by a variety of factors, such as loss or destruction of a plate on account of neglect or natural disaster. Despite the absence of copper-plate grants, evidence for land grants may exist in the *pañjī* records, namely in the concept of the *mūla*. Although there is no evidence to confirm or deny the speculation, it is quite possible that the village inhabited by the *viji purūṣa* of a *mūla* was a grant of land made to that Brahmin, either by a Karnata king or a previous ruler. Furthermore, the notion that the *mūla* represents a grant of land is conveyed by the existence of the *patra pañjī*, which contains information on the territorial expansion of a *mūla* into *grāma*-s or villages. The *pañjī* records do not explain the reasons for the segmentation of a *mūla* into subordinate *grāma*-s, but it is possible that these sub-lineages represent migrations of Brahmins resulting from grants of immovable property. Baidyanath Saraswati writes that the invention of the *mūla-grāma* system was "the earliest method adopted to bring together different members of the same family or the different families of the same origin that had scattered about in course of time."[70] He further opines that the

---

[70]Saraswati, "The Web of Maithil Clanship," 32.

"system may have been closure on the nomadic habits of the people" and that the system "might have originated from the migration of the people and their families."[71] Saraswati does not provide additional details regarding his claims.

As described earlier, the *patra pañjī* of the Khauāla *mūla* shows that forty-three branches were established by fifty-nine members of this lineage. It may be assumed that each of these branches are the result of migration. There may be numerous factors for the migration, but it is highly likely that the creation of new territorial sub-lineages is connected to the grant of a particular village to a Brahmin. This assumption may be confirmed by the entry in the Khauāla *patra pañjī* that states the *rāja paṇḍita* Saha went to Kurama. This *rāja paṇḍita* may have been an appointed official similar to the *purohita* mentioned in *Manu Smṛti* 7.78, who was a personal domestic priest of a ruler as well as a personal adviser. As the record does not specifically state that Saha's descendants are at Kurama, it is possible that Saha himself was granted land in Kurama because he was a priest or minister in the court of a king, or perhaps the land was given to him along with the appointment to that post. The *patra pañjī* of the Khaṇḍavalā *mūla* also suggests that segmentation of this lineage is based upon migration resulting from land grants. The record for this *mūla* shows that Ṭhakkura Harāī went to Bhakharāī, Ṭhakkura Ananta Hari to Lakhanaura, and the descendants of Ṭhakkura Dube are at Bhaura. The title 'Ṭhakkura' signifies that these individuals were recognized as 'lord', a designation which may have been assumed or bestowed upon the acquisition of property.

---

[71]Saraswati, "The Web of Maithil Clanship," 32.

Considering that there is a paucity of copper-plate and other documents that contain information about land grants made by Karnata kings to Brahmins, I propose that the *pañjī* records were developed for the additional purpose of capturing information about donations by the kings of Mithila to Brahmins. Although the reasons for the segmentation of a *mūla* into various *grāma*-s may vary, it is possible to assume that each branch represents the migration of a Brahmin from his ancestral home to a new location on account of the reception of a grant of land in the village that is known as the *grāma*. The very existence of the *patra pañjī* suggests a transformation of the idea of grants. In place of, or in addition to, providing each Brahmin with a separate document for each grant of land, the *pañjī* offered a means for centrally managing such transactions. One would imagine that given forty-three branches of the Khauāla *mūla* and thirty-six branches of the Khaṇḍavalā *mūla* that there would be at least one extant record among these families. The *patra pañjī* provides an administrative convenience for bureaucrats in charge of managing land grants in that it provides a high-level record of grants allocated to the various branches of a *mūla*.

The establishing of a patriline associated with a particular property within the territory of a kingdom suggests another importance of the *mūla*. The creation of a hereditary lineage implies that there are also specifications for succession of the rights to the lands given to members of the lineage. Considering the importance of territory to the *mūla*, I offer that the idea of the *mūla* also contains within it a means for facilitating inheritance of the ancestral property of the *viji purūṣa*. In Chapter 1, I explained that the *pañjī* records offered a means for understanding all of the kin relationships explained in the *smṛti*, in particular that

they assisted in clearly specifying the agnatic *sapiṇḍa* relationships of ego to the seventh generation and in diminishing the obscurites of the *samānodaka* relatives, from the eighth generation to the fourteenth. Knowledge of these relatives is important not only for purposes of marriage, but also for knowing relatives that are the heirs of an individual. The connections between the defined kin categories and inheritance are specified in the *smṛti* regarding inheritance. Both Manu and Yājñavalkya emphasize the succession to property along the patriline. The connection between *sapiṇḍa* and property is made very clear by Manu, who states that "water is to be given to three ancestors and the funereal offering to the three as well; the fourth in descent is the giver of the offering, and the fifth one has no connection"[72] Moreover, he states that "property belongs to those within the *sapiṇḍa* category, after that to the *sakulya,* and finally to the teacher or student"[73] Manu also states that if there are no heirs to the property, then it should be given to Brahmins that are learned in the three Vedas and pure in conduct, for then the *dharma* is not violated.[74] The *smṛti*-s contain a vast amount of detail regarding the order of succession and the categories of kin that fall into the order. For the purposes of the present discussion it is sufficient to say that the intent of the laws of inheritance is to limit succession to property along the agnatic lineage. "Once the immediate kindred of the deceased has been exhausted, all agnatic relationships are deemed of greater propinquity than any remaining nonagnatic ones".[75]

---

[72]*Manu Smṛti* 9.186: त्रयाणामुदकं कार्यं त्रिषु पिण्डः प्रवर्तते । चतुर्थः संप्रदातैषां पञ्चमो नोपपद्यते ॥ (Jolly, *Mânava Dharma-Śâstra*, 211).

[73]*Manu Smṛti* 9.187: अनन्तरः सपिण्डाद्यस्तस्य तस्य धनं भवेत् । अत ऊर्ध्वं सकुल्यः स्यादाचार्यः शिष्य एव वा ॥ (ibid.).

[74]*Manu Smṛti* 9.188: सर्वेषामप्यभावे तु ब्राह्मणा रिक्थभागिनः । त्रैविद्याः शुचयो दान्तास्तथा धर्मो न हीयते (ibid.).

[75]Trautmann, *Dravidian Kinship*, 255.

In the explanation of the ideology of the *mūla*, I explained that the indigenization of the *viji purūṣa* created a local segment of the universal *gotra*. That idea becomes a bit clearly when considering that *gotraja* or "those belonging to the *gotra*" are eligible for inheriting property. Yājñavalkya states that after the *sapiṇḍa*-s and *samānodaka*-s, the property goes to *gotraja*-s. As the *viji purūṣa* may have had relatives outside of Mithila, the property belonging to him could have been inherited by these individuals. By limiting the *gotra* relationship within the agnatic lineage to the extent to the *viji purūṣa*, the *pañjī prabandha* excluded these individuals. Now, the pool of eligible *gotraja*-s would be the *mūla*-s of the same *gotra* as recorded in the *gotra pañjī*.

By making available all information regarding various kin categories of an individual, the ancestries recorded in the *pañjī* assist not only in securing proper marriages, but also in identifying all of the legitimate heirs of an individual. The Khauāla *patra pañjī*, then, may be interpreted as showing all of the grants of land given to the descendants of the *viji purūṣa* Prajāpati. It contains a record of each major segment of the *mūla* in terms of the descendant and the village to which he moved. The Karnata and previous kings may have issued copper-plate grants to these Brahmins, but such records have not yet been identified. The grants may have been lost by the families or destroyed. Manu recommends that the king sign a land grant and provide information on his ancestry so that future kings will now of the grant. If such a grant is lost or destroyed, then how would Brahmins prove their rights to land in the event that the kingdom is conquered by a new king? By preserving

107

information regarding the location of branches of a *mūla*, the *pañjī* serves as a record for land grants.

2.5 Lineage and Exclusion

Did the genealogists register every Brahmin present in the kingdom of Harisimhadeva during the time of *pañjī prabandha*? By what criteria did the registrars determine if a particular Brahmin family was to be included in the census? Was the registration mandatory, voluntary, or selective? Unfortunately, the available historical records do not provide information on such demographic aspects of *pañjī prabandha*, nor do the *pañjī* records offer any additional insights. Given that there were close to one thousand *mūla*-s and only 180 of those were active in the 1980s, one might speculate that the census was carried out on as many Brahmins in the Karnata kingdom as possible. But, the significant drop in the number of active *mūla*-s allows for some speculation regarding the usage of the *pañjī* system for patrolling the bounds of the community through verification of inclusion and the enforcement of exclusion.

The first case regards the migration of families that left Mithila for the Braja region of Western India, which I briefly mentioned at the outset of the chapter. These Maithils refer to themselves as 'Brajastha' or 'Brajavasi' Maithils or 'those residing in Braja'. On account of their migration from Mithila, the lineages of the Brajastha Maithils were excluded from the *pañjī* records and they were not permitted to marry with the main community in Bihar. The reasoning is that while the Brajastha Maithils claim to have followed the marriage rules of

108

pañjī prabandha even outside of Mithila, the marriages that took place were not authorized by official *pañjīkara*-s and the marriages were not recorded in the genealogical registers. As members of the main community had no way of verifying the validity of Brajastha Maithil marriages after several generations, the migrant lineages were excluded and their *mūla*-s or specific *mūla-grāma*-s were considered defunct. That hundreds of *mūla*-s are now defunct suggests that the Brahmins of many *mūla*-s, such as the Brajastha Maithils, left Mithila at some point between the 14th and 20th centuries.

The case of the Brajastha Maithil families is similar to the migrant lineages among the Kanyakubja Brahmins. In his discussion of the conceptualization of the Kanyakubja Brahmin community, Ravindra Khare points to the rise of Muslim rule in the 12th century as a factor of segmentation and fracture. Muslim rule "was a potent factor which led Brahmins to lay emphasis on the recognition and importance of territory, the *susthān*, the original place of concentration".[76] Many Kanyakubja Brahmins migrated to Bengal and Orissa, and while some families maintained genealogies, others did not. It appears that the geographical movement of Kanyakubjas from their ancestral territories also coincided in a move "away from the customs and practices of people in the original basin."[77] As a result, "[w]hen a family migrated from the original place of concentration it was not remembered by those at the original place" because social interaction was the basis of maintaining ties of kinship and caste.

---

[76]Khare, "The Kānya-Kubja Brahmins and Their Caste Organization," 351–352.
[77]Ibid., 352.

The second case is a speculative one regarding the exclusion of a Brahmin from the genealogies at the time of registration. The Bangaon copper-plate indicates that a Brahmin named Ghāṇṭūkaśarman from Kolancha was given land in north Bihar in the 12th century. There is no record of Ghāṇṭūkaśarman in the *pañjī* and no knowledge of him outside of the inscription. Suppose that Ghāṇṭūkaśarman settled in Tirabhukti and took up the profession of teaching philosophy, grammar, and logic — subjects in which the grant acknowledges his expertise — in the village he was granted. Suppose also that although Ghāṇṭūkaśarman was quite satisfied with his new environs, he sought a bride from Kolancha and after marriage brought her to Tirabhukti. He may have raised children and also arranged their marriages with brides from families in his father's ancestral home instead of with Brahmins local to north Bihar. The growth of the family would have increased the size of Ghāṇṭūkaśarman's settlement, but all of the in-marrying brides would have arrived from Kolancha and all of the children of these marriages would possess cognatic kin relations outside of Mithila. It is quite possible that by the time of Harisimhadeva the descendants of Ghāṇṭūkaśarman continued to prefer marital relations with those of Kolancha. When *pañjī prabandha* was carried out, the family of Ghāṇṭūkaśarman may have opted out of the registration as all of their affines were either in Kolancha or they preferred the association with their patriline in Kolancha more than their geographical residence. Thus, the descendants of Ghāṇṭūkaśarman may have continued to reside in Mithila after *pañjī prabandha* and despite their connection to the region over two centuries, they were not included in the Maithil community as a matter of choice.

The concept of the *mūla* as a hereditary lineage connected to Mithila and to the Karnata kingdom may be interpreted from a perspective of competition, or rather as a means to limit competition. I offer that the creation of the *mūla* provided the Karnata kings with a local community of ministers and scholars, but it also provided Brahmins with a means for restricting access and opportunity to the Karnata court to Brahmins from outside of the community. The copper-plate grants discussed above indicate that Brahmins had been settling in north Bihar for centuries. They may have been serving in the courts of various kings as ministers and scholars. But, their employment may have been unstable at times of political upheaval when a local king was defeated by another, who established new control in the region. The arrival of new rulers would likely entail the arrival of new Brahmins and other officials who served them. This might limit opportunities for existing Brahmins, as the new kings would give preference to Brahmins and others with whom they maintained pre-existing relationships.

The Karnata dynasty to which king Harisimhadeva belonged was founded by Nanyadeva in 1097 CE. When Nanyadeva established control in Tirabhukti it is likely that he had Brahmin ministers and other advisers in his employ. Vinoda Bihari Varma writes that the founders of the Karana Kayatha community were individuals who were in the service of Nanyadeva when he established the Karnata dynasty.[78] A *pañjī prabandha* was also carried out for the Karana Kayasthas during the time of Harisimhadeva. While the Karana Kayasthas preserve the tradition that they came to Mithila with Nanyadeva, there are no

---

[78]"मिथिला परम्परा में कहल जाइछ जे करण कायस्थक कतेको मूल क बीजी पुरुष 'काण्णाट्' सं मिथिला में नायदेवक सझ अयलाह ।" (Varmā, *Maithila karaṇa kāyasthaka pāṁjika sarvekṣaṇa*, 24).

such traditions among the Maithil Brahmins. It is highly probable that among Nanyadeva's ministers were Brahmins from Bengal and other regions over which the erstwhile Pala rulers held sway. D. C. Sarkar states that the Pala kings maintained matrimonial relations with rulers of the Karnata region to which they traced their ancestry.[79] The Palas continued to maintain "intimate relations" with south India and that their south Indian relations "often received appointments under the Pālas".[80] The Sena kings, which replaced the Palas also came from the Karnata region. Sircar points to the fact that Vijayasena established Sena control in Bengal at nearly the same time as his Karnata contemporary Nanyadeva established a kingdom in Tirabhukti. "It has to be remembered that," he writes, "when several small chieftaincies and big kingdoms under South Indians were flourishing in the Bengal-Bihar region, they must have been patronising South Indians in the same way as the Muslim rulers of India entertained Musalmans of other countries at their courts."[81] There are no epigraphical or literary records to substantiate Sircar's claim that Karnatas had brought 'south Indians' to Bihar. It is of interest that the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* lists the 'Karnāṭas' as a community of 'Drāviḍa' Brahmins. Whether these 'Karnāṭa' Brahmins were given preference by Karnāṭa Kshatriyas is difficult to say. Whatever the case may be regarding migration of Brahmins to the Karnata kingdom between 1097 and 1324 Brahmins, by the time of Harisimhadeva, there was a conscious effort among the Brahmins of the region to enforce restrictions on access to the court, to land, and to kinship relationships.

---

[79] Sircar, "Aspects of Marriage in North Indian Society," 25.
[80] Sircar, "Migration of Southerners to East India," 57.
[81] Ibid., 59.

2.6   Brahmins and the State

The organization of the *mūla pañjī* and structure of the *uteṛha pañjī* make it clear that an important function of the *mūla* was the regulation of marriage through the creation of an endogamous community. "The persistent feature of Indian society, its basic building block," as Pauline Kolenda put forth, "is the endogamous descent-group."[82] While endogamy may be the 'persistent feature' of caste organization, its principles are not uniform throughout the Brahmin *varṇa*. Irawati Karve states that there is a large "circle for seeking marital alliances, but there is always an outer limit for this expansion which is different for each caste" and that "[t]his region of endogamy may comprise from a few administrative districts to a whole linguistic region."[83] Moreover, "[t]he consciousness of caste status keeps marriage territorially and genealogically within a group which, from old times, is established as an affinal group, while the taboos on the marriage of near kin and the prescription of local exogamy tend to spread the affinal group over a comparatively large area and to include a considerable number of families within it."[84] The territorial boundaries of endogamy may coincide with the boundaries of political entities. M. N. Srinivas writes that political systems of pre-modern India were "characterized by clear territorial cleavages marking off the territory of one chieftain or raja from the territories of others" and "above the chieftain or raja, there was the viceroy of an emperor or the emperor himself, and below the chief were the headmen of single villages."[85] With such a hierarchy of authority, the boundaries of a

---

[82]Kolenda, "The Changing Caste System in India," 83.
[83]Karve, *Kinship Organization in India*, 125.
[84]Ibid., 125–126.
[85]Srinivas, "Caste in Modern India," 15.

local ruler's domain were not constant and were "subject to expansion or contraction depending upon the military prowess of the chief" and "the firmness with which the viceroy of emperor exercised his control."[86] While these boundaries were not stable, "at any single moment they constituted effective barriers between people living in different chiefdoms."[87] Srinivas emphasizes that "[s]uch a political system naturally imposed severe limits on the horizontal extension of caste ties." He concludes that "political frontiers determined the effective, if not the maximum, social space of each caste living within them."[88]

The enumeration of 'Maithil' among the *pañca gauḍa* shows that the Brahmins of this region had developed an 'outer limit' to their *yoni-saṃbandha* that kept marriages 'territorially and genealogically' within this group. But the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* provides no basis for comprehending the definition of the term 'Maithil' and the characteristics of its endogamous principles. Was the term a descriptive label for Brahmins who resided in that region or was it an ascriptive label for individuals born into an already established community of 'Maithil Brahmins'? As explained in the preceding chapter and in the above section, the *pañjī prabandha* established without a doubt that the designation 'Maithil' was to be known as being ascriptive. Just as Vijñāneśvara affirmed the boundaries of *sapiṇḍa* as established by Yājñavalkya in order to specify the genealogical frontier beyond which a bride and groom must be selected, so also did the implementers of *pañjī prabandha* define the ascriptive and territorial extent for the 'Maithil Brahmins' at the primordial generation of the *viji purūṣa* and the *mūla* that is established upon him. The establishment of the *mūla*, the

---

[86]Srinivas, "Caste in Modern India," 15.
[87]Ibid.
[88]Ibid.

114

conceptualization of the *viji purūṣa* as the 'outer limit' of an agnatic lineage, the localization of the *gotra*, and the selective registration of Brahmins in Mithila point to the fact that the creation of the Maithil Brahmin *jāti* was an endeavor intended to produce a community of Brahmins who were 'known' to be such.

The rise of named patrilines attached to territories may be interpreted as part of a larger trend in the changing nature of state formation in the post-Gupta period (c. 800–1300 CE). Offering a challenge to the old 'feudalism' narrative, Romila Thapar argues that the formation of Brahmin lineages associated with newly established kingdoms represents a conceptualization of state and society that is more properly termed as but should be more properly termed as an "integrative polity".[89] Thapar writes that an important aspect of this 'integrative polity' is the evolution of the relationship between the king and the Brahmin. In earlier periods it was based upon "both dependency and competition", but during the medieval period, it shifted more towards dependency because the benefits for Brahmins became more tangible.[90] Thapar explains that state formation in earlier periods, particularly in the first millenium BCE was driven by competition between the king and Brahmin. By the first millenium CE, rituals of consecration and other processes of legitimizing the rule of kings had begun to equalize the competition between Brahmin and king. Land grants, Thapar explains, was the key to achieving such balance: "the brahman validated the king as a *kshatriya* or performed a similar act, and in return received wealth in the form of land."[91] The granting of lands by kings to Brahmins changed the nature of the relationship. Thapar

---

[89] Thapar, *Early India*, 445.
[90] Ibid., 453.
[91] Ibid.

writes that "wealth in earlier times had been movable and barely heritable, whereas now it was land and therefore immovable, permament and heritable.".[92] The changing notion of property "allowed the brahman to appropriate the authority of the *kshatriya* and establish a ruling lineage."[93] Moreover, "[t]he branch lineages may not have been kin-related but the fiction of kinship had to be maintained, and this fiction attempted to follow the normative rules, thus adding to the emphasis on caste".[94] The establishing of 'ruling lineages' for Brahmins coincided with another trend. Thapar writes that "Territories emerged under new names and ruling lineages were associated with territorial names rather than only with clan names".[95]

In a study of Rajput lineages in Gujarat, A. M. Shah notes that the strength and depth of lineage groups are associated with control of land.[96] Shah concludes that the expansion of lineages is linked to the inhabitation and ownership of land by families. The residential stability of families fostered greater kinship unity between related families in a particular locale, which in turn, led to increased social and political power of the lineages to which these families belonged. Shah notes that lineage groups have grown substantially over the past during each generation since the early 19th century and that the "demographic growth is accompanied by spread of interest in genealogies kept by professional genealogists and mythographers".[97] Shah explains that this interest in genealogies is related to claims to status made both by lineages within a caste and by caste groups as a whole, and genealogies are

---

[92] Thapar, *Early India*, 453.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid., 445.
[96] Shah, "Lineage Structure and Change in a Gujarat Village," 132.
[97] Ibid., 143.

seen as a means of legitimizing these claims. Although Shah does not explicitly state it as a conclusion, it is possible to analyze the connection between lineage and genealogy in the Gujarat village in question as a means to maintain status and power in a territory through some sort of official sanction.

Much of what Thapar writes may be applied to Mithila in the 14th century. But, as shown by the analysis of the *pañjī prabandha* so far, the lineages established by Brahmins were certainly 'kin-related', moreover kinship was no mere 'fiction', but a fundamental part of the organization of the lineage.

It is within this context that I propose that the *pañjī prabandha* and the creation of the *mūla* was intended to produce a community of Brahmins affiliated with the Karnata kingdom. By stating that a certain number of lineages are to be considered Maithil Brahmins, the Brahmins of the Karnata kingdom ensured a stable relationship with the king. Ministers and other positions within the Karnata administration would be filled by Brahmins listed in the *pañjī* records. Moreover, the linking of Brahmin lineages to lands within the Karnata kingdom further ensured that Brahmins would remain within the boundaries of the kingdom.

2.7 Conclusion

The tale of Māthava the Videgha suggests that Brahmins did not reside to the east of the Sadānīra until the king had brought Agni, the sacrificial fire, over the river. After that the land become home to many Brahmins. These early Brahmins and those who were resident

at the court of Janaka at Mithila may have been the ideological and eponymous ancestors of the 'Maithils' described in the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa*, but it was not until the implementation of the *pañjī prabandha* during the 14th century under the rule of king Harisimhadeva, that a historical community of Maithil Brahmins can be recognized. The foundation of this community is the *mūla*, or the lineages created through the genealogical census operations. As I have discussed in this chapter, the formation of these lineages gave Brahmins a territorial identity by indigenizing the apical ancestors to the geographical domain of the Karnata kingdom.

The analysis of the Maithil *mūla* presented in this chapter suggests that these named territorial patrilines were conceived for purposes beyond the arrangement of marriages. The *mūla* established a means for identifying a Brahmin by both his ancestry as well as his geographical location. It also provided the king with documented information about a Brahmin's pedigree and helped to create known lineages of Brahmins with which a royal dynasty could establish cooperative relationships.

We now know what the definition and boundaries of the 'Maithils' mentioned in the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa*. This ten-fold classification of Brahmins given in the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* remained durable. By the 16th century, it appears to be accepted as a matter of fact. The *nibandhakara* Maheśa Ṭhakkura, whose views on *sapiṇḍa* were presented in the first chapter, wrote a series of legal digests on customs as they pertain to Mithila. His *Dāyasāra*, a treatise on inheritance and partition of property, has a section called 'Varṇavicāra', in which

he describes the basics of the castes and refers to the ten types of Brahmins as consisting of the following:

सारस्वताः कान्यकुब्जा गौडा मैथिलोत्कलाः ।
पञ्चगौडा समाख्याता विन्ध्यस्योत्तरवासिनः ॥
माथुरं मागधं विनेति । केचित्पठन्ति शिष्टाः —
कार्णाटाश्च तैलङ्गा महाराष्ट्रा गुर्जरास्तथा ।
पञ्चद्राविडा समाख्याता विन्ध्यदक्षिणवासिनः ॥[98]

> The Sarasvatas, Kanyakubjas, Gaudas, Maithilas, and Utkalas; together they are known as the Panca Gauda, residing north of the Vindhya.
> The Mathura and Magadha are excluded.[99] Some readings offer the following:
> Karnatas, Tailangas, Maharashtras, Gurjaras, together they are known as the Panca Dravida, residing south of the Vindhya.

Maheśa Ṭhakkura's description of Brahmins is nearly identical to the classification given in the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa*. But, his description provides a more precise geographical distinction between the Brahmins. The 'Gauḍa' and 'Drāviḍa' divisions are defined as "residing north of the Vindhya" (*vindhyasyottaravāsinaḥ*) and "residing south of the Vindhya" (*vindhyadakṣiṇavāsinaḥ*), respectively, meaning that the Vindhya mountain range that cuts across central India serves as a topographical boundary between the two, which does not occur in the classification found in the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa*. We can only assume that the distinctions on account of food habits, Vedic schools, and especially marriage and kinship customs grew greater over a course of four centuries. The reference to "Maithila" in the *pañca gauḍa* division indicates that the Brahmins of the region were already perceived as having a geographical designation at the minimum, and perhaps as bearing some cultural

---

[98]Maheśa Ṭhakkura, "Dāyasāra," 96.
[99]The specific exclusion of the Mathura and Magadha or 'Maga' communities by Maheśa Ṭhakkura is curious. see Miśra, *Brāhmaṇotpatti-darpaṇa*.

distinctiveness from the neighboring Kanyakubjas to the west, the Gaudas to the east, and the Utkalas to the south, such as language and other local attributes. That Maheśa Ṭhakkura references the 'Gauḍa' and 'Drāviḍa' distinctions in the 16th century shows that the ten-fold division of the Brahmin *varṇa* from the 12th century proved to be quite durable.

The importance of *pañjī prabandha* and the concept of the *mūla* in the social organization of the Maithil Brahmins is exemplified by another point: there are no internal territorial divisions among the Maithils. Let us take the case of the Kanyakubja Brahmins. As reported by M. A. Sherring in *Hindu Tribes and Castes* (1872), the Kanyakubja "tribe" consists of five "sub-tribes", namely the "Kanoujiya Proper", "Sarjupâria or Sarwaria", "Jijhotia", "Sânadhiya", and the "Kanoujiya Brahmans of Bengal", which is itself sub-divided into "Vârendra", "Rârhiya", "Pashchâtiya", and "Dakshinâtiya Vaidik".[100] The classification shows that the Kanyakubja community fractured into territorial grouping, including a group of migrants to Bengal. While they all belong to the Kanyakubja class, each of these sub-castes are endogamous. For example, the Sarayuparinas traditionally do not marry with the Sanadhiyas. Moreover, there are "sub-tribes" such as the Sarayuparina, who consider themselves proper 'castes' in their own right, indeed with their own sub-regional divisions, to the extent that some pandits contest the subordinate status and insist upon the independence of the group.[101] In describing the organization of the Maithil Brahmins, Sherring writes only that the community has four internal divisions. The *pañjī prabandha* may be responsibile for the absence of territorial fission among the Maithil Brahmins, which may

---

[100]Sherring, *Hindu Tribes and Castes*, 23.
[101]Khelāḍīlāla, *Sarayūpārīna Brāhmaṇa Vaṃśāvalī*, 3.

have resulted in the creation of exogamous sub-castes. The *pañjī* system controlled marriage and recorded migrations in order to ensure that knowledge of kin and non-kin remained intact despite geographical dispersion. But these internal divisions are an important feature of Maithil Brahmin caste organization and structure, and are based upon the status of the *mūla*-s. The emergence of status ranking and the importance of the creation of hereditary lineages of Brahmins connected to the state is discussed in the next chapter.

Śākhā	*Gotra*	*Pravara*
Samaveda (Kauthuma)	Śāṇḍilya	Śāṇḍilya, Asita, Devala
Yajurveda (Mādhyandina)	Vatsa	Aurva, Cyāvana, Bhārgava, Jāmadagnya, Āplavāna
	Kāśyapa	Kāśyapa, Avātsara, Naidhruva
	Parāśara	Śakti, Vaśiṣṭha, Parāśara
	Kātyāyana	Kātyāyana, Viṣṇu, Āṅgirasa
	Bhāradvāja	Bhāradvāja, Āṅgirasa, Bārhaspatya
	Sāvarṇa	Aurva, Cyāvana, Bhārgava, Jāmadagnya, Āplavāna
	Gārgya	Gārgya, Dhṛta, Vaiśampāyana, Kauśika, Māṇḍavyātharvaṇa
	Kauśika	Kauśika, Atri, Jamadagni
	Gautama	Aṅgira, Vaśiṣṭha, Bārhaspatya
	Kṛṣṇātreya	Kṛṣṇātreya, Āplavāna, Sārasvata
	Vaśiṣṭha	Vaśiṣṭha, Atri, Bārhaspatya
	Viṣṇuvṛddhi	Viṣṇuvṛddhi, Paurakutsa, Trasadasya
	Maudgalya	Maudgalya, Āṅgirasa, Bārhaspatya
	Kauṇḍinya	Astika, Kauśika, Kauṇḍinya
	Kapila	Satatapatya, Kauṇḍinya, Kapilya
	Taṇḍi	Taṇḍi, Saṅkhya, Āṅgirasa
	Upamanyu	Upamanya, Āṅgirasa, Bārhaspatya
	Alambukākṣa	Gārgya, Gautama, Vaśiṣṭha
	Jātukarṇya	Vaśiṣṭha, Atri, Jātukarṇya

Table 2.1: The *śākhā*, *gotra*, and *pravara* of the Maithil Brahmins.

Gotra	*Mūla*
Śāṇḍilya	Digho (Dirghosa), Sarisaba, Pabaulī (Pagaulī), Kharaura (Khaṇḍavalā), Gaṅgaulī, Yajuāra (Jajivāla), Sodarapur, Mahuā, Yamugāma, Kariana, [Suarī], Sajhuāra, Paṇḍaul, Dahibhata, Tilaya (Tilaī), [Māhara], [Simbalāma], Siṃhāsama (Siṃhāśrama), [Karahiā], Anāri (Allāri), Koiyāra, Talahanapura, Parisarā, [Prasaṇḍā], Viranāma, Uttamapura, Kodariā, Chatimana,'[Barebā], Machavāla, Gaṅgaura, Bhaṭaura, Budhaura, Brahmapura, [Karahiā **], [Gaṅguāla], Ghosiyāma (Ghuriyāma), Chatauni, Bhiguala, [Nanautī], Tapanapura, Hohiyāra
Vatsa	Pali, Hariyāma, Ṭaṅka, Ghusauta, Jalaya (Jalaī), Koiyāra, Karmaha, Buddha, Mararha, Reoṛa, Vahira, Paru, Tisauta, Phandaha, Ucita, Aṛayī (Alayī), Babhani, Soini, Bhaṇḍāri, Sakuna, Tapanpura, Ḍarai, Karai, Viṭhuāra, Jarahari, Satalakha, Baraba, Sūrī, Yajuāra, Pohaddī, Bhanna, Bārharārha, Varuāla, Nanaura, Bhanna, Lāhī, Citrapalī, Rantavāsa, Saraunī
Kāśyapa	Oinavāra, Khauāla (Khauāṛe), Darihara, Baliyāsa, Kusumāre, Maṛare, Satalakhe, Visaivāra, Naravāre, Parue, Sakaṛivāra, Bhariye, Kaṭaivāra, Pakaṛiye, Merandovāra, Nonītavāra, Vitaivāra, Naguradahe, Vindhavāra, Bhaduāre, Naraune, Dostivāra, Jagatī, Chādana, Panicobhe, Sūrimāhā, Malichāme, Dahalā
Parāśara	Suragaṇe, Naraune, Sakarivāra, Pihavāre, Suraivāra, Sakarahore, Suraure, Baṛāme, Tilaivāra, Suarī, Śambhuāle, Barabe
Sāvarṇa	Pañcobhe, Barabe
Bhāradvāja	Kaligāme, Belauñce, Ekahare, Soinvāra, Dhaurī, Barabe, Bhūtaharī, Goṛharā, Ḍomakaṭariye
Gautama	Brahmapura, Surarivāra, Budhaure, Pakariye, Koiāra, Suraure, Basuāre, Surauravāra, Auriyā, Uttamapura, Paṇḍubā
Kātyāyana	Kujalivāra, Nonautī, Jallakī
Kauśika	Nikutavāra, Nikatī
Kṛṣṇātreya	Bhūsvare
Vaśiṣṭha	Nānāpura
Viṣṇuvṛddhi	Kothue
Maudagala	Ratavāla
Kauṇḍinya	Parisari
Kapilya	Piparauna
Taṇḍila	Parasaṇḍa
Upayanyu	Ekahariva
Alambukākṣa	Brahmapuraka
Gārgya	Baseha
Jātukarṇya	Devahariye

Table 2.2: Classification of active Maithil Brahmin *mūla*-s according to *gotra*.

Chapter 3

The Best of Brahmins

As discussed in the previous chapter, the *mūla* construct that is the basis of social orga-
nization among the Maithil Brahmins was established both for the regulation of marriage
and the creation of hereditary Brahmins lineages connected to the Karnata state. By an-
choring the lineage to a village, the concept of the *mūla* ensured a fixed territorial basis for
Brahmins of these lineages. An analysis of the genealogies shows that the *pañjī* records
continued to expand in detail and scope well after they were first developed. This indi-
cates that genealogists continued to actively record each new marriage and birth within the
community and it acknowledges the acceptance of the *pañjī* system by the Maithil Brah-
mins. However, this analysis also reveals that genealogists were compiling information
about *mūla*-s and their members beyond what might be required for determining suitable
marriages. The *pañjī* records contain detailed information about administrative positions
and scholarly titles. What might be the significance of preserving details about the achieve-
ments of individual Brahmins?

In this chapter I aim to situate *pañjī prabandha* within the context of interactions be-
tween Brahmins and the Karnata state in order to examine additional developments of the

mūla construct. I focus upon the development of a lineage ranking system that resulted in the hierarchical segmentation of the Maithil Brahmin community. I demonstrate that the ranking of *mūla*-s was related not only to marriage, but also to the underlying notions of Brahmin identity and personhood that formed the ideological basis for the *pañjī prabandha*. The rank system resulted in the creation initially of three grades within the community, which expanded to five grades as a result of inter-marriage between the grades. Over time these five grades began to function as sub-castes, although there was no mandatory endogamous exclusion between the grades. While the Maithil community did not fracture into territorial sub-castes, the five grades themselves became a distinctive part of a Brahmin's identity. Moreover, I discuss the issues of individual status and lineage ranking in terms of the proposition raised by Śabara, which was discussed in the first chapter. I explain that the status and rank systems were developed as ways of additionally knowing the identity of a Brahmin.

3.1   Brahmins before Pañjī Prabandha

The *pañjī prabandha* was instituted during a period of relative calm in medieval north Bihar that followed the demise of the Pala empire of Bengal and other powers, and preceded the rise of the Delhi Sultanate. Before rising to power in 1097,[1] Nanyadeva (r. 1097–1147) was a Karnata *kṣatriya* who served as a chief under either the Chalukya or Pala kings. He

---

[1]An inscription at the ruins of the fort of Simraon reads "नन्देन्दु बिन्दु विघु सम्मित शाकवर्षे सछावणे शितदले मुनिसिद्धि तिथ्याम् स्वातौ शनैश्चर दिने करिवैरिलग्न श्रि नान्य देव नृपतिव्यदधात वास्तुम् ॥" (Choudhary, "Simraon Inscription of Nanyadeva," 124). Radhakrishna Chaudhary interprets this date as being a Saturday in the month of Sravara, in the naksatra of Svati in the year 1019 Saka, which he equates to on July 10, 1097 CE ("Political History of North Bihar," 306).

appears to have taken advantage of the instability in northern Bihar that preceded the final decline of the Pala kingdom of Bengal, which had ruled over most of Bihar. In addition to being a statesman and a soldier, Nanyadeva was also a scholar of the performing arts. He wrote a commentary on the *Nāṭyaśāstra* that is titled *Bharatabhāṣya*. In this treatise he refers to himself as a "chief of the feudal lords" (*mahāsāmantādhipati*) and an "observer (or upholder) of *dharma*" (*dharmāvaloka*).[2] So, it may be assumed that he commanded both territorial and social authority within the Pala regime and that he had gained the allegiance of various other officials, particularly those who presided over the administrative regions of the Pala empire that lie in north Bihar. It is possible that Nanyadeva himself presided over some portion of northern Bihar and that as Pala control in the region began to disintegrate in the late 12th century, he made an effort to assert his control over the *bhukti* or province of north Bihar known as Tirabhukti. As he is said to have ruled for fifty years, it is apparent that he managed to establish enough peace with other successor states to the Pala empire that surrounded his realm — the Gahadavala kings to the west in Kanauj and the Sena rulers to the east in Bengal — in order to extend and maintain his control across the expanse of north Bihar. He built his capital at Simraon in the western portion of Tirabhukti that was known as Camparanya, or modern 'Champaran'. After the death of Nanyadeva, the kingdom is said to have been divided between his sons Malladeva and Gangadeva.[3] Tradition holds that Malladeva extended Karnata control into Nepal and that he settled there, while Gangadeva (r. 1147–1188) carried on in Tirabhukti.

---

[2]The colophon at the end of the first part ('Uddeśādhyāya') of the *Bharatabhāṣya* reads "इति महासामन्ताधिपति-धर्मावलोक-श्रीमन्नान्यपति-विरचिते सरस्वती-हृदय-भूषणे भरतभाष्ये प्रथमाध्यायः ॥ (Desāī, *Bhāratabhāṣyam*, pt. 1, 15).

[3]Sircar, *Studies in the Society and Administration of Ancient and Medieval India*, 140.

It is presumed that the Karnatas continued to administer Tirabhukti in the same fashion as when it was a province of the Pala empire. The historian R. S. Sharma writes that the organization of the kingdom "could not have been much different from that of the Senas who were ruling over northern and eastern Bengal in the same century."[4] Gangadeva is said to have introduced a system of territorial administration in the kingdom. Tradition holds that he organized the kingdom into *pargana*-s, or administrative and fiscal divisions, and that he established a bureaucracy in each of these regions for the collection of revenue and general supervision, as well as village councils for more local administration.[5] These developments were carried on by Narasimhadeva (r. 1188–1227), the son of Gangadeva, as well as by Narasimhadeva's son Ramasimhadeva (r. 1227–1285). These two kings expanded the administrative structure of the Karnata realm by appointing law enforcement officials through the kingdom and accountants for each village.[6] It appears that the administrators of the Karnata state had begun to grow increasingly powerful by the time Ramasimhadeva yielded the throne to his son Saktisimhadeva (r. 1285–1295). Of these administrators, the ministers directly associated with the king's court appear to have become particularly powerful, to the extent that they began to exert their control over the kingdom. The influence of the ministers becomes clear during the reign of Saktisimhadeva. The traditional account in Mithila, as conveyed by Shyam Narayan Singh, is that Saktisimhadeva was a "despotic ruler" and his "despotism offended the nobles" to the point that "one of his ministers es-

---

[4]Sharma, "Government and Political Institutions," 353.
[5]Singh, *History of Tirhut*, 62.
[6]Ibid.

tablished a "council of seven elders, as a check upon the autocratic powers of the king."[7]

Radhakrishna Chaudhary speculates that "There seems to have been some sort of a palace revolution which deprived the king of his actual power."[8] The revolution was aimed at getting Saktisimhadeva to abdicate the throne in favor of his son, Harisimhadeva. Chaudhary writes that "The executive power was naturally vested in the Council of Elders who seem to have run the administration till Harisimha came of age and took over the reigns of government."[9] The above gives the sense that the "Council of Seven Elders", whoever they were, were powerful enough to orchestrate a supposed coup against the king and to enthrone a successor of their choice, persumably one they could influence more effectively. Whether he came to power as a result of a coup or not, Harisimahdeva (r. 1295–1326) replaced his father as the ruler of Tirabhukti. It was under the reign over Harisimhadeva that *pañjī prabandha* was instituted. The above suggests that Brahmins had attained powerful positions in the Karnata kingdom.

The few epigraphical records from the period preceding the rise of the Karnatas and from the early years of Karnata rule shed some light upon the authorities who were operating in Tirabhukti. There is a copper-plate grant from Panichobh, near modern Darbhanga, dated to the 12th century. The grant was not made by a Karnata king, but by someone named Samgramagupta, who describes himself as a "great king" (*mahārājādhirāja*) and as a "governor" (*mahāmaṇḍālika*).[10] Additionally, the grant enumerates several officials such

---

[7]Singh, *History of Tirhut*, 63.

[8]Chaudhary, "The Karṇāṭa Kingdom of Mithila," 116.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Panchobh copper-plate, line 5: "[...] महाराजाधिराज महामाण्डलिक श्रीमत् संग्रामगुप्त देवो विजयी । (Choudhary, "Panichobh Copperplate of Samgramagupta," 114).

as the "minister of war and peace" (*mahāsāndhivigrahika*), "military strategist or comman-der" (*mahāvyūhapati*), "chief officer" (*mahādhikārika*), "keeper of the royal seal" (*mahā-mudrādhikarika*), "head of the village councils" (*mahāmahattaka*), and a host of others.[11]

While there are no other records that shed light upon Samgramagupta, his usage of such titles on grants suggests that he may truly have held an important position in the Karnata kingdom, such as governor of a district. He claim to being a "great king" may be more embellishment than any actual position he may have held. In any case, Samgramagupta was granting lands in Tirabhukti to Brahmins. There is also evidence that officials of the Pala empire were exerting a level of independence well before the arrival of the Karnata. In this previous chapter, I briefly mentioned the Bangoan plate from the 11th century as one of the few pieces of evidence showing grants of lands to Brahmins in north Bihar. This plate deserves a bit more attention. Although the Bangaon plate is stamped with the name of the Pala king Vigrahapala III, the real donor of the land is a Brahmin minister named Ghaṇṭīśa.[12] The grant states Ghaṇṭīśa gave lands out of his own possession to the donee Ghāṇṭūkaśarman. The minister also makes it a point to inscribe upon the plate that he is the son of Yogesvara and the grandson of Vivada, and that this Vivada's mother is Iddha-hala, who is the daughter of Gohanaka and the granddaughter of Kacchha, who came to Tirabhukti from Krodanca (Kolanca).[13] The plate is important to our understanding of the

---

[11]Panchobh copper-plate, lines 6–7: "[...] महासान्धिविग्रहिक महाव्यूहपति महाधिकारिक महामुद्राधिकारिक महामहत्तक [...]" (Choudhary, "Panichobh Copperplate of Samgramagupta," 114).

[12]Sircar, "Bangaon Plate," 51.

[13]Lines 49–50: "[...] Krodanchan=niriyaya Kachchha iti yah sad-Vad-Brahmananam sthi-tis=tasmad=Gohanako dvij-ottama-griham=visrama-bhur=vajvanam | asmad Iddhahal=eti yatra-Vivadau Yogesvaro yat-sutah khyatas=Tunga ito=pi nirmmala-yasa Ghantisa-nam=atmajah [...]" (Sircar, "Bangaon Plate," 57).

politics of north Bihar at this period because it not only shows Brahmins granting lands to other Brahmins to settle them in Tirabhukti, but it also shows that Brahmin ministers were conscious of their own ancestral territorial ties.

Who were these ministers who had gained enough authority in the Karnata court to oust the 'despotic' king Saktisimhadeva and to put in place his successor, Harisimhadeva? Some evidence may be gleaned from both literary records writing during the Karnata period and from the *pañjī* records. Both of these sources provide insight into the relationship between Brahmins and the kingdom. The excerpt of the *mūla pañjī* of the Khauāla lineage discussed in the previous chapters reveals that several descendants of the *viji purūṣa* Prajāpati had attained important positions in the social and political life of north Bihar. Prajāpati himself is referred to as *mahāmahopādhyāya* "highly eminent teacher", as are Hariśarmmaṇā, Nayapāṇi, Ratnapāṇi, Bhāvāditya, Nayāditya, and Dharāditya. Prajāpati's sons Vācaspati and Umāpati are referred to as *mahopādhyāya* "great teacher", as are Haripāṇi and Harāditya. Moreover, the aforementioned Hariśarmmaṇā is not only a *mahāmahopādhyāya*, but a *dharmādhikaraṇika* "justice of the law", as well. The *pañjī* not only tells the descent of the Khauāla *mūla* from the *viji purūṣa*, but also expresses the fact that the apical ancestor and a great number of his descendants were recognized as accomplished scholars and that at least one held an important judicial position under a Karnata king. Similarly, the *pañjī* record for the Visaphī *mūla* of the Kāśyapa *gotra* reveals that this lineage was closely associated with the administration of the kingdom:

गढ विसफी सं बीजी विष्णुशर्म्माः ए सुतो हरादित्य ए सुतो कर्मादित्यः । ए सुतौ सान्धिविग्राहिक देवादि-
त्य राजवल्लभ भावदित्यो । सन्धिविग्राहिक देवादित्य सुता रणागारिक वीरेश्वर वार्तिक नैबन्धिक (६४/०५)

130

धीरेश्वर सप्रक्रीय महासामन्ताधिपति महामहत्तक गणेश्वर भाण्डागारिक यटेश्वर स्थानागारिक हरदत्त मु-
द्राहस्तक लक्ष्मीदत्त राजावल्लभ शुभदत्ताः । तत्र पार्णागरिक नैबन्धिक वीरेश्वर सप्रक्रिय गणेश्वर राजवल्लभ
शुभदत्ताः नान्यपुर त्रिपालि सं कामेश्वर दौ । अपरौवार्तिक धीरेश्वर भाण्डागारिक यटेश्वरो महप्पौरवासि
माधवभागिनेयो हरदत्त लक्ष्मीदत्त महथौर वासी यमुगाम स काटिर्यमाने दौ ॥[14]

The founder of Gaḍha-Visaphī is Viṣṇuśarmmā. His son is Harāditya, whose son is
Karmāditya. Karmāditya's two sons are the *sāndhivigrahika* Devāditya and the *rajā-
vallabha* Bhavāditya. The seven sons of Devāditya are the *raṇāgārika* Vīreśvara, the
vartika naibandhika Dhīreśvara, the *mahāsāmantādhipati mahāmahattaka* Gaṇeśvara,
the *bhāṇḍāgarika* Yaṭeśvara, the *sthānāgarika* Haradatta, the *mudrahastaka* Lakṣmī-
datta, and the *rajavallabha* Śubhadatta. Of these, the *parṇāgarika naibandika* Vīreś-
vara, the dear Gaṇeśvara, and the *rajāvallabha* Śubhadatta are from the daughter of
Kāmeśvara of Tripāli-Nānyapura *mūla-grāma*. The others, the *vartika* Dhīreśvara,
the *bhāṇḍāgarika* Yaṭeśvara, *mahāpauravāsi* Haradatta and Lakṣmīdatta, are from the
daughter of Kāṭiryamāna of Yāmugame-Mahathaura *mūla-grāma*.

The descendants of this Viṣṇuśarmmā were accomplished statesmen. These Brahmins of
Visaphī served as "minister of war and peace" (*sāndhivigrahika*), "chief of the vassals"
(*mahāsāmantādhipati*),[15] "head of village councils" (*mahāmahattaka*),[16] "royal advisor"
(*rājavallabha*), "officer in charge of the armory" (*raṇāgārika*), "officier in charge of legal
codes and digests" (*vartika-naibandhika*),[17] "officer in charge of stores" (*bhāṇḍāgarika*),
"officer in charge of the provinces" (*sthānāgarika*), "officer in charge of the royal seal"
(*mudrahastaka*),[18] These individuals were not only noted administrators and governors,
but they were respected scholars and they wrote several important *smṛti* texts. The *Sugati-
sopāna* of Gaṇeśvara provides more insight into the position of this family in the Karnata
kingdom. In the introduction to this work he writes:

---

[14]*Mūla Pañjī* written by Pañjīkara Paṇḍita Modanānda Jhā, folio 15/01.

[15]Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, 179.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid., 215.

[18]Seems to be a synonym of the *mudrādhikārina* described by Sircar (*Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, 204).

अभूद्देवादित्यः सचिवतिलको मैथिलपतेर्निजप्रज्ञाज्योतिर्दलितरिपुचक्रान्धतमसः ।
समन्तादश्रान्तोल्लसितसुहृदर्कोपलमणौ समुद्भूते यस्मिन् द्विजकुलसरोजैर्विकसितम् ॥ [१]

अस्मान्महादानतडागयागभूदानदेवालयपूतविश्वः ।
वीरेश्वरोऽजायत मन्त्रिराजः क्षमापालचूडामणिचुम्बिताङ्घ्रिः ॥ [२]

लसन्महीपालकिरीटरत्नरोचिश्छटारञ्जितपादपद्मः ।
अस्यानुजन्मा गुणगौरवेण गणेश्वरो मन्त्रिमणिश्चकास्ति ॥ [३]

संशोषयन्ननिशमौर्वनिभप्रतापैर्गौडावनीपरिबृढं सुरतानसिन्धुम् [।]
धर्मावलम्बनकरः करुणार्द्रचेता यस्तीरभुक्तिमतुलामतुलं प्रशास्ति ॥ [४]

श्रीमानेष महामहत्तकमहाराजाधिराजो महासामन्ताधिपतिर्विकस्वरयशः पुष्पस्य जन्मद्रुमः ।
चक्रे मैथिलनाथभूमिपतिभिः सप्ताङ्गराज्यस्थितिं प्रौढानेकवशाम्बुदैकहृदयो दोस्तम्भसम्भावितः ॥ [५]

सचित्तवित्तनिकराहरणप्रवीणाः शिष्या इवेह विलसन्ति गुणा यदीयाः ।
खौअलवंशतिलकं भवशर्मासंज्ञं प्रज्ञाविनिर्जितमुरारिपदं नियुज्य ॥ [६]

वेदस्मृतिपुराणादि दृष्ट्वा लोकहितैषिणा ।
कृतं सुगतिसोपानं श्रीगणेश्वरमन्त्रिणा ॥ [७][19]

Devāditya, who was the head of the ministers of the king of Mithila, had scattered the darkness of the enemies through the light of his own wisdom. When he, unweary like a stone, arose to please those of good heart, the lotuses that are the Brahmin lineages blossomed all around. (1)

From Devāditya, the king of ministers named Vīreśvara was born. He purified the world by the performance of *mahādānā*-s, the creation of ponds, performance of *yaga*-s, and the building of temples. The crest-jewels of many kings kissed his feet. (2)

His younger brother, Gaṇeśvara, shines through his own qualities and is a jewel among the ministers. His lotus feet are also illuminated by the gems in the crowns of kings. (3)

With his prowess Gaṇeśvara overpowers the lords of Gauda and he is like the fire of Aurva,[20] that causes the sea of the Sultans (*suratāna*) of Gauḍa to become parched. Follower of the path of *dharma* and whose mind is bathed in compassion, he presides unmatched over the matchless Tirabhukti. (4)

This *mahāmahattaka*, *mahārājādhirāja*, *mahāsāmāntādhipati* is the tree of life upon which the flower of fame blossoms. He caused the seven-fold kingdom to be preserved by the Maithila king and was worshipped by their strong shoulders and remained in the hearts of people. (5)

He qualities are like disciples capable of bring friends and wealth. After having appointed Bhavaśarmā, the pride of the Khauāla lineage, who defeated Murāri through his intellect. (6)

---

[19]Quoted in Jayaswal and Sastri, *Catalogue of Manuscripts in Mithila*, no. 429 Sugatisopānam, p. 505–506.

[20]The anger of the *ṛṣi* Aurva against his enemies was so strong that it generated a flame that threatened to destroy the world, so it was cast into the ocean and resides there as a 'submarine fire' (Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 239).

After having consulted the Vedas, *smṛti*-s, *purāṇa*-s, and other sources, the esteemed minister Gaṇeśvara produced the *Sugatisopāna* for the benefit of all. (7)

Gaṇeśvara's introduction is certainly highly eulogistic, but there are elements in the descriptions of his father Devāditya and his brother Vireśvara that allude to the actual authority they may have possessed. The *pañjī* states that Devāditya was a *sāndhivigrahika* and the above states that he had himself engaged in conflict against the enemies of the king of Mithila. Moreover, through his efforts, the Brahmin lineages of the kingdom flourished. Vireśvara was a *raṇāgārika* and developed the kingdom through the building of temples and ponds, and he performed great acts of giving, presumably to Brahmins. The author Gaṇeśvara himself is described in the *pañjī* as a *mahāsāmantādhipati* and a *mahāmahattaka*. While the descriptions of these Brahmins may be laudatory, the positions are confirmed by the *pañjī* records and by additional authors. Gaṇeśvara's son Ramadatta was a scholar of the traditions of the *Yajurveda* and compiled a treatise on the marriage customs of the Vājasaneyi *śākhā*, titled *Vājasaneyivivāhapaddhati*. In it Ramadatta writes:

सन्धिविग्रहमन्त्रीन्द्रदेवादित्यतनूद्भवः । भूमिपालशिरोरत्नरञ्जिताङ्घ्रिसरोरुहः ॥ [१]
सन्धिविग्रहिकः श्रीमद्वीरेश्वरसहोदरः । महामहत्तकः श्रीमान् विराजति गणेश्वरः ॥ [२]
श्रीमता रामदत्तेन मन्त्रिणा तस्य सूनुना । पद्धतिः क्रियते रम्या धर्म्या वाजसनेयिनाम् ॥ [३][21]

From the *sāndhivigrahika* and lord of ministers, Devāditya, whose lotus feet were touched by the jewels of the crowns of king, (1) arose the *sāndhivigrahika* Vīreśvara. Of the same womb was born the shining *mahāmattaka* Gaṇeśvara. (2) The conventions of the Vājasaneyi school have been compiled by his son, the minister Ramadatta (3).[22]

---

[21]Quoted in Jayaswal and Sastri, *Catalogue of Manuscripts in Mithila*, no. 317 'Vājasaneyivivāhapaddhatiḥ', p. 355.

[22]The second verse is interesting because in it Ramadatta makes it a point to specify that Vīreśvara and Gaṇeśvara are uterine brothers (*sahodara*). The excerpt of the Visaphī *mūla pañjī* given above shows that Devāditya had six sons from two wives.

The high positions attained by this family may be a consequence of their long-standing relationship with the kings of Mithila. Evidence for this claim is found in the introduction of the *Gaṅgābhaktitaraṅgiṇī* by a scholar named Gaṇapati, who is the son of Dhiresvara and whose "grandfather served Nanyadeva".[23] This passage indicates that the family descended from Viṣṇuśarmmā, the founder of the Visaphī *mūla*, had been in hereditary service with the Karnata dynasty of Tirabhukti since the time of its establishment by Nanyadeva in 1097. That they continued to obtain hereditary appointments by the successors of Nanyadeva is evident from the writings of Caṇḍeśvara, whose ideas about *sapiṇḍa* were discussed in Chapter 1. In the *Gṛhastha-ratnākara*, Caṇḍeśvara states that he is a minister of the king of Mithila,[24] and also specifies that he serves as the *mahāsāndhivigrahika* of king Harisimhadeva and that his father Vīreśvara also held this position.[25]

Caṇḍeśvara's writings shows that the Visaphī family had a great hand in administering the kingdom, but they also show that these Brahmins continued to make contributions to scholarship. In the introduction of the *Vivāda-ratnākara* Caṇḍeśvara seeks to convey to the audience his credentials for writing a treatise on civil law as he refers to himself as the "jewel among the ministers" (*saciva-ratna*)[26] and well-versed in the subjects of *mimamsa* and *dharma*.[27] Then he informs the audience of the following accomplishment

---

[23] सद्विद्याकुलयोर्विशेषमखिलम्विद्यायनान्योद्दौ वृत्तिं यस्य पितामहाय मिथिलाभूमण्डलाखण्डलः श्रीधीरेश्वरसूनुरन्वहमसावभ्यस्य भाउं मतं गङ्गभक्तितरङ्गिणीं गणपतेर्ब्रूसतीप्रीतये ॥ Quoted in Jayaswal and Sastri, *Catalogue of Manuscripts in Mithila*, no. 86 'Gaṅgābhaktitaraṅgiṇī', p. 88.

[24] गृहस्थरत्नाकरेऽस्मिन् श्रीचण्डेश्वरमन्त्रिणा । मिथिलापृथिवीनाथ सन्धिविग्रहकारिणा । (Kamalakṛṣṇa Smṛtitīrtha, *Gṛhastha-ratnākara*, 3).

[25] इति महामहेन्द्र महाराजाधिराज श्रीहरिसिंहदेव महासान्धिविग्रहिक वीरेश्वरात्मज सप्रक्रिय महासान्धिविग्रहिक श्रीचण्डेश्वरविरचिते गृहस्थर-त्नाकरे गार्हस्थ्यतरङ्ग (ibid., 6).

[26] चण्डेश्वरः सचिवरत्नमिमं विवादरत्नाकरं रचयति श्रुतिशास्त्रविज्ञः ॥ (Kamalakṛṣṇa Smṛtitīrtha, *Vivāda-ratnākara*, 2).

[27] मीमांसानयनो विचारचतुरो मन्त्रीन्द्रचण्डेश्वरः स श्रीमान् परमत्र वादविषयं प्रस्तौति रत्नाकरम् ॥ (ibid., 1).

श्रीचण्डेश्वरमन्त्रिणा मतिमताऽनेन प्रसन्नात्मना नेपालाखिलभूमिपालजयिना धर्म्मेन्दुदुग्धाब्धिना ।
वाङ्मत्याः सरितस्तटे सुरधुनीसाम्यं दधत्याः शुचौ मार्गे मासि यथोक्तपुण्यसमये दत्तस्तुलापूरूषः ॥[28]

The esteemed minister Caṇḍeśvara being pleased after conquering the king of Nepal, performed the *tulā-pūruṣa dāna* on the banks of the river Vāṅmatī [Vāgmatī], which flowed like the Suradhunī (river of the gods).

From the above it is known that Caṇḍeśvara carried out a military expedition in Nepal and defeated some king there. Afterwards, he performed the *tulā-pūruṣa dāna* on the banks of the river Vagmati (modern Bagmati), which courses through the center of Mithila from north to south until it joins the river Ganges. Caṇḍeśvara considers the performance to be quite important because he mentions it again in the final section of the *Vivāda-ratnākara*, but here he mentions that the event took place towards the end of 1314 or the beginning of 1315 CE.[29] The *tulā-pūruṣa dāna* or the "gift equaling the weight of a man" consists of giving a measure of gold equal to the weight of the donor. In addition to the gifts of gold, the *dāna* often consisted of grants of land or villages to Brahmins.[30]

A small but notable point of interest is to be found in Gaṇeśvara's introduction to the *Sugatisopāna* is the mention of another Brahmin lineages. He wrote that his own "qualities are like disciples capable of bring friends and wealth" and that he gave an appointment to "Bhavaśarmā, the pride of the Khauāla lineage". The nature of the appointment is not specified, but the reference to Bhavaśarmā suggests that there was some level of cooperation between the Khauāla and Visaphī lineages. While interactions between Brahmin lineages

---

[28]Kamalakṛṣṇa Smṛtitīrtha, *Vivāda-ratnākara*, 1.

[29]*Vivāda-ratnākara*, 'Upasaṃhāra': रसगुणभुजचन्द्रैः सम्मिते शाकवर्षे सहसि धवलपक्षे वाग्मतीसिन्धुतीरे । अदित तुलितमुचै-रात्मना स्वर्णराशिं निधिरखिलगुणानामुत्तरः सोमनाथः ॥ (Kamalakṛṣṇa Smṛtitīrtha, *Vivāda-ratnākara*, 676). The editor of the text, Kamalakṛṣṇa Smṛtitīrtha, suggests that the event took place "in the bright half of the month of *Pausha* in the year 1236 of the Śaka era", which he equates with either December 1314 or January 1315 CE (Ibid., v).

[30]Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. II, pt. II, 870–872.

are certainly not special and may be expected, within a political environment where access to kings and courtiers might inspire competition between families, it is particularly notable that Gaṇeśvara mentions a Brahmin outside of his own family in the introduction of a text, which is generally reserved for eulogizing oneself and one's pedigree. To be sure, Gaṇeś-vara is the only scholar among the other writers belonging to the Visaphī lineage to have made such mention.

The above sources demonstrate that the Visaphī lineage was tightly connected to the Karnata court. The descriptions of the various achievements of these individuals in defending the kingdom, conquering neighboring territories, protecting and nurturing the Brahmin community, and making donations of gold and land portrays the members of the Visaphī family as the light of Kshatriya rulers. These Brahmins assumed titles that were used by Nanyadeva, such as 'head of a feudatory council' (*mahāsāmantādhipati*), but also represented themselves as the 'upholder of *dharma*' and "lord of the ministers", whose feet were kissed and illuminated by the jewels in the crowns of various kings. They rescued the land from the darkness cast by enemies of the king through the light of their own wisdom. Had readers been unaware that the authors were Brahmins, they could not be faulted for assuming that Gaṇeśvara, Caṇḍeśvara, and their kinsmen might well have been Kshatriyas. In addition to illustrating that Brahmins had grown quite powerful in Mithila, the literary evidence shows the importance of the *mūla* in the organization of Brahmin society. The ministers of the Visaphī lineages were able to maintain their hereditary ties to the Karnata court for more than two centuries and with the governments of six kings.

136

Returning to the question posed at the outset of this section, considering the extent to which the Visaphī family administered the kingdom, it is possible to conceive that conflict may have arisen between the king Saktisimhadeva and one of these *mahāsāmantādhipati*-s, *sāndhivigrahika*-s, or *mahāmattaka*-s. The dispute may have grown to the the point where the king's expression of authority was interpreted by these Brahmin ministers as 'despotic'. Devāditya, whose seven sons went onto become ministers of the Karnatas, was himself the *sāndhivigrahika* of Ramasimhadeva. His son Vīreśvara assumed the same position under the latter's successor, Saktisimhadeva.[31] As these ministers held political power and social status, they could have assumed effectual control of the kingdom by placing it in the hands of a 'Council of Elders', which administered the kingdom until Harisimhadeva had attained an age at which he could be coronated as the next Karnata king.

In addition to the administrative relationships between Brahmins and the king, the *pañjī* records show that there was an equally strong connection between scholars and the kingdom. Another example of the establishing of hereditary lineages in Mithila society and the growing authority of Brahmins in Mithila is the expansion of the *mūla*. The previous chapter described the segmentation of the *mūla* into *grāma*-s, but there is an additional branching of the *mūla* that requires discussion. In some cases the migration of a Brahmin from his ancestral home to a new village or the minimal lineage associated with a member of a *mūla* was considered in high esteem that the segmentation of the *mūla* resulted in the establishing of that branch not as a *grāma*, but as a separate *mūla*. The branching of one *mūla* out of

---

[31]Mishra, *History of Maithili Literature*, 136.

another is rarely encountered in the *pañjī* records, but there are at least three such cases. In this section I briefly explain the creation of the Oini, Khaṇḍavalā, and Sodarapura *mūla*-s.

The excerpt of the Khauāla *mūla pañjī* discussed in Chapter 1 showed that the *viji purūṣa* Prajāpati had two sons, Vācaspati and Umāpati. That excerpt described the lineage descending from Prajāpati's first son Vacāspati and it indicated that Umāpati's lineage was to be found on folio 127/5 of the *mūla pañjī*. That section showing the following information regarding Umāpati his descendants:

> उँमापति सुत विद्यापति सुतो जयपतिः ए सुतो हिङुकः ए सुतो ओइनाहः ओइनि ग्रामोपर्यकः । ए सुतो अतिरूपः ए सुतो गोविन्दः ए सुतः लक्ष्मणः ए सुता राज पण्डित कामेश्वर रामेश्वर हरिश्वर त्रिपुरे तेवाडी सलखन गोढीकाः [...][32]

> The son of Umāpati is Vidyāpati, his son is Jayāpati, his son is Hiṅguka, his son is Oināha, who is the founder of the village Oini. Oināha's son it Atirūpa, whose son is Govinda, whose son is Lakṣmaṇa. The sons of Lakṣmaṇa are the *rāja paṇḍita* Kāmeśvara, Rāmeśvara, Hariśvara, Tripure, Tevāḍi, Salakhana, and Goḍhika [...]

The above indicates that Umāpati's great-great-grandson Oināha was granted a village, which was named after him, and that he was recognized as the founder (*grāmoparjaka*) of a new branch of the patriline. There is no information about the reasons for the recognition of Oināha as a new lineage founder or the grant of land given to him. His importance may be seen in the position acquired by his descendant Kāmeśvara, who was appointed as the *rāja paṇḍita* in the Karnata court. Similarly the *pañjī* shows the following:

> [...] सिंहाश्रम सं बीजी महामहोपाध्याय हलायुध ए सुतो महो दधि । ए सुतो महो जाइकः ए सुतो महो महिधर ए सुतओ गाङ्कुकः ए सुतो वागीश्वर ए सुतौ रत्नेश्वर रामेश्वरौ लगुरदह सं विसव दौ । रत्नेश्वर सुता महामहोपाध्यय हल्लेश्वर महामहोपाध्यय (०५/०४) सुरेश्वर (०५/०४) जीवेश्वराः [...] सोदरपुर ग्रामोपर्यकाः ॥ [...][33]

---

[32]*Mūla Pañjī* written by Pañjīkara Paṇḍita Modanānda Jhā, folio 127/2–128/1.
[33]Ibid., folio 17/01.

The founder of the Siṃhāśrama *mūla* is *mahāmahopādhyāya* Halāyudha, whose son is *mahopādhyāya* Dadhi. The son of Dadhi is *mahopādhyāya* Jāika, whose son is *mahopādhyāya* Mahidhara, whose son is Gāṅguka. The son of Gāṅguka is Vāgīśvara, whose own two sons are Ratneśvara and Rāmeśvara. Ratneśvara married the daughter of Visava of Laguradaha *mūla* and his sons are *mahāmahopādhyāya* Halleśvara, *mahāmahopādhyāya* Sureśvara, and *mahāmahopādhyāya* Jīveśvara. The three are the founders of the village Sodarapura. [...]

The above excerpt shows that the three sons of Halāyudha's descendant Ratneśvara were recognized in Mithila as prominent scholars. The title of *mahāmahopādhyāya* bestowed upon the brothers Halleśvara, Sureśvara, and Jīveśvara are evidence of their achievements, so also is that they were either granted the village of Sodarapura or land within the village as gifts. The prominence of these scholars within Maithil society led to the establishing of the Siṃhāśrama (known colloquially as 'Simāsama') branch at Sodarapura as its own *mūla*. The third case is explained below:

[...] गङ्गौली सं बीजी गङ्गाधरः ए सुतौ विर (०५/०४) नारायन । तत्र नारायण सुतः (१७//०२) शुलपाणि । ए सुतौ हाले साँईकौ । थरिया सं कान्ह दौ ॥ खण्डवला ग्रामोपायर्कः ॥ साँईकः संकर्षण परनाम [...][34]

[...] The founder of the Gaṅgaulī *mūla* is Gaṅgādhara. His two sons are Vīra and Nārāyaṇa. The son of that Nārāyaṇa is Sulapāṇi. The two sons of Sulapāṇi are Hāle and Sāī. Sāī married the daughter of Kanha of Thariyā *mūla*. He is the founder of the Khaṇḍavalā branch. The given name of Sāī is Saṅkarṣaṇa [...]

Saṅkarṣaṇa, the descendant of the Gaṅgaulī *viji purūṣa* Gaṅgādhara, was a *rāja paṇḍita* of the king of Bastar,[35] which is presently located in the central Indian state of Chhatisgarh. He was given the village of Khandava as a grant from the king and he resided there with his family for sometime before returning to Mithila. As shown in the above excerpt, Saṅkarṣaṇa's bride belonged to the Thariyā *mūla*, so it is evident that Saṅkarṣaṇa maintained

---

[34]*Mūla Pañjī* written by Pañjīkara Paṇḍita Modanānda Jhā, folio 17/01.
[35]Singh, *History of Tirhut*, 212.

contact with Mithila although he served a king outside of the region. The establishing of a branch of the Gaṅgaulī lineage upon a village located beyond the borders of the Karnata kingdom is significant. It indicates that Saṅkarṣaṇa and his family commanded a high degree of social status within Maithil society, such that the king and his *pañjīkara*-s may have agreed to the creation of a *mūla* outside of Mithila. However, the fact that the new *mūla* was named 'Khaṇḍavalā' after the village Khaṇḍava where Saṅkarṣaṇa resided further shows the importance of territorial anchoring of Brahmin lineages in the ideology of recognizing a Brahmin among the Maithils.

The recognition of the Oini, Sodarapura, and Khaṇḍavalā sub-lineages as being *mūla*-s on par with the parent *mūla* is more symbolic than practical. As they are truly *grāma*-s of the respective *mūla*-s, they have the same *gotra*-s as the parent *mūla*-s (see the excerpt from the *gotra pañjī* for the Śāṇḍilya and Kāśyapa *gotra*-s shown in Chapter 2). The *sagotra* status of the Khauala and Oini *mūla*-s would prevent inter-marriage between the two lineages. The explanation, then, for the establishing of *grāma*-s as *mūla*-s was to preserve the prestige attained by these families. The establishing of such sub-lineages as *mūla*-s also has an impact upon the identities of individuals associated with the new lineages. The ancestors of the Oini or Sodarapura *mūla*-s are members of the parent patrilines Khauāla and Siṃhāśrama, but the social identities of members of the new *mūla*-s whose ancestries were truncated and tied to new *viji purūṣa*-s.

3.2 Recognizing the Status of a Brahmin

The preservation of titles acquired by individuals and the elevation of minimal lineages to the status of independent maximal lineages in the *pañjī* may be explained as a means of transmitting hereditary and achieved attrbutes across generations to future kings. Just as Manu states that copper-plate grants should bear the ancestries of the donor king for the knowledge of future kings, so also may the *pañjī* records serve to inform future rulers of the positions that particular Brahmins and their families held during dynasties of the past. The recording of such professional attributes may appear to force the practice of genealogical record-keeping well outside of the original scope of ensuring proper marriages. However, a closer inspection of the matter suggests that the retention of information on an individual's status may have actually have fallen in line with the attempt made by the formulators of *pañjī prabandha* to regulate Brahmin marriage in accordance with the specifications in the *smṛti*. Recall that in his discussion in the *Tantravārttika* regarding the means for perceiving the 'caste of the progenitor', Kumārila Bhaṭṭa offered the following:

> विशिष्टेन हि प्रयत्नेन महाकुलीनाः परिरक्षन्त्यात्मानेनैव हेतुना राजभिर्ब्राह्मणैश्च स्वपितृपितामहादि पार-
> म्पर्याविस्मरणार्थं समूहलेख्यानि प्रवर्त्तितानि। तथा च प्रतिकुलं गुणदोषस्मरणात्तदनुरूपाः प्रवृत्तिनिवृत्तयो
> दृश्यन्ते।[36]

> [I]t is for the sake of making their respective caste duly and authoritatively recognised, that the Brahmanas and the Kings have introduced the system of writing up and preserving their genealogies trees, which serve to preserve and perpetuate the names of their forefathers. And as these records distinctly point out the particular excellences and defects of each family, it is always in accordance with these that, we find people being attached to, or repulsed from, particular families.[37]

---

[36]Sâstrî, *Tantravârtika*, 7.
[37]Jhā, *Tantravārttika*, 9.

Of significance to the present discussion is the phrase "[on account of] point[ing] out the particular excellences and defects of each family" (*pratikulaṃ guṇa-doṣa-smaraṇāt*). Kumārila does not specify exactly what is meant by positive 'qualities' (*guṇa*) and 'blemishes' (*doṣa*) of each family. He may have been referring to the social status of individual families, the quality of a particular lineage, and the marital histories of a family and their attention to marriages made according to the rules prescribed by the *smṛti*. His implication is that 'good' families will have a record of their genealogies that can be analyzed in order to verify that the history of the family contains marriages conducted properly. For it is towards such families that people are inclined (*pravṛtti*) to turn when seeking suitable marriages for their children. Conversely, people have a tendency to turn away (*nivṛtti*) from families that are known to have negative qualities. In the first chapter, I explained the manner in which the *pañjī* institution ensured abidance by Yājñavalkya's rules regarding *gotra*, *pravara*, and *sapiṇḍa* exogamy, as well as *varṇa* endogamy. However, those specifications are with regard to individual brides and grooms. Kumārila's discussion of the 'qualities' and 'blemishes', however, relate not to the individual, but to the *kula* or family to which that individual belongs. The question naturally arises: by what standard can a groom measure the positive and negative qualities of a prospective bride's family?

In addition to the list of qualities that a bride should possess, the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* states that she "should be from a family of Srotriyas, whose ten ancestors are renowned, but not from a family that possesses hereditary diseases or deficiencies, even if they are

prosperous."[38] In the *Mitākṣarā*, Vijñāneśvara offers details that clarify the meaning of this verse. He states that a bride should be taken "from a family whose ten persons, meaning five on the mother's side and five on the father's side, are renowned".[39] In order to make the marriage one of equals, Yājñavalkya further specifies that the groom should also "possess good qualities, be of the same *varṇa*, be himself a Srotriya, whose virility has been tested, and who is youthful, intelligent, and well-liked."[40] The stipulation that the groom and bride be of the same *varṇa* is redundant, but likely added for emphasis considering that both much be of the same *varṇa* if they are to be a Shrotriya and from a family of Shrotriyas, respectively.

Based upon the above descriptions of a 'good' family by Yājñavalkya and Vijñāneś-vara, it is possible to interpret Kumārila within the context that these 'good' families are 'attracted' towards prospective brides and grooms who are the offspring of a Shrotriya fa-ther, born into a family of Shrotriyas, whose affines are also Shrotriyas, and which possesses both material as well as spiritual wealth. The qualities of material wealth are certainly easy to measure, but it is more difficult to grasp the intangible status and spiritual wealth of a Brahmin who is recognized as a Shrotriya. A 'Shrotriya' is a Brahmin who has been taught the Vedas and understands the meaning of the teachings.[42] A Brahmin who is "conversant

---

[38] *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.54: दशपूरुषविख्याताच्छ्रोत्रियाणां महाकुलात् । स्फीदातपि न संचारिरोगदोषसमन्वितात् ॥ (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛiti*, 15).

[39] *Mitākṣarā*: पूरुषाः दशभिः पुरुषैर्मातृतः पञ्चभिः पितृतः पञ्चभिर्विख्यातं यत्कुलं तस्मात् । (ibid.).

[40] *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.55: एतैरेव गुणैर्युक्तः सवर्णः श्रोत्रियो वरः । यत्नात्परीक्षितः पुंस्त्वे युवा धीमान् जनप्रियः ॥ (ibid., 16). In his commentary on this verse, Vijñāneśvara states that "a great family is one that is affluent and has sons and grandsons, animals, servants, villages, etc."[41] Moreover, he adds that the groom should be "of the same or higher *varṇa*, but not lower" than the bride (*Mitākṣarā*: सवर्ण उत्कृष्टे वा न हीनवर्णः । (ibid., 16)).

[42] *Mitākṣarā*: श्रोत्रियाणामधीतवेदानाम् । अध्ययनमुपलक्षणं श्रुताध्ययनसंपन्नानाम् । (ibid., 15).

with the sacred knowledge"[43] and able to understand the philosophical and ritual aspects

of Vedic traditions is a 'Shrotriya'. The term itself signifies a Brahmin who has mastered

the *śruti*, the eternal knowledge that was "heard" by his *ṛṣi* ancestors,[44] which is distin-

guished from teachings known as *smṛti*, or knowledge that is "remembered". On account

of his spiritual bearing the Shrotriya earns special privileges. Yājñavalkya states that a king

should actively settle Shrotriyas in his kingdom by giving them grants, titles, and hospital-

ity.[45] The king should also provide a Shrotriya with a proper residence in which to live.[46]

Manu states that "a king must not levy taxes upon a Shrotriya and no Shrotriya residing

in a kingdom should perish from hunger".[47] The caution is that the "kingdom in which a

Shrotriya pines with hunger will certainly be afflicted by famine" in return.[48] On the other

hand, "whatever meritorious acts [a Srotriya] performs under the full protection of the king,

thereby increases the king's length of life, wealth, and kingdom".[49] Based upon the above,

a Brahmin who is a Shrotriya is important not only for maintaining the 'positive qualities'

of a family or lineage for purposes of marriage, but also for legitimizing the sanctity of a

king and the prosperity of the kingdom.

As a Shrotriya is defined as a Brahmin who understands the Veda and is entitled to

exemplary treatment by a king, one might imagine that non-Shrotriya Brahmins may have

---

[43] Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 1103.

[44] Ibid., 1101.

[45] *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.333: Translation adapted from Vasu, *Yajnavalkya Smriti,* Book I, 414.

[46] *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.333:

[47] *Manu Smṛti* 7.133: म्रियमाणो ऽप्याददीत न राजा श्रोत्रियात्करम् । न च क्षुधास्य संसीदेच्छ्रोत्रियो विषये वसन् (Jolly, *Mânava Dharma-Śâstra*, 139). Translation adapted from Bühler, *The Laws of Manu*, 237.

[48] *Manu Smṛti* 7.134: यस्य राज्ञस्तु विषये श्रोत्रियः सीदति क्षुधा । तस्यापि तत्क्षुधा राष्ट्रमचिरेणैव सीदति ॥ (Jolly, *Mânava Dharma-Śâstra*, 139). Translation adapted from Bühler, *The Laws of Manu*, 237.

[49] *Manu Smṛti* 7.136: संरक्ष्यमाणो राज्ञा यं कुरुते धर्ममन्वहम् । तेनायुर्वर्धते राज्ञो द्रविणं राष्ट्रमेव च ॥ (Jolly, *Mânava Dharma-Śâstra*, 140). Translation adapted from Bühler, *The Laws of Manu*, 237.

attempted to capitalize upon the benefits that accrue from such status. Kumārila held that a Brahmin is to be known on account of his birth, but Patañjali defined a Brahmin as being a 'Brahmin' not only "by virtue of his birth", but especially "by his knowledge of scripture and his ascetic qualities".[50] These descriptions suggest that the Shrotriya status of a Brahmin is a 'sociocentric' aspect of his identity, that the Brahmin community, the king, and the general public be aware that a Shrotriya is dwelling among them.

But, how does a king or anyone else recognize that a Brahmin claiming Shrotriya status is not only a 'Brahmin', but a 'Shrotriya' as well? Moreover, by what means is such a title conferred upon a Brahmin? Manu states that "having ascertained his learning in the Veda and the purity of his conduct, the king shall provide for [the Srotriya] means of subsistence in accordance with the sacred law, and shall protect him in every way, as a father protects the lawful son of his body."[51] Manu, however, does not describe the means for 'ascertaining' a Brahmin's knowledge of the Veda or the purity of his conduct. Just as king Harisimhadeva is credited with laying the foundations of the *pañjī* system, he is also credited with measuring the knowledge and conduct of the Brahmins of his kingdom. Another legend regarding the origins of *pañjī prabandha* that has long circulated within the Maithil Brahmin community describes how Harisimhadeva 'ascertained' the status of Brahmins.

A king had called for a great assembly of the Brahmins in his realm. On the day of the event several Brahmins, who were flattered to have been invited to dine with the king,

---

[50] *Vyākaraṇa Mahābhāṣya* 2.2.6: तपः श्रुतं च योनिश्चेत्येतद्ब्राह्मणकारकम् । (Kielhorn, *Vyâkaraṇa Mahâbhâshya,* vol. 1, 411).

[51] *Manu Smṛti* 7.135: श्रुतवृत्ते विदित्वास्य वृत्तिं धर्म्यां प्रकल्पयेत् । संरक्षेत् सर्वतश्चैनं पिता पुत्रमिवौरसम् ॥ (Jolly, *Mânava Dharma-Śâstra*, 139). Translation adapted from Bühler, *The Laws of Manu*, 237.

performed their morning ablutions and quickly departed for the palace. Other Brahmins arrived in the afternoon after having bathed and performed their basic daily rites, skipping the longer rituals just for the day so as to not delay their audience with the king. The remaining Brahmins arrived late in the evening after they had completed not only their basic religious duties, but also the *agnihotra* ritual. When these thirteen Brahmins finally arrived, the feast had nearly run its course. The others chastised them for their delay and their disregard for the king. When the king asked about the reasons for their delay, they told him of their responsibilities, of the importance of the *agnihotra*, and offered their apologies. The king then announced to the audience that he had held the feast because he wanted to learn who were the best Brahmins in his kingdom. He had intended to open debates with them in order to test their knowledge. Now, it was clear who of these were the most illustrious. Proclaiming the last to arrive as the best Brahmins, the king divided the Brahmins of his kingdom into three groups: a Brahmin who arrived first was a common Brahmin, a *jayavara*, one who arrived second was 'deserving of respect', a *yogya*; and one who had completed all of his required duties before arriving was a *śrotriya*.[52]

Unlike the legend of Harinatha Upadhyaya, there is nothing in the content of the legend of the king's assembly that connects its events with the implementation of *pañjī prabandha*. The legend explains the classification of Brahmins into hierarchical grades of Shrotriyas, Yogyas, and Jayavaras, but it does not provide insights into the rationale behind the classification or its effects upon the community.

---

[52]Adapted from Rameshwar Singh, "Maithil Marriage"; Thakur, *History of Mithila*; Jha, *Genealogies and Genealogists of Mithila*.

The three groups of Brahmins mentioned in the legend comprise the three basic hierarchies of the community and the names of the groups have remained the same. As indicated the assignment of a Brahmin into one of the three groups was based upon his conduct. Conduct itself was measured by the order in which a Brahmin arrived at the assembly. The result of the king's test publicly confirmed which Brahmins in the kingdom were Shrotriyas. The second group was categorized as Yogya by their potential for better conduct. The last group were categorized as Jayavars, Brahmins who were 'Brahmin' solely on account of their birth, but of lower status than the Shrotriya and Yogya because of lack of erudition and purity in conduct.

The legend suggests that the positive (*guna*) and negative (*dosa*) qualities of Brahmins was established by a king. The rank system may have developed in order to adhere to prescriptions in the *smrti* regarding the qualities of the bride and groom. Yet, there is no stipulation for measuring a family. The *gotra* cannot be assessed in terms of *guna* and *dosa* because of the simply numerical magnitude and geographic distribution of its members. However, as a segment of the *gotra* specific to Mithila, the *mūla* offers a means for assessing the qualities of a lineage.

By registering Brahmins and their ancestries the *pañjī prabandha* offered a means for recognizing a Brahmin as a 'Brahmin'. The introduction of status grades represents a development of the identification system. Now that Maithils knew that they were Brahmins, they could also answer the question of who among them were the most illustrious Brahmins. As a result of this development, a Brahmin now belonged not only to a territorial lineage

(*mūla*), but also to one of the Shrotriya, Yogya, Panjibaddha, Vansaja, or Jayavara grades. This system makes it easy to follow Yājñavalkya's recommendation that a bride "should be from a family of Srotriyas, whose ten ancestors are renowned".

The *pañjī* records have meticulously preserved the names of thousands of Brahmins, the patterns of their migrations, and the titles and posts they held. Considering the importance of the ranked grades in the identities and social practices of the Maithils, is it surprising that *pañjī* records do not provide sufficient detail about the grades and their original intent. But, the *mūla pañjī* contains the following verse that contains a list of thirteen Brahmins recognized as Shrotriyas:

गङ्गौलीर्द्विज वीर कोऽपि त्वलयी गङ्गधरः पण्डितः
साञ्जी खण्डवला तिसौत नगरे विश्वम्भरो अभूत् पुरा
खौवालोऽपि प्रजापति कर्म्महा शास्त्रज्ञ वंशिधरो
दान्ति सिद्धिजन कुजौली नगरे बभनिया शर्मा शिवः
नरसिंह माण्डरो महामहोत्र शास्त्र सं विदो
घुसौत वासुदेवकौ महिधरौ नरौन के
हरिअम्ब झा दिक्षितो महामहो विशारदः
सिंहाश्रमो हलायुधो महामहो त्रयोदशः[53]

The *pandita* Gangadhara of Gangauli and *pandita* Gangadhara of Alayi;
Sai of Khandavala, Visvambhara of the ancient city of Tisauta;
Prajapati of Khauvala, the master of *sastra* Vamsidhara of Karmaha;
the sage Danti of the city of Kujauli, Siva of Bhabhaniyam
the *mahamahopadhyaya* and master of *sastra* Narasimha of Mandara;
Vasudeva of Ghusauta, Mahidhara of Narauna;
the *mahamahopadhyaya* and *diksita* Visarada of Hariambha;
rhe *mahamahopadhyaya* Halayudha from Simasrama;
these are the thirteen.

The verse provides the names of the thirteen individuals and the villages to which they belonged. These thirteen individuals are significant because they are also the *viji purūṣa* of

---

[53] find citation

148

the *mūla* named after these villages; for example from the *pañjī* excerpts discussed in this and previous chapters, Prajapati is the founder of the Khauala *mūla*, Sai of the Khandavala *mūla*, and Halayudha of Simasrama. This raises several questions. Are these the thirteen Brahmins who were originally designated as Shrotriya? Or is it the lineage of these individuals that are Shrotriya? There is no explanation in the *mūla pañjī* regarding this matter. It is possible that the apical ancestors were recognized as Shrotriya and it is just as likely that thirteen Brahmins were giving this distinction and it was applied to their entire lineage. This is significant because it shows that it was not the individual Brahmin who was measured into the three grades, but the lineage. It establishes the notion that Shrotriya status was applied to all members of a lineage back to the apical ancestor.

The verse suggests that the status was given to the individual Brahmin. Recall the excerpt of the Khauala *mūla pañjī* from Chapter 1. It shows affinal *mūla*-s starting with Prajapati's grandson, Gaṇapati, whose father-in-law belongs to the Dhanauja *mūla*. The father-in-law of Gaṇapati's son Gadādhara's is of the Marāṛa *mūla*. Gadādhara's son Haripāṇi's father-in-law is of Mahuā *mūla*. Haripāṇi's son Ratnapāṇi's father-in-law is of Jajivāla *mūla*. None of these *mūla*-s are Shrotriya.

There is a sense that Shrotriya status was historically prescriptive. Another verse states:

खत्रऔरश्च खौवालश्च बुधवालस्तथैव च
माण्डर दरिहरश्चैव सोदरपुरस्तथा
अयन्ता श्रोत्रि संयुक्ता ब्राह्मणा वेद पारगाः
त्रयोदशे ते विख्याता वारान्तश्चापि कथ्यते
गङ्गौलो च कुजौली च पबौली त्रालयि तथा
बहेराढी सङ्कराढी पाली प्रज्यान्त श्रोत्रिया
दीर्घोष बेलौच्चः पनिचोमे एकहरौ तथा

वलियासौ जजिवालश्च टङ्कवालश्च पाण्डवाः
अष्टावैते समाख्याता मध्यमा पञ्जिकोद्भवा
एतेषां वंस विजी वै पञ्ज्यां सर्वे निवेशिता[54]

Kharaura (Khandavala), Khauvala, Budhavala
Mandara, Darihara, Sodarapura
Ayanta Shrotriya are Brahmins who are masters of the Veda
Thirteen are said to be varanta.
Ganguli, Kujauli, Pabauli, Alayi
Baheradhi, Sankaradhi, Pali are Prajyaanta Shrotriya
Dirghosa, Belaunca, Panicobha, Ekahara
Valiyasa, Jajivala, Tankavala, Pandu
These are are madhyama
These lineages and their founders were entered into the *pañjī*

This verse shows a different list of *mūla*-s. It also shows a ranking of lineages into *varanta*,

ayanta, and *madhyama* categories.

घुसौतौ गङ्गौली हरिअम्ब खौआलौ दरिहरा
तिसौतौ वै पाली सरिसब सिंहासौ कर्महा
भभनियाम शर्मा द्विजवर पटुम्मार्ण्डर पुरे
बलेवाडौ नूनं कुलपति मते विजी पुरुषा
बभनियाम बिन केचित् सङ्कराढी पुरै सहः
त्रयोदशे ते विख्याता पञ्ज्यां वै विजी पुरुषा
सिंहाश्रमं बिन केचित् कुजौली सहितं पुरा
त्रयोदशे ते विख्याता विस्"वचक्के व्यवस्थिता
जजिवालसट्ङ्कवाल पनिचोभश्च विलोञ्चककः
पाण्डुरः सुरगनश्चैव सतलखा ग्रम एव च
बलियासौ विसफि चैव जलेवारस्तथैव च
माण्डरश्च तथा विश्वचक्के वै बीजी पुरुषा[55]

Ghusauta, Gangauli, Hariamba, Khauala, Darihara
Tisauta, Pali, Sarisaba, Simhasama, Karmaha
Bhabhaniyam *sarma* twice-borns Mandara complete
... *viji purūṣa*
Bhabhaniam then Sankaradhi ...

---

[54]find citation
[55]find citation

The thirteen were given in the panji
Simhasama then Kujauli
Thirteen at the visvacakra Jajivala, Tankavala, Panichob, Vilocha
Pandura, Suragana, Satalakha
Baliyasa, Visaphi, Jalaivara
Mandara, these were at the visvacakra

These different *mūla*-s given in the above verses show that the status of lineages was variable. Moreover, the verses suggest that such changes occured more than once. It also suggests that the recognition of the thirteen individual Brahmins may have occurred before *pañjī prabandha*. The mention of names of individual Brahmins in the original list and the mere listing of lineages suggests that the status of a Brahmin had shifted from individual rankings to that of entire lineages. Table 3.2 shows the *mūla*-s ranked as Shrotriya and Yogya in the 20th century.

Various Maithil scholars have tried to establish a correlation between the numbers of Shrotriyas and Yogya identified at the king's assembly with the numbers of highly-ranked *mūla*-s in the *pañjī*.[56]

3.3 Status and Marriage

The purpose of the *pañjī prabandha* was to ensure that Brahmins married Brahmins in order to ensure that their offspring would also be Brahmins. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this mandatory isogamy essentially nullified the provisions given by Yājñavalkya and Manu regarding marriage between persons belonging to different *varṇa*. It also nullified the existence of intermediate *jāti*-s to which offspring of mixed-*varṇa* marriages were assigned

---

[56]Jha, *Genealogies and Genealogists of Mithila*, 43–44; Mishra, *Shrotriyas of Mithila*, 15.

by the *smṛti* authorities. To be 'Maithil' was to be registered in the genealogies and to abide by marriage laws so that one's offspring would also be 'Maithil'. The *pañjī prabandha* may have abolished the ability of Maithil Brahmins to take wives of other castes, but it established a means for meeting the criteria established by Yājñavalkya that a groom, who is himself a Shrotriya, should choose a bride whose ten renowned ancestors are Shrotriyas. In doing so, however, the *pañjī* system incorporated within the Maithil Brahmin caste the *jāti* system that applied in the *smṛti* to designations between *varṇa*-s.

Following the principle that a Shrotriya groom should seek out a Shrotriya bride, the administrators of *pañjī prabandha* established similar principles of isogamy such that Yogyas were to marry Yogya and Jayavaras were to marry Jayavaras. The logic behind this intent seems simple enough: if parents are of equal grade, then the offspring acquires the same grade rank. But what happens when a Shrotriya groom cannot find a Shrotriya bride? This is a question that is less theoretical than it is practical. Isogamy was difficult to maintain for the simple fact that membership in the Shrotriya grade was limited to only thirteen Brahmins. The limited number of Shrotriyas required that grooms of these families had to find brides that were outside of their *mūla*, *gotra*, and *pravara*, outside of *sapiṇḍa* boundaries, but within the grade. Let us see what the scenario was like. The thirteen Shrotriya lineages belonged to five *gotra*-s, shown in table 3.1 below.

Of these *mūla*-s, Kujauli and Narauna had the greatest ease in marrying within the grade they are the only Shrotriya members of their *gotra*-s. Grooms of these two *mūla*-s could conceivably marry brides from twelve *mūla*-s. The six *mūla*-s belonging to the Vatsa *gotra* had

gotra	mūla
Śāṇḍilya	Gaṅgaulī, Siṃhāśrama, Khaṇḍavalā
Vatsa	Ghusauta, Karmaha, Alayī, Tisauta, Hariamba, Bhabhaniyam
Kāśyapa	Khauvala, Maṇḍara
Kātyāyana	Kujauli
Parāśara	Narauna

Table 3.1: Thirteen original Shrotriya *mūla*-s.

the greatest restrictions. The *mūla*-s of the Vatsa *gotra* had to immediately avoid marriage with five *mūla*-s, which left them with eight *mūla*-s from which to seek brides. Yet, over time, the *sapiṇḍa* restrictions would further limit the number of *mūla*-s from which potential brides could be taken. In order to examine the difficulties of maintaining isogamy among the Shrotriya lineages, I provide a hypothetical case based upon that Brahmin of the Khauala *mūla* named Dharaditya, who was the individual specified at the end of the excerpt of the Khauala *mūla pañjī* described in Chapter 1. That excerpt showed that Dharāditya married the daughter of Vaṃśadhara, who belonged to the Gaṅgaulī *mūla*. Dharāditya's son could not take a bride from the Khauala *mūla* or from his mother's Gaṅgaulī *mūla*. Moreover, based upon *sagotra* restrictions, his son would have to choose a bride from a *mūla* that did not belong to his agnatic Kāśyapa *gotra* or his maternal grandfather's Śāṇḍilya *gotra*. The *sagotra* restriction eliminates five *mūla*-s, leaving Dharāditya's son to choose an eligible bride from seven remaining *mūla*-s. Based upon these limitations, let us presume that Dharāditya's son married a bride from the Ghusauta *mūla* of the Vatsa *gotra*. The son of this marriage would have an even more limited numbered of brides to choose from. This son is prohibited from marrying Khauvala brides because of *samula*, Maṇḍara brides because

of agnatic *sagotra*, Ghusauta, Karmaha, Alayī, Tisauta, Hariamba, Bhabhaniyam brides on account of maternal *sagotra*. The elimination of eight leaves five *mūla*-s. Once the list of sixteen ancestors is drawn up in the *uteṛha pañjī*, *sapiṇḍa* restrictions may further reduce these five *mūla*-s. Given these limitations it is natural that the number of eligible marriage partners within the grade would diminish after a number of generations.

The diminishing number of eligible Shrotriyas for marriage presented a crisis. If a Shrotriya married a Shrotriya, then the offspring would be Shrotriya, but if either the groom or bride married outside of the grade, then the offspring would no longer be a Shrotriya. Preservation of the status of the lineage was one thing. The greater issue was that marriage of Shrotriyas outside of the grade could result in excommunication of the offending families from the Shrotriya community.[57] Therefore, in order to accommodate the crisis presented by endogamy in the Maithil marriage system, Shrotriyas were permitted to marry Yogyas with the permission of the king.[58] However, as the parents are of unequal grade rank, he offspring acquires an intermediary rank. As marriages outside of the endogamous grades increased, the rank system was reorganized in order to classify the offspring of mixed-grade marriages.[59] The offspring of a Shrotriya or Yogya bride and a Jayavara groom was placed into a new category called *panjibaddha*, which was placed between the Yogyas and Jayavaras.[60] The offspring of a Shrotriya or Yogya groom and a Jayavara bride were placed into a category called *vansaja* or *bansaja*, which ranked below the *pañjībaddha*.[61]

---

[57]Saraswati, "Institution of Pañjī," 270; Brown, "Substance and Structure," 200.
[58]Saraswati, "Institution of Pañjī," 271.
[59]Saraswati, "A Note on Marriage Custom in Maithil Brahmans of Bihar," 120.
[60]Sinha, "Pañjī System," 84.
[61]Ibid.

The creation of categories for classifying offspring of mixed-grade marriages resembles the *jāti* categories described in the *smṛti*-s. Recall that while the *smṛti*-s advocated marriage within the *varṇa*, the texts also accepted the fact that mixed marriages were a reality at the time the texts were composed or at some point in the past. The authorities developed categories known as *jāti*-s into which the offspring of such unions would be placed. The texts identified two types of offspring depending upon the status of the parents. The marriage of a bride to a groom of a higher *varṇa* was known as *anuloma* (hypergamous). The marriage of a bride to a groom of a lower *varṇa* was known as *pratiloma* (hypogamous).[62] The *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* specifies the following for offspring born of Brahmin parents with persons of mixed *varṇa*. Of the *anuloma*-s: "By a Brâhmaṇa in a Kṣatriya woman is produced merely a Mûrdhâvasikta; in a Vaiśya woman, an Ambaṣṭha; and in a Śûdra woman. a Niṣâda or a Pârasava even."[63] Of the *pratiloma*-s: "The son begot by a Kṣatriya and a Brâhmaṇî woman is called a Sûta, by a Vaiśya is called a Vaidehika, and by a Śûdra a Châṇḍâla – outcaste from all religions (dharma)."[64] The grade system replicated the *varṇa* structure within the Maithil Brahmin community, with the Shrotriya considered the true 'Brahmin' and the Jayavara as representing the 'Vaishya', or commoner.

---

[62]Trautmann once described *anuloma* as 'with the grain' and *pratiloma* 'against the grain', as 'one would pet a cat'.

[63]*Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.91: विप्रान्मूर्धावसिक्तो हि क्षत्रियायां विशः स्त्रियाम् । अम्बष्ठः शूद्र्यां निषादो जातः पारशवोऽपि वा ॥ (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛiti,* 28). Translation from Vasu, *Yajnavalkya Smriti,* Book I, 189.

[64]*Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.93: ब्राह्मण्यां क्षत्रियात्सूतो वैश्याद्वैदेहकस्तथा । शूद्राञ्जातस्तु चण्डालः सर्वधर्मबहिष्कृतः ॥ (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛiti*, 29). Translation from Vasu, *Yajnavalkya Smriti,* Book I, 192.

3.4 Status and Personhood

The rank system expanded the means for recognizing a Brahmin. With the emergence of ranked grades, it was no longer sufficient simply to identity someone as being 'Brahmin, but it was necessary for understand the measure of their 'Brahminhood'. As discussed in the first chapter, the *pañjī* system mandated that sixteen ancestors of a bride and groom must be examined in order to determine any pre-existing relatedness within the prohibits degrees of consanguinity. This information was recorded in the *uteṛha pañjī*, which enumerates the thirty-two lineages from which a Brahmin is descended. The *uteṛha pañjī* not only makes it possible to identify pre-existing relationships that would invalidate a potential match between bride and groom, but is also enables the *pañjīkara* to specifically identity the status of any Brahmin individual through an examination of the status of each of the thirty-two ancestors. The *uteṛha pañjī* provides the genealogist with the means of verifying if a potential bride meets Yājñavalkya's recommendation that she have ten illustrious Shrotriya ancestors. The *uteṛha pañjī* of a pure Shrotriya would show that all sixteen ancestors are also Shrotriya. The same record would also show if any ancestors are of lower grades.

The second manner in which the rank system internalized caste dynamics was by incorporating the principles of the rise and fall of *jāti*-s. The *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* states that "the rise of caste is known over the seventh or fifth generations, respectively".[65] This principle was intended to raise the *jāti* status of an individual born from a mixed-*varṇa* marriage. The number of generations required for the caste of a descendant to rise is dependent upon the

---

[65] *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.96: जात्युत्कर्षो युगे ज्ञेयः सप्तमे पञ्चमेऽपि व । व्यत्यये कर्मणां साम्यं पूर्ववच्चाधरोत्तरम् ॥ (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛiti*, 30).

156

jāti designation of the offspring. In the *Mitākṣarā*, Vijñāneśvara explains how this process works. For offspring with a Shudra, it takes seven generations. He gives the following example. A daughter born from a Brahmin father and a Shudra mother is a Nisadi. She marries a Brahmin and gives birth to a daughter. This daughter is married to a Brahmin and she gives birth to a daughter, and so on, until the child from the six generation. This daughter marries a Brahmin and from them will be born a Brahmin.[66] For a child born from a Vaishya, it takes six generations: A daughter born from a Brahmin father and a Vaishya mother is an Ambasthi. She marries a Brahmin and gives birth to a daughter. Each daughter marries a Brahmin until the fifth generation, when the daughter of that union gives birth to a Brahmin.[67] Finally, for the offspring born of a Kshatriya, it takes five generations: The daughter born of a Brahmin father and a Kshatriya woman is a Murdhavasikta. She marries a Brahmin, and her daughter marries a Brahmin, until the fourth generation. The offspring between that daughter and a Brahmin will be a Brahmin at the fifth generation.[68]

The processes of the rise and fall of caste has been interpreted as being an ideal that was not actually practiced. Govinda Upadhyay described the principle of adjusting *varṇa* status over generations as a product of marriage regulations designed to implement "social control through 'promise' and 'ostracism'."[69] His implication is that the 'promise' of rise over several generations was intended to enforce intra-caste marriage through the idea that

---

[66]*Mitākṣarā*: ब्राह्मणेन शूद्रायामुत्पादिता निषादी सा ब्राह्मणेनोढा दुहितरं कांचिज्जनयति सापि ब्राह्मणोढान्यां जनयतीत्यनेन प्रकारेण षष्ठी सप्तमं ब्राह्मणं जनयति । (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛiti*, 30). Translation adapted from Vasu, *Yajnavalkya Smriti*, Book I, 218.

[67]*Mitākṣarā*: ब्राह्मणेन वैश्यायामुत्पादिता अम्बष्ठा । साप्यनेन प्रकारेण पञ्चमी षष्ठं ब्राह्मणं जनयति । (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkya-smṛiti*, 30). Translation adapted from Vasu, *Yajnavalkya Smriti*, Book I, 218.

[68]*Mitākṣarā*: मूर्धावसिक्ताप्यनेन प्रकारेण चतुर्थी पञ्चमं ब्राह्मणमेव जनयति । (Panśīkar, *Yādnyavalkyasmṛiti*, 30). Translation adapted from Vasu, *Yajnavalkya Smriti*, Book I, 219.

[69]Upadhyay, *Brāhmaṇas in Ancient India*, 175.

the status of one's descendants would improve through hypergamous marriage. P. V. Kane

holds that the principle was valid only as a theory. He writes:

> These provisions would considerably lessen the rigour of the caste system based purely
> on birth. But one feels grave doubts whether such a method of jātyutkarṣa or jātya-
> pakarṣa (particularly the one based upon occupation) was or could be ever enforced
> in actual life. It would have been impossible to remember descent in a particular way
> for five or seven generations. The want of unanimity among the original smṛtikāras
> and the commentators also points in the direction that the method advocated, though it
> might have originally some slight basis in fact, was only a hypothesis and an ideal.[70]

The *pañjī* records may ease Kane's grave doubt regarding the plausibility of the enforce-

ment of *jātyutkarṣa* and *jātyapakarṣa*, even if the change of *jāti* occurs within a single caste.

The combination of the *uteṛha pañjī* and the rank system made the rise and fall of *jāti* grade

within the Maithil community possible.

Carolyn Brown has explained this theory in her analysis of the rank system in terms of

a "theory of quasi-biological kinship"[71] that is based upon the "ethnosociological" model

used by Ronald Inden and McKim Marriott in their analysis of marriage and kinship in

Bengal. Brown claims that the indigenous Maithil view of the rank system is based upon

the principle of "substance", which she defines as being "inherently of a moral order, which

carries its own code-for-conduct, which has a nature with a propensity to act in certain

ways."[72] The quality of 'substance' of Maithil Brahmin lineages was judged by a king, in the

manner explained in the above legend. The 'substance' of lineages was not fixed, but was

mutable and could be changed by conduct and marriage. Brown defines conduct, or what

she refers to as *karmakanda*, as "the expression of the in-born code-for-conduct in the action

---

[70]Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. II, pt. I, 65.
[71]Brown, "Substance and Structure," 206.
[72]Ibid., 201.

of the Brahmins."[73] This *karmakanda* is "reflexive", in that a Brahmin's conduct affects his

substance. She explains that a man of a lower rank may change his status by the "favorable

judgements" of genealogists, the king, and his peers.[74] Moreover, she defines *karmakanda*

as "heritable", in that any changes a man makes to his status is passed onto his offspring,

such that "a single elevated man lifts his entire line of descendants, or degrades them."[75]

Brown also states that *karmakanda* is "normative", men of inferior ranks can improve their

'substance' and raise their status by emulating the conduct of superior groups.[76] The role

of marriage, for which she uses the term *vivaha*, in the alteration of 'substance' provides

both a "danger" and an "opportunity". Brown states that if a man marries a woman from a

superior lineage, then that "superior blood is mixed with one's own inferior blood", thereby

improving its 'substance' as it is passed onto the offspring of the couple. Conversely, if the

woman is from a lower lineage than the man, then the 'substance' of the blood becomes

degraded and the offspring "acquire the inferior substance" of the mother.[77]

The application of the 'substance' theory becomes clearer when applied to the case of an

individual Brahmin. Recall from Chapter 1 that the *uteṛha pañjī* specifies the sixteen male

ancestors that form the *sapiṇḍa* boundary outside of which a potential bride or groom may

have any relation. As mentioned in that discussion, a child produced of the union represents

the merger of thirty-two patrilines; thirty-one of which are affinal and the remaining is the

---

[73]Brown, "Substance and Structure," 202.
[74]Ibid.
[75]Ibid.
[76]Ibid., 203.
[77]Ibid.

agnatic lineage. According to the 'substance' theory, that child is the product of the 'substance' of thirty-one lineages mixing with the 'substance' of the primary agnatic lineage.

Brown provides the example of a Jayavara groom and a Shrotriya bride. The offspring of this union will have the 'substance' of sixteen Jayavara lineages and sixteen Shrotriya lineages. A son of this marriage will have the *mūla* of his Jayavara father, but his 'substance' will be much higher than that of his father on account of the Shrotriya 'substance' inherited from his mother. In turn, if this son marries a Shrotriya bride, then the offspring will inherit the 'substance' of sixteen Shrotriya lineages from his mother and the 'substance' of eight Shrotiya lineages from his father along with the 'substance' of the residual eight Jayavara lineages. Now, the 'substance' of the thirty-two lineages that produced this son consists of that of twenty-four Shrotriya lineages and eight Jayavara lineages. In this way, if Shrotriya brides can be acquired for the sons of the next five generations, then the son of the sixth generation would have the 'substance' of thirty-one Shrotriyas, but the 'substance' of the agnatic Jayavara lineage would still remain. Brown states that a "Jaibar [Jayavara] lineage may marry all Srotriya for eight generations", which which point "individuals will be composed of 31 parts of Srotriya substance", but "that thirty-second line cannot be thrown off" because it is "the inferior line of his Jaibar fathers which gives him his permanent lineage identity." The agnatic line is "his core of continuous substance."[78] As a Shrotriya lineage is considered superior, the system is designed to permit "the reckoning of precise

_____

[78]Brown, "Substance and Structure," 204.

proportions of Srotriya substance which any *kula* [family] had acquired through strategic intermarriage".[79]

The above measurement of the 'substance' that makes up an individual Brahmin points to Kumārila's assertion that the offspring of a marriage between persons of different *varṇa* "regains the original purity of the caste of his either parent, by a continuous excellence, or otherwise, of conduct and relationships, when he reaches the fifth or seventh generation downwards". Kumārila was referring to the principles of *jātyutkarṣa* and *jātyapakarṣa* as explained by Yājñavalkya and Vijñāneśvara.

of thirty-two Shrotriya lineages marries a bride from a Jayavara family. Their offspring would possess the 'substance' of sixteen Shrotriya lineages and sixteen Jayavara lineages. If their son subsequently marries a Jayavara bride, then the child of this union would have the 'substance' of eight Shrotriya and twenty-four Jayavara lineages. In any case, all male descendants would retain a small fraction of Shrotriya 'substance' on account of the original Shrotriya rank of the agnatic lineage.

In the past, it may have been possible for a Brahmin father to have sons of mixed *jāti*-s, one from a Brahmin wive and the other from a Kshatriya wife. The status of these sons would be different although they have the same father. The rank system of the Maithil Brahmins offers the reality that the status of sons from the same father and mother may be different. Imagine the scenario that a Shrotriya family has three sons. The first son is married to a Shrortiya bride, the second to a Yogya bride, and the third to a Jayavara

_____

[79]Brown, "Substance and Structure," 207.

bride. This scenario will result in the grandchildren of the second and third sons belonging to different grades, although the grandfather is a Srotriya.

In this way, it is possible to claim that the *pañjī prabandha* internalized a major principle of the *varṇa* system within a single *varṇa*. As the rules of Brahmin marriage in Mithila mandated that Brahmins must marry within the *varṇa*, the *pañjī* abolished the concessions permitted by Yājñavalkya and other *dharma* authorities for Brahmins to marry wives of other *varṇa*-s. With the rise of marriages based upon genealogies and rank, the classification of inter-*varṇa* offspring was moved to within the Maithili Brahmin caste and redirected towards the classification of *jāti*-s within the community.

By specifying that 'Brahminhood' is a function of birth, Kumārila laid the foundation for ascriptive identity based upon genealogy. The rank system of the Maithil Brahmins, however, takes hereditary identity to a whole new level. Srotriya status was originally based upon one's individual actions. The legend of the king's assembly states that the thirteen Brahmins who showed up last did so because they were devoted Brahmins. The rank system set up a standard that status was no longer based solely upon one's individual behavior, but upon his parentage. A Yogya may be a more accomplished scholar than a Srotriya, but the rank system fixed his status. It seems that the quandary posed by Śabara was taken to heart by the Maithils, for they not only developed a genealogical means for recognizing a Brahmin, for ensuring that future members of the community would be 'Brahmin' on account of their lineages, but they developed a grade system for assessing the status of each Brahmin.

162

3.5   Origins of Lineage Rank

In the previous chapter I discussed the possibility that the *mūla* of the Maithils could have been constructed based upon pre-existing information on the ancestral territories of Brahmins as well as new information gleaned from continued analysis of new genealogical records. The same question may be applied to the rank system: do the grades represent pre-existing notions of status among the Brahmins of Mithila before *pañjī prabandha* or do they represent a new paradigm of status that emerged after the genealogical census? I offer that, like the *mūla*, the ranking of lineages was based upon the existing social status of Brahmin families before and during *pañjī prabandha* as well as upon status conferred upon families as a result of genelogical analysis and personal achievement during and after *pañjī prabandha*. There are two points that deserve some discussion. The first is that continued genealogical analysis likely resulted in increased knowledge about the marital practices of lineages well beyond what may have been remembered or recorded by individual families. By collating information on families at the level of the *mūla*, the *pañjīkara*-s were certainly able to identify the qualities of marital relations to much greater depth than individual familiies themselves were capable of perceiving. The status of a family may have risen or fallen based upon the history of marriages within their *mūla*. For instance, if genealogists identified consanguineous marriages within some lineages of a Shrotriya *mūla* then the status of those lineages would be degraded. The second point is that there is evidence that shows the high status of several *mūla*-s before *pañjī prabandha*. As shown in the discussion of the Visaphī *mūla*, it is apparent that their close relationship with the Karnata

dynasty and their own prominence within the Brahmin community gave them a rank in the

pañjī system. The same applies to the Khauāla, Oini, Siṃhāśrama, Sodarapura, Gaṅgaulī,

and Khaṇḍavalā *mūla*-s, who were known for their scholarship.

In his study of the Bangaon copper-plate described previously, D. C. Sircar writes that

the record "exhibits the great importance attached by the local Brahmanas of Tirabhukti to

their relationship with the Brahmanas of Kolanca".[80] He points to the fact that the Brahmin

minister Ghantisa "is found to trace his ancestry to a Kolancha Brahmana" in the inscription

on the record. Based upon this, Sircar concludes that Ghantisa's "partiality to the Brah-

manas of Kolancha is also indicated by the endowment made by him out of his own land in

favour of another Kolancha Brahman".[81] He supports his claim by stating the following:

> That Kolancha, together with Tarkari, apparently not far from it, was one of the most
> renowned seats of learned Brahmanas in the early medieval period is definitely sug-
> gested by numerous characters of East Indian rulers granted in favour of the Brahmanas
> hailing from that place. The identification of the locality is disputed. Some scholars
> locate it is the ancient Sravasti country, i.e., the district round modern Set-Mahet on
> the borders of the Gonda and Bahraich Districts of the U. P., while other are inclined
> to place it on the borders of the Dinajpur and Bogra Districts of North Bengal. The
> suggestion of the former group of scholars appears to be more reasonable. Equally in-
> teresting is the fact that the reverential attitude of East Indian Brahmanas towards the
> Brahmanas of Kolancha, as evidenced by the record under review, seems to have been
> an important factor in the growth of the peculiar social institution, known as Kulinism,
> in North Bihar and Bengal.[82]

The 'kulinism' to which Sircar points in Mithila is the *pañjī* records and in Bengal to

the *kulapañjī* records. The traditional legend among the Bengali Brahmins is that a king

named Adisura wanted to perform a sacrifice, but that there were no Vedic Brahmins in

his kingdom. So, Adisura invited five learned Brahmins along with their servants from

---

[80] Sircar, "Aspects of Marriage in North Indian Society," 30.
[81] Sircar, "Bangaon Plate," 52–53.
[82] Ibid., 53.

Kolanca. The Radha and Varendra Brahmins trace their ancestry to these five Brahmins from Kolanca, or Kanauj. During the 12th century, a Karnata king named Ballala or Ballalasena (c. 1159–79 CE) is credited with introducing a hierarchy into the Brahmin caste by ranking the descendants of the five Brahmins from Kolancha. Sircar claims that there is epigraphical evidence for the establishing of this system in both Mithila and Bengal. He cites the Bangoan copper-plate inscription described above, in which Ghāṇṭūkaśarman of Kolanca is granted land in the village of Vasukavartta in Tirabhukti.

The difficulty with Sircar's assessment that the Brahmins of Mithila "attached importance" to the Brahmins of Kolancha. While the Bengali *kulapanji*-s mention the migration of five Brahmins from Kolancha to Bengal, such information is absent from Maithil records. Moreover, it is not clear to which "Brahmins of Mithila" Sircar is referring? It may be the case that the minister Ghantisa had given preference to a Brahmin from his maternal ancestral territory, but as discussed in the previous chapter, Ghantisa may have been a Brahmin from Mithila, but he was not a Maithil Brahmin and there is no record of him in the *pañjī*. As I have shown in this chapter, the growth of 'Kulinism' or lineage-based status, in Mithila arose not from the external origins of the Maithil lineages, but from the importance of certain lineages within the Karnata kingdom and their proximity to the king's authority. It may have certainly been the case that the ancestry of a *viji purūṣa* could be traced to Kolancha or some other territory, but the *pañjī prabandha* severed any such ties. While the Radha and Varendra Brahmins of Bengal trace their ancestry to Kolancha and consider themselves as

165

a sub-section of the Kanyakubja Brahmins, the Maithil Brahmins do not trace their ancestry outside of Mithila.

3.6 Conclusion

The creation of hereditary Brahmin lineages through the codification of the *mūla* had two repercussions on the Maithil community. Both arise from the ranking of the lineages. First, the lineage ranking resulted in the stratification of the caste. Because of the emphasis placed upon endogamy within the grades, the three grades began to function like sub-castes. The second repercussion was the emergence of the Shrotriya grade as the preeminent grade of Brahmin. A Brahmin was a Shrotriya on account of his learning and conduct, and these qualifications were recognized by the king. In this way the Shrotriya title gave the Brahmin access to certain privileges with regard to the king. It is commonly understood that the purpose of *pañjī prabandha* was to prevent illegitimate marriages among the Brahmins of Harisimhadeva's kingdom. The introduction of a ranking system and the expansion of the panji records indicate that there was a purpose to the implementation of official genealogies that extended beyond the domain of marriage. Although there are no manuscript or epigraphical sources from the Karnata period that offer any insight into the reasons for the implementation of *pañjī prabandha*, I have demonstrated using the *pañjī* records, literary sources, and inscriptions that Brahmins had attained prominent positions within the Karnata kingdom. Moreover, these Brahmins appear to be largely responsible for the actions of the king, to the point that a 'council' ushered in the reign of Harisimhadeva by advocating the

166

abdication of his father, Sakrasimha. That members of the Visaphī *mūla* retained hereditary positions within the government, and that these individuals authored treatises on everything from the duties of a householder to the bestowal of grants to the proper sacraments to be followed during certain holidays, indicates that they held considerable influence over the kingdom. It is quite possible that the idea for *pañjī prabandha* arose from these *smṛti* writers. The intent could have been multifarious, so that it would include a system for ensuring proper marriages, as well as for maintaining a census of the Brahmins of the kingdom, and for understanding 'who is who' among the community. Given the power of Brahmins in the Karnata kingdom, it is fair to establish that the *pañjī prabandha* was conceived by and implemented by Brahmins for Brahmins, and that as a matter of protocol they attached the name of Harisimhadeva to the endeavor. In the next chapter I discuss the emergence of a new authority of certain Brahmin lineages at a time of distress, or the rise of a Brahmin king.

Gotra	Uttama	Madhyama
Śāṇḍilya	Pabaulī Gaṅgaulī Kharaura Sodarapura Sarisaba	Dirghosa Yajuāṛa
Vatsa	Ghusauta Tisauta Karmaha Buddhavala Baherāṛha Alayī Pali Bambhiyama Hariyāma	Ṭaṅkavala Jallakī Ujati Phanadaha Sankona
Kāśyapa	Darihara Mandara Sankaradhi Khauāla	Baliyāsa Pandua Bisapi Satalakha Oini
Parāśara	Narauna	Suragaṇa
Sāvarṇa	—	Pañcobha
Bhāradvāja	—	Belauñca Ekahara
Kātyāyana	Kujauli	—

Table 3.2: Eatablished (*vyavasthita*) *mūla*-s of the Maithil Brahmins.

Chapter 4

The Brahmin as King

The regulation of brahminical genealogies and marriage practices in the Karṇāṭa kingdom established the Brahmins of Mithila as an endogamous, territorial *jāti* of 'Maithila Brahmins'. Soon afterwards, the newly-established community was faced with two challenges that changed the nature of the *jāti*. The first of these was the introduction of a hierarchical instructure into the social organization of the Maithil Brahmins. The second was the end of Harisimhadeva's rule. Soon after the *pañjī prabandha,* the army of Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq (r. 1321–1325) overran Mithila after subjugating the kingdom of Lakhnauti in Bengal and forced Harisimhadeva to flee from the throne to the foothills in Nepal.[1] The ouster of Harisimhadeva ended two centuries of Karṇāṭa rule in Mithila. More importantly, it terminated traditional Hindu rule by Kshatriyas in the region. With the defeat of Harisimhadeva, Mithila was incorporated into the Delhi Sultanate and was known administratively as 'Tirhut'.[2] The *pañjī-prabandha* carried out during the reign of Harisimhadeva placed the control of the social order of the Maithil Brahmins into the hands of the king. Now after the defeat of Harisimhadeva they had to accommodate the rule of the Sultan at

---

[1] Ansari, "Tughluq Control over Bihar," 158–159.
[2] Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 201.

169

Delhi. After a long period of political instability in north Bihar brought about by the campaigns of Ghiyas-ud-din, his son and successor Muhammad bin Tughlug (r. 1325–1351) restored Hindu rule in the region through the appointment of a new ruler of Tirhut.[3] This new regent, however, was no ordinary Hindu king, in fact he was not even a Kshatriya. Kameshwar Thakur was a high-ranking Brahmin of the Oini *mūla* and the former *rāja paṇḍita* 'royal priest' of Maharaja Harisimhadeva.

Between 1351 and 1947, there were two main Brahmin lineages that controlled various parts of Mithila. The first was the Oinivara, which was followed by the Khandavala. The Brahmins of these lineages established dynasties that maintained both social and political control over the territories of the erstwhile Tirabhukti, which by the time of the Delhi Sultanate had come to be known as Tirhut. These Brahmin rulers acquired their power from both external and internal sources. In their role as functional Kshatriyas, the Oinivaras and political elites of other lineages protected their local power and landed interests by deriving their authority from external rulers. They then leveraged this authority internally to preserve the integrity of the Maithil Brahmin community and their status as high-ranking members of the *jāti*. In doing so these Brahmin-kings maintained their position through a precarious dichotomy: on the one hand, their status as high-ranking Brahmins bound them to the caste community through marriage and kin relations, and on the other their status as rulers bound them to the larger political domain. In this chapter I discuss the manner in which the Brahmin rulers of Tirhut exerted their control externally, namely how they maintained control of the space between the local community and imperial society by positioing them-

---

[3] Ansari, "Tughluq Control over Bihar," 170–171.

selves a buffer between the Brahmin *varṇa* and the profane domain of the Delhi Sultans, the Mughals, and finally the British.

4.1   The Start of Brahmin Rule

Formal rule by Brahmins in Tirhut began with the Oinivaras (see figure 4.2). The sixteen rulers of this dynasty faced the turbulence of shifting imperial powers, contestations for the territorial integrity of Tirhut, and attempts by kinsmen to usurp their powers. Yet, the Oinivaras managed to maintain a level of control over Tirhut for nearly two centuries (c. 1351–1532). However, it is not clear exactly how and why Kameshvar Thakur acquired the sanction to rule Tirhut. Some indication is given in the chronicles of Ikhtisan, a minister of Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq, who was part of the Sultan's expedition to Bengal. With regard to the Sultan's attack on Harisimhadeva, the chronicle reports:

> The Rai of Tirhut was arrogant on account of his resources in man and material and also strong fortification. He did not acknowledge the overlordship of the Sultan of Delhi, let alone the payment of tribute. Informed of the march of the Delhi army under the command of the Sultan into his territory, he lost courage and sough safety in flight. He considered the forest and hills safer than his fort. A few days later, the Sultan entered the large city of Tirhut. He stayed there for quite some time to organize the administration of the region. The officers were posted in the newly carved-out territorial units and the land chiefs who resisted, depending on the dense forests around their strongholds, were attached and eliminated. But those chiefs who acquiesed were spared and rewarded with additional land for maintaining an increased number of soldiers for the service of the centre.[4]

The "Rai of Tirhut" is Harisimhadeva, but the account does not specify the identity of these "land chiefs". Of interest is the point that 'chiefs who acquiesed' were given control of the conquered territories of the Karnata kingdom, which had been incorporated as an *iqta*

---

[4]Siddiqui, *Perso-Arabic Sources on the Life and Conditions in the Sultanate of Delhi*, 95.

within the Sultanate.[5] According to the historian Iqtidar Hussain Siddiqui, the Sultans of Delhi had a particular policy regarding lands helds by Hindus. He writes, "[t]he ruling elite of the Sultanate differentiated the *raiyat* (or Hindu masses) from the high-caste Hindus, the Brahmans, and the land chiefs."[6] Moreover, they considered these high-caste Hindus as hereditary land chiefs and the Sultan's policy towards such chiefs was influenced by the traditions established by Muslim rulers in Sind and Punjab. Siddiqui cites the example of Qutbuddin Aibek, the founder of the Delhi Sultanate, who "appointed a Rana from the Benaras territory as *sahib-i-barid* (the head of the intelligence department), although his Muslim associates were opposed to an Indian's appointment to such an important post."[7] The goal of such an appointment was likely to gain the confidence and loyalty of local political elites, who were willing to recognize the authority of the Sultan of Delhi. Siddiqui also cites the example of Rai Ramchandra of Deogiri, who was defeated by Alauddin Khalji in 1307, but had his territory restored to him as a *zamindari*.[8] During the reign of Firoz Shah Tuqhluq, the successor to Ghiyas-ud-din, the term *zamindar* was applied to hereditary land chiefs, which suggests that they had autonomy in their territories.[9]

The preference of the Delhi Sultans for appointing high-caste Hindus as *zamindar*-s may explain the appointment of Kameshvar Thakur as a ruler of Tirhut. In the previous chapter I explained that the Oini lineage of the Khauala *mūla* had been recognized as an eminent lineage and that it was established as an independent *mūla*. The *mūla* was estab-

---

[5]Siddiqui, *Authority and Kingship under the Sultans of Delhi*, 246.
[6]Ibid., 72.
[7]Ibid., 73.
[8]Ibid., 75.
[9]Ibid.

lished after Oinaha was granted the village that was named 'Oini' after him. The excerpt of the Khauala *mūla pañjī* shows that Kameshvar Thakur was a *raja pandita*, presumbly at the Karnata court. It would not be too far-fetched to consider that after Harisimhadeva fled from Tirhut, Kameshvar the 'chief priest' and Candesvara the 'minister of war and peace' of the Karnata court came forward when Ghiyas-ud-din rewarded land to chiefs who displayed their loyalty and petitioned for control of the lands of their former king. The social status of Kameshwar Thakur and the long-standing position of the family of Candesvara may have been viewed favorably by the Delhi Sultan, especially as gaining the loyalty of these high-ranking Brahmins might encourage other landed elites in the community to accept the new authority in Delhi.

Kameshvar Thakur was installed as the Sultan's representative in Tirhut by Muhammad bin Tughlug (r. 1325–1351). The Sultan, however, did not give Kameshwar sole authority to manage Tirhut. He appointed the ruler of Lakhnauti, Haji Ilyas Shah, to oversee Kameshwar Thakur. When Muhammad bin Tughluq passed away, Ilyas Shah sensed an opportunity to exert his control over Tirhut. He invaded the province and divided it into two. The chronicler Mulla Taqiya wrote that Kameshvar objected to the action and raised forces to defend his territories, but after several battles Ilyas Shah asserted his dominance over Kameshwar.[10] Ilyas Shah took control of the western and southern portions of Tirhut — the areas known as Hajipur, after Haji Ilyas — and he left the northern areas and the areas east of the river Gandak with Kameshwar. Shortly after ascending to the throne at Delhi, Firoz

---

[10]Ansari, "Consolidation of Tughlaq Rule," 186.

Shah Tuqhluq (r. 1351–1388) launched a campaign against Haji Ilyas. After reacquiring

Tirhut, Firoz Shah issued a *farman* in 1353, which reads

> The *zamindars*, amongst whom are included *muqaddams*, *mafruzian*, *malikan*, etc., from the bank of the river Kosi up to the boundary of Lakhnauti (Bengal), who come and join us would be exempted from the payment of revenue (tribute) for the current year. Moreover, the privileges enjoyed by their ancestors during the reigh of Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish would be restored and the tribute refixed accordingly.[11]

Firoz Shah deposed Kameshvar, and placed the latter's son Bhogishvara in charge of the

territory. In the *Kirtilata*, Vidyapati remarks that Bhogishvara was a *piya sakhi* 'dear friend'

of Firoz Shah, but the description is likely a polite way of expressing the Sultan's discontent

with Kameshvar's ability to maintain control of Tirhut and to defend the territories under

his control from invaders. Some sources state that Bhogishvara decided to share control of

Tirhut with his brother Bhavasimha.[12] It may not have been an equal share of the right to

rule, but a deputation of authority of a portion of territory. The jurisdictions over which the

brothers Bhogishvara and Bhavasimha presided is not recorded, but their joint rule seems to

have provoked the jealousy of the latter, which resulted in the murder of Bhogishvara. Bh-

ogishvara was replaced by his son Ganeshvara, who according to Vidyapati was murdered

by a Turk named Aslan. Some modern scholars claim that Ganeshvara was actually mur-

dered by someone in his uncle Bhavasimha's lineage in an attempt to gain complete control

of Tirhut. They hold that the story of Aslan is a sanitization of the facts by Vidyapati. The

historian Radhakrishna Chaudhary states that Devasimha, the son of Bhavasimha launched

a coup to take control of the rulership. Despite the attempt, Ganeshvara's son Kirtisimha

---

[11]Siddiqui, *Authority and Kingship under the Sultans of Delhi*, 174.
[12]Grierson, "On Some Mediæval Kings of Mithila," 58.

is reconfirmed as the rightful ruler. The line of Bhogishvara ends with Kirtisimha as he passes away without a male heir.

The Oinivara rulership of Tirhut passes over to the lineage of Bhavasimha, who had two sons. The elder son, Devasimha, becomes the Oinivara king, but abdicates in favor of his son, Sivasimha. Sivasimha is considered to be the most politically active king of the Oinivaras. He colluded with Raja Kansa, a *zamindar* of Bengal, with the purpose of gaining independence from Ibrahim Shah Sharqi of Jaunpur. But, he was captured by Ibrahim Shah, who restored Devasimha as the ruler. After the death of Devasimha, Ibrahim Shah once again placed control of Tirhut in the hands of Sivasimha. Why Ibrahim Shah did so is not known. Sivasimha, in any case, revolted again. He is said to have asserted his independence from Delhi and Jaunpur by ceasing payment of taxes or tribute. He minted his own coins and initiated military campaigns against other landed chiefs on the borders of Tirhut.[13] After his death his queen Lakhimadevi took control of Tirhut and eventually the rulership passed to Sivasimha's younger brother Padmasimha. Padmasimha was also succeeded by his queen Visvasadevi. The Oinivara line of Devasimha ended here, as both Sivasimha and Padmasimha died without male heirs.

The Oini rulership passed to Bhavasimha's second son Harisimha, who in turn was followed by Narasimha. By this time the territory controlled by the Oinivaras had been significantly reduced. Nasir Shah (r. 1442–1459) of Bengal had taken control of the Bhagalpur region of eastern Tirhut. The western portion of Tirhut centered upon Hajipur also came under the sway of Nasir Shah. After Narasimha's death, his eldest son Dhirasimha

---

[13]Choudhary, *History of Muslim Rule in Tirhut*, 74.

took control of the Oinivara territory. But in 1470, Ruknuddin Barbak Shah invaded Tirhut and once again split the province into two; he established himself at Hajipur and gave control of the residual Tirhut to Dhirasimha's brother Bhairavasimha (r. 1475). Bhairavasimha asserted his independence from Barbak Shah and managed to conquer Hajipur and extend Tirhut to its original western boundary along the river Gandak.[14] He managed to maintain control of Tirhut, but after his death the Bengal Sultan reclaimed the territory. In 1495, Sikander Lodi (r. 1489–1517) overran Tirhut. Not much is known about the condition of Oinivara rule under Bhairavasimha's son Ramabhadrasimha. As Lodi influence was unstable in Tirhut, the Sultan of Bengal, Alauddin Hussain Shah, took advantage of the situation and conquered northern Bihar from Purnea in the east to Saran in the west. Ramabhadrasimha somehow remained a ruling chief of Tirhut throughout all of this. His son Lakshinathasimha (r. 1518–1532) took over, but five years after Alauddin's son Nasrat Shah invaded Tirhut in 1527, the latter ended the life of the Oinivara ruler and subjugated Tirhut. The defeat of Lakshinathasimha brought the Oinivara dynasty of Tirhut to a close. The Oinivara rulers were certainly active in maintaining their control of Tirhut in the face of changing political circumstances throughout northern India and the various imperial dynasties through which Tirhut passed as a tributary province. In addition to external political pressures, the Oinivaras dealt with feuds within the family, as brother vied against brother for the position of ruling chief of Tirhut.

In the *Kirtilata*, a lyrical work from the 15th century about the Oinivara kings, Vidyāpati writes:

---

[14]Choudhary, *History of Muslim Rule in Tirhut*, 79.

176

ओइनी वंस पसिद्ध जग को तसु करइ ण सेव । दुहु एक्कत्थ न पाविअइ भुअवै अरु भूदेव ॥

The Oini dynasty is known throughout the world; is there anyone who does not serve it?
Nowhere else are Brahmins and kings found mingled together.

ता कुल केर वड्डिपन कहवा कवन उँपाए । जञ्जम्मिअ उप्पन्नमति कमेसर सन राए ॥

By what measure should the greatness of the lineage be described;
where else was arisen a king equal in maturity and intellect to Kameshvara?

तसु नन्दन भोगिसराआ वर भोग पुरन्दर । हुआ हुआसन तेजिकन्ति कुसुमाउँह सुन्दर ॥
जाचक सिद्धि केदार दान पञ्चम वलि जानल । पिआसखा भणि पिअरोजसाह सुरतान समानल ॥

His son Bhogishvara delighted in luxuries on par with Indra [Purandara].
As splendid and handsome as Kamadeva [Kusumayudha],
he was known for his donations to beggars and mendicants; he was five times as great as Bali.
The Sultan Firoz Shah called him his dear friend.

तासु तनअ नअ विनअ गुन गुरुअ राए गएनेस । जे पट्ठाइअ दसओ दिस किन्तिकुसुम संदेस ॥

His son was Ganeshvara, who was righteous, loyal, and had all the qualities of a *guru*;
his fame and splendor spread in each of the ten directions.

तान्हि करो पुत्र युवराजन्हि [...] स्विमद्वीरसिंह । तासु कनिट्ठ गरिट्ठ गुण किन्तिसिंह ।[15]

His sons were the princes [...] Virasimha, and his younger brother Kirtisimha.

The above portrays the Oinivara lineage as one where Brahmins and kings 'mingled together'. It is the first time in Mithila where such a 'mingling' had taken place.

4.2   The Nature of Brahmin Rulership

The overthrow of the Karnata dynasty and the rise of a Brahmin king changed the nature of kingship in Tirhut and altered some basic brahminical ideologies about the king and the state. A few generations after Kameshvara Thakur began his rule, the old minister

---

[15]*Kīrtilatā* pt. 1 (Sakasenā, *Kīrtilatā*, 10–14).

Candesvara wrote a treatise titled *Rājanīti-ratnākara*. By this time he had written six other

treatises on various aspects of *smṛti*, but this seventh would be his last. Candesvara reports

that the work was written at the request of the Oinivara king Bhavasimha.[16] During the reign

of Harisimhadeva, Candesvara had composed his *Gṛhasta-ratnākara*, which may have been

motivated by the social changes in Mithila out of which the *pañjī prabandha* emerged. The

instability that arose after the fall of the Karnata kingdom and that continued through the

early generations of the Oini dynasty may have likewise inspired Candesvara to compile

his thoughts regarding the nature of kingship and the political organization of the state

during an era that the law-giver Manu might have called *āpat*, or 'despair'. Candesvara

opens the *Rājanīti-ratnākara* with a section titled 'Rājño Nirūpaṇa' or 'The Qualities of a

King', at the outset of which he defines the meaning of *rāja* or 'king' as "he who protects

the people".[17] Then, he provides the example of the mythical Veṇa, an evil king, as a

hypothetical objection to the definition he offers of the king as 'protector'. "If protection

of the people makes one a king, then the meaning of a 'king' is questionable because Veṇa

didn't protect people, but he was still a king." Candesvara responds that kingship is a matter

of capability, and even Veṇa was capable, even if he did not fulfill his potential for just rule.

This discussion of the basic meaning of a king and the importance of 'capability' (*yogyatā*)

is intended to emphasize the primary point that Candesvara wishes to make in this section

of the treatise, which follows as:

---

[16]*Rājanīti-ratnākara*, pt. 1: राज भावेशेनाज्ञप्तो राजनीतिनिबन्धकम् । तनोतो मन्त्रिणामार्य्यः श्रीमान् चण्डेश्वरः कृती ॥ (Jayaswal, *Rājanīti-Ratnākara by Chaṇḍeśvara*, 1).

[17]*Rājanīti-ratnākara* pt. 1: [...] प्रजारक्षको राजेत्यर्थः (ibid., 2).

अत एव कुल्लूकभट्टः राजशब्दोऽपि नात्र क्षत्रियजातिपरः किन्त्वभिषिक्तजनपदपालयितृपुरुषपरः । राज-
नीतिकामधेनौ राज्याभिषिक्तो राजा प्रजापालनादेस्तदीयत्वात् तत्प्राक् ज्ञानासंभवाच्चेति प्रजापालने प्रवृत्त
इति बहवः । वस्तुतस्तु प्रजापालनप्रवृत्त्यभिषेकादयोऽस्य कारणमात्रं प्रजास्वामित्वे राजत्वेन प्रसिद्धो राजा
केवलशौर्य्याच्चाक्षराज्यस्य राजत्वव्यवहारादिति गुरवः ॥[18]

As stated by Kulluka Bhatta: "the word *rāja* here is not only indicative of one from the
Kshatriya *jāti*, but also to one who has been coronated in order to care for the country".
The *Rājanīti-kāmadhenu* states "he who is coronated in the kingdom is the king and
before that it is not possible to have experience in looking after the people because only
the king is engaged in such duty. [need to finish the translation]

According to Candesvara the word *rāja* generally indicates someone from the Kshatriya
varṇa, but it is not necessary that the king be a Kshatriya. The point of having a king,
he offers, is to provide protection of the people and kingdom, and therefore, he who is
coronated as the king, whatever be his *varṇa*, is to be regarded as the king as long as he
fulfills his obligation. After laying down the definition of a king and who may sit upon the
throne, Candesvara offers the following:

राजा तु त्रिविधो ज्ञेयस्सम्राट् च सकरोऽकरः ।
सर्व्वेभ्यः क्षितिपालेभ्यो नित्यं गृह्णाति वै करम् ॥
स सम्राडिति विज्ञेयश्चक्रवर्त्ती स एव हि ।
मासि मासि करन्दद्यात्प्रत्यब्दञ्च तथैव च ॥
सकरः स तु विज्ञेयो राजलक्षणसंयुतः ।
करं सन्देशव्याजेन यो ददाति हि स्वेच्छया ।
अधीश्वरन्तमेवाहुः शास्त्रे शास्त्रविदो जनाः ॥[19]

There are three types of kings, known as *samrāṭ*, *sakara*, and *akara*. He who al-
ways collects taxes from all from kings is known as a *samrāṭ* 'emperor' and is also
a *cakravartin* 'world conquerer'. He, who gives taxes on a monthly basis or every
year is known as a *sakara* 'taxed'. He who gives tax on his own accord under the pre-
tense of a gift, he known by people as an *adhisvara* 'king or lord' as described in the
sastra-s.

---

[18] *Rājanīti-ratnākara* pt. 1. (Jayaswal, *Rājanīti-Ratnākara by Chaṇḍeśvara*, 2–3).
[19] *Rājanīti-ratnākara* pt. 1. (ibid., 3).

Candesvara's three-fold classification of a king suggests that political thinkers in 14th century Tirhut realized that times had changed. Ideally, the king would be a sovereign or an emperor, but it was acceptable if his position and rule was subordinate to an imperial authority. It may be inferred from Candesvara that the payment of mandatory taxes or the realization of taxes in the form of tribute was also acceptable, particularly if it meant that the king was able to maintain order within his local realm or jurisdiction. He further states:

> [...] स्मृत्यादावमी राजत्वेन प्रख्याता लोके तु राजेति सकरः चक्रवर्त्ती सम्राट् अधीश्वरो महाराज इति प्रसिद्धाः विशेषप्रतिपत्त्यनुरोधात् परन्तु त्रयाणामपि धर्म्मे सममेव विशेषानभिधानात् । [...][20]
>
> According to the *smṛti* and other sources, these kings are all known commonly as 'kings'; a *sakara*, *cakravarti*, *samrāṭ*, and *adhisvara* are known as '*maharāja*' in accordance with the nature of their reign; but, despite the differences, the *dharma* of the three is the same.

Although these three types of kings are differentiated by being the recipient or giver of tax or tribute, they still have the same duties and responsibilities. The classification of kings with regard to their relative independence and dependence is important to Candesvara, for he continues to describe the specific features of each. He states that there are two types of the *akara raja* or *adhisvara*: one who is free from taxation either on account of his heroism (*saurya*) or by the mercy (*anugraha*) of the *samrāṭ*.[21] The first is able to rule on his own accord, while the other rules through the direct oversight of the *samrāṭ*.[22] The *akara raja* conducts his own affairs within the rule of law and gives tribute for the sake of maintaining peace.[23] There are also two types of *sakara raja*, differentiated by the right to enforce the

---

[20]*Rājanīti-ratnākara* pt. 1. (Jayaswal, *Rājanīti-Ratnākara by Chaṇḍeśvara*, 4).

[21]*Rājanīti-ratnākara*, pt. 1: अधीश्वरो द्विविधः शौर्य्यादकरः सम्राडनुग्रहाद्करः । (ibid.).

[22]*Rājanīti-ratnākara*, pt. 1: आद्यः स्वेच्छयैव दण्डादि ददाति । द्वितीयोऽप्यनुग्रहात् । (ibid.).

[23]*Rājanīti-ratnākara*, pt. 1: द्वितीयाभिप्रायेणेदम् आद्यश्शमार्थं सन्देशव्याजेन किञ्चित्करं ददाति । (ibid.).

rule of law. The first type has the ability to enforce and punish with sole authority, while the second type does not have the authority to punish and may have his enforcement abilities overruled by the *samrāṭ*.[24]

It is apparent that Candesvara wrote the *Rājanīti-ratnākara* at a time when Tirhut was no longer governed by a sovereign ruler, a Kshatriya, or a Hindu. The times may have changed, but as Candesvara makes it clear through this treatise, the shifting political circumstances in the land did not invalidate the necessity of kingship. Regardless of the broader changes, the local kingdom and its people still needed to be protected. The Karnata Kshatriyas were gone, so Candesvara states that anyone can become the ruler so long as he is coronated and he ensures the prosperity of the kingdom and its inhabitants. The classification of three types of kings is also significant. Candesvara recognized that the king may be not independent and that his ultimate authority may derive from an external source. He was also aware that the position of a ruler and the welfare of the kingdom may depend upon an economic relationship between the local ruler and a *samrāṭ*. Candesvara started his career under Harisimhadeva and ended it in service in the court of Bhavasimhadeva. During this time he witnessed the fall of the Karnatas, the entrance of Turkic governors, and the establishment of the Oinivara dynasty. It was likely through these experiences that Candesvara gained the insight to modify traditional principles of kingship to meet the needs of a new era. With the rise of Kameshvar and the Oinivara dynasty, it is possible that Candesvara's acceptance of a non-Kshatriya king was a veiled validation of brahminical kingship.

---

[24]*Rājanīti-ratnākara*, pt. 1: सकरोऽपि द्विविधः अधिकृतदण्डादिरनधिकृतदण्डादिः । (Jayaswal, *Rājanīti-Ratnākara by Chaṇḍeśvara*, 4).

The *Kirtilata* provides additional insight into the nature of brahminical rule in Tirhut under the Oinivaras. Although it is a literary work, its themes and subjects appear to be based to an extent upon the political and social realities of Tirhut as observed by Vidyapati. One section of the text confirms Candesvara's descriptions of the subordinate status of kings. In order to avenge the murder of their father Ganeshvara by a Turk named Aslan, the princes Virasimha and Kirtisimha travel by foot from Tirhut westward to Yavanapura in hopes of seeking an audience with Ibrahim Shah, the Sultan. As he narrates this tale in the *Kīrtilatā*, the poet Vidyapati describes in detail the journey of the two princes as they encounter various villages along the way, steer free from the temptations of the bazaars, observe the mistreatment of a Brahmin boy by a Muslim thug,[25] and finally enter the grand court of the Sultan. When the time comes for Kirtisimha to address the Sultan, he begins, "Today is a great day, it is an auspicious day and the present time is an auspicious moment, for today I will make my mother proud, and today is especially meritorious because I have touched the Sultan's slippers."[26] He then states, "but there are two misfortunate deeds that I must report: Someone is gaining glory by basking in yours, and that someone has sent my father to heaven."[27] The Sultan demanded to know, "Who is he that calls himself king of Tirhut?"[28] The prince replied, "I tell you this with fear in my heart; but, you are

---

[25]*Kirtilata*, pt. 1: हिन्दू तुरके मिलल बास एकक धम्मे अओका उपहास । कतहु वाँग कतहु वेद कतहु मिसिमिल कतहु छेद । कतहु ओझा कतहु षोजा कतहु नकत कतहु रोजा । कतहु तम्बारु कतहु कूजा कतहु नीमाज कतहु पूजा । कतहु तुरुक बरकइ वाँट् जाइते बेगार घर । घरि आनए बाँभन बटुआ मथाँ चडावए गाइक चुडुआ । फोट चाट जनउ तोड उमर चढावए चाह घोर ॥ घोआउरि धाने मदिरा साँध देउर भाँगि मसीद बाँध । गोरि गोमठ पुरिल मही पएर्हुँ देना एक ठाम नहीं ॥ हिन्दू बोलि दुरहि निकार छोटेओ तुरका भभकि मार ॥ हिन्दुहि गोट्ठओ गिलिए हल तुरुक देखि होअ भान । अइसेओ तसु परतापे रह चिरे जीवत सुरतान ॥ (Sakasenā, *Kīrtilatā*, 42–44).

[26]*Kīrtilatā*, pt. 1: अज्ज अच्छव अज्ज कल्हान अज्ज सुदिन सुमुहुत्त अज्ज माजे मझु पुत्त जाइअ अज्ज पुन्न पुरिसथ्था पातिसाह पापोस पाइअ । (ibid., 18).

[27]*Kīrtilatā*, pt. 1: अकुशल वेविहि एक्क पइ अवर तुम्ह परताप । अरु लोअन्तर सग्ग गउ गअणराए मझु बाप ॥ (ibid.).

[28]*Kīrtilatā*, pt. 1: फरमान भेल कजोण चाहि तिर्हुति लेल जन्हि साहि.

182

here, Aslan is there. First, he did not obey what you had commanded, then he murdered Ganeshvara. Now he has taken shelter there. He has hoisted his royal standard and is collecting the taxes of Tirhut."[29] The Sultan grows increasingly incensed as Kirtisimha airs his grievances. Outraged by the new of Aslan, Ibrahim Shah orders his army to move upon Tirhut. The Sultan and the princes reach Tirhut and a great battle ensues. The elder prince Virasimha dies with valor as he protects Kirtisimha from an attack. After Aslan's army is defeated Kritisimha engages the treacherous commander arm to arm. The prince overpowers Aslan, but at the final moment spares his life. Victorious, the Sultan and Kirtisimha leave the battlefield as the sound of conches fills the air. Then, a great celebration is held in which the verses of the four Vedas are recited in all directions, and at an auspicious time Kirtisimha was coronated as king of Tirhut by the Sultan.[30] Vidyapati closes the tale stating that "Kirtisimha's unequalled victories made him equal to the great king Vkramaditya. He gained the benefaction of the Sultan by crushing the pride of the wicked through his own bravery; moreover, Kirtisimha reclaimed his father's kingdom from his enemy and fulfilled the desires of the Sultan in doing so."[31]

As is evident from the title of the work, the *Kīrtilatā* narrates the story of Kirtisimha, the great-great-grandson of Kameshvar Thakur through his elder son Bhogishvara. The narrative focuses upon Kirtisimha's attempt to regain the kingdom of Tirhut, of which his father Ganeshvara was king, and his ultimate success in being made king. The tale possesses

---

[29]*Kīrtilatā*, pt. 1: डरे कहिनी कहए आन जेहां तोहे ताहां असलान । पढम पेल्हिअ तुज्झु फरमान । गएन्राए तौ वधिअ तौन सेअ विहार चापिअ । चलइ तें चामर परइ धरिअ छत्त तिर्हुति उगाहिअ ।

[30]*Kīrtilatā* pt. 1: तो पलट्टिअ जित्ति रण राए शत्रु ध्वनि उच्छलिअ नित्त गीत वज्जिअ चारि वेअ झङ्कार सुह महुत्ता अहिषेक किज्जिअ ।

[31]*Kīrtilatā*, pt. 1: जेन्हे राजे अतुलतरविक्रम विक्रमादित्य करेओ तुलनजे साहस साधि पातिसाह आरादि दुष्टा करेओ दप्प चूरेओ पितृ बैरि उँद्धरि साहि करो मनोरथ पूरेओ (Sakasenā, *Kīrtilatā*, 14).

183

all of the narrative devices and ostentatious details that a court poet would employ in an adulation of his patron and the king's lineage and realm. Vidyapati, who is still celebrated in Mithila, was active in the court of the Oinivara ruler Sivasimha, the great-great-grandson of Kameshvar Thakur from his second son Bhavasimha. Vidyapati's story is, in effect, the history of his patron's paternal cousin. Although the *Kīrtilatā* is a literary work, the plot of the tale, its protagonists and antagonists, as well as the personages and places mentioned in it suggest that the core of the work is based upon historical circumstances.

Additionally, a close reading of the *Kīrtilatā* brings to light much information regarding kingship and governance in Tirhut during Oinivara rule in the 14th century. Firstly, in order to avenge the death of Ganeshvara, the princes inform Ibraham Shah of the incident and seek his permission to take action against Aslan. Secondly, even though Kirtisimha is the prince of Tirhut he shows his deference to the Sultan by touching his slippers. Thirdly, Kirtisimha tells Ibrahmin Shah that Aslan is using the name of the Sultan to impose his rule over Tirhut and, specifically, that he is collecting taxes. This detail suggests that Kirtisimha viewed the collection of taxes as his right and his mention of it is an expression of his own personal displeasure, voiced through Vidyapati, of Aslan's usurpation of his hereditary position. Fourthly, Virasimha and Kirtisimha engage Aslan in battle under the banner of the Sultan, not with their own armies. This may suggest that the military of the Oinivara kings was small or it might be a deference to the Sultan's authority. Fourthly, both Virasimha and Kirtisimha are described as engaging in battle. This suggests perhaps that the Brahmin Oinivaras actually took up arms to defend their rule; equally, it could be seen as poetic

184

license to show the valor of the princes, as might be Kirtisimha sparing the life of Aslan. Lastly, and most importantly, Vidyapati states that with great celebration, and according to proper Vedic rites, the Sultan coronated Kirtisimha as the king of Tirhut.

The *Kīrtilatā*, therefore, suggests that the Oinivara rulers were subordinate to external authorities and that Tirhut was a province or tributary state within a larger empire. The traditional perspective in Mithila is that the Brahmin kings of this time period paid tribute to external rulers, but that Tirhut remained 'independent' of Muslim rule. This perspective is upheld by Shyam Narayan Singh in his *History of Tirhut* (1922), which states that 'the Rājas of Mithilā as of the rest of India were subject to the Delhi Emperor so far as they had to pay revenue, otherwise they were independent.'[32] Such statements are questionable when interpreted through the lenses of the *Kīrtilatā* and other literary sources produced during the Oinivara period and the Khandavala dynasy that succeeded it. More significantly, such statements do not take into account the intricate circumstances and conditions under which the Oinivaras found themselves operating. It is more historically accurate to state that the Oinivaras negotiated with successive imperial regimes in order to preserve their interests. The narrative from the *Kirtilata* also complements Candesvara's descriptions of the three types of subordinate kings. Based upon Candesvara's treatise, it is clear that most Oinivara rulers held onto Tirhut as *sakara raja*-s, or rulers who paid tribute or tax to an emperor. The sources show that the position of these Brahmins as rulers was heavily dependent upon the benefaction of the Sultan of Delhi. Despite the frequent attempts by imperial and regional powers to wrestle Tirhut from the Oinivaras, the province remained in the hands of these

---

[32]Singh, *History of Tirhut*, 68.

Brahmins through their own initiatives and on account of repeated interventions of external powers.

Although it is a departure from the ideals that Manu and Yajnavalkya had established in their *smṛti*-s, the *Rājanīti-ratnākara* accepts a non-Kshatriya king. While Candesvara was open to anyone becoming king, he was less open to changing the traditional structure of the government, or king's court, as was described by Manu and Yajnavalkya. A king is anyone who is coronated and takes on the duty of protecting the people, but he must still have a group of councilors: "a king cannot function without a minister".[33] Quoting Manu, Candesvara says that the king should choose "seven or eight ministers", who are known for their "service to kings, knowledge of the *sastra*-s, experienced in battle, and from prestigious lineages" that have provided hereditary service to kings.[34] He then goes on to state

सर्वेषान्तु विशिष्टेन ब्राह्मणेन विपश्चिता । मन्त्रयेत्परमम्मन्त्रं राजा षाड्गुण्यसंयुतम् ॥
नित्यं तस्मिन् समाश्वस्तः सर्वकार्याणि निःक्षिपेत् । तेन सार्धं विनिश्चित्य ततः कर्म समारभेत् ॥[35]

> The king should seek advice from the Brahmin who is the most accomplished in the six qualities among the ministers. He should entrust that Brahmin with all responsibilities and should always undertake an action with his advice.

In describing the qualities of a king Candesvara says that someone does not have to have experience in looking after the kingdom and its inhabitants because that is the duty of a king. The implication is that an individual learns to do these things once he actually assumes the

---

[33]*Rājanīti-ratnākara*, pt. 2: अमात्यं विना राजकार्य्यं न निर्व्वहती[ति] [...] (Jayaswal, *Rājanīti-Ratnākara by Chaṇḍeśvara*, 10).

[34]*Rājanīti-ratnākara*, pt. 2: मौलाञ्छास्त्रविदः शूरान् लब्धलक्षान् कुलोद्गतान् । सचिवान् सप्त चाष्टौ वा प्रकुर्वीत परीक्षितान् ॥ Candesvara then offers the following gloss: मौलान् कुलसेवकान् कुलोद्गतान् कुलीनान् ॥ (ibid.).

[35]*Rājanīti-ratnākara* pt. 2. (ibid.).

186

role of a king. However, Candevara agrees with the traditional idea put forth by Manu that a king's ministers should be experienced with the duties of rule, and moreover, they are to be Brahmins. Although the *Rājanīti-ratnākara* is a prescriptive text, like the *Manu Smṛti* and *Yājñavalkya Smṛti*, the fact that it was written during the 14th century when Hindu notions of kingship and rule were being thoroughly tested, shows that the Brahmin kings of Tirhut may actually have tried to implement some of these considerations. Another notion that emerges from an analysis of the development of brahminical kingship in medieval Mithila and the available textual sources is that Tirhut during this time was conceived of in the minds of its scholars as a Brahmin state. This state was ruled by a Brahmin king with a court of Brahmin ministers, who negotiated with Muslim emperors, governors, and other functionaries in order to maintain the conceptual connections of community, territory, and society of the Maithil Brahmins.

4.3   The Second Phase of Brahminical Rule

The history of the Oinivara dynasty of Tirhut as it appears in normative histories and the majority of secondary sources describes its origins with Kameshvar Thakur and its demise with Lakshiminatha or 'Kansanarayana'. However, it appears that experience of the Oini *mūla* with rulership was somewhat broader. The *pañjī* records preserve the history of an- other branch of the Oinivaras descending from Kameshvar's younger brother Salakhan (see figure 4.3):

> [...] ओइनाहः ओइनि ग्रामोपार्यकः । ए सुतो अतिरूपः ए सुतो गोविन्दः ए सुतः लक्ष्मनः ए सुता राज पण्डित कामेश्वर रामेश्वर हरिश्वर त्रिपुरे तेवाडी सलखन गोढीकाः सलखन सुतो शिवाई भट्टगओनो लाहि

187

सं शिव दौ । शिवाइ सुता कुमर प्रभाकर श्रिकर सुधाकराः भण्डरिसम सं वंशिधर दौ । प्रभाकर सुतो राज रत्नाकरः निखूति सं कान्ह दौ । राज रत्नकर सुता कुमर मतिकर बुद्धिकर हरिकर लाखूकाः दिघो सं गौरी दौ । कुमर मतिकर सुता माधवसिमःअ मुकुन्दसिंह राजा हरिसिंह ब्रह्मपुरा सं नोने दौ । राज हरिसिंह सुतो राज रामचन्द्रः जालय सं रत्नपानि दौ । राज रामचन्द्र सुता राज प्रताप नारायण पदाङ्कित जगदिश कुमर खगसिंहो सरिसब सं जसाइ दौ । राज प्रताप नारायण सुतो महारज किर्तिनारायण बेलउँच सं परमानन्द दौ पाली सं लक्ष्मिनाथ दौ । माहाराज किर्तिनारायण सुता महाराजा रुद्रनारयण सप्रकीय कुमर मान्धात कुमर शिव बाबू कुमर दुर्लभसिम्हाः पीरापुर अल्लारि सं हरिनाथ सुत अच्युत दौ जालय सं शङ्कर हौ । [...] महाराज रुद्रनारायण सुतो लक्ष्मिनारायण कुमर देवनारायणो जल्लकी सं राय हेमनारायण दौ [...] महाराज लक्ष्मिनारायण सुता महाराज रूपनारायण कुमर् ब्रजनारायण कुमर नरनारायण कुमर ऐनिपालनारायण [...] कर्महा सं राम दौ [...] महाराज रुपनारायण सुता महाराज फतेह्नारायन बाबु जगतनारायण बाबु कुआ प्रसिद्ध मङ्गलनारायण कर्महा सं कमलनयन सुत किसू दौ [...][36]

Oināha is the founder of the Oini *grāma*. His son is Atirūpa. The son of Atirūpa is Govinda, whose son is Lakṣmaṇa. The sons of Lakṣmaṇa are the *rāja paṇḍita* Kāmeśvara, Rāmeśvara, Hariśvara, Tripure, Tevāḍi, Salakhana, and Goḍhi. The son of Salakhana is Śivaī, who married the daughter of Śiva of Lāhi-Bhaṭṭagāon *mūla-grāma*. Śivaī's son is *kumāra* Prabhākara, Śrīkara, Sudhākara; Prabhākara married the daughter of Vaṃśidhara of Bhaṇḍarisama *mūla*. The son of Prabhākara is *rāja* Ratnākara, who married the daughter of Kānha of Nikhuti *mūla*. The sons of Ratnākara are the *kumāra* Matikara, Buddhikara, Harikar and Lakhuka; Matikara married the daughter of Gaurī of Digho *mūla*. The sons of *kumāra* Matikara are Mādhavasiṃha, Mukundasiṃha, *rāja* Harisiṃha; Harisiṃha married the daughter of None of Brahmapura *mūla*. The son of *rāja* Harisiṃha is *rāja* Rāmacandra, who married the daughter of Ratnāpāṇi of Jalaya *mūla*. The sons of *rāja* Rāmacandra are *rāja* Pratāpanārāyaṇa and *padāṅkita jagadīśa kumāra* Khagasiṃha; Pratapanārāyaṇa married the daughter of Jasāi of Sarisaba *mūla*. The son of *rāja* Pratāpanārāyaṇa is *mahārāja* Kirtinārāyaṇa, who married the daughter of Paramānanda of Belauñca *mūla*, who is the daughter of the daughter of Laksminatha of Palī *mūla*. The sons of *mahārāja* Kīrtinārāyaṇa are *mahārāja* Rudranārāyaṇa, *kumāra* Māndhāta, *kumāra* Śiva, and *bābū kumāra* Durlabhasiṃha. Rudranārāyaṇa married the daughter of Harinātha's son Acyuta of Allāri-Pirapura *mūla grāma*, who is also the daughter's daughter of Śaṅkara of Jālaya *mūla*. The sons of *mahārāja* Rudranārāyaṇa are Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa and *kumāra* Devanārāyaṇa. Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa married the daugher of Hemanārāyaṇa of Jallakī *mūla*. The sons of *mahārāja* Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa are *mahārāja* Rūpanārāyaṇa, *kumāra* Brajanārāyaṇa, *kumāra* Naranārāyaṇa, and *kumāra* Ainipālanārāyaṇa. Rūpanārāyaṇa married the daughter of Rāma of Karmahā *mūla*. The sons of *mahārāja* Rūpanārāyaṇa are *mahārāja* Phatenārāyaṇa, *bābū* Jagatnārāyaṇa, *bābū* Kuā who is known as Maṅgalanārāyaṇa. Rūpanārāyaṇa married the daughter of Kisu, who is the son of Kamalanayana of Karmahā *mūla*. [...]

---

[36]*Mūla Pañjī* written by Pañjīkara Paṇḍita Modanānda Jhā, folio 138.

The above record shows that Kameshvara Thakur's younger brother Salakhana was also appointed the ruler of some part of north Bihar. Although not generally mentioned in histories of medieval Bihar, the *pañjī* record suggested that the Oini sub-lineage of Salakhana grew to be quite respected and that it outlived that of Kameshvar Thakur. The *pañjī* does not provide any information on where they actually ruled. The genealogy indicates that Salakhana's grandson Prabhakara possessed the title of *kumāra* 'prince', which implies that Salakhana's son Sivai was also given a ruling title, although that information has not been preserved. The influence of the family grew steadily from the time of Prabhakara, as his son Ratnakara is recognized as a *rāja*, and after some generations, his descendant Kirtinarayana is given the title of *mahārāja*. That title passes down for at least six generations to Sridharanarayana. Despite outlasting their kin in Tirhut, these Oinivaras descended from Salakhana were never able to gain larger prominence in north Bihar. The Oini *mūla* may have had multiple ruling lineages, but the rulership of Tirhut passed into the hands of another Maithil Brahmin lineage.

The second phase of brahminical rule in Tirhut begins with the Khandavala dynasty, whose first ruler was Mahesa Thakkura. This Brahmin ruler was originally the *raja pandita* of the king of Bastar in central India. He is the same Mahesa Thakkura whose passages from the *Dayasara* on *sapiṇḍa* and the ten-fold classification of Brahmins were discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. Mahesa Thakkura's ancestor Saṅkarṣaṇa Ṭhakkura was a scholar from the Gaṅgaulī *mūla*, who through his service as *rāja paṇḍita* of the king of Bastar, received the grant of the village Khandava. Mahesa Thakkura belonged to the Khandavala *mūla* of

189

Maithil Brahmins. There are several legends associated with Mahesa Thakkura (hereafter, Mahesh Thakur) and the beginning of Khandavala ruler. These legends all claim that Mahesh Thakur went to Delhi and was given an appointment by the Mughal emperor Akbar.[37] The legends state that Mahesh Thakur succeeded in impressing Akbar with his erudition. In return, Akbar is said to have given Mahesh Thakur either the *rajai* or rulership of the entire *sarkar* of Tirhut, or at the least the appointments of *caudharai* and *qanungoi*, or revenue collector and legal officer, of Tirhut.[38] Despite the absence of a *farman* or any formal decree, Jata Shankar Jha firmly holds that Mahesh Thakur was given some sort of an appointment by Akbar and that the appointment was acquired "by impressing the emperor with his intellectual attainments".[39]

The insistence upon Mahesh Thakur receiving an appointment from Akbar is based upon the *farman* granted to his son, Gopala Thakkura (hereafter, Gopal Thakur). This *farman* is a reinstatement of the appointments of *caudharai* and *qanungoi* to Gopal Thakur, which implies that the positions were held by his father.[40] The *farman* states that the *caudharai* and *qanungoi* of the entire *sarkar* Tirhut "according to ancient custom"[41] or "as of old"[42] be entrusted with Gopal Thakur. The appointment appears to have been passed onto Gopal because he had suppressed a revolt by Bharatajatiya or Paramara Rajputs in western Tirhut.[43] Gopala retired from his appointments in 1581 and was replaced by his brother Paramananda

---

[37]For discussions and analyses of the legends see Jha, "History of Raj Darbhanga," 14–25 and Choudary, *History of Khandavala*, 13–35.

[38]Jha, "History of Raj Darbhanga," 25.

[39]Ibid., 26.

[40]Ibid., 19–20.

[41]Choudary, *History of Khandavala*, 46.

[42]Jha, "History of Raj Darbhanga," 19.

[43]Singh, *History of Tirhut*, 216; Jha, "History of Raj Darbhanga," 26.

Thakkura (Parmanand Thakur); however, the latter renounced the positions shortly after and passed them onto their younger brother Subhankara Thakkura (hereafter, Subhankar Thakur). The trend of short-lived or renunciation of the hereditary appointments was carried on by Subhankar, who passed the posts into his son Purusottama Thakkura (Purushottam Thakur). A *farman* dated to 1641 CE grants the appointments to Purushottam's half-brother Narayana Thakkura (Narayan Thakur), who was succeeded by his brother Sundara Thakkura (Sundar Thakur).[44] The tenures of these Khandavala *caudhari*-s and *qanungo*-s were rather uneventful and it seems that these Brahmins did not maintain much interest in the positions apart from the revenue or land that they received for their service.

Some enthusiasm for rule begins first with Mahinatha Thakkura (Mahinath Thakur), the son and successor of Sundar Thakur. Jata Shankar Jha writes that "[i]t was in his time that the family, due to enormous royal favours, came to possess all the dignity of a big estate."[45] When Mahinath was appointed as *caudhari*, he was called to duty in 1661 by the Mughal *faujdar* of Darbhanga, Mirza Khan to assist in military activity in the regions of Morang and Palamau, in north-eastern and eastern Bihar, respectively. Mahinath proved himself quite immensely. The Mughal emperor Aurangzeb instructed the governor of Bihar, Lashkar Khan, to bestow land and other titles upon Mahinath. A portion of the *farman* states:

> Since this Hindu Brahmin has displayed such valour, I have by an exalted farman, granted him the Sadr Zamindari and settlement of Sarkar Tirhut, and Zamindari of Pargana Dharampur, Sarkar Monghyr, and conferred upon him a Khilat and the Mahi Maratib. The valiant Khan too should bestow some consideration upon him which may honor him in the eyes of his neighbours, and send him a letter of approbation assuring

---

[44]Jha, "History of Raj Darbhanga," 29.
[45]Ibid., 31.

him of the permanent enjoyment of the zamindari so that other subordinates may be spurred to similar good services.[46]

In addition to receiving a *khilat* (royal robe), and permission to use the *mahi maratib* (royal piscene insignia), Mahinath received grants of land that vastly extended the territory of the Khandavala family. He was granted the entirety of *sarkar* Tirhut including the *terai* region of Nepal, which consisted of one-hundred and two *paragana*-s; the *paragana* of Dharampur in *sarkar* Monghyr, and five *paragana*-s in *sarkar* Purnea and two *paragana*-s in *sarkar* Tajpur.[47] Mahinath also developed a system of succession to the estate that would prevent its division among heirs. As he had no male heir, he named his brother Narapati Thakkura (Narpati Thakur) as his successor. In 1690, Mahinath's brother Narpati Thakur begins rule in an official capacity as a recognized ruler of Tirhut. Aurangzeb seemed to be pleased with Narpati's service alongside Mahinath, for in the *farman* he wrote "Mahinath Thakur and his brother Narapati Thakur having displayed the prowess of their swordsmanship gave a thorough beating to that ill-fated one (Raja of Morang)."[48]

The authority of the Khandavala rulers continued to grow after Mahinath received true rulership of Tirhut. By the time his brother Narpati assumed control of Tirhut, he had already grown old, so he retired to Varanasi and executed a will naming his son Raghava Thakkura (Raghav Thakur) as his successor.[49] Raghava took control of the *zamindari* in 1701, but two decades later his fortunes greater increased. In 1720, Alivardi Khan conferred

---

[46]Choudary, *History of Khandavala*, 58.
[47]Jha, "History of Raj Darbhanga," 31.
[48]Ibid.
[49]Ibid., 35.

192

upon Raghava Thakkura the title of *raja*.[50] In recognition of the new title, Raghava changed

the family title from Thakkura to Simha (Singh). With the title, however, came difficulties.

His adversaries staked claimed to the *paragana*-s that were granted to his ancestor Mahinath

by Aurangzeb. The *raja* deployed his military and recovered his properties. Raghav Singh

named his son Visnu Simha (Vishnu Singh) as his successor, but the next *raja* expired four

years into his reign in 1743.[51] Vishnu Singh was replaced by his brother Narendra Simha

(Narendra Singh), who held the same ambitions of his father. Narendra Singh was known

as the "warrior prince" as he carried out numerous expeditions on behalf of the Mughal

government, as well as upon his own accord. Narendra Singh was at once time charged

by Raja Ram Narayana, the *subehdar* of Bihar, for avoidance of revenue payments.[52] This

led to a confrontation in which Narendra Singh killed Ram Narayana, who was a Bhumihar

Brahmin. Narendra Singh died without a male heir in 1760, but before his death he had

adopted a son of his uncle Ekanatha Thakkura.[53] This adopted son, Pratapa Simha (Pratap

Singh), became the next *raja* of Tirhuta.

It was during the time of Pratap Singh that Khandavala authority in Tirhut experienced

some major changes. First, Pratap Singh moved the administration from the village of

Bhaura to Darbhanga. Secondly, during his tenture he encountered the beginnings of British

rule. The East India Company was granted the *diwani*, or the right of revenue collection, of

Bihar, Bengal, and Orissa by the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II in 1765. Pratap Singh was

---

[50] Jha, "History of Raj Darbhanga," 35.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., 43.

forced to continue the military activities that had preoccupied his forebearers. The *raja* was called upon by British authorities to defend his northern territories against the ambitions of the Gurkha ruler Prithvinarayana Shah.[54] But, troubles of a different nature regarding the *sarkar* of Tirhut began stirring. Pratap Singh had amassed some debts and the British authorities had ceased to pay his allowance until the accounts were settled.[55] The financial conditions of the estate, however, continued to deteriorate. Pratap Singh passed away in 1775. The British authorities contacted Madhava Simha (Madhav Singh), the half-brother of the *raja*, in order to convince him to take up management of the estate.

Madhav Singh's experiences with the British were not positive, but they were momentous for the future of Khandavala rule in Tirhut. From the outset, Madhav Singh's management of Tirhut was plagued with adminstrative hurdles regarding land and finances. Other members of Pratap Singh's family petitioned for greater monetary allowances, the creditors of former *raja* continued to demand repayment, and use of force was also used by the British to resolve a misunderstanding regarding rights to territorial possessions and payment of revenues.[56] At some time during the rule of Madhav Singh, the British had considered settling the *sarkar* of Tirhut in perpetuity with Madhav Singh, but that decision was not formalized. Jata Shankar Jha has summed up Madhav Singh's experience in the following words: "Only two generations before Raja Narendra Singh could defy the authority of the Deputy Governor of Bihar with impunity" because the "Rajas of Darbhanga had for all practical

---

[54]Jha, "History of Raj Darbhanga," 44.
[55]Ibid.
[56]Ibid., 48–51.

194

purposes come to be regarded as the master of the whole Sarkar of Tirhut."[57] Moreover, "[t]hey had acquired a number of privileges either on the basis of some imperial farmans or by the right of might."[58] The basis of the difficulties in the relationship between the British and Madhav Singh is that "[t]he new government was not prepared to recognise his former status and the Raja was not willing to content himself with the role assigned to him".[59] By this time the Khandavala holdings had come to be known as the 'estate of Darbhanga', after the city to which the administration was moved.

By the time Madhav Singh passed away in 1807, the proprietary rights to the *sarkar* of Tirhut granted by Aurangzeb to Mahinath had been diminished to a *zamindari*. Although the Khandavala rulers retained the title of *raja*, its usage was only customary as their true position was that of *zamindar*. Madhav Singh was succeeded by hia son Ksatra Simha (Chatra Singh) in 1807. The start of the Anglo-Nepalese War in 1812 gave Chatra Singh a chance to prove his worth to the British. In 1815, the British thanked him for services rendered during the campaign by conferring upon him the title of 'Maharaja Bahadhur'. The newly minted Maharaja Bahadhur Chatra Singh took additional steps to secure the Darbhanga estate. He resolved old feuds with the Bettiah Raj family and he began to make investment in various European and Indian enterprises.[60] When he died in 1839, he handed over a renewed Darbhanga to his son Rudra Simha (Rudra Singh)

---

[57] Jha, "History of Raj Darbhanga," 61.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., 62.
[60] Ibid., 66–67.

Maharaja Rudra Singh further stablized the Darbhanga estate. He strengthened the holdings of the royal Khandavala lineage from the ambitions of kinsmens by petitioning the Privy Council to declare a law of inheritance for the Maharajas of Darbhanga. The law specified that the eldest son would succeed to the throne and other sons would receive property for their maintenance.[61] Additionally, Rudra Singh made significant donations for the expansion of Hindu and Western education in Tirhut. His eleven-year reign, although short, ameliorated the Khandavala family in the eyes of the British. Rudra Singh was succeeded by his son Mahesvara Simha (Maheshwar Singh) in 1851. His reign was short and ill-fated. Six years after becoming 'Maharaja', the conflicts of 1857 arose. Moreover, while Mahesvara's predecessors did much to set Darbhanga upon stable ground, during his reign the estate was once again faced with financial problems. By the time he passed away in 1860, Darbhanga was once again in heavy debt. Moreover, his successors were minors and the estate was taken over by the Court of Wards.[62]

At the time of Maheshwar's death and when Darbhanga was placed under the management of the Court of Ward, the Maharaja's two sons, Laksmisvara (also Lakshimshwar and Luchmeshwar) and Ramesvara (Rameshwar) were only two and one year of age, respectively. The future of the Khandavala dynasty was now completely in the hands of the British. Under the Court of Wards, the British undertook the responsibility of rehabilitating the entire estate. Additionally, they saw to it that the heir, Lakshishwar, and his brother Rameshwar were given ample time for both Western and traditional brahminical education.

---

[61] Jha, "History of Raj Darbhanga," 70.
[62] Ibid., 75.

"The Maharajah had been trained to manage his own affairs and to take a lively interest in the welfare of his people, while his brother had been deemed fit for appointment to the Civil Service of the province, in which he is now an Assistant Magistrate."[63] By the time Lakshmishwar Singh had taken charge of his estate, he had already gained a fair amount of experience in management as well has taken a personal interest in the development of his ancestral holdings. Lakshmishwar had a hospital for women constructed in Darbhanga, subsidized the establishment of both Western and Sanskrit schools, and gave funds to the University of Calcutta, as well as to schools in England.[64] He was nominated to the Legislative Council of Bengal in 1883 and had given substantial funds to help start the Indian National Congress in 1885. It is beyond the scope of the present discussion to enumerate and describe the various additional activities of Lakshmishwar Singh. The brief description of his accomplishments that is given above is intended simply to convey the range of interests that captured the Maharaja's attention. He passed away in 1898 without a male heir. The *zamindari* of Darbhanga passed onto his brother, Rameshwar Singh.

Maharaja Rameshwar Singh was as motivated as his brother in expanding the prominence of Raj Darbhanga. The British conferred upon him various honors, including the hereditary title of 'Maharajadhiraja'. He was nominated to the Legislative Council of Bengal and he donated funds to the British during World War II.[65] When Bihar was separated from Bengal and established as a separate province in 1912, Rameshwar Singh was ap-

[63] Jha, "History of Raj Darbhanga," 77.
[64] Ibid., 87.
[65] Ibid., 92.

pointed to the Executive Council of the Lieutenant Governor.[66] Yet, while his brother had expressed interest in Western modernity, Rameshwar Singh turned his attention towards the rejuventation of traditional culture for a modern age. He contributed funds for the establishment of Benares Hindu University in 1905.[67] He presided over the All-India Hindu Religious Sammelan in 1915 and was inducted as the lifetime president of the Sanatana Dharma Mahamandal.[68] He also assisted in the founding of the Bihar Landowners Association, of which he remained the lifetime president.[69] When Rameshwar Singh passed away in 1929, his eldest son Kamesvara Simha (Kameshwar Singh) accended the throne as Maharaja of Darbhanga.

Kameshwar Singh was twenty-two years of age when he became the Maharaja of Darbhanga. He maintained a balance of the Western-oriented and traditional interests of his uncle and father. Kameshwar donated extensively to Benares Hindu University, as well as to Patna University, and he established a new university in Darbhanga, as well as a Mithila Research Institute, which was dedicated to the study of Sanskrit.[70] He maintained a favorable position regarding British rule in India and was invited to the Round Table Conference in London in 1930, but maintain an objective position regarding the future of India within the British empire. Yet, during the Quit India movement, the Maharaja refused to comply with the government's orders regarding provisions for suppressing uprisings within Bihar.[71] As the controller of a vast territory, it is not surprising that he expressed concerns regard-

---

[66] Jha, "History of Raj Darbhanga," 92.
[67] Ibid., 93.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., 102.
[71] Ibid.

ing the abolition of *zamindari* and land reform. He had rebuilt much of Darbhanga and various cities across north Bihar after a massive earthquake in 1934. He continued such developments even after the earthquake in an attempt to provide the region with modern infrastructure. During his rule India gained independence and after 1947, the Maharaja of Darbhanga became an ordinary citizen. As Darbhanga was never permanently settled with Madhav Singh in the 18th century and the Khandavala rulers that followed never succeeded in receiving the status of ruling chief from the British, Raj Darbhanga was incorporated into the state of Bihar at Independence.

4.4   Brahmin Kings and Brahminical Society

The Brahmin-kings of Mithila, especially those appointed to rule over Tirhut paid attention not only to their relationships with external authorities, but also worked to advance the interests of their caste. An analysis of the *pañjī* records shows that throughout the time period discussed in this chapter, the Maithil Brahmins continued to abide by the regulations of *pañjī prabandha*. As the *pañjī* records continued to grow and the number of Brahmins seeking marriages continued to increase as well, the Khandavala rulers began to patronize an annual event called *sabha gacchi* "garden meeting", where families would gather in order to meet the genealogists for arranging marriages. Maharaja Rameshwar Singh described the meeting in his own words as:

> In order to facilitate the marriage of the Maithil Brahmans, periodical meetings (*Sabhas*) attended by authorized genealogists are held during the *Shuddha* (sacred days) at different centres such as the villages Saurath, Partapur, Sajhuar, Bhakhrail, Sahasaula, Bangaon and Govindpur-Harrahi of the Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Bhagalpur and Purnea districts, respectively, where thousands and thousands of Maithil Brahmans

flock and such of them as wish to marry consult the genealogical registers and having obtained the *Aswajan Patra* from the *Panjiars*, proceed to the dwelling houses of the bridal party and have the marriage performed in accordance with the *Shastras* and the Maithil customs. It is impossible for all the Maithil Brahmans who are several lakhs in number, to get the services of the genealogists who form a very limited class at their homes and it is possible to get them only at large gatherings where they have all their ancient records at hand.[72]

[Add more]

4.5   The End of Brahmin Rule

The Oinivaras and Khandavalas ruled Tirhut for nearly six centuries. Despite the nature of their 'rulership', the ability of these lineages to maintain power speaks equally to their status as high-ranking Brahmins as well as to their ability to negotiate with various authorities from the Delhi Sultante, Mughal, and British periods. The intent of this chapter is to show how the residual territories of the Karnata kingdom were maintained by the Brahmins whose lineages were anchored to Mithila as a consequence of *pañjī prabandha*. Although the Karnatas were ousted, the Brahmins who served that Kshatriya dynasty managed to maintain their hereditary association with state authority. The Visaphi lineage, which had already provided two centuries of ministerial service to the Karnatas, was able to maintain its position by serving the Oinivara dynasty, as demonstrated by Candesvara's connection to various Oini kings. The Oinivara dynasty, despite its precarious hold on power at the rise of each new ruler, somehow managed to convince various Muslim Sultans and subordinate regional rulers of their ability to control Tirhut. The Mughals placed the Khandavalas in charge of north Bihar and conferred the first true 'kingship' upon a Brahmin ruler. Although

---

[72]Rameshwar Singh, "Maithil Marriage," 541. The term '*panjiara*' is a colloquial form of '*pañjīkāra*'.

the British did not recognize this title by conferring upon the Khandavala kings the status of ruling chief, they recognized the importance of these Brahmins and bestowed upon them nominal, yet hereditary titles of 'Maharaja', 'Maharaja Bahadur', and 'Maharajadhiraja'.

Catherine Asher and Cynthia Talbot write that after the expansion of Turkic power in northern India, one group of several native Indians that were affected by the imposition of Sultanate rule where "ritual specialists like Brahmins, Hindu temple priests, Jain monks, and sectarian leaders":

> Though not actively persecuted, they were dependent on the patronage of kings, chiefs, and other local magnates and the amount of financial support available to them declined notably with the elimination of the indigenous ruling elite. Learned Brahmins and Jains had also often served as ministers and counselors in the courts of indigenous kinds, and opportunity that similarly diminished during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. However, the influence of some Hindu and Jain groups apparently reemerged as they began to serve as money lenders and bankers to royal houses, both Muslim and non-Muslim.[73]

The nature of caste and kingship in Mithila during Sultanate and Mughal rule seems to deviate from the general case described above. The Brahmin of Mithila did not simply 'reemerge' in positions of prominence nor did their opportunities diminish under Sultanate and Mughal rule. They rose to the position of the indigneous ruling elite, which had been eliminated.

Just as the Brahmin kings of Mithila forced an internalization of the Brahmin-Kshatriya relationship within the *varṇa* with regard to marriage and kinship, they also established a new perspective on this relationship with regard to their external authority. The Brahmin king was still dependent upon the imperial ruler, whether this ruler was a Hindu Kshatriya

---

[73] Asher and Talbot, *India Before Europe*, 46–47.

or a Muslim Sultan. The Brahmin received the right to rule from the ruler, even if the ruler

was a non-Hindu.

Prajapati
⋮
Umapati
⋮
Jayapati
⋮
Hingu
⋮
Oinaha
Atirupa
Govinda
Laksmana

Kameshvara   Harshana   Tripura   Tevadi   Salakhana   Gauda
(see fig. 4.2)   (see fig. 4.3)
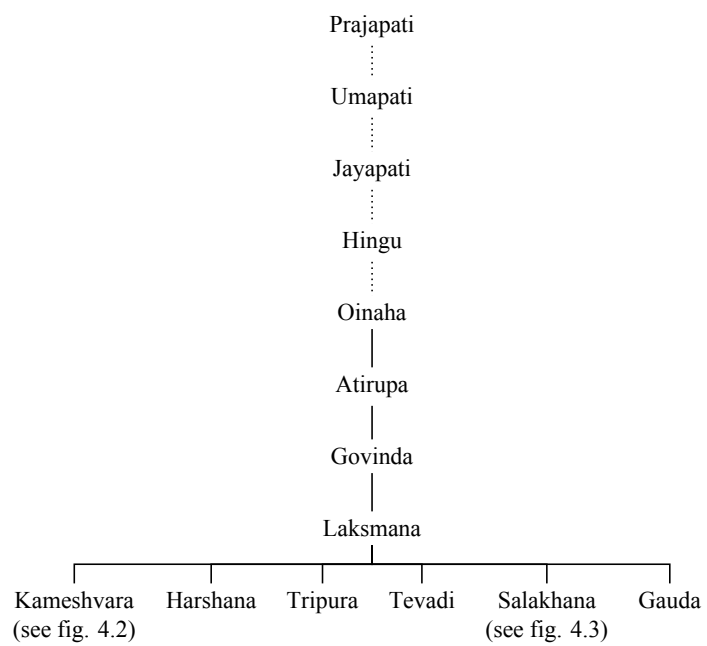
Figure 4.1: The Oini lineage.
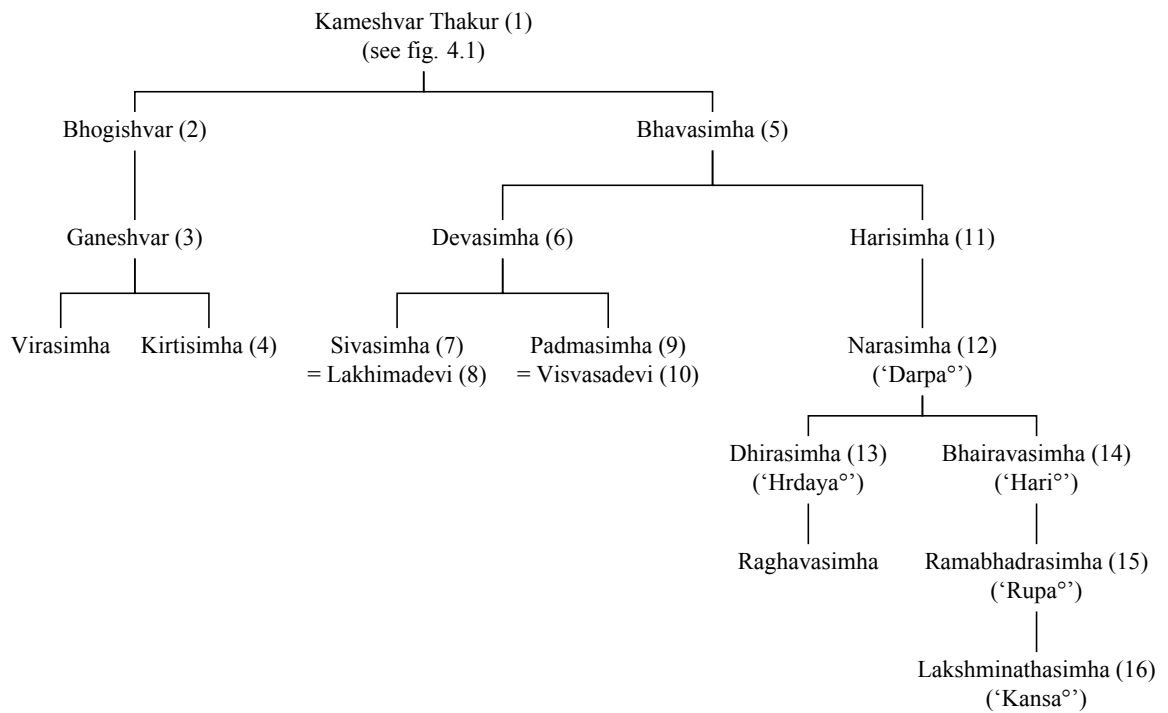
Figure 4.2: The rulers of the Oinivara dynasty of Tirhut (c. 1353–1532). The abbreviation symbol ° after a name refers to the suffix '-narayana', eg. Darpa° is Darpa-narayana.
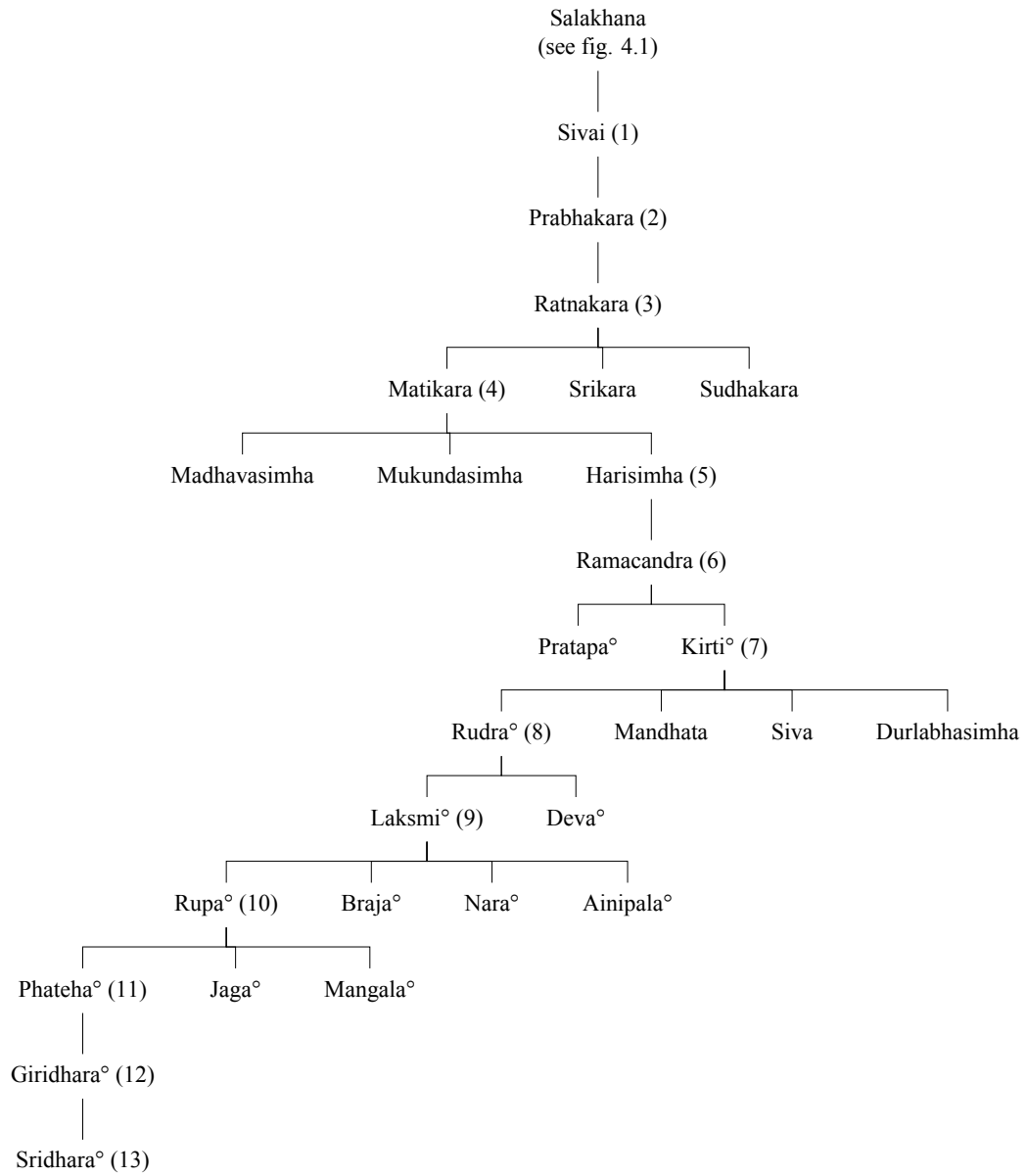
Figure 4.3: The rulers of the Oinivara dynasty of Champaran. The abbreviation symbol °
after a name refers to the suffix '-narayana', eg. Pratapa° is Pratapa-narayana.

Mahesh Thakur (1)

Gopala (2)   Paramananda (3)   Subhankara (4)

Purushottama (5)   Narayana (6)   Sundara (7)

Mahinatha (8)   Narapati (9)

Raghava (10)

Vishnu (11)   Narendra (11)

Pratapa (12)   Madhava (13)

Chhatra (14)

Rudra (15)

Maheshvara (16)

Lakshmiswara (17)   Rameshwara (18)

Kameshwara (19)
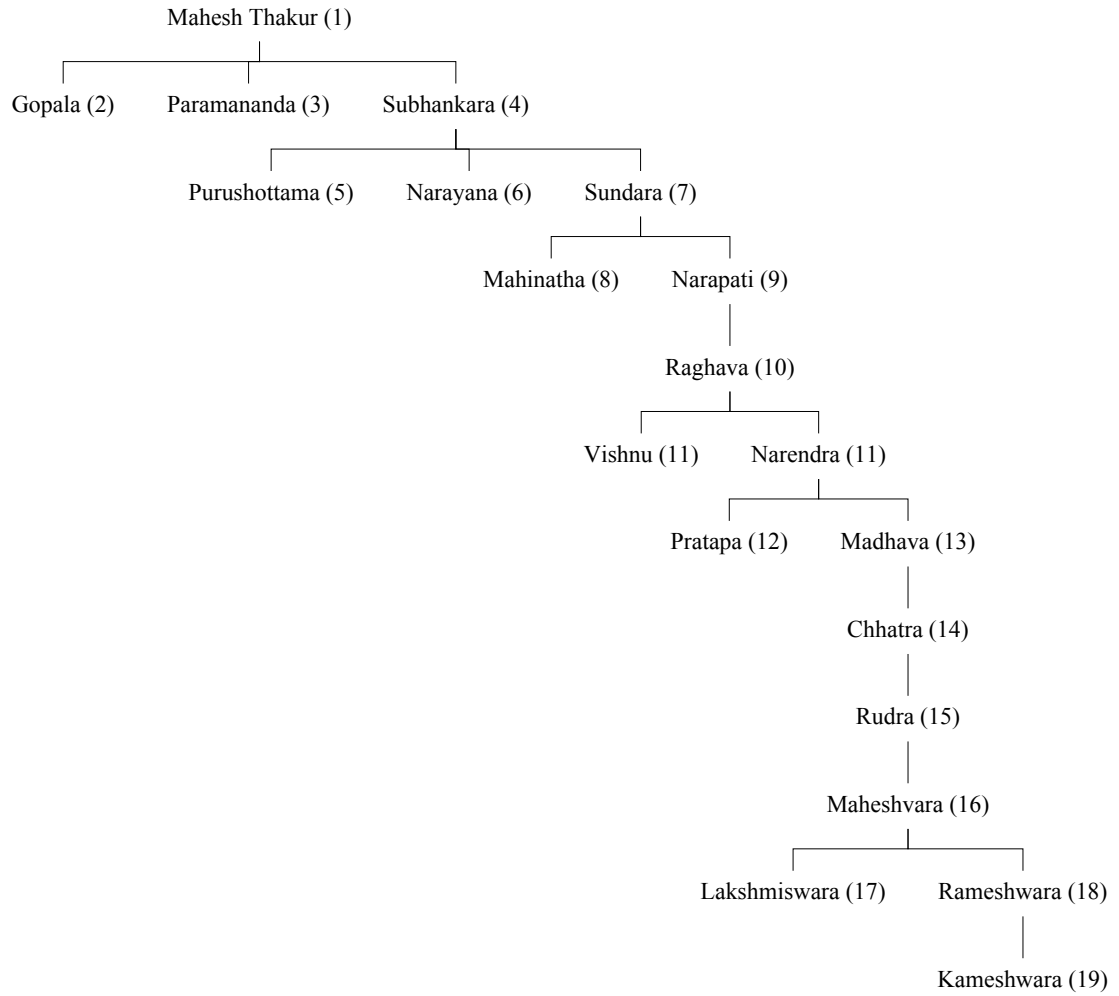
Figure 4.4: The rulers of the Khandavala dynasty of Tirhut (c. 1557–1962).

Chapter 5

The 'Conundrum' of Brahmin Identity

The legends about the origins of *pañjī prabandha* and the rank system offer a cultural understanding of the origins of the social organization, structure, and marriage practices that define the Maithil Brahmin community. They also offer insight into the the community's conceptions of the deeper structure of society and its proper regulation. The first narrative tells of a Brahmin whose marriage is discovered to be illegitimate. The genealogical investigation found that other Brahmins also had arranged marriages without proper attention to the regulations against consanguinity. These discoveries threw the Brahmin community into a crisis as several eminent individuals were found to be unpure. The second story explains how the best Brahmins of the kingdom distinguished themselves according to their individual merit. Those who were Shrotriyas, the most learned of Brahmins, distinguished themselves from their fellow caste members by arriving at the assembly after having performed all of the obligatory rituals and proper study of the sacred texts. On the surface it appears that these legends are about the Brahmin. A closer reading, however, suggests that the main, if not equal, protagonist is the actor that appears at the end of the narratives in

order to restore order to the community or to confer recognition upon Brahmins. It is the king.

The importance of the king in these legends and his role in the ordering of brahminical society evokes the classical Indian view that maintaining the proper order of society through regulation of *dharma* is a fundamental duty of the king.[1] The Brahmin is responsible for propagating dharma and the king is responsible for upholding it. When the Brahmin community is in disarray, the king restores order to it. The regulation of marriage practices in order to ensure the proper function of castes when necessary is but one of his several obligations, especially when Brahmins are in danger. After all, it was Brahmins, who, "for fear of sinning themselves, entrusted the kṣatriyas with the duty of ruling and protecting the earth and its inhabitants".[2] Maharaja Harisimhadeva fulfilled his duty as a Kshatriya when he established an formal genealogical system for regulating the marriage practices and status hierarchies of Brahmins in order to preserve their purity and virtue. He preserved dharma by ensuring that the Brahmins responsible for transmitting it were abiding by their own dharma.

But, what happens to the socio-political order when the *kṣatriya* is removed from the archetypical relationship between Brahmin and king? Who, then, is responsible for the maintenance of dharma? Who is responsible for the proper functioning of the Brahmins? These hypothetical questions became all too real for the Maithil Brahmins when their polit-

---

[1]Collins, "The Origins of the Brahman-King Relationship in Indian Social Thought"; Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship*; Heesterman, "Power, Priesthood, and Authority"; Basham, "Ideas of Kingship in Hinduism and Buddhism."
[2]Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship*, 63.

ical order was shaken by temporal circumstances. Surely, Harisimhadeva did not anticipate how a Brahmin king might disrupt the lineage and status systems of the genealogy he established. Nonetheless, the very insertion of the Brahmin king into this genealogy transformed the nature of the system. What was initially an institution patronized and administered by a Kshatriya king for the preservation of Brahmins had evolved into an instrument used by a particular Brahmin lineage for preserving its status as functional Kshatriyas and high-status Brahmins within the Maithil Brahmin community.

Why would the presence of a Brahmin king disrupt the very nature and purpose of brahminical geneology and cause a rupture in the social order of this community? Moreover, what happens to a brahminical community when a member of that society acquires the power to regulate it? The previous chapter describes the formation of the Maithil Brahmin community as an endogamous, territorial, ethnic nation based upon lineage and kinship, which was patronized by the state. This chapter describes the effect of the panji system on the expansion of brahminical identity by focusing on the role of the king in controlling the brahmin community.

By analyzing the genealogy system of Harisimhadeva and the manner in which it governed the marriage practices of Brahmins, I demonstrate in this chapter that the rise of a king from the midst of the Brahmin community converted the institutions of brahminical practices of genealogy and marriage into an instrument of political control that further intensified the cohesion of the Brahmin community, but through processes of fracture and reassumption. Harisimhadeva intended to protect the dharma of the Brahmin community

209

through the careful and consistent recording of genealogies. But, with the emergence of a ruler from within the Brahmin community, the genealogy system now had to contend with a dual and conflicting agenda. On the one hand, it preserved the *dharma* of Brahmins and on the other it promoted the *artha* 'prosperity' of the king, which was now tied to the *dharma* of his Brahmin kinsmen. The Brahmin king complicated the genealogy system because he was not only regulated by the official genealogies, but he was also responsible for regulating them. The Brahmin kings of Mithila exercised their regulatory authority over genealogy and the approval of marriages in order to control the kingship and the structure of the brahminical community in two significant ways. First, they used manipulated the lineage ranking structure of the *pañjī* system and the right to authorize marriage in order to ensure the political dominance of the royal lineage. Second, the Brahmin kings intervened in the genealogical system in order to maintain their social dominance over the Shrotriyas, the highest sub-caste of the Maithil Brahmins, and their own position within the Shrotriya community. These inventions resulted in the creation of additional *pañjī* records, social categories, and marriage rules. These resulted in the expansion of the ideology of the Maithil Brahmin *jati*, which by the time of Kameshwara Thakur, was on its way to developing a state structure based upon Brahmins for the upkeep of Brahmins.

5.1 The Tension Between King and Brahmin

A passage from *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* articulates that "Nothing transcends the *kṣatra*; therefore, the brahmin sits below the kṣatriya at the royal consecration. But, the brahmin

210

is the womb of the *kṣatra*; therefore, although he attains the highest status; he finally rests upon the *brāhma*, who is his own womb".[3] This statement encapsulates the primeval tension in classical Indian political philosophy between the 'temporal power' of *kṣatra* and the 'spiritual authority' of *brāhma*. It is an attempt to address the equally ancient question of who is superior, the Kshatriya or the Brahmin? The question, ultimately, is a paradox for it operates within the domain of *dāna*, or the relationship of 'exchange' between the king and the Brahmin, in which both of these selves are simultaneously dependent upon the other, as well as mutually subject to the other. For Ananda Coomaraswamy this paradox "subsumes the whole of Indian political theory", while for Thomas Trautmann it is "the central conundrum of Indian social ideology". But, what might become of the 'conundrum' when *kṣatra* and *brāhma* are embodied within a single self?

The accension of a Brahmin to the throne of his former Kshatriya patron may appear to resolve what Thomas Trautmann has described as "the central conundrum of Indian social ideology."[4] This 'conundrum' springs from the tension between spiritual authority (*brahma*) and temporal power (*kṣatra*) that is embodied in the relationship between Brahmin and Kshatriya in classical Indian political philosophy. It may appear that the appointment by the Kameshwar Thakur as ruler of Mithila by the Delhi Sultan had the effect of uniting spiritual power and temporal authority, which would enable the Brahmin king to adjudicate both the socio-political and religious orders without the complications inherent in the

---

[3] *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.11: ब्रह्म वा इदमग्रे आसीदेकमेव । तदेकᳵ सन्न व्यभवत् । तच्छ्रेयो रूपमत्यसृजत क्षत्रं । यान्येतानि देवत्रा क्षत्राणीन्द्रो वरुणः सोमो रुद्रः पर्जन्यो यमो मृत्युरीशान इति । तस्मात् क्षत्रात्परं नास्ति । तस्माद्ब्राह्मणः क्षत्रियमधस्तादुपास्ते राजसूये । क्षत्र एव तद्यशो दधाति । सैषा क्षत्रस्य योनिर्यद्ब्रह्म । तस्माद्यद्यपि राजा परमतां गच्छति ब्रह्मैवान्तत उपनिश्रयति स्वां योनिं । य उ एवᳵ हिनस्ति स्वांस योनिमृच्छति स पापीयान् भवति यथो श्रेयाᳵसᳵ हिᳵसित्वा । (Vasu, *Brihadaranyaka Upanisad*, 90–91).

[4] Trautmann, *Dravidian Kinship*, 285.

traditional Brahmin-king relationship. The reality, however, was quite the opposite. The codification of Brahmin genealogy and the regulatory authority granted to the royal office by Harisimhadeva for the purpose of preserving the *dharma* of Brahmins now had to accommodate the dual *dharma* of the Brahmin king, whose status and purity was linked to his fellow caste members by both his presence in the genealogical record and his regulation of the record. Therefore, rather than equalize the tension of the relationship between *brahma* and *kṣatra*, the brahminical kingship simply shifted the locus of tension from the inter-caste level to the intra-caste domain. The internalization of the tension between *brahma* and *kṣatra* within the office of the Brahmin-king offers a new perspective on Trautmann's 'conundrum', through which the question of which is superior is further complicated by the forcing of kinship into the domain of exchange.

The case of the Shrotriya Brahmin-king offers us another perspective from which to view the paradox postulated in the passage from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, which signifies the mutual dependence of *brahma* and *kṣatra*. The profane order within which temporal power operates originates from the spiritual authority that structures the sacred order. The temporal power of the king is legitimated by the Brahmin through ritual. The Brahmin, however, strives to distance himself from the mundane world, but is the sole possessor of the authority to consecrate royal power. In this way, contrary to his aspirations, the Brahmin's order is bound to that of the king. He is responsible for bringing *dharma* from the sacred order into the profane, while it is the duty of the king to maintain and protect *dharma*. Without the king, order devolves into chaos; without the Brahmin, chaos infiltrates the order.

This mutual dependence of the spiritual and temporal orders is reinforced in the 'conundrum' through the domain of exchange, or *dāna* 'gift'. The Brahmin's spiritual authority is contingent upon his independence from the material world and from the king, but the Brahmin's authority is challenged by his practical dependence upon the king for his subsistence. This dependence is manifested through the gifts that he receives from the king. The theory of *dāna* holds that "religious gifts flow upward to superior beings", while "royal gifts flow down a hierarchy of dependency".[5] This opposition between sacred and temporal exchange arises from the duties prescribed to the Brahmin and Kshatriya castes in the *dharmaśāstra*. Kshatriyas are obliged to study the Vedas, to offer sacrifices, and to give gifts. On the other hand, Brahmins are required to teach the Veda to other Kshatriya, to officiate at their sacrifices, and to receive gifts from them.[6] The Brahmin is the unique recipient of *dāna*; indeed it is his natural duty to receive gifts. Yet, this does not mean that he is a willing recipient. The gift itself is a paradox, a 'danger' to the Brahmin because it threatens his spiritual authority. The theory of the gift states that *dāna* is an extension of the giver.[7] The gift is, therefore, also governed by the theory of ritual pollution, and as an extension of the giver, it is suffused with his qualities. In this way, the exchange of gifts is not a neutral transaction devoid of consequences. "The bodily extensions of inferior beings are dangerously polluting to superiors, but conversely those of superiors ... are concrete forms of grace (*prasāda*) to inferiors".[8] When a Brahmin receives a gift, he also receives the pollution of

---

[5]Trautmann, *Dravidian Kinship*, 285.
[6]Ibid., 280.
[7]Ibid., 286.
[8]Ibid., 287.

the donor that is transmitted through the gift. Thus, the domain of 'exchange' is propped up through the contest between purity and impurity. The 'danger' inherent the exchange, or the "poison in the gift"[9] also propagates the 'conundrum'. The Brahmin consecrates the royal order of the king and the king supports the material requirements of the Brahmin. But, the king's gift is "a danger" to the Brahmin because it is "a bodily extension of the donor, which because the donor is by definition an inferior, is defiling to him and diminishes his spiritual luster, tejas, so painfully acquired and so easily drained away".[10]

Having established the basis of the tension between the Brahmin and king, let us briefly evaluate its presence in the formation of the *pañjī prabandha*. Hearing of the crisis presented by actions that may diminish the status and purity of Brahmins, the king steps in to restore order. He mandates a genealogical survey of Brahmins and requires that all Brahmin marriages be performed under authorization of the king. Herein lies the puzzle. The Brahmin is the spiritual authority, but his life is being regulated by the temporal power of the king. However, as the crisis in the Brahmin community has the potential to disrupt spiritual authority, the king is required to intervene in order to save it. The contest between spiritual power and temporal authority is more evident in the second legend. The king held a feast for Brahmins, but the most virtuous Brahmins prioritize their spiritual obligations over the temporal authority of the king. The thirteen Brahmins, who arrive last after having performed the complete schedule of rituals, indicate their preference for spiritual power explicitly by prioritizing it over the temporal privilege of dining with the king. Neverthe-

---

[9]Raheja, *Poison in the Gift*, 32.
[10]Trautmann, *Dravidian Kinship*, 287.

less, it is the king who exhibits higher authority over the Brahmins. He declares them the best of Brahmins and confers upon them the status of Shrotriya. In doing so, he introduces an internal hierarchy within the Brahmin community that henceforth orders social and kinship interactions between Brahmins. The contest between priestly and kingly authority in these two legends ultimately support the classical Indian notion of the relationship between *brahma* and *kṣatra*.

5.2   Tensions of Kingship and Kinship

While the *pañjī prabandha* was originally focused on the order of the general Brahmin community, with the involvement of the Brahmin-king, it began over time to focus mostly on the highest strata of brahminical society, the Shrotriyas. As evidenced by the restructuring of the *śākhā pañjī* by the founder of the Khandavala dynasty, the relationship between the Brahmin king and his non-royal Brahmin kinsmen became the dominating focus of the *pañjī* system. The continued involvement of the Brahmin king in the genealogical system resulted in a replication of the competition between *brahma* and *kṣatra* that is internalized within the Brahmin caste itself.

The mutual reinforcement of Shrotriya social structure and kinship practices led to several conflicts between the king and his Shrotriya kinsmen that began in the 18th century. U. N. Jha's assertion that modern ideas promoted by either the king or the Shrotriyas were powerless against the hold of tradition is exemplified in two cases. Tradition states that

during the 18th century, the increasing military duties of the Brahmin kings distressed the Shrotriyas.

As explained briefly in chapter four, Narendra Singh (r. 1743–1760) fought a battle in which he killed Raja Rama Narayana, a Bhumihar Brahmin. Although he fought the battle in order to protect the interests of the Khandavala estate, the Brahmin community levied charges of *brahmahatya*, of the murder of a Brahmin, against him. The Shrotriya community expressed their displeasure by effectively excommunicating the maharaja in by preventing any future social or marital relationships with his lineage.[11] They did so by leaving Tirhut and seeking refuge with the Shrotriya ruler Indranarayana Singh of the Pahsara estate in Purnea. This Shrotriya ruler belonged to the Suragana *mūla*. The migration of the Shrotriyas resulted in the severence of social relationships between Shrotriyas and the Khandavala lineage. After Narendra Singh passed, his adopted son Pratap Singh took over as ruler of Tirhut. After the Pratap Singh's half-brother Madhava Singh (r. 1775–1807) took control of the Khandavala rulership in 1775, the relationship between the Khandavala house and the Shrotriyas had begun to improve. Narendra Singh had died without producing a son, so the taint of *brahmahatya* had passed with him. Pratap Singh was adopted from a different Khandavala branch and his lineage did not have the same sitgma as the previous royal lineage. On account of this, Madhava Singh was able to convince the Shrotriyas to return to Tirhut from Purnea. Shrotriya Brahmins back to Darbhanga by giving them land grants. On account of the absence of Shrotriya families, Madhava Singh had taken a high-ranking Yogya bride, which meant that the prince had a reduced *laukika* status. Thus, the

---

[11]Mishra, *Shrotriyas of Mithila*, 22.

king had brought the Shrotriyas back in order to establish a group that could marry with his lineage and preserve its Shrotriya lineage.[12]

The censure of Narendra Singh by the Shrotriya clans is one of several instances where spiritual authority and temporal power clashed within the Shrotriya community. But, the ability of the Maharaja of Darbhanga to appease the Shrotriyas shows the mutually reinforcing relationship of the two. Furthermore, the return of the Shrotriyas to Darbhanga also shows how the king was able to further consolidate control over them. The Brahmin-king became the head of the Shrotriyas during the reign of Madhava Singh. As Madhava Singh had brought them back from Purnea and settled them in Darbhanga, they entrusted him with protection of the Shrotriya community.[13] Important matters would be discussed in a *sabha* 'council', while the king was given discretion in handling routine matters. It appears that up until the time of Madhava Singh, a caste council assisted the king with matters related to the regulation of *pañjī*, but for reasons unknown, the "community bestowed entire authority" upon the king.[14]

The legend of the militaristic Maithil Brahman king who faced the censure of the Shrotriya clans is one of several instances where spiritual authority and temporal power clashed within the Shrotriya community. The Brahmin-king also exerted his control over Shrotriyas using exchange relations to settle disputes. The last king of Darbhanga, Kameshwar Singh, challenged the orthodoxy and insularity of his community several times. The first was in October 1930, when he travelled to London to attend the first session of the Round Ta-

---

[12] Brown, "Raja and Rank," 766.
[13] Mishra, *Shrotriyas of Mithila*, 23.
[14] Jha, *Genealogies and Genealogists of Mithila*, 78.

ble Conference on Indian constitutional reform. When he returned in the early months of 1931, a major section of the Shrotriya community declared that the Maharaja had outcasted himself by crossing the oceans and they challenged his authority as head of the community (Henningham: 134). Kameshwar Singh responded to his critics by saying that had travelled to London for the general welfare of the community and to seek its advancement. The Shrotriyas would not accept this excuse on behalf of modernity and threatened to excommunicate the king and withhold exchange relations. Kameshwar Singh retaliated by barring the use of royal-owned resources to those who refused to dine with him. Once the Shrotriyas realized that they would lose royal patronage, they reconsidered their threats (Henningham: 135). Yet, the acknowledgment was reciprocal: Kameshwar Singh contributed to the development of projects dear to the Shrotriyas in exchange, such as scholarships for the study of Sanskrit and the subsidization of literary and cultural endeavors. Thus, Kameshwar Singh used his authority as head of the community to silence his critics.

The tension of the Brahmin-king 'conundrum' is sustained with great intensity through the exchange practices between the royal and non-royal Shrotriya lineages. The Shrotriyas are themselves divided into two groups: the Babuan 'noble' and the general Shrotriya Brahmins.[15] The Babuans are Shrotriyas that belong to the royal lineage of Khandavala-Bhaura and their descendents. They are not a separate endogamous group, but marry into Shrotriya families. The special relationship between the king and the Shrotriyas is based upon actual kinship relations between the two authorities.[16] Moreover, the king and the Shrotriyas

---

[15] Jha, *Genealogies and Genealogists of Mithila*, 82.
[16] Ibid., 74.

were in a "mutually beneficial relationship", which was bounded by their shared Shrotriya status and by their "separate interests".[17] The Shrotriyas were traditionally committed to scholastic and religious activities, while the king was dedicated to the function of society and support of the Shrotriyas. To the extent that the Brahmin-kings being functioning as Kshatriya kings in relation to their Shrotriya brethren.

The Babuans are considered the "highest section of the community" and are "famous for their aristocratic bearing".[18] The relationship between the Babuans and Shrotriyas is one of mutual beneficence: "The Babuans cannot perform any ceremony without consulting their Shrotriya relatives".[19] For example, Babuans do not perform the sacred thread ceremony themselves, but invite Shrotriyas to perform it for them. Moreover, the Babuans "believe that the Shrotriyas are of ideal conduct and ... only the latter could perform the Vedic rites with perfection".[20] The Babuan in his royal function requires the assistance of spiritual authorities, for the "Shrotriyas are the guide of the Babuans" and the latter is dependent upon Shrotriyas, who "advis[e] him regarding his proper role in any ceremony or occasion".[21] In this sense, the Brahmin kings and their families function socially as if they were Kshatriyas and have ceremonies performed by Brahmins, namely their non-royal Shrotriya kinsmen.

The internalization of the tensions of the brahmin-king relationship affected how the Shrotriya king interacted with other members of the Shrotiya community. Brown remarks that when a Shrotriya agrees to dine with another, "he is doing them a great honor, because

---

[17]Brown, "Raja and Rank," 768.
[18]Jha, *Genealogies and Genealogists of Mithila*, 82.
[19]Ibid., 83.
[20]Ibid., 84.
[21]Ibid., 82.

he is humbling himself by accepting their hospitality".[22] This agreement to dine hinges upon

theories of exchange, which hold that the rank of a Brahmin determines his willingness

to accept gifts. This plays out in the Brahmin-king relationship among the Shrotriyas in

several ways. Brown reports that there is a superior Shrotriya lineage that "has for decades

refused to visit Darbhanga, where they might have to accept the hospitality of the Maharaja

of Darbhanga, who is slightly inferior to them".[23] This relationship was further promoted by

a tension, which hinged upon the Shrotriyas "forcing the maharajas to support the system

through their threat of withdrawal from exchange relations, and the king enforcing it through

his personal, centralized control of all marriages".[24] Both the king and the Shrotriyas abided

by the *pañjī* system from fear of social exclusion, which gave such power to the tension

that "[e]ven those who are influenced by modern ideas of casteless and classless society

could not succeed if they tried to break the traditional institution".[25] Although both the

royal and non-royal Shrotriya lineages belong to the same sub-caste, the presence of the

king within the Shrotriya grade had the effect of recreating the tension between Brahmins

and Kshatriyas within the Brahmin caste.

5.3 King's Control of Lineage Rank

The Brahmin king not only manipulated the *pañjī* system in order to maintain his position

as the head of the social order, but he further used the lineage rank structure of the system

---

[22] Brown, "The Gift of a Girl," 58.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Brown, "Raja and Rank," 768.
[25] Jha, *Genealogies and Genealogists of Mithila*, 166.

in order to maintain his primacy in the political order. One way in which genealogy was used to reorder the political system was to eliminate political rivals of the lineage belonging to the royal house. Despite the rise of the Khandavala lineage in the political structure of Mithila, the old royal family of the Oinivara dynasty had not been fully extinguished. Competing narratives state that the founder of the Khandavala dynasty had to contest for the *sarkār* of Tirhut with scions of the Oinivara house. The very nature of dueling claims to the throne of Mithila by the Oinivara and Khandavala families reveals another political dimension of the *pañjī* system. In addition to regulating affinal relationships of the Shrotriya in order to preserve their ritual purity, the *pañjī* system also provided a way for the king to eliminate adversaries from within the Maithil Brahmin community. Moreover, the contest between the Oinivara and Khandavala houses speaks to the manner in which the organizational structure of the Maithils not only preserved the community as a whole, but also led to internal fractures.

Upon review of a *farman* granted by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, and the genealogy that accompanies it, Hetukar Jha states that it was the Oinivara clan who "continued to possess the royalty even after the Mughal empire was inaugurated on Indian soil", despite the traditional account that the Oinivaras had been deposed and replaced by the Khandavala dynasty.[26] Some scholars claim that it was not until Alivardi Khan granted the title of *rājā* to Maharaja Raghava Singh in 1735 that the first official evidence of Khandavala rulership exists.[27] While historical evidence contradicts the traditional legends regarding the claims

---

[26] Jha, "Oinwaras," 146.
[27] Jha, "Oinwaras," 148; Choudary, *History of Khandavala*, 142.

to the throne of Tirhuta by the Oinivara and Khandavala dynasty, the ultimate victory of the

Khandavala dynasty over the Oinivara suggests that there was a contest for temporal power

within the Brahmin community that was decided through the *pañjī* system.

Through the reorganization of lineages carried out five generations after the institution

of the *pañjī* system, the Khandavala dynasty founded by Mahesh Thakur secured its future

authority once and for all by naming itself as the only Shrotriya lineage of the Khandavala

mūla and classifying the remaining thirty-five as Yogya status. The reduction in status of

potential competitors from the same lineage essentially removed the newly Yogya-graded

Khandavala *mūla*-s from the marriage orbits of Shrotriyas and cast a social blemish upon

them. However, that was not all. Mahesh Thakur not only modified the rank and status of

his kinsmen, he took steps to further consolidate the power of the one remaining Shrotriya

Khandavala *mūla* by eliminating the Shrotriya status of political rivals. He did so by re-

ducing the status of the Oini *mūla*. In the *pañjī prabandha*, the Oini clan of Kameshvar

Thakur was classified by Harisimhadeva as belonging to the Shrotriya grade.[28] After the

reorganization, the Oini lineage not only lost the majority of their land holdings,[29] they also

lost their status in the *pañjī* records as they fell from the high ranks of the Shrotriyas and

were classified as a minor Yogya lineage.[30] In this way the Brahmin king prohibited the

members of a distant, but competing royal lineage from laying future claim to the kingship

of Mithila. By removing them from the ranks of the Shrotriyas down to an unimportant

Yogya family with little material influence, he effectively prohibited them from social and

---

[28]Thakur, *Medieval Mithila*, 293.
[29]Jha, "Oinwaras," 146–147.
[30]Brown, "Raja and Rank," 765.

marital interactions with Shrotriyas. Moreover, the king eliminated any likelihood of future patronage of the Oini lineage by the Khandavala royal house and secured the prominence of his own lineage.

The reorganization of the genealogical system to promote the royal lineage had a significant effect on the organization of the *pañjī* records themselves. The *śākhā pañjī*, or the lineage record, was revised to focus solely upon the one remaining Shrotriya lineage of the Khandavala *mūla*, the lineage of the Bhaura *grāma* to which the kings of this dynasty belonged. It provides details on the ancestry of the most important Shrotriya lineages and their relationships with the royal Khandavala-Bhaura lineage.[31] The revision of the *śākhā pañjī* to reflect only the royal lineage of a particular *mūla* further reveals how the brahminical genealogy system was manipulated to maintain the position of the Brahmin-king.

5.4   King's Control of Individual Rank

The Shrotriyas are ranked into *avadata* "pure" and *loka* 'common' ranks. The *loka* Shrotriyas are further ranked by their placement in a *śreṇī* 'class'. The creation of the *śreṇī* sub-ordering system in the 19th century is another example of how the identities of individual Brahmins were shaped by the *pañjī prabandha*. The need for re-structuring the grading system was caused by marriages between the grades. This led to a system in which ranks were falling and the Shrotriya grade was in danger of becoming extinct. A system was developed by which all Srotriyas were assigned to one of eight sub-ranks within their grade. As several individuals from a particular lineage fell into the same sub-ranks, a label called

---

[31]Saraswati, "Institution of Pañjī," 270.

a *laukita*, also known as an individual's *pañjī* or *painj* in colloquial Maithili, as assigned to each individual in the rank.

One manner in which the Brahmin-king affected Shrotriya identity was through his authority to assess their status. When the internal rank system was established by Harisimhadeva, out of the 180 brahmin lineages recorded in the genealogists, only 13 were deemed as Shrotriyas, 20 as Yogyas. In the 16th century, during the reign of the first Khandavala ruler, it was discovered that marriages were not exclusively being conducted within the endogamous grades. The system encouraged rank endogamy, but given the limited pool of marriage partners within the Shrotriya fold, Shrotriyas began to contract marriages with Yogyas, the second grade within the hierarchy The result was that Shrotriya lineages were downgraded to such an extent that it nearly resulted in the extinction of the grade.[32] As the crisis of endogamy accelerated and further affected the existence of the Shrotriyas, a new system of rank was imposed by Maharaja Mahesh Thakur in order to classify the offspring born of unions between Shrotriyas and Yogyas. The new rank system incorporated these half-Shrotriyas into the Shrotriya fold, but distinguished them from Shrotriyas who were *avadata*, or 'pure'. The result was the expansion of the Shrotriya community and the establishment of a precedent for inducting a new member into the group, who was not born into it.

As the crisis of endogamy accelerated and further affected the Shrotriyas, a new ranking system was imposed in order to classify the offspring born of unions between Shrotriyas and Yogyas. Initially, all Shrotriyas were known as *avadata* 'pure', as were the children

---

[32]Brown, "Raja and Rank," 59.

of a Shrotriya union. As Shrotriya men began to marry Yogya women, the offspring of the union were permitted to retain the Shrotriya status of their father, but on account of their mother's Yogya status, they were not considered 'pure' Shrotriyas, but were instead called *loka* 'common', and were given a status lower than that of their fathers. A sub-system was introduced within the *mūla-grāma* structure in order to manage the presence of these *loka* Shrotriyas. All the Shrotriya lineages were reclassified and ranked on a grade internal to the sub-caste, which was known as the *laukika* 'common' system.[33] This new system introduced an involutionary means of determining rank. The *laukika* status of a Shrotriya is based upon the *laukika* status of the maternal grandfather. If an individual is born to parents bearing the same *laukika* status, his *laukika* status is that of his father. However, if its parents belong to different *laukika* statuses, then the son is assigned the lower *laukika*, that being of his grandfather. Only a Shrotriya has a *laukika*; if a Shrotriya marries a non-Shrotriya, the offspring loses Shrotriya status entirely. But, soon after the implementation of this system, the *laukit* titles were themselves in disarray. In 1897, Maharaja Rameshwar Singh asked the genealogists to resolve the issue, which they did by classifying all existing *laukit* ranks into seven grades called *śreṇī* 'class'.[34] Both the *laukit* and *śreṇī* sub-systems of rank were introduced specifically to manage the involution of the Shrotriya grade. Certainly, the continuing decline of pure Shrotriyas presented a danger to the Brahmin order as individuals were not only failing to conduct themselves according to *dharma*, but the very purity of individuals was also fading through offspring being born of mixed grades.

---

[33]The *laukika* designation is also referred to as '*laukit*' by Brown and others. The *chapa* from 1905 and the ranks of the Yogyas published by Rameshwar Singh refer to the titles as *laukika*, so I adopt that spelling.
[34]Mishra, *Shrotriyas of Mithila*, 50; Brown, "Raja and Rank," 767.

5.5   The King and His Marriage

By the "virtue of the authority vested in him" the Brahmin king could elevate the rank of any Brahmin.[35] The well-known example is the is the raising of the Phanandah *mūla* to Yogya status. Carolyn Brown cites two cases in which the king used the *śreṇī* system more to protect the kingship than to manage the Brahmin community. These cases concern the status and marriage of the last king of Darbhanga, Maharaja Kameshwar Singh. Before he took the throne in 1929, Kameshwar Singh belonged not to the highest *śreṇī*, but to the second highest rank. This was the result of his father, Maharaja Rameshwar Singh having married Shrotriya women of low *śreṇī* rank. In order to raise the status of the prince, Kameshwar Singh was raised from the second *śreṇī* rank of his mother to the bottom of the first *śreṇī*, where he was still lower in rank to fifty Shrotriyas. Kameshwar Singh's wife was given special *laukika* status and her *śreṇī* rank was also raised.[36] The change of status of both Kameshwar Singh and his queen would ensure that his offspring would not drift too far in terms of rank. In this way, a future heir would be a suitable match for daughters of the fifty highly-ranked Shrotriyas. Kameshwar Singh, however, could not produce an heir with his Shrotriya wife. In the 1930s, he decided to take a second wife in hopes of doing so. Rather than choose another Shrotriya wife as bride and second queen, Kameshwar Singh set his eyes upon the daughter of an influential Yogya family. There were two problems with this arrangement: His marriage to a Yogya would require special permission and going through with the ceremony might force distance between the king and other Shrotriyas. The

---

[35]Thakur, *History of Mithila*, 35.
[36]Brown, "Raja and Rank," 769.

226

first problem was quickly resolved. Since the king was the final judge on all marriages, he naturally had the right to authorize his own marriage. The second problem was solved by promoting the immediate male members of the Yogya bride's family to low *śreṇī* Shrotriya status and bringing other Shrotriyas to dine with them.[37]

5.6   Internalizing the Conundrum

The twining of *dharma* 'order' and *dāna* 'exchange' offers the prospect of imagining that an individual who is a Brahmin functioning as a king might unite spiritual authority and temporal power, in effect neutralizing the 'conundrum'. This harmony of *brahma* and *kṣatra* would appear to enable the Brahmin king to adjudicate both the socio-political and religious orders without the complications inherent in the relationship between Brahmin and king. The 'conundrum' might then be resolved. After all, the Brahmin king promotes dharma and preserves it because his own spiritual authority consecrates his temporal power. As a Brahmin, the *dāna* the Brahmin-king might receive from other Brahmins is infused with the bodily extensions of other Brahmins, and may theoretically be, of no danger to him, as would be the gifts he might give to other Brahmins.

However, rather than equalize the tension, the fusion of *brahma* and *kṣatra* within the Brahmin-king simply shifts the locus of the 'conundrum' from the inter-caste level to the intra-caste domain. The internalization of the tension offers a new perspective on Trautmann's 'conundrum'. As the preceding examples show, the emergence of a Brahmin-king revolutionized Shrotriya 'self-hood' and 'subjectivity' by introducing into the exchange re-

---

[37]Brown, "Raja and Rank," 770.

lationship between king and brahmin the most important and potentially 'dangerous' form of gift: *kanyādāna* 'gift of a maiden'. Of the eight forms of marriage recognized by the *smṛti*-s and other authoritative digests, the brahminical preference for acquiring brides is *kanyādāna*. In this form of marriage, a girl is given as a bride without expectation of reciprocity. She is incorporated into the family of the groom and inserted anonymously into his agnatic history by acquiring the *gotra* 'patrilineal clan' designation of her husband and relinquishing that of her father's lineage. In *kanyādāna*, the bride "is given absolutely" and is "conceptually assimilated to her husband, constituting his other half (*aparārdha*) and so rendering him complete and capable of offering sacrifice".[38] As such, the gift of a bride adheres to the theory of *dharmadāna* 'pious gift' and aligns with the appropriate directionality of exchange. As religious gifts are given upwards in a social hierarchy, so must daughters be "given up (*anuloma*) rather than down (*pratiloma*)".[39] The bride is, then, a potentially 'dangerous' gift because she is given upwards and is an extension of the giver, her family. She may affect not only the purity of her husband through her conceptual assimilation to him, but because she constitutes his other half, the purity of his lineage rests upon her womb.

---

[38]Trautmann, *Dravidian Kinship*, 291.
[39]Ibid.

5.7 Sustaining the 'Conundrum'

Maharaja Rameshwar Singh, the father of Maharaja Kameshwar Singh, delivered a presidential address at the All-India Hindu Religious Sammelan at Hardiwar on April 10, 1915, in which he stated:

> It is a matter of the highest importance to any society that it should organize itself into a body politic, with a living centre, round which the whole fabric of society must gather, for the upkeep and uplift of the society as a whole. That centre, according to Hindu notions, is the King, without whom the fabric goes to pieces. Just as in the organization of the universe, there is a divine centre from which all law proceeds, making for an orderly evolution of the universe, so in human society, the king is a centre from whom all law proceeds and that gives rise to an orderly evolution of society.[40]

He concluded his description of the importance of the king in Hindu society by quoting the *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*, stating "[t]he King is always pure and whatever his birth may be, while doing kingly duty, he is a Brahmana".[41] Rameshwar Singh certainly chose the right words to describe the centrality of the king in the ordering of the universe; being that he was also a Shrotriya Brahmin trained in Sanskrit. Drawn from a treatise on Hindu law, Rameshwar Singh's conclusion that a king is a Brahmin while 'doing kingly duty' strikes at the heart of the Brahmin and Brahmin-king relationship. When Kameshwar Thakur first began 'doing kingly duty' in 1353, the Brahmins of Mithila had within their midst a royal family, which despite their Brahmin status began to function as Kshatriyas. This event offers a new perspective on Trautmann's 'conundrum' of the Brahmin-King relationship. Trautmann stated the relationship between spiritual authority (*brahma*) and temporal power

---

[40]Rameshwar Singh, "Presidential Address at Hardwar All-India Hindu Religious Sammilan, 10 April 1915," 65.
[41]Ibid., 66.

(*kṣatra*) rests upon the question of whether the Brahmin is superior to the king or dependent upon him. The tension between the Brahmin's simultaneous superiority and dependence arises from the contradiction that temporal power originates from spiritual power, but that spiritual power is sustained through temporal power.

As discussed in this essay, the relationship between Brahmin and king in Mithila is made more complicated by the kinship practices that connect the Brahmin to the king. To be sure, the unity of *brahma* and *kṣatra* through the idiom of kinship pervades Vedic political philosophy. In a monograph on spiritual power and temporal authority, Ananda Coomaraswamy wrote that "the whole of Indian political theory is implied and subsumed in the words of the marriage formula in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*: 'I am That, thou art This, I am sky, thou art Earth'", addressed by the Brahmin to the king.[42] Coomaraswamy follows by declaring that "Peace and prosperity, and a fulness of life in every sense of the words, are the fruit of the 'marriage' of the Temporal Power to the Spiritual Authority".[43] The kinship metaphor in the relationship between Brahmin and the king becomes complete when we consider the Vedic notions of the origin of *brahma* and *kṣatra*. A passage from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* states that "the brahman is the womb of the kṣatra", but although the Kshatriya attains the highest status through the *rājasūya* 'royal consecration', "he finally rests on the brahman, his own womb".[44] Thus, there is a fundamental unity of temporal power and spiritual power, which is exemplified in the case of the Brahmin-king of Mithila, where the highest Brahmin is also the most powerful Kshatriya.

---

[42]Coomaraswamy, *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government*, 1.
[43]Ibid., 69.
[44]Heesterman, "Power, Priesthood, and Authority," 142.

The merger of the institutions of kinship and kingship in 14th century Mithila produced a unique circumstance that held sway for six-hundred years. The case of brahminical kingship in Mithila is unique because it was regulated by kinship practices and a genealogical system implemented by a Kshatriya for ordering Brahmins, which came to be regulated by a Brahmin. It should be stated that Brahmins serving as kings in Mithila is not an uncommon phenomenon in Indian history. The Shungas were a Brahmin family that served as officials to the Mauryas. They became the successors of the Mauryan dynasty after Pushyamitra, the commander of the Mauryan army, assassinated the last Mauryan king and usurped the throne.[45] Indian notions of kingship in fact, do not prevent a Brahmin from becoming king. The *Mahābhārata* permits any able leader "to be made king when there is a mixture of orders and when barbarians are threatening".[46] Thus, the placement of Kameshvar Thakur on the throne of his former patron Harisimhadeva by a Turkic sultan after the devastation of the Karnata dynasty by 'barbarian' invaders upholds the regulation provided by the *Mahābhārata*. The coronation of a Brahmin king followed the arrival of Turkic dynasties in north India, which truncated the Hindu social order, such that kings were eliminated and Brahmins were appointed as head of the political order.

5.8   Conclusion

Tradition holds that Harisimhadeva ordered the genealogical regulation of marriages on the grounds of "encourag[ing] religious observances amongst the people to show that in this

---

[45]Thapar, *Early India*, 210.
[46]Scharfe, *The State in Indian Tradition*, 57.

world and especially so in Mithila — the country of the Janakas, the king initiates — spiritualism should be the ideal of every man".[47] The reference to King Janaka, a mythical king of Mithila, signifies that Harisimhadeva was undertaking a reorganization of the Brahmin community in order to emulate the ideal of a philosopher-king: a Kshatriya devoted not only to the preservation of the temporal aspects of his realm, but to the spiritual aspects as well, which are to be preserved and promoted by Brahmins. The king ordered that all marriages must be certified by an authorized genealoger, who was appointed by the king. The *pañjī* system survived for four hundred years because it was patronized by the kings of Mithila. However, the king's role in the regulation of marriage became stronger after the rise of the Khandavala dynasty. While all Brahmin marriages were required to be authorized by the genealogist, marriages involving members of the Shrotriya sub-caste required the special permission of the king. Thus, the king became an important gatekeeper in the brahminical kinship system.

The legend regarding the origin of the three grades of Maithil Brahmins suggests that Harisimhadeva classified Brahmins by rank according to their conduct. By the time of Rameshwar Singh, the king's authority to classify Brahmins was no longer based upon the individual conduct of an individual, but upon the desires of the king. Rameshwar Singh's creation of the *śreṇī* rank sub-system is but one example of how brahminical genealogy was expanded in order to incorporate the king into the brahmincal social order. The Brahmin king transformed notions of Brahmin identity in north Bihar by binding Brahmin kinship to kingship. What was initially an institution established by a Kshatriya for the preservation

---

[47]Thakur, *Medieval Mithila*, 11–12.

of Brahmins had evolved under the control of the Brahmin-king into an instrument used by a single Brahmin for preserving both his status as a functional Kshatriya and as a Shrotriya Brahmin. The Brahmin-king changed Shrotriya identity in north Bihar in two ways: First, he bound Shrotriyas to him through the potentiality of kinship. Second, he transformed Shrotriya identity by expanding the basis for Shrotriya status from a solely ascriptive identity gained by the rather involuntary act of birth into a prescriptive potential, or an identity that could be conferred or stripped by the Brahmin-king.

Śreṇī	Rank	Laukit	Mūla-Grāma
Prathama	1	Rāmadeva Miśra	Sadarapuriye Raiyāma
	2	Dāmū Jhā	Maḍare Sihaul
	3	Pitāmbara Jhā (*baṛakā*)	Maḍare Sihaul
	4	Daśaratha Miśra	Ekahare Rucaula
	5	Rudrapati Jhā	Baliyāse Māḍara
	6	Śaṅkara Rāya	Baliyāse Māḍara
	7	Pitāmbara Jhā (*choṭakā*)	Maḍare Siraul
	8	Mādhava Miśra	—
Dvitīya	1	Jīvanātha Jhā	Darihare Rataulī
	2	Hṛdayanātha Jhā	Darihare Rataulī
	3	Nainana Jhā	Sarisabe Khāṅgura
	4	Pāṇi Jhā	—
	5	Suragaṇa (*baṛakā*)	Surgaṇe Loāma
	6	Vīra Ṭhākura	Khaṛaure Bhaura
	7	Bhikhārī Jhā	Palivāra Mahiṣī
Tṛtīya	1	Jagadīśa Miśra	Baliyāse Narasāma
	2	Motī Jhā	Palivāra Maṅgraunī
Caturtha	1	Bholana Jhā	Pagulavāra Bāṛhiyāma
	2	Suragaṇa (choṭakā)	Surgaṇa Loāma
	3	Hāṛī Jhā	Maḍare Sihaul
	4	Kamala Jhā	Khoāre Nāhasa
Pañcama	1	Cāna Jhā	Sarisave Khāṃgura
	2	Lacchū Pāṭhaka	Palivāra Divarā
	3	Mādhava Miśra	Baliyāse Narasāma
	4	Sabandhu Jhā	Tisaute Kuā
	5	Narapati Jhā	Sakaribāra Lohanā
	6	Gonū Miśra	Sadara Burire Kaṭakā
	7	Bhaiyana Jhā	Buddhavāre Ḍumarā
	8	Bhañjana Jhā	Sarisave Vaghavāsa
	9	Nilāmbara Miśra	Baliyāse Narasāma
	10	Hemāṅgada Rāya	Baliyāse Māḍara
Ṣaṣṭama	1	Nagara Koṭa	Phandahavāra Khanāma
	2	Sihavāra Didhave	Sandapura
	3	Kanta Jhā	Bamaniyiyāme Kaṭamā
Sāptama	1	Amauna	Buddhavāre Mahiṣī
	2	Mahādeva Jhā	Baliyāse Viṭaula
	3	Puruṣottama Miśra	Hariyame Śivā

Table 5.1: Shrotriya Shrenis with the Laukit and Mula-grama

Śreṇī	Rank	Laukit	Mūla-Grāma
Prathama	1	Narapati Jhā	Sakarivāra Lohanā
	2	Mādhava Miśra	Baliyāse Narasāya
	3	Gonū Jhā	Sadarapuriye Kaṭakā
	4	Bhaiyan Jhā	Buddhavāre Ḍumarā
	5	Mañjana Jhā	Sarisave Vaghavāsa
	6	Nilāmbara Miśra	Baliyāse Narasāya
	7	Nandan Jhā	—
	8	Kariye Jhā	—
	9	Kanta Jhā	Sinhavāra
	10	Sivāī	—
Dvitīya	1	Padūma Jhā	Satalakhe Sataula
	2	Śrīkānta Jhā	Sakarivāra Bharaulī
	3	Maniārī	—
	4	Bandhu Miśra	—
	5	Amona	Buddhavāre Mahiṣī
	6	Khuśihāla Miśra	Baliyāse Narasāya
	7	Mahadeva Jhā	Baliyāse Biṭhaulī
	8	Parmānanda Chaudharī	—
	9	Kamala Nayana Pāṭhaka	—
	10	Gonū Jhā	—
Tṛtīya	1	Ghanānanda Jhā	Buddhavāre Ḍumarā
	2	Gaṇapati Miśra	Baliyāse Narasāya
	3	Jīvakaraṇa Miśra	Palivāra Samaula
	4	Dhāre Jhā	—
	5	Murārī Miśra	Yajuāre Jamunī
	6	Devānanda Jhā	—
	7	Prāṇa Miśra	—
	8	Śūlapāṇi Jhā	Palivāra Haripura
Caturtha	1	Bharāma	—
	2	Basantapura	Maḍare Haripura
	3	Prabhākara Chaudharī	—
	4	Choṭī Jhā	Paṛarue Mahindro
	5	Kokaṛihire	—
	6	Sakhuā	Satalakhe Sataula
	7	Pakaṛī	—
	8	Pratihasta	Khauāre Nāhasa
	9	Narahā	Satalake Sataula
	10	Mahatū Pāṭhaka	Baghaniyāme Karaiyāina
	11	Śilānātha	—
	12	Śūlapāṇi Jhā	—

Table 5.2: Yogya Shrenis with the Laukit and Mula-grama

235

Śreṇī	Rank	Laukit	Mūla-Grāma
Pañcama	1	Harinārāyaṇa Ṭhakura	—
	2	Sakhuā (choṭkā)	Satalakhe Sataula
	3	Tulā Pāṭhaka	Baliyāse Narasāya
	4	Nityānanda Chaudharī	Aṛaivāra Premgaṛh
	5	Baṭāī Miśra	—
	6	Meharamāna Ṭhakura	—
	7	Ehu	—
	8	Khageśa Jhā	—
	9	Khuṭauniyā	—
Ṣaṣṭama	1	Tārāpati Jhā	—
	2	Goī Miśra	Sadarpuriye Sukheta
	3	Ballī Chaudharī	??ni Vatsavāra
	4	Muralī Jhā	—
	5	Madan Miśra	Hariyame Rakhavārī
	6	Lakṣmīpati Miśra	Kodariye Pacāṛhī
	7	Viśvanātha Jhā	—
	8	Līlā Miśra	—
Sāptama	1	Badatī Jhā	—
	2	Hiradī Jhā	—
	3	Viśvāmbara Chaudharī	—
	4	Vaṃśī Chaudharī	—
	5	Baraunī	Maḍare Sakurī
	6	Ḍaṇḍapāṇi Jhā	Sakarivāra Bataila
	7	Jarasaina	—
	8	Sudhākara Jha	—
	9	Jaduni Jha	—
	10	Maṭaru Jha	—
Aṣṭama	1	Bodhakṛṣṇa Jhā	—
	2	Vīra Jhā	—
	3	Mālāpura	—
	4	Nareśa Jhā	Palivāra ???pura
	5	Kanta Jhā	Maḍare Kanasama
	6	Pati Jhā	Hariame Rakhavārī
	7	Mogalāhā	Ekahore Orā
	8	Gatirāma Jha	—
	9	Pratāpa Nārāyaṇa	—
	10	Oinī	—

Table 5.2: Yogya Shrenis with the Laukit and Mula-grama (continued)

Śreṇī	Rank	Laukit	Mūla-Grāma
Navama	1	Ratikar Jhā	—
	2	Jhañjhārapura	Maḍare Jagaura
	3	Arkapura	—
	4	Kauśikīdatta Jhā	Belauce Kako
	5	Mahidhara Miśra	Ṭakavāla
	6	Guṇī Jhā	Sakarāṛhī
	7	Maheśhpura	Belauce Ratuvāra
	8	Hālo	Hariame Āhīla
	9	Mahidhara Jhā	—
	10	Nāro Jhā	—
	11	Becū Jhā	—
Daśama	1	Kanhaulī	Sakarivāra Chājana
	2	Macalī Miśra	—
	3	Viṣṇudattapura	—
	4	Dharādhara Chaudharī	—
	5	Cīrā Miśra	—
	6	Rudra Nārāyaṇa	—
	7	Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa	—
	8	Bharagāma	Pālī
	9	Bhavana Jhā	—
	10	Nityānanda Kujaulī	Kujalivāra ??giyā
	11	Khauāla Kauśikīdatta Jhā	—
	12	Cakrapāṇi Chaudharī	—
	13	Bindhī Mahādeva Jhā	—
	14	Paduma Jhā	—
Ekadaśama	1	Rasika Nārāyaṇa Jhā	—
	2	Bhūkhanī Jhā	—
	3	Sāgarapura	Naraune Ojhau??
	4	Cāna Pāṭhaka	—
	5	Baherī	—
	6	Khajurī	—
	7	Taraunī	Baliyāse Sakurī
	8	Harinagara	Baliyāse Sakurī
	9	Lāla Ṭhākura	—
	10	Andī Miśra	—
	11	Guṇānanda Jhā	—
	12	Bhakṣī	—
	13	Mohanā	—
	14	Muṛārī	—
	15	Saptā	—
	16	Beramā	—-

Table 5.2: Yogya Shrenis with the Laukit and Mula-grama (continued)

Śreṇī	Rank	Laukit	Mūla-Grāma
Dvadaśama	1	Nakaṭū Jhā	—
	2	Śaśibhūṣaṇa Jhā	—
	3	Nidhi Miśra	—
	4	Haridatta Ṭhākura	Kharoṛe Khuṭṭī
	5	Lāla Biharī Jhā	—
	6	Rohāra	Sadarapuriye Rohara
	7	Kachuā	Sadarapuriye Rohara
	8	Nehāla Chaudharī	Jalāivāra Goraula
	9	Umāī Miśra	—
	10	Ābhī Jhā	—
	11	Pheṭakaṭāī	—
	12	Aravinda Jhā	—
	13	Ucatī Prabhunātha Jhā	—
	14	Prītam Gosāīṃ	—
	15	Nadoraka	Baliyāse Dharaurā
Traidaśama	1	Paṛaulī	Narāona
	2	Raṅka Jhā	Narāona
	3	Kolahaṭṭā	—
	4	Jālā	—
	5	Nāgadaha	—
	6	Mannurāma Jhā	—
	7	Raghupati Jhā	Kusumbāla
	8	Dhan-garvana	—
	9	Rāmanātha	Pālī
	10	Sarahada	Māḍara
Caturdaśama	1	Ghasīrāma Chaudharī	—
	2	Bacanū Devāna	—
	3	Andī Phandaha	—
	4	Salaha	Gaṅgolivāra Sakuri
	5	Dhāru Ṭhākura	—
	6	Jalāṛha	—
	7	Jñānī-dhyānī	—
	8	Pati Ṭhākura	—
Pañcadaśama	1	Kāla Ṭhākura	—
	2	Nīlāmbara	Baliyāse
	3	Nīlāmbara Chaudharī	—
	4	Katarū Ṭhākura	—
	5	Savaura	—
	6	Haradatta	—

Table 5.2: Yogya Shrenis with the Laukit and Mula-grama (continued)

Conclusion

In the *Linguistic Survey of India*, George A. Grierson described Mithila as being "a land under the domination of a sept of Brāhmaṇs extraordinarily devoted to the mint, anise, and cumin of the law".[48] This dissertation suggests that this "devotion to the law' may be a consequence of a particular historical event that occurred in north Bihar in 1326: the establishment of *pañjī prabandha*. By the time Grierson arrived in India in 1872, the principles of *pañjī prabandha* had governed the organizational structure and social ideology of this 'sept of Brāhmaṇs' in Mithila for five centuries, and it would continue to do so well into the middle of the 20th century. I now raise the questions posed in this dissertation: Who is a Maithil Brahmin and by what criteria is a Brahmin considered a 'Maithil'? Like other Brahmins, the Maithil Brahmin is associated with a branch of the Veda, of which two are prevalent in Mithila. A Maithil Brahmin is either a Chāndoga, or follower of the Kauthuma *śākhā* of the Sāmaveda, or a Vājasaneya, or follower of the Mādhyandina *śākhā* of the Yajurveda. He belongs to one of twenty *gotra*-s, which in Mithila are assigned to the two aforementioned Veda-s. One *gotra* is attached to the Sāmaveda and the remaining nineteen to the Yajurveda. Through his *gotra* he shares affinity with those members of the other ten

---

[48]Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India,* vol. V, pt. II, 4.

gauḍa and *drāviḍa* Brahmins who also share descent from the same eponymous *r̥ṣi* ancestor. But, this affinity is restricted to the territory of Mithila on account of his association with a *mūla*. This *mūla* is linked to the residence of his earliest known ancestor, his *viji purūṣa*, within the territory situated in the region bounded to the north by the Himalayas, to the south by the river Ganges, to the west by the river Gandak, and to the east by the river Koshi. During the time of Harisimhadeva his ancestors were in Mithila and participated in the genealogical census. As a result he is recorded in the *pañjī*, through which he is able to determine all of his historical and contemporary relatives, and all of the partilines and matrilines that converged through proper marriage at each successive generation resulting in the production of the shared body, the Maithil Brahmin that he is.

This dissertation has attempted to show that the creation of the Maithil Brahmin community was the result of a deliberate attempt to create a bounded community whose boundaries were genealogical. The recasting of the Brahmin in medieval Mithila through the convergence of genealogy, territory, kinship, in the regulation of the brahminical identity gave rise to social and political structures that both institutionalized Brahmin identity within the state and which relied upon the sanction of the state. The *pañjī prabandha* represents a new aspect of the relationship between the state, kinship, and caste. The systemization of genealogies and the appointment of officials entrusted with maintenance of the genealogies bound caste and kinship with political authority and state bureaucracy. The motivation of the king, as the embodiment of the state, to maintain the order of castes by regulating marriage resulted in the establishing of a formal institution that collected, classified, and

verified kinship data in order to authorize marriages. Such a system not only expanded the function of the state, but also expanded the importance of marriage in not only the social organization of Brahmins, but also in maintaining the state.

The suggestion that birth and genealogies provide tangible means for identifying a Brahmin seems to have caught the attention of the Brahmins and royal administrators in Mithila. The ideological origins of *pañjī prabandha* are unknown, but it is tempting to contemplate that the implementers of the system in 14th century Mithila drew inspiration from the new definition of *sapiṇḍa* offered by Vijñāneśvara in the *Mitākṣarā* two centuries earlier. Acceptance of these views in Mithila is attested by the importance given to the concept of a new 'shared body' known as *ekaśarīrārambhakatā* by the *dharma* scholars Caṇḍeśvara and Maheśa Ṭhakkura. That the foundational legend of *pañjī prabandha* focuses upon a breach of the *sapiṇḍa* rule, makes the possibility of such influence all the more tempting to imagine. Moreover, four centuries later the works by Caṇḍeśvara and Maheśa Ṭhakkura would be considered by Thomas Colebrooke as the basis for what the British called the 'Mithila school of law'.[49] It is equally tempting to see Kumārila Bhaṭṭa's notions about caste and cognition from the *Tantravārttika* being espoused in the *Mitākṣarā*, especially since Vijñāneśvara was "a profound student of the Pūrvamīmāṁsā system".[50]

I have aimed to explain the historical origins of the Maithila Brahmins and to understand the ideological and social principles that distinguish this community from other Brahmin communities. I demonstrate that *pañjī prabandha* resulted in the formal creation of

---

[49]Rocher, "Schools of Hindu Law."
[50]Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. I, pt. II, 603.

the 'Maithila' community of Brahmins as an endogamous and territorially bounded *jāti* or 'caste' in which membership was regulated through marriage laws in accordance with genealogical records and ideologies regarding the personhood of a Brahmin. The establishing of the Maithila Brahmins as a distinctive 'caste' community was predicated upon two factors. First, the *pañjī prabandha* codified a new lineage designation called the *mūla*. The *mūla* is a lineage based upon the universal brahminical *gotra* affiliation, but it represents the segment of a *gotra* that is local to Mithila. Secondly, the system mandated that marriages be performed between individuals belonging to 'registered' *mūla*-s, with regard to the new principle of *mūla* exogamy and the traditional prohibitions regarding consanguinity enjoined by the legal digests. By limiting marriages to those individuals belonging to *mūla*-s recognized in the genealogies, the *pañjī* system not only created the concept of a 'Maithila' community, but by establishing the geographical boundaries of the endogamous group, it intrinsically defined the perimeters of the *jāti*. Moreover, through its regulation of marriage the system implicitly controlled reproduction, and as a result it defined membership in and expansion of the community. Therefore, while the *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa* indicates that there was a sense that the 'Maithilas' were a distinctive regional community in the 11th century, it was not until the implementation of *pañjī prabandha* in the 14th century that the Brahmins of Mithila were truly established as an endogamous, territorial *jāti* of 'Maithila Brahmins'.

By the time Kameshwar Singh passed away in 1962, India had become an independent nation in which kings and princes held onto no more than the passing loyalty of their for-

mer subjects, who like them, were now ordinary citizens of the Republic of India. Before his death, Kameshwar Singh had granted whatever honorary powers remained with him to his nephew. From 1962 until 1975 the prince continued to authorize marriages by granting *siddhānta* to Shrotriya familes, but he "finally acceded to the view of many" that the *pañjī* system was "archaic and counter to the interests of the future development of India and Bihar".[51] The prince of Darbhanga renounced his authority as head of the community and eliminated the differences between Shrotriya, Yogya, and Jayavar.[52] Although Raj Darbhanga no longer exists, theoretically the tension still does. The Shrotriyas refuse to accept anyone but the Maharaja of Darbhanga as their head..[53] However, there is no Maharaja at present. With the death of Maharaja Kameshwar Singh, the Shrotriya community was left without a leader. The genealogical system implemented by Harisimhadeva in the 14th century had been in operation for six-hundred years when it was finally abolished by the same temporal authority that had introduced it: the king. Yet, the question still remains: What happens to the *dharma* of Brahmins when there is no Kshatriya king to safeguard it? The answer perhaps lies embedded in the paradoxical passage from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. Although there is no king to keep them with the bounds of sacred law, the Brahmins still have their genealogies and now the burden of maintaining their proper caste and kinship duties rests upon their own shoulders. The *dharma* of the Brahmin, then, "finally rests on the brahman, his own womb".

---

[51]Brown, "Raja and Rank," 775.
[52]Ibid.
[53]Mishra, *Shrotriyas of Mithila*, 167.

Bibliography

Sanskrit Texts and Translations

Bühler, Georg. *The Laws of Manu*. Translated with Extracts from Seven Commentaries. Sacred Books of the East, vol. 25. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886.

Desāī, Chaitanya Puṇḍarīka, ed. *Bharatabhāṣyam*. Śrīnānya-bhūpāla-praṇītam. Prathamaḥ khaṇḍaḥ (adhyāyāḥ 1–5). Indirā kalā saṃgīta viśvavidyālaya granthamālā, kram. 1. Khairāgaṛha: Indirā kalā saṃgita viśvavidyālaya, 2018 saṃ. [1961].

Eggeling, Julius, trans. *The Satapatha-Brāhmana: According to the Text of the Mādhyandina School*. Part 1, Books I and II. Sacred Books of the East, vol. 12, pt. 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1882.

Gāyatoṇḍe, Gajānanaśāstrī, ed. *Śrī Skandapurāṇa. Sahyādrikhaṇḍa*. Dā. Jarsana da Kunhā [Gerson da Cunha] sampādita granthācī saṃśodhita saṃvardhita āvṛtti, Marāṭhī arthāsaha. Mumbaī: Śrī Kātyāyanī Pablikeśansa, 1971.

Gharpure, Jaganath Raghunath. *Sâpiṇḍya, or The Law of Sapiṇḍa Relationship*. Being a Collection of two treatises on Sâpiṇḍya, and relevant extracts from authoritative works, together with an Introduction. 1st ed. Collection of Hindi Law Texts, vol. XXVII. Bombay: V. J. Gharpure at the Office of the Collection of Hindu Law Texts, 1943.

Jayaswal, K. P., ed. *The Rājanīti-Ratnākara by Chaṇḍeśvara*. 2nd ed. Patna: Bihar and Orissa Research Society, 1936.

Jhā, Gaṅgānātha, trans. *Tantravārttika of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa*. A Commentary on Śabara's Bhāṣya on the Pūrvamīmāṃsā Sūtras of Jamini. Bibliotheca Indica, no. 161. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1924.

Jolly, Julius, ed. *Mânava Dharma-Śâstra: The Code of Manu*. Original Sanskrit text critically edited according to the standard Sanskrit commentaries, with critical notes. London: Trübner & Co., 1887.

Kamalakṛṣṇa Smṛtitīrtha, ed. *Gṛhastha-ratnākara: A Treatise on Smṛti*. Bibliotheca Indica, vol. 249, issue no. 1504 (new series). Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1928.

Kamalakṛṣṇa Smṛtitīrtha, ed. *Vivāda-ratnākara: A Treatise on Hindu Law by Caṇḍeśvara Ṭhakkura*. Bibliotheca Indica, vol. 103 (re-issue), issue no. 1511 (new series). Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1931.

Kielhorn, Lorenz Franz, ed. *Vyâkaraṇa Mahâbhâshya of Patañjali*. Volume 1. 2nd rev. ed. Bombay: Government Central Book Depot, 1892.

Maheśa Ṭhakkura. "Dāyasāra." In *Dharmaśāstrīya Nibandhāvālī*, edited by Ramachandra Mishra and Siddheshwara Bhattacharya, 95–182. Mithila Institute Series, Ancient Text no. 28. Darbhanga: Mithila Research Institute, 1978.

Müller, Friedrich Max, ed. *Rig-Veda-Samhitâ: The Sacred Hymns of the Brâhmans together with the Commentary of Sâyanâkârya*. Volume IV. Mandala X. 2nd ed. Published under the patronage of His Highness the Mahârâjah of Vijayanagara. London: Henry Frowde, 1892.

Nyáyaratna, Maheśachandra, ed. *The Aphorisms of the Mimámsá by Jaimini, with the Commentary of Śavara Svámin*. Vol. I, Adhyáyas I–VI. Bibliotheca Indica. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873.

Panśīkar, Wāsudev Laxmaṇ Śāstrī, ed. *Yādnyavalkyasmṛti of Yogīshvara Yādnyavalkya*. With the Commentary Mitākṣarā of Vidnyāneshvara. 4th ed. Bombay: Pāndurang Jāwaji, Nirnaya-Sāgar Press, 1936.

Sandal, Mohan Lal, trans. *The Mîmâmsâ Sûtras of Jaiminî*. Chapters I–XII. Reprint from the edition of 1923–1925, Allahabad. Sacred Books of the Hindus, Vol. XXVII. New York: AMS Press, 1974.

Sâstrî, Gangâdhâra, ed. *Tantravârtika*. A Gloss of Sabara Svâmî's Commentary on the Mîmâmsâ Sûtras by Bhatta Kumarila. Benares Sanskrit Series. Benares: Benares Sanskrit College, 1903.

Upādhyāya, Gaṅgā Prasāda, ed. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇam*. 'Ratnadīpikā' hindī ṭīkayopetam. Ḍā. ratnakumārī prakāśana yojanāntargatam, prathamaṃ puṣpam. Naī Dillī: Prācīna vaijñānikādhyayana-anusandhāna saṃsthānam, 1967.

Vasu, Srisa Chandra, trans. *The Ashṭâdhyâyí of Páṇini*. Book II. Allahabad: The Panini Office, 1894.

———, trans. *The Brihadaranyaka Upanisad*. With the Commentary of Sri Madhavâchârya called also Anandatirtha. The Sacred Books of the Hindus, Vol. XIV. Allahabad: The Panini Office, 1916.

———, trans. *Yajnavalkya Smriti, with the commentary of Vijnaneśvara, called the Mitāksara and notes from the gloss of Bâlambhaṭṭa*. Book I: The Âchâra Adhyâya. The Sacred Books of the Hindus, Vol. XXI. Allahabad: The Panini Office, 1918.

Maithili and Hindi Texts

Jhā, Parameśvara. *Mithilā-tattva-vimarśa*. Patna: Maithili Akademi, 1977.

Jhā, Rāmanātha. "Maithila brāhmaṇaka pañjī-vyavasthā." *Mithilā-Bhāratī* 3 (1972): 1–19.

———. *Maithila brāhmaṇoṃ ki pañjī vyavasthā*. Aitihāsika aura varṇanātmaka paricaya. Laheriyāsarāya: Kanhaiyālāla Kṛṣṇadāsa, [undated].

Khelāḍīlāla, Saṅkaṭa Prasāda. *Sarayūpārīna Brāhmaṇa Vaṃśāvalī*. 10th ed. Vāraṇasi, 1997.

Miśra, Jayānanda. *Pañjī byavasthāka udbhava evaṃ vikāsa*. Darbhaṅgā: Śāradā Prakāśana, 1983.

Miśra, Makkhanalāla. *Brāhmaṇotpatti-darpaṇa*. Naī Dillī: Nītā Prakāśana, 2006.

Rāya, Gaṇeśa. *Maithila brāhmaṇa evaṃ karṇa kāyasthaka pañjīkaraṇa: Parimārjita evaṃ parivarddhita*. Chatavana: Aśoka Kumāra Rāya eva Paṅkaja Kumāra Rāya, 1984.

Sakasenā, Bābūrāma, ed. *Kīrtilatā*. Kāśī: Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā, 1964.

Varmā, Vinoda Bihārī. *Maithila karaṇa kāyasthaka pāṃjika sarvekṣaṇa*. [A Survey of the Panji of the Karan Kayasthas of Mithila]. Madhubanī: Krānti Bihārī Varmā, 1973.

Epigraphical Records

Choudhary, Radhakrishna, ed. "The Panichobh Copperplate of Samgramagupta (C. 12th-13th Cent. A. D.)" In *Select Inscriptions of Bihar*, Introduction and Appendix in English and Text in Sanskrit, 113–115. Madhipura: Shanti Devi, 1958.

———, ed. "The So-Called Simraon Inscription of Nanyadeva." In *Select Inscriptions of Bihar*, Introduction and Appendix in English and Text in Sanskrit, 123–124. Madhipura: Shanti Devi, 1958.

Majumdar, N. G. "Nandapur Copper-Plate of the Gupta Year 169." *Epigraphia Indica* XXIII (1935–36): 52–56.

Sircar, Dineschandra. "Bangaon Plate of Vigrahapal III; Regnal Year 17." *Epigraphia Indica* XXIX, pt. I (1951): 48–57.

———. "Copper-Plate Grants from Bihar." *Epigraphia Indica* XXXV, pt. II (1963): 125–144.

Panji Records

Mūla Pañjī written by Pañjīkara Paṇḍita Modanānda Jhā. In the possession of Pañjīkara Paṇḍita Vidyānātha Jhā, Darbhanga.

Government Records

Bihar. State Cabinet. "Memorandum," February 27, 1992.

India. Ministry of Law and Justice. Legislative Department. "Constitution (Ninety-Second Amendment) Act." *Gazette of India*, January 8, 2004.

Patna High Court. "Binay Kumar Mishra Vs. State of Bihar and Ors." C.W.J.C. No. 2263 of 1992.

Newspapers and Magazines

Ahmed, Farzand. "Tongue Lashing: Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav provokes linguistic backlash." *India Today*, March 31, 1992.

Chakraborty, Tapas. "Maithili row in govt." *The Telegraph*, November 21, 2002.

Chaudhary, Pranava K. "Maithili protagonists resent govt. apathy." *Times of India*, March 5, 1992.

"HC verdict on Maithili hailed." *Times of India*, November 2, 2000.

Dictionaries

Jha, Govinda, ed. *Kalyani Kosh: A Maithili-English Dictionary*. 1st ed. Kameshwar Singh Bihar Heritage Series, 4. Darbhanga: Maharajadhiraja Kameshwar Singh Kalyani Foundation, 1999.

Monier-Williams, Monier, ed. *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary: Etymologically and philologically arranged with special reference to cognate Indo-European languages*. New edition, greatly enlarged and improved with the collaboration of E. Leumann and C. Cappeller. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889.

Dissertations and Theses

Collins, Alfred C. "The Origins of the Brahman-King Relationship in Indian Social Thought." PhD diss., University of Texas, Austin, 1976.

Pandey, Anshuman. "Avenging Maithili: The Eighth Schedule and Electoral Power in Bihar, 1999–2004." Master's thesis, University of Washington, Seattle, 2006.

Secondary Sources

Ansari, Hasan Nishat. "End of the Karṇāṭa Kingdom and Assertion of Tughluq Control over Bihar." In *The Comprehensive History of Bihar*, vol. II, pt. I, edited by Syed Hasan Aksari and Qeyamuddin Ahmad, 157–183. Historical Research Series, vol. XIX. Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1983.

———. "Firuz Shah Tughluq (1351–88): Consolidation of Tughlaq Rule." In *The Comprehensive History of Bihar*, vol. II, pt. I, edited by Syed Hasan Aksari and Qeyamuddin Ahmad, 184–232. Historical Research Series, vol. XIX. Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1983.

Asher, Catherine B., and Cynthia Talbot. *India Before Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Basham, A. L. "Ideas of Kingship in Hinduism and Buddhism." In *Kingship in Asia and Early America*, 115–132. XXX International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa. México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1981.

Bhattacharya, Jogendra Nath. *Hindu Castes and Sects*. An exposition of the origin of the Hindu caste system and the bearing of the sects towards each other and towards other religious systems. Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1896.

Black, Brian. *The Character of the Self in Ancient India: Priests, Kings, and Women in the Early Upaniṣads*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.

Blair, Harry W. "Structural Change, the Agricultural Sector, and Politics in Bihar." In *State Politics in Contemporary India: Crisis or Continuity?*, edited by John R. Wood. Boulder: Westview Press, 1984.

Blunt, E. A. H. *The Caste System of Northern India with Special Reference to the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*. London: Oxford University Press, 1931.

Brass, Paul R. *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*. London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974.

Brough, John. *The Early Brahminical System of Gotra and Pravara*. A Translation of the Gotra-Pravara-Mañjarī of Puruṣottama-Paṇḍita. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953.

Brown, Carolyn H. "Demography and Rank Involution in North Bihar." *Eastern Anthropologist* 38, no. 4 (1985): 315–321.

Brown, Carolyn H. "Raja and Rank in North Bihar." *Modern Asian Studies* 22, no. 4 (1988): 757–782.

———. "Substance and Structure among the Maithil Brahmins." *Eastern Anthropologist* 36, no. 3 (1983): 197–210.

———. "The Gift of a Girl: Hierarchical Exchange in North Bihar." *Ethnology* 22, no. 1 (1983): 43–62.

Chaudhary, Radhakrishna. "Political History of North Bihar (550–1200 A.D.)" In *The Comprehensive History of Bihar*, vol. I, pt. II, edited by Bindeshwari Prasad Sinha, 281–330. Historical Research Series, vol. XII. Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1974.

———. "The Karṇāṭa Kingdom of Mithila." In *The Comprehensive History of Bihar*, vol. II, pt. I, edited by Syed Hasan Aksari and Qeyamuddin Ahmad, 107–156. Historical Research Series, vol. XIX. Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1983.

Choudary, Rabindra Nath. *Political History of Khandavala Dynasty* [sic] *in Mithila (1556-1793)*. Delhi: Capital Publishing House, 1987.

Choudhary, Radhakrishna. *History of Muslim Rule in Tirhut*. 1206–1765 A.D. Chowkhamba Sanskrit Studies, vol. LXXII. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1970.

Chuyen, Gilles. *Who is a Brahmin?: The Politics of Identity in India*. New Delhi: Manohar, 2004.

Colebrooke, Henry T. "On the Sanscrit and Pracrit Languages." *Asiatic Researches* VII (1801): 199–231.

Conlon, Frank F. *A Caste in a Changing World: The Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmans, 1700-1935*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government*. American Oriental Series, no. 42. New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1942.

Datta, Swati. *Migrant Brāhmaṇas in Northern India: Their Settlement and General Impact, c. A.D. 475–1030*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989.

Deshpande, Madhav M. "Pañca Gauḍa and Pañca Drāviḍa: Contested Borders of a Traditional Classification." *Studia Orientalia* 108 (2010): 29–58.

Dumont, Louis. "Marriage in India: The Present State of the Question, III. North India in Relation to South India." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 9 (1966): 90–114.

Freiberger, Oliver. "Negative Campaigning: Polemics against Brahmins in a Buddhist *Sutta*." *Religions of South Asia* 3, no. 1 (2009): 61–76.

Ghurye, Govind Sadashiv. *Two Brahmanical Institutions: Gotra and Charana*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1972.

Gonda, Jan. *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View*. Reprinted from NVMEN III and IV with Addenda and Index. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966.

Grierson, George A. "A Plea for the People's Tongue." *Calcutta Review* LXXI (1880): 151–168.

———. *An introduction to the Maithilí language of North Bihár, containing a grammar, chrestomathy & vocabulary*. Calcutta: J. N. Banerjee and Son, 1882.

———. *Bihār Peasant Life*. Being a discursive catalogue of the surroundings of the people of that province, with many illustrations from photographs taken by the author. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1885.

———. "On Some Mediæval Kings of Mithila." *Indian Antiquary* XXVIII (1899): 57–58.

———. *Seven grammars of the dialects and subdialects of the Bihárí language*. Part I. Introductory. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1883.

———. *The Linguistic Survey of India*. Vol. V. Indo-Aryan Family. Eastern Group. Pt. II. Specimens of the Bihārī and Oṛiyā languages. Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1903.

Heesterman, J. C. "Power, Priesthood, and Authority." In *Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society*, 141–157. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

Inden, Ronald B. *Marriage and Rank in Bengali Culture: A History of Caste and Clan in Middle Period Bengal*. Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1976.

Jackson, Peter. *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Jayaswal, Kashiprasad, and Ananta Prasada Sastri. *A Descriptive Catalogue of Manuscripts in Mithila*. Vol. Vol. 1. Smṛti Manuscripts. Patna: Bihar / Orissa Research Society, 1927.

Jha, Hetukar. "Elite-Mass Contradiction in Mithila in Historical Perspective." In *Elite and Development*, edited by Sachchidananda and A. K. Lal, 187–205. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1980.

Jha, Hetukar. "The Oinwaras in the Mughal Period." *The Journal of the Bihar Research Society* 55 (1969): 144–150.

Jha, Jata Shankar. "An Early Attempt at Marriage Reform in Mithila." In *K. P. Jayaswal Commemoration Volume*, Published under Patronage of Government of Bihar, edited by Jata Shankar Jha, 533–537. Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1981.

———. "History of Raj Darbhanga." *Journal of the Bihar Research Society* XLVIII (1962): 14–104.

Jha, Ugra Nath. *The Genealogies and Genealogists of Mithila: A Study of the Panji and the Panjikars*. Varanasi: Kishor Vidya Niketan, 1980.

———. "The Origin of Panji System." *Eastern Anthropologist* 19, no. 3 (1966): 190–204.

Kane, Pandurang Vaman. *History of Dharmaśāstra: Ancient and Mediæval Religious and Civil Law*. 2nd ed. Government Oriental Series, Class B, No. 6. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1974.

Karve, Irawati. *Kinship Organization in India*. 3rd ed. New York: Asia Publishing House, 1968.

Khare, Ravindra S. *The Changing Brahmans: Associations and Elites among the Kanya-Kubjas of North India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

———. "The Kānya-Kubja Brahmins and Their Caste Organization." *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 16, no. 3 (1960): 348–367.

Kolenda, Pauline. *Caste in Contemporary India: Beyond Organic Solidarity*. Menlo Park, CA: Benjamin/Cummings Publishing Company, 1978.

———. "The Changing Caste System in India." In *Caste, Cult and Hierarchy: Essays on the Culture of India*, 68–86. Kirpa Das Series in Folklore and Anthropology, no. 3. Meerut: Folklore Institute, 1981.

Kosambi, D. D. "Early Brahmins and Brahminism." *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 23 (1947): 36–46.

Madan, T. N. "Is the Brahmanic Gotra a Grouping of Kin?" *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 18, no. 1 (1962): 59–77.

Mayer, Adrian C. *Caste and Kinship in Central India: A Village and its Region*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960.

Mishra, Abhaya Nath. *Shrotriyas of Mithila*. Varanasi: Kishor Vidya Niketan, 1984.

Mishra, Jayakanta. *A History of Maithili Literature*. Vol. 1 (Early and Middle Periods). Allahabad: Tirabhukti Publications, 1949.

Mishra, Yogendra. "Aryanization of Bihar: Northern and Southern." In *The Comprehensive History of Bihar*, vol. I, pt. I, edited by Bindeshwari Prasad Sinha, 183–194. Historical Research Series, vol. XII. Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1974.

———. "Monarchical States in Bihar up to 600." In *The Comprehensive History of Bihar*, vol. I, pt. I, edited by Bindeshwari Prasad Sinha, 195–222. Historical Research Series, vol. XII. Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1974.

Pandey, Mithila Sharan. *The Historical Geography and Topography of Bihar*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1963.

Raghavan, V. *Darbhanga*. Allahabad: Local Secretary, XIV All-India Oriental Conference, Darbhanga (Mithila), 1948.

Raheja, Gloria Goodwin. *The Poison in the Gift: Ritual, Prestation, and the Dominant Caste in a North Indian Village*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

Rameshwar Singh. "An Account of the Maithil Marriage." *The Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society* III (1917): 515–542.

———. "Presidential Address at Hardwar All-India Hindu Religious Sammilan, 10 April 1915." In *Speeches of the Honourable Sir Rameshwar Singh*, 65–69. Calcutta: Shadi Ram Monga for Chand Lal & Sons, 1930.

Risley, Herbert H. *The People of India*. Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1908.

Rocher, Ludo. "Schools of Hindu Law." In *Studies in Hindu Law and Dharmaśāstra*, edited by Donald R. Davis, Jr., 119–127. Anthem South Asian Normative Traditions Studies. London: Anthem Press, 2012.

———. "The Sūtras and Śāstras on the Eight Types of Marriage." In *Studies in Hindu Law and Dharmaśāstra*, edited by Donald R. Davis, Jr., 587–595. Anthem South Asian Normative Traditions Studies. London: Anthem Press, 2012.

Saraswati, Baidyanath. "A Note on Marriage Custom in Maithil Brahmans of Bihar." *Eastern Anthropologist* 9 (1955): 20–22.

———. "The Institution of Pañjī among Maithil Brahmans." *Man in India* 42 (1962): 263–276.

———. "The Web of Maithil Clanship." *Eastern Anthropologist* 11 (1957): 33–35.

Scharfe, Hartmut. *The State in Indian Tradition*. Handbuch der Orientalistik, zweite Abteilung: Indien, dritter Band: Geschichte, zweiter Abschnitt. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989.

Shah, A. M. "Lineage Structure and Change in a Gujarat Village." In *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India*, edited by Patricia Uberoi, 119–145. Oxford Readings in Sociology and Social Anthropology. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Sharma, R. S. "Government and Political Institutions (A.D. 550–1200)." In *The Comprehensive History of Bihar*, vol. I, pt. II, edited by Bindeshwari Prasad Sinha, 331–358. Historical Research Series Vol. XII. Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1974.

Sherring, Matthew Attmore. *Hindu Tribes and Castes as Represented in Benares*. Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1872.

Siddiqui, Iqtidar Husain. *Authority and Kingship under the Sultans of Delhi: Thirteenth-Fourteenth Centuries*. New Delhi: Manohar, 2006.

———. *Perso-Arabic Sources on the Life and Conditions in the Sultanate of Delhi*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1992.

Singh, Shyam Narayan. *History of Tirhut: From the Earliest Times to the End of the Nineteenth Century*. Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1922.

Singh, Upinder. "Brāhmaṇa Settlements in Ancient and Early Medieval India." In *A Social History of Early India*, edited by Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, 157–175. History of Science, Philosophy, and Culture in Indian Civilization. Vol. II: Life, Thought, and Culture in India, pt. 5. New Delhi: CSC and Pearson Education, 2009.

Sinha, Nawal Kishore. "Pañjī System: A Unique Social Institution of Maithil Brahmans." *Bulletin of the Anthropological Survey of India* XXVII, nos. 1 & 2 (1978): 82–87.

Sircar, Dineschandra. "Aspects of Marriage in North Indian Society." In *Problems of Early Indian Social History*, 1–36. Calcutta Sanskrit College Research Series No. CXXII. Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1983.

———. *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*. 1st ed. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966.

———. "Migration of Southerners to East India." In *Problems of Early Indian Social History*, 55–67. Calcutta Sanskrit College Research Series No. CXXII. Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1983.

———. *Studies in the Society and Administration of Ancient and Medieval India*. Vol. I. Society. Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1967.

Srinivas, M. N. "A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization." *Journal of Asian Studies* 15, no. 4 (1956): 481–496.

Srinivas, M. N. "Caste in Modern India." In *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*, 15–41. New York: Asia Publishing House, 1962.

———. *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952.

Thakur, Upendra. *Aspects of Society and Economy of Medieval Mithila*. New Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 1989.

———. *History of Mithila: Circa 3000 B.C.-1556 A.D.* Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1956.

Thakur, Vijay Kumar. "The Pañjī-Prabandha and its Impact on Maithila Society." In *Ludwik Sternbach Felicitation Volume, pt. 2*, 715–720. Lucknow: Akhila Bharatiya Sanskrit Parishad, 1979.

Thapar, Romila. *Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Trautmann, Thomas R. *Aryans and British India*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

———. *Dravidian Kinship*. Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology, no. 36. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Upadhyay, Basudev. "The Magas of Ancient Bihar." *Journal of the Bihar Research Society* XLVI, nos. 1–4, 309–311.

Upadhyay, Govind Prasad. *Brāhmaṇas in Ancient India: A Study in the Role of the Brāhmaṇa Class from c.200 BC to C. AD 500*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1979.

Weber, Albrecht. "Zwei Sagen aus dem Çatapatha Brâhmaṇa über Einwanderung und Verbreitung der Ârier in Indien, nebst einer geographisch-geschichtlichen Skizze aus dem weissen Yajus." In *Indische Studien*, Zeitschrift für die Kunde des indischen Alterthums, 1:161–232. Berlin: Ferd Drümmler's Buchhandlung, 1871.

Wilson, John. *Indian Caste*. Bombay: Times of India Office, 1877.

Witzel, Michael. "The Development of the Vedic Canon and Its Schools: The Social and Political Milieu." In *Inside the Texts, Beyond the Texts*, edited by Michael Witzel, 255–345. Columbia, MO: South Asian Books, 1997.