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History of Bengal as Reflected in the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* of Minhaj Uddin us Siraj

ABSTRACT: We have had so far about Bengal history are from different sources that have defined the Bengal history from different angles, but no attempts have so far been made to treat the history of Bengal in the light of some specific medieval sources dealing with politics, administration, society, and economics of Bengal. In this respect, "*Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*" of Minhaj Uddin us Siraj is of immense importance to know about the history of this region. Incidentally, "*Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*" of Minhaj Uddin us Siraj also highlights a few points relating to the contemporary history of North Bengal (*Varendri*). Accordingly, Minhaj Uddin us Siraj has given an eyewitness account of the conquests of Ikhtiar-uddin Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji in Bengal. In fact, the entire chapter in Bengal had centered on the military exploits of Bakhtyar Khalji. But what has been significant about his approach the thirteenth century Bengal history was kinness with which Minhaj Uddin us Siraj observed the contemporary social milieu. Besides giving the graphic description of every military encounter of Bakhtyar Khalji, Minhaj Uddin us Siraj always focused with curiosity on the social formation in Bengal. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj appeared to be particularly interested in describing military strategies. If one goes along the line of narration given by Minhaj Uddin us Siraj, it appears that Bakhtyar Khalji had used both military powers and strategic deception to conquer Nadia. Since Minhaj Uddin us Siraj stopped his narrative about Bengal with the incident of Bakhtiar Khalji's assassination, he did not mention any thing about the administration in Bengal. It is presumable that Bakhtiar Khalji did not get any time to organize his administration.

KEY WORDS: Bengal history, Minhaj Uddin us Siraj, chronicle of "*Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*", empire dynasties in India, eyewitness account, and contemporary social milieu.

INTRODUCTION

We have had so far about Bengal history are from different sources that have defined the Bengal history from different angles, but no attempts have so far been made to treat the history of Bengal in the light of some specific medieval sources dealing with politics, administration, society, and economics of Bengal. In this respect, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* of Minhaj Uddin us Siraj is of immense importance to know about the history of this region. Incidentally, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* of Minhaj Uddin us Siraj also highlights a few points relating to the contemporary history of North Bengal (*Varendri*).

Medieval Indian historiography highlighted mainly two distinct traditions of history

writings: the Arabs and the Persians. The Arab historians had a wide range covering date wise – a chronological catalogue of events pertaining to political, military, social, economic, and cultural activities. Persian historiography had a narrower limit, the history of the rulers. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj followed the Iranian traditions of historiography.

Minhaj Uddin us Siraj was born in Ghur in circa 589 AH (*Anno Hijriyah*) or 1193 AD (*Anno Domini*), i.e. two years after the battle of Tarain. His father was appointed *Qazi* of the Ghurid army stationed at Lahore after its occupation by Shihabuddin in 582 AH / 1186-1187 AD. But in 591 AH / 1194 AD, at the invitation of Sultan Bahaud-din Sam, he went

to Baharin and Turkharistan and accepted *Qaziship* of the region.¹

Minhaj Uddin us Siraj grew up in the harem of Princes Mah Malik,² daughter of Ghiyas-Uddin Muhammad bin Sam. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj's family had a long background of loyal relations with the *Khalifat* of Baghdad³ and good relation with the house of Ghur and Ghaznin.⁴ Minhaj Uddin us Siraj went to Zaranj, capital of Sijistan, and stayed there for few times. In 617 AH / 1220 AD, Minhaj Uddin us Siraj was in Tuluk. After four years, Minhaj Uddin us Siraj joined in defensive campaigns against the Mongols.

In 618 AH / 1221 AD, when Changiz Khan crossed the Jhilm, Minhaj Uddin us Siraj married and started planning to leave from India. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj left from India in 624 AH / 1227 AD and reached Uchch by boat. Then, he was appointed head of Froze College of Uchch (1227 AD); law officer and director of the preaching and of all religious, moral and judicial affairs (1232 AD); *Qazi* of Delhi (1241 AD); Principal of Najriya College, Delhi and Superintendent of its endowments, *Qazi* of Gwalior and preacher in metropolitan mosque (1244-1245 AD); and *Sadar-i-Jahan*, *Qazi* of the State, and Magistrate of the Capital under Nasruddin (1246 AD). His stayed at Lakhnauti, capital of Bengal for nearly 3 years (1241-1242 and 1243-1244 AD), enabled him to get accurate information about the outlying Muhammadan territory (Sarkar, 1977:80).

After a year Ilutmish captured Multan and Minhaj Uddin us Siraj passed in through the service of Ilutmish and reached Delhi in Ramazan 625 AH / 1227 AD. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj saw a suitable atmosphere for his

knowledge to flourish in a capital of Delhi. He worked under Ilutmish for about ten years. Ilutmish appointed him as *Imam*. Thereafter, Minhaj Uddin us Siraj had written *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*. But *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* did not follow only dynasty wise history. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj deals with the following six themes: (1) Patriarchs and Prophets; (2) Prophet of Islam, Pious Caliphs, the Omayyads, and the Abbasids; (3) the 'Ajami Dynasties, namely the Pesh-Dadan, the Kaianian, the Ashkanian, the Sasanina, and the Akasiran; (4) the Minor Dynasties and Other Muslim Dynasties; (5) the Sultans of Delhi and Their Nobles; and (6) the Mongols (Nizami, 1983:72).

Tabaqat-i-Nasiri's meaning calls for some explanation. Literally, the word means a "layer" but it is used for a class or order, race or generation. Its connotation concerns both space and time. Earlier, the term was used for the royal houses of Iran only, but latter on it was used for others also (*shuara*, *sufiya*, *fiqaha*, attribute). In *Hadist*, this terminology indicates those who transmit *Hadist* one generation to the others (Nizami, 1983:72). Some writers have explained the meaning of *Tabaqa* as twenty years.

Minhaj Uddin us Siraj had close relations with the Turkish *Sultans* and he was an official chronicler of the *Sultans*. Minhaj Uddin us-Siraj had also close relations with Ghaznin and the Muizzi and Qutbi Maliks. Racialism was revived too much in the Sultanate period. The Turks, ordinarily, did not compromise with any fault from the non-Turkish people. If they (non-Turkish people) could have committed any fault, they were severely punished by the *Sultans*. However, the Turkish nobles of Delhi favoured the non-Turkish chiefs. The *Khaljis* (non-Turks) came to power by over throwing the so called slave dynasty.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY OF BENGAL

Information from Minhaj Uddin us Siraj on the 13th and 14th century related to the administrative history of Bengal was based on the data about political history obtained from the two chronicles, under discussion, that have been pointed out in the following manner.

¹Minhaj Uddin us Siraj's family originally belonged to Jurjan, which is a small district on the North-West frontier of Ghur. Daghistani's statement that he was born at Lahore is not correct. According to Minhaj Uddin us Siraj himself, he reached Uchch for the first time in 624 AH (*Anno Hijriyah*) or 1226-1227 AD (*Anno Domini*).

²Mah Malik was the foster sister and school mate of Minhaj Uddin us Siraj's mother.

³According to Minhaj Uddin us Siraj, his ancestors had received *misals* from the Abbasid a *khilat* from the Caliph.

⁴One of his ancestors, Abdul Khaliq Jurjani, came to Ghaznin and impressed by his religious erudition and position; Sultan Ibrahim of Ghaznin gave his daughter in marriage to him "Abdul Khaliq's son Ibrahim" (named after his maternal grandfather of Minhaj Uddin us Siraj).

First, Regarding the Native Ruler. The stars, who gave the death blow to the Pala power in Bengal, probably belonged to Karnataka. They had accepted service under the Pala kings and settled in Bengal. The earliest ruler of the Sena dynasty was Samanta Sena who was succeeded by Vijaya Sena. He wrested a large part of Bengal from the Pala. Vijaya Sena was succeeded by Vallala Sena (1158-1178 AD, *Anno Domini*), the famous Ballal Sen of Bengali tradition, who is said to have reorganized the caste system and introduced *Kulinism* in Bengal. He was succeeded by Lakshmana Sena (1178-1205 AD) who founded an era and the famous medieval city of Lakhnauti. Lakshmana Sena was a ruler in the country of Bang (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:558).

Second, Regarding Territory. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj gives us adequate information about the different capital cities, fort-towns, and other settlements in his chronicle. The identification of the places mentioned by him had been done by the modern scholars over the years. The following is the list of places mentioned and their possible identification.

On the Basankot. According to Cunningham, Basankot is situated the mound of Bhasubihar near Mahasthangarh, more than one hundred miles from Lakhnauti. Monomchan Chakravarti consents that Basankot was near Lakhnauti. It cannot be Ballalbari or the transformation of any Hindu fort as he imagines; it was, according to Minhaj Uddin us Siraj, altogether a new structure (cited in Chakravarti, 1909:210; and Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:151). According to Rajani Chakravarti, Basankot was a fortress of Gour. It is like a polygon and made with a mud-wall and a ditch. According to Minhaj Uddin us Siraj, there was fairly large space between the city and the minar of Basankot where in later times rival armies fought (cited in Sarkar, 1973, II:35).

On the Devkot. Devkot was a very ancient city of Bengal and it's another name is Bana-Pura (Bonnogor of Martin). The Muslim town was perhaps at Dumdumah, a cantonment built near the Hindu city, and both became known by the same name (Sarkar, 1973, II:36).

The active centre of Muslim power in Bengal was Devakot or Diw-kot (now called Gangarampur) in the district of Dinajpur. According to J. Martin (1919:660), the proper name of Dumdumah is Devkot. It received its present appellation, from its having been a military station during the early part of the Muhammedan government. Cunningham more fully describes it, thus:

The old fort Devakot is situated on the left or eastern bank of the Purnabhava river, 33 miles to the northeast of Pandua, 18 miles to the south-south-west of Dinajpur, and 70 miles to the north-north-east of the citadel of Gour [...]. To the north of Devakot is a walled enclosure about 100 feet square, and to the north of this there is second fortifier enclosure of about the same size. Both these are surrounded by massive earthen ramparts and broad ditches [...]. To the South lays the Muhammedan quarter of Damduma or the encampment, extending in a straggling way down [...]. From this point, there is an embanked road leading to the east past the two great lakes called Dahal Dighi and Kala Dighi. The former is supposed to be of Muhammedan construction as it lies from east to west (cited in Chakravarti, 1909:95-100).

On the Ganguri. The *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* states that Husam-uddin-Iwaz was the feudatory of Kalwa-i or Galwa-i or Kalwa-in or Galwa-in, the latter word is probably nasal (cited in Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:575-76). Sir Jadunath Sarkar identifies Ganguri with Mahal Gankarah in Sarkar Tanda of Todarmal's Rent-Roll (Sarkar, 1973, III:130).

On the Jajnagar. According to Dr. Quanungo and Rai Bahadur Monmohan Chakravarti, "In the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Jajnagar always means Orissa, probably north Orissa. The name is derived from Jaipur on the bank of the Vaitarani River, an old head quarter of north Orissa" (cited in *JASB*, V, 1873:217). But Dr. R.D. Banerjee held to the fact that "Jajnagar is Jajllanagar [...] in Chattisgarh district"; though he admitted "The majority of Mussalman writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries mention Jajnagar when they intend to refer to Orissa" (Banerjee, 1930, I:1).

On the Lakhnor. There is hardly any difference of opinion among scholars that

Lakhnor of Minhaj was situated somewhere near the ancient town of Nagar in the Birbhum district (Banerjee, 1930, II:258). Blockman's Lakarkuda in Birbhum (cited in *JASB*, V, 1873:212) is to be definitely rejected in favour of Nagar or Rajnagar, once perhaps the capital of some Hindu *Rajah* as the placement by Lakhnor (Lakaur, Langaur, variants in the text of *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*). Some scholars accepted the question of identification of Lakhnor with Nagar.

On the Nudia. Nudia was a famous city of Bengal. The city surprised by Bakhtyar Khalji perhaps stood between Bulpukur and Samudragarh where alleged ruins of Lakshmana Sena's time are pointed out (Chakravarti, 1909:204). The territory of Lakhnawati⁵ has two wings on either side of the river Ganga. The Western side they call Rai (Rarh)⁶ and the city of Lakhan-or⁷ lies on that side; and the eastern side they called Barind or Barindah (cited in Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:585), and the city i.e. Diwkot is on that side.

Third, Capital Cities of Navadvip. Sir Jadunath Sarkar writes that there is no evidence to say Navadvip was ever the permanent capital of the Sena kings. According to him, it is a holy place which is situated on bank of river Ganga. When the Sena king came with their servants who are the ministers they needed a populous court. The city, however, consisted almost entirely thatched bamboo houses, the characteristic feature of Bengal architecture, whence the name of *Bangala* given even to the stone edifices in Delhi Fort built in this style of arched bamboo roofs (Sarkar, 1973, II:5).

It is surprising that no fort, no protective wall of bricks is narrated by any historian as bordering the Navadvip. Most probably a bamboo palisade – like the Sal wood palisade of ancient Pataliputra noticed by Megasthenes – encircled the main portion of the city with an

octroi post at the gate (Sarkar, 1973, II:5). In this context, Ramesh Chandra Majumdar writes in his book, *History of Bengal*, Volume I, and said as follows:

Nadiya is referred to as one of the capitals of the Sena kings in the genealogical treatises (*kulajis*) in Bengal. It is true that these accounts cannot be regarded as of great historical value unless corroborated by other evidence, but the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* seems to confirm their statement. In the Pavanaduta of Dhoyi, Vijayapura on the Ganges is referred to as the capital of Lakshmana Sena. Mr. M. Chakravarti identifies it with Nadiya which agrees well with the directions contained in the poem [...] as Vijayapura is mentioned immediately after the description of Triveni Sangama, [...] its identification with Nadiya appears to be preferable (Majumdar, 1990).

THE EXTENT OF BAKHTYAR KHALJI'S CONQUESTS AND TERRITORIAL EXPANSION

The defeat of Prithviraj by Muhammad Ghuri in the second battle of Tarain, in 1192 AD (*Anno Domini*), opened the flood-gates of Muslim invasion of India and a large part of Northern India was overrun by the Muslims before the end of twelfth century AD. A detailed account has been given by Minhaj Uddin us Siraj (Vol.I, 1864:234-236 and 254-259), how Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji made a sudden raid on Nadiya, where the Sena ruler, Lakshmana Sena, was staying, sometime about 1202 AD, seized it and gradually conquered other parts of Bengal. The account rests solely on the authority of the Muslim historian, Minhaj Uddin us Siraj, and its credibility has also been discussed in Volume I.

Minhaj Uddin us Siraj tells us that Ikhtyarud-Din Muhammad bin Bakhtyar belonged to the Khalji tribe of Ghur, and the territory of Garmsir. He was a man acting with rush or sudden energy, energetic, undulant or fearless, bold, and also expert. He came from his tribes to the court of Muhammad Ghuri for the purpose of service. But, his appearance was humble and unprepossessing. So, a small stipend was given to him. Therefore, Bakhtyar Khalji rejected it and he left Ghaznin and came into Hindustan. Bakhtyar Khalji reached the

⁵Of course, Bang is not included and our author mentions it separately.

⁶Raverty wrote "Ral" or "Rad" after hearing a Hindu pronounce the Sanskrit, *Rarh*, containing as it does; the letter which few but natives of the country can properly utter.

⁷The printed text followed in Elliot has "Lakhnauti" but that is totally impossible, since it lay east, not west of Ganges; its right pronunciation is, no doubt, Lakhan-or.

capital, Delhi, but here he was not initially entertained. Then, Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji left Delhi and reached Budaun, here he joined the service under Hizabr-uddin Hasan-i-Adib (commander of leader of troops).

After a few years, Ikhtiyar-Uddin-Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji joined the service under Malik-Hasam-ud-din-Aughul-Balk of Awadh. At that time, Bakhtyar Khalji had done so many works with boldness and he has Bhgwat or Bhugwat and Bhiulior Bhiwali gifted out to him as fief. In 1197 AD, he organized an attack against Bihar with 200 horsemen. Odantapuri, the capital of Bihar, was looted and plundered by Bakhtyar Khalji. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj tells us that Ikhtiyar-Uddin-Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji attacked Bihar suddenly and captured the fortress. When this news of his success, fame, and fortune has spreaded in North India, one group of Khalji tribe joined his (Bakhtyar Khalji) army. After the victory was affected, Muhammad Bakhtyar returned with great booty, and came to the presence of the beneficent Sultan,⁸ Kutub-ud-Din I-bak, and received great honour and distinction.⁹

Ikhtiyar-ud-Din was so much emboldened by success in Bihar that he planned the conquest of Bengal which ruled By Lakshman Sena of the Sena dynasty. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj describes the conquest of Nadiya in the following manner:

The second year from this, Muhammad Bakhtyar got his troops ready, started from Bihar and suddenly entered the city of Nadiya, so fast but not more than 18 troopers could keep up with him, while the rest of his army were coming up behind him. When he reached the gate of the city, he did not molest any one, but (proceeded) silently and modestly, so that none could imagine that it was Muhammad Bakhtyar, but most

⁸The palace, as we know, stood on the very bank of the Ganges, while the city's western gate must have been far inland in order to intercept the merchandise that came from the south and the west by the land route so that the custom duty could be collected here.

⁹He was not then Sultan and his master, Sultan Muizz-ud-Din, was still alive and was assassinated thirteen years afterwards, and some time even after that Kutub-ud-Din received his manumission and the title of "Sultan" from the nephew of Muizz-ud-Din. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj does not mean that Kutub-ud-Din was Sultan at that very time. He was not Sultan, in fact, during the lifetime of Muhammad Bakhtyar.

probably the people thought that the (new comers) were traders who had brought high priced horses for sale. When he reached the gate of the residence Rai Lakhmaniya, he drew his sword and begun the slaughter of his infields. At that time the Rai [...] was seated at his meal [...] when cries rose up from the gates of his palace and the middle of the city. By the time, he learnt what the circumstances were, Mohammad Bakhtyar and run into his palace and harem and cut down a number of people; (so) the Rai fled away by the back door with bare feet (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:150-151).

It is true that the ruler was not an old man, but he was absolutely lethargic and negligent of his duties. Although the invaders were in Bihar, he did nothing to protect his territory. No wonder, Ikhtiyar-ud-Din took advantage of this state of affairs in Bengal. Ikhtiyar-ud-Din moved towards the North and established himself at Lakhnauti. Lakhsmen Sena took shelter in Eastern Bengal where he continued to rule for some time. No attempt was made by Ikhtiyar-ud-Din to conquer the whole of Bengal.

After Muhammad-i-Bakhtyar possessed himself of that territory (Rae Lakhmaniah's), he left the city of Nudiah in desolation and he place which is (now) Lakhnauti¹⁰ has been made into his seat of government (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:552). Therefore, Lakhnauti was

¹⁰The name of Rae Lakhmaniah's capital was spelt Nudiah until the time of Aurangzeb, when words ending in -ha-i-Mukhtafi-were ordered to be written with as Nudiah. Muhammad-i-Bakhtyar destroyed Nudiah and leaving it in desolation passed onwards [Rauzat-us-Safa says "he passed beyond the territory of the Rae"] and in place of that capital, founded another city [or town] at the place, according to the *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* where Lakhnawati has been [...] and which, at this time [reign of Akbar] they call Gaur. The Gaur M.S. says that he made the *mauza* (place, villege, district) of Lakhnawati as his capital, now twelve miles from the Ganga. The *Mirat-i-Jahan Numa* says, "He founded a city as his capital in the territory of Lakhnawati, which signifies Gaur of Bangladesh", at the place where Lakhnauti was. Budauni says that Muhammad-i-Bakhtyar destroyed the idol temples of the infields erected *masjids* and other buildings, and built a capital in his own name which is now called Gaur. Gaur or Gandha was the name of a division of the present country or tracked styled Banglah as well as of its ancient capital, and its inhabitants were Gauriya or Gaudhiya. According to Abul Fazl, the fort of Gaur was founded by Balal Sen, the second of the Sen dynasty, one of eight (in some copies seven) kings who reigned 106 years, out of which Balal Sen reigned fifty years. According to the same author, the last the most ancient name of the city was Gaur afterwards changed to Lakhnauti, and subsequently styled Gaur again. The emperor Humayun named it Bakht-abad. Banglah itself is sometimes styled Jannatul-Bilad.

the capital of Bengal at the time of Bakhtyar. He brought the different parts of that territory under his sway and instituted therein, in every part, the reading of the *Khutbah*, and coining of money,¹¹ through his praise worthy Endeavour, and those of his *Amirs*, mosques, colleges, and monasteries (for Darweshes) were founded, from those of the booty and the wealth (taken) he dispatched a large portion to the presence of Sultan Kutub-ud-Din I-bak (Uddin us Siraj, 1973, II:10).

Ikhtiyar-ud-Din began to dream of carrying his arms beyond the Himalayas. Ikhtiyar-ud-Din's main purpose was the conquest of Tibet and Turkistan. About the middle of the year 1205 AD (*Anno Domini*), he set out, according to Minhaj Uddin us Siraj, with an army of 10,000 horses on his new adventure. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj wrote, "in the different parts of those mountains which lie between Tibbet and the country of Lakhnauti are three races of people, one called the Kunch, the second the Mej (Meg), and the third the Thiaru; and all have truck Countenances" (Uddin us Siraj, 1973, II:10).

As an essential preliminary, Muhammad Bakhtyar perhaps made raids of exploration into the tribal tracts, as we are told by Minhaj Uddin us Siraj that Muhammad Bakhtyar "prior to his expedition, had captured a Mech and induced him to accept Islam at his hands" (Uddin us Siraj, 1973, II:10). This man latter known as "Ali the Mech, agreed to act as Bakhtyar's guide through the sub-montane region and he had been perhaps instrumental in writing for his master the loyalty of the tribes, which, as we learn, stood well the test of Bakhtyar's darkest hour of misfortune" (cited in Sarkar, 1973, II:10).

¹¹There is not a word in the facts causing "his name to be read in the *Khutbah* and stuck on the coins". According to the *Zubat-ul-Tawarikh*, he established "the *Khutbah* and money of Islam", and its author copies Minhaj Uddin us Siraj almost verbatim. Other writers, on the contrary, state that having brought all the surrounding territory under his sway, after the capture of Nudiah, he assumed a canopy of state, read the *Khutbah* for himself and issued coin in his own name, which is not correct. He would naturally have issued coin in the name of the Sultan Muizz-ud-Din Muhammad i-Same to whom he appears to have been most loyal (see Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:571).

Muhammad Bakhtyar entered into a treaty with Raja of Kamrup who agreed not to molest him at least with advice. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj has stated that a river flows in front of that place, of vast magnitude, the name of which is Begmati¹² and, when it enters the country of Hindustan, they style it, in the Hindu dialect, *Samund* (ocean);¹³ and, in magnitude, breadth, and depth, it is three times more than the river Ganga (Uddin us Siraj, 1973, II:561). The river was spanned by a stone bridge. Leaving a force to hold the bridge (two of his own *Amirs*, one a Truk slave, and the other a Khalji, with troop, in order to it until his return), Ikhtiyar-ud-Din set out for Tibet.

It is not certain in what direction Ikhtiyar-ud-Din marched or what part of Tibbet was his objective. After sixteen days of marching, he reached a strong fortress standing in open century which was well cultivated and thickly populated. The inhabitants joined the garrison fortress in opposing the invaders and though Ikhtiyar-ud-Din held his ground throughout the day, his losses were very heavy and ultimately he decided to retreat. About the fate of the retreating army, Minhaj Uddin us Siraj writes:

When they retreated, neither a blade of grass nor a stick of firewood was to be found throughout the whole route. The inhabitants had burnt it all, and those who lived in the defiles and passes had moved from the line of route. During these fifteen days, the cattle and the horses did not get a sir of food or a blade of grass. The soldiers had to kill their horses and eat them till they came out from the mountains into the country of Kamrup and reached the head of that bridge. They found two

¹²The name of this river in the best and oldest copies in Begmati, but some others, the next best copies, have *Beg-hati*, *Bak-mati*, or *Bag-mati*, and others have *Bang-madi*, *Mag-mdi*, and *Nang-mati*, or *Nag-mati*. *Bag-mati* is not an uncommon name for a river and is applied to more than one. The river of Nipal, which lower down is called the *Gandhak*, is called *Bag-mati*. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj says about the size, we are led to conclude that this river, *Beg-mati* or *Bek-mati*, must be Brahma-Putra; but what part of it is the question to be solved. When Minhaj Uddin us Siraj adds that it is more than three times boarder and deeper than the Ganga and, of course equally liable to inundation – the idea of its being spanned by a stone bridge of above twenty arches, shows that the narrator or his information must have been grossly exaggerated.

¹³*Samund* or *Samudr* or *Samudra*, the ocean, one of the best copies of the text has when it enters the ocean or sea of Hindustan.

arches of the destroyed. The reason [...] was that an enmity had arisen between the two *Amirs* (who were left to guard the bridge) and, in their discord, they had neglected to watch the bridge and protect the road, and had gone off. The Hindus of the Kamrup country came and he destroyed the bridge (Uddin us Siraj, 1973, II:562).

Ikhtiyar-ud-Din found that the natives had destroyed or obstructed the roads and burnt all vegetation. There was neither fodder nor fuel and the army was forced to live off the flesh of its horses. The bridge had been destroyed and no boats were available. The *Raja* of Kamrup also attacked the retreating army and drove it into the river. Ikhtiyar-ud-Din managed to reach Deokot with about hundred horsemen.

The disaster broke the nerves of Bakhtyar Khalji and he fell seriously ill. On hearing this, Ali Mardan, one of his *Amirs*, came to Deokot. Ikhtiyar-ud-Din was confined to bed and nobody had seen him for past three days. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj (1973, II:562) describes that Ali Mardan reached his bed, drew he sheet from his face and thrust a dagger into his breast.

On the Khalji Civil War, circa 1206-1212 AD (Anno Domini). Before leaving on his Tibbet campaign, Bakhtyar Khalji had sent Malik Izz-ud Din Muhammad Shiran Khalji and his brother, Ahmad Shiran, on a mission of conquest of Lakhnor (Nagar in the Birbhum District) and Jainagar (in Orissa). Malik Izz-ud Din Muhammad Shiran Khalji and his brother, Ahmad Shiran, were Lieutenants of Bakhtiyar Khalji's court. The murder of Malik Ikhtiyar Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji was followed by an interregnum and civil war which ended only when the notorious Ali Mardan aid with his life the penalty of Bakhtyar Khalji's blood in about 1212 AD, after a chequer career of exile in Delhi, captivity at Ghazni and a reign of terror at Lakhnauti (Sarkar, 1973, II:14).

Malik Izz-ud Din Muhammad Shiran Khalji proceeds towards Naran-go-e,¹⁴ and after

¹⁴Other writers state that Malik Izz-ud Din Muhammad Shiran Khalji on hearing of the fate of their chief Muhammad-i-Bakhtyar returned at once from Jainagar with his force, proceeded to Devkot and performed the funeral ceremonies; and then marched from Diw-kot to Barsul and secured the

having defeated and captured its Governor, Ali Mardan, came back to Devkot and declared himself successor of Bakhtyar Khalji. Ali Mardan was imprisoned by Malik Izz-ud Din Muhammad Shiran Khalji and handed him over to the charge of Baba (familiarily so styled perhaps), Kotwal, the Saffahani (Isfahani). Ali Mardan, with help of Kotwal, escaped from prison and went off to the court of Delhi. After listening to his request, Kutb-ud-Din I-bak ordered Kaemaz (the Governor of Oudh) to proceed from Awadh towards the territory of Lakhnawati. Malik Hasam-ud-Din 'Iwaz, the Khalji, was the feudatory of Ganguri, and he went forth to receive Kaemaz, the Rumi, and along with him proceeded to Diw-Kot; and at the suggestion of Kaemaz, the Rumi, he became the fife of Diw-Kot (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:576), Malik Izz-ud Din Muhammad Shiran Khalji and other Khalji *Amirs* were determined to attack Devkot, when Kaemaz Rumi returned again and attacked by the Kaemaz. Rumi and Muhammad-i-Shiran was slain.¹⁵ Thus, Malik Izz-ud Din Muhammad Shiran Khalji's reign had ended in about a year (1207-1208 AD).

On the Ali Mardan (Ala-ud-Din), 1210-1213 AD (Anno Domini). Minhaj Uddin us Siraj describes Ali Mardan¹⁶ as a man of vigor,

assain, Ali Mardan, and threw him into prison.

¹⁵The Gaur MS says that he was killed in action after a reign of eight months, and in this letter statement, the *Zubdat-ut-Tawarikh* and some after works agree; but the period seems much too short from the assassination of Muhammad, son of Bakhtyar Khalji to his death for reason mentioned in the note or the Country must have remained some time without a ruler before Ali Mardan succeeded.

¹⁶Ali Mardan, that is to say, Ali the son of Mardan, was energetic an impetuous; but he was not endowed with sense or judgement and was notorious for bondless and audacity, for self-importance, haughtiness, excessive vanity, and gasconade; and was cruel and sanguinary. After he escaped from confinement for assassination his benefactor Muhammad, son of Bakhtyar, when lying help lesson his death bed, he proceeded to Delhi and presented himself before Kutb-ud-Din I-bak, who, at that time, had acquired the sovereignty of Delhi, and was well received. He accompanied Kutb-ud-Din I-bak to Ghaznin at that time that he filled the throne of Ghaznin, the partisans of Sultan Taj-ud-Din I-Yal-duz, at the time of Kutb-ud-Din I-bak's precipitate retreat probably. Some authors, however, state and among them the authors of the *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* and *Zubdat-ut-Tawarikh*, that in one of the conflicts of that time, Ali Mardan was taken prisoner by the Turks – *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* says the Turk mans – and was carried off into Kashghar where he remained for some time. Ali Mardan at length managed to reach Hindustan again and proceed to Delhi and presented himself at the Court of Kutb-ud-Din I-bak who received him with great

furious, fearless, and bold. After imprisonment at Naran-go-e, Ali Mardan came to Sultan Kutb-ud-Din I-bak and helped him in all the matters. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj (1973, II:125) says "He begun issuing orders of assignment on different parts of Hindustan, and his tongue uttered empty boastings. Both in public gathering and open darbar (*Jama's wa bargdh*), he gave himself the airs of the lord of Khurasan, Ghazni, and Ghor, and talked idle nonsense". Kutb-ud-Din I-bak pleased with his behavior appointed him ruler of Lakhnauti.

Malik Hasam-ud-Din Iwaz welcomed the new ruler (Ali Mardan) at Devkot in about 1210 AD. After the death of Sultan Kutb-ud-Din I-bak, Ali Mardan declared independence and declared himself as a Sultan under the name Ala-ud-Din. Ali Mardan was not a good administrator and he was a cruel man. Under his reign, so many *Amirs* of Khalji were murdered. Hasam-ud-Din Iwaz entered the palace of *Amir* Khalji and murdered Ali Mardan and elected Malik Hasam-ud-Din as Sultan of Lakhnauti. He ascended the throne under the name of Ghiyas-ud-Din Iwaz Khilji.

On the Ghiyas-ud-Din Iwaz Khilji, 1213-1227. According to Minhaj Uddin us Siraj (1937:II), Ghiyas-ud-Din Iwaz Khilji ruled in Kutb-ud-Din I-bak pleased with his behavior appointed him ruler of Lakhnauti for 15 years. He transferred his capital from Devkot to Gaur (historical city of Bengal). For the first time, the Delhi Sultan attacked Bengal and Ghiyas-ud-Din Iwaz Khilji obeyed his suzerainty and then Iwaz Khilji became the ruler of Kutb-ud-Din I-bak.

On the Bengal Under the Mamluks. Prince Nasir Uddin Mahmud who had overthrown Ghiyas-ud-Din Iwaz Khilji and re-establish Delhi's sway over Bengal. After the death of Prince Nasir Uddin Mahmud, Daulat Shah Khilji became the viceroy of the Khilji principality. Daulat Shah assumed for himself the title of the Delhi Sultan. Possibly assumed by such titles, Daulat Shah tried to revive

favour and distinction. The fact of his having been a captive in the hands of his rival's-I-Yal-Duz's – partizans was enough to ensure him favourable reception. Kutb-ud-Din I-bak conferred upon him the territory of Lakhnauti in fief and he proceeded thither and assumed the government.

Khilji supremacy in Bengal and to keep off at the same time Delhi's aggression by nominal allegiance to the Sultan of Delhi. But, he was soon overpowered and ousted by a bold and adventurous Khilji noble named Balka.

The next Governor of Bengal was Alauddin Jani. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj is silent on the activities of Alauddin Jani during his short rule of one year and a few months. For some reason, he was removed from the governorship (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:239-241) under the order of Iluttmish, Malik Saiuddin Aibak, left Bihar to take over the charge of Lakhnauti. And Tughral Tughan Khan was transferred from Badaun to Bihar. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj says "Sultan Iluttmish was so highly pleased with Aibak's presents that he bestowed on him the title of *Yughan-Tat*" (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:732). Aor Khan Aibak made himself master of Lakhnauti after the death of Saifuddin. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj, then, says as follows:

Tughral Tughan Khan ruled Bengal for about nine years. He fought with Aor Khan without formal sanction from the lord of Delhi. Although he seized the throne of Bengal by force of arms, he never ignored the supremacy of Delhi. Though a usurper, Tughral was wise enough to legalise to authority by procuring a formal recognition from Raziah, the Sultan of Delhi. He sent in charge of Qazi Jalauddin. His status as ruler of Bengal and Bihar was recognized by Raziah. He received from the latter an umbrella and a red canopy in return for his acknowledgement of Delhi's suzerainty (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:732).

The contemporary historian Minhaj Uddin us Siraj says that in 642 AH (*Anno Hijriyah*) or 1224 AD (*Anno Domini*), the infidels of Changiz Khan came to the gate of Lakhnauti (Uddin us Siraj, 1973, II:344). Raverty has discounted clearly the statements of Badaoni, Nizamuddin Ahmad, and Ghulam Hussain by observing that in some manuscripts of *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, the copyists possibly made an error by mentioning *Habkar Khan* in the place of Jainagar and the latter Muslim historians instead of solving the problem have named *Habkar Khan* as Changiz Khan (see Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:662).

Malik Mughis Uddin Yuzbak was appointed the next governor of Lakhnauti. With the death of Malik Mughis Uddin Yuzbak in Kamrup, Bengal's independence came to an end and Delhi's authority was reimposed. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj says after the death of Malik Mughis Uddin Yuzbak; and before the appointment of Jalal Uddin Masud Jain as governor of Bengal, someone was appointed as governor of Lakhnauti by the court of Delhi, who might have possibly issued coins in the name of Sultan Nasir Uddin (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:769).

Jalal Uddin Masud Jain ruled for one year and he sent elephants and other presents to Delhi as his tribute (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:713). He was deposed before the year 1257 AD ended. In the same year, when Tajuddin Arsalan Khan invaded Lakhnauti, a man named Izzuddin Balban Yuzbaki had been ruling in Lakhnauti (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:769). The next governor of Bengal was Malik Izzuddin Balban-i-Yuzbaki. In the absence of Izzuddin Balban Yuzbaki, the citizens of Lakhnauti offered resistance to Arsalan Khan (the governor of Kara) for three days. Izzuddin Balban-i-Yuzbaki rode back hurriedly, but he was defeated and killed (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:769-770).

Malik Tajuddin Arsalan Khan was ruling independently over Bihar and Lakhnauti with the title of Sultan. Tatar Khan succeeded his father to the throne of Lakhnauti. Muhammad Tatar Khan was succeeded by Sher Khan, a member of the family of Arsalan Khan. This much is only known that after Sher Khan, the Court of Delhi appointed Amin Khan as governor of Bengal.

THE HISTORY OF BENGAL IN THE 13TH AND 14TH CENTURY

The government established by the Bakhtyar Khilji was a sort of clannish feudalism. He divided his kingdom to the army officer, most of whom were Turks and Khiljis. After Muhammad-i-Bakhtyar possessed himself of that territory (Rae Lakhmaniah's), he left the city of Nudiah in desolation and the

place which is (now) Lakhnauti,¹⁷ he made the seat of government. He brought the different parts of the territory under his sway and instituted therein, every part, threading of *Khutbah*, and the coining of money.¹⁸ His close associates were put in charge of the following fiefs-Barsul (Barsala, Sarkar Ghoraghat) to Ali Mardan, fiefs of Santush and Maksadah¹⁹ (in Sarkar Barnakabad) to Muhammad-ad-i-Sheran,

¹⁷The name of Rae Lakhmaniah's capital was spelt Nudiah until the time of Aurangzeb, when words ending in - hai-mukhtafi - were ordered to be written with - as Nudiah. Muhammad-i-Bakhtyar destroyed Nudiah and leaving it in desolation, passed onwards (Raznat-us-Safa says, "He passed beyond the territory of the Rae") and, which, at this time (reign of Akbar), they call Gaur. The Gaur M.S. says that he made the Mauza' (place, village, district) of Lakhnauti, his capital, now twelve miles from the Gang. The *Mirat-i-Jahan-Numa* says, "He founded a city as his capital in the territory of Lakhnauti", which signifies Gaur of Banglah, "at the place where Lakhnauti was". Badauni says that Muhammad-i-Bakhtyar "destroyed the idol temples of the infields and erected *masjids* and other buildings, and built a capital in his own name - which is now called *Gaur*". *Gaur* or *Gauda* was the name of a division of the present country or tract styled Banglah as well as of its ancient capital, and its inhabitants were *Gawriya* or *Gaudhiya*. According to Abu-Fazl, the fort of Gaur was founded by Balal Sen, the scion of the Sen Dynasty, one of eight (in some copies, seven) kings who reigned 106 years, out of which Balal Sen reigned fifty years. According to the same author, the last of this dynasty was Rajah-or. It would seem, from this, that the most ancient name of the city was Gaur, afterwards changed to Lakhnawati, and subsequently styled Gaur again. The emperor Humayun named it Bakhtab. *Bagalah* itself is sometimes styled Jannat-ul-Bilad.

¹⁸There is not a word in the text about causing "his name to be read in the *Khutbah* and stuck on the coins". Some authors consider him an independent sovereign and say that he "reigned" for twelve years. He certainly ruled in quasi independence for that period; but, from the expressions made use of by him in his last sickness, he evidently was loyal to Sultan Muizuddin, and he probably paid some nominal obedience to Malik Kutubuddin Ibak, as the Sultan's Deputy at Delhi. It is not to be wondered at that Muhammad, son of Bakhtyar neither issued coin in his own name, nor in the name of his sovereign's slave; whilst that sovereign was alive - the latter would have been in an impossible act. According to the *Zubdat-ut-Tawarikh*, he established "the *Khutbah* and money of Islam", and its author copies Minhaj Uddin us Siraj almost verbatim. Other writers, on the contrary, state that having brought, all the surrounding territory under his sway; after the capture of Nudiah, he assumed a canopy of state, read the *Khutbah* for himself, and issued coin in his own name, which is not correct. He would naturally have issued coin in the name of Sultan Muizuddin Muhammad-i-Sam, to whom he appears to have been most loyal. He had no occasion whatever to issue money in the name of Malik Kutb-Uddin, who was still a slave; and Muhammad-i-Bakhtyar only did the same year in which Sultan Muizuddin was himself assassinated.

¹⁹These two names are most plainly and clearly written in four of the best and oldest copies of the text, with a slight variation in one of Maksidah for Maksidah [the Maxadabad probably of the old maps and old travelers]. See, for further information, Minhaj Uddin us Siraj (1864, I:575).

territory between Devkot and Bikanwah to Mutamid Uddaula, fief of Ganguri (or Gangri) to Malik Hasam-ud-Din Iwaz, the Khilji. This distribution of fiefs among his powerful adherents was promoted by Bakhtyar for other consideration. He was quite aware of the hopes and aspirations of his follower.

Hence, by putting them in charge of fiefs, Bakhtyar tried to satisfy their ambitions as well as to avert any sort of intensive conflict among them which might have endangered the very existence the Muslim principality from Lakhnauti. Very little is known of the system of administration of the country during this period. Therefore, it is known that the capital was located sometimes at Lakhnauti and sometimes at Devkot. There is no mention of the existence of any civil administration in his principality; Bakhtyar Khalji's form of government may possibly be described as a sort of military-cum-feudal government. In the history of Bengal, perhaps this was the first military government and at this time only the military personnel were entrusted with the responsibilities of civil administration. Some have related that there was an *Amir*²⁰ of his Ali Mardan, a Khilji of great intrepidity and temerity, to whose charge the fief of Narangoe was made over (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:572).

After the death of Ikhtyar Uddin Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji, a bitter struggle for the Masnad continued for some time among the Khalji nobles (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:573-574). According to Minhaj Uddin us Siraj:

Mohammad Shiran Khilji, having heard the news of the tragic end of his master, hurriedly marched away with his army from Lakhnor or Nagar in the Birbhum district and reached Devkot to punish Ali Mardan, who, however, had gone away to his own fief of Barsala in the Ghoraghat region. He performed the rites of mourning for Bakhtyar who was buried perhaps some his fief. Ali Mardan was captured and imprisoned and left to the charge of the Kotwal (Sensechal) of that place, whose name was Baba. Bakhtyar Khalji, then, returned to

Devkot again and assembled the *Amirs* together (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:574).

Therefore, Ali Mardan Khalji was the first governor of Bengal. It was Ali Mardan who was probably the first to declare himself Sultan of the Kingdom (Lakhnauti) and have he *Khutbah* read in his name. Malik (Sultan) Husam-uddin Iwaz the Khalji was a man of exemplary disposition, and came of the Khalji of Garmsirof Gaur (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:580). Husam-uddin Iwaz Khalji adopted the title of Sultan Ghiyas-Uddin and began to function as an independent ruler of Bengal (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:161).

Ghiyas-Uddin Iwaz Shah was the first Sultan to issue coins in his own name. The name of the Caliph of Baghdad is inscribed on the coins along with that of the Sultan. "Ghiyas-Uddin Iwaz Khalji's most important administrative measure was the transfer of the seat of government from Devkot to the historic city of Gaur".²¹ Lakhnauti or Gaur was conveniently situated commanding easy and rapid communication by water of distant parts of Bengal as well as with the important towns of Bihar (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:24). Ghiyas-Uddin Iwaz Shah constructed a fleet for the purpose of warfare. Hence, he might be called the father of Muslim navy in Bengal. This fleet helped Ghiyas-Uddin Iwaz Shah in preventing Sultan Iltutmish.

According to *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, "Ghiyas-Uddin Iwaz did not remain content with merely transferring the capital to Lakhnauti. He took special care to adorn the city and spent large sums of money to make an around improvement of the city" (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:589-590). Minhaj Uddin us Siraj also says that Ghiyas-Uddin Iwaz Khalji left many fine monuments of his goodness behind. He built Lakhnauti a super mosque, a college, and caravan series. The whole city of Lakhnauti was enclosed with an earthen rampart protected on all sides except towards to Ganges by a deep ditch about 150 feet in breadth (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:583).

The capital was protected by a fort build in the neighborhood. Ghiyas-Uddin Iwaz Khalji

²⁰ *Zubat-ut-Tawarikh* has "one of the great *Amirs*", and C. the Izafat, in 'Ali-i-Mardan, signifies' Ali son of Mardan. See Minhaj Uddin us Siraj (1864, I:572).

²¹ See vide proceedings of Indian History Congress in 1944.

protected Lakhnauti and neighbourhood from inundation by constructing a number of canals and bridges. Communication was very much needed for both military and civil purposes. Between 1227 and 1338 AD, the Lakhnauti kingdom may be said to have been subordinate to the rulers occasionally asserted their independence.

INFORMATION ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS OF BENGAL

On the Social Condition. Muhammad Bakhtyar was one of the members of Khalji adventures who separated themselves from their tribe and settled in Garamsir,²² now known as Dasht-i-Margo, situated on the eastern border of Seistan. Muhammad Bakhtyar came from his tribes to the court of Ghaznin, and (to) the Audience Hall of dominion of the Sultan Muizuddin Muhammad-i-Sam (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:548). Minhaj Uddin us Siraj informs us about the followers of Bakhtyar Khalji and we learn how men belonging to his tribe flocked around him in the hope of making fortune of themselves (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:548-549). Minhaj Uddin us Siraj tells us as follows:

In the different part of the mountains, which lies between Tibbet and the country of Lakhnauti, are three races of people one called the Kunch, the

²²The most absurd statements have been made with respect to the people named Khalji, the plural of which, according to the Arab mode of writing, is Akhalj. It is also written, but rarely, *Khalaj*; but some few Muhammedan Indian authors write it *Khilj* and *Khalji*, and most European writes have followed them (Dow, however, makes "chligies" of them, although Firishtah writes the word like other Muhammad authors); but according to the fertile imaginations of Europeans, the Khalji-tribe and Ghalzi-tribe are one people – infact, some roundly assert that the Khalj are one and the same race as the Afghan tribe of Ghalzi, without there being a shadow of authority for such an assertion in any Muhammedan writer whatever. Because the Khalji happened, in the days of the Ghurian Sultans (and long prior), to have been located in the part of Khurasan now, included in what in the present days is styled by the general name of Afghanistan – a comparatively modern designation – such writers, in their innocence, jumped at the conclusion that they were Afghans, and more than that, that the Khalji and Ghalzi must be one and the same people. The Khalji are a Turkish tribe, an account of whom will be found in all the histories of that race – the *Shajirah-ul-Atrak*, *Jami-ut-Tawarikh*, introduction to the *Zafar-namah*, and c.; and a portion of them had settled in Garmsir long prior under discussion, from whence they came into Hindustan and entered the service of Sultan Muizuddin.

second the Mej (Meg), and the third the Tiharu; and all have Turk countenances. They have an idiom too, between the language of Hind and Turk. One of chiefs of tribes of Kunch and Mej, whom they were wont to call Ali, the Mej, fell into the hands of Muhammad-i-Bakhtyar into those hills, act as guide; and he brought the latter to a place where there is a city, the name of which is Burdhan [Kot].²³

Minhaj Uddin us Siraj describes, when was in the territory of Lakhnauti made inquiry respecting, that mentioned city. It is a city of great size and whole of its walls are hewn's authority of tone, and (its inhabitant) are an assemblage of *Brahmans* and *Nuns* (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:560-561) and that city under the authority of their *Mihtar* (chief of Lord), and they hold the pagan faith²⁴ and every day, at day break, in the cattle-market²⁵ of that city, about one thousand five hundred horses were sold; and all the *Tanghan*²⁶ horses which reached the Lakhnauti country they bring from that place.

This was the formative period of the Muslim society in Bengal. Ikhtyar Uddin Mohammad Bakhtyar Khalji established colleges²⁷ for the purpose of learning about

²³The oldest and best copies generally have as above, but two, and one copy gives the vowel points. The *Zubdat-ut-Tawarikh* also has Burdhan twice. The other copies collapsed have Murdhan and Murdhan-Kot, and the printed text, in a note, has Durdhan (Wurdhan) as well as Burdhan. See, for further information, Minhaj Uddin us Siraj (1864, I:549).

²⁴In the oldest copies of *Nunian* and in the more modern ones, *Tunian*. One copy of the text however has "butparastan", idol-worshippers.

²⁵The original is "din-i-tersai", the word *torsa* is very widely applied, to signify a Christian, also a worshipper of fine or *gabr*, a pagan, an infidel and an unbeliever, and not to "any established religion", other than that of Islam. Here, Minhaj Uddin us Siraj, Raverty thinks, refers to Christians-Manicheans – the whole of Tartary and other northern parts of Asia contained a vast number of Christians.

²⁶The word used is "nakhhas", which signifies a seller of captives, cattle, or booty of any kind, and is used to signify a part where cattle and slaves are bought and sold.

²⁷The printed text and that only has *asp-i-tang bastah*. Where the editor or editors got this from it would be difficult to conceive, but they could scarcely have intended to convey the meaning of horses brought down with saddles on their balks reads to be mounted. The worlds in the copies of Minhaj Uddin us Siraj's text one – *asp-i-tanganah* – they are still well known. Stewart, who had no printed text to go by, read the pretty correctly "Tanghan". Hamilton says these horses are called *Tanyan* or *Tughan*, "from Tangustan, the general appellation of that assemblage of mountains which constitutes the territory of Bootan". He must mean Tanistan, the reign of Tangs or defiles. Abul Fazl also mentions these horses, in his *Ain-i-Akbari*, "In the

education of the Muslims. Mohammad Shiran, Ali Mardan, and Humam-uddin Iwaz were the most prominent Khalji nobles.

On the Economic Condition. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj, in *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, has not much information about economic condition. Among the early rulers of Bengal, Ghias-uddin Iwaz Khalji, did something in the direction. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj tells us:

Ghias-uddin's treasury a large chalice full of gold and silver *tangahs*, and bestowed upon him a present of about two thousand *tangahs*; and gave to commands to his own *Maliks* and *Amirs*, *Grandees* and *Ministers* of state, so that each one presented, on his behalf, liberal present. About three thousand gold and silver *tangahs* more were obtained. At the period of his returned home (from Lakhnauti), an additional five thousands *tangahs* were acquired in gifts, so that the sum of ten thousand *tangahs* was amassed by that *Imam*, and *Imam's* son, through the exemplary piety of that monarchy of benevolent disposition (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:560).

Sultan Ghias-uddin Iwaz Khalji was the first attend to such works of public utility. He used the construction of a series of dykes to protect the city of Lakhnauti and the suburbs from the inundation of the flood waters (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:584). The territory of Lakhnauti consists of two parts, on opposite banks of the Ganges. That to the west is called Ral, the city of Lakhnauti is on this side. From Lakhnauti to the gates of Lakhthnaur, and on the other side of the river as far as the city of Deokot, embankments (Pul) have been raised, which extend for ten days journey (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:584-585). Therefore, its information indicates the economic development of the country.

On the Religious Condition. Mosque formed an important feature of the Muslim society in Bengal. The construction of Mosques began with the conquest of Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj (1864, I:560) records that after making Lakhnauti the seat of government,

lower parts of Banglah near unto Kuj [Kunch], a [species] of horses between the gut (gunth) and the Turk (breed) is produced, called *Tanghan*", which is also written *Tanganan*, and gives the spelling of the word, but they are not born "ready saddled".

Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji built Mosques, Madrasa, and the Khanqahs. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj tells also us as follows:

Ghias-uddin Iwaz founded *Jami* (general) and other *Masjid*, and conferred salaries and stipends upon good man among theologians, the priesthood, and descendants of the Prophet, and other people acquired, from his bounty and munificence, many riches (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:583).

Sultan Ghias-uddin Iwaz Khalji's encouragement to the '*Alims* and the *Sufis*, Minhaj Uddin us Siraj writes as follows:

And in that country (Lakhnauti), many marks of his goodness remained [...]. He gave pensions to good men among the *Alims* (learned), the *Mashaikh* (doctors learned in religion and law) and the *Sayyids* (descendants of the Prophet) and other people received much wealth from his generosity (Uddin us Siraj, 1864, I:583).

CONCLUSION

Minhaj Uddin us Siraj has given an eyewitness account of the conquests of Ikhtiar-uddin Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji in Bengal. In fact, the entire chapter in Bengal had centered on the military exploits of Bakhtyar Khalji. But what has been significant about his approach the thirteenth century Bengal history was kinness with which Minhaj Uddin us Siraj observed the contemporary social milieu. Besides giving the graphic description of every military encounter of Bakhtyar Khalji, Minhaj Uddin us Siraj always focused with curiosity on the social formation in Bengal.

The information that Ali Mech, who was converted to Islam, was Bakhtyar's principle guide in the so-called Tibbet-expedition and that after the disastrous retreat and re-crossing of the mighty river, most likely the Brahmaputra. The Mech tribes had assisted Bakhtyar for a safe return to Devikot are indeed pregnant with significance. It highlights on the one hand that the Mech tribe was an important political and social element in the reign at the time as the other tribe namely the Koch were. On the other hand, the

invading army was not considered by the Mech as prejudicial to their political and social interest. That many of them had accepted Islam without being compelled to do so suggest that (1) conversion was not always forcefully done; and that (2) conversion was not induced by Hindu caste opprobrium.

Minhaj Uddin us Siraj appeared to be particularly interested in describing military strategies. If one goes along the line of narration, given by Minhaj Uddin us Siraj, it appears that Bakhtyar Khalji had used both military powers and strategic deception to conquer Nadia. The strongest point in his attack was the element of surprise which he fruitfully employed to outwit Lakshman Sen, the ruler of Bengal. It was perhaps with the same strategy of speed and surprise that he intended to conduct his so-called Tibettian expedition. He might have overlooked in his over enthusiasm the difficulties of the terrain. Though the Bakhtyar Khalji's objective was to conquer Tibet and on that score Minhaj Uddin us Siraj might have faithfully recorded it but what is doubtful is identification of the place where Bakhtyar Khalji could have gone.

It was not Tibet at any cost. Because, Tibetan sources which *Sakappa* has so systematically studied do not mention of any such invasion. Nor could it be in Bhutan, because the *Bhutani Namthars* (Butani History) too did not record any invasion from the south in the thirteenth century. So, there is strong possibility that Bakhtyar Khalji might have gone to Bomdila which on account of being inhabited by some Tibetians had confused Bakhtiar Khalji. Minhaj Uddin us Siraj has informed that the *Kafirs* (infidels) by which he obviously meant the *Assamese* had disrupted the logistics and made retreat not

only difficult but almost suicidal. It is perhaps not out of place to mention here that the Assam's seemed to have applied an identical military strategy in their subsequent military confrontation with the Mughals.

Since Minhaj Uddin us Siraj stopped his narrative about Bengal, with the incident of Bakhtyar Khalji's assassination, he did not mention any thing about the administration in Bengal. It is presumable that Bakhtyar Khalji did not get any time to organize his administration. Nor was it necessary at that stage. The importance to build up administrative machinery arose much later when the Bengal rulers declared their independence from the Delhi administration.

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