

MODERN NEPAL

Rise and Growth in the Eighteenth Century

Volume I & II

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Harakumaradatta Sen purchased peace with a pledge to follow Gorkha in all the latter's ventures. We shall mention the price he paid some time later. Actually Tanhoun's contingent joined Gorkha in the latter's attacks further west. But Prthvinarayana virtually failed to advance as Lamjung-Kaski resisted him. Haradatta Sen heaved a sigh of relief and Tanhoun was spread for the next reign of Nepal for total submission and annexation. But then it had become a subsidiary state of Gorkha.

Early in 1756 A. D., a Christian missionary from Italy Padre Tranquillo by name visited Tanhoun. He interviewed Raja Trivikram Sen, and presented to him books on Christianity. The Raja was much impressed with what he heard about the Christian faith and begged of Father Benedetto through a letter to send two priests for preaching work. Written in the Nepali language, the letter to Benedetto was addressed in the name of Maharajadhiraja Trivikrama Sen with date line *Magha Sudi 14* (verified for 14 February, 1756 A. D.)⁸ from his winter camp at Ghat. The Ghat probably referred to Deoghat near the confluence of the Gandak and its main tributaries, where the Raja of Tanhoun had his temporary headquarter for the three months of the cold season.

It is not known whether any Padre was stationed at Tanhoun as was the case in three kingdoms of the Nepal Valley. Probably in the turmoil which accompanied the rise of Gorkha as a power coinciding the fifties of that century, the very idea of expanding their activities at that stage beyond the confines of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon could not have strongly weighed with the Capuchin missionaries. No records are available bearing testimony to the existence of a resident mission in Tanhoun or anywhere in the realms of the Baisi and Chaubisi. It appears from a letter of Father Tranquillo that he had also visited Gorkha to secure timbers from its forest for the construction of a church building in Kathmandu (Kathmandu, 13 October, 1756)⁹. The King of Gorkha was ailing at that time and sought medical treatment by the visiting Father. The same Father Tranquillo has left us a

8 C. D. 38, Missionary Italiani Nel Tibet el Nel Nepal, Part IV, p, 231.

9 Documenti Missionary Italiani, etc. Vol. II, Part II, pp. 198-99.

brief account of Tanhoun, which is incorporated in the letter above referred to: "Tanhoun is at a distance of 11 to 12 days' journey from Patan. The Kingdom of Gorkha is just three days' journey from the capital of Tanhoun (Tanhounsur)¹⁰. The principality of Tanhoun is bounded in the north-west by Palpa whose Raja belongs to the same family. The city of Palpa is at a distance of four days' journey. To the north of Tanhoun is Kaski and Lamjung. The letter touches Tibet in the north but it has no dependents in that part. Lamjung is just close to Tanhoun only a journey of a day and a half.¹¹ To the south there is Mackwanpur and Bettia. It takes 11-12 days for reaching there¹².

"Tanhoun is half mountainous and pretty cold as cool as Italy, though there is no snow but it receives cold wind from China. The other half is a low land which is warm. We have great jungles abounding in tigers, elephants, bears, rhinoceros and wild boars. Though it is extensive, it does not have more than 24,000 houses all over. There are two big rivers which join at Mukam Deo Ghat (union of a God with a Goddess). The joint stream henceforth becomes Gandak, then it flows to Bettia, to Chappra and to Patan to join the Ganges.

"In Tanhoun as in the half portion of the kingdom of Lamjung religion is Brahmanism. People are malicious but not much superstitious. They are ignorant and not at all gifted. Often the country is visited by the Brahmins of Banaras who have evil influence on them. The inhabitants have no books of religion. Pagodas are few.—the people worship red stones.¹³ In the mountains the people have a moderate complexion; they are neither fair nor dark; in the plains they are dark and all are dressed like the Hindustani. They say that there are some

¹⁰ Actually the distance is not so much. The Padre seems to have covered the distance by himself in so many days. He might have been a bad man to travel so slow. The distance is less than 10 miles.

¹¹ The actual distance is only 6 miles.

¹² The distance is about 60 miles through a circuitous route.

¹³ Either the deity Ganesha or Hanuman.

also defeated. Both the uncle and the nephew were sent to Delhi and were murdered there. The queen of Indra Sena tried to avenge her husband's death with the help of the Kirata chiefs and soldiers, she defeated the Nawab and expelled his occupation of the border. All these events took place in 1706 A.D. It was said by one source that Subhang Sena himself was ransomed off by agreeing to pay annually as a tribute some elephants. The chronicler of the Kirata gives a different version of the story. He says that Subhang was rescued by a combined force of Kiratas and Morang which invaded Purnea. They in common plundered the Nawab's treasury and laid hands on gold and silver worth about Rupees 3 lakhs. According to the old Sena chronicle the title of Hindupati appears for the first time in the royal epithets of this monarch. He had four sons Mandhata, Mahipata, Manikya, and Jagat, the last of whom was taken to Chaudandi by Hansu Rai, the Kirata minister of the area.

The contemporary Thyasapu written in the Nepal Valley speak of the invasions of Mackwanpur by the rulers of the Valley. The excursion into the Mackwanpur territories began since the time of Pratapamalla whose contemporary was Subha Sena. According to Thyasapu D Pratapamalla and Srinivasamalla had jointly carried an invasion of the border areas of Mackwanpur on 790 *Magha krsna 4*, but had returned without achieving anything. Next year on 790 *Jyestha krsna 12 budhavara* Srinivasamalla alone invaded Mackwanpur and he was accompanied besides his own soldiers also by 4 ministers and 100 soldiers of Bhatgaon, Murari Sahi of Gorkha and Jagbania. However, he was compelled to retreat and all fled back to Patan. The Thyasapu D further informs that on 801 *Chaitra sudi 10* the men of Kathmandu went on an expedition against Mahakumar (Subha Sena) those of the 4 ministers of Patan and Bhatgaon were also to be there but they told Kathmandu that they were to go to Sindhuli. About a year later, however, it was declared that Sindhuli had been captured on 801 *Vaisakha krsna 2 anuradha naksatra adityavara*=Sunday, 24 April, 1681 and the lead was given by the king of Kathmandu.

The Thyasapu A (f. 31) under the same date line notes the

events of conquest of Sindhuli (Dinding, Tinipatan, Patalinga —these 4 days later) by Parthivendramalla, and says that all the 3 rulers had participated. It is said that on 801 *Bhadra sukla 13 angaravara*, the grandson of Hindupati (Haribara), Bidhata Indra, came to the Kantipur palace escaping with a rhinoceros. The cause of the flight is not given. Perhaps as Baburam Acharya also says, Indrasen had temporarily taken shelter in the Nepal Valley. He had quarrelled with his uncle.

The Thyasapu E in confirmation of this account under the same dateline adds that all the pramanas and peoples had joined the fight so did the 3 Chautaras. According to this Thyasapu Mackwanpur was conquered on 803 *Phalguni sudi chaturthi asvini naksatra angaravara at 15 ghati* past night Tuesday, 24 February, 1683. But the invaders abandoned forts captured by them as they heard that Tanhoun had marched to the help of Mackwanpur. As the invaders were running away through the route of Pharping, Srinivasamalla fell into the hands of the defenders who were chasing attackers. But the rulers of Bhatgaon, Kathmandu, Lamjung, Gorkha, Bhirkot, Palpa, Rising, Ghiring and Sisiya combined to defeat Mackwanpur. In this conflict Jagsing Bania was sent there (probably to negotiate) Kathmandu got one elephant as a prize.

It looks that the attacks on Mackwanpur conducted by Pratapamalla and Srinivasamalla were aimed at intervening in behalf of Subhasena, who was one of the parties contesting the throne of Mackwanpur. This becomes clearer from the following paragraph, where we discuss a letter of Pratapamalla to one influential person in Mackwanpur.

The Bir Library has recently acquired a letter of Pratapamalla of date *Phagunavadi 9* (but without year and week day) addressed to Dalakha Bania asking the latter to manoeuvre by all means for placing Subhasena on the throne of Mackwanpur. It adds that the advice now tendered was in pursuance of their previous consultation. The letter presupposes a state of affairs complicated enough for the smooth succession of the

(8) The Provincial executive will try all offences except the big five ones involving heinous crimes and others amounting to moral turpitude.

(9) Whoever violates the laws of the state or rebels against the lawful authority, (the Raja of Morang or tribal heads), shall be punished with deposition and banishment.

In the same treaty the distribution of areas per head was arranged thus:

- (1) Around Pokla Ywang Yok (fort) in present Taplejung district under Feyohang.
- (2) Around Augdang Yok in Ilam under Loli Mahang.
- (3) Around Feden Yok in Punch Thar (Ilam) under Papohang.
- (4) Around Kurle Yok in Taplejung under Mahohang.
- (5) Around Hasta pu Yok under Linse Hang.
- (6) Around Pomajung Yok in Athrai (Ilam-Taplejung border) under Akluff.
- (7) Around Takluk den Yok under Khecho Hang.
- (8) Mering den Yok on the bank of Tamor under Sisiyen.
- (9) Chenlung Yok under Maijug Hang.
- (10) Takpe Suyok in the north under Samba Sreng Hang.

Although the portion of the hilly area in between the rivers Dudhkosi and Arun was within Morang's jurisdiction, the same system of tribal rule obtained there also. This was divided into twelve sections each under its own Rai Raja as was the belt between the rivers Arun and Kankayi just mentioned.

The ancient history of all these areas is, however, enveloped in darkness. Before we proceed to give anything in that direction it is necessary, therefore, to make a thorough search into their past. The basin of the river Arun appears to have held a thriving culture in its lap as did the Karnali region of West. The search may open new fields of research and study to a historian.²¹

The following are some of the important original documents

²¹ A History of Kirats by Prem Bahadur Limbu (in Nepali). The author has copies of some documents, but these have to be checked and edited.

relating to the events of the history of the Kosi basin in the 17th and 18th centuries :—

- (a) A Sanad issued by Ahmad Khan Daulat Bahadur of Purnea in the name of certain Kirata chiefs dated Hizri 1125.
- (b) A proclamation in the name of Kirata chiefs to assemble in Vijayapur, the headquarter of the Sen Raja of the region, issued by Harischandra Sen and others, which dates Vikram Samvat 1719 *Pausa Sudi 4*. This Harischandra Sen was the same ruler as Harihara Sen.
- (c) A decree of the Sena Prince sent to all the Kirata chiefs to rise to arms against the Sikkimese proclaimed in the name of Maharani Jivadevi, dated V.S. 1763 *Asvin vadi 8*.
- (d) Another order calling to arms the Kirata chiefs in defence of the motherland issued by Mandhata Sen dated V.S. 1764 *Asvin Sudi 5* to bight the Nawab.

Nothing more could be written about these petty states ruled by the Senas. We now proceed to bring this section to a conclusion by adding a few passages from foreign accounts, which, though brief in themselves, are likely to shed further light on the economic and political condition of the localities concerned.

We have already quoted passage from Tavernier for a description of a journey to Palpa. Below we give a gist of what Father Cassino wrote about Mackwanpur. Father Cassino had walked through the territory of this principality to reach Patan along the course of the river Bagmati in about the beginning of the year 1740 A.D. The noting which he made is picked up from his diary (author's translation).

"Jujur is a village belonging to Mackwanpur. There is a fertile jungle 20 kos in extension. The King gets substantial income out of the forest. He goes on a shooting and hunting expedition. He catches elephants, rhinoceroses and wild buffaloes and sells them at a heavy price. Even the smallest of elephants and rhinoceros (tall 3 cubits) fetches each Rs. 500/- If it is of longer size, the price is Rs. 500 more for every additional cubit. The customs levy is charged to a contractor who pays six months in advance to the king a portion of the amount due to him. Very often he

becomes insolvent. Mackwanpur has very little of cultivable land. It is sparsely populated. The population is shifting. Most of these repair to the hills during the rainy season for fear of malarial fever.”²²

We reproduce another passage from Levi and this one giving a description of the Terai of Mackwanpur is interesting for the many informations though brief, it provides in regard to the fauna, flora and geographical situation of the locality concerned.²³

“Then ‘Kalpaghur’ XIV ; ‘Barrihua’ XVI ; which is the frontier of the Moghal Empire ? One crosses after this on the territory of the Rajah of ‘Mackwanpur’, and through a thick forest of 28 thousand paces in width, and 100 in length from east to west ; elephants, rhinoceroses, tigers and bisons roam in there and many other wild animals so that one really runs the risk of death. At night big fires are carried on the four corners of the palanquin, then shouts, beating of drums, musket shots are resorted to, to frighten away the tigers. But the carriers and the guides who are idolaters make use of superstitious figures and of magical charms. The hunting of the wild animals gives the Rajah of Mackwanpur a profitable income. In the depths of the forests one discovers a number of ruins, they are, so rumour says, the remains of the great and antique town of ‘Scimanagada’. Many stories have been woven on this town, and a plan engraved on a stone on the great square at Batgas (Bhatgaon) is still there to be shown one. Old coins are also found, but rarely, which resemble her in construction in the shape of a labyrinth.

“From Father Grueber’s account it appears that the Rajah of Mackwanpur (he calls Morang but this name was applied to Mackwanpur because Morang was a part of that state, which came to the knowledge of the missionary) paid a yearly ‘tribute of 2,50,000 richedales and of seven elephants’ to the Moghal. In this connection Kircher’s memorandum adds; “The kingdom of ‘Moranga’ wedges in the kingdom of ‘Tibet’ its capital Radoc in the last station reached by Father d’Andrada in his journey to

22 Italiani Missionari, etc., Vol. II. Pt. iv, p. 15.

23 Levi, i. p. 120 (Georgi’s compilation).

Tibet, they redound with numerous indications of the Christian faith which had planted, in the names of men still current, Dominic, Francis, Antony”.

General Political Picture of the Units of the Baisi and Chaubisi

The picture is characterised by

- (1) too many states in a limited area,
- (2) the average size was not at all viable for a political entity
- (3) The biggest of them such as Jumla, Palpa, Mackwanpur and Vijayapur contained more than 20,000 houses ; the rest in varying number from 2000 to 8000 houses with the smallest 600 to 1400 hovels.
- (4) The income shown in a record for the most enviable of them never went beyond a few thousand rupees.
- (5) Thus except Jumla, Piuthan, Palpa, Tanhoun, Mackwanpur and the three states of the Nepal Valley not one of them could be called a principality even in a limited sense. The status of the ruler could as well not be greater than that of a chief of a group of villages.
- (6) The larger states also suffered from various deficiencies in economic resources and man power, and if it were not for the isolation nature dictated in their cases, they would have been wiped out by a superior power appearing in the neighbourhood in the Gangetic plains,
- (7) In their state of division and backwardness, the entire Chaubisi and Baisi region was vulnerable to any kind of pressure of a superior strategy and military strength either from outside or within itself.

Such was the situation which Prithvinarayana found himself in as he aspired to carve and consolidate a strong kingdom in the Himalayan ranges.

Thank God, Nepal had not attracted notice of a country power emerging in the plains. Otherwise, the dream of Prithvinarayana Shah would have remained only a dream or even this dream would not come to his mind. The same natural factors had precluded the possibility of territorial power in the

was pitched against a much overwhelming force of a vastly superior enemy who was several times bigger in resources, territory and man-power. This defeat was not so ignominious as it would have been if Nepal had waged a battle with an equal.

Overall Effects of War on Nepal

It seems that apart from general sacrifices of a protracted war it had to make, Nepal ultimately lost nothing in territory or independence by these reverses. But on the other hand all areas in Kuti and Kerong sector that lay on that side of the Himalayas as well as a little portion on this side were finally settled in favour of Tibet much to the opposition from Nepal. Tibet was, however, required to pay Rs. 10,000 yearly as a tribute to Nepal. From a circular letter of Bahadur Shah (VS 1846 *Bhadra vadi 2, roj 6*) the boundary line fixed in 1783 to assign half of Kuti to Nepal was in pursuance of the old agreement referred to here that took place in Pratapamalla-Bhimamalla's time. But the agreement of 1793 did away with this provision altogether. Now the frontier line in this sector did not also follow the Himalayan heights and water-sheds to conform to the natural boundary, because Tibetan territory had here deeply penetrated far inside the Himalayan heights on Nepal's side.

This was, however, true of only the eastern sector. In the West the old boundary of Nepal was regarded as to have held good. Its jurisdiction over Mustang and similar other jutting was not questioned. In the middle sector that had witnessed a scene of Chinese incursion the demarcation was otherwise not conforming to its original line.

The Government of Nepal lost the right of coinage. Ordinarily in this matter Nepal would not have been a total loser because of the economic supremacy as its currency had the same negotiability in terms of exchange¹⁰⁵. But all import of Nepalese

105. THHL, OL, 116-12b-13, 27b-15, 1418-9b-10 (Cited by S. Cammann)

currency was prohibited and similarly the entry of Nepalese into Tibet was banned¹⁰⁶. Nepal's economic advantages were now rendered ineffective by these measures of the Chinese Government. For sometime at least Nepal was practically cut off from Tibet and its trade in that area had entirely ceased to exist. By a special clause of the treaty signed between Nepal and Tibet that was to follow all these settlements, Nepal was also required to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Emperor of China and it appears that the King did acknowledge Chinese overlordship even though nominally for a long time. Further while acknowledging Chinese suzerainty, Nepal renounced its conquest of Sikkim which now became a vassal of the Emperor¹⁰⁷. Of course, these provisions were designed to work against Nepal's interest both materially and psychologically and no doubt they succeeded. As a result of the reverses Nepal came to be totally sterilised *vis a vis* the northern neighbour. Now in that relationship Nepal's lot was cast for the role of a vassal of China. Nepal also undertook to send a regular five yearly tribute to China consisting of elephants, horses, peacocks, rhinoceros horns, and peacock plumes¹⁰⁸. Hamilton says that with regard to this aspect of Gorkha-Chinese relations the feeling in Nepal had been to take it as a friendly alliance¹⁰⁹. In accordance with the statement of Chinese sources the status of Nepal was to be like that of China's many other dependents like Korea, Annam, Siam and Burma¹¹⁰. It was understood

106. THHL, CL, 116-12b-13, 37b KTSI, 1411-38b-15, 1418-9b-10.

107. THHL, CL, 118 9B. 11 quoted by S. Cammann, P. 132

108. Kuang-hsu Hui tien, 67 13b quoted by S. Cammann.

109. Ibid. Kirkpatrick, however, says (Preface): It was in other respects by no means honourable to the rulers of that country, especially if it be true, as was affirmed at the time by some intelligent persons, that a little more firmness on the part of the Regency would speedily have compelled the Chinese (who had suffered greatly from sickness and scarcity and were not less impatient to quit Nepal than the Nepaliens to get rid of them) to solicit the accomodation which they were permitted to make a merit of granting.

110. Kuang-hsu Hui-tien 67.13b THHL CL, 116-12b ; KTSI 1411 14b quoted by S. Cammann.