

THE RISE OF THE HOUSE OF GORKHA

A STUDY IN THE UNIFICATION OF NEPAL
1768-1816

BY
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THE RISE OF THE HOUSE OF GORKHA

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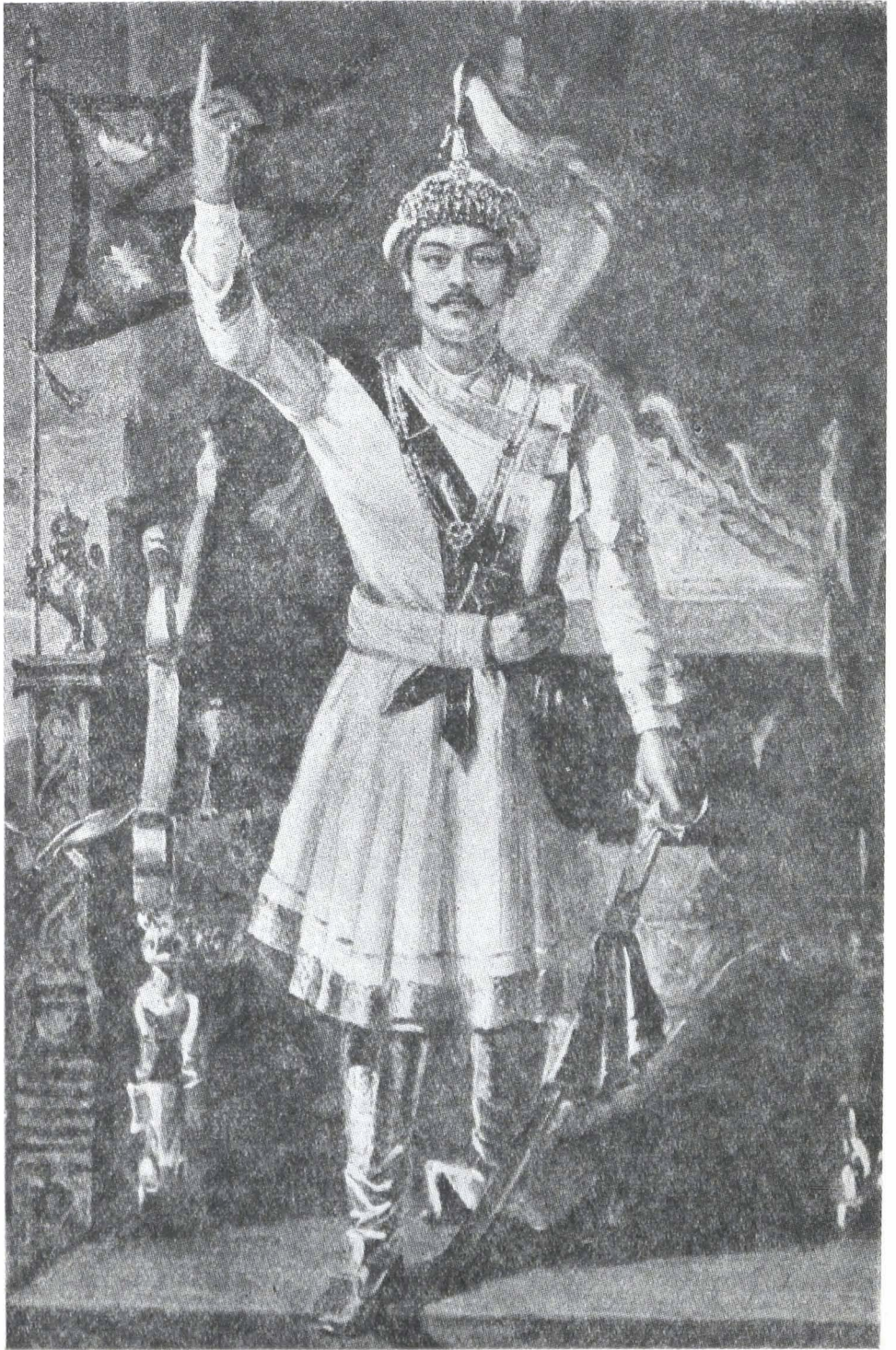
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TO MY SISTERS



PRITHVINARAYAN SHAH

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13. P R E F A C E

The rise of the House of Gorkha is undoubtedly the most significant event—the critical turning point—in the history of modern Nepal. It marks the transition in the hill regions of Nepal from the era of Himalayan valley-centred petty states to the period of true national growth. Therefore I think that in the history of Nepal there can be no period which is more important than this one for an understanding of Nepal as a modern state.

Furthermore, in terms of the internal politics of today's Nepal, the period covered by this study can be considered to be of fundamental importance. It is my contention that the basic guidelines of Nepali politics have been family-oriented, not party-centred. Moreover, these guidelines were laid down in the period during which the House of Gorkha unified Nepal. Consequently, I do not believe that one can fully understand the significance of the interplay in Nepali politics today without a previous understanding of the forces that were at play in the struggle for prestige and preferment during the period under study.

This study avoids as far as possible the traditional areas of historical dispute that have been cherished by many writers of Nepali history. I have found such dispute sterile as far as history is concerned and devoid of meaning in the study of the emergence of the Nepali state. Rather this work focuses on the sheer magnitude of the task of unifying the hill states of Nepal. Today, when we are still struggling to establish satisfactory lines of communication throughout the hills, the impact of the geography of Nepal on its history and its unification should be painfully evident. Because this is not so readily apparent as it might be to many contemporary historians nor to many of those who have tried to describe the story of Nepal's growth, this study is rooted firmly in the mountains and valleys of Nepal. In my own mind,

the great conquest of the Gorkhali rulers and fighting men was not the conquest of an indifferent collection of hill states, but the magnificent achievement of man conquering the rugged and defiant barriers that nature had thrown in his path. Considering the tautly stretched lines of communication that linked Kathmandu with the Gorkhali forces at the foot of Fort Kangra, especially in a country where the wheel was all but unknown and totally inapplicable, I cannot but marvel at the strength of the human spirit to conquer and win when it is truly inspired and economically motivated.

This, then is my analysis of the unification of Nepal; inspiration and economic incentive. I have divided the analyse into three major parts. In the first part I have tried to analyse the geographic, the geopolitical, and the economic forces at work in the Himalayas that militated against unification. Against these is counterposed the leadership of Prithvinarayan Shah, whose inspiration, it is argued, was alone able to solve the riddle posed by these forces and bring them into plain support of his military efforts. In the second part I have described the conquest itself in terms that hopefully will render a hitherto confusing picture both meaningful and strategically understandable. Finally, in the third part I have explained in broad terms the Gorkhali efforts to administer this hill tract. It is in this latter part that I have shown how a departure from the overall ideals enunciated by Prithvinarayan Shah led to a momentary breakdown in the administrative system and weakened Nepal in its fight with the British in 1814-16. Despite this momentary laps, however, Prithvinarayan Shah's system proved itself strong enough to withstand the shock of military defeat and sustain the Nepali state in its struggle to maintain its independence against the tide of encroaching British imperialism.

This is what I have set out to do in this study. Whether or not I have succeeded is for the reader to decide. The weaknesses in this study I fully acknowledge as my own. The over-all thesis is one evolved through many an hour of lonely thought and

study. The material in support of my contentions, however, is derived from a wide variety of sources and from the cooperation of many close friends and sincere scholars. I am deeply indebted to my good friend Mahesh Chandra Regmi, whom I consider to be one of the truly great scholars of Nepal today. To him I am indebted for my basic insight into that relationship between land and people that has expressed itself in the history of Nepal. I am also under a great debt of gratitude to my colleagues in the faculty of history at Tribhuvan University for their constant kindness and encouragement as well as their willingness to discuss the various problems I have presented them from time to time.

The nature and scope of this study precludes, of course, the use of original materials throughout. I have drawn freely from published documents and works in order to establish a balanced treatment of the subject. The work of the Samsodhan Mandal and of Yogi Narhari Nath in publishing Nepali source materials has brought to light a tremendous body of Nepali documentation that is still largely untouched. The Regmi Research Collection and the Regmi Research Series have also been invaluable. The microfilm collection of Tribhuvan University Library was proved to be a mine of unpublished material on the role of Rana Bahadur Shah. I am also indebted to the Goethals Memorial Library of St. Xavier's College, Calcutta, and the National Library of India for their cooperation and for the use of materials found there.

I would like to express here my thanks to Dr. Hira Lal Singh of Banaras Hindu University—friend, mentor, and sincere critic. His historical perspective and balance have continually brought him to question my findings and to open new areas of concern. I am grateful to him, and I sincerely hope he will find in this study sufficient justification for the time he has so generously given me.

It would be impossible to thank publicly every Nepali who has assisted me in my work. So many have taken a profound

interest in it that the period of research has been really a period of sharing ideas. I owe my thanks to Dr. Harka Bahadur Gurung, Dr. Ratna Rana, Dr. Prayag Raj Sharma, and Yadu Nath Khanal, who kindly read through my manuscript and offered invaluable comments. I would like to thank also an old and accommodating friend, Ram Datta Koirala, who patiently went over hundreds of Nepali letters and documents with me. I express here my profound appreciation for his help. Lastly, I wish to thank Fr. James Donnelly, S.J., of St. Xavier's School for the time, trouble, and devotion he has shown in helping me to prepare the manuscript for publication.

CHAPTER ONE

GEOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

Political and civil laws should be in respect to the climate of each country, to the quality of its soil, to its situation and extent, to the principal occupation of the natives, whether husbandmen, huntsmen, or shepherds.

—Montesquieu¹

The history of a people is the story of their survival and growth on the land. Though their history deals with their conflicts; their social, political and economic growth; and their intellectual and religious evolution, these developments are rooted in the land and take much of their proper tone from it. This concept is fundamental to an understanding of history. The land is more than a mere backdrop or a stage for the action of history. At every turn of events the land exerts its influence. At times this is broad and obvious. At other times it is more subtle. But this influence is always there.

The influence of the land is felt not only in the turn of events in people's history. It is felt in the people themselves. There is a mutual relationship between a people and the land they inhabit. Just as the people mould and use the land to suit their purposes, so the land itself forces an adaptation on the people, even to the point of shaping their thinking and outlook on life. This has, of course, long been recognized. The term *motherland* has been coined precisely to label, if not define, this relationship. And yet, however obvious this relationship might be, the extent of its influence in the lives of men is far from obvious. Perhaps it is because this influence is so subtle that, more often than not, it is ignored in recording the development of a people.

This study will not presume to define precisely the influence of the land on the people of Nepal—even to describe adequately the nature of the land itself is a task that beggars the imagination. Neither will it ignore that influence, because that influence is real and must be taken into consideration.

1. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Law*, B.k. i, Ch. 3.

It takes on a special importance in this study of the unification of this rugged, unpolished country of Nepal. The Gorkhali advance battered down barriers ; ruptured the petty thought patterns of scores of tiny, valley-centred states; and challenged the people of the hills with the concept of a new and powerful state. Yet, in every stage of the growth of this new state, the land, even as it had in the petty states that were swept away, moulded the state, shaped its concepts, and even dictated the nature of its development.

Part One of this study has been devoted to an assessment of the various facets of the land-people relationship, because this study ambitions a fundamental understanding of Nepal and its unification. This cannot be established on a firm basis without such an examination. It is also this assessment, perhaps more than any single historical fact, that clearly delineates the greatness of Prithvinarayan Shah, the author of the unification of Nepal and the father of this country.

The story of the unification of Nepal begins, then, with the Himalayas and the Himalayan foothills. While the following discussion must be somewhat technical at times, it must always be borne in mind that these rugged hills are *home* to the Nepali people, with all that this word implies. It is for the reader to visualize what life in these hills must have been like if he would understand what the unification of Nepal implied. He must fit his thought patterns to the shape of the Himalayas and understand that the Nepali is of this land and this land is in his blood; that the Nepali has tamed these mountains and hills in his own way; and that he has learned the art of survival here under the most trying circumstances. To lose sight of this fact would be to uproot the Nepali and strip his actions of much of their meaning.

A. GEOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION

What is this land like, this land which the Nepali calls *Mother Nepal* ? Seen from the air it is a seemingly endless stretch of ridges and mountains, with narrow valleys watered by still narrower streams. Yet this maze breaks down into fairly simple geographic terms. The area in question lies between 77° and 89° East Longitude, and from 26° to 31°

North Latitude.² It is a rough, elongated quadrilateral, with the Southern edge resting on the Gangetic plain and the northern edge following more or less faithfully the watershed of the Himalayas. To the east lies the Teesta River and to the west lies the Sutlej River. These rough boundaries do not define Nepal as it is today. Rather they describe the area within which the struggle for the unification of Nepal took place.

The Mountain Ranges

Approached from the south, the first elevations in this quadrilateral are part of a broken chain of hills called generically the Siwalik Hills.³ They rise to an average height of three thousand feet. This range, if it may be called that, varies in breadth from five to ten miles. The terrain is hog-back in nature, a rugged forested landscape. In general the soils here are immature and dry.⁴

Running parallel to, and north of, the Siwalik Hills is the Mahabharat Lekh. The average height of mountains in this range is seven thousand feet, but individual mountains rise to nine thousand feet and more. The average breadth of this range is about ten miles, though spurs stretch out both to the north and south far beyond this limit. These mountains are far steeper and more rugged than the Siwalik Hills, but for a surprising distance up their slopes, terraces have been cut to allow for cultivation. Some forest is found, but usually only at the higher elevations. The soils here are generally thin and stony.

The main Himalayan range rises about fifty miles to the north of the Mahabharat Lekh. Statistics do not do justice to

2 Modern Nepal, of course, lies between 26° and 30° North Latitude and 80° to 88° East Longitude. The references given in the text are to the area that for the sake of convenience, has been called Greater Nepal in this study.

3 Geographers give these hills distinct names in various sections of the country. They are known as the Chure Hills in the east, to the centre they are known as the Dundwa Range, while farther west they are known simply as the Siwaliks. For the sake of simplicity they will be referred to throughout this study as the Siwaliks.

4 Because the soils are still in the formative stage, they will not support much agriculture. They will, however, support forest growth, and this area today is quite heavily forested.

this range, though they help to form a picture. There are over two hundred and forty peaks that rise above twenty thousand feet. The landscape is desolate and wild, with no human habitation possible in the upper reaches. Since the snow line is about seventeen thousand feet, there is no vegetation possible in much of this area.

Still farther north, and running westwards from the meridian of Kathmandu, there is still another range, the Tibetan marginal mountains.⁵ They lie about ten miles to the north of the Great Himalaya. The average elevation here is about nineteen thousand feet, and the terrain is less rugged than the Great Himalaya. These mountains define the watershed between the Ganges and the Tsan-po, as well as the boundary between Nepal and Tibet.

It would be a mistake to imagine these four ranges as forming parallel lines. The main crest lines do generally describe such lines, but the countless spurs running off from each peak create what can only be described as a maze. The implications of this as far as human transportation is concerned should be obvious. The trails are difficult even for sturdy mountain ponies, and for centuries the best and surest way to travel was on foot.⁶

The Valleys

The roughly parallel ranges of the Siwalik Hills, the Mahabharat Lekh, the Great Himalaya and the Tibetan marginal mountains are separated by lowlands characteristic of each zone.

5 The terminology used is that of Dr. Harka Bahadur Gurung, whose account of the geography of Nepal is generally followed here, unless otherwise indicated. Cf. Dr. Harka Bahadur Gurung. 'The Geographic Setting', *Nepal, a Profile* (Kathmandu, 1970), pp. 4-11.

6 Of this, Toni Hagen, *Nepal* (Berne, 1961), p. 98, says: 'Journeys in the interior are still today made on foot. The tracks are too bad and too steep, and either there are no bridges across the big rivers or they are too dangerous to be used by pack animals or by animals burdened with riders. All the goods are carried on the backs of men. The wheel—and hence also the cart—is unknown as a means of transport outside the capital and the Tarai.' Toni Hagen is an outstanding authority on this aspect of Nepal. For seven years his work as a United Nations geological expert serving in Nepal took him to every corner of this mountainous country. He has estimated that his journeys in quest of mineral deposits took him a total of eighty-seven hundred miles on foot throughout the country. It is doubtful if any other person, foreign or Nepali, has travelled over so much of the country, except perhaps Toni's Sherpa assistant Aiyla.

To the south of the Siwalik Hills lie lowlands that merge into the Gangetic plain. They are properly called the Tarai, or, farther west, the Bhabar⁷. These lowlands constitute a broad belt of forest and farmland about twenty-five miles to thirty miles wide. For the purposes of simplicity in this study, this area will be called simply the Tarai, whether it lies in the east or west.

Between the Siwalik Hills and the Mahabharat Lekh lie low valleys which resemble the Tarai in both relief and climate. These valleys, or doons, are covered with deep deposits of silt and rock brought down from the Himalayas by the swift flowing mountain streams. The Himalayan rivers in most cases are obstructed in their course by the Siwaliks, and so deposit a considerable part of their load of silt in the plains lying between the Mahabharat Lekh and the Siwaliks. The tops of hillocks that have been buried under the silt jut out here and there in these doons. Usually these appear to the viewer as well-wooded mounds rising from a level plain.

At a higher elevation and lying between the Mahabharat Lekh and the Great Himalaya is the area called Pahar. It is much dissected, but the terrain is subdued. These valleys, for such they are, are extensively cultivated and form the traditional zone of Nepali settlement. It is in this Pahar zone that the great Valley of Kathmandu is found.

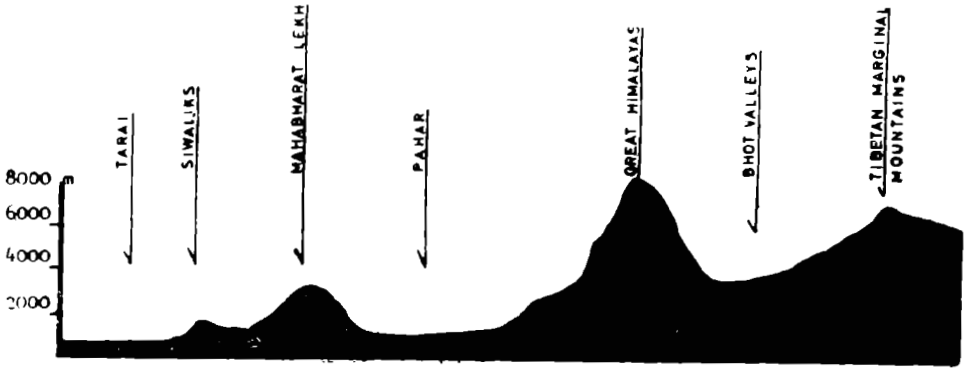
Farther north, between the Great Himalaya and the Tibetan marginal mountains, lie the Bhot valleys, which resemble in almost every respect the Tibetan landscape.

The Climate

The climate offers wide variations. To the south, the Tarai and doon areas have a hot, humid, tropical climate. At the other extreme, the Bhot valleys in the north offer a typically tundra climate, with cool summers and very cold winters. Even the centrally located Pahar zone offers great variations but here the climate tends to be more temperate. Towards, the south of this zone and in the lower elevations the summers

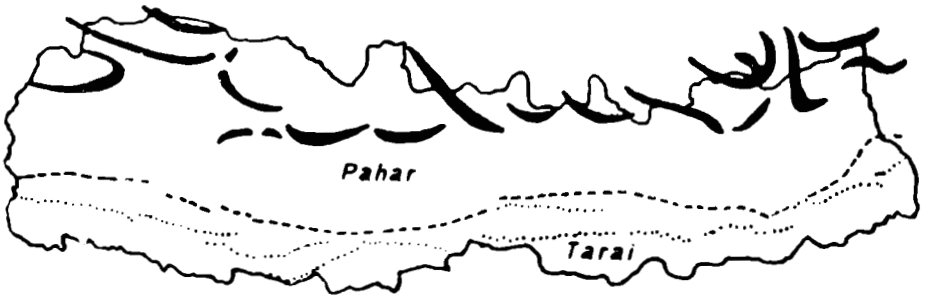
⁷ Strictly speaking the Bhabar and the Tarai are two different zones. The Bhabar refers to the belt of waterless forest land especially prominent south of the Kumaon hills, while the Tarai is well-watered.

Fig. 1 Cross Section, South to North



Based on Toni Hagen

Fig. 2 Natural Regions of Nepal



- GREAT HIMALAYAS
- - - - MAHABHARAT
- SIWALIKS

Based on Toni Hagen

are warm, with temperatures in the low nineties, while in the higher elevations and to the north the temperatures in winter drop below freezing, and the summers are cooler and shorter. When it is recalled that the area in question does not cover more than five degrees of latitude, the range in climate is striking.

The whole area is dominated by the monsoon, which brings heavy rains from June to September. The rainfall is much heavier to the east and lighter to the west. Because of the influence of topography, great variations in the amount of rainfall are found even in rather small localities.

The Rivers

Mention has been made of mountain streams and rivers crossing this area. There are many. Some of them are mere rivulets. Others are more formidable, such as the Kosi, the Gandaki, the Kali, the Ganga itself, the Jamuna, and the Sutlej. The mountainous nature of the land and the complicated drainage pattern it traces indicate a complex system of tributaries and feeder streams for each of these rivers.⁸ The amount of water they carry varies with the seasons. In the winter they tend to shrink, some of them to insignificance. But during the monsoon season even the tiniest of them can become treacherous.

B. LAND AND PEOPLE

The Influence of Geography on Life

Both mountains and streams tend to retard travel and to isolate sections of the country from one another.⁹ This isolation is enhanced by the nature of the monsoon, when heavy downpours turn mountain trails into slippery paths and lengthen journeys interminably. For the villager the monsoon season was a time to stay at home, tend his fields, and occupy himself with home tasks and simple cottage industries. The dry months of the winter were the time for travel, if travel was necessary. Then the trails were dry, the rivers subsided, and

⁸ Cf. Pradyumna Karan, *Nepal* (Lexington, 1960), p. 23.

⁹ Gurung 'The Geographic Setting' p. 11; also N:B. Thapa et al, *Geography of Nepal* (Calcutta, 1969), p. 8.

the cooler weather made walking less of a chore. The villager travelled to barter and to buy, and that meant carrying his produce on his back up and down the mountain trails and across the streams and rivers by the flimsiest of bridges. It is natural that he would choose a period when an already onerous task would be less difficult. By the same token, the winter was the fighting season. Wars and feuds were settled after the monsoon when the rice crop was harvested and travel was more convenient.

All of this paints a picture of isolated units within the country. Villagers clustered along the broader river valleys. A few huts straggled up the mountain slopes were terraced fields gave them some hope of a crop. The mountains themselves offered perfect settings for small but sturdy forts that commanded the valleys.¹⁰ These natural defensive positions can be added to the dividing factors of mountains and rivers in reducing this sizable stretch of the country into small, isolated units.

Deterrents to Outside Intervention

Two formidable barriers must be added to explain the fact that no outside agent had found it feasible to attempt to gain permanent sway over the land of the Pahar zone. To the north, the Himalayan rampart presented a stout barrier. This barrier was pierced by a number of mountain passes, through which some trade passed between Nepal and Tibet, but the passes were high (twenty-four of them above seventeen thousand feet), and were almost totally impracticable in the winter.¹¹ Since the winter was the time for movement in the Pahar zone an army from the north would have to complete its activity either in the rather short warm season after the

10 One has to see one of these mountain forts to realize the full significance of the word *Command* used in the text. They sit anywhere from one thousand to two thousand feet above the surrounding territory, enjoying an unobstructed view of all that transpires below, and protected from attacking forces by ascents of from 1 : 5 to 1 : 7. If there was any general weakness in these forts, it was the inadequate provision for water, the inevitable result of their very location on the top of a mountain ridge.

11 Thapa, *Geography*, p. 11, gives a list of the major Passes. He says that Rasuwa was open the year round. This, however, does not substantially change the position described here.

monsoon or in the somewhat longer warm period that followed the winter. In any case an enemy could not be sure of more than four months of fighting season. If a northern enemy were caught in the Pahar zone by the winter, the passes would be closed, and his supply lines would be cut. If, on the other hand, he were caught in the Pahar zone by the monsoon, his army would be immobilized.

Invasion from the south also had its disadvantages. The first of these was presented by the Tarai itself and the doon area. In these low-lying areas there was an extremely virulent type of malaria, known to the people as *aul*.¹² The local inhabitants, the Tharus, had developed some immunity to it, but to the hill man and to the true plainsman the *aul* season was a time when wisdom directed a migration away from the Tarai.¹³ A second factor was the hill barrier itself. To the foot soldier of the plains the hills loomed above him in a manner that

¹² The Jesuit Ippolito Desideri, who stayed in Lhasa from 18 March 1716 to 28 April 1721 and travelled through Nepal in 1721 has some interesting comments on the *aul* fever. He says: 'For some days we ascended and descended high mountains, meeting very few inhabitants until we arrived on a plain where the kingdom of Nepal ends and that of Bitia begins. I have already said that for many months in the years this road is impassable, being deadly. Anyone daring to take this journey at that time is liable to catch a disease called *ol* by the natives. This *ol* is a sort of influenza which prevails in the plains and the valleys through which one is obliged to pass; it is less virulent in the day-time, but pestilential at night or when asleep, being caused by the great heat and humidity. In these valleys the Parbettia sow rice, so the fields are always full of stagnant water at least a hands-breadth deep. Also the water draining off the mountains collects in pools and putrefies, from whence noxious vapours rise in the summer and hang about the valleys so the air is pestilential. The malady is generally fatal: if the man survives he never really recovers his health. It is true that the men who carry the mail from Nepal to Pattna, and from Pattna to Nepal, are obliged to pass at all seasons, but they know the short cuts, avoid the valleys, and spend the nights on the mountains. They also know certain secret remedies and a drink called *Bang*, water in which dried leaves either of hemp or of some similar plant have been soaked. It is greenish in colour and very refreshing but makes men stupid and drunk. Many died on the way although, they are all natives of these mountains and live for a few months every year in the valleys.' Ippolito Desideri in Filippi, ed., *An Account of Tibet, the Travels of Ippolite Desideri of Pistoia, S.J. 1712-1727* (London, 1937), revised edition, pp. 319-20. Hagen, *Nepal*, p. 37, expresses himself more directly when he says: 'The climate of the Tarai is unhealthy, a malarial hell!'

¹³ Henry T. Prinsep, *History of the Political and Military Transactions in India during the Administration of the Marquess of Hastings, 1813-1823* (London, 1825), p. 6, says: 'The insalubrity of the climate during a great portion of the year prevents the establishment of any considerable towns in the tract. The population, is indeed, for the most part migratory: the several classes retiring either into the hills or to a distance in the plains, when the unhealthy season commences.'

could only invite caution. It would be foolhardy for the plainsman to wear himself out in an assault on these hills. There were too many of them. When one hill was taken, a score more remained in the same area, each with its garrison, and each garrison skilled in all the nuances of true mountain warfare.¹⁴ Then, too, the law of the land imposed its authority even on invading armies. The wheel was not so much unknown as it was useless. Supplies had to be carried, either by mountain ponies, which were rare, or by men. On the flat the plainsman will not be outdone in feats of carrying by a mountain porter. But in the hills he is as a child. What a tempting sight such a supply line of struggling porters would have offered to mountain troops! How vulnerable such a column would be when the invading troops themselves were struggling with the twisting upward climb of the hill trails.¹⁵

Men, of course, will dare and conquer any difficulty, provided the prize is worth the taking. But what had the hills to offer? It was a poor land, offering little in the way of amenities, and even the necessities of life were secured only by unremitting toil. Except for a few larger valleys and the Valley of Kathmandu itself, there was no area that could be called truly fertile.¹⁶ Mines offered some wealth, but it was almost insignificant in itself, and, compared with what was available in the land to the south, it was totally negligible.¹⁷ There was

14 Cf. Note One at the end of this chapter for a detailed description of the ascent into the mountains as reported by one of the Company's sepoys who penetrated Nepal disguised as a messenger.

15 Baburam Acharya, *Sri Panch Baramaharajadhiraj Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Sankshipta Jivani* (Kathmandu, 2025 B.S.), iii, 480, cites especially this vulnerability of Kinloch's supply line in describing the defeat of Kinloch by the Gorkhalis.

16 It is significant that Pradyumna Karan, *Nepal*, p. 37, lists only six agricultural zones in Nepal, three of which are in the Tarai, outside of the Pahar zone, and one of the remaining three is Kathmandu Valley itself. Of the other two, the western hills zone is characterized by fertile soils, but marginal rainfall, while the eastern hills zone has better rainfall but suffers from poorer soils.

17 Although Francis Hamilton, *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal* (Edinburgh, 1819) pp. 76-7, gives a detailed description of the methods used in refining copper and iron ores, it is clear from the over-all picture presented in both Kirkpatrick and Hamilton that the total production of these mines was not very significant. The gold, of course, that seemed to come from Nepal was actually Tibetan gold, which came into Nepal through the Tibet trade.

some copper and iron, and there seemed to be gold in small quantities. But there was nothing like the sort of prize that would be required to attract a conquering general to dare the hazards of the trail.¹⁸

The People

It can be said with complete assurance that Nepal was an isolated land. It was cut off with sharp finality from the north and south. And in the long expanse of its east-west dimensions, it was cut by mountains and rivers into little pockets of culture that were almost totally self-contained and self-sufficient.

Yet for all its isolation, this area was always an area where the Mongolian people from the north and the Indo-Aryan people from the south met and mingled. If more were known about the migrations of people into Nepal and Greater Nepal, it would perhaps be easier to say whether these people moved into Nepal in spite of its isolation or because the very isolation of the land offered a refuge. But the people came. Pradyumna Karan says of it :

Nepal apparently was populated mainly by large-scale migrations, over a period of many centuries, from all the surrounding areas. The intermixture of Mongoloid groups from Tibet with Indo-Aryan people from northern India has gone far to break down homogeneity of race, in the strict sense; on the other hand, the great variations of environment in this country of contrasts and the difficulty of communication between different regions have preserved distinctions of language, culture, and even physical characteristics between population groups.¹⁹

Dr. Harka Bahadur Gurung tells much the same story, though with a slightly different emphasis. His opinion is equally worth consideration here :

The medieval history of the Himalayan regions is wrought

¹⁸ Prinsep, *History*, p. 62, says of this, 'Neither Ukbur nor any of his descendants on the throne of Delhee made any attempt to add the tract of hills to the Moghul empire; its revenue was not an object of cupidity... Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 62, adds, '...it seems in general to have been the policy of the princes of India to allow the mountain chiefs, even when very petty, to retain at least this extent of low country, as being too obnoxious to their incursions to be of a value adequate to defray the expense of its defence.'

¹⁹ Karan, *Nepal*, p. 63.

with the fluctuations of Mongoloid and Khasa dominance. The most notable phases being the seventh century, golden age' of Tibet when Strong-Btsan-Sgampo extended his empire to the Himalayan foothills, the 12th century occupation of western Tibet by Khasa rulers of Jumla, and the 18th century expansion of the Gorkhas from Kangra to Sikkim. The inhabitation of Nepal Himalaya therefore was the outcome of successive migrations of Mongoloid groups from the north-east and the Caucasoid people from the south-west. Nepal is also the meeting ground of northern Lamaism and southern Brahminism though most of the tribal groups still cling to the shamanistic Jhankri cult of mediums and sorcerers. The impact of the Hindu rulers over the last few centuries has been progressive 'sanskritization', and the establishment of Indo-Aryan Nepali as the *lingua franca* of the Kingdom.²⁰

The full implication of this statement concerning the migration of people into the area of Greater Nepal in terms of the culture and racial characteristics of the population of the country may not be immediately evident. But a moment's reflection will show that the isolated, self-contained units mentioned above tended to catch up and hold small cultural groups or mixtures of such groups, much as indentations on the shore retain the last vestiges of the retreating waves. Lack of communication has actually preserved many of these group characteristics to this day. centuries after the migrations were completed. So much is this so, that Professor Tucci writes :

'No one knows exactly how many languages and dialects are spoken in Nepal, certainly several dozen. As well as the Gurkhas..... there are the Newari...the Gurung, the Magar, the Limbu, the Bhutia, the Kiranti, the Murmi, and many others, divided and sub-divided into castes and sub-castes and groupings so numerous that the ethnographical study of Nepal, despite the many researches undertaken, is still one of the most complex in the world.'²¹

20 Gurung, 'The Geographic Setting', p. 8.

21 Guiseppe Tucci, Nepal, *The Discovery of the Malla*, trans. Lovett Edwards (London, 1960), p. 76.

In view of this expert opinion, it is perhaps sufficient to say here that there is no simple means of describing the population of either Modern Nepal or Greater Nepal. There was great diversity in cultural background ; there was great diversity in language; and there was considerable diversity in religious belief and practice.

C. LAND AND THE ECONOMY

An Agricultural Society

It was as true of Greater Nepal in the early eighteenth century as it is today that the economy rested primarily on agriculture. There were some mines, of course, and these considerably assisted the people in the manufacture of simple agricultural tools and in fashioning weapons. But basically their life was bound up with the soil and its produce. Trade was minimal. There was very little these units had to offer in the way of trade, so that whatever trade existed tended to be transient, with goods from Tibet being carried through the hill states for sale or barter in the lower districts, and the goods of India being carried to the north for exchange in Tibet. The average peasant's ability to purchase was severely limited by the mere fact that he lived a marginal existence, and so had little surplus which he exchange for imported goods.²² Most of the needs of the peasants in these small political units could be met within their own circle, and those that could not be met there could be satisfied from their neighbours on an exchange basis. Perhaps the only crop that

²² Krikpatrick's comment on this, though dating from a somewhat later period, is worthy of notice. He says: 'Whether or not grain is raised in this district in Greater quantity than is required for the consumption of the inhabitants. I had not the opportunity of ascertaining; but it is certain, that neither here, nor at any other town or village in our route (Kathmandu alone excepted) could we easily procure even a single day's provisions for our followers; the authority of the government being almost always necessary for this purpose, notwithstanding our readiness to pay whatever might be demanded; from this circumstance, and the nature of the country, which was everywhere unfavourable to the transportation of its productions to any distant market. I am inclined to think that the most part of these people are content to obtain from the earth support only for themselves, and that, consequently, we were rarely supplied by them in the course of our journey but at the expense of exposing them more or less to real inconvenience.' William Kirkpatrick, *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepaul* (London, 1811), pp. 75-6.

might be considered a cash crop in the hills was cotton,²³ and from the encouragement given to the development of cotton-based cottage industries by Prithvinarayan Shah,²⁴ it can safely be assumed that trade in this commodity was not highly developed. Then, as now, the lower and better watered lands produced rice and wheat with some oil seeds, while the higher land was given over to the cultivation of millet and other dry crops.

Society in the Pahar zone, then, was basically an agricultural society. From the land primarily came whatever wealth the principality possessed. As a closely connected consequence, the land also provided whatever prestige might be had within each tiny realm. Caste, of course, played its role in this question of prestige, but in comparison with the importance of the control of land it was far less significant. To be without land condemned one to the fringes of society where food and life itself depended on one's ability to provide some small service to the community in order to acquire the necessities of life. To have land was essential, and this basic fact of life developed a real hunger for land in the hill man.

It should be recalled that the land of the Pahar zone was not the fertile land of the Tarai, but the thin, immature soil of the hills. This makes the whole discussion of the peasant's *right* to till the land all the more poignant. If one were fortunate enough to claim tenancy rights to bottom land along the river valley floor, a fair crop might be expected without undue labour. But, as the terraced hillsides bear witness, many could claim only the right to till the mountain slopes, where they raised a meagre crop of millet, or perhaps maize. It was a hard life that encouraged the characteristics of rugged independence, a willingness to toil, and fortitude in the face of the harsh demands of nature.

23 Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 232, says : 'Two kinds of coarse cotton cloth, called Khadi and Changa, are woven by the Newar women of all ranks, and by the men of the Parbatiya caste, called Magar. The cotton grows in the hilly parts of the kingdom and is sufficient for the consumption; but none is exported from Nepal proper.'

24 Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Updesh*, ed. Yogi Narhari Nath (Kathmandu, 2016 B.S.), p. 13.

Land Tenure

Since the right to till the land was so important, something should be said at this point on the subject of the land tenure systems prevalent in Greater Nepal. Unfortunately there are very few records of an official character dating from the pre-Gorkhali period that will assist in constructing a picture of the tenancy and taxation policies during the period under discussion. There are *some* records, however, and with the help of these and the existing studies of land tenure in various sections of Greater Nepal that have been published, at least the principles involved in land tenure can be stated.²⁵ These principles are three :

1. All land was understood to be the property of the state.
2. Land, as the principal source of wealth, could not be allowed to remain non-productive.
3. The possession of a free-hold right to the land was the sole means to rise to a position of wealth and prestige.

In general, it can be said that the principle of state-ownership of the land can be accepted for the majority of the hill areas and the Valley.²⁶ This principle admitted of certain important exceptions, but the discussion of these can be postponed until after the main concept has been discussed. The origin of this concept of state ownership cannot be traced with any degree of accuracy. It seems, however, that in the small political units mentioned above, the prince allotted

²⁵ Cf. in particular M.C. Regmi, *Land Tenure and Taxation in Nepal* (Berkeley, 1965), 4 vols. Also his *Economic History of Nepal*, which is in the press.

²⁶ Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepal*, pp. 86-7, says : 'The Sovereign is deemed to be originally the absolute proprietor of all lands, nor is there any tenure under which they can be enjoyed permanently, or considered as hereditary possessions, except the few hereafter particularised. Even the first subject of the state, whether as to birth or office, had, generally speaking, but a temporary and precarious interest in the lands which he holds. As M.C. Regmi argues so forcefully, the institutions of birta land and jagirs would have had no meaning, unless the underlying assumption that the land belonged to the sovereign were verified. These two concepts of birta and jagir will be discussed below, but it will suffice for the purpose of Regmi's argument to point out that birta gave over to a private individual the permanent right to the land, while jagir gave to him the temporary right to the land. The point of Regmi's argument is that unless the sovereign first possessed the land, he could not so assign it in birtas and jagirs, both of which were common features in the hill states, even before the advent of Prithvinarayan Shah. Cf. M.C. Regmi, *Land Tenure*, i, 18.

land to his subjects according to their need, reserving to himself a share of the produce of the land to defray the cost of his durbar and the administration. It is true that in those early days there was ample land for all.²⁷ Nevertheless the land nearer the rivers and streams that could be more easily irrigated would be the most desirable, and some authority would have to determine the boundaries. As time went on, the right of the prince to determine the boundaries and his right to a share of the produce developed into a concept of state ownership and peasant tenure, with a regular payment of an increasing portion of the produce to the prince. This is, of course, speculation, but it seems well founded.

With the emergence of this concept certain significant corollaries developed. The peasant might farm the land or not. If he did farm it, he was obliged to pay a rent or tax which was based on the productivity of the land.²⁸ If he did not farm the land, he was obliged to leave it to someone who wished to cultivate it. In short, his right to the land was based on his regular payment of rent to the crown. The question of ownership or of selling the land did not arise. Generally speaking, waste land was available to anyone who cared to undertake the task of bringing it under cultivation, and tax incentives were available to make such a proposition attractive to anyone who

27 It is significant in this connection that in his letter appointing Sur Singh Rana and Kalu Khadka as Amalis of Bhadgaon, a well populated city, one of the instructions of Prithvinarayan Shah was that they should settle people and encourage agriculture. Kirkpatrick's observations add somewhat to this. He says, 'Adverting to the very wild and rugged nature of the country, we shall see no great room for imagining its population to be considerable; the valleys only are of any account in estimating the numbers of the inhabitants, and they are, with the exception of Napaul (Kathmandu Valley) itself, and perhaps one or two others, little better than so many mountainous cavities. Even the Turrye or Turryani, generally speaking, would seem to be but indifferently peopled, the villages throughout being, as far as I can learn, very thinly scattered, and in most places of a mean rank in point of magnitude, as well as appearance.' Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepal*, pp. 182-3.

28 The peasant's obligation to pay half of the produce to the crown or to the proprietor of the land was a common practice in the hills during the Gorkhali occupation, as will be developed in a later chapter. The application of this principle to the pre-Gorkhali period is justified on the basis that the Gorkhals in general did not introduce radical changes in areas they conquered, but accepted things as they were. Kirkpatrick, *ibid.*, p. 17, mentions expressly that this practice was followed in relations to the forest lands of the Tarai after the Gorkhali conquest.

wanted more land. The point at issue was this, that the land was expected to bear fruit. It was not permitted to stand idle so long as there was anyone who was willing to farm it. This corollary principle underlines the meaning of land in a primitive agricultural community. Since land was the basis of wealth, it must not be allowed to remain non-productive.

Also, in this agricultural community, the importance of land had to be measured in terms of prestige as well as wealth. It was his control of the land and the fruits of the land that constituted the real power of the prince.²⁹ By the same token, for all other members of the community land was the sole means of attaining to prestige and influence in the state, as well as to that leisure which is the primary desire of those who must toil for their livelihood.

The amount of toil involved must not be underestimated. Excepting the more fertile valleys, in the thin and immature soils of the Pahar zone, crops necessarily were poor. Yet the standard rent exacted from the peasant was one-half the crop. It can easily be surmised that, having paid this exaction, the peasant had barely enough remaining to provide a rude subsistence for himself and his family.

The only escape from this heavy assessment was to gain, by one means or another, the control of a section of land as a free-hold right. In general there were three ways to gain such control.

1. Through a jagir grant.³⁰ The prince regularly assigned to those who served the durbar in an official capacity the rents from specified plots of land. If this land were farmed by the jagirdars or their families, the full produce of the land would be theirs. If it were farmed by tenants, the jagirdars could still exact the rent, one-half the crop.

2. Through birta grants.³¹ The prince occasionally rewarded

29 The combination of the importance of the land and the sovereign's right to assign it to his subjects gave him real power over his subjects. Cf. in this regard the quotation from Kirkpatrick given in note 26 above.

30. The jagir assignment in Nepal was made in view of services actually being rendered to the state, and to that extent the use of the term in Nepal differs from the more familiar use of the same term in India.

31 The existence of birta grants in Nepal before the Gorkhali conquest is well-established. The clearest proof of this is Prithvinarayan Shah's

a noble for some particular service rendered by bestowing on him a grant of land. While the jagir grant remained valid only as long as the concerned noble served the court in an official capacity, the birta grant had no set time limit, and it was valid until it was recalled or confiscated. Sometimes the prince mortgaged land to one of his nobles in order to raise funds. This became a sale of land in effect, and it was classified as birta.

3. Through reclamation of waste land. The normal process following the reclamation of waste land called for the tenant to pay rental after three years. However, it is apparent that the peasant would be in no hurry to make this payment unless approached for it, and, in times of stress, when the collection records fell into disarray, it was quite possible for the newly reclaimed tract to go unmarked for some time. Thus, this became a kind of free-hold, and would remain so until the title to the land was scrutinized.³²

It should be mentioned also that the peasant's tax obligations did not end with the payment of his land tax. Jhara, or compulsory unpaid labour, was another form of tax. The obligation to provide such labour fell on all the peasants alike. It was utilized at times for the repair, maintenance and enlargement of the durbar; at other times it was used for the construction of fortifications and temples.³³ When imposed

frequent offers to confirm existing birtas and to confer new ones on those whom he could persuade to defect from their old loyalties to serve him. Cf. the following letters of Prithvinarayan Shah :

To Mahant Sumran Dass, dated 1828 B.S., Chait, badi i, roj 6.

To Kamal Narayan Pandit, dated 1824 B.S., Ashar, sudi 5, roj 6.

To Puranpu of Mantali, dated 1821 B.S. Jyestha.

To Gindun Panwar Lama, dated 1818 B.S., Phalgun, badi 9, roj 6.

32 M.C. Regmi cites an order of 1867 in Majh Kirat that noted that since 'the former king of that area was very weak' many persons had occupied lands as they liked as birta or kiptat. *Regmi Research Collections*, vi, 75 and xx, 224.

33 'An inscription by King Srinivas of Malla of Lalitpur at the *Rato Machindranath* temple in 1729 B.S. (1672 A.D.) states that the king may exact labour on a compulsory basis from his subjects in the construction and repair of forts, walls, and bridges as well as in war.' Translated from Dhanbajra Bajracharya, 'Malla Kal Ma Desh Raksha Ko Vyavastha.' *Purnima*, No. 2, p. 31, in *Regmi Research Series*, ii, No. 5 (1 May 1970), p. 112. Prithvinarayan Shah also made use of jhara labour to transport military supplies, etc. Cf. Letter of Prithvinarayan Shah to the Dwares of Palanchowk, dated 1831 B.S., Jyestha, sudi 13.

indiscriminately, it could entail real hardships for the people, since they not only had provide the labour, but also their tools and rations for the duration of the task set to them.³⁴

In the largely non-monetized economy of these agricultural communities, jhara was an obvious solution to the problem of getting work done that was required by the state for its well-being and preservation. It is evident, however, that such a system of providing for these needs opened the way for many abuses all of which added to the trials of the peasants.

In Kumaon the lot of the peasants in the pre-Gorkhali period was apparently even more trying than that sketched above. In this regard Atkinson says :

Instead of obliging each village to supply a portion of the expenses of the royal table and for the salaries of the royal servants (Sakti Gosain) set apart specified villages for the support of particular departments of the Rajah's service, known as Butkara villages, and also planted gardens in various places to supply the royal table with fruit...A line of villages stretching from the snows of Almora was set apart for suppling the royal table with snow under the namè of Hiunpal. The long-continued wars had given rise to a body of professional soldiers who sought as their reward grants of land in the conquered districts; these were now for the first time administered on a fixed system and regular assignments of land were made for the support of troops in camp and garrison under the name of *visi bandak*. *So minute was the supervision that it is said that the practice of growing grain and fruit on the tops of the houses dates from the settlement of Sakti Gosain, because these were the only places left by him untaxed.*³⁵

The tax in Kumaon was heavy, but it is interesting to note that the same basic principles applied to Kumaon as in most of Greater Nepal. It wss only the manner of their application that was different.

³⁴ Prithvinarayan Shah instructed the dwares to have the people bring even their own *namlos* (i.e. tump lines) for carrying his supplies.

³⁵ Edwin T. Atkinson, *The Himalayan Districts of the North Western Provinces of India* (Allahabad, 1882), ii, 555-6.

Further west, in the area between the Jamuna and the Sutlej, there were a number of small states. Each of these employed its own system of taxation, and apparently there was a wide degree of variation in the systems used. As Kennedy says :

It is difficult to give an accurate report of the manner the revenue is levied in these states. It differs essentially in almost every one. In some parts of Keonthul the Rana claims one-fourth of the produce, and certainly no peasantry appears to live in greater comfort. The cost of regular assessment in some states is one of the greatest evils the country labours under. It does not appear that previous to the Nepal conquest any fixed revenue was levied.³⁶

The situation in the trans-Jamuna area and the Kumaon area differed in some particulars from the situation that prevailed throughout most of modern Nepal. However, the principle of state ownership of the land prevailed in these areas as it did elsewhere. The differences that existed were merely variations in the application of this principle in the area in question. In some places in the hills of Nepal, however, there existed an entirely different concept of land tenure. In these communities, land was considered to belong, not to the state or to the prince, but to the community as such. This form of tenure was known as *kipat*.³⁷ It was found among certain tribal and communal groups. In these areas no one held individual title to the land. The community owned the land and extended to each tenant his right to till the land. The amount of land any one family held was determined by the community in view of the needs of that family for survival and by their direct use of the land. When a family failed to make use of the land they held, the land reverted to the community and was assigned to someone else who needed it and was willing

36 C.P. Kennedy, 'Report on the Hill States', 6 July 1824, *Records of the Delhi Residency and Agency* (Lahore, 1911), p. 272.

37 There is clear indication that *kipat* tenure existed in Nepal before the time of the Gorkhali conquest, since at the time of the Gorkhali occupation of eastern Nepal a solemn promise was made while salt and water were mixed, whereby the Gorkhali nobles on behalf of Prithvinarayan Shah agreed not to violate the Kiratis' *kipat* land. Cf. Iman Singh Chemjong, *History and Culture of the Kirat People* (Kathmandu 1967), ii, 157. For the best available treatment of *kipat* tenure, cf. M.C. Regmi, *Land Tenure*, iii, pp. 81-132.

to farm it. Here again the importance of the land is evident. Land must not be permitted to remain idle. It was the source of the community's wealth. The right to the use of the community's land was thus based not only on the customary occupation of the land, but also on the actual use of the land.

It will readily be seen that there was an intrinsic contradiction between communal tenure and state ownership of the land.³⁸ It was to be expected that where these two types of tenure were brought into contact, there would be difficulties, and history has proved that this assessment is correct. But, for unavoidable reasons, kpat has remained in use until modern times.³⁹

D. TRADE AND THE ECONOMY

The stress given in these pages to the importance of agriculture and the land in the economy of the hill states is fundamental to an understanding of these states as well as to an understanding of the process of unification. However, in addition to agriculture there was some trade and commercial activity. Though relatively much less important, this also must be discussed to complete the economic picture. In the discussion of the trade of Greater Nepal, two preliminary distinctions are in order :

1. Was the trade in indigenous products, or was it a purely transit trade ?
2. Was the transit trade, where it existed, carried on through the medium of local merchants, or was it predominantly in the hands of outsiders, either from Nepal itself or from India ?

These distinctions have a direct bearing, not so much on the nature or the quality of the trade, as on the effect it has on the local economy in the pre-Gorkhali petty states. A vigorous trade in indigenous products benefits the community, not only indirectly, by enriching the merchants, but also directly, by

38 State ownership of the land implies the State's right to the direct administration of the land as well as the right to assign to it. Communal ownership concedes the right of the state to impose taxes on the land, but reserves to the community the right to assign the land.

39 Cf. Note 37 above regarding Prithvinarayan Shah's oath to respect the kpat tenure of the Kiratis.

providing employment to local artisans and those who supply them with raw materials. If the trade is a purely transit trade, and that, too, carried on by outsiders, even the indirect benefit to the local community is reduced to the point where the only local people to profit from the trade are the local hill porters and those who contract for their labour.

As far as the Tarai is concerned, it is clear from contemporary accounts that a great deal of buying and selling took place across the southern borders of Greater Nepal between the Tarai villages and India.⁴⁰ This trade, however, affected very few of the hill states, and is of relatively little concern for the purposes of this study, which is more directly concerned with the Pahar zone.

Trade in the Hills

In the northern Himalayan regions, however, the main occupation of the people necessarily was trade.⁴¹ This trade centred on the best of the passes through the mountains into Tibet. Kodari (Kuti), Rasuwa, and Thak were some of these.⁴² Naturally, no generalization will cover the trade patterns of all of these, but it is both interesting and enlightening to see in some detail the manner in which trade was carried on in one such area.

Traill's account of the pattern of trade in the Bhotia Mahals of Kumaon is valuable for its detailed treatment of the Bhotiya trade in that area.⁴³ According to Traill, the Bhotiyas who engaged in the Tibet trade each had a particular correspondent in Tibet, with whom and with whom alone he could deal. Nor could the Tibetans trade with any but their fixed clients. The Bhotia middlemen bartered salt for grain in the Tarai or hills, and then bartered the grain in Tibet for salt and other

40. Francis Buchanan, *Purnea Report* (Patna, 1928), p. 556.

41. Cf. the description of the climate of the Bhot valleys given above, p. 7.

42. Desideri, *Travels*, p. 310, gives an idea of the establishments that grew up near such passes. He says: 'There are many rich merchants with large houses, and warehouses in Kutti, who receive travellers in their houses provide animals, men and anything they need, and pass their goods through the customs houses.'

43. George W. Traill, 'Statistical Report on the Bhotia Mahals of Kumaon', *Asiatic Researches*, xvii (1832), 34-9.

commodities. The exchange rate varied according to the distance the produce had to be carried. If the exchange was made in the Tarai, the rate was four measures of grain for one of salt. If the exchange was made in the hills, it was three of grain for one of salt. If the exchange was made nearer the border, the rate dropped to two of grain for one of salt. It never became more favourable than this. In Tibet the exchange was uniformly four measures of salt for one of grain. The profit was considerable, but the trade was limited by the resources of the individual trader, by the restrictions put on the trade by the Tibetan authorities, and by the seasonal nature of the trade. It was strictly a transit trade, but it was carried on by local merchants.

In the Pahar zone itself, however, as distinct from the northern Himalayan regions, one study says that whatever manufacturing and commercial activities existed were related to the needs of subsistence, and hence were not generally an independent means of livelihood.⁴⁴ Indigenous trade was practically non-existent. This same study goes on to say that the commercial activity of the hill areas, where it existed, was monopolized by outsiders, either by Newars from the Valley or by bairagis from India.⁴⁵ Thus in the Pahar zone in general the economy was very little affected by trade, and agriculture had to remain the basis of economic life.

The one area in the Pahar zone where trade played an important role in the economy was Kathmandu Valley. The trade of the Valley was directed both towards the plains of India, especially Bengal and Tibet, but it was largely Tibet-oriented, dealing with Lhasa and points along the Kathmandu Valley-Lhasa trade route. It was in this northern trade that the major profits were to be found.⁴⁶

Traill's account of the Bhotiya trade, discussed above, was rather simple and straightforward. The primary items of trade were grain and salt. The picture that emerges of the Kathmandu Valley-Tibet trade is much more complicated, and

44 M.C. Regmi, *Economic History*, Chapter II.

45 Bairagi, a religious mendicant.

46 Political Consultation, 7 March 1796, No. 3, Abdul Kadir Khan's report to the Governor General on the Tibet trade and Nepal.

the trade itself is of a more commercial nature. The major sources for this aspect of Nepal's economy are the accounts of Bogle⁴⁷ and Turner⁴⁸ as well as the letters of the Capuchins who were working both in Lhasa and in the three capitals of Kathmandu Valley at this time.⁴⁹

Kathmandu Valley Trade

Bogle visited the Teshu Lama in 1775. His report deals with both the items of trade and with the merchants who carried on this trade. Of Nepalese products as such, Bogle speaks chiefly of iron and rice. Goods imported from Bengal through Nepal, however, included broadcloth, otter skins, indigo for dyeing, pearls and beads of coral and amber, conch shells, spices, tobacco, sugar, Malta striped satins, and a few types of white cloth, chiefly coarse. The Tibetans paid for these items with gold dust, musk, and yaktails.⁵⁰ Though Bogle speaks of the Kashmiri merchants and gosains, 'holy men', as playing a very important role in the Tibet trade, he points out that these men dealt primarily in small objects of relatively high value, in view of the great distance their goods had to be transported. Such items were easier to carry and had a higher profit margin. The bulk of the trade, however, was carried on by Newari merchants, and it was this group that handled most of the retail trade in Lhasa as well. Also, while trade originating in Nepal was not too important, Nepal was one of the two main channels for the valuable trade between Bengal and Tibet, the other channel being Bhutan.⁵¹

Turner, who visited Tibet in 1783, speaks almost entirely of trade between Bengal and Tibet, but, of course, the Bengal trade was carried on principally through Nepal. To Nepal

47 Clements Markham, *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa* (London, 1876).

48 Captain Samuel Turner, *An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet* (London, 1800).

49 Luciano Petech, ed., *Il Nuovo Ramusio. I Missionari italiani nel Tibet e nel Nepal* (Rome, 1952), ii, parts 1-4. Petech reproduces all the known correspondence of the Capuchins in Tibet and Nepal.

50 Markham, *Narratives*, pp. 128 and 14.

51 This is confirmed by Desideri's account. Desideri had said, '... the road across western Tibet is so impractical that the caravans of merchandise from Cascimir, Hindustan, Armenia and Nepal come through Kutti'. Desideri, *Travels*, p. 130.

itself Tibet sent rock salt, borax, and gold dust, and received in return coinage, course cloth, rice and copper. Of the transit trade through Nepal, he says that Tibet imported broadcloth, trinkets, knives, scissors and telescopes, cloves, nutmegs, sandalwood, pearls, gems, heavy brocades, conch shells, amber, Malta cloth, tobacco, indigo, and otter skins. The Tibetans paid for these with gold dust, musk and borax. Turner also adds that most of the profits of this trade were enjoyed by gosains.⁵² This last point is contradicted by Abdul Kadir Khan, who visited Nepal in 1795 on a mission for the Company's government. Abdul Kadir Khan maintained that the Nepalis, acting as middle men between the Tibetans and Indian merchants, appropriated the bulk of the profits on both the articles in transit from Bengal as well as on the articles of Tibetan origin that were exported to Bengal through Nepal. He also emphasized the purchases made in Nepal by Tibetan traders coming down to the Valley.⁵³

The Capuchin accounts deal more with the mechanics of customs duties, the government's share in the trade profits. According to these accounts, the customs inspectors came to the factory and inspected the merchandize, which was then roped up, given an official seal, and wrapped in a buffalo hide. The following day the customs inspectors again visited the factory, confirmed the original seal, and then added a second seal to the outside of the package. At the border the seals were inspected, and if they were intact, the goods were allowed to pass. Customs duties amounted to nine Mahendramalli per maund of goods, plus the payment of a passport fee at the border. Customs on cloth and metal handled by non-Nepalis was about sixty per cent higher. The passport tax on Europeans was fifty Mahendramalli, while for others it was two and a half.⁵⁴ Desideri adds that on the Tibet side the bales were not opened, but charged several *tang* for every two Patna maunds by weight.⁵⁵ Newar merchants, however, were charged less

52 Turner, *Embassy to the Teshoo Lama*, pp. 381-3.

53 Political Consultation 7 March 1796, No. 3, Abdul Kadir Khan's report to the governor general on the Tibet trade and Nepal.

54 Petech, *Il Nuovo Ramusio*, ii, parte iv, 65.

55 Desideri, *Travels tang*, p. 130. A *tang* was worth three and a half rupees (Patna, sicca).

by the Tibetan customs authorities than the other merchants.⁵⁶

From this account it is clear that the Nepalis had a real advantage in the main items of transit trade. As for indigenous items, the details of customs inspection in Kathmandu seem to indicate that the export to Tibet of goods manufactured in Nepal was very limited in quantity. The method used for inspection and assessment was simply too time-consuming to be adapted to a large export trade in such items. This is borne out by the failure of any Nepalese items of indigenous manufacture to appear high on the lists of Tibetan imports. On transit items, however, the Newars enjoyed a far more favourable position than other merchants because of the preferential treatment they received from both the Nepali and Tibetan customs. It will also be noticed that the Newar traders had no restrictions placed on them as to whom they could contact in Tibet, unlike the Bhotiyas described in Traill's account.

Conclusion on Trade

To sum up this account of trade, then, it can be said that the great exception to the general trade pattern of the Pahar zone was Kathmandu Valley. Here, too, the amount of indigenous trade carried on was negligible. The profits accruing to the mint from the minting of Tibet's coinage probably equalled the amount earned through the sales of indigenous materials, and in none of the trade lists of Tibet that are extant do Nepali manufactures of art work command an important position. Even the trade of the Valley was predominantly a transit trade. But there were three factors which made it far more important in the economy of the Valley than it was elsewhere in the Pahar zone. First, the great trade route from India to Tibet passed through the Valley and on to Tibet through the passes at Rasuwa and Kodari. The Valley thus enjoyed a strategic position on this trade route, and the kingdoms of the Valley were in a position to capitalize on this through the imposition of customs duties on all trade that was

⁵⁶ The reason for this preferential treatment accorded the Newars was, according to Desideri, that 'long ago a Grand Lama of Tibet who was born in Nepal reduced the duty for all Nepalese merchants.' *Ibid.*, p. 130.

carried through the Valley to Tibet. The second factor was the skill of the Newars as traders. This skill was almost legendary in the hills, and it is known that when king Ram Shah of Gorkha first began to experiment with the Tibet trade, he imported Newari merchants to handle this for him.⁵⁷ The third factor lay in the preferential treatment the Newars received both from their own governments and from the Tibetan authorities, which levied a lower customs duty on them than it did on the other merchants who dealt in the Tibet trade and gave them special trade concessions in Lhasa itself.

As far as the over-all economic position of trade in the Pahar zone is concerned, however, it must be borne in mind that the political units, including those of the Valley, were very small. Even those areas that were inclined towards trade and had the necessary skills did not have the infra-structure to develop a large-scale, indigenous export trade. It was inevitable, then, that those areas that could support agriculture leaned more heavily on the produce of the land for their wealth than on any external commercial activity. The far northern regions *had* to depend on trade, since they could not develop any significant agricultural base in view of the harsh climatic conditions prevailing there. The very nature of their trade, however, limited its scope, and must have acted as a check on the population these regions could support. In general, then, it must be said that the economy of the various political units that comprised Greater Nepal rested primarily on agriculture with trade supplying some areas with a useful addition to the wealth of the state.

Summary

The area which has been described above as Greater Nepal is one of sharp geographical contrast. From the south the land rises abruptly in a series of ascents, with roughly parallel ranges of mountains dividing the country longitudinally, and the spurs emanating from these ranges to the north and south

⁵⁷ Cf. *Bhasha Vamsavali*. The text referred to throughout this study is that published in Samsodhan Mandal, *Sri Panch Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Upadesh* (Kathmandu, 2025 B.S.) ii, 545-iii, 926. The reference here is to ii, 559-61.

dividing the country into small, self-contained geographic units. This geographic fragmentation of the country is completed by the many mountain streams and rivers that cross the land. Normally moderate and quiet, these rivers and streams become dangerous torrents during the monsoon, and present real hazards to transit and obstacles to communication.

The economic base of these units was agriculture. These small units were basically agricultural societies, in which land formed not only the means of livelihood but also the sole means to wealth and prestige in the community. In certain areas to the north and in Kathmandu Valley, the income from agriculture was supplemented by trade. Though in Kathmandu Valley in particular this income added substantially to the prosperity of the state, it was not such as to offset the agricultural bias of the economy. The burden of taxation in these states was heavy, amounting in most cases to one-half the produce of the land. To this burden was added *jhara* or compulsory unpaid labour, for the benefit of the various state projects and for service of the crown. It would be safe to conclude that for the hill people it was truly a case of the survival of the fittest, and that these conditions molded a strong, independent, and determined people who would provide fit recruits for the armies of Gorkha once given proper leadership.

*NOTE ONE : Report of an Indian Sepoy on the Location of Tansen**

Summary of a report of Bhuroo Deen, Sepoy, 1st Grenadiers, 1st Bn. 34th Regiment N.I., dispatched under disguise of an Hurcarah to Tansen, the Residence and Cantonment of Amar Sing Tappa, in command of the Nepaul Frontiers.

After crossing the hill on which the Kazee's house stands, and at the foot of which Boctwul is situated, we descended into the valley beyond it. On the way we came to a Chokey. This spot seems to be under the fire of the Fort. Hitherto the road is as follows : at first mounting near the Kazee's house it is divided into broad steps easily to be ascended by elephants and horses it is afterwards subjected to all the irregularities of the hill over rock and a kind of kanker a number of loose stones are washed down from the summit during the rains, and these greatly contributed to the difficulty.

Question : Do you think it possible by removing these loose stones to make it passable for wheeled carriages ?

Answer : The native rock is too rugged and there is not sufficient earth to make a level.

*Consultation 30 April 1813 No. 51, Political Department.

In the hollow between the two hills the road is carried through jungle of Saul and other species and trees. A little beyond the basin we commenced mounting the hill on which the Fort stands. I suppose the different windings of the road are not less than a cutcha coss in length, but this length diminished the steepness. This cutcha coss does not bring you to the road where the Fort is placed, but to a small flat in the side of the hill about a matchlock shot below it, of which you can discern one bastion and a part of the wall. The flat is spacious enough to contain 50-60 men and is not open to the fire of the Fort...Nya Kote, the name of the Fort, is built of the stones found among the hills. It consists of an inner and outer fort. Each square has bastions at the angles. The Fort is armed with 16 guns. The 2nd contains a magazine. The guns of the Fort command the road in several places as far as I have proceeded, and sometimes without a very great depression of the aim. But musquetry would be harmless, tho' indeed the Lahore Matchlocks might carry with effect into some parts of the pass. Were the garrison to come out of the Fort and advance about 100 paces, they might then fire with effect on the flat. I saw one ascent to the Fort from the flat but much obscured, and I do not think there is any other path, except the narrow foot-paths of the hill people, of which there were some traces from the huts on the flat. The road to Tungsein now begins to descend and is for 70,000 paces good, but impassable by carriages. 1/4 coss the second spring. 1/4 coss from this spot the road after a number of ups and downs and winding over rocks reaches the north by eastward foot of the first range of hills where there is a small plain. Having proceeded about 1/4 coss on the sloping sides of heights came to another river called Maurreeaur. It flowed in the direction of the road on the right hand and came from the hills in the rear. Near this spot another fort appears which is built in the range of hills that run along the W. side of the Tehnavee river from N. to S. in front of our camp at Raj Ghaut. This Fort has a communication with the town of Boutwul but had as yet been obscured from my view. It is said to contain 8 guns and a company. I could discern to bastions, but no more, for I guess the distance to be 2-1/2 coss and it did not stand on lower ground than its namesake the Nya Fort before described. 1/2 coss onward reach the foot of a hill not less than 1 or 1/4 coss to the summit. This hill is very difficult. It is called Mussaun Hill from a village at its top. The bottom of the hill is 3/4 coss further on where the road is repeatedly intersected by the windings of a narrow channel of water of which I could not learn any name. After proceeding 1/2 or 3/4 coss further we reached the foot of Tan Sein Hill. A road turns off here left to Palpa, said to be 3 coss distant. A coss distant on the top of the hill is Tang Sein. This hill appears to grow out of the mountain that overtops it more than Nya Kote does our encampments.

Dated : Camp on the Tehanavee, 6 April 1813.

The Journey here mentioned took two days.

*NOTE TWO : Hamilton's Sources**

Hamilton divides his sources, all witnesses, into four groups. Of these he says :

Concerning the country between Sikkim and Nepal proper, my information is chiefly derived from the following persons :

1st. Agam Singha, hereditary chief of the Kirats, a tribe bordering immediately on Nepal, and last Chautariya, or Prime Minister, of the princes who governed that people.

*Hamilton, *op. cit.* pp. 1-5, *passim*.

2nd. A Brahman, who was the Munsuf, or civil judge of Bahadurganj, a territory in the district of Puraniya belonging to the Company. His ancestors were hereditary dewans to the princes who governed the territory between Nepal and Sikkim, that is, the Brahman's family managed the princes' revenue.

3rd. From Narayan Dass, a scribe (kayastha) whose ancestor, Janardhan, accompanied Lohanga, founder of the late dynasty; and whose descendants enjoyed the hereditary office of Neb, or second minister to the successors of that chief, until their final expulsion from the mountains.

4th. A slave of the Raja of Gorkha.

5th. A Kirat from Hedang, near the Arun River.

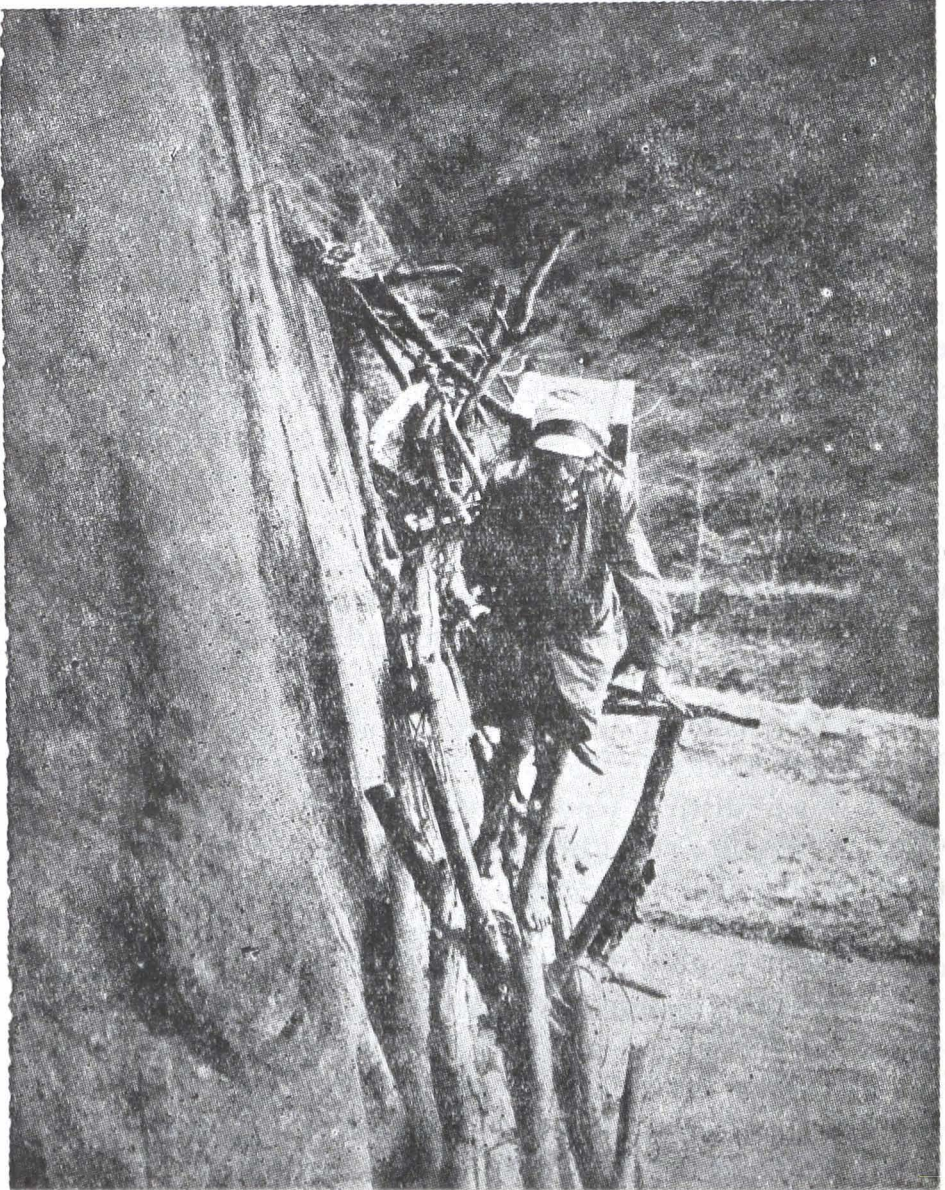
The account of Nepal Proper is chiefly derived from my own observations. Concerning the country between Nepal Proper and the river Kali, I follow chiefly the authority of the following persons :

1st. A Brahman, named Sadhu Ram Upadhya, whose family was in hereditary possession of the office of priest (Purohit) to the raja of Palpa, one of the principal chiefs in this district

2nd and 3rd. Prati Nidhi Tiwari, and Kanak Nidhi Tiwari (two brothers of the sacred order, the former very learned, and the latter a man of business. Their family had been long mantris, or advisers, of the same chiefs, but came originally from Kumau;

4th. Sama Bahadur, uncle to the Raja of Palpa, now in exile:

Finally, concerning the parts west to the river Kali, in the rainy season 1814 I proceeded up the Ganges, with a view to going to Haridwar, where I expected to procure intelligence: but, fortunately, I met at Futtehgur with a person well qualified for the purpose. This was Hariballa, a Brahman born in Kumau, but who has long been in the service of the Garhwal Rajas, and has travelled much in the adjacent parts.



A LAND FRAGMENTED BY NATURE. A FOOTBRIDGE ON THE ARUN RIVER IN EASTERN NEPAL ILLUSTRATES THE FLIMSY LINES OF COMMUNICATIONS THAT JOINED THE TINY STATES OF NEPAL, (HAGEN: NEPAL P. 46.)

CHAPTER TWO

THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND

I would allow the State to increase so as is consistent with unity: that, I think, is the proper limit.

—*Plato*¹

The preceding chapter discussed Greater Nepal from the point of view of geography and economics. The picture that emerged from that discussion was not one calculated to encourage thoughts of unification. Not only had nature fragmented the land by erecting innumerable mountain barriers and scoring the earth with dividing rivers, it had endowed the land with sufficient fertility to make each of the units so created a viable economic unit. Though few of these units would be deemed wealthy by any stretch of the imagination, they were sufficiently self-contained and self-sufficient to exist as primitive agricultural societies.

This divisive aspect of nature and economy in Greater Nepal was reflected in the political structures that evolved there. There was a distinct tendency throughout the whole area of Greater Nepal to resist unifying forces and to fragment into principalities that harmonized with the geographic and economic units into which the land was naturally divided. This chapter will analyze this tendency to political fragmentation, determine the strength of the petty rajas who ruled these mini-states and the alliances into which they grouped themselves, and assess the effects of Rajput infiltration on the political situation in Greater Nepal before the Gorkhali conquest will be viewed from the aspect of the eventual unification of the country. Far from being arbitrary, this selectivity is dictated both by the objectives of the present study as well as by the fact that in the nature of things very little documentation has survived the passage of time unless it was concerned with the Gorkhali conquest.

¹ Plato, *Republic*, IV, 423.

A. POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION

'Political fragmentation' is an unwieldy phrase. However, it is an apt one. For it is a fact of history that in an area covering roughly seven hundred miles from east to west and approximately one hundred miles from north to south there existed simultaneously no fewer than eighty separate political entities. On a basis of rough mathematics that is approximately one state for every eight hundred and fifty square miles. Some of these states, of course, were much larger than this. And of course, many of them were very much smaller.

These states were spread fairly evenly over the hills, with the concentration increasing towards the west. To the east of Kathmandu Valley there were two kingdoms, Bijayapur and Chaudandi, in the Tarai, and the independent state of Sikkim in the eastern hills. To the south of the Valley lay Makwanpur. In Kathmandu Valley itself there were three independent kingdoms. Immediately to the west of the Valley, in central Nepal, were the Chaubisi Rajas—the twenty-four princes.² Still further west were the Baisi Rajas—the twenty-two princes.³ Mustang lay to the north. Kumaon and Garhwal lay across the Kali River outside of modern Nepal. In the area to the west of Garhwal, between the Tons and the Sutlej, lay the principalities of Cooloor, Hindoor, Bussahir, Sirmoor, the Bara Thakurai (the twelve principedoms), and the Athara Thakurai (the eighteen principedoms).⁴ And to the north-west beyond the Sutlej River lay Kangra, the principality against which Nepal's westward expansion foundered.

All of these principalities were in a state of constant flux, and all their borders underwent frequent modification. Their were alliances made and broken, marriage alliances contracted, expansionary skirmishes, and encroachments. Throughout the changes taking place in this area, however, there was a definitely discernible trend towards political fragmentation. Larger states became smaller, and smaller states became smaller still. It was clearly a case of the pull of the natural

2. Cf. Note One at the end of this chapter for a comparative list of the Chaubisi Rajas.

3. Cf. Note Two at the end of this chapter for a comparative list of the Baisi Rajas.

4. Cf. Note Three at the end of this chapter for a list of the Athara and Bara Thakurai.

dividing factors of the land overcoming such political ties as arms and personalities could forge.

This fact of political fragmentation deserves careful attention. It is far more important than the mere existential fact of one petty kingdom more or less in a land teeming with petty kingdoms. Each of these kingdoms in itself may well deserve the most intense historical study, but in the context of the unification of Nepal, it is the process of their fragmentation that calls for study and analysis. It is important to know what factors led to this widespread political fragmentation in order to expose the forces that opposed unification. For this, three major lines of analysis are indicated :

1. The trend towards political fragmentation ;
2. The causes of political fragmentation ; and
3. The failure of consolidation efforts.

The Trend Towards Political Fragmentation

The Gorkhalis were not the first to build up a substantial kingdom in Greater Nepal. Before the rise of the House of Gorkha there had been at least five kingdoms of considerable size, and three of them had reached an advanced stage of development; the Malla kingdom of Jumla, the Sen kingdom of Palpa, and the Malla kingdom of Kathmandu Valley. Though these three kingdoms did not arise at the same time, and political fragmentation occurred at different periods in each, for a time they co-existed, and their combined areas covered an extensive part of Greater Nepal.

The Malla kingdom of Jumla, with its capital at Simja, lay to the far west of Nepal.⁵ The task of reconstructing the history of this kingdom has only just begun, but a very coherent thesis for the origin, development, and fall of this kingdom has been brought forward by Professor Tucci.⁶ It is

⁵ The Mallas of Jumla were not related to the better known Mallas of Kathmandu Valley. Cf. Giuseppe Tucci, *Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal* (Rome, 1950), p. 49; D.R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal* (Calcutta, 1965), i. 713; and Luciano Petech, *Mediaeval History of Nepal* (Rome, 1958), p. 81.

⁶ Tucci, *Preliminary Report*. This remains the most important work on the Mallas of Jumla. Several other authors have published since Tucci and have shed additional light on his findings. Among Nepali authors Yogi

a thesis founded solidly on field work and a thorough knowledge of the records of neighbouring states, especially the Tibetan records, which throw considerable light on the Jumla kingdom.⁷ This kingdom, founded in the twelfth century by invading Khasa tribes,⁸ was formed by joining the kingdom of Guge⁹ with Purang¹⁰ and possibly also with Ladakh. In the thirteenth century western Nepal was added to the territories of the kingdom. As its climax the power of the Mallas had extended their conquests as far as Dullu in the south-west and Kaskikot in the east. The golden age of the Mallas of Jumla was reached in the reign of Prithvimalla, for whom there are extant inscriptions dated as early as 1354 A.D. and extending as late as 1376 A.D. The Malla kingdom was basically feudal, and when the power of the centre was eclipsed, the feudatory states resumed their independent status. For approximately two hundred years this Malla kingdom had united more than half of Greater Nepal into a large feudatory state. Its collapse led to the independent status of the Baisi Rajas and the feudatory status of Kali Kumaon under Doti.¹¹

In central Nepal the Sen kings achieved a kingdom of very considerable size. The Sen kingdom was based on Tula Sen's capital at Makwanpur.¹² It reached its golden age during the

(Continued from page 34)

Narhari Nath has done extensive field work in the Karnali basin, in which Jumla is situated, and which fell under the rule of the Khasa Mallas of Jumla. His collected documents and inscriptions have been published in *Itihas Prakash* (Kathmandu, 2013 B.S.), ii, parts 1-3. His findings have tended to confirm Tucci's original report. Petch has also shed additional light on Tucci's work, especially as regards the genealogy of the Mallas of Jumla. See Petch, *Mediaeval History*, pp. 102-3.

7 Professor Tucci published five inscriptions of the Malla period. The most important of these is the Dullu genealogy, which enabled him to compare the Malla kingdom with the Tibetan records—an area in which he is pre-eminently qualified. An additional item of documentary evidence discovered by Professor Tucci was the *Kanakapatra* of Shituska, dated Saka 1278 (1356 A.D.).

8 Khasa; an ancient Indo-Aryan tribe of western Nepal.

9 Guge; western Tibet, south of the Sutlej River.

10 Purang; south-eastern Tibet, south of the Sutlej River and east of Guge.

11 Ram Nivas Pandey, 'A Short History of Doti State, Western Nepal', *Nepal Review*, 1969 (i), 247.

12 Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 130.

reign of Mukunda Sen I (1518-53), when its boundaries were extended far to the west and to the east.¹³ The Sen kingdom was also feudatory in character. It lasted approximately two hundred years, from the mid-fourteenth century until the mid-sixteenth century, before its unity was broken and it was reduced to the level of a number of independent but related kingdoms. The initial division of the Sen kingdom into six petty states saw further fragmentation when the kingdom of Makwanpur was later divided into the kingdoms of Makwanpur, Bijayapur, and Chaudandi.¹⁴

Centered in Kathmandu Valley was the great Malla kingdom, under whose rule the Newars of the Valley attained the golden age of their culture.¹⁵ It would be quite misleading to represent this kingdom as either thoroughly unified or completely stable in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. From the vast collection of inscriptions and literary colophons now available,¹⁶ as well as the evidence of the various extant chronicles, it is quite evident that the kingdom was in fact neither unified nor stable during this period. However, it is equally clear that the Malla kings held actual or nominal sway over a very extensive section of central Nepal. Also, despite the various royal institutions such as *dvairajya*, *ardharajya*, and even collegial rule, there was a simple unity in the reigning family of the kingdom.¹⁷ The emergence of strong feudal lords, who usurped many of the royal prerogatives from time to time, did not constitute a final division of the state, and the Malla kingdom remained recognizable as a state under central rule with rather extensive territories.

13 Ibid., pp. 130-1.

14 Ibid., p. 137.

15 The term *Malla*, as applied to the Kings of Kathmandu Valley, refers by convention to at least three separate dynasties. The last of these three dynasties, that founded by Jayasthiti Malla, was the more vigorous, and it was this dynasty that led the Newars to their cultural zenith. Cf. D.R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, i, 446.

16 Petech, *Mediaeval History*, pp. 81-2.

17 *Dvairajya*: the simultaneous rule of two kings of equal, or junior and senior status, ruling either co-jointly or in different parts of the same kingdom.

Ardharajya: the simultaneous rule of two kings of unequal status, ruling either co-jointly or in separate parts of the kingdom.

Collegial rule: the rule of several brothers simultaneously, with no one of them enjoying the title of king.

It is not possible to define satisfactorily the extent of these territories, but using Krikpatrick's account as a guide, the following rough boundaries can be listed: on the north, Kuti and the mountains of Neelkunth (Gosainkund Lekh); on the south the forest of Medini Mull (?); to the west, the mountain of Lamidanda and the Trisuli Ganga; and on the east, Sanga and the Dudh Kosi River. The division took place during the early sixteenth century.¹⁸

The existence over a period of several centuries of these kingdoms, all of considerable size, indicates that the limitations of geography and economics could be transcended. Jumla and the Malla kingdom of Kathmandu Valley not only achieved control over large tracts of land, but also reached a high level of cultural development. Having once succeeded in overcoming the handicaps of geography and economics, they should have continued to grow and develop. Yet, for all of this, political fragmentation did occur; and it occurred not only in these larger states, but also in states much smaller in extent.

Causes of Political Fragmentation

Since these larger states in Greater Nepal tended to break down in smaller political units, it is logical to search for the causes of this tendency. An analysis of the process of fragmentation reveals four major causes.

1. Division

The first and most obvious cause for the political fragmentation of a kingdom was the division of the succession rights

¹⁸ Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepal*, p. 169. Kirkpatrick, unfortunately, does not mention his sources for the historical account given in his report. Petech was the first to point out the general agreement of Kirkpatrick's account with the chronicle called by historians VK, which is a fragment kept in the Kaiser Memorial Library in Kathmandu. In its present fragmented form, VK does not include the narration of the division of the Malla kingdom. It is possible, however, that Kirkpatrick was fortunate enough to see the whole chronicle, in which case his source would be VK even for these boundaries. This is of course, an assumption. VK was published by Petech in Roman characters in his *Medieval History*, pp. 213-7, and later by D.R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, iii, 158-63. Petech's presentation is accompanied by numerous notes on the reconstructions he thought proper. Regmi merely states that he has followed Petech in the reconstructions, since, as he says, he has found Petech's reconstruction correct.

between the king's sons or relatives by the king himself. The clearest example of this was the division of the Sen kingdom by Mukunda Sen in 1553 A.D., who parcelled out his kingdom among four sons, one grandson, and a nephew.¹⁹ This division of the state shattered the unity of one of the strongest kingdoms in the hills. Although the family alliance remained, each of these new rulers became an autonomous ruler exercising the right of independent action. Further fragmentation took place when Harihar Sen, who succeeded in time to the throne of Makwanpur, divided his kingdom between one of his sons and his grandson.²⁰

Why did Mukunda Sen take this action? Undoubtedly there existed the real possibility of disputes over the succession, which the king might be strongly persuaded to prevent by a timely division of the prize. But this solution to the problem of such a division is too pat to be readily accepted, and even Hamilton found Mukunda Sen's act inexplicable :

It is agreed by all, that Mukanda Sen, the son of Rudra, possessed very extensive dominions, and might probably have founded a kingdom equal to that which the Gorkhalese now enjoy, but he had the *imbecility* to divide his estates among his four sons.²¹

Hamilton's astonishment is quite understandable. A king who has the intelligence to forge a great kingdom does not suddenly reject all semblance of reason and divide that kingdom. Since the division was made, however, it seems reasonable to ask :

1. Would such divisions of a strong state be even considered if the possible lines of division were not already latent in the structure of the state ?

2. If these divisions were latent in the structure of the state, and if the king had reasons to doubt his eldest son's ability to control the kingdom as he himself had done, might he not forestall a gradual disintegration of the state by an orderly division of it among his heirs ?

There are several indications that this latter was indeed the

¹⁹ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 131. For the date, cf. Baburam Acharya, *Bhanubhakta Smarak Grantha* (Darjeeling, 1997 B.S.), p. 65.

²⁰ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 137.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

case. The fact that the division was effected with apparent disruption of the economy and with no indication of opposition to the division from the nobles suggests that the potential divisions already existed within the state. The feudal nature of the Sen kingdom also indicates the existence of possible lines of division. And, of course, the type of agricultural society found in the hill states was purely adapted to the administration of extensive territories. The hill states were based largely on a non-monetized economy. Taxes were generally assessed in kind and were utilized by assigning the revenues from certain areas to fixed purposes within the kingdom and to defray the cost of the salaries of court officers. It became the personal task of those working for the crown and paid by the assignment of jagirs to collect and use the revenues from the area assigned to them. These court officers gradually acquired in the lands assigned to them some of the prerogatives of the crown, on the principle that, in the mind of the peasant, he who collects the taxes is the government. This is not to suggest that the cause of the fragmentation was either the existence of these court officers or the method by which they were rewarded for their services. Their duties kept them too close to the court for that to have been true. What is suggested is that this practice tended to weaken whatever bonds existed between the central government and its feudatory states, so associating the peasants' principal contact with government, the paying of taxes, directly with a government servant acting in his own right.

In a feudal society the centre's control was never strong. In a larger state the very size of the kingdom taken together with the method of assigning tax revenues to the direct payment of court officers necessarily further weakened these bonds. To counteract this tendency, it was advisable for the king to assign a son or a royal collateral²² to superintend the government in the more remote areas. And this, in turn, would suggest quite naturally the lines of future division.

It is suggested here, then, that in a case where a large kingdom was divided by a raja among his sons or collaterals, the reason for the division was not merely to obviate a possible

²² Royal collateral : a descendant of the royal family not in the direct line of succession.

dispute over the throne, but also because the nature of the economy, the system of taxation and discharge of court obligations, as well as the system of administration in use naturally suggested such a division. This division would be more acceptable to a king who was himself extremely capable, but who saw his son and heir to be less able to direct the affairs of such a state.

2. Disputed Succession

The second major cause for political fragmentation in Greater Nepal lay in disputed succession. These disputes could be between the sons of the king, between the heir and a class of nobles, or between the heir and collateral. This seems to have been the cause of the division of the Malla kingdom of Kathmandu Valley, the division of the state of Makwanpur and Bijayapur, as well as the separation of the Kumaon Tarai from Kumaon.

Kathmandu Valley

In the case of Kathmandu Valley, the struggle for power lay between the feudatories on the one hand and the sons of Yaksha Malla on the other. After the death of Yaksha Malla in 1481, the rule of the Valley was exercised co-jointly by his sons and one grandson.²³ However, actual rule in Kathmandu was in the hands of a group of hereditary nobles,²⁴ while in Patan the three principal nobles of the seven leading families exercised rule.²⁵ In theory these nobles were all subject to the over-riding wishes of the sons of Yaksha Malla, but in fact they exercised such wide discretionary powers that they had become *de facto* rulers of these two cities and their dependencies. It was Ratna Malla who disrupted the harmony of collegial rule. In 1484 he suppressed the nobles of Kathmandu and began to rule there personally.²⁶ On his death in 1521,

23 Cf. in particular the inscription found on a small temple in Tachapal Tol in Bhadgaon, published in Dhanbajra Bajracharya, ed *Itihas-Samsodhan Ko Praman-Prameya* (Kathmandu, 2016), i, 138, mul bhag.

24 Cf. especially the inscription of Parthibendra Malla at Pashupati, published in Bajracharya, *Praman-Prameya*, i, 136, mul bhag.

25 *Sadyantakosasara*, written in 1557 B.S. Found in the Kaisar Memorial Library, published in Bajracharya, *Praman-Prameya*, i, 6, mul bhag.

26 Cf. the inscription referred to in note 24 above.

the rule of Kathmandu remained with his descendants. Ratna Malla himself had made an effort to suppress the nobles of Patan also, but in this he failed. Some time after Ratna Malla's death, Bishnu Singh, a noble of Patan, broke away from the collegial rule of Yaksha Malla's sons and established his own independent rule in Patan.²⁷ Thus the Malla kingdom came to be divided into three independent kingdoms. Some time later the town of Banepa also managed to maintain for a short time an independent rule. Benepa and Patan were again in time brought under the control of the Mallas, but the rule was no longer united. The division was made permanent in August 1548, when a solemn gathering of the descendants of the sons of Yaksha Malla met and took an oath to maintain the peace between their respective kingdoms and to respect one another's boundaries.²⁸ It is clear that the division thus effected after the death of Yaksha Malla had proved lasting, and the kingdom was not again united under a single rule until the Gorkhali conquest.

The fact of the division of the Malla kingdom after the death of Yaksha Malla is historically certain, but the causes are not so well defined. They underlie the events indicated in the literary colophons and inscriptions of the day. Petech has summed up the situation that had prevailed in Kathmandu Valley before the division :

The Nepalese monarchy was theoretically absolute and by divine right... In practice the royal power was very much curtailed by the landed aristocracy, who in times of disorder such as about 1180 and between 1310 and 1380, took the law into their own hands made and unmade kings at their will. According to the later *vamsavalis*, during the period between the invasion of Nanyadeva and the arrival of Harisimha, the monarchy was practically in abeyance and Kathmandu was divided between 12 'kings', while Patan had as many 'kings' as there were *tol*. But the colophons speak another language, however divided, however anarchi-

27 According to a copper plate inscription dated Nepal Sambat 666 (1603 B.S.), published in Bajracharya, *Praman-Prameya*, i, 12, mul bhag.

28 An inscription from the Pashupati collection, published as inscription 97 in D.R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, iii, 108-11.

cal, the country (and the scribes with it) always officially recognized a king as the titular head; at the utmost, they could oscillate between two claimants to the throne. The weak monarchy never resolved itself into a feudal confederacy...Of course, beneath the surface and within this last uniting link the aristocracy was all in all.²⁹

The cause of the breakdown of the Malla unity of rule, then, was the power of the aristocracy or feudal lords. Since Patan, Bhadgaon, and eventually Kathmandu developed as separately functioning parts of the same kingdom, these three cities were already favoured to become independent. It was a normal development for the nobles to assume greater power, even failing—when the Malla rulers proved weak—to acknowledge the royal authority. When the reverse was true, and the nobles of Kathmandu were weak, it took but a bold move on the part of a determined man such as Ratna Malla to establish himself in independent power there. When this separatist move was duplicated by a powerful noble of Patan, the division was complete.

The point at issue, of course, was the basic feudal structure of the Malla Society. It has been observed that under the feudal system in vogue in the Malla kingdom the feudatory nobles not only exercised control over the local administration, but also occupied responsible posts at the centre, since it was from this group that the royal ministers were chosen and since the post of minister was usually hereditary. The same author goes on to argue that because the area governed was fairly small in extent, because there were feudatories, and because these feudatories played their role at court, the tendency towards fragmentation was to some extent neutralized.³⁰ This view seems decidedly myopic. There was always a strong tendency towards political fragmentation that required only a favourable set of circumstances to disrupt the apparent unity of the kingdom. The feudatories themselves had tremendous political power, since they enjoyed not only local administrative control in their own territories but also held by hereditary right the positions of ministers to the king. In such a

29 Petech, *Mediaeval History*, pp. 173-4.

30 D. R. Regmi, *Mediaeval Nepal*, i, 490-1.

power structure the king's freedom of action was severely limited at all times, and when the king was weak, his power was nil. Also, given the peculiar structure of the Malla kingdom, with three separate seats of power evolving, it is difficult to find a more convenient stepping stone to political fragmentation.

Since the basis for fragmentation existed for some years prior to the actual event, it can well be asked why this fragmentation did not take place earlier. It seems clear from the fact that it could have taken place earlier and did not, that the mere power of a feudatory did not in itself constitute sufficient reason for fellow feudatories, nobles and people to accept a powerful feudatory as king. It meant something to be of the royal family. Granted this leadership and the nobles' support, whether voluntarily given or exacted by force, a member of the Malla family, in a position to seize power in one of the three cities of the Valley, could establish independent rule. This was true provided, of course, he was sufficiently strong to stave off interference from other members of the family. In the case of Ratna Malla, the collegial rule of his brothers lacked that decision necessary to interfere. In addition to this, the nobles of Kathmandu had for so long defied the authority of the throne that apparently the first reaction of the brothers was satisfaction that he was able to suppress them. Given this advantage, Ratna Malla had little difficulty in completing the work that a refractory and strong nobility had begun.

Makwanpur

The situation in Makwanpur that led to the division of the country was totally different. The simplest way to present this is to quote Hamilton directly, since he is the major source for this information.

Harihar (the raja of Makwanpur) seems to have fallen into a state of dotage, and his three sons by Mahisi rose upon their aged parent, and put him in confinement. In this difficulty he applied to Adanuka, the wife of Chhatrapati, who was one of these unnatural sons, and promised, if she would leave the whole of his kingdom to the child with which she was then pregnant. This lady, who seems

to have possessed great abilities, persuaded her husband and his two brothers to release their father, on condition that the whole kingdom should be divided into four equal shares, one for each brother. The three sons of Mahisi then went and attacked their brother. In order to compel him to agree to this engagement, but they were defeated with great loss, and retreated to Phulwari on the Kamal river, where Adanuka was delivered of a son, whom his grandfather immediately created king of all the territories east from the Kosi, while he left all on the west of that river to his son Subha.³¹

This is a much clearer case of a quarrel breaking out over the right of succession, although it should be noted that the decision to divide the kingdom was made under duress. It is a clear example of the tendency towards political fragmentation.

The Kumaon Tarai

The third case mentioned was the separation of the Kumaon Tarai from Kumaon during the reign of Mohan Chand. Mohan Chand descended from an obscure Raotela family.³² By a combination of intrigue and ruthless conspiracy he had gained the throne. The main obstacles to his removing the rightful king had been Jaikishan Joshi and Harsha Dev Joshi of the powerful Mara faction,³³ who had long been the main support of the crown. In order to betray these two men, Mohan Chand had bribed Nandaram, the Kumaoni dewan in the Tarai, promising to give him the Tarai as his own possession in exchange for his cooperation. When the plot succeeded, Mohan Chand kept his word. But Nandaram, unable to trust this man, gave the whole of the Kumaon Tarai to the nawab of Oudh, from whom he received it as a zamindar of the nawab.³⁴ Thus rivalry for the throne brought about the

³¹ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 137.

³² Raotela Family : Junior members of the Chand house of Kumaon were called Raotelas. Cf. Atkinson, *Himalyan Districts*, ii, 541.

³³ In Kali Kumaon the Mara faction and the Phartyal faction were continually engaged in political intrigue and caused endless difficulties to the successive rulers of these states. According to Atkinson, *Himalayan Districts*, ii, 507, this hostility between the two groups was responsible for the intrusion of the Chands in the tenth century, the downfall of the Chands in the eighteenth century, the defeat of Hearsy in 1815, and the litigation of the Nain Sing case in 1867.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, ii, 598-600.

fragmentation of the kingdom of Kumaon. The case is very much in point, since Mohan Chand, Harsha Dev, and these Tarai lands figured in Amar Singh Thapa's efforts to expand Gorkhali territory in Kumaon in the period of Gorkhali ascendancy.³⁵

3. Migration and Separation

A third major cause of political fragmentation in Greater Nepal lay in the migration of people from one area, either inside or outside of Greater Nepal, to another area in the hill region. The social structure of one of these hill states was a very closely balanced one.³⁶ The advent of a significant number of members of the Brahman or Kshatriya caste into one of them would seriously upset this balance, and tend to produce fragmentation. Of course, the migration of a large number of any one group into a hill state would have much the same effect.

The migration of the Rajputs from Chittor into the hills was the direct cause of the fragmentation of the Malla kingdom of Jumla.³⁷ Though they were relatively few in number, they were of a higher caste, warriors, and of a temperament that quickly gained them the ascendancy in the hill states where they settled. Acting from the many feudal principedoms in the Jumla kingdom, their effect on the kingdom was centrifugal, that is, they strengthened the feudal states and helped them pull free from the centre.³⁸ There was probably no outright attack on the Malla capital at Simja until the process of fragmentation was fairly advanced.

Directly related to this was the fourth cause, the normal desire of feudatories to fight free of the bonds that tied them to their overlord. It was of the nature of the hill kingdoms, that grew by accretion rather than assimilation, that feudatory states would remain such only so long as the strength of the

35 Harsha Dev was one of the chief supporters of the throne of Kumaon. After the Gorkhali conquest he vacillated between the various factions, finally siding with the British against the Gorkhalis in the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814-6.

36 This is clear from the nature of the land tenure throughout the hills in this period. Cf. M.C. Regmi, *Economic History*, Chapter II.

37 Tucci, *Preliminary Report*, p. 130.

38 Centrifugal force: any factor that tends to disrupt the unity of a state.

centre held them in that position.³⁹ When there occurred any significant change in the power structure existing between the overlord and the feudatory, the tendency was for the feudatory state to pull free. The advent of the Rajputs undoubtedly hastened this fragmenting tendency.

It will be seen on reflection that underlying these causes were two difficulties basic to the hill states, the feudatory nature of the administration and their economy. These causes produced political fragmentation because the hill state was essentially vulnerable—there was a ‘mini-state mentality’ in the hill man that was predisposed to fragmentation. This vulnerability, taken together with the geographic isolation of the land and the natural defensive positions the land offered, not only made political fragmentation possible, but rendered it practically inevitable. Thus, regardless of the fluctuations of power in individual hill states, there was a definite trend towards political fragmentation and the emergence of many tiny principalities.

The Failure of Consolidation Efforts

It was inevitable that all efforts at consolidation of petty states into one larger hill state would fail as long as the economy was land-based and a feudal structure was allowed to remain. Since nothing could be done to change the nature of the economy, any state seeking to weld the petty states of the hills into a substantial and enduring kingdom would have to find a solution to the problem of a feudal society. The old system of conquering a neighbouring state, allowing the old nobility to remain in control, and accepting merely an increase in revenues either from direct taxes or by the payment of an annual tribute would have to yield to a more dynamic system of administration before the tendency towards political fragmentation could be overcome.

It is too early in this study to suggest the nature of this ‘dynamic’ element that the Gorkalis eventually introduced into the administration. But from the above analysis, it is clear that certain fundamental pitfalls would have to be avoided in that administration; sons and relatives were not to be made petty or feudal lords; the law of primogeniture must be strictly adhered

³⁹ Growth by assimilation : growth by a true union of two states.

Growth by accretion : growth by accepting subsidiary status as a feudatory, or imposing sovereignty on feudatories.

to; there must be a tight control over migration and new sources of strength must be absorbed into the dynamism of the administration; and the centrifugal tendency inherent in the economy must be opposed by a strong central administration.

B. THE POWER OF THE HILL RAJAS

The existence of these petty principalities was ultimately contingent upon the ability of their individual rajas to defend the state against aggression and to control the administration of the state itself. The raja's strength was derived from a combination of cultural, political, and economic factors, each of which contributed to his hold over his people and the forces he could marshal in defence of his boundaries and prerogatives.

The philosophical basis for the kingship in any community is directly related to the cultural background of the people of that community.⁴⁰ In the hill states, where there was a very rich and diversified cultural background, it would be difficult to give a clear concept of the philosophy of kingship in each section of the country were it not for the fact that the ruling class of most of the hill states had been subjected to a process of sanskritization,⁴¹ as a result of which the ruling class throughout most of Greater Nepal were Hindu.⁴² Without digressing on the subject of Hindu polity, it will suffice here to say that in such a society it was not only the king's right to rule, to enforce law, and to punish transgressions, it was his religious duty to do so. In brief, his power was the power of the *danda*.

40 C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, et al, *The Cultural Heritage of India* (Calcutta, 1962), ii, 493. Also Mortimer Adler, ed., *The Great Ideas* (Chicago, 1952), i, 639b.

41 Sanskritization: a term first applied by Srinivas to indicate the upward mobility of a caste in the social scale of a region. M.N. Srinivas, 'Caste Principles in a Kandyian Community', *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon, and North-West Pakistan*, ed. E.R. Leach (Cambridge, (1960), p. 613. Sir Denzil Charles Jelf Ibbetson, *Report on the Punjab Census of 1881* (Calcutta, 1883), p. 174, describes how, given increased political and economic importance, a caste may increase its 'social standing' through the observance of what he calls 'the artificial standards of Brahmanical Hinduism (i.e. the rules of ritual avoidance)'. For further comment on this process in Nepal, cf. Colin Rosser, 'The Newar Caste System.' *Caste and Kin in Nepal, India, and Ceylon*, ed. Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf (Bombay, 1966), pp. 69-70.

42 Hamilton, *Nepal*, pp. 18 and 52.

Political Power

The power of the *danda* explains the philosophic basis for the raja's power. However, in the realm of daily life, power must have a more tangible basis. For the hill states this basis was land. In a society where life, wealth and prestige are intimately bound up in the land, ownership of the land is the ultimate expression of power. And in the hills the general maxim was : the land is the prerogative of the crown. The possible origins of this principle in the hill states have been discussed in Chapter One. At this point it is the political aspect, not the economic aspect, of this principle that must be considered.⁴³

To put the political aspect of land control in the clearest possible focus, the land was life; the land was security; the land was wealth and prestige. And the land was the raja's. The raja, therefore, controlled life; he controlled security; he controlled wealth and prestige. And therefore he controlled his people.

This proposition deserves elaboration. It is based entirely on the economic situation described in Chapter One. Ultimate ownership of the land was vested in the crown. This ownership did not of course, extend to those who farmed the land. The peasant was not a serf bound to any particular locality, but remained free to migrate or not, to till the soil or not. However, if the peasant opted to till the soil—and in an agricultural society this option was the obvious one—his rights to the land he farmed were limited to tenancy rights, contingent on his regular payment of taxes. The land itself remained the property of the crown. Furthermore, just as the peasant was not obliged to remain on the land, so the raja was under no obligation to keep him on the land, but could evict him at will. Thus the peasant's tenure was as much dependent on his obedience to the raja as it was on his payment of taxes. In an atmosphere in which the peasant protected his rights by constant vigilance and warded off the dissatisfaction of the lowest government official by occasional gifts and unpaid services, one can imagine the

⁴³ The interweaving of politics and economics in the historical development of a country is at times difficult to assess and makes it necessary to study the same idea from several distinct points of view. Failure to recognize this factor has been one of the major weaknesses in the analysis of the history of Nepal in the past.

electrifying effect of a royal decree in the village. As far as the peasant was concerned, the raja's ownership of the land gave him the ultimate political mandate.⁴⁴

The noble was no less vulnerable to the royal will. His title to nobility rested on his control of a section of land given him by the crown in reward for the exercise of his talents in the service of the crown, his jagir. This jagir of its very nature was temporary and would cease as soon as his services were no longer required by the crown or when he acted against the raja's will. The noble's title to the land, as has been mentioned, was richer than that of the peasant. But, like the peasant, his title did not extend to the soil itself,⁴⁵ and it was contingent on his faithful performance of the raja's will in his daily work. Hence he was bound to the raja much more closely than was the peasant.

In the light of these political implications of the principle of land tenure enunciated in the expression : the land belonged to the crown, it seems that the power of the raja extended far beyond the power of the *danda*. The king not only had the duty to make laws, enforce them, and punish transgressions, he also had the irresistible power to exact absolute obedience. And this power could be exercised with a very limited show of force.

In addition to the political power which control of the land assured him, the raja could call upon the labour of his peasants to build up his defences and help work his lands. This compulsory, unpaid labour, or *jhara*,⁴⁶ which was briefly described above, played an important role in the day to day conduct of the business of the kingdom. But it was a source of added strength in time of war. Through it the raja could impress

⁴⁴ M. C. Regmi, *Economic History*, Chapter II.

⁴⁵ M. C. Regmi, *Land Tenure* iii, 15, says : 'In other words, while Birta constituted a form of private property, Jagir was a temporary assignment intended to compensate the jagirdar for the specific services rendered by him, and terminable at the discretion of the government. No alienation of its ownership rights in the land by the State was involved in Jagir.'

⁴⁶ 'Compulsory labour was exacted in at least three forms : Jhara, Beth, and Begar. Jhara meant the requisition of labourers from each family in the village for a certain number of days for public purposes. Beth, or Bethi, meant the exaction of unpaid labour on a customary basis, while Begar denoted the requisition of casual labourers for emergency requirements.' *Ibid.*, iii, 53. Throughout this study the term *jhara* is used as a blanket term for all forms of compulsory and unpaid labour.

every able-bodied man in the kingdom into his service. Though his professional army was made up of the military castes, the raja could, through jhara, use anyone for military service.⁴⁷ Jhara also provided him with porterage services to move military supplies as well as labour to produce weapons and runners to carry messages.⁴⁸ While the land tenure policies assured him of obedience from his tenants, the custom of exacting jhara permitted him to call upon the total strength of all his peasants, whether they were tenants on the land or not.

However, it must not be thought that the raja's power in these respects was unlimited. It was limited simply because there is a limit to human endurance. If the raja's exactions in terms of jhara went too far, his peasants left him and migrated to some place more favourable to life and work.⁴⁹ This was a radical step for peasants to take, but if conditions in their homes made it necessary, they took it. Later records are eloquent in their testimony to such peasant reactions, and for this to happen was a calamity to the crown.⁵⁰ When it was said

⁴⁷ See Prithvinarayan Shah's letter to Ram Krishna Kunwar, dated 5 Magh 1819 (January, 1763), advising him of the measures to be taken against Mir Kasim during the latter's invasion of Nepal; ordering him to press all those in his authority into jhara service and gather them together to be prepared to move when Prithvinarayan Shah gave the order. Samsodhan Mandal, *Prithvinarayan Shah*, iii, 986.

⁴⁸ See Prithvinarayan Shah's letter to the Dwares of Palanchowk, dated 1831 B. S., Jyestha, sudi 13 (April, 1774). *Ibid.*, iii, 1181.

⁴⁹ Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepaul*, p. 65, says of this: 'Chitlang, called also Lohari, or little Nepaul, stands near the bank of the same stream that passes below Markhoo and Tambeh-kan; it contains a few brick and tiled houses of two and three stories, but is on the whole an inconsiderable place, though certainly the first station having any appearance of a town... It is said to have been formerly more extensive and flourishing than it is at the present, and its decline was accounted for to me by observing that its inhabitants to be pressed as porters by the officers of government and other persons of authority passing through it, had occasioned the greatest part of them to fly from this oppression into the interior parts of the country. There can be little room to doubt this account, when it is considered that the same thing happens under many other governments, which have not the will or the power to protect the labouring classes of the people from the violence of the superior orders.'

⁵⁰ These documents usually take the form of an admonition to local administrators not to harass the people by the excessive imposition of such services. Cf. the following order issued in 1790: 'Peasants are being greatly harassed by the imposition of compulsory and unpaid services ... so that they cannot even cultivate their lands properly. Accordingly, from 1790, we exempt them from porterage and other services...except on fair wages.' Quoted in M. C. Regmi, *Land Tenure*, iii, 58-9.

that land was life and wealth and prestige, this was something of a half-truth. To be these things, the land had to be worked, and this required peasants who were sufficiently satisfied with their lot to remain and work the fields. The very importance of land in an agricultural society gave a special dignity and importance to those who worked it. And this in turn imposed definite limitations on the powers of the raja.

Economic Power

The economic strength of the hill raja depended on several considerations. The first of these was the size of the state and the natural resources it contained. It is a simple matter of arithmetic that the more land the raja controlled, the greater his income. Of course, the quality of the land in his kingdom had to be considered, as did the number of peasants he had to till the land. But as a general rule it could be said that the larger the state, the greater its economic power. If his territories included mines—and many of the hill states did—this was an added value. Such mines were small, but they yielded a steady income to the crown.

Those states fortunate enough to control important trade routes were able to add very substantially to their revenues by levying customs duties on the merchandise that was brought into their country or that merchants took through their territories to other markets. While trade in the hills was not usually important, in some cases it proved a source of considerable income.

One of the most important sources of wealth for the hill rajas, however, lay in the fertile lands of the Tarai. Many of the hill rajas were in a position where they could control sections of this rich land. As a rule, rents were lower in the Tarai, but the crops were richer, and usually more than one crop a year could be grown, so that the income was higher. Hamilton and Prinsep both mention the fact that the hill rajas controlled the Tarai for a distance of about twenty miles from the foothills. Hamilton further states that :

Before the conquest by the Nepalese, the petty Rajas, who governed the different portions [of the Tarai], were so much afraid of their neighbours, that they did not promote the

cultivation of this low land. They rather encouraged extensive woods and contented themselves, in great measure, with the produce of the forests in timber, elephants, and pasture; even then, however, many rich spots were occupied and very productive, but they were so buried in the forests as to be little observable.⁵¹

The most voluminous item of export from the Tarai was rice, 'of which 2,00,000 maunds and upwards entered the Gorakhpur district in a single year'.⁵² Taking this figure alone, and leaving aside the rice that was consumed by the people locally and not exported, the tax from this land would amount to over sixty-six thousand maunds of rice a year. The actual tax, including other crops in addition to paddy must have been much higher and must have formed a very important source of revenue to the hill rajas who were fortunate enough to control a sizable portion of the Tarai.

The economic position of the various hill rajas has a direct bearing on the question of the unification of the country. The wealth of these hill states constituted the prize that made the effort of conquest worthwhile. More important from the point of view of the hill states, the wealth of a state had a direct bearing on the military power of the state. This was true for two basic reasons. First, since the military establishment was directly supported by the grant of lands in most states, the availability of land for this purpose and the richness of the income from such land acted as a direct limit to the military power of the state.⁵³ Put as a formula, the greater the land revenues that could be assigned to the military, the stronger the army that could be assembled. Secondly, the advent of the musket into hill warfare proved an important factor in the process of unification. Muskets, however, were both expensive to buy and to use.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 64.

⁵² H. R. Nevill, ed., *District Gazetteer of U. P. : Gorakhpur District* (Gorakhpur, 1911), XXXI, 78-9.

⁵³ It should be noted, however, that in the Baisi Rajas the raja collected the revenue and then paid his military establishment, whereas in the rest of Greater Nepal the military establishment was supported by direct land grants. Cf. Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 112.

⁵⁴ Baburam Acharya has given the price of a musket at the time of Prithvinarayan Shah as sixty rupees. Gold at that time sold for sixteen to eighteen rupees a tola.

To equip an army with them required a large military budget, and this was intimately connected with the wealth of a state.

One further limit to the military power of the hill states must be mentioned here. Since these hill states were agricultural societies, there was a practical limit to the number of men who could be removed from the land for extended military service. In general the land-man ratio was low. To remove men indiscriminately from the land was to risk allowing farm land to revert to waste land. This would reduce the economic productivity of the state and affect all of the state's functions, including the military establishment. This also had to be taken into consideration when planning a war. How many men could a state risk losing in battle without seriously endangering its economy? All of these considerations were important in inverse proportion to the size of the state. The smaller the state, the more important they became, and in view of the tiny political units that existed in the hills, these questions became very important indeed.

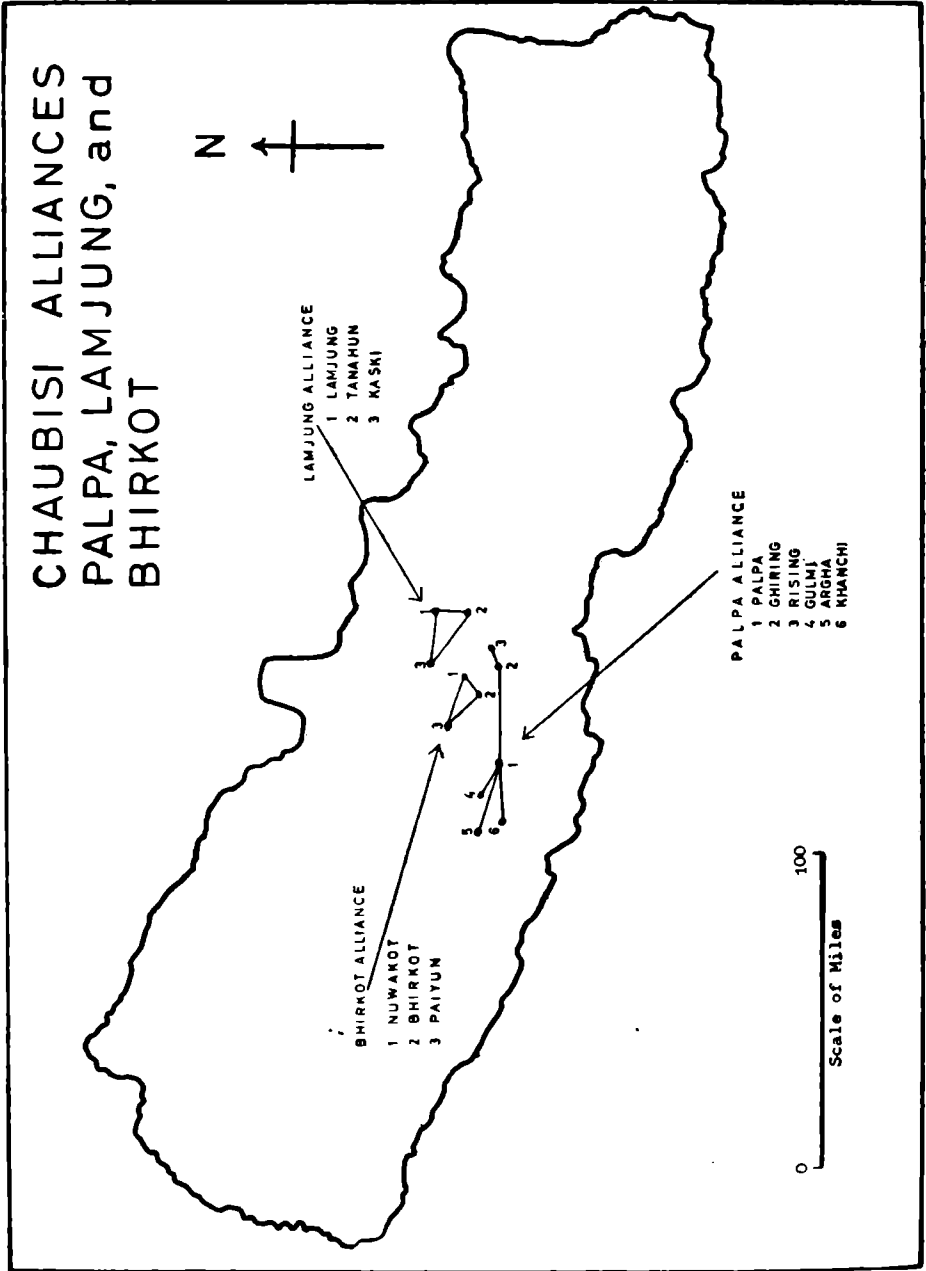
C. ALLIANCES

Since the area of Greater Nepal was divided into so many mini-states, the question of alliances assumes a considerable importance. No state in the Himalayan area seems to have been completely satisfied with its lot in terms of location, mines, trade, etc. There was a continual shifting of boundaries to take advantage of the presence of a weaker ruler on the throne of a neighbouring kingdom or a shift in the balance of power.⁵⁵ Frequently aid had to be enlisted from friendly rajas to achieve this, and it seems to have been a regular feature of hill life that such aid was given for a price.⁵⁶

The various types of alliances found in the hill states were : political alliances, marriage alliances, and family alliances. Of the political alliances were by far the most important. Sometimes these political alliances included one or more mem-

⁵⁵ Cf. a letter to this effect from Narbhupal Shah to the raja of Lamjung, published in Samsodhan Mandal, *Prithvinarayan Shah*, iii, 929.

⁵⁶ Gautambajra Bajracharya, 'Thyasaphuko Aitihāsik Vyakhya', *Purnima*, No. 13, pp. 15-6.



bers of a family alliance (the Jajarkot alliance included Gulmi, Khanchi, and Argha, which were collateral branches of the same family), but more often they did not.

Hamilton lists five of these political alliances, though there may have been more.⁵⁷ Since several of these alliances will feature prominently in the discussion of Gorkhali expansion in later chapters, a word or two should be said about them here.

The most important of these alliances was the Palpa Alliance. It consisted of Palpa, Jajarkot, Rising, Ghiring, Argha, Khanchi, and Gulmi.⁵⁸ The Palpa Alliance controlled the southern part of the Mahabharat Lekh and large sections of fertile Tarai land, stretching some seventy-five miles from east to west and more than twenty miles to the south of the Siwalik Hills. There were important trade marts in some of the states that comprised this alliance, and several mines of copper, iron, zinc, and cinnabar. Palpa itself enjoyed excellent relations with the nawab of Oudh, and this was one of the greatest sources of strength of this kingdom and the alliance which it headed.⁵⁹ This alliance, more than any other in the hills, threatened to block the advance of the Gorkhalis to the west, and only the astuteness of Bahadur Shah and the perfidy of Palpa permitted the Gorkhalis to penetrate this strong cluster of states.⁶⁰

A second important alliance was the Lamjung Alliance, consisting of Lamjung, Kaski, and Tanahun.⁶¹ This alliance controlled the territory west of Gorkha along the southern slopes of the Great Himalaya as far west as the Kali Gandaki. Tanahun had a subsidiary alliance with Dhor, and Kaski with Satahun. The economic base of the Lamjung Alliance was

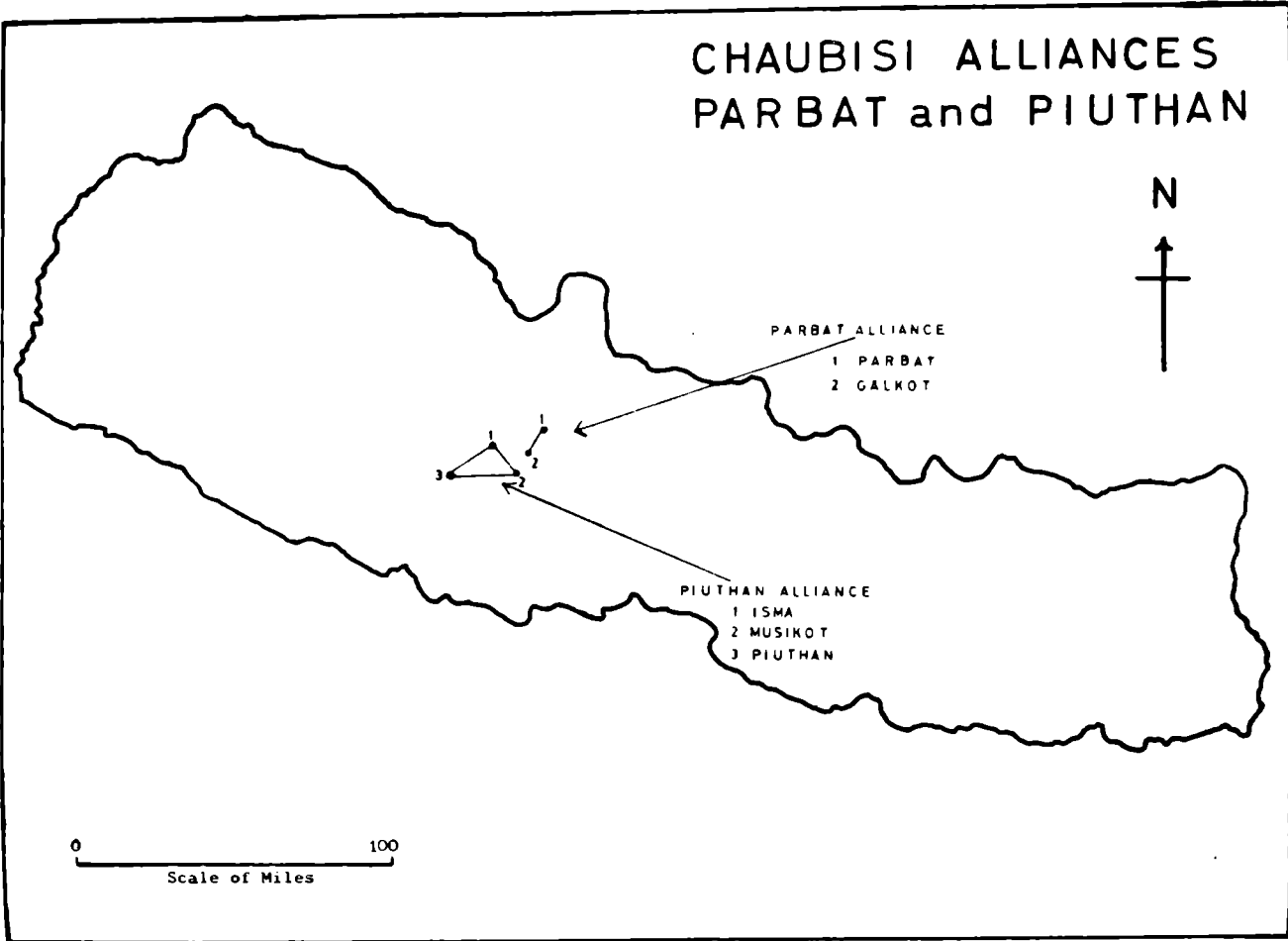
⁵⁷ Hamilton is the major source of our knowledge of these alliances. No other document gives such detailed data as does his report, nor, from the very nature of the political fragmentation of the hills, could this be expected in government documents of the times. The reader is referred once again to Hamilton's credentials for this treatment. They are listed in Note Two at the end of the first chapter of this study, pp. 29-30.

⁵⁸ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 239.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 172-3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* Also Baburam Acharya, *Nepal Ko Samkshipta Brittant* (Kathmandu, 2022 B. S.), p. 92. However, Baburam's conclusions about the nature of the bond between Kathmandu and Palpa at this time are gratuitous.

⁶¹ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 239.



considerably weaker than that of the Palpa Alliance, but it did derive some profits from the mines situated in some of the states and from the transit trade that used the Larke Pass for the Tibet trade.⁶²

The Bhirkot Alliance controlled the sector of the hills to the west and south of the Lamjung Alliance. It was one of the weaker alliances, and had no significant economic base. Its strength was derived primarily from its position in the hills. It consisted of the Bhirkot, Nuwakot (western), Paiyun, and Garahun.⁶³

Malebum, or Parbat, had an alliance with Galkot. Parbat was an especially strong state, controlling a large section of the southern slopes of the Great Himalaya to the west of the Kali.⁶⁴ It proved to be one of the most persistent enemies of Gorkha.

The fifth and last major alliance was the Piuthan Alliance. It consisted of Piuthan, Musikot, Isma, Khungri, and Bhingri.⁶⁵ It controlled the hills to the west of the Palpa Alliance's territory and was well situated for controlling sections of the Tarai.⁶⁶

These five alliances were alliances of convenience. They were dictated solely by mutual self-interest, the members assisting one another in the defence of their countries, and occasionally sharing in some raid on a weaker neighbour. Considering the positions they held in the hills and the routes that they controlled, it is quite easy to see why their defensive strength would be far greater than their ability to strike at an outlying state.

This last point is one that is well worth emphasizing. Each of these states in central Nepal had strong natural defences. But taken in defensive groups, as Hamilton listed them, they became even stronger defensive blocks, with great control over the trails and routes. It is difficult to see how an enemy equipped with no better weapons than these states themselves

⁶² Larke Pass : Thapa, *Geography*, p. 10, says of this : 'This pass lies in Larke Himal in the district of Gorkha. Its height is 17,102. ft. The Larke village is situated on the east of this pass.'

⁶³ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 239.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁶⁶ Cf. Figure 4.

possessed could possibly penetrate and subdue any one of these alliances without a lavish expenditure in men and material. But this, of course, was the task that confronted Gorkha.

Farther to the west there were no such strong defensive alliances. The western kingdoms recognized the suzerainty of Jumla, as did many of the Chaubisi as well.⁶⁷ But this recognition was a mere formality, a reminder of the earlier supremacy of Jumla. According to Hamilton, the role of Jumla had been reduced to the point where its sole authority was to exhort the various princes of the Baisi and Chaubisi who recognized his suzerainty to maintain their tenuous balance of power, and to confer the royal *tika* on the heir to the throne of each state. He received from each of the rajas an annual embassy with a small gift.⁶⁸

Marriage Alliances

Second in importance among the types of alliances used among the hill rajas were the marriage alliances. These alliances contracted between the ruling family of one state and the ruling family of another had three basic purposes: an increase of wealth through the dowry that was given, an increase in prestige by marrying a daughter or son into a family which was considered to be important in hill society, and to secure the friendship of a strong king and thereby secure immunity from attack and possible assistance in the execution of projects of a military nature. Of course, the same marriage could provide two of these objectives, depending on whether the marriage was looked at from the point of view of the girl's family or the boy's.

In general these objectives are no different from those that have influenced marriages of convenience in the history of any country or any family of means. Perhaps the most successful of such marriages in the history of Nepal was that of Bahadur Shah, the second son of Prithvinarayan Shah. He and Mahadutta Sen of Palpa cemented their alliance through the marriage of Bahadur Shah with the princess of Palpa.⁶⁹ On the strength

⁶⁷ Tucci, *Preliminary Report*, p. 130.

⁶⁸ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 239.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 173-4.

of this alliance and marriage, Bahadur Shah was able to break the Palpa Alliance, conquer the Chaubisi Rajas and carry the Gorkhali conquests to Kumaon in a matter of a few years.

Normally marriage alliances gave no assurance in themselves of assistance in any campaign nor of immunity from attack at the hand of the family with whom the marriage alliance was contracted. In an age which recognized the right of a man to marry more than once, it is clear that to find suitable brides a raja would have to contract marriage alliances with several families to satisfy his desires and to marry someone on his own social level. This was true of Gorkha, and it must have been equally true of all of the hill states. The result was a vast network of such alliances. Narbhupal Shah of Gorkha married four times, the first with the princess of Khanchi, the second with the princess of Palpa, the third with the niece of the raja of Parbat, and the fourth with the princess of Tanahun.⁷⁰ In other words, he had two marriages into the Palpa Alliance, one marriage into the Lamjung Alliance, and one marriage into the Parbat Alliance. Yet within a relatively few years and despite the marriage alliances, all of these kingdoms were brought under the control of Gorkha. The general history of conflict among the hill states, taken with the fact of frequent intermarriage between the ruling families of individual states, indicates that there must have been little confidence in the strength of a marriage alliance to guarantee immunity, except perhaps in the first few years after the marriage was contracted.

Family Alliances

Family alliances were commonplace among the hill states. By family alliance is meant that union which is the natural result of collateral branches of the same family ruling in different hill states. Hamilton mentions three such families that had assumed considerable importance in Greater Nepal : the Sen family,⁷¹ the Shah family of Gorkha,⁷² and the Gulmi

⁷⁰ Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, i, 92-3.

⁷¹ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 170.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 240.

family—also Shah.⁷³ The Sen family ruled in Palpa, Butwal, Tanahun, Rising, Makwanpur, Rajpur, Bijayapur, and Chaudandi. The spread of this family through so many separate kingdoms was the direct result of political fragmentation of the Makwanpur kingdom that had been built up through several generations and reached its greatest expansion in the time of Mukunda Sen I.

The Shah family had collateral branches in Nuwakot (western), Kaski, Lamjung, Satahun, and Gorkha.⁷⁴ These various collateral branches were established not by the fragmentation of one large Shah kingdom, but by occupying the thrones of existing states, either because they were invited to do so, or because an individual member of the family conquered the state and ruled it in his own name.⁷⁵

The Gulmi family ruled in Gulmi, Khanchi, Argha, Musikot, Dhurkot, and Isma. Hamilton gives no indication as to how this family succeeded in gaining control over these various states. Apparently the process was similar to that followed by the Shahs of Gorkha. The Gulmi family was also known as Shah, but there seems to have been no family connection between the Shahs of Gorkha and the Shahs of Gulmi.⁷⁶

These family alliances had no direct bearing on the political or economic independence of the members of the alliance.⁷⁷ Because of the nature of their independence, resulting from political fragmentation, as in the case of the Sens, or on the acquiring of political control of existing states, as in the case of the Shahs of Gorkha and perhaps of Gulmi, there was often strong enmity between the various members of the family alliance. For instance, Lamjung and Gorkha were constantly at odds, and one study says that eleven wars were fought between these two

⁷³ Ibid., p. 265.

⁷⁴ Cf. Note Five at the end of this chapter, p. 72-3.

⁷⁵ Hamilton, *Nepal*, pp. 243-4. Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, i, 3, setting aside all available accounts asserts that Drabya Shah established the kingdom of Gorkha out of whole cloth, as it were. Granted the serious lacunae in existing knowledge about the establishment of the Shah dynasty at Gorkha, there can be no justification for putting forward an entirely new theory without offering the slightest proof for its validity.

⁷⁶ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 263.

⁷⁷ Cf., the frequent battles between Lamjung and Gorkha, as well as those between Isma and Musikot.

states in the space of nine years.⁷⁸ Hamilton points out that the rajas of Isma waged a constant war with their kinsmen of Musikot.⁷⁹

If one compares the three family alliances mentioned here with the political alliances mentioned above, it will be clear that the political alliances, which were the result of diplomacy, rarely coincided with the family alliances, which were historical accidents.

Thus, though the individual hill states were very small, they nourished definite military ambitions which were directly related to their economy, such as improved trade positions, better defensive positions, and the control of mines or especially fertile farm lands. To achieve these objectives, the aid of other states was regularly sought and obtained at a price. As a defence against such encroachments and military action, groups of hill states banded together into fixed alliances, which were basically defensive. Marriage alliances were also contracted, with a view to improving the raja's position in terms of wealth or prestige, but these alliances rarely secured either immunity from attack or assistance against an enemy. Family alliances, because they were frequently the result of the political fragmentation of a state or the seizure by a discontented royal collateral of a neighbouring state as his own domain, not only failed to become a source of strength to the family, but often developed into areas of friction between collaterals of the same family.

D. THE RAJPUT KINGS

One of the most important developments in the history of Greater Nepal occurred in the fourteenth century. During this period a number of Rajputs moved into the land, seeking a refuge after their heroic defence and later flight from Chittor.⁸⁰ This movement has often been called a migration of Rajputs, but perhaps *infiltration* would be a more apt expression. While the total number of Rajputs who moved into Greater Nepal may have been large, there is no reason to

⁷⁸ D. R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal* (Calcutta, 1961), p. 23.

⁷⁹ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 268.

⁸⁰ Tucci, *Discovery of the Malla*, pp. 65-6.

believe that these men came all at one time or that they even came in large groups. The fact that they were easily absorbed into existing structures rather indicates that they infiltrated gradually in small groups.

The problem of finding records to document this Rajput infiltration is understandable. In the very sketchy accounts that are extant of even the most important occurrences of that day, there would obviously be little concern shown for the arrival of small groups of refugees, even though they were men of high standing and warriors. Hamilton, writing over one hundred and fifty years ago, found it almost impossible to get information on this, and what information he did receive was contradictory. He was reduced to the expediency of giving the opinions of his various informants, without drawing any definite conclusion as to what actually took place during the period of Rajput infiltration.⁸¹ Without entering into the popular but historically sterile question of which families in Greater Nepal, if any, were spurious, i.e., who claimed Rajput descent without being truly Rajputs, an assessment must be made of the impact of the Rajputs on the history of this period. And this assessment must be carried out despite large lacunae in the body of knowledge about these Rajputs that has come down to modern times.

It is generally agreed that the area where the Rajputs had their greatest impact was in the region of the Chaubisi and the Baisi Rajas. According to Hamilton they gained control of the principalities where they settled through a three-step programme:⁸²

1. They were welcomed into a principality because of their talents and rank.
2. They made themselves indispensable in the affairs of the principedom.
3. They deposed the ruler, or disposed of him, and took the reins of government to themselves.⁸³

⁸¹ Cf. Note Six at the end of this chapter for a statement of the various views presented to Hamilton, p. 73-4.

⁸² Hamilton, *Nepal*, pp. 12-3.

⁸³ Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, i, 47, opines that these principedoms were established without the shedding of blood. One wonders if this insistence on removing all indications of violence from the early history of Gorkha and the Rajput states in general does not reveal a fundamental bias in his work.

The arrival of the Rajputs caused some considerable disturbance in the balance of power, to be sure, but given the feudal nature of society, the shift was rarely more than that from the position of a semi-autonomous to that of an autonomous principality. Their arrival also caused more than a ripple in the religious consciousness of the people of the area where they were able to settle, and the period of Rajput emergence was characterized by progressive sanskritization.⁸⁴ It was, after all, hardly to be expected that men who had lost a kingdom because of the strength of their religious beliefs would become overly tolerant of other beliefs merely because they had opted to settle in a new land.

More important to the development of this study was the nature of the government the Rajputs established. Of this Hamilton observed :

The management of affairs in all the petty states was in many points the same, and differed chiefly in the names applied to similar officers, and in the nature of the military establishment in the two countries to the east and west of the river Kali...in other points, such as the names of officers and the form of government, the eastern parts followed more closely the ancient Hindu system, while the western more fully imitated the Muhammedans.⁸⁵

In view of this statement, it seems possible to generalize on the government of the Rajput states from the abundant material available on the Sen state of Makwanpur, and thus arrive at some general conclusions about the nature of Rajput rule in the hills.⁸⁶

In Makwanpur the raja appears to have shown little active concern in the day-to-day management of the government. He was surrounded by Rajputs and Khas who were completely devoted to him and his family. His major concern appears to have been the relations of his state with his neighbours.

⁸⁴ This is a gradual process, and still carries on in Nepal. Cf. Rosser, 'Newars', pp. 69 ff.

⁸⁵ Hamilton, *Nepal*, pp. 101-2.

⁸⁶ The generalization used here is somewhat daring. It is not, however, without foundation. Undoubtedly it would be reassuring to have further documentation on this point. Such documentation does not exist, however, or at least it has not yet been brought to light. In the absence of such material it seems to be desirable to use the sources available, allowing room for future correction, if necessary.

The chautariya had as his task the signing of all commissions and orders. In some states the chautariya was a royal collateral, but in Makwanpur, and perhaps in other states as well, the chautariya was a local noble, and the office remained hereditary within the same family.

The most active person in the management of the affairs of government was the kazi, whose main task was the day-to-day management of the business of the state. This post was not hereditary, and to it the raja could appoint anyone he pleased, Rajput or local noble.

The dewan in Makwanpur had the charge of collecting the land revenue. This post was hereditary and was also one of the most lucrative and influential in government.

The chautariya, kazi, and dewan formed the king's council, which was expected to advise him in the direction of the state's policy.

The regular military force was formed of an inner circle of Rajput and Khas soldiers and a much larger force of Kirat soldiers. The Rajputs and Khas resided near the raja, and formed an elite corps in the army. They were paid in cash. The regular army of Kirats was placed under the command of sardars. No fixed number of troops was assigned to any one command, the number being determined by the task assigned to the sardar and his ability as a commander. Sardars could be changed at the will of the raja, and the sardar in turn could appoint new soldiers or remove old ones according to need and his own pleasure. The Kirat army was paid through the jagir system with a section of land being assigned to the sardar to be divided among his troops, with one share reserved for himself. He received no revenue from the land of his troops, though they were expected to give him presents from time to time. When called upon by the raja, the sardar was expected to take the field with the number of men authorized to his command. While in the field the troops were given subsistence in addition to the fields that had been assigned to their maintenance. As a regular feature of their service a certain number of these troops were assigned duty on a rotation basis at the residence of the raja.

In the hills outside the capital the charge of revenue collection and the police were entrusted to an officer called a subba.

The role of the subba was apparently two-fold. As regards the collection of the revenue he was under the dewan, while for military and police matters he was subordinate to the sardar. In his revenue collecting functions he was assisted by zamindars, who received a grant of land as remuneration for their work and in addition were entitled to farm as much of the waste land as they wished without the payment of any added tax. When they were called on by the raja, they were expected to provide a certain number of irregular militia.

This administrative structure has certain features that are proper to Makwanpur, but from Hamilton's statement quoted earlier it seems that, given the necessary changes in terminology and custom, the same structure could be found in most of the Rajput states. It seems, then, that the following generalizations can be made :

The Rajputs apparently introduced no significant changes in the revenue structure of the state. The peasants held their land on tenure basis and paid revenues amounting to one-half of their harvest. The local administration was divided equally between the military and the revenue collecting agencies, and evidently the local representatives were employed in these functions.

The main military strength of the hill state lay in the local soldiers, who were supported by their jagir system. The officer corps at the higher level was composed of Rajputs, but the liaison between these officers and the main military force was entrusted to a sardar taken from the local troops.

Certain of the principal officers of the central government were also local people, whose knowledge of local customs and the land tenure problems of the area made them indispensable. In these states where the chautariya was not a royal collateral but a local representative holding the office on an hereditary basis, much of the regular task of government was also borne by one of the local population.

In many of the hill states the Rajput raja and his immediate followers were apparently not deeply involved in the details of government, and allowed the local governmental structures to carry on much as they had before the emergence of the Rajputs as a ruling class. The raja's main concern seems to have been

his position *vis-a-vis* the other principalities in his neighbourhood and the expansion or defence of his personal prerogatives. The heavy emphasis on the military in Hamilton's account seems to indicate this. Further support for this conclusion can be derived from the fact that agricultural societies are extremely conservative and do not readily accept changes in their traditional structures, and from the added fact that the Rajputs, being a very small minority at the time of their accession, would introduce no changes in the administrative structure that were not absolutely necessary, since this would weld other elements of society into common opposition against them.

Because of the nature of the administrative structures described above, there was a clear and marked cleavage between the peasants and their Rajput rulers.⁸⁷ The actual strength of each of these hill states, then, must be measured not only in terms of the economic and defensive position the state occupied, but also in terms of the ability of the raja to bridge this gap between his administration and the peasants of his state. To carry out such an assignment was a function of leadership that was all the more important in view of the fact that the normal tensions of the state militated against this. The ranking officers of the local population would naturally tend to resent too close an interference in the affairs of their office and would consider indifference on the part of the ruling Rajputs to be a blessing. The preoccupation of the Rajputs with military and 'foreign' affairs would draw them away from the much less interesting but vitally important problems of revenue, reform, and justice involved in the daily routine activities of government.

Government of this type also invited indifference on the part of the peasants. As long as they were left in the peaceful tenure of the land, and as long as the jhara impositions were within reasons, they remained passive to the new government and indifferent to its development and expansion. When

⁸⁷ This gap between the Rajput rulers and their peasants is a deduction based on the arguments given throughout this analysis of the political situation maintaining in Greater Nepal in the mid-eighteenth century. Naturally, this gap varied in different states. But the existence of such a separation of rulers and people in the Rajput states of Nepal seems well-founded. This point has special significance for the development of this study.

conditions became too difficult for them, they decamped and resettled in another area where the conditions, though exacting, proved less unreasonable. This possibility of causing depopulation of the land by overly stringent impositions acted as a brake on the raja's demands and kept the living conditions throughout the hills relatively uniform, given the essential variations based on soil fertility and trade routes.

However, this combined indifference on the part of the ruling class towards the peasants and the passivity of the peasants towards their ruler acted as a barrier to any notable expansion of a state or move towards greater unification. In all the hill states this gap between peasants and rulers proved to be an internal check on the development of the state's political aspirations. Bridging this gap called for qualities of leadership and a more than average concern for the affairs of the peasant population. To overcome this inherent lethargy of the state the raja had to enlist the full energies of the peasant class, and this required him to translate into terms that were understandable and acceptable to them the goals that he envisioned for the state, the attainment of which would impose heavy burdens on the entire population. The history of this period, during which political fragmentation rather than unification was the rule, is the story of the almost universal failure of the Rajput rulers to achieve this level of leadership.

NOTE ONE : COMPARATIVE LIST OF THE CHAUBISI RAJAS*

<i>Nepalese Chronic e^a</i>	<i>Kirkpatrick</i>	<i>Hamilton</i>	<i>Vansittart</i>	<i>Oldfield</i>	<i>Nepalese Chronicle^b</i>
Lamjung	Lamjung	Lamjung	Lamjung	Lamjung	Lamjung
Kaski	Kaski	Kaski	Kaski	Kaski	Kaski
Galkot	Galkot	Galkot	Galkot	Galkot	Galkot
Rising	Rising	Rising	Rising	Rising	Rising
Ghiring	Ghiring	Ghiring	Ghiring	Ghiring	Ghiring
Palpa	Palpa	Palpa	Palpa	Palpa	Palpa
Musikot	Musikot	Musikot	Musikot	Musikot	Musikot
Isma	Isma	Isma	Isma	Isma	Isma
Tanahun	Tanahun	Tanahun	Tanahun	—	Tanahun
—	Gulmi	Gulmi	Gulmi	Gulmi	Gulmi
Khanchi	Khanchi	Khanchi	—	Khanchi	Khanchi
Satahun	—	Satahun	Satahun	Satahun	Satahun
Dhor	Dhor	Dhor	—	Dhor	Dhor
Parbat	Parbat	Parbat	Parbat	Parbat	—
Bhirkot	Bhirkot	Bhirkot	Bhirkot	Bhirkot	—
Nuwakot	Nuwakot	Nuwakot	Nuwakot	—	Nuwakot
Paiyun	Paiyun	—	—	Paiyun	Paiyun
Argha	—	Argha	Argha	—	Argha
Garehun	Garehun	—	Garehun	—	Garehun
—	—	Dhurikos	—	Dhurikot	Dhurikot
—	—	—	Butwal	Butwal	—

—	—	—	Piuthan	—	Piuthan
—	Dang	—	—	Dang	—
—	Parthana	—	—	Parthana	—
—	Wigha	—	—	Wigha	—
—	Sallyana	—	—	Sallyana	—
Gajkot	—	—	—	—	—
Khuprikot	—	—	—	—	—
Bhingrikot	—	—	—	—	—
Gotam	—	—	—	—	—
Rugam	—	—	—	—	—
—	Luttahoon	—	—	—	—
—	Jhili	Poin	—	—	—
—	—	Gajarkot	—	—	—
—	—	Tarki	—	—	—
—	—	—	Pokhara	—	—
—	—	—	Deorali	—	—
—	—	—	Dharkot	—	—
—	—	—	Kaikho	Tansen	—
—	—	—	—	Chilli	—
—	—	—	—	Tatahun	—
—	—	—	—	—	Gorkha
—	—	—	—	—	Bajhang

*Table based on D. R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal* (Calcutta, 1961), p. 11.

NOTE TWO : A COMPARATIVE LIST OF THE BAISI RAJAS*

<i>Nepalese Chronicle^a</i>	<i>Hamilton</i>	<i>Kirkpatrick</i>	<i>Vansittart</i>	<i>Oldfield</i>	<i>Nepalese Chronicle^b</i>
Jumla	Jumla	Jumla	Jumla	Jumla	Jumla
Jajarkot	Jajarkot	Jajarkot	Jajarkot	Jajarkot	Jajarkot
Musikot	Musikot	Musikot	Musikot	Musikot	Musikot
Sallyana	Sallyana	Sallyana	Sallyana	Sallyana	Sallyana
Jehari	Jehari	Jehari	Jehari	Jehari	Jehari
Doti	Doti	—	Doti	Doti	Doti
—	Dailekh	Dailekh	Dailekh	Dailekh	Dailekh
Roalpa	—	Roalpa	Roalpa	Roalpa	Roalpa
Gotam	—	Ghatum	Gutam	Gutam	Gutam
—	Gajur	Gajur	Gajur	—	Gajur
Accham	—	Accham	Accham	Accham	—
—	Bamphi	Bamphi	Bamphi	Bamphi	—
Chilli	Chilli	—	—	—	Chilli
Rukum	Rukum	—	—	Rukum	—
Dang	Dang	—	—	—	Dang
—	—	Malliganta	Malliganta	Malliganta	—
Dharma	Dharma	—	—	—	Dharma
Malneta	Malneta	—	—	—	Malneta
—	Bilaspur	—	Bilaspur	—	—
—	—	Rugham	Rugham	—	—
Phalabang	—	—	—	—	Phalabang
—	Dullu	—	—	—	Dullu

Majal	—	—	—	—	Majal
—	—	Balhang	—	Balhang	—
—	—	—	Goriakot	Goriakot	—
—	—	—	Kalagaon	Kalagaon	—
—	—	Darimeka	—	Darimeka	—
Gajul	Gajul	—	—	—	—
Thallera	—	—	—	—	—
Piuthan	—	—	—	—	—
Bajang	—	—	—	—	—
Khumri	—	—	—	—	—
Tadiagarha	—	—	—	—	—
—	Malebam	—	—	—	—
—	Galkot	—	—	—	—
—	Satatala	—	—	—	—
—	—	Ghopriakot	—	—	—
—	—	—	Dalhang	—	—
—	—	—	Danmeka	—	—
—	—	—	Mellianta	—	—
—	—	—	—	—	Darna
—	—	—	—	—	Bajura
—	—	—	—	—	Thalahara
—	—	—	—	—	Durryal
—	—	—	—	—	Gurmakot
—	—	—	—	—	Biskot

*Table based on D. R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal* (Calcutta, 1961), p. 4.

NOTE THREE: CAPTAIN C. P. KENNEDY'S LIST OF THE BARHA THAKURAI*

Keonthul	Comharsain	Kotee
Bughat	Bhujee	Kearie or Maban
Bhagul	Mulog	Konyar
Khottar	Dhamee	Mungul

Captain C. P. Kennedy's List of the Athara Thakurai*

Joobul	Dulaitoo	Poondur
Kotegurh	Sare	Burrowlee
Bulson	Nawur	Beeja
Raeen	Dudoo Kuwau	Shangree
Kunaitoo	Theog	Dhurkottee
Kurrungloo	Ghoond	Cotrach

These principalities were found in the area bounded by Ladakh, 32° North Latitude, 78½° East Longitude, and the confines of Chinese Tartary on the north; on the east by the Chinese territory, Longitude 79° at Shipku; on the west by the Sutlej River; and on the south by the Sikh States.

NOTE FOUR

Political geographers speak of those factors within a state that tend to disrupt its unity as being centrifugal forces. Such forces would be the barriers of the physical features of a country, human barriers, and the diversity of character existing among different sections of the population of the state, to name a few.

Centripetal forces in political geography refer to those factors within the state that promote unity. The basic centripetal force must be some concept or idea which justifies the existence of the state as a separate entity. At the most primitive level this idea may be no more than the will of a ruler to which, for whatever reason, all the regional parts of the state grant their loyalty.

This theory has been developed by Richard Hartshorne in a paper entitled 'The Functional Approach to Political Geography', which was delivered to the Association of American Geographers. It was later published in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, xl(1950), No. 2, 95-130, and has been republished frequently in manuals of political geography.

This approach to the political geography of Nepal has been adopted throughout this study as the framework for explaining the impact of Nepal's geography on the political problems of mid-eighteenth century Nepal.

NOTE FIVE

Hamilton (*op. cit.*, pp. 240 ff.) discusses at length the 'pure' and 'impure' branches of the Shah family of Lamjung, Gorkha, etc. This is undoubtedly a fertile field for investigation; however, it is entirely outside the scope of this study. Professor Tucci has adequately expressed the attitude of the present writer in the following passage :

The road from Jumla to Dullu is the route of those fresh warlike migrations which left India to find some recompense for their lost splendour in the unhealthy valleys of the Himalayas. The wanderings which led them here after the downfall of the Malla began (according to

*Report of Captain C.P. Kennedy, Assistant Deputy Superintendent, Sikh and Hill States, to Lt. W. Murray, Deputy Superintendent, Sikh and Hill States, dated Subathu, 6 July 1824 and published in *Records of the Delhi Residency and Agency* (Lahore, 1911), p. 257.

a tradition of which we hear an echo in the chronicles) immediately after the fall of Chitor, the solitary bulwark put up by the Hindu resistance to the Moslem advance. Three times Chitor fell and twice rose again from its ruins. Always, when uncertain hope became the certainty of despair, of humiliation and of death, the women—and there were thousands of them—cast themselves on the pyre that they themselves had prepared, and the men, from the greybeards to the youths, in festal attire, flung open the gates and threw themselves on their assailants to break their way through or to die.

Many have doubted that the pretensions of the Nepalese nobility to be descended from the Rajput heroes might only be wishful thinking to increase their own prestige. The discoveries we had just made seem to show that there is some truth in the legend.

Giuseppe Tucci, *Discovery of the Malla* (London, 1960), pp. 65-6.

NOTE SIX

Hamilton gives three versions, received by him while engaged in his study of Nepal, of the origins of the Rajputs of the Nepal hills. For the information of the reader, all three of these accounts are given here as Hamilton recorded them. The writer's own reservations have been noted in Note Five above.

The first account :

According to the traditions most commonly current in Nepal, the Hindus of the mountains (Parbatiya) left their own country in consequence of an invasion of the Muhammedan King of Dilli, who wished to marry a daughter of the Raja of Chitor, or Chitaur, celebrated for her beauty. A refusal brought on the destruction of her father and his capital city; and to avoid a hateful yoke, many of the people fled to the hills. A somewhat similar story, related in the translation of the *Ferestah* by Dow, would seem to verify the truth of the tradition, and fix its date to the 1306 year of our era.

The second account :

In opposition to this tradition, very generally received in Kathmandu, and throughout the eastern parts of the Nepalese dominions, Hariballabh contents that there was a certain Asanti, a prince descended of Shalivahana in the seventh or eighth generation, and who, therefore, should have lived in about the second or third century of the Christian era, but whom Hariballabh supposes to have lived seven or eight hundred years ago, in which case the Shalivahana from whom he was descended must have been different from the prince whose name has been given to an era. Asanti came to these mountains, and established a Kingdom extending from Pesaur to Morang, and having for its capital Karuvirpur, a town near Almorah. His descendants were called Suryabangsi Rajputs, and with them came pure Brahmans, whose doctrines gradually gained ground by the addition of colonists, and the progress of generation. This progress would appear to have been very slow, for I cannot find, even in Kumau, the seat of the first colonists or that there are now any other Brahmans, except those called the Brahmans of Kumau, a colony avowedly introduced from Kanoj by Thor Chandra, who lived after the middle of the fifteenth century of the Christian era, and, therefore, subsequent to the colony from Chitaur. The country had previously been inhabited by Jars, Magars, and other impure and infidel tribes, and great numbers of these continued under the descendants of Asanti as cultivators; but, west of the Soyal, there was no Raja who was not of pure birth, although the barbarous chiefs continued to hold most of the country east from thence, tributary, however, to the descendants of Shalivahana. Hariballabh remembers the names of only three of Asanti's

successors, namely Basant, Dham Deva, and Brahma Deva; but his descendants continued for a considerable time to enjoy a supremacy over the chiefs of the hills, although their power was much reduced by family dissensions, and by appanages granted to collateral branches. Various turbulent chiefs, that successively came from the low country, took advantage of this weakness to reduce the authority of the descendants of Asanti to a jurisdiction nearly nominal; and, in the reign of Akbar, the government of Karuvirpur was totally overturned by the petty chief of Kumau, who pretended to be of the ancient family of the moon, and whose ancestors, a few generations before, had succeeded, by an abominable act of treachery, in obtaining a settlement in hills.

The third account :

Concerning the colony from Chitaur I received another account, from the Mahanta, or prior of the convent of Janmasthan, at Ayodhya. He alleges, that Chaturbhuj, a prince of the Sisaudhiya tribe, having left Chitaur, conquered Kumau and Yumila, where he established his throne, from whence his family spread to Palpa, Tanahung, and the Kirats. The supremacy very lately admitted by all the eastern mountain chiefs to the Rajahs of Yumila, is a strong presumption in favour of this opinion. Many chiefs, and especially the Palpa, Tanahung, and Makwanpur families, pretend to be descended of the Chitaur princes; but it is very doubtful whether they have any claim to a descent so illustrious, for the Mahanta said, that, after some generations, all the hill chiefs rebelled and paid only a nominal obedience to the Raja of Yumila, nor does Samar Bahadur, uncle of the Palpa Raja, claim kindred with the chief.

Hamilton, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-5.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DREAM OF UNIFICATION

From Chandragiri's top I asked, "Which is Nepal?" They showed me, saying, "That is Bhadgaon, that is Patan, and there lies Kathmandu." The thought came to my heart that if I might be king of these three cities, why, let it be so.

—*Prithvinarayan Shah*¹

The unification of the four score and more of petty kingdoms in Greater Nepal stands out as one of the great challenges of eighteenth century Asia. Earlier chapters of this study have spelled out this challenge in terms of the nature of the terrain and the political and economic structures that prevailed throughout the land. Clearly the unification of Greater Nepal would be an appallingly difficult task for any of these petty states. Yet it is a fact of history that tiny Gorkha accepted this challenge and, in spite of terrain, economics, and political structures, swept these kingdoms aside and founded the modern state of Nepal. Before narrating the story of this unification, which is as fascinating as the task itself was appalling, it is important to see the dimensions of this challenge in terms of Gorkha's limited resources of men and means. Accordingly, this chapter will clarify the meaning of the term unification, discuss the factors that favoured and those that inhibited it, and conclude with an introduction of the man who first set out to turn the dream of unification into a reality, Prithvinarayan Shah of the House of Gorkha.

A. UNIFICATION DEFINED

The term unification itself means different things to different people. To avoid confusion and to limit the scope of this study, it will be useful to explain here the various degrees of unification and indicate the meaning of the term as it is used in these pages. This can be done most easily and clearly by des-

¹ Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Upadesh*, p. 3.

cribing the various degrees of union in terms of the type of unification achieved. This includes :

1. Military unification
2. Political unification
3. Legal and judicial unification
4. Administrative unification
5. Cultural and religious unification.

For the sake of clarity in this discussion, the simplest possible frame-work will be used for describing these degrees of unification : state A will stand for the unifying agent and state B, the state brought into unity.

Military unification is merely the expansion of one state at the expense of another. State A conquers state B, and state B is reduced to being a part of state A. At this level of unification there is a minimum of administrative reorganization and a minimum of interference in the local affairs of state B. Basically the only change is that the revenues of state B now belong to state A. This is a very feeble kind of unification; the two states are somehow one; but the union will perdure only so long as state A has military superiority over state B.

The second degree of unification, which has been called *political unification*, involves more. In this case the administration of state B is brought under the direct control of state A, so that the agents of state A direct and control the administration of state B at the central and perhaps even at the local level. In this grade of unification, the appointees are almost all citizens of state A, and they exercise the role of masters or conquerors in the state territories of state B. Where local people of state B still play a role in the administration of the country, they usually remain figure heads, with no substantial power. This, also, is a weak form of unity, and usually generates areas of reaction and opposition, which will disrupt the unity, if opportunity offers.

Legal and judicial unification is a third degree of unification, and this produces a much stronger form of unity. State A extends its laws and judicial customs to include state B, so that the citizens of both state A and state B live and work under the same legal structure. Though discrimination may be shown in the application of the laws or in the judicial process, the impli-

cation of this degree is that the citizens of both states are equal before the law. Where the legal customs of state B are radically different from those of state A, this step may cause serious opposition, but when applied uniformly and fairly over an extended period of time, this process produces the basis for strongly united countries.

Administrative unification, which is listed here as the fourth degree, is an essential step for the formation of a strongly unified state. According to this degree, the citizens of state B have equal opportunity to serve in the administration of government at all levels, both within the territories of the former state B and in the territories of state A. This degree of unification can, of course, fail to achieve its purpose, but where it is successfully implemented, it tends to produce a well-united state.

The fifth degree mentioned here is that of *cultural and religious unification*. To attain this degree of unification, it is not necessary that the citizens of state B be forced or induced to abandon their own religious and cultural past.² What is required is that there be a religious and cultural assimilation such that the citizens of both states feel at ease with one another, and that there be a gradual assimilation such that the citizens of both states enjoy some common practices, even when there may be considerable difference of belief. Language, as a part of culture, is also involved here, and a common language is a strong bond in the final unification of the two states. Of course, when the citizens of state A and state B already share the same culture and religion, this step is greatly facilitated.

It should be clear that the various degrees of unification that have been isolated here for the purpose of discussion are not water-tight compartments. After the initial unification of the first degree, the others may develop gradually and simultaneously. They interlock and interact, so that a measure of success in any of these degrees will facilitate the achievement of the others.

There is also a time factor involved in the attainment of all

² As Hartshorne, 'Functional Approach to Political Geography', pp. 105-6, has said, 'Where regions differ in social character, the tendency of the state to force some degree of uniformity of social life meets with resistance. Thus the very attempt to produce unity may intensify disunity.'

of these degrees. Military conquest may require only a very brief period, but for the others time is essential. Where they are hastily imposed by force, they are almost all self-defeating since they then tend to provoke elements of reaction and even to unite such elements into a strong force of opposition. There is no way to define the limits of the time factor. It may require years for these processes to be completed; it may take centuries. From this it should be clear that it was not possible for all of these processes to be completed in Nepal during the period covered by this study, 1768-1816 A.D. Consequently, the major thrust of this study will be in the area of military conquest and political unification as outlined in the first and second degrees of unification mentioned above.

The analysis given here of the various degrees of unification also indicates some of the features that were necessary to any state that planned to set out on a path of conquest and unification in Greater Nepal. The first, and most essential, was the military itself. A state had to have the military means, both in men and equipment, to be able to successfully conquer another state. This is a very significant factor, and will have to enter into the discussion of Gorkha's dream of conquest at a later stage in this study, where it can be given more careful attention.

A second feature was the type of government involved. Clearly a feudatory type of government would not achieve true unity. Its very nature militated against unity and set up a strong centrifugal force within the state. The analysis of the fragmentation of principalities in Greater Nepal undertaken in Chapter Two illustrates this. Not only did a feudatory state contain this strong centrifugal force, fortified by the centrifugal forces of a forbidding terrain and extremely difficult communications, but it tended to nullify the basic centrifugal force within a state, namely loyalty to the ruler, by restricting the loyalty of the local nobles and peasants to their own chief.³ It was of the nature of a feudatory system that while the loyalty of the feudatory chiefs was demanded by the king, the loyalty of subjects within the feudatory units was directed towards their own chief or raja.

The third feature was a strong central government. No

³ Ibid., p. 109.

state could impose unity or direct the forces within the state to the achievement of unity, if the central government was not thoroughly unified and strong enough for the task. Political geographers uniformly insist that the role of government is to make and execute decisions and that for this they must have power.⁴ If the power of the central government were dissipated through the division of the government or ruling class into factions, or the executive head of government were not strong enough to impose his will, the effectiveness of the government was seriously weakened. The result tended to be regional disunity leading even to fragmentation.

These three features are basic to an understanding of the unification of Nepal. Each of them will figure in the discussion that follows in Part II and Part III of this study. Properly, however, they must be introduced here, at the watershed between the failure of the pre-Gorkhali kingdoms to achieve true unity and the acceptance of this challenge by the House of Gorkha.

B. PRO-UNIFICATION FACTORS

Although there were no factors in Greater Nepal that could be said to *favour* unification, there were some elements of society in the various hill states that rendered an apparently impossible task at least feasible. The most obvious of these was the basic similarity of government prevailing in the various hill states. The rulers were generally of the same class—Rajputs. The type of administration was the same. And the taxation burden was the same. In such circumstances there was no real reason for the peasants to favour one government over another. With few exceptions the same was true of the local, non-Rajput nobles⁵. Generally speaking, both to local nobles and peasants one government was as good as another.

Another important, though intangible, factor was the *attitude* of the peasants. If the first chapter of this study has established anything at all, it is that the peasants led a very difficult existence. The land of Greater Nepal was jealous of

⁴ Norman J. Pounds, *Political Geography* (New York, 1963), p. 17.

⁵ *Nobles* refers to the leaders of the local population who participated in the administration.

its fruits, and only the hardest of toil brought the land to fruition. There was also the uncertainty of tenure and the heavy burden of the taxation. In view of this, the mental outlook of the peasant in the hills became a factor to be reckoned with. It seems certain that the type of man who could master the art of survival in this land of Pahar was not the sort of man who would rush blindly into battle without first weighing carefully the advantages and disadvantages that would accrue to him and to his family from it. He was a man of loyalty and a man of courage, but he was also a man of prudence and a man endowed by nature and a hard life with a sceptical attitude towards all the promises of government. It is significant that the vast majority of administrative officers in government were involved in tax collection.⁶ It can be taken as axiomatic that this significance was not lost on the peasant. As a result the peasant was indifferent towards war as long as war was indifferent towards him. An attack on his state that was as long as war in reality no more than an effort to unseat his ruler in order to replace him by another of the same type and calibre would stir him but little from his daily round of activity. On the other hand, an attack that threatened his crops, his home, or his family became a personal challenge that dredged up all the fighting qualities of his soul. In short, as long as the peasant was not molested, his concern for the fate of a ruler was not calculated to arouse him to any vigorous activity in that ruler's defence.

This brings into focus the true significance of the gap between Rajput rulers and people that was described in Chapter Two. The relationship between ruler and ruled differed from state to state. It depended in the final analysis on the measures of concern the ruler showed for his people, not just towards the warrior class, but to the peasant in the fields and also to the townsman who rounded out the balance of the economy. If there was a tragic flaw to be found in the hill rajas, it was a lack of concern for their people. Such an attitude is difficult to document, but wherever it has been isolated, whether in the history of the Malla kings of the Valley or the Sen kings of

⁶ M. C. Regmi, *Economic History*, Chapter II.

Makwanpur or the Chand kings of Kumaon, it has been the prelude to the failure of the line. The surest sign of this unconcern of a ruler for his peasants was the struggle for power among the descendants of the royal family or between nobles in the state.

The raja's concern for his subjects thus became a vital factor in a militarily successful state. Normally this quality of concern was profound, and the gap between the ruler and the ruled was profound. In states where the ruler did exhibit a true concern for his people the situation was better. But even here one must avoid any temptation to imagine that the peasants living in such a state were blessed and relatively prosperous. They were not. Living conditions in the hills at their best would have appalled even the hill man of today, who is as rugged an individual as nature has ever contrived. Any tendency to soften this picture should be stoutly resisted. The lot of peasants in such a state was less harsh than in others, but it was still demanding in the extreme. At the same time credit must be given where credit is due. Where a ruler departed from the accepted norm of 'milking' the land and the peasants of the maximum revenue returns, he was rewarded by an uncommon loyalty. The fact that this was generally not the case and peasant indifference was widespread must necessarily have aided the Gorkhali conquest.⁷

Much must be made of this peasant indifference simply because the hill man was a natural warrior. Survival in the hard school of the hills had endowed him with a rugged frame, a hardy independence, and a will to live that made warfare and hand-to-hand combat less an act of courage than an application to a new type of problem of his determination to survive. Coupled with this was his gift of persistence and patient effort. The land of Pahar tells a story, and it appears in mile after mile of terraced fields cut with the simplest of tools into the mountain sides, blunt testimony to the type of man who mastered the mountains. There is something deeply impressive to be said for a man who can attack a mountain with a kodali⁸

⁷ In addition to the *adhiya*, or half the crop, which was the normal tax for the right to farm the land, additional taxes, both in terms of labour and payments in kind, could be, and were, imposed.

⁸ The hill kodali is a simple digging tool, a kind of mattock.

and when his day is done, pass that tool along to his son to continue the effort to master their physical surroundings. Just as there is something to be said of the quality of a man who can stand on a mountain ridge and look down the mountain side to the valleys a mile below and draw strength from the mountains that are his. This is not mere rhetoric. It is an attempt to assess those qualities of the land that have made the hill man of Nepal one of the finest fighting men the world has ever known.⁹ This was the type of man who populated the hill states. The fact that he was, by and large, indifferent to any attack except one that threatened his own personal welfare was an obvious asset to the Gorkhali efforts at unification.

As a corollary to this, these same hill men offered Gorkha a hidden advantage once a region was successfully conquered. The fact that the hill man's loyalty could be won and he could be pressed into the zealous service of the crown, given the proper leadership and incentives, offered a great potential reservoir of manpower for the Gorkhali armies—manpower the expanding state of Gorkha would require. The man was there. Whether he became a fighting man or remained indifferent was largely a question of leadership. As events proved, the leadership his own raja failed to give him the House of Gorkha would provide.

C. OBSTACLES TO UNIFICATION

If there was one attitude that was characteristic of the hill rajas it was the tendency to think in terms of the limited world they ruled. The greatest centrifugal force known to political

⁹ Hodgson said of these hill troops, 'In my humble opinion they are by far the best soldiers in India.' Quoted in Sir William Hunter, *Life of Brian Houghton Hodgson* (London, 1896), p. 109. The record compiled by these same hill men in two world wars has amply justified Hodgson's claims. Turner, *A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language* (London, 1931), p. ix, adds this apostrophe to his Preface: 'As I write these last words, my thoughts return to you who were my comrades, the stubborn and indomitable peasants of Nepal. Once more I hear the laughter with which you greeted every hardship. Once more I see you in your bivouacs or about your fires, on forced march or in the trenches, now shivering with wet and cold, now scorched by a pitiless and burning sun. Uncomplaining you endure hunger and thirst and wounds; and at the last your unwavering lines disappear into the smoke and wrath of battle. Bravest of the brave, most generous of the generous, never had country more faithful friends than you.'

geography is the existence of geographical barriers that are truly obstacles to communications.¹⁰ As the first chapter of this study has shown, the mountains that divided the Pahar zone were truly such barriers. They split the country, disrupted communications, and offered the strongest defensive positions known in that age. Coupled with this fact of geography there was the economic factor of the small agricultural society. Rarely could a raja think of extensive conquest, because he did not have the means to pursue it. Given the limited size of his kingdom and its scanty returns in revenues, there was small chance for him to finance a war of any proportions. Also, the shortage of manpower within his domain forced him to think humbly in terms of military conquest. The accompanying table, based on the best estimates that are available as to the size of some of these kingdoms, indicates clearly the limitations imposed on the hill rajas.

Chaubisi Rajas — Population (in Roofs)

Gorkha	12,000	Rising	600	Khanchi	4,000
Lamjung	8,000	Ghiring	2,000	Musikot	4,000
Tanahun	12,000	Paiyun	2,000	Isma	4,000
Kaski	8,000	Parbat	8,000	Dhurkot	7,000
Nuwakot	600	Galkot	2,000	Bajhang	700
Dhor	2,000	Palpa	24,000	Piuthan	14,000
Satahun	2,000	Gulmi	6,000	—	—
Garahun	6,000	Argha	4,000	—	—

Baisi Rajas — Population (in Roofs)

Jumla	24,000	Malnet	7,000	Phalabang	7,000
Doti	14,700	Thalahara	2,000	Chilli	4,000
Darna	700	Dailekh	4,000	Jehari	6,000
Jajarkot	13,000	Dullu	700	Darmr	2,000
Bajura	6,000	Durryal	14,000	Atbis Gotam	2,000
Musikot	4,000	Dang	4,000	Majal	8,000
Gajur	140	Sallyana	12,000	Gurmakot	6,000
Biskot	1,000				

* Tables adopted from D.R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal*, according to Nepalese *Vamsavali*.

¹⁰ Hartshorne, 'Functional Approach to Political Geography', p. 104.

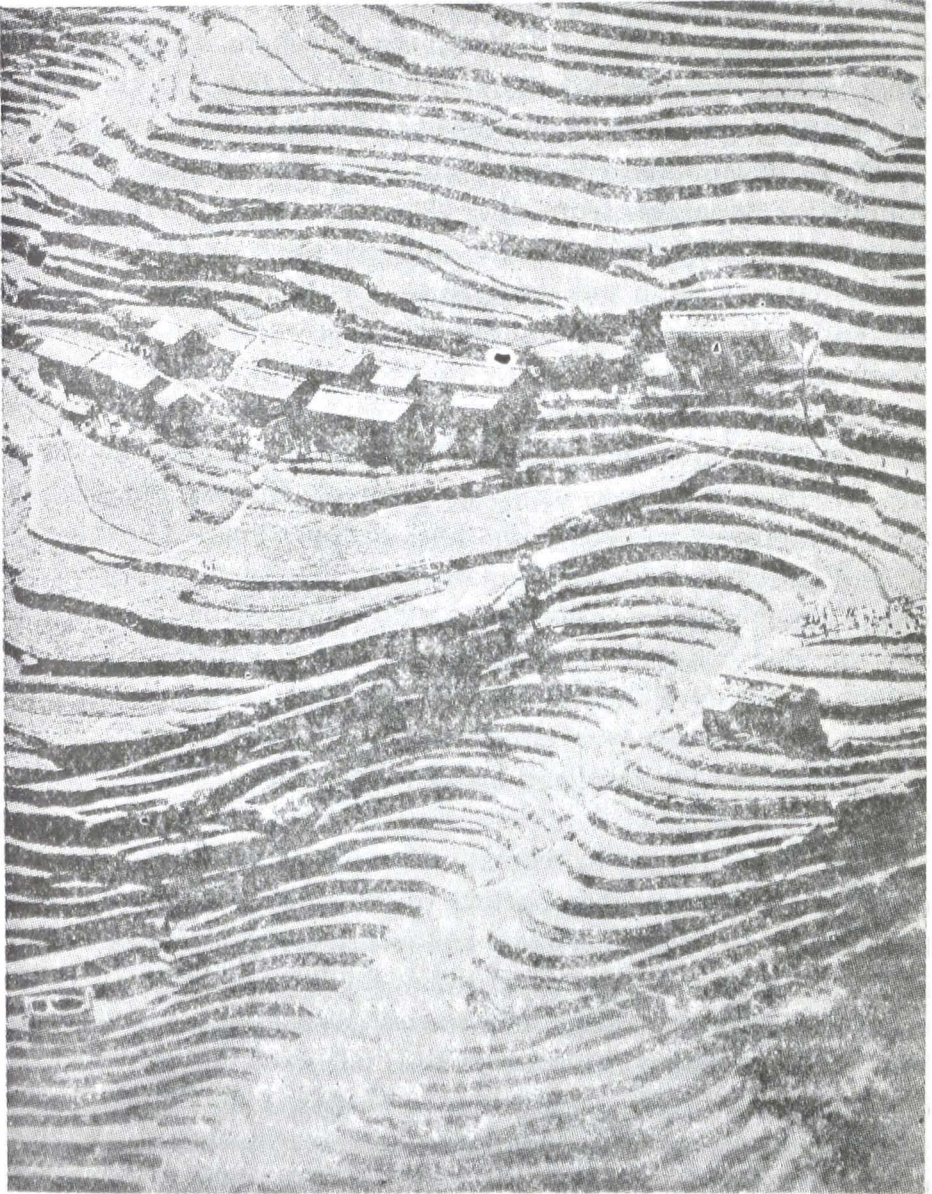
Apropos of this question of military ambition, it might well be asked whether these rajas, being Rajput warriors and ardent Hindus for the most part, were influenced by the classical Hindu concept of conquest. Undoubtedly they were. The mystique of the horse sacrifice could not have been entirely lost to them.¹¹ And yet there is no historical evidence of any major campaigns during the immediate pre-Gorkhali period that would indicate that this was an important factor in their outlook. The evidence indicates quite the opposite. The fact that Hamilton makes much of the conquest of Balihang by the raja of Palpa and his satellites suggests strongly that successful wars of aggression or conquest were limited in both scope and purpose.¹²

The defensive alliances that have been described at length in Chapter Two must also have been strong inhibiting factors. A study of the terrain these alliances occupied, and an examination of the strong hill fortifications they possessed, cannot but impress a military observer with their defensive strength. Sketches of these fortifications that accompany the various accounts treating of the Anglo-Nepal war indicate intricately interlocking hill posts surmounted by a strong citadel. Although these sketches date from a period later by a few years than that covered by this study, there is no reason for assuming that the fortifications they depict were not typical of the period under discussion here. In fact, the available descriptions of battles fought at this time seem to indicate that these, or similar arrangements, were standard defensive procedures. Further testimony to this effect is provided by Hamilton's descriptions of the various sites chosen for the capital cities and chief forts of the Chaubisi and Baisi Rajas. The total defensive picture makes the problem of conquest seem practically insoluble.

There were other deterring factors as well, not least of which was the mutually held determination to maintain the balance of power. So long as all the states were small, all were safe. Once any state began to grow significantly, the sheer economics

¹¹ The horse sacrifice, or *asvamedha*, was directly connected with the glories of conquest and played an important part in the literature extolling the great Hindu kings of India. Cf. V. M. Apte, 'Vedic Ritual', *The Cultural Heritage of India*, ed. Sunit Kumar Chatterji et al (Calcutta, 1958), i, 253.

¹² Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 171.



THERE IS SOMETHING DEEPLY IMPRESSIVE TO BE SAID FOR A MAN WHO CAN ATTACK A MOUNTAIN WITH A KODALI AND, WHEN HIS DAY IS DONE, PASS THE TOOL ALONG TO HIS SON TO CONTINUE THE EFFORT TO MASTER THEIR PHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS. (HAGEN, P. 21.)

of the situation gave it vastly increased power, and such a state thereby constituted a grave threat to the independence of all the states in the area. Thus there was a determined opposition to any state that attempted to expand. This is clearly reflected in Prithvinarayan Shah's *Dibya Upadesh*, where Prithvinarayan Shah asked his advisors about the dangers that Gorkha would face from neighbouring kingdoms should he embark on the conquest of Kathmandu Valley.¹³ And that his concern was well founded is apparent from the chronicles, which recount the repeated attacks by Lamjung and its allies on Gorkha when Prithvinarayan Shah was engaged in his campaign to conquer the Valley.¹⁴ The very limitations of the small hill states made it imperative for each of them to prevent another state from growing substantially, and any state that disrupted this balance became a common enemy. To tolerate any state's nourishing the urge to grow was to invite disaster. Should a state show these symptoms, its neighbours took it upon themselves to worry it and force it either to contain its desires or to limit them to insignificant military actions. In view of this, it is a cause of considerable wonder, not that the House of Gorkha succeeded in its unification of the hill country, but that it was ever able to begin. The journey of conquest, like all others, began with a single step, but the implications of taking that first step stagger the imagination.

It is painful to try to recreate the mental attitudes of the day. But to do so is important to the study of the events that took place in Nepal in the late eighteenth century. There existed a definite historical picture of many small mini-states, co-existing more or less peacefully, and so constituted both economically and geographically that 'Live and let live!' would seem the obvious motto. This picture is violently rearranged in the short space of three generations to one in which all of these mini-states are subject to one individual state, which originally differed in no significant way from any of the others, neither in geography nor economy. Somehow this change must be explained, and the significance of that explanation will largely depend on the factors involved, both physical and moral. As

¹³ Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Upadesh*, p. 4.

¹⁴ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, ii, 767-9 and iii, 861-2.

the discussion of these factor's inhibiting unification progresses, this question 'Why Gorkha ?' beomes more and more compelling.

D. THE LOGISTICS OF CONQUEST

In the context of this discussion of the difficulties that faced any hill state daring to embark on a career of conquest, the logistics of Gorkha's position requires some comment. It is important to see just what this undertaking meant to Gorkha in terms of manpower and finance.

Manpower Resources

The accounts available attribute a population of twelve thousand roofs to Gorkha at this time. For the sake of comparison, the three main members of the Lamjung Alliance had a combined total of twenty-eight thousand roofs. Palpa alone had twenty-four thousand roofs. On the basis of these figures Gorkha clearly had no advantage in manpower over its neighbours and rivals.

Gorkha had, *at the most*, fifteen to twenty thousand men.¹⁵ Of course, not all of these could be committed to the campaign. There were certain priorities in the allocation of this manpower that had to be observed for the welfare of the state.

The first of these priorities was the tilling of the fields. In an agricultural society this was essential and could never be neglected. This was especially true of Gorkha, since it had neither mines nor income from commerce.¹⁶ Of course, the fighting season was the winter time. During this period the manpower requirements for the care of the fields would be less. Regmi has pointed out that generally in the hills at this period only one crop a year was produced.¹⁷ Yet two considerations suggest that even in winter there were substantial limitations to the manpower that could be allotted to a military campaign. The first of these is the fact that many of the crops that grow best on the hill slopes or *pakho* land do not have growing seasons that coincide exactly with that of paddy,

¹⁵ Based on a *maximum* of five adults per roof.

¹⁶ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 245.

¹⁷ M. C. Regmi, *Economic History*, Chapter II.

which thrives on the valley floor.¹⁸ Clearly men would be required to care for these crops. More important, Prithvinarayan Shah does not seem to have wanted Brahmans to serve in his armies.¹⁹ Since the population of Gorkha seems to have been over one-third Brahman,²⁰ it seems that slightly more than one third of the able-bodied men in Gorkha would have been withdrawn from military service on these grounds alone.

A second priority was the defence of the home land. It was understood that the moment Gorkha set off on its campaign to the east, the states to the west of Gorkha would feel free to attack. The natural defences of the country and Gorkha's own fortifications offered some help against these attacks, but a sufficient reserve of fighting men had to be kept back to man these defences. This need was certainly not overlooked by Prithvinarayan Shah. As has been seen, it was one of the first considerations he entertained after his decision to conquer Kathmandu Valley. Perhaps these first two priorities together would account for about half of the able-bodied men of the state.

It can be estimated, then, that Gorkha had a maximum of eight to ten thousand men to use on its campaign. But one further consideration remained. Of these men, how many could Gorkha risk losing through casualties or death? Clearly there was a limit to the number of men a hill state could afford to lose, before it became so weakened as to be an easy prey for its neighbours. This was certainly an aspect of logistics that had to be considered. Statistics on battle casualties are always difficult to trace with any degree of accuracy, and, given the conditions in the hills, it is not surprising that very few details on this point are available. Since the fighting was generally carried out in hand-to-hand combat or with bows and arrows, casualties were normally light. But in an especially

¹⁸ Pakho lands : unirrigated land on the hill sides.

¹⁹ Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Upadesh*, p. 16.

²⁰ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 244, 'Gorkha's chief inhabitants were Brahmans and Khasiya, in about equal numbers, with rather fewer Magars.'

sharp encounter they could be very high.²¹ This question of casualties must have been a matter of concern for the man of Gorkha; and Prithvinarayan Shah's discussion of the care to be given the families of those who fell in battle in the *Dibya Upadesh* indicates that he had given the matter serious thought.²²

Casualties and deaths also meant economic loss to a small kingdom, and this loss also had to be weighed against the gains to be expected from the campaign. In such discussion the possibility of success as compared with the strength of the defences had to be reckoned. The more valuable the prize, the more tenacious the defence, and the greater the opponent's defensive capacity. Since the very rich valley of Kathmandu was the initial goal, the negative aspects of the campaign loomed large. In the balance, the odds for Gorkha's success must have seemed decidedly chancy.

Material Resources

Manpower was only part of the larger picture of Gorkha's logistics problem. As has been seen, Gorkha's economy was entirely agricultural. There can be no doubt that the war put a heavy strain on this economy.

First, the army had to be supported. Since this would be a major military undertaking, the small standing army supported by jagirs would not suffice. A much larger army would have to be recruited, and this army would have to be trained. Men in training have to be fed, even though they are not productive agents in the economy.

Secondly, equipment had to be purchased. It is a known fact that while on his Banaras trip in 1743 Prithvinarayan Shah purchased some muskets.²³ Khukaris, the traditional weapon

²¹ Casualties at a skirmish at Parewa Hat numbered four or five enemy deaths and five to seven wounded, as opposed to one Gorkhali death and three wounded. Letter of Prithvinarayan Shah to Kalu Khadka, dated 3 Chaitra 1828 B. S. (March 1772). In the invasion of Kirat Pradesh, Prithvinarayan Shah reported to Ram Krishna Kunwar that four to five hundred of the enemy had fallen. Letter of Prithvinarayan Shah to Ram Krishna Kunwar, dated 27 Magh 1830 (February 1774). According to the *Bhasha Vamsavali*, at the first battle of Kirtipur the total number of deaths for both sides came to twelve hundred. At Makwanpur four to five hundred Makwanis fell. *Bhasha Vamsavali*, iii, 817 and 844.

²² Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Upadesh*, p. 17.

²³ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, ii, 715.

of the hill man, had to be made, and this required steel, which had to be purchased since Gorkha possessed no mines of her own. Some sort of uniform was also required for the troops, if for no other purpose than the quick and easy recognition of friendly troops during the heat of battle. Many of these things required cash, which was a very scarce commodity in the hills, and it is not surprising to read that Prithvinarayan Shah had to borrow funds to meet these expenses.²⁴

Supplies formed a third item of expense. It is an axiom of military effort that 'an army travels on its stomach'. Troops require food, and the army of Gorkha was no exception to this rule. The question arises as to where they could procure this food. Could the Gorkhali army live off the land? Apparently not. To buy sufficient food grains was impossible. To loot the villages was self-defeating.

It was impossible to buy sufficient food grains in the conquered territories simply because the peasants had very little to sell. The attack would have to take place after the paddy harvest was in and the fields lay empty. As for the harvest itself, the revenue agents from government were not slow to collect their share, which, as has been seen, was half the crop. Those villages that formed part of the jagirs of government servants would also have yielded up to their masters the full measure of their due, as would the birta lands. What was left for the people was stored, but this was barely enough for subsistence. In consequence, though there might be some grain for sale to the invading Gorkhali army, this would have been very little in comparison with the army's needs.

Nor does it seem the invading Gorkhalis would have looted these farm homesteads. Loot was the accepted right of the conqueror, but there were so many factors strongly counselling against any such action that it is doubtful if the Gorkhalis would have dared to indulge freely in this form of living off the land. Large-scale looting could seriously endanger the

²⁴ M. C. Regmi has pointed out the significance of two documents published in *Aitihasik Patra Sangraha*, ii, 10-11 and 50-1, which show that Gorkha was so poor that trifling sums were borrowed from other principalities and remained unpaid for years. M. C. Regmi, *Economic History*, Chapter I; also cf. letter of Prithvinarayan Shah to Srimahant Kamal Ban, undated, published in Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, ii, 248.

whole campaign. The Gorkhali supply and communications' lines would be long and extremely vulnerable. Considering the limited manpower resources of the Gorkhali army, the whole route could not be carefully patrolled. If the villagers cared to raid this route, there would be no real defence against them except to retaliate by punitive raids on individual villages. But to resort to this form of protection was entirely against the best interests of the Gorkhalis. As has been seen above, the hill man was by and large indifferent to the fate of his rulers, but he was far from indifferent to anything that struck at his own interests. To risk arousing these men would have been an unmitigated disaster for the hopes the Gorkhalis entertained. No matter what later developments occurred in regard to looting and living off the land, it can safely be presumed that in the early years of their campaign the Gorkhalis rejected this method of supplying the army. It was simply too great a risk towards the success of their campaign.

Since little grain could be purchased and since looting was ruled out as a means of supporting the army, the only alternative was for the villages of Gorkha to supply the food that was required by their troops. The hill man could survive on a very simple diet. A little *chura* and *makai*²⁵ will sustain even the modern hill man under the worst of conditions, and this must have been the staple diet of the Gorkhali army. This the villages of Gorkha would have to supply. Once Gorkhali control was established in an area and the first crop was harvested, the resources of Gorkha would be substantially augmented by the revenues from the new lands they controlled. But at least for the first few years Gorkha would have to suffer greatly from the strain of supporting the campaign.

E. LEADERSHIP

War in the hills imposed heavy obligations on all the citizens of the state, noble and peasant alike. At the best of times, life in the hills was hard, and to expect the peasants to shoulder the burden of an extended campaign was unrealistic unless some new factor was introduced into the equation. This factor, as has been suggested earlier, was leadership, and from

²⁵ Chura and makai : parched rice and maize.

all that has been seen of the nature of the hill states and their problems, leadership was clearly a major factor. It supplies the only rational answer to the persistent question : 'Why Gorkha ?'

It was the function of leadership in the hill state to stir the peasants and the humbler citizens from the lethargy and indifference of their lives and induce them to throw their full energies into the campaign. The inertia of the peasants must be gauged by the description of their lot that has been detailed above. No matter how warlike the people of Gorkha might be, their independence and scepticism would so strongly militate against acceptance of any quixotic venture to conquer the wealthiest of Nepal's valleys that only a man endowed with very rich qualities of leadership would be able to infuse them with the vision of the world that might be theirs.

To use the words vision and dream to describe the proposal Prithvinarayan Shah brought forward to conquer such apparently superior states as existed in the Valley is perhaps misleading. There is no doubt that his idea was visionary, so far was it beyond the known capabilities of the average hill raja. No other word will quite contain its implications. But at the same time this vision was practical. It had to be, if it was to be operative among the soldiers and peasants. Since the hill man was not the sort to accept visions on the basis of their grandeur alone and his unconcern for the abstract is notorious, each step of the plan had to be broken down into goals that were concrete and attainable. And these goals had to be made attractive to the peasant and the soldier in their own right. There could be no question of fighting for the glory of Gorkha or the fulfilment of destiny, which have been strong motives in other arenas. For the hill man it came down to the simple question : 'How does this affect me ?' And it was the role of the leader, Prithvinarayan Shah, to show clearly that it affected each of them thus and so.

This was not lost on Prithvinarayan Shah. The *Bhasha Vamsavali*⁶ sums up his understanding of the problem in very direct terms, saying that since Sri Maharaj Prithvinarayan Shah's plan was a great one, he made strong efforts to give the

²⁶ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, ii, 672.

people hope and courage, to satisfy their minds, and to bring them completely under his authority. Unless kazis, nobles, and citizens were willing to follow him, he could achieve nothing.

Shared ambition was the essential dynamism that Prithvinarayan Shah used to stir his subjects from the lethargy and indifference that were endemic in the hills. This ability to share ambition is, of course, a mark of leadership, and the extent of such an ability in Prithvinarayan Shah can be measured only by his achievements. That he had the ambition is absolutely clear from the description in *Dibya Upadesh* of that moment of truth on Chandragiri :

At this time these two astrologers said to me, "O King, your heart is melting with desire." I was struck with wonder. How did they know my inmost thoughts and so speak to me ? "At the moment your gaze rested on Nepal you stroked your moustache and in your heart you longed to be king of Nepal, as it seemed to us."²⁷

And from Prithvinarayan Shah's earliest recorded conversations on this topic, he clearly intended to share that ambition with his followers. He did not content himself with telling them that he intended to conquer the Valley. As he himself indicates in the *Dibya Upadesh*, he asked advice, proposed difficulties, and actively encouraged them to contemplate with him the dangers involved and the prize to be gained. Caught up with his idea, he sent word to Ranjit Basnyat, Man Singh Rokaya, and Birbhadra Pathak.

"Come straightway, without sleeping, to Maidhi" . . . and they came.

"I have come to Nepal and I have seen it. And I have decided it must be mine. What say you ?"

"Attack, O Prince," they said. And they agreed with me. But I asked them, "If I go to seize another's kingdom, will not another come to seize my kingdom ?"

"Yours, O Prince, is the voice to frighten elephants. If those Baisi and Chaubisi princes come, a river of blood will flow in the Chepa," they answered.²⁸

²⁷ Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Upadesh*, p. 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

This conversation, recalled and recorded years after the event, reflects something of the urgency and the wonder of what Prithvinarayan Shah had seen, and his manner of presenting it is a study in the psychology of leadership. The recorded conversation is brief. But the highlights are there, and it can safely be imagined this same sort of conversation took place around many a campfire on Prithvinarayan's long trip to Banaras and his council chambers in Gorkha, from which focal points it filtered throughout the land.

True leadership, of course, goes beyond the communication of ambition. Ambition cools when long unfulfilled. Besides spelling out in concrete terms the advantages for each individual partaking in the task, it was even more important to lift their aims from personal ambition to the overview of seeing a *group goal* as desirable and attainable. Did Prithvinarayan Shah attain to this higher quality of leadership? There is evidence to indicate that he did, though this evidence is not of a documentary nature.

First, the conquest of Kathmandu Valley took twenty-six long years.²⁹ For the Gorkhalis they were years that held many minor successes as well as a few major victories. During those years, however, there were some major set-backs. When the Gorkhali forces were twice thrown back from the walls of Kirtipur, the inescapable question confronted the troops: 'If we cannot capture Kirtipur, how will the great cities of the Valley ever fall to us?' Though the Gorkhalis seemed invincible against the small towns and hamlets that surrounded the Valley, the great problem of how to take a strongly fortified city was one of those that lay beyond their power to solve.³⁰ This sense of ultimate frustration had to be dispelled, and it required the sort of leadership mentioned above to do it.

Secondly, twenty-six years is more than a generation of fighting men. During that time how many men who first took to the field with Prithvinarayan Shah were still alive to carry

²⁹ Prithvinarayan Shah conquered Nuwakot in 1744, the first stage in his conquest of the Valley. He completed the campaign in 1769 with the conquest of Bhadgaon.

³⁰ From the various accounts of Gorkhali attacks on walled cities from Kirtipur to Fort Kangra, it seems that they never mastered the technique of a successful assault on such positions.

on the fight? Certainly enough of them had perished to make the motive of personal ambition seem pale and ineffective. Unless Prithvinarayan Shah had managed to bring his followers to share in his own vision, it is difficult to explain this sustained drive of the Gorkhali forces.

Thirdly, years later when Prithvinarayan Shah was near death's door, he used the expression: 'my little, painfully acquired kingdom.'³¹ There is something in this phrase expressing his personal identification with the work of conquest that is at once humble and also justifiably proud. From the way it was caught up by the scribe as Prithvinarayan Shah spoke, there is every indication that it was a familiar phrase and one that struck an echo in the hearts of those around him.

There is still further evidence that as a leader Prithvinarayan fostered this group enthusiasm. Every word that he spoke in the *Dibya Upadesh* on the subject of his peasants and his soldiers indicates a strong personal commitment to them, a commitment that must surely have been returned.³² Kirkpatrick's often quoted comment comes to mind:

We may conclude from the respect in which Prithvinarayan Shah's memory is yet held by the Purbutties, and especially the military part of them, that . . . he was not inattentive to the means of conciliating those on whose support he depended.³³

Kirkpatrick's grudging praise is really a recognition of the quality of leadership described here. It is this quality of leadership that made possible Gorkha's first step on that long journey of conquest. Given the facts of economics, geography, and political geography of the hill states, no other explanation seems capable of explaining the fact of Gorkha's rise from obscurity to a position where it could seriously challenge the full might of the East India Company.³⁴

F. PRITHVINARAYAN SHAH

Prithvinarayan Shah, the father of modern Nepal and the

³¹ Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Upadesh*, p. 14.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 15-7.

³³ Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepaul*, p. 271.

³⁴ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 245, says, 'The chiefs of Gorkha . . . were considered insignificant.'

leader of the Gorkhali conquest, was born on 27 December 1722,³⁵ and was crowned king of Gorkha on 3 April 1743.³⁶ Besides being heir to the throne of Gorkha, he was also heir to a very considerable legacy of good government-peasant relations. In this connection two personages stand out as worthy of special mention. Both of them had a strong influence on him and on the destinies of Gorkha.

The first of these was Ram Shah, one of the earliest rajas of the House of Gorkha. All the evidence available on this ruler indicates that he rose above the common failing of the hill rajas, expressed above as indifference to the lot of their subjects. One of Ram Shah's most important contributions to the government of Gorkha is embodied in the regulations he laid down to rule various aspects of daily life. These regulations—sketchy though they are—indicate a close familiarity with the problems his people faced and a true concern for their needs. Also, the *Gorkha Vamsavali* abounds in stories about Ram Shah which bear witness to this same quality in the man. While *vamsavalis* must always be received with a healthy scepticism, it is generally unwise to reject the major trend of the accounts given in them. Since all the accounts in the *Gorkha Vamsavali* dealing with Ram Shah emphasize his concern for the people, it must be concluded that this was an outstanding quality in him. Prithvinarayan Shah himself attests to Ram Shah's influence on him in the *Dibya Upadesh*.³⁷

The second person who exercised a strong influence on Prithvinarayan was his foster mother, Chandraprabha. She not only had the care of him during the early years of his life,³⁸ but also took vigorous charge of government when Prithvinarayan's father lost interest in the affairs of state. She was known as the Chautariya Maharani, and directed the affairs of the kingdom with skill and compassion until Prithvinarayan succeeded to the throne. She, perhaps more than

³⁵ Cf. Naya Raj Pant, 'Aitihāsik Siromāni Sri Baburam Acharya Sanga Prarthana', *Purnima*, No. 19, pp. 83-5.

³⁶ Baburam Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, i, 159.

³⁷ Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Upadesh*, p. 12.

³⁸ *Gorkha Vamsavali* (Banaras, 2009 B. S.), pp. 137-9.

anyone else, formed this young man in his duties as a ruler. Her influence on the prince was profound, and when his father died, he pleaded with her not to commit sutti, but to remain and assist him, because she was needed for the defence of the country.³⁹

Prithvinarayan Shah began his career as master of the House of Gorkha at the age of twenty. He was a very young man when the government came into his hands, but he possessed excellent advisors and learned to use their suggestions well. And from the first he was a man of ambition. Hamilton says of him that he was

... a man of insatiable ambition, sound judgment, great courage, and ceaseless activity. Kind and liberal, especially in promises to his friends and dependants, he was regardless of faith to strangers, and of humanity to his enemies...⁴⁰

Several times in this chapter the question has been asked, 'Why Gorkha?' From all that has been said, the answer should be evident, 'Because Prithvinarayan Shah of the House of Gorkha provided the vision and the leadership that galvanized this state to concerted action and sustained it to the moment of victory.' The story of the unification of Nepal did not unfold entirely during his lifetime, but it began with him, simply because he boldly took the first step on that long journey of conquest.

³⁹ Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, i, 140. The *Bhasha Vamsavali* gives a very detailed description of Chandraprabha giving advice to Prithvinarayan Shah concerning the financial arrangements made for the Muslim artificers who were brought to care for the muskets purchased for the invasion of the Valley. *Bhasha Vamsavali*, ii, 715-6.

⁴⁰ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 245.



THE HISTORIC CASTLE OF GORAKHNATH ABOVE GORKHA, THE CRADLE OF MODERN NEPAL.
(HAGEN, PAGE 47)

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONQUESTS OF PRITHVINARAYAN SHAH

When Jaya Prakash Malla heard the report that the raja of Gorkha had plans to conquer Nepal, he became enraged and wrote to Gorkha, saying, "When the raja of Gorkha comes to take my kingdom, I will destroy his kingdom in an instant." And the raja of Gorkhas wrote: "If I cannot crush him, then I am not Prithvinarayan Shah, the son of Narbhupal Shah."

—*Bhasha Vamsavali*¹

Prithvinarayan Shah was king at twenty, conqueror at forty-seven, and father of his country by the time of his death at the age of fifty-three. He was essentially a man of decision. His ambition to conquer the Malla kings of Kathmandu Valley, significant though it was, was hardly unique. Undoubtedly other hill rajas had from time to time nursed this same ambition. Such a prize was too rich in the relative poverty of the hills to go unnoticed and undesired. The singular difference between these hill rajas and Prithvinarayan Shah lay in the fact that Prithvinarayan Shah took the steps necessary to realize his ambition. Very shortly after he assumed the direction of affairs in Gorkha, without waiting for his youthful dream to cool, he set out on a career of conquest that led him to a mastery of the Valley and the entire territory of eastern Nepal.

Prithvinarayan Shah was not only a man of decision, he was also realist enough to recognize the complexity of the task he was undertaking. Compared to the very limited resources of Gorkha, the kingdoms of the Valley were wealthy and strong. The fields of the Valley were fertile, and the crops were good.² Taken as a unit the Valley had plentiful supplies of grain,

¹ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, ii, 672.

² Fr. Cassiano, writing in his journal under the date 1 February 1740, said, 'La città di Batgao e situata nel mezzo d'alcune amene colline, quali l'industria della genti di campagna rendono fecondissima, e se le stagioni vanno bene, fanno fino a 3 raccolte per anna'. (The town of Batgao is located in the middle of rolling hills which are transformed by the industrious population into very fertile land, and, if the season is good, they can produce three crops per year.) Published in Petech, *Il Nuovo Ramusio*, ii, parte vi, 24.

financial and economic security, and an abundant supply of manpower. Nor was there any dearth of the fighting men of the Magar, Khas and Bagale Thapa clans.³ In short, the Valley was economically sound and militarily secure. On the face of things the Malla kings should have experienced no difficulty in repulsing the attacks of a state as insignificant in the scheme of things as Gorkha, all of which Prithvinarayan knew quite well.

Besides the strength of the Valley, Prithvinarayan Shah was aware of its weaknesses. He knew full well that the Valley was not a unit in any but a geographic sense. There were tensions in the Valley that he knew he could exploit in the interests of his plan, and even though any one of the kings of the Valley was stronger than Gorkha, he confidently believed that he *could* defeat them.

The tensions that existed between the Malla kings were closely bound up with the Valley's strategic location on the major Tibet trade routes. Striking out of the Valley to the north-east and north-west were the two main arteries of the Tibet trade. They crossed the Himalayas through the passes located at Rasuwa and Kodari, passed through Kyrung and Kutu, and then led onwards to Lhasa. Along these mountain routes from time immemorial had moved the stuff of the Tibet trade. Because of their close proximity—scarcely three miles separated the durbar square in Patan from the old royal palace in Kathmandu, with perhaps twice this distance separating these two kingdoms from Bhadgaon—any one of the kingdoms of the Valley could dominate the Tibet trade, the key to which lay in the possession of those villages that controlled the exit of the trade routes from the Valley where these routes were most vulnerable. Since the Tibet trade was a valuable source of revenue, control of these villages and the trade became a critical point of rivalry. The rivalry was intensified by the fact that it was also along these routes that the silver and gold of Tibet came down to the Valley and minted coins returned to Tibet.

It is an interesting fact, testified to by Desideri, Bogle, and

³ Surya Bikram Gyawali, *Nepal Upatyakako Madhyakalin Itihas* (Kathmandu, 2011 B.S.), p. 124; also Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, ii, 234 and 236.

Turner,⁴ that the Tibetans possessed no coinage of their own. Why this should be so is not at all clear, and it would be pointless to enter into a discussion of the possible reasons for it. But given the fact of a coinless society, the normal media of exchange in Tibet were the silver ingot weighing thirty-two Chinese ounces or the pouch of gold dust.⁵ Both of these were awkward and difficult to handle. At each transaction it was necessary to produce a balance to weigh the bullion, under pain of loss owing to scrapings from the ingot or petty thievery from the gold pouch. Then, of course, there was the problem of the purity, or lack of it, in the gold dust itself. All of these difficulties could be solved by the use of a stable coinage. Not having any such coinage themselves, the Tibetans were quick to adopt the coins of Nepal when they found them available. For over two centuries these coins of Nepal, bearing the generic name Mahendramalla, circulated freely in the bazaars and trade marts of Tibet. They were convenient, stable, and readily acquired.

Rendering this service to Tibet entailed no great hardship for the kings of Nepal. It was, in fact, a delightfully simple business transaction. The bullion was turned in at the mint in either Patan, Kathmandu, or Bhadgaon, and a corresponding weight of coins was paid over to the Tibetan merchant.⁶

⁴ Desideri, *Travels*, pp. 167-8; Markham, *Narratives*, p. 129, note one; and Turner, *Embassy to the Teshoo Lama*, p. 232.

⁵ Markham, *Narratives*, pp. 128-9; and Turner, *Embassy to the Teshoo Lama*, p. 372.

⁶ Desideri, *Travels*, pp. 167-8, besides explaining the method of purchasing coins in Nepal, gives an interesting account of the source of the vast amount of silver being sent from Tibet to Nepal for minting. He says, 'The Emperor of China.....ordered an innumerable number of men to be summoned, among them many Tartars, from the outlying provinces of the empire as well as from Peking, and commanded the various Kinglets of lower Tartary, his dependent and feudatories, to send strong reinforcements. Only he who knows the immense riches of the Emperor of China can at all realize the quantity of arms, ammunition, instruments of war, and animals provided for this huge army. I will only give one instance; to every officer and soldier five years of pay was granted and immediately given. Though I fear that the reader disbelieve me, I affirm that I do not exaggerate and that what I relate I saw with my own eyes. Shortly after the Chinese entered Tibet for the second time, the whole vast kingdom was flooded with silver, which so diminished in value that reiterated edicts and severe punishments were necessary to force the people to accept it as payment. I must explain that the Chinese had no coinage, but simply large or small pieces of

The profit accruing to the mint lay in the difference between the weight of the pure bullion turned in and the weight of silver in the alloy of the coin. The weight of silver introduced into the alloy was, of course, a variable factor, depending on the financial needs of government or the greed of the occupant of the throne.

The profit in such transactions was considerable, and it is understandable that this profit was a constant source of friction and a cause of strife between the Malla kings. The north-western route, through Nuwakot, Rasuwa, and Kyrung, was controlled entirely by Kathmandu. But the north-eastern route, the more practicable of the two, passed between the towns of Sankhu and Changu in the Valley, leaving the Valley under the shadow of the forts at Naldum and Mahadev Pokhari.⁷ It was consequently in a very vulnerable position. Since this was the more desirable route, the competition to control it and the money-trade that flowed along it was keen, and, quite naturally, led to a certain tension and suspicion between the Malla kings.

A cursory glance through the history of these three Malla kingdoms reveals a further cause of friction between them. There was a distinct tendency for the stronger kings of one kingdom, especially those of Kathmandu, to dominate and hold one or other of the remaining kingdoms in a subordinate position.⁸ Correspondingly, the Malla kings of Bhadgaon and Patan tended to hold their neighbour Kathmandu at arm's length.⁹ This contributed to their independence and autonomy of movement, but it also rendered unified action very difficult indeed.

Geographically the Valley presented a strong unit, but

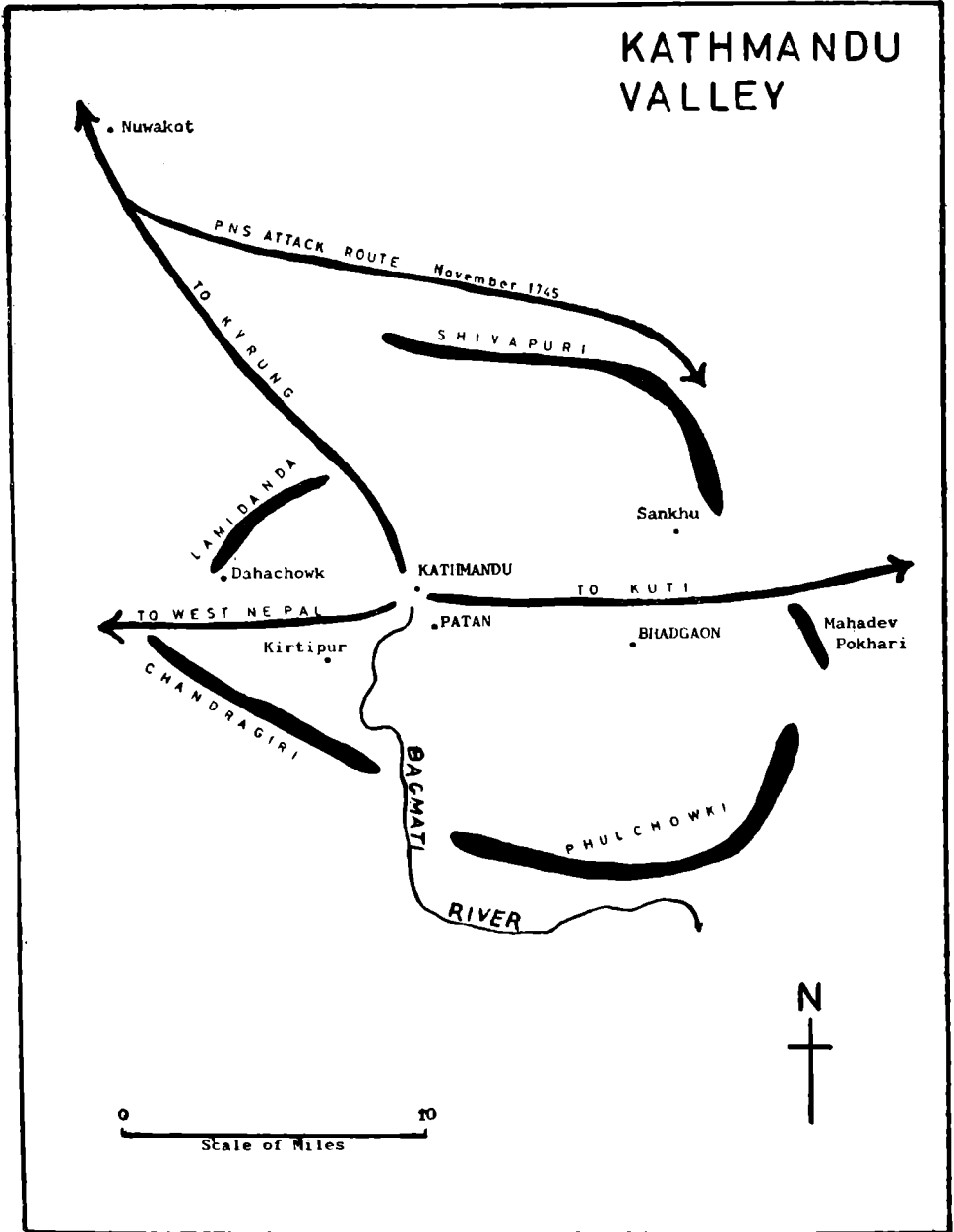
(Continued from page 101)

silver. Exposed to some risk, to expense, and to the long journey, the Thibettans sent this silver from Lhasa to Nepal to change into the money of the three petty Kings who ruled that Kingdom. They charged nothing, but gave an equal weight in coins for the silver and gained many millions, especially the King of Kathmandu.'

⁷ To Baburam Acharya must go the credit for locating the site of Naldum geographically. It should be mentioned also that he is one of the few historians of Nepal who rightly has seen the importance of geography in the development of the history of the country. Cf. Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, ii, 231-2.

⁸ D. R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, ii, chapters on Patan, Kathmandu, and Bhadgaon.

⁹ Gyawali, *Madhyakalin Itihas*, p. 112.



politically it was no unit at all. This fact alone removed the idea of the conquest of the Valley from the realm of futile hope and placed it firmly in the field of practical ambition.

However, notwithstanding this political disunity, the Valley was a formidable fortress. The Valley itself, measuring roughly twenty by sixteen miles, is surrounded by mountains rising to 8,500 or 9,000 feet, whose radial spurs average about 6,000 feet. To the north lies Shivapuri. To the west lie Lamidanda and Chandragiri. While along the southern side of the Valley lies Phulchowki, whose ridges reach around to the east, completing the Valley rim.

The Valley itself is known as the Char Bhajyang, the land of the four passes.¹⁰ Although the ridges can be crossed at many saddles, there are only four practicable passes into the Valley, and these are easily controlled. Nuwakot, to the north-west of the Valley, is the most important defensive point in that quarter, though it lies some distance outside the Valley proper. The north-eastern gate is guarded by Naldum and Mahadev Pokhari. The western gate, between Lamidanda and Chandragiri, is guarded by Dahachowk.

This land of the four passes was the land that Prithvinarayan set before his mountain troops as their objective. The task of realizing this goal was to take over twenty-five years, and engage the Gorkhalis in a persistent war of attrition—a direct attack on the Valley would have been contemptibly easy to defeat. The task of conquering the Valley can be divided into three distinct phases, each with its own objectives and techniques:

Phase one, 1744-54, aimed at sealing off the northern and western passes, thereby cutting off the flow of money into the Valley from Tibet, and opening up to Prithvinarayan the possibility of trafficking in Tibetan gold.

Phase two, 1754-64, aimed at cutting the Valley off from the states to the south, and preventing any flow of help or supplies into the Valley. It was chiefly characterized by a stringent blockade that seriously weakened the Malla kings and reduced the people of the Valley to a total dependence on the produce of the Valley itself.

¹⁰ Thapa, *Geography*, p. 184.

Phase three, 1764-69, provided the coup de grace to the Malla kings. With their isolation complete, the Malla kings were forced to watch in morbid fascination as the Gorkhali troops pushed their outposts right up to the walls of their capitals and finally to see them break through the final victory.¹¹

A study of Prithvinarayan's campaign reveals something of his technique as well as the besetting weakness of the Gorkhali army. Prithvinarayan's tactics leaned heavily on diplomacy, the achievement of victory from within, and surprise. The importance of these tactics must be evident to any one who has studied the mountain fortress from a military point of view. To storm one of these fortifications was a practical impossibility, given the rudimentary weapons of the day. It was a far wiser approach to try to win over the commandant or to strike swiftly during the night or at first light, before the defenders had a chance to button themselves up within the walls of their fort. Once the fort was closed, the task became the interminable one of siege or blockade.¹²

And herein lay the great Gorkhali weakness. They had never developed a satisfactory technique for forcing the defences of a fort or walled town. Prithvinarayan used what could be termed the 'outpost technique.'¹³ For this his men set up outposts, consisting of little more than simple breastworks around a fort. Although the position of these forts on high hills gave them great defensive strength, they usually faced the problem of provisions and even water, which had to be brought regularly into the fort from outside. A number of well-placed outposts, or thanas, could effectively prevent these essential items from reaching the garrison and in time force the garrison either to desert the fort or come out to fight against the attackers. The outpost technique was long and tedious, but in the absence of proper siege weapons, it was the only expedient the Gorkhalis

¹¹ Actually, the victory over the three capitals of the Valley was in general easier than some of the other battles fought by the Gorkhalis, such as that at Kirtipur. However, the final battle and victory at Bhadgoan justifies the use of the expression here.

¹² This, of course, was not a seige in the classical sense, but something of a blockade combined with frequent harassing patrols.

¹³ The word *outpost* is used here to explain the word *thana*. It was a type of small fort, often with mud and rock walls. It served as a shelter for the blockading force.

knew for forcing a defending garrison to leave the shelter of their walls to fight or flee. Of course, the possession of a few mountain cannon with the requisite skill in their use would have changed the procedure significantly, but without them and without the means of storming a fort, the only remaining option was to force the defenders into the open, if possible, and then overwhelm them with superior numbers or superior fighting skill.

With this introduction, the tale of Prithvinarayan Shah's conquests can be traced. It will not be necessary here to enter into every detail of these campaigns. This has been done exhaustively by others, and their books lie ready to hand.¹⁴ This chapter will attempt to establish only two points: the *drive* of Prithvinarayan Shah during this long campaign and the difficulty of maintaining it in the face of the intense hill rivalries and jealousies focussed on him by the petty chieftains of the Chaubisi Rajas. Though the conquest of the Valley will occupy the major portion of this chapter, the latter portion will deal with Prithvinarayan's conquests to the east of the Valley as well as his aborted effort to penetrate the Chaubisi Rajas.

Phase One, 1744-54

The goal of phase one of the campaign was limited to the exercise of effective control of the approaches to the Valley from both the west and the north. Cutting off the Valley from the north would entirely disrupt the Tibet trade. This would at once strike a telling blow at the economy of the Newar kingdoms and also open up to Prithvinarayan himself the possibility of trafficking in Tibetan gold and silver. Severing connections between the Valley and the states to the west, on the other hand, could prevent any of the Chaubisi Rajas from sending troops to the direct assistance of the kings of the Valley. In terms of military objectives this meant the conquest of Nuwakot to the north-west of the Valley, Naldum and Mahadev Pokhari to the north-east, and the control of Lamidanda ridge and the fort at Dahachowk on the west of the Valley.

Nuwakot was the most critical of these three military objectives. It guarded the approach to the Valley, and control

¹⁴ Cf. especially Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, four volumes; and Samsodhan Mandal, *Sri Panch Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Upadesh* (Kathmandu, 2025 B.S.), four volumes.

of it would secure the Gorkhali lines of communication. Once taken, however, it would be the easiest to hold. It lay practically on the border of the territories of Kathmandu and Gorkha, and the position itself was very formidable. Conquest and control of Naldum and Dahachowk, however, were to prove more of a military problem. Lying as they did on opposite sides of the Valley, they would force the Gorkhalis to divide their strength and extend their supply lines, while at the same time presenting Kathmandu with shorter lines of communication over very easy terrain. As will be seen, the Gorkhali army at this stage was too small to command control over all of these points simultaneously. It also lacked the depth of trained officers necessary to guarantee effective operations on several fronts at the same time.

In addition to the tactical problems presented by these three military objectives, there was the practical problem of securing some sort of assurance that the more ambitious of the Chaubisi Rajas would not take advantage of Gorkha's preoccupation with the attack on the Valley by attacking Gorkha itself. Udyot Sen, the crown prince of Palpa, had stressed the importance of this to Prithvinarayan when the latter had sought his advice on his plan to conquer the Valley. The kingdoms of the Lamjung Alliance in particular were a source of danger to the Gorkhalis. Lamjung itself sat on Gorkha's western border, poised for either sudden raids or prolonged attacks into Gorkhali territory. It was essential to Gorkha's security and to the success of Prithvinarayan Shah's plan that he find some guarantee that these states, especially Lamjung, would not intervene.

There were several possible solutions to this diplomatic challenge. Prithvinarayan could either secure binding treaties of non-intervention from the key states of the Lamjung Alliance; or he could secretly stir up trouble between them, so that they could not combine in operations against Gorkha. Since there was no great assurance that any state would honour a treaty, if it was clearly to its advantage to ignore it, the safest course would be both to arrange the treaties and keep the several states stirred up against one another.

Prithvinarayan followed the course of safety. He deputed Kalu Pande to arrange for the crucial treaty with Lamjung, and

both the *Dibya Upadesh*¹⁵ and the *Bhasha Vamsavali*¹⁶ record his success in terms that leave no doubt of the importance of this treaty in Prithvinarayan's scheme of things. A letter of Prithvinarayan to Pandit Rajivalochana makes it equally clear, however, that he was stirring up the waters of discord between Lamjung and Kaski.¹⁷ He kept a representative at the court of Kaski and made Kaski's cause his own in a dispute Kaski had with Lamjung. This proved so effective that throughout his campaign in the Valley, Prithvinarayan continued to assist Kaski in any quarrel that arose between Kaski and Lamjung. It is true that this siphoned off some of Gorkha's limited resources, but it was a sound investment that did much to simplify Gorkha's position during the critical first phase of the campaign. When intervention finally came, Gorkha's position was secure and the intervention was handled with a minimum of disruption to the campaign.

After hitting on the solution to the diplomatic challenge, Prithvinarayan was free to approach the tactical problems of his military objectives. The first of these objectives was Nuwakot. Moving with caution and imagination, Prithvinarayan sent his troops in disguise down to the Trisuli Ganxa River, which formed the boundary between Kathmandu's territories and those of Gorkha. To explain their presence he put them to work digging irrigation trenches and preparing the fields for sowing. In the meanwhile he awaited the suitable moment for his first serious attack on the Malla stronghold at Nuwakot.¹⁸

The Malla forces at Nuwakot were under the command of Jayant Rana, formerly of Gorkha. Following the accepted principle that subversion was preferable to a clash of arms, Prithvinarayan tried to win Jayant Rana over to his cause before launching any attack on the fort. He sent word to Jayant Rana that since he was originally of Gorkha, he should come over to the Gorkhalis. But Jayant Rana, while admitting that this was true, declared that since he had accepted the 'salt' of

¹⁵ Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Upadesh*, p. 6.

¹⁶ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, ii, 722.

¹⁷ Letter of Prithvinarayan Shah to Pandit Rajivalochana, dated 6 Magh 1802 (1746)—Samsodhan Mandal calculation, published in Samsodhan Mandal, *Upadesh*, iii, 932-7.

¹⁸ Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Upadesh*, p. 9.

the Mallas, he would remain true to this until his death.¹⁹

And so the die was cast. Nuwakot was to be taken by the sword. Prithvinarayan divided his forces into three bands. The first, under the command of Kalu Pande, was to ascend the hill from the north by way of Gerku Khola. The second was to take the Dharmpani Road under the command of Mahoddam-kirti Shah. While the third was to follow Prithvinarayan Shah himself.²⁰ The troops, numbering perhaps a thousand men, crossed the river by boat under the cover of darkness, and the attack was launched in the early morning of 26 September 1744.²¹ Prithvinarayan achieved complete surprise. The success was total. The Gorkhalis had won their first major victory of the long campaign to conquer the Valley.

After he had thus severed the Kyrung link between Nepal and Tibet, Prithvinarayan waited a full year before moving on to the next step of his campaign—the Kuti link. When his plans were complete, he sent his army along the Tadi Khola to the north of Shivapuri, to come upon the fort of Naldum from the north. Naldum, it must be remembered, was one of the two forts that controlled the trade route from the north-east of the Valley through Kuti to Tibet.

The Gorkhali force, to the number of about nine hundred men, took the thana at Sangachowk below Naldum without difficulty, probably towards the end of November 1745. Their attack on Naldum also carried, and, though this key fort was destined to change hands five times in the campaign, for a brief period Prithvinarayan enjoyed control of this vital point on the Kuti road.²² On 24 February, however, the Mallas mounted a massive counter attack against the Gorkhalis, and the Gorkhalis were driven off the mountain. Among those who

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, ii, 722.

²¹ The dates given throughout this chapter are those adopted by Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*. No further reference will be given to the dates used, unless the author deviates from the chronology used by Baburam Acharya.

²² The *Bhasha Vamsavali* gives details of several attacks on Naldum. Because of internal difficulties and conflicting data from the letters of Prithvinarayan Shah dating from this period, Baburam Acharya chooses to introduce still one more attack, which he puts as the *first* attack on Naldum. Although his reconstruction is not without merit, it lacks historical foundation and has not been followed here.

fell in the battle was Shivaram Singh Basnyat, the commander of the Gorkhali troops.²³ The loss of a commander was, as always, a severe blow to the Gorkhalis, totally disrupting their fighting organization. Consequently the Gorkhali troops abandoned the struggle for Naldum and returned to Nuwakot to apprise Prithvinarayan Shah of their defeat.

Jaya Prakash Malla of Kathmandu quite naturally tried to follow up his success at Naldum by a determined effort to dislodge the Gorkhalis from Nuwakot. For this effort he appointed the same Kasi Ram Thapa as commander, who, brimming with confidence after his first victory over the Gorkhalis, rashly promised to drive Prithvinarayan Shah back across the Trisuli.²⁴

Kasi Ram Thapa's threat was rash but by no means idle. Though Nuwakot was a strong post, it was far from impregnable, and the Gorkhali position there was still tenuous. While the Gorkhalis had treated the villagers well and could reasonably hope for some cooperation from them, their own numbers were still far from large.²⁵ There was also the disconcerting fact that Kasi Ram Thapa had formerly been in command at Nuwakot and was thoroughly familiar with the terrain. The Gorkhali position was precarious, but not desperate.²⁶

Prithvinarayan reacted with vigour to this new threat. He exhorted his troops to fight as tigers to defend Nuwakot and swore that if they should fail him there, he would die with them. He left a small detachment to hold Nuwakot itself and divided the remainder of his men in two sections to flank the narrow plain at the confluence of the Tadi Khola and the Likhu Khola, taking up his own position a short distance to the west near

²³ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, ii, 768-71.

²⁴ Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, i, 100 and 104.

²⁵ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, ii, 759, note : 'The Gorkhali army did not exceed 1200 men at this time.'

²⁶ Baburam Acharya indicates that the Gorkhali positions were very strong at the time of this attack, and that the peasants of the area were strongly supporting the Gorkhalis, even refusing to sell provisions to Kasi Ram Thapa. Cf. Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, ii, 236-7. His position cannot be accepted. The Gorkhali strength at Nuwakot at this time, according to available evidence, was slight, and at the time of year in question, the spring, there could be no question of purchasing grain from the villagers, who seldom had surplus grain and certainly none at this time of year.

Devi Ghat.²⁷

The *Bhasha Vamsavali* account of the battle is very weak in detail. From the disproportion of casualties given in that account, it seems that the Gorkhalis must have attacked at night, when they were able to throw the Malla forces into complete confusion and send them reeling back along the hill trails to the safety of the Valley.²⁸ Certainly it is clear that it was a signal victory for the Gorkhalis and a crushing defeat for Kasi Ram Thapa, even allowing for exaggeration in the casualty figures.

News of the victory generated great enthusiasm in Nuwakot. Kasi Ram Thapa's defeat gave the Gorkhalis the final assurance that Nuwakot was theirs. It was never again challenged. In Kathmandu, however, the reaction was one of stunned disbelief. It could not be accepted that an army of the size sent to dislodge the Gorkhalis could be so thoroughly defeated. Consequently the news of the defeat set in train a series of events that left Kathmandu groping for leadership for several years to come.

So humiliated was Kasi Ram Thapa by his defeat that he travelled straight through Tokha on the southern slopes of Shivapuri to his home in Phalanchowk, neither daring to show his face in Kathmandu nor answering a summons from Jaya Prakash to explain the disaster.²⁹ A royal summons is not lightly spurned, as Kasi Ram Thapa learned by bitter experience. Throughout the remainder of June and all of July he remained in seclusion, refusing to go to the king to explain the cause of his defeat and his subsequent actions. Since Kasi Ram refused to come to him, Jaya Prakash was compelled to go to Kasi Ram. This he did in early August, coming upon Kasi Ram and his companions at Deopatan, near Pashupati.³⁰ Jaya Prakash's anger is understandable, but it does not excuse the fool his all next act, for he used his Nagarkote mercenaries³¹ to put Kasi Ram and seven of his fellow umraons to

²⁷ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, ii, 753-6.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, ii, 756.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, ii, 756-7.

³¹ Nagarkote mercenaries: At this time Jaya Prakash Malla had recruited some mercenaries from India and from the area around Kangra to serve in his army.

death, thereby alienating not only Kasi Ram's brother Parsuram, but also an important section of the court of Kathmandu and the remainder of the Thapa umraons. There can be no doubt that the use of mercenaries for this act greatly aggravated the shock of the deed itself—the implication lay for all to see that Jaya Prakash could not trust any of his Khas and Magar soldiers.

The hill men, already restive under Jaya Prakash's rule, were thus in a mood to welcome any overture that Prithvinarayan Shah chose to send. The letter Prithvinarayan sent to Parsuram Thapa made a casual reference to the fate of Jayant Rana,³² and then proceeded to promise him protection and guarantee his fields and income, if he should see fit to cast his lot with Gorkha.³³

Parsuram Thapa responded by going to Nuwakot where a mutually acceptable arrangement was worked out. The districts of Kabre-Phalanchowk, Sindhu-Phalchowk, Dolkha, and others that had been under the command of the Thapa umraons were to remain in their control. The villages of Sankhu and Changu were to be handed over to Ranjit Malla of Bhadgaon, while to Prithvinarayan were to go the forts of Naldum and Mahadev Pokhari. The arrangements could not have been better. Ranjit was rewarded for his earlier assistance by receiving two of the most important villages on the Tibet trade route.³⁴ The Khas and Magar chieftains were assured of continued income from their territories while at the same time showing their contempt and spite for Jaya Prakash Malla. And Prithvinarayan Shah gained control of the two most important forts on the eastern side of the Valley.

The military movements required by these arrangements took place on 21 August 1746. Prithvinarayan took possession of Naldum and Mahadev Pokhari and turned Changu and Sankhu

³² Jayant Rana had been captured by Prithvinarayan Shah at Belkot and flayed alive.

³³ Letter of Prithvinarayan Shah to Parshuram Thapa, dated 9 Bhadra, 1804 B.S. (1747)—Samsodhan Mandal calculation, published in *Aitihāsik Patrasangraha*, ed. Ramji Tewari (Kathmandu, 2021 B.S.), ii, 57-60.

³⁴ Ranjit Malla had helped Prithvinarayan Shah to acquire a loan by which he was able to initiate his attack on Nuwakot.

over to Ranjit Malla of Bhadgaon.³⁵ When news of this new disaster reached Kathmandu, Jaya Prakash realized that he had not only lost the command of the eastern approaches to the Valley, but also that the situation had become critical for his own position in Kathmandu. His younger courtiers, awakening to the Gorkhali threat, began to demand action which Jaya Prakash could not undertake. In his massacre of Kasi Ram Thapa and his companions at Deopatan he had so alienated the Khas, Magars, and the leading Pramans of the Valley,³⁶ that there was literally no one to whom he could turn to give him the military leadership and the financial support that the new state of affairs required. He was, to put it bluntly, hamstrung by the results of his own impulsive act, and in the existing circumstances he was useless to the people of the Valley as a leader. Without difficulty his enemies succeeded in stirring up the people to depose him and place on the throne of Kathmandu his eight year old son, whom they gave the name Jyoti Prakash.³⁷ Taudik Kazi became the minister with the active power of the state in his hands.

Taudik Kazi had come to power in Kathmandu on what could only be called a war policy. It was the presence of the Gorkhalis at Naldum and Mahadev Pokhari that had stirred up the people of the Valley, and something had to be done about this immediately, if he were to retain control of events. Though the accounts dealing with the sequel to his *coup* are not clear, one thing is certain, that the villages of Sankhu and Changu were taken over once again by Kathmandu, while the forts remained in Gorkhali hands. And this seems to have satisfied the people. Whether the return of the villages was the result of an agreement worked out with Prithvinarayan, as

³⁵ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, ii, 718-36, describes the *battle* that took place at this time. Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, ii, 239, states that Parsuram Thapa had the gates of the fort opened to the Gorkhalis—this is a part of the reconstruction mentioned in note 22 above.

³⁶ D.R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, ii, 432-4, has explained at length the distinction between the use of *praman* and *Pradhan* for the leading Newari nobles of Patan. Though the reasoning is not entirely convincing, the Samsodhan Mandal and Baburam Acharya have accepted this title of *praman*, and it has seemed desirable to follow their example to avoid confusion.

³⁷ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, ii, 775.

Baburam Acharya suggests,³⁸ or the results of a battle, as the chronical indicates,³⁹ is of very little significance here. The important point is that the Kazi accepted a compromise, allowing the Gorkhalis to remain in their fortified posts, and at the same time appeasing the more militant of the people in the Valley. Also, it is clear that the very acceptance of the compromise indicates that the confusion created in the Valley by the events mentioned above was very great. Had Taudik been able to effect the removal of the Gorkhali troops from their positions, he would surely have done so. The Valley possessed the means to achieve this. The obvious conclusion is that what was lacking was leadership. The estranged military commanders and umraons were apparently reluctant to accept the new leader, or they saw some advantage to themselves in remaining aloof from the major task at hand, the expelling of the Gorkhali invaders. In any event, Prithvinarayan's diplomatic handling of the disaffected Parsuram Thapa exploited Jaya Prakash Malla's blunder to the full.

With Nuwakot, Naldum, and Mahadev Pokhari in their hands, the Gorkhalis turned their attention to Lamidanda. Lamidanda had originally been controlled by Patan, but shortly before this time, Tanahun had taken possession of Chitlang Valley and had gained control of most of Lamidanda. This had created hardships for the people of Patan, who had depended on the forests of Lamidanda for timbers for their houses. A deputation was sent to Tanahun to negotiate the return of the ridge, and considerable success was achieved there. However, when the entourage was returning to Patan, to finalize the negotiations, they were met by Kalu Pande. This astute Gorkhali was able to convince the raja of Tanahun that he should not give any rights on the ridge to Patan, but rather to Gorkha. The Patan delegation was forced to return empty-handed, and Gorkha established its first hold on Lamidanda in August 1747.⁴⁰

In three years the Gorkhalis had achieved some considerable

³⁸ Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, ii, 241.

³⁹ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, ii 770.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, ii, 771, mentions only the battle for Dahachowk, which came later. Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, ii, 251, citing a variant reading of the *Bhasha Vamsavali*, gives the incident described above.

gains. They held three important forts, and they had the right to develop their control over the ridge that formed the western side of the Valley. They were in a position to consolidate their hold on the western ridge completely, while at the same time they held on to the foothold they had made on the north. The presence of the Gorkhalis at Naldum must not be taken too seriously at this stage of the campaign. Their supply lines to these forts were long and easily disrupted. It was the settlement and consolidation of Lamidanda that was important, and to this they turned in the next seven years.

On 30 April 1750, Jaya Prakash Malla succeeded in returning to his palace, where, leaving the infant king on the throne, he resumed the control of government.⁴¹ He was supported vigorously by the nobles of the city, and from this new-found political base he was able to begin the reorganization of the army, so necessary to any concerted action against the Gorkhalis.⁴² It was in early 1754 that he was able to take the field. His first action was to drive the Gorkhalis out of Mahadev Pokhari. Naldum then became untenable, and the Gorkhalis withdrew, leaving the eastern side of the Valley to Jaya Prakash for the time. The Gorkhalis, however, capitalized on their stronger position on Lamidanda as well as on Jaya Prakash's concern for Mahadev Pokhari, and seized the important position at Dahachowk Garhi, which gave them total control over the western approaches to the Valley.⁴³

Once the Gorkhalis had established complete control over the western side of the Valley, they returned to Naldum. They retraced their steps along the Tadi Khola, retook Sangachowk, and then moved rapidly by night on the garrison at Naldum. The defenders, caught completely by surprise, were easily dispersed, and Naldum fell once again into Gorkhali hands.⁴⁴ Jaya Prakash Malla's troops at Mahadev Pokhari saw clearly that the situation had changed radically. The Gorkhalis had vastly

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, ii, 780-1.

⁴² Part of this reorganization was the hiring of a large number of Nagarkote mercenaries, on whom Jaya Prakash became more and more dependent. It was the paying of these mercenaries that ate into his financial reserves, and made the loss of the Tibet money-trade more serious for him.

⁴³ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, ii, 786.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* ii, 787.

increased their forces, and to remain at Mahadev Pokhari was no longer feasible. They withdrew, leaving the fort to the Gorkhalis. And so the first phase of the campaign to conquer the Valley ended. The Gorkhalis held absolute control of the western approaches to the Valley, and once again they held the strong points that formed the 'door' to the eastern side of the Valley.

Phase Two, 1754-64

The significance of the Gorkhali successes during their first ten years of fighting against the Valley was not lost on the Chaubisi Rajas. Gorkha had committed the unpardonable offense of seriously upsetting the balance of power among the hill rajas, and not even the diplomacy of Prithvinarayan Shah could prevent them from banding together to force Gorkha to moderate its ambitions. In May of 1755 they crossed the Chepe River in sufficient force to compel the Gorkhali defenders to withdraw from Sirhanchowk Garhi, which the combined force of the Chaubisi immediately seized. To make the matter more serious, others of the Chaubisi not directly involved in this action against Gorkha were waiting near-by to see the outcome and to enter the fray if it showed signs of success. It was apparent that this was a serious challenge to Gorkha, and would have to be met with sufficient force to impress upon all that such interventions were not to be taken lightly.

However, the Gorkhali tactic was to do the expected in a most unexpected way. May melted into June, and still no Gorkhali attack materialized. With the monsoon season underway, the Chaubisi attackers found themselves in difficulties they had not foreseen. Their prolonged stay, necessarily in force since an attack was momentarily expected, required more in the way of provisions than they could possibly have carried with them. Peasants were pressed into jhara service to carry supplies, but during the paddy season the work of these men was required in the fields. The sharp edge of expectancy slowly gave way to anxiety, and still there was no sign of a Gorkhali counter-attack. Only at the end of July did the Gorkhali troops put in their appearance, and then they struck with a savage fierceness that drove the invaders from their posts and sent them scurrying

back across the river by whatever means they could find. The rain-swollen Chepe did perhaps as much slaughter as the Gorkhali khukaris in the rout, and the victory was as complete as could be achieved in the rugged landscape of the hills.⁴⁵ It would be nine years before the Chaubisi would again venture to try to curb the Gorkhali advance, and during that period the Gorkhali conquest would have attained such momentum that there was no hope of arresting it short of its goal.

It is a sign of the limited resources in terms of the manpower Prithvinarayan could call upon, that during this period when the Chaubisi confrontation was being prepared, Jaya Prakash Malla was able to take possession of the fort that Prithvinarayan had built on Shivapuri.⁴⁶ The loss in itself was not serious to Prithvinarayan, though it did weaken his supply lines to Naldum and Mahadev Pokhari. More important, it shows that the Gorkhals were still unable to concentrate significant military strength at two points simultaneously.

Financially, too, Prithvinarayan was in difficulty. Few of the areas that had fallen to the Gorkhals up to this time offered fields that could be used as jagirs to increase the size of the army. Since the army had to be developed and its fire-power increased by the purchase of more muskets and ammunition, some other source of revenue had to be found. At this juncture Prithvinarayan turned to the money market of Tibet. From letters of his still extant it is clear that he was in serious need of cash and that he expected to improve his position by carrying on a significant trade in gold and silver bullion.⁴⁷ The

⁴⁵ Ibid., ii, 787-8. The delaying tactic described here is based on Baburam Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, ii, 335-7. Baburam, of course has reconstructed this on the basis of the time element, but his reconstruction is sound and perfectly acceptable.

⁴⁶ There is no mention of the loss of this fort in the *Bhasha Vamsavali*. There is, however, a rather detailed description of the conquest of Shivapuri by the Gorkhals. A fort in such a locality would have little meaning for the Mallas, but for Prithvinarayan it would have added a considerable degree of safety to the lines of communication and supply between Nuwakot and Naldum Garhi. Baburam Acharya presumes that the fort was built by Prithvinarayan, lost by him, and later regained. This is unproved, but reasonable.

⁴⁷ Letter of Prithvinarayan Shah to Haridev Pandit et al, dated 22 Bhadra 1812 B.S. (1755), republished with notes by Samsodhan Mandal, *Upadesh*, iii, 953-6, from Balkrishna Pokhrel, *Panch Saya Barsha*, pp. 211-2,

pattern of that trade is apparent from his letters. He sent his own silver mohars to Tibet, where his men exchanged them for pure gold and silver bullion. The gold was then sent to him at Nuwakot, where he sold it to Indian merchants who had come there in search of it. In one letter he urgently requests as much as twelve thousand to fifteen thousand tolas of gold at the top price of nine rupees a tola.⁴⁸ Since gold sold even in the Nepal market for as much as fourteen rupees a tola,⁴⁹ it is clear that Prithvinarayan Shah had hopes of gaining substantial profits for his military needs.

During the two years following the defeat of the Chaubisi Rajas Prithvinarayan concentrated his efforts on the western side of the Valley, strengthening his position there and extending his hold over the villages of the area. It was only in May of 1757 that he again attempted a major attack.⁵⁰ Kirtipur was his target. It was an important town inside the Valley, but situated on an easily defended hill. Several aspects of this first battle for Kirtipur stand out as important. The first is the fact that after the long preparations involved in the consolidation of the western side of the Valley, where Kirtipur lay, there were many, including Kalu Pande, who still thought the move premature. The second is the spirit of unity evinced by the common people of the Valley, who came to the rescue of Kirtipur in large numbers and who proved more than a match for the Gorkhali army. The attack ended disastrously for the Gorkhalis, with the redoubtable Kalu Pande falling in the battle and Prithvinarayan Shah himself escaping with difficulty to the security of Nuwakot.⁵¹ The Gorkhali weakness, of course, can be explained in terms of the economics of war, as well as by the fact that essentially Gorkha was a far weaker state than any of those in the Valley. The rallying of the

(Continued from page 117)

and letters of Prithvinarayan Shah to Haridev Pandit, dated 4 Phalgun 1813, 17 Phalgun 1813, 12 Chaitra 1813, and 3 Srawan 1813 B.S., republished with notes in the same volume, ii, 766-73, from Balkrishna Pokhrel, *Panch Saya Barsha*, pp. 204-12.

⁴⁸ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, ii, 766-73.

⁴⁹ Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepaul*, p. 212.

⁵⁰ *Gorkhaliharuko Sainik Itihas*, Samsodhan Mandal, *Upadesh*, ii, 521.

⁵¹ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, iii, 817.

people of the Valley to the defence of Kirtipur presents a more difficult problem. Kalu Pande, in his objection to the Kirtipur attack at this time, had stated the case with accuracy, saying that the cities of the Valley were united.⁵² The question is, what united them? Though there are many possible explanations, there is a lingering suspicion that the Gorkhali troops, because of financial distress, were beginning to impose more of the burden of their campaigns on the occupied sections of the Valley. Perhaps the incident of the Machindra Nath, which is related in the chronicle is apropos of such a changed spirit among the Gorkhalis. According to the chronicle, the Gorkhalis would not allow the Newars of Pharphing and other villages on the western side of the Valley to go to Patan to take part in this festival according to their custom until the kazis of Patan ransomed them.⁵³

From later evidence it is also clear that Prithvinarayan's financial policy in Tibet was not a success.⁵⁴ For a variety of reasons his coins were not readily accepted in Tibet, which must have been a severe blow to his plans. At the same time, though he had attained considerable success in acquiring new territories, and these must have brought him some income, still there remains the hard fact that war is a heavy financial burden for any state to bear. Gorkha was no exception to this. It seems possible then that the Gorkhalis had begun to impose heavier exactions on the territories they controlled and that their raids into the villages of the Valley were becoming more bold and more demanding. If so, this would go a very long way towards explaining the new unity among the people of the Valley.

The Gorkhali failure at Kirtipur in May 1757 was a severe reverse. It was to the credit of Prithvinarayan Shah that he was able to rally his men after this and press on with his campaign. His next important move was to recapture the fort on Shivapuri on 1 July 1759,⁵⁵ and in January 1760 he followed this by

⁵² Ibid., iii, 814.

⁵³ Ibid., iii, 810-1.

⁵⁴ This problem will be discussed in Chapter Six in connection with the treatment of the Nepal-China war.

⁵⁵ Cf. Devi Prasad Bhandari, 'Sri Panch Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Samaya Ka Nisshit Sambat ra Thithimitiharu', *Purnima*, No. 11, pp. 25 ff.

attacking to the east of the Valley, taking the new fort at Phalan-
chowk and the fort at Kabre.⁵⁶

After this burst of activity there was a period of relative quiet lasting more than two years. During this period the Gorkhali strategy underwent a significant change. When hostilities resumed, Prithvinarayan focussed his energies on the areas to the south of the Valley, apparently with a view to isolating the Valley from the lands to the south. In August 1762 the Gorkhali overran Digbandan Sen's capital at Makwanpur, following this by the capture of Sindhuli on 2 October and Hariharpur two days later. By January Parewa Danda was also in Gorkhali hands.⁵⁷ Thus in a few months the Gorkhali had cut off completely the southern approaches to the Valley, and the possibility of a stringent economic blockade of the Valley became a reality.

However, the conquest of Makwanpur carried with it significant implications. Makwanpur, though independent, held certain Tarai lands as a zamindari of Mir Kasim, the nawab of Bengal.⁵⁸ The Gorkhali action in Makwanpur came at a time when Mir Kasim was in need of funds and also at a time when he wanted desperately to test his newly organized army. His position *vis a vis* the British was becoming more and more precarious, and he apparently thought that his intervention in Nepal would give his troops the sort of training under fire that would prepare them for the day when they must face the Company's army.⁵⁹ In view of his financial straits, the lure of 'Nepali gold' was also an important factor in his decision to interfere on the basis of his connection with Digbandan Sen.⁶⁰

Gurgin Khan led the nawab's troops into the hills, and he enjoyed initial success. In a letter of Magh 1819 B.S. Prithvinarayan pointed out to Ram Krishna Kunwar that the invaders had practically surrounded Makwanpur, but that two thanas were still open for the Gorkhali troops to enter the fort. He

⁵⁶ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, iii, 838-41.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, iii, 843-9.

⁵⁸ R. C. Mazumdar et al, *An Advanced History of India*, Third edition (New York, 1967), p. 663.

⁵⁹ Mir Kasim had no greater success against the British at Buxar in 1764 than he had against the Gorkhali in this fray.

⁶⁰ K. C. Chaudhuri, *Anglo-Nepalese Relations* (Calcutta, 1960), p. 10.

indicated that the main body of the nawab's troops was in Harnamadhi, and that the Gorkhali force should strike there. For this attack jhara forces were to be used.⁶¹ The Gorkhalis attacking from the heights and under the cover of darkness so confused the nawab's forces that they fled by any means they could, leaving behind several small cannons and five to six hundred muskets, plus other supplies that were invaluable to the Gorkhalis.⁶² Equally important, however, the Gorkhali's hold on the southern approaches to the Valley was secure, and the economic blockade could be pressed home.

The Gorkhali success against the invaders from the south was followed in October of that same year by the conquest of the area to the east of the Valley. Dhulikhel was the main obstacle here, and it did not fall without heavy fighting. It was an important centre, and according to the chronicle there were so many troops from the Valley among its defenders that all could not be accommodated inside the fort and many had to be stationed outside.⁶³ Casualties on both sides were heavy, but on 23 October the Gorkhalis prevailed.⁶⁴ They rapidly swept through the other towns in the area, bringing the whole region under Gorkhali control.⁶⁵

The economic blockade now became a decisive factor in the campaign, and it was severely pressed home. It is clear from two separate letters of Prithvinarayan Shah to Ram Krishna Kunwar that no salt, cotton, grain, or other goods were to be permitted to enter the Valley. Brahmans who attempted to violate this blockade were to be imprisoned. All others were to be killed and left along the way as a grim warning to other would-be blockade-runners.⁶⁶ That these instructions were

⁶¹ Letter of Prithvinarayan Shah to Ram Krishna Kunwar, dated 5 Magh 1819 (1763), republished with notes in Samsodhan Mandal, *Upadesh*, iii, 986-8, from Baburam Acharya.

⁶² *Bhasha Vamsavali*, iii, 850.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, iii, 855-6.

⁶⁴ The date is confirmed by the *Gorkhaliharuko Sainik Itihas*, Samsodhan Mandal, *Upadesh*, ii, 522.

⁶⁵ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, iii, 855-8.

⁶⁶ Letters of Prithvinarayan Shah to Ram Krishna Kunwar, one dated 24 Kartik 1822 B.S. (1765), the other undated, republished with notes in Samsodhan Mandal, *Upadesh*, iii, 1009-14 and 1031, from Baburam Acharya.

rigorously carried out is clear from a letter of one of the Capuchins posted in Nepal, in which he says:

We found that the King of Gorkha had sent an armed force to a place called Parsa... We had to pass through that place, and so we stopped on the road and sent ahead a man with a letter to the commander of the Gorkhali troops. We wrote to the commander that we had nothing with us except the necessary food for the journey and some medicines, as we were going into Nepal. We did this because we already knew that all the roads of Nepal had been closed, and that death was the lot of anyone carrying anything into Nepal, even in the smallest quantity.⁶⁷

The maintaining of such a blockade occupied a great many of the soldiers that Prithvinarayan Shah had under his command, and in these circumstances he was ill-prepared for another intervention on the part of the Chaubisi Rajas. Rather than disrupt his blockade when word of such an invasion reached him, he ordered the very young and the old men of Gorkha to be used to drive the invaders out.⁶⁸ The news of the dispatch of a Gorkhali army against the Chaubisi severely shook their confidence. They laid the torch to Kalang village, where many of them had been staying and prepared to move back to their own territory. But Surpratap and his 'special' army fell upon them before they could make good their withdrawal and put them and their companions quartered in neighbouring villages to flight.⁶⁹ The chronicle paints a lurid picture of the losses suffered by the Chaubisi, but perhaps some allowance must be made in that account for the enthusiasm of the scribe.⁷⁰ Their losses, however, were sufficiently humiliating to prevent the Chaubisi from meddling in the affairs of Gorkha for some time to come and clearly indicated that the Gorkhali fighting machine was by that time operating with deadly efficiency. More important, the Chaubisi were repulsed

⁶⁷ The Author, 'A Letter of Fr. Giuseppe da Rovato (December 29 1769)', *Journal of Tribhuvan University*, v. (June 1970) p. 7.

⁶⁸ *Guru Vamsavali*, quoted in Baburam Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, iii, 445-6.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, iii, 446.

⁷⁰ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, iii, 861-2.

without any interruption of the economic blockade of the Valley.

Phase Three, 1764-9

With the hills surrounding the Valley completely under their control and the Chaubisi once again on the defensive, it was time for the Gorkhali troops to turn their full attention to Kirtipur. As later events were to prove, it would have simplified matters had the Gorkhalis been able to besiege Kirtipur while at the same time pressing home the attack on the major cities of the Valley. Their numbers would still not permit this, however, and the campaign had to be continued step-by-step, and Kirtipur had to be taken before the campaign was carried to Kathmandu.

Kirtipur was well fortified. It would be no easy task for the Gorkhalis, whose siege tactics left much to be desired, to take such a city. They began by occupying the villages in the immediate vicinity of Kirtipur, Pango to the south and Chowbar to the south-east. Their plan called for them to scale the wall with ladders and thus carry the fight inside the city.⁷¹ Chances for success in such a venture were slim, and must have appeared so to those involved in taking the decision. Yet, in the absence of an alternative plan, the Gorkhali leaders under Surpratap Shah put it into effect.

The attempt was made on 16 September 1764. A few soldiers were able to make their way inside the wall, but Surpratap and his companions found the assault extremely dangerous. Surpratap reached the top of the wall, but was struck by an arrow, which pierced his left eye.⁷² The loss of Surpratap's effective leadership left the Gorkhalis completely at odds, and the attack dissolved into confusion at first, and then withdrawal from the scene. Once again Kirtipur had proved to be a greater military problem than the Gorkhalis could master. But there was a significant change in the situation this second time. First, the people of Kirtipur had no such ample assistance from the rest of the Valley as they had enjoyed in 1757. Secondly,

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, iii, 871.

⁷² *Ibid.*, iii, 872.

Kirtipur was delivered by a stroke of luck, a fortunate arrow shot that momentarily left the Gorkhals leaderless. Against a determined enemy such as Gorkha, once Prithvinarayan Shah determined on siege tactics, there would be no real hope left for the people of Kirtipur unless they adopted some radically different tactics, a move they showed no signs of making.

When he received the news that Gorkha had suffered a setback at Kirtipur, Jaya Prakash Malla determined on a fresh attempt to break out of the Gorkhali stranglehold. Judging that the easiest route for movement both to the north and south would be through the north-eastern gate, which was guarded by the forts of Naldum and Mahadev Pokhari, Jaya Prakash decided to take Naldum. His troops, including Nagarkotis, Khas, and Magars, took two of the three outposts that flanked the fort, and it seemed that his effort would succeed. But when victory was almost within his grasp, a Gorkhali relief party coming up to Naldum by night from the south-west—and thus from the rear of the Kathmandu troops—was mistaken by Jaya Prakash's men as a further addition to their own numbers and permitted to move inside their lines. In such circumstances the Gorkhals were able to wreak havoc on the camp, completely disorganize the Malla forces, and drive them off the hill.⁷³ Thus Jaya Prakash Malla's attempt to break the blockade was defeated, and the blockade remained in force.

In October 1765 the Gorkhals returned to the attack of Kirtipur. This time they systematically set up their outposts and put the city under siege. The people of Kirtipur had already cut their grain, but it was still drying in the fields when the Gorkhals moved into the area. The Gorkhals captured this, thus striking a cruel blow at the people of Kirtipur. Food was consequently a problem. Water also was to become a problem.⁷⁴ And, of course, there was the psychological pressure—the traditional messages were sent into Kirtipur, pointing out the futility of resistance, the wisdom of surrender, and the obvious advantages in life and property to be gained by admitting the Gorkhals.

⁷³ Hodgson Papers, published in Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, iii, 449-50.

⁷⁴ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, iii, 874-5.

For six months Kirtipur resisted, but finally in mid-March, the gates of the city were thrown open at night and the Gorkhals possessed themselves of the town and its fort. After their victory the Gorkhals followed their usual practice of rewarding those who yielded to their demands and punishing those who resisted. In this case the punishment was disfigurement, and the tips of the noses of many, if not all, were cut off.⁷⁵ Out of respect for religion, Prithvinarayan confirmed existing guthis and established a new one, but in view of Kirtipur's resistance he resumed all existing birtas, so that there is no record of any birta grant in Kirtipur going back beyond the time of the Gorkhali conquest.⁷⁶

There was an immediate reaction to the Gorkhali conquest of Kirtipur both inside and outside the Valley. Lamjung of the Chaubisi made a move to invade Gorkha from the west, but this was suppressed without difficulty in September 1766.⁷⁷ Jaya Prakash Malla's reaction was more serious. He solicited military aid from the East India Company.⁷⁸ Anyone familiar with the startling success of the East India Company in India after 1750 is well aware of the implications of this request.

The response of the Company to Jaya Prakash's overtures has been discussed repeatedly by many authors, both Nepali and foreign. All of these accounts are based on the East India Company's records, either obtained directly or from the liberal quotes and references found in Chaudhuri. Nothing new has been added, nor has any document from Jaya Prakash Malla's hand been produced. There is no reason, then, to dwell on these accounts here, and a summary treatment will suffice.

⁷⁵ The question of the cutting off of the noses of the people of Kirtipur has been mooted for the past ten years. By this time all the arguments have been seen, and without new documentation, little more can be said. Baburam Acharya's position is quite clear in the fourth volume of his life of Prithvinarayan Shah. The author continues to hold the view expressed in his *Prithvinarayan Shah in the Light of Dibya Upadesh* (Kathmandu, 1968), pp. 33-4, that it is very difficult to destroy the value of eye-witness accounts by argumentation, no matter how skilfully that argumentation is presented.

⁷⁶ The lack of such grants, when birta grants do exist that antedate the Gorkhali conquest in other territories, seems to indicate that Prithvinarayan Shah simply did not renew them as a matter of discipline. Cf. M.C. Regmi, *Land Tenure*, ii, 85.

⁷⁷ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, iii, 861-2.

⁷⁸ Chaudhuri, *Anglo-Nepalese Relations*, pp. 12-3.

What is significant in the context of this study is the possible impact of the British intervention on Prithvinarayan Shah's plans for Nepal. This was serious, beyond doubt. It is quite evident in this regard that :

1. This intervention *could* have succeeded.
2. If it had succeeded, it would have disrupted the entire development of the political scene in the hills and totally rearranged the structure of modern Nepal.
3. The Gorkhalis had to use the strategic advantage of the hills and the total available resources of their army to put this down.

As regards the British decision to intervene, the kindest commentary that can be made is that the decision was hastily formed, the plan of attack naively drawn up, and the leadership of the expedition was an insult both to their opponents and to their own military tradition. It is little short of a miracle that the British force survived at all. Only Prithvinarayan Shah's determination to concentrate on essentials—the attack on the Valley—permitted Kinloch, the leader of the ill-fated expedition, to escape total disgrace.

Setting aside the politics of the decision to intervene and the manner of choosing the leader of the expedition, both of which were at best questionable, Kinloch's sins of omission and commission are glaring proofs of his ignorance of the country he was attacking and the enemy he would oppose. To put it briefly, he entered the Tarai during the monsoon and *aul* season, without proper arrangements for provisions, and with such a contempt for his foe that he planned to make a direct dash for the Valley when the expedition began to collapse around him.⁷⁹ What more need be said ?

Prithvinarayan's reply to the British challenge was a classic case of the use of terrain in mountain warfare. He drew the British force into the hills by withdrawing the garrison from the fort at Sindhuli and removing from the villages in the line of approach any rations that might be useful to the British and their Indian sepoys.⁸⁰ He let the British force feel the full

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 21.

⁸⁰ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, iii, 863.

weight of the impossible conditions under which they were labouring, while he completed his preparations for facing them. He then sent an army under Bir Bhadra Thapa to the area in the hills above Sindhuli. Half of this army remained at Pauwa Garhi about two miles north of Sindhuli, while the other half moved to the south along the side of the English line of march and encamped secretly at Dhungrebas. A second army, under the command of Kazi Bamsharaj Pande, was sent to take up its position with the Gorkhali troops at Pauwa Garhi. As Kinloch's troops moved up the hill towards Pauwa Garhi, the Gorkhals began to rain stones and rocks down on them. Then, when the encounter actually began, the Gorkhals struck the English both from the front and the rear, causing tremendous damage to the British ranks.⁸¹

The casualty figures bear witness to the ferocity of the fight. The chronicle, which normally gives very low casualties for the Gorkhali army, says simply that of the Gorkhals, many were killed and many wounded, while of the English dead nothing is known.⁸² Prithvinarayan had intended that the British force be so badly mauled that there could be no question of the British reforming their troops and launching another quick attack during the winter season. He succeeded beyond his expectations. Of the twenty-four hundred men Kinloch had led into the hills, eight hundred returned with him to the plains.⁸³ Fully two-thirds of his force he lost either to death or desertion.

Once the British threat had been safely countered, Prithvinarayan returned to finish his task in the Valley, the conquest of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhadgaon. Actually, the conquest of these three cities was something of an anti-climax. After so many years of struggle and after so many difficult and dangerous battles, the Gorkhals literally walked into Kathmandu. The attack was planned for late September 1768, during the festivities of the Indra Jatra. The Gorkhali lines were pushed right up to the walls of the city, so that a musket shot could

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid, iii, 864.

⁸³ Chaudhuri, *Anglo-Nepalese Relations*, p, 27, quoting Barwell's letter to his father.

penetrate the homes of the residents near the walls.⁸⁴ There was little Jaya Prakash could do, and he apparently decided to do nothing at all. The account in the chronicle reads like a veritable *Gotterdamerung*. The Newars, together with their king, celebrated the Indra Jatra festival as usual. The festival seems to have gone on with very little concern about the Gorkhalis camped outside the walls preparing for their final attack on the city.⁸⁵ Seemingly the mercenaries hired from India were supposed to have been on guard. Yet in these circumstances the Gorkhalis 'entered' the city in three columns, one from Bhim Sen Than, one from Nara Devi, and one from the present Tundikhel.⁸⁶ Nothing is said in the chronicle of the manner of the Gorkhali entrance into the city or what the guards were doing. Whether the gates were broken in, or someone opened the gates to the Gorkhalis, or Gorkhali soldiers scaled the walls and opened them is not mentioned.⁸⁷ After a brief fight, Jaya Prakash escaped with two hundred soldiers to Patan, and Prithvinarayan Shah seated himself on the throne set up in the square near the palace especially for the formalities of Indra Jatra. There is a brief statement in the chronicle of the fact that one of the buildings was mined, and that this was set off, injuring a number of Gorkhali troops.⁸⁸ The rest is left in darkness to tease the imagination of the reader.

The Capuchin account of this event and the fall of Patan.⁸⁹ which occurred within a few days, adds very little to the account found in the chronicle. However, two things stand out in this Capuchin account as being worthy of mention. The first is the care that Surpratap took of the Capuchins when the Gorkhali soldiers entered the city, and the second is the sense of fear that pervaded both Kathmandu and Patan after the Gorkhalis entered. Rumours spread like wildfire through the city, even though the only retaliatory measures taken were those

⁸⁴ The Author, 'Giuseppe da Rovato', p. 12.

⁸⁵ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, iii, 878.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ The gates were broken in by the Gorkhalis with axes according to the 'Prithvindravarnadayak', published in Samsodhan Mandal, *Upadesh*, ii, 446.

⁸⁸ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, iii, 878-9.

⁸⁹ The Author, 'Giuseppe da Rovato', p. 12.

directed by the Gorkhalis against the Pramans of Patan, whose inconstancy and perverseness had caused endless trouble to a long line of kings in Patan, including Prithvinarayan Shah's own brother, Dalmardan Shah. As the Capuchin account observes:

The terror caused in the city by the entrance of the king of Gorkha was such that I do not know how to describe it. The only thing that I can say is that despite the size of the city and its large population, you hardly saw a person moving around in it, either because they had run away or were hidden from fear.⁹⁰

Yet the Capuchin account makes it quite clear that Prithvinarayan Shah committed no act of vengeance or cruelty on the population at large either in Kathmandu or Patan. Nor is there any mention of looting by the soldiers of Gorkha. Baburam Acharya sets the dates for the conquest of Kathmandu and Patan as 26 September 1768⁹¹ and 6 October 1768 respectively.⁹²

Although the cities of Kathmandu and Patan fell with hardly a fight, the battle for Bhadgaon, joined over a year later, proved a more fitting finale to the long and important campaign.⁹³ On the night of 10 November 1769 the Gorkhalis burst through the eastern gate of Bhadgaon and poured into the city. Almost immediately the defenders of the city set fire to some houses near the gate to provide the light needed for fighting. Meanwhile a second detachment of Gorkhalis broke through the north gate of the city, and by the first light of day the defenders had been forced back so that two groups of Gorkhalis, about fifteen hundred men in all, were able to join ranks before the main gate of the palace. After dawn, when Jaya Prakash's mercenaries—for Jaya Prakash had ended up in Bhadgaon—began to fire on them with a small cannon,

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 13, but the *Bhasha Vamsavali* reports that some kazis of Kathmandu were killed and some punished, and all of the pramans of Patan were punished.

⁹¹ Though 26 September was put forward authoritatively as the date for the conquest of Kathmandu, Naya Raj Pant, 'Aitihāsik Siromani Sri Baburam Acharyajyu Sanga Prarthan', *Purnima*, No. 9, p. 88, proves conclusively that the correct date was 25 September 1768.

⁹² Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, iii, 595.

⁹³ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, 887-92.

the Gorkhalis took to the roof tops to escape the fire of the cannon and to find a better field of fire for their own muskets. The battle for the city lasted until 12 November, with the defenders gradually withdrawing to the more protected places in the palace and the Gorkhalis edging nearer and nearer. Over the city hung a pall of smoke from the fire that had gradually spread to a whole section of the city while the battle raged. Jaya Prakash had taken virtual command of the defences, and it was only after he had been wounded by a musket ball in the leg that the defence collapsed. One of Ranjit Malla's lieutenants then waved his pagari from a window of the palace in token of surrender. Bhadgaon had fallen. The conquest of the Valley was complete. Prithvinarayan Shah's ambitions were realized.

Throughout the long campaign to conquer Kathmandu Valley, the Gorkhali army under Prithvinarayan Shah's leadership exhibited a growing confidence in its abilities and a growing professionalism. The long war had actually been a training ground that transformed individual hill fighters into an accomplished army with some very important victories over enemies both inside and outside the hills to its credit. Prithvinarayan himself had grown in stature during the same period, showing greater discretion in his undertakings and an ability to subordinate side issues to the basic thrust of his campaign. By continual reliance on officers that showed some ability he developed a solid cadre of seasoned and capable officers who were to form the hard core of Gorkha's now professional army.

One aspect of Prithvinarayan's activities during this time which contributed greatly to his military success, was his constant effort to weaken the enemy from within. Much was said earlier of the importance of the land in the economy of the hills. Throughout the campaign Prithvinarayan used the common craving for possession of land to win over to his cause key figures in the territories he was attacking. In the uncertainty generated by the war, he wrote repeatedly to such men, assuring them that after his victory they would be guaranteed their rights, their safety, and continued possession of their land.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Letters of Prithvinarayan Shah to Nikantha Joshi, dated 28 Baishakh 1812 B.S. (1755)—Samsodhan Mandal calculation—and to Rajivalochana, dated 6 Magh 1802 B.S. (1746)—Samsodhan Mandal calculation, etc., published in Ramji Tewari, *Aitihāsik Patra Sangraha*, ii, 68-72 and 41-2.

The assurance of victory that his letters convey must have struck a note both of warning and anxiety in the hearts of those receiving them. As the war developed and the Gorkhali army gained momentum, this steady assurance of Prithvinarayan Shah that he was ready to include such men in his entourage was the sign they were searching for. Many of these men came over to him, bringing to his service not only their loyalty but also their influence in the places where they lived.

The Abortive Expedition to the West

Once the Valley was secure, Prithvinarayan turned his attention to the Chaubisi Rajas to the west, who had so continually endangered his whole campaign. His army was a tested instrument of war, and a great deal of work remained for them in the east. But it was against Prithvinarayan Shah's nature to suffer passively the constant interference the Chaubisi made in his affairs. Consequently, he directed his troops towards the west in the spring of 1771 in an effort to subdue the Chaubisi Rajas.⁹⁵

The Gorkhali expedition to the west was more than a punitive expedition. At the same time it was by no means a concerted effort at conquest. There is an economics of warfare that decrees that the prize must be somehow commensurate with the effort involved in taking it. For the Gorkhalis the western hills at this time offered no such prize. The area that Prithvinarayan Shah wanted was the fertile Bijayapur-Chaudandi area of the eastern Tarai, the economic importance of which far outweighed any advantage that might be derived from the conquest of the west. But if an expedition to the west could guarantee that there would be no further interference from the Chaubisi, it was worth the effort.

The results of this campaign can be briefly stated. On 25 April 1771 Bamsharaj Pande led a Gorkhali force into the Chaubisi territories along the northern route through Lamjung and Kaski. A second Gorkhali force, under Kehar Singh Basnyat, took the southern route through Rising and Ghiring. The advance of the northern force was brought up short at western Nuwakot, and Bamsharaj Pande settled in at Sanjya

⁹⁵ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, iii, 909-12.

to await the arrival of Kehar Singh's troops.⁹⁶ Meanwhile Kehar Singh had also enjoyed considerable success. But in a battle with Bhirkot on 4-5 June he found that the soldiers of Tanahun, who were acting in alliance with him, held back from the fight. He ordered almost one hundred of them to be put to death for this.⁹⁷ From that moment the campaign was doomed, and there remained only the question of the extent of Gorkha's defeat. Gorkha's presence in the area was on the sufferance and with the collaboration of some of the Chaubisi, and none of them would condone such high-handed action.

Kehar Singh continued on his way to the rendezvous with Bamsharaj Pande, but he began to experience the 'withdrawal' tactics that are so effective in the hills. The Gorkhals found themselves occupying towns, which had to be garrisoned, but not defeating armies. Their forces, never large, became more and more fragmented, so that when Kehar Singh joined Bamsharaj he had with him less than half of his army.⁹⁸

With the onset of the monsoon of 1771 the two Gorkhali commanders established a more permanent camp, and to provision their troops they further alienated the local population by levying a birta tax on the Brahmans and a land tax on the peasants.⁹⁹ Meanwhile the Chaubisi troops began to move into the area around nearby Satahun, and it became apparent to all that the battle to be fought in the area would be a crucial one for the Gorkhals. The Gorkhali commanders decided to take the initiative, called the troops that had been left at Bhirkot, and attacked. But the battle was a complete disaster. Kehar Singh Basnyat and five hundred Gorkhals fell in the battle.¹⁰⁰ Bamsharaj Pande was captured and taken prisoner to Parbat. The survivors escaped to Dhor. Gorkhali detachments that had been left in various garrisons along the way, then rushed to the assistance of the survivors at Dhor, but the Chaubisi surrounded them there and prepared to finish what they had begun at Satahun. Ultimately the Gorkhals had to hand over their weapons to the Chaubisi and leave the

⁹⁶ Ibid., iii, 910.

⁹⁷ Ibid., iii, 909.

⁹⁸ Acharya, *Prithvitarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, iii, 573.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, iii, 910 and note.

country in utter defeat.¹⁰¹ Because of the difficulty of communications, there was very little that Prithvinarayan could do to mitigate the disaster.¹⁰²

This defeat in the west made several things quite clear. The Chaubisi would not at that time be taken by merely military means. They were far too strong defensively for that. Also, the Gorkhali army, professional though it had become, was by no means a powerful army even in the hills. Strategy and the tactics of subversion would have to remain an important part of any expansionary scheme for many years to come. And also the lesson was driven home with brutal clarity that the hill soldier and the peasant must not be alienated during any phase of the campaign. Any army moving in the hills was too vulnerable to risk turning the country-side against it. The hills were tailored to defence and guerilla warfare.

Prithvinarayan Shah now had a very difficult decision to make. He knew that he had the force necessary to take the Bijayapuri-Chaudandi area in the eastern Tarai. But would the Chaubisi try to interfere in Gorkha once this operation was under way? With the very difficult problem of communications confronting him, there would be no opportunity for troops employed in the eastern Tarai to be recalled quickly in the event of an attack. Would the defensive alliance that had just defeated his expedition to the west prove sufficiently strong to enable a concerted Chaubisi attack on Gorkha? Or would the traditional rivalries of these kings prevent them from following up their advantage by attacking Gorkha? The Chaubisi strength had not lain in superior numbers or fighting skill. Terrain had been their big advantage. This was purely defensive strength, which they would forfeit if they tried to invade Gorkha. Even the Chaubisi must have realized that. Further, it must have been clear to the Chaubisi that Gorkha, smarting under the defeat it had just suffered, would exact stern vengeance of them should the opportunity present itself. Prithvinarayan Shah apparently concluded that the risk of an immediate attack was slight, provided the Gorkhali expedition to the east was con-

¹⁰¹ Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, iii, 574-5.

¹⁰² He did, however, charge those who had lost their rifles sixty rupees each, according to Baburam Acharya, *ibid*, iii, 575.

ducted with dispatch.

The Conquest of Eastern Nepal

Prithvinarayan had been in contact with Harinanda Upadhyaya, one of the wealthiest Brahmans in Majh Kirat, since the fall of Kathmandu and Patan.¹⁰³ Harinanda promised to assist Prithvinarayan Shah in any way he could in the conquest of the eastern Tarai. In addition to this promise of substantial aid, Prithvinarayan had the assurance that many Brahmans and Chhettris in the area would support Gorkha. For some time before the actual attack he had employed men in the east to solicit this support. Because of this the Gorkhali troops were able to move with great speed when the attack was launched in August 1772. Harinanda supplied them with boats to help them cross the Sun Kosi River, and the Gorkhals, armed with muskets, were able to sweep through the hills. Their superior fire-power completely outmatched the bows and poisoned arrows used against them.¹⁰⁴ Portage services were provided by Murmis and Sunwars. By January 1773 the Gorkhals controlled the upper half of Majh Kirat, and by the end of February their control extended to the southern half as well.

Prithvinarayan was then in a position to carry out the final phase of his plan to conquer the two kingdoms of Chaudandi and Bijayapur. Mindful, however, of the possible relationship of these kingdoms with the East India Company, and not being anxious to repeat the experience he had with Mir Kasim, he wrote to the governor general that he was merely engaged in a punitive expedition against the Kirat chieftain Buddha Karna Rai, who had murdered a relative of his. He asked the governor

¹⁰³ Letters of Prithvinarayan Shah to Harinanda Pokhrel, dated 15 Bhadra 1830 and 18 Phalgun 1830 (1773 and 1774)—Samsodhan Mandal calculation, published in *Itihas Prakash*, i, part i, 12-3.

¹⁰⁴ Letters of Prithvinarayan Shah to Amar Singh Thapa et al, dated Phalgun, sudi 7, roj 3, verified for either 21 Phalgun 1829 B.S. or 9 Phalgun 1830 B.S. (1773 or 1774); to Ram Krishna Kunwar et al, dated 22 Paus 1830 B.S. (1774); and to the Dwares of Palanchowk, dated 12 Ashar 1831 B.S. (1774)—all dates by Samsodhan Mandal calculation, published in Samsodhan Mandal, *Upadesh*, iii, 1099-1100, 1166-8, and 1181-2. These letters mention the sending of substantial quantities of gun powder and bullets to the eastern front, which shows a considerable increase in the use of muskets in the war there.

general to refrain from assisting Buddha Karna Rai, should such help be sought.¹⁰⁵ He then ordered the attack on Chaudandi in July 1773. The raja fled, deserting his troops, and his men surrendered on 16 July.

The Gorkhals spent a year in consolidating their hold on Chaudandi, and then, during the monsoon of 1774, they crossed the Tarai lowlands and rivers by elephant and came upon Bijayapur suddenly. Their attack during the monsoon was an unheard of thing in the Tarai, and they achieved complete surprise. After a very short fight Bijayapur fell into Gorkhali hands on 17 July 1774.

In order to secure their possession of these Tarai areas the Gorkhals also had to gain possession of the forts in the hills from which raids into the Tarai could be made. This was done with very little difficulty, and with their capture the whole of eastern Nepal lay open to the Gorkhali army. Within a few months the Gorkhals were able to secure almost the entire eastern hill region. Large groups of hill people submitted willingly to their rule, and in each such case a generous treaty was worked out for them. The few pockets of resistance that the Gorkhals encountered were wiped out quickly.¹⁰⁶

Considering the momentum the army had gathered in the east, there was a real danger that the Gorkhali troops would move rashly into areas that came within the sphere of influence of the Dalai Lama. It was considered essential in Kathmandu that the Dalai Lama be in no way offended until some satisfactory settlement of the coinage question could be reached. As a matter of fact, at this very time when the Gorkhals were moving practically unhindered through the hills, a Gorkhali mission was in Tibet negotiating for a settlement of this very important financial question. Since the Gorkhali conquests had now brought them into direct contact with the territories of the Sikkim raja, who was a disciple of the Dalai Lama, Prithvinarayan Shah sent a sharp letter ordering that nothing be done that would in any way endanger his relations with Tibet.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, iv, 64. This collection will be referred to as CPC in future references.

¹⁰⁶ Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani* iii, 612.

¹⁰⁷ Letter of Prithvinarayan Shah to Abhiman Singh Basnyat et al, dated 23 Aswin 1821 (1774) Samsodhan Mandal calculation, published in *Itihas Prakash*, i, part i, 13.

But before this letter arrived in the east, the Sikkim raja had already signed a treaty with the Gorkhali commanders which marked out boundaries between the two states to the mutual satisfaction of both parties.

At this point Nepal had gained the whole of the eastern hills, including all the territory west of the Singalila watershed.¹⁰⁸ In the Tarai the Gorkhals controlled the entire territory as far east as the Teesta River. If the Gorkhali administration of these areas could be organized without hindrance from the East India Company, Gorkha was well on the way to becoming a major hill state.

Actually, Prithvinarayan Shah had long since put into practice a policy that was later to become a dictum in his *Dibya Upadesh*, the maintaining of friendship with the Company.¹⁰⁹ His diplomatic contacts with the Company during this period have been detailed in an earlier study by the author and need not be repeated here.¹¹⁰ But while the negotiations themselves have no direct bearing on the issue here being discussed, it is important to recall that Gorkha acted on the principle that, having conquered a state, Gorkha became master not only of the state but also of all that state's territorial claims. If the conquered state had any claim at all to Tarai land, Gorkha assumed that claim as her own. This meant that if such a state held any land from the Moghul nawabs or the Company on a zamindari basis, Gorkha claimed the right to continue to hold that land on the payment of the same obligations that the previous zamindar had paid. Prithvinarayan Shah's negotiations, carried on through the agency of Dinanath Upadhyaya, secured British acceptance of this principle in fact, if not in law, and this formed the basis of Gorkhali relations with the Company until the turn of the century.¹¹¹

Despite his many achievements, Prithvinarayan Shah was still a comparatively young man in the winter of 1774-5. It comes as something of a surprise, then, to read in the account of Bogle's visit to the Teshoo Lama that according to current reports Prithvinarayan was seriously ill and that his body was

¹⁰⁸ Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jivani*, iii, 612.

¹⁰⁹ Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Upadesh*, p. 11.

¹¹⁰ The Author, *Prithvinarayan Shah*, pp. 47-56.

¹¹¹ Cf. below, Chapter Seven.

covered with fever spots.¹¹² The facts, however, bore out these reports, and though not yet fifty-three years of age, Prithvinarayan Shah had clearly come to the end of his career. His last gift to the people of Gorkha was his *Dibya Upadesh*, delivered in a series of discourses at Nuwakot during December 1774.¹¹³ In early January 1775 he was taken to Devighat near Nuwakot, where he died on the morning of 11 January.¹¹⁴

Prithvinarayan Shah's achievements stand for themselves. His position in the history of Nepal is secure. Only one thing need be added here. It has been said that his conquest of the Valley, which was the great stepping-stone to the future unification of Nepal, was achieved only because the kings of the Valley could not suppress their petty jealousies and unite against him. Though the fact is true, the implication that Prithvinarayan Shah did not bring to the campaign something that gave him and his Gorkhalis the fighting edge over the kings of the Valley cannot be accepted. Any *one* of the kings of the Valley was strong enough to defeat the Gorkhali forces, even in the midst of such petty feuds as were in progress. Each of these states had a stronger economic base than Gorkha and sufficient wealth to provide themselves with a strong professional army. What they lacked, and what Prithvinarayan Shah possessed in abundance, was leadership and vision. For them each battle was a war in itself, and once it was won or lost, there was nothing further to be considered until the next battle was joined. For Prithvinarayan Shah each effort was but part of a planned campaign. Defeats came, but they were all taken as incidents along the road of greater purpose. This practical understanding of what was at stake he communicated to his men, so that even the worst of set-backs was shaken off and put firmly behind them. Prithvinarayan Shah had vision, and he could communicate with his men. These are the elements of leadership. On the other hand, Jaya Prakash Malla, who was certainly the ablest of the Malla kings of the Valley at that

¹¹² Markham, *Narrative*, p. 157.

¹¹³ Acharya, *Prithvinarayan Shah Ko Jiwani*, iii, 631-2.

¹¹⁴ Naya Raj Pant, 'Baburam Acharyajyu Sanga Prathana', *Purnima*, No. 9 p. 91, establishes clearly the date of Prithvinarayan Shah's death as 11 January 1775, rather than 10 January 1775, as had formerly been accepted.

time, failed basically because he did not know how to distinguish the art of leadership from the power to command. His suspicions and doubts of the loyalty of his own men sowed the seeds of dissension among his followers, and showed his inability to translate into terms that they could understand the threat that Gorkha represented to the complacency of the Valley. Weighed in any objective scale of merit, Prithvinarayan Shah must inevitably emerge the greater of the two, and the deciding factor was his skill as a leader.

CHAPTER FIVE THE REGENCY PERIOD

Be convinced, then, that we shall augment our power at home by this adventure abroad, and let us make the expedition.

—*Thucydides*¹

Under the leadership of Prithvinarayan Shah the tiny state of Gorkha had risen from its slumbers. Under his guiding hand an army of considerable size had been developed and a cadre of skilled officers had been trained. Moreover, by dint of skilful diplomacy, superior tactics, and hard fighting he had led this army to the conquest of Kathmandu Valley and the whole of eastern Nepal. Leadership was the key to this success, and Prithvinarayan Shah's death thrust this burden on his eldest son and heir, Pratap Singh Shah.

Pratap Singh Shah was just twenty-three years of age when he came to the throne on 11 January 1775.² Though he was young when he became king, the burden pressed upon him was somewhat lightened by the fact that he inherited both a good army and prudent advisors, should he choose to use them. Prithvinarayan Shah had succeeded to the throne at the age of twenty and had matured into a highly successful ruler. From the viewpoint of age there was no reason to doubt that young Pratap Singh would be able to emulate the success of his father.

From the point of view of character and Pratap Singh's preparation for his task, however, there was considerable reason to wonder whether Pratap Singh would ever reach his father's stature. He was born after his father had embarked on the conquest of Kathmandu Valley, and he grew up during a period when Prithvinarayan Shah was intensely preoccupied with the prosecution of the war against the Malla kings. Consequently, Prithvinarayan had never been able to spend the

¹ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Bk. VI, Ch. 18.

² Prithvinarayan Shah died on 11 January 1775 and according to custom Pratap Singh Shah was proclaimed king the same day.

time with the boy that was necessary to prepare him for his task. Furthermore, Pratap Singh, unlike his younger brother Bahadur Shah, was not especially enamoured of the military life and the hustle and bustle of a military camp. His Brahman tutors had seen fit to neglect his training in the political writings of the *shastras* and turned his attention to the more gentle study of poetry and music.³ Also, as he grew older he fell more and more under the influence of Bajranath Pandit, who introduced him to the mysteries of Tantricism.⁴ This led him down the path of sensuality and ill-prepared him for the task of leading what was essentially a military state.⁵ It is perhaps this phase of Pratap Singh's life that is indicated in the *Raj Vamsavali* recently published by Bal Chandra Sharma, which says that Prithvinarayan Shah's son Pratap Singh Shah took four or five women to himself, and that when Prithvinarayan Shah learned of this and was unable to convince him of his error, he went to Nuwakot and stayed there.⁶ From the point of view of Pratap Singh's preparation for his office and his own personal character, then, the transfer of power from Prithvinarayan Shah to Pratap Singh Shah left much to be desired.

Perhaps a more critical challenge to the easy transfer of power lay in the disaffection that had arisen between Prithvinarayan and his brothers. During the long years of the campaign for the conquest of the Valley, these men had laboured spiritedly in the Gorkhali cause. When the prize was won, they approached Prithvinarayan, and, true to the spirit of the hills before the rise of the House of Gorkha, they petitioned that he give them each a share of the conquered territory to rule as their own. In the eyes of the hill men, their request was just. In terms of unification, however, it would have been catastrophic to grant it. Here, then, lay the first subtle challenge to the unity of the House of Gorkha, and many scholars see

³ Baburam Acharya, *Nepal Ko Samkshipta Brittant* (Kathmandu, 2022 B.S.), p. 70. This is interesting in light of Prithvinarayan Shah's strictures against such pursuits, which, of course, date from a period subsequent to Pratap Singh's education. Cf. Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Upadesh*, p. 20.

⁴ Acharya, *Samkshipta Brittant*, p. 70.

⁵ Satkari Mookerjee, 'Buddhism in Indian Life and Thought', *Cultural Heritage of India*, i, 595.

⁶ 'Kathmandu Upatyaka Ko Ek Rajvamsavali', *Ancient Nepal*, No. 6 (January 1969), p. 16.

in Prithvinarayan's treatment of this petition an indication that he saw his conquests not only as an acquisition of territories but also as a real unifying force in the hill states. The incident is treated at length in the *Bhasha Vamsavali*, and it is perhaps best to present a translation of that account here for the general reader. Scholars, of course, will want to consider the original for a more exact treatment of the incident.

At this time the four brothers of the maharaja or Gorkha [Prithvinarayan Shah] made a request of him. "By your glorious valour and our strength you have made the kingdom of Nepal your own. Now give to the four of us younger brothers whichever cities and villages you think we should have." The maharaja considered this and decided upon this answer. "If I now show my love for you, my younger brothers, by telling you to take for yourselves these cities and these villages of the three kingdoms of Nepal, I will be laying a heavy burden on my descendants. Just as the kings of these three cities were continually quarrelling and could not live in peace, and so their kingdom crumpled and fell into my hands, so will it be if I divide the kingdom. My descendants will not be able to enlarge the kingdom. The kingdom itself will not be firm and stable. Therefore it is better not to give what you ask than to give it." So the maharaja refused to give what his brothers had asked. The brothers were very downcast, because, as they said, "We worked very hard, and now he will not give us what we ask." After this some of them remained in the city, while others went elsewhere.⁷

Unfortunately for the welfare of Gorkha, this was not the end of the matter, though the chronicle seems to imply that it was. There are extant two letters, dating from about 1771, that indicate that Mahoddam Kirti Shah took the matter into own his hands. Apparently he took possession of an area in the Tarai and began to rule it as his own private kingdom. He wrote a compromising letter concerning this move, and this letter was intercepted by Kehar Singh Basnyat, who promptly forwarded it to Prithvinarayan Shah himself. How Prithvinarayan settled the usurpation is not clear from the letters, but

⁷ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, iii, 919-20.

certainly he did not spare his younger brother's feelings. Mahoddam Kirti was furious that he was found out, but he gave out that he had been falsely accused and would deal with those responsible. Prithvinarayan Shah heard of this also and wrote first to Abhiman Singh and Kehar Singh Basnyat to encourage them and assure them that they had only done their duty. He told them that they had not even accused Mahoddam Kirti, but had only sent a letter of his that they had intercepted and thought should be brought to the attention of the court.⁸ To Mahoddam Kirti, however, Prithvinarayan Shah wrote in a vein that must surely confound those who try to strip Prithvinarayan Shah of the human passion and force of character that made him the leader he was. He told Mahoddam Kirti that he had heard of his threats against Kehar Singh and warned him that he would have his eyes plucked out if he dared to carry out his threats. He also made it clear that Kehar Singh was guilty of nothing, that he made no charge, and that he had merely done his duty, whereas Mahoddam Kirti had accused and convicted himself by the letter he had written. This being the case, he advised Mahoddam Kirti that since he had been false to the trust that had been placed in him, he might better hold his tongue.⁹

But the matter refused to rest there. Three days before Prithvinarayan Shah's death at Devi Ghat on 11 January 1775, Mahoddam Kirti and the raja of Kaski signed a *dharmapatra* in Kaski in which the raja of Kaski promised to assist Mahoddam Kirti Shah, chautariya, in building a house in Kaski.¹⁰ From what has already been said about the relations between Gorkha and the Chaubisi, of which Kaski was one, it is not surprising that the court in Kathmandu saw this as a threat to the throne and the integrity of the country.

This was the situation that Pratap Singh inherited. It was quite a challenge for the young king, and perhaps this helps us

⁸ Letter of Prithvinarayan Shah to Abhiman Singh Basnyat et al, dated 7 Marg 1828 B.S. (1771)—Samsodhan Mandal calculation, published in Samsodhan Mandal, *Upadesh*, iii, 1078-9.

⁹ Letter of Prithvinarayan Shah to Mahoddam Kirti Shah, undated, published in Samsodhan Mandal, *Upadesh*, iii, 1079-85.

¹⁰ A *dharmapatra* written by Raja Siddhinarayan Shah of Kaski to Mahoddam Kirti Shah, dated 1831 B.S., Paus, sudi 12, roj 6 (1775), published in Ramji Tewari, *Aitihāsik Patra Sangraha*, ii, 86-90.

understand, if it does not fully explain, why Pratap Singh imprisoned his brother Bahadur Shah within two weeks of the day Prithvinarayan Shah died. Imprisoned along with Bahadur Shah was Dal Mardan Shah, a brother of Prithvinarayan Shah. At the instance of Gajraj Misra, the Gorkhali agent in Banaras, who had come to Kathmandu for the coronation, the sentence of imprisonment was commuted to exile.¹¹

Though it would be convenient to set this episode aside as merely another quarrel between members of the royal family, it cannot be done. It touches too nearly on the unity of authority in the country, which makes it a vital part of this study, and it had a profound influence on the course of Nepali history for the next twenty years.

The Charge of Conspiracy

The most perplexing part of the whole episode is the *reason* for Bahadur Shah's imprisonment. Why was a lad of seventeen years imprisoned almost before his father's ashes were cold? No one knows. There is no documentary evidence to show that he was guilty of any particular crime. In the absence of such evidence, historians have regularly fallen back on speculation, and this, unfortunately, has not always been unbiased.

The obvious explanation of Pratap Singh's action is based on a charge against Bahadur Shah contained in a letter written by Rana Bahadur Shah, the son and successor of Pratap Singh, to his agents enroute to Lhasa, and dated B.S. 1854, Baishakh, badi, roj 2(1797 A.D.).¹² The letter is quite clear. When the agents reach Lhasa they are to approach the authorities there and impress them in language suitable to the occasion with Bahadur Shah's evil intentions against the persons of Pratap Singh Shah and Rana Bahadur Shah. The letter contains twelve accusations, the first of which is the most damaging, since it is a direct accusation that Bahadur Shah had conspired with Dal Mardan Shah to kill Pratap Singh. Was it for this that Bahadur Shah and Dal Mardan Shah were imprisoned and later exiled? Or is the accusation itself subject to suspicion?

¹¹ Acharya, *Samkshipta Brittant*, p. 73.

¹² Published in Chittaranjan Nepali, *Sri Panch Rana Bahadur Shah* (Kathmandu, 2022 B.S.), pp. 111-5.

Rana Bahadur Shah's accusation against Bahadur Shah is dated just twenty-one years after the 'assassination conspiracy' was supposed to have taken place, and a full three years after Rana Bahadur had assumed the full powers of the throne. His accusation, then, dealt with an event that took place before he was even born, and the charge was delayed for three years after Rana Bahadur had the power to prosecute it. Further, at the time when the letter was written Bahadur Shah was languishing in prison, where he died of unexplained causes before the agents ever reached Lhasa. The suspicion is strong, then, that Rana Bahadur's accusation was intended to justify Bahadur Shah's death to the authorities in Lhasa, among whom Bahadur Shah had many friends,¹³ and that it did not constitute a legal accusation of crime. It could not have been such. Rana Bahadur had no personal knowledge of the event, since he was not yet born when it supposedly took place, and if there were clear proof given him for the existence of the conspiracy, he surely would not have waited three years before he got round to punishing it.

This suspicion is strengthened when the accusation is examined more in detail.

1. If such a charge were true, the place to make it was not in the drawing rooms of far-off Lhasa, but in the court of Nepal. Regicide or attempted regicide is an ugly crime, and would assuredly have received condign punishment. The verdict of the court in Kathmandu would have been far more impressive than the unsupported charge sent to Lhasa, and had there been such a verdict, there would surely be some record of it, or at least a mention of it, in the documents available today.

2. What motive could a boy of seventeen have harboured that would lead him to plot the death of his brother before he himself had fully recovered from the shock of his father's death? That he himself become king? Unlikely. It takes time for such aspirations to grow, and this conspiracy is supposed to have taken place practically at the funeral pyre of Prithvinarayan Shah. Not only is the time factor against this, but Bahadur Shah's temperament itself is against it. He was too much his

¹³ Cf. the letter of the Chinese ambas to Rana Bahadur Shah, Chittaranjan Nepali, *Rana Bahadur*, pp. 108-9.

father's son not to realize what such an upheaval would do to the kingdom at a time when its armies were achieving such success in the field. Besides, as *chautariya*, which he could rightfully expect to be named, he would have ample scope for his abilities without engaging in the odious crime of regicide.

3. If the state of affairs had been such as Rana Bahadur's charge indicated, imprisonment and later exile would have been far too mild a punishment. Certainly such a dangerous rival would not have been allowed to wander freely among the hostile *Chaubisi*, which is precisely what Bahadur Shah was permitted to do.

4. In a letter to Pratap Singh Shah, Bahadur Shah wrote some time later that he had always been loyal to Pratap Singh's person and to the state.¹⁴ In his answer to this letter Pratap Singh neither contradicts this nor does he prefer any charge against him. Instead there exists in this letter and in the whole correspondence between these two brothers a strong bond of affection. What Pratap Singh did tell his brother was that he had exiled him without anger and in peace of mind, measuring the medicine to the wound, and further stated that when the wound was healed Bahadur Shah was welcome in his old home.¹⁵ It is hard to imagine this as coming from the intended victim of an assassination plot.

There is a second possible explanation for Pratap Singh's action. On the supposition that Pratap Singh's uncles were conspiring to gain control of portions of the kingdom, as indeed they had been, and that the young Bahadur Shah had listened with undue attention to the discussion pro and con which the public knowledge of the uncles' desires made inevitable, it is conceivable that Pratap Singh's advisors would suggest when Mahoddam Kirti fled the country that both Dal Mardan Shah and Bahadur Shah be confined. In such a supposition the very

¹⁴ Letter of Pratap Singh Shah to Bahadur Shah, dated 15 Srawan 1833 B.S. (1776)—*Purnima* calculation; published in Dinesh Raj Pant, 'B.S. 1832 Dekhi B.S. 1858 Samma Ko Nepal Ko Itihas Ma Nayan Prakash Parne Kehi Patraharu', *Purnima*, No. 17, pp. 30-1. It should be noted that the practice of the Nepal durbar was to summarize at the beginning of a letter the contents of the letter that was being answered, so that having possession of one letter gives at once both the initial query or statement of a case and official answer.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

flight of Mahoddam Kirti pointed an accusing finger at Dal Mardan and Bahadur Shah.

This second possible explanation has more to recommend it than the first, but there is one convincing argument against it. When, as regent, Bahadur Shah had the full power of the state in his hands, he consistently maintained the internal unity of the state and in no instance did he allow any of the royal collaterals to separate even one of the more distant regions as his own private domain. Bahadur Shah's policy in this regard was absolutely consistent with his father's policy. In view of the emotional scenes necessarily associated with his father's last discourses and the funeral rites at Devi Ghat, it is difficult to imagine a boy of seventeen showing himself so callous as to countenance any such proposal, especially since his father had condemned it only a short time before.

A third possible explanation of Pratap Singh's action can be proposed. Of the two sons of Prithvinarayan Shah, Bahadur Shah seems to have been the more popular with the military and the military commanders. His energy and ambition, so resembling the qualities of his father, must have commended the boy to the rugged soldiers with whom he grew up and in whose reflected glory he basked. Pratap Singh, on the other hand, was of a gentler sort, who by education and preference was inclined towards a style of life totally different from the rough bivouac and the field. It is entirely possible that Pratap Singh's advisors alerted the young, newly-installed king of the dangers such a brother might represent to his crown. A talented brother enjoying the support and the affection of the military could be a dangerous rival indeed. Added to this was the sudden and conspiratorial flight of an uncle who had already been seriously taken to task by Prithvinarayan Shah himself for attempting to establish himself in a position as raja. The logic of this is quite compelling. In a contest between Prithvinarayan Shah and Mahoddam Kirti Shah there could never have been any doubt as to the outcome. But should there be a contest between Pratap Singh Shah and Bahadur Shah, Bahadur Shah's personality with the army might render the outcome far from certain. If Bahadur Shah had failed in any way to show his full co-operation with the new king immediately

after he took possession of the throne, or disagreed strongly with his plans or his way of life, this would have compounded the suspicion. The best and surest solution to such a contest would be to decide it before it began by confining Bahadur Shah and his uncle.

This third solution, both by the process of elimination and by reason of the evidence in support of it, seems the more likely. Without stating categorically that this was so, it must be said that it has a strong appeal.

1. It calls for no animus between the two brothers, a fact that is borne out by their subsequent correspondence, which conveys a real warmth of feeling between the two.

2. It would still leave room for Pratap Singh's gentle reminder to Bahadur Shah, when the latter expressed a desire to return to the Valley, that he had been at fault and must therefore remain outside.

3. It would explain the anxiety of certain of the royal advisors to prevent Bahadur Shah's immediate return to the Valley after the death of Pratap Singh Shah.

4. It would explain the retaliatory measures taken by Bahadur Shah against these same advisors to the young king when he returned from exile after Pratap Singh's death in November 1777.

5. It would explain why no more serious action than exile was taken against Bahadur Shah and why he continued to assist and advise Pratap Singh whenever he could.

For all of these reasons, then, the third of the three proposed solutions to the problem of Bahadur Shah's imprisonment and subsequent exile is the one that will be followed here. This is done on a tentative basis, until such time as further research gives a clearer indication of the motives Pratap Singh Shah had in confining his younger brother to prison so soon after the death of their father and then exiling him from the country.

Once a reasonable explanation for Bahadur Shah's exile is accepted, it is much easier to understand the correspondence that passed between Pratap Singh Shah and Bahadur Shah. It is most revealing. For one thing, it shows that Bahadur Shah, even though he was exiled from Nepal, was actively concerned with the interests of the state. His activity among the Chaubisi

on behalf of Gorkha and his gentle chiding of Pratap Singh for not taking more positive action to strengthen and expand the state makes this clear. The correspondence also evokes from Pratap Singh the forthright statement that whereas Bahadur Shah believed that one must actively promote the welfare of his country by sword and diplomacy, he himself felt that all this was determined by fate and the will of the gods; that 'what will be, will be'.¹⁶

Though this latter sentiment may indicate a supreme passivity to the reader, the facts of Pratap Singh's short reign, as is so often true among men, belie his claim to a fatalistic unconcern. In fact, Pratap Singh managed in the two years and ten months of his rule to achieve quite a satisfactory record.

Gorkhali Activity in Eastern Nepal

In a series of very bitter engagements that culminated in the Gorkhali victory over the raja of Sikkim at Chainpur in 1776, the Gorkhali army established their supremacy over the territory they had held at the time of Prithvinarayan Shah's death.¹⁷ Pratap Singh Shah was thus able to consolidate Prithvinarayan's conquests and prepare the way for the final assimilation of these lands. Perhaps equally important in this campaign was the use of Limbus in the Gorkhali armies.¹⁸ These were the first of many recruits from among the peoples of occupied territories, and their recruitment established a pattern that was to become characteristic in the years ahead. Since it was this opening of recruitment to the men of the fighting castes throughout Greater Nepal that permitted the development of the Gorkhali army, without which the expansion of Gorkha and the unification of Nepal would never have been possible, it became an important factor in the rise of the House of Gorkha.

In addition to his military success in the east, Pratap Singh was able to fulfil a second Gorkhali ambition. It had been one of Prithvinarayan's sternest commands that Buddha Karna Rai be captured and done away with, since Prithvinarayan had rightly seen that this man was the one possible obstacle to the

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Iman Singh Chemjong, *Kirat People*, ii, 175.

¹⁸ Ibid. ii, 173.

assimilation of the eastern Tarai.¹⁹ Buddha Karna Rai, however, had fled from Nepal into the Company's territories, and a Gorkhali raiding party had to slip across the border to kidnap him. He was then brought back to Nepal and summarily executed.²⁰ It was a harsh end to a man who had never been known for tenderness to his enemies, and it ended the intrigue that Buddha Karna had been carrying on for many years in the Bijayapur-Chaudandi areas. The importance of this act cannot be stated too strongly. The rich and fertile areas of the eastern Tarai were a prize such as the true hill raja ambioned always but rarely acquired. They offered increased revenues to the state and extensive areas of jagir lands to pay the increasing costs of government and establish Gorkha's military machine on a firm economic footing. But before these advantages could be enjoyed, order had to be established, and Buddha Karna's long opposition and intrigue had rendered this impossible.

The Conquest of Chitawan

The actual territorial acquisitions of Pratap Singh Shah were slight. He added to the kingdom of Gorkha the area of Chitawan, a doon valley in the central inner Tarai, which even today is but little developed.²¹ Even this action he took only on the persuasion of Bahadur Shah, who pointed out to his brother that the time was most auspicious for the attack, since the East India Company was distracted by troubles to the south and constrained by Warren Hastings' policy of restricting the Company's territorial acquisitions. There was no real campaign involved, and the area was annexed after perfunctory battles.²² But Chitawan, as Bahadur Shah rightly saw, was an area of some strategic value in that it would protect the flank of any Gorkhali move into the Chaubisi, and well-developed defences in the Mahabharat Lekh along the northern edge of the doon would add one more obstacle to the British should they decide

¹⁹ Letter of Prithvinarayan Shah to Abhiman Singh Basnyat et al, dated Aswin, badi 30, roj 4. published with notes in Samsodhan Mandal, *Upadesh*, iii, 1193-5.

²⁰ Chemjong, *Kirat People*, ii, 177; also Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 141.

²¹ Thapa, *Geography*, p. 64.

²² Acharya, *Samkshipta Brittant*, p. 75.

to open trade routes to Tibet through Nepal by force. This latter possibility was remote, but nonetheless real, as later events were to prove.

Pratap Singh Shah's Death

Among Pratap Singh's less successful efforts was his attempt to bring back to Nepal one or two Capuchins. The Capuchins had left the Valley in 1768 after the fall of Patan to seek refuge in Chuhari, near Bettiah, from the uncertainties of war. Pratap Singh wanted them back as doctors. It must be recalled that he had been cured by the ministrations of one Father Michelangelo during the third phase of the attack on the Valley,²³ and the usefulness of men such as Father Michelangelo had been well and truly brought home to him at that time. Both Pratap Singh's own correspondence and the Capuchin correspondence testify to his concern.²⁴ But, though Father Michelangelo himself visited Pratap Singh and spent several days with him,²⁵ the Capuchins simply had no man to send on a permanent basis. This lack of proper medical care may well have cost Pratap Singh his life, for, though earlier accounts have ascribed his death to smallpox,²⁶ recently published correspondence indicates that the disease that eventually brought about his death was

²³ Petech, *Nuovu Ramsio*, ii. parte 2, 235, letter CI 105.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, ii. parte i, lxxix, says, 'Morto Prithvi Narayan ai aprimi del 1775, gli successe il figlio Sima Pratap Shah, il protettore della missione da cui tanto si attendevano i cappuccini del 1768. In fatti il nuovo re invito subito i cappuccini a reintrare a Kathmandu, ma per mancanza di missionari il nuovo Prefetto P. Giuseppe da Rovato (1769-86) non pote far nulla.' (After the death of Prithvi Narayan at the beginning of 1775, his son Sima Pratap Shah succeeded him, the protector of the mission, from whom the Capuchins had expected so much in 1768. In fact, the new king quickly invited the Capuchins to come back to Kathmandu again, but because of a lack of missionaries, the new perfect Fr. Joseph da Rovato (1769-86) could do nothing.) Also, *ibid.*, ii, parte I, 187, note 73, 'In tre lettere da Patna datate rispettivamente 29 Dicembre 1775, 30 Dicembre 1775, e 10 Dicembre 1776, il P. Giuseppe da Rovato continuava a ripetere che il nuovo re aveva invitato a ritornare, ma che egli non aveva la possibilita di accontentarlo.' (In three letters from Patna, dated respectively 29 December 1775, 30 December 1775, and 10 December 1776, Fr. Giuseppe da Rovato continued to repeat that the new king had invited him to return, but that he did not have the means to accommodate him.)

²⁵ Letter of Pratap Singh Shah to Bahadur Shah, dated 1834 B.S., Baishakh, badi 2, roj 5, Kantipur, published with notes in Dinesh Raj Pant, 'Nayan Prakash Parne Kehi Patraharu', *Purnima*, No. 17, p. 36.

²⁶ Acharya, *Samkshipta Brittant*, p. 76.

one that should have responded to proper medical care.²⁷

Pratap Singh Shah's untimely death brought a real crisis to the kingdom of Nepal. Pratap Singh himself had been poorly prepared to assume the burden of government when he came to the throne, but he had at least been mature enough to evaluate the advice offered him by his ministers and, if necessary, countermand their orders. His death gave the throne to an infant who was not yet two and a half year of age.²⁸ It also enhanced the role of the ministers, making them decision-makers and formulators of policy rather than advisors and executors of policy. In consequence, they assumed a very important position in government until it could be clearly established that final authority in the kingdom rested either with Bahadur Shah, who was still in exile, or Pratap Singh Shah's young widow, Rajendra Laxmi. Obviously this had a serious effect on the unity of the country. Equally serious were the schemes evolved by the various nobles of the court to influence either Bahadur Shah or Rajendra Laxmi, and it was at this time that the seeds of intrigue were deeply planted among the nobles of Nepal.

In this regard a most enlightening series of letters between the court and Bahadur Shah has been published in recent years.²⁹ This series of eleven letters, written over a two-week period immediately after Pratap Singh's death, suggests the nature of the struggle going on in the court of Nepal at this time. All of the letters written from Kathmandu were written in the name of the infant king, but, of course, they were the work of one or other of the ministers. They indicate that even while the young widow was observing the rites required by the death of her husband, the ministers of the court were maneuvering for positions of power from which they could control the destinies of the country.

As soon as Bahadur Shah was informed of the death of his

²⁷ Letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Dalmardan Shah et al, dated B.S. 1834, Agahan, badi 6, roj 5, published with notes in Dinesh Raj Pant, 'Nayan Prakash Parne Kehi Patraharu', *Purnima*, No. 17, p. 37.

²⁸ Rana Bahadur Shah was born on 1832 B.S., Ashad badi 11. Cf. Chittaranjan Nepali, *Rana Bahadur*, p. 1. Baburam Acharya, *Samkshipta Brittant*, p. 72, has verified this for 25 May 1775. Pratap Singh Shah died on 17 November 1777.

²⁹ Cf. Dinesh Raj Pant, 'Nayan Prakash Parne Kehi Patraharu', *Purnima*, No. 17, pp. 37-43.

brother, he set out for Kathmandu to perform the rites of mourning and the *shrad* ceremony. When news of this move reached the court, a letter was dispatched to him asking him not to come until the official mourning period was over.³⁰ This same sentiment was conveyed to Bahadur Shah again and again. As Bahadur Shah continued on his way, the later letters assume an almost frantic tone, urging him to remain in the Tarai, to wait until he was sent for, to await a delegation that would come to bring him into Kathmandu, etc. Though the letters all indicate that once the mourning period was over Bahadur Shah would be brought to the Valley, there is every reason to suspect their sincerity. This suspicion is centred, not in the request for Bahadur Shah to remain in the Tarai for a time, but in the opposition to his coming to perform the normal rites of mourning which his relationship with the departed king imposed on him. This duty could not be lightly set aside, especially since he was so close to the Valley, and his desire to fulfil it should normally have been respected.

As Bahadur Shah came to realize the true situation in Kathmandu, he abruptly changed his plans. Even when he was told he might proceed to Kathmandu, he refused to go on and expressed his intention of returning to Bettiah.³¹ The letters themselves had roused his suspicions and, of course, he had other sources of information about events in the Valley in addition to these letters. His change of plans, then, was not a stubborn reaction to the court's original reluctance to have him in Kathmandu, but a reaction to a new development in the court that he saw as a threat to his own personal safety and freedom of action. Bahadur Shah's plan to return to Bettiah was changed, however, when he received the last letter of the series, which indicated a far more favourable attitude toward him. In this letter Bahadur Shah was *ordered* to come to the capital.³² The letter adds that Gajraj Misra, Daljit Shah, and other important personages including all the nobles had written to Rana Bahadur concerning Bahadur Shah, and that on the

³⁰ Ibid., p. 38.

³¹ Ibid., p. 43.

³² Ibid., Letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Bahadur Shah, dated 1834 B.S., Agahan, sudi 3, roj 4 (22 Marg 1834 B.S.—1777).

basis of this advice he was obliged to order Bahadur Shah to come to the Valley for the welfare of the state.³³ Apparently the tide had turned in favour of Bahadur Shah, and his prestige at court finally forced his recall. Shortly after Bahadur Shah returned to Kathmandu he wrote to Dal Mardan Shah and Bal Bhadra in a manner that indicates that he had already taken control of the affairs of state. He also mentions that the hostile clique in government who had long had the ear of Pratap Singh and who had apparently tried to prevent his return to the Valley had been removed from the scene. Bajranath Pandit had been seized, branded, outcasted, and exiled from the country. Parsuram Thapa had been imprisoned. And Kazi Swarup Singh Karki had fled to India to escape punishment.³⁴

The Struggle for Power

Bahadur Shah's return to the Valley, however, did not ensure him absolute control of the government during the infant king's minority. The young widow of the late king had a very strong will of her own and was unwilling to relinquish the advantages that her position as queen mother offered her.³⁵ As a further complication in the contest between these two, there were not a few nobles who were willing to assist one or the other in exchange for the right to share the crumbs of power that fell from the royal table.

The first real clash between Bahadur Shah and Rajendra Laxmi developed over the question of further expansion of Nepal's territories. Bahadur Shah was determined to recruit the new companies that would be required for this, but he was strongly opposed by the queen mother and her advisors, who were content to rest and enjoy what had already been won.³⁶ When neither side could prevail by reason, Rajendra Laxmi resorted to force. With the help of Sarvajit Rana she had Bahadur Shah confined and thus settled the dispute for a time. Shortly after this, however, Gajraj Misra once again intervened, and

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Dal Mardan Shah, undated, published in Tewari, *Aitihāsik Patra Sangraha*, i. 39.

³⁵ Acharya, *Samkshipta Brittant*, p. 78.

³⁶ Ibid.

was able to obtain Bahadur Shah's release.³⁷

After securing his freedom, Bahadur Shah set about establishing his authority in a way that would permit him to execute his plan for the expansion of the kingdom. He overcame Rajendra Laxmi's continued opposition by the crude expedient of having Sarvajit Rana killed and the queen mother confined to the palace.³⁸ It was, of course, an impetuous and foolish act, and one that he would regret, but Bahadur Shah felt that the critical time for westward expansion had arrived and that if he could turn Gorkha's attention to the Chaubisi and the expansion to the west, this was a small price to pay.³⁹

In pursuit of his plan Bahadur Shah first proposed to the royal advisors an attack on Tanahun. Understandably this met with a cool reception. Bahadur Shah was but twenty years of age, and his treatment of the queen mother had caused deep misgivings about his prudence and stability. The majority at court opposed him and succeeded in blocking his plan for four months. Bahadur Shah, however, would brook no such delaying tactics, and when it became apparent that these nobles were determined to prevent military action which he considered urgent, he proceeded on his own authority to order Sardar Bali Baniyan to attack Tanahun.⁴⁰

When the raja of Tanahun heard of the approach of the Gorkhalis, he fled before the attack could take place. The Gorkhalis thus occupied Sur, the capital of Tanahun, with practically no opposition.⁴¹ But the raja's flight—motivated less by fear than by a recognition of his own weakness—had been only to a neighbouring kingdom to seek help in driving the Gorkhalis from his territories. When Palpa responded generously to his request, he was able to begin massing troops at Balithum in preparation for his counter-attack. The Gorkhali commander, rather than allow the enemy to complete his preparations, took the initiative and attacked first, but in the battle on 10 March

³⁷ Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepaul*, p. 273.

³⁸ Sarvajit Rana was killed on 1835 B.S., Bhadra, sudi 11, roj 4. Cf. Chittaranjan Nepali, *Rana Bahadur*, p. 108.

³⁹ Acharya, *Samkshipta Brittant*, p. 78.

⁴⁰ Bhasha Vamsavali, quoted in Dinesh Raj Pant, 'Aprakasit 6 Wota Aitihāsik Patraharu', *Purnima*, No. 20, p. 318.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

1779 the Gorkhals were defeated.⁴² Bali Baniyan himself and sixty-five Gorkhali soldiers fell on the field of battle.⁴³ Parbat then joined the attack, and a combined Chaubisi army crossed the Narayani River to strike at the Gorkhali troops at Someshwar in Chitawan, where they again prevailed. With the Chaubisi clearly on the offensive and gaining momentum, the pressure on Bahadur Shah mounted, and the situation, once so promising, began to deteriorate rapidly.

Bahadur Shah was caught on the horns of an impossible dilemma. To remain and protect his interest in Kathmandu was to invite disaster in the military campaign he had launched in the face of all opposition. On the other hand, to go to Gorkha to bolster the Gorkhali resistance and save the campaign was to invite further interference in palace affairs by the queen mother. Characteristically Bahadur Shah opted for Gorkha and the campaign. His arrival there completely altered the course of events. He was able to redirect troops to the Someshwar front from Gorkha, Upardang Garhi, and Kabilaspur and retake Someshwar.⁴⁴

While Bahadur Shah was regaining control of the situation in the west, his fears for the situation in Kathmandu were verified. The queen mother took advantage of his absence by summoning Mahoddam Kirti Shah from Banaras—Mahoddam Kirti, it will be remembered, was the younger brother of Prithvinarayan Shah. As Rajendra Laxmi had expected, no one at court dared to withstand Mahoddam Kirti, who soon had her released. Once free, she took immediate steps to ensure her position. She exiled Bahadur Shah once again and exiled or put to death his immediate followers.⁴⁵ Quite unexpectedly several of the leading military commanders chose to join Bahadur Shah in exile, since they apparently felt that without his leadership there would be no significant military action in

⁴² Ibid. p. 318.

⁴³ Acharya, *Samkshipta Brittant*, p. 79.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid. Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepal*, p. 273, however, says, 'Neglecting, however, to conciliate the chief men of the state, who laid claim to greater rewards for past services than he was able or perhaps disposed to grant, he soon discovered that they began once more to lean towards his antagonist, who at the same time professing a resolution to submit entirely for the future to the will of her brother-in-law, the latter judged it on the whole most prudent to restore her liberty.'

Nepal. Unperturbed by this, Rajendra Laxmi settled back to enjoy her position as queen mother and regent. She was free at last of her arch-rival and free also to savour leisurely the fruits of her victory.

The Renewal of Military Activity

Had Rajendra Laxmi been more experienced in the world of political and military affairs, she would have realized that in the situation then prevailing in Greater Nepal the decision to rest and enjoy the fruits of victory could not be left to Gorkha's choosing. There were strong enemies in the west who would take advantage of any lull in the fighting to improve their own position. There were elements in the east who still retained the ability to stir up trouble. Rajendra Laxmi was to be forced by events to take action, despite her personal desires.

Eastern Nepal had been conquered, but the area was not completely settled, and there still remained a few who openly opposed Gorkhali rule. While he lived, Buddha Karna Rai had been the centre of opposition, but after his death it was the widow of Karna Sen who stirred up unrest in the area.⁴⁶ Besides trying to regain the support of the East India Company in the struggle to regain her lost possessions, she wrote to Mukunda Sen II, of Palpa, a kinsman of her late husband, and begged him to send one of his sons to become the heir to Bijayapur and Chaudandi. Mukuṇḍa Sen, of course, saw this as an important opening for further action against Gorkha. It would occupy Gorkha's attention in the east, and allow the Chaubisi an opportunity to prepare a concerted attack from the west. He complied with her request and sent his son Dhoj Bir Sen to her. The fugitive from Kathmandu, Swarup Singh Karki, was sent as his protector.¹⁷

⁴⁶ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 142.

⁴⁷ Acharya, *Sankshipta Brittant*, p. 83. Hamilton, *Nepal*, pp. 171-2, says, however, 'After the death of Prithvi Narayan, his son Singh Pratap showed so much favour to Swarup Singha, whom he had raised from a low rank to the important office of Karyi, that, on account of the envy which was excited, the favourite was under the necessity of flying to the Company's territory. There some European gentlemen took notice of him, and supported him with money. Having introduced himself to the unfortunate widow of Karna Sen, chief of the eastern branch of the family.....Swarup obtained authority from this lady to proceed to Palpa for assistance; and

These action of Karna Sen's widow and Mukunda Sen were sufficient warning to the court of Kathmandu. When Karna Sen's widow began to send letters to Sikkim and other states asking them to join in attack on Nepal, Rajendra Laxmi was forced to take some action.⁴⁸ What she did was significant and proved that though attracted by a life of leisure, she could, when pressed, take strenuous action in defence of her country.⁴⁹ Her first move was to increase the number of Magars in the army, since their knowledge of the eastern Nepal regions made them invaluable for service there. She also had the foresight

(Continued from page 156)

having gone there, Makunda gave him his youngest son Dwaja Vir to be adopted by the old lady, and to assert the claims of his family.' In short, Hamilton gives to Swarup Singh the credit for the initiative in approaching Mukunda Sen.

⁴⁸ Acharya, *Samkshipta Brittant*, p. 84.

⁴⁹ Though no Nepali record exists for the ultimate solution of the eastern Tarai problem, Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 142, gives this account of it: 'The unfortunate widow, deprived of her only hope, seems to have harboured views of revenge. She sent to Mukunda Sen, the Raja of Palpa, and, as I have said above, of the same family with her husband, in order to request one of his sons, whom she might adopt, and to whom she might transfer the right to the middle and eastern divisions of the principality. The Raja accordingly sent Dhujavir, one of his younger sons, who came to Puraniya in the year 1779, and sent letters to the Deva Dharma Raja, to Sikim, to the Chaubisiya Rajas, and to the Governor of Bengal, soliciting aid, but without the least probability of success. He had remained about three years at Puraniya, and had formed a friendship with Madrapate Ojha, a Brahman, who managed the estate of Dhumgar, within nine coses of the frontier of Morang. He had also formed a friendship with a Ganes Bharati Mahanta, a priest, who lived between Puraniya and Dhamgar. This man, in the year 1782, promised, that, if the youth came to his house, he would adopt him as his pupil (Chela), and lend him money of which the young man was in much need. On his arrival at the residence of this priest, various delays and frivolous excuses were made to avoid the performance of the promises; and the youth was tempted, by an invitation from his friend Madrapate, to advance to Dhumgar where he and his friends were entertained eight days, in the office where the rents of the estate were collected. In the night of the eighth day the party were suddenly awakened by the approach of a body of men; and, on looking out, perceived that these were armed; and had surrounded the house. The party in the office looked for their arms, but these had been removed in the night without their knowledge. They soon learned, from the language of the people by whom the house was surrounded, that they were Gorkhalese soldiers, who ordered them to come out. Several who went out were killed, but the raja remaining within, and all his people invoking the protection of the governor and of Company, the usual in such cases, the soldiers entered, and said, there is no governor nor Company can now give you any assistance. The raja soon received a cut in his forehead, and then acknowledged himself, asking them, whether they intended to carry him away or to murder him. They replied, that they came for his life; on which he began to pray, and held out his head, which was cut off with a sword.'

to make two Magars, Bandhu Rana and Deva Dutta Thapa, kazis. Along with this she ordered that the military supplies needed for war be build up.⁵⁰

The stage was thus set for a renewed burst of Gorkhali activity in Greater Nepal. Since the Gorkhali military activity in this phase of the unification of Nepal differed significantly from that which led to the conquest of the Valley—it was mountain warfare pure and simple—a few words about the nature of mountain warfare at this point may obviate some confusion in the narration of attack and counter-attack that follows.

There were actually three basic principles that governed mountain warfare in the hills of Nepal at that time. First, hill armies aimed at control, not occupation of territory. The validity of this principle was based on two facts: in the Pahar area there were no large cities to occupy; and hill armies were generally small. Since there were no large cities to occupy, the primary target necessarily became the key fort in an area, the control of which would ensure the control of the surrounding territory. Also, since the armies were small, the hill rajas could not plan a large-scale invasion, but had to rely on rapier-like thrusts into hostile territory. Few soldiers could be spared for occupying even fairly important towns. Hence the principle: control, not occupation, with control achieved by the control of key forts,

The second principle followed was a defensive principle. Any intrusion of a hostile force into a defending territory could be countered by withdrawal tactics only so long as the invader did not strike at a really strategic fort. The tactic of withdrawal, of course, combined three points: 1) drawing an invading force ever deeper into the defending territory; 2) forcing the invading force to expend troops in the occupation of minor posts and forts; and 3) encouraging the invading force to lengthen its supply and communication lines so that they would become increasingly vulnerable. This tactic, however, had to be abandoned if an important and strategically located fort were lost, since such a fort exercised control over an area *and* control over the revenues of the area. If such a fort was actually lost, an immediate counter-attack became essential.

⁵⁰ Acharya, *Samkshipta Brittant*, p. 84.

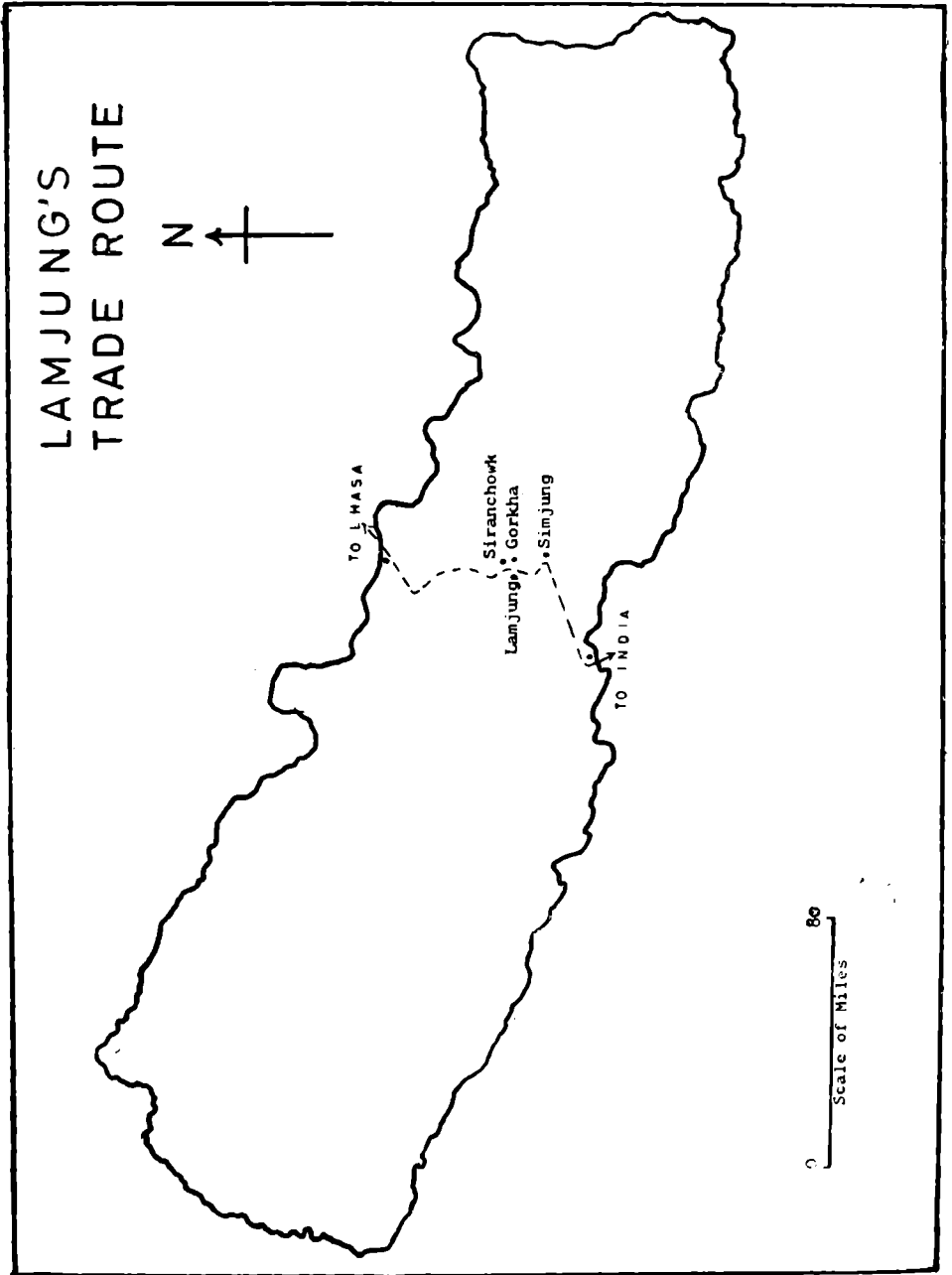
The sooner the fort could be regained, the less danger to the state and the less disruption in the normal revenue arrangements in the territory.

The third principle was the principle of counter-attack. Once an invading force was defeated and driven back from its objectives in the defending country, a counter-attack aiming at some key point within the intruder's territories was in order. This principle was based on the very practical observation that an army in retreat was less likely to be able to face a sharp counter-attack, and therefore the chances for the success of such an attack were excellent. In this connection it must be recalled that maintaining a large number of troops in one place was a very profitable proposition in the hills, and so the hill armies tended to be highly mobile, keeping a minimum number of troops stationed at any one given point. As a result of this, it was often possible to catch the enemy at a time when the troops in a particular fort were reduced in number. Surprise, of course, was a factor in this, and this surprise is precisely what was aimed at by executing an immediate counter-attack.

These three principles: 1) occupy forts, not territory, 2) regain any strategically placed fort lost as soon as possible, and 3) counter-attack as soon as the invader's attack had been turned back, gave to the hill warfare of the late eighteenth century an appearance of constant motion and counter-motion leading almost to confusion. This confusion, however, is only apparent. Once it is realized what the armies were striving to achieve, the moves and counter-moves become as fascinating as a chess game between masters.

I. The Defeat of the Chaubisi Invasion

Lamjung, as Gorkha's oldest enemy and nearest western neighbour, could be expected to take the lead in any activity against the new Nepal. Militarily Lamjung was strong, and, with the added assistance of Parbat, on which Lamjung could safely rely, she was *very* strong. Strategically, however, Lamjung was quite vulnerable. As Hamilton indicates, Lamjung depended almost entirely on trade for its income.



Lamjung.....was a cold country bordering on the snowy peaks of Emodus [the Himalayas], and inhabited by Bhotiyas, with some Brahmans and Khasiyas in the warmer vallies. It contained no mine of any importance, nor any town of note, except the capital; and the chief advantage... that the Raja enjoyed was the commerce with Bhotan or Tibet, which was carried on through a passage in Emodus called Siklik [Larke Pass], by way of Tarju, Tanahung, Dew Ghat [Deo Ghat] and Bakra, into the low country.⁵¹

As the accompanying sketch map shows, this trade route moved from the Tarai north past the outpost at Simjung, through Lamjung, and on towards Tibet by way of Larke Pass. On the way from Lamjung to Larke, it passed within striking distance of the Gorkhali fortress at Siran Chowk Garhi. The route was especially vulnerable in two places: in the south at Simjung, and in the north at Siran Chowk Garhi. Since she was already in possession of Siran Chowk Garhi, Rajendra Laxmi was in a position to choke off Lamjung's trade with the north. If she could also take possession of Simjung, she would be able to cut Lamjung off from the south, thus striking a telling blow at Lamjung's economy and reducing Lamjung's potential for interference in Gorkhali affairs.

In pursuance of this plan, one company of soldiers was sent to set up thanas around Simjung and bring it under Gorkhali control. Since Simjung did not lie far to the west of the Gorkhali fort at Upardang Garhi, once the Gorkhalis had established themselves there, the combination of Simjung and Upardang Garhi would give them a commanding influence on all trade passing through Deo Ghat and enable them to strike a crippling blow at Lamjung. For some months, however, the Chaubisi had been making extensive preparations for this war. They were, in fact, already in possession of the high ground at Simjung when the Gorkhali army detachment approached. The Chaubisi were thus able to drive the Gorkhali off and set up their own thana there.⁵²

After blunting the Gorkhali attack at Simjung, the Chaubisi

⁵¹ Hamilton, *Nepal* p. 243.

⁵² Acharya, *Samkshipta Brittant*, p. 85. Of this the *Bhasha Vamsavali* says that the Chaubisi took Simjung on 26 Paus 1703 Saka (1838 B.S.—1782). Cf. Dinesh Raj Pant, 'Aprakasit 6 Wota Aitihāsik Patraharu', p. 321.

commander, Garud Dhoj Panth of Tanahun, launched an immediate attack on the Gorkhali fort in the north, Siran Chowk Garhi. He had a sizable army for this offensive, including troops from Lamjung and Parbat, military units from Palpa, Piuthan, and Kaski, plus some soldiers from the lesser states of the Chaubisi. He used the soldiers of Palpa to garrison Simjung against a possible Gorkhali counter-attack, while the rest of the troops he took with him into Lamjung for the attack across the Chepe River on Siran Chowk Gathi. In the van of the army he placed the troops of Kaski.

Kaski was a most unwilling participant in this venture. Earlier, when Lamjung and Parbat were engaged in a war against Kaski, Prithvinarayan Shah had removed the pressure on that state by a timely attack on Lamjung.⁵³ Besides this, though Kaski and Lamjung belonged to the Lamjung Alliance,⁵⁴ Raja Siddhinarayan of Kaski had no great desire to see Lamjung establish herself as a stronger state than she already was. It was quite obvious that any territory that could be taken from Gorkha would be annexed to Lamjung. With a strong state like Parbat on her west, Kaski was not eager to have a greatly strengthened Lamjung on her eastern border. In fact, should Lamjung grow significantly stronger, and Kaski be thus sandwiched between the two strong states of Parbat and Lamjung, he could fear for the very future of Kaski. Despite these misgivings, however, Raja Siddhinarayan and his troops were obliged by Lamjung and Parbat to join in the coalition against Gorkha. With such a strong army to carry out this campaign, Garud Dhoj's attack on Siran Chowk proved successful, and the Chaubisi took up their positions inside Goakhali territory at this important northern fort.

The Gorkhalis now found themselves in a very awkward position. According to all the principles of mountain warfare, it was also an intolerable position. The Gorkhali nobles rose to the occasion, and moved out in force from Kathmandu to join in the effort to drive the Chaubisi out of their territory. Gorkhali detachments were posted in Sera, Harmi, and Ajirgarh

⁵³ Cf, above, p. 158.

⁵⁴ Cf, above p. 55.

as part of the counter-offensive.⁵⁵ However, before the Gorkhali counter-attack began, Bal Bhadra Shah, the Gorkhali commander, sent a letter to Raja Siddhinarayan of Kaski. Though the contents of this letter are not known, the letter itself had very dramatic effects. The raja promptly packed his army off for Kaski and left his erstwhile allies to face the Gorkhals alone.

While Garud Dhoj Panth was adjusting to this sudden and undesired development, the Gorkhals moved forward to the attack. For the time, the van of the Gorkhali army was held in reserve, and Sardar Amar Singh Thapa, a native of Siran Chowk, who knew every inch of the ground on which the battle was to be fought, led four companies out of Ajirgarh to Chisapani. Near Chisapani, at Chipleti, he encountered a detachment of Chaubisi troops and roundly thrashed them. Garud Dhoj Panth, oblivious of this encounter and of the presence of the Gorkhali advance party in the area, then made his signal mistake. He committed his whole army to throwing up a new thana at Jhimryak in preparation for the coming battle with the Gorkhals. While his men were thus engaged, Amar Singh Thapa, fresh from his victory at Chipleti, struck at the Chaubisi troops. A terrible battle ensued, with the Gorkhali surprise being balanced by the Chaubisi superiority in numbers. The fighting stretched out through the morning and into the afternoon, giving Bal Bhadra time to wheel the van of the Gorkhali army into the attack. The combined Gorkhali forces then overwhelmed the Chaubisi troops and drove them helter-skelter back across the Chepe into Lamjung territory, causing them to desert in the process the Lamjung fort at Raginas Kot to the east of the Chepe.⁵⁶

Kirti Bam Malla, the raja of Parbat, was furious at this defeat, which was as much the result of Siddhinarayan's flight as of Garud Dhoj Panth's miserable military tactics. To vent his spleen on Garud Dhoj Panth would achieve nothing, except perhaps to alienate some of the other Chaubisi military personnel. But Siddhinarayan was altogether an acceptable target

⁵⁵ *Bhasha Vamsavali, Purnima*, No. 20, p. 321.

⁵⁶ Letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Bahadur Shah, dated 1838 B.S., Phalgun, badi 10, roj 5 (29 Magh 1838 B.S.—1781), published in Dinesh Raj Pant, 'Aprakasit 6 Wota Patraharu', pp. 316-7.

for his wrath. So Kirti Bam Malla gathered up the scattered Chaubisi forces and led them towards Kaski. Siddhinarayan fled to save himself, and quite naturally he went to Gorkha for protection. When the Gorkhali nobles returned to Kathmandu, Raja Siddhinarayan went along with them. There he was well received, and after some months of discussions he entered into a treaty of subsidiarity with the court of Kathmandu.⁵⁷

2. *The Conquest of Lamjung*

In signing a treaty of subsidiarity with Siddhinarayan, Rajendra Laxmi automatically pledged herself to restoring him to his throne. This could be done effectively only by both conquering Lamjung and driving Kirti Bam Malla out of Kaski, an operation which would require a military commander of superior skill. Since she had no such commander in her service, Rajendra Laxmi accepted the advice of her ministers and recalled Bamsha Raj Pande, who, it will be remembered, had resigned his post and gone to Bettiah to stay with Bahadur Shah when Rajendra Laxmi seized control of the state. Bamsha Raj Pande and his brother Damodar Pande were made kazis, and Bamsha Raj set out at once for Gorkha.⁵⁸

Bamsha Raj's first step was to isolate Lamjung. His plan to achieve this called for the neutralization of Tanahun and a sudden thrust up through Tanahun into western Lamjung and Kaski, driving Kirti Bam Malla back towards Parbat and cutting the communications between Parbat and Lamjung. The first step in this programme was fairly easy. Overtures to the Panths, the leading officials of Tanahun, fell on fertile soil—perhaps Garud Dhoj Panth's recent humiliation and its aftermath may have facilitated this—and Tanahun stepped aside. Bamsha Raj then sent Amar Singh Thapa with a picked force through Tanahun towards Kaski. Moving rapidly through the hills by little-known trails, Amar Singh caught Kirti Bam Malla's forces completely by surprise at Dahregaunda Deorali in western Lamjung, and Kirti Bam Malla himself had to sneak away from the scene of his army's defeat, bare-footed and clad

⁵⁷ *Bhasha Vamsavali, Purnima*, No. 20, p. 321.

⁵⁸ Acharya, *Samkshipta Britanti*, p. 86.

only in a dhoti.⁵⁹ Bamsha Raj was thus able to garrison Kaski, which lay to the rear of Lamjung, and complete Lamjung's isolation. He then spent the remaining weeks of the monsoon in setting up thanas in the vicinity of Tarju, taking Chiti and Lamjung's Chisapani practically without a fight. When these preparations were complete, it was clear that nothing could stop the inexorable Gorkhali advance, and the raja of Lamjung fled, leaving Lamjung to the Gorkhalis.

3. *Kaski's Betrayal*

Palpa entered the contest in September of the following year, 1783; when Mahadutta Sen urged Ram Krishna Kunwar, the Gorkhali commander at Upardang Garhi, to defect. Sensing a new Chaubisi offensive, Rajendra Laxmi recalled Swarup Singh Karki from India and assigned him to lead the campaign against Palpa.⁶⁰ This campaign was later broadened in scope to include Parbat and others of the Chaubisi as well. The Gorkhali plan of attack called for a huge pincers movement into the Chaubisi territory, the southern arm of the pincers to be led by Abhiman Singh Basnyat, and the northern arm by Naru Shah. Swarup Singh Karki remained in over-all command.

Abhiman Singh Basnyat led five companies of Gorkhali troops along the inner Tarai, crossing the Mahabharat Lekh to the south-east of Palpa and overrunning the Palpali outposts that he encountered. He won a minor victory at Balhang, and finally entered Tansen, the capital of Palpa, on 4 April 1784. His position in this zone was strengthened by the decision of the Palpali governor at Butwal to join forces with the Gorkhalis.⁶¹

The northern sweep of the army was also highly successful. This wing of the army defeated Aridaman Shah of Western Nuwakot at Kristi on 28 February 1784 and also occupied Paiyun.⁶²

When the Gorkhalis were on the point of complete victory, Kaski's betrayal snatched it from their hands. For reasons

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁶⁰ *Bhasha Vamsavali, Purnima*, No. 20, pp. 324-5.

⁶¹ The size of the Gorkhali company varied, but it was usually about two hundred men; hence Abhiman Singh had about one thousand men under his command. In view of this, his achievement is remarkable.

⁶² *Bhasha Vamsavali, Purnima*, No. 20, p. 324-5.

never satisfactorily explained, Siddhinarayan of Kaski wrapped in an old cloth the treaty that Rajendra Laxmi had given him and threw it one night into the Gorkhali camp. It was found in the morning, and the subedar sent some nobles to Kathmandu with it. Unexplained though his action was, Siddhinarayan made it quite clear that he had deserted his allies.⁶³ He then completed his betrayal by moving his troops into a threatening position to the rear of the northern wing of the Gorkhali army. When Kirti Bam Malla then sent a large force from Parbat to confront these same Gorkhali troops, the Gorkhali position in the north suddenly became precarious. Remembering the disastrous defeat of the Gorkhalis at Satahun in 1772, Rajendra Laxmi immediately called for the withdrawal of all Gorkhali forces in the Chaubisi area. Naru Shah returned to Lamjung on 3 June 1784, and Abhiman Singh Basnyat returned to Lamjung five days later.⁶⁴

4. *Final Victory*

The Gorkhalis had clearly shown their superiority in the campaign, and only Kaski's betrayal had prevented their total victory, but the Chaubisi were still far from being cowed. The Chaubisi Rajas, and Kirti Bam Malla in particular, remained determined to prevent Rajendra Laxmi from disengaging from the contest and enjoying the fruits of her expanded kingdom. Kirti Bam Malla felt that with Kaski's defection from the Gorkhalis the initiative lay with the Chaubisi and that this initiative should be exploited. As an added irritant there remained the Gorkhali presence in Lamjung. Parbat, it must be remembered, had been separated from Gorkha only by the states of the Lamjung Alliance. Lamjung and Tanahun, two of the three states of this alliance, had already fallen to the Gorkhalis. The third, Kaski, had proved to be both weak and vacillating. Hence, the

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 325. Although one of the major reasons for Siddhinarayan's unwillingness to combine against the Gorkhalis had been his gratitude for Gorkha's past services, this must not be pressed too far. Equally important had been his reluctance to see Lamjung become more powerful. With the collapse of Lamjung, he was relieved of the pressure that Lamjung had exerted on his eastern borders. If, by collaboration with Parbat, he could help defeat Nepal, he would be in a position to enjoy his kingdom without undue fear of intervention.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 325-6.

very presence of the Gorkhals in the Lamjung-Tanahun area was a threat to Parbat, and the basic principles of mountain warfare demanded that he make an effort to unseat the Gorkhals from their forward base in Lamjung.

In addition to the military presence of the Gorkhals in Lamjung, there was also the Gorkhali diplomatic presence to be considered. During the lull in the battle occasioned by angle time for Gorkhali agents to move among the Chaubisi to Gorkha's disengagement policy, there would be a win over dissident elements to their side or to convince the rajas individually and to this Kaski was especially vulnerable—that it was good policy to cooperate with the Gorkhals.

Acting on this conviction, Kirti Bam Malla sent an army into Lamjung and occupied Makai Danda in the west of Lamjung on 22 June 1784. It was a clever move. By consolidating this post he would have a convenient base for further operations against the Gorkhals in Lamjung and perhaps succeeded in forcing a total Gorkhali withdrawal.⁶⁵

Rajendra Laxmi responded to this challenge by sending one company of soldiers from Kathmandu to Lamjung to reinforce Swarup Singh Karki. The Gorkhali commander then attacked Makai Danda, scattered the Parbat forces there, and captured their commander. His victory, though hardly decisive, delivered a severe blow to Kirti Bam Malla's plans for further action against Nepal. After this, content with his limited success, Swarup Singh Karki returned to Kathmandu, while the two Gorkhali kasis remained with their troops, quartering them for the monsoon in two separate areas in Tanahun.⁶⁶

After the monsoon of 1784 the Gorkhals returned to the offensive in the west. Up to that time they had conquered only Tanahun and Lamjung among the Chaubisi Rajas. These were, however, the two strongest kingdoms east of the Kali River. During the winter of 1784-5 Rajendra Laxmi planned to complete the conquest of this area and establish the Kali as a secure boundary for Gorkha on the west. She sent Daljit Shah and Swarup Singh Karki to occupy Kaski, and with this the Gorkhals controlled the whole territory of the Lamjung Alliance, which

⁶⁵ Acharya, *Samkshipta Brittant*, p. 90.

⁶⁶ *Bhasha Vamsavali*, Purnima, No. 20, p. 326.

had once been the strongest defensive alliance in the hills.⁶⁷ It was then a simple task to subdue the principalities lying to the south of this alliance. A minor skirmish was fought at Sarankot on 11 June 1785, after which Abhiman Singh Basnyat conducted a sweep through the small kingdoms along the Andhi Khola valley. Finally, to complete the occupation of the Chaubisi territory to the east of the Kali River, the Gorkhals occupied Satahun on 17 June 1785, thus avenging the defeat suffered there in 1772.

With this conquest Rajendra Laxmi's military achievements ended. During the period of her regency she had prevented the development of any real opposition to Gorkhali rule in eastern Nepal. She had also succeeded in bringing under Gorkhali sway the states of the Lamjung Alliance and the lesser states of the Chaubisi Rajas lying east of the Kali. Though the complete subjugation of this territory would have to remain for Bahadur Shah's regency, she had achieved a great deal in the eight years she controlled Nepal. From a military point of view, then, Rajendra Laxmi's regency, despite a very shaky beginning, had proved to be quite successful. Her action, of course, had been but a response to the threat posed to Nepal by the states to the west Kathmandu—time and circumstances had proved that Bahadur Shah had been right when he urged continued military action among the Chaubisi. In view of this, one might think that Bahadur Shah might have been able to lead the Gorkhals to more positive action, had he been a little less impetuous in his treatment of the queen mother. This is unlikely. It does not seem that any accommodation between the two was possible. Rajendra Laxmi would never have agreed to play a minor role, leaving the major decisions in the hands of her brother-in-law, and without this power to make and execute decisions Bahadur Shah would have been both helpless and frustrated.

It is this aspect of her regency, the clash between Rajendra Laxmi and Bahadur Shah, that bore the most unfortunate results. The unity of the Gorkhals under Prithvinarayan Shah had been their great strength. Rajendra Laxmi's introduction

⁶⁷ Ibid.

of a partisan spirit into the court inevitably weakened the state, and while it is true that for a time Bahadur Shah's military success during the period of his own regency would be able to distract the various contenders for royal favour and prestige, after his death this evil came back to plague the court of Nepal for many years to come. Perhaps this was an inevitable development, especially in view of the succession of a minor and a regency period of almost sixteen years. Nevertheless it was unfortunate that the guiding genius of this partisan spirit held a position as regent where she could so positively encourage it.

Rajendra Laxmi's Death and the Recell of Bahadur Shah

In January 1785 Rana Bahadur Shah's *Bratabanda* ceremony was held at Gorkha. Baburam Acharya suggests that Bahadur Shah was invited for this and that he accepted the invitation, thus passing once more into the danger zone where the queen mother's will was law. After the ceremony, according to this opinion, he returned with the royal party to Kathmandu, where he remained for some months. The queen mother, who had come to know that she was dying of tuberculosis, established her strongest partisans in positions of power to protect her son and to control the destinies of Nepal after her death until Rana Bahadur came of age. As the end drew nearer, her suspicions of Bahadur Shah again flared up, and in early July she ordered him to be kept in close confinement at Pharping, on the southern edge of the Valley. Only after her death was Bahadur Shah released from prison and recalled to serve as regent.⁶⁸

Baburam Acharya does not, of course, insist on this opinion. He offers it as an explanation of what probably happened. Certainly there is a logic to it, and also a sort of dramatic finality to this account of the end of the struggle between Rajendra Laxmi and Bahadur Shah. The theory is, however, no longer tenable. Recently published materials indicate that the final chapter in their struggle was neither so dramatic nor so simply explained.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Acharya, *Samkshipta Brittant*, p. 91.

⁶⁹ Dinesh Raj Pant, 'Aprakasit 12 Wota Aitihāsik Patra', *Purnima*, No. 21, pp. 49-70.

In a letter dated 31 Ashad 1842 B.S. (mid-July 1785) Bahadur Shah was told that, though he had delayed for one reason or another in returning to the Valley, the moment he received this official letter he was to return to the Valley without delay.⁷⁰ Though the letter contains no indication of the residence of Bahadur Shah, it is quite clear from the terms of the letter that he was a free agent at the time the letter was written and that he was by no means in prison—a fact of very significance, since Rajendra Laxmi died just two days after this letter was written.

This letter forms the last in a series of twelve letters written over a two and one-half year period, from January 1783 to July 1785. All were written in the name of Rana Bahadur Shah to Bahadur Shah. Since Rana Bahadur was a boy of between eight and ten years of age when the letters were written, and since most of them deal with matters of state, it is apparent that someone highly placed in government wrote them in his name. Eight of the letters extend an invitation to Bahadur Shah to return to Kathmandu. Three of them ask him to send news regarding the British intentions in Nepal. And one of the letters asks him to use his influence with the officers of the Company's government to prevent the kingdoms of Parbat and Palpa from gaining either aid or rifles from the Company's government. Who was the author of these letters with their persistent invitation to return? And why were they written?

Dinesh Raj Pant suggests that the appearance of the invitations to Bahadur Shah to return to Kathmandu is an indication of the emergence of his partisans into positions of influence at the court.⁷¹ More probably, however, these invitations originated with Rajendra Laxmi, and were extended because she wanted to have her powerful rival in a position where she could watch him. If the invitations had originated from some of Bahadur Shah's partisans who had managed to secure positions of influence in the court, and if it had been safe and meaningful for him to return, he would have known it and returned.

⁷⁰ Letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Bahadur Shah, dated 1842 B.S., Ashad, sudi 5, roj 2, Kantipur (31 Ashad 1842 B.S.—1785). *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

His very diffidence in the face of eight such invitations, pressed repeatedly throughout a period of two years, indicates that he was suspicious of the motives prompting them. The final invitation, of course, must be taken as a genuine desire to have him back at the centre of power, and it is certain that Bahadur Shah answered it promptly, since he was at the head of government within two weeks of Rajendra Laxmi's death. Of course, Rajendra Laxmi's concern to have Bahadur Shah in a position where she could watch him does indicate that he had sufficient support at court to force her to take this action.

It was undoubtedly this faction at court that brought about the final recall of Bahadur Shah. Before her death Rajendra Laxmi had tried her best to ensure the continuance of her followers in power until her son came of age. Her death did not render these men powerless. The fact that their objections were overcome and Bahadur Shah recalled indicates something of the strength exerted at court by Bahadur Shah's partisans: military commanders and older nobles who had shared the companionship of Bahadur Shah's father and who were dissatisfied with the progress of the country. While it was true that during the years when Rajendra Laxmi had directed the affairs of Nepal some very important military gains had been made, there was not a man of those commanders and nobles who was not fully aware that in each case the military action she called for was a reaction to a challenge from outside. These same men were all aware that the army had grown into a strong weapon, forged in battle, and quite prepared to take the initiative on a broad front throughout the western Chaubisi and beyond. The times called for a man of decision, and a man with an *elan* for leadership. Neither of these could be supplied by the men to whom Rajendra Laxmi had entrusted the state during the remaining years of the young king's minority. In the mind of these nobles the situation called for the talents that they knew Bahadur Shah possessed. They knew enough of about his character, of course, to realize that his return to power would threaten the safety of those who had so long enjoyed the patronage of Rajendra Laxmi, and it can be assumed that in the councils of state during which the decision to recall Bahadur Shah to power was

reached, those men in particular made a strong case for not taking this step. But their arguments were more than countered by the conviction already reached by the majority that Bahadur Shah was the man they required at the centre of authority.

At the end of eleven days of mourning for Rajendra Laxmi, Bahadur Shah was back in Kathmandu, and on the decision of the court council he was named mukhtiyar, or chief minister. One of his first acts as mukhtiyar was to put Swarup Singh Karki to death and to eliminate Bal Bhadra Shah from the officers of the court.⁷² He was then free to turn his attention to the conquest of the west.

⁷² Acharya, *Samkshipta Brittant*, p. 92.

CHAPTER SIX

THE CONQUESTS OF BAHADUR SHAH

Let us one and all, singly and jointly, exert ourselves to the uttermost; for the matter wherein we are engaged concerns the common weal. Strain every nerve, then, I beseech you, in this war.

—*Herodotus*¹

Bahadur Shah, the man who stepped into the centre of power in Kathmandu in July 1785, was a man born to command. He inherited from his father qualities of leadership and aggressiveness that had been honed to a fine edge by his early years in and about the military camps of the armies of Gorkha. During the ten years of his exile he had found abundant time to reflect on military strategy, to interview fugitives from the various central and western Nepal states, and to consider the basic problems presented by the Gorkhali thrust to the west. When called by the court council of Kathmandu to the post of mukhtiyar 1785 he was twenty-seven years of age, in the full vigour of his manhood, tried by adversity, and thoroughly prepared for the role he was then called on to play in the development of his country.

In many ways the nine years of Bahadur Shah's mukhtiyari formed the golden age of Nepal's unification. It was during this time that Nepal passed definitely from the status of an insignificant state to that of a power in the Indian sub-continent. Though later misfortunes severely limited this power, for a brief period it threatened to engulf the whole of the hill region. A few comparisons help to clarify Bahadur Shah's accomplishments. Prithvinarayan Shah had laboured twenty-five years in the conquest of the Valley. Rajendra Laxmi had spent almost eight years in conquering the eastern Choubisi. In the light of this it is difficult to believe that in nine years Bahadur Shah was able to conquer the whole of western Nepal and Kumaon as well. When we add to this the fact that during this same period Bahadur Shah had to fight off a

¹ Herodotus, *History*, Bk. vii, No. 53.

determined invasion of Chinese troops, his achievements take on an aura of the incredible. True, he inherited a remarkably fine army, but he supplied that army with the direction and inspiration necessary to success. He was, in short, very much a man of Prithvinarayan's stamp.

As the above paragraphs have hinted, what distinguished Bahadur Shah from Pratap Singh Shah and Rajendra Laxmi was his aggressiveness and his planning. Pratap Singh took those steps that the political situation of the time thrust on him and extended the dominations of the House of Gorkha slightly—and only at the urging of Bahadur Shah. Rajendra Laxmi was essentially a reactor, fitting her response to the time and the nature of the challenges that were thrown in her path. But Bahadur Shah had his eyes on the horizon as his father had done. He was no dreamer, but a man who knew what the Gorkhali army could achieve and a man who had very definite ideas about the ways and means of achieving it.

Bahadur Shah's approach to the question of Gorkhali expansion is best typified by his conquest of the Chaubisi Rajas west of the Kali River. In this area there were the strong states of Parbat, Palpa, Piuthan, and Isma. The battle fought between their armies and the Gorkhalis under Rajendra Laxmi filled the pages of the preceding chapter, and, when the final summation was made, it was apparent that though they were often defeated, they were never beaten in spirit. They were still very much a force to contend with. Yet in the space of six months Bahadur Shah subdued them all, with the exception of Palpa, of whom he managed to make an ally.

There had been two things missing from the Gorkhali approach to these western campaigns during the rule of Rajendra Laxmi. Strategy was one of these. The other was the simple fact that the army had grown stale. Successful officers were retained in command whether their success was due to superior leadership or to the raw courage of the fighting men. Favourites were posted to high command and allowed to conduct the campaign as it suited them, whether it was in the best interests of the army and the state or not. It took Bahadur Shah slightly over a year to remedy both the deficiency in strategy and to trim the army of unwanted elements.

By way of strategy, he had correctly reasoned that if he could separate Parbat and Palpa, he would cut the task of conquering the western Chaubisi in half. If in addition he could win Palpa to his side, the easier southern approaches into this territory would lie open to his men. To achieve both at one stroke he settled on a marriage alliance with Palpa. Within a few months of his assuming the burdens of the mukhtiyari he married Bidya Laxmi, the daughter of the raja of Palpa.²

Hamilton has lamented this marriage and the subsequent alliance between Bahadur Shah and Mahadutta Sen as a betrayal by Mahadutta Sen of his kinsmen and his allies.³ This may well be true, but the fact remains that it was a brilliant move on the part of Bahadur Shah, since it neutralized at one stroke one of the most powerful of the Chaubisi. In assessing the importance of Bahadur Shah's alliance with Palpa, it must not be forgotten that Palpa was practically invulnerable to any concerted Gorkhali attack. The raja of Palpa enjoyed an intimate connection with the nawab vazir of Oudh,⁴ and there was little room for doubt that if Palpa were seriously threatened, the resources of the nawab would be brought into the fray. Thus Bahadur Shah's alliance neutralized a powerful enemy enjoying the favour of a still more powerful neighbour, opened the way for his soldiers to penetrate to the heart of Chaubisi territory, and gained the cooperation of Palpa's army into the bargain. In a land where marriage alliances had been contracted for generations with an eye to improvement of status and power, rarely had one marriage achieved more than this one did.

After the marriage ceremonies were over, Bahadur Shah retired to Gorkha, where he conducted the pajani of the army.⁵ As a preliminary to this review of the merits and failures of every member of the military forces all appointments were suspended. The pajani began with the highest officers and was carried down through the lowest soldier in the ranks. Military records were examined, those no longer found fit for service were turned out, and new appointments made. Where members were turned out for lack of fitness, the army was relieved of a

² *Gorkhaliharuko Sainik Itihas*, ii, part 3, 436.

³ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 173.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Gorkhaliharuko Sainik Itihas*, ii, part 3, 436.

strong reactionary weight to further activity. But, in addition to this, the very conduct of a pajani sharpened everyone's sense of discipline and service. It brought a new tone to the military command, and prepared it for the task that lay immediately ahead. Such a review was long overdue. Under Rajendra Laxmi, the pajani, which was supposed to be carried out each year, had become a formality. It is clear, however, from the chronicle that the first pajani conducted by Bahadur Shah was no mere formality.⁶ It was a direct preparation for a short, sharp, and final campaign against the Chaubisi Rajas.

The Gorkhali forces were marshalled at Karkikot on the east bank of the Kali River during the last weeks of May 1786, the month of Jyestha according to the Nepali calendar. They crossed the Kali on Saturday 10 Jyestha and began their march on the kingdom of Gulmi. Though it had been expected that this would be a difficult battle, the raja fled, and the Gorkhalis occupied Gulmi on the following day. Since the monsoon was already setting in, the Gorkhali army settled down at Gulmi for three months to consolidate its position and to wait for the weather to improve.⁷

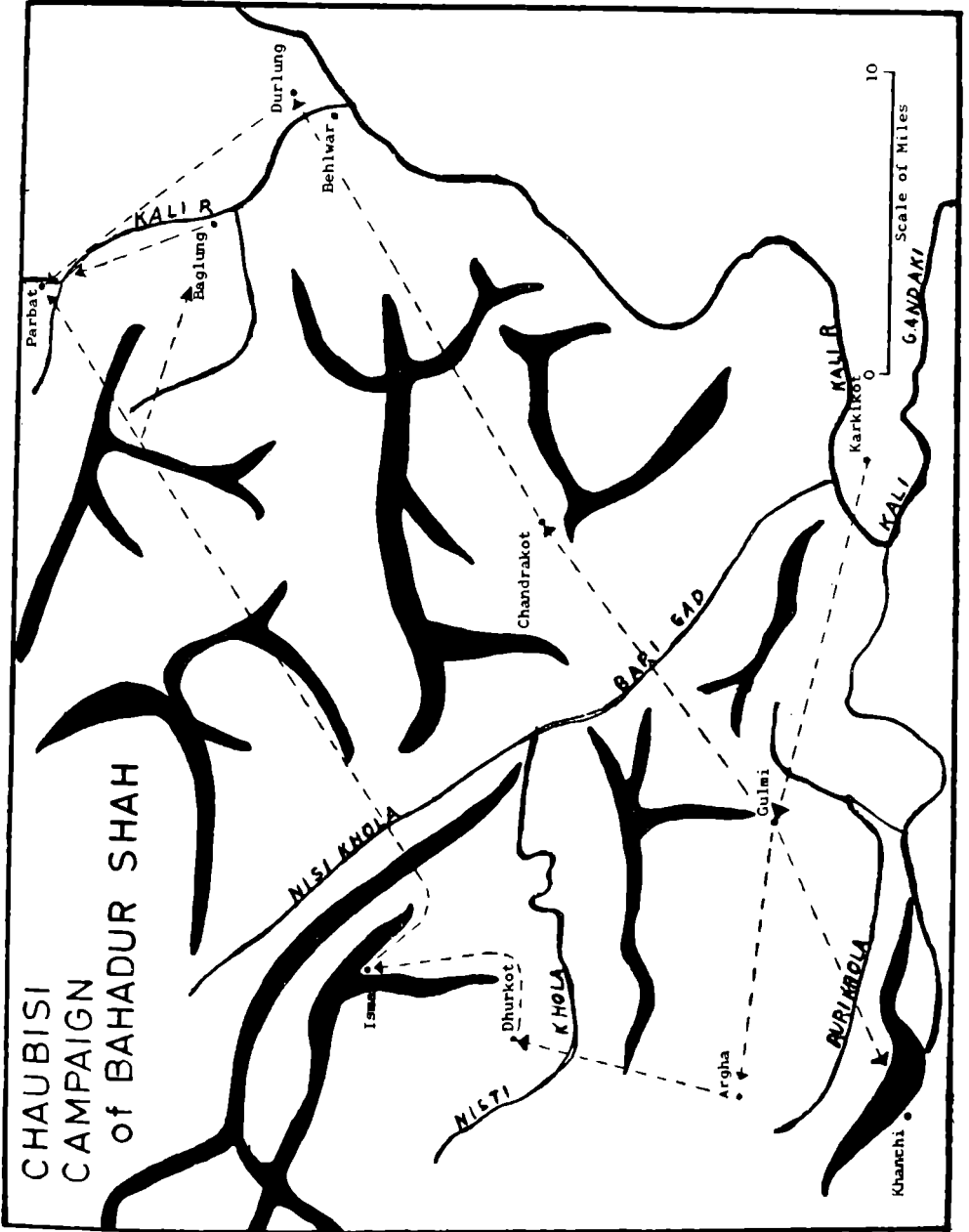
The undertaking of the campaign at the beginning of the monsoon must have shocked the raja of Gulmi. It was not the fighting season.⁸ The very presence in the field of a large body of fighting men at this time indicated both the seriousness of their plans and the strength of a state that could afford to support a large army in the field for three months of essentially inactive waiting. If such were in fact the thoughts that the raja of Gulmi entertained, he was not far from the truth of the matter.

With the end of the monsoon at the end of Bhadra of the Nepali calendar, or mid-September 1786, the Gorkhali army began their attack. Sardar Ambar Singh Rana took two companies to Chandrakot to the north-east, and Subba Jognarayan Malla marched on Khanchi to the south-east with his forces. Chandrakot was occupied with little resistance, and the raja of Khanchi fled, leaving the town and fort to the

⁶ Ibid., ii, part 3, 436-7.

⁷ Ibid: for the date, however, cf. Ramji Tiwari, 'B.S. 1843 Ma Bhaeka Kehi Mukhya Ghatana', *Purnima*, No. 2. p. 61.

⁸ Cf. above, pp. 9-10.



Gorkhalis. Meanwhile Kazi Shiv Narayan Khatri led a third division of the Gorkhali army against Argha to the west, meeting with little opposition. All of these moves were completed within three days, by 28 Bhadra 1843 B.S.⁹ It was the very speed of the Gorkhali attack that prevented the Chaubisi from combining forces against them, a fact that emphasizes Bahadur Shah's wisdom in establishing his monsoon base in Gulmi.

Gulmi, Khanchi, Argha, and Chandrakot had fallen easily into Gorkhali hands, but this did not diminish their importance to the success of the campaign. With their southern base secure, the Gorkhalis could move to the north without concern for the safety of their rear of flanks. This gave them the freedom of movement necessary for a rapid advance into the north. Previous campaigns against the Chaubisi had failed largely because they were carried on in a desultory manner that allowed the Chaubisi to work out alliances, shift troops, and arrange their defence in time to meet the Gorkhalis. It was Bahadur Shah who realized that it was no longer necessary to move so slowly and with such caution. The Gorkhali army was more than a match for the armies of various Chaubisi Rajas, and the secret of conquering them lay in rapidly overcoming individual kingdoms before they could combine their forces at any particular line of defence.

With their base thus secure, Gorkhalis began their march to the north. They took Dhurkot four days after the conquest of Khanchi, and then on 4 Aswin 1843 B.S. they fought at Ismakot the first major battle of the campaign. This battle raged for some hours before it was decided finally in favour of the Gorkhalis. But it was a victory worth the effort, since it subdued a very important kingdom in the area and opened the way to the north. With the victory at Isma behind them, the Gorkhalis continued to the north, meeting stronger resistance from Kirti Bam Malla as they moved towards Parbat. The Gorkhalis fought and won major victories at Durlung and Baglung as they moved north,¹⁰ and were thus on the threshold of their first major encounter with Parbat on its own territory.

⁹ Ramji Tiwari, 'Mukhya Ghatana', p. 61.

¹⁰ *Gorkhaliharuko Sainik Itihas*, ii, part 3, 436.

Parbat, or Malebum, was a wealthy country, as far as this could be said of any of the hill states. It had, according to Hamilton,¹¹ no fewer than twenty-five copper mines, small, but producing a considerable wealth for the raja. Since it lay on the main trade route from the plains, through Butwal and north through Thak and Mustang to Tibet, it also controlled the Tibet trade through the Kali Gandaki gorge. In the area controlled by Parbat there were perhaps as many as 100,000 families, mostly of Gurung descent.¹² Altogether a strong opponent. However, there were serious tensions within the state. Raja Kirti Bam Malla had undermined his own position with his nobles. The constant struggle with Gorkha had taken its toll in terms of men and wealth, and still Kirti Bam Malla had not been able to halt the growth of this upstart state of Gorkha. The nobles were dissatisfied with him and anxious to see his son Nar Singh Malla rule in his stead.¹³ This, of course, greatly aided the Gorkhals, but, judging from Kirti Bam Malla's conduct in previous encounters, it is doubtful if he could have withstood the strength of this Gorkhali attack even in his prime. As it was, Parbat fell to the Gorkhals just ten days after the conquest of Isma.¹⁴

With Parbat subjected to their rule, the Gorkhals retraced their steps through Dhurkot and on westward to Piuthan, which they conquered a month later, on 19 Kartik 1843 B.S., or about the end of October 1786. They then marched on Dang in the inner Tarai, conquering this kingdom ten days later; swung to the north, taking Rolpa on 2 Marg 1843 B.S. (November 1786), four days after the conquest of Dang; and by the 7 Marg they had reached the Bheri River.¹⁵ In six months they had subdued the whole of the Chaubisi west of the Kali. Three of these months had been spent in camp awaiting the end of the monsoon. It was altogether a memorable achievement.

One of the great factors in Bahadur Shah's strategy was a

¹¹ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 272.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 274. The chronicle attributes only 8,000 families to Parbat. Such a small number, however, is inconsistent with Parbat's role in the fight against Gorkha and the enormous stretch of territory Parbat controlled.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Tiwari, 'Mukhya Ghatana', p. 61.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

lesson that he had learned from his father : 'Win over the enemy or factions of the enemy. Be generous to those who cooperate with you; harsh with those who oppose you.' Using the carrot as much as the stick, Bahadur Shah had consistently granted appealing concessions to those who submitted to Gorkhali rule without fighting. Recalling that of all the possessions available to a noble or a raja in the hills, land was the most important, Bahadur Shah settled generous grants on several kings, including the rajas of Bhirkot and Satahun even before he began his campaign.¹⁶ Mustang was granted almost total freedom of action, with only minor reservations.¹⁷ All of these grants were known to the people of the hills and inevitably caused the nobles to give serious thought to the whole question of opposing Bahadur Shah. War and battle had a glamour of their own for the fighting castes, but basically the one desire that every hill man had was for land. As for fighting, they could enjoy as much as they wished within the Gorkhali army. It was open to receive them, provided only they were loyal to the crown and carried their share of the battle. Where was the logic of fighting a determined Gorkha to the bitter end in defence of land and honour, when they could have all this and more by submitting? Some of the greatest leaders of the hills, including men like Bhakti Thapa, who would leave his mark on the history of Nepal as few men have,¹⁸ realized that it was a far wiser thing to join the Gorkhali juggernaut than to throw away life and prosperity in opposing it. This realization, perhaps more than anything else, accounted for the finality of this campaign. The lesson was written large for all to see. Gorkha, i.e. Nepal, was strong enough to conquer even the strongest of these hill states, and it clearly intended to do so. But for those who wished to join the Gorkhalis, there was not only the prospect of easy terms, there was also the promise of acceptance and preferment within the structure of the expanding

¹⁶ Cf. an order of Rana Bahadur Shah, dated B.S. 1843, Paus, badi 7, roj 3 (1 Paus 1843 B.S.—1786), detailing the accommodation made to Bhirkot and Satahun, and the copper plate given to the Mustang raja, dated 1847 B.S., Jyestha, badi 5, roj 4 (9 Jyestha 1847 B.S.—1790), both of which have been published with notes in Dinesh Raj Pant, 'Asrit Rajya Upar Bahadur Shah Le Lieko Niti', *Purnima*, No. 6, pp. 51-5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-5.

¹⁸ Mahesh Raj Pant. 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 10, pp. 37-8.

Nepal.

With the Chaubisi campaign behind him, Bahadur Shah was in a position to overrun the whole of the western hills. He had a fighting machine such as the hills had never known. Continuing Gorkhali conquests had brought large areas of the Tarai under Gorkhali control, valuable land that Bahadur Shah could dispense as jagirs to the hill men who saw fit to join the Gorkhali fighting machine. This was a reward almost beyond the dreams of the land-hungry hill man, and the promise of it guaranteed the Gorkhali fighting machine a constant stream of recruits. The fuel was there. The fighting machine was there. The opposition confronting it was negligible. It was a combination practically guaranteeing success.

There was, however, one serious cause for caution. A fighting machine such as this could easily be drawn on to ever greater conquests without leaving time for the consolidation of the territories conquered. This would lead to merely ephemeral victories, with no real unification taking place. What this army needed was the control of a strong man who could direct it as he saw the need. Bahadur Shah was such a man, but should his attention be taken from the important task of consolidating the territories brought under Nepal's dominion, or should he be removed from power, the very unity of the state would be shaken, because the army would then be free to move on to further conquests, without concern for the vital task of consolidation. From the vantage point of history the warning is clearly discerned, but given the climate of victory prevailing in Nepal and in the army, it is small wonder that this warning went totally unheeded.

For there was a climate of victory. The kingdom of Palpa, for all its cooperation, was given a very meagre reward, the control of Gulmi, Argha, and Khanchi, all former members of the Palpa Alliance.¹⁹ But to Mahadutta Sen personally was given a handsome reward, as befitted the companion of a conqueror. If the accounts can be believed, he was given a golden umbrella with matching golden symbols of royalty, jewelled spears, pearl ear-rings, a pearl necklace, one hundred and one

¹⁹ Cf. above, p. 55.

elephants, and one thousand and one horses.²⁰ Granting the inevitable exaggeration in this account, the meaning is clear that he was accorded the marks of esteem and prestige that must have warmed his heart. Hostages were also taken from the states that had accepted Gorkhali rule. These men were brought to Kathmandu, where they were treated to the sight of this great hill city, and treated in a style that suited their ranks.²¹ One must, of course, take all of this with a sizable grain of salt. Bahadur Shah was no spendthrift,²² and the hill man had no talent or patience at that time for staging impressive displays. The important point here is the *enthusiasm* of the scribes. There can be little doubt that the report of victory after victory kept the capital alive with speculation and that among the fighting castes and the court there was now a total confidence in the army's ability to attain whatever objective the mukhtiyar chose to set for them.

Westward to the Mahakali

Bahadur Shah had achieved a great deal in the first six months of his campaign in the west. In the three years that followed, from the last months of 1786 to early 1790, he was able to extend the rule of Kathmandu over the whole territory that is now known as Nepal, adding almost twenty thousand square miles to the territories controlled by the House of Gorkha.

When this extensive territory is considered, and when the mountainous nature of the terrain is recalled, it is clear that in the short time of a little over three years the Gorkhali troops could do little more than unseat the ruling rajas and control the strategic points in the area. It should also be said that the Gorkhali conquest of these areas was due as much to the political instability of some of these kingdoms as to the strength of Gorkhali arms. Some of this instability, of course, was induced by Bahadur Shah's policy of treating generously those rajas, or factions with a state, who chose to cooperate with the Gorkhali armies. But it must also be realized that these were changing

²⁰ *Jayaratnakarnatak*, pp. 142 and 234, quoted in Dinesh Raj Pant, 'Asrit Rajya Upar Bahadur Shah Le Lieka Niti', *Purnima*, No. 6, p. 52.

²¹ Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepaul* p. 274.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 212,.....this court affects on no occasion either splendour or munificence.'

times. With the Gorkhali army moving rapidly towards the west, the political situation in most of the kingdoms was thrown into turmoil, and the resulting condition of uncertainty and unease contributed very largely to the success of the Gorkhali armies.

Jumla was the key to the west. Although it had long since fallen from the status it once held as the greatest state in western Nepal, it still held a commanding position in the hills, boasting of a sizable population and considerable wealth.²³ A glance at the sketch map accompanying this chapter will indicate something of the strength of its position from a military point of view.

The Gorkhalis chose to attack Jumla by the northern route, passing from the lands of the Mustang raja along the mountain tracks and into Jumla from the north-east. According to Kirkpatrick, this northern route was a journey of about 500 miles.²⁴ Hamilton allowed four miles on the mountain trail to one mile of level travel,²⁵ which would make the map-distance about 125 miles. This is surprisingly close to the distance as measured on the quarter inch map of Nepal. The march to Jumla must have taken the Gorkhalis the better part of one month to complete.

Hamilton states that Jumla had collected an army of twenty-two thousand men to face the Gorkhalis, a force far superior to anything the Gorkhalis could put in the field at this time.²⁶ In view of the narrow valleys and the very high mountains in the Jumla area, it is not surprising that Jumla with such an army was able to resist this northern Gorkhali army's advance for more than two years. Eventually a second Gorkhali army approached from the south, taking Dullu and Dailekh, and then moving up the valleys to Jumla, which fell to the Gorkhalis in mid-September 1789.²⁷ Though the northern route chosen for the first Gorkhali advance was the more difficult, it had not been

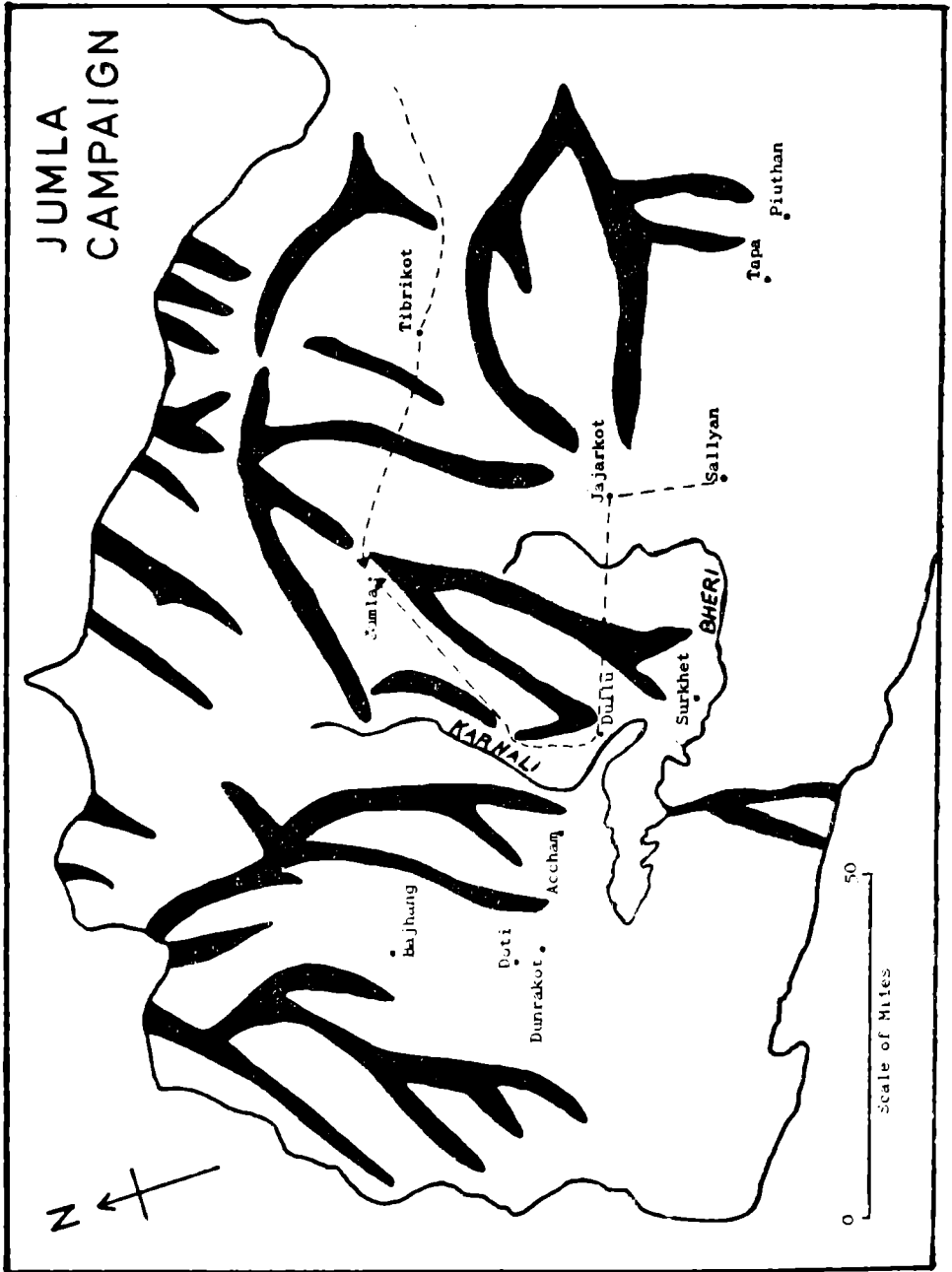
²³ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 284.

²⁴ Kirkpatrick., *Account of Nepal*, p. 291.

²⁵ Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 286.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

²⁷ Dinesh Raj Pant, 'Sri Panch Rana Bahadur Shah Le Kumaon Ma Raheka Nepali Rajdud Sripati Panth Lai Lekheko Patra Ra Tyasko Aitihasik Vyakhya'. *Purnima*, No. 4, p. 64, note.



without its logic. Much of Jumla's prosperity depended on its trade along the northern mountains and into Tibet. By cutting off the approaches to the valley where Chinasin, the capital, was located, the Gorkhalis substantially shortened the war. This northern blockade, of course, was not sufficient to end the war, but it did serve its purpose. It was, however, the southern army which caught the defences of Jumla by surprise, when many of the defenders had dispersed to bring in their harvests, and succeeded in taking the capital.²⁸ Though the victory in Jumla was far from a lightning victory, taking more than two years, it must be reckoned a considerable achievement against a determined opponent who enjoyed all the advantages of terrain.

After the conquest of Jumla, the Gorkhalis moved farther west to Achham, Bajhang, and Doti. Doti was a rather substantial kingdom in the far west of modern Nepal. It had once claimed most of Kali Kumaon as part of its territories, but from the time of Bharati Chand of Kumaon (1437-50 A.D.), the roles of the two states had been largely reversed, so that the kings of Doti had been obliged to defend themselves against the incursions by the Kumaoni rajas and to pay tribute to them. Bajhang had been a dependent of Doti until it was taken from Doti by Kumaon, but with the decline of Kumaon's power under Debi Chand (1720-6) and Kalyan Chand (1730-47), Bajhang had been able to act as an independent kingdom. Doti, of course, wished to regain its control over this state.²⁹ Persuasion failing, other means were tried. After a marriage alliance was contracted between the Dotyal raja's son and the daughter of the raja

²⁸ Hamilton, Nepal, pp. 287-8, says: 'For two years the raja resisted the troops of Gorkha, and had collected a force of 22,000 men; but Rana Bahadur, watching a favourable opportunity, when most of these had retired to their homes, completely surprised the country and acted with such force and cruelty, that no force durst afterwards assemble.' This last is confirmed by a letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Bhakti Thapa, dated 1846 B.S., Magh, sudi 3, roj 2 (8 Magh 1846 B.S.—1790), Kantipur, and republished in Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima* No. 10 pp. 41-3, from *Itihas Prakash*, which says '..... if you advance without securing the area there, it will be a great error. Therefore, following the advice of the nobles there first conquer the sections that have not yet been conquered. Establish forts in such places that will not inconvenience the people. Those who have fled to the jungles to cause trouble later, search out, attack, and cut down. Use whatever supplies are necessary. Kill off those who are above twelve years of age.....'

²⁹ Acharya, *Samkshipta Brittant*, pp. 96-7.

of Bajhang, the son was promised that he would be named the successor to the throne of Doti, if he murdered his father-in-law, the raja of Bajhang. This plot succeeded, but the sons of the Bajhang raja managed to flee to Achham. While in Achham they secretly contacted the Gorkhalis, accepting their suzerainty and promising an annual payment of five hundred rupees, if the Gorkhalis would take up their cause.³⁰ The Gorkhalis accepted the offer, and invited the raja of Achham to join in this pact. When he refused, the Gorkhalis marched on Achham, took it, and then moved on Doti. The raja of Doti fled before their advance, and, although minor skirmishes were fought at Durkot and Narikot, the victory over the kingdom of Doti fell to the Gorkhalis largely by default.³¹

With this victory over Doti the Gorkhali armies had reached the Mahakali River. It was time to call a moratorium on the westward expansion. The Gorkhali armies had begun to experience trouble in Sikkim. There was trouble brewing on the northern border with Tibet. The Gorkhali forces had been spread very thinly over the whole of western Nepal. And the task of assimilating the vast territories that Bahadur Shah had added to Kathmandu's dominions urgently demanded attention. But the Gorkhali army had gathered such momentum that each victory made the next campaign easier. To the west lay Kumaon and Garhwal and the minor states beyond. It was an invitation too tempting for the Gorkhalis to resist.

The Conquest of Kumaon

The Gorkhalis were introduced into Kumaon by Harsha Dev Joshi in 1789.³² Harsha Dev was a man of genius, a born leader, and a real patriot. It was unfortunate that his star arose at a time when the destinies of Kumaon were clouded by factional strife and the personal ambition of Mohan Singh. To recount Harsha Dev's biography would be practically equivalent to giving a detailed analysis of the political struggles that engulfed Kumaon for over forty years. His father had been

³⁰ Ibid., p. 97.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Atkinson, *Himalyan Districts*, ii, 609; also Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 296.

Sib Dev Joshi,³³ the diwan of Kumaon, whose strength and determination had bolstered the throne of the Chand family in the period of their decline during the reigns of Debi Chand and Kalyan Chand.³⁴

For centuries the kingdom of Kumaon had been the scene of a power struggle between two great factions, the Phartyals and the Maras.³⁵ Sib Dev Joshi had been supported by the Maras,³⁶ and his death as a result of a Phartyal intrigue had left the throne of Kumaon without a champion.³⁷ Into this political vacuum Mohan Singh had stepped. He succeeded in out-manoeuvring Sib Dev's sons, Jaikishan and Harsha Dev, and establishing himself on the throne under the name of Mohan Chand.³⁸ Harsha Dev struggled for twenty-six years against his usurper. He was severely handicapped in the struggle, however, by the fact that to replace Mohan Chand he had to produce a candidate from the royal family for the throne, and there was no one available with sufficient determination and political acumen to oppose Mohan Singh.

After Mohan Singh's death, his brother, Lal Singh, and his son, Mahendra Singh, continued the struggle against Harsha Dev, and eventually so discredited him in Kumaon that he was forced to leave the field. Harsha Dev was unable to find support from either Garhwal or the nawab of Oudh, who had already pledged himself to protect Mahendra Singh. Determined to remove Mahendra Singh from the throne, Harsha Dev turned to the Gorkhals, who by this time had reached the far west of Nepal. His defection was welcomed by the Gorkhals, because, as a member of Mara faction, he could command wide support in Kumaon.³⁹

The Gorkhals crossed the Mahakali and entered Kumaon early in 1790. One division entered Sor to the north, while a second crossed into Kali Kumaon proper. Lal Singh opposed the Gorkhali force in Kali Kumaon, while Mahendra Singh

³³ Atkinson. *Himayalan Districts*, ii, 590.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, ii, 584-93.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Also, cf. above, p. 45.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, ii, 593.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, ii, 594.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, ii 598.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, ii, 609.

chose to confront Amar Singh Thapa in the north. Mahendra Singh succeeded in winning the first engagement with Amar Singh at Gangoli, and Amar Singh then decided to rejoin the southern division of the Gorkhali army. Lal Singh, who was opposing the southern army, suddenly found himself trapped by the two divisions of the Gorkhali army. He abandoned the field to the plains. When Mahendra Singh heard this news, he also fled, being joined at Rudrapur later by Lal Singh. The Gorkhalis meanwhile continued their march on Almora, which they reached in the spring of 1790 after overcoming some slight resistance at Hawalbagh.⁴⁰

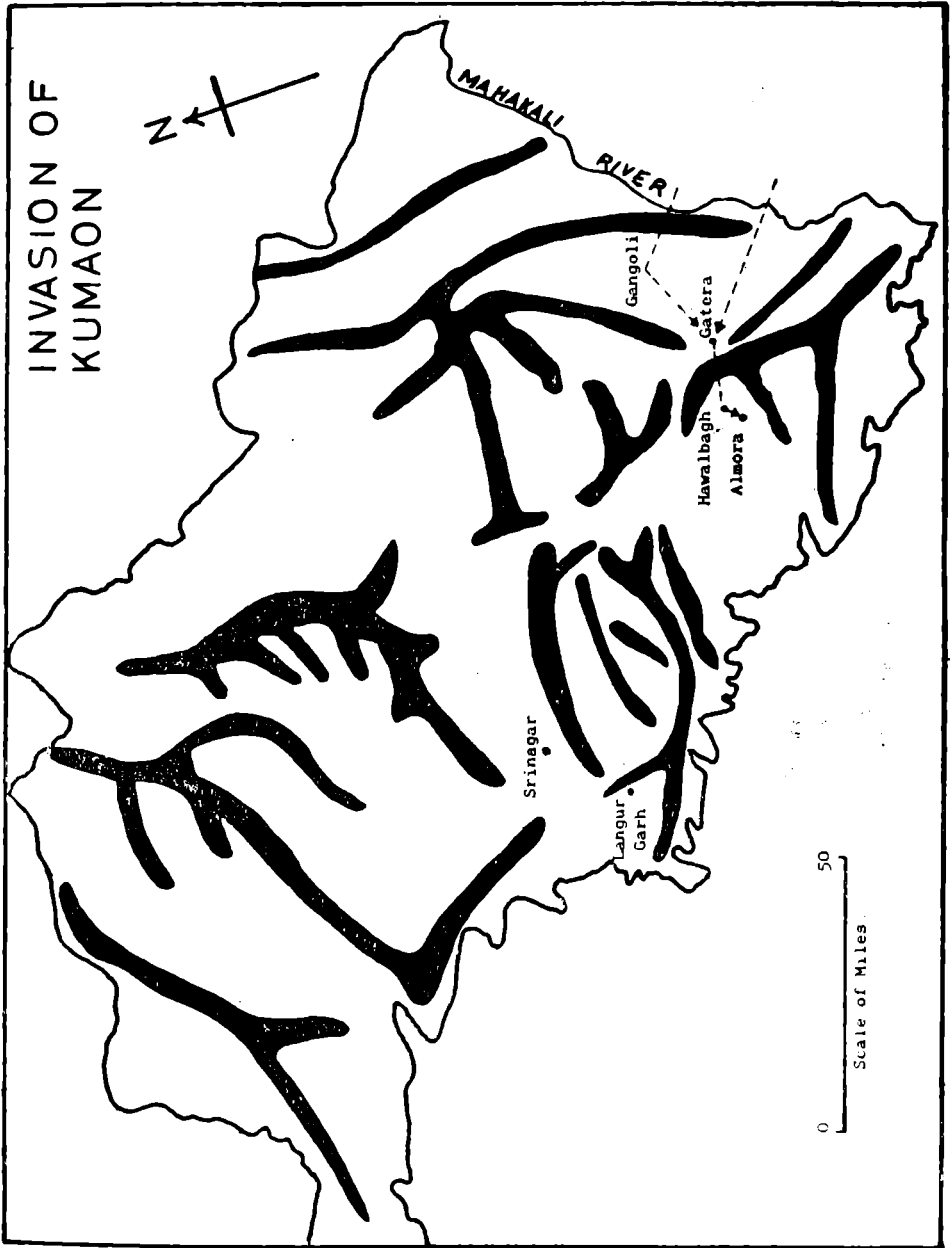
Harsha Dev joined the Gorkhalis in Almora, and for a year he lived in amity with them. It was a year spent in feverish activity in preparation for the invasion of Garhwal. Preliminary probings of the Garhwali defences had made little headway, and plans were made for a formal attack on the hill fortifications of that state when news reached the Gorkhalis of the Chinese invasion of Nepal.⁴¹ Since it would be necessary to withdraw from Kumaon to meet the Chinese threat, the Gorkhalis had planned to install Harsha Dev as their agent in Kumaon. But Pradyumna Sah, the raja of Garhwal, agreed to a treaty with Kathmandu that would establish formal relations between the two states and called for an annual tribute to Kathmandu of nine thousand rupees.⁴² Since Garhwal and Kathmandu were now nominally friends, it was no longer feasible to entrust the government of Kumaon to Harsha Dev, who was considered *persona non grata* to the Garhwali court.⁴³ Harsha Dev reacted violently to this reversal, and though at times after this he cooperated with the Gorkhalis when it suited his purpose, he was basically alienated from them and strove against them with the same determination that he had shown in the struggle against Mohan Singh and Mahendra Singh. It was

⁴⁰ Ibid., ii, 610.

⁴¹ G.R.C. Williams, *An Historical and Statistical Memoir of Dehra Dun (Roorkee)*, 1874, p. 114; also Hamilton, *Nepal*, pp. 299-300; and Atkinson, *Himalayan Districts*, ii, 609.

⁴² Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 13, p. 34; also Captain F.V. Raper, 'Narrative of a Survey for the Purpose of Discovering the Sources of the Ganges', *Asiatic Researches*, xi, 500. Atkinson, *Himalayan Districts*, ii, 610, note, describes the confusion over the sum to be paid and opts for the figure Rs. 25,000, which is clearly in error.

⁴³ Atkinson, *Himalayan Districts*, ii, 610-11.



a most unfortunate turn of events, and had the Gorkhalis been able to foresee how this estrangement would affect their future,⁴⁴ it is certain that Pradyumna Shah and his annual tribute would have been given scant consideration. But by such chance occurrences are the destinies of men and states determined.

The Nepal-China War

The westward progress of the Gorkhali armies was halted by the Nepal-China war of 1792. The Chinese invasion of Nepal in June of that year was the first major challenge to the Gorkhali government in Kathmandu. It forms, then, an important aspect of the problem of the unification of Nepal. As such it must be given careful consideration here.

This was the direct result of the deterioration in Nepal-Tibet relations, and this deterioration was in turn closely linked with the problem of Tibetan coinage. The fact that the Malla kings of the Valley had long enjoyed a handsome profit by minting coins for use in Tibet has been discussed earlier.⁴⁵ In their efforts to derive the greatest possible profit from the coinage transactions, the later Malla kings began to reduce the amount of silver in the alloy of their coins. This reduction of the amount of silver in the alloy and the consequent debasing of the coins produced by the Mallas was the origin of the Nepal-Tibet coinage problem which was inherited by the Shah dynasty. Schyuler Cammann, basing his opinion on Kirkpatrick and Markham, indicates how seriously debased these Malla coins were:

⁴⁴ Ibid., ii, 646, note 3, 'Harak Deb was introduced to Mr. Fraser by Captain Hearsey, who thus describes him in 1814 :—"This man is a perfect instrument whose name the Gorkhalis dread; his connections in Kumaon amount to above 6,000 men, and he is now near 68 years old, but is active and vigorous and has all his faculties clear; his influence is great on all the hill Rajas even extending beyond the Satlaj." Mr. Fraser writes: "Although exceedingly depressed by misfortune and penury, he still possesses an active, energetic, and enterprising mind." Though fully informed of the intentions of the British Government to keep possession of Kumaon, Harak Deb now threw his whole influence in their favour, as his party always opposed Lal Singh, who was countenanced by the Gorkhalis. One of the first results of his communications to his friends was that a body of them joined Captain Hearsey's force with 100 matchlockmen.'

⁴⁵ Cf. above, pp. 103-4. Also Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepaul*, p. 211, who says, 'Formerly the profits on the silver coinage alone yielded a lack of rupees annually.'

The last Newari rulers, especially Ranjit Malla, last Raja of Bhatgaon, sent to Bhutan and Tibet such base coins as to cause a decrease of nearly one half of their value, thus causing the Tibetans to lose faith in the Nepalese [Malla] currency. But they still continued to use it, as it was their only form of coinage, other payments being made in purses of gold dust or silver ingots, as Bogle and Turner explained.⁴⁶

Whether the situation was quite so alarming as this would be difficult to determine. It is sufficient, however, to point out that the Malla coinage was debased sufficiently to create a problem of exchange when Prithvinarayan Shah came to power in Kathmandu Valley and introduced his own coins into Tibet.

The basis for the problem is also partly to be found in Prithvinarayan Shah's dedication to the idea of *pure* coinage. In his *Dibya Upadesh* Prithvinarayan Shah laid it down as a cardinal principle of government that the mint should be kept pure.⁴⁷ This policy was basically wise, but despite its wisdom, it created a difficulty that even the shrewdest of economists could not have foreseen. Though much debased, the Mahendramalli still performed the service for which it originally came into demand, and it was everywhere accepted within Tibet. The Tibetans saw no real need for the pure coins of Prithvinarayan. And, though Prithvinarayan's envoys tried to convince the Tibetans of the importance and the utility of adopting the new and purer coinage, they met a stubborn resistance. The Tibetans pleaded the difficulty of withdrawing all of the debased coins from circulation, and asserted that it was impractical to establish separate exchange rates between the Mahendramalli and the pure coins, since the coins were roughly the same size and weight. The Tibetans suggested that the new coins of Prithvinarayan be circulated simultaneously with the old and at a value on a par with them.⁴⁸ The fact that the Mahendramalli were far less valuable than the coins of Prithvinarayan Shah did not impress them as significant.

It has been suggested, and perhaps with a good deal of

⁴⁶ Cammann, *Trade through the Himalayas*, p. 109.

⁴⁷ Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Upadesh*, p. 18.

⁴⁸ Cf. 'Gorkha Memorial', Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepaul*, pp. 339 ff.

insight, that the counterproposals of the Tibetans were artfully naive.⁴⁹ In the sluggish, lamaistic society of Tibet, where the *status quo* was accepted as the permanent condition of things, change of any sort must necessarily have been viewed with apprehension and distrust. Regardless of his overriding motivation, Prithvinarayan Shah must have seemed to the Tibetans as a man of great violence, a man who disturbed the comfort of changelessness, and certainly, as a result of his incursions into the districts of Kirat, as a man of alarm. Further, though the Mahendramalli had lost half of its face value through the cheapening of the alloy, as a matter of fact the combined scarcity of the coin and its usefulness had actually increased its value in relation to the only other medium of exchange available, silver ingots and purses of gold.⁵⁰ Given this psychology, it is inconceivable that the Tibetans would have accepted Prithvinarayan's proposals and his coinage no matter how ingeniously urged. Nevertheless Prithvinarayan sent his delegation to Tibet late in 1774 to attempt a negotiated settlement.⁵¹ He died in early January 1775, and this mission returned to Kathmandu without success.

Prithvinarayan Shah was succeeded on the throne in 1775 by his eldest son Pratap Singh Shah, who also tried to solve this nagging problem. What success should be attributed to Pratap Singh's efforts cannot easily be determined,⁵² but it can be said with confidence that, whatever efforts he made, he

⁴⁹ Cammann, *Trade through the Himalayas*, pp. 109-10.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 110, basing his views on Markham, *Narratives*, p. 129.

⁵¹ Markham, *Narratives*, p. 158.

⁵² Regmi and Acharya speak of a treaty between Nepal and Tibet which was signed during the reign of Pratap Singh Shah. Regmi (Dilli Roman) gives a Newari version of this treaty in an appendix to his *Modern Nepal*, which he mentions as being taken from a chronicle. He also supplies an English summary of this treaty. Intrinsicly there is nothing to indicate that this treaty is not a valid document. The difficulty arises in trying to fit this treaty into the account given in the Gorkha Memorial, which Regmi himself follows. The Gorkha Memorial says that after Prithvinarayan Shah's mission to Lhasa nothing happened on this matter of the coinage for some nine or ten years. Such a treaty as Regmi indicates is certainly something of primary importance, and if it were signed during Pratap Singh's reign, it would be within a year or two at most of Prithvinarayan's Lhasa mission. It is difficult to reconcile the treaty with the Memorial, but at the same time the treaty itself cannot be ignored. At the present this difficulty seems insoluble. However, it is apparent that the treaty, if it is accepted, did not materially alter the circumstances that led to the war, and for the purposes of this study it can be safely ignored.

made no lasting impression on the Tibetan mind. The coinage problem remained as vexing and as illusive of solution after Pratap Singh's reign as it had been before.

Bahadur Shah inherited this problem on his appointment as mukhtiyar. Rajendra Laxmi had been content to allow the matter to rest. But, with the army suddenly making new and definite demands on the treasury of Nepal, it was natural that Bahadur Shah should take up once again this problem of Tibetan trade and coinage. However, Bahadur Shah's efforts to negotiate a settlement with the Tibetans proved as fruitless as had those of Prithvinarayan Shah and Pratap Singh Shah. His proposal for a conference to settle the question met with a chilly reception, and the Tibetans indicated that they were quite prepared to resist any show of force that Bahadur Shah might be inclined to make.⁵³

At this point something must be said of the flight of Samarpa Lama from Tashilunpo to Kathmandu, because it is at this time that his presence in Kathmandu became meaningful in terms of Nepal-Tibet relations. His flight, however, had actually occurred some years prior to this, being set in 1781 by the account of the Chinese historian Wei Yuan.⁵⁴ As Wei Yuan put it :

In the 46th year of the Ch'ien-lung reign the Panch'en Lama of ulterior Tibet came to the capital of China to congratulate the Emperor on the occasion of his 70th anniversary; donations to the Pontiff came from "inside and outside," like "seas overflowing and mountains heaping." When the Panch'en Lama passed away in the Capital, his remains were escorted back to Tibet. As to his treasures, they all became the property of his brother Chung-pa Hutukhtu. But the latter gave no donations either to the Monasteries or to the Tangut Soldiery; besides, he declined the claim of his younger brother Samarpa to have his share in the division of the treasures, on the ground that he (Samarpa) had

⁵³ 'Gorkha Memorial', Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepaul*, p. 340.

⁵⁴ Percival Landon, *Nepal* (London, 1928), ii, 276, note 2.

embraced the "Red Religion."⁵⁵ Angered by this refusal, Samarpa brought his complaints to the Gorkhas, and used the hoarded treasures of Ulterior Tibet and the Chung-pa's arrogance as incitements to them to invade this country.⁵⁶

Wei Yuan, then, would have us believe that the reason for Samarpa's flight was disappointment at not receiving a share of his elder brother's inherited wealth. There is in some quarters, however, a rather strong belief that the Panchen Lama had been murdered during his stay in Peking, and that *fear* was also an element in Samarpa Lama's flight.⁵⁷ It is also quite possible that there were other motives for his fear and subsequent flight. Being disappointed in his hopes for a share in his brother's wealth, which by tradition should have been given to him, it is highly probable that before fleeing from Tibet he took whatever of value he could lay his hands on at the moment and safely transport across the mountains with him to Nepal. Since Tashilunpo was the seat of the Panchen Lama, the spiritual guide of the emperors of China, and the repository of whatever

⁵⁵ Of the differences between the 'Red Hat' monks and the 'Yellow Hat' monks in Tibet during his stay in Tibet from 1716 to 1721, Desideri, *Travels*, pp. 220-1, has this to say: 'In Tibet there are two kinds of monks, the first class whose superior is the Grand Lama of Potala, wear a yellow cap. The second class wear a red cap and also acknowledge the said Grand Lama as supreme head of their sect and religion, but regard the Lama who lives on the mountain in the province of Thakpo as their immediate superior. The monks with the yellow caps are dedicated to Sciakkia Thubba, whom they revere as the founder of their class; those with red caps, while venerating Sciakkia Thubba as a legislator, are more devoted to Urghien, who they assert was the founder of their class, and whom they worship with a special ritual differing from that of other monks. Although there are fewer of these monks they are held in higher esteem and honour in Tibet than those of the yellow caps, perhaps because they are more retiring or because they appear to have a higher morality. The envy and intense hatred with which they are regarded by the monks of the first class is not to be described; the persecution was so great as to cause the ruin and almost the destruction of the monks of the second class, but also of the unhappy kingdom of Tibet.'

⁵⁶ Cf. Wei Yuan's account of the expedition against the Gorkhalis, translated by H. S. Brunnert and published in Appendix XXI of Landon, *Nepal*, ii, 275-82. Cammann, *Trade through the Himalayas*, p. 112. note 51, says of this document, 'The first section devoted to the Gorkha campaign (5.34-39) has been translated, somewhat loosely, into French by Camille Imbault-Huart, 'Histoire de la Conquete du Nepal par les Chinois,' *Journal Asiatique*, ser 7, vol. xii (Paris, 1878), 348-77. Much later (in 1926), it was translated into English by H. S. Brunnert and printed in Landon's *Nepal*, ii, 275-82. As the latter has many of the same mistakes as the former, we may suspect that Brunnert was merely translating the French translation, rather than the original Chinese as represented.'

⁵⁷ CPC. x, 1792, letter No. 745.

gifts the emperors had seen fit to give him over the centuries, and since Tashilunpo had never been looted during all the vicissitudes of Tibet, it is clear that Samarpa Lama would have had an ample selection of valuables from which to choose.⁵⁸ Gold, because of its value in relation to size and weight, would have been the obvious choice in view of the journey that had to be made over the mountains to safety. If this conjecture is so, and it is highly probable, Samarpa Lama had reason to flee the country, and the only safe direction for his flight was south to Nepal.

Samarpa Lama thus became an important factor in Nepal-Tibet relations. Not only did he convey information of the startling riches of Tashilunpo to the Gorkhalis as an incitement for them to intervene in Tibet, but also his very presence among the Nepalis as an honoured guest was considered an affront to Chung-pa Hutukhtu, the regent of Tashilunpo. While not a *cause* of the Nepal-Tibet war of 1788, Samarpa Lama's presence in Kathmandu certainly aggravated the existing causes.

The most useful document for this phase of the development of Nepal-Tibet relations is the memorial prepared by the court of Nepal to explain the cause of the war.⁵⁹ According to this source, the Gorkhalis sent a memorial to the emperor of China to explain the problem of coinage and to try to reach a final settlement. The normal route for such a memorial to Peking lay through the amba, the Chinese representative in Lhasa. The amba, using his discretionary power, decided not to forward the memorial,⁶⁰ and the Nepali envoys had to return to Kathmandu with the certain knowledge that the authorities in Lhasa, both Tibetan and Chinese, were determined to do nothing about

⁵⁸ Wei Yuan, London, *Nepal*, ii, 276.

⁵⁹ This document has been set aside by Cammann, *Trade through the Himalayas*, p. 111, as being notoriously unreliable. One wonders where the criterion for this has been set. However, Nepali history has suffered a great deal of such abuse, and it has done little more than to stir historians to a new sense of urgency in investigating and writing their own history. It is possible that some of the blame for this misunderstanding of Nepali history by foreign scholars must be laid on the shoulders of Nepali historians themselves for failing to write in any international language. For taking the initiative in this, special credit is due to Dilli Raman Regmi. Pride of place, however, is due to Mahesh Chandra Regmi, who has consistently tried to put research materials at the disposal of foreign scholars, both in the original and in translation.

⁶⁰ Cammann, *Trade through the Himalayas*, p. 111.

this matter.

In view of the intransigence of both the Tibetan and Chinese authorities in Lhasa and their refusal even to discuss this problem, Bahadur Shah determined on a punitive expedition into Tibet to encourage the Tibetans to see the reasonableness of the Nepali request for negotiations and to achieve a settlement of this long-standing problem. When the Gorkhali army entered Tibet in 1788, the Tibetan defences collapsed completely, and even the Chinese officers sent to assist in driving the Gorkhalis back into Nepal found the Tibetan army so demoralized that opposition to the Gorkhalis was futile. The Gorkhalis penetrated into Tibet as far as Shigatse, and, though Shigatse did not fall to them, they swept all else before them, and so entrenched themselves around the fort at Shigatse that no effort of the Tibetans could dislodge them.⁶¹

At this point the Dalai Lama, Chung-pa Hutukhtu, and others intervened and agreed to discuss terms. The reason for this sudden intervention was as much involved in the politics between Lhasa and Peking as it was in the war with Nepal. At this time Lhasa was nominally under the authority of China, but it had been many years since this authority had been effectively exercised. The Chinese were merely represented in Lhasa by two ambas who showed neither the energy nor the desire to interfere in Tibetan affairs.⁶² But both the regent of Tashilunpo and the Dalai Lama realized that if China had to involve herself in this war, the results, regardless of the military outcome of the war, would be unsatisfactory for the Tibetans in terms of their relations with China. Chinese control of Tibet would be tightened, and Lhasa would lose much of its autonomy. It was, then, imperative that this dispute be settled as quickly as possible to forestall Chinese intervention.⁶³

When negotiations began in earnest, the Nepalis put forward incredibly difficult terms. They began by asking compensation not only for their expenses in the war, but also for all that had been lost to the Nepal treasury during the years when the Nepal-Tibet trade had been hampered because of the coinage

⁶¹ Gorkha Memorial, Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepaul*, p. 341.

⁶² H.E. Richardson, *Tibet and Its History* (London, 1962), p. 68.

⁶³ Original Consultation No. 27, 22 December 1788, India Office Records.

problem. The Tibetans, however, suggested that if something more reasonable would be asked, they would seriously consider it. Before stating their second demand, the Nepali representatives put the matter entirely to the Lamas to determine who was at fault in causing the war. Once the Lamas admitted that the fault lay entirely with Tibet (and what else could they say, if they wished to hasten negotiations and prevent the Chinese from becoming involved), the Nepalis offered the Tibetans a choice as their second proposal. The Tibetans could either pay them a sum of fifty lakhs, or they could pay an annual tribute of one lakh and allow Nepal to retain the areas south of the Lungur Himal that had been captured. However, even this price was far more than Lhasa was prepared to pay.⁶⁴

At this stage Chanchoo, a military commander sent by the emperor to drive out the Nepalis, intervened, sending two ranking officers and a military force to see that the matter was settled. With the arrival of these men on the scene, negotiations were hastened along, and an agreement was reached.⁶⁵ The terms of this treaty, as given in the *Sandhi-Patra Sangraha*, are freely translated here for the benefit of the reader. Historians are urged to see the Nepali text itself.

1. For the convenience of the people and merchants of Tibet and Nepal, it is agreed to exchange one of the Gorkhali Raja's mohars for two of the mohars in circulation in Tibet.
2. Tibet agrees to retain the practice of having coins circulated from the Gorkhali Raja's mint and Gorkha will mint these coins and send them to Tibet for circulation.
3. Even if the high authorities of Tibet wish to change this agreement, it will not be changed. Whoever changes this agreement will be considered an enemy by the Gorkhali Raja. Whoever observes it will be considered a friend by the Gorkhali Raja. The following have affixed their signatures :

The Potala Lama's representative : Dunar Sel Hun Thondup Phunchop;

The Durin Kazi's representative ; Purdun;

⁶⁴ 'Gorkha Memorial', Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepaul*, pp. 342-3.

⁶⁵ *Ibid* , p. 343; also Wei Yuan, *Landon, Nepal*, ii, 276.

The Great Lama's representative : Arjabegi Esethachan.

Witnesses :

The representative of Tashilunpo : Samarpa Lama;

The representative of the Sakya Lama : Nehba Lopsang Thinden.

4. Within a month following Karkat Sankranti each year the Lama of Lhasa will send Rs. 50,001 to the Maharaja of Gorkha.

Witnesses

Bam Shah Dev; Sri Harihar Upadhyaya, treasurer, Shyamlal Pande, Sri Durin Kazi Tenzing Penjo Tsering, treasurer Nibuk; Samarpa Lama, Badhun Eburn Pande Tundup, Sakya Jhinpun, etc.

Dated : 1849 B.S., Baishakh, sudi 2⁶⁶

The terms of the treaty are simplicity itself. But there are several points that are extremely interesting about it. The separation of the fourth clause from the foregoing three is intriguing; and, more important, there is no signature of either the Dalai Lama or his representative on the annual tribute clause, clause number four. It can safely be inferred from this that this clause did not have the sanction of the Dalai Lama. Also, no comment or mention is made in this treaty of a mission taking gifts to the emperor of China, yet it is known that such a mission did go to Peking. These two discrepancies, the lack of authorization for the tribute clause on the part of the Dalai Lama and the failure to mention a tribute mission, which nevertheless did go to Peking, can be explained only by examining the conduct of the Manchu officers sent on behalf of the emperor of Peking to settle the disturbance.

The explanation for this conduct found in Wei Yuan's account reads as follows :

In the 3rd month of the 55th year of the Ch'ien-lung reign,

⁶⁶ *Sandhi-Patra Sangraha* (Kathmandu, 2022 B.S.), p. 20. There is some confusion over the tribute to be paid by the Tibetans to Nepal. The Nepal treaty mentions Rs. 50,001, without specifying the specie; Cammann, basing himself on the Chinese *Thung-hua-hsu-lu* (Records of China) says the annual tribute was 300 Tibetan ginots of silver, which was equivalent to 9600 Chinese ounces of that metal; Wei Yuan says the yearly subsidy was 15,000 in gold; Moulavee Abdul Kadir Khan speaks in his report of the yearly tribute being three lakhs of rupees. None of these original sources speaks of two treaties, which is the solution to the difficulty arrived at by several Nepali authors.

the Gorkhas . . . sent troops and invaded the frontier area. The Tangut soldiers were not able to make any resistance. As for the officers whom the Government appointed, in order to help in the extermination of the invaders—e.g. Officer of the Guards Pa-chung, Tartar Generals Ao-Hui, Ch'eng-te, and others—they tried to settle the matter amicably and to get peace through bribery. So they secretly advised to the Tibetan Abbots and other ecclesiastics privately to pay the Gorkhas a yearly subsidy of 15,000 in gold to stop the military operations.

At the time the Dalai Lama could not agree to the suggestion. Nevertheless, Pa-chung ventured to deceive the Emperor by presenting a memorial to the effect that the rebels had surrendered. So far was this from being the case that he actually persuaded the Gorkha chieftain to bring tribute, in order to be appointed Prince of the country (Juo-wong). In this "War" not a single soldier was lost, but a million was spent on soldiers' rations.⁶⁷

There is no intrinsic difficulty in accepting this statement of events. The tribute mission agreed to by the Nepalis should not cause any special wonder. It was a mere formality that could be accepted easily. The expenses of the journey were paid by the Chinese, and the gift-bearing party always brought back from China richer gifts than they presented. Also, the exact interpretation that would be put on this mission in Peking itself was not disclosed to the Nepalis. It was presented to them as a formality, as a result of which the Gorkhali king would be especially honoured by the emperor. Since the Chinese officers were deceiving their own emperor there is every reason to suppose that they also practised deception on the Nepalis.

But, if the emperor was deceived by this, and apparently he was, the Dalai Lama was not.⁶⁸ The first year's tribute was paid at the time the agreement was completed, but in the years immediately following, he refused to pay. Since he had not recognized that clause of the treaty, he refused to consider himself bound by it.

⁶⁷ Wei Yuan, Landon, *Nepal*, ii, 276.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

This refusal must have stunned the Nepalis. The treaty had given them all they had hoped for in their relations with Tibet, and yet, hardly had they begun to enjoy its fruits, when the whole thing was dashed from their hands. In fact, the tribute mission had not even returned from Peking before the treaty was repudiated, at least as far as clause four.⁶⁹ Samarpa Lama's anxiety to persuade the Nepalis that Tashilunpo was a target worthy of their mettle now came into its own, and he could count on the full attention of the court in Kathmandu. Wright's chronicle states that Bahadur Shah called him (Samarpa Lama) and asked for full particulars about Tashilunpo.⁷⁰ For so astute a military commander as Bahadur Shah, full particulars must certainly have included detailed descriptions of the defences of the place, and not merely information about the wealth of the monastery, which presumably he had already heard often from Samarpa Lama.

Bahadur Shah now planned to take by force of arms what had been solemnly promised by treaty and had then been flagrantly denied him. Perhaps he should have realized the implications of such an attack and the strong possibility of Chinese intervention. However, the Chinese officers he had met up to this point had been of very mediocre talents. Quite possibly Bahadur Shah felt that a raid could quickly be completed, before such men as these could intervene, and once the Gorkhalis were back inside Nepal, his mountain ramparts would protect him.

When this second Nepali attack on Tibet began in 1791, it was no half-hearted measure. Nor was it aimed only at punishing the Tibetans, as the first expedition had been. This time the aim was the rich monastery of Tashilunpo.⁷¹ By 28 October the Gorkhalis had taken possession of Shigates and Tashilunpo

⁶⁹ Cf. Kirkpatrick's note at the end of the 'Gorkha Memorial', p. 343. 'This is not the place to offer any comment on the preceding narrative. It is sufficient to observe here, that the Bhootias soon discontinued to pay the tribute settled by treaty, never, indeed, discharging more than one year's amount. The consequence was a renewal of hostilities, which terminated in the invasion of Nepaul by a Chinese force.' The tribute mission returned after fourteen months.

⁷⁰ Daniel Wright, ed., *History of Nepal, Translated from the Parbatiya*, 2nd edition (Calcutta, 1958), p. 159.

⁷¹ Cammann, *Trade through the Himalayas*, p. 121, based on the Chinese sources.

and sacked the monastery of the Panchen Lama. And a thorough job it was. Chapels, dwelling chambers, the jewelled spires of stupas, and even the tombs of the deceased Panchen Lamas were looted. Chung-pa Hutukhtu had fled with whatever wealth he could carry, but there was more than enough remaining. Never before or again would any Gorkhali army find so rich a prize.⁷²

The sudden thrust of the Gorkhali attack had surprising results in different quarters. Pa-chung, when he heard of it, was enroute to Jehol with the emperor. His reaction was one of despair, and he threw himself into the river and drowned himself, since the deceit he had practised on the emperor must then come to light.⁷³ In Tibet itself panic was the rule. Government troops, both Chinese and Tibetan, ignored their strategic advantage and withdrew into the interior rather than face the Gorkhalis. As the Gorkhali army advanced and the situation deteriorated, the governor sent a memorial to the emperor asking permission to abandon Tibet to the invaders.⁷⁴ But to the emperor of China himself came disbelief and anger. He could not believe a whole country should so quickly have been thrown open to an enemy whom his own officers had so recently defeated. His first reaction was to send Ao-hui and Ch'eng-te back to Tibet to finish properly the task he had assigned them two years previously. More mature thought, however, convinced him that these two would never succeed in doing a second time what they had so miserably failed to do the first time. So he sent Fu-k'ang-an to take charge of the campaign and Hai-lan-ch'a to be his military assistant.⁷⁵ The emperor's decision was an unfortunate one for the Gorkhalis. The other officers sent had been incompetent, but Fu-k'ang-an was not. He was a man of intelligence and military skill, and he set about his task with energy and determination.

While the van of the Gorkhali army returned to Nepal by way of the torturous route of Syartano, about one thousand Gorkhali troops were left to guard the frontier.⁷⁶ Ao-Hui and

⁷² Ibid., p. 122.

⁷³ Wei Yuan, Landon, *Nepal*, ii, 277.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Ch'eng-te had already arrived in Tibet with some four thousand troops who remained on the border.⁷⁷ Chinese sources say that these two satisfied themselves by taking Nilam, near Kuti, which was guarded by about one company of Gorkhali soldiers, and then wrote to the emperor announcing that the Gorkhals had retreated. The same sources say that these two generals had made no mention in their report to the emperor that sizable numbers of Gorkhali troops were to be found in Kyrung and at a pass they call Yung-Hsia.⁷⁸

However, while these two generals were to let the matter rest, Fu-k'ang-an continued his preparations. Two thousand soldiers from the district of Solon, five thousand soldiers who had been quartered in Szechwan, and three thousand government troops from Tibet itself were assembled.⁷⁹ Provisions sufficient to feed an army of fifteen thousand troops for a period of one year were also gathered. With these preparations completed, and they required a full three months after the arrival of Fu-k'ang-an and Hai-lan-ch'a in Tibet, Fu-k'ang-an was ready to begin his campaign against Nepal.⁸⁰

The attack on the Nepali territories began in mid-June 1792,⁸¹ with the Chinese commander sending detachments to cover the passes to the east and west of Kyrung to prevent an encircling movement by the Gorkhali troops. The main attack was centred on Kyrung.⁸² The Gorkhali defences at Kukur Ghat at the head of the pass consisted of three posts in a spear-shaped formation, with the point of the spear aimed at the north. In this way the two posts to the rear could support the advance post. Two of these three posts were overrun immedi-

⁷⁷ Ibid., ii, 278.

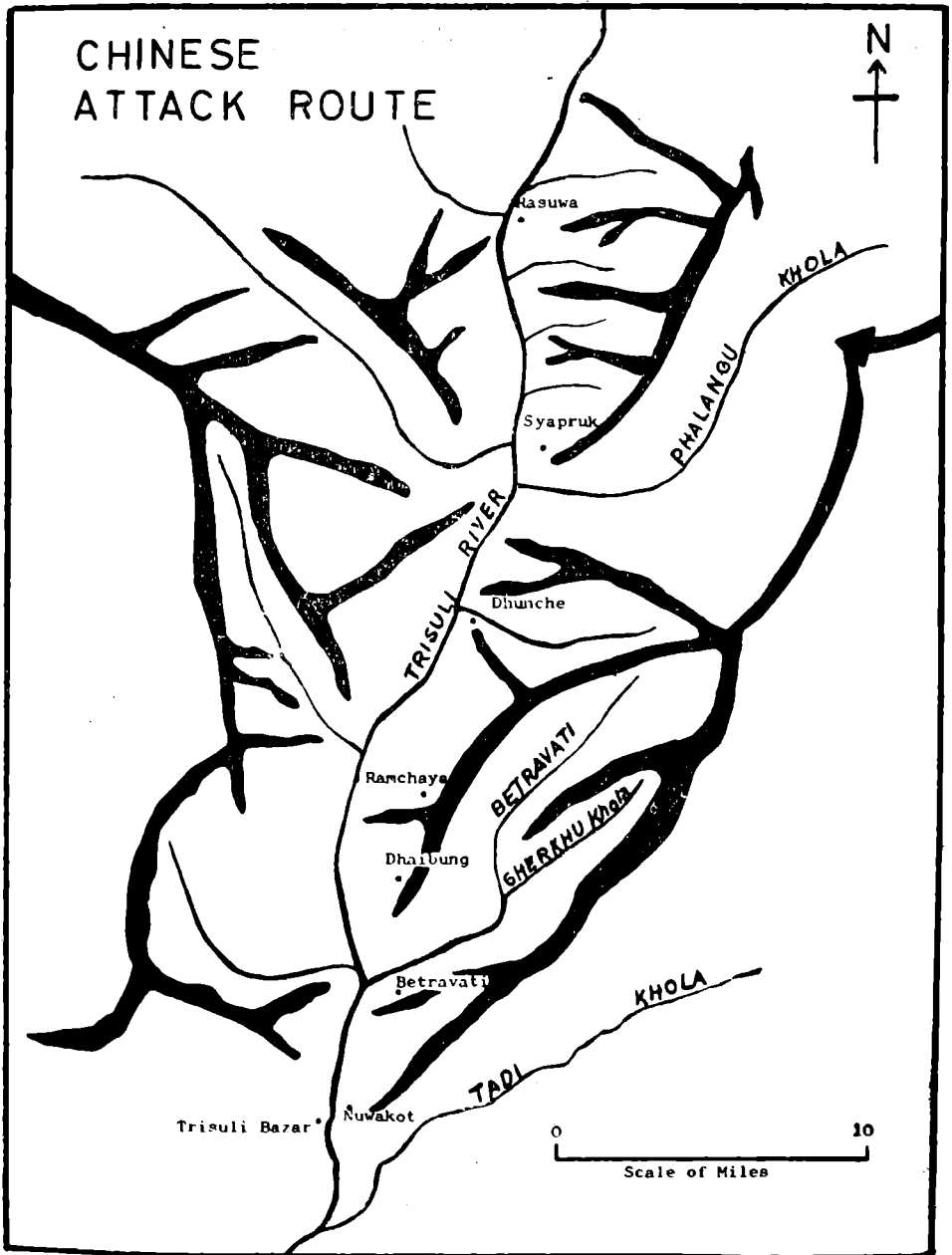
⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid. Cammann, *Trade through the Himalayas*, p. 123, drawing on his richer knowledge of the country gives further details: 'The army itself contained a number of different kinds of troops, illustrating the composition of the Manchu Empire at the time. Fu-k'ang-an was a Court Manchu, but his second in command was Hai-lan-ch'a, a Solon tribesman from northern Manchuria, and the soldiers consisted of Daghor horsemen from the Manchurian-Mongolian frontier, recently subjugated Chin-ch'uan mountaineers from western Szechuan, and cavalry from Rodonor, as well as troops from the natives of eastern Tibet.'

⁸⁰ Wei Yuan, Landon, *Nepal*, ii, 278.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.



ately.⁸³ As soon as news of this attack and its results reached Shatru Bhanjan Malla, the commander of the Gorkhali troops at Kyrung, he set out with his troops to the relief of the remaining post at Kukur Ghat.

As the Gorkhals hurried along the trail near Pangain ridge, the Chinese army ambushed them, and sent the relief party reeling back to Kyrung, with one subedar and twenty to twenty-five men killed.⁸⁴ The Chinese lost some fifteen men, but they could afford to suffer a few casualties at this stage. The Gorkhals could not. The Chinese followed up their advantage and pursued the retreating Gorkhals to the gates of their forts at Kyrung, and actually shot a second subedar at the gate of the fort. Shatru Bhanjan Malla himself was severely wounded.⁸⁵

The attack on Kyrung was vicious. Here again the Gorkhals had employed the triple-post defence, with one post in advance of the other two. For three days the Gorkhali defences held out against repeated attacks, but just before dawn on the fourth day the Chinese stormed the fort, letting fly an astonishing volley of musket-shot, arrows, flaming torches, and even bags of gunpowder. They overwhelmed the first post, and the surviving defenders slipped out and retreated to the other posts, to which the Chinese attack now shifted. By evening of that same day these two posts were also breached, and the Gorkhals had to fall back quickly through the pass, taking up positions at Rasuwa early the next morning.⁸⁶

In these early stages of the fighting the Chinese superiority in numbers gave them a great advantage. They repeatedly relied on flanking movements, using a sufficiently large force to pin the Gorkhals in their defensive positions, while another detachment of Chinese soldiers made a wide encircling movement that brought them down on the Gorkhals from the flank or the rear. There was little the Gorkhals could do to defend themselves. They had called for reinforcements, but

⁸³ A letter of Rana Bahadur to the army commanders in the west, giving full details of the invasion. The letter is dated 1849 B.S., Kartik, badi 7, roj 1, and is contained in *Sandhi-Patra Sangraha* (Kathmandu, 2022 B.S.), pp. 17-20.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

travel in the hills takes time, and the Chinese exploited to the full the advantage they had by attacking swiftly and in force.

With the fall of Rasuwa by just such a flanking maneuver, the Gorkhals fell back on Syapruk.⁸⁷ There they were reinforced by Subedar Bhaskar Jagbal and his company of Gorkhals, and shortly thereafter they were joined by Prabal Rana, Bharat Khabas, Ranakesar Pande and the Srinath company with some umraons and their irregulars. Word was spreading rapidly of the Chinese advance, and the defences were being organized, but they were still pitifully weak. The Chinese attack was now clearly committed. The only possible advance for them was down the valley of the Trisuli Ganga, and now that they had crossed to the left bank of the river, they were hemmed in between the river and the wall of the valley. Frequent left bank tributaries offered the Nepalis natural lines of defence along the length of the river. But even these natural vantage points were betrayed by their lack of numbers. For their fire to be effective enough to prevent the Chinese from crossing the river, they had to choose a spot on the spur of the mountain near the river. This left a wide sweep of the spur behind them, rising to the crest of the ridge. In this situation the Chinese could carry out flanking movements with ease. Had the Gorkhals possessed sufficient troops to mount an attack against the Chinese camp while the flankers were out and away from camp, they could have blocked the Chinese advance with relative safety and with assurance of success. But the Chinese superiority in numbers prevented this.

At Syapruk, also, the flanking movement succeeded for the Chinese.⁸⁸ The flankers moved upstream along a tributary of the Trisuli, crossed the river to the east of the Gorkhali positions, and came back towards the west, high on the ridge behind the Gorkhals. When they appeared, they held the high ground, and it would have been suicide for the Gorkhals to maintain their positions or to try to take the high ground from the Chinese. The Gorkhals moved quickly to the south, taking up positions at Dhunche. At Dhunche Damodar Pande joined the defenders with the van of the Gorkhali army. Bhaskar

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Jagbal and his men took up a position on a steep outcrop at Deorali, so steep that they had to climb practically hand over hand to reach the top. This position was well-located, and provided the Gorkhals with a salient which the Chinese had to take before attempting to advance further. The battle for this position was fierce. The Chinese mounted three attacks on the position, being driven back mercilessly the first two times. In the third, two Nepali subedars were killed along with some forty to fifty men. The Chinese lost more than two hundred men. But with each wave of the attack the Chinese had been able to improve their position, and after the third attack the Gorkhals had to send for reinforcements.⁸⁹ They were no longer strong enough to withstand the pressure of the Chinese onslaught. Damodar Pande moved his whole force into action to try to drive the Chinese back, and here one of the first major battles of the war took place. Some estimate the casualties on both sides as high as two thousand, but this figure is completely out of proportion to the size of the armies involved.⁹⁰ The Gorkhals recognized that to continue to fight on this ground was to be forced to fight the Chinese type of war and not their own. Since their numbers were more nearly equal to the Chinese, there was less danger from the Chinese flanking movements. In these circumstances the classic Gorkhali withdrawal tactic would be more to their advantage. The Gorkhali troops withdrew from Dhunche to Kamaiya Garh, where another severe battle took place. This time the Gorkhals were able to choose the site for the battle. Chinese casualties here numbered between one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty men. Terrain played a large part in the Gorkhali victory here, as Damodar Pande had planned it should. After this battle the Chinese settled down at Ramchaya. The Gorkhals again withdrew, this time as far as Dhaibung.

At this stage the Chinese had to make a serious evaluation of their position. Their advance had been steady, but casualties were mounting. Further, as they penetrated deeper into Nepal, their own supply lines were becoming dangerously long

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Pudma Jung gives this figure, but it is likely that he is in error. Losses of this size would have severely crippled either army.

and vulnerable. They were committed to this line of advance, but the Gorkhals were free to choose their ground for defence. Also, there was nothing to prevent the Gorkhals from sending a second army on a wide flanking movement through hill passes known only to them to cut off the Chinese supply lines entirely. The Chinese forces were clearly no longer in a position of strength. In view of this, the Chinese now suggested that discussions be held.⁹¹ For these discussions the Gorkhals allowed the Chinese to move from Ramchaya south to Dhairbung, while the Gorkhals themselves took up stronger positions south of the Betravati River, near Nuwakot.

Had the Chinese been content to continue their parley at this point they would have gained the maximum concessions from the Gorkhals without the loss of men they eventually suffered. It is clear that the Gorkhals were anxious to settle this war as quickly as possible. The war was absolutely meaningless to them. They could never hope to challenge the whole of China, and there was little to be gained in the way of concessions from Tibet at this stage. Meanwhile their real opening to profitable expansion lay in the western hills and the Tarai lands controlled by hill rajas. And at this time the whole of the Gorkhali position in the far west was endangered because of the need to retrench their military commitment there in view of the Chinese invasion.⁹²

It is quite possible that the Chinese were actually as arrogant

⁹¹ Cf. Rana Bahadur's letter cited above. Wei Yuan mentions these talks, but says they were initiated by the Gorkhals, and that they were sternly rejected. These two sources normally agree, and the point at issue here is quite minor, since the talks came to nothing. However, if the Nepali account is not accepted, there is some difficulty explaining the Chinese advance to Dhairbung. It should be pointed out here that numerous traditional accounts of these engagements exist, and if one were to try to reconcile all of them, the result would be bewildering. It seems best to follow the two main sources, the Nepali letter of Rana Bahadur referred to in note 83 and the Chinese of Wei Yuan, making allowances for any differences that may exist between the two. It is likely that Rana Bahadur's letter was actually prepared by Bahadur Shah, since at this time he was still mukhtiyar and this letter is an official account sent to the leading Gorkhali military figures in the west. There is no reason why he should falsify the account to them, and every reason why he should give a truthful picture of what happened.

⁹² Cf. Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 10, p. 45, letter describing the conditions in the west at this time.

and confident as their letters at this stage represent them to be.⁹³ At any rate, their next demand was that talks with the king, Rana Bahadur, and the mukhtiyar, Bahadur Shah, be held at Nuwakot, and that the Chinese army be permitted to take up positions there. In view of the strategic importance of Nuwakot, an order came from Kathmandu that the Chinese must not be permitted to cross the Betravati River at any cost.⁹⁴ The Chinese then announced that if they were not *permitted* to cross the river and take up positions at Nuwakot, they would achieve this by *force*.⁹⁵

In preparation against this attack the Gorkhali defenders were divided into three detachments.⁹⁶ The first and most important was located at Dudhiya Thumka on the ridge overlooking the river. A second lay across the river from the Chinese camp. A third detachment was stationed just north of present Trisuli Bazar, downstream from the Betravati-Trisuli confluence. The Chinese generals could not agree on just how they would mount their attack, so Fu-k'ang-an himself determined the move. About a thousand Chinese troops were sent across the bridge over the Betravati as an advance guard, with the remainder waiting to take advantage of any weakness that happened in the Gorkhali defences. Once the Chinese troops had crossed the river, detachments were sent to the east and to the south against the Gorkhalis stationed at Gerku and at Trisuli Bazar. The main body of Chinese troops then began their attack on the Gorkhalis at Dudhiya Thumka.⁹⁷

The long patience of the Gorkhali soldiers was here rewarded. The Chinese committed the classic blunder of attacking uphill against skilled mountain troops. Either the Chinese were relying on their superior firepower, or their respect for the Gorkhali soldier had declined in the aftermath of earlier battles. But advance uphill they did, and in the rain as well, a perfect target for soldiers whose daily bread was mountain warfare. Rocks, boulders, logs, and missiles of all kinds were thrown down

⁹³ These letters may be found in the appendix to D.R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal*.

⁹⁴ Cf. Rana Bahadur's letter.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, also Wei Yuan, Landon, *Nepal*, ii, 279.

the slope to tear great gaps in the advancing lines of Chinese.⁹⁸ This shower of deadly and unpredictable missiles threw the Chinese ranks into complete confusion. Then the Gorkhali troops from the east and south swung into the attack, shouting their war cry: '*Gorkhali ayo!*' and charging into the confused and retreating Chinese mass. The Chinese returned to the bridge and tried to race back across it to safety, but here the way was suddenly blocked.⁹⁹ The Chinese generals, disgusted at the sudden turn of events, refused to allow the fleeing soldiers the safety of the bridge, and forced them back at the point of the sword to return and fight. But there was no fight left in these men. Some tried to swim the river. Others died on the blade of the khukari. And there was no numbering those who had been swept to their death by the thundering missiles.¹⁰⁰ The Betravati itself was swollen with monsoon rains, and few of those who tried to test its current lived to tell of it. In the account of Wei Yuan :

Our troops sometimes fought and sometimes retreated. The number of dead and wounded was very great. Hai-lan-ch'a, from across the river, came then to assistance, and O-le-teng-pao, holding the bridge, fought stubbornly; and succeeded to repel the enemy.¹⁰¹

Regardless of the reasons the Chinese had had for suggesting talks earlier, they now found their position precarious. The Gorkhali defences had stiffened considerably. The ranks of the Chinese had been greatly thinned. And the incidence of malaria among the Chinese troops was on the rise. In the face of such a set-back as they had just suffered, peace was not to be spurned. Talks began anew between the Chinese and the Gorkhalis, with the Chinese no longer pressing their demand to be allowed to come to Nuwakot for the discussions. This time rapid progress was made. The Chinese set down four conditions of peace,

⁹⁷ Rana Bahadur's letter.

⁹⁸ Wei Yuan, Landon, *Nepal*, ii, 280.

⁹⁹ Rana Bahadur's letter; also Wei Yuan, Landon, *Nepal*, ii, 280.

¹⁰⁰ Rana Bahadur's letter.

¹⁰¹ Wei Yuan, Landon, *Nepal*, ii, 280.

and, after discussion, all were accepted.¹⁰² There was to be a tribute mission to Peking; the loot from Tashilunpo was to be returned; the *dharmapatra* signed by Samarpa Lama was to be turned over to the Chinese; and the goods, servants, and companions of the now dead Samarpa Lama were to be surrendered to the Chinese, so that they might be returned to Tashilunpo.

The reason for the Chinese desire for peace was made clear when the Nepali kazis joined the Chinese camp preparatory to making the journey to Peking. They were astonished at the suffering they saw there. Provisions had almost given out, and there were sick and wounded everywhere in the camp. As soon as the Gorkhali kazis arrived in the camp, the Chinese advance party of wounded and baggage carriers began the long trek back to Tibet and China.¹⁰³ Some two weeks later the commander, accompanied by the Gorkhali tribute mission, left with the rest of the Chinese army.¹⁰⁴ The war on this front was over. The Gorkhals could once again concentrate on the battles to the west.

Despite the commentaries of men like Hamilton,¹⁰⁵ the Nepal-China war can best be described as a stalemate. There was no real winner. And yet there are some persistent doubts that continue to be urged about this. If it was a stalemate, it is asked, why did the Gorkhals give Chinese everything they asked, including the loot from Tashilunpo? And secondly, if it was a stalemate why did the Gorkhals agree to send a regular tribute

¹⁰² Rana Bahadur's letter. Pudma Jung, *Life of Maharaja Sir Jung Bahadur of Nepal* (Allahabad, 1909), p. 6, gives a summary of this treaty in seven points. The *Sandhi-Patra Sangrah* gives a Nepali translation of an English version of the treaty found in the Jaisi Kothi of the Nepal Foreign Office. This is the same treaty as that reported by Pudma Jung. There is no indication given that this is an official treaty. The terms in it do not match the events that led to the war as given in any of the original sources, and in fact, clause two can be accepted only in the light of Pudma Jung's version of the causes of the war. There is every reason to hold this version of the treaty suspect. However, this same treaty was included as the sixth enclosure in letter of Bijaya Shamsher, then Director General, Foreign Affairs, Kathmandu, to the Chairman of the Committee on Admission of new members in the United Nations Organisation, dated 22 July 1949, as additional proof of Nepal's independent and sovereign status.

¹⁰³ Rana Bahadur's letter.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Hamiltal, *Nepal*, p. 248. Hamilton's view is ultimately based on a report of Abdul Kadir Khan forwarded to the governor general from Mr. Duncan, the resident in Banaras, and reaching Calcutta on 15 September 1792. It is summarized in CPC, x (1792), No. 745.

mission each five years to Peking ?

Before touching on the answers to these questions, it is important to recall that for the Gorkhalis the war was something to be ended at all costs. It was a war that could never be won, and even if the Gorkhalis succeeded in defending their homeland successfully against invasions from the north, the mere effort would prevent their expansion to the west and the administrative reforms that were required throughout their conquered territories. The war was expensive, it was distracting from more important work, and it was meaningless. Any terms that did not deprive them of their sovereignty or demand compensation would be acceptable to them.

In view of this, it is clear that the Gorkhalis did not give the Chinese very much. As for the return of the booty from Tashilunpo, since no one knew exactly what had been taken, and since there is no inventory available of what was returned, it can safely be questioned whether the Gorkhalis did, in fact, return all the booty.

The question of the tribute mission is not at all significant as far as sovereignty is concerned. There is no indication of such an implication being contained in the five-yearly gift embassies to Peking either among the Nepali writers or the Chinese. The only ones who were ever confused by this clause were the British, and this was all to the advantage of Nepal.

As for the Tibetan coinage and its profits, this was certainly lost. But it had been lost long before this, as even Bahadur Shah must have realized. It had from the first been a mistake for the Gorkhalis to think that because coins made in Nepal provided the coinage of Tibet, Nepal could in any way dictate the conditions for the use of that coinage.

The real losers in the war were the Tibetans, who found themselves caught in the middle, and the British, whose efforts at diplomacy fell so far short of the mark that they lost their Tibetan markets and gained the undying suspicion of the Gorkhalis.¹⁰⁶ The cost in terms of men and wealth to both the Chinese and Gorkhalis also indicates that there no real victors

¹⁰⁶ Cammann, *Trade through the Himalayas*, p. 139, who says, 'The rulers of Bengal were of course totally discredited with the Gurkhas, the Chinese, and the Tibetans.'

in this war.

Bahadur Shah's Fall from Power

The Nepal-China war came to an end in the summer of 1792. In the aftermath of the war, Bahadur Shah had countless details to settle, not least of which was the handling of the Kirkpatrick mission to Nepal. The full details of the Gorkhali overtures to the East India Company for assistance in the war and the British response have been deliberately set aside during the narration of the causes of the war and the execution of it. To state the case briefly, in a letter received by the governor general of the Company on 5 September 1792, and dated 22 Srawan 1849 B.S. (31 July 1792), Bahadur Shah informed the governor general of the Chinese attack on Nepal and reminded him of two former letters in which he had requested aid in repulsing the Chinese. In this letter he went on to request that the commanding general at Dinapore be directed to dispatch two battalions of Europeans and two of sepoy with military stores and a suitable number of guns, so that the Gorkhals might expel the Chinese from their territory.¹⁰⁷ On 3 August 1792, however, the governor general had received a letter from the Dalai Lama, dated 1 March 1792, in which he was requested *not* to send any aid to the Gorkhals and to imprison any Gorkhals he should lay his hands on.¹⁰⁸

The governor general temporized by offering to send one of the Company's servants of 'high status and integrity' to mediate the dispute between China and Nepal.¹⁰⁹ The gentleman in question was Colonel (then Captain) Kirkpatrick, who did not even set out for Nepal until after the war had been successfully terminated by the treaty mentioned above. The governor general was accordingly requested in a letter from the court of Kathmandu on 24 October 1792 not to send Kirkpatrick, since the war had been amicably concluded and peaceful relations then subsisted between the Gorkhals and

¹⁰⁷ CPC, x (1792), No. 724, summarizes a letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to the governor general, dated 13 July 1792, and received in Calcutta 15 September 1792.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, No. 625, summarizes a letter from the Potala Lama to the governor general, dated 1 March 1792, and received in Calcutta 3 August 1792.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, No. 768.

their northern neighbours.¹¹⁰ However, since the governor general was keen on sending a man to Nepal, the court in Kathmandu agreed to send two agents, Bam Shah and Dinanath Upadhyaya, to meet Kirkpatrick at Azimabad.¹¹¹ A letter from Bam Shah and Dinanath Upadhyaya, received by the governor general on 11 January 1793, was summarized as follows:

The Maharaja of Nepal had desired that Captain Kirkpatrick should not proceed further than Azimabad; instead he had deputed them (the writers) to meet him there for exchange of views between the two governments. After their arrival at Azimabad they had seen Captain Kirkpatrick whom they found to be a very wise and good man.....The Maharaja of Nepal has since changed his mind and now desires Captain Kirkpatrick to proceed to Nepal.¹¹²

Kirkpatrick arrived at Bara Garhi on 15 February 1793 in response to orders received from Calcutta, and then proceeded on to Nuwakot, where he arrived on 3 March.¹¹³ The Gorkhalis carried through the formalities of the visit. Kirkpatrick met Rana Bahadur Shah and Bahadur Shah for the first time on 4 March, but it rapidly became evident to Kirkpatrick that there was neither work for him to do in Kathmandu nor was his presence really desired. He accordingly took leave of the Valley on 14 March, arriving at Sagauli on 4 April 1793.¹¹⁴

The net effect of Kirkpatrick's visit to Nepal will be seen in a later chapter. Here it is merely necessary to mention it to illustrate the fact that after the Nepal-China war Bahadur Shah was very much preoccupied. In addition to the Kirkpatrick mission, he tried to reinvigorate the attack in the west, and was able to initiate several Graids into arhwal,¹¹⁵ though time did not permit him to complete this conquest. It would be left for

¹¹⁰ Ibid., No. 849, dated 11 October 1792.

¹¹¹ Ibid., No. 1009, Dinanath Upadhyaya to Captain Kirkpatrick, received 24 December 1792.

¹¹² Ibid., No. 1091.

¹¹³ Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepal*, pp. 355-7.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 369.

¹¹⁵ Raper, 'Survey of the Sources of the Ganges', p. 500.

Kazi Amar Singh Thapa to achieve the final victory over Garhwal and to continue the expansion of the kingdom to the west.

A few months after Kirkpatrick returned to India, Rana Bahadur at last came of age. For some time subsequent to this he was content to allow Bahadur Shah to continue to conduct the affairs of state, but within one year, in mid-April 1794, he took the powers of government into his own hands.¹¹⁶ From that time it was evident that the young king would remove Bahadur Shah from the scene entirely, should the opportunity present itself. In his *Durgarchanakalpataru*, written in 1850 B.S. (1793-4), Laxmipati Pande omitted all mention of Bahadur Shah, which indicates that in his eyes and in the eyes of the court in Kathmandu, Bahadur Shah's star had already fallen.¹¹⁷ Letters from the Chinese ambas in Lhasa to Rana Bahadur mention that Bahadur Shah had corresponded with them about going to Peking,¹¹⁸ apparently because he thought such a trip would be both profitable and safer than remaining in Kathmandu.

Bahadur Shah was arrested and confined to prison in a fort near the modern Paropakar toward the end of February 1797.¹¹⁹ In mid-April of that same year Rana Bahadur Shah sent a list of instructions with Sarvajit Pande, who was on his way to Lhasa, explaining his motives for taking action against Bahadur Shah, so that Sarvajit could explain this action to the Chinese ambas.¹²⁰ Towards the end of June 1797 (14 Asar 1854 B.S.) Bahadur Shah died in prison, apparently as the result of the treatment he had received there.¹²¹

The passing of Bahadur Shah from the scene was in reality the end of an era in the history of Nepal. It would take some

¹¹⁶ Nepali, *Rana Bahadur*, p. 23.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Dinesh Raj Pant, 'Daivajya Siromani Laxmipati Pande', *Purnima*, No. 9, p. 45.

¹¹⁸ Nepali, *Rana Bahadur*, pp. 109-11, quotes this in full.

¹¹⁹ Acharya, *Samkshipta Brittant*, pp. 103-4.

¹²⁰ Published in Nepali, *Rana Bahadur*, pp. 111-5.

¹²¹ Dinesh Raj Pant, 'Daivajya Siromani Laxmipati Pande', *Purnima*, No. 10, p. 49.

years before the full impact of this change would be felt in Nepal, but it would bear very important consequences for the country as a whole and its unification. There is no need to praise Bahadur Shah or to recapitulate his achievements. The whole of this chapter has tried to relate these in the general context of the military unification of the country. His record is the clearest vindication of his position in the history of Nepal and the strongest rebuttal of the various charges that have at various times been levelled against him.

CHAPTER SEVEN
THE CONQUESTS OF
KAZI AMAR SINGH THAPA

Hope is man's curse; many a state hath it involved
in strife, by leading them into excessive rage. . . who
knoweth when to be quiet is a wise man. Yea and
this too is bravery, even forethought.

—*Euripides*¹

Though Bahadur Shah's death occurred at the end of June 1797 (14 Asar 1854 B.S.), his control over Nepal's policies and his direction of government had effectively ended in April 1794. During the interval between the end of Bahadur Shah's direction of Nepali affairs in 1794 and the return of his nephew Raja Rana Bahadur Shah from Banaras in 1804, there was no significant effort to continue Nepal's westward expansion into Garhwal and the Cis-Sutlej states. This ten-year period of military inactivity comes as an unexpected hiatus in the history of the unification of Nepal. It indicates a period of considerable instability in the court of Kathmandu, with very serious implications for the future of Nepal and the unification of the country.

In a strictly chronological sequence, the *political* developments in Kathmandu between 1797 and 1804 should be discussed at this time. For two important reasons, however, this discussion has been reserved for later chapters. First, for the sake of continuity it is important to present a complete over-view of the full extent of the military conquests of the House of Gorkha. And secondly, the political situation in the Valley that brought about this hiatus in military affairs is of a piece with the changes in the centre of power in Kathmandu that led to the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814-6. These political changes, then, are seen more suitably as a background for that war. Both of these reasons not only support the decision to discuss the conquests

¹Euripides, *The Suppliants*, 11. 480 ff.

of Amar Singh Thapa at this point, they actually dictate such a decision.

The discussion of the conquests of Amar Singh Thapa is rendered somewhat difficult by the fact that there were *two* well-known military commanders by the same name.³ One Amar Singh Thapa was the father of Bhim Sen Thapa. The second Amar Singh Thapa was the commander of whose exploits this chapter will treat. Nepali documents rarely distinguish between the two, and many of the English writers of that period seem to have completely confused them. To add to the confusion, both of these commanders were active in Kumaon at various times. For the purpose of clarity, it will be enough here to state that the Amar Singh Thapa mentioned in the documents concerning Kumaon and the 1791-2 invasion of Garhwal was the father of Bhim Sen Thapa.³ The Amar Singh Thapa mentioned in the later accounts dealing with the military expansion in the west from 1804 onwards was the general who opposed Ochterlony in the Anglo-Nepal war.⁴ For clarity's sake, this latter Amar Singh Thapa will always be referred to as Kazi Amar Singh Thapa, regardless of the military title he may more properly have had at any stage of the campaign. It is with Kazi Amar Singh Thapa that this chapter will primarily be concerned.

Though there was no important military activity in the west for a ten-year period, there were minor incidents of a military nature that add considerably to our understanding of the state of the House of Gorkha at this time. One such incident was the attempt made by Amar Singh Thapa during 1795 to extend Nepali rule to a section of the Kumaon Tarai.⁵ It will be recalled that during the period of political instability in Kumaon, when Mohan Chand was fighting his way to the

³ For the existence of *two* military commanders named Amar Singh Thapa, cf the letter of Bara Kazi Amar Singh Thapa to General Amar Singh Thapa, published in *Purnima*, No. 9, pp. 48-53.

⁴ Lal Mohar of Girbana Yuddha Bikram Shah appointing Amar Singh Thapa Sardar, published in Nepali, *Bhim Sen Thapa Ra Tattkalin Nepal* (Kathmandu, 2013 B.S.), pp. 253-4.

⁵ Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Nepal-Angrej Yuddha Suru Hunu Bhandā Ek Barsha Agari Amar Singh Thapa Ka Chora Ra Aktarlōni Ka Chora le Miteri Laethe', *Purnima*, No. 9, p. 48, note 2.

⁶ Letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Shri Bhakti Thapa et al, dated 1852 B.S., Paus, sudi 5, roj 3, published in *Himavat Sanskriti*, No. 3, pp. 1-10.

throne, the Kumaon Tarai had been given to one Nandaram in payment for his cooperation. Nandaram, in turn, gave it to the nawab of Oudh, from whom he received it back as a zamindari.⁶ Hence, Amar Singh Thapa's incursion into the Kumaon Tarai was an incursion into an area enjoying the protection of the nawab of Oudh. Since the Gorkhals had always carefully avoided attacking any area that had the nawab's protection, Amar Singh Thapa's move into the Tarai was not only an indirect attack on the nawab of Oudh, but was also directly counter to the set policy of the court of Kathmandu.⁷ As was to be expected, both parties reacted immediately. The nawab began military preparations against the intruders,⁸ and the court of Kathmandu ordered Sardar Bhakti Thapa, the commander in Kumaon, to get Amar Singh Thapa and his troops out of the area immediately.⁹ The court of Kathmandu reasoned that if this offense were not prolonged, and if no further incursion were made, the nawab would not press his complaint by moving into the hills against the Gorkhali armies. Events proved their reasoning to be correct. At the same time, however, the court took occasion to remind Bhakti Thapa that the forces available for the garrisoning of Kumaon were few. He should, therefore take immediate steps to strengthen whatever defences Kumaon had, and in the future avoid any incident that might occasion a conflict with major powers in that area.¹⁰ From this it is quite clear that at this time the court of Kathmandu entertained no intention of a campaign of conquest in that quarter, either because they lacked leadership or because the aftermath of the Nepal-China war left them without the means for continuing their expansion westwards.

There is an interesting foot-note to this incident of the incursion into the Kumaon Tarai. In February 1795 the court of Garhwal had sent a certain Dharanidhar as an ambassador to

⁶Cf. above, p. 45.

⁷Letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Sardar Jasibant Bhandari et al, published in *Himavat Sanskriti*, No. 3, pp. 12-4.

⁸Letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Sardar Bhakti Thapa et al, published in *Himavat Sanskriti*, No. 3, pp. 14-5.

⁹Letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Sardar Bhakti Thapa et al, dated 5 Magh 1852 B.S. (1796), published in *Himavat Sanskriti*, No. 3, pp. 9-10.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

Kathmandu to plead for some remission in the annual payments to Kathmandu. It was difficult, he said, for the raja to meet the annual payment of nine thousand rupees. Kathmandu was reluctant to grant any remission, and Dharanidhar was kept waiting in the capital for some time. At length, however, the annual tribute was reduced from nine thousand to three thousand rupees per year, because the nawab's reaction to Amar Singh Thapa's foray into the Tarai had alerted the court in Kathmandu to the possibility that a disaffected Garhwal might decide to improve her lot by an alliance with the British or the nawab. Such an alliance would provide the forces of the plains with an easy entry into the hills and become a very serious threat to the Gorkhali possessions in Kumaon.¹¹ The court was also aware that men like Lal Singh, Mahendra Singh and Harsha Dev Joshi, who had been driven from power in Kumaon, were busy in the court of neighbouring kingdoms in search of support for a return into the hills and to power.¹²

Aside from this negligible foray into the plains, the Gorkhali armies were more involved in maintaining peace among the various petty states that had come under Gorkhali rule in the west of Nepal than in any further expansion of the country. Only after Rana Bahadur Shah returned to the capital in 1804 did this pattern of inactivity change—an indication, perhaps, that leadership had been lacking rather than any shortage of the means to wage war.¹³ Also indicative of this is the fact that on his return Rana Bahadur released Kazi Amar Singh Thapa from the confinement to which he had been subjected by Damodar Pande's faction.¹⁴ Apparently Kazi Amar Singh Thapa was expected to supply the necessary leadership for the armies of Nepal, since he was immediately assigned the command of the armies in the west and given a large degree of autonomy in the conduct of the campaign in that quarter. His

¹¹Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 13, p. 33.

¹²Letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Sardar Bhakti Thapa et al, undated, published in *Himavat Sanskriti*, No. 3, pp. 12-4; and letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Sardar Bhakti Thapa et al, dated 1852 B.S., Srawan, sudi 8, roj 6, Kantipur (1795), published in *Himavat Sanskriti*, No. 3, pp. 7-9.

¹³Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 300; also Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 14, p. 150.

¹⁴Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 259.

first objective was to be Garhwal itself.

To put the conquests of Kazi Amar Singh Thapa into perspective, it will be necessary to reconsider certain aspects of the 1791-2 war in Garhwal. During the period of internal struggle in Kumaon, when Harsha Dev Joshi and Mohan Chand had been struggling for control of Kumaon, relations between Harsha Dev and the rajas of Garhwal had seriously deteriorated. When Harsha Dev was finally ousted from Kumaon, he found the doors of Garhwal shut tightly against him. He finally approached the Gorkhals, and, as was seen in the previous chapter, offered his help in their conquest of Kumaon. When he entered Almora in triumph with the Gorkhals, the treatment he had received from Garhwal still rankled, and he urged the Gorkhals to continue their campaign westwards to the conquest of Garhwal.

The Gorkhals spent one year in preparing for the conquest of Garhwal. When it was finally undertaken, the Gorkhali advance was brought up short at Langur Garh.¹⁵ Langur Garh was a strong fortress situated between the Ganges and Koh Rivers, very close to Srinagar, the capital of Garhwal.¹⁶ The Gorkhals tried to take Langur Garh for one year, and were still involved in this effort when they received the announcement of the Nepal-China war.¹⁷ The Gorkhals agreed to interrupt their campaign against Garhwal 'most reluctantly' and to conclude a treaty of peace with Garhwal, as mentioned in Chapter Six.

This treaty of peace between Garhwal and Kathmandu provided for the payment of nine thousand rupees a year to Kathmandu by Pradyumna Sah of Garhwal and the maintenance at Srinagar of a Nepali resident. At first sight the treaty seems like a simple agreement between two states. Yet it cannot be doubted that the Gorkhals considered it to be a treaty of subsidiarity and that they looked upon Garhwal as a

¹⁵Atkinson, *Himalayan Districts*, ii, 610.

¹⁶Williams, *Memoir*, p. 114.

¹⁷'When the Chinese troops reached Dhaibung, the morale of our troops went down. We were faced with the problem of saving the country and repulsing the enemy by maintaining troops on two fronts. This was the reason why the paid soldiers, musketeers, and shield bearers accompanying you had to be dismissed.' Letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to the Officials in Kumaon, translated from *Sandhi-Patra Sangraha in Regmi Research Series*, ii (1 August 1970), No, 8, p. 177.

part of their dominions. In support of this there are two letters summarized in the *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*. The first, from Rana Bahadur Shah to Bishan Nath Upadhyaya, dated 10 October 1792, states simply, 'In the western districts the writer fought the hill rajas and *occupied Kumaon and Garhwal*.'¹⁸ The second letter, also from Rana Bahadur Shah is addressed to Gajraj Misra and is dated the following day, 11 October 1792. In it Rana Bahadur says:

The contest in the west with the rajas of the hill tracts, Garhwal, etc., has also ended in favour of the writer. *The territory of Nepal has now been extended to the eastern bank of the Ganges river at Hardwar*. Settlement has also been made with the raja of Sirmur.¹⁹

Thus, though Garhwal was still being ruled by Pradyumna Sah, it was considered to be subject to Kathmandu when the war was broken off in 1792. However, though the court of Nepal spoke of the area of Garhwal as being Gorkhali territory, it is quite clear from later events that this was not exactly true, and that Garhwal, though bound by the terms of the treaty, still enjoyed considerable independence and autonomy.

As Rana Bahadur Shah's letter to Bishan Nath Upadhyaya further indicates, a treaty was also concluded at this time with the principedom of Sirmoor. According to the terms of this treaty the Gorkhalis were able to occupy a section of land in the hills that formerly had been the property of the raja of Sirmoor. The letter to Bishan Nath Upadhyaya goes on to say:

On their arrival (Bam Shah, Kalu Pande, Amar Singh, and others) the raja of Sirmoor sued for peace and ceded part of his country up to the river Alakananda, which has been occupied.²⁰

This treaty with Sirmoor would have important consequences in the later expansion of Nepali rule to the west, and will be referred to again during the discussion of those events.

In view of this treaty with Garhwal it might well be asked why Kazi Amar Singh Thapa was to begin his campaign by

¹⁸CPC, x (1792), No. 835.

¹⁹Ibid., No. 851.

²⁰Ibid., No. 835.

subduing Garhwal, when it is clear that the Gorkhals already exercised as much authority there as they did in many of the states of the Baisi and Chaubisi Rajas in Nepal proper. The conquest of Garhwal was actually dictated both by the Gorkhals' ultimate objective in this campaign and by the insecurity of Gorkhali control in Garhwal. Of their objective, Raper, writing in 1808, pointed out:

It had long been a plan in agitation, at the court of Nepal, to invade the territories of the Raja of Srinagar, and to extend their possessions to Kashmir.²¹

Though there is no documentary proof of Raper's statement, it does have a logic of its own, and it is quite clear that at the time there was very little to prevent the Gorkhals from advancing as far west as Kashmir. Certainly Kashmir was a prize well worth whatever sacrifice the conquest of Garhwal and the western states might entail. But, if such an ambitious objective were the goal of this campaign, Garhwal would have to be taken first. Under the existing treaty Garhwal still enjoyed too much autonomy and was too much involved in the intrigues of the west to be trusted. If the Gorkhals allowed such a state to remain in their rear, it would seriously endanger any extended military campaign to points farther west. The actual conquest of Garhwal, even when a treaty of subsidiarity existed, was dictated largely by military expediency.

Hamilton, of course, maintains that the Gorkhali attack on Garhwal in 1804 was made without any pretext whatsoever.²² This is patently not true. The fact is that Pradyumna Sah himself provided the pretext. During the troubled times of 1797-1804 in Kathmandu he had fallen into arrears in his annual tribute payments to Kathmandu.²³ In itself this failure to pay three thousand rupees a year was nothing very serious, but, as will be explained at length in Chapter Eight, the Gorkhals insisted for administrative reasons on an exact fulfilment of the terms of any treaty with a subsidiary raja. During the disturbed years nothing could be done about Pradyumna Sah's failure to honour his tribute obligations. But when order was restored to

²¹Raper, 'Sources of the Ganges', p. 500.

²²Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 300.

²³Raper, 'Sources of the Ganges', p. 500.

the politics of the Valley, it was determined to settle this problem once and for all before moving father west. While Hamilton may not have considered this a valid pretext, in the context of the Gorkhali administrative system it was both valid and necessary.

Accordingly, in October 1804, the Gorkhali army gathered in impressive numbers in Kumaon. The *Gorkhaliharuko Sainik Itihas* lists a total of forty-five companies gathered for the campaign,²⁴ Allowing about two hundred men to a company, this would put an army of nine thousand men in the field at this time in Kumaon. Raper sets the figure for the Gorkhali army at eight to ten thousand men,²⁵ which is sufficiently close to confirm the report in the *Sainik Itihas*. Opposed to these Gorkhalis were some fifteen to twenty thousand mercenaries serving the Garhwali raja under the command of Sisaram and Dal Bir Rana.²⁶ Kazi Amar Singh Thapa was in over-all command of the Gorkhali forces.²⁷

The Gorkhalis crossed the Pindar River and came upon the Garhwali camp near the banks of the Mandakini River. which with the Pindar is a tributary of the better known Alakananda River. The confrontation of these two armies brought the professional army of Nepal into battle against the large, but mercenary, army of Garhwal. In theory the Garhwalis should have enjoyed the advantage of fighting in more familiar terrain. Actually, however, the Gorkhalis had conducted frequent raids into the Garhwal territory despite the treaty of 1792, and the knowledge of the country gained from these raids, plus such information as the Nepali resident in the court of Srinagar could gather for them, was sufficient to nullify any real advantage the Garhwalis might have had.

In the first engagement of the campaign, Pradyumna Sah's troops, being mercenaries for the most part and anxious to avoid a battle with the Gorkhalis if it were at all possible, put up very little resistance.²⁸ The Garhwali lines broke, and the troops fled

²⁴*Gorkhaliharuko Sainik Itihas*, ii, part 3, 446.

²⁵Raper, 'Sources of the Ganges', p. 500.

²⁶*Bhasha Vamsavali*, quoted in Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 14, p. 150.

²⁷*Gorkhaliharuko Sainik Itihas*, ii, part 3, 442.

²⁸Raper, 'Sources of the Ganges', p. 500.

with their commanders. Sisaram and some of the Garhwalis fled toward Rawai in the south, while Dal Bir Rana and the remainder of the Garhwali forces fled towards Srinagar, the capital of Garhwal.²⁹ Bhakti Thapa with about one thousand Gorkhals pursued Sisaram, forcing him to stand and fight at Chillabheri Lekh. Sisaram was killed along with some fifty to sixty of his Garhwali mercenaries. The rest were scattered. Bhakti Thapa and his men then retraced their steps towards the north-west to rejoin the van of the army.³⁰

Meanwhile Hastidal Shah and his men pursued Dal Bir Rana towards Srinagar, where a second battle was fought in which one hundred and fifty to two hundred Garhwalis fell. Pradyumna Sah then retreated towards the plains with most of his nobles. A part of the northern Gorkhali force occupied Srinagar: others returned to the east across the Alakananda River to Chandra-bodan; while a third group travelled to the south-west to the doon, occupying Dehra in October 1804.³¹

Pradyumna Sah next set up a camp at Kheda in the Siwaliks, apparently with the intention of continuing the war. A Gorkhali force attacked them there, but was defeated and forced to return to Dehra. When this news was reported to Kazi Amar Singh Thapa, he led a second attack on Kheda himself, and this attack carried. Casualties on both sides were relatively low, but

²⁹*Gorkhaliharuko Sainik Itihas*, ii, part 3, 443.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 14, p. 150. Atkinson, Raper, and others of the English authors assign the Gorkha occupation of Dehra Doon to October 1803. This, however, is clearly in error, since the campaign to take Garhwal began only *after* Rana Bahadur Shah's return from Banaras to Kathmandu, which was in 1804. Cf. Secret Consultation 26 April 1804, No. 301, a letter of Thomas Brooke to the secretary to government, dated 24 November 1803. The English authors often rely on the same source, and hence errors, once made, are compounded. As William Wilson Hunter, *Life of Hodgson*, pp. 52-3, says, 'It is surprising how long a really good piece of work lives in India. The Report for which Traill and his assistant were gathering the materials in 1819-20 become the basis of the administrative handbook to the province. It was published in the *Asiatik Researches* in 1828; entered largely into Batten's Settlement Reports of Kumaon from 1842 to 1848; was reprinted by order of the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces in 1851; supplied materials for the account of Kumaon written by Mr. Atkinson in 1877 for the Statistical Survey of India; and then started life afresh in the article "Kumaon" in the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*. That article reproduced in 1886 contains some of the *ipsissima verba* of Traill written in 1823.'

Pradyumna Sah fled into India to Saharanpur, and the Gorkhals held the field. After a short while the Gorkhals returned to Dehra in the doon, where they camped for some time. Since Dehra was not really defensible, they moved their camp to a low hill some five miles to the north-east, called Nala Pani,³² which would later become famous as the scene of one of the most heroic defences in Asian history.³³

Pradyumna Sah's next actions show a determination quite surprising in a man who was, as Raper says, 'more inclined to a life of indolence and dissipation than to encounter the toils and dangers of war.'³⁴ In Saharanpur the Garhwali raja pawned his throne for 150,000 rupees and raised another 50,000 rupees by pawning the jewels and plate of the temple of Badrinath.³⁵ With the money thus raised he sought out the Gujar raja, Ramdayal Singh of Landhaura, from whom he was able to obtain the assistance of some twelve thousand men. He was then prepared to make a final effort to regain his lost territories.

The last and greatest battle between Kazi Amar Singh Thapa and Pradyumna Sah was fought about half a mile north of the village of Bhurbura, near Dehra. The battle ended in catastrophe for the Garhwals. Pradyumna Sah himself was struck and killed by a musket ball while he was standing in front of his tent, and with his death the Garhwali attack totally collapsed.³⁶ An estimated one thousand of the troops fighting for Pradyumna Sah fell that day,³⁷ and his son Pritam Sah and Dal Bir Rana were captured. Dal Bir was put to death, but Pritam was sent to Kathmandu as a hostage.³⁸ At the time of this victory the treaty with Sirmoor, mentioned earlier, was renewed.³⁹

³²*Gorkhaliharuko Sainik Itihas*, ii, part 3, 444.

³³Here during the Anglo-Nepal war some six hundred Gorkhals, men and women, withstood for one month the attack of an English force that was heavily equipped with cannon and that reached a total of over ten thousand fighting men. A memorial pillar erected there by English soldiers commemorates this bravery. Cf. Atkison, *Himalayan Districts* ii, 639-40.

³⁴Raper, 'Sources of the Ganges', p. 500.

³⁵Williams, *Memotr*, p. 115.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 116.

³⁷*Gorkhalihariko Sainik Itihas*, ii, part 3, 444, gives two to four hundred. Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 14, p. 150. quoting the *Bhasha Vamsavali*, gives the figure one thousand to twelve hundred.

³⁸Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 301.

³⁹*Itihas Prakash*, i, 83

News of the death of Pradyumna Sah spread consternation over the whole country-side. The inhabitants of the doon withdrew into the mountains and could not be induced to return to the cultivation of their fields. However, when Mahant Har Sevak Ram was reinstated in his possessions as zamindar, he was finally able to persuade the villagers to return to their homes and to accept Gorkhali rule.⁴⁰

Westward from Garhwal

Kazi Amar Singh Thapa's advance into the territories of the western hill states was occasioned by the struggle between the states of Sirmoor, Hindoor, and Nadun for control of the Bara Thakurai. The Bara Thakurai were very petty states to the west of Garhwal. In the course of their history they had owed their obedience and tribute to various of the larger Cis-Sutlej states. Most recently, however, they had belonged to Sirmoor, who had taken them from Bilaspur. Sirmoor had angered Sansar Chand of Nadun by opposing his effort to take Bilaspur and Mundi. In consequence Sansar Chand asked the raja of Hindoor to assist him in an attack on Sirmoor⁴¹ and promised that Hindoor could take the Bara Thakurai as his share of the spoils.

At this stage of the struggle the raja of Sirmoor called upon his ally Kazi Amar Singh Thapa for assistance.⁴² Kazi Amar Singh responded by sending Bhakti Thapa with one thousand men to join Sirmoor against the combined forces of Sansar Chand and his Hindooria allies. Even with these Gorkhali reinforcements, however, Sirmoor was still no match for Sansar Chand. Sirmoor and the Gorkhalis were forced to fall back, allowing Sansar Chand to loot Karma Prakash's possessions. But Karma Prakash stubbornly refused to admit defeat and once again reminded Kazi Amar Singh Thapa of their treaty. This time Kazi Amar Singh himself advanced into the area. He defeated Hindoor, subdued most of the petty principedoms in the

⁴⁰Raper, 'Sources of the Ganges', pp. 464-5. One is reminded of the fear inspired in the people of Patan at the time of the Gorkhali conquest, as reported in the letter of Fr, Giuseppe da Rovato quoted above, p. 130.

⁴¹Hamilton. *Nepal*, p. 304.

⁴²*Ibid.*

area, and returned Karma Prakash's estates to him.⁴³

Although this engagement was a minor one, it had very important results for the future of the Gorkhali campaign. As a direct result of the Gorkhali victory, the Hindooria Raja Ram Singh and his troops fell back first on their fortresses in Hindoor, and then, as the Gorkhalis systematically captured these, they made a final and successful stand at the fort of Plasseiah.⁴⁴ The Gorkhalis thus gained control of a number of very important forts in the Sutlej area, but their failure to gain this one fort was to prove critical.

The second result of this campaign was the decisive proof that the Gorkhalis were superior to Sansar Chand's troops. Though both sides in the conflict had enjoyed the cooperation of allies, the fact remains that the brunt of the fighting fell on Sansar Chand and Kazi Amar Singh Thapa, and Kazi Amar Singh Thapa had won a clear victory. There now seemed to be no reason why the Gorkhalis should not attack Sansar Chand, if they were given a pretext for doing so.

As a third result of this victory over Sansar Chand and Hindoor, the Gorkhalis were able to subdue most of the petty rajas in the Cis-Sutlej area. In a very short time the whole of the Bara and Athara Thakurai fell to the Gorkhali army. The speed of these victories has caused several writers to comment on it. One, Kennedy, says that 'Kazi Amar Singh Thapa strengthened his interest by espousing one of the Bughat Rana's families which at that period was, in point of power, the second state of the Bara Thakurai.'⁴⁵ Ochterlony, however, in a letter to the governor general offers a slightly different reason for the rapid success of the Gorkhalis in this region:

The Rajas who have been expelled did not maintain any or only a very small number of troops, but depended for the defence of their country on the inhabitants themselves and to this and to a want of concord amongst the chiefs may be in a great measure attributed the success the Gorkhalis have met with. At Nahan the principal government in the hills in this quarter they were first called in by the Rajah

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Kennedy, 'Report Dated 6 July 1824' p. 260.

⁴⁵Ibid.

himself to subdue an insurrection of his own people, and from thence made their way to the Sutledge more by this discord, existing between the chiefs, than by force of arms and every place of strength has fallen not by attack (for they have not guns of any calibre) but by famine, the consequence of blockade.⁴⁶

The speed of this conquest, however, was quite deceptive. It is true that the rajas in question either submitted or were driven out. But they were not decisively defeated nor was Gorkhali authority firmly established. Here again a stronger control at the centre in Kathmandu should have insisted on a more leisurely pace, and should also have insisted that this area be consolidated before the Gorkhali armies moved forward. But such control of the army did not exist at that time in Kathmandu, with the result that the Cis-Sutlej area was not consolidated, and Kazi Amar Singh Thapa immediately sought some opportunity that would enable him to enter into Nadun to confront Sansar Chand in his own kingdom.

It was the small state of Cooloor which provided Kazi Amar Singh Thapa with the opportunity he sought. Seeing the Kazi's success against Hindoor and Sansar Chand, Cooloor asked him to intervene in the struggle then going on between Cooloor and Nadun over the taluk of Bati in Cooloor, which Sansar Chand claimed. Kazi Amar Singh Thapa gladly accepted this invitation, and the Gorkhals crossed the Sutlej.⁴⁷

The first action between Kazi Amar Singh Thapa and Sansar Chand took place at Mahal Mori in May 1806.

Sansar Chand's troops were signally defeated and fled in confusion to Tira (Tehra), where there were fortified palaces belonging to the Raja. But the Gurkhas pressed on for Kot Kangra, keeping up their communications with Bilaspur on the Satlaj.⁴⁸

Kangra was a formidable stronghold. Raper says of it:

'It is situated on a high and steep mountain, about

⁴⁶Secret Consultation, 16 August 1814, No. 16. Letter of Colonel Ochterlony to John Adam, secretary to government in the political department.

⁴⁷*Gazetteer of the Kangra District*, i, *Kangra Proper*, 1883-4 (Punjab Government), pp. 39-40.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 40.

twenty cos to the west of the Beas river; it is well supplied with water, and contains sufficient ground to yield subsistence to the garrison, consisting of three or four thousand men.⁴⁹

Some idea of the strength of this fort can be derived from the fact that from 1744 to 1774, a period of thirty years, Nawab Saif Ali Khan, an isolated Muslim commander with no resources beyond the range of his own guns, held Fort Kangra against the full power of the Delhi emperor and was not dislodged.⁵⁰

After the initial battle at Mahal Mori, the Gorkhals moved their camp to Jwalamukhi, a famous pilgrimage spot that fell within Nadun's jurisdiction. The main body of Gorkhali troops then laid siege of Fort Kangra, while Bhakti Thapa was sent with a detachment to capture the fort at Tehra to the east.⁵¹

The Gorkhali campaign, however, was not without its problems, and almost from the beginning they had trouble with their allies. Many petty rajas had accompanied them into Nadun on the pretext of assisting them in the war against their long-time oppressor Sansar Chand. During the period of the siege these rajas of neighbouring states, no matter how petty they might be, moved about Sansar Chand's territories with impunity. They took full advantage of the fact that Sansar Chand's troops were tightly locked up within their fort and the Gorkhals were busy in pressing the siege. Thus they could, and did, loot the area, taking anything that was not heavily guarded.⁵² In the long run they proved far more hindrance than help.

Another difficulty developed in the Cis-Sutlej states to the rear of the Gorkhali army. Before Bhakti Thapa could invest the fort at Tehra, the fugitive raja of Hindoor, Ram Saran, broke out of his fort at Plasseiah and tried to retake his lost territories in Hindoor. Since Hindoor and Sirmoor lay directly across Kazi Amar Singh Thapa's supply lines, Ram Saran could not be allowed to move about in Hindoor unchecked. Yet when Bhakti Thapa crossed over into Hindoor to attack, Ram Saran merely withdrew into his fort at Plasseiah. The Gorkhals were not able to spare sufficient troops from the campaign in Nadun to mount

⁴⁹Raper, 'Sources of the Ganges', p. 501.

⁵⁰*Kangra Gazetteer*, p. 38.

⁵¹Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 16, p. 390

⁵²*Kangra Gazetteer*, p. 40.

a full scale attack against Ram Saran, and so, though repeatedly driven off, he was always able to venture out from his fort at Plassejah to renew his efforts. This forced the Gorkhalis to interrupt their attack on the fort at Tehra on several occasions to drive the Hindooriyas off and maintain their hold on the Bara and Athara Thakurai. It must have been a very difficult period for the Gorkhali troops. The goal they had before them, if they could once take Kangra, was Kashmir itself. But those very states that had assisted the Gorkhalis in the beginning of the venture against Nadun were consistently interfering in the campaign, and Hindoor proved to be a constant irritation.⁵³

Consequently, Kazi Amar Singh Thapa wrote to Kathmandu for advice and assistance. In answer to his letter, Nayan Singh Thapa, Bhim Sen Thapa's brother, was sent out with reinforcements for the Kangra campaign.⁵⁴ Of course, it was no easy task to march over five hundred miles from Kathmandu to Kangra. Mr. Rutherford, writing to the governor-general in 1814, shed some light on the difficulty of communications on this route :

On the banks of the Ganges and within our territory there is a point, in the route of communication, between the seat of Government at Nipaul and their possessions to the westward by which the reinforcements proceeding to the army of Amur Singh, and travellers of every description are obliged to pass. After descending a high hill to the eastward, the road leads across a plain to the left bank of the Ganges. This plain is in the possession of the British Government. The river being unfordable, a boat is maintained by the Nipaulese on the opposite side which is in their territory; it used until lately to be kept on the eastern side. Scarcely a day passes that some soldiers do not go or return by this route. They are seldom in parties exceeding 20 or 30 (for in the present desolate condition of the country a greater number cannot find subsistence on the march), yet in this way and by this road thro' the Company's possessions, has the Grand Army of Nipaul marched to the conquest of the provinces of Nahun, Sirmoor,

⁵³Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 16, pp. 387-8.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 391.

and Busher.⁵⁵

Nayan Singh Thapa arrived in the west some time in 1806, and proceeded immediately to the task of putting down the raja of Hindoor and the other states of the Athara and Bara Thakurai who are causing the Gorkhalis trouble. Once he arrived at Kangra, after completing this task, the Gorkhali attempt to take the fort at Tehra, so long postponed because of the trouble in the Cis-Sutlej states, was put into execution.⁵⁶

Yet Bhakti Thapa had no sooner begun his work at Tehra, when Ram Saran of Hindoor again began to stir up trouble to the east of the Sutlej. The Gorkhalis were stronger now that Nayan Singh Thapa had arrived with reinforcements from Kathmandu, and, while a detachment was sent to settle Hindoor once more, the siege of Tehra went forward. Bhakti Thapa, with twelve companies of soldiers, or about twenty-five hundred men, set up a strong blockade around Tehra. As the blockade began to take effect, Sansar Chand sent a force of soldiers from Kangra to break it, but this army was badly mauled by the Gorkhalis and thoroughly routed.⁵⁷ The blockade eventually succeeded, and by the end of September or early October 1806 (16 Aswin 1863 B.S.), Bhakti Thapa was able to write to Kathmandu that Tehra had fallen.⁵⁸

After the Gorkhalis had taken Tehra, the blockade of Kangra continued with very little external activity. Since the garrison of the fort were able to maintain themselves for a time with the food supplies they were able to grow within the walls of the fort itself, such a blockade would necessarily be a long one. But the Gorkhalis took heart from the fact that the fort was heavily over-garrisoned—the land could not yield enough grain for more than three or four thousand men, about half as many as Sansar Chand had within the walls. Because of this, Sansar Chand gradually consumed the reserves the fort had laid by, and as the

⁵⁵Secret Consultation, 16 August 1814, No. 9, Letter of T. Rutherford to John Adams, secretary to government in the political department, dated 6 July 1814.

⁵⁶Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 16, p. 389.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Letter of Sardar Bhakti Thapa to Girbana Yuddha Bikram Shah, dated 25 Kartik 1863 B.S. (1806), republished with notes in Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 17, pp. 53-4, from *Himavat Sanskriti*, No. 3, p. 16.

siege entered its third year the pressure the Gorkhals were exerting began to be felt more.

By this time Sansar Chand was in desperate straits. He had somehow to escape from the fort and bring relief, or the fort would inevitably fall into the hands of the Gorkhals. While he was thus deliberating on some plan by which he could save his fort, the Gorkhali officers consulted among themselves on ways and means of hastening the conquest of Kangra, since the siege was taking its toll of the Gorkhals also. The officers were strongly divided. Nayan Singh Thapa insisted that the fort could now be taken by frontal assault, and, when the other officers refused to accept this, he led the companies under his personal command in a direct assault on Fort Kangra.⁵⁹ For a time it seemed that this bold plan of attack would succeed, but the fort was too strong for him, and his attack failed when he himself was shot dead before the fort. This was in 1808.⁶⁰

Sansar Chand had beaten back the Gorkhali attack under Nayan Singh Thapa, but his provisions were getting very low, and it was quite possible that the whole mass of Gorkhali troops would now try to avenge Nayan Singh's death in an all-out attack which his men might not be able to withstand. What took place then can best be judged from a letter sent by Kazi Amar Singh Thapa to Ochterlony, received on 15 December at Ludhiana and forwarded to the governor general the following day. In his covering letter to the governor general Ochterlony mentioned that he was not sending a strict translation, 'but what he conceived to be the purport of the original' and that he had 'omitted many names which I thought were unnecessary to mention.' The letter of Kazi Amar Singh Thapa, forwarded in this adapted form, follows :

Formerly I had written to you two or three letters respecting Kangra, it is probable they were duly received.

For these fifty years past friendship has been established between the Company and the deceased Raja Parthi Narain Shah (Prithvinarayan) Shumshere Jung, and has continued increasing to this day. On this account the Raja Bikram Shah has sent a Vakeel and Kazi Rughunauth Pandit's brother to

⁵⁹*Gorkhalharuko Sainik Itihas*, ii, part 3, 445.

⁶⁰Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 17, p. 55.

Calcutta with presents etc. to the Governor General of which you have probably received information and instructions.

The state of affairs at Kot Kangra was this, that, after an expense of crores of Rupees and the loss of many men, I had for four years attacked that country and besieged the fort. When the besieged were in the greatest distress for provisions and Raja Sansar Chand repeatedly sent to request that I would give him leave to quit the fort allowing him something for subsistence on which an agreement was made ratified by Religion, that I should have the forts of Kangra and Taragurh with the sacred well of Jwallajie and four thousand rupees of the country of Pallanows, and he was to retain the fort of Tehrie and the remaining boundary of Kangra as his own, and in the course of ten days this agreement was to take effect.

Relying confidently on the engagement of so solemn a nature, I acquiesced and withdrew my troops from the road of Gunnaish Ghaut, of which circumstances this Raja availed himself and drew fresh supplies into the fort during the night, and in the day time sent out his family and treasures.

At the expiration of the ten days, I desired the Raja to evacuate the fort, on which he requested a further delay of two days to take out the remainder of his treasures; this too I granted, and this Raja, placing Norung Putwaul in charge of the fort fled with Mohamed Khan Rohilla in the night. Had I not placed confidence in the treaty we had entered into the forts, the boundary, his treasure and the Raja himself would have fallen into my hands, but I relied too confidently on his oaths and promises. I suffered him to quit the place without touching a hair.

The Raja then called upon Ranjeet Singh for assistance, promising him the fort of Kangra and the said Ranjeet came for that purpose to Jwalajie, but wrote to me that he was only there for religious purposes, and not to credit the reports of the interested.

Sansar Chand and the Raja of Lahore approached towards Kangra and encamped, and as there had been two treaties between the Raja and the Gorkha state, in which it was stipulated that whatever country was attacked by the one

should be unassisted by the other, and the friends and enemies of the one should be the friends and enemies of the other, I did not believe that the Raja would interfere. On this persuasion I did not purpose for war or lay in provisions, and Sansar Chand secretly let in the troops of Ranjeet Singh, and we had two engagements, one in the city and one in Gunnaish Ghaut, in which I lost a Sirdar and sixty men killed and one hundred wounded, and he lost one thousand killed and 1200 wounded, and the victory was on my side insomuch that Ranjeet was unable to meet me again the field but surrounding me on all sides, I was distressed for provisions and hearing that the Raja Rameun (Ram Saran) had risen in the kingdom of Hindoor, I left Kangra to settle that country and the Raja fled at my approach.

After which I understood that the Raja Kumper Dass (Karma Prakash) of Surmore had also revolted. Now the state of affairs with this Raja is, that Kowr Kishore Singh and other people of that country had expelled him from the government and I came there with my troops and reinstated him in authority on his promise and oath to accompany me with his force to Kangra and that my enemies should be his, and these promises were committed to writing, but the Raja Kumper Das neither sent his army nor came himself to Kangra, on the contrary he twice engaged the Kuthree troops under Bansraje and at this time has sent a confidential person to Rajah Ram Sein and has besieged Nalagurh and Ramshari which are garrisoned by my troops, and has murdered, contrary to all usage, Bishput Oopadeea, my Vakeel, who was besides a Brahmin. Notwithstanding this, I sent my son Randheer Singh to expostulate with the Raja Kumperdas to give him every assurance of his continuance in favour and to settle the country as he passed. But the Raja in dread of my anger has fled, and my son has besieged his forts of Marung, Juggut Gurh, and Surmorea on all sides and in this country of Hindoor all the forts except Chundeall Gurh are in my possession, and it is probable it will soon fall.

Lately a letter has arrived from the Maharajah informing me that he has sent troops to my assistance, and it is my intension on the arrival of these forces and the reduction of

these forts to proceed to Kangra, because leaving this country unsettled in my rear on the former occasion has caused all this trouble.

You also had better establish yourself on the boundary in the rear and advance, as according to the proverb, it is preferable to be attacked by a tiger in front than pursued by a jackal, as your foresight and knowledge, etc. etc.

The Raja Ranjeet Singh lately sent me the treaty between us, but I immediately returned it and desired mine to be sent back. If we should both advance together the business will be completed.⁶¹

Kazi Amar Thapa's letter makes it clear that the root of his failure at Kangra lay in his allowing Sansar Chand time to evacuate his family and treasures from the fort before he and the Gorkhalis took possession of it. Since the normal procedure would have been for Kazi Amar Singh Thapa to accept the surrender of the fort first, and then permit the defeated raja to leave, one may well wonder why the Kazi accepted Sansar Chand's proposal. The answer lies in the fact that the Gorkhalis' position was almost as serious as was that of Sansar Chand. The Gorkhalis had blockaded the Kangra for four long years. During that time, besides the problems of disease attendant on any besieging army, the problem of their own supplies became more acute. The area around Kangra had been stripped bare :

Other hill chieftains, incited by Sansar Chand's former oppressions, made inroads with impunity, and aggravated the general disorder. For three years this state of anarchy continued in the fertile valleys of Kangra; *not a blade of cultivation was to be seen*; grass grew up in towns, and tigresses whelped in the streets of Nadaun.⁶²

This meant that supplies had to be drawn from the newly conquered territories in the Cis-Sutlej and Garhwal areas. This was a tremendous burden to put on these places, feeding eight to ten thousand troops—yet to draw supplies from Nepal proper was clearly impossible. It is little wonder that these states were

⁶¹Secret Consultation, 9 January 1810, No. 4.

⁶²*Kangra Gazetteer*, p. 40.

growing restive.

This factor was one that gave Kazi Amar Singh Thapa cause for worry. He, more than anyone else, realized how quickly he had rushed his troops through these tiny states in his anxiety to have at Sansar Chand. He now began to realize that one lightning sweep through these territories, without pause for establishing firm control, was not enough to guarantee the support he desperately needed to bring the Kangra campaign to a successful conclusion. In fact, the victory was slipping away from him just at the time when Sansar Chand had reached the point of desperation. As his letter says :

Lately a letter has arrived from the Maharajah informing me that he has sent troops to my assistance, and it is my intention on the arrival of these forces and the reduction of these forts to proceed (again) to Kangra, *because leaving this country unsettled in my rear on the former occasion has caused all this trouble.*⁶³

Improbable as Sansar Chand's proposal was, then, Kazi Amar Singh Thapa accepted it because it offered him an opportunity to reach his prize before conditions to his rear forced him to break off the blockade entirely. One can imagine his chagrin, then, when he saw Ranjit Singh appear on the scene as Sansar Chand's ally.

Ranjit Singh arrived in Pathankot with his army in June 1809.⁶⁴ When his presence there became known, many of the petty chieftains who had nominally been helping the Gorkhalis went over to him and began to prevent the Gorkhalis from receiving supplies. This gave Ranjit his cue. Having no wish to confront the Gorkhalis directly, he sent his men to assist in this move to force them to withdraw by cutting off their supply lines.⁶⁵

Kazi Amar Singh Thapa offered to pay Ranjit Singh, if he would withdraw his army,⁶⁶ but Ranjit Singh, contrary to his agreement with Sansar Chand, had designs on this powerful fort himself. He moved on the fort in the month of August, and, to

⁶³Secret Consultation, 9 January 1810, No. 4.

⁶⁴Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 19, p. 210.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

guarantee the cooperation of Sansar Chand, he took Sansar's son as hostage. The Gorkhals were in no position to prevent Ranjit Singh from entering the fort, and Ranjit took up his position there at the end of August 1809.⁶⁷

Once he was safely inside the fort, Ranjit Singh sent a letter to Kazi Amar Singh Thapa asking him to withdraw from the area. If the Kazi complied, Ranjit agreed to cooperate with him against the British. Since Ranjit Singh had signed a treaty with the British in April of that same year, his offer struck the kazi as the height of hypocrisy, and in his anger he imprisoned the messenger who had brought the letter.⁶⁸

Ranjit Singh's reaction to the kazi's act was to attack the Gorkhals stationed at Ganesh Ghat to the south of Fort Kangra. This the Gorkhals drove off in a fierce battle in which casualties on both sides were high. The Sikhs withdrew, reformed their ranks, and made a second attempt in the afternoon of the same day. This time they managed to secure several outposts from which they could fire directly into the Gorkhali defences. To drive the Sikhs from these vantage points, the Gorkhals mounted a counter-attack, but night fell before their maneuver could be completed. During the night, however, they were able to infiltrate the Sikh positions, and in the early morning the Sikhs prudently withdrew.⁶⁹

Kazi Amar Thapa, heartened by his success thus far against the Sikhs, then decided upon a direct confrontation with the main body of Ranjit Singh's troops. The ensuing battle lasted several days, and the casualty rate on both sides was very high. But, as might be expected, this clash between the two best armies in the north ended without a clear decision either way. Both armies were exhausted, and the two generals reluctantly agreed to a truce and a treaty. Kazi Amar Singh Thapa left Kangra to Ranjit Singh for the time and withdrew his troops to the east of the Sutlej, where he planned to implement the programme he had outlined in his letter to Ochterlony. He would then return to the attack of Fort Kangra.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 211.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 211-2.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 212

Kennedy bears witness to the firmness of Kazi Amar Singh Thapa's purpose. He says :

As soon as Umur Sing returned to these states from Kangra in 1809 he turned his whole force against the Hindoor Raja, but the advance of the British troops this year to Lodiana is supposed to have saved Plassiah from being laid siege to and captured.⁷⁴

Kazi Amar Singh Thapa then asked Karma Prakash of Sirmoor for an interview. Karma Prakash, thinking that Kazi Amar Singh was now a defeated general, replied in a manner that offended the kazi, who promptly sent his son Ranjore Singh to attack Sirmoor. Sirmoor fell without a fight to the Gorkhals when Karma Prakash fled, and Nahan and Jythuk in Sirmoor became important Gorkhali posts in the years immediately ahead.⁷²

Hindoor also fell later in this same year to the Gorkhals, followed in 1810 by the conquest of Joobul, Poondur, and Bussahir.⁷³ The attack on Bussahir occurred shortly after the death of the raja of that state, Oogar Sein, who was succeeded on the throne by an infant. The queen mother and the leading members of government fled to the north and agreed to pay an annual tribute of twelve thousand rupees to the Gorkhals to guarantee immunity from further attacks, a very useful addition to the Gorkhali war fund.⁷⁴

During all this time the Gorkhali programme for the conquest of Fort Kangra had not been abandoned. As Kazi Amar Singh Thapa had declared to Ochterlony, once he had subdued the Cis-Sutlej States, he intended to return to the attack on that fort. Ranjit Singh sent a complaint to Ochterlony in September 1811 that indicates that the kazi was true to his word :

I have received arzees. . . acquainting me of (Kazi) Amar Singh Thapa, the Kaze of the Gorkha forces, having taken possession of the Bisher country, which is situated on the opposite bank of the river Sutlej, of his departure from thence and arrival at the banks of that river and collecting boats at the

⁷¹Kennedy, 'Report Dated 6 July 1824', p. 260.

⁷²Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 305.

⁷³Kennedy, 'Report Dated 6 July 1824', pp. 258-68, passim.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 268.

ferries for the purpose of crossing that river and attacking the territories of Kooloo, Munde, etc., belonging to me, also of his having sent messengers to the above Rajas strongly insisting on their attendance at his camp.⁷⁵

The reasons for Gorkhali persistence as regards Kangra are quite clear. It was the gateway to Kashmir, and, having come within striking distance of that great prize once, they were determined to try again. As Kennedy pointed out :

Had the Nepalese succeeded in reducing Kangra, there is little doubt that they would have very shortly after extended their conquest to Cashmere.⁷⁶

However, Gorkhali ambitions towards Kashmir were not to be fulfilled. By the year 1811 a definite tension was developing all along the southern border of Nepal between the British and the Nepalis. In a few short years that tension would burst forth into a major conflict between the armies of the East India Company and Nepal, the outcome of which would determine for generations to come the exact confines of the state of Nepal. This tension between the Company's government and the court of Nepal forced Kazi Amar Singh Thapa to relinquish his last efforts at expansion in the west. In 1813 he had taken several villages formerly belonging to Raja Ram Singh of Hindoor, who had been deposed by the Gorkhali forces. Although this was a minor affair in itself, it has its importance because it led to the clearest enunciation of the 'principle of limitation', which was to have such a profound influence on Anglo-Nepali relationships and on the unity of the House of Gorkha. In view of the importance of the 'principle of limitation', it is best to allow the correspondence between the court at Kathmandu and the governor general to tell the story of this incident. The two key letters of this correspondence are lengthy, but their importance more than compensates for that length.

To the Raja of Nipaul

Written 15th May 1813

I am induced to address you on the present occasion for the purpose of representing in amicable terms the conduct of

⁷⁵Secret Consultation, 4 October 1811, No. 18, Letter of Ranjit Singh to Colonel Ochterlony, received 2 September 1811.

⁷⁶Kennedy, 'Report Dated 6 July 1824', p. 261.

Kajee Amer Singh Thappa one of your officers, in the full confidence that you will immediately take such notice of it as will compel him to desist from a course of proceedings which is calculated to produce unpleasant consequences. The circumstances to which I allude are briefly as follows.

You are apprised that the Territories of the Sikh Chiefs lying between the River Jumna and the Sutledge have been taken under the protection of the British Government which has guaranteed these territories against all foreign attack. The circumstance and the progress of the Nepaulese arms under the command of Kajee Amer Singh Thappa in the hilly regions which form the Northern boundary of the tract of territory above described having brought your possession and the lands under the declared protection of the British Government in contact, it became necessary to adopt some *principle of limitation* with respect to the authority of the two governments, with a view to prevent the occurrence of misunderstandings and difference. *Accordingly the principle adopted by the British Government and communicated to Amer Singh Thappa by Colonel Ochterlony in the month of April 1810 in a letter which received the sanction and confirmation of the British government, was that no interference should take place on the part of the British Government in the proceedings of Nipaul in the hills and that on the other hand the Nipaulese authority should on no account be extended below the hills.* It is obvious that this principle imposes no restriction on the measures of the State of Nipaul which can be justly complained of by that government, since the Sikh chiefs were fully justified in placing themselves under the British protection and the British Government equally at liberty to afford that protection and none of the rights of the State of Nipaul were affected by this arrangement. Notwithstanding this just and simple principle, the troops of Kajee Amer Sing Thappa have lately descended from the hills and invested four villages belonging to Raja Ram Sing, whose possessions in the hills consisting of Nalagarh and other places, were formerly conquered by the Nipaulese. Col. Ochterlony remonstrated with Amer Sing Thappa against this proceeding which the Kajee defended on the ground that the villages in question formed

a portion of the Talook of Batowling, of which the greater portion is said to be situated in the hills, an argument which is entirely without force, *since the question must turn on the local position* of the villages, namely, whether they are situated above or below the hills, and not on their having formed a portion of any particular Talook. Colonel Ochterlony has accordingly been instructed after ascertaining that the four villages are, as there is no reason to doubt, situated below the hills, to take the necessary measures for defending them against any attempt to dispossess the proprietor Raja Ram Sing. I have communicated these particulars in the firm expectation that you will issue positive orders to Amer Sing Thappa, to desist from his attempt on these villages, and *to abstain carefully in future from any interference in the countries below the hills.* By strict attention on both sides to the principle above stated, no room will be afforded for misunderstanding or dispute.⁷⁷

The answer to this letter of the governor general was received in Calcutta on 5 August of that same year. The letter in the form in which it is presented here is that actually presented to the governor general in council for their deliberation, i.e. as translated by the Persian secretary to government. No copy of the original Nepali document is available, nor, to the knowledge of the writer has this official translation ever been published.

From Bikram Shah

Rajah of Nipaul

Received 5th August 1813

I have had the pleasure to receive your Lordship's letter under date the 15th of May respecting Rajah Ram Singh Hindorea which has afforded me much satisfaction.

The circumstances of Rajah Ram Sing's case were fully communicated in a letter from Kazeer Amer Sing Thappa to Colonel Ochterlony, but as that officer has not perhaps apprised your Lordship of the contents of that communication the details of the question are not contained in your Lordship's letter. Although they have been communicated in the letter from Amer Sing Thappa to Colonel Ochterlony

⁷⁷Secret Consultation, 15 May 1813, No. 39. Letter of the governor general to the raja of Nepal, dated 7 May 1813.

and will no doubt be fully made known to your Lordship in due course by that officer. I nevertheless beg leave to state the case summarily to your Lordship with the pen of friendship.

The state of the case is this: that in the Sumbut year 1862 (or A.D. 1805) when the Gorkha army occupied a position on the bank of the Sutledge Raja Ram Sing Hindorea and every one else who was inimical to this state and disposed to excite disturbances were expelled from their country while the Kulorea Raja and such others as faithfully and zealously discharged the duty of allegiance to this government and abided by their engagements were confirmed in their possessions, and the villages in dispute were assigned in Jaggeer to Dheodutt Raee, who from his ancestors was a dependent of this Government; and he accordingly held possession of those villages until my army crossed the Sutledge on an expedition westward, when Rajah Ram Sing taking advantage of that opportunity to dispossess the Raee, reinstated himself in the possession of the villages in question, and began to raise disturbances and to commit various unwarrantable acts. In consequence of which Kazee Amer Sing Thappa again ejected him from the possession of those villages. This government indeed is firmly resolved to inflict exemplary punishment on such Rajahs as have in violation of their engagement swerved from their allegiance to its authority and to take possession of their country.

Your Lordship has stated that the frontiers of the territories of the states having been brought in contact, it becomes necessary to adopt some *principle of limitation* with regard to the authority of the two governments, with a view to prevent the occurrence of misunderstanding and difference; that accordingly the principle adopted by the British Government and communicated to Amer Sing Thappa by Colonel Ochterlony was, that no interference should take place on the part of the British Government in the proceedings of the Government of Nipaul in the hills, and that on the other hand the Nipaulese authority should on no account be extended below the hills, but that notwithstanding this principle the troops of Kazee Amer Sing Thappa had lately descended

from the hills and invested four villages belonging to Rajah Ram Sing, and that Colonel Ochterlony had therefore been instructed after ascertaining that the four villages were (as there was no reason to doubt) situated below the hills to take the necessary measures for defending them against any attempt to dispossess the proprietor Rajah Ram Sing. Your Lordship has further desired me to issue positive orders to Amer Sing Thappa to desist from his attempt on those villages, and to abstain carefully in future from any interference in the countries below the hills, observing that by strict attention on both sides to the principle in question no room would be afforded for misunderstandings or dispute.

This communication has excited my utmost astonishment. The fact is that territorial possession is not, by states, acquired by purchase. As the Honorable Company have by the grace of God established their dominion in Hindoostan by the power of the sword, so have I by the same means acquired possession of the hills *together with the low lands dependent* on the territories of former Rajahs, some of whom tamely submitted to my authority, while others were expelled for their conduct. Since the first establishment of the British authority in India and that of the Gorkha Government in Nipaul, however, such a principle of limitation as this, namely that the authority of such a one should extend as far as the Hills, and that the country below the hills should belong to such a one, *has never at any time formed the subject of a communication between the two states.* On the contrary, the principle which has from time immemorial obtained with both Governments is, that it should not be allowable for one state to exercise any kind of interference in those lands in which the other state had first established an authority. Accordingly such has been the practice hitherto observed by both states. No interference has at any time taken place on the part of this Government in territory to which the British Government has established a previous authority, and vice versa, and there does not exist the slightest misunderstanding or difference of interest between the two States.

But with respect to the principle of limitation which your Lordship states to have been established by your Govern-

ment, *a principle of this nature ought to have been adopted by the mutual consent of both Governments; as a principle adopted by one of the parties concerned cannot be considered binding on the other.* I therefore write with the pen of friendship to suggest that the principle which has heretofore prevailed between the two States, viz., *that no interference whatever may be exercised on the part of one state in such territory as the other may have acquired previous possession of,* may continue in force, since the observance of such a rule is best calculated to improve the friendship subsisting between the two States, and to obviate the occurrence of any sort of misunderstanding or difference.

My Lord! There is no question whatever to enquire whether the villages in question are situated below or above the hills; *it is merely necessary to ascertain which of the two Governments had first possession of those villages.* Your Lordship states that it is four years since the Rajahs whose territories are situated between the rivers Jumna and Sutledge placed themselves under the protection of the British Government; but it is as evident as the sun, that in the first place Rajah Ram Sing Hindorea is a Hill Rajah, and that in the second place the country of the Rajahs Babshee Jalundhur has been for eight years past under the authority of this government. It moreover appears from the representations of Kazeer Amer Sing Thappa in particular, that the villages in question actually came into the possession of this Government in the Sambat year 1862 (or 1805 A.D.), as above stated. Hence the right of this Government to those villages is in every respect clearly established.

Notwithstanding this, however, in consideration of the friendship subsisting between the two States, I issued orders to Kazeer Amer Sing Thappa directing him in case the villages in question should appear to have been previously held by the Honorable Company to desist from any attempts upon them and abstain in future from such proceedings. Your Lordship will also on your part be pleased to send corresponding instructions to Colonel Ochterlony. With regard to Rajah Ram Sing Hindorea, both he as well as the other Chieftains were expelled from their dominions because they

did nothing but excite disturbance against this state. Being therefore inimical to this State they will not of course be wanting in their exertions to disturb the harmony subsisting between the two States. But I am perfectly well assured that under the circumstances of the sincere friendship and amity which has by the blessing of God for a long series of years been established between the two powerful States the representations of such interested and ill-disposed persons will in no wise be either credited or attended to. I entertain a firm expectation that the principle which I have stated as being conducive to the improvement of the friendship subsisting between the two States, without affecting the rights of either, will doubtless meet your Lordship's acquiescence and approbation.

Believing me ever anxious for accounts of your Lordship's health and welfare I trust that you will be pleased to gratify me by the transmission of joyful letters on the subject.

A true translation

Signature of the Persian secretary.⁷⁸

These two letters clearly enunciate the major point of difference between the British and the Nepalis as regards the border problems. The British position was clearly that the Nepalis should confine their interest to the hills exclusively, and this excluded the whole of the Tarai region, right up to the foothills. This was the 'principle of limitation'. It is clear from the fiscal considerations mentioned in Chapter One that this position was totally unacceptable to the Nepalis. The Tarai lands were, quite literally, the prize for which the hill men strove. To exclude the Tarai from the aim of Nepali military strategy would be a serious blow to the kingdom. It could never be accepted. The Nepalis, on the other hand, held firmly to the principle that he who captured the head captured as well the members. They felt that if they brought a raja, no matter how petty or how large, under their rule, they were entitled to the total possessions of that raja, whether they be in the hills or the plains. And, in line with this principle, they felt that it was the duty of the British to yield to the Nepalis wherever the Nepalis had first claim on

⁷⁸ Secret Consultation, 2 October 1813, No. 39. Letter of the raja of Nepal to the governor general, received 5 August 1813.

such lands as the result of their conquest of a hill raja. This position was equally unacceptable to the British. They knew full well that the source of Nepal's military strength was the Tarai, and that if this could be safely excluded from the valid objectives of Nepali military activity, they would have small cause to fear a state that was rapidly growing into a major power.

Both the Nepali position and the British position would harden over the next year, until there was no room for compromise between them. There can be little doubt, however, that, underlying the various border disputes that actually led to the war between the two states, were these two diametrically opposed principles. In Chapter Eleven the motives each of these two governments entertained for urging these principles to the test of war will be examined. Their enunciation, however, belongs properly here, since this exchange of letters terminated Nepal's westward expansion.

With the conclusion of this incident the story of Nepal's conquests comes to an end. Three points stand out in bold relief throughout this history: first, the role of leadership in all the achievements of the House of Gorkha; second, the growth of the military as a power factor in Nepal; and third, the importance of the Tarai land in driving the army to renewed efforts of conquest. The combination of these points plus the courage and military skill of the hill man account for the development of the tiny state of Gorkha to the position it held in 1813, spanning the Himalayas from the Sutlej to the Teesta, and sweeping from the Tibetan marginal mountains down to the rich Tarai land to the south. In extent, this achievement could not match the conquests of the East India Company. But, considering the narrow base on which this achievement rested, it is small wonder that the British were thoroughly impressed with the rise of the House of Gorkha.

PART THREE
THE END OF THE AFFAIR

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE GORKHALI STATE

All external accessions receive taste and colour from
the internal constitution...

—*Montaigne*¹

The growth of tiny Gorkha into a powerful hill state is exciting even when viewed from the historical perspective of a war-weary twentieth century. It was not an over-night, mushroom growth, but the steady purchase of victory upon victory for half a century. This steady accumulation of victories, the shouldering aside of set-backs with Spartan determination, and the accomplishment of all of this under the wary eyes of the British lords to the south and the Chinese Manchus to the north, gives the sympathetic student of history a tingling sense of achievement, vicarious but real.

Standing between this military victory, however, and a united Nepal, there remained the basic problem of administering the conquered territory. Until some sort of durable administrative structure could be erected in the conquered lands, the process of unification could never develop into those higher stages of unification which are associated with the concept of a modern state. Also, unless a workable solution to the problem of administration were reached, the state could not survive the pressure that external forces continually exerted on it. Part One of this study outlined the nature of this problem in terms of the land and the society that developed on the land. Part Two went on to summarize the conquest. It now remains in Part Three to define the nature of the Gorkhali attempt to come to grips with the problem of land and society, and to administer their conquests. The word *attempt* has been used here by design, since it was owing to a partial failure in the Gorkhali administration that the area of Greater Nepal was truncated into the Nepal of today.

¹Montaigne, *Essays*, 1, 41.

Before his death in 1775 Prithvinarayan Shah set down certain-guidelines for the direction of his successors. These form a part of that document known today as Prithvinarayan Shah's *Dibya Upadesh*. Without submitting the *Dibya Upadesh* to a detailed analysis, which is neither necessary nor desirable in this study, some effort must be made here to describe the basic thrust of these guidelines, for it is only against such a background that the nature of the Gorkhali administration can be properly viewed and its failure fairly assessed.

Prithvinarayan Shah conceived of the state as resting on two sturdy pillars, a contented peasantry and a loyal army.² In the context of hill society, which was basically agricultural, this concern for the peasants revealed a shrewd insight into the fundamental problem of unification. In the area of Greater Nepal it was the land that was important, simply because the land was life, and for this reason it was to the land that the peasant's first loyalties would always remain dedicated. Any unification of the country would have to recognize and learn to work with this fact. In practical terms, the state could not survive unless the peasant could retain enough of his crop after taxes to support himself and his family in modest security.

Ensuring the peasant of even this degree of economic security was no easy task in the hills, especially in a state the size of Greater Nepal. As administrative units proliferated, the number of government servants necessarily increased. These men had to be paid, and taxes had to be exacted to pay them. The burden of taxation thus tended to increase, even though the peasant in the hills was already committed to the payment of half of his crop.

Prithvinarayan Shah's guide-lines for the handling of this problem were based on two ideals: keep the life-style of the court simple; see that the taxation system is fairly and honestly administered. Concretely, he suggested that the salaries of the court officers be kept low,³ with rewards for superior work being given in terms of honour rather than wealth;⁴ that taxes be collected, not by tax-farmers on a contract basis, but by govern-

¹ Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Upadesh*, p. 17.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 13 and 14.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴ *Ibid.*

ment officials;⁵ and that the tax accounts be strictly audited at regular intervals.⁶ The court itself he expected to be a nobility of service, not an arena where affluence and prestige could become the goal of political striving and the cause of factionalism. To further protect the peasant, the king himself was to see that justice was fairly administered,⁷ and that bribery, which is the death of justice, was strictly punished.⁸

The second pillar of Prithvinarayan Shah's state was the army. On it depended the state's security. To guarantee the army's strength, he directed first of all that the soldiers be provided with lands exempt from major taxes, so that they would be able to fight without anxiety for the welfare of their families.⁹ To further relieve his soldiers from anxiety, he ordered that the sons of those who fell in battle be given lands for their support until they were old enough either to serve in the army or to assume the role of tenants in their own right.¹⁰ In exchange for this security, Prithvinarayan Shah demanded from his soldiers courage and skill in battle,¹¹ as well as absolute loyalty.¹² It was essential to the welfare of the state that the army remain an arm of the king to be used as he required, without any of the weaknesses of favouritism or factionalism.¹³

Central to this scheme of things was the position of the king. By the judicious use of his power, of the pajani the king could call into question the performance of any officer of the state, from the highest noble to the simplest soldier in the ranks and remove those who had failed to measure up to their tasks. The very possession of these powers implied that it was the king's duty to exercise them strictly but fairly to guarantee the security of the state and the welfare of the peasants, for, as Prithvinarayan Shah put it, the soldiers and peasants were the very marrow of the king,¹⁴ the peasants were his storehouse.¹⁵

⁵Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 15.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 16-7.

¹¹Ibid., p. 16, giving instructions on conducting the military pajani.

¹²Ibid, p. 17.

¹³Ibid., pp. 17 and 18.

¹⁴Ibid. p. 17.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 14.

Only if the king protected the peasant from oppression at home and attack from abroad could that loyalty flow from the peasant towards the king on which the national unity ultimately depended. Such a bond of loyalty was all the more urgent in view of the terrible problems of communication the geography of Greater Nepal presented.

But these guide-lines of Prithvinarayan Shah, however astute, could only indicate the direction the developing Gorkhali administration should take. They could not remove the stresses and strains inherent in that development. That there were stresses and strains will be apparent from a few basic considerations.

Gorkha was a very tiny hill state before the conquest. It had a simple, agriculture-based administration. It can reasonably be asked how many men with administrative capabilities a kingdom of that size and with that economic base could produce. Further simple Gorkha had conquered sophisticated Kathmandu. Agricultural Gorkha had conquered the forested Tarai. A small closely knit, Hindu society had conquered men of varied religious beliefs and cultural traditions. In short, the conquest had opened a whole new world of ideas to the Gorkhalis, and this world the Gorkhalis had to administer. How was Gorkha to produce the number of knowledgeable administrators this conquest demanded? Who in Gorkha would understand the intricacies of trade, the problems of exploiting the forests or the complexities of communal land tenure? Clearly there was nothing in Gorkha to prepare a group of men or even one man for such assignments. Even if the quality of knowledge required was reduced to the minimum of practical experience, as opposed to the theoretical understanding of the total economic and social problem—even if the tasks were simplified to the barest minimum of understanding—there was still nothing in Gorkha to prepare a man for assuming such burdens. The further task of preparing men to coordinate all of these aspects of administration in Greater Nepal is left to the reader's imagination. This is the problem of administration the Gorkhalis had to solve.

The conclusion is evident. No matter how or when Gorkha annexed other kingdoms, she must rely on the existing structures within those states. It has been said by historians of Nepal, and



A MALE OF NEPAUL

very wisely too, that the Gorkhali conqueror did not introduce large-scale change because to do so would unnecessarily disturb the people of the conquered territories and lead to unrest and possibly to uprisings.¹⁶ This is basically true. But the failure of the Gorkhalis to introduce such changes goes much deeper than that. For the typical Gorkhali administrator of that time, limited as he was by his own experiences in his own tiny state, merely to grasp what was being done in other localities was an accomplishment. To expect him to introduce changes was totally unrealistic. He did not introduce changes, largely because he did not know how things could be done better, and this was true because he did not understand, at least initially, how things were done at all. The Gorkhali was thus forced by the very magnitude of the problem to rely at the outset on local administrative structures in the areas conquered.

Although this dependence of the Gorkhali administration on local structures limited the administration's response to Prithvinarayan Shah's guide-lines, it had the positive value of forcing the administrators to consider local conditions and adapt to them. The drawback lay in the fact that it forced extensive decentralization on the administration and increased the centrifugal forces already operating in Greater Nepal. To understand the Gorkhali administration, then, it is necessary to see how the Gorkhalis adapted to local conditions and also how they tried to overcome the devisive tendencies inherent in decentralization.

Administration in the Petty States

The annexation of a new state was done either by military or diplomatic means. If it was done by diplomacy, the problem of local administration was largely taken care of by existing governmental structures in that state. Of the various states that accepted Gorkhali rule in exchange for a certain degree of autonomy, Jajarkot was the first. A letter of Prithvinaryan Shah to the raja of Jajarkot reveals the degree of autonomy granted to that state:

Throughout your kingdom, your ancestral authority as well as your right to award capital punishment, or shaving, deprive or restore caste, impose the Chumawan, Godhuwa, and Dharmadikari levies, grant or confiscate birta lands and

¹⁶Cf. above, p. 65.

appropriate the proceeds of panch khat and other judicial fines, escheats, fines on adulterers (chak-chakui), fees for stamping weights, and measures are confirmed to you. Whenever there is a succession to our throne, you shall pay a Salami of Rs 701. Whenever there is a succession to your throne, collect customary fees from your subjects.¹⁷

The raja of Jajarkot thus retained almost total control of the administration within his state. He had, of course, to pay a certain percentage of his revenue proceeds to Gorkha. This is not mentioned in this letter, but that this payment was made is clear from a subsequent letter in which the raja asked for some remission, on the grounds that his own family had increased in size and that the lands of Jajarkot had been damaged by floods and landslides, as a result of which his people were impoverished. He simply could not pay. His petition was rewarded by a remission of three thousand rupees in his annual revenue payments.¹⁸

Bahadur Shah made a similar arrangement with the raja of Mustang in 1790.

From Raja Rana Bahadur Shah

To Raja Wangyal Dorje of Mustang

We hereby confirm your rule over the territories occupied by you from the time of your forefathers, adding thereto the territories situated north-east of Bandaphat, along with Bharbung Khola, Tarap Khola, Langu Khola, and Chharkagau, which had been encroached upon and occupied by Jumla. We also confirm the customary payments which you have been collecting in Thak, Thini, Barhagaun, Manang, Nar, Nisyan and other areas. Jumla, when it occupied your country, used to forcibly collect the Chhyakpol tax from those who visited it for trade. We hereby grant you authority to collect this tax. Do not create obstructions when our troops or nobles visit your country on any business. When we commence military campaigns in the north and the west, send wholeheartedly your troops and military supplies to join our troops. Attack the territories that are to be attacked, and guard those that

¹⁷*Regmi Research Service*, ed. M.C. Regmi, ii, No. 1 (January, 1970), 17. Letter of Prithviurayan Shah to Gajendra Shah, raja of Jajarkot, dated 25 Magh 1825 B.S. (1769), published originally in *Itihas Prakash Ma Sandhi-Patra Sangraha*, p. 4.

¹⁸Regmi Research Collections, i, 642, summarized in *Regmi Research Series*, ii, No. 1 (January, 1970), 17.

are to be guarded. Formerly you used to make Sirto and Mamuli payments to Lhasa and Jumla. Continue paying Rs 71 to Lhasa as before. A sum of Rs 929, along with five horses, which you used to pay to Jumla, should now be submitted to us at Kantipur on the first day of the month of Magh every year. We hereby issue a copper-inscription to this effect. Be faithful to us, and comply with our orders. Rule over and enjoy your territories within the prescribed boundaries from generation to generation.

Dated 1847 B.S., Jyestha, sudi 5, roj 4, Kantipur.¹⁹

Thus it is clear that the acquisition of a new state through diplomatic means solved the problem of local administration without adding any stress to Gorkha's own administration. Permitting such a degree of autonomy to the raja, however, did raise the spectre of eventual fragmentation of the Gorkhali state. The Malla kingdom of Jumla, the Sen kingdom of Makwanpur, and the Malla kingdom of Kathmandu Valley had all been built on just such accommodations, and they had failed. The critical point that divided those earlier failures from Gorkha's success was that Gorkha's arrangements with her feudatories, though benevolent, were based on a strong control of these acquired states. The documents that treat of the relationship of these feudatory states with the centre show that Gorkha made very definite demands on its feudatories and enforced them under threat of *dismissal* of the local raja. A summary of these demands shows that :

1. Territory could be detached from the lands of one raja and assigned to another raja.²⁰
2. New rajas were created and territories granted to them by cutting sections away from existing kingdoms.²¹
3. Though the grants usually read : 'Rule over and enjoy your territories from generation to generation,' this was entirely

¹⁹Published in *Sandhi-Patra Sangraha*, p. 671. Translation by *Regmi Research Series*, ii, No. 4 (April, 1970), p. 91.

²⁰Regmi Research Collections, v, 435 : Badia was detached from Palpa and given to Gulmi, 1860 B.S., Aswin, badi 1 (1802) ; *ibid*, v, 418, Chilli was detached from Sallyan, 1860 B.S., Bhadra, badi (1803) ; and *ibid*, xix, 452 : Bajra, which had broken away from Achham and Doti, was confirmed as a separate state, 1848 B.S., Srawan, sudi 15 (1791).

²¹*Ibid.*, xx, 113, grant of four pargannas as raj to Dinanath Shahi, dated 1860 B.S., Srawan, sudi 3 (1803).

contingent on the faithful performance of duty. No raja of a feudatory state could expect his son to inherit the throne unless he carefully fulfilled every demand of the centre.

4. A raja's land could be confiscated either in whole or in part, unless the raja had entered into a treaty of *alliance* with Gorkha and hence was not strictly a feudatory.²²

5. Rajas were expected to assist the centre in capturing criminals or people wanted by the centre.²³

6. Rajas were expected to offer gifts to the raja in Kathmandu from time to time. This was especially true on the occasion of the marriage of his sons, his sons' *bratabandan*, etc.²⁴

7. Rajas were expected to assist the centre in wars prosecuted in their area, and this assistance was to be given with alacrity.²⁵

8. Field grants of land given by representatives of the centre to rajas in reward for their cooperation had to be confirmed by the centre. This confirmation was given only after an investigation into the exact legal status of the territories in question. Even after confirmation, the centre still reserved the right to correct its decision in view of more accurate information that might later come to light.²⁶

9. The centre often transferred obligations that had been imposed on one feudatory to another.²⁷

10. The centre at times confirmed gifts of territory made by one raja to another in appreciation for services rendered, but unless this confirmation was given, the gift was invalid.²⁸

These prerogatives of the centre as regards its feudatories did not give to Kathmandu absolute administrative control over the feudatory states, nor were they intended to. In their own

²²Ibid., i, 231, 'Birta Survey Regulations', 1855 B.S., Paus, sudi 5.

²³Ibid., v, 327, Order to capture Suban Sahi, dated 1853 B.S., Ashad, sudi 11. The same order was issued to several rajas.

²⁴Ibid., xv, 452, Letter to Raja Ananta Pal of Bajra, dated 1848 B.S., Srawan, Sudi 15 (1791).

²⁵Ibid., v, 466-7. Order to raja of Jajarkot, raja of Bajra, and raja of Bajhang to bring their troops to join the Gorkhalis in Kumaon, dated 1860 B.S., Chaitra, badi 6 (1804).

²⁶Ibid., v, 214, confirmation of Indra Bhupal L. Singh in possession of Musikot, dated 1849 B.S., Bhadra, sudi 1 (1792).

²⁷Ibid., v, 214.

²⁸Ibid., v, 681, Letter of Icha Ram Upadhyaya Karki, nayak of Udayapur, dated 1844 B.S., Srawan, badi 3 (1787).

territories the rajas enjoyed a very wide range of powers. At best this system was a compromise between Kathmandu's exercise of absolute control through the appointment and supervision of its own administrative officers and the looser federations achieved by the Mallas and Sens. Such prerogatives as Kathmandu enjoyed, however, she protected with a very firm hand. This is readily attested to by a letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Hari Krishna Khan, the raja of Bhirkot, dated 1849 B.S., Paus, badi 9, roj 6 (January 1793), informing him that Indra Bhupal Khan, his predecessor in Bhirkot, had been removed from the throne because of failure to obey orders sent him from Kathmandu. Hari Krishna was reminded that Bhirkot was his to enjoy as long as he and his successors remained loyal to Gorkha and obeyed her commands.²⁹

Administration in Conquered Territories

The problem of administration in states that were annexed by military means, of course, was much more complex. Here the first order of business was to complete the subjugation of the territory and to impose Gorkhali rule. There are extant several letters from the court at Kathmandu to commanders in the field giving instructions on this aspect of the work of unification, as well as descriptions from contemporary writers. These do not supply a complete picture of the problem nor of its solution, but they do give some idea of the forthright manner in which such problems were met.

When Bhakti Thapa was appointed suba of Jumla, the court wrote to him on 1846 B.S., Magh, sudi 3, roj 2 (November 1789), authorizing him to do whatever was necessary for the welfare of Nepal according to the opportunities that appeared and the advice of the nobles in Jumla. Some definite instructions were given for specific problems and he was advised to complete the pacification of Jumla before moving on. But in general he was given wide latitude to adapt his rule to the needs of Jumla.³⁰

²⁹Letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Hari Krishan Khan, raja of Bhirkot, dated 1849 B.S., Paus, badi 9, roj 6 (26 Marg 1849 B.S.....1792), published in Dinesh Raj Pant, 'Nayan Prakash Parne Patraharu', *Purnima*, No. 17, p. 48.

³⁰Letter of Rana Bhadur Shah to Bhakti Thapa, dated 1846 B.S., Magh, sudi 3, roj 2 (8 Magh 1846 B.S.), published with notes in Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 10, pp. 49-51.



A FEMALE OF NEPAUL

Once Gorkhali rule had been firmly established in Jumla, a new set of instructions was sent to the subba in charge there, dated 1851 B.S., Srawan, Sudi 3 (July 1794). These instructions are far from being exhaustive, yet it is clear that the subba had abundant powers of discretion to carry out the tasks that seemed urgent. It will be useful to examine these instructions to form some idea of what the centre expected of its local representatives. The following are presented from M.C. Regmi's abstract translation:

1. Financial allocations for temples shall be made as in the past.
2. Religious and charitable expenses for the Chandan Nath Temple shall be incurred as in the past.
3. Expenses shall be incurred as in the past during the Dashain Festival.
4. Expenses incurred on mail-carriers and Vakils shall be remitted as in the past.
5. Presents which are received there shall be transmitted to us.
6. In the event of rebellion, guilty persons of above the age of twelve years shall be beheaded, but the members of their families shall not be enslaved.
7. Offenses committed by soldiers and other persons shall be scrutinized by Panchas and punishment shall be awarded in the form of death or enslavement as appropriate.
8. In case feudatory chieftains in the area do not extend assistance in war or in other matters, and rebel, they shall be awarded suitable punishment.
9. In the event of invasion by enemies, appropriate defense measures shall be adopted. Instruction from the centre shall be unnecessary in such emergencies, as the palace is situated at a distance.
10. Complaints against you shall be disposed of only after proper scrutiny of evidence submitted by both parties. One-sided evidence shall not be heard.
11. Stationery expenses for the Kachahari administrative office shall be incurred as usual.
12. Remission shall be granted for expenses incurred in

repairing forts, constructing suspension bridges, and making boats.

13. Rewards shall be granted to persons rendering exceptional service.⁸¹

Since Jumla was in the charge of a subba, many powers were withheld from him that were regularly given to sardars in other areas.⁸⁰ Despite this curtailment in his powers, it is evident that the subba had considerable authority. Unmentioned in the instructions is the fact that regular reports were sent to Kathmandu both by the subba and his associates. On the basis of these reports Kathmandu was able to make necessary changes, give advice, and decide difficult cases. Also, of course, local citizens were free to appeal any decision of the subba to the court in Kathmandu.

The instructions given to Bhakti Thapa when he was appointed sardar of Kumaon indicate a much wider range of powers. He had, for instance, the power to hold the pajani, which he was instructed to do on the advice of the subba and subedar. He also had the power to pass sentences, even the death penalty, on those convicted by local panchayats. Petty rajas in the area west of the Marsyangdi River were subject to his authority. And the defence of the area was his responsibility, both as regards the military and the building of forts and fortifications. Specific instructions were given him to develop communications by building bridges and roads and by removing all obstacles in the delivery of official mail. Finally, he was instructed to maintain good relations with Tibet on the north, by honouring the existing agreements with Tibet, and with the nawab of Oudh, by doing nothing that would tend to anger him.⁸³

Notice has already been called to the wide discretionary powers given to both the subba in Jumla and the sardar in Kumaon. The reasons for this are obvious. Both of these areas were very far away from the court of Kathmandu, and

⁸¹*Regmi Research Series*, i, No. 2 (December 1969), 40.

⁸⁰The subbas functioned under the sardars as subordinate officials. Their appointment, however, was made by the court in Kathmandu.

⁸³Instructions from Rana Bahadur Shah to Bhakti Thapa in Kumaon, dated 1851 B.S., Srawan, sudi 13, roj 6 (27 Saun 1851 B.S....1791), published with notes in Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 11. pp. 35-6.

many details necessary to determine individual cases could be had only on the spot and against a background of local experience. There are extant numerous letters from the court to Bhakti Thapa in Kumaon, which add interesting information on the government of province.³⁴ These letters make it quite clear that the centre was concerned with the larger issues of policy, the establishment of revenue rates, and the use of revenue and the pajani. Local matters were left entirely in the sardar's hands. There is also a rather extensive correspondence between the centre and Jumla,³⁵ and it is surprising how many of the cases brought to the attention of the centre for decision were land cases, which could be settled on the basis of documents. Local legal cases involving crimes rarely came to the attention of the centre, though the subba was considerably restricted in the punishments he could meet out. As Hamilton says :

Military officers, named Sardars, frequently are appointed to command over different portions of the country, and, wherever they are, have a jurisdiction in all matters over the Subbas. In particular, their criminal jurisdiction is much more extensive, as they can condemn to capital punishment, without any reference to the court, while the Subba requires an order from thence before he can punish any criminal.³⁶

The decentralization of authority implied in the instructions given above to the subba of Jumla and the sardar in Kumaon must be considered a later development that was entirely at odds with the mind of Prithvinarayan Shah. In his letter of appointment of Sur Singh Rana and Kalu Khadka as amalis of Bhadgaon, Prithvinarayan had expressly pointed out that they should 'make arrangements in the city, settle the citizens, and encourage agriculture'.³⁷ Except in the case of criminal offences and offences against the state, they were given a wide range of powers to develop the area under their authority, despite the fact that Bhadgaon was only a few miles from Kathmandu. The conclusion is evident. Decentralization was a major part of the

³⁴Cf. Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, Nos. 10-23.

³⁵*Itihas Prakash*, ii, part 2, 1-42.

³⁶Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 108.

³⁷Letter of Prithvinayrayan Shah to Sur Singh Rana et al, dated 1830 B.S., Kartik, badi 5, roj 4, published in Samsodhan Mandal, *Upadesh*, iii, 1162-3.

Gorkhali structure of government. It allowed a high degree of flexibility; it allowed local authorities to temper their rule to the needs of time and place; and it allowed local people, who had always found their government close-by to intensify more easily with the conquering Gorkhalis than would have been the case if the government were conceived in terms of a more distant seat of authority.

Even in the case of major laws promulgated by the centre for the whole kingdom, there was a wide latitude given in their enforcement, to allow their adaptation to local conditions. The ban on cow slaughter is a case in point. As was to be expected, when the Gorkhalis assumed control of large stretches of the country where the Hindu laws of purity were not previously observed, a ban was imposed on cow slaughter. When the Solu Khumbu area of the eastern Himalayas was brought under Gorkhali rule, this law was promulgated there as well. It was only in 1805, however, that a group of judges was sent to Solu Khumbu to enforce the law, and the regulations issued to govern their conduct make it clear that the centre recognized the impossibility of the immediate enforcement of a law so alien to the normal lives of the people there.³⁸

There is thus a pattern throughout these early years of Gorkhali rule that can be summed up as :

1. Adaptability to local conditions
2. Adherence to local customs
3. Decentralization of authority

Taxes in the Provinces

For the local people, life under the Gorkhalis remained fundamentally unchanged, except, of course, in regard to taxation and land revenues. Here the problem was complicated by the financial burden of conquest. The expansion of Gorkha was not achieved without heavy expenditures both in material and money. Those provinces that were so unfortunate as to be situated near the areas where the fighting was still going on had an especially heavy burden to carry. They were often still under the government of absentee military commanders, and they had to supply the bulk of the food grains which were required for the

³⁸ *Regmi Researches Series*, i, No. 1 (November, 1969), 15-9.

support of the troops. Though this burden was expected by Kathmandu to be a temporary one, it could be very severe when the fighting in an area continued over a prolonged period of time. English authors, especially those who were later involved in the revenue administration of Kumaon and Garhwal,³⁹ have been unduly harsh in their criticisms of the Gorkhalis for the burden of taxation they placed on those areas. The historian with a sense of humour can enjoy comparing their comments on the situation in Kumaon and Garhwal and the extortion that the Gorkhalis supposedly practised there with the East India Company's unenviable record against the native princes of India. Or, if he is so inclined, he can show the discrepancies within a single writer's statement of the case. Such a practice is useful for whiling away an afternoon in amusing reading, but it is not history and it does not escape the fact that the Gorkhalis *did* lay a heavy hand on those provinces, and that in some cases it was not at all defensible. If the central authority in Kathmandu at that time found it reprehensible and tried to correct it, it seems naive for a writer in the twentieth century to become unduly agitated about the statement of fact.⁴⁰ War costs money. The provinces to the west had a double burden to pay. Their own rulers had exacted the utmost from them in order to hire mercenaries in their defence, and the Gorkhalis in their turn leaned heavily on them for the support of the war that continued westward. None of these territories had been even moderately wealthy before all of this. It is not surprising, then, that the provinces in question felt the burden of supporting these wars to be excessive or even that depopulation resulted from some of the methods used to exact the finances necessary to carry on. What is important is that the centre did not *condone* excessive exactions and did what lay in its power to correct abuses. The fact that the centre was not able to enforce every reform that it issued only underscores the frequently repeated statement that the Gorkhali army was moving far too quickly for

³⁹Cf. Especially Traill and Atkinson.

⁴⁰D.R. Regmi in his *Modern Nepal*, pp. 277-8, shows just concern for the justification of Gorkhali rule in Kumaon. He overlooks the orders of the Kathmandu government itself initiating reforms there. The centre certainly realized that the administration in Kumaon was deficient and took steps to remedy it. Cf. Regmi Research Collections, xxxvi, 321; xx, 176-9; and xxiii, 338.

the necessary administrative assimilation of these territories to be carried out, a point that will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

The fact that the centre was concerned about this problem of the financial condition of the provinces of Kumaon and Garhwal cannot be denied. Two authors in particular have called attention to the efforts of the central government of Nepal to alleviate the burdens on the provinces. Traill, writing shortly after the British conquest of the area, said:

The consequent depopulation of Kumaon as a result of the military mismanagement of land assessments and taxes was rapid and excessive, as fully proved in the numerous waste villages deserted at that period, and in the incomplete state of agriculture which prevails generally in the villages still inhabited. *After the conquests of the Nepal government had been further extended, and the subjugation in this quarter fully established, measures were adopted to remedy these disorders.* A commission was accordingly deputed immediately from Kathmandu, for the purpose of fixing the revenues at an equitable rate. The settlement was formed on actual inspection of the resources of each village... On the completion of this survey, a detailed account of each pergunna, showing the numbers, names, size, and extent of the villages, was submitted for the approbation of the court of Nepal... The demand thus authorized, generally speaking, was by no means excessive or unreasonable but the absence of a controlling power on the spot, rendered the arrangement almost nugatory, and the military chiefs were enabled to evade it by the power vested in them, of imposing fines at their own discretion, in the administration of the interior police.⁴¹

Traill thus makes it clear that the central authorities in Kathmandu were adamantly opposed to excessive tax burdens on the people. It is understood, of course, that this does not mean that the Kathmandu government was altruistic in its outlook on taxation. *Excessive* here means simply exceeding the normal fifty per cent of the crop, a tax that was imposed on all

⁴¹G.W. Traill, 'Statistical Sketch of Kumaon', *Asiatic Researches*, xvi (1829) 190. Traill's report was dated 16 April 1823.

those in the hills who farmed government land, whether it be jagir or raikar. As Traill pointed out, the military commanders were able to circumvent the regulations issued by Kathmandu as long as there was no one on the spot to supervise their enforcement.

G.R.C. Williams, writing a good deal later, but basing his comments on official reports from an earlier period, wrote of Kathmandu's efforts to meet this need and their success, or lack of it, in the undertaking :

The first to check the excesses of the domineering soldiery, and so stay the tide of emigration that would soon have left the valley (Dehra Doon) desolate was Amrit Kazi, but the administration of Hustee Dhul Chatra is extolled above that of all others. He put a high premium upon agriculture, making liberal advances and giving away whole villages at nominal rents (Rs. 5 or so), to various Zamindars who were thus enabled to grant leases to cultivators at one-twelfth, and even one-sixteenth, of the produce. (See Mr. Shore's settlement report, 15 December 1825 and his letter to Mr. Traill, 30 March 1828). According to Mr. Shore, 1876 B.S. (1810) was a year famous for his efforts in the cause of progress, the results of which were most striking in the Kalyanpure pergunna *a tract much less prosperous under the English system.*⁴²

These are not isolated citations, introduced to put a fair colour on a very bad situation. Others could be produced here to give the same sort of testimony. The historical record is quite clear that as the westward expansion took place, the first phase of Gorkhali rule was a time of real financial hardship for the people. This was followed by an attempt to introduce reforms, which in turn were finally enforced by the central government's appointment of a governor with the powers to impose them over the heads of the local military leaders.

The financial situation in newly conquered territories had been rendered somewhat more difficult by the flight of the leading zamindars from these territories. Since all of these men hoped to return on a more favourable day, it is certain that among the valuable possessions they took along with them were their tax

⁴²Williams, *Memoir*, p. 253.

records, which formed the basis for their claim to the lands under them. The Gorkhali military governors, then, had no written records to tell them what the normal assessment should be, nor did they have the time to set about making such an assessment. Consequently, they imposed whatever taxes they thought the community could bear, with the error on the side of excess rather than leniency.

Jagirs and the Peasants

Jagir assignments created a further complication in the financial situation in the hills. These newly conquered areas were almost entirely parcelled out in jagirs,⁴³ and were, therefore, to some extent exempt from any authority other than that of the jagirdar who received them. Since the military assignment of a jagir in that area was inevitably a temporary one, it was quite natural, though deplorable, that the officer who received the assignment should try to gain the maximum return from the assignment while it was his. Such an attitude is based on an extremely short-ranged view of economic life, but in the military, where one necessarily has a very short-ranged view of life itself, this is not impossible to understand. It was perhaps to the jagir system as applied in Kumaon and Garhwal more than anything else that the local people owed their sufferings. When the further consideration is added, that the heavy concentration of troops necessary for the war in the west had to be paid by this means, something of the scope of the problem can be seen. It can also be seen from Atkinson's comments on this problem, that as the military moved west, the problem moved west with them. As Atkinson says :

From the year 1806, when Bam Shah became civil governor of the province, matters changed very much for the better.⁴⁴ He began at once to adopt measures to secure a better administration. He gained over a number of the principal Brahmans and other leading men by promises or bribes, and

⁴³Traill, 'Statistical Sketch of Kumaon', 189, 'On successive conquests of Kumaon and Gerwal...the country, including all the villages hitherto reserved for the support of the court and their attendants, was parcelled out in separate assignments to the invading army...'

⁴⁴This comment about Bam Shah's success is interesting, because Bam Shah succeeded Hasti Dal Shah, who was highly praised by Williams, *Memoir*, p. 253, for his rule.

was thus able to frustrate the weak attempts of the disturbers from outside. *Garhwal was at this time governed as if its rulers' sole object was to turn it again into a jungle. But Kumaon appears to have been favoured in every way.* The property of private individuals was respected, the grants of land made by previous rulers were confirmed to the actual possessors, the revenue was collected in the usual manner, a rude attempt to administer justice was made, and most prized of all it was forbidden to sell the persons of revenue defaulters and their families into slavery.⁴⁵

The financial problems of these western provinces of Kumaon and Garhwal were compounded by :

1. The stripping of the country to pay the defence costs by the defeated raja of the province ;
2. The cost of further Gorkhali military expansion ;
3. The jagir system employed to pay the troops.

The whole problem of the military jagirs and the assimilation and development of conquered territories requires considerable discussion. Certain aspects of this will be reserved for the following chapter, but two points in this connection must be considered as being directly related to the problems of the development of the administration of the new provinces. The first of these involves the rights of the jagirdar, and the second involves the extent of jagirs throughout the country.

The grant of a jagir bestowed certain privileges on the grantee, or jagirdar. His primary right, of course, was to appropriate a share in the produce of the land, normally fifty per cent in the hill areas, which otherwise would be paid to the government as the peasants's tax. In addition to this he had the right to impose certain small levies and the right to certain non-agricultural revenues.⁴⁶ More important, in the context of this chapter, he had judicial rights within narrowly defined limits, but limits, nonetheless, which would embrace most of the litigation that could be expected in the rural areas.⁴⁷ Originally, also, he had the right to enhance rents, and, unless the tenant were otherwise protected,

⁴⁵Atkinson, *Himalayan Districts*, ii, 624-5.

⁴⁶M.C. Regmi, *Land Tenure*, iii, 10.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, iii, 11.

the right to evict his tenants.⁴⁸ He was, in short, a kind of very petty lord on his jagir.

The jagirdar, whether military or civilian, was normally also an absentee landlord, since his duties called him elsewhere. This meant that he had to employ either a relative or a manager to see to his lands. Thus it can be seen that in the matter of simple justice in every day affairs, the peasant was twice removed from government. The jagirdar enjoyed many of the judicial functions that would normally be exercised by government. And this was not good. Since the jagirdar was usually absent, his manager assumed this prerogative, and this was bad. The jagirdar was at least a government servant, and had to face a reckoning for his conduct. The manager was in private employ facing no such reckoning, and yet he was able to exercise functions that should rightfully be those of government itself. If ever there was a system open to abuse at the expense of the peasants, this was it.

When the size of the armies employed by Gorkha is considered, the proportions of this potential—and often woefully real—abuse are apparent. Hamilton, speaking of the revenues of five districts in eastern and southern Nepal, makes some startling statements.⁴⁹ The five districts were then known as Morang, Chainpur, Saptari, Khatang, and Bara Garhi-Makwanpur. Of these districts, half of Makwanpur, most of Chainpur, and most of Khatang were given over to jagirs. This is only Hamilton's reporting, of course, but he is reporting about the area of which he had the most accurate information. It is true that the areas given to jagirs in these five districts were not the most fertile, but the fact remains that practically the whole of the Pahar zone in the eastern half of modern Nepal was reserved for jagirs. Among other things, this meant that in this large section of the country, jagirdars or their representatives held in their hands most of the day-to-day judicial functions. All this must be borne in mind when the extent of the jagir problem is mentioned. How much of western Nepal, Kumaon, Garhwal and the petty states beyond was allotted to jagirdars there is no way of knowing at this date. Certainly it was a very significant

⁴⁸Ibid., iii, 34.

⁴⁹Hamilton, *Nepal*, pp. 151-64.

amount of land, since all the contemporary reporters on the economic problems of those territories mention the jagir problem, and since the concentration of troops was heaviest in the west.⁵⁰ Deferring the economic aspects of this problem as well as the power these large jagir holdings conferred on the military for the following chapter, it is the centrifugal tendency involved in this massive decentralization that must be pointed out here.

Unity and Administration

In view of the centrifugal forces the nature of the terrain of Greater Nepal imposed on any government trying to unify this territory, the decentralization of the Gorkhali administration must seem a very definite step away from unification. It constituted a constant danger to the structure of that unity the extensive Gorkhali conquests made possible in the country.

These centrifugal tendencies in the administration were reinforced by the centrifugal tendency inherent in the jagir system. Under this system the gap between peasants and government was very wide indeed, and this was the besetting weakness of the earlier Rajput states. What held the Gorkhali state together was an amalgam of a strong central authority exercised over its officers in the field and the loyalty of the military to the crown.

The key man in the provincial administration was either the sardar or the governor. These men were in supreme control in the provinces, and were given wide discretionary power. The use of that power was kept under constant check by the central authorities. The sardar or governor was expected not to take any action of moment in the province without consulting the other nobles present, and whatever action was decided upon was detailed to the central authorities in the monthly reports or in special letters sent for this purpose. In matters of considerable moment the course of action proposed by the sardar or governor was regularly commented upon and often corrected by the authorities of the central government.⁵¹

⁵⁰Cf. especially Traill, 'Statistical Sketch of Kumaon', p. 190; Williams, *Memoir*, pp. 119-21; and Atkinson, *Himalayan Districts*, ii, 625.

⁵¹*Regmi Research Series*, i, No. 2 (December 1969), 41. Letter of Bam Shah to Girbana Yuddha, dated 1870 B.S., Phalgun 3; also Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 11, p. 35, letter of instructions to Bhakti Thapa in Kumaon, dated 1851 B.S., Sarwan, 12, roj 6, Kantipur (1794).

In addition to these checks on the action of the sardar or governor, there was an additional check in the auditing of his accounts. This was done from time to time, as occasion demanded, and the mere fact that he would have to explain extraordinary expenses helped to ensure the sardar's or governor's opting for a prudent course of action. Much of the income of the province, of course, was already ear-marked for various regular expenditures, especially for the army, and there was very little actual cash income for him to use.⁵²

The greatest check on the activities of the sardar or governor lay in the annual pajani. This review of his conduct in office, with the prospect of removal, provided the central government with a very strong hold over the men in the field. Since all of the nobles stationed in the area could, and did, send private reports to the centre, and since the subbas who served under the governor were not subject to his appointment, but were appointed by Kathmandu itself, the sardar or governor could rest assured that every move he made was known to the centre.

The centre's concern to establish fair taxation rates and the changes in governors that were introduced in an effort to achieve this were a part of the centre's effort to reach the people. Further efforts were urged by the centre in the question of roads and bridges, both of which would ease the problem of communications locally and help establish stronger links with the centre. Bhakti Thapa was urged in his instructions on his appointment as sardar in Kumaon to take special notice of this need.⁵³ Hasti Dal Shah, who was governor there later, carried on this work, so that Raper was led to comment on the excellence of the road that had been constructed from Devaprayag to Srinagar.⁵⁴ Such improvements were often made by using jhara labour, which imposed an additional burden on the peasants, but this was not always the case. Bhakti Thapa was informed by Kathmandu that one company had been assigned to protect the area and improve the road in Achham, and he was told not to change their assignment when he conducted the annual pajani.⁵⁵

⁵²Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 12, p. 47.

⁵³Ibid., *Purnima*, No. 11, p. 35, Letter of instructions to Bhakti Thapa in Kumaon, dated 1851 B.S., Srawan, sudi 12, roj 6, Kantipur (1794).

⁵⁴Raper, 'Sources of the Ganges', p. 497.

⁵⁵Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Bir Bhakti Thapa', *Purnima*, No. 12, p. 53, Letter of Rana Bahadur to Bhakti Thapa, dated 1852 B.S., Srawan, sudi 8, roj 6.

It must be admitted, of course, that the centre's effort to reach the people was not entirely successful. The peasant's lot was a hard one, yet the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries did not know the intense social concern that is characteristic of this age, and, despite the hardships of the peasants in Greater Nepal, the picture was not entirely dark. Kirkpatrick, who is at times as critical as any of the English writers, commented on the easy familiarity that existed between the peasants of all classes and the nobility,⁵⁶ and expressed the opinion that the Gorkhali government was 'at least as mild and equitable as any other in India, whether Hindoo or Mohammaddan'.⁵⁷

The central government, then, tried to overcome the strong centrifugal tendencies in the mode of administration of the provinces that Gorkha's own inadequacies and the nature of her conquests thrust upon her, by exercising a strong control over the governors in the field, and by striving at least in certain basic ways to maintain contact with the people of the states assimilated. The fact that the Gorkhali army was strong and made its presence felt throughout the length and breadth of Greater Nepal also provided a strong centripetal force in the country. This was true not only because insurrections could be put down quickly and efficiently, but because the army imposed a real *pax Gorkhali* on the acquired territories. There was relief in the land from the interminable feuds between states. There were no more fights between factions in states. And there were no more incursions by raiding parties from outside.⁵⁸ This latter problem had never existed on any large scale within the Baisi or Chaubisi Rajas, but in the territories farther west it had been a constant source of affliction for the peasants.⁵⁹ The Gorkhalis ended these raids in summary fashion by fulfilling a threat to burn one village for every plundering party that entered the doon. One such punitive mission was enough to convince would-be raiders that the Gorkhalis' threat was serious. The raiding stopped.⁶⁰

⁵⁶Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepaul*, p. 36.

⁵⁷Ibid, p. 65.

⁵⁸Atkinson, *Himalayan Districts*, ii, pp. 578, 603 and 607 ff.

⁵⁹Ibid. Atkinson speaks eloquently of the terrible desolation these raids had made in the doon area.

⁶⁰Williams, *Memoir*, pp. 118-9.

The Central Government

Mention has been made throughout this chapter of the central government. It comprised the raja himself, assisted by a collateral who served as chautariya, four kazis, four sardars, two kharidars or secretaries, the chamberlain, and the treasurer.⁶¹ The members of the leading families of Gorkha, the Tharghar, also exercised a strong influence, even when not holding any of the positions mentioned. Kirkpatrick had observed the importance of this inner group of nobles and found it difficult to understand the base of their power in government. This need not be such a mystery as Kirkpatrick found it.⁶² Besides the leading Brahman families this group included the leading fighting families of Gorkha, from whom came the bulk of the military officers. It was their loyalty to Gorkha and to the throne that ensured the throne of the loyalty of the army, which was always one of the great stays of the Gorkhali state. Consequently, their concurrence was essential in any major decision because of the tremendous importance that Gorkha placed on the military. In fact, if loyalty to the central authority, as posed in the person of the king or ruler, is the most primitive of the centripetal forces in bringing about the unification of a country, the loyalty of the military in Nepal was the strongest expression of that force.

It was this very importance of the military in the unification of Nepal as well as the influence that the military classes had in the court itself that made it essential for the king to be the type of man who could command that loyalty and control and direct the energies that this group represented. This put a heavy burden on the king. In fact the whole administrative organization of the state imposed a heavy burden on the king, and the administration was as good as the king made it. Thus it is no exaggeration to say that the unity of Nepal depended directly on the integrity of the king. This was the way the state developed, and this was the way that Prithvinarayan Shah had wanted it to develop. But this system was too weak to withstand the pressures acting against it.

The weakness of the system did not lay in the concept—it is doubtful if any other system of government would have succeed-

⁶¹Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 108.

⁶²Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepal*, pp. 124-5.

ed in the hills at that time. The weakness lay in Prithvinarayan's inability to project his thinking far enough into the future. He did not foresee, and he could never had been expected to foresee, that, after his son Pratap Singh's reign, a succession of minors would inherit the crown and that the resulting weakness of the crown would open the door to factionalism, intrigue, and a serious decay at the centre. It was this that was ultimately to betray the unity of Greater Nepal.

CHAPTER NINE
THE LAND-MILITARY COMPLEX

Their opposition, stubbornness,
Spoil the most glorious success,
Till in deep, angry pain one must
At last grow tired of being just.

—Goethe¹

As this study has taken pains to point out, land provided the basic motivation for the conquests that led to the unification of the petty states of the hills into the modern state of Nepal. Prithvinarayan Shah's ability to interpret his dream of conquest into the more prosaic terms of land and crops had supplied the essential motivation that stirred his hill men from the struggle for survival on the land to the struggle for conquest. It had always been a truism in the hills that land was life and that those who wished to live a more abundant life could satisfy their wish only by acquiring the rights or tenure rights to either more land or more fertile land. Prithvinarayan Shah changed that truism into the dynamism of conquest.

One of the most impressive illustrations of this importance of land in the hills to both noble and peasant alike was the use Prithvinarayan made of it during the conquest. He used it not only to reward his soldiers, both officers and men of the line, but also as an effective lure in winning men of influence in the areas under attack over to the support of Gorkha. Altogether there are more than twenty letters extant in which either an offer of an outright gift of land or an offer to guarantee continued possession of land was made in exchange for services to the Gorkhali state.² To cite just three of these, in 1747 Prithvinarayan Shah wrote to Parsuram Thapa encouraging him to defect to Gorkha. He promised Parsuram that he would protect his life and property, and as an added inducement he mentioned that a birta

¹Goethe, *Faust*, Part II, v, 11. 11270-4.

²Cf. Samsodhan Mandal, *Upadesh*, iii.

had already been set aside for him.³ In 1754 Prithvinarayan made an appeal to all the citizens of Dolkha, promising them continued possession of their lands, if they supported the Gorkhali troops when they came into the area.⁴ And in a third letter to Sadullaji Mojamji in 1765 Prithvinarayan confirmed Sadulla in the possession of his lands.⁵ These three letters, one to a leading military commander of the Malla kings, another to the citizens of a whole area, and a third to a leading merchant, all offer land as the major reward for cooperation. And this is not surprising, since land was the currency of the conquest, the means by which the rulers of the House of Gorkha paid for the victories that extended their rule from the Teesta to the Sutlej.

It should be emphasized here, however, that in itself the conquest of new lands and the assignment of these lands mentioned throughout this chapter had no direct effect on the peasants' right of tenure on these lands. It was not the object of the Gorkhali conquest to deprive the simple people of the land, their livelihood, or the means to achieve it. It was the *revenue* of the land—that was at stake. The peasant had inevitably to surrender half of his crop in taxes, regardless of the government that actually ruled the land. What the Gorkhali conquest gave to the government in Kathmandu was the right to appropriate that revenue or to assign it either to the army, to an official of the state, or to a citizen in reward for services he had rendered to the state. Thus, in speaking here of the acquisition of land and the assignment of land, it is the acquisition and assignment of *revenue rights* that is intended.

Land Determined the Army's Strength

The actual growth of Gorkha was quite remarkable. From a state of a few hundred square miles it expanded into an area of approximately ninety thousand square miles. A moment's consideration of the revenues generated by this greatly increased

³Ibid., ii, 938, Letter of Prithvinarayan Shah to Parsuram Thapa, date estimated as 9 Bhadra 1804 B.S. (1747) by Samsodhan Mandal from internal evidence.

⁴Ibid., iii, 945, Letter of Prithvinarayan Shah to the Bharadars of Dolka, undated.

⁵Ibid., iii, 1057, Letter of Prithvinarayan Shah to Sadullaji Mojamji, dated 1822 B.S., Baishakh, sudi 10, roj 3 (1765).

area indicates the vast field of opportunity the Gorkhali conquest offered to those who had a right to claim a share in them.

Though the army was by no means the only group to share in these increasing revenues, it was in many ways the most important. It was through the army that the increase in Gorkha's lands was acquired, and it was only through the assignment of a military jagir that the simple hill man was able to share in the additional wealth that this brought to the state. Apart from this, there is no indication that the lot of the peasants of Gorkha was at all changed merely by the vast increase in the size of the state. As long as the Gorkhali peasant remained on the land as a simple farmer, his taxes remained the same, his tenancy rights remained the same, and so his life remained the same.

It was Prithvinarayan Shah himself who opened the door to a share in these revenues for the simple peasant-soldier. In his *Dibya Upadesh* he said:

An important point is that the soldiers required for the king should be given their house and land and that they should farm it, so that they can support themselves by both means⁶

Of course, the practice of assigning land to the support of the military had been common in almost all the hill states. The significance of Prithvinarayan Shah's directive and practice was the application of this on an individual basis and on a scale equal to the vast increase in Gorkhali territories. As a direct result of this practice the double dichotomy was set up: the limit of the army is the land; the limit of the land is the army. The army could expand as long as there was land to be assigned for its maintenance. And there would be land to provide for the maintenance of an expanded army as long as the army was strong enough to conquer and hold it.

Jagirs and Unification

Before advancing to the more complex relationships between the army and the land, it is important to note that the military's desire for land was not merely an expression of greed, but that the assignment of jagirs during the period of Gorkhali expansion played a very important role in the development and unification

⁶Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Upadesh*, p. 15.

of the country. For example, in the conquered Tarai areas there was a vast amount of waste land which had to be brought under cultivation for the development of the country. In view of this, the lands assigned as jagirs, for the regular maintenance of the army, and as birtas, in reward for military service, often included substantial areas of waste and undeveloped land. If the jagirdar or birtadar wished to derive the greatest advantage from his assignment, he had to see to the development and exploitation of this land. Where the jagirdar was able to develop his jagir over an extended period of time his income was enhanced and a strong forward thrust was given towards development.⁷ As Hamilton pointed out:

Before the conquest by the Nepalese, the petty Rajas, who governed (the Tarai's) different portions, were so much afraid of their neighbours, that they did not promote cultivation of this low land. The Gorkhalese, being more confident, *have cleared much of the country*. . . even now they export a considerable quantity of grain.⁸

That Hamilton was merely observing the results of a set policy of government is apparent from a letter of instructions sent to Kazi Abhiman Singh Basnyat regarding the settlement of the waste lands of the districts of Saptari, Mahotari, Bara, Parsa, Rautahat, and Morang. Among other things he was told to allow immigrants from India to clear and farm the land, but that unless they built houses and settled there within two years, their land would be assigned to others. And, to give more positive encouragement to this settlement, he was authorized to make one or two villages in this area over to each of the jagirdars and birtadars in the area.⁹

The policy of assigning jagirs and birtas clearly served in many ways to open up the country to development and gave an encouragement to this development that would not have been otherwise possible. Of course, most of the increased revenue went to individuals and not to government, but even if the revenues to government were increased only slightly by this procedure, the enhanced value of the land assigned to the nobles and,

⁷M.C. Regmi, *Land Tenure*, iii, 9.

⁸Hamilton, *Nepal*, p. 64.

⁹*Itihas Prakash*, i, 15.

through the army, to the common people became a vitalizing force in the conquest and unification of the country.

Secondly, the fact that the army was open to the fighting castes of the whole country and was not kept merely as the private preserve of the natives of Gorkha served to unify the country. The door was open to a better life for the fighting castes of the whole of Greater Nepal as long as these men were willing to serve in a common cause.¹⁰ Iman Singh Chemjong mentions the fact that in the east there were many Limbus who served with the army, even in battles against their own people.¹¹ While in Kumaon the number of Kumaonis who served with the army was actually greater than the number of soldiers from Nepal proper serving there.¹² Not all of these men, of course, served in the regular companies. Many of them were irregulars. But they did serve, and they were rewarded for this service. The major difference between regulars and irregulars lay in the manner of assigning them lands. Lands were assigned directly to the soldiers on the regular roster, while in the case of irregulars, land was assigned to the umraon, who in turn recruited and rewarded his irregulars.¹³ In either case, the fighting men who wished to serve the Gorkhalis faithfully were guaranteed a living and a source of income.

It should be made perfectly clear, however, that these development and unification aspects of the jagir system were entirely contingent on the hill man's desire for land. It was this desire that brought him into the army, and it was this that kept him there. Even when the state was prepared to pay him a regular cash salary, the average hill man found the income from land far more attractive. Kirkpatrick has preserved the sentiments of one Gorkhali jamidar in this regard that aptly illustrates this point:

One of the jamedars of the Raja's company of guards informed me that he held three Kaiths, which yielded him (after dividing with the cultivator) about sixty rupees per

¹⁰The fighting castes only were taken into the regular army; the others had to serve in the irregulars.

¹¹Chemjong, *Kirat People*, ii, 173.

¹²Atkinson, *Himalayan Districts*, ii, 624.

¹³Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepaul*, pp. 55-6.

Kaith, or one hundred and eighty rupees; and that he further received from the treasury two hundred and eight rupees a year. He added that he had been much better off when he belonged to a private company, as he then, instead of receiving a portion of his pay in money, enjoyed sometimes ten and sometimes twelve tolerably productive Kaiths.¹⁴

Since the army had land, it held out a strong attraction for the hill man who was eligible and willing to fight for Gorkha. As Gorkha's territorial possessions expanded, her power to recruit and pay a larger army grew, and the number of those who found their way out of the humdrum existence of village life into the army increased significantly. This relationship between Gorkha's territorial growth and the growth of her military power can be illustrated from the various records and estimates of the size of the Gorkhali army over a period of years. Though it is not possible to give exact numbers, there is a clear indication of the trend, and this trend in military growth closely parallels the various campaigns detailed in Part Two of this study.

Conquest and Army Expansion

The *Gorkhaliharuko Sainik Itihas* makes no mention of the number of companies serving for the period before 1769. It has been estimated that during this period the number of soldiers Gorkha put in the field never exceeded twelve hundred.¹⁵ This, of course, is speculation based on estimates of Gorkha's strength. In 1769, according to the *Itihas*, four companies were assigned by name to the campaign in the west.¹⁶ Six years later ten companies were assigned by name to campaigns in this same quarter.¹⁷ Significantly, four companies whose existence is known were not among those ten, so that there were at this time a minimum of fourteen companies, or about twenty-five hundred men. For the campaign in the far west in 1804 ten new companies were recruited,¹⁸ or an additional group of at least fifteen

¹⁴Ibid., p. 103.

¹⁵Surya Bikram Gyawali, *Amar Singh Thapa* (Darjeeling, 2000 B.S.), p. 124.

¹⁶*Gorkhaliharuko Sainik Itihas*, ii, part 3, 433.

¹⁷Ibid., ii, part 3, 436.

¹⁸Ibid., ii, part 3, 433.

hundred men.¹⁹ All of these figures deal with the troops actually assigned to specific campaigns, and the *Itihas* makes no effort to give the *total* Gorkhali enlistment.

From observation and his own estimates, Kirkpatrick, who was himself a military man, put the number of Gorkhali troops at fifty to sixty companies in 1792.²⁰ This would be from seventy-five hundred to nine thousand men, depending on the size of the companies, which varied from one hundred forty men to two hundred twenty men. In 1802 Hamilton, also a military man, estimated the size of the Gorkhali army as being sixty to sixty-five companies, or from nine to ten thousand men.²¹ If to this is added the ten new companies recruited in 1804 for the campaign in the far west, the total comes to between seventy and seventy-five companies, or about eleven thousand five hundred to thirteen thousand men. While it would be very unwise to consider these figures as anything more than estimates, they do serve to show that there was a very definite expansion of the Gorkhali army, and that this expansion was somehow parallel to the expansion in Gorkha's territories.

Rough Estimates of Military Growth

Date	Companies Mentioned	Estimated Increase		Estimated Totals		Conquest
		Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum	
pre-1769	—	—	—	1200	—	
1769	4	—	—	1200	—	Valley
1775	10 (new)	1400	2300	2600	3400	East Nepal
1792	50-60	3600	9800	7000	13200	Kumaon
1802	60-65	0	1100	9600	14300	—
1804	10 (new)	1400	2200	11000	16500	Preparation For Garhwal Campaign

¹⁹Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepaul*, p. 102.

²⁰Hamilton, *Nepaul*, p. 112.

To carry this discussion one step further, Kirkpatrick states that the pay of the private sepoy serving in the Gorkhali army in 1792 was seventy-six rupees a year.²¹ The Government also provided the soldier with his coat or uniform. Thus, an increase of seventy-six thousand rupees a year would be the minimum increase in the military budget for an increase of one thousand men in the army. When the salaries of the officers, commissioned and non-commissioned alike, and the equipment required for such an increase are taken into account, every thousand men represented a drain of about four to five lakhs of rupees a year on the central treasury. On the basis of these estimates, an army of nine thousand men would cost the government about forty-five lakhs a year. At the same time, in 1792 Kirkpatrick estimated the annual income of the government of Nepal at between twenty-five and thirty lakhs of rupees.²² It seems safe to conclude, then, that the only means of supporting this increased army lay in the government's power to assign military jagirs, a power that was directly contingent upon the government's ability to acquire control over ever increasing amounts of land.

This relationship between military power and land is not assumed. It is clearly indicated in the documents, and several concrete examples will establish it. During the Nepal-China war the government found it could not support war on two fronts at once, even though military wages were paid in jagirs. In consequence westward expansion was halted, and many of the military serving in the west were relieved of their assignments. As Rana Bahadur wrote to the military commanders in the west in 1792:

When the Chinese troops reached Dhaibung, the morale of our troops went down. We were faced with the problem of saving the country and of repulsing the enemy by maintaining troops on two fronts. *This was the reason why the paid soldiers, musksteers and shield bearers accompanying you had to be dismissed.* There was justice in some cases and

²¹Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepaul*, p. 102.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 211. This estimate is, if anything, an exaggeration, according to some authors, and, in fact, Gajraj Misra told Captain Knox in 1802 that the total income to the central Government was only five lakhs a year. Political Consulation 18 September 1837, No. 69.

injustice in others. Yet we shall grant paddy to some and cash to others.²³

In other words, the government was forced to dismiss some soldiers in the west in order to enlist the troops necessary for the Chinese war. It did not have the finances to maintain both the army in the west and the army needed to defend the Valley from the invading Chinese.

This connection between the strength of the army and the land assigned to them is made even more explicit in a letter of Prithvinarayan Shah to Debu Rana, in which Debu Rana was instructed that at the time of the annual pajani he was to assign lands to the military commanders according to the strength of their units. Otherwise their strength would have to be reduced.²⁴ This letter makes it very clear that the numbers enrolled in the army or serving with the umiaons were directly limited by land assignments. Thus, to expand the army meant that there had to be an increase of land available for assignment to the maintenance of the newly recruited troops.

In 1805, when the possibility of war with the English seemed very real and large-scale military expansion was undertaken, the government was forced to resume all birta lands for which birtadars did not have a clear title.²⁵ Naturally this measure was highly unpopular and would not have been enforced unless it was absolutely necessary. It is a clear indication of the limits that available jagir lands put on the size of the army, and it stresses the fact that to increase the army's numbers, new lands had to be available for jagir assignment.

It seems from this discussion, then, that the double dichotomy: 'the limit of the army is the land; the limit of the land is the army', is justified, and that there was a definite mutual relationship between territorial expansion and military growth.

²³*Regmi Research Series*, ii, No. 8 (August 1970). Letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to the officers sent for the conquest of Kumaon, translated from *Aitihāsik Patra Sangraha*, i, 56. This is a translation of the letter referred to as Rana Bahadur's letter in Chapter six of this study.

²⁴Samsodhan Mandal, *Upadesh*, iii, 1136-7. Letter of Prithvinarayan Shah to Debu Rana, date verified for 8 Magh 1824 B.S. (1768).

²⁵M.C. Regmi *Land Tenure*, ii, 84-8, has developed the clearest case yet presented to explain the birta confiscation measures of Rana Bahadur Shah, establishing beyond doubt that the lands confiscated were without evidence of title.

What is not clear is the *compulsion* towards expansion and military growth that drove the army beyond the limits of prudence. To understand this it is necessary to understand the continually increasing demands made on available land within the Gorkhali state.

Further Demands On Land

Had there been a direct one-to-one ratio between the acquisition of land and the assignment of military jagirs, it would have blunted in some degree the army's need for recruits and led to a less vigorous expansion policy. But such a ratio did not exist. There were at least five other demands made on new land acquisitions, each of which reduced the amount of land available for distribution to the army.

In his *Dibya Upadesh* Prithvinarayan Shah set down the directive that the children of those soldiers who had fallen in battle should be provided for.²⁶ Kirkpatrick noticed this practice and commented on the indulgence of the Gorkhali government towards such widows and orphans. He also observed that the very dimensions of this problem had forced some retrenchment in the practice during the period of Bahadur Shah's conquests.²⁷ This is not surprising in view of the extended period of military activity, and it must be readily apparent that this practice imposed an increasingly heavy burden on the finances of the state. Since the support extended to these military widows and orphans was in the form of land grants, it is clear that this severely reduced the amount of land that could be directly assigned to the support of the army.

A second factor that must be considered is the awarding of *birta* land to those commanders who had success in the field.²⁸ Since the roster of successful military commanders was continually increasing, the amount of land that was assigned to them in recognition of services rendered came to a considerable amount, and this, too, was subtracted from the lands available for normal jagir assignments to the military.

²⁶Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Upadesh*, p. 17.

²⁷Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepaul*, p. 103.

²⁸*Itihas Prakash*, i, 14, Letter of Pratap Singh Shah to Abhiman Singh Basnyat, dated 3 Srawan 1834 B.S. (1777).

A third factor to be considered in this regard was the assignment of land in birta grants to those who smoothed the way for the Gorkhali conquests by defecting to the Gorkhalis or by otherwise assisting them in their efforts. The Gorkhalis felt a deep sense of gratitude to such men for their efforts to expedite the conquest, and this sense of gratitude found expression in substantial birta grants. In 1773 the Gorkhali commanders assigned to the conquest of the eastern Tarai wrote to Harinanda Pokhrel, who had given them very considerable help, and promised him that, in gratitude for the services he had given, all the birta grants he had held from the Makwani raja would be confirmed.²⁹ Later they wrote again, assigning him a new birta, exempt from all taxes.³⁰ When the boundaries of this birta grant are traced out on a map, it is quite clear that the Gorkhalis were not niggardly in expressing their gratitude. It is a huge tract of land. Since there were many such arrangements, perhaps not always involving so much land, but generous nonetheless, it is evident that additional conquests by the army did not bring a corresponding increase in the amount of land available for military jagirs.

Gratitude to those who had helped the Gorkhalis also included royal gratitude towards the gods. From time immemorial lands had been set aside for the maintenance and services of the temples as an outward sign of the gratitude of victorious monarchs for divine assistance. Accordingly, successful Gorkhali campaigns were also commemorated by grants of land to the temples and to Brahmans. These grants, called *guthis*, also had to be taken out of the total amount of land acquired for the state by military conquest.

In addition to these factors, the life-style at the court in Kathmandu changed significantly as the army met with increased military success. Kirkpatrick, speaking of the Tharghar as they appeared to him in 1792, says:

[The Tharghar] formerly affected, like the Omrahs a great simplicity of dress, justifying their practice in this point by observing, that it was with their swords, and not with the

²⁹Samsodhan Mandal, *Upadesh*, iii, 1158. Letter of Gorkhali Bharadars to Harinanda Pokhrel, date verified for 15 Bhadra 1830 (1773).

³⁰*Ibid.*, iii, 1159.

aid of fine garments, that their ancestors had raised the Gorkhali house to the respectable station which it now occupies; but whatever the risk the Thurghurs might have heretofore run of incurring censure or ridicule by appearing in vestments of silk or muslin, it is pretty certain that they have latterly relaxed considerably in this point, and there are at present some among them who are far from manifesting any solicitude to maintain inviolable this rustic characteristic of their order.³¹

The cost of supporting the families of fallen soldiers, generosity to friends, rewards to faithful servants, gifts to Brahmans and temples, and luxury at court, all of this had to be paid in land assignments. Thus each new conquest brought more land to the state, but only a fraction of the land acquired by conquest could be set aside for the military. The desire for land was thus never completely satisfied, nor could it be as long as there remained unconquered lands to the west that offered the military some hope of satisfying their land-hunger. Yet every effort to satisfy this hunger was frustrated because the newly conquered lands were largely absorbed by the above-mentioned commitments of the state and by the need to pay in jagirs the increased numbers of troops required for their conquest. This was the source of what several English authors have termed the 'greed' of the Gorkhali armies. Their 'greed' was nothing more nor less than an effort of the military to resolve the forces that were acting on them. They were driven by this inner compulsion to renewed military conquests—even when further territorial expansion was not in the best interests of the state, and when every effort to resolve these forces led the state closer and closer to inevitable confrontation with either Ranjit Singh in the Punjab or the British on the plains of India.

Inherent Dangers

In addition to the dangers of military confrontation with other strong powers that this land-military complex presented, there were even greater dangers to the unity of the state inherent in the system itself. The first of these inherent dangers lay in the centre's effort to overcome the centrifugal tendencies

³¹Kirkpatrick, *Account of Nepaul*, p. 123.

that jagir and birta assignments represented. In the previous chapter the importance of the pajani in overcoming these tendencies was stressed. But the pajani, if strictly applied, led to frequent changes in jagir assignments. As Kirkpatrick observed in 1792:

[The umraons] are never allowed to remain a long time together in the command of the same place, being relieved for the most part yearly, and not infrequently in the moment that they are about to reap the harvest of their lands. *The same policy, however, is discernible in all the arrangements of the Nepal government with regard to its delegated authorities, and the jaghire lands, both of which are constantly changing hands.*³²

It was this constant change that led to the abuses that were mentioned in the previous chapter, and which did so much to earn for the Gorkhals the obloquy of the people of Garhwal and Kumaon, and which were to lead to such disastrous consequences in the future.

A second danger inherent in this system was the development of the army, and more especially the army's officer corps, into a distinct force in the government with its own special interests. Successful commanders had accumulated very large tracts of land as the Gorkhali conquest progressed. The annual pajani, however, presented the very real possibility that these lands, or a part of them, would be removed. Since the land conferred status and prestige as well as wealth, it became a point of interest to them to see that in the reassignment during the pajani they and their relatives were not rotated into positions of lesser financial appeal or removed from the list of jagirdars altogether. The result in terms of military politics and the interference of the military in state politics must be frighteningly evident.

It is in this connection that Rana Bahadur Shah's abdication and the reign of Girbana Yuddha Bikram Shah (1799-1816) must be considered. Girbana Yuddha came to the throne as an infant. He lived the crucial part of his reign under the regency of a step-mother, who was completely without experience in government and politics. The result was the

³²Ibid., p. 55.

ascendancy of certain families in the state who had strong military connections and who exercised a predominating control over the governmental structures, including the pajani.

Writing of this danger in 1801, Rana Bahadur Shah, who was then in Banaras, clearly underlined the dangers to the unity of the state that this situation represented. He told Bhaktabar Singh Basnyat he should keep the pajani and the royal seal in his own hands, and warned him that if they once fell into the hands of the Pande family, the Pandes would control everything.³³ The pajani was one of the major sources of power in the state. So long as this power was in the hands of a competent monarch, there existed the strongest motive for the nobles of the state to remain loyal to the interests of country and crown, since through the pajani disloyal elements could be cut off from the land, which was the basic source of their power. The pajani thus represented an important and absolutely necessary centripetal force in the decentralized administration of Nepal at that time. It allowed of abuses, of course, but it also served the vital interests of unity in the state.

Should this power of the pajani fall into hands other than those of the head of the House of Gorkha, or should the reigning monarch prove unable to enforce his will through the pajani because of the military lobby or the pressure of family groups, the way lay open to factionalism, intrigue, and conspiracy. Further, should such a struggle develop, as indeed it did, the various factions engaged in it had to have the means to win support. Land was the only acceptable currency in such a contest. Therefore the struggle for power itself created a greater demand for land that could be used for this purpose. But, as was seen in Chapter Seven, there was a ten year lull from 1794 to 1804 in the Gorkhali westward expansion. No new lands were being conquered at this time that could be used for distribution to loyal partisans. There remained, then, only the *reassignment* of already occupied lands, which meant that the jagirdars and birtadars already in possession of such lands had to be expelled from their holdings to make room for new favourites. This led to the indiscriminate use of the powers of

³³*Itihas Prakash*, i, 16. Letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Bhaktabar Singh Basnyat, dated 1858 B.S., Magh, sudi 13, roj².

the pajani, to false accusations, to the imprisonment and even execution of leading members of the court. It was factionalism at its worst. And it was factionalism of a sort that forced otherwise loyal military commanders and other members of the court to take sides merely to protect themselves. It was a case of 'those who are not for us are against us'. And those who were in any way 'against' the party in power became the victims in the above-mentioned search for lands.

What is especially distressing about all of this is that the military hiatus mentioned earlier could have been so well employed to consolidate the victories already achieved, and to bring about a greater degree of unity within the country. This was most especially true in Garhwal and Kumaon. But the necessary attention was not given to these areas until too late. They never became a part of Nepal in the same sense that the various kingdoms of the Baisi and Chaubisi Rajas did, and this cast the strongest doubt on the permanency of their conquest.

Perhaps more serious even than this was the neglect of the rank and file of the military. Though military commanders had amassed large holding the land available to the maintenance of the army itself was always just short of what was required. This meant, as was earlier mentioned, that the strength of companies had to be cut down. Soldiers who had found in the army a means to a better livelihood were put on rotation, so that in the period of their actual service in the districts they were strongly tempted to 'make the most' of the opportunity offered. This factor must be taken into consideration when the treatment meted out to the peasants in the conquered districts is considered. In this connection, Mr. Fraser's estimate of the Nepali as a man and soldier deserves notice :

The regular army of Nepal has been for so long a time accustomed to active service, to a series of constant warfare and victory, that the men have become really veteran soldiers, under the advantages of necessary control and a certain degree of discipline; and from their continual success they have attained a sense of their own value—a fearlessness of danger and a contempt of any foe opposed to them. They have much of the true and high spirit of a soldier—that set-

...ing of life at nought in comparison with the performance of duty and that high sense of honor which forms his most attractive ornament and raises his character to the highest. They are also cheerful, patient of fatigue, industrious at any labor to which they are put, very tractable and quiet, and from what has fallen under my own observation and knowledge, not, I think, wanton or cruel. *This, however, is a somewhat dubious part of their character; in various situations they have behaved in different ways, and have given reason to presume that their natural disposition, whatever it may be, is swayed by situations and circumstances.*³⁴

No direct cause and effect relationship can be drawn between the power struggle at court, the neglect of the rank and file of the army, and the treatment meted out to the peasantry of the conquered districts by the army. However, the basis for inference is very strong. Also, it would be completely fatuous to presume that the struggle going on in the court, involving as it did the leading military figures, would have no effect whatsoever on the military itself. And the prostitution of leadership for personal gain must necessarily have had a profound effect on all those who once followed blindly and willingly.

Again and again throughout this study, the logic of events has forced the conclusion that the unification of Nepal required a strong man at the centre of authority. The same note must be struck here. The army was a leading factor in the unification of the country, but it was not competent to direct the consolidation and development of its own conquests. To be effective, the army had to be controlled. It was not capable of controlling itself, because of the many forces acting on it both from within and without that forced it to assume the posture of conquest. But in Nepal, which was essentially a military state, the royal family and the military leaders represented the total leadership of the country. Since the army was not competent to lead the government, the burden fell on the royal family itself, and, more especially, on the head of that family. The royal family could effectively fulfil its role in the administration only when the king who headed it was both strong enough to wield the powers which

³⁴Fraser, quoted in Atkinson, *Himalayan Districts*, ii. 625.

the administration put into his hands, and sufficiently clear-headed to apply himself to the task of organizing an effective and beneficial administration of the conquered territories.

To sum up the situation, the Gorkhali system of administration was controlled by the pajani, which called for the unbiased appointment of the right man to the right post. On this depended the quality of the administration in each of the districts, and the happiness and prosperity of the citizenry as well. Having appointed the right men to the right posts throughout the country it again fell to the king to direct and coordinate their work as well as to hold in check the expansionary forces contained in the army.

All of this was a heavy burden for any king to carry, but carry it he must. To fail to uphold the power of the central authority in an unbiased and constant spirit of service, as conceived by Prithvinarayan Shah, was tantamount to unleashing the enormous centrifugal forces that were bound up in the geography of the country, the economy that maintained, and the very administration itself. The forces at work in the country must be conceived as straining to pull away from the centre, and the king as holding them under control by the strength of his rule. This does not mean that the leading people of the country were wilfully trying to break away from the central government. Nothing could be farther from the true picture. The forces mentioned here lay in the very nature of the administration and the country itself. The state had grown up around the concept of a strong king; the nature of the land and the economy of the land *demand- ed* a strong king; and to deny this demand by removing him from the centre of power would be to risk the loss of whatever unity the House of Gorkha had achieved.

This was the critical situation that prevailed in Nepal when Rana Bahadur Shah came of age, and it is in the context of his reign, or more especially of his abdication, that the dangers of the land-military complex must be viewed. The army was under a strong inner compulsion to strive for new conquests just to maintain its position. The officer corps in particular was emerging as a strong political force, which, if left unchecked, would urge constant conquest as the solution to their problems, since the jagir and birta system left them little scope for advancement.

The development and exploitation of the lands already possessed offered little increase of revenues to government and no increase in land holdings or government posts to the officer corps. An increased army, on the other hand, offered more high-ranking posts for competent officers and a ready weapon for the extension of military conquests. Opposing this drive for expansion lay the fact that the time had long since come when the nation had to stop its headlong growth; the time had come to consolidate and to develop an adequate and sensitive administration of its territories. *There* lay the way of prudence and wisdom. But to take this path required strength at the centre, and this was denied to the country during the reign of Rana Bahadur Shah.

CHAPTER TEN
THE CRITICAL REIGN OF
RANA BAHADUR SHAH

. . . diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are reliev'd,
Or not at all.

—*Shakespeare*¹

Rana Bahadur Shah was born on 25 May 1775. When he was about two and a half years of age on 17 November 1777, his father died, leaving the throne to him.² During the long years of his minority his mother, Rajendra Laxmi, and his uncle, Bahadur Shah, served as regents, leading Gorkha to a mastery over the whole hill area from the Teesta River on the east to Almora on the west. In 1793, at a time when Nepal was just recovering from the Nepal-China war, Rana Bahadur himself came of age. For one year after that date he allowed his uncle to continue to direct the affairs of state, but in mid-April 1794 he set his uncle aside and began to rule in his own right. Three years later, in mid-April 1797, Bahadur Shah died in prison, and Rana Bahadur was alone to rule as he would. The period that immediately followed was one of the most critical in the history of Nepal. It is also one of the most controversial.³

The basic facts of the case can be established without difficulty, and it is, perhaps, best to begin this chapter with these. When Rana Bahadur Shah was twenty-four years of age, in February 1799, not five years from the time that he had assumed the full powers of the state, a letter was received in Calcutta announcing Rana Bahadur's abdication in favour of his son Girbana Yuddha Bikram Shah.⁴ There is also extant a copper

¹Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, IV, iii. 9-11.

²Cf. above, p. 154.

³The controversy concerns not only the events that occurred at this time, but also the interpretation to be placed on these events. It is because the author has no desire to enter unnecessarily into this controversy that an effort has been made to document this chapter as fully as possible.

⁴Letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Mr. Clark, translated from the Persian into Nepali in Chittaranjan Nepali, *Sir Panch Rana Bahadur Shah* (Kathmandu, 2020 B.S.), p. 131.

inscription bearing the same date as this letter, 1855 B.S., Phalgun, sudi 2, and addressed to the gurus, priests, chautariyas, kazis, nobles, elders, and citizens of Gorkha, all the four classes and thirty-six castes. This inscription carries the same message as the letter, namely that Rana Bahadur had abdicated in favour of his son Girbana Yuddha Bikram Shah.⁵

This, then, is the first fact that stands above dispute: that in February 1799 Rana Bahadur Shah freely and completely renounced his throne and entrusted it to his son, Girbana Yuddha, then aged one and a half years. His stated purpose was to lead a life of prayer and penance.

The second fact is contained in a letter from Banaras, dated 28 May 1800. It stated for the information of the governor general:

Yesterday Rajah Run Bahadur Sah, Raja of Nipaul, with Bulbudder Sah and Kurdip, a person of rank, four equipages of females and fifty men arrived at Benares. . .⁶

Thus Rana Bahadur renounced the throne in February 1799 to lead a life of prayer and penance, and fifteen months later he appeared in Banaras, an exile from his own country. These two facts stand out as absolutely above controversy.

What transpired in the intervening months? What led the young ex-rajah, who had renounced the world to live a life of meditation, to appear in exile with four women, a bodyguard of fifty men, and accompanied by several Nepalis of considerable rank? It is here, largely owing to discrepancies in the sources, that the controversy begins.

It has seemed best in this study to try to determine the least biased of the several accounts available that cover the period of these fifteen months. The account selected here is that of Captain W.D. Knox. Choosing Knox's account as the least biased, at least as far as the events that transpired in Kathmandu during this period, is an assumption, of course, but it is an assumption that is well-founded. It is based on the fact that Rana Bahadur's arrival in Banaras gave the British a golden opportunity to exploit the situation in Nepal, and that the governor general, in order to

⁵Ibid., pp. 123 ff., copper plate inscription of Rana Bahadur Shah.

⁶Secret Consultation 26 June 1800, No. 70, Intelligence received from Banaras, dated 28 May 1800.

determine on the best means to exploit that situation, wanted as objective a report as he could get on the events in the Valley that had led to Rana Bahadur's exile. In view of this he appointed a personal agent, Knox, who had served under Kirkpatrick on the British mission to Nepal in 1792, to reside with the ex-*raja* as his sole contact with the Company's government. Knox was instructed:

The governor general is not in possession of any accurate, authentic details relative to the late transactions in Nepal, or the causes of the *Rajah's* flight from there...until he shall have obtained a clear insight into the actual state of affairs in Nepal, and have ascertained the respective views and dispositions of the exiled Prince and the ruling power in that country. His Lordship will not be enabled to decide definitely on the measures which it may be expedient to pursue... You will therefore endeavour to procure a full and faithful account of the dissensions which have for some time past agitated the Kingdom of Nepal; and you will transmit the same to the governor general as soon as possible.⁷

After eighteen months of investigation in Banaras and Kathmandu, Knox submitted a report to the governor general, dated 23 January 1802, in which he gave the details of the events that had transpired between the time of Rana Bahadur Shah's abdication and his exile.⁸ It is this report which forms the basis for the first part of this chapter. The assumption is that this report is accurate and less subject to bias than those originating in the Valley at the time of such confusion.

Using Knox's report as a guide, the answers to three questions can now be attempted:

First, why did Rana Bahadur renounce his throne? According to Knox's report, Rana Bahadur had fallen in love with a beautiful young widow of a Brahman. He bestowed on her all the affluence and distinction that lay within his power, including even the title of *rani*. And he did this in spite of public opinion against such a liaison. In the course of time she bore

⁷*Ibid.*, No. 85, Letter of instructions to Captain W.D. Knox, dated 23 June 1800.

⁸Secret Consultation 30 June 1802, No. 42, Report of Captain Knox to the governor general on Rana Bahadur Shah and the events that led to his exile, dated 23 January 1802.

him a son, Girbana Yuddha. When she learned that she had contracted a serious illness and could not hope to live very long, she reminded Rana Bahadur Shah that his own horoscope foretold that he would not live beyond his twenty-fourth year. Their son would thus be left an orphan and the object of whatever malice people had borne towards their love. Rana Bahadur, impelled both by the conviction that he would die at an early age as well as by his love for his rani, determined to abdicate and properly install Girbana Yuddha on the throne during his own lifetime.

Secondly, why was this coronation of Girbana Yuddha accompanied by such fanfare as the oath of obedience exacted from the nobles, the copper inscription, and letters to the Company's government? According to the report, since Girbana Yuddha was not the first-born son and since he was not of unmixed Rajput blood, he had no claim to the throne at all. Therefore, to ensure Girbana Yuddha's position on the throne, some days prior to the actual abdication and coronation each noble was obliged to sign an oath of obedience to the young king. The raj tilak, or sign of succession, was imposed on the infant king's head by the raja of Palpa, who had been summoned to perform this task because of the rank he enjoyed among the ruling rajas of the hills. And, to guarantee the continuance of the administration, Rana Bahadur himself constituted the government, including regent, chautariyas, and kazis, that was to rule during the transition period. In short, he did all in his power to guarantee the succession of Girbana Yuddha.

Thirdly, what brought about Rana Bahadur's exile? After renouncing the throne, Rana Bahadur devoted himself to the care of his ailing rani, offering generously to the temples and to the Brahmans, in an effort to save her life. When she died, he behaved as a madman, venting his grief in numerous atrocities, desecrating temples, causing some of the Brahmans to lose caste, and mistreating all who dared to oppose him. His grief seemed not to abate with the passage of time, and the atrocities inflicted on the innocent increased. During this period the young king was sent to Nuwakot on Rana Bahadur's orders. Because of the 'terror which had become general' some of the leading members of the court also went to Nuwakot, where they

assumed charge of the king and made plans for their mutual safety. They took a solemn oath to remain faithful to one another, to force Rana Bahadur to leave the capital, and to cause him to retire some place where he would be well-provided for but should have no further hand in government. They then sent Rana Bahadur a statement that since he had voluntarily abdicated, he no longer had any right to interfere in government and recommended he retire to a place agreeable to himself where they would provide him with whatever necessities of life he should request. Rana Bahadur was furious. He tore up the paper and swore vengeance on all those connected with it. Realizing the strength of the opposition, he ordered all the troops in the vicinity of the capital to come to him to support his claim. The opposition, however, began a slow march from Nuwakot on the capital, well-supported by troops loyal to the infant king and their commanders. To block their approach Rana Bahadur sent several detachments with guns to establish posts in the passes, but these men defected to the chiefs coming from Nuwakot. Rana Bahadur then fled to Banaras out of fear that he would be captured and forcibly retired to some place where he would be stripped of all power.

The events represented in these three answers are by no means beyond controversy. Contemporary documents, however, tend to substantiate them. As regards Rana Bahadur's cruelties after the death of his queen, Hakum Antony, a fifty year old Portuguese of questionable antecedents, whom Rana Bahadur had appointed his own confidential agent in dealing with Knox, testified to Knox that:

. . . [Rana Bahadur] caused Damadhar Panre the supreme officer of his army to be chastized with a whip for not being so rapid as he expected in the execution of some order; that, on the death of the Ranee, he directed three companies of Sepoys to destroy the temple of Bhuwanee in Catmandu, and upon their demurring punished them by pouring boiling oil over their bodies, and that he totally demolished the temple, one of the most revered in the country, put many of the Brahmins belonging to it to death, branded others, and deprived of their cast all he could seize, by the most offensive means.⁹

Hakum Antony had been in the service of Rana Bahadur for over a year according to the testimony of Rana Bahadur himself.¹⁰ This would place him in the ex-king's service while Rana Bahadur was still in Kathmandu and make him a possible witness to the events he described.

A letter from the Chinese ambas Haterin and Tuchan Tyathin in Lhasa addressed to Damodar Pande, Tribhuvan, Narsingh, and Kirtiman acknowledged their account of the recent transactions in the Valley and admitted that 'we have heard this from everyone'.¹¹ The fact that the four kazis would write their own explanation of events to the ambas is not especially surprising. The key phrase, however, 'and we have heard this from everyone', indicates that this state of affairs was widely discussed in Lhasa to the point where it had been brought to the attention of the authorities there.

Along similar lines is the letter written in Girbana Yuddha's name to the merchants and panchas of Bhadgaon, in which Rana Bahadur's irresponsible actions were described as well as the young king's refusal to permit even his own father to act in a way that was repulsive to all men of good conscience.¹² The force of this letter, of course, lies not in what is said, since it was undoubtedly written by one of the four kazis, but in the fact that it was written to people who were witnesses to what was transpiring in the Valley and who were therefore able to detect any misstatement of fact in it.

As for the military preparations described in the report, there are extant a number of letters issued both by Rana Bahadur and by the nobles at Nuwakot under the name and seal of the infant king, calling for the support of the troops. The loyalty of the military to the infant king and their own commanders is readily apparent from the outcome, which was Rana Bahadur's flight to Banaras.¹³

¹⁰Secret Consultation 21 August 1800, No. 3. Letter of Captain Knox to Lieut. Col. Kirkpatrick, secretary to government, dated 19 July 1800.

¹¹Secret Consultation 31 July 1800, No. 6. Letter of Captain Knox to Lieut. Col. Kirkpatrick, dated 12 July 1800.

¹²Nepali, *Rana Bahadur Shah*, p. 135. Letter from the Chinese ambas to the four kazis of the Kathmandu government.

¹³Ibid., p. 52. Letter of Girbana Yuddha to the people of Bhadgaon, dated 1859 B.S., Baishakh, badi 9, roj 5 (1802).

¹⁴Ibid. pp. 132-4.

Finally, in the letter of information sent to the governor general announcing Rana Bahadur's arrival in Banaras, which was cited in part above, the following cause is assigned for his flight:

The circumstances that occasioned the Rajah's flight from Nepal are these—He wanted to resume his seat on the Musnud of Nepal, but the ministers, the Caujee, the Rauny, etc. observed to him that he had voluntarily abdicated the Government in favour of another, and that his resumption of it was inadmissible. This incensed the Rajah greatly against the officers of the Government, and he gave orders for beating some and putting others to death. They and the body of the people have in consequence of all this denounced him as a mad man and declared that he ought to be confined: the Rajah hearing of this quitted Nepal and repaired to Benares.¹⁴

Since this letter of intelligence was sent to the governor general immediately after the arrival of Rana Bahadur, the source of the writer's information becomes a matter of importance. It must have been either someone in the ex-rajah's own suite who passed on these details or some Nepali resident in Banaras who had access to information of what was transpiring in the court of Nepal. In either case it reflects Nepali opinion of the chain of events that led to the exile, voluntary though it was, and certainly it tends to support Knox's report.

British Intervention

Rana Bahadur's flight from Kathmandu had prevented actual physical conflict between himself and the four kazis who controlled the government, but it had not resolved the real conflict between the principals. The ultimate point at issue was Rana Bahadur's role in the Kathmandu government. Rana Bahadur wanted a position where he could at least control the government during his son's minority. The party in power in Kathmandu wanted him restrained in a place where he could exercise no such control. As soon as Rana Bahadur reached Banaras, the party in power began to take measures to guarantee the safety of the rule from the fugitive ex-rajah and self-declared swami. For his

¹⁴Secret Consultation 26 June 1800, No. 70, Intelligence received from Banaras, dated 28 May 1800.

part, Rana Bahadur began to contrive both some guarantee of the safety of his son and his own return to Nepal.¹⁵ The physical distance that separated the two factions and the fact that Rana Bahadur was in the effective custody of the English opened the door to intrigue on the part of both dissident Nepalis and the Company's government.

Rana Bahadur had come to Banaras voluntarily, and, of course, he was perfectly free to leave. What really delivered him into the hands of the English was his lack of funds. With a show of generosity, but actually with a good deal of craft, the English gave him assurances of some support, to the extent of six thousand rupees a month, but the money was handed over in such a way that Rana Bahadur was kept in a state of continual financial difficulty, and unable for want of funds to develop any significant programme for his own return to Nepal. The British were thus in a position to bargain with either Rana Bahadur or the party in power in Kathmandu to gain their ends.

During his first year and a half in Banaras, Rana Bahadur appeared to the British as utterly fickle, devoted to pleasures far beyond his slender means (he incurred debts to the extent of sixty thousand rupees to local bankers during this period and reportedly deprived his senior rani of her jewels to pay for these pleasures),¹⁶ and so inconstant that they felt nothing could be built on his allegiance. They decided to abandon him in favour of the party in power in Kathmandu. Rana Bahadur, who at this time relied on the most unqualified persons for advice, was actually induced to request of the governor general that Knox be sent to the borders of Nepal to treat directly with members of the ruling government in Kathmandu, thus playing directly into the hands of his opponents.¹⁷

¹⁵Nepali, *Rana Bahadur Shah*, pp, 136-7. Letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Shere Bahadur, dated 1858 B.S., Phalgun, Sukla 3, raj 1; *Itihas Prakash*, i, 15-16. Letter of Rana Bahadur to Bhaktabar Singh Basnyat, dated 1858 B.S., Magh, sudi 13, roj 2, Banaras; Consultation 28 August 1800, No. 3. Letter of the governor general to Captain Knox, dated 29 August 1800; Secret Consultation 30 June 1802, No. 14, Letter of Rana Bahadur to the governor general, received 4 November 1801; and Secret Consultation 30 June 1802, No. 5. Letter of Captain Knox to the governor general, dated 27 June 1801.

¹⁶Secret Consultation 30 June 1802, No. 5. Letter of Captain Knox to the governor general, dated 27 June 1801.

¹⁷The governor general had already written to Rana Bahadur informing him that he had directed Knox to proceed to the border, when he received word from Knox that he had received a request from the ex-*raja* to the

Knox went to the border, where with the assistance of Gajraj Misra, who acted on the part of the ruling power in Kathmandu, a treaty was worked out that was mutually acceptable. The English acquired the one thing they wanted in Nepal at that time, the commercial rights to trade in Nepal and through Nepal with Tibet.¹⁸ The ruling clique obtained the restraint of Rana Bahadur, whether in India or Nepal, on a fixed income and with the guarantee of the Company's government, thus gaining by the treaty what they had set out to achieve at Nuwakot.¹⁹

Though the treaty was signed on 26 October 1801, Rana Bahadur was not officially informed of its provisions until January. Meanwhile, however, his agents had kept him informed of the course of the proceedings, and when he realized what the treaty would do to him, he made a desperate effort to regain the governor general's support for his cause. Only this could explain the letter the governor general received from him on 5 November 1801—a letter that must surely be considered one of the most amazing documents ever to be written by a ruler of Nepal. The letter contains a series of propositions, the first of which are damaging enough:

That I may be reinstated and confirmed as formerly through the aid and assistance of the Company in my government and authority and my rank and my dignity, upon the raj and that I may regain my rights and powers from the usurped possession of my disaffected subjects, and that Palpa and Butwal and Ramnugger also may be put in my possession under my authority; in which case I will pay six annas to the Company's government; and ten annas will be appropriated to my own use; if the country of Nipaul only should be restored to me, I will pay the Company's government in the proportion of four annas.

Within the tract of country from the frontier of Cummaon and to that of Morrung is the boundary of my hereditary

same effect, whereupon the governor general recalled his original letter and sent a revised version, making it appear that Knox's assignment to the border was done in response to the raja's request. Cf. Secret Consultation 16 April 1801, No. 136, 137, and 139.

¹⁸Secret Consultation 30 June 1802, No. 11. Instructions of the governor general to Knox on his assignment as resident at the court of Kathmandu, dated 31 October 1801; and the governor general's report to the council on the treaty, Secret Consultation 30 June 1802, No. 1.

¹⁹Cf. the separate article appended to the treaty of October 1801 dealing with the provisions made for Rana Bahadur.

land, the Officers of the Vizier are stationed here and there, that the whole of this hereditary land may, through the Company's aid, be as formerly entirely delivered up to my authority and administration and that I may be put into possession of it; in which case I will continue to give the Vizier specie and presents in the same manner as former Rajahs; and of the residue of the Province eight annas shall be given to the Company, and eight annas shall be appropriated to my own use.²⁰

This part of Rana Bahadur's letter is striking, especially in view of the heavy dependence Nepal placed on the revenue of these very Tarai lands for the support of the court, nobility, and army. The second part of his offer is unique:

If (which may God avert) none of my descendants shall be in existence, I agree that the whole of the country of Nipaul shall devolve to the administration and control of the Company; and I do further agree that, excepting the Company, no person, whether of my tribe or of my relations, or of the disaffected in the country of Nipaul, shall ever be put in the possession of the power and authority, and in that event a jagheer, the monthly produce of which shall amount to 30,000 rupees shall be appropriated from the Company's territories to me for my expenses, which will convince me of the benefits to be derived from the Company's friendship.²¹

If one were searching for evidence of the state of Rana Bahadur's nerves and the shakiness of his thinking at this time, it would be difficult to find anything more expressive than this. Here again the complete concentration of Rana Bahadur's hopes on his son is evident. What is striking in the extreme is that he should put the whole of his kingdom in the balance. This letter, which has never been published before, clearly indicates Rana Bahadur's deep distrust of the ruling power in Kathmandu and his own near despair, a despair that was well-founded if he ever had entertained any real hopes of returning to his throne with the help of the English.²²

²⁰Secret Consultation 30 June 1802, No. 14. Letter from Rana Bahadur to the governor general, received 5 November 1801.

²¹Ibid.

²²There are those who defend Rana Bahadur's overtures to the governor general on the grounds that his offer was merely a ploy to keep the governor general off balance and thus avoid British involvement in Nepal. This

The treaty that had been signed on 26 October 1801 between the governor general and the rulers in Kathmandu effectively cut him off from any such return. This treaty provided for the maintenance of Rana Bahadur in India to the extent of seventy-two thousand rupees a year in cash plus ten thousand rupees a year in elephants, the payment of which was to be guaranteed by the Company's government. Should Rana Bahadur choose not to remain in India, but to live on his jagirs in Nepal, he was also obliged to conform to the following provisions:

. . . that he should not keep in his service fomentors of sedition and disturbance, that he shall retain no more than one hundred male and female attendants, and that he shall not retain about his person soldiers of any description. . . He must not attempt either by speech or writing to excite commotion nor harbour about his person rebels and fugitives from the territories of Nepaul, neither must he commit any depredations upon the subjects of that country.²³

The governor general chose to inform Rana Bahadur of these provisions through the agency of Knox, who was instructed on 31 October 1801 to fulfil this assignment.²⁴ On 13 January 1802 Knox sent Rana Bahadur the governor general's letter along with his own covering letter, in which he explained the terms of the accommodation that had been provided for him and pointed out most emphatically the necessity of Rana Bahadur's adhering strictly to the terms that had been laid down.

From the foregoing proceedings, then, it seems clear that Rana Bahadur's flight from Kathmandu into the Company's territories had removed any immediate cause for conflict in the Valley, but it had also raised the spectre of Rana Bahadur's return with the aid of the English. To secure themselves against such outside interference, the ruling party in Kathmandu had felt obliged to make some sort of accommodation with the English.

interpretation has been rejected here simply because no historical evidence has ever been suggested to bolster it. Actually, the assumption that such a ploy would succeed is almost as naive as the offer itself and reveals a significant lack of familiarity with the documents available.

²³Cf. the separate article appended to the treaty of October 1801 dealing with the conditions under which the Nepal government would provide for the maintenance of Rana Bahadur.

²⁴Secret Consultation 30 June 1802, No. 11. Instructions of the governor general to Knox on his assignment as resident to the court at Kathmandu, dated 31 October 1801.

At best they considered the resulting treaty of October 1801 as the lesser of two evils, a view that Knox had reported to the governor general during the early stages of the negotiations:

The sentiments of the [Nepal deputies] are fluctuating between opposite impulses, and it must be confessed that they are placed in a dilemma in which a choice is not without perplexity. They certainly wish to avoid entering into such a treaty with your Lordship's government, as the introduction of strangers into their country may bring on them the odium of a very unpopular measure, and the enmity of very powerful families; but, by shunning this connexion, they have to risk the return of the Raja, supported by a large force, joined by numerous malcontents, inflamed with resentment, and determined on their destruction.²⁵

If the party in power in Kathmandu was uneasy about the treaty, Rana Bahadur was adamantly opposed to it, and he protested vigorously to the governor general in a letter received on 18 February 1802:

... My Lord! the assignment of the Pergunnah of Bidjeepore, and which is a very trivial independence is made over to me by the letter addressed to me by Captain Knox, under some terms of such severity that the acceptance of them in toto would infallibly subject me to degradation, and my life would be passed under extreme difficulty and embarrassment.²⁶

Thus the treaty was from the first embraced with reluctance by the clique in power in Kathmandu, and totally rejected by the ex-king in Banaras. From these two points of view alone it rested on very shaky foundations. Since the British were well aware of this, they were not overly sanguine in their estimation of the treaty's durability. As Wellesley told the council on 30 June 1802:

[The treaty] is ascribed solely to the solicitude on the part of the members of the present administration to confirm, by the credit of our alliance an authority which is rendered insecure by the intrigues of an opposing faction, and to interest the

²⁵Secret Consultation 16 June 1801, No. 134, Letter of Knox to the governor general, dated 10 March 1801.

²⁶Secret Consultation 30 June 1802, No. 23. Letter from Rana Bahadur to the governor general, received 18 February 1802.

British Government against the restoration of the abdicated Rajah on the Musnud of Nepaul.²⁷

Wellesley confirmed this in his letter of instructions to Knox, as first resident to Nepal, insisting on the precariousness of the treaty because it was based, not on a desire for an alliance with the British, but on a fear that the British might assist Rana Bahadur to regain the throne in Kathmandu.²⁸

The State of the Administration in Kathmandu

Rana Bahadur Shah's irresponsible action in resigning the throne in favour of his infant son had thus led to consequences he had never foreseen. Nepal was laid open to direct British intervention. Even more dangerous for the unity of the country, he also threw the administration into chaos at a time when it was vitally necessary to develop a sound administration in the conquered territories. As has been seen, the successful functioning of the Gorkhali administration relied on the raja's faithful performance of his duty.²⁹ Both the decentralized administration and the centrifugal tendencies inherent in the whole geopolitical complex of Nepal required above all a monarch who could rise above family, party, and interest-groups within the country and direct the administration towards the ends assigned it by Prithvinarayan Shah. By his abdication Rana Bahadur had turned his back on that duty. He had actually handed over the central administration to an incompetent regent and a group of men who, however, qualified in their own right, were far removed from the impartiality the administration required.

For a time these four kazis were forced to cooperate for the welfare of the state. They had fought hard in the conquest of Greater Nepal and in the war against China, and they saw in Rana Bahadur's frantic activity after the death of his rani a real threat to all that had been achieved as well as to themselves. But once Rana Bahadur's opposition was removed, they began to drift into that factionalism that family ties and the struggle for land and prestige made inevitable.

²⁷Ibid., No. 1, Report of the governor general to the council on the negotiations leading to the treaty.

²⁸Ibid., No. 11, Instructions to Knox on his appointment as resident at the court at Kathmandu, dated 31 October 1801.

²⁹Cf. above, pp. 298 ff.

Apart from the chautariya, Shere Bahadur Shah, the strong men in this administration were Kazi Kirtiman Singh Basnyat and Kazi Damodar Pande.³⁰ Nominally Kirtiman Singh was the principal kazi, but Damodar Pande, because of his long and brilliant military record, exercised almost equal influence in the government. He further strengthened his position by enlisting a strong group of followers through a judicious use of patronage.³¹ The balance between Kirtiman Singh and Damodar Pande was destroyed, however, sometime in the fall of 1801, when Kirtiman Singh Basnyat and several other nobles were murdered. Damodar Pande was generally blamed for this,³² because it was known that he had been at odds with Kirtiman Singh, and also because Rana Bahadur Shah, in a letter to Bhaktbar Singh, had marked Damodar as the one man the Basnyats had to fear.³³ Damodar Pande, of course, was too strong to be attacked directly, but he could be attacked through his followers. In the ensuing investigations and arrests, many of these men as well as his own sons were arrested and confined. In consequence, Damodar withdrew from government. Even after it became evident that he had not been implicated in the murders, he continued to remain aloof in the hope of forcing the regent to extend to him even greater powers than he had enjoyed before.³⁴

The absence of Kirtiman Singh and Damodar Pande from government signalled a general scramble by lesser nobles to exert their influence in the administration. Since none of these men had sufficient prestige or influence to gain an overriding control of the court, the result was confusion compounded with mistrust. This was reflected in the difficulty experienced in assigning a delegation to meet Knox and convey him to the capital. While waiting on the border Knox reported to the governor general:

By letter from Bam Sah received this day by Gujeraje Misser, I have the satisfaction to report the arrival of that

³⁰Nepali, *Rana Bahadur*, p. 34.

³¹Secret Consultation 30 June 1802, No. 4. Letter of Knox to the governor general, dated 10 June 1801.

³²Ibid., No. 45. Letter of Knox to the governor general, dated 28 February 1802.

³³*Itihas Prakash*, i, 15. Letter of Rana Bahadur Shah to Bhaktbar Singh Basnyat, dated 1858 B.S., Magh, sudi 13, roj 2 (1802).

³⁴Secret Consultation 30 June 1802, No. 45. Letter of Knox to N.B. Edmosntone, secretary to government, dated 28 February 1802.

Chieftain at Hitaunda, about four days journey from hence, where he was waiting to be joined by Damdhur Pande, Tirbowan and the other members of the deputation who were some days march in his rear. In the dispatch of these deputies some difficulties occurred, arising from the remote and unconnected nature of the Nipaul administration. Those who were to go, were fearful of something being done in their absence to their particular prejudice, and those to remain apprehended still greater injury by the Party proceeding acquiring for themselves the exclusive favour and support of our government.³⁵

A further indication of the struggle for power going on in the court of Kathmandu is found in the conduct of these deputies after their arrival on the border. Their first item of business was not a discussion with Knox of the Nepal government's intention to implement the treaty, as Knox expected, but a serious discussion of the situation in Kathmandu and an attempt to arrive at a mutually acceptable distribution of government offices. They obviously felt that they could settle this question more calmly away from the atmosphere of intrigue that prevailed in the capital, and, if their opponents believed that their decisions bore the sanction of the Company's government, it might add weight to their agreement.³⁶

These events make it clear that, far from removing the cause of difficulty in the capital, Rana Bahadur's flight had simply destroyed the last bond of unity among the kazis and had invited everyone with the slightest pretence to power to maneuver into a stronger position in government and secure positions of importance and prestige for family and friends. In view of all that has been said about the centrifugal forces active in Nepal it is evident that the danger this new state of affairs represented to the unity of the country was very real indeed, and far outweighed such atrocities as were ascribed to the ex-king Rana Bahadur. While these latter were detrimental to the well-being of the country and the population of the Valley, the intrigue that succeeded his flight was leading to a disregard for

³⁵Secret Consultation 30 June 1802, No. 43 Letter of Knox to N.B. Edmonstone, secretary to government, dated 11 February 1802.

³⁶Ibid., No. 45. Letter of Knox to N.B. Edmonstone, secretary to government, dated 28 February 1802.

life and liberty as great, if not greater, than that which had existed under the ex-king. In addition, the shock this was giving to the administration exceeded anything the country had known during Rana Bahadur's time.

Rajrajeshwari Devi's Return

While the Kathmandu deputies were in conference on the Nepal border, they received news that the senior rani, Rajrajeshwari Devi, had left Banaras and had arrived at a village on the border, with the intention of returning to Nepal.³⁷ Her presence and intention constituted a new complication for them to consider. While the deputies appear to have borne no animosity towards Rajrajeshwari Devi, her return to Nepal presented two difficulties. First, she was largely an unknown quantity as far as her own personal intentions were concerned and hence none of the deputies really knew how she might act if she were installed as regent in Kathmandu. Secondly, there was every possibility that her return to Kathmandu would herald the return of Rana Bahadur himself to the capital. Certainly her return would mean a change in the power structure of the court. The fact that she was already on the border made an immediate decision imperative, and the deputies discussed the problem at length. In the summary of these discussions that Knox sent to the governor general, the attitude of Damodar Pande is especially noteworthy, since it was on his position in government that the British had relied when they entered into the treaty.³⁸ It is

³⁷Ibid., No. 44. Letter of Knox to N.B. Edmonstone, secretary to government, dated 17 February 1802. It has been said that Rana Bahadur sent his senior queen Rajrajeshwari Devi to Kathmandu to break the treaty that had been made between the ruling party there and the Company's government. However, in a letter dated 4 July 1801 Rana Bahadur Shah wrote to the governor general, telling him *inter alia* that he had sent Rajrajeshwari Devi and Bal Bhadra Shah on the 22 June 1801. On 27 June 1801 Knox wrote to the governor general that he was still awaiting the Nepal deputies to discuss the draft of the treaty and the changes proposed by both sides. Since the treaty was only finalized and signed on 26 October 1801, it is readily apparent that Rajrajeshwari Devi, for whatever reason she was sent away from Banaras, was not sent to break a treaty that had not then even been made, and at a time when Rana Bahadur himself still hoped for the discussions of Knox and the deputies to prove favourable to himself. It must be recalled that Knox's trip to the border for these discussions had been made at Rana Bahadur's request. Cf. Letters of Knox and the ex-*raja* to the governor general, Secret Consultation 3 August 1801, No. 8, and Secret Consultation 30 June 1802, No. 5.

³⁸Secret Consultation 30 June 1802, No. 4. Letter of Knox to the governor general, dated 10 June 1801.

apparent that Damodar had lost confidence in the regent and had decided to cooperate with anyone who could assure him some measure of control in Kathmandu or whom he felt himself strong enough to influence.

Dhaumdhur Pande is, I understand, desirous of conducting Run Bahadoor's Rannee to Catmandu, with the view of placing her at the head of the administration and Tirbhowan Sing, is conceived to be equally well disposed to a measure, which might pave the way for the reinstalment of Run Bahadoor, of whom he had ever been the constant and declared favorite. Upon the discussion therefore of this question, these two contended that the Rannee ought to be conducted to Catmandu, and permitted to reside there on an adequate allowance, that it would be cruel to expel her from her native country, without any imputation of offence, and that, if her residence there should be found dangerous to public tranquillity it would then be just to preserve internal peace by removing her to some place too remote for intrigue. Bum Sah and the remaining deputies on the other hand pointed out the main difficulties and dangers to be apprehended from conducting the Rannee to the capital, and recommended most warmly that, for the present, she should be obliged to move to some place within the Company's territories.³⁹

This discussion of the immediate future of Rajrajeshwari was resolved by Gajraj Misra, who sided with Bam Shah and his supporters, because he felt that the most important task confronting the deputies at that juncture was the implementation of the treaty.⁴⁰ Damodar Pande and Bam Shah were then sent to explain the situation and the decision to Rajrajeshwari. Naturally, she was most unwilling to accept this, but since she was virtually helpless, she was at length persuaded to agree. Bam Shah was then free to escort Knox to the capital; Rajrajeshwari Devi remained for for the time on the border;⁴¹ and the Nepal government committed itself to the implementation of the treaty.

³⁹Ibid., No. 45. Letter of Knox to N.B. Edmonstone, secretary to government, dated 28 February 1802.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., Nos. 31 and 33. Letters of Knox to N.B. Edmonstone, secretary to government, dated 26 March 1802 and 2 April 1882.

Apparently, however, nothing was actually done in the way of assisting Rajrajeshwari financially, and she was forced to take a step that upset the precarious balance existing in the Nepal administration. Knox reports in February 1803 that only after she had left her position on the border and had begun to move towards Kathmandu did the regent approach him and ask him to mediate.⁴² She asked him to offer Rajrajeshwari a house in Patna and a sum of five thousand rupees a year, if she would remain in India. According to Knox, this would have been an insult to the senior queen, and he refused to act unless a sum more suitable to her position would be applied to her use. The regent eventually proposed to give Rajrajeshwari eighteen thousand rupees a year, and on this understanding Knox sent his munshi, Mirza Medhi, to the Tarai to make the offer. Meanwhile, to prevent Rajrajeshwari's progress to the capital, all her male attendants were arrested and carried off, and she was left alone with a few female attendants. Knox's report of the meeting of Mirza Medhi and the senior queen provides an interesting commentary on her position:

Intimation of Mirza Medhi's arrival being made to the Rannee, she desired him to be brought to her palanquin, where, after presenting a nuzzur, he stated to her the subject of his mission, and received the following reply. That those who composed the Government of Nipaul were her servants and slaves, and were indebted to her for the stations they possessed, that instead of their return of duty and gratitude so justly her due they had not only shown it to be their fixed intention to keep her in a state of banishment from her native country, but, by seizing her jagheer, had deprived her of the means of living in a foreign one. That deceived by promises and assurances treacherously granted for the purpose of keeping her inactive, she had remained at Kuroubunnuh exposed to the dangers of an unhealthy climate, and suffering a variety of distresses, until finding no probability of any provision being made for her, she had left that place with a determination to proceed to Catmandoo. That the seizure of her servants had not in the smallest degree weakened this determination, that having commenced her journey, as no

⁴²Secret Consultation 7 July 1803, No. 28, Letter of Knox to N.B. Edmonstone, secretary to government, dated 27 February 1803.

outrage could deter her, so no offer could induce her to turn back, and therefore, that nothing but the loss of life could prevent her from her approach to the capital.⁴³

That Rajrajeshwari's expressed determination was no empty boast was made apparent by later events. Though assigned to prevent her approach to the capital, the military not only refused to hinder her, but actually assisted her on her journey, even carrying her palanquin. Her progress threw the regent and her advisors into confusion, and every move they made to prevent the approach of Rajrajeshwari tended to alienate the military further, until they openly declared their support of the senior rani.⁴⁴

As a last resort, Damodar Pande was commissioned to meet Rajrajeshwari at Thankot at the edge of the Valley and to persuade her to accept some sort of settlement. Damodar Pande reluctantly accepted this commission, but he had hardly arrived at Thankot when he heard that the regent and her advisors had fled from the palace with the young king. He then transferred his allegiance to Rajrajeshwari and helped conduct her into the city and to the palace, where she was warmly welcomed by the people. The ministers gradually returned to their posts, and the young king was brought back from Pashupati to the palace. Rajrajeshwari thus held the regency in her hands, and she rewarded Damodar Pande by appointing him principal kazi.⁴⁵ As was to be expected, within a short time of his appointment Damodar Pande began to make large-scale changes in the personnel of the administration. The new appointees were predominantly men of Damodar's party, and factionalism in the central administration was thus given further encouragement.⁴⁶

The new regent was, by her own admission, totally inexperienced in government.⁴⁷ She was wise enough to be suspicious of every courtier's motives, but neither able to decide on an

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Secret Consultation 28 April 1804, Letter of Rajrajeshwari Devi to Gajraj Misra, received in Banaras on 11 January 1804, '... since I am a woman, helpless, inexperienced, and devoid of understanding, and, in addition to this, could not distinguish between good and bad by reason of the misrepresentations of certain persons, it has therefore followed that I have erred in that respect.'

independent course of action nor to choose someone on whom she could rely or whose advice she could trust. The result was almost complete confusion in the administration and widespread despondency among the court nobles.⁴⁸ Work came to a virtual standstill and no one could say with confidence what the future would bring.

Meanwhile Knox was having his own problems. When it had been agreed that the Nepal government would provide Rana Bahadur with seventy-two thousand rupees a year, paid in regular instalments, it was determined that this money should be raised from definite jagirs within the kingdom.⁴⁹ The responsibility of collecting the money and paying it over to the ex-king was entirely that of the Nepal government. The governor general, unable to let well enough alone, and anxious to retain a strong hold on Rana Bahadur, determined to accept the responsibility of paying Rana Bahadur his pension.⁵⁰ The Company consequently had been paying a regular pension to Rana Bahadur since 26 October 1801. It was Knox's unhappy lot to try to press the Nepal government to complete its arrangements for the collection of this money from the assigned jagirs and to pay it over to him. In the confused state of affairs in Kathmandu, such a decision was not to be reached easily. Knox, through the offices of Gajraj Misra, continued to urge action, and his importunities continued to be met with delays and promises that showed no sign of fulfilment.⁵¹ Since the Company had taken on itself the responsibility of supplying Rana Bahadur with cash, there was no compelling motive for the Nepa' government to hasten these collections. Rana Bahadur would be taken care of in any event, and in the meanwhile a new alignment of the various factions could work itself out.

In his anxiety to be able to report to the governor general that the funds were being collected on schedule, Knox seems to

⁴⁸Secret Consultation 2 May 1805, No. 350. Letter of Knox to N.B. Edmonstone, secretary to government, dated 20 May 1801.

⁴⁹Cf. special clause of the treaty of October 1803.

⁵⁰Secret Consultation 30 June 1802, No. 1. Report of the governor general to the council: 'I deemed it proper...to place him (Rana Bahadur) more immediately under the control of the British Government, to authorize the payment of the amount assigned for his support by monthly instalments from the treasury at Banaras.'

⁵¹Secret Consultation 7 July 1803, No. 28. Letter of Knox to N.B. Edmonstone, secretary to government, dated 27 February 1803.

have missed altogether the fact that the total situation in Kathmandu had changed. If anything, this was the time for him to move cautiously and to try patiently to win the confidence of the new regent. Instead, acting on the apparent conviction that the whole government of Kathmandu would collapse without his presence, he announced that if some progress were not made in the final arrangements of these payments by 18 March 1803, he would give notice on the 19th of his intention to depart from Kathmandu.⁵² Some payments were made prior to his deadline and an effort was being made to complete an arrangement for the regular collection of the funds from Rana Bahadur's jagirs,⁵³ but nothing short of a final settlement would satisfy Knox, and he insisted on a sort of blind fulfilment of his avowed intention to leave the country. Even the wishes of the regent failed to move him from this decision.⁵⁴

Before he left Kathmandu, Knox received numerous visits from members of the nobility who spoke frankly of the changing mood in Kathmandu regarding Rana Bahadur. Knox knew, of course, that the whole British position in Nepal was based on the desire of the Kathmandu authorities to keep Rana Bahadur out of Kathmandu. He himself had indicated as much to the governor general, yet he did not seem at all concerned when the following sentiments were expressed to him and which he dutifully reported to the governor general :

[Rana Dheer Singh's] brother in law, when in private with me, declared his opinion, that under the Maha Rannee's government the confusions of their officers almost daily increase, and expressed his wish for the return of Run Bahadur, as necessary for the establishment of tranquillity in the country. Bum Sah, Hastadal Sah, Shamshere Sah, and Pokhur Sah, all relations of the reigning family, held the same language, but [stated] that the merciless disposition of Run Bahadoor would require to be kept under [such] subjection as would disable him from renewing those decrees of capricious cruelty that had made him the terror of Nipaul. Upon desiring them to be more explicit, they said that it was their wish, that Run Bahadoor should be placed at the head

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

of an administration which would be formed with the countenance of the British Government. . . They added that these sentiments were not confined to themselves, but if the Governor General should determine on reinstating Ran Bahadoor, all descriptions of men would hasten to meet him with their tenders of duty, and that it would be an easy matter to adjust every point in a secure and satisfactory manner, previously to his passing the boundaries of the Honble Company.⁵⁶

Knox was apparently misled by their suggestion that it would be necessary for the Company to supervise Rana Bahadur, should he return to the capital. Certainly the implications of this opinion were lost on him. If Rana Bahadur were welcome again in Kathmandu, the foundation for the treaty *and* for an accommodation with Rana Bahadur was gone, and with it any basis for any intervention in Nepal.

But Knox was determined to fulfil his word regardless of the situation developing in the capital. At the end of March 1803, he left Nepal and proceeded to Govind Ganj in the Company's possessions,⁵⁶ where he tried to keep in touch with the situation in Nepal. While he was there, Rajrajeshwari Devi forwarded further payments to the Company to discharge the debt that the Nepal government and Rana Bahadur had contracted with the Company,⁵⁷ but clearly Knox's usefulness had ended. He eventually proceeded to Calcutta, where he was able to present his view of the condition of the Kathmandu administration to the governor general,⁵⁸ and then disappeared from the scene.

Knox's departure from Nepal placed the governor general in a very awkward position. He had risked a great deal in entering into the treaty with the Kathmandu government in preference to

⁵⁶Secret Consultation 2 May 1805, No. 350. Letter to N.B. Edmonstone from Knox, dated 20 May 1803.

⁵⁷*Ibid.* Knox was severely criticized for his departure in this fashion from Kathmandu in Campbell's report on Anglo-Nepal relations during the Knox period. This report was prepared by Campbell in the British Residency in Kathmandu and forwarded to the governor general 25 July 1837 by Brian Hodgson. Cf. Political Consultation 18 September 1837, No. 69.

⁵⁸Secret Consultation 26 April 1804, No. 295. Letter of Girbana Yuddha to Gajraj Misra, received at Banaras 11 January 1804, stating that twenty-four thousand rupees had been sent at partial payment of this debt. And Secret Consultation 2 May 1805, No. 352. Letter of Knox to N.B. Edmonstone, secretary to government, dated 23 June 1803, announcing further payment of eighteen thousand rupees.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, No. 302. Letter of the governor general to Thomas Brooke, acting agent in Banaras, dated 24 January 1804.

siding with Rana Bahadur. Now, according to Knox, the Kathmandu government was proving unreliable and unable to implement the treaty. To make his decision of a course of action more difficult, there were many conflicting reports coming to him.

1. Knox had reported that at this time no one in Nepal would oppose Rana Bahadur Shah's return to Nepal and to a place in the administration.⁵⁹

2. A letter from Rajrajeshwari Devi to Gajraj Misra that arrived in Banaras on 11 January 1804 seemed to indicate that she *was* trying to implement the treaty and that she wanted it:

I expect daily increasing advantages from the treaty, which you have ratified with His Excellency the Most Noble the Governor General. . . I have not nor will not deviate from the treaty you have made. It is therefore necessary that you conduct Captain Knox to the frontier and inform me immediately what officers you appoint to escort him from there to this place, that I may depute them accordingly.⁶⁰

Another letter from a large group of nobles in Kathmandu bore much the same intelligence:

There is no deviation whatever on our part, nor will there be any, to the execution of the articles of the treaty. The delay which has hitherto occurred on this point was entirely occasioned by the unsettled state of our Government, as is well known to you. . . since a complete arrangement has been affected, we have no pretence to decline the execution of the treaty. Do you come and bring Capt. Knox with you to this place for the purpose of completely carrying into effect the objects of the treaty and by no means entertain an idea of any change or difference in this business.⁶¹

3. Yet Rana Bahadur, with the assistance of leading nobles of the Valley and at least the connivance of Rajrajeshwari Devi, made a clandestine effort to leave Banaras.⁶²

4. The Nepal government was discharging its financial obli-

⁵⁹Secret Consultation 2 May 1805, No. 350. Letter of Knox to N.B. Edmonstone, secretary to government, dated 20 May 1803.

⁶⁰Secret Consultation 26 April 1804, No. 295. Letter from Rajrajeshwari Devi to Gajraj Misra, received in Banaras 11 January 1804.

⁶¹Ibid., No. 297. Letter from nobles in Kathmandu to Gajraj Misra, received in Banaras 11 January 1804.

⁶²Secret Consultation 2 May 1805, No. 352. Letter from Knox to N.B. Edmonstone, secretary to government, dated 23 June 1803.

gations in full accord with the treaty.⁶³

5. Intelligence was received that the Nepal government had made overtures to China for assistance, should the Company invade Nepal.⁶⁴

6. Rajrajeshwari Devi had imprisoned many nobles, whom she claimed were opposed to the treaty and had prevented her from fulfilling its terms.⁶⁵

7. Knox was emphatic that the situation in Kathmandu was so chaotic that there was no possibility of a government being formed that would be able to fulfil the treaty's provisions.⁶⁶

8. Rana Bahadur's agent, Ranganath Pandit, had approached the Company's agent to discuss the concessions that Rana Bahadur would give the Company on his restoration to power in Kathmandu.⁶⁷

The picture thus presented to the governor general was indeed confusing. If the same details are viewed from Nepal's point of view, however, the picture becomes considerably clearer. To state it briefly:

1. Nepal did not want the treaty with the Company, but had accepted it at the time to avoid more serious interference from the Company.

2. The only real means available to the Company to insist on a fulfilment of the treaty were the financial commitments of the Nepal government and Rana Bahadur to the Company, and the possible use of force.

3. The Company would not resort to force as long as it appeared that the Nepal government wished to fulfil the terms of the treaty. Assurances to this effect in addition to the steady elimination of Nepal's debt to the Company would both forestall the Company's action and at the same time free the Nepal government from any financial claims the Company might try to enforce.

⁶³Cf. above, note 57.

⁶⁴Secret Consultation 14 November 1803, No. 84. Letter of Knox to N.B. Edmonstone, secretary to government, dated 17 August 1803.

⁶⁵Secret Consultation 2 May 1805, No. 295. Letter of Rajrajeshwari Devi to Gajraj Misra, received in Banaras 11 January 1804.

⁶⁶Ibid., No. 350. Letter of Knox to N.B. Edmonstone, secretary to government, dated 20 May 1803.

⁶⁷Secret Consultation 26 April 1804, No. 301. Letter of Thomas Brooke, acting agent in Banaras, to N.B. Edmonstone, secretary to government, dated 24 November 1803.

4. The appeal to China was an obvious effort to play on the Company's fears of alienating that government, should the Company dare to attempt a direct military intervention in Nepal.

Whether this pattern was the result of a carefully planned programme, or adopted step by step as opportunity provided, the pattern is there, and it makes good sense. Certainly it is clear that the situation in Nepal was not as chaotic as Knox had led the governor general to believe.

The governor general, of course, was not privileged to view these events from the vantage point of history, and Knox's departure from Nepal had deprived him of any on-the-spot information. He was thus compelled to make a decision on the basis of the information he had at hand. On 24 January 1804 Thomas Brooke, the governor general's agent attending on Rana Bahadur in Banaras, was informed by the secretary to government in Calcutta that according to a decision of the governor general in council the treaty of October 1801 was to be considered null and void. The governor general further decided that no treaty or special arrangement would be entered into with Rana Bahadur *at that time*. Consequently, since the treaty was null and void, there was no longer any justification for detaining Rana Bahadur in Banaras and that he should be considered free to return to Nepal. His departure, however, should be delayed for one month to allow those in Kathmandu responsible for the treaty to take necessary precautions, since it could be expected that Rana Bahadur would take measures against those who had previously opposed him.⁶⁸

The reasoning that led the governor general to the decision to dissolve the treaty and release Rana Bahadur was more amply explained in a letter to Knox's secretary, Charles Lloyd, dated 2 February 1804. Since Rana Bahadur's abdication, no permanent government had been established in Nepal, nor could any administration function properly because of the intrigue, violence, and factions within the country. Without such a permanent government there was no hope of the terms of the treaty being fulfilled. Further, those who wanted the treaty were motivated

⁶⁸Ibid., No. 302. Letter of the governor general to Thomas Brooke, acting agent in Banaras, dated 24 January 1804.

only by fear, and no firm hope for the fulfilment of the treaty could be founded on fear.⁶⁹

Unexpressed as reasons, but perhaps equally a part of the governor general's thinking, was the possibility either that Rana Bahadur would regain authority in Nepal and the government would then settle down in such a way that a new treaty could be worked out; or that Rana Bahadur and the various factions in Kathmandu would be so deadlocked that the governor general's mediation would be required, and he would once again be asked to intervene. In the meanwhile, the continued presence of the ex-king in Banaras was an unnecessary economic burden on the Company as well as a cause for concern.

Rana Bahadur Shah's Return to Kathmandu

Rana Bahadur Shah was free to return to Kathmandu in March 1804. Accompanying him was a relatively unknown Nepali sardar named Bhim Sen Thapa, who had gone with Rana Bahadur to Banaras and served him there in the capacity of commander of his bodyguard.⁷⁰ In the voluminous correspondence that exists between the governor general and various British agents, residents, and informers his name hardly occurs. But in a letter of Charles Lloyd dated 19 November 1803 he is referred to as one of the ex-king's favourites, though even in this letter he is still described as commanding the Gorkhali soldiers in the service of Rana Bahadur.⁷¹

A study of the documents of this period reveals a very marked change in Rana Bahadur's conduct after November 1801. It is apparent that after that time he had fallen under the influence of an advisor who was able to give him solid counsel and restrain his undisciplined reaction to the events that were transpiring in the capital. Subsequent events indicate that more than likely this advisor was none other than Bhim Sen Thapa, for once Rana Bahadur returned to the capital Bhim Sen Thapa played a role far out of proportion to his former post as commander of the body guard.

The restraining influence of Bhim Sen Thapa, if indeed it had

⁶⁹Ibid., No. 297. Letter of the governor general to Charles Lloyd, dated 2 February 1804.

⁷⁰Ibid., No. 300. Letter of Charles Lloyd to government, dated 19 November 1803.

⁷¹Ibid.

been his advice that steadied Rana Bahadur in Banaras, continued in an even more marked degree after Rana Bahadur's return to Kathmandu. While it is true that Rana Bahadur saw to it that Damodar Pande and four others were put to death,⁷² this was hardly the outbreak of cruelty and violence that the governor general had expected. In fact, apart from these executions, there was a remarkably business-like tone to the new administration. The military offensive in the west was rapidly organized and put into execution. Efforts were made to increase the funds available to replenish the treasury, which recent events had badly depleted, as well as to finance the war. And, in general, the loose ends of the administration were pulled together with firmness and considerable restraint. Those nobles who had expressed to Knox a desire to see Rana Bahadur back in power provided he was held under some sort of restraint must have been duly impressed. Not only was Rana Bahadur acting in a way to satisfy most of the nobles, he was also destroying any possibility of the governor general's again capitalizing on the factionalism of the administration to interpose his authority.

One of the more serious pieces of business that Rana Bahadur faced at this time was the situation of Palpa. At the time when the other kingdoms of the Chaubisi Rajas had been annexed by Gorkha, Palpa had been left more or less independent. This had been partially demanded by the close relations that existed between the nawab of Oudh and the reigning family of Palpa and partially the result of the treaty between Bahadur Shah and the king of Palpa.⁷³ By 1804, however, the nawab of Oudh's lands and powers had been taken over by the Company, and Palpa had fallen to some extent under the influence of the British.⁷⁴ To compound the seriousness of this situation, the raja of Palpa had both directly and through his wakil made overtures to the Company to assist them in an invasion of the hills in order to exert pressure on the Kathmandu government to implement the treaty of 1801.⁷⁵ Rana Bahadur removed this

⁷²Acharya, *Samkshipta Brittant*, p. 119, would make the number of these killed by Rana Bahadur at this time slightly higher.

⁷³Cf. above, pp. 181 ff.

⁷⁴Secret Consultation 30 June 1802, No. 36. Letter of instructions to Captain Knox, dated 30 June 1802.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, No. 30. Letter of Knox to the governor general, dated 22 March 1802.

source of pressure by enticing the raja of Palpa to Kathmandu, where he was summarily placed under restraint, and then occupying Palpa. This removed the governor general's last opportunity of interfering directly in Nepali affairs. Apparently, then, the serious danger to the unity of Nepal that had been presented by Rana Bahadur's precipitate abdication and the subsequent collapse of the central administration into factional strife was rapidly being remedied.

The Death of Rana Bahadur

Towards the end of February 1806, however, almost two years after his return to the Valley, Rana Bahadur took a step that caused general uneasiness among the members of the court. He had himself named mukhtiyar,⁷⁶ a post that placed him legally at the head of government during his son's minority. Since he had presumably been enjoying the full powers of government without this title, there was room for speculation as to his reasons for thinking it necessary to assume the title at this time and for the suspicion that it was the first step in throwing off the restraint under which he had been acting. For anyone who could recall the days of terror just before Rana Bahadur's exile, this was indeed a chilling thought.

Whether this fear was responsible for a conspiracy against the life of Rana Bahadur or not, within a few months of his assuming the title of mukhtiyar he was struck down in cold blood by his brother Shere Bahadur Shah.⁷⁷

From the aspect of the unification of Nepal, it was not so much Rana Bahadur's death as the use that Bhim Sen Thapa made of it that is important. Charging conspiracy against the ex-king, he had a number of the leading nobles put to death and took advantage of the situation to execute the imprisoned raja of Palpa.⁷⁸ In one stroke he thus gained complete ascendancy in Kathmandu and so cowed those who were in opposition to him that he held undisputed sway in the kingdom. At the same time he destroyed forever any possibility of Palpa's betraying the secrets of the hills to the British.

⁷⁶Nepali, *Rana Bahadur*, p. 74. Letter appointing Rana Bahadur Shah mukhtiyar during the minority of Girbana Yuddha.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 78.

⁷⁸Acharya, *Samkshipta Brittant*, p. 125.

Palpa Signals a Change

From the time when the raja of Palpa had been enticed back into the hands of Rana Bahadur, the Gorkhalis had begun to exercise effective control over the Palpali state. Negotiations had then been begun with the Company for the right to farm the zamindari which Palpa held first from the nawab of Oudh and then, after the cession of his lands to the Company's government, from the Company.⁷⁹ As has been seen in Chapter Seven, the Nepal government maintained on principle their right to all the lands dependent on a hill raja when the raja was conquered or taken under Gorkha's supervision.⁸⁰ Their claim in 1805 to the Butwal zamindari of Palpa, however, was summarily rejected in a letter written under the direction of the governor general to the Nepali wakil in Calcutta.⁸¹

After the death of the raja of Palpa, however, Bhim Sen Thapa's father, General Amar Singh Thapa, was appointed governor of Palpa, and the Nepalis tightened their control over this land.⁸² The governor general's letter was brushed aside, possibly because it was so contrary to the facts. The British contention that they could never be sure of being able to collect their revenues from the officers of the Nepal government was contradicted by the fact that the Nepal government had for years faithfully discharged their rents in other border areas.⁸³ And the Nepalis' claim of ancient usage was based on the fact that the British had given de facto recognition to this practice in the Makwanpur Tarai and the Bijayapur-Chaudandi Tarai since the days of Prithvinarayan Shah.⁸⁴ It was not unreasonable to believe that, despite the rebuff, the affair could be arranged to everyone's satisfaction.

⁷⁹Secret Consultation 17 July 1806, No. 89, Official note of the Persian secretary to government to the wakil of the raja of Nepal, dated 6 January 1806.

⁸⁰Cf. above. pp. 245 ff.

⁸¹Secret Consultation 17 July 1806, No. 89. Official note of the Persian secretary to government to the wakil of the raja of Nepal, dated 6 January 1806.

⁸²Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Nepal-Angrej Yuddha Suru Hunu Bhandar 1 Barsha Agari Amar Sing Thapa Ka Chora Aktarlani Ka Chora Le Miteri Laethe', *Purnima* No. 9, p. 48.

⁸³Cf. Campells' report on Anglo-Nepal relations during the Knox period, Political Consultation 18 September 1837, No. 69.

⁸⁴CChaudhuri, *Anglo-Nepalese Relations*, pp. 40-56.

If this was indeed the Nepalis' belief, they were mistaken. The governor general's letter had clearly indicated a change in British policy as regards Nepal, occasioned both by Nepal's great expansion as well as by a certain chagrin over the total failure of the Knox mission. The British had allowed a golden opportunity to slip through their grasp, and it was now time to try to recoup their losses. The British correspondence from the time of Rana Bahadur's departure from Banaras onwards indicates a general hardening of their policy towards Nepal—a hardening of policy that would be brought to its ultimate conclusion in these very Tarai lands in the years just ahead.

Conclusions

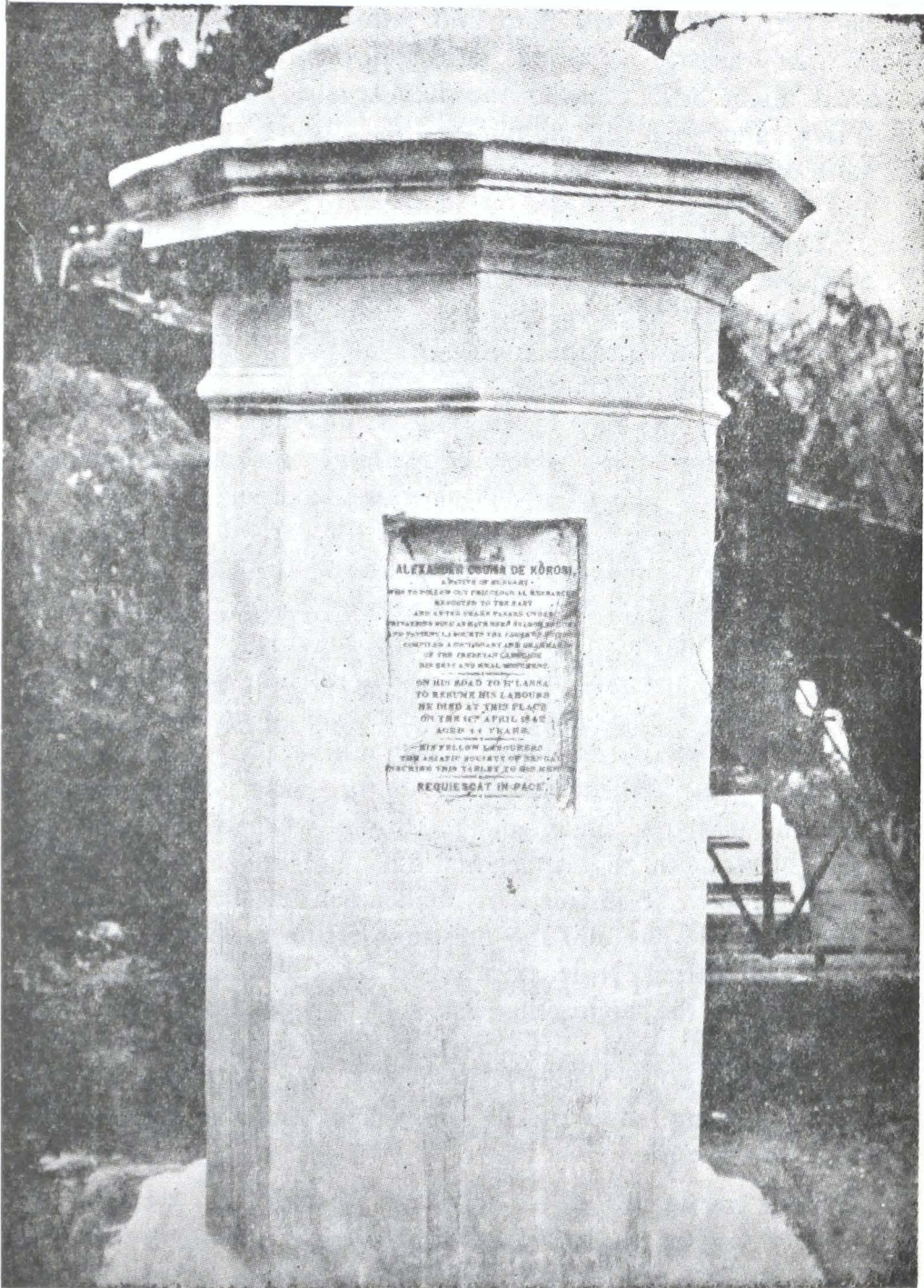
Before leaving this chapter it is necessary to assess the damage that had been done to Nepal's unity by Rana Bahadur's abdication and flight to Banaras. It is not an easy assessment to make. The danger of British intervention in Nepal was later successfully countered, and there was no lasting damage done to Nepal from external sources, except insofar as there was a hardening of the British attitude towards Nepal's occupation of the Tarai lands. It is possible, of course, that this would have taken place in any event, but this episode certainly hastened it. The major damage was internal, and it was twofold.

First, a strong impetus was given to the spirit of factionalism within Nepal that had begun during the regency of Rajendra Laxmi. Family was set against family, and many of the bonds that had held together the old military families in a common cause were ripped asunder. Cooperation would still exist on the military front, but never again would Nepal know total cooperation from these families on the political scene.

Secondly, and equally dangerous to Nepal's unity, was the fact that this period of political struggle at the capital prevented the proper consolidation of the areas in the far west that were especially vulnerable to side intervention. Had these years been spent in concentrated and studied development of the administration in those areas, it is quite possible that Gardner's irregulars might not have had the success they enjoyed

in Kumaon in 1815 and the British might not have found the petty rajas of the Bara and Athara Thakurai so helpful in that theatre. A good Gorkhali administration in those areas might have reduced the influence of these rajas considerably, and such an administration would have followed naturally from a well-developed administration in Kumaon and Garhwal.

Throughout these pages any estimate of Rana Bahadur's character and personal habits has been scrupulously avoided as being apart from the purpose of this study. But the impact of his reign on the unification of the country cannot be overlooked nor minimized. It is quite clear that his irresponsibility in the face of the duties his high office of king placed on him, and which he willingly assumed in setting aside his uncle, led to a very serious weakening of Nepal at a time when Nepal had every need for careful consolidation and good government after the pattern urged on the nation and his successors by Prithvinarayan Shah. Undoubtedly Rana Bahadur was not alone in the making of his decisions. Certainly he had advisors who urged on him various courses of action, and these men too must bear their share of the blame for what transpired. But ultimately it was Rana Bahadur who failed Nepal at a time when Nepal needed him; he placed a child on the throne, when Nepal needed a man of strength and determination. Individual acts of Rana Bahadur may be justified or condemned in the light of the morals of the day and the pressures acting on him. Were he a private citizen, little more could be said about him. But in view of the high office he held, no historian can take such a lenient view. He must go down in history as a king who irresponsibly deserted his office for personal reasons and in doing so seriously weakened the country he was called on to serve.



ALEXANDER JOHNS DE KOROVI,
A NATIVE OF SCOTLAND,
WHO TRAVELLED ON THE PACIFIC OCEAN AND REMAINED
RESIDENT IN THE EAST
AND AFTER BEING PLACED UNDER
RESTRAINT HERE AS HE HAD BEEN BEFORE IN THE
AND FURNISHING THE FINEST SPECIMENS
CONSIDERED A CONTINUANT AND GREAT
OF THE FINEST CLASS
IN THE EAST AND NEARLY
ON HIS ROAD TO SYDNEY
TO RESUME HIS LABOURS
HE DIED AT THIS PLACE
ON THE 17TH APRIL 1847
AGED 44 YEARS.
— HIS FELLOW PASSENGERS
THE GREAT SOCIETY OF THE
NATIVE AND THE
REQUIESCAT IN PACE.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

PRELUDE TO WAR

It may be sufficient to remark, that one of the objects of disputes which have given rise to the war owes its remote origin to the consequences of Captain Kinloch's expedition; and that the ulterior objects of Kirkpatrick's and Knox's missions, were defeated by the enmity and jealousy of a party, which subsequently acquired the exclusive power of the State, and has by its violence, injustice and rapacity, produced the existing contest, and whose blind obstinacy, there is reason to believe, presents the only obstacle to pacification.

—*Lord Hastings to the Court*¹

The atmosphere in the council chamber of Fort William was sombre indeed when Rana Bahadur Shah left the Company's territories in 1804. The governor general and his council had spent three years trying to profit from Rana Bahadur's voluntary exile, only to see their hopes go glimmering when Rana Bahadur retrieved his position in Kathmandu with a minimum of disturbance. The admission that their plans had gone away must have been doubly galling for them, since it put the final seal of failure on forty years of Anglo-Nepal relations.

Since the time of Kinloch's attempted invasion, the Nepal government had followed, with but momentary hesitancy, the instructions of Prithvinarayan Shah to maintain friendship with the English but to keep them out of the hills. For the same period of over forty years the British had been trying by every means in their power to undo the folly of the Kinloch invasion. They had followed a policy of conciliation; they had sent envoys and residents; they had structured treaties and agreements, but Nepal remained firmly shut. Not only were the markets of Nepal closed to the direct exploitation of the

¹Secret Letter to the Court of Directors, published in Bikrama Jit Hasrat, *History of Nepal* (Krishan Nagar, 1970), p. 249.

British traders, but the lucrative markets of Tibet as well. The fact that in this same period Gorkhali arms had swept through the hills in a sustained series of campaigns added to the Company's frustration, since the Gorkhals had gained absolute control over every practical approach to Tibet. The old policy was bankrupt. It was obviously time for a new approach to the question of Nepal.

The first indication of the new British attitude was their reaction to the Gorkhali occupation of the Butwal Tarai in 1805. It had been established as a working principle between Nepal and the Company at the time of Prithvinarayan Shah that as long as the Gorkhals were willing to continue the zamindari payments on the lands they took from the hill rajas, they might continue to farm them.² Such payments had been made on portions of the Makwanpur Tarai as late as 1801.³ Barlow's letter to the Nepal court reversed this policy. Notice was served in his letter that Nepal's occupation of any zamindari vesting in the Company's government was unacceptable to the Company.⁴

This was followed in 1810 by the enunciation of the principle of limitation, namely that all lands in the Tarai were the right of the Company, while Nepal must confine its possessions to the hills.⁵ From that time onwards, the court of Kathmandu received a steady stream of complaints of encroachments and usurpations. The inevitable friction along the border between the two countries finally focussed on the two areas of the Butwal Tarai and Rautahat.

This border problem, which eventually led to war between Nepal and the East India Company, is simply stated. Nepal had occupied for many years an area in the Butwal Tarai, which the Company claimed had belonged to the nawab vizier of

²Cf. above, p. 330.

³Secret Consultation 30 June 1802, No. 1, governor general's report to the council, dated 20 June 1802; also the Anglo-Nepal treaty of October 1801.

⁴Secret Consultation 17 July 1806, No. 89. Official note from the Persian secretary to government to Sri Kishan Pandit, wakil from the raja of Nepal, dated 6 January 1806,

⁵Political Consultation 15 May 1813, No. 39. Letter of the governor general to the raja of Nepal, dated 7 May 1813.

Oudh, and which had been ceded to the Company by him.⁶ In Rautahat the British claimed twenty-two villages on the basis of thirty years uninterrupted possession, but which in fact Nepal had seized on the basis of a prior claim.⁷ It was mutually agreed by the two governments that a border commission should be appointed to investigate the question on the border itself.⁸ Major Paris Bradshaw was deputed by the governor general to represent the British claims.⁹ Kishan Pandit headed the group of Nepali commissioners.¹⁰

The records of the East India Company give a complete picture of the development of this investigation. The reports of Paris Bradshaw, letters of the governor general, letters from the maharaja of Nepal, and communications from Ranganath Pandit, all fill in details. In theory all this documentation should make it very easy to determine the party at fault in this dispute. Actually, it is extremely difficult to assign the guilt to either party. Both governments were absolutely convinced that their claim was just. The border commission itself failed to come to any agreement. In the end Hastings took the decision into his own hands, and his resolution to occupy the lands by force led to counter military activity on the part of the Nepalis and to war.¹¹

A great deal of study has been given to this border dispute and the conduct of it both by the Company and Nepal. The documents reveal two things very clearly: there was a dispute because there was a real border problem that was much more serious than a case of usurpation;¹² and this problem was not at

⁶ Consultation 15 January 1813, No. 46. Letter of appointment to Paris Bradshaw, dated 15 January 1813.

⁷ *Ibid.*, No. 62. Letter from the raja of Nepal to the governor general, received 10 October 1812.

⁸ *Ibid.*, No. 46; also Consultation 9 April 1813, No. 27. Letter of J. Adam, secretary to government, to Paris Bradshaw; and Consultation 15 January 1813, No. 45. Letter of the raja of Nepal, received 28 September 1812.

⁹ Consultation 15 January 1813, No. 46.

¹⁰ Consultation 7 May 1813, No. 70. Letter of the raja of Nepal to the governor general naming the Nepali commissioners, received 19 April 1813.

¹¹ Cf. below, Chapter Twelve.

¹² The fact that the Nepalis were able to present documents on which their claim was based makes it more than a case of usurpation. The decision of Hastings in Butwal was based on a prior claim, not on the Nepali lack of a claim. In the case of the twenty-two villages, the British claim was undocumented and based on thirty years of uninterrupted possession, while the Nepalis had a documented claim to the land.

all simplified by the personalities on whom its solution rested. Before moving on to a consideration of the border problem itself and at the risk of digression, it will prove useful to look briefly at these personalities.

On one side there was the Marquess of Hastings, newly arrived in India and eager to make his mark; impatient of delay and peremptory in his demands. As his agent on the border was Paris Bradshaw, a pompous, militarily correct figure, whose reports were crammed with endless trivia, military advice, and self-justification, and whose interpretation of British colonial justice divided the world into those who were wrong and those who were British. The reading of his dispatches evokes a certain sympathy for the Nepali commissioners who were compelled by circumstances and the will of the governor general to deal with this man.

On the Nepali side there was the calculating Bhim Sen Thapa, put on the defensive by this new British attitude on the border, and caught up in the web of meaningless border marauding that threatened to sweep his forces into war before they were ready.¹³ As his chief agent on the border there was Kishan Pandit, a past master of the art of diplomatic procrastination, but wholly innocent of any ability to deal with a man like Bradshaw.

The interplay of these personalities was further complicated by a maddening delay in correspondence, which found an abrupt and insistent letter of the governor general followed immediately by a casual enquiry from Nepal over some totally unrelated and trivial occurrence in the far west.¹⁴ Whether the delay and the resulting confusion was the result of a tardy delivery of letters, slowness of the court of Kathmandu to respond, or the deliberate policy of the court is, of course, impossible to determine.

¹³ Political Consultation 18 September 1837, No. 69. Hodgson claimed, in his covering letter for Campbell's summary of Anglo-Nepal relations during the Knox period that the so-called usurpations were 'protected' dacoities. However, he neither offers evidence that they were protected nor does he specify what he understands by the word 'protected'.

¹⁴ The governor general wrote to the raja of Nepal on 25 June 1813 announcing his decision that the whole of the disputed lands in the Butwal Tarai were to be taken by the Company. In his next communication, the raja of Nepal discussed the four disputed villages in the far west. Cf. Consultations 18 June 1813, No. 24, and 2 October 1813, No. 39.

As for the border problem itself, despite the assurance expressed first by Minto, then by Hastings and Bradshaw over the clarity and indisputability of the British claims, it is quite clear that a real problem existed. Bradshaw was forced to realize this when he descended to particulars at the village level. This fact is that no survey had ever been made. Distances were measured largely by guesswork. When a small part of the Butwal Tarai was actually surveyed, Bradshaw was forced to admit in a letter to the commander-in-chief that his own earlier estimate of a distance of less than forty miles had been in error by almost fifteen percent.¹⁵ Because of this, the two governments simply did not know where the boundary should be except by local oral testimony and the record of village canungoes. And local oral testimony, Bradshaw found, was both confusing and unreliable.¹⁶ In addition, the records of village canungoes and zamindars were themselves far from transparently honest. Buchanan (Hamilton) had earlier pointed out in this regard that :

Landlords on both sides make frequent innovations, which are often winked at for some years by those on the opposite side; for every Zimidar who loses an acre makes his loss a pretence for withholding the revenue of twenty.¹⁷

There can be no doubt that the border problem was very real, and yet it is important to retain some sense of proportion. The Butwal Tarai, by Bradshaw's own report, was only wasteland,¹⁸ and the total revenue claimed from the twenty-two villages was less than fifteen thousand rupees a year.¹⁹ The land in question was of small value, and there is ample evidence that the two governments knew this. The fact is that, though the Anglo-Nepal war grew out of this border problem and the resulting dispute, the dispute itself was the occasion, not the cause, of the war. The problem could have

¹⁵ Consultation 15 May 1813, No. 41. Letter of Paris Bradshaw to the commander-in-chief, dated 26 April 1813.

¹⁶ Consultation 4 March 1814, No. 58. Letter of Paris Bradshaw to J. Adam, secretary to government, dated 20 January 1814.

¹⁷ Quoted in *Regmi Research Series*, i, No. 2 (December 1969), 37.

¹⁸ Consultation 9 April 1813, No. 26. Letter of Paris Bradshaw to J. Adam, secretary to government, dated 21 March 1814.

¹⁹ Consultation 15 January 1813, No. 63. Letter of Bir Kishore Singh to Lord Minto, undated.

been solved, and the war could have been avoided, had not the dispute been merely symptomatic of a far larger problem.

Collision Course

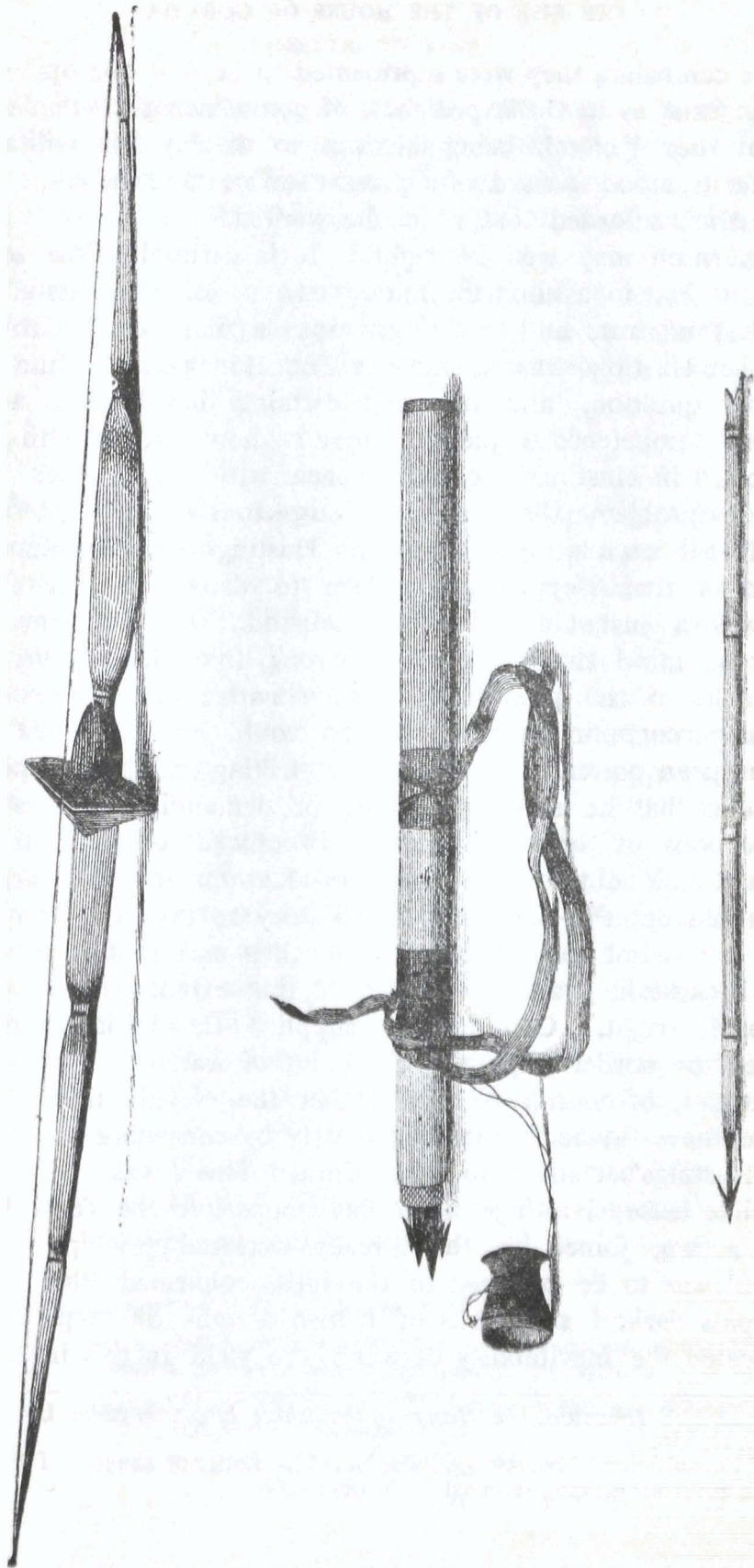
The House of Gorkha and the East India Company had been on a collision course from the time that the Gorkhali advance to the west had placed them squarely athwart the trade routes through the Himalayas. Given the economics of the situation, the position of Nepal, and the British sense of their right to trade, there was no way of avoiding the war short of a complete and sudden reversal of character on the part of the Nepalis or the British. The fact that the Gorkhals had built up a powerful military machine in the hills, of course, added to the problem, but fundamentally it was a case of the thrust of British trade being pulled up short by a strong, independent hill people, who refused to be pushed or badgered or persuaded to adopt a line of action that was distasteful to themselves.

To say that the two governments were on a collision course, however, does not imply that the collision had to take place at this time. It is true that the Nepalis were adamant regarding their policies on trade in the hills. But this had been true for decades and no war had been thought necessary. It is also true that there was a border problem, but there had been border problems before, and they had been solved, either by compromise or because one or other of the two governments had yielded the disputed point. Undoubtedly this problem could have been solved in the same way without significant loss to either government. In fact, Hastings, after winning the war, was quite willing to turn the disputed lands over to the Nepal government because their value did not justify the expense of maintaining British authority there.²⁰ Then why, it may be asked, did this dispute expand to the point of war?

Thornton, who is not usually considered hasty in his conclusions, has laid the blame for starting the war at Hastings' door:

If the disputed lands were so worthless as, at the end of

²⁰ J. L. Cox, *Papers Respecting the Nepal War* (London, 1824), p. 853. Letter of J. Adam to Paris Bradshaw, dated 9 December 1815.



NEPAUL BOW, ARROW AND QUIVER

the campaign, they were represented to be, but one opinion can exist as to the expediency of commencing it—that the governor general, being anxious to display his military talents, stood in need of a pretext for war and the disputed districts afforded that which he wanted.²¹

Thornton may well be right. It is certainly clear that someone had to assume the initiative in pressing the issue to the test of war, and Hastings was a man of initiative. Whether Hastings was as vain as Thornton presents him is another question, and one that certainly lies beyond this writer's competence to judge. There is, however, an attitude expressed in Hastings' correspondence with Nepal over the border problem that smacks suspiciously of contempt for Nepal as a sovereign power. Hastings seems genuinely surprised that Nepal should dare to deny him what he felt was a just and reasonable demand. It never seems to enter his mind that he could be wrong, that there might be two sides to the question, or that a native power deserved the same common courtesy that he would have extended to a European power. What is most striking in his correspondence is that he is always asking or demanding favours or concessions of Nepal—a tendency in official communications from Calcutta that the court of Kathmandu had earlier remarked upon²²—but never conciliatory or even compromising. It is not hard to believe of such a man that there was war because he wanted war, and to that extent Thornton is probably right. Certainly he supplied the initiative that forced the border dispute to the point of war.

It can, of course, be argued that the Nepalis themselves could have avoided the war merely by conceding the right of Hastings' claims to the Tarai. This was certainly possible before Hastings moved his troops into the Tarai. But his action, joined to the already declared principle that Nepal was to be confined to the hills, confirmed Bhim Sen Thapa's darkest suspicions of British designs on Nepal and indicated the inevitability of war. To yield in this instance

²¹ Edward Thornton, *The History of the British Empire in India* (London, 1843), iv, 336.

²² Consultation 7 November 1808, No. 58. Letter of the raja of Nepal to the governor general, received 25 October 1808.

would have been merely to postpone the war. In view of this, Bhim Sen Thapa elected to accept the challenge of war on the basis of three fundamental considerations :

1. The increasing British knowledge of the secrets of the hills;
2. The state of preparation of his army;
3. The possibility of powerful Indian princes siding with Nepal to defeat the British and perhaps even to drive them out of India.

Probing for Knowledge

The Nepalis had always felt that the Himalayan foothills were their strongest line of defence.²³ It was a fixed Gorkhali policy to close off the less easily defended trails into the hills and to establish families of unquestioned loyalty on those that were open.²⁴ In line with this policy, the movement of outsiders through the hills was severely restricted.²⁵ The object of all of this was to prevent outsiders, and particularly the Company, from learning the secret trails and passes into the hills.²⁶

Kirkpatrick's report after his visit to Nepal in 1792 was the first British effort to come to grips with the secrets of the hills. Whether it was intended for this purpose or not, his report contained valuable descriptions of Nepal's fortifications, and the routes he described formed the basis for British enquiries in 1813 and 1814.²⁷

Hamilton's observations in 1801 were far more detailed than those of Kirkpatrick, and far more valuable from a military point of view. His information was supplemented by that of Captain Crawford, who also accompanied Knox on his mission to Nepal. Crawford was the commander of Knox's military escort, but he was selected for this post pri-

²³ Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Upadesh*, p. 12.

²⁴ Jagir grant to Jagannath Khatri et al in Makwanpur, dated 1861 B.S., Baishakh, sudi 4, quoted in M.C. Regmi, *Land Tenure*, iii, 8.

²⁵ Consultation 12 March 1813, No. 52. Letter of the raja of Nepal to the governor general, received 27 December 1812.

²⁶ Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Upadesh*, p. 12.

²⁷ Consultation 16 August 1814, No. 5. Letter of J. Adam, secretary to government, to Lt. Col. Crawford, dated 21 July 1814.

marily because he was a trained surveyor.²⁸ Knox himself had been instructed by the governor general to obtain detailed information of Nepal's internal and external defences.²⁹

In 1811 Moorecroft was apprehended in Kumaon after he had journeyed through Kumaon to Tibet. In his letter to the court of Kathmandu requesting Moorecroft's release, the governor general was careful to avoid mentioning that Moorecroft's companion was Captain Hearsey, who later commanded a detachment of the British force that invaded Kumaon, and who certainly was not in Kumaon with Moorecroft because he was 'interested in Tibetan ponies.'³⁰

In 1812 Major Bradshaw was ordered to obtain detailed information about the passes and routes into Nepal.³¹ He used his time during the meetings of the border commission to send spies into the hills, including the critical area of Makwanpur, and his reports are filled with military intelligence.³²

In 1814 Dr. Rutherford, who carried on trade in timber and jute in the Kumaon Tarai, was assigned the task of gathering information about approaches into Kumaon, which his long association with the area made especially easy.³³ In short, the British were using every means available to increase their knowledge of the Nepal hills.

Though the Gorkhalis could not have known the full extent of this British probing for information, they certainly were not insensitive to it. If the secrecy of the hills was at all a factor in Nepal's defence plans, as it surely was, then postponing the war would only fritter away whatever advantage the Gorkhalis had in this respect.

²⁸ Consultation 30 June 1802, No. 11. Letter of N.B. Edmonstone, secretary to government, to W.D. Knox, dated 31 October 1801.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Letter of the governor general to the raja of Nepal, written 7 November 1812: 'Mr. Moorecroft...last year formed the determination of proceeding beyond the Himmaleh Mountains to the confines of Chinese Tartary for the purpose of ascertaining the resources of that country in horses fit for the use of the British government...'

³¹ Consultation 15 January 1813, No. 46.

³² Consultation 9 August 1814, Nov. 10 and 11, Letter of Major Bradshaw to J. Adam, secretary to government, with enclosed spy reports.

³³ Consultation 16 August 1814, No. 10. Letter of J. Adam to Thomas Rutherford, dated 30 July 1814.

The preparation of the Nepal Army

The army of Nepal had been trained in battle and forged through dozens of campaigns into a well-knit fighting force. With the failure of the Gorkhali campaign against Kangra in 1809,³⁴ the court of Kathmandu found it was no longer capable of expansion. Nepal was hedged in by Ranjit Singh on the west and by the British on the south. Expansion to the north or east was not practical because of the connection Tibet and Bhutan enjoyed with the Chinese emperor. The result of this impasse was that the army had run out of battles to fight, and its fighting edge would therefore steadily deteriorate. Also, the fact that no new lands were being acquired meant that the size of the army could not be increased, since its size was restricted by the amount of land that could be assigned to the military. The existing army might be better trained and better equipped.³⁵ Postponement of the war might allow time for this, but even this possibility was limited by the financial resources of the country. In short, postponing the war would give the Nepal army little advantage in terms of training and equipment, while at the same time the troops would lose a great deal of their fighting edge.

The war would prove that the greatest weakness of the army was its lack of artillery. Muskets they had in plenty, manufactured in Nepal and very serviceable.³⁶ And with this weapon the Gorkhali marksman was a crack shot.³⁷ But cannons were needed, and those that were cast in Nepal were of very inferior quality.³⁸ The calibre of these cannons was also limited both by the casting technique used as well as

³⁴ Cf. above, pp. 242-3.

³⁵ The training and equipping of the Gorkhali army was one of Bhim Sen Thapa's main efforts at this time. Cf. Chittaranjan Nepali, *Bhim Sen Thapa ra Tatkalin Nepal* (Kathmandu, 2012 B.S.), pp. 69 ff.

³⁶ Consultation 12 February 1833, No. 165. Hodgson's memorandum on the Gorkhali army. This dates from a slightly later period than that under discussion, but it is applicable in full to this period.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 'It is its abundance of good muskets and good powder, together with the perfect use of this arm for which its soldiery of the line is remarkable, which form the point of strength and reliance of the government of Nepal.'

³⁸ *Ibid.*

the problem of transporting them through the hills.³⁹ The result was that the Nepal army had cannons of small calibre suitable for short-range, anti-personnel work, but they wanted desperately the longer-ranged heavy cannon that could be turned on British positions during the siege of Malaon, Jythak, and Almora. The manufacture of such cannon, however, would in no way be aided by a postponement of the war. What was needed was a better grade of steel and the skill in casting them,⁴⁰ and this they were neither able to get at the time nor likely to get in the near future.

Allies Among the Indian Powers

One of the key factors in Bhim Sen Thapa's thinking was the recognition of the real weakness of the British position in India. The number of European troops actually employed in the Company's Bengal army was very limited.⁴¹ It was apparent everywhere that the Indian Powers could drive the British out of the sub-continent, if they could combine against them. But no one had yet succeeded in forming the type of confederacy that would be required for such a war.

Bhim Sen Thapa was faced with a severe dilemma. Prithvinarayan Shah's injunction had been to flight in the hills and to stay out of the plains.⁴² But that had been issued in 1774. Since that time the British power had become far more formidable and more insistent in its demands. It was doubtful if the Nepal army would be able to withstand a concerted attack by the numbers of troops that the British could put into the field. The resources of Nepal were limited, their communications stretched over seven hundred miles of mountains, and their firepower could not match that of the British. The British, on the other hand, had easy communications across the plains, practically unlimited resources, and

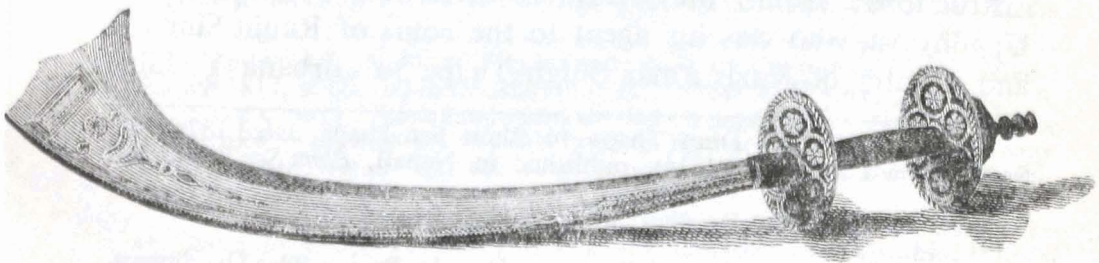
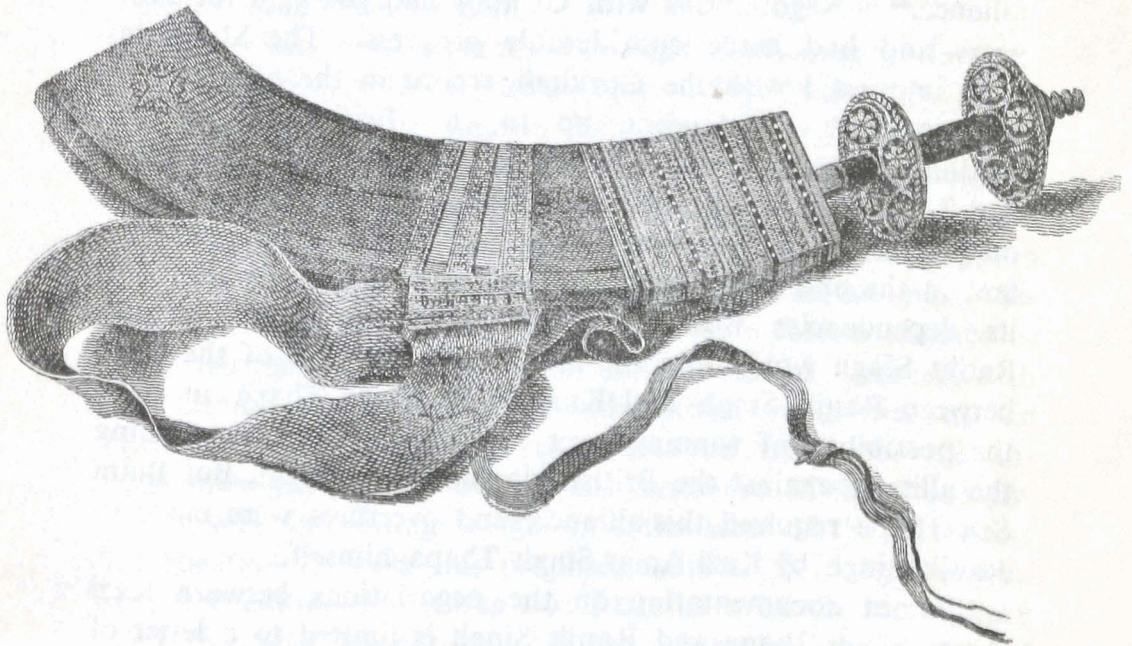
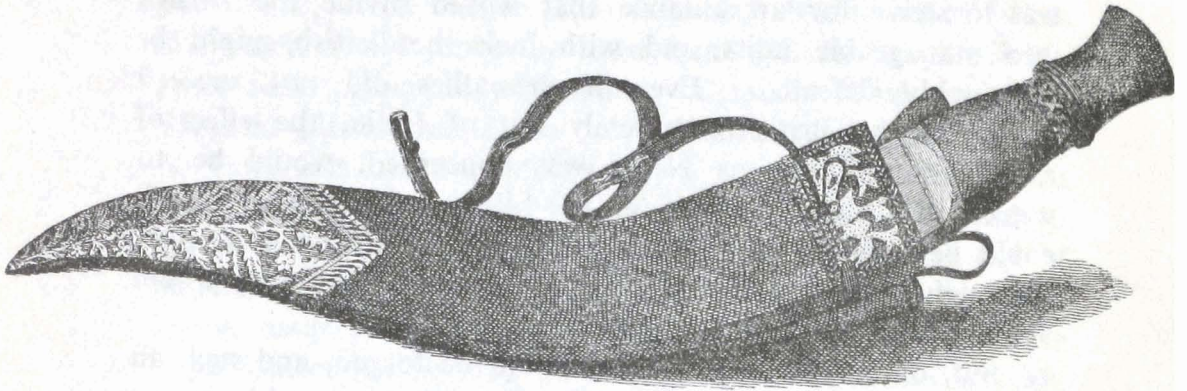
³⁹ Although cannons were transported in the hills, even for surprising distances, the lack of easy mobility severely limited their use as well as their size.

⁴⁰ Hodgson's memorandum on the Gorkhali army.

⁴¹ Hunter, *Military Sketches of the Goorkha War in India in the Years 1814, 1815, 1816* (London, 1822), p. xi: 'It was calculated that the number of officers employed with their corps during the Nepal war did not exceed the proportion of one to a hundred sepoys.'

⁴² Prithvinarayan Shah, *Dibya Upadesh*, p. 11.

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enormous firepower. Further, a confrontation with the British could not be avoided indefinitely. The solution, obviously, was to strive for an alliance that would divide the British into manageable units, and with luck the British might be thoroughly defeated. Even if the allies did not succeed in driving the British completely out of India, the effect of an alliance, as far as Nepal was concerned, would be to weaken the British attack on the hills to the point where it could be smashed by the Gorkhals. If the British were once thoroughly defeated in the hills, it was doubtful if they would again readily risk an invasion of Nepal.

But, of course, the alliance had to be forged, and such an undertaking was not easy. Bhim Sen Thapa sent his agents to Gwalior to try to win over this power to the idea of alliance.⁴³ Negotiations with Gwalior had gone on for some years and had made considerable progress. The Mahrattas were impressed with the Gorkhali record in the hills and by their courage in standing up to the British.⁴⁴ But the Sindhia alone did not feel competent for the task that Bhim Sen Thapa was asking of him. Prudence urged him to insist on greater guarantees than Bhim Sen Thapa could give him, and in the end it was more or less agreed that Gwalior and its dependencies would join Nepal on the condition that Ranjit Singh would join the alliance.⁴⁵ In view of the clash between Ranjit Singh and Kazi Amar Singh Thapa in 1809, the possibility of winning over Ranjit Singh and concluding the alliance against the British was not very bright. But Bhim Sen Thapa required this alliance, and overtures were made to Ranjit Singh by Kazi Amar Singh Thapa himself.

Extant documentation on the negotiations between Kazi Amar Singh Thapa and Ranjit Singh is limited to a letter of instructions from the Kazi to Kharidar Prithvi Bilas Upadhyaya, who was his agent to the court of Ranjit Singh,⁴⁶ and a letter of Kazi Amar Singh Thapa to Girbana Yuddha

⁴³ Letter of Ram Dhoj Thapa to Bhim Sen Thapa, dated 1871 B.S., Swaran, badi 1, roj 2 (1814), published in Nepali, *Bhim Sen Thapa*, pp. 285-91.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Letter of Kazi Amar Singh Thapa to Kharidar Prithvi Bilas Upadhyaya, dated 1871 B.S., Magh, badi 13, roj 2 (1815). Ibid., pp. 125-31.

Bikram Shah in Kathmandu mentioning the results of his negotiations.⁴⁷ In the former letter a long series of proposals was made, from which the kharidar could select those he thought would prove the most attractive to Ranjit Singh. Three basic proposals were made: a possible division of the Gangetic plain from Delhi to Calcutta between the Sikhs, the Gorkhalis and the Mahrattas; a suggested outline of the attack that could be made on the British; and an appeal to Ranjit in the name of Hinduism to drive the British out of India. In his letter to Girbana Yuddha, Kazi Amar Singh Thapa assures his sovereign that Ranjit Singh will join the Nepalis after the British are defeated at Malaon and Jythak. And, of course, it was a foregone conclusion that if Ranjit Singh were to join with the Gorkhalis, the Mahrattas were already committed to join.⁴⁸

Historians have generally not taken too seriously this proposed alliance of the Gorkhalis, Sikhs, and Mahrattas. Documentation is meagre, and, in fact, there is very little concrete evidence that either the Sikhs or the Mahrattas themselves took it seriously. The Marquess of Hastings, however, took a more realistic view of it and undertook elaborate steps to prevent any such alliance from interfering in his plans for Nepal. As he saw it, whether there was a formal alliance or not, the mere fact that his armies would be engaged with the Gorkalis would give the Mahrattas, in particular, an excellent opportunity to break loose on raids into the independent petty states or into the territories of the Company.

A very interesting insight into the view of the Marquess of Hastings towards this proposed alliance is to be found in the first edition of Prinsep's well-known book on the military and political transactions of the Marquess of Hastings.⁴⁹ Prinsep sketches the following picture of the concrete steps

⁴⁷ Letter of Kazi Amar Singh Thapa et al to the raja of Nepal, dated 2 March 1815, published in translation in H.T. *Prinsep, History*, i, Appendix B.

⁴⁸ The Court of Kathmandu also carried on negotiations with the Chinese authorities in Tibet to try to raise funds to finance the war, but this attempt proved unsuccessful. Cf. the correspondence in Nepali, *Bhim Sen Thapa*, pp. 300-4, and 309-14.

⁴⁹ Henry T. Prinsep, *A Narrative of the Political and Military Transactions in India under the Administration of the Marquess of Hastings 1813-20* (London, 1820), pp. 35-45. This first edition will be referred to as *Narrative* in future references.

taken by Hastings to avoid the dangers inherent in such an alliance:

1. British protection was offered to the tiny state of Bhopal, where the Sindhia could first be expected to begin military activity. This step had as its sole purpose the delaying of Mahratta activity in the area for a time, and was based on the governor general's confident expectation that the Nepal war would be brief.⁵⁰

2. In view of this, the whole disposable force of the Madras army was brought to the northern border of that presidency in order to be available for immediate action, should the Mahrattas make any effort to join the Gorkhalis or to take advantage of the Nepal war to attack Bengal.⁵¹

3. On the other hand, to insure the brevity of the Nepal war, the Bengal army was heavily committed to that front. According to the official returns, there were a total of 46,629 British troops in the field at one time against Nepal. This represented over half of the total force available to the Bengal army, and left a thin covering of troops to handle all normal military activity or eventualities in the half-million square miles of the presidency as well as to man the quarter-master services for the Nepal war.⁵²

4. Hastings set out to raise an additional three regiments for the regular army and six provincial corps to fill the gaps created by this heavy assignment of men to the Nepal war.⁵³

5. Two additional king's regiments were summoned from the Cape and Mauritius to assist in handling the situation in India.⁵⁴

Hastings apparently felt that if he could force the Mahrattas to pause in any decision to make use of the Anglo-Nepal war for their own purposes or to join the Gorkhalis formally in an alliance against the British, he would have time to complete the campaign in the programme of action. Of the success of his efforts, Prinsep concludes:

Although the greater part of the force of the Bengal presidency was known to be occupied in the hill country,

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 50-1.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

and daily accounts of reverses in that quarter must have been eagerly circulated, the Mahrattas were nevertheless deterred by the formidable aspect of the British preparations from resenting in any way this undisguised and direct counter action to their views.⁵⁵

It was because Hastings took the possibility of a Gorkhali-Mahratta alliance seriously that he took the drastic measures he did to prevent a formal joining of the Mahrattas in the contest and was able to prevent such a challenge to British authority in India. To this extent his foresight was rewarded with success. But none of his precautions envisioned the Sikhs joining in the war. If Ranjit Singh, then, had agreed to join in the alliance during the first phase of the Anglo-Nepal war, there is every chance that the alliance would have succeeded in its objectives. The Madras army, which had been detailed to keep the Mahrattas in check, numbered only thirteen thousand men.⁵⁶ If the Sikhs and the Mahrattas together had determined to move at a time when over half of the Bengal army was closely engaged by the Gorkhalis, even the addition of this force would have been sufficient to contain these two great powers. The first of the British commanders to be affected by the Sikh involvement would have been Ochterlony. His offensive against Kazi Amar Singh Thapa would have been seriously interrupted, and, since Ochterlony was the only British general who really understood the nature of mountain warfare, the whole outcome of the Anglo-Nepal war would have been affected.

Though the Mahrattas may have been inhibited by Hastings' activity, the real failure of the alliance must be traced to Ranjit Singh's reluctance to join any alliance with the Gorkhalis. And this reluctance, of course, must be directly attributed to the clash between Ranjit Singh and Kazi Amar Singh Thapa at Kangra.

At the time when Bhim Sen Thapa had to make his choice either to accept immediate war with the British or to postpone it by yielding to their demands, the fate of the alliance was still undecided. It was clear to him that the future of the

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 58.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 49.

alliance, on which the final outcome of any war with the British must depend, was directly connected with his early successes against the British. The problem to which he had to address himself, then, was the effect of a delay or postponement on those chances. Any postponement of the war would give the British time to penetrate even further the secrets of the hills on which much of the Nepali defence rested. Delay would also dull the fighting edge of the Gorkhali troops without any compensation in terms of better equipment or increased firepower. To accept the immediate challenge of war, then, seemed the more logical course, gambling on the completion of an alliance that would ensure ultimate victory. The gamble failed, of course, but that failure does not destroy the logic which determined Bhim Sen Thapa to make it.

Summary

The expansion of the Gorkhalis to the west placed all the practical passes through the Himalayas to Tibet under their control. The Gorkhali policy of excluding foreign traders and controlling all trade between Tibet and the plains prevented the British merchants of the East India Company from the commercial exploitation of the hill markets. From the time of the Kinloch invasion of Nepal in 1767, British policy towards Nepal had aimed at re-opening that area to British trade. In pursuit of this objective they had followed a policy of conciliation towards Nepal. The failure of the treaty of 1792 and the treaty of 1801 to achieve the British objective, as well as the resolution of the factional strife in Kathmandu to the exclusion of British interests in Nepal, indicated the bankruptcy of that policy. The immediate result was a hardening of the British attitude towards the Nepalis in the Tarai. This led to a sharp border dispute between the two governments. Hastings' determination to force the Nepalis to accept his demands induced him to occupy the disputed territory by force. The Nepalis, faced with the necessity to yield or to accept war, opted for war, since to yield would at best only delay the war and since every indication showed that delay could only harm their cause. A key factor in the Nepali thinking was the possibility of an alliance of the

Gorkhalis, Sikhs and Mahrattas against the British. This failed on the one hand because of the reluctance of the Sikhs and the Mahrattas to commit themselves until the Gorkhalis had defeated Ochterlony at Malaon and Marley at Jythak, and on the other hand because of the extravagant precautionary measures adopted by Hastings to contain the Mahrattas.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE GAMBLE FAILS

This is inscribed as a tribute of respect to our gallant adversary, Bulbudder, commander of the fort and his brave Gurkhas . . .

British Memorial at Nala Pani

In 1744 Prithvinarayan Shah took the first steps in the Gorkhali campaign that led to the conquest of Kathmandu Valley. During his reign he saw that campaign blossom to include the whole of eastern Nepal and the eastern Tarai. The Gorkhali military activity, begun on such a small scale at Nuwako in 1744, carried in successive waves to the Teesta in the east and westward to the Kali, to the Sharda, and finally to the Sutlej. Considered as a military achievement, this Gorkhali success was a formidable display of the powers of the Gorkhali war machine. In its own way it was every bit as spectacular as the achievements of Nepal's southern neighbour, the British East India Company.

Greater than the challenge of military conquest, however, was the challenge of administrative unification. It was on this crucial point that the permanence of the Gorkhali military achievements hinged. Only a thorough and far-reaching administrative unification would enable this sprawling hill state to withstand the external dangers that its very geographical position presented.

This administrative unification was never achieved in the areas westward of the Sharda. The very pace of the army's conquests denied the central government the leisure required for the adaptation to local conditions, which was the essential feature of the Gorkhali administrative system. Thus, Hastings' war caught the Gorkhalis militarily prepared but administratively weak in the west.

The situation in Kumaon was especially critical, both because the Gorkhali troops had been siphoned off to garrison the provinces farther west and because the province

itself was still politically unstable. The neglect of Kumaon was the Gorkhalis' most serious mistake. In this case there had been ample time for a thorough administrative unification, but it had been squandered in the confused years of Rana Bahadur Shah's reign. Ultimately, this neglect of Kumaon was to cost the Gorkhalis the war.

Hastings' Bluff

In the previous chapter an effort was made to define the forces that were driving Nepal and the East India Company inexorably towards war. An effort was also made to describe the motives that prompted Hastings and Bhim Sen Thapa to react as they did to the border dispute. But it was the border dispute itself that brought matters to a head and occasioned the war.

It will be recalled that by mutual consent the two governments had assigned commissioners to meet on the border to decide the dispute arising from border problems in Butwal and in Rautahat. Both governments bound themselves in writing to abide by the decision of this commission, thereby removing the decision from the hands of the several governments and placing it completely in the hands of the commissioners.¹

The commission first met in Butwal, but it was unable to reach a final decision. It is understandable that in their initial position both sides should be convinced of their right to the land on the basis of the documents in the possession of their respective governments. But no progress was made from that point, and the Nepali commissioners found themselves in an unenviable position. Major Bradshaw refused to admit the validity of their documents as proof of possession, and the British position had hardened to the point where it would admit of no compromise.² The only alternative remaining to the Nepalis was to surrender the land, a decision they did not feel free to make in view of the strength of their documents. They felt obliged to refer to Kathmandu for further

¹ Consultation 7 May 1813, No. 70. Letter of the raja of Nepal to the governor general, received 19 April 1813.

² Consultation 15 May 1813, No. 40. Letter of Major Bradshaw to J. Adam, dated 1 May 1813.

instructions.³ Hastings, however, removed the decision from their hands. After reviewing Bradshaw's reports, he decided that the case was sufficiently proved, and declared that the work of the commission in Butwal was complete, that the land belonged to the Company.⁴ This decision, of course, was in clear contravention of the terms of the commission, and the court of Kathmandu was shocked at his action.⁵ But this was as nothing compared to the shock Hastings had in store for Kathmandu in his decision regarding Rautahat.

The dispute in Rautahat centred around the proprietorship of twenty-two villages. These villages—originally Nepali—had been in British possession from the time of Kinloch's mission in 1767, but early in the nineteenth century the Gorkhalis had seized control of them. When the border commission met, Bradshaw insisted as a preliminary condition for any discussion of these villages, that they be handed over to him in trust, until the commission should be able to determine their ultimate fate.⁶ It is an indication either of the Nepali commissioners' good faith or of an incredible naivete that they submitted to this condition and did in fact hand over the villages. In either case, they were hardly prepared for Hastings' abrupt communication that, on the basis of an earlier investigation in this area, he was content that the Company's case was clearly proved and that there was, therefore, no need of further investigation. The villages belonged to the Company. What remained was only for the Nepalis to remove the civil apparatus they had set up in the area and leave the villages in the hands of the Company's representative, Paris Bradshaw.⁷ It is not surprising the negotiations between the two groups of commissioners broke down at this point.

³ Consultation 7 January 1814, No. 56. Letter of the raja of Nepal to the governor general, received 12 December 1813.

⁴ Consultation 18 June 1813, No. 24. Letter of the governor general to the raja of Nepal, dated 25 June 1813.

⁵ Consultation 7 January 1814, No. 56. Letter of the raja of Nepal to the governor general, received 12 December 1813.

⁶ Consultation 4 March 1814, No. 53. Letter of Major Bradshaw to J. Adam, secretary to government, dated 12 February 1814.

⁷ Consultation 15 April 1814, No. 65. Letter of the governor general to the raja of Nepal, dated 9 April 1814; also Consultation 4 March 1814, No. 59. Letter of instructions to Major Bradshaw, dated 4 March 1814.

In accord with his plan to establish the Company's authority securely in these two areas of Butwal and the twenty-two villages, Hastings ordered units of the Bengal army to occupy them.⁸ This contingency had been foreseen from the first, and the resulting military occupation was swiftly accomplished.⁹ There is no doubt that Hastings intended the very speed of his occupation of the territories to stun the Nepal government into acquiescence and acceptance of the *fait accompli*. His bluff very nearly succeeded. In the debate in the Nepal durbar over the attitude Nepal should take to this turn of events, those who advocated the abandonment of these Tarai lands spoke out clearly and strongly for peace.¹⁰ Bhim Sen Thapa, however, on the basis of the motives sketched in the previous chapter, held out for war, and his views carried.¹¹

Until the onset of the monsoon there was little the Gorkhals could do to interfere with the establishment of the Company's authority in the disputed areas. But, wise to the ways of Tarai, they knew that with the advent of the monsoon and the *aul* season, the British regular forces would have to be withdrawn. They merely waited for this, and then sent a detachment sweeping down out of the hills to surprise the British police posts and drive out their civilian representatives.¹² Hastings' bluff had been called, and he faced the necessity of total war against Nepal to redeem his position.

⁸ Consultation 15 April 1813, No. 63. Order to Captain Hay to proceed to the occupation of the Butwal Tarai, dated 6 April 1814. It will be noted that these orders were transmitted before the raja of Nepal was notified of the governor general's decision.

⁹ Consultation 15 January 1813, No. 48. Letter of instructions to Lt. Col. Fagan, adjutant-general, dated 15 January 1813; also Consultation 18 June 1813, No. 25. Letter of instructions to Lt. Col. Fagan, adjutant-general, dated 18 June 1813.

¹⁰ Reply of Chautariya Bam Shah et al, quoted in English translation in Prinsep, *History*, i, Appendix A, 496-71. Note that the reference to Prinsep's *History* is to the second edition.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 458.

¹² Consultation 17 June 1814, No. 61. Letter of G.H. Fagan, adjutant-general, to J. Adam, secretary to government, with enclosed reports of field commanders, dated 10 June 1814. The Gorkhali attacks took place on the morning of 29 May 1814.

The British Plan of Battle

The immediate difficulty under which Hastings laboured was the elaboration of a plan of battle against an enemy whose strength he did not know, to be fought in a mountainous terrain, the nature of which was still largely unknown to him. He decided to apply massive force at selected points along the seven-hundred mile front. In this way he hoped to force the Gorkhals to divide their defensive strength and to drain troops away from the Kathmandu area. A direct attack would then be made through the hills on Kathmandu itself. The five general areas selected for attack were : the eastern hills, the Sutlej area in the far west, the doon area below Garwal, the Butwal area, and the Bagmati area.¹³ The manpower required by these tactics was no problem at all for Hastings. Where his plan fell short of the mark was in the commanders he relied on to lead the attack on the points chosen.

Major Latter was assigned to the eastern hills. He was given two thousand men and instructed to harass the Gorkhali garrisons there. If possible, he was also to establish contact with the raja of Sikkim.¹⁴

Major-General Ochterlony had command in the far western Sutlej area. He had six thousand men equipped with sixteen of ordnance. His immediate objective was engaging Kazi Amar Singh Thapa's forces.¹⁵

The doon area was assigned to Major-General Gillespie. He had thirty-five hundred men to take Dehra in the east of the doon and Nahan in the west. When this was accomplished he was to march on Srinagar.¹⁶

Major-General John Sullivan Wood was to lead a force of about four thousand men equipped with eleven pieces of ordnance into the Palpa hills.¹⁷

¹³ Prinsep, *History*, i, 83-6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, i, 85-6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, i, 83; Ochterlony's troops were later augmented to eleven thousand men, including four thousand irregulars.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, i, 83-4. The doon army was later augmented to ten thousand five hundred men with twenty pieces of ordnance.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, i, 84. J.S. Wood was later reinforced by both regular and irregular cavalry units.

When these four attacks were well under way, Major-General Marley was to strike up the Bagmati valley towards Kathmandu with a force of eight thousand men equipped with twenty-six pieces of ordnance.¹⁸

Of these five commanders, who initially led a combined force of some twenty-three thousand men, later augmented to forty-six thousand men,¹⁹ only Ochterlony and Latter were able to adapt to mountain warfare. Of the remaining three commanders, Gillespie was killed in the first engagement of the war, Wood was completely discredited, and Marley *deserted*.

A. GORKHALI ASCENDANCY—NOVEMBER 1814— FEBRUARY 1815

1. *Nala Pani*

Although Hastings did not declare war officially until 1 November 1814,²⁰ his commanders were instructed to take the field as soon as the monsoon permitted.²¹ Gillespie's doon army thus entered the doon well before the declaration of war. When Bal Bhadra Thapa Konwar, who was in command of the Gorkhali defences of Dehra, heard of the approach of this army and its size, he realized that it would be impossible to defend the city. He therefore abandoned Dehra, moving his troops, approximately six hundred men, to a hill northeast of the city, where he took up positions in the small fort of Kalanga.²² A week elapsed before the British reached Dehra, and Bal Bhadra employed this time for completing his defence-works. The fort was situated on a hill some five to six hundred feet above the surrounding area, toward the northern edge of a plateau that flattened out at the end of a ridge. The position was improved by a skilful use of sharpened bamboo and by erecting breastworks, which consisted of a double wall of logs laid horizontally, with the cavity between the the walls filled with

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, i, 15. Marley's force was later increased to thirteen thousand men.

¹⁹ Prinsep, *Narrative*, p. 50.

²⁰ Prinsep, *History*, i, 78.

²¹ *Ibid.*, i, 84.

²² The fort of Kalanga was situated at Nala Pani, about five miles northeast of the city of Dehra. The battle has been referred to as either Kalanga or Nala Pani by contemporary writers.

rocks. The outward appearance of the resulting fortification was quite deceptive, since these apparently simple breastworks were able to withstand all but the heaviest cannon shot—far heavier than anything Gillespie had in his train. The weakness of the position, as in so many hill fortifications, was the water supply. But this weakness was not to be discovered by the British troops until long after the battle was joined.

The first British attack on Nala Pani took place on 31 October, the day before the official declaration of war. Gillespie's plan of attack called for detachments to storm the fort from three sides.²³ Under cover of their fire, pioneers would erect ladders against the walls of the fort, and a fourth attacking force would sweep up these ladders to take possession of the fort. Against this, Bal Bhadra's defence was ridiculously simple. He opened the wicket gate of the fort and blocked the entrance with crossed logs, through which he aimed his cannon. The field of fire thus opened for the cannon covered the full length of the most exposed wall of the fort. For maximum effect Bal Bhadra loaded the cannon with grape shot.

Gillespie's attack went awry from the beginning. In his impatience to have at the enemy he opened his initial bombardment much ahead of schedule, probing for weakness in the walls of the fort. When he saw his shot bounce harmlessly off the rock-lined wooden walls, he lost patience and ordered the signal for the joint attack several hours before his attacking parties expected it. Some of them never even heard the signal. The ladders, however, were set in place, and those who were to mount them swarmed up to the walls, only to be cut down by the fearsome blast of Bal Bhadra's cannon. The dazed survivors fell back, unable to cope with the situation. Gillespie should then have called off the attack, but he was reluctant to admit defeat to the Gorkhalis. Heedless of personal danger, and perhaps with a certain contempt for the Gorkhalis in the fort, he moved forward to rally his men. A Gorkhali marksman lined his sights on this inviting target, and Gillespie fell dead at the foot of the fort.²⁴

²³ Consultation 18 November 1814, No. 11. Report of Colonel Mawbey, dated Kalanga, 1 November 1814.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

The effect of this one shot on the morale of the Indian sepoy of the Bengal army was dramatic. Hardly less so was its effect on the commanders. It clearly signalled that the Gorkhalis were made of sterner stuff than had been thought,²⁵ and it served notice that only overwhelming force would drive them out of their mountain strongholds. Marley and Wood never really recovered from the shock of Gillespie's death, and and even with very substantial reinforcements they could not be brought to engage the Gorkhalis in their respective areas of responsibility.

At Nala Pani itself Major Mawbey, who was next in command, reacted to this day's battle by suspending all activity until reinforcements and heavy artillery could be brought up.²⁶ It took over three weeks to do this and to set up gun emplacements on the plateau. The guns were finally in place some three hundred yards from the fort by 25 November, and the bombardment of the fort began. By noon on the 27th the heavy shot had breached the wall of the fort. The British forces then tried to storm the breach, only to find their way blocked by sharpened bamboo stakes. Their charge hesitated, and the Gorkhalis fired a withering volley into the ranks of the attackers and drove them off. Major Mawbey did manage to get a light gun set up in the breach itself to fire directly into the fort, but no one could stand up to the Gorkhali fire long enough to use it. The day ended with the British withdrawing. British casualties for the day amounted to over five hundred men dead and wounded. And still Bal Bhadra held his position.

Mawbey then turned his attack from the fortifications to the men manning them. He instructed his gunners to fire anti-personnel bombs into the fort, and he sent scouts out to discover the Gorkhali water sources. The water supply was finally blocked, and the Gorkhalis were forced to evacuate the fort on 30 November, but Bal Bhadra and some seventy of his men were able to cut their way through and escape

²⁵ Prinsep, *History*, i, 135-6.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, i, 90.

into the hills.²⁷

2. *Jythak*

Nala Pani had cost the British heavily, but this same army was to suffer even more when it was moved to the west of the doon against Nahan and Jythak. Kazi Amar Singh Thapa's son, Ranjor Singh Thapa, was in command there. At Kazi Amar Singh Thapa's command, Nahan had been left undefended, and Ranjor Singh set up his defences at Jythak on a ridge overlooking Nahan. Major-General Martindell, who had meanwhile assumed command of Gillespie's forces, took possession of Nahan on Christmas day, 25 December, and immediately set about preparations for the attack on Ranjor Singh's positions.

The result of the first day's battle at Jythak was almost a repetition of the first day at Nala Pani. What made this doubly bitter to the British was the fact that it was not an inexperienced army that was so humiliated but the very troops who had fought at Nala Pani—and British *grenadiers*, not Indian sepoy. During the night of 25 December Martindell sent out two strong detachments to attack Jythak from the north and the south. Major Richards set out first, taking his troops on a wide sixteen mile sweep around to the north to get into position for the attack on Ranjor Singh's ridge, early the next morning. Major Ludlow, who led the attack up the the southern slope of the ridge, left camp in the early hours of the 26th. As his men advanced to the area assigned to them, they encountered two Gorkhali scouting parties, both of whom fell back before them without offering any resistance. Somewhat heartened by this, the combined force of British *grenadiers* and Indian sepoy carried on to a small ruined temple, where they were to await the attack by Major Richard's party to the north. But in the distance a small, lightly defended Gorkhali stockade was seen. The British *grenadiers* in Ludlow's force begged him to

²⁷ The impression Gorkhali bravery in the battle for Kalanga made on the British was profound, as evidenced by the detailed treatment of it found in all British accounts of the war. In recent years a fascinating account of the battles, written in letters to the durbar by some of the survivors, has been published by Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Nala Pani Ko Larain', *Purnima*, No. 3, pp. 66-72, and *Purnima*, No. 4, pp. 72-4.

allow them to charge this stockade to avenge the humiliation of Nala Pani. Ludlow foolishly abandoned the battle plan and allowed the attack. Unknown to him, Jaspao Thapa had concealed the major part of his forces in a slight hollow behind the stockade. While the British attacked, Jaspao Thapa sent out flanking parties on both sides of the British troops. When the force of the British charge was broken on the stockade itself, these flankers caught the British in a deadly cross-fire. There was nothing left for Ludlow but retreat. But the Gorkhalis would not be so easily denied, and they pursued the British down the mountain side. The Indian sepoy who were waiting in the assigned area to the rear caught up in the rush of the retreat, which rapidly developed into a rout. Ludlow and his men, defeated and exhausted, arrived back in camp at the foot of the ridge before 10:00 that morning—before, in fact, the attack had even been scheduled to begin.

Meanwhile Major Richards and his men on the northern approaches of Jythak fared somewhat better. They managed to secure a point on the top of the ridge and hold it throughout most of the day. But they were pinned down by Gorkhali fire, and the steady fighting ate heavily into their ammunition reserves. Richards sent for reinforcements and supplies, but Martindell was by then seriously worried that Jythak was to be a second Nala Pani. He ordered Richards and his men to abandon their position and retreat. The British withdrawal was costly, but Richards did get his troops off the mountain without the heavy losses that Ludlow had suffered. This first day of battle at Jythak cost the British over three hundred men in dead and wounded and cooled Martindell's ardour for battle. For over a month and a half he refused to take any initiative against the Gorkhalis.

2. *Jitpur*

The failure of Major-General John Sullivan Wood was another severe blow to Hastings' plans. He had almost four thousand men with which to force a passage through the hills into the Palpa area. Wood decided to take the pass at Jitgarh first, and, if possible, to carry on to Jitpur beyond

the pass. To guide his advance through the jungle he employed an old Brahman, who led the British through a thick sal forest that opened out abruptly within fifty yards of the Gorkhali positions at Jitpur. Before the British could realize their danger, the Gorkhalis opened fire, and Wood's brigade major and engineer officer were mortally wounded in the first volley. Although some of his men gained a position in the hills to the rear of the Gorkhali position, Wood doubted their ability to advance even if they took Jitpur, and so he ordered a retreat. The Gorkhali resistance he encountered here, added to the reports that he had received from the other sectors at Nala Pani, Jythak, and Butwal, convinced him of the rashness of any further move against the Gorkhalis. Although he was reinforced with parties of irregular cavalry and the 8th Native cavalry, Wood made no further move against the Gorkhalis, and left them free to move their patrols through the area at will.

4. *Marley's Desertion*

Major-General Marley was in command in the Bagmati sector, but since he failed to put in his appearance until mid-December, Major Bradshaw proceeded to employ the tactics he had long urged in letters to his superiors.²⁸ He first conducted a surprise raid on a Gorkhali camp and took prisoner Chandra Shekar Upadhyaya, who had been appointed by the Kathmandu court as *vakil* to Calcutta but who could not get a pass from Bradshaw to enter the country.²⁹ After this, Bradshaw set up headquarters at Baragarhi with outposts at Sumanpur and Parsa. When Marley arrived in mid-December with the van of his army and took over the command, he did not recall the outposts, but began immediately to plan attacks on Hitaura, Hariharpur, and Suktiduri Pass.

²⁸ Cf. in particular Consultation 4 November 1814, No. 21. Letter of Major Bradshaw to Lt. Col. Fagan, dated 13 October 1814.

²⁹ This effort of the Kathmandu *darbar* to avoid dealing with Bradshaw has not been otherwise noticed in this study. It would be very useful to examine the influence of this man, with whom both the governor general and Ochterlony eventually had differences, on the course of the whole border dispute and ensuing war.

During the delay caused by Marley's tardy arrival at Baragarhi and the planning of the attacks, the Gorkhals had been steadily probing the strength of the outposts of Sumanpur and Parsa. On New Year's day the Gorkhals mounted their attack. Both posts were taken totally by surprise and overrun. British casualties were very high. Marley was completely disheartened by the turn events had taken and thereafter refused to move against the Gorkhals, despite heavy pressure from the governor general and strong reinforcements.³⁰ Finally, on 10 February, he *deserted* his troops without so much as an indication of a temporary commander.³¹

5. *The Sepoy Charge*

The final Gorkhali success of this period of Gorkhali ascendancy was in a way the most devastating to British morale. On 17 February word reached Martindell at Jythak of the approach of a small party of two hundred Gorkhali reinforcements moving from Malaon to Jythak. Lieutenant Young with some two thousand irregulars was sent out to intercept them. Contact was made, and the Gorkhals were surrounded. The Gorkhals realized that there was little hope of victory, but, after the manner of hill troops, they discussed their next move and decided to sell themselves dearly rather than surrender. With khukari in hand they charged the British irregulars, even though they were outnumbered ten to one. The irregulars broke before them, their morale shattered. From that time the Gorkhals treated the irregulars with contempt and whenever they encountered a force of irregulars, no matter how strong, they charged. Regardless of numbers, the irregulars were never once able to withstand the hill men and their khukaris.³²

³⁰ Atkinson, *Himalayan Districts*, ii, 634. Marley commanded at the time of his desertion a force probably larger than the whole Nepal army.

³¹ Marley was eventually succeeded by Major-General George Wood, who is not to be confused with Major General John Sullivan Wood, the commander in the Palpa sector.

³² The British force dispersed on this occasion was an irregular force, but the sepoys fared little better. Field observations led Hunter to say, '... when, let me ask, was the line of Seapoys ever broken, or their charge arrested, in physical collision with the enemy? The conclusive answer must admit that they turned, almost *uniformly*, from the contest before a blow had been struck, under the influence of a moral impulse, which deterred them from proving the badness of the ground and the inferiority of the bayonet.' R. Hunter, *Military Sketches*, p. xiv.

Thus by mid-February the Gorkhalis had achieved considerable success. Of the four British commanders they had faced, Gillespie was dead, Marley had deserted, Wood was frightened into inactivity, and Martindell was practically incapacitated by over-cautiousness. In addition, the Gorkhalis had struck such terror into the Indian sepoy that they were useless in battle unless accompanied by large numbers of European troops.³³ True, the Gorkhalis had lost Nala Pani, but this was at best a Pyrrhic victory for the British. The Gorkhalis had every reason for optimism, since it seemed certain that Ranjit Singh and Gwalior would join them and permit them to carry the war to the British.³⁴

B. BRITISH RECOVERY

1. *The Weak Link*

The sector of the front that was to betray the Gorkhalis was one that had not featured prominently in Hastings' battle plan at all. During his tour of the provinces in the winter of 1814, Hastings had decided to use a force of irregulars to attack Kumaon in the hope that it would at least embarrass the Gorkhalis and force them to defend one more point.³⁵ Without realizing it at the time, Hastings had hit upon the weakest link in the Gorkhali defences. Kumaon at this time was defended by a small force of Gorkhalis, numbering perhaps seven hundred and fifty men, with an equal number of Kumaoni irregulars—fifteen hundred men to defend a whole province.³⁶ In addition, the province of Doti, east of Kumaon, had been practically stripped of troops.³⁷ Bam Shah, as governor of Kumaon, had final responsibility for the defence of the province, and it was a terrible responsibility, since Kumaon formed a key link in Gorkhali communications with the far west. It seems incredible that it should have been left with such weak defences.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

³⁴ Prinsep, *Narrative*, p. 47.

³⁵ Atkinson, *Himalayan Districts*, ii, 644.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, ii, 654.

³⁷ Letter of Bam Shah to Girbana Yuddha, dated 1871 B.S., Aswin, sudi 8, roj 6. Quoted in Mahesh Raj Pant, 'Nepal-Angrej Yuddha Ko Ghoshan Nahunda Angreje Gareko Yuddha Ko Tayari', *Purnima*, No. 5, pp. 54-9.

Despite the weakness of Kumaon's defences, however, the British were reluctant to advance in this area without first attempting to win the province by subversion. For some months prior to the actual invasion they had been in contact with Bam Shah in the hope that he could be induced to betray his country and accept British rule. The British agents were apparently led to believe that Bam Shah was totally disaffected with the Kathmandu government, but in time they came to realize that their hopes were misplaced and that Bam Shah had no intention of abandoning his obligations to his country.³⁸

British contacts with Harsha Dev Joshi, however, were far more rewarding. It will be recalled that Harsha Dev Joshi and his family had played an important role in Kumaoni politics long before the Gorkhali conquest of the area.³⁹ Later negotiations between the Gorkhalis and Pradyumna Sah, the raja of Garhwal and an enemy of Harsha Dev, had alienated Harsha Dev from the Gorkhalis, and the abuses that had developed in the Gorkhali administration of Kumaon had completed this alienation, making Harsha Dev a mortal enemy of Gorkhali rule. The British agents found that the idea of assisting in the invasion of Kumaon appealed to him, and Harsha Dev was introduced to Lt. Col. Gardner, who was in command of the British irregulars in Kumaon. Harsha Dev agreed to use his extensive influence in Kumaon to promote the British cause. How important that influence was to become is evident from Atkinson's summary of this aspect of the British campaign:

Harak Deb Joshi was one of the main instruments by which the people of the country were persuaded to join us. His influence was still great, and he gave the whole of it without reserve to support the plans of the British Government. After the abandonment by the Gorkhalis of their position at Kumpur and the advance of the British force to Katarmal, the natives of the province who were

³⁸ Cox, *Nepal Papers*. Secret letter from the Bengal Government to the Committee and Court of Directors in London, dated 21 June 1815, 'Bam Sah, whatever causes of personal dissatisfaction he might have had, was animated with a high spirit of patriotic zeal and devotion.'

³⁹ Cf. above, pp. 193 ff.

employed in the Gorkhali service began to desert in great numbers. Many of them returned to their homes, and more than three hundred soldiers, including several sardars of some importance, joined us and were incorporated in our force before the end of March. After these desertions it is probable that the whole available force of the Gorkhals for the defence of Almora did not amount to one thousand men.⁴⁰

This was the story of the whole campaign in Kumaon. The British force, numbering initially over forty-five hundred men, was easily able to out-maneuvre the Gorkhali defenders and force the Gorkhals to abandon one post after another. Despite a significant victory over Captain Harsey's force, which had been sent on a flanking movement through eastern Kumaon, and the capture of the captain himself, the Gorkhals were unable to stem the tide of the British advance. The Gorkhals desperately needed reinforcements, but there were few men to spare. Hastidal Shah arrived in Almora with a small body of Gorkhali troops, which gave some relief. A further reinforcement of four companies was sent from Kathmandu to aid the beleaguered defences of Kumaon, but the difficulties of communication through the hills prevented them from arriving in time to be of any help.⁴¹

In the meanwhile, Hastings had realized the significance of the breakthrough in Kumaon. He sent Colonel Nicolls, quartermaster-general for the British troops in India, to take charge of the Almora campaign and assigned two thousand regular troops to this front in addition to the very large number of irregulars already assigned to the area—all of this against less than one thousand Gorkhals.⁴²

The final blow to the Gorkhali defenders fell towards the end of April. Hasti Dal Shah and a body of some five hundred Gorkhals had set out from Almora to secure Almora's northern line of communications with Kathmandu. This party was intercepted; Hasti Dal Shah, the ablest Gorkhali commander in this sector, was killed in the first

⁴⁰ Atkinson, *Himalayan Districts*, ii, 654.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, ii, 660.

⁴² Prinsep, *History*, i, 151.

moments of the battle; and the Gorkhali's suffered terrible losses.⁴³ When word of this disaster reached the defenders at Almora, they were stunned. Before they could recover from the first shock, the British closed in on Almora, and, though the Gorkhali's fought desperately to throw them off the Almora ridge, they were unable to prevent the British advance. At length, when the British had managed to establish gun positions within seventy yards of the gate of the fort at Almora and the British howitzers were demolishing the walls of the fort at point blank range, Bam Shah was forced to ask for terms.⁴⁴ He surrendered Almora on 27 April and immediately sent a letter to Kazi Amar Singh Thapa giving him details of the battle and advising him of his surrender.⁴⁵

2. *Malaon and Jythak*

The fall of Almora cut the Gorkhali lines of communication between Nepal proper and the far west. It also sealed the fate of Kazi Amar Singh Thapa at Malaon and Ranjor Singh Thapa at Jythak. Before describing Kazi Amar Singh's surrender, it will be useful to review the progress of the war in that sector. At Malaon, giving due respect to Kazi Amar Singh Thapa's reputation as a canny general, Major-General Ochterlony had moved with extreme care from the very beginning of the campaign. He had early summoned reinforcements and heavy guns from Delhi, thus delaying his attack until February 1815, but bringing his total attack force to over ten thousand men well-equipped with heavy cannon.

Kazi Amar Singh Thapa's position in the Malaon hills, though formidable in appearance, was actually much weaker than it looked. He was dependent on Bilaspur in the lowlands for his food supplies, and the nature of the hills forced him to spread his forces very thin in an attempt to defend every vantage point in the hills. Considering the guns that Ochterlony had at his disposal, every strong point on the

⁴³ Atkinson, *Himalayan Districts*, ii, 661.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, ii, 664.

⁴⁵ This letter is quoted in full in English translation in Atkinson, *Himalayan Districts*, ii, 665-6.

ridge was a potential point of vantage for Ochterlony and a source of serious danger to the Gorkhals.

Ochterlony's battle plan called for him to exploit these two weaknesses in the Gorkhali position. He was able without undue difficulty to cut off the supply of food from Bilaspur and then turn his attention to the intricate network of defensive posts that were situated throughout the Malaon hills. These posts were designed to withstand any frontal assault, with each post being protected from the rear by supporting fortifications. However, none of the fortifications was equipped with good cannon, and none of them could withstand a long cannonade by heavy guns. If Ochterlony were once able to move his cannon up onto the ridges, he could lob his shells over the intervening space and blast the Gorkhals out of each fort as he came to it. The only possible Gorkhali defence was to keep the British off the ridge. In this, however, the Gorkhals were defeated by Ochterlony's superior numbers. They had to call up reserves from the protecting forts in the rear and treat every British assault as a major one, because Ochterlony had sufficient troops to attack and overwhelm several positions simultaneously. By launching several well-timed attacks at once, Ochterlony could divide the Gorkhali defences dangerously. Once the Gorkhals had moved definitely into defensive positions against these assaults, Ochterlony had only to move a third force up the ridge towards their exposed flank or rear. The Gorkhals were then trapped and had no resources but to withdraw to another position. It was good mountain warfare, and Ochterlony practised it to perfection. He secured his target, a place on the ridge, and then proceeded to prove his mastery of hill tactics by moving slowly, consolidating each position that he took, and allowing the pioneers time to build roads so that the heavy guns could be moved forward to support each attack. After a series of carefully planned and executed moves, he succeeded in establishing a position on the crest of Deothal, not one thousand yards from Kazi Amar Singh Thapa's main fort at Malaon. Bhakti Thapa led a furious assault on this position, but the Gorkhals were driven off and the

position secured.⁴⁶ Once the British guns were brought up and installed in the first week of May, the kazi's position in Malaon became untenable.

The climax of the Jythak campaign was actually a carbon copy of the Malaon campaign. The British superiority in numbers made it inevitable that they would be able to establish themselves and their heavy guns on a vantage point within range of Ranjor Singh's fortifications sooner or later. They could then press the attack with comparative impunity. This is what happened, and the Gorkhals had nothing in their arsenal of weapons that had the range or the destructive power of the British guns.

Both Kazi Amar Singh Thapa and Ranjor Singh Thapa were thus hemmed in and looking down the barrels of the British guns when Bam Shah's letter arrived announcing the fall of Almora. Although the old commander still refused to surrender, his men began to drift away. The cause was lost. Kazi Amar Singh Thapa at last saw the hopelessness of the situation and, compelled by circumstances and the British guns, surrendered with honour for both himself and Ranjor Singh.⁴⁷ Ochterlony extended favourable terms to him, and the Gorkhali positions in the far west were turned over to the British on 15 May 1815. The first phase of the war had ended.

C. TREATY NEGOTIATIONS AND THE SECOND PHASE OF THE WAR

The sudden and disastrous turn of events in the western hills destroyed any possibility of an alliance with Ranjit Singh against the British. The Gorkhals had provided a magnificent opening, but the war had moved too swiftly for the slower-paced diplomatic discussions in Ranjit Singh's court. Bhim Sen Thapa had gambled on being able to carry on the war successfully long enough for the Indian princes to realize the opportunity the situation offered and act, and he had lost his gamble. The logic of his position forced him to sue for peace.

It was Bam Shah, the governor of Kumaon, who actually made the first moves towards re-establishing the former relations

⁴⁶ Prinsep, *History*, i, 169-70.

⁴⁷ Atkinson, *Himalayan Districts*, ii, 671.

between Kathmandu and the Company. After the fall of Almora he had discussed with Gardner the possibility of a general peace, and when it had become apparent that Kazi Amar Singh Thapa could not long hold out in Malaon, the governor general forwarded a draft treaty to Gardner on the possibility that the court of Kathmandu would choose to negotiate through him.⁴⁸ Apparently Bam Shah had also been in contact with Kathmandu even before Kazi Amar Singh's surrender, for toward the end of May 1815 Gajraj Misra arrived in the camp of Paris Bradshaw with the necessary authority to negotiate a peace settlement. Because of the time element, it is apparent that Kathmandu could not have heard of Kazi Amar Singh's surrender when the decision was made to send the Misra to negotiate a treaty.

There was actually very little that could be negotiated. The British had already committed themselves to restore most of the petty princes of the far west to their principalities and to give to the Sikkim raja the area in the east between the Teesta and the Mechi rivers.⁴⁹ The governor general had also decided that Kumaon itself should become the property of the Company so that he could open the way for trade with western Tibet. These three British demands were non-negotiable. The remaining two demands the British made were the surrender of the Tarai up to the Siwaliks, and the establishment in Kathmandu of a British resident.

Though the Nepalis had no desire for a resident in Kathmandu, this demand was accepted as inevitable. The surrender of the Tarai, however, was something that the Misra did not feel competent to concede, nor did he think that the court in Kathmandu would accept such a condition. He accordingly broke off negotiations and returned to Kathmandu. In August he was sent back to renew the negotiations, only to learn that the governor general still insisted on the cession of the whole Tarai. However, since the main Nepali objection to the loss of the Tarai lay in the fact that many of the leading members of the court had their jagirs and birtas there, Hastings expressed his willingness to pay an annual subsidy of two lakhs of

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, ii, 672.

⁴⁹ This territory was officially ceded to the Sikkim raja by the treaty of Titalia on 10 February 1817.

rupees to the court of Nepal. He thought that this cash payment would compensate these officers for the loss of their lands. This concession, however, was totally unacceptable, since it would put the leading members of the court of Kathmandu in the pay of the Company's government and thus subject them to unwanted pressure from the Company in the event of any future dispute or difference over policy.

Hastings, after considering the scant returns of the Tarai lands in question and the difficulty of defending them, determined to offer a further concession. He insisted only on the retention of those Tarai lands actually in the possession of the British, and he continued the offer of the cash stipend of two lakhs a year.⁵⁰

Misra went to Kathmandu to consult with the court. He returned to the Tarai shortly after this and signed the treaty on 28 November 1815.⁵¹ The Company's government ratified the treaty on 9 December 1815, and all that remained was the ratification of the treaty by the Nepal government. With the end in sight, the British relaxed their military posture. The quartermaster began to sell off the provisions that had been laid by for a possible second campaign in the hills. And units of the army were returned to their cantonments.

The treaty which Misra had signed called for the Nepal government to deliver the ratified treaty into the hands of Bradshaw within fifteen days.⁵² This period of time was totally unrealistic. If a minimum of six days was allowed for Misra's journey to and from the capital, only nine days remained for serious discussion of the treaty by the court. The British themselves, despite the greater facility of communications and the advantage of having dictated the treaty—and so being content with its terms—had required eleven days to accomplish a formal ratification.⁵³ It is not surprising, then, that the

⁵⁰ This cash subsidy was finally annulled by the Memorandum of Cession which restored parts of the Tarai to Nepal, dated 8 December 1816.

⁵¹ This treaty came to be known as the Treaty of Sagauli. There is some confusion over the date of this signature. The treaty itself is dated 2 December 1815. Prinsep gives the date 28 November 1815 for the signing, and Atkinson gives the date 2 December 1815.

⁵² Treaty of Sagauli, article 9.

⁵³ If the date 2 December 1815 is taken for the date of the signature, the time required for the British ratification is reduced to seven days.

Nepalis were not able to fulfil the time clause stipulated in the treaty.

When the stipulated time passed and the ratified treaty was not handed over by the Nepal government, Ochterlony was ordered into the field and supplies were gathered for a second expedition against Nepal. A letter was also sent to Girbana Yuddha warning him that the British army was approaching. In support of this action it has been suggested that the reason for the delay in the ratification of the treaty was the opposition to the treaty by the so-called *war party* in Kathmandu. If such were actually the case, Hastings' action was ideally suited to galvanize support for the continuance of the war. If, on the other hand, Hastings really wanted the ratification of the treaty, his purpose would have been far better served by showing a greater consideration for the problems his territorial demands had thrust on the Nepalis and allowing them time to discuss the treaty and its meaning.⁵⁴

Actually, a strong case can be made for the opinion that Hastings acted with undue haste and thus forced the renewal of the war. Prinsep, who was Hastings' greatest apologist,⁵⁵ tried to justify Hastings' action. If his arguments are accepted, then the blame for the renewal of the war must be laid on the court of Kathmandu. But for three simple reasons Prinsep's arguments cannot be accepted. First, his reconstruction of the debate in the Nepal durbar from which the *war party* emerged victorious is in fact based on a letter of Kazi Amar Singh Thapa written eight months previously, in March 1815, before the tide of battle had turned against him, and when the Gorkhals still had strong hopes of concluding an alliance against the British with Ranjit Singh. That was no longer even a remote hope. Secondly, there was no indication whatever of

⁵⁴ Bradshaw's reports perhaps had an unhealthy influence on Hastings. It is interesting to note that Hastings himself expressed profound dissatisfaction with Bradshaw and removed the negotiations from his hands in favour of Ochterlony, and that Ochterlony, too, had difficulties with this man. Thornton, however, *History of the British Empire in India*, iv, 327, considers Hastings' rejection of Bradshaw as an attempt to escape the blame for the failure of the negotiations.

⁵⁵ Prinsep, *Narratives*. p. x, '...but he (Prinsep) does acknowledge with some pride, that the present head of the Indian Government has claims to personal attachment, which may have given a bias to his political views and reasoning...'

renewed military activity in the hills before Hastings' letter, a state of affairs that is inconceivable if the Gorkhals were really planning in secret for a second contest. Thirdly, to make Kazi Amar Singh Thapa the leader of a war party in Kathmandu is to accuse this old soldier, held in honour by every British commander whom he ever opposed, of deliberately violating both his word and his honour.⁵⁶ And, of course, Prinsep himself admits:

The non-ratification of the treaty of Segoulee has not, ordinarily, been attributed to any settled plan of deceit practised on the British government.⁵⁷

If Prinsep's argument are rejected, however, as apparently they must be, it seems only just and fair to regard the Gorkhali renewal of military activity as a move motivated by the fear that the British intended to march into Kathmandu to dictate the terms of peace there. Certainly the fifteen day stipulation was unreasonable, and since it was unreasonable, what other interpretation could the Nepalis put on Hastings' letter informing the court that the British army was approaching Nepal? The allocation of blame for the second phase of the war is perhaps a moot point, and yet it has its importance, because it tends to confirm Thornton's criticism of Hastings—that there was war because Hastings wanted war.

The war was resumed in February 1815. Ochterlony was already moving into the Tarai with a force of twenty thousand fighting men, including three British regiments, when he met Gajraj Misra, who delivered the formal intimation that the Nepali government had determined to recommence hostilities.

This second phase of the war was very brief. By 27 February Ochterlony had been able to gain a position at the foot of Makwanpur ridge. This ridge extended from east to west with a slight depression near the centre. Towards the eastern end of the ridge lay the fort of Makwanpur, which was the last major defence of Kathmandu. To the west of the fort, and

⁵⁶ The value which Kazi Amar Singh Thapa placed on his military honour should be apparent from his steadfast refusal to desert his government despite the almost lavish offers made to him by the British. In his agreement of surrender he had bound himself to the cause of peace. There is no evidence whatever that, having given his word to this, he became the head of a *war party* in Kathmandu.

⁵⁷ Prinsep, *History*, i, 191.

separated from it by the depression, lay a village called Sikhar Katri. On the morning of 28 February, for some unspecified reason, the Gorkhali troops stationed in Sikhar Katri withdrew. Ochterlony seized this opportunity and hurried a force up the ridge to occupy the village. The Gorkhalis immediately realized their error and tried to drive the British off the ridge, but Ochterlony sent a steady stream of reinforcements to hold the village at all costs. By nightfall it was clear that Ochterlony had secured his foothold. The next day he was able to move his cannon up the ridge and bring them along the ridge to within five hundred yards of the fort at Makwanpur. But he never had to use them.

As soon as it became clear that the fort of Makwanpur could not stand, word was sent to Ochterlony requesting him to receive Chandra Shekar Upadhyaya, who wished to present the ratified treaty. This Ochterlony agreed to do, and after assuring himself that Chandra Shekar came with full powers and that the treaty was sincerely offered, he accepted it.⁵⁸ His first move was to send one of his staff, Lieutenant Boileau, to Kathmandu vested with the powers of acting-resident. He then withdrew from the hills.

The war thus came to an end, and with it came to an end the Gorkhali military activity in the hills. With the exception of several additions of land in the Tarai made later in 1816⁵⁹ and again in 1860,⁶⁰ the boundaries of Nepal have remained unchanged to this day. Lost were the territories of Kumaon, Garhwal, and the Bara and Athara Thakurai. Lost, too, was the area now known as Darjeeling District. Altogether some forty thousand square miles were given up, without hope of ever being recovered. It was a serious loss, but it was the logical conclusion of the failure of the central government of Kathmandu to insist on restraining the army's westward march until an

⁵⁸ Actually Ochterlony had been informed of the ratification of the treaty on 24 February 1816. Cs. B.D. Sanwal, *Nepal and the East India Company* (Bombay, 1965), p. 209. Apparently this opinion is based on a letter of Ochterlony to the secretary to government, dated 5 March 1816.

⁵⁹ Memorandum of Cession, restoring the Tarai lands between the Gandak and the Rapti Rivers and between the Rapti and Coosa Rivers, dated 8 December 1816.

⁶⁰ Treaty of 15 November 1860, restoring the Tarai lands between the Kali and the Rapti River and the Tarai lands in the Gorakhpur area.

adequate and competent administration could be set up in the conquered territories.

But the war was not all failure. Despite the loss, the House of Gorkha remained to weather the storm of the reconstruction years and to complete the unification of Nepal proper. Also, the very impact of Gorkhali courage and tenacity impressed the British as nothing else had been able to do and encouraged them to leave well enough alone in the hills of Nepal. It was in fact the foundation for the sort of respect that made it possible for the British to accept Nepal as a sovereign nation. Despite the many restrictions the British put on Nepal at the time of the peace, Nepal still emerged from the fires of war in better condition than any princely state in India. The argument still rages in Nepal, of course, as to the wisdom of entering the war with the British. Quite probably no historian will ever truly satisfy the arguments that are endlessly paraded both pro and con. But no Nepali will ever question the one sure conclusion that can be drawn from the war: that since Nepal did not fragment as a result of the war, the House of Gorkha had not been built on sand; that it rested firmly on the bed-rock of soldier and peasant; and that its architect, Prithvinarayan Shah, had built it to last.

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