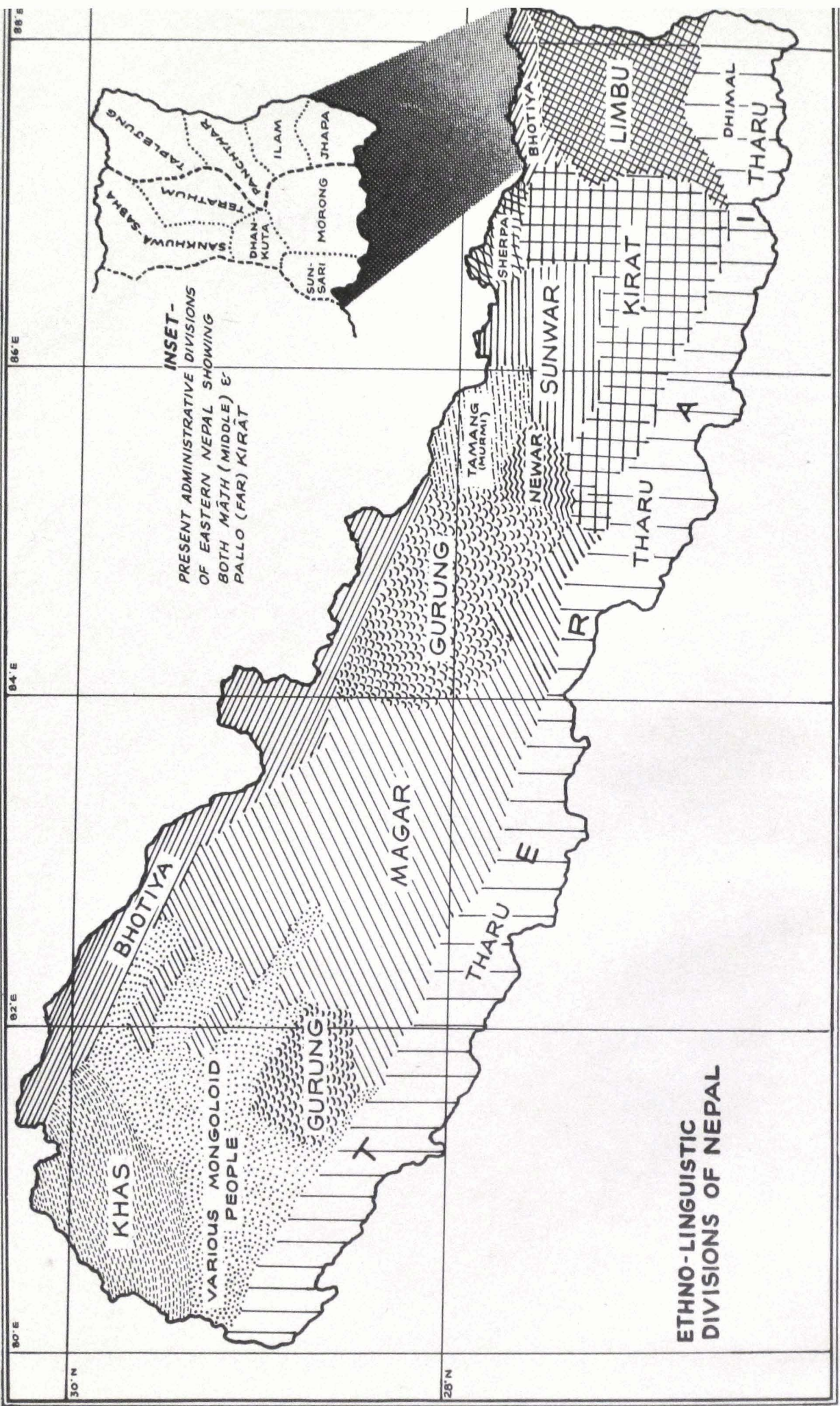


THE GORKHA CONQUESTS

THE PROCESS AND CONSEQUENCES OF
THE UNIFICATION OF NEPAL,
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE
TO EASTERN NEPAL

KUMAR PRADHAN



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KUMAR PRADHAN

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Foreword

It is a privilege to be able to express appreciation of Dr Kumar Pradhan's research on the origins of Gorkha state consolidation in Nepal, viewed from the perspective of contemporary affairs. Dr Pradhan is one of India's most erudite and versatile scholars in Nepali area studies. Devoting himself to the work of teaching in his home district of Darjeeling, without the frills that others find in high-sounding titles such as area studies or interdisciplinary approach, he has used his basic professional competence as a historian to range from studying changes in the social outlook of Nepali literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (in India as well as in Nepal)—his volume on this is compendious and was published by the Sahitya Akademi—to the processes of socio-economic change of hill tribes in Darjeeling, which had till the eighteenth century been contested between Nepal and Sikkim, and in Eastern Nepal, contiguous to it across the international border.

The present volume represents his findings on the historical origins of cultural diversity in the region, and on the way in which the Gorkha political lineage came to rear itself out of this, to create a new political pattern in conflict and compromise with British Indian imperialism, with far-reaching consequences of homogenization for Eastern Nepal. A quite different socio-political culture and enclaved plantation economy grew in British Indian Darjeeling. In this book, Dr Pradhan focuses on the microcosmic aspect of changes in Nepali state and society itself. One looks forward to reading another volume on his research into how quite different patterns emerged out of the mingling of autochthonous Lepchas, archaic élite Bhutias, Nepali migrants, British planters, missionaries and cantonment recruiters,

Hindustani commodity dealers and small shopkeepers, and Bengali teachers and petty officials, all of whom came to settle in Darjeeling district which imperialism annexed from its protectorate of Sikkim (to which they restored it earlier from Nepal) to place in its own provincial territory of Bengal.

In this book, Kumar Pradhan makes certain interesting new points about political anthropology and political culture in historical perspective, with particular reference to Nepal as a part of South Asia.

1. As a Himalayan territory, it is from the point of view of the lobe, cis-montane, i.e. this side, south of even the great Parbat peaks. Like many Indian mountain communities traditionally dominated by chieftains and their clan lineages, Nepal had its tribal diversities. In the first part of this volume, Kumar Pradhan heuristically categorizes these diversities from the point of view of the masses, i.e. 'from below' as popular historians nowadays term it. He divides the terrain into its old, endogenous, subregional categories. From west to east were Khasan (contiguous to Kangra, Kumaon and Garhwal in India), Magrat (north of Central U.P.), the Valley proper (with Nepal's focal political towns of Patan, Bhadgau and Kathmandu) and Kirat to the East (divided in the same progression into Wallo—i.e. *urle taraf* in Hindustani—Hither Kirat, Majh—i.e. Middle Kirat, Pallo—i.e. *parte taraf* in Hindustani—Further Kirat). From North to South were Bhutan (inhabited by the Bhot peoples transhumant across the Tibetan plateau and the high ranges), Pahar (or hills, in Central Nepal), Madesh (or middle country—between hill and plain) the counterpart of what Indians call terai, and what breeds the dialect still called *madesia* among Nepali workers in tea plantations in the Indian terai. He then looks at data presented by recent scholarship in Nepal and Europe on Nepal's earliest political history and shows differences, as well as manifold intermingling and similarities, with popular Indian and mountain Buddhist culture. The tribal diversities are part of old Indian culture—not Hindu (a term not endogenous in ancient India, but ascribed by conquerors and travellers), but broadly South Central, and South-East Asian, in antiquity. They are the base of popular understanding across international borders within the SAARC, however much its ruling élites might occasionally posture at being at odds.

2. These diversities, without superordinate state control, led to feudal-like conditions of chieftaincy and principality among some tribes, and ultimately to internecine warfare. In this phase, the one about which the earlier epigraphic, numismatic or manuscript records, are available, the ruling groups in the Pahar as well as

Madesh invited Brahman experts in statecraft and social surplus extraction from the plains to help in their affairs. Such people brought into cis-montane political organization, the Hindu political consciousness of caste exclusiveness and hierarchical ordering of domination and subordination of the masses. In principalities like the Sena territory of Makwanpur—north of the West Bihar terai—chiefs styled themselves and their eldest sons, Hindupati and Chhatrapati, some generations after Benaras *pandits* taught Shivaji and later the Peshwas this usage in Satara and Pune. The ancestral lineage of Gorkha was encouraged to think of political hegemony over the rest by warfare, conquest, unification, and the ritual celebration of force, as much as by ideologies of centralizing synthesis, which Hindu Brahmanical Sanskritizing philosophers have sought to emphasize by obscuring its trends of force and class distinction.

3. The linkage of feudal hierarchy and politics with the Brahmanical religion of Benaras and other parts of the northern plains makes Nepal the last independent Hindu kingdom—now in the throes of a struggle with the forces of constitutionalism. It is explicated in Prithvinarayan Shah's dream of establishment of Gorkha's power all over the Nepal Valley, then west and east. His lineage explicitly Hinduized the rank ordering, introduced the draconic punishments for infringements of the caste code for maintaining social order, and the newer and more modern aspects of the exploitative aspects of the land tenures of the tribal areas of the north, as well as the chieftaincies of the centre and south. Dr. Pradhan focuses first on the narrative of what earlier Nepali historians and foreign scholars have studied as 'the unification of Nepal' and 'the creation of Nepali nationality'. Going through the chronology and source material meticulously, he shows that the first proposition did not necessarily lead to the second one: the Gorkhas built a powerful lineage but their state was a ruling class, one typical of late eighteenth century India, without practical participation in nationality by the people in general. It emphasized a binary divide between *tagadharis* (those who donned the sacred thread, were Brahmanized) and those whom *tagadharis* treated with contumely as *matwalis* (people who drank distilled liquor, who were thus low-class because they stank and were of the lowest castes, hewers of wood and drawers of water).

The *tagadhari-matwali* distinction which the Gorkhas made the basis of their ruling class-people dichotomy was similar to the *ashraf-ajlaf* or *babusahab-razil* dichotomy in North India, or the *bhadralok-chhotolok* dichotomy in Bengal, or Brahman-non-Brah-

man dichotomy in the south. It hegemonized the lower orders (by force as well as social purification ritual and missionary conversion into the tribe-caste continuum that anthropologists like Nirmal Kumar Bose and Surajit Chandra Sinha have spoken of), into accepting subordination within the late-eighteenth/early-nineteenth century Indian indigenous state forms, what the British colonialists were then calling 'country powers' or later 'the princely states'. Such an order, based on social authoritarian values articulated by the Hindu religion, propagated by migrants from the middle Gangetic plains at a time when the Mughal Empire was showing the signs of insurgency, *zamindars*' revolts and chaos within a ruling class which had alienated itself from the masses, was militarized between 1750 and 1815 as a transient Gorkha empire over the Himalayas: from Kangra and Garhwal's edges to the Lepcha region of Darjeeling, and part of South Sikkim in the eighteenth century.

4. The late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century character of this state form—which is supposed to be transitional in India, (as a transient phase between the successors—*riyasats*—following the Mughal Empire, such as Hyderabad, Bengal, the Maratha Confederacy, Awadh, the Punjab, the Rajput and Sikh principalities in Rajasthan, the Punjab and the northern hills, Jammu, Kashmir, etc., or such as the Ahom, Travancore, or *Poligar* principalities and chieftaincies) and the British Indian Empire which homogenized a forced unity in earlier heterogeneous diversity—is shown by Dr. Pradhan to be parallel to, if not directly influenced by, core trends in Indian political ideology. The Nepal ruling class at that time referred to their great southern neighbours territory as "Mughlan". Before the definitive collapse of Mughal legitimacy in 1787, when Shah Alam II was first blinded by Ghulam Qadir Rohilla and then given shelter and protection in his own Red Fort by Mahadji Sindhia, the Nepali Gorkha lineage treated themselves as a peripheral lineage in the domain of Mughal prestation and patronage. Kumar Pradhan signifies this religious symbiosis as follows: 'Prithvinarayan, the ruler of a small and poor principality, realized his dream of making himself the king of the Nepal valley. He shifted his capital to Kathmandu on 21 March, 1770 and adopted as his flag the royal banner of Bhadgau, introduced long before by Jayasthitimalla, the red banner which (Baburam) Acharya describes as "the national colour of the Hindus". With the conquest of the three kingdoms of Nepal, Prithvinarayan's personal campaigning ended. Since the Mughal emperor was still the paramount power on the Indian subcontinent, Prithvinarayan...

requested him for recognition of the title "Maharaja Samsar Bahadur Jung" and in 1770 received it". (p. 96). If the Gorkha lineage was later regarded as incarnations of Vishnu, this was a modern Brahmanical construct.

5. The making of the Nepal monarchy was as much, however, a part of British emergence in Indian Empire, as it was of Mughal decadence and *roi faineant* complaisance. Prithvinarayan's early aggrandizements occurred at a time when Britain was winning Plassey and Wandiwash. His conquests in Majh Kirat, especially at the expense of the old Hindu lineage of Makwanpur whose territories marched with the Mughal domains in Purnea and Bettiah in Bihar (with rebels in which their chiefs were embroiled) were not seen with favour by Bengal rulers, whether Mir Kasim, or Harry Verelst. The former committed his 'new model army' drilled by Gurgin Khan and Reinhard to an adventure in defence of the old dynasty of Makwanpur. Prithvinarayan's Gorkha troops who had just conquered it destroyed the Bihar army, leaving the Nawab weak before British attack in 1763. The East India Company, in its turn, acquiring Diwani in 1765 sought to defend the Makwanis; but the Kinloch Expedition of 1767 was also repulsed. Yet Prithvinarayan did not challenge the new rulers of the plains proximate to Majh Kirat and Pallo Kirat, and chose to deal with them with cautious diplomacy. His successors and their captains preferred to expand into more northern mountain recesses, all the way to the forts of Nagari and Darjeeling past Ilam and Khumbu. In Eastern Nepal, the kingdom was formed in the interstices of the British expansion into North Bihar and Kuch Bihar, in the same way as Prithvinarayan Shah's successors' captains expanded into the Western Himalayan foothills or for that matter, as Ranjit Singh became Maharaja of the Punjab shattering the Rajput petty hill principalities of Nagarkot and its neighbourhood, and others collapsed in the desiccation of Indian power in the latter years of the 18th century. In the same way the new Alaungpaya dynasty of Burma erupted with rapine and anarchy into the Brahmaputra Valley in Assam in the early 19th century. Both Nepalis and Burmans were aggrandizers within the new state system that grew with new imperial expansion, i.e. of what Edward Thompson called *The Making of the Indian Princes*. At the same time, the new Nepal also aroused the antagonism of the Chinese overlords of Tibet. Prithvinarayan had described Nepal as a 'tuber between two rocks' and—in 1792, Tibet forced Nepal to buckle down northern expansion.

The British tolerated such a state on its periphery while it faced its own Western imperial crisis in the Napoleonic Wars. Immedi-

ately after Waterloo, Lord Hastings struck at the Gorkhas. Though the War increased British respect for the hillmen, imperialism annexed their edges in the west, and turned the easternmost fringe, the Nagari *subbah* which included the salubrious Darjeeling spur, into a protectorate as part of its Sikkim ally during the Anglo-Nepal War.

6. After that, the social history of the Nepal state is one of subalternity—which means junior cadetship; and *not* popular competition against the ruling élite as recent jargon tries to suggest. A Bengali historian at Oxford has recently translated ‘subaltern consciousness’ as ‘*habildari chetana*’. Kumar Pradhan has a fruitful set of hypotheses to explain the factions at the Kathmandu court—one group led by the Pandes supporting revanchism against the British which was popular among the soldiery, the other first by Bhimsen Thapa and then Jung Bahadur Rana, the founder of the Rana oligarchy, compromising with imperialism and leading to the later policy of turning to a Nepali royal recruiting agency for it, a policy of subordinate feudalism bulwarking capitalist colonialism. The processes of tension, violence, and even massacres, as well as dismal social existence conditions for the peasantry which made up these tendencies, were part of the social trends of Hinduization, Sanskritization and casteist reactionary force summed up by the *tagadhari-matwali* dialectic, in which the latter became subjects, followers of, and even retainers to the former. However, as Dr Pradhan does not fail to note, there were recurrent revolts and insurgencies against the royal officials, in Eastern Nepal (his case), as elsewhere: as well as a flow of migration to India and abroad. This led to a ‘hundred years of solitude’ from democratic trends for the people of Nepal, in which political unity was established at the expense of cultural diversity. It was to be a century and much more, whose dead hand has begun to wither only very recently.

7. The entire thesis is a fruitful one for general political sociology as well as history. It arouses interest in the democratic aspects of diversity lurking beneath sovereign unity. It leads to the question—was fragmentation the only reason for their failure? Or were they enfeebled by their hill range and narrow valley isolation? Or, as Dr Pradhan emphasizes, and scholars of eighteenth century Punjab and Afghan decline like Prof Athar Ali or Dr Muzaffar Alam have done in their recent articles or books, was the desiccation of trade routes across the Himalaya, Pamir and Hind Koh mountains chains from India to Central Asia, a more important reason for their weakening and authoritarian consolidation under repressive political élites? An admixture of these factors lies at the roots of the

transitional political forms of Nepali tribes and castes: and also of the Swat Pathans studied by Barth, or of the Kachins of Highland Burma studied earlier by Edmund Leach. Kumar Pradhan contributes to this literature, not least by placing the last independent Hindu kingdom in a historically materialist perspective. On the other hand, he contributes to a more specialist theme, which is recently evoking scholarly interest in the West as well as in India—the internal dynamics of South Asian political systems parallel to early colonialism. He shows how a representative one consolidated itself by contact with Brahmanical ideological structuring, how its Sanskritization was not necessarily harmonious for the lower classes, and how its ruling class maintained itself, like its neighbours, by becoming junior collaborators of British imperialism.

On both counts, this book should be of interest to a wide variety of readers.

BARUN DÉ

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1 May, 1990

Preface

The Process and Consequences of the Unification of Nepal, with Particular Reference to Eastern Nepal AD 1750-1850, written almost a decade before and accepted as a doctoral dissertation by the Calcutta University in 1982, is being published with the main title of *The Gorkha Conquests*. The book has been divested of many details and all the diacritical marks for the convenience of general readers.

Nepal has received the attention of many Indian scholars, and monographs on different facets of Indo-Nepal relations have appeared. This work is a study on the emergence of the present Nepalese state and society. Historians of Nepal have written about the subject, often describing it as 'national unification'. However this study differs from them in the sense that it is an attempt to examine how the multitudinous diversity of the land was resolved in the process of unifying scores of independent political units into one state and the socio-economic consequences of this process on peoples embracing great cultural and ethnolinguistic diversity.

Though this work deals primarily with the history of the birth of the present kingdom of Nepal, that is, roughly between AD 1750 and 1850, the theme of the work necessitated a review of the process in a broader chronological framework for a more meaningful understanding.

For its source material, the work had to depend on published and unpublished archival as well as other material in Nepali because no archival material in English for the subject is available. Innumerable documents of varying historical importance are still to be found in private possession in Nepal. Quite a number of trips, specially to Eastern Nepal, had to be undertaken for on the spot study of such

documents and the traditions behind them. Such visits not only gave opportunities for gaining intimate knowledge about the people but also for making a sustained study of their oral and literary traditions.

The words Kirata and Kirat have been used here with some difference in the shades of their usages. The first is a generic name that designates the Indo-Mongoloids, and Kirat, as is the general practice among the Nepalese, stands for the tribes known as the Rais (Khambus) and Limbus of Eastern Nepal, the region is also known as Kirat and is divided into the Near, Middle and Far Kirat.

With gratitude I recall the unfailing encouragement and kind attention given, even during his illness, by my supervisor Professor Nirmal C. Sinha, then Centenary Professor of International Relations, Calcutta University. I am grateful to the University Grants Commission for the financial assistance which, to an extent, made this study possible.

With affection I thank Suren (Dr Surendra Munshi, Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta) for sharing his views with me and collaborating in a preliminary survey of the subject, and to Srobona (Mrs Srobona Munshi, Department of English, Calcutta University) for all the help and inspiration I got from her. Fondly and with profound regard I cherish the memory of Professor Bimala Prasad Mukherjee who not only encouraged but helped me in getting registered for Ph.D.

This study could not have been possible without the works of numerous scholars from whose works, as recorded in the Notes and Bibliography, I have derived heavily. I thank those archivists and librarians of Nepal and India without whose help in obtaining documents and books not much progress would have been possible.

With great pleasure I remember some renowned historians of Nepal, the late Baburam Acharya, Nayaraj Patna, Dhanavajra Vajracharya and Mahesh Chandra Regmi for giving me their time and attention. For warm hospitality and unstinted help in Eastern Nepal I thank a host of my friends, most particularly Mr Kaziman Kandongba. Thanks are also due to one of my old pupils, Mr Man Bahadur Chhetri of Ilam, for procuring some rare and valuable documents and to my nephew Daya Ratna Pradhan for patiently photocopying a really large corpus of documents.

To Subhash (Mr Subhash Ranjan Chakraborty, Department of History, Presidency College, Calcutta) I am indebted for his constant fraternal proddings and help in getting the book published and to Dr (Ms) T.T. Kumar, I.A.S., not only for her keen interest and encouragement but also for going through parts of the typescript and suggesting corrections.

I have no words to express my gratitude to Professor Barun Dé for

his help in getting the book published by the Oxford University Press and for readily agreeing to grace the book with his Foreword. Indeed, this work would not have seen the light of day without him.

I am grateful to Mr Wangchu Lama, Darjeeling Forest Office, for typing the thesis as well as the press copy of this book. The painstaking task of making the Index was undertaken by my wife Purnima and children Indira, Somendra, Gehendra and Manasa, whose loving help sustains me during the periods of research and writing.

The credit for any merit in the work must be shared by all whom I have named and who prefer anonymity, but none of them are responsible for the lacunae that this book suffers from or for the views it propounds.

25, Belombre Road
Darjeeling
3 April 1990

KUMAR PRADHAN

Introduction

'From the summit of Chandraghiri there is a most commanding prospect, the eye, from hence, not only expatiating on the waving valley of Nepaul, beautifully and thickly dotted with villages, and abundantly chequered with rich fields fertilized by numerous meandering streams; but also embracing on every side a wide expanse of charmingly diversified country. It is the landscape in front, however, that here most powerfully attracts the attention; the scenery in this direction gradually rising to an amphitheatre, and successively exhibiting to the delighted view the cities and numberless temples of the valley below; the stupendous mountain of Sheoopoori; the still super-towering Jibjibia, clothed to its snow-capped peak with pendulous forests; and finally, the gigantic Himma-leh, forming the majestic back-ground of this wonderful and sublime picture ...'¹

Thus in 1793 was Colonel William Kirkpatrick enchanted by the view of Nepal valley from the summit of the nearby Chandragiri hill. Five decades before his visit, the heart of Prithvinarayan Shah, then ruler of a small hill principality called Gorkha, about a hundred kilometres to the west of the valley, was similarly captivated. The panorama that he saw stoked his ambition to conquer it and the intensity of that passion he describes in *Divya Upadesa*.² 'So that the king of Nepal might not recognize me,' he recounts, 'I covered myself with a *syakhu* (a shawl-like covering) and went along the banks of the Rapti, accompanied by Bhanu Jaishi and other *thar-ghar*.*

'On reaching the top of the Chandragiri hill I asked, "Which is

* *Thar-ghar*. Members of the six families, namely, Pande, Aryal, Panta, Rana, Khanal and Bohra, who had helped the rise of the principality of Gorkha. They constituted the Council of Gorkha.

Nepal?" They pointed out saying, "That is Bhadgau, that is Patan, and that is Katu mandu." Then I cherished a desire in my heart that I might be the king of these three cities. At that moment these two astrologers said to me, "Maharaj, your wish will be fulfilled." I marvelled as to how they could know my innermost desire, and I asked them. They replied, "At that moment your eyes were riveted on Nepal, you stroked your moustache, and it seemed to us that you were wishful to be the king."...'³

Prithvinarayan's ambition was fulfilled after thirty years when this valley became the centre of a new and enlarged kingdom, thence called Nepal. Yet, the inhabitants of the surrounding hills, plains and mountains refer to the valley as Nepal even though they live within political frontiers of the present kingdom of Nepal.⁴

The Nepal valley, also called the Bagmati or the Kathmandu valley, is barely two hundred and fifty square miles in area. Though small enough to be traversed on foot in a day, it contains what has been called the 'scene of a cultural efflorescence remarkable even in the perspective of the civilizations of Nepal's neighbours—India and Tibet.'⁵

Present day Nepal was once a cluster of petty principalities, small kingdoms' and settlements virtually independent under respective tribal chiefs. The rulers of Gorkha conquered them, thus forging the new kingdom of Nepal and marking the transition from an era of petty states (diversified power) to an era of nation-building. This is a most significant period which deserves attention for a proper understanding of the history of Nepal.

Historians of Nepal tend to describe the polity before the conquests of Prithvinarayan Shah as the state of 'political fragmentation' before 'national unification'. However 'fragmentation' implies a breaking or separation into pieces of a pre-existent whole; and national unity connotes the change, a conscious one, from the chaos of national disintegration to the quondam state of cohesion. Such a description also presupposes the presence of various factors contributing to the sense of national unity among a people with aspirations towards a separate national identity. Herein lies the debate—was Nepal ever a nation before Gorkha forged it into one and did it ever have a physical shape comparable to the present one to merit such description?

Attempts have been made to establish that Nepal broadly conformed to the present physical shape even in the remote past. Epigraphic and literary sources are cited to vindicate this thesis, but on closer scrutiny they seem vague and do not prove the theory definitively.⁶

Shifts in emphasis rather than basic differences have characterized

the studies of different scholars of Nepalese history. Baburam Acharya, the doyen among Nepalese historians, regarded the conquests of Gorkha as the cause of national unification. D.R. Regmi felt that behind Prithvīnarayan's conquests 'patriotism was the guiding factor' because the king was a 'nationalist to the core of his heart'. However, Regmi considerably changed his view in the revised edition of his *Modern Nepal*.⁷ Ludwig F. Stiller's study on the *Rise of the House of Gorkha*, covering the period from 1768 to 1846, elaborates by emphasizing the leadership of Prithvīnarayan Shah, whose 'inspiration...was alone able to solve the riddle' posed by 'the geographic, geopolitical, and economic forces at work in the Himalayas that militated against unification'.⁸ He sums up saying, 'This is my analysis of the unification of Nepal; inspiration and economic incentive'.⁹

In addition to Prithvīnarayan's role as the founder of Modern Nepal, scholars have praised his statesmanship in keeping the British out. D.R. Regmi is of the view that 'in the wake of Prithvīnarayan's defeat the British colonial interest would surely have acquired a firm footing,' and adds, that had things been different, Nepal would not have become a 'united whole as it is today'.¹⁰ Similarly, Stiller, describing the conquests of Prithvīnarayan, 'in terms that hopefully will render a hitherto confusing picture both meaningful and strategically understandable', explains the Gorkhali efforts to administer their newly acquired kingdom. Indeed he shows how a departure from these ideals enunciated by Prithvīnarayan Shah led to a momentary breakdown in the administrative system and weakened Nepal in its fight with the British in 1814-16.¹¹ He then adds that despite this lapse, Prithvīnarayan's system 'proved itself strong enough to withstand the shock of military defeat and sustain the Nepal state in its struggle to maintain its independence against the tide of encroaching British imperialism'.¹²

Considering his achievements, it is no wonder that scholars of Nepal should extol Prithvīnarayan. He was truly a remarkable character. Though critical of him in many respects, even Hamilton agrees that 'Prithvīnarayan... was a person of insatiable ambition, great courage, and increasing activity'.¹³

However, Nepali historiography suffers from the prejudice of nineteenth-century West European and North American historians who dealt largely with governments and great men, or from what E.H. Carr described as the 'Bad King John' and 'the Good Queen Bess' theory of history.¹⁴ A disagreement with a dictum 'history is the biography of great men' is not to declare the individual to be a *quantite negligible*. The individual has his free will and a role in history, but even a great man is a social being, defined by his social relations. The

traditional historians of Nepal, however, tend to make too little of the 'dull multitude' and too much of the cataclysmic personality of the rulers. Analyses of social and economic forces help one to dispel the penumbra of twilight surrounding many historical events of the time. Prithvinarayan's public actions certainly had historical antecedents and definite consequences.

A departure from the traditional historiography of Nepal was made by Mahesh Chandra Regmi. Lamenting that the persistent disregard for the economic aspects of Nepal's historical problems were inexplicable and inexcusable, in his *A Study in Nepali Economic History, 1768-1846* Regmi sought to describe 'the economic policies and programmes followed by the Gorkhali rulers to mobilize human and material resources for territorial expansion'. His aim was to be of help 'in providing insights into the basic features and objectives of Gorkhali rule without which the political history of this period cannot be studied meaningfully'. In the process he tries to throw light on the 'impact of these policies and programmes on the life of the people' and 'to analyse economic influences at work among the people'. Thus his understanding of the process of political unification and its economic aspects and consequences led him away from the spectacle of the sword to a realization that military campaigns resulting in the mobilization of human and material resources eventually hampered long-term economic growth.¹⁵

Another significant consideration to be borne in mind is that Nepal is a country of diversity at multiple levels and of many kinds. The insistence that the conquests of Gorkha were for the national unification of Nepal implies as the most salient point the integration of all diverse elements into a whole. The present kingdom of Nepal, an elongated rectangular country of roughly 55,000 square miles, is indeed small in size. But within this physical framework almost all the climatic zones on the earth are represented. Thus there is southern *terai* region or Nepal's share of the Indian Gangetic plain and swamps; the high fertile valleys and sharp mountain ridges of central Nepal and the snowy wastes of the Alpine zone where Nepal juts out at places into the trans-Himalayan plateau.

The landscape changes from paddy fields, grasslands and jungles in the plain land of the Indian boundary to soaring mountain heights of approximately 25,000 feet, a mere 150 miles to the north on the Tibetan border. Accordingly climate ranges from the tropical heat of the lowlands to the arctic cold of higher altitude. The diversity of this geographic setting is equally matched by ethnic, linguistic, religious, social variety and this is seen especially in Kathmandu where population is on the increase. Furthermore, Nepal is basically an agrarian

country. No other town in the country can boast of even a third of the 1,50,492 strong population of Kathmandu, the country's capital and largest town (1971 Census). More than thirty languages and innumerable dialects are spoken, belonging to distinct groups of Indo-European, Tibeto-Burman, and Austro-Asiatic origin are spoken. 'If about a half of the population in western and southern hemispheres claim Indian origin with regard to language, religion, social organization and physical features, a different pattern is discernible in the mountain villages of the north and east where the Tibetan linguistic, cultural and religious connections and Mongoloid physical type of the inhabitants are distinct traits. Again the people are divided into a multitude of clans and sub-clans, castes and sub-castes and groupings so numerous that Giuseppe Tucci says, 'the ethnographical study of Nepal, despite the many researches undertaken, is still one of the most complex in the world'.¹⁶ Similarly, 'religious differences, which are of great social, economic and political significance in Nepal, introduce another element of complexity into the country's human geography. The distribution of religious groups does not follow the lines of tribal divisions; many of the tribes are divided as to religion'.¹⁷

With its predominantly agricultural and pastoral economy there existed a complexity with respect to land tenure. *Raikar*, *birta*, *guthi*, *jagir*, and *kipat* were the major land tenure systems.¹⁸ Similarly, the taxation methods too lacked uniformity.

Reviewing the process and consequences of the political unification of Nepal, the consideration of such diversities leads to questions that ask how the problem of this multitudinous diversity was resolved, and how scores of politically independent units were consolidated into a common territorial framework under one ruler or government. Indeed what were the consequences of this unification on different groups with their diverse and discrete primordial sentiments?

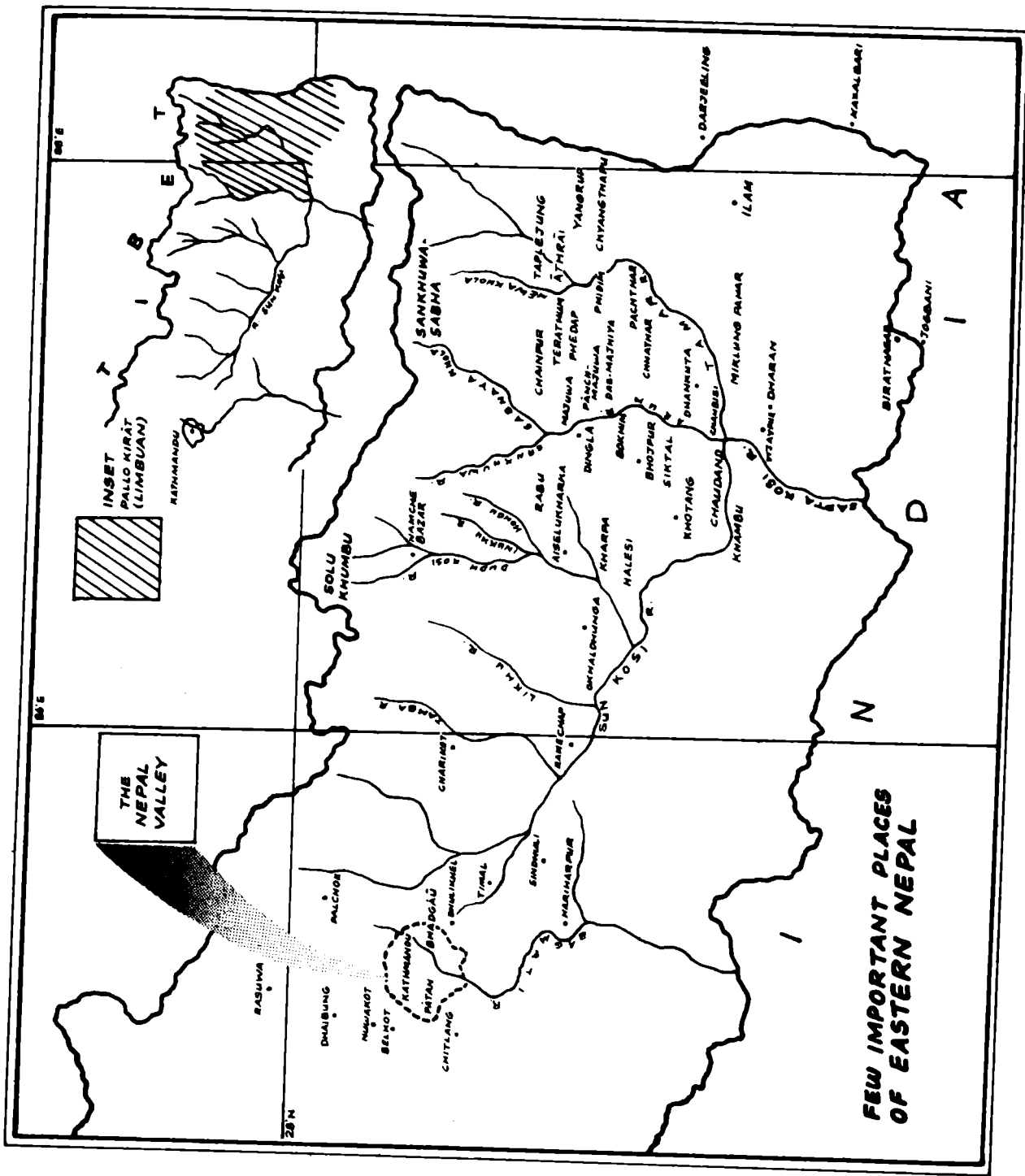
These questions are tackled for a better understanding of the subject. They seek to refute M.C. Regmi's view that 'a classification of the Nepali society purely from the ethnic view point would hardly be meaningful...in a socioeconomic study'.¹⁹

Nepalese society was not homogeneous, hence for an in-depth understanding of the essence of Nepalese history and sociology this study holds ethnolinguistic or ethnocultural classification important. Though the period of the Gorkha conquest and consequent territorial unification covered hardly seventy years, the subject is examined against a broader historical perspective. The political history of different regions before they were conquered by Gorkha has been analysed. Further, special emphasis is laid on Eastern Nepal, an area more or less ignored by Nepalese historians. No coherent account of

pre-unification Eastern Nepal being available, an attempt has been made to reconstruct its history from as early a date as possible from the available source materials. Such a treatment is necessary for an intensive study of the society of the area which was one of the last tribal regions to be conquered by Gorkha and annexed to the emergent kingdom of Nepal. This exhibits a common pattern in a long-drawn historical process of which the unification of Nepal under Gorkha appears to be only a part, though often overaccentuated.

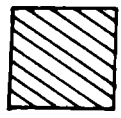
Part One

PRE-UNIFICATION SITUATION



FEW IMPORTANT PLACES OF EASTERN NEPAL

THE NEPAL VALLEY



**INSET
PALLO KIRAT
(LIMBUWAN)**

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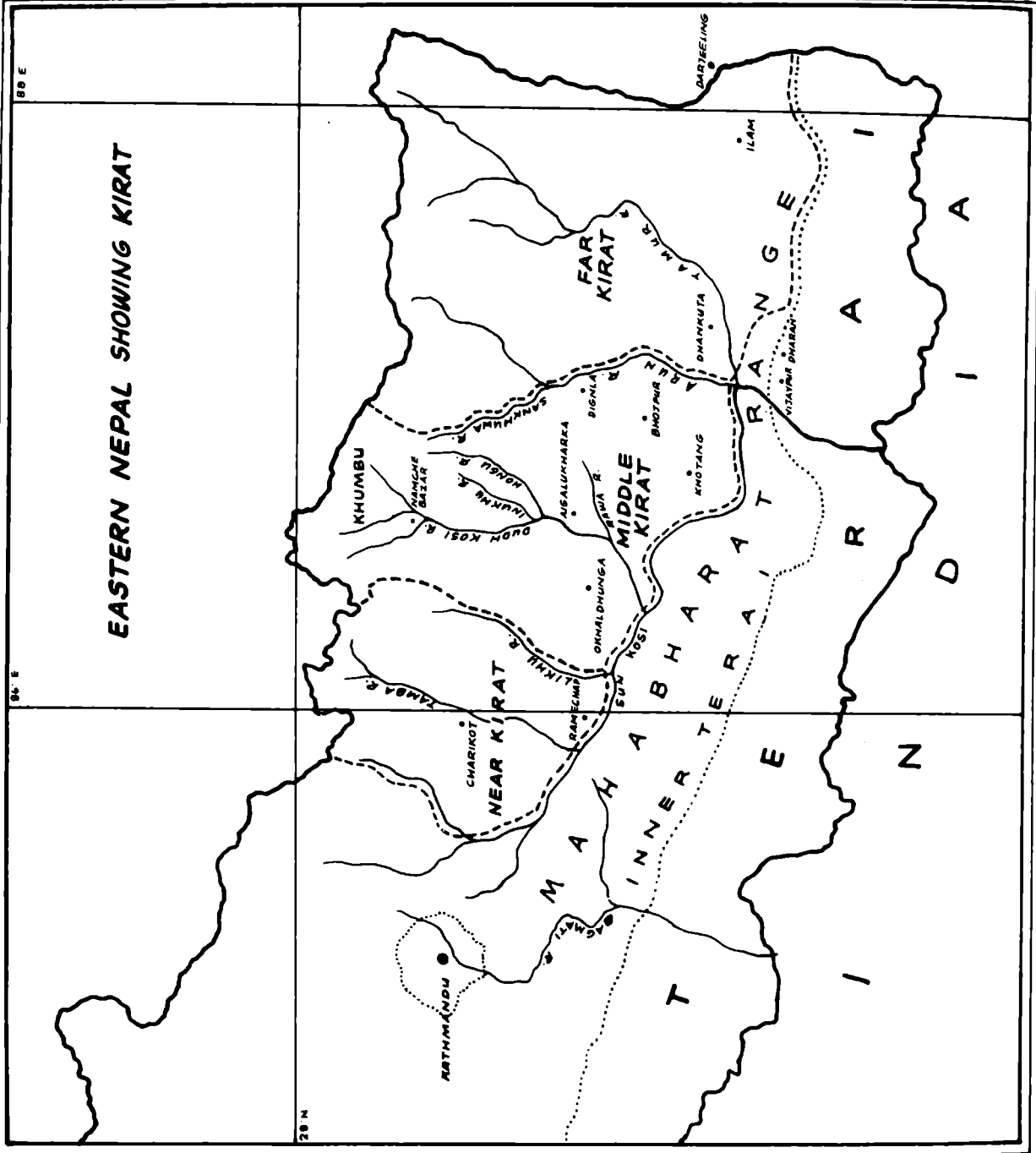
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1

Historical Background

The people of Nepal divide their country into three horizontal belts: Bhot, Pahar and Mades. The alpine zone in the north, called Jadan or Bhot (the name for Tibet) is sparsely populated by tribes akin to the Tibetans in custom, habit, speech and belief; to the south of this lie the hills, or Pahar, the very matrix of Nepal's history. The people living here are culturally identified as Nepalis and also as Gorkhas; further south, there extends the Mades, a derivation from *Madhyadesh*, the name for the Gangetic plains, or the *terai* belt where people have affinities with those of the northern Indian plains.

The further subdivision of the country—particularly of the Pahar region into vertical zones—has historical significance. Khasan, the land of the Khasas, falls roughly into the present-day Mahakali-Karnali zone in the west. To its east lies Magrat, the land once predominated by the Magars, now called the Dhaulagiri-Gandaki zone. Further east lies the valley identified from the remote past as Nepal or Kathmandu, Patan and Bhadgau; yet further towards the east lies Kirat, subdivided into Wallo (Near), Majh (Middle) and Pallo (Far) Kirat. These divisions, horizontal and vertical, are in no way homogeneous; each presenting a melange of diversity.

THE NEPAL VALLEY

The Nepal valley, from where the new kingdom of Nepal took its name, played an important role in the history of the country.

Until recently studies on the history of Nepal almost exclusively dealt with that of the Nepal valley. Its early history is shrouded in an apocrypha of legend and myth. The legendary belief, that the valley was once a lake,¹ is confirmed by geological evidence. Another conclusion is that the valley was the home of autochthons of some

unknown origin. The primitive hordes of pastoral peoples from the plains and marshlands must have settled there later. Historical sources dealing with the early period are not very comprehensive. *Gopala Vamsavali*, a palm-leaf manuscript of the late fifteenth century,² lists the names of eight 'cowherd' or *Gopala* kings as the earliest rulers. They were eventually replaced by the 'buffalo-tamer' or the *Mahishapala* dynasty that survived for three generations. The names of all these kings are of Sanskrit or Indo-Aryan origin whereas those of the succeeding Kirata kings are definitely not Indo-Aryan. However, the names of the rulers of these three dynasties of the proto-historic period differ a little from the lists given by Kirkpatrick and Daniel Wright.³

It is difficult to establish the veracity of these accounts on the basis of a single source of a much later date. The chronicle relates how the Kiratas were later supplanted by the Lichchhavis who, according to a Purana, were immigrants. The Lichchhavis were the first rulers to leave a number of coins and inscriptions in Sanskrit dating from about the middle of the fifth century. Nepal must have gained importance much earlier than its first historical mention in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta (c. AD 340-380). Because of its fertility and geographical centrality with regard to Indo-Tibetan trade, it was growing into a metropolis marked for cultural and architectural efflorescence.

The first Lichchhavi king, who defeated the last Kirata kings, Patuka and Gasti, is known as Srinimi (*Gopala Vamsavali*), Nivisha (Wright) and Nevesit (Kirkpatrick). K.P. Jaysawal has suggested that this was not a personal name but one derived from 'Lichchhavi' (Nichchhavi of *Manusmriti*).⁴ The first ruler to have left coins and important inscriptions was Manadeva. The exact period of his reign has been a subject of much controversy,⁵ though the general opinion is that he must have belonged to the Saka era. If this view is accepted, his regnal year was AD 464.

Nowhere in his genealogy does Manadeva claim to be of Lichchhavi descent. It is only in the epigraphs of his daughter and later successors that such an origin is claimed.⁶ According to Jaina traditions the Lichchhavis had entered Nepal when Vaisali was invaded by Magadha, probably in the sixth century BC.⁷

Manadeva claims that he subjugated the Malla feudatories in the west and other chieftains in the east.⁸ His successor's inscription has been found in Gorkha outside the Nepal valley. This supports the theory that the Lichchhavis could have ruled over a larger territory not confined to the valley alone. However they soon lost power to a feudatory, Amsuvarma, whose name is mentioned in most of the

sixteen inscriptions of Jayadeva II. Amsuvarma either usurped *de facto* power or acquired a position equal to that of the king. Hiuen Tsang refers to him as a 'king' distinguished for learning and ingenuity, but the Chinese had made a similar mistake elsewhere when they mistook the powerful Rams for kings.⁹

Whatever his official position, Amsuvarma remained the real ruler till his death.¹⁰ The Lichchhavis continued to occupy the throne but grew weaker day by day and like Amsuvarma their Gupta vassals also took advantage. Thus inscriptions began to be issued in the joint Lichchhavi-Gupta names.¹¹ Conspiracies and internal feuds continued to undermine the court, eventually inviting Tibetan intervention in the middle of the seventh century.

According to a Tibetan belief, Nepal was occupied by Tibet in AD 640.¹² But Narendradeva, who sought Tibetan help to recover his throne, though described by the Tiang annals as a vassal of Tibet,¹³ still used a full royal title. The Nepal valley had been exposed to the influence both of the Indian plains and the Central Asian highlands from the beginning. In fact the last two kings of the Lichchhavi dynasty, Shivadeva II and Jayadeva II, were married to princesses of two Indian dynasties—Maukhari and Gauda respectively. Tibetan chronicles even talk about the marriage of the powerful Tibetan king, Srong-btsan Gam-po, with Amsuvarma's daughter, Bhrikuti of Belsa, who along with her Chinese co-wife is given the credit for introducing Buddhism in Tibet.¹⁴ But this is vehemently disputed by Nepali scholars who argue that not only is the event unrecorded in Nepali chronicles, but a Kshatriya ruler could not have given his daughter in marriage to an uncouth Mongoloid.¹⁵ They do not accept the opinion that Tibet had a hold over Nepal during this period.¹⁶

The history of the Lichchhavis becomes obscure from the middle of the eighth century. There is a lamentable desideration of sources for the history of Nepal from 750 to 1000. Luciano Petech aptly describes the situation as 'a comeback of mythology in the very middle of sober history'.¹⁷

Petech divides the period of 750-1768 into the Thakuri and early Malla period (c. 750-1480) and the period of the three Malla kingdoms (1480-1768).¹⁸ The *Vamsavalis* refer to the first of these dynasties as solar. The later use of Thakuri (Thakura) was due probably to the influence of the 'Rājputization' of genealogies.

It was no doubt a period of comparative darkness due to the decline of the valley kings. Though the *Gopala Vamsavali* refers to a Tibetan king, Namoyati, ruling over Nepal, no definite date is assigned to him, nor has he been clearly identified.¹⁹ Similarly one school of thought²⁰ refers to Dharmapala, undoubtedly the Pala ruler of Bengal as a

Gauda king of Nepal. Even if this cannot prove Tibetan or Indian political suzerainty, it does indicate one of the sources of the various influences on the society of the inhabitants of the valley—the Newars.

Invaders were lured by the richness of the valley. One of them was Jayapida Vinayaditya of Kashmir (c. 782). His abrogation of Brahmanism and temple grants and levy of taxes on temple property in Kashmir all suggest the plight of his economy. It is probable that his decision to raid the Nepal valley was provoked by a desire for a permanent solution to his economic problem. Kalhana²¹ describes Jayapida's enterprise and how it was thwarted by Aramudi, the king of Nepal. Sylvain Levi suggests that he was a Tibetan king,²² Jaysawal identifies him with Varadeva (Vara>Ara, mundita> mudi), a post-Lichchhavi king mentioned in the chronicles,²³ and Jagadish Chandra Regmi finds in his name a phonetic similarity with Mundri of the Lichchhavi epigraphs.²⁴ As the fight took place in the area described as Magrat, Aramudi might have been a Magar tribal chief.²⁵

A new era, called the Newar or Nepal era, was founded on 20 October, 879. This was probably a renewed Saka era after a lapse of eight hundred years.²⁶ The epigraphs, which are now sources of historical information, were replaced by colophons in manuscripts and *thyasafus* written in Newari.

The rulers from the time of Bhaskardeva were called Thakuris. Some scholars consider them to be the descendants of Amsuvarma. It was during the reign of this dynasty that the valley witnessed another invasion from the plains of India. Nanyadeva, the founder of the Karnata dynasty of Mithila in AD 1097 and a Paramara (Karnat) Kshatriya of southern origin,²⁷ was regarded by the later kings of the Nepal valley as their progenitor.²⁸ Like the Senas of Bengal, he too came from South India. He entered Simroan in the Nepal terai. The Senas and the Karnats were probably the forebears of the Chalukyas who raided north India in the eleventh century.²⁹ Nepali historians, however, argue that Nepal was never invaded by Nanyadeva as it was then under independent rulers.³⁰

The total absence of numismatic evidence from the beginning of the ninth century has led scholars to believe that Nepal was then ruled by some Indian dynasty. A number of South Indian kings of the period claim to have brought Nepal under their sway,³¹ 'however geographically absurd that may seem'.³² Another feature of the period was *dvairajya* or the joint rule of two kings, each ruling a part of the kingdom which, however, was considered to be a whole. Petech suggests that this institution might have had something to do with the Mongoloid elements in the Newar society.³³ This period was one of anarchy. Feudatory chiefs often wielded real power and the kingdom

was torn by civil strife, which continued even after the Thakuris were replaced by a more vigorous dynasty, the Malla.

Whether the Mallas had any relationship with the ancient Mallas mentioned in Manadeva's inscription or with Khasa Mallas of Western Nepal is not known. They ruled over the Nepal valley and some neighbouring tracts from c. 1200.

The five centuries of Malla rule were not free from inroads from outside. Nepal maintained its intercourse with Tibet, and India as before. Anantamalla (c. 1274-1310), a contemporary of Qublai Khan of China, had close links with Tibet, particularly with the powerful Sakya-pa monastery. It was through Tibet that a band of eighty Newar artisans under Araniko or A-ni-ko (1245-1386) went to Peking from Nepal.³⁴ The Ming rulers of China and the kings of Nepal exchanged envoys, and consequently no invaders came from the north.³⁵

Nepal was invaded instead from other directions. A strong Khasa kingdom, which included Kumaon-Garhwal, present-day Western Nepal and parts of Western Tibet, had stretched to the west of the Nepal valley at least by the thirteenth century. In 1287-88 the Khasa king Jayatarimalla invaded and destroyed cities in the Nepal valley. Though driven out he renewed his attacks soon after.³⁶ The Khasa withdrawal was followed by two invasions by forces from Tirhut (Mithila) in 1290 and 1311, under Chandeshwar, a minister of Harisimha and a descendent of Nanyadeva. In his book *Vivada-ratnakara* he claims to have extirpated the Raghu progeny.³⁷

The overlordship of the Karnats of Mithila in the Nepal valley is refuted, but the squabbles and the resultant splitting of the valley into the kingdom of Patan and Bhadgau was an invitation to further trouble. The discovery of a silver coin struck in the name of Ala-ud-din Khalji once led to the conclusion that the Khalji power had extended to Nepal.³⁸ There is no other evidence to support this theory and Petech is probably right in his assumption that 'this passing acknowledgement of overlordship must have been a diplomatic precaution to forestall an invasion by the dreaded conqueror of Deccan and South India.'³⁹

The Khasa Ripumalla (Re'us Mal of the Tibetan texts) invaded Nepal in 1313, but left soon after to visit the terai where he left his name in graffito on the Ashokan Pillar. He was followed, in 1328, by Adityamalla, the son of Jayatarimalla, who, record *vamsavalis*, captured Navakot and Patan.

When Mithila was threatened by Muslim rule in the person of Ghiyas-ud-din who invaded Tirhut in the fourteenth century, its ruler, Harisimha, fled from his capital Simraongarh (Simdhunigarh of the Newari texts) to Nepal. Although this was not an invasion of Nepal,

the king might have regarded Nepal as a vassal in view of the fact that it had earlier been conquered by his minister, Chandeshwar. Whatever his status in Nepal, extant sources do not warrant a view that Harisimha became its ruler.⁴⁰ Instead he is credited with the introduction of the mythical goddess Taleju," a popular deity in the Newar pantheon.

Even if it is accepted that Harisimha never ruled Nepal, it can be surmised that he held a respectable and high position there during his exile. Furthermore if Jagatsimha, 'a prince of Tirhut', according to the chronicles, was his son, the assumption of the kingship by Harisimha for a short period cannot be ruled out entirely. Moreover, the later Malla kings claimed descent from Harishmahadeva and their rule saw the wide use of Maithili as a literary medium in the Nepal court.

The chronic dissension of Nepal invited in 1359 yet a far more ravaging conquest, this time by Shams-ud-din Ilyas of Bengal. Two epigraphs⁴¹ in the valley stand witness to this depredation. He burnt down the capital, broke into three pieces the image of Pasupati, and destroyed the *dharmadhatu stupa* of Swayambhu.⁴² Besides, his was also a predatory raid.

The long period of anarchy was brought to an end by Jayasthitimalla (1385-1395), a king of obscure origins who had married the daughter of Jagatsimha, 'the prince of Tirhut'. Jayasthiti introduced many innovations with a view to stabilizing his kingdom. Many feel that he was given the name Jayasthiti because he established *sthiti* or stability in the kingdom. He introduced a well-organized caste system with a definite Brahman predominance. He consolidated royal power, did away with the influence of powerful families and united his domain. One of his successors, Jayakshamalla (1428-1480), could even boast of having conquered lands as far as Gaya, Magadha, Mithila, a number of hill states, Gorkha⁴³ and 'Sikarjoong of Tibet to the northward', an important mart on the Kathmandu-Lhasa road.⁴⁴ He gave prominence to the Newari language and it came to be widely used in epigraphic records thenceforward.

But the consolidation of the kingdom became infructuous when he, like the Franks, ignored the law of primogeniture and divided his realm among his three sons. Thus there arose three principalities—Patan, Bhadgau and Banepa. Patan, which had its capital at Kathmandu, separated from the latter in 1603. The collateral principalities,

* 'Amba Bhavani of Tulajapur in Hyderabad State is one of the most important Sakta shrines in the Deccan. Sivaji the great 17th century hero of the Hindu national revival, was a devotee of this deity', Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, *Kirata-Jana-Kiriti*, p. 41.

whose capitals lay at an average of 7-8 miles from each other, never lived in amity.

The history of the Mallas from 1480 till their defeat at the hands of Prithvinarayan of Gorkha is a narrative of mutual jealousies and open fights resulting in the transitory ascendancy of one at the cost of the others. To make matters worse, each principality in turn suffered from its own internal discords caused by the ambitions of the different contenders for the throne. A popular adage describes the situation that there were as many kings as there were *tols* or localities in the valley.

The disunity and rivalry of the city-kingdoms ultimately proved fatal for their kings. Just about a hundred kilometres to the west of the valley, the small principality of Gorkha was growing powerful. When its ruler Prithvinarayan Shah, lured by the sight of Nepal, decided to conquer it, the three kings of the Nepal valley failed to offer a united opposition, which facilitated the Gorkha conquest of Nepal in 1769.

Despite all these political vicissitudes the cultural and literary activities were never curtailed. An entrepot in Nepal was essential to Indo-Tibetan trade. This became the sheet-anchor of the prosperity of the valley, thus the main cause of conflict between its city-kingdoms was the control of trade-routes. In the later half of the sixteenth century Bhadgau lost to the city-kingdom of Kathmandu Sanga and Banepa, two important stations on the route to the Kuti pass leading to Tibet.⁴⁵ Consequently, this new city of Kathmandu became more important than Patan and Bhadgau. One of its kings, Mahendramalla, began to mint silver coins for Tibet in exchange for other precious metals. His *Mahendramalli* was the first silver coin used in Nepal.

KHASAN : THE KHASA KINGDOM AND THE BAISI

Of late the western part of the present kingdom of Nepal has been receiving more attention from scholars for two significant reasons. In the first place it was from that region that the Khasas, the speakers of the Khasa language or proto-Nepali moved eastward. Secondly, it was also from there that the progenitors of the rulers of Gorkha or the present ruling dynasty and the dominant group of Nepal came. Moreover the discovery of significant archaeological material has also attracted the attention of writers and scholars alike.

It is not true that nothing was known about the Khasa kingdom of the west previously, although more information has come to light with the discovery of a number of epigraphs by Tucci, Naraharinath and others.⁴⁶ As most of the kings were surnamed Malla, Tucci describes his sojourn in the region and his discovery of this half-forgotten realm

as *The Discovery of the Malla*. These Mallas do not seem to have any consanguineous relation with the Malla kings of the Nepal valley.

The Mallas of the west were Khasa as described by their epigraphs and other chronicles. They created quite a big kingdom, which once contained not only Western Nepal but also Kumaon-Garhwal and parts of Western Tibet. Tucci has shown that the genealogy of the Mallas, contained in the epigraph found in Jumla, fully agrees with the description given in different Tibetan texts.⁴⁷

The Lichchhavi king of the Nepal valley, Manadeva, claimed the subjugations of Mallapuri after he crossed the Gandaki and levied the *mallakara* tax to meet the menace of the Mallas. These Mallas are often taken to be the ancestors of the Khasa kings on the basis of a similarity in name-endings. However, as evidence this is too tenuous for such a conclusion because Malla was a popular title among many ruling families in the Indian sub-continent. An ancient republican tribe was also called Malla. The epigraphs are clear that the names of the Khasa rulers first ended in 'challa'; it was changed to 'malla' later on.

The inscription which throws light on this dynasty is the Dullu stele inscription (1357) of Prithvimalla. This stele has engravings on its southern and northern faces. At the top, on each face is an image of the *stupa* and the Lamaist mantra, *Om mani padme hum*, in the Ranjana script. It then continues in Devanagari verse, speaking of the genealogies of two royal families. The readings made by Tucci and Yogi Naraharinath vary to some extent, but Tucci's presentation of the lists of kings finds corroboration in Tibetan texts.⁴⁸

The southern face of the stele gives the list of the kings of the Aditya family, most of their names ending in 'pala.' Then Tucci speaks of Srirajakhya (Srijava in Naraharinath), whose son Punyamalla succeeded Pratapmalla, the last king of the other dynasty, who died childless. He had been a monk at the Sakya monastery in Tibet.

Pratapmalla's genealogy on the northern face of the stele begins with Nagaraja, mentioning Chapa, Chapilla and kings whose names are appended by 'challa'. Some of their epigraphs have been found in India. One found at Balesvar, dated 1223, mentions Krachalladeva Jina of Kantipur identified with Krachalla, the fifth king listed on the stele inscription. In an inscription at Gopeshwar near Alakananda, on the way to Badrinath, his son Asokachalla mentions his conquest of Kedarabhumi or Garhwal. In a similar record at Bodhgaya he calls

* Dhanavajra Vajracharya, however, concludes that it was a tax levied on the cattle, *Lichchhavikalka Abhilekh*, Kathmandu 2030 VS (1973). This view is based on the levy called *mallapot* or *mallakara* of Manadeva's ancestors, R. Gnoli, pp. 58, 74-75, 78.

himself the ruler of Khasadesa or the Khasa country. It is dated 'seventy four years after the end of Lakshaman Sena's kingdom' in Bengal.⁴⁹ The title 'challa' was made 'malla' by the next king Jitari or Jayatarimalla of the chronicles, who invaded the Nepal valley twice in 1287-88. The Aditya kings ruled in Guge and Purang, which were according to Tibetan texts, parts of Zan zun, 'the old name of all western Tibet'⁵⁰ which in its heyday had been under Tibetan control.

The political unification of Western Tibet and Western Nepal meant economic unity. Trade relations between the two brought about an unprecedented prosperity of the region. With Punyamalla's accession Sija or Semja (Tucci identifies it with Yats'e of the Tibetan texts)⁵¹ in Jumla became the centre of the kingdom. Unexplored archaeological remains at Sija bear witness to the historical importance of the town, which had now dwindled to no more than a village. The stele inscription of Prithvimalla stands there.

The *Gopala Vamsavali* informs us that Jitari's nephew Ripumalla invaded the Nepal valley in 1313 (433 Newar era). Three of his epigraphs have been found at Sija.⁵² One of them claims that he was the author of the Buddhist text, *Laghuratnatraya*. The Rummendei Pillar Inscription of the great Indian king Ashoka Maurya bears a graffito in Devanagari with the Lamaist mantra and the name of Ripumalla. The Ashokan Pillar of Niglihava bears another graffito with his name and the date 1234. This date in the Saka era corresponds to 1312.⁵³ It is not certain whether a part of the western terai was included in the Khasa Kingdom or whether Ripumalla visited it as a pilgrim at the time of his expedition to the Nepal valley. Tibetan sources record his conquests of some parts of India.⁵⁴ Besides these, a host of other inscriptions in Sanskrit and proto-Nepali have been found in Western Nepal. One Devavarmadeva's Sanskrit inscription of 1276 SE (AD 1354) mentions, among other things, the name of Prithvimalla's minister Yasovarmadeva.⁵⁵

The Khasa kingdom at the apogee of its career was divided into two regions, Khasan in the south and Jadan (Tibetan part) in the north. Khasan had the predominance of the Indo-Aryan (Khasa) speakers. The Khasa kingdom disintegrated after Prithvimalla's reign. The innumerable land-grants since the time of Punyamalla exhibit the process of fragmentation. The earliest Mallas were Buddhists but since the time of Punyamalla, when the two realms were united and the capital shifted to Sija in the South, a Hindu bias becomes evident. The Sanskrit prologue on the copper plate charter of Prithvimalla speaks of both Saka (1280) and Vikram (1415) eras and the gods invoked are Hindu deities like Vaisvanara and the avatar of Vishnu (Buddha?). Lands, along with the right to collect thirty-six kinds of taxes, was

granted almost exclusively to the Brahmans. Such grants were perpetual, 'till the sun and moon last', and were to be enjoyed by the inheritors of the donee.⁵⁶

On the basis of the extant sources an attempt can be made to reconstruct the history of the subsequent phase. 'The Tibetan chronicles stop with him', says Tucci about Prithvimalla.⁵⁷ and the silence is eloquently self-explanatory. The Garhwal-Kumaon region split and witnessed the emergence of comparatively strong dynasties, the Chand in Kumaon and the Panwar in Garhwal!⁵⁸

In Western Nepal the process of fragmentation continued apace. The most recently discovered inscription is that of Medinibrahma Raulo, dated 1315 SE (AD 1393), who was not a Malla. As noted earlier, Prithvimalla had a minister named Yasovarma, a fact corroborated by a Tibetan text, and another named Devarma.

The Varma (brahma) family appears to have become powerful and even to have seized the throne. Medinivarma's Sanskrit eulogy describes him as the lord of a big dominion. His copper plate charter describes Sija as his capital.⁵⁹ A copper plate grant of Sahasrabrahma Raulo in 1397 describes him as a royal personage.⁶⁰ Another charter was jointly granted by Medinibrahma Raulo and Baliraj Raulo in 1404⁶¹ and a similar one in the name of Baliraj (1398).⁶²

The decline of the Khasa kingdom coincided with the rapid expansion of Muslim power in India. Harisimha had fled from Tirhut to the Nepal valley at the advance of the Muslims and had died there in 1325. The valley itself witnessed the invasion of Shams-ud-din Ilyas in 1359. The occupation of Western India by the Muslims set in motion the migration of many high-caste Hindus, feudal chiefs and princes to the security afforded by the hills. Genealogies refer to such migrations from Rajasthan after it was captured by Ala-ud-din Khalji.

The political situation in the old Khasa kingdom must have been chaotic. This is evident from the large number of genealogies of petty principalities that were found in the ruins. Though the panegyrics of all these potentates are as impressive as those of great emperors, these 'kingdoms' were nothing but minor fiefs. Most of their chronicles claim descent from the emigrant Rajput chiefs and clans.

Oral traditions of the region preserve many legends about one Jalandhari Sijapati.⁶³ In genealogies he is described as the principal ancestor of the migrants. The Dulla chronicle begins with an eighth generation descendant, a Rathor chief, Ratan Jot. Jalandhari is said to have gone to Mansarowar first and thence to Jumla. He seized Sija and ruled from there earning the epithet, Sijapati.⁶⁴

The Thakuris of the Sija valley describe Jalandhari as their ancestor.⁶⁵ Although he is not mentioned in any of the epigraphs, stories

identify him with one of the eighty-four siddhas, a mythical being, a pilgrim and an ancient physician.⁶⁶ Strangely they neglect a simple fact that the name could have been derived from the Indian state Jalandhar, to the west of Nepal, from where a migratory wave could have entered Western Nepal. It was in their attempts to 'dynastize' that the petty rulers often claimed to be the scions of the solar and lunar dynasties. That this tendency began even much earlier is to be seen in Prithvimalla's stele where he is described as a direct descendant of the Aditya (solar) dynasty. The tendency 'of juxtaposing and concatenating short genealogies and grafting them into an impressive whole which is truly greater than the sum of its parts'⁶⁷ was a common practice.

Land grants to the Brahmans indicate their settlement over a wide area. The 'Rajput' chieftains who fled to the hills under the pressure of the Muslims must have been readily welcomed by these Brahmans. The society thus came under a new impact. Local families also began to claim Rajput status in order to get away from, rather than reveal, their original ancestry.

The rapid fragmentations of land, as registered by later epigraphs, was almost wholly donative in character. Though the genealogy of Achchham, situated south-east of Doti, does not contain the names of Udaybrahma and Ajitbrahma, a copper-plate bearing their joint names (1437) has been found. The origin of their family is traced to the Bhatta Brahmans who are said to have left Kanauj. One of their descendants went to Doti and from there to Jumla where, a few generations later, a scion of the family married the daughter of Asokachalla. The new principality of Achchham is said to have been carved out for the prince born of this wedlock. He was born in the village of Samal, named after the homeland of the migrants.⁶⁸

Jumla itself was divided. Vatsaraja Maheswara is depicted issuing orders to the officers of upper and lower Jumla and referring to his many feudatories in his land grants (1450 and 1455). A place named Chhinasim assumed importance. Seven land grants between the years 1498 and 1729 were issued from the place. Tiprikot in the east became the centre of another principality. A similar number of grants belonging to the period 1575 to 1720 originated from there. Bilaspur in Dullu-Dailekh (1568), Liku (1600-1631) Dunai (1678-1696), Rolabrahma (1713), Luhu (1736) Lamathada (1724-1736) are other such centres described as capital cities in the charters. Grants made were mostly to the Brahmans with title such as Jaisi, Upadhyaya, Brahman, Dhital and to those among the Chhetri (Kshatriya) with surnames like Roka, Katuwal and Bohra. Some charters were granted by as many as three to five joint rulers. A copper grant of 1713, for

example, was issued to a Brahman by Maharajadhiraja Palasahi, Bhemasahi and Purtisahi.⁶⁹

The petty states which emerged on the debris of the Khasa kingdom were described as Baisi or the Twenty-two states. Sources give different names to the constituents of the Baisi and often there is an overlapping with the names of some among the Chaubisi or Twenty-four states which rose to the east in the Gandaki zone. The numerical descriptions were not always literally applicable however and either group could have contained a greater or a lesser number of states.

MAGRAT : THE SENA KINGDOM, THE CHAUBISI AND GORKHA

The region between the Gandaki and the Nepal valley in the east is popularly described as Magrat because it was populated predominantly by the Magars of the hilly regions. Gurungs predominated in the north and the terai was inhabited mostly by the Tharus. The kingdom of Mustang, now a part of Nepal, juts out here into the trans-Himalayan zone.

The Sena was the most important dynasty to have ruled in this area. They are said to have served initially under Tharu chiefs. The Senas once succeeded in uniting a large part of the region and also a part of the plains of Eastern Nepal. The Senas are often described as Makwanis. The rulers of Gulmi, Argha and Isa were called Kala Makwanis or Black Makwanis. The marital relationship between the two branches suggest their different origins.

The Senas, like other ruling families, have a number of *vamsavalis* or genealogies.⁷⁰ The *Makwani Sena Vamsavali* (SV 1), composed only in 1768, contains the genealogies of the Senas of Palpa, Rajpura, Tanahu, Madaria, Darchha and Rising in Sanskrit prose, and that of Makwanpur in five Sanskrit stanzas. A versified genealogy (SV 2) of Palpa, Gulmi and Butwal Senas in Sanskrit was composed by Bhavadatta in AD 1802. A religious treatise *Achara Dipaka*, also in Sanskrit, gives the genealogy of Tanahu Senas (SV 3) in six verses.⁷¹ A chronicle of the Senas of Palpa, Tanahu, Rajpur and Makwanpur (SV 4), differing somewhat in details from others, is in Hindi.⁷² Hamilton should be considered as a separate source as his account (SV 5) is based on the information given by Samar Bahadur, the younger brother of the last Sena ruler of Palpa, although it does contain some variations.⁷³

Though our sources are not unanimous in belief, a history of the Senas can be reconstructed on the basis of these genealogies and other records. The argument that the Senas were related to the famous Senas of Bengal, probably Brahmans of South Indian origin, is based

on the epithet found in the beginning of all Sena documents. The title Rupnarayana is linked with the river of this name in Bengal. It is suggested that the Senas migrated to Nepal after they were defeated by the Muslims from the land alongside that river.⁷⁴ It is added that a tribe called Majhia in the eastern hills of Nepal, once under the Senas, speak a language which has a striking similarity with the Bengali dialect of East Bengal. A few Senas or Shena Brahmans are mentioned in the Lichchhavi inscriptions of the Nepal valley but their links with the later Senas cannot be ascertained.

The SV 1 traces the origin of the family to Madanraya, SV 2 to Ratnadeva, SV 3 to Chudaraja, and SV 5, on the basis of a manuscript prepared by a Sena descendant, to Chitor. Thus all of them point to the Rajput origin of the Senas. SV 5 relates how the Senas from Chitor captured Allahabad and settled in the vicinity of Nepal from where they captured the hill territory adjacent to Butwal and Champaran, with its capital at Rajpur. There they were employed in the services of the Tharu chiefs. Rising could have been their first acquisition from where they extended their dominions to Palpa. The latter was the oldest state of the Chaubisi and had existed at least a century before the others.

Mukunda Sena (c. 1540-75), described by the first 3 genealogies as the fifteenth, thirteenth and twenty-eighth scion of the family respectively was, however, the first Sena to possess an extensive realm. According to Wright he raided Patan in the Nepal valley in the fourteenth century.⁷⁵ Scholars, however, doubt the authenticity of both the date and the event.⁷⁶ Wright had also described Mukunda as a Magar chief,⁷⁷ probably because he was a king in Magrat. As will be seen later others had also referred to the Senas as Magar chiefs.

Mukunda established better relations with the rulers of neighbouring hill states like Gulmi and Parbat through marriage alliances. As the Nepal valley was divided into three kingdoms, Mukunda intervened in their politics. He helped Ratnamalla, the weak ruler of Patan, against the Tibetans and also established his overlordship in Dhading and Gorkha,⁷⁸ which had so far been under the tutelage of Patan. Mukunda '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'.⁷⁹ It is not certain whether Mukunda himself was responsible for the partition or whether his sons, kept in charge of different regions, became independent after him. Thus Palpa, Tanahu, Butwal and Makwanpur separated as independent principalities.

Butwal and Palpa were gradually united and to it were annexed the lands of the Magar chief Balihang or Baldhyang. The Magar also lost

his territories to Gulmi and Khanchi. The last remnant of his land formed yet another state, Khilung, under a Brahman who accepted the overlordship of Palpa. The daughter of Gandharva, a Sena king of Palpa, was later married to Narbhupal Shah, the father of Prithvinarayan Shah. Palpa also befriended and acquired from the Nawab Vazir of Oudh the zamindari of Tilpur and Rajpur in the middle of the Nepal terai. With the annexation of Gulmi the realm of Palpa became an extensive one. Its economic resources were ample since Palpa controlled a large part of the fertile plains.

Tanahu contained some hilly and terai regions. But in Rising and Rajpur Mukunda's nephew and grandson respectively claimed independence. Bhringi Sena (1548-1571), the first independent ruler of Tanahu, had Sur as his capital. Weakened as it was due to internal squabbles, Tanahu could not retain the Magar-land of Gorkha for long. A prince of Lamjung, Dravya Shah, and an ancestor of Prithvinarayan Shah, seized Gorkha with the help of Ganesh Pande, a Brahman, and an old employee of Mukunda Sena. After acquiring Rising once again Tanahu made an abortive attempt in the seventeenth century to recapture Gorkha. Its ruler Digvijaya Sena (1673-1694) cleverly acknowledged the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb as his suzerain and held a *jagir* from him as a 'Raja'. Hamilton presumes that it was the estate of Ramnagar near Betiah which was under the protection of the East India Company later on. According to a source⁸⁰ Tanahu added Gorakhpur as a zamindari under the Mughal emperor Farrukhshiyar. Kamrajdatta Sena (1694-1749) cemented his friendship with Gorkha and, like Palpa, had given his daughter in marriage to Narbhupal Shah.

Both Gorkha and Tanahu, taking advantage of the divisions in the Nepal valley, took an active part in its politics in 1715 and 1722. Gorkha even took Lamidara, situated on the road to Patan (1722). However, on the intervention of the ruler of Kathmandu it was given to Tanahu. As Narbhupal did not want to damage relations with Kamrajdatta, he thought it better to expand his energy in an attempt to take Nuwakot, then held by Kathmandu. A rebellious noble of Gorkha had held it for a decade as a vassal.

Makwanpur also became independent, and later was split into three independent kingdoms. The account of these states had relevance to Eastern Nepal and will have specific coverage in a following chapter.

Like the Baisi the states collectively denominated as the Chaubisi were the products of fragmentation and of the new settlements by migrants from the old Khasa land and India. Apart from the Senas there were other rulers in the Chaubisi. The rulers of Parbat, Galkot and Ghiring claimed descent from the Samal whereas the ruler of

Pyuthan did so from the Chand families. Those of Khanchi and Dhurkot described themselves as being of Medhasi descent (whereas besides other Sena potentates Panyu also claimed to be Sena).

Gorkha did not belong either to the Baisi of the Karnali zone or to the Chaubisi of the Gandaki zone. Instead it occupied the land between the Kali-Gandaki and the Trisuli, the region described as Parkot in the Puranas.⁸¹ A book, compiled under the patronage of Ram Shah, the king of Gorkha, describes him as belonging to the dynasty of Parkot or Magrat.⁸²

The ubiquitous process of 'Rajputization' in Gorkha is depicted in its genealogies. The first of these was composed by Chitravilas in seven Sanskrit verses under the patronage of Ram Shah. This *Rajvamsavali*⁸³ traces the origin of the dynasty to the Rawal kings of Medapat (Mewar) in Rajasthan. The narrative was incorporated in the *Gorkha-vamsavali*.⁸⁴ It is on this that Hamilton⁸⁵ and the *Gorkhadhisa-champu*,⁸⁶ (composed probably in the third decade of the last century) base their accounts. There are other works of later dates like the *Gorkha Vamsavali* (c. 1840)⁸⁷ and the chronicle, entitled *History of Nepal*, translated by Shivashankar, and Gunananda Pandit and edited by Daniel Wright.⁸⁸ In the light of trustworthy old records, most of such accounts have been found to contain glaring mistakes.

Whether they descended from the fugitive Rajput chieftains or not, the early scions of the family used 'Khan' as their title. Two of them, Khancha and Micha, are described as Magars by Hamilton,⁸⁹ because of their Magar names meaning 'the elder' and 'the younger' respectively. But these names could well have been given by the original inhabitants of the place in order to differentiate between the two sons of the immigrant chief. Khancha Khan established himself in Dhor and to it he later added Bhirkot, Satahu and Garahu. Micha Khan became the chief of Nuwakot and annexed the Gurung settlement of Kaski to it. A son of this Kaski chief was invited to be the king of Lamjung, another Gurung territory, by the high caste Brahman-Chhetri groups who had migrated there earlier. However, the boy taken from Kaski was killed by the 'Sekhanta' (Seshanta, Skt., 'frontier?') tribe of Lamjung'. Those who extended the invitation swore innocence and took yet another son of the Kaski chief to Lamjung. The prince, Yasobrahma, was made the ruler of Lamjung. In Kaski they changed their surname to Sahi. A further change to 'Shah' was made by Ram Shah in the seventeenth century.

Yasobrahma sent his second son, Dravya Shah, to occupy the land between the Marsyangdi and Chepe. Hordes of migrants followed him to the east and colonized the area. Eminent among them were Brahmans like Narayan Aryal from Isma, Sarveshwar Khanal from Argha,

Ganesh Pande and Bhagirath Pantha from Kumaon, a Kshatriya, Keshav Bohra, from Salyan and Gangaram Rana, a Magar, from the neighbourhood. The colonizers, besides the few occupational outcastes, were mostly Brahman-Chhetris⁹⁰ and a few occupational outcastes like the Kamis (ironsmiths), Damais (tailors) and Sarkis (cobblers).

There are varying accounts of the capture of Gorkha by Dravya Shah. The Gurung Ghales and Magars of Liglig near Gorkha traditionally selected the man who won a racing competition as their chief for one year. Taking advantage of such a festival, Dravya Shah pounced upon them, captured Liglig and then Gorkha by killing its Khasa Kharga chief. The priest, Narayan Aryal, crowned Dravya Shah, the king of Gorkha (1616 VE = AD 1550).⁹¹ Another version recounts that Narayan Aryal, when asked about the preceptor's fee by Ganesh Pande, told the latter that the inhabitants of Gorkha did not like their king and were in need of a Kshatriya ruler, and demanded as payment Pande's help in making Dravya Shah, the king of Gorkha,⁹² D.R. Regmi comments that 'the Khadka chief, a Khasa by caste was not of a pure blood and the Brahmans were conspiring because their Hindu sense of royalty would not tolerate subjugation by him. The emigrants made efforts to unseat the ruler and pave the way for a Rajput prince to come and occupy the throne.'⁹³ Similar efforts of the high caste Hindus later contributed to the successful expansion of Gorkha.

Gorkha, surrounded by fertile lands and containing the broad valley of the river Darraundi, soon became the centre of a new kingdom. To the north of it was Barpak, a Gurung settlement. As it adjoined Tibet, salt, a most essential but rare commodity in the hills, could be procured from there.

It is generally believed that the land came to be called Gorkha because a Nath Yogi had installed an idol of Gorakhnath there even before its capture by Dravya Shah. But what seems more probable is the derivation of the name from a (Tibeto-Burman?) word *garkha* meaning a cluster of villages. Others have tended to associate the name with *Kharka* meaning grassland or pasture. A Lichchhavi inscription found in Gorkha suggests the probability of an early settlement in the area.

Dravya Shah installed a Council with Sarveshwar Khanal as the royal priest, Ganesh Pande as secretary, Bhagirath Pantha as commander, Keshav Bohra as revenue officer and Gangaram Rana as judicial officer. Narayan Aryal was the royal preceptor. The six members were called *thar-ghar*. They constituted the Council of Gorkha and enjoyed privilege and prestige.

The successors of Dravya Shah (d. 1570) carried on the task of territorial expansion. Ram Shah (r. 1606-1636) captured many adjoin-

ing settlements and defeated Lamjung and Tanahu. Like Jayasthiti of the Nepal valley, Ram Shah's contribution lay more in the field of consolidation and organization of administration and in society as a whole. He gave a simple practical code of laws, and encouraged agriculture, industry and commerce.⁹⁴

Ram Shah facilitated the import of salt from Tibet by occupying Ruhi, beyond the Larke pass, in the north. He made a treaty with Patan which, after the separation from Kathmandu and the loss of the Tibet road, needed a way to obtain salt. A few Newar artisans of Patan were encouraged to settle in Gorkha. Trade was opened between Gorkha and the Nepal valley. Magars learnt the improved art of weaving and metallurgy, thus copper and brass utensils began to be manufactured in Gorkha. Ram Shah standardized the currency and the weights and measures. The newly acquired dominions in the north were colonized by the Brahmans and Chhetris.

That many Sanskrit works were composed in Gorkha during Ram Shah's reign is shown by their colophons. His Devanagari inscriptions replaced the old Newari script. No temple or architecture of the preceding period has been found, but Ram Shah's epigraphs and buildings give clear evidence of a style borrowed not from the Nepal valley but from North India. He patronized Chitravilas who composed the seven-versed genealogy connecting the Gorkha dynasty with the Rajputs of Chitor. He also invited Nanda Misra, a scholar from Benaras, and made him the royal preceptor. The process of Hinduization was intensified during his reign.

The years of reign of his successors—Dambar Shah (1635-1642), Krishna Shah (1642-1658), Rudra Shah (1658-1569), Prithvipati Shah (1669-1716)—witnessed the gradual consolidation of Gorkha. No great military enterprise was undertaken, though many matrimonial alliances with other hill states were made. Narbhupal Shah (1716-1743) made such alliances with Khanchi, Palpa and Parbat, three among the Chaubisi. He also made an attempt to take Nuwakot in 1737. Jayanta Rana, the Magar commander of his army, suffered defeat and Magar influence in the court of Gorkha declined. The Brahman Pandes became more powerful there. Narbhupal also sent his son Prithvinarayan to the court of Ranjitmalla of Bhaktapur (Bhadgau) to establish a diplomatic relationship.

When Prithvinarayan ascended the throne of Gorkha in 1743, there were no large kingdoms either in the west or to the east of it. Except for the three city-kingdoms of Nepal all other principalities comparatively larger in size were sparsely populated. A reckoning shows that at the time of the Gorkha conquest in 1769 Kathmandu had about 22,000 houses, Patan 24,000 and Bhadgau 12,000.⁹⁵ An old text gives

some idea about the Chaubisi states. Each of the hill principalities of Tanahu, Kaski, Lamjung and Parbat had about 8,000 dwellings, Pyuthan had about 12,000 and smaller ones like Sallyankot and Dhor 700.⁹⁶ The town of Gorkha was 'the only place of note in the territory'. As Hamilton records, 'It is said to contain 12,000 houses and the temple of Gorkhnath who is one of the tutelal deities of the reigning family'.⁹⁷

All the principalities of the Baisi and Chaubisi as well as Gorkha were said to be 'very poor'.⁹⁸ The Gorkha rulers often borrowed small sums of money at high rates of interest, from their subjects. Not infrequently such loans remained unpaid for several generations. Similar loans were also taken by the rulers of other princedoms.⁹⁹

Gorkha, with no direct communication with Tibet or the Indian plains, with no mines, nor with any noteworthy manufacture for commerce, was considered insignificant.¹⁰⁰ Other hill states were also small and poor, but most of them had formed alliances and 'leagues' for the purpose of mutual defence. They had a mutually held policy of maintaining, to an extent, the existing balance of power. There were at least five such leagues under the leadership of Lamjung, Bhirkot, Palpa, Malebum and Pyuthun.¹⁰¹ Jumla, the old centre of the Khasa kingdom retained a vague nominal suzerainty over other members of the Baisi. Gorkha, however, was not a member of any of these leagues.

2

People and Society

Migratory waves from different climes and cultures, more particularly from the plains of India and the Tibetan highlands, moved to Nepal and colonized its different areas from early times. Some came for the security the hills provided, others were in search of better fortune while some were merely goaded by a wanderlust. The country thus became a meeting and spawning ground of migrants and this fact proved decisive to its history. If the northern belt is more Tibetan and the south evinces a marked Indian impact, the Pahar or the middle hill region, the principal arena of Nepal's history, is a zone where an admixture of these influences is discernible. And yet, the country's evolution cannot be explained solely in terms of ideas and influence brought from outside.

THE NEWARS OF THE NEPAL VALLEY

It was due to its comparative prosperity that the Nepal valley had attracted marauders and migrants from the remote past. A probe into the society of the Newars,¹ who constitute the predominant part of the population of the valley, helps a better understanding of their evolution. The Newars, who speak a Tibeto-Burman language² have a rich literary heritage, containing distinct elements. Having emerged as a result of the commingling of different ethnic groups they acquired certain common social traditions and a linguistic homogeneity. Baines and Risley call them a 'national tribe'.³

No definite knowledge about the earliest autochthons and their relationship with the present-day Newars can be gathered. Lichchhavi epigraphs mention Mundri⁴ and Koli⁵ in connection with royal lineage. The similarity that these names have with Munda and Kol, the Austric tribes, is obvious and their languages are said to be 'closely

related to the Mon-Khmer languages.¹⁶ There is a controversy regarding an ancient royal lineage there named Abhir, believed by some to be Abhir-Gupta, a later dynasty. But an interesting point is that the name Abhir (Ahir) was often bracketed with the Mundas and Kols.⁷ Although Suniti Kumar Chatterjee claims that the derivation of Newar is from Nepal itself,⁸ Baburam Acharya believes that 'Nepar' is derived from 'Newar', a people whom he holds to be early settlers of Austric origin.⁹ The Newari language, like other Tibeto-Burman dialects in the Himalayas, contains Austric vestiges. Other evidence besides the linguistic suggest that some sections of the Newars like Duneeya and Balami are descendants of such settlers. They occupy the lowest rungs of the present Newar social hierarchy and speak a dialect somewhat different from the current Newari. No longer inhabiting the valley, they suggest 'a substratum over which the present racial and cultural superstructure of the Newars has been built up'.¹⁰

The words Gopala (cowherds) and Mahishapala (buffalo-tamers) for the two early dynasties signify that the tribes were probably pastoral. Did they really have Sanskrit names as given by the genealogy or are the names later reconstructions? Gopala might be the Sanskritized form of a Tibeto-Burman word *go-pa* (Tibetan *mGO*, 'head' and *pa* for a substantive masculine particle meaning *mGO-pa* or headman or chief with the honorific suffix *la*). The early entry of the Mongoloids is suggested in the *Svayambhu Purana*, according to which, the first king Dharmakara, was installed by Manjusri, believed to be derived from manchu. The book describes the Chinese origin of Dharmakara.¹¹

The Jyapus, who constitute the predominant agricultural population among the Newars, and are seldom found outside the valley, with the introduction of the caste system by migrants from the south, came to be regarded as upper caste Sudras. Broadly divided into 'Sat-sudra' and 'Asat-sudra' or Hindu and Buddhist Sudras, the Jyapus have further divisions. One such section called Gua or Gual or Hale is sub-divided into Sa-pu (cow-milker) and Me-pu (buffalo-milker) and is similar in this respect to the Gopala and Mahishapala groups.¹² They are found concentrated in Thankot which figures as the capital of the Gopala and Mahishapala rulers. Such lower castes are probably the descendants of those early settlers who were subjugated later by newcomers. The legend of the Gopala lineage was probably influenced by the account of the Pala Kings of Bengal, some of whom claimed to have had relations with Nepal.¹³ The names of the two early dynasties definitely seem to be later reconstructions.

Mahishapalas, according to the chronicle, were supplanted by the Kirata dynasty. The names of the rulers are clearly non-Sanskrit. Though the epigraphs of the next lineage, the Lichchhavis, do not

mention the Kirata, the names of many places mentioned are undoubtedly Tibeto-Burman.¹⁴ Although the names of the three cities of Patan, Kathmandu and Bhadgau are derived from the Sanskrit words Pattana, Kashthamanadapa and Bhaktagrama, they were known at once time by the non-Sanskrit names, Ye, Yambu and Makhoprim (or Khvapu) respectively. Mongoloid traits are marked in the majority of Newars and their speech is Tibeto-Burman.

No epigraphic or numismatic record of the Kiratas has been found. The absence of ruins suggest that no urban development had taken place. The society was probably agricultural and pre-literate. The Buddhist texts assert that the valley had close contact with the Indian plains during the Kirata period, while legends recount the visit of the Buddha during the reign of Jitedasti, (a Kirata), and of the Buddhist monks who came in the company of merchants.¹⁵ Chronicles describe Ashoka Maurya's visit to the valley during the reign of Sthunko, the fourteenth (Wright) Kirata king. Ashoka is believed to have erected four *stupas* at Patan. The Jaina sage Bhadrabahu is also said to have gone to Nepal valley.¹⁶

The process of 'Aryanization' was intensified by the Lichchhavis who supplanted the Kiratas. Although the Puranas describe them as coming from Vaisali,¹⁷ there is a controversy regarding their actual origin. However whether the Lichchhavis were of Mongoloid or non-Aryan origin as Samuel Beal and J.F. Hewitt think¹⁸ or Aryans as B.C. Law opines¹⁹ is unimportant. Because even if they were of non-Aryan origin, they were wholly Aryanized. Though their Sanskrit inscriptions date back to AD 464 during the regnal period of Manadeva (or since the time of his grandfather Vrishadeva)²⁰ they might have migrated to Nepal much earlier, anytime between the third century BC²¹ and the first century AD.²²

The caste system was the most significant introduction made by the Lichchhavis. Their inscriptions refer to the Brahmans and Manadeva describes himself as one devoted to the duties of a Kshatriya.²³ The Chandalas have been mentioned²⁴ but there is no mention of the Vaisyas and the Sudras though a reference to all the 'eighteen castes' is to be found. However, this description was in general use in India and as it included Khasa, Kirata, Dravida, Kalinga, Gauda, Huna, etc., it cannot be taken as the complete truth. Castes rules were, however, not followed vigorously firstly, due to the fact that the Mongoloids and other non-Aryans formed the bulk of the population and, second, because the impact of Buddhism had probably preceded Brahmanical norms. The ruling families could have been puritanical. Two of the last kings were married to the princesses of the Maukhari and Gauda kingdoms. 'The Nepalese kings for the first time in the history of Nepal,' exults D.R. Regmi, 'were admitted into the fold of the Kshatriyas and could woo... the Kshatriya Princess of the plains'.²⁵

Nichchhavi, the corrupted form of Lichchhavi, was applied to Tirhut (Mithila). Thus Harisimha and his successors are referred to as Tirhutiyas in old documents. As a matter of fact, old Nepalese chronicles ascribe the origin of the names Newar to the entry into the valley of Harisimhadeva's ancestor Nanyadeva, a Karnat prince. It is said that the original Newars were part of Nayar clan. 'Looking at the fact that nowhere do we find the reference to the term Newar before the period of Nanya Deo,' Nepali remarks that 'this explanation gets support from the current practice of the Gorkhas who, while referring to the Newars, say "Niyar"'. In this he sees the possibility of such a derivation.²⁶ The Nayars constituted the main bulk of the Chalukya army that invaded North India, and the present Newari Shresthas were traditionally associated with Nanyadeva and known as soldiers in Nepal.²⁷

There are many cultural similarities between Malabar in South India and the Nepal valley. Not only is the chief priest of Pasupati in Nepal a *Dravida*, but the similarity between the temples in Malabar and Nepal is too striking to be ignored. Special mention is made of the ancient Shiva temple, the Mahadeva Kovil of Beypore south of Calicut, by Percy Brown who sees it as 'a deliberate copy of the double roofed Nepalese temple architecture'.²⁸ Although the majority of the Newars could not have come with Nanyadeva the name of the politically powerful group could have been adopted by the people in general. The tendency is found prevalent among other tribal groups. It was probably like the later use of the name Gorkha for all the hill tribes who were actually subjugated by the rulers of Gorkha.

For a time the caste system in its traditional form was not strongly established. One interesting institution recorded in the Lichchhavi inscriptions is the *gausthika* a or guild-like organization. A few of these organizations consisted of people associated with tax-gathering, wrestling, lamp and incense making etc. There was also one Brahman *gausthika*. The later organization of the Newar castes was made on the same basis. The *gausthikas* were probably formative caste-like guilds. The Kiratas are described in the list as hunters, one of the sixty-four castes into which Jayasthitimala organized the Newar society. Thus, as was the case with the Jyapus, tribes in later years continued to be absorbed as castes. The Jyapus have thirty-two sub-divisions while another Sudra group of the Kumhale (potters) has four. Other Newar castes like the Sayami (oilers), Konal (incense makers), Dunim (carriers) and Kshatrakara (land measurers) were created from different *gausthikas*.²⁹

Accounts regarding Nanyadeva, Harisimha and Chandeshwar show the great impact of the Karnats of Mithila. In the reign of Jayasthitimala a long period of social confusion was brought to an end and

stability established. He fully relied on the Hindu law books as the ultimate authority. He organized the caste system with the help of five Brahmans, Kirtinath Upadhyaya Kanyakubja, Raghunath Jha Maithili, Srinath Bhatta, Mainath Bhatta, and Ramnath Jha from India.³⁰ The Newar society was divided into four *varnas* and sixty-four castes 'on the basis of the hereditary occupations and genealogies'.³¹ The Brahmans were further divided into three groups, Pancha Gauda, Pancha Dravida and Jaisi. The Thakurs like the royal Mallas were regarded as Kshatriyas. The Josis and Achars, 'though allowed to wear sacred thread, were enjoined to marry Shreshthas'. Thus, they were given the status of the Vaishya with the part privilege of the Brahman. Between the Shreshthas and the Jyapus were a number of artisan groups. Placed lower than the Jyapus were the unclean and untouchable castes respectively.³²

Buddhist Newars were also segmented into different castes. The concept of 'Sanskritization', one scholar holds, is 'particularly inappropriate and confusing in a discussion of the Newar caste system in which there occurs the co-existence of both the Hindu and Buddhist cultural traditions'. Today the entire Newar community is internally divided into twenty-six castes on the basis of heredity, tradition and occupation.³³

The Hindu Brahmans are further divided into the purer Deva Brahman, and the Bhatta Brahman groups. Besides these there are, of course, the Jha or Tirhutiya Brahmans. Vajracharya and Banra were the Buddhist equivalents of Brahmans. The ruling Mallas had the status of Kshatriyas. Among the Vaisyas were the Thakuris (not to be confused with those from Western Nepal) and other castes called Chhathare (six sub castes). The members of the Chhathar were regarded as descendants of the six families both Hindu and Buddhist that had migrated from India. Lower in status are the Sudras, the majority of whom bear the names of their occupations. The untouchables were the butchers (*Nay*) fishermen (*Po*), sweepers (*Chamkhala*) and leather-workers (*Kulu*).

The process of acculturation had continued for centuries. Thus though divided as Hindus and Buddhists, the Newar as a whole developed common traits. They were probably the first group of Tibeto-Burman speakers in the Himalaya region to undergo a socio-cultural metamorphosis under the caste domination from outside. The process started in the fifth century AD, only to be intensified with the passage of time. Indeed the Newar society was a miniature nation in itself till they were conquered by the Gorkha.

KHASAS AND OTHERS OF THE FAR WEST

The Newars refer to the Brahman and Chhetri, migrants from the

west, as Parbates, (literally meaning mountain dwellers), either because they were really such or because they came from the region of Parbat, also called Malebum, a name derived from *Malla bhumi* or the land of the Malla Khasas. Their Indo-Aryan language is called Parbate or Khay-bhay or the Khas speech by the Newars. The Brahman-Chhetri group played a vital role in the conquests of Gorkha, and in the creation of the present kingdom of Nepal as well as in the other subsequent socio-political realms. The majority of them lived in the hills of Western Nepal and at present form about eighty per cent of the total population of the area.

The Parbate Brahman caste ranks highest in the hierarchy and is divided into the Purbiya (eastern) and Kumain (from Kumaon) groups. Each group claims to be purer and socially superior to the other. The Brahman as priests have always played a significant part in the process of the Hinduization of the Mongoloids. However, the Jaisi Brahmans, rated as lower in rank, are not allowed to act as priests because they are the progeny of irregular unions. The offspring of a Brahman and a Thakuri Chhetri woman is referred to as a Hamal and is accepted as a Thakuri, not a Brahman. The progeny of the Brahman and a Khas woman or a woman of a Mongoloid tribe is referred to as Khatri. Ethnologically, the Chhetris are related to the Khasas.

Who were these Khasas? A large number of people in Garhwal, Kumaon and Nepal were known by this name. If the Nepali language of today was once called the Khas speech,³⁴ the principal dialect of Kumaoni was known as Khas-parijiyā, the speech of the Khasa ryots.

The Khasas, variously called Khasa Khasha and Khashira, were regarded as an Indo-Aryan tribe, and find mention in many ancient Sanskrit texts along with other frontier tribes living in the North-western periphery of the Indian sub-continent. There is an opinion that because they formed a tribe of non-Vedic Aryans, they were referred to as degraded Kshatriyas in *Manusmriti*.³⁵ The occurrence of 'khas' or 'kas' in the names of many Central and West Asian places has led scholars to point out that their original homeland was in that region from where they had dispersed over a large area.³⁶

Atkinson in this context quotes Pliny's reference to *Cesi*,³⁷ a mountain race between the Indus and the Jumna, Ptolemy's *Achasia regio* indicates the same. Ashoka, according to the Tibetan historian Taranath, subdued a frontier tribe 'Saa' in the north-west and the name is considered to be a misreading of Khasa.³⁸

Grierson, R.L. Turner and Suniti Kumar Chatterjee have shown that the various Indo-Aryan dialects spoken by people along the southern glacis of the Himalayas have so many common features because they were all influenced by the language brought there by

Khasa migrants from the north-west.³⁹ Linguistic data has caused scholars to believe in the pre-existence of a hypothetical Khasa Prakrit from which languages categorized as Eastern Pahari, namely, Kumaoni, Garhwali and Nepali have emerged. Sylvain Levi believed that Kharosthi was the script of the Khasa.⁴⁰

Humla in north West Nepal is a valley surrounded by the Saipal range, the Takh Himal and the Changla Himal with only its southern end open. It is here that the Humla Karnali and the Mugu Karnali rivers meet and it was through this gap that several centuries ago the Khasas entered Humla and carved a big dominion. However, the Khasa (soon mingled) with the original Mongoloid inhabitants and later with the high caste Indo-Aryan migrants from the Indian plains. The majority of later Khasas of Western Nepal were actually descendants of such miscegenation. However the leaven of pure Khasa descent in them is not denied.⁴¹

The Chhetris who claim to be superior to the Khasa tend to call the latter Khas and believed that the name is derived from the Nepali verb root-'khas', ('to fall'), thereby implying that they were fallen Kshatriyas. The purest group, particularly Ektharia Chhetris, claim descent from the Rajputs and other 'pure' Kshatriyas from the plains of India. However the tide of events around them confounded the Khasas and the Kshatriyas in all essentials. Their offspring were 'entitled to every prerogative which Kshatriya birth confers in Hindusthan'.⁴²

The Brahmins' progeny from the Khasa women also get the status of the Kshatriya but with the patronymic titles of the Brahmins.⁴³ Hodgson finds in this situation 'the key to the anomalous nomenclature of so many stripes of military tribes of Nepal... in the nomenclature of the sacred order'.⁴⁴ The claim of the Kshatriya newcomers to be of Rajput origin can be better understood 'in terms of a process, rather than in terms of the ancestry, genuine or concocted, of individual dynasties'.⁴⁵ The Khasa records bear witness to the fact that by the thirteenth century Brahmanical influence had been firmly established. The emergence of the Baisi and Chaubisi suggests the expansion of the agrarian economy as was seen in other parts of India 'as a result of the emergence of the Rajputs from about seventh century'.⁴⁶

The eastward movement of the people dislodged from the Khasa realm continued. A comparative study of the dialects of Sija, the old Khasa capital, with modern Nepali on the basis of the cognate counts in the words using the Swadesh list has led a Nepali linguist to conclude that Nepali and Sijali had once been a single language 576 + 139 years before, that is, before the speakers of Khasa moved

eastward between AD 1255 and 1533 giving rise to two distinct dialects.⁴⁷ This period synchronizes with the advent of the 'Rajputs' and other high castes in the west.

The claim to Rajput descent by the newcomers was known to the Tibetans and the name of Chitor occurs ever so often in the Tibetan documents. Though Tucci finds 'no reason to disbelieve this tradition'⁴⁸ an interesting anecdote is on record. As seen earlier the title of the Gorkha rulers was first changed from Khan to Sahi and then to Shah by Ram Shah. Hodgson was told at Kathmandu that Ram Shah had sent his envoy from Gorkha to Mewar in Rajasthan 'to exhibit the Gorkhali Rajah's pedigree and to claim recognition of alleged kindred'. A somewhat staggered Sishodia chief of Mewar was inclined to admit the relationship but the envoy could not satisfy the chief about his own caste status. He was a Khasa claiming to be a Kshatriya, hence his mission was courteously dismissed without further enquiry.⁴⁹

If Brahmanical Hinduism became predominant in the Nepal valley and in the Baisi with the migration of high caste people from Indian plains, parts of Magrat, or the Chaubisi and also parts of Kirat of Eastern Nepal witnessed somewhat similar changes with the advent of the Senas. The Senas of Makwanpur assumed the title of Hindupati or Lord of the Hindus and, like others, claimed Rajput descent. However though the Senas of Palpa claimed descent from a Sishodia chief,⁵⁰ they served under the Tharus first.

The Tharus⁵¹ lives throughout the length of the Nepal terai and the adjoining parts of India. Though the menfolk do not pretend to be of Rajput origin, legend has it that when the Rajputs were about to be besieged in Chitor they sent their womenfolk to take shelter in the lower hills of Nepal. When Chitor fell and most of the Rajput men were killed, the refugee women took husbands from amongst the local people of the terai and their offsprings came to be known as Tharus. Hence the Tharus call their wives 'Rani' (queen). A similar theory connects them with Thar, the desert in Rajasthan, but others derive the name from 'thar' or Clan and from Sthavira, a Buddhist community. The point emphasized is their use of the term Vaji (Vrijjians or Lichchhavis) to designate non-Tharus, showing that they might have descended from some non-Vrijji tribe. Hodgson has placed them among the 'broken tribes'.⁵² Others take them to be Indo-Aryan speaking Mongoloids, now their speech is heavily influenced by major languages like Maithili, Nepali, Bhojpuri, Bengali, and Hindi. The Tharus were totally subjugated by the Senas in the greater part of the Nepal terai. Some of their clan names like Rana, Khasa and Kachila might have originated from their contact with the Magars, the Khasa and the Koch, which was another important tribe of north-east India.

THE MAGARS AND OTHER MONGOLOIDS

The Magars⁵³ and Gurungs,⁵⁴ are the two most important hill tribes of the western Pahar. The area extending from the Himalayas in the north to the Mahabharat range in the south, and enclosed by the watershed of the Trisuli in the east and Kali-Gandaki in the west, is generally called Bara Magrat or the Twelve Magar districts. These districts were probably Argha, Bhirkot, Dhor, Garhu, Ghiring, Gulmi, Isma, Khanchi, Musikot, Panju, Rising and Satahu.

The Magar language contains at least three mutually unintelligible dialects. Like the names of the rivers in Assam and North-east India, the names of Magrat rivers are also either prefixed or suffixed by 'di' or 'ti' (it means water in both Bodo and Magar). Thus we have the rivers Jyagdi, Marsyangdi, Darraundi, Rapti, etc. The places too have names that are undoubtedly Magar.

The Magars were probably part of a very ancient influx of the Mongoloids. One opinion holds that they came with the army of the Tibetan king Srong-bTsan sGampo and that the tribal names of the Magars and Tamangs are derived from the Tibetan *Mag*, meaning 'war' or battle and that these tribes were Tibetan warriors. Without quoting his source, Hooker, the famous botanist who visited Darjeeling, Sikkim and parts of Eastern Nepal in 1848, noted that 'the Magars, a tribe now contained in Nepal west of the Arun, are aborigines of Sikkim, whence they were driven by the Lepchas westward into the country of the Limboo, and these latter still further west.'⁵⁵ Sarat Chandra Das relates a legend about the fight between the 'Kangpachan people' and the Magars, whose ruined forts and towns we see in the Kangpachan valley,⁵⁶ west of Kinchinjunga. According to the legend the upper valley of Kangpachen was inhabited by the Sherpas and the lower by the Magars. The Magars were later expelled by the Tibetans from there and from the Tamar valley.⁵⁷ Northey and Morris discovered a few remaining Magar colonies in the region.⁵⁸ However, as will be seen in a later chapter, the legend could have originated from events which took place much later. The main settlement of the Magars in the Gandaki region dates back to so much earlier.

A copper-plate inscription of Shivadeva, dated 221 Newar era (AD 1110) has been discovered.⁵⁹ On it is mentioned the name of a vishaya or province called Mangavara. Scholars believe that the name was an archaic form of Magar. They quote other sources to show that Dhavalasrota or the present Dhaulagiri zone was then under the Mangavara vishaya. The Magars had settled mostly in the western and southern flanks of this Dhaulagiri-massif.⁶⁰ Etymologically, Mangavara

can be derived from Mangvala or Mongol. The Sherpas, who according to legend came into conflict with the Magars, arrived in Kangpachan much later.⁶¹

The Magars are divided into many clans. Hamilton writes that the members of each division of Bara Magrat were 'supposed to have a common extraction in the male line' and 'each Tham (*thum*) was governed by a chief, considered as the head of a common family.'⁶² They later acknowledged the overlordship of the Khasas, Rajputs and the Senas and thus began the process of their Hinduization. Since the Magars formed the main contingents of the Sena army, their rulers were often called Magar chiefs. Wright refers to Mukunda Sena of Palpa as the Magar king. The Sikkim chronicle also describes the Senas as Magar chiefs. Since Gorkha was in Magrat and because some Magars were recruited in its army, the Gorkha conquerors also were similarly described in some Sikkim records. Prithvinarayan Shah describes himself in his *Divya Upadesh* as 'the king of Magrat'.⁶³

The Magars conform more closely to Hindu norms than the Gurungs who inhabit the northern part of the region. Unlike the latter, they employ Brahman priests, and although the Gurungs eat⁶⁴ from the hands of the Magars, the latter normally do not eat food cooked by the Gurungs. The Magars rationalize their aspiration towards Hindu inclusion by inventing a myth which relates them to the Thakuris.⁶⁵

The Magars, who are divided into seven major clans, share some common clan-names with the Chhetris, like Burathoki, Rana, Roka and Thapa. This is probably the result of the early accommodating adjustments made by the Brahmans. At some point of time the Chhetri caste stopped receiving converts from the Mongoloid hill tribes into its fold, thus those 'Magars who had become Chhetris began to distinguish themselves from those excluded by suffixing their names with Chhetri' (e.g. Thapa Chhetri).⁶⁶

The Gurungs occupy the stretch along the zone immediately to the north of the Magar zone and which extends right up to the snows. They are more Tibetanized.⁶⁷ If the Magars were principally an agricultural people, the Gurungs were chiefly pastoral. The higher altitudes that they inhabited kept away the immigrants from the plains of India. Thus the Gurungs could retain their customs to a greater extent.

The Gurungs call their language Tamu-mai and their country Tamu-mai-hyula. The word *hyula* is akin to the Tibetan *yul* meaning 'country'. The origin of the name Gurung is not clear. Tradition has it that they were descendants of Gurupa, the younger of the two sons of Munainua. One Tibetan account mentions that a group of the Mon people of this country were known by the name Gyurin (Gurung),

and were to their greatest part adherents of Bon.⁶⁸ The name Gurung could have originated from a group of Bon priests who were story-tellers (sGrung).

According to one Gurung tradition the Gurung Ghales came from the north side of the Himalayas and established themselves at Ghandrung (Kot), Lamjung and Gorkha and ruled the country 'until the arrival of princes from India'. Risley explains that Ghale is but a variant of the Tibetan word *gyal* for 'king'. Other Gurung clan-names are also explicable by Tibetan words.⁶⁹ The western and central Gurungs now use the hierarchical order respectively as Ghale, Kon, Lama, Plon (also Lem, Pai) and Kle, Kon, Lam and Lem (Khro).⁷⁰ These divisions are probably based on their political functions. Links can be seen between Kon or Ghone and Tibetan term *go-gNas* (pronounced Kone) meaning 'official position'.⁷¹ The Gurung word *nasa* for a 'village' has a phonetic similarity with the Tibetan *gNas* for 'place'.

According to Gurung tradition, the Kons were administrators under the Ghale kings. The word Lama is undoubtedly derived from the Tibetan *bLa-ma* or 'priests'. Plon is from the Tibetan word *Lon*, meaning a 'councillor'. One Gurung clan, Lamchhane, is a compound of Lama and *mChod-gNas* (pronounced Chho-ne) meaning 'a chaplain' or 'priest who makes offerings'. These people might have been given land or a right to its revenue. Khro seems to be a variant of the Tibetan *Kroh* meaning one or several leaders.

A Gurung belief is that their ancestors had found pre-existing settlements when they first came to Nepal. The Ghale kings occupied the region and probably fortified it. In fact 'Galkot' is derived from Ghale Kot (meaning royal headquarters). A few Gurung clans have names similar to those of the Magars, the Chhetris and also the Brahmans.

The Gurung territory was repeatedly invaded from the late fourteenth century onward until its rulers were eventually dispossessed by the end of the next. The Gurungs living in lower altitudes soon came under Hindu influence and they took part in the siege of Gorkha by Dravya Shah in 1559.

The Gurungs were later divided into the superior Char (four) jats (castes) and inferior Sola (sixteen) jats. A Nepali document of 1694 VS (AD 1637) that Pignede found made attempts to trace the descent of the Char Jat back to the Rajputs and refers to the Sola Jat as the family of 'the sons of the servant.' It claims that the name Gurung is derived from a mythical Mahaguru (Great Teacher). This perspective in any case is that of 'the dominant Hindu caste system introduced into Nepal by migrants from the south'.⁷² Gurungs themselves claim that such segregation took place only after the conquest of their territory 'from the south'. The traditional view point is that these

divisions among the Gurungs helped the king of Lamjung to occupy their other settlements. Thus the Lamchhane and Kon groups allied themselves with the invaders and dispossessed the Ghale chiefs.

Tribes, some with definite habitats and others scattered over a wide area, leading nomadic lives, live in this zone. The Rauts of Western Nepal and the Rajis or Rawats of Askot in Garhwal appear to be of the same stock.⁷³ They are referred to as 'wild men' and speak a Tibeto-Burman dialect despite their common claim to the status of the Kshatriya.

In 1857 Hodgson described the Kusundas, now almost extinct, along with the Chepang tribe.⁷⁴ They resembled the 'Kol or Oraons, the Mundas and the Males, and spoke Tibeto-Burman dialects. Some of them also had definite Mongoloid features. The Chepang tribe describes itself as an offshoot of the Kirati (Rai-Limbu) of the east.

All along the northern Himalayan zone tribes speaking Tibetan and other Tibeto-Burman dialects subscribe to some form of Tibetan Buddhism. However the influence of Hindu norms on the Thakalis has been shown by Haimendorf.⁷⁵ The Thakalis also called themselves Tamangs, and partly derived their livelihood from trans-Himalayan trade. Though a process of change has quite recently become perceptible,⁷⁶ they were at one time 'likely to have been part of an ethnic group which also included such tribes as the Tamangs, Gurungs and Magars'.⁷⁷ They say that they had their own king, Hansa Raja, and that the four books which contain the myths of their origin are recited every twelve years. They point to their connection with Sija, the capital of the Khasa kingdom. Indeed they could have been the Mongoloids who moved eastward via Dolpo to the Thak Khola, their present habitat, under pressure.

With the information supplied by epigraphic records, temples, sculptures, manuscripts, chaityas and stupas, it is not very difficult to learn more about the religious beliefs, both Hindu and Buddhist, popular in the Nepal valley. Shiva was the most popular deity.⁷⁸ However, besides the other Hindu deities, Vedavyasa was regularly worshipped. Indeed the Nepal valley is an important centre of Brahma worship, the like of which is not found in India.⁷⁹ The Shakta cult became more popular in the post-Lichchhavi and Malla periods, probably because of many common beliefs and traits between this cult and the beliefs of various tribes.

Nepal is an important centre of Buddhism. The proclivity of some early Lichchhavis to it⁸⁰ is recorded and there are eighteen Lichchhavi epigraphs that throw light on the widespread popularity of this religion. Various sects and cults of Buddhism, for example, Hinayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana, Tantrayana and Lamaism, thrive in different parts of the country. Donative records prove that Buddhism had found the patronage of the mercantile community.

Buddhism was once popular among the Khasa rulers. Krachalla was a devout Buddhist and Asokachalla described himself in his Bodhgaya inscription as a votary of Mahayana. Other Khasa epigraphs contain Buddhist symbols and Lamaist mantras. However the later inscriptions, despite their Buddhist symbols, are fundamentally Hindu in their texts. Even after the destruction of the political unity between Nepal and part of Western Tibet, the impact of this connection remained in Western Nepal for centuries, and 'with it Buddhism resisted the impact of Hinduism'.⁸¹ Tucci refers to a letter from the Lama of a Sakya monastery to Hastiraja, the king of Sija (Ya-te), asking the latter 'to avoid in every way, as if they were poison, the doctrines of the worshippers of Hindu gods... of the heretics as well as those of Mohammedans'. The Lama also advised the prince to abjure from animal sacrifices as 'they are causes of a great sin, which causes rebirth in the hells.'⁸² Hastiraja was a petty chief, not a Malla, and there is no evidence of his being a Buddhist. Indeed the population was mostly Hindu,' sacrifice of chicken (still practised in Nepal) and goats were practised' and Brahmans occupied the positions of importance, thus 'these facts point to a country greatly Hinduized: such as Semja (Sija), or Jumla might be'.⁸³ The advance of Islam in India 'daily poured fresh refugees among them.'⁸⁴

However, the process of Hinduization was not always totally successful and at times left strange admixtures in the society. The Chhetris or Kshatriyas, with the Brahmans, constitute the *tagadhari* or those entitled to wear the sacred ceremonial thread. This was a later conceptualization made to distinguish the dominant high-castes from the *matwali* or those to whom the intoxicant liquor is not a taboo. The *matwali* were generally associated with the Mongoloids. However, there were many Chhetris in Western Nepal who were given neither the sacred thread nor the real Kshatriya status. They are known as Matwali Chhetris. The influence of Hinduism on them is marginal. E. Vansittart described them in 1894 as the progeny of the Khasa and the Magar women and almost indistinguishable from Maagars and easily assimilating with the Magars and Gurungs.⁸⁵

Most important in the spiritual life of the country is the evidence of cult-syncretism and the plethora of folk religions. Although they do have many common rituals and customs, it is not possible to say whether they are variants of one religion which, for the want of an adequately satisfying term, is described as Shamanism. The most important religion of this nature was Bon, the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet and its adjoining regions.⁸⁶ Though the Siberian region is considered as the *locus classicus* of 'true shamanism', Nepal, even today, is a very lucrative field for its study. In Tibet, 'by a reverse

process, Shamanism took over most of the beliefs and practices of Buddhism and reorganized itself as Bon'.⁸⁷

Tucci and Snellgrove have discovered many traces of Bon in Western Nepal.⁸⁸ A Tibetan text states that the majority of Gurungs are adherents of the Bon, and adds, 'another section of the Mon population, called *Ma Kra* and known as the *Khasi* (Khasas), are said to believe neither in the teachings of Hinduism nor in those of the Buddhists'.⁸⁹

Both Hinduism and Buddhism have assimilated elements from primitive cults. They are based on a belief in supernatural beings, which often are the personifications of natural phenomena. There is a belief that certain persons, or 'Shamans', have the ability to communicate with them. Though this over-simplified description is in no way adequate in offering the variegated picture of such cults, 'Shamans' are used by all the ethnic groups of Nepal.⁹⁰ In Nepal the *jhankri* is noted for the trance and spirit possession. The repeated chant made while they beat the drum contains the word 'bombo', which at once one reminiscent of Bonpo.⁹¹

If the Sunuwar tribes has the *puimbo* or ngami Shamans, the Gurungs have *pajyu* and *khepre*, the Lepchas have *bongthings*, the Rais and Limbus phedangba, etc. Among such local practices the worship of Mashta in Western Nepal is typical. There are again different forms of Mashta and often wooden idols are offered to them. Among the officiating priests in the shrine of a *Mashto* (singular form) the possessed oracle of *Dhami* forms an important part. Khasa inscriptions invoke *mashto* as a witness to the agreements made or simply as an important deity.⁹² Snellgrove has noted that the chief divinity of Jajarkot, one of the Baisi states, is Mashta, with his attendant Jhankri. The Rauts worship Mashta and at Tiprikot, which formed a part of the Khasa realm, the people 'are not really Hindu at all,' their gods are Mashta and Jhankri Babire.⁹³ Ancestor worship in the form of *kuldevata* is another ubiquitous practice followed by almost all the ethnic groups.⁹⁴

In Nepal the Hindu and Buddhist Tantrik cults as well as all these other religious faiths are so confused that sometimes it becomes difficult to differentiate between them. The common traits among them may be the result of mutual influence over centuries. Mithila is often regarded as the centre of Tantricism, but, 'it might have originated in the outer, tribal circle'⁹⁵ as R.S. Sharma holds. At the same time, Stein has tried to show 'how Hinduism and Shaivism may have played a part in the Bonpo religion'.⁹⁶ To cite an interesting case, the Shaivite Tantric ritual of *panch-makear* has many similarities with the ones performed by Gurungs in the worship of Seu (Shiva?) in their

own primitive religion, known as Ghyabring, 'which is of jhankri cult'.⁹⁷

Agriculture has always been the mainstay of Nepal's economy and even today provides sustenance to more than ninety per cent of people. In general it was largely a peasant society. The south-east terai, with its narrow tract of alluvial plain, is an outstanding agricultural area. The mid-western and far western terai, however, suffer from insufficient rainfall and yield poor harvests.⁹⁸ But this particular south-east terai zone was important not only for its forests which were rich in timber but also due to its proximity to India.

North of the inner terai the Chure hills, a continuation of the Siwalik range, runs parallel to the Mahabharat range which is further north. The strip between the two, called Bhitri Madesh or inner terai, contains the low valley or doon. The land here resembles the terai in relief and climate, but was 'mostly allowed to fall into a state of jungle'⁹⁹ as a defence for the country from the south. Consequently, it was darkened by forests and inhabited by wild beasts.

North of the Mahabharat and south of the high Himalayas, which include several mountain peaks of more than 26,000 ft including Sagarmatha or Mount Everest, lies the Pahar or the hill country. The central part of it is comprised of broad, well-watered mountain valleys with rich soil and is the second most important agricultural region. Crops like paddy, wheat, and maize grow on its well-terraced hill sides. In this belt is contained the Baisi, Chaubisi, Gorkha, the Nepal valley and Kirat. The far western hills where the Baisi emerged have steep slopes, poor soil and inadequate rainfall. This could have been one of the factors contributing to the migration of the people from there to the east. Population is, therefore, concentrated in the middle and in eastern hills.

Land has played an important role in the socio-economic and political history of Nepal. Land was the vital means of production and the principal source of wealth. Hence land became the chief symbol of social prestige as well as the main source of political power. Historical processes gave rise to different forms of land tenure in Nepal.

Raikar, a compound of *rai* derived from *raja*, used in many proto-Nepali epigraphs, and *kara* or tax, implied state landlordism where the tenant's right was limited to occupancy. When such *raikar* land was assigned as emoluments of office to government employees, it was called *jagir*. The *rakam* tenure was the assignment of land as remuneration mostly for the performance of manual functions. The tenure called *birta* (Skt. *Vritti*, livelihood) originated when the state granted as rewards land to individuals, after divesting itself of ownership, and enabling them to make a living. The *guthi* (*goshthi*, assembly) tenure

was applied to lands endowed for the use of philanthropic, religious and charitable institutions. Lastly, there was the tenure of land called *kīpat* in which the ownership of land was vested collectively in an entire ethnic group. The most prominent case of this nature till recent times was found in Eastern Nepal, specially in Pallo Kirat.¹⁰⁰

It is difficult to ascertain at what point of time agriculture was introduced in the Nepal valley and in the other regions. The ancient tribes probably had a pastoral economy and were acquainted with some primitive form of agriculture. Lichchhavi inscriptions mention *Kshatra* (*Khet* in Nepali) or cultivated fields with measures of yield in land-grants.¹⁰¹ The method adopted by the people of the Nepal valley was hoe-cultivation. Even today, having discarded the plough, fields are cultivated by the Jyapus in the valley with a digging hoe called *ku* in Newari. Only non-Newar cultivators use the plough. The taboo on the plough is probably *not* due to the Buddhist influence as both the Hindu and Buddhist Newars practise animal sacrifice and are non-vegetarian. As K.P. Chattopadhyaya presumes, it is probably due to the ignorance of early inhabitants about its use and its advantages and later because of their hostility towards the people who knew its technique.¹⁰² The wooden pulverizer, called *khatta-muga*, used by the Jyapu, is similar to the *Katta-kol(h)* used by Malayali peasants of South India.¹⁰³ Hiuen Tsang noted that the valley peasants were ignorant of the use of oxen.¹⁰⁴

By the time of the Lichchhavi Sanskrit inscriptions in the fifth century, the valley must have had sufficient surplus produce to sustain an urban culture. This was, of course, not possible without a class division. However, how far this division was coterminous with caste division is not known.

In India one important development from Gupta times was the practice of land grants to the Brahmans which was sanctified by the injunctions laid down in Brahmanical scriptures.¹⁰⁵ However, Lichchhavi inscriptions record land grants which were not made to the Brahmans. Lands were donated for meeting daily expenses of temples and viharas,¹⁰⁶ feeding nuns,¹⁰⁷ worship of deities,¹⁰⁸ and philanthropic works.¹⁰⁹

Such land was kept under the trust of a *guthi*¹¹⁰ instead of any particular priests. Manadeva's Changu inscription mentions the donating of inexhaustible wealth to Brahmans,¹¹¹ there is also a record of Brahmans granting land for 'the karanapuja' of Vaisampayana.¹¹² The *guthi* type of land tenure appears to have emerged early in the valley, land grants such as *birta* or *jagir* belong to a later period. In any case, the land in the valley was not that extensive and the areas donated do not appear very big.¹¹³ Furthermore, trade and manufacture began to play the more important role in the valley.

Birta and *jagir* emerged gradually with the advent of the high-caste migrants from the Indian plains. In the areas inhabited by Mongoloid peoples, land was held on a customary and communal basis. There is evidence to indicate that communities other than Limbus of Eastern Nepal also owned land under this system.¹¹⁴ In 1836, this system was abolished in the Nepal valley and its surrounding areas.¹¹⁵ Eastern Nepal came under the influence of high caste Indo-Aryans after the other areas where only parts of the *kipat* land remained as atavistic remnants of bygone days. Tribes like the Chepangs, Murmis (Tamangs), Sunuwars can still recall owning their own *kipats*.¹¹⁶

The lands owned by such communities were converted to *raikar* lands and later *birta* and *jagir* were extracted from them. Sub-infeudation of land in Western Nepal occurred frequently. The extant records covering the period between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries show land grants mostly to the Brahman and Chhetri castes.¹¹⁷ Later, in the Nepal valley the Newar kings granted lands to the Brahmans¹¹⁸ and also sold lands to them.¹¹⁹

Due to the rugged nature of the country, innumerably divided by lofty mountains and deep gorges with rivers and streams too difficult to ford, each settlement was at a considerable distance. Such communication obstacles were by no means conducive to the growth of trade and the village economy was that of an autarky based on simple and minimal needs. Monetary value became significant only in the valley and places located on the main trade routes between India and Tibet. This largely explains the absence of numismatic finds in other areas of Nepal. Manadeva was the first ruler of the valley whose *mabanka* coins give evidence of the rise of the money economy. Coins of Lichchhavi and subsequent dynasties have been found. However there is a long inexplicable interlude from AD 750-1000. Father Ippolito Desideri, who reached Kathmandu from Lhasa in 1721, describing the commerce in the valley observed that 'the rupee of Mongol, (Indian currency) was generally used in Nepal in large dealings.'¹²⁰ Coins issued by rulers of other large kingdoms like the Khasa or Sena have not come to light as yet, although there is reference to the Khasan and Jadan rupees in the copper plate inscriptions (AD 1745) issued by a prince Sudarsan of Javesvara (Jumla)¹²¹ and the Kalyal chief Surathsahi of Jumla (AD 1729).¹²²

Payments in kind continued long after the knowledge of metal money spread among the people familiar with the barter system. This was because of the infrequency with which money was minted due to the scarcity of metals. The small fragmentations of political authority could have at the same time, been responsible for impairing the use of currency. It is not known whether any particular commodity was

used as the medium of exchange. Marc Bloch describes the peppercorn payment in European places like Normandy and Genoa which can be categorized under the system of monetary economy.¹²³ In Tibet, 'barley grain was used to make purchases ranging from horses to clothes'.¹²⁴ In the absence of regular internal markets, people waited for fairs (*mela*) which were held at the time of religious festivals or in the small townships which emerged on various trade routes. It is difficult to assess how much trading business was obtained by the occasional pedlar merchant. In 1766 Padre Tranquille discovered in Tanahu some Muslim merchants from Bettia selling bangles.¹²⁵

The entrepot trade with Tibet was responsible for the affluence and political importance of the Nepal valley. The Buddhist texts record the visit of Indian merchants to the valley. Amsuvarma's inscriptions at Tistung records the exemption of taxes by these merchants who had returned to the valley from outside after selling iron, yak tail, wool, musk and copper utensils.¹²⁶ The word *sarthavaha* or leader of the caravan of merchants occurs in an inscription in connection with Sarthavaha Ratnasimha and Guhamitra who record land grants for religious purposes.¹²⁷ Shivadeva's Lagantol inscriptions lays down that *agrahara* must provide five porters annually to accompany traders to Tibet. This requirement is known as the Bhattavishti.¹²⁸ Other kinds of *vishti* or forced labour are mentioned in similar records. In fact the system continued and was known as *jhara* until recently. Inscriptions record grants of land and wealth to the Sangha or the Buddhist Church, but no information regarding its participation in economic activities can be gleaned from them.

The valley kingdom benefited greatly when Tibet agreed to circulate silver coins minted in Nepal in exchange for gold. Nepal purchased silver for this purpose from India making a considerable profit in the process. The first king to silver coins in Nepal was Mahendramalla (c.1564) and his *mahendramalli* coins mint were in use for a long period of time. Father Ippolito Desideri wrote in 1721, 'There is much commerce in this place, as many Tibetans and heathens from Hindustan came there to trade, and merchants from Cascimir have offices and shops in the town.... The larger coins are called Mandermalli, in common parlance Mohar, and are worth half a Mongol rupee...' ¹²⁹ In later years the Malla kings added copper to the silver coins with a debased value.

The foreign trade of Nepal was confined almost entirely to its northern and southern neighbours, Tibet and India. The terai and Northern India have long been a trading area where Indian products were sold to Nepal merchants. An early reference to trade relations between India and Nepal occurs in Kautalaya's *Arthashastra* which

mentions the import from Nepal of a rainproof black woollen rug called *bhingisi*, in a patchwork of eight pieces.¹³⁰ The ancient Buddhist texts add that the cheapest commodity in Nepal was wool (the Tibetan word for Nepal is Balpo, meaning the land of wool) and orpiment. The classical accounts mention a trade route running from the north-west to Pataliputra, the ancient capital of India, and an important offshoot of this road connected India with Tibet and China through Nepal.¹³¹ Ralph Fitch had heard in 1583 that there was regular commercial intercourse between India and Tibet via Nepal and Bhutan.¹³²

A somewhat detailed account of this trade is left by an Armenian merchant, Hovannes Joughayueti, who entered Nepal in 1686 and went to Lhasa from there. Indian merchants carrying on trade with Nepal and Tibet derived nett profits ranging from 70 to 130 per cent from their transactions. His ledger contains 174 items of trade in addition to costly fabrics, precious stones, musk, spices, tea and Chinaware. These were bought and sold particularly in compliance with the requirements of the 'upper' class of the feudal society of India, Tibet and Nepal.¹³³ Father Della Penna listed the Indian imports from Nepal as being musk, yak tails, wool, hides, tusks, herbs, timber, bronze and articles of religious and artistic value, while the exports from India to Nepal were fine cloth, silk, brocades, spices, saffron, sandalwood, indigo, cotton, seeds, jewellery, perfumes and drugs.¹³⁴ Bengal salt was sold in Nepal and Nepal saffron in Bengal.¹³⁵

In the wild, desolate and inhospitable alpine zone no cultivation was possible thus cattle were reared and spinning and weaving wool also became an important occupation. The cattle not only gave wool, meat and milk but also served as a means of transport over the mountainous and difficult terrain ridges. Meagre agricultural resources were, however, replenished by trans-Himalayan trade. Mountain dwellers like the Sherpas, Thakalis and others of Tibetan descent partook in this lucrative enterprise along many routes in Eastern as well as Western Nepal. However, the two main trade routes could not be monopolized by them. One of these went from Kathmandu along the Indravati, Sunkosi and Bhote Kosi rivers to the Kodari pass and from there to Kuti in Tibet. The other route linked the valley by way of Rasuagarhi with Kirong in Tibet. These relatively easy routes were used almost exclusively by the Newar merchants.

The main trade-route that links Pokhara and Baglung in the middle ranges to Tibet follows the course of the Kali-Gandaki river. The entry into Tibet is made through a mountain pass north of the town of Mustang. Besides the Thakalis,¹³⁶ other ethnic groups live in this region that is bounded by Mustang, Manang and Dolpo. It had been a part of the 'Rajput' principdom of Galkot after the Gurung Ghale

kings were dispossessed. Further west in the Karnali zone the two main routes lie on the banks of the two tributaries of the Karnali river system, the Magu Karnali and the Humla Karnali. These routes were within the Khasa kingdom and were later controlled by the Kalyal chiefs of Jumla. The townlet of Mugu had always been predominantly a settlement of traders. It is within easy reach of Tibet and the grain-growing area of Jumla. The Humla region in the extreme north-west of Nepal has both Hindu and Buddhist communities. Unlike other regions here even high-caste Hindus could be found engaged in trans-Himalayan trade with Matwali Chhetris and other 'Bhuteas' of unknown origins.

Their most important item of trade was the Tibetan salt in exchange of rice. From the Humlis in the west to the Sherpas in the east the frontier tribes exploited the geographical situation between the Tibetan highlands and the lower regions of Nepal, making good use of their ability to transport goods across high altitude. Besides salt, other Tibetan goods of trade were wool, sheep, donkeys, mules and goats. Besides rice, Nepal supplied copper to Tibet.

The *Dhatumanjari*, composed in the fourteenth century, mentions the location of copper in Nepal while another record testifies to the superior quality of the Nepali copper brought to India.¹³⁷ Similarly *Yuktikalpataru* praises the swords manufactured in Nepal.¹³⁸ Copper was found in principalities like Kaski, Gulmi, Musikot, Payyu, Parbat (Malebum), Galkot and the adjoining areas of the Nepal valley such as Tamakhani (copper mine). Iron mines were found in Salyan, Khanchi, Dhurkot, Dang, Payyu, Parbat and Galkot. However, the export of these metals must have been negligible.

With the exception of the Nepal valley kingdom which thrived on trade, the rest of the country had largely a rural economy. The hill rajas were poor. They borrowed petty sums of money at a high rate of interest and loans often remained unpaid for generations.¹³⁹ They also mortgaged land. In 1684 Keharinarayan Shah of Lamjung took Rs 2400 from a Brahman, Narayandas Upadhyaya, partly selling and partly mortgaging land. The Pynthan Chief Motichand mortgaged lands for the petty sums of Rs 220 and Rs 200 in 1778 and 1780.¹⁴⁰ The Newar Malla kings also sold land to the Brahman-Khasa (Chhetri) migrants who had begun to settle in the valley since the sixteenth century.¹⁴¹ The later use of debased coins by them gives evidence of the critical state of their economy. The annual income of the hill rajas of the Baisi and Chaubaisi hardly exceeded a few thousand rupees. Salyan owned a part of the plains and also several mines, 'yet he was so poor that when the late chief married a daughter of Prithwi Narayan, the young lady complained bitterly to her father, that he had bestowed her on a chief unable to give her food'.¹⁴²

Nepal is a land of great linguistic variety, and a study of its linguistic frontiers with their shifts and changes over the centuries could be an enlightening exercise. But such task has been rendered almost impossible by the absence of written records in most of the Tibetan-Burman languages spoken in the country.

Three great language families are thought to be represented in Nepal—Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman and Austro-Asiatic. But this is somewhat misleading. Very little research has been done on the indigenous tongues, and the classification of many of them remains tentative. Satar, a language spoken in the eastern terai is undoubtedly of Austric origin, but Chepang, Danuar, Darai, Jirel, Dhimal and Jhagadi are labelled as Austric by some and Tibeto-Burman by others.

Of the Tibeto-Burman languages, Newari is the most important as it preserves a rich literary heritage that has survived many centuries. Other principal languages belonging to the same category are Tamang, Magar, Gurung, Khambu (Rai or Kirati), Limbu, Sunawar, Sherpa, Lepcha, Thami, etc. Many of them however are locally spoken in unintelligible dialects. Magar has three and Rai not less than ten. Hayu, Thami and Dhimal are closely related to Rai and Limbu and reveal connections with the Munda branch of the Austric family. Grierson counted thirty-two Tibeto-Burman dialects in Nepal.¹⁴³ Besides Newari, two others, Limbu and Lepcha, have their own scripts used for manuscript writing.¹⁴⁴ Tamang, Sherpas and Lamaist Gurungs, who profess Buddhism or Bon, depend on the Tibetan texts.

Though Sanskrit was used by the Lichchhavis in their inscriptions from as early as the fifth century AD, it is clear that it was never the language of the common people. Newari appears to have become the vehicle of a prolific literature since the eleventh century, and their scripts called Kutila, Bhujimol, Kumol, Kvemol, Golmol, Pachumol, Homol, Litumol and Ranjana were evolved from the Gupta script.¹⁴⁵ Though Newari is placed in the Tibeto-Burman family, suggestions have been made that it was derived from an early form of speech which was subsequently influenced by Tibeto-Burman and Indo-Aryan languages. A scholar has shown that Tibetan and Newari had a common parent language and that Newari separated to become a distinct language somewhere in the eighth century AD.¹⁴⁶ A close contact with Sanskrit, Maithili and Nepali has brought about many changes in it.

Inscriptions in Newari dating back to the reign of Yakshamalla have been discovered. Chronicles were also composed, combining both Sanskrit and Newari, the most famous example being the *Gopala Vamsavali*. Manuscripts composed from the eleventh century onwards have helped scholars to throw light on medieval Nepal. The Lichchhavi and post-Lichchhavi kings of the valley, the Khasa

kings and the Sena potentates of different principalities all patronized Sanskrit.

Maithili was another Indo-Aryan language that occupied a prominent place, at least in the courts of Nepal and in the Sena kingdoms. Today the speakers of Maithili inhabit a large part of Bihar and the Nepal terai. The frontiers of Maithili have been fluctuating from age to age. The area where Maithili is spoken is known as Tirhut, a derivation from Tirabhukti, the name prevalent in the fourth and fifth centuries and also known as Mithila. But 'in the earliest known period of its history it was called Videha and included several kingdoms in it, Mithila and Vaishali being the most important.'¹⁴⁷ The Lichchhavis who are recorded to have migrated to the Nepal valley from Vaisali were subsequently followed by the Karnats or the Tirhutiyas of the Nepali chronicles.

The Malla kings of the Nepal valley who claimed descent from the Karnats of Mithila showed their preference for Maithili. Many writings from Mithila reached the valley. *Charyagitis*, described as a combination of Old Bengali, Old Maithili, Old Assamese and Old Oriya, was rediscovered in Nepal in 1916.¹⁴⁸ These *gitis* are sung in the temples of Nepal during festivals even now. Malla kings like Siddhi Narasimha, Bhupatindra and others of the three city-kingdoms composed many hymns, songs and plays in Maithili.¹⁴⁹

Either because the Senas were collaterals of the Karnats of Mithila or because they ruled over a large part of the Maithili-speaking area, they have left behind a number of documents in Maithili. Evidence shows that the Tibeto-Burman speakers also used it, at least for official purpose.¹⁵⁰

The Indo-Aryan language which assumed the predominant position subsequently is Khas Kura (later Nepali), the language of the Khasas. With the eastward movement of the people from Western Nepal this language came to be known to the Newars as Khay-bhay or Parbate. Sundarananda Bara, a Newar who used this language with Sanskrit to write *Triratna-Saundarya-Gatha* (1839) called it Parbate-bhasha.¹⁵¹ Hamilton says, 'but west from the capital, it is more commonly known as the Khas bhasha, a dialect of the Khas country.'¹⁵²

The Khas-kura was spoken in the Sena kingdoms as these rulers had Khasas in their armies. The speakers of the language must have migrated in sufficiently large numbers to the Nepal valley by the early seventeenth century. Lakshminarashimha's inscription at Makhan Tol in Kathmandu (AD 1641) was written in this language to enjoin people not to capture and kill in a specified area. The Khasas were employed in the court and army and they are mentioned thus in many contemporary Newari documents. An important trilingual inscription in Sanskrit, Newari and Nepali was installed by Pratapmalla (AD 1670)

when a tank called Rani Pokhri in Kathmandu was completed. It also mentions Brahman, Pradhan, Khasa and Magar as witnesses.¹⁵³

Though no poem written in the Khas speech before the reign of Prithvinarayan has been found, a number of prose manuscripts and epigraphs help scholars to trace its development through the last five centuries.¹⁵⁴ The extant early poems in it appear to be contemporaneous with Prithvinarayan Shah and some of them describe his conquests. One such early poet is by Subananda Das, generally taken to be a Newar. Those poems give some ideas about the popular view of the Gorkha conquests and shall be discussed in the relevant context.

Eastern Nepal : Tribes and Traditions

THE KIRAT RAIS AND LIMBUS

Kirat, in the eastern zone of Nepal, is the home of many hills and plains tribes. Sub-divided into the Near, Central and Far regions, it is geographically quite similar to the rest of the country. The fertile eastern terai extending from Parsa to Morang was once covered with lush forests before parts of it were cleared up for cultivation. The inner terai, which includes Sindhuli and Udaipur, was also forested but here the steep slopes did not prove ideal for cultivation. Moreover, its low lying areas were malarial, and thus sparsely populated.

The cold and forested northern belt of Kirat with its eastern boundary extending to meet those of Sikkim and Darjeeling is inhabited by the Sherpa, Lhomi and other unidentified tribes. The lower hills or Pahar are thickly forested, but here the climate being warmer valleys are densely populated despite the sharp segregations caused by lofty hills and deep gorges.

Central Kirat is called Khambuan just as the region further towards the east is Limbuan. The Khambus (or Rais) and the Limbus constituted the majority of the population till the Gorkha conquests. The name Kirat was once used exclusively for the Khambus, although later it was extended to include the Limbus.

The Kirata is a generic term for Mongoloids and thus was used in numerous Sanskrit and classical texts as well as some Indian epigraphs.¹ Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, in his study on the contributions of the Kiratas to the composite Indian culture,² proposed the name 'Indo-Mongoloids' for 'the Mongoloid tribes from the east'. These tribes 'after their settlement within the frontiers of India and in contiguous tracts came to be known to the Aryan speakers as their neighbours and dwellers in the same land—their compatriots—and were designated as Kiratas'.³

Different etymological explanations are suggested for the name Kirata. Some of them being 'those living on frontiers',⁴ 'those who talk gibberish'⁵ 'the traders in silk (*kirat*)'⁶ and so on. In the ancient records they were associated with China⁷ and often confused with other Aryan and non-Aryan frontier tribes of north India. They are described as 'degraded Kshatriyas', hence Sudras.

The word Kirata in a broader sense is comparable to the Tibetan 'Mon' which was used generally for all the inhabitants of the south 'who had not been organized into states'. Mon included all sorts of aborigines of the wooded Himalayan hills, like Mishmi, Abhors, 'the low caste communities' of Ladakh and the tribes of Sikkim and Bhutan. It was probably derived from the Chinese word 'Man' used to refer to all southern 'barbarians'.⁸

If Suniti Kumar Chatterjee takes a linguistic perspective of the Kirata problem then Hermanns' *Indo-Tibetans*⁹ is an anthropological study. He felt that the term Indo-Mongoloid wrongly implied that all the people who belonged to the Tibeto-Burman language group possessed typical Mongoloid racial characteristics. Thus Hermanns proposed the name 'Indo-Tibetan' instead, which 'covers not merely the linguistic but also geographic conditions and... includes both Mongoloids and non-Mongoloids'.¹⁰

Chatterjee, in discussing the Nepali Kiratas concentrates mostly on the Newars of the Nepal valley sadly ignoring those people who, among all, have retained the name Kirat, Kirati or Kirant. Hermanns, on the other hand, gives more importance to the Lepchas and his study is based solely on the field work conducted at Darjeeling.

Iman Singh Chemjong, a Christian Limbu has written a number of books both in English and Nepali, about the Kirats of Nepal, their history and culture.¹¹ But, as will be made clear in the course of this study, he is biased, often taking recourse to imagination and stressing tenuous phonetic similarities at the cost of authenticity.

Chemjong believing that the name Kirat is but a 'corrupt form of Kiriati, Kiryat or Kirjath which means a fort or town in Moabite language of the Mediterranean region' traces the origin of the migrating Kirats to the west, linking them with an ancient tribe called 'Kiratite' mentioned in the Old Testament.¹² At the same time however he accepts theories regarding migrations of the Kirats from the east and the north. Moreover his references to the Mongoloids in general as the Limbu Kirats of Eastern Nepal naturally creates confusion.

The Khambu (Rai) and Limbu tribes retain Mongoloid physiognomy to a greater extent but, as with other tribes, the multifarious interplay of different types in them is quite evident. However, although they do not assert that they always lived in the land of their

present habitat, and though legends uphold that they had migrated, there is still no unanimity regarding the direction from which they came.

The Rais or Khambus, also called Jimdars are at times pejoratively referred to as Kichaks. At present they constitute a meagre percentage of the population of the Near Kirat region, the land roughly between Banepa to the east of the Nepal valley and the Likhu river. They are concentrated in Khambuan or Central Kirat, between the river Likhu in the west to the Arun and the Sankhuwa rivers in the east.

There is a theory that the Kirats were the aborigines of the Nepal valley but were later pushed towards the east. A Kirati legend claims that they come from a land which originally was a lake. Some Rais, probably on the basis of knowledge acquired from the accounts of the Nepal valley, claim that they cultivated that valley 'before the Newars'. However there is nothing to establish any connection between the present Rais and the ancient Kiratas of the Nepal valley. Yet, it is also not clear as to why, among all others, the Rais have retained the Kirati nomenclature. Their other name Khambu is believed by some to be derived from Kham in Tibet while a few Sanskritists tend to describe it as a derivation from the ancient name Kamboja. The names Jimdar and Rai are undoubtedly of later origin. Jimdar was derived either from *jamidar*, 'holder of land' or from *jimmadar*, 'functionary with official responsibility (*jimma*)'. Rai is a derivative of *raja*. This title is said to have been conferred on the Khambu chiefs by Prithvinarayan Shah after the Gorkha conquest of Khambuan,¹³ but even prior to that the Sena potentates of Eastern Nepal had referred to them similarly. However, the title which was spelt as Raya was changed to Rai by the Gorkhalis.¹⁴

The Rais and Limbus are related to the large Tibeto-Burmese speaking Mongoloid population which is spread throughout the sub-Himalayan region and the North-Eastern hills of India. Even though Sikkim and Bhutan are situated between Eastern Nepal and North-East India, a large number of similarities have been observed between the Monbas, Daflas, Miris and Rais.¹⁵ In the upper Arun valley 'there are Rai settlements... barely distinguishable from...the structures of the Assam Himalayas'.¹⁶ The Rais claim that their ancestors had migrated to Nepal in groups, over a period of time.

The Rais are actually not a homogeneous group but congeries of tribes or clans. Morris listed seventy-one clans each with numerous sub-clans.¹⁷ The Yakhas (now called Dewans), despite their claim to be different, are one such clan and are called Yakha-Rai. Many Rai clans have their own languages although they do not have any script. Grierson¹⁸ counted eighteen such speech forms which in most cases

were unintelligible. Hence a saying in Nepali goes—*Jati Rai uti kura* or that there are 'as many Rai dialects as there are Rais'. These different clans were presumably kindred tribes, who settling down in their present habitats soon gave rise to a confederacy called Khambu or Rai. The linguistic multiplicity was further aggravated by centuries of isolation and the absence of a central control.

The Rais were neither Hindu nor Buddhist. The Hindu influence is minimal in the areas situated far from their settlements. The Rais had their own supreme God, Paruhang, as well as other deities. They honoured the god of the farmers, Bume (thought by some to be derived from the Sanskrit *bhumi* meaning land), and worshiped the Mother Goddess (now known as Chandi). They had their own seasonal festivals and did not celebrate the Hindu festivals Dussera or Diwali. The religious leader who presided over their ceremonies was called Ngopa (mGo-pa, headman, 'chief' in Tibetan), and like the *jhankri* was apparently possessed by a spirit. He was also the physician of the tribe.

Most of the Rais in Khambuan claim descent from Khambuho, eldest of the three legendary brothers. While the two younger brothers, Meratup and Menho are said to be ancestors of other Rais. Some important Rai clans are Khaling, Chamling, Dimal (or Dimmal), Kulung, Dumi, Thulung, Bantawa, Bahing, Waling, Sangpang, Sotang, Mewahang and Lohrung.

There are other legends associated with the origin of the Rais. One relates that the origin of the Lepchas, Rais and Mechs can be traced to three brothers. The other divides the Kirats into two broad groups, Lhasagotra and Kashigotra, claiming that half of them came from Lhasa or Tibet and the other half from Kashi or Benares in India. However, this opinion appears to be a later concoction made under Hindu influence as is evident by the use of the suffix *gotra*.

The Kirat oral tradition is called *mundhum*. One Limbu *mundhum* describes 'Muna Maidan' as the original Kirata homeland. Then again, according to the Limbu version of the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel the people dispersed when they found mutually unintelligible languages emerging amongst them. Differences led to wars and consequently only four leaders survived. One of them, Papahang ('Hang' in Rai and Limbu means a chief or a king) migrated with his people towards the east to Simanugarh (Simraon or Tirhut or Mithila?). Those who went north came to be known as the Gurungs, the Magars and the Newars while the Lepchas and Kachens were descendents of others who had moved to the east.¹⁹

The *mundhum* goes on to give an account of the migration of another (section) to 'Sinyuk' (China). Indeed it was from here that

conquering groups travelled south to Tibet and the Kirat country right down to Mithila in the plains. Thus the Kirat *mundhum* has proved the process to be a montage of various historical incidents which took place in China, Tibet and India. The Kirats are called the votaries of the 'Yuma' religion.

The Limbu chronicle obtained by Vansittart²⁰ has another version of the migrations from Lhasa (Tibet) and Kashi (India) and of the reunion at Ambepojoma in Kirat, which was then controlled by others. The oppressed Limbus were soon forced to elect ten chiefs to meet the crisis. Thus ten different chiefdoms came into being. They were Tambar Khola, Terathum, Athrai, Phedap, Yangrok, Mewa Khola, Pachthar, Chhathar, Chaubisiya and Charkhola.

Not only do these names illustrate an Indo-Aryan influence but their numerical associations suggest that each was a settlement of a certain number of clans. Thus each name means something more, like Terathum (thirteen settlements), Athrai (eight Rai settlements?), Panchthar (five clans) Chhathar (six clans), Chaubisiya (twenty-four), and Charkhola (four rivers).

Although he does not specifically quote from it, Chemjong's *History and Culture of the Kirat people* which refers to the ten chiefs is probably based on descriptions in the *mundhum*.²¹ He calls them the 'Shan Makwan', and says that they were a section of Thai people of Chinese nationality who, in the beginning, had come from the Suchuwang province of Unan (Yunnan?). They moved to North Burma, 'settled in a place called Monkwan' and the Sittang valley from where they travelled to Assam. The early settlers of Limbuan and the ten 'Shan Makwan' chiefs that they were subsequently dislodged by were both referred to as Kirats by Chemjong. Since the Senas of Makwanpur had established their suzerainty over Kirat, it is difficult to ascertain whether Chemjong based his theory on the phonetic similarity of places like Makwanpur, Monkwan and Makwan in order to establish the Kirat origin of the Senas.

At the time of their invasion of Kamrup, the Turks were impressed by the 'Turki countenance' of people like Koch, Mech and Tharu.²² The Turks were defeated by the Ahoms who occupied Assam in AD 1228 and were responsible for 'a fresh and vigorous Mongoloid element' to be used in shaping the history of Assam and North-Eastern India for the next five centuries'.²³ The Ahoms are also described as Thai or Shan people who came to Assam by way of North Burma in the thirteenth century.

The decline and ultimate fall of the kingdom of Nanchao in Yunnan is believed to be the cause of a large scale exodus of Tibeto-Burman speakers from the region. Though Nanchao is generally considered a

Thai kingdom, a critical analysis of the Nanchao language has led scholars to conclude that it was more Tibeto-Burman than Thai.²⁴

Nanchao, the loyal vassal of T'ang China, literally meant 'southern kingdom', and was one of the six small tribal principedoms in Yunnan, that had begun to grow powerful in the eight century AD. Withstanding both Tibetan and Chinese attacks, Nanchao still dominated the reopened trade-routes leading to Burma. In its heyday Nanchao had conquered parts of Assam and reopened an ancient trade route with India. All this was facilitated by Chinese distraction due to the growing strength of Tibet. However, marauding bands of hostile Tibetan forces drove Tibeto-Burman migrants from the north of Nanchao to the Irrawady valley of Burma in the ninth century.

Nanchao grew powerful in a span of three decades and it is difficult to explain 'how a heterogeneous nation of no less than fifty-four tribes was able to unify itself and accomplish such a feat'.²⁵ However, this unity did not last for long. The internal problem brought on by the extreme ethnic division caused its decline, particularly after 877. Between 877 and 1253 waves of migrating peoples moved southward from there over a wide area that extended from Assam to Cambodia.²⁶ However we cannot ascertain the number of tribes that went from there to North-Eastern India and then on to the hills of Eastern Nepal. A more comprehensive study of the Kirat *mundhum* by competent scholars is however likely to give us more information.

There are other traditional beliefs like the one recorded by Sarat Chandra Das,²⁷ that suggest that the Tibetan pastoral people had journeyed southward in search of greener pasturage for their cattle. The story relates that a cowherd crossing the Kangla pass in search of a lost yak, found it grazing in land, that was rich in barley. He returned and induced others to migrate. The Yakhas Sanskritist claim that 'Yakha' was a derivative of Yakshah believe that they were so called because they came to Kirat in pursuit of their lost yak.²⁸

The Limbus assert that they are called Yakthumbas because they were the ones to defeat and dislodge the Yakhas. The Lepcha name for Limbu is Tsong or Chong, a name still retained in Sikkim. The Limbus hold that Limbuan actually means 'the land conquered with the help of the bow (*li*) and arrows'. In fact most places in Limbuan have names that are either prefixed or suffixed by (*lih*).

Limbuan or Far Kirat, lying between 26° 40" north and 27° 56" north and 87° 57" east, extends from the Arun in the west to the Singalila range that lies along the Sikkim and Darjeeling borders. Like the Rais the Limbus were also neither Hindu nor Buddhist. Their *mundhum* contains a legend that bears a close resemblance to the creation myth of the Mech people.²⁹ The Limbus worship a formless God called

Tangera Ningwaphuma. They performed animal sacrifices, ate beef and worshipped innumerable petty deities. The present text of the *mundhum*, transcribed and translated by Chemjong into Nepali, however, appears to be an idealized version of the original because of its content of sophisticated ideas which seem to be definite borrowings from Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity and Hinduism.

The Limbu priests are called *phedengma* and *bijuwa** Hermanns differentiates Limbu *phedengma* from other Shaman priests on the grounds that they did not tremble when possessed, nor use the hour-glass shaped drum.³⁰ However, Hermanns has been proved wrong about this finding made on the authority of his informant, and it is made clear in the *mundhum* that like other tribes, the Limbus did follow Shamanistic practices. Moreover, spirit possession among the Limbu Shamans has been noted in recent studies.³¹

Whether the Limbus can be described as having a specific clan organization is doubtful now. Risley points out that they were divided into numerous kindred groups. Two such groups are named Toetlagu and Yambhota, which are the respective Limbu names for a red rhododendron and a fruit. The other kindred groups are nicknamed Thegim (wicker-worker), Menyangho (the unsuccessful one), and Libong (archer). These sub-divisions in the absence of strict centralized authority were autonomous. In fact any issue that concerned community life was decided by a common *chumlung* or assembly.

The Kirat society, according to the *mundhum* was almost republican with comparatively unorthodox rules. The custom by which they adopted outsiders into their tribes was known as *chokphungthim*. Once adopted an outsider was considered a full-fledged Kirat and was not made to suffer any differential treatment. This particular mode of adoption must have gone a long way in assimilating divergent ethnic and linguistic groups into the Kirat fold.

Some Limbu manuscripts collected by Hodgson were deposited in the British Museum. Though different from the Devanagari the Limbu script is apparently a derivative of the former. One religious leader, Srijunga Hang, executed by a Sikkim king in the eighteenth century, was regarded as the inventor of the Limbu script.

The most interesting institution of the Limbu till recent times was the system of *kipat* or communal ownership of land. Though land

* It is difficult to formulate a clear-cut difference between the two. The first is a Limbu word, the second is a Nepali word. An article which suggests a possible method of analysing the problem, Philip Segant's 'Pretres Limbu et Categories Domestiques', is published in *Kailash, A Journal of Himalayan Studies*, Vol. 1 No. 1, Kathmandu July 1973, pp. 51-76.

could be used exclusively by one individual as a member of the tribe, he could not claim private ownership. Thus he had no individual right to dispose of the land as it belonged to the tribe or the community as a whole. *Kipat* was totally in contrast with the concept of state landlordism.

The origin of the word *kipat* is not known, but the name was used by the Majhi and other communities of Western Nepal before their conquests by Gorkha.³² This word is not found in any relevant extant records of the Sena overlords of Limbuan or in the settlements made by Prithvinarayan with the Kirat chiefs. Nor did the Limbus use it. They recognized this as 'Tansing Khoksing' or the system which had 'land reclaimed after clearing forests'. This custom is somewhat comparable to that of the Mundas among whom 'the ownership of land was vested collectively in the entire community of *Khunthattidars*',³³ who reclaimed land after clearing forests.

The *kipat* system was continued in Limbuan till recently. However, there is evidence that proves that other tribes also once followed this system. In certain cases old documents fully corroborate this belief. A field study was undertaken among a number of Yakhas (Dewans), whose ancestors had migrated to Darjeeling four or five generations ago, and it transpired that they still remembered their *kipat* in Pach Majhiya in Kirat. This usufructuary hold over land by a particular clan, sept or tribe is suggested by the Sunuwar word *ru* for land itself which has a deeper significance. This word occurring in almost all Tibeto-Burman languages literally means 'bone' and is thus used as an indication of the close relationship between different kindred groups, collectively owning land. Just as the Khambus became the Rais and the Yakhas became Dewans, the Limbu chiefs were honoured with the title Subba, now used by most of the Limbus.

SUNUWAR, TAMANG (MURMI), YOLMO, THAMI

The Sunuwars or the Mukhia,* were mostly inhabitants of Near Kirat. According to Risley they came from Western Nepal and settled in Chaplu on the Likhu river. They inhabit Ramechhap, Dolakha and a small part of Okhaldhunga. Hermanns relates that they came to Nepal from a distant land called 'Churdji-bangchi(?)' after the Newars but prior to the Brahman migration.

After coming under Brahmanical influence the Sunuwars divided themselves into twelve *thars* or septs and claimed that they were descended from three brothers, the eldest of the three was believed

* A Chhetri sept has also the name Mukhia. It means chief or headman.

to be the ancestor of the first ten thars, while the two younger brothers each had one *thar* associated with them. Sometimes Mongoloid tribes, influenced by the Hindu caste hierarchy, used the word *thar* to denote sub-divisions based on clan, occupation, kinship, etc. The Sunuwars consider the two latter divisions as superior to the Das-thari who probably were born of mixed marriages between the Sunuwars and the non-Sunuwars. Risley points out to a close similarity between the Sunuwars, the Magars and the Gurungs although they are now endogamous tribes. Sunuwar customs have much in common with those of the Magars. The Sunuwars enjoy a homogeneity with respect to language. Thus their dialects do not vary much from place to place or from clan to clan. Akin to the Sunuwars in most customs, though socially inferior were the Jirels. If the Sunuwars were more Hinduized, then the Jirels were mostly followers of Lamaism. Indeed their dialect is very close to the Sherpa language and their priest is either a Sherpa or a Jirel Lama. They are considered to be the offspring of marriages between Sunuwars and Sherpas.

These tribes believe that the Surels, the Sunuwars, the Rais, Limbus and Hayus were descended from five brothers respectively. Surels, regarded as a Sunuwar group, are named after Suri Khola, the region in which they settled. The Hayu dialect was noted by Hodgson as 'remarkably resembling' those of the Chepangs and Kusundas.³⁴ However, because of the degree of integration between Hayus and other tribes the former are no longer easily identifiable.

The Murmis or Tamangs once lived around the Nepal valley, and today are concentrated to the east of it. Though described briefly in accounts of the eastern Himalayan region, specially those of Nepal, Sikkim, and Darjeeling no detailed study on them has as yet appeared.³⁵ In Nepal the Tamangs are pejoratively called 'Bhotes' or Tibetans by caste Hindus. The Tamang language is rated the fourth 'major' one of Nepal, and the census of Nepal (1971) ranks it as first among the Sino-Tibetan group.³⁶

The Tamangs profess Lamaist Buddhism and retain a cultural heritage that is Tibetan in origin. However, such retention does not exclude other influences. Some claim that their other name Murmi is a derivative of Mulami (Mul, Skt. 'principal', or 'chief' and *mi* Tib. 'man') for chief. This title was used by few chiefs of the Nepal valley during the medieval period. 'Mulami' (affixed to the name) was used frequently although its exact import was 'difficult to ascertain'. However the title soon became hereditary and according to Petech began assuming thus its modern character of a family name Murmi'.³⁷ Petech includes 'Mula or Murmi, the ancient Mulami' as a caste group of the Shaivite Newars.³⁸ However, Bista notes that he could not trace Murmi

as a clan or tribe although 'in some places,... the headman of a clan is called *mulmi*.'³⁹

The Tamangs, however, do not call themselves Murmi. This name was probably given to them by others. Murmi is a Tibetan term meaning 'the people of the frontiers (*mur* 'at the frontier', *mi* 'man').'⁴⁰ Some believe that Tamang is a corruption of the Tibetan rTa dMag, which means 'army of horses or cavalry.'⁴¹ Such an etymological reconstruction has led the Tamangs to believe that their ancestors came to Nepal as the cavalymen of Srong bTsan sGam-po.

The Tamangs are now divided into the Bara Tamang (Twelve Tamang) and the Athara (Eighteen) Jat (caste). The former are considered the more superior. However these numerical descriptions do not give a correct picture. The entire Tamang community is divided into several *thars*. Bista has recorded twenty-five, and field work done at Darjeeling has resulted in the discovery of forty-nine different clans.⁴² The hierarchical divisions made later were the consequence of Hindu influence.

Observers have noted a great similarity between Tamangs and Gurungs with respect to both speech and custom.⁴³ Though the former profess Buddhism, their religious activities include Shaman practices. In Darjeeling their open adherence to Bonkhor or Bon has been noted.⁴⁴

Perceval Landon describes the Murmis or Tamangs as 'the hewers of wood and drawers of water, coolies by heritage and ready to merge their individuality in almost any adjacent tribe.'⁴⁵ Bista gives a similar description.⁴⁶ There are records that claim that they worked as carriers in the army of Prithvinarayan Shah. They are beef eaters. Probably to rationalize their being denied the right to wearing the sacred thread, the Tamangs concocted the legend of their descent from Mahesur (Mahesvara or Shiva), 'a younger brother of Brahma and Vishnu'. The legend says that Mahesur was tricked into eating beef by his elder brother. 'When he discovered this, Mahesur in anger, struck his brothers with the intestines of the dead cow. Some of the tripe clung round the shoulders of his elder brothers, from which originated the custom of wearing sacred threads'.⁴⁷

The Tamangs followed the *kipat* land system. The Tamang clans held an exclusive and inalienable right over the land. Baburam Acharya's view is that Prithvinarayan granted *kipat* land to the Murmi, Sunuwar and Thami in exchange for their services as carriers and porters during his expeditions to Eastern Nepal. This, he feels, was probably how such a form of land tenure originated because there is no documentary evidence prior to this to prove otherwise.⁴⁸ However this view does not stand to reason. The word *kipat* is used by the

Tamangs also to mean a clan. Thus, under the Bomjan *kipat* kindreds like Hebung, Kamkol and Namlang are included. Similarly there are sub-divisions under each Bal *kipat*. The Ghising *kipat*, the Moktan *kipat*, the Yonjan *kipat* and so on. Besides, when the whole community owns land in a pre-literate tribal society we cannot expect to find deeds and documents proving proprietary rights. The grant of *kipat* by the state authority similarly goes against the very concept of communal ownership of land.

The name of the tribe called Yolmo or Yolmowa is derived from a place-name, Helmu or Helembu, written as Yolma in Tibetan. This region, just above the Kathmandu valley, is described in the biography of the great Tibetan mystic, Milarepa, who is said to have meditated in a cave there. A Tibetan text describes the land as 'a secret country, Yol-mo, circle of snowy mountains.'⁴⁹

The Yolmos are very much akin to the Tamangs and the Sherpas, and the three of them probably originated from the same stock. As a matter of fact, many people in Helembu regard themselves as Sherpas, and some deny the very existence of Yolmo as a separate tribe. However, the Yolmo dialect, Yolmali, is considered to be quite distinct from the solo-Khumbu Sherpa speech. Tamang, Yolmali and Sherpa dialects are but variations of the Tibetan language. All of them follow Tibetan Buddhism and use Tibetan scriptures. Some of the Yolmo clan-names like Dongba, Syangba, Zangba, Zingba, Zimba are very similar to the Tamang clan-names like Dong, with the suffix *ba* dropped, Syangbo, Zimba and so on.

Yolmos are often erroneously called Kagates, a name derived from *kagat* or the Nepali word for 'paper'. Hodgson noted that 'most of the Cis-Himalayan Bhotias east of the Kali river make the Nepalese paper, but the greatest part of it is manufactured in the tract above Nepal proper',⁵⁰ or Helembu. However, paper-making is not confined to any particular tribe, it is also the occupation of many caste Hindus. The Kagate, therefore, is neither a tribe, nor a dialect.

The caste Hindus of Nepal use a common name 'Bhote' or Bhutia for the Tamangs, Yolmos, Sherpas and other highlanders. In many instances these tribes are found using the honorific Lama as their surnames.

The Thamias are now found working as porters and carriers in Nepal and outside. According to their tradition, a couple, Aputchhuku and Sona Aji came once to a place called Thimi (Dolakha district) from Simang-ghat* and Kamang-ghat. They settled there where Sona Aji

* There is a Limbu tradition which relates the migration of a chief Papahang towards the east where he reached a place called 'Simangharh' (Simraongarh)

gave birth to many sons. One of these boys went east and became Rai-Limbu. He returned to tell his brothers that land was plenty in the east and that they should all move there. But they preferred to stay back and, thus, came to be known as Thami (*thamnu*, in Nepali means 'to stay'). This tradition has no etymological significance. It can be seen that the word is from the Tibetan *mTha* for 'frontier' and *mi* for 'man', which translates as 'border people, barbarians'.⁵¹ The Thamis speak a Tibeto-Burman dialect and have many customs, religious and social, similar to the Rais. They worship Bhume, the deity who is the personification of land. Less under Hindu or Buddhist influence the Thamis profess their own primitive Shaman cult.

THE SHERPAS AND OTHERS

To the north of the Rai settlements in Majh Kirat lies the region called Solu-Khumbu, the homeland of the Sherpas. The Sherpas are mostly concentrated in the area between 86°E and 27°15" to 28°N. Their name is a derivative of the Tibetan conjunction *Sher-pa* meaning easterner. The three regions which together contain the bulk of the Sherpa population are Khumbu, Pharak and Salu. Extending from the D'ing-ri region of Tibet in the north to the confluence of the Dudh Kosi and Bhote Kosi in the south, Khumbu has a number of villages at an altitude between 12000 to 13000 ft. Summer settlements (*yersa*) and pastures extend beyond 15000 ft. Pharak with its partly broad and slightly sloping terraces is a strip of land that flanks the Dudh Kosi gorge, nestled between elevations of 8000 to 9000 ft. The Sherpas occupy the higher ridges, while the Rais inhabit the lower slopes. Shar-rang or Solu is a broad valley lying south-west of Pharak. These three regions contain the major part of the Sherpa society and are together referred to as Solu-Khumbu. Few Sherpa villages are also scattered outside this region.

The Sherpas are more Tibetan in dress, speech, religion and food habits. Though many other ethnic groups from other parts of Nepal have reached Solu-Khumbu, the Tibetan heritage of the Sherpas is not greatly influenced by them. Their Lamas belong to the Nyingma-pa and bKa-Gyud-pa sects, their local beliefs and superstitions are the same as those of Tibet recorded elsewhere.⁵² But they also take the service of non-Sherpa Shamans. The Sherpas once subscribed to Shamanism. However it is now reported to be 'in a severe state of decline'.⁵³

The Sherpa economy till recently was based on agriculture, animal husbandry and trans-Himalayan trade. The tillers turned traders in winter when for half the year Khumbu remained frozen. Trade gave

the Sherpas a standard of living far superior to those of the Rais, Limbus, Gurungs and Magars. In other regions of Solu-Khumbu both summer and winter crops were possible. In exchange for salt and wool purchased from Tibet, the Sherpa traders sold grain, butter, cattle and some Indian commodities. In fact just fifty years ago Khumbu was a centre for the export of Nepalese iron to Tibet.*

The Sherpas, traditionally believed to have eighteen clans, in actuality have many more. Documents affixed with the royal seal during 'the reign of King Rajendravikram Shah (1816-1847) indicate that parts of Solu-Khumbu and its pasturages were previously under the Rais.⁵⁴ It was not until the middle of the sixteenth century that the Sherpas immigrated into the region. Their written and oral traditions refer to their entry from a place called Salmo Gang in the Kham province of Tibet, a distance of some 1300 miles away. This migration was caused by a political tension between the Kham people and their powerful Mongol neighbours in the north. There are traces of two successive groups of migrants to Nepal. Leaving Kham in the east they first came to the Tinkyé region of central Tibet and thence moved onward to Nepal. This latter journey from Tinkyé to Nepal was necessitated in 1531-33 by the invasion of Mirza Muhammad Haider Dughlat, the commander of Sultan Sa'id Khan of Kashgar.⁵⁵

The first four proto-clans to immigrate from the north occupied Mingyapa and Thimmi, the eastern and western parts of Khumbu, later their territory also extended from Serwa and Chappa to Solu. In the beginning only a small group of Sherpas came to Solu-Khumbu but their members soon multiplied.

The next lot of immigrants to Khumbu came in the mid-eighteenth century from D'ingri in Tibet. As they had a greater cultural similarity with the early migrants they were easily integrated into the Sherpa community. Non-Sherpa and Sherpa communities mixed and the progeny of inter-community marriages, especially in Pharak, are noted to have been assimilated with the Sherpas. The Sherpas share a few common clan-names with other tribes.⁵⁶

In the rougher regions of the upper Arun and Tamar rivers live ethnic groups that practice Tibetan culture. No intensive anthropological research on them has been undertaken so far. However a few socio-economic and other features have been noted by Haimendorf.⁵⁷ One such group, which calls itself Lhomi or 'Kar Bhotés', believes that its ancestors came from Tibet. Its members speak in a Tibetan dialect and are divided into several clans (*rhu*). Haimendorf remarks that in some aspects their appearance and life-style is

* This export declined with the opening of trade route via Kalimpong.

similar to that of the Monbas, Daflas and Hill Miris of North-Eastern India. Like these tribes the Lhomis indulge in blood sacrifice and in hunting. They also build their houses in a similar pattern. Each Lhomi village was administered by a hereditary headman called *pembu* or *gowa* (mGo-pa).

Haimendorf noted that Buddhism made some progress in the region when it was under 'Denzung Raja', their name for the ruler of Sikkim, but that 'to-day most of the monuments (Buddhist monuments like *chorten* and *mani-walls*) are in a poor state of repair, and no major structures seem to have been put up for several generations'. In Tangmoche (a Lhomi village) he found 'a man who combined the function of lama and spirit-medium and even possessed two different ceremonial garments appropriate to the two roles. However, those priests who are also lamas do not kill the sacrificial animal with their own hands'. The Lhomis combine 'elements from different cultural spheres'.⁵⁸ This heterogeneous composition of the Lhomis is reflected in their material equipment, religion and clan formation.

THE LEPCHAS

The Lepchas, the Anglicized form of the Nepali Lapche, were settled in the extreme east of Far Kirat, Sikkim and Darjeeling. The Lepchas describe themselves as Rong. Waddell claims that the name Lap-che was derived from a Nepali word which means 'vile speakers'.⁵⁹ However, no such Nepali word exists. The significance of the suffix *che* is made clear by the Tibetan *tsen* or *chen*, (order or class) and *Lap* (in Rai and Limbu meaning 'wing'). It may be suggested that the word is used euphemistically to mean 'border', or 'frontier' and by Lap-che the Kirats meant 'borderers or frontier people', as it was in the case of the Murmi and Thami.

The Lepchas have attracted the attention of many researchers.⁶⁰ A Lepcha tradition records that a wave of migrants, moving eastward, asked their fellowmen to follow, tracing the route marked by chopped banana plants and *bohori** trees. These path-finders reached Sikkim from the west and became Lepchas. Another group branched out further east to reach Burma. These people were the ancestors of the Kachins. Groups that followed later found the resprouted banana plants and blackened *bohori* branches. Thinking it impossible to overtake the earlier groups they decided to move north. They became the Rais and the Limbus. Yet another group feeling settled in the terai remained there and from them descended the Koeth, Mech, Dhimal, Tharu and Danwar tribes.

* *Cordia obliqua*

However, another Lepcha belief indicates a place called Mayel as their original homeland. This place was situated in an inaccessible valley of the mountain which in Lepcha was called King-tzum-song-bu, 'the mountain that is highest over our head'. We know this mountain by its 'Tibetanized' form Kanchenjunga. The Lepchas also assimilated other migrants who called themselves the Khamba Lepcha. Yet another tradition, perhaps born later under the influence of Lamaist Buddhism, points out that the place of the Lepcha origin was on the holy mountain Kailash (Ti-se).

The Lepcha folk mythology is rich and varied and contains its own version of the story of the great deluge and that of the Tower of Babel. But almost all the places mentioned are local, situated in the land covered by Limbuan and Sikkim. The Shaman faith that the Lepchas professed, was probably Bon because they called it Bong-thing-lom or Man-lom. The Lepcha Shaman was called Bongthing. The chronicle of Sikkim, as will be seen later, amply describes early clashes between this primitive religion and the Lamaism brought down by Tibetan migrants from the north.

The Lepchas have a script and their language is considered to be Tibeto-Burman. The Sikkim chronicle credits the invention of this script to the third ruler of the erstwhile Namgyal dynasty of Sikkim. Lepchas however do not accept this. They believe that it was the work of five scholars. The British regarded the Lepcha script, used by General Mainwaring, as a 'pure fiction'. Mainwaring had been euphoric in his praise of the Lepchas and had compiled a Lepcha grammar book and a Lepcha dictionary in 1876 and 1898.⁶¹ However David Diringer's *Alphabet* contains the picture of a page from a Lepcha manuscript of AD 1800 presented to the India Office Library. It shows that the script was indeed the same. A document found in Eastern Nepal proves that the script was used in 1852.⁶² Thus the Lepcha script was certainly not a 'pure fiction' fabricated by Mainwaring.

PLAINS TRIBES

The plains tribes of Eastern Nepal are the Koch, the Mech and Dhimal. The Koch and Mech tribes have been described as offshoots of the Bodo, a name derived from Bod of Bhot or Tibet. A Mech legend regarding their origin, like those of other Mongoloid tribes of Nepal, talks about three brothers, Limbu, Khambu and Mech who came from the north. Lambu and Khambu or Limbu and Rai could not bear the heat of the Gangetic plain, so they returned to the hills of Nepal but the youngest moved eastward to Assam. He was the ancestor of the Mech tribe. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee believes that the name Mech is

a derivative of the Sanskrit word *mlechchha* meaning 'barbarian, non-Aryan or foreigner in general'.

The two main rivers of the Eastern Nepal terai Kosi and Mechi have apparently been named after the Koch and the Mech who are also known collectively as Rajbansis, a description identical to that of the Rajputs. The Koch country is supposed to have once included 'the western half of Assam on one side and the eastern half of Morang on the other with all the intervening country'.⁶³ One tradition relates that Hajo founded an extensive Koch state by uniting the Bodo Koch and Mech. Bisu (later Sanskritized as Bishwa Simha), the grandson of Hajo, is reputed to have built his capital at Koch Behar, the nucleus of the later Koch Behar (Cooch Behar) in Bengal.

The Dhimals,⁶⁴ though darker in complexion, retain the Mongoloid physiognomy of the Limbus. The change in complexion was undoubtedly caused by the tropical sun of the plains. The Dhimal speech is very close to that of the Limbus. They also have legends that speak of the three brothers leaving their original homeland in search of fortune and how the late-comers missing the trail settled down in the plains. The very name Dhimal has a close phonetic similarity with Dimmal, a Kirat clan.

This melange of ethnolinguistic tribes present a picture not usually encountered even in countries much larger than Nepal. The demographic make-up of the country is overlaid with a wide assortment of elements. The evolution of the tribes and clans was brought about by pressures and changes, political and otherwise. Since people lived in close proximity to each other, at a time and place where states, as we know them, did not exist, territorial frontiers were naturally rather vague. Clans and tribes coalesced to form new societies and make new habitats. This fact might also account for the common elements found amongst them. Many of them regarded the others as having the same origins and thus considered them collaterals. The tribes were all endogamous. However they did not extend this inclusive tendency to the Indo-Aryan groups. These tribes, before and even after coming under the impact of the more sophisticated Hindu and Buddhist religions, still retained their many folk cults and languages, all very similar to each other. However, these tribal societies with their own institutions and primordial sentiments still could not exist as a consolidated and homogeneous entity.

4

Eastern Nepal: History and Polity

Eastern Nepal has generally been neglected by historians. The first researcher to have made efforts to discover its past was Hamilton¹ whose work remains our only source in many respects. Since then, stray references to the region's history have been based on Hamilton's study and the few documents discovered later on. Chemjong,* more than a century after Hamilton, tried to reconstruct the history of Kirat but, as noted before and as will be seen later, his sheer enthusiasm often resulted in the presentation of an inaccurate and unconvincing picture.

There are no sources that deal with the early history of Kirat. Local tradition give only a dim picture. Since the fifties, many documents of the Sena period have been discovered and published. Field work undertaken for this study in Eastern Nepal found that a number of households there were in possession of documents, yet unpublished, of historical importance. Facts gleaned from all these available sources are at times corroborated by the chronicles and the accounts of neighbouring Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet, Koch Bihar. The chronicles of Sikkim have been particularly helpful in cross-checking and in reconstructing a sober chronology. The historical and political background of Eastern Nepal and Sikkim is essential for a comprehensive picture of later events as both were involved in the Gorkha conquests.

Koch was the principality established in the East Nepal terai in the late sixteenth century. The entire area from the Bharali to the Tista and the Karatoya (the Begmati of Minhaj-us-Siraj) was occupied by Koch principalities between 1250-1500.² It was during this period that the eastward expansion of the Ahoms and the seizure of Kamrup (AD 1498) by Husain Shah of Bengal took place.

* Iman Singh Chemjong (d.1976), a Limbu Kirat, was the Specialist, Kirat Language and Literature at Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

Under the impact of the Ahoms, already Hinduized, the Koch realm disintegrated. Ralph Fitch, who visited India between 1583 and 1591, recalls his sojourn to 'the country of Couche which lieth 25 days journey from Tanda (Malda)'. He had seen people with 'eares which be marvelously great of a span long' and who used almonds as small money.³ The practice of elongating ears, common among tribes like the Garos, was abandoned by the Koch when they came under Hindu influence. The fragmented principalities soon passed out of history.

A branch of the western Koch, however, carved out a principality in the Eastern Nepal terai of Morang. The Koch are not alone in regarding Vijaynarayan as the founder of a principality, with its centre at Vijaypur situated in the low hills to the north of the present town of Dharan in Eastern Nepal. Just as he was in the habit of calling all the Mongoloids Kirats, Chemjong described Vijaynarayan and his ancestors as 'Limbus of Sakwaden sept'.⁴ He mentions a chronicle of Vijaynarayan as his source but refrains from mentioning either its date or the script used. Caution is called for because of the Limbu tendency to concatenate other chronicles. Hamilton was informed that Vijaynarayan's ancestor came from Kamrup but that he had no connection with Koch Bihar. Regarding the chief Harbhang Raja and his minister Bharbhang Mantri, named thus by the natives, Hamilton had a notion similar to that 'entertained by the Bengalese of Havachandra and Bhacachandra of Kamrup which, may perhaps serve to connect the history of the two dynasties'.⁵

Vijaynarayan made friends with the Kirats living in the hills north of Morang. He took into service Singha Raya, the son of Khelang, who was Hong or hereditary chief of the Kirats'.⁶ This was perhaps the first instance of a Kirat assuming the title of Raya. Chemjong informs us that he was the son of Murehang Khebang, the chief of Phedap.⁷

The rise of Vijaypur was probably contemporaneous with the later parts of the regnal period of Mukunda Sena (c. 1540-75) of Palpa. When his large Sena kingdom was partitioned between his four sons, the easternmost portion, Makwanpur, became the property of his youngest son, Lohang.⁸ The prince soon got an opportunity to move further eastward during the years when Vijaypur was troubled due to internal strife between the Hindu Koch ruler and his tribal Kirat minister.

The hardy but needy Kirat chiefs were impressed by the comparative prosperity of the fertile Morang region and considered it an honour to be the nominal vassals of Vijaypur. The Kirats, however, considered Vijaynarayan as a king only of the lowland terai. To Vijaynarayan, the friendship of the Kirats meant the guaranteed help of a warlike tribe who, at the same time, were no better than *mlechchhas*.

Vijaynarayan later had the Kirat chief killed on the grounds that he 'being an impure beef-eating monster... presumed to defile a Hindu woman'.⁹

Baju Raya (Bajhang, according to Chemjong), son of the murdered Kirat went to Lohang Sena for help. The promise of the Kirat support was fortuitous. Lohang crossed the Adhwara river, subdued a petty Magar chief and took small territories belonging to 'Aniwar Brahman'. After this success in the present Mahottari district, Lohang's eastward march resulted in the seizure of lands belonging to the Bhawars, who, though described as low castes, claimed descent from Nanyadeva of Tirhut or Mithila, in the present Saptari district. He then attacked a hill named Gidha where he faced stiff resistance. The 'Dano', meaning devil, who offered the resistance must have been a tribal chieftain. He was subdued with the help of 'the holy man Ramnath', presumably a Brahman.

Taking off from the point in Hamilton's account, Chemjong fancifully identifies the Gidha hill with the Giddhe hill at Kurseong in Darjeeling and recounts that Bajhang, the Kirat chief, was killed by the Lepcha chief Turve Puno in AD 1618. Lohang is said to have taken revenge by putting 'the Lepcha king of Kurseong-Siliguri to death'.¹⁰

Chemjong probably took the latter portion of the account from Mainwaring who wrote in 1875 that his earliest information regarding the Lepcha history was that it commenced 'from the time of their king Turve, who, apparently reigned about 450 years ago'.¹¹ Mainwaring felt that the Lepchas might have entered at that time, from the south of the Himalayas. Three names are given as the respective successors of Turve-pano (in Lepcha *pano* means a chief or king).*

Mainwaring merely mentions Turve but says nothing about his fight with the Kirat or the other chiefs, nor does he refer to the Giddhe hill in his account. The date suggested by him also underlines the discrepancy in Chemjong's account. However, far more important is the fact that Chemjong, confuses the Giddha hill at Kurseong, with another hill of the same name situated further towards the west in Eastern Nepal.

* However, a Lepcha scholar has this to say: 'Again, mention has been made by foreign writers like Mainwaring and others of the supposedly fifteenth century kings, Turvey, Turyek, Tursong and few others. These are nothing but figments of imagination; they may be nothing more than dramatizing of some legendary figures by some of our tribesmen, and given out to the eager and enthusiastic foreigners. There has never been any historical or other kind of proof supporting the belief'. —A.R. Foning, *Lepcha, My Vanishing Tribe*, New Delhi 1987, p.8.

After the Giddha episode, Lohang descended on Meghvari on the bank of the Kosi, crossed it and occupied Vijaypur. Hamilton, gives the three versions that he heard. Vijaynarayan was overthrown violently; he died childless; and the machinations of a mendicant, Ramnath Bharati, as a revenge against the king made the dynastic change possible.

Lohang's conquests extended from the Adhiya river in the west to the Mahanada in the east. The Mahanadi or Mahananda is the Sanskritized name of the river known as Mahaldi (which means 'the bent-river' in Lepcha.* Lohang is reported to have built a fort on the bank of the Mahananda. The fort could have been at Lohagarh (Lohang Garh or Lohang's fort?), situated between the Mahananda and the Mechi, now a sprawling tea garden in the foothills of Kurseong. In fact there is a strong local belief that its densely wooded hills concealed the ruins of the fort of a 'Loha Raja'.¹² Ramnath Bharati was installed as a priest of the temple built at Varahchhatra and was well-endowed,

Baju Raya's son was appointed as Lohang's minister. The Kirat chief gave up his title of Hang, assumed the Sanskrit name Vijaychandra, the title 'Chautariya' and also 'adopted some degree of purity in his manner of life'.¹³

About Lohang's son Raghav Sena nothing definite is known. He probably ruled till the middle of the seventeenth century. During his reign some significant changes took place in Sikkim. The Lepchas, considered the autochthons of the land, began to be subjugated by the Tibetan immigrants. For a complete historical study the Sikkim chronicle dating back to the coming of the Tibetans is important because it throws light on the history of Eastern Nepal. Furthermore, since the Sena genealogies do not assign regnal periods to any of the rulers of Vijaypur, a comparative study of the Sena Kingdom and Sikkim helps one to establish a chronology. Thus it will not be a futile digression to discuss the history of Sikkim in some detail.

The Sikkim history, compiled by the Lamas of Pemiongchi, was destroyed by the Gorkhas during their raids. With whatever was saved and on the basis of other extant documents and oral traditions a *History of Sikkim*¹⁴ was compiled by the royal couple Sir Thutop Namgyal and Yoshay Dolma. This work, as yet unpublished in Tibetan and English, along with Risley's *Gazetteer of Sikkim* (1894),¹⁵ constitute our principal source of information.

* The source of the river is a ridge called Mahaldiram near Kurseong in Darjeeling. The river rises below the ridge and bends towards the plain. The suffix *di* for 'river' in Lepcha in the name Mahaldi is the same as Magar word in Magarat and Bodo word in North-East India.

The Lepchas ruefully assert that their name for Sikkim was Ren-jong or Namayel-Ren-jong-lyang, 'a sacred land inhabited by honourable and honest people',¹⁶ though later Tibetanized into an Bras-lZongs (pronounced De-zong or Denjong) which means 'the valley of rice'. Though Sikkim history refers to the cementing of an inseparable bond between the native Lepchas and the Tibetan newcomers, a close reading gives ample evidence of the Lepcha-Tibetan conflicts which later facilitated both the Gorkha conquest and the British occupation of a part of Sikkim.

According to the chronicle the first Tibetan king Phun-tshog Namgyal ascended the throne of Sikkim in 1640 by, subjugating the Lepchas, Tsong's (Limbus) and Magars; 'the people were not allowed to remain masterless as before'. In other words, tribal independence was replaced by the establishment of a new kingdom.

Phun-tshog is said to have clashed with a 'Magar king'. In a very different context, the Sikkim chronicle makes a reference to the 'Mangar Raja Hindupati'. Extant documents of the Senas show that Lohang's grandson Harihar had adopted the title of Hindupati.* The Sikkim history does not refer to Phun-tshog's conflict with a Magar king. However, Risley relates that the first Sikkim king 'overcame one Sintu Satichen, or Mangal Gyalpa', and remarks that 'though the latter is considered to have been a Lepcha, the name sounds more like a Magar one'. The Magars, according to him, 'occupied the valleys in the south of Kanchinjunga-Everest range' and their 'chief disappeared leaving no trace'.¹⁷

The 'Mangal' Gyalpa is nothing but Magar Gyal-po or the Magar king. Chemjong, following Risley calls Sintu Satichen a Magar, ruler and adds that he ruled over the Kangpachan valley.¹⁸ This identification was presumably borrowed from Sarat Chandra Das, who was told that the upper part of the valley was first inhabited by Tibetans called Sherpas, migrants from 'Shar Khambu' (Solo Khambu) while the lower valley was occupied by the Magars.¹⁹ He refers to the rebellion of the Magars against the oppressive taxes levied by these Tibetans and how they lost and were expelled from Kangpachan and the Tamar valley by reinforcements from Tibet. Das does not identify the Magar chief but narrates the story of how the Magar's widow took revenge by poisoning the Tibetan soldiers.²⁰

Chemjong makes the Magar king 'Sintu Satichen' surrender to the

* D.R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal*, 1975, pp. 71-72: 'According to the old Sena chronicle, Raghava Sen adopted the title of Hindupati'. After a few passages: 'According to the old Sena chronicle the title of Hindupati appears for the first time in the royal epithets of Subha Sen, a son of Harihara'.

reinforced Tibetan army that came when the Limbus of Daramdin (in Sikkim) and the Magars of Tangbachen (Kangpachan) refused to recognize Phun-tshog as their king. Chemjong then picks up from Das the story of the vengeance wreaked upon Tibetan soldiers and makes it out to be the work of Sintu Satichen's widow'.²¹

According to Sikkim history the reign of Phun-tshog lasted from 1640 to c. 1670. The surviving documents of Harihar Sena belong to the period between c. 1662 and 1682 and show that he had assumed the title of Hindupati. This period coincided with the reign of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in India (1658-1707) during which the furthest expansion of Mughal dominions took place. The Mughal governor of Bengal, Mir Jumla, had subdued Morang on his way to check the Ahoms of Assam,²² and conquered Koch Bihar. The challenge to the Mughals in the Deccan was presented then by the Maratha leader Chhatrapati Shivaji who dreamt of founding a Hindu empire in India from the time of his coronation in 1674. It is interesting to note that Harihar Sena had not only adopted the epithet, Hindupati, but had also named his son Chhatrapati.

It is difficult to say whether the Sikkim ruler fought against Harihar. However the Senas, as they first established themselves in Magrat, are often referred to as Magars in Sikkim chronicles. 'Sintu Satichen' seems to be nothing else but 'Hindupati Sen' (Sintusati Chen). Chemjong's account resulting from the combinations of accounts taken from Hamilton, Das and Risley cannot be accepted as accurate.

Troubled by internal feuds, Harihar nominated as his successor Subha Sena, the only son of his second wife, in preference to his sons, Chhatrapati, Padma and Pratap, born from other marriages. Harihar, who was now in his dotage became a prisoner at the hands of the deprived rebels. Harihar sought the help of Adanauka, the wife of Chhatrapati, promising to leave the whole of his kingdom to the child born to her. However being a woman of great nobility, she procured his release only after the rebels made an agreement to divide Makwanpur into four parts, one for each brother.²³

A document issued jointly by Harichandra (Harihar) and Bukha (Subha) Sena in 1662-63²⁴ suggests that Subha had assumed power during his father's life time. As the rebel brothers wanted to impose their agreement on him, Subha sought the help of the kings of the Nepal valley. In an undated though properly sealed letter the Nepal King Pratapmalla (c. 1641-1674) urged a merchant, Dolakha Bania, to try all means to place Subha on the throne of Makwanpur.²⁵

Another Newari document records how Subha fled with one Jagay Bania to Kathmandu (AD 1671). It further adds that four courtiers of Srinivasmalla (c. 1657-1685) of Patan and a hundred from Bhadgau

went with Murari Shah of Gorkha and Jagay Bania to Makwanpur to fight.²⁶ Helped thus, Subha emerged victorious, and his brothers were forced to retreat to Phulwari on the Kamala river.²⁷ Meanwhile Adanauka gave birth to a son, Indu Vidhata, and as promised earlier, he was given the land east of the Kosi, while Subha retained the land west of it. Thus was Makwanpur divided into two principalities.

More trouble was in store for Subha. According to a report, prepared by Sitab Ray, the deputy *naib* of Bihar under the East India Company, the Senas of Makwanpur taking advantage of the imbecility of one Narsimha Ram, the zamindar of Tirhut since 1556 and occupied three districts.²⁸ His descendants recognized their opportunity for revenge. Subha had not appointed any Kirat as his minister but had as *dewan* one Pradyumna Upadhyaya, a Brahman from Tanahu. This Brahman conspired with Parsuram Thapa, a Khasa, for whom he had violated caste rules by giving him his daughter in marriage.²⁹ Subha was captured by then and surrendered to Isfundiyar Khan, the Nawab of Purnea.³⁰ Isfundiyar handed him over to Dayar Khan, the *faujdar* of Darbhanga. Subha agreed to pay Rs. 1200 as revenue to the Mughals. Makwanpur had to pay an elephant or the stipulated amount of revenue for Tauttar pargana till 1688. Isfundiyar became the Nawab of Bengal in 1680 and held office for twelve years.³¹ Meanwhile, Indu Vidhata, the king of the Eastern principality, decided to rescue his uncle with the help of other hill principalities.

The authenticity of Hamilton's account stating that the intervention of a few hill principalities proved effective, is proved by records found later. A contemporary Newari document records that a combined force of soldiers from Kathmandu, Patan, Bhadgau, Lamjung and Gorkha marched to Makwanpur when it was invaded by one 'Vishtisamkhivakta' (?) in 803 Nepal era or c. November 1682. The road to Makwanpur was opened by February-March (1683)' ³² The *Gorkha Vamsavali* ³³ relates how Prithvipati Shah of Gorkha had sent an army when the king of Makwanpur sought help against the Nawab... Although the event is not dated we know that the army was led by Atibal Shah and Haricharan Pande.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact date of Subha's restoration. It is probable that the struggle with the Mughals was a protracted one. The Newari document records that in 811 Nepal era, when the 'king of the east' had gone to Kathmandu with an elephant as a present Bhupatindramalla (c. 1687-1701) personally came out of the city to receive him. The date given corresponds to 1691. After some days 'the Morang king' signed a treaty with the three kings of the valley. The combined army of the three Malla kings left for Makwanpur a month later. It adds that the king of Lalitpur or Patan

(Yoganarendramalla, c. 1685-1705) also left for Makwanpur and 'Vidhata Indra left eight days later'.³⁴ Either Subha was not released till much later or Indu Vidhata, who appears to be a resourceful man, continued the fight against the Mughals.

The success however did not last for long. Hamilton records that even while Indu Vidhata and his restored uncle Subha were rejoicing, Kalu Upadhyaya, relative of the Brahman who betrayed Subha, was conspiring to capture both the Sena rulers. The Nawab had made the most liberal promises. The greater part of the low country of Morang was reduced by the Muslims who 'settled some free land on the family of the traitor, but vastly less than was expected'. Subha and his nephews, once more betrayed and captured, 'were sent to Delhi where Muhammad Azim, then emperor, deprived them of their caste'.³⁵ Hamilton might have mistaken Muazzam Shah (Bahadur Shah) who had become emperor in 1707 after killing his brother Muhammad Azim. The Sena rulers seem to have been sent to Delhi after 1707. They never returned. As suggested by Sitab Ray they were probably converted to Islam.

The Upadhyaya Brahmans, who acted as traitors and surrendered the Senas to the Mughals, seem to have assumed power in parts of Makwanpur. A copper plate at Mulchok in Patan records in Newari a treaty signed by Patan, Bhadgau, Gorkha and 'Makwanpur Upadhyaya' in 1701.³⁶ A land-grant issued in 1697 by a 'Hindupati' prince Man (either of Subha's two sons, Mandhata or Manik)³⁷ still exists. Mandhata is found using the complete royal title in other documents of the year.³⁸ He is found requesting Jasu Raya, who appears to be an important Kirat chief, for an elephant. A grant made to him by Indu Vidhata from Vijaypur that year was a nominal confirmation of the chieftainship of the Changay village in Athrai.³⁹

The Kirat began to play a more active role in the polity of Eastern Nepal after the surrender of the Senas to the Mughals. Prabodh Das, the naib or the second hereditary minister of Makwanpur, fled with Subha's sons, Mandhata and Manik, to the Kirats.⁴⁰ In the eastern principality of Vijaypur the wife of Indu Vidhata, Jiva Devi, began organizing a strong opposition with the help of the Kirats. Her letter of 1706 implored the Kirat chiefs Chemjong Raya, Aba Raya, Inda Raya, Chhugma Raya, Majim Raya, Boaji Raya, Siha Raya to attack the enemy immediately informing them that 'her authority in the east existed no more and that a fierce fight was going on there'.

Listing the Sena documents, D.R. Regmi describes this letter as 'a decree of the Sena prince sent to all the Kirat chiefs to rise in arms against the Sikkimese proclaimed in the name of Maharani Jivadevi'.⁴¹ A mere reference to the 'east' does not give any reason to interpret it

as Sikkim. A chaotic situation had fragmented the Sena dominions. This letter was sent from Jitpur whereas others were issued from the middle principality of Chaudandi. The 'east' simply stood for Vijaypur from where Jivadevi had probably been forced to move west by the rebels in collusion with the Mughals. She had sent the letter through Ramkrishna Thapa, a Khasa Chhetri, in her employ.⁴² In 1707 Mandhata also requested one Kirat chief Siya (Hita) Raya to proceed with arms to meet him on receipt of his missive.⁴³

That the Kirats were not under the direct rule of the Senas was made clear by appeals made to the Kirat Hangs or chiefs. Some of them in Far Kirat (Limbuan) regarded the Senas of Vijayapur as their overlords. However there was no definite boundary between the Limbu land and Sikkim. Parts of Limbuan had a kind of relationship with Sikkim which was tantamount to an acknowledgement of the overlordship of the Sikkim ruler as well.

Kirat help and Mughal weakness after 1707 saved the Senas. Kirat tradition records that the Muslims were then pushed beyond Jalalgarh in the south.⁴⁴ Saif Khan was then the *faujdar* of Purnea and commandant of Jalalgarh. The fort built there by the Muhammadans was 'a frontier post to protect the border against invasion from Nepal'.⁴⁵

According to the chronicle of the local Khagra family this frontier fort was built by the first Raja of Khagra, Jalal-ud-din (1605-1627) to check the raids of the hill tribes from Nepal, however, more authentic accounts claim that it was built by Saif Khan in 1722.⁴⁶ From Jalalgarh the boundary of Purnea then 'ran eastward passing a little north of the confluence of the Mahananda and Kankai to the most southern point, where the pargana of Suryapur touches the district of Dinajpur'.⁴⁷ This gives an idea regarding the southern boundary of Makwanpur.

The Senas seem to have recovered a large part of their territories with Kirats help. The restored Sena kingdom was, however, divided between Mandhata (Mahapati) and Manik. That the latter ruled at least till 1727 is proved by a land-grant issued from Makwanpur to one Sri Gosai at Janakpur. Mandhata's 1725 grant confirming the rights of Isa Raya, the Kirat son of Sukha Raya, over his father's villages and parganas proves that he ruled the eastern half of the Sena kingdom.

Hamilton claims that Mandhata was restored by the Kirat Vidyachandra Raya who was related to the minister of Manik. Mandhata had a *naib* from the family of Prabodh Das.⁴⁸ Mandhata is recorded to have asked Isa Raya to help the dewan in the work of administration.⁴⁹ The Kirat chiefs also acted as judicial officers at Vijaypur. A 1722 record shows a Kirat Chokha Raya judging a matrimonial case involving two Kirat families.⁵⁰

A digression to Sikkim history clarifies other developments. The second Namgyal king, Tansung (c. 1670-1700) had married three girls: one from Bhutan, one from Tibet and one from Limbu. The latter according to Sikkim and Limbu sources was the daughter of Yong-Yong Hang, a chief in the Arun valley.⁵¹ The bride was accompanied by seven Limbu girls who 'were taken as wives by the highest Kazis and ministers of Sikkim'. With the entry of the Limbu girls into their new home, *Su Him* in Limbu, the land came to be known as Sukhim, later anglicized as Sikkim.⁵² In fact even today, people of Nepal still call the state Sukhim rather than Sikkim.

Tansung's Bhutanese wife, Pande Wangmo, conspired to overthrow Chhadgor (Phyag-rDor) the third king of Sikkim (1700-1717). She obtained the help of Bhutan and an army from there invaded Sikkim in 1700 or 1706. A party of four 'carried the young king by Ilam road via Walung (the country of Tsongs) into Tibet'. Ilam is the most important hill region in Eastern Nepal while Walung or Walanchung in the Tsong (Limbu) country is the easternmost pass between Nepal and Tibet. Hooker's Wallanchoon is known as Walangchung Gola because of the customs-house (gola) there. As late as 1850, Hooker noted that the people there paid 'tax to the Nepal and Sikkim Rajaha'.⁵³ Despite the Gorkha conquest of the region and its annexation to the organized kingdom of Nepal, Hooker found that its Goubah (mGo-pa) or headman 'disputed the Nepal Rajah's authority to pass me through his dominions'.⁵⁴ The situation there a century before can be easily imagined.

The deposed ruler of Sikkim was restored by Tibet. The Bhutanese retired and though they evacuated Sikkim they still retained their position at Damsang, up to the hill of Tegong-la, or what is now the Kalimpong sub-division of the Darjeeling district. Thus the greater part of this region, then called Mon-loong-Kha-bzi was lost to Sikkim.⁵⁵ Unrelenting however, Wangmo successfully plotted the murder of Chhadgor. The reign of Gyurme (hGyur-med rNam-rGyal, r. 1717-1733) was beset with acute tribal conflicts.

The Tibetanization of the Lepchas was by no means a total success. Most of the Rongs followed their own cult norms. The Tibetan-Lepcha conflict began with the fight between the Lamas and Lepcha Shamans or Bongthings. The king, under the immense influence of the Bongthings, was prejudiced in favour of the Lepchas. Thus the Tibetan Lamas or Tashongs 'belaboured them and killed them'. They were able to convince the king that the Lepcha priests were only *muthepa* or imposters. One Lepcha rebel leader was Tishe Bidur who, 'pretending to be an incarnation of Guru Padmasambhava, had acquired a big following'. He had become powerful enough to stop the incoming revenue to Sikkim from the plains.

Tishe Bidur also sought the help of 'Mangar Raja and tried to raise a rebellion'. This Mangar Raja could be none other than Mandhata Sena. The Lepchas were quelled, but the Tsongs or the Limbus of Sikkim were harassed no less. The Sikkim ruler wanted to build 'a covered pathway between Dechen Ling and Rabdantse palace in the style of the Potala palace in Tibet'. For such purposes 'the Tsongs (Limbus and Magars) were always employed' even though it meant the levying of forced labour. The imposition 'drove them in disgust to leave the country in a body, and they retired to a place called Limbuana land'. The Sikkim history adds that this was the beginning of the alienation 'which eventually resulted in the separation of the Limbuana land from Sikkim'.

Though Sikkim claimed to have ruled Limbuana, and though there is evidence of people, particularly in the north-east of the Far Kirat, recognizing this overlordship, it should be remembered that Sikkim had a small population. Even in 1891 there were only 5762 Lepchas and 4894 Bhutias or people of Tibetan origin in Sikkim. On the other hand, Kirat was believed to have had 'nine lakh (900,000) Kirats'. Though Hodgson's interpretation was that a house tax at two annas per family would yield 900,000 annas's,⁵⁶ Hamilton (1819) claims that there were 90,000 Kirats able to carry arms, even though not above 5000 to 6000 were considered as regulars.⁵⁷ The Lepcha-Bhulia population more than two century earlier could have numbered three or four thousand.

When the Lepchas sought the help of the 'Mangar Raja', the Sena principality itself was in the midst of trouble. Mandhata had left his territory intact to his son Kamdatta who was on very bad terms with Bichitra Ray, the Kirat Chautariya.⁵⁸ Though a Limbu chronicle records the marriage of Kamdatta with Thangsama Raya, the sister of the Limbu chief,⁵⁹ the Kirat is stated to have driven him away to Lhasa. Kamdatta, then in all probability, went not to Lhasa but to Sikkim, the country where there was similar trouble. The Sikkim history gives such an indication.

Gyurme Namgyal had died childless in 1734 but only after his dying confession that a nun of Sangchelling monastery had 'conceived by a connection with him'. The nun gave birth to Namgyal Phun-tsoq (r. 1741-1780). However, a powerful Tibetan minister Changzed Tamding refused to recognize the child as the legitimate heir. The minister became the virtual ruler of Sikkim till 1741 and was even called Gyalpo (king) Tamding. The Lepcha party in court was unhappy with this development. Headed by Changzed Karwang the Lepchas took up the cause of the child and brought him to Senchal, near Tiger Hill, in Darjeeling for security reasons. From there the child prince was taken

to Bhutan 'until the Kazis or Jongpens of Lepcha extract obtained the upper hand in Sikkim'. Confronted with the Lepcha opposition, Tamding fled to Tibet and appealed to the Lhasa government. Tibet then deputed one Rabden as Regent in 1747 who not only improved administration by taking a census and collecting annual rents from the people⁶⁰ but also convened a vast assembly 'of all the subjects' at Mangsher. This 'Mangsher Duma' defined the powers, privileges and duties of the Lepcha headmen or Tumyangs and the Tibetan Jongpens or lords of the forts. Thus the quarrel between them had subsided for the time being.

It was at such a juncture that Kamdatta had turned to Sikkim for help against his powerful Kirat minister. The Sikkim chronicle relates that 'the Magar chief having died, his son wanted to have his installation ceremony performed or graced by the presence and authority of the Sikkim Maharaja'. This was, of course, an exaggeration of the status of the Sikkim ruler. However, Sikkim failed to take advantage of the situation. Not heeding the advice given to him by senior officers, the Tibetan Regent Rabden 'through ignorance of prevailing customs and usages, as well as a deplorable lack of political foresight', did not respond to Kamdatta's request. The Sena ruler then turned to Bhutan. The Deb Raja at once deputed four representatives. The grateful Sena not only sent valuable gifts to the Deb Raja but also made 'a plan to conquer Sikkim and bring it under the rule of Bhutan'. The fear of Tibet acted as the deterrent though 'the interchange of civilities' between Sikkim and the Senas ceased totally.

When Kamdatta was in exile his place had been taken by Jagat Sena, 'a younger but legitimate son of the western branch of the family.'⁶¹ Jagat Sena brought about a reconciliation between the Kirat minister and Kamdatta, though this led to a further division of the eastern principality. Jagat kept for himself the land between the Kamala and the Kosi and gave all the territory to the east of the Kosi to Kamdatta. Thus Lohang's Makwanpur was divided into three parts: Makwanpur proper, the realm of Jagat Sena with its centre at Chaudandi or Amirpur, or the land covering roughly the whole of the present Saptari district and, lastly, the land east of the Kosi under Kamdatta with its centre at Vijaypur.

Documents of 1727 bring to light some difficulties that were faced then by Makwanpur. There was a border dispute with the Bettiah Raja whose officers prevented tenants from paying taxes to Makwanpur.⁶² Secondly the *faujdar* of Darbhanga had raised the revenue of the Tauttar pargana from Rs. 1200, fixed during the time of Subha Sena, to Rs. 10,000 in 1733. Manik had to agree to pay an additional sum of Rs. 2,500. Then again, till 1763, elephants worth Rs. 12,500 had to be paid as tribute to Tirhut.⁶³

In Vijaypur one Bisambhar or Bisantar Sena appears to have assumed power before the restoration of Kamdatta. This name does not occur in the Sena genealogies of either Makwanpur or Chaudandi-Vijaypur. In a genealogy procured in Eastern Nepal during a field work for this study⁶⁴ this name precedes that of Kamdatta. The chronicle could have been ignored but for the existence of two grants made by him: one relates to the grant of *jagir* in 1750 to Sathwa Raya in Damak, Harduwa, Kachudah, Jurkiya and Guwabari, all in Morang. The other was a similar grant (1751-52) made at Letang to a Mansingh Mantri with an interesting epigram, 'greater the service greater the jagir; lesser the service lesser the jagir'.⁶⁵

There is no evidence to support Chemjong's identification of Bisambhar with Subha Sena. Jagat, whose documents are yet to be discovered, was probably established at Chaudani and Bisambhar, probably a relation, of his, controlled Vijaypur for some time. Or else, Jagat himself might also have been known as Bisambhar.

Evidence indicates that by 1756 Kamdatta was restored. He appointed Ramchandra Pandit as priest and gave him a land-grant that year. In 1761 Kamdatta is found imploring Sathwa Raya, who was granted a *jagir* by Bisambhar, for serving him with 'body and wealth'.⁶⁶ His two other documents of 1763 and 1765 are land grants made to two Brahmans, Ramchandra Pandit and Rambhadra Pandit respectively.⁶⁷

Vijaypur had trade relations with Purnea. Saulak Khan Abdullah stipulated in 1158 Hijri era (c. AD 1761) that Purnea goods could be sold anywhere in Morang and the hills, while yak tails, musk, timber and medicinal herbs from the hills could be sold at the normal price in Purnea. D.R. Regmi's assertion that this document 'purports to prove the fact of the Muslim attack in 1159 HS.' appears to be wrong when the text of the document is closely read.⁶⁸ Purnea had come to an understanding with the Kirat officer and the name of the Morang king does not occur there.

When border disputes arose between the Morang and the East India Company's dominions in Bengal, inquiries were made by the Company regarding the status of Kamdatta. It was reported that he was an independent ruler and not subordinate to any state. Kamdatta did not pay tribute or revenue to anybody for his territories unlike Makwanpur who had to pay the Raja of Tirhut for parts of his dominion. Kamdatta's territory extended 'up to Bhutan, on the Tista on the plains, Purnea, Tirhut and Bettiah'.⁶⁹ An author wrongly assumed that 'even Bhatgong was within his kingdom' and that 'later on it became independent under its Zamindar with the assistance of the Raja of Sikkim'.⁷⁰ He mistook this 'Bhatgong' or Bhadgau for one

of the three city-kingdoms of the Nepal valley. The city was never under a zamindar and the opinion that it became independent with the help of Sikkim is incorrect. The place mentioned in the English record is another Bhadgau, also known as Bhaktapur, a small village situated in the extreme south-east corner of Nepal's present border with India, a few miles south of Naxalbari in the Darjeeling district. In a land-grant made by Jaskarna Raya to Rambhadra Pandit in 1764, the land assigned by the former is Bhadgau which is described as *basti* or settlement in Non (?) village in Morang. This mistake however has been often repeated by others.⁷¹

As 'all the interchange of civilities' between Sikkim and the Senas had ceased, the former could have helped the rebel zamindar of Bhadgau near its border. Sikkim in fact soon played a similar role. First Hamilton, and then Chemjong, wrote that Kamdatta's Kirat minister Vichitrachandra was succeeded by Buddhikarna* as Chautariya. But the extant documents indicate assumption of power by others before him. There are two documents of Srikanta, dated late 1760 and the mid 1761. The first is a *jagir* grant to Tularam Pandit and the second border to Jamanucho Raya for help and resources.⁷² There are other documents regarding Jaskarna Raya, dated 1764 and 1765. One major grant to Rambhadra Pandit and another to one Chaudhara.⁷³ Srikanta's letters were issued from Vijaypur and Jaskarana's from 'Jajai' (?). The latter was perhaps a minister in the west. This place seems to be 'Jugur', visited by a missionary, Father Cassino, in 1740. He described it as 'a village belonging to Mackwanpur'. There was a fertile jungle '20 kos in extension'. Thus the king got substantial income out of the forests.⁷⁴ The epithets used by the Kirat ministers and the grant of *jagir* by them do not indicate a peaceful state of affairs.

Such a development, resulting from the conflict between the Sena rulers and their Kirat officers, was unfortunate especially in view of the events taking place around them. In 1762 Prithvinarayan of Gorkha had occupied Makwanpur. In Chaudandi, Jagat Sena was succeeded by his brothers Bikram and then by Katna Sena† (Coran Sein of British records). From British records it seems that Buddhikar-

* English records call him Buddhakarna. In the letters of Prithvinarayan the name is Buddhikarna. Hamilton has Budkarna. However, his own letters give the name as Budhikarna. The Sikkim history refers to him as 'Bhoti Karna'.

† Hamilton was told that Jagat was succeeded by his two brothers Bikram and Karna respectively. However, Baburam Acharya recalls to have seen the names of Mukunda Sena IV and Tribikram Sena in old documents, *Sri 5 Badamaharajadhiraj Prithvinarayan*, vol. 3, p.620

na had assumed power as the Dewan of Kamdatta at Vijaypur by 1765. However, the Senas and the Kirats never lived in amity. Thus either the king, or the Dewan, at different times were compelled to flee Vijaypur for security reasons. In the neighbourhood the British in 1765 obtained the *diwani* of Bengal.

In 1765-66 Buddhikarna and another Kirat, Ajit Raya, advised Kamdatta to make attempts to recover the lost ancestral territories. They raised a contingent to recover Bhadgau from the rebel zamindar. Altogether the expenses involved caused a fresh conflict with Kamdatta. The latter wanted all expenses to be met by the Vijaypur treasury which was under the Dewan's control. The Dewan however wanted Kamdatta to defray the expenses from his own personal account.

Buddhikarna was dismissed⁷⁵ and now he engineered a rebellion with the help of the unpaid soldiers. Kamdatta was forced to take refuge in Purnea under its *faujdar*, Suchet Ram. He even appealed to one Brahman, Ghanashyam, 'of the family of traitor who had betrayed Subha Sen'. The Nawab of Bengal called and sent him to meet the Company's Governor at Calcutta. The Brahman took him down to Calcutta but once there Kamdatta fell ill. Failing to meet the Governor, he returned to Purnea leaving a letter on 29 March 1767 seeking the Company's help.⁷⁶

Buddhikarna's grant of *birta* in Morang to Rambhadra Pandit in 1767⁷⁷ shows him at the helm of affairs at Vijaypur. As the Company's help was not forthcoming, an underrated Kamdatta raised an ill-equipped horde, killed the Dewan's younger brother and attacked the Dewan, Buddhikarna, who escaped.⁷⁸ The enraged Kirat appealed to the legitimate heir of Makwanpur, 'then in exile'. He recommended an alliance with Sikkim.⁷⁹ Buddhikarna then went to Sikkim, an event which finds full corroboration in Sikkim history as well as in British documents.

Sikkim history, however, misunderstands the purpose of the Kirat's visit to Rabdantee, the then capital of Sikkim. It says that after the Regent Rabdan 'another Regent was appointed by Tibet, named Na-lung Dingkharwa, during whose time a nephew of Chowkari, resident in the plains, named Bhoti Karna, came to Rabdantee to pay homage, and to renew the arrangement of paying the annual tribute regularly'. Hamilton is more correct in his information. According to him Buddhikarna made an alliance with Sikkim. Ten men were sent by its rulers under the pretence of bringing about reconciliation between Kamdatta and Buddhikarna. 'These ruffians,' he adds, 'having been admitted to a conference without suspicion, rushed on Kamdatta and put him to death. Buddhikarna then placed on the throne of Vijaypur the legitimate heir, Karna Sen, whom the

Gorkhalese had then expelled from the middle principality or Chaudandi'. The ruler Karna Sena was the last Sena ruler of Vijaypur. However, Buddhikarna wielded *de facto* power until its invasions by Gorkha, and his relationship with Karna Sena turned sour.

Insufficiency of source materials discovered so far make a fuller understanding of the Sena administration a difficult task. Only Hamilton could throw some light on the polity of this area. However, his not being a first-hand account, cannot always be accepted.

Describing the nature of the government in the realm of Lohang's successors, Hamilton remarks that the king took little interest in the affairs of the government. He was always 'surrounded by Rajputs and Khas, much attached to his person and family, and by 'Brahmans'.⁸⁰ The Brahmans played a very significant, though not always laudatory, role in the politics of the small principalities. Since the Senas called themselves Hindupati, the Brahmans who had their own axe to grind acted as priests, astrologers, court officials and often as conspirators. These Brahmans, marked for their puritanism and strict adherence to caste rulers, were probably from Mithila.

The Khasas, as in the courts of the Nepal valley, had also found employment in the Sena kingdoms. While Parsuram Thapa served in the court of Subha Sen, Ramkrishna Thapa was found carrying Jivadevi's missive to the Kirats. The regular military forces of the Senas consisted of the Rajputs and Khas 'who generally resided near the person of the Raja, and formed his immediate security'. However, they were not in majority since the greater bulk of their force consisted mainly of the Kirats.

Hamilton places the 'Chautariya' after the king. It appeared to him that the post was always held by a 'Kirat of the family that had governed the nation before the union with the Rajputs'. He signed all orders to which the king had affixed his seal, and enjoyed one-tenth of the whole revenue. Next came the *naib* or deputy Chautariya. This was a hereditary post held by a Kayastha whose duty was that of a scribe since the Kirats were no great penmen'. The most active person in the management of government affairs was the Kazi or Karji, 'who received one-sixteenth of the profits of the whole country. The Dewan, hereditary in a family of Brahman's, is mentioned last by Hamilton. He collected revenues to the plains 'and probably made much more than either Chautariya or Karji'.

This account given by Hamilton creates a problem. The word 'Chautariya' was also in use in Gorkha where the chief officer, who happened to be of royal blood, was given this title. It is difficult to ascertain whether the post held by the Kirat chief was so designated. The post of the Dewan is said to be lower than those of the Chautariya

and Kazi, although documentary and other evidence describes the Dewan as a Kirat, and not a Brahman. In all probability the post of the dewan was next to that of the king himself, at least in Vijaypur. In the most productive western principality of Makwanpur, one of the most productive regions, the dewan, free from the turbulence of hill men, 'had little power since only a few of the hardy Kirats were under his authority'.

Hamilton made an interesting observation that the Kirat holding the post of Chautariya, was denied by other officers of Indian origin. This he was told was done from hatred to the Kirat, by whose power the Rajas and their adherents were very much controlled. The Kirat informants could have used the name Chautariya in imitation of the practice prevalent in the ascendant kingdom of Gorkha.

The Kirats, though under the nominal suzerainty of the Senas, enjoyed complete autonomy in the hills. The people knew only their immediate superiors, or their respective tribal chiefs. The Hinduization of the Kirats was not strong except in cases where the chiefs were in closer contact with the Sena court in the plains. The adoption of Hindu names and 'some degree of purity, by the successors of the Kirat chief, who was murdered by Vijaynarayan for defiling a Hindu woman, do not however reflect a general transformation of Kirat society.

The Kirats constituted the main bulk of the army in the east. However this army was not a standing one. They were household warriors recruited chiefly from among cultivators of the soil. Central authority had nothing to do with the raising of such an army, which was formed instead by appeals to the chiefs in times of crisis. The Kirat soldiers fought under the powerful tribal chief or the Sardar. There was no definite number of men under each of these commanders and the number probably depended on the ability of the Sardar. The Kirats were chiefly armed with swords, bows, and poisoned arrows while 'the Rajputs had fire-arms'.⁸¹

In the hills the revenue collection and the maintenance of law and order were entrusted to officers called Subbas. As revenue collectors, they served under the Dewan and as commanders under the Sardars. The Limbus later adopted the name Subba for the whole community.

A history of the Limbus, published in Nepali, gives an agreement purported to have been made between the Sena ruler and the Kirats. It is quoted in full by D.R. Regmi.⁸² The agreement stipulates that the dewan would be the person elected by ten provincial (tribal) chiefs of the Kirats for a tenure of five years. However other records establish that the post was a hereditary one with no fixed tenure fixed to it. On the other hand Hamilton says 'the Raja might punish the Chautariya in whatever manner he pleased, and even put him to death; but he

could not deprive him of his rank, nor his son of the regular succession'.⁸³ The post of Dewan was kept hereditary in the family of the Kirat executed by Vijaynarayan. The tenure was never fixed. Buddhikarna was once dismissed by Kamdatta, but the Senas had no chance. The Kirats were entirely guided by their chief, and they composed almost the whole strength at the state'.

Other terms of the agreement like the checking of the migration to Morang and the hills, the census every ten years and so on appear to be too modern to be true at a time when frontiers were indefinite, the conception of loyalty to the central authority hazy and even the recognition of the overlordship of more than one kingdom not legally absurd. If Sikkim had some claim over the extreme eastern and northern parts of the Far Kirat, the Tibetan government at times addressed its people and officers and people rich and poor of the Limbu and Rai lineages directly. Similarly Makwanpur paid rents for some areas to the Mughals and later to the British. Johann Grueber, a Jesuit who visited Makwanpur which he called Morang, noted that its king paid 'yearly to the Great Moghul a tribute of 250,000 rix dollars and seven elephants'.⁸⁴

The language in the court was Maithili. It was used for official correspondence with the Kirats. However the scribes were non-Kirats. Though the Limbus claim their scripts to be an old one it was hardly in daily use and had to be revived by a few educated Kirats like Chemjong in recent times. The Kirat society in general was a tribal and a pre-literate one.

Frykenberg's remark that 'perhaps nowhere on earth are the intricate relationships between mankind and land so extremely complicated as in the sub-continental lands encompassed by the Indian ocean basin'⁸⁵ held good for Nepal. It is a well-known fact that Kirat, particularly Limbuan or the Far Kirat, retained the communal ownership of land till recently although neither Hamilton nor the Sena documents refer to it as *kipat*.

Speaking about the payment to the Sardars, Hamilton says that each of them received a quantity of land in the hills 'in proportion to the extent of his command'. The Sardar kept a portion and distributed the rest among officers and soldiers under him. The Sardar did not receive regular tribute from the lands, 'although all his men made him presents'.⁸⁶

This description suggests the *jagir* form of land tenure and both *jagir* and *birta* grants are registered in Sena records. *Jagir* grants to the Kirats in 1750, 1751, 1765, were made in the plains. The hill areas are not specified by Hamilton. One fact which should be carefully noted is that he describes the Kirats and Limbus separately, the former name

being reserved for Khambus or Rais. Could this mean that the process of eroding *kipat* lands in the Middle Kirat or Khambuan was largely completed under the Senas? There is evidence of a *birta* grant to the Brahmans in the Near Kirat although no such grant could have been made in the Far Kirat. But even if hill regions were assigned as described by Hamilton, they were sub-divided among the Kirats, either the Rais or the Limbus themselves. Since these people constituted the bulk of the army, it precluded the possibility of land grants as emoluments to non-Kirats. In other words, land remained intact within the community. Hamilton's observation that no duty was levied in the hills is also another characteristic of the *kipat* tenure.

The Sena rulers confirmed the traditional rights and privileges of the Kirat tribal chiefs only from time to time. The practice was nominal. For example, Indu Vidhata's grant of the Changay village in the hills is described simply as a grant. Then again, Kamdatta's grant to Sakhwa Raya (1761) mentions only the latter's authority over the hundred tenants of eighteen villages with an injunction to remain prepared with arms for royal service. The *jagir* system played a very significant role in the subsequent history of Nepal, particularly in the conquests made by Gorkha. As the Senas did not pursue any expansionist policy, grants of *jagir* to soldiers were very few and probably with a different connotation.

The Sena documents refer to *birta*, another form of land-grant, where the *jagir* was a temporary assignment of land revenue, the Kirat chief could not enjoy any tribute from the land except what was presented to him. On the other hand, *birta* was associated with private property. Thus the land under this tenure was heritable and transferable. Kamdatta's grant of *birta* to Ramchandra Pandit (1763) and to Rambhadra Pandit (1762) as well as Buddhikarna's *birta* grant to Ramchandra Pandit (1767) and Tularam Pandit (1771) were all grants made to Brahmans. The lands assigned to them were in the plains.

In this context it should also be noted that later *kipat* tenure was often described as *sewa birta* or grants for some specific service. Some *kipat* lands were made in exchange for the services of members of the community who acted as carriers and soldiers. But in no grant to the Kirats has *birta* been referred to. Anyway, the *birta* and *kipat* could not be equated.

In his account of the hills, Hamilton says that 'there were also zamindars, who appear to have held the property of the soil'.⁸⁷ They retained only a small portion of good land fit for transplanted rice, and were 'bound to pay three rupees a year, and appear in the field with an army when called upon by the Subah'.⁸⁸ Whether the zamindars were actually proprietors of land is doubtful. The Khambu or Rai

Kirats were also called Jamidar or Jimdar. The misconception about zamindar, could have resulted from a phonetic similarity between *Zamindar* (landlord) of Persian origin and Jimidar derived from the Arabic *jimmadar*, literally meaning 'responsible'. The latter was also a term applied to a functionary, referred to in Nepal law.⁸⁹ However, this was a post-unification phenomenon. Hamilton, who visited Nepal at the height of its expansion under Gorkha, could have erroneously used the term in its other sense. However the usage of the word varied throughout India before, during and after the Mughal period. Zamindari was tantamount to a grant of authority which in some cases became a domination. To quote Frykenberg, 'A zamindar was not the "owner" of these lands-cum-people as such. Indeed the common law notion of property ownership was and is an alien concept, altogether inappropriate when applied to India and to zamindari landholding. A zamindar's "tenure" was, therefore, a form of political and socio-economic authority or control'.⁹⁰ In the hills cultivation was done by share-croppers on the basis of *adhiya* or one-half. Anyone who employed *adhiyars* was known as a *zamindar*, whether he was a *jagir* or *birta* holder or a member of the *kipat*.

No coins of the Sena rulers have been discovered so far. The payment of taxes in the terai was made in the Mughal currency while in the hills it was probably in kind. No duties were levied in the hills except at custom houses near the plains or the Tibet border. A variety of duties was levied in the fertile terai.

The important *golas* or custom houses on the routes leading to India and Tibet in Eastern Nepal were 'Ilam, Majhiya, Bilasi, Tengting and Huchi-Mechi, Dimali and Sitang'.⁹¹ Chainpur in the west had considerable trade with Tibet. Other important passes were Hatia on the river Arun and Olangchung on the Tamar.

Besides the value that the eastern terai has for its fertility and its rich forest wealth, the hills of the region contained many passes to Tibet. The region had a great geopolitical importance as it remained surrounded by India, Sikkim, Tibet and Bhutan and this was quite clear to Prithvinarayan Shah and his successors.

Part Two

*THE PROCESS OF THE
POLITICAL UNIFICATION*

The Gorkha Conquest of Nepal

To understand whether or not, the unification of Nepal was caused by nationalistic feelings, one first needs to examine the motives behind the conquests of Gorkha. In April 1743, when Prithvinarayan Shah became king of Gorkha the once larger Khasa, Sena and Malla kingdoms of the Nepal valley presented a pitiful picture of dissension, debility and disorganization. A corresponding decline of princely power led to further territorial fragmentations. The hill princes claimed Rajput descent and agreed to inter-state marital alliances. This fact, though supposed to make bonds of common kinship, resulted instead in mutual jealousies and fears. These states were inhabited by different tribes and groups who had no definite consciousness of their shared achievements in the past nor any unity of faith or language. The situation was ideal for a determined conqueror. Thus the Gorkha conquests were certainly not made for the cause of 'national unity'. In fact there is no basis for such a supposition.

D.R. Regmi once held in his *Modern Nepal* (1961) that the unification of Nepal was possible because, 'Prithvinarayan Shah was a nationalist to the core of his heart. With him, if conquest was the aim of life, patriotism was the guiding factor for any action'.¹ In the revised and enlarged edition (1975) Regmi elaborates his earlier claim by writing that 'an element of ambition was always there in his scheme of conquest and nobody can deny that he was primarily a conqueror and all his intentions were woven round his desire to conquer'. He further adds, 'Perhaps the motive behind his conquest was not that of one who knew of Nepal as we understand today. Patriotism or national feeling could not conceivably apply to any urge for conquest or expansion of the territory'.² The characterization of Prithvinarayan as a 'conqueror' implies that territorial expansion was his sole objective. However this is debatable. Could Prithvinarayan have waged wars only

to satisfy a need for action, without any other motive? That his expansion was neither a process of national unification nor objectless is amply borne out by facts.

Immediately after his accession to the throne of Gorkha, Prithvinarayan turned his attention to the valley of Nepal. His enchantment with the beauty of the metropolis was no childish fascination for a new toy. The cause of this allurements is obvious. Compared to other hill states the valley was rich because of its agriculture, manufactures and trade with Tibet and India. For ages it has attracted invaders. Prithvinarayan had precursors in the Khasa Jitarimalla and Ripumalla, Jayapida of Kashmir, Mukunda Sena of Palpa and Shams-ud-din of Bengal. Their forays in the valley, according to available source materials, did not betray any desire for permanent occupation. The Gorkha desire to seize the valley was however discernible in the actions of Prithvinarayan's predecessors, Dravya Shah, Prithvipati Shah and Narbhupal Shah.

Gorkha, on the other hand, was a small and poor kingdom, hemmed in on all sides, with no outlet for trade, without mines and manufactures worth the name. This poverty is emphasized by a popular nineteenth century story. According to this story when Prithvinarayan decided to conquer the valley and collected money from his people for the purpose, it filled only a bison's horn.³

Thus Gorkha could obtain an economic viability and survive only at the expense of its neighbours. Ram Shah wanting an access to the Tibet trade, had tried to expand northwards by controlling the Kuti and Kerung passes. However he was stopped by the Tibetans at Rasuwa. Prithvinarayan's father Narbhupal had tried to take advantage of the internecine fights of the Nepal valley kings. The attempt for the control of Nuwakot, which would have been the first step towards the seizure of the valley was however foiled in 1737 by Jayaprakash the king of Kathmandu. However Gorkha still did not give up hopes.

Prithvinarayan knew only too well that it would be foolhardy to invade the valley immediately. Even a cursory glance at his war logistics explains the calculation with which he set out to conquer. The valley was rich, superior in arms but geographically vulnerable. His first strategy was to blockade the valley. And to do so Prithvinarayan took recourse to all means—the sword, subterfuge and diplomacy, often verging on cruelty. Even his marriage with the daughter of Hemkarna Sena of Makwanpur had a political end in view: Makwanpur controlled the routes between the plains and the Nepal valley.

Gorkha realized the need of making alliances, if only to neutralize as many states as possible. In his sojourn to Benares as a pilgrim Prithvinarayan met an officer of Parbat, a member of the Chaubisi,

and the ruler of Jajarkot, a member of the Baisi, as well as rulers of Doti and Sirmoor. He tried to improve relations with Palpa and open contact with Tibet through a peripatetic Lama he met on his way. The number of collateral states under the Sahi (or Shah) family had increased to eight. Lamjung, considered as the head of the group, was never happy with the total independence of Gorkha, and this remained a source of tension.⁴ In his *Divya Upadesh* Prithvinarayan clearly formulated his strategy thus: 'Nepal would not fall without a *kuruchhetra* (war). Lamjung is like a garuda (hawk), Gorkha is like a serpent and Nepal, a frog. The serpent must delude the eyes of the hawk, only then it can devour the frog'. He then lists the 'Brahman, Khas, Magar and Thakuri' as components of his army. But, he says, 'the mount of the Brahman is like that of a bull, it would be a sin; that of the Thakuri is like a lion, there could be betrayal by it afterwards; the magar is like the mount of a pony, he would be slow; the Khas is like a swift Turki (Arabian) steed; hence the task could be done quickly by the Khas'.⁵

It was only after twenty five years of sustained struggle that the Gorkhalis reached the walls of Kathmandu. The failure to take Nuwakot had demented his father and the fulfillment of this ambition became Prithvinarayan's first task.⁶ Nuwakot, which controlled the routes from the valley to the west and to Tibet in the north, was like all other principal settlements of the medieval period, a *garh* or fortress surrounded by a deep moat and high walls.⁷

For an attack on Nuwakot in the east, it was essential to keep the rear well-guarded. Here rivalry between Kaski and Lamjung proved helpful, even then it was decided that it was better to delude the eyes of the hawk, Lamjung.

Envoys, mostly Brahmans, were sent to the neighbours: Harihar Pandit and two Upadhyayas to Tanahu, Manikantha Rana to Palpa and Gangadhar Pant to Kaski. However they all refused to help Gorkha for fear of offending Tibet in case Nepal was invaded after the fall of Nuwakot. These states had routes linking them with Tibet and depended on the latter for their salt supply. Thus they decided to follow the Lamjung attitude towards Gorkha. Hence the more important envoy, Kalu Pande,⁸ was sent to Lamjung. As Lamjung then needed Gorkha aid against Kaski, the *Divya Upadesh* confirms that a treaty was made between Gorkha and Lamjung.⁹ Gorkha was wise to befriend Lamjung, because though the venture against Kaski proved futile, Lamjung was still bound to send a small contingent later, to help Gorkha in the invasion of Nuwakot.

Learning from past failures, Prithvinarayan first strengthened his hill fortifications around Gorkha, at Liglig, Lakang and Bhirkot. He

collected an army of 1300 conscripts. The failure of the previous campaigns under the Magars had ruined their reputation in court.¹⁰ The Magar commander was replaced by high caste leaders. The army then marched under Rudra Shah, Maheshwar Pant, Govinda Joshi Aryal, Gangaram Pande and Kalu Rana under the pretext of digging an irrigation canal at Kinchet. This was preceded by the construction of a small workshop for the manufacture of weapons and the training of able-bodied men under Indian instructors.¹¹

An important factor which helped Gorkha was the settlement in Nuwakot of Brahmans, Chhetris and Magars from the west. A wealthy Brahman, Kalyan Upadhyaya, became a friend of Gorkha and supplied necessities for the army. One Kalu Adhikari, a Jaisi Brahman, went incognito to 'bury a nail in the enemy soil', a Tantric rite. For this the Brahman was granted *birta* land.¹²

Nuwakot, a fertile basin watered by the Tadi (Suryamati) and the Trisuli-Gandaki, was under Kathmandu. The army of Jayaprakashmalla was then commanded by Jayanta Rana, a rebel Magar of Gorkha.¹³ Prithvinarayan tried to induce him to return to his service, but Jayanta refused saying, 'I am yours, but I have already eaten the salt of Jayaprakash. Now I would die for him'.¹⁴ The Malla army was composed mostly of the Khasas. Stationed at the hilly township of Nuwakot it did not descend to the basin for fear of *aul* (malaria), and the Gorkhalis occupied the basin without any resistance. Though the hilly region to the north of Nuwakot was inhabited by Tibetans, in its lower region lived the early Brahman and Chhetri migrants who were overtly sympathetic to Gorkha. Hence the Gorkhalis adopted a new stratagem. They avoided Nuwakot, and from there attacked the hill of Mahamandala and occupied it. Jayanta Rana fled. Now it was easy to enter Nuwakot. The place was taken in 1744. Jayanta Rana had retreated to the stronghold of Belkot. Prithvinarayan marched there and won an almost Pyrrhic victory; the captured enemy commander was flayed alive.¹⁵

The victory of Nuwakot was significant from different viewpoints. besides the advantage of occupying a well-watered fertile basin, the seizure of a place which commanded the route to the Kerung pass gave to the Gorkhalis the right to the collection of custom duties in Tibet trade. Thus it deprived Kathmandu of a profitable source of income. There were other trade routes under Kathmandu, which by-passed Nuwakot, but the Gorkhalis were now in a position to create impediments to the trade between Tibet and Nepal.

Jayaprakash could not reconcile himself to the loss of Nuwakot and was determined to recover it. However his army was affected by conspiracies. His commander Ranabhim Thapa was accused of being an agent of Gorkha and made captive. he was replaced by his rival,

Kasiram Thapa. Neither Patan, nor Bhadgau came forward to help Kathmandu. Jayaprakash, however, had enough of financial resources at his command to be able to raise an army of eight thousand. However though the twelve hundred Gorkhalis were outnumbered, Kasiram still failed to recover Nuwakot and fled towards Banepa.

Jayaprakash was aware of the fact that the Khasa (Parbate or hill-men) soldiers had no confidence in him. Doubting the loyalty of his commander he had ordered mercenaries from the plains of India to kill him. This murder of Thapa and eight other Parbate officers in 1746 was avenged by Kasiram's younger brother, Parasuram. The latter engineered a plot to dislodge the Malla king and even procured the assent of Jayaprakash's wife. The Brahmins and Chhetris, the Khasas, Jaisis, Bhandels and Rajdalavs joined the plot.¹⁶ The king's younger brother was declared the ruler of the five villages of Deupatan, Changu, Sankhu, Gokarna and Nandigram. The rebel prince, Narendraprakash, however, was suppressed and died a fugitive at Bhadgau.

The failure of the collateral Malla kings to unite was unfortunate. The chronicles at the point relate the fight between Bhadgau and the Kathmandu-Patan alliance. Kalidas, a powerful noble of Patan, joined in the conspiracy and Gorkha could fish in this troubled water. When Bhadgau and its rivals sought Gorkha help the latter could play a dubious role to serve its own interests.

The ruler of Gorkha had appealed to Parasuram to join forces with him promising in return the confirmation of his *birta* (c. 1744).¹⁷ With the invitation of Parasuram, and the consent of Bhadgau, the ruler of Gorkha occupied the villages of Sankhu and Changu that belonged to Kathmandu (1746).¹⁸

Jayaprakash made a desperate attempt for the recovery of the lost territory but was forced to retreat. The next initiative was taken by a few nobles of Kathmandu. Taudik and his friends, who had fled when Kasiram and his cohorts were butchered, installed Jayaprakash's five-year old son Jyotiprakash on the throne. The new government under the rebel approached the king of Patan for help and drove away the Gorkhalis from Sankhu and Changu. It was only four years later that the ousted king Jayaprakash could come out of hiding, win the sympathy of his soldiers and recapture his throne. Many conspirators were executed. However, those lucky enough to escape were readily welcomed at the Gorkha court.¹⁹

By 1745 the Gorkhalis had consolidated their position at Nuwakot and made it their capital.²⁰ A good base of operation Nuwakot facilitated a quicker move eastward to Nepal. Yet the task was not an easy one.

The next Gorkha target was Naldum. Although Kazi Chikuti Maske, the commander of the Kathmandu army, had recovered it, Naldum

soon fell into the hands of the Gorkhali commander, Balabhadra Thapa (1754). Gorkha successfully concealed its real intention from Ranajitmalla, the king of Bhadgau whom Prithvinarayan had visited as a youth and whom he regarded as *mitbaba** he was led to believe that Gorkha was only fighting for a common cause. Ranajitmalla realized the real intention of Gorkha only when his territory, Kabhre, was captured in 1759.

In order to allay the fears of Bhadgau, Gorkha had also stationed forces at Mahadev Pokhari, an eastern gate to Kathmandu. Naldum lay to the north of it. Other hill states did not hesitate to take advantage of the discomfiture of the Mallas. Tanahu occupied Chitlang and Lamidanda, in the Nuwakot region, under Patan. To prevent complications Prithvinarayan wrested Chitlang and restored it to Patan.

If the hill states were inclined to take advantage of the unenviable situation of Nepal they were equally keen to prevent the expansion of Gorkha. Jayaprakash exploited this situation to recover Mahadev Pokhari, but Naldum could not be kept for long. Prithvinarayan then seized Dahachok, an entrance point in the north-west of Kathmandu. This resulted in the closure of all Kathmandu gates to other hill states and the severance of trade relation between Tanahu and Kathmandu. Dahachok was also a vantage point from where an attack could be launched against Patan.²¹

After the closure of Kirong, the Newar traders used the Kuti pass to enter Tibet. Gorkha was therefore determined to occupy it for a complete economic blockade of the valley. This could be realized only by violating the treaty with Lamjung, and Gorkha was morally unscrupulous enough to do so. Lamidanda was wrested from Patan and Sindhuli-Palchok, surrounding the trade route along the bank of the Trisuli that linked Patan and Tanahu to Gorkha, was occupied. Patan was thus encircled from the east and the south.

By 1754 Gorkha had strengthened its position and was succeeding gradually in the policy of blockade. Dolakha was another of its important conquest. Described as an important town (*pattan*) in old epigraphs, this small township had a chequered history.²² For some time Dolakha had freed itself from central control and was ruled by a separate dynasty of rulers. The viability of even such a tiny principality was ensured by its location on the northern trade route to Tibet. It

* When a friendship is ritually consecrated the two friends become *mit*. Such a friendship enjoins one's mourning the death of the other with all the rituals a blood relation is required to perform. Ranajitmalla of Patan and Narbhupal (Prithvinarayan's father) of Gorkha had made such a friendship. Hence Prithvinarayan called Ranajitmalla his *mitbaba* or *mit-father*.

had a predominantly Newar population, while its surrounding areas had sizeable numbers of Tamangs, Thamis and Sherpas.²³ But, by the time of the Gorkha expansion, a large settlement of Khasa-speaking people was found there. The Brahman and Chhetri agriculturists from the west had been attracted by the fertile basin between the Sunkosi and the Tamakosi. Their settlements were destined to be of help to Gorkha.

Apart from its importance in Tibetan trade, Dolakha had an iron deposit at Thosé. Prithvinarayan must have had these factors in mind when he wrote to the chief citizens of Dolakha asking them to surrender. In letters addressed to the 'Pradhans' of Dolakha in 1754 he said that his sway had extended to the east of Naldum. The inhabitants were given assurance that their lives and property would be protected as it had been with those of Palung, Tistung and Chitlang, who had yielded without resistance.²⁴ Tularam Pande negotiated for him and Dolakha surrendered without resistance.

In a letter to Harideva Pandit and Jamadagni Upadhyaya, Prithvinarayan expressed his desire to circulate his silver coins in Tibet in the manner that the Malla coins were circulated as legal tender there. He wanted to buy silver from Indian merchants to mint coins which could then be exchanged for Tibetan gold at a great profit. Both, in procuring the surrender of Dolakha and this venture, the help of the Upreti Brahmans of Dolakha proved to be of great value to Gorkha.²⁵

With a profit in view Prithvinarayan issued pure silver coins in 1754.²⁶ very similar to the coins of Ranjitmalla of Bhadgau. But the Tibetans did not accept his coins and continued to regard the coins of Kathmandu with Tibetan inscriptions as the legal tender.

The sudden dislocation of the traditional trade caused by the Gorkha conquest drove many Tibetans in the Bigu region of Dolakha and the border at Khasha* to rebellion.²⁷ Traders were robbed on the way and Tibetans did not allow 'even a handful of salt to enter'.²⁸ The trade agents of Gorkha at the Tibetan border tried to come to an agreement with the Tibetan officer at Kuti.²⁹ Though rebellions were quelled, the commercial enterprise of Gorkha were abruptly disrupted when its attention was diverted by Parasuram's machinations.

The success achieved by Gorkha so far was destined to invite the jealousy and opposition of other hill states. Lamjung, after negotiating with Parbat, attacked Sihanchook in the north of Gorkha. Parasuram Thapa, who had joined the service of Bhadgau, was instigating Chaubisi states to attack Gorkha in the rear. But Prithvinarayan procured Thapa's murder through one Jhagal Gurung, disguised as

* Khasha pronounced as Khaasaa, is not to be confused with Khasa of Western Nepal

an itinerant bard (1755).³⁰ To keep the rear safe and secure, Gorkha had to allay the fears of Lamjung by renewing an old treaty by which Gorkha was bound not to move beyond the Sindhu hill in the east. However Gorkha betrayed Lamjung and seized Sindhu-Palchok. The combined army of the Chaubisi states was repulsed from Sinranchok.

It could have been manifest to the Mallas of the valley that Prithvinarayan's next move would be to attack them. There were only a few Khasas and Magars left in the Kathmandu principality, but Jayaprakash doubted their loyalty.³¹ For a time he inspired a feeling of solidarity and arranged for the military training of the Newar youth of all the three principalities of the valley, under instructors from Nagarkot or Kangra.³² In the face of a burgeoning national resistance the advisers of Prithvinarayan like Harivamsa Upadhyaya and the astrologer Kulananda Dhakal counselled patience till the valley principalities were again divided by internal feuds. However, another viewpoint recommended haste because any delay would give time for the enemy to consolidate. Thus the first major move against Kirtipur was made in May, 1757.

Perhaps this was the only occasion when the Nepal kingdoms showed signs of a strong sense of solidarity. However, it is difficult to gauge how strong the Newar national spirit was. The hardships caused by blockades and exactions in villages occupied by Gorkha might have caused the ire of the people. Whatever the cause, Jayaprakash himself led his volunteers from Kathmandu, king Visvajitmalla led his people from Patan, and the aged Ranjitmalla's commanders led the Bhadgau contingent. A fierce battle ended with the retreat of the Gorkhals; they suffered their greatest loss in the death of Kalu Pande. Though this defeat affected Gorkha for some time, it also made them wiser. Prithvinarayan now devoted more thought and energy to his economic blockade rather than to a direct attack.

The conquests that Gorkha had made so far were hardly more economically advantageous. They did not yield much revenue; further, increasing military exploits would call for more arms and ammunition. All this put Gorkha in a dire financial stringency. Hopes for gaining substantial profits from Tibet were belied. A total subjugation of the valley was the only way to solve the crisis, and the best means to force it to surrender was by shutting it off completely.

Prithvinarayan took another step towards his goal by occupying Shivapuri. The fort there was vacated by the Chaubisis and was now under Jayaprakash. A sudden attack in July, 1759, forced its surrender. This was followed by attacks on Palanchok and Kabhre (January 1760) and Dhulikhel (June 1761) which lay to the east of the valley.

Less than a month after the retreat of the Gorkhals from Kirtipur, the British had won a decisive victory at Plassey in Bengal (June, 1757)

and a few months before the Gorkhali attack on Dhulikhel, the third historic battle of Panipat (January, 1761) had decided the fate of India. The balance of power in the Indian sub-continent was undergoing a rapid change. Gorkha was soon to come into contact with the growing British power. The British Central Asian policy was destined to make its impact felt on the events in Nepal.

When the blockade began to tell upon the economic well-being of the valley people, the only way now open to them was the southern avenue, or the road leading to Makwanpur along which there was an unhampered flow of goods both ways.

Gorkha realized that Nepal had to be isolated from the south and this called for an action against the Sena kingdom of Makwanpur. Hemkarna Sena, the ruler of Makwanpur and the father-in-law of Prithvinarayan, had died (1759). He was succeeded by Digbandhan. There was no love lost between Makwanpur and Gorkha since the time of Prithvinarayan's marriage to Hemkarna's daughter. The Sena rulers often sided with the Malla kings of Nepal.³³ Makwanpur possessed fertile *terai*, and if occupied, it could go a long way in meeting the financial need of Gorkha. However, it held certain lands in the plains as a zamindari under the Nawab of Bengal and the Nawab's patron, the British, could cross Makwanpur to help the kings of the valley. There were various reasons that made an attack on Makwanpur inevitable.

In August 1762, a strong force under Prithvinarayan's brothers, Mahoddamkirti, Dalapati and Dalajit, accompanied by Vamsaraj Pande and Keharsingh Basnet overran the capital of Makwanpur. The Gorkhals occupied Sindhuli and Hariharpur in October, 1762. Digbandhan surrendered and 'the chief persons who resisted (the) attack' suffered greatly at the hands of their conquerors.³⁴ The conquest of Makwanpur brought the Gorkhals into conflict with Mir Kasim, the Nawab of Bengal.

Mir Kasim had been made Nawab by Vansittart, the Governor of Bengal, after a secret agreement in 1760. Though expected to be a nominal occupant of the throne, he acted as an independent ruler, a position incompatible with the British policy in Bengal. Mir Kasim needed funds desperately to organize an army because he knew that sooner or later the matter would come to a head. Kanak Singh, a local chieftain, had requested Mir Kasim to intervene on behalf of Digbandhan Sena. More than with the intention of helping the ruler of Makwanpur, the Armenian commander of Mir Kasim's army, Gurgin Khan decided to march against Gorkha with 'an eagerness to test the strength and skill of the troops whom he had disciplined and of the artillery which he had trained'. The 'lust for the Nepalese gold' was another potent factor in his decision.³⁵

In January 1763, Prithvinarayan in a letter to Ramakrishna Kuvar,

the Gorkhali commander and an ancestor of Jang Bahadur Rana, wrote 'on Wednesday, Magh 2, the army of Hakim surrounded Makwanpur, but it is reported that only Dedhuwa thana has been besieged and two others are still open to us. We have heard that Nawab's army is stationed at Harnamadhi. Now we must attack it. Make all in the land under your jurisdiction assemble together (for fighting) by *jhara* (forced labour).³⁶

The expedition of Mir Kasim failed miserably. A great number of his men and guns were lost.³⁷ Gorkha took Makwanpur. Apart from a fertile plain Makwanpur also had an access to Tibet. Without the revenue accruing from the area, it would have been difficult for Gorkha to make preparation for further expansion. Further, this victory brought southern routes to the Nepal valley under Gorkha control. The eastern border of Gorkha now extended till near Kirat in the northern hills, with the occupation of Parsa, Bara, Routehat, Sarlahi and Mahottari in the south Gorkha territory met the frontiers of the British dominions. The encirclement of the Nepal valley was now almost complete.

The consolidation of the Gorkhali position had to be followed by the actual occupation of the valley, but for this some more initial conquests were required. A few Newar villages to the east of Bhadgau were captured. King Ranjitmalla of Bhadgau, who had been installed on the throne of Patan in the meanwhile, left his new kingdom. The nobles of Patan then offered the crown to Jayaprakash of Kathmandu (June 1763). Three months later the Gorkhals subjugated the recalcitrant village of Dhulikhel after a fierce fight, and occupied the villages of Khadpu, Chaukot, Pansuti, Banepa, Nala, Sanga and Pharping.³⁸

The policy of blockade began to take effect. The Nepal valley suffered from an acute scarcity of essential commodities like salt that came from Tibet, and cotton and timber that were imported from other hill principalities. This actually helped the Gorkha to occupy the seven villages without any bloodshed. The traders of the seven villages and Bhadgau requested the Gorkhali officers to allow them to trade from Banepa, but Prithvinarayan was stern in his injunction, 'Banepa is an ideal place for settling traders; but if they are settled there today, goods may enter the valley. You will settle them there only if they agree to surrender and be on our side'. The blockade was maintained with all seriousness and smugglers were rigorously punished.

Prithvinarayan's writ read, 'The royal order for closing the road had been sent from here; establish watchposts along the road. If anyone is caught smuggling salt or cotton (into the valley), if he be a Brahman, tie him up; if the other caste behead him on the road. Salt, cotton and other goods must not be allowed to enter even into Thankot and

Chitlang. If they reached Thankot and Chitlang, it is as good as their having reached Nepal'.³⁹ Commodities like grains, rice, paddy and lentil were also listed as contrabands of war.⁴⁰ A Roman Catholic missionary seeking permission to enter into the valley from Parsa in 1769 bore witness to the rigid execution of this policy.⁴¹ Enraged with Prithvinarayan, a Sannyasi went to the valley, met the kings of Kathmandu and Bhadgau and promised to break the blockade. However the posse of about five hundred armed Sannyasis that he led was dealt with severely by the Gorkhalis under Jahangir Shah. They were killed almost to the last man.⁴² The encirclement around the valley was tightened.

At this critical juncture in their lives, the Nepal kings lost all sense of purpose. The unity forged by Jayaprakash proved a transitory phenomenon. He did not have cordial relations with Patan where his rebel brother Rajyaprakash was now installed. Undermining the interests of Patan, he even offered a treaty to Gorkha only a few months after the battle of Kirtipur. Among other stipulations, he agreed to acquiesce if Gorkha took Patan or even to hand over Patan to Gorkha if he happened to take it. He agreed to treat Gorkha as an equal in matters of Tibetan trade.⁴³ In exchange, Naldum was to be restored to Kathmandu. It is not known how far the conditions contained in the letter were translated into reality or whether Jayaprakash's offers were merely a ruse to recover Naldum. Before Naldum was taken, Brahmans like Dhanapati and Deva Sharma had offered to be on the side of the Gorkhalis if their lands and properties were safeguarded.⁴⁴ Prithvinarayan promptly agreed and granted the new lands, apparently after confiscating those of others. His letter to one Deuhari Jaisi states that he was being given the lands surrendered by 'Bhote' (Tibetans or people of Mongoloid origins), Ojha, Brahmans and the land taken from Chamu Padhya. Those Brahmans who did not join him were dispossessed, and that set an example for others.⁴⁵ In a letter to Damodar, who was angry because his land had been confiscated by Ranajitmalla, the king says that he would compensate him somewhere else. Damodar Pandit was another Brahman, a subject of Bhadgau, but working for Gorkha. The king wrote, 'Even if *mitbaba* is angry, I am not. Nothing can be achieved if you are undecided. Jayaprakash has offered terms of treaty but Naldum is not to be given up. Our purpose cannot be served if we do not also adopt the policy of flattery. Only yesterday Lakshman Upadhyaya left for Bhadgau. If the work is done, better. If not, it can be done if you take the initiative'.⁴⁶

Diplomatic victory was not all that Gorkha wanted. Even after so many years the valley still eluded its grasp. The agents, Tularam Pande, Bali Panta, Jayakrishna Thapa, Devraj Katuwal, Ranjit Thapa, sent by

Prithvinarayan to spy on the internal affairs of the valley had been punished by Jayaprakash when the purpose of their mission was exposed (1755). But Gorkha still had other agents like Nilakantha Josi,⁴⁷ Abhusasingh Pradhan⁴⁸ and Kirtirajananda Upadhyaya.⁴⁹

Other hill states fully realized that it would be imprudent to allow Gorkha to grow more powerful with more resources at its command. Hence the Chaubisi states decided to attack Gorkha from the rear. The execution of the policy of blockade kept a great many of the Gorkhali soldiers occupied. Hence to meet the challenge of the Chaubisi in Gorkha all menfolk above twelve and below sixty-six years of age were conscripted. This ill-assorted army under Chautariya Mahoddamkirti Shah and Surapratap Shah, however, repulsed the invaders (January, 1764).⁵⁰

The Chaubisi failed, the blockade of the valley remained uninterrupted. The gentry (*pramans*) of the valley, composed mostly of the merchants whose prosperity depended on the Tibet trade, opened negotiations with Prithvinarayan. What he demanded from them was nothing less than the crown of Patan. When Jayaprakash learnt of the under-hand dealing of the *pramans* some of them were executed while others were punished through public humiliation and exile (December 1763). This severe measure only worsened the situation. The *pramans* now decided to instal a new ruler at Patan and offered the crown to Prithvinarayan. He agreed to accept it and lift the blockade if the Gorkhalis were allowed a free movement to and from Patan. The nobles of Patan refused to accept this condition because it could cause the loss of their power. However the kingship of Patan was something that Prithvinarayan did not like to forego, and he agreed on the condition that his brother Dalmardan Shah would actually stay in the city as his Regent. Dalmardan accepted the crown of Patan on behalf of his brother (February 1764) and coins were minted in the name of Prithvinarayan.⁵¹ However because the blockade was not raised, the *pramans* forced Dalmardan to lead the life of a royal captive.

The continued blockade of the valley had made the *pramans* more and more restive. Out of desperation they tried to capture the Gorkha Regent Dalmardan, but he was saved by one Dhanavanta Singh who finally joined Gorkha.⁵² In order to cause a rift between Prithvinarayan and Dalmardan, the *pramans* crowned the latter king and minted coins in his name.⁵³

The main task before the king of Gorkha now was the conquest of the valley itself. The first step towards achieving this goal was the capture of Kirtipur, but the town was well-fortified and the Gorkhalis had not forgotten the reversal suffered in 1757. After much deliberations they occupied the villages of Chobhar and Panga near the town.

When Kirtipur itself was attacked in September 1764, it once again proved a hard nut to crack. Surapratap Shah, the commander of the army, was incapacitated when an arrow struck his left eye, and Dalajit Shah was wounded.

Kirtipur as in 1757 received no help from the three kings but the Gorkha reverse there in 1764 inspired Jayaprakash to break the Gorkhali stronghold. Determined to recover Naldum he sent a force of Khasas, Magars, and Nagarkotis under Bagha Singh. However, initial success ultimately proved futile.⁵⁴ Gorkha occupied some more villages in the north-east of Kathmandu. The Khadgas of Mudikhu were dislodged and Jagdol, with a predominantly Brahman-Chhetri population, yielded without opposition.⁵⁵ At this juncture Bhadgau tried to help Kathmandu by lending its army. Dalmardan was ousted from Patan (April 1765) and Tejanarasimhamalla replaced him (2 May 1765).⁵⁶ A tripartite defence treaty was also made by the Malla kings on 8 May.

Kirtipur still stood as a tough challenge. A contemporary, Father Giuseppe, describes the town as containing 8,000 houses. The Gorkhalis renewed their attack on it in October 1765 by plundering grains, reaped and left drying in the fields. Even though food became scarce, the inhabitants of the town still remained undaunted. After it was seized by Gorkha for six months, the three kings of Nepal sent a contingent to relieve the town. Father Giuseppe's first hand account runs thus: 'One day in the afternoon they attacked some of the Tanas of the Gorc'hians, but did not succeed in forcing them, because the king of Gorc'ha party had been reinforced by many of the nobility, who, to ruin Gainprejas (Jayaprakash), were willing to sacrifice their own lives. The inhabitants of Cirtipur having already sustained six or seven months siege, a noble of Lelit Pattan called Danuvants (Dhanavanta) fled to the Gorc'ha party, and treacherously introduced their army into the town. The inhabitants might still have defended themselves, having many other fortresses in the upper parts of the town to retreat to; but the people of Gorc'ha having published a general amnesty, the inhabitants, greatly exhausted by the fatigue of a long siege, surrendered themselves prisoners upon the faith of that promise'.⁵⁷ The date of the fall of Kirtipur given in a *Vamsavali* and a contemporary diary is calculated to be 12 March, 1766.

Enraged by the stiff resistance of the people of Kirtipur, Prithvinarayan, perhaps to set an example for others, did not keep his promise of general amnesty. He ordered 'the principal inhabitants of the town' to be 'put to death' and 'to cut off the noses and lips of everyone, even the infants, who were not found in the arms of their mothers'.⁵⁸ Nepali scholars present skilful arguments to refute this contemporary account which finds corroboration in old documents.⁵⁹

Kirkpatrick had seen a remarkable number of porters with cut noses.⁶⁰ A paper in the Hodgson Collection⁶¹ describes that the noses weighed 12 seers and 1 tola and that 865 people lost their noses Baburam Acharya dismisses such accounts as hearsay and the fabricated accounts of later writers.⁶² He however admits that some ten or fifteen people of Kirtipur were punished in this manner. D.R. Regmi rejects the account given in the *Vamsavali* as an exaggeration⁶³ and Gewali quotes Lalitaballabh in support of his supposition that the ears and noses of only a few were cut. In his *Triratna-Saundarya-Gatha*⁶⁴ Sundarananda relates that after the occupation of Kathmandu when the village of Chopur rebelled, Prithvinarayan punished the villagers by cutting off their hands. He adds in its Nepali translation that 'the hand and also the nose, as in the case of Kirtipur, of everyone of the village of Chopur were chopped off'. Besides the recorded testimony of much older authors the folk memory, carried down through generations, still recount the macabre incident.

The fall of Kirtipur was followed by the opposition of the Chaubisi and Jayaprakash's appeal to the British for help. The attack of the Chaubisi under Lamjung in the rear was successfully repulsed by Vamsaraj Pande and Harsha Panta. Partha Bhandari, the commander of Lamjung, surrendered (24 September 1766) and joined Gorkha. However far more serious was the prospect of British intervention on behalf of the Malla kings of the Nepal valley.

Umda and Ramdas, agents of King Jayaprakash met Golding, the English Commercial Chief at Bettia and asked for help. Golding and Thomas Rumbold, the Company's chief at Patna, recommended to Verelst, the then Governor of Bengal, an expedition against Gorkha. The British considered that such an action could be justified not only on moral but also on practical grounds as a pre-emptive move to protect Bettia, which was under the British since 1764 and which was now exposed to the invasion of Gorkha which had already 'encroached upon us not a little'. Far more important than these was the possibility of reviving the almost dead trade with Tibet through Nepal and obtaining gold from there to meet the scarcity of specie in Bengal caused by huge drainage as a result of China investment.⁶⁵

The Nepali chronicle is wrong in its assertion that the expedition was sent by Governor 'Histen' (Hastings). The Kinloch expedition was ill-prepared for a battle in the strange hill terrain. Prithvinarayan informed his commander that one of the men of the English, who had come up to Hariharpur, was at Kathmandu with a report that since the Jats were moving against the British from the west, no action was possible, and that Jayaprakash was feeling gloomy. His instruction was not to allow the English to flee but to pursue and trouble them.⁶⁶

The small force led by Kinloch in 1767 captured Sindhuli. However he could not penetrate further into the unfamiliar mountains. Heavy casualties were inflicted on the British.⁶⁷ The *Vamsavali* relates that the Gorkhalis had temporarily withdrawn from Patan and that 'Hadi (Hardy) Saheb', who was injured and 'Kaptan Kilakh' (Captain Kinloch) fled;⁶⁸ at another place it mentions the capture of booty and guns. Prithvinarayan recorded this victory in his *Divya Upadesh* and in an inscription.⁶⁹

The victory achieved by Gorkha over the British was significant in many respects. The failure of the British left Gorkha free to deal with the besieged city-kingdoms of Nepal. The victory not only boosted their morale but also helped the Gorkhalis to obtain guns that were not common in the hills. Further, the intervention of the British implanted seeds of suspicion in the Gorkha mind and its future relationship with the British was guided to a large extent by this feeling.

Prithvinarayan's numerous agents in the valley became active. According to the *Bhasha Vamsavali*, he sent a number of Brahmans to impress upon Jayaprakash the futility of offering resistance to the ruler of Gorkha who had subdued the hill states of the west and had defeated 'Kasmilla Khan' (Mir Kasim) and the English.⁷⁰ Kirtirajananda, whom the Gorkha king has approached for the completion of 'the task of the Kathmandu throne' in exchange for the safeguarding of his property and priesthood, was the royal priest of Patan. The Brahmans received favoured treatment from him. When Bisankhu was captured, three Paudyal Brahmans were exempted from repaying a loan of two thousand rupees taken from a Newar Patan trader, Bhajudeva Taudhik.⁷¹ He confirmed the *birta* granted to the Brahmans, exempting them from paying taxes and conferring judicial authority on them.⁷²

Wealthy Brahmans also granted loans to the king and in exchange received land or got confirmed old free-hold land.⁷³ Father Giuseppe, who reached Nepal at the beginning of 1769, reports that during the siege of Kathmandu the Brahmans of Gorkha 'came almost every night into the city, to engage the chiefs of the people on the part of their king'. They also misled Jayaprakash by promising that 'they themselves would deliver up their king Prit'hurnarayana into his hands'. And, 'having by these artifices procured an opportunity of detaching from his party all his principal subjects, tempting them with liberal promises according to their custom, one night the men of Gork'ha entered the city without opposition'.⁷⁴

The élites of the valley, who were mostly traders and merchants, were suffering from the ban on Tibetan trade while the ordinary people were hard hit by the scarcity of commodities of daily use. Jayaprakash had only a handful of Maithili Brahmans on his side.⁷⁵ If

he had hoped for a second British intervention, he was mistaken. The East India Company was not in a position to renew the Nepal expedition in view of the defeat suffered by Kinloch, the war with Haidar Ali of Mysore, and the rebellion of *zamindars* in Bihar.⁷⁶

There is no proof of much popular opposition to the Gorkhalis. Prithvinarayan had surrounded the cities with his outposts,⁷⁷ and tightened the encirclement. As Stiller says, 'The final conquest of the three kingdoms of the valley reads almost as an anti-climax'.⁷⁸ The Gorkhalis entered Kathmandu when Jayaprakash and his people were busy celebrating Indra Jatra festival (25-26 September, 1768). Jayaprakash escaped with his three hundred 'Hindusthani sold' rs' to Patan where Tejnarasimhamalla received him. A number of Kathmandu nobles were given capital punishment and their properties confiscated by Gorkha.⁷⁹

Patan fell after a few days. In this also Prithvinarayan was assisted by the Brahmans. The Nepali chronicle is fully corroborated by Father Giuseppe's contemporary account that Prithvinarayan promised all the nobles of Patan that 'he would suffer them to remain in the possession of their property, nay he would even augment it'. As they placed no reliance on this promise, 'he sent his domestic priest (Sriharsha Mishra according to Acharya) to make this protestation'. When the nobles became ready to surrender, Jayaprakash and Tejnarasimha retired to Bhadgau.⁸⁰ A few nobles like Saikhwadhan, Bhoj Singh and Saimcha followed them with their soldiers. The evacuation of Patan by the kings and chief nobles was followed by the Gorkhali occupation on 6 October, 1768.

Stiller quotes the Capuchin account of the terror caused in Patan by the entrance of the king of Gorkha and observes, 'yet the Capuchin account makes it quite clear that Prithvinarayan Shah committed no act of vengeance or cruelty. Nor is there any mention of looting by the soldiers of Gorkha'.⁸¹ The Capuchin, Father Giuseppe, on the other hand, says that after the occupation of Patan, 'parties of his soldiers broke open the houses of the nobility, seized all their effects, and threw the inhabitants of the city into the utmost consternation'. He presents an account of the murder of nobles, 'their bodies... mangled in a horrid manner'.⁸² Much lurid in detail was the letter sent by him to Rome on 29 December, 1769, under the dateline of Patna.

However since the missionaries were granted full freedom by the Malla kings to preach their religion and convert people to Christianity,⁸³ it was quite natural for them to be sympathetic to the Malla kings. Prithvinarayan, on the other hand, had forced them to leave Nepal. D.R. Regmi does not find the account of the Capuchin 'fully consistent with reality' because 'they were prejudiced against him (Prithvinarayan)'.⁸⁴ Suryavikram Gewali supports the expulsion of the missionaries since they

were involved in politics. He comments that though Prithvinarayan treated them with kindness, they reciprocated with animosity.⁸⁵ These opinions make clear how Nepali historiography suffers from blind prejudice as far as 'the father of modern Nepal' and his actions are concerned. In the process the other side of the picture is ignored. This includes the effects of the Gorkhali conquests on subjugated peoples and societies, that offered resistance or remained recalcitrant.

The Nepali chronicle corroborating the Capuchin account records the severe punishment meted out to the nobles of Patan. Father Giuseppe records that they obtained permission 'though the interest of his' (Prithvinarayan's) son, to retire with all the Christians into the possessions of the English'. The *Vamsavali* similarly records the escape of many nobles to the plains, and the execution of those who could not flee.⁸⁶ To dismiss the eye witness account on the grounds of its being prejudiced, and another indigenous one, clearly not based on the Capuchin account, on the grounds that it was a later work, can at best be termed as a bias resulting from a false sense of nationalism.

It took more than a year for Prithvinarayan to take Bhadgau where all the three Malla kings were now assembled. The method adopted was to force the starving people of Bhadgau to surrender by plundering the reaped grain in its fields. Soldiers and agents were sent from Sanga, Lubhu, Patan, Kathmandu, Deupatan, Gorkarna and Changu for the purpose.⁸⁷ The Gorkhals burst into the town on 10 November, 1769. There was some resistance and in his last bid to ward off his enemies, Jayaprakash was wounded by a musket ball and died within a week. The defence collapsed with his fall and two other Malla kings surrendered. Tejnarasimha died a captive and Ranjitmalla was allowed to retire to Kasi as a pilgrim.

If the sight of the valley from the top of the Chandragiri hill had stoked the ambition of Prithvinarayan to capture it almost three decades ago, his *mitbaba*, Ranjitmalla, on his way to India as an exile, climbed the same hill, cast a pensive glance at the valley below and gave vent to his sadness in a fourteen-lined poem in Newari.⁸⁸

Prithvinarayan, the ruler of a small and poor principality, realized his dream of making himself the king of the Nepal valley. He shifted his capital to Kathmandu on 21 March, 1770, and adopted as his flag the royal banner of Bhadgau, introduced long before by Jayasthitimalla, the red banner, which Acharya describes as 'the national colour of the Hindus'.⁸⁹

With the conquest of the three kingdoms of Nepal, Prithvinarayan's personal campaigning ended. Since the Mughal emperor was still the paramount power in the Indian sub-continent, Prithvinarayan, after his victory, requested him for the recognition of the title 'Maharaja Samser Bahadur Jang' and in 1770 received it.⁹⁰

6

The Gorkha Conquests of Eastern Nepal and Sikkim

Despite the expansion of Gorkha power over Makwanpur and the Nepal valley there was no guarantee of its permanence. Though a Sanskrit poem claims that other hill rajas felt faint on hearing about the conquest of Nepal,¹ this does not mean that they had not been put out of gear. As the rise of Gorkha disturbed the balance of power in the hills, the petty states of the west often tended to check Gorkha's move eastward by attacking it in the rear. If such diverting tactics had proved irritants before, a potential combination of jealous and antagonized states could now pose a real threat to Gorkha. Besides the Baisi and Chaubisi states, there were Sena rulers in the east, unhappy ever since the annexation of the collateral kingdom of Makwanpur. If an alliance of all those states could succeed in obtaining the support of the British, who were not very happy with the emergence of a strong kingdom between their Indian dominions and the prospects of the Central Asian marts, the realized Gorkha dream would surely have been cut short.

Prithvinarayan could not afford to lose whatever opportunities he got for aborting such a possibility. Advantage could be taken of the internal feuds of the Baisi and Chaubisi states, and the British could be proffered a guarded friendship. However, despite the failure of the Kinloch expedition, there were Company servants who wanted to take strong action against Gorkha and restrain it.

Though aware of the great commercial possibilities of Tibetan trade since their arrival in India, the British had not taken any step to develop it until they occupied Bengal,² where the northern frontier was contiguous with the Himalayan foothills. Not only did the rise of the British in Bengal coincide with the Gorkha conquests but both were also pursuing a somewhat parallel policy with regard to Tibet.

The British considered trans-Himalayan trade vital for their commercial interests and Gorkha knew that the prosperity of their kingdom depended on close economic ties with Tibet. But as a result of the Gorkha conquests this trade was discontinued and at a time when the Company was beginning to appreciate its value as a possible source of specie to redress the adverse balance of China trade. A few months before the Gorkha occupation of Kathmandu and Patan the British had considered Nepal a means of access not only to the local trade of Tibet and the Himalayan hill states, but also to the fabulous markets of China. Such an alternative land route could avoid the restrictions of Canton. The Calcutta Council was, therefore, to 'obtain the best intelligence... whether trade could be opened with Nepal, and whether cloth and other European commodities may not find their way thence to Tibet, Lhasa and the western parts of China'.³

In August 1769, barely a couple of months before Bhadgau was taken by Gorkha, James Logan, a surgeon in the Company's service, had volunteered to go to Nepal to advocate a policy in support of the Newar Rajas. Logan believed that the Gorkha king could easily be defeated because the latter had lost the support of the Tashi (Panchen) Lama of Tibet, a close friend of Jayaprakashmalla, when he plundered the rich monasteries of the Lama's disciples in Nepal. Furthermore, 'Raja Coran Sain' or Karna Sena of Vijaypur was an enemy of the Gorkha king since the deposition of his first cousin, the king of Makwanpur. Karna Sena had not only proposed a second attempt to Kinloch but had also invited Logan to negotiate the terms of an alliance between him and the Company. But, by that time, the Newar Rajas were already dethroned; Logan's mission was still-born.

Another reason for the stand taken by the Company against Gorkha was with regard to the status of Makwanpur and the Tauttar pargana. Keighly, the Chief of Darbhanga, held in 1771 that the Tauttar parganas, bounded by Champaran, Purnea, Gandak and the *terai* belonged to Bihar and was thus included in the grant of *Diwani* to the Company in 1765. He wanted the extension of the Company's boundaries to their 'lawful limits'. Similarly, the English Commercial Agent at Bettia advocated the policy of confining the Gorkha Raja 'within his own hills'. Immediately after the occupation of Makwanpur, the Gorkha king had sent his agent, Dinanath Upadhyaya, a descendant of the Brahman revenue officers of Makwanpur and now a subject of Gorkha, to Darbhanga for negotiations with the Company.

Nepali and English sources affirm that he succeeded in establishing the fact that the Tauttar pargana belonged to Nepal as a right of succession to Makwanpur,⁴ and that Makwanpur was never a *zamindari* of Bihar. The reply sent by the Patna Council to the Governor-in-

Council⁵ on July 30, 1771, was based on the information supplied by Sitab Rai who visited the *pargana*, then under Nepal, for some field-work for his report. This sojourn was not hidden from Prithvīnarayan. On 15 February 1771, in a letter to his astrologer, the king wrote, 'Sitab Rai, the Subba of Patna, is reported to have come as far as Kesariya. It is not known whether his purpose was to fight with us or something else; he is said to have gone back to Patna'.⁶ Prithvīnarayan had sent five elephants valued at Rs. 15,000 as tribute to the British and the Patna Council noted that there was 'no reason to complain of his having committed any acts of hostilities as yet, whatever may be apprehended from him hereafter'.⁷ Besides the Company was then in no mood to increase its military expenditure:

Baburam Acharya's arguments that Karna Sena and Avadhut Singh, (the son of Ranjitmalla, the exiled Bhadgau king,) were hatching a plot to kill Prithvīnarayan cannot be sustained on a reading of the source material.⁸ Avadhut Singh was trying to persuade the Company for military assistance to recover his father's kingdom and continued to do so till much later. But both of them were too feeble to create any problem for Gorkha.

Since the Baisi-Chaubisi in the west was always a potential problem, Prithvīnarayan next directed his attention there. A start could be made by wooing Tanahu which had once been defeated and restored by him. But Tanahu had started an anti-Gorkha flirtation with Lamjung. The Gorkha commanders Keharsingh Basnet and Vamsaraj Pande reduced the small principalities of Dhor, Bhirkot, Gulmi and Payyu. They were ensured supplies by the Brahmans in exchange for promises of the confirmation of their freehold land-grants. However, Tanahu, Lamjung, Kaski and others put up a combined resistance. As a result the Gorkhali army retreated after suffering heavy losses. The Gorkhali move was 'more than a punitive expedition' but 'by no means a concerted effort at conquest'.⁹ Thus, though the possibility of an outright conquest of the western principalities had been mooted before, all that Prithvīnarayan desired at this juncture was to establish his lordship over them.

Prithvīnarayan wrote to the king of Jajarkot in 1769 that 'arrangements were being made for sending troops to the east'. With a request for reports of Baisi-Chaubisi, the king was assured that if conquered, Jajarkot would have only to pay a salami of Rs. 701 and in lieu, could enjoy all other taxes and revenues.¹⁰ Gorkha did not send an army to the west because of the difficult terrain. The Chaubisi might have chosen to take advantage of this defensive strength which, as Stiller says, they could forfeit if they invaded Gorkha. Besides, the traditional rivalries between the Chaubisi states was a deterrent against any such move.¹¹

Thus what Prithvinarayan wanted was swift action in the east. The eastern boundary of the new kingdom of Nepal had extended up to the Dudhkosi. When Bhadgau was invaded in 1769, the army was said to have been composed of the Kirats, Kambojas (Khambus?) and Khasas.¹² In an attempt to blockade the valley, Dolakha in the east had already been subdued. Baburam Acharya feels that the Kirat settlements in the 'Wallo Kirat' (Near Kirat) was also under Gorkhali occupation then. Unfortunately, on this point, the sources fail to satisfy us.

The newly gained territories of Gorkha witnessed rebellions from time to time. We have noted earlier how the 'Bhotiyas' of Bigu in Dolakha remained recalcitrant till they were eventually subdued. The 'Bhotiyas' had risen under one Bire Dhami after he was released by Lachhiman Thapa in 1762.¹³ Though Dolakha proved its loyalty by capturing the fugitive officers of Makwanpur when they came in 1762,¹⁴ Dhulikhel had risen eight months before the fall of Bhadgau.

Bhasha Vamsavali records that when Dhulikhel was recaptured by Dalajit Shah in 1763, the people put up a tough resistance at neighbouring Chaukot under Namsingh Rai and Mahendrasingh Rai. The Gorkhalis lost 332 men in their attempt to take the place that was being defended 'with the help of only fifty houses'.

Trouble which could be detrimental to the interests of Gorkha was brewing in Eastern Nepal. Kamadatta had been murdered by Buddhikarna with help from Sikkim. The uncle of the deceased Sena ruler then solicited the help of the Company against the *Dewan* (1770). Ducarel, the first English Collector of Purnea, was in favour of lending support. He complained that Buddhikarna was plundering the Company's frontiers and harassing its subjects. Moreover, he argued that because Morang was a fertile country, a strong and peaceful rule there could attract Company tenants in the bordering regions, and as a consequence of their settling there the Company's revenue could augment. On the other hand, if Morang remained disturbed, the bordering areas of the Company would attract plunderers from across the border. So he felt that the best method was to intervene in the affairs of the Sena kingdom and extend the Company's influence over Morang.¹⁵ Years before, Reza Khan, the *naib nazim* of the Company, had suggested a similar course of action so that in order to stretch the Company's boundary north of Purnea to its 'natural frontier' in the hills.¹⁶ The English were interested in Morang, fertile and rich in forest wealth, with its supply of ship timber.¹⁷ However the Select Committee did not consider it imperative to intervene.

Prithvinarayan's option for swift action in the east was provoked by a new development. The British, it seemed, were not the only ones who could deprive Gorkha of the fertile plains of Morang. The year

that Prithvinarayan took Kathmandu and Patan had seen the accession of bSod Nams Lhan Grub (Sonam Lhendup), popularly called Deb Zhidar, as the Deb Raja of Bhutan. Getting rid of priestly control he had made himself independent. With a view to consolidate his position, he strengthened his connection with the Panchen (Tashi) Lama of Tibet and the new ruler of Nepal.¹⁸

Though Bhutan had initially wanted to occupy the Dooars, the realization that a permanent hold was not possible without political hegemony over Koch Bihar made Bhutan decide to merely pressurize the latter. Bhutan was making and unmaking the kings of Koch Bihar for a while. Keeping up this policy, Zhidar descended on the plains of Buxa in 1770, imprisoned Dhairjandranarayan, the ruler of Koch Bihar, and hoisted his own protégé, Rajendranarayan, on the throne. In his conquering spree Zhidar also invaded Sikkim. Sikkim history relates, 'in the Chag-tag (Iron-tiger) year, AD 1770, a vast invading force came as far as the eastern bank of the river Tista, and their main bodies took possession of those portions of Sikkim, while the scouts and advanced patrols and skirmishing parties came up as far as Mangbro and Barphug in Sikkim'. A body of Zhidar's army crossed the Tista and invaded Vijaypur. Invited to participate in the campaign his protégé, the king of Koch Bihar, joined in with a contingent under Raikat Ramnarayan.

The Bhutanese invasion of Vijaypur does find mention in Bhutanese, but not in any Nepali source. There is not a single extant document in the name of Karna Sena. This was because Buddhikarna wielded power in Vijaypur till 1773 when Chaudandi, the middle Sena principality, was annexed by Gorkha.

As described earlier, Bhutan had sent representatives in response to Kamadatta's invitation at the time of his accession. Circumstantial evidence suggests that the Bhutanese army, instigated either by relatives of the murdered Kamadatta or other enemies of the *Dewan*, invaded Vijaypur to punish Buddhikarna.

Buddhikarna himself had strained relations with a few of his own fellow Kirats in the latter part of 1769. A letter from his younger brother to Samo Raya and Ahom Raya appealed for 'the return of those who had taken refuge in Sikkim'. This appeal, made in the latter part of 1769, asked for a favourable response 'if they did not want to destroy their country, but wanted its peace and prosperity'.¹⁹ Buddhikarna's jagir grant to Funma Raya at Letang in Chaubis Thum is dated as early as 1771.²⁰

The Bhutanese incursion was only a temporary affair and there was no prominent interruption in Buddhikarna's rule. From the banks of the Tista the Bhutanese might have sallied forth in bands over the surrounding countries of Sikkim and Vijaypur; not, however, to con-

quer territories. In a conversation that George Bogle had with Tashi Lama at Tashilumpo in 1775, the latter had said, 'I have already written to Sing Pertab (Simhapratap, the son and successor of Prithvinarayan) telling him that his father treacherously and unjustly made himself master of Bijapur (Vijaypur)... I hope he will restore it to Deb Rajah, its rightful possessor'.²¹ However, Bhutan could have occupied Vijaypur for some time, though it was never 'the rightful possessor'. Bhutan's withdrawal was not caused by Prithvinarayan as held by one author.²² Bhutan was then thwarted by Sikkim and the British.

The advance-party of the Bhutanese army that had penetrated deeper into Sikkim found itself 'surrounded by lamas and laymen' and was forced to withdraw. Bhutan negotiated a treaty with Sikkim at Pob-chu near the Rhenock hill spur, and 'Sikkimites obtained possession up to that place, which originally belonged to Bhutan'. The area was actually annexed by Bhutan from Sikkim in 1706.

At this juncture the English Company, keen to revive trade between Bengal and Tibet, then totally suspended by the Gorkha conquests, was in search of new routes to Tibet. In 1771 the Court of Directors suggested an exploration of Assam and Bhutan for an alternative to the Nepal route. The Collector of Rangpur was instructed to examine the prospects of Bhutan as a market for British goods.²³ By 1770 the opening of Tibet had become a fixed British aim. Warren Hastings, who became Governor of Bengal in 1772, was the first to try and execute the policy more seriously. He found a good opportunity to extend British influence to the north-east when Bhutan invaded Koch Bihar in 1772 and Nazir Khagendranarayan solicited British help on behalf of the minor son of the Koch Bihar ruler. Since the Bhutanese had reached dangerously close to the British district of Rangpur, the appeal found a quick response. In 1773, a section of the British army inflicted a series of defeats on the Bhutanese.

For a cautious man like Prithvinarayan, whose letters show a pretty good network of border intelligence in different quarters, these developments were alarming. The British were closer to Morang from more than one direction. Thus Prithvinarayan's chief concern was not to let the fertile *terai* slip, since it was vital from both strategic as well as economic viewpoints. The disruption in the Tibet trade had negated the anticipated lucrative prospects. Meanwhile, the kingdom under Gorkha had expanded and with it the requirements for its consolidation also increased. Prithvinarayan understood the value of land for people who had a predominantly agricultural and subsistence economy. Land was the only source of stable income, and the most valued possession. Thus in such growth lay the necessity for more land, hence more conquests.

It was Kirkpatrick who observed, 'Whatever his conduct as a con-

queror, or however severe his nature, may have been, he was not inattentive to the means of conciliating those on whose support he principally depended'.²⁴ Prithvinarayan's policy throughout his conquests was to confirm the existing land grants and other privileges of those high castes who assisted the Gorkhali advances by defection. In most cases fresh grants were assigned as *birta* and in some cases exemptions made in the payment of the *Kusahibisahi* tax. This was collected from *birta*-owning Brahmans when their grants were confirmed.²⁵ Moreover, lands had to be granted to the members of the court and distinguished military commanders.²⁶

Jagir grants to military personnel and government employees were necessitated by a preponderantly non-monetized economy. The mode of meeting the expenses of military establishments was also by assigning *jagirs*. Prithvinarayan realized his dependence on his soldiers and thus made land arrangements for them so that they could relax whether at home or in the front.²⁷ The soldiers too preferred *jagir* to cash payment. The *jamadar* who held three *Kaiths* (Khets)* each yielding him sixty rupees as nett income and further receiving two hundred and eighty rupees yearly from the treasury, thought himself better off 'when he belonged to a private company', because, not receiving any part of his salary in cash, he had then 'enjoyed sometimes ten, and sometimes twelve tolerably productive *Kaiths*'.²⁸

The circle was really vicious. The need for more land to assign as *jagirs* resulted in further conquests, and new conquests made the expansion of the army necessary. On the basis of Kirkpatrick, Hamilton and some contemporary records have described Stiller's estimates as the minimum and maximum increase in the number of soldiers showing rapid growth in the standing army. In 1769 its estimated strength was only 1200, but by 1775 it had risen to 2600-3400.

Prithvinarayan, realizing the value of the fertile eastern terai, wrote in an October 1774 letter. 'It is no use giving up revenue-yielding better land and retaining the land of inferior quality... Do not give up the plains (Madhes)'.²⁹ Hence others had to be forestalled.

The English company, a powerful competitor, was in an advantageous position because Karna Sena regarded it as a sort of paramount power, 'the Sardar of all the Rajahs' and had sought its intervention against Gorkha. He had not only implored Kinloch to make a second attempt on behalf of Jayaprakash, but, in January 1772, met one Francis Peacock and gave him permission to explore his

* Cultivable or irrigated land in the hills on which paddy and wheat can be grown is known as *Khet*. It is equal to 25 *ropanis* (or 100 *muris*), a *ropani* of land in the hills equals to 5,476 sq. ft or 0.13 acres.

country for timber. The British could take whatever timber, elephants and spices they required. Moreover Karna Sena promised to ask the zamindars of every *pargana* to help the British with labourers and boatmen.³⁰ All that he asked for in exchange was strong action against Gorkha. Similarly British help was also sought by Koch Bihar, with whom the Newar Rajas and the Senas of Makwanpur had marital relationships. Thus the British could take advantage of the situation by placing themselves at the service of either of the rivals. They did so by helping Koch Bihar against Bhutan.

Now Prithvinarayan's immediate object was to cross the Dudhkosi and occupy Majh Kirat. The Dudhkosi river flows west and meets the Sunkosi to the north of the Mahabharat hills and then flows east as the Sunkosi to meet the Arun, on the eastern boundary of Majh Kirat. The confluence is in the north-east of Chaudandi, at the centre of the middle Sena principality, which was then under Karna Sena. The Gorkhali preparations to cross the Dudhkosi were made in early 1772 when Karna Sena was facing trouble from Vijaypur as well. In his letter to Peacock, Karna Sena talks about the ill-conduct of the people of the East 'who had seized 10 or 15 villages' belonging to him and had 'set up new landmarks'.³¹ This situation is reflected in the letter of one Jayarudra Upadhyaya, a Brahman subba of Chaudandi. In it he demands from a revenue collection functionary, Saun Raya, an explanation for leaving Bodhe *pargana* for Vijaypur without permission. He complained that some tahsildar was collecting revenue at Bodhe on behalf of Buddhikarna. Saun was asked to return immediately to Bodhe to find out Buddhikarna's intentions from his men, and also to collect revenue with the help of soldiers. Chamu Thapa accompanied by soldiers was sent with a *mohar* (order) to establish the claim of Chaudandi.³² Karna Sena also reported to the English that the agents of the Chaubisi princes had approached him requesting the Company's intervention.

The detailed *Bhasa Vamsavali* mentions the conquest of the east in one line only. 'Kazi Abhimansingh Basnyat, Ramakrishna Kuvar', it says, 'then returned after conquering Vijaypur, Chainpur, Chaudandi'. Ramakrishna Kuvar, deputed for the invasion of Kirat, enjoyed the confidence of Prithvinarayan.³³ The king instructed Amarsimha Thapa, Sibe Khatri, Ranasur Bishta and Dalapati Khawas to obey the orders of Ramakrishna and sent them ten pitchers of gunpowder and three thousand pellets³⁴ for the Kirat conquest.

But more than this military preparation, Gorkha relied on its old stratagem of winning over to its side the Brahmans and Chhetris. Some of these people had migrated from regions as far as the Baisi-Chaubisi and Magrat to the Nepal valley and eastward to the Near and Middle

Kirat. The names of Parasuram Thapa, Ramakrishna Thapa, Chamu Thapa as well as those of many Brahmans appear as officers of the Sena kingdoms. Such officers were potential defectors while the Brahman-Chhetri settlements could be the veritable Trojan horse for Gorkha. If the Chhetris occupied high civil and military posts, the Brahmans formed a wealthy class because they were the chief beneficiaries of land-grants in various principalities. They advanced loans to Prithvinarayan³⁵ and helped him with army supplies. Their role immediately before the conquest of the valley is also a point to bear in mind. In order to foment dissensions in the valley alone, 'he had about 2000 Brahmans in his service'.³⁶ A similar strategy was used in the conquest of Kirat.

The high castes, particularly in the east, could not have reconciled themselves with the political authority wielded by the Kirats. The latter were often denigrated as *mlechchhas*, because their customs did not conform with Hindu mores. But for a few exceptions, the Kirats in general did not subscribe to the Brahmanical Hindu religion. They were 'beef-eating monsters' even to the founder of Vijaypur. Bangya Basnet was specially deputed to win over the high castes to the Gorkha side.

Swarupsingh Karki, a Chhetri employed under Karna Sena, probably had such an inhibition and thus was not on friendly terms with the Kirat minister. He took asylum under Prithvinarayan after the capture of Kathmandu and Patan. Similarly, a wealthy Brahman of Majh Kirat, Harinanda Upadhyaya Pokhrel, clandestinely offered his services to Gorkha. Harinanda's descendants trace their origin from one Kasidas, who is said to have migrated from Kanauj in India to Dullu in Western Nepal.³⁷

After a few generations the Pokhrels moved eastward and came to Makwanpur and found employment as priests. The Senas had assigned them many *birtas*,³⁸ the most famous being at Kharpa. Thus the family came to be known as 'the Pokhrels of Kharpa'. They realized that Gorkha would swallow Sena kingdoms before long, and in order to safeguard and augment their interests, set aside all moral inhibitions.

From Kharpa, situated on the eastern bank of the Dudhkosi, Harinanda not only helped the Gorkhals to cross the river (August 1772) but also advanced a loan of 3585 Patna rupees to Ramakrishna for the payment to his soldiers. 'I shall not only have the *birta* land granted to you by the Makwani king confirmed', Ramakrishna promised, 'but shall have additional land required by you granted. Harinanda Padhya, have the rest of the Kirat conquered, we will look after you'.³⁹ In return Harinanda promised Prithvinarayan his help in the occupation of Chaudandi. This scion of the family of the Sena

priests sent a clod of its earth to Prithvinarayan as symbol of the surrender of Chaudandi.

The Brahmans and Chhetris welcomed the Gorkhali entry to Majh Kirat. Karna Sena took no step for the safeguard of the hills; he was concerned more with his land in the *terai*. The Khambus (Rais or Kiratis) under Chatin Raya of Rawakhols and Atal Raya of Penakhola offered resistance in vain. The Gorkhalis advanced up to Chisankhu and Rewaghat, halted at Halesi where the soldiers were paid, and then moved to Majhuwa, Kulum and Dingla inflicting heavy casualty on all those who resisted. This was reported to Prithvinarayan and he sent a further supply of arms and ammunitions.⁴⁰ The quantity of ammunition supplied gives an indication of the stiff opposition offered by the Kirata. A few days later the king received a communication about the attack on Kirat, presumably the central part of Majh Kirat, where four to five hundred Kiratis were killed.⁴¹

Harinanda's elder brother, Trilochan Upadhyya, priest of the Sena ruler, also betrayed his king and rendered similar service to Gorkha in its attempt to capture the *terai* or Morang. Prithvinarayan told him, 'it is only in view of your services that we have attempted the task in the east. You are there'. With such confidence Prithvinarayan requested Trilochan to do everything by which the work could be completed. He was promised the confirmation of 'all his *birta* in the Kirat country' and exemptions from all kinds of taxes. He was told, 'You are the priest of the Kirat land; this priesthood will be yours even after the conquest. Get it conquered'.⁴² Trilochan's price was some lands of his choice as *birta*. He made it known through Bangya Basnet. Only five days later the king wrote that the land for which the request was made by him was granted with all tax exemptions. With the royal order to this effect went an instruction to help the army to cross rivers at points where the enemy would not know. 'If the news reached the other side, this attempt would also end in futility', Prithvinarayan cautioned him.⁴³

It is not known whether Karna Sena knew about his priest's role, but he placed a great reliance on the British. If the Company agreed to help him, he himself would send thirty thousand archers, about fifteen hundred horse and soldiers and would furnish the necessary informations about the Gorkhalis. He wanted the Company to back the main column of his archers by its forces and artillery, and added, 'Nypaul is so fine a country that it will please both the sepoys and the Company'. The intervention was being sought in favour of the cousin of Jayaprakash and to pressurize Vijaypur to give up the villages it had seized.⁴⁴ The British did not respond. Warren Hastings was in need of money and could not afford a costly adventure of doubtful results.

Further, his policy, as he formulated, was to complete the outline of the Company's dominions; it was of self-defence, and not in favour of 'remote projects of conquest'. Karna Sena might have cherished the desire to occupy Nepal with British help, but negotiations had already been opened between Gorkha and the Company.

With the fall of Chaudandi in mind, Prithvinarayan wrote to Warren Hastings on May 27, 1773, about his desire to cultivate cordial relation with the Governor. His intention was to forestall the Company's intervention during the Gorkhali attack on Vijaypur. Describing Kamadatta as his brother and Buddhikarna as the treacherous *Dewan* who had 'usurped the countries of Amirpur (Chaudandi) and Bijapur' (Vijaypur), he informed the Governor that he proposed 'to send a force to punish the Dewan, who it is suspected might take refuge in Purnea, which is a neighbouring district'. Prithvinarayan, therefore, requested the Governor to write a letter to the Chief of Purnea asking him not to give Buddhikarna any help. There was an inducement. If successful in his 'attempt to punish the Dewan and recover the countries', Prithvinarayan would send the Governor 'merchandise and curiosities'.⁴⁵

An amicable settlement could be reached between the two. Hastings needed the help of Gorkha to prevent the depredations committed by the Sannyasis every year in Bengal. Described in British records as 'lawless banditti', the Sannyasis or mendicants, called Nagas, forced contributions in the name of charity. They were held in high esteem by the villagers and came as far as Dinajpur and the Dooars every year. They once had tried to break the economic blockade of the Nepal valley by helping its kings. They put up a stiff resistance to the British, and when pursued, took refuge in the Nepal *terai*.⁴⁶ Warren Hastings' reply on 30 October 1773 was that 'the Raja's messengers saw him just at the time of his leaving Benares', and though he had asked them to meet him at Patna they never did. Hastings, therefore, requested Prithvinarayan 'to send trustworthy representatives'. On their arrival action could be taken according to his letter, and also 'to prevent the depredations committed every year in Bengal by Sannyasis who came from his country'.⁴⁷

Since the British decided to appease the new ruler of Nepal, Karna Sena's appeals went unheeded. The Gorkhali advance in the east was facilitated by the neutral British stance. Whatever opposition the Gorkhalis faced came from the Kirats under their tribal chiefs in the hills. As the regular military force of the Sena rulers consisted of 'the Rajputs and Khas, who generally resided near the person of the Raja', Trilochan might have played a significant role in neutralizing or winning them over to the Gorkha side. Chaudandi was taken without

much bloodshed. After the fall of Chaudandi, some of the Kirats took refuge either in the hills or Sikkim or India. In a July 1773 letter Prithvinarayan assured them, 'Though you did to us what you should not have done at the time of our conquest of this land, we guarantee the safety of your lives and properties', He further implored them to return saying 'You were the good subjects of Makuwani king yesterday, but today he is not your king. We have established our rule in this kingdom ... Come back with your people'.⁴⁸

The greater part of Majh Kirat was subdued by the middle of 1773. The Gorkha king wrote to Warren Hastings (May 1773) when a large part of Majh Kirat had already been reduced and a preparation was afoot for an advance towards Vijaypur and Pallo Kirat, about his intention to punish the 'treacherous Dewan', Buddhikarna. The Kirats of the hills offered resistance, but many factors worked against them. Though there is no contemporary source to corroborate it, a document,⁴⁹ copied probably in 1846, does mention that Visvesvar Jaisi Aryal, a Brahman, had been to Chaudandi and the Kirat land where he spent two years preparing the way for the Gorkha conquest. However the nature of his accomplishments is only a matter of conjecture. Given the characteristics of a rule in which revenue collection was the only government function, and considering the selfish interests that the land-owning class had, the Sena kingdom had enough weaknesses to cause its end with a minimal amount of outside pressure. Besides the support that Gorkha won from the Brahman-Chhetri group, the most potent cause of the Kirat failure was the division of these freedom loving people into a number of tribal *thums* that were unable to offer a united opposition in the absence of a central leadership. Moreover, in the Sena army 'the Rajputs had fire-arms' and the Kirats were 'chiefly armed with swords and bows, their arrows being poisoned'.⁵⁰ This is confirmed by other sources. The use of firearms by the Gorkhals⁵¹ is attested by Prithvinarayan's documents; on the other hand, an inscription of a Gorkhali commander who fought in the east describes the Kirats as 'Bhilla' using poisoned weapons.⁵²

Karna Sena was accepted at Vijaypur as its *de jure* ruler, but the actual power was in the hands of Buddhikarna, the 'Rajabhara Samartha'. However, his power seemed to be confined only to Vijaypur and not over his fellow Kirats in the hills. A chronicle of the Sikkim rulers in the Limbu language mentions the chiefs (Hang) of Kirat thus: Buddhikarna Rai of Morang-Vijaypur, Jamun Rai of Chaubis Thum, Fung Rai of Pachthar, Jang Rai of Athrai, Athang Rai of Phedap, Mongpahang Rai of Yangrup, Subhavanta Rai of Tamar, Rainasingh Rai of Mewa, Srideva Rai of Maiwa, Asadeva Rai of Chhathar, Harshamukhi Rai of Chainpur and Sunuhang Rai of Arun. Prithvinarayan is described as Pene Hang.⁵³

Abhimansingh Basnet, who was stationed with his army in the lowland of 'Ambarpur' (Amirpur or Chaudandi), appealed to Harinanda again in January 1774. The letter is interesting because of its details. It says that Harinanda not only helped the Gorkhali army to cross the Dudhkosi, but had also advanced loans, first of 3585 Patna rupees and then 7466, to pay the soldiers. Acknowledging all this the letter records his service 'in winning over the Parbate *umra* (nobles)' or leading Brahmans and Chhetris 'to our side by breaking them from the Kiratis'. The promise of an extensive tax-free *birta* in the low-land of Majh Kirat and the post of Chaudhari (tax collector) accompanied a request, 'Keep on your work for the establishment of our sovereignty over the hills and plains of Vijaypur in the east, being ruled by Dewan Buddhikarna... We will have you taken care of'.⁵⁴

Buddhikarna either had no resource to oppose the Gorkhals or else he realized its futility in view of the defection of 'the Parbates' as witnessed in Chaudandi. He fled from Vijaypur after Abhimansingh entered Chaudandi. In his reply, dated January 4, 1774, to the Governor's letter of October 1773, Prithvinarayan informs that Buddhikarna 'has now fled from Bijapur'. There was a misgiving about the British course of action regarding Vijaypur and this impelled Prithvinarayan to say that he would occupy the place if the Governor 'assisted' him. He was even ready to pay whatever revenue was fixed, and thought of sending Abhimansingh to Calcutta to negotiate the deal. Realizing the value of the Gangetic plain in the south, he now also cast his eyes upon Bettia. In reply to the request to prevent the Sannyasi menace the king expressed his inability to stop them from crossing the Gandak as it was outside his jurisdiction. 'It has lately been included in Bettia', he says, and goes on to show his willingness 'to extend (his) possession in that direction if the Governor assists'. 'In that case,' the Governor was assured, 'the Sannyasis will never be able to cross the river'. He also cited how at the instance of Vansittart he had once 'severely punished the Sannyasis for plundering the English factory'.⁵⁵ The British could not have permitted the Gorkhals to carry out these ventures in Bettia but they did nothing to stop the execution of the plan to take Vijaypur. The letter was only to keep the British reassured and in a state of inaction when he made his move towards Vijaypur.

Karna Sena died in 1774 about 'eighteen months after his expulsion' from Chaudandi.⁵⁶ According to a Nepali source, Karna Sena had fled to Rampur in the British territory to solicit help; in exchange he was ready to allow the British to establish a *kothi* or factory at Vijaypur, and also 'to allow the Company to take ten annas and to remain satisfied with six annas for himself' from the revenue of his kingdom. But he died before a reply came from Calcutta.⁵⁷ Chemjong,

without quoting any source, gives the impression that he was killed by unknown assailants at Purnea. As his infant son could be a source of future trouble, he was, according to Hamilton, inoculated with poison by a hired Brahman under the pretext of being vaccinated for small pox. A Nepali source only makes a furtive comment that when Dinanath went to Calcutta to negotiate with the British, the little Makwani prince was there with a *Dewan*, Bhuvanewar Upadhyaya, to solicit British help, 'but by the prowess of our Sri S. Sarkar (Prithvinarayan) Makwani saheb caught small-pox and died'.⁵⁸

Trilochan had been assigned the task of making it possible for the army to cross the rivers stealthily, for 'once we reach the other side, all will depend on our strength'. In carrying arms and others supplies to the army, *jhara* or forced labour was used and in some cases land was also granted to the porters as '*kipat*'. However, here the word *kipat* was a misnomer.⁵⁹ Tamangs (Murmis), Sunuwars and Thamis acted as porters. In pursuance of a policy to create a rift in the Kirat camp, a letter was sent to Jang Raya, Fung Raya, Jamun Raya and 'other Limbu Rayas'. These three names occur in the Limbu genealogy of Sikkim as those of the chiefs of Athrai, Pachthar and Chaubis Thum respectively. Prithvinarayan told them that his prowess had made him master of their country and assured them and their families of the protection of their lives and property. But this assurance was not applicable to the side of 'other nine lakh Rais'. He instructed them 'to do away with other chiefs'.⁶⁰

Abhimansingh was not sent to Calcutta to negotiate with the Governor. His services as the Gorkha commander were more valuable. Since Buddhikarna had already left the place and taken refuge in the British territory, there probably was almost no resistance when Abhimansingh advanced eastward from Chaudandi and took Vijaypur (c. June-July 1774). The difficult terrain in the hills had scattered pockets that offered resistance, though not unitedly. This is made clear by a Limbu manuscript collected by Hodgson in 1840. The Kirats under two Khambu chiefs, Waling Hang and Uling Hang, had fought against the Gorkhalis on the banks of the Tamakosi in the Near Kirat and continued their fight for seven years. Such recalcitrant pockets existed in the already conquered Kirat when the Gorkhalis moved eastward. As 'no help came from the Limbu Kirats living beyond the Arun', many chiefs left for 'Muglan' (India). The account adds, 'Chautariya Agamsingh Rai also left for India'.⁶¹ Similarly, the manuscript describes a resistance under Jaikarna Rai when the Gorkhalis crossed the Arun. Raghu Rana, a Magar officer in the Gorkhali camp, is described as having fought against a Kirat warrior, Kangsore. Both of them were killed and, according to an oral tradition cited by Chemjong, a truce

was made between Abhimansingh and the Limbus stipulating that the Kirats would acknowledge the Gorkha king as their king and themselves as belonging to the Gorkha family.⁶²

Prithvinarayan's letters reveal the tough fights that the Kirats gave. Describing the completion of the conquest of Majh Kirat, which he called Wallo Kirat, he wrote to a religious preceptor, Yogi Bhagavan-tanath, 'We have accomplished the task of Kirat by your blessing... Now the frontier (in the east) has extended to Arun. About one thousand enemies were killed, four hundred were drowned and about fourteen hundred women and children have been made captive. Wallo Kirat has been conquered'.⁶³ The letter also mentions a fight between Kaski and Lamjung in the west. Such quarrels left the Gorkhals undisturbed to complete their conquest in the east.

Warren Hastings made a belated claim that both Amirpur and Vijaypur were 'parts of the province of Bengal'. A summary of the communication to 'Prithvinarayan, the Ruler of Nepal', dated August 10, 1774, reads, 'Last year a letter was received from him communicating his intention to seize the murderer of the Raja of Morang.* A reply to that letter was handed over to his wakil. It now transpires that his troops have occupied Bijapur and Amirpur, both of which are parts of the province of Bengal. As it is desirable to preserve friendly relation between him and the Company, it is hoped that he will remove his troops from those places'. The British claim was undoubtedly wrong. Chaudandi and Vijaypur never formed parts of Bengal. Prithvinarayan informed the Governor through an agent about the occupation of both kingdoms on 13 October 1774. He also made a request for a *sanad* under the Governor's seal and signature and the payment of *nazrana*. Warren Hastings had probably been influenced by Buddhikarna who had gone to Calcutta to solicit British assistance. On November 28 Prithvinarayan replied to Warren Hastings, who had by then become Governor-General, that he was prepared 'to pay to the Company the revenues of Bijapur' in the same manner as he 'paid that of other villages like Makwanpur'. He hoped that 'the Company will not be the loser' and that 'the Governor General will not be prejudiced against him by the misstatement of his enemies'. An agent went to Dinajpur and Dinanath was sent to Calcutta to negotiate with the British.⁶⁴ Dinanath succeeded in his mission and the matter was finally settled in favour of Nepal. The threat posed by the Marathas tied the hands of the British. Later they recognized the authority of Nepal over Makwanpur. A further realization dawned when Dinanath, on the request of Mrs. Hastings, could send a contingent of the Gorkhali army to help the British at the time of the Chait Singh affair.⁶⁵

* Buddhikarna

Prithvinarayan's move to Morang in the east was for the possession of the revenue-yielding plains. However this did not mean that the march to the hills was only to satisfy a need for action. The motive, as will be seen, was deeper and primarily economic. Since Sikkim claimed an overlordship in the eastern and northern part of Far Kirat or Limbuan, the Gorkha policy of expansion was destined to cause disputes with that country. In his report to his commanders on 25 August 1774 after keenly watching developments in Kaski, Lamjung and Palpa, Prithvinarayan said that 'at a place which is after 'four days' walk from our border the son of the Sikkim Dewan has come to confer with our officers'. He added, 'It does not appear that there is any bad intention against us'.⁶⁶

The letter claimed the Kankai in the plains and Tamar and the Sabha in the hills as the eastern boundaries of the Gorkhalis. However there is an indication that the actual control was established only up to Harichand Garhi because after the initial claim it adds 'if the Kiratis agree that the Kankai is 15 kos (thirty miles) to the east of Harichand Garhi'. Till much later date Sikkim kept claiming Kankai as its western boundary though sources clearly state that the land between the Kankai and the Tista in the plains known as Morang, belonged to Vijaypur. The course of the river helps to dispel the confusion. The Kankai flows in a south-easterly direction from the Singalila Range, which divides Limbuan from Darjeeling, before it takes a sharp bend towards the east and flows somewhat constantly southward to the plains. The references made by Sikkim were to the upper reaches of the river, that is, it lay claim upon the northern part of Ilam, parts of Pachthar and Taplejung.

As indicated by the letter, negotiations were opened with the Kirats, for the actual control of the land between the Bakra and the Kankai.⁶⁷ Claiming the Kankai as the eastern border the king wrote to Yogi Bhagavantana, 'Men could not be slain, many fled to Sikkim. About 85 of those hiding in the bushes and forests were killed. We are about to make a treaty with Sikkim, and if it is made, those who have taken refuge there will be extradited to us. If the treaty is not made we shall have to fight with Sikkim. If it invades we shall defeat it by your blessings'.⁶⁸

Any possible intervention from outside made diplomatic activities imminent. Emissaries were thus sent to different quarters, but probably less to parley than to espy: Viswamitra 'Padhya and Gangananda Acharya were sent to Sikkim, where they were probably killed along with their two associates, Brihaspati Pandit went to Purnea, Kiritamali to Patna, Baikuntha Padhya to Nawab Shuja-ud-daulah of Oudh, Dinanath Padhya to Calcutta, and Lalgiri, a *gosain* trader, 'having trade establishments at Lhasa and Benares' to Tibet. Similar missions, by

the good officers of the Yogi, were used to confer with Jumla, Jajarkot and Kaski. Prithvinarayan was satisfied and confidently claimed that even if the other Chaubisi states 'try their best to attack us cannot simply do so because of their incapability'.⁶⁹

Compared to Near or Middle Kirat the east did not have large Brahman-Chhetri settlements. A few places had distinct Indo-Aryan names. However these were either given by the outsiders to designate the settlements of five clans (Pach-thar), eight Rai clans (Athrai) and so on or else was probably due to the influence of Maithili⁷⁰ used by the Senas.

The Gorkhals under Abhimansingh reached the Tamar river by September 1774. The Kirat chiefs, to whom Prithvinarayan had written earlier, bought peace as is indicated by another letter written to them at the time, 'You are the good subjects of that land. You recognized me as your king and neither rose against the king then nor have you done so now. Having understood this I have accepted you as my own and accordingly officers have been instructed... Look after the land properly with the consent of officers there'.⁷¹ He confirmed the rights of the chiefs and wanted them to span a bridge over the Tamar. The required 'consent' of the Gorkhali officers was sure to impinge upon the autonomy enjoyed so far by the Kirats.

The extension of the Gorkha conquest to the east by September 1774 can be precisely demarcated. Of the different zones into which Nepal is now divided for administrative purposes, the hill districts of Taplejung, Pachthar and Ilam in the Mechi zone touching the boundaries of Sikkim and Darjeeling lay outside it. The eastern part of the Jhapa district in Morang or the land to the east of the Kankai in the flat land which touches the Mechi in the Siliguri sub-division of Darjeeling and the Purnea district of Bihar was also not a part of it. The Kirats, who had accepted the Gorkha rule, had been asked 'to do away with other chiefs' and were told that the terms offered to them 'did not apply to the nine lakh Kirats of the other side', the other side being Limbuan.

The Kirat chiefs under Gorkha seem to have obeyed the king's order and spanned a bridge over the Tamar. In October the Gorkhals crossed the river. Some of the chiefs surrendered. Abhimansingh reported to his king about the voluntary submission of the *Subbas* of Sringya. For the consolidation of new conquests, Chaudandi had been fortified and the army marched from Kurilya in a three-pronged attack. It is not known what opposition the Gorkhals faced, but they moved fast.

The lofty 'denuded peak' Falut, of the Lepchas, on the north-western tip of Darjeeling, is where its border meets with those of Sikkim and Nepal. From there the Singalila range runs northwards

forming the boundary between Nepal and Sikkim and southwards between Nepal and Darjeeling. A little above Falut, over the same range, there is a pass called Islimba in Pachthar on the Nepal side; a little further up joining Sikkim and Nepal is the Choyabhanjyang* pass, to the west of which is a place called Chyangthapu.

In a letter dated 5 October 1774 Abhimansingh, the Gorkhali commander, reported his advance up to Islimba and Chyangthapu. The report fetched the royal order that the places were not to be evacuated. It laid down the main object as 'the occupation of the land to the east of the Kankai and west of the Tista' in the plains for it would not serve any purpose if the 'inferior land' was retained and 'revenue-yielding superior land was left to the others'. The instruction was explicit, 'If Sikkim remains quiet even after the occupation of Chyangthapu and Islimba, if it does not break the truce and come to fight, do cross the Kankai very cautiously. But if Sikkim is offended by our occupation of Chyangthapu and Islimba and breaks the peace, don't evacuate the plains. You must quickly advance up to the Tista which forms the border of Hindupati'.⁷² The commander followed the order, and by the end of 1774 the Gorkhals crossed not only the Kankai but also the Mechi in their drive towards the Tista. It is made evident by Abhimansingh's confirmation of the priesthood of the Dantakali temple and some land in *mauja* Haskhowa in *tappa* Bonigau at Damabadi in the name of a Lokeshwar Pandit.⁷³ There is a place called Haskhowa on the east of the Mechi on the way from Naxalbari to Siliguri in the *terai* of the Darjeeling district. An old chronicle records the date of the fall of Chaudandi, Chainpur and Vijaypur as July-august 1774, and that of Ilam as October 1774. It adds that Ilam surrendered without a fight.⁷⁴

The truce alluded to in the letter was the one which Gorkha probably made with Sikkim in August 1774. Though the hills and plains of Eastern Nepal fell into the hands of the Gorkhals, there was a snag—Buddhikarna, who had taken shelter in the British territory, was canvassing for their support. Prithvinarayan, infatuated by the reported superior breed of the fugitive *Dewan's* elephant, wanted it to be stolen by bribing its *mahout*. His instruction about the *Dewan* himself was clear, 'If Buddhikarna could be captured there, the very root of the trouble would be removed. If possible, depute some soldiers, promise them ten to twelve hundred (rupees) and other rewards and have him killed...Have it done by all means'. Buddhikarna was killed in 1777,⁷⁵ two years after the death of Prithvinarayan.⁷⁶

To his commanders the instruction given was not to wage a war of

* *bhanjyang* in Nepali means 'a pass'.

offence against Sikkim. Action was called for only if Sikkim moved first. This policy finds expression in the letter to Yogi Bhagavantanath also. The letter to Abhimansingh and others in October 1774 was more clear, 'Do not go beyond Islimba and Chyangthapu to occupy territory. In case of Sikkimese attack, choose a vantage point to give battle and defeat them. If you go to the old territory of Sikkim, the relation with Lhasa may turn bad. Therefore, don't advance to the north, and see that not even four-finger breadth of the Lhasa territory is encroached upon. You must not give trouble to the people there, and also you must not go to the old territory of Sikkim'.⁷⁷ A similar assurance had been sent to Tibet. Much perturbed by the Gorkha subjugation of 'Murang' and 'Bijapur', which disrupted the trade between Bengal and Tibet, the Panchen or Tashi Lama met George Bogle, Warren Hasting's emissary to Tashilumpo on 23 December 1774. Bogle had been sent in an attempt to open up Tibet, he was told that Prithvinarayan 'had promised again and again to him and to the government at Lhasa, that he would never encroach a finger's breadth on their territories, 'but now he had attacked Demo Jong's (Denzong or Sikkim) country, which was subject to Lhasa'.⁷⁸ Bogle informs that 'the Debo', who had played chess with him 'was gone with forces to oblige the Gorkha Rajah either to quit Demo Jong's country, or to fight with him'. He gives the impression that the Lama, the real power in Tibet at the time, was much concerned and was always inquiring after the Gorkha Rajah. A few days before, on 6 December, the Lama had informed Bogle that the Gorkhali 'forces are employed in attacking Demo Jong, whose country is in the neighbourhood of Bengal. They have surrounded it; the Gorkha Rajah has trained sepoy after the English manner, and given them muskets'. The Lama also corrected Bogle's misinformation that the Gorkhas were on the borders of Tibet by saying, 'They must have meant Demo Jong's dominions, which are subject to Lhasa'.⁷⁹ A few days after, on 11 January 1775, Prithvinarayan died.⁸⁰

After receiving the news of Prithvinarayan's death, a letter was sent by Tashi Lama to Pratapsimha Shah (1775-77) asking him to relinquish Morang and Vijaypur conquered by his father, the lands which, however, the Lama erroneously thought to have belonged to Bhutan. *The History of Sikkim* describes Bogle's 'Debo' or Deb Patza, sent to Nepal by Lhasa, as Depon Petsal, and the Nepali document had Dheba Pachhal. The Sikkim account throws much light on these events regarding which the extant Nepali sources do not say much. In view of Prithvinarayan's instruction that Tibet should not be offended, it seems true that when Depon Petsal approached the Nepal frontier, the Gorkhas who 'intended invading Sikkim... could not send the invading force'. But that Prithvinarayan did not advocate a totally pacific policy towards Tibet is made clear by other sources.

Tibetan trade was the primary consideration of Gorkha, and the principal reason for its conquest of Nepal. But as Bogle remarked, 'although the wealth of Nepal furnished the Gorkha Rajah with the means by which he rose, he neglected to cherish the source from when it flowed. Mistrustful of subjects disaffected to his government, he entertained a number of troops on regular pay'. The army was not only expanded and equipped with firearms, but an artillery was formed. 'The ordinary revenue of countries where a standing army had hitherto been unknown was unequal to these extraordinary expenses', he continues, 'and the Gorkha Rajah, among other expedients, had recourse to imposing high duties on trade in order to defray them'. Such a policy forced merchants to quit the country. The Gosains, 'who had formerly very extensive establishments in Nepal... were driven out of the kingdom'. Only two Kashmiri houses remained 'and the Rajah, afraid also of their abandoning him, obliges them to give security for the return of such agents as they have occasion to send beyond the boundaries of his dominions'. The expulsion of the merchants was in accordance with the views that the king expressed in his *Divya Upadesh*. One of the Kashmiris allowed to remain was probably Sadullaji Mojami as shown by a document (1765) which confirms his ownership of the land and house in Nepal, and requires 'the payment of the same amount as *salami* as other merchants would have to pay on our actual occupation of Nepal'.⁸¹

The disruption in trade and the consequent loss of revenue aggravated financial constraints already made acute by the requirements of an expanding army and an enlarged kingdom. Thus a total control over the Tibetan trade was felt necessary. If Tibet was suffering due to the closure of Kathmandu roads it had access to the south through other directions, and in this lay the significance of Sikkim. Prithvinarayan's mercenary outlook desired the establishment of a political hegemony over the hills of Kirat and Sikkim so that all the doors to Tibet could be closed and transit trade fully controlled. If possible, a sphere of influence had to be extended over Tibet itself.

Bogle feared that Gorkha would even try to conquer 'Pari-jong' or Bhutan, and 'that having assumed the title of king of the Hills (Parbat-kai-Badshah), he (Prithvinarayan) wished to be one in reality'.⁸² The British envoy tried to impress upon the Lama the necessity of a connection between Tibet and Bengal for the overcoming of such an eventuality.

Gorkha, on its part, did not view the British power with equanimity. Company troops in support of Koch Bihar had defeated Bhutan in 1772. This occurred not only in the plains but also in the hills as far as Dalimkot (Kalimpong), close to the Tista which then formed the Sikkim-Bhutan border in the hills. Though the British had withdrawn

from the area when the Anglo-Bhutan treaty was made in 1774, their threat of impinging the Gorkhalis remained. The British had to be forestalled, because in 1777 Pratapsimha Shah wanted Abhimansingh to take Someswar-Kabilaspur in the plains of Chitaur as swiftly as possible in order to 'overtake the Firangis' or Englishmen.⁸³

Nearest to Lhasa, the places of the region that Gorkha wanted to control most were the northern part of Taplejung in Pallo Kirat and Sikkim. Prithvinarayan had even thought of the possibility of a war with Tibet for the realization of this purpose. When Bogle met Tashi Lama on 19 January 1775, barely a week after the death of Prithvinarayan, the Lama told him about the letter just received from Kathmandu. Sent not only to him but also to the Dalai Lama and other ministers, the letter stated that Prithvinarayan had no wish to quarrel with the Tibetans, 'but if they had mind for war... he was well prepared'. He wanted them to know 'that he was a Rajput', and made clear as to what his preferences were. He wanted to establish factories at Kuti, Kerong and other places upon the borders of Tibet and Nepal, 'where the merchants of Tibet might purchase the commodities of his country and those of Bengal'. He would allow the transportation of 'the common articles of commerce' but 'no glasses or other curiosities' the import of which he wanted Tibet to prohibit. Furthermore, Prithvinarayan wanted Tibet to have no connection with 'Fringies or Moghuls' (the British and the Indians), they were never to be admitted into Tibet. Lastly, he wanted Tibet to circulate the coins minted by him, of which 2000 rupees he had already sent before.⁸⁴ The letter was probably taken to Tibet by a *gosain*, 'Bhimgiri's disciple Lalgiri' who, the king had once told his preceptor, had 'trade establishments (*Kothi*) in Lhasa, Kasi (Benares), and had land, house and *kothi* here (in Kathmandu) too'.⁸⁵

On the basis of both what Bogle wrote and the Sikkim chronicle it may be accepted that Tibet had taken some steps to preempt the Gorkhali move against Sikkim, perhaps when Limbuan was being seized. According to Tashi Lama an 18000 strong army had been sent under Depon Petsal.⁸⁶ However they had returned 'as they were unable to proceed on account of the great quantities of snow which rendered the road impassable'. However, the Tibetan government was angry with Depon. Depon told Bogle when they met a few days after his return in April 1775 that he was 'expecting soon to be again sent towards Nepal'.⁸⁷ Depon might have retreated on his own when he heard about the Gorkha king's death. Tashi Lama also 'received a letter from the commander of the Gorkha troops mentioning that he intended to desist from war on account of his master's death, and proposing a truce for three years'.⁸⁸

Though the Sikkim sources describe the help given by Sikkim to the Kirats in 1774, there is reason to doubt its veracity. The account presented is almost the same as that of the event which took place at a later time. There is also no other source to support the account. What seems probable is that some sort of an agreement was made after the death of Prithvinarayan.

However, there is a serious discrepancy between the Nepali and Sikkim sources about a treaty in 1775. The Nepali source refers to a treaty (*dharmapatra*) between Nepal and Tibet written in Newari, made on 'Newari samvat 895* Sravan sukla 13 Wednesday' at Khasha. Sikkim history dates it the 13th day of the 6th month of the Shing-lug (Wood-sheep) year of AD 1775'. When Bogle met Tashi Lama on 26th January 1775, 'it was the first day of the Tibet year'. Even a rough calculation indicates that both refer to a treaty made in July-August, 1775. The Tibetan source claims Walung as the place where the treaty was signed.⁸⁹

The Nepal-Tibet treaty was purely a commercial one concerned mostly with problems arising out of the debased metal coins of indefinite value, and the rise in the price of silver and gold in Nepal. Tibet agreed to use only the coins minted in Nepal. There was also an agreement that no trader, whatever his place of origin, should be allowed to bring silver and gold except through the passes of Kuti and Kerong. Both promised to respect each other's borders.⁹⁰ However nothing was said regarding the Nepal-Sikkim frontiers.

Though no Nepali version of any treaty made between Sikkim and Nepal in 1775 has come to light, the royal historians of Sikkim assert that 'an old copy of this treaty is still extant'. The Nepali text of the Nepal-Tibet treaty also names its Sikkimese signatories.

According to the Sikkim source the Gorkhalis first demanded compensation for the slaughter of four Brahmans—most likely being Visvamitra Padhya and Gangananda Acharya mentioned in Prithvinarayan's letter⁹¹ as the two envoys deputed to Sikkim. On behalf of Sikkim an amount of Rs. 4,000 was paid by Tibet as blood money. The chronicle adds that 'the Gorkha undertook to refrain from future raids'. Not very clear is how the blame for 'the present rupture' could have been put on Bhutan with whom the Gorkhalis promised not to have connections 'in the matter of armed assistance'.

The Sikkim source also states that the boundary was fixed between Nepal and Sikkim. However, this demarcation would now make the recent Gorkha conquests in both Kirat and Morang into parts of Sikkim. But the area was never evacuated by the Gorkhalis. In view of

* The Nepal or the Newar era started from 20 October AD 879, a Thursday.

this what can be safely presumed is that Tibet paid blood money for Sikkim but the Sikkimese request for redrawing the boundary was never conceded to Sikkim had, according to the chronicle, gone with various documents as 'evidence of its former possessions... with the histories as to how they came to be obtained and with petition to the Tibetan government' praying that it should not be allowed to suffer any loss of territory. However, Sikkimese claims over Limbuan and Morang seem to have been unjustifiable.

The annexations of Chaudandi, Vijaypur and Limbuan were significant and the Gorkhalis did not harass Sikkim for many years. Pratapsimha wrote to Abhimansingh saying that his conquests of Saptari and Vijaypur meant the occupation of an area which would give an annual revenue of Rs. 175,000. These triumphs provided the resources for further conquests. The occupation of northern Far Kirat brought under their control the Walangchung pass leading to Tibet. The whole region surrounded by Tibet, Sikkim, Bhutan and the British dominion in Bengal had great strategic importance... From a social view point it brought different tribes of Mongoloid and Tibetan origins under the control of the new kingdom of Nepal. The conquest of Eastern Nepal was a great achievement indeed and Abhimansingh commemorates this in an inscription at Kathmandu which describes him as the victor of 'nine lakh Kirat'.⁹²

The extension of Nepal during the reign of Prithvinarayan was not even half of what was achieved later by his successors. Chitaur in the plains was annexed in 1777. In the same year Pratapsinha died after a short reign. Then followed the long period of regency of his widow, Rajendralakshmi, and then of his younger brother, Bahadur Shah, while Ranabahadur Shah was still a minor (b. and r. 1777-1799). The further expansion of Nepal continued particularly under the leadership of Bahadur Shah who acted as Regent from 1786 to 1795. However the period was one of confusion because of power struggle and palace intrigues which, after 1777, was to remain a marked feature of the political culture of Nepal.

When the Gorkhalis resumed their career of conquest they turned to both the west and the east. Tanahu, Palpa, Kaski and Lamjung envied the rise of Gorkha and their subjugation became essential. Besides the unscrupulous intrigues of jealous disputants for the throne, the pacific policy of Rajendralakshmi was responsible for the suspension of military expeditions for six years during her regency. Despite this some important military gains were made. Thus the western frontier of Nepal was extended to the Kali-Gandaki. This occurred after the reduction of Kaski and Lamjung, ruled by the collaterals of the founder of Gorkha. Baburam Acharya remarks, 'this victory was not because the Regent willed it, but

it was more an outcome of the reaction to the challenge from her enemies outside'.⁹³ Yet even if she had not willed a recourse to war; the rationale of a *kriegstaat* in quest of more land for the growing war machinery would have negated her a pacifism. Her death in 1785 and the rise of Bahadur Shah, Prithvinarayan's younger son, as Regent, once again set the machine of war in motion, consequently this soon doubled the size of Nepal. In the west the Gorkhalis under the command of Damodar Pande gained a series of victories. Gulmi, Argha, Khanchi, Parbat (Malebum), Musikot, Galkot and Pyuthan fell one by one and by 1787 the frontiers of the new Nepal touched the border of Jajarkot, which was already a vassal of Gorkha. The rulers of Salyan bought peace by recognizing Gorkhali overlordship, and so did Angyal Dorje, the king of Mustang in 1789.⁹⁴

This victory was followed by the conquests of Dailekh, Doti, Achchham and Jumla. By 1789, all the Chaubisi and Baisi states, except Palpa, were subjugated. Their frontiers now extended to the Mahakali river, the present western border of Nepal. In 1790 the Gorkhalis under Amarsimha Thapa gained more victories in the west. Kasau was conquered in 1790. The westward drive continued after the fall of the Regent and the assumption of power by Ranabahadur and even during the regnal period of Girvanayuddha Vikram (1799-1816), particularly under the leadership of Mukhtiyar (Premier) Bhimsen Thapa. The Gorkhalis conquered Garhwal and reached Kangra across the Yamuna by 1808. Meanwhile, Palpa, which had remained independent was reduced in 1805. The western frontier now extended up to the Satlaj. Most of these areas were brought under the direct control of Kathmandu. However, with a few strong principalities, subsidiary alliances were made. Such states were granted some measure of autonomy.

In the east the promise given to Sikkim in 1775 remained operative for thirteen years. The Sikkim chronicle says that immediately after the treaty was signed and the Tibetan agents had returned, the Gorkhalis 'again poured down two forces by the two passes of Tobjong (Taplejung) above, and Ilam below'. But the places, as seen earlier, had already been occupied by October 1774.

Risley's account that the Gorkhas were driven out from Ilam and that the Sikkimese penetrated as far as Chainpur in 1787 does not appear to be correct. Following him, Chemjong had reconstructed an account of the battle of Chainpur in 1776, and others have quoted him.⁹⁵ However the sources on which the account is based relate to events and persons of a later date. Chemjong quotes three documents of the period between 1782 and 1784. One confirms the privileges of the Kirat chiefs, the second gives information about the distribution

of weapons among them, and the third one indicates Kirats having reported to the king about preparations being made by Sikkim. Chemjong suggests that the Limbus had joined the Gorkhali army. Stiller comments that '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'.⁹⁶ It is doubtful whether the Limbus were recruited in the regular army. Documents are vague regarding this, but apparently the Limbus rebelled later when attempts were made to conscript them. Moreover, the definite policy laid down by Prithvinarayan was to recruit only the Khasas, Thakurs, Magars and Gurungs.⁹⁷ The regular army was officered by Chhetris. In 1791 some Kirats fought on the side of the Gorkhalis but they were not regulars. This was also the case when Nepal faced a greater crisis in 1814. The Kirats then enlisted were also not regulars, 'they received no pay', but were 'allowed to keep all they might obtain, specie excepted, by plunder'.⁹⁸

There is no evidence of a Gorkhali invasion of Sikkim between 1775 and 1788. The invasion in 1788 was not an event isolated in itself, but closely connected with Nepal's Tibetan policy. The relationship between Nepal and Tibet had deteriorated due to various reasons. First, there was the problem of the debased coinage. The *Mahendramalli* minted in Nepal for circulation in Tibet had been debased during the rule of the last Malla causing a decrease of nearly one half of their face value. Prithvinarayan had inherited the problem, hence his *Divya Upadesh* laid down that the mint should be kept pure.⁹⁹ The Nepal version states that the king's envoys tried to convince the Tibetans and 'pleaded the difficulty in withdrawing all of the debased coins from circulation'. They insisted that no separate exchange rates between *Mahendramalli* and Gorkha coins should be fixed. As the new coins were roughly the same size and weight, the Tibetans wanted Prithvinarayan's coins to be circulated at par with the old coins. In their insistence Stiller saw the love of 'the sluggish, lamaistic society of Tibet' for the *status quo*.¹⁰⁰ Camman assigns a plausible reason. The scarcity of the *Mahendramalli* coins had actually increased their value in relation to the only other medium of exchange, silver ingots and purses of gold dust.¹⁰¹ The Tibetan version is that their government had sent Prithvinarayan presents and a letter in 1770 explaining the background of the trade previously existing between Tibet and Nepal, and asking him to allow it to continue. They apprised him of the problem of the debased currency requesting him to prevent bad coins from being sent to Tibet. The version given in the biography of the eighth Dalai Lama is similar to Bogle's report that the Tibetans were

willing to accept Prithvinarayan's coins provided that he take back all the Nepalese money which was then in circulation. The Gorkha king's reply to this matter and his suggestion that the pilgrims be allowed to move freely between the two countries were courteous though non-committal.¹⁰² The old specie continued to pass; 'but the channel by which it was introduced having been long stopped up', it had 'risen greatly above its former value, as well in proportion to the talents of silver as to the gold dust'.¹⁰³ It was to solve this problem in a way advantageous to Gorkha that the Nepal-Tibet treaty had been made in 1775.

Nepal's ambition to monopolize Tibetan trade by controlling all the passes had led to the Gorkhali conquest of the upper hill region of Limbuan, considered 'inferior' to the 'revenue-yielding superior plains'. The treaty made with Tibet in 1775 had stipulated that Tibet would trade only through the Nepal routes. However in 1784 Tibet opened trade route through the Chumbi valley leading to Sikkim. The logical conclusion of Nepal's Tibet policy was to stop this circumvention by conquering Sikkim itself.

Nepal found an excuse in the controversy over the Panchen Lama's personal property to wreak vengeance on Tibet. The Lama's property was being claimed by his two brothers. One of them, Chosdup Gyatse, known as Shamar Trulku, the head of the Karma-pa sect, sought Nepalese help to claim his property. On this pretext the Gorkhals invaded Tibet and occupied Nyanang, Rongshar and Kirong. By the summer of Earth-ape year (1788) they marched to Dzonka and Shekar on different routes leading to Shigates.

The Sikkim chronicle is more accurate when it relates that in 'Sa-tel' or 1788 the Gorkhals invaded Sikkim. * However it was not really 'nine years after the last rupture' as claimed. This mistake was probably due to a wrong calculation of date in the twelve-year cyclical method of Tibetan reckoning. A conquest of hilly Sikkim was not for the sake of conquest *per se*. It was to be a corollary to Nepal's rupture with Tibet in 1788. The date of 'the last rupture' given in the Sikkim chronicle is 'the tenth day of the first month of the Chag-ji' (that is, Iron-hen year) or 1780. It was in all probability the misrepresentation of Sa-ji (Earth-hen year) or 1789. The latter would then mean either late February or March 1789 which, as will be seen, is fully confirmed by Hamilton. The confusion in the Sikkim chronicle is removed when we recognize the total resemblance of the descriptions of the events both of 1779-80 and 1789.

* 'From a letter addressed by Mr. Pagan to Colonel Ross, in the month of September, (probably of 1788, for there is no date in the letter) the Gorkhalese invaded Sikim'. Hamilton, p.120

A two-pronged attack on Sikkim took place in 1788. Purna Ale, a Magar commander of the Gorkhali force, came from Ilam, probably after crossing Choyabhanjyang. Then he advanced up to Reling and Karmi, now in Darjeeling, and Chyakhung in Sikkim. Another force moved from Vijaypur. According to the Sikkim source the name of the commander of 'another Gorkha force from Bijapur' is Johar Singh, Markham called him 'the Subah of Morang'.¹⁰⁴ Hamilton called him 'Tiurar Singh, Subah of Morang, and Risley said he was 'general Jor Singh'.*

Advancing stealthily on the Singalila route, Johar Singh crossed the Khaletchu (the Tibetan name for Kulhait), an affluent of the Great Rangit to the north of Darjeeling. Proceeding quickly on its banks, he made a surprise attack on the palace of Rabdantse and captured it. Rabdantse was the capital of Sikkim, situated on the same level, about three hundred feet below the famous monastery of Pemiongchi. Tenzing Namgyal and his family 'had scarcely any time to dress' before they took flight, the Sikkim chronicle adds. According to Hamilton, Rabdantse was taken 'shortly previous to the 28th October, 1788, as in a letter from Mr. Pagan of that date he had just received accounts of the entire conquest of Sikkim by the Gorkhalese', a report which 'considerably magnified the extent of their victory'.¹⁰⁵

The Sikkim account is mistaken when it says that another army 'more numerous and powerful, under one Damodar Pande subsequently reinforced the Gorkhas'. Damodar Pande, one of Nepal's distinguished generals, was in charge of the western part of the country. The mistake made by the chronicle was because he was in overall command of the Gorkhali army when the Chinese intervened on behalf of Tibet immediately after. The Gorkhalis 'spread all over the country', the account continues, 'prying into every creek and corner of Sikkim, they sent parties to pry and prowl about all the valleys of the river Tista and its tributaries... they proceeded to take possession of every Jong (fort) and monastery which they stripped of their properties and administrative powers'.†

Bhutan had sent some financial help to the Sikkim king who had

* He was probably Jahar Singh, the son of renowned Gorkhali commander Kehar Singh Basnet.

† Describing his visit to Pemiongchi, 'once the capital of Sikkim', in January 1849, Hooker noted that 'the Gorkhas plundered Tassiding, Pemiongchi, Changchelling, and all the other temples and convents to the west' of the Tista. It was then, he says, the famous history of Sikkim, compiled by the lamas of Pemiongchi, and kept at this temple, was destroyed, *Himalayan Journals*, I, pp. 309-10.

taken shelter near its border. The Gorkhali army of '6000 men, of whom 2000 were regulars' met no opposition till it reached Rabdantse. However, despite the opposition it met there the army laid siege to Rabdantse. Though the Sikkimese account says that Bhutan helped only by sending food and money, Hamilton¹⁰⁶ states that it was with the help of Bhutan that Sikkim forced the Gorkhalis to lift the siege. However, the Bhutanese retired soon because 'they were 'allowed no pay, and the country was too poor to admit of plunder'. 'By a letter of Pagan', Hamilton adds, 'this would appear to have happened before the 29th March, 1789', a date close to 'the tenth day of the first month'* if the year Sa-ji (Earth-hen) 1789 and not Chag-ji (Iron-hen or 1780), is accepted. On the return of the Bhutanese 'the greater part of the people of Sikkim submitted to the Gorkhalis'.

The Sikkimese, however, continued to resist the Gorkhalis under the leadership of a Lepcha commander, Chogthup (Chhothup) †, popularly known as Satrajit for the seventeen (*satra*) victories (*jit*) he is said to have won over them. The sobriquet is reminiscent of the name, Strajit, of the Mughal *thandar* of Pandu in Assam who was defeated by the Ahoms c. 1636.¹⁰⁷ The son of an old Lepcha minister Karwang, Chogthup could have defeated the Gorkhalis in skirmishes here and there after retiring to a stronghold situated between the two branches of the Tista. 'This place,' observed Hamilton in 1802-03, 'called Gandhauk (Gangtok), has annexed to it a territory of considerable extent, and affords the Rajah a revenue of about 7000 rupees a year, which is all that he possesses'.¹⁰⁸ While Chogthup led troops and annoyed the Gorkhalis, his brother Namgyal ('Nam-si' or 'Lamjit of the Bengalese', Hamilton) defended the new capital and looked after the administration. The king was absent since 1789 when he went to Lhasa seeking help, he died there in 1793. Tibet did not give any significant help. The Sikkim chronicle blames Chogthup and Zomgyal, his younger brother, for misleading Tibet with a story about the successful expulsion of the Gorkhalis from Sikkim just before a Tibetan force could be despatched.

A column of the Gorkhalis had penetrated as far as Chongtong ‡ (Chungthung). Its commander was probably Subedar Jayanta Khatri ('Genti Khatree' of English documents and 'Jang Khater' of the Sikkim chronicle). The first-hand observations of Hamilton, often

* The Tibetan Lhosar or New Year usually falls in the second half of February or early March.

† Hamilton gives the name as 'Yuk-su-thuck'. Yuk appears to be a title used by many of his Karwang family. Su-thuck, therefore, is nothing but Chogthup.

‡ Now the Chongtong or Chungthung, a tea garden in Darjeeling.

confirmed by other contemporary documents, give a clear picture of the administration of the region conquered up to the Tista. The far eastern part of Kirat was formed into a district, and the Subba resided at its headquarter in Chainpur. The subdued parts of Sikkim were placed with certain changes under his military jurisdiction.

The Gorkhalis in Sikkim were stationed at Darjeeling and Nagari * (called Sam-dung by Hamilton, but shown as a different place to the west of Nagari in an old map). Hamilton wrote that beyond Nagari and Sa-tang (Sitong) 'one day's journey' away was Darjeeling, 'on the other side of the high mountains, which would appear to be the chief fortress of the country, as it is there that the Gorkhalese troops are mostly stationed'.¹⁰⁹ 'From thence to Sikkim,' he says, 'is six days' journey'. Sikkim probably stood for Gangtok.

Besides Darjeeling the other important Gorkha military stronghold was Nagari, the headquarters of Jayanta Khatri, a place on a hill at the source of the 'Balakongyar' or Balasan. In old documents, it is mentioned with Nagarkot as an important pass between Bhutan and Nepal. The pass of Nagarkot led from Morang into the hills. Nagari was to become the eastern site of the Anglo-Nepal war in 1815.

The Lepcha inhabitants of the subjugated part of Sikkim did not reconcile with Gorkhali rule. They were so troublesome that the Gorkhalis judged it prudent to give them or else allow them to retain their own governor or collector. The Lepcha 'Yu-kang-ta, called Angriya Gabur by the Bengalese, a nephew' of Chogthup, according to Hamilton, was Yug Konga, a younger brother of the gallant Lepcha commander. The name occurs as Ekunda or Yekunda in contemporary Nepali records.

The revenue of the lowland *terai* was collected by *chaudhuris*. This consisted of portions of agricultural produce and customs collected at border passes. Chainpur had a considerable trade with Tibet through that part of the land near the Arun. Otherwise the land tenure was 'very trifling, the whole almost being held by military tenure'.¹¹⁰ In 1808 Hamilton found the whole civil government of the occupied Sikkim under Yug Konga who had agreed to pay annually a fixed sum as tribute. 'The Subah of Chayenpore was,' Hamilton says, 'in military authority over him' or Yug Konga, and there were Gorkhalese troops at Sikkim (Rabdantse?) and Darjeeling, the two chief places in the district'.¹¹¹ Confirming this the Nepali account on a copper plate grant by Nepal to

* Also spelt Nagri. The name is said to have been derived from Lepcha words *nak* = straight and *gri* = high stockade. Nagari is now a sprawling tea estate in Darjeeling.

Konga or 'Ekunda Kazi' empowered him to collect revenue in the land east of Mechi.

The grant authorized the Lepcha collector to 'keep six annas out of sixteen collected as his commission and deposit ten annas at the Ilam camp'¹¹² under Chainpur. In the summary of the voluminous correspondence regarding disputes over the boundaries between Nepal and Sikkim during 1833 and 1837, prepared by Captain R.B. Pemberton, 'Eklatuf Subha' (Yug Lhathup, the son of Yug Konga) is found deposing for Nepal saying that he was 'formerly the *tahsildar* in hills for that part lying between the Rivers Konki (Kankai) and Mechee, the collections were paid at Chayenpore' and 'Ekoonda Kajee was Zamindar and paid 10 annas in the Rupee to Jayanta Khatri for the troops'.¹¹³ There are also accounts of the deposition of a Lepcha ('when he was six years old the Gorkhas took possession of Sikkim') and his octogenarian father, 'Jungmo', who had collected the revenue from the ryots on behalf of the Lepcha administrator and paid the revenue to 'Jynteah Kuttri of Nagree'. Another Lepcha witness had seen, when he was young, 'Jungmo bring paddy as tribute to Jynteah Kuttri of Nagree'.¹¹⁴

Although the Lepcha collector's residence at Nagari is described as 'a very large building, with several stories, and it was represented to Mr. Monro as a fort of some strength', Hamilton still doubted both accounts because he had learnt that it was 'roofed only with thatch'.¹¹⁵ The administration was run with the consent of the Gorkhali officer. As a British document of 1846 relates, the orders passed then 'invariably had the joint seal of the Sikkim Rajah's Dewan and the Gorkha Subah at Nagree'.¹¹⁶

The Gorkhali hold over the whole eastern region was shaken in 1791. In the 1788 spree of conquests Nepal had imposed a treaty on Tibet (2 June 1789) wanting it to 'circulate the coins minted by the Gorkhali king' at the exchange rate of 'one Gorkhali *mohar* to two *mohars* already in circulation'. Tibet was also required to pay an indemnity of Rs. 50,001.¹¹⁷

In 1791 Nepal renewed its war with Tibet, the non-payment of the stipulated amount of indemnity serving as the *casus belli* this time. The Gorkhalis advanced to take Shigatse and plundered the rich monastery of Tashilumpo. On the strength of promises of friendship offered by the British emissaries, Bogle and then Turner, Tibet had previously appealed to the British. However Lord Cornwallis could not intervene for various reasons.¹¹⁸ Tibet then turned to China, and Chien Lung, the Manchu Emperor, sent a vast army to drive the Gorkhalis out.

It was feared that the Gorkha army might invade Tibet through Sikkim, thus Chogthup (Satrajit) was sent to the most assailable places

on the frontiers. The Chinese Amban in Tibet required 'the most zealous co-operation and active service' of Sikkim and promised Chogthup that in exchange for his satisfactory services he would get suitable recognition and 'the grant of buttons and peacock feathers with rewards and titles'.¹¹⁹ The Chinese circulated an order which said, 'As we intend to proceed to the Gorkha Raj and lay it in ruins, so you the Sikkimites and Tsongs (Limbus) must also render every assistance to the best of your abilities. You will have to come to the Gorkha country to join the troops under the Tungthangs. Vast tracts of territories will be conquered, and foes shall be slain in countless numbers, and their countries ravaged. You will retain possession of as much land as you have conquered...small though your forces be, you must do your utmost for your future good and peace'. A small Tibetan force from Shekar Dzong in Tibet 'drove the Gorkhals out of it', says a Tibetan scholar.¹²⁰ Eastern Nepal and Sikkim were in a great turmoil from 1791 till Nepal made peace with China the following year.

The fragility of the unification of Nepal was proved when the news of the Chinese advance caused Kirat to revolt against the Gorkhals. According to the Sikkim account the Chinese officer wrote to Chogthup as well as to the Tsongs (Limbus), Ashadeva, Dzarshamookhs, and Shonahang * saying that though the Tsong had reported to him about their advance and the encounter with the Gorkhals, they had been compelled to retreat when their ammunition was exhausted. 'To the Tsong force (Limbu, Jimdars, Magars), he sent a supply, 100 measures of gunpowder, and 500 of lead'. The magnitude of the rebellion is described in Nepali documents and this tallies with the Sikkimese accounts.

Risley's account deals with the expulsion of the Gorkhals and the Sikkimese penetration as far as Chainpur in 1787. Chemjong's account mentions the people involved in the Chainpur battle in 1776. However all this actually relates to the events and personages of 1791-92.

Ranabahadur Shah, the king of Nepal, in his letters of 1792 to the feudatory kings of Jajarkot and other places, informed them about the Chinese and Tibetan advance up to Sikkim, Chainpur and Vijaypur. He further added that they had incited the Lepchas and Limbus to revolt by paying them. They had 'taken Chainpur and a few other places' with a force of five to seven thousand.¹²¹ The Chinese manoeuvre to take Chainpur which lay twenty-six miles south of Ritak

* The Limbu chronicle, cited above, lists the names of a few important Kirat chiefs or *Hangs*. It includes Ashadeva Rai as the chief of Chhathar, Harshamukhi Rai of Chainpur and Sunuhang Rai of the Arun.

on the road to Shigatse, was to close the Tibetan approach. The Bhutea or Tibetan leader, whose name is given as Depchang Rinzing by Chemjong (in 1776) was really Deba Tsang Rinzing. However, the real fighting was done by the Sikkimese under Chogthup. The Tibetans crossed the Arun in the north, Chogthup is reported to have killed two Tsong chiefs on the Gorkha side.

According to Nepali sources, Purnananda Upadhyaya, the Subba of Vijaypur, fought with two companies of soldiers, and 'about five hundred of the enemies including seven Tibetan *sardars*' were killed in the fort of Siddhipur. King Ranabahadur wrote to Jajarkot, 'the news of the total casualty figure have not reached so far... but this time also two of the kazis named Karwang have been killed and also other high ranking officers who have not yet been identified'.¹²² Some of the brothers of Chogthup—he had seventeen—might have been killed, though he himself was not. The most important casualty was 'Deba Tsang Rinzing...leader of the Bhutea force'. The Sikkim source throws light on this loss which 'disheartened the men so much that they got dispersed and scattered'.

The Sikkimese army failed and the rebellion in Kirat was suppressed with severity. A bilingual Sanskrit-Nepali inscription at Chainpur claims that the descendants of 'Bakhatvarsimha Basnet, the youngest son of Keharsimha Basnet, who...in the year 1848 samvat (1791) had suppressed the rebellion of Pallo Kirat in the east, who with the company of his soldiers fought and defeated the enemies at Siddhipur',¹²³ had made a reservoir there to meet the scarcity of water. When the harshness proved to be counter-productive, Nepal began to follow a somewhat conciliatory policy towards the Kirat Rais and Limbus. Punishments had resulted in emigrations and the depopulation of villages. Chemjong quotes a Limbu manuscript to show that severe punishments meted out to some chiefs caused the emigration of thirty-two thousand Limbus in three groups, one to Sikkim, and the other two to Bhutan and Assam.¹²⁴

The policy of appeasement began as early as 1794. A royal order of the year to one Sambahang Namhang Rai reads thus, 'Your people rose against us when the Chinese came and were killed and injured. For the rebellion, you have been punished and forgiven... We confirm your ownership of your ancestral land'.¹²⁵ An order of 1794 to Nabha Rai says, 'We had confirmed your possession of your ancestral land in past also. Meanwhile you rioted and plundered and did what you should not have done under the pressure of the Sikkim Bhutias. Yet we forgive you and order you to come back and settle down in your land'.¹²⁶ An order of 1804 confirming the Subba-ship of Phedap to Asahang records that his ancestors had held the post since the time

of Makwanis.¹²⁷ The name of Asahang occurs as that of a chief to whom an appeal had been made by the Chinese. As late as 1827 the Kirats like Igumba Rai, Yochhupya Rai and Gunajit Rai were being asked by Nepal to come back and settle down in the lands enjoyed by their forefathers. They are recorded to have left the country 'at the time of invasion' and were being forgiven for 'all the blood-shed of the past'.¹²⁸

The Chinese only incited the Kirats and made no moves in the east. The main force was that of Sikkim itself. The Tibetan indifference to Sikkim became clear after the war when the treaty was made. Regarding the main operations between China and Nepal, it suffices to say that accounts vary according to which side has the telling of it. The Chinese faced hard resistance but they had vastly superior numbers and, when in September 1792, they were only a few miles away from Kathmandu, Nepal sued for peace.

Tibet got an assurance that the Tashilumpo property would be restored and an agreement was made for demarcating the Nepal-Tibet boundary. Sikkim was not represented at the negotiation, and Tibet refused to listen to its pleas 'on the ground that though Bhutan had helped Tibet, the Sikkimese had not'.¹²⁹ The Nepal-Sikkim boundary was drawn further back to the left bank of the Tista. This, according to Sikkim history, was due to the absence of Sikkim, the indifference of Tibet and misrepresentations made by Nepal. The Chinese general merely assured Sikkim that 'it had been arranged and settled that his original territories would be restored to him' but that 'the details had not been entered into'. Sikkim made two representations to Tibet (the copies of which were reported to be extant) that in spite of the assurances of the restoration of the original boundaries of Sikkim, 'the Gorkhas' has 'again sent raiding parties into Sikkim' and not fixed boundary anew as ordered'. As a matter of fact, Sikkim not only lost most of its territory to Nepal, but Tibet also pushed down its boundary up to the Chola-Jelep range.

The boundary of Nepal in the east remained extended up to the Tista both in the hills and the plains. 'For some years,' Risley says, 'Pemiongchi and all the south Tista tract paid rent to Nepal, until in 1815 the Nepalese were compelled by the British Government'.¹³⁰ The infant Sikkim ruler,* after his return from Tibet, remained the ruler only of a small tract to the east of the Tista with his capital at Gangtok. Thus, in the first decade of the nineteenth century, an area much larger than the present kingdom emerged as Nepal. This larger area, often referred to as 'Greater Nepal', extended for thirteen hundred miles from the Satlaj in the west to the Tista in the east.

* gTsong-Phud rNam-rGyal (Chhugpu Namgyal), r. 1793-1861.

Nepal's ambition to establish any sort of political or economic hegemony over Tibet was checked in 1792. On the contrary, the action of Nepal greatly augmented the Chinese power in Tibet. It was a decisive blow to the policy so earnestly followed by Prithvinarayan; and at the same time it was a blow to the policy of the British, pursued with equal eagerness since Warren Hastings' governorship. The English Company, when approached both by Nepal and Tibet, had tried to mediate by sending Colonel Kirkpatrick in 1792, but the move came too late. The commercial treaty made that year between Nepal and the Company was the only access for Indian traders and British goods to Tibet. When Abdul Kadir Khan, a merchant sent by the Company to examine the prospect of trade with Tibet through Nepal, came to the conclusion that it was bright, John Shore, the Governor, wondered whether it would have been better for the Company if the Chinese had occupied the whole of Nepal in 1792 and driven out the Gorkhalis since they had previously ousted the Newar Rajas. The Company took advantage of the political change resulting from the exile of Ranabahadur Shah in Benares, and induced the rulers of Nepal to accept a British Resident at Kathmandu. The Treaty of 1801 was not welcome to many in Nepal and was regarded as an imposition. Captain Knox, therefore, achieved nothing during his stay at Kathmandu from 1801 to 1803. On the contrary Anglo-Nepal relations became strained and the treaty of 1801 was dissolved. Lord Wellesley hoped that the Company could in future avoid having anything to do with Nepal.¹³¹

Checked in the north by China, the directions in which Nepal could expand were the west, south and east. Having reached the Satlaj in the west it could not go beyond because of the rise of the Sikh power under Ranjit Singh. In the south the dominions of Nepal and the British were coterminous along the plains to an extent of thirteen hundred miles, and quarrels concerning boundaries were inevitable. There were charges and counter-charges of encroachments. Not only was the border between the two dominions ill-defined, but in some cases the hill rajas, ousted by the Gorkhalis, and though not the proprietors of their lowland tracts regarded themselves as tenants of the Nawabs of Bengal and Oudh. But the terai was of vital importance for Nepal as its revenue formed the major share of land income. Without going into the merits of the case presented by both,¹³² it would suffice to note here that Bhimsen Thapa, who had risen as the Prime Minister and wielded *de facto* power, was trying to combine different Indian rulers by sending envoys to them.¹³³ Hence Lord Hastings' 'policy was motivated principally by a sincere fear that unless the British acted first, the native states would combine and drive the Company from India. Only paramountcy could preempt destruction. This way of

thinking made it impossible for Hastings to treat the Nepalese encroachments as mere isolated border incidents'.¹³⁴ Thus the Marquis of Hastings declared war on Nepal in 1814.

Sikkim in the east, much truncated in size and left in the lurch by Tibet, had to fend for itself. After some friendly communication with the British the Sikkim court applied to the British for 'a force to help it in driving out the Gorkhas'. The war between the British and Nepal was imminent. Probably with knowledge of the Sikkimese appeal to the British, Nepal in 1813 asked China 'for military aid against the Sikkimese, who... were proving contumacious'.¹³⁵ Nepal's action, in view of the war of 1791-92, was to find out the reaction of China in case of a fresh invasion of Sikkim. But China itself was much perturbed by the expansion of the British empire in India. The Sikkim chronicle refers to four letters sent then by China. One of them told Sikkim that a Tibetan force had always been stationed at Phari. It was now being thought desirable to station troops both at Phari and Gyantse, 'with no other innovations or alterations in view, but the convenience of making enquiries into the movement of Ferangis', and Sikkim was 'not to entertain any fears on that score'.

At the juncture, in its search for trade routes to Tibet, the Company was thinking about the option that Sikkim could offer because of the matrimonial and religious affinities it had with Tibet and that it could also be a bulwark against the possible Nepal-Bhutan alliance against the British.¹³⁶ Accordingly, Captain Barre Latter of the Rangpur Local Battalion, stationed at Titaliya to the south of Siliguri, was instructed to establish contacts with Sikkim.¹³⁷ Latter succeeded in his endeavour. The Sikkim ruler, according to the chronicle, even sent the Chinese Amban's letters to the 'official Head Sahib of the Ferangis'.

When the war broke out between Nepal and the Company, the king of Nepal, Girvanayuddha appealed to Tibet for help. No material help came, but Tibet offered prayers for Nepal's success in the war.¹³⁸ Sikkim, a sufferer at Nepalese hands, was completely at variance in its attitude. It was not only Sikkim that solicited British help. Sikkim history claims that 'the Khambu chiefs, Yakhas and Ashogrambus having also entreated (the British) government for help, the Government at last sent a large force against the Gorkhas'. The British tried to incite rebellion among the Baisi-Chaubisi states; Captain Barre Latter, who was in command on the frontier east of the Kosi, was instructed to contact all the Kirats 'who it was anticipated would rush to aid the cause of their legitimate chief and the Company'. Many of Nepal's feudatories became restive specially when the ruler of Palpa was brutally put to death after his subjugation by Gorkha. A scholar of Nepal thinks that 'the disloyalty shown by a few feudatories' was a factor contributing to the cause of Nepal's defeat¹³⁹ in 1815.

Though the Sikkim account refers to the Kirat chiefs' entreaty to the British, there was probably only a feeble stirring in Eastern Nepal in support of the Company compared to what had happened during the Sino-Nepal war in 1792. The attempts of the surviving Sena pretenders to the throne of Makwanpur, Chaudandi and Vijaypur to raise a force of the Kirats failed miserably. Most of the other exiled hill chiefs also remained ineffectual. Scott, the Magistrate of Rangpur, negotiated with Sikkim but failed to win over the Kirats.¹⁴⁰ The policy of conciliation that Nepal had followed towards the Kirats after the war of 1792 seems to have paid dividends.

Sikkim joined the British and requested for gunpowder and flints. The joint move of the Company and Sikkim was to dislodge Jayanta Khatri from Nagari. A letter from Sarovarsingh Rana to Bhimsen Thapa, written before the war, informs that 'so far negotiations with the Firangis in the south have failed. There is a possibility of war... In case a war broke out in the plains there would be much trouble in the east. Subedar Jayanta writes that the Gangtokians (people at Gangtok) seem bent upon creating trouble even at this stage.'¹⁴¹ A royal order to a Subba Balabhadra admonishes him for his failure to go to Karfok near Ilam on the plea that he could not enlist soldiers. In many places there was no strong regular force and that the newly conquered parts in the east showed some signs of restiveness is made evident by the order. It adds, 'Jayanta Khatri has written from Nagri that despite our orders none has gone to Karfok. He says that the Lepchas (Sikkim) have become restive and any delay on your part may cause irreparable damage'.¹⁴²

Nagari withstood the joint assault of the British and the Sikkimese. According to the Sikkim account, 'by means of stratagem the Gorkhas were dislodged'. A letter from Gajendra Karki and the Lepcha chief Ekunda (Konga) from Nagari indicates that about six thousand *ryots* had revolted and the disruption in movement was caused by the destruction of bridges.¹⁴³ But Jayanta Khatri and his men were never dislodged. One of the terms* of the Sugauli treaty signed by the British and Nepal after the war clearly indicates this.

When the war ended with the capitulation of Nepal, the Sikkim ruler thanked the British and requested 'that the boundary between Sikkim and the Gorkha territory be laid at Timar Chorten (the Tamar river) if possible, but the best would be 'the Arun river, and the least

* Article 3, clause 5, which gave all the territories within the hills eastward of the Mechi 'including the fort and lands of Nagree and the Pass of Nagarcote leading from Morang into the hills' also enjoined that 'the aforesaid territory shall be evacuated by the Gorkha troops within forty days'.

of all Milighu, Dhankote as middle, Shadijong, down to the Kannika Tarai... All the country east of these are Sikkim territory, and I pray', he implored, that 'these may be restored to Sikkim'. In other words, Sikkim claimed not only the territory east of the Singalila range but also a large part of Eastern Nepal. The Sikkimese are said to have even crossed the Mechi and 'occupied the abandoned Gorkha posts at Ilam and Phae'.¹⁴⁴ However this claim is undoubtedly an exaggeration, because neither Nagari nor Ilam had been abandoned by the Gorkhalis.

The British felt that the richest part of Nepal, and the part which furnished it with sinews of war, was the lush *terai*, hence its cessation was made the first condition of the truce. By the treaty of Sugauli, accepted on March 4, 1816,¹⁴⁵ Nepal ceded most of the *terai* it possessed. In accordance with the British policy 'to restore the ancient chiefs in all cases in which special reasons did not exist against it', the annexed hill states west of the Mahakali river, except Kumaon were restored. All the territories within the hills eastward of the river Mechi, 'including the lands of Nagree and the Pass of Nagarcote leading from Morung into the hills, together with the territory lying between that pass and Nagree' were ceded to the Company 'in perpetuity'. The treaty laid down that 'the aforesaid territory shall be evacuated by the Gorkha troops within forty days'. Jayanta Khatri had to move out of Nagari; he went to Ilam.

Sikkim was given its old hill territories east of the Mechi river. The size of Nepal was reduced but Sikkim did not get all that it had asked for. The territory lying between the Mechi and the Tista* was restored to Sikkim by a separate treaty signed at Titalia between Sikkim and the Company on February 10, 1817. The treaty also stipulated that Sikkim would submit to the arbitration of the Company any dispute with Nepal and other neighbouring countries.¹⁴⁶ The treaty thus established a complete British influence in Sikkim. For the first time the British acquired the right to trade up to the Tibetan frontier. But the more significant effect was the decision 'to shut out the Nepalese from any ambitious views of aggrandizement to the east, and to circumscribe their territory on three sides while on the fourth, the stupendous range of the Heemalaya and the Chinese frontier present an effectual barrier'.¹⁴⁷ Prithvinarayan had compared Nepal with a 'tuber between two boulders', and both in 1792 and 1816, the two boulders proved adamant enough to be unyielding to the tuber's zeal to expand.

* The territory which now forms Darjeeling, Kurseong and Siliguri sub-divisions of the Darjeeling district.

Yet in view of the dynamics of Gorkhali expansion it would be illogical to presume that Nepal could give up scheming for further conquests. Nepal still hoped to drive towards the east. A conglomeration of kingdoms lay there and Nepal could consider itself strong enough at least to conquer them. Nepali documents of the period show that Nepal kept itself well informed about the developments in almost all the states in the Indian sub-continent. In 1798-99, for example, it knew about Napoleon's discomfiture in Egypt, Tipu's defeat in Mysore, and developments in Lahore and other courts. It always kept a watchful eye on the British and, at the height of its expansionist career, it had agents working stealthily for the conquest of Assam,¹⁴⁸ not yet conquered by the British then. Nepal also did not give up the hope of occupying Sikkim and Bhutan.

Nepal was presented with an opportunity to exploit the internal feuds in Sikkim and serve its designs once more immediately after the treaty of Titalia. Sikkim suffered from chronic internal feuds. The rebellion of the Limbus or 'the *paharis* or Tsong community' in the middle of the eighteenth century had been put down by 'Satrajit' Chogthup's father, Karwang, the Lepcha minister. The rebellion was the result of the Limbu chiefs being deprived of their traditional privileges. The Sikkim chronicle talks about their fastidiousness 'about certain customs recognizing their privileges and status'. The rebel chiefs had been given their privileges and 'for a while the land enjoyed peace'.

More serious in nature was the recurrent conflicts between the Lepchas and Bhuteas. When the powerful Bhutea or Tibetan minister Tamding had refused to recognize the posthumous infant of Gyurmed and captured power, he was opposed by the Lepcha faction under Karwang. The 'Mangsher Duma' had apportioned powers to the Lepchas and Bhuteas and established peace. But the amity was not destined to last for ever. The Bhutea camp, jealous of the achievements and the rising power of the Lepcha Karwang family, procured the murder of Bolod, a scion of the family, under the king's instruction in 1826. The Lepcha chiefs 'left Sikkim taking with them about eight hundred houses of Lepcha subjects' and went to Ilam seeking Nepalese help. Thus began the 'Kotapa insurrection' which was again to cost Sikkim dearly.

The Kotapa insurrection was not a brief affair. Jayanta Khatri, who had by then retired to Ilam, wrote in 1826 about the 'slaughter of Limbus, Lepchas and other old subjects by Bhuteas in Sikkim and a delegation of five' that went to meet him seeking help. The British had withdrawn to the plains in turmoil and were stationed at Phasidewa with two cannons, the Lepchas were insisting that it was the time to take action in Sikkim.¹⁴⁹

Moreover, a border dispute arose between Sikkim and Nepal, and Sikkim referred the matter, in accordance with the treaty of Titalia, to the Company: the two issues were intricately related.

It was to investigate this dispute that Lord William Bentinck deputed Captain G.W. Lloyd and G.W. Grant in 1828. They penetrated into the hills and came up to 'the old Gorkha station of Dorjiling' where Lloyd spent six days in February 1829. They were charmed by the site and recommended to the Governor-General that Darjeeling would make an ideal health resort for European soldiers. Accordingly, in 1829 they were instructed to visit Sikkim once more, accompanied by a surveyor, Captain Herbert, to examine the full possibilities offered by the place. They remained at Darjeeling, then deserted by the Lepchas, for sometime. Their findings suggested to the government that the place would not only make an ideal health resort but that its possession would confer 'considerable political benefits' on the Company. The British then decided to carry the measure into effect.¹⁵⁰

When the Englishmen decided to visit Sikkim (1831) to talk about the Kotapas and 'not to take any portion' of their land, the king agreed because he wanted the restoration of the 'original boundary' claiming that the Yakha and Khambu tribes or Kirats were under him. His complaint was that 'the Magar named Dzin Khatri' or Jayanta Khatri had induced the rebel Lepchas to follow him to Ilam, and the Lepchas had made Nagari their stronghold.

A letter of 1833 from Ilam supplements the information about the united fight that the Lepchas gave the Bhuteas. There was also a rumour that all the Lepchas would leave for 'Dharma's country' (Bhutan).¹⁵¹ The inducement sent by Sikkim to the Lepchas in Ilam proved only a ruse to capture them.¹⁵² If Sikkim appealed to China and Tibet to open negotiations with Nepal for the extradition of the Lepcha rebels, then the rebels sought British support. Sikkim lamented that 'the Kotapa rebels, who claimed Darjeeling as their patrimonial land, had made a voluntary gift of it 'to the British in the hope of gaining their sympathy'.

The British regarded the Lepcha insurrection and their asylum in Nepal as 'a matter of indifference to the British government',¹⁵³ and called the Lepchas 'Rebels headed by a Traitor'.¹⁵⁴ They were going to intervene only if a dispute arose between Nepal and Sikkim.

Along with the border investigations between Sikkim and Nepal the British officers, however, continued to pursue the subject of obtaining Darjeeling from Sikkim ostensibly for the purpose of making it a health resort for the Europeans. In actuality they realized that it was an ideal place to keep an eye on Sikkim and Nepal with a hope that if

a road was built there, the people of Sikkim would open traffic not only with Darjeeling but also 'between Bengal and Chinese Tartary'.¹⁵⁵

Sikkim's cession of Darjeeling to the British in 1835 and the establishment of a strong British station there acted as an impediment to Nepal's desire to march eastward after 1816. Sikkim was unhappy because the British had failed to fulfil the conditions in exchange which led to further trouble and the subsequent annexation of more Sikkimese territory in the hills and plains (modern Siliguri). Thus the British further consolidated their position in 1850. Darjeeling not only served a strategic purpose, but the Lepchas, who had taken refuge in Nepal, returned to live there under British protection.¹⁵⁶ Sikkim then sent a mission to the Nepal Darbar for some unknown reason. The Government of India instructed Campbell, the Superintendent of Darjeeling, to 'watch the course of this correspondence with Nepal',¹⁵⁷ since it had not given up the desire to expand and its army was becoming restive.

A mission from Nepal went to 'the land of Dharma (Bhutan) through the Sikkim road of Nangelucha, Darjeeling, Simpali, Tista and the plains of Dalimkot'. Its report contains information about happenings in Sikkim, the beginning of the British settlement in Darjeeling, and the Lepcha acceptance of employment under the British. It then goes on to narrate the displeasure of Ilam Singh, a Limbu minister of Sikkim at this, and the discord between Bhutan and the Englishmen who had gone there to hunt with their womenfolk.¹⁵⁸ The British were equally watchful. Lloyd, on special duty in the North-east Frontier, reported 'the intelligence obtained relating to the movements of a Nepal mission composed of two native officers and twenty sepoy, who have proceeded via Nagra Gurree and the Morung into Bootan'. The government instructed him to be 'watchful and diligent in observing these intrigues and seeking information' but not to make 'such proceedings ground of any overt act' as 'the government must decide when and how to deal with the missionaries of a state like Nepal, and the manner in which to notice the conduct of the Court in sending them'.¹⁵⁹

The ostensible object of these missions was to organize a league of Himalayan states against the British. When the emissaries from Nepal returned to Kathmandu, in late July 1839, Hodgson, the British Resident at Kathmandu, reported that when stopped at the frontier of Bhutan by the 'Subah' where the purpose of the mission was asked, he was told that 'the Nepal Raja had heard with concern of the insurrection against the old Deb (the Deb Raja of Bhutan); that this rebellion was instigated by the Company; that Nepal was ready to assist the old Deb with soldiers or small arms or cannon; and that the Deb

had only to point out how the assistance could be best rendered and a league offensive and defensive be formed against the arts and power of the Company'. The Bhutanese frontier officer was instructed to tell the Nepal mission 'that cannons were the chief want of the Deb and that if Nepal could not supply cannons the next best thing would be artifices to cast and make them in Deb Dharma (Bhutan)'. Nepal proposed a fresh mission with a few pieces of artillery if Tibet permitted their transport through its territory because 'the interposition of Sikkim' rendered the command of the Sikkim route to Bhutan impossible. Nepal had thought of cajoling 'the Tibetan authorities by an offer of its troops to assist in their affairs also and to help to put down an insurrection that had recently broken out in the province of Poonie (?)'.¹⁶⁰ Nepal's real motive behind the armed assistance lent to Bhutan was to conquer it, and probably Sikkim on the way. In his letter to the Government of India in September 1839, Hodgson reported 'that this (Nepal) Durbar a few days back and in the midst of protracted discussions with me suddenly sent to request passage for its troops through Sikkim for the conquest of Bhootan'. On inquiring 'if the Durbar had received any injury from Bhootan', the reply given to Hodgson was, 'none whatever' though 'it was the custom of Gorkha nation'. When the Resident pointed out that Sikkim was an independent State and she would 'never consent to yield you passage for such a purpose', the reply was, 'we care not a fig for Sikkim's consent: we want only yours'. He thus noted that 'the present application taken in connexion with the former one would seem to indicate the Nepal's desire of extending herself to eastward as an ever-present urgent motive with her, that she is prepared to defy the wrath of China for its gratification'.¹⁶¹

When Brian H. Hodgson was sent to Nepal as the Assistant Resident in 1824, a British civil servant William B. Bayley, the then Acting Governor General of India and also Chairman of the Court of Directors, had said that 'Nepal is in every sense peculiar, and in present quiet times you can learn little there. But we have had one fierce struggle with Nepal, and we shall yet have another. When that event occurs there will be very special need for local experience... Go... and master the subjects in all its phases'. Hodgson later said, 'I did as I was advised' and thus gained 'supreme knowledge of Nepalese affairs'.¹⁶² He intervened frequently in Nepalese politics that were marked by a struggle for supremacy between two major families of the nobility, the Thapas and the Pandes. The Thapas, responsible for concluding the peace in 1816, were identified with a moderate, though not entirely pacific, foreign policy. Bhimsen Thapa had obtained a retrocession of a part of the eastern terai from the Company and this tract in 1837

was 'the mine from which Nepal drew its chief net main resources'.¹⁶³ In 1816 Nepal had told the British that it would never consent to give up the terai. 'Take the terai and you will leave us without the means of subsistence',... 'for the hills without it are worth nothing'.¹⁶⁴ A large tract of the plains still remained under the British and the attitude of Nepal to the treaty of Sugauli remained one of sullen acquiescence. The Pandes, vehemently anti-British, sought a resumption of the wars of conquest to the south. Bhimsen Thapa maintained the ascendancy of his family and held office till 1837, trying to satiate the bellicosity of the Pandes, without being excessively provocative to the British. Rajendravikram Shah (1816-1846) did seldom rule and, as a result, there were continual plots and counter-plots within the ruling family. These conflicts became interlocked with the feud between the Thapas and the Pandes.

The ascendancy of the Thapa came to an end in 1837 when Bhimsen was toppled from power, 'seized, ironed and thrown into prison' where he was compelled to commit suicide two years later. With the rise of the war party of Pandes, Lord Auckland felt that, perhaps, a war with Nepal could not be staved off. In April 1840, many Gorkhali soldiers suddenly appeared at the great fair held in Ramnagar forest, eight miles within India. They forcibly levied market dues and told the inhabitants of ninety-one villages that the land, about 200 sq. miles in size, belonged to Nepal.¹⁶⁵ On 21 June, 1840 the six thousand strong army rose in revolt at a general parade at Kathmandu. There was an attempt to detain the Resident and the troops marched to the Residency. The king conveyed a message to his soldiers on 23 June, 'The British Government is powerful, abounding in wealth and in all other resources for war. I have kept well with the English so long, because I am unable to cope with them. Besides I am bound by a treaty of amity, and have now no excuse to break it; nor have I money to support a war. Troops I have, and arms and ammunition in plenty, but no money... I want treasure to fight the English. Take lower pay for a year or two, and when I have some money in hand, then I will throw off the mask and indulge you with war'. The reply given by the troops is quite revealing. They said, 'True, the English Government is great; but care the wild dogs of Nepal [Buansu (wolves)] how large is the herd they attack? They are sure to get their bellies filled. You want no money for making war; for the war shall support itself. We will plunder Lucknow and Patna... We will soon make the Ganges your boundary. Or if the English, as they say, are your friends and want peace, why do they keep possession of half of your dominions (Kumaon)? Let them restore Kumaon and Sikkim. These are yours, demand them back; and if they refuse, drive out the Resident, and let us have war'.¹⁶⁶ Hostile

preparations were made, arsenals became active; in the mutiny only the troops in and around the capital were engaged, but 'a census of the population fit to carry arms, i.e. between the ages of twelve and sixty, was made, and produced a return of four hundred thousand souls'. However, the actual increase then amounted only to nineteen thousand men.¹⁶⁷

The trouble died down for the time being, and Hodgson demanded the Nepal darbar to comply with his requirements that Nepal should relinquish the lands encroached, put a stop to all the secret intercourse with the allies of the British government including Lahore, and atone for the unprotected state in which the Residency was left during the mutiny of 21st June.¹⁶⁸ But the situation demanded a permanent solution. First, either Nepal had to be subjugated or else its government had to be made subservient enough to serve the colonial interests of Britain, and such government the British must do anything to prop up. Secondly, a full understanding of the nature of the state of Nepal demanded that there must be some outlet for the warlike people of the country. The important consequences that this led to are discussed in the next chapter.

Auckland informed Hodgson that there would be no hesitation regarding the movement of troops to the Nepal frontier.¹⁶⁹ He also asked the Resident to advise him whether the object of the anticipated war with Nepal should be 'the entire subjugation of the country, or the raising up of another Gorkha Government or administration'.¹⁷⁰

Because of its entanglement in Afghanistan, the British government could spare no troops for Nepal, hence it was deemed necessary to change the ministry by diplomacy.¹⁷¹ However, a day before the British government wrote to the Resident, he had already secured the desired change at Kathmandu. The Pande ministry was dismissed and a coalition ministry was formed on 3 November. Those persons who had 'disturbed the good understanding existing between the two governments' were dismissed.¹⁷² Eventually, the palace intrigues culminated in a bloody slaughter in 1846, called the 'Kot massacre'. Thus Jang Bahadur, nephew of Bhimsen Thapa and commander of a quarter of the armed forces, established his own predominance. The Rana regime that lasted till 1950 served its own purpose by playing second fiddle to the British imperialism. For services rendered to the British during the Indian Revolt of 1857 the districts lying between Nepal and Oudh, which were ceded to the British in 1816, were restored to Nepal.¹⁷³ Thus the kingdom assumed its present shape.

Except the war with Tibet during 1854-56, Nepal has never fought its own war since the treaty of Sugauli. The conquests of Gorkha came to a virtual end in 1816. But as noted earlier, there were strong forces

at work in Nepal which would not have allowed its army to remain idle for long and evidence establishes that Nepal's desire to extend eastward after 1816 lingered on for decades. However, other equally potent factors, both within and without, combined together finally to put a stop to the further expansion of Nepal. And in the course of these developments we find the emergence of a new country covering a physical radius that possessed diversities of various kinds.

Part Three

*SOME CONSEQUENCES OF THE
UNIFICATION*

Consequences and Conclusion

Behind the works of Prithvinarayan Shah, historians of Nepal generally read the noble ambition of unifying a 'nation'. Baburam Acharya, the doyen among them, held that Prithvinarayan did not work towards territorial expansion, instead 'his only motive was the unification of Nepal'.¹ The generally accepted view in Nepal echoed by others was that the king 'infused a feeling of nationalism into the minds and hearts of the Nepalese'.² Praising the character of Prithvinarayan, historians call any description of his harshness and cruelty an 'unjust allegation'. D.R. Regmi even says that though he 'annexed principalities after principalities' he did so 'by defeating their rulers', and that his was 'not a war of attrition directed against the people' because 'the people did rarely come into the picture in any sphere in those days'. His conclusion is that since Prithvinarayan fought the rulers 'the quarrel was an internecine one' and 'the fight...a sort of civil war'.³ That such views do not stand to reason in the light of the character of his conquests has already been proved, and needs no further comment.

Nepali historiography is still largely guided by the dictum 'history is the biography of great men'. Viewed from such an angle it could imply that the multitude need not come 'into the picture'. However, even a great man is a social being, defined by his social relations. Thus his public actions have historical antecedents and definite consequences. This is just to point out two of the connections that are involved in a social process without either denying his free will or depreciating his role in history. An appreciation of such connections is vital for our complete understanding. As E.H. Carr formulates it, 'the facts of history are indeed facts about individuals, but not about actions of individuals performed in isolation, and not about the motives, real or imaginary, from which individuals suppose themselves to have acted. They are facts about the social forces which produce from the actions

of individuals results often at variance with, and sometimes opposite to, the results which they themselves intended'.⁴

The concept of the national unification of Nepal is born of a hindsight view of Nepal history in modern times, a result of the country's growing sense of sovereignty. In the period under review, Nepal merely meant the Bagmati valley. The regions embraced by present day Nepal had never been grouped together in the past to form a country or nation. However, Nepali historians claim that Nepal conformed to its present shape in the ancient past. Various arguments, based on epigraphic and literary evidence, have been put forward in support.⁵ Yet the theory is not irrefutable. Even if accepted, it does not explain how the name Nepal could not stand for the whole physical realm through all the vicissitudes of its history. The valley kingdom could have enlarged itself to some extent at some point of time in the past, but it could never have conformed to its present shape. Was not the nomenclature 'Nepal' elastic enough to extend or shrink new dominions over which Gorkha gained or lost control after 1770? As late as 1968 Westerners were observing that some mountain tribes and villages were 'not aware that the nation of Nepal exists', the name designated for them was that of the Kathmandu valley.⁶ Did not Prithvinarayan himself mean the same by the name 'Nepal'? Folk memory in proverbs, sayings and songs carries the same meaning, nor does the village Nepal think differently in its usage of the name. As a matter of fact, the central power of the unified kingdom often described itself as 'Gorkha Raj' and by the word 'Gorkha' the subjugated areas of Western Nepal meant for long 'a government official'.

In modern times strong feelings of nationalism have created movements against foreign rule. Such movements have taken place for a positive, coherent, national identity, and national feelings have been generated by binding factors like common language, culture and the feeling of a shared past. Such was not the case with Nepal. It lacked such common bonds of nationality. Nepal was neither a nation in being, nor in hope. For instance, there can be no parallel between the cases of the national unifications of Italy or Germany and Nepal. Even when Germany was divided into congeries of petty political units, a sense of unity prevailed there because of common bonds of kinship, history, culture and language. Thus even before the birth of united Germany, von Stein could say, 'I have only one Fatherland and that is Germany... To Germany alone, and not to any part of it, I am devoted with my soul'. Unlike it, the conception of one Nepal was not there and more than half of its land mass was conquered in the post-Prithvinarayan era. There was no Stein in Nepal who could even wish it 'to be great and strong, in order to recover...its independence and nationality'. Indeed, none in Nepal could then say, 'My creed is unity'.⁷

How was the process of the unification of Nepal viewed by the actor and his contemporaries? In his *Divya Upadesh* Prithvinarayan described his dominion as 'a painfully acquired kingdom', and bequeathed counsels on how to maintain and run it. The *rajya*, or the territory that he conquered till his death in 1775, he described as 'a tuber between two boulders', that is, a buffer between India and China, and advised his men to keep friendly relations with both, cautioning them that 'the emperor of the South is sly'. This understanding made him hold up norms for a simple and austere court life. He was against the use of cloth imported from Muglan (India) and favoured the export of goods from the country against hard cash. His understanding of the geopolitical importance of his kingdom had the calculation of a politician, while his economic outlook was mercenary—its goal was to force the foreigner to buy more than he sold.⁸ This does not depict his conquests as motivated by a desire for national unification. However Prithvinarayan's words in a different context have often been misquoted now to show that his aim was the establishment of national unity. This quotation, torn out of context, reads thus, 'This is not only my little painfully acquired kingdom but a common garden of all castes (people)'. But the king's concern was different. In the original, the passage reads thus, 'if (my) soldiers and courtiers are not given to seeking pleasure, my sword can strike in all directions. If they are given to pleasure, this will not remain a kingdom acquired with no little pain by me, but (it will be) a common garden for all kinds (of people). If everyone is watchful, this will be a true Hindusthan (Hindu Land) of all higher and lower four castes (*jat*) and thirty-six varnas'.*

Leaving aside the implications of this policy of making his kingdom a real Hindu land for the time being, let us examine how the task of 'unification' was seen in a few extant contemporary writings. These works, in Sanskrit and Nepali, are filled with eulogies of the Kshatriya warrior-like qualities of the king. A few extant Nepali literary pieces of the period echo the heroic mood in narrating their hero's exploits. Raghunath Bhat, whom Prithvinarayan took with him from Benaras, uses a similar style in his only extant poem written in praise of Goddess Sakti, the Goddess of valour, power and energy. Similar in mood is the only poem of Subanandadas, a contemporary Newar writing in Nepali. Describing the military exploits of his hero, Prithvinarayan, he views the subjugation of different states as different items in the king's sumptuous supper. The items are described as the *sinki* (dried radish) of Nepal fried in the butter of Magrat with condiments like asafoetida

* It would have been more correct to say four *varnas* and thirty-six castes.

and cumin of Palpa, seasoned with the pungency of Rising, served with the rice of Tanahu and lentil of Bhirkot. The same idea is echoed in an old folk rhyme in which defeated states are referred to metonymically by their respective principal products. It describes him (Gorkha) as the wise who pulverized maize (Dolakha), held dried fish (terai or Makwanpur) in the fist, pressed *sinki* (the Nepal valley), broke the lump of salt (Kaski and Parbat through which salt came from Tibet), mowed down *kodo*, black millet (Western Nepal, especially from Dailekh to Kumaon), prepared curd (Dang) and set free (for grazing) his sheep (Kuti and Kerung from where sheep were imported; the passes which we surrendered to Tibet) for the great festival of *dasai* (*dasami* or Durga Puja).⁹

These descriptions suggest that the motive behind the conquests was economic exploitation of the subjugated principalities. Even at the cost of being repetitive, the facts examined clearly establish that it was not in a fit of irritation that Gorkha had launched its career of conquests, and that these conquests were not without objects. Prithvinarayan was not without precursors. To make itself economically viable, the small and poor Gorkha had tried to seize and control passes through which trans-Himalayan trade moved, and the desire to move eastward to control the entrepot trade of 'Nepal' was cherished for long. It took twenty-five years of unceasing, sustained effort before the Gorkhals could enter the Nepal valley. The effort was not made for its own sake. Rich in agriculture and manufacture, the valley had profitable trade in which monastic institutions of Tibet, families of Newar traders, Kashmiris and others participated. The fear of totally losing the profit accruing from this trade and the import of bullion in exchange and minted coins had made the valley kings of Nepal compromise with Gorkha¹⁰ as early as 1757. The Gorkhali agents in 1759 were found busy in the Tibetan border trying to organize a similar enterprise till the valley was occupied in 1769.¹¹

Prithvinarayan's mercantilist belief was in an accumulated stock of bullion as the index of his kingdom's wealth. Thus his policy was directed to attract as much of it as possible to his dominion. He tried to vie with the valley till it was reduced. For total control over the valley, his strategy was to control its passes. As a result its vital interests were hit. If there was a popular clamour for peace with Gorkha because of the attrition caused by the continuous blockade, the political élites, most of whom came from the class of traders, were ready to make overtures to Gorkha to safeguard their own interests. That explains why the actual takeover of the valley in 1768-69 was relatively easy and why it 'reads almost as an anti-climax'. Thus the policy of economic blockade by a strategically calculated campaign was successful.

Passes in Kirat and Sikkim were in closer proximity to Lhasa. Viewed in its natural historical setting the effort to get the best of Tibetan trade had a logical parallel in the process of political consolidation and further territorial aggrandizement. The Gangetic belt, especially in the east, was more fertile. The nature of the society and economy of the country as a whole was such that cultivable land played a significant role as an incentive to the army. Strategic considerations led to further conquest in the west—the Chaubi-Baisi as a deterrent force had to be done away with. Moreover, many of those principalities also controlled passes to Tibet, possessed mines and parts of the Gangetic plains. The Gorkha policy; therefore, was neither of a conquest *per se*, nor was it motivated by any nationalist consideration.

Mahesh Chandra Regmi, the eminent economic historian of Nepal, made a departure from the traditional historiography by locating economic factors in the process of the political unification. He showed that the underlying objectives of Prithvinarayan's conquest of Nepal were the control of the trade routes to Tibet and territory in the plains.¹² Regmi has had some impact in Nepal. Thus, Ludwig F. Stiller, writing his history at the Tribhuvan University of Nepal, accommodates economic consideration in his appreciation of Prithvinarayan's 'vision and leadership'.¹³ He has summed up his analysis of the unification as 'inspiration and economic incentive'.¹⁴

Other cardinal factors which need to be considered are the ethnic, religious, cultural, linguistic and economic diversity of Nepal. Moreover a study had also to be made on the method of solving this multitudinous diversity in unifying scores of politically independent entities into a kingdom and its consequences on different groups with their divergent allegiance. Though M.C. Regmi does not deem the classification of Nepal society purely from the ethnic view point as meaningful in a socio-economic study, his lines following this formulation are revealing. 'Nepali political history,' he says, 'had its central genesis in the midlands, whose inhabitants dominated the social, political and economic life of the country. Members of Nepal's political élite, the bureaucracy, and the army have traditionally come from these regions. Communities belonging to the eastern hill regions, the Himalayan regions, and the Tarai played scarcely any role in politics, the administration, or the army. They were important to the newly established Gorkhali state solely because of the role of their inhabitants as peasants, porters, artisans, and tax payers. Nepal's political élite, therefore, has traditionally belonged to the central and midlands'¹⁵

Thus, it may be concluded that the creation of a large Gorkhali state resulted in a conscious division of society between the rulers and the

ruled, subjugators and the conquered. But then, who among the people of the central and the midland regions constituted Nepal's political élite and the bureaucracy and occupied higher echelons in the army? Regmi goes on to say that this 'social and economic leadership was provided by Brahmans and Chhetris, the descendants of early immigrants from northern India and members of the local Khas community who had succeeded in elevating their caste and social status'.¹⁶ He, however, thinks that this 'over-simplified classification of Nepal society is not necessarily a disjunctive one' and that 'lack of opportunity should by no means be confused with ineligibility to play customary and traditional roles in the society'.¹⁷

It is essential to understand the formation of the 'Nepali society' and study some of the relevant social relations. Thus a close look at the contacts between the high caste plainsmen from India who infiltrated into Nepal as migrants and conquerors and the native hill tribes, mostly Mongoloids and speakers of Tibeto-Burman languages and dialects is required. Though the actual history of the Gorkha conquests and the consequent political unification of Nepal hardly covers a period of seventy years, a deeper understanding of the event and its consequences cannot be possible without locating the process itself within the broader movement of Nepal's history since early times.

Contact between the immigrants from India and hill tribes were more intense in the middle region, known as Pahar, which has remained the matrix of Nepal's history. The people of this zone, called Pahares or Pahariyas, culturally designated as the Nepalis and Gorkhas, are distinguished from the Mádheses or plainsmen of the terai and the Bhotas of the Himalayan region. For this study, the early Hindu immigrants from the plains of India to the Nepal valley provide the starting-point of our discussion. A close study of the history of Nepal reveals a general recurring pattern in different places at different points of time with only slight variations or differences in the degree of intensity.

As outlined in some detail above, the process of the formation of the Newar society in the valley started early with such contacts of its autochthons. The epigraphs of the Lichchavis, 'immigrants from outside', Indo-Aryan by speech and Hindu by religion, clearly establish the fact that with their supplanting of the Kirats, the Brahmanical domination was established in the valley. In the epigraphs we find mention of the Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Chandals, but this does not give a clear picture of the caste organization or how an adjustment was made with indigenous tribes. The new society grew up on the substructure of the Mongoloid and other tribes who were relegated to the status of the *sudras* as indicated by the case of Jyapus.

The caste system was better organized specially by those who subsequently moved from Mithila and established socio-political domination in the valley. Chandeshwar, the minister of Harisimha, who claimed to have conquered Nepal, was the leader of Smritic studies. Mithila, specially after its conquest by the Muslims, became the centre of a rigorous and orthodox Brahmanical conservatism. As one scholar puts it, 'The Mathils have been guided by the mint, anise and cumin of the Brahmanic Law in their everyday life'.¹⁸ The Vamsavalis claim that the Newar society was organized by Jayasthitimalla on the basis of the caste system and add, 'Though caste laws existed in the past, they got lost owing to neglect and disuse'. Jayasthiti is recorded to have invited five pundits from India to help him in the task and they drew from the Hindu law books a series of caste laws. The system thus established was based on a *varna* model, the Brahmans were Pancha Gauda and Pancha Dravida of Indian origin, the Kshatriyas were the conquerors and rulers of the kingdom. These later Mallas claimed descent from Nanyadev, an ancestor of Harisimha. The whole population was divided into sixty-four castes many of which bore the names of occupations, guilds and tribes. The Nepal valley presented the picture of a mini-nation till the Gorkha conquest.

A significant social consequence of the Gorkha conquest of the valley was the metamorphosis undergone by this miniature nation. With the establishment of the political domination of the high caste Parbates or the Brahman-Chhetris from the west, the Newar came to be regarded as a *jat* or caste in the emergent Nepali society. In the Newar society itself the domination of the Hindu plainsmen had been established long back, now the newcomers established their domination over the whole Newar society.

What we saw happening in the Nepal valley at a very early date recurred in Western Nepal at least around the fourteenth century. The next significant development in the history of Nepal came with the fourteenth century infiltration from the plains of India (perhaps, mostly from Rajasthan). In the west, the Khasas, regarded as a non-Brahmanical tribe speaking an Indo-Aryan language, were later Hinduized and absorbed into the Chhetri caste. The Parbates, not to be confused with the Pahares, the term used for all hillmen, meant the Brahmans, Rajputs, Khasas (Chhetris) and later constituted the two upper hierarchies of *varna* system in the Nepali society. Their caste system was peculiar in view of the absence of Vaisyas and Sudras but the existence of occupational castes like Damais (tailors), Kamis (ironsmiths), Sarkis (leather-workers), regarded as 'untouchable', hence outcastes outside the *varna* system.

With the eastward movement of the Parbates and the carving out of small principalities by them in the region populated by Mongoloid

tribes like Magars and Gurungs, these tribes also underwent a process of transformation. Gorkha itself was one such principality carved out by the Rajputs in Magrat. With the absorption into the Hindu fold of the Magars, and Gurungs to a lesser extent, there arose a double order. At the initial stage some of these tribes were assigned the status of Kshatriya which gave rise to many common clan names between the Chhetris and Magars, but later they were relegated to lower orders. As a consequence of the subjugation, these tribes were converted into castes. The Magar and Gurung communities were assimilated into the new political structure, 'but at lower and middle echelons of the army rather than as prospective claimants to political power'. Similarly this also occurred with regard to land-ownership.¹⁹

In the case of the Kirats or the Rai-Limbus of Eastern Nepal a similar change was brought about after the Gorkha conquest. The Kirats had adopted many outsiders in the course of their long history to form an institution like Chokphung Thim, conferring them with an equal status. There was no question of horizontal gradations. Like other tribes the Kirats were divided into septs or kindreds named after the places of their habitation or after their principal pursuits. During the period of Sena suzerainty they were not even considered to be a Hindu caste.

Except in the case of the Newars, both Buddhist and Hindu, who were graded into castes, the group cleavages in the multicultural Mongoloid society were vertical. The divisions were ethnic, religious, linguistic and tribal. The solitary change brought about by the conquests of Gorkha was the imposition of horizontal divisions based on caste hierarchy. What took place was a transformation of *jati*, tribe or nationality, to *jat* or caste. The Parbate castes were sub-divided into *thars* or *tharis*, usually translated as septs or clans but literally meaning sort, variety or kind. With the transformation of Mongoloid *jatis* into *jats* different sub-divisions within a *jati* or tribe came to be recognized as *thars*. For example, the Newar with its sixty-four castes, now formed one caste of Nepali society while its sixty-four sub-divisions were known as *thars*. All tribal sub-divisions of kindred groups were now described as *thars*. Just to give an illustration, the Magar has divisions like Rana, Thapa, Ale, and each has further sub-divisions. One source lists 134 of such *thars* or sub-groups of Thapa, 121 of Rana and 116 of Ale.²⁰ Thus, except for the occupational 'untouchable' castes, comprised of both the Parbate and Newar untouchables, the Nepali castes formed as a consequence of the Gorkha conquest were actually tribal and did not have an occupational basis. Thus the endogamous tribes became endogamous castes.

At times when sub-divisions of a Mongoloid tribe were also designated as *jats* or castes the picture grew more complex. The Tamangs

are divided into Bara (Twelve) and Athara (Eighteen) castes, Gurungs into Char (Four) and Sola (sixteen) castes subsuming the group having lower numerical denominations as higher in gradation. Even the Kirat Rai-Limbu groups were divided between Kashigotra and Lhasagotra, the group supposed to be of Indian origin being higher than the one of Tibetan origin. The introduction of *jat*, *thar* and *gotra* were innovations in the society of erstwhile non-Brahmanical tribes. Thus Kashigotra could use a Brahman priest in case of non-availability of a tribal one.

The society that emerged on the basis of a system which recognized a horizontal gradation could not exist without affecting its tribal groups that were now transformed into intra-caste groups. The awareness of super and subordinate in such hierarchical divisions permeated into these groups. The caste system percolated into each tribe. Often these divisions, as one author observed, reflect that the better economic status belonged to the group named after lesser number. The Gurungs resent the fact that such discriminations between *char* and *sola jats* among them were 'created by the Brahmins and the people of the south to divide the Gurungs and to give them an inferior status in Nepalese society'. They say that such distinctions were made 'since the conquest of the Gurung territory from the south', and such feelings are often expressed by members of Mongoloid tribes. The divisions never had a functional basis, but a hierarchical one.²¹

That the political unification created a sharp dichotomy in the social order is revealed by the manner in which the two broad categories were conceptualized as *tagadharis* (those who wear the Brahmanical sacred thread) and *matwalis* (those to whom intoxicants are not taboo), two words which are not antonymous. The first group consisted of the Brahmans and Chhetris; the vanquished people of Mongoloid origin like the Newars, Magars, Gurungs, Tamangs, Rais, Limbus, Sunuwars and others were relegated to the *matwali*. Even Newar Brahmans did not enjoy an equal social status with the Parbate Brahmans. It was said that towards Newar Brahmans 'all the section of the Parbatiya Brahmins behave like a closed community'.²² Some Magars and Gurungs, even if initially assigned a Chhetri status when they first came into contact with the Parbates, were not treated as equal to the Parbate Chhetris. Most of them were accorded the status of the Vaisya. The Newar higher castes 'who spoke Newari and followed the Newari cultural traditions, were recognized as the Nepali counterpart of the Indian Vaisya'. However, this was only on secular grounds, ceremonially they were still considered *Sudras* 'owing to their traditional practices relating to dietary, marriage and divorce'.²³ The Kirats or rather Kirat chiefs, who came into closer contact with the Hindupati

Senas in their courts, could have undergone some amount of Hinduization, but the Kirat society in general had remained tribal. After the conquest of Eastern Nepal by Gorkha the Kirats, Sunuwars, Tamangs and the lower caste Newars were all given, as groups, the ceremonial status of the Sudras. If the process of status usurpation by higher caste immigrants had started in the Nepal valley during early times and in Western Nepal around the thirteenth century, in Eastern Nepal it took place after its conquest by Gorkha. On the whole, the political unification of Nepal under Gorkha accentuated the process of status usurpation by the high order Hindus.

The birth of the unified kingdom of Nepal in no way created a unified society. It did not unite the segregated groups brought under it, on the contrary it divided them. This was because their relationship was now based on usurpation and exploitation and not on a sense of equality—a *sine qua non* in the process of nation-building. The descendants of the plainsman maintained, in theory, the 'purity' of their descent, though, in practice, many 'impure alliances' were made. This contributed to the heterogeneity of the population. However the transformation of the unconnected co-existence of segregated tribal groups into a social structure of super and subordinate status was based on ethnic considerations and was formed on the *varna* scheme.

The consolidation of the caste organization was done under State jurisdiction. In India such matters were decided by local chiefs and zamindars during the Mughal period. Under the East India Company there was a regular court, called the Caste Cutchery or the Jatimamala Kachahri, that heard and decided cases relating to caste matters. The President of this court was appointed by the English Governor. In Nepal the penal code was based on the Hindu scriptures. The maintenance of the principles of Hindu law was a State institution and the degradation to a low caste was a *panchakhat* or one of the five severe punishments that could be inflicted. This form of punishment prevailed in India during the early eighteenth century,²⁴ but it was a penal action inflicted by the State power in Nepal and sometimes used to punish the enemies of Gorkha. The chiefs of Palpa who offered stiff resistance to Gorkha in 1762 were put to death and their children 'were delivered to the most vile and abominable tribe, (Sarki)* to be educated in their odious profession, as outcastes'.²⁵ What a judge of the chief court of Nepal once told Hodgson is revealing, 'Below (in the plains of India) the Sastras (are) things to talk of : here, they are acted up to'.²⁶

The Hindu religion bolstered up the political, military and

* Cobbler, leather worker

economic dominance that was the mainstay of this hierarchy. It is true that the spread of Hinduism did not begin with the conquests of Gorkha. It began with the advent of the Lichchavis in the Nepal valley and seemed to have become well established there by the fifth century AD. The Khasa rulers, who were initially Buddhists, introduced their epigraphs with Lamaist mantras. They were influenced by the immigrants who first came in the thirteenth century to Western Nepal under Muslim pressure. By the time of Prithvimalla there was a 'slow and constant penetration of Hinduism'. This was the Hinduization of the court and the upper classes²⁷ which prompted a Lama to recommend to a later ruler 'to avoid in every way, as if they were poison, the doctrines of the worshippers of Hindu gods'.²⁸ The rulers of the small principalities, that had been built on the ruins of the Khasa kingdom and of those newly carved out in Magrat by the 'Rajputs' and others, were also Hindus. The Makwanpur Senas called themselves 'Hindupati' and even before they took Vijaypur in the east, its Koch founder had his Kirat minister killed accusing the latter of being a beef-eating monster who molested a Hindu woman. Thus the conquest of Gorkha was not an introduction of a totally alien culture, though one of its consequences was the acceleration and intensification of the process of Hinduization. This process then needs a closer examination.

It is often pointed out that the only major instance of incommmodation caused to a religious group was the expulsion by Prithvinarayan of Christian missionaries, who had found shelter and were permitted to preach in the Malla kingdoms of the valley and Makwanpur.²⁹ Nepal has a sizeable Buddhist population and the rulers could not afford to overtly offend them. In many cases the religious endowments of the Buddhists were confirmed, but there was always a strong predilection for Hindu norms and practices. Other religions were not patronized.

In his book, on the people of Nepal during 1816-39, entitled *The Silent Cry*, L.F. Stiller claims that after the political unification of Nepal, unity was brought about by the introduction of a uniform Hindu law. This law also took into account ethnic diversity and local customs affected, to some extent, by the process of 'Sanskritization'. In its original usage the term Sanskritization referred to the upward mobility of castes in the social hierarchy, but here he uses the term 'in a slightly different sense to mean the introduction, through law, of the Hindu ideal'. He finds the two usages 'closely related, but the difference sufficient to warrant calling it to the reader's attention'.³⁰

The concept of 'Sanskritization', developed and made popular by the eminent Indian sociologist, M.N. Srinivas, through his study of the

Coorgs of South India has received much criticism. The terminology itself has been described as an unhappy and an unsatisfactory choice. As one sociologist remarked, 'a crucial difference between the early British observers of the Coorgs and Srinivas lies in the fact that, whereas Srinivas emphasizes the internal process on the part of the Coorgs to Sanskritize themselves,... the British observers have noted in the process of brahmanization an external imposition by the Brahmins'.³¹ From a study of Nepal history, it can be empirically established that 'Sanskritization' was largely through the 'introduction', nay, imposition of the 'law of the Hindu ideal'.

First, though there were some attempts at the 'upward mobility of castes', one recent example shows that in the case of Mongoloid Thakalis, the young members 'with a smattering of education' used 'the most tortuous arguments to prove that the Thakalis had originally been Thakuris', and that many of them followed Hindu rites.³² But it is doubtful whether they would be accepted as Thakuris, the caste from which the rulers of Nepal generally hail. Among the Newars, the attempt at upward mobility of the caste however is within the community itself.³³ In the general context of Nepali society, there is hardly any case of upward mobility of any 'caste' of Mongoloid origin to a higher Brahman-Chhetri status. Secondly, the notion of 'Sanskritization' that Srinivas gives refers to 'vegetarianism' and 'teetotalism'. Cases can be cited to prove that such Brahmanical puritanism was accepted by some members of the tribal groups, for example, one investigation showed that such a changed tendency was perceived in some Limbus in Limbuan (Pallo Kirat) in recent times. Though described as 'post-1950 changes', at the same time they show a marked change among the educated Brahman youths who now drink liquor and eat whatever they want.³⁴ A pertinent question is whether 'Sanskritization' of tribes is the result of an 'internal process' or of a long domination of higher castes. The attempts of tribal groups to exhibit, and trace their 'pure' origin by fabricating legends about their genesis, could be nothing but an inbuilt defence mechanism. Srinivas wonders how the people living in villages were made to obey the caste rules or punished for violating them.³⁵ In the case of Nepal, a definite answer to the question 'who?' can be found. It was the State power through the government machinery. Even a cursory examination of the legal codes of Nepal can amply vindicate this answer.

The process of Sanskritization was nothing but the subjugation of tribes to the dominant, ruling class of high castes in Nepal. The legal system reflected the interests of the ruling group as established by the rules framed from time to time. Though the laws were codified for the first time in 1854, extant documents relating to penal actions by *lal mohar* or royal order before are revealing.

Stiller, after mentioning 'the ideal of Hindu law and unity', refers to the dialogue between different customary laws of ethnic groups and Hindu practices and concludes that these laws were taken into account at the time of dispensing of justice, because 'the basic criterion was : peace... preferred to the imposition of conformity'. He found that the 'legal recognition of customs which were contrary to accepted Hindu practice encouraged the growth of tolerance in Nepal'. Ethnic groups however could follow their customary laws on payment of fines. Stiller goes further to ask why this was so and then explains that 'The fines that were imposed upon various ethnic groups for the right to be different tell the story'. He holds that the story was about the administration 'overtly concerned with the promotion of unity among the people', as a result 'a certain attitude' that militated against unity. According to him the fines were not imposed because the administration wished to impress on those who had to pay them that Hindus were a privileged class in a Hindu state; there were other ways to do that. Referring to 'Sanskritization' he adds 'we now know enough about social mobility in Hindu society to realize that there were quite enough social pressures towards conformity without imposing monetary fines'. He finds that the objective behind fines was 'purely monetary' and concludes, 'this unfortunate development was not the product of Hindu law but the work of an administration that found itself so pressed for funds that it seized on every opportunity to increase revenues, no matter how detrimental some of their measures might prove to the common good or to the growth of unity in the country'.³⁶

National unification is a complex subject. Unity cannot be brought about by the imposition of uniformity. Imposition of fines was only one of the methods used to coerce people to conform to Hindu caste rules. Non-conformity, according to Hindu scriptures, was punishable. The scriptures prescribe five severe punitive measures, called *panchakhat*, which were: confiscation of property, the degradation to a low caste, banishment, mutilation and death. All of these penal measures and also enslavement were applied in cases of non-conformity. Imposition of fines, which can be taken as a mild form of confiscating property was not only 'the work of an administration...so pressed for funds'. The high castes had repugnance for the *matwalis*. There is no yardstick to gauge the feeling of animosity or repugnance that the puritanical groups had for non-conformists. But then intolerance has often been found to be a puritanical trait. A few illustrative facts tell the story of this animosity.

The word 'Bhote' is often used pejoratively, and the Murmis or Tamangs are thus referred to by Nepalese castes groups. During his visit Hamilton had observed that 'the doctrine of the Lamas is so

obnoxious to the Gorkhalese, that, under pretence of their being thieves, no Murmi is permitted to enter the valley where Kathmandu stands, and by way of ridicule, they are called Siyena Bhotiyas, or Bhotiyas who eat carrion; for these people have such an appetite for beef, that they cannot abstain from the oxen that die a natural death, as they are not now permitted to murder the sacred animal. They have, therefore, since the conquest, retired as much as possible into places very difficult of access; and before the overthrow of Sikkim a great many retired to that country, but there they have not escaped from the power of the Gorkhalese, and have been obliged to disperse even from that distant retreat, as they were supposed too much inclined to favour its infidel chief'. He adds, 'they never seem to have had any share in the government, nor to have been addicted to arms, but always followed the profession of agriculture, or carried loads for the Newars'.³⁷ It should be remembered that numerically the Tamangs constituted the fourth largest linguistic group in Nepal in 1971.

The enslavement and killing of *matwalis* by the state was a regular feature. An 1863 document reads: 'Prime Minister Jang Bahadur has upgraded the Khas to the equal status of Chhetri. Magars and Gurungs also have been promoted to the rank of the Colonel and have been enlisted in the old army. Others have also been recruited for the army. He has also established a law forbidding the killing (*na masnu*) of Newars who were being killed or enslaved since the past (*aghi dekhi masine*) and he has also made a law for the formation of a contingent of Limbus and Kiratis forbidding their killing and enslavement'.³⁸ However, upper echelons of the army were monopolized by the *tagadharis*, and this remained unchanged. A British army officer noted that the Chhetris in the British Indian army looked down upon the Mongoloid tribes.³⁹ That the antipathy was general and continuous can be proved by the expression of even a great scholar like Rammani Acharya Dikshit who only a few decades before wrote—

This land is of savages, mountain folks, villagers
and of the brawny and the boor,
Keep it always like this, O God!
Monarchy is to the Aryas the only means of weal—
For democracy we Arya subjects have no real zeal.
Make the ministry for ever from Brahmans and Chhetris;
That too only from the higher clans of Brahmans and Chhetris
you take,
While making the ministry, never and nowhere
Matwalis should be included even by mistake.*⁴⁰

* Author's translation of a passage from Dikshit's *Bhalo Kuro* (Good Things).

Monetary considerations could have been a factor in 'dialogues between the customary laws of ethnic groups and Hindu law'. However that does not explain away all the peculiarities of the Nepalese law. The major points that do not fail to strike at once are immunity of Brahmans from capital punishment, discriminations in punishments inflicted for similar crimes, and a strict enforcement of caste and other Hindu rules. Stiller admits that 'certain areas of conduct were outside the dialogue' where there could be no compromise with Hindu law. Dialogues could then be made only with 'local customs that were in direct opposition to Hindu law', and 'which did not affect the religious practices of orthodox Hindus'.⁴¹

Exemption from capital punishment was granted to the Brahmans and Chautariyas (king's younger brothers and other collaterals) by Ram Shah on the ground that they did not commit the sin of *brahmahatya* and *gotrahatya*.⁴² Even for major crimes the punishment prescribed was exile after having their heads shaved. Prithvinarayan exempted the Brahmans from the death penalty even if found smuggling goods into the valley during the pre-conquest blockade.⁴³ In fact Brahmans enjoyed this exemption till recent times.⁴⁴

More than the guidelines given to judges in documents relating to laws and punishments during Bhimsen Thapa's premiership⁴⁵ the royal orders that pass judgement on specific cases and refer to Kathmandu need a closer study. These documents of 1834⁴⁶ show the rate of discriminatory justice. For a Mongoloid Magar woman who killed her new born infant by a slave, the penal measure was to cut her nose and make her an outcaste. But an Upadhyaya Brahman widow, who committed the same crime with a Magar, was to be taken round the camp with a blackened face and expelled after being degraded. More interesting reads the punishment for suppressing information about sexual contact between an Upadhyaya widow and a slave — a Brahman woman who knew it but suppressed the information was to undergo repentance, the slave who did the same was to be killed. Even if Magar criminals died their families were not spared; their share of land or property were confiscated. If there were cases of marital infidelity between a Brahman man and a Brahman woman, the man was to be exiled after having his head shaved. No confiscation of property or punishment to the woman was ordered. If it was between a Magar woman and an outcaste, the woman was punished with a mutilation of the nose and forced to exile, the man's share of property was taken. For a crime of polluting other Magars by distributing wine to them, posing as a Magar, an outcaste woman was ordered to be killed. Washermen selling meat were to be punished for polluting others, those who were 'polluted' unknowingly were to undergo purificatory rites.

Laws differed according to castes. Another document of the period⁴⁷ prohibits the cohabitation with one's elder sister-in-law as a great sin. The order begins 'as the lands are backward and caste arrangements have to be made there, the Kiratis, Limbus, Lepchas and Jumila are exempted', and the penal code reads that for such a crime Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Sannyasis (mendicant castes) were to be degraded from their castes and exiled with shaven heads, the sexual organs of Khasa, Rajput Kshatriya, Vaisya and Gurung Ghale were to be mutilated, everything belonging to Newar Sudras were to be confiscated, while other outcastes like Damai, Sunuwar, Kami, Sarki, Balami, Majhi and tribes like Murmi Bhotas (Tamangs) and Chepangs were to be killed. Caste rules were imposed strictly. To smoke tobacco given by an outcaste was punishable.⁴⁸ Such rules of caste purity formed an important part of the legal codes compiled later as *Muluki Ain*, which remained in vogue till recently.⁴⁹

The prohibition of cow-slaughter was imposed after the Gorkha conquest in areas where beef-eating was the general practice. Hindu caste rules and the ban on cow-slaughter were enforced in different principalities of Nepal before the political unification. Reference has been made to the Vijaypur ruler's hatred for the 'cow-eating' Kirat even before the Sena domination was established there. A letter of an Italian missionary in 1740 shows that cow killing was punished with death in the kingdoms of the Nepal valley. The people there hated non-Hindus like Muslims, and every family kept a cow as a mark of devotion.⁵⁰ The Gorkha conquests extended the scope of such prohibitory Hindu laws over a much wider area. When Majh Kirat was conquered and its Sherpa inhabited upper region was annexed, cow-slaughter was banned. The order read, 'If persons guilty of this crime are punished with death and enslavement, most of the inhabitants of this area will have to be so punished. Accordingly, the heaviest possible fines should be imposed on persons who slaughter cows after that area came under our rule and as long as they have wives, sons, daughters and bondsmen available for sale (to pay fines). However, those who committed this crime after March 1804 should be either beheaded or enslaved'.⁵¹ The Limbus were forbidden by a royal order to sell cows to Sikkim. A document procured in Eastern Nepal shows that one Balahang Limbu of Ilam, made to suffer the mutilation of his nose and degradation from the status of *pani chalne* (the one from whom water could be taken) as a punishment for his crime, migrated to Sikkim. Later in 1816 one Dhanman Limbu made an appeal on his behalf to permit the culprit to return to his own country as a landless tenant (*kuriya garai*) if his caste status was restituted (*pani phoi*).⁵²

Any unintentional harm done to the cow by Brahmans necessitated an expiatory rite by law. Here too discriminatory justice was meted out. The crime of the late Upadhyaya Brahman, who tried to satiate a sexual urge by using the sacred animal, resulted in a royal order to perform his last rites (*kiriya*), but in the case of Damai, the order was death by hanging.⁵³

No further explanation is required to show how the punitive measures ranging from heavy fines, enslavements, mutilation of limbs, confiscation of property, degradation of caste, exile and death were imposed on the ethnic groups — some semi-Hinduized and some non-Hindu— forcing them to conform with the more important Hindu laws. Were the discriminations of penal measures in accordance with the caste hierarchy not to impress that caste Hindus were a privileged class? Was not the process called 'Sanskritization' largely a consequence of draconian Hindu laws?

There could be no communication between the Hindu ruling group and other ethnic groups on major points which were related to the Hindu puritanical mores. It would be too much to expect that the rulers understand that moral values are relative in different societies. However, Haimendorf says, 'Had the Chhetris attempted to impose their customs and way of living on the populations whom they politically dominated, resistance might well have been fierce and would probably have prejudiced the possibility of extending Gorkha rule over areas inhabited almost entirely by tribes that speak Tibeto-Burman tongues and are unfamiliar with Hindu ideas. But the indifference of the Chhetris to the social habits and even to the religion of other groups facilitated the peaceful coexistence of many culturally different populations in one political unit. Thus the recognition of the diversity of morals helped the Chhetris to come to terms with people when they had no wish to influence the cultural sphere, even though they had established themselves in a position of political dominance.'⁵⁴ The picture was somewhat different. Some indifference to non-Hindu social habits was due to the segregation of tribal settlements caused by the geography of Nepal.

Stiller says that uniform codes of conduct were not followed and 'tolerance of a sort' had to be produced or else 'the farmers would have decamped, as they had frequently done for other, lesser reasons, and left the fields untilled and the crops not sown'.⁵⁵ It was thus in the interest of the ruling group that compromises had to be made, and such 'dialogues' with ethnic groups again took place after fines were imposed on them. But there were also 'areas of conflict', and Stiller cites the case of Panchgaon of Thak Khola where Thakalis 'demanded the right to administer the territory for themselves with no outsiders,

not even official judges, to interfere with their local customs'. It called for 'an extensive dialogue'; the government conceded their demand but the people were 'urged to return to their own district, and an annual assessment of Rs 3001 was placed on the territory, to be raised by the local people'.⁵⁶ However such 'dialogues' were not made in all cases; when people could not pay fines, they generally migrated.

Gorkha rule was not accepted with equanimity in every conquered territory. Rebellions broke out from time to time. The Kirats, as seen earlier, rose in 1792 and rebellions in other areas can be inferred from the administrative regulations about them.⁵⁷ Rebellions led to severe punishments like death, mutilation and enslavement. Such uprisings were destined to fail because of their desperate and unorganized nature. Rebels were never in a state to articulate the formulation of their opposition and severe punishments acted as deterrents for others. The situation had other consequences. People realized that escape was the alternative to opposition.

Before taking up this point, another factor, by way of a hypothetical and partial explanation of a kind of conformity can be suggested. The dialogue to offset an opposition to Hindu Brahmanical domination could have been presented by the prevailing situation at the popular lower level. It was related to the tribal folk religions.

In the descriptions of different tribes it was noted that most of them were followers of different branches of a religion which is often categorized as Shamanism, akin to Bon, a pre-Lamaist religion of Tibet and the adjoining countries. It was a religion more of rituals and practices than philosophy. Indeed the Hindu religion in its popular form has also remained largely a system of rituals.

Hinduism incorporates within itself the totality of various beliefs. Nepal is also a bastion of Tantric cults. Tantricism—both Hindu and Buddhist—has a strong base there because the situation was particularly favourable for the admission of such elements from folk religions. Remarkable analogies can be found between these folk traditions and Tantricism because they are governed by a similar psychological atmosphere.

Tantricism served an important social purpose by prescribing numerous rituals and remedies for daily use. It was very close to the tribal religions and could be mutually identified to a greater extent and intensity. The origin of Tantricism was probably not due to the greed of mercenary Brahmans in exchange for their services as ascribed by Max Weber, but rather to a sense of competition with Jainism and Buddhism.⁵⁸ In the context of Nepal, Buddhism itself was influenced greatly by Tantricism and this gave rise to Vajrayana and Sahajayana. In the case of Tibet, a mutual impact between Lamaist

Buddhism and indigenous Bon had remained a marked feature. Mithila, from where orthodox Brahmanism reached Nepal, was the principal centre of Tantricism. However, as R.S.Sharma puts it, Tantricism itself could have 'originated in the outer, tribal circle and not in Madhyadesa'.⁵⁹

The situation presented by the correlation between the tribal cults and Tantricism could have largely solved the problem of the Brahmans who had to deal with semi-Hinduized as well as non-Hindu tribes. It could give spiritual compensation to the Sudras, who were debarred from Vedic practices. The situation in Nepal was analogous to R.S.Sharma's description that the 'Sudras' naturally 'came to have some rights and interests in the land in which Brahmans and other beneficiaries enjoyed superior rights. This became inconsistent with the traditional ritual status of the Sudras which had to be raised by providing initiation for them in the tantric sects'.⁶⁰ In the process the native mother goddesses came to be worshipped as Sakti or Buddhist Tara. Temples were built to house not only deities of the Hindu pantheon, but also many folk divinities like Mashta of the Khasas in Western Nepal, or simply Devi and other folk deities in Eastern Nepal.⁶¹ Thus the social and economic problems created by the confrontations between the Brahmans, the beneficiaries and the tribal people could have been partly solved through a Tantricism akin to tribal cults. It welcomed women and Sudras or the incoming aborigines. Sharma claims that Tantricism itself was 'the produce of the Brahmanical colonization of the tribal area through the process of land grants'.⁶² Hence it could recognize emergent social and feudal hierarchy.

If Tantricism can be described as a 'religious attempt at social reconciliation and integration rather than at the accentuation of the social conflict', it is essential to further this discussion by presenting a short account of an indigenous religious movement in Nepal which served as a critique of, and also assumed the form of a movement against, the socio-economic milieu emerging from the interaction of social forces consequent to the new political process. The origin of the Josmani cult is obscure, but it was based on a higher philosophy of devotion to *nirguna* or the attributeless God. It was an iconoclastic creed that was against casteism, commercialization of spiritual knowledge and many other vices of Brahmanical Hinduism. The history of this cult⁶³ has been traced from Santa Dhirjedil Das and his disciple Sasidhar, both contemporaries of Prithvinarayan. Sasidhar even corresponded with Prithvinarayan. If Prithvinarayan's son Pratapsimha was a Tantric, his grandson Ranabahadur was a follower of Josmani. The latter once abdicated the throne and assumed the

name of Swami Nirvananda. One biographer mentions his many iconoclastic and anti-Brahmanical peccadilloes as deeds done under the inspiration of Josmani belief.⁶⁴ The description in the Vamsavalis which states that 'by reason of his cohabitation with the female of a sacred caste or a Brahman's daughter, his senses left him and he became mad' has caused British writers to label him a lunatic. Other high ranking people like Bhimsen Thapa's younger brother General Ranabirsimha⁶⁵ was also converted to Josmani. However, the actual strengthening and popularizing of Josmani was done by Jnandil Das (c. AD 1821-1883). Born to a Brahman family at Fikal near Ilam in Eastern Nepal, Jnandil is reported to have been arrested when Lakshman Thapa engineered a rebellion against the autocracy of Jang Bahadur Rana. His preaching against casteism, bigotry, superstitious rituals and sacrifices were disliked by the priestly class. Jnandil made Eastern Nepal his field of activity and a large number of Kirats, specially Rais, became his followers. There were also others, including 'outcastes' who were initiated by him. Arrested again at Ilam by the principal administrator, the rebellious prophet went on to make Rangbul at Darjeeling his centre and also established another centre at Geling in Sikkim. A Sikkimese officer, Jerung Dewan, suspicious of Jnandil's unorthodox approach to religion, destroyed the Geling abbey once. Jnandil's disciple Rabidas later kept up the tradition at Darjeeling by challenging Scottish missionaries.⁶⁶ Anti-domination political rights often assumed the character of religious movements.

Like many other mendicants of the cult, Jnandil composed hymns in mixed Sndhukaddi and also in Nepali using folk rhythm. His *Udayalahari*, a poetical work completed at Darjeeling in 1877, can be taken as a good summary of the Josmani doctrine. Its importance in our discussion is because of its critical references to the society that emerged as a result of the unification. For example, at one place he says, 'Flour pounded of millet from Rumja plain (a Gurung area) is bespiced with nothing but the water of Brahman (nirguna). Gurungs have mastered spiritual knowledge and performance and Brahmans are left wondering';⁶⁷ at another place he satirizes the Brahmans, who usurped lands, thus :

The Brahmans of this Kali age are fallen from Truth
 They do not read the Vedas as the plough is dear to them.
 Ignoring all their duties, carrying ploughs and yokes like oxen
 They think that they are superior to all men.

But, it suffices to say here that as entrenched as Brahmanical Hindu religion became as a consequence of the political and socio-economic usurpations of the high caste Hindus, the Josmani cult also gradually

declined. It maintained, to some extent, its popularity in the different socio-political environs outside Nepal in Darjeeling and Sikkim. In Nepal itself, Josmani Sadhus, accused of having eaten from the hands of outcastes and prosecuted in the court of Ilam, now took a defensive stand in protection of their castes.⁶⁸ The movement, that perhaps could have become a cohesive force, faded soon afterwards.

The process of Hinduization was made possible by the political and economic domination of the Brahman-Chhetris. Not only the *bharadars* or courtiers but also the *jagirdars* or *birta* owners who dispensed justice to the tenants on their lands came from this group. In 1559, Dravya Shah took Gorkha with the support of 'all the people of Gorkha who wore the Brahmanical thread'⁶⁹ or were *tagadharis*. In addition to the royal family, other high caste families like Aryal, Pande, Khanal and Pantha also became prominent. The positions of these families were duly maintained by Ram Shah⁷⁰ and retained till Ranabahadur. A privilege enjoyed by these families was a share in the amount of fines for the neglect of Hindu ritual ceremonies. 'Their amount,' wrote Hamilton, 'is divided into eight shares of which the Raja takes one, the collector one, the Dharmadhikar one, and one goes to each of the five families of Brahmans, named Pangre (Pande), Panthe, Arjal (Aryal), Khanal and Agnidanda. These families divide their shares equally among their members, who have multiplied exceedingly. Besides the fine, all delinquents in matters of ceremony are compelled to entertain a certain number of these five families; the two first fattening on the wicked of the country west from the Narayani; and the other three on those east from the river.'⁷¹ He also noted that the amount of the fines and the number of these families had increased enormously since the Gorkha conquest.

References have already been made regarding the participation of Brahman-Chhetri families in the conquests of Prithvinarayan and his successors. Pande, Basnets and Kuvars (later Ranas) proved remarkably successful. Shivaram, Keharsingh, Abhimansingh, Jahar Singh and Bakhatvar among Basnets; Kalu, Tularam, Vamsaraj and Damodar among Pandes and Ramakrishna Kuvar played effective roles in the political unification. Many royal collaterals and Chhetri Thapas like Amarsimha, Birbhadra and Bhimsen also greatly assisted the task. After all, the unity was forged by their brawn and the Brahman brain. That these families did not maintain purity in marital relations, and that they took other wives from tribal groups, is however a different matter. In any case their emergence as a distinct class can in no way be doubted.

Kirkpatrick did not fail to notice the 'considerable credit and authority' that some leading families enjoyed at Kathmandu because

of their 'ancient services, and attachments to the Gorkha family'.⁷² He remarks that Bhadgau 'appears to be the favourite residence of the Brahmans of Nepal, containing many more families of that order than Kathmandu and Patn together, all those of the Chetree tribe (to which the reigning prince belongs) flocking on the other hand to the capital, while Patn is principally inhabited by Newars'.⁷³ The total number of such prominent Brahman-Chhetri families were thirty-six, and were not 'of equal consideration'. The families constituting the *tharghars* were the most powerful, and it was felt 'that the throne of the prince himself would be no longer secure, should the principal Thurgurs concur in thinking that his general conduct tended to endanger the sovereignty which they profess themselves bound'.⁷⁴

The political power of the Brahman-Chhetris had a strong economic base that had resulted from socio-religious, socio-political and 'social service' land holdings. One can maintain that political unification did not effect the basic structure of the society even though changes took place in the fortunes of many persons, families, castes and tribes.

The overall economic situation of Nepal was rural, agricultural and subsistent; this resulted in a uniformity with respect to land tenure also. The incidence of land grants like *birta* and *jagir* in all the principalities prior to their unification under Gorkha has been exemplified earlier. After the Gorkha conquest, the petty rulers of subjugated principalities were replaced by a Subba or a regional administrative head. In those principalities not brought under direct control, the feudatory chief had the same status as a Subba. In Kathmandu the Gorkhalis had four Kazis instead of one as in Gorkha, but this was necessitated by the expansion of the kingdom. It may be argued that the only changes brought about by the conquest of Gorkha was the establishment of a centralized authority, or the founding of a large kingdom under a single ruler. The Subbas conducted their affairs as before, and the Gorkhalis adopted a policy of minimum change in the administration of the expanded kingdom. As the Gorkha conquest did not bring about any economic changes, it could make some believe that the peasantry and the humble folk of the lower orders remained untouched by political turmoils. However, this was not the case. The Gorkhali conquest accelerated many other existing processes which had begun much earlier; this also occurred in the economic field. The necessities of the military campaigns made them resort to economic practices that had far-reaching implications.

The usual mode of defraying the expenses of military establishments and paying the army was by assignments of land as *jagir*. *Birta* grants were made to the eminent commanders and *kus birtas* to

Brahmans for their various services. Higher ranks in the army tended to be filled from among the Chhetris (including the Rajputs or Thakuri). Others at the most rose up to the rank of captains. Up to the middle of the nineteenth century, armies were raised when needed and disbanded when not required. In general, only members of the higher castes were retained in service during peace time. Hence they monopolized the *jagirs*.

There are no statistics to show the amount of land under different tenures during different periods. Figures⁷⁵ available for 1852-53 fail to present a clear picture in the absence of the total measurement of land under cultivation. However, there is no corresponding figure of lands under *birta*. Any attempt at even a rough calculation is made difficult by the use of different systems of weights and measures in different parts of the kingdom. But this disadvantage can in no way detract from the fact that during the post unification period there was a tremendous increase in the *jagir* and *birta* holdings. In view of the nature of Gorkha conquests it cannot be gainsaid that the government needed more in order to satiate more appetite for land: 'the limit of the army is land; the limit of the land is the army'.⁷⁶ Besides the inevitable increase in the number and extent of *jagir* holdings, old *birta* grants were confirmed when their holders readily submitted to the Gorkhalis and new ones were granted to potential defectors, eminent military leaders and scheming Brahmans; besides, the defeated rulers had also to be placated. Indeed, Prithvinarayan had 'moulded the Birta system to suit his military and political requirements'.⁷⁷

It is true that at times attempts were made by Ranabahadur Shah and others to confiscate *birta* grants. However the built-in socio-political system was such that nothing much could be achieved. Moreover, such action was dictated not by any principle but by personal idiosyncrasy or political expediency. The confiscation of the birtas of Pandes by Bhimsen Thapa and then those of the Thapas later by the Pandes exemplify this. Only three months after Jang Bahadur's bloody coup in 1846, the *birta* and religious *guthi* endowments confiscated by Ranabahadur in 1805 were restored. The royal order for the restoration read, 'As no peace has prevailed in the palace since the confiscation of the *birtas* of Brahmans in 1805...on the recommendations of the Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief Jang Bahadur Kuvar and others that it would be beneficial to us...we do hereby restore the confiscated birtas of Brahmans all over the kingdom'.⁷⁸

The *jagir* was assigned for a fixed period of time. Since the assignee employed in active military/civil service seldom lived on his *jagir* land, he left the cultivation to the *mohi* or the cultivator. Such absentee

jagirdars sold *tirjas* or the authority to collect taxes to brokers called *dhokres*.⁷⁹ These agents profited by collecting more than their investments. As a result the *mohis* were oppressed. Similar system existed even in the *raikar* and other lands. Though Prithvinarayan had advised that taxes be collected by government officials for effectiveness, the Gorkhali administration had to depend on agents called *ijaradars*. These *ijaradars* collected as much as they could, paid a fixed periodic sum to the government and appropriated the excess collected.⁸⁰ In some places Subedars or military commanders acted as *ijaradars*.

Birta implied the divesture of the ownership right by the state to private individuals, but it was not always total and unconditional. Birtawals were obligated to supply troops and materials.⁸¹ Their lands were often cultivated by *adhiyars*, who, as the very name suggests, paid half the produce to their landlords, retaining the other half for themselves. In these cases shares fluctuated according to the amount produced. To keep their income steady the birtawals later replaced the *adhiya* with the *kut* system under which cultivators paid a fixed quantity of their produce and other commodities or else a cash amount. The quantity fixed was bound to be higher than that of *adhiya*. In fact the change was made for this very purpose. The peasant now bore all other costs and risks of marketing. To tide over the difficulties the peasant had to take loans. Rural indebtedness became a common feature and the condition favoured the richer landlords, mostly Brahmans, who now took up on a large scale money lending and other speculative functions.⁸² The jagir and birta holders always saw to it that they got more than what they would have otherwise got from the land. When the government paid 30 per cent as interest rate, the rate paid at times by peasants was much higher.

Peasants did not enjoy any tenurial security; they could be evicted according to the will of the landholders. This occurred when they failed to pay the stipulated amount of produce or the cash in lieu; landholders then made settlements with others who agreed to pay higher amounts.

Besides these risks, peasants under every form of tenure bore many other burdens. The *corvée* system did not originate with the conquest of Gorkha, the Sanskrit word for it, *vishti*, is mentioned in old Sanskrit inscriptions and forced labour was no unusual feature in other principalities where it was imposed for repair and construction work. However, the popularity of this system increased with the requirements of the newer Gorkha conquests. Variations of *corvée* were made mandatory because without them Gorkhali conquests could not have been possible. *Jhara*, a kind of forced labour, was imposed for transportation of arms and ammunitions to different corners during wars in

the east, west or against Tibet and the British.⁸³ It was also used for tasks like digging canals for irrigation, capture of elephants, repair of roads, bridges and the like. If it was an occasional imposition, *rakam* was the labour-tax on the peasantry for specific functions to meet administrative and defence needs. Another variation, the *hulak*, was imposed for transportation of official mail (*kagate hulak*) and for the carrying of arms and ammunitions (*thaple hulak*).

Caste discriminations were also made for the purpose of taxation. Ever since 1813, the Brahmans, in the area between Nepal valley and Ilam, were exempted from *jhara*.⁸⁴ Families were divided castewise for the payment of *thaple* and *kagate hulak*. In Dullu in the west the Brahmans, Thakuris, Sannyasis and the Khasa 'not otherwise enrolled for *thaple hulak*' were separated for the less onerous *kagate hulak* or carrying of the official mail.⁸⁵ An overwhelming majority of Jaisis and Upadhyaya Brahmans were separated for mail transportation services between Kathmandu and Dhankuta in the east and Doti in the west.⁸⁶

In addition to these impositions there were various other taxes and royal levies. The Saune-Fagu tax, payable in kind or in cash and collected in June-July and February-March, meant an extra share for the landholder from the monsoon and autumn produce. Untouchables did not pay this tax but were instead made to pay articles such as hide and the like. Public festivals and mournings were occasions for collecting other kinds of taxes: *goddhuwa*, collected at the time of the marriage of the princes; *gadimubarak*, levied at the time of coronation; *Chumawan*, imposed during the *upanayan* or sacred thread ceremony of the prince; *godan*, collected to finance the royal gifts of cows to Brahmans on special occasions and there were very many other such levies.⁸⁷ Furthermore, exactions were imposed by local functionaries.

All this added considerably to the high incidence of rural indebtedness, while the failure or incapability to repay loans led to bondage and slavery. The non-conformity of tribal groups with principal Brahmanical norms led to slavery, and often women and children of the rebels, the tax defaulters or those who could not pay fines or repay loans were enslaved. G.B. Fraser, a British officer who visited Garhwal after the Nepal war in 1815, reported that during the Gorkha rule there a total of 200,000 people had been enslaved.⁸⁸ A royal order to check slave traffic in Garhwal states that the people were reduced to slavery on charges of adultery.⁸⁹ Adultery or *chak chakui** was punished by fining. However in many cases the woman's nose was slit and she

* Kirkpatrick observes that adultery was termed 'significantly, *Chak Chakui* in allusion to the habits of the bird called by Europeans the Brahminy Goose', p. 104.

was enslaved. This form of punishment was only for the women of low castes and *matwali* tribes or Mongoloids.

Slaves were sold. Raper, an Englishman who visited Garhwal in 1808, described the sale of slaves at a Gorkhali post in a pass leading to Har-ka-Pir, where 'slaves were brought down from the hills and exposed for sale'. 'Many hundreds of these poor wretched', he wrote, 'of both sexes, from three to thirty years of age, are annually disposed of in the way of traffic. These slaves are brought down from all parts of the interior of the hills and sold at Hardwar at from ten to one hundred and fifty rupees each'.⁹⁰ In 1877 a slave girl of Damai caste, described as the grand-daughter of a slave woman, was sold for Rs. 30, payable in two instalments. A document of 1860 shows that a slave was gifted to a priest by his friend.⁹¹

In 1803 an order was passed that 'no Brahman or Rajput shall be enslaved in our country in future'. Thus yet another dimension was added to the social division between high caste *tagadharis* on the one hand and the *matwali* and outcastes on the other. Though Magars had come into contact with the high castes much earlier and were initially given a Chhetri status, the bondage problem was acute among them in the western hill areas. Moneylenders kept Magar boys and girls in bondage as interest on loans advanced to their parents. Although this practice was banned in 1837 it was revived again in 1846 under the pressure of the moneylenders.⁹² Debtors often became *banda* or bonded labourers. Thus, a person could be mortgaged like a piece of property. Children were sold as slaves to settle loans and powerful persons in the village often enslaved the poor.

How did these oppressed peasants and humble village folk try to tackle the situation? Most of the human cattle rounded up and sold, for example at Hardwar, were 'exported' to India. No religious sentiment could prevent this. Slavery as an institution continued till the second decade of the present century. Of course slavery was not utilized on the government level and orders were issued to check slave traffic, but the socio-economic condition was such that it remained both in political as well as social levels. When these oppressed people found the situation irremediable, they were left with no other alternative but migration to other places, either to some congenial place within or in most cases outside the kingdom. There are many documents which bear witness to the flight of peasants and other humble people.

Authors often assign the cause of migration to an increase in population and the consequent pressure on land. But land was plentiful, and a vast tract of land in the *terai* had yet to be reclaimed. Documents divulge that people from the adjoining Indian plains were

often induced to migrate to the Nepal terai to hoe up the land. Even recent statistics exhibit that cultivable land forms 28 per cent of the total area of the kingdom, and in 1971 only 13.1 per cent of the total area was being cultivated, 14.9 per cent remaining uncultivated but reclaimable.⁹³ The proportion of such reclaimable land could have been higher in the nineteenth century. However there were numerous factors acting as deterrents, and so people migrated.

In Nepal the state was the ultimate 'owner' of the land. But the nature of certain landholdings involved the divesture in practice of such 'state ownership'. The ordinary tillers of the soil never enjoyed the proprietorship of land; the tenure of a *jagir* or *birta* holder was a form of political and socio-economic control. If the *mohi* or the tiller was not reduced to slavery or was not a bonded labourer, his condition was that of a praedial serf. In the *raikar* land the right of the cultivator was limited to occupancy and, in a case of default, the land was not attached though the *mohi* was evicted.

Zamindars as intermediaries between the state and the cultivators wielded the same authority in *raikar* lands as in the *jagir* and *birta*. The zamindar did not have the right to alienate the land. However he was a revenue farmer with a considerable socio-political and economic clout and a right to evict tenants. If this was a feature of the terai and Western Nepal, the central hill region presented a somewhat different picture. There small plots of cultivable lands were directly under peasants, but the tenurial right was confined to the actual use of the land. However, the permanence of the peasant's tenure was undermined by reallocations of lands under the *raibandi* system which constricted each lot to nothing more than a subsistence holding. They forfeited their rights only when they did not cultivate the land themselves, and no family was allowed to keep excess land. This system of reallocation which created the impermanence of the tenure of small cultivators was due to 'the growing requirements of rice-lands for assignments under the *jagir* system'.⁹⁴

Destined to always remain an agricultural labourer even if land was reclaimed, the ordinary peasant had no incentive to bring new land under the plough. Individual efforts made by peasants to reclaim cultivable land did not pay. The government took certain attempts in the direction of land reclamation, and tax exemptions were granted for initial periods, but nothing much came out of it in the absence of a well-organized plan, proper direction and supervision. The government also granted loans to the peasants for meeting initial expenditures, but the quantity of such loans was meagre, the rate of interest exorbitant and, more than that, it was repayable in a year. This short-term itself was a prohibitive factor and such loans proved of no

advantage. Under the circumstances the enterprising cultivator would take loans from private individuals, and sometimes interests on such loans were as high as 300 per cent.⁹⁵ Thus cultivable land could be reclaimed only by people with means and power. New *birta* grants were made to those who undertook such assignments and received them as *birtas*, but the condition of the peasantry in such reclaimed lands did in no way vary from that of others. They were subject to the same taxes and impositions. Also, when peasants were induced by the offer of favourable taxes to obtain an allotment of waste land for reclamation, they ran the risk of being evicted after the land was reclaimed. The land-holder or the local authority would then reallocate the reclaimed land to others on terms more favourable to themselves.

Though the Gorkhalis did not bring about significant changes in the tenurial systems prevalent before the political unification, the very nature of their conquest affected the peasants adversely. The condition of the peasantry became worse. When the situation first became serious 'the peasants left the lands they cultivated and migrated to places within the kingdom or outside'.⁹⁶ The situation becomes amply clear when we examine two cases—the impact of the Gorkhali conquests in the extreme west and finally in the east.

Kumaon, which was ruled by the Gorkhalis for eleven years, was later annexed by the British according to the Treaty of Sugauli (1815). George William Traill, who became the Commissioner of Kumaon in 1815, and his assistant, B.H. Hodgson, collected data for new revenue settlements there. Traill's report throws some light on the nature of Gorkhali rule. After its conquest by the Gorkhalis, each district of Kumaon was divided into military commands and the officer-in-charge there enforced a fixed sum besides other impositions. Far from the supervision of Kathmandu, the officers and soldiers tried to wring as much as they could out of the people. Villages were left waste and the people 'fled into the densest and most impenetrable jungles'. To control the situation 'the Central Gorkha Government in Nepal' sent a commission of enquiry to fix the Kumaon revenues at reasonable rates. The Commission's registers of village cultivation were used subsequently by the British administration. However there was a basic difference in the two systems. As Traill says, the Gorkha assessment 'must be viewed rather as a tax founded on the number of inhabitants than on the extent of cultivation', and despite an elaborate system of returns and registers, made up village by village, 'the absence of a controlling power on the spot rendered the agreement almost nugatory'. Traill reports that the prevailing system under the rulers of Kumaon was continued after its conquest by Gorkha. The system of taxation consisted previously of imposts like transit duties on goods,

taxes on trade, on cultivation, on mining, on law suits, on the manufacture of *ghee*, on weaving, on grazing cattle, and on other different produce. Besides, a variety of 'presents' or 'forced gifts to the Raja' had to be given on occasions of birth, marriage and other various incidents of agricultural life. The Gorkhalis retained all these impositions and added new ones; innumerable exactions were also made by revenue agents and contractors.

According to Traill the last land assessment of the Gorkhalis, made in 1812, 'when their oppressions had depopulated the province', amounted to Rs. 241,122. Besides extortions by local agents, the gross demand was for Rs. 268,977.⁹⁷ A comparison of the amount of revenue collected in Morang, Saptari-Mahottari and Rautahat between 1791 and 1887 as calculated from the figures quoted by Regmi⁹⁸ shows that Morang yielded between 1794 and 1805 a total of Rs. 408, 806. The revenue collected in Saptari-Mahottari shows a downward curve from Rs. 92,001 in 1791 to Rs. 52,043 in 1795 and Rs. 46,668 in 1807. The slope in the case of Rautahat seems to have been less steep, from Rs. 14,001 in 1791 and Rs. 14,501 in 1794 to Rs. 10,001 in 1803 and Rs. 11,001 in 1895. The gross demand of the first British settlement in Kumaon in 1815-16 after the abolition of old taxes and 'without extortions' was Rs. 132,723.

With the return of the cultivators the revenue steadily increased. Unlike the Gorkhalis, the British demanded a fixed amount from each village on the basis of the quality of its land. Under the Gorkhali rule 'the villages were assessed everywhere, rather on a consideration of the supposed means of the inhabitants than on any computation of their agricultural produce'. The result was, 'balances soon ensued, to liquidate which, the family and the effects of the defaulters were seized and sold'. As a result, 'The consequent depopulation was rapid and excessive'.⁹⁹

The inhabitants who remained behind were made responsible for making good any discrepancy between the amount assessed and that actually realized. This finds eloquent corroboration in 'orders regarding Chak-Chakui fines and ban on slave traffic in Garhwal, Sirmoor and elsewhere' issued in 1812. The order says, 'We have received reports that ryots are enslaved on charges of adultery, and that (miscreants) try to sell and purchase industrious and tax-paying ryots. In Garhwal, lands went out of cultivation and revenue declined because of such malpractices. The ryots who were left suffered'.¹⁰⁰ There came a stage when even Gorkha military chiefs found it impossible to enforce impositions.

The consequences of the Gorkha conquest of Garhwal and Kumaon is graphically described in the poetical works of Molaram

(1740-1833), a famed artist of Garhwal. His versified history of Garhwal¹⁰¹ is an eyewitness account of many important contemporary political events. Besides his versified petition to Bhimsen Thapa imploring the restoration of confiscated '*birta, jagir, guth*' describes 'how beautiful was Srinagar, how desolate it is now', and says that 'the peasants have neither seeds, nor oxen nor a single *cowrie*, penniless they have fled to the plains'.¹⁰² The burden of the exorbitant taxes imposed by the Gorkhalis finds mention in a verse in Nepali composed by Gumani Pant, regarded as the meta-poet of Kumauni. No wonder, the Gorkha tyranny passed into a proverb in Garhwal-Kumaon, and 'no sooner had the British forces entered the hills (1815)', writes Atkinson, 'than the inhabitants began to join our camp, and bring in supplies of provisions for the troops'.¹⁰³

The whole politico-military structure of the kingdom of Nepal was reared on land grants whose beneficiaries exclusively belonged to the high castes. Never before was the class of landed interests so deeply entrenched both politically and economically as during and after the political unification. These high castes constituted a class *vis-à-vis* other ethnic communities of Mongoloid origin and 'untouchables'. The *tagadhari* castes usurped socio-political and economic power while other ethnic groups were subjugated. One cannot delve very deep into the socio-economic problems of Nepal without first understanding this caste-class equation and how castes are structured in relation to one another.

A classification of Nepali society from an ethnic viewpoint is required, therefore, for a socio-economic study. The Brahmans and Chhetris provided 'social and political leadership' and the Magars and Gurungs, already brought under such 'leadership', were 'gradually assimilated into the new political structure' and participated in the conquests of Gorkha, but their role was 'at lower and middle echelons of the army rather than as prospective claimants to political power'. Most of the Mongoloid tribes and occupational and untouchable castes, though not enrolled in the army, 'played a part in the process of territorial unification, and, later, that of administrative consolidation, through portage and other unpaid services under the forced-labour system...Slaves and bondmen also belonged mostly to these groups'.¹⁰⁴ However Regmi says that 'this somewhat oversimplified classification of Nepali society is not necessarily a disjunctive one.' He further adds 'not every Brahman or Chhetri occupied a position of a political power and influence'.¹⁰⁵

Every individual of a particular caste or class is, of course, not to be expected to hold an equal position of power and influence. In a colonial situation, for example, every member of the dominating

group is not a ruler. The Brahman-Chhetri group, however, formed the ruling group, the *herrenvolk*, which enjoyed the benefits of the political unification. The very next line of Regmi is significant: 'as their (Brahman and Chhetris) numbers increased, large segments of these communities spilled over to the lower and middle echelons of the army and the administration, often at the cost of Mongoloid groups such as the Magars and Gurungs. There were also numerous cases in which communities that were qualified to play political, military, or administrative roles by virtue of their ethnic origin remained content with a peasant's life'.¹⁰⁶ But the question is : could they have been allowed to play those roles with the rights, privileges and powers that went with them ?

The feeling of superiority among the *tagadharis* sprang from their position against the 'lower' orders. This consciousness bolstered by puritanical Hindu norms and imposed by law incapacitated others who 'by virtue of their ethnic origin' had to remain *dhakres* (commoners) contented with a peasant's life. Regmi claims that the 'ascriptive land-ownership rights, which emerged through grants or temporary assignments of land, were limited to these groups (the political élites and military groups) for all practical purposes',¹⁰⁷ none the less he concludes that the existence of these classes do not invalidate the main basis of the classification of Nepali society as presented by him (categories as belonging to the central and midlands and those belonging to other parts of the country). 'Lack of opportunity,' he adds, 'should by no means be confused with ineligibility to play customary and traditional roles in the society'.¹⁰⁸ However, if the customary and traditional roles mean participation in political and administrative work, the 'lack of opportunity' for other ethnic groups resulted in their subjugation in the process of the unification of Nepal, and this subjugation deprived them of the opportunity and made them 'ineligible'.

The composition of the ruling caste or class never changed. Though new appointments, dismissals and confirmation of government employees and tenants took place in the annual *pajani* * all individuals were from the same class. The status usurpation and consolidation of political and economic domination of *tagadharis* over *matwalis* increased with the conquest of Eastern Nepal. In 1774 the Kirats were assured that the *status quo* would be maintained. However, Kirat land was brought under the administrative jurisdiction of the

* *Pajani* was an annual ceremony 'when each public office was officially vacated and its previous occupants needed reconfirmation by the Maharaja if he was to continue in power', Perceval London, *Nepal*, Vol.I, p.86,

Gorkhali officer. Military establishments were set up at places like Chainpur and Ilam, and military commanders like Abhimansingh Basnet, Ramakrishna Kuvar, Subba Purnananda Upadhyaya and Subba Jayanta Khatri from the *tagadhari* class became the actual administrators.

The Kirats could not reconcile themselves to the Gorkhali conquest of their lands. Many Kirats at the incitement of the Chinese in 1792 rose up in arms. The government tried to repress the rebellions with severity, but then realized the need to placate the Kirats by confirming their rights and privileges. Fugitive Kirats were given amnesty. The privilege of the 'drum being beaten', originally conferred by 'Sena Makwani king' in the name of Sekhjit and Srimukhang Subba, and falsely taken by one Adalsingh as his own, was restored in 1838 to the original owners who fought against the British in 1814 at Madhubani.¹⁰⁹ Jayanta Khatri confirmed in 1826 the subbangi (Subbanship) of Chyangthapu to one Chanthun Rai, whose ancestors had held that position 'since the time of the Senas' but had 'fled to Sikkim during the turmoil' of 1792. He was asked to be 'true to the salt' and 'deposit the revenue at the company' or military command at Ilam.¹¹⁰ Many published¹¹¹ and unpublished documents¹¹² refer to the confirmation of such position of Kirat *subbas* and their privileges. Confirmations of autonomy were, however, not total. There were conditions and duties attached to them. Most of the confirmations fixed certain amounts that were to be deposited in instalments at the military command office at Chainpur and Ilam.¹¹³ The early confirmations enjoined duties like the banning of cow-slaughter¹¹⁴ and the keeping open of passes on pain of death.¹¹⁵ The Subbas who enjoyed the privilege of the 'kettledrum being beaten' in their honour had to be prepared with *bharadars* in times of war.¹¹⁶ They had to act as watchmen, and those who encroached over the border without permission were to be held up and handed over by them to the *amalis* of Chainpur and Karfok near Ilam.¹¹⁷ The confirmation of *kipat* included the forced labour (*hulak*) for carrying army goods up to the village border.¹¹⁸ The *jhara* exemptions created the condition that every 'house with plough' pay one rupee, and those who did hoe cultivation pay 12 annas per household. The Rais and Subbas were to remain prepared with weapons and were required to obey the *bharadars*.¹¹⁹ The Kirats were brought under the direct control of Kathmandu. If the Sena overlordship over the Kirats was previously legal fiction, the autonomy of the Kirats was made fictitious after the Gorkha conquest.

As a consequence of the conquest of Eastern Nepal the marked change that took place was the gradual transition of *kipat* or communal land-ownership to other forms of land-holdings. This land

tenure where land was vested in one ethnic group was extended over forest, wasteland, streams and also over minerals. Such *kipat* land could not be permanently alienated from persons outside the ethnic group. This system of land tenure was, therefore, intimately connected with the tribal autonomy enjoyed by the Kirats. Such *kipats* belonging to other Mongoloid tribes had been eroded elsewhere as a result of the early infiltration of high caste Hindus and the lands had been converted to *raikar*. The process had already been started in Majh Kirat; extensive *birtas* were granted by the Sena rulers of the priestly class of Pokhrels at Kharpa and elsewhere. The Sena grants to the Kirats in the hills were mostly confirmatory of their traditional *sub-baship* and were not *jagir* and *birta*. Such privileged land grants were made in the *terai*, but not in Pallo Kirat.

Assurances were made regarding the *status quo* that was to be maintained though the traditional *kipat* tenure did not prevent the government from giving waste and uncultivated lands to immigrant settlement in the land under *kipat*. The *kipat* rights extended over wastelands was an unconsidered factor. The *kipat* system was not abolished immediately but instead was often described as *seva-birta* or the land granted for some service. Thus the very basis of the *kipat* system was challenged. There were periodical examinations of the *kipat* registrations and surveys were made. All doubtful or previously unregistered *kipat* holdings were converted to *raikar*. The immigrants could not obtain *kipat* land in the region. A document of 1857 refers to the examination of *kipat* land, the reduction and then the confirmation of the remaining parts of Majh Kirat by Akalsingh Khatri in 1806, in 1846 by Ramnath and Gopal Upadhyaya, and in 1854 by Subedar Sivadatta Kharga and Aiman Khatri. The officers were always Brahmans and Chhetris.

By royal order the reclaimed or wasteland brought under plough by the Murmis (Tamangs) and all other non-*kipatiya* Kirat were to be handed over to the government.¹²⁰ In 1828 a survey team found *kipat* land at Muga in Chainpur being cultivated by Jimdars (Rais) as *raikar* land, and assigned it to Mukunda Thapa, Biru Thapa, and Arjun Thapa, all Chhetris.¹²¹ The land was reconfirmed as *raikar* after another survey by Kazi Narsimha Thapa in 1857.¹²²

Survey teams often fixed which land was to be *raikar*. In 1809, for example, a royal order told Dhanbir Rai and Dewan Rai that the land claimed by them as *birta* (here the word is used for *kipat*) or *seva birta* was, on examination, found to be unregistered; took 'three hundred *khet*' (irrigated land) and confirmed only *pakho* land (unirrigated land where only maize, millet or other dry crops can be cultivated) in their names.¹²³ Since no practice of land registration had existed before and

since early registrations were vague in defining the *kipat* areas, confirmed as 'the ancestral lands' or 'lands being enjoyed since the time of forefathers', it can be surmised how easy the task of conversion of *kipat* into *raikar* could have been.

The immigration of a large number of non-Limbus in Limbuan took place after its conquest by Gorkha, and thus began the alienation of *kipat* lands. The government did not discourage this. Bhimsen Thapa decreed that lands alienated by Limbus by sale 'should be registered as *birta* in the name of non-Limbu purchasers'.¹²⁴ Though this policy was reversed in 1883 there were other methods by which the *kipat* was transformed into *raikar*. One method was the execution of possessory mortgage. But this development took place during the fag end of the nineteenth century.¹²⁵ There was another way marked for its ingenuity.

Not graded into upper and lower caste hierarchies, the Kirat community received as a whole a definite place in the Nepali caste system after political unification. The Kirats were usually assigned the status of Sudra.¹²⁶ Though intra-caste gradations categorized numerically as *bara*, *athara*, *sola* and the like are not to be found among the Rai-Limbus, another sort of hierarchy was introduced in the Kirat society.

The Sena documents usually use the title *Raya*, for the tribal chief, which was later changed to *Rai* by the Gorkhalis. Later documents, however, use the terms *Subba*, *Rai* and *Karta*. That these had different status connotations are suggested by the documents relating to petitions for recognition as *Subba* or *Rai*. In 1834, for example, one Dhanbir *Rai* was conferred a *Subbangi* in response to his petition submitted in 1827 through Kazi Narasimha Thapa with an offer of some land to the government.¹²⁷ One Sibemot *Rai* was similarly conferred when he made a petition with an offer of land. However, according to the list of tenants under him he seems to have been made a *Subba* over not more than three households.¹²⁸ The appeal of one Silmukhi was that in the previous survey he was registered as a *Rai*, but in the new order he was described only as a *karta*. He was given the *Raiship* (*Raigiri*) in 1841.¹²⁹ There were people like Mokhemhang, Harkabir *karta*, Bajunsingh *karta*, Modha *Rai*, Sutarsingh *karta*, Kunna *Rai* and others who applied and obtained *Subbangi* after the offer of land or money.¹³⁰

The number of *Subbas* increased at the cost of *kipat* lands. In 1834 the old *Subbas* complained that the frequent surveys and examinations by the *amalis* of the army and the district military officers resulted in the break-up of their fraternity and the *pagari* investitures to new *Rais* and *Subbas* created much confusion in the land settlement. 'If it

continues, many of our fraternity may migrate to Bhot (Tibet) and Muglan (India),' they said. The appeal was for stay in the conferment of new *Subbangis*. There was a stay order for a period of ten years which demanded that the old and new Subbas of the land between the Arun and the Mechi fulfil their obligations by regular payment of revenues; no *raikar* land was to be converted and shown as *kipat*, and no remissions from the fixed revenues were to be demanded.¹⁵¹ However, the desire of some to achieve a superior position was always beneficial to the central power and the bestowal of higher status of Subba continued unabated.

The title of 'Rai' was given to a village headman in Majh Kirat and a member of the Limbu village council in Limbuan. Thus, in the Limbuan context the desire for upward mobility was from *karta* (a member of the village council under the *kipat* system in Limbuan), to Rai and to Subba (Limbu village headman). The Subbas were again divided into categories like full-fledged *minaha* Subba and *tiruwa* Subba. A *sanad* of the Rana Prime Minister Bir Shamsheer, dated AD 1887, defines a *tiruwa* Subba as one who became a Subba without an offer of *khet* to the government, but paid a levy plus a *salami*. Such *tiruwa* Subbas did not have the right to decide cases and impose fines, a part of the fine went to the presiding headman. Prior to 1887 the inspection teams found the *tiruwa* Subbas imposing fines despite previous orders. On the recommendation of another principal audit team composed of Kharidar Kulnath Upadhyaya and Subedar Padmabahadur Karki Chhetri, the old rule was insisted upon by which the Subbas empanelled by the inspection teams in 1838 and 1853 could become *minaha* Subbas if they surrendered 60 *muris* (about 2 acres; a *muri* is also a volumetric measurement equal to 2.40 bushels) of *kipat* paddy land (*khet*) and land yielding a revenue of Rs. 30/- or else a cash amount and if the Rais and Majhiyas surrendered half of that paddy land and paid half the amount.¹⁵² Orders conferring *Subbangi* in 1896 and 1928¹⁵³ show that this process of eroding *kipat* land continued for decades. Karnadhoj surrendered a plot of *kipat* paddy land which could yield a revenue of Rs. 30 (60 *muris*) and in addition paid a sum of Rs. 52. The order is dated 1985 Fagun 21 gate roj 2 (1922). Another document of 1896 (= 1953 Poush su.11 roj 5) granted *subbangi* to one Askarna Rai after the surrender of *kipat* land yielding 30 *muris* or revenue of Rs. 15 and payment of Rs. 26.

Thus by a long process the communal land-ownership in Eastern Nepal decreased considerably. Further, the literate Brahmans could take advantage of the illiterate Kirats when the former granted loans and made it impossible for the *kipat* owner to redeem his land.¹⁵⁴ That the government sympathized with the non-Limbu settlers, who were

subject to the state taxes under the *raikar* tenure, in any local dispute,¹³⁵ was obvious. In 1804, a dispute between a Limbu and a Brahman settler led to the judgement: 'Limbus do not tolerate Brahmans, but they shall not be allowed to displace the Brahmans'.¹³⁶ Once the Hindu settlers came on the scene, the struggle for land started with all intensity. This struggle, which continued in Limbuan, has been very well brought out by the study conducted by Caplan.¹³⁷ He remarks, 'generally speaking, *kipat* was nibbled at, not swallowed whole'.¹³⁸

Though Prithvinarayan did not impose any tax on *kipat* land, it did not stay free from taxation for long. Ranabahadur Shah imposed levies like *Saune* at 2 annas, *Fagu* at 2 annas, *Bhedabhars* at 1 anna per homestead after the confirmation of 'lands held by Kirats since the time of Makwani kings' in 1786.¹³⁹ Later homestead tax was fixed at the rate of Rs. 6.8 annas. *Kipat* lands were increasingly brought under a diversified tax system.¹⁴⁰ Tax collections were made by various officials like Subbas, *amalis*, Rais and *tiruwa* Subbas. *Ijara* contract was also prevalent in 1831 in the *raikar* lands of the hills of Eastern Nepal.¹⁴¹ In the *kipat*, however, taxes were collected from each Limbu household regardless of the actual area of *kipat* land in its possession. Hence the tax burden was greater on poorer Limbus than on those who had extensive individual land holdings in *kipat*.

The Kirats were absorbed in the general administrative structure of the kingdoms and the policy of the government to maximize the area of state control over agricultural lands to make provisions for land grants and assignments to others decreased the amount of land under *kipat* tenure. In the overall social hierarchy the Kirats were reduced to a lower status. Laws were enforced to make them conform to Hindu norms. The cow-slaughter ban was strictly imposed; instructions given to the Rais, Majhiyas and Jimdars of Majh Kirat in 1857 laid down previously that any accidental death of a cow or an ox was simply to be punished with fine, henceforth such sinners should be dealt with both by *niti* and *smriti* (that is, they should be punished and asked to perform some purificatory rite according to Hindu rituals). Now on all such sinners should expiate (ritually) and make others do the same'.¹⁴² Regulations imposing orthodox caste norms were issued. Sunuwars, Mahato, Tharus, who did not follow the rules of commensal purity and accepted 'rice and water' from Tharu women having connections with Kami, Damai, Sarki, Musalmans and Mushars were fined and were asked to make such women outcaste.¹⁴³ Besides the tax impositions, the Limbus were not exempt from other exactions. Often there were oppressions and once in 1838 the Limbu Subbas and Yakhas complained that when they went to pay taxes for the *khet* under *jagir*, and cash in lieu of *jhara* at the camp, forced labour was imposed

on them by the army and they were made to carry supplies. The government had to intervene.¹⁴⁴ By a similar order in 1831, Bhimsen Thapa had assured the Limbu, Rai and Subba subjects of the Miklung hills that 'that land had been entered in the ledger as our allowance and Subba Prayagdatta Jaisi, sent from here for making settlements (on our behalf), will no more arrest you or give you any trouble, you need not feel restive. If old tenants have fled to some places else, ask them to return and settle down in their lands...Every proper arrangement will be made'.¹⁴⁵

The conversion of *kipat* into *raikar*, and all the heavy taxation and impositions, indebtedness and bondage, slavery, unredeemable mortgages of land and their usurpations resulted in the emigration of the people from their ancestral land. Our previous references, *passim*, have shown that the incidence of emigration was a regular feature in the post-unification period. In absence of any reliable statistics for the whole of Nepal, I will concentrate my attention on Eastern Nepal.

'The progressive decline in revenue and depopulation in the eastern terai districts after 1793 cannot be attributed solely to the "push" factors of over-taxation and oppression in other forms,' writes M.C. Regmi, 'There were also a number of "pull" factors operating from the Indian side'.¹⁴⁶ He holds that after the introduction of the permanent settlement in Bengal (1793) the new zamindar class with secure property rights over land could provide 'greater incentives to prospective settlers than the *Amanat* revenue collectors on the Nepali side'.¹⁴⁷

'Our Tarai region is desolate,' the government of Nepal lamented in 1792, and thus Nepal made attempts to attract settlers from India to its terai lands. The very composition of the terai population shows that the incidence of subsequent migration from northern India into the Nepal terai was pretty high. One scholar observed that the probable cause of this was 'the government (of Nepal) had to content itself with letting migrants from India develop the economy of the terai. Until the last several decades, terai history had been dominated primarily by events further south on the plains, by Pax Britannica, by population growth and the spill-over of people into the terai, by economic expansion represented by the railroads, by new trading communities and adventuresome businessmen. This has been a progression of events which the Nepalese government could not be expected to control to any significant degree'.¹⁴⁸

If the pull factors operating from the Indian side were stronger, the emigration from the Indian plains to the Nepal terai becomes inexplicable. What cannot be denied, despite the fact of the emigration of people from there, was the availability of land in Nepal. When we

consider the sheer number of persons who emigrated from Nepal we realize that the fact of pressure on land or any other natural cause cannot solely be held responsible for the 'push' out of the kingdom, and that similarly the 'pull' from the Indian side cannot be assumed as the most decisive factor. There are many Nepali documents which refer to the emigration of the Kirats to Sikkim and Muglan (India). This situation leads us to turn to the internal social conditions for an explanation. First, the magnitude of emigration from Eastern Nepal should be taken into account.

By the middle of the last century a large number of people were compelled to emigrate from Eastern Nepal. The Limbus were not recruited before to the Nepal army. They fought as irregulars under their own tribal chiefs. Some of the Limbus had fought in the Nepal-Tibet war of 1854-56 and in appreciation, Jang Bahadur exempted them from enslavement and confirmed their *kipats*.¹⁴⁹ However, his attempt to recruit them in the army caused them to migrate. Hooker, a contemporary observer who visited Eastern Nepal in 1848, wrote, 'Many Limbus enlist at Dorjiling, which the Lepchas never do; and the rajah of Nepal employs them in his army, where, however, they seldom obtain promotion, this being reserved for soldiers of Hindoo tribes. Latterly Jung Bahadur levied a force of 6000 of them, who were cantoned at Kathmandoo, where the cholera breaking out, carried off some hundreds, causing many families who dreaded conscription to flock to Dorjiling'.¹⁵⁰

Darjeeling, conquered and occupied by Nepal from 1788 to 1816, and restored to Sikkim by the British in 1817, was taken by the British as a 'gift' in 1835. Often described as the 'British Sikkim', Darjeeling later developed as the place with the largest concentration of Nepali population outside Nepal. After the British conquests of more lands from Sikkim and Bhutan in 1866 the place assumed its present shape as a district. From the beginning the Kirats formed the biggest segment of its Nepali population because it became an easy refuge for coming from the adjoining Eastern Nepal. That this was done on a large scale can be inferred from a special order issued by the Nepal government in October, 1868, to the Kirat Rais and Subbas of the area between the river Arun in the west and the Mechi in the east. It was worded thus, 'After the separation of lands from the control of *kipat* in Khambuan and Limbuan, taxes are being paid (by you) as the Khasa Brahmans (Brahmans and Chhetris) pay on the basis of plough and homestead in the *raikar* land instead of the flat Rs. 6.8 annas (per *kipat* homestead)... As the laws and customs have not been well put together there, the tenants of different villages leave with their families for Dorjeling (Darjeeling) in Muglan (India), and if you

Subbas and Rais come to know about this, make arrangements for the settlements of those cultivated plots left by them with other tenants and pay revenue. Do not leave the lands vacant and do not ask for remission on the plea that tenants have fled. If it is proved that any of you Subbas and Rais have helped the tenants to escape to Dorjeling Muglan, you will be fined as per rules and laws'.¹⁵¹

For want of reliable statistics, it is difficult to arrive at a precise estimate of the population of the kingdom of Nepal during the last century. *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* gave a 'rough estimate' in 1908: 'In all probability it does not exceed 4,000,000.'¹⁵² Earlier Kirkpatrick observed (1793), 'Averting to the very mild and rugged nature of the country, we shall see no great room for imagining its population to be considerable'.¹⁵³ M.C. Regmi holds that in the last century 'low density of population and a consequent shortage of manpower constituted a chronic problem'. If we take into consideration the 1971 census of Nepal (11,555,983) with an annual growth rate of 1.8 per cent, and the Rai-Limbu (Kirat) population in the hills of Eastern Nepal (315,910; their population in Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Udaipur in the plains and Solu Khumbu in the mountain zone add up to 71,495; the total being 397,405, i.e. a little more than 3 per cent of the total population), and calculate backwards, we get figures of the total population of the kingdom in 1900 as 3,469,000* in 1870 approximately 2,038,000 and the corresponding approximate figures of the Kirat population in 1900 and 1870 as 1,15,600 and 67,940 respectively.¹⁵⁴ Hamilton, who visited Nepal in 1802-03 reported 'It is said, that there were in all 90,000 Kirats able to carry arms'.¹⁵⁵ 'Ninety thousand' or 'nine lakh' Kirats are popular descriptions still in use but with no scientific basis.

A regular census was taken in the winter of 1871-72 in the district of Darjeeling. The Bengal Census Report then admitted its limitation when it stated that the task of taking census was difficult in Darjeeling because of the absence of regular villages, scattered population and illiteracy. Yet, W.W. Hunter remarked, 'with regard to the accuracy of the Census, the Deputy Commissioner is of the opinion that the returns are fairly accurate for the old hill territory of Darjeeling, † but they are incorrect for the *terai* Sub-division and for the Damsang tract (Kalimpong) to the east of the Tista'.¹⁵⁶ Anyway, C.F. Magarh's District Compilation of Darjeeling states that the total population of the district in 1872 was 94,712. Under the 'ethnic division' of the population, the 'Nepalis', under 41 different heads, numbered

* This comes close to the rough estimate of *The Imperial Gazetteer*.

† The strip of land which the British took in 1835

25,781. However, this excluded the Murmis or Tamangs (6570) who were placed among the aboriginal tribes. Hunter wrote that 'including the Murmis... the number of Nepalis in Darjeeling would be raised to 32,338'. When we add Syangden, Moktan and Tamang (all Murmis) numbering 12 but shown separately, it makes the figure 32,350. Thus the Nepalis then constituted 34 per cent of the total population of the district. When we add the number of the Kirats—including the Dewan, Dilpali, Durlami, Yakha, Jamadar (Jimdar), Khambu, Limbu Rai and others of the Rai-Limbu group shown under separate heads—it comes to 13,692, because they constituted about 42 per cent of the Nepali population of the district. In fact, Darjeeling alone had 20 per cent of the 1870 figure of Nepal's Kirat population. If the bulk of that population emigrated during 1840-60 as suggested by the British records, about 12 to 15 per cent of the Kirats moved out of their land to Darjeeling. In comparison, if Basnet (Chhetri number shown: 2) and the group vaguely described as Gurkha (51), Pahariya (92), Parbatiya (21) are taken as Chhetris, their collective strength is only 166. Even if we add the 447 Thapas though this could have included the Magars as well, the number rises only to 613. No Brahman or Chhetris have been shown under the heading 'Nepalis'. The Hindu superior castes were classified into two groups of 902 Brahmans and 1754 hill Rajputs. However these figures also included Brahmans and Rajputs from Bihar and other parts of India. In short, out of the total Nepali population of 32,350, the *matwalis* and 'untouchables' constituted 32,080. The Kirats formed the largest group of the Nepali population followed by Tamangs (6570) and Magars (3011). These figures do not include the numbers of Kirats and others who emigrated to Sikkim and other places. If the Kirats formed about 14 per cent of the total population of Darjeeling in 1872, they constituted about 20 per cent in 1901, and still form the largest group of the Nepali population. By the middle of the last century, when the tea industry had not yet been started, the Kirats seem to have settled in large numbers in Darjeeling. Hooker noted that the Limbus enlisted at Darjeeling, and a *Handbook of Darjeeling*, published in 1863, notes that the Darjeeling Sebundy Corps of Sappers and Miners were then 'composed almost entirely of Nepalese'.¹⁵⁷ In 1869 the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling noted 'the increasing immigration of Nepalese',¹⁵⁸ and in the census of 1891, 88000 persons in Darjeeling were recorded to have been born in Nepal, where the total population was said to have been 2,23,314 then.¹⁵⁹ In 1891, the total number of Nepal-born persons enumerated in India was 236,391, in 1901 it increased to 243,037, in 1911 the figure stood at 280,246. In other words, people with Nepalese nationality constituted 35.72 per cent of

the total foreign-born persons in India in 1891, 37.86 per cent in 1901, and 43.25 per cent in 1911. In 1921 and 1931, they constituted 45.39 per cent and 44.77 per cent respectively of the total foreigners enumerated in India.¹⁶⁰ Throughout this period, they formed the single most numerous immigrant group living in India. Hunter commented in 1876 that the Nepalis were a pushing and thriving race and capital agriculturists and labourers in the tea gardens.¹⁶¹ However this alone does not present the true picture.

That the 'push' factor like the pressure on land was not responsible for a large scale emigration from Nepal is borne out by the general economic history of the kingdom—there was 'low density of population' and 'shortage of man-power constituted a chronic problem'—and several references are available which indicate the anxious wish of Kathmandu that 'the village population may increase'. The loss of revenue was the chief consideration with the government. 'Village headmen were held responsible for the loss of production in case cultivators left the *raikar* or the *jagir* lands uncultivated'.¹⁶² Similarly the 'pull' factor from the Indian side—new areas of cultivation and opening of tea gardens—was not decisive for such an exodus of people from Nepal. When we consider the situation in the general context of 'relatively little movement into India'¹⁶³ throughout the period, the question of migration from Nepal assumes an added significance. Moreover, this migration was not for a short period. Hunter noted in 1876, 'The Nepalis who immigrate to Darjeeling from their native country mostly settle down permanently in the District'.¹⁶⁴ The data from Darjeeling showing migration before 1850 indicates that the largest numbers came from the eastern hills of Nepal. During his visit in 1848, Hooker found the land in the hills of Eastern Nepal 'highly favoured by nature', and villages appeared with crops of golden mustard and purple buck-wheat in full flower; yellow rice and maize, green heap, pulse, radishes, barley and brown millet'.¹⁶⁵ Then, the question arises, why did so many people leave their ancestral land?

Speaking on the occasion of the manumission of slaves in 1924, the Rana Prime Minister put the figure of slaves at 51,519. These slaves also fled and took refuge outside Nepal,¹⁶⁶ some of them were however captured.¹⁶⁷ The speech mentioned that slavery in Nepal was a cause of emigration; 'the total number of those who have left the country reaches a high figure'. The speech at the same time noted the exploitation and 'the pitiable slave like condition of the Nepalis working in the coal mines of Assam', and that even then they were 'unwilling to return'.¹⁶⁸

Seeking an answer to the question 'why?' we find that pressure on land is no decisive factor, nor can unscrupulous labour agents from

India entice so many people for such a long period of time to emigrate and provide cheap labour outside. In his work *Thatched Huts and Stucco Palaces*, M.C. Regmi diagnoses the cause of 'a large scale emigration of people from the hill areas of Nepal to Bengal, Assam, Burma and elsewhere' in the nineteenth century in 'the progressive proletarianization of the small peasant in Nepal' during that period. He notes that 'agrarian indebtedness', 'growing population and the consequent pressure on the available agricultural land' and slavery as the 'basic inequalities of Nepal's agrarian system' on the one hand, and 'the development of the coal mining industry in the adjoining provinces of Bihar and Bengal, and of the tea industry in Bengal and Assam' on the other, as factors creating the phenomenon.¹⁶⁹

We also pose another question: why did the people belonging to the Tibeto-Burman dialect groups or people of Mongoloid origin constitute the bulk of the proletarianized small peasants to be pushed out from a feudal Nepal to become the industrial proletariat in India? In the context of Darjeeling, for example, the Brahmans, including not only Nepali Brahmans, formed about 2 per cent of the total Nepali population in 1901, while the Chhetris constituted a little more than 1 per cent of the total Nepali population in 1941. The Brahman-Chhetris are described as 'successful cultivators' and most of the Brahmans were 'residents in the Khas Mahals in the Kalimpong Subdivision' in 1941. It implies that Brahman-Chhetris did not form any sizeable part of the nineteenth century emigrants, those who migrated and became cultivators apparently did so with some capital to invest in land and cattle.¹⁷⁰ Sarat Chandra Das, going from Darjeeling to Tibet through Eastern Nepal in 1881, marked a number of Limbu settlements in Darjeeling, and observed, 'Nepalese settlers are numerous here, and I noticed some Brahmans and Chhetris who live chiefly by selling milk and butter'.¹⁷¹ In comparison, the number of Brahman-Chhetri group increased to a considerable degree in different parts of Eastern Nepal during the corresponding period. Describing Ilam in Limbuan in October 1848, Hooker noted, 'The inhabitants are chiefly Brahmans'.¹⁷² The 1971 census shows that Brahman-Chhetris constituted 52.9 per cent and Limbus 18.3 per cent in Pallo Kirat or Limbuan. The high caste people form the major part of the hill people migrating to the fertile 'revenue yielding' terai of Nepal. In 1961 the hill castes (Brahman-Chhetris) formed 20.4 per cent of the population in the fertile Morang or eastern-most plain district that touches the Siliguri sub-division of Darjeeling. Hill tribals formed only 5 per cent, and the plains people of north Indian origin formed the rest of the 74.5 per cent.¹⁷³

Nepal's career of conquest came to a virtual end in 1815. There was

no possibility of occupying more land. The *Jagir* system with its obvious political and economic implications demanded more lands to meet the requirements of a rapidly growing administrative organism after political unification. The desire for landownership was universal in a feudal society. But lands for *jagir* and *birta* assignments were now limited. The situation was bound to be explosive in the long run, if not immediately. However this did not happen for two reasons: emigration and recruitment of 'Gorkhas' in the British Indian army.

Nepal has been characterized as a 'population-exporting nation'.¹⁷⁴ People escaped from the feudal exploitation in Nepal to the colonial exploitation in British India. In his speech at the time of the emancipation of slaves, the Prime Minister of Nepal contrasted the plight of servitude in which the labourers from Nepal had to work in the colliery of Assam with the happy lot of those who joined the 'Gorkha battalions' of the British Indian army.

Hodgson had perceived that in a country without a trade outlet, the natural and inevitable occupation was war. In view of the land-military complex and the nature of *kriegstaat* that Nepal had assumed, the power depended in the long run on its fulfilling the fundamental condition of providing a career of aims for the army chiefs and high castes. Even after 1815, the regular army, according to Gardner, the first resident, was ten thousand. In 1819 it had reached twelve, and in 1831 had fifteen thousand men. This later constituted the 'peace establishment which was in constant pay', and as one report describes, the 'one-third of the force that Nepal could, at a very short notice, call into the field; and that in a most efficient condition, well drilled, well armed with muskets and bayonets, and tolerably well accounted'.¹⁷⁵ As Hodgson noted, the system of army enlistment was one of annual rotation, and there was always a huge reserved force.

The revolt of the six thousand strong army at Kathmandu on 21 June, 1840, described above,¹⁷⁶ makes the situation clear. When the king said that he had no money to indulge in war, with the British or for further conquests, the soldiers gave a very meaningful reply, 'You want no money for making war; for the war shall support itself'. The trouble died down then, but Hodgson, the Resident, also understood that the situation demanded a permanent solution. He initiated three formulas in order to get rid of a chronic cause of umbrage in Anglo-Nepal relations. To move from the tertiary to the primary: (i) the settlements of border disputes; (ii) a new and healthy direction to be given to the energies of the people at large by fostering a Central Asian trade with India; and (iii) an outlet for the surplus military population of Nepal.¹⁷⁷

The first object was realized by demarcating the frontier with Oudh

in 1830, the eastern terai frontier in 1833 and Nepal-Sikkim frontier in 1839.¹⁷⁸ For the realization of the second object, that is, of converting 'Nepal from an interposing obstacle into a common mart where the merchants from Hindustan might interchange their commodities with the traders from inner Asia', he collected the necessary data and submitted them to the government.¹⁷⁹ Though Hodgson's third proposal of enlistment of troops to find an outlet for the energy of the surplus population of Nepal was pigeon-holed and his trade proposal was accepted, there were a few factors that negated the significance of it all. First, the Indo-Tibet trade through Nepal even before the Gorkha conquest could not have been of immense volume. It is made amply clear by the fact that this trade came almost to a total stop under a slight pressure by the Gorkhas. Had it been significant, it could have withstood this pressure and survived. Tibet undoubtedly had strong commercial ties with Kathmandu. Similarly, 'the scope of the trade of north India extended to the Nepal low-lands', but as Pemble concludes, 'it was as if these two points—the Kathmandu valley and the Nepal lowlands—were the extremities of two separate commercial systems'.¹⁸⁰ Secondly, Nepal had lost the position of primacy in the Indo-Tibet trade by now. Attempts were being made by the British to contact the Tibetans and the Chinese from the west after the acquisition of Kumaon and Garhwal in 1816. By the 1860s commercial interest in Tibet switched from Western Tibet to the Lhasa road through Sikkim. Moreover, after the treaty of Nanking was signed (1842) with China, attempts were made to establish Indo-Tibetan relations with Chinese mediation. Lamb points out that now 'protection of Indo-Tibet trade was important not so much for its inherent value as for its effects on British prestige'. The main interests in Tibetan trade lay only in the need to preserve a foothold in the commercial life of Central Asia and in the face of competition from Russian merchants; and 'by the 1860s the main field for such competition lay in Kashgaria',¹⁸¹ not Kathmandu.

Justifying the 'quietening the passion for arms among the military tribes of Nepal' by 'the encouragement and increase of commerce' in late 1891, Hunter says that 'the Rs.3,000,000 of Nepalese imports and exports in 1831 had grown into a Nepalese trade with British India alone of over Rs.33,000,000 in 1891'.¹⁸² Hodgson had foreseen that such a trade development would only be possible 'when the legal position of British India merchants in Nepal should be placed on a satisfactory footing'. Thus his second series of efforts were 'directed to exploring the judicial system of Nepal'. In support of this stand, the official records noted that during Hodgson's Acting Residentsip (1829-31), 'a gradual cessation of suspicion and distrust between the

Nepalese and the people of the plains of India', was indicated by the increase of commerce, 'especially in the importation of Indian and European articles, to the exclusion of those from Bhutan and China'. Thus the Nepalese chiefs and Bhimsen himself began to show 'a growing inclination for British luxuries and customs'.¹⁸³ This flow of trade was however in the nature of a one-way traffic in which the people of Nepal could play only a marginal role.

Finally, then, what proved catalytic in the circumstance was Hodgson's prime object. He had urged the British government to draft a considerable number of the surplus soldiery of Nepal into the British army. By the time the Anglo-Nepal war in the western zone ended in 1815, about 4,650 soldiers of the Gorkha army had deserted and taken service with the Company in response to the invitations of the British commanders. Three battalions, called the 1st and 2nd Nasiri Battalions and the Sirmoor Battalion had been formed with those soldiers. Edward Pagent, the Commander-in-chief, proposed in 1825 to recruit soldiers from the Nepal dominions. Gardner, the then Resident, however, opposed the idea because he believed that the Gorkhas could not separate themselves completely from their native country, as they could not remove their families from Nepal and, secondly, in case of a war with Nepal, 'they would adhere decidedly to their natural allegiance'. He conceived that a better plan would be to 'negotiate with Nepal for the service of a portion of her organized troops as mercenaries'. Nepal was prepared to agree; Hunter doubted that 'it was under the Prime Minister's (Bhimsen Thapa's) prompting that Mr. Gardner suggested it'. However, nothing was done and in 1832 Hodgson submitted a report about the good qualities of the Gorkhalis as soldiers. He reported that about thirty thousand *dhakres** or soldiers were struck off the roll by rotation every year.¹⁸⁴ Lord Dalhousie later realized the necessity of recruiting Gorkhas. The first eight regiments were recruited from the western hills of Nepal, Kumaon and Garhwal, then exclusively from the Magars and Gurungs, and later from Thakuris and Chhetris as well.

When he presented his views for giving an outlet to the surplus soldiery of Nepal, Hodgson said that the strength of the regular Nepal army was 15,000 and the Rajputs (Thakuris), Khasas and Chhettris, Magars and Gurungs were about 30,000 in number. The soldiers from the two latter tribes filled only the lower echelons of the army.

It must be admitted that the Nepal government did not initially help the British to recruit soldiers. Despite Hodgson's recommenda-

* The word meant commoners who were not in the employ of the government, opposite to *jagir*

tion, probably with the concurrence of Bhimsen Thapa, no centralized system of recruiting could be arranged till 1886, and new recruits had to be smuggled out of Nepal. Jang Bahadur was unco-operative whenever the matter was raised by the British. However, this opposition was not based on any principle but on personal grounds.¹⁸⁵ The initial opposition of the Ranas was on the same grounds that 'the village population may increase' and revenue maximized. Yet, this opposition of the government could not check the outflow of the humble peasantry, and new 'Gurkha Battalions' were formed.¹⁸⁶ From 1886, when the first 'Gurkha Recruiting Depot' was allowed to be opened at Gorakhpur, and other centres were opened as catchments on the borders of Nepal, recruitment became easier. The qualities of boldness, endurance, honesty, frankness and self-reliance of the humble hillmen had attracted the British. Sir Arthur Hirtzel, Under-Secretary of State for India, admitted in 1922, 'it is, after all, mainly because of the Gurkha element in the Army that we value the friendship of Nepal'.¹⁸⁷

According to Major Nicolay of the Gurkha Rifles, in January 1913, there were 18,142 Gurkhas in the Indian army, 1,028 in the Imperial Service Troops, 5,135 in the Military Police of Assam, Bengal and Burma, making a total of 24,205. Of this number, 22,348 men were from Nepal.¹⁸⁸ In addition, there was a reserve, residing for the most part in Nepal, of '100 men per Battalion of the Gurkha Regiments of the Indian Army', sanctioned after the experimental Reserve Training at Gorakhpur in 1909-10.¹⁸⁹ According to the same *Handbook of the Indian Army*, to make good 'annual wastage', between 1,800 and 2,000 recruits were required annually. Going by past experience, it decided that the required annual number should be 'always obtainable without any difficulty'.¹⁹⁰

Vansittart gives a tabular statement of those enlisted during the recruiting seasons from 1886-87 to 1903-04. In total 27,428 men were recruited of whom 19,315 were from central Nepal and 8,113 from Eastern Nepal.¹⁹¹ A table prepared by C.J. Morris gives the distribution of recruits from 1906-07 to 1919-20.¹⁹² When the need arose, as in the years during 1914-18, the British were able to take in a considerably large number of 18,346 recruits in just one 'season'. Nepal lent much assistance in the recruiting of soldiers, and the result, as a report of the Nepal Foreign Office as well as Northey and Morris show, was that 200,000 of the country's best men were recruited during the entire period of the war.¹⁹³ In addition, the British, among the other titles and rewards to the rulers, granted in 1920 an annual present of Rs. 1,000,000.¹⁹⁴ Over 55,000 of the recruited men were enlisted in the regular Gurkha battalions of the British Indian army. The average age

of these young men was around eighteen years,¹⁹⁵ and the 'Gurkhas' suffered around 20,000 casualties. 'When it is recorded that the bulk of these men came from the martial classes of which the total male population, according to the census of 1911, amounted to 907,000—from which total those who were too young, too old, or physically unfit must be excluded—it can be seen to what extent the country had been denuded of its manhood'.¹⁹⁶ It was during the next world war that Nepal told the British, 'What little wealth Nepal has in her man-power, with that she has readily come forward as ever to the help of her great friend and ally during this war and her sons have not failed to show to the world of what stuff they are made'.¹⁹⁷ The question is—who formed the main bulk of those sons of Nepal ?

The Thakurs or Thakuris, considered to be of Rajput origin and from which group the ruling dynasty comes, were prized by the British officers as their best soldiers. But not many of them were available for recruitment. The number of Chhetris too was never particularly high except in the critical war years when all the resources had to be mobilized. The Thakuris were concentrated in the 2nd Battalion of the 9th Gorkha Rifles and here they held relatively better positions. 'In 1929 the Battalion had slightly over 33 per cent of Thakurs serving with it: in the whole Battalion 66 per cent of the Subedars, 75 per cent of the Jamadars, and 70 per cent of the Havildars were Thakurs'.¹⁹⁸ The same source informs that 'in the Nepalese Army a very large proportion of all the officers above the rank of Lieutenant are Chhetris. They are intensely proud of their tradition and affect to look down upon the Mongoloid tribes'.¹⁹⁹

In 1888-89, the earliest years for which records are available, a total of 872 recruitments were made, of these 622 were Magars, 225 were Gurungs, and 24 were classified as 'others'.²⁰⁰ During the period 1894-95 to 1903-04, for which full information is available, 16,304 recruitments were made, of these 5,915 were Magars, 3,524 were Gurungs, 2,217 Limbus, 1,976 Rais and 2,672 were classified as 'others'. From 1906-07 onwards, the Thakuris and Chhettris figured for the first time. However, statistics show that the Magars and Gurungs constituted the major components of the Gurkha soldiers in Nepal. In addition to the fact of the sheer number of recruits from Nepal, the remark made by Tukei, a British Officer should be recalled, 'It is strange to realize that during all these years from 1815 onwards the Nepalese at Kathmandu had been... more often cold than warm in their attitude (towards the British)... yet here in India were Gorkhas freely enlisting and loyally serving the hated rival'.²⁰¹ What explanation can there be for this, particularly in view of the proven loyalty of the Gorkha commanders towards their king?²⁰²

The answers to this and the earlier question as to why so many emigrated from Nepal are to be found in the social condition of the kingdom. Prithvinarayan had to assure the fugitive Limbus of Pallo Kirat when they left for Sikkim and the adjoining Indian territories after their defeat by the Gorkhalis. There is much evidence of the exasperation of the government from time to time when it came to know about the flight of ryots due to oppressions. The real cause was the economic hardship and the social discrimination suffered as a result of the political, social and economic domination of the high caste *tagadhari* class over *matwalis* of Mongoloid origins and 'untouchable' low castes, who constituted the overwhelming majority of the humble, toiling folk. Thus many people left their lands simply because they were left with no option. The non-caste federated tribal society of Nepal was transformed to a caste society, and in many cases the old clan villages of different tribes became mixed villages, the Brahman-Chhetris being the new comers there on the wake of the Gorkhali conquests. Since the number of Brahman-Chhetris had risen, large segments of these groups spilled over to the lower and middle echelons of the army and the administration, at the cost of the Mongoloid groups. The dispossessed were left with no other alternative than emigrating or joining the British Gurkha battalions.

The 'communities belonging to the eastern hill regions, the Himalayan regions, and the Terai played scarcely any role in politics, the administration, or any army'²⁰³ because the very nature of the political unification of Nepal meant the consolidation of the Parbate high caste domination, others remaining in a subordinate status, and in most cases simply as hewers of wood and drawers of water for the dominant group. Our study of the Kirats in particular establishes that they formed a large emigrant group; the political unification of the kingdom meant a total disruption—social, economic and political—of their own tribal life patterns.

Emigrations enrolment with the British army provided an external opening to those who were hard put to maintain themselves within their ancestral land. This controlled the situation from becoming explosive and at the same time served the colonial and imperial interests of the British. Though Nepal remained 'independent', the British could impose many constraints, for example, in the import of arms, recruitment of soldiers, foreign relations and the like. The British played a significant role in court politics through the Resident. As seen earlier, Hodgson could bring about a change in the ministry; when Ranoddip Singh, the successor of Jang Bahadur, placed obstructions in the matter of recruitment of soldiers by the British, the Resident had said, 'the Minister does not mean business, but intends by professions and pretences to *put off the evil day* as long as possible,

in the hope that eventually the proposal may be dropped'. The proposal was not dropped, the Prime Minister was himself dropped and was murdered eighteen days later.

The phenomenon of the emergence of the Rana rule and its relationship with the British, the contrivance of mutual interests which propped up the Rana autocracy for a century and ensured Nepal's voluntary submission and free assistance to the British, however, calls for a separate study. The changes made at the top of the power structure from the beginning of the Gorkhali rule, were only changes of individuals and families; they all belonged to the same high caste group. The switch between the Thapas and Pandes, and the eventual usurpation of political power by the Ranas were only different notes of the same tune.

Seen in the broader perspective of social processes at work, the history of Nepal provides one pattern. Starting from the infiltration of the Indo-Aryan speaking plainsmen to the Nepal valley in the ancient past; the thirteenth century high caste migration from India to Western Nepal, the land of the non-Brahmanical Indo-Aryan Khasas, to the broadening and intensification of the process of high caste Hindu domination everywhere since the Gorkha conquest we can arrive at a more meaningful interpretation of the history of 'modern' Nepal. Variations are there of course, but the pattern remains the same.

A question may be justifiably asked — were there then only 'negative' consequences to the process of political unification of Nepal? Did it not contribute 'positively' in the integration of the people? If one looks at the process of political unification without any romantic notion or bias born from a false sense of nationalism, or any caste or religious prejudice, one is bound to come to the conclusion that the Gorkhali conquests created a unified kingdom, but not a unified society. The Gorkhali state achieved the integration of several princedoms and principalities into a common territorial framework under a central authority. However, it did not unite the segregated groups brought under the unified kingdom; on the contrary it divided them.

Symbols of common identity are often indicated as proof of integration. In the case of the hill people or Pahares a few things like the national dress and a national weapon (*khukuri*) were regarded as symbols of unity.²⁰⁴ However no deeper significance was attached to this. Another point which is quoted to give the proof of an early feeling of oneness is taken from the *Vamsavali*. It recounts that when, on a pilgrimage to Benares, Prithvinarayan met some people from the western hills also going there and requested that they travel together,

they agreed saying that divided though they were into Gorkha, Lamjung, etc. in the hills, in the plains they were all 'hillmen'. Such a sentiment of identity probably helped in the emergence of a distinct ethos. The people described in this anecdote of course all spoke an identical language and belonged to one cultural milieu. They constituted the *tagadhari*.

Belonging to the same linguistic family the Tibeto-Burman dialects spoken in Nepal had many common words and other similarities, though they were not mutually intelligible. Different groups professed cults and creeds which were similar in some respects, and presumably gave a unanimity of spirit and of thought. These *matwalis* were distinct from caste Hindus. Despite varying degrees of acculturation and the so-called 'Sanskritization' which, as noted, was not the result of the 'internal process' but largely one of political domination of the caste Hindus, they still retained facets of their ancient beliefs and customs. Cases of resistance to Hinduism have also been noticed from time to time. Such resistance has a close connection with the problem of land in Pallo Kirat where culture often assumed the role of a 'political ideology'.²⁰⁵

The part played by language in the task of national integration need no explanation here, and Nepali scholars stress the importance of language in bringing about a national unity after political unification.²⁰⁶ We have noted the spread of Khas kura even before the unification of Nepal as a result of the migration of the Brahman-Chhetris. That the government followed a consistent policy of using this language for official purposes after the unification is proved by its use in all official documents, the replacement of Newari and Maithili, and the mild admonitions to officers like Dinanath Upadhyaya, Nepal's agent in Calcutta, in 1796 for sending reports in Persian. 'You write in Persian,' he was told, 'Being a Hindu, start writing in *nagari* letters'.²⁰⁷ In a country of isolated villages and mutually unintelligible languages, most of them without a script or a literary tradition, the Khas kura, later called Gorkhali could emerge as the second language of the Tibeto-Burman speaking tribes. The official patronage to it, and its use in the British armed forces, where recruits from different tribes were taken, also helped its growth. The development in transport and new communication methods have been helping its spread in recent times. It is realized that importance and stress should be given to the language 'if integrity and sovereignty of Nepal is to be maintained'.²⁰⁸ But, at the same time, it should be remembered that as the Brahman-Chhetri people dominated the socio-political life of Nepal, the percentage of the literate and the educated was much higher among them. Being native speakers of Nepali, their proficiency in the official language further helped to consolidate their domination.

It was after the present kingdom of Nepal came into being that the language known variously as Khas-kura, Parbate and Gorkhali assumed yet another name, Nepali. However this name was not locally used. The first use of the name was probably made by J.A. Ayton, Assistant Professor of Fort William College in Calcutta, whose first grammar of the Nepali language was published in 1820.²⁰⁹ Hamilton and B.H. Hodgson, a more eminent scholar, who lived in Nepal from 1829 to 1842, mostly as the Resident, contributed innumerable papers on different aspects of the Nepal society. However he used the names Khasa and Parbatiya to describe Nepali. Poets and writers of Nepal simply called it 'bhasha' or Khas-kura or Parbate, though officially it was Gorkhali. The name Nepali was made popular outside Nepal and the rulers of the country recognized it only in the nineteen thirties. The unification of Nepal helped its quick spread. Hamilton keenly observed, 'it is making rapid progress in extinguishing the aboriginal dialects of the mountains'.²¹⁰ But Tibeto-Burman modes of speech are used in homes and tribal villages even today. Many village people belonging to such groups do not follow Nepali or else lack proficiency in its use.

In this context, it will not be amiss to mention that in India, the Nepali language has helped to bring about a closer integration of the Kirats, Magars, Gurungs, Tamangs, Newars, Brahmans, Chhetris and others. The Nepali language is spoken there as their first language or 'mother tongue'. There are other socio-economic factors behind the rise of a feeling of identity among the Indian Nepalis, and the language serves as a bond of unity among them. But that is a different story which receives a detailed treatment in a separate study.²¹¹ However, it should be noted that in this different context the absence of any domination by one group over others within the community has gone a long way in bringing about a closer union. This is only to show a contrast and not to suggest that the problem of national integration can be circumvented by the elimination of other languages and beliefs.

Authors have referred to the national spirit of the Nepalese in the nineteenth century, specially with reference to the war with the British. The word 'Nepali' for the language and the Nepalis or Nepalese for all the people of Nepal were used by the British. This is however not to be seen in the Nepali documents of the post-unification period. References were made to the whole country as Nepal, but the people were mentioned by their caste and tribe names, or as *praja* (subjects) and *raiti* (tenants), or as four *varnas* and thirty-six castes. As late as 1968 some observers noted, 'Some mountain tribes and mountain villages of Nepal still are not aware that the nation of Nepal exists. They consider themselves members of some other tribal group, and

citizenship in a larger social organization is still incomprehensible. *Nepal* designates for them the Kathmandu Valley only. Nepal's common man has no history of responsibility beyond his family, village, or tribe. Nationalistic spirit is confined chiefly to urban areas where communication and travel are comparatively easy'.²¹²

Facilities of travel and communication may help in bringing about closer physical integration, but this is not the only basis of national unity. The subject of national integration covers a wide gamut of social relationships. When integration of different political units into a common territory under a central authority is only the result of conquests and annexations and when the social relationships emerging from it continue to be based on religion, caste and other forms of discriminations, no foundation of a true national state can be said to have been laid.

The social relationships which emerged from the Gorkha conquests were based on ethnic, caste and other discriminations, hence they were exclusive, discriminatory and exploitative. Without denying the achievement of the small kingdom of Gorkha in the unification and consolidation of Nepal, its resultant social relationships have been underlined here because they make real barriers in the task of true integration of disparate elements into a single nation. The forms and degrees of discrimination and exploitation were really manifold.

First, the political unification of Nepal accentuated on a wider basis the subjugation of the original inhabitants, mostly Tibeto-Burman speaking Mongoloids, by the high order Hindu migrants from the Indian plains. The unification thus meant the control of the state power by some prominent high caste families. In the economic sphere, the very nature of the Gorkha conquests gave birth to a privileged landholding gentry or a feudal class of *jagir* and *birta* owners drawn from the same 'two superior classes of the Hindoos'. They occupied all the positions of trust, enjoyed civil and military power and maintained themselves on exactions from the humble peasantry. Thirdly, the laws and rules that were framed up were for the benefit of this privileged class. As a result the political unification of Nepal meant the consolidation of the powers and privileges of this socially higher, militarily and politically powerful and economically privileged order. Scholars of Nepal invariably praise the cohesive role of the Hindu religion, but what is overlooked in the endeavour is the fact that culture and religion often assume the role of political ideology. If the theoretical rationale of the politically unified kingdom of Nepal was expressed by the Brahmanical Hindu religion, its pragmatic basis was represented in the class of *tagadhari* high castes who enjoyed a monopoly of power.

Notes

Introduction

- 1 Colonel William Kirkpatrick, *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepaul*, London 1811, reprint New Delhi 1969, p. 69
- 2 Prithvinarayan Shah's *Divya Upadesh* was edited and published by Yogi Naraharinath as *Sri 5 Bada Maharaja Prithvinarayanshahdevo Divyaupadesh*, Goraksha-Grantha-Mala No. 80, Kathmandu AD 1959. It was also published in *Itihas Prakashma Sandhipatra-samgraha*, Vol I, ed. Yogi Naraharinath, Kathmandu 2022 VS (AD 1965), pp. 311-15. The quotation in the text is a translation from *Sri 5 Prithvinarayan Shahko Upadesh*, Jagadamba Publication No. 39, Vol I, p. 13, ed. Gautamvajra Vajracharya. The *Upadesh* has been translated into English by L.F. Stiller S.J., cf. his *Prithvinarayan Shah in the Light of Ditya Upadesh*, Kathmandu 1968, pp. 35-46. In view of the omission of details of important events in the king's life in the *Upadesh*, D.R. Regmi considers it 'useless as a historical treatise', *Modern Nepal*, Vol I, Calcutta 1975, p. 255. The original text is recorded to have been preserved in the household of the descendants of Prithvinarayan's commander, Shivaramsingh Basnyat, and is reported to be in the commander's own handwriting. The king speaks in the first person singular. In the prologue it is stated that they are the dictates of the king in the presence of his preceptor, priests, members of the *thar-ghar*, the royal kinsmen and courtiers when he came to Nuwakot after the conquest of the three city-kingdoms of the Nepal valley and the dominions of 'Hindupati'. The short work was in no way meant to be read as an autobiography; he was only bequeathing his thoughts as maxims for running the affairs of the newly-created kingdom of Nepal under Gorkha. The language fully confirms the historical value of the work. It cannot be regarded as useless.

3 *Upadesh*, Vol I, p. 13

4 This is a fact quite common in Nepal. Haimendorf says, 'Cradling the three ancient towns of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhadgaon, the valley is not only the political and administrative centre of the Kingdoms of Nepal, but it is Nepal in the sense that the inhabitants of the surrounding mountain country will refer to this valley as 'Nepal', even though their own homelands lie just as much within the political frontiers in the present state of Nepal, *Caste and Kin in Nepal, India and Ceylon*, ed. Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, Bombay 1966, p. 11

5 Haimendorf, op. cit.

6 *Itihas Samsodhanka Praman-prameya*, Vol I, ed. Dhanavajra Vajracharya, Kathmandu 2019 VS (AD 1962), p. 21: In support of the stand that Nepal conformed to its present shape even in the remote past, the arguments put forward are: i) The first epigraphic reference to Nepal is found in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of the great Indian king Samudragupta (c. AD 330-80) where the name Nepal is mentioned as a feudatory state between the names of other such states, Kamrup (Assam) and Kartipur (Garhwal-Kumaun). The whole region between Assam and Garhwal, therefore, was Nepal; ii) the mention of the subjugation of the Mallas beyond the Kali-Gandaki, about sixty miles to the west of the Nepal valley, in Manadeva's Changunarayan Inscription indicates that Nepal in the fifth century AD embraced a much greater area than the Nepal valley; iii) Hiuen Tsang, the famous Chinese pilgrim who visited India in the seventh century AD, described Nepal (Ni-po-lo) as a country about 4000 *li* (1300 miles) in circuit with its capital city of 20 *li* (6 miles) round. The present area of Nepal is almost equal to this; hence remarks D.R. Regmi, 'This means that the area which Nepal covers at the moment was practically the same which it had enjoyed in the ancient past', *Medieval Nepal*, Vol I, Calcutta 1965, p.2; iv) The T'ang annals of China mentions that Narendradeva, the king of Nepal, had helped China to oust Arunasva, a feudatory chief who had usurped the throne of Kanauj after the death of Harshavardhan, by sending seven thousand horsemen, V.A. Smith, *Early History of India*, Oxford 1924, p.355; it is argued that a petty principality could not have supplied such a contingent; v) in his *Rajtarangini*, a poetical history of Kashmir, Kalhana mentions the defeat of the king Jayapida of Kashmir by Aramudi, described as the king of Nepal; therefore Nepal was not confined to the valley alone in the past; vi) there are many works where Nepal finds mention along with Kumaun, Kedar, Jalandhar and Kashmir and this could not have been so if Nepal meant the valley only.

However, some pertinent points can be raised here. First, the mention of Nepal between the names Kamrup and Kartipur does not necessarily prove the fact of Nepal's expansion from Garhwal in the west to Assam in the east. As the Nepal valley was famous for its agriculture, manufacture, trade and urban life in otherwise rural surroundings, or probably an area covered with dense forests and left uninhabited, in the past the valley alone could have enough significance to find mention in Samudragupta's epigraph. Second, it is true that the Nepal valley kingdom, whenever under a strong ruler, tended to grow in size, but there is no strong basis to prove that Nepal conformed to its present shape in the ancient times or to vindicate a view like that of Jagdishchandra Regmi, who in his *Lichchhavi Sanskriti*, Kathmandu 2025 VS (AD 1969), pp. 95-105, claims that Nepal during the ancient period extended from the Kali-Gandaki region in the west to Sikkim and Bhutan in the east. Third, in the absence of other corroborative evidence, it is difficult to accept the Chinese pilgrim's account at its face value. According to Samuel Beal, Hiuen Tsang 'does not appear himself to have gone into Nepal... (he) went to the capital of Vrijjis and there speaks from report', *Si-yu-ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, Vol II, Book VII, London 1884, pp. 80-81. Fourth, the report of the T'ang annals about Nepal's seven thousand horsemen can be viewed against many instances of rulers of even tiny principalities giving exaggerated figures of their force and exalted accounts of their conquests. As regards arguments based on Kalhana's account of the defeat of Jayapida of Kashmir by Aramudi, it is to be noted that Aramudi has not been properly identified. Some scholars take him to be a Tibetan king. D.R. Regmi thinks that he might have been a tribal chief, probably a Magar. The name Aramudi is not found in any record of Nepal. However there is such a place-name in the Magrat area to the west of the Nepal valley. Kalhana, who might have been well-acquainted with the more famous Nepal of that region, could have used the name. Lastly, the mention of Nepal along with those of larger kingdoms like Kumaun, Kedar and Kashmir is found in works of much later dates.

7 D.R. Regmi's views that Prithvinarayan's 'patriotism was the guiding factor' behind his conquests and that the king was a 'nationalist to the core of his heart' are found in his *Modern Nepal*, Calcutta 1961, p. 100. However he modifies his opinion in the revised and enlarged edition of the work, *Modern Nepal*, Vol I, Calcutta 1975, pp. 89,264

8 Ludwig F. Stiller, S.J., *The Rise of the House of Gorkha : A Study in the Unification of Nepal, 1768-1816*, New Delhi 1973, p. xiv

- 9 *ibid.*
- 10 D.R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal*, 1975, p. 90
- 11 Stiller, p. xiv
- 12 *ibid.*
- 13 Francis Buchanan Hamilton, *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal and of the Territories Annexed to this Dominion by the House of Gorkha*, Edinburgh 1819, p. 245; reprint New Delhi 1971.
- 14 E.H. Carr, *What is History?* Pelican Book, reprint 1967.
- 15 Mahesh Chandra Regmi, *A Study in Nepali Economic History, 1768-1846*, New Delhi 1971, p. ix
- 16 Giuseppe Tucci, *Nepal: The Discovery of the Malla*, London 1962, p. 76
- 17 *ibid.*
- 18 Mahesh Chandra Regmi, *Economic History*, and also his *Land Tenure and Taxation in Nepal*, 4 vols., Research Series, Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1963-68; *Land-ownership in Nepal*, Berkeley 1976; and *Thatched Huts and Stucco Palaces: Peasants and Landlords in 19th century Nepal*, New Delhi 1978.
- 19 M.C. Regmi, *Landownership in Nepal*, p. 6.

Part One: Pre-unification Situation

1. Historical Background

- 1 The story of the Nepal valley being drained by the deity Manjusri, mentioned in *Manjusrimulakalpa*, has a great deal of similarity with the legends of other countries. A local tradition relates that the plains of Loyang, once the capital of China, was drained and made fertile by a deity. Kalhana also recounts a similar story about the Kashmir valley in his *Rajtarangini*, 1/25-27, and the Tibetans have a similar legend, J.A. Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism*, London 1895.
- 2 *Gopala Vamsavali*, a palm-leaf manuscript first discovered by Cecil Bendall, is written in one of the early Newari scripts, Bhujimol. Many of its folios are missing. The languages used in it are Sanskrit and the classical Newari, Durbar Library Catalogue I. 1583.7: H.P. Shastri, *Catalogue of Palm-leaf and Selected Paper Manuscripts Belonging to the Durbar Library, Nepal*, 2 vols., Calcutta 1905, p. 16. The chronicle was published with a Nepali translation of the Sanskrit

portion in *Himavat Samskriti*, 1/1, Kathmandu 2016 VS (AD 1959), pp. 9-31.

- 3 Kirkpatrick's information about these early rulers given in chapter VIII of his *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepaul* seems to be based on the manuscript of a *vamsavali* preserved in the library of Kaisher Shamsar Rana at Kathmandu. The text has been reproduced by Luciano Petech as Appendix V of his *Medieval History of Nepal, c. AD 750-1480*, Serie Orientale Roma X, Materials for the Study of Nepalese History and Culture 3, Rome 1958. Daniel Wright's *History of Nepal*, translated from Parbatiya (Nepali) by Munshi Shew Shankar and Pandit Gunanand, Cambridge 1877, was 'written by one Guvaju' or Vajracharya priest of the Buddhist Newars. The chronicle used by Sylvain Levi in his *Le Nepal*, 2 vols., Paris 1905, was compiled by one Siddhi Narayan, a Shaivite Newar. See also D.R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, Part I, Calcutta 1965, ch. II and Bikramjit Hasrat, *History of Nepal: As Told by Its Own Contemporary Chroniclers*, Hoshiarpur 1970, 'Prologomena'.
- 4 K.P. Jaysawal, *Chronology and History of Nepal, 600 BC-AD 800*, Patna 1937, pp. 62-63
- 5 Shankarman Rajvamsi, *Lichchhavisamvatko Nishkarsha*, Kathmandu 2030 VS (AD 1973).
- 6 In the Pashupati Suryaghat Inscription, Vijayavati, daughter of Manadeva, refers to her father as a scion of the Lichchhavi family. However, the first king to describe himself as a Lichchhavi was Shivadeva: his inscription of 512 samvat (AD 568 or 500) in Hariram Joshi, ed. *Nepalko Prachin Abhilekh*, Royal Nepal Academy, Kathmandu AD 1973, Inscription No. 57. The claim of Lichchhavi descent is faithfully maintained by Shivadeva's successors. See also Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, *Kirata-Jana-Kriti: The Indo-Mongoloids, Their Contribution to the History and Culture of India*, Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta 1951, p. 24
- 7 J.C. Jain, *Life in Ancient India as Depicted in Jaina Canons*, Bombay 1947, p. 254
- 8 Manadeva's Changunarayana Inscription, Hariram Joshi, op. cit., p. 6ff.
- 9 Samuel Beal, op. cit.
- 10 There is a controversy about the date of Amsuvarma. The first date he used, according to his own system of reckoning, has been variously read as 29, 31 and 34 by scholars. Bhagwanlal Indraji takes it to be the era founded by Harshavardhan, *Indian Antiquary*, XIV, p. 420. Fleet agrees with him, 'The Chronology of the Early Rulers of Nepal', *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. 3, Appendix

4, pp. 177-91, and so do does Kielhorn, *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 5, App., pp. 73 and R.K. Mukherji, *Harsha*, London 1926, pp. 30,39,40. Lévi regards the era as a Tibetan one. A group of diligent Nepali scholars of the Itihas Samsodhan Mandal (a committee for the rectification of the Nepal history) of Nepal reads the date as 29. Shankarman Rajvamsi holds that it was but a transformed Saka era.

Many Indian scholars believe that Amsuvarma was a feudatory of Harshavardhan, but his epigraphs clearly point out that he was a vassal of the Lichchhavis of Nepal.

- 11 *Inscriptions in Gupta Characters*, Serie Orientale Roma X, Materials etc. 2, Rome 1956, Inscriptions No. L.LI, LII, LIII, LIV, LV, LVI
- 12 Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, New York 1967, pp. 27; Gedun Chhopel, *Deb-thar-dKar-po*, tr. by Samten Norboo as *The White Annals*, Dharmasala 1978; T. Kunga Dorje, *Deb-thar-mar-po*.
- 13 Lévi, op. cit, II, p. 185
- 14 Shakabpa, op. cit., p. 25 ff.
- 15 D.R.Regmi, *Ancient Nepal*, Calcutta 1960, 'The Bhrikuti Story', pp. 155-57
- 16 The statement is based on a number of writings on the ancient period of Nepal by Nepali scholars.
- 17 Luciano Petech, op. cit., p.1
- 18 *ibid*.
- 19 Namoyati is simply described as a 'Bhotaraja' in the *Gopala Vamsavali*; he is said to have ruled over Nepal after Basantadeva.
- 20 Their belief is based on a tradition embodied in *Swayambhumahatmya*; Petech, p.30
- 21 Kalhana, *Rajtarangini*, IV, verses 531-581
- 22 Lévi, II, pp. 177-78; however, Petech, pp. 29-30, thinks that Aramudi is not a Tibetan name 'in spite of Lévi's suggestion to this effect'.
- 23 K.P. Jaysawal, 'Chronology and History of Nepal, 600 BC-AD 800' *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, XXII, Part 3, 1936, pp. 156-264
- 24 Jagdishchandra Regmi, *Lichchhavi Samskriti*, pp.11
- 25 D.R.Regmi, *Ancient Nepal*, p. 170ff: 'Was Aramudi a Magar Chief?'
- 26 Suryavikram Gewali, *Nepal Upatyakako Madhyakalin Itihas*, Kathmandu 2019 VS (AD 1962), p. 12; R.C. Majumdar, 'The Eras in Nepal', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, I,I, 1959; D.R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, Vol I, relevant parts.
- 27 Radhakrishna Choudhury, 'The Karnats of Mithila (c. AD 1097-1355)' *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Vol XX, Parts I-IV, Poona 1955, p. 93

- 28 Jagajjyotimalla of Bhaktapur (Bhadgau) claims his descent from Nanyadeva in his play, *Muditakuvalayasva*, written in 748 Nepal Era (AD 1628). Similarly Pratapmalla of Kantipur (Kathmandu) traces his genealogy from Nanyadeva in his inscription of 748 NE (AD 1649)
- 29 Radhakrishna Choudhury, op. cit., p.1
- 30 Dhanavajra Vajracharya, ed. *Itihas Samsodhanko Praman-prameya*, pp. 232 ff.
- 31 Someshvar I, the Chalukya king of Kalyani in South India, claims his conquest of Nepal in his inscription of AD 1047. Someshvar III makes a similar claim in his inscription of AD 1162, *History of the Deccan*, 2 vols, 1960 relevant portions. It is interesting to note that colophons of *Pryaschittopadesa*, composed in Nepal in AD 1178, and two other works composed in AD 1180 inform us that they were composed during the reign of Someshvardeva: Petech, pp. 51,70,71
- 32 Petech, p. 51
- 33 Petech, pp. 31,32,37-40
- 34 Petech, p.99
- 35 Petech, pp. 145-54
- 36 Giuseppe Tucci, *Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal*, Serie Orientale Roma, Materials etc. 1, Rome 1956, p. 68, 121; Yogi Naraharinath, *Itihas Prakash*, Vol II, Parts 1-3; Petech, p. 101 ff.; Baburam Acharya. 'Tanhunko Sen-vamsa', *Bhanubhakta Smarak Grantha*, ed. Suryavikram Gewali, Darjeeling 1940, p. 63
- 37 Radhakrishna Choudhury, 'Harisimhaddeva of Mithila', *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, vol XLII, Parts I-IV, 1961, Poona 1963, pp. 123-40
- 38 Petech, p. 103
- 39 Petech, p. 104
- 40 Petech, p. 113
- 41 Inscriptions at Patan Pimbahal (AD 1359) and Simbhu.
- 42 *Gopala Vamsavali* corroborates the date as Marga 470 Nepal Era and describes the destruction.
- 43 The play *Narapatijayacharyatika*, written by Jagajjyotimalla, the king of Kathmandu, is the most important source on the conquests of Jayayakshamalla, Petech, pp. 166-67
- 44 'Jye Ekshah Mull or Jye Kush Mull,...is said to have annexed Morang, Tirhoot, and Gyah to his dominions, and to have conquered also Gorkha to the westward, and Sikarjoong of Tibet to the northward. He likewise completely subdued the refractory Rajahs of Patan and Khatmandao' Kirkpatrick, *Kingdom of Nepaul.*, p. 266

- 45 Kirkpatrick, p. 267; Suryavikram Gewali, *Madhyakalin* etc., p. 104
- 46 Tucci, *The Discovery of the Malla* (1962) and *Preliminary Report* (1956); Yogi Naraharinath, *Itihas Prakash*, 2/1-3 2013 VS (AD 1956)
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- 49 For Asokachalla's inscriptions, cf. Kielhorn, 'Inscriptions of North India', *Epigraphia Indica* Vol V, p. 79; Rahul Sankrityayan, *Himalaya Parichaya 1: Garhwal* (Hindi) Allahabad 1953, pp. 110ff; Tucci, *Preliminary Report*, p. 67. Also *Indian Antiquary*, X, p. 346, *Epigraphia Indica*, XII, p. 29. For Lakshaman Era, cf. R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The History of Bengal*, Vol I, Dacca 1943, p. 233, 259
- 50 Tucci, op. cit., p. 75
- 51 Tucci, p. 112ff., 152
- 52 *Itihas Prakash (IP)*, 2/1, p. 79ff.
- 53 Petech, pp. 80-81
- 54 Tucci, p. 110
- 55 *IP*, 2/1, pp. 46-47; Tucci, p. 113, reads the date as 1298.
- 56 Punyamalla's copper-plate charter (AD 1335) to Jayakara Pandit, Prithvimalla's (1356) to his tutor and horoscope-maker Golhu Jaisi, another charter (1358) to Devraj Jaisi and Abhayamalla's (1376) to Jayabrahma Jaisi, *IP*, 2/1
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- 59 *IP*, 2/1, p. 103
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- 61 *ibid.*
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- 64 op. cit., Vol 4, pp. 7
- 65 *ibid.*
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- 67 David P. Hanige, 'Some Phantom Dynasties of the Early and Medieval India: Epigraphic Evidence and the Abhorrence of a Vacuum', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XXXVIII, Pt. III, 1975, p. 526
- 68 *IP*, 2/1, p. 112ff
- 69 *IP*, 2/1, *passim*
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ment of Nepal, under the title, *Senā-vamsavali*, ed. Shankaram Rajvamsi, Puratattva Prakashanmala 17,2020 VS (1963). Also, *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi-patra Samgraha*, Vol. 1, ed. Yogi Naraharinath, Kathmandu 1965, p. 252ff.

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- 72 It was published in *IP*, 1/1, Kathmandu 1955, p. 561
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- 85 Hamilton, *passim*
- 86 *IP*, 2/3, pp. 598-611
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- 93 *Gorkha Vamsavali*, Kasi Gorakshatilla Yogapracharini, u.d., pp. 5-7
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- 95 Kirkpatrick, pp. 160,162, 163
- 96 *IP*, 2/3, pp. 586-88 quotes a list of the Chaubisi kings with the number of houses in each of those principalities during the time of Prithvinarayan Shah. Yogi Naraharinath notes that the list is taken from a damaged historical document in the possession of Anangnath Paudyal.
- 97 Hamilton, pp. 244; D.R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal*, 1975, p. 16. In his *Divya Upadesh*, Prithvinarayan refers to the number twelve thousand to mean Gorkha. The people of Gorkha, even when their population was larger, were often described as 'the twelve thousand'.
- 98 Hamilton, p. 245
- 99 The letter of Rudra Shah, the king of Gorkha, to Pratiman Upadhyaya, 1730 VS (AD 1673); the letter of Prithvipati Shah to Vyasa Upadhyaya, 1772 VS (AD 1715): in the first case the king confirms having borrowed a sum of Rs 120, and in the second case the king renews his grandfather's unpaid loan of Rs 320 at a higher rate of interest, *Aitihāsik Patra Samgraha*, No. 2, ed. Dhanavajra Vajracharya and others, Kathmandu 2021 VS (1964), pp. 10-11, 50-51, passim.
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2. People and Society

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- 13 Petech, p.30
- 14 Lichchhavi epigraphs in Gnoli, Vajracharya and H. Joshi
- 15 Perceval Landon, *Nepal*, 2 vols., London 1928, vol. 1, p. 12ff.
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- 17 The relevant verse from the *Pasupati Purana* is quoted in *Sanskrit Sandesa.*, 1/16, Kathmandu, p. 36. Lichchhavis are described as immigrants and it is said that those strong rulers of Vaisali, 'after extirpating the Kiratas, will bring their rule in Nepal'.
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A Grammar of the Rong (Lepcha) Language, Calcutta 1876; The Lepcha words are printed in the Lepcha script.
- Iman Singh Chemjong, *Limbu-Nepali-Angreji Sabdakosh*, Kathmandu AD 1961; *Lepcha-Nepali-Angreji Sabdakosh*, Kathmandu AD 1969; H.W.R. Senior, *A Vocabulary of the Limbu Language of Eastern Nepal*, Intelligence Branch, Division of the Chief of Staff, Simla 1908
- 144 Hemraj Shakya, *Nepal Lipi Prakash*, Kathmandu 2030 VS (AD

- 1973) — , ed. *Varna Parichaya*, Puratattva Prakashan Mala 2, Kathmandu 2017 VS (AD 1960)
- 145 Jayakanta Mishra, *History of Maithili Literature*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi 1976, p. 1
- 146 Haraprasad Shastri discovered *Charyagiti* at Kathmandu in 1916: Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, *Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, Calcutta University 1926; Hem Barua, *Assamese Literature*, New Delhi 1965, p. 30; Jayakanta Mishra, op.cit., p. 44; Sukumar Sen, *History of Bengali Literature*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi 1960, rev. ed., 1971, p. 24 ff.
- 147 Suryavikram Gewali, *Nepal Upatyakako Madhyakalin Itihas*, 1962, p. 218 and ch. 18
- 148 The letters of various Sena rulers of Vijaypur to Kirat chiefs, referred to in the subsequent chapters, are in Maithili. The Kirat chiefs used it not only in their communications with others like Brahmans, probably Maithils, but also with other Kirats: cf. Chosha Raya to Khoaji (Boaji) Raya, Belayanji Raya (AD 1722), Dewan Srikanta Raya to Tularam Pandit (AD 1760), Srikanta Raya to Jembucho Raya (AD 1761), Dewan Jaskarna Raya to Rambhadra Pandit (AD 1765); Prithvinarayan Shah's grants of *kusbirta* to Mahanta Sumaran Das (AD 1771), Pratapsimha Shah's land-grant to the same (AD 1775), Gorkha commander Abhimansingh Basnet's land-grant to a priest, Lokeshwar Pandit are in Maithili. There are also other instances of the use of Maithili. For the documents referred to above, cf. *Puratattva-Patra-Samgraha*, Pt. 2, AD 1962
- 149 Sundarananda, *Triratna-Saundarya-Gatha*, ed. Dhanavajra Vajracharya, Nepal-Sanskritik Parishad, Kathmandu 2019 VS (AD 1962). This edition contains a valuable historical introduction by Nayaraj Panta and also a useful collection of historical documents in Appendices.
- 150 Hamilton, p. 16
- 151 Pratapmalla's Ranipokhari Inscription, 1592 Saka Era: 790 Newar Era (AD 1670), *Puratattva-Patra Samgraha*, pp. 2-4
- 152 Balkrishna Pokhrel, ed. *Paanch Saya Varsha*, Kathmandu 2020 VS (AD 1963) It contains a collection of specimens of Nepali prose writing of the period between AD 1337 and 1886.

3. Eastern Nepal: Tribes and Traditions

- 1 For example, the epigraphs in *Epigraphia Indica*, V, pp 170; XVIII, 112, verses 8-11; XX, 22, reference in the 'Sabhaparva' of the *Mahabharata*; *Markandeya Purana*; F.E. Pargiter, *Bibliotheca Indica*, 1904, p. 322; E.T. Atkinson, *Notes on the History of the Himalayas of*

the NWP, India, 1883, ch. III, p. 125 ff.; McCrindle *Ancient India as Described by Ptolemy*, ed. S.N. Mazumdar Sastri, Calcutta 1927, pp. 191-94, 217; Suryavikram Gewali, 'Sanskrit Sahityama Kirata Jatiko Varnan', *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan Patrika*, 2/1, Darjeeling 1934; Sashi Bhushan Chaudhuri, *Ethnic Settlements in Ancient India*, Pt. I, Calcutta 1955.

- 2 Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, *Kirata-Jana-Kriti: the Indo-Mongoloids*, op.cit., p. 23
- 3 *ibid.*
- 4 Kasten Ronnow, 'Kirata', *Le Monde Oriental*, XXX, Uppsala 1936, p p. 90-169; Chatterjee, op.cit.
- 5 Chatterjee, p. 18
- 6 The derivation from the Mech work 'Kiret' for silk, op.cit.
- 7 *EI*, XX, 22, fn. 11
- 8 R.A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, op.cit., pp.34-36
- 9 Fr Matthjias Hermanns, *The Indo-Tibetans: the Indo-Tibetan and Mongoloid Problems in the Southern Himalayas and North-east India*, Bombay 1954
- 10 op.cit., pp. 130-31
- 11 Iman Singh Chemjong, *Kirat Itihas*, Kalimpong 1948; *History and Culture of the Kirat People*, Kathmandu 1966; *Kiratkalin Vijaypurko Samkshipta Itihas*, Kathmandu 2031 VS (AD 1974); *Kirat Mundhum (Kiratko Ved)*, Champaran, u.d.
- 12 Chemjong, *History and Culture.*, p.2.
- 13 E. Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, Calcutta 1906, sec. ed. 1915, rep. 1916; C.J. Morris, *Gurkhas; Handbook for the Indian Army*, Calcutta 1933, sec. ed. 1936, p. 85; Dor Bahadur Bista, *People of Nepal*, p. 122; Francis Taker, *Gorkha: The Story of the Gurkhas of Nepal*, London 1957, p. 38.
- 14 The Sena land-grants and letters to the Raya (Rai) chiefs: Vidhata Indra Deva to Boajit Raya, 1741 VS (AD 1684), original with Prembahadur Chemjong; Man (?) Deva to Sabha Raya, 1754 VS (AD 1697), original with Subba Ramananda, Tamar Khola, Ikhabu; Harinarayan Sena to Adakil Raya, 1794 VS (AD 1734), original with Narbir Limbu, Myanglung, Tera Thum; Mahapati Sena to Thujeney Raya, 1754 VS (AD 1697), original with Dhanprasad Angbuhang, Changay, Athrai; Vidhata Sena to Jasu Raya, 1734 VS (AD 1677), original with the same. Similar other documents are found in the private possession of many Kirats in eastern Nepal.
- 15 Fürer-Haimendorf, *Himalayan Traders.*, p. 108
- 16 *ibid.*
- 17 C.J. Morris, op. cit., pp. 103-16
- 18 *LSI*, III, Pt.I, pp. 283-88, 305-13, 327-39, 342-49, 373-81

- 19 Chemjong, *Limbu-Nepali-Angreji Sabdākosh*, 'Preface', pp. 3-4
- 20 Morris, p. 87
- 21 Chemjong, *Kirat Mundhum*.
- 22 Minhaj-us-Siraj, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* quoted in *Kirata-Jana-Kriti*, p. 54
- 23 Chatterjee, *Kirata-Jana-Kriti*, p. 55; E.A. Gait, *History of Assam*, revised and enlarged by B.K. Barua and H.V.S. Murthy, Calcutta 1963, p.1
- 24 Thomas A. Marks, 'Nanchao and Tibet in South-Western China and Central Asia', *The Tibet Journal*, III, No. 4, Dharmasala 1978, p.3 ff.
- 25 ibid
- 26 M. Blackmore, 'The Rise of Nan-chao in Yunnan', *Journal of South-east Asian History*, I, Kuala Lumpur 1960, pp.47-61
- 27 Quoted in Northey and Morris, *Gurkhas*, pp. 214-15; Morris, *Gurkhas*, p. 85
- 28 Oral tradition of the Yakhas (Dewans) narrated by old Dewans of Darjeeling.
- 29 Charu Chandra Sanyal, *The Meches and Totos of North Bengal*, North Bengal University 1973, p. 69; Chemjong, *Mundhum*, p.1
- 30 Hermanns, *Indo-Tibetans*, p. 12
- 31 Shirley Kurz Jones, Rex L. Jones, Philippe Sagant and Nicholas Allen in Part I entitled 'Spirit Possession in Eastern Nepal', *The Spirit Possession in Nepal Himalayas*, 1976.
- 32 M.C. Regmi, *Land Tenure and Taxation in Nepal*, combined volume, Kathmandu 1978, p. 536 fn.
- 33 N.K. Bose, 'An Account of the Mundas', *The Structure of Hindu Society*, New Delhi 1971, p. 44
- 34 Hodgson, *Essays on the Languages, etc.*, rep. New Delhi 1972, p.1, Pt. II, p.46
- 35 A few studies on the Tamangs are: Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, 'Ethnographic Notes on the Tamang of Nepal', *Eastern Anthropologist*, IX, Nos. 3-4, pp. 166-77, which deals with the Tamangs who live east of Kathmandu; Santabir Lama, *Tamba Kaiten Hwai Rimthim* (Nepali), Darjeeling 1957, which gives the genealogy, habits and customs and also some folk songs of the Tamangs: a large portion of the work is translated in 'The Tamangs as seen by one of themselves', Alexander W. Macdonald, *Essays on the Ethnology of Nepal and South Asia*, Kathmandu 1975; Surendra Munshi and Ugyen Lama, 'The Tamangs of Darjeeling', *Journal of the Indian Anthropological Society*, vo. 13, No.2, July 1978, pp.151-185, vol. 13, No.3, November 1978, pp. 265-286. Also Morris, Vansittart, Dor Bahadur Bista.
- 36 Subhadra Subba, *Studies in Bilingualism in Nepal: Bilingualism in Nepal Terai*, Report on a Pilot Project No. 1, INAS, Kirtipur 1975, p.2
- 37 Petech, *Medieval Nepal*, p.187

- 38 op.cit., pp.175-76
- 39 Bista, *People of Nepal*, pp. 55,60
- 40 Macdonald, op.cit., p. 129
- 41 Santabir Lama, op.cit; Gedun Choephel, *The White Annals*, tr. by Samten Norboo, Dharmasala 1977, p.37
- 42 Munshi and Lama, op.cit.
- 43 Grierson, *LSI*, III/I, p. 189
- 44 Munshi and Lama, op.cit.
- 45 Perceval Landon, *Nepal*, 2 vols., London 1928, rep. Kathmandu 1976, II, p. 246
- 46 Bista, op.cit., p. 52
- 47 Hamilton, pp. 52-53
- 48 Baburam Acharya, *Sri 5 Badamaharajadhiraj Prithvinarayan Shahko Samkshipta Jivani*, 4 vols., Kathmandu 1968 AD, vol. 3, p. 606
- 49 C. Horne, 'Paper-making in the Himalayas', *Indian Antiquary*, VI, April 1877, p. 96 quotes Hodgson; Macdonald, pp. 148-49, fns. 27, 28
- 50 Macdonald, op.cit.
- 51 Sarat Chandra Das, *Tibetan-English Dictionary*, Calcutta 1902, p. 598
- 52 Snellgrove, *Himalayan Pilgrimage*, p. 216
- 53 Robert A. Paul, 'Some Observations on Sherpa Shamanism', *Spirit Possession.*, op.cit.
- 54 Bista, p. 34
- 55 Michael Oppitz, 'Myths and Facts: Reconsidering Some Data Concerning the Clan History of the Sherpas', *Contributions to the Anthropology of Nepal*, ed. Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, Warminster 1974
- 56 *ibid.*
- 57 Haimendorf, *Himalayan Traders*, ch. 5
- 58 *ibid.*
- 59 L.A. Waddell, *Among the Himalayas*, London 1898, Note No. 16 in the Appendix
- 60 A.C. Campbell, 'Note on the Lepchas of Sikkim with a Vocabulary of their Language', *JASB*, IX, 100, Calcutta 1840, pp. 379-93; G.E.S. Gorer, *Himalayan Village: An Account of the Lepchas of Sikkim*, London 1938, sec. ed. 1967; A.K. Das and S.K. Banerjee, *The Lepchas of Darjeeling District*, Bulletin of Cultural Research Institute, Special Series 2, Calcutta 1962; S.K. Banerjee, 'Marriage Pattern among Lepcha Community: Past and Present', *Modern Review*, CXI, 2 February 1962, pp. 148-51; C. de Beauvoir-Stocks, 'Folklore and Customs of the Lap-chas of Sikkim', *JASB*, XXV, 1925, pp. 325-505; C.A. Bell, 'Ancestor Worship among the Lepchas' *JASB*, LXXII: 1903; Grierson, *LSI*, III, I, pp. 233-49, 255-71
- 61 G.B. Mainwaring, *Dictionary of the Lepcha Language*, Berlin 1898, 'Preface', p. ix

- 62 There are two loan deeds between a Limbu, Dhanman Subba, and a Lepcha, Ata Sardar, registered at the Darjeeling Court in 1855 under two anna non-judicial stamps of the East India Company. The texts are in Nepali, and in one of them the Lepcha text in the Lepcha script is given on the back. The photo of one of them is published (plate no. 5 and 6) along with the text of the deed, Kumar Pradhan, *Pahilo Pahar*, Darjeeling 1982, p. 80.
- 63 B.H. Hodgson, 'On the Koch, Bodo and Dhimal Tribes', *Miscellaneous Essays Relating to Indian Subjects*, I, section I, Pt. 3, London 1881, p.107 ff.
- 64 Dor Bahadur Bista, 'Dhimal and Bodo', *People of Nepal*, p. 142 ff.; Tulsi Diwas and others, *Dhimal Lok Jivan Adhyayan*, Kathmandu 1973; Indra Bahadur Rai, 'Purba Nepal Teraika Dhimalharu' *Tipeka Tippaniharu*, Darjeeling 1966, pp. 11-18; Tulsi Diwas, *Pradarshankari Dhimal Lok Samskriti*, Kathmandu 1978

4. Eastern Nepal: History and Polity

- 1 Francis Buchanan Hamilton, *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*, London 1819
- 2 Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, *Kirata-Jana-Kriti*, p.62
- 3 William Foster, *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*, rep. New Delhi, pp. 24-25
- 4 Iman Singh Chemjong reports that this particular genealogy was in the possession of Ratna Bahadur Limbu of Pachthar, *Kiratkalin Vijaypurko Itihas, VS 1641-1872*, Kathmandu 1972, pp.22-23
- 5 Hamilton, pp.132-33
- 6 *ibid.*
- 7 Chemjong, *op.cit.*, p. 26
- 8 Hamilton describes Lohang as the fourth son of Mukunda. The *Palpa Sena Vamsavali*, composed in Sanskrit by Bhavadatta, calls him the fifth son of Mukunda by the third wife, daughter of the ruler of Pyuthan, a member of the Chaubisi. The work narrates the division of the Sena kingdom in verses 26-28.
- 9 Hamilton, p. 133
- 10 Chemjong, p.34
- 11 Mainwaring, *Grammar.*, p. x
- 12 The local traditions heard from different people at Lohagarh narrate the story of a Loha(r) Raja and say that the forested hills nearby have remains of his palace. The folk etymology now derives the name from Lohar or blacksmith. A day-long search in those hills in 1968-69, however, yielded nothing.
- 13 Hamilton, p. 136

- 14 The history was compiled in Tibetan by the Sikkim ruler, Thutob Namgyal and his consort, Jeshey Dolma, when they were interred by the British at Kurseong in Darjeeling in 1908. It was translated into English by Dawa Kazi Samdup. Both the original and the translation are unpublished. A copy of the work was procured by Charles Bell and given to the library of the Royal Central Asian Society, London. The source in this book is a copy obtained from Sikkim.
- 15 H.H. Risley, *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Calcutta 1894
- 16 Nima Taklinmu, 'Sikkim Namko Artha', *Lepcha Jatiko Utpati Au Shrishtiko Ek Jhalko*, Darjeeling 1968, p.3
- 17 Risley, p.10
- 18 Chemjong, p.47
- 19 Sarat Chandra Das, *Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet*, ed. W.W. Rockhill, London 1902, p.26
- 20 op.cit., p.27
- 21 Chemjong, p.46
- 22 Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, 5 Vols.; Calcutta 1912-52, Vol. III, Calcutta 1916
- 23 Hamilton, p. 137
- 24 *Puratattva-Patra Samgraha*, Pt. 2, p.4
- 25 The original letter, in Maithili, is in the Rashtriya Abhilekhalaya (National Archives), Kathmandu, Chemjong, pp. 68-69 gives a verbatim reproduction of the letter but with a wrong reference.
- 26 The *thyasafu* no. 975: National Archives, Kathmandu. The relevant portions in Newari with their Nepali translations are given in *Aitihāsik Patrasamgraha*, Pt, 2, 8021 VS (AD 1964), p.43 fn.
- 27 Hamilton, p. 137
- 28 *Bengal Past and Present*, Calcutta July-December 1932
- 29 Hamilton, p. 138
- 30 *ibid.*
- 31 L.S.S.O'Malley, *Purnea: Bengal District Gazetteers*, Calcutta 1911, p. 35; Jadunath Sarkar, *The History of Bengal*, Vol. II, Muslim Period, 1200-1757, Dacca 1948, p. 376
- 32 The *thyasafu* in Newari quoted by Nayaraj Panta in his Introduction to Sundarananda's *Triratna-Saundarya-Gatha*, ed. Dhanavajra Vajracharya, Kathmandu 2019 VS (AD 1962), p. 63 fn.
- 33 *Gorkha Vamsavali*, edited and published by Yogi Naraharinath, Kashi Gorakshatilla, pp. 79-82. Also published in *Ancient Nepal: Journal of the Department of Archaeology*, No. 28 and 29, July 1974 and October 1974, pp. 1-28 and 1-24 respectively.
- 34 Ramji Tewari, 'Bhupatindra Malla', *Purnima*, 1/3, 2021 VS (AD 1964), pp. 39, 40 fn.

35 Hamilton, pp. 138-39

36 The copper-plate inscription in *Abhilekh Samgraha*, No.11, ed. Ramji Tewari and others, Kathmandu 2020 VS (AD 1963), p.11; *Aitihāsik Patrasamgraha*, No.2, pp. 40-41

37 The document, dated 1754 samvat, consulted in Eastern Nepal.

38 Mahapati Sena to Jasu Raya, 1734 Samvat Magh, copied by one Indrajū. The year seems to be 1754 as Mahapati's land grant to Thujen Raya, 1754 Samvat Savan badi roj 1 with proper seal suggests. Both the documents are in private possession at Athrai in Eastern Nepal. Hamilton, 'Mahapati means elder son, and I was assured by the Munsuf of Bahadurgunj, that his real name was Mandhata', p. 139.

39 Indu Vidhata to Jasu Raya, 1754 samvat Savan badi roj 1

40 Hamilton, p. 139

41 The letter published in *Itihas Prakash*, 1/1, p. 91; *Puratattva Patrasamgraha*, No.2, p.5, Chemjong, p. 79 refers to the queen as Padmavidhata Indurajarajeshvari, a misreading by Chemjong of Srimadvidhata.

42 ibid

43 *Puratattva Patrasamgraha*, 2, p.6 the letter dated Samvat 1764 Sal Savan Sudi 5 panchami 3 roj

44 Chemjong, p.81

45 O'Malley, *Purnea*, p.189

46 op.cit., pp.36,189

47 ibid

48 Hamilton, p. 139

49 Chemjong, pp.86-87

50 Chokha Raya to Boaji Raya, Samvat 1779 Katik Sudi 14 roj, Vijaypur, *Puratattva Patrasamgraha*, 2, p.7

51 The Sikkim History (Note 14 above) states, 'The third Rani was the daughter of a Limbu chief, who ruled in the Arun valley in West Sikkim, named Yong Yong Hang'. The Limbu chronicle calls the chief Yo Yo Hang and gives the name of his daughter as Inku Hangma.

52 The Nepalese generally say Sukhim. Waddell, however, derives the name from the Nepali or Parbatiya word *Sikhin* or 'the crested' because the mountain ridges of Eastern Nepal, as seen from Nepal, 'seem to form a bristling series of crests', *Among the Himalayas*, Appendix Note No. 6. The word *sikhin*, however, is not to be found in any Nepali dictionary.

53 J.D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals*, Vol. I, p.20

54 op.cit., p.207

55 Risley, *Gazetteer*, pp.10,13

- 56 Hodgson, *Miscellaneous Essays*, I, p.399
- 57 Hamilton, p.148
- 58 op.cit., p.139
- 59 *Angbhang Vamsavali*, quoted by Chemjong, pp. 94-95
- 60 The Sikkim History: 'To every subject who came to pay him respects the Regent gave a plateful of salt. As salt was a very rare thing then, it induced one to come to him... It was a means to obtain a pretty correct census. He had all the names of recipients of the salt *bakshish* noted down in a roll, and next year the first assessment of taxes were made according to the above roll'.
- 61 Hamilton's account is fully supported by a Sanskrit genealogy which says that Jagat was the second son of Manik: Hamilton, p. 139; *Sena Vamsavali*, pp. 14-15
- 62 Letter from Manik Sena to Gangaram Ojha of 1783 Fagun sudi 10; from Manik Sena to Thanadar Kotwali of Chautara Garh of 1784 Chait badi 10; from Manik Sena to Raja Dhruvasimha of Bettia Raj of the same date, *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi-patra Samgraha*, 1,p.673
- 63 *Bengal Past and Present*, Calcutta July-December 1932
- 64 The *Vamsavali* procured from Dhanbahadur Subba of Athrai, written in a long sheet of Nepali paper 8'6" x 91 over 2
- 65 *Puratattva-Patra-Samgraha*, 2, p.9
- 66 Kamdatta to Sathwa Raya, 1818 Magh badi roj 10
- 67 Kamdatta Sena to Ramchandra Pandit, 1820 Samvat; to Rambhadra Pandit, Samvat 1822 Aswin sudi 1 roj, *Puaratattva.*, pp.13,15
- 68 The Persian document of Ravi aul 4 tariq 1158 quoted by Chemjong, p. 83 informing the source as Subba Prembahadur Mobohang; D.R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal*, 1975, p. 76
- 69 *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, II, No. 44, 51, 85, 98, 174, 233, 241
- 70 K.C. Chaudhuri, *Anglo-Nepalese Relations from the Earliest Times of the British Rule in India till the Gurkha War*, Calcutta 1960, p.49
- 71 Chemjong, *History and Culture of the Kirat People*. 115; K.C. Chaudhuri is mistaken when he says that Gorkha was 'one of the four sovereign principalities into which Nepal was then divided. These were: Kathmandu, Patan or Lalitpatan, Bhatgong and Gurkha', op.cit., p.5. The mistake is repeated by Asad Husain, *British India's Relations with the Kingdom of Nepal*, London 1970, p.2
- 72 *Puratattva.*, p.11 ff.: 1817 Push badi nau 3 roj and 1818 Jyestha sudi 15
- 73 op.cit., pp. 14-16=17: 1821 Baisakh sudi 9 roj
- 74 L. Petech, *I Missionari italiani nel Tibet o nel Nepal*, Vol. II, Pt. 4, Rome, p.15
- 75 *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, op.cit.

76 op.cit.,pp.18,20,27,29,48,67-68, 71; Hamilton, p.140

77 *Puratattva.*, pp. 17-18: Magh sudi 1824

78 *Calendar.*, op.cit.; Hamilton, op.cit.

79 ibid.

80 Hamilton, p. 148

81 ibid.

82 D.R.Regmi, *Modern Nepal*, 1975, p. 79 quotes Prembahadur Limbu, *Kirat Jatiko Itihas*

83 Hamilton, p. 147

84 Markham, *The Mission of George Bogle*, Appendix I, p. 300

85 Robert Eric Frykenberg, ed. *Land Tenure and Peasant in South Asia*, Wisconsin and New Delhi 1977, Introduction, p. 1

86 Hamilton, p. 150

87 op.cit., p. 149

88 ibid.

89 M.C. Regmi, *Land Tenure*, I, pp. 126-134; *Landownership in Nepal*, p. 104 ff.

90 Frykenberg, op.cit., p.8

91 Hamilton, p. 157

Part Two: The Process of Political Unification

5. The Gorkha Conquest of Nepal

- 1 D.R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal*, Calcutta 1961, p. 100
- 2 D.R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal*, Vol. I. Calcutta 1975, p. 89
- 3 Sundarananda, *Triratna-Saundarya-Gatha*, p. 105, verse 7
- 4 According to *Vamsavalis* Prithvinarayan changed his *gotra* from Bharadvaja to Kashyap at Kasi probably with a view to sever his ritual and nominal connections with his collaterals and as a sign of his total independence from them.
- 5 *Upadesh*, I, pp. 24-5
- 6 There are three places having the same name Nuwakot in Nepal. The place referred to here is about 30 km west of the Nepal valley. For source material of the history of this place, cf. Dhanavajra Vajracharya and Tekbahadur Shrestha, *Nuwakotko Aitihāsik Ruprekha*, Kathmandu 2032 VS (AD 1975).
- 7 In his Sanskrit work *Prithvindravarnodaya*, Lalitaballabh, the court poet of Prithvinarayan, describes Nuwakot as a place surrounded by a deep moat and stone walls. The work was composed in AD 1770, verse 35: *Upadesh*, II, p. 434ff.
- 8 Kalu Pande, an important member of Prithvinarayan's court, was brave and shrewd. He was appointed a Kazi. The king says, 'I had a mind to give the post of Kazi to Biraj Bakheti, but the post had to be given to Kalu Pande because the latter is more intelligent'. Biraj Bakheti was a Magar; Kalu Pande was a descendant of Ganesh Pande who had helped Dravya Shah to capture Gorkha. Kalu Pande died in 1757 fighting against Kirtipur.
- 9 *Upadesh*, I, p. 318
- 10 The Gorkhali army, commanded by Biraj Bakheti, a Magar, had failed and the command was given to Maheshwar Panta. But he

also failed in the face of a concerted move by the three kings of the Nepal valley. Biraj and his fellow Magars told the king, 'You had replaced us by Panta. Your Panta could achieve nothing except drying up a golden river', *Bhasha Vamsavali*. The reference was to the Gorkhali retreat after burning down a bridge over Trisuli river.

- 11 Three Muslims, Sekh Jarwar, Mamatki and Bhekarsingh, from Lucknow had gone to Nuwakot seeking employment as they knew how to fire guns. The king appointed them 'Adjutants' and they trained the Gorkhali army, *Upadesh*, I, p. 212. A letter of William Moorecraft from Hazipur to the East India Company, dated 8 September 1814, informs that one Francis Neville, born of a French father and an Indian mother, was in the employ of Prithvinarayan, *Papers Respecting the Nepaul War* quoted in Suryavikram Gewali, *Prithvinarayan Shah*, Darjeeling 1976, pp. 64-5 fn. The king had also married a daughter of Abhimansingh who helped in procuring guns.
- 12 Astrology and tantric rites played an important part in the hill states. The date and time of every important undertaking was decided by astrologers. The burying of the nail in the enemy soil was a magical rite for facilitating the easy occupation of the enemy territory.
- 13 Jayanta Rana had left Gorkha in humiliation after Narbhupal's defeat at Nuwakot. He was then employed by Jayprakashmalla, the king of Kathmandu, and was given the task of defending Nuwakot.
- 14 Prithvinarayan gives the account in his *Upadesh*, *Upadesh*, I, pp. 320-21
- 15 Lalitaballah, verses 34-39, *Upadesh*, I; *Sri 5 Badamaharaja*, Bir Library, Kathmandu, pp. 37-48, which ends with the victory over Belkot. It gives the names of all important Gorkhali commanders.
- 16 *Bhasha Vamsavali*, cf. *Upadesh* II and III.
- 17 *Upadesh*, III, pp. 929-30, Letter No. 3
- 18 Prithvinarayan to Rajivlochan Pandit of Kaski reveals that Kaski then had sought the help of Gorkha against Lamjung, an ally of Gorkha. The relationship of Gorkha with Lamjung had soured after the Gorkhali occupation of Nuwakot. The letter expresses the helplessness of Gorkha because it was then engaged in the task of subjugating Changu and Sankhu, *Upadesh*, op. cit.
- 19 *Bhasha Vamsavali*, Kathmandu and Patan editions
- 20 Prithvinarayan to Haridev Pandit, c. AD 1756, describes Nuwakot as '*rajdhani*' or capital, *Upadesh*, III, Letter No. 14. His letters of AD 1745 to 1767 were despatched from Nuwakot headquarters. Lalitaballah refers to Nuwakot as '*Sri-rajdhani*'.
- 21 The account of the conquests are also given in a manuscript kept by the family of Bhakti Thapa who laid down his life in the course

- of Anglo-Nepal War, 1814-16, *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi Patrasamgraha*, 1, p. 372.
- 22 For the source material of historical outline of Dolakha, Dhanavajra Vajracharya and Tekbahadur Shrestha, *Dolakhako Aitihāsik Ruprekha*, INAS, Kathmandu 2030 VS (AD 1973).
- 23 When the oral history of Dolakha is recited every year during the Dussera festival, the names of its early kings are given as Hai Hai Raja, Sui Sui Raja, Golma Raja, etc., which probably indicates their Tibeto-Burman speaking Mongoloid origin, op.cit, p. 17.
- 24 Prithvinarayan's Lal Mohar (Royal Order), in the possession of a family at Dolakha, published in *Itihas Prakash*, 1/1, p. 91. According to Baburam Acharya the first order was of 7 August 1754.
- 25 Prithvinarayan to Haridev Pandit and Jamadagni Upadhyaya, Bhadravadi 12 roj 4 (c. AD 1755) *Upadesh*, III, pp. 953-54, Letter No 8.
- 26 The silver coin on the obverse has the legend 'Sri Sri Gorakhnath Sri Sri Bhavani' and on the reverse 'Sri Sri Prithvinarayan Sahi Deva' 1671: the year is in Saka era, Baburam Acharya, *Sri 5 Badamaharaja.*, 2, p. 301.
- 27 The letter referred to in Note No. 25 above.
- 28 The Gorkha delegates to Tibet, Nandu and Keharsingh Basnet, to Prithvinarayan, *Aitihāsik Patrasamgraha*, 2, pp. 78-79; *Upadesh*, III, p. 1042, Letter No 37.
- 29 Five letters relating to the Tibet trade policy were brought to light by Balkrishna Pokhrel, *Pach Saya Varsha*, and reprinted in *Aitihāsik Patrasamgraha*, 2, p.83 ff. The king rewarded Haridev with a *birta* land at Pipaltar in Kabhre-Palanchok; *Upadesh*, III, pp. 966-70, Letters 11-14.
- 30 The king mentions this episode in his *Divya Upadesh*.
- 31 Baburam Acharya, *Sri 5 Badamaharaja.*, 2, p. 339.
- 32 According to Acharya, op. cit., pp. 339, 357-60 the Nagarkotis were from Kangra which had wrested its freedom on the decline of the Mughals. They repulsed the Ruhellas from Garhwal-Kumaon. The story of their bravery travelled fast to the hill states of Nepal. Jayprakash of Kathmandu had brought about 150 of them to act as instructors. They had reached Kathmandu about 1757; Acharya, op. cit., pp. 339, 357-60.
- 33 Lalitaballabh, verse 44, says that Makwanpur was on the side of Nepal against Gorkha.
- 34 Hamilton, p.145: Digbandhan and members of his family were taken prisoners. Hamilton adds, 'The chief persons that had resisted... he (Prithvinarayan) put to death, some by sword, some by the rope, and some by flaying them alive. Their children he delivered to the most vile and abominable tribe, (Sarki), to be educated in their odious

profession of outcasts'. Sarki is the occupational low caste of leather-workers and cobblers. Hamilton informs us that Digbandhan, his wife and seven sons were kept in confinement and lived on the pittance sent to them by their kinsman, the king of Palpa. 'What became of the remainder of these unfortunate persons I cannot say; but in the year 1780 Bhubar, one of the sons of Digbandhan, effected his escape to Betiya, in the Company's territory, where he was kindly received and two villages, free from the obligation of paying any revenue, were granted to him'.

35 N.L. Chatterjee, *Mir Qasim*, Lucknow University 1935, pp. 163-64. The episode finds mention in *Riaz-us-Salatin* and *Siqr-ul-Mutaqherin*, Vol. II, and Nepali texts like *Bhasha Vamsavali* and *Divya Upadesh*. The ruler of Makwanpur was Digbandhan and not Vikram Sen as is given in K.C. Choudhuri, *Anglo-Nepalese Relations*, p. 10.

36 *Upadesh*, III, pp. 986-87, Letter No 20

37 *Bhasha Vamsavali* records that 1700 of the Newab's men were killed, the Gorkhals lost 25 to 30 men and 50 to 60 Gorkhals were wounded. The Gorkhals captured two cannons, one bomb and 400 to 500 guns. It says that when Prithvinarayan heard the news of the escape of 'Gurwin Khan', the king became so angry that only 1700 were killed and the rest were allowed to flee. The king even refused to give *darshan* to the victorious army. In his *Upadesh* he only says that when the 'Kashmeri Khan Nawaf' invaded makwanpur, 'I came back after repelling him from the border with the help of only a hundred and twenty swords'. The retreat of the Nawab's army is described in *Siqr-ul-Mutaqherin*, II, N.L. Chatterjee, op. cit., pp. 163-64

38 The date of the fall of Dhulikhel (22 October 1763), six other villages (27 October) and Pharping (2 November) are according to the calculations of Baburam Acharya on the basis of diaries and letters preserved in the Red Box at the Palace Record Room and Jaisi Kotha (Foreign Office) Record. The king's letter to Ramkrishna Kuvar is quoted in full by Acharya in his biography of Prithvinarayan, *Sri 5 Badamaharajadhiraj*, 3, pp. 441-42. The diary was preserved by the descendants of the king's astrologer, Kulananda.

39 *Upadesh*, III, pp. 998-99, Letter No 23: to Ramkrishna Kuvar Margabadi 5 roj 5 (January 1764)

40 op. cit., p. 1009, Letter No 27 of Prithvinarayan to Ramkrishna Kuvar, Margabadi 7 roj 3 and Letter No 26 'Ka', p. 1031

41 The relevant portion of Father Giuseppe de Rovato's letter, 29 December 1769, is quoted in L.F. Stiller, *The Rise of the House of Gorkha*, p. 122. Also Stiller, 'A Letter of Father Giuseppe de Rovato (December 29, 1769)', *Journal of Tribhuvan University*, V, June 1970,

- p. 7. de Rovato wrote, 'We wrote to the commander (the Gorkhali commander at Parsa) that we had nothing with us except the necessary food for the journey and some medicines, as we were going to Nepal. We had been closed, and that death was the lot of anyone carrying anything into Nepal, even in the smallest quantity'. Kirkpatrick gives an extract from Father Giuseppe's 'Account of Nepaul': 'The king of Gork'ha, despairing of his ability to get possession of the plain of Nepal by strength, hoped to effect his purpose by causing famine; and with this design stationed troops at all the passes of the mountains to prevent any intercourse with Nepal; and his orders were most rigorously obeyed, for every person who was found in the road, with only a little salt or cotton about him, was hung upon a tree; and he caused all the inhabitants of a neighbouring village to be put to death in a most cruel manner: even the women and children did not escape, for having supplied a little cotton to the inhabitants of Nepal; and, when I arrived in that country at the beginning of 1769 it was a more horrid spectacle to behold so many people hanging on trees in the road', Kirkpatrick, *op. cit.*, Appendix III
- 42 *Bhasha Vamsavali, Upadesh*, Hamilton and contemporary records
- 43 Jayprakash offered, *inter alia*, the following terms to Prithvinarayan : (a) mutual recognition of Gorkha and Kathmandu coins of equal weight and quality as legal tender in their respective kingdoms; (b) both kingdoms to send equal amounts of goods to Tibet, both to keep trade agents for the supervision of imports from Tibet and equal distribution of gold obtained from there; (c) the Tibet trade to be regularized through Nuwakot; (d) equal distribution of *sicca* obtained from the plains (India), *Upadesh*, III: pp. 973-74, Letter No 15, Samvat 1814, roj 3 miti Paushbadi 8
- 44 Prithvinarayan to Dhanapati and Deusarma, c. AD 1754, Mohan Prasad Khanal, ed. *Prithvi-patra-samgraha*, 1,2028 VS (AD 1961), p. 6
- 45 Prithvinarayan to Deuhari Jaisi, c. AD 1755, *op.cit.*, p 7
- 46 Prithvinarayan to Damodar Pandit, undated, c. early AD 1755, *op.cit.*, pp. 8-9
- 47 Nilkantha Joshi, a resident of Bhadgau, worked on behalf of Gorkha and was exempted from *jhara* (forced labour). His *birta* was confirmed and he was exempted from paying taxes, *Upadesh*, III, pp. 978-79, Letters No 16 and 17, dated AD 1758 and 1759
- 48 Abhudasingh Pradhan of Kathmandu seems to be a secret agent of Gorkha. Prithvinarayan wrote to him in AD 1763, 'Serve my interests by all means. Only your performance will prove that you are mine. Complete the task by creating a rift there', *op. cit.*, p. 990, Letter No 22

- 49 Prithvinarayan to Kirtirajnanda Upadhya, op.cit., p. 1019, Letter No 31; 'Now complete the task regarding the throne of Kathmandu by secret plan with your uncles. Your *birta* at Sankhu, Changu, Patan, Kathmandu and your landed property and priesthood are hereby assured'.
- 50 *Bhasha Vamsavali* in *Upadesh*, III, pp. 852-53
- 51 D.R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, II, p. 367. Baburam Acharya states that Prithvinarayan did not allow the use of Newari script and Newari era on the coins issued. Instead, he ordered the use of Saka era 1685 and the legend 'Gorakhnath', the guardian deity of Gorkha, to be followed by the name of the deity of Patan, op.cit., p. 427
- 52 Prithvinarayan to Ramkrishna Kuvar, Bhadrasudi 7 roj 6. Kazi Dhanavanta had been insulted by Jayprakash. Father Giuseppe's account also bears out that Dhanavanta joined Gorkha, Kirkpatrick, Appendix III, pp. 380-86
- 53 The coin has the legend 'Karunamaya' in the Newari script and the date in Newar era corresponding to October 1764: Satyamohan Joshi, *Nepali Rashtriya Mudra*, Kathmandu, pp. 111-12, illustration No 17
- 54 Baburam Acharya, op.cit., 3, pp. 449-52 quotes an account of Prithvinarayan's reign from the Hodgson Collection.
- 55 Prithvinarayan informed Ramkrishna about the occupation of Mudikhu and Jagdol. Gokarna could not be taken because of the reinforcement from Bhadgau and Patan. The king says, 'Ranjit and Jayprakash met on last Wednesday and took oath at Guheshwari temple; Taudhik, Devidas Bhaju and others from Patan went to meet them there. But Dhanavanta and few others could not come to an agreement and did not go. I will surround Gokarna in a day or two', *Upadesh*, III, pp. 1003-4, Letter No 25
- 56 *Bhasha Vamsavali* only gives the date of Tejnarsingh's accession. His coin is dated 885 Newar era. According to Baburam Acharya the date corresponds to 2 May 1765, Acharya, op.cit., p. 454
- 57 Kirkpatrick, p. 383; *Bhasha Vamsavali* informs that Dhanavanta's property was confiscated by Jayprakash but was later restored by Prithvinarayan who admitted him to Gorkhali society for his services.
- 58 Father Giuseppe adds that Prithvinarayan also ordered 'all the noses and lips which had been cut off to be preserved, that he might ascertain how many souls there were, and to change the name of the town into Naskatapur, which signifies the town of cut-noses'. He says that Father Michael Angelo had interceded on behalf of the inhabitants, many of whom killed themselves in despair, and 'others came in great bodies to us in search of

medicines'. Giuseppe, who visited Nepal in 1769, adds, 'it was most shocking to see many living people with teeth and noses resembling the skulls of the deceased', Kirkpatrick, pp. 383-84

- 59 *Bhasha Vamsavali* informs that this inhuman punishment was meted out because Surpratap's left eye had been damaged. It says that all above the age of twelve lost their noses and only those who fled could save themselves; the cut noses weighed 17 dharni and 1 seer (46.8 kg); Lalitaballabh, verse 46 and Sundarananda, *Triratna Saundarua-Gatha*, verse 23 corroborate this account.
- 60 Kirkpatrick, p. 164: on his way to Nepal Kirkpatrick saw a remarkable number of his porters with cut noses.
- 61 A paper in the Hodgson Collection, vol. 52, No 47 also describes the incident and says that the cut limbs weighed 12 seers 1 tol, the number of people thus punished being 865.
- 62 Baburam Acharya dismisses the account as hearsay and fabricated reports of later writers, *Sri 5 Badamaharajadhiraj.*, 4, ch. 39, pp. 777-88. He surmises that only ten or fifteen people of Kirtipur might have been punished thus.
- 63 D.R. Regmi regards the account given in the *Bhasha Vamsavali* as an exaggeration, *Modern Nepal*, 1975, p. 180. Suryavikram Gewali quotes Lalitaballabh as a proof of his opinion that the noses and ears of 'only a few inhabitants' were cut, *Prithvinarayan Shah*, p. 143 fn.
- 64 Sundarananda describes that when, after the occupation of Kathmandu the village of Chopur rebelled, Prithvinarayan punished the villagers by cutting off their hands. In the Nepali translation of the passage he adds, 'the hands and also the noses, as in the case of Kirtipur, of everyone in the village of Chopur were chopped off', op.cit., verse 66.
- 65 K.C. Chaudhuri, *Anglo-Nepalese Relations*, ch. II, 'Kinloch Expedition', pp. 13-39: based on British records.
- 66 Prithvinarayan to Ramkrishna Kuvar (AD 1767), *Upadesh*, III, p. 1026
- 67 Chaudhuri quotes Barwell's letter to his father which informs us that of the twenty-four hundred men, only eight hundred returned', op.cit., p. 27. also *Bhasha Vamsavali*.
- 68 *Bhasha Vamsavali* contained in *Upadesh*, III.
- 69 In his *Upadesh* the king refers to 'Hadi Saheb's attack on Sindhuli' with three or four platoons, his repulse from there and the capture of big guns. In the king's Nasalchok Inscription of AD 1769, the second line of the second verse reads: *matta kshanamapi na rane sththumishah Firangi*', 1/1; *Upadesh*, II, pp. 430-31
- 70 *Upadesh*, III, pp. 877-78
- 71 Prithvinarayan to Bhavanishankar, Chamu and Bireshwar Paudyal, *Upadesh*, III, p. 1014, Letter No 28

- 72 Letter to Angiras Upadhyaya, op.cit., pp. 1015-16, Letter No 29 and to Kamalnayan Pandit, p. 1017, Letter No 30
- 73 Letter to Indramani Jaisi, pp. 983-84, Letter No 19
- 74 Kirkpatrick, p. 384
- 75 Baburam Acharya, op.cit., 3, p. 499
- 76 K.C. Chaudhuri, op.cit., p. 30
- 77 Letter to Ramkrishna Kuvar, op.cit., p. 1024, Letter No 32
- 78 L.F. Stiller, *Prithvinarayan Shah in the Light of Dibya Upadesh*, p. 36; *The Rise of the House of Gorkha*, p. 127
- 79 *Upadesh*, III, p. 878: the *Bhasha Vamsavali* describes how a number of Kathmandu nobles were punished with death and confiscation of property and that Jayprakash also mined, with white gunpowder, the vicinity of Tulaja Bhavani. Acharya does not accept this account on the grounds that Prithvinarayan never adopted the policy of punishing people after they were defeated, and white gunpowder was not in use even in Europe then, op. cit., 3, p. 505
- 80 It is corroborated by Lalitaballabh, verse 59, Lakshaman Kavi's *Kavitanikashopala*, verse 138 and Sundarananda's *Tri-ratna-Saundarya-Gatha*, verse 58
- 81 Stiller, *The Rise of the House of Gorkha*, p. 129
- 82 Kirkpatrick, p. 385
- 83 Ranjitmalla had allowed the missionaries to live and preach at Bhadgau promising not to punish them or his subjects who would embrace Christianity of their own free will. However, the missionaries were not allowed to use force or do anything improper, Ranjitmalla's letter in Newari of 861 Newar era (AD 1740); Jayprakash also granted a house to 'Padri Kopuchin Akrakta Tochivane' at Batutol and Tangaltol, his Copper-plate Inscription (AD 1741 and 1754 in Newari, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Pt. 17, No 2, 1848: D.R.Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, Pt. IV, p. 306; *Upadesh*, III, pp. 1027-28
- 84 D.R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal*, 1975, p. 208
- 85 Suryavikram Gewali, *Prithvinarayan Shah*, p. 166
- 86 Kirkpatrick, p. 386; *Upadesh*, III, p. 882
- 87 Letter to Debu Rana, op. cit., pp. 1140-41, Letter No 36
- 88 The *Bhasha Vamsavali* relates that while leaving his kingdom, Ranjitmalla climbed the same Chandragiri hill, (from where the sight of the Nepal valley had impressed Kirkpatrick and had, long before that, stoked the ambition of Prithvinarayan for its conquest), and gave a last lingereing look to 'Nepal'. The overflow of his pathos finds expression in his Newari poem of fourteen lines. 'O God, O God', he says, 'how am I to forget Nepal? The evil enemy came and finished me... I am a fugitive in a strange land

from today... The evil one deceived me by feigning love'. It is to be remembered that Ranjit was Prithvinarayan's *mitbaba* as the former's friendship with the latter's father, Narbhupal Shah, had been ritually consecrated. The *Vamsavali* account is from *Upadesh*, III, pp. 900-01.

89 Baburam Acharya, *Sri 5 Badamaharajadhiraj.*, 3, p. 519

90 D.R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal*, 1975, pp. 221-24 records that he was refused permission to get the Persian document of the Mughal Emperor translated. He writes, '... the authorities under false sense of nationalism would not allow me to photograph the documents', *op.cit.*, p. 222.

6. The Gorkha Conquest of Eastern Nepal and Sikkim

1 *Bhaktavijayakavya*, verse 80:

A-karnya Gorakshadhara-dhirajam. Nihséeshanepalashubha-gyabha-jam. Samantasam.stha-h sakala- naresé mu-rchchha-prapa-tena viki-rnakeséa-h.

2 J.C. Sinha, *Economic Annals of Bengal*, 1927, pp. 33-34

3 Alastair Lamb, *British and Chinese Central Asia: The Road to Lhasa 1767-1905*, London 1960, p. 7 quotes from Home Miscellaneous (India Office Library, London), Vol. 219, f. 325, Court of Bengal, 16 February 1768.

4 K.C. Chaudhuri, *Anglo-Nepalese Relations*, ch. III, IV for India Office sources in English. A Nepali document, presumably copied from the original in c AD 1846, gives a good summary of Dinanath's mission to Patna and Calcutta during 1770 and 1773, *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi.*, pp. 7-11. Also 'Statement of everything that passed between the Nepaul Government and the English', India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Series, Vol. 648, pp. 198-250.

5 *ibid.*

6 Prithvinarayan to Kalu Pande, the astrologer, Baburam Acharya, *Sri 5 Badamaharajadhiraj.*, 3, pp. 560-61.

7 Patna Council to Governor-in-Council, K.C. Chaudhuri, *op.cit.*

8 Such an explanation to justify the killing of Nagarkotis because of the crime of saluting the king without dismounting from the horse is rather far-fetched. The *Bhasha Vamsavali* and a document in Hodgson Papers, Vol. 51, f. 221-222, that is, both the sources are silent about any plot to kill Prithvinarayan. On the contrary, they narrate the king's order to massacre the Nagarkotis for their apparent insult to him and the execution of the order. However, Acharya admits that his interpretation could be a subject of debate, 'but to discuss it would be only to lose time', *op.cit.*, 3, pp. 582-86.

- 9 Stiller, *The Rise of the House of Gorkha*, p. 131
- 10 This favoured treatment was because of the treaty that the preceding king, Hari Shah, of Jajarkot had made with Gorkha at the time of pilgrimage to Kasi long before, Prithvinarayan to Gajendra Shah, *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, p. 4; Upadesh, III, pp. 1143-44, Letter No 36 'kha'
- 11 Stiller, op.cit., p. 133
- 12 *Bhaktavijayakavya*, verse 43
- 13 Prithvinarayan to Lachhiman Thapa, 1819 Bhadrasudi 1 roj 6, *Prithvipatra-samgraha*, p. 10
- 14 From King Rajendravikram Shah's proclamation to 'the seven hundred Newars and others of Dolakha town', c. 1806, Vajracharya and Shresstha, *Dolakha*, p. 172; Daniel Wright, *History of Nepal*, 1877, rep. 1958, pp. 154-55. Mahendra died fighting and Namsingh fled to Pyuthan.
- 15 Ducarel to Becher, Resident at Darbar, 4 April 1770, *Select Committee Proceedings*, 17, p. 182 ff.
- 16 N.K. Sinha, *Fort William-India House Correspondence 1767-1769*, India Record Series, Vol. V, pp. 78,81
- 17 *ibid.*
- 18 Markham, *Narratives*, p. 37
- 19 The original letter, in Maithili, was in the possession of I.S. Chemjong. He published it in his *Kiratkalin Vijaypur*, pp. 108-09. There is no reference to Deb Zhidar in Chemjong.
- 20 He was also permitted to enjoy the revenue accruing from the sale of manjit herb and hides in the plains, and was instructed to 'be always ready with arms at the service of the Court', *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, p.186
- 21 Markham, p. 165
- 22 Ram Rahul, *Modern Bhutan*, New Delhi 1971, p. 36
- 23 S.C. Sarkar, 'Some Notes on the Intercourse of Bengal', *Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission*, Vol. XIII, 1930, p. 101
- 24 Kirkpatrick, p. 271
- 25 A number of letters guaranteeing continued possession of land to many potential defectors and helpers of the Gorkhali cause have come to light. Reference can be made to letters published in *Upadesh*, III, Letters No. 3 (to Parsuram Thapa), 25 'ka' (to the pradhans of Dolakha), 16 (to Nilkantha Joshi), 24 (to Manthali), 29 (to Angiras Upadhyaya with exemption from the payment of *kusahi-bisahi* levy) 24 'ka' (to Sadulla Mojamji), 38 (to Lakshminath), 45 (to Vidyakar Upadhyaya), etc.
- 26 To give two examples: the astrologer Kulananda Jaisi, according

to *Bhasha Vamsavali*, was given Borlang Thum as *birta* and Ramkrishna Kuvar was assigned all the lands surrounding Simbhu and Dhulikhel; the grant says, 'all this for you and your descendants to enjoy', *Upadesh*, III, Letter No 51

27 *Upadesh*, I, p. 326

28 Kirkpatrick, p. 103

29 Prithvinarayan to Abhimansingh Basnet, Asvinbadi 30 roj 4 (5 October 1774), *Upadesh*, III, pp. 1193-95, Letter No 71

30 Public Proceedings of 8 June 1772, No 2 (a) quoted in K.C. Chaudhuri, *Anglo-Nepalese Relations.*, pp. 46-47

31 Home Public Consultation, 8 July 1772, op.cit.

32 Chemjong, *Kiratkalin Vijaypur*, pp. 111-13: original with Ratnabhadur-Mabohang

33 Prithvinarayan to Ramkrishna, *Upadesh*, III, p. 1095, Letter No 51: In September-October 1772 the king wrote, 'When Kalu Pande fell at Kirtipur. I had lost heart that the three cities of Nepal I would never be able to conquer. But by your intelligence and prowess I took them. Even if I give you half this kingdom, it would not suffice. The areas surrounding Simbhu and Dhulikhel I grant to you and your descendants to enjoy. I was deeply shocked when your brother fell at Timal. Now I depend on you for the invasion of Kirat'.

34 op.cit., p. 1099, Letter No 53

35 Prithvinarayan to Indramani Jaisi shows that a loan of Rs 2950 was advanced to the king by the latter and the landownership of Jaisi was not only confirmed but new land was also granted to him. The new land was to be returned on the payment of the loan, op.cit., pp. 98-84, Letter No 19

36 Kirkpatrick, p. 382

37 It was related to the author by Ganesh Pokhrel, a descendant of Harinanda, still a big landholder in Jhapa region. He was the *pradhan pancha* of Surungra Panchayat Bloc in Morang, Eastern Nepal. A genealogy of the Pokhrels, written in about 980 verses in Nepali, by Krishnachandra Upadhyaya Pokhrel, has been published as *Pokhrelko Vamsavali* from Kharpa in the old district of East No 3, 2014 VS (AD 1957). Kasidas, it describes, was born for the protection of the Hindu religion, then in a stage of decline under the pressure of the *yavanas*. In Dullu his patron deity was Mashta. The Pokhrels are now settled in various parts of Eastern Nepal.

38 A document of samvat 1808 (c. AD 1751) records *kus birta* grant of land at Padaribot at Chhot Kot to Pradyumna Upadhyaya by Vikram Sena. The *Pokhrel Vamsavali* refers to Khidim, Helegu, Chhoprak, Kharpa as *birta* granted by Sena kings of Makwanpur.

Pradyumna Upadhyaya is probably the same one referred to as Subha Sena's dewan by Hamilton.

- 39 Ramkrishna Kuvar to Harinanda, *Upadesh*, III, p. 1156, Letter No 58
- 40 Prithvinarayan to Ramkrishna Kuvar and Amarsingh Thapa, c. late AD 1773, op.cit., p. 1166, Letter no 63: the king wrote, 'I appreciate the account describing the killing of enemies at Majuwa, Kulum, Dingla, Pauwa, and the figures of the killed and injured by you. We had sent 20 pitchers of gunpowder, 6825 pellets, 45 tola steel, 757 pieces of flint and 9 hundred pieces of paper. Please distribute'.
- 41 Prithvinarayan to Ramkrishna, c. early 1774: 'The report that you invaded Kirat and 4-5 hundred were killed has been communicated (to me). You did a splendid job, I appreciate it. The energy you put in the conquest of Nepal and Kirat has been of greater magnitude than that of any other sardar. Much pleased at your work I am sending 22 pairs of *sirropau* to you. (They are) being sent for other sardars also. Distribute according to the list of names. We are sending 25 pieces of guns too'.
- 42 Prithvinarayan to Trilochan Upadhyaya, 1830 Sravansudi 9 roj 4 (AD 1773), op.cit., p. 1154, Letter no 56
- 43 op.cit., pp. 1155-56, Letter no 57
- 44 Home Public Consultation, July 8, 1772, No 2 (B)
- 45 Calendar of Persian Correspondence, IV, Calcutta 1925, p. 64
- 46 J.N. Ghosh, *Sannyasis and Fakir Raiders in Bengal*, Calcutta MCMXXX; also cf. G.W. Forrest, *Selections from the State Papers of the Governors-General of India*, Vol. I, Oxford 1910, p. 19 fn and G.R. Gleig, *Memoirs of Warren Hastings*, Vol. I, 1841, p. 303
- 47 Calendar of Persian Correspondence, 30 October 1773, No 601, 602
- 48 Prithvinarayan to Lohorong Thulusingh Majhiya, Sangwa Majhiya, Pawa Majhiya, Hulungwa Majhiya, Dhupu Majhiya, Maita Majhiya and Somajit Majhiya, Samvat 1830 Sravanbadi (July 1773), op.cit., pp. 1152-53, Letter No 55
- 49 'Taraitirako Sandhi Vighraha', *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, p. 8 ff.
- 50 Hamilton, p. 148
- 51 The descendants of Harinanda relate that Prithvinarayan had sent the Pokhrels to procure guns from Calcutta and they succeeded in their venture by adopting various stratagems to dodge the watchful British. The account, however, should relate to a later period. Jayamangal, Srikrishna and Pradyumna Pokhrel were given the task during the reign of Girvanyuddha Vikram Shah in AD 1804 as is shown by the king's letters to Srikrishna and Jayamangal, Samvat 1861, 1862 1nd 1863 (AD 1804, 1805 and 1806), *Pokhrelko Vamsavali*, pp. 198-201. Their *birta* lands, granted by the 'Makwani kings', were exchanged for a more extensive land

of Charkhu, Khotang at Rumjatar and was confirmed by the king Girvan in 1804.

52 Dhaukalsingh's inscription at Narayanhitu, Samvat 1850 (AD 1793).

53 *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, pp. 457-58.

54 Abhimansingh Basnet and Partha Bhandari to Harinanda Pokhrel of Kharpa, Samvat 1830 sal Falgunsudi 15 roj (26 January 1774), op.cit., pp. 1158-60, Letter No 59.

55 Calendar of Persian Correspondence, 14 January 1774, No. 763

56 Hamilton, p. 140.

57 *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, p.8.

58 *ibid.* Hamilton describes how the widow of Karna Sena then appealed to Mukunda Sena of Palpa for help. He sent his younger son, Dhajavir, to Bhutan, Sikkim and the Chaubisi states and finally to the Governor of Bengal. When he reached Purnea, he was decoyed by a Brahmin priest, Ganesh Bharati Mahanta, and another Brahmin, Madrapati Ojha, both agents of Gorkha, and was killed by the Gorkhalis. Among the killed with him were Ripumardan, a son of Karna Sena, a messenger of the Sikkim king and his five attendants, pp. 142-43.

59 For the levy of *jhara*—for portorage during the invasion of the east, cf. Royal Orders to the Dwares (functionaries appointed by a jagirdar for collecting homestead tax on *jagir*land) of Palanchok, 1831 VS (AD 1774), op.cit., p. 1181, Letter No 66 and 67. Baburam Acharya held that the *kipat* system of communal land-ownership owed its origin to such royal grants. He based his opinion on two points: Prithvinarayan's grant of *kipat* lands to some Tamangs of Nagarkot, later confirmed by Girvan on Poushsudi 4, 1857 (January 1801), and the absence of any document to establish that the *kipat* system existed before. Prithvinarayan, in all probability, merely confirmed the already existing *kipat* lands of some Tamangs. The very concept of the *kipat* or the ownership of land by the whole of a tribal group implies non-documentation as Caplan noted in 1956, 'It is worthwhile nothing that on the whole transactions involving Limbus with members of other groups are registered. Treasury office records list only four cases where land-transactions in *kipat* between Indreni Limbus were recorded. The explanation offered by Limbus and Brahmans alike is that "Limbus trust one another; they do not have their transactions registered at the office"', *Land and Social Change in East Nepal*, p. 64

60 *Upadesh*, III, p, 1179, Letter No 65.

61 Hodgson had collected some Limbu manuscripts and they are said to have been kept in London. A portion of an ms. is quoted by

- Chemjong, *Kiratkalin Vijaypur*, pp. 135-36. Agamsingh Rai, an informant of Hamilton, was descended in the fifth degree from Vidyachandra, the Kirat minister of Lohang Sena. Agamsingh took refuge in India as the guardian of Karna Sena's widow and the infant son, Hamilton, p. 140
- 62 Chemjong, *op.cit.*, pp.151-54: To drive home this point to the Limbus, Abhimansingh mixed some salt in water for signifying the indissoluble union of the Limbus and Gorkhas. He exhorted the Limbus to say, if asked who their king was, that their king was the king of Gorkha, that he was in Gorkha and that they belonged to the family of Gorkha. This story is based on an oral tradition of Pachthar.
- 63 *Upadesh*, III, pp. 1185-87, Letter No 69
- 64 Calendar of Persian Correspondence, IV, pp.219-20, 241, 258
- 65 The subject of Makwanpur cropped up when Mirza Abdullah Beg claimed Routhat under Makwanpur as his *jagir* and appealed to the Company. For the detail of the dispute, the role of Mrs Hastings and the final settlement of the matter, cf. *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, pp. 9-10 and K.C. Chaudhuri, *op.cit.*, p.53 ff.
- 66 Prithvinarayan to Kalu Pande and Partha Bhandari, Samvat 1831 sal miti Bhadrabadi 4 roj (25 August 1774), Baburam Acharya, *op.cit.*, pp. 596-97
- 67 *ibid.*
- 68 *Upadesh*, III, pp. 1187-89, Letter No 70
- 69 *ibid.*
- 70 Prithvinarayan's grant of *birta* to Sumirandas, Janakpur (AD 1771), Abhimansingh's grant to Lokeshwar Pandit, Vijaypur (AD 1774), etc., *Puratattva Patra-samgraha*, 2, *passim*
- 71 Prithvinarayan to Janga Raya, Jamun Raya and other Raya Limbus, 1831 Bhadrabadi roj 6
- 72 Prithvinarayan to Abhimansingh, Partha Bhandari, Kirtisingh Khawas, Bali Baniya, Asvinbadi 30 roj 4 (5 October 1774), *Itihas Prakash*, 1, p. 13; *Upadesh*, III, pp. 1193-95, Letter No 71
- 73 *Puratattva Patra-samgraha*, p. 3, No. 55
- 74 'Gorakshadhish Dravya Shahko Vamsavistar', *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, pp. 373-79; p. 377
- 75 Buddhikarna returned to Chilmari after he failed to obtain the support of the British in Calcutta. From there he was 'carried off by a party of Gorkhalese soldiers disguised as robbers. He was taken to Vijaypur, where, under the pretence of avenging the death of Kamdatt, the slender claim which the Gorkhalese used to cover their unjust attack on the infant son of Karna Sen, he was put to the most cruel tortures, which continued three days before

he expired', Hamilton, p. 141. Pratapsimha Shah, the son and successor of Prithvinarayan, wrote to Abhimansingh (July 1777): 'Buddhikarna is the master of Vijaypur. There would have been too much trouble if he were not captured. He was captured from Muglan (India) and the trouble is now ended. That in itself is some achievement', *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, p. 188. A temple called 'Buda Subba' (Old Subba) at Vijaypur is believed to have been erected on the grave of Buddhikarna.

- 76 Wright, Hamilton, Oldfield and many others give the date of Prithvinarayan's death as AD 1771. Bogle was visited by the agent of Nepal in Tibet on 18 March 1775, and he says, 'I told him that I heard from everybody of Gorkha's death, and enquired if he had received any accounts of it'. The Nepal agent had not received any information. Prithvinarayan's letters of 1774-75, his successor's letters, including one to Warren Hastings (Calendar of Persian Correspondence, No. 2048, 2049), Kirkpatrick, who visited Nepal in 1793 and the *History of Sikkim* prove the date to be AD 1775. Markham wrongly corrects Bogle in his footnote comment that the king died in 1771.
- 77 Prithvinarayan to Abhimansingh, Partha Bhandari and others, op.cit., Letter No 71
- 78 Markham, *Narratives*, p. 149
- 79 op.cit., p. 144
- 80 Baburam Acharya, 'Sri 5 Prithvinarayan Shahka Antim Din or Last Days of Prithvinarayan Shah (AD 1774-75)' *Sri 5 Badamaharajadhiraj*, 3, p. 629 ff.
- 81 *Upadesh*, III, p. 1057, Letter No 24 'ka'
- 82 Markham, pp. 157-58. In the letter the Gorkha Raja is said to have styled himself as 'Parbat-kai-Badshah' or the emperor of the mountains and that 'formerly he used to send presents of fruit only, but upon this occasion had sent more valuable presents'.
- 83 *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, p. 188
- 84 Markham, p. 158
- 85 An interesting information that the Gosain gave Bogle was that 'he (Gosain) understood that the Kerant Raja, upon his country being seized by the Gorkhas, had taken refuge with Demo Jong (Sikkim); but having since, upon the Gorkha Raja's hostilities with the chief, discovered the insecurity of his situation, had fled towards Purneah'. This was an obvious reference to Buddhikarna. The Gosain also told the Tashi (Panchen) Lama that 'the Gorkha Raja was covered over with blotches and sores, and his health (was) very bad', op.cit, p. 157. Prithvinarayan's letter, op.cit., Letter No 70
- 86 Markham, p. 157

- 87 op.cit., p. 164
- 88 ibid.
- 89 The *Dharmapatra* in Newari gives the date of its signing as Newar Samvat 895 Sraavan sukla 13 Wednesday. The agreement signed at Khasha in the Kuti region was mostly a trade transaction and does not mention Sikkim at all though it gives the names of the Sikkim delegates. The *History of Sikkim*, however, refers only to an agreement between Sikkim and Nepal under the supervision of Tibet. The treaty is said to have been signed at Walung, op.cit.; T.W.D. Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, p. 157
- 90 For the text of the Nepal-Tibet treaty in Newari, cf. *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, p. 70-71, a summary in Nepali, pp. 71-72; Leo E. Rose, *Nepal Strategy for Survival*, p. 32
- 91 *Upadesh*, III, Letter No 70
- 92 Tilanga-ghar Inscription in Sanskrit-Awadhi, *Sanskrit-Sandesh*, 1/5
- 93 Baburam Acharya, *Nepalko Samkshipta Vrittanta*, p. 91
- 94 Shivanarayan Khatri and Prabal Rana to Angyal Dorjay, the king of Mustang, Samvat 1846 Kartiksudi 1 roj 2, *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, p. 736
- 95 Risley, *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, p. 118; Chemjong, *Kirathalin Vijaypur*, p. 169 ff.; Stiller, *The Rise of the House of Gorkha*, p. 148
- 96 Stiller, op.cit.
- 97 *Upadesh*, III, p. 327
- 98 John Pemble, *The Invasion of Nepal: John Company at War*, Oxford 1971, p. 28
- 99 *Upadesh*, III, p. 329: Prithvinarayan says, '*Upra-nta taksa-r pani chokho chalaunu*' (Mint pure coins henceforward). About the Mahendramalli coins Turner wrote, 'a very small quantity of specie, and that of a base standard, is current in Tibet. It is the silver coin of Nepal, here termed Indermillee (Mahendramalli); each is in value worth about one-third of a sicca rupee, and they are cut into halves, third parts, and quarters', Samuel Turner, *An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet, containing a Narrative of a Journey through Bootan, and Part of Tibet*, London 1800, p. 372
- 100 Stiller, op.cit., pp. 191-92
- 101 Schuyler Camman, *Trade through the Himalayas*, Princeton 1951, p. 11 Also Kirkpatrick, p. 340; Markham, p. 129
- 102 Shakabpa, *Tibet*, pp. 156-57 where he bases his account on a biography of the Dalai Lama VIII.
- 103 Markham, p. 129
- 104 Hamilton, p. 120; Markham, lxxvii
- 105 Hamilton, p. 120
- 106 op.cit., pp. 120-21

- 107 E.A. Gait, *History of Assam*, pp. 113, 114, 116, 118.
- 108 Hamilton, p. 122.
- 109 op.cit., 127.
- 110 op.cit. 156.
- 111 op.cit., 123.
- 112 Lakshabir Sahi, Hemdal Thapa, Udayananda Pandit to General Bhimsen Thapa, 1893 Maghbadhi 13 roj 4, Nepal National Archives, Letters No 445, 446.
- 113 Correspondence between the Secretary, Government of Bengal and G.W.A Lloyd, on Special Duty, North-East Frontier, Darjeeling and the British Resident in Nepal and the Secretary, Government of Bengal on various dates, Darjeeling Court Records, Vol. 22. The summary of the correspondence regarding disputed boundaries, signed by R.B. Pemberton on 15 July 1837 with his remarks, Darjeeling Court Records, vol. 35 : para. 36'... This witness Eklatuf Sooba deposed that he was formerly tahsildar in the hills for that part lying between the Rivers Konki (Kankai) and Mechee, the collections were paid at Chayanpoor east of the Mechee. He says Ekunda Kajee was Zemindar and paid 10 annas in the Rupee to Jyantea Khatri for the troops—says that his collections extended east of the Mechee...'
- 114 Darjeeling Court Records, op.cit., para. 37.
- 115 Hamilton, p. 126.
- 116 Capt. Salter's Report in the Political Office quoted by P. Melville, Offg. Under Secretary to the Government of India, September 1846, in the latter's memorandum on the connection of the Sikkim Rajah with the British Government, P. Melville, Bengal Political Consultations, 14 November 1846, No. 29.
- 117 *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, p. 20: Nepal-Tibet Treaty 1790.
- 118 Alastair Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia*, p. 23 ff.
- 119 *The History of Sikkim* informs us that the original letter of the Chinese Amban to Chogthup was extant at the time of its compilation.
- 120 Shakabpa, *Tibet.*, p. 160.
- 121 Ranbahadur Shah to Gajendra Saheb of Jajarkot, Samvat Chaitra sukla 2 roj 7 (March 1792) and to Krishna Shah, of the same date, *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, pp. 12-13, 403.
- 122 *ibid.*
- 123 Major-Pati Inscription at Chainpur: for Sanskrit and Nepali texts, *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, pp.756-58.
- 124 Chemjong, *Kiratkalin Vijaypur*, p. 77 refers to an ms. in the possession of Subba Lalsor Pendang. He mistakenly gives the date as 1776.
- 125 Royal Order to Sambahang Namhang Rai, 1852 Asvinsudi 2 roj 2 (original with the family of Subba Rahananda, Tamar).

- 126 Royal Order to Nabha Rai, 1851 Sravanbadi 13 roj 6 (original with the family of Subba Dhanbahadur Labunghang, Taplejung)
- 127 Royal Order to Asahang Rai, Kitabhang Rai, Totuwa Rai, 1860 Margabadi 30 roj 2, *Puratattva-Patra-Samgraha*, 2, p. 38
- 128 Royal Order to Igumba Rai and others, 1884 Bhadrabadi 5 roj 1, op.cit., p.73
- 129 Risley, *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, p. 19
- 130 *ibid.*
- 131 For details of the Anglo-Nepal relations during the period cf. K.C. Chaudhuri, *Anglo-Nepalese Relations*; B.D. Sanwal, *Nepal and the East India Company*, Bombay 1965
- 132 John Pemble, *The Invasion of Nepal*; Suryavikram Gewali, *Amarsimha Thapa*, Darjeeling 1957
- 133 Chittaranjan Nepali, *Janaral Bhimsen Thapa Ra Tatkalin Nepal*, Kathmandu 2031 VS (AD 1975)
- 134 John Pemble, op.cit., p.49
- 135 John Pemble, op.cit., p. 52
- 136 *Papers Relating to the Nepal War*, London 1824, p. 268
- 137 op.cit., p. 258
- 138 Shakabpa, op.cit., p. 174 quotes from the biography of the Dalai Lama X
- 139 Maheshraj Panta, 'VS, 1871-72 ko Nepal-Angrej Juddhama Nepal-Harnana Euta Thuto Karan', *Purnima*, No. 1. also see his articles on different facets of Anglo-Nepal War, *Purnima*, Nos. 5,6,7,8.
- 140 Secret Consultations: Secretary to Government to Major Bradshaw, 26.11.1814; same to D. Scott, Rangpur, 2.11.1814; same to Captain Barre. Letter, 26.11.1814
- 141 Sarobarsingh Rana to Bhimsen Thapa, Asvinbadi 3 roj 7, *Aitihāsik Chitthipatra Samgraha*, 1, pp. 182-83
- 142 *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, pp. 195-96
- 143 Gajendra Karki and Ekunda Kazi to Ranadhvaj Thapa, Asvin 3 roj 5, Nepal National Archives, Letter No 143
- 144 John Pemble, p. 339
- 145 C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements, Sanads, Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, Vol. II, Calcutta 1892, pp. 173-75; for Persian and Nepali versions of the treaty *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, p. 83 ff.
- 146 Article 3 of the Treaty of Titalia, 1817
- 147 H.T. Prinsep, *History of the Political and Military Transactions During the Administration of Marquess of Hastings 1813-1823*, 2 vols., London 1825, vol. I, p. 207
- 148 Ranbahadur Shah to Dinanath Upadhyaya, Samvat 1855 sal Sravan 6 roj 4 (1798), *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, pp. 24-25

- 149 Jayanta Khatri from Ilam Fort to Jaspau Thapa, 1883 Samvat maghsudi 6 roj, Nepal National Archives, Letter No 109
- 150 H.V. Bayley, *Dorjé-ling*, Calcutta 1838, pp. 3,54; Political Consultations, 17.10.1833, No 1
- 151 Letter from Ilam, Bhadrabadi 5 roj 4, Nepal National Archives, Letter No. 273
- 152 The Kotapa insurrection is described in some detail by Ranasur Bhandari in his letter to Swarup Bishta, 1888 Sravan 30 roj 1, Nepal National archives, Letter No. 267; *Aitihāsik Chitthipatra*, 2, p. 33
- 153 Trevelyan, Deputy Secretary to Government, Fort William, to Major Lloyd, 14.8.1834, Darjeeling Court Records, Vol. 22, 1834
- 154 Marten, Acting Magistrate of Rungpore to W.H. Macnaughten, Secretary to Government in Political Department, 1.12.1834, op.cit.
- 155 H.V. Bayley, *Dorjé-ling*, Calcutta 1838, p. 40
- 156 G.A. Bushley, Secretary, Government of India to A. Campbell, Superintendent of Darjeeling, 3.11.1846, Assorted Papers, Darjeeling Court Records
- 157 I.P. Grant, Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, to A. Campbell, Superintendent of Darjeeling, 3.3.1839, Assorted Papers marked No. 367, Darjeeling Court Records.
- 158 Bhaktawarsingh Bhandari to the Nepal Darbar, Nepal National Archives, Letter No 149
- 159 Secretary to the Government of India to Lt. Col. G.W.A. Lloyd, 8.8.1838, Assorted Papers, Darjeeling Court Records
- 160 B.H. Hodgson, Resident at Kathmandu to H.T. Prinsep, Secretary to Government, 5.8.1839, Assorted Papers marked 'Secret', DCR.
- 161 Hodgson to Prinsep, 24.9.1839, op.cit.
- 162 William Wilson Hunter, *Life of Brian Houghton Hodgson*, London 1896, pp.94-95
- 163 Report of 24 July 1837 written by Dr. A. Campbell, Assistant to the Resident, Nepal, in three parts, The first or introductory part is called *The Report of 1837* and the other two as *Principal Transactions* by Hunter. The citation is from *Principal Transactions*, p. 62, para 44, Hunter, *Life of Hodgson*, pp. 95-96, fn. 3 and p. 101, fn. 3
- 164 W.W. Hunter, op.cit., p. 101 quotes from *Principal Transactions*, para 25
- 165 Hunter, op.cit., pp. 183-84
- 166 H. Ambrose Oldfield, *Sketches from Nepal*, 2 vols, London 1880, rep. new Delhi 1974, pp.318-19
- 167 Oldfield, op.cit., p. 321
- 168 Hodgson's Note to the Nepal Darbar, 6.9.1840, Darjeeling Court Records, vol. 28, 1850-1861

- 169 J.R.Colvin, Private Secretary to the Governor-General, to Hodgson, 18 July, 1840, *Auckland Manuscripts*, Vol. XI, p. 252 quoted in Hunter, op.cit., p. 189
- 170 J.R. Colvin to Hodgson, 28 August, *Auckland Mss.*, XIII, Hunter, op.cit., p. 190
- 171 Letter from the Secretary to the Government of India (Confidential) to Hodgson, 2 November 1840, Hunter, op.cit., p. 191
- 172 'Translation of a Yaddasht from the Maharaja of Nepal to the address of the Resident, dated Saturday, January 2nd, 1841', Hunter, op.cit., p. 193
- 173 The details of the boundaries of tracts restored to Nepal by the British in the plains after the Indian Revolt of 1857 are given in the letter of Ross D. Mangles, Secretary of State, to Lord Canning, Governor-General of India, 17 March 1858, quoted in full by Asad Husain, *British India's Relations with the Kingdom of Nepal*, pp. 77-78. fn. 5

Part Three: Some Consequences of the Unification

7. Consequences and Conclusion

- 1 Baburam Acharya, *Nepalko Samkshipta Vrittanta*, p. 45
- 2 Asad Husain, *British India's Relations with the Kingdom of Nepal*, London 1970, p. 30
- 3 D.R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal*, Calcutta 1975, p. 257
- 4 E.H. Carr, *What is History?* Pelican reprint 1967, p. 52
- 5 Note No 6, 'Introduction' of this book
- 6 Horace B. Reed and Mary J. Reed. *Nepal in Transition: Educational Innovation*, p. 27
- 7 Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Origins of Modern Germany*, Oxford 1976, p. 406: Friedrich von Stein's 'Manifesto of 1812'
- 8 *Upadesh*, I, p. 324
- 9 Baburam Acharya, *Purana Kavi Ra Kavita*, Kathmandu 2003 VS (AD 1953), 2035 VS (1978) edition, pp.5-6
- 10 Chapter 5: 'The Gorkha Conquest of Nepal' above
- 11 *Upadesh*, III, Letters No 11-14, 37
- 12 M.C. Regmi, *Nepali Economic History*, p. 9
- 13 Stiller, *The House of Gorkha*, p. ix
- 14 *ibid.*
- 15 M.C. Regmi, *Landownership in Nepal*, p. 6
- 16 *op.cit.*, pp. 6-7
- 17 *op.cit.*, p. 8
- 18 Grierson, *LSI*, V, Part II, p. 4: Jyakanta Mishra, *History of Maithili Literature*, New Delhi 1976, p. 1
- 19 Regmi, *Landownership in Nepal*, p.7
- 20 Thulo Thar-Gotra *Pravaravali*, Benares undated; Charles McDougal, 'Structure and Division in Kulunge Rai Society', *Kailash: Journal of Himalayan Studies*, 1/3, Kathmandu 1973, pp. 205-24

- 21 Bernard Pignede, *The Gurungs: A Population of the Nepalese Himalayas*, a typescript of the English translation of the French work, *Les Gurungs: Une Population Himalayenne du Nepal*, The Hague 1966, by Gillian Macfarlane, kept at the Tribhuvan University Library, Kirtipur, Nepal, pp. 184, 186. Pignede describes an open struggle between the *char jat* and *sola jat* Gurungs resulting from the championing of the cause of poor *sola jat* peasants by one *char jat* Gurung, Dil Bahadur. Cases alleging land-grabs were instituted against *sola jat* peasants by *char jat* landholders.
- 22 Gopal Singh Nepali, *The Newars*, p. 152
- 23 op.cit., p. 148
- 24 Walter Hamilton, *A Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description of Hindostan and the Adjacent Countries*, II, London 1820, pp. 672-80
- 25 Francis B. Hamilton, *Kingdom of Nepal*, p. 145
- 26 B.H. Hodgson, *Miscellaneous Essays Relating to Indian Subjects*, II, London 1880, pp. 237-41
- 27 G. Tucci, *Preliminary Report*, p. 109
- 28 op.cit., pp. 114-15
- 29 Luciano Petech, *I missionari italiani*, 1952, Vol. II, Part 2, p. 278 ff
- 30 Ludwig F. Stiller, *The Silent Cry: The People of Nepal 1816-39*, Kathmandu 1976, ch. VI, pp. 153-83: 'Sanskritization and Unity'.
- 31 Surendra Munshi, *Tribal Absorption and Sanskritization in Hindu Society*, monograph for limited circulation only, Calcutta 1978, pp. 26-28. Also Colin Rosser, 'The Newar Caste System', op.cit., p. 70
- 32 Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, 'Buddhist Communities of Western Nepal', op.cit., p. 146
- 33 Rosser, op.cit.
- 34 Ved Prakash Upreti, 'Limbuwan To-day: Progress and Problems', *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, 3/2, Kathmandu, September 1976, pp. 47-70
- 35 Surendra Munshi, op.cit., p. 18
- 36 Stiller, *Silent Cry*, pp. 181-83
- 37 Hamilton, *Kingdom of Nepal*, pp. 52-53
- 38 *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi.*, p. 611: A sale deed between sellers Chandramal Sahi, Bharmal Sahi and buyer Deumalla; a deed of gift by Buddhimalla in favour of his friend Varshanath, *Itihas Prakash*, 2/1, p. 342. A.W. Macdonald, *Essays on the Ethnology of Nepal and South Asia*, Kathmandu 1975, p. 292, Note 16(iv) interprets *masinya* as those who may be reduced to slavery and *namasinya* as those who may not. However, there could not be further enslaving of a person who is already a *kamara* (slave). *Masnu* in Nepali means to finish or to kill.
- 39 C.J. Morris, *Gurkhas: Handbooks for the Indian Army*, Calcutta 1936,

rep. 1942, p. 58; Asad Husain, *British India's Relations with the Kingdom of Nepal*, p. 240

40 The original passage in Nepali runs thus:

जंगली, पर्वते, काँठे, भूसतिघे गैवारको
यो देश हो भगवान, राखिदथौ त्यसै गरी;
राजतंत्र नै छ एउटा हित-साथक आर्यको —
आर्य रैती हामीहरू चाहर्ने लोकतंत्र त्यो।
बाहुन-छेत्रीहरूबाटै मंत्रीमण्डल जोड्नु
बाहुन-छेत्रीहरूमा पनि उच्चकूलका हुनु;
मंत्रीमण्डल जोड्दा कहीं कतै पनि
भूलले पनि मतवाली कबै नहुलनु।

41 Stiller, *Silent Cry*, p. 172

42 Suryavikram Gewali, *Ram Shahko Jivan Charitra*, Darjeeling 1933,

43 *Upadesh*, III, Letter No 27

44 The Brahman leaders against the Rana regime were said to have enjoyed this immunity. The case of Tanka Prasad Acharya, later Prime Minister of Nepal, is often cited as an example.

45 Chittaranjan Nepali, *Janaral Bhimsen Thapa*, Appendices

46 *Puratattva-Patra-Samgraha*, 2, Documents No 97 and 98 (AD 1834), 107 (1837), pp. 84-89, 103-09

47 C. Nepali, op.cit., pp.203-04

48 *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, pp. 384-85, Documents of AD 1850

49 Alexander W. Macdonald, 'The Hierarchy of the Lower Jat', *Essays on the Ethnology*, pp. 280-95

50 D.R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, II, p. 538

51 M.C. Regmi, *Nepali Economic History*, p. 119: Regulations on Cow Slaughter in Solukhumbu, Margabadi 9, 1862 (November 1805)

52 Lt. Keshar Thapa to General Krishna Bahadur Rana, Samvat 1918 Vaisakhvadi 3 roj (AD 1861): a document collected in Eastern Nepal

53 *Puratattva-Patra-Samgraha*, 2, op.cit.

54 Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, *South Asian Societies, A Study of Values and Social Controls*, New Delhi 1979, p. 179

55 Stiller, *Silent Cry*, p. 176

56 op.cit., 175

57 Regmi, *Nepali Economic History*, p. 118, fn. 109-11

58 Max Weber, *The Religion of India*, Illinois 1958, p. 297

59 R.S. Sharma, 'Material Milieu of Tantricism', *Indian Society: Historical Probing*, In memory of D.D. Kosambi, ed. R.S. Sharma, New Delhi 1974, p. 188

- 60 op.cit., p. 180
- 61 Chapters 3 and 4 above
- 62 R.S. Sharma, op.cit., p. 189
- 63 Janaklal Sharma, *Josmani Santa-Parampara Ra Sahitya*, Kathmandu 2020 VS (AD 1963)
- 64 Chittaranjan Nepali, *Sri 5 Ranbahadur Shah*, Kathmandu 2020 VS, p. 39 ff.
- 65 Shamsheer Bahadur Thapa, *Ranabir Singh Thapa*, Kathmandu 2023VS (AD 1966). General Ranabir Singh fought against the British in the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-16. He renounced the mundane life and became Swami Abhayananda of the Josmani cult.
- 66 Janaklal Sharma, op.cit., p. 100 ff.; Kumar Pradhan, *Santa Jnandil: A Rebellious Saint Poet*, to be published in the Makers of Literature Series of the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi
- 67 Santa Jnandil Das, *Udaylahari*, verse 93. It is interesting to note the observation of G.S. Nepali, *The Newars*, p. 152: 'The Newar Brahman Deo-Bhajus also, on their part, refuse to recognise the superior status of the Gorkha Brahmins... They look down upon them on the ground that most of these Brahmins do not hesitate to work as farmers and that in the majority of cases, they do not follow the profession of learning'.
- 68 The opinion is based on the papers relating to this case heard at the Ilam court in AD 1907; documents collected in Eastern Nepal.
- 69 Daniel Wright, *History of Nepal*, p. 170
- 70 *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi*, pp. 684-702: an old *vamsavali* procured from Suryavikram Gewali.
- 71 Harshavardan, *Kingdom of Nepal*, p. 103 ff.
- 72 Kirkpatrick, p. 123
- 73 op.cit., pp. 163-64
- 74 op.cit., pp. 124-25; 163-64
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- 84 Rajendravikram's Lal Mohar (Royal Order) to the Rais of Chaubisi in Eastern Nepal, 1884 Chaitrasudi 15 roj 2, *Puratattva-Patra-Samgraha*, 2, pp. 75-76
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- 99 *Traill's Report*, op.cit., pp. 41, 42
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- 101 Molaram's versified *Gadarajavamsaka Itihas*, excerpts given in Rahul Sankrityayan, *Himalaya Parichay (1): Garhwal*, Allahabad 1953, pp. 209-10, 213-24
- 102 op.cit., pp. 213-25, Molaram's prayer to Bhimsen Thapa as 'Srinagar Durdasha' (Misery of Srinagar)
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- 104 Regmi, *Landownership*, p. 6
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- 106 ibid. Also A. Patricia Caplan, *Priests and Cobblers: A Study of Social Change in a Hindu Village in Western Nepal*, San Fransisco, 1972
- 107 Regmi, *Landownership*, pp. 6-8
- 108 ibid.
- 109 Rukka or Order of the Prime Minister to Sekhjit and Srimukhang Subba, 1895 Maghbadi 3 roj 4
- 110 Jayanta Khatri to Chanthun Rai, 1885 miti x (torn) 3 sudi roj 1, collected in Eastern Nepal

- 111 *Puratattva-Patra-Samgraha*, 2, Documents No. 66, 70, 71, 73, 85, 88, 96
- 112 Some of the documents are listed below:
- a. Ranbahadur's Lal Mohar to Sri Fago, Deva Rai and others, c AD 1782
 - b. Same to Kamjit Rai, confirmation of *kipat* with exemptions except Saune-Fagu, AD 1786
 - c. Same to Sering Rai, Manjit Rai, etc., AD 1806
 - d. Same to same, 1812
 - e. Same to Anget Rai, *kipat* confirmed with *pagari* (membership of the Limbu village council), 1808
 - f. Girvanyuddha to Ramjit Rai and others, *kipat* at Fakuwa Jasingkot Dara, 1810
 - g. Confirmation of *amalat*, given by Makwani king, in the name of Tatuwa Rai, 1790
 - h. Confirmation in the name of Atahang Rai, given by Makwani king in Sabhuwa, Yawa, Tamar region, 1790
 - i. Ranbahadur to Yugam Rai, confirming Hindu Makwani's award, 1786
 - j. Rukka to Chetsingh, Parbal Subba, Balnanda, Asman, Donahang, Gangajit, Chandrabir, 1831-32
 - k. Rajendravikram's confirmation of the 'ancestral land' of Subba Rangya of Athrai, examined and confirmed in 1839
 - l. Confirmation of land at Sikarpur Nagi, 1838-39
 - m. Rajendravikram to Subba Rai, Phedap, 1832
 - n. Same to Chainpur amali: confirming *kipat* of Chhathar Subba Mahansingh Subba, 1837
 - o. Same to Subba Sajasita, Panchamat Rai and Mukhang Karta, Phedap, confirming Subbangi, Rai and Karta-ship, 1835
 - p. Same to Subba Gewa Singh, Balananda, Asman Karta, Athrai 1835
 - q. Same to Asalmukhi, Karnamukhi, Dhanbir, Dalsingh Rai at Chainpur 1835
 - r. Same to Ashang, Jasman, Johyan at Terathum Taplenjung 1835
 - s. Same to Sriman Rai, Subba Yulihang, Jaskarna, Raikarna Rai at Chainpur 1838
 - t. Same to Nepalsingh, Pachthar 1835
 - u. Surendravikram to Silmukh Subba, Asrup Subba, Ranbir Subba, 1855
 - v. Same to Fatekarna Subba, Mansingh Karta, Jarman Bungdeli, Mewa Khola 1850
 - w. Same to Khowa Rai, confirmation of the land being enjoyed since the time of Morang Senas at Yaksingjung, 1849
 - x. Rajendravikram to Subba Dhanjit, Nesiman Karta, Bahajit Karta, 1832
 - y. Same to Dhanman Subba, Karta Ansaman, 1832, etc.

- 113 Of the documents quoted in Note 112 above a. exempted all taxes except Saune-Fagu, k. fixed Rs 41 to be deposited at Ilam camp, n. fixed Rs 298, o. Rs 208, p. Rs 134, q. Rs 456, r. Rs 122, t. Rs 86, u. Rs. 1242.8 annas, v. Rs 59, etc.
- 114 Note 112(i): '*gobadh nagarnu, gare masnu*': don't kill the cow, finish them who kill it'.
- 115 Note 112 (b): '*gauda banda nagarnu, gare masnu*': don't close the passes, their closure to be punished with death'.
- 116 Jayanta Khatri to Chanthun Rai, Note 110 above
- 117 Note 112 (n) : 112 (y)
- 118 Note 112 (y)
- 119 Order of 1884 Chaitrasudi 15 roj 2 (1827 AD). Also *Puratattva-Patra-Samgraha*, 2, Document No 90
- 120 Rajendravikram's Lal Mohar to the Rais, Majhiyas and Jimdars of Majh Kirat, 904 Jyeshthabadi 5 roj 1, *Puratattva*, 2, Document No 110. It was in reply to an appeal against the reduction of *kipat* land (AD 1846)
- 121 *Puratattva*, Document No. 91
- 122 op.cit., Document No. 111
- 123 op.cit., Document No. 71
- 124 Order against alinietion of *kipat* in Pallo Kirat, Jyeshthabadi 9, 1943 (1886 AD)
- 125 Regmi, *Land Tenure*, p. 552 ff.
- 126 G.S. Nepali, *The Newars*, p. 148: 'When we take into account the broader Hindu society of Nepal as led by the Gorkhas the different ethnic groups in order of their social statuses include: Upadhya Brahmin, Jaisi Brahmin, and Deva Bhaju Brahmin; Kshatriya groups— Thakuri, Chhetri (former Khasa) and Khatri; double order— Magar, Gurung, Vaisya (Newar high castes); Sudra— Limbu, Rai, lower caste Newars, Sunwar, Murmi, Tharu; Untouchable— Parbate or Nepali-speaking untouchables and Newar untouchables'. As observed during the coronation of the king the Kirats take the role of the Sudra in ritual ceremonies.
- 127 *Puratattva*, 2, Document No 100
- 128 op.cit., No 101
- 129 op.cit., No 112
- 130 op.cit., No. 113, 114, 117, 118. Also Rajendravikram's Lal Mohar to Kunna Rai, AD 1834
- 131 op.cit., No. 102
- 132 op.cit., No. 121
- 133 The grant of Subbanship to Karnadhoj Limbu who appealed for new *subbangi* after separation from his brother, Chandrabahadur, who separately became a Subba *ipso facto* on the death of their father, Indrabahadur Limbu.

- 134 Lionel Caplan, *Land and Social Change in East Nepal: A Study of Hindu-Tribal Relations*, London 1970, p. 56
- 135 op.cit., p. 63 ff. Regmi, *Land Tenure*, p. 551; Royal Order confirming the conversion of *kipat* land into *raikar* by a Brahman, Naran Padhya, 1947 Jyeshthabadi 5 roj 6 (AD 1890)
- 136 Regmi, *Nepali Economic History*, p. 52, fn. 57
- 137 Caplan, *Land and Social Change*, ch. 4: 'Limbus and Brahmans: The Cleavage'
- 138 op.cit., p. 60
- 139 Ranbahadur Shah's Order to Yugam Rai, 1843 Falgunsudi 8 roj 1, and to Atrai on the same date; also Regmi, *Land Tenure*, p. 557
- 140 ibid
- 141 Kaptan Bakhtavarsingh Bhandari to Dalpa Majhiya at Chhitang
- 142 Rajendravikram Shah's Lal Mohar, 1904 Jyeshthabadi 5 roj 1, *Puratattva*, 2, Document No. 110
- 143 Royal Order to Sunuwars, Chaudhuris, Mahatos, Tharus and others of Dang and Deukhuri, 1900 Falgunbadi 4 roj 5, *Itihas Prakashma Sandhi.*, p. 415
- 144 Rajendravikram's Lal Mohar, 1895 Baisakhsudi roj 4
- 145 Bhimsen Thapa's letter, 1888 Jyeshthabadi 5 roj 7
- 146 Regmi, *Nepali Economic History*, p. 132
- 147 op.cit., p. 133
- 148 Frederick H. Gaige, *Regionalism and National Unity in Nepal*, Los Angeles 1950, rep. New Delhi 1975, p. 62. The book deals with the terai region of Nepal.
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- 150 J.D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals*, I, p. 129
- 151 Document dated 1925 miti Asvinbadi 5 roj 7 (AD 1868): preserved in a government office in Eastern Nepal.
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- 153 Kirkpatrick, pp. 182-83
- 154 M.C. Regmi, *Nepali Econmic History*, pp. 101-02. Figures of the Kirat population in the districts of Taplejung, Pachthar, Ilam, Sankhuwa-Sabha, Terathum, Dhankuta, Bhojpur, Khotang and Okhaldhunga are from the figures given in *Mechidekhi Mahakali*, 4 vols., Kathmandu 2031 VS (AD 1974), Vol. I, *passim*.
- 155 Hamilton, p. 148; The popular usages, 'Nine Lakh Kirat', according to Hodgson's interpretation, is to mean that a house-tax at two annas per family would yield 900,000 annas, which eventually came to be applied to the ethnic group as a whole, *Miscellaneous Essays Relating to Indian Subjects*, Vol. I, London 1880, p. 399
- 156 W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. X: District of

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- 157 Captain J.G. Hathorn, *A Handbook of Darjeeling*, Calcutta 1863, p. 85 ff.
- 158 Extracts from 'Resolution of the High Court of Judicature at Fort William in Bengal on the Annual Criminal Statement for the District of Cooch Behar for the year 1869', 19 September, 1870, Darjeeling Court Records, Assorted Papers, No. 1089
- 159 A.J. Dash, *Gazetteer of the District of Darjeeling*, Calcutta 1947, p. 50
- 160 Census of India, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931, I, Part II: Table on Birth Place. India here means the British Indian provinces and 'native states' within the British empire.
- 161 Hunter, *Statistical Account*, op.cit., p.197
- 162 Regmi, *Nepali Economic History*, p. 197
- 163 Kingsley Davis, *The Population of India and Pakistan*, Princeton 1951, p. 93
- 164 Hunter, op.cit., p. 53
- 165 Hooker, op.cit., pp. 181-84
- 166 Ghartis and Bhujels are regarded as former slaves. A study differentiates between the two stating that the 'difference of the Bhujel to the Gharti, the main group of former slaves, is that the Bhujel ran away before the abolition of slavery, while the Gharti were freed by this act of law' (slavery was abolished in AD 1924), Walter a. Frank, 'Attempt at an Ethno-Demography of Middle Nepal', *Contributions to the Anthropology of Nepal*, ed. Christoph von FÜRER-Haimendorf, op. cit.
- 167 A letter from Colonel R.C. Lawrence, Resident at Nepal, to W.S. Seton Karr, Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, Simla, 4 September 1868, Darjeeling Court Records, Assorted Papers, No. 18 of 1868: It refers to 'the case of four Nepalese subjects who after becoming domiciled in British territory were taken back to Nepal by a party of Nepalese'. The British demanded their restoration and Jang Bahadur sent those four persons to the Residency. They were 'removed from Darjeeling District by their former Master Mahaveer Karkee and others'. However, the four men told the Resident that they were much better as slaves. How far the answer was tutored by the captors is hard to say. But the Resident saw no reason 'for doubting what the refugees said'. He also wrote, 'I was aware that people of their class in Nepal as a rule are well treated and well cared for by their owners'. The British government dropped the matter: Under-Secretary, Government of India, to the Resident, 23 September 1868, Darjeeling Court Records, assorted Papers, No. 1085
- 168 Sri 3 Maharajbata Kariyahaarulai Amalekh Garaune Barema Bakseko

- Speech*, 1981 sal Marga 14 gate Sukrabar (28 November 1924, Friday), pp. 31-34. For the gist of this speech in English, cf. Perceval London, *Nepal*, 2 vols., II, pp. 166 ff.
- 169 Regmi, *Thatched Huts*, pp. 134-35
- 170 The Brahmans who emigrated could have included those who were banished from the kingdom for breaking puritanical codes. As most of the tribes of Nepal had already undergone a process of Hinduization some Brahmans could have come occasionally, as is observed even today, for priestly profession. Brahmans and Chhetris are mostly found engaged in agriculture and dairy farming in Assam, Sikkim and Darjeeling, and they usually possess lands. Although no study has been undertaken to establish this point, a hypothesis on the basis of casual observations shows that Brahman-Chhetri emigrants came with capital for the purchase of land and cattle. This view is also suggested in an unpublished article 'Bhut, Bartaman Ra Bhavishya ani Nepali Rashtrabad' written by Kaziman Kandangba. He says that '*tagadharis* emigrated with capital to earn money, non-*tagadharis* to earn livelihood'. Some non-Chhetri migrants might have become 'Chhetris' because many tribes and low castes were usually not enlisted in the British Indian army. While migrating to a new land they could have raised their social status. Ghartis, the runaway slaves, numbered 1419 in the population of Darjeeling in 1871-72, 3448 in 1901 and 3548 in 1911, the number of the Ghartis in 1941 was 496 only.
- 171 Sarat Chandra Das, *Journey to Lhasa and Central Asia*, p. 3
- 172 Hooker, I, p. 167
- 173 Census of Nepal, 1961, Vol. II, p. 1621
- 174 M. Weiner, 'The Political Demography of Nepal', Seminar of Population and Development, Centre for Economic Development and Administration, Kathmandu 1971, Seminar Paper No. 2, pp 99-114
- 175 Hunter, *Life of Hodgson*, p. 105 quotes Principal Transaction, para 62
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- 177 Hunter, *Life of Hodgson*, p. 105 ff., quotations from *Auckland Manuscripts*, and Hodgson's Private Papers.
- 178 Secret Consultations, No. 74, January 18, 1848; Hunter, op.cit., p. 106, *Principal Transactions*, para 64
- 179 Reports sent on 8 March 1830 and 1 December 1831: Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal, Vol. XXVII, Hunter, ip.cit., p. 111 ff.
- 180 John Pemble, *Invasion of Nepal*, p. 60
- 181 A. Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia*, p. 322
- 182 Statistical Abstracts Relating to British India, presented to both

- Houses of Parliament, Return for 1890-91, London 1895, pp. 226-27, Hunter, op.cit., p. 115
- 183 Secret Consultations (mss.) of the Government of India, No. 74, 18 January 1841, later printed as *Excerpts from the Letters of the Resident at Kathmandu to Government from 1830-1840*, by J.R. Tickell, Assistant Resident, Hunter, op.cit., p. 128
- 184 quoted from Hodgson's Report to the Government in October 1832, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, II, 1833; *Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal*, XXVII, Calcutta 1857, Hunter, op.cit., pp. 108-09
- 185 A. Husain, op.cit., pp. 201-02; Note No. 177 above
- 186 David Bolt, *Gurkhas*, London 1967, ch. 4 'The Gurkha Brigade', p. 79 ff.; Husain, ch. 8
- 187 Husain, pp. 205, 234, 254: Hirtzel's Report from Political and External File, 25 August 1922, India Office Library, London
- 188 Major Nicolay in Eden Vansittart, *Gurkhas: Handbooks for the Indian Army*, Calcutta 1915, p. 170
- 189 *ibid.*
- 190 op.cit., pp. 144-46
- 191 op.cit., pp. 174-77: Table II—Tabular Statement of Recruits Enlisted, 1886-1904
- 192 Major C.J. Morris, *Gurkhas: Handbooks for the Indian Army*, Calcutta 1936, rep. 1942, pp. 171-76
- 193 A Report on Nepal and the Great War, 1914-1918: Nepal Foreign Office, 'Basta' No. 63, quoted in Husain, op.cit., p. 185: W. Brook Northey and C.J. Morris, *The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country*, London 1928, rep. New Delhi 1974, p. 367
- 194 Husain, pp. 201-02
- 195 Morris, *Gurkhas*, p. 34 and Appendix 6, Recruiting Statistics: Table A showing the number, clan, average age, height and chest measurement of recruits enlisted in Western and Eastern Nepal from October 25th, 1886, to the end of Recruiting Season, 1934-35, pp. 171-76
- 196 Northey and Morris, op.cit., p. 267
- 197 Letter from the Rana Prime Minister Juddha Shamsheer to General Claude Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief of India, 11 March 1945, Nepal Foreign Office, 'Basta' No. 56 reproduced in Husain, pp. 252-53
- 198 Morris, op.cit., 54
- 199 op.cit., p. 58
- 200 E. Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, p. 174-77
- 201 Francis Toker, *Gorkha: The Story of the Gurkhas of Nepal*, London 1957, p. 120
- 202 B.D. Sanwal, *Nepal and the East India Company*, pp. 188-98, rep: on the loyalty of Gorkha commanders

203 Regmi, *Landownership*, p. 8

204 The hillmen of the midlands or the Pahar belt of Nepal usually dress alike in *daura* or *labeda* or a jacket fastened on one side of the chest by strings, *suruwal* or tight trousers and cap. The *khukuri* or the curved knife is used by all. These are often taken to be symbols of national identity. Hooker, op.cit., I, p. 128, noted that the Limbus used, instead of the *ban* or a straight dagger like the Roman sword, 'the Nepal curved knife, called "cookree", and while for the striped kirtle of the Lepchas are substituted loose cotton trousers and a tight jacket, and on the head a small cotton cap'.

G.S. Nepali, *Newars*, pp. 64-65, notes that in contrast to the Newars, 'the other ethnic groups of Nepal, including Gorkhas (except their richer sections) are very scantily dressed inasmuch as the lower garment is concerned. The majority of them have an upper garment known as *labeda* and a '*longoti*' to be called a lower garment. Over this dress, a long piece of loin cloth is used as a cloth-band round the waist (called *patuka*) in which the Nepalese traditional weapon, the *khukuri* is fastened. It is the use of *longoti*, which leads the Newars to have a very superior attitude in relation to these people who wear it and therefore the epithet, '*pakhe*' is used by the Newars while referring to these people.

'The Newars, on the other hand are well dressed from head to foot. The type of dress with regard to males is common to all the Nepalese. Perhaps it is the Newar's gift to other ethnic groups who wear it. The male upper garment is called *la(n)* in Newari and is the same as *labeda*. The lower garment is called *suruwa*...The Nepalese *suruwa* is more akin to the lower garment of the males of Saurashtra and Kutch, who, like the Gorkhas, call it *suruwal*. The *labeda* or *la(n)*... resembles somewhat the *pashbandhi Kediya* of Gujarat... Over such upper garment the '*patuka*' (cloth belt) is worn. Ghurye says that this type of upper garment was the earlier dress of north India.'

205 Caplan, *Land and Social Change in East Nepal*, pp. 188-89, observes, 'What is in essence a confrontation over land comes to be seen as a battle for the survival of a way of life. Conceptualized in this way, cultural distinctiveness serves as an important weapon in the struggle for land. It becomes essential for the Limbus to reiterate the peculiarity of their own customs and values. When cultural practices and beliefs are promoted and their uniqueness stressed, they not only maintain group boundaries, but becomes what Cohen refers to as a "political ideology", culture, in other words, comes to have a political role'. Also, Jiro Kawakita, 'Magar Resistance to Hinduism', *Hill Magars and Their Neighbours*, ch. 6

- 206 This point is underlined in most of the writings on the Nepali language. T.W. Clark, *Introduction to Nepali*, Cambridge 1963, p. viii: 'Today it (Nepali) is not only the mother tongue of the descendants of the Khas tribesmen, who are scattered throughout the whole length of the country, but also the second language of many members of the other tribes, some of whom have already lost their mother tongue and speak Nepali as their only language. According to the 1952-54 census, the population of the hill areas of Nepal is 5,867,000; and of these some 84 percent now speak Nepali, 66 percent as their mother tongue and 18 percent as a second language'. See Appendix F. below.
- 207 Ranabahadur Shah to Dinanath Upadhyaya, 1853 Poushadi 15 roj 7, *Aitihāsik Patra-Samgraha*, 2, p. 99
- 208 *Education in Nepal*, National Education Planning Commission, Kathmandu 1956, pp. 62-63
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- 210 Hamilton, *Kingdom of Nepal*, p. 16
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Appendix

The following tabulation shows the domination of the high castes (Brahman, Chhetris or Tagadharis) in the political sphere even after the Revolution of 1950:

A. Council of Ministers (1950-59)

	Prime Minister	Other Cabinet Ministers				
		Brahmans	Chhetris	Newars	Kirats	Others
1	Chhetri	3	6	1	0	0
2	Brahman	3	7	1	1(R*)	0
3	Chhetri	0	5	1	0	0
4	Brahman	1	1	1	1(R*)	1(Y*)
5	Brahman	4	2	0	1(R*)	0
6	Newar	1	3	1	0	0
7	Brahman	3	2	1	0	1(B*)
8	Chhetri	2	6	1	1(L*)	1(M*)
9	Chhetri	2	3	0	1(L*)	0
10	Brahman	6	1	1	1(L*)	1(T*)
		25	36	8	6	4

R*=Rai, L*=Limbu, Y*=Yadav, B*=Bengali, M*=Mahato, T*=Tharu

The Tagadharis constituted 80% of the ministers, and the rest 20%.

B. Representation in Parliament, 1959

		<i>Number of representatives</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
i. <i>Hill:</i>	Brahmans	31	28.4
	Chhetris	30	27.5
	Newars	5	40.6
	Other tribes	22	20.2
	Low castes	1	0.9
ii. <i>Plains:</i>	Caste Hindus & Muslims	13	11.9
	Other tribes	7	6.4
		109	c 100

C. Representation in the National Panchayat, 1967

		<i>Number of representatives</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Hill:</i>	Brahmans	30	24.0
	Chhetris	47	37.6
	Newars	15	12.0
	Other tribes	19	15.2
	Low castes	1	0.8
<i>Plains:</i>	Caste Hindus & Muslims	11	8.8
	Other tribes	2	1.6
		125	100

D. Senior Army Officers, 1967

		<i>Number of representatives</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
	Chhetris	137	74.0
	Brahmans	12	6.5
	Newar	12	6.5
	Gurung	12	6.5
	Rai	2	1.1
	Tamang	2	1.1
	Magar	1	.5
	Others	7	3.8
		185	100

E. The Graduate Constituency in the Election
for National Panchayat, 1971

	<i>Number of representatives</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Tagadharis:</i>		
i. Brahmans	3900	48.7
ii. Chhetris	1250	15.6
<i>Non-Tagadharis:</i>		
i. Newars	2500	31.1
ii. Others		
a. Tribes	358	4.5
b. Untouchables	10	0.1
	8018	100

F. Census Figures: Nepali Language

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Those who entered Nepali as mother tongue</i>	<i>People showing other languages as mother tongue</i>
1951	8,256,625	4,013,567	4,243,058
1961	9,412,996	4,796,528	4,616,468
1971	11,555,983	6,060,758	5,495,225

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