

Report on Two Tours in Search of Sanskrit Manuscripts in Some Parts of the Kingdom of Nepal

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1. The exploratory tours on which what follows is the report, were undertaken by me in March/April 1979 within the framework of the agreement between His Majesty's Government of Nepal and the German Oriental Society; it is this agreement on which the 'Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project', started in 1970, is based, its German director being Dr. h. c. W. Voigt. Like the project itself, the tours also were made possible not only by the 'German Society for the Encouragement of Scientific Research' but also by the close cooperation of the Department of Archaeology of the Ministry of Education of HM's Government of Nepal, to which I am bound both for its valuable advice as also for its letter of recommendation to the district officers; in the field, the letter proved most useful indeed.

The main aim of the exploratory tours was not to survey exhaustively a part or even the whole of Nepal as to the present state of the preservation of Sanskrit Mss., but to get a rough

idea of the amount and kind of Mss. to be found outside the traditional cultural centre, viz. the valley of Kathmandu. For such basic information should contribute to solving the immediate problem whether and in which manner the above mentioned project should be continued from 1980 onwards.

Certain restrictions put on the undertaking of these exploratory tours could not be overcome: time was too limited to visit all the places I had intended to reach, because for various reasons the actual journeys took more time than calculated, and it seemed preferable not to stick stubbornly to a fixed schedule but to be ready to follow up information received on the spot. For I had decided not to confine myself to only collecting hearsay information about people in possession of Mss. but rather to try as far as possible myself to visit the owners of Mss. and personally inspect whatever material they had. Since I am not a Tibetologist, I disregarded those areas which are already

more or less well known to abound in Tibetan texts.

Although the information thus collected by me is strictly speaking valid only for those places or areas I could actually visit, the results can, to be sure, nevertheless be regarded as representative for a much larger part of the country, and they suffice for a clear decision on the project in the next future.

2. First tour (26th of March-13th of April 1979)
- 2.1 I left Kathmandu on the 26th of March by landrover following the road to Pokhara up to Ambukhaireni; from there I trekked to Manakamana. Though a place of religious importance, no Mss. were found there. The next day I travelled on foot to the town of Gorkha where the situation turned out to be quite different.

The manager of the 'Aryal Hotel and Lodge' introduced me to his father, Pdt. Dandapani Aryal (Jyotisha, Atreyagotra, Madhyandinasakha of the Yajurveda), who most readily showed me his collection of Mss. It contained the following texts:

Maghamahatmya V(ikrama) S(amvat) 1661
Varnakosa of Indumauli VS 1661
Sisupalavadha
Kiratarjuniya
Amarakosatika of Kulanidhisharma
Ramayana: Bala-, Ayodhya-, Lanka and Sunderakanda with Tika
Laghujataka with Tika
Bhavisyagrahanacandrika [till S(aka) S(amvat) 2813 !]
Mantracandrika
Dasakarmapaddhati (Garbhadaana-Vivaha)
Tajika-Nilakanthitika
Brahajataka

Suryasiddhanta
Triprasadhikara (a part either of Bhaskara's Siddhantasiromani or of Kamalakara's Siddhantatattvaviveka)
Jyautisharatnamala of Sripati
Bhasvati SS 1465 (!)
Muhurtachintamani SS 1695
Several Panchangas, i. e. calendars, e. g. for the years VS 1853, 1879, 1895
a Janmapattrika (3m X 20cm)
Samarasarasamgrahatika of Somachandrayogin SS 1703
Dasavidhi
Prasastiratnamala
Grahaghavyasyodahrti SS 1734
Martandabhidhana with Tika SS 1756
Svarodaya of Narapatijayacharya SS 1731
Jatakapaddhati of Keshavasamvatsara
Gamatkarachintamani SS 1699
[[Jyotisha-] Jaiminisutra
Jatakabharana SS 1685
Lagnachandrika
Sarvarthaintamani
Bhasapariccheda on Siddhantamuktavali
Tatparyabodhini of Ramakrishna
Samudrikapramanalaksana
Caurapancashika of Bilhana
Anekarthamanjari
a family-Vamshavali (30 generations)
and some other documents of historical value
Pdt. Badrinath Sharma Acharya showed me the following two manuscripts in his possession:
Bhagavatamahapurana with Nepali translation
Saptasati of Vyasa VS 1975
and Pdt. Phanindramani Acharya his Ms. of the Sravanotsargavidhi SS 1719
The following gentlemen living in Gorkha are said to own Sanskrit Mss:
Kaviraj Shrestha (Ayurvedic doctor, Dhara-pani, Cipitol),

Gopal Acharya (Parshlanpani),
Tejnath Acharya (Dharapani),
Ramnath Mishra (Dharapani),
Ramji Patel and Bhimprasad Katel (both :
Kateldhara).

I was also informed that Mr. Hemadatta Koirala Puspanidhi, living in the village Naresvara in the Bogati Panchayat has a collection of Mss., and that in the village Liglig in the West of Gorkha (near Palungtar) there is a rather large community of Brahmins who according informant possess many Mss.

2.2. On the 30th of March I returned by another footpath to Ambukhaireni and drove on to Pokhara where my attention was drawn to different households with the names Regmi and Parajuli. Among these is that of Pdt. Madanabhusana Parajuli who is said to own among others a Ms. of the Harivamsha in Newari Script, but is also known for his lack of readiness to show his collection even to his fellow Brahmins.

I was not able to get in touch with the family of the late Sriraman Parajuli who is said to have possessed Sanskrit Mss. Pdt. Somanath Regmi, too, is said to be in possession of various Mss. Yet I was fortunate to be guided to the house of Pdt. Tankanath Parajuli (near the Vindyavasini-Temple) who keeps several bundles of Mss. of which I was shown at least some, containing the following texts:

Vishnupurana (undated but apparently old)
Ganeshasahasranama with Bhasya SS 1774
Kavyaprakasha (incomplete)
Tarkamrta of Jagadishadhattacharya
Mantramahodadhi of Mahidhara VS 1614
Raghuvamsha with Mallinatha's
Commentary (sargas 11 and 12 only)
Rudrayamalatantra VS 1920

Kalikapurana SS 1702
Udaharabachandrika of
Vaidyanatha (commentary on the
Kavyaprakasha)

Saragita (Hindi)
Rasatarangini of Bhanudatta
Pratisthamayukha of Nilkantha
Jalashayaramotsargamayukha
of Nilkantha SS 1626

Acharadarsa of Sridatta VS 1686

Sarajakalika of Kaviratna VS 1862

Kalikasahasranamastotra VS 1866

Ashaucadidhiti of Jivadeva VS 1866

Tattvanusandhana of
Mahadevasarasvati

Siddhantakaumudi of

Bhattojidikshita (two Mss., one of SS 1766)

Vedantarasa with a commentary of Vagis-
vara Bhattacharya

Parasharasmrti with
Madhavabhasya SS 1674

Srisukta VS 1819

Jyesthanaksatrajananashanti

Radhavinodakavya SS 1702

Gotrapravaraniirnaya of
Bhattojidikshita VS 1850

Saptashati (portion of the Markandeyapurana)
with a commentary by Nagojibhatta

In Pokhara there are located also two camps for Tibetan refugees, one (Jhose Patan) in the south, near the road leading to Tansen, the other (Hyangja) in the north of the city, which should be visited for Tibetan blockprints and Mss.

2.3. On the 2nd of April I climbed up the hills in the North-West of Pokhara and followed the trail on the ridge up to Dharapani. The son of Pdt. Karunanidhi Jyotishi I did not find at home, but was reliably informed that he has a fairly good collection of Mss. By

chance I met Mr. Motilal Paudel who has inherited from his father the following Mss.:

Sadanganyasamantrapanchamrtasana- grahajapasamksepaividhi	SS 1821
Yajnakarma-Vratibandhavidhi	SS 1824
Vasisthavivaha-Grahanamaskara	
Antyapaddhati	SS 1824
Panchanga (i. e. calendar)	
Krsnarjunasamvade Karmagita	
Tirthavali (Hindi)	
Tattvabodha of Shankaracharya	
Ekadashivishupuja	
Tulasistotra	
Sarpayamigayatri	
Satyanarayanapuja	
Bhavisyottarapurane Shrikrnarjuna- Samvade Adityahrdayastotra	
Mrtyunjayastotra	
Rsipanchamivratibandha	
Agnisthapana	
Vajasaneyisamhita	SS 1824

Mr. Motilal Paudel also referred me to Mr. Durgadatta Bhandari and Mr. Pashupati Bhandari Jaisi whose Mss., however, could not be inspected by me.

Following the trail a little further the next day, I met in Naudanda Mr. Harilal Suvedi who showed me the following Mss.

Vivahavasisthi	
Chudakarma	
Chaturthikarma	SS 1826
Pandavagita	
Shivakavacastotra	
Mahimnastotra of Puspadantacharya	
Rudriya	
Rsitarpanavidhi	SS 1830

He also spoke to me of the collections of his sagotras (Bharadvaja) Pdt. Hariprasad and Pdt. Ananta Suvedi. On my way back to Pokhara

I stopped in Kaski where I visited Mr. Narahari Pandit who besides several printed Sanskrit texts owns the following Mss.:

Shuklayajurvedasamhita (dirghapatha)	SS 1823
Vasisthachudakarma	
Bhagavadgita	
Vivahavasisthi	SS 1862

Mr. Premraj Suvedi Jyotishi, living near by, showed me a pile of mixed up manuscript leaves among which I could identify the following texts:

Saptashati	SS 1802
Vaidyangi: (Nepali)	
Brhajjataka	
Jyotisharatnamala	
Grahashanti	

Many other gentlemen whom I was not able to meet personally are said to possess Mss., viz. Radhadatta Mukhya (Turishvara/Deurali between Naudanda and Kaski), Hiranyaprasad Jyotishi, Ramprasad Jyotishi, Krishna-prasad Jyotishi, (Laksmiprasad Jyotishi), Sete Davadi, Tankanath Davadi, Hariprasad Davadi, Chudamani Davadi, Balaram Davadi, Kalu Davadi (all : Kotmani), Mitralal Pandit, Sobhanath Pandit, Balhari Pandit, Vasudev Pandit (all : Ratamata) and Narahari Pandit (Rotevani).

2.4. On the 5th of April I reached Tansen by road. It was especially interesting and fruitful to get to know there Mr. Deviprasad Pandit (Pandeya) whose father and grandfather had been Rajgurus (Kashyapagotra). Although his own collection is very small, containing only two Mss. (Merutantra SS 1778 and Trailokyavijayakavaca), he gave me the names of other persons possessing Mss.: among these are his relative Pdt. Upen-

draraj Pant living in Rata Mathi, Baglung, whose rich collection of palm-leaf Mss. he had seen himself; Mr. Jaganath Upadhaya; Prasad Devkota; and Mr. Krishna Raj Gurukarna who, like Mr. Krishnaraj Pandeya, lives in the quarter of Dharapani.

Of these persons I decided to visit Mr. Jaganath Upadhaya; yet his 'collection' turned out to consist in copy-books only used by his father to write down texts or textportions he studied when he was young. Nevertheless it could be useful to contact him again as he works in the Panchayat and promised to gather information upon Sanskrit Mss.

Pdt. Neerajat Prasad who stays in a building called Ram Nivas showed me the following Mss. in his possession:
Purusottamamahatmya (palmleaf)
Bhagavatakatha alias-arthanukramanika
 of Ksemendra
Malladarsha of Premanidhisharma
Tararahasyavrtti : Vashnatattvanirnaya
 Harivamshatika VS 1908
Bhagavatapur with Bhavarthadipika on it

2.5. From Tansen I trekked down to Ridi-bazar; but this excursion was rather disappointing as regards Mss. findings. By Mr. Ramji Prasad Khanal I was informed that a couple of years earlier somebody of the Dept. of Archaeology had already visited this place and taken away Mss. to be kept in the National Archives. And Pdt. Ekadev Pujahari told me that he had had in his possession three bundles of Mss. partially belonging to other people and that his wife in what he called an 'attack of insanity' one day while he was absent from his house, took all of them out into the garden and burnt them down.

I was, however, referred by seve-

ral informants to the village of Thorga Mach where 'big pandits' are said to live, among them Himprasad Geomli and Shivakumar Geomli. Since time was pressing I could not go there, but returned to Tansen from where I drove to Bhai-rahava.

2.6 My inquires about Mss. in the village of Parariya near Lumbini brought on quite an unexpected result : I was finally shown the guest-book of the site of Lumbini for the years 1927 sqq., it being a 'hath le lekheko purano kitab' (an old hand-written book) : I visited also some other villages near the alleged site of Kalpilavastu and near Niglihava, but nowhere did I come across any Mss.

2.7 The destination of my next excursion was the so called "Inner Terai", i. e. Dang. On the 11th of April I arrived in Tulsipur after a rather adventurous ride over mountain ranges and across rivers.

There I met by chance Mr. Tikaram Regmi who had just come down from Salyan. He told me of a 300-years old Ms. of the Rigvedasambhita in his possession and was quite sure that many of the pandits living in Salyan had large collections. Unfortunately, I was not able to go myself to Salyan which can be reached from Tulsipur only in two days.

Prof. Ambikaprasad Adhikari, Head of the Sanskrit Dept. of the Tribhuvan University at Birgunj (former Belghundi), gave me the names of Pdt. Tikanath Gautam and Pdt. Manibhadra Sharma, both living in Hapur, and of Pdt. Rameswar Sharma from Bijauri, Pdt. Vasudev Sharma Ghimire and Bhagavata Sharma from Ghorahi as possessing Mss. None of them could I meet at home,

but the information is, no doubt, reliable.

2.8. When I returned to Bhairahava the people I had asked to inquire about Mss. on this city informed me that they had not been able to lay hands on even a single one. Since I had run out of my food stock I decided to drive back to Kathmandu; via Narayanghat and Hetauda. I arrived there on 13th of April.

3. Second Tour (17th-22nd of April)

3.1. After a few days of rest I started on my second tour on the 17th of April and reached Ilam in the far west the next day. A young Limbu man told me that Limbu Mss. can be found in Taplejung (about two days north of Ilam). This information was corroborated by another Limbu, Mr. Ranahang Magu (District of Phidim, village of Tharpu Manager, Ward No. 4), whom I happened to meet in Ilam. He told me of many Limbu Mss. he kept in his house and also referred me to the famous 5 Limbu temples and the Sadhugupta Guthi-Samsthan in Sablako, all situated in the district of Taplejung.

I could not detect any signs of the existence of Sanskrit Mss., neither in Ilam nor in Phikkal.

3.2 An informant in Kathmandu and strongly recommended me to visit Jhapa. Thus I took off from the main road to ride in a dust cloud to Jhapa. But there I was told by Pdt. Bhanudatta Pokharel that there are no Mss. at all, neither in the town nor in the District of Jhapa.

3.3 My next step was Dharan where I visited the Pindeswar Temple. Except for an unreadable stone inscription brought there from Pokhara, I found no other

written material. The Priest, Pdt. Baira Prasad of the near-by Dantakali temple, however, let me have a look at the single Ms. he has in his possession containing various works, viz. :

Devikavaca (from Varahapur)

Ratrishukta

Varapradana (extract of Marhandeyapur)

Saptasati

Mr. Chhavilal Pandit, Dean of the Sanskrit-Adhyayana Samsthan, Pindeswar Vidyapith, Dharan was sceptical of there being any Sanskrit Mss. in Dharan itself and the neighbourhood, since this is a comparatively new settlement. Nevertheless I was told by other informants that Mr. Madhavprasad Baral, Mr. Trailokyanath Baral and Mr. Agni-prasad Baral, all in the village of Kurule, and Mr. Khagendraprasad Adhikari and Mr. Purnaprasad Adhikari in the village of Simbhu Nasuva (near Dhankuta), might well possess Sanskrit Mss. As regards Dhankuta and Asmara, one should consult Mr. Hemchandra Pokharel, teacher at the campus in Dharan.

3.4 In Biratnagar, the only person from whom reliable information can be gathered, Mr. B. D. Upadhyaya, editor of the weekly Himal-Chuli, had unfortunately gone 'to his village' for some days. The sons of the late Mr. Sobhachandra Khanal assured me that they had inherited at least one Ms. which they, however, claimed to have given away in loan. They were unable to tell me the title.

In the Terai, I have inquired about Mss. at many other places, too, but always in vain. Thus I have got the firm impression that with the sole and important exception of Janakpur (vide the report by Prof. Dr. M. Hahn

and Mr. M. R. Panta) there are no Mss. to be found in this part of Nepal. Most of the settlements are comparatively recent and the part of the population which lives there from of old apparently did not develop any important written traditions. Yet even this is significant enough as a negative result, so that this tour also may be considered to have been useful. On the 22nd of April I completed it by returning from Hetauda to Kathmandu.

4. General observations and conclusions

- 4.1 Sanskrit Mss. in obviously considerable quantity can be found outside the valley of Kathmandu, too. The character of the texts handed down is, however; to a large extent determined by the every day religious needs of the people. The knowledge of Sanskrit is rapidly fading away: rich and well kept collections of Mss. I was shown exclusively by aged pandits. Wherever they have already passed away, the next generation seems to lack genuine interest in and understanding for this part of their patrimony. This was particularly obvious in all those cases where Brahmin families have in fact been peasants for many generations.

Whether this process of de-Sanskritisation can be stopped, and by what means, is a problem not to be dealt with here. Yet the need for preserving as soon as possible all such manuscripts as have escaped destruction cannot be overemphasized: If steps are not immediately taken, I dare say hardly a single Sanskrit Ms. will exist in this part of Nepal in another decade or perhaps two.

- 4.2 The goal of preserving this part of the cultural heritage of Nepal - a goal to

be sure, of national as well as international scientific importance - could be best achieved by microfilming the Mss. within the framework of the "Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project". I should, however, add here a remark of a practical nature.

By checking the titles Mss. I had seen on my tours with the catalogue in Kathmandu of the Mss. already microfilmed, I could verify my strong impression that the great majority of texts are well documented in the official and private collections microfilmed so far.

It is, therefore, not advisable to microfilm every single Sanskrit Ms. that may be found in other parts of the country; rather the work should be confined to selected Mss. only, viz. those that Prove by their age or their contents to be especially valuable. In order to be able to judge the value of a Ms. in terms of its rarity a complete list of the titles of all the Mss. microfilmed until now is indispensable.

The microfilming can best be done by actually travelling to the various places. After inspecting the collections and selecting those Mss. which should be microfilmed, not only the actual filming but also the developing should be done on the spot so that result can be immediately checked and a retake be done where necessary. As such a procedure would, of course, imply carrying a lot of equipment "up and down" the hills and mountains, the individual "campaigns" should be thoroughly organised by respective preparatory tours which can be undertaken by a single person or by two.

In addition one might think of staying for a longer period at the larger place to which the Mss. from neighbouring villages could be brought. Climatic conditions do not favour excursions throughout the year. This, together with other factors like the relatively less 'density' of Mss., will have unavoidable effect that the relation between the input in terms of money and the output, i. e. the total number of microfilmed manuscript leaves will be quite different from that of the first 10 years of the NGMPP. Yet the main result of my tour is that it would, no doubt, be worth-while to go

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to the expense of preserving at least the most valuable of these still existing Mss.

Almost all the owners of Mss. whom I had the pleasure to meet, did not only appreciate the fact that a foreigner had come a long way to ask their permission to have a look at their Mss. but they also readily declared their willingness to make them available for microfilming. And I should not conclude my report without expressing my gratitude to all these amiable people. My special thanks are due to Mr. Rana Bahadur Thapa, my indefatigable and resourceful driver and companion.

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