A Leaf From the Bendall

"Vaṃśāvalī"¹

Thakurlal Manandhar

The language of the mss. in question is difficult. One part is written in debased Sanskrit and the other part in old Newari. Bendall borrowed the mss. and it was taken to London for research. One consequence of this was Bendall's article 'The History of Nepal and Surrounding Kingdoms' ². The same article was also inserted in the first volume of Mahamahopadhyaya Har Prasad Shastri's catalogue of mss. in the Durbar Library ³.

There occurs on one of the leaves of the mss. the sentence -

tatpāscaḥ bhotarajena mahāyati rajyaṃ karoti nepālamandale - which is omitted by Professor Bendall in his article. But later, Professor Petech, in his book, "The Mediaeval History of Nepal (c. 750-1480), made an attempt to make sense of the sentence.

Professor Petech read: "tatpāṣad Bhotaraja-Namoyatih Nepālama-
mandale rajyam karoti": which he translated: After (the reign of Vasantadeva) the Tibetan king Namoyati (?) ruled over Nepal".

He construed the sentence to mean that a Tibetan king came and ruled the country because the word Bhot is used nowadays in Nepali to mean Tibet. However he also misread the text as 'Bho-
taraja-Namoyatih' instead of 'bhotarajena-mahāyati' and this created another difficulty for him. After searching in the literature of Tibet to find out whether a king of this name appears anywhere he concluded: 'but there is nothing in the Tibetan texts about con-
quests in Nepal' at that time. He was forced to indulge in con-
jectures which seem quite irrelevant in this context.

Although I myself had the unexpected privilege of reading out the mss. to Professor Petech sometime during the summer of 1956 in the Bir Library itself, this sentence escaped my notice simply because I was not asked to translate it. What Professor Petech wanted to find out from my reading seemed to be only verification of the dates which he had jotted down in his notebook beforehand.

And so it was that I did not pay attention to the sentence at that time. Later, when his book was published, I noticed his wrong in-
terpretation, but it was too late. So afterwards in 1966 when I was in Rome for a short trip from Kiel, West Germany, I met Pro-
fessor Petech and made some suggestions to correct this and a few other mistakes for a future edition of his book.

The correct reading of the sentence is "tatpāṣad bhotara-
janamayati rajyaṃ karoti Nepālamandale". nam is Newari ablative case-ending signifying 'from' and rūje is just a Newari variant of Sanskrit rajya since 'ya' is pronounced ye by Newari speakers. So it transpires that the sentence is a mixture of poor Sanskrit and Newari. 'Ma' is a misreading for 'ma' in Professor Petech's transcription. This is easily made, for, in Newari script, the
headline over 满, if it looks straight, is to be read 满; but, if it is curved, should be read 'mo'. Thus the correct reading of the sentence means literally that somebody (a king) comes from the Kingdom of Bhota and rules over Nepal.

However, the difficulty for a historian is not yet solved. The question arises as to what the word 'Bhota' implies in this context. If one reads through other Newari portions of the same mss., the answer becomes clear. The word 'Bhota' is met with frequently in many other contexts, such as "Bhota or Bhonta (a variant spelling) ādamā va ke teochhi kāye madō" meaning that the cost of rice shot up so much that one ādam of Bhota or Bhonta currency could not fetch even four manās (measure) of it. This is written when describing the intensity of suffering of the people in the year 466 Nepal era (1346 A.D.) in the region of Banepa, Panauti and the neighbouring villages which had fallen victims to famine or siege. So 'Bhonta ādam' implies a currency of Bhonta and indicates the existence of a state called Bhonta or Bhota.

Students of Nepalese history are aware of the fact that Nepal sometime after Amshuwarman was split into two half-kingsdoms in the days of the Lichchavis and the Thakuris; one half being 'yem' 5 (the Northern Kingdom) and the other being 'yela' (the Southern Kingdom). So we find two kingdoms in the Lichchavi period of Nepalese history, one major and the other minor as indicated by such expressions as vijayaraṇya and ardharāṇya respectively. Historians like K.P. Jayaswal have described this kind of joint-rule as the Dvairāṇya system. Coming down to the early mediaeval period, we again find two kingdoms sometimes joint and at other times disjoint as indicated by such terms as 'Bhonta' and 'Gwanla', the one major and the other minor. In this case 'Bhonta' designated the eastern kingdom and 'Gwanla' the western kingdom.

Expressions like 'Bhonta rājya nemayati rājya kareti nepalāmandale' (rājya here is Sanskrit spelling for rāje), 'bhonta yā gwanlan āya mathyākatom' 7 and 'bhonta yā gwanlan āya thāyākatom' 8 (these are pure Newari expressions) are met with in the same manuscript. Gwanla indicates the kingdom of Nepal (expressed in Sanskrit as Nepālamandala): the capital of this part, i.e. the western kingdom happened to be the town of Deo Patan which is still called in modern Newari 'Gwanla'; and Bhonta indicates the eastern kingdom with its capital in the city of Banepa, which is still called in modern Newari 'Bhonta'.

Another case in point is the appellation of 'Bhonta' to chiefs who came from or had their origin in the eastern kingdom of 'Bhonta'. The name of king Jaya Bhimadeva (1258–1271) was preceded by this appellation (previous to his accession): Bhonta Shri Jaya Bhimadeva. Many other chiefs from that kingdom had the same epithet prefixed to their names, for instance, Bhonta Jaya Shaktideva (the grandson of king Jaya Bhimadeva), Bhonta Shri Jaya Rājadeva (before he was
A leaf from the Bendall "Vamsavali" 101

crowned king), Bhonta Shri Shri Jayurjunedva (after his dethronement), Bhonta Jaya Simha Rama (previously a Prime minister of Banepa royal family, later, a feudatory of king Jayasthiti Malla). etc.

This kingdom of Bhonta lost its identity as a separate state by itself only on Friday, Nov. 23rd 1380 A.D., when king Jayarjuna deva, the last of the Banepa royal line was made to enter into his own kingdom (mahājātra yānga thawa rāja Bināpyā kwaṭha dumbijyacaktu, as the Newari portion of the Vamsavali puts it) with honour and dignity, though deprived of power as a major king. Twenty-two days after that when he came to the fort or castle at Gokarna with an evil design to get back to power, his plan was nipped in the bud and he had to remain virtually a prisoner, in a house called Tripurakwachhen (in Bhatgaon), where he died a year after on Feb. 3rd, 1382 A.D. The sympathetic tone with which the chronicler ends his narrative in the Sanskrit portion of the Vamsavali deserves notice. In a document written ten years after, in the year 511 N.E. (1391 A.D.) Jaya Simha Rama was referred to with the appellation as Shri Shri Bhonta (Bhuwanta) rājakula mahāmatya, meaning prime minister of the Bhonta Royal House while the Kingdom of Bhonta remained under his protection as a dependent state, acknowledging the formal suzerainty of king Jayasthithimalla. It was still considered to be an honour and prestige to make mention of his having had such connection with the defunct royal house in the past, with double Shri Shri as a mark of respect for the royal house though Jaya Simha Rama was ruling that part of the country at the time as a feudatory of king Jayasthithimalla. An end-leaf of the manuscript 'kriyā samuccaya' in the Kaiser Library reads as follows:

गम्भीर ५१२ कालिक तुलक क्षमास्थयाप्रकाशाभिषेक्ष्यां प्रकाश स्वादिष्ट चतुष्ट स्वादिष्ट चतुष्ट 
श्रीश्री पुत्र राजकुमळ महामात्य महामात्य महामात्य महामात्य लक्ष्यां लक्ष्यां लक्ष्यां लक्ष्यां लक्ष्यां लक्ष्यां लक्ष्यां लक्ष्यां लक्ष्यां
के तदनी करिते दिनशि तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण तारुण

(Note in the document, the specific use of 'ubhaya raja kula ektava' as an adjectival phrase for the King's Sword to indicate the merger of the two kingdoms lit. the two Royal Houses. This
tradition of installing this Royal Symbol on such big ceremonial occasions to signify the august presence of His Majesty is still observed nowadays in this country).

It seems quite probable that the Sanskrit form of Bhonta is Bhunkti. The same mss. states: samasta nepāla shri jaya rudra malla eva navakota bhunkti paryanta rāja kriitam meaning that when Jaya Rudra Malla became all powerful he ruled the whole of Nepal which extended even up to Navakota and Bhunkti, after he had his own kinsman Jayārimalla deva crowned king (1320-1344). Even the expression 'raja Bhukti matram dadau' can mean that the newly enthroned king (Jayāri Malla) was given only Bhunkti as his domain since there is every possibility that Bhukti and Bhunkti are just variants in spelling. It may be interesting for a historian to note that another neighbouring state founded originally by Nāyadeva was named 'tri bhukti' which afterwards got corrupted into modern 'Tirhut'.

Footnotes

1. The Bendall Vamsāvalī, afterwards named as Gopālarāja Vamsāvalī in the list prepared by the Bir Library. This article is based on my reading of the copy printed in 'Himavat Sanskriti, year 1, no. 1.


4. See Luciano Petech, Mediaeval History of Nepal (c.750-1480), Roma, ISMEO, 1958, p. 29.

5,6. In old Newari yem means north, ye means south.

7. During the reign of King Ananta Malla in the year 427 N.E. (1307 A.D.) the king left 'Gwanla' for 'Bhonta' and after a year he died. His funeral rites were not performed until 4 days later. After that the 'Gwanla' kingdom remained separate or disjoint (excluding the 'Bhonta' kingdom).

8. Again in the year 468 N.E. (1348 A.D.) Jaya Rājadeva was crowned king in Gwanla and from that time onwards 'Bhonta' was admitted into the kingdom of 'Gwanla' or linked to it, 'ubhaya rajakula ekatva', as the Kaisher Vamsāvalī puts it. See p. 14 in the Kaisher fragment of the Vamsāvalī (in Kaiser Library), no. 171.