

Nepal: A Small Nation in the Vortex of International Conflicts.
1984. Prem R. Uprety. 344 pages. Pugo Mi. Kathmandu. Price Rs. 200.

The historical evolution of the Nepalese diplomatic relations with her neighbours in general and the British-India in particular is a popular field for research and writing among the Nepalese and foreign scholars. These scholars have extensively used the Nepalese, the Indian and the British archival records in research. Several quality books, monographs and articles on the evolution of Nepalese diplomacy of the last two centuries have been published. Considerable number of similar publications dealing with the recent aspects of Nepalese diplomacy have appeared in the past two decades. Most of them are narrowly focused on two themes -- Nepal's bilateral relations with her neighbours and with international agencies. Rose (1971) and Husain (1970), as exceptions, have so far attempted to study the evolution of Nepalese diplomacy from broader regional and global perspectives. But their successes have been limited.

Prem R. Uprety's Nepal: A Small Nation in the Vortex of International Conflicts is an attempt to see the evolution of Nepal's regional and global diplomatic relations during the first half of the 20th century. On the basis of this study, Uprety endeavors to establish a thesis that small nations have made significant contributions in influencing the outcomes of major regional and global events. Scholars of international relations, he contends, have constantly ignored the contributions of small nations and dispensed with their efforts in favour of the larger ones only. Predilectory treatments of such nature, he thinks, are unjust, and they not only deprive the small nations of proper recognition in international relations but also present a narrow picture of the functionings of the nations in crucial times. As justification of his thesis, he presents Nepal as an example of those small nations which have made lasting impact on the world despite their limited resources and abilities. He then goes on to assess the role Nepal played in the Tibetan Crisis of 1900-1912, the two World Wars and the major political events in India during and immediately after the British rule.

For the purpose of assessing Nepal's role and her contributions in the region and the globe, Uprety has tried to investigate the causes which induced her to participate in the issues mentioned above. These questions can be roughly categorised as follows: What psychological factors motivated the then Rana rulers to take their country "through the dark tunnels of international conflicts"? How did the World Wars and the problems in India influence the Nepalese polity, economy and mind? How did these events pave the way for the freedom movement against the Ranas in Nepal? These questions are answered under three major thematic divisions of the book. They are Nepal and her role in the Tibetan Crisis, 1900-1912, Nepal and the two World Wars and Nepal's

contributions in suppressing the internal disorders in India during and after the British rule.

Upreti's attempt to project Nepal as a small but important member of the international community which exercised direct and indirect influence to shape the outcomes of the discussed events fails short of proving his point of view. Presented discussions and analyses, on the contrary, demonstrate that in all major events -- except the Tibetan Crisis in which Nepal's interests were directly threatened -- Nepalese roles were secondary. Furthermore, Nepal unequivocally endorsed the British stand on the regional and the global issues. For instance, Nepalese support to the Younghusband Mission to Tibet or Chandra Shumsher's instructions to Dalai Lama to maintain cordial relations with the British or Nepal's participation in the World Wars, in Afghan and Hyderabad episode, were indicative of the country's subordination to the British in major foreign policy matters. In all these issues Nepalese rulers appear to be insensitive to the limitations of their country and were simply bent on pleasing the British authorities.

The psychological factors motivating the Ranas to involve Nepal into the major and minor crises in and outside the South Asian region, Upreti correctly states, were primarily dictated by their quest for legitimacy in power. And legitimacy would be certain if the Ranas collaborated with the British and kept them happy. In addition, he says the close relations between the Ranas and the British, the Gorkha recruitments, the Ranas' expectations of monetary, territorial and personal rewards for the country and themselves motivated them to assist the British in the World Wars and the problems in India and Tibet. One of his arguments that Nepal participated in the two World Wars due to her abiding "Faith in principles of peace and justice and partly from the sacred canons of the Hindu Dharmashastras" is a little too farfetched.

As the obsession of the scholars in international relations in favour of larger nations perpetuates and will be so in the days to come, this book is the first comprehensive study of Nepal's relations with the British-India, Tibet and China during the first half of the 20th century. This book per se does not enhance Upreti's reputation any further; nevertheless, it exemplifies his scholarship and patience to go through archives collecting documents. He has written in detail with substantial documentary evidence on Nepalese soldier's activities in the World Wars, Nepal's problems of recruitment and training of soldiers and financing the war efforts and the impact of the international events on the Nepalese economy, politics and society. These details provide several new pieces of information on Nepalese history which were unknown till the publication of this book.

Inconsistent statements, lack of analysis and confusion over the chronology and printing errors constantly annoy the reader. The first part of the book, though sound in research and quality, is, for instance, evidently a reproduction of Upreti's previous publica-

tion, Nepal-Tibet Relations, 1850-1930, with minor changes of words and sentences here and there. It is also more surprising to find him repeating the same chronological and contextual errors of his previous book. To be specific, the case of the 1912 Tibeto-Chinese problem can be presented. According to both publications, on April 12, 1912, the Tibetan and the Chinese sought the British and the Nepalese mediation to end their protracted crisis. But the next line goes on to say on April 2, 1912, negotiations between the belligerents were completed and a truce followed. Another sentence compounds the confusion further by stating that on April 1, 1912, the Chinese handed over 144 rifles to the Tibetans according to a truce concluded between them. Inconsistencies of this sort lead the reader to conclude three things. The author either neglected to scrutinise the documents under study thoroughly, or the documents are inconsistent or the book was hurried through the press to meet some deadline.

Furthermore, Uprety suffers from a historian's common disease, that is to stretch a preferred topic to its breaking point and leave others out with no interpretation. This problem is best represented by his attempt to establish the revolutionary nature of an obscure body called the Raktapat Kommittee by connecting it with the Soviet principles and political secularization:

In short, this book is a mine of information left unanalysed. In spite of so many shortcomings, Uprety must be congratulated on his painstaking efforts. This book is a must for any one interested in Nepalese history and Nepal's foreign policy of the first half of the 20th century.

- Shyam K. Bhurtel

Review Article:

Mediaeval History of Nepal C. 750-1482. Second, Thoroughly revised Edition: Luciano Petech, 254 pages, including Appendixes, Genealogical Tables, Bibliography and Index. Italian Institute for Middle and Far East. Serie Orientale Roma No LIV. Rome. Price: Lira 40.000 = Rs 370.

Luciano Petech's Mediaeval History of Nepal c. 750-1480 (Rome: 1958) was, by any standard, a landmark for its time. Prior to its publication very little original work had been done on the history of medieval Nepal. Nearly a century ago, Bhagwanlal Indraji published "Some Considerations on the History of Nepal" (1884), in which he scanned the chronological data supplied by modern chronicles in the light of the twenty-three inscriptions he published four years earlier. Cecil Bendall added a few more inscriptions, and with the help of manuscript colophons, inscriptions and coins he published a seminal paper in 1903. The chief attraction of Bendall's paper, "A History of Nepal and Surrounding Kingdoms 1000-1600," was the fact that Bendall made a feeble attempt to use a medieval chronicle which he had recently discovered in the Durbar Library, Kathmandu. Piecing together every bit of information he could collect from Nepalese sources, Indian classics, Tibetan and Chinese documents, and European materials, Sylvain Lévi made heroic efforts to reconstruct Nepal's ancient and medieval history in the three classic volumes of Le Népal (1905-1908). Despite its age the work still remains a basic reference tool. Lévi gave a sober but perceptive outline of medieval history of Nepal by critically evaluating all the sources of information he was able to collect at the beginning of this century. For nearly half of this century Nepalese scholars, competent to work on primary source-materials along modern lines of historical research, were almost non-existent. Most of the vernacular textbooks on Nepalese history were summaries of the vaṃśavalī-s such as the one edited by Daniel Wright (1877). The more knowledgeable authors such as D.R. Regmi summarised Bendall, Lévi, Wright, Kirkpatrick, Hamilton, and Jayaswal within verbose and inconclusive frameworks (cf. Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal, 1952).

Like his predecessors Bendall and Lévi, Petech (1958) directly tapped primary source-materials. The most important of these were manuscript colophons and the medieval chronicles, particularly the all-important Gopālarājvaṃśavalī and its cognate-- the fragment of

a chronicle which Petech discovered in the Kaisher Library, Kathmandu. The potentiality of manuscript colophons for documenting the historicity of medieval kings was identified by Bendall for the first time. A judicious and critical use of all the colophons available to him was made by Lévi. But the total number of the colophons they could collect was limited to a few dozens. Above all, they failed to penetrate the obscure textual surface which surrounded the hard core of historical data contained in the newly-discovered medieval chronicle. Petech (1958) was way ahead of Bendall and Lévi. Everything else apart, Petech was able to collect nearly 80 dated colophons and 2 inscriptions for the Thakurīs (A.D. 879-1200) and 169 dated documents, including 23 inscriptions, for the Early Mallas (A.D. 1200-1480). A great many of these primary sources were published for the first time.

In 1958 Petech's main achievements were two: he reconstructed a reliable chronology and sketched a clear and perceptive outline of the political history of the Thakurīs and the Early Mallas. The outline was enriched by unassuming but useful general sections on medieval social structure, administration, coinage, and a section on the cities of the Valley. Although Petech defined the aim of his book in modest words as

my main purpose was to place on a more secure footing the the chronological and political framework of Nepalese mediaeval history
(Petech 1958:3)

the book laid the foundation for Nepal's medieval history on a truly scientific line.

Twenty-six years later, Petech has recently published a "second, thoroughly revised edition" of his book. Between Petech (1958) and Petech (1984) the historiography of Nepal in general and of medieval Nepal in particular has had a most fruitful and eventful time. Among other things, Nepalese scholars have now come of age—both active and productive, albeit ambitious at times. Whereas Petech (1958) refers to only 25 inscriptions of the period (A.D. 879-1480), nearly 100 inscriptions of the period have now been discovered and published—most of them by Nepali scholars. Numerous documents of the Early Malla period have been published, studied, and analysed, including the Gopālarāja-vaṃśāvalī and the cognate chronicles. Here mention must be made of D.R. Regmi's Medieval Nepal 4 Vols (Calcutta and Patna, 1965-1966)—the most prolific and ambitious piece of writing by a Nepali scholar. In this work there is a bewildering corpus of extremely useful fresh materials published for the first time. Unfortunately, however, they are poorly edited and uncritically presented. Petech (1984:3) faults Regmi (1965-1966) as "a rather prolix and repetitive piece of historiography". The looseness of structure, the contentious tone, and the verbosity of style are not the disease: they are merely the symptoms of a basic intellectual lacuna in the historian. Beginning from his earliest published papers (1942) to his latest Inscriptions of Ancient

Nepal 3 Vols (Delhi: 1983) Regmi's fundamental handicap, as a practising historian, has been the absence of a conceptual framework, without which one can't cope with the data or make any coherent sense out of the mass of accumulated materials. Unlike Regmi, Petech's strength lies in his avoidance of ambitious scales. In the revised version too he sticks admirably to his original modest purpose, i.e., "to place on a secure footing the chronological and political framework of Nepalese mediaeval history" (Petech 1984:3). He even stakes a disclaimer this time:

As I had already cautioned the reader in 1958, it is rather a old-fashioned history-writing which is offered in the following pages: dynasties, kings, wars, chronological problems etc.

(Petech 1984:3)

Without denying that time has already come to divert our attention to researches on social, cultural, and economic aspects of medieval Nepal, even after a quarter of century's researches Petech has shown unwavering faith in the tradition of "old-fashioned history-writing", unequivocally preoccupied with names, dates, dynasties—with what Sylvain Lévi would have called "the phantoms of the Dark Ages".

In the history of Nepal, the Dark Period is not just a colourful metaphor: a great hiatus between the Licchavis (A.D. 464-733) and the Early Mallas (A.D. 1200-1482) is one of the most inexplicable features of Nepalese history. After Jayadeva II's inscription of Samvat 157/A.D. 733, we have only five dated documents with the name of the reigning king to fill in the gap of 146 years:

1. 180 Māgha Kṛṣṇa 2/December 27, 756 Mānadeva
2. --- Āṣāḍha Kṛṣṇa 7/ Mānadeva
3. 250 prathama Āṣāḍha 2/May 31, 827 Balīrāja
4. 271 Vaiśākha Śukla 5/April 8, 848 Baladeva
5. 301 Vaiśākha Śukla 7/April 13, 878 Mānadeva

Like most students of Nepalese history, Petech is disturbed at this gap, particularly because his ultimate ambition is to "place on a secure footing the chronological framework". Such big gaps in political chronology are matters of poor comfort for him. Consequently, Petech had to look for "explanations". Chapter III: The Late Licchavi Period is, thus, an essay in explanation made up of controversial arguments to fill in this uncomfortable gap in the political chronology. Petech resorts to the Chinese sources (A.D. 643-651) which merely show that Nepal had remained a protégé of Tibet since Narendradeva (A.D. 643) and that "the Tibetan ascendancy in Nepal" had "waned after A.D. 651". Unlike the dispersed and contentious discussions in Regmi's Ancient Nepal (Calcutta: 1969-192; 214-222; 289; and 347-352), Petech sums up the whole question of "Tibetan ascendancy in Nepal" in a few clear, concise, and well-documented paragraphs (pp. 24-27) and the sources of confusion are clearly traced—except for a very basic one.

In 643 or 644 the Tibetans helped the pretender Narendradeva, then a refugee in Tibet, to overthrow the usurper Viṣṇugupta, restoring the Licchavi dynasty to the throne. After this the king remained a protegee (sic) of Tibet In a fragment possibly going back to Wang Hsüan-tš'e Nepal is described as a state subordinate (shu) to Tibet.

(Petech 1984:24)

Here Petech's reference is to a confusing paragraph in Shih-chai fang-chih compiled by Tao-siüen in 650. The relevant paragraph reads

Recently the orders of the Empire (China--KPM) passed by the Kingdom (of Nepal--KPM) and thence extended far. Now it depends (shu) on T'ou -fan (Tibet)

(Chapter I, p. 97, col.13)

However, the last crucial sentence of this paragraph is replaced by a different one in Fa-youen-tehou-lin--the famous encyclopedia of Buddhism compiled by Tao-che in 668. In the encyclopedia, eighteen years later, the same paragraph reads:

Recently the orders of the Empire passed by the Kingdom and thence extended far. On the east, the kingdom of Women is adjacent to T'ou-fan

(Chapter 29, p. 96, col.14)

The paragraph reappears, as in 650, in both the recensions of the T'ang Annals--the Old T'ang Annals compiled by Liu Hsu in 945 and the New T'ang Annals compiled by Ou-Yang Hsin in 1072. Lévi assumes that the common source of these extracts "might have been" the lost travel accounts of Wang Hsüan-t'š'e-- partially preserved in fragments in the above sources. (See Lévi, "Les Missions de Wang Hiuen-Ts'e dans l'Inde," Journal Asiatique, 1900 May-June pp. 442-443 and ff). Lévi does not satisfactorily explain the transparent divergence in the two versions. In Le Népal (1905) Vol I p. 159 Lévi, who favoured the Tibetan-ascendancy-in-Nepal theory, translates only one (650) version, leaving out the other. This may be the source of entire confusion among the scholars favourably disposed to the Tibetan ascendancy theory.

However, this doesn't help to fill in the gap in the Nepalese chronology which spans between A.D. 733-879. Petech's explanation is not any more strengthened by his debatable attempt to interpret "a puzzling passage" in the Gopālarājvaṃśāvalī (folio 23a):

tatpāścād bhoṭarājenamāyatih Nepālamaṇḍale rajyaṃ karoti

which he translates as:

After him the King of Bhoṭa came and established
his rule in the Nepal Valley

(Petech 1984:27)

Petech confesses that

Two interpretations are possible: either Bhoṭa is Tibet, or it is the same as Bhonta, the medieval name of the Banepa region to the east of the valley... ...The balance is almost even and I am not prepared to decide the question either way although it must be conceded that the graphical difference between Bhoṭa and Bhonta scores a little point in favour of Tibet.

(Petech 1984:27-28)

This little graphic point in favour of Tibetan ascendancy in the 8th-9th century Nepal is somewhat weakened by the fact that the orthography of the chronicle Petech cites is much less than standardised. Several of the place- and personal names used in the chronicle are transcribed in more than one "standard form"-- real or assumed. (See the Index of Personal Names and the Index of Place-names in The Gopālarāja-vamśāvalī, edited by Dhanavajra Vajrācārya and Kamal P. Malla, Wiesbaden, 1985, pp. 191-203)

In Chapter IV: The Transitional Period, Petech deals with the political history of the Nepal Valley during the 321 year period, between the founding on Nepāla Saṃvat (on Thursday October 20, 879) to A.D. 1200. He adopts what he thinks is "the non-committal heading Transitional Period" for these 321 years. The term was first used by Mary Slusser and popularised by her in Nepal Mandala (Princeton: 1982). On any account this is an inapt term because in the history of a country with a total recorded history of less than 1500 years, to call a time-span of 321 years "the transitional period" is a little too lavish, particularly for the historian aspiring to erect an infallible chronology. There is, of course, ample cultural justification for taking the year A.D. 879 as a new signpost in that a new epoch era, a new frame of time-computation, comes into use on and since this year. We don't yet know the precise occasion of the founding of Nepāla Saṃvat though. Petech uses an equally astonishing term, 'Newari Saṃvat.' No known or extant document of the period cited by Petech calls this epoch era "Newari". On the contrary, it is consistently called Nepāla or Nepāliya or Naipālika Saṃvat. As Petech well knows, Newārī is not even a corrupt colloquial Prakrit form of Nepāla. Nor is it used in any document dated earlier than the 18th-century Capuchin dispatches to Rome:

Although the 321 years is a protracted continuation of the Dark Period following Jayadeva II, there is no such dearth of "source materials" of a sort for the first three centuries of the new epoch era as for the 146 years following A.D. 733. The earliest colophon of the period is dated NS 40/AD 920 and the earliest inscription is dated

NS 107/AD 987. Even in 1958 Petech succeeded in collecting 90 documents including 2 inscriptions for this so-called "transitional period". To this he has now added 15 more inscriptions and 26 new colophons. However, of these 41 new pieces of documentation for the period, only 3 are unpublished previously--2 documents (Nos 1 and 6) of Baladeva (A.D. 1048-1060) and 1 (No 5) of Rudradeva (A.D. 1167-1175). All these three colophons are from S. Matsunami's Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Tokyo University Library: Tokyo, 1965.

The more disturbing aspect of this quantitative expansion of Petech's documentation for the transitional period is that not a single of these 41 new documents upsets or enriches the chronology already established before the book was published. On the other hand, as the book appears to have already gone to press by December 1983, it was perhaps already too late for Petech to take note of Mohan Prasad Khanal's Cāṅgu Nārāyaṇakā Aitiḥāsika Sāmagrī (Kirtipur: Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, October 1983). Among others, it contains 7 inscriptions of the period: No 8 Śaṅkaradeva, NS 173; No 9, Śaṅkaradeva NS 172; No 10, Lakṣmī-kāmadeva, NS 158; No 12, Harṣadeva, NS 207; No 15, Siṃhadeva, NS 241; No 16, Mānadeva, NS 260; and No 17, Amṛtadeva, NS 296. Among these, Inscriptions No 12 and No 16 completely upset Petech's chronology, the first by extending the earliest known date of Harṣadeva (Jyestha Kṛṣṇa 7, 207) and the second by extending the latest known date of Mānadeva (Bhādra Kṛṣṇa 7, 259). Śaṅkaradeva (NS 172-173) of Inscription Nos 8 and 9 is completely new to the established chronology. The disproportionate significance of such miserable little pieces of information clearly unmask, not only the poverty of source materials for conventional political history, but also the poverty of old-fashioned historiography as an intellectual enterprise, focussed on dates, dynasties, kings, kingdoms, and wars, on the "little kings killing and pillaging each other"--as Lévi has so graphically put it.

The belaboured structure called the chronology of the transitional period is thus, on the whole, a dreary reading consisting of some 130 extracts from manuscript colophons and inscriptions, containing little but the names of reigning kings, their dates and at times the place where the manuscript was copied. Unlike inscriptions which are often state or royal documents, manuscript colophons are not state documents as such. That the political historian, in default of other "source materials", is obliged to resort to this spurious, but non-political, outgrowth of cultural enthusiasm is in itself a telling story. That the marginal notes of the not-too-learned scribes are the stuff out of which our "political history" is made is a painful realisation for enthusiastic new-comers to the field such as the reviewer. Even more painful is the realisation that the source materials are already near the point of exhaustion, already reaching a point of no returns, a little too soon perhaps. This source-materials "crunch" is all but evident in Petech's second, "thoroughly revised edition", published after a gap of a quarter of a century, quantitatively adding 41 new documents without contributing anything to the already established chronology. Thus the old-fashioned historiography may have reached its point of consummation in Petech 1984, or so it seems.

Just to give one brilliant example of the style, summing up the rule of Narendradeva on the basis of 8 extant colophons he had diligently collected, Petech writes:

Narendradeva governed Bhatgaon since last 1133; in the period 260-267 (A.D. 1140-1147) he ruled the whole country as king. Nothing else is known about him.

(Petech 1984:60-61)

If Petech cares for it, he can add still one more "document" to his list. There is an inscription dated NS 265 of the time of Narendradeva on a vajracārya crown deposited now in a Museum in Paris (See M. Gilles Beguin, "A propos d'une tiare d'officant Bouddhique," La Revue du Louvre et des Musées de France, Vol 3, 1984). However, the point is: will this additional colophon tell us anything else of use to the political historian? The whole period of 321 years before the rise of the Mallas is merely a dismal list of "historical names and dates". The only difference between the conventional vamsāvalīs and the old-fashioned political history of the Thakurīs is that the latter is "positive", i.e., confirmed by other historical documents of a sort. The poverty of the narrative is, of course, not due to the intellectual lapses or personal weaknesses of the historian. Indeed, the Dark Period is not just a handy phrase. It nearly adequately describes the first half of the period covered by Petech's book. Twilight, if not total darkness, is the stuff of which political history of Nepal is made during the period. We grope in vain for illumination amidst a debris of miserable colophons and fragmented inscriptions. Yet alas! we do not yet know even the basic elements of political history of the period. We do not yet know for sure who these "little kings" were; where they ruled from; what the origins of their "dynasties" were; where their "royal seats" were. Nor do we know for sure whether these "little kings" following Rāghavadeva (ca. A.D. 879-919) were merely the survival of the ancient Licchavis who receded mysteriously into oblivion since ca. A.D. 750.

Fortunately, as we get closer to our times, Petech's narrative gets richer in content. Chapter IV of Petech 1958 dealing with the Mallas, is now split into three separate chapters: Chapter V: The Early Mallas; Chapter VI The Tripura and Bhonta Families, and Chapter VII: Jayasthiti-Malla and the Karṇāṭa-Mallas.

Justifying his new scheme Petech writes:

The name Malla has been hitherto conventionally used for the kings who ruled the valley from 1200 to 1768/69... ..the name is incorrectly employed to cover at least three different dynasties... Accordingly, I shall deal with these dynasties in three separate chapters.

(Petech 1984:79)

At what point in a family-tree does a new dynasty begin and collateral scions end is a question worth debating. Instead of "three different dynasties" we may be merely dealing with "three different rival or collateral families" belonging to the same dynasty. In Petech's Geneological Table B (p 230), instead of four separate "dynasties" we may be looking at the same family-tree with rival scions, except that we are still in dark about "the missing links". That power knows no kinship is only too clear from the family-history of Jang Bahadur Kunwar and his descendants. Yet there is little room for doubt that Petech's latest scheme on the Mallas is richer than anything he has written earlier on medieval Nepalese history. This is so because of several reasons. Petech has now fuller access to the medieval chronicles--the Gopālarājavamśāvalī, the Kaisher Library Fragment, and the abridged vamśāvalī discovered by Dhanavajra Vajrācārya at Gorkha. He has also some 57 inscriptions, though still far and few between, 11 in all before Jayasthitimalla. This dearth of epigraphic sources is, however, compensated by the rich and detailed accounts in the chronicles for the Early Mallas, the Tripura and Bhonta Families. If we compare the two editions of Petech, it becomes so clear that although he tried to use the chronicles in 1958, he was all but bewildered by the impenetrability of the language of the Gopālarājavamśāvalī. Thanks to the generosity of CNAS and the magnanimity of Vajrācārya, in 1984 Petech's access to it became less painful:

My understanding of the Chronicle was much facilitated when during my stay in Nepal in 1982 Mr. Dhanabajra Bajracharya generously allowed me to utilize his unpublished Nepali translation of the Gopalavamsavali; by its help most if not all the difficulties were overcome.

(Petech 1984:7)

With such generous access to Vajrācārya's published and unpublished papers the difficulties of comprehending key source-materials for the Mallas were painlessly overcome. Petech's new treatment of the Mallas, therefore, shows a substantial change.

The chronicles apart, Petech has collected 195 colophons and 57 inscriptions for the period between A.D. 1200-1482 (a total of 282 years). Of these 83 are new ones-not included in the first edition. However, all of these, with the exception of 6 colophons, are already published. Of these 6 documents, 2 are from the Tokyo University Catalogue; the third from the Kyoto University Catalogue (Petech 1984: 94 footnotes 4,6 and 7), and the fourth one was communicated personally to Petech by Vajrācārya (Petech 1984: 163, footnote 5). The remaining two colophons were personally communicated to Petech by Purnaharsa Bajracharya (pp 83-84). None of this is intended to deny the fact that Petech is a first-rate scholar on his own right. His strong points are too many: his impeccable knowledge of epigraphy, the Sanskrit language, Hindu astronomical computations, familiarity with Tibetan-Chinese sources, not to mention his

felicity in European sources and ease of access to Nepalese published and unpublished works. Yet it is unbelievable that he still thinks that

Malla tax (mallakara) (in Licchavi epigraphy refers to) the tax imposed on their subjects, either for defence or for tribute purposes.

(Petech 1984:71)

In a well-documented paper, a Nepalese scholar had already convincingly shown that the mallakara was a tax levied on sheep (Gyanamani Nepal, "Mallakarako Paribhāṣā," Contributions to Nepalese Studies Vol VII, Nos 1 & 2, pp. 193-221 (June 1980). Equally astonishing is Petech's identification of the respectable feudal title rāṇaka with a Magar surname and Pañcavata with a Magar country on this flimsy ground. Rāṇaka was a respectable feudal title used in, among other places, medieval Mithila-- an unlikely place for Magars to drift in the late 12th century A.D. ! Yet another surprise for us is the legend perpetuated by Petech (1958: 124), circulated uncritically by Regmi I (1965:313) and reiterated unrectified by Petech (1984:129). According to Petech.

The Svayambhū Nāth inscription of 492 NS tells us that Jayarājadeva died as a result of having been burnt asleep.

The Svayambhū Nāth inscription of 492 is luckily still intact on the site. The lines 7-8 merely refer to the invasion and arson by Sultān Samas ud-dīn Ilyās and to the death of King Jayarājadeva in course of time. The two events are totally unrelated:

kālena kiyatā dhīmān sa rājā tridivaṅgataḥ

There is nothing here, as far as one can see, which tells us that the king died "as a result of having been burnt while asleep".

This compels us to raise a related question: was Petech able to interpret the materials to which he had so easy and generous an access? There are reasons to doubt if all of Petech's interpretations of the chronicle materials are impeccable. The chronicle was compiled at the court of Jayasthitirājamalla: he is praised in no uncertain terms. Yet Petech misses two central ambiguities of the chronicle:

1. In the whole chronicle there is not a single clue as to the social origins or lineage of Jayasthitirājamalla-- except the cryptic note that he was brought by Devaladevī.

2. There is not a single explicit entry in the whole chronicle which tells us when Jayasthītirājamalla was formally crowned a King of Nepal.

Petech claims that

The formal proclamation took place on September 15, 1382 when Jayasthītimalla gathered all the nobelmen (bhāro) and accepted their homage and offerings (prasāda)

(Petech 1984:137)

The text of the chronicle (folio 60b: line 3) reads in our English translation as follows:

In NS 502, on Āśvina Śukla Āstamī, Śrī Śrī Jayasthītirājamalladeva the King consecrated the royal sword by assembling all the nobles in the royal courtyard. He distributed 1700 pieces of shields and swords.

(Malla in Vajrācārya and Malla, 1985:162)

Clearly, the occasion was not a coronation ceremony: it was Āśvina Śukla 8 i.e., the Kulachi-Bhoē-ceremony during the Durgā Pūjā in the Royal Palace.

Yet in the whole book, Chapter VI: The Tripura and Bhonta Families (pages 93-136) is, without any doubt, the best part of revised Petech. It has all the virtues of Petech's writing: it is clear, concise, sharp in focus, and above all firmly based on solid data culled from the chronicles. The entire chapter in its present form and shape would have been impossible to conceive, let alone reconstruct, had there been no chronicles--the Gopālarājavamsāvalī and its cognates. With admirable patience and success Vajrācārya has been using these materials for well over two decades. His papers on the Ḍoyas, on the Rāmavardhanas, on the Muslim Invasion of 1349, and on the political history of early and late medieval Nepal have shed much light on this obscure period and its source materials. Petech's contribution lies in the fact that he has imposed a chronological structure and a convincing political interpretation on the chronicle materials. All this is evident from Petech's remarks at the end of the chapter:

All these colourful events are known from V³ and VK only, since the colophons, which had grown rare during these times of strife, continued to recognize the legitimacy of the Gwanla Kings only.

(Petech 1984:121)

Where Petech has no chronicle materials to rely on (Dharmamalla, Jyotirmalla, and Yakṣamalla) his narrative thins down as usual, though his treatment remains secure--based as it is mainly on colophons and inscriptions.

In many ways, the most readable sections of the book are the general chapters: Introduction; Chapter I: Sources; Chapter II: Chronology--all at the beginning of the book, and Chapter VIII: Social and Administrative Conditions, at the end. Here too Petech sticks to absolute essentials with scholarly sobriety, yet he has some very significant generalisations to make on the structure of medieval feudal power and society, on the physical and cultural canvas of this power-play. On the economy as such, there is precious little, except for a few pages on coinage. We have now some additional information on medieval coinage in the studies of Bernhard Kölver (Nepal Research Centre Journal, V/VI:133-154, 1981/82). The most provocative remarks made by Petech in these chapters are, of course, about religion and the State and about the political status of the cities of medieval Nepal Valley. In Chapter VIII, Section B deals with the Monarchy and Section C, with Nobility (pp. 188-193). In less than five pages, Petech has distilled the political essence and the nature of medieval feudal power structure. One is almost tempted to say that this is all that is there to the political history of medieval Nepal.

Petech gives a curious interpretation of the word viṣaya, that a viṣaya is necessarily "on the outskirts of the Valley, geographically speaking outside it" (p. 193). In the Narayan Chaur Inscription of Jayadeva II's time (No. 149 in Vajrācārya's edition of Licchavi Inscriptions), while demarcating the land-boundaries of the grant located in the Naxal area, line 49 refers to a Vodda Viṣaya. If a viṣaya is necessarily outside the Valley, as Petech has it, the location of a viṣaya right around a cluster of draṅga-s should have been a geographical impossibility. Viṣaya is the administrative status of a settlement, not its geographic location.

Unlike in the first edition, Petech is now less sure of himself about the location of the Licchavi capitals and palaces:

The time is not yet ripe for a final choice
(p. 184)

is a wise and sober but unexpected remark from a scholar who tends to be too often so committed. Despite his own later observation that

we have no significant evidence to show which was
the capital of Nepal in the period before Jaya-
sthitimalla

(p. 187)

Petech concluded earlier that

Patan became the capital (or one of the capitals) in the Transitional period (p. 184) or, Patan seems to have been the capital during the Early Malla and the Tripura/Bhonta periods (p. 188).

Petech diligently arrives at this conclusion on "the statistical average of the preserved colophons and inscriptions" (p. 185). Here the historians of medieval Nepal remind us of the proverbial sage (rṣi) who always analysed the realities of the world outside by merely looking at the shadows cast inside the tree-trunk cave where he meditated. To have to deduce every element of our medieval political history from such meagre non-political documents as the colophons of ritual or religious manuscripts, copied by the pious scribes is, of course, an unforeseen necessity. But when our historians begin to calculate "the statistical average" of the place where these manuscripts were copied to decide where the medieval royal seat lay, we might as well say that we have had nearly enough of "the colophons".

Mary Slusser (1982:123) had almost mercilessly destroyed Petech's pet idea that Patan was a medieval capital city. To stick to such a shaky idea so rigidly is now no more academically tenable unless better evidence than the colophon statistics is available to conclusively show that Patan was ever a royal seat before Siddhinarasimhamalla (A.D. 1620-1681). Besides, Petech is not at all consistent in the application of his statistical tools. We wish he had applied the same tools to decide the complex relationship between religion and the medieval Nepalese State. Starting from the first dated ms. of the period, 'Prajñāpāramitā dated NS 40 (A.D. 920) to the last ones of the period, Pañcarakṣā dated NS 600 (A.D. 1480) it would have been a most rewarding statistical exercise to find out how many of the manuscripts are Hindu (Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, and Nātha) and how many Buddhist (Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna). More important will also be the average of the places where the manuscripts were copied--courts, temples or monasteries. Petech's sweeping remark that

The king in his public capacity was bound to follow the Hindu rites and uphold the Hindu social order. Śaivism was the official creed of the monarchy.

(page 203)

deserves to be questioned. In the cultural history of the Nepal Valley, during the period covered by revised Petech, Buddhism in its later versions played a most crucial role. This is evident from the fact that several of the extant monasteries were founded during this period or a little later. (See John Locke, The Bāhās and Bahīs of the Kathmandu Valley, forthcoming). This flowering of Buddhist institutions could not have been possible without state patronage or royal investment, nor without sufficient social prestige accorded to Buddhism. Most monasteries have considerable landed property as royal endowments. One really wonders if Petech had looked into this aspect of interrelationship between

religion and the State, rather than just scratching the surface of the heraldic royal titles assumed by the Mallas. Except for their surface value as biruda they mean precious little. In a cultural canvas where a king described by Petech as "a staunch Hindu" assuming the typically śaiva formula Paśupaticaraṇa-kamala-sevita Māneśvariṣṭadevatā-vara-labdha-prasādita is described by his official chronicler as "an incarnation of the Buddha, blessed with the grace of Svayambhū in the Kali Yuga, as well as an incarnation of Eight Lokapālas, the Eight Protectors of all sentient beings" only to conclude that "he was like Rāmacandra in the past", it is nearly impossible to be as categorical as Petech on "the official creed of the monarchy" or the rites and the values it upheld "in public capacity".

Petech has collected some 400 documents of the period from different sources located as far apart as Nor Monastery in Tibet and St Petersburg Library in Leningrad. All of these are documented to establish the political chronology of Medieval Nepal. One merely hopes that every item of the documentation is accurate and impeccable. Checking every item is a daunting task--almost as challenging as writing another book. Yet nullius in verba-- we take nobody's word for granted--is so laudible a motto of the Royal Society of London that it is now and then worth pursuing. Scanning and sampling a few of Petech's documentation has been a disquieting experience. To give only a most telling example, on p. 80, Petech gives the colophon of Pañcarakṣa, dated NS 265, copied for a certain Indra Bhāvo of South Kathmandu during the reign of Narendradeva. The colophon was first published by T.R. Vaidya and Hem Raj Shakya in Medieval Nepal: Colophons and Inscriptions (Kathmandu: 1970), p.12. However, in Petech's book the date given is "NS 2-60-5 = 265 dvipauṣa Śukla Ekādasyām Śanaiscara Rohiṇī-nakṣtra yoga- sidvi". As these astrological details are missing from Vaidya and Shakya, we checked Petech's footnote (p.80, no.3) where he writes:

Partly published by Shakya and Vaidya, p.12; reproduced by J. Trier, Ancient Paper of Nepal (Copenhagen, 1972), Plate 111.

However, on checking the plate in Trier's book, it happened to be a totally different manuscript. The Vaidya-Shakya manuscript is in private possession in Patan; the Trier manuscript is in the Royal Library in Copenhagen (No. 175a). The title of the Patan manuscript is Pañcarakṣā; that of the Copenhagen manuscript is Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā. The Patan manuscript was commissioned by Indra Bhāvo; the Copenhagen manuscript, by Nārāyana Thākura. The Patan manuscript was copied in Yaṅgala, South Kathmandu; the Copenhagen manuscript was copied in Mānīgala, Patan. Only the name of the reigning King and his regnal year are the same; but the remaining astrological data in Petech's documentation come from the Copenhagen manuscript, not from the Patan manuscript. Petech has combined the colophon data from two manuscripts to generate one date--harmlessly, but not accurately. What is disturbing is the confusion of sources because the detailed date comes from the colophon of Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā, not from Pañcarakṣa, as Petech has it.

The cover pages of Petech announce that it is a "thoroughly revised edition". As we have emphasized earlier, Petech's reputation as a thorough scholar has never been sullied. Unfortunately, however, the revision and edition of this publication do not seem to have been as rigorous as one expects of a Petech or IsMEO publication. To document some ugly examples only, let us take up computation first. On p. 37, Petech gives a colophon for Rudradeva, dated NS 148 Māgha Śukla 10 on the basis of the symbolic numbering system: rājā vasu -manu-prathiti (841 ? = 148). Vasu is 8 alright, but no known colophon uses other terms used here. Petech does not seem to have confirmed the validity of published reading. On p. 44, the colophon No 2 for Baladeva gives the date NS 152. It should have been NS 172 because the AD conversion is A.D. 1052. On p. 67, colophon No 1 for Rudradeva gives the AD equivalent for Phālguaṇa Kṛṣṇa 8 NS 288 as May 4, 1168; it can only be March 4, 1168. Similarly, on p. 71 colophon No 6 for Vijayakāmadeva gives Āśadha as the Nepali month and January as the AD conversion. One hopes that it is Māgha, unless Swamikkanu Pallai's tomes on Indian Ephemeris are also full of printing errors. They are no fewer in Petech's book. Here is an incomplete list of the some of the more irritating ones:

developped for developed (p.1,p.105,p.179); constance for constancy (P.2); leafs for leaves (pp. 5-6); protegee for protégé (p.24); confuse information for confused information (p.25); reing for reign (p.32); M.T. Pant for M.R. Pant (p.51); Jule for July (p.61); subiects for subjects (p.67); Thākuriś for Ṭhakuriś (p.67); several building for several buildings (p.106); tried for tired (p.107); eternized for ? (p.107); sacral for ? (p.108); NS for VS (p.102 footnote no 4); inspite of for in spite of (p.109, p.185); sacral hingship for sacred kingship (p.110); tollerated for tolerated (p.110); its titles indicates for its tiles indicaté (p.111); framt for from (p.114); teinted for tainted (p.115); fouded for founded (p.118); it authentic for if authentic (p.119); Muhrikha for muhrikhu (p.124); bits of informations for bits of information (p.124); dispartition for disrepair (p.126); depart for departure (p.127); descendance for descent (p.128); his grounds seems for his ground seems (p.128); tollerable for tolerable (p.128); that sound rather vague for that sounds rather vague (p.128); Suryaman Adhikari for Suryamani Adhikari (p.128, footnote No 3); flared out for flared up (p.134); Itam bahal for Itum Bahal (pp.136 and ff); pretendant for pretender (p.136); stanza for lines/paragraph (137); wich for which (pp.20,146); damayed for damaged (p.149); criterium for criterion (p.167); explanation for explanation (p.157); complicate for complicated (p.179); wa shis for was his (p.181); halft for half (p.182); Tagal for Tangal (p.184); synonymous for synonymous (p.185, p.201); religions for religious (p.187); T.B. Sresthi for T.B. Shrestha (p.197); Aganakamalla for Anarghamalla (pp.79,99, 111,230); tolleration for toleration (p.203); confuse for

confused (p.205); castal for caste (p.206); wreath for wraith (p.210); S.L. Katare for S.L. Katre (p.235); Shresthi for Shrestha (p.238). etc.

Because the book was a real landmark in 1958, because its second "thoroughly revised edition" came out after a gap of 26 years, all these typographical and other errors of oversight make it less prestigious than it would have been otherwise. A unique example of oversight in Petech, 1984 is in his introduction to the fragment of a chronicle Petech discovered and published. In the revised edition Petech writes,

The original abridgement stops with the Muslim invasion of 470 NS, the last words being iti vaṃśāvalī (p. 8).

One has only to look up the roman transcription of the chronicle in Petech's book (p. 228) to find out that "the last words" are not iti vaṃśāvalī, but atha vaṃśāvalī likhyate. They are not the last words of the original text, but the initial formula of the new genealogical material grafted onto the old text by the 17-18th century scribe. This is no small surprise because the fragment was discovered and published by Petech a quarter of a century ago. Petech wisely dropped out "the less scholarly appendixes" from the second edition. The genealogical tables are decidedly an improvement to look up. In Table B (p. 230) Petech prints Jayarudramalla of the Tripura Family in block capital letters, implying that Rudramalla too became a full-fledged king (?). But young energetic king-maker, Rudramalla never reigned; he merely ruled. It would have been so very convenient to add at the end of the book a chronological summary of all the known and established dates of the Kings from Jayadeva II to Yakṣamalla--a kind of vintage and concentrated Petech on a single page. But that is probably for the Third Edition which, hopefully, will not take long either to research or to come out.

With disarming modesty Petech writes in his Preface:

Looking back to the last quarter of a century, I am under the impression that the first edition of the present book has fulfilled its task and has played a useful role, if nothing else, as a provoking factor; many later workers in this field have discussed its findings, accepting or rejecting or criticizing them.

(Petech 1984:3)

The revised Petech is going to be more than "a provoking factor" for many workers in the field. It is likely to be a catalytic agent to look for new trails in the historiography of medieval Nepal. Even as it is, Petech's is a fundamental piece of work. No one interested in medieval history can afford to ignore it.

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