

LINGUISTIC ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE NEPAL VALLEY
A PRELIMINARY REPORT

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1. Introduction

This paper attempts to present a preliminary analysis of the non-Sanskritic nominals attested in ancient Nepalese epigraphy. The corpus of the epigraphy consists of 190 inscriptions in Sanskrit inscribed on stone in Gupta script--a syllabic alphabet. Most of them are dated. The earlier set is dated in Śaka Era (founded in A.D. 78); the later, in Mānadeva Era (founded in A.D. 576). The chronological span of the epigraphy is between A.D. 464 - A.D. 877. Its provenance is mainly the Nepal Valley, inhabited until recently by the Tibeto-Burman speaking Newars. Although the language of the inscriptions is Sanskrit, some 246 non-Sanskrit nominals have so far been identified in their running text. Most of these are place-names, the names of rivers, canals, springs, and other water-sources. Some nominals are the names of tax offices, taxes in kind. There are also a few assorted names of objects and persons.

The aim of the paper is limited. It attempts to assign the non-Sanskritic nominals to the Tibeto-Burman sub-family of the Sino-Tibetan family of languages, mainly by tracing some of the roots to the Bodic division. The paper also attempts to show the relationship between these nominals and the modern Newari language. The second major aim of the paper is to explore the possibilities of using linguistics as an instrument of the prehistory of the Nepal Valley. The non-Sanskrit nominals are documented here as substantial evidence of the "Kirāta Period" in ancient Nepalese history, for which there is as yet no archaeological evidence other than the statement of the medieval chronicler.

6 / Kailash

In attempting the preliminary analysis of the data, we are conscious of the limitations set by the nature of the material. For one thing, there are variant readings by different authorities, particularly of the non-Sanskritic nominals. The non-Aryan words in Gupta syllabic script is evidently an unsatisfactory system of transcription. A number of inscriptions are in a state of preservation or readability which is not ideal. We have drawn all our data from Vajrācārya (1973). Although it is not a critical edition, the volume is considered the most authoritative edition of ancient Nepalese epigraphy.

2. Ancient History and Ethnography of the Nepal Valley: A Background Note

The early history of the Nepal Valley is obscure and legendary. The archaeological excavations at a couple of sites have not lent any evidence datable beyond the early centuries A.D. (Deo, 1968). The earliest inscription is dated A.D. 464. The ancient inscriptions of the valley were issued by the ruling house of the Licchavis--a clan of the north Indian origin whose antiquity dates back to the days of the Buddha. The advent of the Licchavis in the Nepal Valley is ascribed by the chronicler to conquest over the aboriginals of the valley--generically described in Sanskrit as *kirāta*. The *Gopālarājavaṃśāvali*, a chronicle in Sanskrit and Newari compiled in ca. A.D. 1387-1390, mentions two pastoral dynasties--the *Gopālas* (the cowherds) and the *Mahiṣapālas* (the buffalo-herds)--as the earliest settlers of the valley. The chronicle then lists 32 *kirāta* kings who ruled over the valley for a total period of 1903 years and 8 months. Then the Solar Licchavis arrived and overthrew the *kirātas* who ultimately retreated to the east of the valley. The chronicle specifically mentions that they now live in the river valleys of the Arun and the Tāmākosi. Most scholars tend to identify the *Kirātas* of antiquity with the modern Rais and Limbūs who call themselves *kirātis* and their homeland in eastern Nepal, *Kirānt* (Levi, 1905; Chatterjee, 1950; Shafer, 1954).

The Licchavi inscriptions were official and religious documents issued by the ruling elites--the Licchavi kings, the Thakuri Varmaṇas and Ābhira Guptas as their vassals. These three clans shared political power among themselves for four centuries between A.D. 464-879. Apart from these three, there are epigraphic evidences of the other immigrant clans of Indian origins such as the Vṛjjis, the Mallas, the Śākya, the Kolīs. They must have migrated in small numbers and made

the valley their home. But the epigraphy as such is silent as to the incidence of conquest or immigration of the Indo-Aryan speakers. However, on a closer look at the inscriptions, it is evident that there were *at least* two linguistically and ethnically distinct groups of people comprising the ancient inhabitants of the Nepal Valley. By far the most revealing facts of ancient epigraphy are:

- a. Nearly 80% of the place-names are non-Sanskrit.
- b. As toponyms and hydronyms, the few Sanskrit place-names are general in nature. A few are mere Sanskritization of non-Sanskrit names.
- c. Except for five or six non-Sanskrit personal names, all the personal names traced in the epigraphy are Indic and Sanskrit. Some typical surnames are: --gupta, --pāla, --jīva, --sena, --dutta, --mitra, --varma, --varmā, --vardhana, --varmaṇa, and --gomi.

The striking contrast between the linguistic sources of the *place-names* and those of the *personal names* suggests two different ethnic/linguistic affinities of the elites and the aborigines, one supplying the personal names and the other, the place-names. The people supplying the place-names, unlike the ones supplying the personal names, must have been living in the valley

- a. for a long time, possibly a millennium earlier than the arrival of the Indo-Aryan speaking southern immigrants;
- b. in large numbers, at least in greater numbers than the Licchavis, the Ābhira Guptas and the Thakuri Varmaṇas; and
- c. all over the valley, rather than in small colonies of recent settlers.

The internal evidence of the epigraphy shows a social structure already permeated with caste ideology. The epigraphy attests, not only to the existence of the fourfold division of the society into the castes of brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, and śūdra, but also to a more significant stratification into *aṣṭādasa-prakṛti*, i.e., eighteen *tribal* groups who lived on the fringe of the classical model of the caste system. The earlier pastoral settlements at higher altitudes on the rim of the valley were slowly being deserted in favour of permanent civic settlements based on agriculture, animal husbandry, metal crafts, and trade, including long-distance trade. The river basin of the Bāgmati and Viṣṇumati was sprawling with nuclear settlements feeding the focal urban habitations of Pātan, Devapātan, Kathmandu, and Bhaktapur. Among the other surrounding settlements were:

- a. North: Tokhā, Dharmasthali, Dhāpāsi, Tuśal, Phutuṅ, Burānil-kantha
- b. North-East: Chāngu, Sānkhu, Gokarṇa, Bode
- c. South-East: Thimi, Nālā, Sāngā, Banepā
- d. West: Thānkot, Chowkitār, Mālātār, Kisipidi, Balambū, Satungal, Phāsinkhel, Icaṅgu, Ādeswar
- e. South: Lele, Chāpāgaon, Pharpin, Buṅgamati, Sanāguthi, Tistuṅ, Chitlān.

3. The Source Language of the Non-Sanskritic Nominals

Space does not permit listing *all* the 246 nominals here. For a preliminary inventory Malla (1973b) can be used. It is necessary to draw a basic distinction among these nominals between the non-Sanskrit nominals, i.e., the nominals which are *not* Sanskrit, but may be from Prakrit dialects, *and* the non-Sanskritic nominals, i.e., the nominals which are not Sanskrit in origin or descent. This paper is concerned with the non-Sanskritic nominals although some marginal comments are also made on the nominals (47 in all) which are not Sanskrit but may have been Prakrit. Hypothetically, the non-Sanskritic nominals in ancient Nepalese epigraphy can be assigned to the three pre-Aryan sources:

- a. The Austroasiatic Languages/Dialects
- b. The Dravidian Languages/Dialects
- c. The Sino-Tibetan Languages/Dialects

Of the three, the Dravidian hypothesis is the least tenable one. So far no Dravidian language has been traced in the entire span of the Nepal Himalayas. Jhāngaḍ, a Dravidian language of the Northern Kurax Group, has been reported recently from Sunsari and Morang districts of the Nepal Terai. Our data seem to have no connection with the reported material. Among the Austroasiatic languages only two languages of the Muṅḍā group--Satār and Santhāli--are known to exist in Nepal. They too are reported from the southern edges of Jhāpā and Morang districts--geographically at some remove from the Nepal Valley. The nominals of non-Sanskritic origins traced in ancient Nepalese epigraphy cannot with any justification be assigned to the Austroasiatic sources. In the past, historians and anthropologists have postulated that the earliest stratum of human habitation in the Nepal Valley had come from the Austroasiatic sources. Among the first serious Nepalese scholars of the Newars, Regmi held the view that

At the earliest time the Kathmandu Valley was the settlement of the people closely resembling the Austro-Asiatics, and those got mixed up with the Mongoloid immigrants from the south-east at the next stage... .. In its antiquity the Newar community was a mixture of three peoples (Austro-Asiatics mixed with Dravids and Mongoloids) before it came in contact with the Aryan settlers. The Austro-Asiatic elements in the Newars must be represented by the Jyapus who form the vast majority of the population in the valley. Their physiognomy is neither Mongoloid nor Aryan nor except in a few cases (do) they show an admixture.

(Regmi, 1969: 15)

Gopal Singh Nepali also believed that some people allied to Austro-Asians might be the autochthones of the valley, "who subsequently disappeared bequeathing their culture to other people who supplanted them" (Nepali, 1965: 32). Chatterjee too believed that

In the Nepal Valley, in certain cases the Mongoloid dialects have apparently ousted Austric speeches; but the latter, while giving way, have managed in some matters to influence the former.

(Chatterjee, 1950: 169)

However, Chatterjee did not elaborate how or where the Austric speeches "manage to influence" the Mongoloid dialects in the Nepal Valley. A more recent view on the Austric origins of the Newars is that of Nicolas J. Allen, a British anthropologist, who argues

The Newar reliance on the digging stick recalls the paper by Furer-Haimendorf (1950) in which he proposes that in the late neolithic times there occurred an extensive dispersal of Munda speakers from the region of Assam; with them they took a culture based on wet rice cultivation without plough or traction carried on from relatively large permanent villages with community houses... .. The Newar may in origin have belonged to this Munda migration... .. No other people seemed to have clung so exclusively as the Newar have to the digging stick.

(Allen, 1969: 71-72)

The source language of the non-Sanskritic nominals has been a subject of speculation in the past. Ācāryā, the late Historian-Laureate of Nepal, assigned them to the dialect of the Nepāras--a people of the Austroasiatic origins--a hypothesis which he later on abandoned (Ācāryā, 1953 and 1972). He speculated that the dialect was "pronominalized" in spite of the fact that there was no syntactic information available in the epigraphic data. Regmi assigned the nominals to the Newari language:

The various names like *dulung*, *khepung* are pure Newari derivatives. The language of the inscriptions being Sanskrit, it may be inferred that Newari was then thrown into background as uptill now it is.

(Regmi, 1960: 21)

Vajrācārya (1968: 8), while assigning the data to the Kirāta language family (i.e., Tibeto-Burman), is less committed:

It is possible to assign the place-names in ancient Nepalese epigraphy to the Kirāta language family even on the basis of commonsense. Yet it is not possible to do so conclusively without analyzing the words on the basis of linguistic science.

(My translation from Nepali)

Another Sanskritist is no more committed either:

At the present state of our knowledge we can only say that these are local names, belonging to some unknown language. It may be early Newari, which otherwise is attested first in the 14th century. They may also belong to an older substratum which preceded the immigration of the Newars, the date of which is unknown. It is therefore too early to decide to which language these names belong. The syllabary structure of the many names of localities and persons mentioned in the Licchavi inscriptions does not conform with that of early Newari, but we do not know, of course, whether the structure of Newari had changed considerably or not between the 8th and the 14th centuries. For convenience sake the language of the names in the inscriptions will be called "Kirāti" here, without excluding the possibility that it represents an early form of Newari.

(Witzel, 1980: 326)

We will attempt to analyze the morphological structure of the nominals later on in this paper since this appears to be the main consideration. However, at this point it must be stressed that the sooner we dismiss the Austroasiatic hypothesis the better. Few of the 246 non-Sanskrit nominals seem to have any verifiable formal similarity with a few well-documented Austroasiatic languages. The most sound argument for assigning the nominals to the Tibeto-Burman sources is that they make sense and that the data reveal *internal regularities* similar to Tibeto-Burman morphology and lexicon. Although a majority of the nominals can incontestably be traced back to a proto-form of the Newari language, the data are much less homogeneous than one would have liked them to be. For one thing, the data come from an area in the culture zone already characterized by language-contact, racial interbreeding, social assimilation and cultural synthesis. It is, therefore, unrealistic to expect a set of data which are totally pristine and unaffected by contact situations. At any rate, we are

dealing with a very remote state or states of the language, separated from modern Newari by a gap of well over a millennium, with no connected data for the intervening period. When the earliest written Newari texts of some length begin to be available in the 14th century the language was already impregnated with the Indo-Aryan infiltration and heavy Sanskrit loans.

4. The Source of the Non-Sanskrit Nominals

Although the ruling elites promoted Sanskrit as the language of ritual, authority and epigraphy in the Nepal Valley, they themselves possibly spoke some dialects of Eastern Prākṛit--presumably Māgadhī or Ardha Māgadhī as a colloquial language of everyday communication. This is evident from some 47 nominals, mostly place-names, attested in the Licchavi epigraphy. Although these words are *not* Sanskrit they betray formal characteristics (e.g., geminate and retroflex consonants) which are more akin to Prākṛit dialects than to the Tibeto-Burman ones. Their presence in the epigraphy is significant. Their distribution in terms of time and space deserves a comment or two. These names are significantly concentrated in limited areas, and with a few exceptions they are, chronologically, much younger as cultural phenomena. The largest numbers have come from two inscriptions--one from Balambū dated A.D. 705 and another from Nāxāl Nārāyaṇchaur ca. mid-eighth century A.D. These two inscriptions contain 20 such place-names. the others are mostly isolated incidences in older settlements of Pātan, Sāṅkhū, Deopatān, Paśupati, and Kāthmandu (Lagan area). Eighteen place-names are scattered among these five areas.

In the outlying areas the following settlements have each lent 1 such name: Bode, Nālā, Thimi, Chāpāgāon, Lele and Māligāon.

Given below is a list of these non-Sanskrit nominals:

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. uḍaṇehusa | 10. daṭṭaṇadalpasa | 19. punu |
| 2. utthima | 11. dholavāsa | 20. pondi |
| 3. upabhidhi | 12. naḍapatā | 21. poulam |
| 4. uparima | 13. nuppunna | 22. badra (ālī) |
| 5. khātampalli | 14. pārigespullī | 23. bilva |
| 6. gaṇi | 15. pālaṇa | 24. bemmā |
| 7. gamme | 16. puṃdaṭṭa | 25. bhukkunḍikā |
| 8. goṭana | 17. puṇḍi | 26. bhumbhukkikā |
| 9. jājje | 18. puttī | |

27. bhoṭṭa	34. vāta	41. śaktavāṭa
28. māśa	35. vilivikṣa	42. sāṭammi
29. māśā	36. vaidya (?)	43. sālagambi
30. yavadu	37. vaidyamadaḡudi	44. sistikoṭṭā
31. reṭā	38. vottvorūṣo	45. svayapuroṗita
32. valasokṣi	39. vottrino	46. hasvīmavillī
33. vastum (?)	40. vodda	47. helītila

5. The Morphology of the Non-Sanskritic Nominals: Some Notes

What is attempted here is a preliminary analysis of the structure of the non-Sanskritic nominals, mainly by identifying varifiable formal elements in the structure. It is hoped that, apart from appealing to the semantic criteria in the end, such an analysis can provide us with a safe clue to the nature of the data.

1. Stem +-priṅ suffix

cu-priṅ
yā-priṅ
kho-priṅ
mā-kho-prṁ
jol-priṅ
khūl-priṅ
kha-kam-priṅ
pu-ṭham-priṅ
tha-sam-priṅ
ka-dam-priṅ
mhu-priṅ
mhas-priṅ
praṅ-priṅ

2. Stem + -co suffix

theṅ-co
mi-di-co
kha-rhi-co
mo-gum-co
brem-gum-co
pa-haṅ-co
lum-baṅ-co
dhan-co
kha-re-val-gaṅ-co
(ardha) - co

3. Stem + -khu sūffix

teṅ-khū
japti-khū
hūḍi-khū
ca-lam-khū
pi-khū
lam-khū

4. Stem + -gum suffix

-- -gum
cho-gum
pā-gum
hārā-gum
ṅha-gum
daṅdaṅ-gum

5. Stem +-bū/brū suffix

tham-bū
sa-lam-bū
nim-brū
pri-cchim-brū
pri-tum-bru
prom-jnam-bu
mit-tam-brū

6. Stem +-ju suffix

ta-laṅ-ju
fa-laṅ-ju
lul-ju

7. Stem +-ko suffix

a-śiṅ-ko
rip-śiṅ-ko
su-bram-ko
rhim-ko
koṅ-ko
miṅ-ko
saṅ-ko

8. Stem + *-dul* suffix
 te-khum-dul
 na-ti-dul
 śā-tun-ti-dul
 tham-bi-dul
 me-kaṅ-ḍi-dul
 bur-dum-bra-dul
 sa-phan-dul
 (sreṣṭhi) -dul
9. Stem + *-gval* suffix
 te-gval
 mā-gval
 gī-gval
 yū-gval
 lin-gval
 lañ-ja-gval
 mal-rha-gval
 -- -gval
10. Stem + *-duñ* suffix
 kā-duñ
 gaṇi-duñ
 pha-va-duñ
 hus-prin-duñ
11. Stem + *-diñ* suffix
 gam-pren-diñ
 joñ-jon-diñ
12. Stem + *-lañ/lum/-lam* suffix
 nā-lañ
 dum-lañ
 kañ-ku-lañ
 gāñ-su-lañ
 gol-lam
 mā-kho-du-lam
 lam-khu-lam
13. Stem + *-stuñ* suffix
 cu-stuñ
 te-stuñ
14. Stem + *-tī* suffix
 lem-ba-tī
 śi-tā-tī
 dhe-lan-tī
 śā-tun-tī
15. Stem + *-bī* suffix
 kom-pro-yam-bī
 tham-bī
 jam-yam-bī
 dām-yam-bī
16. Stem + *-khā* suffix
 ke-khā
 śa-lañ-khā
 ta-ve-ce-khā
 pra-yit-ti-khā
 kañ-kā-vat-ti-khā
17. Stem + *-mhuñ-m* suffix
 hā-mhum
 kū-mhum
 bra-mhuñ
 śul-mhuñ
18. Stem + *-maka/-laka* suffix
 pā-gum-maka
 gum-di-maka
 ti-la-maka
 kā-da-laka
 pi-kañ-kū-laka
 udal-ma-laka
19. Some other Nominals
 e-tañ
 khṛ-puñ
 gi-nuñ
 gul-lam-tañ
 cu-hvañ
 te-gvañ
 du-prañ
 dum-prañ
 pañ
 proñ-ni-prañ
 proñ-pro-vañ
 fe-rañ
 mā-thañ
 mai-siñ
 mā-tiñ
 vil-hiñ
 sañ-gā
20. Given below are some examples of prefixed elements:
 i. Prefix *mā* + stem
 mā-thañ
 mā-nañ
 mā-gval
 mā-kho-pṛm
 mā-kho-dul
 ii. Prefix *te* + stem
 te-gvañ
 te-gval
 te-khum
 te-pula

14 | Kailash

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|---|--|
| <p>iii. Prefix <i>cu</i> + stem</p> <p>cu-stuñ
cu-priñ
cu-hvañ</p> | <p>v. Prefix <i>du/dum</i> + stem</p> <p>du-prañ
dum-prañ
dum-lañ</p> |
| <p>iv. Prefix <i>tham</i> + stem</p> <p>tham-bi-dul
tham-sam-priñ
tham-bū
tham-tum-ri</p> | <p>vi. Prefix <i>proñ</i> + stem</p> <p>proñ-jña-prañ
proñ-ni-prañ
proñ-jñam-bu
proñ-pro-vāñ</p> |

The above analysis reveals that the source language of these nominals has a morphology consisting of monosyllabic roots and affixes (prefixes and suffixes). According to Benedict (1972: 96), "The study of Tibeto-Burman morphology is in large measure simply the study of those prefixed and suffixed elements which can be shown to be of some antiquity". As for the grammar, Shafer writes:

The "grammar" of a Sino-Tibetan language consists largely of certain words or syllables that are added to a noun or verb or pronoun... They are usually postposed... This word is always a monosyllable in the four main literary Sino-Tibetan languages and in many other, such as Lusei or Newari. So that Sino-Tibetan languages are generally described as monosyllabic... There are Sino-Tibetan languages... that have disyllabic and even trisyllabic words... This represents the primitive condition, the present monosyllabism being due to degeneration. The primitive polysyllabism was due to "prefixes" which were not actually prefixes.

(Shafer, 1966: 11)

Polysyllabism can undoubtedly be deceptive in Tibeto-Burman languages. Take, for instance, two modern Newari place-names:

pākopukhuldyāñ
netāpāco

The first place-name is merely a compound of *pā* (slope), *ko* (beneath), *pu-khul* (pond), *dyāñ* (terrace); the second, of the following elements: *ne* (main, focal, central), *ṭā* (hillock), *pā* (slope), and *co* (peak). Among our data also there are striking polysyllabic nominals such as the following:

yabramkharo (place-name)
gecchimdhāka (court-bearer's name)
āṅglābakasapitā (name of an administrative unit)
kedumbāṭa (personal name)
gumpadbrim (place-name)

6. The Semantics of the Nominals

The nominals fall into specific lexical areas such as the following:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Toponyms | a. Names of hillocks | nominals with suffix- <i>co</i> |
| | b. Names of fields | nominals with suffix- <i>bū/brū</i> |
| | c. Names of forests | nominals with suffix- <i>gum</i> |
| | d. Names of slopes | nominals with suffix- <i>ko</i> |
| | e. Names of elevated lands | nominals with suffix- <i>duñ/diñ</i> |
| | f. Names of pathways | nominals with suffix- <i>khā</i> |
| | g. Place-names with house/houses as landmarks | nominals with suffix- <i>gval</i> |
| | h. Names of places in general | nominals with suffix- <i>priñ</i> |
| 2. Hydronyms | a. Names of canals/water sources | nominals with suffix- <i>dul</i> |
| | b. Names of rivers | nominals with suffix- <i>khū</i> |
| 3. Tax Administration Terms | a. Tax Offices | lingval
kūthera
māpçoka
sulī |
| | b. Taxes in kind | kasaṣṭhi
cokhparā
bhoṭṭa
phalañju
dañkhuṭṭarthā
sim |
| | c. Tax Officers | tepula
testum
piṭaljā
bramhuñ
śulmhuñ |
| 4. Personal Names | | kedumbāṭa
sindrira
gecchindhāka
rogamācau
khaḍuka
vottrino |
| 5. Grants | | gīnuñ
digvāra |

6. Objects

kūmhum (ritual seed)
 bhukkuṇḍikā (a species of fish)
 yatisā (money)
 hāmhum (ritual seed)
 cho (wheat)
 kica (worm)

Suffixes such as *-co, -bu, -gum, -ko, -bi, -duñ, -khā, -khu*, or a number of roots such as *sim, cho, kica, hāmhum, lam, cu, tham, ko, ti, dum*, are authentically Tibeto-Burman. A number of these are still in use in Newari and cognate languages in the same sense.

7. Historical Evidence of the Evolution

There are historical evidences of the evolution of ancient non-Sanskrit place-names into modern Newari place-names which are still in use.

kho-priñ	kho-pa
mhas-priñ	mhya-pi
prañ-priñ	pham-pi
khai-naṣ-pu	khad-pu

Some of the other ancient place-names surviving in modern Newari are given below:

<u>Ancient</u>	<u>Modern Newari</u>
teñkhu	tekhu
kicapriciñ	kisipidi
būgāyūmi	buñga
mākhopriñ	khopa
khoprñ	khopa
khṛpuñ	khopa
sāngā	sāngā
nālañ	nālā
kurpāsi	khopāsi
lembatī	lele
gullamtam	guita
phutuñ	phutuñ
satvaumālambā	satuñgal/balambu
teṣtuñ	tistuñ
tuñcatcatu	capali
jamayambī	jamal/yam (bū)
theñco	theco
thambū	thainbū
tegval	tyagal
māthañ	makhan

The long gap of time and the lack of intermediate data between ancient place-names and modern Newari forms make significant generalizations on the *actual stages* of phonological or morphological changes

difficult. However, some trends are evident: the loss of consonants and syllabification are the outstanding landmarks. But whereas *-priñ* in *kho-priñ* has survived as *pa* in *kho-pa*, it has come down to us as *pi* in *mhas-priñ* and *prah-priñ*. The motivations for these changes appear to be different depending perhaps upon dialectal, regional, social-cultural, and language-contact factors. In any case, the contact with the Indo-Aryan speakers is historically evident. This must have been one of the major factors affecting the changes.

8. The Relationship of the Data with the Newari Language

In relating the data to the Newari language scholars have shown two responses: cautious and committed--both without going into the detailed analysis of the data in totality. If Vajrācārya and Witzel represent one end of the spectrum Regmi and Doherty (1978) represent another end. Witzel is willing to assign the data to "some unknown language", at most to "Kirāti language". He does not rule out the possibility that the data "represent an early form of Newari". For him the main problem in relating the data with the Newari language is that

The syllabary structure of the many names of localities and persons mentioned in the Licchavi inscriptions does not confirm with that of early Newari.

How Witzel came to this conclusion is not particularly clear; but the earliest available written texts of some length in Newari can be consulted, and the syllabic structure of the native Newari stems can be compared with the syllabic structure of the non-Sanskritic nominals found in the Licchavi epigraphy for verifying Witzel's contention.

Many of the roots and suffixes that we have identified in the data are still in use in modern Newari, e.g., *co*, *ko*, *du*, *gal*, *gum*, *khu*, *tham*, *khā*, *lah/lam*, *ti*, *bi*, *kica*, *sim*, *mi*, etc. These roots and affixes are still used in modern Newari in the same sense as they were in ancient epigraphy. All this is not to deny that the Newari language changed in the last two thousand years. Like any other natural language it must have changed a great deal, particularly because it was spoken in a most active contact zone. What is not yet clear to us is the exact nature of change or changes and their different phases and causes. On the basis of the available formal, lexical and diachronic evidence (such as the evolution of several ancient place-names in modern Newari), we can safely postulate that the source language of *most* of these nominals is proto-Newari.

9. Apropos of the "Origins" of the Newars

We do not know who the aboriginals of the Nepal Valley were, nor do we know anything about their ethnic or linguistic affinities. In the past, scholars have tended to believe that the Newars were the aborigines of the valley. For example, Furer-Haimendorf wrote:

Immigrants from India as well as from Tibet have at times exerted a considerable influence on Newar culture, and some of them have ultimately been absorbed into Newar society, but there is every reason to believe that the bulk of Newar people has been settled in the Nepal Valley since prehistoric times.

(Furer-Haimendorf, 1956: 15)

The people known today as Newars are a mixed racial stock, consisting of several layers of immigrants from the north as well as the south who arrived in the Nepal Valley at different times in the last two millennia and were ultimately absorbed into the matrix of the social structure and culture system that evolved in the valley. The modern Newars are related to one another, *not* by descent or race, but by a common culture and language; they are related to one another by the place and function they have in Newar social structure. Already by the end of the first millennium A.D., the ancient clans of the pastoral Nepalās (herdsmen), the Kirātas, the Vṛjjis, the Śākya, the Kolis, the Mallas, the ruling families of the Licchavis, the Ābhira Guptas, and the Thakuri Varmanas--all were lost among the aboriginals of the valley in the making of the Newars.

When scholars debate "the origins" of the Newars, they are-- apart from promoting seductive hypotheses--presumably, trying to isolate the *earliest stratum* in the ethnic composite called the Newars. Some day historians and ethnographers may come up with more convincing evidence in favour of the Austroasiatic, the Dravidian, or the Muṇḍa "substratum" in the language, race, culture or society of the Newars. But the non-Sanskritic nominals, particularly the places-names in Licchavi epigraphy, provide us with an irrefutable set of evidence for the Mongoloid ethnic and Tibeto-Burman linguistic affinities of the aborigines of the valley. They fully substantiate the statement of the medieval chronicler who assigns a long Kirāta rule over the valley before the arrival of the Solar Licchavis.

The deceptively Sanskrit-sounding place-name *Nepāla* (singular, the country; plural, the people *Nepāla*) is an important clue to

the origins of the Newars. The word *newāra* has evolved from *nepāla-nebāla-newāla-newāra*. But as we have tried to show in Malla (1980), the place-name *Nepāla*, like so many place-names in South Asia, is derived from the name of the people who inhabited it. The word *Nepāla* is not an Indo-Aryan word. The Licchavi epigraphy is replete with non-Sanskritic place-names. There are also some interesting examples of Sanskritization of non-Sanskritic place-names, such as Newari *yala-sim* becoming Sanskrit *yūpa-grāma*, Newari *nhwa-khu* becoming Sanskrit *Vāgvati*, Newari *cah-gum* becoming Sanskrit *dolā-sikhara* and so on. The nominal *Nepāla*, too, appears to be a Sanskritization of the Tibeto-Burman roots *nhet* (cattle) + *pā* (man), i.e., herdsman. In support of this hypothesis there is first the internal evidence of Licchivi epigraphy itself. As late as A.D. 512-607 there still was a distinct clan called the *Nepāla* who were addressed to in the epigraphy as *swasti naipalevyah*, i.e., greetings to the *Nepālas*. The members of this clan lived in the Tistung-Citlāng valley during the 6th-7th centuries A.D. Even now the small valley beyond the ridge of the Candrāgiri hill continues to be the settlement of cowherds and buffalo-herds. The other substantial evidence for this hypothesis comes from two medieval sources: 1. the Cambridge University Library *Amarakośa*, a Sanskrit-Newari lexicon dated A.D. 1386, defines the Sanskrit word *Ābhīrī* in Newari as, "the daughters and wives of the cowherds of the *Nepa* clan". (folio 58a). 2. *Gopālarāja-vamśāvali*, the medieval chronicle compiled in ca. A.D. 1387-1390, also mentions *Nepa* as a primeval cowherd of the valley. (folio 17a). The word *Nepāla*, thus, appears to be a Sanskritization on the analogy of *Gopāla*, except that whereas *Gopāla* can be interpreted in terms of Sanskrit etymology, *Nepāla* cannot mean "cowherd" in Sanskrit. Although the *Nepālas* were known as *Ābhīras* to the Indo-Aryan speakers, they were a non-Aryan racial stock who slowly came under the fold of the Aryan culture, religion and social structure. The medieval chronicler mentions eight cowherd and three buffalo-herd kings before they were overrun by the Mongoloid *Kirātas*. The origins of the Newars appear to go back to this racial/linguistic encounter between the ancient pastoral *Nepālas* and the Tibeto-Burman speaking Mongoloid *Kirātas*. Although originally the word *Nepāla* < *Nhet-pā* signified a specific clan of herdsman, in course of time all the people who came to live in the Nepal valley came to be known as *Newāra* < *Newāla* < *Nebāla* < *Nepāla*. In the long run all the inhabitants of the valley who spoke the Newari language came to be known as the Newars.

10. Conclusion

The main interest of the data we have analyzed lies in their historicity. The non-Sanskritic nominals are valuable materials for the reconstruction of the Tibeto-Burman sub-family, the comparative study of the Sino-Tibetan family of languages in which there are only five literary languages with written records of some age. Above all, the data are valuable for diachronic study of the Newari language. Finally, the data lend much needed support, particularly from the archaeological point of view, to the statement of the medieval chronicler who assigns a long Kirāta rule over the valley. At the same time, the nominals are an important index to the ethnography of the ancient valley, providing us with the most valuable clue to the origins of such a complex racial type as the Newars. Where archaeology has hitherto failed the historian, linguistics may serve him as an instrument of prehistory.

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