

# Ancient and Medieval Nepal

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## INTRODUCTION

### *Geographical Setting*

The kingdom of Nepal, an elongated rectangle lying along the slopes of the mighty Himalayas, stretches for five hundred miles from east to west and lies between 80° and 88° East Longitude. Barely a hundred miles wide and stretching from 26° to 30° North Latitude, its altitudes range from a few feet above sea level to the highest point on earth. The variety of elevations gives the country a range of climate zones encompassing almost all those found on earth, from the subtropical jungle to the arctic conditions of the high Himalayas and the arid zone of the Tibetan plateau. With an area of 54,717 square miles and a population of 17,000,000 Nepal is hardly a tiny country--70% of the member nations of the United Nations are smaller than Nepal in terms of population and over 40% are smaller in terms of area. Yet she is dwarfed by her two giant neighbours, India and China.

If one approaches the country from the south the first hills encountered are the Chure Hills rising sharply from the Gangetic plain to an average of 3,000 feet.<sup>1</sup> This band of hills, five to ten miles wide, presents a rugged, forested landscape with dry and immature soils. North of this range rises the Mahabharat Lekh or 'mid-hills' to an average of 7,000 ft. above sea level, though individual peaks may be as high as 9,000 ft. The hills are steep and jagged with the lower slopes cleared and terraced for cultivation

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Harka Bdr. Gurung, 'Geographic Setting', in *Nepal, A Profile*, Nepal Council of Applied Economic Research (Kathmandu, 1970), p. 4-11. The terminology is his.

and the upper slopes covered with forest. Fifty miles north of the Mahabharat Lekh rise the mighty Himalayas. Nepal has over 240 peaks above 20,000 ft. above sea level and the queen of these is Sagarmatha (Mount Everest). This is a wild and rugged landscape with a permanent snow line above 17,000 ft. and few human inhabitants.

The ranges of hills alternate with lowland areas. Along the Indian border is the Tarai or 'Madesh' area, a continuation of the Gangetic plain. This 25-30 mile wide belt is a land of subtropical forest and farms. Between the Chure and Mahabharat ranges are narrow low valleys known as 'Dun' which resemble the Tarai in climate and relief. Between the Mahabharat range and the Himalayas lies the 'Hill Country' or '*Pahār* Country' which includes the narrow, north-south valleys of the great rivers: The Karnali, the Gandaki and the Kosi. Since the high Himalayas are uninhabitable and until recent times most of the Tarai was a malaria-infested jungle, this 'Hill Country' has been the traditional area of Nepalese settlement. Here lies the Valley of Kathmandu, the capital and nerve centre of Modern Nepal and the cradle of Nepalese culture.

West of the meridian of the Kathmandu Valley and north of the main range of the Himalayas lies yet another range known as the Tibetan marginal mountains extending north for about twenty miles. These mountains average 19,000 ft. above sea level and the terrain is less rugged than of the Himalayas. Between the high Himalayas and these mountains lies a number of high valleys called 'Bhot' valleys with a landscape similar to that of Tibet.

Geography has determined the very existence of Nepal as a separate nation, her culture, and her economy. Each of the lowland areas of the country the Tarai, the Hill Country, and the Bhot Valleys has its own distinctive environment, population and economy. Over the centuries this hill area has provided a haven for people from north and south, so that the present racial make-up of the country is a mixture of various Asian elements which has been called the 'ethnic turntable of Asia'.

King Prithvinarayan Shah of Gorkha united the petty kingdoms across the hills into one nation in the latter part of the seventeenth century, but the kingdom of Nepal has a long history and the extent of the country has varied according to the fortunes of the various dynasties.

### *Sources*

Though we have contemporary written records from the fifth century A. D. on, the origins of Nepal are still shrouded in vale of mystery. Nepal is mentioned in several of

the classical Indian sources and we have several classical literary sources of Nepali origin such as the *Purānas*, the *Paśupati Purāṇa*, the *Himavat Khaṇḍa*, the *Nepāla Mahātmya*, and the *Swyambhū Purāṇa*. Yet these are fairly late works and not works of history but mythologies rich in religious and cultural lore.

A number of *vaṃśāvalīs* or chronicles give us some information about the origins and earliest history of Nepal. The oldest and most reliable of these is called the *Gopālarājavāṃśāvalī* ('The Chronicle of the Gopala kings'). The first half of this chronicle is written in Sanskrit of a rather corrupt and ungrammatical quality; the second half is in medieval Newari with a preponderance of Indo-Aryan loan words.<sup>2</sup> It is written in one of the earliest scripts used in Nepal known as *bhuji mola* or 'the fly-headed script' which apparently resembles the Gupta or Kutila script and which, according to Prof. Kamal P. Malla, is the paleographic successor of the ancient Newari script with hooked lines. Internal evidence and the special praise bestowed upon King Sthiti Malla (A. D. 1382-95) as Rama, Buddha and Lokapala reveals that the final redaction of this belongs to the last quarter of the fourteenth century though the Sanskrit section may be older.

The chronicle which William J. Kirkpatrick drew on when compiling his list of rulers and the length of their reigns seems to be equally old and reliable. The chronicle from the private collection of the late Field Marshal Kaiser Shamsheer Jang Bahadur Rana, which was used by Liciano Petech in his book *Mediaeval History of Nepal*, seems to be an abridged version of the chronicle used by Kirkpatrick in his work, *An Account of The Kingdom of Nepal* (1811).<sup>3</sup>

The later chronicles all written in the Nepali language in the last century are merely new versions of the aforementioned Sanskrit and classical Newari works with subsequent additions, condensations and adaptations. Some of the Nepali language chronicles which have acquired a good deal of prominence, as a result of their use by foreign authors in their works on Nepal, are those contained in (i) *History of Nepal Translated from the Parbatiya* (1877) by Dr. Daniel Wright,<sup>4</sup> (ii) 'Some Considerations on the History of Nepal', by Bhagvanlal Indraji and Buhler,<sup>5</sup> (iii) *Le Nepal, étude*

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<sup>2</sup> Dhanavajra Vajracarya & Kamal P. Malla eds., tr. *The Gopālarājavāṃśāvalī*. Nepal Research Centre Publications No. 9. Wiesbaden Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985.

<sup>3</sup> Colonel Kirkpatrick, *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal* (1811), Reprint: Bibliotheca Himalayica, Series I, Volume 3, Manjursi Publishing House. New Delhi, 1969.

<sup>4</sup> Reprint: Kathmandu: Nepal Antiquated Book Publishers, 1972.

<sup>5</sup> Bhagvanlal Indraji, "Twenty-three Inscriptions from Nepal with some Considerations on the Chronology of Nepal", translated from Gujarati by G. Buhler. Reprinted from *Indian Antiquary* Vol IX (1880) 163-94.

*historique d' un Royaume Hindou*, by Sylvain Levi,<sup>6</sup> and 'A History of Nepal and Surrounding Kingdoms (1000-1600)', by Cecil Bendall,<sup>7</sup> later reprinted as the introduction to H. P. Shastri's *Catalogue of Palmleaf and Selected Paper Manuscripts Belonging to the Darbar Library, Nepal*.<sup>8</sup> Three more of these chronicles have been published in more recent times in Nepali and several more lie unpublished in the National Archives. All four of the chronicles used by the authors mentioned above seem to be more or less identical, although they were compiled by different local persons for them at different times. The chronicle used by Wright was initially translated for him into English by Munshi Shewasankar of the British Residency with the help of a local Nepali, Gubhaju Gunananda. The chronicles used by Sylvain Levi were compiled for him by Siddhi Narayan of Deupatan, Kathmandu. A Nepali gentleman named Karidar Buddhiman Singh compiled, translated, and edited such chronicles in Nepali up until the 1870s. All the subsequent Nepali language chronicles may derive from the version compiled by him and completed in 1878.

Though the chronicles are not primarily historical works in the modern sense, the dynastic framework or chronology which they furnish for the later periods has been corroborated by epigraphic and numismatic evidence. For the earliest period of Nepal's history, they provide an imposing list of dynastic rulers constructed by compilers writing at a much later date. Often historians have omitted some of the names of the rulers given in the chronicles because they are found to be either too many or too few to cover the period.

Grateful mention must also be made of basic works on Nepali and Indian numismatics and epigraphy by E. H. Walsh, A. Cunningham, J. F. Fleet and F. Kielhorn who have provided material useful to the study of the ancient and medieval history of Nepal.

Archaeological investigations carried out in several parts of the country have also added to our knowledge of the ancient period. Excavations at Tillaarakot, Beniarahi and Paisia in the Nepal Terai have furnished evidence of the existence of civilization in that area before 300 B. C. Although the cultural influence of the Maurya and Sung empires during the three centuries before Christ had definitely made its way into the Nepal Terai, limited excavations at Harigaun, Lajimpat and Dhum Varahi in Kathmandu have not so

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<sup>6</sup> Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1908.

<sup>7</sup> *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 72 (1903) 1-32.

<sup>8</sup> Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1916.

far yielded proof of settlements in the Valley prior to the early centuries of the Christian era.

The chronicles are the only source covering the earliest period of Nepali history for which no epigraphic or numismatic evidence is available. It is only after the middle of the fifth century A. D. that inscriptions enter the picture. From the 10th century onward an invaluable source of authentic historical information is found in the colophons of manuscripts of various literary works. A colophon is a note placed at the end of a manuscript usually giving the name of the scribe, the date, the place the manuscript was copied, the name of the reigning monarch, and frequently one of two other bits of information. Thanks to the arduous labours of Daniel Wright, Bhagvanlal Indraji, Harapada Das Chattopadhyaya, Cecil Bendall, Sylvain Levi and K. P. Jayaswal in the past and of Raniero Gnoli, Luciano Petech and Giuseppi Tucci, in our time, inscriptions and colophons from different periods and from different parts of Nepal were collected, published and interpreted. Over the last twenty-five years more of these have been collected, published and interpreted by Nepali scholars especially by a group of Nepali scholars known as the *Itihās Saṃśodhan Maṇḍal* under the direction of Naya Raj Pant. Dhanavajra Vajracarya, one of the scholars of this group, has published the entire corpus of the early inscriptions with a Nepali translation and commentary<sup>9</sup> and Dr. Dilli Raman has recently published them again with an English translation and commentary.<sup>10</sup> The individual labour of an ascetic of the Gorakhanath sect, Yogi Narharinath, has resulted in the collection of a fair number of inscriptions and other source materials from various parts of the country.

These works have furnished a valuable fund of epigraphical information and made it possible for scholars to assess the substance and detail of the chronicle information in the light of more positive and authentic historical evidence. Strange as it may seem to modern historians, the writing of the early history of Nepal has so far been mainly an attempt to order the chronological list of dynastic rulers, and even at that, as Prof. Petech suggests, with a touch of irony and humour, 'the list is by no means a settled one.'<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Dhanavajra, Vajracarya, *Licchavikālkā Abhilekh*, Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies, Historical Collections Series, no. 6. (Kathmandu: INAS, 1973).

<sup>10</sup> Dilli Raman Regmi, *Inscriptions of Ancient Nepal*, III Vols (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1983).

<sup>11</sup> Luciano Petech, *Mediaeval History of Nepal*, (Rome Instituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958), p. 5.

Another source available to us from the eleventh century on are what is known as *tād patra tamsuks*. These are legal documents (*tamsuk*) recording land grants, land transactions, loans and other monetary transactions written on narrow strips of palm leaf (*tād patra*). These provide a wealth of information on the political, economic and social status of the country.<sup>12</sup> From the late Malla period we also have a number of *thyāsaphus*, personal diaries of events mainly pertaining to the life of the royal courts.<sup>13</sup>

### Early Works

The first article published in English on Nepal was Sir John Shore's translation of Father Giuseppe de Rovato's 'An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal', in the second volume of the *Asiatick Researches* (Calcutta), in 1790. Fr. Giuseppe's account, however, belongs to an earlier period, as he died in 1786. Col. William Kirkpatrick's *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*, containing information gathered during his 1793 diplomatic mission to Kathmandu is the first complete book on Nepal in English and was brought out by Miller, London in 1811. Another very early book on Nepal was *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal, and of the Territories Annexed to this Dominion by the House of Gorkha*, by Dr. Francis Buchanan (later Hamilton), published in 1819 by Constable, Edinburgh.

Among the Nepali authors in the field, Ambika Prasad Upadhyaya was the first to write and publish a history of Nepal in Nepali (1929). His book is, however, based entirely on secondary information derived by the author from his perusal of books in English. Following in his footsteps Totra Raj Pande, Balachandra Sharma and Dhundiraj Bhandari wrote and published books in Nepali on the history of Nepal. Baburam Acharya, Surya Bikram Gewali and Nayaraj Pant deserve mention among the more serious Nepali scholars of the country's history, and it is mainly to them that the Nepali reading public owes its knowledge of the country's past. Dr. Jagadish Regmi has made a remarkable

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<sup>12</sup> A number of these have been published in various Nepali journals. Shankarman Rajvamsi has published three volumes of them under the title *Bhūmisambandhi Tamsuk Tādpatra*. Hemraj Sakya has published the oldest collection of these found at Uku Baha in Patan (*Sivadeva Saṃskārīta Ūnkuli Śrī Rudravarna Mahāvihāra Sthita Tālptra-Abhilekh* [Patan: Buddha Jayanti Samiti, 2524 Buddha Samvat]). Sixty Eight of these have been published with English translation and commentary by Bernhard Kolver and Hemraj Sakya (*Documents from the Rudravarna-Mahāvihāra, Patan* [Sankt Augustin: VGH-Wissenschaftsverlag, 1985]).

<sup>13</sup> A *thāysaphu* is a manuscript written on a continuous strip of heavy cardboard-like Nepali paper which is compressed into different folds so that it opens like an accordion.

contribution to the history of ancient Nepal with his three books in Nepali on Licchavi Culture, the political history of the period and the religious history of the period. Dr. Dilli Raman Regmi is the only Nepali historian who has written and published extensively in English on the ancient and medieval history of the country, His *Ancient Nepal* and his three volume *Inscriptions of Ancient Nepal* deal with the earliest period. His four volumes on Medieval Nepal, comprising 2,249 pages, are a monumental collection of source materials for a study of the period.

### *Nepal in Legend and Myth*

The *vaṃśāvalīs* or chronicles take us back to the very origins of the country and tell us how the Kathmandu Valley, which was once a lake, was rendered fit for human habitation by Krishna or Manjusri, either of whom may be credited with the feat of cutting a deep gorge in the mountain to drain the water. Geological evidence confirms that the Valley was indeed a lake at one time. Its rich moist soil must have produced a luxuriant growth of vegetation. The newly reclaimed land and its virgin forests must have provided an ideal habitat and ample food for both the domesticated cattle and the wild life that abounded in the area during the time of the first settlers.

The chronicles are literary rather than historical compositions. However, if one takes as generic the names they give for the earliest ruling dynasties, namely the Gopālas (cowherds) and the Mahiṣapālas (the buffalo-herders), then the imaginative accounts of their adventures prove realistic enough as general descriptions of the pastoral stage of civilization prior to the practice of settled agricultural life.

As a manifestation of divine will or as a mere dispensation of nature, a sage (*muni*) called Ne appears on the scene as the protector (*pāla*) of the land and the founder of the first ruling dynasty. Thus the chronicles explain the origin of the name of the country Ne-pāla, the land 'protected by Ne'. His successors are called *gopālavamṣī*, the members or descendants of the family of cowherds. Curiously enough, their names end in *-gupta*; and this makes sense, in a way, because the well-known latter day Gupta rulers of India and Nepal (A. D. 320-550) also claimed descent from the cowherds. According to the chronicle used by Kirkpatrick, the *gopālavamṣī*, or the cowherd family, some with names ending in '*-gupta*', cover a period of four hundred and ninety-one years.

It was customary for the Nepali and Indian rulers to trace their lineage to some worthy personage, human or divine. As the sun and the moon are generally regarded as gods, and were visible to everyone, the rulers felt a natural temptation to claim descent from them. The Cowherd (*gopāla*) Dynasty, claiming descent from the moon is called

either the Lunar (*candravamśī*) or the Ne Muni Dynasty. The chronicles used by Kirkpatrick and Wright name eight kings of this dynasty, whereas Padmagiri's Chronicle mentions only five.<sup>14</sup>

According to Kirkpatrick's chronicle, the Cowherd Dynasty is followed by rulers of the Buffalo-herder Dynasty (*mahiṣapālavamśā*), founded by an Indian Rajput called Bhul Singh. He came from the country between Simraungarh and Janakpur in the Tarai. He and his two successors, Jaya Singh and Bhavani Singh, are said to have ruled for a total of eleven years and seven months. Other chronicles mention three kings of this short-lived dynasty which they call the 'Abhira' ('Ahir') Dynasty: Varasimha, Jayamatisimha and Bhūvansimha.

The village of Matatirtha, situated at a distance of four miles southwest of Kathmandu, was the seat of government of the rulers of the Cowherd and Buffalo-herder dynasties. Nepal was then bounded by the River Trisuli on the West, by the River Dudhkosi on the east, by the Nilakantha Himalayan range on the north, and by the valley of Chitlang on the south.

The last ruler of the Buffalo-herder Dynasty was overthrown by the Kirata army of Yellung Kirata, from the region beyond the River Dudhkosi which extended as far as the kingdom of the Devaraja of Bhutan to the east. According to Kirkpatrick's chronicle, Yellung Kirata was succeeded by twenty-six rulers of the Kirata Dynasty whose rule covered a total period of one thousand five hundred and eighty-one years and one month.<sup>15</sup> Quite a few rulers thus must have reigned more than fifty years and some for more than seventy years, or the lengths of these reigns have been arbitrarily doubled or trebled to fill up the time span. The names of the kings do not sound Sanskrit. The list begins with Yellung, Duska, Ballancha, etc. and ends with Khembhoom and Gully Jung, the latter being assigned the incredibly long reign of eighty-one years.<sup>16</sup>

Although these rulers have been given inconceivably long reigns in the above account, it is with the Kiratas that the chronicles reach slightly more solid ground above the boggy realm of myth and legend. The Kiratas have a good deal more than the shadow existence of their predecessors in the chronicle accounts, for they still exist. The Rais and Limbus of eastern Nepal are collectively known as Kiratis to this day. The Kiratas are also celebrated in the well known Hindu epic, the *Mahābhārata* and in the *Purānas* as a

<sup>14</sup> Kirkpatrick p. 256; Wright p. 108.

<sup>15</sup> Kirkpatrick p. 257-8.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.



hill-tribe with remarkable skill in archery and warfare. Although there is no direct or precise reference to Kirata rule in the inscriptions of the later rulers, there can be little doubt that the Kiratas ruled for a few centuries before Licchavi rule began in Nepal. Numerous place names are recorded in the Licchavi inscriptions which are non-Sanskrit and are taken to be of Kirata origin.

Nothing substantial is known about Nepal's relations with either the Nanda empire (4th Century B. C. ) or the Maurya empire (c. 325-185 B. C.) except for stray references in Buddhist and Jaina religious literature, the account of Aśoka's visit to Lumbini (the birthplace of the Buddha), and the popular legend of his visit to the Kathmandu Valley. Hence we do not know for certain whether Nepal came under the sway of the Nanda and the Maurya rulers, nor is it certain whether or not Nepal came under Kuśāna rule which extended from about the middle of the first century A. D. to the third century. Some historians have claimed that Nepal did come under the Kuśāna rulers but solely on the basis of the discovery in the Valley of stray coins of the Kuśāna emperors, Kadiphes I and II.<sup>17</sup> It may be surmised that the supremacy of the Kiratas and their Licchavi successors did correspond to the later period of Kuśāna rule, but the present state of our knowledge does not allow us to state anything definite about the extent of Kuśāna domination over the Kathmandu Valley.

When the Licchavis, who succeeded the Kiratas, entered Nepal and when they assumed their position of power is not known. According to one theory, the Licchavis entered Nepal about the middle of the 5th century B. C., after Vaisali was overrun around 464 B. C. by Ajātaśatru, king of Magadha and the first ruthless empire builder. On the other hand, the Licchavis may have entered Nepal only after the Licchavi homeland of Vaisali fell under the control of the Kuśānas, in which case they would not have set up their dynasty in Nepal until the 1st or 2nd century of the Christian era. It seems that there was indeed a wave of migration of peoples from northern Bihar to the Nepal hills. This is suggested by the existence of the Koliyas, Vrijikas and Sakyas in the Kathmandu Valley. Most probably the Mallas first migrated to the Gandaki basin.

With the exception of the *Gopāla Vamśāvalī*, the chronicles do not mention the Licchavis by name but merely proceed with a new list of kings. Except for the one used by Kirkpatrick, all the chronicles list some of the rulers who followed the Kiratas kings as belonging to the Lunar Dynasty (*somavamśī*) and some to the Solar Dynasty (*sūryavamśī*). According to Kirkpatrick's chronicle, the Kiratas were dispossessed of their kingdom by Nevesit, a Kshatriya of the Solar Dynasty, who set up his own dynastic

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<sup>17</sup> D. R. Regmi, *Ancient Nepal* (Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta: 1960), p. 69-73.



rule. The fact that the *Gopāla Vaṃśāvalī* has been definitive about the rise of the Licchavis to power following the downfall of the Kiratas proves the importance of this work. The *Paśupati Purāna* is also of the same view. The Licchavis themselves claimed descent from the sun-god as Jayadeva II has recorded in his Pashupati inscription of A. D. 733. These Lunar and Solar Dynasties also link the Nepali rulers, like most of the north Indian dynasties, to the great epic heroes of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, who also claimed similar origins from the moon and sun gods of the Hindu myths.

### THE LICCHAVI ERA (5th Century A. D. to Mid 8th Century)

Though it is not known exactly when the Licchavis penetrated into Nepal, there is a consensus among historians that the Licchavi rule in Nepal must have commenced by the first or the second century of the Christian era. However, the names of some seventeen or eighteen rulers that follow Nevesit in the chronicle confront us with a problem. The question is whether to accept these rulers as Licchavi rulers, even in the absence of epigraphical and numismatic evidence about them, or to treat at least the first five (Nevesit, Makaranta, Kakavarman, Paśupuṣpa Deva and Bhāskara Varman) as belonging to the Lunar Dynasty (*somavamśī*) and the rest to the Solar Dynasty (*sūryavamśī*), as most of the chronicles do.<sup>18</sup> The chronicle to which Kirkpatrick owes his information has made the problem a little simpler by accepting all the rulers as members of the Solar Dynasty, to which the Licchavis themselves belonged. Even then, the problem of accounting for the lengthy reigns of these seventeen or eighteen rulers persists.

Dr. D. R. Regmi has ascribed to Paśupuṣpa Deva the revival of Hindu influence in the Kathmandu Valley, which had been dominated for some time by Mahayana Buddhism under the patronage of the Kuśānas.<sup>19</sup> He regards Bhāskara Varman, whom the chronicles (obviously in a spirit of exaggeration) credit with the conquest of India up to Rameshvaram in the south, as the solar splendour of the Licchavis in fact as well as in name. He further infers from the above that the support of the Licchavis in Nepal was solidly entrenched behind the Guptas in India. The mention of the Licchavis on the coins of Chandra Gupta I and Samudra Gupta, and the fact that the Licchavis had ceased to exist in India by that time, are adduced as supportive evidence. Bhūmi Varman, the successor of Bhāskara Varman, he identifies as a contemporary of Chandra Gupta I and Vṛṣadeva as

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<sup>18</sup> Kirkpatrick, op.cit., p. 259.

<sup>19</sup> D. R. Regmi p. 70.

that of his son Samudra Gupta.<sup>20</sup> Through this rather clever, but questionable manipulation, Dr. Regmi cuts down the list of sixteen or seventeen kings in the chronicles to a handier four or five. This also brings the ancient history of Nepal down to Vrsadeva, the Licchavi ruler who is mentioned in the later inscriptions. The matter is then further simplified by regarding Jaya Varman on Kirkpatrick's list as Jayadeva I of the Pashupati inscription of Jayadeva II.

This inscription set up by King Jayadeva II in A. D. 733 within the precincts of the Pashupatinath temple gives a list of kings which is no less imaginative in its approach and conception than that of the chronicles themselves. The chronology of the dynasty starts with the sun-god, moves through a list of mythical or Pauranic rulers like Manu, Ikṣvāku, Vikukṣi, Viśvagaśva, Sagara, Dilīpa and Asamañjasa, and finally proceeds to a ruler called Supuṣpa, remotely indentifiable with Paśupuṣpa Deva on Kirkpatrick's genealogical list. We are told further by the inscription that names of some of the rulers before Supuṣpa have been omitted, and that even after Supuṣpa some twenty names have been left out before the name of Vṛṣadeva appears. Vṛṣadeva is followed by Sankaradeva and Dharmadeva, after whom the rule of his son and successor, Mānadeva I commences. The Changunarayan inscription of Mānadeva I (dated A. D. 464) begins the roll of the Licchavi kings with Vṛṣadeva.

There was, for some time, a good deal of controversy about the dates used in the inscriptions of Mānadeva I and his successors. His inscription at Changunarayan is dated in the year 386, and the succeeding inscriptions follow serially down to the time of Aṃśuvarman when a new era is introduced. According to Bhagavanlal Indrajī, who was the first to publish Licchavi inscriptions, the earlier dates used by the Licchavis belonged to the Vikram era, which began in the year 57 B. C. On the mistaken notion that it was the Vikram era which was employed in Nepal during the Licchavi period some historians concluded that the country was under the control of the Imperial Guptas. In his introduction to the Gupta Inscriptions and in his article in *Indian Antiquary* of July 1886, J. F. Fleet sought to attribute the Licchavi inscriptions in Nepal to the Gupta era, which began in A. D. 320. Sylvain Levi regarded the dates as belonging to an era unique to Nepal commencing in A. D. 110. R. G. Basak, author of *History of North Eastern India*, like Bhagavanlal Indrajī, considered the dates up to the time of Śivadeva as Vikram Era dates. However, like Fleet, he regarded the dates on Śivadeva I's inscriptions as relating to the Gupta era probably because he read 300 on one of Śivadeva's inscriptions for what other scholars had deciphered as 500. However, Dr. R. C. Majumdar, in his article on the chronology of the early kings of Nepal, convincingly demonstrated that the dates on the

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-72

Licchavi inscriptions up to the time of Amśuvarman's emergence as an absolute ruler, belong to the Śaka era, which began in A. D. 78.<sup>21</sup> This is now accepted by all scholars.

The existence of the Licchavis as a political power prior to the rise of Mānadeva cannot be denied, because the marriage of a Licchavi princess to Chandra Gupta I, at the close of the third century A. D., served to enhance the power of the Imperial Gupta dynasty of India. However, it still remains to be proved that the Licchavi princess, Kumārī Devī, whom Chandra Gupta I married belonged to the Licchavi ruling house of Nepal.

The controversy about the supposed supremacy in Nepal of Samudra Gupta, Chandra Gupta's son, is also still to be settled. According to some historians, Nepal must have acknowledged the suzerainty of the Gupta empire under Samudra Gupta because Nepal is mentioned among his tributaries. Other historians are of the opinion that Samudra Gupta mentioned Nepal not as one of his tributaries but as one of those frontier kingdoms that maintained friendly relations with him.<sup>22</sup> It seems likely that Nepal was not a colony of the Guptas in the ordinary sense of the word, although it may have acknowledged the nominal suzerainty of the Gupta Empire when this was at its zenith.

## Mānadeva I

With Mānadeva I we move on to the *terra firma* of history supported by epigraphic and numismatic evidence. Mānadeva I was the first Nepali King who left behind him inscriptions and coins. His inscription on the Changu Narayan pillar, at Changu about six miles to the northeast of Kathmandu, is the earliest historical inscription with a date so far available in Nepal. Fourteen inscriptions of Mānadeva's reign have been found, and they cover a period of forty-five years, from A. D. 464 to 505.

If what the inscriptions state about Mānadeva I is to be believed, he impressed everyone with a pleasant smiling manner that inspired confidence in his visitors. He was as talented as he was highly devoted to his mother, Rājyavatī, who did not burn herself with her dead husband but chose to assist her son, Mānadeva, in administering the country.

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<sup>21</sup> R. C. Majumdar, 'The Eras in Nepal,' *Journal of the Asiatic Society* (1959) I:1,47-49.

<sup>22</sup> D. R. Regmi, *Ancient Nepal*, p. 70.

Mānadeva was brave and resolute. He had learned the science of warfare in battles fought at his father's side. After his father's death, he went to war with the rebel feudatories, first in the east, and then conquered Mallapuri on the bank of a river to the west. According to some writers, the Mallapuri that Mānadeva I conquered was probably what is now modern Kasia and Paya in the Gorakhpur district of the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. According to others, the Mallapuri mentioned in Mānadeva's inscription refers to the land of the Mallas in the western hill area of Nepal, either in the Gandaki or Karnali basin.<sup>23</sup>

Mānadeva was a devotee of Vishnu and set up two images of his favourite god in the extended posture (*vikrānta*) which are among the specimens of Licchavi sculpture which have come to us intact. Like others Licchavi kings, he had a liberal outlook on religion. Although he himself believed in the worship of Vishnu, his wives set up Shivalingas, the pillars representing the phallus of Shiva, and probably practised Shaivism. Mānadeva himself set up a Shivalinga near the Vishnumati river in 474. Buddhism existed side by side with Vaishnavism, Shaivism and the Shakta cult. The Buddhist monastery of Māna Vihāra, evidently named after Mānadeva, is thought to have been built on his orders. There are indications that this Māna Vihāra was situated at Swayambhu.

Mānadeva put up a huge building called Mānagrha, which probably served both as his personal residence as well as the official Seat of his government. He also put into circulation coins known as *mānāṅkas* which bear the name of his queen, Bhoginī.

Mānadeva was a powerful monarch and suppressed the feudatories with a strong hand. Probably these had grown aggressive and defiant in scattered pockets of Nepal after the death of his father, as was the case in India after the Licchavi republic of Vaisali was incorporated into the Māgadhan empire by Ajātasātru. The gradual emergence of regents like Aṃśuvarman and the Gupta co-rulers during the period of Mānadeva's successors shows that the Licchavi monarchy in Nepal later had to face a renewed challenge from the feudatories.

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 131-35.

### **Mānadeva's Successors**

Mānadeva was succeeded by his son, Mahideva. Since both the last inscription of Mānadeva I and the first inscription of Vasantadeva, Mahideva's successor, are dated A.D. 506, Mahideva must have reigned only a few months.

Nine inscriptions of Vasantadeva's reign are available. It appears from some of these inscriptions that the feudatories with the Gupta name-endings had begun to emerge as leading figures. The Thankot Adinarayana inscription of Vasantadeva mentions Virocana Gupta as 'Performer of Sacrifices' (*yājñika*), but Vasantadeva's Lagantol inscription contains the name of Ravi Gupta who is called 'Commander-in-chief and Chamberlain' (*sarvadandanāyaka mahā-pratihāra*). The Balambu inscription of Vasantadeva mentions one Kramalila as 'Feudal Overlord' (*mahārāja mahāsāmanta*). Other inscriptions of Vasantadeva reveal that the Guptas were quite prominent and exercised considerable authority during Vasantadeva's reign. As the last of the nine inscriptions of Vasantadeva is dated A. D. 532 and the next dated inscription (at least two reigns later) is of 538, it is difficult to ascertain how long he actually ruled.

On the basis of the evidence of coins called *guṇāṅkas*, which resemble, in many respects, the coins of Mānadeva I, known as *māhāṅkas*, the name of a new king, Guṇakāmadeva, has been brought in at about this time. However, further research is needed to prove his place and identity in the established line of the Licchavi rulers.

It is not clear whether Vasantadeva was succeeded by Manudeva or Vāmadeva, but an inscription found near Sankhu tells us that Vāmadeva was ruling in A. D. 538. Rāmadeva ascended the throne after Vāmadeva. One of his two inscriptions shows that he was reigning in A. D. 545.

Rāmadeva was followed by Gaṇadeva, whose reign had commenced by A. D. 557. He has been assigned a reign of at least eight years as his last dated inscription is A. D. 565. Gaṇadeva has now been found to have been Gaṇadeva's successor and the immediate predecessor of Mānadeva II. Mānadeva II is now credited with the founding of a new era, beginning in A. D. 576, which was hitherto attributed to Amśuvarma, the co-ruler and successor of Śivadeva I.

### **Śhivadeva I and Amśuvarman**

Sixteen inscriptions of Śhivadeva's reign throw considerable light on the Licchavi period. His inscriptions cover a period of fifteen years from A. D. 590 to 604. The

Guptas seem to have temporarily ceased to be the rivals of the ruling authority of the Licchavi king. At this point opposition came from Amśuvarman, who is said to have belonged to the Vaiśya Ṭhakurī clan and who started out as an influential officer of Śivadeva's court but in time rose to be a co-ruler. Finally, he became more important than the legitimate ruler, Śivadeva himself, and succeeded him after his death.

It is erroneously believed that the system of twin kingdoms or *dvairājya* appeared for the first time in Nepal's history during this period. However, as there was no territorial division, the Amśuvarman--Licchavi relation was actually more like the Shah - Rana type of dual authority in modern times with two rulers ruling one and the same territory as Maharadadhiraja and Maharaja from 1856 through 1950.

To turn to Amśuvarman's reign in Nepal: he is mentioned as feudatory (*sāmanta*) in the beginning and then as chief feudatory (*mahāsāmanta*). However, an inscription toward the end of Śivadeva's reign describes him as King of Kings and the Feudal Overlord (*mahārājadhirāja śrī sāmanta*). It is difficult to determine exactly when Amśuvarman's absolute rule commenced, and this task is complicated by his introduction of the Mānadeva II era into the inscriptions without identifying the era. This led some scholars down the wrong path. Sylvain Levi identifies it with the Tibetan era, and according to him the dawn of the Tibetan era in Nepal coincided with Amśuvarman's acceptance of Tibetan suzerainty. Levi has confused the Mānadeva II era with the Tibetan era and wrongly concluded that Nepal came under Tibet's domination. Similarly, scholars like Bhagavanlal Indraji, J. F. Fleet and F. Kielhorn have confused the Mānadeva II era in Nepal with the Harṣa era of India and have erroneously inferred that Nepal came under the sway of Harṣa's empire. While sharing the confusion of the aforementioned scholars, Prof. N. N. Ghosh does not, however, endorse their conclusion that Nepal was a part of Harṣa's empire.<sup>24</sup>

Amśuvarman's inscriptions cover a period of sixteen years from the 29th year (A.D. 605) to the 45th year (A.D. 621) of the Mānadeva II era. On the basis of the length of time covered by his inscriptions, he may have ruled on his own for sixteen years. His inscriptions after the 39th year of the Mānadeva era (A.D. 615) refer to him as *śrī*. Coins also bear his name, *śrī amśu*, on one side and the title *mahārājadhirāja* on the other. It redounds to the credit of Amśuvarman that the royal title "The most Venerable King of Kings" (*bhaṭṭāraka mahārājadhirāja*) assumed by him was also adopted after him by each of the Licchavi rulers, and the era introduced by him was also followed by his successors to the end to the Licchavi period.

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<sup>24</sup> N. N. Ghosh, *Early History of India*, p. 316



### ***Evaluation of Amśuvarman's Rule***

Amśuvarman's reign was characterized by great architectural and sculptural achievements. Like Mānadeva I, Amśuvarman built a beautiful palace, called Kailāskūta Bhavana, which served both as his personal residence and the official seat of his government. Many drinking fountains and water conduits were built during his reign, some of which are still in existence. Amśuvarman also put up many Shivalingas, or pillars and images of Shiva.

The famous seventh-century Chinese traveller, Hsuan Chuang (Hsuan-tsang) mentions Amśuvarman in the account of his travels in India as the king of Nepal who had reigned shortly before the journey of which he writes. He says that Amśuvarman was renowned for his bravery, learning and piety.

From his inscriptions also, it appears that Amśuvarman was a man of learning as well as action. In addition to fighting victoriously against his rival feudatories in many battles, he was well read and had a deep respect for other scholars.

Amśuvarman was a man of religious temperament and was constantly engaged in the study of religious books. Because he had a profound knowledge of religious lore, he was eager to make sure that temples and monasteries were properly maintained. He therefore set up generous trusts to meet their expenses.

Although Amśuvarman believed in Shaivism and adopted the title "He who Meditates at the Feet of the Most Venerable Pashupati (*paśupatiḥaṣṭāraka pādānudhyāta*) to prove his devotion to Shiva, he also assisted the Vaishnava and Buddhist institutions. He was a generous and liberal king, treating Hindus and Buddhist alike without discrimination and a benevolent monarch who wrote on one of his inscriptions: 'I am always thinking of how I can make my people happy'.

Amśuvarman did not belong to the Licchavi dynasty, yet in all probability, he adopted Śivadeva's son, Udayadeva, as his heir. One of Amśuvarman's inscriptions refers to Udayadeva as 'Crown Prince' (*yuvarāja*) and 'Witness' (*dūtaka*) [to the edict].

### ***Amśuvarman's successors -- Re-emergence of the Gupta Co-rulers***

Amśuvarman was indeed followed by Udayadeva, one of whose inscriptions has survived, but it was a short reign of at most three years. An inscription of A. D. 623 presents us with the dual government of Dhṛuvadeva, a Licchavi and probably a brother

or cousin of Udayadeva, and Jisnu Gupta, a member of the influential family of the Guptas. It was the kind of government for which Amśuvarman had set a precedent. There is evidence that Udayadeva had been ousted, but nothing is known about the circumstances that led to the ousting of Udayadeva and the emergence of a Gupta co-ruler. Probably the Guptas began to raise their heads again when the strong man, Amśuvarman who had suppressed them, disappeared from the scene. It is possible that Udayadeva was removed from the throne by Dhruvadeva after a short reign with the assistance of the influential family of the Guptas. According to the T'ang annals, Udayadeva's son, Narendradeva, fled the country after his father was dethroned by his uncle, sought asylum in Tibet and later regained his ancestral throne with the help of Tibetan authorities.<sup>25</sup>

According to a popular Tibetan legend, there was a Nepali king called Go Cha, whom Sylvain Levi identified as Udayavarman on the basis of the literal meaning of the Tibetan word. Popular legend has it that this king had a daughter by the name of Britsumn or Bhrkuṭi, whom Song-tsen Gampo, the famous king of Tibet, married. But Dr. G. Tucci has shown in his article 'The wives of Srong-btsan-sgam-po' in *Oriens Extremus*, 1962, that the Tibetan king's marriage to a Nepali princess is almost certainly a legend without historical basis. Thanks to the attention and prominence this story received from scholars like Levi, it was for quite some time accepted as an historical fact.

Five inscriptions of the joint rule of Dhruvadeva and Jisnu Gupta have survived. The dates are legible on only two of the inscriptions which are dated 48 and 49 of the Mānadeva II era, corresponding to A. D. 624 and 625. The dual government of Dhruvadeva and Jisnu Gupta was followed by Jisnu Gupta's absolute rule, which was soon replaced by the dual government of Bhīmārjunadeva and Jisnu Gupta. Three inscriptions of this government have come to light. The dates (which can be read on only two of them) are 55 and 57 of the Mānadeva II Era, corresponding to A. D. 631 and 633.

The dual government of Bhīmārjunadeva and Jisnu Gupta was superseded by that of Bhīmārjunadeva and Viṣṇu Gupta, the latter acquiring authority from his father, Jisnu Gupta, to rule in his name. The inscriptions available for this joint rule are dated A. D. 640 and 641.

### *Narendradeva*

It was from Bhīmārjunadeva and Viṣṇu Gupta that Narendradeva wrested his ancestral throne with the help of Tibet. The Chinese annals do not describe in detail the

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<sup>25</sup> D. R. Regmi, *Ancient Nepal*, p. 177.

circumstances of Narendradeva's return to power. They are content merely to mention his escape to Tibet after the dethronement of his father and his subsequent recovery of the throne with the assistance of the Tibetan government.

By the seventh century A. D. Tibet had emerged as a powerful kingdom with Lhasa as its capital. This had the effect of transforming Kathmandu, a remote and isolated valley in the sub-Himalayan region, into a cultural and commercial centre and a bridge between South Asia and Central Asia. Limited trade may have taken place across the Himalayas via Kathmandu even before this, but it was only in the seventh century A. D. that political relations gained importance.

At the time that Hsuang Chuang and his party were returning to China by way of the Pamirs, a Chinese mission of twenty-two men, led by Li I-piao and Wang Hsuan Tse, was proceeding towards India by a new route, which had never before been used for the journey between Nepal and China via Lhasa. South-west of Lhasa it reached the Himalaya and crossed the Kerung pass. The opening of this route must have greatly stimulated the growth of commercial and cultural intercourse between these countries, since the early Chinese pilgrims to India, like Fa-Hsien and Hsuang Chuang, had preferred the great length and the hazards of a journey across the Gobi Desert and the Hindukush to the risks encountered by crossing the Tibetan plateau and the high Himalaya.

Narendradeva takes his place among the leading personalities of the Licchavi period, like Mānadeva I and Amśuvarman. Thirteen inscriptions of Narendradeva's reign are available covering the period from A. D. 643 to 679, and we also have Chinese sources of information about him:

Seated on the throne is Narendradeva, bedecked with diamonds, pearls and other jewels, wearing earrings of gold and with an amulet of Buddha's likeness dangling on his breast. In the midst of his court, men sprinkle scented water and scatter flowers. On the king's right and left, courtiers are seated on the floor. Behind the throne, countless soldiers stand at arms.<sup>26</sup>

Such is the description of Narendradeva and his court given in the Chinese annals, based on the account of Wang Hsuan T'se. Narendradeva's reign reflected the glorious achievements of the Licchavi period in general.

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<sup>26</sup> See *Ibid.*, 177.

Narendradeva must have heard glowing descriptions of the wealth and splendour in the Imperial Court during his stay in Tibet as a refugee. Chinese and Tibetan annals state that the early Tibetan ruler, Song-tsen Gampo, wielded some authority over the Kathmandu Valley, reportedly for having helped King Narendradeva and his family recover the throne that had been lost two decades earlier. Narendradeva initiated formal relations between Nepal and China. He sent a mission to China with all kinds of gifts and succeeded in establishing cordial relations with the Chinese court.

A few years before Narendradeva's reign, King Harshavardhana had ruled in northern India. He had established friendly relations with China, and there was a regular exchange of emissaries between the two countries. After Harshavardhana's death, an envoy from China, Wang Hsuan T'se, arrived in India with a large entourage. The envoy was attacked by Arjuna ('Arlo-nashun' in the Chinese text), who had usurped the throne after Harshavardhana's death. Arjuna put some of the emissaries to death, sent others to prison, and confiscated the gifts they had brought. Wang Hsuan T'se and one of his colleagues managed to escape and reached Narendradeva's palace in Nepal.

Narendradeva, the king of Nepal, and Song-tsen Gampo, the king of Tibet, helped the Chinese emissaries to attack the impetuous Arjuna by putting troops at their disposal. Narendradeva sent seven thousand cavalymen to the aid of the Chinese ambassador, who led an assault on the usurper, captured him with his family and carried them off to China.

Friendship between Nepal and China was thus firmly established. China was grateful to Nepal for its help in this crisis and for the vindication of its honour. A few years later, the same Chinese ambassador again passed through Nepal on his way to visit centres of Buddhist pilgrims in India.

At the time of Narendradeva, Nepal was a prosperous and powerful country. The contemporary descriptions of the grandeur of the royal court attest to this. Narendradeva's palace, called Bhadrādhivāsa, was beautiful and majestic. According to a description in the Chinese annals, it was a seven-storied building roofed with plates of copper. Its metal work, balustrades, screens and beams were decorated with semiprecious stones, and in the four corners of the ground floor were crocodile heads of gold with water flowing from mouths in a continuous stream.

In the days of Narendradeva, the Nepali people lived in houses of wood. Their walls were painted in bright colours and decorated with murals and friezes. The people were very fond of festivals and celebrated them by playing a great variety of native instruments. Wrestling and bullfights were popular forms of entertainment. Bullfights

were a special feature of religious functions that usually attracted large gatherings of people. Religious processions (*jātrās*) were not unknown, but they had not gained the same prominence they acquired later during the Malla period.

Narendradeva adopted the same royal title (*paramabhāṣṭāraka mahārājadhirāj*) as Amśuvarman and showed devotion to Shiva. The beginning of the annual festival of the image of the god Lokeśvara -- Matsyendranātha is associated with his reign. Most of his inscriptions bear the Buddhist Wheel of Religion (*dharmacakra*) flanked by two deer, but some of his inscriptions also display the traditional Śhaiva and Vaishnava symbols of the bull and the conch with Vishnu's wheel (*cakra*).

At that time Sanskrit was the medium of higher education and Sanskrit learning was fairly widespread among the people. Some of them were well-versed in astrology and astronomy and could draw up calendars on the basis of calculations of the various phases of the moon. Since artistic and literary refinement presuppose a certain level of material prosperity, Nepal must have enjoyed a fairly high standard of agricultural and commercial development.

The country had by now become a thriving centre by serving as a gateway from India to China both for merchandise and for scholars who disseminated knowledge and culture as they travelled. About this time Nepal learned from China the art of paper making. Handmade paper of the finest quality was added to its traditional exports of musk, orpiment, blankets and other woollen goods to India.

## *Śivadeva II*

According to a Buddhist legend, Narendradeva retired to a monastery in his old age. He was succeeded on the throne by Śivadeva II. Seven inscriptions of his reign have come down to us and they cover a period of perhaps sixteen years from A.D. 685 to 701.

Śivadeva II, described in his son's inscription as one who 'by his glory put to shame all hostile kings', sought to enhance the prestige of his family by marrying the daughter of Bhogavarman, the Maukhari king in the plains. Śivadeva II's wife's name is given as Vatsadevi and she is further identified as the granddaughter of Adityasena, King of Magadha.

Although Śivadeva II, like his predecessors, was devoted to Shiva, he saw to it that the deities of Mahayana Buddhism were not neglected and that Buddhist monasteries

were properly looked after. He also continued the tradition of his predecessors in administration and trade and made sure that Nepal was not cut off from the main stream of Hindu culture.

### *Jayadeva II and His Successors*

Śivadeva II's son and successor was Jayadeva II. At least six inscriptions from his reign have come to light. All but one of them are partially damaged. Those which do have dates give us a span of twenty years from A.D. 713 to 733. As noted above, Jayadeva's inscription at Pashupatinath gives a chronology of the Licchavi rulers. Some regard the inscriptions of Jayadeva II as the last recorded inscriptions of the Licchavi period.

Jayadeva II continued his father's policy of marrying into the family of the rulers in the plains and married the daughter of the king of Gauda. As the *kṣatriyas* of the plains had long considered the Licchavis to be an inferior kind of *kṣatriya*, the marriages of Sivadeva and Jayadeva II to the daughters of the *kṣatriya* kings of the plains acquired an additional importance.

One of Jayadeva II's inscriptions mentions Vijayadeva as his heir apparent, and the chronicles add a few more names after him. For a long time nothing of substance was known about the Licchavi period after Jayadeva II. The period between his death and the rise of Rāghavadeva, the founder of the Nepal Era (*saṃvat*), was described as the dark period of Nepali history. Historians experienced real difficulty in filling up the gap between Jayadeva II and Rāghavadeva and usually furnished four or five names of kings from the available genealogical lists with possible suggestions about regnal years to fill up the gap. However, an inscription of one Śivadeva (III) dated 174 of the Mānadeva II era (i.e. A.D. 750) has recently come to light. This places him immediately before Mānadeva III, whose sole inscription is dated 180 of the Mānadeva II era (A.D. 756), and who was followed by Gaṇadeva II. Two recent discoveries give a Balirāja ruling in 250 (A.D. 826) and Baladeva ruling in 271 (A.D. 847). A manuscript dated 301 of the Mānadeva II era attests to the reign at that time of another Mānadeva. If this Mānadeva IV is dated about 875, in accordance with Dr. J.C. Regmi's suggestion, there is little gap to be filled up between this date and A.D. 879 when Rāghavadeva began to rule.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Jagadish Candra Regmi, *Prācīn Nepālko Rajnītik Itihās* (Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy, V.S. 2035), 178-79.

### *Nepal's Political Status and Territorial Extent*

A word may be appropriate at this stage about Nepal having been Tibet's vassal for quite sometime following the rule of the Tibetan King Song-tsen Gampo. Popular legends assume, without basis in fact, that the defeat of Aṃśuvarman by Song-tsen Gampo preceded the marriage of the Nepali Princess Bribtsum, or Bhṛkuṭi, to the Tibetan king. Again the widely held view of a so-called 'Tibetan Era' (A.D. 595) in Nepal, an invention of Sylvain Levi, has absolutely no factual basis, and therefore cannot be cited as proof of Tibetan suzerainty or domination over Nepal.

However, there can be no cogent reason against Tibetan suzerainty (but not domination) over Nepal for a certain period of time, if we take into account the Chinese and Tibetan Records. The *Ch'in-tan-shu* (*Old History of the T'ang Dynasty*) and the valuable Tibetan documents found at Tunhuan (containing a chronology of events in Tibet from A.D. 650 to 747) state that Tibetan kings very often stayed in Nepali territory as if it were part of their kingdom. It appears that, in return for the help Narendradeva received from the Tibetans in regaining his throne, he had to make certain concessions to them.<sup>28</sup>

It is difficult to define precisely the geographical and political boundaries of Nepal during the Licchavi period. Some claim that Mānadeva I's suppression of the secedatory rebels in the east probably meant the incorporation into his kingdom of the area of the Kiratas which might have extended as far as the eastern limits of the present kingdom of Nepal, if not beyond it. An Indian scholar is of the opinion that Nepal's eastern and south-eastern boundaries at one time may have touched the limits of Kamarupa or Upper Assam in the hills, and those of Dawak (Naugaun) in the plains. Dawak terminated in the territory of the modern district of Jalpaiguri in West Bengal.

Mānadeva I was credited with the conquest of Mallapuri in the west. Some authors think that the Mallapuri Mānadeva I conquered did not refer to Pava and Kasia in the west but to the territory of the Khasa Mallas in the Karnali basin, which extended as far as Kartipur or modern Garhwal.<sup>29</sup> However, this is speculation on the basis of very little evidence and in his latest work on Ancient Nepal Dr. Dilli Raman Regmi considers all the theories that have been propounded and concludes:

To sum up, Nepal [in the Ancient Period] was situated over the hilly region extending west to east from the river Budhi Gandak to the river Sunkosi and a little

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<sup>28</sup> R. Regmi, *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106-7.

further. The actual line probably lay between the river Trisuli Gandak in the west and the confluence of the Sunkosi and Rosi in the east. The northern line probably touched the snowy ranges of the Himalayas. There could be confusion as to the southern boundary. In all probability the boundary might lie along the Churia [Chure] ranges.<sup>30</sup>

The Licchavi era is followed by a dark period in Nepal's history which lasted for about two centuries. This has led some scholars to assume that Nepal must have fallen under foreign domination of some kind during this time. Whatever may be the facts, there is no doubt that Nepal suffered a decline in territory and power at this juncture.

(To be concluded)

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<sup>30</sup> Dilli Raman Regmi, *Inscriptions of Ancient Nepal* Vol. 1:17.