

ON FRANCIS BUCHANAN HAMILTON'S ACCOUNT
OF THE KINGDOM OF NEPAL¹

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Francis Buchanan Hamilton's² *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal* is one of the most complete historical works on the country. Being the only reference for many of the ancient Himalayan kingdoms, it is widely quoted, and many old articles on Nepal are mere summaries of this book³. The conditions of elaboration of this pioneering and influential study thus shed some light on the way Nepal is apprehended by Westerners and even by Nepalese scholars. A first draft of the work can be found in a manuscript entitled *Some Observations on Nepal* that Hamilton wrote after his trip there in 1802-1803. It was later completed and corrected during his two stays near the Nepalese frontier in 1810 and 1814 and after the reading of Kirkpatrick's account (published in 1811). To my knowledge, the manuscript of *Some Observations* has never been utilised by other scholars than Hamilton himself. It is dated 1802 on its cover, but while this may refer to the beginning of its composition, it is certainly not the date of its termination, as Hamilton's trip ended in 1803. Hamilton refers to this manuscript in *An Account* in the following manner: "In the year 1802, when in this vicinity, I heard an imperfect account concerning this dynasty, and have mentioned them in the observations on Nepal, which I then composed"⁴. Hence, we learn that *Some Observations* was written at the time of the trip or shortly thereafter. Another clue shows that it is not a travelogue but a text written afterwards: Hamilton describes the village of Muccul Puccul (or Maka Paka) between Ettonda (Hethauda) and Bimphedi (Bhimphedi) in a narration which seems to follow his journey, but we learn in *An Account* that he went through this village only on his return, and it may thus be concluded that he included all the places he had visited on a reconstituted single journey for easier reading.

It is quite obvious that *An Account of the kingdom of Nepal* was written in reaction to Kirkpatrick's book, the latter being amply cited by

¹ I wish to thank Steve Brown for his careful reading of the first draft, and especially Mahes Raj Pant for his numerous corrections and suggestions regarding the contents.

² In 1818, Francis Buchanan adopted his mother's name, Hamilton, for inheritance purposes.

³ For example, L. Dubeux (1848).

⁴ *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*, p. 45.

Hamilton, and much criticised. On his side, Kirkpatrick makes clear reference to Hamilton in his preface and states that he wanted to publish both his data and those collected by the Knox mission together in the same work, but it seems that Hamilton was reluctant to share his information⁵.

There were at least two copies of *Some Observations on Nepal*, as fragments of the same text are now kept in the India Office Library⁶.

Some Observations, as well as Hamilton's other unpublished materials, render the conditions in which *An account of the Kingdom of Nepal* was elaborated more explicit and provide new data on Nepal, two components that I shall examine here.

Hamilton's correspondence to Roxburgh (quoted by S. Brown 1997) leaves no doubt that he very much disliked his mission to Nepal: "(...) the people are such cursed liars that no dependence can be put on what they say" (11 April 1802, Chitlong), "(...) We arrived here yesterday and are in sight of Catmandu in a large bare ugly valley(...)" (15 April 1802, Tancote) "I (...) wish for nothing more than to be out of it again as soon as possible" (25 April 1802, Catmandu).

⁵ One should remember that Knox was under the orders of Kirkpatrick during his first mission to Nepal. He later became the first British resident in Nepal. Kirkpatrick writes in his preface, p. xiii, that ten years after he made an account of his mission for the Government, some friends incited him to publish a book and that he then gave his manuscript to a gentleman to be embellished.

"From this time, the fate of the Work rested with the gentleman alluded to; and perhaps its appearance would not have been much longer delayed, if it had not been suggested that, as a second mission to Nepaul had taken place, since the former one in 1793, and under circumstances far more favourable to the prosecution of useful enquiry, it was probable that much new, as well as more correct information, relative to that country, would soon reach England, which, if it did not wholly supersede the necessity of the intended publication, might be advantageously engrafted upon the latter. But the expectation thus excited was not yet fulfilled, when the death of the proposed Editor once more arrested the progress of the Work, which, on that occasion, passed into the hands of the present Publisher, exactly in its original shape. In the mean while, the latter having incurred considerable expense in preparing entirely to relinquish the publication, or to postpone it to an indefinite period; especially as the additional information, in the expectation of which so much delay had already occurred, did not any longer appear likely to be obtained." (my emphasis)

⁶ They seem to have been written by Hamilton himself as they have the same script, and furthermore the script of these manuscripts is also the same as the one used in the letter Hamilton sent in 1814 at the time of the British war with Nepal.

The entirety of *Some Observations* reflects Hamilton's feelings of exasperation, perhaps also of disappointment for this unknown and mysterious country which did not in fact reveal much to his eyes, as might be understood from his letter to Roxburgh, dated 2 March 1802: "(...) very serious objections have been made by the Nepal government to the number of Europeans (...) and (...) the strongest objections would be made to the coming of any person who had no evident employment but that of spying the nakedness of the land."⁷ It must be recalled that the British thought during the eighteenth century that Nepal was an Eldorado, full of gold mines (K.C. Chaudhuri, 1960: 4).

A first general remark is that the text of *Some Observations* has been toned down by Hamilton in *An Account*. He suppressed many of his excesses, both negative or positive, and most of the details relating to himself or his trip, creating a more impersonal text.

Though still numerous, many of the contemptuous remarks of *Some Observations* were not published in *An Account*. Thus this passage (p. 34) "Even now the common poor bullocks of the country, in one day, carry four maunds of rice from Bichiapcor to Ettonda" appears in *An Account* (p. 197), as: "Even now, cattle convey along it on their backs the usual burthen of grain."

On p. 39, he writes about the Makvanpur fort in the following terms: "(...) probably, like the other forts of the Nepalese, a place of no strength", a nasty remark which does not appear in the book. Again, on pp. 47-48 of *Some Observations*, a very scornful and humiliating passage follows a remark published on p. 202 of *An Account*, according to which the Nepalese would not construct a road for fear of their neighbours:

"Jealousy of strangers is the predominant principle in the Nepal government, and they have succeeded in keeping up that ignorance of which the Genevan Philosopher was so great an admirer. This however completely counteracts their jealous care of excluding foreigners: and exposes them to be subdued by every well informed nation, that may choose to make the attempt."

The Nepalese attitude is clearly unbearable for Hamilton who seems to lose his sangfroid here.

An amusing example of the watering down of the text can be found on p. 115 of *Some Observations*, where one reads: "Captain Knox killed

⁷ My emphasis.

two female buffalos [sic], that had been fattened entirely on grass, and they made very good beef", whereas in *An Account* they only make "tolerable beef"⁸.

The only thing in Nepal which Hamilton seemed to have enjoyed, and which is also hidden from the reader of *An Account*, is its flora, (p. 51): "Until the 14th of April we remained at Chitlong, in a situation highly gratifying to me as a botanist (...) "⁹.

It should be noted that Hamilton employs the first person plural in this last remark as throughout *Some Observations*, whereas *An Account* is composed in the first person singular and omits all references to Knox, who Hamilton was in fact accompanying during his mission. This is symptomatic in my opinion of Hamilton's radical change of status between 1802 and 1818, which can perhaps be explained by his role during the British war with Nepal in 1814. Indeed, Hamilton was solicited to deliver information on this occasion.

Hamilton as a spy

In a letter dated 21st July 1814, addressed to S. Adam, Secretary to Government, H. Fagan, from the Secret Department, writes about Hamilton:

"(...) that gentleman would be anxious to contribute to the public Service all the benefit to be derived to it from his extensive Statistical Knowledge and experience, directs me to request you will suggest to the Right Hon'ble the Governor General the propriety of conveying to Doctor Buchanan the expression of His Excellency's wish that he would communicate to you any information he may have acquired in his Journey to Nepal or in his recent tour along the Northern Frontier which might in his judgement be of use in a military point of view, and with reference to a future invasion of the Nepal Dominions."

Accordingly, Adam sent a letter to Buchanan on the 28th July in the name of the Governor General. On 19th August 1814, Francis Buchanan hastened to reply to Adam's letter received on 15th August, from Garipoor. He states therein that he was sending three maps of Nepal and then describes the easiest route to Kathmandu according to Samar Bahadur, uncle of the Rajah of Palpa, as being the one along the channel of the

⁸ Whether "good" or "tolerable", killing female buffaloes was forbidden by Nepalese law.

⁹ On the impeded career of Hamilton as Botanist, see Brown (1997).

Bagmati. He also advises taking the easy and strategic fort of Makwanpur to distract the enemy's attention, whereas the real goal would be the road to Chisapani. He then describes the road he had taken in 1802 in the very same words used in *Some Observations* ¹⁰.

There follows a long passage on politics in which Hamilton suggests using the Newar against the Gorkhali :

"The Newars who form the most numerous class of inhabitants in Nipaul proper, are, I believe, the most disaffected subjects of Gorkha, partly from the remembrance of cruelty, and partly from religious differences; and would, I am convinced, be willing to afford supplies, so soon as their fears of punishment were removed; but this might not be easy to accomplish; and although the resources of such a fine valley could not be removed without a most barbarous severity, there is little room to suppose that the present ruler of the Country would hesitate a moment about the execution, provided he has knowledge to value the importance of the measure."

Hamilton recommends taking information from the refugees, and restoring the native Chiefs to their former position, a project which had been planned on several occasions before that time to restore the commerce of the Company via the Kathmandu valley (Chaudhuri 1960) :

"The whole Dominions of Gorkha, except the petty principality of that name, are known to have lately been under the independent Government of numerous petty Chiefs, to whom the people under their authority appear to have been strongly attached. Many of these chiefs, or their immediate children, are now living in the Company's territory, fed with daily hope of assistance, the known character of the person, who manages the affairs of Gorkha, having long rendered it almost certain, that no accommodation would take place (...) they are in a state of want, that renders them highly dissatisfied (...). It is evident, that, if any advantage is to be taken of these persons' claims, no delay should be admitted, as whatever force they may have is daily diminishing."¹¹

Finally, he advises against attacking Kathmandu, and suggests sending a detachment with the four Rajas of Makwanpur, Tanahun, Palpa and Garwhal and restoring afterwards the legitimate heir of the Gorkha

family with the ancient family possessions, satisfying Bhimsen's ambition with Nepal proper, and confirming the rule of Brahm' Sahi in the country of Almora. Hamilton ends by suggesting that the British might take the whole of the Nepalese Terai, but not more, lest the Chinese interfere.

Clearly, it is not a mere letter of information that Hamilton sent, but a real strategic programme, which, it seems, was appreciated by the Governor General, as expressed in a letter dated September 9 from Adam, and which formed the basis of the policy adopted.

In fact, Hamilton had acted as a spy for the Company much before the war with Nepal, and it is even clearer from *Some Observations* than in *An Account* that our surgeon and botanist was also a spy collecting strategic information during his mission. Unpublished mentions are numerous. Thus, on p. 34. about the road from Bichiakor to Ettonda:

"For about seven miles the channel of the river serves for a road, which is enclosed by low but very steep hills and precipices, that are covered with thick woods, and form a strong barrier to the dominions of Nepal."¹²

Again on p. 37, about Ettonda:

"It is a small village containing a dozen shops, where travellers may procure grain and other refreshments, and where traders can get a small supply of porters : for goods from the Terriany are generally carried so far on bullocks, but these can proceed no farther. For the accommodation of travellers the Rajas have built a brick house, which surrounds a square court and is very capable of lodging safely a considerable quantity of goods. Was the true interest of the country understood by the Nepal government, it would make the road so far at least passable with loaded carts, which would greatly facilitate commerce; and, as hereafter will be seen, there would remain between Ettonda and Catmandu a frontier of abundant strength".

On p. 31, on the forest before Bichiakor :

"In this forest there is little or, no underwood, and the trees stand at considerable distances from each other, so that against a regular army it does not add much strength to the frontier of Nepal".

¹² When there is an underlined part in a quoted passage, it means that this part does not appear in *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*. When nothing is underlined, the entire passage is missing in *An Account*.

¹⁰ This probably indicates that he had not yet started drafting *An Account* at that time.

¹¹ All these letters are kept at the India Office Library, in the Home Miscellaneous Series H 644 and are published in the *Military History of Nepal. Papers respecting the Nepaul war*, pp. 2, 6, 37-46.

And lastly on p. 137, Hamilton describes another itinerary, through Pharping, which he took on his way back, with precision:

"For horses this road is certainly easier, than that by which we entered, and it is the only route by which elephants can go into the country; but it is more fatiguing for men, and is a much stronger barrier to Nepal than even Chundunghery. Some reports state, that a road practicable for carts either exists, or might be easily made on the banks of the Baagmutty all the way from Catmandu to the low country, and that the river during its whole course flows with so gentle a stream, that in the rainy season canoes might descend. How far it may be practicable to make such a road, I do not know: but I learned from a faithful servant, that followed me to the low country, and who had several times travelled the road from Catmandu to Hateoul, that on this route he had been forced to leave the banks of the river by precipices, and some of the stages had consisted entirely of bad roads passing over mountains."

Clearly then, the first draft of what was to become *An account of the Kingdom of Nepal* is less filtered than the final result and provides us an interesting insight into the conditions of elaboration of the book. More than this general context, *Some Observations* also describes the progress of the trip in detail.

Progress of the trip

This precise account of Hamilton's journey and sojourn in Nepal gives a more vivid idea of the mission¹³. Apart from the difficulties on the road, these extracts show that the members of the mission did not remain together all the time.

"Captain Knox having been appointed Resident at the Court of Catmandu, I was directed to accompany him, and accordingly in the beginning of the year 1802, I went to Patna, where he then was encamped. On the 12th of January we commenced our journey, and proceeded by slow marches to Gorasan, a village near the boundary. There we continued encamped from the 30th of January till the 19th of February, when we advanced a few miles within the frontier of the Nepal dominions, and came to a village which is named Chucheroa, and is placed near the ruins of an ancient city, that was called Gor Semeran. On the 14th of March we advanced about four miles to a small village

named Baguanpur, on the 17th we returned to Cucheroa, and on the 18th we again encamped at Gorasan, where we remained seven days. [p. 1]

On the 25th of March we proceeded towards the West, and having passed through a poor ill cultivated country, in the Bettia Zemindary, and near the frontier of Nepal, on the 28th we arrived at Jukiary, the last village in the Companys [sic] territory on the great road to Catmandu.[p.29]

On the 29th of March, at no great distance from Jukiary, we again entered the territory of Nepal, and went about fourteen miles to Gor Pursera. The country near our route is level and clear: but little of it is cultivated. An old fort, and many plantations of Mango trees show, that formerly it has been in a better state. [p. 30]

Gor Pursera is a small village with a large tank. Near it is a brick house, which was build by Singy Pritap', the present Rajas grand father, who in the cold season sometimes resided in the Terriany, on the improvement of which he bestowed considerable attention.

On the 30th of March we advanced about fourteen miles to Bichiacor. [p. 31] On the 31st of March we proceeded about sixteen miles to Hettaura or Ettonda. [p. 34]

On the way we met with some religious mendicants, who, as we passed, very charitably called out, Ah! my children you will all die of thirst, there is no water to be had for eight miles. This having been bawled out in a dismal tone by ten or twelve men reputed holy, alarmed our people, and made them fancy themselves quite exhausted with thirst, before we had advanced three miles from where they had received a copious supply of water. Accordingly on approaching a spring near the Currura, some of them flew from the road, and threw themselves down to drink with as much avidity, as if they had passed an Arabian desert. [p. 36]

On the 4th of April Captain Knox proceeded, but I did not follow until the 7th, and during my stay at Ettonda I made the following observations on that place. [p. 37]

On the seventh of April I went about eighteen miles to Bimphedi. [p. 40] The eighth of April I remained at Bimphedi (...). [p. 44]

On the ninth of April I joined Captain Knox, who had encamped about a mile above a town called Chitlong. [p. 45]

In the afternoon I proceeded about six miles, and having at first followed the principal stream of the Panouny, and then one of its

¹³ A good description of the Knox mission can be found in K.C. Chaudhuri (1960 : 119-141).

branches, I came to Captain Knoxes [sic] encampment, after having had a good view of Lahary Nepal. [p. 49].

Until the 14th of April we remained at Chitlong (...), when we advanced about four miles to Tancot in the greater valley of Nepal. [p. 51]

On the 16th of April we went to the bottom of a celebrated hill dedicated to Suembu, and continued encamped there till the twenty sixth of July, when we moved into houses, which the Regent built for our accommodation, and which were placed in a garden near a temple called Narainhutty. On the Eighteenth of March 1803 we took leave of the Court, and proceeded on our return to the Companys dominions. During this time we made frequent visits to different parts of the valley, and I shall now detail, what I observed, and what I was able to collect from the observation of the Bramin, by whom I was accompanied. [p. 52]

On the 18th of March the Resident and his suit took leave of the court, and we set out on [p.136] our return by the way of Pherphing.(...) On the 27th of April we entered the Company's territory, and in the following day I took leave of Captain Knox." [p. 137]

The context of Hamilton's journey thus clarified, we shall now turn to the data contained in *Some Observations* and which do not figure in *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*. In the following pages, I shall quote most of them, apart from geological observations, which are not very useful today, and agricultural data that will be quoted in a future publication.

Whether one should rummage through the deliberately unpublished accounts of others is of course a debatable point. It is certain that Hamilton made a choice when he selected extracts of his *Observations* to incorporate them in his *Account*. And one may presume that he did not make use of what he considered too personal, too imprecise or incorrect and what was diplomatically inopportune. However, given the lack of information on Nepal at that time, it seems to be a valuable source that should at least be investigated, given that the political incorrectness has been erased by time. Nevertheless, one should be careful when using this type of source and it should be underlined that Hamilton's writings as a whole have too often been quoted as a primary source and taken for granted. To give just one example, the fact that he wrote on pp. 52

and 240 of *An account of the kingdom of Nepal* that the Gorkhali kings were in fact Magar is too often cited as historical proof for this assertion. Nevertheless, Hamilton naturally remains a primary source with regard to what he observed, such as the names by which people designated their country at that time:

"The inhabitants of Nepal call their own country Hinduany, as having never been subject to foreigners; while the Company's territory, from the name of its former Lords, they call Mogulany. [p. 1] Nepal is also named Maddesh or the Central-country, for which appellation I heard no reason assigned." [p. 2]

Description of the Terai

One of the most interesting parts of *Some Observations* is the description of the Terai dominions of Nepal before their reduction caused by the British war in 1816.

"Although the Terriany forms a part of that immense plain, which separates the large mountainous tract, called Bindachul, from the still more extensive alpine region called Hemachul or Hemalichul; yet it is not so level as Bengal, but in some places rises into very gentle swells. Although the soil is free from those saline impregnations, that render sterile a great part of the Companys territory, through which we passed on our route from Patna, yet in general it is light and poor. It is however exceedingly deep; and, like the whole of the immense plain, of which it forms a part, consists entirely of alluvial earth, in which, at the greatest depths to which men have penetrated, no stone is to be found.[p. 11]

To judge from the numerous tanks and canals, it is probable, when GorSemeran [sic] flourished, that the whole of the Terriany was well peopled and cultivated: [p. 14] but, from all accounts, after the Nawars [sic] retired, it became in a great measure desolate. The Rajas of Macuanpur were always too weak to venture upon clearing a country, which they could only defend, by concealing themselves among hills and forests. According to the account of the present inhabitants, almost the whole country, about twenty years ago, was waste. In the government of Singy Pritap considerable encouragement was given to settlers from the Companys provinces. In times of scarcity advances were made to poor wretches, who at home could not procure a subsistence; and all thieves, debtors, and vagabonds were received with open arms. By these means a considerable population has been collected : but the country is still capable

of very great improvement, even on the wretched system of agriculture that now exists. [p. 15]

The Terriany, like the other parts of the dominions of Gorca, the valley of Nepal excepted, is divided into districts called Subaias, each of which is governed by a Suba, who in general holds his office for three years. In the cold season the Suba of the district, through which we passed, resides at Cucheroa; but, when the unhealthy season commences, he retires to Macuanpur. These Subas possess a jurisdiction in all matters civil and military, but their power does not extend to the inflicting of capital punishment, which can only be carried into execution by orders from the Raja. The Suba appoints his own deputy, who is called Phousdar; and, besides his authority as judge magistrate and commander of the troops, he is invested with the power of collecting the royal revenues, and particularly the rent of the crown lands. [p. 16]

The crown lands are not extensive, being only such as are reserved to defray the personal expense of the Raja. All the officers of government, all the military down to the private soldier, and even many of the domestics in the palace are paid by Chacran or Service lands, which they hold, so long as they perform the services, but of which they may be deprived at the pleasure of the Raja. There is however a considerable extent of land, which has been entirely alienated from the crown. The larger part of this has been granted either to various places of worship for the support of religious ceremonies, or to men who are reputed to be the servants of God: but a considerable portion also has been given to different branches of the royal family, and to some of the principal chiefs of Gorca, who accompanied the conquests of Prithi Narain.

In the Terriany the Crown lands are more extensive than any where else, and are divided into small districts called Jappas, each of which is placed under the management of a Chaudry assisted by a Mauzumdar or Accomptant. In order to encourage these officers to be diligent in reclaiming [p. 17] waste lands, they are allowed two anas for every Biga in their district, that is cultivated. Of this sum the Chowdry²⁴ gets ten sixteenths, and the Mauzumdar has the remainder. The Suba, whenever he pleases, has the power of removing them.

Under the Chowdries are a set of officers called Macuddum or Mahatau, each of whom manages one or more villages: and who for every hundred Begas, that he has in cultivation, gets ten Bigas of Chacran land.

Massun Row, the Maccuddum of Cucheroa, had under his care three other villages. He was a man of considerable influence, being a very notorious and barbarous robber. On this account he was greatly feared by all his neighbours, who called him Sirdar, a title of much higher rank than that even of Suba, and to which he had no manner of legal right. If we could credit the natives, his followers amounted to a thousand men able to bear arms. These at convenient times he sends into the Companys territory to steal cattle, or to commit similar depredations. When they cannot be employed in this way, which is esteemed honourable, they assist the old men and women to cultivate their fields. [p. 18]

Omne avum ferro teritur, versaque juvenum
Jerga fatigamus hasta : - semperque recentis
Conportare juvat prodas, et vivere raptis.

Such practices, it is said, are only allowed in the Terriany; and in fact, near the capital, we found the police tolerably good. The office of Macuddam [sic] is not hereditary, and is held at the pleasure of the Suba.

The farmers or cultivators of crown lands ought to give the Raja one half of the produce. But in general they give nothing voluntarily, and the Mocuddams [sic] exact from them as large a proportion of the produce, in kind, as they can, and for this purpose commonly employ flogging: and the same means are again employed by the Chowdries to make the Macuddams disgorge. Every private person, and all those who have Chacran lands make the best bargain that they can: but leases are never given, and money rent can seldom be procured." [p. 19]

This fascinating account of the state of the Terai draws a picture of a wild zone where a great kingdom once flourished, that of Gor Semeran, which had fallen into complete negligence by the end of the eighteenth century and whose cultivation was very much encouraged by the Gorkhali government of 1800. This out-lawed territory was mastered by powerful rogues helped by real armies. They belonged to the central administration but behaved as independent lords. In Hamilton's picture of the Terai, insalubrious forests are expanding, against which the powerful kings oppose clearance by all means: financial interest for newly cleared fields and permission to all kinds of thieves to settle in the kingdom. On the

other hand, the weak kings (such as that of Makvanpur as described below), as well as the tribal groups "oppressed by their conquerors", find refuge in the middle of these woods, and prevent their clearance.

"(...) at about ten miles from Etonda there is a place called Muccul Puccul, where some grounds are cultivated by a class of people called Cat' Bhotas. In their persons and manners these strongly resemble the rude tribes, that inhabit the country between Ava and Chittagong; and seem to have retired into these woods as a protection against the Hindu invaders of their country. Their huts are raised on posts, which in countries, that from the nature of their soil are apt to produce fevers, seems to be a practice very conducive to health." [p. 42]

Crossing the Terai at that time was perilous and the entrance into the Nepalese dominions did not seem to be marked by any duty, the customs being located further up on the road, in the hills, as indicated by this passage :

"At Bichiacor merchants proceeding to Catmandu pay a small duty. It is two annas[sic] on every bullock-load, with fourteen anas[sic] for every musketeer, and twelve anas for every other armed man, that forms a part of the escort: for without a Guard merchants cannot venture any valuable property." [p.34]

By proceeding from the Terai to the Kathmandu valley, Hamilton noted *en route* precise botanical information, absent in the *Account* :

"On the 30th of March we advanced about fourteen miles to Bichiacor. The Terriany extends about three miles North from Gor Pursera. After having passed this space, we entered a stately forest consisting mostly of a tree called Sucua, the timber of which is by the Europeans of Bengal called Saal. The trees, that are most commonly intermixed with the Sucua are the Shaguda and Cumbia, that I have described in my papers relatives to Mysoor". [p. 31]

"At Bimphedi the vegetable productions put on a strong resemblance to those of Europe. Peaches, Pears, Pines, Oaks, Willows, and Alders are thickly scattered through the woods, while Rasp berries grow on every bank. The *Pinus longifolia* it must be observed delights in a southern exposure. None grow between Churiagat and Doca Phedi: but the steep precipice there facing the south, and the southern face of the mountains

above Bimphedi are covered with trees of this kind. In Nepal proper I afterwards found the same to be the case.(...) The inhabitants would not sell their poultry, and were with difficulty persuaded to part with a kid." [p. 44]

History of the Terai

In the only passage of *An Account* which mentions *Some observations*, Hamilton refers to the history of Gor Semeran (modern Simraongarh), and notes that he sent a Brahman there in 1810 to correct and complete his data. We may suspect that this revision was provoked by the reading of Kirkpatrick's account; indeed, in spite of the fact that it did not appear until 1811, it seems to me that Hamilton may have read Kirkpatrick's manuscript¹⁴, for his first version of the history of Tirhut contained an error that presumably only another account may have shown him. Indeed, in *Some Observations*, Hamilton wrote that Hurry Sing Deo, the last king of Simraongarh, was the founder of the dynasty, whereas Kirkpatrick's genealogy is correct on this point:

"The next grand event, that is remembered, is the foundation of Gor Semeran, which according to one tradition happened in the year of our Lord 1361, and according to another twenty years later. It was founded by Hurry Sing Deo, who is said to have been a Jemedar¹⁵ Bramin, a cast of which I could procure no account. He is said to have come from the West, and to have subjected to his authority the whole country, that is bounded to the North by the mountains of Nepal proper; on the East by the Cousuky river, and on the South by the Ganges. Traditions differ concerning the western frontier, some making it to have been the Gunduky, while others extend to the river Deva the Kingdom of Hurry Sing. When this Prince come to these parts, they are said to have been mostly overgrown with forests, among which were concealed small villages governed by petty Rajas. The walls of Gor Semeran may still be traced, and are said by the natives to form a square, of which each side extends

¹⁴ Of which, at least two copies exist, kept respectively in the British Library and in the India Office Library.

¹⁵ In the fragments of *Some Observations* there is a note at this word : "A Brahman, not following the profession of the priesthood, but holding land and attending to temporal concerns." It thus seems that this fragment is posterior to the complete manuscript. Moreover, Jemedar is spelled there as "Zemindar", which tends to show that there has been some improvement by Hamilton in this second text. According to Mahes Raj Pant, Hamilton mixed the dynasty of Karṇāta up with that of Oinwārā who followed them after the fall of Harasiṃhadeva, and who were degraded Brahmins.

three cosses or six miles. The inhabitants of this city were of a tribe called Nawar [sic], who are supposed by the people of the Terriany to have accompanied Hurry Sing Deo from the west. [p. 3]

(...) It must however be observed, [p. 4] that, without comparing both Musulman History and Hindu tradition, we are constantly liable to fall into great mistakes. The Musulmans are apt to bestow the name of rebellion on all the wars, which the most powerful Hindu Monarchs have carried on against the Faithful, while on the contrary the Hindus look on the most petty Zemidars as legal sovereigns, and the actions of the list established Musulman governments are often represented as the temporary incursions of a band of robbers.

According to tradition Hurry Sing Deo reigned thirty years, and was entirely independent of the Musulmans. He was succeeded by his son Shivai Sing. A brother of this prince, having had a dispute with his sovereign, fled to Delhi; and having procured an army from the Musulman King, he advanced towards Gor Semeran with an intention of dethroning his brother. Before he had reached the Gunduky, Shivai Sing having heard of the approach of an army of men that eat beef, was seized with a panic, and after having reigned twenty two years resigned his kingdom to Cun Calli¹⁶ the tutelar Deity of his capital city. He then [p. 5] dedicated his life to God, and having assumed the character of a religious mendicant, he passed his days in wandering about the places which are esteemed holy.

It is said, that about this time the unnatural brother of Shivai Sing died; and that the Musulman army, after a fruitless attempt on Gor Semeran, were obliged to retreat, owing as the Hindus suppose, to the powerful influence of the tutelar Deity. The Musulmans however seem to have seized on all the country near the Ganges, which continued subject to them, until the establishment of the Companys authority.

About the same time the Nawars [sic] deserted Gor Semeran, for what reason I have not been able to learn. They took with them the image of Cun Calli, and retired with an intention of going to Nepal, which in fact was probably the country, from whence they originally came. (...) [p. 6] (...) They afterwards settled in the valley of Nepal, where at present they are the most numerous class of inhabitants: but, ever since they left Gor Semeran, it would appear, that they have been subject to Rajput princes.

A considerable time after the retreat of the Newars [sic] the Musulmans seized on the middle parts of the territories of Hurry Sing Deo, and extended their conquest to the present boundary of the Gorca dominions. These new acquisitions were granted to two Hindu Zemindars, through whose influence probably the inhabitants had been induced to submit to a foreign yoke.

The Eastern part of this newly acquired country, which we call Tiruhut or Tyroot, was given by the Musulmans to Mahis Tacur, a Coruri Bramin, who governed it as a Zemindar under their authority. He was succeeded by his son Purus Suttum, he by his son Mahinat, and he by his son Narput. Ragu Sing son of the last mentioned Chief obtained from the king the title of Raja, and was succeeded by his [p. 7] son. Narindar Sing, who left his Zemindary to a brother named Pritap Sing, and he was succeeded by his half brother Madu Sing, who is the present Zemindar. The carelessness or imbecility of these chiefs, and the art and treachery of some of their servants, have reduced this family to a comparative poverty, and forced them to alienate a large proportion of their estates.

Bettia, or the western part of the dominions of Gor Semeran that fell under the Musulman yoke, was given to a Sallaria Bramin named Guzz Sing. He had six sons, and was succeeded by Dilliph the eldest. This chief divided his country between his two sons Drup and Shivanat. The latter was soon after put to death by his elder brother, who thus reunited the whole Zemindary. He was succeeded by his daughters [sic] son Jugul Kissur, whose son Birkissur is the present Raja of Bettia. After the company obtained the government of the country, five pergunnas or districts were taken from Jugul Kissur, and given to the son of Shivanat, who now enjoys that part of the family estate. Drup Sing seems to have been a savage, who with the policy commonly adopted by [p. 8] Hindu Rajas, allowed the frontiers of his country to be over-run with forests, and who considered it as a capital offence to clear any part of them for cultivation. He thus however procured safety from the musulman authority, who were contended to receive an annual tribute in wax and charcoal, which he valued at twelve thousand Rupees. His successors, having been more enlightened, began to clear their country, and when the permanent settlement was made, it was valued at three lacs of rupees. Ever since the Raja has been laudably employed in improving his estate, and this such success, that he is said to have at present a neat income of one lac of rupees, after paying the revenue and deducting all expences of collection. There is still however much room for improvement; nor can it be

¹⁶ Obviously Cun Calli is one of Taleju's local names. Kāli is a common epithet of Taleju and Cun may be an incorrect spelling of *khun*, a Hindi word designating "blood" which is often used in central Nepal as well.

expected, that less than twenty years, even of his prudent management will be able to give the country a number of inhabitants adequate to its full cultivation.(...) [p. 9]

(...) After the retreat of the Nawars the northern parts of the dominions, that had belonged to Hurry Sing Deo, seem to have fallen into great confusion; and to have been almost entirely overgrown by forests. At length Manic Sing, a Rajput, established his authority at Mucuanpur, and seems to have possessed all the country bounded on the North by Nepal proper, on the East by the Cousuky, on the South by the territory now belonging by the Company, and on the West by the Gunduky.

Manic Sing was succeeded by his son, Hemcurn Sing, who was also called Hindupad. He was succeeded by Dirgobund Sing, who gave his sister in marriage to Prithi Narain the Raja of Gorca, by whom he was sometime afterwards deprived of his dominions. Bupbur Sing, the son of this unfortunate prince, fled from the conqueror into Bettia, and died there a few years ago, leaving [p. 10] behind him a son, who as yet is a child. A portion of Hurry Sing Deos [sic] kingdom, which was situated to the East of the Cousuky, was formed into a principality called Morung, which also fell a prey to Prithi Narain of Gorca : but of its history, I have been able to procure no account. It forms a part of the Terriyani subject to Nepal, and is governed by two Subas, who reside at Visiapur, which is the Bissypour of our maps." [p. 11]

Hamilton's account of the history of Tirhut, inaccurate as it may be, is nevertheless important in two respects: it is a local account told by people of Gorsamaran¹⁷, as well as being quite an old one, dating from before the diffusion of the Nepalese chronicles. It has been accepted since Petech (1962, 1984) that Hurry Sing Deo did not come as a conqueror to the Kathmandu Valley and did not found a new dynasty there as a late inscription and the Wright chronicle state¹⁸. For L. Petech (1962), Hurry Sing came as a refugee and his role should not be emphasised, as no Nepalese inscription of that time mentions him. The Nepalese would have

¹⁷ L. Petech (1984 : 211) is mistaken when he alleges that Hamilton's account of Mithila is a Nepalese tradition unknown in Mithila, as it is clearly indicated that the account was told, both times, in this Southern part of Nepal which was once the capital of Mithila.

¹⁸ According to Mahes Raj Pant (personal communication) this theory was first elaborated by the Saṃśodhana-maṇḍala and later incorporated in their *Itihāsa-Saṃśodhanako Pramāṇa-Prameya*, published in 2019 V. S. (1962).

created this origin of the Malla dynasty lately for prestige. Not being a historian, one may nevertheless have a doubt about the soundness of this hypothesis when Hamilton tells us precisely that the Newars do not refer to this origin¹⁹, but that the story is told by people of Simraongarh itself. One would have to suppose that the myth was born in Nepal between the 14th and the 17th centuries when we have evidence of its existence, was then conveyed to the plains and remembered orally there, whereas it was forgotten in the Kathmandu valley by the beginning of the 19th century. Hamilton's materials are precious as they show how the account of the history of Tirhut could be told by the people, in 1802 and then in 1810. This historical account has been quoted in length although it does not differ much in its last part from *An Account* because it states more clearly here Simraongarh as a late Newar's place of origin, for they are said to be from Nepal, to have fled to Simraongarh and then to have returned to their original country.

Population

In *Some Observations* Hamilton discusses the origin of the Newar at length, and raises the contradiction between their alleged origin in Mithila, their physical appearance, their caste system and their language.

"From the vocabularies of the two languages it will be evident, that the Nawars have a considerable affinity with the Cat'Bhoteas; and their features have a strong tendency towards the Chinese countenance, although this is not so strongly marked as among the natives of Thibet.

In contradistinction to Kirkpatrick, Hamilton states later²⁰ that their physical features are not clear. In *Some Observations* Hamilton had already remarked that together with their "Chinese countenance" the Newar

"(...) have the custom of Cast in all its strength: and in the next place the most common tradition, in the Terriyani, is, that they came originally from Gorsemeran. This however in Nepal is not generally credited, and it is there alleged, that they are descended from certain servants of Shiva,

¹⁹ "It must, however, be confessed, that the Newar themselves totally deny this origin, and allege, that the only foundation for it is the resemblance between the names Newar and Aniwār.", *An Account*: p. 50.

²⁰ *An Account*...p. 50.

who attended that deity on an expedition, which he made into the country, where they were left behind to inhabit the land, and long continued to be governed by princes of their own nation. It must be observed, that, when the Gorca family conquered Nepal, the Nawars were subject to Rajputs, and were defended chiefly by soldiers of that cast. Perhaps then it may with some probability be conjectured, that the Nawars were originally Bhoteas, who were converted to the doctrines they profess by a small colony from Hindustan, and who by this incorporation suffered a partial change in their language and customs. That afterwards they were either wholly, or in part expelled by a colony of Rajputs, and retired to Gorsemeran, where they continued, till they were pressed upon by the Musulmans. Preferring the government of Hindus to the Mohammedan yoke, they may have again returned to Nepal, and submitted to its Rajput chiefs. It is not unlikely that, during their residence [p. 76] at Gor Semeran under the authority of Bramins, they may have adopted the doctrine of cast, which even the Musulman conquerors of India have not been altogether able to resist. Some of them also, in order to gain the favour of their sovereign, may have deserted the doctrine of Boudha, and worshipped Maha Deva as the chief Deity." [p. 77]

Along with the Newar, unpublished extracts concerning the "Cat' Bhotea"s and the "Parbutties" can be found in *Some Observations* :

"The first class of inhabitants, that I shall notice, are those, who by the present governing people are called Cat'Bhoteas; but who assume to themselves the name of Sayn, by which appellation they are also distinguished among [p. 71] the Nawars [sic], and the same appellation is bestowed on their country." [p. 72]

Who exactly are the Sayn or Cat' Bhoteas ? In *An Account* (pp. 55-56), it is said that all the inhabitants of Tibet and Bhutan are called Bhotiya : "Some of these people, who inhabit near Kathmandu, call themselves Sayn; and the same name is given by the Newars to the whole nation". *Some observations* adds :

"The same may be said of the Cat' or wild Bhoteas or Sayn. In this name we may perhaps trace the Sinoe of the Ancients, who are placed near mount Emodus. The language of the Sayn is nearly allied to that of Lassa, and they are a thick, short, muscular people with Chinese countenances. The religion of the Cat'Bhoteas is the same with that of the

Boudhists of Thibet, and they follow the Lamas as their spiritual guides".
[p. 72]

It seems that the people similar to Tibetans, who follow their religion and employ Lamas, and who leave near Kathmandu may be the Tamang, but their alleged polyandry which follows tends to prove that either the Tamang once practised this custom, or that Hamilton mixed them up with other Tibetan groups, and that may be the reason why he did not publish this.

"The women of the Cat'Bhoteas have at the same time several husbands; and when one happens to be in his wifes [sic] company, he places at the door his shoes, or a fruit called Bel, which prevents the others from intruding." [p. 74]

Furthermore, in an extract quoted above, we have seen that Hamilton encountered a village of Cat'Bhoteas²¹ on his way to Kathmandu, between Etonda and Bhimpheedi, which is now inhabited by Tamang. He compared them with the Burmese groups he encountered in Ava and stated that their huts are raised on posts (p. 42), a fact that links them more to the Kirat, from what we know today. But in *An Account* (p. 53) he wrote that "(...) no Murmi is permitted to enter the valley where Kathmandu stands, and by way of ridicule, they are called Siyena Bhotiya, or Bhotiya who eat carrion (...)". Murmi being an ancient ethnonym for the Tamang and the word *siyena* being probably related to *sayn*²², it seems likely that the expression Cat' Bhoteas may refer more specifically to the Tamang. Whether this name referred only to the Tamang or was a generic name

21 It may be that this appellation was referring to the "Bhoteas" who work the wood (*kāth* in Nepali), as do the Tamang around the Kathmandu valley. Hamilton may have misunderstood this word and thought it was the wood as forest, hence his translation of "wild Bhoteas".

22 In his interesting discussion on the word *Se*, it seems to me that Ch. Ramble (1997) has forgotten to take into account the possible Nepali and Sanskrit origins of the word. Indeed, if the word "Siyena" quoted here may be only a Nepalese mocking interpretation of the word "Sayn", the *Gorkhā vaṃśavāli* mentions the Sekhant people as living near Gorkha, and the modern usage in Gulmi District is to call *śeṣi* (or *śaiṣi*) and *śeṣinī* the people living north of them in the mountains, whatever their caste or ethnic group, and *śeṣ* their country (except the Tibetans which are called Bhote and their country Bhotān). The names *sekhant* and *śeṣi* are obviously derived from the word *śeṣ*, which means "the end, the remainder of something" in Sanskrit and Nepali, and, more specifically in the Nepali of central Nepal, "the top of something", like the head or the summit. Thus the phoneme "Se" is also found in Nepali names designating various people living in the mountains.

designating any Tibeto-Burman group, their state at the beginning of the 19th century seems to have been miserable:

"All the Cat' Bhoteas are very poor, and have either been reduced to slavery, or in order to avoid that odious condition have been forced, to retire into forests or other places of difficult access. From this circumstance, joined to their weakness, which must have prevented them from being intruders, I am inclined to believe, that they are the original inhabitants of the country". [p. 74]

While commenting on the "Bhoteas", Hamilton delineates a basic distinction drawn by the Hindus²³ between Christianity and Islam on the one hand, which are strictly forbidden and whose followers are kept apart, and any form of animism or Buddhism, on the other hand, whose followers are *de facto* incorporated into society²⁴.

"Although the Bhoteas eat all kind of animals and do not even abstain from beef, still they are considered as Hindus by their neighbours the Parbutties and Nawars: nor are these liable to be punished on account of an intercourse with the Bhoteas, as they would be for a too intimate connection with Christians or Musulmans." [p. 74]

His treatment of the Parbutties (called Parbatiya or Mountain Hindus in *An Account*) is rather different, being obviously more passionate than objective. In *Some Observations*, Hamilton accused them of being "false" in addition to the amazing series of insults he professes against them in the two texts. He adds that they are:

"debilitated by an excessive indulgence in low pleasures; their morning are spent in sleep, and the day is occupied in the performance of religious ceremonies; so that no time is left for business, nor for informing their minds concerning anything useful."

In the same passage on p. 22 of *An Account*, they are only "exhausted" instead of "debilitated", and the underlined passages are

²³ On this subject, see Gaborieau (1994).

²⁴ Interestingly, Christians and Muslims appear under the same category in a letter from Parasuram Thapa quoted by K. Chaudhuri (1960: 114): "Misser Gujraj would have given up the country of the Hindoos to Mussalmans (...) [i.e. the British]" and thus commented by Chaudhuri: "The reference to the Mussalmans here must have been made in a generic sense, meaning persons who took beef."

suppressed.²⁵ Despite Hamilton's evident antipathy, the description of the Parbutties is very rich in *Some Observations* :

"In Nepal proper the Parbutties are not so near so numerous as the Nawars: but in the remote parts of the Kingdom, they form the sole population, except in the Terriany, and some districts inhabited by Bhoteas." [p. 103]

"In other respects [than the killing of one's wife's lover] the Parbutties resemble entirely the Hindus of Northern parts of India: and delight in swaggering about fully armed, and in boasting of their warlike, and predatory adventures. They are however a diminutive race of men, but very active and hardy." [p. 92]

"The widows of all the Parbutties, except those of the two lowest casts, ought to burn themselves with the dead bodies of their husbands: but many of them refuse to submit to this barbarous custom, and I never heard, that force was used. From all that I have hitherto learned, I am inclined to think, that this custom is more prevalent in Bengal than any where else. The women of the two higher casts of Parbutties are shut up from view, wherever extreme poverty does not interfere to prevent the husband from showing this mark of his jealousy. I shall now give an account of the different casts of the Parbutties beginning with those of higher rank and gradually descending to the lowest. The Parbutty Bramins seem to be exceedingly ignorant, and, so far as I could learn, did not even know, whether they belonged to the Paush Draveda or to the Paush Gauda division of the sacred tribe²⁶. They are almost all of the sect called Shiva and Suty because they follow the worship of the destructive spirits as explained in certain books called Agum." [p. 98]

"The Parbutties Bramins (...) abstain from venison, because, according to the legend, their Deities in a visit to this country assumed the form of a deer²⁷. The widows of these Bramins, in place of burning themselves on the funeral piles of their husbands, prefer in general to live as concubines with some person of their own rank.(...) The Jujubedy Bramins also keep concubines of the Rajput cast, and with these beget a race of people called Coss, who are considered as a higher kind of Rajputs. The (...) Cummia and Purubi (...) act as Gurus and Purohitts for the low casts (...).The

²⁵ On the other hand, in the next sentence of *Some Observations* which is "Except the Brahmins, all are addicted to drunkenness", Hamilton rectified "Except a few of the Brahmins" in *An Account*.

²⁶ Paush Draveda and Paush Gauda = Pañcadrāviḍa and Pañcagaūḍa.

²⁷ A reference to Paśupatiṅgā ?

children they have by Bramins widows are also called Jousy, and those they have by Rajput concubines are Coss, the lowest of whom is by birth higher than the sovereign of the country." [p. 99]

"The ignorance of the Parbutty Bramins, and their neglect of the rules of their sacred order in eating unclean things, seem early to have disgusted the Gorca Rajas, who have long employed two families of Canogia Bramins to act as hereditary Gurus and Purohitts for all the branches of their house. When the power of Prithi Narain had extended to Nepal, he invited from Tiruhut a hundred families of pure Bramins, and settled on them lands of considerable value. The Bramins and Pundarums, who officiate as priests in most of the temples in Nepal, are from Draveda, or the country near Madras, for which I heard no rational cause assigned." [p.100]

Turning to the Rajput, *Some Observations* has the following to say:

"Saha it must be observed is the family name, and is applied even to the illegitimate branches of the house of Gorca. This name is also that of the Rajas, who for some generations have governed Goruhal or Srinuggur, and this family is the only one of these Rajput chiefs, that has not been expelled from the country, or reduced from sovereign authority." [p. 94]²⁸

"The country subject to these Rajput chiefs continued long subdivided into a number of petty principalities, of which Nepal proper contained the three most powerful, namely Liliet Patun on the South, Catmandu on the West and North, and Baatgong on the East. Prithi Narain the great grand father of the present Raja, being a man of sound judgement, and great enterprise, took advantage of this divided state; and sometimes by force, but oftener by fraud and perfidy, he subjected most of the country to an authority, which he maintained by the terror of his cruelty. He was however liberal to his followers; and his memory, and prudential maxims are held in the highest reverence by the people of Gorca, whom he [p. 94] so far elevated above their neighbours, and who to do them justice, possess a loyalty and love for their sovereign, that somewhat brightens their character.

Although Prithi Narain detested Europeans, and left as a sacred maxim of state, an injunction never to admit any of them into his dominions, he was sensible of the advantages of our military discipline; and confirmed his throne by a tolerably well regulated Militia, which he armed, clothed, and

²⁸ This first paragraph has been crossed out in the manuscript, but the status of the crossed out passages is not clear as many of them have been published in full in *An Account*.

disciplined somewhat in imitation of English Seapoys, and this rendered them infinitely superiour to any troops, in the neighbourhood."²⁹ [p. 95]

"The succession to the Gudy, or Throne, was always considered as confined to the male line of the Royal family by legitimate wives : but all persons descended from concubines are untitled to be called Saha, and to hold certain high offices, which are confined to the royal blood. However on the resignation of the late raja, who had no legitimate son, he placed on the throne a child, which had been born to him by a Brahminy woman. This child on account of his mother's birth [p. 96] is no doubt of higher rank than any other person of the family: but the people were much disgusted by the Rajas having had the audacity to defile a woman of the sacred order, so that the sons title is not a little invalidated by his birth having originated in what is considered as a shocking crime. The leading chiefs of Gorca however eagerly support his claims, as during his minority they have a favorable opportunity of plundering the country." [p. 97]

"The same Bramin says that the ancestor of the most respectable branch of the royal family, to which Bum Saha, the late Chouter, belongs, was the offspring of a concubine: but the branch continues of pure unmixed Rajput blood of which among a people so dissolute very few families can boast." [p. 98]

"These [the Rajputs] call themselves Cshitries, and the Prince being of this cast, their claim to that rank is not openly disputed: but they receive only the Opadesha of Sudur. Not only the Raja, and most of the principal families are of this cast; but to it also belong by far the greater number of the Telingas, or Soldiers. Few of them however are of pure descent, most of them having become Coss by a mixture with Brahmins. The Rajputs in their turn have not been idle in confusing the distinction [p. 100] of cast, and with women of lower birth, both Parbutties and Newars [sic] have begotten a numerous progeny. These are called Cussia and adopt the cast of their mothers with some additional rank on account of their paternal origin. Many of the royal family are of this kind." [p. 101]

²⁹ It seems that Prithvi Narayan went further by employing, for instance, a French engineer to cast canons. This man, called Dilbensee by the Nepalese, was met in 1795 by Maulvi Abdul Qadir who wrote that he was paid an enormous salary of 500 rupees per month. He had a son, Francis Neville, by a Newarni, in 1777, who fled to India after his father was killed when he tried to escape, and gave information to the British in 1814. Dilbensee was assisted by another Frenchman called Vincent.

The description of the caste system of the Parbutties notes (p. 102), of the Nai barbers that: "(...) a Rajput without disgrace may keep a concubine of this cast."

On the same page, Hamilton had inserted in the hierarchy of castes three groups between the "Cami" and the "Damai" which do not appear in *An Account*: "the Dholi or Drummers, the Gain or Singers and the Bahat, another set of people who sing and dance". Their relatively high position compared to modern usage is surprising, but the fact that Hamilton erased them from the book perhaps shows that he was not so sure about them.

This very interesting description of the high caste "Parbutties" of that time links them with the warrior tribes of India, such as the Rajput, when it is said that they walk around fully armed and that they shut up their women from view. The Brahmins are divided into three classes: the first one is religious as Jujubedy is a deformation of Yajurvedī, and the latter two, geographical, Kamiya and Purubi probably being the current distinction between the Purbiyā and Kumāi Brahmins. In fact the Rājopādhyāya, Jhā, Purbiyā and Kumāi are all Yayuverdin except a some of the Kumāi, who are Tripāthī. One point on which Hamilton is probably wrong is the higher status he attributes to the groups born from intercaste unions.

Administration and justice

This is the last topic on which valuable observations are not reported in *An Account*, such as this passage about the status of the administrators:

"The third rank of Great Ministers are the Sirdars. Royal favour, may raise the lowest person to this dignity without irritating the people: but the late Maha Rany seemed in a great measure to have been driven from her authority by the disgust, that was excited by her raising a favourite Sirdar to the office of Treasurer." [p. 108]

which in *An Account* became :

"The Serdars are chosen from whatever families the chief thinks proper; but in public opinion, the giving the office to low men, especially if these are entrusted with much power, is exceedingly offensive". [*An Account...*, pp.108-109]

The published version thus erases the incriminating remark, which is quite important if one remember that the office of Treasurer was the same as that of Kaji, Minister, according to both Hamilton and Kirkpatrick. And finally, *Some Observations* provides a rich description of the social context in which justice was administered and applied in 1802 :

"Justice is administered by certain Bramins called Bicheris, who have very little rank, except that derived from their cast; and whose salaries are not adequate to make the office respectable. Two or three of them sit daily in the market place to determine civil causes, and a similar number have the charge of the police, and of punishment of crimes. They decide finally no causes, but such as are of very little importance. In every matter of consequence the Bicheris draw up a report, which is referred to the decision of the Durbar. The present weakness of the government has produced some relaxation in the police: but formerly it was in so far good, that thefts and robberies were very rare. Even now they are not so [p. 108] common as in most parts of India. The crimes were punished with an excessive severity, and no offender was ever pardoned. The hands and feet of the culprit were cut off, he was then flayed alive, and allowed to expire in this state of agony. Deliberate assassination under certain circumstances of provocation is not considered as a public crime. (...) The fines levied for different offences form a considerable addition to the Royal income, and often amount to a total confiscation of the property and person of the offender. Frequent occasion is on this account taken to hearken to invidious complaints against wealthy men, who are thus often squeezed: and of course every person is careful to affect an appearance of poverty." [p. 109]

Here again, Hamilton as an observer provides valuable remarks that would not be found in historical documents, such as the false appearance of poverty affected by the people to avoid confiscation³⁰, and which, even now that this practice no longer exists, still persists to a certain degree in the hills.

Few in number as they are, the observations on Nepal by the first Western travellers must be carefully preserved and exploited. We have already underlined the precautions one should take when using

³⁰ This is confirmed for instance by G.-M. Wegner (1988 : 10), about the Newar Butchers : "In the olden days, all the Nāy families were regularly dispropriated by the king(...)"

these old documents, which are difficult to criticise by lack of comparison. Additionally in this case, the manuscript having already been used by the author for a publication, the precaution should be even greater. However, this partial first draft of *An Account* makes the conditions of elaboration of the work and the writer's presumptions more explicit, presumptions which we have inherited along with this constitutive account. For instance, and this is true for most 19th century works, these first observations were made in the Kathmandu Valley and reflect in one sense the Newar's view on the whole society. Many clues to this can be found in the manuscript, such as the low position given to the "Cummiya" and "Purubi" Hill Brahmins, who are said to perform rites for low castes. As they were ranked in the Muluki Ain (1854) at the highest position in the caste system, this may be understood as the Newar Brahmins' view on them, for it is well-known that the latter allege a superior position, believing themselves more literate and less involved in the degrading activity of agriculture. Another clue to the Newar view conveyed by Hamilton is the use of the name "Parbutties" which is not used by the people it designates themselves, but by the people living in the Kathmandu Valley and especially the Newar³¹. In *Some Observations*, the Magar (Mungurs) are classified as one class of "Parbutties". Hamilton thus underlines, in spite of himself, the true meaning of the word, but the use of "Parbutties" (or its modern spelling) to designate the Nepalese of Indian extraction still persists, even in anthropological texts. This is regrettable, given the pejorative coloration of the term. Hamilton is also a precursor in the kind of discrimination that developed against the high castes of Nepal, in

³¹ Nowhere in the new Nepali dictionary of the Academy it is written that Parbatiya designates a population or a language but "1. Related to the mountain; hilly. 2. Which stands in a hilly region; Hillman; mountaineer". In the Turner dictionary, the pejorative coloration of the term is indicated in connection with the language: "Belonging to the mountains; -s. a Hillman; the Nepāli language (esp. as spoken by uneducated villagers)." In the Muluki Ain, the expression seems to be used only to characterise "the Chetris and other cordon-bearers of the Hills" (Höfer 1979 : 135), probably in opposition to the ones of the plain who are given a lower status. For Oldfield (1880: 44) : "The term "Parbattiah" is applied only to the tribes dwelling to the west of the Valley of Nipal;". Finally, even though the adjective Parbatiyā can be found in a Malla text preceded by the very honorific prefix *śrī*, in the expression *śrīparbatiyā brāhmaṇa* (personal communication from Mahes R. Pant), its modern usage in Central Nepal is to qualify backward and poor people living in the heights.

many Western writings. We should guard against such practice³²: the so-called "arrogance" of the Gorkhali was principally a reaction to the Company's expanding authority.

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³² The following passage (G. Kopp, 1995) is a common if caricatural example of this : "Une distorsion fondamentale affecte de ce fait le Népal contemporain entre sa culture autochtone (égalitarisme, sens du travail et du devoir accompli chez les Kirat à l'est) et cette culture importée de l'Inde (hiérarchie des castes, fatalisme oisif chez les Khas à l'ouest). [...] Pour les hautes castes, politesse et courtoisie sont le fait des inférieurs. L'oisiveté est une distinction sociale et travailler revient aux gens du commun. [...] à un même niveau de formation, les hautes castes (Brahmanes et Chhetris) ne rechercheront pas d'emploi, tandis que les basses castes reprendront de toute façon les activités de leurs aînés : le système éducatif, très coûteux, tourne donc à vide, celui qui exerce une profession étant justement celui qui n'y est pas préparé!"

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