

# A Few Words on Archaeological and Archival Research in Southern Mustang

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Archaeological and archival researches reveal the achievements of human beings in different times. Specialized learning with scientific approach helps us in drawing different inferences. Verification of informations on the basis of present day realities hypothetically take us to truth to certain extent. Although fiction is not the base of the recording of historical events, events based on the realities of life cannot be ignored. If any event occurs in a certain place, the circumstances leading to the event have to be taken into consideration. What situation has caused the event to originate; what was the degree of participation of the people in the event; how was its impact in the society; how was the record maintained? The investigation of all these facts and compilation, comparison, and assessment of such informations will naturally help in depicting the special features of certain cultural and ethnic groups. Authenticity of such events are confirmed with proper study, analysis and verification of the informations recorded in different forms. Archival sources thus prove to be one of the sources of studying cultural life and its historicity. Archival sources fall in the literary sources studying the history of mankind, which include both fictitious as well as narrative of real events. Archaeological sources on the other hand are the most extensive sources of informations which have to be carefully studied with wide vision, using macro as well as micro analysis technique. With regard to archaeology we excavate the potential sites with all techniques of

expeditions and explorations. Such researches will definitely prove to be more useful in the proper study of the history of mankind.

This special issue of 'Ancient Nepal' deals with the reports of archival and archaeological researches in Southern Mustang.

Dr. Dieter Schuh in collaboration with Wangdu Lama has presented the second part of his report entitled "Investigations in the History of the Muktinath Valley and Adjacent Areas" and the first part of the report was published in 'Ancient Nepal' Issue No. 137.

In this issue his report deals with two specific areas of studies, namely, (1) Governmental Organisation Structures in Southern Mustang in the Eighteenth Century, and (2) The Rise of Tibetan Enclave in the Muktinath Valley and the Linage of upto the Middle of the Eighteenth Century.

He has further subdivided the first topic into two parts, namely, (a) Democratic city state south of Kagbeni, and (b) The feudalistic political order of the land of twelve villages.

To begin with, he gives an account of an autonomous unit referred as Thak Khola in the eighteenth century. Thak Khola was an area stretching from Baragaon 30 km south to Ghasa at

that time. It was an autonomous area stretching from Parbat to the south and Mustang to the north. Politically, the area was divided into three separate units, namely, Thak, Som-bu (Thini) and sPun-khris (Marpha) in the eighteenth century. The author has based his study on "The Bemchang Village Record and the Early History of Mustang District". He has translated the original Tibetan texts into English and has depicted the socio-economic life of the area and regulations relating to local self government.

Secondly, he has also evaluated the feudalistic political order of the land of twelve villages. By quoting the narrative chronicle the author has pointed out relationship of the nobles of the Muktinath Valley with Jumla. He further states that the later lords of the castle of Muktinath came from Jumla. He has also elaborately described the political and social order in those days quoting different documentary sources. The author has also mentioned the areas for further research. He says that it is yet to be decided if Khro-ba-skyabs-pa himself or his sons Grol-ma were the actual founders of that castle of Kagbeni. He further says that the ethnic study of the area from Jumla to Mustang is an open question.

Mr. M. L. Karmacharya's article entitled "Role of the Bhaladmis in the Management of Local Affairs in Southern Mustang in the 19th and 20th Centuries" deals with archival materials which are in the possession of the Nepal German Project on High Mountain Archaeology. The author in general defines the role of Bhaladmi as a gentle person or reputable man of good character. Mr. Karmacharya critically evaluates the documents recently discovered in Marpha, Thini, Jhong, Jharkot and Ghasa. These documents are the bonds or regulations drawn up with mutual consultations and consent by the communities on various occasions. These documents cover the period from 1868 to 1964. These were the sets of customary rules and regulations made by the residents of the villages located in the southern part of the modern

district of Mustang.

To conclude, the author says that the Bhaladmis had the role of arbitrators, mediators or persuaders assisting in maintaining local community discipline for peace and prosperity in their respective territories. The Bhaladmis were recognised for their sincerity, integrity and intellectually enlightened attitude. They exerted significant influence in the decision making process.

Dr. Angela von den Driesch in his paper "Wild Life in Ancient Khingar, Mustang" has given his analytical report on the faunal assemblage of wild animals found in the Dzong Khola Valley situated halfway between Kagbeni and Muktinath. The bones of the wild animals are referred as the archaeological evidence for locally extinct animal species in the Valley. Under the direction of Dr. H. G. Hüttel (KAVA, Bonn) excavations were carried out in 1991 and 1992 in the old settlement mound of Khingar. On the basis of observations three periods of settlement have been established. The first settling period (I) was limited to the centre of the mound. Its inhabitation probably ended during the second century. More extended habitation has been observed in the second period (II) (3rd/4th to 8th century AD), and the subsequent period (III) has been dated approximately from the 10th to the 13th/14th century.

During the excavations a great amount of faunal materials was sampled. It consists of bones of slaughtered and hunted animals which are considered as kitchen refuse of the former settlers. The total number of bone fragments of the ancient village exceeds 18,000 bone specimens. The extensive sample provided the bone specimens of the domesticated as well as wild animals.

The author makes mention of the following species of the wild animals out of these extraordinary remains :

1. Water-buffalo, *Bubalus bubalis domestica*

2. Himalayan tahr, *Hemitragus jemlaicus*
3. Goral, *Nemorhaedus goral*
4. Red deer, *Montiacus montjak*
5. Barking deer, *Motiacus muntjak*
6. Wild boar, *Sus scrofa*
7. Himalayan weasel, *Mustela sibirica*
8. Weasel, *Mustela nivalis*

The author further remarks that the presence of these species in question not only contributes to our knowledge of their former zoo-geographic distribution, it also helps to reconstruct the former landscape and the natural environment of the Valley at the time of its early occupation.

The author has elaborately discussed zoo-geographic distribution of the Valley and natural habitat of the wild animals with comparative pictures of such habitats in other parts of the globe.

Dr. Ernst Pohl and Mr. Chandra Prasad Tripathee in their preliminary report of the campaign 1994 entitled "Excavation at Garab-Dzong, District Mustang" give an account of the investigation of the settlement processes in the Kali Gandaki Valley and its tributaries. Besides the settlement on the Muktinath Valley, the researchers located the largest of the castles and fortified settlements at Garab-Dzong in southern Mustang. It lies in the estuary of the Langbo Kyung in the Kali Gandaki Valley. By virtue of its location it commands the north-south route through the Valley and the route towards the east through Mesokanto pass on the way to Manang. It is located on a hill, a few kilometers southwest of Jomsom. On the plateau of the hill the researchers find remains of a fortified settlement and several freestanding fragmentary concentric walls. On three sides the slopes are steep as 45°.

The researchers make mention of the *Chimang Bem-chag* which gives an account of the erection of the fortification of Garab-Dzong. Bemchag is a written village record. Quoting Thak Khola (*Bem-chag*) they say that a local kingdom with the name

*Sum* extended its border to the Lubra Valley in the north, Chimang in the south and as far as the Pass to Manang in the east and also make mention of the existence of *Se-Rib*. They further say that *Chimang Bem-chag* gives an account of the erection of the fortification of Garab-Dzong which was at the place where an older complex existed.

The report gives an account of the findings of the excavations of Garab-Dzong. To refer to the report Garab-Dzong possesses several archaeological advantages.

Firstly, there was no subsequent building activity on the site. During the first surveys it was noted that within the walls themselves often wooden beams and boards are preserved which proved to be an excellent source of dendrochronological information. Judging by the visible walls only nearly 50 house units on the upper plateau can be identified. The main goal of the first campaign of excavation was the determination of the chronological range of settlement in Garab-Dzong.

The report mentions that the oldest wood sample measured till now in the Dendrochronological laboratory of the University of Cologne reveals a founding of the fortified settlement in the first half of the 16th century A.D. On the strength of the dendro dates available upto now the rebuilding took place in the first half of the 17th century. The wood sample indicates nearly uninterrupted building activity till the end of the 18th century. It was abandoned during the 19th century. Recently several samples of charcoal are available for 14C dating.

In course of archaeological excavation 25,000 sherds were recorded. The iron and bronze objects which include costumes and adornments such as belt buckles, two fragments of bronze bangles or finger rings were also found. On the findings noteworthy are the beads of clay, coral and glass and copper coins.

To conclude, the report mentions that it is a fortified complex dating the first half of the 16th century. It is guessed that the settlement was abandoned in the 19th century. Within this period of occupation different rebuilding phases can be marked. The excavation campaign has not yet been complete. Still the archaeologists are looking for earlier architectural remains.

Dr. Charles Ramble and Dr. Christian Seeber in their paper entitled "Dead and Living Settlements in the Shöyul of Mustang" gives an account of demographic pattern of Shöyul and cultural interaction of ethnic groups in southern Mustang.

To begin with, the authors say that the nineteen villages of Mustang district comprise the enclave known as Baragaon. In most part of it the people are Tibetan speaking. The five settlements located north of Jiri and south of Samar are known as Shöyul. The inhabitants over there speak Tibeto-Burman language known as *Seke* (Tib. *se-skad*). The people of Panchgaon and Thak, south of Baragaon were referred as *Ur-Thakalis*.

The authors mention that the aim of the research was to provide brief description of the abandoned and inhabited sites and to summarize the available literary and oral accounts concerning the migration of the people into and out of the enclave.

The authors give detail evaluation of the five *Seke* speaking villages collectively referred as the Shöyul (Tib. *Shod-yul*). The following are the different names of the main settlements in and around the Shöyul :

<u>Nepali</u>	<u>Seke</u>	<u>Tibetan</u>
Tangbe	Tangbe	Taye
Chusang	Tshugsang	Tshug
Tetang	Timi	Te
Chaile	Tangle	Tsele
Ghyaka	Gyuga	Gyaga
Jhong	Muga	Dzong

To conclude, the authors make mention of the

process how the **language** and culture of Tibetan speaking rulers from the north has eclipsed the older non-Tibetan culture and how the *Seke* speaking people abandoned their village.

Dr. Christoph Cüppers in his article, "Short Remarks on the Caves at Tabo in Spiti", has given an account of Tabo Chos Khor of India which has not been archaeologically explored. He compares its cave system with that of Mustang.

In his article Dr. C. Cüppers says that the town and monastery of Tabo are located in a valley of the Spiti river, India. The river flows along the edge of the plateau on which the town and its fields are situated. Opposite the town on the northern side lies the exposed cliff containing caves. These caves all lie at the same height and can be reached from the road over a gradually ascending path.

To quote the author, "probably the caves were first noted by Francke for the first time". Guiseppe Tucci visited the monastery and the villages of Tabo for three days (18-21 July, 1933) and had mentioned about the caves. In 1970's Romi Khosla visited the region and described the caves. When the caves were studied in July 1994, out of three only one cave dwelling was existing. The study process of decay has been halted by Indian government by declaring it as a protected cultural heritage site. The author says that Handa was the first person to declare it an artificial cave not a natural one. Handa also found several potsherds in the cave.

The author further remarks that "I noted close similarities between them and the caves investigated in southern Mustang." "In Tabo, as in Mustang, traces could be found of old hearths, niches, seats, grain storage areas."

Archaeological investigation has not been carried out in the caves of Tabo in the Spiti river valley. Description of the cave has been illustrated by the pictures.