

On the Historiography of Nepal: The ‘Wright’ Chronicle reconsidered*

Manik Bajracharya and Axel Michaels

Introduction

It is an often-discussed theory that India (and this includes, for once, Nepal as well) did not produce any historiography.¹ As early as around 1030 CE the Muslim scholar and polymath Al-Biruni could write:

Unfortunately the Hindus do not pay much attention to the historical order of things, they are very careless in relating the chronological succession of their kings, and when they are pressed for information and are at loss, not knowing what to say, they invariably take tale-telling (quoted in Witzel 1990: 2).

For Friedrich Hegel, influenced by Friedrich Schiller’s famous inaugural lecture ‘Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte?’ (What is universal history and why does one study it?) delivered in Jena in 1789, this meant that all non-European cultures, including India and China, were without history: ‘Because Indians do not have history as historiography, they do not have history as an arena of action (*res gestae*), i.e. they did not develop (history) into a truly political field.’²

This notion of the lack of Indian historiography has often been repeated. The historian R.C. Majumdar, for instance, wrote in *The History and Culture of the Indian People: The Vedic age*: ‘It is a well-known fact that with the single exception of Rājatarāṅginī (History of Kashmir), there is no historical text in Sanskrit dealing with the whole or even parts of

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- 1 See Berkemer (1998) for a discussion of the relevant literature; with regard to Nepal, the works of Witzel (1990) and Mishra (2010) have been especially helpful.
- 2 ‘Weil die Inder keine Geschichte als Historie haben, um deswillen haben sie keine Geschichte als Taten (*res gestae*), d.i. keine Herausbildung zu einem wahrhaft politischen Zustande’ (Hegel after Glasenapp 1960: 65; our translation).

India' (1951: 47). Even Wilhelm Halbfass repeated the argument in *India and Europe*, his *magnum opus* published in 1981:

The Indian tradition has not brought forth historical accounts or inventories of developments, changes, chronological sequences of ideas. Innovations and reorientations have not been documented as such (Halbfass 1988: 367).

However, one must see this notion in relation to the monopolistic Western claim of scientific historiography, which denies the scientific value of other historiographies. We will return to this point later. To be sure, India did not have an Herodotus, a Thucydides or a Livy, though not even these historians produced any 'historiography as a separate, impartial science' (Witzel 1990: 40) or made claims for its universality. One does not find this in the West before the 18th century; as an academic discipline it was established in the 19th century only. To be sure, history writing always serves certain political or epistemological interests (see Mishra 2010: 18). The same holds true for the denial of any scientific sense for history and historiography. It seems that one has to see the 'rationality' of history as a science, in relation to the alleged 'irrationality' of other forms of history writing.

In 1924 Hermann Goetz, an Indologist and art historian at Heidelberg University, challenged the view that India did not develop any historiography:

In academia there are sometimes theories that have developed due to the lack of knowledge of material and then remained ineradicable despite experiences collected in the meantime. Such a theory is also the theory that Indians did not develop a real historiography and a sense for history (Goetz 1924: 3; our translation).

Goetz then lists a number of chronicles: 19 in Sanskrit, 5 in Pali, 11 in Sinhala, 22 in Hindi and Rajasthani, and 4 each in Bengali and Tamil; among them the famous *Dīpavaṃśa* and *Mahāvāṃśa* from Sri Lanka, the *Gāṅgavaṃśāvalī* from Orissa, and the *Chambavaṃśāvalī* from Himachal Pradesh. Yet he knew nothing of the Nepalese chronicles, possibly the largest collection of such texts in South Asia (cp. Hasrat 1970: XV).

The Nepalese Chronicles

The Nepalese *vaṃśāvalī*s range from a few folios up to more than 300. There is one early chronicle of the Malla period, the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī* (Vajrācārya and Malla eds. 1985), which was compiled from various chronicles (Witzel 1990: 18) at the end of the 14th century, probably in Bhaktapur, in hybrid Sanskrit and Old Newari, and many later chronicles, mostly written in Nepali. The catalogue of the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project lists 110 *vaṃśāvalī* manuscripts and the Hodgson Collection³ in the British Library 65.⁴ These chronicles were mostly composed or compiled in the late 18th and 19th centuries; the authors and compilers are generally not known. The chronicles became popular after the Shah dynasty conquered the Kathmandu Valley in 1768/69. To the group of later chronicles belong *inter alia* the Hindu *Bhāṣāvāṃśāvalī*, the *Rājavaṃśāvalī*, the *Rājabhogavaṃśāvalī* and a number of smaller and specific *vaṃśāvalī*s related to certain ethnic groups, e.g. *Sena-*, or *Guruṅ-Vaṃśāvalī*.

Only two longer chronicles have so far been translated into English:

- a) The so-called *Padmagiri's Chronicle* included in Bikram Jit Hasrat's *History of Nepal* (Hasrat 1970) which is based on the English translations of various texts prepared by Hodgson himself. These translations are preserved in the Hodgson Collection at the British Library (vols. 16 and 17) and entitled 'Sacred Legends and Vamsavalis of Nepal Proper or the Great Valley'. Hasrat attributes the *vaṃśāvalī*s to a figure named Padmagiri, who is not mentioned in the Hodgson documents.⁵
- b) The so-called *Wright Chronicle*, one of the oldest of the later chronicles, which has become most famous through its English translation by Daniel Wright (1877), a physician who served at the British Residency in Kathmandu from 1866 to 1876.

3 Brian Houghton Hodgson lived in Nepal from 1820 to 1843, and from 1833 as British Resident (see Waterhouse 2004 and Whelpton & Hutt 2011).

4 One of the original chronicles in the Hodgson Collection (Vol. 52, folios 83-86 and 55-56), entitled *Nepālarājaparāmarā*, has been edited and translated by Riccardi (1986).

5 See Ramesh Dhungel et. al, online catalogue. The catalogue mentions Hasrat's claim that the author of Volume 17 (folios 173-219) is Padmagiri. However, a more detailed study should be done to find out the exact relationship between Hasrat and Hodgson's translations. 'Padmagiri' is mentioned in *Svayambhūpurāna* (1.50) as a name attributed to the Svayambhu hill, not as a person.

Despite the fact that several Nepalese scholars—for example, Nayanath Paudel, Devi Prasad Lamshal, Gautamvajra Vajracharya and K.P. Malla, and Dinesh and Mahesh Raj Pant—have edited some of these texts in Nepali, the state of the art regarding the Nepalese *vaṃśāvalī*s is unsatisfactory, as remarked by Theodore Riccardi in 1986:

There are neither adequate texts nor translations in print, and, curiously, where translations are available there are not texts, and where we have texts there are no translations. Much of the discussion therefore is based on reports *about* texts rather than on the texts themselves, and outdated translations. Kirkpatrick's text is lost. The text used by Wright has never been published, and only Petech reports in print that he has examined it. The chronicle discussed by Levi the *Brāhmaṇa-Vaṃśāvalī*] has never been published. Hasrat has published transcriptions of English translations found in the Hodgson papers, but he gives no information about the original texts. Other texts are fragmentary (Riccardi 1986: 248).

The Wright Chronicle

Given this situation, we decided to prepare the *edition princeps* and a new translation of 'Wright's' *History of Nepal*, which has remained one of the major sources of Nepalese history and legends. It has been reprinted no fewer than ten times by different publishers. Being the most readily available translation of the *vaṃśāvalī*s, Wright's book has been used extensively by scholars all around the world. It also happens to be the only Buddhist *vaṃśāvalī* of its time.

For the preparation of the critical edition of the text we have so far collected four manuscripts of this *vaṃśāvalī* which were prepared at different times but are closely related to each other:

- a) CA: This *vaṃśāvalī* in the collection at Cambridge University was the actual manuscript used for Wright's translation. Wright acquired this manuscript from Edward Byles Cowell who later donated it to the university. Cecil Bendall's *Catalogue of the Buddhist Sanskrit Manuscripts in the University Library, Cambridge* (1883: 205) lists the manuscript as 'add. 1952'. The manuscript runs to 184 leaves of Nepali paper with nine lines per page. The size of the manuscript is 11 by 4.5 inches and

it is in a well preserved condition. The author is unknown. Additional notes on the margins of pages are by a different scribe. The manuscript ends with a report of the birth of king Surendra Vikram Shah (1829-1881) in 1751 of the Śaka era.

- b) BL: The second manuscript is archived in the Hodgson Collection in the British Library as ‘vol. 52, fols. 7-52’. This *vaṃśāvalī* was probably compiled by Pandit Amritananda Vandya for Hodgson. The first six folios are missing from this manuscript. It contains a total number of 46 leaves of Nepali paper. The number of lines per page varies from 22 to 55. The very well preserved manuscript has three different kinds of writing, probably by the same scribe. It has rough jottings on several pages. The manuscript ends with the description of historical events up to Rajendra Vikram Shah (reigned 1816-1847). Surprisingly, this important manuscript has so far escaped the notice of historians and philologists.
- c) NA1: A manuscript in the National Archives, Nepal, titled *Nepālavamśāvalī*, dated N.S. 1001, which was microfilmed by the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project on 14.4.1972 (Manuscript no. 4-1010, reel no. A319/2). It has 71 folios; the first and final folios of the manuscript are torn out, and page margins are damaged. In the colophon, the scribe Babu Maniraja Patravamsha of Pimbahala and the patrons Virasingh Vana and his son Harsha Bahadura of Athanani Nakabahil are mentioned. The manuscript ends with a description of events during the reign of Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher (1901-1929).
- d) NA2: A manuscript in the National Archives, Nepal, titled *Nepālako Vaṃśāvalī*, which was also microfilmed by the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project on 14.4.1972 (Manuscript no. 4-2814, reel no. A319/5). It is a modern bound book of 93 pages, measuring 28x16 cm. It is undated and ends abruptly at a description of events during the reign of Shrinivasa Malla (1661-1705; Shrinivasa Malla was a joint ruler with his father Siddhinarasimha Malla as early as 1649⁶).

Wright’s knowledge of Nepal and Nepalese languages was very limited as he admits in his preface: ‘I am not myself an Oriental scholar, and have

6 SHAH (1992:84).

had nothing to do with the translation beyond revising it for publication, and adding a few notes regarding the customs and places mentioned.’ (p. vi). ‘His’ translation was probably prepared by the Indian Munshi Shew Shunker Singh, who apparently also did not know the places very well. Even the help of Pandit Gunanand was often misleading. Thus we read on p. 130: ‘This Rājā [i.e. Viśvadeva Varman] once said that the human sacrifice to Bacchlā [Vatsalā] was a piece of cruelty, whereupon the Narasivā made a great noise.’ In a footnote Wright explains Narasivā: ‘Literally ‘man-jackal’; perhaps the sacrificing priest. The Pandit cannot explain this passage.’ What in reality happens is that a (New.) *dhvājūju* (‘jackal’s king’), a man with a semi-priestly function during the Vatsalājātrā, howls like a jackal in the Vatsalā Temple near the Paśupatinātha Temple early in the morning of the last day of the procession (see Michaels 2008: 91-92). Wright and his assistants apparently neither knew the procession nor the Vatsalā Temple, which they also confused with the Vajreśvarī or Pīḡāmāī shrine.

It thus happens that Wright’s translation is inadequate in many regards. First, it is much shorter than the original manuscript because he fails to translate many obscure passages and most Sanskrit verses and inscriptions in the text, especially those from the Malla period. Second, he often misidentifies places or understands technical terms incorrectly.

Another example demonstrates that one also has to include visual material together with the translation in order to identify the sacred places. This concerns the identification and localisation of the ‘Madunāsala-deva’ Temple (Wright 1877: 214). In the manuscript we read:

*pherī kāṣṭhamamaṇḍapasaṇḍhi eka prācīna liṅgākārabhitrakā devālayakā
nṛtyanāthakā dhyāna nikāsī sundara mūrti banāikana āphule kavitā banāī
śilāmā lekhī kavindrapura nāma rākhī ṭhulo satala banāī madunāsaladeva
kahalāī basāyā* (CA 130a)

In the *Wright Chronicle* this is translated on p. 214 as follows:

He [King Pratapa Malla, r. 1641-1674] made a beautiful image of Nṛitya-nātha, exactly like one in a conical-shaped temple, and placed it in a large *pātī*, newly built for the purpose, which was named Madunāsala-deva.

Our new translation will be as follows:

And then he [King Pratapa Malla] pulled out the *dhyāna* of the Nṛtyanātha (sculpture) in a shrine inside an ancient *liṅga*-shaped temple in the vicinity of Kāṣṭhamaṇḍapa, got made a beautiful statue, composed a poem, engraved it in a stone, established a large *sattal* (rest house), gave (it) the name ‘Kavīndrapura’, and called (the deity) Madu-nāsala-deva.

Our new translation shows that Wright and his assistants neither mentioned the proximity of the Kāṣṭhamaṇḍapa, nor the pulling out of the *dhyāna* of the Nṛtyanātha sculpture from a *liṅga*-shaped temple, nor the inscription of Kavīndrapura with the engraved poem of Pratapa Malla (published by Vajrācārya v.s. 2033: 232-3).

However, even with this new translation it does not become clear precisely which sacred place the chronicle is referring to. This only happens if we carefully analyse the topographical and local situation. Then it becomes evident that the chronicler is speaking about the previously four-tiered building at the end of the Kathmandu Darbar Square, which is



Fig. 1: Kavīndrapur Temple, locally known as Nāsadyah Temple

still known as Kavīndrapur Temple, or locally in the Kathmandu Newari dialect as ‘Marunāsaḥ’. (The temple lost its fourth roof during the 1934 earthquake: see the photo of ca. 1920 and the drawings in Gutschow 2011: 512-513.) ‘Kavīndrapur’ is related to King Pratapa Malla, who saw himself as king of the poets (*kavīndra*). This is why the fourteen deities of the temple include ‘Nṛityanātha’ (=Nṛṭyanātha), the god of dance and music, in Newari also named ‘Nāsaḥḍyaḥ’ or, as in the chronicle, ‘Nāsala’. ‘Madu’ is related to the city quarter Marutvāḥ, where the temple is located, close to the Kāṣṭhamaṇḍapa.

As mentioned, our translation will be supplemented by unpublished drawings and paintings of mid-19th century Nepal, which Niels Gutschow discovered in the Royal Asiatic Society London (see Head 1991) and other places. Among these sources, there are, for instance, two historical illustrations from the time of the composition of the *Wright Chronicle* showing the Kavīndrapur or Marunāsaḥḍyaḥ Temple:

- a) A drawing by Rajman Singh (archived in the Royal Asiatic Society, London) and collected by Hodgson.
- b) An unpublished water painting by Oldfield (1822-1871) from 1857.

Both illustrations show the Marunāsaḥḍyaḥ Temple near the Kāṣṭhamaṇḍapa with attached shops. From the caption of the Singh drawing and a note on the back of the Oldfield painting we learn that the temple or *sattal* was erected in ‘1656(N.S 770)’⁷ by Pratapa Malla, called resp. ‘Bhū Bhandel or Dhansār’ by Singh/Hodgson and ‘Dunsar’ by Oldfield. Singh/Hodgson add that the temple is dedicated to ‘Nityanāth or NasaDeo.’ Both probably refer to Nep. *dhansār* (Skt. *dhanaśāla*), which apparently indicates that the building was also used as a kind of treasury.⁸ This means that the illustrations sometimes give us information additional to the *Wright Chronicle*. We then understand that the temple is primarily dedicated to Nṛṭyanātha whose statue – a rare image with Nṛṭyanātha in his anthropomorphic appearance – is in the centre of the front arcades – and not to Narasiṃha as a plate from the Guṭhi Saṃsthāna at the entrance door suggests. This is also confirmed by the fact that the two inscriptions

7 The calculation of Singh/Hodgson is wrong, because NS 770 equates to 1657 or 1658.

8 ‘Bhandel’ could also come from bhaṇḍāra, ‘treasury house.’

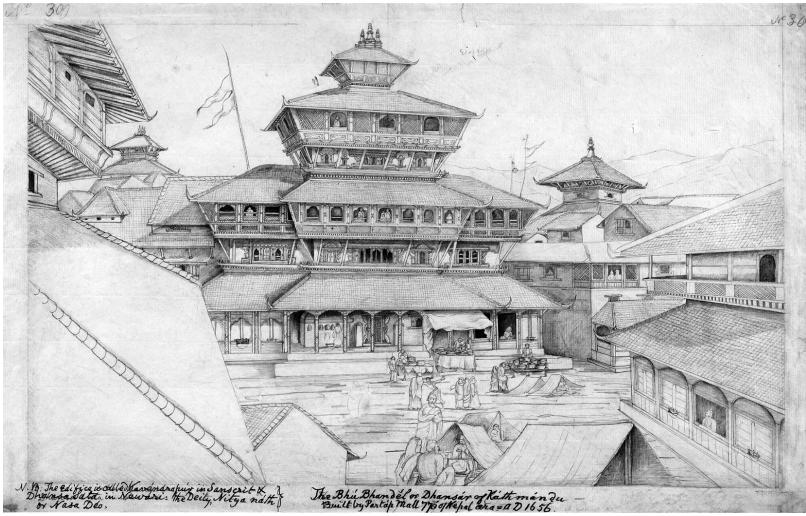


Fig. 2: Drawing by Rajman Singh in the Hodgson Collection at the Royal Asiatic Society



Fig. 3: Kathmandu, watercolour painting by Henry Ambrose Oldfield (1822-1871). Written on the reverse side: 'The Dunsar in the city of Kathmandoo, March 1857' (courtesy: British Library, Shelfmark WD 3278, Item number 3278)

include the poem of Pratapa Malla mentioned in the Wright Chronicle.

The unsatisfactory state of the existing *Wright Chronicle* makes it all the more important to prepare a critical edition of the *vaṃśāvalī*, to completely translate it anew, to add as many annotations as necessary and to supplement it with historical and modern maps, drawings and photographs.

Nepalese Historiography

The Nepalese chronicles have often been classified as historical source material that lacks the status of proper historiographical texts. Daniel Wright called 'his' chronicle a 'native history', Bikram Jit Hasrat has given his book the title *History of Nepal as Told by its Own and Contemporary Chroniclers*, Theodore Riccardi (1986: 247) regarded the texts as a 'major source for the writing of Nepalese history' and attests the *vaṃśāvalīs* an 'unquestioned value as historical documents' that 'have created as much confusion as they have illumination.' Michael Witzel classified and valued them as sources of parahistorical nature. However, as Yogesh Raj Mishra aptly remarks, 'the epistemological superiority of history over sources of history is a vestige of a certain political order of knowledge, and not (...) a consequence of an ignorance of historiography in South Asia' (Mishra 2010: 15).

Indeed, even if it might be too early to come to robust conclusions, we can already see how the chronicles result in a certain concept of history that has its own characteristics. These texts claim to narrate the history of Nepal, or mostly the Kathmandu Valley, and the sequence of its rulers along with their major deeds and most important events. Their focus is often on the donation of temples and other monuments, but also the description of rituals and festivals, as well as the genealogy of rulers.

The chronicles have mostly been written from the dynastic or ethnic point of view. After all they are *vaṃśāvalīs*, i.e. pedigrees of a particular dynasty (*vaṃśa*) similar to lists of old teachers (*paramparā*). There are no larger causal relations; myths, legends and facts are mixed. We find in them realistic reports of fires, earthquakes, repairs of temples etc., but we also find the narration of legendary figures and deities as historical agents and their miraculous acts. We encounter illusory lengths of reigns ('he ruled for 1000 years'), but also exact dates for events. We notice that the chronicles apparently try to heal a departure from tradition, or try

to connect to the south, i.e. India, for instance by claiming that Sthitiraja Malla or Pratapa Malla trace their origin to the famous Karnataka king Nanyadeva (Brinkhaus 1991, Witzel 1990: 4).

It goes without saying that India and Nepal produced more historical sources than just the chronicles which apparently survived more at the margins of the subcontinent, i.e. Nepal, Sri Lanka, Kashmir or Orissa, 'not disrupted by intervening Muslim periods of government' (Witzel 1990: 40), thus showing that Indian historiography is not derived from the Arabic-Persian tradition of history-writing. In Nepal, the chronicles are complemented by inscriptions, a vast number of historical documents, *praśastis*, manuscript colophons, old coins etc. Besides this bedrock historical material, Nepal has another category of historical texts, written in Newari (see Mishra (2010: 24)), i.e. *thyāsaphū* (Ieporello), *aitihāsikaghatanāvalī* ('garland of events'), *aitihāsikatipoṭa* ('historical notes') or *dharahpau* ('a leaf of list'). We further find pauranic historiographies (*itihāsa*) and many eulogising texts, i.e. *purāṇas* ('based on a framework of a genealogical nature' (Witzel 1990: 2)), *kathās*, *māhātmyas*, or *sthalapurāṇas* such as the *Svayambhūpurāṇa*, *Paśupatiṭpurāṇa*, *Himavatkhanda* of the *Skandhapurāṇa*, or the *Nepālamāhātmya*. We have a few historical *kāvya*s, though not of the extent of Kalhaṇa's *Rājatarāṅginī* (which lists its own sources such as inscriptions, *praśastis*, manuscript colophons, old coins, etc.). We also lack, as far as we know, specific temple histories (such as the *Mādālā Pāñji* of Orissa).

We therefore can now say that there is a Nepalese (and Indian) historiography and concept of history. This was also Hermann Goetz's conclusion: 'We face a richly developed Indian historiography starting from the 11th century in all Indian languages, not only in Sanskrit' (Goetz 1924: 22, our translation). Other scholars confirm this: 'Taken together, these sources represent a bulk of material perhaps as large as found in other civilizations' (Witzel 1990: 39). Much of this material has been neglected as historical material—probably due to a Brahmanical purism that focused on Sanskrit at the cost of the vernacular languages, and due to the regional and thus limited scope of the *vaṃśāvalīs*.

However, the question is not so much whether Indian and Nepal historiography exists: this cannot be doubted anymore. It is important rather to specify the distinct form of this Nepalese and to a certain extent also Indian concept of history. It is true that the chronicles do not speak

for *the* history of Nepal but ‘only’ for a certain historical perspective and therefore remain a kind of ethno-history, i.e. a local, or ethnic or indigenous form of historiography. But in a way all history is ethno-history, the narrative of a certain region and period (see Mishra 2010: 19).

There are indeed peculiarities of Nepalese historical narratives that show the uniqueness of the Nepalese (and Indian) concept of time and historiography and which at the same time can cope with the universalistic claim of history as science:

- Nepalese historiography is primarily the report of a series of events⁹ with chronology as its organising structure. The *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī* (fol. 30b) refers to itself as ‘accounts of the past’ (*bhūtavṛttānta*): and the Cambridge manuscript of the *Wright Chronicle* refers in its opening stanza to various past incidents (*anekapūrvavṛttānta*).
- The chronicles are commissioned work with a focus on specific dynasties, often ‘to bolster the claims of minor local chiefs and kings to a high rank’ (Witzel 1990: 3).
- Fact and fiction are not separated; events sometimes stem from the literary imagination of the author(s) or compilers, though eyewitnesses’ testimonies, protocols etc. are also included.
- Emplotment becomes an important element; historical events are generally told as narratives with actions of human and non-human agents. The historian or author of historiography does not gain supremacy over the narrator as is the case in European historiography: ‘retelling—not the first hand account of unique experience—rules’ (Guha 2002: 60, cp. Mishra 2010: 21)
- Indian and Nepalese historiography is not a *śāstra*, i.e. a scientific form of knowledge. ‘Overt argumentation is absent, and so is engagement with other narratives’ (Mishra 2010: 16). It did not produce a special genre of texts but depends on existing literary categories such as metrical poetics (*kāvya*), myths and legends, or eulogies (*māhātmya*, *purāṇa*). *Vaṃśāvalīs* therefore abound in religious contents and narratives.
- In Nepalese historiography, and this is perhaps most important, a

9 Mishra (2010: 37) speaks of ‘cases’ defined ‘as the bare particulars of an (real or imaginary) event *in* a historical text’ but not in the world.

sense of wonder and religio-aesthetic appreciation are the primary goal of the narrations.

None of this is writing history in the narrow academic sense of reflecting how ‘it really was’ –to use a famous phrase of the German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886). However, according to the American historian Hayden White this claim is anyway impossible since there are no strict differences between historical and literary texts. Both are different narratives, ‘manners of speaking’ or story-telling: ‘Narratives per se did not distinguish historiography from other kind of discourses, nor did the reality of the events recounted distinguish historical from other kind of narratives’ (White 1973: ix). For White all historical texts are narratives and fictions with special forms of ‘encoding of the facts contained in the components of specific kinds of plot structures’ (White 1978: 70) and certain master tropes or styles of discourse. Indeed, it is true that only by telling stories is the permanent and undifferentiated flow of life or everything that happens turned into temporally limited and unidirectional chains of events bound together by causes and thus attributed by agency.

In the case of *vaṃśāvalīś*, we are often dealing with a religiously motivated narrative of events and thus with a religious concept of time and agency, which is dominated by divine forces and agents and includes for example a focus on origins, creations, miracles, curiosities, sensations, dreams of deities or kings. Events are thus related to a soteriological concept of time that is not interested in temporality and historicity but in eternity and immortality.

This concept implies many characteristics that result in a special form of historiography—for instance, the singularity or uniqueness of events and the denial of change. Whatever occurs happens on a mythological time level, and this means it can only be retrieved but not repeated. The ritual, for instance, is celebrating the unchangeable that always remains as it was from the beginning; it is therefore never simply repeated but always enacted again as before; in this way it remains the original. A religious or mythical concept of time knows only proto- and archetypes. This is somewhat similar to the idea of Sanskrit conceived as the gods’ language that ‘simply ‘cannot’ change’ (Witzel 1990: 5) which resulted in a certain disinterest in historical changes of languages among pundits.

Conclusion

The concept of Nepalese and Indian historiography is very much related to such religious and aesthetic notions. History in China ‘has always been perceived to be closer to philosophy than literature as is the case in Europe or India’ (Mishra 2010: 38, Weigelin-Schwiedrzik 1996: 84-85); India and Nepal on the other hand have often regarded historiography as religiously motivated narratives of wonders created by divine influences. This, however, does not mean that the chroniclers did not sense and value historical facts. The introductory *śloka* of the *Wright Chronicle*, not translated by Daniel Wright, makes this very clear:

jyotirūpaṃ mahābuddhaṃ guhyadeviṃ nirañjanaṃ,
 jyotirūpaṃ mahādevaṃ śrīgaṇeśaṃ namāmy aham.
 anekapūrvavṛttānta śrutvā dṛṣṭvā yathākramaṃ,
 nepālikānāṃ bhūpānāṃ vaṃśāvalī pralikhate.

‘The Great-Buddha-in-the-Form-of-Light; Guhyadevi (Guhyeśvari), the Spotless One; the Great-God-in-the-Form-of-Light (Śiva); Glorious Gaṇeśa, I pay homage to you.

This Chronicle of the kings of Nepal has been written in accordance with various past incidents heard and seen.’

This is why we will in our edition no longer call the *vaṃśāvalī* the ‘Wright Chronicle’ but give this important source of Nepalese historiography back to Nepal by doing justice to its original name: ‘Nepālikānāṃ Bhūpānāṃ (Bauddha) Vaṃśāvalī (NBhV)’ or ‘The (Buddhist) Chronicle of Kings of Nepal.’

There is certainly no privileged form of narrating the past or history unless one accepts the superiority of scientific over religious historiography (and *vice versa*). Only through a multitude of historical narrations will Nepal discover her history, and only by listening to these stories will it find her future.

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