

Munsīs in the Courts of Early Śāha and Rāṇā Rulers: The Career of Lakṣmīdāsa Pradhāna

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Introduction

From the mid-18th century until the end of Rāṇā rule in Nepal, exchange of information between governments was largely mediated by *munsīs*. They were properly trained scribes and secretaries of the court, who were required to gain knowledge of languages of correspondence including Persian, the administrative language of the Mughals in neighboring India. Akbar (1542–1605) was the first of the Indo-Islamic emperors of northern India to formally declare Persian as the language of administration at all levels (Alam/Subrahmanyam 2004: 62). During the early period of colonial conquest in India, the British also followed the Persian administrative system and consolidated the role of the *munsīs*:

During colonial times, a *munsī* was an interlocutor for the Company officials who not only functioned as a mediator and a spokesman (*vakil*), but was also a key personage who could both read and draft materials in Persian, and who had a grasp of the realities of politics. (Alam/Subrahmanyam 2004: 61)

From the 17th to the early 19th century, *munsīs* were also the elites in India who could prominently serve as teachers. When the British established

1 I would like to express my gratitude to the Pradhāna family, especially Mr. Janaki Pratap Singh Pradhan, Mr. Bhagat Man Singh Pradhan, Mr. Mani Man Singh Pradhan and Mr. Shantesh Man Singh Pradhan from among the descendants of Lakṣmīdāsa, for providing me with relevant materials and facts for this article. I had an opportunity to interview them on September 14, 2015.

Fort William College in 1800, the Indians who were appointed as teachers were mainly *munsīs* and Paṇḍitas (Das 1978: 15–21).

Much has been written on the subject of *munsīs* and other scribal elites of India.² However, works that illuminate the scribal culture of premodern Nepal are almost non-existent. In this article I will try to sketch the life and the role played in the courts of 19th-century Nepal by a prominent *munsī* named Lakṣmīdāsa Pradhāna. He was the *mīra munsī* (“head of *munsīs*”) of the Munsīkhānā (“house of *munsīs*”), the government office responsible for foreign affairs and correspondence during the rule of Bhīmasena Thāpā (term of office 1806–1837) until the end of Rāṇa period in 1951.

A Short Biography of Lakṣmīdāsa

Bhagat Man Singh Pradhan published a chronicle (*vaṃśāvalī*) of the Pradhāna family in VS 2063 (2006 CE). According to this *vaṃśāvalī*, Lakṣmīdāsa was born in VS 1850 (1793 CE) to Motirāma Siṃha, a descendant of one of the six *pradhānas* of Patan. These *pradhānas* used to rule Patan as powerful nobles during the late Malla period. The *vaṃśāvalī* further relates the ancestry of the Pradhāna lineage to a Thakurī prince named Kalyāna Siṃha from Rajasthan who came to Patan in the 16th century and married the daughter of Harihara Siṃha Malla (Pradhan VS 2063: 1). During Pṛthvīnārāyaṇa Śāha’s conquest of Patan, one of the six *pradhānas*, Kājī Khaḍgadhara Siṃha, fled to Banaras, while all the others were killed (ibid.: 2).³ In the course of time, Khaḍgadhara’s sons Gajendra Siṃha and Motirāma Siṃha returned to Nepal and settled at Madu Ṭola in Kathmandu. Munsī Lakṣmīdāsa was born to Motirāma Siṃha as the second of his five sons (ibid.: 30–31).

It is not yet known where Lakṣmīdāsa received his education. He apparently came in contact with Bhīmasena Thāpā in Banaras when the latter accompanied Raṇa Bahādura Śāha during his exile in 1800–1803 (Upādhyāya VS 2056). Bhīmasena Thāpā became the *mukhtiyāra*

2 On the scribal elites of premodern India, see Rao/Shulman/Subrahmanyam 2001, Alam/Subrahmanyam 2004, Das 1978, O’Hanlon 2010 and the other contributions to the special issue *Munshis, Pandits and Record-Keepers: Scribal Communities and Historical Change in India* of *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 47.4.

3 Even though Khaḍgadhara’s name is not mentioned, the story of the flight of one of the six *pradhānas* of Patan is narrated in some of the *vaṃśāvalis* composed in the 19th century. See, for instance, NBhV I, p. 118.

(chief minister) of Nepal after the death of Raṇabahādura in 1806. During his *mukhtiyārī*, Bhīmasena Thāpā appointed Lakṣmīdāsa to the position of *mīra munsī* at the Munsīkhānā. Lakṣmīdāsa was also associated with the Alaīcīkoṭhī.⁴ Saradāra Bhīma Bahādura mentions that Bhīmasena Thāpā called Lakṣmīdāsa in from the Alaīcīkoṭhī to appoint him as *mīra munsī* of the Munsīkhānā (Pāḍe VS 2039: 113), while Śrīrāmaprasāda (Upādhyāya VS 2056) states that he was appointed as the chief of the Alaīcīkoṭhī after the Anglo-Nepalese war of 1814–1816.⁵ After his appointment at the Munsīkhānā, the career of Mīra Munsī Lakṣmīdāsa continued for five decades. According to a *vaṃśāvalī* housed at the National Archives Nepal, he died at the age of 75 in Banaras on the 11th of the bright fortnight of Bhādra in VS 1924 (1867 CE) (DP-MGV, fol. 4v, 5r).



Plate 1: A portrait of Mīra Munsī Lakṣmīdāsa, in the collection of the Pradhāna family at Madu Ṭola, Kathmandu. Photo: Manik Bajracharya.

- 4 The Alaīcīkoṭhī was a trading house cum consulate office established by the Nepalese government in Patna, India.
- 5 It seems that Lakṣmīdāsa was not the first *mīra munsī* during Bhīmasena Thāpā's term of office. According to the document NGMPP E 2738/6 dated VS 1865 (1809 CE), a person named Rajā Khā held the position of *mīra munsī*. This document granted him a house and land in Kathmandu for him and his family. Regmi (1978: 33–34) also provides six documents relating to him, all from 1810. In none of these documents, however, is the Munsīkhānā mentioned.

On the Munsīkhānā and the Duties of a Court Munsī

The Munsīkhānā dealt with Nepal's relations with England, India, Tibet and China. It was founded during the rule of Bhīmasena Thāpā. The exact date of its formation is unknown,⁶ but it was probably established after the Anglo-Nepalese war of 1814–1816, and sometime around the opening of the permanent British Residency in Kathmandu.⁷ This opening resulted from the need to conduct foreign affairs, especially with the neighboring colonial government, in a more active and professional manner.

Before the formation of the Munsīkhānā, foreign correspondence was handled by the Jaisīkoṭhā, an office founded by King Pṛthvī-nārāyaṇa Śāha. The Jaisīkoṭhā was later put under the Munsīkhānā, and it was then re-organized to deal mainly with Tibetan affairs.

The *Mulukī Ain* (MA) of 1854, Section 12 of Article 33, mentions the following duties of the (court) *munsī*: for every letter of memorandum received from the English, the *munsī* should prepare a reply within two days of its arrival after consulting about it with the prime minister. He should then send it to the Kausī to be stamped (MA, pp. 160–161). Similarly, Sections 13 and 14 of the same Article provide instructions on what categories of women should be granted travel documents to visit foreign lands (ibid., p. 161).

A long and important *savāla*⁸ issued by Jaṅga Bahādura Rāṇā and Raṇoddipa Siṃha, and referring to a *savāla* of 1864 addressed to Lakṣmīdāsa, contains the functions of the court *munsī* and provides directions on how to deal with foreign correspondence both with British India and with Tibet. The major clauses of the *savāla* include the following activities (Adhikari 1984: 107–109, 142–145):

- sorting out letters and dispatches received daily from both within and outside Nepal and submitting them to the Western Commanding General or to the prime minister

6 Kumar (1967: 103) mentions different opinions regarding the date of establishment of the Munsīkhānā—1825 according to Babu Ram Acharya, and 1808 according to Nepal Man Singh.

7 A first attempt to open a British residency in Nepal was carried out after the treaty of October 1801. Captain Knox then came to Kathmandu as the resident, but he left in March 1803 and the attempt of the British to post a resident in Nepal ended in failure. After the ratification of the Sugauli Treaty on 4 March 1816, the first officiating resident of the permanent British residency arrived in Kathmandu in April 1816 (see Manandhar 2005: 6–9).

8 *Savālas* are government rules and regulations enacted based on an existing law (see Karmacharya 2001: 328).

- preparing drafts of replies to the letters and dispatches
- attesting *lālamoharas* and *rukkās* and dispatching them to the concerned parties with the approval of the prime minister
- issuing travel documents to people visiting India
- receiving Tibetan officials visiting Nepal and dispatching letters to the *ambā* (Chinese representative) and to other high officials in Tibet
- keeping records of all the letters sent and received

Jaṅga Bahādura Rāṇā established another office near the British Residency at Lain in Kathmandu and kept it under the control of the Munsīkhānā. An attaché was appointed to it with the military rank of a captain. The office was variously known as the attaché office, the office of the captain of Lain, or the office of the *munsī* (Pāḍe VS 2039: 113). The purpose of this office was to facilitate communications between the British Residency and the palace.

During Candra Śamśera's rule (1901–1929), the Munsīkhānā was brought under the direct control of the prime minister (Agrawal 1976: 19). He also expanded the Munsīkhānā into five sections: Jaisīkoṭhā, Sadara Aminī Gośvārā, border surveys, the section concerned with affairs relating to India, and England and the attaché of Lain (Pāḍe VS 2039: 114).

H.N. Agrawal, referring to a *munsīkhānā jaisīkoṭhā savāla* issued in VS 1974 (1917 CE), lists the scope of the Munsīkhānā's activities as follows:

- (a) formulation of foreign policy with regard to England, India, China and Tibet;
- (b) implementation of the policy laid down by sending *dui chhape* [a double-sealed document, MB] orders to various offices and border district administration;
- (c) issue *rahdani* (passport) to Nepalese nationals going to foreign countries;
- (d) correspond with Tibet and China (through jaisī kotha) and England and India;
- (e) decide all border cases, boundary disputes and cases in connection with no man's land, and
- (f) maintain all records and foreign correspondence. (Agrawal 1976: 41–42)

The staff of the Munsīkhānā in the year 1917 consisted of forty persons and another ten working out of the Jaisīkoṭhā.

Lakṣmīdāsa's Career as the *Mīra Munsī*

Lakṣmīdāsa, after becoming *mīra munsī* at the Munsikhānā, enjoyed a long career in the field of foreign affairs in Nepal. He served in the office through the major part of the 19th century under several masters. We may gain insight into his career by examining a number of documents and other written sources relating to him.

The earliest documents relating to Lakṣmīdāsa that I have found so far are from the 1830s. Of the documents collected by Shantesh Man Singh Pradhan, there are two *lālamoharas* from 1832 and one from 1837 in which Lakṣmīdāsa is addressed as *munsī*. One of the *lālamoharas* from 1832 (see Appendix, Doc. 2) was issued by King Rājendra, who granted him a piece of land at Madu Ṭola as *sunābirtā*.⁹ Lakṣmīdāsa obtained the land, originally belonging to a *guṭhī*, by providing another piece of land as a replacement.

Lakṣmīdāsa is mentioned in the colophon of the *Nepālī Rājako Vaṃśāvalī*, a chronicle in the Sylvain Lévi Collection at the Institut d'études indiennes, Centre de documentation des Instituts d'Orient of the Collège de France, under the code MS.SL.08 (B.7). The work, dating from 1834, was commissioned by Lakṣmīdāsa and written by a Brahmin scribe named Siddhinārāyaṇa of Devapaṭṭana. In its colophon, Lakṣmīdāsa is addressed as a "virtuous, benevolent and excellent *munsī*" (see Appendix, Doc. 4). The translation of the chronicle in Sylvain Lévi's *Le Népal* was largely based on this manuscript, which had been presented to him by Deva Śamśera Rāṇā (see Appendix, Doc. 4 for the text and translation of the colophon).

Bhīmasena Thāpā was removed from power in 1837, and he died in 1839. After him, Nepalese politics went through a decade of turbulent transition. The struggle between different factions and constant shifts in power made for a dangerous and unstable period. Lakṣmīdāsa, however, managed to hang on to his post as the *mīra munsī* throughout this difficult time.

In a *rukkā* dating from 1842, Lakṣmīdāsa is addressed regarding the appointment of a new clerk (*nausindā*) for translating Persian documents at the Munsikhānā. This is the earliest document found up to

9 *Sunābirtā* is privately owned land which is liable to some taxation (see Whelpton 1991: 286). This form of land grant emerged when the *raikar* (state owned) land was sold to individuals, originally as tax-free and inheritable property. Prthvinārāyaṇa Śāha levied taxes on such lands in the Kathmandu Valley (see Regmi 1964: 39–40).

now where the name “Munṣikhānā” is mentioned. The document is preserved as NGMPP DNA 15/95 at the National Archives Nepal (see Appendix, Doc. 1).¹⁰

Another document, NGMPP E 2764/62, records Mīra Munṣī Lakṣmīdāsa’s salary as Rs. 1,300 for the year VS 1901 (1844–1845 CE). This contradicts Adhikari (1984: 109), who asserts that the *mīra munṣī*’s annual salary was Rs. 3,401, Rs. 1,200 of which was paid in Indian currency and the rest provided in the form of land.

In 1846, after the Kot massacre, Jaṅga Bahādura Rāṇā rose to power and became the prime minister and commander-in-chief. According to the family sources, Lakṣmīdāsa was present at the palace during the massacre. Not only did he survive this incident; his career attained new heights during the rule of Jaṅga Bahādura Rāṇā.

In a *rukkā* dating from 1849 issued by King Surendra Śāha, Lakṣmīdāsa is addressed as “*ṭaksārī*”¹¹ *mīra munṣī*,” indicating that he was granted authority to mint coins. This document, published in Joṣī (VS 2042: 14–15), directs the *munṣī* to control the import of musk from Tibet (see Appendix, Doc. 3). Satyamohana Joṣī further mentions in his book that Lakṣmīdāsa minted coins at his own house at Madu Ṭola. The coins contained his name, “Lakṣmī,” on one side. He was also put in charge of customs at the Tibet border, and of a copper mine as well (ibid.: 15).

Apart from the Nepalese documents, Mīra Munṣī Lakṣmīdāsa was mentioned in the correspondence between the British residents and the British government. Ludwig F. Stiller has edited several of these in his book *Letters from Kathmandu: The Kot Massacre* (1981). Lakṣmīdāsa is often alluded to as the “darbar munshi” or “darbar mir munshi,” and occasionally mentioned by name in those documents. Some of the documents from Stiller’s book are discussed below.

In a letter sent to the British government on 3 July 1840, Resident Hodgson reports of his questioning the *darbāra munṣī* regarding a mutiny within the Nepalese army (Stiller 1981: 22). Hodgson mentions, too, that the *munṣī* and occasionally the minister had been the only persons authorized to deal with the resident during Bhīmasena Thāpā’s term of office (ibid.: 20).

In Hodgson’s letters of 21 August 1840 (ibid.: 29–30) and 5 September 1840 (ibid.: 30–32) to the British government regarding

10 An edition of this document has also been published in Adhikari 1984: 142.

11 *Ṭaksārī* is a person in charge of mints; derived from *ṭaksāra*, “mint”.

negotiations concerning Nepal's seizure of a part of Ramnagar, one gets a clearer picture of the role played by the *darbāra munsī* and the *munsi* of the resident as intermediaries between the palace and the residency.

On 2 January 1841, Nepal signed an agreement committing itself to make every effort to increase friendly relations between the British and Nepalese governments, and to treat the British resident always in an honorable manner. Lakṣmīdāsa is one of 92 *gurus*, *cautariyās*, *kājīs* or other top-ranking officials of Nepal who signed the agreement (ibid.: 72–74, Foreign Secret Consultation no. 121).

In a letter of Resident Lawrence to the British government dated 19 February 1844, the *darbāra munsī* is described as “the constituted medium of intercourse” (ibid.: 237). In another of his letters, from 18 December 1844, he mentions the *darbāra munsī* as the “chief spokesman” of the Nepalese government (ibid.: 260).

In 4 January 1845, Lawrence reports on Kājī Jaṅga Bahādura Rāṇā, Kājī Kālu Śāhī, Umākanta Upādhyāya and Lakṣmīdāsa coming to the residency to announce Māthavara Siṃha Thāpā's appointment as “Minister for life” (ibid.: 265). Similarly, in a letter of 23 September 1845, he mentions the *darbāra munsī* reporting to him on the formation of a new body of ministers consisting of Cautariyā Fatya Jaṅga and the *kājīs* Gagana Siṃha, Abhimāna Rānā and Dalabhañjana Pāṇḍe (ibid.: 286).

Acting Resident Ottley, in a letter of 15 September 1846, reports that the *darbāra mīra munsī* came with a cousin of Jaṅga Bahādura Rāṇā to pass on the news of the Kot massacre (ibid.: 296). Similarly, in a letter of 16 September 1846, Ottley writes that Jaṅga Bahādura Rāṇā, accompanied by the *darbāra mīra munsī*, visited him to inform that Jaṅga Bahādura had been appointed as “sole Minister and Commander-in-Chief,” and to “express the hope that the friendship between the two governments might continue unabated” (ibid.: 298).

Munsi Lakṣmīdāsa is mentioned as the scribe in the colophon of a Sanskrit treatise, the *Upavanavinoda*. The text, an extract from the *Sāraṅgadharapaddhati*, contains descriptions of herbs and garden decorations. The text is preserved as NGMPP A 951/91 and contains 37 folios. Lakṣmīdāsa was one of the 218 members of the Kausal (Council) that prepared the *Mulukī Ain* of 1854 (MA, p. 5).

It seems that Lakṣmīdāsa and his family enjoyed elevated social privileges during the Rāṇā period. His family was regarded as “Nevāra Rāṇājīs” for the closeness they had achieved with the Rāṇā rulers (Pāḍe VS 2039: 114). They were allowed to perform such rituals as marriage in the manner of Parbatīya Kṣatriyas. Henry Ambrose Oldfield, who

served as a medical doctor at the British Residency from 1850 to 1863, therefore wrote: “[the darbar munsī has,] on payment of a fee, been raised from the rank of Niwar to that of Parbattiah” (Oldfield 1880: 411).

After Lakṣmīdāsa, his descendants continued to serve at important posts of the Munsīkhānā, especially at the attaché office of Lain, and in other offices. His family was popularly known as the “*Munsī* Clan” (*munsī khalaka*). Kājī Bala Māna, Amara Māna and Kājī Marīca Māna were among his prominent descendants who served at the Munsīkhānā.

Conclusion

Lakṣmīdāsa did not belong to any community of traditional scribes, such as the Kāyasthas, Jośīs or the Paṇḍitas. Still, he had a very successful career as a *munsī*. He was a Newar who descended from the nobles of the late Malla period, and was educated in the Persian and English languages, as required of *munsīs* at that time. This may have provided him with knowledge of a sufficiently broad transcultural scope that, together with additional advantages, allowed him to become a successful intermediary between cultures within Nepal and between governments.

Lakṣmīdāsa carried out his duties as the *mīra munsī* during one of the most turbulent times in the political history of Nepal. His career spanned five decades under several prime ministers.¹² He faithfully fulfilled his duties as an administrator, and possibly played an important role in lessening the political turmoil of mid-19th-century Nepal. We may say that he was a pioneer in raising the post of *munsī* to a professional level in Nepal. He was also able to train descendants of his to the profession and to secure the post of the chief *munsī* for them, thereby forming a “clan” of *munsīs*.

The career of Munsī Lakṣmīdāsa thus represented something beyond the usual role of a *munsī* as a scribe, author, translator or teacher. He was a cultural and administrative broker, a successful diplomat, and a mediator between governments, cultures and languages. He established himself as an active player of the 19th-century Nepalese court to great effect. He was, significantly, one of the very few Newars who held an important post in the courts of early Śāha and Rāṇā rulers.

12 DP-MGV, fol. 4r mentions that Lakṣmīdāsa served for 51 years under seven *mukhtāras* (sic).

Appendix

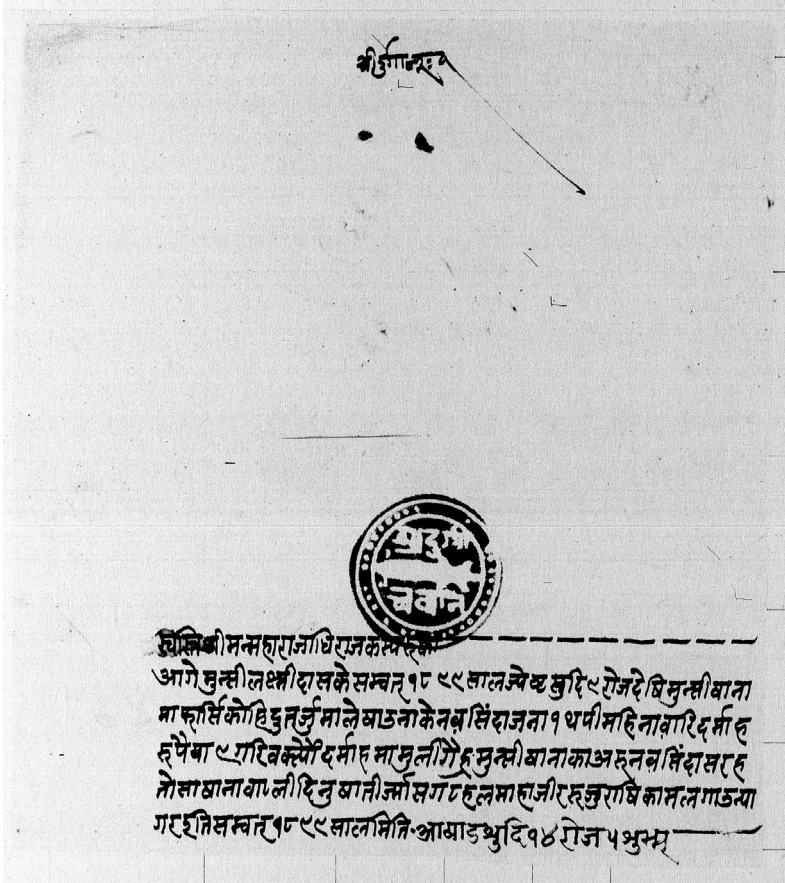
Editorial Conventions

The texts have been transcribed as faithfully as possible; the orthography, for instance, has not been changed into modern Nepali. Nepali case endings are treated as true suffixes, and Nepali compound verbs have been joined. The *nukta*-sign (as in ँ, ः), visarga-like sign (:), and middle dot (•) have been ignored in the editions. The *daṇḍa* (|) has been supplied to the text as a sentence breaker where necessary. The various types of macrons and lines are uniformly represented by “---”. Line numbers have been added for the main body of the original text.

**Document 1: A Rukkā to Munsī Lakṣmīdāsa re the
Appointing of a New Nausindā**

Dated VS 1899, Thursday, the 14th of the bright fortnight of Āṣāḍha
(1842 CE); NAK ms. no. 632; microfilmed as NGMPP DNA 15/95;
for the digital edition, see DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.30311>.

Facsimile:



Edition:

श्री दुर्गाज्युः\

[royal seal]

- 1 स्वस्ति श्रीमन्महाराजाधिराजकस्य रुक्का । ---
आगे मुन्सी लक्ष्मीदासके । सम्वत् १८९९ साल ज्येष्ठ सुदि ९ रोजदेषि मुन्सीषाना-
मा फार्सिको हिदुतर्जुमा लेषाउनाके नवसिंदा जना १ थपी महिनावारि दर्माह
रूपैया ९ गरिवक्स्यौ । दर्माह मामुली गैह्ल मुन्सीषानाका अरू नवसिंदासरह
- 5 तोसाषानावाट ली दिनु । षातीज्मसिंग टहलमा हाजीर रूजु राषि काम लगाउन्या
गर । इति सम्वत् १८९९ साल मिति आषाड शुदि १४ रोज ५ शुभम् । ---

Translation:

Venerable Durgā

[royal seal]

Hail! A *rukkā* of the venerable supreme king of great kings.

[Regarding] the following: to Munsī Lakṣmīdāsa.

[Effective] as of the 9th of the bright fortnight of Jyeṣṭha of the Vikrama era year 1899, we have added a *nausindā*¹³ at the Munsīkhānā in order to have Persian [documents] translated into Hindu[stānī?], and fixed a monthly salary of 9 rupees. Just as with other *nausindās* of the Munsīkhānā, provide him with the monthly salary and other supplementary remuneration, taking [the money] from the Tosākhānā.¹⁴ Placing your faith in him, and him at [your] service, assign him the [said] task.

Thursday, the 14th of the bright fortnight of Āṣāḍha in the Vikrama era year 1899. [May there be] auspiciousness.

13 A *nausindā* is a scribe or a clerk of lower rank responsible for translation, registry and accounts.

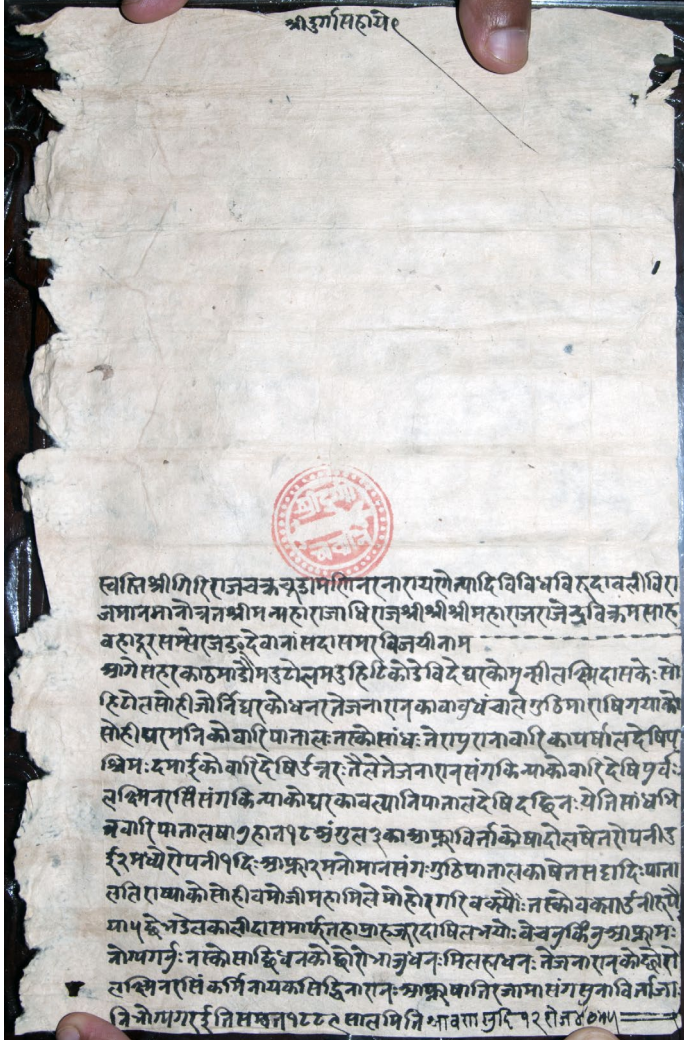
14 The Tosākhānā was the central royal treasury in Kathmandu.

Document 2: A Lālamohara from King Rājendra Granting Munsī Lakṣmīdāsa a Piece of Land at Madu Ṭola as Sunābirtā

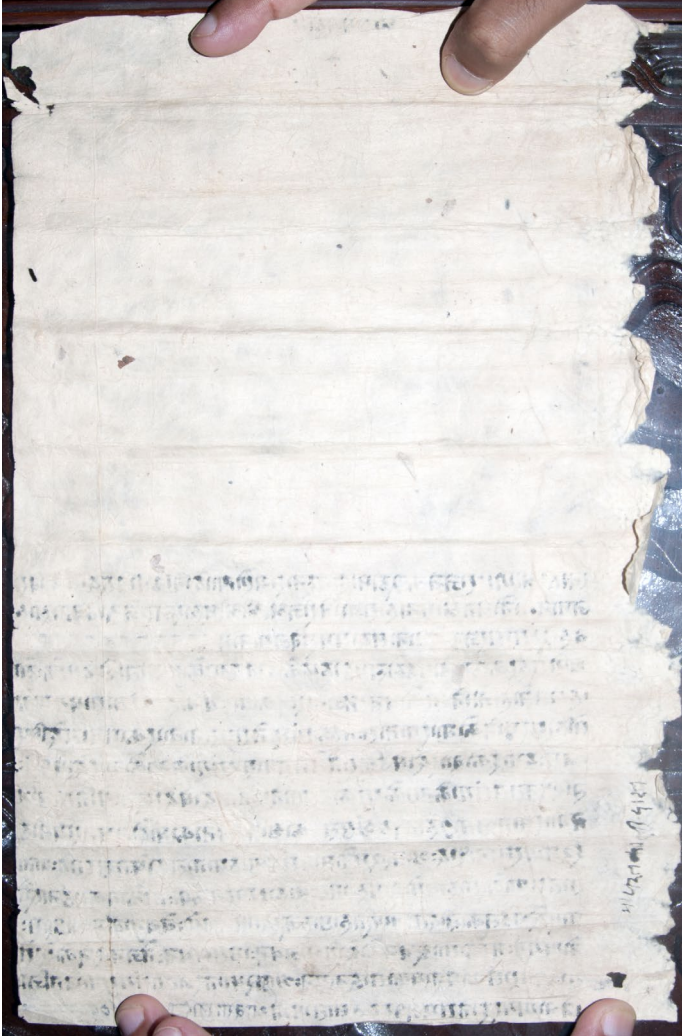
Dated VS 1889, Wednesday, the 12th of the bright fortnight of Śrāvaṇa (1832 CE); Private, in possession of Shantesh Man Singh Pradhan (Maru, Kathmandu); photographed by Manik Bajracharya as LD 1/1; for the digital edition, see DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.39467>.

Facsimile:

Recto:



Verso:



Edition:

[Recto]

श्री दुर्गासिहाये\

[royal seal]

- 1 स्वस्ति श्रीगिरिराजचक्रचूडामणिनरनारायणेत्यादिविविधविरूदावलीविरा-
जमानमानोन्नतश्रीमन्महाराजाधिराजश्रीश्रीश्रीमहाराजराजेन्द्रविक्रमसाह-
वहादूरसम्सेरजङ्गदेवानां सदा समरविजयीनाम । ---
आगे सहर काठमाडौं मडुटोल मडुहिटि कोडेविदे घरको मुन्सी लक्ष्मीदासके । सो-
5 हि टोल सोही जोर्नि घरको धन र तेजनारान्का वावु धंचाले गुठिमा राषिगयाको
सोही घरमनिको वारि पाताल तस्को सांध तेरा पुराना वारिका पर्षालिदेषि प-
श्रिम दमाईको वारिदेषि ऊत्तर तैले तेजनारान्संग किन्याको वारिदेषि पुर्व
लक्ष्मिनरसिसंग किन्याको घरका वत्यानि पातालदेषि दछिन । येति सांधभि-
त्र वारि पाताल षा ७ हात १८ अंगुल ३ का आफ्ना विर्ताको षादोल षेत रोपनी दु-
10 ई २ मध्ये रोपनी १ दि आफ्ना २ मनोमानसंग गुठि पातालका षेत सट्टा दि पाता-
ल लिराष्याको सोहीवमोजीम हामिले मोहोर गरिवक्स्यौं । तस्को वक्साऊनी रूपै-
या ५ छेभडेल कालीदासमार्फत हाम्रा हजूर दाषिल भयो । वेचनु किनु आफ्ना म-
नोग्य गर्नु । तस्को साछि धनको छोरो भाजुधन मिलह्यधन तेजनारान्को छोरो
लक्ष्मिनरसिं कर्मिनायक सिद्धिनारान् । आफ्ना षातिरजामासंग सुनाविर्ता जा-
15 नि भोग्य गर । ईति सम्वत १८८९ साल मिति श्रावण सुदि १२ रोज ४ ॥॥

[Verso]

माफत¹⁵ कालीदास

Translation:

[Recto]

May glorious Durgā succour (us)!

[Royal seal]

Hail! [A decree] of him who is shining with manifold rows of eulogy [such as] “The venerable crest-jewel of the multitude of mountain

15 For *mārphata*.

kings” and Nāranārāyaṇa etc., high in honour, the venerable supreme king of great kings, the thrice venerable great king, Rājendra Vikrama Sāha, the brave swordsman, the divine king always triumphant in war.

[Regarding] the following: to Munsī Lakṣmīdāsa of Koḍevide Ghara at Madu Hiṭi, Madu Ṭola in the city of Kathmandu.

The plot of building land (*bāri-pātāla*) adjacent to Dhana and Teja Nārān’s house—(that is, the land) below that same house [and] in the same *ṭola* donated to the *guṭhī* by their father Dhaṃcā—lies within following boundaries: to the west of the wall of your older garden, to the north of the garden of the *damāi*, to the east of the wall of the garden that you bought from Teja Nārān, [and] to the south of the building land [you] bought from Lakṣmī Narasiṃ. The land within this boundary measures 7 *khās*,¹⁶ 18 cubits and 3 finger-breadths. Under an agreement between you, you (i.e., Lakṣmīdāsa) have received the building land from the *guṭhī* after giving [it] one *ropanī*¹⁷ of the two *ropanīs* of your own *birtā khādola*¹⁸ land as a replacement, in accordance where-with we have sealed [this document]. The fee (*baksāunī*) of five rupees for this has been submitted to us through the *Chebhaḍela*¹⁹ Kālīdāsa. Do selling or buying of the land as you wish. The witnesses to this are: the sons of Dhana (Bhāju Dhana and Milamha Dhana), the son of Teja Nārān (Lakṣmī Narasiṃ), and the chief mason (Siddhi Nārān). Enjoy (the property) to your own satisfaction, considering it as a *sunābirtā*.

Wednesday, the 12th of the bright fortnight of Śrāvaṇa in the Vikrama era year 1889.

[Verso]

Through (*mārphata*) Kālīdāsa.

16 *Khā* is a measurement unit of land, having twenty-two and half cubits in length and four cubits in breadth, appropriate for building a house (*Nepālī Brhat Śabdakośa*, s.v. *khā*).

17 *Ropanī* is a measurement unit of land, having an area of 5,476 square feet.

18 Meaning unclear.

19 *Chebhaḍela* was a government institution responsible for building and renovating state houses and properties, and collecting taxes. Here, the term is referring to an officer of the institution.

**Document 3: A Lālamohara from King Surendra Directing
Mīra Munsī Lakṣmīdāsa to Control the Import of Musk
from Tibet**

Dated VS 1905; Friday, the 30th of the dark fortnight of Caitra (1849 CE);
edited by Satyamohana Joṣī (VS 2042: 15).²⁰

Edition:

श्री दुर्गाज्यूः १

श्री ५ सर्कार

- 1 स्वस्तिश्री गिरिराज चक्र चूडामणि नरनारायणेत्यादि विविधविरुदावलि विराजमान मानोज्ञत
श्रीमन्महा-
राजाधिराज श्रीश्रीश्री महाराज सुरेन्द्र विक्रम साहबहादुर सम्सेर जङ्गदेवानां सदा समर विजयिनाम-
आगे टक्कारी मीर मुन्सी लक्ष्मीदासके भोटबाट आउन्त्या कस्तुरी सेर १ के महसूल कस्तुरी तोला
२।१।० लाग्दा जाहेर गरी कस्तुरी कोही महाजन बेपारी ल्याउँदैनन् चोरि छपि ल्याउँछन् ----
- बाट महसूल
- 5 घटाई बक्सनु भया महाजन बेपारिहरू खुला गरी ल्याउनन् षुला गरी ल्याया ---- को महसूल
पनि बढन्त्या
छ भनी तैले विंति गर्याको श्री मद्राजकुमार कुमारत्तमज श्री प्राइम मिनिष्टर यान् कम्प्यांडर इन चिफ्
जनरल जङ्गबहादुर कुंवर राणाजी मार्फत हाम्रा हजुरमा जाहिर भयो अब उप्रान्त सम्बत् १९०६
साल बैसाष
बदि १ रोज देखि भोटबाट महाजन बेपारिले ल्यायाका कस्तुरी सेर १ के महसूल कस्तुरी तोला
१।१। चुक्ति
गरी ली कस्तुरी बिनामा टक्सारको छाप लाई दिनु टक्सारको छाप नलाग्याको कस्तुरी कोही
महाजन् बेपारिले
- 10 किन्या बेच्याको फेला पार्यो भन्या कस्तुरी जवद गरी ली ---- मा बुझाउनु भन्या बन्देज
बाँधि वक्स्यौ
यस बन्देजमा चलैन चलावैन तसलाई भारि दंड होला इति सम्बत् १९०५ साल मिति चैत्र बदि ३०
रोज ६
शुभम् ।

मार्फत बंवाहादुर कुंवर राणाजी

मार्फत शिव प्रसाद अर्ज्याल

20 The edition provided here is a reproduction of Joṣī's edition without any modifications. The translation is mine.

Translation:

Venerable Durgā – 1

The fivefold venerable ruler

Hail! [A decree] of him who is shining with manifold rows of eulogy [such as] “The venerable crest-jewel of the multitude of mountain kings” and Nāranārāyaṇa etc., high in honour, the venerable supreme king of great kings, the thrice venerable great king, Surendra Vikrama Sāha, the brave swordsman, the divine king always triumphant in war.

[Regarding] the following: to Ṭaksārī Mīra Munsī Lakṣmīdāsa.

The request you have made, asking: “Since, for every 1 *sera*²¹ of musk imported from Tibet, the amount of 2 *tolās*²² and 1 *ānā*²³ has been levied, no merchant will formally declare [musk] when bringing any. They bring it in hidden [from customs]. If His Majesty decreases the levied amount, the merchants will bring [the musk] openly. The levies accruing to His Majesty will increase if they bring [the musk] openly,” has been made known to us by the venerable prince and son of a prince Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief General Jaṅga Bahādura Kūvara Rāṇājī. We have put into effect the following rule: “From now on, starting from the 1st of the dark fortnight of Vaiśākha of the year [VS] 1906, for every 1 *sera* of musk brought from Tibet by merchants, take 1 *tolā* and 1 *ānā* of the musk as a levy, and mark the musk pods with the stamp of the *ṭaksāra*. If unstamped musk is found being bought or sold by any merchants, confiscate the musk and hand it over to His Majesty. Whoever disobeys this rule or causes [others] to disobey it, will be subject to heavy punishment.”

Friday, the 30th of the dark fortnight of Caitra in the Vikrama era year 1905. [May there be] auspiciousness.

Through Bam Bāhādura Kūvara Rāṇājī.

Through Śiva Prasāda Arjyāla.

21 A measure of weight equivalent to 80 *tolās* (approx. 933 grams).

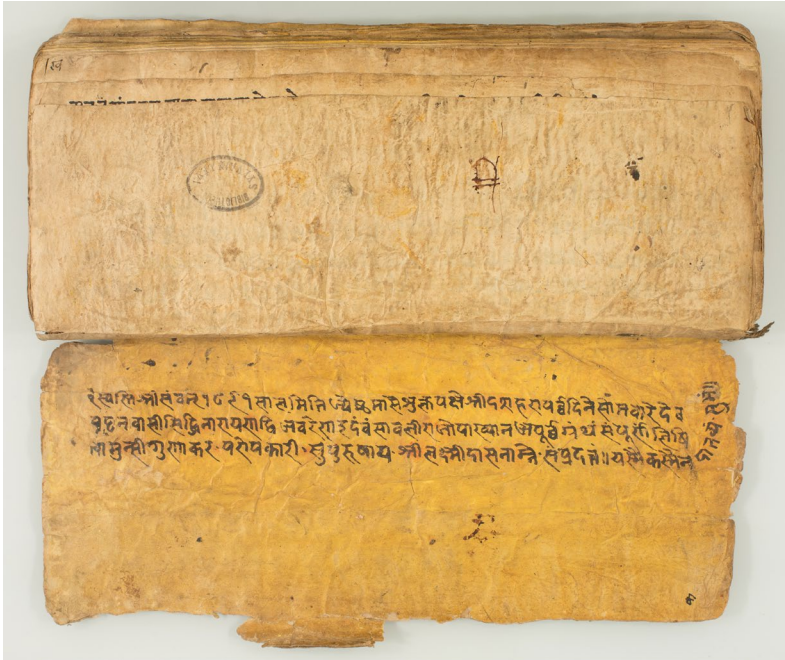
22 A measure of weight equivalent to approximately 11.5 grams.

23 One-fourth of a *tolā*.

Document 4: The Colophon of the *Nepālī Rājāko Vamśāvalī*

Recto of the back cover-leaf of a chronicle in the Sylvain Lévi Collection at the Institut d'études indiennes, Centre de documentation des Instituts d'Orient of the Collège de France, MS.SL.08 (B.7); Dated VS 1891; Monday, the 10th of the bright fortnight of Jyeṣṭha (1834 CE).

Facsimile:



Edition:

- 1 स्वस्ति श्रीसंवत् १८९१ सालमिति ज्येष्ठमासे शुक्लपक्षे श्रीदशहरापर्वदिने सोमवारे देव-
पट्टनवासीसिद्धिनारायणद्विजवरेण इदं वंसावली(!)राजोपाख्यान(!)अपूर्वग्रंथं संपूर्णं लिषि-
त्वा मुन्सीगुणाकरपरोपकारीसुपुरुषाय श्रीलक्ष्मीदासनाम्ने संप्रदत्तं ॥ यस्मै कस्मै न
दातव्यं सुभं ॥

Translation:

Hail! On the day of the Daśaharā festival, Monday, on the 10th of the bright fortnight of Jyeṣṭha in the Vikrama era year 1891, the estimable twice-born Siddhinārāyaṇa of Devapaṭṭana, having finished writing this unprecedented book [containing] a genealogical account of kings, handed it over to the virtuous, benevolent and excellent *munsī*, the venerable Lakṣmīdāsa by name. It is not to be given to anybody else. [May there be] auspiciousness.

Abbreviations

DP-MGV	<i>Damanārohaṇa Pūjāsāmāgrī</i> and <i>Munsi Gharānāko Vamśāvalī</i>
MA	<i>Mulukī Ain</i>
NBhV	<i>Nepālikabhūpavaṃśāvalī</i>
NGMPP	<i>Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project</i>
VS	Vikrama Saṃvat

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