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## Appendix

# In the Khasa Malla Tradition A Thangka of Vikram Shahi (r. 1602-1631) King of Jumla

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### 1. The King



Fig. 1

This painting, dated Śaka Samvat 1530/ 1609 CE is a unique representation of King Vikram Shahi (1602-1631: Vikramaśāhi, Vikramasāhi), an early 17th century King of the Kalyāla (or Kallala) dynasty of the Jumla valley, one of the hill states of Nepal that were the heritors of the great Khasa Malla kingdom of the 13/14th centuries (fig. 1). [1] It is an unprecedented combination of Tibetan thangka painting format and style and Indian courtly portraiture. King Vikram Shahi was known for his close relationship with and protection of the Buddhist lamas and monasteries of his kingdom, a continuation of the remarkable bi-cultural and bi-lingual tradition of the Khasa Malla kings. The painting's two inscriptions in Nepali in Devanagari script and Tibetan in Tibetan U-me script continues a combination of dual script/ dual language inscriptions previously encountered only on the earlier sculptures and inscriptions of the Khasa Malla period.

The King is shown seated on a cushion underneath a tree, barefoot, dressed in robes and adorned with gold jewelry, a dagger tucked into his robe, holding a branch of coral in his right hand and smoking from a hookah held by one of his sons. Before his seat other weapons – a sword and shield and bow and quiver of arrows – are laid down. He is flanked by his two wives, and his two other sons are also shown on either side: one of the sons is shown behind the king with a *chauri*, ceremonial yak-tail fan, while the other is shown holding a tiger with a chain, a familiar motif of Tibetan painting. [2] All three sons wear small turbans similar to that of their father, and like their father are barefoot. The central area of the painting resembles in some respects the courtly Pahari paintings of the hill states of India to the south, which were

almost always painted on paper.

But this painting is on cloth, and is mounted in the Tibetan fashion as a thangka with blue cotton mounts top and bottom; and for this reason we will refer to this work as the *thangka* in the rest of this article. The composition of the rest of the thangka is formatted in familiar Tibetan style: Amitabha is found in the center of the top register, with Manjushri on the left and Chen Rezi and Vajrapani on the right (these last three deities are known together as the “three great protectors”). Just below these upper figures another crowned deity is depicted, perhaps a goddess, white in color, seated on a cloud, and holding a vase and a coral branch. In front of the king, a lama is depicted, seated on a cushion placed on a hilltop, surrounded by three miniature deer, his right hand in the gesture of granting protection or teaching, his left hand in his lap; he wears a fur-lined conical cap with flaps covering his ears. This lama is identified by an inscription as “phyos-rkyad pal-zang”, doubtless a misspelling of chos-skyabs dpal-bzang (Chokyab Pelzang) and is almost assuredly a well-known lama of that name of the Dolpo region to the northwest of Jumla (fig. 2). [3] The lower part of the thangka shows another lama, seated on a cushion with a seatback, his hands in gestures similar to the lama above, attended by a monk with a flywhisk (fig. 3). This probably represents the Lama Yonten Gyaltsen of the inscription (see below). Among the other figures in the lower register are a horse and an elephant – likely associated with the *saptaratna* (the seven jewels or possessions of the *chakravartin* or universal monarch), which is a common motif in Buddhist iconography. [4] There are two further figures, both scantily clad in dhotis, adorned with beads, their long hair tied up in knots, raising offerings of a conch and a plant to the king.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

The tree behind the king shows two intertwined trunks of different colors, which perhaps we can poetically interpret as an allusion to the mingling of two diverse cultural traditions in Vikram Shahi's kingdom.

The king, his two wives and three sons are all named in the dated inscription, in Nepali in Devanagari script, on the upper and right borders. A further inscription in Tibetan in the U-me (running) script at the bottom of the thangka describes the protection granted by the king to the Buddhist lamas of the kingdom. [5]

The inscriptions can be translated as:

1) upper inscription in Devanagari characters:

Om! Let it be well! In the year 1530 of the Shaka era, in the month of Phālgun, on the 25th solar day, on Monday (2 March, 1609). Śrī Rājā Vikrama Sāhi, (his) queens Agrāvati (and) Samudrāvati; (and) 3 princes Vīśeka Sāhi, Hari Sāhi (and) Badrī Sāhi.

2) Tibetan inscription at the bottom in U-me (running) script

King Vikram Shahi and (his) Princes gave (give?) protection to Lama Yonten Gyaltsen from Nepalese (Mon) and Tibetan (bod) side for his spiritual and family lineage. Anyone would be punished if they broke the order ... Minister Vajra Malla and Kale Badra (Bahadur?) both were present. Triple Gems are the refuge. May it be auspicious.



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

This combination of two inscriptions on a religious work, one in Sanskrit/Nepali in Devanagari script and the other in Tibetan, has only been found in the western Nepal tradition of the Khasa Malla kingdom, and now, in this case, a successor kingdom. [6]

The Khasa Malla kingdom dominated the regions that are now West Nepal and West Tibet from the 12th century until the middle of the 14th century. For a brief history of the Khasa Malla lineage and an examination of their tradition of fine metal sculpture, please see "The Metal Sculpture of the Khasa Mallas of West Nepal/ West Tibet" (<https://www.asianart.com/articles/khasa/index.html>). Two of the early Khasa kings, Asokacalla, from the second half of the 13th century, and Ripumalla, from the first quarter of the 14th century, left bronze sculptures inscribed with their names (Figs. 4 & 5). [7] Another sculpture was the donation of one of the two wives of the last Malla king, from the middle of the 14th century (fig. 6). Ripumalla is also named in an inscription of a painting of Tara, which is so far the only painting that can be definitively attributed to the Khasa Malla tradition (fig. 7). [8] These works attest to the interest in the religious arts of these kings, and indicate royal patronage for what became a major Himalayan bronze casting tradition. As all of these works are Buddhist, they are also testimony for the importance of Buddhism for this royal lineage.

From inscriptions, we know that Prithvimalla, the last of the fully documented Khasa Malla kings, one of whose wives made the image of Prajanparamita in fig 4, ruled between 1338 and 1358 AD. After Prithvimalla's reign, a king, Abhayamalla, perhaps his son, appears briefly in at least one inscription. [9] Abhayamalla does not appear in the Tibetan chronicles, which give no further mention of the Malla dynasty after Prithvimalla, suggesting that the Tibetan political connections of this family and their descendants were lost by this time. Ram Niwas Pandey, a Nepali scholar specializing in the history of Western Nepal, conjectured, "Did Abhayamalla, being childless, distribute his kingdom among his vassals of Doti, Accham, Dullu and Jumla, or was it a coup d'etat (after which) the numerous small principalities had originated?" [10] These numerous smaller principalities became known as the Bāise Rājya, the twenty-two states, and among them the kingdom of Jumla was the most prominent, continuing to be looked upon by the others as at least the nominal suzerain. [11]



Fig. 7

After the Mallas disappeared from the scene, the first ruler of consequence was Baliraja (r. ca. 1404-45) who established the power of the Jumla state and is the first historical ruler of the Kalyāla (or Kallala) dynasty of the Jumla valley. [12] This king was perhaps also known as Hastiraj or Nagaraj. [13] Like many of the later Nepal dynasties, including the Shahs of Gorkha - until recently Nepal's ruling house - many of the Kalyāla Thakuri families in their chronicles claim ancestral roots among the Rajputs of Rajasthan. [14]

Baliraja appears to have been a Hindu king, and under his reign and that of his successors, the support that the Khasa Mallas had extended to Buddhism declined. However, Baliraja was still apparently in communication with the Tibetan rulers and lamas to the north, A letter is recorded from the great lama Ngorchon Kunga Zangpo (Kun dga' bzan po) to Hastiraja thanking the king for presents, and urging him to support the Sakya establishments in his kingdom and to avoid any worship involving the killing of animals. [15]

Vikram Shahi, the king depicted in the thangka, is listed as between the seventh and the ninth in the lineage of Baliraja, depending on the source. [16]

The main sources of historical evidence for the Kalyāla kings are of several kinds. The most reliable are the various dated inscriptions, such as the copperplate inscriptions mentioned above, and the Devanagari inscription of the thangka. Various chronicles and genealogies have been found, but these often disagree one with another. Tibetan literature – particularly the biographies and autobiographies of the more important lamas of the region – are also extremely valuable, as we will see below. The last source is the oral history of the area, which sometimes corroborates and reflects the information we find in the other sources, but often without precise chronological bearings.

Vikram Shahi is a relatively well-documented figure in the Kalyāla dynasty. Along with the Nepali inscription written in Devanagari, dated 1609, found on the thangka, there are three copperplate inscriptions from the reign of Vikram Shahi dating from 1602, 1620 and 1631. [17] In the case of all four of these inscriptions, the king is mentioned with a date, and for this reason these are the most important sources for the dating of Vikram Shahi's reign.

## 2. The Lamas

Beyond these contemporary dated inscriptions, perhaps the most valuable information pertinent to this thangka can be gleaned from the biographies/autobiographies of the eminent lamas of this region – and indeed of greater Tibet - who lived around the time of Vikram Shahi's reign.

One intriguing mention of Vikram Shahi in the Tibetan historical literature is found in an account of a voyage in Nepal undertaken in 1629/30 by the sixth Shamarpa Chokyi Wangchuk (Zhwa-dmar-pa Chos-kyi dbang-phyug). This lama was the sixth in the line of the "red hat" hierarchs of the Karma Kagyu school, of whom the leading Lama is the "black hat" Karmapa. In his account of his sojourn in Nepal Chokyi Wangchuk recounted meeting "the Jumla king Vikrama Śāha who was returning from a pilgrimage to India." [18] This meeting must have occurred towards the end of Vikram Shahi's reign, for the last document we have from his reign is dated 1631.

Perhaps the most important Tibetan source is the autobiography of the lama Chokiyab Pelzang (chos skyabs dpal bzang) (1536-1625) whose biography was published in the original Tibetan and English translation by David Snellgrove in *Four Lamas of Dolpo*. This lama is shown next to the king in the thangka, where he is named by inscription (fig. 8). [19] This lama died at the age of 89 in 1625, so when the thangka of Vikram Shahi was made in 1609, he would have been 73 years old. It is worth referencing several passages of his autobiography, which testify to his relationship with the kings of Jumla, one of whom was certainly Vikram Shahi, whose reign began when the lama was 66, and coincided with the last 22 years of the lama's life.

Chokiyab Pelzang refers to the Jumla king, ("the king of Mon") in several passages of his autobiography. Snellgrove notes that "Mon in Dolpo usage refers to the non-Tibetan speaking areas to the west and south of Dolpo. 'The King of Mon' refers therefore in local Dolpo usage to the King of Jumla". [20] In recounting an incident where he is asked to help the king settle a quarrel in Mustang, to the east of Dolpo, Chokiyab Pelzang records:

About that time the clan-leaders of *Khang-dkar* were quarrelling, and the King of *Mon* kept on sending word that I should come and act as witness at the reconciliation that he and his ministers were arranging. [46] [21] After a whole succession of such messages from Lo, the Abbot *Lion of Merit* (*bSod-nams seng-ge*) came with some monk-attendants, and as a result of this I returned to T'hākar and then set out for *dGe-lung*. On the way I gave sacraments to several faithful believers in Tsharka, and many people gave me small presents, meat, butter and other things. So I made the journey there. The *Khang-dkar* leaders came to meet me and led me in procession to *dGe-lung*. I taught in the



Fig. 8

monastery there to the monks and others, giving them the instructions in the *Innate Yoga of the Great Symbol*. The abbot and Chief *Srīdar* himself were present. The leaders were all reconciled, and I made everyone content in one way and another by giving them whatever consecrations and initiations they wanted. [22]

This passage shows clearly the relationship between the King and Chokyab Pelzang: the king turned to the lama to gain his help in solving a dispute among his high ranking Buddhist subjects, who greatly respected the lama; this the lama was willing and able to do. The passage clearly shows how the political issues of the ruler can coincide with the religious prestige of the Lama to produce an alliance between the two, and gives a rationale for Vikram Shahi's guarantee of the wellbeing of Yonten Gyaltsen and other lamas in the Tibetan inscription of the thangka, surely a quid pro quo for the lamas' help with the king's Buddhist subjects. It is possible, indeed likely, that the king in this incident is Vikram Shahi as this king's reign (1602-1631) coincided with the last 2 decades of Chokyab Pelzang's life, when the Lama

had gained considerable renown throughout the kingdom; and the thangka, with its portrait of Chokyab Pelzang, suggests a close relationship. [23]

Another later passage also reveals the respect accorded a high lama such as Chokyab Pelzang:

"On many other occasions brahmins and other high ranking people would often come from Jumla and the King of *Mon*. I satisfied the wants of all of them in various ways, with amulets, blessed kerchiefs, blessings and so on, and all of them seemed to be devout and believing. As for these matters, perhaps these blessed kerchiefs and other blessings were of some use against the non-human beings of the *Mon* regions, for on many occasions, wherever I went, the gods and serpents and even the mountain-divinities seemed to meet me and accompany me in a devout and trusting manner, but others have more (to say about this) than I have." [24]

This passage testifies to the respect accorded the lama by the "Mon" people of Jumla, of course predominantly Hindu: despite the difference of religious belief, it is clear that the lamas had gained the confidence of the southern subjects of the kingdom, who respected the powers of the Lamas' rites and predictions.

Yet another passage shows the deference and respect accorded Chokyab Pelzang by a "king of Mon", as recorded toward the end of the lama's biography by his biographer:

"Again '*Dza'i-phan*, the King of Mon, besought him saying: 'In general, O Lama, may you remain strong in health - as firm as sun and moon - for the good of living beings! In particular I beg you to prophesy whether I shall gain the kingdom or not.' Our lama remained a moment in thought and said: 'There is a good chance of your gaining the kingdom this year. Otherwise it will be hard to gain it.' Just as he said, that year he held the kingdom, but since he was uncircumspect, it was not permanent. These things happened just as our lama said." [25]

This incident was recorded not by the Lama himself, but by the Lama's biographer, Sonam Lodro (not the first of the Four Lamas of Dolpo of the same name, but a disciple of Chokyab Pelzang) as an example of the powers of clairvoyance displayed by the master, and thus cannot be placed anywhere specifically in the timeline of the lama's life. [26] The mention of the name of the king, '*Dza'i-phan*, in this passage is enticing (and we will encounter a second similar mention below). But unfortunately, it is difficult to determine which king is being referred to. As Snellgrove writes: "The term *Mon* is still used in Dolpo to refer generally to the lower valleys to the west and the south, and since until the end of the 18th century these regions were all more or less subject to the king of Jumla, he is usually referred to in the biographies as the King of *Mon*." When names are mentioned, "The only names of these kings that occur in our texts are '*Byid-ras* and his successor variously spelt '*Dzāli-phan* and '*Dza'i-phan*" Snellgrove further notes "It seems impossible to relate them to the names which occur in the genealogies quoted by Tucci in his *Preliminary Report*". [27] We will see the further references to these names of kings of Jumla below.

It was not only in the biography of Chokyab Pelzang that relations between the kings of Jumla and the high lamas of Dolpo are described. Chokyab Pelzang's predecessor and teacher, Sonam Lodro (1516-1581), also had a relationship with the royal family of Jumla, and relates this incident in his autobiography:

Just as I was preparing to come up (to Dolpo), the chief-lady came from Jumla ('*Dzum-lang*). I explained to her how the people of *Mu-gum* had been divided and the country disordered, and especially how that year many people had died of smallpox. 'Mindful of my duty to the King,' I said, 'I have reconciled these people of *Mu-gum*. I beg you, O Queen, to emphasize this matter and give your command.' The chief lady said: 'Reverend Lama. It is very good of you to have reconciled these people of *Mu-gum*. Especially your putting an end to this disease of smallpox and saving them from dying has been a most gracious act of protection. I will do as you say. Now Reverend Lama, you must stay here, and not go back to Dolpo. But wherever you stay, I will give you a sealed writ, to the effect that monks and laymen, strong and weak, whoever they are, shall be guilty of no malice or thieving in your regard.' She gave me this writ, and afterwards I decided to come back to Dolpo. [28]

As Sonam Lodro died some 20 years before the reign of Vikram Shahi, the "chief-lady", or queen, must be the queen of a predecessor of Vikram Shahi. This passage describing the Queen's promulgation of "a sealed writ, to the effect that monks and laymen, strong and weak, whoever they are, shall be guilty of no malice or thieving in your regard" presages the Tibetan inscription of the thangka, which gives the same type of royal guarantee mentioned here. It's clear that the close relationship between the royal house of Jumla and the Lamas of Dolpo, and the esteem with which these lamas were regarded by the royal families, were longstanding traditions.

Yet another passage, from the biography of the third of the "Four Lamas of Dolpo", Palden Lodro (1527-1596) who was born eight years before Chokyab Pelzang and also died many years before him, gives dramatic evidence of the powers of the high lamas of Dolpo, and the respect accorded to them by their southern neighbors, the lay folk and the royal families of Jumla:

Another time when our Lama was at *Jātshang*, King '*Byid-ras* was ill and two valley-men came from Jumla to ask our Lama for a diagnosis. He said to them: 'You go to Bu-chung Dorje and I will send the results of the diagnosis,' and he sent them to *mDa'-chen*. Mastering his dreams, our Lama went to look at the king, and he was already dead. King '*Dzāli-phan* had taken off his turban and was wearing an old *bir-kyi*. [29] Towards the south up the valley from where the king was, there was a lawn with pools of water here and there. The queen was there with the king's corpse. She was in great anguish of fear at being burned, and she was looking round-eyed at the king, hoping that he would say: 'Stay.' But the king did not say anything. Our lama said to the King: 'Do not let the Queen go to her death. She is suffering so much.' The King replied: 'She knows whether she will go to her death or not,' and remained there without speaking (to her). Our Lama had in mind to explain the doctrine of acts and retribution, but as he could not enunciate the speech of the valley-men, this explanation of the doctrine did not succeed. Then the Queen jumped to her death, and although he felt limitless compassion in his heart, there was nothing he could do, he said. [27] When morning came, he sent his assistant Sherap Tenpa to *mDa'-chen* with the results of the diagnosis, for the two valley-men were waiting there. Our Lama sent a message by his assistant to Bu-chung Dorje saying: 'My dream was of such and such a kind. You decide whether it would be wise or not to tell the two valley-men.' Bu-chung Dorje replied: 'We must tell them about the dream quite clearly. They set out and came here on foot to ask for a diagnosis.' So he told them about it quite clearly. The two valley-men cracked their finger-joints (as a gesture of despair), and one of them returned looking quite grief-stricken. The other one went to Narakot, and when he told about the affair of the diagnosis, the valley-men were amazed and from then on they used to say 'That Tibetan lama is a good fellow.' Later on one of these two valley-men returned to the lama's presence, bringing as presents a roll of cloth and some foreign molasses. 'It has happened as the Lama pronounced,' he said, and he begged to place his head at our Lama's feet. 'I beg that my relations and dependents may come within the protection of your responsibility,' he said. [30]

In this astonishing passage we see again an example of the visionary predictive power that were ascribed to the great Lamas, a power which was partially responsible for the great esteem with which they were regarded by all. The entire scene of the first paragraph is a result of the lama "mastering his dreams" and envisioning events happening elsewhere. It should be noted that this passage, like the passage where Chokyab Pelzang predicts the course of a king's career, rather than being the memories of the lama himself, are both reported by the biographer, in both cases the monk Sonam Lodro, who was biographer to both lamas.

It is certainly of interest that in both cases a king named either "Dzālī-phan" (in this instance) or "Dza'i-'phan, the King of Mon" (in the scene from Chokyab Pelzang's biography) is involved, presumably they are one and the same, and the "King 'Byid-ras" of Palden Lodro's amazing séance must be the predecessor, perhaps the father of this ruler.

It is not possible to determine the exact chronology of either this scene, or the scene including the king of the same name in Chokyab Pelzang's biography, but since Palden Lodro died in 1596, it would seem that the successor king "Dzālī-phan" cannot be Vikram Shahi, whose reign began in 1602. [31]

### 3. Other images of Vikram Shahi and the oral history of Tichurong

The thanka is not the only image of a Jumla king. Figures identified as Vikram Shahi and members of his family are also depicted in several sculptures.

In 1971 a Nepal Archeological Department team led by Janak Lal Sharma documented three brass sculptures (and published photos of two) in the Tripurasundari temple in Tibrikot (or Tripurakot), some 45 miles east of present day Jumla. [32] This temple is said to have been built on the site of the palace of Vikram Shahi. [33] Although the sculptures are not inscribed, they were identified by Sharma as depicting Vikram Shahi (fig. 9), his queen Sunakesarā (fig. 10), and a prince (which was not photographed by Sharma's team). [34] These lovely small sculptures resemble in many details religious sculptures or donor figures in the Tibetan or Nepal valley traditions, but the treatment of the robes, with very natural and realistically depicted folds, is unusual. Both the king and the queen are shown on lotus bases, reflecting their elevated royal status. Both are shown in "royal attire", with elaborate robes and jewelry: the king has a turban on his head similar in style to that worn by the Malla kings of the Kathmandu valley. The king is shown in full lotus position, with his left hand in his lap while his right hand appears to be raised in a gesture of teaching. The queen is shown with her right foot lowered in the position of ease, or "lalita asana", with her hands resting in her lap.



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

Queen Sunakesarā/ Sunakesā is a legendary figure in local history. It is said that the queen was of exceptional beauty, and Vikram Shahi was so enamored of her that he even tended to forget the affairs of his kingdom. A neighboring Tibetan king, one Jhampan of Dhaulatri, or Khojarnath, was also taken with the beautiful queen, to the extent that he plotted an attack to carry her away, which he finally managed to do. Vikram Shahi, enraged, made several unsuccessful attempts to recover his queen, but was unable to do so until he enlisted the aid of a neighboring king, Saimālasāi (or Sāimala sāhi) of Raskot; with this king's help the queen was rescued after a battle in which Jhampan was killed. Saimālasāi and Vikram Shahi divided the kingdom of the vanquished king and set up the boundaries of their territories in the copper plate inscription of 1620 that is one of the four historical documents of Vikram Shahi's reign. [35]

In recounting the story of the beautiful abducted queen, Pandey describes it as a "fable" or a "legend of the locality" Sharma acknowledges she is largely known as a "heroine of folklore" (lokakathāko nayi) but claims that she is in fact historical. But Sharma's (and Pandey's) identification of the brass sculpture of the queen as Sunakesarā/ Sunakesā is a not universally accepted even by the locals. Ratnakar Devkota, also citing the testimony of local elders of Tibrikot, identified the brass sculpture of the queen as Agrāvati, wife of Vikram Shahi, and the sculpture of the prince (of which we don't have a photo), as their son Badrī Śāhi. These identifications match the inscription on the thanka. In his later 2007 book, an historical approach to the history of the Jumla kingdom, Devkota seems to solve the riddle of the two queens

when he lists both Sunakesā and Agrāvati as queens of Vikram Shahi, with Sunakesā queen of Chināsīm, (the old Khasa capital of Sinja/Semja) the king's northwestern seat, and Agrāvati queen of Tiprikot, his southeastern palace, with their sons both being shown as crown princes (yuvaraj) presumably inheriting control over the two regions. [36] This seems a plausible scenario. However, as we will see below, the local oral history of the region of Tichurong, to the east of Tiprikot, relates that a Badri Shahi wed a local woman named Agrawati and they were the parents of (a presumably later) Vikramshahi: an example of the confusion in the local history of this royal lineage.

Sharma's Archeological Department expedition found another image said to be of Vikram Shahi, one of a group of clay images in the "Dhāṅsā" (Nepali) or Dri-K'ung (Tibetan) gumpa in Gumbatara village in the lower Dolpo area of Tichurong. [37] The image of Vikram Shahi is shown in sukhāsana (the relaxed form of the lotus position) with his right hand before his chest with his index finger raised, and the left hand in his lap holding a bowl (pātra), interpreted by Janaklal Sharma specifically as a "bowl for grain" (annapātra) (fig. 11). Another researcher into the traditions of Tichurong, Jag Bahadur Budha, a native of the village of Gumbatara, provided us with another more recent photograph of this same sculpture, which he also identifies as Vikram Shahi (fig. 12). [38] Sharma interprets these two positions of the hands as showing a single wish - that the king "wanted to see or hear that the stomachs of his subjects were filled with grain". [39]



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14

Another sculpture of a donor king was photographed in 1992 by Franz-Karl Ehrhard in another gumpa in the same region, Sa-'dul gumpa (or "Chandul" gumpa), about five miles beyond Gumbatara (fig. 13); a more complete photograph was supplied to us by Jag Bahadur Budha (fig. 14). [40] This sculpture is also associated by the local people with a king named Vikram Shahi or Vikram Shah. Ehrhard published his photograph to accompany an important article on this gumpa, aptly named "A Temple at the Crossroads of Jumla, Dolpo and Mustang" where he quotes the biography of the lama Urgyen Tenzin (O-'rgyan bstan-'dzin 1657-1737) regarding this king and the restoration of Sa-'dul gumpa:

Now, at the time of my thirty-fourth year, the *Bhu-pala*, the ruler, the king of Jumla, *Bhi-ri-sras* [by name], as he had issued the strong request to renovate the vihāra of Sa-'dul, I restored the three inner sanctums and erected representations (ie statues) of Mahāmuni, O-rgyan rin-po-che (ie Buddha Śākyamuni and Padmasambhava) and others. What amounted to a *zho* [of silver] from the king [of Jumla] himself, (...and many other donations) – when it all had been brought together and offered, the receptacles were set up [by me]. [41]

We have here another example of a Jumla king cooperating with an eminent Lama to protect and nourish the Buddhist traditions of his domain. But which king? Ehrhard notes that “the names Vikramaśāhi and Vīrabhadurśāhi might have served as possible candidates for the person of the Tibetan rendering Bhi-ri-sras, but their regnal years were 1602-1621 (sic: now accepted as 1631) and 1635-1665, and thus they lived too early”, since the restoration of Sa-'dul, which occurred when the lama Urgyen Tenzin was 34 years old, must have been in 1690-91. The next king in the succession, Vīrabhadraśāhi (1665-1676) is also a bit too early:

In attempting to solve the puzzle, Ehrhard turned to the work of anthropologist James Fisher for the oral traditions of local kings in Tichurong. In *Trans-Himalayan Traders*, Fisher records:

Badri Sah...was...the father (by his Magar wife) of Vikram Sah, who was eventually defeated by the Gorkhas and who is the only named historical figure generally remembered in Tichurong today.  
According to local legend, Vikram Sah, the last raja of Tibrikot (one day's journey downstream from “Tarangpur” toward Jumla) was born less than 200 years ago in Yelakot, which is now a flat, uninhabited piece of land overlooking the Bheri River below the Tichurong village of Gomba. Vikram's mother was a Magar woman named Agra Wati, but because his father's first, presumably high-caste wife in Tibrikot was without a male heir, Vikram was called there to be raja. [42]

This genealogy of course reverses the father-mother to son relationship we find in the thangka inscription - where we see Vikram Shahi and Agrāvātī as King and queen and Badrī śāhī as a prince – and in Devkota's two accounts. But it gave a possible genealogy to account for a later Vikram Shahi who could be the Sa-'dul gompa donor. [43]

So far, there is no clear historical record of a later Vikram shahi among the Jumla kings. As noted by Pandey (1997), the record of the Kalyala kings gets quite muddled and chaotic for some fifty years following the reign of Vīrabhadra Shahi, with a plethora of rulers' names appearing in various documents. [44]

Thus it may be that the Vikram Shahi of the thangka has been conflated in popular memory with another later ruler, who donated the *zho* of silver to Urgen Tenzin's 1690 restoration of Sa dul gompa. We may never know whether the statues in clay in 'bri gung gompa and Sa dul gompa and in brass in the temple of Tripurasundari at Tibrikot are representations of Vikram Shahi of the early 17th century or later successors; we only know that in the history and legends of the people of both Tibrikot and Tichurong, these sculptures represent a beloved king associated with this still famous name.

#### Endnotes

1. The dynasty has been called Kallala or Kalyāla, but Kalyāla is now more generally used. The spellings of the names of the kings vary widely in both historical documents and scholars' accounts. In the case of Vikram Shahi (as we will call him throughout this article) we find Vikramaśāhi, Vikramasāhi (as found in the inscription on the thangka, see below). Vikramśāi is used in the copperplate of SS 1524/ 1602 CE; Vikramśāi and Vikramasāi are both used in the copperplate of SS1542/ 1620; and Vikramasāi is found in the copperplate of SS 1553/1631. Scholars (Sharma 1971, Devkota 1994 and 2007, and Pandey 1997) all tend to use Vikramaśāhī (while the spelling śāhi is used for the princes' names in the thangka inscription). We have used the spellings used in various documents for king's names and other names, to give the reader experience of the wide variations.

2. see Jeff Watt's entry on this motif – “the Mongolian with the Tiger” in HAR: <https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=4355>. It is difficult to interpret this motif in this context, perhaps merely a decorative and presumably flattering addition to the depiction of one of the princes.

3. More on this lama below.

4. wheel, jewel, wife or queen, minister, elephant, horse, general: see <https://www.wisdomlib.org/definition/saptaratna>

5. Photos, transliteration and full translation of the inscriptions can be found, along with detailed photos, in the [Appendix](#)

6. The use of Devanagari script at this period of Nepalese history was limited to the regions of Western Nepal; in the Kathmandu valley the various Newar scripts were in use up until the 18th c. Many Khassa malla sculptures have Sanskrit/Nepali inscriptions using Devanagari script, and also many have Tibetan inscriptions, and at least two (including fig. 6) have inscriptions in both languages/scripts.

7. from Sharma, P R., 1972, pp 18-19: Aśokacalla attested 1255 1270, and 1278; Ripumalla attested 1312 (2 inscriptions) and 1313

8. both his bronze (fig. 5) and painting (fig. 7) are inscribed with the same formula, “May Ripumalla live long”

9. Sharma, P. R., 1972, p 19, n. 57, citing Naraharinath, Yogi, 1965 p. 772: a copper-plate grant of 1376 AD issued from Udumbarapuri, in contrast to Prithvi's inscriptions which were all issued from Sija or Dullu.

10. Pandey, 1970, p.45

11. Sharma, P. R., 1972, p. 19

12. Pandey 1970 45 ff, Tucci, 1956, 121 ff : various chronicles give extensive previous rulers.

13. Pandey 1970, p. 48 where he equates Baliraj, with Hastiraj and Nagaraj

14. though only two claim such descent in writing, the Gorkha Shahs and the Senas of Palpa, see Sharma, P. R., 1972, 16, see also his discussion of Chetris and Thakuris 14-16.

15. Tucci 114-115 quotes from a letter to king Hastiraj from kun dga' bzang po (Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo (1382-1456)); Pandey 1970, p. 40 equates Hastiraj with Baliraj or Nagaraj, but mistakenly describes Kung dga' bzang po as a king. Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo was a crucial figure in the founding of the great Sakya gompas of Mustang.

16. The lists of kings varies according to source. Pandey 1970, pp 50-52, and 1971, pp 39 -42, gives the following chronology of the Kalyala kings from Baliraja to Vikramasahi: Baliraja (1404-1445), Vaksaraj (1445 -1497), Vijayaraj, Visesaraj/ Vivosasai (1498?), Bhanashahi (1528- 1585), Salimashahi (1591-1599), Visekaraj (1599-1600), Vasantaraj (1600), Vikramashahi (1602-1621/31) Tucci compiles lists from two sources, which do not agree in the names or numbers of kings (1956, pp 121-122)

17. see Appendix. Previously attested are copperplate inscriptions of ŚS 1524 (1602 AD), 1542 (1620 AD) and 1553 (1631 AD) which were published by Yogi Naraharinath in *Itihāsa Prakāśa* (2:1/1956 AD) (Devkota 2007: 775-7). See also Pandey, 1971 42-44.)

18. Ehrhard, 2013, p 284, n. 3 (originally published Ehrhard, 1997)

19. The inscription under the portrait of lama reads *phyos-ryad pal-zang la namo*, “Hail to Chokye Palzang”. Although the lama's name, *chos-skyabs dpal-bzang* – Chokyab Pelzang - in misspelled in the inscription on the thangka as *phyos-ryad pal-zang* – Chokye Pelzang, this is not unusual, as the scribes of the smaller monasteries were often prone to such mistakes, and it is almost certain that the lama referred to is Chokyab Pelzang, the second of Snellgrove's *Four Lamas of Dolpo*. Snellgrove referred to the four lamas by poetical translations of their names into English, in the case of Chokyab Pelzang, “Religious Protector Glorious and Good”. In the original edition of *Four Lamas of Dolpo*, Snellgrove misinterpreted the dates of three of the lamas

by one Tibetan sixty-year cycle, so the dates in his original edition were 60 years earlier than those given here. See Ehrhard, (2013: 313, note 1), who explains that this error was first noticed by David Jackson (1978, "Notes of the History of Se-rib and Nearby Places in the Upper Kali Gandaki Valley", *Kailash: A Journal of Himalayan Studies* 6:3, p. 218, note 86 and 1984, *The Mollas of Mustang. Historical, Religious and Oratorical Traditions of the Nepalese-Tibetan Borderland*. Dharamsala: p. 143, note 67) Snellgrove corrected the dates in the preface to the second edition of *Four Lamas of Dolpo* (original 1967 > 1992: preface to the second edition). I have adopted the spelling Chokyab Pelzang from TBRC/ BDRRC [https://www.tbrc.org/#library\\_BannerSearchResults](https://www.tbrc.org/#library_BannerSearchResults) -- input chos skyabz dpal bzang or chokyab pelzang. The site gives dates 1536-1635 (sic: 1625), an unfortunate typo. See also <https://www.tbrc.org/#/rid=P7271> and <https://library.bdrcc.io/show/bdr:P7271>

20. Snellgrove, 1967, p 153, n. 1

21. the numbers in curly brackets, such as the {46} seen here, are the folio numbers of Snellgrove's Tibetan manuscript.

22. Snellgrove, 1967, p 153. Snellgrove notes that the King's "power in these areas seemed to have been unopposed. It is interesting that at this time he should have extended his control into Lo, where the clan-leaders of *Khang-dkar* were still giving trouble." p. 153, n. 1

23. From the sequence of Chokyab Pelzang's autobiography, we know that this incident occurred after the death of the lama's teacher Sonam Lodro, who died in 1581 (Snellgrove, 1967, pp 144-146). This was 19 years before Vikram Shahi is attested as king of Jumla, and 27 years before the thangka was inscribed in 1609. But it is difficult to discern other date points in the biography. David Jackson (Jackson, 1978: p. 219), refers to the events described in this passage as taking place in "the 1580's" which of course is still before the reign of Vikram Shahi, which began ca. 1602. But he gives no further evidence for this "1580's" dating, presumably based on the fact that it had to have occurred after Sonam Lodro's death in 1581.

24. Snellgrove, 1967, p. 170

25. Snellgrove, 1967, 174

26. Snellgrove, 1967, p. 170-171, The incident we quote is among the comments of the biographer after the autobiographical main part of the text, introduced with this passage: "As for our Lama's powers of clairvoyance, [81] we begged him to give us a clear account, but he replied: 'How should I have powers of clairvoyance?' and would not tell us clearly. If we who were in his circle recall these matters in an orderly way and tell just a little, (then events such as this occurred:)"

27. Snellgrove, 1967 pp 9-10 and p. 9, n. 2. Snellgrove did not have access to Pandey's (1970, 1971, 1997) further extensive research.

28. Snellgrove, 1967, p.117-118

29. Snellgrove, 1967, 202, n. 2, notes "This is a Tibetan phonetic spelling of Nepali *birke* (topi), a small round black braided hat, seldom worn in Nepal nowadays, but frequently seen on the heads of Nepali merchants in Darjeeling."

30. Snellgrove, 1967, 202-203, and n. 2 and 3

31. But Pandey's description of the succession of Jumla kings from the last decade of the 16th century reveal a period of considerable confusion. Pandey 1971, pp 41-42

32. sharma, 1971. p. 9- 11 The great Newar scholar Hemraj Shakya accompanied Sharma; he had also travelled through some of the regions of this expedition with David Snellgrove in 1956 (see Snellgrove 1981)

33. Devkota, Ratnakar, 1991: p. 2, also 1994, p. 63.

34. Pandey (1997: 201), also describes the two statues as Vikram śāhi and Śunakeśā Rānī. The spellings of this queen's name vary: Sharma, 1971, p. 11 has Sunakesarā, while Pandey, 1971, p. 43 has Sukanasa, (perhaps a typo) and Pandey 1997, p 196 and 201 has Śunakaśā/Śunakeśā.

35. Pandey (1971: 43 and 1997: 196, 201) and Sharma (1971: 4-5) describe the story of the abduction of Sunkeśā/Sunakesarā and the subsequent struggle to win her back. Sharma (1971: 4) calls Jhampan the Tibetan (*bhote*) king of "khocarnāth Dhauyātrī". Devkota, (2007: 775-776) gives the original text of the copper plate, promulgated in Dhaulatī (dholyātrī mähārājasthāna) in SS 1542/ 1620 CE, setting out the borders of the two kingdoms of Vikramśāi and śāimalasāi.

36. Pandey (1971:43), "fable"; (1997: 196), "legend of the locality"; Sharma, (1971 p. 4) "heroine of folklore" (lokakathāko nayi). Devkota's identification of the statues as Vikram śāhī, Agrāvātī and Badrī śāhī occurs in his earlier work based on the testimony of local Tibrikot elders (1991, p. 3 and 1994, pp 63-64). In his much later opus, an historical approach to the history of the Jumla kingdom, Devkota (2007, p. 488) presents a list of the Jumla Rajas where, in his listing for Vikram śāhī, both Sunakeśā (Chināsīm) and Agrāvātī (Tiprikot) are shown as queens, with two crown princes (yuvarāja) Bahādūr śāhī and Badrī śāhī, among his four sons listed.

37. Snellgrove, 1961, explains that the village of Gumbatara was previously referred to as Dri-k'ung or "just "Gompa" (*dgon-pa*, 'the monastery' ) because it is the location of "the main temple of all Tichu-rong" the name of which is Dri-k'ung gompa in Tibetan, or Dhānsā (Sharma, 1971: 19) "The name of the temple itself is Dar-sa which probably means 'Spreading Place (of the Doctrine)'. An alternative pronunciation is Densa and this seems to be the recognized Nepali form. In this transition area it is very difficult to sort out some of the names." (Snellgrove 1961, p. 36) In another note, Snellgrove writes: " The name Tichu-rong "is unknown to the SI (Survey of India). The Tibetan classical spelling is probably *dri-chu-rong*, meaning "Valley of Fragrant Water" (Snellgrove 1961: 33 n. "a")

38. Jag Bahadur Budha is Managing Director/ CEO of Himalayan Companion Treks & Expedition, and is a M. Phil candidate preparing a book entitled *Culture of Tichurong People* to be published soon. He has been very helpful and has provided us with several photographs (figs. 12 and 14) and has also provided us with much information. He is a native of Gumbatara and visits there often.

39. Sharma, Janaklal, 1971, p. 21. Sharma interprets the smaller, headless figure in fig. 12 as the mother of Vikram Shahi.

40. Snellgrove, 1981 pp 39-41 gives a description of this gompa from his journey of 1956, but he does not mention the sculpture. Sharma (1971: p. 30) also describes the gompa and calls it "Chāmdul gumbā".

41. Ehrhard, 2013 (originally in Ehrhard 1998), p. 336.

42. Fisher, James F., 1987, *Trans-Himalayan Traders*, p. 30. The village of Gomba in his account is the present day Gumbatara.

43. Ehrhard surmised that Virabhadra śāhi (1665-1676), grandson of the Vikram Shahi of the thangka, might be the Badrī Sah of the local legend, whose son, Vikram Sah could then be the generous donor to Sa'dul gompa. He notes "This Vikram śāh (*Bhī-ri-sras*) can easily be confused with his predecessor of the same name (and this fact might have contributed to his local fame)" (Ehrhard 2013 (originally in Ehrhard 1998), p. 337, and n 13, where Ehrhard also quotes Corneille Jest (1971:75) "Le seul personnage historique connu des Tichurong-pa est Bikram Saha Thakurī, roi de Jumla, qui a été le bienfaiteur des temples des '*bri-gun* et de sa-*dul dgon-pa* ou on conserve sa statue", echoing Fisher's description of Vikram sah as "the only named historical figure generally remembered in Tichurong today" (1987: 30). There are many inconsistencies in the stories handed down by oral tradition. Fisher's account of the legend of Vikram Sah further recounts that... "He and the other Kalyal rajās were eventually defeated in 1786 by Gorkha troops commanded by Kazi Shiva Narayan Khatri and Sarday Prabal Rana (Regmi: 1961, 111) who were fighting for the grandson of Prithvi Narayan. Vikram said that rather than see his kingdom surrendered he would commit suicide, which he did." (Fisher 1987: 30). Ratnakar Devkota, in his account based on oral sources (1991: 10 ff,

1994: 75 ff) while reversing the father-son relationship of Badri Sah – Vikram Sah, also continues - in detail - the story recounted by Fisher of Vikram's suicide in the face of the Gorkha takeover. Devkota's version relates the tragic suicide of all three, first King Vikram, and then Queen Agravati and Prince Badri after the defeat at the hands of Gorkha forces. Putting the reversal of the genealogy aside, this chronology presents problems. Even if a later Vikram shahi were the donor of the restoration of Sa-dul gompa in 1690, it would have been a stretch for him to commit suicide to avoid surrendering his kingdom 96 years later.

The historical record compiled by Pandey records several kings after Virabhadra Shahi, and it fell to Sūryabhānāsāhī to play the role of the last of the Kalyal kings, passing his last year as a prisoner in Kathmandu after being defeated by the army of Rana Bahadur Shah (Pandey, 1997 207-209; Devkota 2007, p. 489)

44. Pandey, 1997, p. 203. One of the challenges of dealing with the history of Western Nepal results from plethora of principalities that made up the post-Khasa Malla Bāise (twenty-two) states. Each of these kingdoms, some very small, had its own royal lineage, and many royal names are found repeated in several different lineages. So there were in fact two other kings named Vikram Shahi in the region, one reigned in the kingdom of Doti, to the southwest of Jumla, in the last quarter of the 17th century (Pandey, 1997, 176-177 and fig. 12), and another in Dullu (south of Jumla and east of Doti) at the beginning of the 18th century (Pandey, 1997, 257-258). The Doti lineage also had a king named Ripumalla, about a hundred years after the Khasa Malla King of the same name of figs. 5 and 7 (Pandey, 1997, p. 174). See also Pant, 2009: 306-307.

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## Appendix

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