

A HISTORY OF NEPAL

Nepal emerged as a unified state over 200 years ago, centred on the Kathmandu Valley with its 2000 years of urban civilisation. While John Whelpton's history focuses on the period since the overthrow of the Rana family autocracy in 1950–1, the early chapters are devoted to the origins of the kingdom and the evolving relations of its diverse peoples. By drawing on recent research on Nepal's environment, society and political institutions from the earliest times, the author portrays a country of extraordinary contrasts, which has been constantly buffeted through history by its neighbours, the two Asian giants, China and India. Economic and political turmoil over the last fifty years came to a climax in the massacre of the royal family in 2001, when the country erupted into civil war. The book represents the first widely available one-volume treatment in English of the whole span of Nepalese history to appear for over a generation. Its comprehensive and accessible approach will appeal to students, professionals and those visiting the region for the first time.

JOHN WHELPTON, who works as a teacher in Hong Kong, is a historian and linguist. He has worked and travelled extensively in Nepal, and has written numerous articles and books on the country. These include *People, Politics and Ideology: Democracy and Social Change in Nepal* (1999, with the late Martin Hoftun and William Raeper) and *Kings, Soldiers and Priests: Nepalese Politics and the Rise of Jang Bahadur Rana, 1830–1857* (1991).

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Key events

BC	
130,000?	Hand-axe man in Dang and Satpati
c. 1700?	Beginning of Indo-Aryan movement into the Indian subcontinent
c. 400?	Birth of the Buddha at Lumbini
AD	
465	Changu Narayan inscription of King Manadeva
647	Nepalese troops assist Chinese envoy in punitive expedition against an Indian state
879	Beginning of Nepal Era
1097	Nanyadeva of Karnataka takes control of Mithila
c. 1100	Establishment of Khasa empire in western Nepal
1200	Commencement of Malla period in Kathmandu Valley
1349	Shams ud-din Ilyas Shah of Bengal raids Kathmandu Valley
1382	Jayasthiti Malla gains control of Kathmandu Valley
1482	Death of Yaksha Malla, last sole king of Kathmandu Valley
c. 1533	Migration of Sherpas from Kham (Tibet) into Solukhumbu
1559	Drabya Shah seizes Gorkha
1628	Jesuit John Cabral is first European to visit the Nepal Valley
1650 (or earlier)	Treaty with Tibet gives Kathmandu joint control over the Kuti and Kirong Passes, the right to mint Tibet's coinage and permission for Newars to open trading houses in Lhasa
1715	Establishment of Capuchin mission in Kathmandu

Key events

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1743	Prithvi Narayan Shah crowned king of Gorkha
1768–9	Gorkhali conquest of Kathmandu Valley
1786	First Nepal–Tibet War
1791	Second Nepal–Tibet War
1792	Chinese invasion of Nepal
1793	Kirkpatrick mission to Kathmandu
1802–3	East India Company's envoy Captain Knox in Kathmandu
1806 April	Assassination of Rana Bahadur Shah and beginning of Bhimsen Thapa's predominance
1809–10	Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh halts Gorkhali expansion in the west
1814–16	Anglo-Gorkha War
1837 July	Dismissal of Bhimsen Thapa
1840	Appointment of 'British ministry'
1842	'National Movement' of courtiers and army press King Rajendra to grant powers to his junior queen
1846 September	Jang Bahadur Rana becomes prime minister after Kot Massacre
1850	Jang Bahadur Rana's visit to Europe
1855–56	Third Nepal–Tibet War
1856	Jang Bahadur Rana becomes maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung
1857–8	Nepal assists British in suppression of Indian Mutiny
1877	Death of Jang Bahadur Rana
1885 November	Shamsher Ranas seize power
1904	Chandra Shamsher Rana assists the Younghusband expedition to Tibet
1914–18	Around 100,000 Nepalese involved in support of Britain in First World War
1919	Opening of Trichandra College in Kathmandu
1923	Britain recognises Nepal's complete independence
1924 November	Chandra Shamsher Rana's speech calling for abolition of slavery
1934 January	Major earthquake destroys many buildings in Kathmandu Valley
March	Removal of C-Class Ranas from the Roll of Succession

1939–45	Mobilisation of Nepal's resources in support of Britain in Second World War
1941 January	Execution of 'Four martyrs'
November	Abdication of Juddha and accession of Maharaja Padma Shamsher Rana
1947 January	Formation of Nepali National Congress
August	India becomes independent
November	Tripartite agreement gives India twelve and UK eight of existing Gurkha battalions
1948 January	Padma Shamsher Rana promulgates constitution
April	Following Padma Shamsher Rana's resignation, Mohan Shamsher Rana becomes prime minister and maharaja
August	Formation of Nepali Democratic Congress
1950 April	Merger of Nepali National Congress and Nepal Democratic Congress to form Nepali Congress
November	King Tribhuvan's flight to the Indian embassy
1951 February	Formal end of Rana regime and establishment of coalition government (now celebrated annually as Democracy Day) under restored King Tribhuvan
April	Bir Gorkha Dal revolt in Kathmandu
November	M. P. Koirala forms Congress government after collapse of coalition
1952 January	Raksha Dal mutiny, leading to banning of Communist Party
1953 June	Second M. P. Koirala government
1955 March	Death of King Tribhuvan in Switzerland
1956 January	Tanka Prasad Acharya appointed prime minister with cabinet of Praja Parishad and independent ministers
July	K. I. Singh becomes prime minister with cabinet of United Democratic Party members plus royal nominees
November	K. I. Singh government dismissed
1958 February	Mahendra announces appointment of Constitution Drafting Commission, government without a prime minister, and a nominated Advisory Assembly
1959 February	Promulgation of constitution
February–April	Voting in general election
May	B. P. Koirala becomes prime minister

Key events

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- 1960** December Mahendra removes Congress government and imposes direct royal rule
- 1962** November Subarna Shamsher Rana calls off Congress armed resistance to Mahendra after outbreak of war between China and India
- December Promulgation of Nepal's new constitution
- 1963** April New Civil Code (Muluki Ain)
- 1964** Land Reform Act
- 1965** January Secret agreement for Nepal to use other sources for arms only if India unable to meet its requirements
- 1968** May Subarna Shamsher Rana pledges 'loyal co-operation' with King Mahendra
- October Release of B. P. Koirala and Ganesh Man Singh from prison
- 1969** June Kirtinidhi Bista, prime minister, denounces defence agreements with India
- 1972** January Death of King Mahendra and accession of King Birendra
- August Congress launches armed raid from India on Haripur (Sarlahi district)
- 1973** Suppression of Jhapeli communist group's Naxalite-style campaign of violence
- 1974** Three-month army operation to clear out Khampas using northern Nepal as base for raids into Tibet
- March Biratnagar bomb attempt on Birendra's life
- 1975** February Birendra makes Zone of Peace Proposal
- June Indira Gandhi declares emergency rule in India
- 1976** December B. P. Koirala and Ganesh Man Singh return to Kathmandu from India and are immediately arrested
- 1979** May Birendra announces referendum on future of Panchayat system
- June Surya Bahadur Thapa becomes prime minister
- 1980** May Referendum decides in favour of reformed Panchayat system rather than return to multi-party democracy
- December Third amendment to constitution provides for direct election of Rastriya Panchayat
- 1985** May Congress launch civil disobedience campaign
- June Bomb explosions in Kathmandu

xiv	<i>Key events</i>
1986 May	Start of Gorkha National Liberation Front agitation in Darjeeling
May	Second general election under the reformed Panchayat system
1987 December	End of Gorkha National Liberation Front campaign in Darjeeling
1989 March	India imposes semi-blockade of Nepal
November	Janata Party wins Indian elections, Rajiv Gandhi replaced by V. P. Singh
1990 February	Start of 'People's Movement'
March	Start of nightly 'light-outs'
March	Patan 'uprising' begins
April	Dismissal of Marichman Singh Shrestha's government, appointment of Lokendra Bahadur Chand as prime minister and Darbar Marg shootings
April	King meets opposition leaders and lifts ban on political parties
April	Dissolution of Rastriya Panchayat and Krishna Prasad Bhattarai appointed prime minister
November/ December	People claiming to be refugees from Bhutan set up makeshift camps in Jhapa
November	Promulgation of constitution
November	CPN (Unity Centre) established
1991 January	Merger of CPN (M) and CPN (ML) to form Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist)
January	Establishment of United People's Front as electoral vehicle for the far-left Unity Centre
May	General election and formation of Girija Prasad Koirala's Congress government
December	Girija Koirala's cabinet reshuffle intensifies conflict within Congress
1992	Recognition of Nepali as one of India's national languages
February	Thapa and Chand factions amalgamate to form United National Democratic Party
April	Police shooting of left-wing demonstrators in Kathmandu
1993 May	Death of Madan Bhandari and Jivraj Ashrit in jeep accident at Dasdhunga

Key events

xv

1994 May	United People's Front splits into Baburam Bhattarai and Nirajan Vaidya factions
July	Girija Koirala requests dissolution of parliament
November	Man Mohan Adhikari appointed prime minister following elections giving CPN (UML) a plurality
1995 March	Prachanda's faction of Unity Centre renames itself CPN (Maoist)
September	Central committee of CPN (Maoist) adopts 'Plan for the historic initiation of the People's War'
September	UML government leaves office after parliament passes a no-confidence motion
September	Sher Bahadur Deuba becomes prime minister heading Congress-National Democratic Party-Sadbhavana coalition
November	Police launch Operation Romeo against Maoist supporters in Rolpa
1996 February	Commencement of 'People's War'
May	Girija Koirala is elected president of Nepali Congress
September	Joint meeting of both Houses of parliament approves the Mahakali treaty by a two-thirds' majority
December	New trade and transit treaty with India
1997 March	Deuba fails to gain vote of confidence
March	Swearing-in of NDP-UML-Sadbhavana coalition under Lokendra Bahadur Chand
October	Chand government loses no-confidence vote
October	Surya Bahadur Thapa becomes prime minister heading NDP-Congress-Sadbhavana coalition
1998 January	Formal split of NDP into separate Chand and Thapa parties
March	Dissidents formally split from UML to form the CPN (Marxist-Leninist)
April	Thapa resigns in accordance with original agreement with Congress
April	Girija Koirala sworn in as prime minister of a Congress minority government
May	Beginning of Kilo Sierra 2 police operation against the Maoist insurgents
August	CPN (ML) ministers join Koirala government

xvi	<i>Key events</i>
	December CPN (ML) ministers resign from government
	December Formation of new Congress-UML-Sadbhavana-Independent cabinet
1999	April Death of Man Mohan Adhikari
	May Elections held in two main phases
	May Krishna Prasad Bhattarai appointed prime minister
	September Seven policeman killed and an inspector taken prisoner at post in Rukum
	December Bhattarai sets up commission under Deuba to make recommendations on Maoist problem
	December Thapa and Chand factions of the National Democratic Party announce they will re-unite
2000	February Police burn down houses in Rukum following death of nineteen police in bomb explosion
	May Girija Koirala replaces Krishna Prasad Bhattarai as prime minister
	July Government declares <i>kamaiyas</i> (bonded labourers) free
	August Death of musician Praveen Gurung in collision with vehicle allegedly driven by an inebriated Prince Paras
	September Maoists attack Dunai, district headquarters of Dolpo, killing fourteen policemen and destroying government buildings
	December Five die in police firing in Kathmandu in rioting over alleged anti-Nepalese remarks by Indian film star Hritik Roshan
2001	January Birendra approves ordinances setting up Armed Police Force and system of regional governors
	February Adoption of 'Prachanda Path' as party doctrine at Maoists' second national conference which also elected Prachanda as party chairman
	April Maoists kill seventy policemen in attacks at Rukumkot (Rukum) and Naumule (Dailekh); government announces plans for Integrated Security and Development Programme involving key role for army
	June Crown Prince Dipendra shoots dead king, queen and seven other members of royal family before apparently committing suicide

Key events

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June	Raj Parishad proclaims Dipendra (now on life support) king and Gyanendra regent
June	Death of Dipendra and accession of King Gyanendra
June	Koirala's resignation after army's failure to engage with rebels holding captured policemen
June	Sher Bahadur Deuba appointed prime minister and declares ceasefire
August	Leaders of constitutional leftist parties meet Prachanda at Siliguri in West Bengal
August	Talks begin between government and rebels
November	Prachanda announces withdrawal from negotiations over government's refusal to concede demand for constituent assembly
November	Rebels break ceasefire with attacks on police and (for the first time) an army barracks in Dang
November	Declaration of state of emergency throughout country and full mobilisation of army against rebels
2002 February	Bamdev Gautam and most CPN (ML) members rejoin UML
February	Rebel attacks on Mangalsen, district headquarters of Acham, and on nearby airfield kill around 150 soldiers and police as well as the local chief district officer
May	Deuba obtains dissolution of parliament after clashing with Koirala over extension of state of emergency
June	Formal split in Congress
July	Unity Centre and Masal merge and their electoral vehicles (United People's Front and National People's Front) combine to form People's Front, Nepal
September	Forty-nine police killed in attack on post in Sindhuli
September	Rebels overrun Sandhikharka, district headquarters of Arghakhanchi, killing sixty security personnel
October	Following discussions amongst political parties, Deuba formally requests king to approve postponement of the elections until November 2003

xviii	<i>Key events</i>
October	Gyanendra announces dismissal of Deuba, postponement of elections and his own assumption of executive powers
October	Appointment of Lokendra Bahadur Chand as prime minister
2003 January	Maoist gunmen assassinate head of Armed Police Force
January	Announcement of ceasefire between rebels and government
May	Commencement of five-party agitation for ending of royal rule
June	Appointment of Surya Bahadur Thapa as prime minister
August	Maoists announce withdrawal 'for the time being' from negotiations and ceasefire
November	Government announces plan to form civilian militias
2004 March	Maoist attack on Bhojpur bazaar kills twenty-nine security personnel
March	Maoist attack on Beni

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Notes on romanisation and terminology

When using Nepali words in the text, I have generally followed the principles explained in my Nepal volume in the World Bibliographical Series (Whelpton 1990: xxiii–iv). The standard Indological system of transcription has been taken as a base, but diacritics have been omitted and some modifications made to come closer into line with anglicisations well established in non-technical writing, and also to reflect the actual pronunciation of Nepali as perceived by speakers of English. The main points to note are:

- ‘Ch’ has been used for both of the consonants respectively transcribed as ‘c’ and ‘ch’ in the Indological system or as ‘ch’ and ‘chh’ in another common style of romanisation; the difference is roughly that between the sounds of ‘ch’ in the English words ‘exchange’ and ‘change’.
- ‘S’ is used for the dental sibilant and ‘sh’ for both the palatal and retroflex sibilants; the three sounds were clearly distinguished in Sanskrit but are all now pronounced by most Nepalese as a single sound somewhere between the ‘s’ in English ‘sip’ and the ‘sh’ in ‘ship’.
- Indological ‘v’ is represented by ‘b’ or ‘w’, according to current pronunciation, and the voiced retroflex consonant similarly transcribed as ‘r’ rather than ‘d’ when this is nearer to the actual sound (e.g. ‘Pahari’ rather than ‘Pahadi’). I have, however, retained the original ‘v’ in a few words taken directly from Sanskrit, notably Vajracharya and *vamshavali*.
- Both the first and second vowels of the Devanagari script are transcribed as ‘a’, even though the first sound is normally pronounced either like the English ‘o’ in ‘son’ or the vowel in ‘sock’ whilst the second is nearer to ‘a’ in ‘father’. Many Nepalese when romanising their own names still follow the nineteenth-century English convention of employing ‘u’ for the first sound, so the spellings ‘Jang’ and ‘Shamsher’ used here are often replaced by ‘Jung’ and ‘Shumshere’. I have tried to follow individuals’ own preference when they are mentioned as the writer of a book or as an informant rather than as historical characters.

Nepali terms used in the main text have been romanised on the above principle, italicised on first occurrence and defined in the Glossary (pp. 259–67).

With some misgivings, I have also decided to continue using ‘Nepalese’ as an adjective of nationality and reserve ‘Nepali’ for the language alone. I realise that this usage will strike many as old-fashioned but still feel it is appropriate to have different words for language and nation in a country as multi-lingual as Nepal. I have also retained the established English spelling ‘Gurkha’ when referring to Nepalese troops serving in the British army, but the more correct ‘Gorkha’ as an ethnic label and for Nepalese in the post-1947 Indian army.

Abbreviations

CIAA	Commission for the Investigation of the Abuse of Authority
CPN (M)	Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist)
CPN (Maoist)	Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
CPN (ML)	Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist)
CPN (UML)	See UML
GAESO	Gorkha Army Ex-Servicemen's Organisation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRD	Integrated Rural Development
NDP	National Democratic Party
NESP	New Education System Plan
NFC	Nepal Food Corporation
NWPP	Nepal Workers' and Peasants' Party
RNAC	Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation
SATA	Swiss Association for Technical Assistance
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
Tam.	Tamang
ULF	United Left Front
UML	Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist)
UMN	United Mission to Nepal
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNPM	United National People's Movement
UPF	United People's Front