

Nepal can avoid such adverse impacts of television viewing. The country can take hints from the experiences of developed nations to provide for programming which will assist children in their development. Programs on science, culture, sports techniques and so forth are bound to have tremendous positive impact on the mental development of children. However, it would be wise to continue with cartoons and similar programs which will make for "balanced" television programming.

Some positive steps were seen taken by parents during examinations. They would ban television during the week or two before the commencement of examination in order to make sure that their children concentrated fully on their studies.

However, though such control is welcomed, a comprehensive television policy for children is necessary, a need which has yet to be fulfilled. Thus, even if it is still early to talk of an "impact" of television on children, predictions can be made. After all, as television is definitely here to stay, we might as well make the best out of it.

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Notes

¹This study was conducted in the months of July, August and September 1989, and the programs mentioned here refer to that time period.

²Class status as used here is defined by income. A middle class family's earnings range from about three thousand to six thousand rupees (Nepali Currency) per month.

³This was brought out in a recently conducted seminar from September 26 to 29, 1989 on "Mass Communication" in Kathmandu.

⁴"Hera, Seckha ra Gara."

MERCANTILISM AND DOMESTIC INDUSTRY IN WEST-CENTRAL NEPAL: SIGNIFICANCE FOR ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY¹

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Introduction

The country of Nepal was never formally incorporated into the boundaries of the British Empire. Accordingly, based on state records, ethnographers have assumed that the community and domestic production remained relatively autonomous until 1951 when the Royal family regained control of the country from the autocratic rule of the Thapa and Rana Prime Minister families.

Our work, focusing on the merchant town of Bandipur in west-central Nepal, uncovered quite a different picture of domestic production and rural economy. We based our historical work on 200 years of business records stored away in the musty cupboards of the shops of merchants. These records include ledgers, letters, purchase orders and receipts, railroad freight bills, shipping insurance documents, court and other litigation records, and tax and land records. They also include many bundles of promissory notes recording, in addition to loans, credit given to the villagers for purchases of fabric from the merchants.

Previously, the usually accepted sources of documentation about the state have been official government records, ancient and not so ancient engravings, and so forth. But if the state is considered in terms of a combination of interests struggling with each other for hegemony,² then official records are biased by the particular interest or alliance of interests in control of the state. They show the struggle of the divided "subaltern"³ or opposition interests, with their own counter-hegemonies, from the standpoint of the dominant interest mainly by inference. The merchant records, while generally not "official" documents, provide documentation for the extension and rise of a major new form of state representing the global dominance of capital, as it was experienced in Nepal. Importantly, the documents give insight into the struggle of capital to establish its control and legitimacy in the countryside. For Bandipur and other Newar bazaars, and the surrounding villages that came under their influence, the

documents show the content beneath ethnographic descriptions which have too often remained on the level of appearances.

These promissory notes record in increasing detail from at least one and a half centuries the nature of commodities traded, credit and loans, rates of interest, forms of collateral, names of the shopkeepers and their stores, and the names of villager buyers and their villages. In addition to the kinds, values and volumes of cloth sold, the rates of surplus (or exploitation) and profit indicating the changing relationship of labor and capital can also be calculated from the ledgers. The self-conscious ideological form of the new hegemony is indicated in the wording of contracts between the producers and the merchants. The letters between the various merchants present a picture of the complex trade relations within Nepal. Letters between Nepali merchants and commission agents in India indicate the manner and extent to which the Nepali merchants were integrated into the bazaars of British India.

The picture painted by the documents is, first of all, that from the early 19th century, fabrics from the factories of Britain were already entering into the Nepali countryside from British India. And, while one can presently see the extent of the merchants' landholdings in the west-central region of Nepal, the records show that the usury and expropriation of wealth and land involved in the trade of the industrial fabrics increasingly established the merchants as an important force in the state, but in the form of the hegemonic interests of the state and caste ideology, not of their merchant capital. The merchants displaced the control of Chetri landlords over landed property, entered some of their sons in the government as officers, used their wealth to influence other officials, and based their legitimacy in notions of Hindu Dharmic suzerainty in alliance with Brahman priests. The assertion of a national bourgeoisie class from its base in the bazaars in British India during the last three decades of British rule (Ray 1988) gave birth to a transformation of scale and content of merchant activity in Nepal as well.

While the merchants did not until recently directly apply their capital to production in Nepal,⁴ their trade in industrially produced fabrics imported from British and, later, Euro-American, Japanese and Indian factories meant that they no longer existed autonomous from production in the manner of mercantile capital prior to the industrial revolution. Rather, their trade and, through it, production in Nepal became increasingly subordinated to industrial capital and its reproduction. These points have been overlooked when the merchants are analyzed in their own terms—for example, of "survivals" of Newar culture.

Lewis and Shakya (1988), as a case in point, write that the industrial fabric trade "has reduced many Newar trading families to being *mere* middlemen supplying imported goods" (*italics added*),

when by definition traders *are middlemen*. The difference between the trade of precapitalist domestically produced commodities and those of industrial capitalists is that in the former case the merchants were merely middlemen who traded goods between various relatively independent communities without themselves controlling production in these communities. Their profits came by exploiting the communities through the trade itself: purchasing cheap and selling dear. In the latter case, the trade becomes the last stage in the circulation of commodities represented in the production process. It is through the merchants that the value of the commodities produced in the factories is realized as money for the factory owners, who then purchase new machines, raw materials, and labor power to begin production again on an ever increasing scale. The merchant profits come to the merchant as a share of the surplus extracted from the factory workers in the labor process. For the factory owner, these surpluses that he pays out to the merchants are just another cost of doing business. As we will see, a destruction of domestic industry that Lewis and Shakya want to emphasize resulted from this subordination of the merchants — and through them, the countryside — to large-scale industry.

While this new kind of trade did not destroy the community in form, allowing anthropologists to describe it in terms of a hypothetical traditional culture, by the 1930s (two decades before the so-called revolutionary opening of Nepal to the west) their trade had essentially ruined most cloth production in the surrounding villages. This separation of industry and agriculture implied that consumption of cloth and other goods, and therefore production and reproduction within the village, had become incorporated into the circulation of industrial production.

The Gharelu under the Ranas and the Saraswati Factory in Bandipur

It was in this context of a domestic industry devastated by foreign commodity imports, that in the early 1930s the Prime Minister of Nepal, Juddha Shamsher Rana (reigned 1932-44), instituted a last ditch program to save this domestic industry (Prasad 1975). In a futile effort to develop a measure of economic freedom and self sufficiency, and to salvage the collapsing hegemonic basis of his regime in landed property and the village community, he initiated a range of programs aimed at reviving production in the countryside and laying a basis for large-scale industrial production.

In 1939 the Prime Minister formed a "Cottage Industry Department" (*Gharelu*), which was to organize and develop both old and new village industries. This program was to ostensibly serve the interests and promote the economic well-being of the villagers by reviving the once flourishing cloth weaving industry which had disintegrated in the onslaught of imported fabrics. The Cottage Industry Department was to supply raw materials and mechanical

looms to the villagers at cheap prices and on easy payment terms. The villagers were to then sell back the finished products. They were to be organized in industrial cooperative associations which would provide the raw materials, tools, and marketing facilities.

Four prominent families of Bandipur took advantage of Juddha Shamsher's cottage industry program to build a textile weaving factory. The district subba Bishnu Lal Pradhan, the clerk Harka Man Shrestha, the fabric retailer Krishna Kumar Piya, and the brothers Hira Lal and Shyam Krishna Pradhan (representing a large textile import house in Bandipur) combined in 1942 to build the Saraswati Factory.⁵

Bishnu Lal Subba (Pradhan) was admired by the people of Bandipur, and he seems to have been sincerely motivated by the goals set out by the Prime Minister for the Cottage Industry Program. But his choice to combine with the three merchants and use their capital to build the factory meant that he had asked people representing the same interests that had brought the demise of industrial production to rebuild it.

According to letters sent between his wholesaler brothers, Shyam Krishna and Hira Lal Pradhan, the merchants were interested in the factory because the Nepali government had imposed quotas and was supplying subsidized thread to the villagers in order to encourage the development of domestic production. The letters document how the merchants used their connections, influence, and wealth to obtain bulk quantities of the subsidized thread. Simultaneously with the construction of the textile factory, they were struggling to receive import quotas and gain control over wholesale and retail markets for imported cloth in the surrounding countryside. They were also hoarding fabrics controlled by quotas to force prices up. The textile factory was part of their strategy to "make money any way you can," as reiterated in their letters — i.e., to make profits and reproduce capital. This also included black marketeering, currency manipulation, and hoarding of commodities.

The clerk, merchants and district subba presented their factory as a cooperative association meant to educate the villagers and encourage the development of indigenous production, as indicated in the factory letterhead and receipt (illustrations 1 & 2), but they themselves took the surplus in the form of profits. This was perfectly legitimate according to the logic of Juddha Shamsher's program, which was aimed at developing an industrial capitalist class. However, his intent seemed to have been to develop this class from the producers themselves and not to strengthen the already existing mercantile capitalists.

**Saraswati Cloth Factory
Bandipur**

In this factory, whomever wants to take the training and, if after training, they want to have a loom in their own home, they will be trained without fee. Whomever wants to work in the factory, they will get paid monthly, according to the factory rules. In this factory, you can get different kinds of domestically produced cloth and printed Damar Kumari Sari, and many kinds of thread are available.

Pieces	Name of Article	Yards	Cost	Amount
Total				

Cashier's Signature

Illustration 1. Translation of the receipt of the Saraswati Cloth Factory

In this factory, whomever wants to take the training and after training if they want to have a loom in their own home, they will be trained without fee. Whomever wants to work in the factory themselves, they will get paid monthly, according to the factory rules.

In this factory, you can get different kinds of domestically produced cloth and printed Damar Kumari Sari, and many kinds of thread are available. Look at the sample and try to contribute to the factory.

Manager—

Bishnu Lal Subba

Illustration 2. Translation of the letterhead of the Saraswati Cloth Factory

The partners hired a master weaver, Hari Bhakta Shrestha, from Chetrapati, Kathmandu to build the looms and oversee production. Now a small *kinara* owner, he describes how Bishnu Lal Subba was originally inspired by a government run factory in Kathmandu in 1942. He used his position of subba to elicit the aid of the government and organize the factory. It took the four families the year of 1942-1943 to construct the factory building. It was an approximately sixty meter long, two story brick structure with a series of rooms opening onto a long porch in front on the lower level (half of which remains). The second story similarly opens onto a long covered balcony which makes

the roof for the porch. The weaving master built 37 flying shuttle peddle looms (25 *chaakune* and 12 *pitaa*) which were placed in the long series of rooms on each level.

Hari Bhakta brought six craftsmen who trained the labor force for several months and then returned to Kathmandu. All the laborers, except two Brahmans from Chiti, were from Bandipur.⁶ Initially, the numbers of men and women were about equal, but by the time the factory shut down, nearly all of the fifty workers were women.

Production in the Saraswati Factory lasted from 1943 to 1945. The fabric was sold both from the factory and from outlets already controlled by the merchants in the surrounding countryside and in the Lamjung hills to the north. Production was stopped in the summer of 1945 due to the Nepal government's reluctance to supply subsidized thread,⁷ combined with the desire of the dominant share holders, Shyam Krishna and Hira Lal Pradhan, not to share profits with other two families.⁸

Appeal.

Sarkaar [Government]. Everything is OK here. About the factory, because of the shortage of thread, it is difficult to keep the factory operating. The thread is nearly about to finish, so that we will have to close the factory. To close it, we have to send away all the workers. If the thread comes, it will be difficult to get them back. To bring all the workers together, it takes a long time. If we do not terminate them, but give them salary without work, it is difficult for the factory. We have written about this many times to the Gharelu [Cottage Industry Department], but up to now we have not heard anything. If you cannot supply a full supply of thread, then you can just give two to four months supply so the factory can keep on going. If you could arrange this thing, it would be very helpful so the factory may not be closed. If I write something wrong, please forgive me.

Na. Subbaa Bishnu Lal Pradhan

2002 Bhadra 4. [1945 A.D. August 20]

Illustration 3. Appeal from Subbaa Bishnu Lal Pradhan to the government about the Saraswati Factory

For some reason, the Nepal government was hesitant about supplying the thread. An appeal in August, 1945 (Illustration 3) to the government claimed that, without the subsidized thread, the merchants would have been unable to continue operating the factory. As yet we have not found the resolution of that problem in the letters. The weaving master claims that the factory was running extremely well, but the partners fell at odds, disbanded the factory, and divided the looms among themselves in proportion to their shares. The letters of Shyam Krishna and Hira Lal Pradhan show how they

continued to connive to obtain subsidized yarn and continue production in their own houses into 1947. For example, the following series of references are found a series of letters in 1947:

... The price of thread has gone up, so I am not planning to send it. And if you ask for the control thread to weave in Bandipur and sell, they will give it to you. To sell the thread is not permitted now. So, we should take 20 to 30 loads of the thread to weave. If you send them now, because of winter you can save 10 to 15% on the porter's wages. The government will give you a 10% discount in the weaving cloth too. If you calculate all these things, it is profitable. If you send this thread in the summer, it is not profitable. It takes many days. It may get wet. Because of that, I am thinking of taking this thread. What is your idea? Please let me know soon. If you run 8 to 10 looms, the time will not take so long. I will take the permission to sell the cloth in Bandipur ...⁹

... The thread is coming continuously. Our cloth is little, but growing...¹⁰

... But in India, from the fifteenth of January or the first of Maagh, they are going to discontinue to control system. It is in the news of the Indian government. What is going to happen, nobody can say. Whatever happens, take profit and sell whatever you have. That would be the best idea. Even if they abolish the control system, you may not get goods soon. And again, we may not even get (the things) at the same price, because they have increased the price of raw cotton. Therefore, you do not have to sell the goods at a loss. From India, they are going to abolish the control system. But here, they have increased the prices of all the goods. I cannot understand anything.¹¹

... About the control thread, they have sent an order from Nepal to Pokhara to sell it. You may get the news from the post or from the Gorkha Patra.... And the wage for *dhami* is 5 paisa per mile. So count the miles carefully. The rate of thread they will fix from Nepal....¹²

... please send me two copies of the finger prints of you left and right hands to get the application for the thread.¹³

Once the Congress Government came to power in India, it soon forced the Nepal government to end the quota system on fabric imports and stop the thread subsidies, allowing again an uncontrolled flood of foreign and, especially, Indian textiles into Nepal. The letters of the Shyam Krishna and Hira Lal indicate that they liquidated their previously hoarded textile stocks in anticipation.

... Nowadays the things are not like before. Sell the things that you have at home soon and make a profit. Do not keep in stock. We do not know what is going to happen. The Congress government is trying to break the quota system. Mahatma Gandhi is trying his best, and I do not think that it will take a long time to break the control. If it takes a long time, it still will not last more than two to three months. But even if the control breaks, and then you will not be getting so much material from India because there will not be enough booking on the train. There may not be so many things coming from India. So it is better to sell what you have at home. So sell all the thread too.¹⁴

... Sell the cigarettes ... It is not profitable just to keep them. After the cigarettes from Thori arrive, the price of cigarettes is going to fall. Now you do not have so many customers, so I did not think it was such a good idea to send a lot of goods. Now there is rumor that the control may break. The quota things will all be in the market again. That is why we just cannot take the material for Maagh and Phaalgun now. If you can sell things, then I will send them to you. A lot of goods are coming from Lhassa. It does not appear that the price will go up. So it is not a good idea to take things now and keep them. Just take the profit and sell the things you have now. Nobody can say anything tomorrow. The Congress Government is going to break the control. And the quota controlled things will be distributed in the villages pretty soon. After a month you can get 2 and 1 numbered things. After the quota things come onto the market, you will not be able to sell any of the black market goods....¹⁵

... The cloth Controls were abolished yesterday. But from one region to another. In Nepal [Kathmandu], they are still giving by the quota system. Even if the quota system were to break, you would not get the goods. Maybe after one or two months, you can get them. But even if you can get them, you cannot take them from one to another region. And the price may even rise one and one-half times. We got the things at the control rate. The merchants of this place also think the same thing. Even if the control is abolished, it will not make any difference for Nepal [Kathmandu]. But I think that after four to six months, something will happen. So whatever you have, try to sell and get out of stock. The quota goods we have, we will not lose anything on that.... The goods we have, try to sell soon. But do not discount them. Even if the control is abolished, you cannot get the things, and it seems that the rate is going to be higher than the control rate. Again, they have not controlled fully for Nepal. So think this over, and work accordingly from it.¹⁶

They were joined in this by all the other large wholesalers in Bandipur. The prices dropped, and the merchants saw larger profits

in the fabrics imported from the large factories of India, Europe, the United States, and Japan, if not the futility of continuing their production.

Discussion

Blaikie et al. (1980 — see note 5) were essentially correct when they attributed the failure of the Bandipur textile factory to foreign commodity trade and industry, though they did not sufficiently emphasize the merchant participants' willing collaboration in this.

For the merchants, at least, if not Bishnu Lal Subba, the construction of the factory was not an attempt "to revive the once vigorous cotton-weaving industry of Bandipur" (Blaikie et al. 1980:126). Weighing potential surplus against the capital invested (the rate of profit), and not the goals of the Gharelu program, at all times seemed to determine the merchant participation in the Saraswati Factory. Thread subsidies and strict quota controls over imports made it profitable. They had no interest in developing the autonomy of the Nepali countryside as envisioned by Juddha Shamsher. In practice, they were shifting production from the household into the direct control of capital, using the Gharelu program as its basis, and thereby attempting to transform their indirect mediation by trade of textile commodities into a direct one of wage labor as a commodity.

As noted above, the labor force eventually came to consist mostly of women. Thus, the factory in particular and the Gharelu in general not only shifted textile production into the domain of capital, but it took a sector of production controlled by women and shifted it over to the control of the patriarchal interests and relations which already characterized merchant capital indigenously and industrial capitalism globally. The production and knowledge of the women entered into the control of male owners and managers, and their products as commodities came under the control of male merchants. The factory owners apparently eventually took the gender relations within the household and domestic skills of the women as their basis.

The new gender mediation of women in the Saraswati Factory underlines the significance of the destruction of the domestic textile industry in undermining women's autonomy. In recent decades, this has turned out to be a double edged sword in Asia. While transnational corporations have presupposed the same conditions as the basis of recruiting a vulnerable and unorganized female labor force in order to destroy organized labor in western Europe, the United States, Japan, and now in the Newly Industrialized Countries, the women of Asia and elsewhere in the third world have begun to organize, often far more militantly than their male counterparts.¹⁷

The historical experience of capitalism globally has been the expansion of the domain of capital from the products of industry to industry itself, from the products of labor as commodities to labor itself as a commodity, and from mediation between communities to the basis of community. That the bazaar merchants of Bandipur were unable to transform themselves into a national industrial class resulted because their trade presupposed and based itself on already developed industrial capital elsewhere. While the large merchant houses of India such as Birla, Tata and so forth used the bazaar as a basis to take the opportunity of global crises in capitalism to enter into direct partnership with foreign capitalists (Ray 1988), the Bandipur merchants only expanded their trade with India (while the palace has been trying to fill the role of state monopolist).

Their expansion of direct control over the countryside continued to take the form of expansion of landholdings and usury, not of capital applied directly to production. The mercantile capital presupposed the same direct peasant production assumed by the landed ruling interests of the state. By the time that Juddha Shamsher attempted to implement his Gharelu and other programs, the interests represented in the industrial class development in India and a dependent form of mercantile class development within Nepal were already too far developed.

Another important structural difference of the Saraswati factory from domestic production was its dependence on imported thread. Thus, from the viewpoint of Indian factories, the Saraswati factory and, for that matter, the Gharelu program, consumed the thread as the last step in the commodity circulation represented by industrial production that was shown above to have characterized the merchant trade. This point is emphasized by the immense trade of both quota and other threads into the countryside that was being carried out by the merchants simultaneous to and after the Saraswati factory, as documented in their letters. In the latter period, the merchants were constantly calculating whether they could more profitably weave the thread on their own looms or just sell it in the villages.

The significance of this discussion for anthropologists is that community and culture in Nepal cannot be analyzed in their own terms. Even prior to the entry of industrial capitalist interests in the form of mercantile capitalism into Nepal, the state contained various interests which controlled peasant surpluses. These included, at the least, merchants and the hegemonic landed property groups. After the rise of industrial capitalism in western Europe, the community in Nepal became increasingly mediated by the bazaar and merchants representing foreign industrial capitalist interests in the form of industrial commodities and mercantile profits, usury, and rents. By the 1930s this was a process that even the Rana rulers of Nepal were forced to acknowledge as they found their hegemonic basis eroding

away. The subsequent change of regimes and development of the state and community have been shaped by this growing dominance. Anthropologists cannot analyze the community in isolation from this larger totality; they must understand the latter theoretically. While every particular analysis need not be a study of the totality, the anthropologist must understand Gramsci's (1971) riddle that the part contains the whole.

Notes

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²The term "hegemony" is used in the sense of Gramsci (1971) to mean where the ideas of the ruling class are internalized into the institutions of the society, that the ruled participate in their own domination.

³The subaltern classes, by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a 'State': their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society, and thereby with the history of States or groups of States.... (Gramsci 1971:52).

⁴Control of land as landlords and usury cannot properly be considered as application of capital or investment into production, rather, it merely asserts rights over surpluses without changing how they are produced.

⁵Blaikie et al. (1980:126) write, "Around 1940 attempts were made to revive the once vigorous cotton-weaving industry of Bandipur and skilled workers were imported from the Kathmandu Valley to operate the looms, which at one time reputedly numbered around 250; but a combination of disputes among the shareholders of the company concerned, and enormous price increases of the cotton yarn with restrictions by India on its export to Nepal, brought about a rapid decline." The date, numbers of looms, and origins of the workers are corrected in this text. We also differ somewhat from the assessment given by Blaikie and Seddon regarding the significance of the rise and decline of the textile factory.

⁶This contradicts Blaikie et al.'s (note 5) description of the workers as specialists brought from Kathmandu. Rather, the factory owners assumed the already transformed conditions of the people and their domestic skills, especially of the women, to provide a wage labor force from the Bandipur locale. Indeed, the project was presented as a revival of production.

⁷Rising prices of the thread given by Blaikie et al. (note 5) seem to have only been a factor some years after the factory had been disbanded by the merchants.

⁸There are other examples of attempts by families in Bandipur to organize joint corporate ownership but to have them fail as individual family interests overrode the collective one. Presently capital is also organized in the framework of *sangai* "together" (or inappropriately "joint") families, which similarly introduces a contradiction into the tendency of capital to concentrate ownership and production when the families break into *chuttai* "broken" (or inappropriately "nuclear") families. As Marx pointed out, this is a dialectical contradiction, because it eventually leads to greater

concentration as the smaller divided capitals of the *chuttai* families are absorbed by larger ones.

⁹Mikesell (1988), Appendix D, Letter 8, Paus 3, 2005 B.S. (1947 A.D.), Shyam Krishna in Thamel, Kathmandu to Hira Lal Pradhan in Bandipur.

¹⁰Mikesell (1988), Appendix D, Letter 10, Paus 10, 2005 B.S. (1947 A.D.) Shyam Krishna in Bandipur, to Hira Lal Pradhan in Devghat, Chitwan.

¹¹Unpublished letter [09/04/89:1], Paus 14, 2005 B.S. (1947 A.D.) Shyam Krishna in Kanpur, India (Add.: Purusottan Das Ganapati Ray, Kanpur) to Hira Lal in Bandipur.

¹²Mikesell (1988), Appendix D, Letter 11, Paus 28, 2005 B.S. (1947 A.D.) Shyam Krishna in Birganj to Hira Lal Pradhan in Bandipur.

¹³Mikesell (1988), Appendix D, Letter 16, Aasaadh 22, 2005 B.S. (1947 A.D.) Shyam Krishna in Bandipur to Hira Lal Pradhan in Kathmandu.

¹⁴Mikesell (1988), Appendix D, Letter 2, Maagh 10, 2005 B.S. (1947 A.D.) Shyam Krishna in Kathmandu to Hira Lal in Bandipur.

¹⁵Mikesell (1988), Appendix D, Letter 3, Maagh 11, 2005 B.S. (1947 A.D.) Shyam Krishna in Kathmandu to Hira Lal in Bandipur.

¹⁶Unpublished letter [8/16/89:2], Maagh 7, 2005 B.S. (Postmarked Jan. 22, 1948 A.D.) Shyam Krishna in Kanpur, India (Add.: Purusottan Das Ganapati Ray, Kanpur) to Hira Lal in Bandipur.

¹⁷Discussed in detail in Swasti Mitter (1986).

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