

# CHANGING FACES OF NEPAL

## THE GLORY OF ASIA'S PAST

An Exhibition at UNESCO

of Photos taken by  
*The Chitrakars of Bhimsen Sthan*  
*Photographers for a Century*



# **CHANGING FACES OF NEPAL - THE GLORY OF ASIA'S PAST**

**AN EXHIBITION AT UNESCO  
OF PHOTOS TAKEN BY  
THE CHITRAKARS OF BHIMSEN STHAN  
PHOTOGRAPHERS FOR A CENTURY**

**DECEMBER 1997**

This Catalogue to the Exhibition for UNESCO Division of Cultural Heritage and  
for the Permanent Delegate of Nepal to UNESCO, H.E. Ambassador Keshav Raj Jha  
has been compiled and written by Susanne von der Heide

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*Cover photograph:*

*Kantipur Mandir (Temple) opposite Kashthamandapa Mandir near Durbar Square in Kathmandu.  
The temple houses Nasa Deo, the god of musicians, a manifestation of Lord Shiva.  
Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1909.*

*Back page photograph:*

*Two princesses at the court dressed in lavishly ornamented robes and adorned with rich jewellery.  
Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1920.*

## **Table of Contents**

Preface to the,Photographic Exhibition	5
Introduction	7
Words of Greeting	8
Welcome to Nepal	9
Acknowledgements	10
The Past in the Present	12
Pioneers of Early Photography in Nepal	17
Photographs	32
References	92



## **Preface to the Photographic Exhibition**

### **"Changing Faces of Nepal - The Glory of Asia's Past - The Chitrakars of Bhimsen Sthan - Photographers for a Century"**

*UNESCO Paris, December 1997*

This book presents a large number of photographs taken by the Chitrakars of Bhimsen Sthan in Nepal during the past century. They are a very precious heritage of Nepal and of humanity, since they provide us with scientific records of living history. For example, many photos document important buildings protected under the World Heritage Convention, immediately before and after the devastating earthquake of 1934. These photographs illustrate the cultural evolution and transformation that have taken place in the Kathmandu Valley (notably in the three royal cities of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur), in people's fashion, the townscape and historic buildings - Nepalese traditional, European neoclassical, and modern. It is interesting to observe how the influence of the outside world took shape, in a harmonious way, in palaces and residences built by the Rana dynasty (which ruled up to 1951) at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the country was largely closed off. Some of the buildings have been destroyed by fire or by the 1934 earthquake, and others have been largely transformed by their inhabitants. Yet these photographs have in the past made scientific conservation and restoration possible in the case of some buildings.

The exhibition "Changing Faces of Nepal" includes some sixty prints from original glass negatives which have been preserved by the family of the Chitrakar clan of Bhimsen Sthan. Some of these photos are presently being shown to the public for the first time. It is to the descendants of Dirga Man and Ganesh Man Chitrakar, photographers at the palaces of the reigning families, that credit is due for having amassed, preserved and continued the photographic legacy of their family in an almost complete state over three generations, a period of some one hundred years.

The outstanding cultural heritage of Nepal, and hence the cultural identity of the Nepalese people, are now threatened by the accelerating development process induced by profit-oriented economic activities and mass tourism. Environmental deterioration as well as organized and illegal plunder of cultural goods compounds the adverse effects on the state of this irreplaceable heritage. As a first step in protecting this unique living environment, which is enhanced by the tradition and the beauty of the Himalayas, from the risk of losing its value, the people's inspiration and wisdom may be refreshed through the present exhibition "Changing Faces of Nepal".

The citizens, empowered by their cultural tradition, may then move forward policies aimed at enhancing both the cultural and economic value of their heritage, thereby meeting the objective of the World Decade for Cultural Development, which is coming to completion during the present exhibition. It is UNESCO's privilege to mark this historic moment.

The Organization has also actively collaborated with the Government and the people of Nepal in carrying out a number of heritage preservation projects, for example, within the framework of the International Safeguarding Campaign for the Kathmandu Valley World Heritage Site. UNESCO is proud to hand over this cultural heritage which is part of the legacy of the past and the present to the future generations beyond the turn of the century.

Our sincere thanks are to the authors and owners of these photographs and to the organizers, in particular H.E. Mr Keshav Raj Jha, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Nepal to UNESCO,

Dr Susanne von der Heide and T.T. Thingo (Ngari Rinpoche) for their special efforts which made the present exhibition and catalogue possible. Our thanks are also to HimalAsia - Cultural Heritage and Educational Foundation, whose generous financial assistance has enabled the publication of the catalogue and the printing of the photographs.

UNESCO Division of Cultural Heritage

Mounir Bouchenaki, Director

Hideo Noguchi, Chief for Asia/Pacific & Europe

Sonia Ramzi, Chief of Promotion

## Introduction

It gives me immense pleasure to present this exhibition, "Changing Faces of Nepal - The Glory of Asia's Past", which depicts photographs taken by successive generations of a Chitrakar family of Kathmandu, during a period of about a century.

These photographs capture historically very important architectural monuments, places and personalities as well as events of Nepal's past. They also convey an idea of the rich cultural heritage and the splendid beauty of the country.

I am extremely happy to launch this important exhibition, particularly on the national day celebration and the auspicious occasion of the birthday of His Majesty the King of Nepal.

May I also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to UNESCO for its generous cooperation and timely arrangements regarding this exhibition.

I would like to thank in particular Mr Federico Mayor, Director General of UNESCO, Mr Mounir Bouchenaki, Director of the Division of Cultural Heritage, Mrs Sonia Ramzi, Chief of the Promotion Section in the Sector for Culture, Mr Hideo Noguchi, Chief of the Asia Pacific Section, Mrs Tania Fernandez de Toledo, Chief of the Division of Cultural Events and Public Relations, and Mrs Susanne von der Heide, Coordinator for Special Programmes to the Division of Cultural Heritage, in UNESCO.

I would also like to thank the Director General of the Archaeological Department of His Majesty's Government, Dr Saphalya Amatya.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank T.T. Thingo (Ngari Rinpoche) and HimalAsia Cultural Heritage and Educational Foundation for facilitating this event, and the Chitrakar families for providing their valuable pictures of the Kathmandu Valley, and also

enabling me to display them to the Member States of UNESCO's family.

Keshav Raj Jha  
Permanent Delegate of Nepal to UNESCO  
Royal Nepalese Ambassador to France

## Words of Greeting

Through the centuries Nepal has been well known for its rich cultural and artistic creativity. The Chitrakars, one clan in particular, have specialized in revealing the world in form and colour, with all its array of wonders, that we can admire even today. Generations of these artists have kept up their work, and thereby helped to form the fundamental richness of the cultural heritage of Nepal.

Before the dawn of democracy in Nepal in 1951, the Chitrakars in general were given exclusive rights to three aspects of our society. Up to the present day they paint at houses and public places, they draw religious pictures and paint masks and ritual pots for festivals and other religious ceremonies, and they brew arrack (rakshi) for ritual and social purposes. Some of the elite among the Chitrakars were also masters in drawing portraits, including in the European styles of the 19th century, and also became photographers. Hard though it may have been, they were masters at adapting to the demand for contemporary artistic work placed by their commissioners. The Chitrakar family from Bhimsen Sthan was one group of pioneers in photography, and Dirga Man Chitrakar's photographs from the beginning of the 20th century, displayed in this exhibition, are certainly some of the oldest photographic evidence of Nepal's past, particularly as it relates to the Kathmandu Valley. Many buildings, monuments, palaces, streets and people seen in these photographs either collapsed in the great earthquake of 1934 or otherwise fell prey to the passage of time. The exhibition "Changing Faces of Nepal - Glory of Asia's Past - The Chitrakars from Bhimsen Sthan - Photographers for a Century" takes us back to the past, like a "time machine", and reveals to us how and on what scale the architectural landscape of the Kathmandu Valley has changed within a century.

To have collected some sixty photographs of the three cities of the valley and other places around the country, as captured with various models of cameras by three generations of a family, and to have exhibited them all together is itself a great feat. On their success in

doing so I would like to congratulate UNESCO, and Mme Susanne von der Heide in particular, who has taken great pains to organize this remarkable exhibition. I am confident that this photo exhibition to be held on the eve of Visit Nepal Year 1998 at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris will help Nepal to attract more tourists from all over the globe, and especially from Europe. Finally I would like to express my thanks to Mr Mounir Bouchenaki, Director of UNESCO, Division of Cultural Heritage, to Mr Hideo Noguchi, Chief for Asia/Pacific and Europe, to the Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Nepal to UNESCO, H.E. Ambassador Keshav Raj Jha, and to T.T. Thingo (Ngari Rinpoche), President of HimalAsia Foundation, for their kind support and sponsorship.

Saphalya Amatya  
Director General of the Archaeological Department  
Kathmandu, Nepal

## Welcome to Nepal

His Majesty's Government of Nepal is celebrating Visit Nepal Year in 1998 to enhance the tourism industry. On the eve of such an important occasion, the photo exhibition entitled "Changing Faces of Nepal" at UNESCO headquarters in Paris is very timely and appropriate. I am confident that this photo exhibition will provide visitors a moving retrospective on old Kathmandu.

The world is changing fast but Kathmandu, the cosmopolitan capital of the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal, still has the aura and ambiance of a magical city out of the medieval past. At all crossroads and temple squares, butter-lamps are lit, incense burnt, hymns sung, and rituals performed with devotion, indicating the continuum of age-old traditions. In narrow alleys of the old township, dwarf buildings adorned with rich wood-carved windows lean at 45 degree angles out over the street, giving an impression that they could fall down anytime, but they have been there for centuries as a witness to the uncanny technology of medieval carpentry. The cultural landscape of Kathmandu still exhibits a reminiscence of one of the last remaining living cultures of Asia's past: *dhungedharas*, the stone spouts that supply water to every locality, *pokharis*, the ponds that add a placid dimension to the city, *bahals*, the community courtyards that serve as culture centres, *dabulis*, the platforms at major crossroads that provide cultural recreation, and *chours*, the open public areas that provide breathing space.

In Nepal, the heritage is defined not just by architectural monuments in the manner of the Acropolis in Athens, Sanssouci of Germany, Alhambra of Spain, the Pyramids of Egypt and Stonehenge of the South of England. Rather, it comprises the total physical as well as spiritual manifestations of the strong cultural living force of Nepalese society. Music, dance, devotion and festivals are deeply embedded in every monument in Nepal. People live with them; they are a part of them. There are many different ethnic groups who speak about 70 languages, still practise their rituals and wear colourful indigenous

costumes. Because of religious tolerance and cultural coherence, never in the history of Nepal have any ethnic riots taken place in the name of religion or language.

Along with its many superlative natural and cultural wonders, Nepal also has two and a half decades of professionalism in the service of mountaineering, trekking, white river rafting, and safaris. Nepal may not be a place to enjoy the luxury of man-made tourism, but it is an ultimate destination for those who want to see the incredible world of nature and culture and experience the glorified past of a medieval civilization in the 21st century. The photographs at the exhibition "Changing Faces of Nepal" will speak for themselves. If they seem unbelievable, then come and visit Nepal in 1998 to witness the cultural extravaganza of yesterday's world. You are welcome. Finally, I wish the photo exhibition a grand success. Thank you.

Karna Sakya  
National Coordinator  
Visit Nepal 1998

## Acknowledgements

Fortunately I have had the immense pleasure to be associated during a large part of my life with art and art-historical subjects, and photography, being one branch of artistic endeavour, has been a special source of pleasure ever since I myself engaged in some experimental photographic studies.

The old photographic work of Nepal came to my notice for the first time during the years of my student life at Tribhuvan University here in Nepal, and gradually I discovered more such photographic items, which stimulated my curiosity to search out the beauty of Nepal's past. Understanding that these documents are part of the important cultural heritage of the country, I have been trying to encourage my friends who have collections of glass negatives and photos of old Nepal, whether big or small, to preserve these treasures.

It was not so very long ago, while speaking on various aspects of preserving the cultural and traditional treasures of Nepal, that the highly respected, and dear friend, Honourable Madam Kamal Shah presented me with a few photos of her family together with the request to do what I could to promote and make available Nepal's culture and heritage to the world. As the source of my inspiration for organizing this exhibition, I owe her my profound thanks.

One of the many factors which made this exhibition possible is the very well-kept glass negative collection of the late Ganesh Man Chitrakar family, glass-plate prints from which are shown in this catalogue. Hard work and patient efforts have gone into printing and enlarging the pictures by both of the brothers Kiran and Arun Chitrakar, to whom I want to express my sincere thanks, as well as to their mother Champa Devi and their brothers Pushpa and Trilokya.

My very special thanks goes to H.E. the Permanent Delegate of Nepal to UNESCO, Ambassador Keshav Raj Jha, at whose initiative this exhibition came into being, and without whose intensive cooperation it would have hardly been able to take place.

My sincere thanks also go to our Director General, Mr Federico Mayor, and our Director of the Division of Cultural Heritage, Mr Mounir Bouchenaki, for giving me the opportunity to prepare this exhibition. I express deep appreciation as well to Mrs Sonia Ramzi, Mr Hideo Noguchi and Mrs Anne Chantal Lampe for their guidance, encouragement and cooperation. Also I would like to thank Mrs Tania de Toledo for her kind cooperation.

I would like to express special thanks to Mr Samar Karmacharya and the families of Mr Dambar and Mr Bishnu Shrestha, and gratitude to Mr Jagdish Chitrakar, for his tireless efforts to contribute his knowledge to this exhibition. Likewise I wish to sincerely thank Mr Madhan Chitrakar, Mr Prem Lal Chitrakar and Mr Bakhat Bahadur Chitrakar for introducing me to so many Chitrakar families, who provided me with much valuable historical information and assistance for my research work. I would like very much to name them all, but their numbers would strain the capacity of this acknowledgement, and so I would request them to understand that I am nevertheless greatly in their debt.

Thanks are also due to Mr Narayan Shamsher J.B. Rana, to Mr Diamond Shamsher J.B. Rana, to Mr Purushottam Shamsher J.B. Rana, to Mr Sadeep Shamsher J.B. Rana, to Mr Jivan Shamsher J.B. Rana and Mrs Kalpana Rana, who have been extremely helpful in supporting my research work.

My thanks also go to the Director General of the Archaeological Department of His Majesty's Government, Dr Saphalya Amatya, and to Mr Karna Sakya, Coordinator of the 'Visit Nepal Year 1998', whose enlightening guidance and advice contributed a lot to the exhibition.

My very special thanks to Mrs Edeltrud Büchler for her constant support of my research work and to Mr Philip Pierce, whose tireless

assistance and hard work made this publication possible in a very short period of time.

And last but not least, my sincere thanks to my friend and partner T.T. Thingo, Ngari Rinpoche, for his supportive cooperation which made carrying out this task much easier.

One final expression of thanks goes to Mr Govinda Shrestha and his staff at Ratna Pustak Bhandar, who have put much energy into making this publication possible. I sincerely hope that the readers of this catalogue will enjoy discovering the beauty and glory of Asia's past.

Susanne von der Heide

## **The Past in the Present**

### **Cultural Development in the Kathmandu Valley and the Significance of the Chitrakars as Painters**

The cradle of Nepal's artistic and cultural development lies in the Kathmandu Valley. The valley's history is intimately bound up with the Newar ethnic group, who probably gave the country its name. They are held to be the original inhabitants of the valley, but later mixed with other ethnic groups, and finally - in part because of their acceptance early on (Licchavi period, 4th to 9th centuries A.D.) of a caste system from India - developed an independent culture of unrivalled force. The land was shaped by various religions and the orthodox rules of some of them - such as Hinduism and Buddhism - as well as by a variety of religious concepts propounded by various cults within the spectrum of these major religions: for example, Shaktism, Tantrism and - specifically associated with Nepal - the Shiva-Linga cult. These diverse religious influences, combined with the legends of old folk belief, supplied a ceaseless wealth of motifs for painters, sculptors, architects, gold-, silver- and coppersmiths, wood-carvers and stonemasons who were members of the ethnic group of Newars.

Apart from influences from Tibet, the kingdom of Nepal was shaped above all by the socio-political, religious and cultural sway of India. Nevertheless, Nepal retained its own identity. The rule of Jayastithi Malla (1382-1395) brought a change, in the form of a new system oriented towards India's Hinduism that divided the inhabitants of the valley into profession-based castes. It was then that the Pun (or Chitrakar) painters acquired the caste status that would remain theirs up to the middle of the 20th century. In spite of these reforms there arose, from out of the extremely complex ethnic heritage, in a steady developmental process that unfolded over centuries, a multi-ethnic state which presented a relatively homogeneous picture of itself to the outside world. It was only in 1768 that the country, which was divided up into various principalities and kingdoms, was united by

King Prithvi Narayan Shah, and the sovereign rule of the Shahs, which continues up to the present, began. Later it tottered for a period of some one hundred years, when the dynasty of the Ranas summarily seized executive power, allowing the Shah kings to be honoured as mere national symbols and titular rulers of the country. From 1846 to 1951 the maharajas of the Rana family ran the kingdom themselves as prime ministers.

In 1951, following the flight of King Tribhuvan (1906-1955) from Nepal to India, in a move coordinated with Jawaharlal Nehru and the new Indian government, the Ranas were forced to submit to a coalition government. Nepal, hitherto warily aloof, now opened up to the rest of the world.

#### **The Founding of the First Extended Kingdom under the Shahs**

Prithvi Narayan Shah (1769-1775) conquered the Kathmandu Valley in 1768. From his position in the city of Kirtipur, he needed 25 years to bring the three royal cities under his control. The contingent of soldiers from the British East India Company summoned to help defend against him were unable to prevent the conquest and returned to India. From then on Prithvi Narayan Shah felt mistrust towards the English and, wherever possible, sealed off his land from its influence. Prithvi's forefathers probably came from Rajasthan, and had fled to the town of Gorkha west of Kathmandu. With Gorkha as their base, they had united, one after the other, the various surrounding principalities and petty kingdoms of the local ethnic peoples. The legal code they created was the most important step in the later unification of the country under Prithvi Narayan Shah, and he himself attached great value to nurturing a feeling of nationhood. Home-grown products were encouraged by him, and the development of the arts was part of this.



While the Shah rulers that followed him did not interrupt the traditional artistic workmanship, they did not particularly further it either. Presumably they lacked the financial resources to support art, having used up everything to equip their armies. They had their eyes fixed on building a new nation and on uniting the eastern and western areas of present-day Nepal.

Of significance for the further development of artisanship and the fine arts in the later Rana period was the relationship the Shahs had with the Tibetans, the Chinese and the British. There were recurrent military conflicts over commercial resources with Tibet, which at the time was under the sovereign control of the Chinese Manchus. Following the peace agreements with the Tibetans and Chinese, direct contacts with Peking were established, which offered the Shahs a certain amount of security from the British presence in India, the latter's power having particularly increased from the middle of the 18th century onwards. They maintained very restrained relations with the British, not because they feared having to share trading privileges with the foreigners but because they looked disparagingly upon people who did not worship their gods. Border problems eventually led to a war between the Nepalese and British - from which the latter, following several setbacks, emerged victorious. In 1816 the Peace Treaty of Segauli was signed; among other things, it stipulated that Gurkha soldiers could henceforth be recruited by the British, and that a British residency would be established in Kathmandu. The first diplomatic relations with a Western world power were entered into with great reserve. In spite of this cautiousness on the part of the Shahs, the British steadily gained influence, thanks to various trading advantages. In addition, intrigues were increasingly debilitating the royal family. The cultural side of life was greatly ignored during these politically unsettled times. Nevertheless, the heritage of religious and traditional

art survived, even if it was largely restricted to the folk level. The practice of shielding the land from outside cultural influences that had been pursued by the late Malla kings (1382-1768) and the Shahs (and later - to a certain extent - the Ranas) harboured great advantages for the various painting traditions of the Newar Chitrakars. Because of it the uniquely Nepalese tradition of producing sketch-books with drawings of religious content, for example, was preserved, since the Chitrakar painters who were involved in the work remained at the time unaffected - or only moderately affected - by other cultures and their traditions. At the end of the 19th century, and more particularly at the beginning of the 20th century, the Chitrakar painters, instead of Pun or Pú, the Newari name for painter, started calling themselves by the Nepali equivalent, Çitrakár (anglicized to Chitrakar). The Chitrakars are not only painters of scroll-paintings and frescoes in temples and palaces, but up to the present have continued to create masks and paintings for certain ritual occasions among the Newars, and also to produce statues and to paint ceremonial vessels. Certain families are also responsible for painting buildings.

During this period, however, interest in Western culture slowly began to develop among the country's ruling families, though their admiration for China was also very great. Bhimsen Thapa (1772 or 1779-1839), the prime minister of the country, and his family had a predilection for both European military and court attire, for example. His preferences lay with French uniforms, and he had French advisers come to Nepal to train Nepalese soldiers - additional testimony to the caution paid to the British. Even before the Rana families, he had palatial residences built for himself, such as Bagh Durbar (constructed in 1805) on the south-eastern edge of the old city, and Sil Khana in Lagan and Sil Khana in Chauni (both probably erected between 1815 and 1820). The buildings reflect his architectural tastes, and exhibit

elements both of the classical Newar style and influences of the Moguls, as well as European Neoclassicism. In his former residence in Chauni is now located Nepal's National Museum, and there, too, are found the portraits of him carried out by the Chitrakars under the influence of Mogul painting, but left unsigned in accordance with the custom of the time.

Of the then British resident in Kathmandu, Brian Hodgson, we know that he employed three local artists in 1833, they being under commission to prepare studies of animals and other natural subjects for him. It may be assumed that they were Chitrakars.

### **The Rana Oligarchy**

In 1846 one of the commanders in the Shah army, Jang Bahadur Kunwar (later Rana), put a bloody end to the intrigues at the court of the Shahs, and then proceeded to set up a family oligarchy that would last more than one hundred years. The Rana prime ministers hoped, by means of a strict administration and a new legal code, to secure the collection of taxes and maintain law and order. Further, the Ranas were able to wrest total economic power for themselves, whereas the Shah royal family was humiliated into shadows of their former selves. Once Jang Bahadur Rana had himself proclaimed the maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung, he tempted to become the equal of the king, and was able to undertake initiatives in the same manner as the latter. The title was important, among other reasons, for the settling of marriages. The Shahs and Ranas continue even today to be allied with one another in this way.

In order to strengthen their trading position vis-à-vis Tibet/China and to prevent opposition to them in India from causing trouble, the Ranas, in contrast to the Shahs, maintained close relations with the British,

and even paid visits to Great Britain: in 1850 Jang Bahadur Rana, accompanied by two brothers, Jagat Shamsher and Dhir Shamsher, became the first maharaja of the Indian subcontinent to undertake a trip to England, and afterwards to France.

In 1857, the year of the Mutiny, the Indians' first war of independence, Jang Bahadur sent the English 12,000 Gurkha soldiers to help to suppress the Sepoy Rebellion. In recognition, Jang Bahadur received back the territory between the Karnali River and the district of Gorakhpur that had been lost in the 1814-1816 war against the English. Less than thirty years later, in 1885, the Indian National Congress was founded, which in time was to lead the country into independence.

Firm trading links were formed with India, which had been experiencing rapid industrialization and urbanization ever since the British occupation. Nepal exported more to the country than it imported; the profits went into the pockets of the Ranas. Nepal's first wave of industrialization came under the Rana ruler Chandra Shamsher (prime minister from 1901 to 1929). Among other things, he had a diesel power supply station and, to transport goods, a ropeway built. In 1908 he travelled with his nephew Rudra Shamsher and a large entourage to Europe, where, besides England, he visited France and Italy. Within fifteen years Maharaja Chandra Shamsher had managed to get the English to recognize the independent status of Nepal. Under his rule, moreover, various administrative and social reforms were carried out. For example, in 1924 slavery was abolished once and for all, and suttee, the self-immolation of widows, prohibited.

The cultural changes in Nepal under the Ranas were sweeping. To be sure, tradition, art and culture were not threatened under the Rana dynasty, but nonetheless the Nepalese aristocracy nourished a growing taste for Western cultural and consumer goods, which they used to

represent their power. India was their model in this. Their ostentatious, pseudo-Baroque whitewashed palaces are still to be found in Kathmandu. While the Ranas also had various grand temple sites constructed during their hold on the government, more than anything else it was by building impressive residences that they left behind monuments to themselves. For such constructions they ordered Carrara marble and Murano glass from Italy, and costly Art Nouveau decorations and French furniture for shipment to Nepal. This was surely also meant to impress the English, who they hoped would, besides recognizing their country as an independent state, help them to build up their own military and set up an arms industry.

Apart from their attachment to European furniture, fashions and grand military parades, the Ranas developed a love for the theatre, and often visited corresponding venues - for example, the Corinthian Theatre in Calcutta. In painting, they were drawn to the naturalism of English and French artists, and an infiltration of mundane motifs of purely aesthetic value into the religious art of Nepal began. Within this first cultural interaction with Europe, which was limited to the Nepalese aristocracy, the demand for art came down to the demand the Ranas had for wall decorations in their large palaces - such things as family portraits, hunting scenes, landscapes and still lifes.

Part of the demand was met by imports from abroad. Court painters from the Chitrakar caste especially employed to that end were confronted with the latest acquisitions; less often European artists were invited to the palaces of the Rana rulers, probably in order to prevent them from coming into contact with the people.

The first time a Newar artist travelled abroad was when Bhaju Man, a painter of the Chitrakar caste, formed part of the entourage during J. B. Rana's trip to England and France in 1850 - a turning point in the

esteem in which Nepalese artists were held, having hitherto remained anonymous, given that their fundamentally religiously motivated work was not judged as an artistic achievement but as merit earned towards a better rebirth, the goal being the attaining of Nirvana.

In general, the Chitrakar artists now had to try, as best they could, to copy from Western models and to adopt new techniques and colour schemes on the basis of European pictures, to the extent that their divergent tradition allowed. During the trip that Prime Minister



*Mathbar Singh Thapa (1798-1845), appointed Mukhtiyar and Commander-in-Chief in 1843. Natural colour and gold, attributed to Bhaju Man Chitrakar. National Museum in Chauni.*

Chandra Shamsher made to Europe in 1908 with his nephew Rudra, the artists Dirga Man and Badra Man Chitrakar had the opportunity to become acquainted with European culture and art.

The artists used new techniques: besides gouaches, oil colours and water-colours were the media of choice. Canvas and hardwood to work with were imported from Europe. Stylistically, the idealizing, two-dimensional character true to the Oriental nature of Indo-Nepalese painting was replaced by naturalistic motifs under a logic of spatial



*Maharaja Jang Bahadur Rana (governed 1846-1856, 1857-1877). Oil on canvas by Dirga Man Chitrakar. National Museum in Chauni.*

perspective. Painted stage décor also came into being at this time: the aristocracy, taking its cue from developments in colonial India, took pleasure in having small theatres built in which performances modelled on Western and Indian concepts were staged, and for these painted backdrops and curtains were required.

A reevaluation of the idea of art occurred in Nepal, namely away from a type of art motivated by myth and religion towards works that served personal edification, and hence were purely aesthetic in nature. In the following years various schools and tendencies arose within this new direction art had taken, and which the Chitrakar painters had pioneered. By now many artists from other social groups of Nepal are part of it.

## Pioneers of Early Photography in Nepal

### Photographers, Artists and Patrons

Up to now there has been no firm grasp of the development of early photography in Nepal, and still further scholarly research will be necessary if a complete history of the origins of Nepalese photography is to be written. One of the greatest problems in this context, surely, is identifying the sources of existing photo prints and glass negatives, any exact assignment being often questionable. By now hardly any living witnesses of the period remain, let alone photographers who could provide information about their work themselves; furthermore, many duplicates of photos and even glass negatives are in circulation in Kathmandu, of most varying degrees of quality. Nevertheless, by means of detailed inquiries and visits to obviously dependable sources, a large pool of information has been collected, a complete analysis of which will no doubt require some time.

Several publications on the 19th century and the history of the Shah and Rana dynasties are now available that contain relevant photos from the private collections of members of the Ranas and other families, though generally only the photo collections are named, not the photographers, since little has been known about these latter up to now. Certainly one reason for this is that the Nepalese photographers employed in the residences of the Ranas very often had to agree to turn all film material over to their employers. Moreover, to confess one's activities in the courts of the Ranas after King Tribhuvan (1906-1955) put an end to Rana rule would hardly have made a good impression.

The collection of glass negatives that for now almost a century has been in the possession of the Chitrakar family of Bhimsen Sthan, particularly the work of Dirga Man (1877-1951) and Ganesh Man Chitrakar (1906-1985), is one of various examples of early photography in Nepal - one, be it said, in relatively good condition, the glass plates having been stored up to the present in their original wooden boxes.

### Dirga Man and Ganesh Man Chitrakar

From private conversations and inquiries we know that Dirga Man Chitrakar, the second son of the painter Laxmi Lal, first began his traditional painting education under his father, as was customary among the Chitrakars, and that around 1891, at the age of fourteen, he was given into the charge of a relative, Purna Man Chitrakar (1863-1939), who at the time was already recognized as a painter as well as a photographer in the residence of Gehendra Shamsher (died 1905), the son of Maharaja Bir Shamsher J.B. Rana (governed 1885-1901). Under Purna Man, Dirga Man not only received further instruction in the painting of Western motifs but also probably had his first encounter with the medium of photography.

From the personal written recollections of the important artist and littérateur Bal Krishna Sama (1902-1981), whose father Samar Shamsher (1883-1958) and grandfather Dambar Shamsher (1859-1922) worked together for years with Purna Man Chitrakar, it is known that Purna Man learnt photography from Dambar Shamsher in 1880. The same recollections reveal that in 1888 the Bengali photographer Neel Madhaba Deen was asked to come to Nepal by Gehendra Shamsher in order to teach him photography. Thus Dirga Man Chitrakar surely had the opportunity to learn the fundamentals of the art both from Gehendra Shamsher and, more particularly, from Purna Man Chitrakar. However, it is uncertain whether at the time a camera had already been put at his disposal to work with.

When his brother Surya Lal became seriously ill, Dirga Man asked the court physician (*raj vaidya*) for help, and later presented him with a medallion painted by him as an expression of his thanks. By chance Maharaja Chandra Shamsher (governed 1901-1929), who following the death of Bir Shamsher (died 1901) and the fall from power of his

successor Dev Shamsher (governed 1901) had become the prime minister of Nepal, discovered this decoration in the possession of his court physician. Chandra Shamsher thereupon took Dirga Man into his employ within his palace, Singha Durbar. Within Singha Durbar were to be found, along with the residence of Chandra Shamsher, the country's most important administrative institutions, including a kind of art and architectural department, in which Dirga Man was given a post. There ground plans were drawn up, portraits, landscapes or hunting scenes painted, renovation work on the palaces designed, restorations of pictures carried out and, later, glass negatives developed and other photographic work undertaken. Other members of the Chitrakar family were also taken on, and they worked together with Dirga Man in the same department - including his brother Surya Lal, who also photographed. When in 1908 Chandra Shamsher set out on a trip to Europe, during which, besides England, he visited France and Italy, Dirga Man was allowed to accompany him in his entourage. He had the opportunity to paint views of Europe, study European art and, when the occasion arose, to make copies and - of greater importance - to paint pictures not only of the maharaja, as presents for his guests, but also portraits of the latter. For example, one anecdote has come down according to which King George VII of England was so taken with one picture Dirga Man had presented him that he wanted to offer a large sum of money for it. The maharaja, however, prohibited the money from being taken.

Whether Dirga Man took photographs during the trip has not been found noted or mentioned anywhere up to now. What we do know from his descendants, however, is that Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher bought various cameras in England with which Dirga Man began to photograph in Nepal on his return from Europe. For this reason all the pictures being shown in the exhibition date to after 1908. Along with his developing activities, Dirga Man also set up a

studio for enlarging photos, since his employers were particularly interested in life-size family portraits. A hole bored into the roof of his house in Bhimsen Sthan served as the source of light. Around the turn of the century, moreover, the ruling families in Nepal took a decided liking to photographs that had been touched up. Dirga Man is said to have been quite adept in this art that had found its way from England via India to Nepal, where it took on a special form.

Chandra Shamsher's successors, Bhim Shamsher J.B. Rana (governed 1929-1932) and Juddha Shamsher J.B. Rana (governed 1932-1945), kept a large part of the administrative apparatus within Singha Durbar, and it was there that Dirga Man worked up into old age. At around the age of 71, when Padma Shamsher J.B. Rana (governed 1945-1948) became the country's prime minister, he resigned his position at the court of the maharajas, and died a few years later at the age of 74.

Three cameras that Dirga Man used are still in the family's possession: 1) an American camera, a R.B. Graflex, patented on June 7, 1927 by the Folmer Graflex Corporation of Rochester, with a Cooke Anastigmat lens, no. 216742, 6 1/2-inch, 165 mm, f/25, made by Taylor-Hobson of England, Patents-Brit 224425, O.S. 1739512; 2) an English camera, a Compur, made by Houghtons Ltd. of London, with a C.P. Goerz (Berlin) lens and accessories from Altrincham 'Thornton Pickard', England; 3) a camera with a German lens produced by Hugo Meyer & Co., no. 468191, Aristoplanat 1:7.7, foc. 17 3/4 inches.

Dirga Man's only son, Ganesh Man (1916-1985), received, as the main education from his father, besides painting, that of a photographer, in the knowledge undoubtedly that this medium would develop further and already represented a good source of income. Ganesh Man, too, was taken up into service at Singha Durbar as a





*Ganesh Man Chitrakar and his wife Champa Devi  
at Bhimsen Sthan. Self-portrait around 1957.*

painter and, more particularly, as a photographer. In 1952, after Nepal began to open up to the outside world and the first development organizations set up office in the country, Ganesh Man was given a post at U.S.A.I.D., where he was active together with other photographers, including Ganga Bahadur Chitrakar, Bishnu Shrestha and Dambar Kayestha. The first aerial photos of the Kathmandu Valley were made at this time. In 1979 he was presented with an award by the Asian Cultural Centre for UNESCO for his photographic achievements. Following his retirement, Ganesh Man devoted himself to the further expansion of a photographic and developing studio, Ganesh Lab, which opened at the end of the 1960s, and where he became the first person in the country to develop slides.

Ganesh Man worked primarily with the following cameras: 1) Rolleiflex, Rollei, Franke & Heidecke of Braunschweig, Germany; 2) Rolleicord, Rollei, Franke & Heidecke; 3) Ikonta M, Prontor-SV, no. 1231/16, Zeiss-Ikon of Stuttgart, Germany.

### **Purna Man, the First Photographer of the Chitrakars, and His Contemporaries**

The most important information on Purna Man Chitrakar (ca. 1863-1939) is to be gleaned from the personal written recollections of Bal Krishna Sama, with whose family Purna Man often spent time. He was the son of the painter Juju Man (born 1844) in Yatkha Tole in Kathmandu, and there probably received his first education as a painter. In ca. 1877, at the age of about eighteen, Dambar Shamsher J.B. Rana (1859-1922), one of the sons of Dhir Shamsher J.B. Rana (1828-1884), is said to have summoned Purna Man from Thapathali, the residence of Prime Minister Jang Bahadur Rana (governed 1846-1856 and 1857-1877), the brother of Dhir, to his own residence. Dambar Shamsher was steeped in art, and loved both traditional and European-influenced painting and music. Moreover, he was interested in photography, and had set up a photo studio and lab. Purna Man's job was to help with the development of glass negatives, and in time he himself became a master of the trade. According to various reports and records, he was also active as an artist with Gehendra Shamsher J.B. Rana, as well as with his father Bir Shamsher (governed 1885-1901), who in 1885, in a bloody coup d'état, had his uncle, Ranaudip Singh, murdered and became the maharaja and prime minister of Nepal. Purna Man was supposedly summoned to the court of Bir Shamsher that same year. It is not clear, though, who among his patrons had sent him at the age of eighteen, in ca. 1881, to Calcutta for further training, principally in photography. He is reported to have visited other cities of the subcontinent, and one may assume that he looked in on various photo studios, which had been established from the middle of the 19th century onwards in the large cities of India. Among them were probably the ones primarily known to the Ranas, such as Bourne & Shepherd, Herzog & Higgins and Johnston & Hoffmann, and later G.W. Lawrie & Co.



*Dambar Shamsher J.B. Rana, his rani and his two sons Bed Shamsher and Samar Shamsher with their ranis. Photo taken by Purna Man Chitrakar.*

Throughout his life Purna Man remained close to the family of Dambar Shamsher (to whose son Samar (1883-1958) he provided instruction in portrait painting) and also to Gehendra Shamsher. The friendship with Gehendra would later have consequences for the relationship between Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher (governed 1901-1929) and Purna Man. Purna Man had been working at Singha Durbar under commission to the Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher. Chandra Shamsher and Gehendra having fallen out, it was not the more experienced Purna Man whom Chandra Shamsher took with him on his 1908 trip to England to document the goings-on, but Dirga Man Chitrakar. Purna Man thereupon took his leave from Singha Durbar. Interestingly, he taught his second wife, who helped him at his work, how to develop and touch up negatives and photos. When he went blind at the age of 66, he was sent to Bombay for treatment by Dharma Shamsher, a brother of Gehendra's, but unfortunately all efforts were in vain. It is all the more astounding, therefore, that in spite of this impediment he continued to give instruction in painting and photography, and to photograph himself, by having the exact light

conditions and the position of objects explained to him. He died in 1939 at the age of 76. Purna Man must be named in the same breath with Bhaju Man Chitrakar, who in 1850 accompanied Prime Minister Jang Bahadur Rana as an artist on the very first European tour of a maharaja from the Indian subcontinent. Many Chitrakars learned the vocation of photographer from Purna Man, and several families still reap the rewards of this today - for example, the Chitrakars of Bhimsen Sthan. Furthermore, he was a highly sought-after portraitist, and was particularly fond of painting in oils, while his coloured photos, too, were famous.

### **Other Chitrakar Photographers**

Purna Man's brother Badra Man (1883-1958) also received a photographic education. He was able to profit from his brother and Dambar Shamsher, and even travelled to Bombay to further his studies, as his descendants report. Unfortunately it is unknown in which studio he worked there. Badra Man later got a job with Gehendra Shamsher's brother Rudra Shamsher (1879-1964), not as a photographer but as an executive administrator, with the title *dittha*, responsible for importing materials. In this function he accompanied Rudra Shamsher on his trip to Europe together with Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher in 1908. Badra Man's descendants report, moreover, that he took photos on the trip, but no concrete evidence of this has been found up to now. His son Tirtha Man likewise learned photography.

Further, Ratna Bahadur Chitrakar (ca. 1897-1979) of Wotu Tole, the brother of one of Badra Man's wives, was educated by Purna Man, as was Ratna Bahadur's brother Hira Bahadur. It may be assumed that Purna Man also taught photography to Ratna Bahadur's and Hira Bahadur's father Halamanta Singh (ca. 1872-1932). During the time that Halamanta and Hira Bahadur were active at the court of King





*Dittha Badra Man Chitrakar. Oil on canvas painted by Chandra Man Singh Maskey.*

Prithvi Bir Bikram Shah (1875-1911), Ratna Bahadur was taken on, at around the age of 17, as a photographer and painter in Singha Durbar, where for the most part he touched up photographs with oils paints. In addition, Ratna Bahadur maintained good contacts with the family of Dambar Shamsher, and was engaged in work for them for several months. Later Ratna Bahadur's son Ganga Bahadur (born 1929) would be employed in Dambar's family, working for Samar Shamsher, the latter's son Bal Krishna and later the grandson Janardan, in their photo studio. From 1952 on he was, furthermore, in the employ of U.S.A.I.D.

Purna Man also taught photography and painting to Krishna Bahadur Chitrakar (1896-1979) of Yathka Tole. The latter found a post in Narayanhiti Palace working for King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah (1906-1955) in administration. Thereafter he was active as a painter and photographer for some forty years in the residence of Baber Shamsher J.B. Rana (1888-1960), son of Chandra Shamsher. At the beginning of his career with Baber Shamsher he received a monthly

salary of 18 rupees, and at the end of his years of labour 25. His son Bakhat Bahadur (born 1931) was already earning at the time 200 rupees a month. In 1952, after the end of Rana rule, Krishna Bahadur quit his job with Baber Shamsher and opened the ABC Photo Studio in Yathka Tole. Several years later, in 1957, his son Bakhat Bahadur established the Photo Flash Studio in Bagh Bazaar. His brothers, Balaram and Amrit, also learned the art of photography. Balaram



*Wedding in a Chitrakar family. Photo taken by Ratna Bahadur Chitrakar, and touched up with Wellington colour.*

became the photographer in the Department of Archaeology, and Amrit was hired as a photographer for the Ministry of Forestry. Bakhat Bahadur advanced rapidly in the administrative section of the Ministry for Education and Culture, where he was the audio-visual supervisor from 1955 onwards. He was sent to India for further training in cinematography; was placed in charge of the Department for Photography and Graphic Arts; was sent to America for photographic training; and several years afterwards was appointed joint secretary, before retiring in 1990. The first Nepali textbook on photography was due to his labours.

There is no evidence whether Chaite Chitrakar (1881-1962) of Marsangali also learned photography from Purna Man. He was in

*General Tej Shamsher J.B. Rana (1885-1942), patron of various artists. Photo taken by Chaite Chitrakar.*



any case involved with the same circle of photo buffs. Chaite, who was brought up by his father in the traditional style of painting, but who also incorporated European trends into his pictures, was first employed in the palace of Prime Minister Bir Shamsher. After the latter's death he worked at Lal Durbar for Bir Shamsher's son Tej (1885-1942), a brother of Gehendra and Rudra who, like them, had a fondness for photography; he took Chaite with him on his trips to Calcutta, Delhi and Bombay. Further, Chaite often worked for Dambar Shamsher and his son Samar Shamsher, under whom he probably first came into contact with photography. Chaite's son Purna (1900-1984) also got himself an education in painting and photography, and was active for the family of Samar Shamsher. Both father and son, moreover, worked at Singha Durbar from time to time. At home they built an enlargement studio in order to be able to produce life-size photographs for the Shah and Rana residences, and in 1951 it was converted into a public photo studio, Purna Studio. Purna's son Babu Kazi carried on the tradition of the family. In 1965 a new studio was

opened in Kal Dhara by Tika Simha Rana, a granddaughter of Prime Minister Juddha Shamsher who had been sent for training to England. She offered a job to Babu Kazi in her studio, where the first colour films were processed in Nepal. Some five years later he opened his own studio, which is still in existence.

*Juddha Shamsher J.B. Rana after his resignation from the prime-ministership (governed 1932-1946) on his way to live the life of a sanyasi. Photo taken by Prithvi Lal Chitrakar, and touched up with water-colour.*



Other photographers of this early period were Harka Lal Chitrakar (born ca. 1873) and his son Prithvi Lal (1893-1968) of Bhimsen Sthan, who was initiated into the arts of painting and photography by his father. It is no longer known from whom Harka Lal learned them. Since his descendants know, however, that Harka Lal and Prithvi Lal were both employed together with Purna Man at Singha Durbar, it may be assumed that the experienced Purna Man was involved in educating them, too. Father and son, in any case, were well-known painters and photographers whose coloured photos enjoyed great popularity. Prithvi Lal used for his work, among other cameras, an Agfa Speedex Compur.

In the part of the city around Bhimsen Sthan also lived the family of the widely known painter of theatre décor and portraitist Bachat Man



*Prithvi Man Chitrakar. Photo taken by his son Prem Man.*

Chitrakar (1872-1946), whose sons Manik Man (1908-1987) and Prithvi Man (1907-1979) learned both traditional and European-influenced styles of painting. Furthermore, Prithvi Man became interested in photography, and is said to have worked as a photographer in a number of Rana houses. Shortly after the Photoservice Studio was opened in 1965 by Astadarayan Manandhar, Prithvi Man signed on and worked for three years, though he was involved exclusively in painting.

Another student of Purna Man was Tej Bahadur Chitrakar (1900-1971), who grew up with his uncle Dirga Man in Bhimsen Sthan, from whom he learned both traditional and Western-influenced painting. He took an early interest in photography, and it is said that he sat up many nights with his uncle Purna Man. Later, during training in Calcutta, where Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher sent him for seven years to learn art, and particularly painting, at the Government School of Arts, he took the opportunity to expand his knowledge in one of the local photo studios. Back in Kathmandu, he was employed for a period at Singha Durbar during the government of Juddha



*Laxmi Bahadur Chitrakar, grandson of Bhaju Man. Water-colour, painted by his son Ganesh Bahadur Chitrakar.*

Shamsher (governed 1932-1946), and later set up an atelier, Sharad Studio, which was also equipped for enlarging photos. He was chiefly known, however, for his painting.

The family of the brothers Laxmi Bahadur (very inexact dates supplied by his descendants: ca. 1846-1936) and Tulsi Bahadur Chitrakar (died 1920) has a very interesting history: Both are sons of Nuche Man, who in turn is said to have been the only son of the renowned Bhaju Man (died ca. 1875), who accompanied Jang Bahadur Rana as an artist on his legendary trip to England. From what one of the wives of Laxmi Bahadur has to say, we know that both Laxmi Bahadur and his brother were photographers and painters, but it can no longer be determined whether Nuche Man and possibly even Bhaju Man already possessed knowledge of photography. Laxmi Bahadur and his younger brother Tulsi Bahadur are said to have worked for a time at Singha Durbar for Chandra Shamsher. It is no longer known who taught photography to the two. While scarcely no information is available on Laxmi Bahadur and his two sons Ganesh Bahadur and Govinda Bahadur, both of whom died at an early age, it is at least known that



*Tulsi Bahadur Chitrakar, grandson of Bhaju Man. Photo taken by his son Krishna Bahadur.*

Tulsi Bahadur and later his sons Buddhi Bahadur (1906-1943) and Krishna Bahadur (born 1911) were active as painters and photographers at the court of Dharma Shamsher J.B. Rana, a son of Prime Minister Bir Shamsher and the brother of Gehendra, Tej and Rudra. Buddhi Bahadur, moreover, is said to have been sent to Calcutta for training in photography and painting. In the palace of Dharma Shamsher in Hadigaon, Tangal, according to the 87-year-old Krishna Bahadur, there were at times between forty and fifty craftsmen and painters working under him. Unfortunately almost nothing remains from the belongings of Bhaju Man and Nuche Man, or to a large extent from those of Laxmi Bahadur either, that could shed light on the early history, since almost everything - pictures, cameras and glass negatives - were destroyed by a house fire. It is possible that Bhaju Man during his sojourn in Europe in 1850 came into contact with photography in England or France, and that Jang Bahadur had him afterwards trained. After 1841 it had become possible in Europe, thanks to the invention of calotype negatives, to produce multiple prints, and photography was becoming ever more popular, given that

it was simpler and cheaper than painted portraits. However, among all the accounts of Jang's European trip that were documented in newspaper articles from England and France, there are no relevant references.



*General Dharma Shamsher J.B. Rana, patron of many artists. Photo taken by Krishna Bahadur Chitrakar.*

### **Further Pioneers of Photography in Nepal**

Besides Purna Man Chitrakar there was another photographer of the early period who seems to have been even older than Purna Man: Chakra Bahadur Kayestha (1856/62-1939/44) had moved from Bhaktapur to Kathmandu in his youth and settled down in Tahiti, where even today his descendants are in the photo business. It is no longer clear how he came to the court of King Prithvi Bir Bikram (ruled 1881-1911). In any case, he is said to have been sent to Calcutta by King Prithvi Bir in order to learn primarily photography and the



colouring of pictures, but also painting as well, but his descendants do not know in which year this occurred. Besides his post at Narayanhiti Palace, Chakra Bahadur, who is described (and not only by members of his family) as having been very adept and innovative,



*From the middle clockwise: King Prithvi Bir Bikram Shah Dev (ruled 1881-1911), Maharaja Ranaudip Singh J.B. Rana (governed 1877-1885), Maharaja Dev Shamsher J.B. Rana (governed 1901), Maharaja Chandra Shamsher J.B. Rana (governed 1901-1929), Maharaja Bir Shamsher J.B. Rana (governed 1885-1901) and Maharaja Jang Bahadur Rana. Photo taken by Chakra Bahadur Kayestha, partly compiled from other photographs.*

also had many private persons as clients, and we know that he built himself a kind of glass house in order to ensure better light conditions to take and enlarge photographs under the sun. It was mainly family portraits and festive occasions that he captured on film in his studio at the beginning of the century. He was, in addition, an importer of photographic paper and glass negatives, along with other photographic accessories. There is still an envelope in the possession of his family



*Chakra Bahadur Kayestha. Photo taken around 90 years ago by his son Tej Bahadur.*

on which is impressed: 'Chakra Bahadur & Sons, Photographers to the Government of Nepal; Oil Painters, Photo Enlargers, Dealers in Photo Materials; Manufacturers of High Class Furnitures; Tahiti Tole, Kathmandu, Nepal'. It is interesting that he was apparently a very skilled carpenter. It was perhaps in this capacity that he first gained entry into the court of King Prithvi Bir.

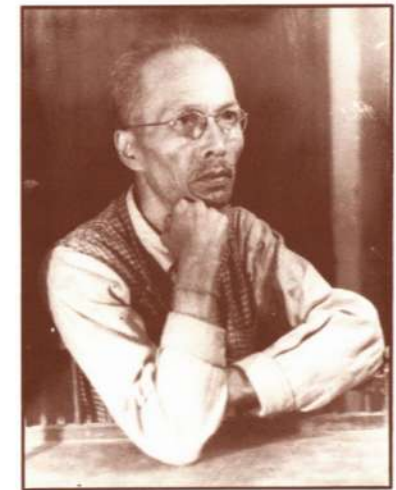
Three of Chakra Bahadur's sons, Tej Bahadur (1896-1975), Darsan (ca. 1900-1935) and Sahilu, learned photography from him and were later, for a period, also employed in Narayanhiti Palace, as well as being partially engaged to work for Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher, but they seem to have been primarily involved with their own photo studio in Tahiti. Hardly anything is any longer known about Darsan and Sahilu - merely that Darsan died very young. In 1965 Tej Bahadur opened his own studio in Tahiti, which still exists today. His two sons, Dambar (born 1928) and Bishnu (born 1933), continued on in the family tradition. Further, both were employed by the U.S.A.I.D., where they were particularly engaged in aerial photography. Today there is still a camera that Chakra Bahadur and Tej Bahadur worked with in the possession of the family: body by Thagee, Prontor II, Gauthier G.m.b.H. of Calmbach, with a Schneider-Kreuznach lens, no. 999507 Radionar.



*The German engineer Paul Jaurich and his German College together with workers at the New Gun Powder Factory of General Gehendra Shamsher J.B. Rana (died 1905) at the beginning of this century in the Kathmandu Valley. Photo taken by Shanta Karmacharya.*

There was another photo studio in Tahiti in the middle of this century: Sri Studio, which was opened by the two brothers Madan and Sri Man Kayestha. These were two of three children of the younger brother of Chakra Bahadur. Other details of this family are not known. The studio now no longer exists.

Further, Ghyan Bahadur Karmacharya and his brother Shanta Bahadur (1873-1950) were early pioneers of Nepalese photography. Like Purna Man, they were trained under the aegis of Dambar Shamsher (1859-



*Shanta Bahadur Karmacharya. Photo taken by his son Samar.*

1922) at the age of 16 or 17, the father of the two brothers, Nanda Lal, being at the time employed in the administration of Dambar's palace, and thus it was that the contact was formed. Later - the exact year is not known - both served under Tej Bahadur Shamsher (1885-1942), the son of Prime Minister Bir Shamsher (1885-1901), at Lal Durbar, where later the son of Shanta, Samar Karmacharya, was also employed under Tej Shamsher's son Indu Shamsher. In 1914 the brothers spent some time in Bombay, where Tej Shamsher had sent

them for further photographic training. Several years later, in 1917, they both opened their own studio in Kel Tole. There they mainly took family portraits, and were called upon to photograph a wide range of festive occasions. Samar, the son of Shanta, can recall that when the studio was opened in 1917 the photo studio of Chakra Bahadur was already in existence in Tahiti. He reports, further, that his father and uncle were working at the time with four or five cameras. One of these cameras, which Tej Shamsheer gave to the brothers, is still in the family's possession: the camera was made by C.P. Goerz in Berlin, as was the lens, Jogmar 1:4.5, 581687 D.R.P., F = 13.5 cm.

Also interesting is the family history of Narayan Prasad Joshi (1909-1985), whose father, Raj Man, like the father of the Karmacharya brothers, was employed at the palace of Dambar Shamsheer, as a *kardar*



*In the middle: Dharma Bhakta Mathema, surrounded by his wrestler group. He also taught wrestling exercises to King Tribhuvan. One of the founders of the Nepal People's Conference, he was executed in January 1941 because of his party activities. Photo taken by Shanta & Ghyan Karmacharya.*

in the upper echelons of the administration. Thanks to this connection, Narayan Prasad was trained in photography by Dambar and Samar Shamsheer. In following years he was principally engaged in the importing of photographic equipment, in which connection he was a representative of the firms Ilford, Adrose and Agfa. In addition, he is said to have been a good tabla player, and to have even opened a music college - under the influence, certainly, of Dambar Shamsheer, who was uncommonly artistic, and who did much to advance the cause of art and music in the country. Narayan Prasad Joshi officially opened his own photo studio, Snap Shot, in 1947, having had for some ten years previously a private studio which allowed him to enlarge and develop, and where he took family portraits and photos of festive occasions. When his clients desired coloured photos, Narayan Prasad asked Krishna Bahadur Chitrakar, the great-grandson of Bhaju Man, to take on the job. Three of his sons, namely Amber Prasad, Ishwor and Durga, learned the profession of photography, and some of their sons, too, are still active in this line.

Another name linked to early photography in Nepal is Pashupati Lal Shrestha, who opened his New Studio in Kichapokhari, probably at the beginning of the 1930s, and who again was an importer of photo equipment from England and later India. It is known that he was employed at the palace of King Tribhuvan (ruled 1911-1955) as a photographer, at times working together with Chakra Bahadur Kayestha and his son Tej.

Other importers of photographic equipment from England and India were Bharat Shrestha, who likewise was a photographer and who opened a studio in Asan, and Tirath Raj Manandhar, who owned a developing lab at least as early as 1914. There, most notably, Purna Man Chitrakar often worked. There, too, colours needed for touching up photos were bought from Wellington. Tirath Raj bore the title of





*Maharaja Dev Shamsheer J.B. Rana. Photo taken in 1901 by Bishnu Dhoj Joshi of Grand Studio, and painted over with oil. National Museum in Chauni.*

*subbha*, a very high post in the administration within Singha Durbar, and apart from his import business for photo equipment and other items desired by the Rana families, he was a general representative for Kodak. His son Laxmi Raj reopened the store in 1936, and his brother Badri Raj, too, would also take up commercial photography: having been trained by Amrit Lal Shrestha in photography, he launched his own business for photo equipment in 1951.

Other names connected with early photography are Ratna Govind Vaidya, who had his photo studio in Patan, and Sardar Bishnu Dhoj Joshi, who opened the Grand Studio on Basantapur Square in the 1930s, and who again was an importer of photographic accessories. A Chitrakar worked for him who was employed primarily to colour photos. Later the son of Bishnu Dhoj took over this job, who for this purpose was sent to Bombay for training in painting. Bishnu Dhoj

and his son Hiranya Dhoj worked mainly for Rana families, and a number of their exceedingly tall, larger-than-life photographs and oil portraits can be seen in the National Museum in Chauni.

### **The First Photographers in Nepal**

The first photographers in Nepal were probably Europeans. There is not the least bit of evidence that Bhaju Man Chitrakar following his journey to Europe, or his son Nuche Man, had any knowledge of photography, or were later given training. We do know that Jang Bahadur Rana was a great lover of art and photography; at least that



*Colonel Dambar Shamsheer J.B. Rana at 16 years. Photo taken by Bourne & Shepherd in 1875 in Kathmandu. Bal Krishna Sama, grandson of Dambar Shamsheer, coloured the photo half a century later.*

is what his son Padma Jang (1857-1907) reports in his biography of his father. But the name Bhaju Man occurs in this book only in the list of persons who went along on the trip to Europe. Padma Jang incorporated the personal written recollections of his father into the biography, and therefore we know that Maharaja Jang Bahadur had



himself been photographed several times, but nowhere is the name Bhaju Man or any other Nepalese photographer mentioned.

The only photographers mentioned in the biography are Bourne and Shepherd of Calcutta, who on more than one occasion took pictures of the maharaja and his guests on hunting parties in the Terai. Jang Bahadur even noted down in his diary the exact dates of these shots. Thus we know that Bourne and Shepherd photographed the English viceroy of India, Lord Mayo, together with Maharaja Jang Bahadur in Harihar, India, on 27 November 1871. Further pictures were taken in the Terai on 4 January 1876, following the acceptance by the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) of a personal invitation by Jang Bahadur to go hunting in the Nepalese Terai. On this list of invited guests, which is also reproduced in the biography, various Englishmen accompanying the Prince of Wales show up, but it is not known whether they for their part took photos of the hunting party - for example, for the *Illustrated London News*, whose reporter is expressly mentioned in the list. Furthermore, it is unfortunately not stated who took the photos that are contained in the Padma Jang's biography, and which show the family of Jang Bahadur.

It is strange that nowhere in the biography does the name of the Englishman Clarence Comyn Taylor (1830-1879) appear. He was demonstrably living in Kathmandu from 1863 to 1865 as the permanent representative (assistant resident) of the resident George Ramsay. Taylor went to Nepal principally on the initiative of the viceroy of India, Lord Canning, to take photographs of various ethnic groups in Nepal; these were included in the eight-volume encyclopedia *People of India*. During his stay in Kathmandu, Taylor made photographs of Maharaja Jang Bahadur and his family, as well as of the nominally reigning King Surendra (1829-1881). They are in a photo album that is now in the British Library in London, and have

been described by J.P. Losty in an article about Clarence Comyn Taylor published in 1992.

We know, however, from the parts of Jang Bahadur's diary published in Padma Jang's biography that the prime minister had already been photographed together with his sons in 1860, on 30 October, to be precise. Strangely, no mention is made of who took this group picture. Padma Jung merely notes laconically that the photo is no longer in his possession. In 1860 Taylor was not yet in Nepal, so that it is thus unclear who the photographer was of the 1860 picture, even though Taylor did take a photograph of Jang Bahadur, if only with two of his



*The then Commander-in-Chief General Ranaudip Singh and his wife Hari Priya Devi. Photo taken around 1876/77 by Dambar Shamsher J.B. Rana.*

sons. Perhaps Padma Jang was mistaken about the year, or else the posthumous publisher of the biography, which first appeared in 1909, was. There is a further indirect indication of Nepalese photographers and artists in the article by Losty: he reports that the British resident

Ramsay, who had been serving in Nepal since 1852, received an inquiry initiated by Lord Canning in June 1861 in connection with the *People of India* project, and answered correspondingly that he knew of no amateur photographers in Nepal, and that the attraction of Kathmandu for professional photographers was not sufficiently great.

### **Dambar Shamsher J. B. Rana**

The names of Bourne and Shepherd, it may be said, occur over and over, not only in Padma's biography but also in other references to the early history of photography that will be published in the immediate future. According to these, the Englishmen Bourne and Shepherd were in Kathmandu in 1875 and took a photo of the then 16-year-old



*Dambar Shamsher J.B. Rana's wife rani Indra Rajya Laxmi. Photo taken in 1896 in Kathmandu by Bert Harris from Johnston & Hoffmann, Calcutta, and touched up with paint.*

Dambar Shamsher (1859-1922), son of Dhir Shamsher (ca. 1828-1884), Jang's younger brother. Dambar had just been appointed captain. A couple of years later, in 1877, shortly after the death of

Jang Bahadur Rana, his brother Ranaudip Singh (governed 1877-1885) became the prime minister of Nepal, and in his new capacity conferred the rank of colonel upon the 18-year-old Dambar Shamsher, reportedly out of gratitude for the fine photographs Dambar had taken of Ranaudip and his wife Hari Priya Devi. As it is said, Dambar's father Dhir Shamsher had given between 20-50,000 rupees to his son, to help to set up a photo studio.

There is still no convincing evidence about who taught Dambar the art of photography but most probably Bourne and Shepherd. Perhaps his father Dhir Shamsher had brought back cameras and accompanying instructional books from his European journey with Jang Bahadur, for we know that Dambar owned a wide variety of such books. His first assistant was Purna Man Chitrakar, and in later years he trained a whole circle of photographers (see above). He also kept up contacts with foreign artists and photographers. Thus in 1888 he met Neel



*Samar Shamsher J.B. Rana and his rani Kirti Rajya Laxmi with their sons Pushkar and Bal Krishna. Photo taken by Dambar Shamsher.*

Madhaba Deen along with Bourne and Shepherd, and in 1896 the artist and photographer Bert Harris, who worked for Johnston and Hoffmann in India, but who apparently went to Nepal between 1896 and 1897. Besides a photograph, coloured and signed by him, of Dambar's wife Indra Rajya Laxmi, there exists, for example, a larger-than-life signed oil painting portraying Bir Shamsheer (governed 1885-1901) and his wife. Following the violent death of Ranaudip in 1885, Dambar, who had in the meantime been named general, was active on behalf of the new prime minister, Bir Shamsheer, and when Chandra



*Bal Krishna Sama and his wife Mandakini. Self-portrait.*

Shamsheer came to power in 1901, he also worked at Singha Durbar. But in 1908 Dambar left Chandra Shamsheer's palace in order to register his protest at the treatment of Purna Man Chitrakar, who had been prohibited from accompanying Chandra Shamsheer on his journey to Europe.

The family tradition was continued by his son Samar Shamsheer (1883-1958), who was also a good painter, and also by his grandson Bal Krishna (1902-1981). Both learned the art of photography from Dambar Shamsheer and became themselves significant photographers. Concerning Bal Krishna we know that he used a Kodak Studio Camera, model no. 2, in his studio in Gyaneshwor, with a lens from Dallmeyer - Portrait Anastigmat - of London. For such a camera and accessories one paid at the time approximately 50 English pounds.

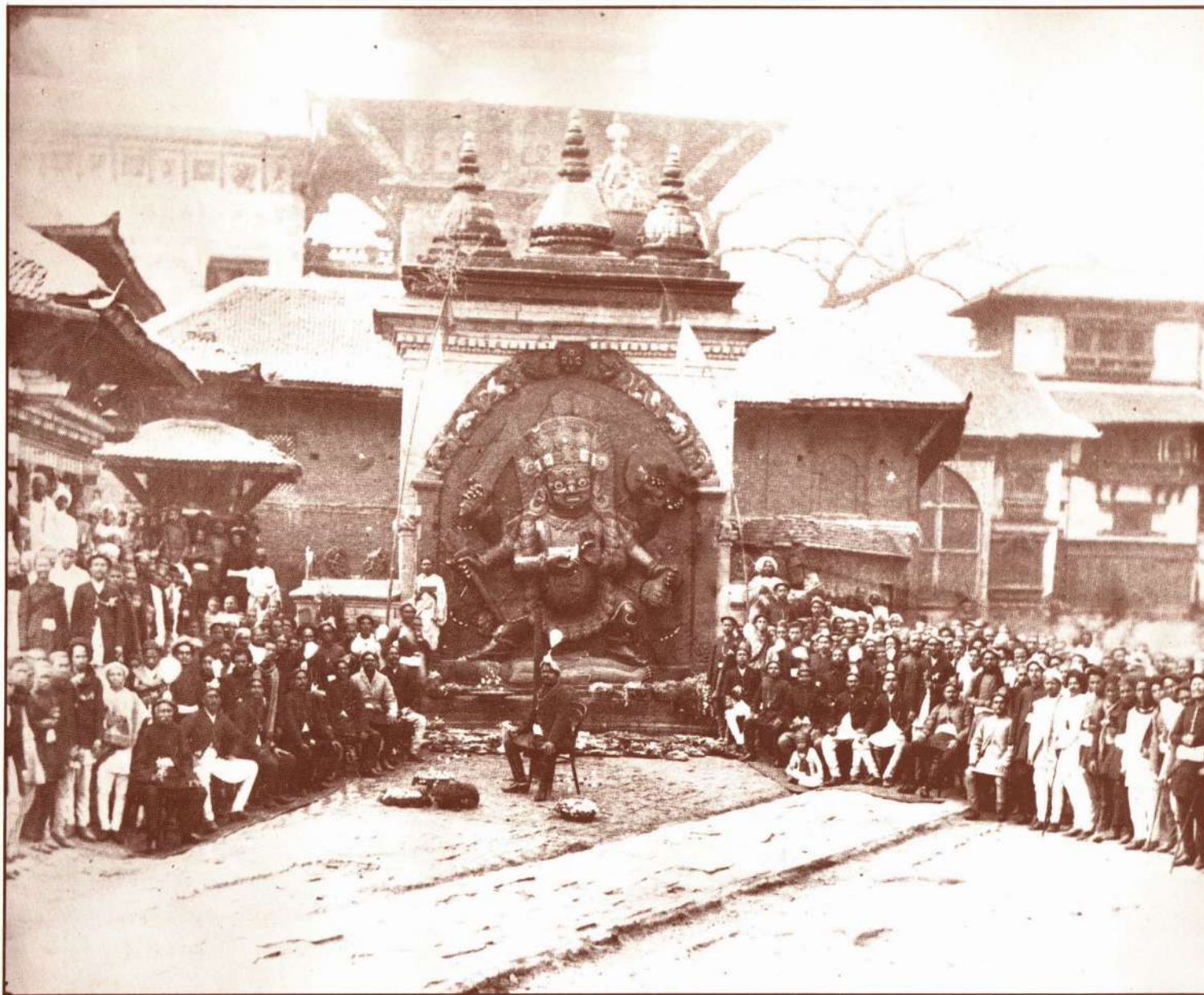


*Prince Gyanendra, four years old, at his coronation on the 7th of November 1950. Photo taken by Janardan Shamsheer J.B. Rana.*

Bal Krishna's son Janardan Shamsheer (1927-1982), too, was known in the trade. It is to him, for example, that we are indebted for the unique and historically important photograph of the four-year-old Prince Gyanendra during his coronation on 7 November 1950, which was performed under the last prime minister of the Rana period, Mohan Shamsheer (governed 1948-1951), since King Tribhuvan (ruled 1911-1955) had fled to India with Crown Prince Mahendra and the latter's son Birendra.

Finally, it should be emphasized once more that it is thanks to Dambar Shamsheer, Nepal's first photographer, and to the members of his family, more than anyone else, that photography was able to gain popularity in Nepal and to become the preferred substitute for expensive oil paintings. He and his descendants helped many families in a difficult period of upheaval to find a new source of income, respect and esteem.





*Ritual offering to the deity Kal Bhairav, whose statue was installed by King Pratap Malla in the 17th century at Hanuman Dhoka, Kathmandu. The ferocious god is also known as Adalata (Court) Bhairav because, as can be seen on the picture, court officials had to swear in front of the deity that they would execute their duties faithfully. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1910.*



*Taleju Temple at Durbar Square in Kathmandu with porters and farmers in the foreground. Taleju is the tutelary goddess of the kings of Nepal and symbolizes their divinity. Taleju is an emanation of the goddess Durga. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1911.*





*Patan Durbar Square, Mangal Bazar, from the south. Most of the temples and shrines were built during the Malla period from the 11th to 18th century. Even though enormous changes have meanwhile taken place in Patan, the city, according to certain estimates, is still supposed to have around 450 Buddhist and the same number of Hindu religious sites. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1920.*



*Bhaktapur Durbar Square before the earthquake which demolished large areas of the city in 1934. More than 200,000 buildings in the whole valley were completely destroyed. Basantapur Palace in the middle left was rebuilt again, and today the National Art Gallery is situated on the site. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1915.*





*Nyatapola Temple in the heart of Bhaktapur City. The strength of each of the guardian statues in front is double that of the preceding one. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1914.*





*Inside of the Pashupatinath Temple area the statue of Nandi, the holy bull and vehicle of Lord Shiva, can be seen. Pashupati, Lord of the Animals, is one of the manifold emanations of the god Shiva. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1920.*



*His Majesty King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah Dev ascending the throne at the age of five years on 2nd February 1911 in Kathmandu. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar.*





*Two princesses at the court dressed in lavishly ornamented robes and adorned with rich jewellery. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1920.*

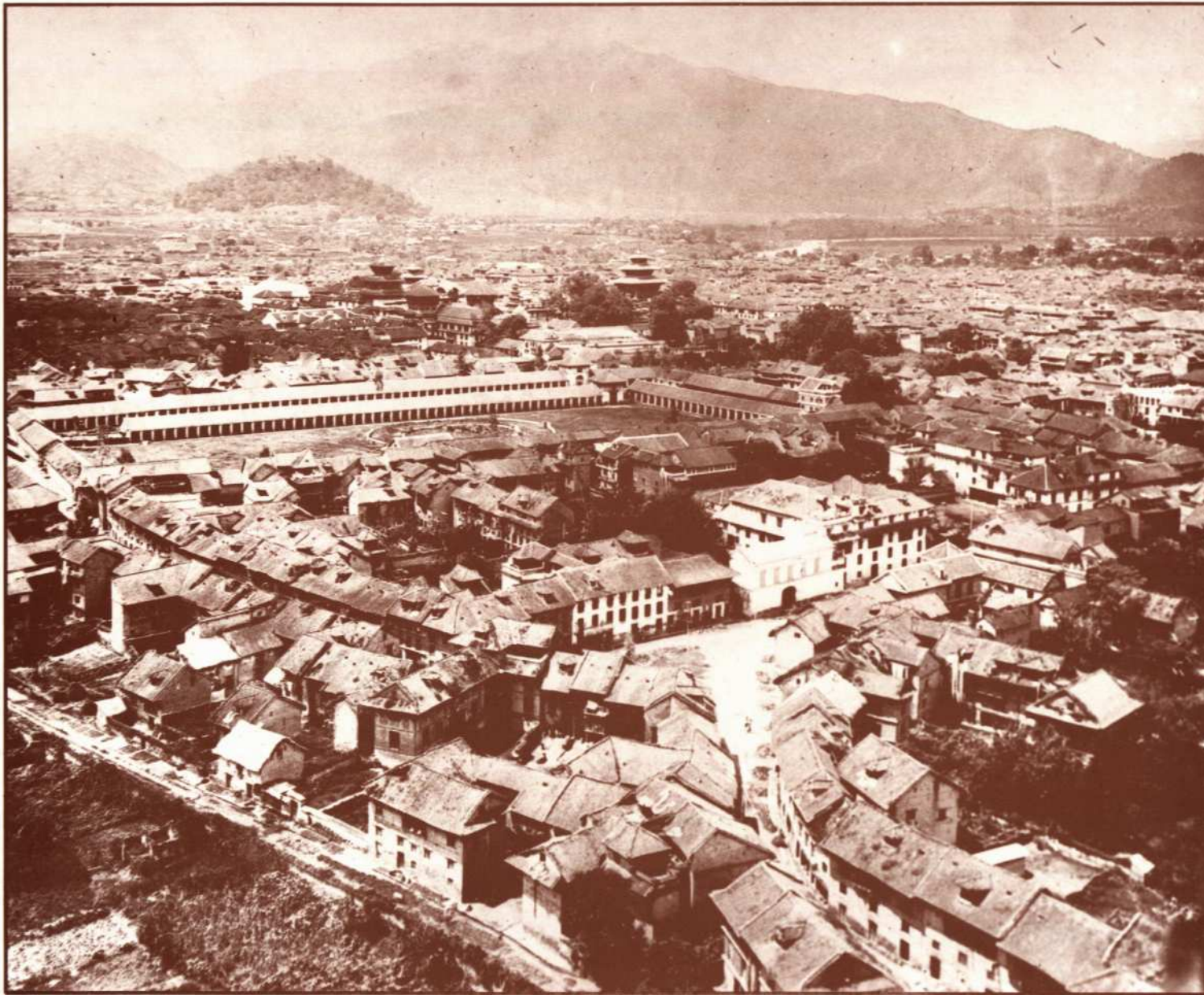


*Old Bodnath Stupa, situated along the old trade route to Tibet, was built in its present shape at the beginning of the 16th century, and has since then been renovated several times with the financial help of Tibetan priests. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1913.*



*Kantipur Mandir (Temple) opposite Kashthamandapa Mandir near Durbar Square in Kathmandu. The temple houses Nasa Deo, the god of musicians, a manifestation of Lord Shiva. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1909.*





*View of old Kathmandu as seen from atop the Dharahara (Bhimsen tower) with Durbar Square and Taleju Temple in the background. The old horse stables in the middle have been replaced by a vegetable market and modern buildings. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1909.*





*The courtyard of Yatkha Bahal near Hanuman Dhoka in Kathmandu during the 'Samyak Puja', a ceremonial offering presented every twelve years. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1920.*





*Asan Tole market in the centre of Kathmandu, seen here with Annapurna Temple, is named after a common fish in Nepal called 'aslan'. The Newari people of the Kathmandu Valley believe that an aslan fish fell from heaven down to the very place where today Asan Tole is located. Therefore Asan is regarded as a holy place dedicated to the goddess of food, Annapurna. Yearly various worshippers used to perform food offering rituals by dressing the entire temple in a net. Threaded on the strings of the net were grains of puffed rice that were later distributed among the people as a sacrament, 'prasad'. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1920.*



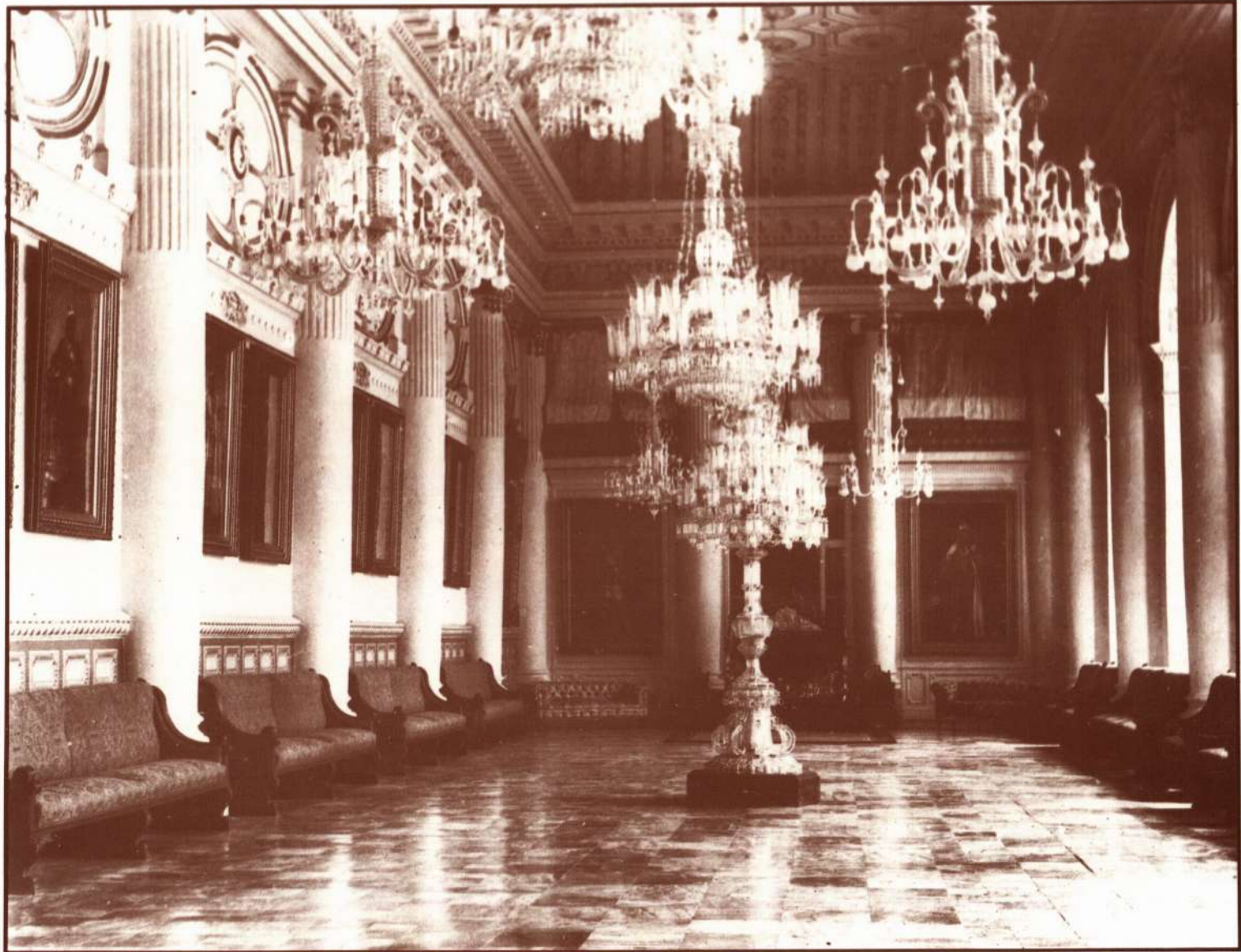


*Durbar Square Kathmandu before World War I, as can be seen from the uniforms of the Gurkha soldiers. The background shows Kumari Temple, which houses the Living Goddess. On the left are Anglo-Indian buildings in the Rana style belonging to the Hanuman Dhoka Palace complex, Mulki Khana and Gaddi Baithak, built for Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher in 1910. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1910.*



*King Tribhuvan (ruled 1911-1955) at the age of eight years in 1914. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar.*





*Inside view of the Gaddi Baithak (Throne Hall) in Hanuman Dhoka Palace at Durbar Square, surrounded by life-size paintings of successive kings and prime ministers, most of them painted by Chitrakars (Chitrakar is a caste term and refers to the original painters to the Kathmandu Valley). Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1917.*

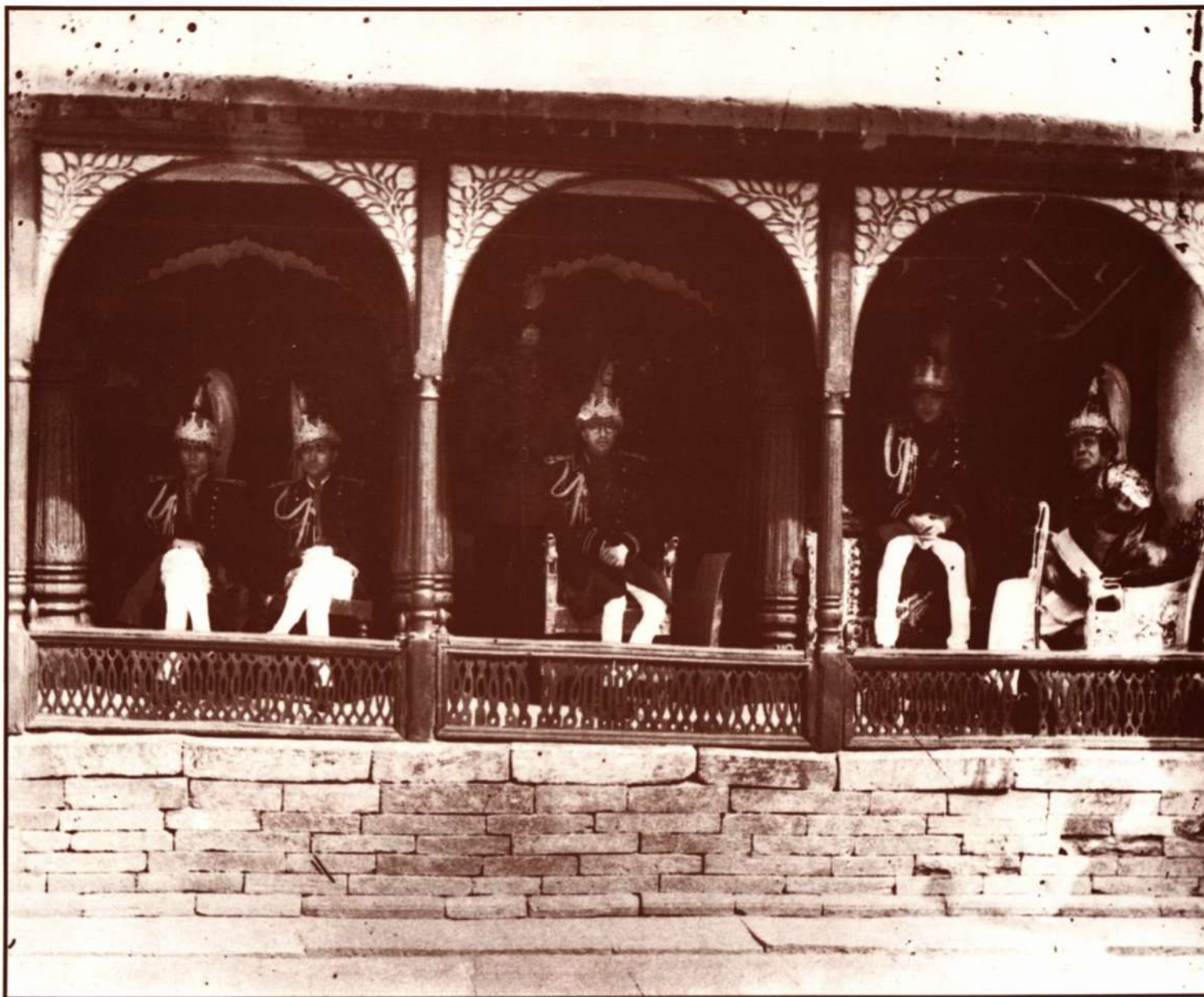


*A high-ranking lady of the court, probably a nanny. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1912.*





*Lady of the court, probably a senior maid of honour (marauri). Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1915.*



*Attending a ceremony in Nasal Chowk, Hanuman Dhoka Palace, from right to left: Prime Minister Padma Shamsher, His Majesty King Tribhuvan, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mahendra, His Royal Highness Prince Himalaya and His Royal Highness Prince Basundhara. Photo taken by Ganesh Man Chitrakar around 1947.*





*Nasal Chowk, inside of Hanuman Dhoka Palace, where the coronation of the king of Nepal is held up to the present. In the foreground Kirtipur Tower, erected in the 18th century with a Bengali-style roof, can be seen. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1916.*

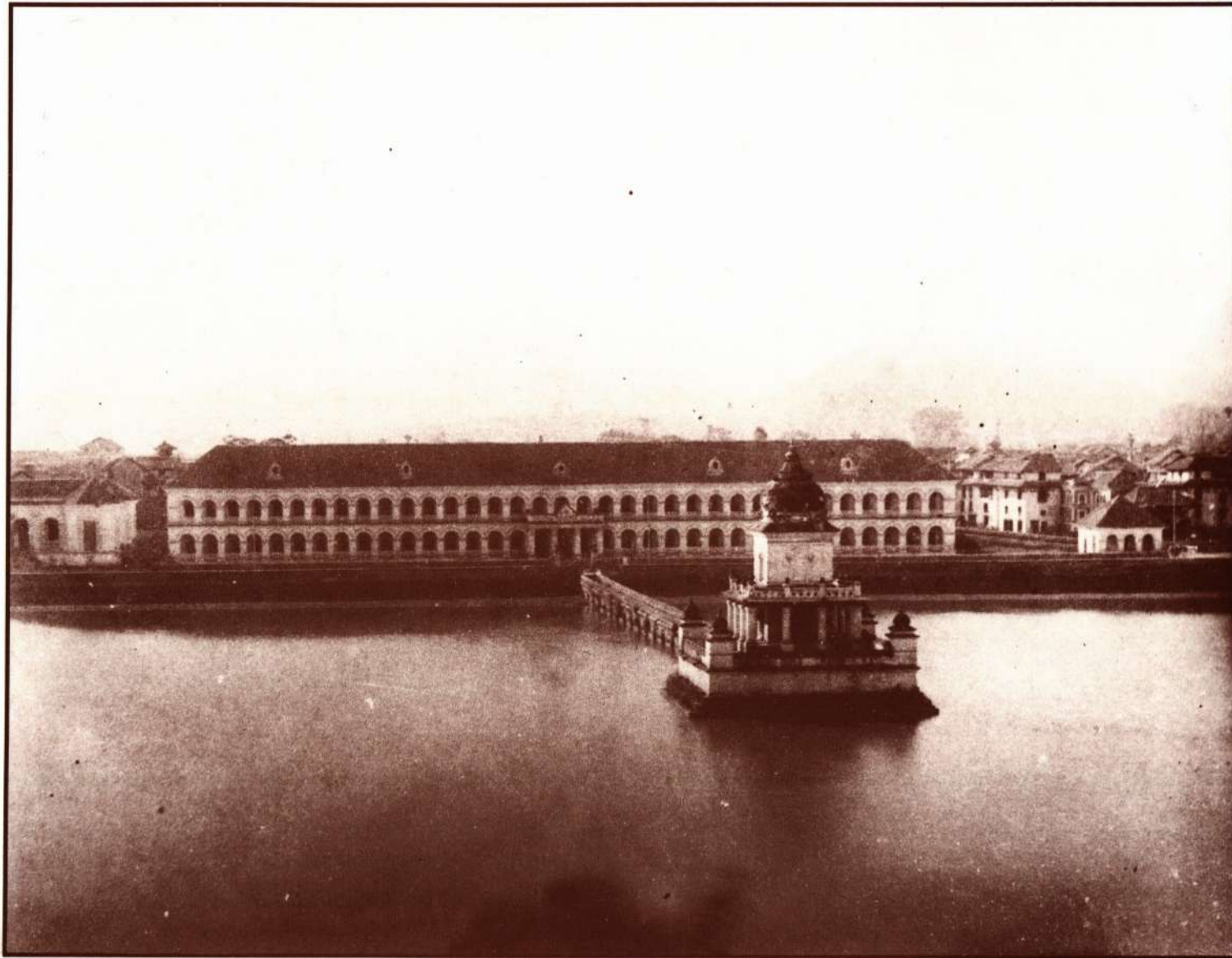


*The Seto Macchendranath festival at Asan Tole is performed yearly between April and May for around four days, depending on the lunar calendar. The White Macchendra god is carried from his temple near Asan Tole in a ceremonial procession to a huge chariot, which will be pushed through different areas in Kathmandu. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1915.*



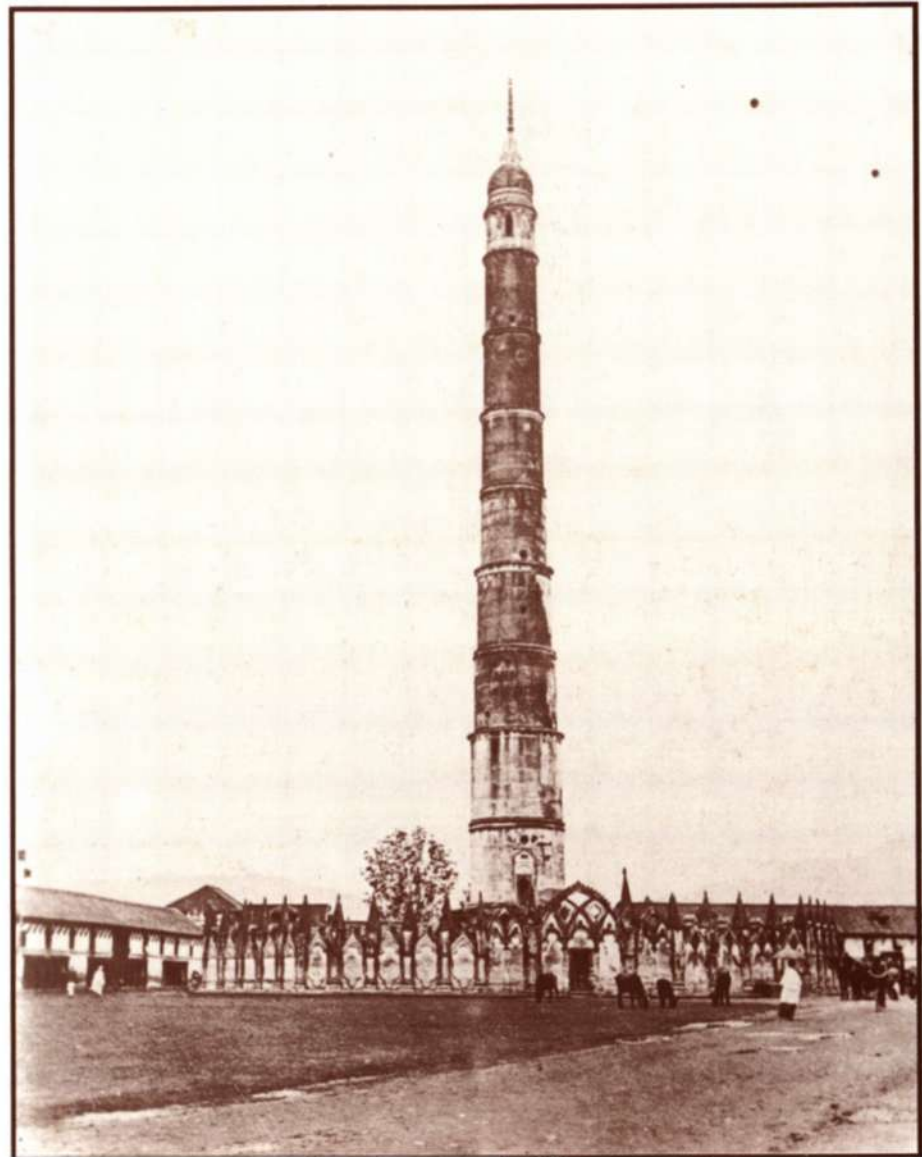


*Indra Chowk and, on the left, Akash Bhairav Temple during the Indra Jatra festival. This most spectacular event lasts eight days, in honour of the rain god Indra, at the end of the monsoon period. On the right is seen Shiva Mandir, a temple that was totally demolished by the earthquake of 1934 and rebuilt as an entirely different structure. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1910.*



*Durbar School, Nepal's first school, founded originally in 1854 at Thapathali Palace, residence of Prime Minister Jang Bahadur Rana after his visit to England, and in 1894 shifted to the newly erected building at Rani Pokhari, at which time it became a public school, having been opened by Prime Minister Bir Shamsher Rana. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1918.*

*The old Dharahara, also called Bhimsen tower, which was totally demolished by the earthquake of 1934 and reconstructed in a slightly changed shape afterwards. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1911.*





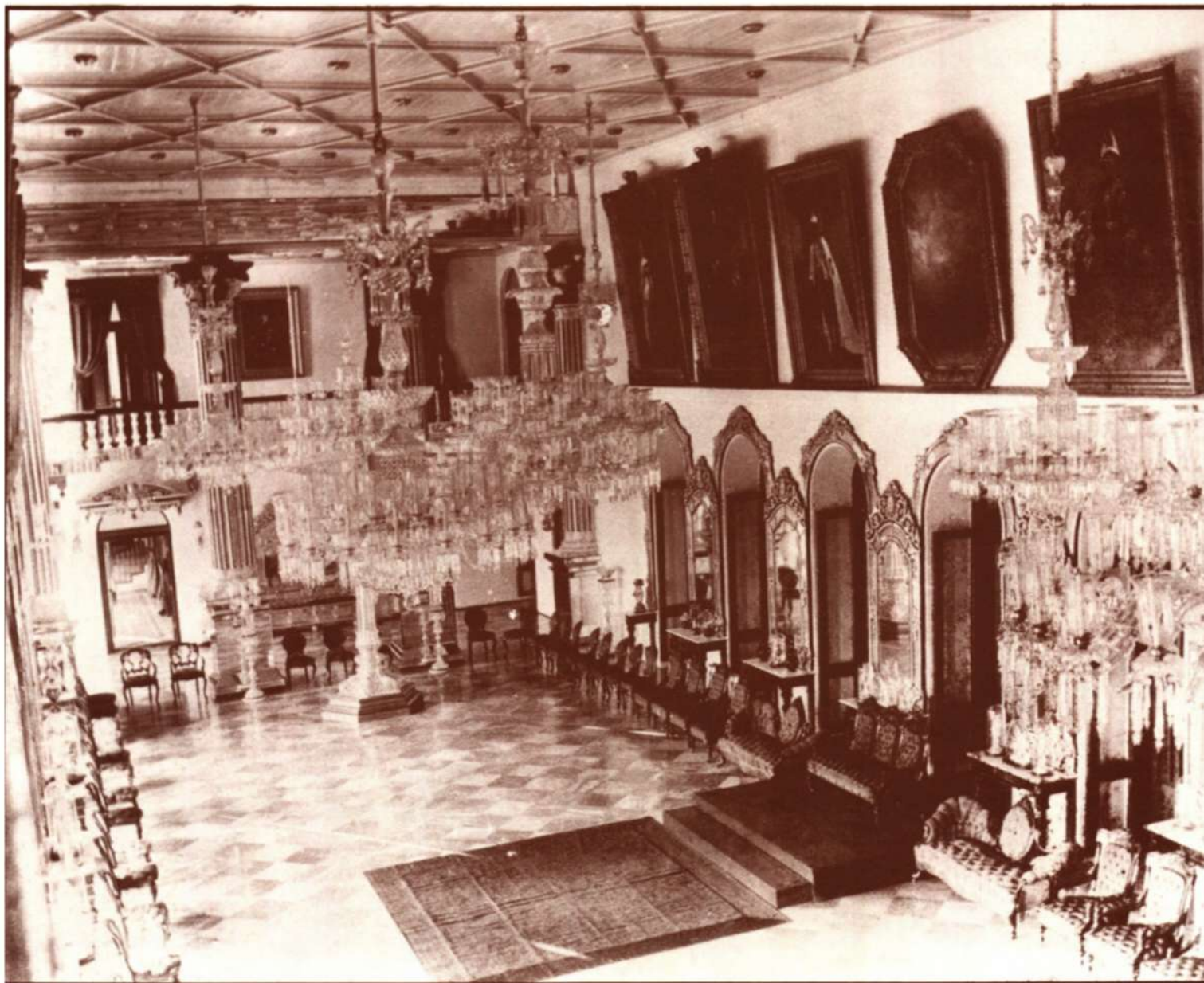


*In the back to the left Phohara Durbar (Fountain Palace), constructed for Bir Shamsher J. B. Rana (governed 1885-1901) in 1895. In the middle Seto Durbar (White Palace), built in 1893 also for Prime Minister Bir Shamsher. On the right Lal Durbar (Red Palace), which was erected in 1890/92 for Bir Shamsher J. B. Rana as well. All these palaces, apart from one wing of Lal Durbar (today incorporated into the Hotel Yak and Yeti), have been torn down or were destroyed by fire in 1923 or the earthquake of 1934. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1910.*



*The entire Seto Durbar (White Palace) was modelled after the famous Government House in Calcutta, which itself was an adaptation of Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire, England, built in 1759/1770. The palace of Prime Minister Bir Shumsher burnt down some years before the earthquake of 1934. None of the paintings could be saved in spite of a high reward offered by the then ruling prime minister. To keep the fire from spreading to the palaces situated on the right and left, the Army Brigade had to be called to make breaches on both sides with cannon. Only one wing of Seto Durbar remains standing today. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1910.*





*Main drawing room (Thulo Baithak) of Seto Durbar in Kathmandu, furnished with Venetian crystal mirrors and chandeliers, Art Noveau and baroque-like furniture from England and France, and portraits painted by Chitrakars (artist clan of Nepal) and foreign artists. Among these latter were three paintings of Maharaja Jang Bahadur Rana (governed 1846-1856 and 1857-1877), Queen Victoria and Prince Albert that had been ordered in England by Jang Bahadur during his visit there (Jang Bahadur visited England and France as the first maharaja from the Indian subcontinent in 1850). The palace as well as all the interior decorations was destroyed by a fire before the earthquake of 1934. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar in 1911.*





*Singha Durbar (Lion Palace) and Bhadrakali Temple as seen from atop the Dharahara (Bhimsen tower). Bhadrakali is one of the four sister goddesses of Kathmandu and is worshipped in an aniconic form. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1915.*



*At Karikobot (the tree under which the Rana maharajas read out their proclamations, in existence until the 1960s) on the Tundikhel: Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher J.B. Rana announces in the presence of His Majesty King Tribhuvan the emancipation of slaves on 28 November 1924. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar.*



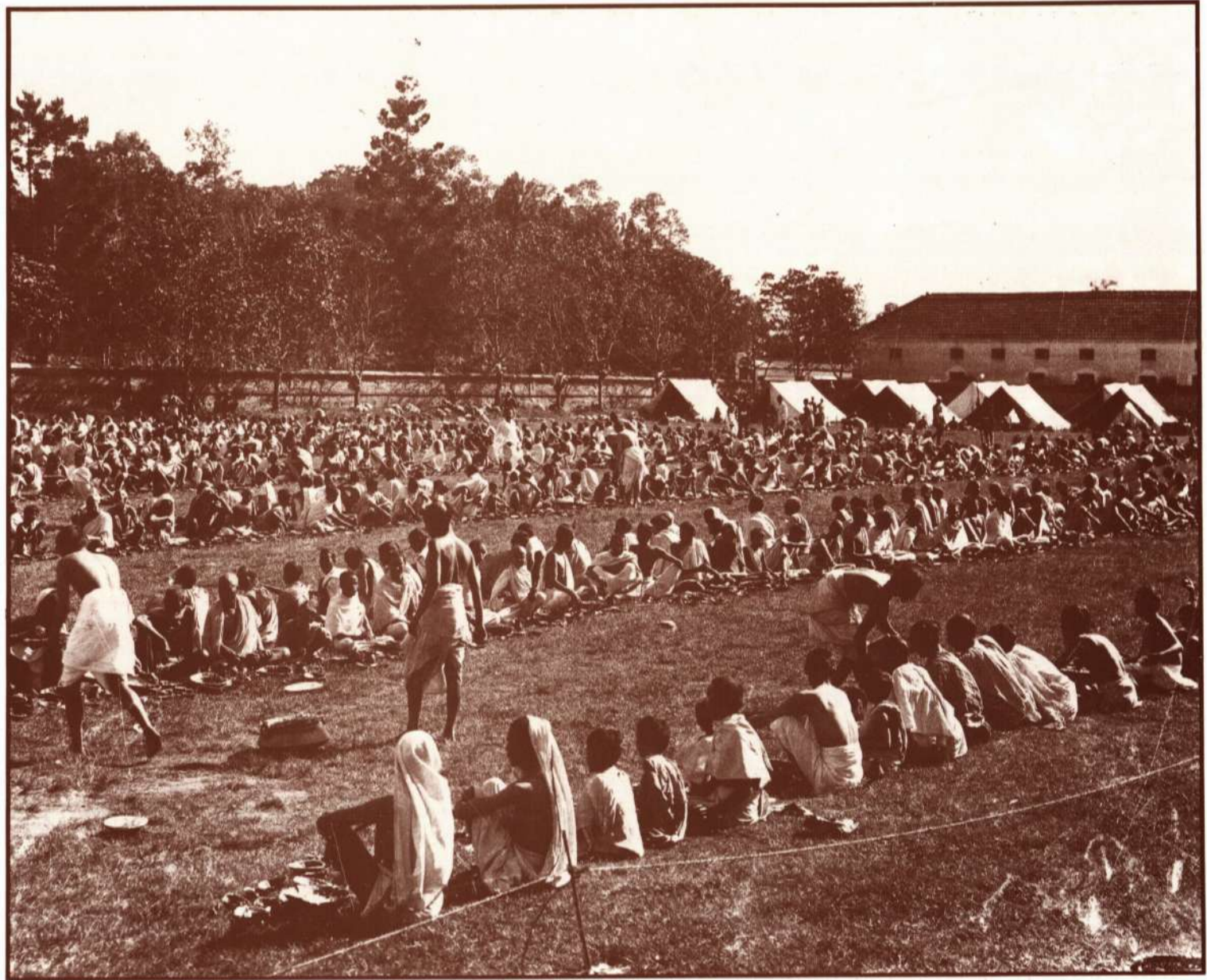
*The Ghanta Ghar (Clock Tower) was built by Nepal's first engineers, Kumar and Kishor Narsingh Rana, who had been trained at the end of the 19th century at Thomason College of Engineering in Rourkee, India, and who later had the chance to study in Japan. The earthquake of 1934 destroyed the Ghanta Ghar completely, but Kishor Narsingh Rana redesigned it around ten years later to accord with the contemporary colonial architectural style. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1915.*





*Feeding of the poor at Tundikhel when Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher returned from Europe. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar in 1909.*



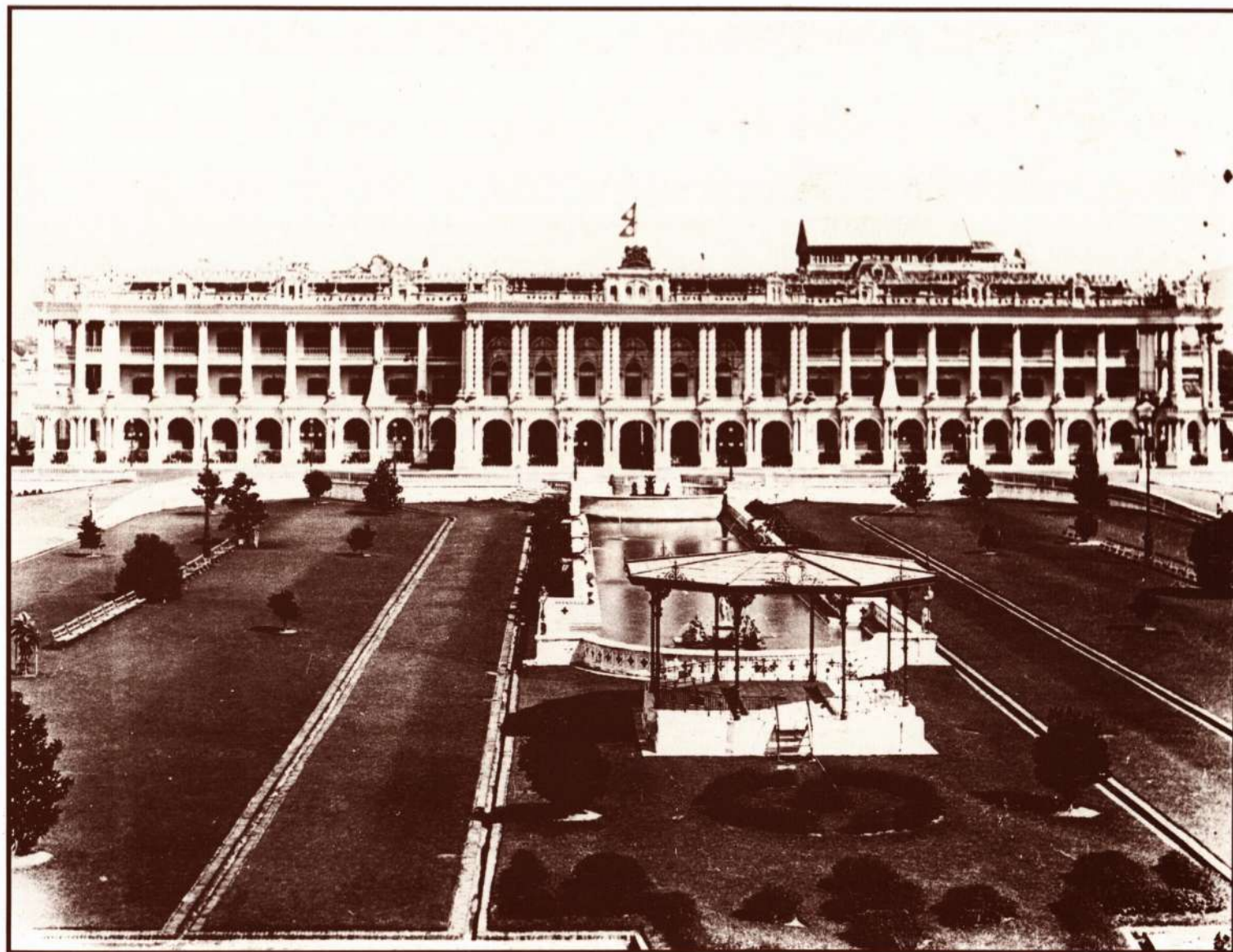


*Feeding of Brahmins (priestly caste) at Pashupatinath after the return of Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher from England. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar in 1909.*



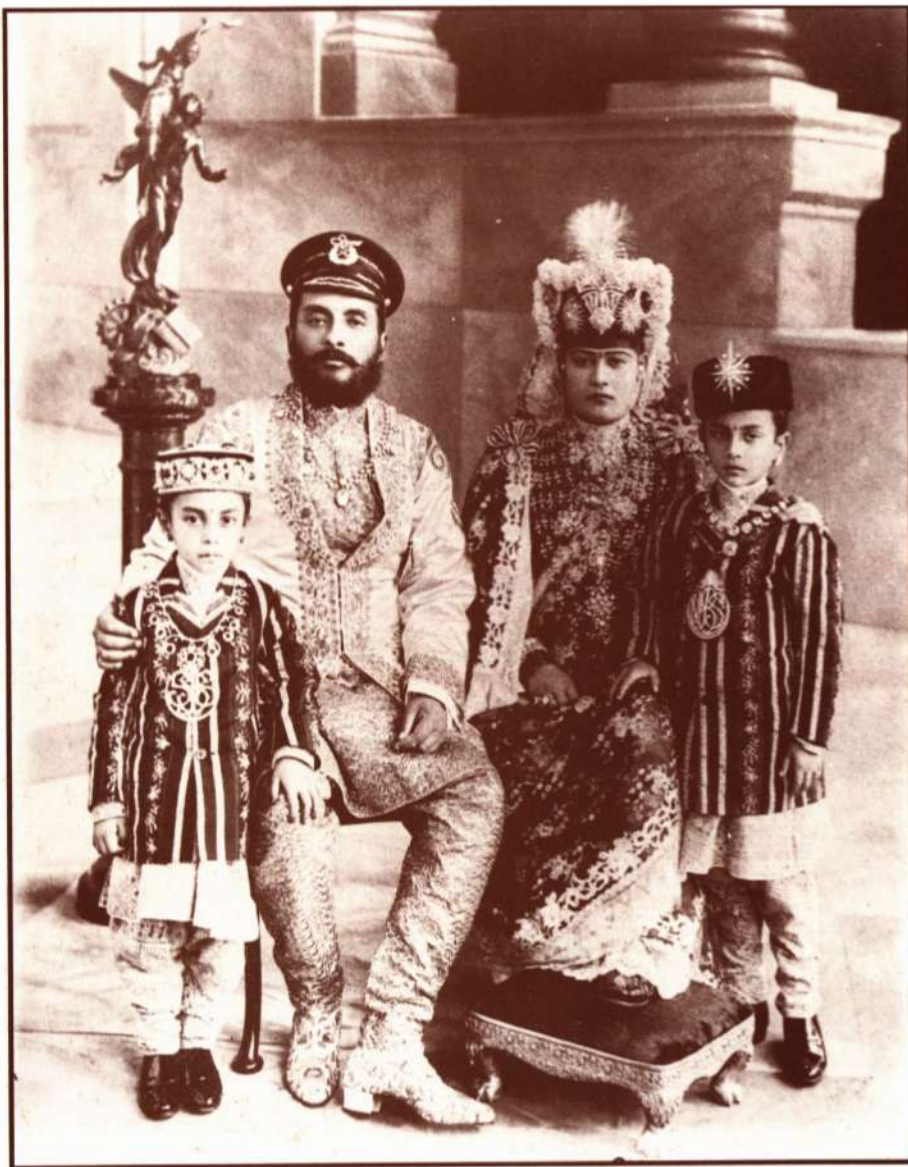


*Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher J.B. Rana (ruled 1901-1929) after being invested by the British with the title Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar.*



*Front view of Singha Durbar (Lion Palace), constructed for Prime Minister Chandra Shamsheer (governed 1901-1929). It is said to have been built in 1903 by Kumar and Kishor Narsingh Rana, who were trained in Japan at the beginning of the century. The palace and its water fountains were modelled after Versailles. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1910.*





*Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher J.B. Rana (governed 1901-1929) and his second rani from Jajarkot together with their sons Vishnu and Shanker. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1909.*



*Singha Durbar, south front. The palace was believed to be the largest building of its time, consisting of seven to eight courtyards and about 1,400 rooms before it burnt down in 1973. The estimated cost of Singha Durbar had been around 500,000 Nepali rupees. Only the front part and surrounding wings have been preserved, and today it is the parliament house of Nepal. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1911.*





*One of the library rooms of Kaisher Mahal fully equipped with European furniture and photographs and paintings by the Chitrakars and foreign artists. The residence of Kaisher Shamsher, son of Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher, was built in 1895. Kaisher Shamsher established one of the largest libraries of Nepal and later donated his palace to the government, which turned it into the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1942.*



*The rani of General Kaisher Shamsher J.B. Rana, Princess Laxmi, an elder sister of King Tribhuvan. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1915.*





*Prime Minister Padma Shamsher J.B. Rana (governed 1945-1948) and Lord and Lady Mountbatten with their daughter at Singha Durbar. On the left side of Lady Mountbatten: Commander-in-Chief General Mohan Shamsher J.B. Rana; on the right side of her husband: the Eastern Commanding General Kaisher Shamsher J.B. Rana, who later became ambassador to the United Kingdom. Photo taken by Ganesh Man Chitrakar in 1945.*





*The rani of General Krishna Shamsher J.B. Rana, Princess Tara, a sister of King Tribhuvan. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1918.*



*The Eastern Commanding General Baber Shamsher J.B. Rana, son of Chandra Shamsher, leading a foreign delegation. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1935.*





*Northern Commanding General Bahadur Shamsher J.B. Rana and the first French envoy to Nepal together with the French army attaché. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1934.*



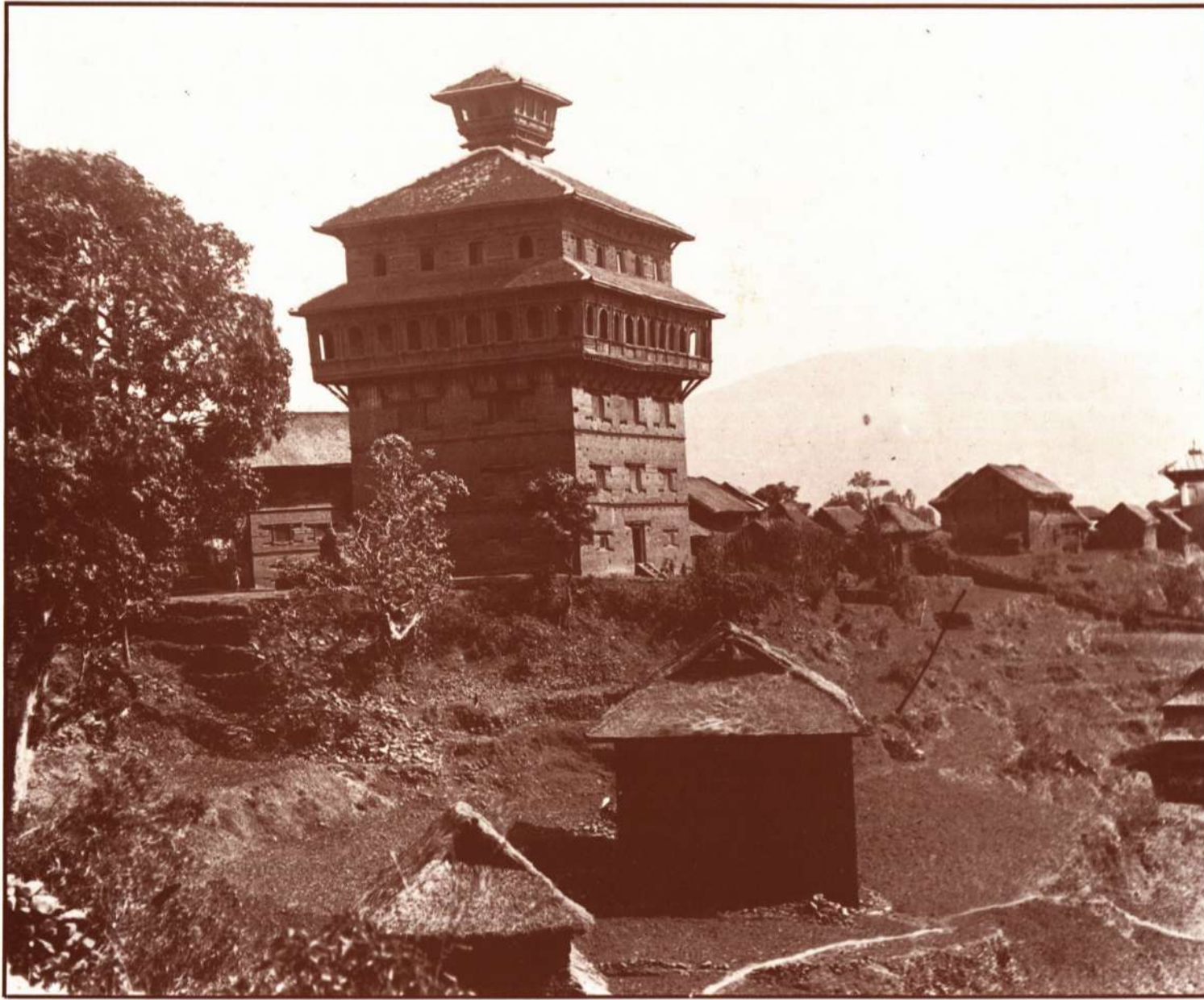


*The young rani of Mohan Shamsher J.B. Rana, son of Chandra Shamsher, who later became the last prime minister of the Rana dynasty (governed 1948-1951). Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1930.*



*Juddha Shamsheer J.B. Rana after his resignation from the prime-ministership (governed 1932-1946) and abdication as maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung, on his way to the sacred site of Ridi in West-Central Nepal, to live the life of a sanyasi. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar in 1945.*





*Nuwakot Durbar, built by King Prithvi Narayan Shah in the district of Nuwakot in 1762 A.D. as his summer palace. Photo taken by Ganesh Man Chitrakar around 1950.*





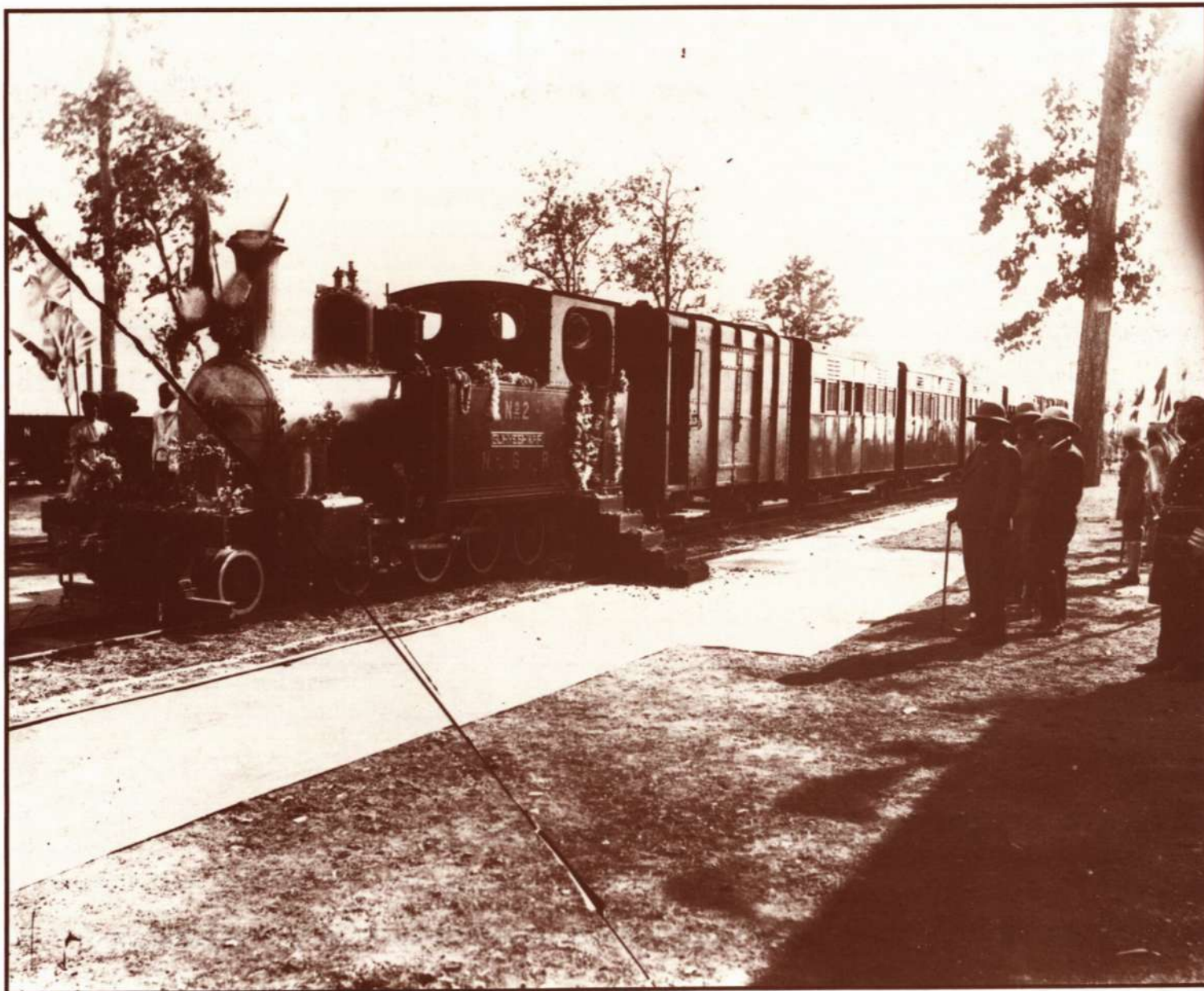
*The town of Tansen in Palpa District, West-Central Nepal, with its residence for the appointed ruling governors, who were frequently looked upon as uncomfortable power factors in the capital. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1935.*





*Cars were treated in the first part of this century as a status symbol in the capital Kathmandu, where they were transported in boxes like any other object. The picture shows hundreds of Nepalis carrying a well-packed car over the mountains to the residences of maharajas. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar in 1915.*





*In 1927 the first and only railway of Nepal was opened between Amlekhgunj and Raxaul on the Indian frontier. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar on the occasion of a visit by the then prime minister.*





*The Chitrakar family of Bhimsen Sthan making preparations for the holy recitation 'nikhon dekha'. In the middle are the two photographers Dirga Man (on the right) and Dittha Badra Man Chitrakar (on the left). Photo taken by Ganesh Man Chitrakar around 1947.*





*The second day of a wedding in the Chitrakar family, after the traditional visit of the temple where the wife receives 'sindoor' (symbol of fidelity and a long marriage) from her husband. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1927.*



*Visit of His Majesty King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev (ruled 1955-1972) to Bhimsen Temple in Kathmandu with representatives of the Malla family, who are the descendants of the former rulers of the valley. Photo taken by Ganesh Man Chitrakar in 1962.*



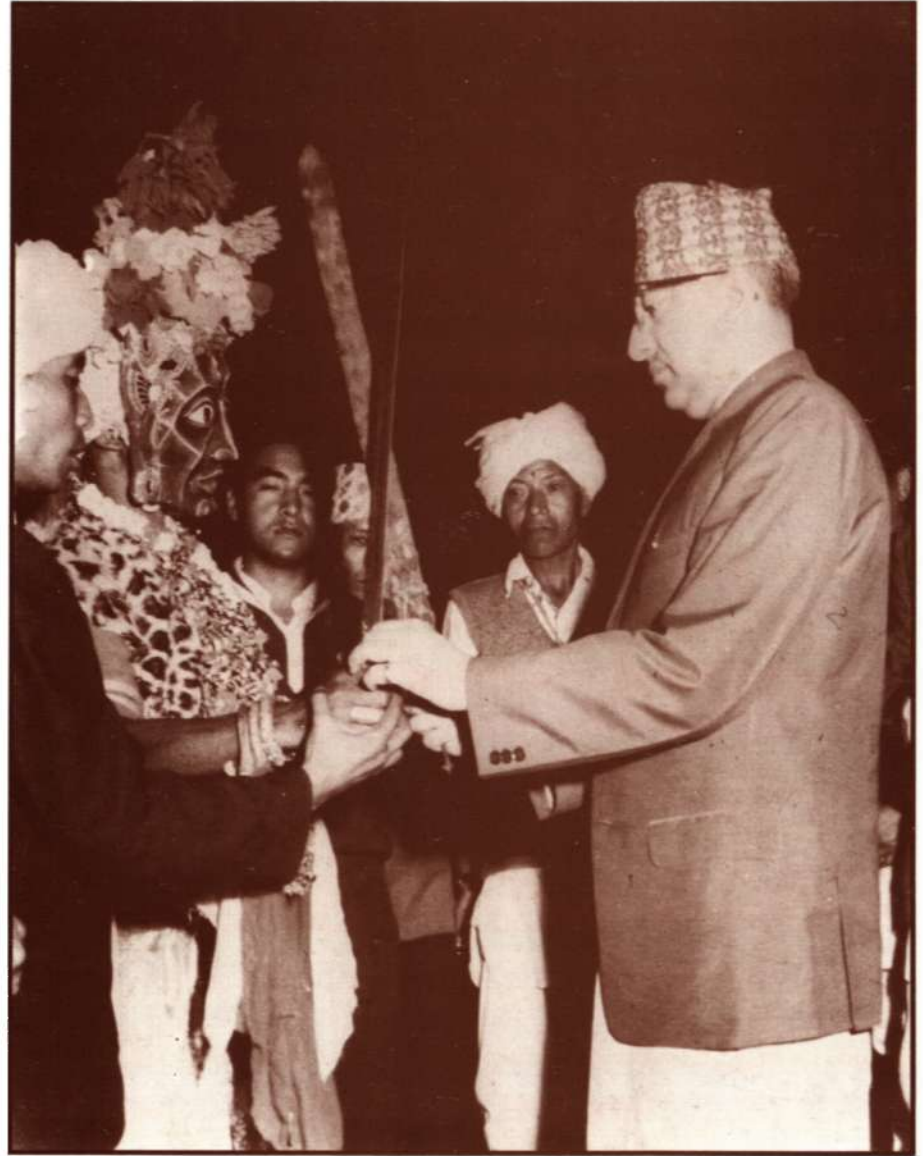


*Bhimsen Temple in Kathmandu, the clan temple of the Chitrakar family. Photo taken by Dirga Man Chitrakar around 1928.*



*The then Crown Prince Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev at his 'bratabandha' ceremony (investiture with the sacred cord) in April 1963. His Majesty King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev is seen in the left foreground giving alms to his son. Photo taken by Ganesh Man Chitrakar.*

*His Majesty King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev exchanging swords with the goddess Ajima during the festival of the god Bhairav held every twelve years in front of Taleju Temple, Kathmandu. Photo taken by Ganesh Man Chitrakar in 1963.*

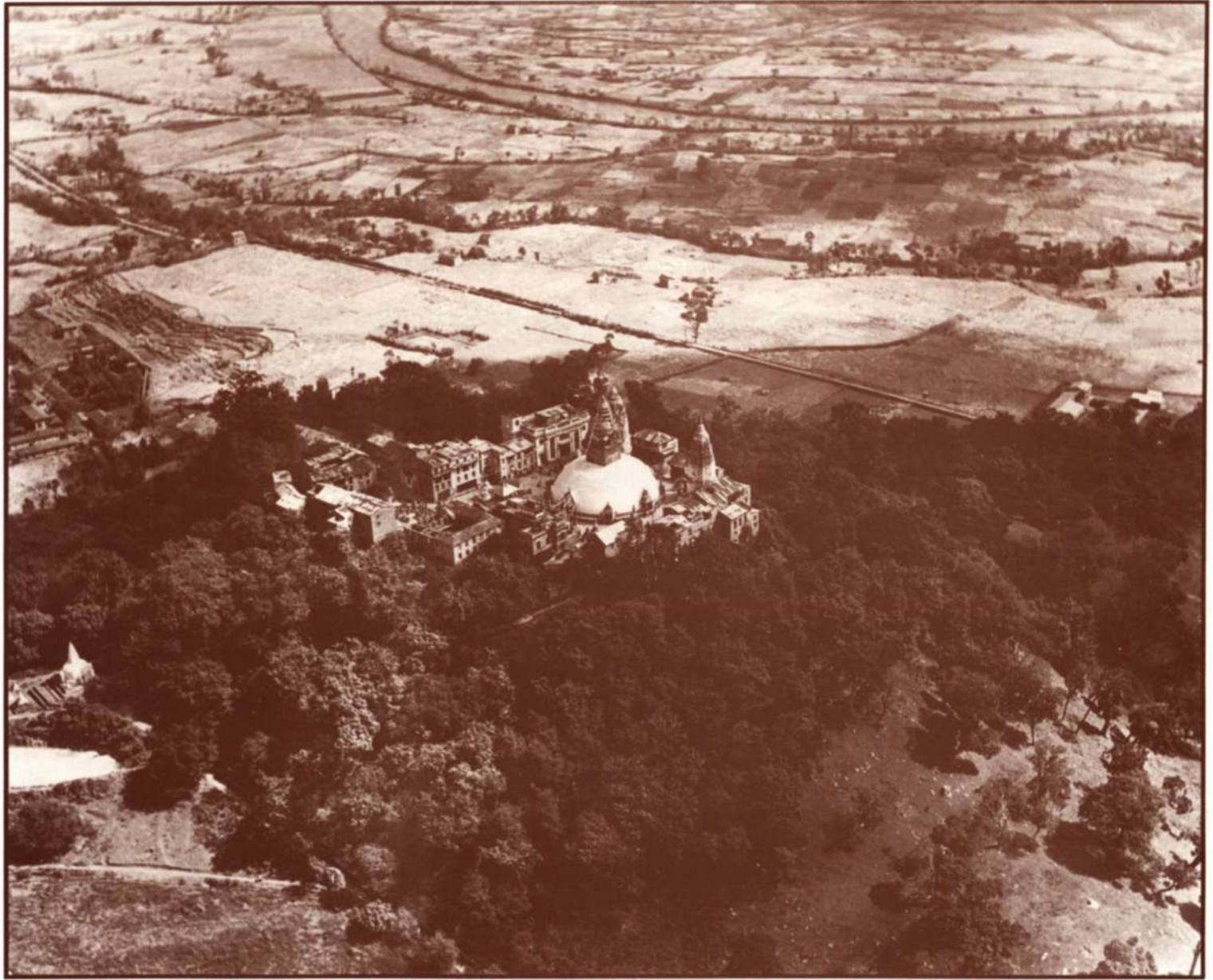






*An aerial view of the Kathmandu Valley; in the foreground Bahadur Bhawan, which later became the first hotel, Royul Hotel, in Nepal. In the middle, Narayanhiti Palace, residence of the King of Nepal, and Phohara Durbar. Photo taken by Ganesh Man Chitrakar in 1960.*





*An aerial view of Swayambhunath Stupa. Today the surrounding area is filled with newly constructed monasteries and houses. Photo taken by Ganesh Man Chitrakar in 1960.*

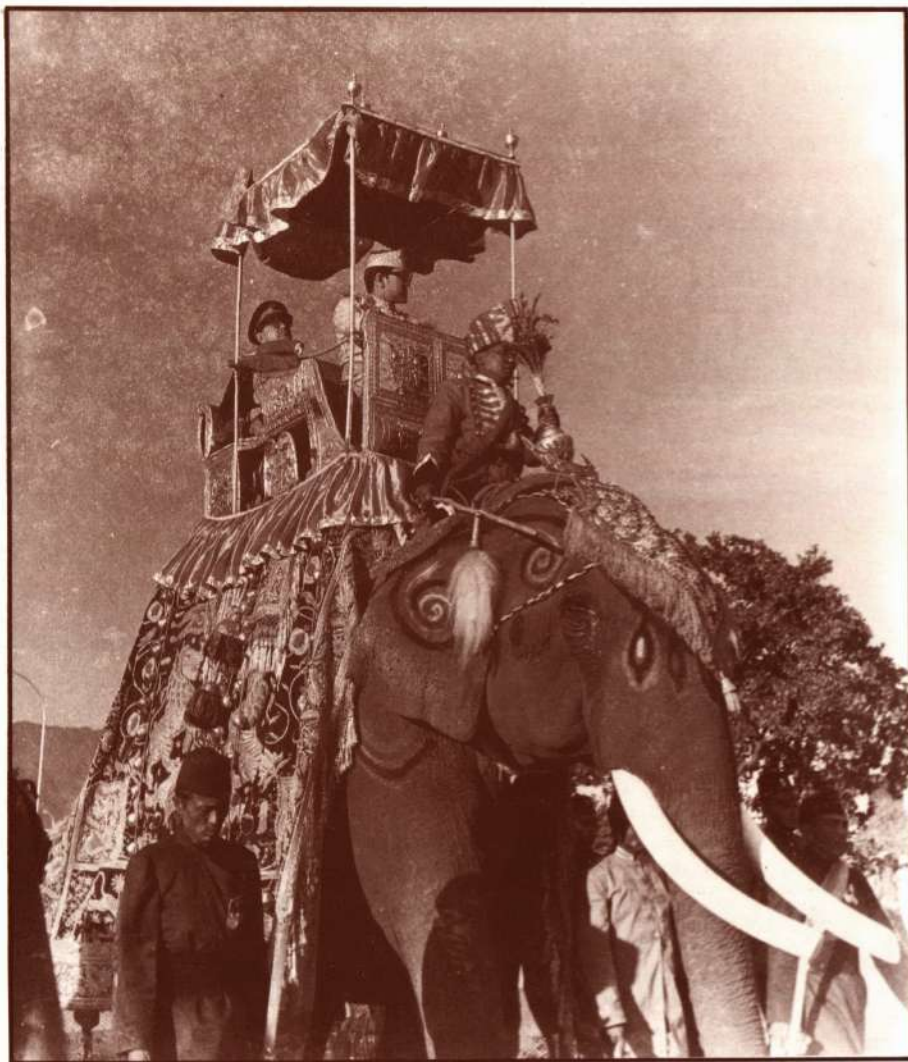


*An aerial view of the temple complex of Pashupatinath. Photo taken by Ganesh Man Chitrakar in 1960.*





*Pashupatinath Temple in front with Ganesh Himal in the background. Pashupati's holy precinct, which includes different sacred buildings and shrines, is the area which surrounds the main temple. This cluster of temples is the starting point of all Hindu devotees on their pilgrimage tours of other holy places in the valley, and at the same time their pilgrimage also ends here. Photo taken by Ganesh Man Chitrakar around 1960.*



*The royal wedding procession of the then Crown Prince Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev in February 1970. Photo taken by Ganesh Man Chitrakar.*





*His Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev during his visit to Paris in the year 1994. Also seen on the photo is Kiran Chitrakar, son of Ganesh Man, who is working today for Nepal Television, in the service of His Majesty.*



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