

XVIII. King Ñi-ma-rnam-rgyal's Account of the Deeds of General Śākya-rgya-mtsho

The following account is found in a decree by King Ñi-ma-rnam-rgyal concerning the descendants of this eminent general, who died without a son. For some time I tried in vain to obtain information concerning the family of a famous minister called Bañ-kha-pa, who rendered important services during the times of the Dogra war. I was of opinion that the Bañ-kha-pa family was probably connected with Śākya-rgya-mtsho. The above-mentioned document shows that, if the Bañ-kha-pa family is descended from the general, it can only be in the female line. But a connexion is probable, in particular, because the castle of I-gu (Dbyi-gu) was the property of Śākya-rgya-mtsho as well as of the Bañ-kha-pa family. The following account is of importance as supplementing the meagre notice of the Mughal wars which we find in the Chronicles. By taking account of enemy generals mentioned in this narrative it might be possible to connect the Mughal histories with those of the Ladakhis.

THE BAÑ-KHA-PAS

About eighteen miles above Leh, in a side valley branching off from the Indus valley, is the principality of I-gu (Dbyi-gu). Its castle, called I-gu-khri-khañ, is mentioned in many inscriptions. It was the seat of a line of chiefs called Bañ-kha-pa, who were extremely loyal to the kings of Ladakh. The first chief who distinguished himself by his bravery was Śākya-rgya-mtsho, the field-marshal who conquered Bu-rig and part of Baltistan under king Bde-ldan-rnam-rgyal. Oral tradition connects this general with the castle of I-gu. We do not hear anything further of these chieftains prior to Moorcroft's report of them. He visited Ladakh in 1820 A.D. He says (vol. i, p. 425, of his *Travels*): 'The Banka, who to his office of master of the horse adds the government of this district . . . The district under the Banka comprises seventy villages. His office is hereditary, and is held by the condition of bringing 700 armed men into the field when required.' Thus a Bañ-kha-pa who commanded a Ladakhi army during the Dogra war is repeatedly mentioned. The Bañ-kha-pas are possibly descended from the traditional king Sūryamati (now pronounced Surgamati) who once resided at a now ruined castle opposite Stag-sna, on the right bank of the Indus.