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**Let me present you a situation. There is an ancient kingdom of which we know nothing. This kingdom was invaded and subjugated. Now, the one who conquered it changed it's religion completely and wrote it's history in a way that the new religion existed always.**

We land in a situation where archeology gives us only ruins, all old literature and all old references wiped out(sometimes violently) and the new country hates it's old culture. I am not talking about Christian Europe or Islamic Arabia. I am talking about Tibet.

One image is enough to tell you the extent to which Tibet divorced itself from it's past. This is Goddess Srin Mo, who is a personification of Tibet. When she resisted introduction of Buddhism into Tibet, she was pinned to the ground with Buddhist temples.



"To subdue her, they build a total of thirteen Buddhist temples, some of which still stand today in places like Bhutan, to pin her down on her back. Four in the inner realm of Tibet to pin her shoulder and hip. Four at the border areas, pinning her knees and elbows.

Four at the borders beyond to pin her hands and feet. And finally, one at the Jo-khang, symbolizing her heart and considered the center of Tibet. Thus Srin is subdued and Buddhism can reign over Tibet."

This is the story of the kingdom subdued by Tibet - Zhangzhung. Literally nothing is known about it except a handful of names thrown here and there and this will be an attempt to put as much information as possible over it in a coherent manner.

Now, where is this Zhangzhung? It's the kingdom which existed in the Trans-Himalayan Tract (the plains between Himalayas and the mountains just East of Indus in Tibet. This is where civilization actually started in Tibet and spread further into Central Tibet.

In his magnum opus *The History of Tibet*, Alex McKay writes that the culture of the tribes of Western Tibet is identical to the culture of Ch'iang tribes. Ch'iang is a much older word than Tu, the Chinese name for Bod which made its appearance only by the time of Sui Dynasty.

Though the Ch'iang home territory is the territory bordering Tibet and China, they slowly moved west into Tibet towards Upper Brahmaputra Valley. Though shepherds by lifestyle, it is presumed that they followed the tracks of the likes of Xiangnou in quest for pillage.

GN Roerich points out that there is another migration directly west towards the Tibetan highlands into the TransHimalayan area by following the Nyenchen Tanglha Mountains from Amdo(Qinghai) finally reaching Kailas-Manasarovar area, probably due to the proximity to Indian plains.



However, there is an equal possibility that they entered through the gap between Karakoram and Gangtise Ranges into Trans Himalayan area which explains a few further things. These tribes "Greater Yang-t'ung" and the "Lesser Yang-t'ung" nearly correspond to the word Zhang Zhung.

Further confirming the observation, one would note that the Zhang Zhung also have two classification Zhang Zhung Stod(Upper) and Zhang Zhung Smar(Lower). In the case of Zhang Zhung, upper and lower correspond to the territorial divisions with Manasarovar as the border.

We would see that Zhang Zhung extended from Ladakh to Maryum Pass and held ground until the rise of Yarlung Dynasty. The last Zhang Zhung king was assassinated when on an inspection tour in the newly conquered Sum Pa lands near Dangra Yumco by the Yarlungs of Tibet.

A contemporary description of Tibet during the times of Drigum Tsenpo calls Zhang Zhung a confederacy and not an empire. This in fact, explains many things, especially the prominence of a king in an area known as Strirajya - Kingdom of Women.

Traditionally, Zhangzhung is called Shangshung Go-Phug-Bar-sum - Kham and Amdo forming Go/Goor, U and Tsang forming Bar, and Guge Stod-Ngari Korsum forming the Phug or Interior.

Whether Zhangzhung existed as a single kingdom or not, what is known is, Zhangzhung proper – the lands between Karakoram Pass, Lipulekh Pass and Maryum La represented a non-Tibetan entity at the time when Tibet was becoming one

of the main powers of Asia.

Wikipedia writes over the names of Tibet that the Tibetan name for Bod is pronounced as Bhö or Phö. The same is prominently noted in Indian languages as Bhota or Bhauta. However, Bod refers to conquered territory and can only refer to a settlement.

One can attempt to trace this to the word Fu – the Chinese sources of the same era mentions of a Fu state of either Qiang or Tibetan ethnicity "more than two thousand miles northwest of Shu County(Central Tibet)". Fu state was pronounced as "bod" or "phyva" in Archaic Chinese."

Nothing much is known about Zhangzhung. There are two reasons for this – the aggressive Tibetan subjugation of Zhangzhung and Buddhification of Tibet. While the first one led to destruction of Zhangzhung as a political entity and destruction of the old order,

Buddhification ensured the construction of a false history of Tibet. The level of purge is indicative from the fact that modern Bon is not much different from Tibetan Buddhism. Going by the fact that even the language of Zhangzhung became extinct due to the imposition of Tibetan

and all Bon texts discovered are from Buddhist era, it is very hard to glean out real information from the works. This is besides the fact that most of the information from these discovered works is religious and not secular.

It's not even known whether they called it Zhangzhung - it may not be amiss to mention that Zhang has a meaning wife-giver and Zhung means centre fully reconciling with the concept of Shangshung Go-Phug-Bar-sum – Phug meaning the core Zhangzhung territory.

Zhangzhung is assumed to be the Central Fortress for Bon in the modern hagiographies but historical references over the same doesn't seem to be convincing enough. Yoshio Nishi and Yasuhiko Nagano propose that, as Zhangzhung language, which is associated with the

Bon religion was the language of dMu tribe and their adherence to Bon is the reason why the whole territory is associated with Bon. Zhangzhung's prominence in Bon only started to rise in their quest for a great legacy after

the Bon were marginalized by the Tibetan Buddhist Communities with whom they fled into India in 1960s. But, note, whatever Bon is post conquest of Zhangzhung only. It wouldn't be amiss to pick information from Bon sources before jumping into something on more firmer footing.

In fact, the Bon importance to Zhangzhung led to the myth of Shambala or Shangri-la. According to Bon belief, Shang Shung had 18 kings, but it is unclear whether this means 18 kings in dynastic sequence, or rulers of 18 co-existing kingdoms. No king list exists.

The origins of Bon can be traced to Tonpa Shenrab who introduced writing(mar = divine script), taught them astrology, medicine and how to worship. He is dated to around 1950 BC.

Next change came in the middle of 11th Century BC when Shenrab Miwo reformed the primitive animism and created Tibetan Bon. Bonpo literature is replete with instances of glorification of Zhangzhung, an attempt to find lost glory after the rise of Buddhism.

The first king of Zhangzhung is said to be Triwer Sergyi Jhagruchen (Triwer(tri=divine, wer=power)) and is said to have lived a thousand years before Buddha. Some historians treat Nyatri Tsembo as a contemporary of Buddha while others place him at a later date.

Zhangzhung held Changthang area as a powerbase, with a network of temples, forts and villages. Locals call these to be built by Mon-pa or Mon dur or Mon rdzong or Mon mkhar. Modern scholars have linked this to Zhangzhung, with the timeframe between 1000 BC to 700 AD.

The fight between Bon and Buddhism went on till Zhangzhung existed – after that, it was plain destruction of Bon. Gyerpung Drenpa Namkha can be looked upon as the last great Bon teacher in the pre-Buddhist era.

Kun-'bum khrao bzhugs-pa'i dbu-phyogs written around 12th Century explains why the king of Zhangzhung is called King of Bon.

"Astride the blessed garuda, he set forth to promulgate the Bon doctrine, and alighted first in the land of Zhang-zhung.

This is the reason why the doctrine originally came to Zhang-zhung, and this is also how it came to be that the [kings of] Zhang-zhung are called the "kings of Bon".

Translated as Silver Castle of the Garuda Valley, Khyunglung Dngul Mkhar or Khyunglung is considered to be the capital city of Zhangzhung. Its foundations are made of gold, and its four sides of silver. Its main portal is of iron, and its four doors of silver.

Its four edges are made of sardonyx, and its beam-ends of copper. Its pinnacle reaches the thirteen levels of the sky: storm-clouds swirl around it, blue dragons sleep on it and garudas soar around its sides. It contains 108 chambers.

The remains of the three storey palace is still visible.

A contemporary account reads thus .

"From the top of the cliffs, Baumann realizes that the settlement must have been only part of an enormous, ancient city.

At the end of the valley, which stretches for 15 kilometers (9.3 miles), Baumann can just make out the cave settlement he discovered during his canoe trip three years earlier...Locals call the mountain "Khardong," or "In the View of the Palace."

The kingdom is divided into three parts – sGo, Phug and Bar. sGo-pa is Khyung-po or North Eastern Tibet with Khyung-po rtse-drug as centre, Phug-pa is nGaris with Ti-se as centre and Bar-pa is Dang-ra or Northern Tibet with Dang-ra khyung-rdzong as centre.

Straddling India from Kashmir to Kamarupa, one may wonder what sort of interaction this area had with India. While the word Trivitaspa(heaven) explains the context, the area is known by various names in India - Khasamandala, Kiratamandala, Kimpurushavarsha, Hunadesa and others.

Traditionally, it's the land of Lord Siva – Manasa Khanda/Kailasa Khanda and the home turf of Kubera and his Ganas – Kinnara, Kimpurusha, Yaksha, Rakshasa and Gandharva. The area is famous for gold and Kinnaras guarded the gold mines of Yakshas and hence,

the area is called Suvarnadesa/ Suvarnabhumi/ Suvarnagotra. Besides, one of the most intriguing references to the area is as Strirajya, kingdom of women. In the modern tongue, it's called mNgaris(Controlled Territory) or Guge –

Guge is known atleast from 650 AD and though Jonaraja calls it Goggadesa, it is known in the vicinity as Guge itself. For instance, Sapni Fort in Kinnaur is still known as Guge Rani ki Kila. Ngaris is generally pronounced as Nari Korsum.

During the Han dynasty Tibet was occupied by a number of tribes called Khiang or Chiang, and towards the close of the fourth century a number of these were united together under Huti Puxiye. This Huti Puxiye story closely resonates with that of Rupati, though.

Rupati, variously mentioned as a Kaurava warrior, a son of Nakula, a grandson of Janamejeya fled Mahabharata and settled in the Transhimalayan tract according to legends. He seems to have set up the first kingdom in Tibet and his successors ruled Tibet till they were replaced by

a Licchavi line. Tsanpu Nyakhri, sometimes called a Licchavi and sometimes, a successor of a different line is the founder of Yarlung line which ended Zhangzhung.

The Tibetan Blue Annals, which is the oldest reference to the legend of Rupati writes of him, "a king named Rupati, who fought at the head of his army, suffered a defeat and fled to the region situated inside the snowy Mountains disguised as a woman.

His descendants settled there, Nowadays his line is called Bod" Look at how things add up. Bod means conquered lands and here we have, a conqueror who conquered those lands. The reference to name change from Pu-rGyal to Bod indicates the shift of naming from Chinese to Indian.

Tibet is called Pu or Fu in early Chinese and Bhota in India, the earliest reference being Mahabharata's Satrunjaya Mahatmya and we don't hear of Bhotas participating in Mahabharata. But, Bhagadatta led a contingent of Cinas and Kiratas, both the names attributed to Western Tibet.

After a long interval another Indian prince called Nah-Thi-Tsanpo or Nya-Khri-Tsanpo, said by some to be a Lichchavi of Vaisali near Patna and by others to be the fifth son of king Prasenajit of Kosala, arrived in Tibet and established a second Indian dynasty amongst the Pons.

The legend runs that an infant Nah-Thi was exposed by his parents in a copper vessel which floated down the Ganges and was found by an old peasant who saved the child and brought him up as his own.

On arriving at man's estate and being informed of the circumstances of his birth the young prince made his way to Tibet and was received by the Pons, who hailed him as king. Under Di-gum-Tsanpo, the eighth in descent from Nah-Thi, the Pon religion had been established in Tibet.



Kailasa is another aspect which is heavily noted in Indian lore. Meru, Kailasa and Manasarovara are the main geographical features of the area. Atkinson calls the whole of Western Tibet as Meru.

Puranas mention four rivers rising and flowing in four directions - The Sita(Sutlej) is supposed to flow from an elephant's head, the Alaknanda(Karnali) from a cow's head, the Chakshu(Brahmaputra) from a horse's head, and the Bhadra(Indus) from a lion's head.

Vayu Purana describes the geography thus. Clearly, we see a picture of the country from Kinnaur(Kinnana) to the borders of Uttarakhand along with discussion about the impossible terrain to the North of Sulej Plains.

Between Sanku-kuta and the Vrishabha mountains is the Parushaka country, the abode of Kinnaras, Urugas, Nagas, and holy men. Between Kapinjala and Naga-saila is a tract adorned with many groves. It abounds with fruits and flowers. The Kinnaras and Urugas with tribes of pious and good men live there. There are beautiful groves of draksha(grape), nagaranga (orange) and badari (jujube) trees. The portion lying between the Pushpaka and Mahamegha mountains is as flat as the palm of the hand, devoid of trees and with very little water which is whitish. The soil is hard and tenacious and even without grass without grass. There are few animals and the few inhabitants have no fixed habitation. The whole country is called Kanan or Kanana. There are several large lakes, likewise great trees and larger groves called Kanta. There are caves here in the mountains most dreary and dark, inaccessible to the rays of the sun, cold and difficult of access. In this country are Siddhas or prophets with the gift of miracles and learned and famous Brahmans. The next mountains are those of the Sitanta range, many yojanas in extent, abounding with all sorts of metals and gems. It is skirted by a most delightful country, well-watered and enlivened with the harmonious noise of the black bee and frogs. There are towns with gates and the refreshing moisture of this country proceeds from Urupa and reuniting together forms a stream called the Vaha of the moon or Chandravaha. There amongst immense caves is Kridavana and the great forest of the Varijata tree of the kings of the gods. There live the Siddhas and Yakshas in caves. To the east is the Kumuda peak with the eight towns of the proud Danavas. Again in the many-peaked mountains of Vajraka live strong and terrible Rakshasas who are also called Nilakas. In Mahanila are fifteen towns of the Hayananas or Asvamukhas, the horse-faced. They were originally Kinnaras courageous like Karttikeya. There are fifteen chiefs of the Kinnaras elated with pride, and in caves below the ground abide people like snakes who live upon the golden stamens of certain flowers. In the hills above are a thousand abodes of the Daityas; the houses are elegant like high-embattled forts. In Venumat are three forts belonging to the Romakas, Ulukas and Mahanetras, three principal tribes of the Vidyadharas whose mighty deeds equal those of Indra.

On Vaikanka reside the offspring of Garuda, the destroyer of serpents : it abounds with precious metals and precious stones. A strong wind swiftly passes over this mountain, in a human form, called Sugriva. The offspring of Garuda in the shape of birds fly about this mountain : they are strong, fly quickly and mighty are their achievement . On Karaja always resides the mighty lord of living beings, riding upon a bull : hence called Vrishabhanka Sankara, the chief of Yogis. The inhabitants like Mahadeva always carry poison about them : they are Pramathas and difficult of access. Mahadeva resides there amongst them. On Vasudhara in Vasumati are the sthans or places of the eight forms of Mahadeva, They are full of splendour and proper places of worship. There are seven places of Siddhas and the place of Brahma of the Four faces, the mighty lord of created things, on a high peak to which all living creatures bow. The eleven Rudras reside there on the Gaja-saila. Sumegha, the mount of the beautiful cloud, is full of minerals, with caves in its bosom and groves along its skirts. Here dwell the twelve Adityas and the eight forms of Rudra, also Vishnu, the Asvins and the good and perfect who are continually worshipped by the Yakshas, Gandharvas and Kinnaras with their king Kapinjala. On the five-peaked Anala, reside Rakshasas with Danavas haughty, foes of the gods, great, strong and of mighty deeds. On Satasringa or the hundred-peaked range reside the benevolent Yakshas and on Tamrabha is a town inhabited by the Children of the snake race; Kadruveyas and Takshakas. In the beautiful Visakacha are many caves and the famous abode of the god Karttikeya. A town and settlement of the beneficent Sunabha, son of Garada, occurs on Swetodatta. On the Paisachaka mountain is a settlement of the Kuveras with a great place to which the Yakshas and Gandharvas resort. Kinnaras reside on Kumuda ; Mahanagas on Anjana ; the towns and white houses of the Gandharvas are seen on Krishna and on Sweta or Pandura, the battlemented town of Vidyadharas, Daityas and Danavas reside on the range with a thousand peaks. On Sukuta reside the chiefs of the Pannagas ; on Pushpaka many tribes of sages ; on Supaksha or Subaksha are the mansions of Vaivaswata, Soma, Vayu and Nagraja, and there the Gandharvas, Kinnaras, Yakshas, Nagas and Vidyadharas worship their favourite deity.

The portion lying between the Pushpaka and Mahamegha mountains is as flat as the palm of the hand, devoid of trees and with very little water which is whitish. The soil is hard and tenacious and even without grass without grass. There are few animals and the few inhabitants have no fixed habitation. On Karaja always resides the mighty lord of living beings, riding upon a bull : hence called Vrishabhanka Sankara, the chief of Yogis. The inhabitants like Mahadeva always carry poison about them : they are Pramathas and difficult of access. Mahadeva resides there amongst them.

Manasa Khanda, a local addition of Skanda Purana details the tract between Manasa and Nanda Devi clearly. This is probably the best description of the territory in any Indian book.

**Forward Route**  
The pilgrim must go by the road of Kurmachala; he must first bathe in the Gandaki and then in the Loha, and let him then worship Mahadeva and the other gods. Then let him worship on the top of Kurma-sila and bathe in the Hansa-tirtha, thence let him go to the Sarju, then to Darun or Tankara, and worship Mahadeva, thence to Patala Bhubaneswara, and then without eating for three days let him worship Siva. Then let him bathe in the Ramganga and worship at Baleswar. Thence to Paban mountain and worship Siva, thence to Pataka and worship Siva, and he should then bathe at the confluence of the Kali and Gori. Thence to Chaturdaunshra mount and worship Siva there. Then to Vyasasrama and worship Vyasa and then to the source of the Kali, then to Kerala mount and worship Debi ; thence to Puloman mount, where there is a lake ; thence to the mount of Taraka and let him bathe in the Tarani and Sarda (or Kali), where they join. Then let him behold the caves and worship the gods and let him cut his beard and fast and perform the Sraddha ceremonies. Then to Gauri mount and then: descending to Mana-sarovara; let him bathe there and give water to the manes of his ancestors and worship Mahadeva in the name of the raja-hamsa. Then let him make the parikrama (circumambulation) of the holy lake Mana and look on Kailasa and bathe in all the rivers around.

**And the return route,**  
Pilgrims must first go to Rawan-hrad and bathe and worship Siva ; then let him worship at the source of the Sarju ; then to Kechara-tirtha ; thence to Brahm-kapal ; thence to Chhaya-kshetra and worship Mahadeva ; thence to Ramasera and bathe there ; thence to Rinmochana and Brahma-sarovara, thence to Sivakshetra and thence to the mount of Nanda; thence to Baidyanath, thence to Mallika, where let him worship Devi and bathe in the Briddhagang. Thence to Jwala-tirtha, where he should worship the sacred fire and bathe in the Padmavati.

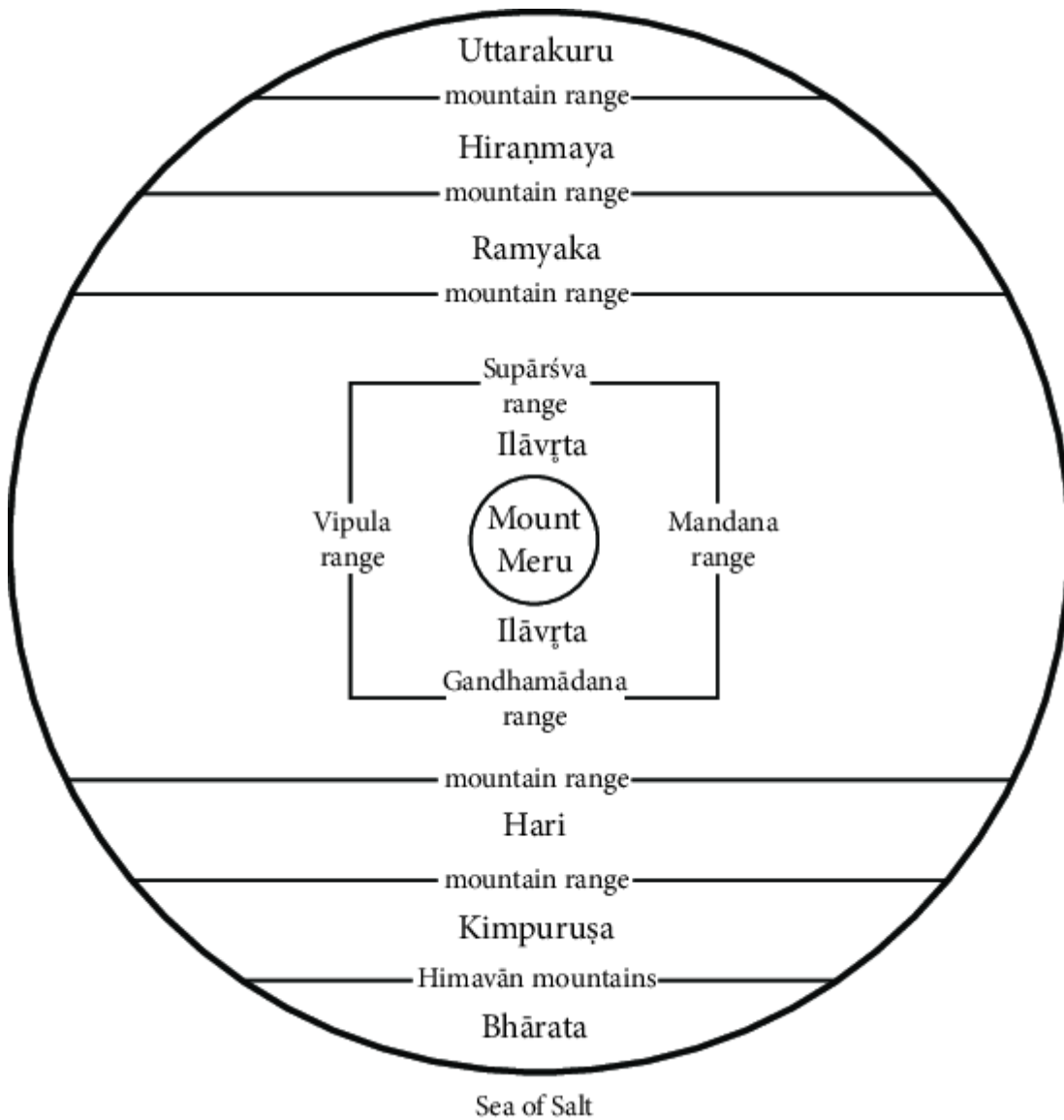
Even, the names of tribes mentioned in those areas are almost consistent - Khasas, Kiratas, Rajyakiratas, Sakas, Nagas and Hunas. Varaha Samhita places Rajya Kiratas between Amaravana(Jageshwar) and China(Northern Tibet).

Taranatha, over conquests of Asoka mentions, “as a reward for his victory over the people of Nepal who dwelt in the kingdom of Kasya and over other mountaineers.” This can link to the fact that Rupati’s successors accepted Magadhan suzerainty.

The only other mainstream Indian king who controlled Kailasa area seems to be Kumaragupta who according to his Mandasor Inscription ruled Kailasa and Sumeru. Whether its Kailasa country or a foothold in the hills or a token submission

from the rulers of that area is not known.

Another name applied to this territory is Kimpurusha Varsha. Kimpurusha Varsha is one of the seven continents of Jambudvipa and is considered to be semi-divine.



Vishnu Purana defines Bharata as below Himavat and Kimpurusha between Himavat and Hemakuta. This is the only country defined as to be between mountains, the only known and major gap being between Himalayas and TransHimalayas.

Matali confirms the same to Dushyanta in Abhijnana Sakuntalam - eṣā khalu hema-kṣoṇma kiṣṇa puruṣa-parvatas tapa-saṁsiddhi-kṣetram. The word Kimpurusha is derived from the root Kim Purusheyam?(What sort of a human?). Brahmanda Purana calls them half men and half lions.

Now, in Tibet, we have a dog which looks like a lion. Assuming the lion mentioned is the Tibetan Mastiff, one would be hit with a deluge of stories involving dogs in that area - Herodotus's ants, the Chinese stories of Keou Koue and Chin Jen, Indian words like Svamukhas etc

While the dog explains the words like Svamukha, on the other hand, the legend of Chen-Jen, the Golden Kimpurushas and Suvarnagotra converge.



Looking at the other names of the area: Khasa.

Khasa seems to be a generic word for mountain tribes which traded gold dust with the Tibetan miners. Mahabharata treats them as half civilized, living on the borders of civilization, Harivamsa calls them Mlechhas and

Manusmriti declares them as fallen Kshatriyas. We have western names like Cesi of Pliny who lived between Indus and Yamuna and Kasia of Ptolemy, but there is no way to link them to the Khasas. According to some versions, Khasas were called as Yakshas till the time of Asoka.

Kirata:

Yavalambar, sometimes identified as Barbarika is the founder of Kiranta Kingdom. He started from Eastern Nepal and extended towards Khatmandu. Kinnar Kiratas of Western Himalayas, Naga Kiratas of Kedarakhanda and Harihara Kshetra are some prominent ones.

Trivitaspa:

The word Trivistapa is used for heaven as well as Tibet.

Imni trivi vi ap tndra vi rohaya|

irastatasyorvarmdida ma upodare||

(Rgveda 8/91/5)

Get that place called Triviap, which is higher than the whole earth and is the ultimate place of origin for humans and also the place of origin of humans civilisation, which is like a mother's womb for all the living beings stomach.

Suvarnagotra:

This seems to be an almost formal name to the kingdom. The area is celebrated for its mines of gold. The Vishnu-Purana in its prophetic chapters declares that the Kanakas or Kanas will possess the Amazon country (Stririjya) and that called Mushika.

Herodotus writes of the Gold Ants of that area,

[3.103] Besides these, there are Indians of another tribe, who border on the city of Caspetyrus, and the country of Pactyica; these people dwell northward of all the rest of the Indians, and follow nearly the same mode of life as the Bactrians. They are more warlike than any of the other tribes, and from them the men are sent forth who go to procure the gold. For it is in this part of India that the sandy desert lies. Here, in this desert, there live amid the sand great ants, in size somewhat less than dogs, but bigger than foxes. The Persian king has a number of them, which have been caught by the hunters in the land whereof we are speaking. Those ants make their dwellings under ground, and like the Greek ants, which they very much resemble in shape, throw up sand heaps as they burrow. Now the sand which they throw up is full of gold. The Indians, when they go into the desert to collect this sand, take three camels and harness them together, a female in the middle and a male on either side, in a leading rein.

Many tried to rationalize what he wrote even bordering the absurd

*Here is perhaps an allusion to the burrows of the miners in the Tibetan gold-fields. Prof. Schiern writes that the gold-digging ants of antiquity are no other than the Tibetan miners. Local circumstances, namely the piercing cold for which the miners are usually dressed in furs, the physical features of the Tibetans which resemble 'incredibly to apes', and their extraordinary habits, gave rise to the notion that they were animals. The subterranean dwellings of the diggers of gold, whose tents are always pitched in "pits some seven or eight feet below the surface of the ground so as to keep out of the wind", added to the active habits of miners, and suggested the idea of ants in particular.*

But a proper explanation came only recently.

*The explorers believe they have pinpointed the land of the legendary gold digging ants and the people who profited in one of the most inaccessible regions of the Himalayas along the upper Indus river.*

*They say the outsize furry 'ants', first described by Herodotus in the fifth century BC, are in fact big marmots. These creatures -Herodotus calls them 'bigger than a fox, though not so big as a dog'- are still throwing up gold bearing soil from deep underground as they dig their burrows. Most important, the explorers say they have found indigenous people on the same high plateau who say that for generations they have collected gold dust from the marmots' work.*

...

*the Minaro villagers told the same stories. 'We went out to the Dansar plain, overlooking the Indus, at an altitude of some 10,000 feet,' he said. 'It was astonishing. There were the marmots and the burrow and the piles of sand they had thrown up.' Moreover, he said, a landslide had exposed the darker, gold bearing soil that was three feet below the surface. That was the same soil the marmots brought up from under the sand.*

On the other hand, it is possible that Herodotus sourced his story from Indian lore itself. Mahabharata talks of a gold digging ant Pipilika and linking it with Khasa, Kulinda and others.

मेरुमन्दरयोर्मध्ये शैलोदामभितो नदीम् ।  
एते कीचकवेणूनां छायां रम्यामुपासते ॥२॥  
खसा एकरसनाह्यर्हाः प्रदरा दीर्घ वर्णवः ।  
परदाश्च कुलिन्दाश्च तंगणाः परतंगणाः ॥३॥  
तद्वै पिपीलिकं नाम उद्धतं यत्पिपीलिकैः ।  
जातरूपं द्रोणमेय महार्पुः पुंजशो नृपाः ॥४॥  
कृष्णान् ललामांश्चमरान् शुल्कांश्चान्यान्शशिप्रभान् ।  
हिमवतः पुष्पजं चैव स्वादु क्षौद्रं तथ बहु ॥५॥  
उत्तरेभ्यः कुरुभ्यश्चाप्य पोढं माल्यम्बुभिः ।  
उत्तरादपि कैलासादोषधीः सुमहाबलाः ॥६॥  
पार्वतीय बलि चान्यमाहत्य प्रणतास्थिताः ।  
अजातशत्रोर्नृपतेर्द्वारि तिष्ठन्ति वारिताः ॥७॥

In fact, Western Tibet's tryst with gold is well known –

"The plateau lying east of the Upper Indus valley has from the remotest times been known by the name of Sarthol, or 'Land of Gold' and here are still grouped a few communities of gold-seekers."

Many writers referred to it, and only by the time of Hyecho whose time is after the end of Zhangzhung, we come to know that Suvarnagotra is a different kingdom than Zhangzhung – either a different kingdom or a province or an allied kingdom.

Name	Author/Work	Location
<u>Suannagura</u>	Ptolemy	Upper Sutlej Valley
<u>Suvarṇabhu</u>	<u>Brhatsamhita</u>	North East of India along with <u>Brahmapura</u> , <u>Palola</u> , <u>Kuluta</u> , <u>Kashmira</u> and <u>Darada</u>
<u>Subanajudaluo</u>	<u>Hyecho</u>	A month from <u>Jalandhara</u> across the mountains
<u>Sufalanaqudaluo</u>	<u>Huein Tsang</u>	Bounded by Khotan in the North, Tibet in the East and <u>Sanbohe/Moluosuo</u> on the West
<u>Svarṇagūttaror/</u> <u>Ysarnai rrvī gūttairi</u>	Khotanese Annals	No information on location
<u>Ysarnai bādā/</u> Gold Family	Multiple references(Khotan, Tibet, China)	Dunhuang/ <u>Shazhou</u>
<u>Gserriqs(Gyi Yul)</u> Gold Mountain/ Gold Race	<u>Vimalaprabhāpariprcchā</u>	South of Khotan and East of <u>Skardu</u> Mountain in <u>Hunza</u> where the <u>rakasi Huṣa</u> , who with her following keeps a batch of 500 merchants as lovers, devouring them, whenever a new batch arrives. Gold Race is derived from the offspring of the <u>rākṣasī</u> and a last, rescued batch of merchants. Similar to the legend of a queen in <u>Shigar</u> queen who used to eliminate her lovers whenever a child was born, which was likewise killed, except if it was a girl. When a Persian prince insisted on a legal Islamic marriage, she objected that she was a deity, and by a legal marriage she would become a laughing stock.

Now, Huein Tsang also calls it Kingdom of Women and says, "On the eastern side this country is bordered by the Fan kingdom (Tibet), on the west by San-po-ho (Sampaha or Malasa - Ladakh?), on the north by Khotan."

The best information over this comes from Hyecho, though. He writes of a small kingdom Suoboci(Suvarṇagotra) to the east of Jalandhara across the mountains, after a month's journey. He says that it's a cold country under the rule of Tibetans.

People there speak a different language but dress like Indians. He says, North East of Kashmir lies the kingdoms of Greater Bolor, Yang-t'ung and Sha-po-tz'u, all ruled by Tibet. The dress, language, customs and dressing of these countries are different but the people are Hu.

Suishu (completed 636) and Beishi (completed 659) mention that Nūguo is located south of the Congling mountains (the Pamirs). Suishu places it 3000 li south of Khotan, the same distance from Suvarṇagotra. It exports salt to India and frequently fights with

India as well as with the Dangxiang(Western Xia). If not for the relation with Khotan, one would note that this kingdom can be easily confused with the other Kingdom of Women located South East of Tibet and South West of Chengdu.

Al Beruni explains the concept of Strirajya more clearly -

"For many centuries the ruler has been a woman...The husband of the reigning sovereign has the title of king, but does not meddle in affairs of state. The men occupy themselves with war and husbandry."

Strirajya is a recurring term in Indian and world historiographies, indicating various kingdoms at various periods of time. A verse from Bhattotpala's commentary of Brhatsamhita goes thus –

Parvata Jaladurgas ca Kosalas Tangana Hala

Strirajyam Bharukacchas ca Tusara Vanavasinah

Chinese histories name two Kingdoms of Women – Nu Kuo in the East and Su Pi in the West, sometimes also called Western Nu Kuo. Tucci mentions that the king is called Kin-chu(Gold Collector). Again, this explains why it is called Strirajya

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the kings went to oversee gold mining and that means population centres are far away from that location - either the kingdom is sophisticated enough to have well connected routes or they want to keep their ways secret.

Vishnu Purana, Yoga Vasishta, Rajatarangini, Brhat Samhita, Skanda Purana, Mahabharata etc mention it. In Rudramayamala quoted in Kularnava Tantra, Strirajya is considered a Shaktipeetha. Though most writers place it in the North West, some like Huein Tsang place it in the East.

The Tang Annals write of the kingdom,

*The people in each successive reign make a woman their prince. The surname of the sovereign is Supi. They build cities in the mountains with houses of many stories, the sovereign's house having nine, in which there are several hundreds of female attendants and a court is held every five days. The men, having nothing to do with the government, only fight and cultivate the land. Both men and women paint their faces of many colours. They live principally by hunting and the weather is very cold. The natural products are copper and gold ore, cinnabar, musk, yaks and two breeds of horses. In addition to salt in abundance, which they carry to India and gain much by the traffic. They have had frequent wars with Tanghsiang and with India. When the queen dies they collect a large sum of gold money and select from her family two clever women, of which one is made the queen and the other the lesser sovereign. The title of the queen is Pinchiu and of the female ministers of state is Kaopali. The sons take the surname of the mother. The written characters are the same as those of India and the eleventh Chinese month is the beginning of their year. At the burial of their sovereign several tens of the great ministers and relatives are buried at the same time. In the period Wu-te (618-626 A.D.) the queen named Tang pang first sent envoys with tribute. Since the year 742 A.D they elected a man as ruler and a few years afterwards the state was absorbed by Lhasa.*

A Tibetan origin myth dating to the times of Songsten Gampo states that Tibet is populated through the union of a monkey Pa Drengen Changchop Simpa, sometimes equated to the Hindu God Hanuman(Hilumandju) and an ogress who was desperate to have children.



*In the beginning the world was covered by water, which evaporated little by little, leaving room for animal life. To the flooded land of Tibet came a monkey that had withdrawn there to immerse himself in meditation and to follow a life of asceticism and chastity. He settled on Mount Gongori. One day, while he sat in meditation, a female demon came to seduce him. Tradition has it that she was the manifestation of the bodhisattva Tara (Jetsun Dolma in Tibetan), a symbol of compassion and protector of merchants and travelers. She threatened that if he refused to sleep with her she would visit a demon and conceive a multitude of small monsters that would destroy all living creatures. The wise monkey yielded and requested Avalokiteśvara's authorization to marry her. Avalokiteśvara blessed the monkey and the female demon, and a few months later six small monkeys were born of their union. The monkey let his six children grow up in the forest, but three years later he discovered that they had become five hundred. The fruits of the forest were no longer sufficient to feed them, and the five hundred monkeys beseeched their father to help them find food. Not knowing what to do, he went again to ask help from the god of compassion. Then Avalokiteśvara went on the mount Meru, or Sumeru, a sacred place for Buddhists, Hindus, Jains and Bonpo. Some say that at the top of the mountain he gathered a handful of barley, others that he extracted five cereals from his own body to offer to the monkey father. Then the monkey father learned agriculture and, after a good harvest, could finally feed all his children. As they fed on the cereals, the monkeys gradually lost their hair and their tails. They also started to use bone and stone implements, then made clothes and built houses, forming a civilization from which the Tibetan people descended.*

Now, compare this with the legend of Matsyendranatha. A curious coincidence is the presence of Lord Hanuman in both the versions.

*Pingala, a queen of all-women's domain (Stri-raiya), desired to have male offspring and prayed to Lord Anjaneya. At this juncture, Macchendra travels to her place and meets her. They develop mutual attraction and in the due course they beget two male children. Macchendra forgets himself in her company settles there for several years. In the meanwhile Gorakha, Macchendra's prime disciple, goes in search of his Guru and finds that he is lodged in a female-domain, where men were not permitted. So he dresses himself like a woman and beats a 'maddale' (a kind of drum), in a tune that sounds "Chal Macchendra, Gorak Aya". Macchendra awakens from the marital pleasures and returns with Gorakha to pursue yogic practices.*

One would see that an innocuous Hindu version is replaced by a vilified version of pre-Buddhist Tibet. But, this may not be that simple enough a representation and can be looked at from many angles.

<https://t.co/dUc2Qwv1To>

One image is enough to tell you the extent to which Tibet divorced itself from its past. This is Goddess Srin Mo, who is a personification of Tibet. When she resisted introduction of Buddhism into Tibet, she was pinned to the ground with Buddhist temples. [pic.twitter.com/JRTG5zOYOv](https://pic.twitter.com/JRTG5zOYOv)

— Eztainutlacatl (@cbkwgl) October 2, 2020



Strirajya denoted domination of women and the pinning of Srin Mo denoted subjugation of Zhangzhung.

Tibet is an untamed beast which was subjugated by Buddhism. Alternately, one can see it as Chinese brought civilization to Tibet

It can represent the betrayal of Srin Mo by another woman Kong Jo, referring to the betrayal of Zhangzhung by it's Yarlung queen.

Notice, Srin Mo is pinned down and not killed means that she can break apart any moment.

Because the topic on the moment is about Strirajya, it may not be amiss if we talk about the famed Vaikuntha Chaturmurti idol of Khajuraho.



An inscription from Khajuraho reads thus -

The lord of Bhota obtained (the idol) Vaikuntha from Kailasa. From him the king of Kira received it as a token of friendship. The Sahi received it from him. Afterwards Herambapala obtained it for a force of elephants and horses.

कैलाशा(सा)द्भोटनाथः सुहृदिति च ततः की[25]रराजः प्रपेदे  
साहिस्तस्मादवाप द्विपतुरगव(ब)लेनानु हेरम्ब(ब)पालः ।  
तस्मूनोर्देवपालात्तमथ हयप[ते]: प्राप्य निन्ये प्रतिष्ठां  
वैकुण्ठं कुरिठतारिः क्षिति[धरति]लकः श्रीयशोवर्मराजः ॥[43]

His son Devapala, the lord of horses, retained it till the illustrious king Yasovarman himself, the ornament of princes, who had crushed his enemies, received it from him. The last king set up the image in a temple in Khajuraho.

Rajatarangini(4:185) mentions that Lalitaditya installed the idol of Lord Vishnu near Kailasa.

"By fixing one magnet above which pulled upwards and another which in the same way exerted a pull downwards he put up without supports in Strirajya an image of Nrhari"

But, the timings don't match because Strirajya was extinguished by the time Lalitaditya came to the throne. A slip like this can be forgiven - either the kingdom is still known as Strirajya or it's a different king who installed the idol.

Fully knowing that there is a Narayana Bhattaraka operating from Garudagrama(probably Khyunglung) as mentioned in the Katyuri inscriptions, the retrieval of the statue from Bhota seems significant as the inscription traces the changing hands from the source –

it can explain one of the last pre-Buddhist links between Western Tibet and India. Shahis surrendering the idol in return for an army clearly tells the importance of the idol and the King of Kira, whoever he is, possibly removed it to preserve it.

A discussion on Kira itself won't be amiss here. There are at least three Kira known –

1. Al-Kiraj raided by Muhammad bin Qasim
2. A kingdom of Kira mentioned in Baijnath Prasastis
3. A kingdom mentioned in Dharmapala's assembly at Kannauj.

Some Muslim sources like Fathnamah-i-Sind places al-Kiraj near Qassa(Cutch) and not deep into India and Dahir's son Jayasimha petitioning the King of Kashmir for help can mean nothing in deciding the position of Kira.

Baijnath Prasastis make more sense – Kira mentioned is contiguous with Zhang Zhung and can be a splinter kingdom when Zhang Zhung fell. It is more probable that Bhimadeva Shahi acquired this statue than any other places due to the proximity of the territory with his own.

On the other hand, there is another Kira which is mentioned by Dharmapala. Pratiharas had the reach to take down Baijnath but not the Kalachuris or the Chalukyas. It is learnt that Kalachuri Gangeyadeva, Kalachuri Karna and Chalukya Vikramaditya VI,

raided Kira and not Kangra. In fact, his list of conquests include Kira, Nepala, Turushka and Khassa among other places. There is no reference to Jalandhara or Trigarta whatsoever. This places the third Kira somewhere in Uttarakhand perfectly fitting the narrative –

two Kira(ta) kingdoms at two extremes of Zhang Zhung. This doesn't seem impossible fully knowing the territories are called Khasamandala and Kiratamandala and the remnants of Zhang Zhung power/reclariant vassals retreated into the hills on either side.

The Baijnath Kiratas have much to fear – if we accept Ye Shes 'Od(959-988)'s burning of Bon Priests as true, one can only wonder what the ten princes whom he sent across Shipki La did and what sort of a danger the idol is in, in the face of iconoclast Buddhistic armies.

Summarizing, the two Kira kingdoms are all princelings who broke free when Tibetan Empire collapsed in 842. But, when Tibet reasserted itself as Guge some 150 years later, they had to flee their lands and carve new kingdoms.

Summarizing, the two Kira kingdoms are all princelings who broke free when Tibetan Empire collapsed in 842. But, when Tibet reasserted itself as Guge some 150 years later, they had to flee their lands and carve new kingdoms.

A Kirata ruler used the window of chaos between 800 and 950 to transfer the idol into Hindu heartlands away from iconoclastic Buddhists has a high chance of occurrence. Did he know that there is another iconoclastic cult knocking on the doors from the other sides?

Though Zhangzhung is extinct, there are some living languages which are related to it from both sides – Kinnaur and Kumaon. A language Janshung whose speakers claim descent from Zhangzhung is spoken in three villages of Morang.

It's nearest relative is Shumcho and the languages are classified under Kinnauric > Thebor. However, the closest language to Zhangzhung is considered to be Darma in Uttarakhand.

Darma // English // Zhangzhung (Tibetan):

*ba* // father // *ba* (Tib. *pha*).

*be* // skin // *pad* [perhaps pronounced something like Eng. 'bay'] (Tib. *lpags*).

*ching-cha* // liver // *shin* (Tib. *mchin pa*).

*khagaco* // stomach // *khog tse* (Tib. *grod pa*).

*gunda-la* // finger (middle) // *kan* (Tib. *kan ma, gung mo?*).

*hrang* // horse // *hrang* (Tib. *rta*).

*hre* // field // *rig* or *tig* (Tib. *zhing*).

*hrup* // rib // *hrib* (Tib. *rtsib*).

*je, tsema* // barley // *zag* or *zad* ['zay?'] (Tib. *nas*).

*phu* // copper // *phu* (Tib. *zangs*).

*mangnu* // red // *mang* (Tib. *dmar po*).

*reju* // nose // *ra tse* (Tib. *rna ba*), noting Chaudangsi *ratse* & Byangsi *hrace*, both meaning 'ear.'

While Janshung is one language which hints at the name of the kingdom, another cognate language which presents us the same picture is Kinnara Kirata. Also to note is the fact that Darmiya, Rang, Byangsi speakers are combinedly called R■ng M■ng .

Now, an interesting proposition regarding this cultural legacy is the Kailasa Circuit - one would see that Kailasa is surrounded by mountains named after Kailasa – the Pancha Kailasa including the main one -

Kailash Manasarovar, Adi Kailash, Kinnaur Kailash, Shrikant Mahadev Kailash and Manimahesh Kailash, with Adi Kailash in Uttarakhand and the rest three in Himachal Pradesh. What explains them?

They are the copycat mountains established by people fleeing Zhangzhung or were they part of the original Bon cult? But, a word of caution.

Alex McKay, in his Kailasa Histories unwittingly provides an answer -

"there is no evidence of the sacrality of Tise or even Maphan that is either contemporary with the Zhang-zhung empire or recorded for a considerable period after its conquest by Yarlung dynasty."

But, Kinnaur seems to be a cultural leftover of Zhangzhung. Bon texts mention that wherever Tonpa Shenrab went, people welcomed him with a dance by name Shonba. It's description is given but the dance is deemed to be a lost at the time of conquest of Zhangzhung.

However, after the flight of Tibetans after Chinese annexation in 1959, during a visit to Kinnaur, Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche and other Bon teachers noticed that the local Shon dance is similar to the traditional Bon dance which was later confirmed as the traditional Bon Yung Drung.

Another interesting point of discussion is the word China itself - which, in fact, is Kinnaur. As like anything else with Zhangzhung, the word Cina is also troublesome. It's not China but it's something else, located either in the Himalayas or in the plains beyond Himalayas.

Tucci placed it in Kanawar in the upper Sutlej valley. Bharati said it's the whole area North of Himalayas including Tibet, Mongolia and Western China, Bagchi said it's Mongolia, Levi and Weller called it China proper and Sircar identified it with Tibet.

Banabhatta wrote, Arjuna crossed Cina to attack Hemakuta, Brhat Samhita places it in North East along with Khasa and others, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Milindapanha and others consider it to be in the vicinity of India while Tantratattva considers it to be a part of Bharatavarsha.

One of the finest references for Cina comes from Kautilya who says Cina is a valley inside Suvarnadwipa which Marcelle Lalou proposes Kinnaur(Kunnu). This is further confirmed through the legend of Simhaprabha, the Buddhist master who was born in Cina Valley at So-khyam

which corresponds to So-gnam, a famous Kinnauri village. In this sense, Mahacina, Aparacina would be nothing more than territories on the other side of Cina, towards Central Asia. Sri Simha learnt Tantra in Suvarnadwipa –

clearly, the area seems to be a melting pot of all the Tibetan religions – Bon, Buddhist, Shamanic and Tantra. Again, from the biography, we get the extent of Suvarnadwipa itself. While it is mentioned to be in the North of Cina, we also read about Sri Simha that



*Therefore, in Suvarnadwipa he received the novice vows of a Buddhist monk and began to study scripture and philosophy. At the Five Peaked Mountain<sup>4</sup> in Suvarnadwipa he also studied all the exoteric and esoteric Tantras under the low caste Master Bhelakirti. Upon attaining the age of 20, he received the full ordination of a Bhikshu. He would remain a monk for the next thirty years.*

There is a Five Peaked Mountain in Suvarnadwipa which can be located from the travels of Go-tseng-pa(c. 1240 AD) – they are the source of River Gyanima and are located near Tirthapuri. This means that Suvarnadwipa covered the whole Transhimalayan tract from Ladakh to Kailasa.

Moving back to the discussion over Nyatri Tsenpo, the most religious versions of Tibetan history depict him as someone who descended from heaven and was made the king - a line of thought which is commonly noted even today.

The 'most secret' tradition (yang gsang) holds that he was descended from the Thedrang and that then he took the name Nyatri. In the land of Puwo a local woman called Motsun gave birth to seven Thedrang brothers, the youngest of whom was Thedrang Manya Ubera. He had a tongue so large it covered his whole face, webbed fingers and a mien indicating ferocity and magic powers. For this reason the powerful Bonpos of Puwo said "He is too powerful, we must exile him!" and after having performed the rite to transfer the Thedrang by offering gifts, they exiled him to Tibet. Here he was met by the Tibetans, who were looking for a king and who asked him "Who are you?" He answered "I am a man from the land of Puwo." "Your fingers and your tongue are truly amazing. With what magic powers are you endowed?" they enquired, and he replied "I have miraculous powers and faculties, that is why I was banished." "Then we will make you our king!" they declared, and raised him onto a throne (khri) supported on the napes of their necks (gnya' ba). So, proclaiming "He is King Nyatri Tsenpo!" they crowned him.

However, traditional accounts present a more rational picture. For example, a contemporary account says that he is a prince of Magadha who left for Tibet and was made king by the people for whatever reasons.

While Tibetan Blue Annals hint that he is a Lichhavi, Bka'chams as referred by Sumpa mkhan tells that he is Dmag-brgya-pa(Satasena) who this thrown into Ganga and is described as the fifth descendant of Prasenajit of Kosala or a descendant of Bimbisara of Mathura.

In fact, the story that he is the rejected child of an Indian king thrown into Ganga is a common recurrence in Tibetan hagiography. These kings were linked to heaven with a rope and when their time is over, they ascend back to heaven.

On the other hand, a Chinese account tells that these kings actually died. A combined reading of all these presents us a picture -

Nyatari Tsenpo is depicted as an Indian who carved his own kingdom in the Yarlung Valley/led the armies of Magadha to form a governorate there.

He is shown to be a prince of Magadha/Kosala/Ujjain who was refused in his birth and was discarded into Ganga. He is brought up in a poor family and moved into Tibet. But the conquest was not without contest as we would see that his son is killed in a rebellion.



His sons fled to Gongbo but bounced back, to enforce their writ. Going by the fact that he was seen descending from Yalashangbo Dome, somewhere North of Bhutan but below Brahmaputra, it is clear that he passed through Chumbi Valley – the shortest route from Magadha into Tibet.

Looking at the contemporary happenings in India from where Nyatari Tsenpo is supposed to have come, it is worth noting that Tibetan Calendar which starts in 127 BC marking the discovery of Nyatri Tsenpo coincides with the murder of Vasumitra Sunga in 124 BC.

Was there a political instability arising out of it, there is no information but the reality is that Shunga Empire is a shrinking regime before it was finally toppled by the Kanvas. Another date presented to him is 414 BC – timing exactly to the end of Haryanka Empire.

What alternates can we present, assuming that he is not real but is a myth? These legends surfaced during the Buddhist Era of Tibet and naturally, they would want to claim descent, either from the lineage of Buddha(Lichhavi) or from the lineage of some of the

earliest patrons of Buddhism who are really noted in the world like Bimbisara or Prasenajit – two of the most powerful men in the contemporary world. Another major tumult seem to have happened during the reign of the eighth king Drigum Tsenpo who was also murdered.

Note that, though these are mentioned as kings of Zhangzhung, they are actually rulers of Yarlung Dynasty, though, Rupati may be the founder of Zhangzhung. A question would arise then, if Zhangzhung was in any way more important than other parts of Tibet.

The answer lies in the location of Khyunglung which is located where the plains and valleys of South Western Tibet meet with the West Tibetan Plain – clearly this place sits at the centre of the place which controls trade routes towards India, China and Central Asia.



As time went by, Yalungs strengthened and in the early Seventh Century, some South Tibet tribes accepted Namri Songsten, the head of Yarlung Tribe as their emperor and overthrew Zingporje, the Zhangzhung Governor of that area.

After that, Namri Songsten went on a spree of expansion taking almost all of Central Tibet. The kingdom assumed the name Bod . There was a failed assassination attempt on Namri Songsten, possibly by the Zhangzhung.

An exchange of princesses between the Yarlung and the Zhangzhung took place in an effort to normalize the relations. The Yarlung princess Sadmarkar acted as a traitor and helped in the ambush of her husband Ligmigya(Ligmi – Existence, rGya – Lord - possibly a title).

Her poem is legendary – it was the one composed as hints to how to attack the kingdom. Clearly, her three poems hint that Yarlungs are not at all capable to take Zhangzhung and ambush was the only way.

Kli-yung-lung ni mgul-mkhar zhig  
Is a mouldy castle in Khyung-lung.  
bran-gyi ni skal pog-pa  
The servant that has fallen to my lot,  
Gu-ge ni rkang-pran zhig  
Is a serf coming from Gu-ge.  
phyi hltas ni ngam-dang brag  
Seen from without all gorge and boulders,  
rzang bltas ni gser-dang dbyig  
But seen from within all gold and precious stones.

The word blyang(destroyed) used for the murder of Ligmicha clearly hints at the significance of the event. The fall of Lig Myirhya, actually, is described in OTA, dated to year 644 quite drastically with the verb brlag ‘was destroyed’ –

a clear indication of the surprise achieved, the actual end and the momentous events which followed it. The ensuing chaos was used to invade Zhangzhung – it would have been a bloody war with Garuda Valley finally forced and subjugated.

The assassination of the king can be dated to 625 but it is known that Zhangzhung fell only after a long fight - Trisong Detsen ultimately subjugated Garuda Valley by crushing a rebellion and destroying the city. However, there is no way to attribute the reason the murder of

Songsten Gampo by his wife and the Zhangzhung princess Ri-thig-man – it can either be a desperate attempt to stop the Tibetan onslaught or it can be her personal revenge for betrayal. But, one thing is certain. The brutality of the attack can be gauged from the fact that

the civilization and it's language is extinct – in fact, nothing explains the fact that Guge had to build a new capital if a formidable city like Khyunglung is still habituated just three centuries later. But, Zhangzhung didn't go down without a fight.

It rebelled everytime there was a major political event – on death of Harsha(647) in India and Taizong(649) in China, on the death of Mangsong Mangtsen in 677 and possibly in 750s as the city of Khyunglung was destroyed by Trisong Detsen completely.

It's possible Songtsen Gampo was murdered during the Zhangzhung rebellion/his death marked the start of Zhangzhung rebellion. As late as 724, a king is noted in Zhangzhung – Lig sNa sur.

This besides, after the sudden death of Tridu Songtsen in 704 in a campaign against Nanzhao, the political chaos ending with the accession of Me Agtsom also involved rebellions in Se-rib in Kali Gandaki Gorge area,

sometimes associated with Zhangzhung as an affiliate as a part of Zhangzhung Smad in Bonpo literature. The rebellion was put out only after the king of Se-rib was captured in 709.

Hunadesa for Zhangzhung is another interesting appellation. This is derived from Huna, a term used alternately for Xiongnu and not Hunas of India.



Though not much is mentioned in Uttarakhand's relation with the kingdoms on the other side of Himalayas, there are sufficient hints to establish that there is very good contact. Colonization of Juhar clearly tells that the king of Hundes is a Suryavamsi Kshatriya.



*These events occurred before the time of the Katyuri Rajas and in course of time the Sokas also disappeared. They were followed by the ancestors of the present Milainwals, who came from Tibet into the valley in this manner. They say that they are of Rajput origin and that their fathers served one of the Garhwal Rajas who gave them Jola in Badhan in jagir, and hence they were called Rawats. One of these went through Malari of Niti into Hundes and entered the service of the Surajbansi Raja of Hundes. Here he remained for a time, and being fond of the chase wandered over the hills towards the south in pursuit of game. One day he followed a wild cow from early morn to evening and saw it disappear at the confluence of the Gunka and the Gori, and accepting this as a good omen the Rawat much fatigued with the chase called the place Mi-dunga and built there the village of Milam, the inhabitants of which are known to the present day as Rawats or Sokas.*

It is just possible that the Katyuri kingdom itself is formed during the chaos of the fall of Zhangzhung. Katyuri inscriptions mention that the kings are devotees of Nanda. It is important to note that Pandukeshwar, where their earliest inscriptions are found is the last village

on the way to Tibet through the Mana Pass, further hinting their close ties with Tibet – the founder of the line Vasudeva is a Buddhist and that the empire rose during the chaos during the collapse of Tibetan Empire, further hinting their Tibetan links.

In fact, local words like Tami, a measuring bowl used in both Tibet and Kumaon, Trijugi for Kailasa etc show the close link between Tibet and Kumaon. The legend of Nandadevi is another important hint in that direction.

Legends say that Goddess Nanda Devi left her home in Nauti village in Karanprayag destined for the snow-capped heights of what is today known as the Nanda Devi mountain, India's tallest peak. There She would be united with Her beloved, Siva of Kailasa, who resides at its summit.

She was guided up the mountain's frozen face by a mystical four-horned ram on a journey that is re-enacted every twelve years in the Nanda Devi Raj Yatra.

In a curious coincidence, the story of Nanda Devi is exactly similar to the marriage of Ri-thig-man, the Zhangzhung Princess

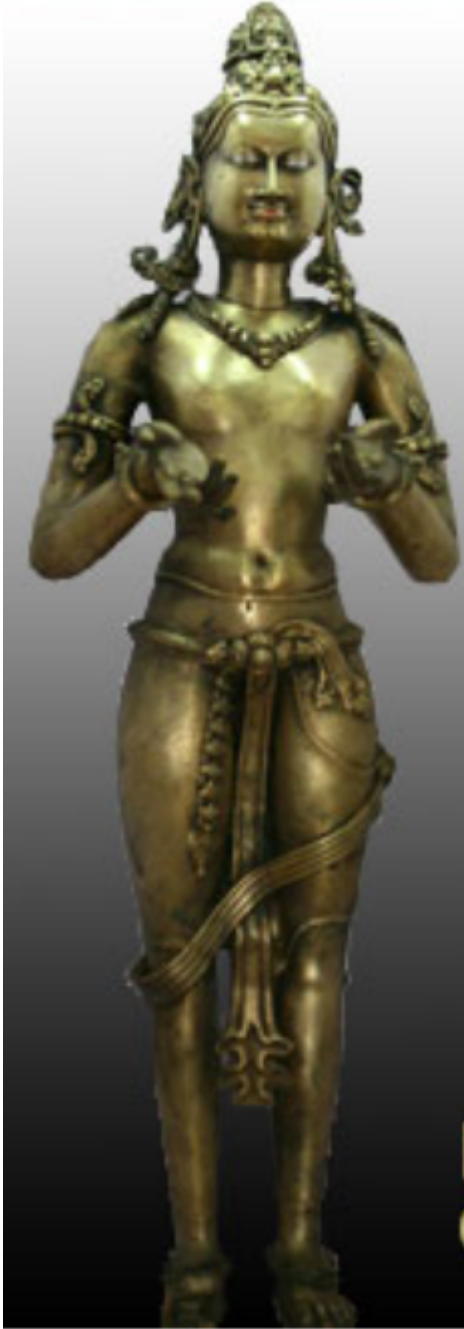
who was sent in marriage to Tibet as a part of a political arrangement between Zhangzhung and Tibet, which in fact, led to a disaster in both the countries. On the other hand, Tibet is commonly seen in Kumaoni folk stories, generally dealing with a Princess whom an Indian Prince

(generally Lord Krishna) falls in love with and wants to marry. An envoy is sent to Tibet and the story deals with his travails. The people across the mountains are generally shown as malicious and are bent on creating harm through deceit.

The stories of Surju Kunwar, Brahma Kunwar, Hima Marchi and of Malu Shahi and Rajula are all but examples of that genre. Trade links between areas both side of the mountains is attested from second millennium BC.

The similarity between TransHimalayan agro-pastoralism and Kumaoni bugyals, and the trade, especially of gold and other metals is well known. Further bolstering the possibility of links, we come across a Pauna Raja whose statue is located in Jageshwar.

Going by the fact that the temple also contains the statues of two more kings Deep Chand and Trimal Chand, it is more plausible that this statue is also of a king whom the local legends call as Paun Raja.



Further highlighting the non-local nature of the ruler, the statue holds lamps like that – such sort of Puja is done by women on Kartika Purnima in Kumaon. Now, there is not much difference in the way you pronounce or write Pa(■) and Ba(■) and Pauna can simply mean Bon.

Going by the antiquity of Zhangzhung civilization and with Silk Road existing to at least 1900 BC, it is possible that Zhangzhung also traded with Indus Valley. A conjecture put forward is that the mythical 'Ol-mo lung-ring(Long Valley of the Olmo) is actually Indus Valley,

with Olmo becoming Meluhha, in effect, the Long Valley of Indus . A related discussion is the theory that Kashmir Neolithic is a part of Bodic civilizational whole and not Indian – this can also give a bridge towards Indus Valley.



Tibetan Gzi Beads are another link with the Indus Valley beads very similar to the Tibetan ones. A similar argument can be put over the trade of turquoise and coral.

All this is fine. But, how powerful is Zhangzhung? We know it's very strong in Vamachara Tantra (Chinachara is a very famous one which involved there) but ultimately, Zhangzhung seems to be a just another local kingdom which wasn't a part of the global power equations.

Though Zhangzhung may have covered a huge territory covering almost half a million sq km, its reach is limited - sTag-gzig is located in Shina territory, there is too less Sanskrit influence on the language and references to the kingdom are not widely known in India.

But, that doesn't matter. It's a kingdom which controlled trade routes as important as that of the Central Asian Silk Routes, it derived its power from the same, and was subjugated because someone else coveted those trade routes.

But, one thing is certain. It's powerful enough to maintain an independent existence all history except for maybe, 300 years and influenced Tibetan Buddhism (especially Tantric) in its own fashion. Zhangzhung stays or not, the undercurrent of its influence still stays. \*Finis\*