

# Historical:: Kingdom of Vijayapur in 1770 AD

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## Kingdom of Vijayapur in 1770 AD

The Kingdom of Vijayapur was conquered by King Prithvi Narayan Shah in July 1774. This Kingdom was situated between the Koshi river in the west and the Tista river in the east. It possessed territories both in the hill regions (the modern districts of Dhankuta, Panchthar, Taplejung, Terhathum and Sankhuwa-Sabha) and the Tarai (the modern districts of Morang, Sunsari and Jhapa).

After it was annexed by King Prithivi Narayan Shah, the Kingdom of Vijayapur was split into two administrative units with headquarters in Chainpur and Morang, for the hill territories and the Tarai respectively.

### The 1770 Famine

On the eve of the Gorkhali conquest of Morang, the area appears to have been devastated by famine. Nepali source materials are not available to indicate the extent of the devastation in Morang, but conditions across the border, in Purnea, are revealing. According to one source:<sup>1</sup>

The famine of 1770 was an "appalling spectre on the threshold of British rule Bengal."<sup>2</sup> There was no such widespread devastating famine in Bengal in the seventeenth century or in the first half of the eighteenth..... The famine did not rage with equal fury in all districts. Ducaral, supervisor of Purnea, reported that two lakhs of people perished in that district. One thousand died in three days after his arrival. He wrote, "The famine continued for about twelve months in a degree of severity hardly to be paralleled in the history of any age or country." The soil of Purnea being very dry and wells being so few the district depended entirely on regular rainy seasons. The least failure of the rains subjected the labourer to the loss of his harvest. The famine therefore raged in Purnea with greater severity than in any other district in Bengal. We can form some idea of the fury of the famine in Purnea from the report received some time after the famine ended that only five were left of the 150 people who prepared Chaunam in the Paraganas bordering in Purnea.<sup>3</sup> The supervisor wrote in April 1770, "In many of the Paraganas one-half of those who were to pay the revenues and cultivate the lands will unfavorably perish with hunger whilst those remaining by being obliged to purchase their subsistence at least 500 per cent than usual will be drained of that little stock which is the only resource for future revenue and cultivation." ... The famine swept away nearly half the people of Purnea.

1. Narendra Krishna Sinha, The Economic History of Bengal From Plassey To The Permanent Settlement, Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1962. Vol. II, PP. 48-55.

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2. Bengal at that time included Bihar and Orissa.

3. Proceedings of The Controlling Council, VI, 20 December, 1771, III, 8 July 1771;  
Select Committee Proceedings, 28 April, 1770.

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