MANIFESTING THE MAṆḌALA:
A STUDY OF THE CORE ICONOGRAPHIC PROGRAM
OF
NEWAR BUDDHIST MONASTERIES
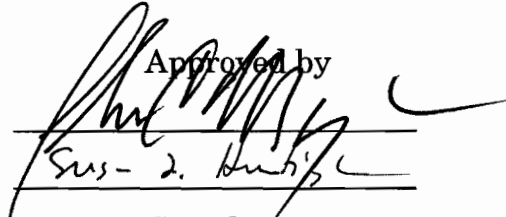## IN NEPAL

Volume I

DISSERTATION

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By

Dina Bangdel, M.A.

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Dissertation Committee:

Professor John C. Huntington, Co-Adviser

Professor Susan L. Huntington, Co-Adviser

Professor Howard Crane

Professor Thomas Kasulis

Approved by

_____

_____

Co-Advisers

Department of History of Art

ABSTRACT

This study examines the core iconographic elements of the Buddhist monasteries in Nepal and their relationship to the religion and ritual practices of the Newar Buddhists. Based on original field research I conducted in the Kathmandu Valley, I have identified three major iconographic themes were widespread and prevalent. These were the **Svayambhū Mahācaitya,** the **Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala,** and the **Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala,** which are manifest in the monasteries as three mandatory architectural elements: the principal vivifying *stūpa;* the exoteric shrine of the principal deity of the monastery; and, the secret esoteric shrine to the Tantric deity. The study analyzes their symbolic meaning and explores how these iconographic components serve as visual metaphors to express the fundamental constructs of Newar Buddhism.

The findings of this study suggest that the core iconographic program is unique to Newar Buddhist context and reflects the essential ideological frameworks of the religion. Specifically, the three core components are conceived of as a hierarchic progression, articulating the Newar Buddhist soteriological methodology of encompassing the "Three Ways" **[Śrāvakayāna,**

Mahāyāna, and **Vajrayāna]** of Buddhism. By examining the constructions of sacred space, the essential iconological constructs of Newar Buddhist art and religious practices are contextualized and defined through these visual symbols.

The analysis also explores the *yoginīs* in the Newar Buddhist context and situates the goddess tradition within the larger Tantric Buddhist methodological framework. A key premise of the study is to understand the Buddhist *yoginī* not only as a unifying theme to decipher the iconology of the core components of the religion, but more importantly, the study proposes to establish the *yoginī* tradition as the ontological source of the Newar Buddhism.

To Bibhakar and Deven

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VITA

December 5, 1965........................... Born—Kathmandu, Nepal

1989... B.A. History of Art,
                                            Bryn Mawr College, PA

1991 .... M.A. South Asian Studies,
                                            University of Wisconsin-Madison

1991-1998 .... Graduate Teaching Associate
                                            Graduate Research Associate
                                            Department of History of Art
                                            The Ohio State University

1998-Present................................ Assistant Professor, Art Department
                                            Western Michigan University

PUBLICATIONS

Lain S. Bangdel and Dina Bangdel, *Inventory of Stone Sculptures of the Kathmandu Valley.* Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy, 1997.

John C. Huntington and Dina Bangdel, "Iconography of a Lost Painting of Swayambhu Jyotirupa", *Orientations,* 1996

Dina Bangdel, *Lain Bangdel: Fifty Years of His Art* (Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy, 1995).

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Areas of Specialization: South Asian and Himalayan Art

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CHAPTER 1

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

It is early morning and I walk along the main street in Patan, one of the three principal cities in the Kathmandu Valley. My senses come alive with the familiar sights, sounds, and activity of humanity around me. I pass the shrine to the Hindu goddess Cāmūṇḍā, where devotees are waiting to take her *darśan* and offer the morning *pūjā*. Just off the road, I step into the tranquility of the interior courtyard of a Newar Buddhist monastery. Inside is a treasure house of art, with exquisite metalwork and wood carvings that reveal the artistic genius of the Newar craftsmen and justify the fame they have rightly enjoyed for centuries throughout Asia. As an art historian, I am excited about studying the works of art of a rich living tradition, where today's religious practices constantly inform the meaning of the visual imagery. An ordinary-looking man sits in the resting area next to the entrance door, and I go over to talk to him. We begin a casual conversation and he asks me what I am doing there. Studying the works of art I tell him, and he replies that I

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first need to grasp the ideological concepts that led to the creation of works of art to fully appreciate their intended meaning. How right he was, and now four years later I realize how fortuitous it was to meet one of the most knowledgeable Tantric *gurus* of the Newar Buddhist tradition at that point in my work. Sūrya Mān Vajrācārya of Ha Bāhā, whom I met so casually, epitomizes the contemporary Tantric teachers in Newar Buddhism. In Patan, he is considered to be a leading authority of Newar Buddhist philosophy and practice.[1]

The Tantric Buddhism practiced by the Newar community in Nepal has fostered one of the richest artistic and religious traditions in the world. Still a living culture, Newar Buddhism flourishes in a small, yet culturally diverse, area of the Kathmandu Valley, where it has shared the religious environment of the Valley with the Hindu and Śakta practices for at least two thousand years. The mutual cultural exchanges with these other traditions have helped shape Newar Buddhism's religious practices, while its internal constructs integrate the doctrinal philosophies of Buddhism with the indigenous Newar heritage. Like other manifestations of Buddhism, the religion functions as a dynamic "path" (*yāna* or *mārga*) that directs the Newar practitioners towards the soteriological goals of Buddhism. What makes Newar Buddhism singular is the ways in which the religion has redefined and transformed certain cultural categories and their meanings to suit the Buddhist ideology and to enable Buddhism to flourish in a dominantly Hindu environment.

Newar Buddhism represents the last remaining legacy of Indian Buddhism that is actively practiced within a South Asian cultural context. As a result, from as early as the nineteenth century, scholars have generally regarded Newar Buddhism's significance largely in terms of its relationship to India.[2] Indeed, Nepal's historical connections with Indian Buddhism have been particularly strong since the eleventh-twelfth centuries, when Tantric teachers of the Pāla period from northeast India are believed to have migrated to the Kathmandu Valley after the monastic centers in India were destroyed by Muslim invaders. During this period, the Kathmandu Valley became an important *entrepot* for cultural exchanges between the northern and northeastern regions of India and the Tibetan plateau. Furthermore, extant examples of sculpture, paintings, and manuscripts that survive in the Newar Buddhist monasteries of the Valley document to Nepal's close cultural ties with Pāla India.[3] Indeed, the material culture of the Newars as well as their still living Buddhist practices may help to reconstruct and contextualize the religious history of Buddhism in India. At the same time, the historical developments of Tantric Buddhism in India must be considered in the study of Newar Buddhist iconography

Despite the apparent commonalities between the Pāla and Newar traditions, looking at Newar Buddhism solely as a manifestation of the legacy of Buddhism in India fails to acknowledge the religion's uniqueness and significance in its own right. Newar Buddhism has developed many

interesting features that derive from the indigenous Newar heritage. For example, the intricate social organization of a highly-structured, caste-stratified Buddhist community, the local cosmogonic myth recounting the sacred Buddhist origins of the Valley, or the esoteric Tantric rituals strictly restricted to the initiated community are only a few of the central aspects of Newar Buddhism that point to its distinctiveness.

Of these, perhaps, the most prominent feature, and the one that has attracted substantial scholarly interest, is Newar Buddhism's socio-religious structure, which is characterized by what appears to be a non-monastic and strictly caste-stratified Buddhist community of married householders, where membership into the *sangha* is based on patrilineal descent. Since caste hierarchy is normally seen as part of the fabric of the Hindu, not Buddhist, religious and social order, this socio-religious aspect of Newar Buddhism has gained much attention from sociologist, anthropologists, and cultural historians. Not surprisingly, scholars have emphasized Newar Buddhism's physical proximity and cultural linkages to Hinduism by suggesting that Buddhism in the Valley itself is "embedded in a dominant Hindu society confined within a very small geographical area."[4] As a result, the shared religious practices of the two religious traditions are often seen as arising from the religious dominance of Hindu influence over Buddhism, or alternatively, as religious syncretism.[5]

Interestingly, the Newar Buddhists themselves maintain that they have been forcibly dominated by Hinduism. This is often expressed in different versions of the local legend that the well-known Hindu philosopher Śaṅkarācārya visited Nepal and defeated the Buddhists in debate, thereby forcing them to take up the Hinduized householder path. Similarly, the Hindu king, Jayasthiti Malla (r. 1382-95) is traditionally said to have abolished celibate Buddhism, and forcibly instituted the caste system and thereby the path of the married householder on the Newar Buddhists.[6] However, while the hereditary caste system of Newar Buddhism may illustrate such a blending of religions, one must not assume that shared characteristics are necessarily a result of Hindu dominance or even religious syncretism, for a number of models of cultural interaction may explain such shared characteristics.[7] Further, this apparent overlapping of religious boundaries have given rise to still another popular, yet erroneous, notion among Western scholars as well as among the Nepali elite that Newar Buddhism illustrates a "degenerate" form of Buddhism, whose quintessential characteristic is religious syncretism. These issues will be examined during the course of this study.

Despite the unique features and apparent anomalies of Newar Buddhism, a close look at the religious traditions of the Newar Buddhists demonstrates that the esoteric Buddhism of the Kathmandu Valley has the same soteriological goals and ideologies as other forms of Buddhist practices.

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In characterizing Newar Buddhism, scholars, such as David Gellner, have defined Newar Buddhism as the "traditional Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism practised by the Newars".[8] It is, as I hope to show, the means and methods through which the religious goal is realized by Newar Buddhist practitioners that make the religion so distinctive. In this study, I will reevaluate Newar Buddhism through its internal conceptions and ideological frameworks as manifest in the visual culture, and will consider how the religion and the art are "classically" Buddhist and, at the same time, unique. My work builds on recent anthropological research, particularly the works of David N. Gellner, John K. Locke, and Todd T. Lewis, which have made significant contributions in analyzing Newar Buddhism in more emic terms.[9] As will be discussed later in this chapter, these scholars have re-examined the socio-religious structures of Newar Buddhism and have cast new light on Newar Buddhism's contributions to the understanding of Buddhist societies in general.

Just as the socio-religious order serves as a tool for interpreting Newar Buddhism, material culture can similarly provide a framework to define the internal constructs of the religion. [10] In the case of Newar Buddhism's rich artistic tradition, the material culture not only serves as testimony to the complex religious practices, but also expresses the soteriological concerns of the practitioners in symbolic form. The structural and ritual spaces of the Buddhist community become avenues through which many of the doctrinal

concepts of the Newar Buddhists are made manifest.[11] As religious centers of the Buddhist community, the sacred monuments, known as *bahis* and *bahas,* provide clues to the complex technical practices that are central to soteriological methodologies of Newar Buddhism. Specifically, the works of art and their iconographic programs within these structures serve as visual symbols through which the ideological constructs of the religion are communicated, and, therefore, understood.

This study explores both the symbolic content of Newar Buddhist art and the ways in which a particular set of religious conceptions are expressed through images. Specifically, my research examines the construction of symbolic space in the *bāhās* and *bahīs* and the ways in which the visual imagery here creates and reinforces the sacred environment. To this end, I will identify the core iconographic components of the Newar Buddhist monasteries and will examine the significance of these themes in relation to the Newar Buddhist religion and praxis. It is hoped that the study of these core iconographic elements will provide a framework to recognize the symbiotic relationship between the art and religious practices of Newar Buddhism, and further, to help identify and clarify some of Newar Buddhism's distinctive features.

HYPOTHESES

The structural spaces of the Buddhist community called *bāhās* and *bahīs* are the ritual centers of the Buddhist practitioners, where acts of worship and veneration are performed daily by members of the community (Figs. 1.1 and 1.2). During thirteen-months of field research in Nepal conducted on three trips, I visited more than 500 Buddhist monasteries in which I found three features that are considered by the practitioners as required elements of these religious structures. These include, first, a principal *stūpa* along the central axis of the courtyard that is venerated by both the lay members of the community and the *sangha* members of the monastery; second, the exoteric shrine of the principal deity (*kwāḥpāḥ dyaḥ*) of the monastery that is the focus of daily veneration for the *sangha;* and, third, a secret esoteric shrine to the Tantric deity (*āgaṁ dyaḥ*). Entrance to this Tantric shrine is permitted to only initiated members of the *sangha* belonging to the particular monastery.

In the visual imagery found in these monuments, three major iconographic themes recur consistently. I will demonstrate that these are also significant in the religious practices of the community. These themes relate to the Svayambhū Mahācaitya, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. It is my intention to show that these three iconographic components, which I will discuss in detail, are closely associated, both in terms of their functional purpose as well as symbolic meaning, with

the three essential components of *bāhā* architecture—the central *caitya*, the exoteric *kwāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine, and the esoteric *āgaṁ* shrine. The buddhological significance of the core iconographic elements will not only help contextualize the relationship among the required structural components of Newar Buddhist architecture, but will also provide a means to understand the ideological constructs of the religious practices.

The Great Stūpa of Svayambhū (Fig. 1.3), also known as Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Mahācaitya, is the premier Buddhist monument in the Kathmandu Valley and the focus of worship for the entire Newar Buddhist community. The Mahācaitya defines many features of Newar Buddhist practice and serves as the sacred symbol of Newar Buddhist religious and ethnic identity. Virtually every aspect of the religion emphasizes the preeminence of this sacred monument—from the daily *pūjās* at Svayambhū site itself, with the devotional singing (*bhajans*) in the mornings and evenings, to the month-long annual worship to the *stūpa* during the holy month of Guñlā, or the initiation rituals and life-cycle rites of Buddhist practitioners that involve various acts of veneration to the Great Stūpa.

A prime indication of the significance of the Great Stūpa in Newar Buddhism is the symbolic presence of Svayambhū in the form of the central *caitya*[12] found in the interior courtyards of the Buddhist monasteries in the Valley (Figs. 1.4 and 1.5). The central *caitya*, as mentioned earlier, is a mandatory element of *bāhā/bahī* architecture.[13] As my research will

demonstrate, this central *caitya* symbolizes Svayambhū Mahācaitya; its presence conceptually generates the sacred space of the *bāhā*. As the predominant iconographic component in *bāhā/bahī* architecture, the significance of Svayambhū Mahācaitya must be understood in relation to its role as the ontological root of Newar Buddhism.

Svayambhū Mahācaitya is inextricably linked with the local cosmogonic myth of the Valley and thus serves as the power source for the Newar Buddhist religious practices. This sacred history is narrated in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* one of the most important religious text of the Newar Buddhists.[14] Although an indigenous text, the underlying structure of the sacred narrative is based on the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna doctrinal premises, and, hence, many of the local practices are legitimized and validated within this context. The narrative begins with the visits of the Mānuṣi Buddhas to the sacred Valley, which was at that time a great lake. From the seed that was sown by the first Mānuṣi Buddha, Vipaśvi, grew a thousand-petalled lotus, and from it emerged a radiant beam of light that was "Svayambhū Jyotirūpa"—the Self-Originated Light Form. As shown in a twentieth-century representation of this creation myth, the beam consisted of five colored rays of light, symbolizing the Five Jina Buddhas, who are understood to be visual descriptors of the Enlightenment process (Fig. 1.6). The Jina Buddhas—Akṣobhya (east), Ratnasambhava (south), Amitābha (west), Amoghasiddhi (north), and Vairocana (center)—are understood to

demonstrate a specific transcendental knowledge of a fully Enlightened Being. After being visited by the Mānuṣi Buddhas including Śākyamuni, the Light-Form was later (in the Kali Yuga) encased in the form of the *stūpa* that we know today as Svayambhū Mahācaitya, "The Great Self-Existent/Self-Originated Stūpa".

Based on the cosmogonic legend of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, the Great Stūpa is also closely associated with Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, who is said to have come from the Five-Peaked Mountain (*Pañcaśīrṣa Parvat)* in China. Seeing that the sacred Valley that was filled with water, Mañjuśrī created an outlet with his sword and drained it, as shown in a contemporary rendition of this theme (Fig. 1.7). The Great Bodhisattva is thus said to have made the sacred light of Svayambhū accessible to all sentient beings who wished to venerate it. In his Form-Body (*nirmāṇakāya*) as Manjudevācārya, (alternatively called Mañjudeva in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*), Mañjuśrī established the first city in the Valley and installed the first king. The Newar Buddhist tradition also considers Mañjuśrī to have initiated the first Buddhist (Vajrācārya) priest of the Valley and expounded the Buddhist teachings of the Vairocana and Akṣobhya cycles, specifically of Nāmasaṅgīti[15] and Cakrasaṁvara.[16] To this day, the Vajrācārya priests of Newar Buddhism trace their lineage to Mañjuśrī as the primordial Teacher (*gūru),* referring to him as Gūru Mañjuśrī. This fact underscores the importance of Mañjuśrī in the Newar Buddhist tradition—a point that will be

significant in understanding the prominence of Svayambhū and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala themes in Newar Buddhist art and practice.

As I will discuss in this dissertation, the Svayambhū Mahācaitya serves as the ontological source of the religion through the cosmogonic myth of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*. Thus, Svayambhū Mahācaitya also defines many key aspects of the Newar Buddhism and becomes the focal point of the religion.

A second iconographic theme that emerges repeatedly in the *bāhās* and *bahīs* of the Valley is the meditational device known as Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, that is, the Maṇḍala of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa. Understood as the root *(mūla) maṇḍala* of Newar Buddhism, the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇḍala's iconographic theme is one of the most popular in Newar Buddhist art.[17] This core iconographic element appears in numerous permutations in the art. For example, the Maṇḍala occurs as complete freestanding stone or metal repousée representation mounted upon an octagonal base (Figs. 1.8 and 1.9), in the display of strut figures on the shrine facade (Fig. 1.10), or as part of the *toraṇa* iconography over the doorways (Fig. 1.11). In the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, the central deity is a form of Mañjuśrī, known as Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa—"Speech-Lord of the Dharma-essence." As I will show through the visual imagery, Mañjuśrī in this context is equated with Vairocana, and specifically in Newar Buddhism is considered identical with the Ādi Buddha.

The preeminence of the Dharmadhātu iconography underscores the central role of Mañjuśrī in Newar Buddhism, a point that has not been extensively discussed in earlier scholarship. An in-depth iconographic study of the Maṇḍala and its symbolism within the Newar Buddhist tradition will be a central focus of this study in order to understand its larger buddhological implications. As I hope to show, the interpretation of Mañjuśrī as the Ādi Buddha will be the fundamental basis for the symbolic association of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

The third core iconographic component of the Buddhist *bāhās/bahīs* is the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala iconography, which is generally found in the Tantric *āgaṁ* shrines. Although this shrine is a required element of *bāhās/bahīs* architecture, the visual imagery related to this esoteric shrine is never displayed in public. The imagery generally belongs to meditational practices of the Anuttara Yoga Tantras, and practitioners must receive higher Tantric initiations in order to have access to these shrines and their ritual practices. Although the accessible works of art may be limited, the Cakrasaṁvara meditation is an integral part of Newar Buddhist practice, particularly as a routine initiation (*dīkṣā*) of the Vajrācārya and Śākya *saṅgha* members. Ironically, while public access to these esoteric images are virtually impossible in the field, numerous sculptures (Fig. 1.12) and paintings (Figs. 1.13 and 1.14) of Cakrasaṁvara, depicted with his *prajñā* Vajravārāhī, have made their way to museums and private collections. Many,

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if not all, of them may have once belonged to the Newar Buddhist Tantric *āgaṁ* shrines.[18] While recent anthropological studies have discussed the ritual aspect of the Cakrasaṁvara cycle initiations from the perspective of the practitioners, the works of art themselves have not been analyzed in context of the ritual and meditational practices. Even when out of their intended ritual context, these images serve as valuable testimony to the importance of the Cakrasaṁvara teachings in Newar Buddhism. Using the objects related to the Cakrasaṁvara theme found in various collections, I will provide a contextual interpretation of the Cakrasaṁvara imagery by studying its significance in Newar Buddhist sacred architecture. Cakrasaṁvara and the other Heruka-cycle Tantric imagery found in the *āgaṁ* shrines will be discussed in conjunction with the higher initiation rituals of Newar Buddhist practice.

As an expression of the Enlightenment process, the three core iconographic themes I have identified will be interpreted as a hierarchic layering of the meditational cycles of Newar Buddhism, with each symbol system is to be understood progressively as a more complex explication of the Tantric soteriological goal. Through a detailed analysis of the religious structures, I intend to show that the Svayambhū iconography encompasses the construction of sacred *bāhā* space and is related to the *kwāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine. The second core iconographic component—Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala of Mañjuśrī—is found most commonly as part of the shrine facade iconography

and may be understood as the exoteric *maṇḍala* that are accessible to the lay practitioners of the community. The third component, the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala relates to the highly esoteric practices of the initiated community and constitutes the highest and most complex meditational cycle in the hierarchic layering. These three iconographic elements found in the religious architecture thus reflect the fundamental components to the creation of sacred space in Newar Buddhism.

OBJECTIVES

Three major objectives are proposed in this study:

- To examine the construction of sacred/symbolic space in Newar Buddhist monasteries. Here, I will discuss the concept of *maṇḍalic* space as a key conceptual construct of Newar Buddhism.

- To analyze the buddhological meaning and symbolic relationship between the iconographic components (Svayambhu Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala) and the core architectural components (principal *caitya*, exoteric *kvāpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine/ shrine façade, and the esoteric *āgaṁ* shrine).

- To establish that the core iconographic program of the *bāhās/bahīs* reflect the fundamental essence of Newar Buddhist ontology and soteriological methodology.

A broader objective of this study is to situate the Newar Buddhist religion within the context of the larger Tantric Buddhist practices throughout Asia. In situating the fundamental ideological framework of the religion within the mainstream Tantric Buddhist tradition, it will be seen that Newar Buddhism is not an aberrant, degenerate, or Hinduized form of Buddhism, as some earlier scholars have repeatedly maintained. Instead, through the study of the visual imagery, we find that the fundamental practices of Newar Buddhism are wholly Buddhist in their doctrinal conceptions. Further, it is hoped that this study will also lay the foundations for further research on the relations between Newar art and the Tantric Buddhist arts of northeastern (Bihar and Bengal) and northwestern (Kaśmir and Ladakh) regions in India, with which it is historically interconnected.

SIGNIFICANCE OF DISSERTATION RESEARCH

Although there have been a number of anthropological and sociological studies that focus on the social structure of the Newar Buddhist community, there has been no substantial research on the religious practices of the Newars based on the evidence of Newar Buddhist art and architecture. The Kathmandu Valley is virtually an open-air museum, with its plethora of art

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works and architecture that reflect the religious traditions. However, there has been limited scholarly research on Newar Buddhist iconography to date. Understanding what I call the "core iconographic themes" of Newar Buddhist religious architecture will provide a framework to better interpret the fundamental conceptions of the technical and lay practices of the Newar Buddhist community. Furthermore, the religious traditions of the Newar community serve as an extremely important document of the cultural heritage of Buddhist Asia. In addition to serving as a tool to help reconstruct Indic Buddhist practices, the Newar Buddhist traditions can be used comparatively to study the Tantric Buddhist methodologies in Tibet and other traditions of Tantric Buddhism.

ISSUES OF HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION

In a study such as this, the historical development of the iconographic program found in the Newar Buddhist monasteries will inevitably arise as an issue. It may be asked whether it is possible to determine a date when the symbolic associations of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala occurred? When did the preeminence of the Vairocana meditational cycles (that is, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala) and the Akṣobhya cycle as taught in the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala meditation arise? When did the three iconographic elements crystallize as a standard, unified iconographic program in Newar Buddhist monastic architecture? It is unlikely that the earliest

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monasteries had these combined features, yet today, these features are ubiquitous. What was the process of evolution by which these elements gained such prominence that they were added to the iconographic program and became the defining features of the *bāhās/bahīs.*

These issues are highly pertinent to establishing the historical development of Tantric Buddhist imagery in Nepal. At the same time, they must be discussed within the larger context of Tantric Buddhism as it developed in India. Certainly, the prominence of the Vairocana cycle teaching goes back to the earliest layers of Indian Tantric Buddhism, as indicated in the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra.*[19] Similarly, the visual imagery in the Western Himalayan monasteries from the eleventh-twelfth centuries, such as Alchi, Tabo, and Lha-lun, appear to be closely related to the Vairocana-cycle *maṇḍalas* found in the Newar Buddhist context.[20] A study of the historical developments of the Newar Tantric art must entail a comparative art historical study of eastern India as well as the Western Himalayan monasteries. Such vast comparative analysis, however, is beyond the scope of this study. Which emphasizes the works of art in the context of contemporary practices, as understood by the Newar Buddhist practitioners of today.

Some physical evidence for historical reconstruction exists in the monuments themselves. As much as feasible, I will refer to these evidence, such as inscriptions and art historical information, to shed light on this issue. However, a thorough historical analysis is not possible with merely the

inscriptional and visual evidence at my disposal. The three core iconographic themes reflect a complex interweaving of the local cosmogonic legend the Valley with the highly technical methodologies of Tantric Buddhism, and suggest a long process of integration and assimilation. Indeed, the fully developed, systematic, and standardized iconographic programs found in the Newar Buddhist *bāhās/bahīs* indicate a culmination, rather than an inception, of religious expression. By the time we see them in evidence, the basic issues had been "resolved". The visual evidence presented here already indicates a point in fairly recent history when the themes had become an integral part of the religion, and, as I intend to show, had acquired the fundamental symbolism seen in contemporary practices. To pinpoint the historical developments of this ideological construct is a difficult task, and requires studying the philosophical and doctrinal developments in Newar Buddhist religious history, specifically in relation with the Tantric imagery of Pāla India.[21] The historical developments remain a rich avenue for further research, and will be addressed in relation the core iconographic program of the *bāhās/bahīs* only briefly in the conclusion.

This study interprets the Newar Buddhist visual imagery based on the contemporary understanding of the conceptual and symbolic frameworks of the religious attitudes. On the one hand, the intensely conservative Tantric Buddhist tradition has assured the continuity of tradition through the centuries, while on the other hand, as part of a living culture, the Newar

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Buddhist practitioners continually redefine and add new symbolic meanings to the art. Within this framework, the iconographic analysis of the imagery, the interpretation of the symbolic content, and the contextual meanings discussed in subsequent chapters will attempt to reflect the perspective of contemporary practitioners of Newar Buddhism.[22]

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

My methodological approach is interdisciplinary. It combines anthropological field research techniques with art historical methods of interpretation and analysis. A major portion of my study consists of original field research conducted in the Kathmandu Valley. Further, my personal background as a native Nepali has also facilitated my field research experience in a number of ways.

I have worked extensively in the field on various aspects of Nepali art, particularly in collaboration with my father, the Nepali artist and art historian Lain S. Bangdel. I have worked on two projects with my father that pertained to the stylistic and iconographic analysis of sculptures of the Kathmandu Valley.[23] This experience not only familiarized me with the status of scholarship in the field but also enabled me to gain extensive familiarity with the works of art and their context. Furthermore, being married to a Śākya, one of the principal Newar Buddhist castes of the Valley,

has allowed easier access into the community and facilitated avenues of communication with my informants.[24]

For my dissertation, I conducted intensive field research for eleven months in the Kathmandu Valley, first, for seven months in 1994, then for four months in 1996, and lastly, for seven weeks in 1998. On the first and second trips, I was part of a research team from The Ohio State University that photographically documented every major Buddhist site in the Kathmandu Valley. For the first three months in 1994, the survey team, headed by Dr. John C. Huntington and Dr. Susan L. Huntington from the Department of History of Art at Ohio State, photographed more than 250 sites.[25] During the next four months, Dr. John C. Huntington and I continued to document the remaining monasteries, leading to a total of 460 sites surveyed and 23,000 photographs taken in 1994. Nearly all the photos taken by John Huntington with my assistance and that of the other members of the Ohio State team. Again, in the summer of 1996 another survey team, this time led by Dr. John C. Huntington alone, went back to complete the bahī/bāhā documentation project and took an additional 10,000 photographs of other Buddhist monuments, including Buddhist pilgrimage sites such as the Tīrthas and Vaitarāga.[26] By the completion of the 1996 fieldwork, more than 500 Buddhist sites had been visited, and each one was photographically documented in detail by the team. Photographic coverage ranged from a single exposure to document the existence of a private cibāhā with nothing

more than a *caitya* and small shrine in the courtyard to more than 2600 photographs of large sites like Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

The photo-documentation in the field was an invaluable resource for mapping out the major iconographic themes of Newar Buddhist art. More importantly, this rich body of material provided opportunity for deeper iconographic study, since detailed views of any given figure or attribute were readily accessible to me, some of which would not otherwise be visible to the naked eye. To make the vast amounts of field data available for research, John C. Huntington and I spent twelve months creating a database for the 23,000 photographs taken in 1994. John C. Huntington and Chaya Chandrasekhar, one of the members of the 1996 team, added the 1996 materials to the database. In creating the database, we reviewed all the photographs and carefully catalogued each slide for necessary information. The database helped organize the enormous amount of raw data, which included not only the detailed information of the site and location, but also iconographic identification and reading of inscriptions, whenever possible. Included in the database are the extensive field interviews that were conducted with the Buddhist priests and practitioners at many of these sites. This computer database provides an easy means of cross-referencing the enormous body of visual data available, which has proved indispensable for the iconographic study central to my dissertation.

It was during my initial field survey in 1994 that I noticed the recurrence of two elements in the courtyards in virtually all Buddhist monasteries in the Valley: a *caitya* at the center of the *bāhā* courtyards that represents Svayambhū Mahācaitya, and the iconographic theme of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.[27] Using the monuments themselves as primary resources, I began to study in detail the context in which these two themes were present. A number of visual clues in the iconographic programs of the more complex *bāhās*, provided material evidence for the symbolic connection between the two elements. I could ascertain the third component of the sacred architecture, the Tantric *āgaṁ* imagery of Cakrasaṁvara, was significant in terms of its ritual practices; however, the works of art that I found related to this theme were all detached from their original context. Nonetheless, these three components appeared to be the core iconographic elements in *bāhā* architecture.

In 1996 I found abundant inscriptional evidence to support the "statements" made by the visual imagery on the symbolic relationship of the two themes of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. The correlation between these two elements provided the basis for my analysis of the relationship among the three core iconographic components. In order to corroborate my findings with the contemporary ritual practices, I returned to Kathmandu in January 1998.[28] During this trip, I observed the principal festival to Mañjuśrī during Śrī Pañcamī at Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

I further gathered crucial information on the initiations and meditational practices of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala and its relationship to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. For the most part, the field research during this visit consisted of interviews with ritual specialists, along with observing and participating in rituals and festivals.

In addition to the inscriptions and the art, much of Newar Buddhist iconography can be understood through religious and ritual texts, and, therefore, textual information and analysis are critical to the study. My approach to textual analysis will include the interpretation (hermeneutics) of religious texts as a means of interpreting the symbolic imagery. Specifically, the cosmogonic legend of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* provides the canonical basis and legitimization for the sacrality of the Great Stupa. Similarly, Tantric Buddhist texts used in Nepal also provide the doctrinal and philosophical basis for the buddhological understanding of the iconographic programs. Specifically, the *Ārya Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra,* the root text of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in Nepal, and its commentaries, are used to provide a thorough iconographic analysis. I will also refer to original ritual texts *(vidhi)* in Newarī that I have translated or those that are published in Newarī as a source for visual imagery and to help elucidate the religious significance of Svayambhū, Dharmadhātu, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala meditations.[29]

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RELIGIOUS CONTINUITIES AND THE CONTEXTUALIZATION OF ART

Tantric Buddhist texts will be used as a theoretical basis for the buddhological understanding of the iconographic program studied in this dissertation. Furthermore, much of the interpretive analyses in this study will be based on the contemporary religious practices of the Newar Buddhist community. In Nepal, the ancient religious practices that are still current provide a means of interpreting and understanding visual imagery. This methodological approach has been particularly illuminating for me to understand the iconological structure of Newar Buddhist art, and a specific incident comes to mind. During the preliminary phase of my research, the constant recurrence of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in the visual imagery suggested to me that they were important in the Newar Buddhist community. Yet, some key questions remained. Why were the two themes present together, particularly in *bāhās,* in Patan? Was there a connection between these two elements, as the visual imagery seemed to indicate, and, if so, what was it?

Early one day during the holy month of Guñlā, I was at Svayambhū Mahācaitya, when the morning *pūjās* and the devotional singing had just started. A fairly large group of devotees was circumambulating the Mahācaitya, offering their prayers and chanting "Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara." This fairly simple and straightforward invocation to the

Mahācaitya as "Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara," the central deity of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, provided a vital clue to their association. It also directed me towards further avenues of research on the connections between Svayambhū, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and Mañjuśrī as well.

This incident is one of many that I experienced and illustrate the opportunity to interpret the past through cultural practices of the present.[30] In the Newar Buddhist community, a great deal of cultural continuity is preserved through the patrilineal social structure of the Buddhist *saṅgha* of the Vajrācārya and Śākya castes. Not only are ancient monuments and works of art actively used in worship and veneration, but, also, those who are the keepers of these sites often maintain a strong sense of the ritual traditions. Similarly, many of the contemporary Newar Buddhist craftsmen, some of whom are descended from fifteen generations of artists, continue to produce works of art for religious purposes according to strict ritual specifications.[31]

Like much of any religious imagery, Newar Buddhist art can be better understood through studying the practitioners' use of sacred images. For my research, both the practices of the members of the community and those of the ritual specialists were important. Contemporary practices of interest include daily worship and rituals, annual and monthly festivals that shed light on the images' religious functions and contextual use observable in the community. The Vajrācārya priests or ritual specialists of Newar Buddhism are the voices

of authority, and provide ritual validation of the religious practices. The familiarity of these ritual specialists with the esoteric Buddhist traditions provides the theoretical framework within which the symbolic meanings of images can be interpreted.

To help contextualize works of art within the contemporary practices of Newar Buddhism, I conducted extensive interviews with the ritual specialists, and observed, as well as participated in, a number of rituals and festivals. Among the practitioners I interviewed were more than ten Vajrācārya priests, from both Kathmandu and Patan. Some of these informants were selected based on their reputation in the Newar Buddhist community,[32] while others were chosen without preplanning as they were performing *pūjās* at a particular site. The informants ranged from highly respected teachers, well-versed in liturgical practices and complex philosophical and doctrinal concepts, to Tantric healers with minimal knowledge of the technical complexities of the religion and whose central focus was the mundane needs of the laity. The accuracy and validity of the information I obtained was "tested" by comparison to responses from other ritual specialist and lay practitioners. Additional interviews were conducted with informed practitioners, who offered invaluable insights into contemporary traditions of the Buddhist community.

In these interviews, my primary goal was to gain an understanding of the core iconographic components of *bāhā/bahī* architecture and their

relationship to the religious practices. Using established anthropological interviewing techniques, my interviews were deliberately unstructured, so that the discussion was generally led by the informant.[33] One of the benefits of this type of interviewing technique was gaining insight into issues that were crucial, but unanticipated. Further, the issues thought to be important by the informants were allowed to emerge without being influenced by my perspective.

The informants consistently alluded to and acknowledged the association of the Svayambhu Mahācaitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in everyday Buddhist practice. In fact, the ritual traditions consistently affirmed the symbolic connection between the Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala through various acts of devotion, votive offerings, and *pūjās*.[34] Similarly, the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī meditations are integral to the Vajrayāna traditions of the Newar Buddhists, and, therefore, despite the secrecy involved, this esoteric tradition was often alluded to in the conversations. Because I did not have the required Cakrasaṁvara initiation, I did not have access to the secret teaching and hence could not directly ask questions related to the esoteric traditions of the Cakrasaṁvara or the other Heruka-class meditations. On the other hand, had I received the initiations, from an ethical standpoint even as an academic scholar, I would not be able to disclose the secret teachings. However, I was able to gain the confidence and familiarity with some of these teachers through repeated

conversations about the seriousness of my study. With the help of two knowledgeable teachers, I have inferred what I believe to be accurate information regarding these secret practices, and, thereby, gain some insights into the highly esoteric Tantric teachings.

Although the average lay informants did not have the technical buddhological and doctrinal training that would enable them to expound the meaning of the association, two prominent Vajrācārya teachers contributed greatly to my research.[35] One notable ritual specialist was Sūrya Mān Vajrācārya from Ha Bāhā, Patan—an extremely well-versed and learned teacher who spent many hours with me explaining the doctrinal and theoretical aspects of the religion. He also gave me the opportunity to offer the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala *pūjā* as primary patron and to receive *abhiṣekha* of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara and the Pañca Jinas.[36] The second ritual specialist who provided crucial is Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, one of the most well-respected and leading ritual specialists of Kathmandu. During 1998 trip, Paṇḍit Badrī Ratna expounded the significance of Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala to me in what he called the "Twelve-Fold Teachings."[37] In addition, I also participated in the *yoginī pūjās* he organized. There were central to my understanding of the Cakrasaṃvara cycle in Newar Buddhist practice.

In addition to tape-recorded interviews, my research materials include videotapes and photographs of a number of Buddhist rituals that allowed me to experience firsthand the contextual use of the visual imagery. The

highlights of my research were the two *pūjās* of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, dedicated to Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, in which I participated as the *jajmān*.[38] The first of these *pūjās* was offered in 1994 at my in-laws' house in Kathmandu. The *pūjā* was performed by Bhindyaḥ Gubhāju of Patan, a Vajrācārya priest who is especially known for his powers as a traditional healer.

The second *pūjā*, performed in 1996, took place on the second-floor *digī*[39] of Ha Bāhā, Patan. It began with extensive theoretical preparation for me by Sūrya Mān Vajrācārya, who explained the buddhological symbolism of the *pūjā*. This process gave me an increased level of experiential awareness that I did not have the first time I offered the Dharmadhātu *pūjā*. This *pūjā* involved an elaborate two-day ceremony and was officiated by five Vajrācārya priests from Patan. Three of the five Vajrācārya priests, Caitya Rāj Vajrācārya, Kamal Rāj Vajrācārya, and Maila Gurju, were from Bu Bāhā, with Paṇḍit Caitya Rāj acting the main officiating priest (*mūl gubhāju*).[40] The other two Vajrācārya priests, Sūrya Mān Vajrācārya and Jog Ratna Vajrācārya, were from Ha Bāhā. The senior priests, Caitya Rāj and Kamal Rāj, were particularly respected in the community for their ritual expertise. The information these two Vajrācārya priests provided on the doctrinal underpinnings and the symbolic content of the *pūjās* given were invaluable to my understanding of the art in context. Further, the overall contextualization of the *pūjās* within the larger framework of the religious ideologies of the

Newar Buddhist community help me understand and interpret the iconographic programs of the ancient Buddhist structures. Specifically, the ritual practices of contemporary Newar Buddhism provided valuable insight into the symbolic meanings of the Dharmadhātu. Maṇḍala iconography within the sacred space of the *bāhās*.

While I intend to use contemporary practices to interpret works of art, in this study the Newar Buddhist monuments and the art will function as primary resources.[41] In this study, the iconographic programs will serve as "visual texts" help reconstruct, interpret and contextualize the material remains within the larger framework of the cultural and religious practices.

SCHOLARSHIP ON THE CORE ICONOGRAPHIC ELEMENTS OF NEWAR BUDDHIST ARCHITECTURE

While the average tourist guide to Nepal will invariably recommend a visit to the Svayambhū Stūpa as the premier site for the Newar Buddhist community, serious scholarship on the Svayambhū Mahācaitya, its art and iconography, is extremely meager. To date, only a few books consider the Mahācaitya in some detail. The first book, authored by Hem Rāj Śākya, is a comprehensive study of the site and its history, although accessible only to readers who understand Newarī.[42] Written by one of the pioneering epigraphist of Nepal who is himself a Buddhist practitioner, the 700-page opus discusses the sacred history of the site based primarily on the

Svayambhū Purāṇa. The book is especially useful in reconstructing the history of Svayambhū, as the inscriptional evidence available at the site, relating to royal patronage and lay donors, is reviewed in detail. However, this work does not discuss the iconography or symbolism of the structure within the context of Newar Buddhist practices.

The second book, a more recent work by Bernhard Kölver, is narrow in focus and deals with the iconometic measurements of the Mahācaitya based on architectural drawings.[43] The book discusses the symbolic meaning of the Great Stūpa as indicated in the traditional drawings and is invaluable for interpreting the iconography of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya. However, this work does not take into consideration the Mahācaitya's contemporary form or visual imagery that may suggest significant historical and iconological changes over time.

The most thorough survey of the site is the archaeological report prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Nepal.[44] The report of the Svayambhū Conservation Masterplan contains detailed maps and drawings of the entire site as well as a documentation of the rituals associated with the Mahācaitya. In addition, a recent publication by Niels Gutschow, who was also largely responsible for preparing the Svayambhū Masterplan, examines the *caityas* of the Kathmandu Valley.[45] In this book, Gutschow carefully discuses the architectural and structural components of Svayambhū as an archetype of other *caitya* forms found in the Buddhist

monasteries. In my research, these two books served as major resources for the study of Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

Although detailed iconographic studies of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya are limited, scholarly writing on Nepali art or on Newar Buddhism frequently includes a paragraph or two on the Mahācaitya. Such references to Svayambhū commonly acknowledge its significance as an early Buddhist monument, and associate the site with the Buddhist creation myth of the draining of the Valley. These brief mentions of Svayambhū Mahācaitya have provided little opportunity for detailed analysis of the monument, and, therefore, much remains to be done. For example, the iconographic program of the Mahācaitya, which no doubt offers clues to the buddhological and doctrinal underpinnings of the religion, has not been discussed. Similarly, Svayambhū's religious status or the substantial royal patronage by the Hindu kings have not been seriously examined. In view of the Mahācaitya's prominence in the Newar Buddhist community and to the history of Buddhism in Nepal, a definitive study of its religious, cultural and historical significance is overdue.

Likewise, despite the ubiquity of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in the *bāhās/bahīs* of the Kathmandu Valley, this iconographic theme has received little attention in scholarly research. With a few exceptions, art historians have not considered the significance of the Maṇḍala in relation to the practices of Newar Buddhism. To my knowledge, the five authors who have

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discussed the theme of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in some detail are K.R. van Kooij, Adalbert J. Gail, the collaborative works of M. Tachikawa and N. Yasuhiko, and Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya.[46]

In a pioneering article on Newar Buddhist iconography, Van Kooij presents an excellent discussion of the iconographic program at Chusyā Bāhā, including the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala theme present in the *toraṇa* and strut figures. In the same vein, the German scholar, Adalbert J. Gail has extensively contributed to the iconographic studies in the Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples of the Valley in general. In the book, *Kloster in Nepal: Ikonographie buddhistischer Kloster im Kathmandutal* [Monasteries in Nepal: Iconography of the Buddhist Monasteries in the Kathmandu Valley], Gail discusses six monasteries and outlines the overall iconographic features of each structure. Regarding the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala theme, he identifies the strut figures at Kwā Bāhā in Patan as the five Jinas Buddhas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. However, Gail does not discuss the presence of this theme elsewhere at Kwā Bāhā or in the iconography of other *bāhās* in any detail.

The third book, written in Japanese by two Japanese scholars, is a descriptive study of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, correlating the iconography of the deities with descriptions given in textual sources, such as the *Vajrāvali* and *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. The major portion of the book is devoted to

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contemporary line drawings of all the deities in the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, which were sketched by the Newar artist, Gautama R. Vajrācārya.[47]

The fourth book is a ritual text discussing the *pūjā* and *vrata* of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, edited by the Newar ritual specialist Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya. The ritual specifications of making the *maṇḍala* is based on a Newarī source, while the iconographic descriptions again follow the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. The book was published as part of the actual consecration of a Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala at Thāṁ Bahī in 1984, which I will discuss later in detail.[48] This book, by far, was the most useful resource for understanding the significance of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in Newar Buddhism, as it reflects the contemporary ritual practices in connection with the creation of art.

Other scholars have noted the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala's presence in the Newar Buddhist context as "the most common cult object after the *caitya*," yet these discussions are cursory at best.[49] Neither the iconographic program of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala within the context of the monuments nor its role in Newar sacred art has been carefully examined. The present study attempts to fill this lacuna in the scholarship, as a framework to better understand the religious constructs of Newar Buddhism.

Published resources and scholarship on the third core iconographic component—the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala theme—are perhaps the most limited and can be broadly divided into three categories. First is the art

historical scholarship that discusses works of art found in museums and private collections. Stella Kramrisch, Pratapaditya Pal, and Ernst and Rose Waldschmidt are among the scholars, who have discussed, although fairly briefly, the stylistic and iconographic elements of Cakrasaṁvara imagery.[50]

The second category is the anthropological studies that describe the ritual practices related to the Cakrasaṁvara meditation. These ethnographic studies provide reliable resources for the highly esoteric practices of Cakrasaṁvara that are generally inaccessible to the general public. The most thorough documentation of the Cakrasaṁvara initiation practices is found in David Gellner's *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* as described to him by Āśakājī Vajrācārya from Kwā Bāhā.[51] This narrative, coming from the perspective of the contemporary tradition, has been invaluable in this study to compare the art, textual sources, and religious practices. Michael R. Allen's study on the goddess Kumārī is also a significant contribution, which helps contextualize the Newar Buddhist understanding of Kumārī as an aspect of Vajravārāhī, the *prajñā*[52] of Cakrasaṁvara.[53] This resource both helps to analyze the Cakrasaṁvara iconography and to infer the contextual use of the art within the practices of Newar Buddhism.

The third category of resources relating to Cakrasaṁvara is the published Newar ritual (*vidhi*) texts that are used in the performance of the rituals.[54] The *Trisamādhi* ("Threefold Visualization/Meditation") is the fundamental ritual related to Cakrasaṁvara / Vajravārāhī. A number of

modern publications in Newari outline the complex ritual.[55] The commentarial exegesis presented in these books by the contemporary ritual specialists further helps contextualize the art with ritual practices.

Despite the relative paucity of published materials on the core iconographic themes of Newar sacred architecture, the artistic traditions of the Kathmandu Valley, both Hindu and Buddhist, have attracted the attention of a number of art historians.[56] Authors that I mentioned earlier, such as Pratapaditya Pal and Adalbert Gail, have examined Buddhist art in terms of stylistic and iconographic issues.[57] In the field of Nepali cultural and religious history, Mary Slusser's two-volume opus, *Nepal Maṇḍala,* serves as the most comprehensive survey thus far published.[58]

SCHOLARSHIP ON NEWAR BUDDHISM

Current scholarly research on anthropology, sociology, and religious history has also greatly contributed to the understanding of Newar Buddhism in the Kathmandu Valley. Of particular significance to this study is the work of three prominent scholars: David N. Gellner, John K. Locke, and Todd T. Lewis. Their contributions will be discussed below.

In his seminal book *Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhism and Its Hierarchy of Ritual* (1992),[59] British social anthropologist David Gellner presents a comprehensive ethnography of Newar Buddhism. In this book, Gellner describes in detail the caste and religious structure of the

Newar Buddhists, their socio-religious organizations, and their religious practices. Following Louis Dumont's classic framework on the hierarchy of caste,[60] Gellner analyzes Newar Buddhism in a threefold hierarchic ordering of the Buddhist soteriological paths, or "ways" (*yāna*), that integrates the diverse practices of the religion. The ideal of the "Three Ways" are *Srāvakayānā,* or Disciple's Way, embodying the values of monasticism; *Mahāyāna,* or the Great Way, embodying the role of the householder and the ideal of the compassionate *bodhisattva;* and last, *Vajrayāna,* or the Diamond Way[61], the esoteric and dangerous path, that embodies the ideals of the Vajrācārya priests.

Gellner proposes that this fundamental construct of Newar Buddhism allows many of the opposing elements of the religion to be reinterpreted and accommodated within the Buddhist context. Gellner's use of these three hierarchies corresponds with the emic categories that are used by Newar practitioners themselves to define the religion, as he indicates in his introduction. As one of the most effective frameworks used to explain the seeming incongruities of the religion (for example, as a married householder, how is the Buddhist practitioner able to uphold the ideals of monkhood such as celibacy), this ideological construct appears to influence all aspects of Newar Buddhist religious life. By outlining some of the fundamental presuppositions of the religion, Gellner's book shows how the religious constructs of Newar Buddhism are articulated through the ideals of the Three

Ways—Sravakayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna—and how these ideologies are combined into a single hierarchic system to maintain and define the Buddhist identity of the practitioners and the religion. Of particular relevance to my research is information about ritual practices of the Buddhist community and the hierarchy of pantheons, as understood by the Buddhist practitioners. Gellner's findings on the symbolism and details of the rituals aid in the contextualized reading of the iconographic programs in the *bāhās*.

Similarly, John K. Locke has contributed tremendously to the understanding of Newar Buddhism. His book on the Buddhist *bāhās* and *bahīs* of the Valley provides one of the most comprehensive surveys of Newar Buddhist architecture, in which he systematically provides information on the social organization of each *bāhā*, its associated branch units, the number of *saṅgha* members, and the annual festivals.[62] In addition, Locke's work on Karūṇāmaya-Matsyendranāth was one of the first detailed anthropological studies on the Avalokiteśvara cult in the Kathmandu Valley.[63]

Todd T. Lewis, an anthropologist and religious historian, has published numerous articles based on his research of the Tulādhars, the Buddhist merchants of Kathmandu, and of the Newar Buddhist diaspora outside of the Kathmandu Valley. These studies offer invaluable insight regarding the role of trade and commerce in the lives of the lay Buddhist practitioners, who essentially sustain the religion.[64] Lewis's recent work on the Sukhāvati

traditions in the Valley contextualizes the religious traditions of Newar Buddhists in the general setting of Buddhist studies.[65]

These anthropological studies focus primarily on issues related to caste dynamics, social hierarchy, kinship, and ethnicity, which are analyzed within the larger framework of the Newar society and, often, in relation to Hinduism.[66] For art historical research, these ethnographic works provide an important background to study the cultural and social contexts of the Buddhist imagery found in the monasteries of the Valley. Critical examination of the material culture as testimony of the religious beliefs and living traditions, however, is seldom included in these works.

HISTORIOGRAPHIC ISSUES AND SCHOLARSHIP ON NEPALI ART

In addition to viewing the present state of scholarship, it is useful to reexamine the circumstances that have shaped the history of scholarship, and the reasons and premises for contemporary interest in certain aspects of Nepali culture. As the indigenous inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley, the Newars have attracted the attention of Western scholars, particularly anthropologists and sociologists. As an ethnic group that appears to be organized by caste, religion, locality, and dialect, Newars and Newar society offer a complex dynamic of interesting elements. Contained in a small geographic area where Hinduism and Buddhism have co-existed for centuries

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and have shared numerous cultural and religious practices, the Newar culture of the Kathmandu Valley has presented to scholars a somewhat peculiar variation of Indian social patterns, one, as I have mentioned, that characterizes South Asian culture as it is presumed to have been before the Muslim advent in India.

The assumption that Nepal, particularly the Kathmandu Valley, is an extension of Indian culture or that Nepal is "India in the making" has had an impact on Western scholarship as well as on Nepali scholars writing in English.[67] The most influential proponent of this school of thought was the late nineteenth-century French Sanskritist Sylvain Levi, who visited the Kathmandu Valley in search of what he perceived to be the last remaining example of South Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism. In one of the passages from his monumental work, *Le Népal*, which is often quoted by scholars of Nepal studies, he writes:

> "Inhabited by the [Indo] Aryan races, converted and civilized by Indian Buddhism, conquered and absorbed by Hindu Brahmanism, Nepal has already passed the first three stages in the history of India; entering belatedly in the cycle, it only remains to know the last phase, which is glimpsed only now, but which India has for a longtime engaged in: the struggle against Islam and against the stronghold of Europe. It is for this [reason] precisely my original treatment and basic interest in the history of Nepal...Nepal is India in the making. In a territory limited to desire like a laboratory, the observer can easily grasp the sequence of steps which from ancient India gave rise to modern India".[68]

Levi's viewpoint continued to influence the "Orientalist" scholars through the early twentieth centuries, and remains influential to some extent in modern scholarship. However, recently, questions of religious dominance

and religious syncretism have played a pivotal role in scholarship, concerning the diverse, yet shared practices of the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Furthermore, issues of Newar ethnicity, caste hierarchy, religious identity, social mobility, and Indianization or Sanskritization have been particularly meaningful for the social scientist when analyzed within the larger framework of other South Asian societies.[69]

Levi's premise has influenced not only the social sciences, but has affected the direction of art historical scholarship. Until the early 1960s, the arts of Nepal were generally considered a provincial extension of the larger Indic culture and analyzed as a regional variant of north Indian art.[70] Consequently, much early scholarship essentially emphasized issues of Nepal's cultural and artistic continuities with India, without paying much attention to the unique characteristics of Nepali art.[71] By citing comparisons with Indian artistic traditions, these early scholars inadvertently minimized the uniqueness of Nepali art, and tended to disregard Nepal's artistic contributions and role in the transmission of styles between neighboring regions such as northeastern India and Tibet. It is only after the 1960s that Western scholars began to reevaluate the significance of Nepali art.[72]

For this study, it is also important to note that art historical scholarship on Nepal has been largely devoted to the study of style and aesthetics rather than iconography. In particular, emphasis has been given to the "classical" art of the Licchavi dynasty (third to ninth centuries C.E.) and

its aesthetic merits, which is contemporaneous to the "classical" Gupta art of India.[73] On the other hand, works of the so-called "medieval" periods of the "Transitional" phase (ninth-thirteenth centuries) and the Malla dynasties (thirteenth-eighteenth centuries), which constitute the majority of extant monuments and art in the Valley, have been largely neglected. Through an expressed preference for the earlier periods, scholars have applied a value system that is similar to the one that was also traditionally used in the study of Indian art. In both cases, the validity is questionable. However, as suggested by my study, the richness of visual and iconographic imagery of Newar Malla art is key to understanding the religions in present-day Nepal, as much of the Hindu and Buddhist religious practices found in the Valley today have their developmental roots in the Malla period.

For the Nepali scholars, one of the main reasons for constant references to Indian art has been to establish the antiquity of the Nepali artistic traditions. If Western scholars perpetuated the notion of Nepali art as a regional variation of Indian art, Nepali scholars have continued to use India as a touchstone to authenticate and validate Nepali art. On the one hand, an effective means to establish the antiquity of Nepali art for the native scholars was through stylistic comparisons with the arts of the Kuṣāna or Gupta dynasties of northern India, and thus establish that the Nepal region was part of the cultural and artistic mainstream during these periods. Indirectly motivated by issues of political and national identity, Nepali historians and

art historians have, in recent years, acknowledged a common artistic and religious heritage between India and Nepal. Yet a major shift in focus has been to emphasize and highlight the uniquely "Nepali" characteristics of the visual culture.[74]

As with Levi, for the scholar of Nepal studies and especially the social scientist, the interest in the Kathmandu Valley, particularly the Newar population, has remained attractive. Various may explain this phenomenon: first, the region remains culturally traditional and insular, thus enabling the general trends in South Asian social patterns to be preserved in traditional form among many of the ethnic groups. The fact that Nepal was never under the Muslim or the British rule as was India probably accounts for the greater continuity with its early, indigenous traditions. Secondly, the Kathmandu Valley is limited in physical size, allowing a manageable sample to be studied. Third, within the cultural tradition, there is diversity, despite the confines of such a small area, as the Kathmandu Valley contains both cities and villages.[75] In fact, after visiting the Valley in 1928, Perceval Landon thus describes the religious environment of Kathmandu.

> This is no unfitting place in which to remark that within the confines of the Valley. . .there is as concentrated a world of varied interest, tradition, and beauty as may be found nowhere even among the history-coloured and majestic ruins of India. . . .The continuity of life and faith as suffered from no religious intolerance, for strange though it may seem, Buddhism and Hinduism have here met and kissed each other. . . . In some ways—certainly in more ways than any other state or district in India itself can claim—Kathmandu remains to-day much as it was in the seventh century.[76]

Wedged between the great plains of the Ganges in the south and the high Himalayan mountains in the north, Nepal's physical terrain has helped create its insular culture, and, at the same time, made it relatively inaccessible to outsiders. Both its physical geographic isolation and historical conditions have greatly contributed to the unique character of the Kathmandu Valley. The dense forests of the southern Tarai and the rugged Himalayas in the north have provided a natural barrie, offering some disincentives to outside invasions. Moreover, the nation remained closed to the outside world for over a century, from the time of the creation of the modern political entity of Nepal by the non-Newar king of Gorkhā, Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇa Śāha in the late eighteenth century, until the mid-twentieth century. During that time, the only foreigners allowed to enter the country and reside at the royal courts in the Valley were the British officers of the Indian Civil Service. It was only after the establishment of a more democratic form of government in 1951 that Nepal's borders were opened to world, thus allowing the possibility of serious foreign research.

These historical circumstances have shaped the history of scholarship on Nepal and the attitudes of foreign scholars towards Nepal. It is the observations of the British and few European scholars who were allowed to enter Nepal in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that laid the foundational groundwork and direction in the history of Western scholarship. In particular, the works of Brian Hodgson, the British resident in Kathmandu

for twenty-five years, and the French scholar Sylvain Levi, introduced Newar Buddhism of the Kathmandu Valley to the West.[77]   These writers not only shaped the attitudes of later scholars writing on Nepal, but also greatly influenced the discourse of Buddhist studies in nineteenth-century Europe. A review of the works of these and other early writers in the following sections will show that that certain premises and interests, still prevalent in current Western scholarship, may in fact be rooted in the late- nineteenth and early-twentieth century views of Nepal and the Newars. Specifically, I will discuss the writings of Kirkpatrick, Hamilton Buchanan, Brian H. Hodgson, Daniel Wright, Sylvain Levi, and Perceval Landon. The works of these early writers are tremendously valuable in understanding the direction of modern scholarship, despite some of the Orientalist-style presuppositions that, until recently, have characterized many writings on Nepal.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF LATE-NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY WRITERS

Although Nepal was never directly under British rule, the early scholarship on Nepal is closely connected with India's colonial experience and with the political interests of the Rāj. Contact with the West began in the seventeenth century, with the European travelers who visited the Kathmandu Valley on their way from India to Tibet or China. Among the early eyewitness accounts are the observations of the Jesuit and Capuchin monks, who visited

the three kingdoms of the Kathmandu Valley during the rule of the Newar Malla kings.[78] From as early as 1626, Jesuit monks visited Nepal on their way to Lhāsa, although their written accounts were generally brief. The Capuchin monks, who established hospices in Bhaktapur and Patan in 1715, later recorded detailed descriptions of the political intrigues of the Malla kings. For almost sixty years until their expulsion by King Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇa Śāha, the Capuchin monks remained in the Valley and were often pawns in the political skirmishes among the three kingdoms.

The state of constant rivalry and court intrigue noted in these early accounts provide a useful source for reconstructing the history of the Malla period before the unification of Nepal in 1769 by King Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇa Śāha of Gorkhā. Despite the internal rivalry, the Three Kingdoms period was a time of great economic stability as a result of the successful trade relations with Tibet. The early European accounts also shed interesting light on the social, religious, and artistic conditions of the Valley during the Three Kingdom Malla period, especially in contrast to the writings of the British in the late 19th century after the unification of Nepal.

The first serious scholarship on Nepal and Nepali history must be attributed to the British officers of the East India Company in India, whose writings on the newly formed political entity of Nepal were, however, largely motivated by political interests of the British Rāj. The first synthesized accounts of Nepal, published in the early nineteenth century, are those of two

British officers, Captain William Kirkpatrick and Francis Buchanan Hamilton. In 1793, Captain Kirkpatrick, representing the East India Company, was sent to Nepal to mediate in the trade war between Nepal and Tibet. The primary agenda of the mission, however, was to secure trade relations between the British and Tibet and to open the Kathmandu-Lhasa route for commercial ventures with the Rāj. Until this time, Nepal had resisted every attempt at commercial intercourse with the British and had closed its borders to the outside. In fact, foreigners had been forbidden to enter the country since Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇa Śāha's expulsion of the Capuchin missionaries, whom he distrusted as foreign spies. Kirkpatrick's mission to set up diplomatic relations with Nepal was foiled when he arrived too late for the signing of the Nepal-Tibet trade treaty.

Kirkpatrick's observations, made during his trip of two-and-a-half months in 1793, provides a surprisingly thorough introduction to various facets of an unknown country that repeatedly had fought off the incursions of the British.[79] Published posthumously eighteen years after Kirkpatrick's trip, the work can be considered the first official account of the country, aimed essentially at the interests of the European colonizers. Describing in detail the itinerary of Kirkpatrick's journey from the Tarai plains to the Kathmandu Valley, the account focuses on the cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions of the Valley. The account's contribution to scholarship lies in the fact that it provides the first outline of Nepali history. Based on indigenous chronicles of

dynastic histories or genealogies (vaṁśāvalīs), Kirkpatrick's work laid the foundation for Western interest in Nepali history, as manifested in later works by other British officers, such as Daniel Wright, Henry Oldfield, and Cecil Bendall.[80]

Kirkpatrick's history begins with the names of the kings in legendary dynasties of the pre-Licchavi periods, namely the Gopāla and Kirāta periods, followed by the kings of the Licchavi period. It is notable that the name "Licchavi" is not mentioned in these published chronicles, nor does Kirkpatrick call the dynasty by name. Rather, the Licchavi dynastic name and the corroboration of the names of the Licchavi kings as given in the vaṁśāvalīs, were established in 1880 by the Indian scholar, Bhagwan Lal Indraji's discovery of inscriptional evidence. Until then, the history of Nepal had been based primarily on the accounts of vaṁśāvalī genealogies, whose authority Western historians often dismissed as lacking the historicity of other written documents.[81] In addition to recording the traditional history of the Valley, Kirkpatrick's work is valuable for the accurate recounting of the then-recent history of the conquests of the Śāha kings and the unification of the kingdom of Nepal. Kirkpatrick's historical accounts were later expanded by Hamilton, in his comprehensive history of the Śāha dynasty until the year 1814.[82]

In describing the various ethnic groups in the Valley, Kirkpatrick's work also sets the stage for the later interest in the dynamics of caste

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relations and ethnicity. Classifying the Newars and "Purbatties" as the two dominant ethnic groups of the Valley, Kirkpatrick identifies the Newars as the indigenous inhabitants of the Valley and distinguishes them from the non-Newar "Purbatties," or "Hindu mountaineers", stating that there exists differences in "character, customs, manners, and features, as in religious rites and language".[83] He further distinguishes between the Hindu and Buddhist Newars, identifying the *bare* castes of Vajrācārya and Śākyas as "Bhāñras or Bāhāuras," and whom he considered to be a minority and "a sort of separatist from the Newars" themselves.[84]

Francis Buchanan Hamilton also takes up in some detail the issue of ethnic demarcation and religious identities, primarily between the Newars, whom he considered as indigenous inhabitants of the Valley, and the non-Newar migrants into the Valley. A professional writer for the East India Company who accompanied Captain Knox during his 1802-03 stay in the Kathmandu Valley, Hamilton follows Kirkpatrick's interest in the history and culture of Nepal.[85] Based on extensive interviews that he conducted both inside the country and with expatriates in India, Hamilton provides a well-informed and remarkably accurate account of the ethnic groups found throughout Nepal, particularly in the hill principalities of the east and west, before the conquest of the Gorkhā kings. Following Kirkpatrick, Hamilton accurately distinguishes the two ethnic groups in the Kathmandu Valley as Newars, the indigenous inhabitants of the Valley, and the "Parbatiyā, or non-

Newar Hindus of the mountains", who, it is presumed, migrated at a later date into the Valley. In contrast to Kirkpatrick' s observations, Hamilton considers the majority of Newars to be Buddhist, who follow the sect of "Buddhamārga", with only a small minority of Hindu Newars who call themselves "Śivamārgas".[86]

The fascination of both Kirkpatrick and Hamilton with the dynamics of the ethnic groups has also been the central focus of modern sociological and anthropological inquiries. The legacy of these two writers is, perhaps, most evident in the terminology or categories that are still used today in Western scholarship to describe the cultural and ethnic distinctions found within the Kathmandu Valley. Kirkpatrick and Hamilton both rightly pointed to the Newars and non-Newars as the two broad ethnic divisions of the Kathmandu Valley, based on ethnic and linguistic differences. Following the term used by these nineteenth-century writers, the word, 'Parbatiyā' ("Parbutti', 'Parbattiyā', 'Parbatiā") has gained currency in Western scholarship to describe the non-Newar migrants into the Valley, and especially the Nepali-speaking ethnic groups.[87]

The term 'Parbatiyā' that is still used in Western scholarship was coined by the British to describe the language spoken by ethnic groups of the hill tribes, especially the Khas tribes of western Nepal, whose language was *khas kurā*. It is etymologically related to the more emic and accurate term, "Parbate" meaning "from the hills". While the ethnic distinctions between

these two groups are significant, it is important to consider the *shared* cultural and religious practices in the Kathmandu Valley, and the ways in which each group, in turn, transforms and redefines these categories. [88] It is the dynamic interactions of these two communities, and the resulting religious climate that characterize the uniqueness of the Kathmandu Valley and their inhabitants.

Kirkpatrick's and Hamilton's work brought Nepal into focus as part of colonial inquiry, but influencial scholarship on Nepali history and culture did not occur until the establishment of the British representative in the Kathmandu Valley. After the visits of Kirkpatrick and Hamilton, the relationship with the British East India Company changed dramatically. Repeated skirmishes for possession of the border territories between India and Nepal from 1814-1816 finally forced Nepal to concede to the British; the Sigauli Treaty to this effect was signed in 1816. As a result, the boundaries of modern Nepal were established, and Nepal agreed to have a British Resident at the court of Kathmandu. This was no small victory for the British, since the general attitude to bar all foreigners from the country had remained strong in Nepal ever since King Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇa had ousted the Capuchin monks in the eighteenth century.

The second British Resident in Kathmandu, Brian Houghton Hodgson was perhaps the most prolific writer and scholar who wrote on Nepal in the nineteenth century. Residing in the Valley for almost twenty years from

1825-43, Hodgson wrote one of the pioneering research in ethnography studies. Through a series of articles written in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Hodgson essentially introduced Newar Buddhism to the West. As importantly, he contributed greatly to the larger understanding of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism. Hodgson was instrumental in igniting Europe's interest in Buddhism, not only through his writings but especially through the collection of Sanskrit Buddhist manuscripts that he had procured in Nepal and donated to collections throughout Europe. A total of 423 Sanskrit manuscripts, most of which were carefully copied from the original with the help of Amṛtānanda Vajrācārya, a priest from Patan, were sent to five libraries in Europe and India. These included the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the College of Fort William, the Royal Asiatic Society in London, the India Office Library in London, and the Bodleian Library in Oxford. In addition, 147 Sanskrit manuscripts were given to the libraries of l'Institute de France and the Societe Asiatique de Paris.[89] To the scholars in Buddhism in Europe, these manuscripts were perceived as the last surviving documents of Indian Buddhism.

Equally significant among Hodgson's many contributions are his ethnographic works on the Newar Buddhism of the Kathmandu Valley, in which he describes in detail the Buddhist cosmology, pantheon, and general concepts of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism as understood by the Newar Buddhist practitioners.[90] With the help of his informant, Amṛtānanda

Vajrācārya, Hodgson drew up a series of questions relating to the philosophy and practices of the Buddhist religion as it existed in Kathmandu Valley. Remarkably thorough in his investigation and aware of his own biases, Hodgson was notably ahead of his time, and freely admitted that he "endeavoured carefully to separate Buddhism *as it is* (in Nepaul) and Buddhism *as it ought to be.*"[91] Hodgson's inquiries on the nature of the Buddhist cosmology and pantheon, as well as on the social organization of Newar Buddhism, offers the first ethnographic account of its kind on Nepal. Although not without factual errors, his research on Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna philosophies as understood by the Newar Buddhist practitioners is still extremely valuable for its content.[92]

Through his ethnographic writings on Buddhism in Nepal as well as the collection of manuscripts, Hodgson profoundly affected the direction of Buddhist studies. His writings on Buddhism of the Kathmandu Valley played a significant role in the general discourse on Buddhist studies, particularly on issues that were of principal concern to scholars in the nineteenth century.[93] Hodgson's work was particularly influential on the issue of Buddhism's place of origin, which, according to some nineteenth century speculations, was somewhere in north Africa, and the issue of the historical existence of Buddhas prior to Śākyamuni. Furthermore, Hodgson's collection of Sanskrit manuscripts brought into question the comparative antiquity of the Pāli and Sanskrit Buddhist texts, and further influenced the Western interpretations

of the historical development of Buddhism itself. For example, the *Penny Encyclopedia* of 1836 cites Hodgson's statement that Sanskrit was the language first used by the Buddhists and maintains that "it was the Buddhists of Nepal, who seem to have preserved the antient [*sic*] doctrines of the sect with the greatest purity . . ."[94]

It is also clear these Sanskrit Buddhist manuscripts fueled a growing interest in textual studies, and thus helped form the foundation for the general emphasis of Buddhist studies in the West, particularly Mahāyāna Buddhism. As Buddhism had already died out in India, the nineteenth-century scholars of Buddhism working in India had to look at literary sources as a primary means of reconstructing and interpreting the religion. The early study of Buddhism, consequently, relied heavily on texts, with emphasis given to the written word rather than the diverse practices and the material remains of the religion. This practice was not only characteristic of Buddhist studies, but parallels much of other scholarship on world religions during this period. The nineteenth-century Europeans thus envisioned an idealized, abstract Buddhism based on literary sources. To some extent, the reliance on the early texts led to the reconstruction of Buddhism, from an early "pure" form to later "corrupt" developments, with Tantric Buddhism seen as reflections of decadence and decay. This debatable view has had a profound and lasting effect on Buddhist scholarship.

Eugene Burnouf, in his 1845 publication on Indian Buddhism, *Introduction à l'histoire du bouddhism indien*, credits Hodgson's tremendous contribution to the knowledge of Buddhism in the West, both through his writing and manuscript collection.[95] As a prolific writer and scholar, Hodgson wrote more than 184 articles on topics as diverse as geography, commerce, economy, natural history, linguistics, anthropology, and religion.[96] In the words of Perceval Landon, "he was the founder of all our real knowledge of Buddhism. He was the only man whose infinite variety of scholarship and interest could, unaided, have written the true history of Nepal."[97] Hodgson's contributions to the history of Buddhist scholarship is also acknowledged by Benoytosh Bhattacharyya in his, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, which has become a classic reference on Buddhist art and which was largely based on the Sanskrit Buddhist manuscripts of Nepal that Hodgson had given to the Asiatic Society of Bengal.[98]

Three years after Hodgson's somewhat forced retirement by the British, Nepal entered into a critical phase in its history under the oligarchy of the Rāṇā family from 1846 to 1951, beginning with the political intrigues of the self-appointed Prime Minister Jang Bahādur Rāṇā. For the Newars, particularly the Buddhist community, this period is marked with strife and tension, especially with enforcement of the Law Code of 1854 by Jang Bahādur Rāṇā, which forcibly conceded much of the lands owned by the *guthi*[99] organizations of the *bāhās*. Because of the government's repeated

attempts to crush Buddhism and establish the Hindu supremacy of the ruling class, many Buddhist Newars see this period as the initial breakdown of the strong religious infrastructure of the *bāhā* organizations that had unified the entire Buddhist community. This period also saw the eastward migration of the Newars outside of the Valley and the establishment of the Newar diaspora in the eastern midland towns, due to the oppressive environment in the Rana oligarchy.[100]

Although the Rāṇās maintained strong ties with the British, the kingdom remained closed to all Europeans, except the British Residents and a few special visitors. In 1850, the same year that Jang Bahādur Rāṇā went to Europe, Dr. Henry Oldfield was appointed the resident surgeon, remaining in Kathmandu for thirteen years, from 1850 to 1863. Oldfield's work, *Sketches from Nipal,* however, was not published until after his death, in 1880.[101] Oldfield does not add much to Hodgson's research, and his writings on Newar Buddhism are in essence a compilation of Hodgson's earlier works. However, Oldfield's *Sketches* still represents one of the first important introductory surveys of the Kathmandu Valley, and its people, religion, history, and society. The text is complemented by Oldfield's own drawings, which comprise an important resource, especially to document the early condition of architectural monuments.[102]

Following Oldfield, Dr. Daniel Wright spent ten years (1866-1876) in the Kathmandu Valley as the resident surgeon. Wright's contributions to

scholarship, particularly Buddhism, are also notable. His greatest contribution is the collection of original Sanskrit Buddhist manuscripts that he assembled during his stay, many of which were later given to the University of Cambridge library.[103] To a large extent, these were the same texts that Hodgson had found, but while Hodgson had procured only copies of the Sanskrit Buddhist manuscripts, Wright collected most of the original manuscripts that were listed by Hodgson. These manuscripts not only provide one of the most important resources for all areas of Buddhist studies (especially Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism), but they are also invaluable for the specific study of Buddhist art and iconography in Nepal, Tibet, and parts of South Asia. It may be argued that one of the most important items in the collection is one of the earliest known illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts of the *Aṣṭasahasṛkā Prajñāpāramitā,* dated Nepal Samvat 128 (C.E.1008).[104] This manuscript is significant not only as an early Mahāyāna text, but because it illustrates the religious and cultural affinities to Indian Buddhism found in the northern and northeastern regions of India during the period of its creation. The total Wright collection of over 800 Sanskrit manuscripts from Nepal is perhaps the largest body of Newar Buddhist literature outside of the Valley. Cecil Bendall later published an excellent catalogue of these manuscripts in 1883.[105]

Aside from the manuscript collection, Wright's constributed to the reconstruction of the history of Nepal. His book, *History of Nepal,* includes an

introductory sketch of the country, followed by a translation of a nineteenth-century Buddhist *vaṁsāvalī,* written in Nepali.[106] Two Indian interpreters employed by the British Residency did the translations. The first part of this traditional history of the Valley is based on the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* which recounts the creation of the Valley and the emergence of Svayambhū Jyotirūpa, the "Self-Existent Form of Light", which is subsequently encased in a *caitya,* in the form we know today as the Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Mahācaitya. The connection between the Svayambhū Mahācaitya and Mañjuśr referred to above is also highlighted throughout this section. Later, in 1970, Bikram Jit Hasrat, in his work, *History of Nepal, as Told by its Own and Contemporary Chroniclers,* would also include another important Buddhist *vaṁsāvalī* called the Padmagiri Chronicles. Like the Wright Chronicle, the Padmagiri Vaṁsāvali also begins with the mythological history of the Valley of the self-creation of Svayambhū Jyotirūpa, as based on the *Svayambhū Purāṇa.*[107] The Padmagiri Chronicle, now located in the India Office Library, London, among Hodgson's Collections, is one of the most complete and elaborate accounts of the Valley written during the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Both Hodgson's and Wright's works suggests that nineteenth-century scholars saw the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* as specific to the Kathmandu Valley and a creation of the Newar Buddhists, although it incorporated in its narrative the general doctrinal concepts of Mahāyāna Buddhism. In 1894,

Hari Prasad Shastri published the Sanskrit text of the larger version of the Svayambhū Purāṇa (*Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa*) that was based on an eighteenth-century manuscript at the Asiatic Society Library.[108] The Buddhist *vaṃsāvalīs*, such as the "Wright" and the Padmagiri chronicles and the original Sanskrit text of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* are the major textual sources used in this study to understand the Buddhist cosmology and the preeminence of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya in Newar Buddhism. Although the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* is the most important textual authority in Newar Buddhism, the question of the antiquity of the text, and the problems relating to various textual recensions and interpolations have still not been critically addressed, even in the more recent translation of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* by Manabajra Vajrācārya and Warren W. Smith.[109]

As recounted by Wright's translators, the history of Nepal until the Śāha period was based entirely on the traditional chronologies of the *vaṃsāvalīs*. Dynastic names of the Kirāta, Somavaṃśī, Sūryavaṃśī, Ṭhakurī, and Malla were mentioned in these accounts. However, these names had not been corroborated by epigraphic evidence. In contrast to India, where establishments like the Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Archaeological Survey of India created an impetus for scholarly research and systematic documentation, Nepal did not have the scholarly tradition of archaeological research or excavation. The lack of established archaeological investigations in the Kathmandu Valley may be partly related to the fact that many of the

ancient religious monuments were still in active use. Regardless, until the discovery of inscriptional evidence to substantiate and correct the accounts of the *vaṁsāvalīs*, Nepal's traditional chronology lacked the definitive historicity of specific dynasties and dates. It is to the Gujarati *paṇḍita* Bhagwanlal Indrajī that due credit must be given for historicizing the information of the *vaṁsāvalīs* and for firmly establishing the chronology of Nepal's history, beginning with the Licchavi dynasty. Encouraged by the Nawab of Junagadh in Gujarat, Indrajī came to the Valley to study Nepal's past, and to explore its connections with India. In Nepal, he found a wealth of inscriptions that would open new avenues in scholarship, but which had gone unnoticed by previous writers. Welcomed in the royal courts of Jang Bāhādur Rāṇā and given access to all religious monuments, he discovered twenty-three inscriptions, among which is the earliest dated inscription of the Licchavi king Mānadeva, dated equivalent to C.E. 464, at the Cāṅgu Nārāyaṇa Temple. These findings not only firmly established the dynastic history of Nepal, but also shed new light on the historical relationship between India and Nepal. A summary of these findings was published in *Indian Antiquary* in 1880, co-authored by Indrajī and Georg Bühler.[110] A detailed catalogue of the epigraphic records discovered by Indrāji was published later in 1885, and was translated from Gujarati by Bühler.[111] Both publications immediately attracted the attention of Indologists, as well as the few scholars working on Nepal.

Before the Licchavi inscriptions were discovered, the traditional chronologies had categorized King Mānadeva's dynastic lineage under the descriptive name *Suryavaṁsa*, or Solar Dynasty. The dynastic name "Licchavi" was found eulogized in the inscriptions as *Licchavi kulaketu,* "glory of the Licchavi family".[112] The inscription of Jayadeva II, dated equivalent to C.E. 733, gives a chronological list of kings of the Licchavi Dynasty, beginning with the list of Paurāṇic ancestors belonging to the Solar dynasty. The discovery of the Licchavi Dynasty, ruling the Kathmandu Valley from at least the fourth century to the ninth, brought into question their connection with the Licchavis of Vaiśālī, one of the sixteen republican states (*janapadas*) in north India during the time of Śākyamuni Buddha. Among the sixteen republican states (*mahājanapada)* of Magadha during the 6th century B.C.E. were the republics of the Licchavis of Vaiśālī, the Śākyas of Kapilvastu, and the Mallas of Pāwā and Kuśinara. Nothing is known of these groups after the republics were annexed and destroyed by Ajātasatru and Bimbisāra. Almost a thousand years after the death of Śākyamuni, the names of the Licchavis, Mallas, and Śākyas appear in Nepal. Yet whether these groups might have migrated into the Valley, or the exact connections of the Nepali groups to the *janapadas* of the Vijjian confederation are still unclear.

Suggestions of further associations with India appeared in the coins of the Indian Gupta king, Candragupta I (ca. 320-335 C.E.), who is said to have married a Licchavi princess named Kumaradevī. In his Allahabad inscription,

Candragupta's son, Samudragupta (ca. 335-375 C.E.) also states that he is the grandson of the Licchavis, and the inscription also mentions Nepal as a border kingdom during his reign.[113]

Regardless of the details of migratory history, Nepal's connections with India, particularly during the Gupta period, which was roughly contemporaneous with the emergence of the Licchavi reign in Nepal, entered into the scholarly discourse and has been a subject of continued interest to both Western, Indian, and Nepali scholars.[114] Nepal's probable association with Gupta India and their shared aesthetic idiom has been emphasized in scholarship, particularly when the art of the Licchavi period is discussed by art historians, such as by Stella Kramrisch, Pratapaditya Pal, Mary Slusser, and Lain S. Bangdel.[115]

By their own admission, the British Residents were not scholars trained in languages or literature, as were the Indologists working in India. But Indraji's discovery of ancient inscriptions in the Valley brought a wave of serious scholars, including Sanskritists and epigraphists, interested in the history of the Valley. Based on the new inscriptions that he discovered during his archaeological mission in Nepal and on the evidence of the Sanskrit manuscripts in the Cambridge Library, Cecil Bendall closed the gaps in the chronology of the Valley that had been established by Indraji.[116] After 1950, when Nepal's borders were opened to the outside world, Italian scholars like Raniero Gnoli and Luciano Petech sustained the research in Nepali

inscriptions and history.[117] Furthermore, in collaboration with the Department of Archaeology of Nepal (established in 1960), the Italian historians and archaeologists from Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (ISMEO) have continued to take special interest in archaeological excavations both in the Kathmandu Valley and elsewhere in Nepal. Recently, they have discovered new archaeological information that calls for a critical re-examination of the chronology of Nepali history.[118]

Specifically, the discovery of Kuṣāṇa coins belonging the reign of King Kaniśka I (ca. second century C.E.) in the recent excavations at the Hāḍigaoñ area in Kathmandu city by the ISMEO team in 1984-88 establishes Nepal's early history, prior to the 5th-century date of the earliest Licchavi inscription.[119] An image of King Jayavarmā with an inscription written in Kuṣāṇa Brahmī script and giving the date of Śaka Samvat 107 (corresponding to C.E. 185) was found at Māligaoñ in close proximity to the Hāḍigaoñ area in 1992.[120] Although King Jayavarmā's dynastic lineage is still unclear, the image of the king shows close stylistic similarities to the Mathurā school sculptures of the Kuṣāṇa period. These discoveries present important early epigraphic information about Nepal's ancient history and, further, raises the issue of Nepal's relationship with Kuṣāṇa India.[121] Notably, almost a decade before these discoveries, art historian Lain S. Bangdel had identified nearly forty ancient sculptures with close affinity to the Mathurā Kuṣāṇa style, among which eight were found in the vicinity of

Hāḍigaoñ and Māligaoñ.[122] Bangdel's research on these early sculptures, particularly the *matṛkā* sculptures found throughout the Valley, reinforces the suggestion of ties with the Kuṣāṇa dynasty.

Although the early twentieth-century British writers greatly contributed to the general body of knowledge on Nepal,[123] the history of the scholarship on Nepal is not complete until due credit is given to Sylvain Levi. The most important and influential scholar of the nineteenth century, and the successor of the French religious historian Eugene Burnouf, Levi was a trained Sanskritist and Buddhist scholar. Along with his contemporaries, such as Vallée de Poussin and Alfred Foucher, he contributed tremendously to the knowledge of Buddhism in Asia. Interested in finding the remnants of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, Levi visited the Kathmandu Valley in 1898, spending a total of two months there. He was given full access to all the important sites in the Valley, and the results of his research were documented in his monumental work, *Le Népal, étude historique d'un Royaumme Hindou,* published as three volumes between 1905-08.[124]

Despite the recent discoveries in the chronological history of the Valley, *Le Népal* still remains one of the most comprehensive and valuable resources on the history, culture, and religion of the Valley. Very much aware of his own contribution to scholarship and his purpose in writing the book, Levi begins by carefully outlining the previous scholarship on Nepal and the objective of his own research. He clarifies his interest in the Kathmandu Valley, pointing to

Nepal's special place in the history of Indic Buddhism, where cultural continuity in this interface nation between India and China has gone uninterrupted for almost two thousand five hundred years.

In an amazingly thorough and encyclopedic account of the Kathmandu Valley, Levi discusses the people, religion, pantheon, festivals, and monuments. Based on the twenty-one inscriptions discovered during his trip (the original texts and their translations were also published), he also revised and added to the history of the Valley. Perhaps most stimulating to the general reader is his daily journal, which provides interesting insight into his investigative techniques and research approaches. From an anthropological point of view, the chapter entitled "Two Months in Nepal" is an excellent ethnographic summary of his experiences, in which he not only freely admits some of the shortcoming of his research methodologies, but also acknowledges his own limitations in the field. His excellent rapport and interactions with his informants, especially with the Newar Buddhists, are evident in his writings, and give insight into Levi's inner person.

With the opening of its borders in 1950, Nepal attracted a number of international scholars in the areas of anthropology, sociology, religion, and art history. Following Levi's scholarly tradition of field research in Nepal, French sociologists and anthropologists like Gerard Toffin, Anne Vegati, Veronique Bouillier, and Marc Gaborieau, have continued to work on various aspects of the religion and culture of the Kathmandu Valley. Gerard Toffin's pioneering

work on the Newars and their social dynamics is of particular significance.[125] Anne Vergati's collaborative work with A. W. Macdonald on Newar art analyzes the visual culture of the Newars through Newar socio-religious traditions.[126] Systematic fieldwork and research have also been conducted by the British, beginning with anthropologist Christoph von Furer-Heimendorf and religious historian David Snellgrove, and their students from the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. British scholars, such as David Gellner and Declan Quigley, working on the Newars and Newar culture, continue to frame their research within the larger theoretical concerns of social anthropology. Among other foreign researchers, the German scholars affiliated with the Bhaktapur Development Project and the German-Nepal Manuscript Project[127] have made the greatest contribution with regards to Newar town planning and social order. Primarily focusing their research on the city of Bhaktapur, the works of Niels Gutschow and Bernhard Kölver are noteworthy for the understanding of conceptual, sacred, and ritual spaces in Newar culture.[128] These works are tremendously valuable for contextualizing the works of art within the framework of Newar religious and cultural categories. Further, American scholars, such as Theodore Riccardi, Todd Lewis, Robert Levy, and John K. Locke as well as Australian anthropologist Michael R. Allen, as discussed earlier, have made significant contributions to the study of Newar society and culture. In the fields of art and cultural history, international scholars like Stella Kramrisch, Pratapaditya Pal, Mary

Slusser, Anne Vergati, Karel van Kooij, and Adalbert Gail have laid the foundational groundwork for the study of art in the Kathmandu Valley.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF NEPALI HISTORIANS[129]

While the majority of foreign scholars working in the Kathmandu Valley after 1951 were sociologists and anthropologists, and were primarily concerned with issues of caste, social structure, and socio-religious organizations, the main area of research for Nepali scholars has been history. The discovery of Licchavi inscriptions by Bhagwanlal Indrajī, Cecil Bendall, and Sylvain Levi in the nineteenth century fueled the interest of Nepali historians and paved the way for a serious effort to reconstruct Nepal's early history. However, the political situation within Nepal during the Rāṇā autocracy from 1846-1951 was extremely restrictive for these scholars, and although a considerable amount of personal interest and research on history was undertaken by a few, the majority of historians were generally prohibited from openly publishing their works.[130] In contrast, a number of Nepali scholars living in India, specifically in Darjeeling and Varanasi, pioneered research in the fields of Nepali history, language, and literature, although many of their publications were banned in Nepal.

Among these pioneering historians living outside Nepal was Sūrya Vikram Gewalī, who made occasional trips to Nepal for his research, but primarily lived in Darjeeling and published his works from there. His

writings, particularly his research on the Malla and Śāha dynasties, are among the first serious contributions by a Nepali to the study of Nepali history. His works include the life and exploits of King Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇa Śāha, and the history of the Malla period.[131]   Other scholars living in Varanasi also played a key role in continuing the interest in reconstructing Nepali history. Two prominent historians, Bāl Candra Śarmā and Rāmjī Upādhyāya, during the Rāṇā regime, published extensively on different aspects of Nepali history.   Bāl Candra Śarmā's work was the first comprehensive survey of Nepali history to be written in the Nepali language. It was then followed by Rāmjī Upādhyāya's work on historical reconstruction.[132]

Many of the Nepali historians residing outside Nepal during the Rāṇā autocracy concentrated on the history of modern Nepal, and, to some extent, aimed at glorifying the kings of the Śāha dynasty. In contrast, the Nepali scholars living in the Kathmandu Valley were interested in reconstructing the early history of the Valley, particularly the Licchavi period. Scholars like Bāburām Ācarya and Naya Rāj Pant, who published a few articles between 1940 to 1950 during the Rāṇā regime, laid the groundwork for serious research that would begin only after the establishment of the democratic movement of 1951.[133]   With the ousting of the Rāṇās, Nepali scholarship entered a new phase of interest. Stimulated by collaborative work with foreign researchers, scientific research techniques and methodologies became

a pressing concern. Furthermore, the newfound freedom to conduct original research led to the discovery of numerous inscriptions of the Licchavi, "Transitional", and Malla periods by Nepali historians and epigraphists.

The primary aim of the post-Rāṇā historians was twofold: first, to write a comprehensive history of Nepal based on epigraphic evidence; and, second, to critically reexamine and review the inscriptions that had been published both by foreign and Nepali scholars. These efforts resulted in a rewriting and reinterpretation of Nepal's early history. This monumental task was initiated by the eminent historian and Sanskrit scholar Paṇḍita Nayā Rāj Pant, who, to this day, is one of the most prolific writers and researchers in the field. In a series of articles published from 1962-63, Paṇḍita Nayā Rāj became the first Nepali scholar to formulate a systematic approach to field methodology and a critical interpretation of history.[134] His greatest contribution may have been the establishment of the Itihāsa Śaṁśodhana Maṇḍala (Circle for Correction of History) in 1953. This "cirlce" included a group of twenty-one historians devoted to furthering the scholarship of Nepali history and culture. Through his rigorous training in epigraphy and languages, particularly Sanskrit, Paṇḍita Pant fostered a new generation of historians, whose aims were to critically review and rectify the errors found in the previous interpretations of history, both by international and Nepali scholars, and also systematically search for new inscriptions that would shed light on Nepal's traditional history.[135] Outstanding among these

scholars are Dhanavajra Vajrācārya, Gautamvajra Vajrācārya, Maheś Rāj Pant, Akrur Kuwinkel, Bāburām Nepal, Gyān Maṇi Nepal, Bholā Nāth Poudel, Mohan Nāth Pāñdey, Śyām Rāj Pokharel, Lakṣmaṇ Satyāl, Aiśwarya Dhar Śarmā, Kumār Dhar Śarmā, Ghana Śyām Subedi and Maheśvar Rāj Subedi.[136]

From 1955 to 1958, the Śaṁśodhana Maṇḍala published a valuable series of pamphlets of their findings under the name *Itihāsa Śaṁśodhana* [History Corrections]. The pamphlets were devoted to the rectification of errors in the reading of previous epigraphic evidence.[137] There were also a number of Nepali journals published by members of the Śaṁśodhana Maṇḍala that are important contributions to Nepali history. These include *Saṁskṛta-Sandeśa* [The Sanskrit Message], published by Nayā Rāj Pant and Yogī Naraharināth from 1953 to 1954, *Abhilekha-saṁgraha* [Collected Inscriptions], devoted to the publication of unpublished inscriptions; *Aitihāsika-patrasaṁgraha* [Collected Historical Papers], primarily of the Śāha dynasty; and *Purṇimā* an excellent Nepali language quarterly that has published the research conducted by the Śaṁśodhana Maṇḍala, beginning in 1964. Although unfortunately accessible only to scholars who know Nepali, these journals and the contributions of the Śaṁśodhana Maṇḍala, nonetheless, constitute one of the primary resources for research on Nepali history, culture, and religion.[138]

The most prolific writer and impeccable researcher among the historians of the Śaṁśodhana Maṇḍala was Dhanavajra Vajrācārya. His greatest contributions to Nepali history are his two monumental volumes on Nepali epigraphy, one on Licchavi inscriptions found throughout Nepal including the Kathmandu Valley, Gorkhā and Tistung, and the other, the inscriptions of the Śāha dynasty.[139] He has also written numerous articles on Nepali history, and was especially interested in reconstructing the history of Licchavi period.

With the establishment of the Department of Archaeology in 1965 and The Center for Nepal Studies at Tribhuvan University, a number of journals devoted to history and culture began to appear in English, including *Journal of Tribhuvan University* (1965); *Ancient Nepal* (1967), published by the Department of Archaeology); *Kailash* (1972); *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* (1974); and *Journal of Nepal Research Center* (1977).[140] Historians like Dillī Raman Regmi, Yadunāth Khanāl, and Rishikeś Śāha were among the few historians who began to publish in English, and continue to actively pursue their research. Among them, Regmī's contributions to scholarship are particularly significance, as they are perhaps the only books that makes accessible to the English reader the large body of material written in Nepali. His works include his two-volume opus *Ancient Nepal*, with four volumes of *Medieval Nepal*, and two volumes of *Modern Nepal*.[141]

The overwhelming research on Nepali history and the awareness of Nepal's historical connections with India gave rise to the interest among scholars regarding the art and culture of the Kathmandu Valley. Although Sanskritists and historians alike addressed some aspects of Nepali visual culture, art historical research per se among the Nepali scholars did not begin conducted until the works of Stella Kramrisch, Pratapaditya Pal, and Mary Slusser were published. Lain S. Bangdel, who was the first among the Nepali scholars to base his work on stylistic and iconographic evidence rather than solely epigraphic sources, has conducted pioneering research in Nepali art. His research on the pre-Licchavi sculptures not only provided the evidence of an established artistic tradition before the fifth century, but also aided in the reconstruction of the history of pre-Licchavi Nepal. Bangdel's contributions on various aspects of Nepali visual culture, including contemporary art, also emphasized the critical need for research by Nepali art historians in the field.[142] Today's generation of scholars like Gautamvajra Vajrācārya, Kaśinath Tamoṭ, and Mukunda Aryāl have also made significant contributions in the Nepali language.[143]

BUDDHIST SCHOLARSHIP IN THE NEWARĪ LANGUAGE

While Nepali historians have used the national language, Nepali, to write the history of the unified nation of Nepal, the majority of Newar scholars, who use the Newarī language, generally address a Buddhist theme.

Whereas contemporary scholars writing on the Tantric Hindu religious traditions of the Newars tend to use Nepali, perhaps as a way of gaining allegiance of the Parbate Hindu majority. In contrast, Newarī or, properly speaking, *Newābhay* or *Nepal Bhāṣā*, meaning "the language of the Newars", has become a vernacular through which the Newar Buddhists emphasize and maintain their religious and ethnic identity. With the establishment of Nepali as the national language after the unification by the Gorkhā king, Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇa Śāha in the seventeenth century, Newarī immediately lost its position as the language of royal courts, and, over the centuries, as the primary medium for the arts and literature. The Rāṇā regime from 1846-1950 had consciously attempted to undermine the Buddhist traditions in the Valley. Yet, in subsequent years, the Newarī language served as a major source for didactic and commentarial literature, and explanatory ritual texts for the Newar Buddhists practitioners.

After the end of the Rāṇā regime in the early 1950s, a new wave of revivalist efforts were propagated by influential Vajrācārya *paṇḍitas* and intellectuals of the lay community in the Kathmandu Valley. To serve this need for religious identity, a vibrant literary movement in the Newarī language re-emerged among the Buddhist community. Not only did Newarī become a medium in which to expound the Buddhist *dharma*, but it also served as a means to encourage the lay population to patronize the efforts of the revivalist movement. With the introduction of the modern printing press,

the traditional religious texts, commentaries, and ritual manuals were no longer scarce or limited to a select number of handwritten copies, but printed books were available to the interested practitioner at a minimal cost.[144] As a result, an enormous literature on Buddhism has emerged in the Newari language that aims to instruct and revitalize the community's interest in the Newar Buddhist religious traditions.

As a way of mobilizing and unifying the Buddhist community, didactic stories, such as *avadānas, jātakas, vrata kathās, tīrtha mahātmyas,* or devotional texts, such as *bhajans, caryā* songs, *dhāraṇīs,* and *stotras,* are often recited during large public gatherings and festivals. For example, devotional *bhajans* are sung by members of the Gyanmālā Bhajan community every morning and evening at Svayambhū during the entire month of Guñlā. Similarly, during the annual *vrata* festivals, such as the Vasundharā *vrata* in Gatila, or the Aṣṭamī *vratas* to Avalokiteśvara, *vrata* stories may be narrated by the officiating priest to the devotees participating in the fast (*vrata*). Further, other important religious texts, previously only found as hand-written manuscripts, are also published in printed form, with commentaries in Newari by contemporary Vajrācārya teachers. Among them, the *Aṣṭasahasrkā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Ārya Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra,* and *Pañca Rakṣā Sūtra,* including the *Navagrantha,* a group of nine liturgical texts of Newar Buddhism, are of particular significance in Newar Buddhism, and are now easily available in the popular printed medium. [145] In many cases, these

religious texts, often reprinted by the demands of the community, are published by devoted practitioners, who see their acts as means of accruing merit (*puñya*) through gift-giving (*dāna*), two essential aspects of Buddhist devotion.

To understand the contemporary practices of Newar Buddhism, this body of scholarship in Newarī is an invaluable resource for both anthropological and art historical research. Of particular importance are the works of respected Vajrācārya and Śākya *panditas* who have not only contributed to the revival of Newar Buddhism in the twentieth century, but have defined the canons of ritual procedures in the contemporary context. By publishing these religious texts, a few reputed and authoritative Vajrācārya priests, such as Amoghavajra Vajrācārya, Aśa Kājī Vajrācārya, Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, Ratnakājī Vajrācārya, Ratna Bāhādur Vajrācārya, Jogmuni Vajrācārya, as will be discussed later in the section, have set the standards for ritual practices. As respected teachers of the community, they have also provided their individual interpretations and commentaries based on their own teaching lineages. Among the informed practitioners, there is a distinct understanding that ritual procedures and their interpretations, differ in the cities of Kathmandu and Patan, since the Vajrācārya priests from both cities generally follow the authority and tradition of their own *gurus*. Although the differences in the ritual procedures and lineage teachings have not yet been analyzed by scholars, a close comparative reading of these ritual manuals

written by the Vajrācārya priests from Kathmandu and Patan may reveal some important distinctions found within the Newar Buddhist traditions. Furthermore, the understanding and existence of these variations may provide answers to some of the differences found in the respective iconographic programs of the *bāhās* in Kathmandu and Patan.

Among the well-known and well-respected Vajrācārya priests and scholars in Kathmandu are Amoghavajra Vajrācārya, Divyavajra Vajrācārya, Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, and Ratnakājī Vajrācārya, all of whose contributions will be briefly discussed here. Often seen as one of the most powerful Tantric *siddhas* of this century, Amoghavajra Vajrācārya (1910-1979) was not only a Sanskrit scholar of great repute, but performed many important *pūjās* in the religious centers of the Valley.[146] Through his efforts to revitalize the modern traditions of Newar Buddhism, Amoghavajra succeeded in re-establishing the authority and respect for the Tantric Vajrācārya priests in the Buddhist community, particularly in Kathmandu. Among his influential books are the ritual texts for the *Guru Maṇḍala pūjā* and the *Kalasapūjā*, the two fundamental rituals of Newar Buddhism,. These have since been repeatedly republished by other Vajrācārya priests.[147] Published by the De Ācārya Guṭhi of Kathmandu, the central administrative body of the eighteen *bāhās* of Kathmandu that oversees and regulates the rituals of the Vajrācārya priests, both works are considered to be important resources for the ritual practices of the Kathmandu Vajrācāryas.[148]

Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya and Ratnakājī Vajrācārya are among the foremost practicing Vajrācārya priests who have made significant contributions to Newar Buddhist scholarship.[149] From Sawal Bāhā in Kathmandu—a *bāhā* reputed for the magical powers of the Tantric *siddhas*—Badrī Ratna and Ratnakājī both follow the lineage of their forefathers in that they are considered among the most authoritative Vajrācārya priests practicing today.[150] Both have written extensively on rituals and religious traditions of the Valley. As preeminent ritual specialists, both have earned the respect of other practicing Vajrācāryas as well as the lay community.

A prolific writer, accomplished ritual specialist, and teacher, Paṇḍit Badrī Ratna, locally known as Badrī Gurjū, has set the standards for ritual procedures in the city of Kathmandu,. Many use his works and commentaries as authoritative texts that reflect the practices of the contemporary Newar Buddhism.[151] Realizing the need to teach the methods of ritual practices in a systematic manner, Badrī Ratna opened a formal curriculum of Buddhist ritual procedures in the Mahendra Sanskrit University in Kathmandu in 1977, thus establishing a much-needed formal training program for the young Vajrācārya priests. Like the virtually defunct De Ācārya Guthi that was once a powerful organization of Vajrācārya priests of Kathmandu, the *Vajrācārya Saṁraksana Guthi* [Vajrācārya Preservation Trust] was established in 1988, with the intention that this body would further provide an organized effort to

revive the religious traditions of the Buddhist community by engaging the expertise and knowledge of reputed Vajrācāryas of Kathmandu. Badrī Gurjū's greatest contributions to scholarship, however, are his works on instructional ritual manuals (*pūjāvidhi*), which draw on older Sanskrit manuscripts to explain and outline the ritual procedures. These include life-cycle rites, exoteric *pūjās,* and esoteric rituals conducted in secret that have been influential in renewing the interest of the lay devotees and fellow practitioners.[152] In recent years, Badrī Gurjū has offered several initiations (*dikṣā)* of Cakrasaṁvara and has organized *pīṭhapūjās* in the twenty-four *yoginī* shrines around the Valley.[153]

Ratnakājī Vajrācārya's contributions to Newar Buddhism are equally significant. One of the foremost *caryā* dance teachers, Paṇḍit Ratnakājī has published numerous *caryā* songs, written by both Indian and Newar Buddhist *siddhas,* that are still performed during the esoteric rituals in the *āgaṁs.* As examples of the modern efforts to enrich the Buddhist literary tradition, his works on ritual and other aspects of Newar Buddhist culture provide a wealth of information on contemporary practices of Newar Buddhism.[154]

In addition to these practicing ritual specialists, the contributions of Divyavajra Vajrācārya, one of the leading Sanskrit scholars of Kathmandu, are important to the development of Newar Buddhist literature. His translations and commentaries of important Mahāyāna *sutras* and Tantric

Vajrayāna texts provide the doctrinal and philosophical foundations of Newar Buddhism.[155]

Like Kathmandu, Patan has its own tradition of learned Vajrācārya priests and respected Śākya *paṇḍits*. Among the authoritative teachers and ritual specialists are Paṇḍit Ratna Bāhādur Vajrācārya, Paṇḍit Jog Muni Vajrācārya, Paṇḍit Āśā Kājī Vajrācārya, and Hemrāj Śākya, the latter being one of the respected Śākya *paṇḍits* in the community. The contributions of these individuals to Newar Buddhist scholarship will be briefly discussed here. From Bu Bāhā in Patan, Paṇḍit Ratna Bāhādur Vajrācārya (1893-1955) published extensively in Newarī, among which his translation of the *Aṣṭasahasrkā Prajñāpāramitā, Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa, Svayambhū Purāṇa, Lalitavistara, Heruka Tantra, Karabira* [Candamaharosana] *Tantra,* and *Samvarodaya Tantra* are most significant. Especially for the iconographic and contexual interpretation of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala presented in this study, I shall use his translation and commentary on the *Ārya Nāmasaṅgīti Gātha,* as it is one of the most popularly used texts in contemporary practice.[156]

Both Jog Muni Vajrācārya and Āśā Kājī Vajrācārya were respected teachers and ritual specialists, who influenced Newar Buddhist religious traditions since the post-Rāṇā period. The works of Āśā Kājī Vajrācārya, in particular, give excellent insight into the traditions of Newar Buddhism, as understood by the authoritative practitioner.[157]

Another prolific writer in the field, Paṇḍit Hemrāj Śākya, is unlike the previous writers in that he is not a ritual specialist by profession, but an epigraphist. His work on Nepali epigraphy is among the most important in the field, for he uses this interest to study the historical developments of Newar Buddhism. To date, he has written over fifty book and pamphelts on various aspects of Newar Buddhist culture, among which the history of important *bāhās* of Patan, such as Uku Bāhā, Bhinche Bāhā, Kwa Bāhā and Bu Bāhā are significant. His seminal work, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya,* a 775-page volume on the history of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya, is one of the most important sources of the epigraphic evidence at the site.[158] A respected epigraphist among the community of international scholars and Buddhist intellectuals, Paṇḍit Hemrāj's contributions to the history and development of Newar Buddhist culture are, indeed, significant. Although Western scholars have used his works as the voice of authority of the Newar Buddhist tradition,[159] Hemraj's scholarly opinions do not always correspond to those of the ritual specialist and Tantric teachers in the community.[160]

The body of scholarship in Newarī written by the ritual specialists and practitioners form one of the most significant resources for the study of Newar Buddhism and its visual culture. These works are aimed primarily for the practitioners to gain awareness of the Buddhist traditions on a more technical level. As many of the writers are themselves ritual specialists, these works are not generally critical studies, but are considered, by the community to be

authoritative guides of the local traditions. Although valuable sources of the contemporary tradition, they must be treated critically, as works may also contain differing, and sometimes opposing, opinions among the ritual specialists. Nonetheless, for Buddhist community, the scholarship in Newarī becomes central to maintain their Buddhist identity in a largely Hindu environment. Thus, the works reflect the attitudes of contemporary practices, but may also provide an emic understanding of the religion and its internal constructs as defined by the practitioners themselves.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The three major secondary sources for this study are: (1) Western scholarship on the Newar Buddhist tradition, specifically current research done by anthropologists and historians of religion; (2) art historical research, conducted by both international and Nepali scholars; and, (3) works published by ritual specialists, as reflections of the contemporary understanding of the Newar Buddhist tradition.

In outlining the published resources for my research, I have attempted to show that the results of this study build upon the tremendous strides in scholarship by the earlier scholars and the informed knowledge of the practicing Newar Buddhists. It is my hope that my study of the core iconographic themes in sacred Newar architecture will add to the corpus of knowledge about the richness of the Newar Buddhist tradition.

[1] I am deeply indebted to Sūrya Mān for his teachings, patience, and the encouragement he offered during various stages of my field research.

[2] As will be discussed later, the nineteenth-century French Sanskritist Sylvain Levi was one of the first Orientalist scholars to establish that the Kathmandu Valley, specifically the Newar Buddhist tradition of the Valley, represents the religious environment of pre-Muslim India. See Sylvain Levi, *Le Népal: Étude Historique d'un Royaumme Hindou.* 3 vols. (Paris: Ernst Leroux, editeur, 1905; reprint, 1991), 28.

[3] See Susan L. Huntington and John C. Huntington, *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree: The Art of Pāla India (8th-12th Centuries) and Its International Legacy* (Seattle and London: The Dayton Art Institute in association with the University of Washington Press, 1990).

[4] John K. Locke, "Features of Newar Buddhism", *The Buddhist Heritage*, ed. Tadeusz Skorupski (Tring, U.K.: The Institute of Buddhist Studies), Series Continua I, 73.

[5] For example, Siegfried Lienhard writes: "The form of Buddhism which survives in Nepal has been undergoing Hindu influence for many centuries, especially under the Hindu kings. Hindu and Buddhist concepts and practices are so intermingled that it is often impossible to draw a distinct line between them. Here Buddhism is no longer in the hands of the monkhood drawing voluntary recruits, but of gurus who form a Hindu-type high caste". See Siegfried Lienhard, "Nepal: the Survival of Indian Buddhism in a Himalayan Kingdom," *The World of Buddhism: Buddhist Monks and Nuns in Society and Culture*, eds. Heinz Berchert and Richard Gombrich (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), 114. Furthermore, even in general survey books on Nepali art, Nepal's religious environment is described in "syncretic" terms. For example, in his survey of South Asian art, J. C. Harle entitles his chapter of Nepali art as "National Syncretism". See J. C. Harle, *The Art of the Indian Subcontinent* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 436-45.

[6] See Daniel Wright, *History of Nepal, with an Introductory Sketch of the Country and People of Nepal,* Translated from Parbatiyā by Munshi Shew Sunker Singh and Pandit Sri Guruanand (Cambridge: 1877; reprint, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1993), 120.

[7] For example, the worship of the *Aṣṭamātṛkā* or Eight Mother Goddesses are often cited as demonstrating Hindu dominance. In subsequent chapters I will show how these goddesses play a key role in the Newar Buddhist soteriological ideology and that the *Aṣṭamātṛkās* are inextricably connected to the Cakrasaṁvara meditation cycle that is practiced in Newar Buddhism.

[8] David N. Gellner, *Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhism and its Hierarchy of Ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 5.

[9] On Hinduism in the Kathmandu Valley, see N. Gutschow and B. Kolver, *Ordered Space, Concepts and Functions in a Town in Nepal* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1975); Robert Levy, *Mesocosm: Hinduism and the Organization of a Traditional Newar City in Nepal* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990); G. Toffin, *Le Palais et le temple: La Fonction royale dans la vallee du Nepal* (Paris: Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, 1993); and Steven M. Parish, *Moral Knowing in a Hindu Sacred City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

[10] That works of art serve as visual symbols of a particular culture or religion and that cultures can be interpreted through their symbols has often been used as a methodological approach by cultural anthropologists. Of prominence are the works of Clifford Geertz, who has effectively used this approach in his research methodology. In symbolic anthropology, there is significant interest in discourse of cultural and religious symbols and ways in which such symbolism informs cultural attitudes. See Clifford Geertz, "Art as a Cultural System"

Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropolgy (USA: Basic Books, 1983). For scholarship on the theoretical approaches in symbolic anthropology, see also Richard J. Parmentier, *Signs in Society: Studies in Semiotic Anthropology* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994); James A. Boon, *Other Tribes, Other Scribes: Symbolic Anthropology in the Comparative Studies of Cultures, Histories, Religions, and Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) and Janet L. Dolgin, David S. Kemnitzer, and David M. Schneider, *Symbolic Anthropology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977). For current anthropological scholarship on Nepal that employs similar approaches, see Sherry B. Ortner, *Sherpas Through Their Rituals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) and Joyce W. Shepard, *Symbolic Space in Newar Culture* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1985).

[11] The term 'monastery' is generally used to designate these Buddhist institutions of the *bāhās* and *bahīs*. These are not "monastic" institutions in the strict sense of the word, but include a membership of a Buddhist *saṅgha* of married householders, who are seen in the community to symbolically uphold the ideals of the monks. The use of the term 'monastery' is derived from the word "*vihāra*," as the formal names of *bāhā*s and *bahī*s are referred to by the Sanskrit term "*vihāra*" or "*mahāvihāra*, which does not, however, fully convey their contemporary socio-religious function.

[12] In Nepal, "*caitya*" is a general term that is used to designate any *stūpa* in the Valley, while "*Mahācaitya*" refers specifically to the Great Stūpa at Svayambhū. The term "*stūpa*" is most often applied to the large *caitya*s of the Valley, i.e. the four "Aśokan" *stūpa*s in Patan and the *stūpa* at Baudha. Here, I use the term "*caitya*" to refer to the smaller *stūpa*s found in the Valley, while the Mahācaitya alone refers to Svayambhū.

[13] During my field research, I visited 521 *bāhā*s and *bahī*s of the Kathmandu Valley, among which only two small *bāhā*s in Patan (Gaṇeśa Bāhā and Siddhi Bāhā) did not have the central Svayambhū *caitya*. In its place was a stone *maṇḍala* of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, further pointing to the association of the Mahācaitya and the Maṇḍala.

[14] There are numerous versions of this creation story. See Hari Prasad Shastri, ed. *The Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇaṁ, containing the Traditions of the Svayambhū Kshetra in Nepal* N.S. 842 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1894). I am summarizing here the well-known creation legend of the Valley, which is also found in various *vaṁsāvali* chronicles or available in popular printed form, generally published in Newer. For example, see Daniel Wright, *History of Nepal, with an Introductory sketch of the Country and People of Nepal,* 77-89; and Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya's Newarī edition, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa* (Kathmandu: Sanu Maya Tuladhar, NS. 1103 [1983]). As the abridged translations of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* in English omits some of the signficant details for iconographic analysis, I am using the original texts of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* written in Newarī.

[15] Nāmasaṅgīti is a form of Mañjuśrī, who is equated with Vairocana. In Nepal, Nāmasaṅgiti is extremely important, and the *Nāmasaṅgīti* text, from which the deity derives its name, is often recited daily during the morning and evening *pūjā*s in the *bāhā*s/*bahī*a. .

[16] Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī is a Heruka-class deity, whose meditation is related to the Anuttara Yoga Tantras. As one of the most important esoteric deities of Newar Buddhism., the united pair are often the principal deity in the secret shrine (*āgaṁ*) in *bāhā*s, access to which is permitted only after receiving Tantric initiation (*dīkṣā*).

[17] Although I have not found any textual evidence of the term "*mūla maṇḍala*" in reference to the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara *maṇḍala,* in my field research I found that the practitioners established this meditation cycle is to be among the primary *maṇḍala*s found in Newar Buddhism. Indeed, the root text of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala—the *Nāmasaṅgīti*

Tantra—is one of the most important Tantras in Newar Buddhism. Although the Cakrasaṁvara cycle meditation is an equally significant meditation practice, as far as the visual imagery is concerned, because of its highly esoteric nature the Cakrasaṅvara Maṇḍala imagery is not as readily visible or accessible as that of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala themes.

[18] As I will discuss extensively in Chapter Six, some of the inscribed Cakrasaṁvara paintings and metal sculptures mention names of the *bāhās*.

[19] The doctrinal and structural origins of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala are based on the Vairocana-cycle *mandalas,* which are also found in the Western Himalayan monasteries. See Ryugin Tajimana, *Les Deux Grands Maṇḍalas et La Doctrine de l'Esoterisme Shingon* (Tokyo: Maison Franco-Japonaise, 1959) and Chikyo Yamamoto, *Mahavairocana Sūtra* (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture and Aditya Prakashan, 1990).

[20] See Romi Khosala, *Buddhist Monasteries in the Western Himalayas,* Biblioteca Himalayica, Series III, Vol.13 (Kathmandu, Nepal: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1979).

[21] A few scholars, notably Mary Slusser in her *Nepal Maṇḍala: A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu Valley*, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), have outlined the history of Newar Buddhism based on visual and inscriptional evidence. Yet, the philosophical and doctrinal developments of the religion have not been addressed in modern scholarship. Despite the large number of Buddhist manuscripts available, no comprehensive textual analysis has been undertaken thus far. This lacuna in scholarship presents a critical problem in the reconstruction of Newar Buddhism's religious history.

[22] In using contemporary practices to interpret the past, I realize here the potential danger of assuming an ahistorical continuity of traditional societies. In other words, this approach must be used with caution, as it could perpetuate the "Orientalist" notion that traditional societies do not change, but live in an idyllic ahistorical vacuum, unaffected by outside influences. On the other hand, this methodological approach can be used effectively to analyze the process of change by comparing the past with the present. In the case of Svayambhū and the Dharmadhātu *mandala,* their symbolic identity continues to take on new, but related, layers of meanings to fit the Newar Buddhist context.

[23] The results of the two projects were published in 1989 and 1995. See Lain S. Bangdel, *Stolen Images of Nepal* (Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy, 1989); and Lain S. Bangdel with Text by Dina Bangdel, *Inventory of Stone Sculptures of the Kathmandu Valley* (Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy, 1995).

[24] Having lived in the Valley for the major part of my life, I have intimately engaged in and familiar with the general aspects of Newar culture. Unless otherwise noted, the information contained in this dissertation arises from my cultural background and acquired knowledge. When Newar Buddhist practitioners served as informants, these specific sources have been noted.

[27] With a few exceptions, the majority of the *bāhās* in Patan have a stone or metal repousee representation of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in the courtyard. In Kathmandu, the Dharmadhātu iconography is most often present in the *toraṇa* and strut figures placed on the shrine facade. I shall discuss this further in Chapter Five.

[29] The ritual text of the *Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala Kriyā Vidhi* is particularly helpful in the iconographic and ritual interpretations.

[30] For the limitations of this approach, see Footnote 22.

[31] The family of Baburājā Śākya from Mahābuddha Temple in Patan traces their family history as craftsmen back to Abhayarāja Śākya, the founder of Mahabuddha Temple in the fifteenth century. Other craftsmen that I know and interviewed also traced their craft tradition back to a number of generations.

[32] I was acquainted with several of the Vajrācāryas through personal family ties.

[33] Although I speak Newarī and am married to a Newar Buddhist (Śākya), most of the interviews were conducted in Nepali, my native language and the national language of Nepal, in which my informants were also fluent.

[34] The two texts closely associated with this symbolic connection, *Ārya Nāmasaṅgīti* and the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* are frequently recited in the Newar Buddhist context. In fact, the chanting of the *Ārya Nāmasaṅgīti* is often a required component of the daily *pūjā* in the *bāhās.*

[35] A third individual, Paṇḍit Ratnakājī Vajrācārya, another well-respected ritual specialist of Kathmandu, was also tremendously helpful during my research.

[36] Sūrya Mān Vajrācārya considers his teaching lineage to be an integral part of his Buddhist training and significant to his understanding the Vajrācārya initiations (*dīkṣā*) he has received. His own *guru*, Paṇḍit Ratna Bāhādur Vajrācārya (1893-1955), was one of the most respected and influential teachers in Patan. Paṇḍit Ratna Bāhādur's translations and commentary of the *Aṣṭasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* and the *Ārya Nāmasaṅgīti* are still among the primary commentarial texts used in Newarī (see section on Buddhist scholarship in the Newari language). Further, Paṇḍit Ratna Bāhādur's own teacher was Kulmansingh, the senior Vajrācārya priest (*cakreśvara*) at Kvā Bāhā in Patan, also considered a prolific Sanskrit scholar, was in charge of the Sanskrit Buddhist manuscripts of the Bir Library in Kathmandu during Hodgson's time around the nineteenth century.

[37] I met with him for fourteen consecutive days, and in each session he would explain the buddhological meaning of Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

[38] *Jajmān* (*jaymā* in Newarī), where variants of this term is used throughout South Asia, means patron, sponsor, offerer, or hereditary patron. In the Newar ritual context, when a Vajrācārya priest performs a ritual on behalf of his patron, the *jajmān* serves a symbolic role, generally sitting to the left of the priest.

[39] This is the general meeting place in the *bāhās* where the private *pūjas* or initiations of the *bāhās* take place. At Ha Bāhā, the elaborate initiation ritual (*dīkṣā*) for higher initiation of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī had been also performed the *digī* earlier that year.

[40] In Patan, Caitya Rāj Vajrācārya is equivalent to the *rāj gubhāju* of Kathmandu, a Vajrācārya who functions as the principal ritual specialist for the city and the royal priest when the Valley was divided into the three kingdoms of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur. As the senior priest of Bu Bāhā, Caity Raj's status equivalent to the *rāj gubhāju* (although no one actually uses the term today in reference to Patan) is attributed Bu Bāhā's associations with Ha Bāhā, which was closely connected with the royal palace in Patan during the Malla period.

[41] John C. Huntington has been instrumental in employing the theoretical approach as art as primary resource.

[42] Hem Rāj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya* (Kathmandu: Svayambhū Vikās Maṇḍala, 1977).

[43] Bernhard Kölver, *Re-Building a Stūpa: Architectural Drawings of the Svayambhūnāth* (Bonn: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag, 1992).

[44] His Majesty's Government of Nepal, Ministry of Education, *Svyambhunāth Conservation Materplan*. Prepared by Niels Gutschow and Gotz Hagmuller (Kathmandu: German Technical Cooperation, 1989).

[45] Niels Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya: 1500 Years of Buddhist Votive Architecture in the Kathmandu Valley* (Stuttgart/London: Edition Axel Menges, 1997).

[46] See K. R. van Kooij, "Iconography of the Buddhist Wood-Carvings in a Newar Monastery in Kathmandu (Chusya Bāhā)," *Journal of the Nepal Research Centre* (no.1, 1977, 39-82); Adalbert Gail, *Kloster in Nepal: Ikonographie buddhistischer Kloster im Kathmandutal* (Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck Verlagsanstalt, 1991); M. Tachikawa and Nagano Yasuhiko, *Hokkai gojizai Mandara no kamigami* [Deities of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala] (Suita-shi: Kokuritsai Minzokugaku Hakubutsukan, 1989); and Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, *Dharmadhātu Vrata Vidhi va Dharmadhātu Vagīśvara Maṇḍala* (Kathmandu: Purṇaharṣa Vajrācāryayā Smṛtī Dharmādān, NS 1113 [1993]).

[47] Personal communication with artist. Gautama Vajrācāryai s also the son of Ratna Kājī Vajrācārya, who, as I have mentioned before, is a leading ritual specialist of Kathmandu. Gautama used the description of the *Niṣpannayogāvali* and the *Vajrāvali* to illustrate the text. Further, he also made a contemporary painting of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, which is included in the illustrations of the book.

[48] Personal communication with author. Further, the inscription on the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala at Thaṁ Bahī confirmed its consecration by Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, following a month-long *vrata* to Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara by the lay patrons.

[49] For example, see Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*. 255-56.

[50] See Stella Kramrisch, *The Art of Nepal* (New York: Asia Society, 1964); Pratapaditya Pal, *The Arts of Nepal*, Part II: *Painting* (Leiden: E.J. Brille, 1978); P. Pal, *The Art of Nepal: A Catalogue of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art Collection* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1985); P. Pal, *Nepal Where the Gods are Young* (New York: Asia Society, 1975); and Ernst and Rose L. Waldschmidt, *Nepal: Art Treasures from the Himalayas* (New York City: Universe Books, 1969).

[51] Personal communication with author. Gellner's primary informant for these rituals was Āśā Kājī Vajrācārya, a well-regarded ritual specialist in Patan, who had been the main

officiating priest for the Cakrasaṃvara initiation conducted at Kvā Bāhā. See also Gellner, *Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest,* 266-279.

[52] In Nepal, the term, *śakti* or *Buddhaśakti* is a popular reference to the Buddhist female deities, although the more formal Buddhist term, *prajñā,* is generally preferred by the erudite ritual specialists.

[53] Michael R. Allen, *The Cult of Kumārī: Virgin Worship in Nepal* (Kathmandu: Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University, 1975).

[54] There are also a number of unpublished original manuscripts written in the Newarī script in the National Archives and the Āsā Saphu Kuthi that pertain to the ritual and philosophical aspects of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala.

[55] Herakājī Vajrācārya, ed., *Samvarodaya Daśamī (Disi) Pūjā Vidhi Pustakaṃ* (Patan, Bu Bāhā: Pusparaj Vajrācārya, 1995). See also Caityarāj Vajrācārya, ed., *Trisamādhi Pūjā Vidhi Pustakaṃ* (Patan: Bu Bāhā Sudhar Samiti, 1996).

[56] See Stella Kramrisch, *The Art of Nepal*; Pratapaditya Pal, *The Arts of Nepal* (Part I: *Sculpture* and Part II: *Painting*) and his other works; Lain S. Bangdel, *The Early Sculptures of Nepal* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, Pvt. Ltd., 1982); and L.S. Bangdel, *2500 Years of Nepalese Art* (Leipzig: Verlag Zimmermann, 1985).

[57] For Newar Buddhist art, see Pratapaditya Pal, *Buddhist Art in Licchavi Nepal* (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1974); A.W.Macdonald and Anne Vergati Stahl, *Newar Art* (Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips Ltd., 1979); and Min Bāhādur Śākya, *Iconography of Nepalese Buddhism* (Kathmandu: Handicraft Association of Nepal in co-operation with ZDH/Technonet Asia Partnership Program, 1994).

[58] Although Mary Slusser's work, *Nepal Mandala* is primarily an anthropological study, it has by far the most extensive art historical information related to Newar Buddhist art. However, both her dating of images and iconographic information must be used some with caution.

[59] See Footnote 5.

[60] See Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications.* Translated by Mark Sainsbury. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970).

[61] This is Gellner's translation of the word "Vajrāyāna", although in Buddhist studies the term "Adamantine" is considered a more appropriate translation. In this study, I use the word "adamantine" as a translation of the term *"vajra".*

[62] John K. Locke, *The Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal: A Survey of the Bāhās and Bahis of the Kathmandu Valley* (Kathmandu: Sahayogi Press, 1985). The photographic documentation of the Buddhist monasteries, conducted by The Ohio State University research team was largely based on the sites listed in Locke's survey. However, a number of sites were added to the list that has not been documented by Locke.

[63] John K. Locke, *Karuṇāmaya: The Cult of Avalokiteśvara-Matsyendranāth in the Nepal Valley* (Kathmandu: Sahayogi Press, 1980).

[64] Todd T. Lewis, "The Tuladhars of Kathmandu: A Study of the Buddhist Tradition in a Newar Merchant Community" Ph.D. Dissertation (Columbia: University Microfilms International 8506008, 1984).

[65] Todd T. Lewis, "Sukhavati Traditions in Newar Buddhism," *South Asia Research* 16, no.1, (Spring 1996), 1-30. See also Lewis, "Contributions to the History of Buddhist Ritualism: A Mahayana Avadana on Stupa Veneration from the Kathmandu Valley," *Journal of Asian History,* 28, no 1 (Spring 1994), 1-28.

[66] For an excellent review on the status of recent anthropological and sociological researches, see David N. Gellner and Declan Quigley, eds., *Contested Hierarchies: A Collaborative*

Ethnography of Caste among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1995).

[67] Here, I use the word "Nepal" in reference to the Kathmandu Valley, as "Nepal" until the 19th century, traditionally meant the "Kathmandu Valley." Even today, many hill tribes speak of "Nepal" when referring to the Valley. The usage of the term to refer to the political state of Nepal was started in the later nineteenth century by the British who extended the name of the Kathmandu Valley to the territories ruled by the Śāha dynasty of Gorkhā. The political state of Nepal itself adopted this usage only at the beginning of the 20th century. See R. Burghart, "The Formation of the Concept of Nation-State in Nepal", *Journal of Asian Studies* 44, (1984): 101-125.

[68] Sylvain Levi, *Le Népal: Étude Historique d'un Royaumme Hindou*, 28. My translation.

[69] See for example, Louis Dumont, "Marriage in India: The Present State of the Question: Postscript to Part I: Nayar and Newar" *Contribution to Indian Sociology* 7, (1964): 77-98. See also Declan Quigley, *The Interpretation of Caste* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

[70] The 1963 exhibition *Arts of Nepal* curated by Stella Kramrisch at the Asia Society Galley was the first exhibition on Nepali art in the West. The exhibition catalogue, *Arts of Nepal* is the first true art historical publication on the Nepali art and also led to the interest in the collection of Nepali artworks.

[71] In his preface, Pal mentions that when he began his study in 1959, less than a dozen articles were published on Nepali art, and most either asserted that the artistic traditions in Nepal were not very old or stressed the strong stylistic influences of Gupta or Pāla art on that of Nepal. See P. Pal, *The Arts of Nepal,* Part I: *Sculpture,* xv. See also P. Brown, *Pictuesque Nepal* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1912); and K. P. Chattopadhyay, "An Essay on the Hisotry of Newar Culture," *Journal and Proceedings, Asiatic Society of Bengal,* n.s. 19:10 (1923), 465-560. See also article by D. Barrett, "The Buddhist Art of Tibet and Nepal," *Oriental Art,* n.s. III:3, (Summer 1957), 90-95.

[72] Pioneering art historical works have been since published by scholars like Stella Kramrisch, Pratapaditya Pal, Mary S. Slusser, and Lain S. Bangdel. See note 58.

[73] Invariably, art historical surveys on Nepali art discuss the Licchavi period as the "classical period" or as the "culmination" of Nepal's artistic tradition, while the styles of the subsequent periods, indeed, some 1500 years, are dismissed in a rather cursory fashion.

[74] Interesting, the recent discovery of the dated image of Jayavarma (A.D. 207), which shows strong stylistic affinity with the Kuśāna image of the Mathura regions has created considerable debate among scholars as to whether the political hegemony of the Kuśānas included the Valley. Earlier findings of a number of pre-Licchavi images discussed by Lain S. Bangdel suggest this trend of scholarship. In the stylistic analysis, Bangdel indicates these images to be close to the Mathura styles of the Kuśāna period, thus establishing and validating Nepal's artistic antiquity before the Licchavi period. Bangdel discuss not only the shared stylistic idiom between these two traditions, but also emphasizes the distinctive features of the Nepali art in this period. See Lain S. Bangdel, *The Early Sculptures of Nepal* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1982).

[75] Gellner and Quigley, 2.

[76] Perceval Landon, *Nepal* 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1928; reprint, New Delhi and Madras: Asian Educational Services, 1993) v. 1, 181-183.

[77] I will cite the works of these scholars in the next section, when they will be discussed in detail.

[78] For example, the Jesuit missionary Father Grueber, who visited the Kathmandu Valley in 1661, recounts the skirmishes between King Pratāp Malla of Kathmandu and his brother, King Śrīnivās Malla of Patan. Other early missionaries to Nepal included Father

Giuseppe, an eighteenth-century Capuchin monk, whose writings provide interesting reading. For detailed accounts of the early missionaries, see Sylvain Levi, *Le Népal: Étude Historique d'un Royaume Hindou*, 75-131. Levi's work has an excellent summary of the works of the Europeans who preceded him.

[79] Captain William Kirkpatrick, *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepaul, Being the Susbstance of Observation Made During a Mission to that Country in the Year 1793* (1811; Reprint Bibliotheca Himalayica, series I, vol.3, New Delhi: Manjusri Publishing House, 1969).

[80] See Daniel Wright, *History of Nepal, with an Introductory Sketch of the Country and People of Nepal*; Henry Ambrose Oldfield, *Sketches from Nipal, historical and descriptive with anecdotes of the court life and wild sports of the country in the time of Maharaja Jang Bāhādur G.C.B to which is added an Essay on Nipalese Buddhism and illustrations of religious monuments, architecture and scenery from the authors own drawings* (London: W.H. Allen and Company, 2 vols., 1880). One of the most important *vaṁsāvalī* chronicles was discovered by Cecil Bendall. Known as the *Gopālarājavaṁsāvalī*, it is also frequently referred to as the *Bendall Vaṁsāvalī* after him.

[81] Derived primarily from oral history, both the earlier *vaṁsāvalīs*, complied in the 14th century during the reign of Sthiti Malla (ca. C.E.1382-1395), and the later ones of the 18th-19th centuries, have been dismissed by some historians as spurious evidence, lacking the historicity of an accurate written chronology. However, as in the case of the Licchavi kings, an image of Jayavarmā, with an inscription corresponding to C.E 185, was recently discovered in Hāḍigaoñ, and this very name appears repeatedly in various chronicles. The evidence suggests that the historical information of these genealogies is, in fact, quite accurate, and that they should be seen as a valuable, though not completely reliable, source of historical information. For one of the earliest and important *vamsāvalī* chronicles, see Dhanavajra Vajrācārya and Kamal P. Malla, *The Gopālarājavaṁsāvalī* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, Nepal Research Center Publications 9, 1985).

[82] Francis Buchanan Hamilton, *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal and the Territories annexed to this Dominion by the House of Gorkha* (1819; Reprint, Biblioteca Himalayica, Series I, vol. 10.).

[83] Kirkpatrick, 124.

[84] Kirkpatrick, 183. Kirpatrick is most likely referring to the term *Bande* or *Bānra,* an honorific title given to the Śākya and Vajrācāryas in Nepal. It is interesting that nowhere does he use the term Buddhist or "Baudhamārgi". Even today, the Newar Buddhists are a smaller minority, compared to the large number of Hindu Newars, although the city of Patan is primarily Buddhist. The 1981 population census reports the following statistics for the three cities of the Valley: in Kathmandu, Hindus (both Newars and Parbate) comprised 83% and Buddhist Newars, 13.1% of the population; in Patan, Hindu were 80.7% and Buddhist Newars 16.7%; and in Bhaktapur, Hindus were 94.9% and 3.6% of Buddhist Newars. See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* 23.

[85] Francis Buchanan Hamilton, *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal and the Territories annexed to this Dominion by the House of Gorkha* (1819; Reprint, Biblioteca Himalayica, Series I, vol. 10.).

[86] Hamilton, 29. Hamilton's use of the terms "Śivamārga" and "Baudhamārga" in reference to the followers of Hindu and Buddhist paths are the very terms used in Nepal today by the practitioners. In contrast, modern Western scholarship continues to use the broader religious terminology of "Hinduism" and "Buddhism".

[87] All Western scholars that I am aware of have consistently used this terminology, including the more recent works by cultural historians, such as Slusser or anthropologists like Gellner, Lewis, and Quigley.

[88] Brought into vogue by the nineteenth-century British writers, the term "Parbatiyā" is still used in Western scholarship. In this study, I prefer to use the more indigenous term "Parbate" in reference to the ethnic groups and people in the Valley who are non-Newars. The terms "Parbate" and "Newar" are commonly used in the Kathmandu Valley today as markers of ethnic identification and cultural difference. Implicit in this understanding are the reference and emphasis to *locale* (Valley verses the hills), and not simply ethnicity or language. Identifying oneself as Parbate therefore gives primacy to the Newars as the original inhabitants of the Valley, and defines the Parbate's own place of origin as being outside the Valley. Further, as the Śāha kings of Gorkhā are also Parbate, there is a tendency in scholarship to think that the non-Newar Nepali speaking groups migrated to the Kathmandu Valley after the Gorkhā conquest in the eighteenth century. However, scholars agree there is enough evidence, both linguistic and art historical, to suggests that groups speaking an Indo-Aryan language migrated into the Kathmandu Valley as early as the 1st-2nd century C.E. See Slusser, *Nepal Maṇḍala,* 8. Further, the recent discovery of an image of Jayavarmā dated to Samvat 107 (second-third century) has an inscription written in the Kuṣana period Brahmi script indicates the dominance of Indo-Aryan culture.

[89] For a list of manuscripts, see William Hunter, *Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts Collected in Nepal by Brian Houghton Hodgson, Esq., F.R.S.* (London: Trubner, 1881). For the manuscripts in the Asiatic Society of Bengal, see Rajendralal Mitra, *The Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal* (Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 1971).

[90] See Brian Houghton Hodgson, "Sketch of Buddhism, derived from the Baudha Scriptures of Nepal" and "Quotations from Original Sanskrit Authorities in proof and illustration of the preceding article" in Brian Houghton Hodgson, *Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of the Nepal and Tibet together with further papers on the Geography, Ethnology and Commerce of Those Countries* (London: Trubner and Co., 1874), 35-96.

[91] Hodgson, *Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of the Nepal,* 41.

[92] Some of Hodgson's findings in his *Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of the Nepal and Tibet together with further papers on the Geography, Ethnology and Commerce of Those Countries* have been critiqued by scholars. See David N. Gellner, Hodgson's Blind Alley? On the So-Called Schools of Nepalese Buddhism", *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* ,12 (1989), 1:7-19.

[93] On Hodgson's impact on 19th-century Buddhist scholarship, see Philip C. Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). See also Donald S. Lopez, Jr., ed., *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

[94] As quoted by Philip C. Almond, *British Discovery of Buddhism,* 27.

[95] Eugene Burnouf, *Introduction a l'histoire du bouddhism indien* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1876), x.

[96] For complete accounts of his works, see William Wilson Hunter, *Life of Brian Houghton Hodgson: British Resident at the Court of Nepal* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1896).

[97] Perceval Landon, *Nepal* (Reprint, New Delhi and Madras: Asian Educational Services, 1993. 1st ed., 1928) v. 1, 85 n.1.

[98] Benoytosh Bhattacaryya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1958).

[99] The *guthi* organization is one of the basic socio-religious features of Newar society, and whose primary function is to administer the proceeds from land endowments given to the temple, deities, and *bāhās*. There are many other types of *guthis,* and membership into the organization may be voluntary or obligatory, depending on the function of the *guthi.* See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* 231-250.

[100] For example, there still remains a significant Newar diaspora outside of the Kathmandu Valley in the cities of Bandipur, Palpa, Baglung, Bhojpur, many of whom are primarily traders.

[101] Henry Ambrose Oldfield, *Sketches from Nipal, historical and descriptive with anecdotes of the court life and wild sports of the country in the time of Maharaja Jang Bāhādur G.C.B to which is added an Essay on Nipalese Buddhism and illustrations of religious monuments, architecture and scenery from the author's own drawings* (London, W.H. Allen and Company, 2 vols., 1880).

[102] It is useful to study the drawings of the early writers to compare the appearance of the monuments against their twentieth-century forms. For example, Oldfield's *Sketches,* and Wright's *History of Nepal,* written a little after a decade, both have early drawings of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya. These sketches may be studied in relation to the appearance of the completed Mahācaitya as it stands today, since the monument has, since the 19th century, been refurbished and partially reconstructed, especially after the 1934 earthquake.

[103] Other manuscripts from Wright's collections are also found in the British Museum, the German Oriental Society at Halle, the University Library at Berlin, the University Library of St. Petersburg, and the Library of the Imperial Academy of St. Petersburg. A list of Wright's manuscripts given to the Cambridge Library is found in the Appendix of his book. See Daniel Wright, *History of Nepal, with an Introductory sketch of the Country and People of Nepal,* 316-324.

[104] The Nepal Samvat era used in Nepal begins in C.E. 879 / 880. Sometimes referred to the Newarī Samvat, this era is commonly used today in the Valley, although Vikrama Samvat (57 C.E.) is the official era in use throughout Nepal.

[105] Cecil Bendall, *Catalogue of the Buddhist Sanskrit Manuscripts in the University Library, Cambridge, with introductory notes and illustrations of the paleography and the chronology of Nepal and Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1883).

[106] See note 103

[107] Bikrama Jit Hasrat, *History of Nepal, as told by its Own and Contemporary Chroniclers* (Hoshiarpur, Punjab: Bikrama Jit Hasrat, 1970).

[108] Hara Prasad Shastri, ed., *The Vrihat Svayambhu Purāṇaṁ containing the Traditions of the Svayambhu Kshetra in Nepal* N.S. 842 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1894).

[109] See Manabajra Vajrācārya, tr., and Warren W. Smith, ed., *Mythological History of the Nepal Valley from Svayambhū Purāṇa, and Nāga and Serpent Symbolism* by Warren W. Smith, (Kathmandu: Avalok Publishers, 1978). For a brief textual analysis of the *Svayambhu Purana,* see Siegfried Lienhard, "The Textual History of the Different Versions of the 'Svayambhupurana', Gerard Toffin, ed., *Nepal: Past and Present Proceedings of the France-German Conference: Arc-et-Senans, June 1990* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt., Ltd., 1993).

[110] Bhagwanlal Indrajī and G. Bühler, "Inscriptions from Nepal", *Indian Antiquary 9,* (1880), 163-194.

[111] Bhagwanlal Indrajī, *Twenty-Three Inscriptions from Nepal, collected at the Expense of H.H. the Navab of Junagadh.* Edited under the patronage of the Government of Bombay,

together with some Considerations on the Chronology of Nepal. Translated from Gujarati by G. Buhler (Bombay: Education Society Press, 1885).

[112] *Gopālavaṁsāvali*, 78.

[113] D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization,* I: *From the Sixth Century B.C. to the Sixth Century A.D.* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1965), 262-268.

[114] For example, in 1888, the eminent Indian epigraphist John F. Fleet published a chronology of Nepali history and its association with the Gupta dynasty. See John Faithfull Fleet, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum,* 3, *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings and their Successors.* Introduction: *On the Chronology of Nepal* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1888).

[115] See Stella Kramrisch, *The Art of Nepal;* Pratapaditya Pal, *The Arts of Nepal.* Part I: *Sculpture;* and *The Ideal Image: The Gupta Sculptural Tradition and Its Influence* (New York: Asia Society, 1978); Bangdel, *2500 Years of Nepalese Art.* See also Mary Slusser and Gautamvajra Vajrācārya, "Some Nepalese Stone Sculptures: A Reappraisal within Their Cultural and Historical Contexts", *Artibus Asiae* 35 (1973); 1-2, 79-138, and 35:3 (1973), 269-270; Slusser's *Nepal Maṇḍala,* particularly the sections of Licchavi art.

[116] Cecil Bendall, *A Journey of the Literary and Archaeological Research in Nepal and Northern India during the Winter of 1884-1885,* (1886; Reprint Biblioteca Himalayica, series III, 2. vols., edited by H. K. Kuloy. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1976).

[117] See Raniero Gnoli, *Nepalese Inscriptions in Gupta Characters.* Serie Orientale Roma 10, *Materials for the Study of Nepalese History and Culture,* no. 2., 2 parts (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1956) and Luciano Petech, *Mediaeval History of Nepal (c.750-1480),* (Serie Orientale Roma, 10., *Materials for the Study of Nepalese History and Culture,* no. 3., 2 parts (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958).

[118] Archaeological excavations have been conducted in Lumbini, Kapilavastu, Simraongarh and Hadigaon. Recently, the ISMEO team, headed by Giovanni Verardi, is conducting excavations at the Kanakamuni Stūpa in Niglisagar in the southern Tarai.

[119] See Giovanni Verardi, *Harigaoñ Satya Nārāyaṇa, Kathmandu: A Report on the Excavations carried out in 1984-88* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1989).

[120] As the Jayavarmā inscription does not refer to the Licchavis directly, there is still some controversy in scholarship regarding the dynastic reign of Jayavarmā. Based on the genealogical chronology of the *vaṁsāvalīs* and the inscription of the later Licchavi king Jayadeva II from Paśupati (equivalent to C.E. 733), scholars have assumed that Jayavarma may be one of the early kings of the Licchavi period. However, until further evidence can be found, Jayavarmā's dynastic relationship remains speculative. For a recent article, see Kashinath Tamot and Ian Alsop, "A Kushana-period Sculpture from the Reign of Jaya Varmā, A.D. 185, Kathmandu, Nepal", *http://webart.com/asianart/articles/jaya/index.html* (Published: July 10, 1996).

[121] See Bangdel, "A Comparative Study of Two Kuṣāṇa-Period Nepalese Sculptures and the Jayavarmā Image of CE 185, *Mārg* (Forthcoming).

[122] Bangdel, *Early Sculptures of Nepal,* Plate 1. Interestingly, the controversial image of the "Yaksa-Bodhisattva" now in the National Museum was also found in Māligaoñ, where the Jayavarmā statue was found. Bangdel was the first scholar to point to the antiquity of Yakṣa image, and proposed a date of first century C.E. Both the Jayavarmā sculpture and the "Yakṣa-Bodhisattva" piece in the National Museum are stylistically very close, and provide clear evidence of the antiquity of Nepal's artistic traditions.

[123] For example, see Perceval Landon, *Nepal,* 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1928) and Percy Brown, *Picturesque Nepal,* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1912).

[124] Sylvain Levi, *Le Népal: Étude Historique d'un Royaume Hindou,* 3 vols. (Paris: Ernest Leroux, Editeur, 1905; reprint, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1990).

[125] For his major contributions, see Gerard Toffin, *Pyangaoñ: Une communauté Newar de la vallée de Kathmandu: La Vie materielle* (Paris: Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, 1977) and *Societé et religion chez les Newar du Népal* (Paris: Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, 1984).

[126] A. W. Macdonald and Anne Vergati Stahl, *Newar Art: Nepalese Art During the Malla Period* (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips Ltd., 1979).

[127] Horst Brinkhaus and Siegfried Lienhard have worked extensively on various Hindu and Buddhist manuscripts in the collection. In addition to his work on the *Nepal Mahātmya,* see also Horst Brinkhaus, *Jagatprakāśa mallas Muladevasa śivadevavyākhyāntaka: Das älteste bekannte vollstandig uberlieferte Newari-Drama* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1987). See also S. Liehnard, *Maṇicuḍavadanoddhṛta: A Buddhist Re-Birth Story in the Nevari Language* (Stockholm: Alquist and Wiksell, 1963) and his *Nevarīgītimañjarī: Religious and Secular Poetry of the Nevars of the Kathmandu Valley* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1974).

[128] See Niels Gutschow, *Stadtraum und Ritual der Newarischen Stadte im Kathmandu-Tal: Eine architectur-anthropoligische Untersuchung* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1983); Niels Gutschow and Bernhard Kölver, *Ordered Space, Concepts and Functions in a Town in Nepal* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1975); and B. Kölver and S. Lienhard, eds., *Formen Kulturellen Wandels und andere Beitrage zur Erforschung des Himalaya* (Sankt Augustin: VGH Wissenchaftverlag, 1986).

[129] I am indebted to my father, Lain S. Bangdel, for his contributions to this section. He is contemporary to many of the scholars discussed here, and has worked with many of them in the Royal Nepal Academy. His personal experiences and familiarity with this period in Nepali history, particularly during the Rana and post-Rana period, have greatly aided my understanding of the contributions of Nepali scholars and historians.

[130] The 104 year rule of the hereditary Rāṇa Prime Ministers is generally considered one of the most oppressive periods in Nepali history. The restriction of knowledge, lack of education and free press that characterize this period were the primary means through which the Rāṇa government was able to repress and control the people.

[131] See Sūrya Vikram Gevalī, *Rāma Śāha ko Jīvan Caritra* [A Biography of Rama Shah], published in 1933; *Nepālī Vijetā Śrī Pañca Prṛhvī Nārāyana Śāha Ko Jīvanī* [Life of King Prithvi Narayan Shah] in 1935, and *Nepāl Upatyakāko Madhyakālīn Itihāsa* [Medieval History of Nepal], published in 1965. His other works include *Amar Singh Thāpā* (Darjeeling: Ranakar Press, 1951) and *Nepālī Vīraharū* [Nepali Heroes] (Darjeeling: Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, 1951).

[132] See Bāl Candra Śarmā, *Nepālko Aitihāsik Rūpa Rekhā* [Outline of the History of Nepal] (Banaras: Madhav Prasad Sharma, 1950); and Rāmjī Upadhyaya, *Nepal ko Itihās* [History of Nepal] (Banaras: Subha Hom Nath Kedar Nath, 1950).

[133] Bāburām Ācarya, "Nepālka Licchavi rājāharūko kālaganana prastāvana" [Preface to the Chronology of the Licchavi kings of Nepal], *Śārada* (vol 5, no. 11, 1940). See also Totra Raj and Naya Raj Pant, *Nepālko Saṁkṣipta Itihās* [An Abridged History of Nepal] (Banaras: publisher unknown, 1947).

[134] See Nayā Rāj Pant, "Abhilekha-saṁgrahako vyākhyā garne bāto" [The Method of Interpreting Inscriptions], *Abhilekha Saṁgraha,* Part I (1962), Part 2 (1963) and Part 3 (1963). For a listing of his articles, see Slusser, *Nepal Maṇḍala,* 441-442.

[135] Interestingly, the two prominent historians of Nepal, Sūrya Vikram Gevalī and Nayā Rāj Pant, often disagreed vociferously and wrote biting criticisms of each other's findings, some of which may have been fueled by their scholarly rivalry. It should be noted that although one of the most thorough bibliographies in English, Slusser's book, *Nepal Maṇḍala,* omits any reference to Sūrya Vikram Gevalī's works. One could speculate that this omission may be attributed to Slusser's primary informants, Maheś Raj Pant and Gautamvajra Vajracārya, two scholars who belonged to Pant's Śaṁśodhana Maṇḍala.

[136] See bibliographic section of Slusser's, *Nepal Maṇḍala.*

[137] A series of articles from 1952 to 1962 was published in book form as *Itihāsa-samśodhanako Pramāṇa-prameya* [Documentary Proofs of History Corrections], edited by Dhanavajra Vajrācārya (Lalitpur: Jagadambā Prakāśan, 1962).

[138] Much of Slusser's historical and cultural analysis and interpretations in her book, *Nepal Maṇḍala,* is based on the research of the Saṁsodhana Maṇḍala, particularly contributions by Gautamvajra Vajrācārya and Maheś Rāj Pant, whom she acknowledges in her Preface as major resources. See Slusser, *Nepal Maṇḍala,* xiv.

[139] Dhanavajra Vajrācārya, *Licchavikālakā Abhilekha* [Inscriptions of the Licchavi Period] (Kathmandu: Institute of Nepali and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University, 1973) and *Śāhakālina Abhilekha* [Inscriptions of the Śaha Period]. Even until his death in 1991, Dhanavarja was conducting extensive research on inscriptions of the Malla period, which is to be published posthumously by the Tribhuvan University, under the working title *Mallakālka Abhilekha* [Inscriptions of the Malla Period]. Personal communication with Gautamvajra Vajrācārya.

[140] For a descriptive list of the important periodicals in Nepali and English. see Slusser, *Nepal Maṇḍala,* 423-425.

[141] See Dillī Raman Regmī, *Ancient Nepal* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1960); *Medieval Nepal,* 4 vols. (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965 and 1966); and *Modern Nepal,* 2 vols. (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 2nd edition, 1961). Regmi's recent book on Nepali inscriptions of the Licchavi period is the only of its kind in English, and is essentially a critical translation of Dhanavajra Vajrācārya's *Licchavikālakā Abhilekha* [Inscriptions of the Licchavi Period]. The translations must be used with some caution, particularly in the English translations of the epigraphs, previously published in Nepali. See Dillī Raman Regmī, *Inscriptions of Ancient Nepal* 3 vols. (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1983).

[142] Lain S. Bangdel has written numerous books and articles in Nepali related to Nepali art. See Bangdel, *Nepālā Dhātukā Mūrti* [Nepalese Metal Sculptures] (Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy, 1971); *Prācīna Nepāli Citrakāla* [Ancient Nepalese Painting] (Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy, 1974); *Prācina Nepālū Mūritkalāko Itihās* [History of Ancient Nepali Sculpture] (Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy, 1982).

[143] In addition to his contributions as a historian in the Śaṁśodhana Maṇḍala, Gautamvajra Vajrācārya has also published numerous articles, both independently and in collaboration with Mary Slusser, on the arts of Nepal. See also Gautamvajra Vajrācārya, "Prācina mūrtikalāko visayamā [On the Subject of Ancient Sculptures]", *Purṇimā* 3, pt.I no. 3 (1964); Gautamvarja Vajrācārya and Mary Slusser, "A Newly Discovered Garuda Image in Kathmandu, Nepal," *Artibus Asiae,* 36, no. 4 (1974), 292-293. Kashinath Tamot's recent article, previously sited, discusses the newly discovered dated image of King Jayavarmā, is co-authored with Ian Alsop. In addition to various articles in Nepali, Mukunda Rāj Aryāl, in a jointly collaborated with Jurgen Winkler also written in English. See Jurgen Winkler and Mukunda Rāj Aryāl, *Nepal* (New York: Kodansha International Ltd., 1977).

[144]Even the manuals of the more esoteric rituals, used by the initiated members and generally kept secret from the general Buddhist community, are now available in paperback. See Herākājī Vajrācārya, ed., *Samvarodaya Daśamī (Disī) Pūjā Vidhi Pustakaṁ* (Yala [Patan]: Yashodhara Mahavihara, 1995).

[145] Among these printed works, the textual exegesis of Amoghavajra Vajrācārya, Divyavajra Vajrācārya, and Paṇḍit Ratna Bāhādur are especially well known in the Newar Buddhist community.

[146] In his capacity as an accomplished Tantric priest, Amoghvajra refurbished and renovated the *yoginī* temple at Pulan Guhyeśvarī, believed to be one of the most powerful Buddhist shrines of Valley.

[147] Amoghavarja Vajrācārya, *Gurumaṇḍalārcana-pustakaṁ* (Kathmandu: De Ācārya Guthi, 1972); *Kalaśārcanādi-homavidhana-pustakaṁ* (Kathmandu: De Ācārya Guthi, 1976). Amoghavajra also wrote the introduction to the 108 forms of Avalokiteśvara in Jana Bāhā. See *Lokeśvarayā Paricaya* (Kathmandu: Lokesvara Saṅgha, 1979).

[148]Versions of Amoghavajra works on *Gurumaṇḍalapūjā* and *Kalaśārcanapūjā* have also been later revised and re-published by Ratnakājī Vajrācārya, Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, (both from Kathmandu) and Aśa Kājī Vajrācārya from Patan.

[149]I am grateful to both ritual specialists, who served as my primary informants during my field research.

[150] Sasvat Vajra, the legendary Tantric priest from Sawal Bāhā, was famous for his magical powers and is said to have established the Mahākāla and Bhadrakālī (Luñmādhī Ajimā) temple at Tundikhel.

[151] To date, Paṇḍit Badrī Ratna has written over forty-one books, among which his translation of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Pūjā Vidhi* and *Nāmasaṅgīti Stotra* will be used in this study. He served as a major resource for my research, and I am indebted to him for his help.

[152] Personal communication from Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya. In my 1998 visit, Paṇḍit Badrī Ratna had organized the *pīṭhapūjā* pilgrimage for the initiates who had taken part in the Cakrasaṁvara initiation. Further, he was also preparing for another initiation to Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī, in which the initiates were sequestered for fifteen days.

[153] Some of his important works include *Nepāla Jana-Jīvana Kriyāpaddhati* (co-authored with Ratnakājī Vajrācārya) (Kathmandu: Self Published N.S 1083), *Sṛga Bherī* (Kathmandu: Ratnadevi Manandhar, N.S 1094 [1974]), *Amoghapasa Lokeśvaryā Vrata Kathā* (Kathmandu: Self Published, N.S. 1101 [1981]), *Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa* (Kathmandu: Sanumaya Tuladhar, N.S. 1103 [1984]), *Yalayā Gurumaṇḍala* [Gurumṇḍḍala Pūjā of Patan] (Kathmandu: Gurumaṇḍala Adhayana Khalah, N.S. 1110 [1990]).

[154] See Ratnakājī Vajrācārya, *Yeñ Deyā Baudha Pūjā Kriyā yā Halañjvalañ (Materials Required for the Rituals of the Buddhists of Kathmandu),* (Kathmandu: Nepal Baudha Prakasan, N.S. 1100), *Nevāḥ Samskāra Saṁskritiyā Tāhcāḥ (Cultural Heritage of the Newara)* (Kathmandu: VajrācāryaPrakashan, 1109), *Kalaśārcana Pūjā Vidhi* (Kathmandu, VajrācāryaPrakashan, N.S. 1111), and *Balipūjāyā Yathārthatā (Reality of Sacrifice-Worship)* (Kathmandu: VajrācāryaPrakashan, N.S. 1113).

[155] Divyavajra Vajrācārya, *Advaya Paramārtha Nāmasaṅgīti* (Kathmandu: Bhusana Prakasan, 1972); *Dharmasaṁgraha Kośa* (Kathmandu: Hemabajra Vajrācārya, 1980); *Nava Sutra Saṁgraha: Baudha Dharma Darśana Antargatakā Nauotā Granthako Sarasanksepa* [in Nepali] (Lalitapur: Bodhi Prakasana Kendra, 1990).

[156] Vajrācārya Paṇḍit Ratna Bāhādur, tr.,, *Ārya Nāmasaṅgīti Gātha* [with Commentary] (N.S. 1113 [1993]).

[157] See his *Mahāyāna Baudha Dharma Darśan* [Philosophy of Mahayana Buddhist Dharma] (Latitpur: Self Published, N.S. 1097 [1977]), *Mahāyāna Buddhadharma (Svayambhū Purāṇayā Chagu Aṁsa): Nepal Dvādasa Tīrtha Vrata* (Lalitpur: Sthavir Buddha Raj Śākya, N.S. 1101 [1991]).

[158] Unfortunately, Paṇḍit Hemrāj's simply summarizes the contents of the inscriptions and does not provide the original inscriptions or their translations nor does he direct the reader towards secondary sources.

[159] An example of Western scholars reliance on Hemrāj's scholarly views is found in Niels Gutschow's recent work on *caityas,* in which he categorizes the morphological forms of *caityas* based on Hemraj's personal descriptions. For instance, the terms *Caturvyuhacaitya, Sikharākuṭacatiya, Padmavalicaitya, Jvālāvalicaitya, Jalahāryuparīsumerucaitya, and Sumerucaitya* are descriptive names of *caityas* based on their morphological form. In the ritual context and the doctrinal understanding, the ritual specialists generally specify that these *caityas* are understood as either Dharmadhātu or Vajradhātu *caityas,* and these descriptive categories are seen as superficial categories.

[160] There appear to be two distinct schools of thought within the community regarding Hemrāj and his erudition. On the one hand, the Newar community respects him as a prolific writer and epigraphist. On the other hand, the ritual specialists and practitioner are skeptical and often dismissive of his knowledge on Buddhism and particularly in the Tantric traditions. I have found Paṇḍit Hemrāj to be a very knowledgeable informant, as corroborated by my correlation of his responses and his works with the other Buddhist practitioners that I interviewed for their accuracy.

Figure 1.1 Interior courtyard of Hā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 1.2 Rituals performed during Vasundharā Pūjā. Hā Bāhā, Patan.1994.
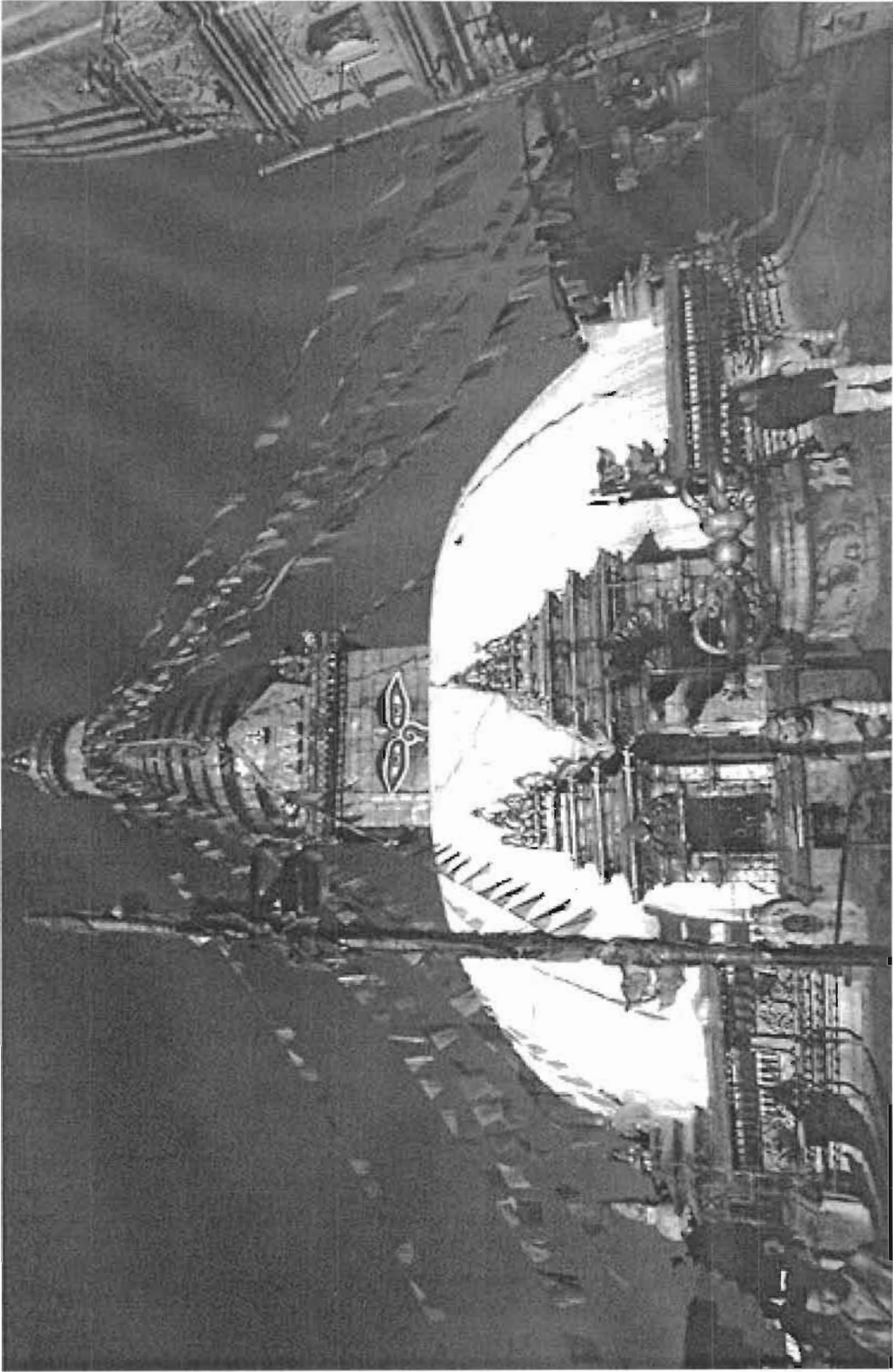
Figure 1.3. Svayambhū Mahācaitya, View of east side. 1996.

Figure 1.5 Detail of central Svayambhū *caitya.*

Figure 1.4 Bāhā with central Svayambhū *caitya.* Haughal Bāhā, Patan. 1996.

(top) Figure 1.6 Painting depicting the emergence of
Svayambhū Jyotirupa, according to the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*.
20th Century Painting. Private Collection.

(left) Figure 1.7 Painting depicting theDraining of the Lake by Mañjuśrī, according the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*.
20th Century Painting. Private Collection.

Figure 1.8 Example of a free-standing Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Uku Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 1.9 View of Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala from top. Ha Bāhā. Patan.

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Figure 1.10 Strut figures depicting Dharmadhātu iconography. Kwā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 1.11 *Toraṇa* depicting Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa. Rato Matsyendranāth Temple, Patan.

(top left) Figure 1.12 Cakrasaṁvara. Gilt Copper. Eighteenth Centory. Private Collection.

(lower left) Figure 1.13 Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. Cloth. Fifteenth Century. Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

(lower right) Figure 1.14 Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. Cloth. Sixteenth Century. Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

CHAPTER 2

MONASTIC ARCHITECTURE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP

TO

NEWAR BUDDHISM

INTRODUCTION

The structures and spaces created by the Newar Buddhists of the Kathmandu Valley provide a means by which the historical development of Newar Buddhism may be reconstructed. Yet, one cannot fully appreciate the creation and meaning of any given structure without knowing something about the creators and the motivations behind the construction. A study of the sacred structures and spaces of Newar Buddhism entails an understanding of the practitioners and the ways in which they have defined the meanings of the sacred. More precisely, the practitioners themselves as well as the ritual acts performed within these structures continually define and reinforce the functional and symbolic aspects of the monuments. As a theoretical framework for the analysis of Newar Buddhist visual imagery, we

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may study the creation and use of sacred structures and space by the following three interrelated components: (1) the created "sacred environment/stage" where the visual symbols are present, in this case, the religious structures called *bāhās* and *bahīs*; (2) the "players", or the Newar practitioners who interpret and use the significant elements of the religion through visual imagery; and (3) the "actions" played in the created space—the rituals that continually define the meaning and religious functions of the monument. Understanding the relationship among these components provides a fuller appreciation of Newar Buddhist religious symbolism.

The aim here is threefold: First, to introduce the reader to the fundamental elements of Newar Buddhist religious architecture, and to contextualize these structures as ritual centers of the community; second, to outline the key characteristics of Newar Buddhist socio-religious organization; and the third, to analyze the relationship between the Tantric Buddhist rituals that are characteristic of Newar Buddhism and the symbolic function of these structures.

As an art-historical study, the primary focus of this chapter is to discuss the basic components and idealized schema of the two categories of Newar Buddhist architecture: *bahī* and *bāhā*. Related concepts that are unique to Newar Buddhism, such as the branch *bāhās* and lineage deities, will be clarified in relation to the religious structures and the pantheon. I

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will also examine the socio-religious organizations of the *bāhās* and *bahīs* in Kathmandu and Patan,[1] since they form the religious foundations of contemporary Newar Buddhist society.

SECTION I: THE "STAGE"

MONASTIC ARCHITECTURE IN NEWAR BUDDHISM: *BAHĪ* AND *BĀHĀ*

Etymologically related to the word, *vihāra* ("way station"), the *bāhās* and *bahīs* are, by definition, Buddhist monasteries, where the monastic community (*saṅgha*) lives. Although Newar Buddhism at first glance appears to be non-monastic, the *bāhā* and *bahīs* institutions belong to the "monastic" *saṅgha* of the Vajrācārya and Śākya caste groups.[2] In the contemporary context, the *saṅgha* members are not celibate monks, but married householders, yet nonetheless, they retain their ritual status as monks. At present, the *saṅgha* members do not reside in these monasteries, and in numerous cases, *bāhās* and *bahīs* are either defunct or abandoned because of the *saṅgha* dying out. In recent years, with the breakdown of the monastic *saṅgha* institutions, the *bāhā* and *bahī* courtyards and residential buildings have been sometimes sold for monetary reasons.

The Newar Buddhist monastic architecture is traditionally divided into two broad categories: *bahī* and *mū bāhā* ("main *bāhā*"). The main *bāhā* institution is further divided into branch *bāhās* (*kācā bāhā*), a subcategory

unique to *bāhās* and not found in the *bahī* institutions.[3] Generally speaking, Newar Buddhist monastic architecture is referred to as *bāhās*.[4] As will be demonstrated below, the *saṅgha* organization as well as the architectural forms of each category is distinctive. Each reflects its functional purpose. Indeed, the formal and functional differences are significant in reconstructing the historical developments of Newar Buddhism.

BAHĪ ARCHITECTURE

Among the approximately five hundred and twenty monasteries in the Valley, there are twenty-five *bahīs* in Patan and sixteen *bahīs* in Kathmandu.[5] Both in terms of its membership (*saṅgha*) patterns and in terms of architecture, the *bahī* is distinct from the *bāhā* organizations. I will first discuss *bahī* architecture, as the *bahīs'* structural forms suggest that they are earlier developments in monastic architecture. The architectural plan as well as the physical location of the *bahīs,* particularly in Patan, indicate that the *bahīs* are older than the *bāhā* institutions.

In an idealized scheme, a *bahī* is generally a two-storied structure built around a quadrangular courtyard, with the main shrine wall opposite the entrance door (Fig. 2.1).[6] As in the *bāhās,* there are three major components consistently found in these structures: a principal *caitya* in the courtyard; a shrine to the exoteric deity of the monastery (*kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ*); and third, an esoteric *āgaṁ* shrine to a Tantric deity (*āgaṁ dyaḥ*) (Fig. 2.2). The *kvāḥpāḥ*

dyaḥ shrine is usually located on the first floor, opposite the entrance wall. It houses a non-Tantric deity, such as Śākyamuni, Amitābha, Dipaṅkara, or Maitreya, whose images are exoteric, and, therefore, accessible for all Buddhist practitioners to worship. The secret *āgaṁ* shrine is usually found on the second floor, although not mandatory placement, and is marked by five-fold windows. Entrance into the Tantric shrine and the rituals connected to it are restricted solely to the initiated members of the *bāhā saṅgha.* In contrast to the exoteric *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine, the deities of the *āgaṁ* are the esoteric Tantric deities of the Heruka class, such as Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī, Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍākinī, or Hevajra/Nairātmā, all of whose ritual meditation require higher initiations (*dīkṣā*).

The three components of *bahī* architecture discussed above, which are identical to those of the *bāhās,* articulate the hierarchical nature of the shrines from non-Tantric to highly Tantric. The shrines also distinguish between the sacred spaces of the "lay" and "initiated" communities, and this distinction is fundamental to virtually all aspects of Newar Buddhist practice. This aspect is emphasized in the two distinct categories of shrines of the *bāhā* and *bahī,* namely, the exoteric *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* that may be contrasted to the esoteric practices and deities of the *āgaṁ* shrines.

Although the functional aspect of these shrines accommodates essential distinctions in Newar Buddhist ritual practices, *bahī* architecture has other elements unique to this architectural category. As indicated in the

groundplan, these include the circumambulatory passage (*pradakṣiṇāpatha*) around the main shrine, the open pillared verandah on the side walls and beyond that, a series of small cell-like rooms, presumably to house the resident monks (see Fig. 2.1). The structure and shrine facade is relatively simple, without the elaborate decorative and rich iconographic elements, such as the strut figures and *toraṇa*, which are usually present in *bāhā* architecture.

The overall plan of the *bahī* is closely reminiscent of the *vihāra* format seen at the caves of Ajantā and Ellora in Western India and the monastic sites such as Sarnath, thus indicating a structural continuity that goes back to Indian Buddhism of at least the fifth century CE. For example, Caves 16 and 17 at Ajantā have similar recessed shrines that, as in the *bahīs* can be circumambulated; a pillared verandah; and a central space that is surrounded by cells (Fig. 2.3). Inscriptions found in the Western caves in India, particularly Cave 17 at Ajantā, allude to the *gandhakuṭi* ("Hall of Fragrance") in reference to the *caitya hall,* such as Cave 19, where the *stūpa* serves as the main focus of worship.[7] It is noteworthy that Newarī inscriptions refer to the main shrine images in *bahīs* as *gandhuri dyaḥ,* ["deity of the fragrance hall"], a term that is still in use today. Scholars have suggested that this term is derived from the word *gandhakuṭi,* and hence, point to the antiquity of the *bahī* institution and a relationship with India.[8] Numerous inscriptions mention the *bahī* shrine image as *śrī gāndhuri deva,*

śrī gāndhuri tathāgata, or *śrī gandhuri bhaṭṭāraka,* in reference to the deity residing in the *gandhakuṭi.*[9]

The etymological connection with *gandhakuṭi* and *gandhuri deva* may also be significant in understanding the *stūpa* as the quintessential object of worship and power throughout the Buddhist tradition, to which Newar Buddhism is no exception. Since the main shrine image in the Newar *bahīs* is called the "deity of the *gandhakuṭi*", it may be inferred that a religious primacy is attributed to the *bahī's* principal *caitya* in a manner very similar to the Buddhist practices of fifth century India, where the main focus of worship in the *gandhakuṭi* was the *caitya*. The living space of the monks containing the *stūpa* as the main object of veneration may contextualize the presence of the principal *caitya* as a mandatory feature of Newar Buddhist architecture, similar to other traditions of the Buddhist world.

The distinctive plan of the *bahī*, with the characteristic small surrounding cells, simple shrine facade, and lack of embellishment suggest that these were intended as residences for a monastic community. The resemblance to Indian monastic structures reinforces this suggestion. Furthermore, in both Kathmandu and Patan, the *bahīs* are most often found in the periphery, in the outer perimeters of the city proper, and such secluded areas would be locations suitable for a monastic community (Figs. 2.4 and 2.5). In mapping their physical placement in Patan and Kathmandu, I found that the *bahīs* were consistently located in the ancient areas of cities where

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Licchavi and pre-Licchavi sculptures (ca. first-third century C.E.) have also been found.[10] In Kathmandu, for instance, Cā Bahī and Gaṇa Bahī are historically Licchavi or as early as the pre-Licchavi sites (see Fig. 2.4). Indeed, the remains of the Licchavi *caityas* found at both sites connect these establishments to the Licchavi period. Similarly, Tukhan Bahī at Hymattol and Thāṁ Bahī at Thamel are found in the outer limits of the old city of Kathmandu, where many Licchavi sculptures have been discovered. These examples provide compelling evidence for the antiquity of the *bahī* institution.

In Patan, the pattern for the spatial distribution of the *bahīs* is even clearer (see Fig. 2.5). The twenty-five *bahīs* of Patan fall just outside the city proper, and the more important ones in terms of ritual significance are found in the oldest section of the town, specifically to the east and north. Oral history of these institutions also attests to the antiquity of these sites, based on the claim that many *bahīs* were established during the Licchavi period or earlier.[11] Indeed, the remnants of *caityas* and sculptures from the Licchavi period, such as those from Konti Bahī and in the courtyard of many *bahīs,* testify to their antiquity. The Konti Bahī panel depicts one of the earliest representations of the *vajra* in Nepali art (Figs. 2.6 and 2.7). Furthermore, *bahīs* in the eastern edge, such as Guitā Bahī in Guitātol and Cikañ Bahī in Chyāsaltol are, according to the oral tradition, among the oldest *bahīs* of Patan. This area has, in fact, yielded sculptures predating the Licchavi

period, attesting to the antiquity of the site, if not the institutions themselves.[12] Similarly, the locale of the northern "Aśokan" *caitya* is an ancient site, whose oral history traces the foundation back to King Aśoka's visit to Nepal in the third century B.C.E. I Bahī, also known as Yampī Bahī, in this neighborhood, is probably one of the most ancient and important *bahīs* in Patan. Its history includes the legendary establishment by its founder, Śūnyaśrī Miśra from Varanasi who came from India during the Licchavi period.[13]

Example of *Bahī* Architecture: Cā Bahī, Kathmandu

One of the oldest monasteries in the Valley that is traditionally believed to have been founded by Cārumatī, daughter of King Aśoka, Cā Bahī typifies *bahī* architecture (Figs. 2.8 and 2.9). This *bahī* is located in Deopatan in Kathmandu to the west of the large Dhandyo *caitya,* among the earliest *caityas* in the Valley. Cā Bahī is a two-storied structure built around a quadrangular courtyard, with a Licchavi-period *caitya* placed at the center. Situated along a north-south axis, as found in most *bāhās/bahīs* of the Valley, the entrance door is at the north end, with the main shrine wall on the south. As is typical in *bahī* architecture, the circumambulatory passage (*pradakṣīnāpatha)* goes around the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine and the side walls on the ground floor have an open walkway supported by pillars. Beyond that

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is a series of small rooms that now house Theravāda monks residing there during their monsoon rain retreats.[14]

The central courtyard has numerous votive *caityas,* with a group of five Licchavi *caityas* directly in front of the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine designated collectively as "the" principal *caitya* (Fig. 2.10). The present configuration of the group of five Licchavi *caityas* as a unified unit in the form of a *maṇḍala* is a later reconstruction, although the *caitya* at the center of this group appears to be part of the original *bahī* plan. Among other votive *caityas* is a *sarvatobhava caitya* from the Licchavi period, which is crowned by a small *stupa*, which is morphologically identical with the Svayambhū Mahācaitya. Four standing Buddhas are depicted in the cardinal directions on the *caitya*. According to the local Newar tradition, these standing Buddhas represent the Four Manuśi Buddhas of each *yuga*.

The *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine doorway is surmounted by an inscribed wooden *toraṇa*, dated N.S. 777 (1767 CE).[15] The iconography of the *toraṇa* depicts the five Jina Buddhas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, who are easily identified by their *vāhanas* and attributes (Fig. 2.11). The central figure is the eight-armed form of Akṣobhya, painted blue and flanked by two Bodhisattvas (Fig. 2.12). The four Jina Buddhas of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala surround him, comprising Ratnasambhava (viewer's lower left), Vairocana (viewer's upper left), Amitābha (viewer's upper right), and Amoghasiddhi (viewer's lower right). As is standard in Newar Buddhist

iconography, the *toraṇa* is crowned by the figure of Vajrasattva. The *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* image is the red form of Avalokiteśvara, popularly known as Karuṇāmaya.

Access to the second floor is possible by a single staircase on the northeast corner. On the second level, the plan mirrors the lower floor, with an open verandah on all four sides that are covered by lattice windows and small cell-like rooms beyond that. Directly above the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine are the three shrines reserved for esoteric worship (Fig. 2.13). The small shrine room in the east is reserved for the goddess Kumārī associated with this *bahī*. As the physical manifestation of Vajravārāhī, who is also the *āgaṁ* deity of Ca Bahī, Kumārī is chosen among the daughters of the *saṅgha* members of *bahī*. Kumārī's worship is thus connected to the *āgaṁ* shrine deities. The shrines directly above the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* houses a small red image of Vajrayoginī, again a form of Vajravārāhī, which I was allowed to see and photograph. The main *āgaṁ* shrine is located in the southwest corner, and is dedicated to Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī[16] (Fig. 2.14). The iconography of the exterior doorway represents the four animal-faced gate guardians of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala (Kākāsya, Ullukāsya, Svānāysa, and Śukrāsya), painted on the outside of the door. As is typical of many *āgaṁ* doorways, the polychromed wooden *toraṇa* depicts Vajrasattva at the center, surrounded by four red *yoginī* figures from the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. Above the *āgaṁ* is

a small shrine-like cupola, at a vertical axis over the main *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine.

Variations of this *bahī* plan are found in Kathmandu and Patan, as in Pintu Bahī and I Bāhā Bahī, where the entire floor consists of a continuous open hall, without the smaller dividing rooms. However, the distinctive element of the detached *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine remains a standard feature of all *bahīs.*

Relationship Between *Bahī* and *Bāhā* Architecture

The physical location and structural plan of the *bahīs* suggest both their antiquity and their likely function as housing for a somewhat reclusive celibate monastic community. Oral history and inscriptional evidence in the Kathmandu Valley also allude to the association of the *bahī* with celibate monasticism.[17] In the contemporary context, the *bahīs* in Patan continue to maintain their tradition and the memory of a celibate monastic institution. The Patan *bahī saṅgha* still refers to itself as *brahmācārya bhikṣus* ["celibate monks"], recalling their former status as celibate monks. By the sixteenth century, however, Malla inscriptions mention married *brahmācārya bhikṣus* in references to the *saṅgha,* suggesting that the celibate traditions of the *brahmācārya bhikṣus* had already been transformed to that of a householder monk.[18] Yet, even in the contemporary context, the *bahīs* continue to see

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themselves as distinct from the *bāhās,* both as social institutions and in their function.

As a separate class of monastery, the *bahī saṅghas* are not numerous, constituting approximately 5.4% of the Buddhist *saṅghas* in the Valley.[19] Unlike the *bāhās* that have sub-branches, called "descendent" or branch *bāhā (kācā bāhā)*, the *bahī*s do not have a tradition of such institutions. In contrast to the *bāhās* where the *saṅgha* of each institution is independent, the members of all the *bahī*s in each city belong to an overall joint membership of the *sarva-saṅgha.* It can be inferred that the *bahī saṅgha* considered their status as celibate monkhood to be a defining feature. Similarly, analyzing the socio-religious developments, that *bahī*s did not evolve branch institutions, can be a direct result of the institution's *saṅgha* of celibate monks, while the emphasis of the "branch" institutions of the *bāhās* could reflect situations born out of practical necessity. As the married "monks" of the *bāhā saṅgha* settled in new locations, it required the building of a "branch" institution, through which the *saṅgha* members continued to maintain ritual connections to the "main" *bāhā.* As will be discussed later in this chapter, the connection of a branch *bāhā* and main *(mū) bāhā* is affirmed through the tradition of lineage deities. Thus, the "branch" institutions also point to core differences in the *saṅgha* membership between the *bāhā* and *bahī* institutions.

MANIFESTING THE MAŅDALA:
A STUDY OF THE CORE ICONOGRAPHIC PROGRAM
OF
NEWAR BUDDHIST MONASTERIES
IN NEPAL

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DISSERTATION

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By

Dina Bangdel, M.A.

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Dissertation Committee:

Professor John C. Huntington, Co-Adviser

Professor Susan L. Huntington, Co-Adviser

Professor Howard Crane

Professor Thomas Kasulis

Approved by

Susan L. Huntington

Co-Advisers

Department of History of Art

The two aspects—that the *bahīs* have no branches and their communal identity as *"sarva sangha"* regardless of the physical locations of the institutions—suggest that *bahīs* are significantly distinct from *bāhās* as institutions for celibate monks.[20] Ritual traditions provide further evidence that the *bahīs* are distinguished from the *bāhās*. The *bahī sangha* does not require the services of the Vajrācārya priest; instead, one of the *bahīs sangha* members, who is a *Śākya-bhikṣu*, receives the *ācāluegu* ("making of an *ācārya*") initiation. Ordinarily, this empowerment into priesthood is solely reserved for the Vajrācārya caste group, as a life-cycle ceremony. The ordination of the *ācāluegu* qualifies thus the *bahī* priest to perform the duties required of a Vajrācārya, such as officiating in life-cycle monastic ordination initiations (*bare chuegu*) and death (*srāddha*) rituals related to the *bahī*. However, there is one major limitation: The *bahī* "Vajrācārya" priest, who is essentially a Śākya, can perform his priestly duties only within the *bahī sangha*, and is not allowed to take private patrons (*jajmān*), as would a Vajrācārya ritual specialist.[21] This distinction of conferring the *ācārya abhiśekha* to a *Śākya-bhikṣu* in the *bahī sangha* also points to inherent institutional differences in the two monastic traditions.

Among the practitioners, there is an implicit understanding of the differences between *bāhās* and *bahīs*, based on their religious emphasis, architectural structure, and *sangha* organization. Contemporary oral history also confirms the *bahīs* as a separate class of monastery and *sangha* The

bahī organization emphasizes the Śravakayāna path with the *arhat* as the ideal, emphasizing celibate monasticism. On the other hand, the *bāhā* organization follows Mahāyāna/Vajrayāna, the paths of the married householders. Many of my informants repeatedly voiced this popular understanding, stating that when Buddhism was open to all communities without the hereditary emphasis of contemporary Newar society, the *bahīs* were institutions where the practitioners received their initial training and lived as celibate *bhikṣus*. After their primary fundamental Buddhalogical training (*prāthamika śikṣā*), they then entered the *bāhās* to receive higher education and initiations into the Mahāyāna/Vajrayāna paths.[22]

The distinctions between the Śravakayāna and Vajrayāna traditions are already present by the thirteenth century. By the Malla period, inscriptions referred to *bāhās* as *sāṁsārika tāntrika vihāra* ("worldly Tantric monastery") that were inhabited by married *Śākya-bhikṣus*. In contrast, the *bahīs* were called *nirvaṇika vanaprasta vihāra* ("other-worldly forest-dwelling [wandering] monastery"), and described as inhabited by *brahmācārya bhikṣus*.[23] Such inscriptional as well as socio-religious traditions provide testimony to two significant points. First, the *bahī* institution was clearly different from the *bāhā*, most likely a celibate monastic tradition, as attested by their physical location, relatively simplicity of architectural form, and contemporary ritual tradition. Second, both the *bahī* and *bāhā* traditions existed side by side. Further, at one time, the two

were probably contemporaneous, although, as known from other information, the celibate *bahī saṅgha* changed to a community of married householder. However, the ritual and architectural distinctions between the two institutions remain separate.

BĀHĀ ARCHITECTURE

The open pillared hallways and small rooms of the *bahīs* served a functional purpose in the teaching at the celibate monastic institution. In fact, many *bahīs* are now often used as primary schools. The architectural structure of a *bāhā*, in contrast, reflects the ritual needs of the married householder. Whereas the *bahī* structure has consistently maintained a simple, austere appearance with minimal embellishment, *bāhās,* in contrast, are much more elaborate, with a profusion of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna deities represented on the shrine facade. Through the generous offerings of the lay *saṅgha* members, the *bāhās* effectively use the sacred space and rich visual imagery as a unified whole to convey their buddhalogical meaning and symbolic function in the community. Although certain core iconographic elements are consistent in *bāhā* architecture, as will be shown in this study, the degree of embellishment varies, depending on the wealth and patronage of the *bāhā*. I highlight here the standard features of an idealized *mū* (main) *bāhā* and the iconographic components central to this study.

As in the *bahī* plan, the *bāhā* is built around a quadrangular courtyard (*chok*), with the entrance door facing the shrine facade (Fig. 2.15). Although an east/west axis is ritually more auspicious, particularly since Buddhist *maṇḍalas* begin at the eastern side, most *bāhās* in the Valley, however, are placed on a north/south axis, with the shrine facade facing north. A pair of male and female lions usually flanks the exterior doorway, which is often surmounted by *toraṇa*, made of wood, metal, or stone. The *toraṇa* is often inscribed and dated, and serves as an important visual document that provides clues to the overall iconographic program of *bāhās*. Among the popular iconographic themes is the Buddha/Dharma/Saṅgha triad, where the Buddha, most often Śākyamuni, is shown flanked by Prajñāpāramitā as the embodiment of *dharma* and Ṣaḍakṣarī Lokeśvara, signifying the *saṅgha*. Other *toraṇa* iconographic themes include esoteric forms of Mañjuśrī, such as Nāmasaṅgīti and Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, both of which will be key to the iconographic analysis presented in this study.

Inside the entrance door is the vestibule or foyer with benches (*phalāñcā*) on either side that serve as a meeting place for the community to gather and socialize. As is standard in *bāhā* iconography, the foyer walls have images of Gaṇeśa (viewer's right) and Mahākāla (viewer's left), the guardians of the sacred space in Newar Buddhism. One enters inside, where a small flight of steps leads into the recessed interior courtyard (see Fig. 1.1). This serves as the sacred ritual area, with votive and ritual objects such as

caityas, maṇḍalas, yajñākuṇḍas, and *vajras*, usually placed along an axis to the shrine.

As in *bahīs,* three required components are mandatory elements of *bāhā* architecture, specifically, the principal *caitya, kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* and the Tantric *āgam* shrines. Although there may be several votive *caityas* in the courtyard, the *bāhā* offers special worship to one that is designated as the principal *caitya* (*mū/mula caitya*). In theory, this *caitya* is consecrated at the time of the *bāhā's* formal establishment, although it may be physically constructed at a later date. In the older *bāhās,* the principal *caitya* is referred to as "Aśoka *caitya*", and dates from the time of King Aśoka's reputed visit to the Valley (Fig. 2.16). Through repeated offerings of whitewash, these "Aśoka *caityas*" are often transformed into formless white mounds. Interestingly, many of the principal *caityas* in *mū bāhās* and older monasteries, particularly in Kathmandu, have similar "Aśoka *caityas*", establishing a "claim" to the antiquity of the *bāhā* establishment. Although the innumerable offerings of whitewash generally make these *caityas* impossible to date, the main *caityas* are, nonetheless, the principal source of worship and vivifying power of the *bāhās.* For example, the whitewashed "Kanaka *caitya*" of Jana Bāhā / Seto Matsyendranāth Temple, is a prime example of an ancient *caitya*, which is traditionally held to contain the relics of Kanakamuni Buddha (Fig. 2.17). Rituals at the site also point to the

primacy given to the *caitya,* where each day the white-washed *caitya* receives the first offerings of the day, before the main shrine image is worshipped.

The evidence of ritual and structural elements suggests that the *bāhā* is conceptually designed around the principal *caitya.* The *stūpa,* from the earliest layer of Buddhism has been an integral component of monastic architecture, and in the Newar Buddhist context, also signifies the multiple layers meanings—as sacred relic, source of power, object of worship, and quintessential symbol of the Buddhist *dharma* and the Enlightenment process. In particular as sacred relic (*dhātu*), the principal *caitya* in the central *bāhā* courtyards serves as the vivifying source and primary object of worship.

In *bāhā* architecture, the shrine façade of the *kvāhpāh dyah* is located opposite the entrance door and is generally a multi-storied structure, as shown from the example at Chusyā Bāhā (Figs. 2.18 and 2.19). As in the *bahīs,* the lower level houses the non-Tantric exoteric *kvāhpāh dyah,* whose shrine is open to the entire Buddhist community. The shrine and the main image are often lavishly embellished with jewelry, clothing, and other offerings given by the lay community (Fig 2.20). In the *bāhās* that I surveyed, the shrine image was always an exoteric image, most often Śākyamuni in *bhumisparśamudrā,* Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya or Dipāṅkara

The members of the *sangha* of each *bāhā* take turns serving as priest/god-guardian (*dyaḥpāla)* in the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine. The current Newarī term, *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ,* is derived from the older Sanskrit term, *koṣṭhapāla* ["guardian of room"], as found in a fourteenth-century inscription.[24] Locke has rightly observed that the current usage of the term *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* means "guardian of the *bāhā / sangha*", and is also called *kvāḥpāḥ āju* ["guardian grandfather"]. My informants also acknowledged this understanding, and ritual practices further reinforced this concept. For example, during the Dharmadhātu *pūjā* where I served as the *jajmān,* I gave offering to the ten elders (*āju*) of Hā Bāhā at the *pūjā's* conclusion. An additional offering plate was set aside for the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* image, who was one of the *sangha* elders in his role as the senior guardian or *kvāḥpāḥ āju.*

In most *bāhās,* the exoteric *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine and esoteric *āgaṁ* shrine are generally demarcated in two levels. The second level, directly above the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* contains the third required element of *bāhā* architecture: the Tantric *āgaṁ* shrine. As in the *bahīs,* the *āgaṁ* enshrines the most esoteric Tantric deities of the Highest (*Anuttara*) Yoga Tantras, such as Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī, Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍākinī, or Hevajra/Nairātmā. Entrance to the shrine is restricted to the initiated members of the *bāhā,* and, specifically, to those who have received higher initiation (*dīkṣā*). The ritual worship is confined to the elders of the *bāhā,* specifically to the senior-most Vajrācārya member (*Cakreśvara).* The higher

initiations (*dīkṣā*) also take place in the *āgaṁ* shrine. On the exterior facade, a five-fold window that symbolizes the five Tathāgatas (Pañca Jinas), typically marks the *āgaṁ* shrine. Although in most *bāhās* the *āgaṁ* is above the *kvāhpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine, there are instances where the *āgaṁ* is in the *digī,* the gathering area for the *saṅgha,* opposite the shrine facade.[25] This suggests that the physical location of the *āgaṁ* is not the determining factor, although, its presence is a mandatory element of *bāhā/bahī* architecture.

Other secondary shrines in a *bāhā* may include a shrine to Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara, and shrines to Nāsadyaḥ (Śiva as Lord of Dance) and Viśvakarma. Furthermore, a Vajrasattva shrine is required of all *bāhās* that have a Vajrācārya *saṅgha,* particularly in the Patan *bāhās.* An empty shrine-like cupola at the top storey symbolizes the essence of *śūnyatā* and the *dharmakāya*—the state of Enlightenment. The roofs are often crowned by miniature metal *caityas,* which informants have often identified as representations of Svayambhū Mahācaitya, the ontological source of Newar Buddhism.

In the *bāhās,* the shrine facade is the most important structural component for iconographic study, since the visual imagery present is most often part of the original iconographic program. The three sides on the ground floor are open halls, sometimes covered by lattice windows. The upper levels of the courtyard walls are separate apartment-like rooms, with no interconnecting doors or passageways. In the larger *bāhā* complexes, the

side courtyard walls are still used as residences, although traditionally only the "monastic" householder castes of the Vajrācāryas and Śākyas were permitted to live within the confines of the *bāhās.* The architectural transformation from the cell-like rooms of the *bahīs,* appropriate for celibate monasticism, to the larger independent units for the married householder, clearly reflects the functional needs of the Newar Buddhist community.

Two significant iconographic elements are the *toraṇa* and strut figures. Over the doorways, both on the exterior and interior shrine door, the *toraṇa* figures provide clues to the main themes present in the iconographic program. Similarly, the upper stories of the shrine facade are supported by decorative struts that generally depicting multi-armed Tantric figures. The strut figures are significant iconographic components of *bāhā* architecture, and articulate technical meditational practices of Tantric Buddhism. For the struts, the Jina Buddhas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography are among the popular themes. Other frequent iconographic groups found among strut figures are deities associated with auspiciousness or protective functions, such as the Offering Goddesses, Pañcarakṣās, Daśakrodha Bhairavas, or Aṣṭamaṅgala Devīs. In some *bāhās,* such as Chusyā Bāhā, Musyā Bāhā, and Khuñ Bāhā in Kathmandu, the courtyard walls are entirely supported by strut figures. In such cases, the strut iconography reflects a unified iconographic program that pertains to a specific Tantric meditational cycle. The presence of a consistent iconographic program also allows the

bāhā's sacred space to be interpreted within the larger Buddhist framework—as a constructed three-dimensional *maṇḍala,* which I will show in the subsequent chapters. For the analysis presented in this study, the *toraṇa* and strut iconography will be the primary resources to contextualize this conceptual understanding.

Bāhā as Three-Dimensional Maṇḍala

The three core architectural elements—principal *caitya, kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ,* and *āgaṁ* shrine—define and vivify the ritual environment of the *bāhās.* Architectural treatises on *bāhā* constructions and ritual specialists state that the Buddhist deities are invoked and invited to create the sacred environment. Textual references allude to the *bāhā*'s sacred space as being carefully constructed to conform to the ritual requirements to represent both Mt. Meru and a *maṇḍala.*[25] These concepts are actualized during consecration rituals,[27] and are further reified by the iconographic programs of the *bāhās.* In consecrating a *bāhā,* the initial ground plan is literally laid out in a *maṇḍalic* grid-like pattern of nine by nine squares into which eight-one deities are ritually invoked. At the center of this sacred space resides Vairocana and it is at this spot that the principal *caitya* is placed. The physical location of principal caitya at the center of the courtyard structurally mirrors a *maṇḍala,* further emphasizes its role as the vivifying source of the sacred environment.[28]

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Other discretionary elements in structure, such as the *toraṇa* and strut figures, are integral to the creation of the ritual space since they articulate, in visual form, the ideological constructs of religious architecture. Thus, the core iconographic program and the individual iconographic components should be identified and deciphered to understand fully the construction of sacred space in Newar Buddhism

As will be shown in this study, textual sources, visual imagery, and the ritual practices continually emphasize and define the *bāhā's* sacred *maṇḍalic* environment. As symbolic center of all religious activities, the *bāhā* also becomes the perfect "stage" in which the Buddhist practitioners affirm their religious identity. More importantly, the *bāhā* provides the necessary environment to attain the soteriological goals of Buddhism. Hence, traditional accounts consider "*vihāras*" to be established for:

> . . . . the benefit, happiness and peace of the Buddhist community and sentient beings, to provide education and initiation to all, to improve one's thinking and knowledge from the beginning, middle and end, and to increase manifold the pure rule of the Buddhist *dharma*. Thus, in conceptualized ritually in the form of the purified land, this is a sacred meritorious space (*puñyabhūmi*).[29]

Ancient *Bāhā Establishments* and their Relationship to the Rock-Cut Architecture at Guṁ Bāhā, Śāṅkhu

Licchavi inscriptions, dating from the fifth to ninth centuries C.E., state that there were at least fourteen *vihāras* established in the Licchavi

period.[30] Although the Licchavi kings were primarily Hindu, inscriptions refer to Buddhist monasteries founded by royal patronage and grants, such as Māna Vihāra built by King Mānadeva, Rāja Vihāra by Aṃsuvarmā, the Syengu Bahā at Svayambhū Mahācaitya by Vṛṣadeva, and Guṁ Vihāra, also a royal foundation, but without attribution to a specific king.[31] The inscriptions often distinguish these royal foundations as *"rāja vihāra"*, contrasting them to the *sāmanya vihāra,* "ordinary monastery", which, mostly likely, had been established by lay patrons.[32] Even at this early date, the *vihāras* were often granted large tracts of land, the income of which supported the financial upkeep of these institutions. Today, in the contemporary context, the *bāhās* are closely involved with a complex land grant system (*guthi*) that continues to provide their primary source of revenue.

Of the ancient *vihāras* mentioned in Licchavi inscriptions, only Guṁ Vihāra still exists. Known by its contemporary name, Guṁ Bāhā, this *bāhā* is located on the hilltop at Śānkhu, where it shares the sacred confines with the "Vajrayoginī" shrine, an important Tantric Śakta site for both Hindu and Buddhist practitioners (Fig. 2.21). Throughout the centuries, the site has remained an important religious center, with significant royal patronage of the Malla as well as Śāha kings. All that remains of the original structure of the *bāhā* is an ancient stone *caitya,* although the remnants of Licchavi caityas found in the courtyard indicate the antiquity of the site. Called

"Dharmadhātu Caitya" in the contemporary context, the *stūpa* is now enshrined in a two-storied temple that was later built in the sixteenth century and is situated to the east of the "Vajrayoginī" shrine (Fig. 2.22). The iconographic elements of the shrine, in particular the *toraṇa* and strut figures, reflect the complex Tantric Buddhist soteriological methodologies of sixteenth-century Newar Buddhism. For example, the strut figures represent the Daśakrodha Bhairavas, who are generally paired with the Aṣṭamātṛkās, while the *toraṇas* in the cardinal directions depict the Pañcarakṣās, the five protective goddesses of Buddhism. In this context, the goddesses are represented both as fully Enlightened Buddhas and as female emanations of the Pañca Buddhas. While the iconography of the temple reiterates some of the key iconographic themes found in *bāhā* architecture, it is the enshrined *caitya* that provides clues to the primacy of *stūpas* in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

Morphologically, the form of the *caitya* (Fig. 2.23) shaped out of natural rock, is reminiscent of the ancient Indian *stūpas,* such as Stupa I at Sanci, with a low hemispheric mound.[33] In fact, remains of other rock-cut *caityas* are found in ruins around the area, indicating that this may be the earliest extant example of rock-cut architecture in Nepal. Like ancient rock-cut traditions in India, the Guṁ Bāhā complex also has several small rock-cut caves that are shaped from the rock outcropping. A large cave, located on the north side, is a two-roomed structure, with the larger outer room leading to a

smaller chamber (Figs. 2.24 and 2.25).[34] The smaller room may have been used for meditation, as the intimate confined space does not allow more than one or two persons to sit comfortably. The carefully carved doorway of this rock-cut structure reflects a post-and-lintel construction of wooden architecture. Other smaller caves are found in the immediate vicinity and some are still used by Tibetan monks for their retreat. Similarly, remnants of early rock-cut *caityas* that are morphologically similar to the early *stūpa* traditions in India are found half-buried along the side of the path that leads up to the temple. The abundance of the rock-cut tradition, which is not as prevalent in the later periods of Nepali history, suggests that this site may have been related to Indian Buddhist monasticism and clearly pre-dates the Licchavi period.

Although nothing remains of the ancient monastic community, the stone *caitya* and surrounding rock-cut architecture may provide insight to ideological motivations behind the significance of *caityas* in Newar Buddhist monastic architecture. If Guṁ Bāhā provides an extant example of ancient *vihāra* architecture, several significant points may be inferred in reference to the preeminence of *caityas* in *bāhā/bahī* architecture. In the ancient Indian Buddhist centers like Sānci, the monastic community was built around the *stūpa,* and, hence, the entire site was sanctified through the presence of the relic. At Sānci I, it is believed that the relic was specifically that of Śākyamuni, and in the larger Buddhist context, every single *stūpa*

symbolically and inherently contains the relics of the Buddha. The tradition of *stūpa* veneration continued in Indian Buddhism even in the ninth-tenth centuries, where the great monastic complexes like Nālandā and Vikramśilā had *stūpas* that vivified and sanctified the religious institutions.[35]

In Nepal, extant material culture, such as the *caitya* at Gum̐ Bāhā, as well as the contemporary traditions of *bāhās/bahīs*, indicate a religious continuity in the establishment of monastic architecture around the principal *caitya*. For example, at Gum̐ Bāhā, the monastic community appears to have been located around the rock-cut *stūpa*. In local history, the *caitya* is a natural self-manifest rock (*"svayambhū"*) and is referred to as Dharmadhātu Caitya, reminiscent of the epithet of Svayambhū, the premier *stūpa* of the Valley. The Gum̐ Bāhā *caitya*'s sanctity is further amplified in the contemporary context, since the structure's morphological form serves as visual and symbolic reference to Svayambhū Mahācaitya. In the ritual practices, Gum̐ Bāhā *caitya*'s primacy is continually defined and emphasized, since the *stūpa* has to be first worshipped before one can pay respects to the adjoining shrine of "Vajrayoginī". Additional inscriptional evidence in the *bahī*, such as the references to *gandhakuṭi* and *gandhuri devatā* as the *bahī*'s *kvāhpāh dyah* image, also allude to the principal *caitya* as the central focus of worship, as was true in the rock-cut *caitya* halls in the Indian Buddhist tradition.

In analyzing the Newar Buddhist monastic architecture, it may be inferred that the same religious paradigm of Indian Buddhism remains the fundamental inspiration for the construction of *bāhās* and *bahīs*. As their ground plan clearly suggests, the interior courtyard and *kvāhpāh dyah* shrines are conceptually built around the principal *caitya*. As evidenced by the continuity of Indian Buddhist traditions, the principal *stūpa* not only vivifies the site but is also the locus of power of the "monastic" and lay community of Newar Buddhism. I will use this premise in the subsequent chapters to propose a symbolic relationship between the principal *caitya* and the Svayambhū Mahācaitya in the Newar Buddhist context.

BRANCH (*KACA*) *BĀHĀS*

The third category of monastic architecture is branch *bāhās* (*kācā bāhā*), a classification that applies only to *bāhās,* and not to *bahīs.* Structurally, the branch *bāhās* are similar to the larger main *bāhās,* although the branch units are generally not as impressive and may not have the rich iconographic elements present in many of the *mū bāhās* (Fig. 2.26). In theory, the three basic components required of the *mū bāhās* should also be present in a branch *bāhā.* However, most often, the principal *caitya* and *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine are the only two elements present in the branch *bāhā.* As an institution, the branch *bāhās* may help understand the concept of lineage descent as well as migration pattern among the married *saṅgha* that

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resulted in the tradition of establishing branch *bāhās*.[36] I will return to this point again in the discussion of lineage deities.

As a rule, *mū bāhās* have independent *saṅghas* of Vajrācāryas and Śākyas with their governing body of initiated elders (*āju, sthāvīra*). The elders (either a group of five or ten) oversee the initiation and life-cycle rituals (*bare chuegu* and *ācāluegu*) among the *saṅgha* at the respective institutions. In contrast, the branch institutions are not independent, but are ritually connected to the main *bāhā* through the patrilineal descent of *saṅgha* members.[37] Theoretically, as married members moved to different locations, new *bāhās* were built, while the *saṅgha* still maintained ritual alliances to the original *bāhā*. This was defined through a common lineage deity or the *mū bāhā*'s *kvāhpāh dyah* serving as the lineage deity. In fact, many branch *bāhās* have rather generic names, *Nhu Bāhā*, which simply means "new *bāhā*".

Branch *bāhās* are often subdivided into two broad categories: official and independent. In actual practice, however, there is enormous flexibility in defining these categories, and there appears to be no set rule regarding what constitutes a branch *bāhā*. *Mū bāhās*, in theory, recognize *kaca bāhā* as officially affiliated because the *saṅgha* members descended from the members of the main *bāhā saṅgha*. Yet, at times, "official" branches, as in Kvā Bāhā, are actually independent foundations that perform independent initiation ceremonies and have a separate *saṅgha* and lineage deity. They have no

official connection to the main *bāhā*. In such cases, the branch affiliation is only in name, and become "independent" branch *bāhās* of a given institution. Very often, because of the small size of the *saṅgha,* such independent *bāhās* are reduced to having the minimal elements of *bāhā* architecture—with simply a *caitya* and shrine in a small private courtyard. In other cases, branch *bāhā*s may not even have a *saṅgha* attached to these institutions, frequently because of the members dying out. In such circumstances, the daily rituals are generally performed either by the *dyaḥpāla* of the main *bāhā* or the residents living in the courtyard.

Other "official" branches, on the other hand, have a clearly defined *saṅgha,* all of whom are seen as descendents from a common ancestor and traced to the main bāhā. Yet, even these branches function independently from the main *bāhās,* in that they have their own rituals, festivals, and priestly duties to act as *dyaḥpāla* in their own branch institution, but not at *mū* bāhā. This is particularly evident of the thirty-two branches of Uku Bāhā in Patan, the *bāhā* having the largest number of branch *bāhās* in the Valley. In other cases, "official" branch *bāhās* are entirely private, established by a family for their personal use, once they moved away from the locality of the main *bāhā*.

In Patan, there is also a category of independent *bāhās* that do not have a *bare saṅgha* of Vajrācāryas and Śākyas, nonetheless, are associated with the lay community. Such *bāhās* are established by lay Buddhist

patrons, many of whom belong to castes that are generally Hindu. Hauga Bāhā is one such example of the larger independent *bāhā* that belongs to the Hindu Rājkarṇikār caste of sweetmakers (see Fig. 1.4). However, *nitya pūjā* ("daily worship") there is performed by the Vajrācāryas from Cuka and Hyana Bāhā, and are given an annual stipend for their services.[38] Similarly, a number of smaller *bāhās* are established by the Jyāpus castes, which were then turned over to the Vajrācāryas for daily worship and ritual. Examples are Pilāñche Bāhā, Tadhañ Bāhā, and Pāṇḍā Bāhā, whose *pūjās* are performed by the Vajrācāryas from Bhinche Bāhā, and become its branches. Most interesting are the *bāhās* belonging to the non-Buddhist castes such as the Hindu Śreṣṭhas. Icchā Bāhā Nani, is a branch of Ta Bāhā belong to the Śreṣṭhas, who established it as their private shrine in the sixteenth century, although the rituals are performed by Vajrācārya priests from Ta Bāhā.[39]

Another example of the complex nature of branch *bāhā* and their associated *saṅgha* membership is that of Nhu Bāhā, a branch of Kvā Bāhā, Patan. According to inscriptions dated N.S.457 and N.S. 482 (C.E 1337 and 1362), the branch *bāhā* was established by the Hindu caste of Pradhānāngas.[40] It is clear from these inscriptions that from at least the early Malla period, the Pradhāns or *pradhānāṅga mahāpātra bhāro,* as they were referred to in inscriptions, were important Hindu nobility who extensively patronized Buddhism and established their own private *bāhās.* This group serves major patrons of Kvā Bāhā, functioning as *jajmāns* for

principal rituals, as indicated by the inscriptions found on begging bowls at Kvā Bāhā, dated N.S. 656.[41]

These examples of different types of branch *bāhās* indicate that there was, and still is, a great deal of flexibility in personal religious preferences, particularly among the lay practitioners, despite the broad caste-based religious distinctions attributed to Newar society. The phenomenon of branch *bāhā* institutions suggest that the strict dichotomous distinctions between Hindu and Buddhist castes and their religious affiliations, must be evaluated with the larger socio-religious circumstances. In other words, caste categories, in the Newar Buddhist tradition, do not follow the strict religious affiliation of Hindu versus Buddhist. While some, such as the Vajrācārya, Śākya and *uray,* maintain a strictly Buddhist identity, religious identity is more ambiguous for others. As indicated by the *bāhās*, castes such as the Prādhāns, Sthāpits, Dhākvās, Śresthas, and to some, extent, the Jyāpus are Hindu castes; yet, they are major patrons of Buddhist institutions. It may then be inferred that while caste defines one's social status in society, it is not always a determinant of personal religious identity. Such intriguing evidence calls for a more inclusive interpretation of caste categories and religious identity in Newar society.

Lineage Deities

In each *bāhā* or *bahī,* there are three categories of deities related to the distinctive functions of worship related to the *saṅgha.* These are exoteric shrine deity (*kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ*), Tantric deity (*āgaṁ dyaḥ*), and the lineage deity (*digu dyaḥ/kuladevatā/iṣṭadevatā*).[42] Daily ritual *pūjās* of the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ,* most commonly Śākyamuni, is the privilege of the *saṅgha,* where the rotation of the role as caretaker (*dyaḥ pālas*) is generally based on seniority of initiation.[43] In contrast, *pūjās* and access to the Tantric *āgaṁ* deity are confined to the governing body of elders (*ājus, thakālī*) who have taken *dīkṣā* initiation. The senior-most Vajrācārya, called Cakreśvara, is generally responsible for the Tantric *diśī pūjā* during each month in the *āgaṁ* shrine, although the other *ājus* take turns to act as *jajmāns* for the *āgaṁ pūjā.*[44] The third category, *digu dyaḥ,* is an important deity in Newar society for both the Hindus and Buddhists. As *saṅgha* members of a *bāhā* trace their lineage to a common ancestor, they also acknowledge a common lineage deity that is worshipped annually by all members. In the Newar Buddhist tradition, a lineage deity (*digu dyaḥ*) is the central source of power for the extended family (*kula*). There is an intimate connection between the family and the *digu dyaḥ,* (also known in Nepali as *kula devatā*), since the extended family is brought together through the familial associations with this deity. Thus, the members are symbolically connected as direct "descendants" of the lineage deity.

From a sociological standpoint, the lineage deity may also suggest migration patterns and trace the links among the *bāhās*, particularly, in cases, where the lineage deities are situated outside a town or village.[45] This is particularly true of the *bāhās,* which trace their lineage deities to another part of town or even outside the city limits. In many cases, lineage deities are generally traced to a specific locale, such as "Vajrayoginī" of Śāṅkhu, Yogāṁvara of Mhepi (Figs 2.27 and. 2.28), the Mahācaitya at Svayambhū (see Fig. 1.2) or the enshrined *caitya* at Kvā Bāhā, as will be discussed in Chapter Three. When a *bāhā saṅgha* moves to another location, the lineage deity, as the source of the family power, protection, and well being, is similarly "brought" to a more centralized location or to the new place of residence.

The concept of "bringing" or "pulling" a deity (*dyaḥ sāliyu*) to a new location is of singular importance in Newar society, in both the Hindu and Buddhist context. In my research, I have found that the transferring of lineage deities from an "original" specific location to a new one serves two critical purposes. One, it acknowledges the deity as prime seat of power; and, second, "bringing" / inviting the deity to the new locus sanctifies the space and assures the well-being of the individual or family to effectively function within the ordered space. Through the efficacy of their *mantras* and *siddhi,* ritual specialists, like the Vajrācāryas, invoke, or "bring" deities to be present at a new place, while they still reside in their permanent homes. The lineage

deities brought to the new homes are not "surrogates" or "replicas" of the original deity; rather, the deities "brought" to their new homes are a direct extension of the power source.

"Bringing" or invoking these lineage deities to the new location serves as a symbolic transfer of power from the primary center to new centers of power.[46] For example, the goddess "Vajrayoginī" at Śānkhu is the lineage deity for many *bāhās* in Kathmandu and the Kathmandu inhabitants. She was "brought" to Lam Bāhā in Paknājol.[47] Although her annual lineage worship is held at her "new" home, it is preferable to visit her in her original primary location at Śānkhu.[48]

I found that there are two broad patterns of lineage deities. For many *bāhās*, the lineage deity is either a *caitya* or a female deity, whose location is often a *mātṛkā pīṭha.* The *caitya,* as lineage deity, invariably refers to the Svayambhū Mahācaitya as the primordial *stūpa* of Newar Buddhism (Fig. 2.29 and 2.30). The lineage *caityas,* such as the Dharmadhātu *caitya* at Guṁ Bāhā, the Svayambhū caitya at Kvā Bāhā, the Dhum Bāhā *caitya* at Patan, can therefore be designated as "descendant *caityas*" of "original/primordial" Svayambhū Mahācaitya. In each of these cases, the Mahācaitya is either symbolically "brought" to reside in these new locations, and/or symbolically connected to the cosmogonic myth of the Mahācaitya. In this understanding, the secondary *caityas* are not surrogates, but function symbolically as *the* prime source of power. These *caityas*, in essence, are realized as part of the

whole, which, in the case of Newar Buddhism, goes back to the primordial *caitya,* Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

The second category of lineage deities of the *bāhās* are female *pīṭha devatās* ("seat-goddess"). The most popular of these Tantric goddesses are "Vajrayoginī" or specifically Khaḍgayoginī of Śāṅkhu (see Fig. 2.23) and Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍakinī of Mhepi (see Fig. 2.27).[49] It is noteworthy that although many *bāhās* identify their lineage deity as the *yoginī* at Śāṅkhu, the actual annual lineage *pūjā* is generally performed at the enshrined *caitya* at Guṁ Bāhā. Only the secondary rituals to "Vajrayoginī" are performed in her surrogate shrine at Paknājol.[50] Similarly, the Yogāṁvara shrine at Mhepi is one of the major lineage as well as Tantric deities of the *bāhās*. Foremost, it is a *mātṛkā pīṭha,* and in the Buddhist context, it is dedicated to Yogāṁvara's *prajñā,* Jñānaḍakinī, variously known as Mhepi Ajimā ("grandmother of Mhepi"). Alternately in the Hindu/Śākta context, she is the Māheśvarī, one of the Aṣṭamātṛkā *pīṭhas.*

As illustrated by the two cases, the lineage deities at these sites appear to have a dual seats of power, with one of them associated with the goddess, thereby reflecting a fundamental aspect of Newar Buddhist Tantric practices. There appears to be a pattern in that lineage deities of the *bāhās* are often associated with a specific sites, such as Khaḍgayoginī or Mhepi, that inherently symbolize a dual seats of power (male and female), with the goddesses playing a significant role as is appropriate in the Tantric tradition.

Although by definition, any deity can be "brought" to reside in a new home, the female deities are most suitable to be invoked to reside in a *kalaśa* and then "brought" to a new residence.[51] The association of the lineage female deities and the *kalaśa* invocation is a significant aspect of the religion. This aspect goes back to the ontological roots of the religion, specifically in reference to Guhyeśvarī, the primordial goddess of Newar Buddhism, who manifests herself in the form of a *kalaśa*. This idea will be further developed in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7.

A key theme related to the lineage deities and their physical placement within the city-limits, thus, is the concept of "center" versus "periphery", the complexities and nuances of which have yet to be fully explored in current scholarship. The "bringing" of the locus of power physically to the center especially pertains to the female deities in the Valley, particularly the *mātṛkā pīṭhas*, which are situated in the periphery of the cities of the Valley. Invited from their primordial homes, these goddesses are then "brought" to reside at the city center. Here, the goddesses are invoked into *kalaśas*, images or in pre-pubescent girls (*kumārī*) and then reside in their *dyocheñ*, "house of the gods" inside the boundaries of the city. The physical presence of the goddess, within the confines of the city, ritually transfers their power from the periphery to the center, thus creating new "centers" of power.[52] In terms of the ritual significance, the *pīṭhas* located at the periphery are symbolic centers and sources of power, despite their physical location.[53]

What may be significant to understand is the inversion of the concepts of "center" and "periphery, in that the shrine's symbolic centrality does not mirror its physical location at the periphery. In other words, "bringing" of the goddess into the center of the city thus constitutes a creation of multiple centers of power, with the source of power centered at the periphery. While in their original locale, the goddesses' powers are open to all, yet in invoking the deity and "bringing" the deity to the center, the power is harnessed and focused by a particular group or individual.

A common element in both these categories of lineage deities—the Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the *mātṛkā pīṭhas*—is that the lineage deity is a self-manifest or self-arisen (*"svayambhū"*) deity, whose power and primordial nature is intrinsic and transcends human construction. In this way, both Svayambhū Mahācaitya, as the "self-arisen" *caitya,* and the *mātṛkā pīṭhas,* as self-manifest "seats", appear to be the most potent and appropriate symbols as lineage deities.

SECTION II: "PLAYERS"

The Buddhist *Saṅgha:* "Initiated" and "Lay" Communities

As in many cultures throughout South Asia, Newar society is similarly bounded by caste and caste becomes a major factor in the definition of religious identity. A discussion of Newar Buddhism's uniqueness invariably includes Newar Buddhism's hierarchy of a caste system, the lack of a celibate

monastic community, and the Tantric Buddhist tradition that is defined by the privileges of patrilineal descent. Perhaps a more appropriate way to characterize the religion may be to highlight the ways in which the practitioners have maintained the Buddhist ideology in an environment where some of the basic structures of Buddhism (such as celibate monasticism and rejection of the caste system) seem to work against the needs of the community. Its uniqueness, therefore, lies in the ways in which the practitioners have redefined and transformed certain cultural categories and their meanings, such as the caste system or the concept of monkshood. These culturally-defined developments are based on fundamental Buddhist ideologies, and enable the Buddhist practitioners to function within the social structures that are inherently Indic.

This section will discuss the "players"—the Buddhist practitioners who define the religion. Rather than approach this section in terms of caste categories, I will examine the social role of the Buddhist practitioners as the "initiated" and "lay" communities. Anthropologists have long studied the caste structures in the Hindu and Buddhist Newar communities and have proposed various models to analyze the conceptual hierarchies of caste.[54] Using the model of Hindu caste structures, scholars have often conceptualized the Newar Buddhist caste hierarchy as a single hierarchic progression, with the highest priestly castes at the top and the lowest castes at the bottom. In contrast, the indigenous Newar framework understands

the caste system to work within broad complimentary and interrelated categories that inherently maintains Buddhist ideologies. The two categories are: (1) the "monastic" *sangha*, who constitute the "initiated" community and (2) the entire population of Buddhist practitioners, who make up the laity (*upāśaka*). This distinction between the initiated and non-initiated (lay) community is a fundamental dualism that pervades all aspects of Newar Buddhist religious life and their symbiotic relationship becomes fully evident within the parameters of the *bāhās* organization.

INITIATED "MONASTIC" COMMUNITY

The Vajrācāryas and Śākyas are the two Buddhist castes that undergo "monastic" initiation and constitute the "monastic community" (*sangha)* of the *bāhās* and *bahīs*. As practitioners of the Vajrayāna path, who are undertake the highly esoteric initiations (*dīkṣā*), they are also distinguished as the "initiated / monastic" community. As married householders belonging to specific castes, the Vajrācārya and Śākya castes understand their "monastic" status as an idealized construct, one that is legitimized through the Vajrayānā framework. However, despite the "caste" designation, their status as "monks", although married, is articulated in their initiations into the Buddhist community as well through rituals performed in the *bāhā* context.[55]

The Vajrācārya and Śākya castes (*saṅgha*) receive monastic ordination as a passage-rite ceremony in early childhood and their ritual status as a monk is repeatedly affirmed in the community. The *bāhā saṅgha*, as a caste group, is generally referred to as *bande, bare* or *bandyeju,* whose etymological root is related to the Sanskrit term, *vande* or *vandanā,* meaning "those who are worthy of respect" i.e. Buddhist monks.[56] They are the highest caste groups in the Newar Buddhist community, yet their primary status is that of a monk. Within the caste group, there is an implied hierarchy, in that the Vajrācāryas, by virtue of their title as "*vajra*-master," hold the position of power as Tantric priests and ritual specialists. The Śākyas' foremost identity is that of a monk, and, although they can perform the rituals in the *bāhā* context, Śākyas are not allowed to function as Tantric ritual specialists in the community.

Historically, the Śākyas have used various honorific titles that reflect their monastic status and symbolic association with Śākyamuni. For example, the Śākya castes of the Valley consider themselves descendants of Śākyamuni's clan of the Śākyas of Kapilavastu. Recalling this honored heritage, they are also formally called *Śākyavaṁsa* ("descendants of the Śākya lineage"), *Śākyabhikṣu* ("Śākya / Buddhist monk), *Brahamācārya Bhikṣu* ("celibate monk"), *Cailaka Bhikṣu* ("*caitya monk*"). The terms Śākyabhikṣu and Śākyavaṁsa were often extensively used inscriptions until

the late Malla period, although in the contemporary context these *saṅgha* members now simply designated as Śākyas.

The categories, *Cailaka Bhikṣu* and *Buddhācarya,* allude to the developments within the socio-religious structure, when joining the Buddhist saṅgha was much more flexible and not strictly caste defined. The honorific title, *Cailaka Bhikṣus,* for instance, still refers to those members of the community who are not initiated in a *bāhā,* but in front of a *caitya.* These are sons of Vajrācāryas and Śākya fathers and a lower-caste mother, who do not become members of the *bāhā* community and are not entitled the privileges and duties as a initiated *bāhā* member.[57] What is noteworthy here is the role of the *caitya* in conferring this caste group their monastic status.

Vajrācārya as *Guru* and Tantric *Siddha*

In contemporary Newar Buddhism, the Vajrācārya priest is the teacher or *guru* of the community, as the individual who performs the rituals into highest Tantric teachings. As the *vajrācārya* ("Teacher/Master of the Adamantine [Path]") of the Vajrayāna tradition, he is addressed as *gubhāju/guruju* ("respected *guru*"), referring to his role as the initiating teacher. In this context, Vajrācārya fulfills the ideals of the Tantric *siddha* of the Vajrayāna path. As an archetype of the *siddha* and Tantric priest, the Vajra-master possesses the powers and qualifications to invoke, control, and summon deities for the benefit of sentient beings (Fig. 2.31). This symbolic

role is significant for the lay patrons, who employ his services for his superior ritual knowledge and efficacious powers of his *mantras*. The Vajrācārya's Tantric qualifications is evident during the *kalaśa pūjā*, one of the basic rituals of Newar Buddhism, in which the Vajrācārya priest invokes Buddhist deities to temporarily reside in the vase (*kalaśa*) for the duration of the *pūjā* (Fig. 2.32).[58] Further, his powers to control the physical world such as fire, water, and *nāgas,* as well as his ability to perform *homa* rituals distinguish him from the other caste members, such as the Śākyas, who may only act as *dyaḥpālā* ("god-guardian") to the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* in the *bāhā/bahī* context. In theory, the Vajrācāryas, therefore, epitomize the role of the ideal Tantric *siddhas*. They live in this mundane world for the service of humanity and to cater to their more practical and immediate needs, while at the same time, practicing the highest technical yogic meditations and visualization of the Vajrayāna Buddhism.

In his social and ritual roles, the Vajrācārya's dual identity is as Tantric *siddha* and priest is always at play; he, therefore, defines the path of the Vajrayāna tradition. The Vajrācārya embodies the ideal of esoteric and dangerous adamantine path, and empowers and directs the rest of the Buddhist community to function in a Vajrayāna framework. Ritually, in this role as Adamantine teacher, Newar Buddhist texts refer to the Vajrācārya as identical with Vajrasattva. More specifically, he embodies Vajrasattva's form-body (*nirmāṇakāya*), as the teacher of higher Tantric rituals and who

has perfected all knowledge and virtues.[59] Quoting the Tantras, Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, Kathmandu's respected ritual specialist, writes:

> "As *yoga* serves as the basis for the Vajrācārya's knowledge, his body is the replica of all Buddhas (*sarva buddha kāya)* and various parts of his body are the wings of Enlightenment; the head of the Vajrācārya is the head of the Five *Kulas* [Five Jinas]; his feet are the *pīṭhas* of the mundane (*laukika*) world and the light of his body are the secret (*guhya*) deities. Thus, with these qualities of the body is the honored *yogin.*"[60]

The Vajrācārya priest's ritual association with Vajrasattva is key to contextualizing the ubiquitous representations of Vajrasattva in Newar Buddhist visual imagery. This identity is nowhere clearer than in an inscribed image of Vajrācārya Guṇajyoti from Chusyā Bāhā, Kathmandu dated 1634 C.E. (Fig. 2.33). Here, the priest is iconographically identical to Vajrasattva, with his right hand holding a *vajra* on his chest, while his left holds a *ghaṇṭā* silenced against his thigh.

LAY COMMUNITY (*UPĀSAKA*)

While the Vajrācāryas and Śākyas are strictly defined as the "monastic" community, there is some fluidity as to what castes constitutes the "lay" community. The Buddhist identity of the Śākyas and Vajrācāryas is never in question, as their *"bare"* status is invested as a life-cycle ritual.[61] In general, the Buddhist laity (*upāsaka*) constitute the *uray* castes or trading community in Kathmandu and Patan. As a caste group, they are seen as

unequivocal Buddhists, who support the *saṅgha* as well as the religious activities of the *bāhās.* These include the castes of the Tulādhars (traders), Sthāpits, Kansākār, Silpakār, Āwa, Mānandhar, and Rājkarnikār. These castes are qualified to receive Tantric Buddhist initiations *(dīkṣā/dekha)* and *(nikhāñ)* to allow them to function within the Vajrayāna path.[62] Further, initiation/life-cycle rites to adulthood *(kayta pūjā)* also defines the identity of the *uray* community as Buddhist.[63]

However, for other lay practitioners also making up the *upāśaka saṅgha* ("lay *saṅgha*"), religious identity is slightly more ambiguous and goes beyond the broad caste-based socio-religious distinctions.[64] For example, Tāmrākārs, Pradhāns, Jośis are generally Hindu Newar caste groups of the Kṣetriya ranks, yet are allowed Tantric Buddhist initiation.[65] Furthermore, many of these individuals are also avid patrons in Buddhist monasteries. The most telling example is at Thāṁ Bahī in Thamel, which does not have a *bare saṅgha* belongs to the Pradhāns of the *cha thare* Śreṣṭha castes. [66] Although a Hindu caste group, the Pradhāns of Thāṁ Bahī receive Buddhist initiation *(kayta pūjā)* and are married at the monastery by a Vajrācārya priest from Kvā Bāhā in Kathmandu. In addition, their lineage deity is the principal *caitya* in the courtyard, and they worship also the Kvā Bāhā Kumārī in their personal *āgaṁ cheñ,* located to the north of the *bāhā.* Furthermore, that the Kathmandu royal Kumārī also visits Thāṁ Bahī on several occasions throughout the festival year suggest the Pradhāns as major

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patrons of Buddhism. Further, the worship of the Kumārī in the Buddhist environment suggests that the Pradhāns receive the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhi initiations, since Kumārī, in the Newar Buddhist context, is the physical emanation of Vajravārāhī.

It is noteworthy that the *dyaḥ pālas* of the *bahī* are not the Pradhāns, but two men from the *pañca thare* Hindu Śrestha castes, who are given life-cycle (*bare chuegu*) initiation to serve as the Buddhist *saṅgha* of the *bahī*.[67] Although Thām Bahī is an exceptional case among the monasteries in the Valley, the situation, nonetheless, articulates complexity of the problem of religious identity that goes beyond the simple boundaries of caste categories.

A similar case is the Jyāpus castes. Anthropologists have often categorized the Jyāpu, or farmer community of the Valley, as Hindus, although their family priest is usually a Vajrācārya. However, their initiation into adulthood (*kayta pūjā*) is performed for three days in front of prominent Buddhist *caityas*, specifically, at Kāthesimbhu ("Svayambhū of Kathmandu") and at Svayambhū Mahācaitya. During Kārttika Purṇimā festival, the uninitiated Jyāpu boys of the Maharjan community come to Svayambhū after having spent the earlier day doing *pūjā* at Kāthesimbhu in Kathmandu. The Buddhist initiation/passage rite takes place in front of the Amitābha shrine on the west side, after extensive *kalaśa pūjā* and *homa* rituals performed by the Vajrācārya priest (Fig. 2.34). The ceremony concludes by performing a special *pūjā* at the esoteric shrine in Śāntipur.

The Jyāpu caste's ritual to adulthood is clearly performed in Buddhist environment and may be indicative of their religious identity as a Buddhist. However, they are also equally involved in many indigenous Newar festivals, particularly those related to the female goddesses of the Valley.[68]

In light of such cases where there appears to be an apparent fluidity in personal religious preferences that goes beyond caste distinctions, several questions arise. How then does one define a lay Buddhist practitioner? Does religious identity depend on the nature of Tantric initiation privileges, or initiation/passage rite ceremonies performed at a Buddhist site, or by employing a Vajrācārya priest during rituals? Are caste distinctions a major determinant of religious identity? Such problematic issues of religious identity that relate to the Newar practitioners are similarly transferred over to classification of the pantheon—an issue that is vital to the study of visual imagery.[69] If Hindus and Buddhists equally propitiate a deity, what then is the deity's religious identity? Scholars have persisted in using rather limiting categories of "Hindu" and "Buddhist" deities. However, as will be shown in this study, the Newar Buddhist pantheon is extremely rich, and includes deities that have been generally categorized as "Hindu".

This is particularly true of the goddesses of the Valley, specifically in reference to Tantric female deities (*mātṛkās, yoginīs,* and *Aṣṭamātṛkās*) such as Guhyeśvarī or Vajrayoginī, who are propitiated by both Hindus and Buddhists alike. The power of the *mātṛkā pīṭhas, yoginī* shrines, other

'dangerous' female deities are shared and recognized by the Tantric traditions of the Hindus, Buddhists, and Śāktas. Since these goddesses are very much part of the Newar Buddhist imagery and pantheon, in this study, I will use an alternate category, based on the religious methodology, i.e., Tantric vs. non-Tantric. I find that this distinction more useful in contextualizing the role of these deities, as the Tantric emphasis is common to all three traditions: Hindu, Buddhist and Śākta. Sectarian identity for both devotees and deities may thus be to distinguish between Tantric and non-Tantric contexts. The *tantric* emphasis entails the use of "impure" [*tamsik*] substances, emphasis on the female as methodology, *yogic* meditation, while *non-Tantric* relates to deities and ritual utilizing "pure" [*sāttvik*] substances pertaining to the "main stream" traditions. The distinction of these two categories is a fundamental premise of this study.

It may be inferred that since the Tantric tradition, by definition, transcends the rigid boundaries of castes and social hierarchies, Tantric initiation allows the Newars entry into a sphere that is otherwise restricted to the outsider, regardless of sectarian affiliation. For those embracing the path of Tantra and acknowledging the power of the Tantric deities, the religious identity of both the devotees and deities lies in the heart of the practitioners and their actions.

SECTION III: "ACTIONS"

To contextualize the works of art found in the *bāhā/bahīs* within the socio-religious context, I will examine here how ritual actions bring together the "players" in the created "stage". In this section, I will discuss three types of rituals and their connection to the religious architecture: (1) the pūjās performed in the *bāhās;* (2) the rituals of the initiated community, both life-cycle rites and initiations, specifically as it relates to the three architectural components; and (3) rituals performed by the lay community.

RITUALS OF *BĀHĀS* AND *BAHĪS*

Among the most impressive Buddhist monuments in the Valley, Kvā Bāhā in Patan epitomizes the *bāhā* as ritual and ceremonial centers of the Buddhist community (Fig. 2.35). In Patan, Kvā Bāhā is the religious focus of daily devotion for the Buddhist community, where hundreds of devotees visit the monastery in the mornings and evenings to offer personal expressions of worship and respect. Daily rituals usually begin between 3 and 5 AM at the main shrine, administered by the *dyaḥ pāla* ["god-guardian"], while the *bhajan khala* ["singing group/organization"] chants the *Nāmasaṅgīti* text in front of shrine and the central Svayambhū *caitya*. At the end of the morning ritual, a hollow wooden log *(gaṅbhasin gaṅ)* is struck 108 times to summon the practitioners for the official worship of the main shrine image of Śākyamuni. Each day until about 9 AM, streams of devotees continue to

arrive and offer *pūjā* to the main shrine image and circumambulate the enshrined Svayambhū *caitya* at the center of the courtyard. While the *dyaḥ pālas* proceed with ritual activities throughout the day, the evening *pūjā* of lighting the lamps (*āratī*) is again joined by large number of lay devotees, who gather in front of the shrine to recite *dhāraṇīs* and sing devotional songs.

During special *pūjā* days, such as the tenth day of the month (*daśamī*), the full moon (*pūñhe),* the new moon (*saṅkrāntī*), or the entire festival month of Guñlā, the *bāhā* is even more alive with all forms of religious activities. While some devotees circumambulate the central *caitya* and offer their daily *pūjā*, others may take *darśan* of the sacred *Aṣṭasahasrīkā Prajñāpāramitā* text that is often displayed at the side of the main shrine. On other occasions, Vajrācārya priests perform *homas* at the request of a patron, or conduct the life-cycle initiation rites for the *saṅgha* in front of the *caitya,* while lay devotees may conclude their annual fast (*vratapūjā)* and participate in a communal worship to popular deities, such as Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara or Vasundharā. Perhaps the most impressive *bāhā* festival is the annual feast, when almost four thousand of the *saṅgha* members gather to pay respects to their lineage deity, the Bāhā's central Svayambhū *caitya*.

Such acts of devotion and faith on the part of the Buddhist practitioners are similarly found in the larger, more active *bāhās* and *bahīs* of Kathmandu and Patan, and to less obvious degree, in the smaller *bāhās* and *bahīs* throughout the Valley. These meritorious activities illustrate the

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importance of the *bāhās* and *bahīs* as the ritual foci of the Buddhist community. These structures serve not only to strengthen the religious identity of the Buddhist practitioners in a primarily Hindu society, but, more importantly, they help affirm the distinct socio-religious roles of the "monastic" *saṅgha* and the lay *upāsaka* community—a distinction that is as fundamental to Newar Buddhism as it is to other traditional Buddhist societies.

As the ritual and ceremonial centers of the community, the Buddhist monasteries are used for many different purposes, such as communal *pūjās*, personal offerings, life-cycle initiation rituals, or even wedding feasts. Nonetheless, the *bāhās* and *bahīs* have five required *pūjās* that must be performed by the Vajrācārya and Śākya *saṅgha* members. These are the *nitya pūjā* ("daily worship') to the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine; the monthly *pūjā* at the Tantric *āgam* shrine; the annual *pūjā* to commemorate the consecration of *bāhā* (*bāhā pūjā*); the annual *pūjā* to the *caityas* to commemorate its consecration *(caitya pūjā);* and the annual month-long Guñlā Dharma *pūjā,* which clarifies the relationship of the "monastic *saṅgha*" to the laity.[70] The first three *pūjās* relate directly to the required structural components, namely the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine, *āgam* shrine, and principal *caitya.*

1. *Nitya Pūjā* at the *Kvāhpāh Dyah* Shrine

As the two highest castes of Newar Buddhism who perform *pūjās,* the Vajrācāryas and the Śākyas are often called the "priestly castes", paralleling the Hindu social structure of the Brahman priest at the top of the hierarchy. This classification emerges from the fact that both castes perform public *pūjās* in some form or another. The Vajrācāryas and Śākyas, as the monastic *saṅgha* of the *bāhas,* are required to perform the *pūjā* to the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine. The daily rituals (*nitya pūjā*) of the main shrine deity (*kvāhpāh dyah*) are required of entire *bāhā saṅgha* through a system of rotation and order of seniority. In this capacity, they are referred to as *dyah pāla* or "god-guardian" and their functions are to provide the appropriate care throughout the day to the deities by offerings of flower, water, incense, fruit, and prayer (Fig. 2.36). In the contemporary context, only the larger *bāhas* like Kvā Bāhā in Patan and Jana Bāhā in Kathmandu maintain the elaborate *nitya pūjā* rituals throughout the day; in many smaller *bāhas,* the *nitya pūjā* is often a matter of obligation and done in a perfunctory manner, or in some cases, none at all, if the monastery courtyard has been sold and the *saṅgha* members have moved away.

An important distinction here is understanding the priestly role as *dyah pāla.* This title, given to the Vajrācāryas and Śākyas during their *nitya pūjā* term, is not specific to Buddhism, but is also used in the Hindu and Śakta contexts. The Hindu lower castes or untouchables, for instance,

are often the *dyaḥ pālas* or caretakers of the Aṣṭamātṛkā *pīthas* located in the periphery of the cities. The distinction here is that a *dyahpāla* is never referred to as *purohita,* or priest. With this understanding, Śākyas can be the "guardian of the deity" (*dyahpāla),* however, they are never the ritual specialists of the community—a role that is reserved solely for the practicing Vajrācārya priest. To the Newar Buddhist practitioner, the Vajrācārya is the Tantric priest of the community, as only he has the qualifications to perform the powerful ritual acts of invoking and summoning deities during rituals. A *bhikṣu* (here, specifically a Śākya) does not have the empowerment of the ritual implements (*vajra/ghaṇṭā*) to invoke the deities and to perform the *homa* ritual. Only, the *ācāluegu* consecration ("making of an *ācārya*) marks the Vajrācārya's status as family priest (*purohita*), who may take hereditary patrons (*jajmāns*).[71] In contrast, their ritual role as god-guardians and caretakers (*dyahpālas*) is obligatory and related to their responsibility as members of a larger monastic community.

2. *Disī Pūjā* at the Tantric *Āgaṁ* shrine

Pūjā in the highly esoteric *āgaṁ* shrine is a mandatory ritual, and restricted to the elders (*ājus*) of the *bāhās* who have received higher Tantric initiation (*dīkṣā*). On the tenth day of the dark half of each month (*kṛṣṇa daśamī),* a special *pūjā* known as *Disī (Daśamī) Pūjā* is performed by the seniormost *āju* in most *bāhās.* The *Disī pūjā* is performed in secret to the

deities of the Anuttara Yoga Tantras that are popular in Newar Buddhism, such as Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī, Hevajra/Nairātmā, and Yogāṃvara/Jñānaḍakinī. In Newar Buddhism, *Diśī pūjā* is also intimately connected with the cosmogonic myth, as it re-enacts and commemorates the secret teaching lineage of the Cakrasaṃvara cycle from Guru Mañjuśrī to the practicing Vajrācāryas.[72] I will further examine this ritual connection in Chapter Six.

3. Annual Bāhā Pūjā (Busadhan) to the Principal Caitya

This *pūjā* commemorates the establishment of the *bāhā* and is, most often, directly related to the installation of the principal *caitya,* which is, in theory, consecrated during the establishment of the *bāhā.* The entire *saṅgha* members gather for this *pūjā,* which requires a special *homa* ceremony. Often, the other *caityas* in the inner courtyard are also anointed with mustard oil and small butter lamps are lit around them. The *saṅgha* afterwards partakes in an elaborate feast prepared at the *bāhā.*

That the annual *bāhā pūjā* is directly related to the principal *caitya* provides further evidence for my proposition that the *stūpa* is the source of power and vivifying element of the sacred space.

4. Annual *Caitya Pūjā*

An important ritual that involves both the *saṅgha* and the laity is the annual *caitya pūjā,* in which all the monasteries are visited and the courtyard *caityas* worshipped (Figs. 2.37 and 2.38). In Kathmandu, the festival procession starts at Svayambhū and circumambulates 128 *bāhās* of Kathmandu.[73] In Patan, sixteen of the eighteen *mū bāhās* are visited physically, thus ritually circumambulating the entire city. The ritual procedures allude to Svayambhū as the primordial source for *caityas* and *caitya* construction. The procession culminates at Ta Bāhā in front of the large *caitya,* which the Newar Buddhists of Patan consider to be a symbolic surrogate of Svayambhū Mahācaitya and refer to as *Svayambhū Bhagavān.*[74] For the Buddhist practitioners in Patan, performing rituals at *caityas* that are symbolically consecrated as Svayambhū Mahācaitya provide equal merit as a visit Ādi Buddha Svayambhū in his primordial site.

5. Guñlā Dharma Pūjā

The month-long religious activities during the monsoon season are called *Guñlā Dharma pūjās,* in which the *bāhās* become the focus of worship. Devotees start their morning *pūjā* at Svayambhū Mahācaitya, then visit the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrines of their respective cities of Kathmandu, Patan or Bhaktapur. As will be discussed later in this section, the rituals of the Guñlā

month such as *Matayā, bāhā dyaḥ boye, Pañcadāna,* strengthen the symbiotic relationship between the "monastic" community and the laity.

RITUAL ACTIONS OF THE LAY COMMUNITY

The laity sustain the Newar Buddhist religious activities in the *bāhā/bahīs.* With the presupposition that enlightenment is open to all, the Newar Buddhist laity wholeheartedly embrace the Mahāyāna path in many aspects of their religious lives, through acts of worship (*pūjā*), gift-giving (*dāna*), pilgrimage (*tīrthas*), fasting (*vratas*), life-cycle rites (*saṁskāra*) and public festivals (*jātrā*). These actions are seen as cultivating skillful means (*upāya*) and compassion (*karuṇā)* and allow the practitioners to follow the *bodhisattva* path in the Mahāyāna tradition. At a more basic level, these meritorious acts also provide auspicious results (*phala*) and merit (*puñya*) to ensure rebirth in the Buddhist paradise.

For the lay Buddhist community, the Mahāyāna ideals are fulfilled through the various religious activities centered on the *saṅgha* and the *bāhās.* Although spiritual progress towards enlightenment is the desired soteriological goal, for the average Buddhist practitioner gaining merit (*puñya)* through acts of devotion is of primary import. Worship and veneration to the Svayambhū Mahācaitya, and to non-Tantric exoteric deities, especially Śākyamuni and Eight Great Bodhisattvas (*Aṣṭamahābodhisattvas*) are meritorious acts that ensure rebirth in paradise.

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In particular, Amitābha, the Buddha of the Western Paradise who presides over Bhadrakalpa, becomes the focus of popular devotion, with the hope of gaining rebirth in his western paradise of Sukhāvatī. Similarly, Avalokiteśvara, popularly called Karuṇāmaya ("Embodiment of Compassion"), is one of the most important deities in the Valley. His annual festival (*jātrā*) is symbolically connected to the bringing of seasonal rains and talismanic protection of the *nāgas* in the Valley.[75] Another aspect through which the laity actively participate in religious activities are annual *vratapūjās* such as those dedicated to Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara and Vasundharā (Figs. 2.39 and 2.40). These *pūjās* are most often organized by the *bāhā saṅgha,* becoming events where the entire community participates.

The laity's rituals emphasize selfless action and these meritorious acts of *pūjās* express the Mahāyāna ideal of universal salvation. Ritual pilgrimages and *vratas* are not only desired for personal well-being and auspicious results, but are to be performed as altruistic actions for the salvation of all sentient beings. The statement of intent, (*saṅkalpa*), at the beginning of each ritual begins solemn promise that the benefits of the *pūjā* is not simply for the offerer, but ensures *puñya* and spiritual advancement for all.

> [I thus offer this *pūjā*] for the protection and salvation of brother, sons and daughters, and all the members of the family; desiring for the body free of disease and lives filled with riches; desiring the attainment of auspicious results; for the destruction of all sins of negative actions committed consciously or unconsciously; for the cessation of numerous fears

(*rājābhaya, caubhaya, agnyābhaya, paracakrabhaya, aṣṭamahābhaya*); for the purification of the body, speech and mind, wishing for the seven-fold increase of auspicious results and four categories (*dharma, artha, kāma, mokṣa*); for the immediate fulfillment of individual aspiration. Thus through the merit (punya) accrued, desiring the salvation of all sentient beings, the final highest transcendent wisdom (*samyaksambodhi jñāna*).[76]

For the laity, Newar Buddhism appears to maintain the Mahāyāna ideology on two distinct levels. First is the popular religion in practice, as understood by the average Newar Buddhist practitioner, where the Buddhist ideals are maintained through acts of faith and religious activities in relation to the *bāhās/bahīs*. Second is the formal religious soteriology, where the complex Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna methodologies are articulated in the ritual practices and visual imagery. This pertains to the informed practitioners of the religion, who have a thorough understanding of the philosophical and doctrinal frameworks of Tantric Buddhism. These two distinctions are also key in the analysis of visual imagery.

LiFE-CYCLE RITUALS OF THE "INITIATED" COMMUNITY

In the Newar Buddhist community, the ritual actions performed within the *bāhās* define the roles of the initiated "monastic" community and the lay practitioners (*upāśaka*). The initiation rituals of the Vajrācāryas and Śākya performed at the *bāhās* reinforce their roles as Buddhist monks. The three architectural elements—the principal *caitya,* the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine,

āgaṁ shrine—have strong ritual function in the Vajrācārya and Śākya initiation and life-cycle rites.

The Buddhist rituals of the "initiated" community consist of three categories of rituals: *bare-chuegu* ("making of the monk"), *ācā luegu* ("making of the Vajra-master"), and *dīkṣā* (Tantric empowerment). Of these rituals, *bare-chuegu* and *ācā luegu* are mandatory life-cycle rituals, while *dīkṣā* is the higher Tantric initiation to Cakrasaṁvara, which is optional. The life-cycle ceremonies are performed in front of the principal *caitya* and the *kvāhpāh dyaḥ* shrine, while *āgaṁ* shrine serves as the site for the secret esoteric *dīkṣā* initiations.

The rituals of the Buddhist *saṅgha* emphasize the ideological structure of Newar Buddhism, in that they incorporate Śrāvakayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna imagery as an integral to their symbolism. In other words, the initiation rituals replicate the inherent ritual hierarchy, going from the simplest Buddhist rites to increasingly more complex Tantric rituals. I will briefly discuss here the life-cycle rituals of the Buddhist *saṅgha*.

"Making of the Monk": Life-Cycle *Bare Chuegu* Rituals

The ritual called *bare chuegu* or "the making of a monk" is an obligatory life-cycle passage rite for all male members of the Vajrācārya and Śākya castes,[77] It is the formal investiture ceremony into the *bāhā saṅgha,* when the initiate symbolically takes up the life of a celibate monk in the *bāhā*

for four days. This ritual is performed in front of the central *caitya* and the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine, and these architectural elements are essential to the ritual as witnesses to the sacred act. The ritual continually emphasizes the symbols of monastic ordination, thus reinforcing the status of the initiate as monk. These rites include taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha; shaving of hair without leaving a top knot, wearing the mendicant's garb that symbolizes the renunciation of the householder status and caste; and the presentation of staff, begging bowl, and *chattra* (Figs. 2.41 and 2.42). The priest also gives the initiate a new name, saying "You are now a *bhikṣu*" and reads to the initiate the *Pañcaśila* and *Daśaśila,* the rules of disciple for the Buddhist monk. For these four days, he is referred to as *bhikṣu* (monk), lives by begging for alms during the day, and returns to the *bāhā.*

As a "monk", he is now formally part of the Buddhist monastic *saṅgha,* although gives up his attire of a "monk" after a specified time. After the four days are over, the initiate symbolically gives up monastic life and embraces the life of a householder. Stating that it is too difficult to spend life as a *śrāmaṇa* or wandering mendicant, the initiate then removes his robes in a ceremony called *civara kote vidhi,* "the ritual of laying aside the monk's robes", which is performed in the offerer's personal shrine or *āgaṁ.* Then, he is further instructed into the ways of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna, the path of the married householder and takes the *bodhisattva* vow.

It is within the Mahāyāna as well as Vajrayāna framework that the contradictory roles of the Vajrācāryas and Śākyas as married monks are legitimized in Newar Buddhism.[78] The *bodhisattva* vow taken during monastic initiation permits them to live a secular life as married householders, upholding the dharma for the sake of all sentient beings. Like the married monks of the Nyingma tradition in Tibet, Newar Buddhism's monastic community, and especially the Vajrācārya in his principal role as Tantric priest and teacher, perform their religious obligations for the good of the community. In their dual, and seemingly opposing, roles of monk and householder, the Vajrācāryas and Śākyas are exemplars of the selfless acts of the *bodhisattva*, whose lives and actions, to the laity are praiseworthy and should be respected. As monks, they embody the disciplined and restrained way of life, without indulging in extremes; as householders, they serve as a paradigm of the altruistic *bodhisattva*, who cultivates the Ten Perfections to Enlightenment, yet whose actions are aimed for the benefit all sentient beings.

Monastic Status Re-Affirmed Through Bāhā/Bāhīs

During the *bare chuegu*, the initiate gives up the monastic life to that of a married householder. Nonetheless, his symbolic status as "monk" remains with him throughout his life through ritual connections to the *bāhā* organization.[79] One of the most important ways in which the religion

maintains and re-affirms this monastic status is through the *bāhās* and lay community. Similar to situations in Indian Buddhist monastic institutions, the Buddhist monasteries of the *bāhās* depend on the generous patronage of the laity for the upkeep and maintenance of the religious activities.

Although membership into the *bāhā saṅgha* is determined by caste status, these monastic institutions remain the ritual and ceremonial centers of the Buddhism, where *pūjās, vratas*, and daily worship is performed for the benefit of the community. More importantly, the social and religious functions of the *bāhas* mobilize and unify the entire Buddhist community.[80] In these contexts, the laity continually affirm the monastic order of the Vajrācāryas and Śākyas during rituals and festivals. Furthermore, recalling when the monasteries were traditionally great centers of learning and ritual activity, the senior members (*ājus*) of the saṅgha continue to be respected as the religious authorities of the community.

The status of the Vajrācāryas and Śākyas as "monks" is especially re-affirmed by the laity in gift-giving ceremonies during *pūjās* and festivals, particularly during Pañcadāna and Saṃyak (Fig. 2.43 and 2.44). In the Pañcadāna (Five Gift-Offerings) Festival during the holy month Guñlā, the laity give the Vajrācāryas and Śākyas five offerings (*pañca dāna*).[81] These acts not only ensure the accrual of merit (*puñya*) for the practitioners, but also helps perfect the most basic virtue (*dānapāramitā*) of the *bodhisattva* path that is embraced by the lay community. In auspicious occasions, such as

weddings and *pūjās*, or in purificatory rituals pertaining to death such as *śrāddha* rituals, the senior members (*āju*) of the bāhā fulfill their monastic responsibilities by receiving alms, and often represent the entire *sangha* of the *bāhā* to the lay community.[82] Such expressions of respect do not emerge as a result of their high caste status; rather, from their symbolic role as a "monk", connected with monastic institutions (*bāhā/bahī*).

The religious observations during Guñlā, which falls in the months of the heaviest monsoon rains (July-August), focus around the *sangha* and the bāhās. These rituals recall the ancient traditions of the rain retreats, when wandering ascetics took shelter and lived through the support of the lay community. The *bāhās* become the center of religious life during Guñlā, when festivals days such as Pañcadāna (the "gift-giving" to the Vajrācāryas and Śākyas), the *bahī dyaḥ boye* (displaying the deities in the bāhās and bahīs), and Matayā in Patan (circumambulating the city of Patan by visiting all the bāhās) re-affirm the function of *bāhās* as ritual centers. During the entire month, no major Tantric Buddhist rituals are performed that require fire sacrifice (*homa*) or meat offerings; instead, the focus is towards the non-Tantric forms of worship and non-Tantric deities, emphasizing the Śrāvakayāna path. The holy month of Guñlā, thus, reinforces relationship between the initiated *sangha* and the lay community. Further, the Guñlā Dharma annually reifies the ideal of a traditional Buddhist monastic

community that has been re-interpreted and re-structured into the Newar Buddhist *saṅgha* and *vihāra*, as we know it today.

TANTRIC INITIATION RITUALS

Tantric initiation rituals allow and prepare the practitioners for the technical meditational practices that are fundamental to Vajrayāna Buddhism. In Nepal, Tantric initiations are separated under two broad categories: one, initiations that are obligatory and given as part of the life-cycle rituals of the *saṅgha*; and two, optional higher Tantric initiation. In both cases, the accessibility to the Tantric initiations are defined by caste.

"Empowerment of the Tantric Teacher": Life-Cycle Initiation of Vajrācāryas

In addition to his role as "monk", a Vajrācārya is the Tantric priest *par excellence*. In addition to the "making of the monk", the life-cycle ritual *ācāluegu* confers the Vajrācārya his ritual status Tantric priest through the five empowerments (*pañcābhiśekha*).[83] The ritual also alludes to his symbolic status as the embodiment of Vajrasattva, "Adamantine-Being." The series of empowerments are highly symbolic of his ritual status as the teacher of the Tantric way. These include the Water-pot Empowerment (*kalaśa abhiśekha*), with which the initiate is ritually purified; the Crown Empowerment (*mukuṭa abhiśekha*), in which he is wears Panca Jina crown, as a symbol of the Enlightenment process; the Vajra Empowerment (*vajra abhiśekha*) in

which he is given the *vajra,* the symbol of *śunyatā;* the Ghaṇṭā Empowerment (*ghaṇṭā abhiśekha*), in which he is given the *ghaṇṭā* and as a pair to the *vajra,* symbolizes the *prajñā / upāya* component of the State of Enlightenment; Name empowerment (*nāma abhiśekha),* in which he is given the name as Vajrasattva, the Adamantine Practitioner; and finally, Vajrācārya Empowerment (*Vajrācārya abhiśekha),* in which he holds the *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* in *vajrahumkara mudra*, in a manner similar to Vajradhara, as the Fully Enlightened Buddha. The ritual implements, *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā*, are the quintessential symbols of Vajrayāna Buddhism and are the iconographic attributes of most Vajrayāna deities. These empowerments, as Vajrācārya's life-cycle rites, are preliminary initiations to Cakrasaṁvara, and allow him to function as the Tantric priest in the *āgaṁ* shrine.

Higher Tantric Initiations: *Dīkṣā*

Subsequent higher initiations called *dīkṣā/dekhā* provide further empowerments into the *maṇḍala* of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, although other Heruka deities such as Hevajra/Nairatmā or Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍākinī are invoked during the initiation. In contrast to the preliminary Vajrayāna initiations to Vajrasattva and Cakrasaṁvara that were included as part of the public *bare chuegu* ceremony, *dīkṣā* is performed in secret, with only other members that have received *dīkṣā* allowed to attended the ritual.[84] Generally, *dīkṣā* initiations are only given at irregular

intervals, and all the eligible members of the community, including the laity, may choose to take the initiation.[85] Once taken, the dīkṣā meditation must be strictly observed every day. Especially for the lay community of the Tulādhars, dīkṣā permits the males to be eligible for special rites performed after death to ensure better rebirth.[86] For the saṅgha members, receiving dīkṣā is required in order to participate in the esoteric rituals performed at the Tantric āgaṁ shrine (either one's personal āgaṁ or the bāhā āgaṁ) or during life-cycle rites such as kumārī pūjā.[87] The higher initiation pūjā is performed in the āgaṁ shrines of the bāhās.[88]

Characteristic of the esoteric Tantric tradition, there is extensive sexual symbolism and a distinct role reversal, in which the women are the active, generating source of power and, thus, play a dominant role in these rituals. During dīkṣā, the women are given primacy and they must complete their respective ritual procedures before the men.[89] During the empowerment ceremony, the women are said to be emotionally expressive and more likely to be dancing and shaking, possessed by the śakti of goddess Vajravārāhī.[90] Similarly, in contrast to the norm whereby the male Vajrācārya priest generally holds position of power, the wife of the main Vajrācārya priest has an equally important, if not the central, role in the ritual. In essence, since the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala is an initiation to a yoginī maṇḍala, the women serve as central generative agent into the Cakrasaṁvara ritual and the initiates present. Typical of the Tantric

teachings, these highly esoteric Tantric *pūjās* involve the active participation of women, while the men are at the receiving end of their power.

HIERARCHY OF TANTRIC RITUALS AND PANTHEON: "OUTER", "SECRET", AND "INNER"

The difference between the higher initiations, such as *dīkṣā* that are done in the secret *āgaṁ* shrine, and the more straightforward rituals as those performed openly the *bāhā* rituals, is in the nature of the rituals. Specifically, these rituals and initiations can be categorized as "exoteric" or esoteric" *pūjās* or empowerments. "Exoteric" rituals are participated in by the entire Buddhist community, without specific initiations or empowerment. These are the exoteric rituals related to the *bāhās,* such as daily and annual *pūjās* to the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine and the principal *caitya.* In contrast, "esoteric" *pūjās* constitute complex Tantric rituals that include sexual symbolism, need of Tantric empowerment, and the reversing of normative categories in terms of the offerings, ritual roles, and imagery. This aspect is also true of the visual arts, in which highly esoteric Tantric imagery is associated with the female imagery and symbolism. These esoteric *pūjās* are connected to the Tantric *āgaṁ pūjās* and include the deities of the Anuttara Yoga Tantras, of which the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala is part. These esoteric rituals are performed in secret and are participated in by the initiated members of the Buddhist *saṅgha.*

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The esoteric Tantric traditions constitute reversing the normative categories in terms of the offerings, ritual roles, and imagery. This aspect is also true of the visual arts, in which highly esoteric Tantric imagery is associated with the female imagery and symbolism.

The Newar Buddhists use three specific terms to articulate the hierarchy of these rituals and deities: outer, secret, and inner. "Outer" (*bāhya*) refers broadly to the non-esoteric rituals, whose worship may be shown openly, while "secret" (*guhya*) rituals are esoteric, but may be permitted to be performed in public in special occasions. The most secret among the Tantric rituals, the "inner" (*abhyantara*) rituals include the highly esoteric *pūjā* to which access is restricted and possible only through initiation.[91] The very term *abhyantara* derives from the term, "inner" room (*abhyantara kvātha*) of the *āgaṁ* shrine or "inner" circle of a *maṇḍala* (*abhyantara maṇḍala*), where the presiding deity resides. It is in the secret and inner rituals that the women figure prominently and 'dangerous' substances such as meat and alcohol are offered.

Just as rituals are distinguished through these classifications and access to them are dictated by the practitioner's initiation, Tantric deities of Newar Buddhism are also classed in this manner, demonstrating progressively higher and more esoteric levels of Tantric expression.

The "outer" (*bāhya*) are deities are represented in their pacific exoteric forms such as the Jina Buddhas, Jina Śaktis, Bodhisattvas, while the *guhya*

or "secret" forms relate to more esoteric deities who may be shown in public. These include Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna deities, such as Vajrasattva, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, Caṇḍamahāroṣana, Vajrayoginī, and Guhyeśvarī. The most esoteric of these categories are the inner (*abhyantara*) deities and refer specifically to the highly esoteric Heruka-class deities of the *āgaṁ* shrines, such as Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī, Yogāmvara/Jñānaḍākinī, and Hevajra/Nairātmā. These are never shown to the public, and practitioners must have received initiation to take part in the ritual.

This three-fold hierarchy, in the nature of esotericism, is a fundamental construct of Newar iconology and in the core iconographic programs of the sacred architecture. The symbolic meaning of the Tantric Buddhist deities, therefore, also involves this conceptual framework, so that many different levels of interpretation can exist at the same time. As I will demonstrate in the imagery of Kvā Bāhā and other *bāhās*, the iconographic imagery found in the Newar Buddhist structures reflect this buddhalogical understanding. For the iconographic analysis that is to follow, I will use the emic categorization of *outer, secret* and *inner* hierarchies to contextualize the symbolic meaning of the visual imagery.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As a methodological approach, I have used here the threefold integration of "sacred architecture", the "practitioners", and the "ritual action" as a framework to understand the complexity of Newar Buddhist visual imagery. This chapter outlined the foundational elements of Newar Buddhist architecture and examined their integration to the socio-religious and ritual environment. These three interrelated components—the sacred structures, their relationship to the socio-religious organizations, and the key rituals—provide the foundation for the iconographic analyses that follow in the subsequent chapters. In the interpretation of Kvā Bāhā's visual imagery, I will discuss the core iconographic imagery in relation to the principal *caitya, kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ*, and the *āgaṁ* shrines. Specifically, how core structural elements correlate directly to the functional aspects of the religion.

In attempting to interpret the religion through Newar frameworks, I hope to show the complexities of the Newar Buddhist religion must be understood as a dynamic construct that is defined by the practitioners and reinterpreted to suit the religious environment. This understanding suggests that Newar Buddhism's complex religious ideologies enable multiple interpretations to exist within a single context, even when certain categories, at times, appear contradictory. In the same way, a successful analysis of Newar Buddhist visual culture must take into account the context of the

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ideological constructs of the religion, since the symbolic language of visual imagery serves as a medium through which the fundamental presuppositions of the religion are expressed.

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[1] As a predominantly Hindu city, Bhaktapur's religious organizations of the *bāhās* and *bahī* are not as well articulated as in the other two cities. Although the core iconographic program discussed in this dissertation also pertains to the Bhaktapur *bāhās,* my iconographic analysis primarily involves the Buddhist monuments of Kathmandu and Patan.

[2] Other Buddhist traditions with married monks are found among the Nyingmā tradition in Tibet.

[3] See John Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of the Kathmandu Valley* for an extensive survey of *bāhās* and *bahīs.*

[4] I will also use this general term to refer to Newar Buddhist monastic architecture.

[5] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of the Kathmandu Valley,* 185-223, 374-395. According to Locke, there are, at present, only twelve functioning *bahīs* in Kathmandu.

[6] In his architectural survey of Nepali architecture, Wolfgang Korn has listed the basic architectural differences between *bahī* and *bāhā* architecture. See Wolfgang Korn, *The Traditional Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley,* Biblioteca Himalayica, Series 2, Vol. 2 (Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1976).

[7] Susan L. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1985), 242.

[8] It is notable that this term is never used to refer to the principal deity of the *bāhās.*

[9] Inscriptions at Jyābā Bahī (N.S. 772), Guitā Bahī (N.S. 778), Cikan Bahī (N.S. 735), Cithun Bahī (N.S. 791) refer to the shrine image as *śrī gāndhurī bhaṭṭāraka.* See Regmi, *Medieval Inscriptions,* vol 3., and Locke, "Unique Features of Newar Buddhism" *The Buddhist Heritage,* 93.

[10] Lain S. Bangdel, *Early Sculptures of Nepal,* 95. In Kathmandu, Hyumattol, Gana Bāhā, and Thāṁ Bahī have yielded ancient sculptures belonging to the Licchavi period. Similarly, in Patan the eastern side of the city has yielded many of the known pre-Licchavi sculptures dating to the first-second centuries CE. It is at these very areas that the *bahīs* are located.

[11] For oral history of Yampī Bahī and Konti Bahī, see Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal,* 125-26.

[12] Lain S. Bangdel, *Early Sculptures of Nepal,* 16-17.

[13] D. Wright, *History of Nepal,* 115-117. This *bahī* is also ritually associated with the bringing of Rāto Matsyendranāth to the Valley.

[14] When I went to Cā Bahī in February 1998, there were major reconstruction was being undertaken by the local *guthis.* Unfortunately, the surrounding cells of the original groundplan had been changed and were converted into a continuous hall, as is typical of the *bāhā/bahī variants* of a later date.

[15] Unless otherwise noted, the readings of the dates are my own.

[16] In my field research experience, this was the only instance where I was allowed to enter the proximity of the *āgaṁ* shrine (although not inside) and permitted to photograph the paintings on *āgaṁ* doorway.

[17] Theodore Riccardi Jr., "Buddhism in Ancient and Early Medieval Nepal," in A.K. Narain, ed., *Studies in History of Buddhism* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corp., 1980), 270.

[18] For example, an inscription of N.S. 635 (1515 C.E.) in Guitā Bahī, Patan refers to "*brahmācārya-bhikṣu*, Śrijakharājajū and his wife Manamāyī." See D.R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, Part III, 104.

[19] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, 515.

[20] Locke, "Unique Features of Newar Buddhism", *The Buddhist Heritage*, 94.

[21] In Kathmandu, one "Vajrācārya" priest from Makhan Bahī serves as the priest for all *bahīs*. In Patan, the twenty-five *bahīs* are divided into two groups: The first group of ten *bahīs* is served by one "Vajrācārya" from Jyābā Bahī, and the second group of fifteen by the "Vajrācārya" priests from Naka Bahī, where they receive their *ācā luegu* initiation. They are called *vajrabhikṣu*. In Patan, they do not use the term, "Buddhācārya / Bauddhācārya", as do the priests in Kathmandu. See Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*.

[22] Personal interview with Tantramuni Brahmācārya Bhikṣu from I Bahī, Patan. Scholars have also remarked that the *bahī saṅgha* are considered by the *bāhā members* to be slightly lower in status and less prestigious than their *bāhā* counterparts. However, my informants in the *bāhās* did not confirm this view.

[23] Locke, "Unique Features of Newar Buddhism", in *The Buddhist Heritage*, 103.

[24] Locke, "Unique Features of Newar Buddhism", in *The Buddhist Heritage*, 103-106.

[25] In some Patan *bāhās*, the actual shrine is above the *digī*, and not directly above the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine, such as in Bu Bāhā, Bhinche Bāhā etc.

[26] Wright, *History of Nepal*, 158.

[27] Personal communication with Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya. He served as the main ritual specialist for *bāhā* consecrations in the contemporary context.

[28] Personal communication from Ratna Kājī Vajrācārya. See also Ratna Kājī Vajrācārya, *Yeṅ Deya Bauddha Pūjā Kriyā vā Halañjvalaṅ* for rituals related to *bāhās* construction.

[29] Hemrāj Śākya, *Śivadeva Saṁskārita Rudravarṇa Mahāvihāra*, 4. My translation.

[30] Dhanavajra Vajrācārya, *Licchavi Kālkā Abhilekha*, preface, no page number.

[31] Dhanavajra Vajrācārya, *Licchavi Kālkā Abhilekha*, 548-62. For an English translation, see also Dilli Raman Regmi, *Inscriptions of Ancient Nepal*.

[32] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, 534.

[33] Although I was permitted to see the *caitya*, photography was not allowed. The *caitya* now is generally covered with a silver repousse cover, however, the morphological form is very similar to Svayambhū Mahācaitya, with the characteristic "eyes" painted in the *hārmikā*, as found in all *caityas* of Nepal.

[34] This rock-cut cave was discovered in 1996 during the field-documentation project from The Ohio State University.

[35] While *stūpas* inherently symbolize Śākyamuni's relics, many small *stūpas* were also erect as votive *caityas* for monks.

[36] That the *bahīs* do not have branch institutions further suggests that *bahīs* were intended to house the celibate monks, while *bāhās* were associated with married householders.

[37] See discussion of branch *bāhās* in Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, 9-10.

[38] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, 229.

[39] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, 140-141.

[40] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, 41-42.

[41] Aki Bāhā, also belonging to the Pradhāns, is a branch of Kvā Bāhā that extensively donated begging bowls, now exhibited during Guñla. Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, 48.

[42] In the Tibetan tradition, the term *iṣṭadevatā/yidam* refers to a chosen deity that is given to the initiate by the *guru*. In Nepal, the lineage deity is also sometimes referred to as *iṣṭadevatā* or *kuladevatā* ("family deity"). However, in the Newar Buddhist context, one is born into the lineage deity relationship.

[43] The term *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* is a popular abbreviation of the word "*kvāḥcāpāla dyaḥ*", meaning "guardian of the *saṅgha*". The term *kvāḥpāḥ āju*, "guardian grandfather/elder," is also used in Patan. The *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* is considered part of the *saṅgha*. Ritual offering given to the elders (*āju*) of the *saṅgha* often include the three deities: the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ*, the *āgaṁ dyaḥ*, and the *digu dyaḥ*.

[44] In a mixed Vajrācārya and Śākyasaṅgha, it is not the senior *āju* that is the Cakreśvara, but Cakreśvara must be the seniormost Vajrācārya empowered to perform the *pūjās* to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, the most common *āgaṁ* deities. In a Śākyasaṅgha, as in Uku Bāhā, the senior elder alone performs the *āgaṁ pūjā*, although the Vajrācāryas from Bu Bāhā are invited to perform *homa* rituals.

[45] The concept of a lineage deity of a family dominates both the Newar and Parbate religious traditions, and the annual worship (*devali*) often means going to the back to the outskirts of the Valley, where the shrine of the lineage deity is located.

[46] It is interesting to note that the original homes of the lineage deities are often located at the physical periphery of cities, while the invoked deities are "brought" to the center of cities in the new locations. This dichotomy of "periphery" (which is conversely the original "center" of power) and "center" (essentially, the new "created center") has some interesting implications that needs to be further explored.

[47] Although the goddess is popularly known as "Vajrayoginī", her proper identification among the four *yoginīs* of the Valley is Khaḍgayoginī.

[48] Locke notes that even when his informants identify the lineage deity as Vajrayoginī from Śānkhu, the main lineage *pūjā*, however, is offered to the *caitya* at Gum Bāhā, while *pūjā* is also offered to Vajrayoginī.

[49] See Chapter 7 for discussion of the *pīṭha-devatās*.

[50] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, 238.

[51] This concept of "bringing" deities in *kalaśas* were alluded to by the ritual specialists.

[52] Of particular significance are the *Aṣṭamātṛkā pīṭhas* in Bhaktapur city, whose *dyocheṅ* are found in the center of the city.

[53] Because the physical location of these powerful *pīṭhas* periphery of the cities, scholars have often tended to emphasize the significance and presence of the *pīṭha-devatās* who are "brought" into the city, often in more tangible anthropomorphic forms and have often neglected to understand that the main source of power lies in the periphery of the city.

[54] As mentioned in Chapter One, anthropologists such as Declan Quigley, David Gellner, Gerard Toffin and Robert Levy have dealt extensively with caste dynamics of Newar society in their works. Of particular significance in recent scholarship is the theoretic model of the caste system as a *maṇḍala*, mirroring the idealized construct of the cities of the Kathmandu Valley. Central in this socio-religious model are the concepts of centrality and periphery, in which the center serves as the location of power (king, palace and high-castes). The periphery implies moving away from the central power, and thus is given an inferior status, and analogous to the low untouchable caste and cremation grounds, who, in fact, live in the city's perpheral boundaries. See Robert Levy, *Mesocosm*; Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*.

[55] In his article, "Buddhism Without Monks: Vajrayāna Religion of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley", *South Asia*, (vol. 2, 1973, 1-14), Michael Allen argues that since Newar Buddhism does not have a monastic community, the Buddhist castes of the Vajrācāryas and

Śākyas have developed into a highly eclectic society, where religious identity is no longer a simple matter monastic ordination. This idea has been influential in earlier scholarship, and, consequently, Newar Buddhism has been often integrated in a Hindu framework. However, the monastic ordination, although symbolic, is built into life-cycle rites of the Vajrācārya and Śākya castes, thus providing an unequivocal testament of their identity as Buddhist "monks", despite their married status.

[56] Hemrāj Śākya, *Rudravarna Mahavihara,* 13.

[57] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal,* 120.

[58] See Ratna Kājī Vajrācārya, *Kalaśārcana Pūjā Vidhi.*

[59] Ratnakājī Vajrācārya, *Newāḥ: Sanskāra Sanskrityā Tāhcāḥ,* 18.

[60] Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, *Buddhism in Nepal,* 28. My translation.

[61] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* 262.

[62] Ratnakājī Vajrācārya, *Newāḥ: Sanskāra Sanskrityā Tāhcāḥ,* 188. Interestingly, Tāmrakars are also included in this classification as Buddhists.

[63] One of my key teachers from Kathmandu, Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, known locally as "Badrīgurju" dedicated most of his services for the benefit of the lay community, including orgarnizing the higher initiations of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī.

[64] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* 43.

[65] The Thirty-Six Saṁvara worship performed in Bijeśvarī in 1982 included four initiated Tāmrakar couples.

[66] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal,* 407.

[67] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal,* 403

[68] The relationship with Newar Buddhism and the *mātṛkās* of the Valley will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

[69] Anthropologists like Gellner, Locke, and Toffin have addressed in their works these problematic issues of caste and its relationship to religious identity. However, in the ordering of the pantheon, the implications of issues need to be examined more thoroughly.

[70] See Locke, *Karuṇāmaya,* for rituals related to Jana Bāhā's *nitya pūjā* and its connections to the Seto Matsyendranāth temple. Also, see Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* regarding rituals in Kvā Bāhā, Patan and the various initiation rituals.

[71] See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest* for details of the initiation rituals.

[72] Herākājī Vajrācārya, ed., *Saṁvarodaya Daśamī (Diśī) Pūjā Vidhi Pustakaṁ,* introduction (no page number).

[73] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal.* 11.

[74] Niels Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya: 1500 Years of Buddhist Votive Architecture in the Kathmandu Valley,* 75.

[75] See Locke, *Karuṇāmaya: The Cult of Avalokiteśvara-Matsyendranāth in the Kathmandu Valley.*

[76] Ratnakājī Vajrācārya, *Kalaśārcanapūjāvidhi* (Kathmandu: Yogamvara Prakashan, 1994, revised edition), 6. My translation.

[77] For a detailed description of the initiation ritual, see John K. Locke, "Newar Buddhist Initiation Rites*",* *Contributions to Nepalese Studies,* vol. 2 (June, 1975), 1-23.

[78] See David Gellner, *Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest* for discussion of the Newar Buddhist ideology of the "Three Ways": Śrāvakayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna.

[79] A slightly different situation is found in contemporary Theravāda Buddhist context of Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, where the ordination into the monastic community is extraordinarily flexible. As in Newar Buddhism, the male members enter the monkshood for a period of time, receiving the highest respect during their status as monks. Yet, once they leave the monastic saṅgha, the Buddhist continue to live a secular life, and, unlike Newar Buddhism, no longer retain their symbolic status as monk. Furthermore, in Southeast Asia, a monk's special station in society is marked by his monastic robes, and shaven head, whereas, in Newar Buddhism, the "monastic" community appears no different than in the lay community. However, traditionally, the *saṅgha* members were required to shave their heads leaving no topknot, symbolic of their monastic status.

[80] The decline of Newar Buddhism in the Kathmandu Valley today can largely be attributed to the breakdown of the *bāhā* institution, where the members sell parts of the *bāhā* courtyard and move away from the community. This is particularly evident in Kathmandu, while Patan, as a predominant Buddhist city, has maintained the *bāhā*s as the central religious foci of their local communities.

[81] Generally, the gift includes husked and unhusked rice, grains, or sweets. Gellner states that the term, *pañcadāna* is etymologically related to the word *puñya-jā* (merit-boiled rice), *pinda-ja* (balls of boiled rice) or *paṇḍāju-jā* (Buddhist priest-rice), suggesting that these were offerings that were meant to substitute the cooked rice traditionally offered to the monks. The more popular understanding of the terms that I am aware of is five (*pañca*) types of alms (dāna) that are offered. See Gellner, *Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest,* 180.

[82] During the Dharmadhātu *pūjā* that I offered at the *digī* of Ha Bāhā, the senior members were offered *dāna* at the end of the ceremony.

[83] See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest* for detailed description of Vajrācārya initiation rituals.

[84] Gellner notes that there are considerably instances when the male members have taken them before marriage. He also gives an excellent summary of the Tantric *dīkṣā* to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī that was performed by Āsā Kāji Vajrācārya, who officiated as main priest in the ritual. See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* 280-288.

[85] In 1995, *dīkṣā* initiation was offered at Ha Bāhā in Patan after more twenty-five years. According to Siddhi Ratna Vajrācārya from Ha Bāhā *saṅgha*, who had been in charge of organizing this elaborate ritual, said that there were about seventy-five initiates. During the initiation, each initiate had go in as a pair—male and female. In January 1998, Kathmandu's foremost Vajrācārya, Badri Ratna Vajrācārya was the chief priest for the Cakrasaṁvara *dīkṣā,* which involved a seclusion of fourteen day for all the initiates.

[86] Lewis, *The Tuladhars of the Kathmandu,* 239.

[87] There is an association in Kathmandu called "Mahāsaṁvara Smārtha Samāj" for the initiates who have received *dīkṣā,* that holds week-long esoteric rituals at Ākāśa Yoginī Temple at Bijeśvarī. In 1982, there was a Thirty-Six Saṁvara Worship, in which 317 people participated. See *Mahāsambar Chattisamat Pūjāya Riport* (Kathmandu: Vijeśvarī Bihār Sudhār Samiti, N.S 1102). For summary of *pūjā,* see also Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* 305-306.

[88] Other less elaborate initiations of Caṇḍamahāroṣana, particularly important for those Vajrācāryas who are Tantric healers, (*vaidya*) may also be taken. In fact, a distinction is made between the Caṇḍamahāroṣana initiation based on the *Karavira [Caṇḍamahāroṣana]* Tantra as *ācāḥ kāye* "receiving initiation of Acala" and the Cakrasaṁvara initiation, based on the *Saṁvarodaya Tantra* as *dekha kāye* "receiving *dīkṣā* [i.e. Cakrasaṁvara / Vajravārāhī]" . See Ratnakaji Vajrācārya, *Newaḥ Samskāra Samskṛtiyā Taḥcā (Cultural Heritage of the Newara),* 17.

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[89] See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, ,* 280-288

[90] During my interviews, the male informants made particular note of this aspect, which they remarked was perfectly in keeping with the ritual at hand and was to be expected, yet in normal circumstances, would be highly deviant behavior.

[91] These terms may also be applied to a *maṇḍala,* in which *abhyantara* refers to the innermost house or center of the *maṇḍala. Abhyantara* is also referred to the inner shrine of the *āgaṁ..* Gellner analyses these terms in a three-fold hierarchy, reflecting Mahāyāna, exoteric Vajrayāna, and esoteric Vajrayāna. However, this framework becomes slightly problematic, since these terms all refer to Tantric practices, which is, by definition, esoteric. The ritual specialists that I consulted constantly referred to this hierarchic framework, in reference to deities, rituals, and their symbolic meanings and buddhalogical interpretation. In fact, access to information, was at times, related to these categories.
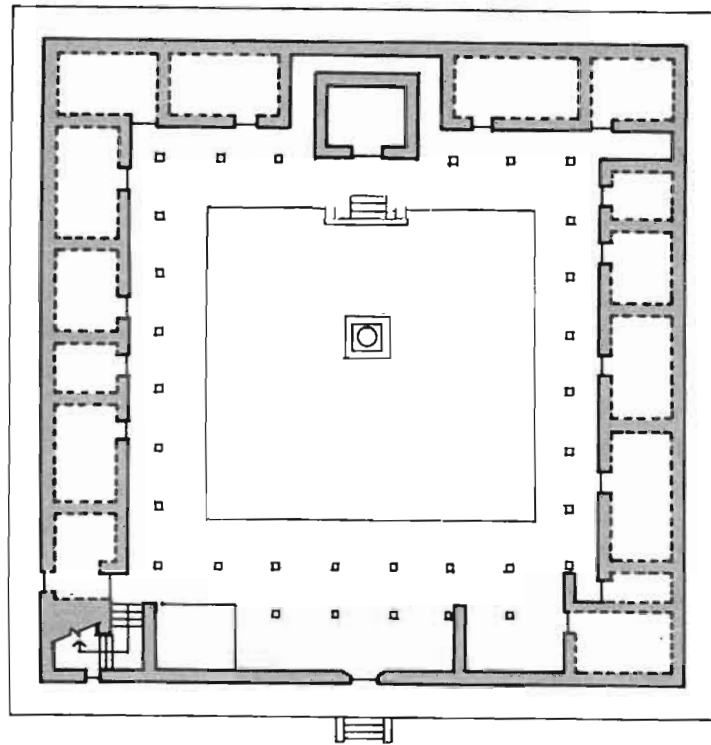
Figure 2.1 Idealized ground plan of a *bahī*.

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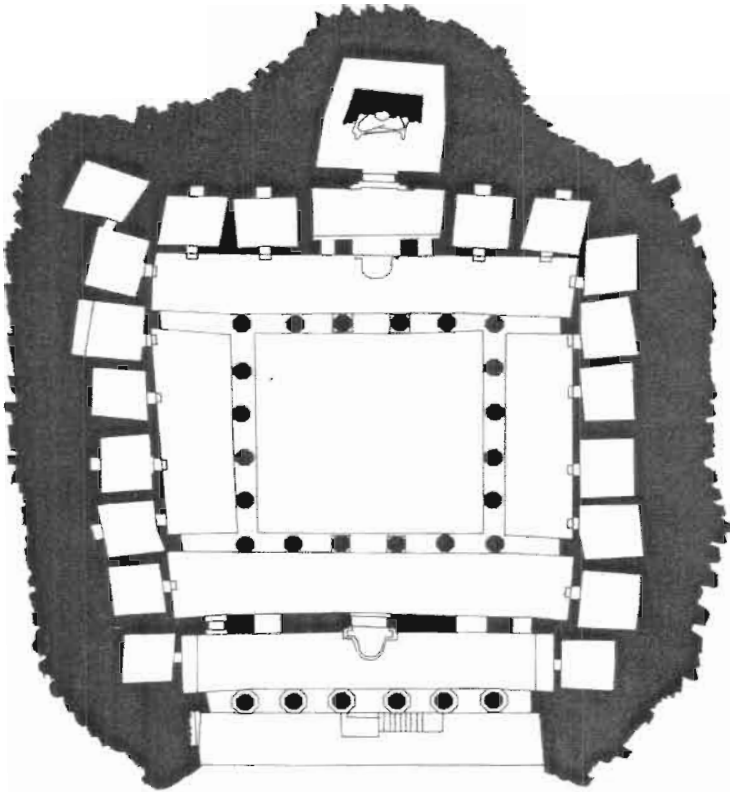
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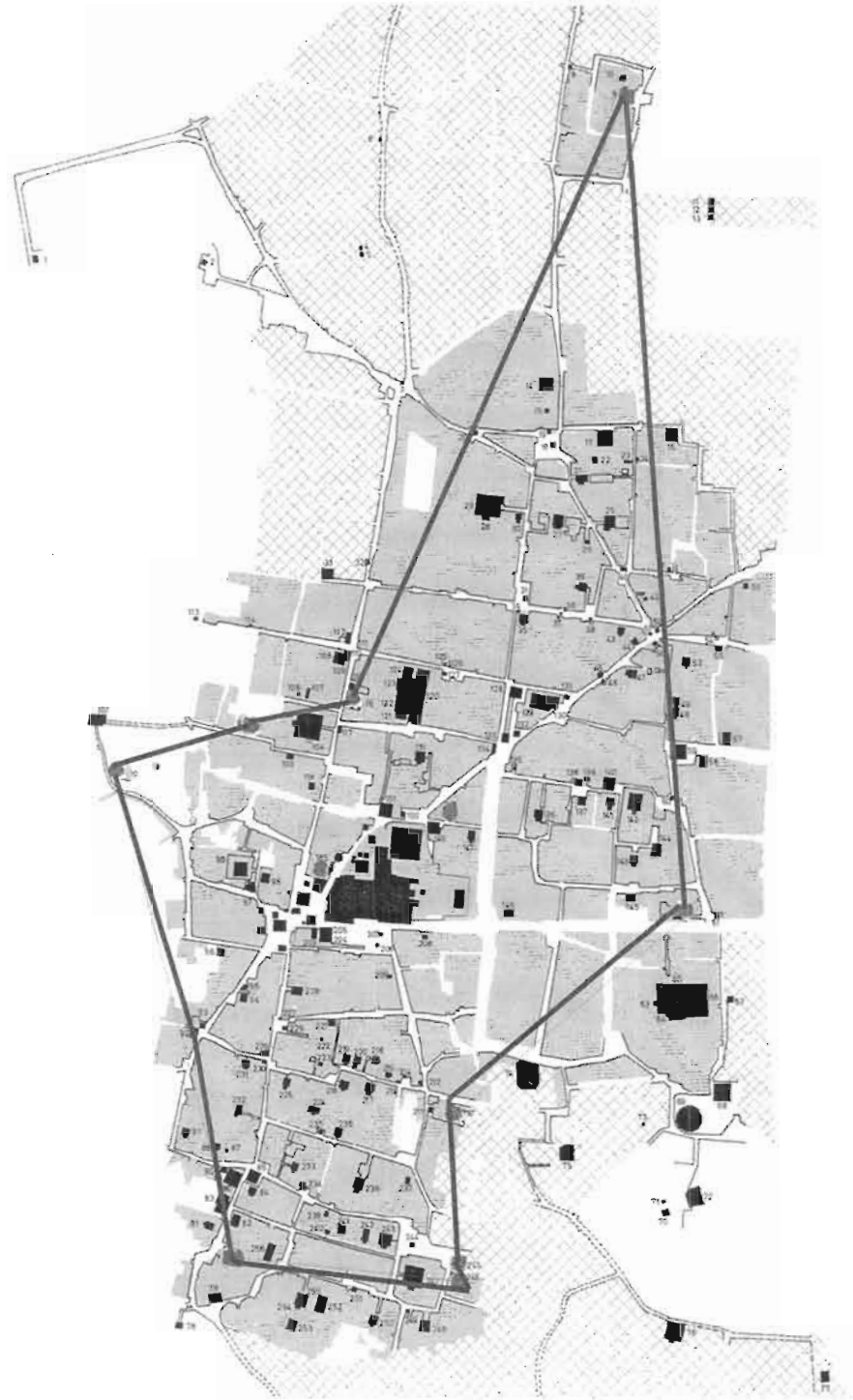
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Second Floor

First Floor
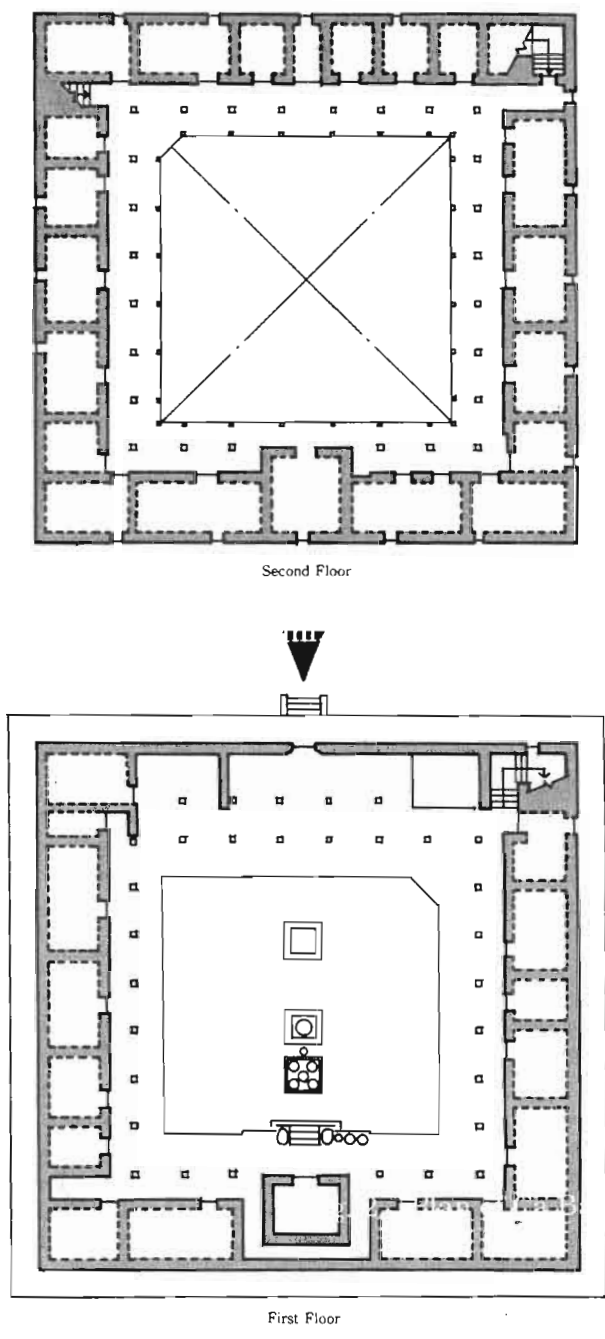
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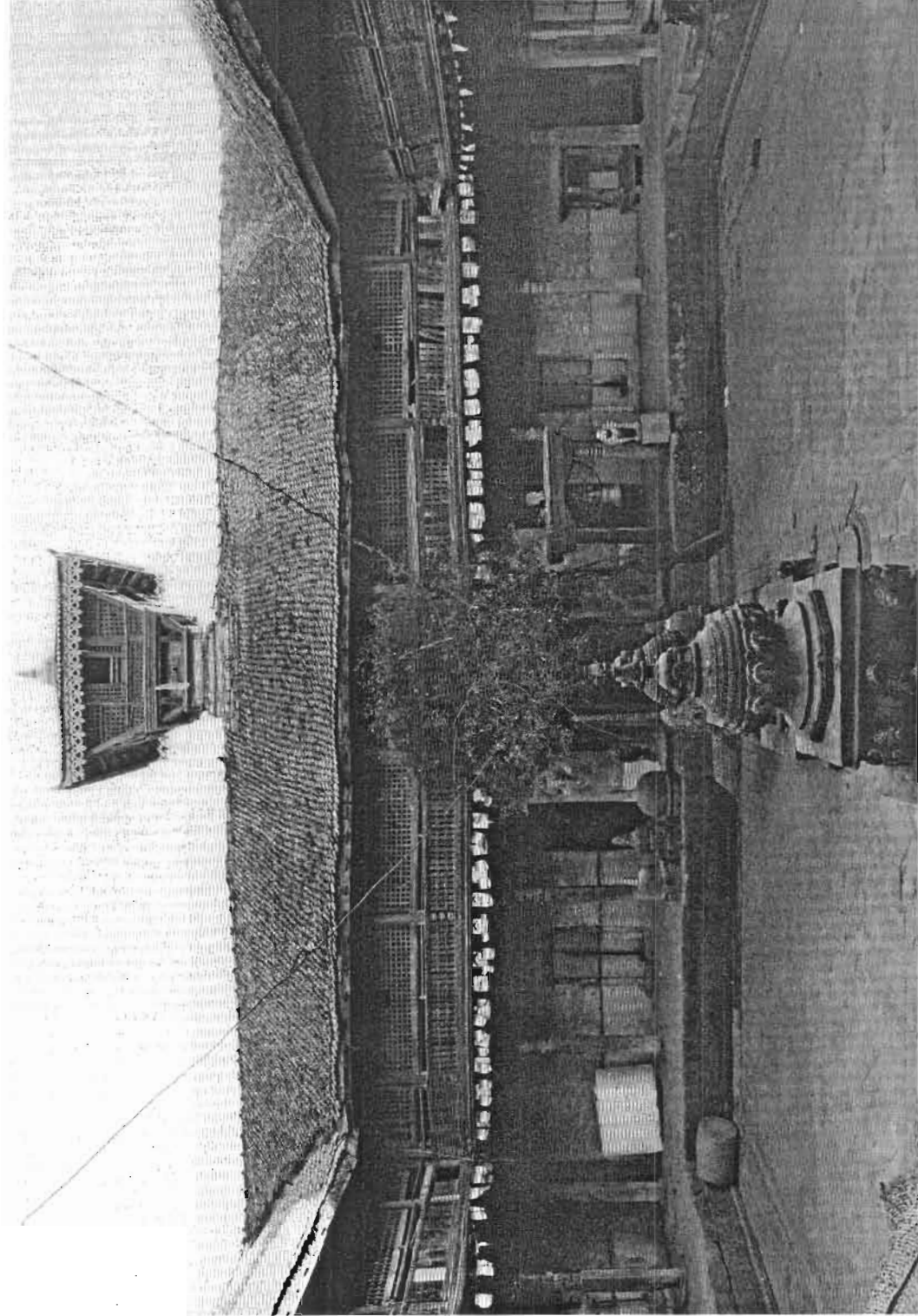
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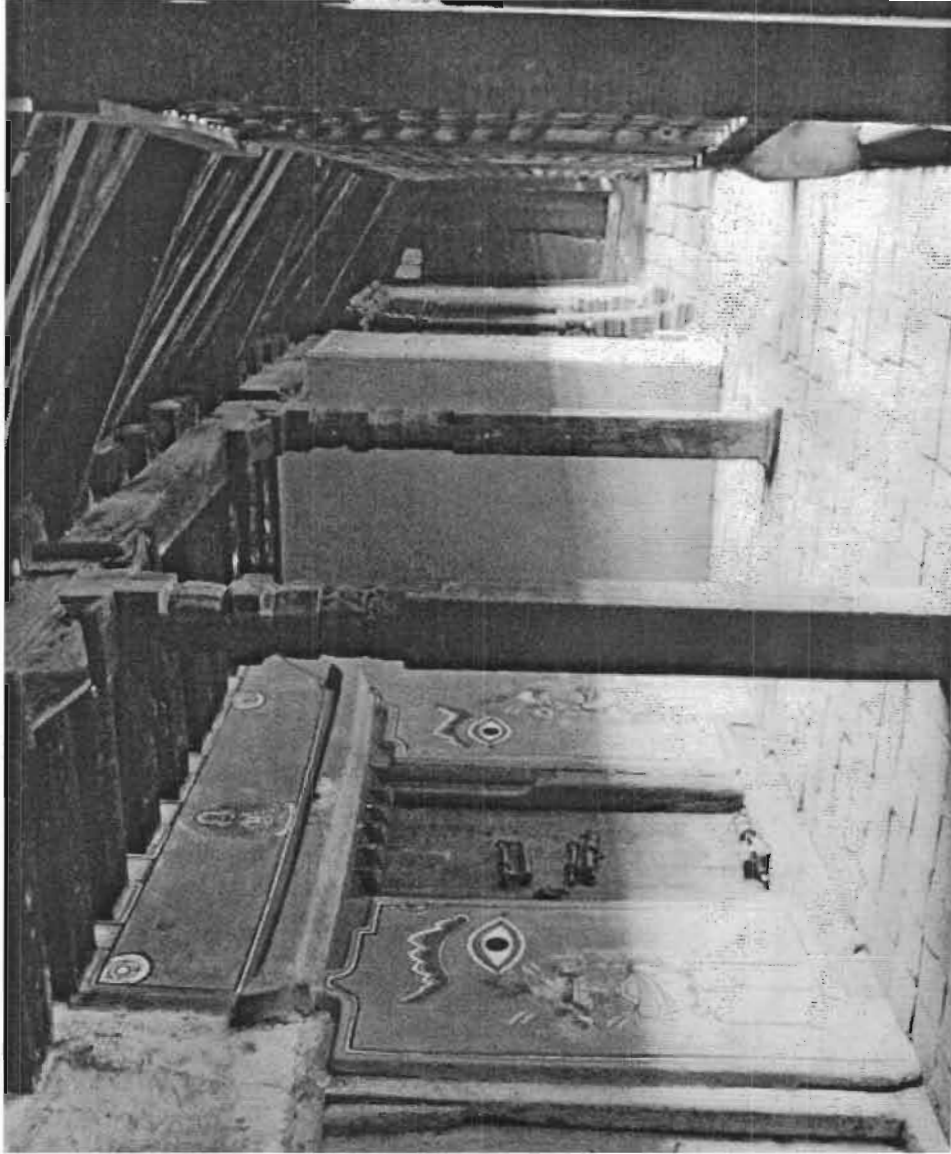
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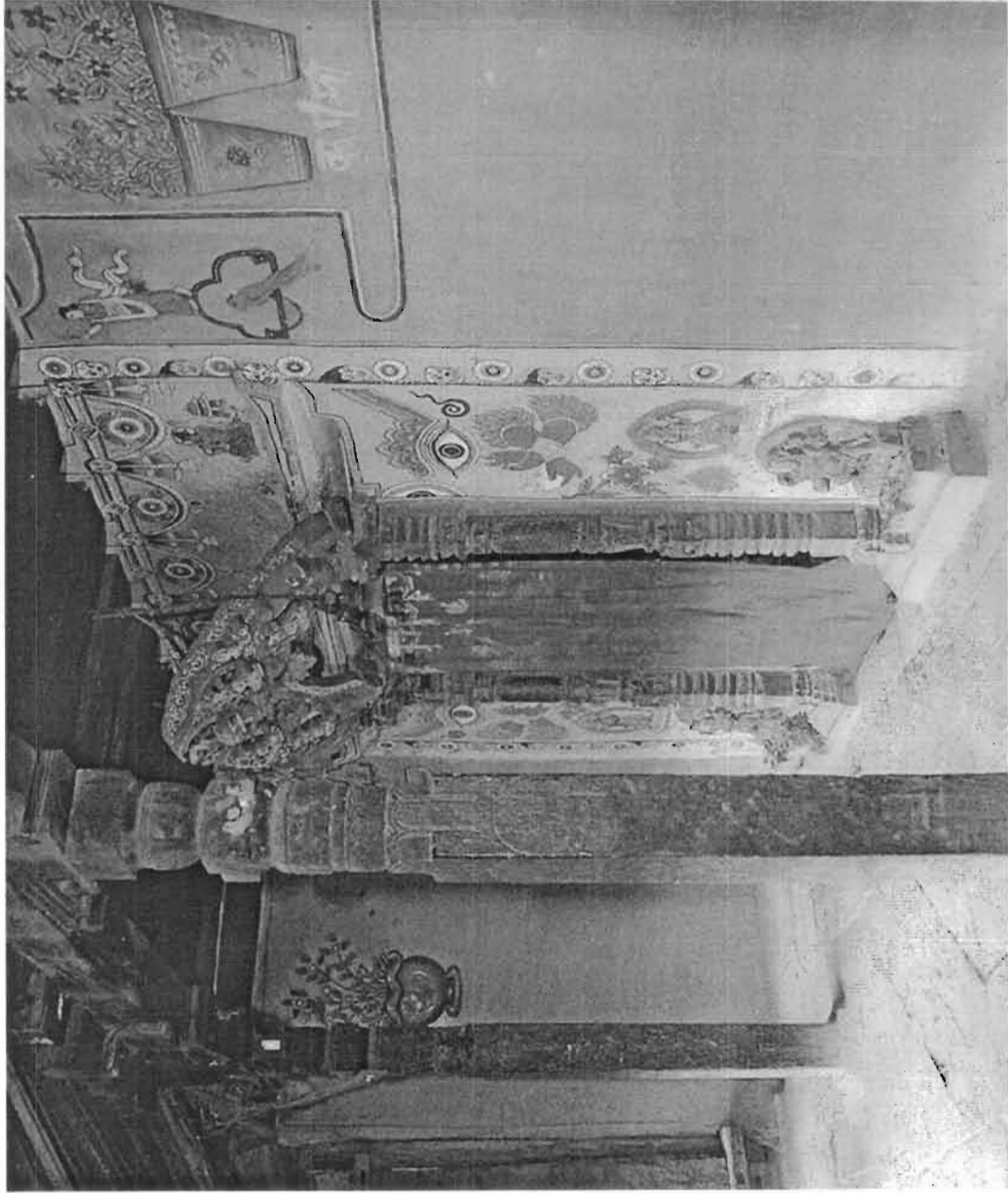
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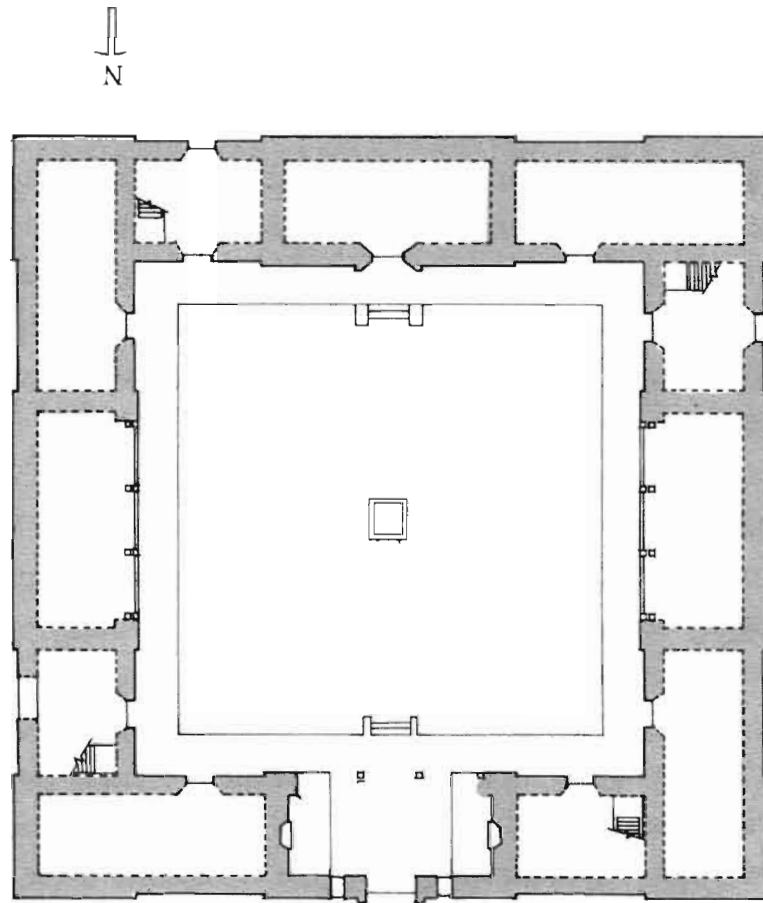
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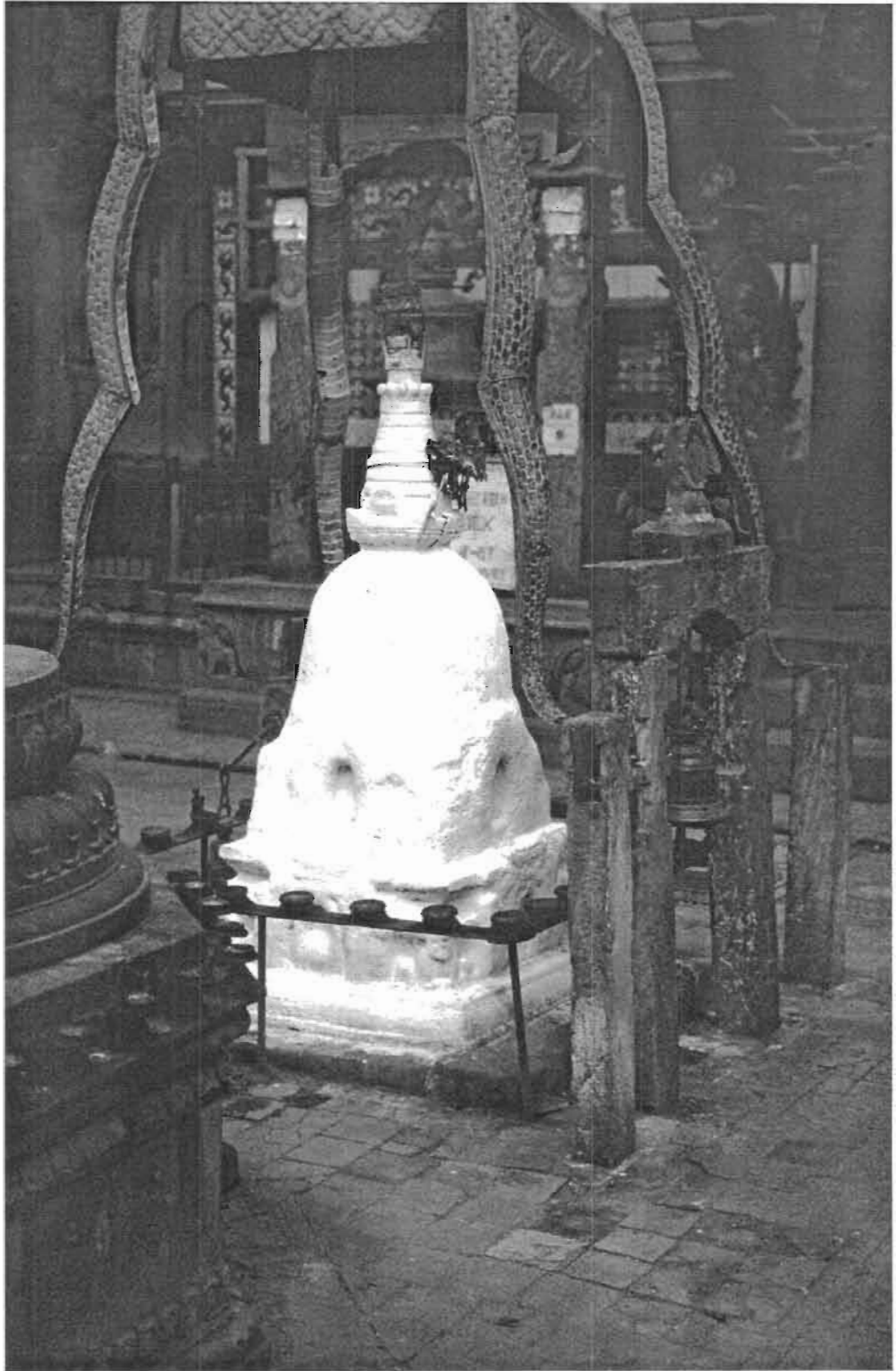
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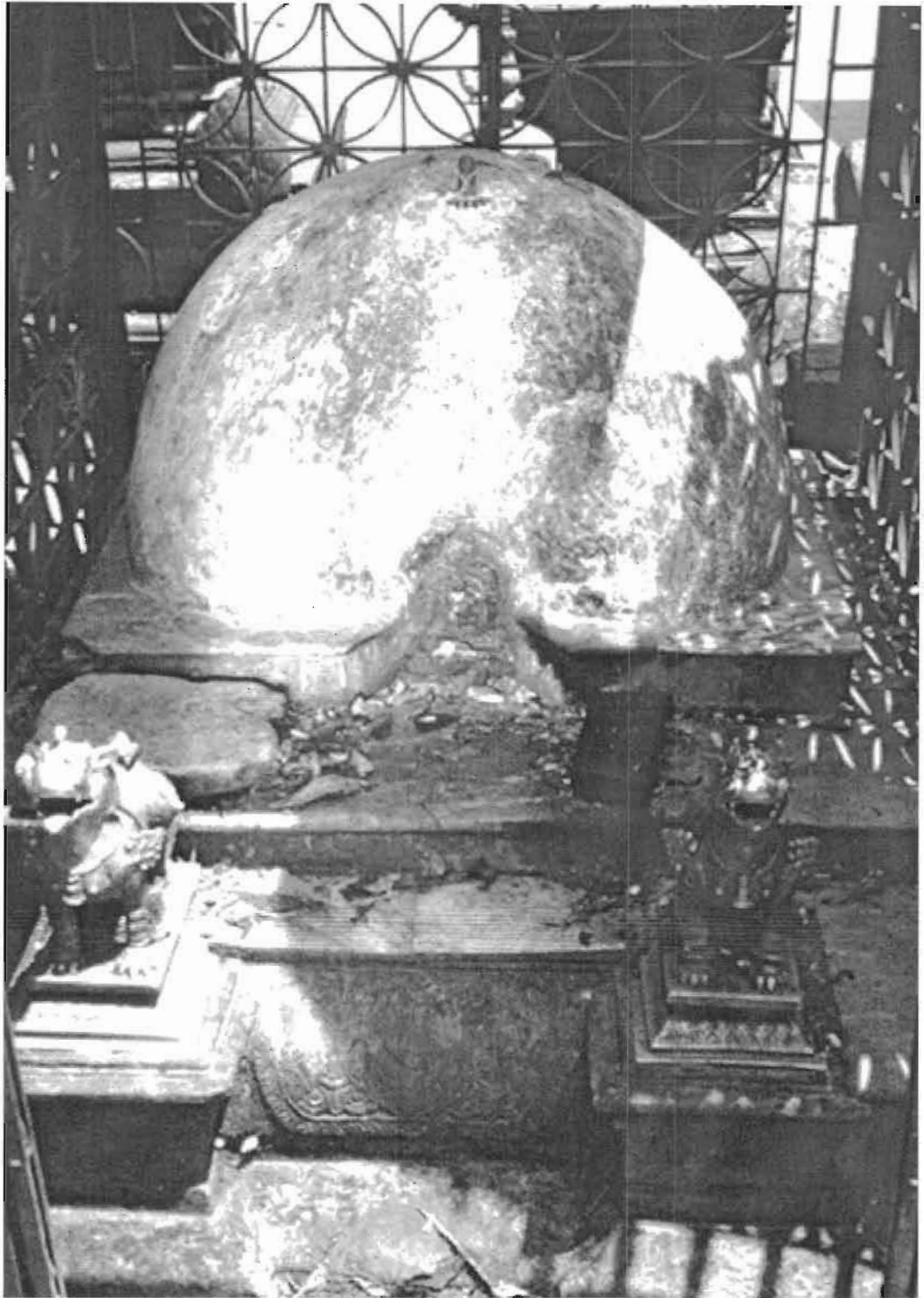
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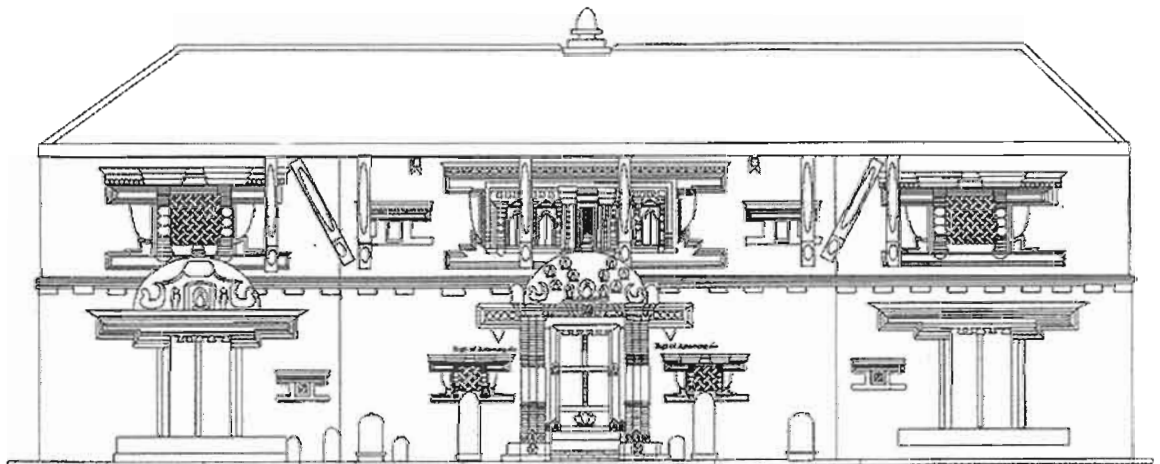
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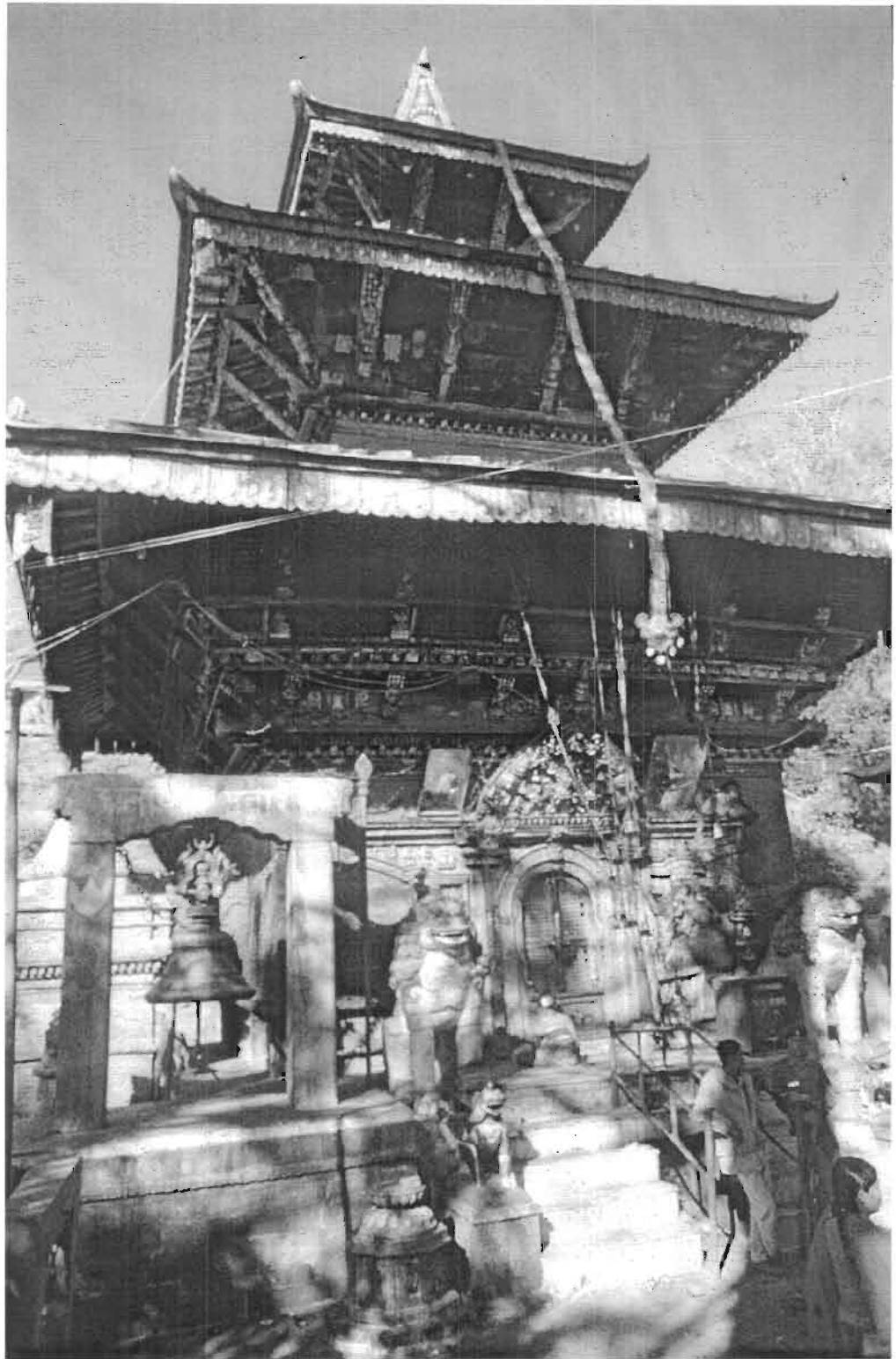
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The Swayambhū Caitya
in the east temple at
Guṁ Bahal, Sankhu

Observed and Drawn
By John C. Huntington

Conjectural

Ancient
monolithic
caitya
core

Conjectural base

Approximately 1.8 meters across

Present
visible
caitya
as covered
with metal
sheathing

Gilt copper
Chatra,
Bhumis
and Harmika

Silver
Sheathing

Conjectural base

Approximately 1.8 meters across

Figure 2.23. Reconstruction drawing of the rock-cut *caitya* at Guṁ Bāhā, Śankhu
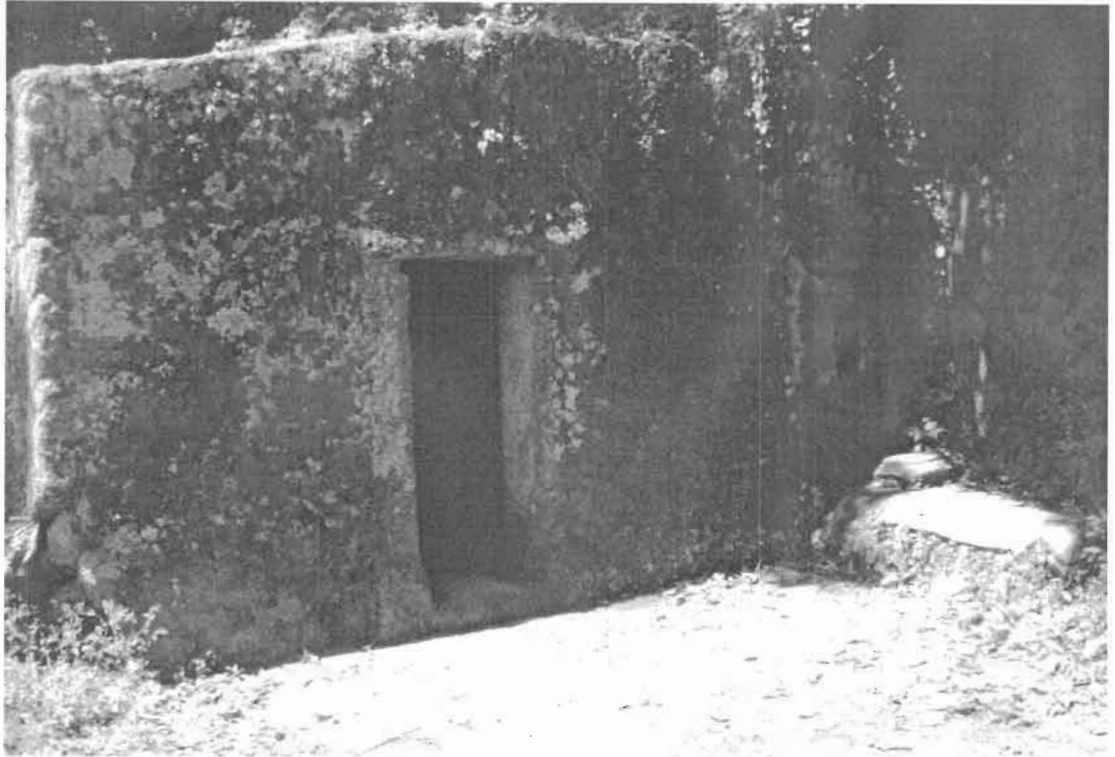
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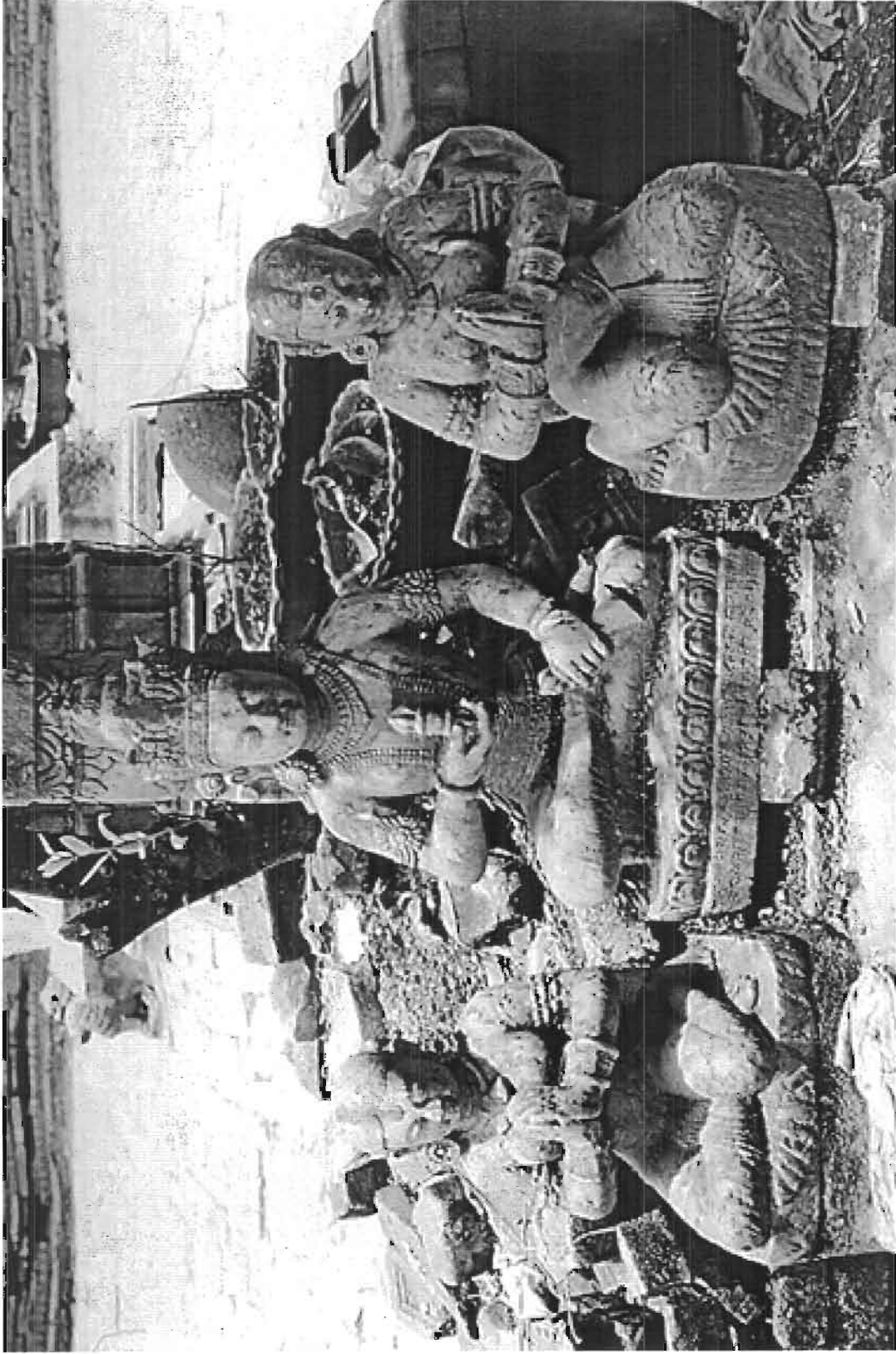
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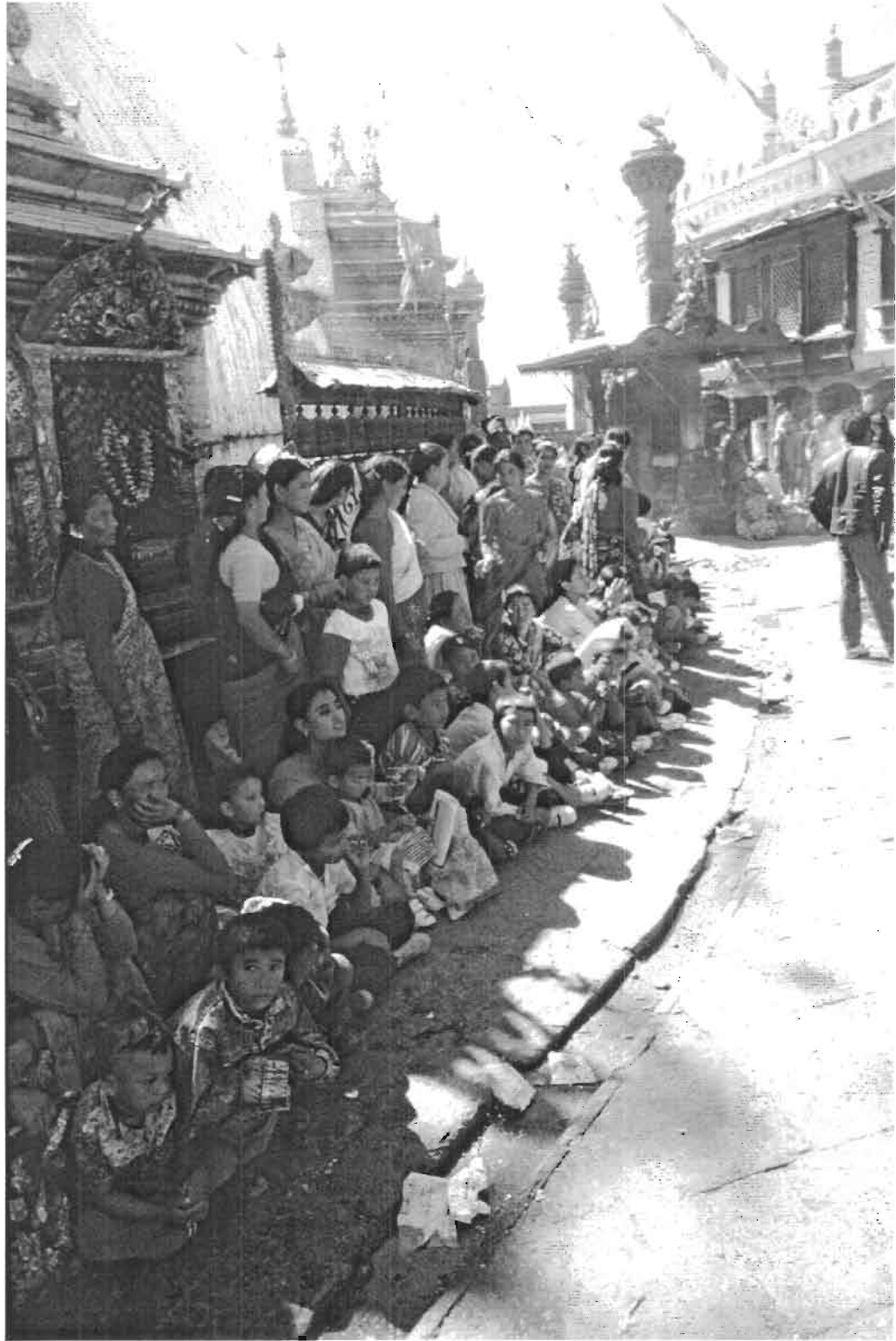
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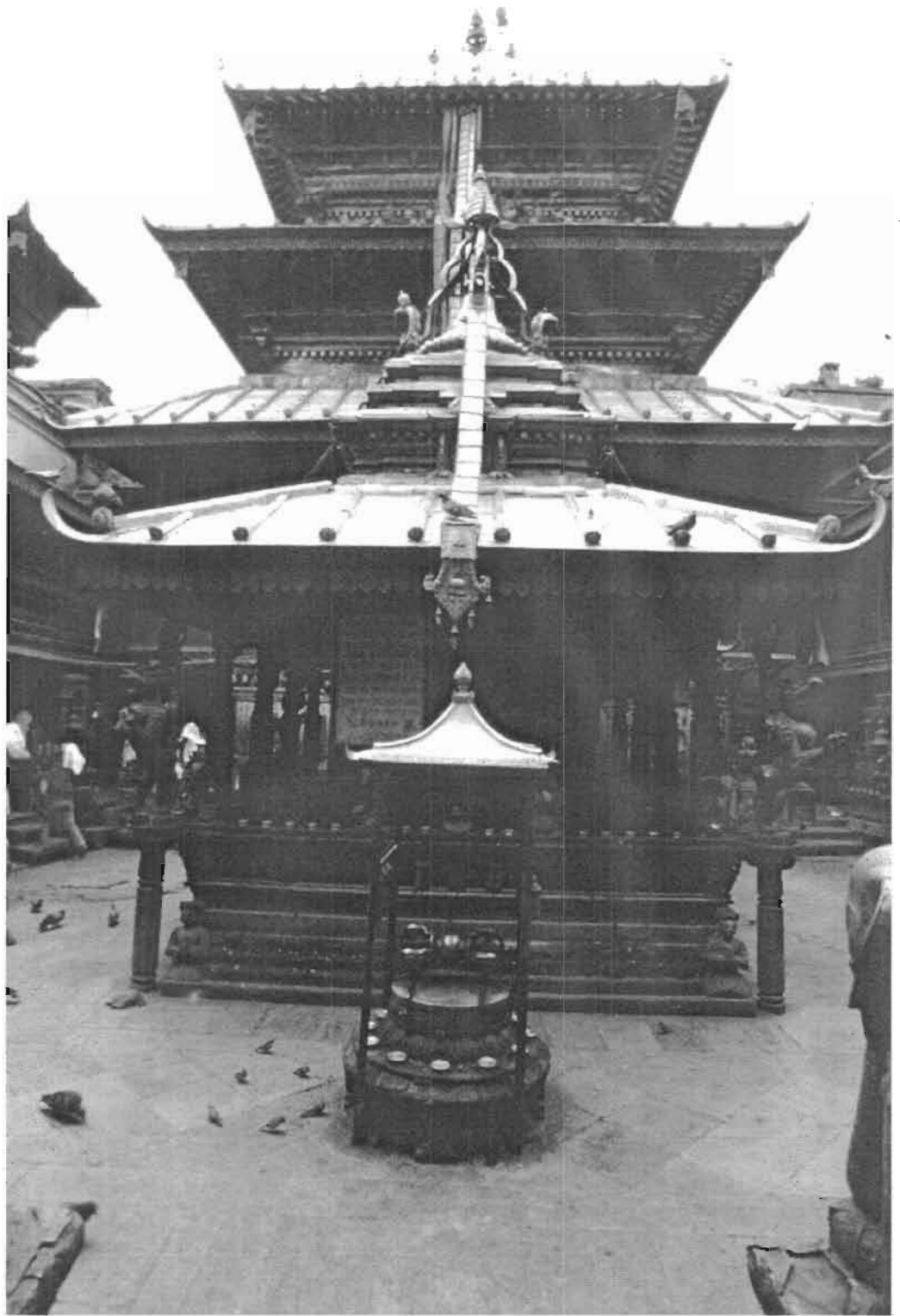
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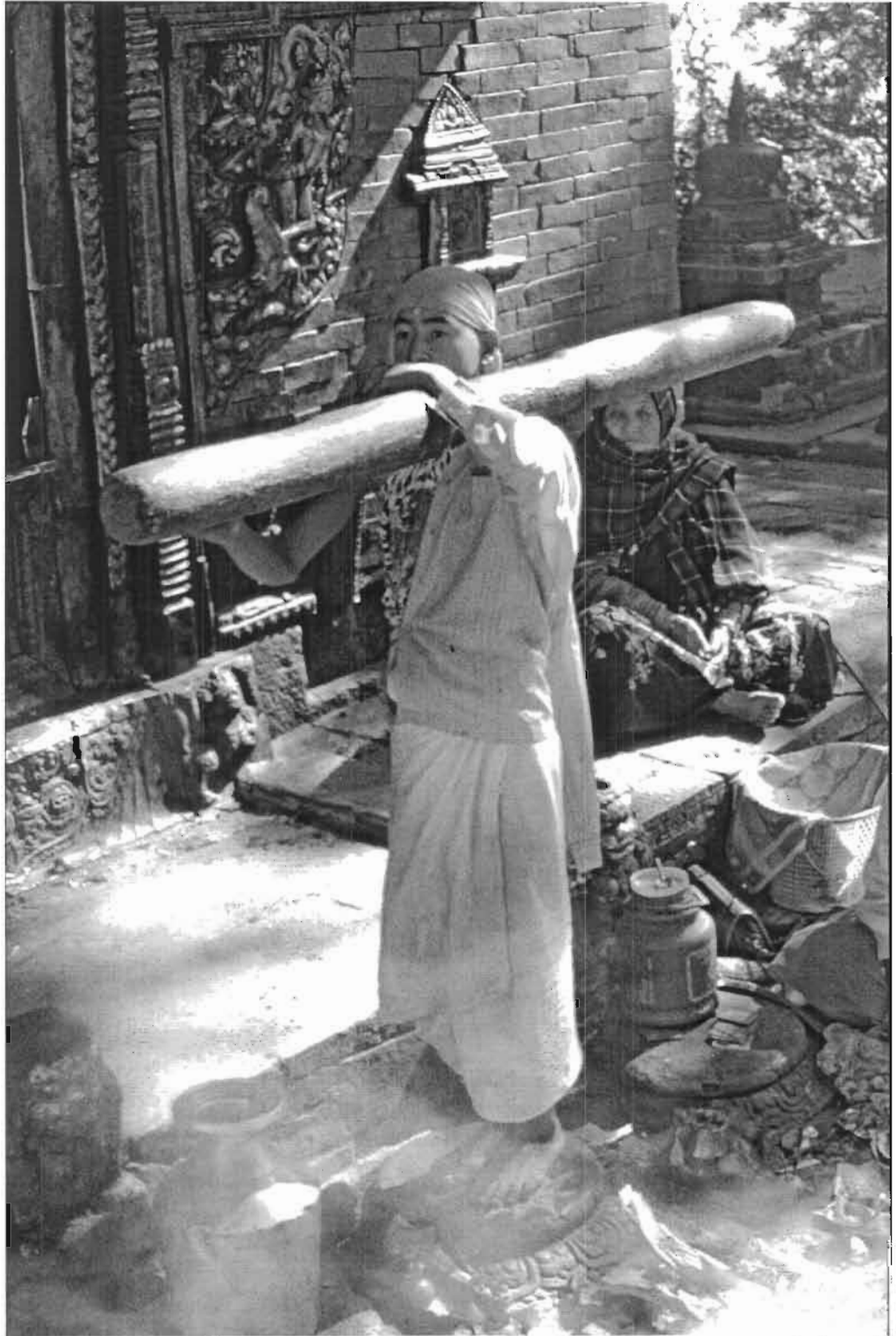
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THE CORE ICONOGRAPHIC PROGRAM OF

KVĀ BĀHĀ, PATAN

INTRODUCTION

As sacred architecture, Newar Buddhist *bāhās* represent the microcosm of the Buddhist universe and cosmology. The architectural elements and visual imagery that create the sacred environment together articulate the fundamental ideological constructs of Newar Buddhist iconology. By examining Kvā Bāhā in Patan, the relationship between the essential elements of *bāhā* architecture and the art clearly emerges and serves as a paradigm to understand Newar Buddhist visual imagery. The visual analysis presented here will: first, identify the *bāhā's* core iconographic themes, that is, Svayambhū Mahācaitya, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and

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the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala iconography; second, address how these components, as a system of symbols, communicate the basic constructs of Newar Buddhist praxis and religion; and, third, discuss the iconographic program as a core unifying theme of Newar Buddhist architecture.

KVĀ BĀHĀ AS ARCHETYPE

One of the most visually impressive Buddhist monuments in the Valley, Kvā Bāhā in Patan epitomizes the *bāhā* as the ritual and ceremonial center of the Buddhist community (Fig. 3.1). The Bāhā is notable for its lavishly decorated shrine facade with the exquisite silver *toraṇa,* reflecting the generous patronage of the large population of *saṅgha* members as well as lay *upāśaka*. Kvā Bāhā is among the largest and most important *bāhās* in the Valley in terms of its religious and historical significance.[1] Of the more than five hundred Buddhist monasteries of the Kathmandu Valley that I surveyed, Kvā Bāhā stands as the archetype of *bāhā* architecture. The visual imagery at Kvā Bāhā, interpreted within the context of the religious practices, offers compelling evidence of the core iconographic program of Newar Buddhist *bāhās*. Despite the overwhelming richness of visual imagery, Kvā Bāhā's iconographic program also represents one of the most fully developed articulations of the relationship among the three mandatory *bāhā* elements: the principal *caitya,* the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ,* and the *āgaṁ* shrine.

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Among the most well-preserved monuments in the Valley, Kvā Bāhā provides optimum conditions for detailed iconographic study. While the damaged or abraded wooden figures found in many other *bāhās* make thorough visual analyses virtually impossible, in contrast, the primary iconographic documents at Kvā Bāhā, such as *toraṇas* and strut figures, are made of metal and preserved in excellent condition. This provides a much more complete reading of the iconographic program and its contextual meaning than found elsewhere.

Kvā Bāhā has the largest *saṅgha* of any *bāhā* in the Valley and the four thousand plus Vajrācārya and Śākya members are among the most active Buddhists of the Newar community. The patronage of the lay community, through the meritorious acts of gift-giving, has played a significant role in the visual imagery of the *bāhā*. Historically, a large portion of Kvā Bāhā's patrons have been Hindu Newars, many of whom were wealthy traders in Tibet and have given lavish gift offerings to the monastery. In fact, the contemporary appearance and nickname "Golden Temple" owe much to the two prominent Hindu families of Dhākvās and Khicāgumās of Nāgbāhā, who have contributed to the embellishment and gilding of the shrine facade and the Svayambhū *caitya*'s temple roof.[2] The lay community continues to be a vital force in the maintenance and upkeep of the monastery, and dictates somewhat the choice of the visual imagery according

to the personal preferences of the patrons. For example, the shrine to Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī in the northeast courtyard wall was established in 1985 by the *Nāmasaṅgīti Bhajan Khala*, a group that is responsible for the daily chanting of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* text at the Bāhā. Such individual offerings are, often, a hodgepodge of images that are given according to the patrons' individual wishes, and are not offered with a specific unifying iconographic theme or program in mind. In contrast, the Vajrācārya ritual specialists normally specify the core iconographic elements of the *bāhā* structure, such as the imagery of the *toraṇas* and strut figures. These components need to be iconographically correct in order to properly consecrate the space and structure as a sacred environment. Consequently, an overarching iconographic program usually exists, that conveys a deliberately conceptualized symbolism related to the created sacred space. While the patrons' personal offerings, no doubt, bring to light the contemporaneous religious emphasis, the core iconographic and structural elements shed light on some fundamental themes of Newar Buddhist visual imagery.

As the relationship between the structure and praxis is a key concern of this dissertation, Kvā Bāhā further serves as a prime example. Because of the active participation of its *saṅgha* members, Kvā Bāhā has one of the strongest ritual traditions among the *bāhās* in the Valley. The precision with

which the rituals are performed speak to the strong continuity of tradition and the wealth of its patronage. As the experience of serving as *dyaḥpāla* for the daily *nitya pūjā* comes only once in a lifetime for the *saṅgha* members, the rituals are, not surprisingly, much more elaborate than in other *bāhās*. Similarly, the constant religious activities conducted here, such as the reading of the sacred *Prajñāpāramitā* text, the initiation rituals, the exhibition of images during Guñlā (*bahī boye*), or the impressive annual feast to the lineage deity, surpass the rituals in most *bāhās* of the Valley. For the analysis in this study, the symbolism and meaning of the iconographic program fully emerges when interpreted within the context of these ritual practices.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Kvā Bāhā is one of the eighteen main (*mū*) *bāhās* of Patan, and, according to the ritual tradition, ranked first in terms of religious significance.[3] Kvā Bāhā has a large number of branches, fourteen of which are "official," while thirteen are "private" branches belonging to Buddhist castes other than Vajrācāryas and Śākyas.[4] However, for all Kvā Bāhā's religious importance within the community and the large *saṅgha,* there is little written information about its early history or foundation. The Bāhā's Sanskrit name gives clues to the early history of the site, as it alludes to the

foundation, or, perhaps, to the reconstruction of the monument. Formally, it is called *Bhāskaradeva Saṁskārita Hiraṇyavarṇa Mahāvihāra* or "Hiraṇyavarṇa [Golden-Colored] Mahāvihāra founded/reconstructed by Bhāskaradeva." Because the Sanskrit term *saṁskārita* may be translated as either "founded" or "reconstructed," the relationship between the traditional history and present structure is unclear. The problem is further complicated by the fact that there are two kings in Nepalese history named Bhāskaradeva. The first Bhāskaradeva reigned from 1045-1048 C.E. in the "Transitional" period, while the other reigned from 1700-1722 CE in the Malla period.[5] Based on ample inscriptional evidence that predate the eighteenth century, scholars have attributed the reconstruction, not the foundation, of Kvā Bāhā to Bhāskaradeva in the Transitional period.[6] However, other sources, such as Wright's Chronicle and the sacred oral history, allude to Kvā Bāhā's original foundation to be earlier than the Transitional period, even as early as the Licchavi period (4th-9th century C.E.). Certainly, if the Licchavi-period dating given by scholars for the principal *caitya* is valid, it may support the traditional history of a Licchavi-period consecration of the Bāhā.[7] The presence of the four metal sculptures of Licchavi period (Figs. 3.2-3-5) gives evidence to the antiquity of the site, as early as the Licchavi period.

According to Wright's Chronicle, the present reconstruction is attributed to King Bhāskaradeva of the Ṭhakurī dynasty in the "Transitional" period in the 11th century. The Chronicle gives the following account:

> "This Raja's name was Bhaskara-deva. In his reign, the Banras [*bande* or Vajrācārya and Śākya *sangha*] of Piṅgala Bāhāl moved to other places. Their descendants, who were Acharya, became Banras, and lived in Gnakha-chok [Nhyaka Chowk] in Lallitpattan [Patan]. The Bhiksus of Devapatan [Deopatan] and Chabahīl came to these people, and told them that they had heard from some people, who were working in the fields, that they had seen the god [*Kvāhpāh dyah*] of Pingala Bāha. They accordingly went to see, and found the god buried under the ruins of the Pingala Bāhāl, and brought him to Patan. . . . . [Then] they took the god to Gnakha-chok, but he [*Kvāhpāh dyah*] said he would not like to live there. This having been brought to the notice of Raja Bhaskara-deva, he caused a new bihar, named Nhul Bāhāl ["New Bāhā"] to be built for the god. This new house also being disapproved of by the god, the Raja went to ask where he would like to fix his residence. The god said he would like to live in a place where a mouse attacked and drove away a cat. He built a bihar, and named it Hema-barna (*i.e.* golden colored), and having placed the god in it, with Āgaṁ-devatās, just as they were in Pingala Bāhāl, he assigned lands to guthis for maintenance of the establishment. The Banras, who came with the god to reside here, were those from Thyakayel and Hatkhatol".[8]

Wright's Chronicle alludes to some key points about the foundation of Kvā Bāhā. It states that the *kvāhpāh dyah* belonged to a more ancient foundation at Piṅgala Bāhā and was then brought to Patan. Although the site has not been excavated, oral tradition retains the memory of this ancient site at Vishalnāgar. At present, nothing remains there except what appears to be remains of Licchavi *caityas*, which may, indeed, indicate the antiquity of the place. The Chronicle also states that the reconsecration of the *kvāhpāh dyah* at a new place necessitated the building of Kvā Bāhā, and the *bāhā*

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was, in fact, a royal foundation. Considering these local traditions, the use of the term *"saṃskārita"* may be deliberately ambiguous. Hence, read as a *śleṣa* or play on words, the Sanskrit name *Bhāskaradeva Saṃskārita* may be translated both as "founded" and/or "reconstructed" by Bhāskaradeva.[9] In other words, while the structure may have been built for the first time by Bhāskaradeva, the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* may have been reconstructed at this new site.

The original conception for Kvā Bāhā's core iconographic program may, indeed, date to its reconstruction during the "Transitional" period. Nepal's historical connections with the north-eastern India during this period were at its peak, with numerous Indian *paṇḍitas* introducing specific Tantric Buddhist methodologies.[10] According to historical documents, the famous Tantric priest, Atiśa stayed in Nepal for a year from 1041-1042 C.E., and taught the Vairocana-cycle *maṇḍalas,* of which the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is part. Atīśa's role in the transmission of these methodologies is evident at the eleventh-century Sum Tsek Temple in Alchi, Ladakh. In this light, Kvā Bāhā's reconstruction, assigned to the "Transitional" period during Bhāskaradeva's reign (1045-1048 C.E.), falls directly after Atīśa's visit, and provides compelling evidence for introduction of new methodologies as practices in northeastern India.

In its present form, Kvā Bāhā epitomizes much of Newar Buddhist *bāhā* architecture, as structures that have complex histories and sites that continue to be refurbished and reconstructed through time. As in other *bāhās* throughout the Valley, the twentieth-century manifestation of Kvā Bāhā, as it exists today, reflects the centuries of loyal patronage, where the core visual imagery becomes obscured with the constant accretions to the original structure through gift-giving. At Kvā Bāhā, the visual imagery as a totality provides clear document of a fully developed iconographic program that incorporates the Tantric Buddhist methodologies within the local cosmogonic myths. It is critical, therefore, to carefully analyze the overall visual imagery and decipher the core symbolic components of the structure.

SECTION I: DESCRIPTION

While Kvā Bāhā remains one of the most important religious monuments of the Valley, a thorough study of the architecture and visual imagery has not been previously undertaken.[11] Familiarity with the structure and a detailed examination of its art are necessary not only to identify the core iconographic elements at Kvā Bāhā, but, more importantly, to analyze the unified iconographic program of *bāhā* architecture. Although the prime components may not all belong to a single period and new works of art were added over the centuries through the generous lay patronage of the

community, the core structural elements of *bāhā* architecture and its correlation with the visual imagery are consistently maintained and emphasized.

The organizational scheme of this section is two-fold. First, I will examine core ground plan of the *bāhā,* highlighting the mandatory structural elements of Newar Buddhist monastic architecture. These three elements will have direct correlation to what I consider the core iconographic components of Newar Buddhist imagery. Second, I will discuss the *bāhā* as it exists today, which include the additional structures and shrines added to the core groundplan of the *bāhā.* This description will be detailed, in order to document how the logic of the original plan and its conceptual symbolism is maintained even with imagery and structures, constructed at a later date.

Core Architectural Components:

Kvā Bāhā is located northwest of the Patan Darbar Square area in Kvālakhu Tole. Unlike many *bāhās* in Patan and Kathmandu, which are aligned along a north-south axis, Kvā Bāhā has an east/west axis, an alignment that the Vajrācārya priests consider ritually correct. In theory, the east/west axis is more auspicious, as it replicates the directional arrangement of Buddhist *maṇḍalas.* Although at present one enters into the inner courtyard through an elaborate stone entrance doorway built in the

nineteenth century (Figs. 3.6-3.7), the core groundplan of Kvā Bāhā has the basic schema of *bāhā* architecture (Fig. 3.8). The interior courtyard has the three required architectural components placed in a straight axis from the entrance: principal *caitya,* established during the time of consecration; the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine; and, the Tantric *āgaṁ* shrine. Unique to Kvā Bāhā, however, an additional *āgaṁ* shrine was consecrated at a later date outside the *bāhā* proper, in the exterior west courtyard at Ila Nani.

Enshrined Principal *Caitya:* Interior Courtyard

The sacred *maṇḍalic* space of the *bāhā* is entered from the second entrance. From a rather elaborate vestibule area that houses various protective deities of the Newar Buddhist pantheon, such as Mahākāla and Ganeśa, one enters the quadrangular interior courtyard, which is approximately forty-five feet by forty-eight feet square (See Fig. 3.8). At the center, a small temple that houses the principal *caitya*, while an impressive five-storied *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine is located on the west courtyard wall, directly opposite the entrance (See 3.1). The courtyard does not have many votive offerings, except for an inscribed *vajra* in front of the main shrine and a freestanding representation of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala on the east side of the central temple. The metal repousse *mandala,* surmounted by a *vajra,* is inscribed and dated N.S. 1023 (1903 C.E.). The ritual spaces are marked

in the courtyard, including the *yajñakuṇḍa* for fire rituals on the west side in front of the *kwāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine and the *kṣetrapāla,* where leftovers from the shrine offerings are thrown. This designation of ritual spaces is also typical at other *bāhās.*

In a structural configuration that is fairly common in the larger *bāhās* of Kathmandu and Patan, the Kvā Bāhā *caitya* is enclosed in a small gilded temple, with a single roof that is supported by four *nāgas* on the top (Fig. 3.9).[12] On the four corners of the shrine roof are the four Guardian Kings (*Caturmahārājās*), literally mirroring the Buddhist conception of Mt. Meru, with the Guardian kings at the base. In addition, four inscribed pendants depicting Svayambhū Mahācaitya hang from the center of the roof in the cardinal directions and rest just below the shrine doors. The representation of the Svayambhū in association with the principal *caitya* is of primary significance. As I will show in this study, the principal vivifying *caitya* is symbolically identified with the Mahācaitya. This visual metaphor will be referred to again in the iconographic analysis.

As the northern direction in Newar Buddhism is associated with *nāgas,* the exterior north side of the temple has natural rocks outcropping on the ground that represents the *nāgarājā,* Varūṇa. According to the sacred history of the site, Varūṇa and his wife Varūṇavatī lived here near the *caitya.*

Above the *nāga* is a waterspout, where the excess water from the oblations to the *caitya* flows out.

The central temple also has twelve forms of Avalokiteśvara placed around the railing of the temple.[13] At Kvā Bāhā, each image is inscribed with Avalokiteśvara's specific form and corresponding month of the year. These twelve forms of Avalokiteśvara pertain to the popular lay pilgrimage/fasting related to Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara called Aṣṭamī Vrata. In this pilgrimage, the practitioners visit one of the twelve designated *tīrthas* during the course of one year and worship a specific form of Avalokiteśvara located at these sites.[14] For the Patan *saṅgha,* the culmination of the *vrata* is performed in front of the *caitya.*

The most important iconographic element in this temple is the four *toraṇas* above the shrine doors. Placed in the cardinal direction, these *toraṇas* depict the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography. The visual imagery here will be central to contextualizing the relationship between the principal *caitya,* Svayambhū Mahācaitya, and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Among all the *bāhās* I surveyed, the iconographic program of the enshrined *caitya* specifically articulates the correlation of the architectural components and the visual imagery—in other words, the association of the principal *caitya* with Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

Sacred History of the Principal *Caitya*

At this point, it may be useful to review the role of the principal *caitya* in the Newar Buddhist context, and examine how the sacred history of Kvā Bāhā[15] reaffirmed this religious symbolism. At Kvā Bāhā, the temple in the center of the courtyard enshrines the main vivifying element and essential component of *bāhā* architecture, namely, the principal *caitya* (Fig. 3.10). The sacred history of the site refers to the *caitya* as "*svayambhū caitya*" and ranks it among the four self-arisen or "*svayambhū*" *caityas* in the Valley.[16] Furthermore, the *caitya* also serves as the lineage deity (*digu dyaḥ*) of the entire *saṅgha* members of the Bāhā. A lineage deity, in the Newar Buddhist context, is a deity that is the common ancestor of an extended family (*kula*) or *saṅgha*.

The local history of the site and *vaṁsāvalīs* emphasize the basic concepts of *bāhā* construction, in particular the importance of the central *caitya* and the *kwāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine. The narratives begin with establishing the origins and sacrality of the principal *caitya* at Kvā Bāhā and the subsequent reinstallation of the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* image. It is noteworthy that the oral history of the Kvā Bāhā *caitya* parallels the cosmogonic myth of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya, as narrated in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*. Kvā Bāhā's history also begins in the same structural form as the *Purāṇa*, such as the sequential visits of the Seven Tathāgatas to the Valley, the sowing of the

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lotus seed, the emergence of the Svayambhū Jyotirūpa, Śākyamuni's visit and taking *darśan* of Svayambhū Jyotirūpa, and the draining of the lake by Mañjuśrī. In light of this evidence, it may be inferred that Kvā Bāhā's oral history is derived from the *Purāṇa* to legitimize the power and sacrality of the Kvā Bāha *caitya*. More importantly, this direct allusion to the Newar Buddhist primordial myth symbolically connects the principal *caitya* with Svayambhū.

In the oral histories, the Kvā Bāhā *caitya* said to be spontaneous and self-existent "*svayambhū,*" and thus is analogous to the self-arisen Svayambhū Mahācaitya. The local narrative retells of Mañjuśrī draining the water of the great lake that later became the Valley. Although Mañjuśrī had cut the Valley in four places for the water to drain out, the water remained standing at the site that is now Kvā Bāhā. From the center emerged spontaneously (*svayambhū)* a small *stūpa* made entirely of jewels (*ratnacaitya*). A pair of *nāgas*, Varuṇa and Varuṇāvatī, inhabited the lake, and a rat named Hiraṇyaka lived here, who was yellow in color, with eyes as bright as jewels. Hiraṇyaka worshipped the *caitya* everyday. It was around this sacred spot where the *ratnacaitya* had emerged that Kvā Bāhā was to be later constructed to house the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* of Piṅgala *vihāra*.

The local legend continues the narrative of the construction of Kwā Bāhā at the very site where the *ratnacaitya* had appeared. I translate here the reconstruction of the *bāhā*, according to the sacred history.

> "Having performed the *pūjā* all night until early morning and invited the *purohitas* and *siddha gurus*, the image of śrī Śākyamuni was bathed and given the five-fold (*pañcāmṛta*) offerings. At the time of constructing the *bāhā*, the gurus performed the *nāga sādhanas* to Varuna and Varunavati and built the *vihāra* in front of the *caitya* that was in the middle of the pond. As a symbol of the abode of the gods and symbolic of the thirteen *bhūmis*, the *bāhā* was ritually consecrated through *mantras* and invocations. Because the rat named Hiraṇyaka had lived there and worshipped the *caitya*, it was named Hiraṇyavarṇa Mahāvihāra, and having been built by the patron, Bhāskaradeva, he installed 600 monks as the *sarvasaṅgha* for the daily *pūjā* four times a day. In this *Vihāra*, during the *punhī* [full moon], a *yajña* [fire-ceremony] was to be performed by the *guthi*, and in the shrine of the *āgaṁ devatā*, Yogaṁvara, a secret *ratripūjā* was performed on each full moon, at which time the gods of the ten *bhūmis* (*Dasabhūmiśvara*) would be present."[17]

The local history highlights several significant concepts in the Newar Buddhist conception of sacred space. It appears that the presence of the *caitya,* in this case the primordial *ratnacaitya,* generates and sanctifies the sacred environment. The *bāhā* then was built around the *caitya*, thus implying the *caitya* to be the power source of the created space. Further, the narrative suggests that the construction of the *bāhā* entailed the three structural components, namely, the vivifying *caitya, kwāḥpāḥ dyaḥ,* and *āgaṁ* shrine, as integral to *bāhā* architecture. Each component is clearly defined as relating to specific ritual functions of the *saṅgha*. The narrative thus reiterates concepts that are fundamental to understanding *bāhā* construction. Further, the narrative also alludes to the conception the *bāhā*

as the metaphor of Buddhist cosmology. Echoing the analogy found in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* the narrative here states that sacred space of the *bāhā* is the "abode of the gods" (*devālaya*) and may be conceptualized as Mt. Meru and symbolic of the Enlightenment process. Following this interpretation, it can be suggested that the sacred space of the *bāhā* is vivified through the presence of the consecrated deities within the structure. This conceptual construct is fundamental to the Newar Buddhist conception of sacred architecture and will be key to deciphering the core iconographic program of the *bāhās* and *bahīs.*

Kvāhpāh Dyah Shrine: West Courtyard Wall

The second architectural component integral to *bāhā* architecture is the most prominent feature in Kvā Bāhā, namely, the main shrine facade (see Ground Plan Fig. 3.8). The main shrine for the *kvāhpāh dyah* image is located on the west courtyard wall and is an impressive, richly embellished five-storied "pagoda-style" structure, with three roofs that get progressively smaller (see Fig. 3.1). On the first level is the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine, where only the current *dyahpāla* and his family are allowed to enter.[18] The entire shrine facade is extensively decorated gilt copper repousse work, donated by lay patrons at various times. The *kwāhpāh dyah* shrine is raised about two feet from the recessed courtyard and accessed through a small flight of stairs.

To protect the lavishly decorated facade, a modern iron grill encloses the passageway in front of the shrine. Two large lions seated on the back of elephants flank the steps leading up to the main shrine door. On the back of the lions are images of Siṁhanāda Lokeśvara, a standard iconographic feature of Patan *bāhā* doorways. On either side of the shrine door is also a pair of double-triangle metal flags, with the Kālacakra *bīja* on each triangle. Other votive offerings include a large temple bell at the south end. Below the bell is an empty wooden seat, which serves as the throne for the *Aṣṭasahaśrika Prajñāpāramitā* text during the morning *pūjās*.

The *kvāhpāh dyaḥ* houses a large silver image of Śākyamuni, facing east (Fig. 3.11).[19] The shrine image is lavishly clothed and decorated with crown, jewelry and other ornaments, thus making it impossible to discern the iconographic attributes or gestures of the image. Informants at the *bāhā* state that the image is seated in *vajrāsana,* displaying the *bhūmisparśamudrā*. If this is true, the image represents Śākyamuni, the *nirmāṇakāya* of the Fully Enlightened Buddha, at the moment of enlightenment. The *toraṇa* iconography suggests that he may also be identified as the Jina Buddha Akṣobhya, who demonstrates the *ādarśajñāna* of Śākyamuni.[20] Above the shrine doorway is one of the most exquisite silver *toraṇas* in the Valley (Fig. 3.12). It is inscribed and dated N.S. 1021 in the reign of King Pṛthvi Bir Bikram Śāha (1881-1911 CE). According to the

inscription, this *torana* replaces the original seventeenth-century *torana* that is now placed above the eastern entrance doorway.[21]

The iconography of the *torana* is unusual and provides clues to the identity of the main *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* image. The center figure on the silver *torana* is a Buddha in *bhūmisparśamudrā,* who may be identified as Śākyamuni/Akṣobhya. He is flanked by Śākyamuni's foremost monks, Sariputra and Mogallyāyana, to his right and left respectively. Flanking the central group are the two Bodhisattvas, embodying the wisdom and compassion aspects of the Enlightened Being. To the Buddha's right is Avalokiteśvara, holding a lotus and a *cauri,* while Vajrapāṇi holds a *vajra* and *cauri* in his right and left hands, respectively. Iconographically, Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi symbolize the dual aspects of the fully Enlightened Buddha enshrined within: compassion and wisdom. This iconographic configuration, popularly found in Newar Buddhist iconography, replicates the one on the shrine door.

In the *torana*'s outer circle are four of the five Jina Buddhas, who are referred to in the Newar Buddhist context, as Pañca Buddha or Pañca Tathāgata. Moving clockwise from left to right, they are Vairocana in *bodhyāṅgi mudrā*, Ratnasambhava in *varadāmudrā,* Amitābha in *dhyānamudrā*, and Amoghasiddhi in *abhayamudrā*. Interestingly, the placement of the Pañca Buddha here does not follow the standard

iconographic patterns found in most *bāhā toraṇas,* where the Buddhas are usually placed in the following sequence, going from left to right: Ratnasambhava, Akṣobhya, Vairocana, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi. In the Kvā Bāhā *toraṇa,* the outer Jina Buddhas follow the pattern of the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala, with Vairocana, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi. At the center position that is generally assigned to Vairocana is Vajrasattva, the *sambhogakāya* of the Ādi Buddha and progenitor of the entire meditational system, according to technical Tantric understanding. Although the *toraṇa* iconography follows the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala layout, beginning with Akṣobhya and ending with Vairocana at the center, here Vairocana and Akṣobhya appear to change places, analogous to some Akṣobhya cycle-*maṇḍalas*[22] Thus, the primary identity of the central Buddha in *bhūmisparśamudrā* can be designated as the Jina Buddha Akṣobhya. Vairocana, in turn, takes Akṣobhya's place in the east along with the other directional Buddhas surrounding him. The *toraṇa* thus demonstrates the five knowledges of the fully Enlightened Buddha Śākyamuni, who is the main shrine image. Thus, he may be identified as both Śākyamuni and the Jina Buddha Akṣobhya.

On the second level, where the *āgaṁ* shrine is generally located, are two sets of decorative windows, each representing the standard iconographic format found in *bāhā* architecture (Fig. 3.13). The lower seven-fold window

depicts the Seven Mānuśi Buddhas, with an image of each Buddha placed in the window niches. The Mānuśi Buddhas are represented by the set of Pañca Tathāgata, with two Buddhas added, which in this case, is Amoghasiddhi represented twice. The iconography of the seven windows is as follows (from left to right): Amoghasiddhi, Akṣobhya, Vairocana, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and two variants of Amoghasiddhi. Three large *toraṇas* are placed prominently, with the larger one at the center and two above the subsequent niches. The center *toraṇa* depicts Śākyamuni surrounded by the Pañca Buddhas, while the other two *toraṇas* depict Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa as the central deity. As will be shown from other examples at *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine, the recurrent iconographic theme on the shrine façade is that of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

Although the second floor does not contain the *āgaṁ* shrine as in many other *bāhās*, the shrine facade still follows the standard architectural designs, characteristic of *āgaṁs*. Specifically, the five-fold window generally indicates the presence of the *āgaṁ* above the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine. Here, the upper five-fold window at Kvā Bāhā also depicts the five Jina Buddhas, placed in the standard iconographic pattern found in Newar Buddhist imagery, beginning with Ratnasambhava, Akṣobhya, Vairocana (center), Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi. The entire group is flanked by Prajñāpāramitā (to the right), with her usual attributes, the lotus, book, and

dharmacakramudrā. To the far left is Ṣaḍakṣarī Lokeśvara, shown in his four-armed form, displaying the *mālā*, lotus, and *cintāmaṇi* at his chest. The entire group represents the popular Buddha/Dharma/Saṅgha iconography, with Prajñāpāramitā symbolizing the Dharma, Ṣaḍakṣarī Lokeśvara the Saṅgha, and the Pañca Tathāgata the Buddha.

The third and fourth levels are the most important structural components for iconographic analysis. Both levels have gilt copper strut figures of the Jina Buddhas, shown in their multi-armed and multi-headed esoteric forms. Unlike the individual votive offerings that are given by lay practitioners and often do not relate to the overall iconography of the *bāhā*, the strut figures on these levels reflect a deliberately conceived iconographic program of Kvā Bāhā, since they are integral to the structure. The iconography of the principal strut figures is related to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, which I propose, is the second major component of Newar Buddhist visual imagery—one that is intimately related to the *kvāhpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine.

In this context, the iconological reading of the strut figures will be central to understanding the significance of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in Newar Buddhist visual art and practice.

On the exterior west wall at the back of the shrine, the third level struts are made of wood and some appear to be inscribed. Although badly abraded and damaged, the iconography of these struts is identical to the

metal strut figures found on the third level shrine facade. These may have been the original wooden struts, which are now replaced by the present set made of gilt copper, which dated to 1607 C.E.[23] On the top floor is another set of wooden struts, depicting angry, ferocious deities alternating with deities in their pacific forms. A row of nine gilt metal *caityas* given as votive offerings is placed on the fourth level roof, while the top roof has thirteen. The crowing element of the shrine facade is a three-tiered *chattras.* The gilt-copper roofs each have a row of Dipaṅkara heads on the edge (an iconographic element typical of Newar Buddhist architecture). At the corners of the roof are the hanging plaques called *hālaṁpo*, depicting the Lokapālas, emphasizing the symbolism of the *bāhā* structure as conceptually identical to the Buddhist cosmological center of Mt. Meru, where the Lokapālas reside.

Tantric Āgaṁ Shrines: East Courtyard Wall and Exterior Courtyard

The third essential component of *bāhā* architecture is the *āgaṁ* shrine, and Kvā Bāhā is unique in having two Tantric *āgaṁ* shrines: one, dedicated to Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍākinī and the other to Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī (See Ground Plan Fig. 3.8). These two deities are archetypes of the Heruka-class deities of the Anuttara Yoga Tantras that are generally houses in *āgaṁ* shrines. As the esoteric component of *bāhā* architecture, access to these shrines and their rituals are restricted to the initiated elders (*āju*) of the

saṅgha. According to elders at Kvā Bāhā, the additional *āgaṁ* was necessary due to the large number of *saṅgha* members.

<u>*Āgaṁ* Shrine to Yogāṁvara and Jñānaḍākinī</u>

The primary *āgaṁ* is that of Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍākinī and is located on the second floor of the east courtyard wall, directly opposite the shrine facade and over the second entrance door of the courtyard (Fig. 3.14). Unlike the usual placement of *āgaṁ* above the *kvāhpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine, the Tantric shrine at Kvā Bāhā is located at the *dīgi,* which is the continuous open hall suitable for the rituals involving large numbers.[24] The actual shrine to Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍākinī is found in the inner (*abhyantara*) room, where only the senior-most *āju* is allowed to enter. Only the ten senior-most elders (*ājus*) called *Daśapāramitā* ("Ten Perfections") are allowed to serve in the Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍākinī shrine.

The imagery found on the exterior of the Tantric *āgaṁ* indirectly alludes to the esoteric nature of the shrine (Fig. 3.15). The interior east courtyard wall on the upper level has eight strut figures, each holding a skullcup and knife, as is typical of esoteric Tantric imagery. The *toraṇa* over the south end door that leads to the *āgaṁ* shrine depicts the Buddha/Dharma/Saṅgha triad, surrounded by the five Jina Buddhas in the outer rings. The *toraṇa* over the north end doorway depicts Vajrasattva as

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the central figure, whose iconographic presence is generally found in the *toraṇas* leading to the *āgaṁ* shrines and alludes to the esoteric nature of the shrine.[25]

The upper portion of the second gateway serves as the exterior/eastern facade of the Tantric *āgaṁ* shrine to Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍākinī (See Fig. 3.14). The esoteric imagery is particularly emphasized on the second level of the exterior facade. The *āgaṁ* is marked on the exterior by the characteristic five-fold windows (Fig. 3.16) found on *āgaṁ* façade. The window niches, similar to the second floor of the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine, contain small metal plaques of the five Jina Buddhas. At the center niche of the window is a *toraṇa,* which depicts a blue figure of Vajrasattva as the central deity (Fig. 3.17). Vajrasattva holds the *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* in his standard iconographic gesture, and is surrounded by eight two-armed female figures. As indicated by his presence on the interior eastern *toraṇa,* Vajrasattva serves as a marker to allude to the highly esoteric nature of the *āgaṁ* shrine. As Gellner rightly observes, Vajrasattva is the "exoteric face" of the esoteric deities.[26]

An elaborately carved two-storied cupola tops the *āgaṁ* sanctum proper. Characteristic of the esoteric Tantric methodologies, female imagery is prominently emphasized on the second level *āgaṁ* façade. Around the upper and lower levels are wooden strut figures that go around the entire structure. The strut figures consistently alternate with male and female

deities, reflective of the well-known Tantric Buddhist metaphor for Enlightenment, in which the male signifies compassion and the female wisdom. At the very top on the east is the Hindu god Sūrya in his carriage drawn by nine horses. Sūrya is flanked by his two female companions, Uṣā and Pratyuṣā, each shown with a drawn bow. In Newar Buddhist iconography, Sūrya is generally paired with Candra, who as the sun and moon, signify the Tantric yogic meditation of the awakening the *cakras*.[27] A metal pendant that hangs down from the bell-like *gajura* tops the cupola roof. The pendant represents a *kalaśa* (vase), an imagery that, as I will discuss in the following section, is intimately connected to Tantric goddess and the esoteric nature of the Tantric shrines. The pendant iconography will be significant in contextualizing the iconology of the Tantric deities of the *āgaṁ* shrine.

Tantric *Āgaṁ* to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī

Unlike many other *bāhās,* Kvā Bāhā's ritually significant shrines are not confined to the interior courtyard. The south end doorway of the west courtyard wall leads to the exterior courtyard to the west called Ilā Nani (Fig. 3.18). Two branch *bāhās,* Michu Bāhā and Baidyaḥ Bāhā, are also here. The second *āgaṁ,* dedicated to Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī and constructed in 1692 C.E., is located on the far western courtyard wall of Ilā Nani.[28] To attend to the second *āgaṁ* shrine, Kvā Bāhā has a subsidiary group of

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twenty-elders (*sthāvira*), who sustain the rituals in the Cakrasaṁvara *āgaṁ*. The *āgaṁ* shrine is topped by a shrine-like cupola, indicating the presence of the *āgaṁ* deity.

Characteristic of *āgaṁ* shrines, the Cakrasaṁvara *āgaṁ* is housed on the second floor, again inside the *dīgi*. On the lower floor is the exoteric shrine to Caṇḍamahāroṣana, who is popularly considered a manifestation of Mahākāla. In the Newar Buddhist context, Caṇḍamahāroṣana is also conflated with the protective deity, Śaṅkaṭā, who is part of the nine constellations (Navagrahas). The Caṇḍamahāroṣana shrine is open to worship by all and is particularly popular on Saturdays, when offerings are given to appease one of the *navagrahas*, Śani.

The three architectural elements at Kvā Bāhā, as characteristic of *bāhā* construction, is reflected in the core groundplan of the *bāhā*. Other subsidiary structures and visual components have been added to the original building through the centuries. One of the most significant aspects of these developments is in the consistency with which the core visual components of the iconographic program are maintained. In the following section, I will discuss the secondary architectural elements and their imagery, which will provide a framework to understand the Newar Buddhist conception of sacred space.

SECONDARY ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES:

Entrance Areas:

In its twentieth-century manifestation, Kvā Bāhā has many other additional elements added to the core structure (Fig. 3.19). This includes the elaborate stone gateway, built in the late nineteenth century, which serves as the present-day entrance into Kvā Bāhā (See Fig. 3.6).[29] The doorway has standard iconographic features of *bāhā* entrances, such as the large male and female lions and the pair of the gate-guardians, Gaṇeśa and Mahākāla, flanking the doorway. Various symbols of auspiciousness embellish this structure, demarcating the sacred environment. Also typical are the male and female *nāgas* encircling the entrance, serving as symbols of auspiciousness and fecundity. Śākyamuni's two foremost monks, Sariputra and Mogallyayāna (invariably to the viewer's left and right), flank the central *toraṇa*, each holding a monk's staff and begging bowl.

The *toraṇas* at Kvā Bāhā are significant for deciphering the iconographic program. It is noteworthy that the *toraṇa* imagery becomes increasingly more esoteric as one progresses into the interior courtyard. The exterior stone *toraṇa* depicts seven seated Buddhas in their exoteric two-armed forms (see Fig. 3.7). Characteristic of Newar Buddhist iconographic norms, this group of seven Buddhas represents the Seven Mānuśi Buddhas. The iconography of five figures is similar to that of the Pañca Jina Buddha,

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while two others relate to the variants of Vairocana in *bodhyangi mudrā*. From the viewer's left moving clockwise, their placement is as follows: a variant of Vairocana in *bodhyāṅgi mudrā*, Amitābha in *dhyānamudrā*, Akṣobhya in *bhūmisparsamudrā*, Vairocana in *dharmacakramudrā*, Ratnasambhava in *varadamudrā*, Amoghasiddhi in *abhayamudrā*, and a variant of Vairocana displaying *bodhyangi mudrā*.[30] Above the *toraṇa* at the top center position above Vairocana is Vajrasattva, who, in the Newar Buddhist context, represents both an aspect of the Ādi Buddha as well as the fully Enlightened Tantric practitioner.[31] As will be shown in this study, Vajrasattva's presence as the top center figure on *toraṇas* is another characteristic of Newar Buddhist iconography, implying Vajrasattva's buddhological role as generator. The entrance roof is also crowned by three *caityas*. Informants have stated that these *caityas* are both universal Buddhist symbols of the Dharma as well as visual reminders of Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

On the corbelled dome of the entrance gate is a Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, consecrated during the construction of the gateway, according to inscriptions at the site. The presence of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala here, as the threshold of the sacred space, gives compelling evidence for my argument that this iconography is a recurrent and primary theme in the visual imagery, and is thematically maintained even in later additions to the

structure. The Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography is reiterated on the inner *torāṇa* of the second entrance gateway.

The exterior gateway leads into a narrow passageway at the far end of which is the second entrance gateway, leading into the interior courtyard (see Fig. 3.14). This gateway served as the original exterior entrance to the *bāhā* before the present one. At the north end (viewer's right) is a rest area (*pāṭi*) that has images of Hindu deities randomly places in small niches. At present, this passageway is the reception area for visitors to remove their shoes before entering the inner courtyard.[32] The south wall (viewer's left) has an unused water-tank, which was traditionally an important part of the *bāhā* structure.

The east wall facade of the corridor is divided into four levels and is richly decorated with stone and wooden carvings. On the first level is the stone doorway that leads to the interior courtyard, while the upper levels mark the exterior facade of the Tantric *āgaṁ* shrine of Yogāṁvara, as discussed earlier. An elaborately embellished shrine-like cupola at the top denotes the presence of this esoteric shrine, a characteristic crowing element of *bāhā* architecture that invariably signifies the presence of an important shrine below.

The rich iconographic elements on the façade echo much of the standard Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna imagery of *bāhā* architecture. On the

lower level, a large stone *toraṇa,* similar in design to the one on the exterior gateway, is placed over the door. The *torāṇa* also depicts seven images of Buddhas (Fig. 3.20). However, here the figures are crowned, multi-headed and multi-armed Tantric forms of the Jinas. These are esoteric forms of the Seven Mānuśi Buddha, which are iconographically identical to the Jina Buddhas of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. While the exterior *toraṇa* had Vairocana as the center figure, here, it is Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, the central deity of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala (Fig. 3.21). Similarly, the other Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala are depicted in their usual iconographic forms—as the four-headed, eight-armed emanations

of Mañjuśrī, as described in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī.*[33] As in the exterior *toraṇa,* here too, the top center figure is Vajrasattva (flanked by Mañjuśrī and Prajñāpāramitā), but shown in his three-headed six-armed Tantric form (Fig. 3.22). As will be shown in the iconographic analysis of Kvā Bāhā, in this form Vajrasattva, is closely associated with Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa.

The *toraṇa* imagery in the outer and inner gateways reflects a thematic progression, from simple exoteric figures in the exterior to more complex esoteric representation of the iconography, as one moves in to the interior. This hierarchy or progression, from exoteric (*bahya*) toward more complex esoteric levels (*guhya* and *abhyantara*), is a recurrent theme in

Newar Buddhist imagery. This pattern is important to the understanding of the symbolic and buddhological meaning of the visual imagery. Further, this framework is also integral to the understanding of the hierarchy of rituals and initiations in Newar Buddhism[34]

South Courtyard Wall

Unlike the upper level of the east courtyard wall that houses the *āgaṁ* shrine, both the upper and lower levels of the south courtyard walls are accessible to the public (see Ground Plan Fig. 3.19). The upper level houses a large image of Amitābha, along with several Dipāṅkara images that are displayed during the five-year and twelve-year Saṁyak festival of Dipāṅkara. Directly below is another shrine area, which serves as a chanting hall for singing devotional songs by both the lay and *saṅgha* members of Kvā Bāhā. This contains a shrine of Syāma Tārā and a number of other images of Buddhist deities. At the western end is the storeroom/treasury that is closed to the public. The inscribed wooden *toraṇas* above the two doors on the east and west end depict the Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

North Courtyard Wall: Vajrasattva Shrine and Tibetan-Style Shrine to Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara

On the upper level, the north wall has a Tibetan-style shrine (*gumbā*) to Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara (facing east), established in the late nineteenth-century (see Ground Plan 3.18). At the center of the room are two rows of benches for devotees and monks to sit and chant Tibetan texts. On the walls and ceilings are mural depicting deities from the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon. The Amoghapāśa shrine was built by the *saṅgha* and lay patrons from Kvā Bāhā, who had spent time in Tibet as wealthy traders and continued to worship in the Tibetan manner. The devotees who frequent the shrine are both Tibetan and Newar Buddhist practitioners.

The lower level of the north courtyard wall houses one of the most important shrines for the Vajrācārya *saṅgha*—the Vajrasattva shrine (Fig. 3.23). In theory, every *bāhā* in Patan that has a Vajrācārya *saṅgha* is required to have a Vajrasattva shrine. Here, in the Vajrasattva shrine the members of the Vajrācārya *saṅgha* of Kvā Bāhā take turns to act as *dyaḥpāla* for a month. While the principal doorway to the Vajrasattva shrine faces east, a secondary access to the shrine in the form of a small window is found on the south end of the north wall. This opening is topped by one of the finest known silver *toraṇas*, depicting Vajrasattva as the center deity (Figs. 3.24 and 3.25).

Inside the Vajrasattva shrine are images of Vajrasattva as the central deity (Figs. 3.26), along with Avalokiteśvara (Karūnāmaya), Vairocana, Mañjuśrī, and Vasundharā. Among the Vajrasattva shrines that I have surveyed in Patan, three deities—Vajrasattva, Mañjuśrī, and Vasundharā—appear to be key components of a Vajrasattva shrine, and each deity is symbolically associated with the Vajrācārya's ritual role as Tantric priest and practitioner. In a technical understanding, Vajrasattva is the Ādi Buddha, with whom the Tantric priest symbolically identifies during ritual practices; Mañjuśrī in his form as Mañjudeva is the primordial *guru* of the Vajrācāryas; and Vasundharā is the exoteric aspect of Vajravārāhī, the main deity in the *āgaṁ* shrine. Here too, the hierarchic layering from the exoteric to esoteric becomes an inherent component of Newar Buddhist imagery. It is within this apparent duality that the deities of the Vajrasattva shrine symbolize the exoteric or public aspects of the highly esoteric "secret" (*guhya*) deities in the *āgaṁ* shrine that are never displayed openly.[35] These concepts will be explored in more detail throughout this study.

SECTION II: CORE ICONOGRAPHIC COMPONENTS OF KVĀ BĀHĀ

As the archetype, Kvā Bāhā has the three essential structural components of *bāhā* architecture—a main *caitya* that is, in theory, consecrated during the establishment of the monastery; a *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ*

shrine; and, a Tantric *āgaṁ* shrine, dedicated to the Heruka-class deities. In examining the visual imagery of Kvā Bāhā and other Newar Buddhist monasteries, a comparable three-fold model is also present that directly relates to the structural components themselves. The visual analyses will show that there are three core iconographic themes related to the Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. These themes have direct correlation to three structural components, namely the central *caitya,* the *kvāhpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine, and the *āgaṁ.*

At Kvā Bāhā, the visual imagery reflects the core iconographic themes of *bāhā* architecture and reveals the interrelationship between the structural and iconographic elements of the sacred architecture. To establish that these three themes are the core iconographic components of Newar Buddhism religious imagery, in this section I will discuss the presence of each component individually in Kvā Bāhā's visual imagery. The aim here is the following:

- To establish that the principal *caitya* is thematically related to Svayambhū Mahācaitya
- To show the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography as major part of the *kvāhpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine's visual imagery
- To illustrate that the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala iconography is related to esoteric nature of the *āgaṁ* shrine

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THE FIRST CORE ICONOGRAPHIC THEME:

Svayambhū Mahācaitya Iconography and its Relationship to the Principal *Caitya*

As is typical of *bāhā* architecture, at the center of the interior courtyard of Kvā Bāhā is the principal *caitya,* enshrined in a temple (See Figs. 3.9 and 3.10). Ritual, morphological, and contextual evidence strongly point to the conceptual synonymity of this *caitya* and the Svayambhū Mahācaitya. The most obvious evidence is in the sacred history of the Kvā Bāhā *caitya.* Kvā Bāhā's central (*ratnacaitya*) is conceived as self-arisen (*svayambhū*) and is equated with the primordial *stūpa* of Newar Buddhism, the Svayambhū Mahācaitya. That the *ratnacaitya*'s sacred history parallels that of Svayambhū Mahācaitya both accentuates the Kvā Bāhā *caitya*'s sacrality as the self-arisen source and, more importantly, also establishes a strong conceptual identity with Svayambhū Mahācaitya. By directly transferring the cosmogonic myth of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya to the legend of the *ratnacaitya* and calling it *svayambhū* ["spontaneously self-arisen], Kvā Bāhā's principal *caitya* is, in buddhological terms, analogous to and, perhaps, symbolically identical with the self-emergent Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

The religious and ritual significance of the Kvā Bāhā *caitya,* based on this direct equivalency, is found in the everyday practices of the lay

community. Each morning, the devotees come to Kvā Bāhā to take *darśan* of the self-arisen *caitya*. This act, according to the practitioners, is equivalent to taking *darśan* of Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

In addition to the etymological connection and the sacred narratives, visual and iconographic similarities between the two *caityas* allude to their synonymy. Despite the difference in size, in their present forms, the two *caityas*, are morphologically identical, each with a low hemispheric mound, a square *hārmikā* with the characteristic "eyes of the Buddha", and the thirteen rings of *chattras* representing the thirteen *bhūmis* (stages) of Enlightenment (Fig. 3.27 and see Fig. 1.2). Iconographically, as is standard in the *caitya* iconography in Newar Buddhism, they both follow the Pañca Jina *maṇḍalic* form replicating the process to Enlightenment, with the four Jina Buddhas placed in the cardinal directions.[36] As will be discussed in Chapter 4, as the primordial source of the religion, Svayambhū Mahācaitya serves as the prototype for virtually all *caityas* in the Kathmandu Valley.

Ritual practices at Kvā Bāhā reinforce the symbolic connections to Svayambhū Mahācaitya. At Svayambhū, the Amitābha shrine on the west side is larger than the other Buddha shrines and receives the most worship. In the Newar Buddhist tradition, Amitābha is not only the presiding Buddha of this *kalpa,* the Bhadrakalpa, but is closely associated with the popular Pure Land cult of rebirth in Amitābha's Sukhāvatī paradise. At the

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enshrined *caitya* in Kvā Bāhā, the principal shrine door is similarly on the west, and the focus of worship for the devotees is clearly to Amitābha on the west. Here, the small image of Amitābha on the *caitya* is generally inundated with flower offerings. Further, the west side has a large number of votive sculptures, including donor figures flanking the west side door. Appropriately, all the *pūjā* rituals, such as the personal offerings to the *caitya,* the lighting of the 108 oil lamps, and daily chanting of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* text are performed on the west side, in front of the Amitābha shrine. Both *caityas*, through the ritual practices, emphasize an inherently Buddhist principle, related to the Pureland Buddhist tradition.

The strongest evidence for the equivalence of the central *caitya* at Kvā Bāhā and Svayambhū Mahācaitya are in the pendants that hang over the shrine doors. In Newar architecture, both in the Hindu and Buddhist context, such pendants generally depict the main shrine deity.[37] As indicated in the inscription, the pendants over the enshrined *caitya* depict Svayambhū Mahācaitya, thus suggesting the symbolic identity of two *caityas*.

Kvā Bāhā *caitya*'s ritual and symbolic identity with Svayambhū Mahācaitya serves as an archetype in relation to the patterns found in other *bāhās* in the Valley. As at Kvā Bāhā, every *bāhā* has a principal *caitya* that vivifies the sacred environment. If Kvā Bāhā's enshrined *caitya* is an archetype, then there should be evidence to indicate that the principal

caityas of other *bāhās/bahīs* are conceived as a hypostasis of Svayambhū Mahācaitya. To contextualize the relevance of this conceptual framework and its relationship to *bāhā* architecture, it is important to first examine Svayambhū's symbolic role in the Newar Buddhist cosmogonic myth.

Svayambhū is closely associated with the Buddhist creation legend of the Valley as narrated in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, as the ontological source of the religion. In the Newar Buddhist understanding, the Mahācaitya literally represents the body of Primordial or Ādi Buddha, and is the progenitor of entire Buddhist world systems. The *Purāṇa* specifically refers to Svayambhū as conceptually generating the sacred geography of the Kathmandu Valley and the sacred environment, in the same way that the central deity in a *maṇḍala* generates and vivifies the sacred space and deities within it. Svayambhū, thus, generates the twelve *tirthas*, eight *vitarāgas*, four rivers, four mountain tops, four Yoginīs, and all the important Buddhist sites and deities therein.[38] In this way, Valley is explicitly conceptualized as Nepal Maṇḍala, and, in the Buddhist context, Svayambhū Mahācaitya is at the core of this sacred circle.[39]

This cosmogram is also transferred to the ritual spaces of the *bāhās/bahīs* by the presence of the principal *caitya* Since every single *bāhā/bahīs* in the Valley has a small *caitya* at the center that symbolically represents Svayambhū, the *bāhā* structures can be read as microcosms of the

Buddhist world systems (Figs. 3.28 and 3.29). Just as the Valley is a maṇḍalic space with Svayambhū as the emanator of its sacred geography, similarly, the *bāhās* are similarly a maṇḍalic space, with the principal *caitya* [Svayambhū] as the generator and vivifier. The ritual function of this *caitya* is identical to the symbolic role of the Mahācaitya in the larger context of the Nepal Maṇḍala. Therefore, the principal central *caitya* is, in the buddhological sense, symbolically indistinguishable and identical to Svayambhū Mahācaitya, the premier Buddhist monument of the Kathmandu Valley. In the prominent *bāhās* such as Kvā Bāhā, Uku Bāhā, and Ha Bāhā, in Patan, and Itum̐ Bāhā, Lagan Bāhā, and Haku Bāhā in Kathmandu, inscriptions and the contemporary ritual context explicitly refer to the central *caitya* as "Svayambhū *caitya*", further establishing the principal *caitya's* buddhological identity with Svayambhū Mahācaitya as the generator of sacred space.

Numerous other references to the symbolic equivalence are evident. For instance, the central *caitya* at Sigha Bāhā, Kathmandu, is specifically called *Kāṭhesimbhu*, meaning "Svayambhū [Caitya] of Kathmandu (Fig. 3.30)[40] The site is replicated in an identical manner to Svayambhū Mahācaitya, including in the establishment of the subsidiary shrines, such as the five "*purs*" unique to Svayambhū. Similarly, at other *bāhās,* such as in Dhum Bāhā, Dau Bāhā, and Pim Bāhā in Patan, as well as Cilānco Bāhā in

Kīrtipur (Fig. 3.31), the relationship with these *caityas* and the Mahācaitya is even more direct. These *caityas* are identified with Svayambhū Mahācaitya, the lineage deity of the particular *saṅgha* and is thus physically "brought" to these sites. In such cases, these *caityas* are specifically referred to as "*Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Caitya*" in the inscriptions found at the site, as a direct allusion to the Mahācaitya. What is noteworthy is that the Newar Buddhist practitioners state that "bringing" or "invoking" Svayambhū to a new site does not imply a surrogacy or substitute; rather these *caityas* are extensions and emanations of the primordial source.

That the central *caitya* of the *bāhās/bahīs* is equated with Svayambhū Mahācaitya is alluded in textual sources. Regarding the establishment of various *bāhās*, Wright's Chronicle states:

> "We have therefore made up our mind to go elsewhere and live in a new bihar...Then they made a chaitya for Svayambhū and an image of Śākyasimha Buddha; and to keep up the worship of these, they took bhikshus. . ."[41]
> And:
> ". . . . He [Śivadeva] made this bhikṣu his Guru and built a bihar, in which he placed images of Svayambhū and Śākya Sinha Buddha, and then he himself because a bhikshu."[42]

Evidence of Svayambhū as the conceptual center of the Newar Buddhist cosmology is also found in a seventeenth-century painting. The painting depicts the reconstruction of the Mahācaitya, and its composition suggests that it may be regarded as a conceptual map of the Valley, in which

Svayambhū serves as the emanator of the *bāhā's'* sacred environment in the Valley (Fig. 3.32). In the painting, Svayambhū is shown in the center, surrounded by the *bāhās* in the specified locality (some inscribed by name). Each *bāhā* is represented as quadrangular courtyard, with a *caitya* at the center of every one.

In my research, I also found numerous inscriptions, such as those from Uku Bāhā, Ha Bāhā, and Bu Bāhā in Patan, which specifically refer to the central *caitya* as "Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Caitya." Although not all of these *caityas* are morphologically identical with Svayambhū, such as the "Aśoka *caitya*" from Ha Bāhā (See Fig. 2.16), nonetheless, the principal *caityas'* direct reference to Svayambhū's epithet, suggests their symbolic and conceptually synonymity to the Mahācaitya. The inscriptional reference alludes that in replicating the source of the primordial Svayambhū, it too is the generative and vivifying source of the *bāhā*. As inferred by these various examples, the presence of a *svayambhū stūpa* at Kvā Bāhā is not unique to the site, but reflects a defining paradigm in the conception of sacred space in Newar Buddhist architecture. The identity of the *bāhā/bahī's* principal *caitya* as Svayambhū strongly affirms the Mahācaitya's role as source of power and ontogenesis of the religion. At a more basic level, it reinforces the concept of the *stūpa* as the quintessential symbol of the Buddhist *dharma*. At Kvā Bāhā as in various other *bāhās*, the principal *svayambhū caitya* has

an additional role. The *caitya* is also the lineage deity of the *bāhā saṅgha*. As mentioned earlier, in the Newar Buddhist context, the lineage deity (*digu dyaḥ*) is a deity that is worshipped annually by all members of an extended family or lineage, and in theory, all who worship the lineage deity are seen as descendants from a common ancestor, thus implying the deity to be the central source of power. At Kvā Bāhā, the ten elders (*āju*) of the *bāhā* called *Daśapāramitā*, take turns performing the daily *pūjā* to the lineage deity for a month at a time.[43] The main festival of the *bāhā* is during the Mukhāṣṭhamī festival, when the four senior members of the bāhā annually bathe the lineage deity (Fig. 3.33). After the washing, the entire male saṅgha (over 4000 members) of Kvā Bāhā collectively worship the *caitya* and partake in a feast (Fig. 3.34). Further, a surrogate of the main shrine image is also paraded around Patan and is taken to the branch *bāhās* for the members to take *darśan* and also to annually reaffirm the lineage connections with the branch bāhās.

As the lineage deity, Kvā Bāhā's *Svayambhū Caitya* serves as the source of power for all members of the saṅgha. In its dual identity as both a hyposthasis of Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the lineage deity, it further substantiates the argument that Svayambhū is the generating source of sacred space. For the *bāhā* members to acknowledge the *caitya* as lineage deity implies that the *saṅgha* is symbolically connected to the primordial site,

Svayambhū, and that the Mahācaitya is the prime source of power for the *sangha*. Buddhologically, the *sangha*'s symbolic connection to Svayambhū is appropriate, as the members take their vows as monks with the *stūpa* as the main witness. As the lineage deity, the central *caitya* further acknowledges the primordial generative source of Svayambhū, as Adi Buddha and the quintessential emblem of the *dharma*. Because the principal *caitya* is present as the genertor of sacred space in every *bāhā,* as in Kvā Bāhā, the Svayambhū Mahācaitya theme is a core component of Newar Buddhist architecture and visual imagery.

THE SECOND CORE THEME: DHARMADHĀTU MAṆḌALA ICONOGRAPHY

The second major iconographic theme that occurs in Kvā Bāhā as well as in most *bāhās* in the Valley is the *maṇḍala* of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, a meditational cycle of an esoteric form of Mañjuśrī. As the preeminent *maṇḍala* of Newar Buddhism, the Dharmadhātu iconography appears repeatedly in various forms. It is sometimes found as a complete *maṇḍala* in the interior courtyard, most often in a stone or metal repousse representation over an octagonal base, sometimes topped with a vajra. It also appears as a series of strut figures on the shrine facade or as part of the *toraṇa* iconography over the shrine or entrance doorways. The largest

freestanding representation of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is at Svayambhū Mahācaitya on the east side, as one comes up the steep flight of stairs towards the *stūpa* (Fig. 3.35). Here, the metal repousse maṇḍala, dated 1668 C.E., is surmounted by a *vajra*–the pristine Buddhist symbol of the adamantine and *śūnyatā*.[44]

In its complete *maṇḍalic* form, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is extremely complex, ranging anywhere from two hundred nineteen to two hundred fifty-two deities. The painting from the Tibetan Ngor collection of the Sākyapā sect shows the abbreviate *maṇḍala,* with its characteristic concentric squares (Fig. 3.36).[45] The *Niṣpannayogāvalī* and *Vajrāvali* are two major iconographic sources for the *maṇḍala* in Nepal, although there are other Tantric ritual texts that also describe its meditation and practice.[46]

The central deity is of the Maṇḍala is a multi-armed esoteric form of Mañjuśrī known as Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa. As Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, "Speech Lord of the Dharma Essence", Mañjuśrī, in his form as Mañjughoṣa ("Beautiful Speech"), is the generator of the *maṇḍalic* space. According to textual sources, specifically the *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is described as golden yellow, four-headed, eight-armed crowned, with the symbols of the Jina Buddhas [*Pañcabuddha ratna kiriṭi*], and displaying the *dharmacakramudrā* with his principal hands.[47] This is shown in a computer-generated drawing (Fig. 3.37).[48] He holds a

book (the *Prajñāpāramitā* text) and sword in his upper left and right hands; his second left and right hands hold a bow and arrow, and the third left and right hold a *ghaṇṭā* and *vajra*. Although iconographic variations are found in the placement of the attributes in his hands in Newar Buddhist art, these remain the primary symbols of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara.

The text also describes Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara as surrounded by eight Uṣṇīṣa deities, who are often not represented in the abbreviated *maṇḍalas*. Beyond this, in the cardinal directions of the inner *maṇḍala* are the four Jinas Buddhas in their esoteric forms, each surrounded by the Vajra Bodhisattvas of his appropriate *kula*. Among them, the Masters of the House—Vajrasattva, Vajraratna, Vajradharma, and Vajrakarma—in the eastern, southern, western, and northern quadrants respectively, are conceptually facing or to the front left of the respective *kuleśa*, or Lord of the *kula*.

The placement of the Jina Buddhas in the inner core of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala follows the basic Pañca Jina *maṇḍalic* pattern, beginning with the east gate at the bottom and moving clockwise around the *maṇḍala* (Fig 3.38). Here, the Jinas are represented as four-faced, eight-armed deities, and identified by their *kula* colors and *vāhana*.[49]

Entering the sacred circle is Akṣobhya in the eastern quadrant, holding a sword, *vajra*, arrow, and *aṅkūśa* in his right hands, while his left

hands display *tarjanimudrā, ghaṇṭā,* bow, noose (*pāśa*) (Fig 3.39). The southern quarter is presided over by the eight-armed Ratnasambhava seated his horse *vāhana.* He displays a sword, *vajra,* arrow, and goad (*aṅkūśa*) in his right hands while his left hands hold a *cintāmaṇi dhvajā, ghaṇṭā,* bow, and noose (*pāśa*) (Fig 3.40). Moving to the west is the esoteric form of Amitābha, identified by his red *kula* color and peacock *vāhana.* Amitābha's attributes consist of a *vajra,* arrow, sword, and, goad (*aṅkūśa*) in his right hands and a lotus, bow, noose (*pāśa*), and *ghaṇṭā* in his left hands (Fig 3.41). Finally, to the north is Amoghasiddhi, represented again in his four-faced, eight-armed esoteric form, displaying the sword, *vajra,* arrow, and noose (*aṅkūśa*) in his right hands, while his left display *tarjanimudrā, ghaṇṭā,* bow, and noose (*pāśa*) (Fig 3.42). All four Jinas appear consistently with Mañjuśrī's attribute, the sword, in one of their hands and are conceived as facing the progenitor of the *maṇḍala,* Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa.

In the Newar Buddhist context, it is the Jinas at the core of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala that are represented in the iconographic programs of the *bāhās,* specifically *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine façade's *toraṇa* and strut iconography. The complex, esoteric nature of these Tantric deities allude to the multiple layers of meanings implicit in their forms, whose ritual significance can only be gleaned through an examination of its relationship with the other two core iconographic elements. The contextual use of the

maṇḍala iconography at Kvā Bāhā reveals the different layers of meanings possible–from the basic lay understanding of the deities as symbols of the Buddhist faith, to the highly technical symbolism that is well within the theoretical framework of Tantric Buddhism. Reinterpreted to fit Newar Buddhist religious ideology and accommodating the key buddhological elements of cosmogonic myth, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is, undoubtedly, one of the most popular iconographic themes in the visual imagery of Newar Buddhist architecture.

Presence of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala at Kvā Bāhā

As the Dharmadhātu iconography is, by far, the most recurrent theme in the visual imagery, I will point out the presence of this iconographic component at Kvā Bāhā. Specifically, this theme is found in three formats, given here in order of significance to the overall iconographic program : (1) as part of the strut iconography of the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine façade; (2) in the *toraṇa* iconography of the shrine and entrance doorways; and, (3) as complete, independent *maṇḍalas.* The placement of this imagery in the context of the structural components of the *bāhā* shows that it is directly related to the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine. Further, a detailed examination of this iconographic theme, together with the other two iconographic components, will indicate the presence of a unified iconographic program.

Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala Iconography as Strut Figures on *Kvāhpāh Dyāh* Shrine

The most important iconographic theme of *kvāhpāh dyah* facade in the west shrine wall relates to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Specifically, the strut figures in the third (Figs. 3.43-3.48) and fourth levels (Figs 3.40-3.54) are the Jina Buddhas from the inner core of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. On both levels, there are six struts, which depict Vajrasattva and the Five Jina Buddhas. Each strut has three figures on it: the top roundel has a small seated Buddha, shown in two-armed exoteric form. Iconographically, this provides the key to the identity of the multi-armed strut figure. At the center is the main strut figure, shown as an eight-armed esoteric form of the Buddha represented above. Each Jina is identifiable by his respective *kula vāhana*. The Buddhas, in their exoteric forms found in the roundels, are not shown crowned, while the larger multi-armed Buddhas wear the Pañca Jina crowns, indicative of their Tantric nature. In the lower niche is the female *prajña* or *Buddhaśaktī,* as is the term used in the Newar Buddhist context. This section depicts seated female figures, holding a *mālā* and book or a *mālā* and lotus. They appear to be variant forms of Prajñāpāramitā and or Tantric forms of the Jina *prajñās*.[50]

These are the primary iconographic elements of the shrine façade, depicting the esoteric form of the Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. In

the Newar Buddhist context, strut figures are part of the larger architectural structure, and these are put in place during the construction or major renovation of the building. Because of this, the visual imagery of the strut figures reflect a premeditated iconographic conception, with ritual specialists deciding what iconographic themes are appropriate and why. The metal struts at Kvā Bāhā were constructed during the most recent major renovation in 1637 C.E., although the identical wooden struts at the exterior west shrine wall suggests that these may have been the older ones replaced.[51] Another earlier renovation is also recorded in 1406 C.E. However, whether the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography was present during this time, is impossible to discern at this time. In comparing Kvā Bāhā's fully developed Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography with other examples of this iconographic program found in the *bāhās* of Kathmandu and Patan, it appears that the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography, as an integral component of the *kvāhpāh dyah* strut figures, was firmly established by the mid-seventeenth century.[52]

Since Kvā Bāhā's strut figures are among the best preserved in the Valley, they serve as a prototype to analyze the overall iconographic conception and meaning of the visual imagery of *bāhā* architecture. In the iconographic analysis, I will provide a close reading of the strut iconography in relation to the other iconographic elements found at Kvā Bāhā in order to

understand the symbolic meaning of the iconographic programs found in *bāhā* architecture.

Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in *Toraṇa* Iconography

Toraṇas are significant components in Nepali architecture, as they provides clues to the iconographic program of the structure as well to the identity of the enshrined deity. At Kvā Bāhā, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is a major theme of the *toraṇa* iconography, beginning with the exterior *toraṇas* and moving into the interior space, just as one would enter a *maṇḍala*. To understand the *bāhā* as a *maṇḍalic* space that is not only generated by Svayambhū Caitya, but also by the Dharmadhātu, I will describe in detail the presence of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala as found in the *toraṇa* iconography.

1. Second exterior gateway *toraṇa*, depicting the esoteric form of the Seven Mānuṣi Buddhas. The central deity of the *toraṇa* is Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, surrounded by the Jinas of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Above the *toraṇa,* the lintel figure depicts Vajrasattva, as a variant of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara (See Figs. 3.20, 3.21, and 3.22). In comparing this imagery with that of the exoteric representation of the Seven Mānuṣi Buddhas in the

outer gateway, here Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara takes the place of Vairocana, thus reconfirming Mañjuśrī's identity with Vairocana.

2. <u>Four *toranas* over the doorways of the enshrined Svayambhū Caitya.</u> Each *torana* in the cardinal directions depicts the Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala—Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi, as the central figures in the east, south, west, and north respectively. They are identified by their *vāhanas* and attributes, which follow the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. At the top center position of the each of the *torana* is Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, the *mandala*'s central deity. The *torana* iconography is the key to establish the relationship between the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the Svayambhū Mahācaitya. This will be further discussed in the next section.

3. <u>South courtyard wall. *Torana* over the west end doorway.</u> The *torana* depicts Amoghasiddhi from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and is identified by his Garuda *vāhana* and his attributes (Figs. 3.55 and 3.56). He is holding a goad, arrow, sword, and *vajra* in his right hands (from top to bottom), while his left hands hold a noose, bow, *ghaṇṭā,* and display the *tarjanimudrā*. He is surrounded by his Vajrabodhisattvas—Vajrakarma (east), Vajrarakṣā (south),

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Vajrayakṣa (west), and Vajrasandhi (north), according to the descriptions given in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*.[53] At the top center position is Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, the emanator of the *maṇḍala*.[54]

4. South courtyard wall. *Toraṇa* over the east end. The *toraṇa* depicts Ratnasambhava from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and is identified by his horse *vāhana* and his attributes doorway (Fig. 3.57). He is holding a goad, arrow, sword, and vajra in his right hands (from top to bottom), while his left hands hold a noose, bow, *chattra*, and a *ghaṇṭā*. He is surrounded by his Vajrabodhisattvas—Vajraratna (east/lower left), Vajratejas (south/upper left), Vajraketu (west/upper right), and Vajrahāsa (north/lower right), according to the descriptions given in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*.[55] At the top center position is Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, the central deity of the *maṇḍala*.[56]

5. Exterior west wall. Entrance doorway *toraṇa.* The central deity of the *toraṇa* is a variant of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, in which his identity is conflated with Vajrasattva (Figs. 3.58 and 3.59).[57] He is shown holding a sword and the *Prajñāpāramitā* text in his upper right and left hands, an arrow and bow in his second right and left, a goad and noose in his third hands, and his

principal hands hold a *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* similar to Vajrasattva. The center figure has a total of six deities to his right and left, all of whom hold Mañjuśrī's attributes, the sword and book, in their upper right and left hands, respectively. A replica of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya, an important visual statement that reinforces the identity of the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara and Svayambhū Mahācaitya, surmounts the *toraṇa*.[58] The *toraṇa* is inscribed and dated N.S. 727 (1604 CE). That the exterior *toraṇas* in the east and west doorways both represent the Dharmadhātu iconography is a significant indication of this theme's prevalence in Newar Buddhist visual imagery, and that the sacred space is generated by the Dharmadhātu.

6. *Kvāhpāh Dyah* shrine wall. Second level. *Toraṇa* above the five-fold windows. Three large *toraṇas* are prominently placed above the niches of the five Jina Buddhas, with the larger one at the center above Vairocana and the two smaller *toraṇas* above the subsequent niches. The center *toraṇa* depicts Śākyamuni surrounded by the Pañca Jinas Buddhas, while the other two *toraṇas* depict the Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. The first of the subsidiary *toraṇas* is above the image of Ratnasambhava at the far left (south), and the central figure,

Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, is shown with his usual attributes (sword and book, arrow and bow, goad and noose, and the *dharmacakramudrā*. The second *toraṇa* is above the image of Amoghasiddhi at the far right (north), and the central deity is the four-faced eight-armed form of Amoghasiddhi from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. He is shown with the *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* in his upper right and left hands, sword and *chattra* in his second pair of hands, arrow and bow in his third pair, and a goad and noose in his principal hands. The placement of the Dharmadhātu iconography on the exterior of what is generally the āgaṁ shrine suggests an important symbolic relationship between Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the deities of the *āgaṁ* shrine.

From the above description, it is clear that the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is a major theme in the *toraṇa* iconography. Both the exterior doorways depict Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa as the central figure. The presence of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala over the outer doors of the enshrined *caitya* is an important visual metaphor, as the *toraṇa* iconography generally provides clues to the identity of the enshrined deity. With this overwhelming popularity in the imagery, the questions arise: Why consistently choose the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala rather than any other Tantric *maṇḍala*? Does this

relate to Mañjuśrī's preeminence in the religion? These issues will be the main focus of the iconographic analysis in this chapter.

Complete *Maṇḍalas* of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara

While the strut figures and *toraṇas* are tied to the overall design and conceptual meaning of the structure, individual free-standing *maṇḍalas* are be offered, according to the wishes' of the lay patrons or *saṅgha* members. The first example of the Dharmadhātu theme at Kvā Bāhā as a complete *maṇḍala* is found on the ceiling of the entrance archway. The *maṇḍala*, approximately fourteen inches in diameter, is made of stone and, according to the inscriptions on the entrance facade, is specified by name and dated to 1886 C.E. (N.S. 1006) (Fig. 3.60). The form replicates the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala's unique morphological structure, with three concentric squares enclosed within the outer circle. In the inner ring is Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa as the center figure while the four esoteric forms of the Jina Buddhas—Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi—are shown surrounding him in their respective directions (east, south, west, and north). Although hard to distinguish, all the other figures of the *maṇḍala* appear to be carved with their respective attributes. The outer ring of the *maṇḍala* has the Caturmahārājā (Four Guardian Kings)—Dhṛtarāstra (east),

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Viruḍhaka (south), Virupākṣa (west), and Vaiśravāna (north)—placed in the intermediate points.

The second example of a complete *maṇḍala* at Kvā Bāhā is found immediately in front of the enshrined *caitya* on the east side (Figs. 3.61 and 3.62). The copper repousse *maṇḍala* is surmounted by a *vajra*, and covered by a metal canopy. The inscription at the base identifies the *maṇḍala* by name (*Oṁ dharmadhātave namaḥ; dharmadhātu maṇḍala*) and the date of consecration to N.S. 984 (1864 CE). The deities are depicted on the horizontal repousse surface of the *maṇḍala*. The presentation is abbreviated, with only the deities at central core shown with their attributes. On the inner side of the canopy is a representation of Vajrasattva, the *sambhogakāya* form of the Ādi Buddha in Newar Buddhism.

The physical placement of the free-standing Dharmadhātu *maṇḍala* in front of a *caitya,* or specifically the central *svayambhū caitya,* is found repeated throughout the Valley. Dharmadhātu Maṇḍalas are often offered in conjunction to a votive *caitya,* particularly in the contemporary tradition of Patan. The most telling example is at Svayambhū, where the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is located in front (to the east) of the Mahācaitya. This recurrent pattern serves as a significant visual metaphor in Newar Buddhist imagery, as it alludes to an implicit relationship between the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the Svayambhū Mahācaitya. What this relationship is and how it is

articulated in the visual imagery of Kvā Bāhā will be discussed in the iconographic interpretation to follow.

THE THIRD CORE THEME: CAKRASAṀVARA MAṆḌALA ICONOGRAPHY

The iconography of Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala and of other Heruka class deities is the third core iconographic component. This theme is directly associated with the esoteric Tantric *āgaṁ* shrine, which is accessed only by the initiated elders of the *bāhā*. Regarded with a great deal of secrecy, it is in the Tantric shrines that the *saṅgha* members receive their higher initiations (*dikṣā*) to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. Kvā Bāhā's visual imagery alludes to the highly technical Tantric practices related to the *āgaṁ* shrine. A close examination of the iconography will establish its correlation with the ritual aspects of the shrine. Kvā Bāhā truly serves as an archetype in this respect, as it is only *bāhā* that have two *āgaṁ* shrines, dedicated to the two of the most important Heruka class deities of Newar Buddhism: Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍākinī and Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī. Generally, most *bāhās* only have one *āgaṁ* shrine to such Heruka-class deities.

The abundant depiction of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala theme at Kvā Bāhā comprises the "exoteric" or *bāhya* ("outer") category, in which the imagery, although inherently Tantric by nature, is openly displayed in public.

In contrast, the visual imagery of the *āgaṁ* shrine constitutes the secret and esoteric ("*guhya/abhyantara*") class that are accessible only to the initiated practitioners. These may not openly be displayed in public and thus remains within the confines of the shrine. The Tantric categories of *bāhya/guhya/abhyantara* "outer/secret/inner" that pertain to the nature of the visual imagery, refer not only to the hierarchy of ritual,[59] but also correlates to the hierarchy of the visual symbolism found in Newar Buddhist architecture. The esoteric nature of the *āgaṁ* imagery is shown symbolically, using extensive visual metaphors and emphasis on the female. The meaning of these symbols must be analyzed through this integral framework of the "secret/inner" classification.

The principal *āgaṁ* shrine at Kvā Bāhā is dedicated to Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍākinī. In contrast to its usual place on the second floor over the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine, the Yogāṁvara *āgaṁ* is located on the second floor of the east courtyard wall, directly opposite the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* (Fig. 3.63). The shrine is accessed through the doorway at the south end, with a *toraṇa* depicting Śākyamuni/Akṣobhya, surrounded by the four Jina Buddha and Vajrasattva at the top center. Inside the upstairs *āgaṁ*, there are two separate rooms: an outer secret room (*guhya*) and inner (*abhyantara*) shrine room.[60] The categories of esotericism—"secret" versus "inner"—are also manifested in the physical layout of the *āgaṁ* shrine. The outer area has a

long row of seats for the ten elders, and to the north end is the image of Vasundharā, who symbolizes the exoteric identity of the goddess, Vajravārāhī.[61] This area is accessible to all the initiated members of the community, and the imagery found there, such as the shrine of Vasundharā constitutes the *"guhya"* or secret class that may be displayed in public. As in the center of the *maṇḍala,* the inner (*abhyantara*) room houses the *āgaṁ* deities and is entered only by the seniormost initiated elder, who is called Cakreśvara, "Lord of the Circle".

The Tantric "outer" and "inner" categories are also reflected in the type of visual imagery present in the exterior facade of the *āgaṁ* shrine.[62] The imagery alludes to the esoteric nature of the *āgaṁ* through symbolic elements, without directly representing the highly secret deities. Characteristic of the Anuttara Yoga Tantra methodology practiced in the *āgaṁ* shrines, the imagery generally emphasizes the Tantric goddesses. For instance, the second floor on the east courtyard depicts a crown of the goddess Kumārī on the exterior window, directly outside the area where the Vasundharā image is housed inside. Both Kumārī and Vasundharā, in this context, are the "outer" (*bāhya*) aspect of the goddess Vajravārāhī, who is the archetypal deity of the *āgaṁ* shrine. Although in theory, the highly esoteric deities of the *āgaṁ* shrines are never represented in public, the iconography related to the *āgaṁ* employ aspects of these deities that may be displayed in

public. In the esoteric nature of the *āgaṁ* iconography, Kumārī represented by her crown, and Vasundharā both symbolically allude to the presence of *āgaṁ* goddess, Vajravārāhī. To the initiated practitioner, Kumārī and Vasundharā are, in this context, the exoteric aspects of Vajravārāhī. In Newar Buddhist iconology, Kumārī, Vasundharā, and Vajravārāhī are the three "faces" of the Ādi Śaktī, the principal deity of the *āgaṁ* shrine.[63] The symbolic meaning of their manifestations, however, is *guhya,* or secret, revealed only through initiation and the context of rituals. To the uninformed and casual viewer, it may appear that the visual imagery of the *bāhās* does not reflect the Tantric nature of the *āgaṁ* shrine. Nonetheless, a contextual reading of the imagery indicate that the Anuttara Yoga iconography, specifically of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, is a dominant theme related to the *āgaṁ* shrines.

The second *āgaṁ* shrine at Kvā Bāhā is dedicated to Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī and is located in the exterior western courtyard of Ilā Nani (Fig. 3.64). The exterior iconography provides hints to the esoteric practices of the *āgaṁ* shrine. Among the twelve strut figures on the exterior, the first and the last struts depict the female bird faced gate-guardians from the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala (Fig. 3.65). The remaining ten struts depict the Daśakrodhas, shown as terrific angry deities holding a skullcup (*kapāla)* and flaying knife (*karttṛkā*). The Daśakrodhas, in the context of the *āgaṁ*

shrines and the ritual performed there, are the esoteric aspects of the ten Dikpālās.[64]

Although the shrine images are not accessible for study and the visual imagery is limited, the meaning of the esoteric imagery can be contextualized through the understanding of the ideological constructs, such as the Tantric hierarchy of the "outer, secret, inner". The strut figures, the *toraṇa* on the exterior facade, and the pendant hanging from the cupola also provide invaluable iconographic information about the contextual meaning of the *āgam* shrines.

Conceptualized as a progressive hierarchy of soteriological practices the three core iconographic components—Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, articulate a unified iconographic program in Newar Buddhist architecture. Their mutual association helps contextualize the symbolic meaning and the reasons for the choice of these themes in the Newar Buddhist context.

SECTION III: ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE CORE COMPONENTS AT KVĀ BĀHĀ

Thus far, I examined the presence of the three core iconographic components of Newar Buddhist architecture–Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and Cakrasaṁvara/Yogāṁvara iconography. Each

of these themes relates to the structural components, namely, the principal vivifying *caitya, kwāhpāh dyah* shrine, and the *āgaṁ* shrine. In analyzing these three components closely, several questions arise: What is the relationship among the three core components? How are they understood by the Newar Buddhist practitioners and how does the visual imagery articulate the relationship of these core components? Is there an underlying iconographic program that emerges through the presence of the core visual elements? Why is this particular set of imagery unique to Newar Buddhist architecture and how does this pertain to the larger constructs of the religion?

My methodological approach here is to analyze the visual imagery, in relation to the larger Tantric Buddhist principles and specific constructs of the Newar Buddhist tradition. I will address the following issues in this section.

- Explore the relationship of the three core components. Specifically, I will examine the relationship of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. In this understanding, I propose that the Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala are identical and this identity is a fundamental construct of Newar Buddhist iconology.

- Establish a unified iconographic program of Newar Buddhist *bāhā* architecture, in which the three core components are key to the visual symbolism. Here, I will explore why the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is the imagery of choice for the Newar Buddhist practitioners.

- Demonstrate that there is an inherent hierarchy of imagery, analogous to the ritual and soteriological practices of Newar Buddhism. To contextualize the symbolic meaning of the unified iconographic program, I will provide a buddhological reading of the iconographic program.

1. ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE ENSHRINED *CAITYA*:

Defining the Relationship between Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala

The iconographic analysis presented in this section will explore the symbolic relationship between the Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Specifically, I will analyze in detail the iconography of the enshrined *svayambhū caitya* at Kvā Bāhā, as the imagery most clearly articulates the Newar Buddhist conception of this ideological construct. The following section is highly technical, in that the interpretation employs basic Tantric Buddhist principles to explain the visual symbolism.

In the previous section, I established that the principal *caitya* was a key component of *bāhā* architecture, and is identified with Svayambhū Mahācaitya. I also contended that the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala was the preeminent *maṇḍala* of Newar Buddhism, indicated by its overwhelming presence in the strut and *toraṇa* iconography of the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine. As both the principal *caitya* and *maṇḍala* are consistently found in the *bāhās/bahīs* throughout the Valley.[65] the question then arises: Is there a relationship between these two core components and if so, what is its significance and how is this articulated in the visual imagery? Among all the *bāhās* I studied, Kvā Bāhā provided the strongest visual explanation of this question. Specifically, the iconographic program of the enshrined *caitya* at Kvā Bāhā provides clues to the symbolic meaning of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala within the Newar Buddhist context. A detailed analysis of the visual symbolism of the Dharmadhātu iconography provides one of the clearest articulations of the symbolic identity between Svayambhū and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, which I propose is a basic premise of Newar Buddhism.

In Nepal both in the Hindu or Buddhist context, the *toraṇa* iconography invariably provides clues to the identity of the enshrined deity. Over the outer doors of Kvā Bāhā's central enshrined *caitya* are metal repousee *toraṇas* on the cardinal directions. The *toraṇa* iconography is

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related to the Dharmadhātu *maṇḍala*, where, in each case, the central deity of the *toraṇa* is the four-faced eight-armed directional Jinas from the inner core of the *maṇḍala*. Each figure on the *toraṇa* corresponds to the descriptions given in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*.

One begins on the east, with the three-dimensional temple replicating a *maṇḍala*. The central figure in the eastern *toraṇa* is the directional Buddha, Akṣobhya from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, who can be identified not only by his attributes, but also by his elephant *vāhanas* below him (Fig. 3.66).[66] Here, Akṣobhya is shown with a goad and noose in his upper right and left hands, an arrow and bow in his second right and left hands, *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* in his third hands, and his principal hands holds a sword and displays *tarjanimudrā*. He is flanked by a pair of unidentified Bodhisattvas, each holding the *cauri*.

Surrounding Akṣobhya, in the outer ring of the *toraṇa* and following the *maṇḍalic* form of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, are the four Vajra Bodhisattvas of the Akṣobhya *kula*—Vajrasattva as the Master of the House (east / lower left of viewer), Vajrarāja (south / upper left of viewer), Vajrarāga (north / upper right of viewer) and Vajrasādhu (west / lower right of viewer).[67] At the top center position, directly above Akṣobhya, is Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, the esoteric form of Mañjuśrī and the generator of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala (Fig. 3.67). Conceived as the central deity and

thus placed on the top, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is represented with his standard attributes: sword and book; arrow and bow, *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā;* and his principal hands in *dharmacakramudrā.*

Reiterating the inner core of the *maṇḍala* is the *toraṇa* over the south door. Here again, the central deity is Ratnasambhava from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, identified by his horse *vāhana*, and surrounded by his four Vajra Bodhisattvas (Vajraratna, Vajratejas, Vajraketu, Vajrahāsa) (Figs. 3.68 and 3.69). Ratnasambhava holds a goad and noose in his upper right and left hands; arrow and bow in his second right and left hands; a sword and *cintāmaṇi dhvajā* in his third hands; and his principal right and left hands hold a *vajra* at the chest and a *ghaṇṭā*. Again Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is at the top center position, as the generator and conceptually at the center of this sacred *maṇḍala.*

The main shrine doorway of the enshrined *caitya* on the west has a metal *toraṇa* that is slightly larger than the rest. Here, the central deity is the eight-armed esoteric form of Amitābha from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, shown seated in *vajrāsana* on his peacock *vāhana* (Figs. 3.70 and 3.71). He holds a sword and lotus in his upper right and left hands; a goad and noose in his second right and left hands; an arrow and bow in his third hands; his principal hands hold a *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā*. Amitābha is flanked by two Bodhisattvas, who are shown with a *cauri* and lotus in their hands. As in the

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other *toraṇas,* Amitābha is surrounded in the outer circle by his *kula* Vajra Bodhisattvas—Vajradharma, Vajratikṣṇa, Vajrahetu, and Vajrabhāṣa. At the top center position is Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa. There is slight variation from his usual attributes, in that the eight-armed Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is shown holding the *kula* symbols of the Jina Buddhas, in addition to his usual attribute, the sword. In his top right hand, he holds the sword, the main attribute of Mañjuśrī and also the *kula* symbol of Amoghasiddhi, while his top left holds a lotus, the *kula* symbol of Amitābha. In his second pair of hands is a *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā.* His third right hand holds the *cakra,* Vairocana's *kula* symbol, while the right hand holds an object that appears be a *maṇi* (jewel), the symbol of Ratnasambhava. As is standard in Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara's usual iconography, his principal hands display the *dharmacakramudrā.*

Moving clockwise to the north and consistently following the *maṇḍalic* pattern, the *toraṇa* shows Amoghasiddhi from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala as the central figure (Figure 3.72). Here too, Amoghasiddhi is identified by his Garuḍa *vāhana* and his attributes—the goad, arrow, *vajra,* and sword in his right hands (from top to bottom) and the noose, bow, *ghaṇṭā,* and displaying the *tarjanimudrā.* Invariably, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, the top center figure, is shown in his standard iconographic form and conceptually at the center and thus the generating source of the *maṇḍala.*

The *toraṇa* iconography of Kvā Bāhā's enshrined *caitya* consistently reiterates the inner core of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Here, the respective Jina Buddhas are placed in their cardinal directions, with Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara in the top center as the generator of the *maṇḍala*. The entire temple of the enshrined Svayambhū *caitya* can be interpreted as a three-dimensional Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, at the center of which should be Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, who generates the entire *maṇḍalic* space. However, at Kvā Bāhā, it is *svayambhū caitya* that takes the place of the central deity Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, as shown in the computer generated drawing (Fig. 3.73) Since the Tantric tradition understands the central deity to be the generator of a *maṇḍala,* that the *caitya* is substituted with Mañjuśrī unequivocally signifies that they are interchangeable. In other words, there is a symbolic identity is implied between the *svayambhū caitya* and Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa.

This understanding may be best clarified visually when comparing the inner core of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the iconographic program of the Kvā Bāhā's enshrined *caitya*. In a technical buddhological understanding and in a conception similar to the *maṇḍala,* the central Svayambhū *caitya* is seen to generate not only the three-dimensional *maṇḍalic* space of the temple, but the entire sacred space of the *bāhā* itself. This conception of the *svayambhū caitya*/Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala as generator and vivifier of sacred

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space is further reinforced by the recurrence of the Dharmadhātu iconography at Kvā Bāhā. For example, the Dharmadhātu iconography is found in the entrance archway and, even more explicitly, in the strut figures of the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine facade, as if projecting the esoteric manifestation of the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū. The presence of the Dharmadhātu deities thus vivifies and creates the *mandalic* space of the *bāhā*.

As the central *caitya* at Kvā Bāhā is equated with Svayambhū Mahācaitya, in the same way, this symbolic association of the microcosm (central *svayambhū caitya* = Dharmadhātu Mandala) can be transferred to the larger macrocosmic level (Svayambhū Mahācaitya = Dharmadhātu Mandala). The symbolic identity of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya and Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa appears to be a key premise of Newar Buddhist practice and iconology, articulated at Kvā Bāhā as well as in the iconographic program of other *bāhās* in the Valley. The iconography of the enshrined *caitya* makes one of the strongest visual statements that the Mandala and the Mahācaitya and its hypostasis are, in the buddhological sense, indistinguishable.

The iconographic programs of numerous other *bāhās* provide visual testimony to this ideological relationship. For example, in a number of small private branch *bāhās,* the reference to the symbolic identity is more straightforward than others. At Gaṇeśa Bāhā in Patan, the Dharmadhātu

Maṇḍala is substituted for the central Svayambhū *caitya* in the interior courtyard and similarly serves as the generator/vivifier of the sacred space. (Fig. 3.74). Inscriptions found on the numerous principal *caityas* variously refer to them as "*Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara*", "*Om Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Caitya*", substantiating the association of the Mahācaitya and the Maṇḍala.[68] Further evidence for the symbolic identity may also be seen in contemporary votive offerings, in which a *caitya* and a Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala are often dedicated together as a pair. In many cases, such offerings, particularly in Patan, are inscribed invoking the *caitya* as "*Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara*" and can be found outside the context of the *bāhā* structures proper. (Fig. 3.75).

The ritual context also alludes to Svayambhū's association with Mañjuśrī. In the statement of intent (*saṅkalpa*) that is recited before any Buddhist ritual is performed, the invocation describes the Valley as a *maṇḍala* "presided by Śrī Heruka Khagānana [Guhyeśvarī] and Śrī Svayambhū Caitya Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara."[69] Similarly, the Svayambhū/Dharmadhātu/Mañjuśrī equation also becomes familiar theme in Newarī devotional songs. In many of the religious songs (*bhajan*) that I heard that were sung at the Mahācaitya in the morning liturgy or during the Guñlā months, the songs give praise to Svayambhū Jyotirūpa as the primordial *stūpa* and called it by the epithet "Svayambhū Dharmadhātu

Vāgīśvara". In other cases, the popular recessions of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* printed in Newarī invariably begin with a long invocation to Svayambhū as Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa.[70] Specifically, the invocation establishes the deities of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala as representing the totality of the primordial Svayambhū Mahācaitya.[71]

These examples illustrate that both the visual imagery of *bāhā* architecture as well as ritual practices reaffirm the symbolic identity between Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. As indicated by the iconographic program of Kvā Bāhā, this theme appears to be a fundamental premise of the Newar Buddhist religious ideology. The buddhological implications of these statements and how this complex ideological construct is unique the Newar Buddhist tradition need to be explored.

Contextualizing the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in Newar Buddhism: Mañjuśrī as Ādi Buddha

To understand why the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is the preeminent exoteric *maṇḍala* of Newar Buddhism, it will be important to analyze Mañjuśrī's role in the Newar Buddhist tradition. Contextual evidence and basic premises of Newar Buddhism clarifies the symbolic relationship of Mañjuśrī and Svayambhū Mahācaitya. In the Mahāyāna tradition, Mañjuśrī is one of the Eight Great Bodhisattvas (*aṣṭamahābodhisattva*) and embodies

the wisdom component of a Buddha's Enlightened state. In the Vajrayāna tradition, Mañjuśrī's role is further elaborated in the Tantras, such as the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra* and the *Kālacakra Tantra,* which describe him as a fully Enlightened Buddha (*samyaksaṁbodhi buddha*).[72]

In order to understand the buddhological implication of Mañjuśrī's role as Buddha and his conflation with Svayambhū, I will first contextualize Svayambhū's role in Newar Buddhism. In the narrative of the origins of Svayambhū, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* states that the Mahācaitya literally represents the Ādi Buddha, who emerged from the void as the self-existent flame, "Svayambhū Jyotirūpa" in the form of five colored rays of light.[73] Only later was the self-existent Jyotirūpa covered in the form of the *caitya*, as we know it today. For the Newar Buddhist practitioners, Svayambhū Mahācaitya has many layers of meaning inherent in its symbolism. At the simplest level, the *stūpa* demonstrates the goals of the lay practitioners—to gain merit (*puñya*) for a better rebirth in the next lifetime or advancement along the path of Enlightenment.

In the Tantric Buddhist context, a *stūpa* is, in fact, a sacred *maṇḍala* that demonstrates the Enlightenment process, manifested by the transcendental knowledges of the Jina Buddhas. In other words, a *maṇḍala* is no different than the three-dimensional *caitya,* as it too maps out the practitioner's path towards Enlightenment. Used as a tool for visualization

and meditation, the deities in the sacred diagram generate from within the heart of the practitioner.

These complex buddhological concepts are integrated in the Newar Buddhist cosmogonic narrative, with Svayambhū Mahācaitya as Ādi Buddha. In the ontological narrative, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* explicitly states that the five colored rays of light that emerged as Svayambhū Jyotirūpa symbolized the knowledges of the Five Jinas Buddhas (see Fig. 1.5). As the repository of the Jinas, the Mahācaitya is also referred to as *Jinālaya* "abode of the Jinas" and *is* the body of the fully Enlightened Buddha (*sarvabuddhakāya*), as referred to in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*.[74] As a three-dimensional *maṇḍala*, the Mahācaitya iconography reflects this complex Buddhological understanding of the Enlightenment process and the structure of the basic Pañca Jina *maṇḍala* is reflected in the ground plan. It has the shrines of the Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi in the east, south, west, and north. Vairocana, who represents the totality of all Buddhahood and is conceptually at the core of the mandalic space, is shown at the top of the *stūpa* and also physically shown outside in a shrine on the south/southeast side, next to the Akṣobhya (Fig. 3.76).

This association with Vairocana clarifies the relationship of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and Svayambhū. The inner core of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala replicates the form of the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala;

however, at the center, Mañjuśrī takes the place of Vairocana (Fig. 3.77). To confirm the identity between the *stūpa* and *maṇḍala*, a second layer of the understanding may be added: that Mañjuśrī, the central deity of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is, in all respects, identical with Vairocana, as a fully Enlightened Buddha. Textual descriptions in the *Niṣpannayogāvali*[75] and in the *Dharmadhātu Kriyā Vidhi*[76] substantiate this association, as Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa is variously described as *bhagavān mahāvairocana mañjughoṣa* "Lord Mahāvairocana Maṇjughoṣa," and *vairocana-ātman* "Self of Vairocana", who possesses the *dharmadhātu* knowledge of the Enlightened Buddha. In other words, this understanding may be better explained by this equation:

Svayambhū Mahācaitya = Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa= Ādi Buddha

Vairocana = Mañjuśrī

It is in their shared symbolism of embodying the Enlightenment process and as the receptacle of the *dharma*-essence (*dharmadhātu*) that Svayambhū and the Maṇḍala are inextricably linked. In Tantric Bu*ddhism, the* concept and symbolism of the *dharmadhātu* occupies a prominent role, particularly in many Vairocana cycle texts, such as the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra*, the root text of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.[77] In the Vairocana *Abhisambodhi Tantra*, it is stated that during the initiation rituals of the

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Three Maṇḍalas of the Body, Speech and Mind, the *ācāryas* or teachers draw their power from the Dharmadhātu, and it is through the purified *dharmadhātu* that *mudrās, mantras, homas*, and rituals are made efficacious and meaningful.[78] In the Newar Buddhist context, the emphasis on the *dharmadhātu* appears particularly appropriate, as the rituals and technical practices of the Vajrācārya priests are rendered effective and powerful. In this way, Newar Buddhist imagery articulates that Mañjuśrī identity is identical to the *sambhogakāya* form of the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū.

As articulated by the visual imagery of the enshrined *svayambhū caitya*, the two core iconographic components, *Svayambhū and the* Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, are fundamental concepts in the Newar Buddhist tradition. The iconographic program reveals a clear understanding not only of Newar Buddhist ontology, but also reflects the complex soteriological practices of the Vajrayāna tradition. This is no more clearly expressed than in the iconographic program of the strut figures on the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine façade.

2. ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE *KVĀḤPĀḤ DYAḤ* STRUT FIGURES

The iconography of the struts on the shrine facade helps clarify why the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala serves as a perfect visual metaphor to explain the

relationship between Svayambhū Mahācaitya and Mañjuśrī. The analysis not only explains Mañjuśrī's symbolic role in the Newar Buddhism, but also provides a buddhological framework to understand the popularity of the Dharmadhātu iconography in *bāhā* architecture. Specifically, it strengthens the argument for a complex, yet unified, iconographic program that is articulated by the three core components of Newar Buddhist visual imagery. The third level consists of six strut figures (See Figs 3.43-48) related to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. The six strut figures include Vajrasattva plus the five Jina Buddhas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, identified not only by the attributes, but by the *vāhanas* flanking their feet. The placement of the Buddhas from left (south) to right (north) are as follow*s:* Vajrasattva, Vairocana/Mañjughoṣa, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi. The four-headed and eight-armed Buddhas of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala follow their prescribed forms, as stated in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī.* Although the iconographic attributes are consistent with textual sources, there is some variation in their specific placement, which may indicate a uniquely Newar Buddhist conception.

In contrast to the eight-armed Buddhas, Vajrasattva is shown as a three-faced, six-armed deity. He holds his defining attributes, the vajra and ghaṇṭā, with his principal hands in *vajrahuṁkāramudrā.* His top right and left hands display a sword and *kapāla*, while his second pair of hands holds a

bow and arrow. Iconographically, this six-armed form of Vajrasattva is described in Sampuṭa Tantra Vajrasattva Maṇḍala in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. The text states that the Ādi Buddha Vajradhara is the chief emanator of the *maṇḍala*, who manifests himself in his *sambhogakāya* form as Vajrasattva. He may be represented in his two-armed or six-armed forms, as depicted here at Kvā Bāhā. Alternately, he can be shown embracing his *svābha-prajña*, who arises from within and is identical with himself.

There are several significant points to be inferred here. Why is Vajrasattva included in the group of six Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and why this form of Vajrasattva from the *Sampuṭa Tantra*? A clearer awareness of Mañjuśrī and Vajrasattva's relationship and respective roles in Newar Buddhism can be gleaned by analyzing the Tantric doctrinal and textual basis for this understanding.

The root text (*mūla tantra*) of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is *Āryamañjuśrī Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra*, which praises the qualities of Mañjuśrī as a fully Enlightened Buddha. As described in the oral teaching given to me by the Vajrācārya priests as well as textual exegeses, the main emphasis of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* is on Mañjuśrī as a fully Enlightened Buddha. To explain Mañjuśrī's qualities as the totality of Buddhahood in the form of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, the text describes Mañjuśrī as

manifesting the six Buddha families (*ṣaṭ kula*) of the purified knowledge-being (*jñānasattva*). The six families include the *kulas* of the five Jina Buddhas plus Vajrasattva. The Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, as the manifested explication of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra* both in physical form and as a meditational tool, represents the five Jina Buddhas to expound the concept of the six *kulas*. At the inner core of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, Mañjuśrī as the *samyaksambuddha* is equated with Vairocana and placed at the center, with the other four Jinas representing a specific knowledge of the fully Enlightened Buddha. However, symbolizing the sixth *kula* Buddha, Vajrasattva is inherently present in the inner circle of the *maṇḍala*. This complex buddhological understanding is signified by Vajrasattva's characteristic attributes, the *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā*, that the Jinas hold in their hands. In other words, each of the Jinas has Vajrasattva is always present in their forms, and thus the Buddhas at the inner core of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala symbolize the six *kula* concept expounded in the *Ārya Nāmasaṅgīti*. In a technical Tantric understanding that is heavily emphasized in Newar Buddhism, Vajrasattva is the head of the sixth *kula*.

This totality of the Buddhist enlightenment process involving the six *kula* families is most clearly articulated in the form of Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśri, the personification of doctrinal text, the *Ārya Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra* (Fig. 3.78). As a Fully Enlightened Being who is equated with Vairocana,

Nāmasaṅgīti's attributes symbolizes the six *kula* families. He is depicted as a twelve-armed figure, with each pair of arms representing the five Jina Buddha and Vajrasattva. This form of Mañjuśrī as the Knowledge-Being (jñānasattva) articulates one of the fundamental teachings of Tantric Buddhism, as expounded in the complex symbolism of the six *kula* families. An important iconographic note here is that this twelve-armed form of Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī is unique to Nepal, and, as far as I am aware, is not found in the artistic traditions of India or Tibet. In light of this, one can propose that this iconographic and doctrinal developments related to Mañjuśrī directly pertain to the Tantric soteriological methodologies practices in Newar Buddhism.

With the understanding that the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is the manifested *maṇḍala* of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra*, the strut figures on the third level can be interpreted as representing the essence of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Specifically, it symbolically expresses the concept of the six kulas—Vajrasattva and the five Jina Buddhas. The visual imagery further alludes to another important buddhological understanding of Newar Buddhism, that is, the relationship between Mañjuśrī and Vajrasattva. The presence of the Samputa Tantra Vajrasattva with the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala Jinas indicates a conflation between Vajrasattva and Mañjuśrī.

Specifically, the *Niṣpannayogāvavalī* articulates the relationship of Mañjughoṣa and Vajrasattva in these terms:[86]

> *Iha vairocana svabhāva mañjughoṣa suviśuddhadharmadhātu jñānātmā svabhā vajrasattvena mudita*

> Thus, Mañjughoṣa is the essence of Vairocana and the self of the *suviśuddhadharmadhātu* knowledge, rejoicing [in sexual embrace] with Vajrasattva, who belongs to/arises from his [Mañjughoṣa's] inherent nature (*svabhā*)."

In reference to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, the text thus describes Mañjuśrī, in his form as Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, as *Vairocana-ātman* "the self of Vairocana", while Vajrasattva is Mañjuśrī's *kuleśa* or Lord of his Buddha family.

The visual imagery found in Kvā Bāhā third level struts contextualizes the textual references. The presence of Vajrasattva with the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography suggests that Mahāvairocana/Mañjughoṣa is buddhologically identified with Vajrasattva. Furthermore, the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* alludes to the concept of six *kulas* and classifies the deities of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala to one of six *kulas*. That the Jinas emanate from the specific Buddha family establishes, in no uncertain terms, their buddhological connection with their respective Lord of the Kulas (*kuleśa*). Here, Dharmadhātu Mañjughosa's *kula* is Vajrasattva, while the Jina Buddhas emanate from the Mañjughoṣa/Vairocana *kula*. The table below outlines the *kula* associations for the deities of the inner core, based on the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*.[87]

SIX *KULA* FAMILIES OF THE DHARMADHĀTU MANDALA						
***KULA* FAMILIES**	Vajrasattva	Mañjughoṣa/ Vairocana	Akṣobhya	Ratnasambhava	Amitābha	Amoghasiddhi
Maṇḍala Deities	Mañjughoṣa	Jina Buddhas Uṣṇiṣas	Vajra *kula* Bodhisattvas	Ratna *kula* Bodhisattvas	Padma *kula* Bodhisattvas	Karma *kula* Bodhisattvas
	[Vajradhāteśvarī]	Locana	Māmakī	Pāṇḍura		[Tārā]

The fourth level struts at Kvā Bāhā (See Figs. 3.49-54) further reinforce Vajrasattva's connection not only with the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala but specifically with Mañjuśrī. Similar to format of the third level, the six struts here each have three figures. The top figure in the roundel is a small seated Buddha, flanked by *vidyadharas.* The main figure is the four-faced and eight-armed Buddha, here flanked by two generic Bodhisattva figures. The Bodhisattva to the right of the Buddha holds a *cauri* in his right hand, while his left displays *varadamudrā*; on the left, the Bodhisattva holds a *cauri* and lotus in his right and left hands, respectively. The lower figures depict multi-armed esoteric forms of the *prajñās,* whose iconographic source I have not been able to identify.

Thematically similar to the third level, the strut figures in the fourth floor also articulate the six *kula* concept of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra*. Here, too, are represented Vajrasattva and the five Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. However, the physical placement of the Buddha differs from the third level. As discussed earlier, the placement of the third-level struts reflect the general meditational sequence and hierarchy of the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala. It starts with the highest of the Buddhas—the *sambhogakāya* form of the Ādi Buddha, here, symbolized by Vajrasattva (and the generator of the meditation system, since Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara emanates from him). Then, replicating the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala and moving clockwise from the center to the east, south, west and north, we have the Jina Buddha Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi, placed in a hierarchical sequence, as shown in the table below:

Iconography of Fourth Level Struts:					
Vajrasattva	Ratnasambhava	Akṣobhya	Vairocana	Amitābha	Amoghasiddhi
Iconography of Third Level Struts:					
Vajrasattva	Vairocana	Akṣobhya	Ratnasambhava	Amitābha	Amoghasiddhi

In contrast, the fourth-level struts follow a different format, but one that is standard in Newar Buddhist iconography. The placement of the

figures, going from the viewer's left (south) to right (north) are: Vajrasattva followed by the Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, namely, Ratnasambhava, Akṣobhya, Mañjughoṣa/Vairocana, Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi. Although at this point in my research I am not aware of any specific meditational cycle that refers to this sequence, this iconographic placement appears to be unique to Newar Buddhist visual imagery and is consistently repeated in most bāhās that incorporate the Dharmadhātu Jinas as part of the strut iconography.

Interpreting the iconography in a buddhological context clarifies the logic of the placement. Specifically, the three center figures—Akṣobhya, Vairocana/Mañjughoṣa, and Amitābha—are integral to the Tantric yogic meditational system. As a group, these three Buddhas represent the cakras of the Body, Speech, and Mind that the yogin purifies during the meditational process.[88] These very cakras are integral to the structural form of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala, in which the three circles that surrounded Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī are called the cakras of the Body, Speech, and Mind (kāya, vāk, citta). This placement of the three figures may be significant in this capacity, as the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is referred to in textual references as suviśuddha dharmadhātu, the "spotlessly [from karmic impurities] "purified essence of the Dharma".[89] Through the practice of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, the practitioner purifies his bodhicitta to realize the

Buddha within and prepares the Newar Buddhist practitioner for the higher practices of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. The iconographic placement of the Dharmadhātu deities in this manner also suggests a hierarchic layering of the *maṇḍalas* that are integral to the Tantric methodologies of Newar Buddhism, namely, the Dharmadhātu and the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍalas. In this context, the visual imagery of Kvā Bāhā articulates a unified iconographic program, alluding to the two fundamental meditational systems used in the Newar Buddhist context. However, at a more basic level, the strut iconography articulates the relationship between Mañjuśrī and Vajrasattva.

Iconographically, the eight-armed Jina Buddhas appear to be variants of Mañjuśrī from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, as described in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī.* The attributes vary slightly from the textual description, and given the contextual understanding, perhaps suggests that this iconographic variant is unique to Newar Buddhism.[90] The Jina Buddhas hold the standard attributes of Mañjuśrī, the sword and book, in each of their hands. This provides incontrovertible evidence that these Jina Buddhas are, indeed, emanations of Mañjuśrī, the Fully Enlightened Buddha in the Newar Buddhist understanding, and not in the ranks of the Aṣṭamahābodhisattvas in the Mahāyāna tradition. Furthermore, each figure also holds the *vajra*

and *ghaṇṭā* in their hands, alluding to the six *kula* concept and reiterating Mañjuśrī's association with Vajrasattva.

In the fourth-level struts, the iconography of the small figure at the top may provide clues to the identity of the main figure and strengthen the conflation between Mañjuśrī and Vajrasattva. In each of the struts, the top Buddha is a four-armed figure. He holds Mañjuśrī's attributes, the *mālā* and book, in his upper right and left hands, while his lower hands hold Vajrasattva's symbols, the *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā*, in a characteristic manner, with the ghaṇṭā silenced on the thigh. The conflation of attributes in this way may also indicate a symbolic association of Mañjuśrī and Vajrasattva. The iconography of the main strut figures can be interpreted in these terms, given Vajrasattva's buddhological role and connection to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Here, in the fourth-level, Vajrasattva's aspects and attributes are prominently emphasized, reiterating the concept of the six *kula* systems that is central in the Newar Buddhist context, and specifically to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

In contrast to the Vajrasattva strut on the third floor, whose iconography related to the six-armed Vajrasattva from the *Samputa Tantra*, the fourth level Vajrasattva is depicted as an eight-armed figure. He holds his main attributes, the *vajra* against his chest and *ghaṇṭā* in his principal hands. The attributes in his right hands include a sword, arrow, and *maṇi*,

while his left hands hold a book, bow, and noose. It is noteworthy that this iconographic form is identical to Mahārāga Mañjuśrī, who is also alternately known as Mañjuvajra.[91]

In this interpretation some fundamental questions arise. If the six strut figures represent Vajrasattva and the five Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, symbolizing the concept of the six kulas, what is the relationship of this figure to Vajrasattva? How is Mahārāga Mañjuśrī identified as Vajrasattva? In the known iconographic sources such as Niṣpannayogāvalī, Vajrāvali, or Sādhanamālā, there are no eight-armed forms of Vajrasattva described in these texts. However, these textual references repeatedly allude to Vajrasattva's identity with Mañjuśrī, specifically in Mañjuśrī form as Mañjuvajra.

In my research, I have found that the eight-armed form of the Kvā Bāhā strut is virtually identical to the Mañjuvajra Maṇḍala is found in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* (No. 20) called "Forty-Three Personifications of Mañjuvajra".[92] Just as Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa was described in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* in the same way, Mañjuvajra is directly associated with Vajrasattva. The only difference here is that the name, Mañjuvajra, is substituted with Mañjughoṣa's.

> *"Iha vairocana svabhāva mañjughoṣa suviśuddhadharmadhātu jñānātmā svabhā vajrasattvena mudita*
>
> Thus, Mañjuvajra is the essence of Vairocana and the self of the suviśuddhadharmadhātu knowledge, rejoicing [in sexual embrace]

with Vajrasattva, who belongs to/arises from his [Mañjuvajra's] inherent nature (svābha).[93]

For a buddhological interpretation, the Mañjuvajra Maṇḍala (#20) is significant in further exploring Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa's connection with Vajrasattva. In the *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* the Mañjuvajra Maṇḍala states that the *Māyājāla Tantra* is the root text for the iconography (*śrīmāyājālatantravistāra yoga nirdesat* "as instructed by the Mahājāla Tantra"). The *Māyājāla Tantra* reference is important, since the same text also serves as the root source (*mūla tantra*) of the *Āryamañjuśrī Nāmasaṅgīti* Tantra, which, in turn, is the root text for the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. It comes as no surprise that, similar to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala (NS #21), the Mañjuvajra Maṇḍala (NS #20) also expounds the six families *(ṣaṭ kulas)* and designates all the deities in the *maṇḍala* to one of these *kulas*. Even through Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the Forty-Three Form Mañjuvajra Maṇḍala only indirectly allude to Mañjuśrī's identity with Vajrasattva, this association is most clearly articulated in the first *maṇḍala* of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*—the Mañjuvajra Maṇḍala itself. The text begins with an invocation to Vajrasattva and continues to the inner core of the maṇḍala, where Mañjuvajra resides.[94] Here, Mañjuvajra is specifically described as *bhagavān vajrasattva mañjuvajra rūpa* ("Bhagavān Vajrasattva in his manifestation/form (*rupa*) as Mañjuvajra"), shown with principal hands embracing the *prajña,* who likewise, is identical with himself

(*pradhānabhujābhyāṁ svāprajñāliṅgīto*).[95] Appropriately, Mañjuvajra's *kuleśa* or spiritual emanator, is Akṣobhya and the structural form of the *maṇḍala* is indeed identical to the Vajrasattva *maṇḍala* of the *Samputa Tantra*. As in the case of *Niṣpannayogāvalī*'s Maṇḍalas # 20 ("Forty-Three Form Mañjuvajra Maṇḍala") and # 21 ("Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala"), the Mañjuvajra Maṇḍala establishes Mañjuśrī's symbolic identity with Vajrasattva. Similarly, the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, one of the earliest Tantras of Vajrayāna Buddhism, associates Mañjuśrī with Vajrasattva.[96] In the *Guhyasamāja*, Mañjusrī's five arrows that pierce the five *cakras* of the *yogin*'s body correspond to Vajrasattva's five-pronged *vajra*.

> "The 'knower of mantras' should contemplate in the middle of the Diamond Sky an adamantine Mañjuśrī of great power; he should recollect his projecting point with the praxis of five arrows, and make them fall, in the manner of the formidable thunderbolt, in five spots.[97]

To briefly reiterate the key points of the strut iconography at Kvā Bāhā, the first strut figure on the fourth-level may thus be identified as Vajrasattva/Mahārāga Mañjuśrī. The other five Jina Buddhas, although emanations of Mañjuśrī, are slightly different from the textual descriptions of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala deities, in that they hold the *kula* symbols in their hands.[98] Nonetheless, the iconographic theme of the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine reflects the complex buddhological ideas expounded in the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, namely, the concept of the six *kulas*. This

interpretation contextualizes the preeminence of Vajrasattva in the strut figures. More importantly, the strut iconography establishes a symbolic association between Mañjuśri and Vajrasattva, as the *sambhogakāya* manifestations of the Ādi Buddha. Specifically, the visual symbolism of Kvā Bāhā iconography can be interpreted through Mañjuśrī and Vajrasattva's role as Ādi Guru in the Newar Buddhist context.

Although the references to the identity between Mañjuśrī and Vajrasattva appear to have its origins in the earliest layers of Tantric Buddhism, the visual imagery present in *bāhā* architecture indicates an iconographic development that is uniquely suited to the Newar Buddhist tradition. The significance and implication of this imagery, however, needs to be analyzed in relation to the two other iconographic themes discussed here, namely, the Svayambhū and the Cakrasaṁvara iconography. Interpreting Kvā Bāhā's iconography in a buddhological framework and through the methodologies prescribed in the Newar Buddhist context strongly indicates a well-conceived, unified iconographic program, whose visual metaphors articulate the complex symbolism of Tantric Buddhism.

Mañjuśrī as Ādi Guru

The Dharmadhātu iconography of the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* struts provides further evidence to understand Mañjuśrī's role as Ādi Guru. The visual

imagery of the struts also serves as a visual metaphor to refer to Mañjuśrī's ritual connections with Vajrasattva. In this context, Mañjuśrī's connections to Vajrasattva is extremely important, as Vajrasattva, "the Adamantine Being" is the primordial guru (*jagad guru*) of Vajrācārya priest of Newar Buddhism. In basic Tantric ritual of the *guruyoga*, Vajrasattva is invariably invoked, as the teacher of the Vajrācārya priest.[99] Similarly, Mañjuśrī, as the teacher to the first Vajrācārya priest according to the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, is the lineage *guru* of the Newar Buddhists.[100] Thus, the imagery at Kvā Bāhā alludes to an integral component of Newar Buddhist ritual practice, in which both Vajrasattva and Mañjuśrī are root (*mūla*) *gurus*. Following the technical methodology of Tantric Buddhism, every ritual performed by the Vajrācāryas begins with the *gurumaṇḍala* pūjā, the visualization and meditation on lineage of *gurus*, starting from Ādi Gurus Vajrasattva and Mañjuśrī to the officiating Tantric priest. In the *guruyoga* meditation, the Vajrācārya priest meditates and visualizes himself as the Adamantine Being (Vajrasattva) (see Fig. 2.36). As Vajrasattva, the Ultimate Guru of all Tantric Siddhas, the *yogin* realizes that the complex symbol systems, such as the identity of Svayambhū and Dharmadhātu that, in actuality, demonstrate the most basic of Buddhist concepts, are generated from within his own heart-mind. Thus, the *maṇḍalas* created in the sacred environment is to aid

the practitioners towards the Tantric path. These *maṇḍalas* are visualized not as an external entity, but to be fully internalized within oneself.

The iconography of the third and fourth level strut figures of Kvā Bāhā clarified and defined this conceptual relationship of Mañjuśrī and Vajrasattva. Ample textual evidence is found in many of the *maṇḍala* described in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* which states that Mañjuśrī's manifestation as Mañjuvajra is assimilated with Vajrasattva. Specifically, Mañjuvajra is called *bhagavān vajrasattvo mañjuvajra rūpah* ("Lord Vajrasattva in the form of Mañjuvajra"). Similarly, Vajrasattva's alternate name is Dharmadhātu, indicating his conflation with Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara as the Adamantine Guru. Furthermore, this conflation of identities between Vajrasattva and Mañjuśrī may help explain the relative hierarchy of the two major *maṇḍalas* of Newar Buddhist, namely, the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. The interpretation will be based on technical Tantric commentarial exegeses.

The iconographic program of the strut presupposes a hierarchic layering of the Vairocana and Akṣobhya-cycle Maṇḍalas in Newar Buddhism, as progressive more complex Tantric methodologies. For example, although Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa Maṇḍala is a Vairocana cycle *maṇḍala,* it is transformed into an Akṣobhya-cycle *maṇḍala* when Vajrasattva presides, and is thus manifested as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala in the "secret"

meaning.[101] This understanding of the meditational practices may be further clarified by the very fact that the descriptions of the Vajrasattva Maṇḍala, both Mañjuśrī/Vairocana and Vajrasattva/Akṣobhya are present in the inner circle, with "Mañjuśrī rejoicing with the *prajña* identical with himself (*svābhaprajñā*)." This buddhological interpretation provides a framework to interpret the two major iconographic components of Newar Buddhist art as a hierarchic layering of *maṇḍalas*, which gets progressively more complex and esoteric. The outward distinction of the hierarchy is expressed in *bāhya/guhya* categories, as the exoteric *maṇḍalas,* such as the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, may be shown in public, while the highly esoteric meditations, such as Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, are secret and require Tantric initiation.

Although the conflation between Vajrasattva and Mañjuśrī is already present in Indian Buddhism by the tenth-eleventh century,[102] the iconographic programs of the Newar Buddhist monasteries clearly indicates that the significance of both Mañjuśrī and Vajrasattva reflects the core ideological conception of Newar Buddhism. Given that Mañjuśrī is the patron deity of the Valley as well as the Ādi Guru and Ādi Buddha, the deity's conflation with Vajrasattva is particularly pertinent to the Newar Buddhist tradition. Specifically, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* establishes Mañjuśrī's authority as the archetype of Tantric teachers, in empowering the Newar Buddhist practitioners into the Heruka-cycle teachings of the

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Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. This ritual context relating to the higher initiations of Cakrasaṁvara articulates the hierarchical relationship between Dharmadhātu and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala.

Hierarchy of the Maṇḍalas: Tantric Commentaries on the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and its Relationship to the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala

This section will discuss the complex Tantric interpretation of the "inner/secret" meaning of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. The analysis is based on the oral teachings given by the contemporary ritual specialists, as well as the correlation given in the Tantric commentaries of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra*. The philosophical premise will be key to contextualize the core iconographic themes as reflecting the larger soteriological practices of Newar Buddhism. The analysis presented here establishes an implicit hierarchy in the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṁvara *maṇḍala,* based on the technical Tantric understanding.

As mentioned earlier, the root text of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra*, which states that Mañjuśrī as the fully Enlightened Buddhas symbolizes the six *kulas.* The *kulas* constitute the families of the five Jinas and Vajrasattva. In the oral teachings given to me by the Vajrācārya priests,[103] Mañjuśrī's exoteric form, as the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, demonstrates his aspect as Vairocana, who is the totality of the

purified *dharmadhātu* knowledge. In each of Mañjughoṣa's forms manifested in the Jina Buddhas, Vajrasattva was always present. Depending on the emphasis of the meditational cycle, it could either be Vairocana's or Vajrasattva's aspect that is principal. The third and fourth level struts at Kvā Bāhā illustrate this visually, where Vajrasattva and Mañjuśrī's attributes were present, thus symbolizing their shared identity. According to the teachings, it is in the secret understanding of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala as expounded in the *Nāmasaṅgīti* that the "true" esoteric meaning emerges.

In contrast to the outer/exoteric or literal understanding, the symbolic or esoteric meaning of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* demonstrates the relationship between the Dharmadhātu (exoteric *maṇḍala)* and Cakrasaṁvara (esoteric *maṇḍala).* This understanding provides the hierarchical framework of Newar Buddhist meditational practices. More importantly, it contextualizes why the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is the imagery of choice for the *bāhā* context. According to the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* the secret (*guhya*) meaning of the *Nāmasaṅgīti,* in the form of the twelve *mantras* and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, was expounded by Mañjuśrī to the Indian *paṇḍita,* Dharmaśrī Mitra. It is the inner or "secret" meaning that relates to the *sahaja* methodologies of the Heruka-cycle *maṇḍala,* such as the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī.

When I asked Badrīratna Vajrācārya to expound on the meaning of the *Nāmasangīti,* he emphasized that he could only disclose the outer *"bāhya"* exoteric meaning, as the secret (*guhya*) meanings involved more esoteric symbolism related to *mahāsukha sahaja yogas* that could not be divulged without initiation. Instead, he referred me to the commentarial literature that disclosed the "secret" meaning. In the Raviśrījñāna's *Amṛtakaṇika Ṭippaṇi* and its commentarial exegesis, Vibhuticandra's *Amṛtakaṇikodyota Nibandha,* both commentaries on the *Nāmasangīti* and a popularly used text in the Newar Buddhist tradition, the secret meaning of the *Nāmasangīti's mantras* is associated with Heruka-class yogic meditational practices, such as Cakrasaṁvara or Yogāṁvara.[104] The commentary discusses the four types of bliss attained through visualizing these mantras in the six *cakras* of the body. According to Wayman's translation of the "outer" meaning:[105]

> *A Ā I Ī U Ū E AI O AU AṀ AḤ sthiti hṛdi /*
> Jñānamūrtir ahaṁ buddho buddhāman trayadhvāvartinam //
>
> A Ā I Ī U Ū E AI O AU AṀ AḤ
> Stationed in the heart of the Buddhas abiding in the three times,
> Am I the Buddha, gnosis embodiment.
>
>
> *Om Vajratikṣṇa dukkhaccheda prajña jñānamūrti*
> *Jñānakāya Vāgīśvara arapacana te namaḥ*
>
>
> OM. Homage to the, Vajratikṣṇa (Diamond Sharp), Dukkhaccheda
> (Cutting of Suffering) Prajñajñānamūrti (Embodiment of Insight-Wisdom),
> Jñānakāya (Knowledge Body), Vāgīśvara (Lord of Speech), Arapacana
> (Five-Syllabled Mañjuśrī)

In the exoteric reading of the above *śloka,* Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is equated with Vairocana as the totality of all Buddhahood and his various qualities described as knowledge-body (*jnānasattva*), embodiment of Insight-Wisdom (*prajñājñānamurti*), or Lord of Speech (*vāgīśvara*). The commentarial literature expounds on the esoteric meaning (*guhya*) of the *mantras,* in which Mañjuśrī is identical to Vajrasattva, the Adamantine Being, also called the Knowledge Being (*jñānasattva*), whose secret *bīja* are the twelve vowels (*ālī*).

In the esoteric understanding, the *bījas* represent the twelve *bhūmis* of the Buddhist cosmology, which in the yogic meditation is visualized as the *yogin's* Adamantine Body (*vajrakāya*).[106] In another reading, the same vowels refer to the twelve physical places of meditation, such as *pīṭhas, upapīṭhas, caṇḍohas, upacaṇḍohas, kṣetras,* and *upakṣetras* within the *yogin's* body.[107] The body is conceived as the *dvadaśabhūmi.* The *yogin* is then instructed to meditate on the six *cakras* of his body, which arises from these twelve vowels. Thus, as the union of the *kāya, vāk citta,* the vowels are grouped into four sets that symbolize the four blisses. The types of four blisses arise from the union of the *yogin* and the four female partners (*mudrās,* lit: "seal" "gesture")—*karmamudrā, dharmamudrā, mahāmudrā samayamudrā.*[108] The *mantras* and their corresponding joys are:

A I U is the *ānanda* (bliss)
Ā Ī U is *paramānanda* (supreme bliss)
E O AṀ is *virasamānanda* (great bliss)
EI AU AḤ is *sahajānanda* (bliss in union)

The commentary also states that when the *bodhicitta* is in *nirmāṇakāya*, then one experiences *ānanda*; when in *dharmakāya, it* experiences *paramānda* (supreme bliss); in *sambhogakāya*, one experiences *viramānanda* (great bliss), and in the highest level, at *mahāsukhakāya*, arises bliss in union (*sahajānanda*). Thus, the commentary clearly states that the *Bhagavān* is the essence/nature of the four blisses. This technical understanding points to an inherent hierarchy of methodology, going from simple to more complex meditations. This same hierarchical paradigm is implied in the presence of the three specific iconographic themes: from the exoteric (Svayambhū) to highly esoteric (Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala).

Transferring the microcosm to the macrocosm, the commentary further specifies that the six *cakras* of the *yogin's* body correspond to the six *kula* (ṣaṭ *kulas*). The *cakras* or energy center of the body correspond to Akṣobhya at the base of the spine; Vairocana at the navel; Amitābha at the heart; Ratnasambhava at the throat, who is described *kaṇṭha cakravarti* ("lord of the throat"); Amoghasiddhi in the head, also called *urṇa cakravarti* ("lord of the urṇa"); and at the highest *cakra* is Vajrasattva, who emerges from the thousand petalled lotus as the *uṣṇīṣa cakravarti* ("lord of the uṣṇīṣa"). It is

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at the highest level in union with *samayamudrā* that Vajradhara manifests himself as Heruka forms, such as Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī or Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍākinī, as *sambhogakāya* forms of the *dharmakāya*. Vajradhara also transforms into the *nirmāṇakāya* forms as the teacher (*gurus)* manifests, for the sake of sentient beings. The commentary further clarifies the yogic meditation process of the Yoga Tantras. It states that grasping his *samayamudrā,* the *yogin* thus generates the five knowledges of the Jinas and experiences bliss in union as Vajrasattva (*ṣaṭ cakravarti svarūpāya sahajānanda jñānāya).* This multivalent soteriological explanation that includes the highly technical Tantric meaning is also relevant to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

An important section in the commentary deals with this "secret/inner" meaning of Mañjuśrī's twelve-syllabled *mantra.* The commentary ends by stating that the outer and inner forms of the *Jñānavajra* ("Adamantine Knowledge") i.e., Vāgīśvara, was described in the yogic meditation. In the texts, there appears to be an emphasis given to the two fundamental distinctions, that is between *bāhya* "exoteric/outer" forms and meaning and the *abhyantara* "esoteric/inner" aspects of the deities. It is within this understanding that we can classify the deities of the *āgaṁ* shrine, as the yogic practices mentioned in the commentary pertain to the Anuttara yoga

class deities. The commentary also specifies that Vajrasattva manifests himself as the Heruka deities and in the *nirmāṇakāya* forms.

The relationship between Mañjuśrī and the Cakrasaṃvara cycle meditation is most clearly articulated in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*. The text explicitly states that Mañjuśrī in his *nirmāṇakāya* form as Mañjudeva, drained the lake and made the Valley habitable for sentient beings. As the Ādi Guru or Primordial Teacher, Mañjuśrī was granted the teaching of the Cakrasaṃvara / Vajravārāhī cycle by Guhyeśvarī. This esoteric teaching was subsequently given to Śantikarācārya, who is the first initiated Vajrācārya in Newar Buddhism. The *guru* lineage tradition in the Cakrasaṃvara cycle continues in Newar Buddhist practice, as the *āgaṃ* shrine *pūjās* are performed on the tenth day of the month and a larger, more elaborate Diśi pūjā is performed in Śāntipur at Svayambhū to commemorate the day that Mañjuśrī received the Heruka teaching from Guhyeśvarī. In this context, Mañjuśrī's role in the Newar Buddhist context as Ādi Guru is perfectly legitimized by his identity with Vajrasattva in the larger Tantric Buddhist context.

It is as Ādi Guru that Mañjuśrī's preeminence can be contextualized ritually, as the *guru* who prepares the practitioner for the secret Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala initiations. The ritual context alludes to this symbolism. It should be noted that in the esoteric Heruka meditational

cycles practiced in Newar Buddhism, it is the Akṣobhya cycle Tantras of the
Yoginī class that are most prominent, such as Cakrasaṁvara, Yogāṁvara
and Hevajra. In the ritual text of the *āgaṁ pūjās* (*Samvarodayaḥ Daśamī*
(Diśi) Pūjā Vidhi), the ritual thus invokes the important Heruka class deities
of Newar Buddhism:

> For the mercy of the *yajmān,* come all the devatās. Bhagavān śrī
> Cakrasaṁvara Vajravārāhī, Hevajra Nairātmā, Caṇḍamahārośana
> Dveśavajrī, Yogāṁvara Jñānaḍākinī, True Guru Vajrasattva, Buddha
> Dharma Saṅgha, Pañca Tathāgata [Jinas], Pañca Tārā [Jina
> Prajñās], and accompanying them, all the gods and goddess are thus
> invoked, as I issue the Adamantine Incense"[109]

3. INTERPRETATION OF CAKRASAṀVARA AND YOGĀṀVARA ICONOGRAPHY OF THE *ĀGAṀ* SHRINES AT KVĀ BĀHĀ

The third core component is the imagery of the Heruka class deities,
which at Kvā Bāhā are Yogāṁvara and Cakrasaṁvara. This relates directly
to the Tantric *āgaṁ* shrine, where the secret Tantric *pūjās* are performed.
An interpretation of the imagery refers to this esoteric Tantric symbolism,
whose meaning can only be revealed through initiation and ritual practices.
Foremost, as the two other iconographic components, the Cakrasaṁvara
Maṇḍala imagery and the rituals of the *āgaṁ* once again go back to the
ontological source of the Newar Buddhism, namely Svayambhū Mahācaitya.
Scholars have overlooked this vital connection in understanding the
importance of the Cakrasaṁvara cycle meditation, as the relationship in the
larger Newar Buddhist context is established in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa.* As

I will show in this analysis, the key iconographic themes of Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Mañjuśrī as Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, and Cakrasaṁvara found in Kvā Bāhā as in other Newar Buddhist *bāhā* articulate the fundamental ideological constructs of the religion. With this framework, we can analyze the Cakrasaṁvara and Yogāṁvara imagery found at Kvā Bāhā.

On the cupola of the Yogāṁvara shrine is a pendant that depicts a *kalaśa* emerging from lotus flower (Fig. 3.79). This is an important iconographic symbol, as it represents the core symbolism related to the *āgaṁ* shrine deities. Here, the *kalaśa* is shown protected by a *chattra* and above that is a plain lotus *maṇḍala,* with dedicatory inscriptions. The pendant shows two symbolic representations of Tantric goddesses, as the *kalaśa* and a lotus *maṇḍala.* In Nepal, the lotus *maṇḍala,* similar to the *śrī yantra*, can be used to symbolize any female deity. More importantly, in the Newar Buddhist context, the *kalaśa* is the quintessential symbol for female deities that refer to the primordial creative principle, Guhyeśvarī (Fig. 3.80).[110] In Nepal, Guhyeśvarī is, invariably, represented as a *kalaśa,* symbolizing her generative power. Guhyeśvarī symbolizes the primordial source, as lotus from which Svayambhū Jyotirūpa emerged took its roots at Guhyeśvarī. As mentioned earlier, Guhyeśvarī, as well as the other *yoginī maṇḍala,* are invariably associated with the *āgaṁ* shrine.

Other female deities, specifically Jñānaḍākinī, the female counterpart of Yogāṁvara, are also symbolized as a *kalaśa*. In her *dyaḥ cheñ* ("god house") at Asan tole in Kathmandu where the goddess has been invited to reside, Jñānaḍākinī is shown as a *kalaśa* (Fig. 3.81). In her anthropomorphic form, shown on the temple *toraṇa*, Jñānaḍākinī as the Goddess Annapūrṇa is shown as an eight-armed figure seated on a snake, with her upper right and left hands holding a sword and shield; the second pair of hands holding the *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā;* the third right hand left hands a *mālā* and *kalaśa*; and her principal right hands holds a skullcup while the left displays *tarjanimudrā* (Fig 3.82).

In the Newar Buddhist context, Jñānaḍākinī's primordial home is at Mhepi and the specific identity of the Kvā Bāhā *āgaṁ* deity is the Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍākinī from Mhepi. Here, the *Yoginī,* alternately known as Mhepi Ajimā and Māheśvarī, is one of the eight Aṣṭamātṛkā *pīṭhas.* As is typical of the *mātṛkā pīṭhas,* a natural outcropping of rock, which is self-manifest, represents Jñānaḍākinī. At Kvā Bāhā, the *āgaṁ* deities, Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍākinī further reinforce the connections with Svayambhū Mahācaitya, as the Yogāṁvara is the *kula devatā* of the first Vajrācārya of Newar Buddhism, Śāntikarācārya.[111]

In the Tantric understanding, the Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍākinī cycle meditation is related to the Heruka class Tantras of Akṣobhya, in which the

central deity, Yogāmvara is an emanation of Akṣobhya while Jñānaḍākinī is associated with Vairocana.[112] When Yogāmvara and Jñānaḍākinī are shown in union, the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* also describe Jñānaḍākinī as Vajradhāteśvarī and Vajravārāhī.[113] A parallel meditational cycle also occurs in the second *āgam* shrine at Kvā Bāhā, where the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala is an Akṣobhya cycle, with Cakrasaṃvara as the Akṣobhya cycle and Vajravārāhī as the Vairocana. As the Yoginī class *maṇḍala*, it is the female principles that are emphasized, and Kvā Bāhā's *āgam* imagery reflects this doctrinal premise. Further, the Newar Buddhist cosmogonic myth, and its connection with the Cakrasaṃvara cycle is alluded to in the Guhyeśvarī *kalaśa* directly below the *āgam* shrine (Fig. 3.83). According to the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, Guhyeśvarī, as the Ādi Śakti, initiates Mañjuśrī into the Tantric practices of Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī.

In Kvā Bāhā, Yogāmvara/Jñānaḍākinī is also closely associated with the Newar Buddhist goddess, Guhyeśvarī. There is a close buddhological and hierarchic connection between the two, and especially as *āgam* deities. Cakrasaṃvara and Jñānaḍākinī are the two most popular *āgam* deities. This direct association is symbolically represented at Kvā Bāhā, as the ground floor directly below the *āgam* shrine depicts the Guhyeśvarī *kalaśa*. This shows association with Cakrasaṃvara cycle. The inner (*abhyantara*)[114] room is the shrine to Yogāmvara and Jñānaḍākinī, and access to the shrine and

its daily rituals performed is reserved to only the senior-most Vajrācārya of the *saṅgha,* referred to as *Cakreśvara* ("Lord of the Circle") or *Cāsalāju.* The monthly *pūjās* in the *āgaṁ* are attended by the ten elders (Daśapāramitā) of the *saṅgha* on the full moon day, and deviate somewhat from the *āgaṁ pūjās* that are generally performed on the tenth day of the dark or light half of month in other *bāhās.*

It is apparent that the significance of the Cakrasaṁvara /Yogāṁvara iconography emerges through the ritual context, and specifically in context with the other two iconographic themes, namely the Svayambhū and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As an archetype of Newar Buddhist monastic structure, Kvā Bāhā's visual imagery provides one of the most fully-developed iconographic programs, concerning the multivalent symbolism of Svayambhū, Mañjuśrī, and Cakrasaṁvara. This iconographic program become the central theme in the *bāhās* of the Valley, emphasizing the concept of the *bāhās* as a three-dimensional *maṇḍala* and as symbolic manifestation of the Enlightenment process. Through the visual imagery at Kvā Bāhā, we can perhaps understand the manifestation of sacred space in Newar Buddhism, as a

sacred environment and Buddhist paradise that illustrates the Tantric process of Enlightenment.

The iconographic components at Kvā Bāhā articulate key themes in Newar Buddhism visual imagery and practices. First, the iconography of the enshrined Svayambhū *caitya* established the symbolic identity between Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Second, the strut iconography of the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine emphasized the concept of the six *kulas* in contextualizing the preeminence of Vajrasattva. Further, the iconographic program suggested an intimate conceptual association between Mañjuśrī and Vajrasattva. Third, the Cakrasaṁvara/Yogaṁvara iconography revealed the themes related to the secret esoteric teachings of the Tantric *āgaṁ* shrine, and the iconographic analyses also suggested that this theme was buddhologically related to the ontology of the religion, namely the Tantric *yoginīs*. In the following, I will briefly summarize the conclusions of the iconographic analyses, in order to contextualize key ideological premises of Newar Buddhist iconology and practice.

- As the first iconographic component in Newar Buddhist architecture, the principal *caitya* is symbolically identified with Svayambhū Mahācaitya. The Svayambhū iconography association is based on the premise that the Mahācaitya is the ontological source of Newar Buddhism, specifically in his role as the Ādi Buddha. In this

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ideological conception, Svayambhū (and its hypostasis as the principal *caitya*) functions as the generator and vivifier of the *bāhā/bahī*'s sacred environment and Adi Buddha.

• As the iconographic program of Kvā Bāhā's enshrined *caitya* implies, a symbolic equivalency is established between Svayambhū and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. This appears to be a uniquely Newar Buddhist conception that brings together complex Tantric soteriological methodologies and the local cosmogonic myth. This symbolic identity thus provides a ideological framework to interpret the fundamental premises of the religion, articulated in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa.*

• The Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, with Mañjuśrī as the central deity, serves as the perfect metaphor to articulate the Newar Buddhist soteriological methodologies. It provides buddhological framework to legitimize Mañjuśrī's importance in Newar Buddhism.

• The iconographic program articulates Mañjuśrī's ritual and symbolic role: Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa is a fully Enlightened Buddha, equated not only with Vairocana, but more importantly, with the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū. Mañjuśrī's multivalent symbolism in the Newar Buddhist context is best manifested through the visual imagery.

- Using the Tantric methodology of the six *kula* system as articulated in the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra*, the iconographic program validates Mañjuśrī's role as the Ādi Guru in Newar Buddhism. As Adi Guru, he is also association with Vajrasattva, who in the Newar Buddhist context, is the *guru* of the Vajrācārya priests. It is as the Ādi Guru that Mañjuśrī is closely connected with the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala.

- Mañjuśrī, as a fully Enlightened Buddha, is teacher of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala cycle in Newar Buddhism. Hence, this iconographic theme is appropriate in relation to the *āgaṁ* shrines, as the *āgaṁ* shrines house the Heruka-class deities such as Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. This relates to the "secret/inner" symbolism of the visual imagery.

- The Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala iconography, as the *maṇḍala* of the Anuttara Yoga class, emphasizes the preeminence of the Tantric *yoginīs*. This aspect of the visual imagery alludes to the role of the *yoginīs* in Newar Buddhism, as the ontology of the religion. The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* repeated emphasizes this ideological notion of Newar Buddhism.

- The three iconographic components (Svayambhū Mahācaitya, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala) suggest

an inherent layering or hierarchy in the visual imagery: from exoteric imagery, openly shown to the public, as in the case of Svayambhū and Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, to the highly esoteric and secret symbolism of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. This hierarchy is mirrored in the ritual practices and in the architectural structure of the *bāhās.* This hierarchical layering serves the theoretical framework through which to interpret the significance of the three core iconographic components, and to establish the presence of a unified iconographic program.

The core iconographic program of *bāhā* architecture can be best conceptualized in this drawing (Fig. 3.84). The three core components are related functionally and symbolically to the three mandatory elements of *bāhā* architecture. The overall iconographic program thus articulates a fundamental understanding of Tantric soteriological methodologies, but interpreted and personalized to fit the Newar Buddhist context. As shown in the drawing, the iconographic program at Kvā Bāhā articulates two fundamental aspects of Newar Buddhist architecture: one establishes Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala as the core iconographic component of Newar Buddhist architecture; The other illustrates the relationship of these components to the three

structural elements of *bāhā/bahī* architecture, namely, the principal vivifying *caitya,* the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine, and the Tantric *āgam* shrine.

Most importantly, the iconographic program of the *bāhās* reflects the basic constructs of Newar Buddhist practice. In this understanding, the hierarchic layering of the visual imagery moves from the simplest, most accessible symbol of the Buddhist *dharma* (i.e., the *stūpa*) to progressively more complex Tantric imagery (i.e., the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍalas). This layering also correlates with the fundamental construct of Newar Buddhism in that the religion, as practiced by the Newar Buddhist, is understood to encompass the methodologies of Śravakayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna Buddhism.[115] Referring to this construct, Gellner writes:

> "These three levels [Śravakayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna] form an ascending hierarchy, but there is also a sense in which they all co-exist, higher levels being merely alternative and more powerful ways of express the truths of the lower levels, for all they may appear to invert them."

Kvā Bāhā's iconographic program and visual imagery , as an archetype of *bāhā* architecture, reflects this hierarchic understanding of the religion. The core iconographic themes, namely Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, serve as perfect three-fold symbols to manifest the fundamental constructs of Newar Buddhism. To fully understand this premises of Newar Buddhist iconology, I

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will, in the subsequent chapters, examine each iconographic component

individually and their relationship to Newar Buddhist religious practice.

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[1] For detailed description of Kvā Bāhā's rituals, see Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhism and its Hierarchy of Ritual.* See also, Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, 31-40

[2] The offerings date from the reign of the Rana prime minister Chandra Shumsher (r. 1891-1929 C.E.). See Dharmaratna Śākya, *Hiraṇyavarṇa Mahāvihārayā Saṁkṣipta Paricaya* [A Brief Introduction to Hiraṇyavarṇa Mahāvihāra] (Kvā Bāhā, Lalitpur: Hiraṇyavarṇa Mahāvihāra Sudhar Samiti, 1992), 17.

[3] In the annual Bāhā Pūjā when all Newar Buddhists visit the eighteen main *bāhās* of Patan, the *pūjā* begins at Kvā Bāhā. This prominent ritual status further reinforces the monument's religious importance in the community. Kvā Bāhā also plays a key role during the Samyak festival to Dipāṅkara, which takes place every five years in Patan. See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 174.

[4] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, 31.

[5] Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*, Appendix III.

[6] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal,* 32..

[7] Scholars, such as Pal, Slusser, and Bangdel have dated the sculptures to the eight-ninth centuries of the Licchavi period.

[8] Wright, *History of Nepal*, 157-158.

[9] The term "Hiraṇyavarṇa" is also interpreted as a *śleśa*. The informants at Kvā Bāhā stated that because the face of the original *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* image was gold, the bāhā was called Hiraṇyavarṇa "Yellow-faced" Mahāvihāra. Other informants also associate the name with the overwhelming use of gilding on the shrine facade to have earned the *bāhā* its name, Hiraṇyavarṇa, i.e. *"bāhā* with a yellow [golden] appearance." These multivalent interpretations suggest the continuity and popular use of *śleśa* as an integral part of Newar Buddhist culture.

[10] The core iconographic program is based on the developments of the Vairocana-cycle methodologies of Tantric Buddhism, already prevalent in northeastern India during the Pāla period (9th-12th centuries). The numerous Indian teachers who visited Nepal indicate Nepal's historical connections with this region. Although this will not be directly addressed in this study, the Tantric developments in northeastern Indian have to be carefully considered in analyzing the historical developments of the core iconographic program.

[11] Anthropologists such as Locke and Gellner have extensively studied the socio-religious organizations and rituals pertaining to Kvā Bāhā. However, detailed physical description of the *bāhā* or its rich visual imagery has yet to be undertaken. In terms of art historical research, A. Gail in his book, *Kloster in Nepal*, briefly examines Kvā Bāhā and the iconography of the narrative panels found on the shrine facade.

[12] Examples of similar enshrined *caityas* in Kathmandu are found in Lagan Bāhā and Itum Bāhā.

[13] For iconographic analysis of the Avalokiteśvara images, see Gail, *Kloster in Nepal*, 42.

[14] Information given by practitioners at Kvā Bāhā.

[15] Unless otherwise noted, the information of Kwā Bāhā's sacred history in this section is based on Ratnaraj Vajrācārya's *Kvā Bāhāhya Vaṁsāvalī* [The Chronicles of Kvā Bāhā] (Nāgabāhā, Patan: Mangal Ratna Śākya, 1993).

[16] The Newar Buddhist tradition understands that there were originally four such "self-arisen" *caityas*: the primordial Svayambhū Jyotirūpa, the "Svayambhū" *caitya* at Gum Bāhā, the "Svayambhū" *ratnacaitya* of Kwā Bāhā, and the fourth at Baregaon. The primacy, however, is always given to Svayambhū Mahācaitya, the Ādi Buddha who appeared as the five rays of light ("Jyotirūpa"). In the Hindu context, similar sets of four deities around the Valley became increasingly popular in the Malla period, such as the four Viṣṇus (Catur Nārāyaṇa), the four Gaṇeśas (Catur Gaṇeśa), the four Kālīs etc. The grouping of the four "self-arisen" *caityas* in the Buddhist context, may, in fact, be a later development, paralleling the Hindu emphasis for the sacred sets of four deities that are placed in specific geographical locations throughout the Valley, hence defining the Valley's sacred geography.

[17] My translation. Ratnaraj Vajrācārya, 37

[18] It is strictly prohibited to photograph the shrine image. As far as I am aware of, the only published photographs of *kvāhpāh dyah* are in the books published by the members of the *sangha* organization, Hiraṇyavarṇa Mahāvihāra Sudhar Samiti.

[19] The primary identification of the shrine images seated in *bhūmisparśamudrā* is invariably understood to be that of Śākyamuni. However, in his survey, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, Locke has identified most the shrine images in the earth-touching gesture as Akṣobhya, the Jina Buddha of the east who, in technical buddhological terms, represents Śākyamuni's moment of enlightenment.

[20] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, 31.

[21] Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras: Light on Indo-Tibetan Esotericism* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1973), 39.

[22] See Ferdinand D. Lessing and Alex Wayman, *mKhas Grub Rje's Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1968).

[23] I have not verified this statement with the informants of the *bāhā*. A 1607 date records major renovations to the structure. See *Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust*, 139.

[24] Other *bāhās* in Patan also have their *āgam* shrine located at the *dīgi*. Examples include Bu Bāhā, Ta Bāhā, and Bhinche Bāhā in Patan. The size of the *sangha* determines the location of the *āgam*

[25]. In my research, I have found that Vajrasattva is the most often depicted in the *toraṇa* leading to the āgam. Examples are *āgam* toraṇas of Bu Bāhā, Su Bāhā, and Sawal Bāhā.

[26] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 134.

[27] The ritual specialists repeatedly mentioned this understanding. As a standard Newar Buddhist iconographic feature symbolizing the Tantric meditation process, Surya and Candra are most often found represented in the right and left lintel extensions of the shrine doors.

[28] *Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust*, 139.

[29] An inscription, written in grammatically-incorrect English and dated 1886, states that the stone façade was built by "Krishna Bir, one of the Master of Stonecutter 1886."

[30] According to my informants, the iconography of the Seven Tathāgatas going from viewer's left to right is: Śikhin, Krakacaṇḍa, Kaśyapa, Vipaśvi, Śākyamuni, Kanakamuni, and Viśvabhū.

[31] This technical Tantric understanding was conveyed to me by the ritual specialists.

[32] This is a recent tradition that was mandated by the Kvā Bāhā Conservation Trust and started in January 1998.

[33] B. Bhattarcharyya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī of Mahāpaṇḍita Abhayakāragupta* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1949), no 21. See also Marie-Terese de Mallmann, *Introduction a L'Iconographie du Tantrisme Buddhique*, vol 1 (Paris: Bibliotheque du Centre de Recherches sur L'Asie Centrale et la Haute Asie, 1975), 254-255.

[34] Gellner, in his analysis of the socio-religious organization, has also used this three tiered division to analyze the hierarchy of ritual in the Newar Buddhist context. See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest.*

[35] This issue will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

[36] At Svayambhū Mahācaitya, the central figure and emanator of the *maṇḍala*, Vairocana is placed in the south/southeast corner between the shrine of Akṣobhya and Locanā. At Kvā Bāhā, the Buddhas Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi are placed in their usual directions (east, south, west, and north), with Vairocana's presence at the center implied, but not shown physically.

[37] See Chapter 7 for further examples in which the pendant iconography provides evidence for the identity of the shrine image.

[38] The stories related to each of these pilgrimage sites are intimately connected with Svayambhū Mahācaitya. During ritual practice, Svayambhū as the source is either visited first or last as the beginning or culmination of the pilgrimage, thus reinforcing Svayambhū's primacy in Newar Buddhism.

[39] The Valley's sacred geography conceived of as a *maṇḍala* is understood in multivalent contexts. For example, in the Hindu version of the creation myth, Nepal Mahātmya refers to Śiva and Pārvatī at the center of the *maṇḍalic* space, while the Śakta tradition in Nepal consider different forms of the Goddess to be at the center of the *maṇḍala*.

[40] Not only is the *caitya* at Sigha Bāhā referred to as Kāṭhesimbhu, "Svayambhū of Kathmandu", but the layout of the sacred space virtually replicates the iconography of the Mahācaitya in its plan and subsidiary shrines. Interestingly, the Sigha Bāhā *caitya*, in inscriptions, is referred to as the Vajradhātu caitya, and not as the Dharmadhātu *caitya*, which Svayambhū is often referred to. Especially in the Kathmandu bāhās, the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala becomes increasingly prevalent after the eighteenth century. The relationship between the Dharmadhātu and the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala is significant, as it not only suggests a hierarchic layering of maṇḍalas, but that Vajradhātu Maṇḍala is also another important Vairocana-cycle *maṇḍala* found in Newar Buddhism, particularly in the city of Kathmandu.

[41] Wright, *History of Nepal,* 122.

[42] Wright, *History of Nepal,* 129.

[43] Kvā Bāhā has an interesting legend about the Daśapāramitās. According to legend, the Lords of the Ten Perfections/Bhumīs (*Daśapāramitās*) used to attend the *pūjās* that were performed at the *āgaṁ* shrine in corporeal form. Later, the gods decided that they would not manifest themselves during the rituals, but that the ten elders of the *bāhā* would symbolically represent them and to worship the elders would be to worship the Daśapāramitās. Thus they are called Daśapāramitā and their presence is required for the āgaṁ pūjās. See Kesar Lall, tr., Kvābāhā: Hiraṇyavarna Mahāvihāra, the Golden Temple (Patan: Hiraṇyavarna Mahāvihāra Sudhar Smiti, 1996), 10.

[44] If the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala has a *vajra* on top, scholars have often erroneously desginated such *maṇḍalas* as a Vajradhātu Maṇḍala. While the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala is also prominent in the ritual practices especially in Kathmandu, the form of the *maṇḍala* and deities represented are completely different than the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. For example, in his recent book on *caityas*, Niels Gutschow identifies the inscribed and dated

Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala at Svayambhū as "*vajradhātumaṇḍala.*" See Niels Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya: 1500 Years of Buddhist Votive Architecture in the Kathmandu Valley,* 88. See also M. Slusser, *Nepal Maṇḍala,* 300.

[45] In course of my research, I found different variations to the number of deities found in the *maṇḍala,* For example, the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* states that there are 216 deities. On the other hand, the Newar scholar, Hemraj Śākya specifies that there are 251 deities. Other Newar scholars, such as Badrīratna Vajrācārya following the ritual text of *Dharmadhātu Vrata Vidhi* states that there are 221 figures in the *maṇḍala.* While the number may vary, the core iconography of the Jina Buddhas in the inner circle remains standard. The Tibetan Ngor tradition of the Śākyapā sects regarding the Vairocana cycle meditation may be significant to understand this teaching in Nepal, as many of the paintings in the Śākyapa tradition were painted by Newar Buddhists artists from the Kathmandu Valley.

[46] Bhattacharyya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* Maṇḍala 21. The other two ritual texts that I have consulted are *Dharmadhātu Pūjā Vidhi* and *Dharmadhātu Vrata Vidhi,* original Newar manuscripts from the National Archives, Kathmandu. The second text is edited by Badriratna Vajrācārya, *Dharmadhātu Vrata Vidhi va Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇḍala* (Kathmandu: Purnaharsa Bajrācāryayā Smriti Dharmadān, NS 1113)..

[47] Bhattarcharyya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī ,* 54-65.

[48] The computer drawings of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala Jinas used in this study was drawn by Dr. John C. Huntington.

[49] In the following, I describe the attributes of the Jinas as specified in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī.* The Dharmadhātu iconography found in the *bāhās/bahīs* show substantial iconographic variation, specifically in the placement of the attributes in the Jina's hands. Nonetheless, the overall Dharmadhātu iconography appears to follow the *Niṣpannayogāvalī.*

[50] At this point in my research, I have not been able to identify the iconographic source for the *Buddhaśaktīs* on the lower section.

[51] *Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust,* 136.

[52] In the *bāhās* I studies, the *bāhās* that had a fully developed iconographic program related to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala as part of the *kvāhpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine and *toraṇa* iconography were reconstructed or built during a fifty-year span during the mid to late seventeenth-century.

[53] Bhattacaryya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* 54.

[54] This *toraṇa* is over the doorway that leads to the storeroom. This *toraṇa* and the one over the east-end doorway appears to be identical with the north and south *toraṇas* of the enshrined Svayambhū *caitya.* Although I have not verified it with the informants at Kvā Bāhā, it may be possible that the wooden *toraṇas* of the south wall were part of the original wooden *toraṇas* of the enshrined *caitya* that were later replaced by the gilt copper repousse ones now present in the shrine.

[55] Bhattacharyya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* 54

[56] This *toraṇa* is over the doorway that leads to upper shrines rooms to Amitābha and Tārā.

[57] Informants identified this image as either Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa or Mahā-Vajrasattva. As I will discuss later in the iconography of the struts on the *kvāhpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine, this form of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara/Vajrasattva has a doctrinal basis on the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra,* which describes Mañjuśrī as the Ādi Buddha of the six *kulas* (the five Jinas and Vajrasattva).

[58] This will be discussed in the next section.

[59]In his anthropological study, Gellner has used these very categories to analyze the hierarchy of ritual. See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest.*

[60] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* 174.

[61] My informants at Kvā Bāhā and Ha Bāhā have referred to Vasundharā as the exoteric manifestation of Vajravārāhī. I will discuss the buddhological implications in the analysis of the visual imagery.

[62] In his analysis the Vajrayāna tradition among the Newars, Gellner, in *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* also distinguishes such categories as "two types of Vajrayāna". The first is what he calls "an exoteric Vajrayana", in which the deities may be displayed in public and worshipped exoterically and the second, "an esoteric Vajrayāna", which include the highly esoteric deities in the āgam̐ shrines. While such broad categories are useful in a general sense, the Tantric distinctions of *guhya* and *abhyantara* are more precise categories to understand the hierarchy of imagery, that pertains to the ritual practices. It also provides a framework to understand the sophisticated levels of explication of the Enlightenment process in using these Tantric Buddhist paradigms. Thus, buddhologically, these categories represent more complex understanding and expressions of the Tantric soteriological methodology.

[63] Information given by ritual specialists from Kathmandu and Patan.

[64] Rituals performed during the esoteric *pūjās,* such as the *bali pūjā,* have specific rituals in which the Dikpālas are transformed to the Daśakrodha Bhairavas in a ritual context.

[65] In Patan, the free-standing *maṇḍalas* are popular votive offerings and are found in virtually all *bāhās*. On the other hand, the Kathmandu *bāhās* has only a few freestanding *maṇḍalas*. However, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography was consistently present in the toraṇa and strut iconography.

[66] Although the attributes are identical to those described in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* the placement of the attributes in each hand is slightly different.

[67] The Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇḍala description in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* lists the four Vajrabodhisattvas (*vajrasattva vajrarāja vajrarāga, vajrasādhūbhi pravṛtaḥ*). In an earlier section relating to the description of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, the text describes the Vajrabodhisattvas in detail regarding their attributes, colors, and *kuleśa*. In Newar Buddhism, the Vajradhātu *maṇḍala is* also an important Vairocana-cycle *maṇḍala* in practice. The Vajrabodhisattva of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala Jinas represented in the enshrined *caitya toraṇa* is identical to the descriptions given in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. See B. Bhattacaryya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī* (Sanskrit text), 44-45.

[68] My research includes many inscriptions found in the Patan bāhās, such at Uku Bāhā, Ha Bāhā, Pim Bāhā, Ga Bāhā, Cilañco Bāhā etc. Furthermore, inscriptions found in the Svayambhū complex also clearly refer to the Mahācaitya as "Dharmadhātu Mahācaitya" or "Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara."

[69] Phanindraratna Vajrācārya, *Vajrayāna Pūjāvidhi* (Kathmandu: Ratna Pithana, 1995), 4. My translation.

[70] Badrīratna Vajrācārya, *Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa,* "ka-ṅa" [Devanāgarī page numbers].

[71] The invocation begins with *the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇḍala Stotra.*

> · *Mañjughoṣam̐ mahāvīram̐ sarvamāra vināśakam̐ /*
> *Sarvākāra pradātāram̐ dharmadhātum̐ namāyaham̐*

> The great hero, Mañjughoṣa, destroyer of all *mārās*
> [Emboding]all form and provider, I bow to Dharmadhātu

[72] See also, Alex Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī: The Mañjuśrī*

(Boston and London: Shambhala, 1985). 4-6.

[73] *Vṛhat Svayambū Purāṇaṁ,* Chapter 2.

[74] Badri Ratna Vajrācarya, *Svayambhū Mahāpurana,* 34.

[75] Bhattacaryya,ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* 23.

[76] *Dharmadhātu Kriyā Vidhi,* 4.

[77] See Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Namasangīti.*

[78] Wayman, *The Enlightenment of Vairocana: The Abhisaṁbodhi Tantra,* 34.

[79] Bhattacharyya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* no. 3

[80] Bhattacharyya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* no. 2.

[81] All the ritual specialists that I interviewed consistently stated that the *Nāmasangīti* was the root text of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in the Newar Buddhist context. The Ngor Maṇḍala collection in the Tibetan tradition, with whom the Newar Buddhist artists had extensive contact, also establishes the *Ārya Nāmasangīti* as the root text of the Maṇḍala.

[82] T. Banarsi Lal, ed., *Aryamañjuśrī Nāmasangīti with Amṛtakaṇika-Ṭippaṇi* by Bhiksu Raviśrījñāna and *Amṛtakanikodyota-Nibandha* (Sarnāth Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1994. See also, Alex Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī: The Mañjuśrī-Nāmasangīti.*

[83] Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī,* 24.

[84] The contemporary Vajrācārya teachers, such as Sūryamān Vajrācārya, Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, and Ratnakājī Vajrācārya, with whom I studied, emphasized this aspect of Dharmadhātu Mañjughoṣa as the totality of the six *kula* system.

[85] Mallmann, *Introduction a L'Iconographie du Tantrisme Bouddhique,* 274.

[86] Bhattacharyya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* 65. My translation.

[87] Bhattacharyya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* 23.

[88] Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantra,* 46.

[89] Surya Mān Vajrācārya. Personal communication. This is also referred to in the *Nāmasangīti Tantra.*

[90] The iconographic variations found in the strut figures and the prevalence of the theme in Newar Buddhist architecture provide indications to the popularity of the theme even in the contemporary context. Although ritual specialist that I interviewed invariably name the *Niṣpannayogāvali* and *Vajrāvali* to be primary iconographic sources, the actual iconography often does not match the textual prescriptions. There may also be local texts that specifically refer to these iconographic forms, which, at this point in my research, I have not been able to identify.

[91] Mallmann, *Etude Iconographique sur Mañjuśrī,* 60-61. The *Sādhanamālā* refers to Mañjuśrī as *mahāraga rupottama mañjuvajra sarvasattva* [All sentient beings Mañjuvajra's most excellent form, Mahāraga].

[92] The only iconographic difference in the Kvā Bāhā strut is that it holds a *ratna* in the third right hand, instead of the *ankuśa* . The *Niṣpannayogāvali* describes Mañjuvarja who holds in his principal hands the *vajra* in his right placed against his heart, with right hand displaying *vajramuṣṭhi* as he holds the *ghaṇṭā.* His right hands, from top to bottom, hold sword, ankuśa, and arrow; the left hands, ankuśa, pāśa, and bow.

[93] Bhattacharyya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* 65. My translation

[94] It should be noted that the only extant copies of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* have been found in Nepal, written in the Newarī script. In fact, Bhattacaryya's translation of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* were based on Newarī manuscripts of the Indian original. However, despite the relative conservativeness of the written tradition, this does not preclude the fact

that the text may reflect the iconographic themes that may have been popular and significant the Newar context.

[95] Bhattacharyya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, 2. My translation. Sexual embrace is symbolized by the *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* in *vajrahuṁkāramudrā*.

[96] See Alex Wayman, *Yoga of The Guhyasamājatantra: The Arcane Lore of Forty Verses* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd, 1977).

[97] Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras: Light on Indo-Tibetan Esotericism* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1973),121.

[98] The *Guhyasamaja Maṇḍala* often hold their *kula* attributes in their hands, however, here the Jinas holds Mañjuśrī's attribute the sword and book/lotus consistently in their upper hands.

[99] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* 140-158.

[100] *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇaṁ,* Chapter 5.

[101] The commentarial literature of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra* refers to the dual interpretation and meaning. This will be further discussed in the next section.

[102] Images from the Pāla period in north-eastern India show this connection. I am grateful to Dr. John C. Huntington for point this out.

[103] I am particularly grateful to Sūryaman Vajrācārya and Badriratna Vajrācārya, two learned gurus from Patan and Kathmandu.

[104] Banarsi Lal, *Aryamañjuśrī Nāmasaṅgīti with Amrtakanika-Tippani by Bhiksu Raviśrījñāna and Amrtakanikodyota-Nibandha* (Sarnāth Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1994), xiiv, 18-19. The following explanation is based on this commentary.

[105] Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī,* 45.

[106] The ritual text to Cakrasaṁvara, *Trisamādhi Pūjāvidhi,* [Rituals to the Three-fold Meditation], emphasizes this understanding.

[107] A = *pīṭha;* Aa = *upapīṭha;* I = *kṣetra;* Ii = *upakṣetra;* U = *chaṇḍoha;* Uu = *upachaṇçoha;* E = *melapaka;* Ei = *upamelapka;* O = *smaśāna;* Au=*upsmaśāna;* Am =*pilavam;* Ah = *upilavam*

[108] B. Lal, *Aryamañjuśrī Nāmasaṅgīti with Amrtakanika-Tippani by Bhiksu Raviśrījñāna and Amrtakanikodyota-Nibandha,* 19.

[109] Herakaji Vajrācārya, ed., *Saṁvararodaya Daśamī (Diśi) Pūjā Vidhi* (Bu Bāhā, Patan: Pusparaja Vajrācārya, 1995), 33. My translation.
Yajmānāsya anukampāya ādgaccha sarvadevatā Bhagavān śrīmat śrī śrī Cakrasaṁvara VajravārāhīHevajra Nairatmā, Caṇḍamahāroṣana Dveśavajri, Yogaṁvara Jñānaḍakinī, sadguru Vajrasattva, Buddhadharmasaṅgha, Pañca Tathāgata, PañcaTārā Sahita sakala deva devī avāhanāya idaṁ vajradhupaṁ niryātayāmī //)

[110] In a ritual context, the principal *kalaśa* is used to invoke the deity propitiated in the *pūjā.* However, even in this context, the *kalaśa* is generally referred to as "Guhyeśvarī *kalaśa*".

[111] Personal communication with Baburaja Buddhācārya. This connection with Śāntikarācārya is significant in the legends of Rāto Matsydendranāth, as Yogaṁvara had predicted to Śāntikarācārya that the deity would be reborn as Karunamaya and subsequently come to Nepal.

[112] In the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* (#4), as the lord of her own *maṇḍala,* Jñānaḍakinī is blue, in which case her *kuleśa* is Akṣobhya or Vajrasattva.

[113] As the consort of Vajradaka, the fierce form of Vajrasattva, she is called Vajravārāhī. See *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* #25.

[114] The term *abhyantara* is most often found in the description of *maṇḍalas,* in which the inner core of the *maṇḍala* where the central deity resides called the *abhyantara maṇḍala* or 'inner circle'.

[115] See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhist and its Hierarchy of Ritual.* As indicated by Gellner's title, he discusses the socio-religious structures of Newar Buddhism as reflective of these categories.
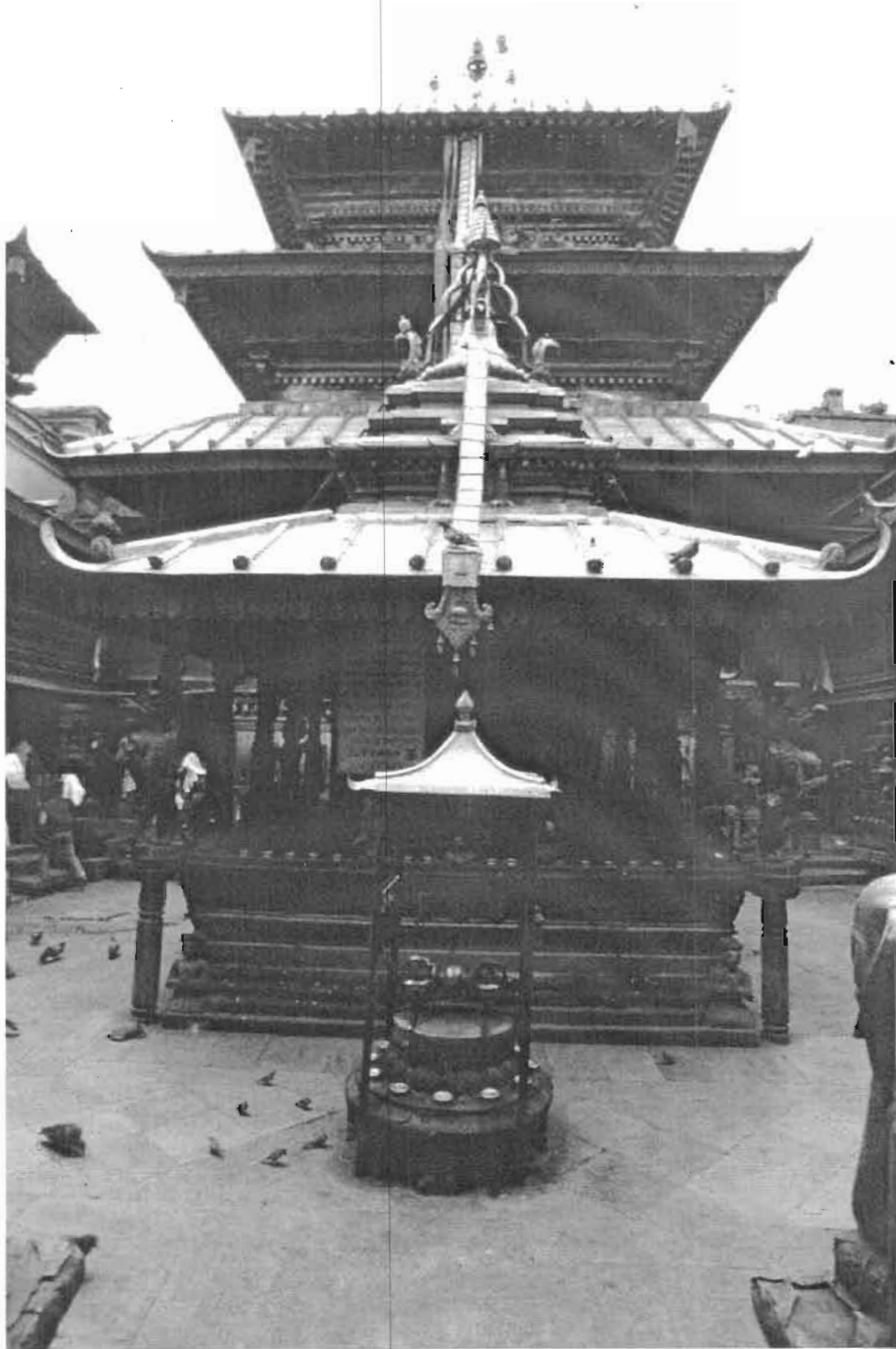
Figure 3.1 Interior courtyard of Kvā Bāhā, Patan.
Viewing looking west.

Figure 3.2 Mañjuśrī Kumāra
in SE Corner. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 3.3 Avalokiteśvara in
SW Corner. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 3.4 Avalokiteśvara
in NW Corner. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 3.5 Unidentified Bodhisattva
in NE Corner. Kvā Bāha, Patan.

Figure 3.6 Exterior entrance gateway. East face. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.
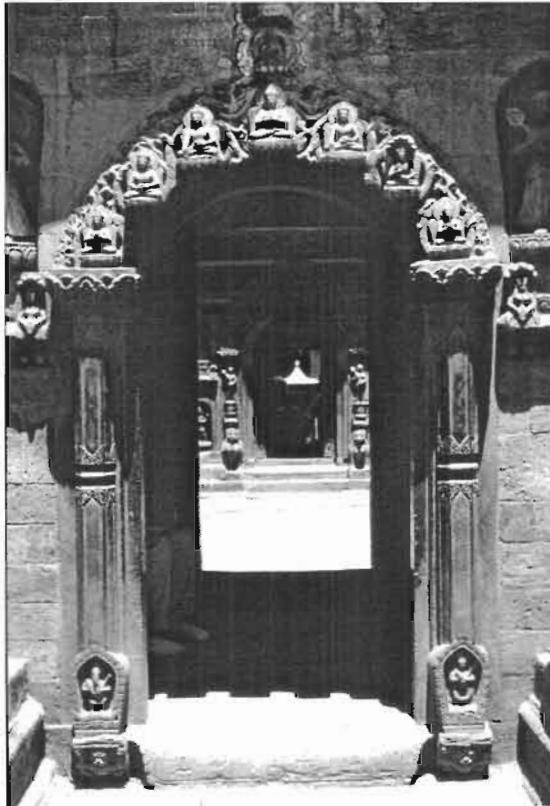
Figure 3.7 *Toraṇa*. Exterior entrance Gateway, depicting the seven Mānuśi Buddhas. East Face. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.
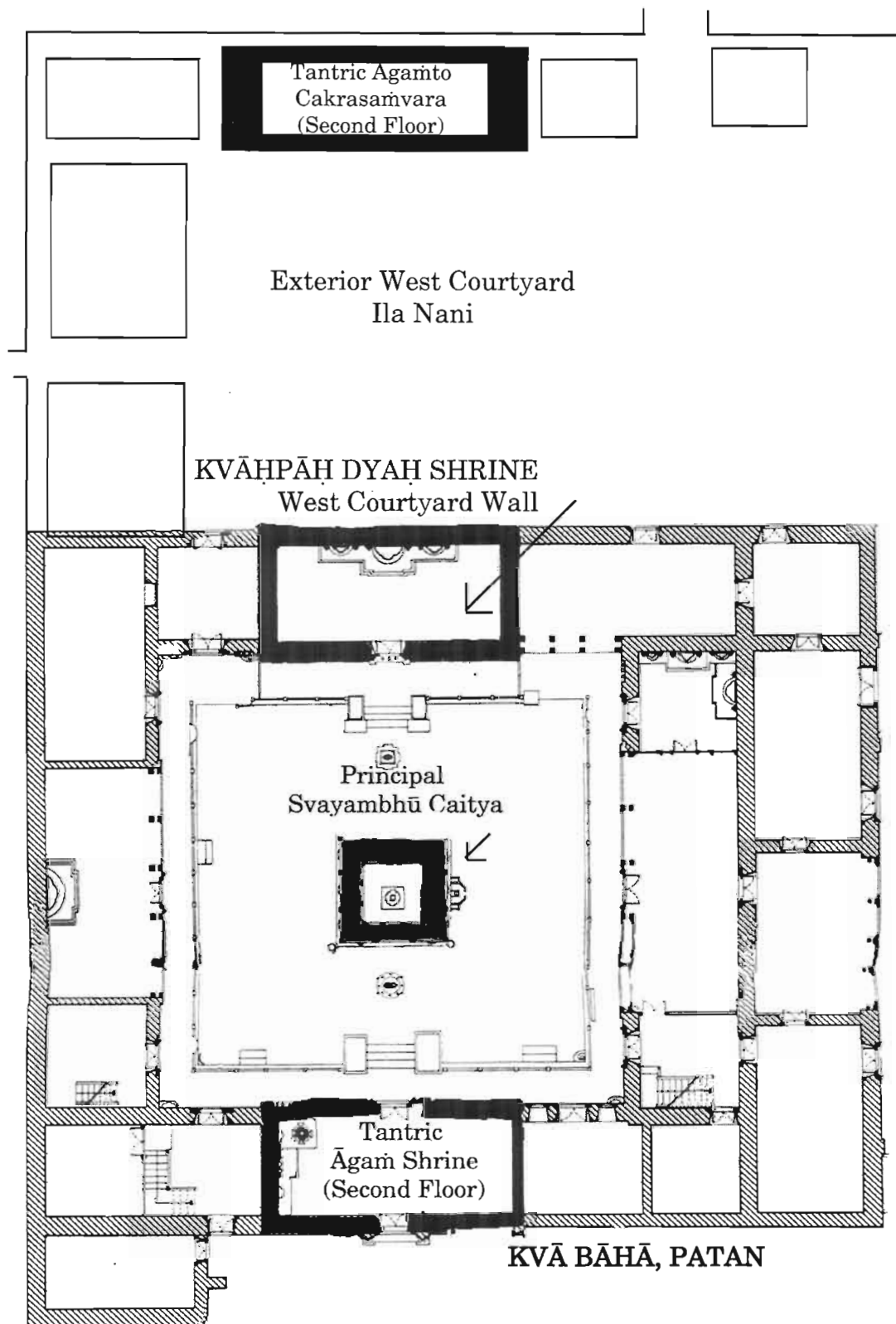
Figure 3.8. Basic groundplan of Kvā Bāhā, Patan, showing the three core architectural components.

Text labels within the figure:

Tantric Agaṁto
Cakrasaṁvara
(Second Floor)

Exterior West Courtyard
Ila Nani

KVĀḤPĀḤ DYAḤ SHRINE
West Courtyard Wall

Principal
Svayambhū Caitya

Tantric
Āgaṁ Shrine
(Second Floor)

KVĀ BĀHĀ, PATAN

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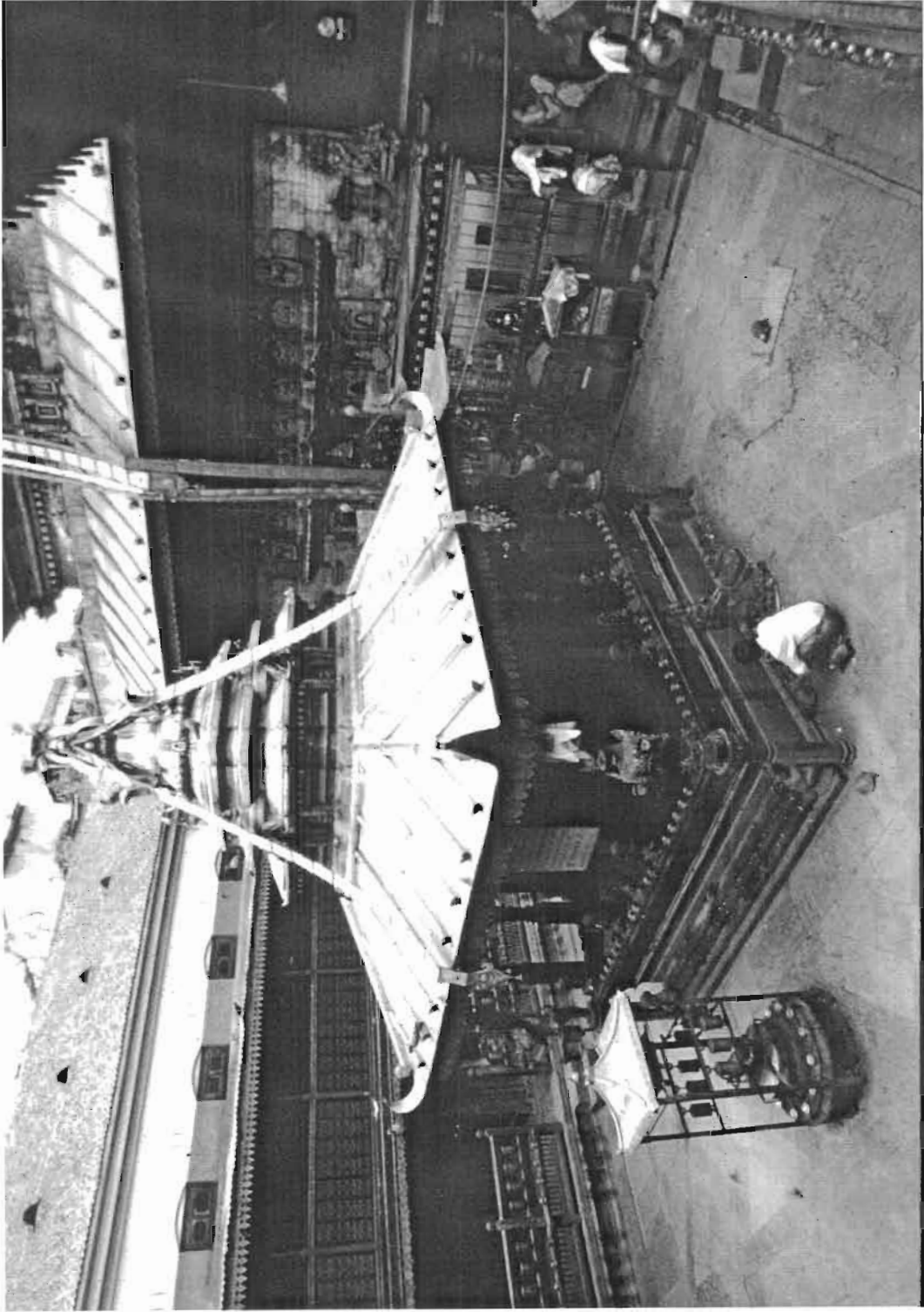
Figure 3.9. Central enshrined Svayambhū *Caitya*. Interior courtyard. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 3.10. Central *svayambhū caitya*. West face. Kvā Bāhā, Patan

Figure 3.11. *Kvāhpāh dyah* image of Śākyamuni. West shrine wall. Interior courtyard. Kvā Bāhā, Patan
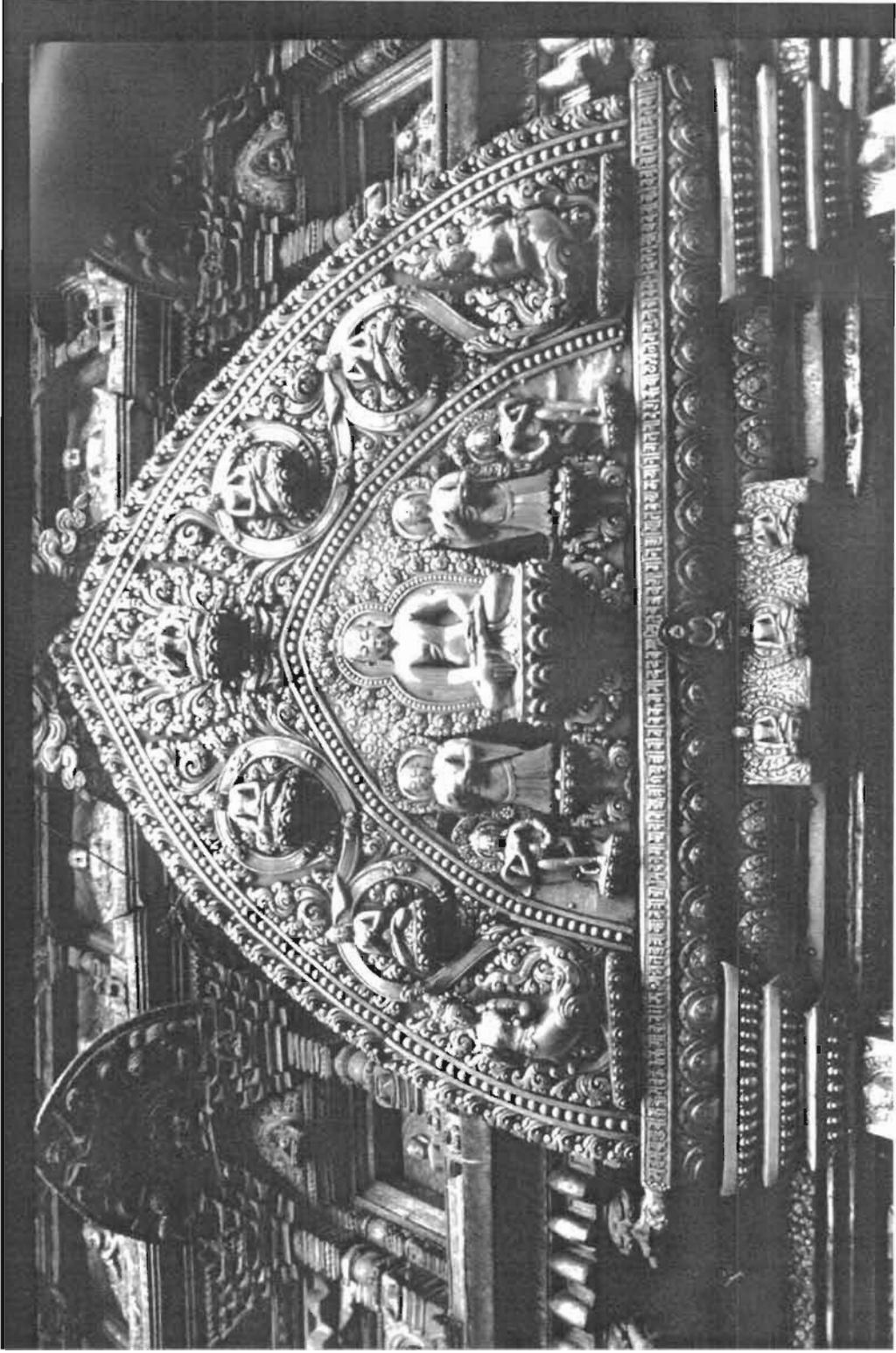
Figure 3.12. *Toraṇa* over main shrine door. West wall. Interior courtyard. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

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Figure 3.13. Upper level. Main shrine facade. West wall. Interior courtyard. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

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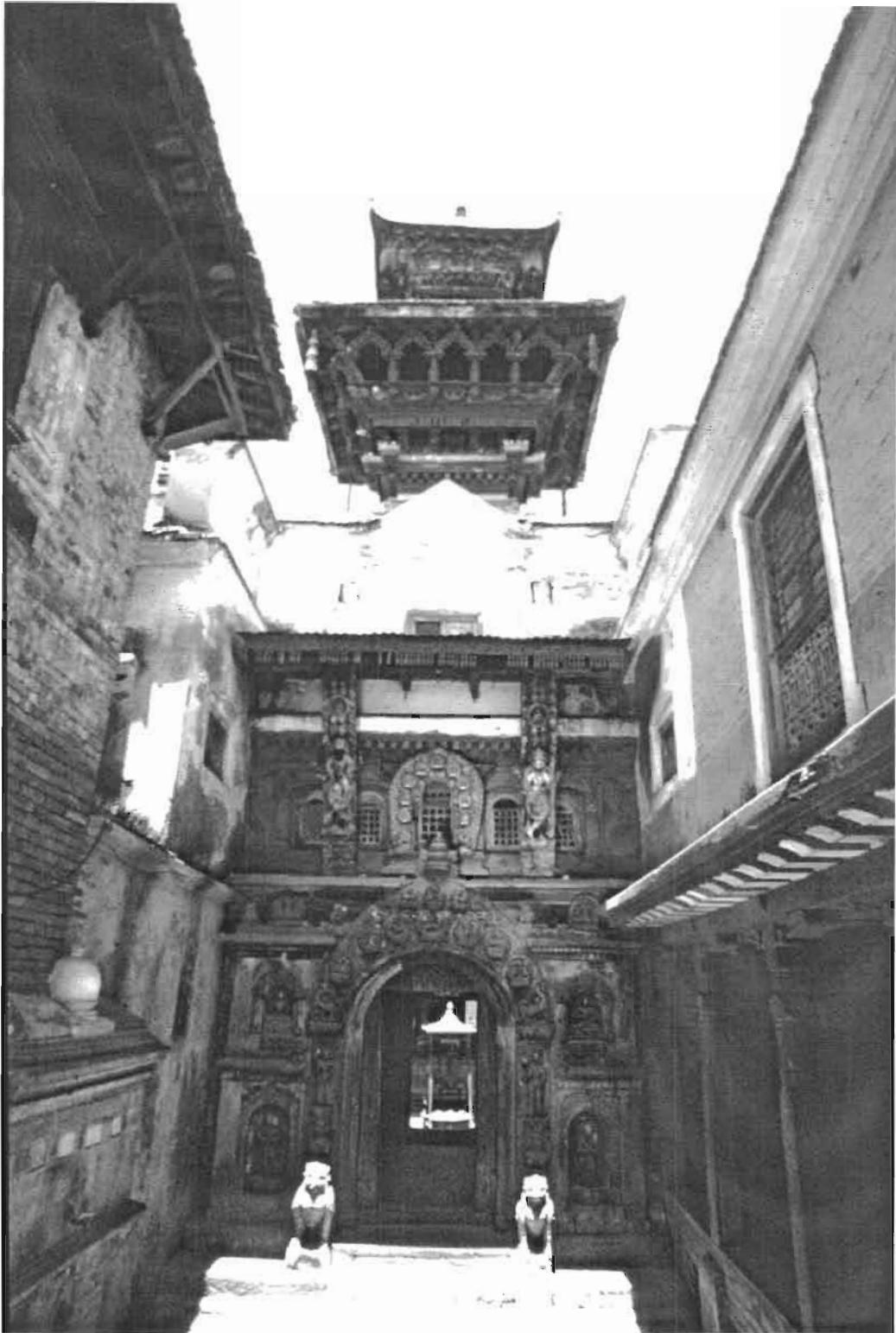
Figure 3.15. Exterior *Āgaṁ* shrine facade to Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍakinī. Second floor of inner vestibule area. Second gateway. East face. Kvā Bāhā, Patan

(top) Figure 3.16. Five-fold window outside *āgaṁ* shrine to Yogāmvara. Second level. Inner vestibule. East face. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

(left) Figure 3.17. Detail of *toraṇa*. *Āgaṁ* shrine to Yogāmvara. Second Level. Inner vestibule.East face. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.
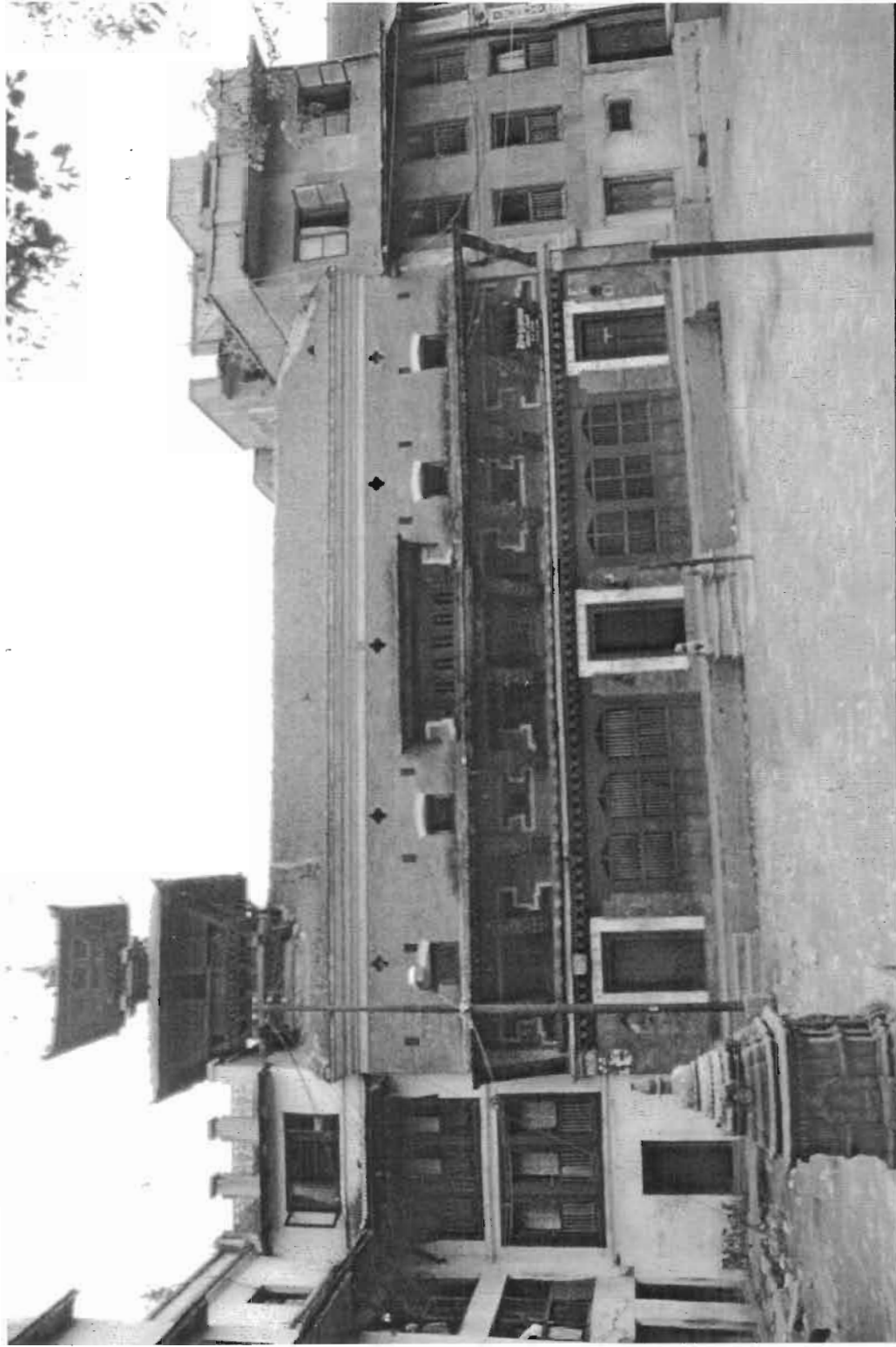
Figure 3.18. Second *āgaṁ* shrine of Kvā Bāhā, to Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī. East face. Exterior west courtyard. Ila Nani, Patan.

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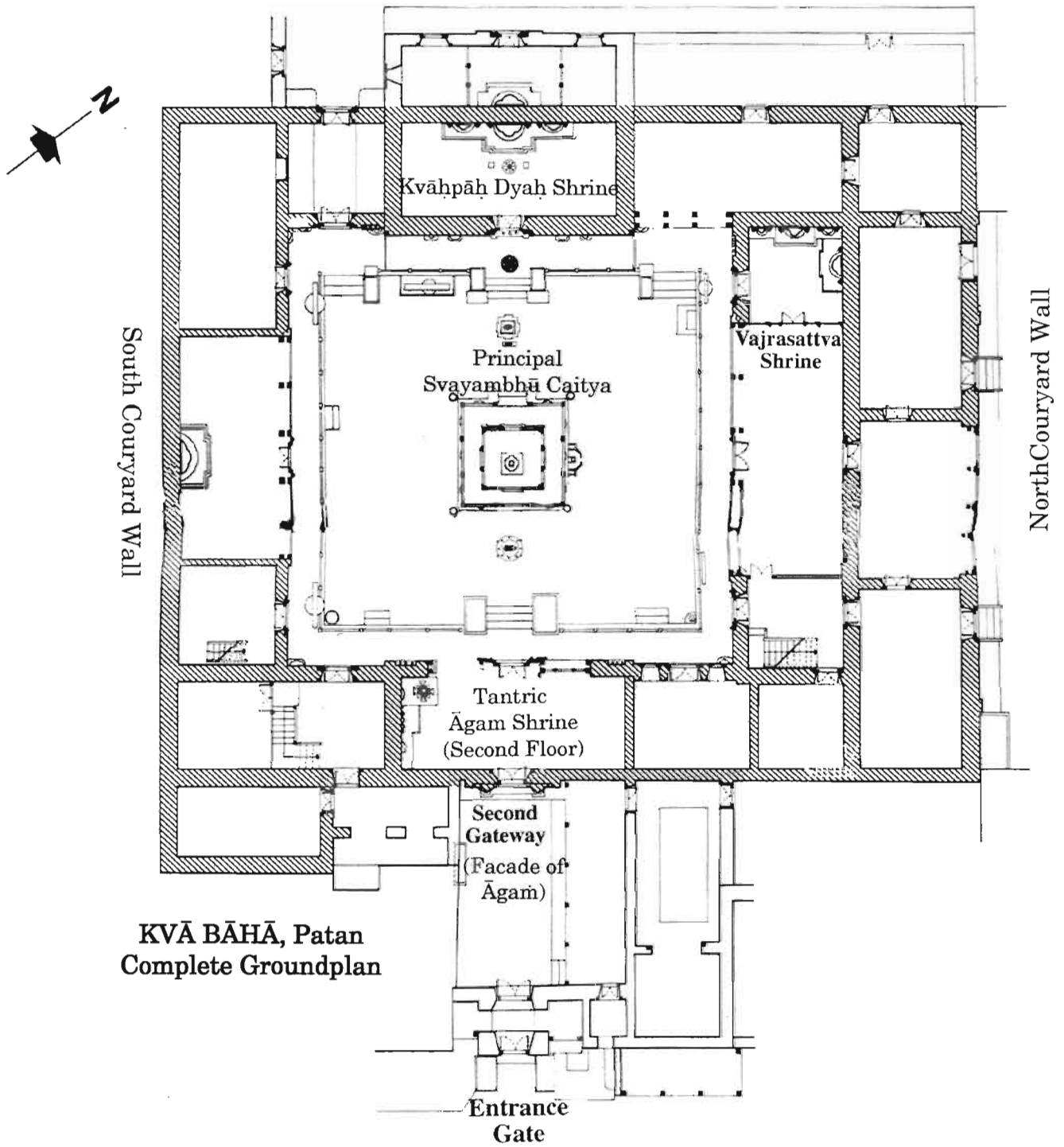
Figure 3.19. Complete groundplan of Kvā Bāhā, Patan, showing additional architectural development.

The following labels appear within the groundplan:

- Kvāhpāḥ Dyaḥ Shrine
- Vajrasattva Shrine
- Principal Svayambhū Caitya
- Tantric Āgam Shrine (Second Floor)
- Second Gateway (Facade of Āgaṁ)
- Entrance Gate
- South Couryard Wall
- North Couryard Wall
- KVĀ BĀHĀ, Patan Complete Groundplan

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Figure 3.20. Stone *toraṇa* of doorway, depicting the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography. Doorway leading to interior courtyard.. Inner vestibule. East Face. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

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Figure 3.21. Detail of Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara. *Torana* over doorway leading to interior courtyard. Inner vestibule. East face. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 3.22. Detail of Vajrasattva, flanked by Mañjuśrī and Prajñāpāramitā. *Torana* over doorway leading to interior courtyard. Inner vestibule. East face. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.
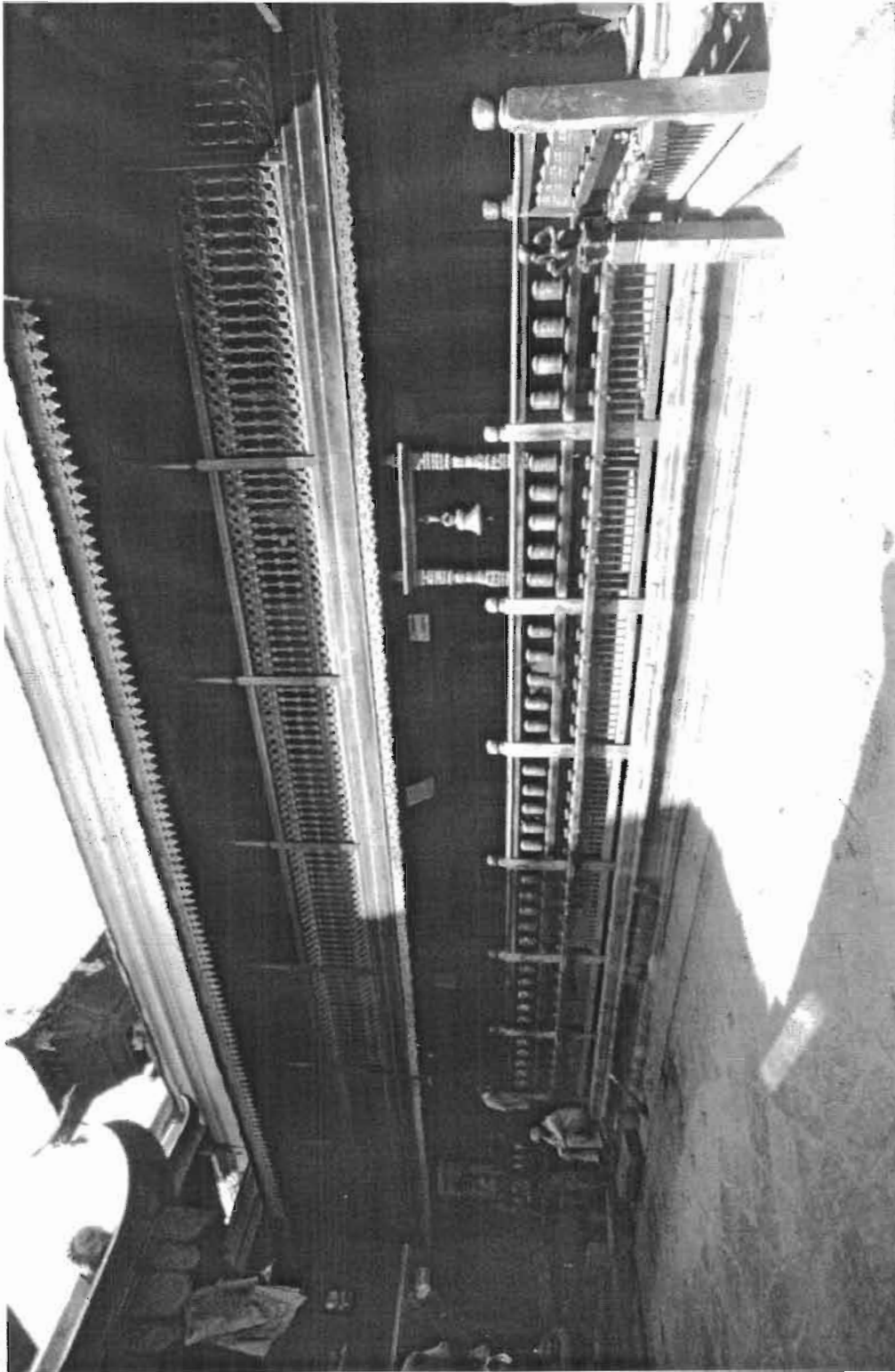
Figure 3.23 North wall, showing Vajrasattva shrine at northwest corner. Interior courtyard. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 3.24. *Toraṇa* above Vajrasattva shrine. North wall.
Interior courtyard. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 3.25. Detail of Vajrasattva. *Toraṇa* above Vajrasattva
shrine.North wall. Interior courtyard. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

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Figure 3.26. Vajrasattva as main shrine image. Vajrasattva shrine.
North wall. Interior courtyard. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 3.27. Central *svayambhū caitya*. West face. Interior courtyard. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.
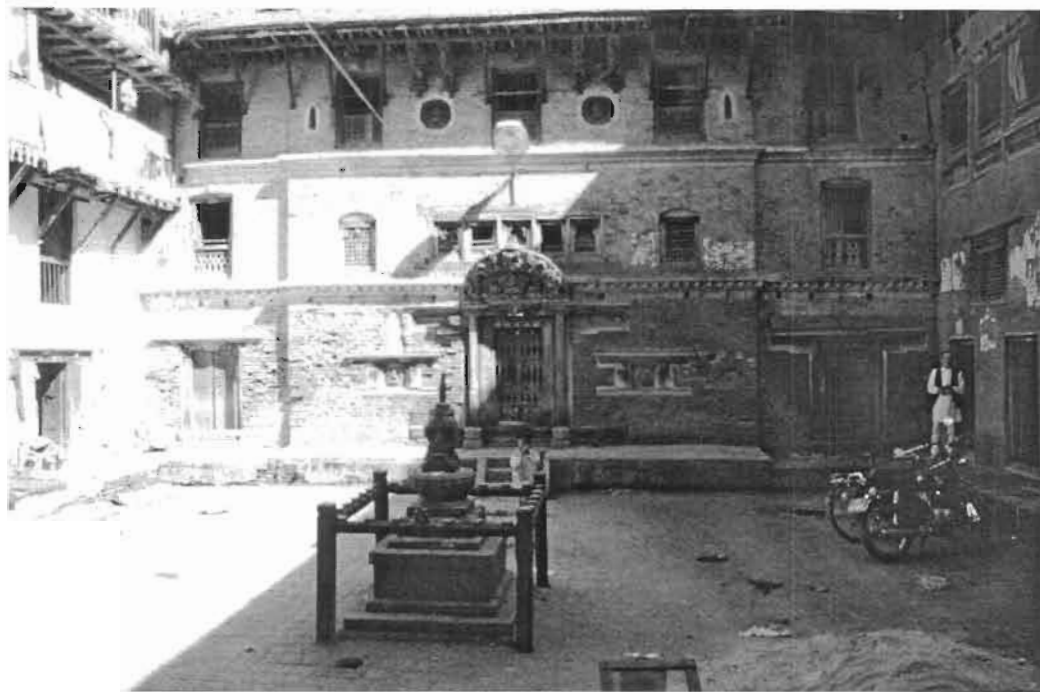
Figure 3.28 and 3.29. Examples of interior courtyard of a small *bāhā* with the central Svayambhū *caitya*. Top: Nhu Bāhā, Patan. Bottom: Cwākan Bāhā, Kathmandu.

Figure 3.30. Kathesimbhu Caitya "Svayambhū of Kathmandu." Sigha Bāhā, Kathmandu.
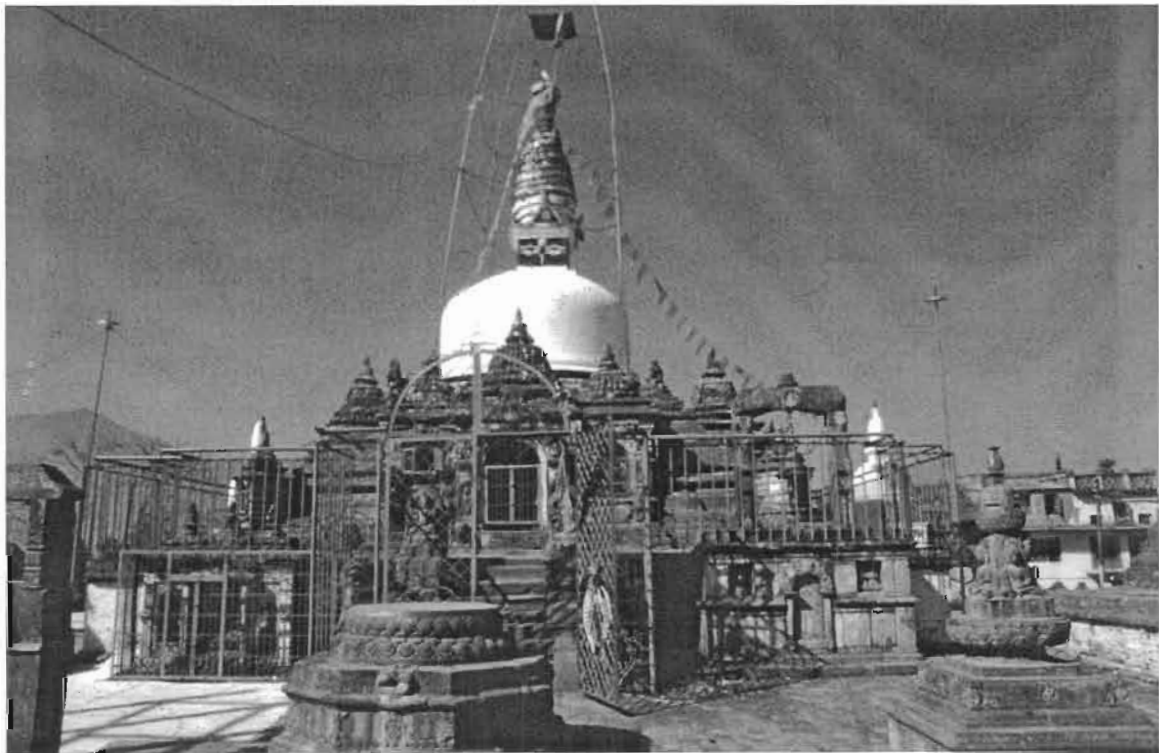
Figure 3.31. "Descendent" *caitya* / symbolic surrogates of Svyambhū Mahacaitya. Cilanco Caitya. Kirtipur.

Figure 3.32. Painting commemorating the refurbishing of Svayambhū
Mahācaitya by *mahāpātras* from Patan. Cloth. Dated A.D. 1565.

Figure 3.33.. Annual bathing of the central *svayambhū caitya.* Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure. 3.34. Annual feast for the *sangha.* Kvā Bāhā, Patan.
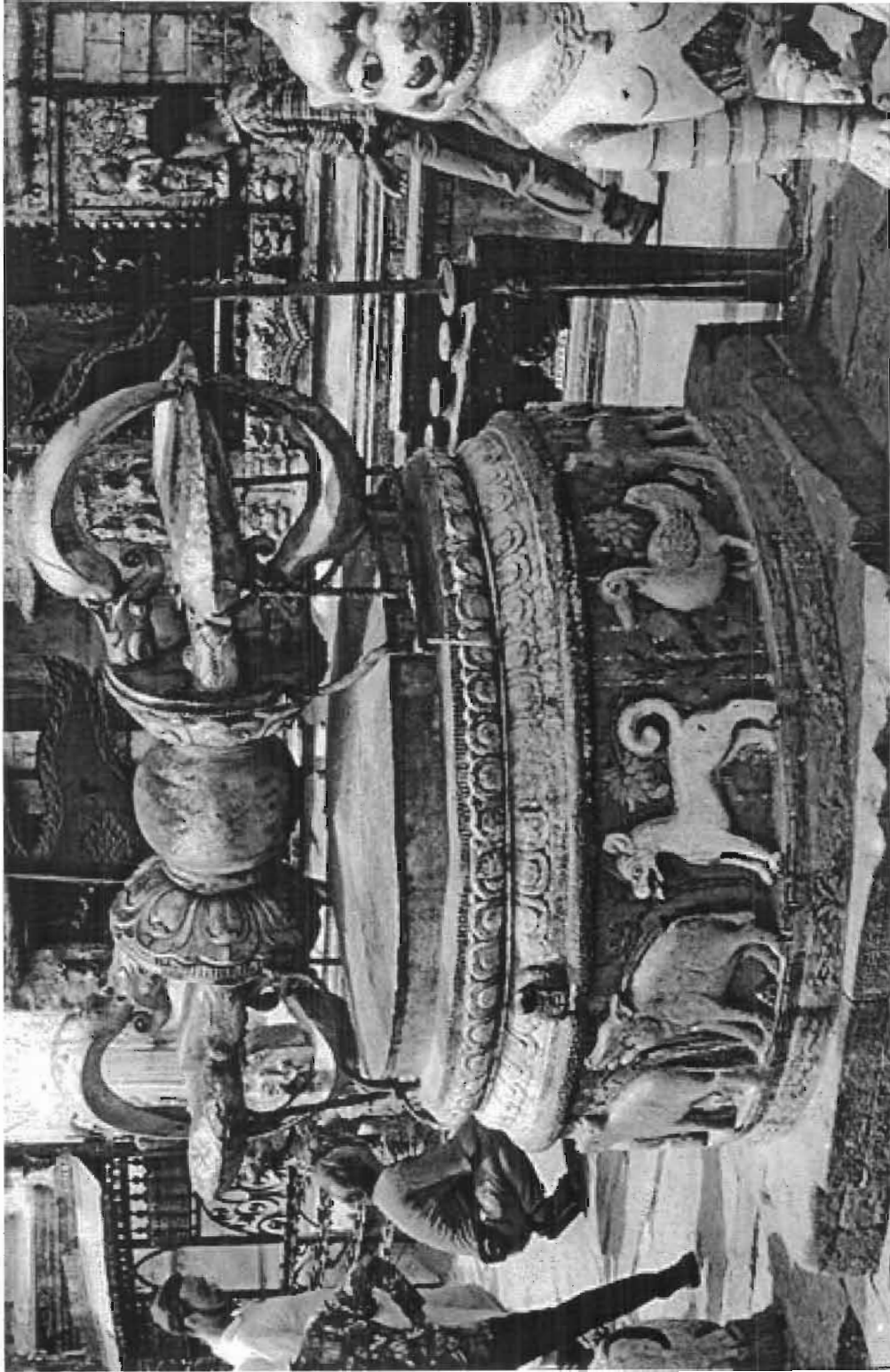
Figure 3.35. Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, surmounted by *vajra*. East side. Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Kathmandu.

Figure 3.36. Painting of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Ngor Monastery Collection, Tibet.

Figure 3.37. Computer generated drawing of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara
Mañjughoṣa.
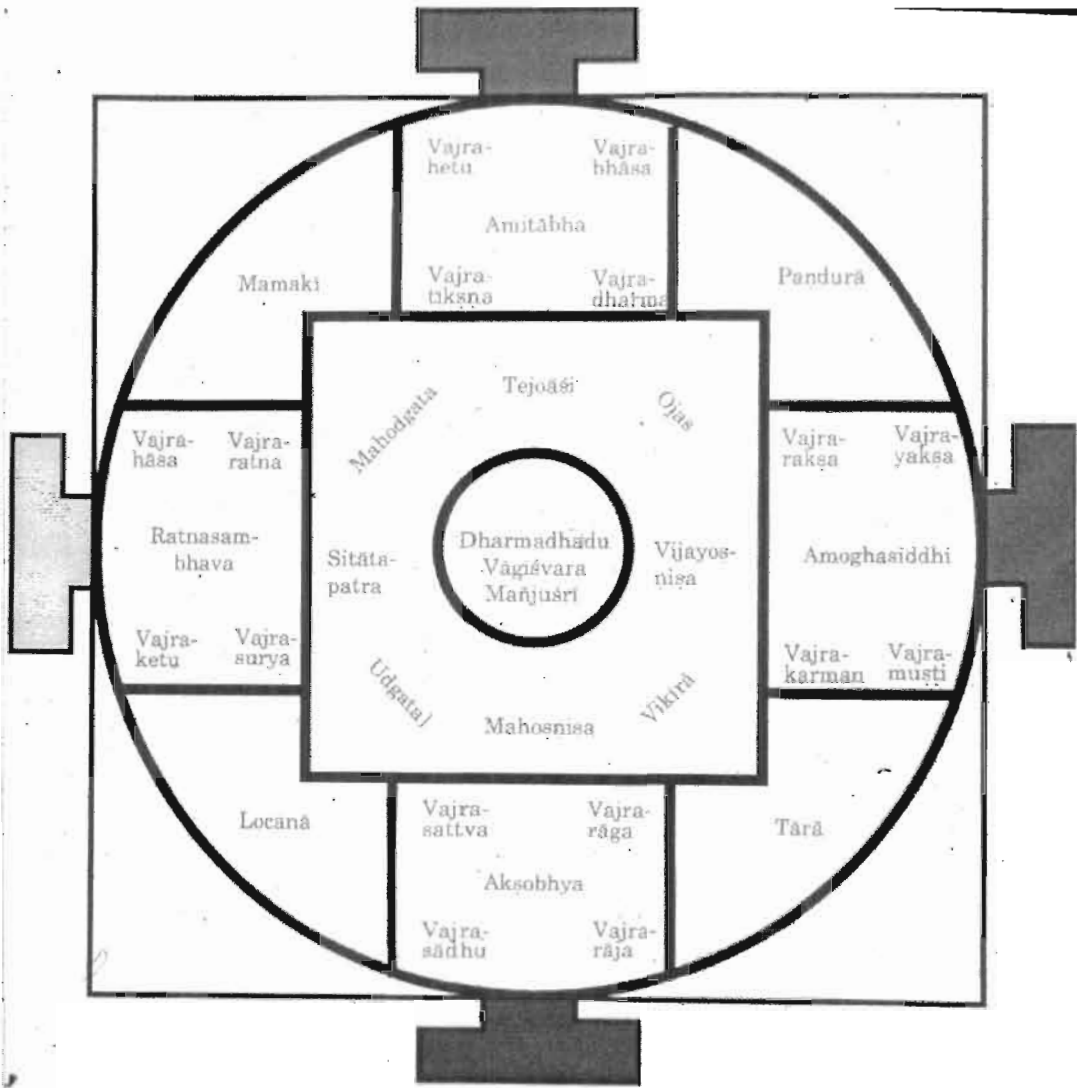
Figure 3.38. Drawing depicting the structure of the inner core of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

Figure 3.39. Computer generated drawing of Akṣobhya from the
Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

Figure 3.40. Computer generated drawing of Ratnasambhava from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

Figure 3.41. Computer generated drawing of Amitābha from the
Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

Figure 3.42.   Computer generated drawing of Amghosiddhi from the
Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

Figure 3.43. Vajrasattva. 1st strut figure from South. Third level, west shrine facade. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 3.44. Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa from the Dharmadhātu Mandala. 2nd strut figure from south. Third level, W. shrine wall. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 3.45 Akṣobhya Buddha from the Dharmadhātu Mandala. 3rd strut figure from south. Third level, W. shrine wall. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 3.46. Ratnasambhava Buddha from the Dharmadhātu Mandala.
4th strut figure from south. Third level, W. shrine wall. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.
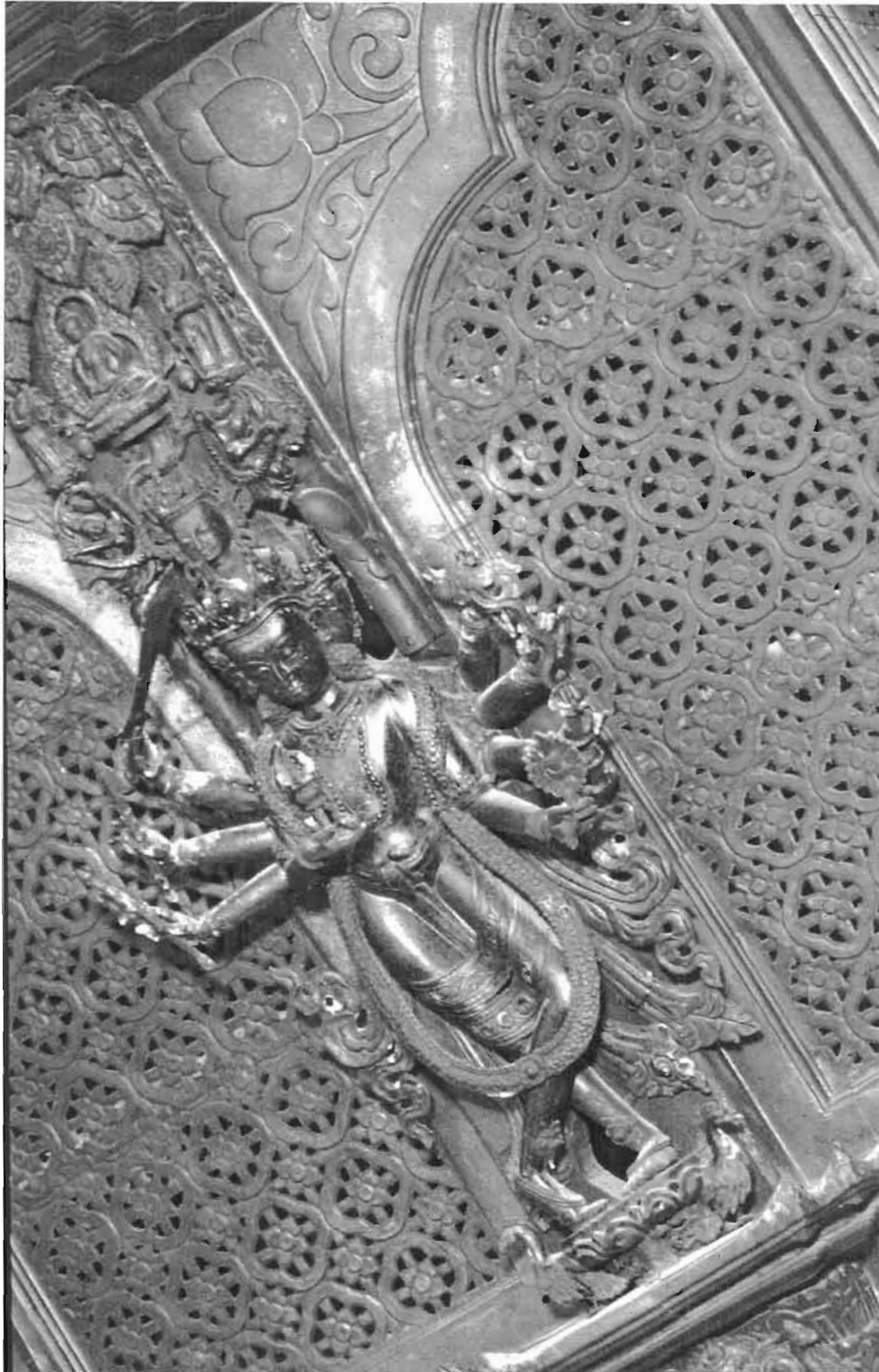
Figure 3.47. Amitābha Buddha from the Dharmadhātu Mandala.
5th strut figure from south. Third level, W. shrine wall. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

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Figure 3.48. Amoghasiddhi Buddha from the Dharmadhātu Mandala.
6th strut figure from south. Third level, W. shrine wall. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 3.49. Mahārāga Mañjuśrī / Vajrasattva.
1st strut figure from south. Fourth level, W. shrine wall. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 3.50. Ratnasambhava from the Dharmadhātu Mandala (variant). 2nd strut figure from south. Fourth level, W. shrine wall. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 3.51. Akṣobhya from the Dharmadhātu Mandala. (variant). 3rd strut figure from south. Fourth level, W. shrine wall. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 3.52. Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara/Vairocana from the
Dharmadhātu Mandala (variant). 4th strut figure from south.
Fourth level,W. shrine wall. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 3.53. Amitābha from the Dharmadhātu Mandala. (variant). 5th strut figure from south. Fourth level,W. shrine wall. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 3.54. Amoghasiddhi from the Dharmadhātu
Mandala. (variant). 6th strut figure from south. Fourth
level,W. shrine wall. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

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(top) Figure 3.55. *Toraṇa* depicting Amoghasiddhi from Dharmadhātu
Maṇḍala. South coutyard wall. East Doorway. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.
(bottom) Figure 3.56. Detail of Amoghasiddhi.

Figure 3.57. *Toraṇa* depicting Ratnasambhava from Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. South coutyard wall. West doorway. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.
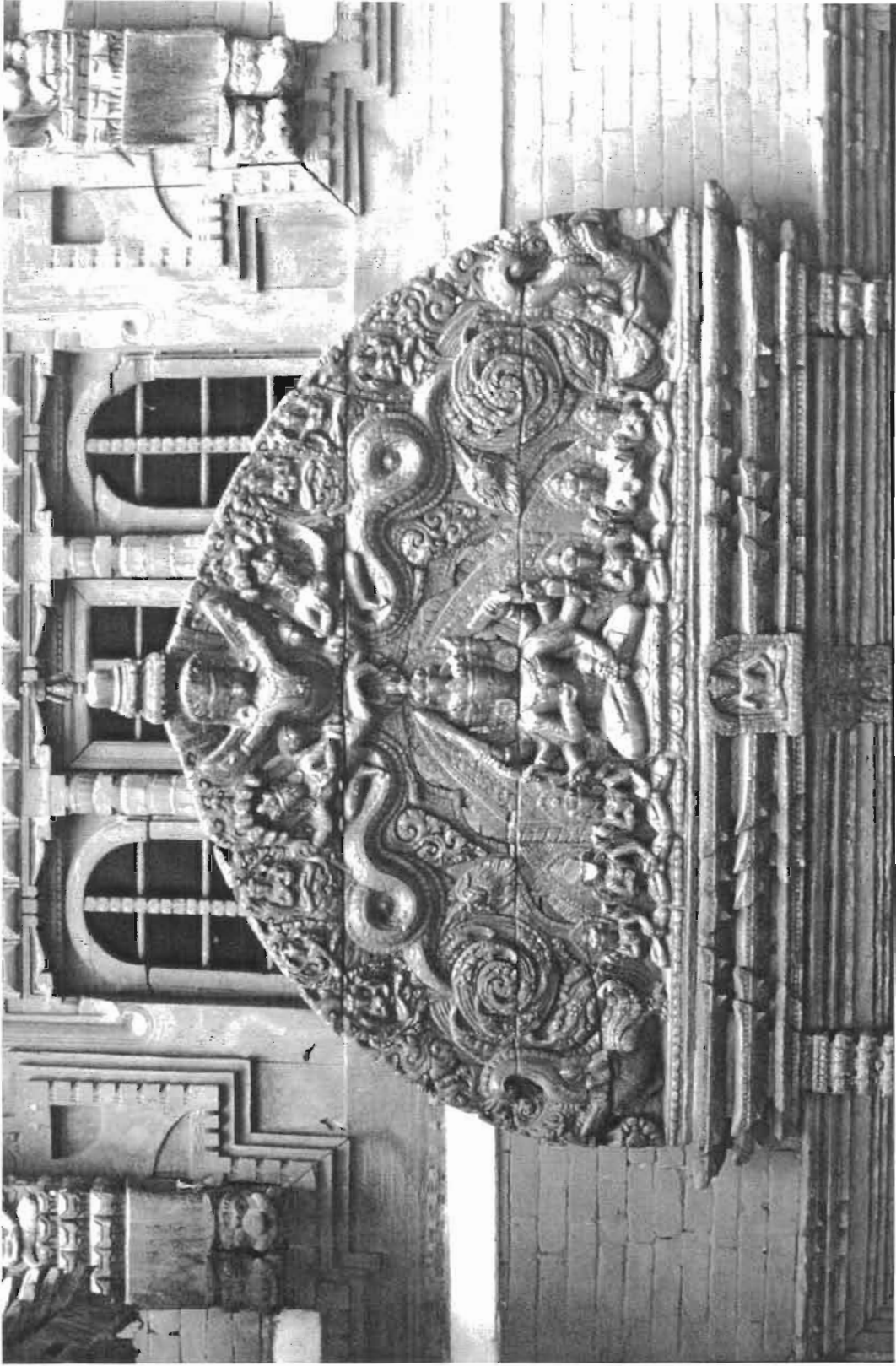
Figure 3.58. Exterior West wall. *toraṇa* depicting Vajrasattva/Mañjuśrī, Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

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Figure 3.59. Exterior west wall. *Toraṇa* depicting Vajrasattva/Mañjuśrī.
Kvā Bāhā. Patan.
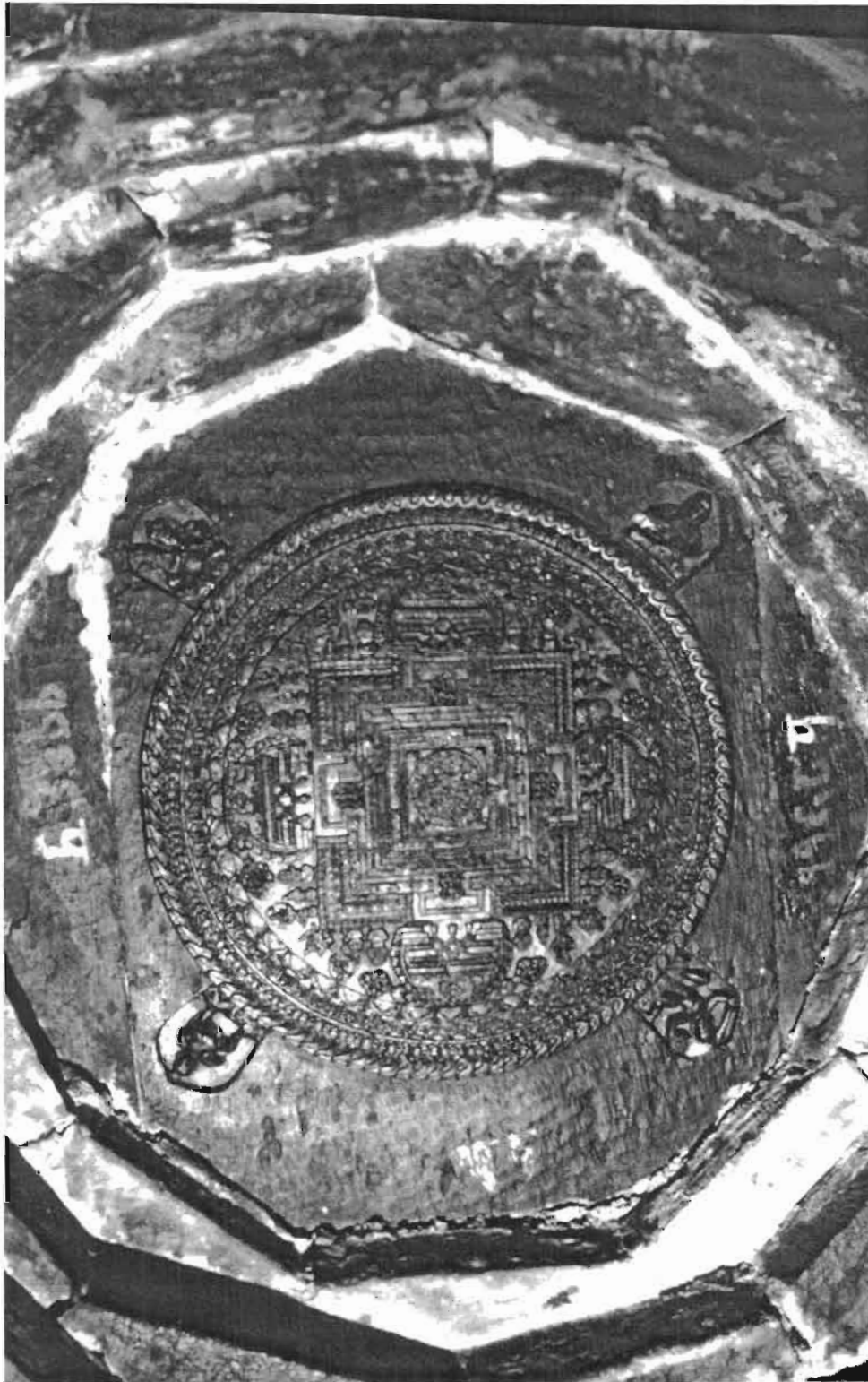
Figure 3.60. Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala over ceiling archway. Exterior door. East side. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.
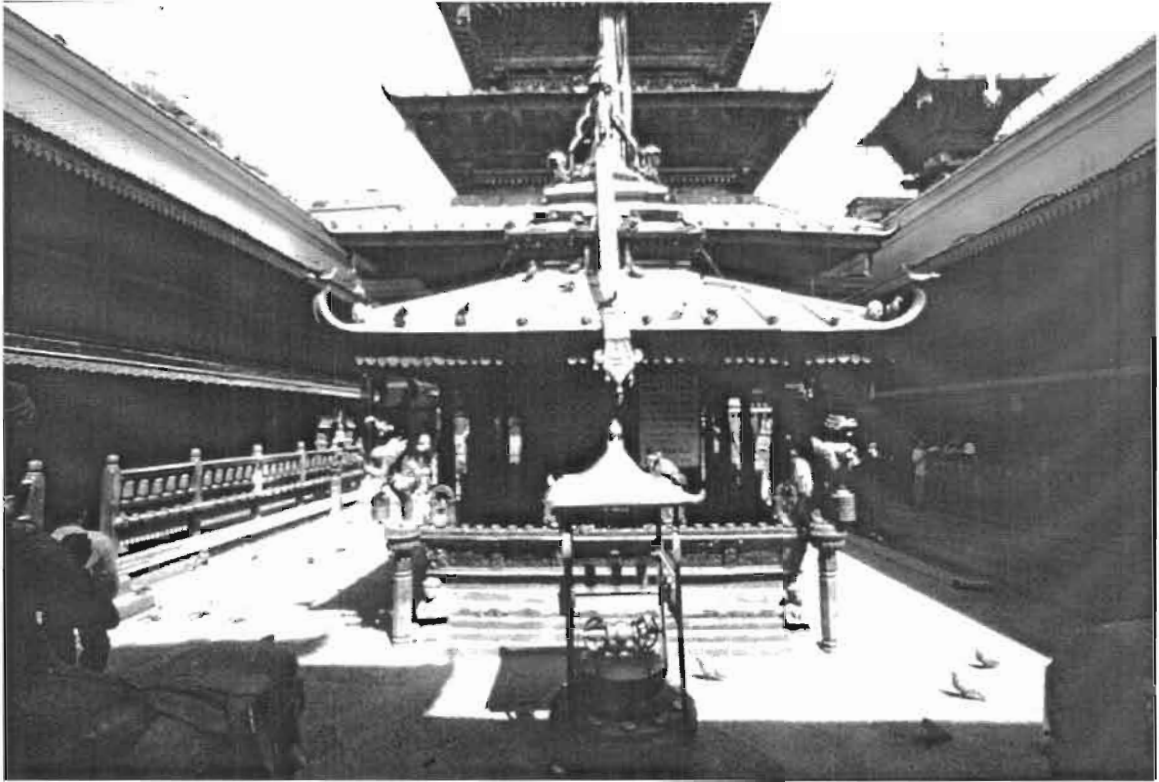
(top) Figure 3.61. Overview of interior courtyard, showing location of free-standing Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. East side. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

(left) Figure 3.62. Free-standing Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. East side. Interior courtyard. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

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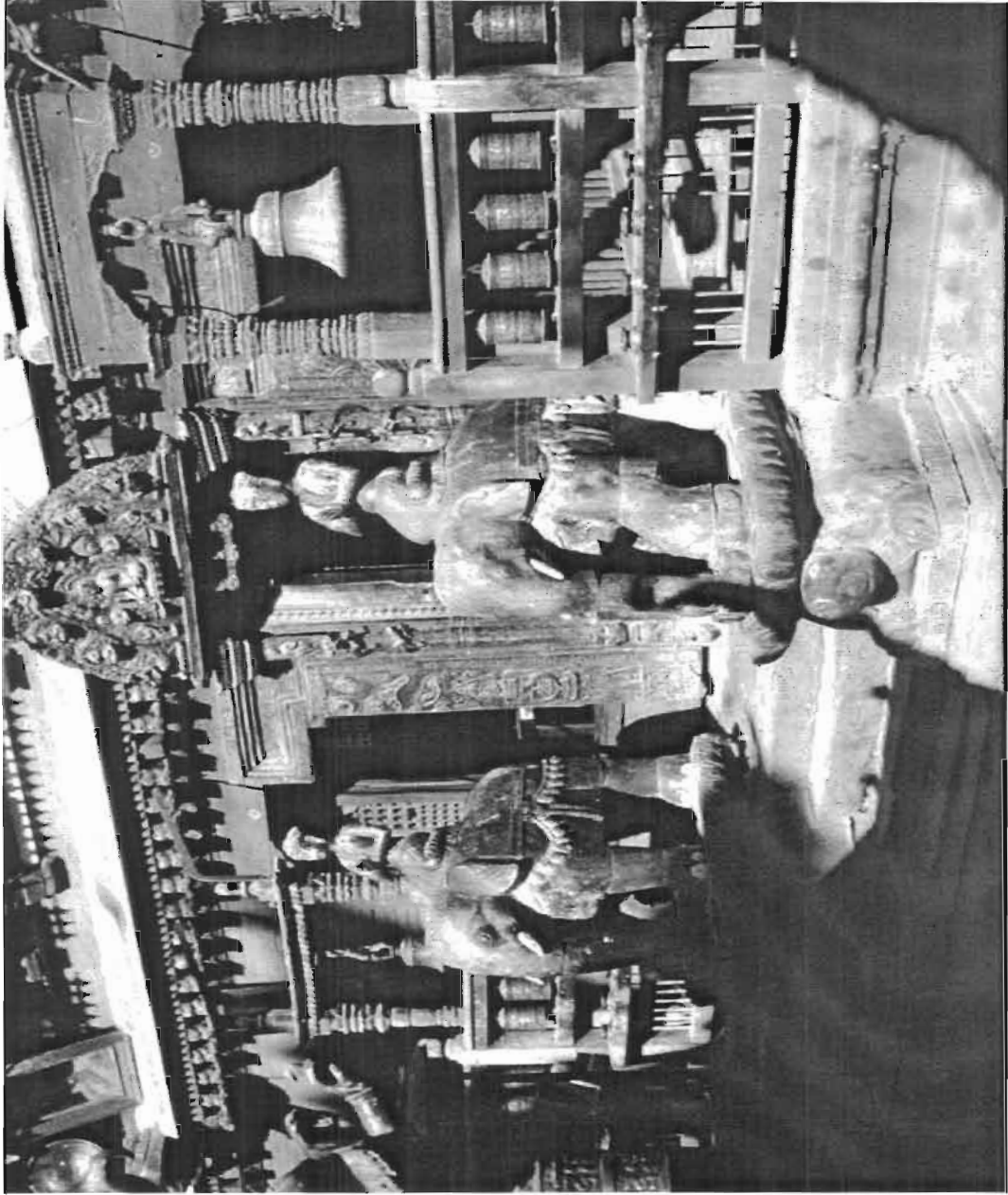
Figure 3.63. East wall. Facade of Yogāṁvara āgaṁ on second level. Interior courtyard. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.
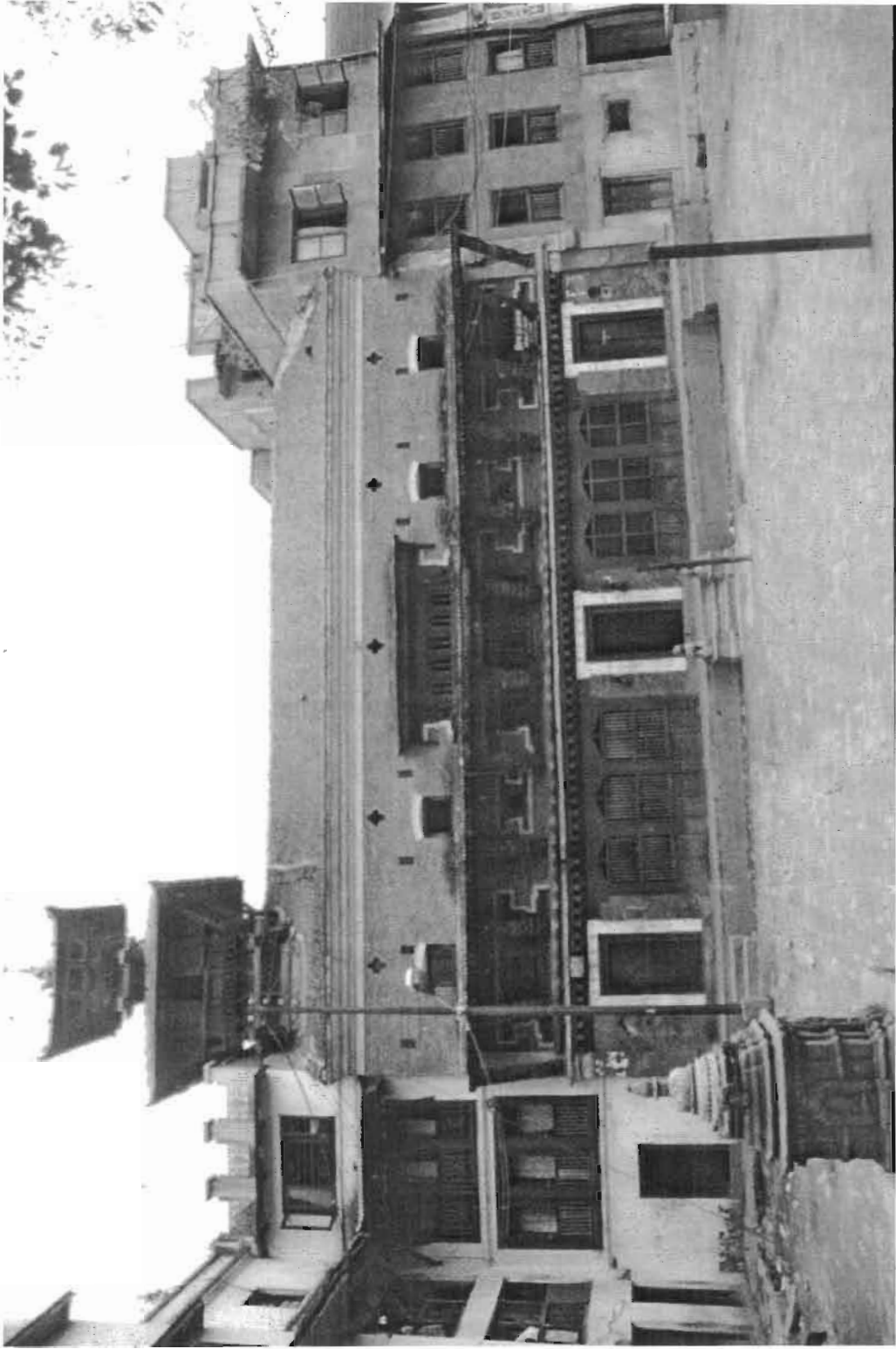
Figure 3.64. Āgaṃ shrine to Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī. Exterior west courtyard, Ila Nani, Patan.

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(left) Figure 3.65. Ullukāśyā/Kākāśya. "Bird-faced" gate guardians from the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. 1st strut from south. *Āgaṁ* shrine to Cakrsaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. East face. Ila Nani, Patan

(right) Ullukāśyā/Kākāśyā. "Bird-faced" gate guardians from the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. 12th strut from south. *Āgaṁ* shrine to Cakrsaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. East face. Ila Nani,

Figure 3.66. East *toraṇa*, depicting the Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Enshrined Svayambhū Caitya. Interior courtyard. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

(left) Figure 3.67 Detail of Akṣobhya from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. East *toraṇa*. Ensrhined Svayambhu Caitya. Kvā Bāhā, Patan. (right) Detail of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa. Top center figure. East *toraṇa*. Enshrined Svayambhū Caitya.

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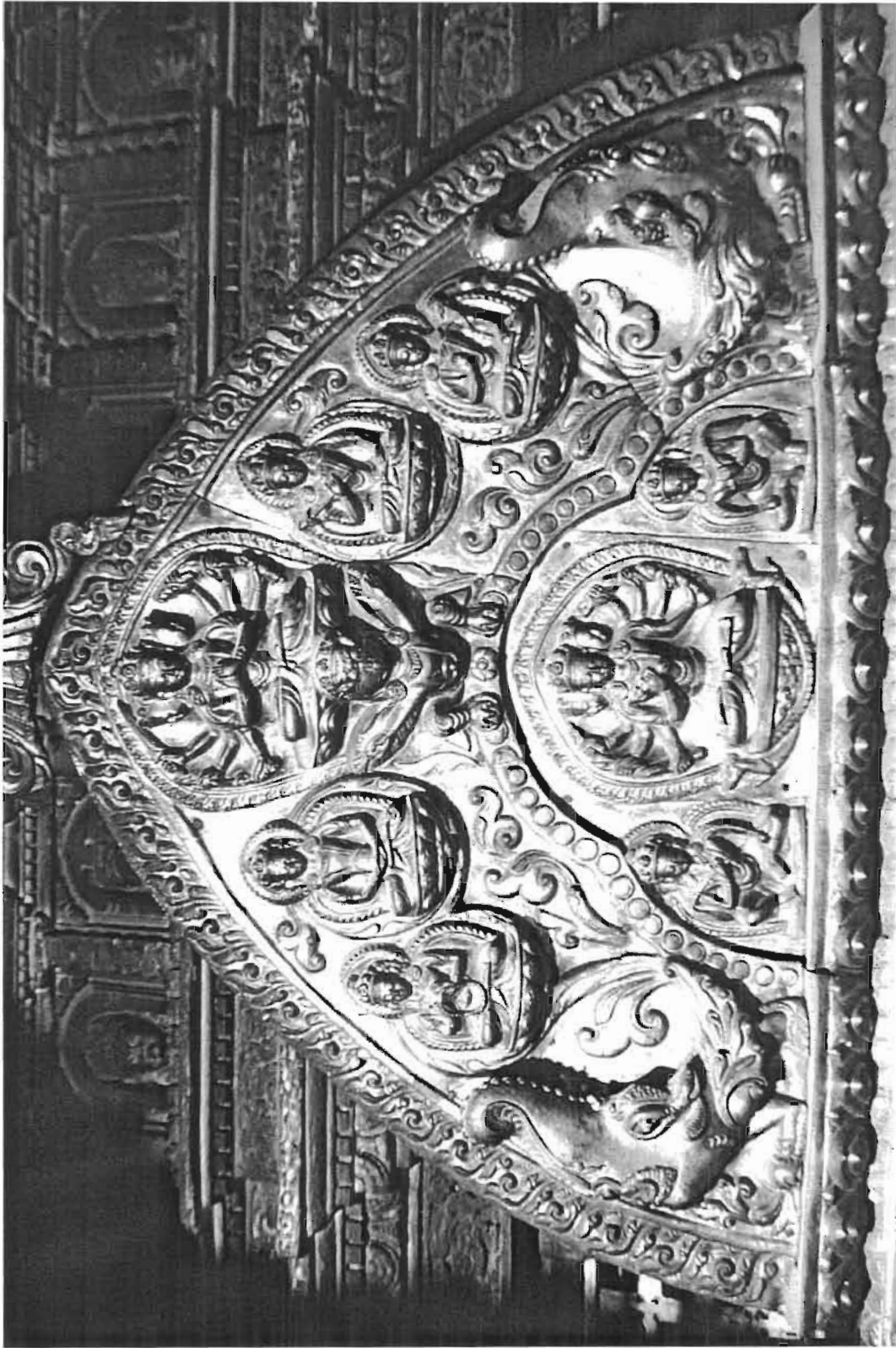
Figure 3.68. South *toraṇa*, depicting the Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Enshrined Svayambhū Caitya. Kvā Bāhā, Patan

Figure 3.69 Detail of Ratnasambhava from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.
South *toraṇa.* Enshrined Svayambhū Caitya. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

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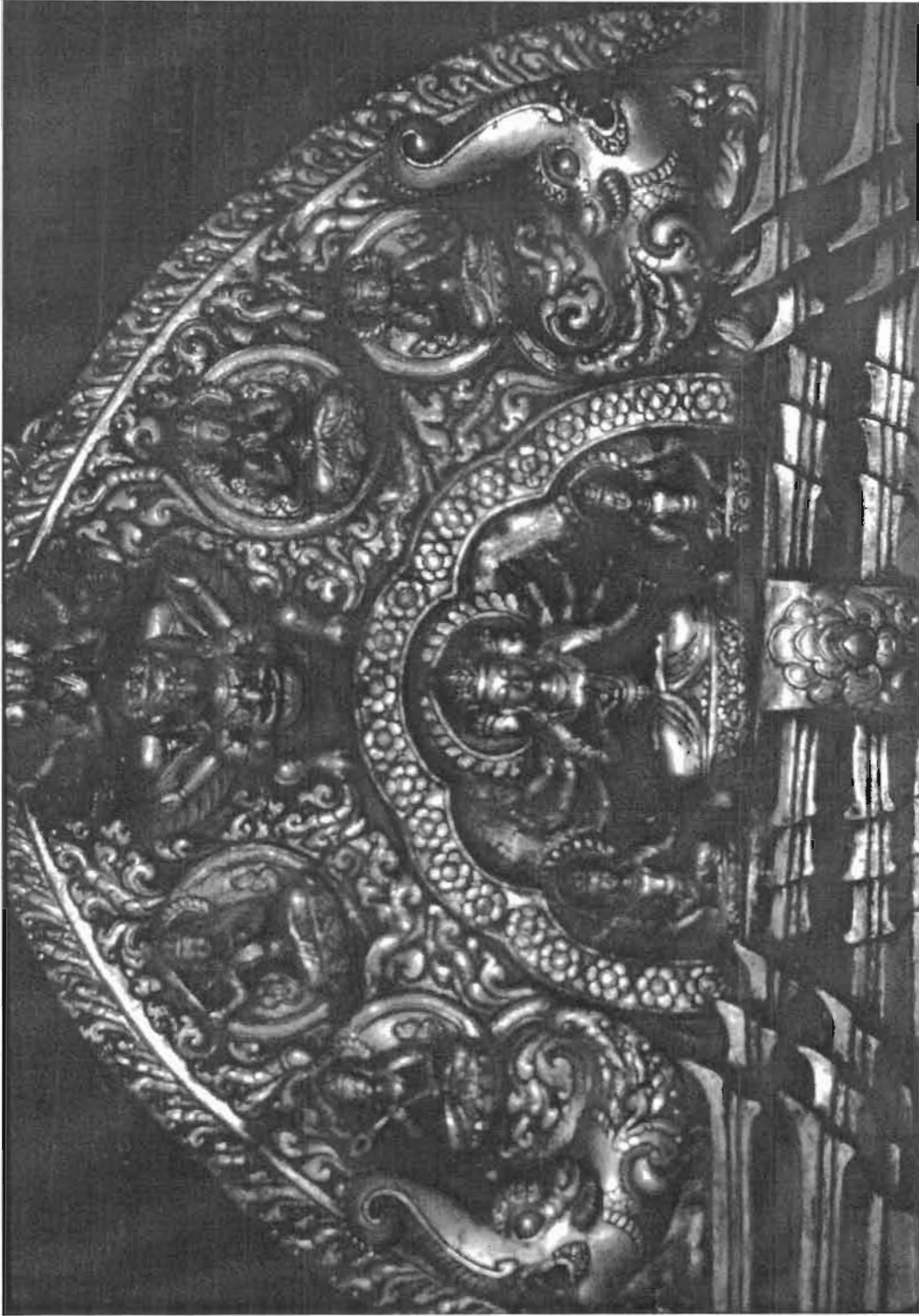
Figure 3.70 West *toraṇa*, depicitng the Jinas from the Dharmadhatu Mandala. Enshrined Svayambhū Caitya, Kvā Baha, Patan.

Figure 3.71. Detail of Amitabha. West *toraṇa*, depicitng the Jinas from the Dharmadhatu Mandala. Enshrined Svayambhū Caitya, Kvā Baha, Patan.
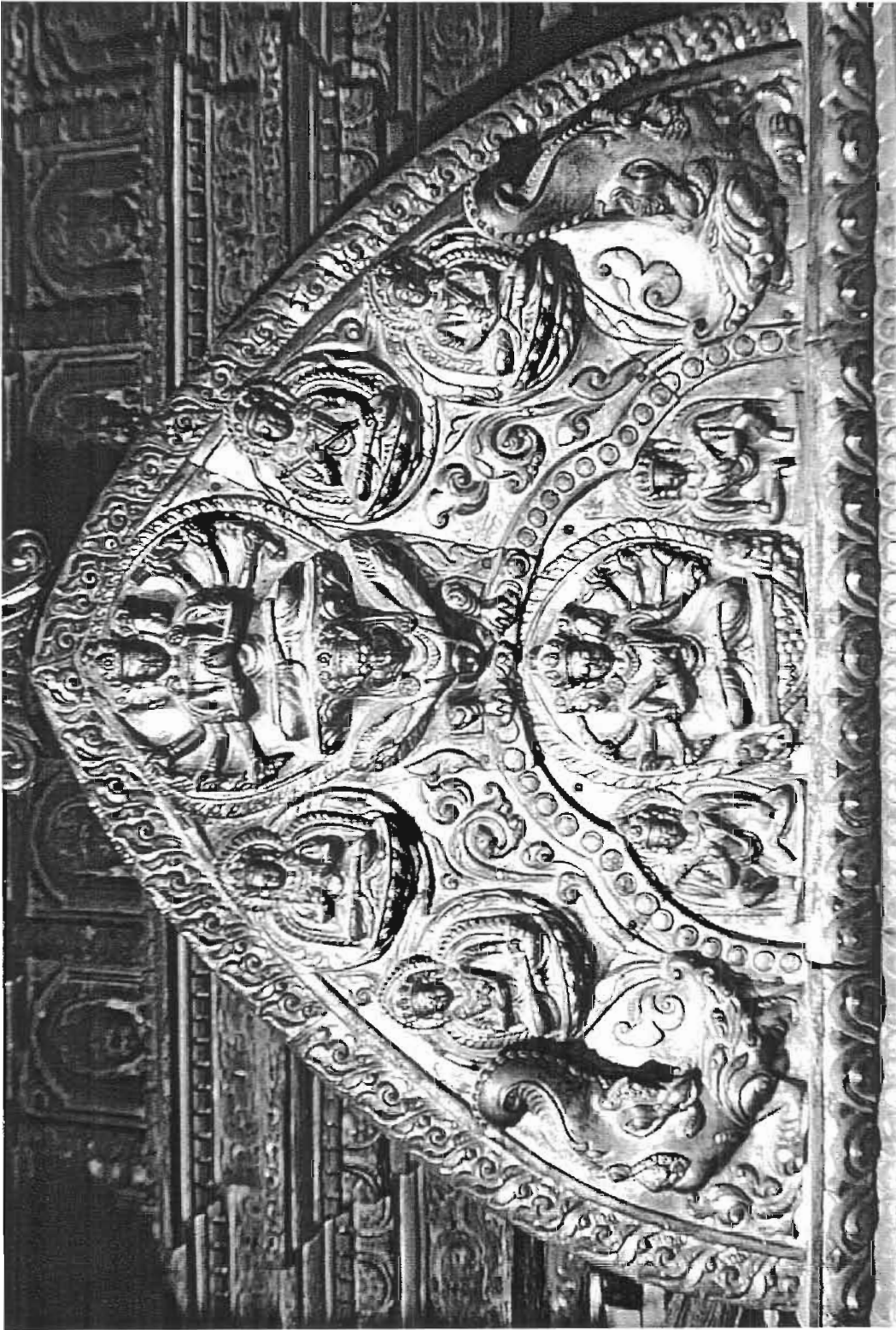
Figure 3.72. *North toraṇa*, depicting the Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Enshrined Svayambhū Caitya. Kvā Bāhā, Patan
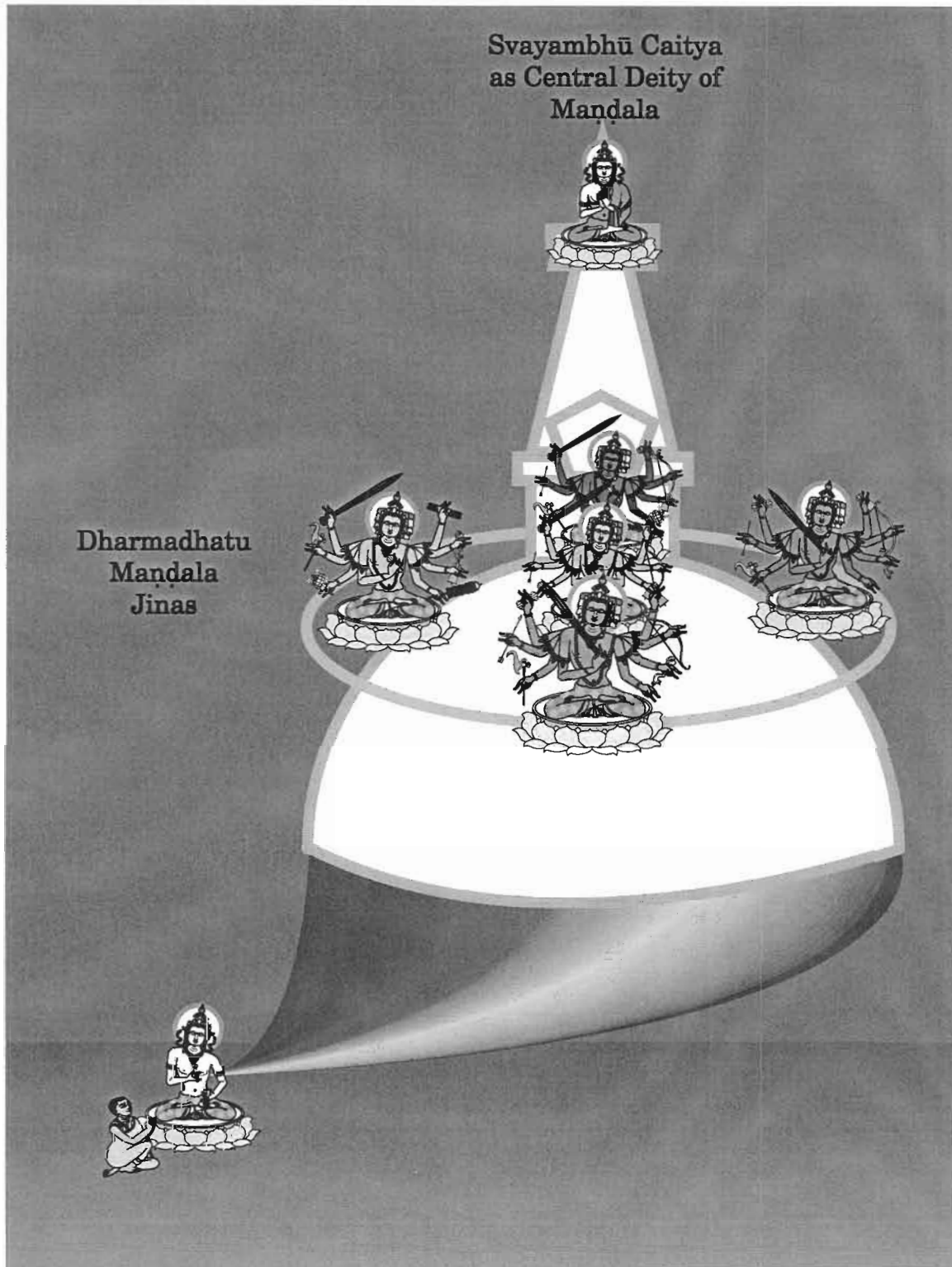
Figure 3.73. Conceptual Drawing on the iconographic program of the Central Svayambhū Caitya at Kvā Bāhā, Patan. At the center is the Svayambhū *caitya* as generator.

Figure 3.74. Bāhā with Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in place of the central Svayambhū *caitya*. Gaṇeśa. Bāhā. Patan.

Figure 3.75. Votive offerings of Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Caitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. N.S. 1051. Kirtipur.

Figure 3.76. View of Vairocana (left) and Akṣobhya shrine (right). Svayambhū Mahācaitya. East side.
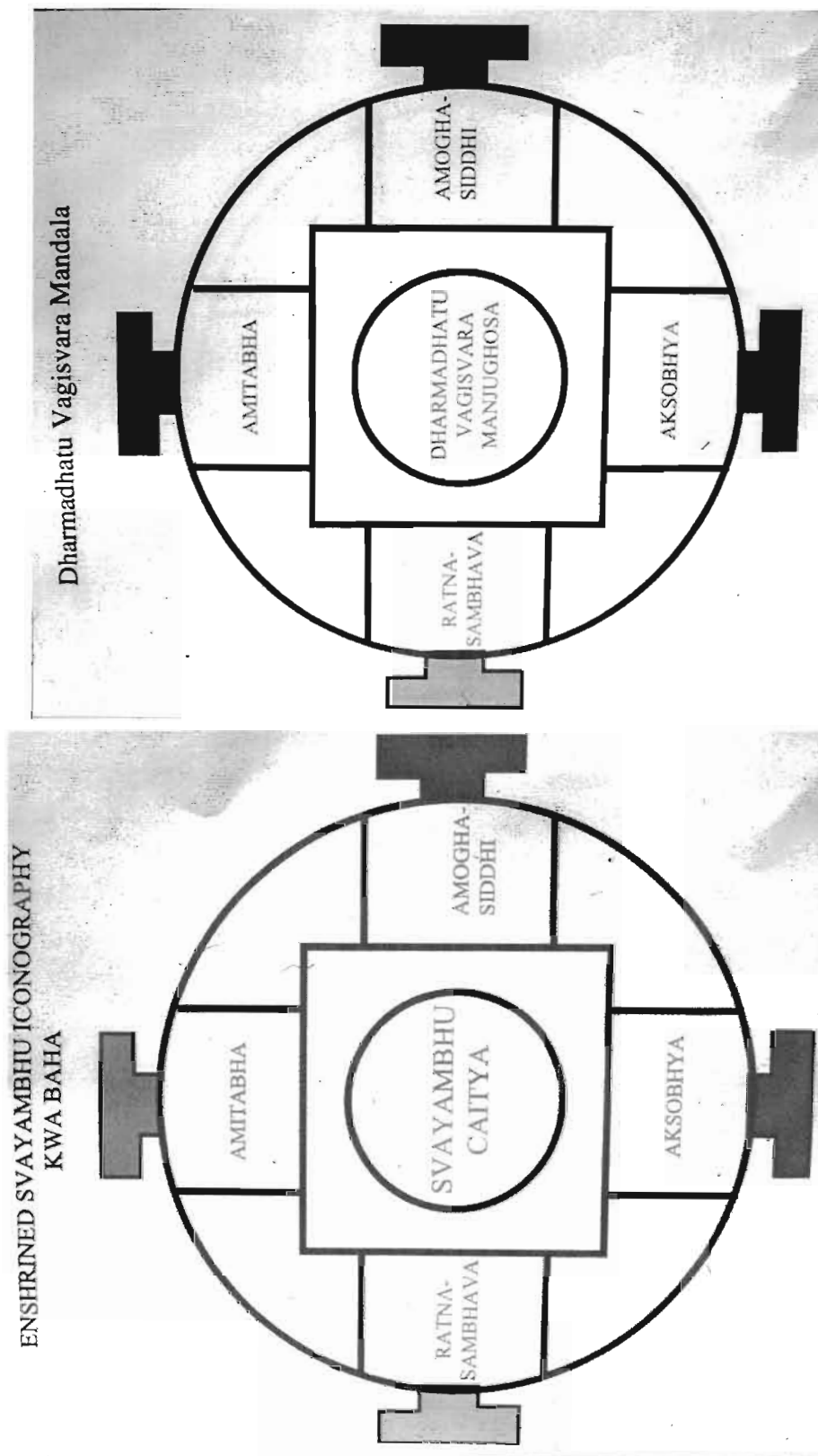
Figure 3.77. Comparison between the iconographic proram of the enshrined Svayambhū Caitya at Kvā Bāhā and the inner core of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

Figure 3.78. Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī. Northeast corner shrine. Interior Court-
yard. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.
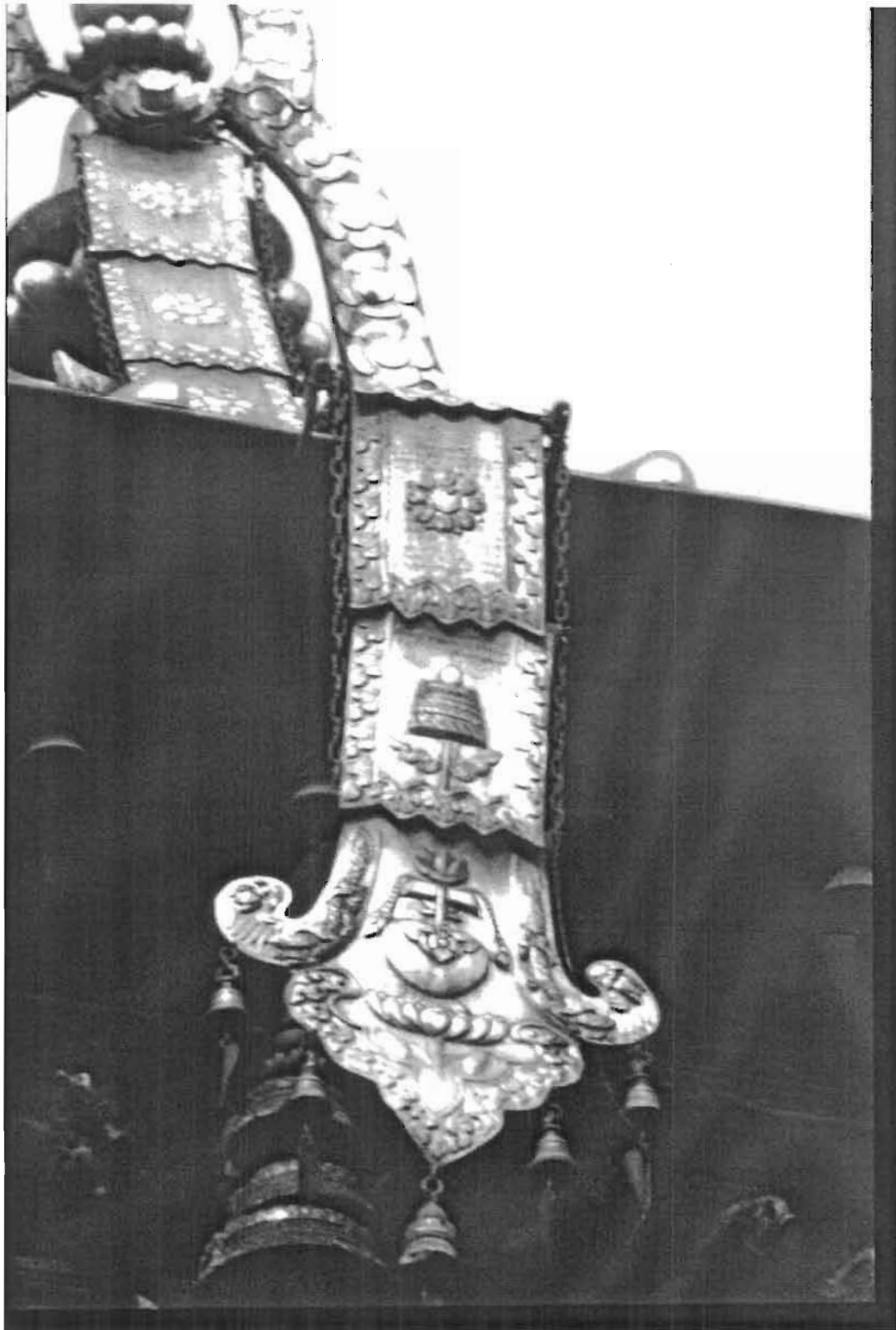
Figure 3.79 *Kalaśa* pendant on cupola on Yogāṁvara *Āgaṁ*. Exterior East wall. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.
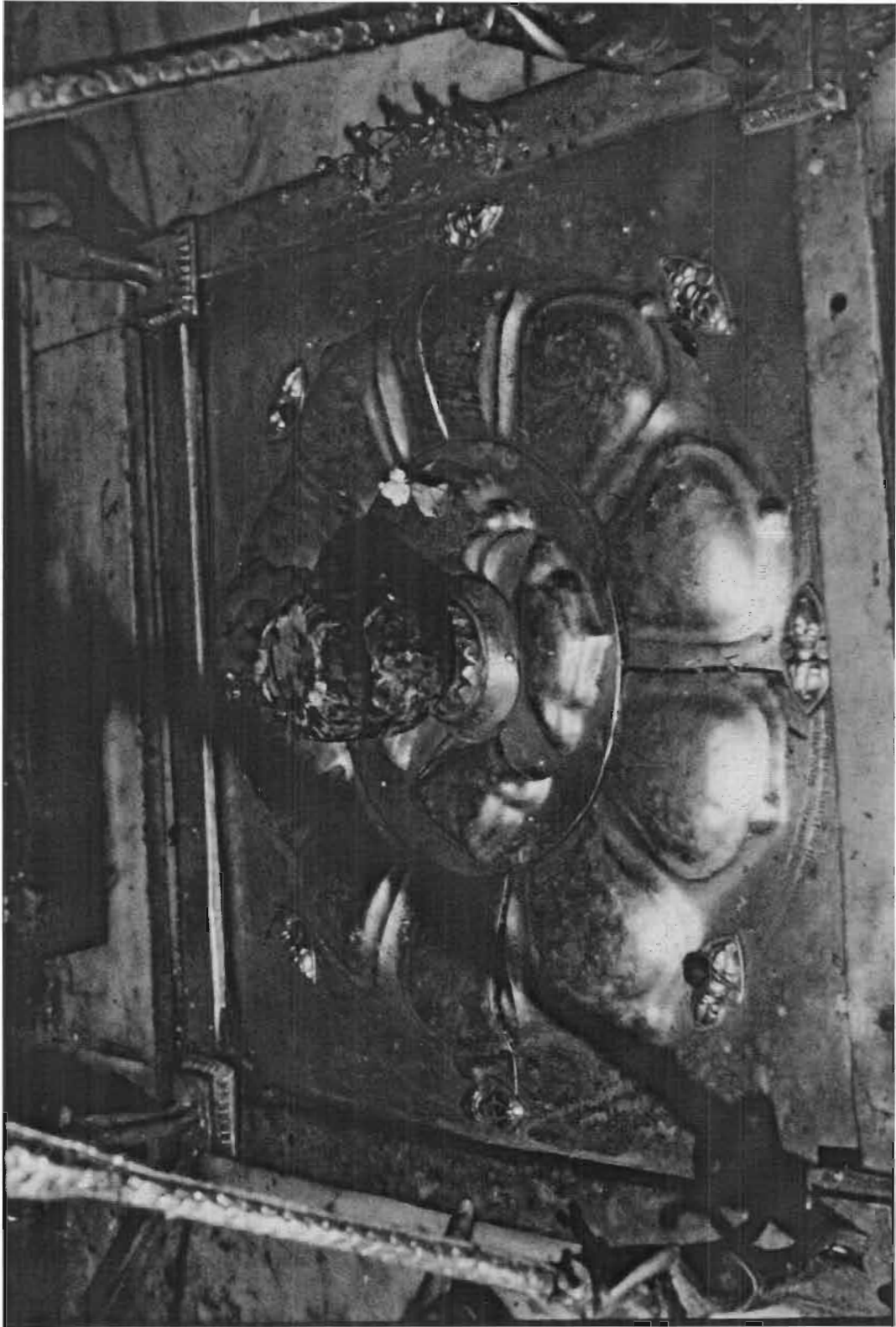
Figure 3.80. Shrine showing the Gūhyeśvari Kalaśa. Purān Guhyeśvarī. Kathmandu.
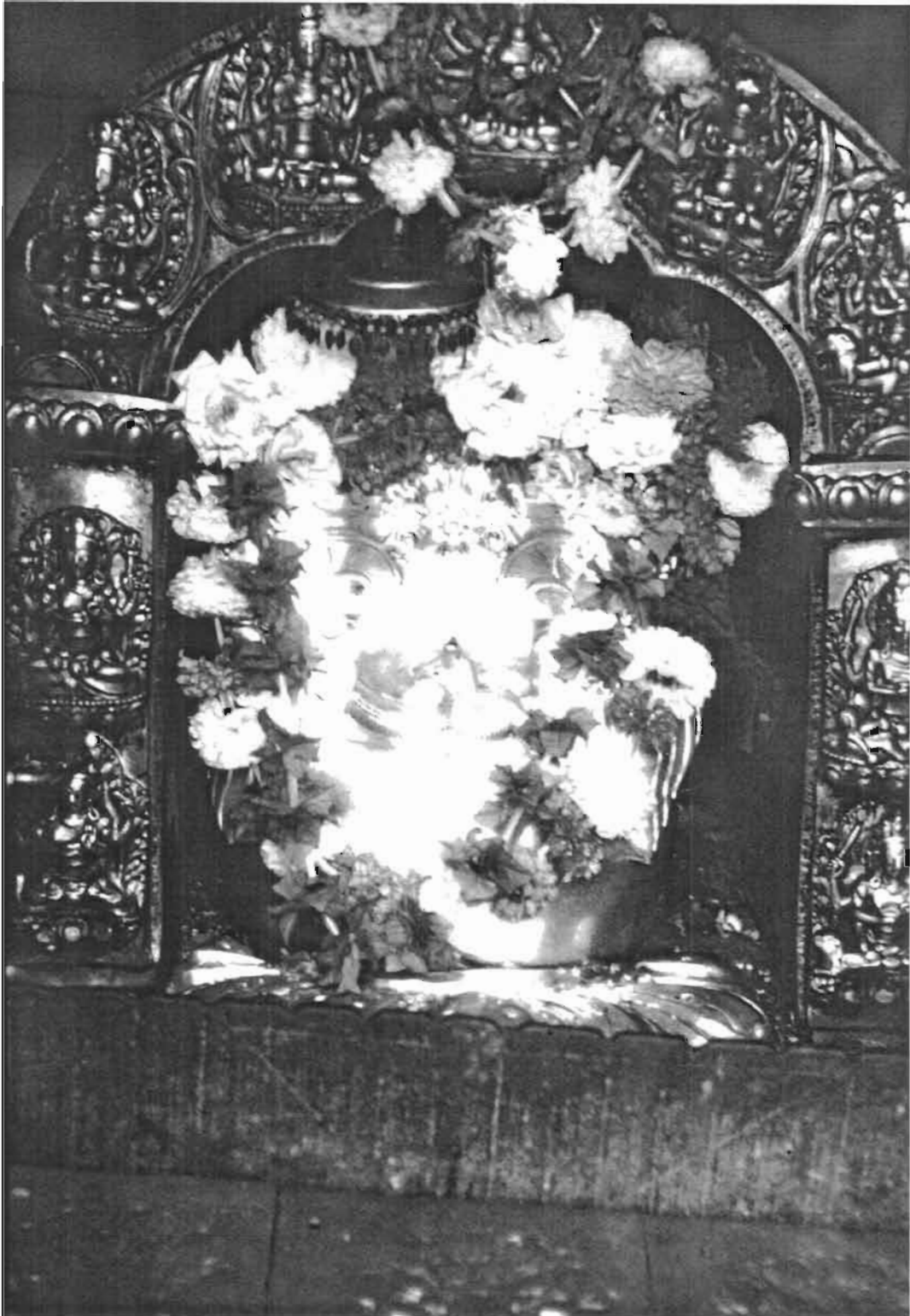
Figure 3.81. Main shrine image of Jnanadakini as Goddess Annapurana, symbolized by *kalasa*. West shrine facade. Annapurna Temple, Asantol.

Figure 3.82. Jñānaḍākinī as Goddess Annapūrṇa. *Toraṇa* over srhine door.. West shrine facade. Annapūrṇa Temple. Asantol, Kathmandu.

Figure 3.83. Guhyeśvarī *kalaśa* at Kvā Bāhā. East wall. Entrance vestibule area. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.
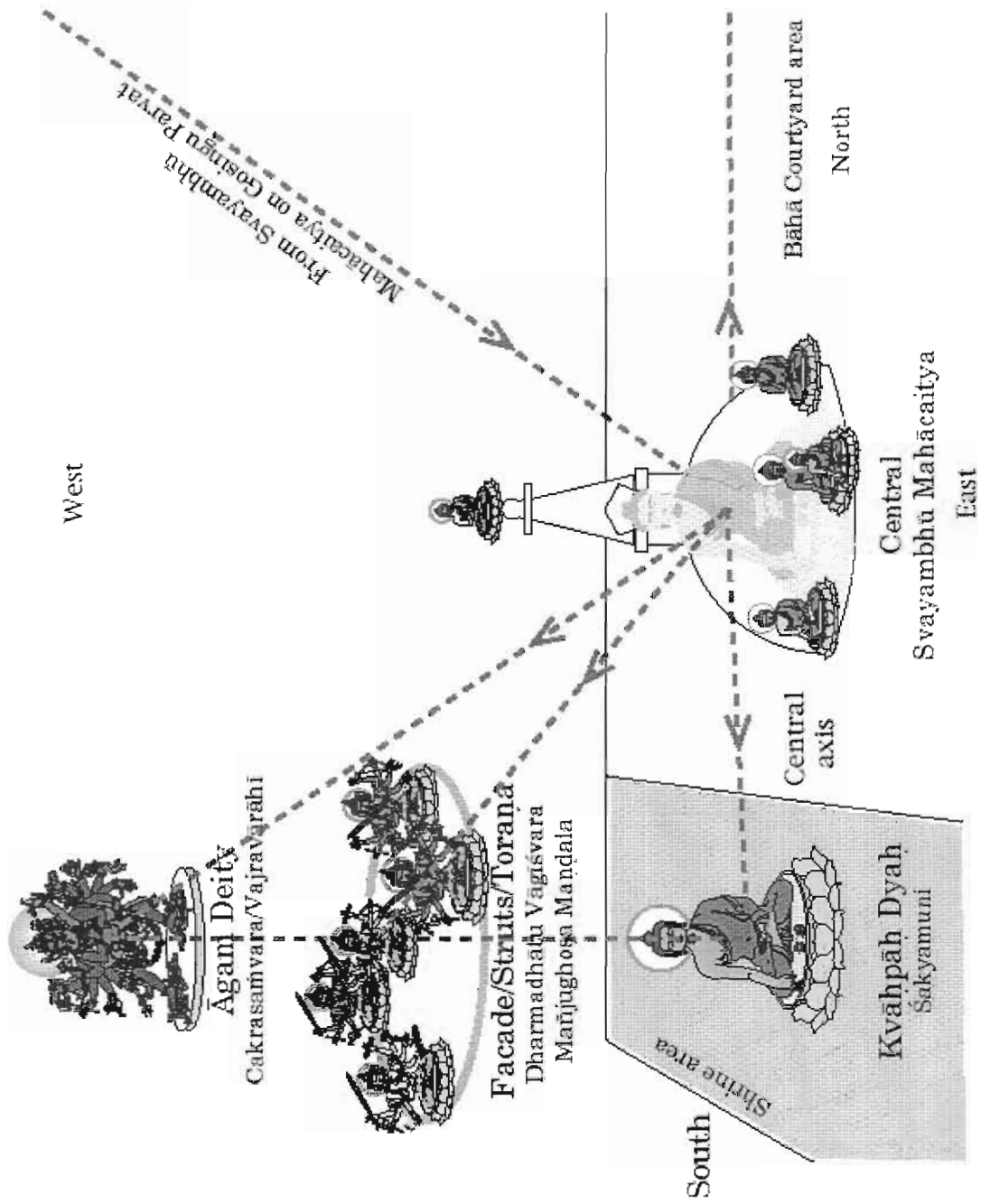
Figure 4.84. Conceptual Drawing of the Core Iconograhic Components of Bāhā Architecture, showing the relationship to the Core Architectural Elements.

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CHAPTER 4

SVAYAMBHŪ MAHĀCAITYA:

THE FIRST CORE ICONOGRAPHIC COMPONENT

INTRODUCTION

Svayambhū Mahācaitya is the premier Buddhist monument in the Kathmandu Valley (see Fig. 1.2). It serves as the ontological source of Newar Buddhism, through which the sacred Buddhist environment of the Valley is generated. As such, it is not surprising that Svayambhū Mahācaitya appears in the form of votive *stupas* at the *bāhās* and *bahīs* throughout the Valley, serving as a core iconographic element. For the practitioners, the Mahācaitya reflects Newar Buddhist cosmogonic notions, which are, in turn, incorporated within the framework of the locally important Tantric methodologies. In this context, Svayambhū is ritual center for the contemporary religious practices of the Newar Buddhist community. The morphological structure of the monument and its preeminence in the religion

suggest its antiquity. As unquestionably the premier religious center in the Valley, the Mahācaitya's sacred history and religious significance in Newar Buddhism need to be thoroughly examined.

Through the centuries, royal and lay patrons have provided abundant offerings of refurbishing and embellishments to the Mahācaitya both to gain merit (*puṇya*) through acts of faith, and to support the Buddhist *dharma* in a largely Hindu kingdom. This material evidence, including numerous inscriptions, is invaluable in reconstructing the monument's historical significance. Similarly, Svayambhū's sacred history serves as the foundation for the ideological constructs of the contemporary religion. In the past, art historical scholarship has not analyzed this socio-religious aspect in relation to Newar Buddhist iconology. A major focus of this chapter is to consider Svayambhū Mahācaitya's role as the ontological source of contemporary Newar Buddhism. The Mahācaitya's fundamental conception as the macrocosmic symbol of the Buddhist universe is emphasized repeatedly in current practice, literary sources, and in the visual imagery. In this light, I shall discuss how the Buddhist practitioners "realize" the Mahācaitya to serve this role, and the ways in which this conception is reified and articulated in virtually all aspects of the religion. Further, in order to understand the Mahācaitya as the ritual core of Newar Buddhism, I will review in some detail the sacred history of the Valley and its relationship to

the Mahācaitya. I will highlight here the broad themes that occur both in the religious narrative as well as the visual imagery. The sacred narrative is especially useful in contextualizing and interpreting the significance of the core iconographic elements in Newar Buddhist art and practice, specifically the concept of the Mahācaitya as the vivifying element of *bāhā/bahī* architecture.

Through contextual evidence of living practices and iconographic interpretation, I will discuss Svayambhū Mahācaitya's role in Newar Buddhist religious traditions and art. I will begin with the sacred and literary history of the site as it occurs in the cosmogonic narrative of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa.* The first section also provides a historical overview of the Mahācaitya, examining the royal and lay patronage at the site. In the second section, I provide a descriptive overview of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya religious complex, including the major shrines associated with the *stūpa.* In the third section, I examine the iconography of the Mahācaitya, as related to Tantric soteriological methodologies. To contextualize the art in religious practices, the fourth section explores the Mahācaitya's role in the ritual context, while the fifth section looks at Svayambhū Mahācaitya's significance in *bāhā/bahī* context. Lastly, in the sixth section, I analyze the various representations of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya that appear votive offerings in the *bāhās* and *bahīs* of the Valley.

SECTION I: HISTORY OF SVAYAMBHU MAHACAITYA

Sacred History of Svayambhū Mahācaitya: *Svayambhū Purāṇa*

The Buddhist sacred history of the Kathmandu Valley is intricately linked with the origins of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya. Although numerous *vaṁsāvalī,* or "chronicles," begin the legendary history of the Valley with this creation story, the complete narrative of Svayambhū's sacred history is found in the various recensions of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa.*[1] Despite the narrative's religious significance, modern scholarship has not undertaken comprehensive textual analysis to discuss its historical and philological developments, or the buddhological ramifications in the context of present-day Newar Buddhist practices.

Several reasons may be attributed to this lack. The most obvious is the sheer complexity of the text, which appears in several different versions and recensions, written in Newari or, very often, corrupt Sanskrit.[2] The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* has been generally dismissed as a "*mahātmya*", that is, a text written in praise or glorification of a particular cult or site. Indeed, the *Purāṇa* is often compared with its Hindu counterpart, *Nepal Mahātmya,* which glorifies and recounts the merits of the sacred Hindu sites of the Valley. The first scholar to propose this designation, Sylvain Levi calls it "a *mahātmya* for the Buddhists." Levi states that unlike true *purāṇas,* the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* treats neither the cosmology, the great *yugas, kalpas,*

nor the sacred universal geography.[3] Viewing the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* as a *mahātmya*, scholars have continued to devalue the religious significance of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* and have failed to recognize the underlying theme of the text as the literary source of Newar Buddhist ontology.

Another key reason for this misunderstanding may be the arguments put forward by John Brough in his influential article "Legends of Khotan and Nepal," written in 1948.[4] Comparing the creation legends of Khotan and Nepal, Brough suggests that the creation history narrated in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* was borrowed directly from a similar legend found in the Khotan Valley, and transmitted to Nepal via Tibet around the eleventh or twelfth century. Brough argues for a Khotanese origin for the Nepalese creation story based on the fact that the name Gośṛnga was a sacred hill and important religious center in Khotan and that in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, the Svayambhū Hill is referred to as Gośṛnga Parvat, or "Cow-Horn Mountain," in the Dvāpara Yuga, and Gopuccha Parvat ("Cow-Tail Mountain") in the Kali Yuga. Many scholars largely accept Brough's views on a Newar adaptation of the Khotanese legend even today. Despite the text's religious significance in contemporary practices, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* has often been relegated to a secondary position compared with other Buddhist *tantra* and *sūtra* literature.[5]

Brough's contention that the Khotanese legend was probably transferred to Nepal during the eleventh or twelfth century is highly speculative. While the Khotanese and Newar stories have similiarities, neither oral tradition nor documented history attests to any direct or indirect connections between Khotan and Nepal at that time. That the Valley was already a major Tantric center with a well recognized traditional history by the mid-thirteenth century is demonstrated by the accounts of the famed Tibetan monk, Dharmasvāmin, who resided in Svayambhū for eight years (A.D. 1226-1234).[6] Further, the local history and oral memory of the Valley as a lake is confirmed by geological evidence, such as the rich alluvial soil, characteristic ripple marks, and the presence of fossils in the Valley that date to the Pleistocene age.[7] It is also notable that many cosmogonic myths across cultures make use of universal archetypical symbols among which water and mountains most are often associated as the source of life and creation.[8] A recent study of comparative mythology by N. J. Allen establishes that many lake drainage myths found in the Himalayan regions have common themes of generation and renewal, very similar to that of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*.[9] For example, the *Rājataraṅgīni* of Kaśmir recounts the manifestation of a Svayambhū in Kaśmir as a brilliant fire. The Newar *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* indeed, acknowledges the existence of Svayambhū in Kaśmir and comments on the similarities of the two self-existent creations.[10]

In analyzing the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, the text appears to incorporate early traditions of Newar culture, such as the cult of the *nāga* (serpent) and *mātṛkā* (mother goddess) worship. In addition, read from a buddhological standpoint, the framework for the sacred history is directly based on the philosophical and soteriological methodologies of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna doctrines. For example, the ontology of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya is based on the concept of the Ādi Buddha and its relation to the *sambhogakāya* forms of the Pañca Jina Buddhas. These elements suggest a long history of indigenous development from the earliest layers of Newar culture to the complex teachings of Tantric Buddhism. Testimony of the text's religious significance to the Newar Buddhists may be further gleaned from the many copies of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* known in manuscript and printed form, dating from various periods. The National Archive in Kathmandu catalogues than more than two hundred extant manuscripts in the collection, and this number does not take into account those copies that are still in the possession of Buddhist practitioners and private collectors. Only the *Ārya Nāmasaṅgīti*, the Buddhist text that is also directly associated with Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the root *tantra* of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, is comparable to the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* in terms of its importance, popularity, and numbers. The ritual significance of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* is highlighted during the holy month of Kārttika, when the sacred narrative is recited daily

in private homes of the Newar Buddhists, thereby reifying and re-affirming the Valley's sacred history. In light of these factors, a close reading of the text, regardless of whether the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* is indigenous to the Valley, reveals many of the themes and concepts that become the fundamental basis to understand the ideological constructs of Newar Buddhism.

Date and Structural Format of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*

Although the origins of the text are still debated, the earliest known complete recensions of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* were compiled by no later than the twelfth century.[11] There are five known versions of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* written either in Sanskrit or in Newari, and the versions may contain eight, ten, or twelve chapters. These are *Gośṛṅgaparvata Svayambhū Caitya Bhattāraka, Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa, Svayambhū Purāṇa, Vṛhat Svāyambhū Purāṇa,* and *Svāyambhū Purāṇa.*[12] The oldest, *Gośṛṅgaparvata Svayambhū Caitya Bhattāraka,* is a short Sanskrit prose version with the basic eight chapters, while later recensions have been expanded to ten or twelve chapters.[13] Although the details of the narrative differ slightly from one version to another, the basic content of the text is centered on the Svayambhū Mahācaitya. The narrative of the two larger versions of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa—Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa* and the

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Svayambhū Purāṇa—broadly follows these essential themes: a series of visits to the sacred lake by the seven *Mānuśi* Buddhas; the manifestation of the *Dharmakāya* known as Ādi Buddha Svayambhū Jyotirūpa in the sacred lake in the Nepal Valley; the draining of the lake and creation of the Valley by Mañjuśrī; the defining of the Valley's sacred geography; and the covering of the Jyotirūpa inside the *stūpa* by the first Vajrācārya, Śāntikarācārya; and the subsequent renameing of the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū Jyotirūpa as Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Caitya. The later recensions of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* include quasi-historical and historical personages such as King Pracaṇḍadeva from Gauḍ (present-day West Bengal), who is later given the name Śāntikarācārya and becomes the first Vajrācārya priest in the Newar Buddhist tradition. This reference to Gauḍ is suggestive of Nepal's close connections with the Tantric practices in northeastern India. Similarly, King Narendradeva of the Licchavi dynasty and King Guṇakāmadeva from the "Transitional period" are also major luminaries mentioned in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* both of whom are closely associated with the rain-making powers of Śāntipur at Svayambhū. These additions in the later recensions can be interpreted as a process of "demythicization"[14] through which the sacred history acquires validation of its authenticity.

The structural narrative of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* follows the tradition of the Purāṇas called *ṣaṭsaṁvāda,* "conversation of six", in which

three groups of interlocutors are superimposed, one on top of another.[15] In the tradition of the *sūtras,* the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* opens with Śākyasimha/Śākyamuni on Sumeru Mountain, where the beings of the three worlds are gathered to hear the sacred story (*dharma kathā*) that will lead the way to enlightenment. Śākyamuni then recounts the story of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya, expounding the glories of the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū to Bodhisattva Maitreya and Ānanda Bhikṣu just has he had done previously at Gopuccha Caitya (Purān Svayambhū Caitya) itself. In the later versions, a complex series of "link and frame" formats of the *saṭsaṁvāda* are incorporated within the text, in which Jayaśrī Bhikṣu, residing in Bodhimaṇḍapa Vihāra, retells the story to Bodhisattva Jineśvara, as he had heard it from his *guru.* The final interlocutor in the second set is the historical figure of Upagupta Bhikṣu from Kukuṭarāma Mahāvihāra in Pataliputra, who explains the importance of Svayambhū to Emperor Aśoka, as they are about to undertake a pilgrimage in the holy land of the Nepal Valley. A fundamental Buddhist theme runs throughout the narrative—that the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū Jyotirūpa, also called Svayambhū Bhagavān, manifested himself as the brilliant ray of light for the sake of sentient beings and to show the way to salvation (*nirvāṇa mārga*). Covered in the form of a *stūpa* in the Kali Yuga, the Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Mahācaitya is the transformed body of Svayambhū Buddha, as alluded to in the text. Although

the details may vary in the various recensions, the sequence of events in the sacred narrative is as follows.

Origins of Svayambhū Mahācaitya Based on the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*[16]

The sacred history of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya based on the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* begins in the remote past in the cyclical time of the *yugas*, during which each of the seven Mānuśi Buddhas visits the sacred Nepal Valley. The narrative begins with the description of the Valley as a holy lake that was the home of the *nāgas*, known as *Kālihrada* ("Black Lake") or *Nāgavāsahrada* ("Lake of the Nāga-Residence"). The text specifically emphasizes the sanctity and auspiciousness of the lake due to the presence of the *nāgas*, who control the rains and who possess a wish fulfilling gem. The narrative recounts the visit of the first Mānuśi Buddha, Vipaśvī, in the Satya Yuga. Vipaśvī visits the sacred lake and predicts the emergence of the Ādi Buddha at a later time. Contemplating the sacred nature of this lake from Jāmāco Mountain, one of the four sacred mountains of the Valley (present-day Nāgarjuna Hill, situated northwest of the Mahācaitya), Vipaśvī circumambulates the lake and plants the lotus seed that had miraculously appeared from Akaniṣṭa Heaven in the middle of the lake. Vipaśvī then predicts that a thousand-petalled lotus would bloom from the seed, out of which would appear the Self-Created light of Śrī Svayambhū Dharmadhātu

Jyotirūpa. He further predicts that Mahā-Mañjuśrī from the Pañcaśirṣa Parvat (Wutai Shan) in China would drain the water in the lake, thereby making the Valley fit for human habitation.

The lotus took root at the Guhyeśvarī *pīṭha,* the home of the primordial form of the Primordial Goddess, in her form as an eternal natural spring.[17] When the bud flowered into a thousand-petalled lotus (a quintessential Buddhist symbol of transcendence), there emerged a radiant beam of light (*jyoti*), which was Śrī Svayambhū Jyotirūpa ("Respected Self-Originated Light-Form"), the manifestation of the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū Dharmadhātu, who resides in Akaniṣṭa Heaven. The beam consisted of five colored rays of light with the Five Jina Buddhas at the center. As shown in a twentieth century recreation of this theme (see Fig. 1.6), each Jina appears within the appropriately colored and positioned rays of light: Vairocana in the central white ray, Akṣobhya within the eastern blue ray, Ratnasambhava in the southern yellow ray, Amitābha in the western red ray, and Amoghasiddhi in the northern green ray. As visual descriptors of the Enlightenment process, each of the five Jinas demonstrate one of the transcendental knowledges (*jñāna*) of a fully Enlightened Being. The subsequent Tathāgatas after Vipaśvi, taking *darśan* of Svayambhū, were thus seeing their own enlightenment reified.

The second *Mānuśi* Buddha, Śikhi Tathāgata, hearing of this auspicious manifestation, comes to the Valley and offers his *pūjā* to Svayambhū Jyotirūpa from the top of Mount Dhyānaco (present-day Champā Devī). The then Tathāgata announces to his disciples that he would be absorbed within the self-originated Jyotirūpa at the event of his death.

Subsequently, the third *Mānuśi* Buddha, Viśvabhū Tathāgata, comes with his disciples to make pilgrimage of the *Nāgavāsahrada* and to pay homage to Svayambhū Jyotirūpa. He goes to Mount Phūlocca (present-day Pulchowki), takes *darśan* of the Ādi Buddha, and offers his *pūjā* in the form of a hundred thousand flowers. He then predicts that Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī would soon come from the Five-Terraced Mountain in the north and would cause the waters to be drained from the lake, thereby creating the Kathmandu Valley, also popularly called the Nepal Valley.

At the same time, Mahā-Mañjuśrī enters into deep meditation in Wutai Shan Mountain in China and becomes aware of the existence of the Ādi Buddha in the sacred lake of the Valley. In his *nirmāṇakāya* form as Mañjudevācārya, Mahā-Mañjuśrī leaves with his two wives, Keśinī/Varadā (who symbolizes wealth) and Upakeśinī/Mokṣadā (who symbolizes wisdom) to take *darśan* of this sacred place. Upon coming to the lake, he circumambulates it three times and first goes to Mount Dhilāco (present-day Candragirī Hill). He then makes a circuit of the holy mountains, going to

Mount Phullocca (Pulchowki), where he leaves his wife Kesinī. From there, he goes to Mount Dhyānocca (Campādevi) where his second wife, Upakesinī, resides on top of the mountain. Finally, he pays homage to Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Jyotirūpa at the center of the lake.

Deciding that the sacred place and the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū Jyotirūpa would become more accessible to pilgrims if the lake was drained, Mañjudeva meditates on how best to drain the waters. He splits the Koṭvāl Mountain at the south end of the Valley with his *Candrahāsa* ("Dreadful Laugh") sword, letting the waters flow out of the lake through the gorge. Fearing that the lake might not drain properly, he also makes cuts in three other places: Chobar, Gokarna and Aryaghat.[18] With the waters draining out of the lake and their home destroyed, the *nāgarājās*, such as Takṣaka, Kulika, and Karkotaka, come to Mañjudeva in despair. Knowing that their absence would be detrimental for the well-being of the land, Mañjudeva implores the *nāgas* not to leave the Valley, and assigns each a new place of residence in the *tīrthas,* the holy pilgrimage sites situated at the confluence of rivers.

When the lake was completely drained, Mañjudeva receives *darśan* of the Svayambhū Buddha in his cosmic (*viśvarūpa*) form on the full moon of Kārttika. The root of the thousand-petalled lotus now becomes visible and the source of Svayambhū Jyotirūpa is revealed as the Guhyeśvarī *pīṭha*

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("Secret Goddess"), where she resides in her primordial form as an eternal spring in the ground. Pleased by Mañjuśrī's devotion and recognition of the sacred *pīṭha,* Guhyeśvarī gives *darśan* to Mañjudeva in her universal (*viśvarūpa*) form. Creating a triangular *yantra* on a three-petalled lotus to symbolize her *pīṭha,* Mañjudeva performs there the secret esoteric meditations of the Cakrasaṃvara cycle that had been taught to him by Guhyeśvarī.[19] The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* thus clearly establishes and emphasizes the symbolic connections among the key elements of the Newar Buddhist religious tradition, namely Svayambhū, Mañjuśrī, and the Cakrasaṃvara cycle meditation. Indeed, the *Svayambhu Purāṇa* provides a strong framework for interpreting the relationship among all three core iconographic elements of Newar Buddhist art.

The narrative continues with Mañjudeva establishing the first city of the Valley, thereby naming it Mañjupattan, and installing Dharmadeva as king. After establishing the first monasteries in the Valley for both householders and mendicants, Mañjudeva is then taught the secret esoteric teachings of Cakrasaṃvara and Nāmasaṅgīti to Guṇākara Bhikṣu. Furthermore, Mañjuśrī, as the archetypal *guru* or Ādi Guru, also teaches the people the fine arts and crafts.[20]

In the Tretā Yuga, the fourth Mānuśi Buddha, Krakucchanda Tathāgata, comes to pay homage to Guhyeśvarī and to Svayambhū Jyotirūpa.

As the *nirmāṇakāya* of Vajrasattva, Krakucchanda goes to Siphūco (present day Śivapuri), where he expounds on the merits of Svayambhū and Guhyeśvarī. In order to initiate his disciples by ritual ablutions (*abhiśekha*), he invokes Vākśaktī (Goddess of Speech) through the power of his *mantras* to create the river Vākmati ("Mother of [sacred] Speech, i.e. *mantras*), currently known as Bāgmatī, the most sacred river of the Valley. The Tathāgata also gives instructions to the river that she may flow where she pleases and wherever another stream should join her, there should be a *tīrtha*. Particularly, her source, middle, and end would be great *tīrthas*. The Tathāgata then creates the second river in the Valley, Keśāvatī (present-day Viṣṇumatī) at the place where the hair of his disciples had fallen after initiation. At the joining of the two rivers, Vākmatī and Keśāvatī, the twelve *Tīrthas* or pilgrimage sites around the Valley were established. In the contemporary context, the Newar Buddhist *saṅgha* continue to go to Vāgdvāra/ Bāgdvār ("Gateway of Speech"), the place Krakucchanda Buddha initiated the first *bhikṣus* and the source of Bagmati, in commemoration of the archetype of the *bare chueyu* initiation.

The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* then gives a detailed description of the sacred pilgrimage places around the Valley, specifically the twelve *tīrthas* and the eight *Vitarāgas,* associated with each of the Eight Great Bodhisattvas (*Aṣṭāmahābodhisattva*) and their respective *aṣṭamaṅgala* symbols. The

Svayambhū Purāṇa also establishes the spatial construct of the Valley as a sacred circle, or *maṇḍala,* narrating the merits and benefits of propitiation at these sacred sites. Continuing the visits of the *Mānuśi* Buddhas, the fifth Tathāgata, Kanakamuni come from Svabhāvatī country to offer *pūjā* to Svayambhū Jyotirūpa and Guhyeśvarī.

The narrative then continues in the Dvāpara Yuga, when the sixth *Mānuśi* Buddha, Kāśyapa Tathāgata, comes to the Nepal Valley on a pilgrimage offer pūjā to Guhyeśvarī, to Svayambhū Jyotirūpa, and to the Mañjuśri *caitya* containing the relics of Mañjudevācārya. On his way back, Kāśyapa continues his journey until he reached the kingdom of Gauḍ (present-day West Bengal), where he instructs King Pracaṇḍa Deva to go to Nepal Valley. He said: "There are, in this universe, four divisions or islands (*dvīpas*): Purvadvīpa, Jambudvīpa, Upper Godāvarī, and Uttarākhaṇḍa. Of these *dvīpas,* there is one which is the best and that is Jambudvīpa, which in turn contains five *kṣetras* or holy places, Kāśi *kṣetra* (present-day Varaṇāsi), Himālaya *kṣetra,* Nepāla *kṣetra*, and Svayambhū *kṣetra*. These last two are the purest, where Svayambhū Dharmadhātu revealed himself in the form of dazzling light. Take yourself to this place, pay homage to these holy *kṣetras,* and you will become a Vajrācārya."[21] Hearing this, King Pracaṇḍa Deva, accompanied by his wife, comes to the Valley to visit the land of the sacred *pīṭhas*, and after worshipping at the various sacred places (*pīṭhas, tīrthas,*

and *upa-tīrthas*), he takes *darśan* of Guhyeśvarī and Svayambhū Dharmadhātu. Seeing the wondrous form of the Jyotirūpa, Pracaṇḍa Deva fears that it would be desecrated in the Kalī Yuga and decides to encase the radiant light of the Jyotirūpa inside a *stūpa*. As an empowerment of this momentous task, he receives initiation as *vajrācārya* ("teacher of the adamantine path") from Guṇākara and is given the name, Śāntikarācārya. The Jyotirūpa is encased in the core of the structure in the form of Svayambhū Mahācaitya, also known as Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Caitya. Pracaṇḍa Deva, as Śāntikarācārya, is also said to have placed the shrines of each of the Jina Buddhas in their respective cardinal directions, as symbols of the five rays of light. Further, the text is explicit in alluding to the symbolic and highly philosophical meaning of the five *puras* ("cities"), stating that they symbolize the five elements and five aggregates (*skanda*). Śāntikarācārya establishes the five *puras* in Svayambhū *kṣetra*, namely Vasupur (Earth), Vāyupur (Air), Agnīpur (Fire), Nāgapur (Water), and Śāntīpur (Ether). Also known variously as Ākāśapur, Saṁvarpur, and Vyomapur, Śāntīpur is the most esoteric of the five shrines, and is the place Śāntikarācārya retired. According to the traditional lore, he resides there even today, absorbed in eternal meditation.

The eighth chapter of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* is perhaps the most pertinent to understand the significance of the core iconographic elements in

Newar Buddhist architecture.[22] It elaborates on the significance of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the *Nāmasaṅgīti* and narrates the story of the Indian monk named Dharmaśrī Mitra from Vikramasilā Mahāvihāra (in modern Bihar), who comes to the Nepal Valley to learn the secret teaching of the Nāmasaṅgīti from Mañjuśrī. Mañjuśrī is taught the esoteric meaning of the twelve-syllabled *mantra* of Nāmasaṅgīti and initiated him to the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇḍala. Mañjuśrī thus reveals that the central deity of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is none other than the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū Dharmadhātu. It is in this section that the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* establishes the symbolic connection between Svayambhū and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, which is central to this study.

In the Kalī Yuga, the next to last of the Mānuśi Buddhas, Śākyamuni Tathāgata visits Svayambhū in order to deliver his discourses on Svayambhū Mahācaitya to Maitreya Bodhisattva.[23] This took place at the Gopuccha Parvat Caitya on the western hill of Svayambhū, where Śākyamuni expounds the meritorious benefits of the sacred site. Having taken *darśan* of Svayambhū, Śākyamuni then visits the primordial Goddess, Guhyeśvarī. At Namo Buddha, he also recalls his previous life as a *bodhisattva* in the *Mahāsattva Jataka*.

In the different recensions, the latter sections of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* vary slightly in the details, but generally include the acts of the

historical personages, such as King Narendra Deva and Guṇakāmadeva from the Licchavi and "Transitional" periods. The acts are invariably associated with Śāntipur and the rain-making powers of the *nāgas.* The narrative recounts the various meritorious deeds of the kings during times of great drought, when the kings entered the secret *āgaṁ* at Śāntipur. As the first Vajrācārya, Śāntikarācārya, is still in *samādhi,* where he teaches the *nāga sādhana Maṇḍala pūjā,* bringing the essential monsoon rains to the Valley during times of drought.[24]

Interpreting the Buddhological Significance of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*

The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* recounts the sacred history of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya through the framework of the cosmogonic origins of the Valley. As with other archetypal cosmogonic myths, the narrative validates and legitimizes the significant aspects of the religious practices. In analyzing the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* as "effective truth" for the practitioners,[25] four pivotal themes emerge that appear to encapsulate key premises of the religion. These themes contextualize the significance of Svayambhū in Newar Buddhist tradition, particularly in articulating the concept of the Ādi Buddha. More importantly perhaps, the text provides a philosophical and theoretical framework for the core visual symbols of the religion that I have identified, specifically Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and

Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. The four themes analyzed here are: (1) Svayambhū Mahācaitya as the Ādi Buddha and symbolic core of the religion; (2) the Mahācaitya as macrocosm and Mt. Meru; (3) Svayambhū Mahācaitya as the generator of the sacred geography of the Valley's *maṇḍalic* space; and (4) the female principle, specifically Guhyeśvarī, as the ontological and generative source of the Mahācaitya.

2. Svayambhū Mahācaitya as the Ādi Buddha and Symbolic Core

The *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* which expounds the cosmogonic origins of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya, is the basis of Newar Buddhist ontology and defines a sacred order through which the practitioners legitimize and validate their religious practices. As the self-created form of light, Svayambhū Mahācaitya is unequivocally the manifestation of the Ādi Buddha, who generates the entire Buddhist universe, the pantheon, sentient beings and the sacred geography of the Valley. In the text, the Svayambhū Buddha's primordial qualities are described as *nirañjana* "spotless, pristine" and *nirākāra* "formless" and equated with the absolute state of the void (*śūnyatā*). The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* describes the Svayambhū Ādi Buddha's totality of Buddhahood in the Tantric understanding of the Enlightenment process, namely, the five Jina Buddhas, who are manifestations of the *Pañca jñāna* and the five aggregates (*skandas*) of the phenomenal world. According to the

Svayambhū Purāna, this emergence from the void into the form-world was represented as the five radiant rays of the Svayambhū Jyotirūpa. With its form transformed and the Jyotirūpa hidden at the core, Svayambhū Mahācaitya thus functions as the symbolic center of Newar Buddhist cosmology and the ontological source of the religion

As the primordial Buddha and the archetype for all *caityas* in Newar Buddhism, the Mahācaitya embodies the totality of the Buddhist enlightenment process, which, in the Newar Buddhist context, is articulated through the complex symbolic associations with the Mandala of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughosa. In the *Svayambhū Purāna,* this connection becomes the underlying theme of the narrative. Here, the concepts of the *Dharmadhātu*, the transformation of the Jyotirūpa into the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara *caitya,* and Mañjuśrī's secret teaching of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* (the root text of the Dharmadhātu Mandala) all indicate Svayambhū's symbolic connection with Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara.

The complex Tantric symbolism related to the Mahācaitya that is articulated in the *Svayambhū Purāna* echoes the highly philosophical concepts of the Vajrayāna and the Mahāyāna traditions, contrary to the general scholarly assumption that the text does not "encapsulate the highest soteriological values" of Buddhism. In fact, the doctrinal basis of the Mahācaitya's symbolism is, indeed, grounded in the Mahāyāna Yogācāra

school, which states that the phenomenal world is a mental construction of the heart/mind (*citta*), and that the true nature of reality can thus only be realized through *samādhi* (visualization) and *yoga* (mental concentration).[26] Similarly, the concept of *tathāgatagarbha*, an essential the Yogācāra philosophy, postulates that the womb or the embryo (*garbha*) of the universal Buddha (*tathāgata*) is inherent in all sentient beings and that the potential for Buddhahood is thus available to all who can recognize the essence of pure *dharma* (*Dharmadhātu*) that exists within. Described as gold in the ore or the fruit in a small seed, the *tathāgatagarbha,* also called *Dharmadhātu,* represents the true Buddha-nature of all beings that is intrinsically pure and devoid of all karmic defilement.[27] For the Buddhist pracitioners, the *tathāgatagarbha/Dharmadhātu* is the source of the phenomenal world, and the path to enlightenment can only be attained through the integration of this potential, and recognizing it through the purified consciousness (*bodhicitta*). Described variously as a brightly illuminated state of awareness in the literature, *bodhicitta* arises when the practitioner sees the pure *tathagatagarbha/Dharmadhātu* within, and thus becomes a fully Enlightened Buddha. To cultivate *bodhicitta* and purify it in order to remove the negative impurities (*kleśa*) that have accrued through many lifetimes, Vajrayāna methodologies emphasize the need for controlling the mind and senses through intense meditational (*yoga*) and visualization (*samādhi*) practices

that helps the practitioner understand the nature of the phenomenal world. These highly philosophical concepts serve as the doctrinal basis for the *Svayambhū Purāṇa.*

The *Svayambhū Purāṇa*'s articulation of the Mahācaitya as the Ādi Buddha is based on the Vajrayāna and Yogācāra methodologies. The Mahācaitya's name itself "Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Mahācaitya" in the *Svayambhu Purāṇa* expresses its inherent symbolism in these highly philosophical terms and through multiple layers of meaning, as typical of other Buddhist texts. For example, the term, *"dhātu",* can be read as both "essence" as well as "sacred relic". Thus, *Dharmadhātu* is both "essence [*dhātu*] of all Buddhist teachings [*dharma*] as well as "the teachings [dharma] as the sacred relic [*dhātu*] that vivifies a *stūpa.* The oral commentaries on the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* given by the Vajrācārya priests that I interviewed were cognizant of the complex layers of symbolism that were inherent in understanding the meaning of Svayambhū Mahācaitya—from the simplest to the highly philosophical.[28] The Vajrācārya priests repeatedly told me that the layers of meanings and methodological practices, such as the symbolism of Svayambhū and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala or the esoteric practices of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, were simply diverse means of explaining the essence of the Buddhist *dharma* and are tools to aid practitioners towards the Enlightenment process. How this idea is

articulated and constructed within the Newar Buddhist paradigm is perhaps best expressed in the visual imagery.

In the ritual lives of Newar Buddhist practitioners, the sacred history of the Valley centering around Svayambhū Mahācaitya is continually reified and re-enacted during the annual festival cycle. The main events of the Newar Buddhist cosmogonic story are commemorated throughout the calendar year, with special festivals and rituals that reaffirm the auspicious events. The visits of the seven Mānuśi Buddha and their divine acts are commemorated on appropriate days at the mountain tops, where each of the Tathāgatas had resided. Of special significance to the Newar Buddhist is the full moon (*purṇimā*) in the month of Kārttika (November-December), which serves as a marker for the pivotal events in the cosmogonic narrative—the emergence of Svayambhū Jyotirūpa, the draining of the lake by Mañjuśrī, and the creation of the Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Mahācaitya by Śāntikarācārya. To commemorate these momentous events, Kārttika *purṇimā* is one of the major festival days at Svayambhū, and is also the annual initiation ceremony of the Jyāpu community into the Buddhist *dharma*.

Similarly, to commemorate Guhyeśvarī's esoteric instructions of the Cakrasaṁvara cycle to Mañjuśrī, the *mū bāhās* in the Valley perform the *diśi* (*daśamī*) *pūjā* in the *āgaṁ* shrine on the tenth day of each month, thus

monthly reifying the sacred event. On *mārga kṛṣṇa daśamī* (tenth day of the dark half of Mārga), the day when Guhyeśvarī revealed the secret teachings, the Vajrācāryas perform a larger annual *diśi pūjā* to Cakrasaṃvara and Guhyeśvarī at their own *āgaṃ* shrines and at the Guhyeśvarī *pīṭha*. In Svayambhū at the Śāntipur shrine, which is the archetypal Tantric shrine to Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī, a special *pūjā* is also performed monthly and annually to commemorate the initiation of the primordial *guru,* Mañjuśrī into the Cakrasaṃvara cycle meditation. The textual and ritual symbolism, therefore, reconfirms Svayambhū's close association the two major meditation cycles of Newar Buddhism, namely, the Dharmadhātu and the Cakrasaṃvara *maṇḍalas*.

In a textbook example of the Eliadian concepts of archetypes and myths that are proposed in his seminal work, *The Myth of the Eternal Return,*[29] the Newar Buddhist rituals and commemorative acts that are centered around Svayambhū Mahācaitya's sacred history can be seen to continually re-enact, recreate, and reify the cosmogonic story of the Valley. As reality is acquired solely through repetition and participation, according to Eliade, the creation myth of the Valley becomes an effective reality for the Newar Buddhist practitioners. By annually reliving and recreating, the sacred history acquires validation and legitimization for the Newar Buddhist practitioners.

3. Svayambhū Mahācaitya as Mt. Meru And Macrocosm

The second theme found in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* is the concept of Svayambhū as macrocosm. Understood as the core of the religion, the Mahācaitya symbolizes the totality of the Buddhist universe, and thus identified with Mt. Meru. The Mt. Meru symbolism can be read in many different levels. In the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* the entire Svayambhū Hill is explicitly stated as replicating Mt. Meru and the Mahācaitya's inherent symbolism as the Buddhist macrocosm is explained in some detail. Physically and literally conceptualized as the cosmic mountain, the Svayambhū Hill is circled by the images of the Lokapālas and Caturmahārajas located at the base. Encapsulating the entire Buddhist macrocosm, in this case specifically Jambudvīpa, the Svayambhū Hill also has the important pilgrimages sites (*tīrthas*) and rivers of the subcontinent, placed around the around the periphery.[30] Furthermore, the steep vertical climb from the east side stairs leading to the summit suggests a literal ascent to the top of Mt. Meru, where the Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Mahācaitya is located (Fig. 4.1).

As every *stūpa* is inherently Mt. Meru, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* describes in detail how this conceptual understanding was reified in the form of the Mahācaitya, when Śāntikarācārya covered the Jyotirūpa and built the

stūpa. The text also specifically states that the Mahācaitya embodies the Kāmadhātu ("Desire Realm)", Rupadhātu ("Form Realm"), and the Arūpadhātu ("Formless Realm") of the Mt. Meru system. This concept is also reiterated rather literally, as many of the votive *caityas* that are visual representation of Svayambhū are often called *Sumerucaitya.*[31] These votive *caityas* found in the *bāhā/bāhī* context suggest a literal representation of Mt. Meru, with the Caturmahārājās at the base and the multiple levels below the *caitya* to symbolize the three realms.[32]

The concept of Svayambhū Mahācaitya as the macrocosm and center of the Buddhist universe (Mt. Meru) can be further explored in the Mahācaitya's mandatory presence in the *bāhās* and *bahīs.* Transferring the idea of the symbolic center to the *bāhā/bahī* context, the presence of Svayambhū Mahācaitya in the courtyard in the form of the principal *caitya* further reiterates the fundamental conception of the Mahācaitya as vivifier of sacred space. Furthermore, the sacred space of the *bahā/bahīs* themselves may be interpreted as symbolizing Buddhist macrocosm. In his recent book on the *caityas* of the Kathmandu Valley, Niels Gutschow states that votive *caityas* in Kathmandu are explicitly referred to as Svayambhū Sumeru Caitya Bhagavān".[33] Gutschow's research strengthens my argument that that these *caityas* are not only symbolic surrogates of Svayambhū, but also that

the Mahācaitya is the center of the Buddhist world system, as conceptualized by the Newar Buddhist practitioners.

(3) Svayambhū as Generating the Valley's Conceptual Construct as *Mandala*

The idea of a macrocosm is also related the conceptual construct of spatial order. The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* clearly establishes Svayambhū as generator of the sacred geography of the Valley and establishes the spatial order in the Valley's religious landscape. The narrative not only lays out this conceptual order, with all the important deities, their shrines and various pilgrimage sites, but also records the sacred origin of the sites. Aside from the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* ritual practices and inscriptional evidence also indicate that the Valley is referred to as *Nepal Maṇḍala,* with Svayambhū and Guhyeśvarī at the center of this conceptual construct. Furthermore, in ritual contexts, such as the statement of intent rites (*saṅkalpa*), the Valley is specifically in the form of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. How this idea is articulated in relation to Svayambhū Mahacaitya will be further discussed in Chapter Six. Nonetheless, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* states Svayambhū is central to the Newar Buddhist spatial order and the conceptual construct of the Valley's *maṇḍala* again continues to reify and affirm the cosmogonic myth.

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(4) Female Principle as Ontological Source of the Mahācaitya

Although Svayambhū Mahācaitya is by far the most prominent Newar Buddhist monument in the Valley, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* underscores one of the most significant issues in Newar Buddhism—the preeminence of the female as the primordial source of power. An underlying principle in the Tantric Buddhist methodologies that has close connections with the Śākta traditions of the Valley, Newar Buddhism acknowledges the goddess' generative force, as articulated in the origins of the self-arisen Mahācaitya. In the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, Guhyeśvarī, the "Secret Goddess" serves as the key to understanding the esoteric practices of Vajrayāna, specifically the Heruka deities associated with the *āgaṁ* shrines, such as Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī, Yogāmvara/Jñānaḍākinī, and Hevajra/Nairatmā. Reflecting her role as generative source, Guhyeśvarī is addressed by her various epithets: *Śaktī Svayambhū, Ādi Śaktī* ("Primordial Energy"), *Khagānana* ("Face of the Void"), *Nairātmā* ("Selfless Void"), *Jineśvarī* ("Female Lord of the Jinas"), *Buddhamātṛ* ("Mother of All Buddhas"), and *Buddhatva Datṛ* ("Bestower of Buddhahood"). As the ontogenesis of Svayambhū Jyotirūpa, where the lotus seed took root at the Guhyeśvarī *pīṭha* (see Fig. 2.79), Guhyeśvarī is, thus, the source or "mother" (*mātṛ*) of the lotus that gave rise to the five transcendent knowledges of the Buddha, symbolized by the Jyotirūpa. This idea of goddess as source is

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further indicated in the text, when Mañjuśrī, discovering the sacred *pīṭha,* receives *darśan* of Guhyeśvarī in her universal form. As the embodiment of *prajña* and bestower of enlightenment, she teaches him the highest esoteric Saṁvara cycles, specifically of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī. As Mañjudeva, the primordial *guru* of Newar Buddhism, Mañjuśrī, in turn, reveals the teachings to Guṇākāra, thereby providing a sacred lineage to the practices of Newar Buddhism. Thus, Guhyeśvarī establishes herself as the chief source of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī meditations of Newar Buddhism. One can therefore state that while Svayambhū Mahācaitya is the ontological basis of Buddhism in the Valley, Guhyeśvarī, in turn, serves as Svayambhū's ontological source. The significance of the female in Newar Buddhist Tantric methodologies will be discussed in detail in Chapter Seven.

The issues that I have briefly highlighted here are some of the underlying themes of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* that are also continually articulated in ritual contexts as well as visual imagery. As a vital symbol of the Buddhist *dharma,* and the ethnic and religious identity of the Newar Buddhists, Svayambhū may be understood through these multiple layers of interpretations and meanings associated with the site. With the premise that the Svayambhū is the religious center and ontological source of the Newar Buddhist religious, I shall now give a brief historical overview of the Mahācaitya.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND PATRONAGE OF THE SITE

A profusion of historical sources, such as inscriptions, colophons, and manuscripts record periodic reconstructions and refurbishment of the Mahācaitya. However, the majority of these sources have not been critically studied to provide a thorough historical reconstruction of the site.[34] Since many of the historical records simply mention the name of the donors and their donation, rather than elaborate on the nature of the work done, little is known about the appearance of Svayambhū before the nineteenth century.[35] In the following, I will attempt to give a brief introduction of the site's history as known, through the evidence of royal and lay patronage.

Based on several factors, Svayambhū Mahācaitya can be considered one of the earliest Buddhist *stūpas* in the Valley. Inscriptional accounts as well as its morphological form suggest its antiquity. Inscriptions from as early as the fifth-sixth century during Licchavi period mention Svayambhū Mahācaitya as an important Buddhist site and refer to offering given by both the lay and royal patrons.[36] Similarly, the earliest known chronicle, *Bhāṣā Vaṃśāvalī* recounts the covering of Svayambhū Jyotirūpa in the form of the *stūpa* and places it in the time of the Licchavi king Vṛṣadeva in the second or third century C.E.[37] Another chronicle, the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī* also states that Vṛṣadeva consecrated/renovated the *"Singu-vihāra-caitya bhattāraka."*[38]

There is some debate as to the date of the actual foundation of the Mahācaitya. Western scholars have generally identified "Singu *vihāra*" mentioned in the Licchavi inscriptions and the *vaṁsāvalīs* as the Mahācaitya itself, since the local name for the area is called Singu.[39] However, Nepali scholars have generally interpreted the reference in the *Gopālarājavaṁsāvalī* to mean the establishment of a *bāhā,* possibly Syengu Bāhā that at present lies to the west of the *caitya*, rather than the foundation of the Mahācaitya, which would, presumably, have already been exisiting. The material evidence strongly suggests that the Mahācaitya may have been extant during the early Licchavi period.[40] That a Licchavi-period *caitya* stands in front of the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine at Syengu Bāhā, may, indeed, provide evidence for the chronicle's statement (Fig. 4.2). Although clearly of great antiquity, the actual foundation of the Mahācaitya still remains debatable. Nonetheless, the earliest inscriptional evidence belonging to the fifth century Licchavi period already indicates that Svayambhū was a well-established Buddhist site by this time, with its form and basic iconographic schema of the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

Patronge at Svayambhū Mahācaitya During the Licchavi Period

An incomplete inscription, now lost, may have been part of a Licchavi-period pillar and was located in the northwest corner of the Mahācaitya, near

the stone used for white-washing.[41]   This stele belonged to Vṛṣadeva's grandson Mānadeva (r. 464-505). The epigraphy and eulogies are similar in many ways to the earliest dated Licchavi inscription (dated 464 C.E) also attributed to King Mānadeva in his victory pillar (*vijaya stambha*) at Changu Narayana Temple. The establishment of a similar pillar at the Mahācaitya may indicate royal patronage during the time of King Mānadeva. The nature of the offering, however, is not known. By the seventh century, during Aṁsuvarmā's reign (r.605-621), the Mahācaitya was specifically referred to as *Svayambhū caitya bhaṭṭāraka,* the "respected *svayambhū caitya*", suggesting that the legend of the "self-created caitya" was already well established.[42]

In addition to these inscriptions, material remains found in the vicinity also indicate that Svayambhū was a prominent site by the Licchavi period. The first category of evidence are the numerous Licchavi *caityas*, popularly called "Aśoka caityas" that are found around the Svayambhū courtyard, such as the one found in front of the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine of Syengu Bāhā (see Fig. 4.2).[43]   These *caityas* can be identified by their simple shape, round dome, and a glossy polished surface and spalling that are characteristic of most Licchavi *caityas.*

Further evidence of an early date includes stone sculptures that belong to the Licchavi period. The most prominent Licchavi sculpture is a large

figure of Maitreya found in the northwest side of the *caitya,* which can be dated to the fifth-sixth centuries on stylistic grounds (Fig. 4.3). Both the iconography and style are closely reminiscent of the Buddha images of the Gupta period in India. Another important sculpture is a *sarvatobhava* type of *caitya* found at Svayambhū that may be one of the earliest of its kind belonging to the Licchavi period or even earlier (Fig. 4.4).[44] There are four standing Buddhas carved on the four sides of the *caitya,* one in each cardinal direction.[45] The faces have been re-cut and indicate a style different from the mature Licchavi period, and may instead be attributed to the late Licchavi period.[46] The rather harsh lines, sharply chiselled features, the simplicity of the drapery and proportions of the images, however, reflect the style of the early Licchavi period images. Each Buddha makes a specific gesture: the Buddha in the east makes *abāhāyamudrā* with his right hand raised; the southern Buddha displays *varadamudrā;* the Buddha on the west shows an unusual *dharmacakramudrā;* while the north side has a Buddha displaying *vajramuṣṭi* in a manner like the Gandhāran sculptures of the Kuṣāṇa period.[47] The presence of the *vajramuṣṭi* is significant here, as it symbolizes esoteric teachings of the five knowledges into one, as stated in Tantric Buddhist texts.[48] Since the style and iconography of this unique sculpture is different from the later fully developed *sarvatobhava-* types Licchavi *caityas* of a later date such as those found in Thāṁ Bahī (Fig. 4.5) or Dhvākā Bāhā,

this form of *caitya* also provides the evidence of the prevalence of Vajrayāna Buddhism by the mid-Licchavi period.

The most interesting and iconographically significant Licchavi remains are four panels located on the drum of the Mahācaitya. Although at present, they are hidden behind the metal *vāhana* figures, these stone reliefs are placed in the cardinal directions directly below the shrines of the Jina Buddhas (Figs. 4.6-4.9). The plaques represent the symbols associated with each of the Jina Buddhas. On the east side is the *vajra*, the symbol of Akṣobhya's *kula* (Fig. 4.6); and on the south is wheel flanked by two antelopes, which may be substituted for Ratnasambhava's *kula* symbol—the jewel[49] (Fig. 4.7). The west side panel has a *dharmacakra* in place of Amitābha's symbol, the lotus (Fig. 4.8). Finally, the north stele shows a seated *nāgarājā* (Fig. 4.9), an appropriate symbol for Amoghasiddhi, who controls the *nāgas* and the rains, and whose paradise is called Amoghavatī, the land of the *nāgas*.[50]

Stylistically, the four panels can be dated to the mid-Licchavi period, when compared with similar Licchavi panels found in the drums of other early *caityas,* such as Cā Bahī Caitya and Tukan Bāhā Caitya (Fig. 4.10). These Licchavi-period plaques provide significant evidence to Svayambhū's iconographic program as well as to the Mahācaitya's preeminence during the

Licchavi period. Comparing the morphology of other votive *caityas* from the Licchavi period and Svayambhū, I have observed the following patterns.

1. The placement of the steles in the cardinal directions at Svayambhū suggests the Mahācaitya's iconographic program replicated the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala.

2. The presence of the steles indicates that Svayambhū's present iconographic scheme representing the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala was already established during the Licchavi period by the sixth century. These Tantric elements found in the steles suggest that Vajrayāna practices were prevalent by the mid-Licchavi period.

3. Recent research indicates that three-fourth of the Licchavi period *caityas* have niches in the cardinal directions.[51] (Figs. 4.11 and 4.12). It may then be deduced that these *caityas* may have replicated the iconography of the Mahācaitya as the prototype of all Nepali *stūpas*. These niches may have contained the images of the Jina Buddhas, replicating the niches of the Jina Buddha shrines at Svayambhū.[52] The Licchavi-panels are located on the drum of the *stūpa* below the seventeenth-century shrines of the Jinas, suggesting that the original Pañca Jina scheme was present during the Licchavi period. Furthermore, various Licchavi *caityas* show the eyes carved in the *hārmikā* similar to the all-seeing eyes of the Ādi Buddha on Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

Other inscriptional indicates that the Pañca Jina iconography was an established schema of Licchavi *caityas*. For example, a fragment of a seventh-century *caitya* belonging to Aṁsuvarmā's reign in a courtyard near Guitā Bahī, Patan, has inscriptions that describe Akṣobhya on the east and Amitābha on the west.[53] Visual evidence is this iconographic schema is also found in the Licchavi *caitya* at Om Bāhā, Patan, dated to the eight-ninth centuries.[54] Here, the iconographic placement of the Buddhas is unique, in that the four Jina Buddhas are placed in their usual cardinal directions. On a second layer, Vairocana, who is conceptually at the center and generally not shown in these early *caityas*, is represented on all four sides above the Jinas. Such examples found throughout the Valley suggest that Svayambhū Mahācaitya is the prototype and premier Buddhist monument in the Kathmandu Valley by the Licchavi period.[55]

Patronage During the "Transitional" Period (9th –12th centuries)

Although numerous repairs and offerings must have been made during the "Transitional" Period, particularly to the central *yāsti* of the *caitya*, few historical documents at the site that fully record these events. Instead, Indian and Tibetan sources record various Indian teachers from northern areas, particularly during the Pāla period, who visited Kathmandu Valley.[56] Many of these teachers resided at Svayambhū and taught there, such as

Śāntārākṣita, Padmasambhava, Kamalaśila, Paṇḍita Vanaratna, Atiśa Dipāṅkara, and Ratnarakṣita.[57]   Among them, Atiśa may have had a significant impact in the transmission of the Vairocana-cycle teachings from India, as occurred in Ladakh and western Tibet.[58] Certainly, the vaṁsāvalīs as well as Tibetan sources gives Atiśa a central role in the resurgence of Vajrayāna practices in Nepal during the 11ᵗʰ century. During his year long stay in the Valley (1041-1042), he established Vikramśila Mahāvihāra (present-day Thāṁ Bahī) in 1041.[59] He is also credited with translating several Vairocana-cycle texts and initiating a Newar *paṇḍita* named Śāntibhadra to his teachings.[60] Atiśa's role in the transmission of the Vairocana-cycle teachings in Nepal must be seriously considered in order to reconstruct the doctrinal and historical developments of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

By the mid-thirteenth century, there is strong literary references to Svayambhū in Tibetan accounts. In the *Blue Annals,* the Tibetan monk Dharmasvāmin is said to have lived in Svayambhū for eight years, studying *Maṇḍala-sādhanas* such as the *Guhyasamāja* and *Vajrāvali* under the teacher, Ratnarakṣita.[61] There is also indication of close ties with the Indian Buddhist monasteries, as the *vaṁsavalīs* refer to Newar teachers who went to Nālandā and Vikramśilā in northeastern and northern India. [62] Among

these Newar Vajrācāryas are Ratnākara, Vāgīśvarakīrti from Pharping, and Kanakaśrī.

Patronage During the Malla Period (12th – 18th century centuries)

By the Malla period, there is extensive inscriptional evidence regarding patronage at the Svayambhū Mahācaitya, with the earliest recorded restoration to the Mahācaitya dating from the twelfth century. Since the secondary published sources that give thorough historical account are generally available only in Newari or Nepali, I will briefly list the accounts of the lavish gift giving and refurbishing to the Mahācaitya during the Malla period.[63]

> N.S. 249 (1129 C.E.) Inscription on the drum states that the Mahācaitya was reburbished.[64] Details, however, are not given.

> Mid 13th century. Extensive renovations by Tibetan donors. dPon-chen Śākya bzang-po, the chief administrator appointed by bLama 'Phugs-pa (1235-1274), donated fifty ounces of gold.[65] dPon-chen Śākya bzang-po also provided the funds to build a temple at the Sa-skya monastery. The famous Newar craftsman Aniko and eighty others are said to have completed the painting and embellishment of the monastery in 1261.

N.S. 470 (1350 C.E.) The Muslim king, Śamsuddin Ilyas invaded the Valley and destroyed the Mahācaitya and other religious sites around the Valley.[66] Details of the destruction and restoration are given in a large inscription stele located northwest of the Mahācaitya. The inscription at Pim Bāhā, Patan also gives details of this razing.

N.S. 492 (1372 C.E.) Full moon of Āświn. Renovation and repair, including a *yāsti* set with gems, *bhūmis, chattrāvali, kalaśa,* and *dhvajā* were made ready in the town of Kaṣṭamaṇḍapa [Kathmandu]. Donor: *Mahāpātra* of Kathmandu, Rājaharṣa Bhalloka. The inscription specifically invokes Svayambhū as "*Śrī Dharmadhātū*" and refers to the form of the *caitya* as symbolizing the three realms of the Buddhist world system—Kamadhātu, Rupadhātu, and Arūpadhātu.[67]

N.S 532 (1412 C.E.) Inscription at Paśupati states that King Jyotir Malla renovated the Mahācaitya and performed *homas* for the reconsecration. Here, the Mahācaitya is referred to as "*śrī Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvaramūrti Svayambhū Caitya.*"[68] This inscription is important to this study, because it establishes the buddhological identity between Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. The inscription also states that

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donations also arrived from Tibet, and the "great teacher Sariputra" from India was responsible for overseeing the renovation.[69]

N.S. 551 (1431 C.E.) During the reign of King Yaksa Malla (1428-1482), the Mahācaitya is refurbished. Lay donor, Anantajīva Bhāro, offers *chattras* made of wax.[70]

N.S. 624 (1504 C.E.) Ratna Malla (1484-1520) calls upon a Tantric *yogin* named gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka (1452-1507) to undertake a complete renovation of Svayambhū. The task, begun in 1476, was finally completed on his third stay at Svayambhū from 1501-1504. Donations were given from the king of Gu-ge in Western Tibet and the ruler of Mustang.[71] Svayambhū's connections with Western Tibet are evident.

N.S. 685. (1565 C.E.) *Mahāpātras* of Patan repair the Mahācaitya. A cloth painting commemorates the reconsecration of "*śrī Syaṃgu*".[72]

N.S. 711 (1590 C.E.) Lay donors from Kathmandu refurbish the Mahācaitya, offering the gilt *hālaṃpati* and *chattra*.[73]

N.S.715 (1595 C.E.) King Śiva Singh Malla (1578-1619) replaces the central shaft and adds a new *yāsti*. The historical sources describe in detail the ritual consecration for this event.[74]

N.S. 721-725 (1601-1601 C.E.) Lay donor Śākyabhikṣu Jayalakṣa refurbishes the Mahācaitya after it is struck by lightening. King Śiva Singh Malla's wife, Gangadevī, also gives offerings to Svayambhū.[75]

N.S. 741 (1621 C.E.) King Lakṣmī Narasimha Malla (r. 1620-1641) of Kathmandu renovates the Mahācaitya and the Mañjuśrī Caitya. Priest performing the *homa* are the royal *gubhājus* from Sikhāmu Bāhā.[76]

N.S. 747 (1627 C.E.) Lay donor Rūparāja Mahārjan performs *homas* and *pūjās* at Svayambhū.[77]

N.S.749 (1629 C.E.) During Laksmi Narasimha Malla's reign, a *Meghasādhana Pūjā* is performed at Śāntipur for the monsoon rains. Vajrācārya priests from Makhan Bāhā and Sikhamu Bāhā enter Śāntipura.[78] This also indicates the growing importance of Śāntipur for talismanic state protection.

N.S.750 (1630 C.E.) Tibetan monk Syāmar Lama refurbishes the shrines of the Buddhas and adds gilding to the *toraṇas* and *bhūmis*.[79] In the same year, numerous *pūjās* are offered by lay patrons, such as the offering of the wax *chattras* by Hākuju Śākya from Tarumula Bāhā in Kathmandu. A *Kalaśārcana* pūjā and *rahasya pūjā* ("secret worship") at Śāntipura is offered

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by King Lakṣmi Narasimha, with the *rājgubhāju* from Sikhāmu Bāhā presiding.[80]

N.S 757 (1637 C.E.) Lakṣmi Narasimha Malla and his son Pratāp Malla (r. 1640-74) erect the Buddha image of Akṣobhya at the foot of the eastern stairs.[81] In addition, lay donor Mañjudeva Śākyabhikṣu and King Lakṣmi Narasimha Malla begin repairs of the Mahācaitya in the month of Vaisākha.[82]

N.S 761 (1641 C.E.) On Āṣādha Purṇimā, King Pratāp Malla (r. 1640-74) of Kathmandu donates the shrines of the Buddhas and Tārās, and places metal images in them.[83] King Pratāp Malla's patronage at Svayambhū is one of the most important, as it indicates a fully-developed iconographic program related to Mahācaitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala by the seventeenth century.

N.S 765 (1645 C.E.) Vajrācārya Siddhimunideva enters Śāntipur to perform a secret pūjā on *śrāvan kṛṣṇa daśamī* (tenth day on the dark half of Śrāvan), which commemorates the day that Mañjuśrī received the Cakrasaṁvara initiation from Guhyeśvarī.[84]

N.S 770 (1650 C.E.) On *Srāvan śukla pratipadā*, King Pratāp Malla inscribed his devotional poems on an inscriptional plaque next

to the Amitābha shrine on the west. The poem describes Svayambhū as "*Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara"* and the hill as "*Mañjuśrīramya kṛtaparvata,* "the beautiful hill made/created by Mañjuśrī."

N.S 775 (1655 C.E.) On the ninth day of the dark half of Āsāḍha (*kṛṣṇa navamī*), King Pratāp Malla and his wife, Anantapriyā build the two temples, Pratāppur and Anantapur, to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. Inscriptional plaque in front of the Anantapriyā's shrine states that the temple is dedicated to *Ekajaṭā Nila Sarasvatī Vajrayoginī*, epithets of Vajravārāhī.[85] This may also indicate that Pratāp Malla and his wife may have received the esoteric initiations of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī.

N.S 778 (1658 C.E.) In order to perform the Mahāmegha *pūjā* and end the drought, King Pratāp Malla enters Śāntipura again on the fourth day of the dark half of Āsāḍha. He also composes a *śloka* for the rains called *Vṛṣṭī Cintāmaṇī Stotra.* Inscription inside Śāntipur to the left of shrine door describes his exploits inside. This is also a clear indication that Śāntipur is dedicated to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī.[86]

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N.S 779 (1659 C.E.) In the full moon of Jyeṣṭha, King Pratāp Malla offers a golden canopy to crown the Mahācaitya.[87]

N.S. 783 (1663 C.E.) On the second day of the bright half of Jyeṣṭha, King Pratāp Malla renovates the shrines of the Buddhas and Tārās.[88]

N.S. 788 (1668 C.E.) On the sixth day of the bright half of Āsāḍha, King Pratāp Malla offers the metal repousee *vajra* and Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala on the east side in front of the Akṣobhya shrine.[89]

N..S.794 (1674 C.E.) King Pratāp Malla enters Śāntipur for the second time in order to bring the monsoon rains.[90]

N.S. 880-802 (1682 C.E.) King Pārthivendra Malla renovates the Mahacaitya and replaces the *yāsti*.[91] The repairs in 1680 were done by Rang-rig-ras-pa of Spiti, Tibet.[92]

N.S 830-34 (1710-1714 C.E.) King Bhāṣkara Malla renovates and refurbishes the Mahācaitya. There is detailed description of the reconsecration.[93]

N.S. 832, N.S, 874, and N.S. 880 (1712, 1754, 1817 C.E.) Manuscript records one of the first well-documented repairs of Svayambhū thus far found.[94] The architectural drawings in the manuscripts

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provide measurements of the *caitya*, and also include an iconographic interpretation of the meaning of the *chattras*.

During the Malla period, King Pratāp Malla was an ardent royal donor, who, despite being a Hindu king, appears to have been initiated into the highly esoteric meditations of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī. From the Śāha period onward, Svayambhū also underwent numerous renovations and repairs. Refurbishings and donations to the Mahācaitya are recorded in 1816, 1818, 1825-26 and 1833.[95] The latest reconsecration of the central *yāsti* was performed in 1918 by Dhanasingh Tāmrākār from Kathmandu, also known as Dharma Sāhu, who donated 75,000 rupees for the work.[96] The Tibetan monk Sarvaśrī Śākyaśrī, who gave 20,000 rupees, also joined his efforts.[97]

The present form of the Mahācaitya owes to the additions and reconstructions done in 1918, 1927, and after the 1938 earthquake, but is based on earlier iconographic schemas. The earliest published photograph of Svayambhū Mahācaitya, taken by Prince Waldemar of Prussia in February and March of 1845 (Fig. 4.13), shows the northwest side of the *caitya*.[98] Here, the shrines of the Jina Buddhas in the cardinal directions are attached to the original drum of the *stūpa*, and the intermediate shrines of the Buddhaśaktis appear to be fairly simple, in contrast to their present form. Oldfield's sketch

of the Mahācaitya published in 1880 (Fig. 4.14) similarly shows the Buddha shrines, including the Vairocana shrine against the drum. Interestingly, both Oldfield and Landon describe the Mahācaitya to be in a general state of disrepair.[99]

Comparing Percy Brown's 1912 photograph of Svayambhū (Fig. 4.15) with its present form (see Fig. 1.2), we find that the present railing of prayer wheels and three rows of votive lamps are absent, and the Buddhaśaktīs shrines do not have today's three-tiered metal repousee roofs or the lions flanking the shrine. These must, therefore, be later additions. The intermediate shrine of the Tārā is simple, resting on the drum base in the earlier form. The most significant renovations occurred in 1918, and included the elaborate metal repousee shrines of the Jinas and their Buddhaśaktīs, projecting outward from the drum molding. Under the shrines are placed the *vāhānas* of the Jinas, further reinforcing the iconographic program of the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala, already present by the mid-Licchavi period. The later developments in Mahācaitya iconography include the placement of the Vairocana and Vajradhāteśvarī shrines to the southeast of the Akṣobhya shrine on the east. Vairocana's *buddhaśaktī,* Vajradhāteśvarī, is represented on the exterior of the *caitya* dome, as a triangular opening. Although brought physically to the outside to complete the literal *maṇḍalic* pattern, Vairocana and Vajradhāteśvarī are conceptually at the top center of the *caitya*. These

numerous embellishments and refurbishing of the Mahācaitya by both the lay and royal donors continues to this day and testify to the creation of new iconographic patterns and meanings that are added to its fundamental symbolism.

SECTION II: DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

Eastern Stairs

Svayambhū Mahācaitya is located in the northeastern side of Kathmandu Valley on top of the hill called Gosingu or Gopuccha Parvat (Fig. 4.16). As mentioned before, the cosmogonic Buddhist myth retells the legend when the Valley was a lake, and Gosingu Parvat ["Cow-horn Hill"] stood out prominently. Here, the thousand-petalled lotus came to rest and out of it emerged Svayambhū Jyotirūpa.[100] A cross-section drawing of Gosingu Parvat published by Gutschow (Fig. 4.17) shows a translation of this mythic symbolism in its physical as well as conceptual form. Specifically, the Mahācaitya is conceived as the *axis mundi* and Mt. Meru in a buddhological context.[101] Scholars have estimated the dome of the *caitya* at the top of the Gosingu Parvat to rest at 1403-26 meters, on a platform of infill three to six meters in depth and covering an area of fifty square meters around the Mahācaitya. As shown in the drawing, the platform supports the dome, and the central wooden pole (*yāstī)* rests on the peak of the mountain, thus

reinforcing the conception of *axis mundi.* Based on the measurements given in the manuscripts, the central pillar is estimated to be 22.08 meters, with a third of it located in the peak, while almost half of it extends beyond the cube, thus accounting for the large number of renovations to the *yasti.*[102]

The main route of ascent to the Mahācaitya is by climbing the 301 steps on the east side, marked by a recently built gateway in the Tibetan style. The placement of deities from the foot of the hill to the very top of the stairs reifies the concept of Svayambhū Mahācaitya as physically symbolizing Mt. Meru and the center of the Buddhist world systems. Less than halfway up are the large Buddha images, donated by King Pratāp Malla, flanking the stairs. At exactly thirty-one meters below the summit (1382.17 meters)—the very level to which the water of Kālihrada is said to have reached—is a natural outcropping of rock that represents Bhairava.[103] Gutschow considers the placement of Bhairava to be a significant testimony of the Svayambhū Hill as the "Primordial Hill", as Bhairava serves as *koṭvāla,* or guardian of the sacred hill " placed at the level of the mythic waters", as shown in the drawing."[104] Slightly below the image of Bhairava is also the natural rock representation of the Nāgarājā Karkotaka, who also inhabited the sacred Kālihrada lake.

Moving upward towards the summit of the Mahācaitya, the practitioner encounters the *vāhanas* of the Pañca Jina Buddhas, beginning

first with Amoghasiddhi's *vāhana,* the Garuda, Amitābha's peacock, Ratnasambhava's horse, Akṣobhya's elephant, and ends with Vairocana's lion. The placement of the *vāhanas* represents the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala in a counterclockwise direction, or more precisely, in a hierarchic schema of the meditation process. In fact, the physical ascent to the Mahācaitya may symbolically replicate the vertical hierarchy of the Enlightenment process in a manner similar to the awakening of the yogic *cakras* from the lowest at the base of the spine (here, symbolized by Amoghasiddhi's *vāhana*) to the highest *cakra,* symbolized by Vairocana's lion. Above the *vāhanas* is the Guhyeśvarī, represented in a form of a natural rock placed in a niche. Guhyeśvarī's presence as the head of this configuration is deliberate, since she not only symbolizes the ontological source for Svayambhū, but more importantly, signifies her role as the generative principle of Newar Buddhism. The visual symbolism represented by the physical ascent to the Mahācaitya itself reflects fundamental iconological concepts of Newar Buddhist tradition, and those that will be reiterated time and again in the visual imagery.

Votive Offerings: Maṇḍalas, *Caityas,* and Ritual Objects

After the steep ascent up the eastern stairs, the devotees enter the main *caitya* area. Immediately at the top of the stairs is a free standing representation of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, surmounted by a *vajra* (see Fig.

3.35).[105] The inscription on the metal-repousee *maṇḍala* states that it was offered by King Pratāp Malla in N.S.788 (1668 C.E.) and made according to the descriptions prescribed in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī.* A pair of lions, also given by King Pratāp Malla flanks the *maṇḍala*. The stone base of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is carved with the twelve painted animals of the Tibetan year cycle. Starting from the east going clockwise are the rat, bull, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, goose, dog, and pig.

The deities of the *maṇḍala* are incised on the horizontal surface, and because of the presence of the large *vajra,* it is, unfortunately, difficult to photograph and study the deities in detail. However, the inner core of the *maṇḍala* can be clearly deciphered and shows the eight-armed Jinas of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, as discussed in Chapter Three. Following the basic form of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, the inner core reiterates the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala, with Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa residing at the center and equated with Vairocana.

The prominence of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala directly in front of the Mahācaitya may be a deliberate attempt to indicate the buddhological identity of the Maṇḍala and the Mahācaitya, showing them as a single iconographic/symbolic unit and a key premise of Newar Buddhism practices. The iconographic program of Svayambhū further suggests the structural and

conceptual similarities between the *maṇḍala* of Svayambhū and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

In addition to King Pratāp Malla's Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, a number of ritual *maṇḍala* and *yajñakuṇḍas* are placed directly in front of the shrines of the Jina Buddhas (Fig. 4.18). Many of these *maṇḍalas* are worn smooth on the surface from ritual use and are thus difficult to identity. The practitioners and ritual specialists at the site identify these as the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, thus reinforcing the ubiquitous presence of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara at Svayambhū. For example, three large Dharmadhātu Maṇḍalas are found in front of the Amitābha shrine on the west, where most of the elaborate rituals offered by the lay patrons take place. Other significant ritual space is the nine-lotus *maṇḍala* on the south side, used during the *bare chuegu* rituals for the Buddhācārya priests of Svayambhū. The life-cycle ordination to monkhood is performed directly in front of the Ratnasambhava shrine, as Ratnasambhava is ritually associated with ritual empowerment and initiation in the Newar Buddhist tradition. Other ritual *maṇḍalas,* addition to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and *yajñakuṇḍas* is a ṣaṭkoṇa ("six-angled") *yantra* of the goddess that is placed in front of the Vairocana shrine. This symbol is generally associated with Tantric Buddhist goddesses that may be worshipped in public, such as Kumārī, Vasundharā, and Vajrayoginī, all exoteric forms of Vajravārāhī.

Several metal *yajñakuṇḍas* found in front of the shrines of the Jina Buddhas are ritually significant for the *homa* ceremonies that are essential components of formal Newar Buddhist rituals. The *yajñakuṇḍa* serves as a ritually defined space, which is protected by the eight Dikpālas in the cardinal and intermediate points. In the metal representations, these are often symbolized by the symbols corresponding to each deity. At the center of the *yajñakuṇḍa* is a *vajra* encircled by a garland—a symbol representing the sacred *vajrānala* ("adamantine fire") that is offered in the rituals.[106]

The most popular offering in the Newar Buddhist tradition is the votive *caityas* that are given by the Buddhist practitioners (Fig. 4.19). In the 1989 survey done by Gutschow, there were 129 votive caityas in the courtyard of the main *stūpa*, and over 200 on the Svayambhū Hill itself.[107] Gutschow states that about 85% of the *caityas* were offered in the last 200 years, although the ten Licchavi period *caityas* attest to the antiquity of this practice at the site. Among the votive *caityas* found here, thirty-three are dated and inscribed. Gutschow also notes that the earliest dated *caitya* is inscribed 1789 C.E., and only the Mañjuśrī Caitya to the west and another votive *caitya* called "Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Caitya" at the southeastern corner appear predate the 1789 *caitya*.[108] Further, indicating the rich development of *caitya* morphology, the *caityas* found at Svayambhū fall under several distinct *caitya* typologies based on their style. Gutschow classifies these *caityas* by

morphological type as Aśoka Caitya, Sikharākuṭa Caitya, Svayambhū Caitya, Dharmadhātu Caitya, Sumeru Caitya, Jalahariupari Sumeru Caitya, Ratnamaṇḍala Caitya, Aṣṭakoṇapadoparicarya Caitya, and Bodhicaitya.[109]

Aside from the votive *caityas* on the main Stūpa area, several larger *caityas* are found in the lower and upper saddle of the mountain. Three important *caityas* include the Vasubandu Caitya in the lower saddle, the Pulān Singu Caitya on the western saddle, and the Mañjuśrī Caitya in the upper saddle on the west.

The Vasubandu Caitya is traditionally said to contain the relics of the Indian teacher Vasubandu of the Mādhyamīkā school, who died at Svayambhū. Further, local tradition at the site has it that the Buddha images contained in the shrines niches are the original ones that were replaced by King Pratāp Malla in the seventeenth century.[110] The stone *maṇḍala* with *vajra* is said to be the original Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala on the east side of the Mahācaitya, now replaced by Pratāp Malla's metal offering.[111] The stone original on the east side prior to Pratāp Malla's time may further indicate that the Svayambhū/Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala equation goes back even further.

Pulān Singu Caitya ("Old Svayambhū Caitya") is perhaps the most important in terms of ritual significance for the community of Buddhācārya priests of Svayambhū (Fig. 4.20). This was the site where Śākyamuni narrated the glories of Svayambhū Jyotirūpa as recorded in the *Svayambhū*

Purāṇa. The *caitya* is also the lineage deity (*digu dyaḥ*) of the Buddhācārya ritual specialists of Svayambhū. The four lineages (*kavaḥ*) of the Buddhācārya families perform a special lineage pūjā (*digu dyaḥ pūjā*) at Pulān Singu Caitya twice a year: first, on the eleventh day of the full moon in Caitra [March-April] and on the thirteenth day of the dark half of Āśvin [September-October].[112] The lineage rituals performed to Pulān Singu by the Buddhācāryas represent an important aspect of devotion and worship to *caityas,* echoing the practices that are found in the earliest layers of Buddhism.

Aside from the Mahācaitya itself, the Mañjuśrī Caitya is perhaps the most important *caitya* on Svayambhū Hill. According to the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* Mañjuśrī Caitya contains the relics of the Mañjudeva, the *nirmāṇakāya* form of Mañjuśrī. During Śrī Pañcamī in the beginning of spring, the Mañjuśrī Stūpa is annually worshipped by thousands of devotees. This festival is marks the day that Mañjuśrī returns to the Valley and remains at Mañjuśrī Stūpa for a little over a month. During this time, the *Nāmasaṅgīti* text is chanted at Svayambhū every day for a month, and also during special times in the *bāhās* and *bahīs.* The connection of Mañjuśrī and the Mahācaitya through ritual is a recurrent theme at Svayambhū, further strengthening the argument for the symbolic association of the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara and the Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

Main Courtyard of Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

The major monuments of the site that are key to this iconographic study are the Mahācaitya itself; the two shrines of the Cakrasaṁvara cycle—Pratāppur and Anantapur; the five Purs; and the Hāritī shrine located in the northwest side (Fig. 4.21). Other buildings, established throughout the development of the site, are equally significant to understand the religious environment of Svayambhū. These include Syengu Bāhā, including the *kvāhpāh dyah* and *āgam cheñ* of the Buddhācārya families, the Tibetan *gumbās* or monasteries (Karmarāja Mahāvihāra in the northeast corner and the Devadharma Mahāvihāra in the west side), and the chanting hall where lay devotees singing *bhajan* ("devotional songs") in the mornings and evenings. Around the main *caitya* complex are residential houses belonging to the four lineages of the Buddhācārya families. In the contemporary context, many of the lower levels of these houses has been converted into commercial shops, catering to the larger number of tourists who visit the Mahācaitya.

Before analyzing the iconography of the main *stūpa*, I will briefly discuss Pratāppur and Anantapur, the five Purs, and the Hāritī Shrine.

Pratāppur and Anantapur

Immediately flanking the Mahācaitya are two imposing white-washed *sikhara*-type temple located in the northeast and southeast corners of the

courtyard. Although the contemporary appearance owes much to the nineteenth-century renovations, these shrine were built the seventeenth century, the shrines—Pratāppur (Fig. 4.22) and Anantapur (Fig. 4.24)—were built by King Pratāp Malla and his wife, Anantapriyā in 1655 C.E. Both buildings are plain, without many visual elements that may give any indication the esoteric nature of the shrine. Hence, previous scholars have not discussed the identity of the shrine images. Nonetheless, the gate guardians flanking outside the shrine doors (Fig. 4.24) are the most important visual clues, as the images represent the four animal and bird-faced gate guardians from the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. Pratāppur on the northeast has Svanāsyā ("Dog-Faced") and Śukrāsyā ("Parrot-Faced") gate guardians, both shown as four-armed dancing figures (Figs. 4.25-26). Anantapur has Kākāsyā ("Cow-Faced") female gate guardian to the left of the doorway, shown as a six-armed figure with the principal hands in *vajrahuṅkāra mudrā* (Fig. 4.27). To the right is Ulūkāyā ("Owl-Faced"), a female guardian of the Saṁvara cycle *Maṇḍalas* (Fig. 4.28). The two shrines thus represent Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, the primary deities of the Newar Buddhist *āgaṁ* shrines—Pratāppur is dedicated to Cakrasaṁvara while the Anantapur is dedicated to Vajravārāhī. In the dedicatory inscription outside of Anantapur, Vajravārāhī is invoked by her epithets: Vajrayoginī, Ekajaṭī, and Nīla Sarasvatī.[113] No one is allowed to enter the shrine, except the head Thakāli of

the Buddhācāryas. The Anantapur shrine has several levels that are accessible and were meant to be used for initiations and meditation practices.[114]

The presence of the highly esoteric Cakrasaṁvara cycle at Svayambhū Mahācaitya is significant. Foremost, it alludes to the meditation's ontological connection with the cosmogonic myth, specifically with Guhyeśvarī as the transmitter of this teaching cycle. Secondly, the presence of this esoteric meditation here provides a theoretical framework to conceptualize the relationship of Svayambhū, Mañjuśrī as Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, and Cakrasaṁvara. This aspect will be later examined in Chapter Six, when discussing the significance of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala in Newar Buddhist art and practice.

Five *Purs*

The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* describes in detail the implied and intended meaning of the five "Purs" ("cities").[115] They are symbolize the five elements (*dhātu*) and are associated with each of the Jina Buddhas. The placement of these shrines around the *stūpa* is significant to the overall iconographic program of the Mahācaitya.

Circumambulating the Mahācaitya in a clockwise direction, we begin at the first of the five Purs, namely Vasupur, dedicated to the Goddess

Vasundharā, who symbolizes the earth element (*pṛthvī*) and goddess of wealth (Fig. 4.29).[116] The shrine, facing north, is a fairly simply structure with a single metal roof. The inscribed wooden *toraṇa* over the shrine door depicts Vasundharā as the center figure with Vajrasattva directly above her at the top center position, indicating his role as the *sambhogakāya* manifestation of the Ādi Buddha in the Newar Buddhist tradition (Fig. 4.30). The exterior wooden struts depict male *yakṣa* figures as symbols of wealth and fecundity, who are identified by name.[117] The shrine contains a sixteenth-century stone image of Vasundharā, represented in her usual iconographic form (Fig. 4.31). She is six-armed and holds in a *mālā* and book in her top hands, a gem and a sheaf of wheat in her middle hands, while her principal hands holds a *kalaśa* (vase) and displays *varadāmudrā*. Vasundharā 's right leg is represented touching the earth and resting on a lotus. The *kalaśa* serves as a quintessential generative symbol that is invariably associated with the female deities. In the Newar tradition, the vase directly refers to the primordial creative source, specifically Guhyeśvarī, who is symbolized by a *kalaśa*. Vasundharā, in the ritual context, is the exoteric face of Vajravārāhī and Guhyeśvarī—a significant concept as I will further examine in Chapters Six and Seven.

The imagery inside the shrine also emphasizes the generative aspect of Goddess Vasundharā. For instance, the inscribed silver canopy over the goddess depicts several *yantras*. From left to right these are a double

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triangle (*ṣaṭkoṇa yantra*) with a lotus at the center; a double triangle *yantra* with three mangoes; a double triangle with a *kalaśa*; and a double triangle with a book at the center. Surrounding these four *yantras* are representations of the *aṣṭamaṅgala* signs. Like the *kalaśa,* the *yantra* is also closely associated with the generative and creative aspect of the goddesses. Specifically, the double-triangled *yantra* in the Tantric tradition is a universal symbol for the goddess's generative and destructive powers at the center of which is the *bindu,* the seed of creation.[118]

The remaining four Purs around the Mahācaitya are similarly related to the natural elements. Moving clockwise from Vasupur towards the south is Vāyupur, located in the southwest corner (Fig. 4.32). The small east-facing shrine houses Vāyu, the wind god wind, represented by a natural rock outcropping (Fig. 4.33). A number of non-anthropomorphic deities are found inside the shrine, identified by the ritual specialists at the site as Bhairava, Gaṇeśa, and Kumārī. This is the only shrine in the Mahācaitya complex to which animal sacrifice is offered, occurring annually during the Rāto Macchindranātha chariot festival to ensure timely wind.[119]

The third element, Agnipur, is in the northwest corner and is a natural outcropping of rock flanked by two small lions (Fig. 4.34). This white-washed rock represents the Tantric form of Agni, the god of fire. Annually, the rock is repainted each year during the eve of Kārttika Purṇimā (Fig. 4.35), the day

that commemorates the creation of the Mahācaitya and establishment of the five Purs by Śāntikarācārya. This ritual act empowers and vivifies the apotropaic power of the shrine image.

The fourth element, water, is associated with Nāgpur and is located directly in front of the Amoghasiddhi shrine on the north side of the Mahācaitya. Nāgpur or the "city of the Nāgas" is represented by a water tank, which is often filled with water during the monsoon rains (Fig. 4.36). At the bottom of the tank is a long stone that represents Nāgarājā Varuṇa. The northern direction as well as Amoghasiddhi is generally associated with the *nāgas,* and Nāgpur is especially propitiated during *pūjās* to ensure appropriate rainfall. The significance of the *nāgas* is alluded to in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* where the water-filled Valley is referred to as the Nāgavāsahrada ("Home of the Nāgas"). In the Newar Buddhist tradition, *nāgas* symbolize wealth, prosperity, fecundity and auspiciousness and are generally connected with water and rain-making powers. In an agrarian community where the monsoon rains are of vital importance to the wealth of the community and the well-being of its inhabitants, the *nāgas* of the Valley are constantly propitiated in their places of residence, such as lakes, walls, and confluence of rivers (*tirthas*). The final chapters of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* discuss in detail the power and ability of the Śāntikarācārya to control the *nāgas* and rain.[120] The rain-making powers is also connected to

Śāntipur, one of the most esoteric Tantric shrines of the Valley and the last of the five *purs.*

Śāntipur is the most important among the five *purs* and is located a little distance from the main *stūpa* in the north/northwest side (Fig. 4.37). The shrine is associated with the highly esoteric practices of Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī, and is a fairly unimpressive, single storied building with a tin corrugated roof. Representing the ether/space (*vyoma /ākāśa*) element, the shrine is popularly called Śāntipur in commemoration of Śāntikarācārya, who comes to the aid of sentient beings during times of misfortune. Alternatively, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* calls the shrine Saṃvarapur, Guhyapur, Ākāśapur, signifying the esoteric nature of the shrine.[121]

Newar Buddhists generally hesitate to divulge the identity of the esoteric Heruka deities enshrined inside to the uninitiated. However, Śāntipur's connections to the Cakrasaṃvara cycle are strongly evident in the ritual context, inscriptions, as well as textual references of Śāntipur. The *Svayambhu Purāṇa*, in fact, expressly states that at the Śāntipur *pīṭha* resides the thousand-armed Mahāsaṃvara, who is the lord of the universe, and his *prajñā*. Visual clues at Śāntipur further point to the presence of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi. For example, the guardian figures flanking the exterior and interior doorways are identical animal-faced door guardians

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from the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala (see Figs 6.31-6.34). Further, the mural paintings show a preeminance of the Tantric goddesses, or *yoginis* connected with the Cakrasaṁvara cycle. Here, the south wall depicts the inner four *yoginīs* of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. Perhaps, the most prominent clue is the shrine door itself, which serves as a surrogate object of worship for the main shrine images. Serving as the face of the deity, the door has a pair of eyes and a row of five skulls on the lintels as the crowning element, suggesting the attributes of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. The center lock on the inner shrine door is in a form of a gorget, worn by the Tantric *yoginis,* and depicts a sword at the center. The lower doorsill depicts a vase, resting on a lotus flanked by two lions. These quintessential symbols related to the Tantric Buddhist *yoginis,* such as *kalasa,* sword, and skull-cup are emphasized in Śāntipur's visual imagery, thus indicating the preeminance of Tantric goddess. In Newar Buddhism, these symbols are specifically associated with Vajravārāhī, the consort of Cakrasaṁvara and also the generator of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala.

The interior of Śāntipur consists of an antechamber that is open to the public, behind which are a series of private chambers which step down the hill behind a perpetually locked door (Fig. 4.38). The exterior antechamber and the images contained in the room, including the shrine door are heavily used in pūjās and are the objects of daily worship and offerings (Fig. 4.39)

The interior shrine is only accessible to the main Buddhācārya priest (*Thakāli*) of Svayambhū and the senior priest from Makhan Bāhā of Kathmandu, and is the archetypical *āgaṁ* shrine, in which only the senior priests with initiation as allowed to enter the *abhyantara* ("inner") shrine.

The shrine and the rituals associated with Śāntipur are connected with rain-making and talismanic state protection. Based on the information given to me by the senior priest at Svayambhū who performs the rituals at Śāntipur, monthly *diśi pūjā* rituals are performed as a state ritual and are financed by the royal family. Once again, Svayambhū is closely related to esoteric Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī practices, providing further evidence for the associations among the key methodological practices of Newar Buddhism—Maṇḍala of Svayambhū, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala.

Hāritī Shrine

The large gilt copper shrine made located in the northwest side of the Mahācaitya (Fig. 4.40) is dedicated to Hāritī Ajimā, who is popularly known as the goddess who protects against smallpox, is the protector of children and is worshipped by both Hindu and Buddhist practitioners. The original temple was replaced by this structure, which was built in 1802 after King Raṇabāhādur Śāha, in a lunatic rage after the death of his son, ordered the

destruction of the earlier temple and the shrine image.[122] The shrine image of Hāritī is made of dark stone, and may, in fact, predate the nineteenth-century reconstruction, as it is stylistically similar to the Licchavi-period images.[123] During special occasions, a metal repousee covering (*kavaca* lit. "armor") is put over the shrine image. Elaborate rituals specifically related to Hāritī, called *chayhakegu pūjā* are performed daily throughout the day outside the temple by Vajrācārya priests for their lay offerers (Figs. 4.41 and 4.42). The offerings given in the ritual such as the *homa* ceremony and the cooked rice are also given to Hāritī in her role as protector of children and protection against disease.

Like the shrines of the Jina Buddhas, the Hāritī temple is visually rich. The iconography of the inscribed metal *toraṇas* over each of the shrine doors serve as important visual evidence of the goddess' protective function. The main *toraṇa* on the south depicts the Pañcarakṣā deities, the "Five Goddesses of Protection" and are represented as fully Enlightened Buddhas, with Mahāsahasrapramardinī as the center figure (Fig. 4.43). Directly above the five goddesses are the Ādi Buddhas of the Newar Buddhist tradition, namely, Vajradhara, Vajrasattva, Samantabhadra. The main shrine doorway on the south also has two other inscribed *toraṇas*. The dedicatory inscription on the west end *toraṇa* first invokes Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara and then Hāritīdevi, again recalling Mañjuśrī's association with the site.

The *toraṇas* on the west, north, and east doors also depict the Pañcarakṣā Goddesses. The west side *toraṇa*, dated N.S. 794, depicts Mahāmantrānusāriṇī as the center deity while the north *toraṇa*, dated N.S.1024, is identical to the south *toraṇa* in the placement of the Pañcarakṣā and Ādi Buddha figures. Here, Mahāsitāvatī is at the center and the Ādi Buddhas Vajradhara, Vajrasattva, and Sāmantrabhadra above the five goddesses. Similarly, the east side shows another Pañcarakṣā Goddess, whose precise identity I am not able to discern. The Pañcarakṣā Goddesses, in the Newar Buddhist context are not only female emanations of the Jinas, but also are personifications of the ritual text, *Pañcarakṣā* and thus directly association with Hāritī's protective function.

As characteristic of Nepali temple architecture, a golden finial crowns the structure and a pendant hangs down from the center of the finial to the middle roof. The pendent depicts a *kalaśa*, an oft-repeated symbolism of the goddess and her generative powers (Fig. 4.44). In the technical buddhological understanding, the female aspect is generally associated with *prajñā* and the attainment of realization (*siddhi* powers) through which the practitioner can attain the state of Enlightenment. However, Hāritī, as an embodiment of the Pañcarakṣās, must also be understood in her role as protective mother, often associated with the more mundane aspects of the popular religion. As with the *mātṛkās,* Svayambhū Hāritī is affectionately called *Hāritī Mai* ("Mother

Hāritī") and *Ajimā* ("Grandmother") in reference to her protective functions. Another popular protective goddess, Ārya Tārā, in the northwest side of the Mahācaitya is often propitiated for her protective nature. To the practitioners, she symbolizes long-life and deliverance from physical fears and harm in her role as Aṣṭamahābhaya Tārā. After performing a *pūjā* at the Hāritī shrine, the Newar practitioners often request the *stotra* of Tārā to be recited at the Ārya Tārā shrine in the northwest side of the Mahācaitya for long-life and prosperity.

SECTION III: ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Interpreting the *Maṇḍala* of Svayambhū Mahācaitya

Traditional Newar Buddhist drawings of the Mahācaitya classify the monument into three major structural elements: (*phaḥ*), dome (New: *pvaḥ*), and the crowing elements including the *hārmika* (*cakū*), *chattras* (*cakrāvalī*).[124] In a detailed study, Kolver further categorizes the basic morphology of the Mahācaitya to include six basic sections (Fig. 4.45). These are: (1) dome, (2) cube or *hārmikā*, (3) a series of thirteen tiers [*cākulī*], (4) the four "shields" in the cardinal directions resting on the cube, (5) the honorific *chattra* on top of the thirteen tiers, and finally (6) the pinnacle (*gajura*).[125]

Morphologically, the shape of the Mahācaitya is a low hemispheric base, reminiscent of the early Indian *stūpas* such as Sanchi Stūpa I (Fig. 4.46). The *hārmikā* is typical of Nepali *caitya* architecture, on which is represented the face and eyes of the fully Enlightened *(samyaksambodhi)* Ādi Buddha Svayambhū (Fig. 4.47). Above the square cube appear crowning elements, including the "shields" in the cardinal directions that bear images reflecting the teaching lineages and Ādi Buddhas in the Newar Buddhist and Tibetan traditions (Figs. 4.48-4.51).[126] Above this are the thirteen tiers that reflect the thirteen stages of the Enlightenment process. Over the very top is the *chattra* and *gajura* that cover the central *yāsti.*

For the iconographic analysis presented here, the ground plan of the *caitya* and the shrines of the Buddhas and their Buddhaśaktīs will provide the basic schema to understand the iconographic program of Svayambhū. Extending slightly outward from the dome base are the shrines of the Jina Buddhas in the cardinal directions, and the Buddhaśaktīs, here called Tārās, are placed in the intermediate points. A ground plan of Svayambhū (Fig. 4.52) shows that the placement of the shrines mirrors the basic Pañca Jina Maṇḍala (Fig. 4.53) and is thus also identical in form to the inner core of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. As a meditation tool that demonstrates the process of Enlightenment, the shrines of the Jina Buddhas here at the Mahācaitya signify the five colored rays of light of Svayambhū Jyotirūpa that is hidden at

the core of the *stūpa*. Through the Pañca Jina *Maṇḍala* schema, it is appropriate that the iconographic program of Svayambhū reflects the basic essence of the Tantric Enlightenment process, as understood in the Newar tradition. When the Newar Buddhist practitioner meditates on the body of the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū and circumambulates the *stūpa,* the Enlightenment process is thus actualized and reified by taking *darśan* and performing *pūjā* at each shrine.

Iconographically, there is an interesting variation in the plan of the *stūpa* in its *mandalic* schema. The four Jina Buddhas—Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi—are placed in their respective cardinal directions (east, south, west, and north), according to the *Pañca Jina maṇḍala* schema. Vairocana, who is still conceptually at the top center and is the generating source of the *maṇḍala,* is physically brought outside to reside next to the Akṣobhya shrine on the east side (Fig. 4.54).[127] A close study of the shrines suggests that the placement of Vairocana here was a later development and was not part of the original iconographic format that was already present by Licchavi period in the seventh century. I will now briefly discuss the shrines of the Jina Buddhas and their Buddhaśaktīs to substantiate my argument that the addition of Vairocana shrine on the outside is a nineteenth-century development.

The iconography of the nine shrines around the Mahācaitya follows a fixed program: the Jinas in the cardinal directions are in larger shrines and the *śaktīs* in the intermediate points are in smaller structures. Entering the *maṇḍalic* diagram, the practitioner starts at the east at the Akṣobhya shrine (Fig. 4.55).[128] Akṣobhya is housed in a metal repousee shrine that projects outward from the dome. In a form of a small temple, it has three tiers of roof and is crowned by a triple *kalaśa*. Symbols of auspiciousness are depicted in the visual imagery, including *kalaśas, aṣṭamaṅgala* signs, and a *nāga* and *nāginī* encircling the shrine. As in each of the five Jina Buddha shrines, a metal *toraṇa* marks the shrine door, two pairs of attendant figures flank the doorway, and the *kula vāhana* is placed in the niche below the shrine (Fig. 4.56). The attendant figures are the two monks, Sāriputra and Mogallyayāna and a *kula* Bodhisattva pair associated the respective Buddha next to the monks. On the inner left and right are images of Sariputra and Mogallyayāna respectively—the monks who in Nepal, invariably, accompany the Buddha. Akṣobhya's *kula* Bodhisattva, Vajrapāṇi is depicted flanking the monk and is shown holding a *vajra* on a lotus. Akṣobhya's elephant *vāhana* is placed under the shrine.

Iconographically, the *toraṇa* figures provide insight into the conception of the hierarchy between the Jina Buddhas and the Ādi Buddhas prevalent in the Newar Buddhist tradition. The standard iconographic pattern is as

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follows: a crown representation of the specific Jina, flanked by *cauri*-bearing Bodhisattvas, while directly above the main figure is the generating Ādi Buddha. Here, the east side *toraṇa* shows the crowned figure of Akṣobhya, symbolizing his transcendent *sambhogakāya* form (Fig. 4.57). Directly above him is the Ādibuddha Vajradhara, represented holding the *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* in *vajrahuṁkāramudrā* (Fig. 4.58). Here, the forms of the Ādi Buddha represented on the *toraṇas* may be interpreted as the manifested *Dharmakāya* image of the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū. In the other three *toraṇas* on the south, west, and north, the Ādi Buddhas are respectively Apāramitā, Sāmantabhadra, and Vairocana. The top center figure on Vairocana's *toraṇa* is Vajrasattva (Fig. 4.59). Vajrasattva is the *sambhogakāya* presentation of the *Dharmakāya,* and in the Newar Buddhist context, is the primordial Guru (Ādi Guru).

The shrine image of Akṣobhya represents the Buddha in his characteristic *bhūmisparśamudrā* (Fig. 4.60). This identifying gesture is often not visible, as he is generally covered with cloth offering, appropriately blue, with a *yantra* depicted in the center of the robe (Figs. 4.61). The ritual specialist at the site stated that this symbolizes his *citta* ("heart/mind") and is a reference to the Tantric nature of the Buddha, who is in union with his female counterpart. During special *pūjās,* such as the full moon (*puñhe*) and *aṣṭamī,* the Buddhas and the Tārās are crowned.

In the cardinal directions, the respective Buddhas are placed in the usual manner following the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala pattern, namely Ratnasambhava in the south, Amitābha in the west, and Amoghasiddhi in the north. The shrines follow the same pattern as the Akṣobhya shrine, with the *kula* bodhisattva flanking the shrine door and the *kula vāhanas* (horse, peacock, and Garuḍa) respectively below in a niche. As mentioned earlier, the *toraṇas* depict the crowned Jinas with a manifestation of the Svayambhū Ādi Buddha at the top center. The Jina Buddhas are clothed in their respective colors: yellow, red, and green

It is noteworthy that the Amitābha's shrine is significantly larger than the others are. In the Newar Buddhist tradition, the four Jinas are intimately connected with the cycle of *kalpas*, or eons, and each is considered to be the lord of each *kalpa*. The Newar Buddhists understand Amitābha as the presiding Buddha of the present *kalpa*, the Bhadrakalpa. For the lay pracitioners, Amitābha's associations with the paradisiacal realm of Sukhāvatī makes him the most important of the Buddhas at Svayambhū. The Buddhācārya priests, when speaking of Svayambhū Mahācaitya, invariably refer to his form as Amitābha as "Bhagavān Dyaḥ", the manifested Svayambhū. The spacious ritual area in front of the shrine further indicates Amitābha's significance. Although the highly philosophical concepts are the ideological basis for the religion, as living tradition, Newar Buddhism shows

that both the lay and initiated practitioners are concerned with the more physical aspects of the mundane world. Amitābha's intense popularity in the Newar Buddhist tradition reflects this emphasis, as his worship relates to the more immediate benefaction and merits that affect the lives of the ordinary Buddhist practitioners. Amitābha's secondary nature as Amitāyus ("Life Without End") or Aparāmitā as he is popularly called by the Newars, is alluded to by the visual imagery in the Amitābha shrine. Flanking the shrine are the images of Yamarāja, the "Lord of Death", appropriately placed on the south—the direction associated with death; and to the north, the figure of Jamnarāja, "Lord of Life" (Figs. 4.62-4.63). Together, the figures embody the whole process of *saṁsāra*— of life and death—an appropriate imagery related to the Buddha associated with long-life and rebirth in Sukhāvatī paradise.

The Jina shrines on the cardinal directions replicate the Pañca Jina schema and appear to be part of the original iconographic program of the temple. At Svayambhū, the addition of the Vairocana shrine is a Newar conception of physically showing the Jina, who is at the top of the *caitya* and conceptually at the center of the Maṇḍala. His presence, while often not represented, is implicit. The practitioners understand Vairocana to be at the core and top center of the Mahācaitya, and his physical placement here at the southeast side next to Akṣobhya is not problematic.[129]

The Vairocana shrine is placed directly next to the Akṣobhya shrine on the east/southeast, and its smaller scale and lack of the Licchavi stele on the drum underneath the shrine suggest that it must have been a later addition to the original Pañca Jina scheme. Iconographically, the placement of the Vairocana and Akṣobhya shrine next to each other may have been a deliberate conception, since in specific Tantric meditation cycles, Vairocana and Akṣobhya can exchange places as the center deity.[130] This aspect in relation to Svayambhū's iconographic program needs to be further explored for a number of reasons. For instance, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* states that Svayambhū Maṇḍala is the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇḍala. This statement is consistent with Svayambhū's iconographic configuration of the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala, since the Dharmadhatu Maṇḍala is essentially a Vairocana-cycle *maṇḍala,* with Mañjughoṣa as a hypostatis of Vairocana. On the other hand, ritual manuscripts that discuss the reconstruction of the Mahācaitya state that two Maṇḍalas are invoked during the consecration: one, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and, second, the Piṇḍikrama/Piṇḍikṛta Maṇḍala.[131] Interestingly, the Piṇḍikrama Maṇḍala belongs to the Guhyasamāja Akṣobhyavajra cycle, with Akṣobhya as the center deity.[132] This reference may be significant to understand the deliberate ambiguity in the placement of Vairocana, next to the Akṣobhya shrine.

Similarly, the second point of evidence that suggests a carefully conceived placement of the Vairocana shrine, although clearly a later development, is in the identity of the Buddhaśaktīs in the northeast and southeast side, specifically that of Māmakī and Locanā. In the intermediate points between the Jina shrines are the Buddhaśaktīs (*prajñā*) or Tārās of each of the Jina Buddha. Understood to be in union with the Buddhas in the esoteric Tantric context, they are always represented to the proper left of the Jina. Based on the contemporary traditions at Svayambhū, the iconographic schema of the Buddhaśaktīs is as follows: Akṣobhya's *prajñā* is Māmakī (NE); Ratnasambhava's *prajñā* is Locanā (SE); Amitābha's *prajñā* is Padminī (SW); Amoghasiddhi's *prajñā* is Ārya Tārā (NW).[133] Vairocana's *prajñā* Vajradhāteśvarī does not follow this configuration, and is placed, for practical purposes, on the proper right of Vairocana. Embodying her true essence as the ultimate absolute reality *(śūnyatā)*, her presence is simply symbolized by a triangular hole, usually covered by a white cloth, the color of her *kula*. (Fig. 4.64).

Going back to the argument that the placement of the Vairocana shrine enables the practitioner to understand the Maṇḍala of Svayambhū to be both an Akṣobhya and Vairocana cycle *maṇḍala*, the identity of Māmakī in the northeast and Locana in the southeast provides some interesting evidence. The contemporary local tradition identifies the goddess in the

northeast corner as Māmakī (*prajñā* of Akṣobhya). However, iconographically, her form is identical to Locanā, also known as Saptalocanī Tārā (Fig. 4.65), as she is depicted with seven eyes depicted on her body. In the Tantric tradition, Locanā is invariably paired with Vairocana or Mañjuśrī.[134] Similarly, the *toraṇa* figure on the southeast shrine is generally identified as Locanā, although the goddess is iconographically identical to Māmakī (Fig. 4.66). She holds a *vajra,* Akṣobhya's *kula* symbol and Māmakī's root family symbol. The fluidity in the identity of Māmakī and Locanā and the placement of the Vairocana shrine may be deliberate to accommodate the ritual practices of both Akṣobhya-cycle and Vairocana-cycle *maṇḍalas.* For example, in the meditational cycles of the Guhyasamāja to which the Piṇḍikrama Maṇḍala belongs, Vairocana's *prajñā* is Locanā and Akṣobhya's as Māmakī in the generation stage of the *Maṇḍala.* In the completion stage (*utpannakrama*) the *prajñās* are reversed, with Akṣobhya paired with Locanā, and Vairocana with Māmakī/Vajradhāteśvarī. Regarding the iconography of the Buddhaśaktīs, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* states that the *prajñās* are Locanā, Māmakī, Pāndurā, and Tārā, beginning in the northeast.[135] This statement suggests that the original iconographic scheme for Svayambhū is a Vairocana-cycle *maṇḍala,* to which other layers of Tantric meditations were added.

In its present iconographic form and based on the idea of deliberate visual ambiguity, I interpret Svayambhū Mahācaitya iconography to embody both the Vairocana and Akṣobhya cycle meditation practices. The key to deciphering the symbolic meanings and making sense of the imagery is to realize that Tantric Buddhist imagery invariably employs multivalent interpretations, as illustrated in the extensive use of *saṁdhyā bhāṣā* ("twilight language") in the texts. These multiple layers of meanings are not mutually exclusive and largely depend on the practitioner's level of initiation and personal spiritual advancement. Following this argument, I suggest that the Svayambhū Mahācaitya's iconography itself reflects the hierarchic layers of meditational practices, from the basic Pañca Jina Maṇḍala, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. All three *maṇḍala,* as a hierarchic conception, may be interpreted increasing levels of esoteric teachings based on the practitioner's level of initiation. In this light, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala may be identified with the physical manifestation of Svayambhū Mahācaitya in the *sambhogakāya* form and is the generation stage (*utpatti krama*) or preliminary meditation to prepare the practitioners for the more complex *sahaja* practices that are taught in the Akṣobhya-cycle Maṇḍala. Indeed, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala meditation, according to commentarial literature as well as the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, is also

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interpreted within the Anuttara Yoga methods, paralleling the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala practices.

In analyzing Svayambhū's visual imagery, I suggest that the iconography and soteriological practices reflect progressively higher levels of Tantric methodologies. Given this premise of the Newar Buddhist technical practices, it seems appropriate that the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, with Mañjuśrī/Vairocana presiding may be interpreted as the generation stage while the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala is the completion stage of the Tantric meditational practices. This argument may be further substantiated by the fact that the two major *maṇḍalas* of Newar Buddhism are, indeed, a Vairocana-cycle *maṇḍala* (Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala) and an Akṣobhya-cycle *maṇḍala*, as we have seen in the visual imagery. As the premier Buddhist monument and ontology of the religion, Svayambhū Mahācaitya's iconographic program must also be reflective of the soteriological constructs of the religion. Using this interpretive framework to analyze the Mahācaitya's iconographic program, I would argue that both the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala are intricately connected and integral to the visual metaphor of the site. In fact, the Mahācaitya's iconography also represents the hierarchic layering of the Maṇḍalas, from the very basic to the more complex and esoteric forms. To the informed practitioner, Svayambhū's iconography therefore incorporates

the macrocosm of Newar Buddhist Tantric practices, that is, the *maṇḍalas* of Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara and Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi. Practitioners explained to me that these methodologies are two sides of the same coin—both explain the Enlightenment process thorough different metaphorical symbolism.[136] For example, the more visible Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala's "secret" or esoteric symbolism (based on the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra*) is, in fact, identical to the Anuttara Yoga exegesis of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. In essence, the iconographic program of the Mahācaitya allows for the multivalent readings of its symbolic meaning, based on the practitioner's individual level of understanding.

SYMBOLIC MEANINGS OF SVAYAMBHŪ ICONOGRAPHY

1. Interpreting Iconographic Program as Tantric Meditation Process

There are two possible ways of interpreting the iconographic program of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya in a technical Buddhological sense that incorporates the ideas of the Tantric Enlightenment process. I discussed earlier that the groundplan of the Mahācaitya replicates the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala. The iconographic program demonstrates the Buddhist Enlightenment process, symbolized through the five knowledges (*jñāna*) of a fully enlightened Buddha. Describing the meaning of Svayambhū Mahācaitya *Svayambhu Purāṇa* alludes to the metaphysical concepts of Mahāyāna

(specifically the Yogācāra system) and Vajrayāna Buddhism. The text specifies that the Jina Buddhas, who were manifested in the light rays of the Svayambhū Jyotirūpa, symbolize the five aggregates (*skanda*) while the *śaktīs* signify the five sense perceptions (*āyatana*). As is characteristic of Tantric soteriological methodologies, Newar Buddhism also postulates *yogic* practices and visualizations as essential tools to comprehend the true nature of reality, and *maṇḍalas* and *mantras* provide a means to conceptualize this process. The Mahācaitya's fundamental program as the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala reflects this meditation process, as indicated in the conceptual drawing of the iconography (Fig. 4.67).

The second conception of the *stūpa* is as the yogic meditation process, again a key concept in Tantric meditation practices. In the technical Tantric meditation process of the Kuṇḍalinī yogic system (or in this particular technical meditation cycle), there are five energy centers in the body called *cakras*, which are often represented as small discs located along the central *nāḍi* or energy channel that starts at the base of the spine, progressing to the top of the head. Through meditation and visualization practices, the *yogin* awakens each of the five *cakras* into a state of full consciousness. Thus, the Tantric meditation process realizes the identity of the individual (microcosm) with the macrocosm (Svayambhū).

The relationship of Svayambhū's iconographic program with the yogic *cakra* system is further emphasized by the placement of the five *purs* around the Mahācaitya. Each *pur* is associated with one of the five elements, hence corresponding to the five energy centers, or *cakras* of the body. During the ritual circumambulation of the Mahācaitya, practitioners generally circumambulate the *stūpa* three times, then visit the five *purs* and culminate their worship at Śāntipur, the esoteric shrine to Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī.[137] Because of the inherent iconographic program, the very act of circumambulation is itself reflective of the Tantric enlightenment process and the *yogic* soteriological methodology of Vajrayāna Buddhism.

2. Interpreting Svayambhū as the Body of the Primordial (Ādi) Buddha

The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* explicitly states that the Svayambhū is the Ādi Buddha, or Primordial Buddha of Newar Buddhism. The creation story attests to the Mahācaitya as the ontology of the religion. With this understanding and following the Yogācāra theory of the Buddha bodies, the Mahācaitya may be interpreted as the *svabhāvika kāya,* "the essence body," of the Buddhist *dharma,* the embodiment of *dharmadhātu,* and the ontology of the manifested Buddha bodies. This concept is reflected in the physical form of the *caitya,* with the *hārmikā* shown with the eyes of the all-seeing

Buddha, according to the Newar Buddhist tradition (see Fig. 4.67). Similarly, the upper levels of the *chattra* are also equated with the crown of the Buddhas. Hence, I interpret Svayambhū's morphological form is reflective of the textual understanding, and the Mahācaitya is called the *nirmāṇakāya* or physical body of the Svayambhū Bhagavān, the Primordial Buddha. The crowned Jina Buddhas are also represented in the *toraṇas*, symbolizing the *sambhogakāya,* or bliss-body, of the fully Enlightened Svayambhū Buddha. Thus, as the Ādi Buddha and *svabhāvika kāya,* the Svayambhū Buddha generates the three bodies (*trikāya*) manifestation of a fully enlightened being. How conception of the *trikāya* system is manifest in the Mahācaitya's iconographic program must be explored in some detail.

3. Hierarchic Layering of Mandalas and the Trikāya System: Pañca Jina, Dharmadhātu, and the Cakrasaṁvara Mandalas

To explain the nature (*svabhāva*) of the phenomenal world, the Yogācāra school of Mahāyāna Buddhism developed the concept of the *trikāya* (Three Bodies) system, and applied this concept to the Buddhist cosmology.[138] The three bodies (*kāya*)—*nirmāṇakāya,* (Form or Transformation Body), *sambhogakāya* (Bliss or Enjoyment Body), and *Dharmakāya* (Dharma Body)—are related to the different aspects of Buddhahood. The *nirmāṇakāya* refers to the earthly Buddhas that appear to show the practitioner the path

to Buddhahood. The *sambhogakāya* is the transcendent body that result from the merits of their *bodhisattva* vows. The *Dharmakāya* is the absolute nature of Buddhahood, symbolized by Vairocana. As the *svabhāvika kāya,* the "self-existent body", it is nature of ultimate reality, i.e., *śūnyatā*. In other words, only the Buddhas in their *dharma* body manifest the true essence of *tathāgatagarbha* and *dharmadhātu*, hidden within all sentient beings. According to the Buddhist thought, only the *Dharmakāya* in its aspect as *svabhāvika kāya* is real and can only be realized by the purified *bodhicitta*.

This complex understanding is alluded to in the iconographic program of the Mahācaitya, specifically in the hierarchic layering of the *maṇḍalas*. The Maṇḍalas in question are the Pañca Jina, Dharmadhātu, and the Cakrasaṁvara *maṇḍalas*. At the Mahācaitya, these *maṇḍalas* are progressively higher levels of Tantric Buddhist soteriological methodology—

from the most basic to highly complex Anuttara Yoga explications of the enlightenment process (Fig. 4.68). Each *maṇḍala* can be interpreted to correspond to the *trikāya* system.

At the simplest level, the groundplan of the Mahācaitya reflects the basic Pañca Jina Maṇḍala, the fundamental Tantric meditation tool that elaborates the five knowledges of a fully Enlightened Being, such as Śākyamuni. In level of understanding, Śākyamuni represents the totality of the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala and he manifest the *nirmāṇakāya* of the Fully

Enlightened Buddha. In the *bāhās/bāhīs,* this corresponds to the *kvāpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine, where Śākyamuni is the archetypical shrined deity.

At the intermediate level, the Mahācaitya's iconography is also intimately connected with the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇḍala. The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* as well as ritual context, as we discussed earlier, specifically allude to the buddhological identity between Svayambhū and Mañjusrī. The visual imagery at the Mahācaitya also emphasizes this buddhological statement. The inner core of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala virtually replicates the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala, with Dharmadhātu Mañjughoṣa equated with Mahāvairocana. In this technical understanding, the esoteric forms of the Jinas of the Dharmadhatu Maṇḍala manifest the *sambhogakāya* aspect. For the practitioners, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala pertains to the category of Tantric *maṇḍalas* that may be displayed in public, but whose secret symbolism and meaning can only be revealed through initiation and empowerment. In the *bāhās/bahī,* this pertains to the second level of the shrine façade, in which the struts and *toraṇas* represent the Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

Although generally not associated with the highly esoteric practices of the Anuttara Yoga Tantras, Svayambhū Mahācaitya is, nonetheless, intimately associated with the secret practices of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī. Generally not noted by scholars, the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala and its

practices are, indeed, present in the Mahācaitya context, particularly in connection to Śāntipur's esoteric rituals. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, the presence of Pratappur and Anantapur (dedicated to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī) directly in front of Svayambhū provides ample evidence that these esoteric practices are part of the Mahācaitya's ritual environment and iconographic symbolism. As the *maṇḍala* of the Anuttara Yoga Tantras that require Tantric initiation, the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala symbolizes the *dharmakāya,* manifest in *sambhogakāya form.* In the context of the *bāhā/bahīs,* this pertains to the *āgaṁ* shrine, where Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī are the archetypal deities.

The hierarchic layering of the three *maṇḍalas* related to Svayambhū's iconographic program that I have suggested is identical to the iconographic program found in the Newar Buddhist monasteries. The evidence presented will substantiate my argument that these three *maṇḍalas* and Svayambhū are fundamental to Newar Buddhist practice and visual symbolism.

SECTION IV: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MAHĀCAITYA IN THE RITUAL CONTEXT

The following section explores the Newar Buddhist understanding of the Mahācaitya as generator of sacred space. The information is based on

contemporary practices, published secondary sources, and an analysis of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa.*

Sacred Geography of Svayambhū Hill

In the ritual context and contemporary understanding, the Mahācaitya and its environs mirror the microcosm of the Buddhist universe. The physical mountain of Gosingu Parvat represents Mt. Meru, with the three realms of Kāmadhātu, Rupadhātu, and Arūpadhātu at the very summit, where the Mahācaitya is located. The pilgrimage sites related to Svayambhū are said to embody the Buddhist enlightenment process. For example, there are thirteen *tīrthas* or sacred pilgrimage sites associated directly with sacred shrines at Svayambhū.[139] These include the shrines to the Five Jinas, the five Buddhaśaktīs, Mañjuśrī, Yogāmvara,[140] and Hāritī (Fig. 4.69). The thirteenth *tīrtha* is unique, in that it is a surrogate pilgrimage site related to the Mahācaitya itself and is located at the confluence of two rivers, the Bhācākuśi and Viṣṇumatī. According to ritual tradition, the pilgrimage to the five Jina *tīrthas* is especially performed on the days when the sacred month of Guñla has five Wednesdays.[141] Further, all thirteen *tīrthas* are associated with a specific *nāgarājā* as well as *pīṭhas* "seats" of the deities, which are represented by natural outcroppings of rock. Most significant

among these are the *pīthas* associated with the five Jina Buddhas, namely the five Purs located at the summit of the hill.

The pilgrimage to these thirteen *tīrthas* is generally performed in the course of one year. The pilgrimage parallels that of the twelve *tīrthas* of the Valley that are specified in the *Svayambhū Purāna*, which are visited during the Aṣṭamī Vrata Pūjā to Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara. The pilgrimage performed by the devotees in visiting the thirteen *tīrthas* has multiple layers of symbolic meaning. On one level, it establishes to the practitioners the most significant deities in Newar Buddhist practice. On another, it also establishes the sacrality of the site as *Svayambhū kṣetra*. This conceptual mapping of the site reinforces the idea of Svayambhū as Mt. Meru and the cosmological Buddhist center through which the sacred geography of the Valley is generated. Visits to these sacred sites reify the creation myth that transcends time and space. The spatial ordering reinforces not only the sacrality of the monument, but also renders the environs of the Svayambhū Hill sacred.

Sacred Buddhist Geography of the Valley

That the Svayambhū Purāna articulates the conception of the Valley as a *mandala* is the basic premise of the sacred Buddhist geography. The theoretical framework proposed by the cosmogonic legend defines the Valley

as a maṇḍalic space and also specifies the sacred sites throughout the Valley as generated by Svayambhū Mahācaitya. Further, Newar Buddhist ritual practices clearly incorporate the idea of the Kathmandu Valley as a *maṇḍala* and reifies the sacred geography in the Newar Buddhist tradition. At the beginning of any *pūjā* performed by a Vajrācārya priest, both esoteric and exoteric, the officiant formally performs a rite called the statement of intention (*saṁkalpa*), which locates the ritual within the confines of the sacred space of the Kathmandu Valley. This ritual precedes the Guru Maṇḍala Pūjā to Vajrasattva—the basic ritual performed during every *pūjā*.

The Guru Maṇḍala *pūjā*, and specifically the *saṁkalpa* ritual, clearly defines the Kathmandu Valley as a sacred maṇḍalic space, with Svayambhū as the generator.

The *saṁkalpa* recitation is as follows:

Oṁ to Vajrasatva [*six*]
Oṁ to the auspicious beginning presided by the Three Jewels of the Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha

Oṁ Hṛim Svāhā (3)
Body purification Svāhā

In the period of Śākyasimha Tathāgata, in the present time of the Bhadrakalpa, in the world system of the Saha world, in the Manu-age called Sun-born (*vaivasata*), in the first part of the Kali Yuga that comes after Satya, Tretā, and Dvāpara Yugas, in the northern Pañcāla country of the Bharata continent (*bharata khaṇḍa*), in the Himālayas in the region of the Vāsukī Nāgarājā, in the *Pīṭha* called Upacchandoha, in the sacred land of South Asia (*āryavrata*), in the home of the Karkoṭaka Nāgarājā, the king of serpents, in the great lake called Nāgavāsa, the dwelling of the great snakes, in the place first visited by Vipaśvī Tathāgata, in the place of Self-Created Svayambhū Lotus, that thus became Śrī Jyotirūpa Svayambhū *caitya*, which is presided over by Śrī Guhyeśvarī Prajñāpāramitā, in the land presided over by Śrī Mañjuśrī and the Seven Tathāgatas, in the Nepal Maṇḍala which has the form of the Śrī Saṁvara

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(Cakrasaṃvara) *maṇḍala*, which is equated to the land Sudūrjayā, adorned by the Eight Vaitarāgas, namely Maṇiligeśvara, Gokarneśvara, Kīleśvara, Kumbheśvara, Garteśvara, Phaṇikeśvara, Gandheśvara, and Vikrameśvara, where the four great rivers, namely Krakacanda-created Vāgmatī, Keśāvatī, Maṇimatī, Prabhāvatī flow; adorned by the Twelve Tīrthas, namely Puñya Tīrtha, Śānta Tīrtha, Śaṅkhara Tīrtha, Rāja Tīrtha, Manohara Tīrtha, Nīrmāla Tīrtha, Nidhāna Tīrtha, Jñāna Tīrtha, Cintāmaṇi Tīrtha, Pramodha Tīrtha, Sulakṣaṇa Tīrtha, and Jaya Tīrtha, surrounded by the four great mountains, Jāmāco, Siphuco, Pulācco, and Dhyānaco, adorned by Vajrayoginī and the like [Vajrayoginī, Khaḍga Yoginī, Vidyādharī, and Guhyeśvarī], along with the *yoginīs* and *gaṇas* and where the Aṣṭa Mātṛkās, Aṣṭa Bhairavas, Simhinī, Vyāghriṇī, Ganeśa, Kumāra, Mahākāla, Hāritī, Hanumāna, and Ten Krodhas reside, located on the southern bank of the Bāgmatī, on the eastern bank of the Keśāvatī, on the western bank of the Maṇirohiṇī, on the northern banks of the Prabhāvati, here within Nepal Maṇḍala, in the city of Lalitapattan, in the kingdom of Aryavalokiteśvara, in the place of Śrī Mañjuśri Parvata and Gopuccha Parvata, in this auspicious [. . . .] season, month, time of month (dark/bright half) date, week, and planetary position, at this [. . .] time, at this [. . . .] Mahāvihāra, of this...*vaṃsa*, and at this date [. . .] performing the offering to Sūrya (*ādityagraha piṇḍa*), Śri Kuladevatā, [*iṣṭadevatā*] Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, Cakrasaṃvara, Vajravārāhī with their *gaṇas*, with ritual procedures, I offer this flower as proof of my intentions."[142]

The major part of the *saṃkalpa* recitation outlines the sacred Buddhist geography of Newar Buddhism. First, it refers to the Kathmandu Valley as "Nepal Maṇḍala", and locates it within the larger sacred geography of South Asia (*āryavrata*), as part of the Bharata continent, north of the Pāñcāla country in the Himālayas. This conceptual scheme of the Kathmandu Valley as sacred *maṇḍalic* space is also shared by the Hindu texts such as the *Nepāla Mahātmya*, which also describe the Valley as the land of Vāsukī, presided over by Śiva and Pārvatī, in their respective forms as Paśupati and Guhyeśvarī.[143]

The recitation also identifies the Valley with the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala that is presided over by Guhyeśvarī Prajñāpāramitā. Furthermore,

it states that the Upacchaṇḍoha *pīṭha* is within the Valley, which further relates it to the conception of the Valley as a Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala.[144]   It defines the connections between Svayambhū, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, and Guhyeśvarī in the spatial construct of the Valley.   Furthermore, the statement explicitly defines the three major elements of the religious practice, namely, Svayambhū, Dharmadhātu, and the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala.   I will discuss the connection of Guhyeśvarī and Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala in Chapter Six.

Finally, the *saṃkalpa* statement specifically demarcates the various sacred sites around the Valley, namely the Four Sacred Mountains, the Four Holy Rivers, the Twelve Tīrthas, the Eight Vaitarāgas, and the Four Yoginī Pīṭhas.   The details of worship, ritual practice, and pilgrimage associated with each of these sites are specifically described in the ritual texts.   The sacred origins of these sites are intricately connected with the creation myth of the Valley as described in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*.

In a ritual context, such as the Guru Maṇḍala Pūjā and *saṃkalpa* ritual, where the *pūjā* is offered by the laity and the statement of intention is recited by the Vajrācārya priest to the ordinary Newar Buddhist laity, the notion of the Kathmandu Valley as sacred space is a conceptual and ideological one.   The use of the sacred spaces that are defined in the

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saṁkalpa pūjā are interacted with directly by the laity through the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*.

The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* lays out the sacred Buddhist geography of the Valley, giving the sacred history of the sites in connection with the creation myth of the Valley. It discuses in detail how these sites became important and how these are to be conceptualized by the laity, particularly the importance of various pilgrimage sites around the Valley. Thus the narratives in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* deal directly with many of the sacred pilgrimage sites around the Valley. For the lay Buddhist community, these narratives serve as ritual guides to pilgrimage practices around the Valley. We shall discuss the various sites according to the categories stated in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*. These are the Twelve *Tīrthas*, the Four *Yoginī Pīṭhas*, the Eight Vaitarāgas, the Four Sacred Mountains, and the Four Sacred Rivers. I will briefly review the sacred geography in the following section.

(1) Twelve Tīrthas

The Buddhist pilgrimage of the twelve bathing places in the Kathmandu Valley is called the *Dvādaśa Tīrtha*. The term *tīrtha* in the Newar Buddhist context: is different from its usual understanding in the larger Indic context. In India, Buddhist pilgrimage centers are generally referred to as *pīṭha* (literally 'seat' of *kuśa* grass belonging to a deity or holy

teacher), while the term *tīrtha* (literally 'ford at a confluence of rivers') is generally associated with Hindu pilgrimage sites. In Nepal, however, the term *pīṭha* is used only to designate the sacred sites of the Goddess, while *tīrtha* refers to both Buddhist and Hindu pilgrimage sites, generally located at the confluence of rivers.

The group of twelve *tīrthas* collectively known as *Dvādaśa tīrtha* is among the most popular Buddhist pilgrimage sites for the laity.[145] As mentioned in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, these sacred sites are located at the confluence of two or three rivers, the primary river being one of the two sacred rivers created by the fourth Mānuśi Buddha, Krakucchanda Tathāgata, in order to ordain his disciples. These rivers are known by the names Vākmatī (Bāgmatī) and Keśāvatī (Viṣṇumatī). As the Bāgmatī is the primary river of the Valley and eventually flows into the Ganges, the sacredness of this river is acknowledged by both Hindus and Buddhists.

The holy sites at the confluence of rivers are sacred to both Buddhists and Hindus. These sites are often 'dangerous' or powerful regions situated at the periphery and away from the center that is Svayambhū. Both "inauspicious" (polluting rituals related to birth, death, and purification) and auspicious rituals are performed at these peripheral sites. As cremation grounds, these *tīrthas* are the places where the inauspicious rituals, such as the *srāddha* and *piṇḍa* offerings for the ancestors, are performed. On the

other hand, ritual purification by bathing in these *tīrthas* acquire merit (*puñya*) for the devotees. The *tīrthas* therefore symbolize the location of a realm in which both purifying and impure rituals take place. Although associated with impurity, the presence of death at these sites is important. By dying or being cremated at a *tīrtha*, the individual gains merit that will help to improve his or her rebirth in the next life. In addition, through the auspicious bathing rituals devotees can purify themselves. This process also allows devotees to gain merit. Therefore, for the devotee, the physical pilgrimage to the *tīrthas* is essential in his or her spiritual progress. Stories of Tantric *siddhas* attaining magical powers are also associated with the cremation grounds. These dangerous places are also connected with the Tantric goddesses, such as the Aṣṭamātṛkās, who provide the practitioner with the *siddhi* powers.[146]

In the Newar Buddhist context, the pilgrimage and ritual offerings at the twelve *tīrthas* are clearly specified in the religious ritual texts.[147] There are specific lists associated with each site, such as type of offerings (flowers, incense, jewel, color, cloth, fruits, gifts etc.), texts to be recited, specific text to be recited at each site, an evil to be abandoned, and a state of mind to be cultivated. The texts also mention the *nāga* and a *yoginī pīṭha* associated with each site.

The most important activity in the *tīrthas* is the annual bathing pilgrimage through which the pilgrim undergoes an act of purification. As the pilgrimage performed in conjunction with the Aṣṭamī Vrata to Amoghapāśa, each of the twelve *tīrthas* is visited once a month in a year-cycle, starting from the month of Śrāvan, beginning with the Puñya Tīrtha at Gokarna and ending with the Jaya Tīrtha at Nakhu in Patan.[148] At the end of the year, the devotees have completed the pilgrimage circuit that encircles the entire Valley. For those pilgrims not capable of doing the year's cycle, there is an abbreviated version of annual bathing pilgrimage, where all twelve *tīrthas* are visited during the month of Kārttika. This pilgrimage cycle starts with the full moon (*purṇimā/Sakimila Punhī*) and ends with the next full moon (*Thilā punhī*). These sites are circumambulated in a conceptual clockwise direction, as the actual locations of the sites do not conform precisely to a circular clockwise layout. During this pilgrimage worship, the cosmogonic myth is often recited at each *tīrtha* and the Valley's sacred geography is also reiterated.

An important category associated with these *tīrthas* is the *yoginī pīṭhas* of the twelve *matṛkās*, or Mother Goddesses. In Nepal, the *aṣṭamātṛkās* or the Eight Mother Goddess demarcate sacred space as a *maṇḍalic* diagram, both in the larger Valley proper and also in the three cities of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur.[149] That these *tīrthas* are

associated with the twelve *matṛkā/yoginī pīṭhas* also suggests that the pilgrimage route of the twelve *tīrthas* are conceptually a *maṇḍalic* space, specifically related to Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. How these *mātṛkā pīṭhas* conceptualize the sacred construct of the Valley as the Cakrasaṁvara *maṇḍala* will be further discussed in Chapter Six.

(2) *Upa Tīrthas:* Navaratha Melā and Pañcaka Melā

In addition to major pilgrimage to the *tīrthas*, there are two pilgrimage festivals that are important to the Newar Buddhist laity. These are generally referred to as *upa tīrthas*, suggesting a secondary type of pilgrimage route during Dasain/Mohani. *Dasain*, the most important annual festival for the Hindus, is celebrated for nine days as *navarātrī* and generally falls on the tenth day of the bright half of the month of *Āświn (āświn śukla ekādasī)*. Newar Hindus call Dasain "*Mohanī*. The Newar Buddhist also celebrate Mohanī in a Buddhist context as an important pilgrimage festival, related to the *mātṛkās*.[150] Newar Buddhists celebrate Mohanī by performing Tantric rituals to their *iṣṭadevatā*. Gellner states that Newar Buddhists interpret Mohanī's tenth day ("Tenth Day of Victory" [*vijayā Daśamī*]) as the day when King Aśoka defeated the inhabitants of Kalinga, repented and became a Buddhist.[151] In the city of Kathmandu during Mohanī, there is a Buddhist pilgrimage practice called *Navaratha Melā* that starts on first day

of the bright half of Āświn (*Āświn śukla pratipadā*) and continues for nine days. The pilgrimage ends on the tenth day of Mohanī by visiting Guhyeśvarī at the Śānta Tīrtha. The Buddhist pilgrims celebrate Mohanī by visiting ten holy bathing sites, also called *tīrthas*, which are a different list from the group of twelve Tīrthas of the *Dvādaśa tīrtha*. While some of the names overlap, there are other sacred sites that are added during the *Navaratha Melā*. As with the twelve Tīrthas, the Buddhist texts are very specific to the type of offerings given at these sites.

Another important bathing pilgrimage of the Newar Buddhists is the *Pañcaka Melā*, which corresponds in date to the Hindu festival of Lakṣmī Pūjā. It begins on the thirteenth day of the dark half of the month of Kārttika and ends on the second day of the bright half of Kārttika. Like the *Navaratha Melā,* devotees go to the confluence of rivers and perform the bathing ceremony.

(4) Four *Yoginī Pīthas*

In Nepal, a *pīṭha* is invariably associated with *śakti* or the Goddess. Although different sets of eight *mātṛkā* ("mother goddess") *pīṭhas* are located around the Kathmandu Valley, four major *yoginī pīṭhas* are located on mountain tops. These are the major shrines to Guhyeśvarī, Vajrayoginī, Khaḍgayoginī, and Vidyādharī. In Nepal, these *yoginī pīṭhas* are the clearest

example of a sacred space that is propitiated by both Hindus and Buddhists practitioners. The sacrality of the site and the power of the *yoginīs* are acknowledged by both the Hindus and the Buddhists, but the deities' specific identity and religious affiliation remain distinct, based on the ritual context and the practitioner's individual mindset and identity. For example, in Hindu context, the *yoginī pīṭha* of Guhyeśvarī in Deopatan is dedicated to Pārvatī/Satī Devi, the consort of Śiva. Invoked by her epithets, Guhyakālī or Kubjikā, Guhyeśvarī is attended by high-class Hindu Newar priests (Karmācāryas). This same site is equally significant for the Newar Buddhist, and Guhyeśvarī is a Tantric Buddhist *yoginī,* who is equated with Prajñapāramitā, the Mother of All Buddhas and the *sambhogakāya* of the primordial goddess (Ādi Śaktī).[152] In this context, she is a Fully Enlightened Being that is the source of all things. The commonality in both religious traditions and the key to understanding the significance of the *yoginīs* in the Tantric nature of the site, however, interpreted in different contexts. The relationship of the Four Yoginīs and Vajravārāhī in the Newar Buddhist tradition will be discussed in Chapter Six.

(4) Eight Vaitarāgas

A second pilgrimage tradition in Newar Buddhism is of the Eight Vaitarāgas or the "Eight Passionless Ones". The eight sacred sites are

dedicated to the Eight Great Bodhisattvas, who had mastered their passions and attained immortality, and exist at these sites for the benefit of all sentient beings.[153] These sacred sites are generally situated within the confines of a Hindu temple complex, specifically at Śiva shrines. At the *yoginī pīṭhas* the name and identity of the goddess in the Hindu and Buddhist tradition are the same, but interpreted in different contexts. In constrast, for the Eight Vaitarāgas the same site is shared by both Hindu and Buddhist, but the deity *(liṅga)* presented as Śiva has the identification of the Eight Great Bodhisattva grafted on by the Newar Buddhists. Further, the Bodhisattvas associated with each site are symbolized by one of the eight Aṣṭamaṅgala signs.

Inscriptional evidence found during my fieldwork attests to the association of these Śaivite temples with a given Bodhisattva. In all eight shrines, there were metal plaques nailed to the door or lintel of the Śiva shrine, stating both the name of the Bodhisattva as well as the particular Vitarāga.[154] For example, At Chāngu Narāyana, the enshrined *liṅga* was worshipped as Sāmantabhadra Bodhisattva in his form as "Kileśvara", an epithet of Śiva. Furthermore, textual evidence, particularly ritual texts, reiterates this tradition of identifying Hindu sites as Buddhist power-places with distinct Buddhist implications. Unlike the annual pilgrimage cycle of the Twelve Tīrthas, the pilgrimage to the Eight Vaitarāgas is

closely associated with the Aṣṭamī Vratas and are performed throughout six months of the year, beginning in the month of Śrāvan (similar to the beginning of the Twelve Tīrthas) and ending in the winter month of Māgha. As with the *tīrthas*, each site has a specific type of offering, text to be recited, *nāga*, and benefit associated with it. Further, the pilgrimage route also conceptually outlines the sacred space in a form of a circle, circumambulating the Valley. During my field research, I also found that the ritual *maṇḍalas* to Amoghapāśa is often encircled by the eight *aṣṭamaṅgala* signs placed in a small *kalaśa*, suggesting the symbolic association of the Aṣṭamahābodhisattvas and *aṣṭamaṅgala*.

(5) Four Mountain Tops

The four sacred mountains that surround the Kathmandu Valley are related to the creation story, specifically with the visits of the Seven Mānuśi Buddhas. Each Buddha is associated with the particular mountain top where he stayed when the Valley was still a great lake. The fifth mountain top is the location of Svayambhū Mahācaitya at Gopuccha Parvata, the most important sacred site for all Newar Buddhists in the Valley. To sum briefly, these are the acts of the Mānuśi Buddhas and the mountains associated with them[155]:

4. Vipaśvi Tathāgata: sowed the seed of the 1000 petalled lotus Svayambhū Dharmadhātu, which took root at Guhyeśvarī; stayed at Mt. Jāmāco.

5. Śikhi Tathāgata: Absorbed into Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Jyotirūpa; stayed at Dhyānāco.

6. Viśvabhū Tathāgata: Offered flowers to Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Jyotirūpa; stayed at Mt. Phulocca.

7. Krakucchanda Tathāgata: Created sacred rivers Vākmatī and Keśāvatī; stayed at Mt. Siphuco.

8. Kanakamuni Tathāgata: Visited Svayambhū caitya; lived at Svayambhū Parvata.

9. Kāśyapa Tathāgata: Taught at Svayambhū Hill.

10. Śākyamunī Tathāgata: Taught and visited Svayambhū Hill at Pulān Svayambhū and took darśan of Guhyeśvarī

Interpreting the Sacred Geography and its Relationship to Pilgrimage and Soteriology

To the Newar Buddhist practitioner, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* serves the principal textual source that delineates the ways in which *puñya* (merit) can be acquired and the bodhisattva path cultivated. The fact that the Valley is maṇḍala, is central to way in which Newar Buddhists are able to interact with the constructed geographic *maṇḍala* and become purified as a result.

The ritual purification of the Body, Speech, and Heart/Mind of the practitioner through meditation that is integral to the Tantric tradition is also reified during the pilgrimage process and in physically visiting the sacred sites and circumambulating the Valley. In other words, through an identification of the sacred geography (macrocosm) with the individual (microcosm), purification and salvation of the practitioner can occur. Through performance of pilgrimage to the sacred sites that are outlined in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, the devotees can gain merit for themselves or their family members better rebirth in their next life. At the simplest level, the pilgrimage to the *tīrthas* and sacred sites, the practitioner gains the specific type of merit that is associated with each site.

Technical practices are often associated with the purification of the body as described in the *saṃkalpa* ritual of the Guru Maṇḍala Pūjā, while lay pilgrimage practices are often thought of as a way to gain merit. However, through the conceptualization of the Valley as the macrocosm, purification and merit can be attained by both groups of people. Through the recitation of the Guru Maṇḍala *pūjā* dedicated to the primordial *guru* Vajrasattva, the Vajrācārya priest purifies himself and ultimately becomes Vajrasattva.[156] One can interpret then, by defining the sacred geography of the Valley during the ritual process of the saṃkalpa, the priest also participates in the pilgrimage process by invoking the sacred geography of the Valley before

him. By calling forth the sacred pilgrimage sites, he mentally performs the pilgrimage process. Like the devotee who physically participates in the process, the priest gains the merit associated with the pilgrimage process. More importantly, the ritual defining of the Valley continually establishes Svayambhū and Guhyeśvarī as the ontological source of the religion.

Similarly, through the pilgrimage process, the practitioner not only attains merit, but, as I suggest, may also be engaging directly in a process of meditative purification. Just as the Vajrācārya is purified through the recitation of the Guru Maṇḍala pūjā and participation in the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala via the defining of the sacred geography, so also does the pilgrim participate in the maṇḍala, and therefore, benefit from the purification of their Body, Speech, and Heart/Mind. For both the priest and the pilgrim, the Newar Buddhist religious goals of purification and the attainment of merit are gained via the sacred, maṇḍalic geography of the Valley. As Gellner notes:

> "Such practices as these make clear that the maṇḍala model applies equally to the universe as a whole, to the country Nepal, to each city, to each temple and shrine, and Tantrically to the worshipper's own body. The realization of one's own identity with these larger designs is the attainment of salvation."[157]

SECTION V: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MAHĀCAITYA IN THE BĀHĀ/BAHĪ CONTEXT

Svayambhū Mahācaitya as Lineage Deity

Svayambhū Mahācaitya's ritual association with the *bāhā/bahīs* of the Valley is established through the physical layout of these religious monuments. As discussed in Chapter Three, the sacred space of the *bāhā/bahīs* is generated through the presence of the central "*Svayambhū caitya*" as the vivifying element of the structure and the symbolic hypostatis of the Mahācaitya. In other words, the sacred space of *bāhā/bahīs* is conceptualized as microcosm of the larger macrocosm generated by Svayambhū.

For many bāhā/bahīs, the Mahācaitya is the lineage deity (*digu dyaḥ*) of many *bāhā/bahīs*. It is precisely in the context of the lineage deities that the symbolic connection of Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the *bāhās* of the Kathmandu Valley are articulated. The lineage deity of a *bāhā*, by definition, not only traces a common ancestor and migration patterns of the *saṅgha* members, but in a buddhological context it also traces the ontological source of power. In Newar Buddhism, it is an *a priori* assumption that the Svayambhū Mahācaitya is the symbolic source of the religion. What this means to the Newar Buddhist practitioners and how this is articulated can

perhaps be best understood by analyzing the symbolic connection of Svayambhū and the *bāhā* organization.

The De Ācārya Guthi of the eighteen *mu bāhās* of Kathmandu is intimately connected with Svayambhū, specifically with the Tantric shrine of Śāntipur, located to the north of the Mahācaitya. Each year, the governing body of the *guthi* is required to meet at Śāntipur, the secret shrine established by Śāntikarācārya, the first Vajrācārya priest of Newar Buddhism, whom all Vajrācāryas consider their spiritual preceptor. As the central locus of power for the ritual specialists, the annual *pūjā* ritually links the entire Vajrācārya *saṅgha* of Kathmandu with Śāntipur and Svayambhū, and in turn, empowers the Vajrācāryas with the ability to perform their rituals with efficacious effectiveness. Furthermore, the *pūjā* also emphasizes Svayambhū Mahācaitya's pivotal role for the Vajrācāryas and the *bāhās* of Kathmandu. A brief analysis of the ritual procedures of the annual *pūjā* will indicate the key position of Svayambhū and Śāntipur as the symbolic source of power for the Vajrācāryas of Kathmandu.

During the annual *pūjā* of the De Ācārya Guthi that falls on the bright half of the month of Caitra, the elders of the *guthi* perform a *kalaśa pūjā* in front of the Amitābha shrine at Svayambhū Mahācaitya, followed by a Tantric *pūjā* in Śāntipur.[158] At the end of the *pūjā,* the elders formally receive into the Ācārya Guthi all new initiates who have received *ācā luegu*

("making of the ācārya") in the past year. In acknowledgment of their status as empowered Vajrācāryas and as witnesses, the initiates offer betel nuts to Svayambhū Mahācaitya and to the elders of the *guthi*. Then, the Vajrācāryas and their families gather for a feast, which is followed by another pūjā in the open space below Svayambhū (Bhuikhel) in honor of the eighty-four mahāsiddhas of the Tantric Buddhist tradition.[159] The next day, a Tantric *pūjā* is performed at the *āgaṁ* of one of the eighteen bāhās of Kathmandu to "bring" Vajrasattva to the city of Kathmandu. To conclude this pūjā, the Vajrācāryas go back to Svayambhū Mahācaitya, perform a *pūjā* there and partake of a feast.

In Newar Buddhism, Vajrācārya priests maintain strong symbolic associations with Śāntikarācārya, who is the *nirmāṇakāya* form of Vajrasattva. As the first Vajrācārya and root *guru* who enshrined Svayambhū Mahācaitya in the form of a *stūpa* and established the five *purs*, Śāntikarācārya is the archetype of the Vajrācārya priest and *siddha* in Newar Buddhism. Tracing their *gurukula* or lineage of *gurus* from Vajrasattva, Guṇākara (Śāntikarācārya's *guru*), Śāntikarācārya to their immediate *guru*, the Vajrācāryas, in ritual contexts, are thus equated with the *nirmāṇakāya* of Vajrasattva. The annual *pūjā* affirms this symbolic status through their ritual association with Śāntipur and Śāntikarācārya, and, precisely through this connection, both directly and indirectly,

acknowledges Svayambhū as the empowering source. Just as the lineage deities are "brought" into the *bāhās* to empower the *saṅgha* members and sacred space, similarly, by "pulling" or "bringing" Vajrasattva, and implicitly Śāntikarācārya as source of power into the city of Kathmandu, the De Ācārya Guthi acknowledges Svayambhū and Śāntipur as the symbolic center of Newar Buddhism.

Svayambhū Mahācaitya's Relationship with Kathmandu Bāhās

The Kathmandu bāhās relationship and connection with Svayambhū can be further highlighted through the lineage deities (*digu dyaḥ*) of the eighteen bāhās of the Ācārya Guthi of Kathmandu. Out of the eighteen, eleven bāhās trace their lineage deity to Svayambhū or its symbolic surrogate.[160] Among these eleven, the six *bāhās* located in the oldest part of the city in the Lower Quarter are directly connected with Svayambhū Mahācaitya as the lineage deity. In addition, Sikhāmu Bāhā, the most important among the eighteen *bāhās* and has ritual associations with Kumārī Bāhā and the old Malla palace also has Svayambhū Mahācaitya as the lineage deity. A pattern, therefore, appears to emerge: The oldest and most prominent *bāhās* trace their lineage to Svayambhū.

The other common lineage deity is the enshrined *caitya* at Sankhu in the compound of the Khaḍga Yoginī shrine. It is a "*svayambhū caitya*",

meaning a "self-existent caitya", and is often referred to as "*Dharmadhātu caitya*". During the lineage *pūjā*, the main ritual is performed at the *caitya*, although Khaḍga Yoginī also receives *pūjā* and propitiation.[161] On one level, ritual identity between Gum Bāhā *caitya* and Svayambhū seems to be implied, but what is significant here are the historical connections that the Gum Bāhā *caitya* may have with the *bāhās* of Kathmandu. Gum Bāhā was one of the earliest, pre-Licchavi Buddhist sites in the Valley, and the remnants of ancient rock-cut caves and *caityas* around the complex provide evidence for the antiquity of this monastic institution. The primary object of worship remaining from the original monastery is the enshrined Gum Bāhā *caitya* that now shares the courtyard with the temple of Khaḍga Yoginī / Ugra Tārā, a prominent *yoginī* shrine of the Valley and one of the four *yoginī* shrines of the Newar Buddhists. A testament of its antiquity is the low hemispheric form of the *caitya* that is reminiscent of the early *stūpas* of Sanchi and Bhārhut. Now enshrined in a temple dating to the Malla period, the original *caitya* appears to be shaped out of a natural outcropping of rock.[162]

As a lineage deity of many *bāhās* of Kathmandu and Patan, the Gum Bāhā *caitya* may be significant for three reasons: 1), its ritual association with Svayambhū, as a symbolic surrogate, further connects the Kathmandu *bāhās* with the Mahācaitya; 2) there may be historical connections between

Gum Bāhā and the *bāhās* of Kathmandu, particularly in patterns of settlement, as, indeed, Guṁ Bāhā still had remains of caves that once served as resident for monks; and 3) following the Tantric tradition, the *bāhās* recognizes the power of the *yoginī* shrines that play an important role in Newar Buddhist ontology, in this case, the shrine is connected to the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajrvārāhī practices.

Talismanic Functions of Svayambhū and its Connection to State Protection

In the Valley, Svayambhū, and specifically Śāntipur, are intimately connected with rituals of talismanic state protection and kingship. Among the *mu bāhās* of Kathmandu that articulate further symbolic associations with Svayambhū, Sikhāmu Bāhā in the Royal Quarter is of particular significance. Said to have been founded by the legendary *siddha,* Lilāvajra, the *bāhā's* prominence and historical importance is attested to the fact that the Rāj Gubhāju, or Royal Vajrācārya priest, is chosen among the Vajrācāryas of the this *bāhā*.[163]   Although the kings of Nepal have been largely Hindus, the royal Buddhist priest (*rāj gubhāju*) is officially decreed to take charge of rituals associated with state protection and maintains the royal powers. An important ritual position decreed by royal patronage, the Rāj Gubhaju is in charge of the *pūjā* at Svayambhū performed by the *Dasadigācāryas,* "The Ācāryas of the Ten Directions". The name of the

Dasadigācāryas derives from the fact that traditionally these ten Vajrācāryas were called to go anyplace within the kingdom to perform various talismanic rituals, particularly in face of natural disasters such as famine, drought or flood.[164] In the late Malla period, the royal *dasadigācāryas* was in charge of performing the daily *nitya pūjā* at Svayambhū Mahācaitya, and according to the oral tradition, no one could offer *pūjā* to the Mahācaitya until the offerings of the Ten Ācāryas have been made.[165]

Furthermore, whenever the Svayambhū Mahācaitya has to repaired, the royally appointed Rāj Gubhāju is still required perform a special *pūjā* (*kṣemā pūjā*) before the work can begin. The inscription at Svayambhū dated N.S. 492 (1372 C.E.) refers to the repairs made to the Mahācaitya after the attacks of Samsuddhin Ilyas in the fourteenth century, and mentions the dedication ceremonies performed by Paṇḍita Vajrācārya, Śrī Jñānakīrti Senapada of Sikomagunhi Vihāra [Sikhamu Bāhā], the royal Vajracarya priest.[166] The additional responsibilities of the Royal Gubhaju at the Svayambhū Mahācaitya include the annual *pūjās* performed at Pratappur and Anantapur, the two Tantric shrine built by Pratap Malla and his wife. Only the Raj Gubhaju is allowed to enter the shrine and offer *pūjā* to Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī/Ekajaṭī.

Aside from his capacity as Rāj Gubhāju that enables him to perform *pūjās* in the personal esoteric shrines of Pratap Malla and his wife,

Anantaprīyā and in Śāntipur, the royal priest's symbolic role as Vairocana in the group of five Vajrācāryas called the *Pañca Buddha*, is ritually important. Although now the *Pañca Buddha* symbolizing the five Jina Buddhas figure only during the annual Kumārī Jātra in Kathmandu, their symbolic role in a ritual context was significant until the late Malla period.[167] Sikhāmu Bāhā's association with Svayambhū as lineage deity qualified the *sangha* to be chosen to represent the *Pañca Buddha*s.

The *Pañca Buddha* group in Kathmandu may also have interesting symbolic associations with the governing body of *bāhā* elders. Unlike in Patan, where the ten elders of *mu bāhās* are usually referred to as the Daśapāramitās,[168] in contrast, the elders of Kathmandu are generally five, representing the *Pañca Buddha* and symbolizing the enlightenment process in Tantric Buddhism. Thus, the *Pañca Buddha* group may have served as archetype for the governing elders (*āju*) of the *mu bāhās*.

Another important Kathmandu *bāhā* closely associated with Svayambhū Mahācaitya and Śāntipur is Makhan Bāhā. The sacred history of the *bāhā* recalls that the monastery was founded by Śāntikarācārya, and hence, legitimizes the fact that the elder of the *bāhā* is required to perform *pūjā* at Śāntipur.[169] Although this *pūjā* was the privilege of Musum Bāhā until the time of King Lakṣminarasimha Malla (N.S.737-761), the father of Pratāp Malla,[170] at present, it is the duty of the senior elder of Makhan Bāhā,

accompanied by the senior Thakāli from Svayambhū to perform the *pūjā* at Śāntipur twice a month, on the tenth day of the month and on the full moon. These rituals are mandatory to ensure state protection, kingship, and proper functioning of the cosmic order.[171] At times of drought, the senior priest from Makhan Bāhā is required to perform a special *pūjā* for the *nāgas*, as they possess the book containing the rituals of *nāga sādhana,* written with the blood of the *nāgas* and instructed by Śāntikarācārya himself. The inscription of an undated painting depicting Pratap Malla's entrance to Śāntipur in order to bring rain to Kathmandu states that the king took with him one Bare (Śākya) from Svayambhū and one Vajrācārya from Makhan Bāhā.[172] This tradition continues to the present at Śāntipur, where the head Thakāli of the Buddhācārya priest of Svayambhū and the senior Vajrācārya from Makhan are required to perform a monthly *pūjā* for the benefit and well-being of the entire country.[173]

Newar *Siddha* Tradition in Kathmandu City and Its Relationship with Svayambhū

The Kathmandu city's four divisions are also symbolically associated with Svayambhū. Specifically, each division of the *Ācārya guthi* is connected with four Tantric *siddhas,* who are said to be Śāntikarācārya's direct disciples. They are: Vākvajra, associated with the Upper Quarter; Suratvajra

with the Central Quarter; Mañjuvaja with Lower Quarter; and, Lilāvajra with the Palace Quarter. Although there is no reliable written evidence concerning the dates and lives of these Newar *siddhas*, local stories claims each of these *siddhas* to have founded one of the eighteen *bāhās*, as the spiritual heirs of Śāntikarācārya.[174] Through these Tantric preceptors, the eighteen *bāhās* of Kathmandu further trace their lineage to Śāntikarācārya, and ultimately to Svayambhū.[175] The tradition of the Newar *siddhas* is a fundamental aspect of Newar Buddhist practice, and an area worthy of study. Despite some problematic factual discrepancies that emerge as is typical of oral tradition,[176] I will provide a brief review of the lives of these Newar Tantric *siddhas,* whose tradition is relatively unknown to Western scholarship. Furthermore, this important tradition among the Newar Buddhists will also illustrate the connection with Svayambhū and the *bāhās* of Kathmandu.

According to the Newar practitioner of Kathmandu, Vākvajra said to be contemporary of King Narendradeva and is generally associated with Kvā Bāhā in Kathmandu.[177] He has special connections with Sigha Bāhā and the "Kāthesimbhu" *caitya.* Through his Tantric powers, he "brought" the Svayambhū Caitya from Kāśi to Kathmandu, where Māmakī resided in a *kalaśa* or *ghaṭa.* Hence, the *caitya* was called Śāntighaṭa Caitya.[178] More popularly, the *caitya* is also known as "Kathesimbhu"—the "Svayambhū of

Kathmandu" and is the symbolic surrogate of Svayambhū Mahācaitya (see Fig. 2.29 and Fig 4.70). The form and iconographic plan of Śāntighaṭa *caitya* mirrors the Mahācaitya, including the five shrines to the Jina Buddhas and the Hāritī shrine at the northwest corner. Kathesimbhu's link with Svayambhū is further strengthened through the "Śāntipur" shrine on the western side, which houses the sacred *kalaśa* of Māmakī (*Śāntighaṭa*).[179] Analogous to Śāntikarācāryaís powers as the great rain-making Tantric teacher, Vākvajra brought water during a period of drought by performing a *mahābali pūjā* and propitiating the *nāgas* in the water conduits (*hiti*) at the request of the king of Singhakalpa Nagar (present-day Thamel or Thaṁ Bahī) on Caitra *kṛṣṇa* Daśamī.[180] Taking the water from this primordial vase of Māmakī, the Vajrācāryas from Kvā Bāhā annually reify this sacred act and perform a *mahābali pūjā* annually at the "Śāntipur" shrine.[181]

Commemorating the "bringing" of the Svayambhū *caitya* to Kathmandu by Vākvajra, there is an annual *pūjā* on the Kati Puñhe, falling on the fourteenth day of the bright half of Āświn, when hundreds of Buddhist practitioners come to Kathesimbhu and recite the *Nāmasaṅgīti* text. For the Jyāpu community, Kati Puñhe marks the initiations into the Buddhist community, as passage rite loincloth ceremonies (*kayta pūjā*) are held at Kathesimbhu and at Svayambhū Mahācaitya on the following day. For the Newar Buddhists, Kati Puñhe is of special significance, as it also

commemorates the day, according to the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* that Mañjuśrī received *darśan of* Svayambhū Jyotirūpa in his *viśvarūpa* form.

The second Newar Tantric *siddha* is Suratvajra of the Central quarter, who is associated with Takṣe Bāhā as its legendary founder. Considered to be a great Tantric teacher of the Hevajra and Nairātmā cycle meditation, he went to Lhāsa to teach, where he resided in a cave and performed the Nairātmā *sādhana.*[182] Honoring the founder's great devotion of Nairātmā, Takṣe Bāhā's *āgam dyah* is Hevajra-Nairātmā, and the lineage deity is Guhyeśvarī, also identified as Nairātmā, who resides at the root of the thousand-petalled Svayambhū lotus. That these Tantric *siddhas* were not merely legendary figures, but indeed may have been influential teachers is suggested by a colophon of an undated Newari manuscript. The inscription states that the text was a commentarial exegesis on the *Hevajra Sādhana* by Saroruha Pāda [*Sarahapāda?*] written by a Paṇḍitācārya Śrīmat Suratpāda, whom Newar scholars consider to be Suratvajra.[183] When Suratvajra may have lived is mere speculation, but popular tradition maintains that Suratvajra's son, Jivacandra is contemporaneous to Rāya Malla, and thus putting Suratvajra contemporaneous with Yakṣa Malla in the fifteenth century.[184] This date, however, seems to be very late for the foundation of Takṣe Bāhā, particularly given the whitewashed "Aśokan" *caitya* that may indicate an earlier foundation. Until further research establishes the identity

of the legendary *siddhas,* one is only left to speculate. Nonetheless, to this day, Takṣe Bāhā remains an important ritual center in Kathmandu, with Guhyeśvarī, as the *bāhā*'s lineage deity and one of the most important *yoginīs* of Newar Buddhism, intimately linked with Svayambhū.[185]

The *siddha* of the Southern Quarter, Mañjuvajra is associated with Musum Bāhā. Also known as Jamnā Gubhaju, Mañjuvajra was famous as Pratap Malla's Tantric Buddhist *guru*, who encouraged the Malla king to build the Cakrasaṁvara and Ekajaṭī/Vajravārāhī shrine on the east side of Svayambhū called Pratāppur and Anantapur in the eighteenth century.[186] Among the Hindu Malla kings, Pratāp Malla extensively patronized Buddhism, and was said to have been initiated into the Tantric Vajrayāna tradition by the legendary Jamnā Gubhaju.[187] It is a popular legend among the practitioners of Kathmandu that Jamnā Gubhaju empowered Pratap Malla enter into the secret shrine Tantric shrine at Śāntipur, and perform the *nāgasādhana pūjā* to end the severe drought that devastated the Valley.[188]

Musum Bāhā's sacred history states it is established during the Licchavi period, and the remains of Licchavi *caityas* may provide evidence for the antiquity of the site.[189] Local informants connects Musum Bāhā with Śāntikarācārya, since the *nāga sādhana* manuscript that was written by Śāntikarācārya with the blood of the *nāgas* and propitiated during the

rainmaking *pūjās* at Śāntipur was originally the property of Musum Bāhā.[190] Although there seems to be great discrepancies in the identity of the *siddhas* and the legendary date of foundation, Musum Bāhās traces its lineage deity to the Amitābha shrine at Svayambhū Mahācaitya. Once again, the Kathmandu *bāhā*'s ritual prominence is found in association with the Mahācaitya.

Through the organization of the Ācārya Guthi, the eighteen principal *bāhās* in Kathmandu maintain special relationship with Svayambhū Mahācaitya. The connection is further strenghtened by Kathmandu *bāhās'* ritual connection to Śāntikarācārya, and ultimately, to the secret *āgam* shrine at Śāntipur. For the Vajrācāryas of Kathmandu, the connection with Śāntipur empowers and validates the Tantric priest's authority as ritual specialist and Tantric *yogin.* Svayambhū, and specifically Śāntipur, as well as the legendary lineage teachers of Śāntikarācārya forms the ontological source for the ritual centers in Kathmandu city.

Eighteen *Mu Bāhās* of Patan and Their Relationship to Svayambhū

Although the eighteen main *bāhās* of Kathmandu show strong ritual associations with Śāntipur and Svayambhū, Svayambhū's connections the *mu bāhās* of Patan are often dismissed.[191] Because of the physical distance to the site and less obvious ritual associations than the *mu bāhās* of

Kathmandu, there has been a general consensus among scholars that the Vajrācāryas of Patan, in particular, appear to have no direct connections with Svayambhū and the sites associated with it.[192] It is true that the eighteen main *bāhās* of Patan function in a slightly different manner and do not have an overall organized administrative body of the *Ācārya guthi* as in Kathmandu. However, a close examination of the *bāhā saṅgha* and their lineage deities articulates the relationship of Svayambhū and the eighteen main *bāhās* of Patan. Unlike Kathmandu where the *mu bāhās* all have Vajrācārya members, the eighteen main *bāhās* in Patan have mixed variety of *saṅgha* members: five *bāhās* have purely Vajrācārya *saṅghas*; six have mixed *saṅghas* of Vajrācāryas and Śākyas; and seven *bāhās* have entirely Śākya *saṅghas*.[193] The *mu bāhās* with a Vajrācārya *saṅgha* have their private *Ācārya guthis* that function in the same capacity as the De Ācārya Guthi of Kathmandu.[194] These *bāhās* are required to have a Vajrasattva shrine, where the *Ācārya guthi* perform an annual *pūjā*. Although there is no annual *pūjā* performed at Śāntipur and Svayambhū, there is evidence that the Vajrācāryas of Patan may have had historic connections with Śāntipur before the division of the Malla kingdom into the three cities. A number of ornaments and utensils that date to the early Malla period were also offered by Vajrācāryas from Patan at Śāntipur shrine, further establishing the connections with the Patan *bāhās*.[195]

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Center Re-Defined: Concept of "Bringing" Svayambhū into the City as Lineage Deity

The Patan Vajrācāryas' symbolic association with Svayambhū is clarified by the lineage deities of the five Vajrācārya *bāhās* (with the exception of one Bhinche Bāhā): Dhum Bāhā, Cūka Bāhā, Dau Bāhā, and Cilanco Bāhā, which all have Svayambhū or its symbolic surrogate as the lineage deity. As a lineage deity, Svayambhū Mahācaitya figures prominently in these *bāhās* of Patan, particularly in cases where the Mahācaitya has been physically "brought" to the respective *bāhā* and consecrated there. Among the eighteen *bāhās* of Patan, two important Vajrācārya *bāhās*, Dhum Bāhā (Fig. 4.71) and Dau Bāhā have established surrogates of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya, by "pulling" Svayambhū Buddha to reside in the *caitya*. At Dau Bāhā, a large Svayambhū Caitya, specifically called Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Caitya, is situated in a large open courtyard, to the west of Dau Bāhā. As the other symbolic surrogates of Svayambhū, the form of the *caitya*, the placement of the Pañca Jina shrines, and the Dharmadhātu *Maṇḍala* on the east side is identical to the iconographic configuration of the Mahācaitya itself. As the lineage deity, the annual worship is performed at this *caitya* during the dark half of Mansir.[196] Similarly, the Vajrācārya *saṅgha* of Dhum Bāhā have "brought" their lineage deity, Svayambhū Mahācaitya to reside at the site. In this case, a smaller

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version of the Mahācaitya is found to the west of the *bāhā,* where the annual *pūjā* is performed by the *sangha* members.

Another important lineage deity in Patan is the enshrined Svayambhū *caitya* at Kvā Bāhā, previously discussed in Chapter Three.[197] Although a "self-arisen" *caitya,* the Kvā Bāhā *caitya* is also equated with Svayambhū, and functions as the lineage deity of Kvā Bāhā and the Vajrācārya *sangha* of Cūka Bāhā, who have "brought" the enshrined *caitya* and consecrated it at the *bāhā.*

For Cilañco Bāhā in Kīrtipur, the lineage deity is Yogāmvara from Mhepi as well as the "Vajrayoginī" from Sankhu.[198] While the Mhepi Yogāmvara is one of the most powerful shrines in Newar Buddhism and is intimately connected with Svayambhū, Śāntipur, and the Matsyendranāth cult, Cilanco Bāhā also traces its lineage to the "enshrined *caitya*" of Gum Bāhā. To vivify the sacred space of the Cilanco Bāhā and the city of Kīrtipur itself, there is large Svayambhū Dharmadhātu *caitya* at the site to the south the *bāhā* itself. As with the other symbolic replicas, both the form and iconography reflects the primordial Svayambhū Mahācaitya. As at Svayambhū, there is also a large inscribed Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, as one come up the stairs leading towards the *caitya* (here, at the north side), that states that the *caitya* is, indeed, identical to the Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Caitya.

As the lineage deities of the four Vajrācārya *sanghas* of Patan, there is no clearer statement that Svayambhū Mahācaitya has strong symbolic associations with the *bāhās* of Patan. The act of "bringing" the primordial source of power into the city generates the sacred space of the *bāhā*. Transferring the macrocosm to the microcosm, the entire city of Patan is vivified and made sacred by the presence of Svayambhū Mahācaitya that is "brought" to the locus of devotion. Through this presence, the city of Patan functions as the symbolic center for the Newar Buddhist practitioners.

More evidence of the ritual importance and connection with Svayambhū is implied by those *bāhās* that have the Yogāmvara shrine at Mhepi as their lineage deity.[199] Intricately connected with Śāntikarācārya, Śāntipur, Svayambhū and Rāto Matsyendranātha. Yogāmvara is the lineage deity of Śāntikarācārya, who worshipped Yogāmvara for the insight as to how Karuṇāmaya or Rāto Macchindranāth should be brought to the Valley to end a drought.[200] In the contemporary context, the Buddhācārya priests of Svayambhū consider Yogāmvara to be their lineage deity. According to the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, Yogāmvara instructed Śāntikarācārya of the methods of bringing Macchindranāth to the Valley, who in turn, instructed his disciple, Banudattācārya in the details of invoking Karuṇāmaya into a *kalaśa* in the form of a bee, and bring him from Kāmarūpa (Assam). Despite the fact that Mhepi is the principal site for Yogāmvara and Jñānaḍākinī, and many

*bāhā/bahī*s directly "bring" Yogāṁvara as their lineage deity, Svayambhū and Śāntipur are also associated with one of the most important rain-making rituals of the Kathmandu Valley. The contemporary ritual traditions reiterate Svayambhū's status as ritual center.

Through this brief survey of the *bāhās* and the lineage deities of Patan, two major themes emerge. The first is that the ontological underpinning for the organization of the *bāhās* as well as the *saṅgha* members is rooted and is inextricably linked with Svayambhū Mahācaitya, and with the personages and deities associated with this structure. Second, following the traditions of Tantra, the goddesses are closely associated with the spatial and conceptual structure of the Valley, and the practitioner's very existence and well-being is derived from their protection and benefaction. In the subsequent chapters, these two themes re-emerge consistently throughout Newar Buddhist religious practices, and the art and iconography similarly reflect this fundamental presupposition of Newar Buddhism. This will be dealt in further detail in mapping the Valley's sacred conception as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala.

SECTION VI: REPRESENTATIONS OF SVAYAMBHŪ MAHĀCAITYA

Svayambhū as Prototype of *Caitya* Form

Numerous votive *caityas* are found throughout the Kathmandu Valley, whose stylistic analysis suggest that the Mahācaitya served as the prototype of *caityas* in the Kathmandu Valley. Niel Gutschow's thorough study on *caitya* architecture reinforces the argument proposed here that Svayambhū is the stylistic and symbolic source. The stylistic variations in *caitya* architecture in Nepal are rich, as indicated by Gutschow's research, in which he distinguishes at least nine *caitya* typologies. Even within these broad categories, there are many different stylistic and morphological variations found in the *caitya* development.

The two examples that I have chosen to discuss here represent those *caityas* that allude directly to the Mahācaitya. Specifically, these *caityas* exemplify the *caitya* form as a visual metaphor for demonstrating the symbolic identity of Svayambhū and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala/Nāmasaṅgīti, or they represent in visual form the cosmogonic myth of the Valley. Inherent in the visual symbolism of these *caityas* is the concept of *stūpa* as Mt. Meru and the *axis mundi*. In my discussion, I will allude to how the morphological form relates to the symbolic meanings of the Mahācaitya.

Examples of Votive Caityas:

(1) Articulating the Symbolic Association of Svayambhū and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala

The connection between Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is articulated in a unique type votive *caitya* found in the Kathmandu Valley. In my research, I have found two *caityas* that depict in three-dimensional form the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. The first *caitya* is found in Lagan Bāhā in the south side, directly in front of the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine (Fig. 4.72), while the second is found in the northeast corner of Svayambhū Mahācaitya, behind Pratappur.[201]

The Lagan Bāhā *caitya* is dated N.S. 786 (1686 C.E.), established on the sixth day of the waning moon in the month of Kārttika.[202] The *caitya* is divided into broad horizontal segments, with the lower two serving as the plinth to support the caitya at the top. The base suggests the idea that the *stūpa* is Mt. Meru, with the figures of four guardian kings placed in the cardinal directions. They are Dhṛtarāṣṭra in the east, Virūḍhaka in the south, Virūpākṣa in the west, and Vairśravana in the north.

The lowest segment is divided into five niches in each direction with a total of twenty niches around the base. This design is called *viṁśatikoṇa* ("twenty-angled") and is widely identified as the basic design of a *maṇḍala*.[203] At the center of the niches are the Mahāsattva Bodhisattvas, shown as

standing figures and corresponding to each of the Jina Buddhas. They are Maitreya in the east, Vajrapāṇi in the south, Padmapani in the west, and Mañjuśrī in the north. The center Bodhisattvas are flanked by four other Bodhisattvas, thus collectively making up the group of sixteen Bodhisattvas in the cardinal directions (*Ṣoḍaśabodhisattva*). An inscription in Rañjana script is found at the bottom of this section on all four sides. The east side contains the fifth *śloka* of the *Ārya Nāmasaṅgīti,* the root text of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. The other three sides have the dedicatory inscriptions of the donor, a Śākyabhikṣu who erected a caitya in memory of his deceased son.[204] The top band also has inscriptions bearing the hundred-syllabled *mantra* of Vajrasattva.

The middle segment of the *caitya* also follows the *vimśatikoṇa* form, with five niches in each direction. Here, the iconography of the figures is related to the inner core of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.[205] The central niches contain the eight-armed Jinas of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in their respective directions, flanked by their *kula* Vajra Bodhisattva. The iconography of the Jinas as well as the Vajra Bodhisattvas correspond to the descriptions found in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī.* A band of inscriptions at the bottom of this segment further strengthens the argument that this *caitya* is a three-dimensional representation of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. The

inscription cites the first three *ślokas* of the *Ārya Nāmasaṅgīti,* as was the case in the lower band.[206]

Above this rests the *caitya* on a lotus base. Morphologically, it is similar to Svayambhū Mahācaitya, with the niches of the Jinas in the cardinal directions and smaller niches for the Buddha *śaktīs* in the intermediate points. Although the niches are now empty, the small holes inside the niches indicate that images of the Jinas and their *prajñās* were placed there. It should be noted that the Vairocana niche, generally in the south/southeast direction as in the Svayambhū Mahācaitya is not present.

The second *caitya* found in the courtyard of Svayambhū Mahācaitya is virtually identical to the *caitya* found in Lagan Bāhā at Kathmandu. This form of *caitya* appears to articulate visually the symbolic identity of Svayambhū Mahācaitya and Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, as the Ādi Buddha of Newar Buddhism.

(2) Votive *Caityas* as Articulating the Cosmogonic Myth

Two interesting examples represent the cosmogonic myth of the Valley with Svayambhū Mahācaitya emerging out the sacred waters of Nāgavāsahrada. These *caityas* are from Bu Bāhā (Fig. 4.73), Patan and Tathu Bahī in Bhaktapur. The forms of both *caityas* represent the

cosmogonic myth, including the large thousand-petalled lotus that emerges from the water-filled base signifying the Kālihrada lake of the Valley.

Remarks on the Dharmadhātu and Vajradhātu *Caityas*

Thus far, I have discussed the principal Svayambhū *caityas* of the *bāhā/bahī* as being identical to Svayambhū Mahācaitya. Inherently, the votive *caityas* are also symbolic surrogates of Svayambhū. The principal *caityas* and other votive *caityas* are referred to in inscriptions as *Svayambhū caitya* or *Dharmadhātu Caitya.* Properly speaking, however, there are two broad categories of *caityas* found in the Kathmandu Valley: Dharmadhātu and Vajradhātu Caitya. Although morphologically there does not appear to be any consistent distinction between the two *caitya*, this designation is arrived through the inscriptions found on the *caityas* themselves. Like the *maṇḍala* distinctions of the Dharmadhātu and Vajradhātu Maṇḍalas, there is considerable ambiguity as to what constitutes a Dharmadhātu and Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, both among scholars and the lay practitioners. Although these does not seem to a morphological distinction between the Dharmadhātu and Vajradhātu Maṇḍalas, I have observed three broad patterns during my field research:

1. The votive *caityas* designated as Vajradhātu Caityas appear to have been increasingly popular after the late Malla period. For example,

the *caitya* bearing the inscription "Vajradhātu caityas" from Thanhiti, Thimi, and Phukha, were renovated in the mid to late sixteenth century.[207]

2. In contemporary practice, the Vajradhātu Caityas appear to be more popular in Kathmandu than in Patan. In Patan and the neighboring vicinities, the offerings of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Caitya as a pair continue to be consistently offered as joint votive offerings, whereas offering of the free-standing Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is rare in Kathmandu. [208] The Vajrācārya priests of Kathmandu have indicated that the *caityas* in Kathmandu are generally consecrated as Vajradhātu Caityas.

3. Both designations of *caityas* as "Vajradhātu" and "Dharmadhātu" in the Kathmandu Valley indicate that the two most important technical meditations in the Newar Buddhist practices are related to Vairocana-cycle.

The finding of my research were also corroborated by Gutschow's study on the *caityas* of the Kathmandu Valley. He indicates that the *caityas* increasingly refer to the teaching or to the transcendental Buddha himself. The inscriptions that refer to the *caityas* as *Dharmadhātu Caitya*, *Cittacaitanya Caitya* ("Caitya of the Consciousness of the Mind"), and state that they are identical with the Ādi Buddha. Other references designate

caityas as Vajradhātu Caitya, Vajradhātu Tathāgata, relating to the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, based on *the Sarva Tathāgatattva Samgrama*.[209] Furthermore, other *caityas* are also referred to in more descriptive terms, such as *Caitya Bhagavān* ("Respected Lord Caitya"), *Pañcajinālaya* ("Abode of the Five Jinas"), and *Pañcabuddha Caitya Bhattāraka* ("Respected Five Jina Caitya").[210] These numerous inscriptions not only indicates the multivalent meanings and symbolism associated with the *stūpa* form, but, perhaps more importantly, indicate the layers of symbolism that directly allude to the Svayambhū Mahācaitya itself.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

I have attempted to show in this chapter Svayambhū Mahācaitya's role and significance as the ontology of the religion and as the first of the core iconographic themes of Newar Buddhist visual imagery. In this analysis, I also suggest the Mahācaitya intimately connected with the other two iconographic themes, namely the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍalas. These two themes and their relationship with the Mahācaitya are essential to contextualize the doctrinal developments of Newar Buddhism, and the ways in which these elements continue to be integral in ritual practices and visual imagery. I also proposed that the Dharmadhātu teachings based on the *Nāmasaṅgīti* text gained much prominence in the

religion, by the very fact that the Buddhist philosophical developments were integrated into the Newar cosmogonic story, and hence directly related to the Svayambhū Mahācaitya. The presence of this visual imagery found in the *toraṇa,* struts, as well as free-standing *maṇḍalas* will, indeed, indicate an indigenous interpretation of the Tantric Buddhist philosophical doctrines. In other words, the symbolic/buddhological identity of Svayambhū and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the technical meditation practices on Mañjuśrī/Vairocana cycles was transformed into a more personal level for the Newar Buddhist practitioners to fit the cosmogonic myth of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya. In this light, although the technical methodologies relating the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍalas are aimed at the practitioner's spiritual enlightenment, their connections with the Newar Buddhist sacred history also make them talismanic rituals, performed for the benefit and protection of the state and sentient beings. This statement is perhaps best clarified in the monthly *pūjās* performed at Śāntipur to Cakrasaṁvara for the protection of the state, all at the same time, indicating to the importance of the Mahācaitya in the Newar Buddhist context. The multivalent contexts and meanings of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya is reflective and fundamental to Tantric teachings.

[1] *Bhāṣā Vaṁsāvalī*, one of the oldest extant *vaṁsāvalī* chronicles dated to the twelfth century, also includes the Buddhist creation myth. Other Buddhist *vaṁsāvalīs* published in English are Wright's chronicles, in his *History of Nepal* and the Padmagiri Chronicles published by Hasrat. See Bikrama Jit Hasrat, *History of Nepal: As Told by Its Own and Contemporary Chroniclers* (Hoshiarpur, Punjab: V.V. Research Institute Press, 1970).

[2] Scholars have generally commented on the sole published version of the original text, namely the *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇam,* edited by Hariprasad Sastri, stating that the coherence of the content and grammatical errors in Sanskrit make it particularly problematic for thorough analysis. See Bernhard Kolver, "Stages of Evolution in a World Picture", *Numen* 32: 1986.

[3] Levi, *Le Nepal,* vol 1, 332

[4] John Brough, "Legends of Khotan and Nepal", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies,* 2:12, 333-339. Brough states, "The name of the sacred hill, Gośrīnga, is regularly used in Khotan, whereas in Nepal the explanation that it was the name of the Svayambhū hill in a former age has every appearance of an afterthought."

[5] For example, D. Gellner states, "The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* does not belong to the very first rank of Buddhist sacred texts. It does not encapsulate the highest soteriological values like the Prajña *Pāramitā* (Perfection of Wisdom), it does not describe the life of the Buddha or his previous lives, nor does it give the secret instructions or teachings associated with the systemic worship of an esoteric deity as do the various Tantras." See Gellner, *Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest,* 196. In the same vein, Horst Brinkhaus in a recent article also accepts Brough's thesis that the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* is, in fact, a Newar adaptation of the Khotanese creation myth. See Horst Brinkhaus, "The Textual History of the Different Versions of the 'Svayambhū Purāṇa", *Nepal: Past and Present,* ed. by Gerard Toffin (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1993), 63-73.

[6] George Roerich, *Biography of Dharmasvamin* (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna, 1959), iv-v

[7] Slusser, *Nepal Maṇḍala,* 8

[8] See Shirley Park Lowry, *Familiar Mysteries: The Truth in Myths* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

[9] N.J. Allen, "'And the Lake Drained Away': An Essay in Himālāyan Comparative Mythology" *Maṇḍala and Landscape,* ed. A.W. Macdonald (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 1997), 435-45.

[10] Levi, *Le Nepal,* vol. 1, 332.

[11] Brinkhaus, 65.

[12] For my research, I have consulted to the original manuscripts of the *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa, Svayambhū Purāṇa,* and the *Svāyambhū Purāṇa.*

[13] See Horst Brinkhaus, "The Textual History of the Different Versions of the 'Svayambhū Purāṇa', *Nepal: Past and Present,* 63-73.

[14] This term is used by Mircea Eliade in his *Myth and Reality,* where he discusses the process of "demythicization", in which ontological myths, as in the case of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* often become "History" as a created reality that is at once divine and human. See Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1975), 108-110.

[15] Levi, *Le Nepal,* vol. I, 213.

[16] The following is a summary of the printed version of the *Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa,* edited by Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya. See Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, *Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa* (Kathmandu: Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, 1978).

[17]In my field research, I found that the location of the shrine remained deliberately ambiguous. Some Newar Buddhists consider the shrine to be located in a small entirely Buddhist temple at Pulān Guhyeśvarī, near Bālāju to northeast of Svayambhū. Other practitioners insisted that it was the prominent Śakta shrine to Guhyeśvarī Bhagavatī at Deopatan, which also continues to be extensively patronized by the Hindu royal family.

[18]Geological excavations suggests that about 30,000 years ago the Valley was filled with a Pleistocene lake which later, at some undetermined point in time, drained away. The drainage of the Valley appears to have occurred in a southerly direction through the present-day Bāgmatī river. All other rivers of the Valley run into the Bāgmatī, which after flowing through the narrow gorge at Koṭvāl finally leaves the Valley, thus marking the southern boundaries. The other three locations, Chobār, Aryaghat and Gokarna are also gorges.

[19] This connection of Svayambhū, Mañjuśrī, and Cakrasaṁvara is related to the primordial goddess Guhyeśvarī. This is a significant point, which will be further discussed in the following chapters.

[20] In the Newar Buddhist tradition, Mañjuśrī is often associated with Viśvakarma, the divine architect. For example, the visual imagery and the iconography of a Viśvakarma temple in Patan are related to Mañjuśrī.

[21] Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, *Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa*, 34.

[22] The eighth chapter of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* is entitled "the teachings and explanations of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala" (*iti śrī Svayambhū purāṇe śrī dharmadhātu vāgīśvara maṇḍalābhidhāna pravartanaṁ namsaṣṭamo dhyāyaḥ*). This section corresponds to the sixth chapter in the *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa*.

[23]Śākyamuni Buddha is also said to have instructed the Nāgas on the right conduct for fertility, prosperity and protection of the Valley. He also gave them the *Sarvasukhada Dhāraṇi*, and the *Mahāmegha Nirnāda Vijraṁbhi Suraketu* "Sound for Awakening the Great Clouds, Flags of the Gods". These *Dhāraṇīs* along with instructions for ritual propitiation to the *nāgas*, and the *Nāga maṇḍalas* are collectively called the *Mahāmegha Mahāyana Sutra*, which is an important text for the Newar Buddhists, which are recited during times of drought and for making rain.

[24] In the contemporary context, the head priest from Svayambhū and the senior *āju* from Makhan Bāhā are the only two individuals that are allowed to enter the *āgaṁ* at Śāntipur. As a ritual for the well being and protection of the state, the monthly *pūjā* is performed by the head priest from Svayambhū. Through lineage descent, he is symbolically associated with the mythical Vajrācārya priest, Śāntīkarācārya.

[25] See Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 108-110.

[26] This understanding was repeated by ritual specialists from Kathmandu and Patan.

[27] Wayman, *Light on Indo-Tibetan Esotericism*, 67.

[28] The degree and sophistication of interpretation varies, depending on the knowledge and erudition of the Vajrācārya priests.

[29] Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return, or Cosmos and History* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1965).

[30] Although I have not verified the data at this point in my research, the *tīrthas* and rivers of Jambudvīpa that are said to be found around the Svayambhū Hill include *Buburdayamān, Ākāśa Gaṅga, Godāvarī Ratnakuṇḍalī, Bhagīrathī Mahāpuṇya, Candrabhaga Khagānana, Yogadhāra Kusumañjalī, Sūryabhāga Mahāmokṣa, Jñānadhāra Mokṣa, Jñānakuṇḍala,* and *Vssundharā.* Each of these pilgrimage sites are associated with the Jina Buddhas and their Buddhaśaktīs. See Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 776.

[31] Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 38.

[32] For examples of these votive *stupas*, see Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*.

[33] Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 25.

[34] See Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya,* 93-480. Although Śākya's study is a pioneering study of the reconstruction of Svayambhū's history, his findings have not critically been analyzed and the historical sources he cites are often not referenced for further corroboration.

[35] The sketches of Svayambhū Mahācaitya found in the works of the British writers such as Kirkpatrick, Oldfield, and Wright are among the earliest known accurate renderings of the site. There are also Newarī paintings that depict the Mahācaitya, however, their visual accuracy may be questionable.

[36] Dhanavajra Vajrācārya, *Licchavikalka Abhilekha,* 74-78.

[37] Nayanāth Paudal, ed. *Bhasa Vaṁsāvalī* (Kathmandu: Department of Archaeology, V.S. 2020), 56-57.

[38] *Gopālarājavaṁsāvalī,* 65."*Tena kṛta sīnguvihāra caitya bhaṭṭārāka pratiṣṭhitā saṁpurṇa kṛtaṁ".*

[39] See Slusser, *Nepal Maṇḍala,* 275; Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya,* 86.

[40] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya,* 91-92. Ratnakaji Vajrācārya, *Bāhāya Tac ca,* 28.

[41] Dhanavajra Vajrācārya, *Licchavikālkā Abhilekha,* 74-78. The inscription, unfortunately, is now lost, but a rubbing of the original is found at the National Archive. My translation of Dhanavajra's reading of the inscription.

> "...son of ...., king [Vrsa]radeva, ...śrī....Śatalakṣmī....his pleasure....wild intoxicated elephants.....who has obedient servants...established a guthi of existing lands in the Mana Vihāra. His son...by greatness...king...brilliant...performed many great *yajñas.* And, having unparalleled victory and controlled the five senses and sense organs, of legendary fame...with excellent dedication to his *dharma* and right action.
>
> Son of good birth....outweighs all other kings......he who...kings, never deviating from his duties, merciful...destroyer of all [enemies]....strong armed, powerful as a lion and intoxicated elephant, steadfast in thought, who is feared by kings as the deer in the forest flees in the presence of the lion ......brave in battle.....ready to serve his father, skilled in art of fighting, enlightened, wise, excellent in form, strength, being, and education, ...a veritable mine of ....expert in the fine arts...., ruling for more than a hundred years...excellent...without thinking....needing release, patience, body of that of the great Varuna and Indra..."

[42] Dhanavajra Vajrācārya, *Licchavikālkā Abhilekha,* 90.

[43] Gutschow states that there are ten Licchavi *caityas* at Svayambhū. In this survey, he records a total of 263 Licchavi *caityas* found in the Valley, which constitutes 13% of all *caityas.* Many Licchavi *caityas* are found in association with water-conduits (*hiti*). See Niels Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya,* 100-173 for an excellent survey of Licchavi *caityas* of the Valley.

[44] Based on stylistic grounds, John C. Huntington dates this image to the third or early fourth century, while P. Pal assigns it to the fifth century. See P. Pal, *The Arts of Nepal,* Pt. 1. *Sculture,* 53-54. Further, scholars have also named this type of *caitya* "Caturvyūha Caitya", recalling the *Caturvyūha* images of Visnu. See Hemrāj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya,* and Gutshow, *The Nepalese Caitya.*

[45] During my field research, my informants maintained these Buddhas represent the four Mānuśi Buddhas of the Four Yugas. Gutschow also provides as alternate interpretation, where the Buddhas are considered to represent the four important places associated with Śākyamuni's lifetime, namely, Kapilavastu, Vaisali, Sarnāth, and Bodhgaya. See Niels Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya,* 179.

[46] The date of this piece has not been firmly established. Based on stylistic comparison with eastern Indian images of the ninth-tenth century, Susan L. Huntington dates this to the later Licchavi period. On the other hand, John C. Huntington attributes this piece to the early Licchavi period (third-fourth century), based on its relative simplicity in comparison to the later Licchavi images. However, there is agreement that this image belongs to the Liccahvi period.

[47] I am grateful to John C. Huntington for pointing this out to me.

[48] Mallmann, *Introduction à L'Iconographie du Tantrisme Bouddhique,* 48.

[49] In Buddhism, the Jewel (*ratna*) symbolizes the teachings of the Buddha, which is often represented by the *cakra* or wheel.

[50] This appears to be a popular understanding in Newar Buddhism.

[51] Gutschow states that out of the total 263 Licchavi *caityas* he surveyed, 200 had niches that ranged from four (in cardinal directions where the Buddhas would be generally placed) eight (four Buddhas and their *prajñās*), and sixteen (Jinas, Prajñās, and Aṣṭamahābodhisattvas). This clearly suggests the placement of the Jinas in the niche, Like that of Svayambhū. See Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya,* 106.

[52] See Ian Alsop, "Licchavi Caityas of Nepal: A Solution to the Empty Niche", www.asianart.com/alsop/licchavi.html, March 1995.

[53] Dhanavajra Vajrācārya, *Licchavikālkā Abhilekha,* 387-8. My translation of Vajrācārya's reading of the inscription.

> "Om, the image of blue-complexioned Akṣobhya, residing in pleasant surroundings, I pay my respects to the peaceful Akṣobhya Tathāgata. He who does benefit to the entire universe, I pay my respects to Samantabhadra, who bears the rays of faultless fame.
>
> .....bow respectfully to the lord of the sages, Śākyamuni. Bow to him, who cultivates the expression of loving kindness (maitri)....the primordial lord of the secrets (guhyādhipati), holder of the pure vajra (vajradhāraṁ), together with the lotus....
>
> ....I bow to him, whose body is covered with bouquets of flowers that is none other than the jewels of the true law, residing in Abhirāti Paradise, bow to Samantakuśūma Buddha. Knower of the highest dharma, steadfast in mind and thought, the compassionate Mañjuśrī, always offer your highest respect.
>
> Through the energy of great knowledge (mahāprajñā), he who eliminates the darkness of great illusion, he who destroys all fear in the universe, together with the compassionate Mahāsthamaprāpta and Lokeśvara, I forever bow to Amitābha to resides in Sukhāvatī paradise."

[54] See Slusser, *Nepal Maṇḍala,* vol 2.

[55] Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya,* 124.

[56] Historical accuracy of the personages and their visits may be glean from Indian and Tibetan sources, such as the *Blue Annals* and the life of Dharmasvāmin. For accounts of the Indian teachers in Nepal, see Rajendra Ram, *A History of Buddhism in Nepal: A.D. 704-1396* (New Delhi: Motital Banarasidass, 1978).

[57] Rajendra Ram, *A History of Buddhism in Nepal,* 32-99

[58] See George Roerich, *Biography of Dharmasvamin,* iv-v. See also, A. Chattopadhyaya, *Atisa and Tibet: Life and Works of Dipankara Srijnana in Relation to the History and Religion of Tibet* (Calcutta: Indian Studies Past and Present, 1967).

[59] Local history of Thaṁ Bahī. See Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal,* 246.

[60] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya,* 191.

[61] George Roerich, *Biography of Dharmasvamin,* iv-v.

[62] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya,* 123-125.

[63] My major resource here is Hemrāj Śakya's *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*. Other secondary sources used were Regmi's *Medieval Nepal*.

[64] See Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 88.

[65] Franz-Karl Ehrhard, "A Renovation of Svayambhūnāth-Stūpa in the eighteenth century and Its History" *Ancient Nepal*, no 114 (1989), 1-8.

[66] See Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, 91.

[67] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 137-138

[68] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 150-151.

[69] See Niels Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 87.

[70] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 152.

[71] Franz-Karl Ehrhard, *Views of Baudhanāth-Stūpa* (Kathmandu: Maṇḍala Book Point, 1991), 14.

[72] Mary S. Slusser, "The Cultural Aspects of Newar Paintings" in Niels Gutschow and Axel Michaels, eds, *Heritage of the Kathmandu Valley: Proceedings of an International Conference in Lubeck, June, 1985* (Sankt, Austin: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag, 1987), 20.

[73] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 153.

[74] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 154-159.

[75] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 160-162.

[76] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 164-165.

[77] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 168.

[78] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 170-71.

[79] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 172-177.

[80] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 174-176.

[81] Oldfield, *Sketches from Nepal*, 222. See also Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 181.

[82] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 180.

[83] Oldfield, *Sketches from Nepal*, 222.

[84] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 185

[85] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 206. See also, Oldfield, *Sketches from Nepal*, 222 and Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, Pt 3.

[86] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 200-204. See also, *Purnimā*, no. 1, vol. 4.

[87] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 206

[88] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 206-8

[89] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 206

[90] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 210.

[91] Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 88.

[92] Franz-Karl Ehrhard, *Views of Baudhanāth-Stūpa*, 12.

[93] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 221-230.

[94] See Kolver, *Re-Building a Stūpa: Architectural Drawings of the Svayambhūnāth*.

[95] Oldfield, *222-225*.

[96] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 302-306.

[97] Kolver, *Re-Building a Stūpa: Architectural Drawings of the Svayambhūnāth*, 108.

[98] Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 88.

[99] Oldfield, *Nepal*, 78; and Landon, *Nepal*, 230.

[100] According to the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, the hill is designated different names in each of the four Yugas. It is technically known as *Padmagiri* ("Lotus Mountain") in the Satya Yuga, *Vajrakuṭa* ("Adamantine Mountain") in the Dvāpara Yuga, *Gośṛnga Parvat* ("Cow-Horn Mountain" in the Tretā Yuga, and *Gopuccha Parvat* "Cow-Tail Mountain" in the Kali Yuga.

[101] Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 90-91. Gutschow provides a detailed architectural reading of the measurements of the site. His observations are also based on the measurements given

in the manuscripts, published by Kolver in his *Re-Building a Stūpa: Architectural Drawings of the Svayambhūnāth.*

[102] The *yāsti* is completely removed during renovation. Kolver, *Re-Building a Stūpa: Architectural Drawings of the Svayambhūnāth,* 99-102.

[103] This may be one of the six Bhairavas that are mentioned in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* as guardians of the site. According to the *Purāṇa,* "Śāntikara placed the images of the following gods all round the place. On the south of Śāntipur he placed Prithubhairava [Earth]; to the west of Svayambhū Apbhairava [Water]; a short way down the hill to the east, Tejobharava [Fire]; to the south-west of the mountain, Vāyubhirava [Wind]; to the west of the mountain, Khabhairava [Ether/Sky]; to the east, Śūnyabhairava [Ether]. See Rajendralala Mitra, *The Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal,* 252-253.

[104] Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya,* 92. Gutschow also quotes John Irwin observations of the concept of the *stūpa* and the *axis mundi* stating that the central pillar "is none other than the Axis Mundi itself, metaphysically identified with the World Tree and the World Pillar as interchangeable images of the instruments used to both separate and unite heaven and earth at the Creation.". See John Irwin, "The Stūpa and the Cosmic Axis," *Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference of South Asian Archaeologists* (Naples: Intituto Universitario Orientale, 1979), 799-845.

[105] In his books, *The Nepalese Caitya* and *Svayambhūnātha Conservation Masterplan,* Gutschow has consistently described the *Maṇḍala* in question as the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala. A number of other scholars, such as Hemraj Śākya in his *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya,* 303, have also misidentified the *Maṇḍala* as the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala. While the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala is also found in the Newar Buddhist context and is also a Vairocana-cycle *Maṇḍala,* Pratāp Malla's dedicatory inscription on the Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala clearly gives the name of the *Maṇḍala* as the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

[106] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya,* 86.

[107] Gutschow et. al., *Svayambhūnātha Conservation Masterplan,* 36-50.

[108] Gutschow et. al., *Svayambhūnātha Conservation Masterplan,* 82.

[109] Gutschow et. al., *Svayambhūnātha Conservation Masterplan,* 50. See also Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya.* Although these categories are useful to distinguish the various forms of the *caitya,* they do not necessarily reflect the ritual distinctions made by the ritual specialists. In my research, the ritual specialists of Kathmandu and Patan broadly distinguish between the Vajradhātu and the Dharmadhātu Caitya. The classifications of these two types of *caityas* are dependent on the *maṇḍalas* performed during the consecration process. If the *Maṇḍala pūjā* invokes the deities of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, the *caitya* is generally classified as the *Vajradhātu Caitya.* Similarly, the Dharmadhātu Caitya inherently houses the deities of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and is equated with Svayambhū Mahācaitya. Interestingly, Gutschow observes that the Vajradhātu Caitya is synonymous to the term "Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Caitya." At this point in my research, I have not been able to verify Gutshow's comments with the actual practices. See *Caitya Pūjā Vidhi,* 24.

[110] Hemrāj Śākya, *Śrī Svyambhū Mahāciatya,* 341. This was also said to me by Bāburāja Buddhācarya, a ritual specialist at Svayambhū.

[111] Hemrāj Śākya, *Śrī Svyambhū Mahāciatya,* 341.

[112] For detailed accounts of the lineage *pūjā* rituals associated with Pulān Singu Caitya, see Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya,* 84.

[113] Scholars have not associated this shrine with Vajravārāhī directly. However, the inscription in front of the shrine clearly invokes Vajravārāhī as Ekajaṭī Nīla Saravatī Vajrayoginī. An identical invocation to Vajravārāhī, alternately referred to as Vajrayoginī, is also found at the Khaḍga Yoginī Temple in Sankhu, where the goddess is also called Ekajaṭā. Anantapriyā's invocation of Ekajaṭī suggests that it is an alternative epithet of Vajravārāhī.

For reading of both inscriptions, see Regmi, *Medieval Nepal,* Pt. 4. Furthermore, the *Sadhanamālā* considered Ekajaṭī to be identical with Vajravārāhī. See B. Bhattacaryya, ed., *Sadhanamālā,* vol II, 204.

[114] The Patan Mahābuddha temple, built almost a century earlier, is stylistically similarly to the *śikhara* style temple of Anantapur. The central tower at Patan also has several levels in the interior that progressively gets smaller. That Anantapur may have similar rooms to be used for Tantric practices is highly probable given the esoteric nature of the shrine.

[115] Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, *Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa,* 25.

[116] The Svayambhū Reconstruction and Preservation Committee renovated the present building in 1982-82. See Gutschow et. al., *Svayambhūnātha Convervation Masterplan,* 79.

[117] The inscribed names of the *yakṣas* include Maṇibhadra, Pūrṇabhadra, Vaiśravāṇa, Dhanendra, Kelimāli, Civikuṇḍali, Sukhendra, Calendra.

[118] The *yantra* symbolizes the seat/presence of the goddess. Often Vajrayoginī, Vajravārāhī, or Kumārī are often represented by a double triangled *yantra.*

[119] According to the informant, the sacrificial offering is technically given to Bhairava on behalf of Vāyudevatā, the "god of wind."

[120] *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇaṁ,* Chapter Ten.

[121] *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇaṁ,* Chapter Five.

[122] Gutschow et. al., *Svayambhūnātha Conservation Masterplan,* 84.

[123] No photography is allowed inside the shrine. However, I have personally closely examined the image inside the shrine.

[124] Kolver, *Re-Building a Stūpa,* 24. The terms in parenthesis are in Newāri.

[125] Kolver, *Re-Building a Stūpa,* 43.

[126] The images on the *hala* are inscribed in Sanskrit and Tibetan, and reflect Tibetan teaching lineages and *siddhas.*

[127] Kolver argues that the physical placement of the Vairocana on the outside thus indicates that "the center is vacant." Based on the paintings of Goddess Uṣṇīṣavijayā who is often shown on the dome of *stūpas,* Kolver suggests that Uṣṇīṣavijayā takes Vairocana place at the center of Mahācaitya and thus the center is re-affirmed. Kolver's statement is contrary to the buddhalogical understanding, as Vairocana is always considered to be conceptually at the core of the Maṇḍala/*stūpa,* regardless of his physical placement on the Mahācaitya and the center is never considered "vacant". See Kolver, *Re-Building a Stūpa: Architectural Drawings of the Svayambhūnāth,* 35-37.

[128] The shrines are not exactly, but deviate 12 degrees off from the true north. See, Niels Gutschow et. al., *Svayambhūnātha Conservation Plan,* 64.

[129] For example, Kolver extensively discussed the problem of the "empty center" and suggests that Uṣṇīṣavijayā in fact takes the place of Vairocana in the vacated space. See, Kolver, *Re-Building a Stūpa,* 81.

[130] In many Anuttara Yoga Tantra meditations, such as the *Guhyasamāja,* Vairocana and Akṣobhya change places, with Akṣobhya at the center and Vairocana in the eastern quadrant. Similarly paired *maṇḍalas* as the beginning (*utpatti krama*) meditation and the completion (*utpanna krama*) cycle is integral to Tantric meditation practices. This concept of the inception and completion cycle maṇḍala may also be inherent in the Svayambhū Mahācaitya iconography. See Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras,* 46-49. and the realization of the Maṇḍala itself and can be considered as entering the Maṇḍala.

[131] This information was given to me by Dr. Alexander Rosplatt from the University of Leipzig, based on his research on the reconstruction of Svayambhū.

[132] The *Niṣpannayogāvalī* also classifies the *maṇḍala* as "Piṇḍīkramokta Akṣobhya Maṇḍala". See Maṇḍala no. 2, *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, 35-37.

[133] This identification was given to me by the Buddhācārya priests at Svayambhū.

[134] de Mallmann, *Introduction à l'Iconographie du Tantrisme Bouddhique*, 232. See also Maṇḍalas 20 and 21 in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*.

[135] *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇam*, 371.

[136] This idea was explained by various practitioners, but most notably by Badrīratna Vajrācārya.

[137] Gutschow et. al., *Svayambhūnātha Conservation Plan*, 85.

[138] Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantra*, 36-42.

[139] Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 96. The information on the ritual aspect of these *tirthas* is taken from Gutschow's work.

[140] According to the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, Yogāmvara is considered to be the lineage deity of Śāntikarācārya, the first Vajrācārya priest. In the contemporary context, the ritual specialists of Svayambhū, the Buddhācārya priest also consider Yogāmvara to be their lineage deity (*digu dyaḥ*). Like Cakrasaṁvara, Yogāmvara/Jñānaḍākinī is important *āgaṁ* deities. Yogāmvara's primordial site, Mhepi Ajimā shrine is also situated on a hill and is considered to be a *śaktipīṭha* of Jñānaḍākinī.

[141] Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 97.

[142] During my research, there were several different versions of the *samkalpa* recitation, which differed slightly in their details. However, the basic outline of the sacred geography was consistent in all the versions. The translation used in the text is from the *Kalaśārcana Pūjā Vidhi*. See also Gellner, 191 for another version of the *samkalpa* statement.

[143] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 192.

[144] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 192-193. Gellner mentions that the *Samvarodaya Tantra*, one of the key Cakrasaṁvara texts, refers to the Himālayas as the *Upacchaṇḍoha-pīṭha*. I have not yet verified this statement in the text, but this designation to the Nepal Valley seems significant, especially in the association of the Valley as a Cakrasaṁvara maṇḍala.

[145] See Dharma Raja Vajrācārya, *Nepala Dvādaśa Tīrtha Mahātmya [The Māhatmya of the Twelve Tīrthas in Nepal]*. (Patan: Dharma Raja Vajrācārya, N.S. 1114) for legends of each of the 12 *tīrthas*.

[146] The cremation grounds as *pīṭhas* for the Tantric goddesses are well-known in Tantric literature. These notions are also commonly held beliefs in Nepal, both in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions.

[147] Ratnakājī Vajrācārya, *Yeh Deyāh Halañjvalañ*, 65.

[148] See Locke, *Karuṇamaya*, on the Aṣṭamī Vrata *pūjās* and their connection to pilgrimage.

[149] The concept of the *Aṣṭamātṛkās* as demarcators of sacred space in Bhaktapur is discussed in detail by Niels Gutschow and Bernhard Kolver, *Ordered Space, Concepts and Functions in a Town of Nepal* (Wiesbaden: Kommissions Verlag Franz Steiner, 1975). See also Robert I. Levy with the collaboration of Kedar Raj Rajopadhyaya, *Mesocosm: Hinduism and the Organization of a Traditional Newar City in Nepal*, for discussion of Hindu sacred space in Bhaktapur.

[150] The connection of Buddhism and Hinduism is particularly brought to the forefront during *Navarātri* or *Mohani*, particularly in context of the worship of Taleju, Durgā, Kumārī, and the masked dances of the Nāva Durgā Goddesses. This aspect needs to be discussed further.

[151] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 220.

[152] *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa*, Chapter Six.

[153] See Dharma Raja Vajrācārya, *Aṣṭavaitarāga Mahātmya [The Māhatmya of the Eight Vaitarāgas]*. (Patan: Dharma Raja Vajrācārya, N.S. 1100) for legends of each of the *vaitarāgas*.

[154] These plaques were offered by the devotees who performed the pilgrimage related to the Aṣṭami Vrata Pūjā to Amoghapāśā Lokeśvara.

[155] Information given in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*. Reference I used was Badrīratna Vajrācārya, *Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa*.

[156] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 128.

[157] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 192.

[158] The annual ritual is described in Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, 255. The governing body of the Ācārya *guthi* includes elders of each of the eighteen *Bāhās*, the eldest of the *guthi* of the four quarters, and the Raj Vajrācāryas Guru from Sikhāmu *Bāhā*, who function as the main officiant of the *guthi*.

[159] Although the eighty-four *siddhas* do not seem central to Newar Buddhism, it is interesting that the *siddhas* play a significant role in the empowerment rituals of the Vajrācāryas at Svayambhū.

[160] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, 205-255.

[161] In fact, Locke notes that although his informants cited "Vajrayoginī" at Sankhu to be their lineage deity, the Vajrācārya priests at the Khaḍga Yoginī temple verified that the main lineage deity ritual was performed to the *caitya*, and subsequent *pūjā* also offered to Khaḍga Yoginī.

[162] At present, the enshrined Gum Bāhā *caitya* is not allowed to be photographed. Although the *caitya* at present, has a metal covering, given as an offering, it is evident from the grove that was carved around the outer edges of the *caitya* that the natural rock was reshaped to fit the form of the *caitya*.

[163] One of the major functions of the Sikhāmu Rāj Gubhāju is to select the Royal Kathmandu Kumārī and act as *dyaḥpāla* of Kumārī Bāhā, which does not have a *saṅgha*, but essentially houses the Kathmandu Kumārī.

[164] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, 261.

[165] At present, the *pūjā* is performed by the Buddhācāryas from Svayambhū, the *dyaḥpālas* in charge of Svayambhū, Śāntipur, and the Hāritī shrine. However, as Locke notes and confirmed by my source, Baburāja Buddhācārya from Svayambhū, the *pūjā* material and money are still sent by the Raj Gubhaju and *daśadigācāryas* as proxy, as these men are too old to come to the Mahācaitya each day.

[166] Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, vol 3, 23.

[167] The five include the Raj Gubhaju, three members of the Sikhāmu Bāhā *kawal*, and a Vajrācārya from Sawal Bāhā.

[168] During my field research, some of my sources also said that the Dasapāramitā symbolized the ten stages (*bhūmis*) of the *bodhisattva* path.

[169] Ratnakaji Bajrācārya and Bijaya Ratan Bajrācārya, *Nepa Deya Viharya Tacah (Key to Vihāras in Nepal)*, (Kathmandu: Self-Published, 1983).

[170] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, 293.

[171] Personal communication with Thakāli Najarman Buddhācārya, the head priest of Svayambhū, who performs the rituals in Śāntipur.

[172] Slusser, Mary. "Serpents, Sages, and Sorcerers in Cleveland", *Oriental Art*. Vol. 2. 1978.

[173] At present, only Thakāli Najarman Buddhācārya of Svayambhū performs the *pūjā*, as the senior Vajrācārya from Makhan is too old to come for the monthly pūjā. However, priest from Makhan sends money and offering as proxy.

[174] There are various stories of these *siddha* popularly recounted in the Newar Buddhist tradition. I have seen children's comic books and pamphlets relating the stories related to these *siddha*.

[175] Locke, *Karuṇāmaya,* 18.

[176] Many informants talked about the magical acts of the *siddhas.* To my knowledge, there are virtually no detailed published text relating this subject.

[177] Ratnakaji Bajrācārya, *Nepah Dehya Vihāraya Tahca,* 74.

[178] According to one version of the legend, a king of Kasi had built a *caitya* and summoned Vākvajra to consecrate it. Invoking Māmakī into a *kalaśa* through his Tantric powers, he consecrated the *caitya* with the water of the *kalaśa.* The people, however, were dissatisfied with this simple ceremony and thought the *caitya* was not consecrated properly. To prove his power, Vākvajra rose into the sky and moved the *caitya,* bringing it to rest at Kathmandu.

[179] Informants at the site.

[180] Ratnakaji Bajrācārya, *Nepah Dehya Vihāraya Tahca,* 76.

[181] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal,* 288.

[182] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal,* 298. Locke's informants note that until recently many Tibetans used to visit Takse Bāhā, where they came to worship their *guru.*

[183] Ratnakaji Bajrācārya, *Nepah Dehya Vihāraya Tahca,* 83. The Sankrit colophon, quoted by Bajrācārya reads: "*Krvetyācārya saroruha pada viracita śrī hevajra sādhanasya vajrapadipanama tippani visuddhih samapta / Krtiriyam Paṇḍitaācārya śrīmat surat padanamiti //*

[184] Slusser, *Nepal Maṇḍala,* 67.

[185] As will be discussed in detail in Chapter Seven, Guhyeśvarī's identity as Vajravārāhī may emerge from the fact that the lineage deities of both Takṣe Bāhā and Mu Bāhā are Guheśvarī. Both Bāhās are intimately associated with the worship of the Mu Bāhā Kumārī as Vajradevī and Vajravārāhī. At Takṣe Bāhā, the Sādya Kumārī resides over the *mahābali pūjā,* which is often offered to Māmakī, who in turn is an emanation of Vajravārāhī. These rituals may provide clues to the identity of Guhyeśvarī "the Secret Goddess", who are known variously as Nairatmā, Vajravārāhī, and Vajradevī.

[186] Although there is a well in the courtyard of the *Bāhā* that is associated with Jamna Gubhaju, Śāntipur and Svayambhū, Locke states that his informants insisted that he is not the same Mañjuvajra who is the preceptor of this quarter.

[187] Wright, *History of Nepal,* 220-221.

[188] Gautam Bajra Bajrācārya, "Pratapmallako Śāntipur pravesa", *Purṇimā,* vol 4, 41-43. Unfortunately, the inscription of Pratap Malla at Śāntipur does not give the name of the Vajrācārya priest.

[189] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal,* 129-130.

[190] Ratnakaji Bajrācārya, *Nepah Dehya Vihāraya Tahca,* 100.

[191] Locke, *Karunamaya,* 25-30.

[192] Locke, *Karunamaya,* 30.

[193] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal,* 129. Later, the book was conceded by the *sangha* at Makhan Bāhā in the seventeenth century.

[194] Locke states that one Tathāgatavajra from Kva Bāhā set up a *guthi* for the standarization of the rituals and texts. Although now defunct, the rules are still followed by the Vajrācāryas of Patan. See Locke, *Karuṇāmaya,* 30.

[195] Hemrāj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya,* 230.

[196] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal,* 146.

[197] For sacred history of the site, see Ratnaraj Vajrācārya, *Kwā Bāhāhya Vaṁsāvalī* [The Chronicles of Kwā Bāhā]. Nāgabāhā, Patan: Mangal Ratna Śākya, 1993.

[198] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal,* 298.

[199] Kvā Bāhā in Patan, for instance, has Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍakinī and Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī as principal deities of the two *āgaṁ* shrines.

[200] Yogāṁvara at Mhepi also has a special relationship with the Rāto Macchindranāth cult, as the *pañju* priests of Rāto Macchindranāth, who are *dyārapālas* of the Bungamati shrine consider the Yogāmvara from Mhepi to be their lineage deity, who is "brought" to Svayambhū. Every year, before the chariot festival, the *saṅgha* offer their annual lineage pūjā to Yogāmvara on the west stairs of Svayambhū leading down to Śāntipur.

[201] In this recent book, Niels Gutschow designates a descriptive term *Ramyakūṭāgāra Caitya* ("Beautiful Palace Caitya") to this type of *caitya*, based on Amṛtānanda Śākya's classification which he prepared for Brian H. Hodgson in the mid-nineteenth century. This classification is not based on inscriptional evidence, but on its morphological structure. Gutschow also mentions five other *caityas* found in the Valley as *Ramyakūṭāgāra Caityas*, however, I have not verified this statement at this point in my research. See Niels Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 261-263.

[202] Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 262.

[203] Niels Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 17.

[204] Niels Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 261.

[205] While Gutschow provides an excellent descriptive analysis of the *caitya*, he does not identify the iconography of this caitya as related to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

[206] Min Bāhādur Śākya, *Arya Mañjushree Nama Sangiti* (Kathmandu: Nagarjuna Insitute of Buddhist Studies, 1993), 31.

[207] Niels Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 188.

[208] In my research, I know of only three Bāhās that have the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala: Kumārī Bāhā, Tham Bahī, and a small Bāhā in New Road.

[209] *Sarva Tathāgata Tattva Samgraha*, 54.

[210] Niels Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 8.
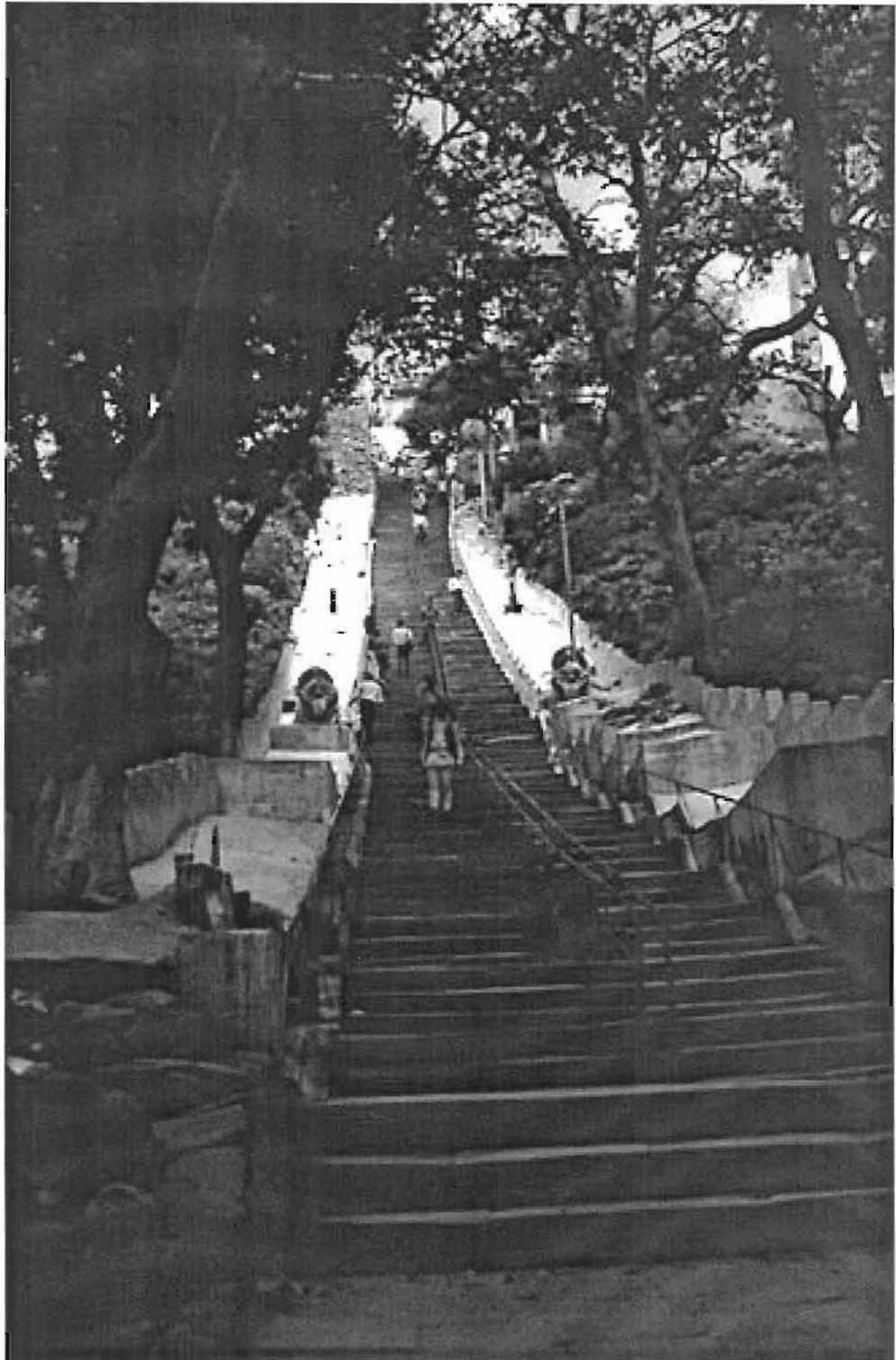
Figure 4.1. Stairs on the east side, leading up to
Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

Figure 4.2. Licchavi *caitya* in front of Syengu Bāhā. Svayambhū
Mahācaitya Complex.
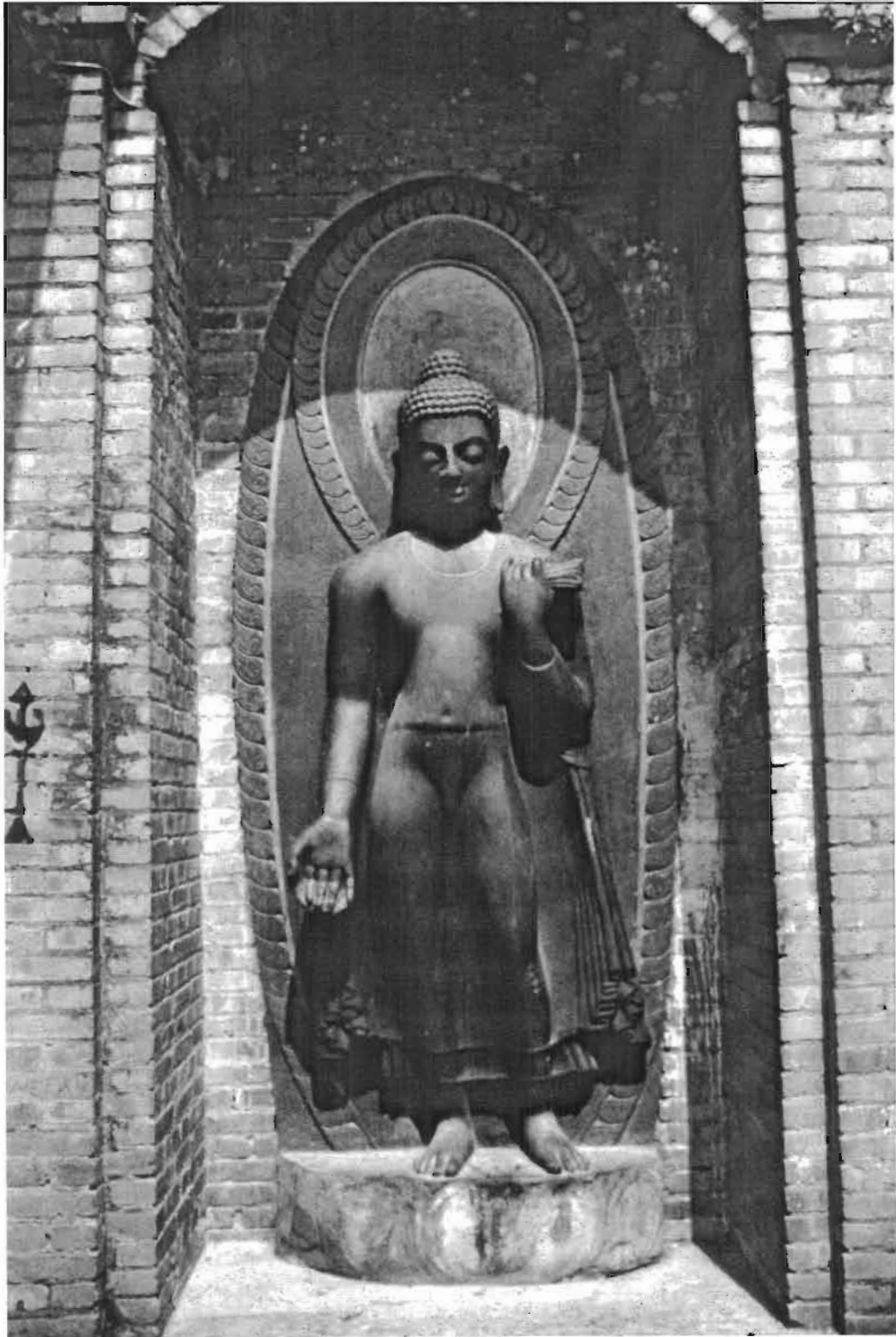
Figure 4.3. Maitreya Buddha. Licchavi Period. Svaymbhū Mahācaitya Complex

Figure 4.4. Caitya with Four Buddhas. Licchavi Period or earlier.
Svaymbhū Mahācaitya Complex

Figure 4.5. Licchavi Caitya with Four Buddhas. Thām Bahī, Kathmandu.

Figure 4.6. Stone stele depiciting *vajra* below Akṣobhya shrine. East side. Stone Base. Svaymbhū Mahācaitya.

Figure 4.7. Stone panel depiciting *dharmacakra* below Ratnasambhava shrine. South side. Stone Base. Svaymbhū Mahācaitya.
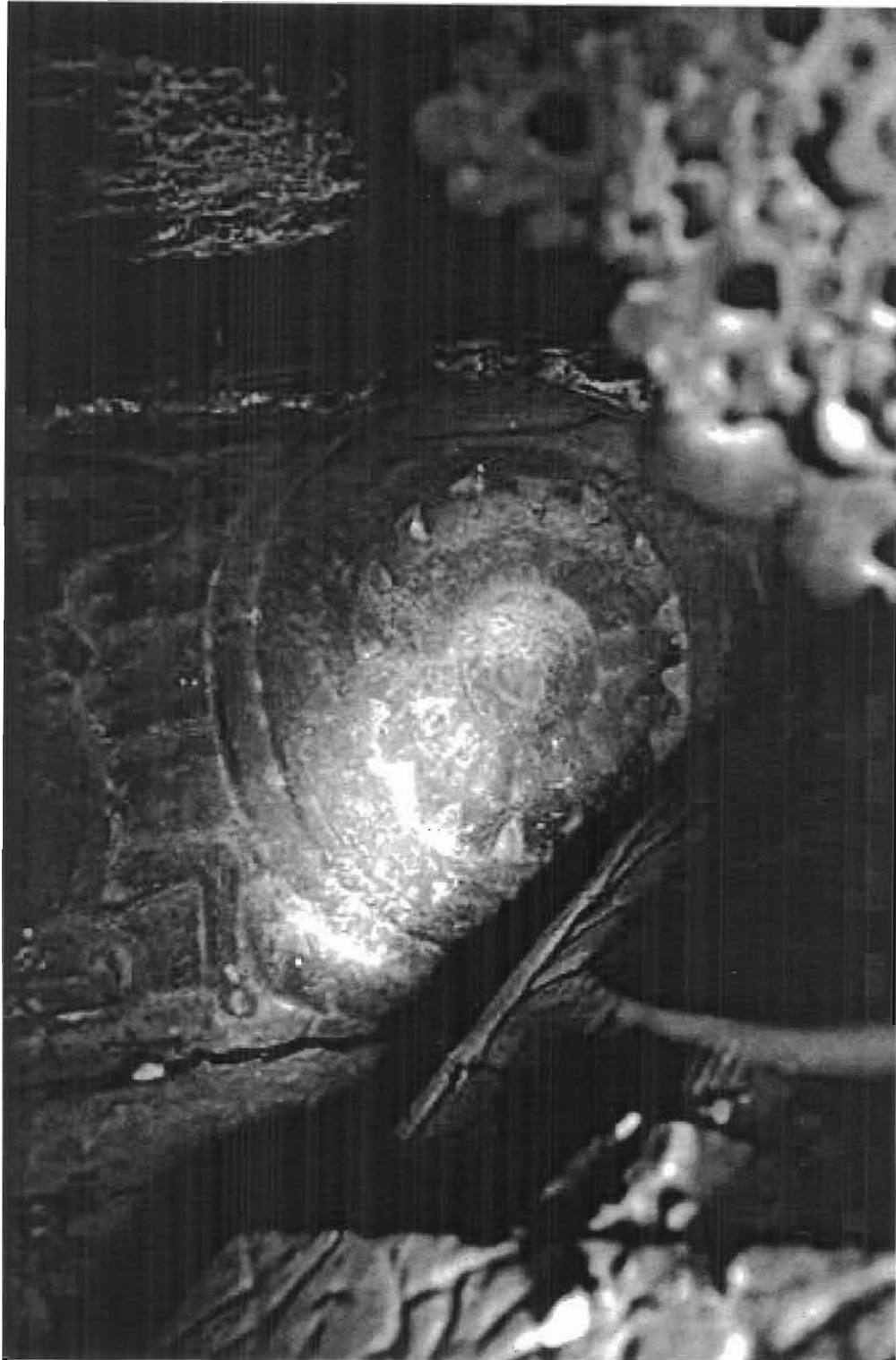
Figure 4.8. Stone stele depiciting *dharmacakra* below Amitābha shrine. West side. Stone Base. Svaymbhū Mahācaitya.

Figure 4.9. Stone stele depiciting a Nāgarāja below Amoghasiddhi shrine. North side. Stone Base. Svaymbhū Mahācaitya.

Figure 4.10. Stone steles depticting *dharmacakra* and *vajra*. Licchavi Period. *Caitya* base. Tukan Bāhā Caitya. Hyumattol, Kathmandu.

Figure 4.11. Licchavi Caitya with niches for Jina Buddhas in cardinal directions. Om Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 4.12. Example of Licchavi Caitya with niches for Jina Buddhas in cardinal directions. Musuam Bāhā, Kathmandu.
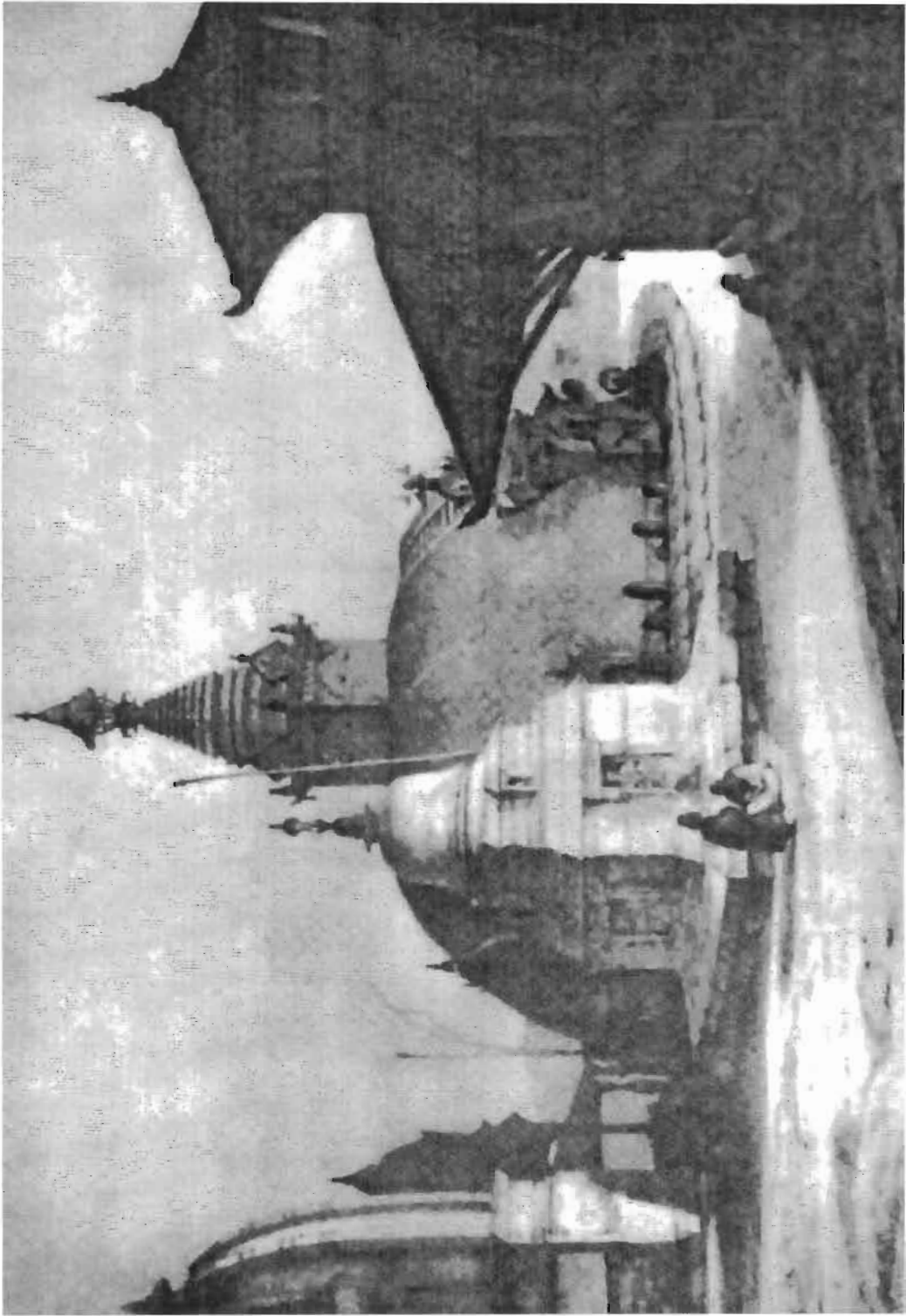
Figure 4.13. Photograph of Svayambhū Mahācaitya taken by Prince Waldemar of Prussia. 1845.
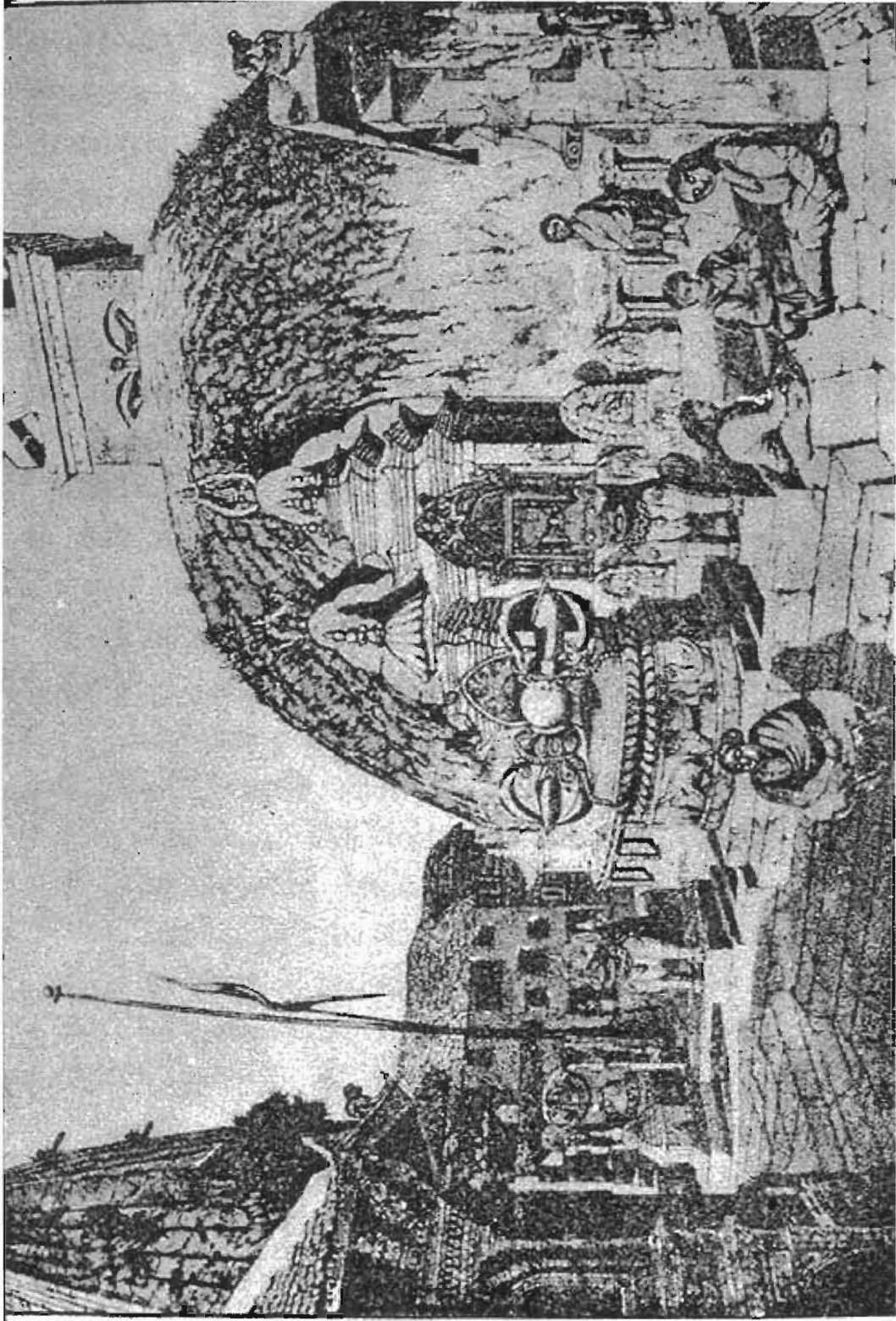
Figure 4.14. Sketch of Svayambhū Mahācaitya by Henry Oldfield. 1880.

Figure 4.15. Photograph of Svayambhū Mahācaitya taken by Percy Brown. 1912.
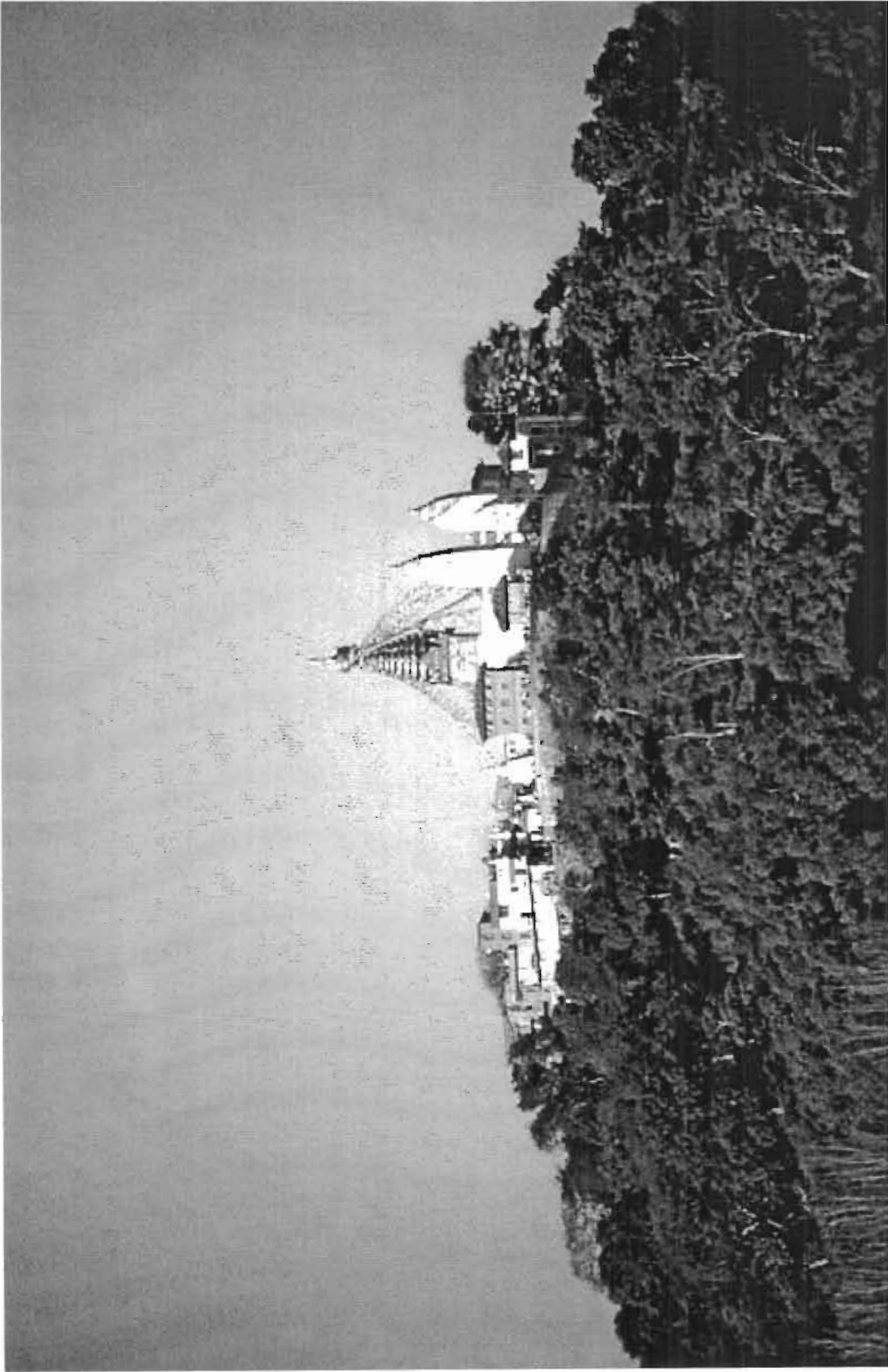
Figure 4.16. Distant view of Svayambhū Mahācaitya on Gopuccha Parvat.
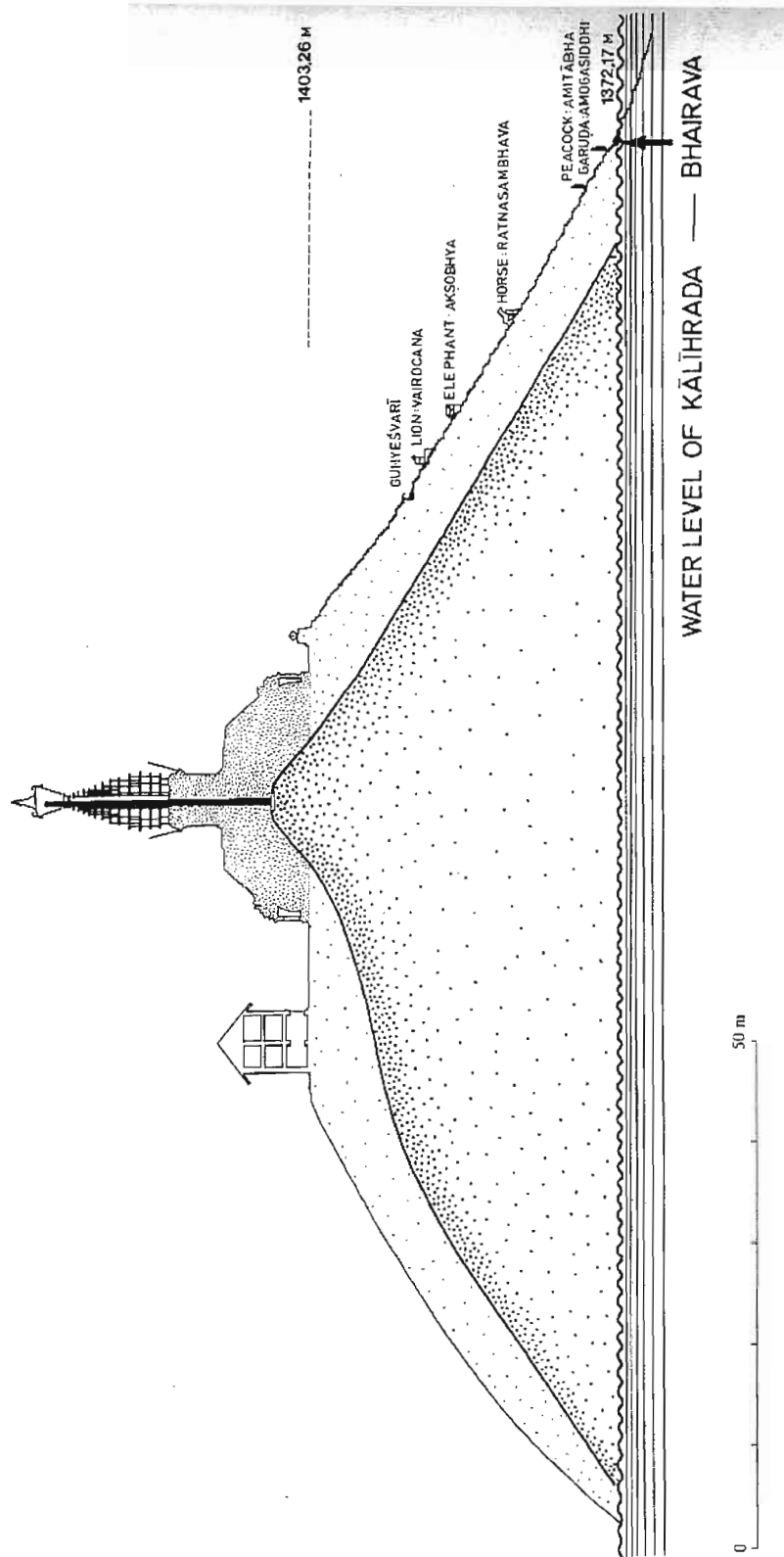
Figure 4.17. Elevation Cross-section of Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

GUHYEŚVARĪ
LION·VAIROCANA
ELEPHANT·AKSOBHYA
HORSE·RATNASAMBHAVA
PEACOCK·AMITĀBHA
GARUDA·AMOGASIDDHI
1403.26 м
1372.17 м
WATER LEVEL OF KĀLĪHRADA —— BHAIRAVA
50 m
0
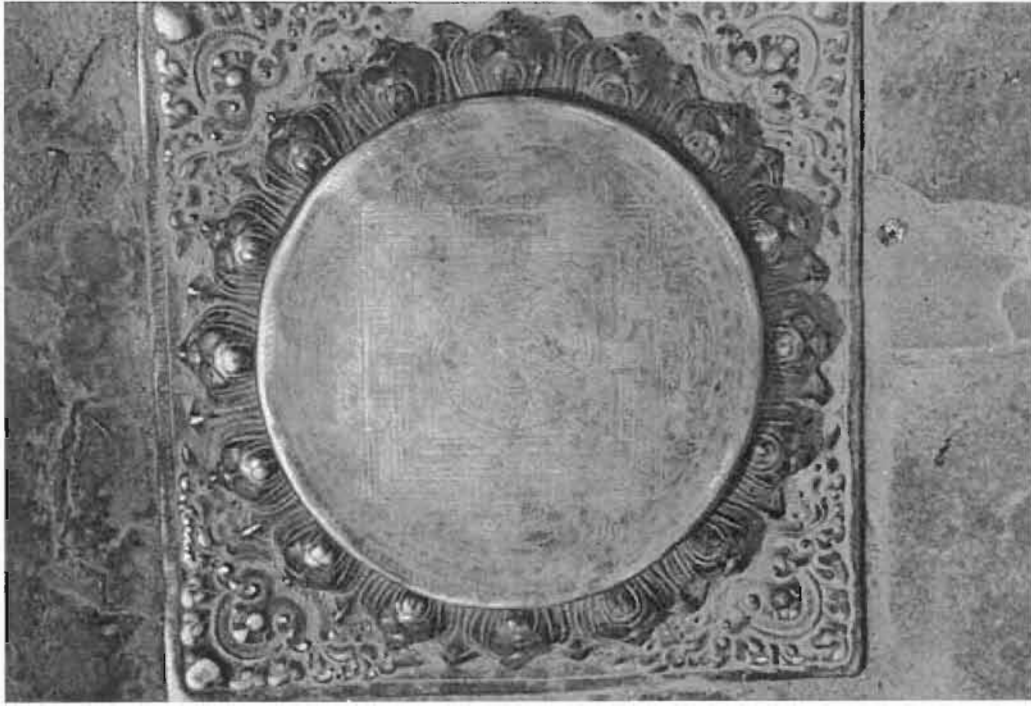
Figure 4.18. Ritual space in front of shrines, depicting *maṇḍala* and *yajñakuṇḍa*. East side. Svayambhū Mahācaitya.
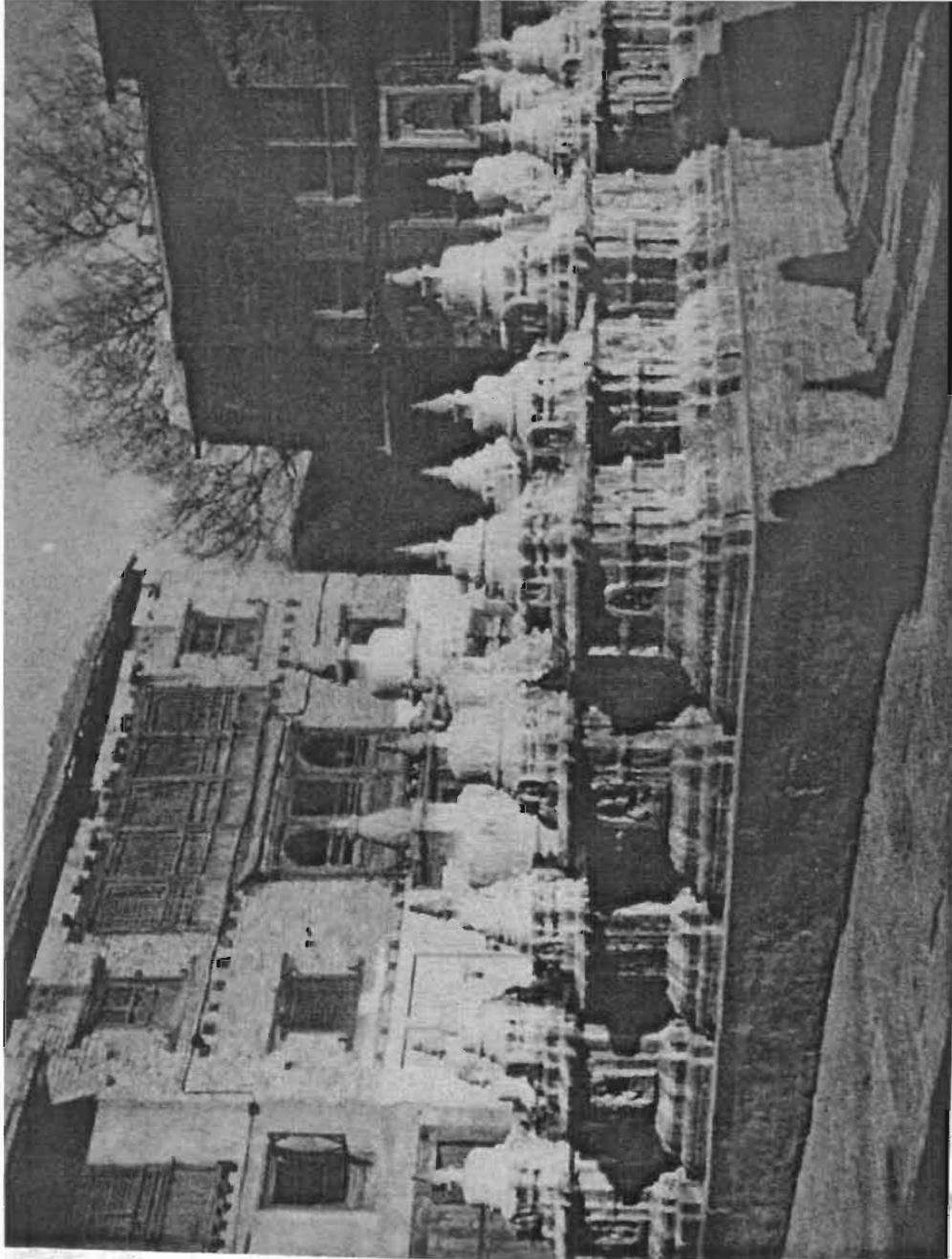
Figure 4.19. Votive *caityas* at Svayambhū Mahācaitya. Northwest side.

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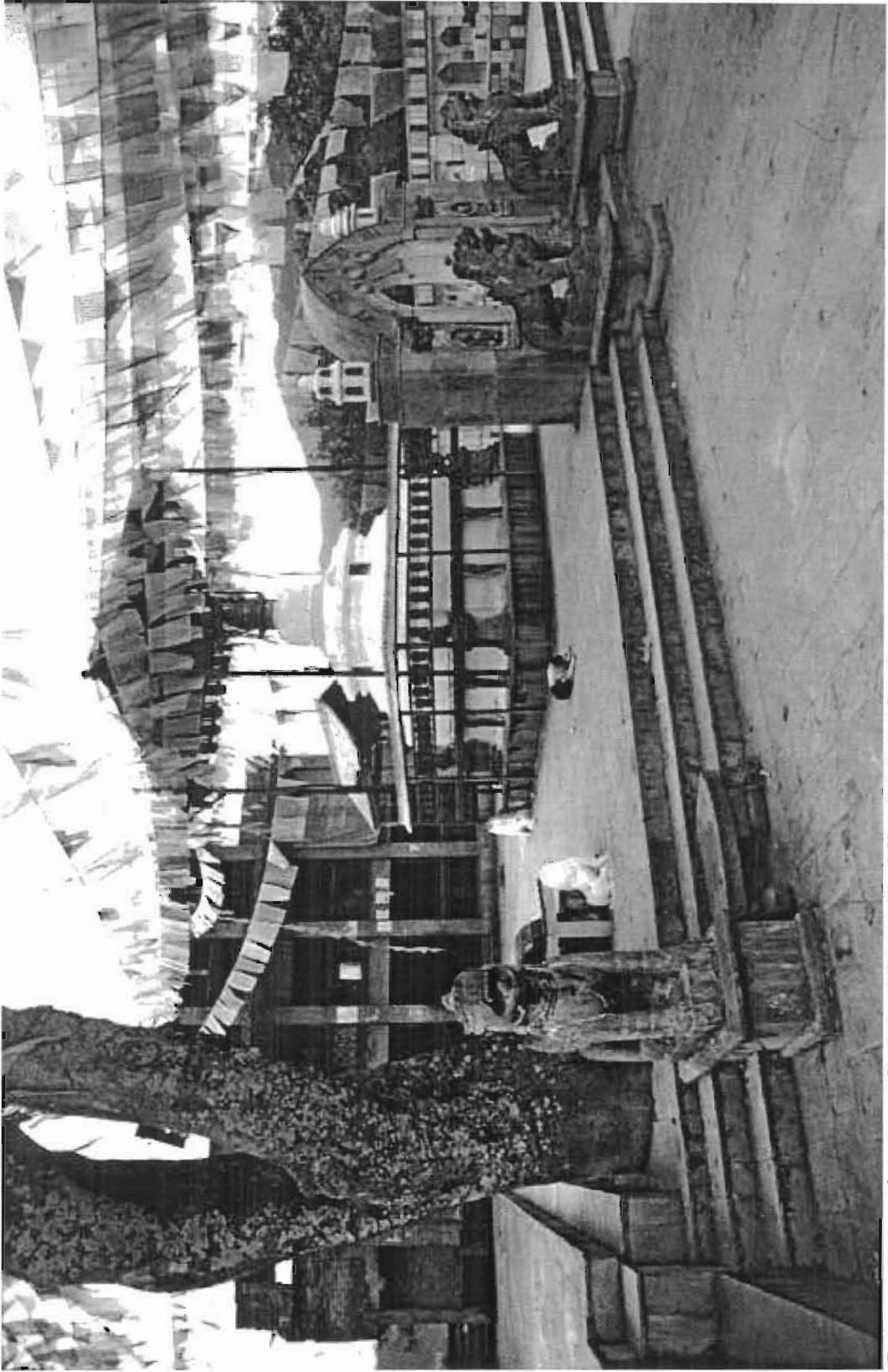
Figure 4.20. Mañjuśrī Caitya. Upper Saddle, West side, Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex. View looking northwest.

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Swayambhū Mahacaitya
(Gosingu Parvat
Samhyeng Mahavihara)
site plan

Sketch plan
By John C. Huntington

Houses and Shops

Colors associated with the five pur
Basupur Yellow
Vayupur Green
Agnipur Red
Nagpur White
[Śāntipur blue?]

Toilets

Śāntipur

Śāntipur
(Mahāsamvara)

Dowa to
lower saddle
(Vasubandhu
Stupa area)

Head Priest's house
in which the main image of
Dipankara Buddha is
stored to be brought out
for festivals, etc.

Agnipur

Agnipur

Baukaji Buddhacarya's
house in which the main
"image" of the Mañjuśrī-
pāda is kept in the agam

Kwapa dya
(Dipankara
Shrine)

Karmaras
Gumba

Karmaraja Mahavihara

Nagpur

Nagpur

Pratāppur

Pratapur (Mahāsamvara)

"Buddha of Light"
(Deva Avatar Bodhisattva?)
[Licchavi period
Maitreya Buddha]

International
Buddhist Lib.

Hariti Shrine

Ajima (Hariti)
Shrine

Pilgrim's
Guest House

Swayambhu
Bahil

Vajra over the
Dharmadhatu
Vagiśvari Mañjughosa
Mandala

Swayambhu Gumba
over Recitation Hall

Anantapur (Nil Sarasvati,
Ugratara, Ekajati)

Anantapur

Down to
lower saddle
(Vasubandhu
Stupa area)

Sculpture
Museum

Basupur
(Basundhara)

Vasupur

Vayupur

Agam

Vayupur

Figure 4.21. Ground Plan of Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.

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Figure 4.22. Pratāppur. Northeast side. Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex. View of south face.
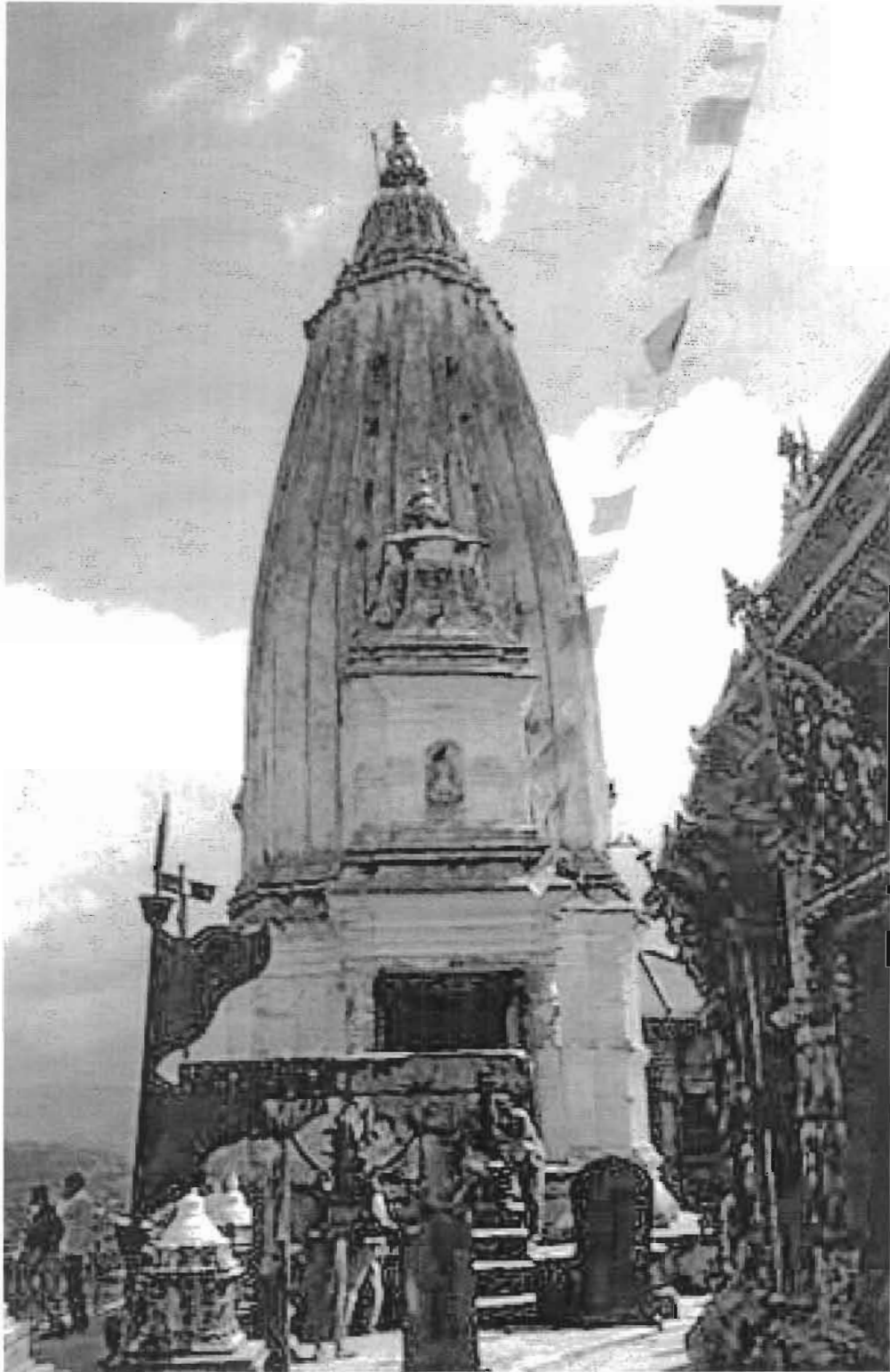
Figure 4.23. Anantapur. Southeast side. Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex. View of north face.

Figure 4.24. View of shrine door. Pratāppur. South shrine facade.

Figure 4.26. Gate-Guardian of Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. Prātappur. Sout side. Figure to right of shrine door

Figure 4.25 Gate-Guardian of Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. Pratāppur. Sout side. Figure to left of shrine door

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Figure 4.28. Gate-Guardian of Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. Anantapur. North face. Figure to right of shrine door
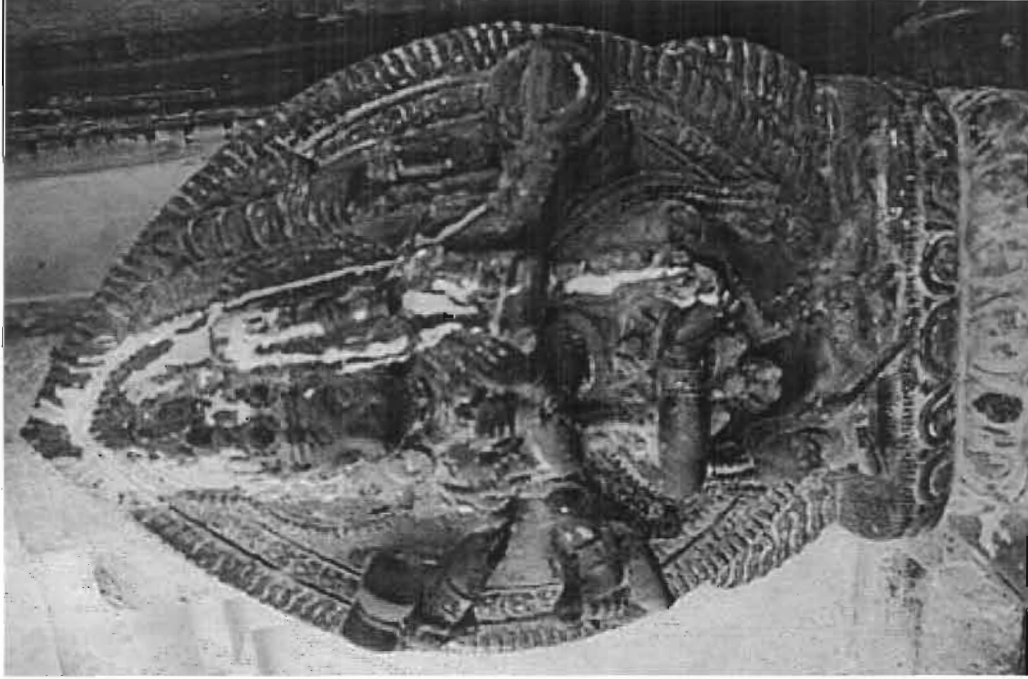
Figure 4.27. Gate-Guardian of Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. Anantapur. North face. Figure to left of shrine door
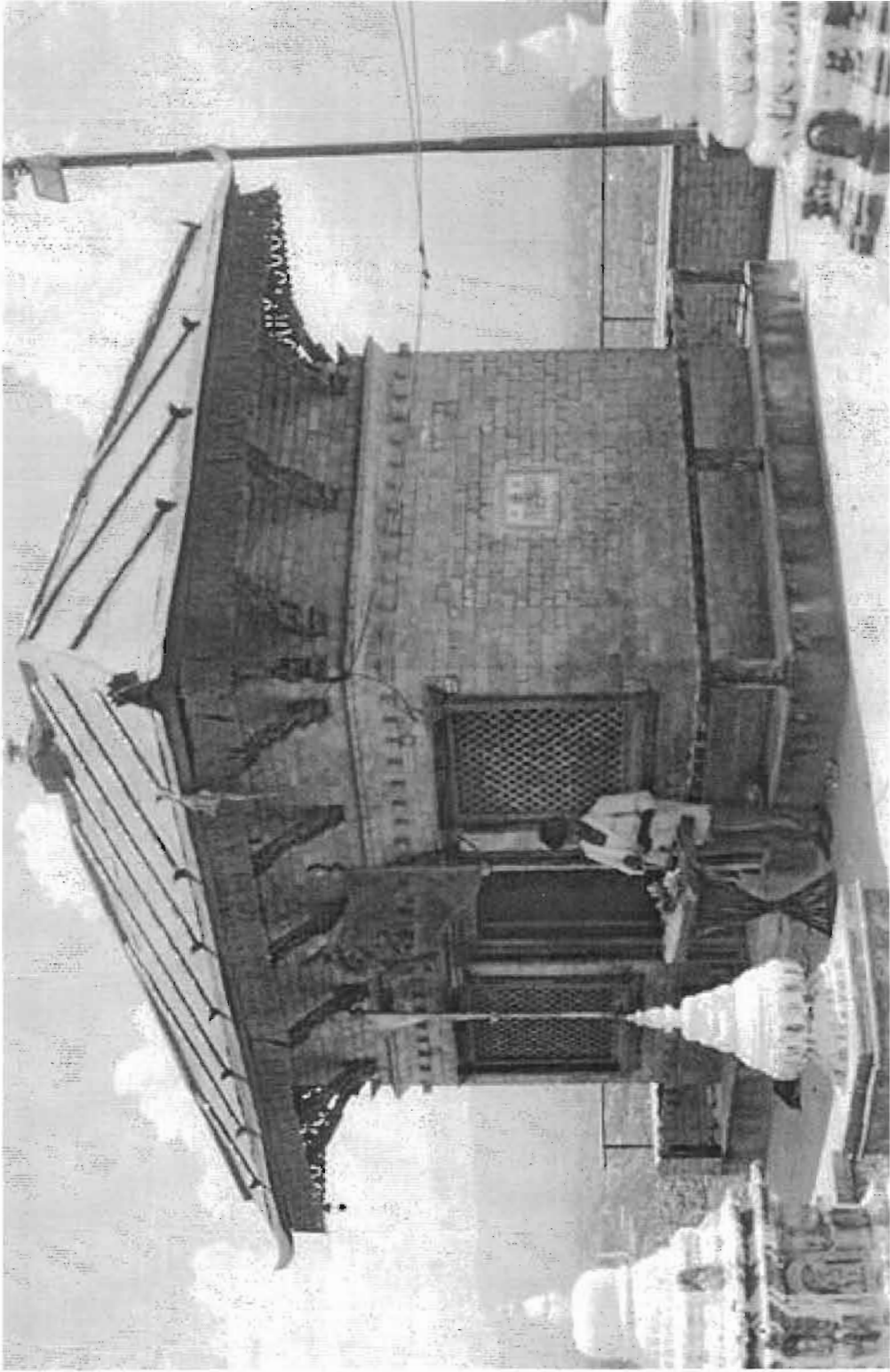
Figure 4.29. Vasupur. Southeast side of Mahācaitya. View from northwest

Figure 4.30. *Toraṇa* depicting Goddess Vasundharā. Vasupur. North Face.

Figure 4.31. Shrine image of Goddess Vasundharā.Vasupur. North face.

Figure 4.32. Vāyupur. Southwest side of Mahācaitya. View of east face.

Figure 4.33. Shrine image of Vāyu as *pīṭha devatā*. Vāyupur.

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Figure 4.34. Agnipur. Northwest side of *Caitya*.

Figure 4.35. Agni's face painted annually during Kārttika Pūrṇimā.

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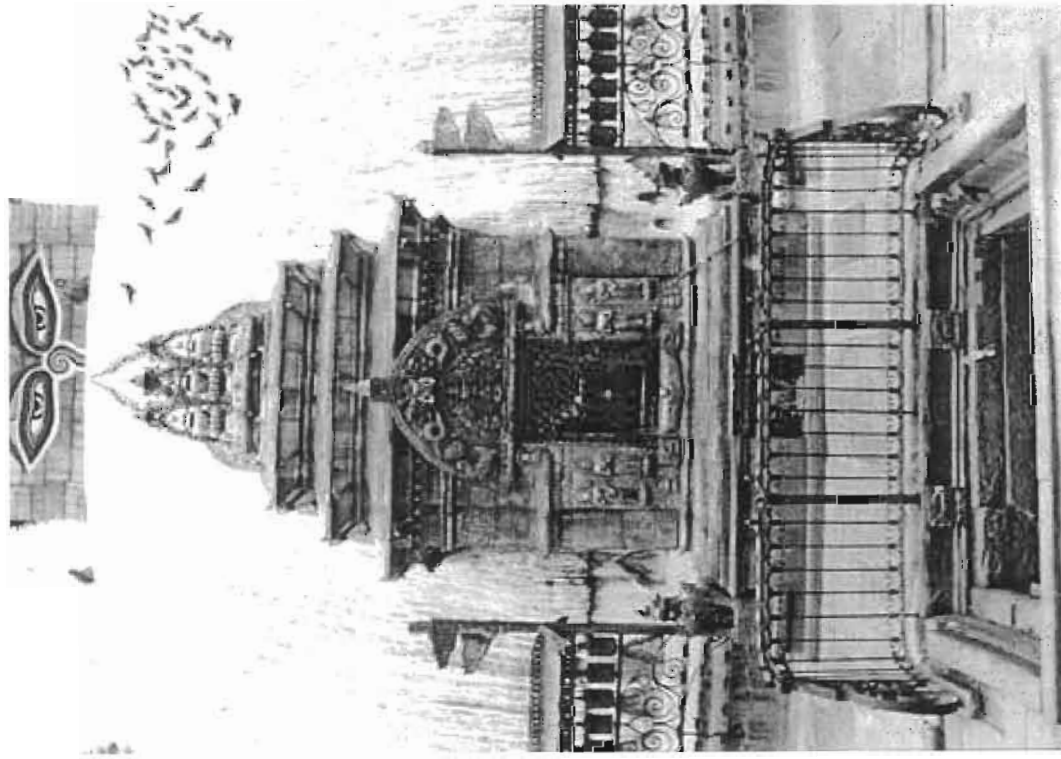
Figure 4.36. Nāgpur, north of *caitya*, in front of shrine of Amoghasiddhi.

Figure 4.37. Śāntipur. Far north side of Mahācaitya. View of south face.

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Figure 4.38. Interior Antechamber. Śāntipur. Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.

Figure 4.39. *Pūjā* performed inside antehamber of Śāntipur.
Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.

Figure 4.40. Hāritī Shrine. Northwest side of Mahācaitya. View of south side.

Figure 4.41. Ritual space in front of the Hāritī Shrine. South side.

Figure 4.42. Daily *pūjā* performed in front of Hāritī Shrine. South side.
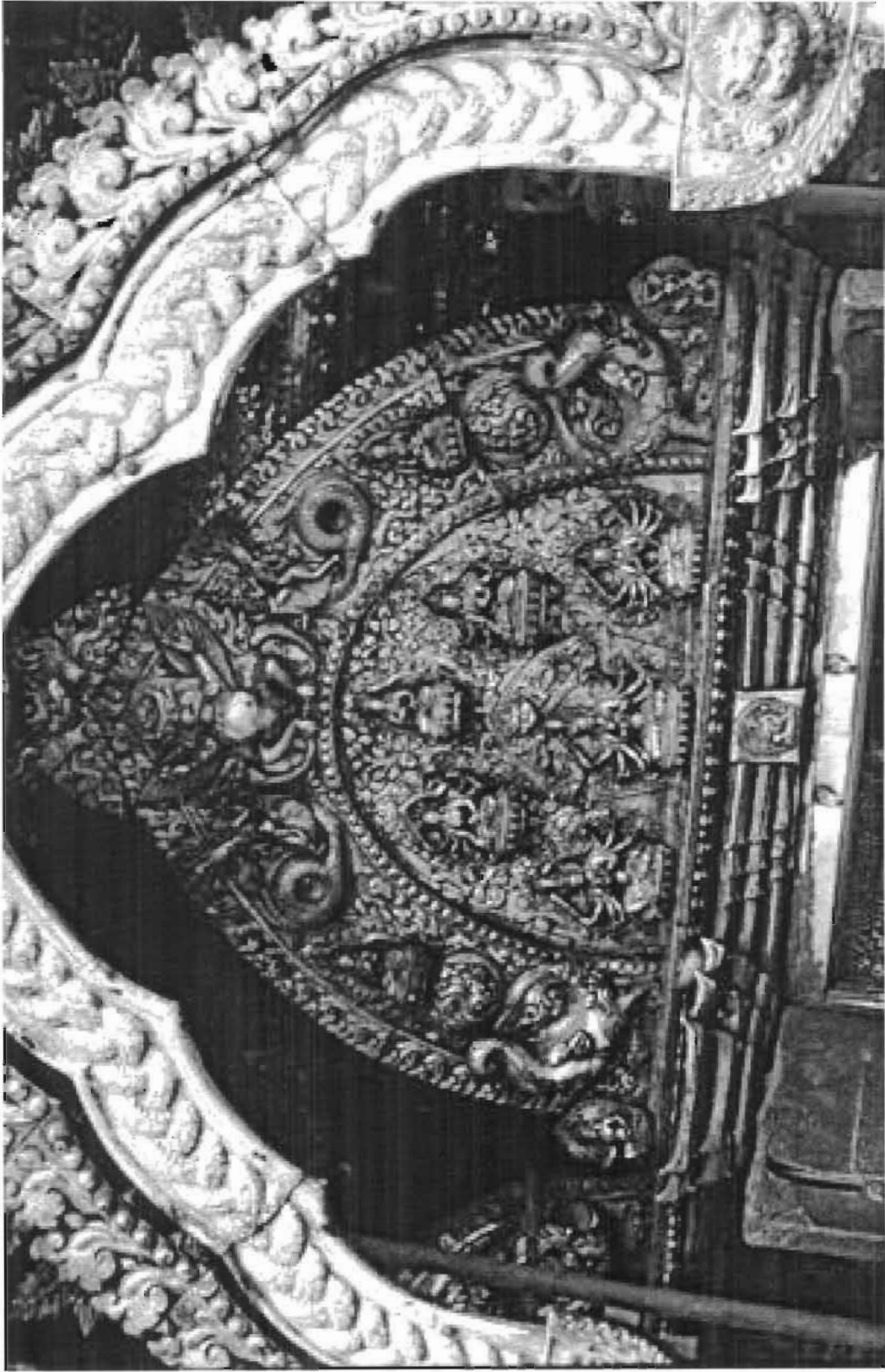
Figure 4.43. Main *toraṇa* depicting the Pañcarakṣā Goddesses. South Side. Hāritī Shrine. Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.

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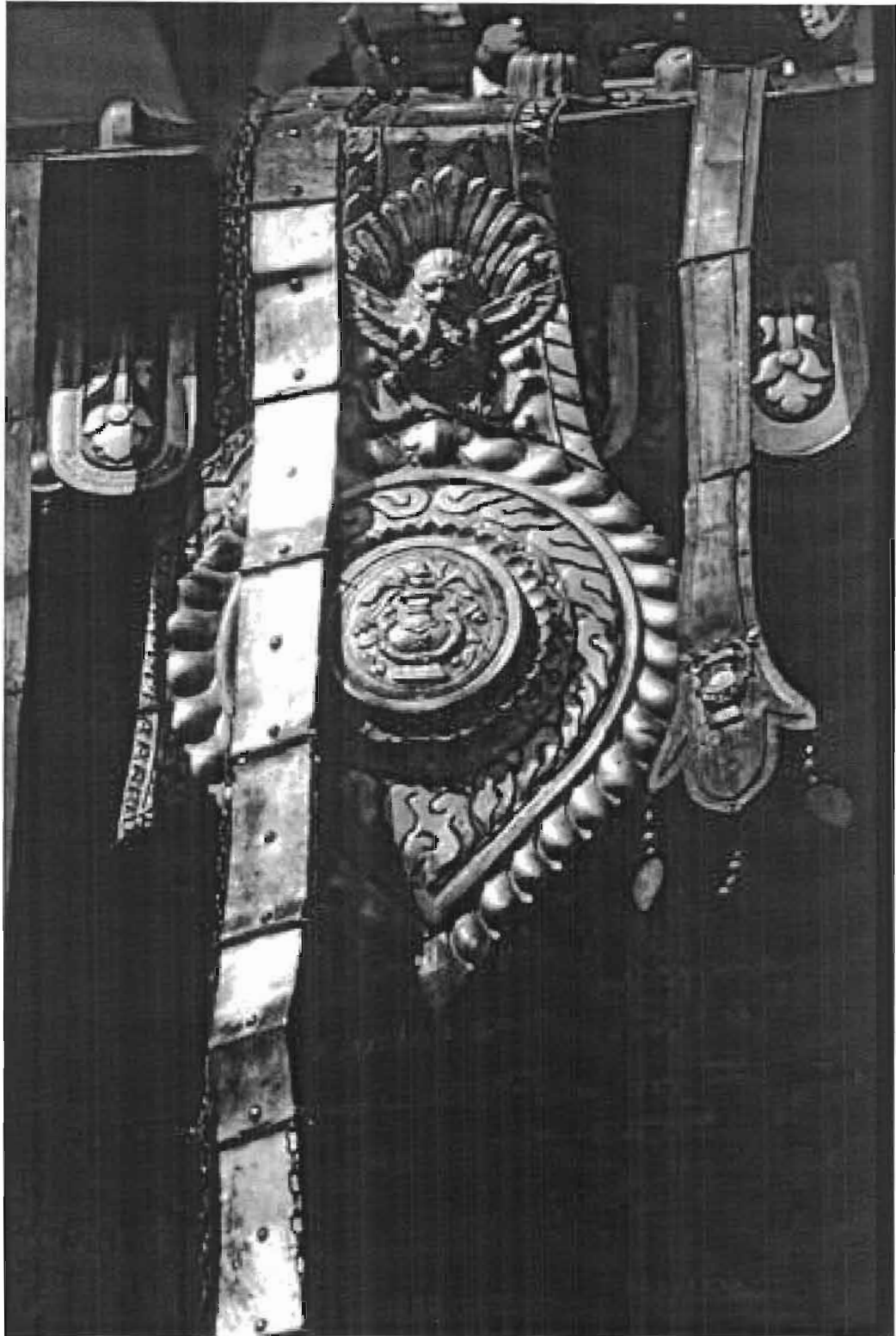
Figure 4.44. Roof Pendant depicting *kalaśa*. Hāritī Shrine. Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.

Ill. 3. Proportions of Sāñcī I and
the Svayambhū, compared

Figure 3.46. Comparative Morphology of
Svayambhū Mahācaitya and Sāñchi Stupa.

Figure 4.45. Drawing depicting structural elements
of Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

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Figure 4.47. *Hāmikā* depicting eyes of the Ādi Buddha. West side. Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

Figure 4.48 *Hālā*. East side. Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

Figure 4.49. *Hālā*. South side. Svayambhū Mahācaitya.
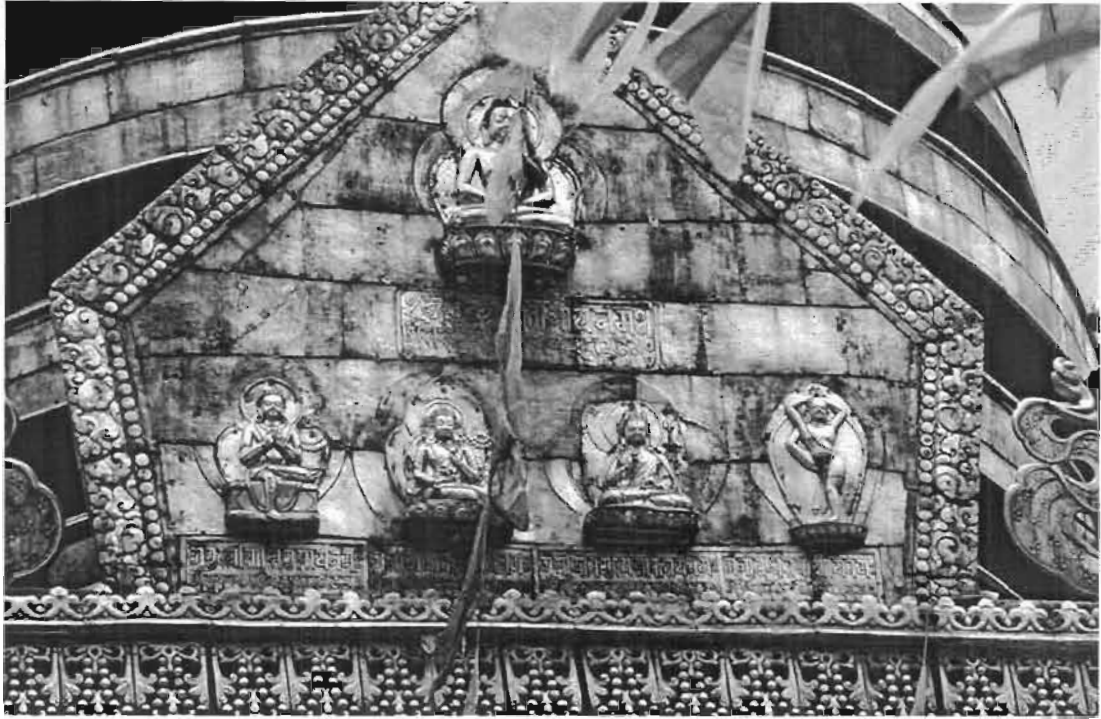
Figure 4.50. *Hālā*. West side. Svayambhū Mahācaitya.
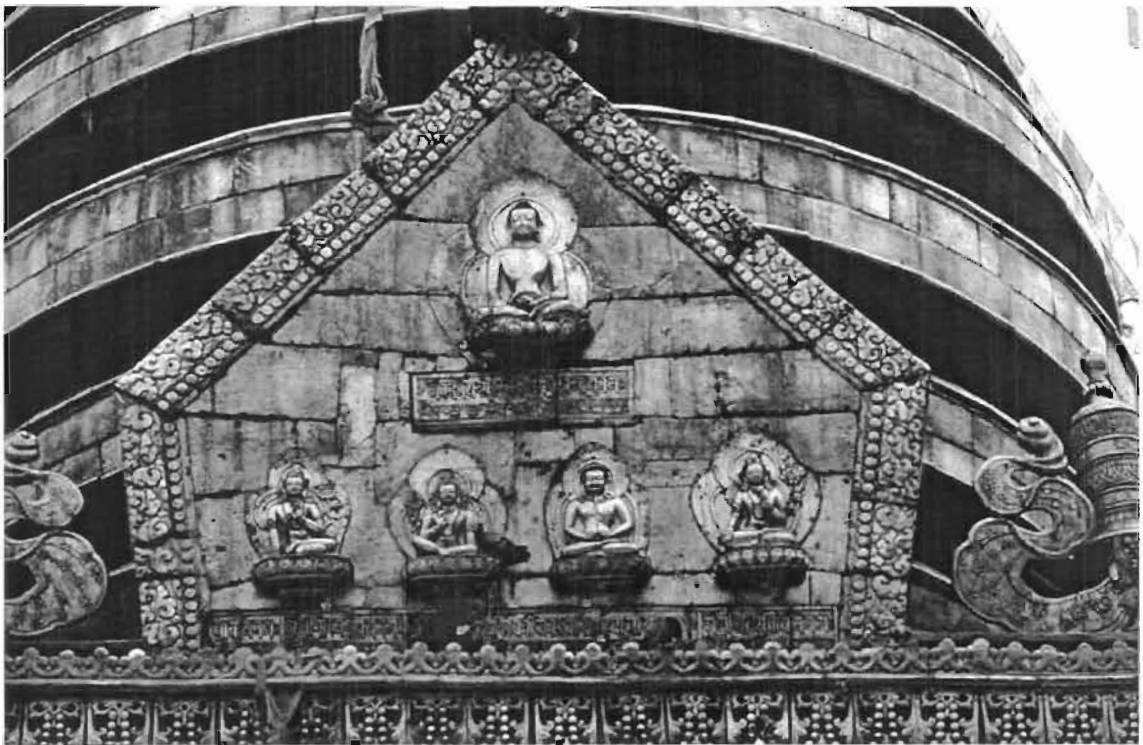
Figure 4.51. *Hālā*. North side. Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

The Major Iconography of
Swayambhu Mahacaitya

A Sketch Plan
By John C. Huntington

Amoghasiddhi

Aryā Tārā
Śakti of
Amoghasiddhi

Mamakī also known as
Saptalocanaī Tārā
the Śakti of Akśobhya

Bhaisajyaguru

Dharmadhatu
Vagisvari
Manjughosa
Mandala

Amitābha

Amitābha

Vairocana

Aksobhya

Vairocana
[Top Center]

Śākyamuni

Empty shrine of
Vajradhatesvari
Sakti of Vairocana
[Center, never shown]

Padmini
Śakti of Amitābha

Locani, Śakti of
Ratnasambhava

Ratnasambhava

Figure 4.52. Ground Plan of Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

Figure 4.53. Morphological Structure of the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala.

Figure 4.54. Vairocana (viewer's left) and Akṣobhya (viwer's right) shrines. East side. Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

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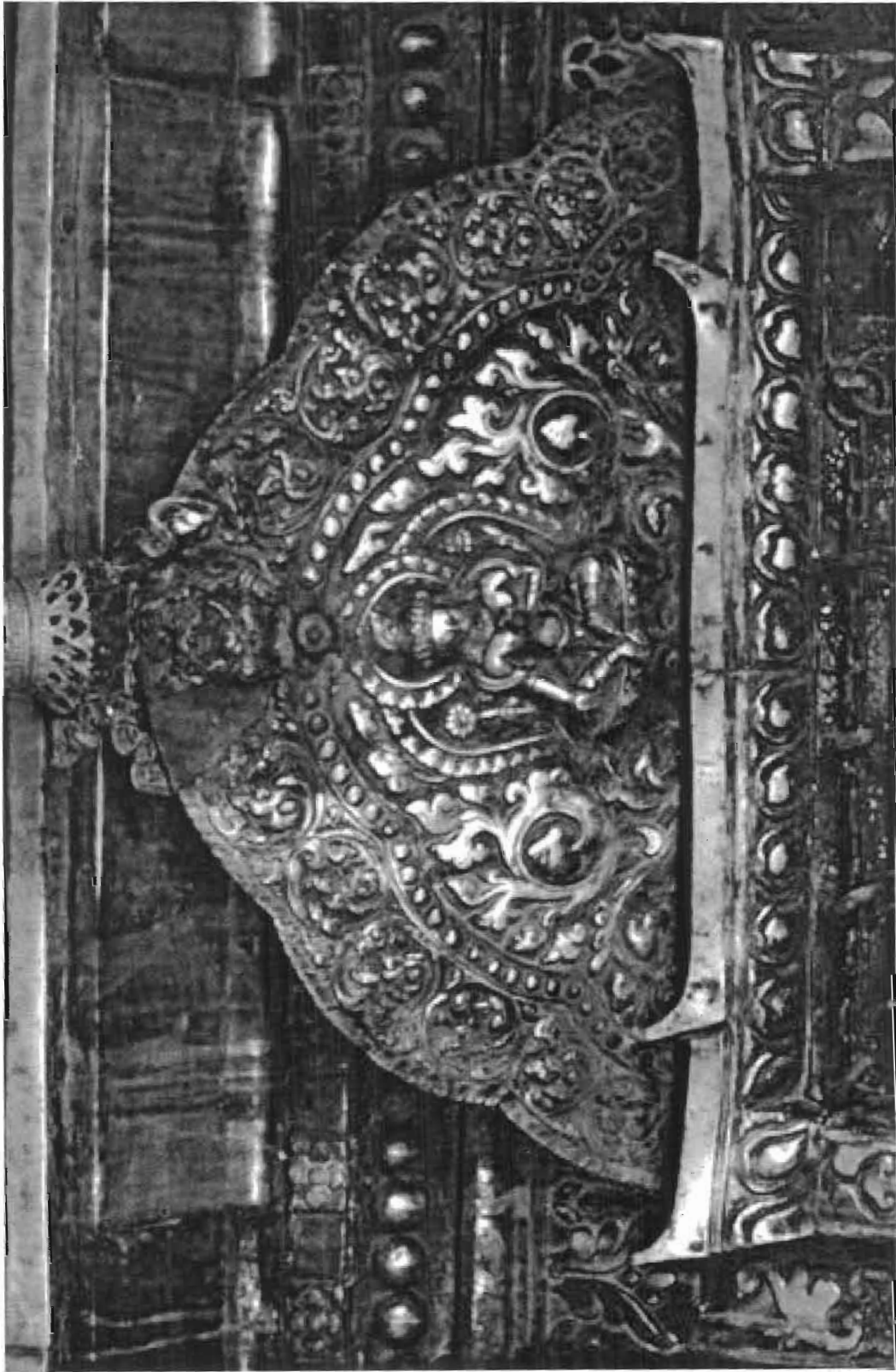
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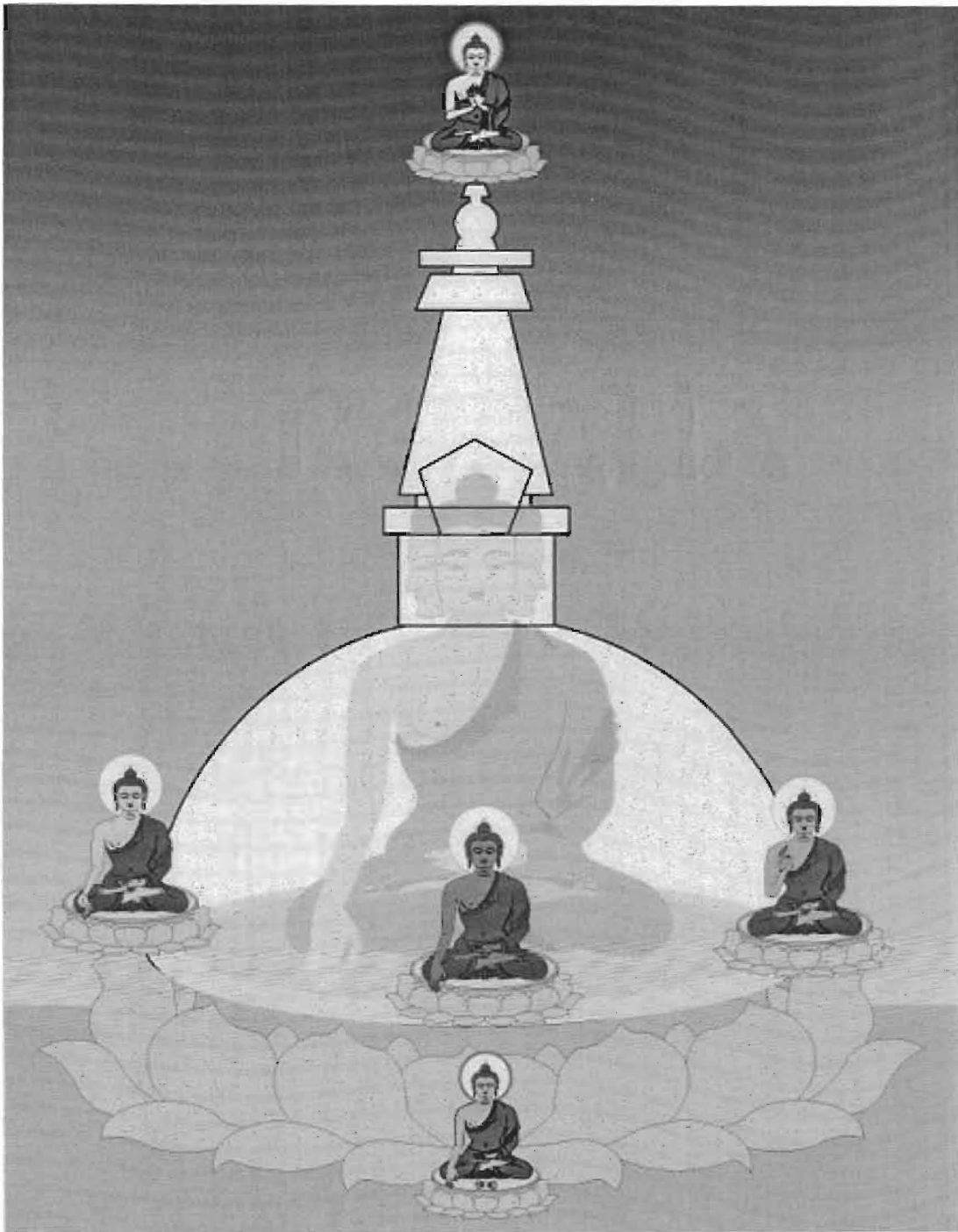
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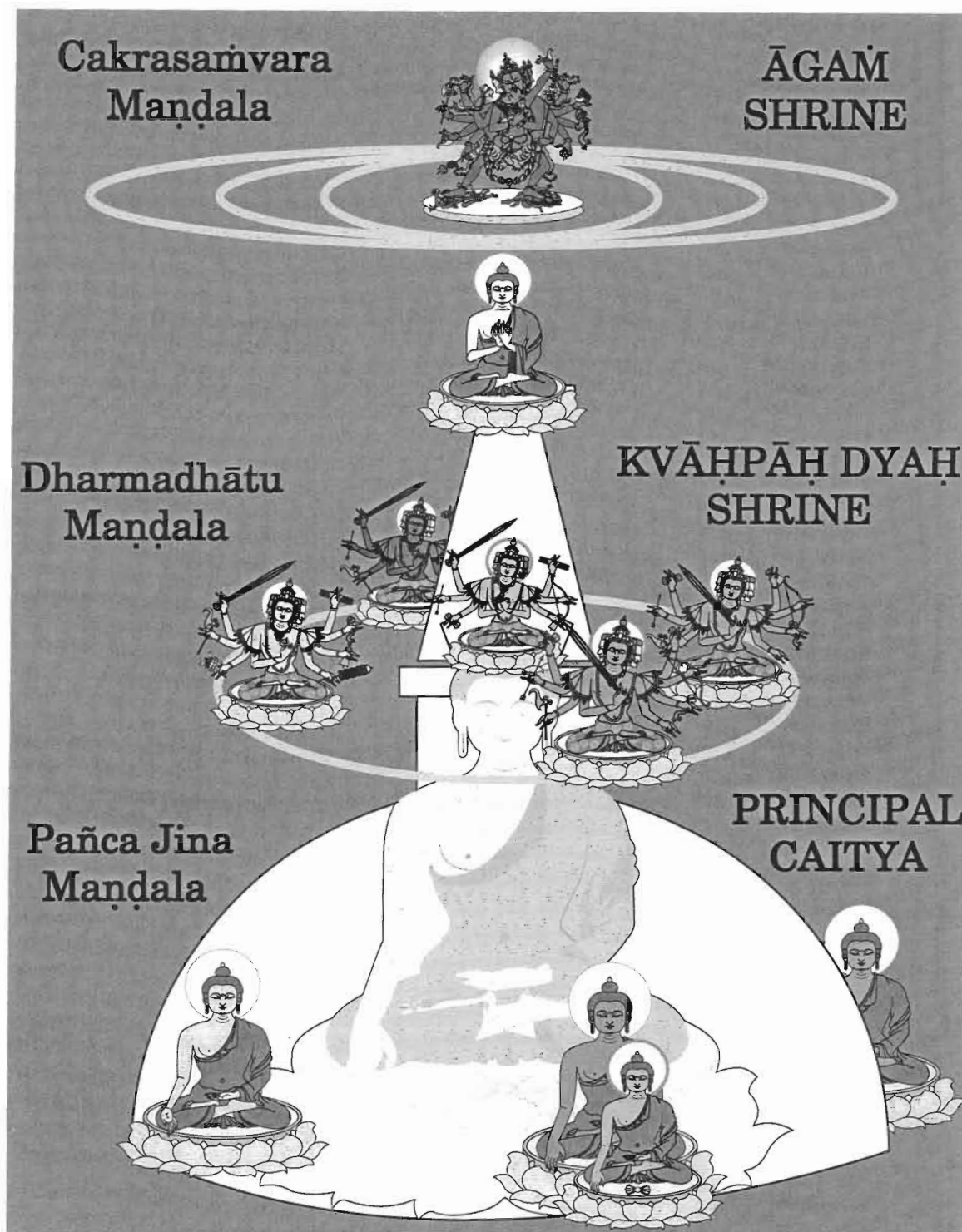
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MANIFESTING THE MANDALA:
A STUDY OF THE CORE ICONOGRAPHIC PROGRAM
OF
NEWAR BUDDHIST MONASTERIES
IN NEPAL

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Dina Bangdel, M.A.

*****

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Dissertation Committee:

Professor John C. Huntington, Co-Adviser

Professor Susan L. Huntington, Co-Adviser

Professor Howard Crane

Professor Thomas Kasulis

Approved by

Co-Advisers

Department of History of Art

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CHAPTER 5

DHARMADHĀTU MAṆḌALA:

THE SECOND CORE ICONOGRAPHIC COMPONENT

INTRODUCTION

To contextualize the significance of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, this chapter provides a buddhological interpretation of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala based on textual references and contemporary oral teachings given to me by the ritual specialists. The analyses represented reflect the technical Tantric understanding and soteriological methodologies, as they pertain to the Newar Buddhist tradition. A familiarity with the philosophical premises of the religion helps understand the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala as a core component of *bāhā* imagery.

To illustrate the preeminence of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala theme in the iconographic programs of the *bāhās/bahīs,* I examine the iconographic program of the six monuments from Kathmandu and Patan. The aim of this

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examination is to show that this theme was a major iconographic theme and incorporated into the larger visual program of the structures by the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries.

SECTION I: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in Newar Buddhist Art

Among the Tantric meditational cycles practiced in Newar Buddhism, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala appears to be the root *maṇḍala* of the religion. The Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, as a demonstration of the Enlightenment process, is one of the most recurrent iconographic themes in Newar Buddhist religious architecture. As illustrated in the visual imagery at Kvā Bāhā, Patan, this theme is not only found in the *toraṇa* and strut iconography of *bāhā/bahī* architecture, but as popular votive offerings, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala's presence is almost as ubiquitous as that of the *caitya*. The Maṇḍala's significance in Nepal can be directly related to Mañjuśrī, the *Maṇḍala's* emanator and the Valley's patron deity, who, in the Newar Buddhist context, is equated with the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū. Mañjuśrī's role developed beyond his role as *bodhisattva* of wisdom to a fully Enlightened Buddha, a trend that is already increasingly apparent in the Mahāyāna *sutras.*[1] In Nepal, he is incorporated into the cosmogonic myth of the Newar Buddhists, in which, Mañjuśrī not only creates the Valley but also is identified with Svayambhū Mahācaitya. In his more mundane aspects,

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Mañjuśrī is generally propitiated as Lord of Speech (Vāgīśvara) and his identity is often conflated with that of the Hindu goddess of learning, Sarasvatī. On the other hand, as the esoteric Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, the central deity of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, Mañjuśrī embodies the highest philosophical understanding of the Enlightenment process as the totality of Buddhahood and *śūnyatā*.

Taking the concepts found in the early Buddhist *sutras,* such as the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* and the *Mahāparnirvāṇa Sutra,* Newar oral traditions as well as indigenous texts such as the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* elaborate on Mañjuśrī's multivalent roles, and specifically establish a homology between the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. The visual imagery found in *bāhā/bahī* architecture further demonstrates Mañjuśrī's complex symbolism, through unified iconographic programs in Newar Buddhist architecture, as is found in the iconography of Kvā Bāhā's central Svayambhū Caitya.[2]

In order to contextualize the popularity of this iconographic theme in the art of the Kathmandu Valley, the basic aims for this chapter are: (1) to discuss Mañjuśrī multivalent role and significance in Newar Buddhism; (2) to provide a buddhological analysis of Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala's symbolic meaning with the Newar Buddhist context; (3) and, to show the relationship of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the other core iconographic components of Newar Buddhism, i.e., Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the Cakrasaṁvara

Maṇḍala.

Textual Sources and Iconographic Description of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala

The textual sources for the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in Newar Buddhist art are the *Kriyā Samūccaya, Sādhanamālā, Vajrāvali Tantra,* and *Niṣpannayogāvalī.*[3] Further, rituals texts describing the visualization of the Maṇḍala and the *pūjās* associated with it are also useful iconographic sources.[4] The Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is one of the most complex *maṇḍalas* of the Vajrayāna tradition; the number of deities in the Maṇḍala, according to the Newar Buddhist tradition, may range anywhere from 216 to 252 deities (see Fig. 3.35).[5] The *Niṣpannayogāvali* (#21) describes the Maṇḍala in detail, including the attributes of the deities in the inner house.[6]

Structurally, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala consists of three concentric squares surrounding the inner (*abhyantara*) circle (Fig. 3.20). The inner house of the Dharmadhātu replicates the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala, with the specific forms of the Jinas placed in the respective cardinal directions.[7] The central deity, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, is identical with Vairocana and is a fully Enlightened Buddha (*samyaksambodhi tathāgata*).[8] He is represented as a four-headed, eight-armed crowned Buddha. His upper most pair of hands holds a sword and book; in his second pair is an arrow and bow;

a *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* in his third pair, and his principal hands display the *dharmacakramudrā*. The eight Uṣṇīṣa deities, who symbolize the stages of Enlightenment, surround Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara. The inner house consists of the four Jina Buddhas placed in their respective cardinal directions. They are represented in their esoteric forms, similar to the central figure, as four-faced and eight-armed crowned Buddhas. Each Jina is in turn surrounded by four Vajrabodhisattvas of his respective *kula*. In the intermediate corners of the inner circle are the Buddhaśaktīs of the Jinas: Locanā, Māmakī, Padminī (Pāṇḍurā), and Ārya Tārā. The entrance to the inner circle is marked by the four guardian deities: Vajrāṅkuśa, Vajrapāśa, Vajrasphoṭa, Vajraveśa.

As the Tantric methodology considers the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala to demonstrate the Enlightenment process, the deities in the subsequent squares thus reflect the totality of this understanding. Further, as the microcosm of the Buddhist cosmology that is visualized to aid the practitioner purify the *bodhicitta,* the deities are residing within the *maṇḍala* are also embody the *devas* in all Buddhist world systems. In the first square are the female personifications of the twelve stages of Enlightenment (*dvādaśa bhūmīśvarī*) in the eastern quarter; the female personifications of the twelve perfections Enlightenment (*dvādaśa pāramitā devī*) in the southern quarter; the twelve *Vaśitā* Goddesses in the western quarter; and the twelve *Dhāraṇī* Goddesses in the northern quarter. The gates of the first square are occupied by the Prātiśamvit deities, while the intermediate corners house the four of

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the eight Offering Goddesses, namely Lāsyā (Gestures), Mālā (Garland), Gītā (Song), and Nṛtyā (Dance).

In the second square are the sixteen Bodhisattvas, four in each cardinal direction. These are joined by the eight offering Goddesses. The ten angry forms (Daśakrodha) of Bhairavas, four in the cardinal directions, four in the corners, one above and one below, occupy the gates of this house.

In the third square are the eight Dikpālas, four in the cardinal directions and four in the intermediate corners. Beyond this is a circle of the deities ("exterior *vajras*") belonging to the Hindu pantheon, who serve here as protective deities. The number, identity, and attributes of these deities may vary from one text to another. In the *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* these are given as: the eight primary gods of Hinduism; the nine Navagrahas; the twenty-four *devas, yakṣas* and *gaṇas*; the eight Mother Goddesses (Aṣṭamātṛkās); the twelve Yakṣarājās and Hāritī; the eight Nāgarājās; the eight Mountain Deities; the twenty-eight constellations (Nakṣattras).

The complexity of the morphological structure suggests that the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, as a Vairocana-cycle *maṇḍala,* developed from earlier Vairocana-cycle Tantras, such as the *maṇḍalas* from the *Mahāvairocana Sutra* and the *Sarvatathāgatatattva Samgraha.*[9] Further, a direct structural relationship can be seen between the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the Maṇḍala of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa,* a text that is dated to he fourth century C.E. In each *maṇḍala,* the inner circle is surrounded by

three concentric squares.[10] Similarly, the Abhisambhodi Vairocana Maṇḍala from the root text, *Mahāvairocana Abhisambhodi Tantra* is also structurally identical to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and has Mahāvairocana as the central deity.[11] A thorough analysis of the structural form of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala with the *Maṇḍalas* of these earlier Tantras may reveal the doctrinal and iconographic developments of the Vairocana-cycle *maṇḍalas.* Indeed, in an eleventh-century Buddhist temples at the Sum Tsek in Alchi, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is found in its fully developed form among the other Vairocana-cycle *maṇḍalas.*[12]

Judging from examples of the freestanding *maṇḍala* that are found in the Kathmandu Valley, the overall morphological form of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in Newar Buddhist art is generally consistent. While the Jina Buddhas from the inner cycle are often represented, the subsidiary deities of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, however, may not be depicted in their anthropomorphic forms. Instead, the deities' presence is signified by the *samaya* symbols, as either circles, squares, *vajras,* or lotuses. This configuration is particularly true of the small votive Dharmadhātu Maṇḍalas, where it would be virtually impossible to carve the iconographic details of all the deities of the Maṇḍala on the horizontal surface. In many such cases, only the central figure of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is represented. However, the unique form of its three concentric circles may still accurately identify the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. While the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala's structural form

is standard in Newar Buddhist art, the depiction of the deities do not always correspond directly to the descriptions given in textual sources. For example, the Jina Buddhas of the inner house, which are the most important iconographic element of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala represented in the strut and *toraṇa* iconography, show considerable iconographic variation in Newar Buddhist art. Although the attributes they hold generally follows the iconographic prescriptions, the placement of these symbols in their hands sometimes differ radically from the text, thus suggesting a local iconographic convention. Nonetheless, in most cases, the identity of the Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala can be consistently established by the presence of Mañjuśrī's primary symbols—the sword and book.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography is found in many different permutations in Newar Buddhist art and architecture—as freestanding *maṇḍalas,* as part of *toraṇa* iconography, and the strut iconography on the shrine facade. The presence of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography, specifically as the *toraṇa* and strut figures, is significant to the overall iconographic schema of the *bāhā/bahīs.* Indeed, because the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala reflects a complex buddhological understanding of the Enlightenment process as realized by the Newar Buddhist practitioners, an examination of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and its symbolic meaning may help decipher the meaning of the iconographic program of Newar Buddhist religious architecture.

Interpreting the Buddhological Role of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in Newar Buddhism.

As a visualization tool, the Tantric system considers the structure of any given *maṇḍala* to embody and symbolize the Enlightenment process. Commenting on the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, Ratna Kājī Vajrācārya, a well-known ritual specialist of Kathmandu, writes:

> "The form of the Maṇḍala is a conceptualization of the Buddhist universe. In order to define the meaning and process of Enlightenment, the teachers have revealed the deities and their *mantras* to be visualized as a means of attaining Enlightenment."[13]

The ritual text, *Sādhanamālā* specifies four stages through which a deity comes into existence during the Tantric meditation process: 1), through the initiate's experiential realization of *śūnyatā;* 2) through the experience of the deity as energy sounds (*mantras*); 3) through the inner vision or visualization of the deity; 4) and through the deity's external manifestation as a works of art.[14] To contextualize the *maṇḍala's* relationship in Newar Buddhist art and practice, the morphological form of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala should interpreted within the Tantric Buddhist framework as replicating the Enlightenment process. In this understanding, the inner core of the Maṇḍala is identical to and structurally replicates the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala, with Mañjuśrī as a hypostasis of Vairocana at the center surrounded by the four Jinas: Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi. As the Jina embody the five transcendent wisdoms (*jñānas*)

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that make up the Enlightenment of a Buddha, the esoteric forms of the Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala similarly symbolize the *sambhogakāya* ("Bliss-Body") of a fully Enlightened Buddha. The central deity of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa is called a *samyaksambodhi Buddha,* embodying the essence of Vairocana ("*vairocana-ātman*").[15] In this aspect, he is the *sambhogakāya* manifestation of the *Dharmakāya* or *Dharmadhātu,* the totality of all *dharma.* Specifically, in the Newar Buddhist context, he may be interpreted as the *sambhogakāya* form of the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū

The symbolism of Mañjuśrī/Vairocana is further conceptualized in more Tantric terms. The visual imagery and ritual practices also indicate that Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is inherently equated with Vajrasattva, who, in the Newar Buddhist context, is also *sambhogakāya* of the Primordial Buddha. For the Newar Buddhist practitioners, these highly philosophical and abstract concepts are reified and strengthened in many different levels through the connection with the cosmogonic myth of Valley. Not only is Mañjuśrī as Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara identified with the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū Jyotirūpa, but the local cosmogonic myth further reinforces Mañjuśrī's connection with Vajrasattva, as they are both the Ādi or Primordial Gurus of the Tantric practitioners.[16] By using the framework of the cosmogonic myth, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala becomes a perfect means for the Newar Buddhist practitioners to define the complex Tantric

symbolism in more concrete terms. For the informed Newar practitioner, the Maṇḍala is a yogic visualization for the purification of the body, speech, and mind through which one realizes the identity of the macrocosm with the microcosm. This highly complex Tantric understanding that Mañjuśrī/Vajrasattva, the progenitor of the entire system, is identical with the practitioner and is reified even further through the connections to the Svayambhū Mahācaitya. As demonstrated in visual imagery of Kvā Bāhā and true of many monasteries of the Valley, this complex understanding appears to be present in the core iconographic programs of Newar Buddhist *bāhās*. Once again, the doctrinal understanding is intricately woven and encapsulated in sacred history of the Valley in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*.

Svayambhū Purāṇa: Contextualizing the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala's Significance in Newar Buddhism and its Art

In the following section, I will briefly recount the narrative given in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* on the significance of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in Newar Buddhism. Subsequently, I will discuss its relevance in contextualizing the importance of Mañjuśrī in the art and religious practices of Newar Buddhism. By establishing a relationship between the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra* and the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū, this section of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* underscores the significance of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* as the root text of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

The significance of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and its relationship to Svayambhū Mahācaitya is expounded in the eighth chapter of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* and the sixth chapter of the *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa*.[17] *Both* chapters begin with the conversation between Bodhisattva Maitreya and Śākyamuni at Gośrīngu Parvat, when the Bodhisattva asks Śākyamuni the true meaning of the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū Jyotirūpa and why he is called Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara. Śākyamuni begins by expounding the qualities of the Jyotirūpa and the merits that will be realized through the worship of the Mahācaitya. In order to explain the symbolic identity between Svayambhū Jyotirūpa and Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, Śākyamuni then recounts the coming of the Indian *Paṇḍita*, Dharmaśrī Mitra, to the Valley to know the secret meaning of the twelve-voweled *mantra* of the *Nāmasaṅgīi Tantra,* the root text of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

According to the narrative, Dharmaśrī Mitra was a famous monk in Vikramśilā Mahāvihāra who decided to go to China to learn the secret teaching of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra*, specifically the meaning of the twelve vowels (*a ā i ī u ū e ai o au aṁ aḥ*). Mahāmañjuśrī, residing at Pañcasirśa Parvat (Wu Tai Shan) in China, realizes through his omniscient insight that Dharmaśrī Mitra had arrived in the sacred Nepal Valley on his way to China. Knowing the Svayambhū Jyotirūpa to be the most appropriate sacred pilgrimage place for the exposition of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* and thus a likely stopping point for the *paṇḍita,* Mañjuśrī comes to the Valley in his

nirmāṇakāya form as Mañjudeva to greet him. To test Dharmaśrī Mitra's faith, Mañjudeva disguises himself as an old farmer ploughing a field.[18] Night had already fallen by the time Dharmaśrī arrived in the Valley and taken *darśan* of Svayambhū Jyotirūpa. Looking for a place to spend the night, he finds shelter in the house of the old farmer, who had two wives, Keśinī and Upakeśinī. The text then elaborates on how Dharmaśrī finally recognizes the true identity of the old man, after overhearing Mañjuśrī tell his wives that the monk was none other than Dharmaśrī Mitra from Vikramśilā who wished to learn the secrets of the *Nāmasaṅgīti*. Realizing that only Mañjuśrī, with his omniscient insight, could know the truth, Dharmaśrī Mitra falls at his feet and begs forgiveness for not having recognized him as the great *guru* (*mahāguru*).

Mañjuśrī accepts the monk to expound the secrets essence of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* and the twelve-syllabled *mantra*, but only after Dharmaśrī Mitra receives the appropriate initiation (*abhiśekha*). Once the purification rites to cleanse his body, speech, and mind of the *saṁsaric* defilements and desires was performed, Dharmaśrī Mitra then receives the *abhiśekha* (empowerment) of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara. Mañjuśrī then explains that this empowerment is a means of purification to see the true state of reality and to achieve the most excellent pure knowledge (*suviśuddha Dharmadhātu jñāna*). The five-fold, ten-fold, and four-fold initiations of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara that Dharmaśrī Mitra receives from Mañjuśrī are described in detail in the

text. Next, Mañjuśrī expounds on the merits of reading the *Nāmasaṅgīti*, which contains the essence of all Tantras. At the completion stage of the initiation, Mañjuśrī instructs Dharmaśrī Mitra to make a Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in front of Svayambhū Jyotirūpa, which again refers to the symbolic identity of Svayambhū and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

The text describes the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, which is created from the powder of precious gems (*ratna cūrṇa Maṇḍala*) of five colors: diamond, sapphire, a yellow gem called "*jāmbūnāda*", ruby, and emerald. The colors symbolize the five Jinas, who radiated from light-rays of the Svayambhū Jyotirūpa. Other Dharmadhātu Maṇḍalas were also made of different media: of flowers of five colors, of colored dust, and finally, of colored stone. The invocation and visualization of the deities by Mañjuśrī, who instructs Dharmaśrī Mitra in these practices, were also described. At the end of the ritual, Dharmaśrī Mitra received the *abhiṣekha* and *samādhi* (visualization) teachings from Mañjuśrī. After these appropriate preparations, Mañjuśrī then reveals to Dharmaśrī Mitra the secret teachings of the *Nāmasaṅgīti*, traditionally considered to contain the essence of all *dharma* and all Tantras. The text states that Mañjuśrī first revealed the "outer" (*bāhyārtha*) meaning and then the "inner" or true (*guhya/abhyantara*) meanings of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* were taught—two distinctions central to the multiple layers of symbolism associated with the *maṇḍala*.

Both *Purāṇas* emphasize importance of the teachings, stating that through the initiation to these teachings the practitioner will not only receive material wealth and benefits, but will attain purification of Body, Speech, and Mind (*kāya vāk citta*). The narrative then describes the gift-exchange between Dharmaśrī Mitra and Mañjuśrī, in which the monk offers his physical body in a form of *ratnamaṇḍala* (lit. "gem *maṇḍala*) as *guru-dakṣīnā*. (obligatory fee to the *guru*).[19] Thanking Mañjuśrī, the guru of the universe (*jagad guru*), Dharmaśrī Mitra states that he now knows the meaning of the *sambodhi jñāna* and the *sādhana* of Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Dharmaśrī Mitra also acknowledges the empowerment and instructions of the *Tathāgata caryā* and *samādhi caryā,* the highest meditational practices that are essential to understanding the true meanings of the *mantras.* Mañjuśrī then states, "Through this *bodhijñāna sādhana* perform the *bodhicaryā vrata* for the sake of all sentient beings in this world. Through this, your body will be made sacred (*puñya śarira*) and through the purification of Body, Speech, and Mind, you will become a *bodhisattva.* Then you will attain great insight and all excellent qualities needed for Enlightenment, destroying the defilements and desires, you will attain state of a *samyaksambodhi buddha.* Keep this in mind and tell everyone. Through this meditation, you will attain *sambodhi citta,* and transcend the *srāvaka, pratyeka,* and, Mahāyāna paths to attain the state of *sambuddha* and *nirvāṇa.* Keep this knowledge steadfast in your heart."[20]

While the first part of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* narrative expounds on the "outer" (*bāhya*) or exoteric symbolism of the *Nāmasaṅgīti*, the text also emphasizes more complex reading that pertains to the highly esoteric metaphors of the Anuttara Yoga Tantras. Specifically, this "inner" or *abhyantara* meaning refers to symbolism associated with the twelve-*mantras*, that are analyzed as reflecting the *sahaja* practices of Vajrayāna Buddhism. For example, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* mentions that the secret meanings of the vowels are related to esoteric *yogic* practices incorporating sexual symbolism. Each vowel reflects a meaning comparable to the *bījas*. In an analysis that is identical to the Heruka cycle Tantras,[21] the text states that the vowel "*e*" is the female principal *prajñā*, while "*va*" represents the male. The union of the male and female deities, symbolized by the "*ṃ*", thus signify the union of *prajñā* (wisdom) and *upāya* (compassion/skilful means); which constitutes the true essence (*paramārtha*) of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* and the Buddhist *dharma*.[22] Based on the commentarial literature of the *Nāmasaṅgīti*, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* states that the twelve *mantras* are have two inherent layers of meaning, classified as *abhyantara* and *bāhya*. The first, more esoteric layer of meaning is based on the Anuttara Yoga type meditations and visualizations of the *abhyantara tantra* ("inner *tantra*"); while the second layer of interpretation follows the less technical, and exoteric category of *bāhya karma* ("outer actions") as prescribed by the *Purāṇa*. This two-fold hierarchy of interpretation—*abhyantara* and *bāhya*—serves an a

fundamental framework to understand the multivalent layers of interpretation in Tantric Buddhist literary as well as visual metaphors.

Thus, both in the Tibetan and Newar Buddhist traditions, the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra* is analyzed both as an Anuttarayoga Tantra (that incorparates the *sahaja* practices and corresponds to the "inner *tantras*") as well as belonging to the Kriyā or Action-class Tantras (that are the external purifications to prepare for the inner *samādhi*). The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* specifically states that the outer meaning (*bāhyārtha*) is the external appearance of the Mahācaitya, in which the process of Enlightenment is symbolized by the fundamental Pañca Jina Maṇḍala. On the other hand, the inner secret meaning (*abhyantara guhyārtha*) of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* is related to the highest yogic practices, such as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala of the *āgaṁ* (secret inner) shrine of the monasteries, and can be divulged only through appropriate initiation.[23] The narrative also alludes that the secret meaning of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* incorporates *sahaja* yogic practices of the Anuttarayoga Tantras. According to the text, in the second esoteric interpretation, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is shown in union with his *prajñā,* in the manner of the Anuttara Yoga *tantras.* Similar to the *āgaṁ* deities, such images are not generally displayed in public.

The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* further illustrates the outer and inner dichotomies in relation to *pūjā* and rituals offered to the Mahācaitya. For

example, the outer actions consist of exoteric *pūjās* and worship to the Mahācaitya and other acts of faith, by which the practitioner will achieve rebirth in Sukhāvatī and acquire the more mundane aspirations of physical existence, such as good health, long life, wealth, and well being. On the other hand, the "inner" actions refer to initiations, yogic meditations, and visualizations that pertain to the highly technical practices of Vajrayāna Buddhism.

Interpreting the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* Narrative

The dichotomy between the outer/inner categories serves as a fundamental construct to interpret Svayambhū Mahācaitya and its associated meditational practices, indicated by the dual interpretation of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra.* The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* narrative is significant for the iconographic interpretation of the visual imagery presented in this study for a number of reasons. First, as a reflection of the living traditions of the Newar Buddhists, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* offers a strong framework to understand the symbolic relationship of the core iconographic components of Newar Buddhist visual imagery, namely Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. Second, the narrative reinforces the iconographic themes found in the visual imagery, in that the symbolic identity of Svayambhū and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala are firmly established in the narrative and thus legitimized within the religious practices. Third,

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the outer and inner dichotomies may be key to interpreting the symbolic and buddhological connections between the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, which I as I have shown, are key iconographic themes of Newar Buddhist art and practice.

(1) Hierarchy of Tantric Initiations and Interpretation: "Outer", "Secret" And "Inner"

As illustrated above in the different levels of initiation and interpretation, the Newar Buddhist practitioners follow the Tantric division of two distinct categories of Tantric practices: exoteric or "outer" (*bāhya*) and esoteric or "secret/inner" (*guhya/abhyantara*). The exoteric *pūjās* or artistic representations, such as the *gurumaṇḍala pūjā* or Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala are those that may be shown and performed in public. On the other hand, the esoteric *pūjās* or imagery are those invoking the highly esoteric deities of the Anuttara Yoga Tantra class that require Tantric initiation. These esoteric *pūjās,* such as the Tantric *āgaṁ pūjā* or Cakrasaṁvara initiation is performed in secret only by the initiated members. The Newar Buddhist use three specific terms to articulate the hierarchy of practices and visual imagery: outer, secret, and inner. Outer (*bāhya*) refers broadly to the non-esoteric rituals, whose worship that may be accessed by the lay practitioners, even without initiation; secret (*guhya*) ritual are esoteric, but may be permitted to be performed in public in special occasions; and, inner

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(*abhyantara*) rituals include highly esoteric *pūjā* to which access is restricted and possible only through initiation.[24] The term *abhyantara* itself derives from the location of the *āgaṁ* shrine proper, where the "inner" room (*abhyantara kvātha)* is where the presiding deity resides. The same term, *abhyantara,* also refers to the "inner" circle of a given *maṇḍala* (*abhyantara maṇḍala).* It is in the secret and inner rituals that the women figure prominently and 'dangerous' substances such as meat and alcohol are offered, as we will discuss in Chapter Six.

Just as rituals and meanings of interpretations distinguished through these classifications and access to them are dictated by the practitioner's initiation, Tantric deities of Newar Buddhism are also classed in this manner, demonstrating progressively higher and more esoteric levels of Tantric expression. The "outer" (*bāhya)* are deities are represented as in their pacific non-esoteric forms such as the Jina Buddhas, Jina Saktis, Bodhisattvas, and the Mahācaitya; the *guhya* or "secret" forms related to more esoteric deities who may be shown in public, such as Vajrasattva, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, Caṇḍamahāroṣana, Vajrayoginī, Guhyeśvarī; while the inner (*abhyantara*) deities are the highly esoteric aspect of the Tantric deities of the *āgaṁ* shrines, never shown to the public, and practitioners must have received initiation to take part in the ritual. These include the Heruka class deities, often shown in union, such as Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī,

Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍākinī, Hevajra/Nairatmya of the *āgaṁ* shrine, whose imagery and rituals have multiple layers of symbolic meaning.

This three-fold hierarchy is alluded to in the understanding of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and is a fundamental construct of Newar iconology, particularly in reference to the core iconographic programs of the sacred architecture. The symbolic meanings of the Tantric Buddhist deities, therefore, also involve this conceptual framework, so that many different levels of interpretation can exist at the same time, as specifically alluded to by the *Svayambhū Purāṇa.* It is within this framework that the relationship between the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the core iconographic imagery will emerge.

Hierarchical Layering of the *Tantric* Methodologies

To further understand these outer/inner categories in relation to the three core iconographic elements, we may interpret it in terms of the hierarchical layering of *tantras* through a buddhological interpretation of the narrative. That the Svayambhū Jyotirūpa, the Ādi Buddha of Newar Buddhism is buddhologically equated with the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the *Nāmasaṅgīti* further indicated by manuscript drawings depicting the reconstruction of the Mahācaitya.[25] These drawings show in detail not only the structural aspect of the *stūpa,* but also allude the symbolic meaning

associated with the Mahācaitya, as given in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* (Fig. 5.1). Here, the twelve vowels of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* are depicted on each of the levels of the *chattras*, with the thirteenth and highest level equated with *śūnyatā*. According to the manuscript, each of the *chattras* also symbolizes the *bhūmis* of the Enlightenment process and is appropriately labeled. Except for the *Vajrabhūmi*, the highest of the stages, each *bhūmi* corresponds to one of the twelve vowels of the *Nāmasaṅgīti*, as indicated in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* narrative.[26] The manuscript drawing of the Mahācaitya, therefore, suggests an unequivocal statement that Svayambhū personifies the fully Enlightened Buddha and is identical to the central deity of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra*. It may be inferred, therefore, that Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, the center deity of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra,* is identical to the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū. The manuscript and the narrative both strongly articulate the homology between the Mahācaitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

Further, the inner and outer meanings that are expounded in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* are significant in their relevance to explain the ritual practices and visual symbolism of Newar Buddhism. Not only are the Vajrayāna rituals classified and interpreted within the broad categories as "outer" and "inner", that is, as exoteric and esoteric rituals, but more importantly, these emic distinctions also imply a hierarchy in the multivalent interpretations of a given work of art. This framework is particularly useful

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to interpret the connection of the Dharmadhātu and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍalas. For example, if we analyze the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in these terms, the "inner" meaning of the Maṇḍala, as interpreted in the "secret" (*abhyantara*) teachings of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra,* is virtually identical to the *sahaja* practices of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. This interpretation is explicitly referred to in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa's* eighth chapter. In establishing a symbolic identity between the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the Mahācaitya, the text clearly states that in the "outer" meaning: The Mahācaitya is a *maṇḍala* that may be shown in public, which, in this case, is none other than the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, the manifest *maṇḍala* of the *Nāmasaṅgīti.* On the other hand, the "inner" meaning of the Mahācaitya is to be symbolized by the highly esoteric interpretation of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra,* which corresponds to the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

In this second layer of interpretation, the esoteric meaning of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala (Vairocana-cycle *maṇḍala*) manifest and symbolized by the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala (Akṣobhya-cycle *maṇḍala*). In this esoteric system, the two *maṇḍalas,* namely the Dharmadhātu and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala may be respectively interpreted as the generation stage (*utpatti-krama*) and completion stage (*utpanna-krama*) meditation *maṇḍalas* in the Newar Buddhist practices. The analysis I propose here stems from the Tantric Buddhist meditation practices, in which Vairocana-cycle *maṇḍala* (to

which Dharmadhātu belongs) are the Stage of Generation and generally identified with the male Buddhas, specifically.[27] On the other hand, the *mandala* of Stage of Completion, are identified as those where the "Buddhas appear in the form of goddesses"[28] and generally relate to the Akṣobhya-cycle *mandala*. In the Newar Buddhist context, this may be identical to the Akṣobhya-cycle Cakrasaṃvara Mandala, in which Vajravārāhī is preeminent.[29] As is characteristic of Vajrayāna soteriological methodologies, the two *mandala* systems in the Newar Buddhist context are, therefore, embody progressively higher levels of Tantric practices. In this respect, the symbolic relationship between Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṃvara Mandala is one of interpretation and meaning, since they both symbolize the Tantric enlightenment process through diverse means. Yet, as metaphorical expressions, their appropriate meanings may only be gleaned through the Newar practitioner's own level of understanding and spiritual advancement.

(2)   Hierarchic Layering of the Three Core Components of Newar Buddhism

The multivalent interpretations of the Mandalas alluded to in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* also pertains to the larger core iconographic components of Newar Buddhist art and practice. Specifically, this conception of a hierarchic layering of the Tantric soteriological methodologies may be illustrated visually using the three core components of Newar Buddhist religious architecture, namely Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu

Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala (Fig. 5.2). At the very core of this understanding is the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū, who generates the most fundamental explication of the Enlightenment process, as the five light-rays of the Jyotirūpa and the Maṇḍala of Svayambhū. He is thus the pure formless (*nirañjana nirākāra*) *Dharmakāya*. After this primordial light is covered, Svayambhū is transformed, for the benefit of all sentient beings, into the *nirmāṇakāya* form of the Ādi Buddha as Svayambhū Mahācaitya. The *Maṇḍala* in question here in the Mahācaitya is the basic Pañca Jina Maṇḍala, which demonstrates the Enlightenment of the Buddha. As the *nirmāṇakāya*, Svayambhū Mahācaitya is also identified with Śākyamuni, who serves as the principal deity for most *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrines of the Buddhist monasteries. In the *bāhā/bahī* context, this component can be interpreted as the principal vivifying *caitya* in the courtyard.

The equation of Svayambhū with the outer meaning of the *Nāmasaṅgīti*, i.e. the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, indicates that in this aspect, Svayambhū can be interpreted as the *sambhogakāya* form of the Ādi Buddha. In other words, the Enlightenment process is explained through the through the multi-armed multi-headed Jinas of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Through the "outer actions," such as *pūjās,* pilgrimages, *vratas,* etc., the practitioner here prepares himself or herself to purify the *bodhicitta* and realize the *Dharmadhātu* within. Despite the complexity of its physical form, the inherent meaning is identical to that of the Pañca Jina Maṇḍala, which is the

core structure of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. In the visual imagery of Buddhist architecture, this aspect is found in the shrine facades, as strut and *toraṇa* figures, usually on the second level. The imagery, in this context, serves as the *sambhogakāya* manifestation of the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ*, Śākyamuni, who is none other than the *nirmāṇakāya* form of Svayambhū Buddha himself. Through progressively higher realizations and complex metaphors to explain the Enlightenment process, the essence of Svayambhū or the "inner" meaning of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* can be interpreted by the highly esoteric *sahaja* meditations of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Specifically, this would pertains to the Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī practices in the Newar Buddhist context. This can be interpreted as the *sambhogakāya* symbolizing the *Dharmakāya* aspect of Svayambhū. As secret practices that may be only accessed through initiation, the imagery is not revealed to the public and remained secret in the *āgaṁ* shrines of the *bāhās/bāhīs*. This element, in Newar Buddhist architecture, is directly associated with the *āgaṁ* deity.

Each of these methodologies, manifested as the three core iconographic components, is elaborate realizations of the most fundamental aspect of the Buddhist *dharma*. Although the means and methods through which this process is realized may be different depending on the practitioner's own attainments, the inherent meaning is the same regardless of external appearances. The hierarchic layering of the methodologies conceptualized here encapsulates the Trikāya system of *nirmāṇakāya, sambhogakāya,* and

Dharmakāya, who is none other than the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū. Thus, Ādi Buddha Svayambhū is the *svābhava kāya,* the essence of the true reality that is explained by means of the various manifestations of the form-body, bliss-body, and *dharma* body. Once again as indicated clearly in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* Svayambhū Mahācaitya is the vital core and essence of the Newar Buddhist Tantric tradition. It is symbolic identity between Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the *Nāmasaṅgīti* that connects the two important meditational cycles of Newar Buddhism—the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṁvara *maṇḍalas.*

The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* has not been previously analyzed in buddhological terms and often dismissed for its lack of philosophical and doctrinal emphasis. However, in the analyses presented here, it appears that for the Newar Buddhist practitioners, the cosmogonic myth, indeed, provides a theoretical and ideological basis to legitimize the Tantric soteriological practices. The text focuses on the essential aspects of Newar Buddhist practice and redefines the Tantric methodologies in more immediate and pertinent metaphors for the Newar Buddhist practitioner. For the analysis of core iconographic program, the text also clearly articulates the relationships among Svayambhū, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra,* and Mañjuśrī.

The iconographic program and the structural elements of the *bāhās* virtually reflect the fundamental iconological construct of Newar Buddhism.

For example, the central *"Svayambhū" caitya,* the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine with the Dharmadhātu strut iconography, and the *āgaṁ* shrine with Cakrasaṁvara mirror the hierarchic layering of the Tantric methodologies and may be interpreted as embodying the *trikāya* system. Visually, this complex buddhological understanding of the layering of the *Maṇḍala* is also conceptualized in the groundplan of the Mahācaitya on the east side, as one comes up the eastern stairs (see Fig. 4.52). All three key symbols of Newar Buddhism are present here. Specifically, the freestanding Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is placed directly in front of the Mahācaitya, while the two shrines of Pratāppur and Anantapur, dedicated to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, are placed prominently flanking the Mahācaitya. Both the Dharmadhātu and two shrines were offered by King Pratāp Malla in the seventeenth century, suggesting that they were already the core symbolic elements of Newar Buddhism. Considering the Mahācaitya's multivalent meanings in the Newar Buddhist context as articulated in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* the placement of the *maṇḍala* and shrines appear to have been a deliberate affirmation of the practices of Newar Buddhism. Further, it can be interpreted as a direct allusion to the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* which discusses Svayambhū's association with the outer/inner symbolism of the *Nāmasaṅgīti.*[30] Indeed, from the seventeenth century onwards, the visual representations of the Mahācaitya invariably embody the three structures—*stūpa,* Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and Cakrasaṁvara shrines—as

an iconographic unit. Although the Pratāppur and Anantapur are not open to public worship, the two shrines are integral to the visual symbolism of the site.[31]

Relevance of the "Outer" and "Inner" Categories in Newar Art

As indicated by the narrative in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, the connection with Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala is based on the "outer/inner" dichotomy. This concept is repeatedly alluded to both in the rituals as well as religious architecture. For example, the imagery of the *kvāhpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine, the strut images of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the "non-Tantric" rituals related to the Mahācaitya constitute the "outer" category. In contrast, the "inner" (*abhyantara*) categories relate to the esoteric imagery and rituals of the *āgaṁ* that are never seen and revealed without initiation.

Similarly, the *Dharmadhātu Kriyā Vidhi* states that during the *bāhya* ("outer") *pūjās performed* during *vrata* ceremonies, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is yellow or white and identified with Vairocana. However, in the secret *abhyantara* pūjās, Dharmadhātu is represented in his *guhya* form, as a fierce blue figure shown in sexual union with his Buddhaśaktī.[32] Such ritual contexts clearly allude to the fact that Dharmadhātu's "inner" form is analogous to Cakrasaṁvara, in which the Akṣobhya-cycle is predominant.[33] Further, during the *dikṣā* initiations to Cakrasaṁvara, Mañjuśrī and his

consort, Upakeśinīvajra, symbolized by the assistant priest and his wife, must be present for the preliminary rituals and the generation stage of the *Maṇḍala*. [34] According to the oral narrative given to David Gellner by Aśa Kājī Vajrācārya, one of Patan's leading ritual specialist and the chief priest during the initiation, the initiate is given the *mantra* of Svayambhū as a preliminary ritual and purification rites of the more complex ritual to follow.

In the above, I have provided an overview of the importance of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in Newar Buddhism. As will be evident from the discussion, the significance of this Maṇḍala is intricately related to the two other key symbols of Newar Buddhism. Thus, an analysis of any one of the three core elements will invariably allude to the others, thus suggesting an intricate symbolic connection. In the following sections, I will discuss Mañjuśrī's role as Primordial Guru and his ritual association to Vajrasattva.

SECTION II: MAÑJUŚRĪ IN NEWAR BUDDHISM

Mañjuśrī as Ādi Buddha and Ādi Guru

In the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, Mañjuśrī is equated with Svayambhū Mahācaitya and is identical with the Ādi Buddha, manifest in his *sambhogakāya* form. As the teacher (*guru*) of the *Nāmasaṅgīti mantras* to Dharmaśrī Mitra and the transmitter of the Cakrasaṃvara cycle meditation, Mañjuśrī is variously called *jagad guru,* the "teacher of the universe" or "foremost of the teachers in the universe" (*eka sretha jagat guru*). In this role,

Mañjuśrī is associated with Vajrasattva, the primordial *guru* of Newar Buddhism.

The equation of Mañjuśrī as Vajrasattva is found throughout the Buddhist Tantras, as early as in the *Guhyasamāja Tantra,* dated to the third-fourth centuries.[35] According to these early Tantras, Mañjuśrī's attributes in his form as Mañjuvajra, constitutes five arrows, which awaken the five *cakras* or energy centers of the officiants's body. These five *cakras,* are associated with the five Jina Buddhas and the five *skandas* (personality aggregates) that are identical to the Buddhas.[36] Similarly, the texts also allude to the fact that the five arrows held by Mañjuśrī as Vajrasattva is transformed into the five-pronged *vajra,* the primary symbolism of Vajrasattva.[37] The visual imagery of Dharmadhātu Mañjughoṣa clearly alludes to Mañjuśrī's association with Vajrasattva, as Mañjuśrī holds a *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* in his hands. Often on a *toraṇa,* one finds Vajrasattva directly above Mañjughoṣa, also suggesting an unequivocal statement of Mañjuśrī's relationship with Vajrasattva. Furthermore, the Vajrācārya priests that I interviewed considered Dharmadhātu Mañjughoṣa to embody the five Jina Buddhas and Vajrasattva, while Mañjuśrī, in his form, symbolized the six *kulas* (families) of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra.* The concept of the six *kulas* and its association with Vajrasattva is not unique to Newar Buddhism, but appears to be central to the Generation Stage *maṇḍalas* of the Anuttara Yoga Tantra, in which Vairocana is preeminent.[38] In the Newar Buddhist context, this would be

even more pertinent, since the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is a Vairocana-cycle *maṇḍala,* with Mañjuśrī is identical with Vairocana. Alternately, Mañjuśrī, in his role as Ādi Guru is also identical to Vajrasattva. The visual presentations of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, as found in Newar Buddhism in this context, reflects the complex Tantric Buddhist understanding of the associations with Vajrasattva, the six *kulas,* Vajrasattva, and Mañjuśrī/Vairocana.

To suit the Newar Buddhist environment, this abstract buddhological understanding is manifest and through symbolic connection of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, Svayambhū and Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī, the personification of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra.* This conception is most clearly demonstrated by a sculpture at Svayambhū Mahācaitya complex, found behind Agnipur in the northwest corner of the courtyard (Fig. 5.3). As one of the most important objects of worship at Svayambhū, the sculptural group represents a large Mañjuśrī Pāda, symbolizing the feet of Mañjuśrī placed on a circular lotus *maṇḍala.* Directly behind it is a large oval stele, iconographically suggestive of a miniature shrine, with Ganeśa and Mahākāla flanking the image. The center figure is Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, shown with his *prajñā* on his lap (Fig. 5.4).[39] Surrounding him are subsidiary four figures, two on each side. However, since the sculpture is fairly abraded, it is hard to precisely identify these images. The lower pairs of figures appear to be female, while the upper pairs are multi-armed male and female figures.

Iconographically, what is significant are the figures placed at a vertical axis, above the center image of Dharmadhātu Mañjuśrī. Directly above him is Vairocana and at the apex of the stele is a representation of Svayambhū, at the center of which is a figure of Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī, now badly damaged. The placement of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, Vairocana, and Svayambhū/Nāmasaṅgīti indicates a symbolic association of the core constructs of Newar Buddhist iconology. In fact, the entire stele can be read as a visual metaphor of the complex symbolism discussed in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*. The presence of the Mañjuśrī Pāda placed directly in front of the shrine (Fig. 5.5) further reinforces the connection with Mañjuśrī and Svayambhū, as the iconographic source for the Mañjuśrī Pāda is directly found in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*.

Significance of the Mañjuśrī Pāda in Newar Buddhism

The narrative relating to the Mañjuśrī Pāda, given in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* establishes the role of Mañjuśrī as the Primordial Guru.[40] According to the narrative, after receiving *dikṣā* of Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the secret teachings of the *Nāmasaṅgīti,* and acknowledging Mañjuśrī as the universal *guru*, Dharmaśrī Mitra wished to take *darśan* Mañjudeva/Mañjuśrī's universal form. Mañjuśrī explains to the monk that he can appear in any form, including as the Mahācaitya and that external appearances are irrelevant to understanding of the true nature of reality.

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Mañjuśrī states that he will give *darśan* to Dharmaśrī Mitra in disguise, but will be able to recognize him by the *utpala* lotus that Mañjuśrī will hold in his hand. Dharmaśrī Mitra goes back to Vikramśilā Mahāvihāra, where as an enlightened monk, begins teach the *dharma* and expound the meaning of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* to the monks. One day, in a larger gathering, he sees Mañjuśrī appear in the crowd as a old, decrepit man, who was covered with dirt, grime, and flies hovering around him. Too ashamed to acknowledge this deformed man as his *guru* and fearing that the monks may laugh at him if he stood up to welcome Mañjuśrī, Dharmaśrī Mitra ignores Mañjuśrī's presence and continues on with his teachings.

After the teachings are over and when everyone has left, Dharmaśrī Mitra goes to Mañjuśrī and greets him. Realizing the heinous sin he had committed because of this ego, Dharmaśrī Mitra asks for Mañjuśrī's forgiveness and saying, "It was through these physical eyes that I could not get past my ego to see your true form. As a means of repentance, I will pluck my eyes out and offer it at your feet."[41] Thus saying, Dharmaśrī Mitra offers his eyes to Mañjuśrī. Knowing the monk had finally let go of his ego and pride, Mañjuśrī expounds on the symbolism of the eyes that are to be represented in the Mañjuśrī Pādukā. Mañjuśrī states that the eyes should be a reminder to all sentient beings of the false appearance of the phenomenal world and that the physical eyes should be transformed into the enlightened "knowledge-eyes" (*jñāna cakṣu*) for the practitioner to understand the true

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state of reality. Mañjuśrī then renames Dharmaśrī Mitra as Jñānaśrī, the Enlightened Knowledge Being. Mañjuśrī then promises to return each year for two months during Māgha Śukla Pakṣa and reside in Svayambhū for two months, expounding the *Nāmasaṅgīti* and to remind all sentient beings about the qualities of Svayambhū and the true meaning of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. This festival is commemorated each year during Śrī Pañcamī, when the Mañjuśrī Pāda becomes the main object of worship.

In the Newar Buddhist context, the Mañjuśrī Pāda becomes the quintessential symbol of Mañjuśrī as the Ādi Guru. Iconographically, the Mañjuśrī Pāda differs from the Buddha Pāda, as it usually depicts the "knowledge-eyes" of Dharmaśrī Mitra in the center, and is raised as a sculpture of the feet, rather than as an imprint left by the feet.[42] As a cult object, the Mañjuśrī Pāda is often worshipped for the immediate aspirations of the practitioners, such as a symbol of auspiciousness, success in business, school, and all endeavors (Fig. 5.6). In his role as Ādi Guru, Mañjuśrī's aspects as embodiment of wisdom and lord of speech are emphasized.

Even more telling of Mañjuśrī's popularity are the symbolic offerings made to him during the Śrī Pañcamī festival. Each year, as promised in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, Mañjuśrī in his *nirmāṇakāya* form, came to the Valley from China, to expound the secret teaching of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* and Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. The narrative is annually reified during the Vasanta Pañcamī, the fifth day of the bright half of Māgha, the spring equinox. On the

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eve of the festival, all the Mañjuśrī Pādas in the Valley are oiled as an offering to soothe Mañjuśrī's feet, and votive *caityas* around Svayambhū are cleaned and oiled for this occasion. Similarly, other sites associated with Mañjuśrī also become important pilgrimage places, such as the Nagarkot Maṇḍapa where Mañjuśrī first rested with his wives, Keśinī and Upakeśinī when he came to the Nāgavāsahrada and *Lhāsapāku*, "the hole to Lhāsa" near Bhaktapur, which is considered to be Mañjuśrī's first resting place when he comes to the Valley. Since Mañjuśrī as Vāgīśvara "Lord of Speech" is popularly conflated with Sarasvatī, the Hindu goddess of learning, many Sarasvatī shrines in the Valley are also propitiated during this festival.

The focus of worship during Vasanta Pañcamī festival is the site of the Mañjuśrī Caitya on the west side of Svayambhū, built by Śāntikarācārya at the same time he covered the Mahācaitya (Fig. 5.7). Also called *Mañjuśrī smṛtī caitya* "Caitya in memory of Mañjuśrī", it is Mañjuśrī's prime site. The main object of worship here is not the *caitya,* but the stone *Mañjuśrī Pāda,* located on the west side of the *caitya* in front of the small shrine dedicated to Avalokiteśvara. Although one of the most important sacred objects in Svayambhū, the Mañjuśrī Pāda is fairly inconspicuous and because of the constant worship, the feet on top of the *Maṇḍala* can barely be deciphered. During the festival, the stone representation is covered by a metal repousse Mañjuśrī Pāda, which is only brought out on this day to commemorate Mañjuśrī's visit to the Valley. During the Vasanta Pañcamī festival, children

are introduced to the first letters of the alphabet, specifically twelve vowels (*a ā i ī u ū e ai o au aṁ aḥ*); this is also the *mantra* of the *Nāmasaṅgīti*. Further, the priest also gives the child the *mantra* of Mañjuśrī, "Oṁ Vāgīśvarāyaḥ", as the first written words that the child will learn to write.

In the contemporary context, the entire area of the Mañjuśrī Caitya is covered with Mañjuśrī's *mantra* written in chalk on the courtyard walls. For the entire two months that Mañjuśrī resides in the Valley and expound the secret meaning of the *Nāmasaṅgīti*; the text is chanted every morning and evening at Svayambhū and the Mañjuśrī Caitya. In addition, the *saṅgha* members of many *bāhās* in Kathmandu and Patan chant the *Nāmasaṅgīti* in front of the *kvāhpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine as part of the daily *pūjā*. As one of the most important festivals for Newar Buddhists, this ritual reconfirms Mañjuśrī's symbolic associations with Svayambhū Mahācaitya, the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra,* and Vajrasattva.

Mañjuśrī's Symbolic Connection with Śāntikarācārya and Vajrasattva

Mañjuśrī's symbolic importance to the Newar Vajrācāryas is related to the first priest, Śāntikarācārya who covered Svayambhū Jyotirūpa with the form of the Mahācaitya. In the Newar Buddhist tradition, the practitioners, who honors the Vajrācārya priest not only acknowledges his divine teaching lineage of the Vajrācārya, but own direct association to it. Similar to the

teaching lineages in Tibetan tradition but in a less complex system, the Newar Buddhist lineage tradition is traced from one's individual Vajrācārya *guru* to Śāntikarācārya, then to Mañjuśrī's *nirmāṇakāya* form Mañjudeva, and ultimately to Vajrasattva. Ratnakājī Vajrācārya, a respected teacher in the Kathmandu community, writes:

> "According to the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* those who are called Vajrācāryas follow the traditions started by Śāntikarācārya, while according to the Vajrācārya's own traditions, they are the *nirmāṇakāya* form of Vajrasattva. These Vajrācāryas, having the knowledge of magical powers (*tantramantras*) and who have completely grasped all the *vidyās,* know from the doctrines to perform all types [of ritual work] for the benefits of sentient beings. For this reason, Vajrācāryas are those who look at the stars [i.e. horoscope], remove evil spirits by blowing (*phuphā yāye*) [i.e. through the power of their *mantras*], acts as healers (*vaidyā*) etc., and in particular, perform *pūjās* and rituals, thus continually following the path of the bodhisattva (*bodhisattvācārya*) for the sake of all sentient beings.[43]

This ritual association is most clearly articulated and enacted in the *gurumaṇḍala pūjā,* the fundamental component of both exoteric and esoteric Tantric rituals. As a form of *guruyoga* ("meditation on the teacher as a Buddha"), the Newar practitioner identities himself/herself with Vajrasattva, thereby acknowledging the authority of the Ultimate Guru and the lineage of subsequent *gurus* who follow him/her. What this means to the Newar practitioner is a reification of the lineage from Śāntikarācārya to Guru Mañjuśrī and, ultimately, to Vajrasattva, the Primordial Adamantine Guru. As established in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* Guru Mañjuśrī is the root teacher

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(*mula guru*) of Newar Buddhism, since it was Mañjuśrī in his *nirmāṇakāya* form as Mañjudeva, who expounded the secret teachings of the *Arya Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra,* the root text of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara. More importantly, Mañjuśrī also taught the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī cycle meditation in this tradition. Mañjudeva also established the lineage tradition of *Vajrācārya* teachers, after empowering the first Vajrācārya, Śāntikarācārya, with the five-fold consecration (*pañcabhiśekha*) as the adamantine teacher (*Vajrācārya*) and initiating him into the highest esoteric teachings of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī.

Re-enacting this lineage tradition, all Vajrācāryas, in turn, receive the *pañcabhiśekha* empowerment during a special passage rite ceremony called *ācā-lueyu* "making of an *Ācārya* (teacher)" ritual, which symbolically traces their lineage to Śāntikarācārya, and then to Mañjudeva, and ultimately to Vajrasattva. In fact, as discussed in the previous section, the Vajrācāryas of Kathmandu continue to re-affirm their lineage associations to Śāntikarācārya in the annual *pūjā* at Śāntipur in Svayambhū, where Śāntikarācārya is still said to reside. That Śāntipur is the Tantric *āgam* shrine for the Kathmandu Vajrācāryas also implies that their source of power is connected to the great Tantric *siddha,* Śāntikarācārya.

To the Newar Buddhist practitioner, the Vajrācārya, in his role as *guru* and priest, is the *nirmāṇakāya* or form-body of Vajrasattva, the Adamantine Guru. For example, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* refers to Śāntikarācārya

variously as *vajra guru* "Adamantine Guru", *vajrasattva pratirūpa* "the likeness of Vajrasattva", and *vajrasattva svarūpa* "form of Vajrasattva."[44] For the lay practitioners, the lineage associations to one's own Vajrācārya priest, to Mañjuśrī, and ultimately to Vajrasattva, is a fundamental aspect of the religion. To affirm the authority of the Vajrācārya priest is therefore to acknowledge Vajrasattva as the ultimate guru. This understanding is constantly alluded to in ritual practice, as Mañjuśrī's symbolic identity with Vajrasattva is further reconfirmed in their shared roles as Ādi Guru. There is clear evidence of ritual continuity in the contemporary Newar Buddhist tradition, as the literary sources of Indian Buddhism, specifically the *Advayavajra Saṁgraha,* reiterate that Vajrasattva's alternate name is Dharmadhātu (*Dharmadhātu paranāma*).[45] Simiarly, early Tantras, such as the *Guhyasamāja,* and the later *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra,* allude to Mañjuśrī ritual identity with Vajrasattva.[46] In the Newar Buddhist context, the visual imagery of the *bāhās* such as the strut figures and *toraṇa* iconography, articulate this symbolic connection of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara and Vajrasattva.[47]

Root Text of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala: *Ārya Nāmasaṅgīti*

The *Ārya Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra* is the root (*mula*) Tantra of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, according to the Newar Buddhist tradition.[48] The *Nāmasaṅgīti* is part of the larger *Māyājāla Tantra* related to the Vairocana-

cycle teachings, however no extant version of this text has thus far become known.[49] The Tibetan Ngor tradition of the Śākya-pa school also considers the *Mañjuśrī jñānasattvasya paramārtha Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra* "The Knowledge Being Mañjuśrī's Tantra of Supreme Meaning, the *Nāmasaṅgīti*" to be the *mula tantra* for the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. In the Newar Buddhist context, the doctrinal basis for the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is clearly the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra*, as indicated not only by the literary sources such as the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* but also emphasized through ritual practices. Text scholars have dated the Tantra to the sixth or seventh centuries based on commentarial literature.[50]

Although the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra* is generally classified as a Yoga Tantra class of the Mahāvairocana cycle,[51] it also has a set of commentaries such as the *Amṛtakaṇīkaṭīkā and Amṛtakaṇika-nāma-ārya Nāmasaṅgīti Ṭippaṇī* by Sūryaśrijñāna that classifies the text under the Anuttara Yoga Tantras and interprets the secret meaning according to the *sahaja* tradition of the Highest Yoga Tantras.[52] In the Tibetan tradition, the Anuttara Yoga commentaries of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* are placed in two categories: one, among the non-dual Tantras, such as the *Kālacakra Tantra*; and second, among the *Yogi Tantra* ("Father Tantra") commentaries, such as the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*.[53] Within this division, the Kālacakra-type of commentaries are also employ the *Hevajra Tantra*.[54]

The relationship of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* with the Anuttara Yoga Tantra class may be significant to contextualize the importance of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in Newar Buddhism. In Tantric Buddhist literature, this association is clearly alluded to by the fact that *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra* is a major source for the chief Kālacakra text, *Paramādi Buddhoddṛta Śrī Kālacakra Nāmatantanrāja* "King of Tantras Called Śrī Kālacakra Drawn From the Supreme Primordial Buddha"). Based on textual hermeneutics, scholars have suggested that the Kālacakra Tantra clearly presupposes the knowledge of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* and refers to Mañjuśrī as the "teacher of the condensed Tantra."[55]

> Your are the mother. You are the father. You are the guru of the world. You are the friend and good companion. You are the (protective) lord (*nātha*). You are the worker, benefactor, dispeller of sin. You are endowed with the high rank. You have the isolated state and have the best state of powers. The destroyer of fault is you, indeed. You are the (protective) lord and the wish-granting gem of the lowest type (of sentient beings). In You, powerful one of the victors (*Jina*), I take refuge.[56]

Based on the references in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* and the commentarial exegesis that are employed by the ritual specialists in Nepal, the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra* appears to follow the Anuttara Yoginī (female) class interpretation in the Newar Buddhist context.[57] Given the contextual reading that Guhyeśvarī is the ontological source of Svayambhū, and who is alternately called Nairatmā in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* and in the ritual context, it may very well be that Akṣobhya-cycle *Maṇḍalas* such as the

Hevajra Tantra are also employed in the esoteric interpretations of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* in the Newar Buddhist tradition. Certainly, the references to the "inner" meaning of the Nāmasaṅgīti in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* allude that the Newar Buddhist tradition clearly employs the esoteric interpretations of the *Anuttara Yoginī Tantras.* The ritual specialists that I interviewed also constantly referred to the *abhyantara* ("inner, secret") meanings pertainting to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the *Nāmasaṅgīti* and following the interpretations in the Highest Yoga Tantras. Further, the ritual practices of the Dharmadhātu include the highly esoteric rituals of the Three-Fold Meditation (*trisamādhi yoga*) that are usually associated with the Anuttara Yoginī class Tantras[58], in which Akṣobhya, instead of Vairocana, presides in this meditation.[59] The hermeneutical interpretations of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* employing these multivalent levels of meaning provide the basis to contextualize significance of the two major *maṇḍalas* in Newar Buddhism. Just as the exegesis understands the two *maṇḍalas* to be progressively more complex explications of the Enlightenment process, the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala tradition in Newar Buddhism may be seen as hierarchic layering of the *maṇḍalas.*

Interpreting Mañjuśrī's Association with Vairocana-Cycle *Maṇḍalas*

As indicated by the structural form of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, the *Nāmasaṅgīti* indicates many layers of development based on the earlier

Vairocana-cycle Tantras, such as the *Mahāvairocana Sutra*, *Sarvatathāgatatattva Samgraha*, *Sarvadūrgati Pariśodhana Tantra* and the *Mañjuśrīmulakalpa*.[60] Expounding on Vairocana as the Universal Buddha, the *Mahāvairocana Sutra* and the *Sarvatathāgatatattva Samgraha* are the fundamental sources for the Garbhadhātu and the Vajradhātu Maṇḍalas found in the Shingon and Tendai traditions in Japan. Indicating a structural development, the inner house of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is identical with the structure of the Vajradhātu, with Vairocana and the Jina Buddhas in their respective directions surrounded by the Vajrabodhisattvas.[61] Similarly, the Maṇḍala of the *Mañjuśrīmulakalpa* (Fig. 5.8), which discusses the identity of Vairocana and Mañjuśrī, is structurally identical to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, with the four-fold division of the inner Maṇḍala (*abhyantara maṇḍala*), the second square (*madhyama maṇḍala*), the third square (*tritiya maṇḍala*), and the outer fourth square (*caturtha maṇḍala*).[62] The structural form of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala indicates a complex culmination of the earlier forms. Indeed, the ideas are presented in the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra* also appear to be fully developed conceptions proposed on the earlier Tantric works.

Commentarial Exegeses of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra*: Meditations on the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala

As a Vairocana-cycle Tantra, the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra* ("Songs of the Names [of Mañjuśrī]") expounds the qualities of Mañjuśrī as a fully Enlightened Buddha (*samyaksambodhi buddha*).[63] It describes, in highly philosophical terms, the knowledge of the Buddha that is achieved through yogic practices. In the first chapter, Vajrapāṇi requests Śākyamuni to expound on the "profound meaning" and "broad meaning" of the *Nāmasaṅgīti*. According to commentarial literature, the "profound meaning" is the absolute truth that is the state of *sūñyatā*, while the "broad meaning" is the conventional or relative truth that is manifested though the *maṇḍala* to purify the *bodicitta* and cleanse defilements.[64]

The text begins with Śākyamuni describing the means to attain the *abhisambodhi* knowledge of an Enlightened Being. The main section of the Tantra, which is of particular relevance to the Newar Buddhist tradition, elaborates on the six *kulas* of the Buddhas. These *kulas* are interpreted as the family of the five Buddhas and Vajrasattva, who is also referred to as *Bodhicittavajra*.[65] In the *Nāmasaṅgīti,* Vajrasattva is defined as the head of the six *kulas*, establishing the theoretical foundations for the popularity of this deity in Newar Buddhism. The text also states that a specific form of Mañjuśrī exists in the heart-mind (*hṛdaya/citta*) of each *kula* Buddha and

according to one of the teachings specific to the Newar Buddhist tradition, the list is as follows:[66]

Buddha	Forms of Mañjuśrī		Kula Kulas Described in Nāmasaṅgīti
1. Vajrasattva	Nāmasaṅgīti	Mañjuśrī	Bodhicitta Vajrakula[67]
2. Mahāvairocana	Jñānasattva [Prajñajñānamurti]	Tathāgata	Kula Traya Kula ("Triple Family of the Body, Speech and Mind")
3. Akṣobhya	Vajrakhaḍga [Dukkhaccheda]	Vajra	Lokāloka Kula ("Great Family that Illuminates the World")
4. Ratnasambhava	Vāgīśvara	Ratna	Mahnoṣṇīṣa Kula ("Family of Great Uṣṇīṣa")
5. Amitābha	Vajratikṣna	Padma	Lokalokottara Kula ("The Mundane and Supramundane Family")
6. Amoghasiddhi	Jñānakāya	Karma	MantraVidyādhara Kula ("Family that Sustains the Mantra and Vidyā")

A prose section also appears in some editions of the *Nāmasaṅgīti*, including in the Newar Buddhist tradition, that further explains the buddhological significance of the text.[68] Interestingly, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa's* references to the *Nāmasaṅgīti* appears to closely parallel the content of the original Tantra and the Indian commentaries, suggesting the Newar Buddhist redefinition of the theme to fit local cosmogonic myth.[69] Furthermore, in the contemporary context, the oral commentaries and

teachings on the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala given by the ritual specialists continue to reiterates the highly philosophical sections of the text. These textual references, going back to the original *tantra,* validate clearly Mañjuśrī's role as the Ādi Buddha in the Newar Buddhist tradition. Such citations from the *Nāmasaṅgīti* as the "essence of the Tantras" and thus naturally to Mañjuśrī exalted status are often elaborated upon:

> "This *Nāmasaṅgīti* is the pure and immaculate omniscient knowledge (*suvisuddha sarvajna jñāna*) and the secret of the Body, Speech, and Mind. It is the enlightenment (*bodhi*) to all the Tathāgatas; and the realization belongs to the rightly completed Buddhas. . . . It is the application (*yoga*) of those who exercise their body, speech, and mind; and the dissociation from all bonds. It is the elimination of all defilements an secondary defilements; the pacification of all hindrances; and the release of all bonds. . . . . It is the speedy sucess of Bodhisattvas who engage in the practice by the way of the Mantra. It is the comprehension of the cultivation on the part of those applied to the Perfection of Insight [*prajñāpāramitā*]; and is the penetration into voidness on the part of those who applied to the cultivation of the penetration into nontwo. . . . .It is the heart of all Tathāgatas. It is the secret of all Bodhisattvas; and the great secret to all the Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas. It is all *mudrā* and *mantra.* It generates mindfulness and aware of those who bespeak of the inexpressible Dharma."[70]

As a physical manifestation and explication of the philosophical concepts expounded in the text, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala symbolizes the totality and essence of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra.* Hence in the Newar Buddhist tradition, the five Jina Buddhas from the Maṇḍala in their eight-armed form symbolizes the six *kula* Buddhas, with the sixth Buddha Vajrasattva inherently present in each form. This is clearly referred to the *Nāmasaṅgīti,* where Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is called the "Master of Speech,

accompanied by the six Mantra Kings".[71] Further, the visual imagery most clearly articulates these conceptions. For example, in some Newar Buddhist iconographic variants, the Jinas of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala are invariably represented with Vajrasattva's premier symbols, the *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* as a pair of attributes.[72] In other instances, the *toraṇa* iconography, almost invariably, shows Vajrasattva at the top center position, indicative of his role as Ādi Buddha and the head of the six Buddha *kulas.*

Considering the textual references and analyzing the Newar Buddhist visual imagery, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is also the Dharmakāya manifest, however represented in the exoteric *sambhogakāya* form.[73] Almost replicating the Newar Buddhist understanding of Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, Wayman states that Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is "the primordial Buddha (*adibuddha*) dwelling in the heart, at the time of complete enlightenment."[74] Similarly, the *Nāmasaṅgīti* referring to secret *mantras* of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, states:

> *A A I I U U E AI O AU AM AH sthito hrdi /*
> *jñānamūrti ahaṁ buddho buddhānaṁ trayadhvāvartinaṁ //*
>
> *A A I I U U E AI O AU AM AH.*
> Stationed in the heart [of the Buddhas] abiding in the three times of the Buddhas
> I am (*ahaṁ*) the Buddha, the embodiment of knowledge[75]

Personification of the Text: Iconography of Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī

Although Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa embodies the philosophical underpinning of the text as the totality Buddhahood as referred to in the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra*, the Newar Buddhist tradition also has an important iconographic form of Mañjuśrī named as the personification of the Tantra_Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī. Aside from Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, Nāmasaṅgīti is the most popular found of Mañjuśrī, as independent images or as part of the *toraṇa* iconography of the *bāhā/bahīs*.

This form of Nāmasaṅgīti appears to be unique to Nepal, as textual descriptions are not found in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* or the *Sādhanamālā*, nor are images of Nāmasaṅgīti found in the Indian context.[76] As the personification of the Tantra and the embodiment of the six *kulas,* in this iconographic form, Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī of Nepal is represented as a twelve-armed figure, with each pair of arms symbolizing of on eof the six *kula buddhas.*[77] A stone sculpture from Svayambhū, dated NS 798 (1678 CE), shows the standard iconographic attributes of Nāmasaṅgīti found in Newar Buddhist art (Fig. 5.9). Here, Nāmasaṅgīti is seated in *vajraparyaṅkāsana,* with lions flanking his lotus through as an indication of his identity with Vairocana. The six pairs of arms represent the attributes and gestures associated with the five Jinas plus Vajrasattva, thus embodying the six *kula* system expounded in the *Nāmasaṅgīti* text, through which the deity gets his name. His first pair of hands is placed against his breast in a double

abhayamudrā. In the Newar Buddhist tradition, this gesture is, alternatively, a teaching gesture and hence, some images of Nāmasaṅgīti are often shown in a double *vyakaraṇamudrā,* the gesture of exposition (Fig. 5.10). The second pair displays the *tarpaṇamudrā* in a gesture of sprinkling the ambosia contained in the bowl (*pātrastha amṛta kṣepaṇamudrā*) placed on his lap. The third pair directly below is placed on his lap in *samādhi mudrā* and holds a bowl of ambrosia (*amṛta*). The fourth pair is perhaps the most significant, as the attributes also vary slightly and have multiple layers of interpretation. Here, the attribute appears to be a sword on top of a *viśvavajra* in his right hand and a *khaṭvāṅga,* topped by a *vajra* on the left.[78] *khaṭvāṅga,* which in this sculpture displays the symbols of the six *kulas.* Other representations of Nāmasaṅgīti show the sword and book, although the *Dharmasaṅgrahakośa* specifically describes the attributes as a *khaṭvāṅga* of human head with a *vajra* (*savajra khaṭvāṅga*) and a *khaṭvāṅga* with a sword on top of a *viśvavajra* (*viśvavajropari khaḍga*).[79] The fifth pair, that generally holds a bow and arrow, is extended outward and the *mudrās* allude to the presence of Mañjuśrī's attributes. The last and sixth pair is placed above his head and displays a unique gesture (*vajracakramudrā*), symbolizing Mt. Meru and his relationship to Vajrasattva.[80]

This form of Mañjuśrī as the personification of the text is one of the most important deities in Newar Buddhism. In the Newar Buddhist monasteries, Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī is a popular theme in the *toraṇa*

iconography over the shrine door, visually reiterating Mañjuśrī's relation to the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine. In the eighteen *main* bāhās of Kathmandu, Nāmasaṅgīti's presence is consistently found in the *toraṇa* iconography, as will be discussed in the following section. Further, many *bāhā/bahīs* also have individual shrines of Nāmasaṅgīti built, where the Nāmasaṅgīti chanting groups perform special *pūjās*. Ritual specialists have also stated to me that the twelve-armed form of Mañjuśrī is the exoteric face of Cakrasaṁvara, whose secret images and teachings are not revealed to the uninitiated. Indeed, the overwhelming presence of this form of Mañjuśrī articulates a uniquely Newar iconographic convention, and further confirms the hierarchic layering of *maṇḍalas* as well as deities.

SECTION IV: RITUALS

Ritual Symbolism of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala

Rituals related to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala also reflected the understanding that Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa represents the totality of the six *kula* tradition. In the Dharmadhātu *pūjā* that I offered in 1996, five colored *raja maṇḍalas* were made to symbolize the Jina Buddhas with Vairocana at the center, with Vajrasattva being inherently present in each (Fig. 5.11).[81] Each *Maṇḍala* was presided by a ritual specialist, dressed in the appropriate colors of the Jinas and wearing a *pañca jina* crown. At the beginning of the ritual, the Vajrācārya priests performed the *guru maṇḍala*

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pūjā, in which they visualize themselves as Vajrasattva, who generates the *Maṇḍalas* (Fig. 5.12).[82] A series of complex meditations related to the *Trisamādhi* ritual was then performed.[83] This Three-Fold Meditation is generally associated with esoteric *pūjās* related to the Anuttara Yoga Tantras, although the Trisamādhi performed during the Dharmadhātu *pūjā* was the exoteric version of the more complex Trisamādhi *pūjā,* which is essentially a visualization of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. This ritual practice also reinforced the symbolic connection between the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala traditions

During this meditation, the priests invoked the Jina Buddhas into the main *kalaśa* and into the *maṇḍalas.* It was then explained that, as a process of visualization, the *maṇḍalas* were then generated in body of the priest's adamantine body (*vajrakāya)* and the Vajrācāryas themselves became the Jina Buddhas, with Vajrasattva always inherently present as indicated by the ritual crown. It was also explicitly stated that the five Jina Maṇḍalas represented during the *pūjā* were elaborations of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, which symbolized the totality of the five into one unit.[84] Before giving me the *abhiśekha* ("empowerment") of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, the Vajrācāryas recited two *slokas* that symbolized their identity with Vajrasattva, and more importantly, to the Heruka deities, specifically Cakrasaṁvara.[85]

Om svābhava suddhaḥ sarvardharmanāṁ svābhavasuddho'haṁ /
śūnyatājñāna vajra svābhavātmako'haṁ /
Om vajrasuddhaḥ sarvadharma vajrasuddho'haṁ //

All *dharmas* are inherently pure; thus I am in essence pure by nature.
The knowledge of emptiness is Adamantine *(vajra)*, thus is the essence of my Self
As adamantine purity is all *dharma,* I am thus the adamantine purity [as Vajrasattva]

Sarva vīra yoginī kāyavākcitta svābhavātmako'haṁ /
Abhiśincantu maṁ sarvavīragaṇa
Om śrī herukāvajra svābhavatmako'ham //

All heros and *yoginīs* of the *kāya vāk citta* [of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala]
       are the essence of my Self *(ātma)*
All the heroic *ganas,* empower me!
The adamantine nature of Śrī Heruka [Cakrasaṁvara] is thus the essence of my Self

The symbolism of the rituals in the Dharmadhātu *pūjā* not reflected the highly philosophical understanding of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* but also alluded to the "inner/profound" meaning of the text related to the Anuttara Yoginī practices, specifically the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍalas. This provides further evidence of the ritual and symbolic associations of the two fundamental Maṇḍalas of Newar Buddhism: the Dharmadhātu and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala.

Rituals Associated with the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in Newar Buddhism

As David Gellner rightly observes, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala belongs to the exoteric level of the Vajrayāna path, that is, the *maṇḍala* and the central deity, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara may be displayed in public.[86] The Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is therefore appropriately employed in a variety of Tantric rituals, from the most esoteric rituals which requires ritual initiation

to the less restrictive ceremonies where the non-initiated lay community can freely participate. In the contemporary Newar Buddhist tradition, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is associated with three categories of Tantric rituals: specifically, the *Dharmadhātu Vrata Pūjā, Lakṣāhūti Pūjā*, and the *Ahorātra Pūjā*.[87] In each classification of *pūjā*, the color of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is different, emphasizing a particular emphasis and level of interpretation that is inherently in the particular soteriological methodology and teaching. The physical *maṇḍalas* during these rituals are made of ephemeral material, generally of colored powders that are mixed with ground stone (Fig.5.13). These types of *maṇḍalas* are popularly known as *rajamaṇḍalas* (also *duṣṭimaṇḍala*) and are common in ritual practice. Similar to the sand *maṇḍalas* in the Tibetan tradition, these ritual *maṇḍalas*, however, lack the precision in execution and technique; instead they are produced in a loose, freehanded manner and generally are less time-consuming.

The first category of *pūjā,* the Dharmadhātu Vrata Pūjā is one of the most popular vratas for Mañjuśrī and is generally performed by the lay community when they offer a votive *maṇḍala*. For example, the inscription in the NS 1080 Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala at Thāṁ Bahī, Kathmandu states that the patrons undertook the *vrata* of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara and performed the *homa* ceremony before the installation of the *Maṇḍala*. The Dharmadhātu *vrata pūjā* is generally performed during the full moon and involves pilgrimage to the twelve *tirthas* and Vitarāgas. Of particular

important during this *pūjā* is the pilgrimage to the *tirthas* of the five Jinas and the Buddhaśaktī around the vicinity of Svayambhū. The participants of the *vrata* are required to bath and perform *pūjās at* these sites. In the Maṇḍala of this *pūjā,* Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is white, rather than yellow, and holds the same attributes as the yellow figure.[88] Generally, the *homa* ceremony is optional and often not required.[89]

In the second category, the Lakṣāhuti type of *pūjās* requires *homa* ceremonies. In this context, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara follows the form described in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* as a yellow-complexioned figure. The *pūjā* constitutes an exoteric ritual, which may be offered by the lay community for well-being and happiness of the family. This type of *pūjā* requires the use of "pure" *sattvik* substances, such as *pañcamṛta,* abstinence of alcohol and meat etc. Although classified as an exoteric *pūjā,* the symbolic elements of the *homa* does involve more esoteric elements.

The most important ritual category that articulates the relationship between Mañjuśrī and the Cakrasaṁvara cycle is the form of Mañjuśrī found in the *Ahorātra pūjās* of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara. I have not found much information of the actual procedures, since the *Ahorātra* rituals, as indicated by their very names, are highly esoteric and generally performed at dead of night in secret. This category of rituals is usually performed inside the *āgaṁ* shrines or in the charnel fields and relate to the "secret/ inner " (*guhya/ abhyantara)* class of rituals, corresponding to the Heruka deities of the

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Anuttara Yoginī Tantras. In this type of *abhyantara pūjā*, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is blue and shown in sexual union with his *śakti*, who is red.[90]

This esoteric form of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara suggests a parallel with the commentarial exegeses of the *Nāmasaṅgīt Tantra* that employs the Anuttara Yoginī methods. Here, the methodological processes of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala are described according to the secret *"guhya"* meanings of the *sahaja* practices of the Highest Yoga Tantras, specifically based on the Akṣobhya cycle teachings, as is alluded to in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*.[91] This interpretation suggests that Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara's blue form symbolizes the *upāya* (compassion) side of the Enlightenment process, while his red female counterpart constitutes the *prajñā* (wisdom) aspect. The union of the two as great bliss (*Mahāsukha*) is the experiential metaphor of *śūnyatā* (emptiness). In this esoteric symbolism, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara and his *prajñā* appear to be analogous to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. Further, in this *pūjā,* Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara and his female parallel the practices of the Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī and through ritual practices are transubstantiated into these deities. Although I do not know the details of the *Ahorātra* rituals to Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara at this point in my research, other Tantric ritual contexts further confirm my observations on the symbolic association of Cakrasaṁvara and Mañjuśrī. For example, the initiations rituals to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī (*dikṣā*) require, as an integral part of the preliminary rituals, the presence of Mañjuśrī in his form

as Mañjuvajra[92] with his *śaktī*, Keśinīvajra (an alternate name for Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara and his *prajñā*). In this ritual, the senior *guru* and his wife symbolize Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, while the assistant ritual specialist and his wife represent Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara and his *prajñā*.[93] This second group, symbolizing Mañjuśrī, prepares the initiates for the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī through purification rites.

The esoteric ritual procedures pertaining to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala further indicate its association with the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, in a ritual manual, states that the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇḍala *pūjā* employs the *Trisamādhi* "Three-Fold Meditation," which are *Rājagrī Yoga Samādhi, Ādi Yoga Samādhi,* and *Karma Rājagī Samādhi,* all of which are generally associated with the meditation cycles of the Anuttara Yoga Tantras.[94] Further, this meditation process is equivalent to the *Tathāgata Caryā,* symbolizing the totality of the Tathāgatas.[95] During the Dharmadhātu *pūjā* that I offered, an abbreviated and exoteric version of the Trisamādhi *pūjā* was performed by the Vajrācārya priests.

What is significant to note is that the *Trisamādhi* meditation is the fundamental esoteric ritual to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, when performed in the *āgaṁ pūjās* and the Diśi Pūjā.[96] In a complex three-fold visualization process, the practitioner first generates the deity as the *"samaya devatā/samayasattva"* ("visualized deity"), specifically Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, and then identifies himself/herself with the

"*jñāna devatā /jñānasattva* ("knowledge deity").[97] As discussed in Chapter

Two, the commentarial text of the *Nāmasaṅgīti*, namely, the *Amṛtakaṇikā*

Ṭīkā gives an identical yogic process to realize the "inner" meaning of the

Nāmasaṅgīti. The different forms of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara and their

corresponding types of rituals allude to a progressively more complex layering

and explications of Tantric practices. At the highest level of *yogic* practice and

attainment, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is visualized as blue and his *prajñā*

red, paralleling the *sahaja* practices of the Cakrasaṁvara cycle.   In this

context, just as Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara

appears to be an emanation of Akṣobhya, identified by his blue *kula* color.

SECTION VI: ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Representations of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in Newar Art

The most frequent representations of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍalas

found in context of *bāhā/bahī* architecture are as freestanding *maṇḍalas*,

strut figures, and *toraṇas*. In this section, I will briefly discuss the

morphological variations of the freestanding *maṇḍalas* found in Newar

Buddhist art and the iconographic patterns found among the strut and *toraṇa*

iconography. To understand the *maṇḍala* iconography in context with the

sacred architecture, I will then examine the presence of the Dharmadhātu

iconography in five *bāhā/bahīs*: Thāṁ Bahī, Kvā Bāhā, Musyā Bāhā from

Kathmandu and Bu Bāhā and Bhinche Bāhā in Patan.

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Freestanding Maṇḍalas

The freestanding representation of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is one of the most popular votive offerings, and second only to *caityas*. The *maṇḍalas* are most often present in the *bāhā/bahīs'* interior courtyards, or as independent votive offering found outside the *bāhā/bahī* context, and are often paired with a *caitya*. In my research, I have found that most Patan *bāhā/bahīs* have freestanding Dharmadhātu Maṇḍalas as votive offerings in their interior courtyards; these *maṇḍalas* are often inscribed and dated. In contrast, only a handful of the Kathmandu monasteries, such as Thāṁ Bahī, Sighā Bāhā, Kumārī Bāhā, and Lagan Bāhā, have the physical presence of the Maṇḍala, although the Dharmadhātu iconography is abundantly found in the *toraṇa* and strut figures.[98]

In Newar art, there are two morphological types of the freestanding Dharmadhātu Maṇḍalas. The most common type is a stone *maṇḍala,* generally about three feet in height with an octagonal base (Fig. 5.14). The lower base contains the figures of the Eight Great Bodhisattvas (*Aṣṭa Mahābodhisattva*), each generally identifiable by his specific attributes. In other cases, the eight auspicious *Aṣṭamaṅgala* signs are substituted for the *Aṣṭa Mahābodhisattvas*, as each Bodhisattva in the Newar Buddhist tradition is symbolically associated with one of the Aṣṭamaṅgala signs.[99] If the *maṇḍala* is inscribed, the inscription usually is placed in the circular band above the Aṣṭamaṅgala figures. The *maṇḍala* itself is carved on the flat

horizontal top surface of the stone, which rests on a doubled lotus. In the smaller *mandalas,* the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala diagram is fairly abbreviated, where the three concentric squares of the Maṇḍala's structural form is clearly outlined, without the subsidiary deities but with only the central deity, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, is prominently depicted. Often, an additional offering of repousse metal cover is offered as further embellishment. Another added votive offering placed over the horizontal surface of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍalas is a metal *vajra,* the quintessential Tantric Buddhist symbol of *śūnyatā* (Fig. 5.15).[100]

The second *mandala* type pertains to the larger Dharmadhātu Maṇḍalas, whose horizontal surfaces are often over three feet in diameter. The base of these *mandalas* is also octagonal, however, do not have the Aṣṭamahābodhisattvas represented on the sides, as exemplified by the one from Bu Bāhā in Patan (Fig. 5.16). Over the plain base rises a double lotus, on top which of is represented the *mandala.* These larger *mandalas,* often inscribed and dated, are generally covered with a metal repousse sheet onto which the *mandala* diagram is carefully incised. Among these large Dharmadhātu Maṇḍalas, examples from Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Pim Bāhā, Ha Bāhā, Bu Bāhā in Patan, and Cilanco Bāhā in Kīrtipur provide excellent references for iconographic study. In Newar art, there appears to be substantial iconographic variation in the attributes or the placement of attributes in the Jina Buddha imagery of the inner house. The discussion of

the *maṇḍalas* from Bu Bāhā, Patan and Thāṁ Bahī, Kathmandu in the following sections will illustrate the complexity and variation in the Dharmadhātu iconography.

Struts Depicting the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala Iconography

The decorative strut figures on the shrine facades of Newar Buddhist monastic architecture is one of the major visual components, where the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography is present. In reviewing the visual imagery, I found this general pattern in the Patan and Kathmandu structures.

The *bāhās*[101] in Patan, in particular the eighteen main *bāhās*, often depict the Jinas of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala as part of the strut iconography. Often, the wooden struts are painted with the appropriate colors of the five Jinas, with Vajrasattva represented light blue or white. There is some iconographic variant in the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography of the strut figures, not found in textual references.

On the other hand, in the *bāhās* of Kathmandu, the Dharmadhātu iconography for the strut figures is not a popular theme as in Patan. To my knowledge, only two *bāhās* in Kathmandu extensively employed the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala as part of the strut iconography, namely Chusyā Bāhā and Musyā Bāhā. These sixteenth-century monasteries are two important *bāhās* in Kathmandu, and their iconographic programs and visual

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imagery are among the most complete and well-preserved examples in the Valley. The wooden strut figures appear to be part of the original construction. The iconography at Musyā Bāhā will be discussed in detail in the following sections.[102]

Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in Toraṇa Iconography

As with the strut figures, the *toraṇa* iconography is a significant element of the iconographic programs of the *bāhā/bahīs*. The *toraṇas* are placed above the doorways to the shrines; the deities represented in the *toraṇas* often provide clues to the identity of the shrine image as well as to the overall iconographic program. Similar to the strut figures, an interesting pattern emerges in the use of the Dharmadhātu iconography in the *toraṇas.* Although strut figures seldom employed the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography, the majority of the *toraṇas* in the eighteen main *bāhās* of Kathmandu were related to forms of Mañjuśrī. The *toraṇa* iconography over the main door of the *kvāhpāḥ dyaḥ* image variously depicted Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, Nāmasaṅgīti, or a form of Mañjuśrī as Mahāvairocana, suggesting the prevalence of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala as part the overall iconographic program of the Kathmandu main *bāhās*. In Patan, I found ten out of the eighteen main *bāhās* had *toraṇas* that depicted the deities of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

The prevalence of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography in the strut figures and the *toraṇa* indicates that this is a major iconographic theme in Newar Buddhist religious architecture. As discussed in the iconographic analysis of Kvā Bāhā, the significance of this imagery and its overall symbolic meanings is better contextualized in relation to the other two iconographic elements, namely Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. To provide its contextual use in Newar Buddhist religious imagery, I will discuss the presence of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala theme from six examples from the monasteries of Kathmandu and Patan.

Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala Imagery in the *Bāhā/Bahīs* of Kathmandu

(1) Iconographic Analysis of Musyā Bāhā, Kathmandu

The major iconographic elements at Musyā Bāhā are related to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala: the exterior *toraṇa,* the interior *toraṇa* over the shrine door, and the strut figures of the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine. As in the iconography of Kvā Bāhā, Patan, two significant themes emerge in the visual imagery: one, the sacred space of the *bāhā* is conceptualized as a *maṇḍala,* specifically the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala; second, the overall iconographic program reflects the symbolic relationship among the core iconographic components: Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍalas. These two themes are alluded to repeatedly not only at Musyā Bāhā, but also in other religious structures discussed here.

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A branch *bāhā* of Kvā Bāhā, Kathmandu, Musyā Bāhā is one of the most well preserved and iconographically rich *bāhās* in the Valley. Historical records at the site state that the structure was consecrated in 1663 C.E., and the inscribed struts of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala are part of the original structure.[103] The *bāhā* is oriented in the north-south direction with the main entrance facing north (Fig. 5.17). There has been extensive reconstruction in the exterior facade, however, the presence of the plain strut supports indicates that they may had originally had strut figures.[104]

Until the 1970s, the exterior entrance had a painted *toraṇa* that was inscribed and dated to N.S. 713, corresponding to 1513 CE.[105] The central figure depicts the twelve-armed form of Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī, the personification of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra*, the root text of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala (Fig. 5.18). As the totality of the five knowledges of a fully Enlightenment Being, Nāmasaṅgīti is appropriately surrounded by Jina Buddhas, shown in their two handed exoteric forms. From the viewer's left going clockwise is Akṣobhya in the lower left; Ratnasambhava in the upper left; Amitābha in the upper right; and Amoghasiddhi in the lower left. At the top center directly above Nāmasaṅgīti is Vairocana, inside a circle of eight *vajras*.

The quadrangular interior courtyard has a single *caitya* directly in front of the main shrine facade on the south (see Fig. 5.18). This *caitya* serves as the main vivifying element of the *bāhā*'s sacred space and is identified with

Svayambhū Mahācaitya. In a direct axis from the exterior doorway is the *kvāhpāh dyaḥ* shrine. The shrine image is that of Śākyamuni, while the second level of the shrine facade houses the *āgaṁ shrine* to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. An elaborately carved wooden *toraṇa* over the shrine is inscribed and dated to N.S. 805 (A.D. 1685) and depicts Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara as the main deity (Fig. 5.19). Alluding his status as a fully Enlightened Buddha and as a hypostasis of Śākyamuni, Dharmadhātu Mañjughoṣa is the central figure of the Buddha, Dharma, Saṅgha iconographic theme. Here, Ṣaḍakṣari Lokeśvara symbolizes the Saṅgha/Compassion aspect and Prajñapāramitā signifies the Dharma/Wisdom component of the Enlightenment equation. In the outer ring are the eight-armed crowned Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala: Akṣobhya in the lower left, Amitābha in the upper left; Amitābha in the upper right and Amoghasiddhi in the lower right. As Vairocana is missing, the center deity Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara takes his place, further reinforcing Mañjuśrī's symbolic identity with Vairocana. At top center position is Vajrasattva, the sixth Buddha of the six *kula* cycle of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* Tantra and the generator of this meditational cycle. Further, the visual symbolism here also alludes to Vajrasattva's significance, as the *sambhogakāya* of the Ādi Buddha in Newar Buddhism. The relationship between Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara and Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī is even more clearly articulated in the *toraṇa* iconography of other *bāhās*. For example, in the *toraṇa* of Mu Bāhā, Kathmandu, the central figure is Nāmasaṅgīti,

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surrounded by the four Jina Buddhas (Fig. 5.20). Directly above Nāmasaṅgīti where Vajrasattva is generally placed is Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara as the generating source.

That the sacred space of Musyā Bāhā may be interpreted as a three-dimensional Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is further reinforced by the four strut figures over the shrine facade. As part of the original structure, the strut figures are in bad condition, with most of the attributed of the figures are damaged and broken. Yet the identify of these figures are the Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and their style and iconography is identical to a similar set of struts at Chusyā Bāhā, a sister branch of Musyā Bāhā.[106] The Jinas' identity as those from the Dharmadhātu is further confirmed by the respective *vāhanas* that appear below the feet of the standing Buddha figures (Fig. 5.21). The Dharmadhātu Jinas are placed in the standard iconographic pattern as found in many other *bāhās*: Ratnasambhava, Akṣobhya, Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi (from viewer's left to right). The fifth Buddha, Vairocana is missing here, suggesting that the shrine image of Śākyamuni is alternatively meant to symbolize Vairocana.

How can we interpret the choice of this visual imagery and its symbolic meaning to convey the Tantric practices of Newar Buddhism? In Nepal, the *toraṇa* figures most often indicate the identity of the shrine image. Here, both the exterior and interior *toraṇa* iconography was related to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and there was a recurrent theme of the identity between Mañjuśrī

and Vairocana. The visual imagery thus indicates that the *kvāhpāh dyah* image of Śākyamuni should can also be interpreted as a form of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, the fully Enlightened Buddha.

Furthermore, the groundplan of the *bāhā* suggests a *maṇḍalic* space with the "Svayambhū caitya" at the center as the vivifying agent (Fig. 5.22). The idea of the Maṇḍala was reiterated by the recurrence of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala imagery in the exterior and interior *toraṇas.* As the practitioner enters the sacred *maṇḍala* of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra* (i.e. the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala), the major iconographic components of the monument (the exterior *toraṇa,* the central "Svayambhū caitya" and the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine) are placed in a direct axis. As shown in the conceptual drawing, the visual conflation alludes to the central themes of Newar Buddhist practices. In other words, Nāmasaṅgīti, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, Śākyamuni, and Svayambhū *"caitya"* are the quintessential manifestations of the state of Enlightenment in the Newar Buddhist context.

(2) Iconographic Analysis of Kvā Bāhā, Kathmandu

Kvā Bāhā is one of the most importantly among the eighteen main *bāhās* of Kathmandu. Structurally, it has the usual components of monastic architecture, namely the *kvāhpāh dyah* and *āgaṁ* shrine, and the principal *"svayambhū caitya"* (Fig. 5.23). As a *maṇḍalic* space, the interior courtyard has the mandatory *"svayambhū caitya"* as the generating agent, which in this

case, is an amorphous whitewashed mound, which are designated as "Aśoka-caityas". Here too, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography is a major theme in the visual imagery; the exterior and interior *toraṇas* both depict the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography.

The exterior wooden *toraṇa*, inscribed and dated to N.S. 798 (1678 CE), depicts Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara as the central figure and the four Jinas of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala surrounded him (Fig. 5.24). Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara's attributes conform to the descriptions given in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, however, here he is depicted as a blue figure, instead of the prescribed white or yellow color. This blue form of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara may allude to his esoteric connections with Vajrasattva, as Vajrasattva in the strut iconography is often shown as a light blue figure. Further, the *abhyantara* ('inner/secret") form of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara with his *śaktī* is also said to be blue. This form, however, is generally not displayed in public.

A metal repousse *toraṇa* that is not inscribed or dated is found over the main shrine door, and may be a later replacement of the original wooden one. The iconography is identical to the exterior *toraṇa* and depicts Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara as the central deity (Fig. 5.25). Again, Vajrasattva as the top center figure directly over Mañjuśrī and the surrounding Jinas are the multi-armed Buddhas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Unlike the two-storied facade of Musyā Bāhā, the shrine facade here is four storied, with the two upper stories related to the esoteric *āgaṁ* shrine to Cakrasaṁvara and

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Vajravārāhī. The topmost level has a shrine-like copula, which is inaccessible, but signifies the "empty" *dharmakāya* aspect of the Enlightened Buddha.[107] The third floor, directly above the *āgaṁ* shrine has mural paintings of four *yoginīs,* to which I will refer again when discussing the Cakrasaṁvara imagery in Chapter Six.

Similar to Musyā Bāhā, the recurrence of the Dharmadhātu theme underscores the idea of the *bāhā* as a three-dimensional *Maṇḍala,* in which Svayambhū Mahācaitya/Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara are the generators and vivifying elements of the sacred space. The *toraṇa* iconography is the most significant visual imagery that alludes to Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography

(3) Iconographic Analysis of Thām Bahī, Kathmandu

Structurally, Thām Bahī is one of the largest and most lavishly decorated *bahīs* in the Valley (Fig. 5.26). As in the two previous examples discussed, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography is found depicted in the *toraṇas,* signifying the conception of the *bahī*'s sacred space as a three-dimensional Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. In addition, Thāṁ Bahī has one of the few examples of a freestanding Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala found among the Buddhist monasteries in Kathmandu.

The exterior doorway of the *bahī* on the east side has a wooden *toraṇa* dated and inscribed N.S.806 (1686 CE). The *toraṇa* depicts the Buddha

Dharma Saṅgha triad, with the center figure of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara as the Buddha, flanked by Ṣaḍakṣari Lokeśvara (Saṅgha) and Prajñapāramitā (Dharma). Similar to the interior *toraṇa* at Musyā Bāhā, the four Jina Buddhas (Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi) are represented above the central group. The iconographic places indicates that Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara takes the place of the missing Vairocana, and thus reinforces Mañjuśrī's identity with Vairocana. Vajrasattva is the top center figure directly above Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, as the source.

The shrine facade, directly opposite the entrance, is fairly elaborate for a typical *bahī*. The shrine *toraṇa* has metal repousse, depicting the twelve-armed form of Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī, the personification of Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala's root text (Fig. 5.27). The visual imagery clarifies the relationship between Nāmasaṅgīti and Mañjuśrī as the emanation of the Ādi Buddha and manifestations the six *kulas* concepts found in Newar Buddhist practice. In the south wall is another wooden *toraṇa* of Nāmasaṅgīti, which may be the original *toraṇa* over the shrine door.

In the interior courtyard are a number of votive offerings, including four votive *caityas*. The principal "*svayambhū caitya*" is a small stone *caitya* that is covered with a metal repousse covering. The inscription on the metal covering refers to the *caitya as "Śrī Svayambhū Dharmadhātu caitya*", providing unequivocal statement of Mañjuśrī role in Newar Buddhism.

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The interior courtyard also has a freestanding Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, one of the few found in the Kathmandu monasteries. The Maṇḍala is placed on a square cement based with two dedicatory inscriptions on the east side base; an iron grill cover with a *vajra* protects the Maṇḍala. According to the dedicatory inscriptions, the Maṇḍala was offered in N.S. 1097 (1977 CE) by the Hindu Pradhans of Thāṁ Bahī, Sūryaman Simha. The inscription further states that the "Dharmadhātu Mahā Maṇḍala" was made according to the iconographic descriptions of the *Kriyā samuccaya, Sādhanamālā, Vajrāvali, and Niṣpannayogāvalī* and the ground where the Maṇḍala rested was purified and consecrated by Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, one of the foremost ritual specialists of Kathmandu.[108] According to Paṇḍit Badrī Ratna, the offerer was a lay practitioner, who wanted to offer the *maṇḍala* in memory of his mother. After a series of *pūjās* and *vratas,* he was given *abhiśekha* ("empowerment") and was formally initiated to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. After extensive preparations for a year, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala was formally consecrated (*pratiṣṭhā karma*) by performing a *homa* ceremony and ten life-cycle rites (*daśakarma pūjā*) in NS 1080 (1970).

Unlike most *maṇḍala* representations that are chased on the metal surface, here, the deities of the inner house are raised from the metal repousse surface and are three-dimensional (Fig. 5.28). Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is shown with his usual attributes, surrounded by the eight Uṣṇīṣa deities (Fig. 5.29). The rest of the inner house is abbreviated, with the Jinas

are placed in the cardinal directions without their respective Vajrabodhisattva. The gilding on Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara and the Jinas against the otherwise plain copper repousse cover distinguishes the prominence of the inner deities. Unlike other representations where the Buddhaśaktīs are generally shown in their two-armed form, here the females are depicted as crowned eight-armed esoteric figures, placed in intermediate points. The deities in the three outer square are carefully depicted, each shown with specific attributes and gestures.

Historically, Thāṁ Bahīs is one of the most important *vihāras* in the Kathmandu Valley, which has been intimately connected in local legends to Mañjuśrī as well as the Indian Paṇḍitas from northeast India. Traditional oral history, such as the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* attributes this *bahī* to be the place where Dharmaśrī Mitra from Vikramśilā stayed overnight when he met Mañjuśrī to hear the secret teachings of the *Nāmasaṅgīti*. These legendary accounts state that Mañjuśrī built this *vihāra* for Dharmaśrī Mitra, hence its name, Vikramśilā Mahāvihāra.[109] Historically Thāṁ Bahī has also been associated with numerous Indian teachers, who came to the Valley from northeastern India. This connection may be a significant to reconstruct the doctrinal developments of Newar Buddhism, specifically in the transmissions of the Vairocana-cycle Buddhism from the Indian teachers to Nepal. For example, in 1200 A.D., the abbot of Thāṁ Bahī is said to be Vibhūticandra from the northeast regions of India, who fled to Nepal from Jagadalla.[110] Of

particular importance is Thāṁ Bahī's connections with Atiśa's visit to Nepal in 1041 A.D., who according to another local tradition, built the monastery. However, in the Tibetan accounts, Atiśa did not found the monastery but built a shrine for "the light shining from the *caitya*".[111] Dharmasvāmin writes:

> Further, in Nepāla there is a *Vihāra* called Thāṁ, also called the 'first Vihāra' or the 'upper Vihāra'. (In this Vihāra there was a Stūpa on which every even a light appeared which was observed by the Venerable Lord [Atiśa] who inquired of all, 'What was it,' but they did not know; only an old woman remarked, 'This must be the colored dust after the erection of the *Maṇḍala* [Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala] by the Buddha Kāśyapa.' The Lord [Atiśa] then erected a temple [*kvāhpāh dyah* shrine] to worship it. In front of this Stūpa, there is a golden image of Śākyamuni. It is called the Lord Abhayadāna. The Indians [Newars] call this sacred place Dharmadhātuvihāra."[112]

The monument's sacred history as well as the iconographic program suggest that Thāṁ Bahī has strong connected to the transmission of the Vairocana cycle Buddhism, in particularly the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇḍala. A comparative analysis of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in the Newar monasteries and the mural paintings in the Western Himālāyas in Ladakh, where Atiśa was also active, may yield invaluable information to reconstruct the historical development of this theme in Newar Buddhist art and practice.

Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala Imagery in the *Bāhās* of Patan

(1) Iconography Analysis of Bu Bāhā, Patan

Bu Bāhā is one of the eighteen main *bāhās* of Patan and is located in a large open courtyard, to the western part of the city. Bu Bāhā is not part of a

single architectural unit and hence does not have the typical *bāhā* plan of a quadrangular courtyard and a well-defined *maṇḍalic* space. The main shrine facade is on the south courtyard wall and is a large four-storied temple (Fig. 5.30). As is characteristic in many *bāhās* in Patan, the Dharmadhātu iconography is the major theme, represented as freestanding *maṇḍalas,* strut figures, and in the *toraṇa* iconography.

The ritual space in front of the shrine has a number of votive offerings, including two freestanding representations of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. The *maṇḍala* in the south side is dated and inscribed N.S. 1067 (1947 CE) and is morphologically similar to the larger *maṇḍala* types with the plain octagonal bases (see Fig. 5.16). Although the deities of the *maṇḍala* are carefully incised in the metal surface, the attributes and iconographic detail of most figures are difficult to discern. In the iconography of the figures in the inner circle, there appears to be some variation to the standard iconographic specification, as described in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī.*

The inner house of the *maṇḍala* (*abhyantara maṇḍala*) is a square, at the center of which is Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, surrounded by the four Jinas in the cardinal directions and the *Buddhaśaktīs* in the intermediate points (Fig. 5.31). In this abbreviated *maṇḍala,* the Vajrabodhisattvas are not represented here. Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara's iconography is unique, because he is depicted as a five-headed and ten-armed crowned Buddha, in contrast to his usual eight-armed form. Furthermore, there is some variation in their

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attributes and placement. In addition to his usual attributes to the eight-handed form described in the *Nispannayogāvalī*, the noose and goad are included in the additional pair of hands. He is represented holding a sword and *cakra*, instead of a book in his top left and right hands respectively; an arrow and bow in his second pair of hands; a *vajra* and *ghantā* in the third pair; a goad and noose in the fourth pair while the principal hands displays *bodhyaṅgimudrā*, a variant of the *dharmacakramudrā*.

The four Jinas, who face Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, are easily identifiable by their respective *vāhanas*. On the east, Akṣobhya's iconography also varies in the placement of the attributes. Further, Mañjuśrī's book which is invariably paired with the sword, is substituted here with a *cakra*, the *kula* symbol of Vairocana. Akṣobhya holds the sword and goad in his top right and left hands, the *vajra* and *ghantā* in his second pair; the arrow and bow in the third pair; and his principal hands hold the *cakra* and display *tarjanimudrā*.

Similarly, Ratnasambhava's attributes are the *vajra* and *dhvajā* in the top hands; a sword and *ghantā* in the second pair; the arrow and bow in third pair; and goad and noose in principal hands. On the west side, Amitābha holds a vajra and lotus (?) in his upper hands; an arrow and bow in his second pair; and the attributes of the other are *difficult to discern. Amoghasiddhi is represented with the sword and the cakra, instead of the book, in the top hands; vajra and ghantā in the second pair; arrow and bow for third pair; and goad and what appears to be a noose. The Buddhaśaktīs are shown seated in*

lalitasana and as two-armed figures, holding a lotus in their left hand, while the right display *varadamudrā*.

The iconography of the shrine facade is closely associated with the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. A metal repousse *toraṇa* is placed above the main doorway over the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine. The iconography depicts and interesting variation of the Jinas of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala (Fig. 5.32). In the inner circle, the central figure is Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara (Fig. 5.33), flanked by Akṣobhya and Amitābha to his right and left respectively. Their *vāhanas* are placed at their side, providing further clues to their identity. Iconographically, the attributes of the Buddhas are identical to the descriptions given in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. However, instead of being seated in *vajraparyaṅkāśana,* the central group is shown dancing in *āliḍha* and *pratyāliḍha* postures. The placement of the three Buddhas—Akṣobhya, Vairocana/Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, Amitābha—refers to the Tantic purification of the Body, Speech, and Mind that is central to the ritual practices of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala.[113] Of the Body, Speech, and Mind components, Vairocana symbolizes the purification of the Body (*kāya*), Amitābha is associated with Speech (*vāk*) and Akṣobhya signifies the Heart-Mind (*citta*).

In the outer circle of the *toraṇa*, Ratnasambhava and Amoghasiddhi are shown seated in their usual eight-armed crowned forms. At the top center is Vajrasattva (Fig. 5.34), depicted in his eight-armed esoteric form that is

related to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. He is the sixth Buddha of the six *kula* system described in the *Nāmasaṅgīti* and is thus inherently present in the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. As a hypostasis of Mañjuśrī, he is shown in this context with Mañjuśrī's primary symbols—the sword and the book—in his top hands; the arrow and bow in his second pair, and the goad and noose in his third pair. His principal hands hold the *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* in a manner characteristic of Vajrasattva, with the *vajra* against his chest in his right hand and the *ghaṇṭā* silenced against his thigh. This is an important esoteric form of Vajrasattva in Newar Buddhist art, since to my knowledge, this form of Vajrasattva is not found described in the textual sources, such as the *Niṣpannayogālī* and *Vajrāvali*. Like the twelve-armed form of Nāmasaṅgīti, this form of Vajrasattva is a Newar Buddhist iconographic convention, signifying Mañjuśrī's symbolic connection with Vajrasattva. Other such examples of Vajrasattva are also found on the *toraṇa* over the *āgaṁ* at Bu Bāhā (Figs. 5.34. and 5.35). These numerous examples indicate that this is a standard iconographic variant of the eight-armed form of Vajrasattva found in Nepal, alluding to his esoteric nature.

The wooden strut figures over the second floor *āgaṁ* shrine also relate to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography.[114] Since the attributes of the figures are severely damaged, it is difficult to distinguish the precise iconographic source. Nonetheless, the figures are depicted as the four-faced eight-armed Jinas, similar to the Jinas of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. There

are six strut figures, with the standing Jinas Buddhas as the main figures and the seated Buddhaśaktīs below them. Each Buddha is painted with his distinctive color. Beginning at the east end is Vajradhāra (Fig. 5.37), who is white and holds a sword and skull-cup in his top hands; the goad and *tarjanimudrā* (?) in the second pair; the jewel and lotus in his third pair; and his principal hands holds the *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* in *vajrahuṅkāramudrā*.[115] Vajradhāra, according to certain Tantric tradition, is the *dharmakāya* representation of the Ādi Buddha. The other five struts represent the Jina Buddha and are Vairocana (Fig. 5.38), Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava (Fig. 5.39), Amitābha (Fig. 5.40), and Amoghasiddhi (Fig. 5.41), identified by their *kula* colors and *vāhanas*. Interestingly, Vairocana's attributes are similar to that of Mahāvairocana from the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala[116]. Two of his attributes are missing in the top right and second left hands. However, his other attributes—the *cakra* in his top left hand and the arrow in his second right hands—are similar to that of Mahāvairocana. Similarly his third pair of hands are shown in *dhyānamudrā* while his principal hands display the *dharmacakramudrā*. The Vajradhātu Maṇḍala is also a major meditational cycle in the Newar Buddhist tradition. Furthermore, it is also intimately connected with the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra,* as the *Maṇḍala* is described in the fifth chapter as "The Great Maṇḍala of Vajradhātu" and is related to the Vajrasattva *kula*.[117] Further, an image of Vajrasattva is placed directly behind the strut figures on this level, at the center, whose placement could

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further indicate his connections with the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra.* That the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala strut figures are placed directly outside the *āgaṁ* shrine[118] may also point to the symbolic association between Mañjuśrī, Vajrasattva, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. Furthermore, the strut figures outside the *āgaṁ* shrine are the "outer" non-esoteric aspect of the highly esoteric Tantric deities of the *āgaṁ,* which may not be displayed in public. As in the visual imagery in the Kathmandu *bāhās,* the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography is also a prominent theme in Bu Bāhā. The iconography and the presence of this iconography over the shrine door and the struts constantly refers to Mañjuśrī as a fully Enlightened Buddha and emphasizes the many layers of symbolic meanings and interpretations of the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū.

Iconographic Analysis of Bhinche Bāhā, Patan

As at Bu Bāhā, the iconography at Bhinche Bāhā shows the recurrent theme of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. The interior courtyard has a number of votive *caityas,* including the principal vivifying "*svayambhū caitya*" that is in front of the west shrine facade (Fig. 5.42). In a vertical axis from the main *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine is a freestanding Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, dated and inscribed N.S. 1056 (1936 CE). The Maṇḍala is surmounted over an octagonal base, which depicts the eight Great Bodhisattvas. The Maṇḍala is physically represented on the metal repousse covering over the stone base.

The shrine facade is a large temple structure with three-tiered roofs design of Nepali architecture, reconstructed in 1939 after the devastating earthquake of 1934. Typical of *bāhā* architecture, Bhinche Bāhā has the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine to Śākyamuni Buddha on the lower level, while the shrine above houses the *āgaṁ* shrine to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. Similar to the case in Bu Bāhā, the *āgaṁ pūjā* is performed at a different location, in the east courtyard wall *dīgi*, which is easily assessable to large number of *saṅgha* members. The metal *toraṇa* over the main shrine, dated N.S. 1019 (1899 CE), depicts Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara as the center figure of the Buddha Dharma Saṅgha triad (Fig. 5.43). He is flanked by Ṣaḍakṣari Lokeśvara (Saṅgha) to his right and Prajñapāramitā (Dharma) to his left (Fig. 5.44). Surrounding the central group are the four Jinas Buddhas, shown in their two-armed form: (from viewer's left to right) Ratnasambhava in the lower left; Akṣobhya in the upper left; Amitābha in the upper right, and Amoghasiddhi in the lower right. In the standard iconographic pattern of most *toraṇas*, Vajrasattva is at the top center position, directly above Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara. An identical wooden *toraṇa* depicting is found over the Amoghapāśa shrine in the south courtyard wall (Figs. 5.45 and 5.46) Judging by the appearance of the *toraṇa,* it is possible that this could have been the original *toraṇa* metal over the shrine doorway that was replaced present *toraṇa* in metal.

On the second level is the *āgaṁ* shrine, which is marked by the characteristic five-fold windows. Above the windows at the center is a *toraṇa* which depicts the twelve-armed form of Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī as the center figure (Fig. 5.47). The iconographic placement of Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī over the *āgaṁ* shrine and the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara over the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine may be a direct allusion to the "outer" and "secret" meanings of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra.* The visual imagery here mirrors the hierarchic layering of the meditational practices, in which the "outer" Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is realized and interpreted through the highly practices *sahaja* esoteric paralleling the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala.

As in the other Newar Buddhist monasteries discussed above, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography at Bhinche Bāhā also reiterates the fundamental premises of Newar Buddhist practice. The visual imagery alludes to the symbolic association of Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and Svayambhū and specifically Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara as the Fully Enlightened Buddha. Furthermore, the iconographic program of the *bāhā* also indicates the progressively higher meditational systems that are central to the Tantric practices of Newar Buddhism.

Iconographic Analysis of Ha Bāhā, Patan

Ha Bāhā in Patan is one of the *mū* (main/original) *bāhās* whose complete architectural structure has been preserved through the dedication of

its *saṅgha* members and lay patrons. The Dharmadhātu iconography is the major theme, found represented in *toraṇas,* struts, and as individual votive offerings. The *bāhā* structure is built around a quadrangular courtyard (*chok*), with the entrance door is on the north, and the shrine facade on the south end (Fig 5.48). As is standard in many large *bāhās,* the exterior doorway is flanked by a male and female lion, and surmounted by an unusual stone *toraṇa.* Placed in a semi-circular panel, the eight-armed Jinas of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala are represented in their standard iconographic placement (Ratnasambhava, Akṣobhya, Vairocana/Mañjuśrī, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi). As at Kvā Bāhā, Patan, the presence of the Jinas at the entrance allude to the *bāhā's* sacred *maṇḍalic* space generated by the Dharmadhātu.

Typical of *bāhā* architecture are the two benches (*phalāñcā*) on the entrance foyer, with the standard door-guardians, Ganeśa and Mahākāla, installed in the side shrines. The east and west interior courtyard walls on the upper levels have large individual rooms, at present used for rituals of the *saṅgha.* Only the east courtyard wall is still used as a residence for one of the *saṅgha* families.

The inner courtyard has numerous votive offerings of *caityas* and Dharmadhātu *maṇḍalas,* many of which are inscribed and dated. A large metal repousse *maṇḍala* is very similar in style to that found at Bu Bāhā. Directly in front of the shrine on the south end is the principal *caitya*, a

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whitewashed Licchavi-period *caitya* that is surmounted by a canopy of *nāgas*. Inscriptions on the canopy refer to this *caitya* specifically as "Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Caitya", further reinforcing Svayambhū Mahācaitya's role as ontological source and generator of the sacred space.

The shrine facade opposite the entrance is a five storied structure, with the lowest floor housing the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ* image of Śākyamuni. The facade is embellished with various images and offerings, with the iconographic imagery relating to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. As is characteristic of many *bāhās* in Patan, a pair of images of Siṁhanāda Lokeśvara flanks the steps leading to the shrine. The shrine door is surmounted by a metal *toraṇa*, depicting the Buddha/Dharma/Saṅgha triad, with Śākyamuni representing the totality of the Buddhist *dharma* (Fig. 5.49). Prajñāpāramitā (viewer's left), as the embodiment of wisdom and *prajña,* symbolizes the Dharma or Teaching, while Ṣaḍakṣarī Lokeśvara (viewer's right), as the embodiment of compassion and *upāya,* symbolizes the Saṅgha. In the center of these dual components of the Enlightenment process is the fully Enlightened Buddha, represented by Śākyamuni.

At Ha Bāhā, the Tantric *āgaṁ* shrine of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī is directly above the *kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ s*hrine and is marked by the characteristics five-fold windows, traditionally symbolize the presence of the Pañca Jinas (Fig. 5.50). Here, the window niches, in fact, do house the images of the five Buddhas. Above the windows are the images of the Seven Tathāgatas

(Manuśi Buddhas), flanked by Prajñāpāramitā on the left and Ṣaḍakṣarī Lokeśvara on the right, again reiterating the iconography of the Buddha/Dharma/Saṅgha.[119]   An image of Vajrasattva is placed above the windows. Vajrasattva's placement directly outside the *āgaṁ* shrine, as in Bu Bāhā, alludes to his role as the *sambhogakāya* of the Ādi Buddha as well as to the enlightened Buddhist practitioner. As in other shrine facades, a pair of images, Māyādevī and Cintāmaṇi Lokeśvara, is found here in the upper left and right side of the façade. This iconographic configuration is unique to the Newar Buddhist tradition.

The symbolic association between the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍalas is further alluded to in the imagery of the *āgaṁ torana*. The *āgaṁ* shrine on the second floor is accessed through the doorway on the southwest corner. The exterior wooded *torana* over the *āgaṁ* entrance, dated and inscribed, depicts Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala (Fig. 5.51). The presence of Dharmadhātu here implies his role as the exoteric or "outer" face of Cakrasaṁvara. Although the Cakrasaṁvara imagery is not publicly shown to the uninitiated, the Dharmadhātu iconography, in this context, alludes to the esoteric practices of the *āgaṁ* shrine. More importantly, this deliberate iconographic placement explicitly refers to the hierarchic layering of these two major meditational cycles of Newar Buddhism.

The shrine façade also prominently depicts the Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. The third floor, directly above the *āgaṁ* shrine, is supported by six decorative struts, on which are depicted the six Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. The iconographic configuration, as is standard in most Patan *bāhās,* includes the five Jinas Buddhas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and Vajrasattva. From left to right, the strut figures are: Ratnasambhava, Akṣobhya, Vairocana/Mañjuśrī, Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi, and Vajrasattva. The wooden struts are inscribed and dated to 1668 C.E., suggesting that the iconographic program was in place by the seventeenth century. The struts are abraded and much of the attributes of the Buddhas are missing. However, the Jinas may be identified by their specific *kula* colors, which have been repainted and repaired. The two upper levels of Ha Bāhā are also supported by strut figures that go around the entire structure. The figures are hard to identify and appear to be Bodhisattva-type figures. As at Kvā Bāhā, Patan, miniature metal replicas of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya crown the second and upper shrine roofs, further reinforcing idea of the Mahācaitya as symbolic source.

Ha Bāhā has all of the standard features of *vihāra* architecture—a main *caitya,* consecrated during the establishment of the *bāhā;* a *kvāhpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine; and a Tantra *āgaṁ* shrine, with the overall iconography related to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Ha Bāhā has an additional feature that is standard in all *bāhās* in Patan that have a Vajrācārya *saṅgha.* This is the

Vajrasattva shrine, located in the northwest corner, that is worshipped by the Vajrācārya *saṅgha,* the members of which take turns to act as its *dyaḥ pāla.* In contrast to the Vajrācārya organization (*De Ācārya Guthi*) of Kathmandu, Patan does not have an overall Vajrācārya *saṅgha.* Instead, the Vajrācāryas of each *bāhā* have their own governing body called the *ācārya guthi,* whose responsibilities include tending to the Vajrasattva shrine, standardizing the rituals among the members, and settling disputes regarding *jajmāni* rights. The presence of the Vajrasattva shrine in the Patan *bāhā* also appears to be a specific emphasis of the Patan tradition.

The Vajrasattva shrine at Ha Bāhā houses three important deities of Newar Buddhism (Figs. 5.52 and 5.53): Mañjuśrī (viewer's left), Vajrasattva (center), and Vasundharā (viewer's right). The images are represented in their exoteric forms: Mañjuśrī holds the sword, book, bow, and arrow; Vajrasattva holds *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā;* and Vasundharā with her usual attributes. The exterior *toraṇa* also depicts these three enshrined deities, however, are shown in their esoteric forms. Specifically, the forms of Mañjuśri and Vajrasattva are related the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, further reinforcing their shared role as *mahāguru* of Newar Buddhism. The *toraṇa* on the viewer's left depicts Mañjuśri in his six-armed form. He holds a sword and lotus in his upper right and left hands; an arrow and bow in his second right and left hands; and displays *varadamudrā* with his principal right hand while

the left hand hold the book. Flanking him are his two female figures, representing his consorts, Keśinī and Upakeśinī.

The larger central *toraṇa* depicts the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography, with an eight-armed Vajrasattva as the center figure, flanked by Mañjuśrī and Vasundharā. As at Bu Bāhā, this form of Vajrasattva is derived from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and is an iconographic variant unique to Newar Buddhist art. As the head of the sixth *kula,* Vajrasattva is shown in his four-headed, eight-armed form, with the attributes of the Jinas of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. In his top right and left hand, Vajrasattva holds the sword and book, which are the standard attributes of Mañjuśrī. The presence of Mañjuśrī' attributes explicitly refer to Vajrasattva's symbolic association with Mañjuśrī as the primordial teacher of the Vajrayāna practices. Vajrasattva's second right and left hands holds the arrow and bow, and the third right and left hold a goad and noose. His principal hands hold the *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā,* Vajrasattva's primary attributes and in a position iconographically prescribed for Vajrasattva images.

The center figure of Vajrasattva is surrounded by the five Jinas of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Their forms appear to be a local variant of the Dharmadhātu iconography, as the placement of the attributes of the Jinas do not precisely match the descriptions given in textual sources. In the *toraṇa,* the placement of the Buddhas reiterates the standards iconographic configuration of Newar Buddhist imagery: (from the viewer's left to right)

Ratnasambhava, Akṣobhya, Vairocana/Mañjuśrī, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi. It is significant to note that directly above Vajrasattva is Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa as Vairocana. This visual metaphor further provides strong evidence for the symbolic relationship of Mañjuśrī, Vajrasattva, and Vairocana in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

The right *toraṇa* represents Vasundharā, flanked by Kumārī and Mahālakṣmi. Vasundharā represents the pacific aspect of the goddess Kumārī, who figures prominently at Ha Bāhā. In the Newar Buddhist tradition, the goddess Kumārī as the exoteric and physical (*laukika*) aspects of Vajravārāhī[120] (Fig. 5.54). In the Newar Buddhist tradition, the goddess manifests herself in the body of a young Vajrācārya girl, who is chosen from among the Ha Bāhā *saṅgha* families. Kumārī's permanent shrine or *dyocheñ* ("god-house") at Ha Bāhā is located in the southeast corner of the *bāhā*. Although the Patan Kumārī no longer lives here, the entrance to this esoteric shrine is marked by an inscribed wooden *toraṇa*, which depicts the Goddess Kumārī, flanked by Gaṇeśa and Mahākāla (Fig. 5.55). During secret Tantric *pūjās* in the *āgaṁ* as well as in public festivals, particularly during the annual *vratapūjā* to Vasundharā during Gāṭila Pune, Newar Buddhist practitioners take *darśan* of the Goddess Kumārī and then break their fast (Fig. 5.56).

The imagery of Vajrasattva shrine at Ha Bāhā thus clearly reiterates two major themes of Newar Buddhism: one, the overwhelming presence of the

Dharmadhātu iconography; and two, the imagery alludes to the "outer/exoteric" and "inner/esoteric" categories of Newar Buddhist ritual practices and art. Specifically, the presence of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography at the exterior of the āgaṁ shrine again points to its role as the bridge between the highly esoteric imagery of the āgaṁ and the exoteric rituals and metaphors used in the kvāḥpāḥ dyaḥ shrine. Time and again, the three core iconographic elements present in the architectural imagery closely mirrors the ritual practices, embodying the Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna methodologies.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter examines the preeminence of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography in Newar Buddhist art and its relation to the ritual practices of Newar Buddhism. In its exoteric/outer nature, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala can be displayed in public and the lay practitioners may perform the meditational practices associated with the Maṇḍala, without extensive ritual initiation. As the preeminent *mandala* of Mañjuśrī, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala becomes, for the Newar Buddhist practitioners, a particularly appropriate medium to allow Mañjuśrī's multivalent symbolism to emerge in a complex Tantric understanding. As indicated by the imagery in the Newar Buddhist monasteries, the Newar Buddhist practitioners have employed the highly philosophical doctrines of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra* in the visual symbolism of

the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography. As the physical manifestation of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra,* the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala has many complex layers of symbolism, in which the "inner" and "outer" meanings dictated by the commentarial literature appears to be key to understanding the visual symbolism. However, the meaning of the visual imagery pertains the spiritual advancement of the Newar practitioner, specifically to Tantric initiation. For the ordinary lay practitioner, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala serves as a talismanic symbol for the well-being and prosperity of his or her family and all sentient beings. For the others who have taken higher ritual initiation, the Maṇḍala serves as a meditational tool through which the process of Enlightenment may be experiences and internalized. The five Jinas Buddhas and the sixth *kula* Buddha Vajrasattva of the Maṇḍala demonstrate the state of Enlightenment and are thus reiterated time and again in the visual imagery. In the physical construction of the sacred spaces of the *bāhās* as a *Maṇḍala* where the deities of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala vivify and generate the sacred environment, the Newar Buddhist practitioner must realize that the Buddhas are not external to oneself but generated through one's own heart-mind (*citta*).[121] The external *maṇḍala* or the macrocosm is thus visualized and identified with the internal *maṇḍala,* found within the practitioner's *cakra* system, i.e. the microcosm. Yet the highly complex Tantric symbolism is personalized and made more meaningful to the Newar Buddhists by integrating it into the indigenous cosmogonic myth. The

perfect visual metaphor to explain this complex Tantric understanding thus become the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography and its multivalent symbolism.

The incorporation of this iconography in the visual imagery of the *bāhās* and *bāhīs* appears to be well-established and integral to the iconographic program by the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries. The personification of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra,* namely Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī, may indeed be a Newar Buddhist conception, as this iconographic form of Mañjuśrī is not found in Indian or Tibetan sources.[122] The core iconographic program of the *bāhās* and *bahīs* clearly integrates the highly complex understanding of the Tantric soteriological methodologies of the Vairocana-cycle *maṇḍalas.*

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[1] Alex Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Nāmasaṅgīti,* 5.

[2] See discussion of iconography in Chapter Three.

[3] The inscription on the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala at Thāṁ Bahī dated 1967 states that the iconographic descriptions were based on these texts. Similarly, the 1688 Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala inscription at Svayambhū offered by King Pratāp Malla mentions that the Maṇḍala's iconographic source as the *Kriyā Samūccaya* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī.* Ritual specialists as well as Newar artists that I have interviewed also use these very sources in the contemporary context.

[4] These include numerous original ritual (*vidhi*) texts, such as the *Dharmadhātu Pūjā Vidhi* and *Dharmadhātu Vrata Vidhi.*

[5] I have found no consistent number of deities in the Maṇḍala, both in the ritual texts or in the information given by ritual specialists. For example, Mallmann, in *Etude Iconographique sur Mañjuśrī,* states that there are 222 deities in the Maṇḍala, while Sylvain Levi, in *Le Nepal,* gives the number of 216. Hemrāj Śākya states that there are 252 deities and Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya says that there are 151. See Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya,* 206-208; Mallmann, *Etude Iconographique sur Mañjuśrī,* 98-99; Levi, *Le Nepal,* II, 18-19.

[6] See Chapter Two for a discussion of the basic form of the Maṇḍala and the iconography of the Jinas of the inner house.

[7] The description of the Maṇḍala given here is based on the *Niṣpannyogāvalī,* number 21.

[8] Iconographically, Dharmadhātu Mañjughoṣa may be white, yellow, or blue.

[9] I would like to thank John C. Huntington for pointing this out. See also Tajima, *Sarvatathagata Tattva Samgraha,* 213.

[10] See Ariane Macdonald, *Le Maṇḍala dur Mañjuśrīkulakalpa* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1962).

[11] Sonam Gyatso, *Tibetan Maṇḍala: The Ngor Collection,* Fig. 20.

[12] For iconographic program of the temples at Alchi, see Groepper, *Alchi: Laddakh's Hidden Buddhist Sancturary, The Sumtsek.*

[13] Ratna Kājī Vajrācārya, "Baudha Caitya Eka Adhyayana, *Palesvan,* vol. 7, no 9 (1995), 3-25. My translation.

[14] B. Bhattacaryya, ed., *Sādhanamālā,* 25.

[15] *Niṣpannayogāvali,* Maṇḍala, number 21.

[16]Already in the *Guhyasamāja Tantra,* dated to the second-third century, Mañjuśrī is increasingly identified with Vajrasattva. See Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras,* 46.

[17] The texts that I have consulted are the *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇam* and *Svāyambhū Purāṇa, Svāyambhū Purāṇa,* as well as Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya's popular printed edition, *Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa,* 213.

[18] Tradition has it that this place is called Sāwā Bhūmi in Lazimpat and was traditionally the first place where rice was annually planted.

[19] The *ratnamaṇḍala* is a body *maṇḍala,* in which the practitioner visualizes his body as Mt. Meru. The offering of the *ratnamaṇḍala* is also offered by the *jajman* during every *pūjā* that is presided by a Vajrācārya priest and is an integral part of the ceremony.

[20] Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, *Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa,* 223.

[21]The symbolism of the *mantra "evam mayā"* is identical to the reading of the Hevajra Tantra. See Snellgrove, *Hevajra Tantra.*

[22] *Vrhat Svayambhū Purāṇaṁ* 342. *"Ekara prajñārūpī ca vamkāraṁ pauruṣamiti/ Prajñopāya svarūpatvādevamiti prakthyate / /"* The meanings and symbolism related to *"evam"* is also glossed in the *Hevajra Tantra* and the *Guhyasamāja Tantra.* See Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras,* 171-183; see also Snellgrove, *Hevajra Tantra,* 49.

[23] *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇaṁ,* 358.

[24] These terms may also be applied to a *maṇḍala,* in which *abhyantara* refers to the innermost house or center of the *maṇḍala. Abhyantara* is also referred to the inner shrine of the *āgaṁ..* Gellner analyses these terms in a three-fold hierarchy, reflecting Mahāyāna, exoteric Vajrayāna, and esoteric Vajrayāna. However, this framework becomes slightly problematic, since these terms all refer to Tantric practices, which is, by definition, esoteric. The ritual specialists that I consulted constantly referred to this hierarchic framework, in reference to deities, rituals, and their symbolic meanings and buddhological interpretation. In fact, access to information, was at times, related to these categories.

[25]Kolver, *Re-Building a Stūpa,* 134.

[26] In his analysis, Kolver has not associated the symbolic meaning of the vowels found on the *chattras* to that of the *Nāmasaṅgīti.* However, given the *Svayambhū Purāṇa's* explicit reference to the identity of Svayambhū and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, it seems appropriate to analyze the symbolism of the manuscript drawing in these terms. See Kolver, *Re-Building a Stūpa,* 134-137.

[27]For practices of the generation and completion stage meditations, see Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras,* 46-48.

[28]Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras,* 48.

[29]See Chapter Six for discussion of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī.

[30] As will be discussed later in this section, Pratāp Malla received the Cakrasaṁvara initiation that enabled him to enter the secret *āgaṁ* shrine at Śāntipur. This reconfirms not only Svayambhū's association with the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, but also with the esoteric

cycles of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. This esoteric component of Svayambhū as been largely dismissed by scholars, as Svayambhū is considered to reflect the early, and hence non-Tantric, developments of Buddhism.

[31]The average Newar Buddhist practitioner is, perhaps, not aware of the identity of the shrine deities as Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī. However, most practitioners seems to have the knowledge that it is a secret shrine to the esoteric deities.

[32]Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, ed., *Dharmadhātu Vratapūjā vā Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇḍala,* preface, no page number.

[33]The esoteric aspect of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara was also indicated to me by Badri Ratna Vajrācārya. Personal communication.

[34] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* 169.

[35]For buddhological interpretation of Mañjusrī's identity of Vajrasattva, see Wayman's chapter entitled "The Five-fold Ritual Symbolism of Passion", *The Buddhist Tantras,* 202-224.

[36]According to Wayman, Tsongkha-pa's commentary on the *Śrīcakrasaṁvara Tantra* specifically pertains to this reference.

[37]Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantra,* 210.

[38]Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras,* 47. This is based on Tsongkha-pa commentaries.

[39]To my knowledge, this is one of the few sculptures, representing Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara with his female consort.

[40]See Chapter 9 of the *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa.*

[41]Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, *Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa,* 145-7

[42]The distinction between the Buddha Pāda and the Mañjuśrī Pāda is by the eyes represented on the Mañjuśrī Pāda.

[43] Ratnakājī Vajrācārya, *Newāḥ Saṁskāra Saṁskṛtiyā Tāhcā (Cultural Heritage of the Newara):* (Kathmandu: Vajrācārya Prakashan, 1986), 5.

[44]See Chapter Seven, *Vṛhat Svayambhū Pūrāṇa.*

[45] Bhattacaryya, *Indian Buddhist Iconography,* 75.

[46]Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras,* 206-207.

[47]See iconographic analysis of Kvā Bāhā, Patan, in Chapter Three.

[48]Textual references, such as the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* as well as the contemporary ritual tradition confirms this statement. Furthermore, the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* also considers the *Ārya Nāmasaṅgīti* to be the root text of the *maṇḍala.*

[49]Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Nāmasaṅgīti,* 4.

[50] Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Nāmasaṅgīti,* 6.

[51] The commentaries of the Yoga Tantra categories include Candrabhadrakīrti and Smrtijñānakīrti, Līlavajra, and Mañjuśrīmitra. See Alex Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī,* 47.

[52] Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras,* 234. See also Alex Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Nāmasaṅgīti,* 6.

[53] Alex Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī,* 6.

[54] Alex Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī,* 10-22. According to Wayman, Naropa's commentaries of the *Hevajra Tantra* make direct reference to the *Nāmasaṅgīti.* Nāropa, who wrote a commentary on the *Kālacakra Tantra* discusses in his commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra,* the connection between the *Kālacakra* commentarial literature, *Hevajra Tantra,* and the *Nāmasaṅgīti.* What may be pertinent here for the Newar Buddhist is the associations of the Akṣobhya-cycle *maṇḍalas* and the Vairocana-cycle ones in the Tantric Buddhist methodology.

[55] Alex Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī*, 6.

[56] Alex Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī*, 7. Wayman maintains that this may be one of the main reasons why the commentaries of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* are found in the *Kālacakra* section of the Tibetan Tanjur canons.

[57] At this point in my research, I have not found out whether the commentarial literature and the Tantras used in the Newar Buddhist tradition have comparable methods of classification as in Tibetan Buddhism. However, many commentaries by Indian and Newar *Paṇḍitas* are found in the manuscript collections of the National Archives in Kathmandu that pertain to both the Yoga and the Anuttara Yoga class; within this division, *yoga* (male) and *yoginī* (female) class *tantras*, such as the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra* are evident. Some of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* commentaries that found in Nepal are: Dombi Heruka's *Nāmasaṅgīti Vṛt;* Advayavajra's *Nāmasaṅgīti Ṭīkā* and *Nāmasaṅgīti Upahāra Vitarka*, Lilavajra's *Ārya Mañjuśrī Nāmasaṅgīti Tika Saropayika;* and Anuparamarakṣita and Indrabhuti's *Arya Mañjuśrī Nāmasaṅgīti Vṛtti*, Vāgīśgvarakīrti's *Ārya Mañjuśrī Nāmasaṅgīti Ṭīkā; Smṛtijñānakīriti;* Suratvajra's *Ārya Mañjuśrī Nāmasaṅgīti Arthavalokanāma*. In addition, the National Archives also has manuscripts of commentaries employing the Anuttara Yoga Tantras, such as the *Nāmasaṅgīti Mantrārthavalokini Ṭīkā, Amṛtakaṇika* and *Amṛtakaṇikā Dhyot Ṭīkā*. I am grateful to Paṇḍit Sūrya Mān Vajrācārya of Ha Bāhā, Patan and Paṇḍit Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya of Kathmandu for pointing this out to me.

[58] According to the *Trisamādhi Pūjā Vidhi*, the ritual text used in Newar Buddhism, this particularly meditation is the fundamental aspect of the Cakrasaṃvara tradition. See also Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, for references to the Trisamādhi rituals to Cakrasaṃvara.

[59] Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya. Personal communication. The Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala is considered a Akṣobhya-cycle *maṇḍala*.

[60] See Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī*.

[61] See Sashibala, *Comparative Iconography of the Vajradhātu-Maṇḍala and the Tattva-Sangraha* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1986).

[62] See A. Macdonald, *Le Maṇḍala du Mañjuśrīmulakalpa*.

[63] See Alex Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī*.

[64] Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī*, 8.

[65] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 567.

[66] Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 567. See also, Divayavajra Vajrācārya, ed., *Advayaparmārtha Nāmasaṅgīti*, preface, no page.

[67] In contrast to this list given in the Newar Buddhist tradition, the *Nāmasaṅgīti* commentary by Candrabhadrakīrti assigns the *Mahāmudrā kula* to Amoghasiddhi and the *mantravidya kula* to Vajrasattva. See Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Nāmasaṅgīti*, 40-46.

[68] Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Nāmasaṅgīti*, 42-46. This section is considered a later addition to the original text. Rin-chen-bzan-po's Tibetan translation of the *Arya Nāmasaṅgīti* in the eleventh century also includes these prose sections.

[69] See Chapter Eight of the *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa*.

[70] Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Nāmasaṅgīti*, 42-43.

[71] Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Nāmasaṅgīti*, 22-35. Based on the commentarial literature and the Tibetan tradition, Wayman argues that *Nāmasaṅgīti* teachings constitute seven *Maṇḍala*, in which a specific form of Mañjuśrī presides. The seven cycles are (1) Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara as the totality of all six *Maṇḍala* (2) "The Maṇḍala of Vajradhātu"[Vajrasattva]: Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī; (3) The Maṇḍala of Pure Dharmadhātu

Wisdom [Vairocana]: Arapacana; (4) The Maṇḍala of Mirrow-Like Wisdom [Akṣobhya]: Trailokyavijaya; (5) The Maṇḍala of Discriminative Wisdom [Ratnasambhava]: Vadismha; (6) The Maṇḍala of Sameness Wisdom [Amitābha]: Vadiraja; (7) The Maṇḍala of Procedure-of Duty Wisdom [Amoghasiddhi] Manjuvajra. The forms of Mañjuśrī in the ṣaṭkulas appear to be slightly different in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

[72]For example, the toraṇa at Ha Bāhā and Bu Bāhā, Patan, show this type of iconography.

[73]Gellner has appropriately classified such practices as the "exoteric Vajrayāna", in which the esoteric deities, such as Vajrasattva, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, Kumārī, Vajrayoginī serves as what he calls the "exoteric faces of the esoteric deities". See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 253-255..

[74] Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Nāmasaṅgīti*, 25.

[75] Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Nāmasaṅgīti*, 26.

[76] The *Sādhanamālā* 82 describes a Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī, whose description is iconographically different from the twelve-armed Nāmasaṅgīti found in Nepal. According to the *Sādhanamālā*, Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī is described as an emanation of Akṣobhya and a four-armed figure, holding a book and sword in his first pair of hands and a bow and arrow.

[77]Interesting, Mallman classifies this twelve-armed as "Nāmasaṅgīti (Bodhisattva)" and does not consider this form of Mañjuśrī to be the *samyaksambodhi* form of the Buddha, as clearly indicated in the Newar Buddhist tradition. She states that "He is often represented in Nepal, but his descriptions were not known until now. . . . Despite his name, Nāmasaṅgīti Bodhisattva should not be confused with Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī.. . . . Here, as a personification of the "Songs of the (sacred) names" which invokes Mañjuśrī, he is thus incontestably connected to the Bodhisattva, even if he is not identified. This is why, on the part of the Nepalis, the confusion over the name exists even in the context of the images, and Amṛtānanda qualifies Nāmasaṅgīti as "Buddha"—to illustrate his presence on the top of the aureole, where he surmounts even Vairocana." To contextualize Mallmann statement in the current study, there is clear evidence to indicate that the Newar Buddhist consider Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī to be a fully Enlightened Buddha in his twelve-armed form. See Mallmann, *Introduction a l'Iconographie du Tantrisme Bouddhique*, 274-275.

[78]The attributes of the fourth pair are identical to the iconographic descriptions given by Mallmann. See Mallamnn, *Introduction a l'Iconographie du Tantrisme Bouddhique*, 274.

[79] B. Bhattacaryya, *Indian Buddhist Iconography*, 207.

[80] In the textual description given by the nineteenth century Vajrācārya priest, Amṛtānanda in the *Dharmakośa Samgraha*, this gesture is described as "*mukuṭopari kṛtāñjalimudrā* "*añjalimudrā* performed over the crown". This same gesture is performed extensively by the Vajrācārya priest during ritual practices, specifically in the *guru maṇḍala pūjā* to Vajrasattva, which is not *añjalimudrā*, but called "*merumaṇḍala mudrā*", in the gestures symbolizes a mountain. According to the contemporary ritual specialists, this gesture symbolizes Mt. Meru, and can be this related to Vajrasattva. My identification of this gesture is based on the drawings given ritual *vidhi* text, *Trisamādhi Pūjā Vidhi*, in which the *mudrā* is labelled *vajracakra*. Hemraj Śākya also refers to this as the "*adhyesana mudrā*", or the *mudrā* of explication; however, in this context, the *mudra* may be more appropriately related to the symbolic understanding of the body as Mt. Meru. See Hemraj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya*, 566.

[81]The *pūjā* was presided by the Vajrācārya priests of Bu Bāhā, with Caityarāj and Kamalrāj Gubhāju's as the senior ritual specialists.

[82]Vajrasattva's connections with the five Jinas were further explained to me during the *pūjā*.

[83] The Trisamādhi *pūjā* is also the basic esoteric ritual for the *āgaṁ pūjās* to the Heruka deities. The rituals also include Tantric *caryā* songs to invoke the specific deities. The Trisamādhi performed during the Dharmadhātu *pūjā* was the exoteric version of the more complex Trisamādhi *pūjā*, which is essentially a visualization of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. This ritual further clarifies the connection between Dharmadhātu and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala traditions.

[84] In another *pūjā* that I had offered in 1994, only one *maṇḍala* was made. The form of the *maṇḍala* was based on the generic Pañca Jina Maṇḍala form, with the center deity was identified as Dharmadhātu Mañjughoṣa.

[85] *Trisamādhi Pūjā Vidhi*, 128.

[86] Gellner, *Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest*, 255.

[87] Personal communication with Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya.

[88] The *Sādhanamālā* describes a white Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, holding a arrow and bow in this top hands, a goad and noose in the second pair, a sword and book in the third pair, and a *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* in the principal hands. Both in terms of the attributes and color, this form of different from the descriptions given in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. Further, the Sādhanamālā states that this form of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara bears an image of Amitābha in his crown. In my field research, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is invariably identified with Vairocana and I have not come across any reference to Amitābha. See B. Bhattacaryya, *Indian Buddhist iconography*, 103-104.

[89] In the second Dharmadhātu Pūjā that I offered that *homa* ceremony was not performed, partly because the *pūjā* took place during the sacred month of Guñla, during which time *homas* are not generally performed.

[90] See Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, ed., *Dharmadhātu Vratapūjā vā Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara Maṇḍala*, preface.

[91] As stated in the commentarial text, *Amṛtakaṇika Ṭikā*.

[92] Tantric texts also imply that Mañjuśrī's form as Mañjuvajra is directly associated with Vajrasattva. See Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras*, 47.

[93] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 275.

[94] Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, ed., *Dharmadhātu Vratapūjā vā Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇḍala,* preface, no page number.

[95] Personal communication with Badrī Ratna Varjārārya. 1998.

[96] *Trisamādhi Pūjā Vidhi*. See also the synopsis of the *Cakrasaṁvara-pūjā Vidhi* in Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 288-290.

[97] See Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantra*.

[98] At this point in my research, I have not addressed the doctrinal or ritual emphasis nor the historical factors that may have contributed to this pattern.

[99] The eight pilgrimage sites of the Vitarāgas in the Kathmandu Valley are associated with the Eight Great Bodhisattvas. The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* describes in detail the symbolic connections of these Bodhisattvas and the Aṣṭamaṅgala signs. During the *Aṣṭamī Vrata* to Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara, these eight sites are visited sequentially as part of the ritual pilgrimage. At these sites, metal repousse plaque inscribed with the name of the specific Vitarāga, Bodhisattva and the appropriate Aṣṭamaṅgala sign are often found, which provides further evidence for the ritual connection between the Aṣṭamaṅgala signs and the Aṣṭa Mahābodhisattvas.

[100] Scholars have often stated that the presence of the *vajra* defines these *maṇḍala* as the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala. However, the form of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala's three concentric squares is unique, and is structurally different from the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, and many

Dharmadhātu Maṇḍalas have the *vajra* offering. The morphology of the *maṇḍala* and the inscriptional evidence must be taken into consideration to properly identity the two Maṇḍalas. See Hemrāj Śākya, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya,* 238 and Gutschow,

[101] Since most *bahīs* generally do not have elaborate shrine facades, I have not found any *bahīs* that have elaborate strut figures that depict the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography. The Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography, however, is generally present as part of the *toraṇa* imagery.

[102] For a detailed iconographic analysis of Chusyā Bāhā, see van Kooij, "The Iconography of the Buddhist Wood-Carvings in a Newar Buddhist Monastery of Kathmandu (Chusya-Bāhā)", *Journal of the Nepal Research Center.*

[103] John K. Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal,* 270.

[104] Because of the iconographic similarities between Musyā Bāhā and its neighboring Chusyā Bāhā, the exterior must have had strut figures on the facade. At Chusyā Bāhā, the exterior struts depict the ten protective deities, the *Daśakrodhas.*

[105] John K. Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal,* 270.

[106]See van Kooij, "The Iconography of the Buddhist Wood-Carvings in a Newar Buddhist Monastery of Kathmandu (Chusya-Bāhā)", *Journal of the Nepal Research Center.*

[107] This understanding was repeated by various informants in Kathmandu and Patan.

[108]*Namaḥ śrī dharmadhātu vāgiśvarāya Mañjughoṣaṁ mahāviraṁ sarva māraṁ vināśakaṁ /*
Sarvākāra pradātāraṁ dhardhātuṁ namāmyahaṁ / / [first *śloka* of the *Nāmasaṅgītī*]
Svati āryya śrīmat śākyasimha tathāgatasya buddhenādi. . . .
śrī ... śāha deva pacyāsaṁ / /śubha samvat 1097 sāla māgha māsi śukla pakṣe pañcāmyāṁ tithau somavāre tatat dine dānapati tasya nepal maṇḍale kāntipure siṁhakalpa mahānāgare (ṭhabahīl) śrī Vikramśila mahāvihāra nhucche kavala pradhāna śrī sūryamān sinha śrī badriratna vajrācārya juyā upadeśānuāra kriyā sumucchaya sādhanamāla vajrāvali niṣpannayogāvali ādi grantha pramānusāra ṭabahīl śrī vikramaśilā mahāvihāra śrī bhagavān devavatāra gandhuriya agrasa sajala pātāsañ kikāga bharjekula śiyāgu śrī Dharmadhātu mahāmaṇḍala dayeka sthāna yānā dina jula. //

[109] For traditional history of the site, see Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal,* 409-412. The field where Mañjuśrī was ploughing the land, disguised as an old man, is said to be Sāwā Bhūmī. As stated by Locke, my informants at Thāṁ Bahī confirmed that Sāwā Bhūmī is the land at Sāmā Khuśi, which is owned by Thāṁ Bahī and the first rice of the season is still ritually planted there.

[110] Roerich, *The Blue Annals,* 43.

[111] Roerich, *Biography of Dharmasvāmin,* 55.

[112] Roerich, *Biography of Dharmasvāmin,* 56. Locke notes that a copy of the *Prajñapāramitā* found in Thāṁ Bahī dated NS 344 (1224 CE) mentions a "Dharmadhātu Vihāra", which was also mentioned in another seventeenth century reference. With this evidence, it may be that the original name of Thāṁ Bahī was Dharmadhātu Vihāra, while the current Sanskrit name, Vikramśilā Mahāvihāra, may have been a later designation.

[113] Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras,* 73.

[114] The informants at Bu Bāhā identified the iconography as related to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

[115] At this point in my research, I am not able to find a textual source for the specific iconography, but it is clearly a Newar iconographic variant.

[116]Mallmann, *Introduction a l'Iconographie du Tantrisme Bouddhique,* 234.

[117] Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Nāmasaṅgītī,* 69-73.

[118]Although the five-fold windows above the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine usually designates the *āgaṁ,* here at Bu Bāhā, the actual *āgaṁ* is found in the north courtyard wall.

[119] The Seven Tathāgatas going from viewer's left to right are: Śikhin, Krakacanda, Kaśyapa, Vipaśvi, Śākyamuni, Kanakamuni, and Viśvabhu.

[120] My informants at Ha Bāhā pointed to the strong symbolic connections of Kumārī, Vasundharā, and Vajravārāhī, in which a specific quality of the goddess is made manifest. Kumārī was the young virgin in the morning, Vasundharā as the auspicious exoteric goddesses in midday, and Vajravārāhī, the powerful sexually mature goddess in the evening. There is also a ritual hierarchy inherent in terms of the exoteric and esoteric meanings.

[121] The Newar Buddhist ritual specialists that I interviewed, specifically Sūryamān Vajrācārya, Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, and Ratna Kājī Vajrācārya constantly reiterated this fundamental premise of visual imagery.

[122] See de Mallmann argument for a Newar Buddhist conception of this iconography. See Footnote 77.

Figure 5.1. Reconstruction Drawing of Svayambhū Mahācaitya, showing symbolic elements of *chattra,* based on the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra.*
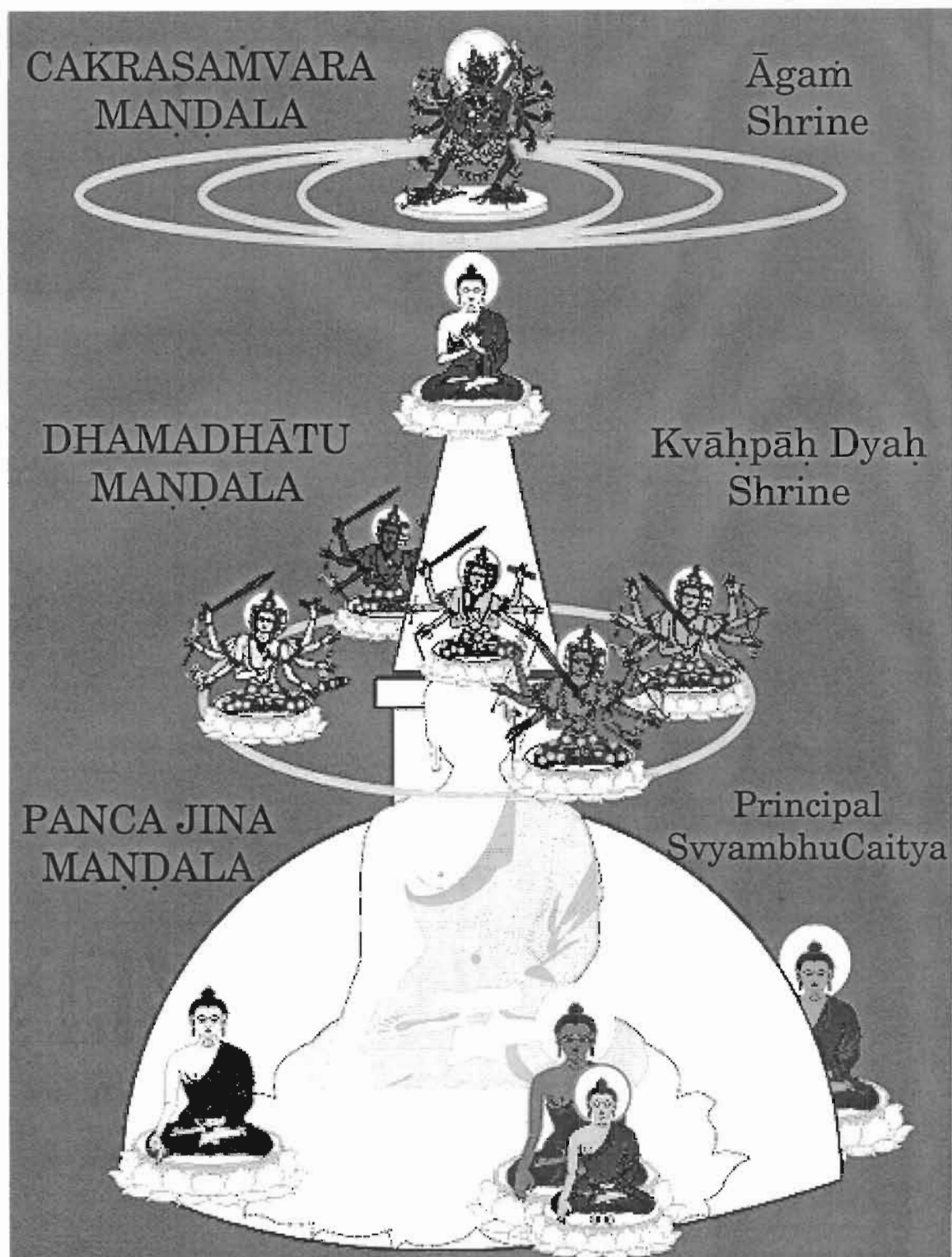
Figure 5.2. Hierarchic Layering of Maṇḍalas related to Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

Figure 5.3. Mañjuśrī Pāda Shrine at Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.
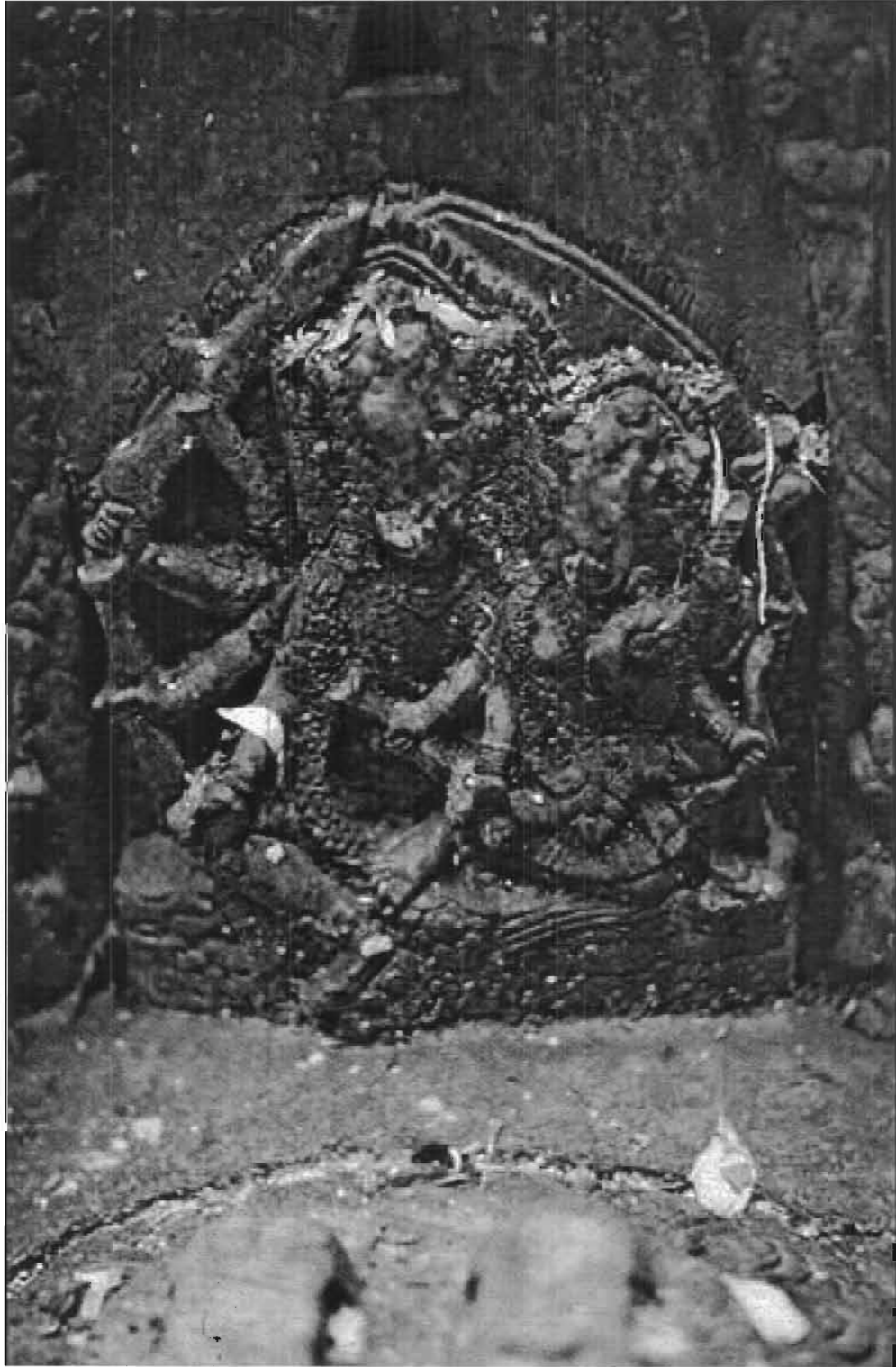
Figure 5.4. Detail of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa
with Prajñā. Mañjuśrī Pāda Shrine. Svayambhū Mahācaitya
Complex.

Figure 5.5. Detail of Mañjuśrī Pāda. Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.

Figure 5.6. Mañjuśrī Pāda as Talismanic Object of Worship. Jana Bāhā. Kathmandu.

Figure 5.7. Annual Festival of Mañjuśrī (Vasanta Pañcamī) at Mañjuśrī Caitya. Svayambhū Mahācaitya. 1998.
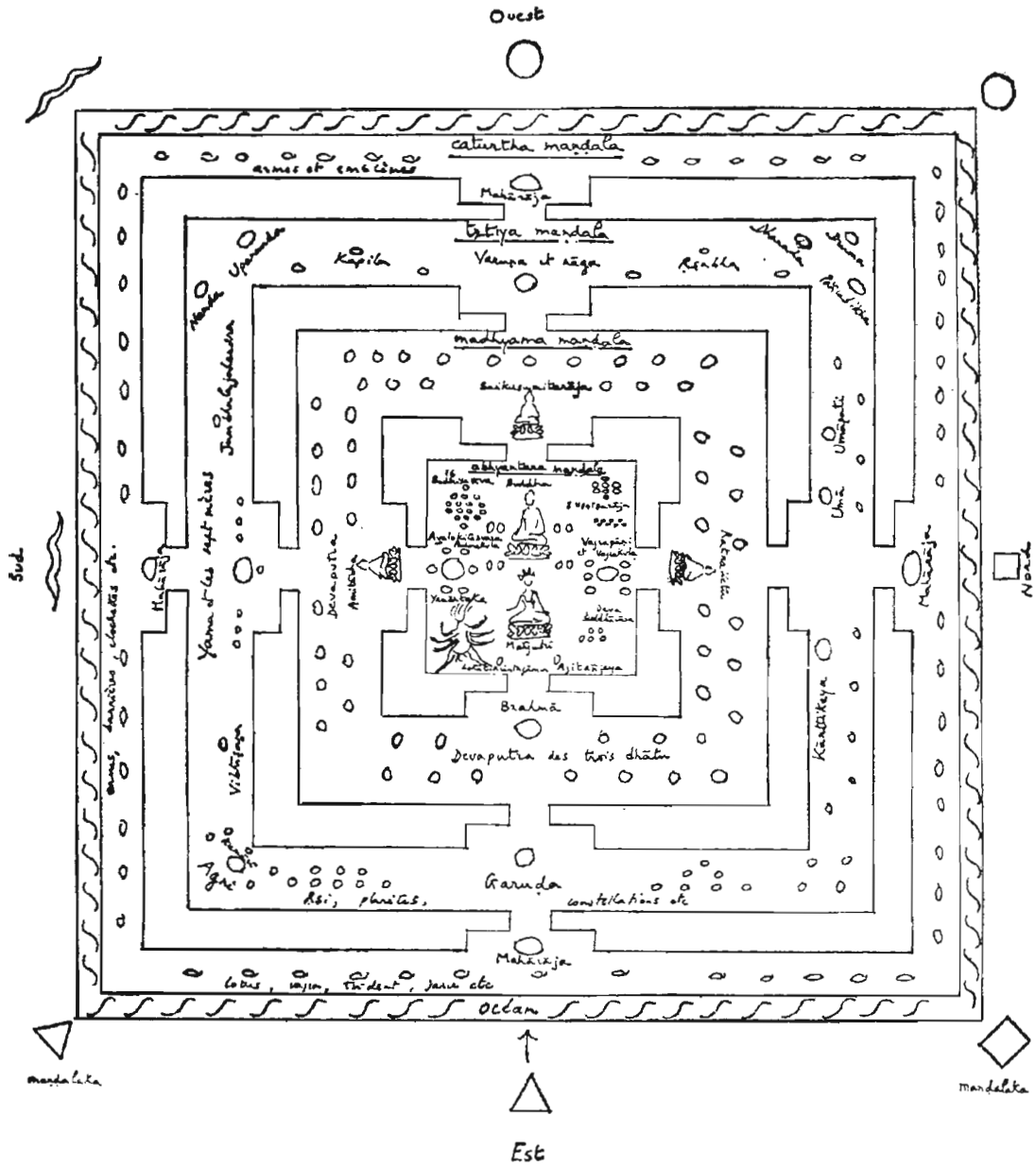
Figure 5.8. Maṇḍala of the *Mañjuśrī Mūlakalpa*.

Figure 5.11. Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa Pūjā. Ha Bāhā, Patan. 1996.
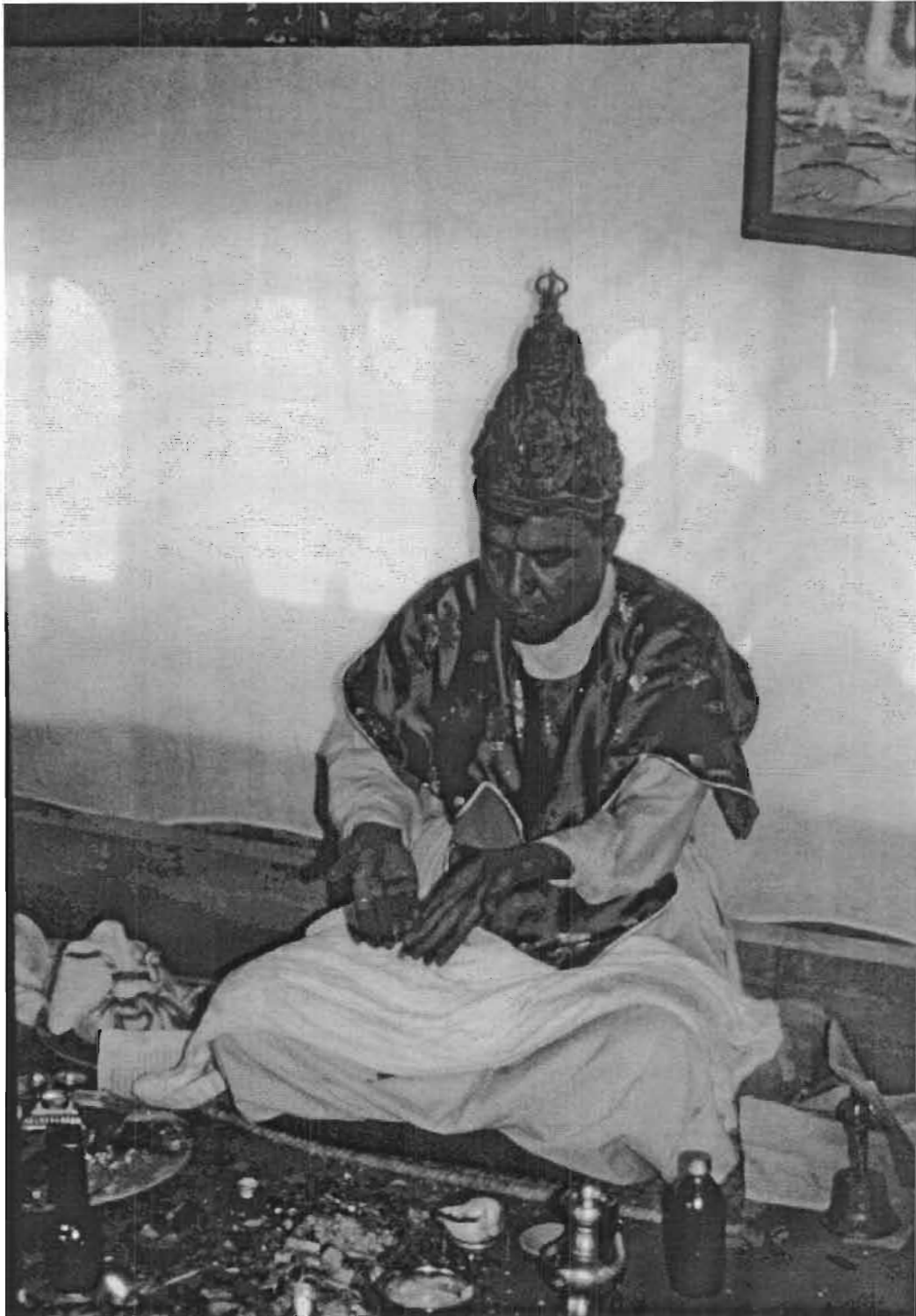
Figure 5.12. Suryamān Vajrācārya as Ratnasambhava, performing *mudrās* of the Offerings Goddesses. Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa Pūjā. Ha Bāhā, Patan. 1996.
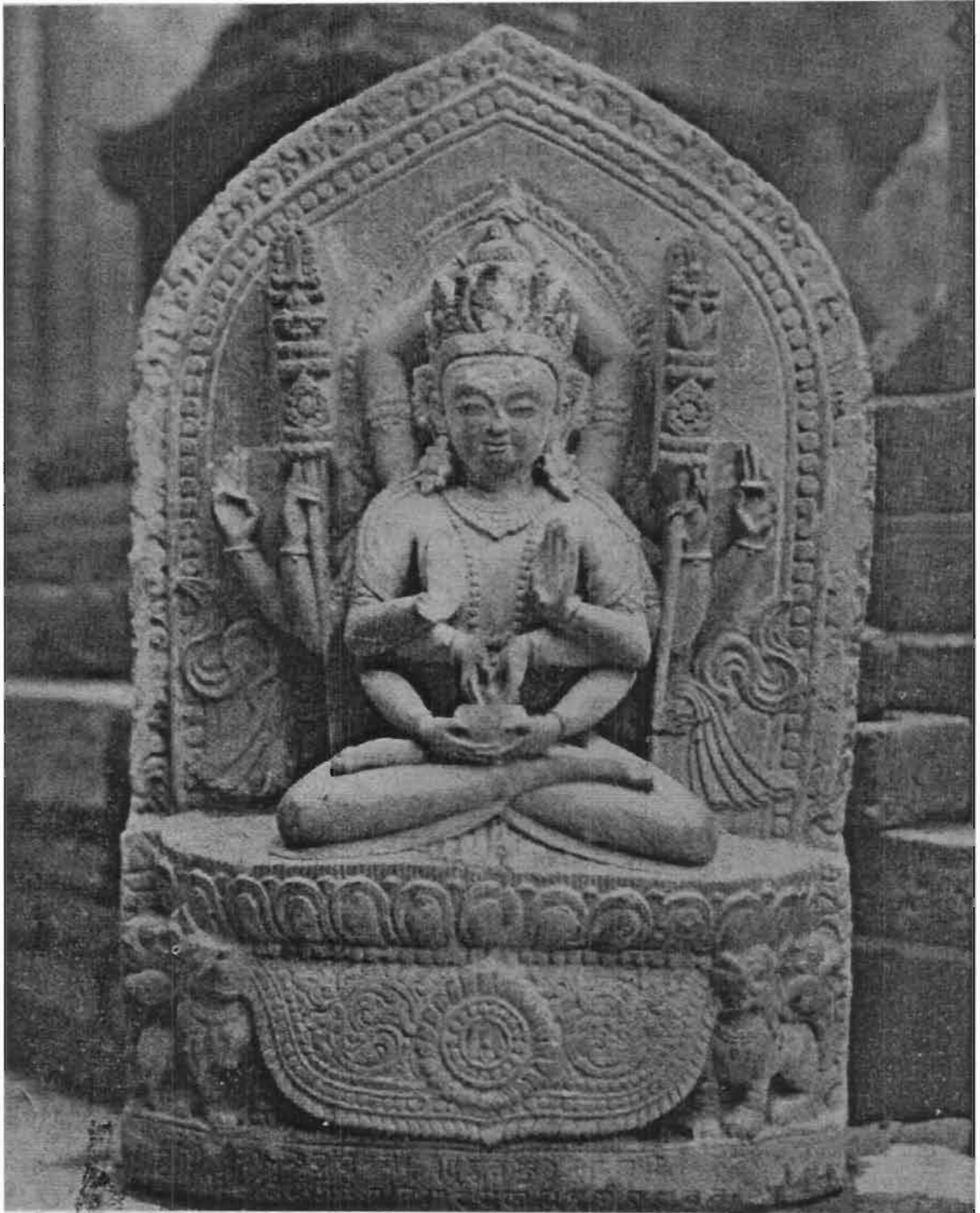
Figure 5.9. Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī. Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex. Dated N.S. 798 (1678 C.E.).

Figure 5.10. Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī. Private Collection.
Metal. ca. eighteenth century.

Figure 5.13. Vajrācarya Priests making *rajamaṇḍalas* of powdered color.
Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala Pūjā. Ha Bāhā, Patan. 1996.

Figure 5.14. Dharmdhātu Maṇḍala with Aṣṭamahābodhisattvas on octagonal base. Ha Bāha, Patan.

Figure 5.15. Dharmdhātu Maṇḍala with *vajra*.
Mahābauddha Temple, Patan.
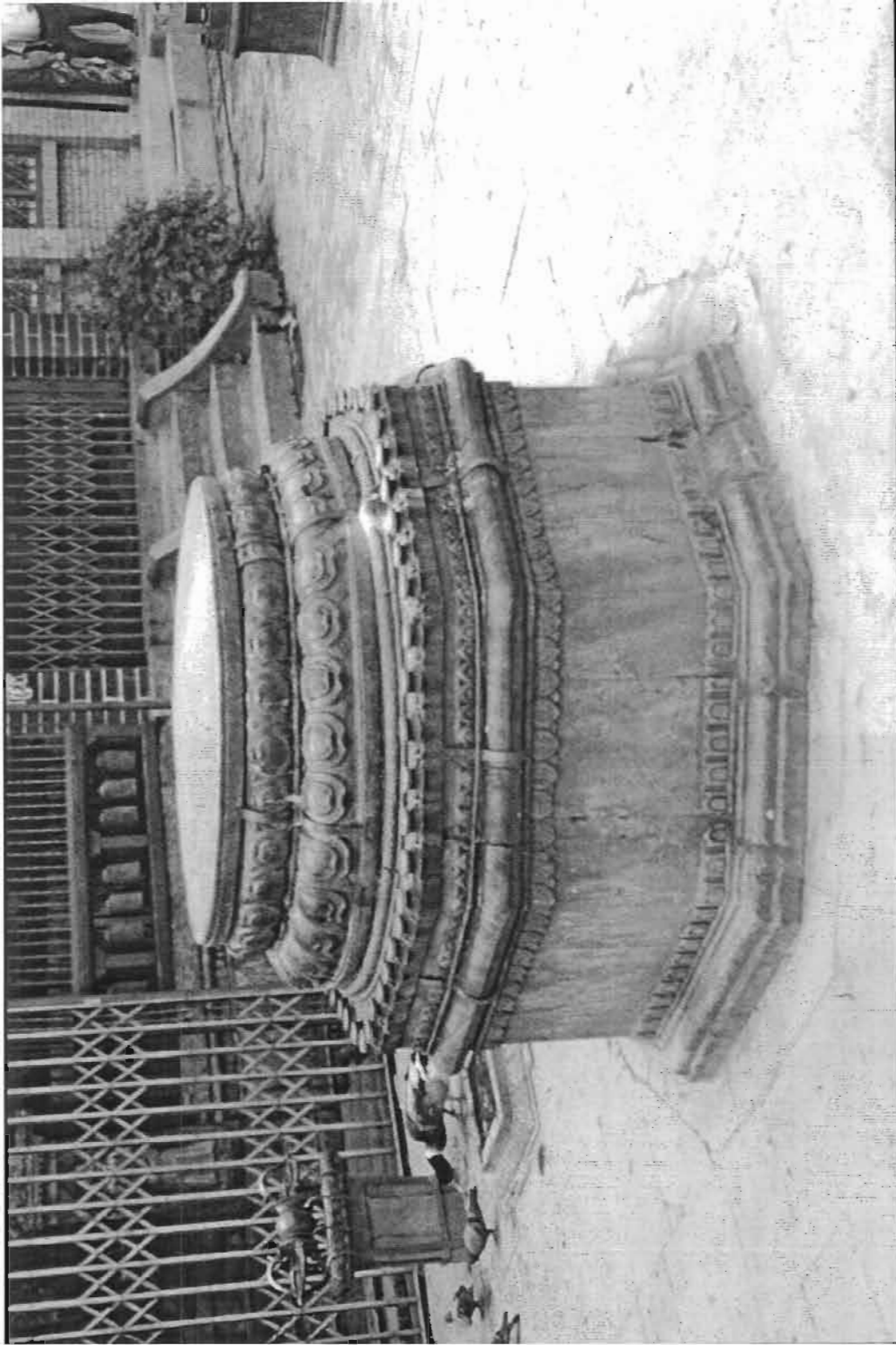
Figure 5.16. Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Bu Bāhā. Patan.
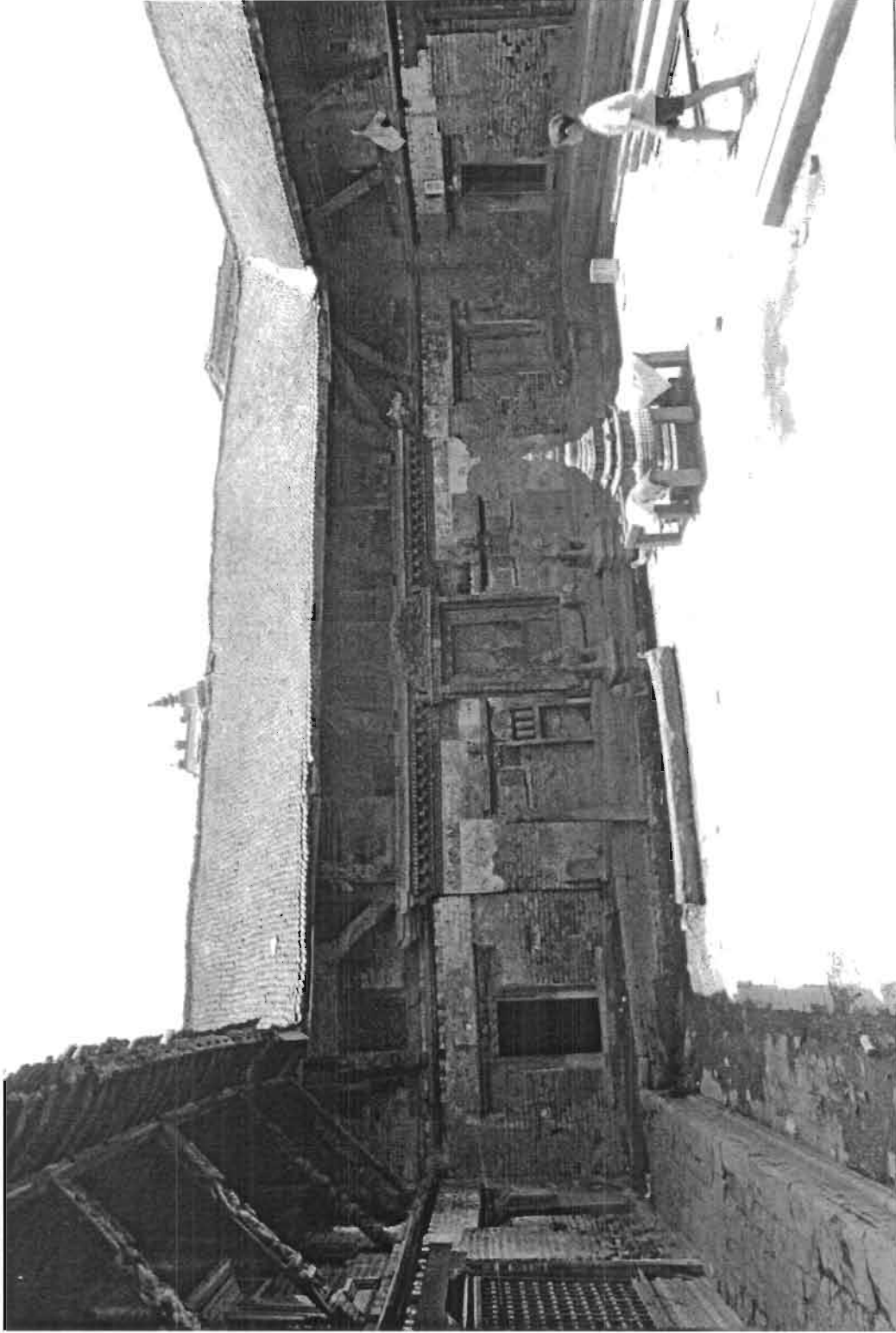
Figure 5.17. Musyā Bāhā. Kathmandu. Interior courtyard, looking at south shrine wall.
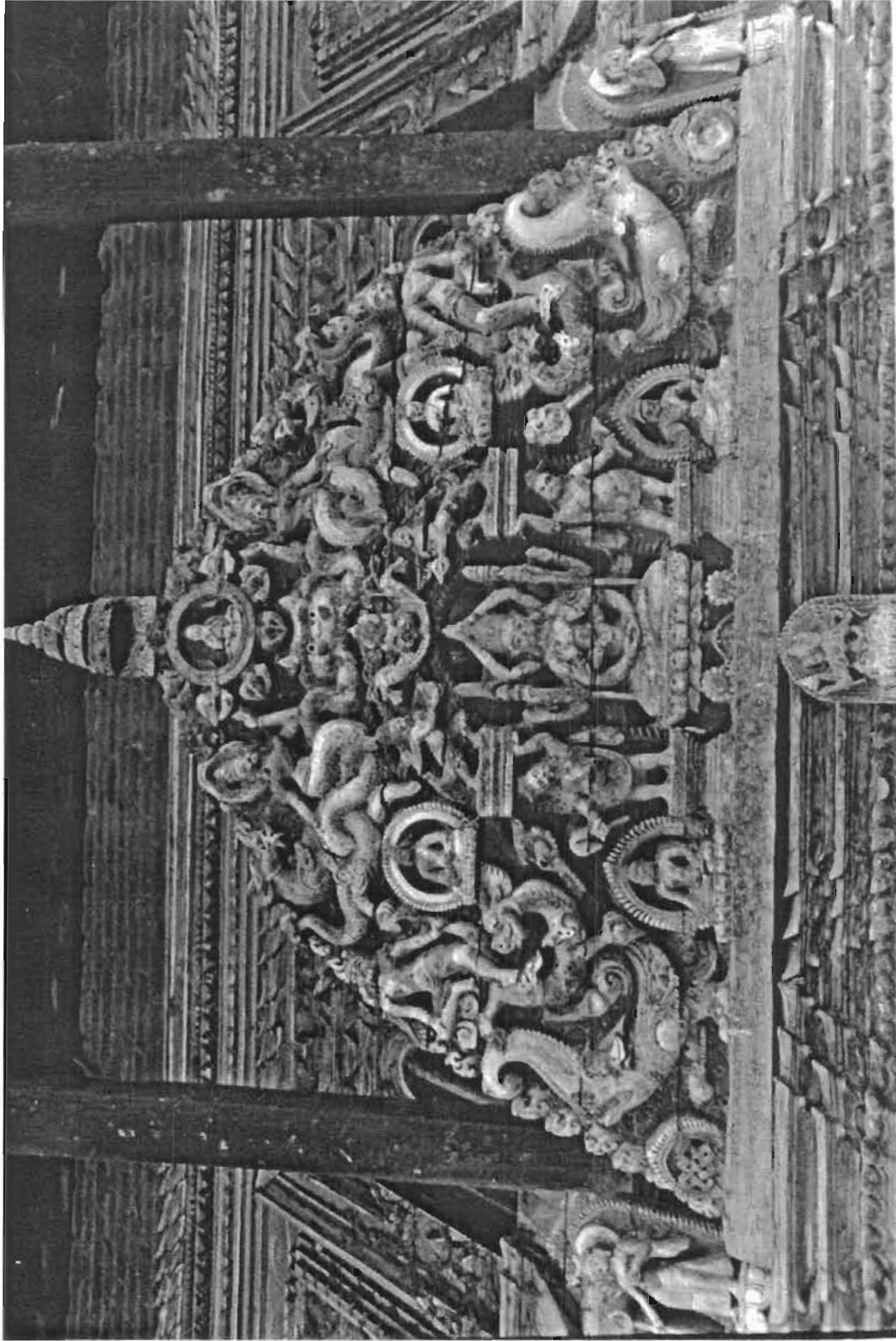
Figure 5.18. Exterior Toraṇa, depicting Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī. Dated N.S 713 (1513 CE). Exterior North Wall. Musyā Bāhā, Kathmandu.

Figure 5.19. Main Toraṇa over shrine door, depiciting Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa. South Courtyard Wall. Musyā Bāhā, Kathmandu.

Figure 5.20. Main Toraṇa, depicting Nāmsaṅgīti Mañjuśrī. Mu Bāhā, Kathmandu. In-scribed. Wood.
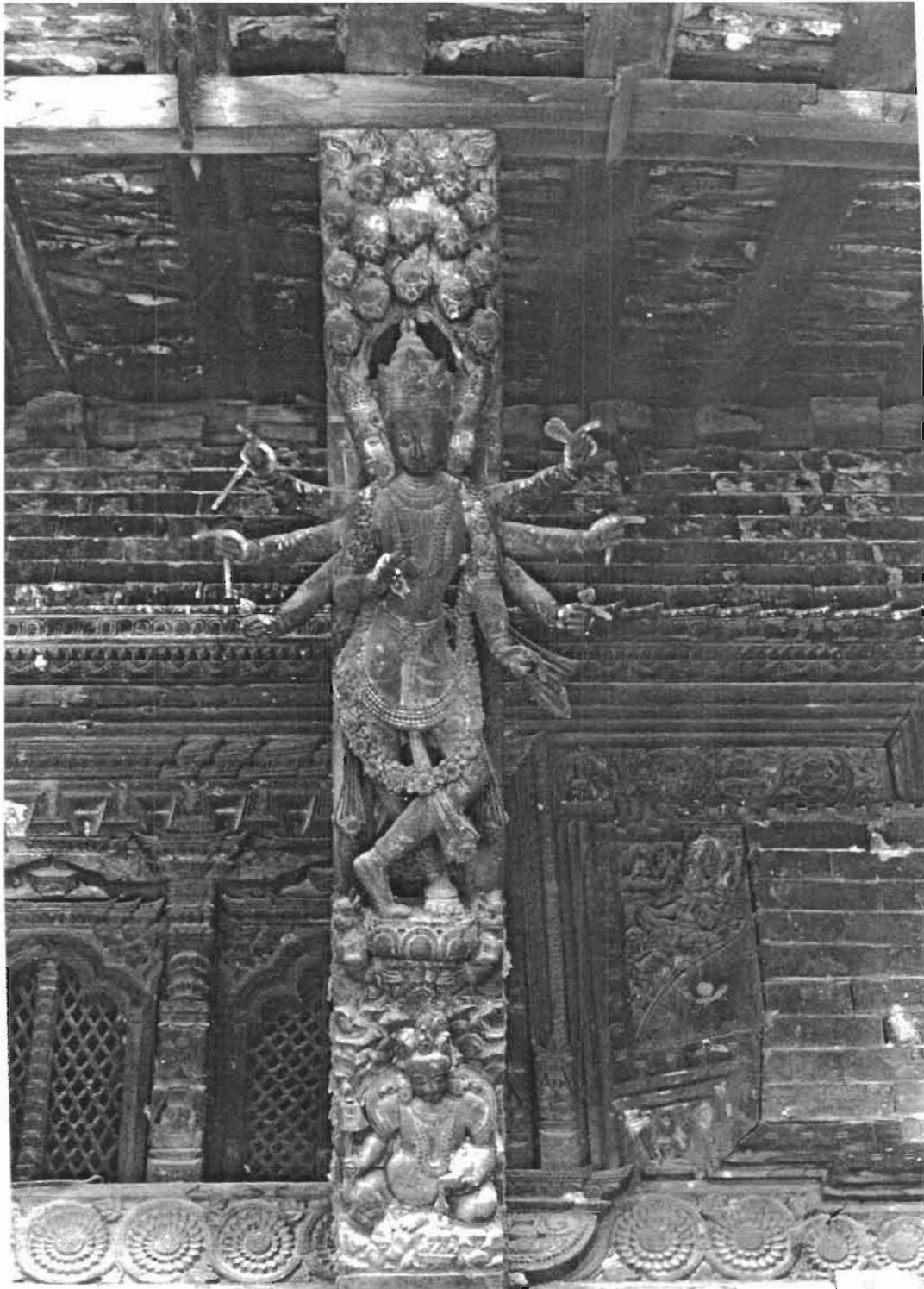
Figure 5.21. Strut Figure depicting Mahā-Amoghasiddhi. Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. South Shrine Wall. 5th strut from east. Musyā Bāhā, Kathmandu.
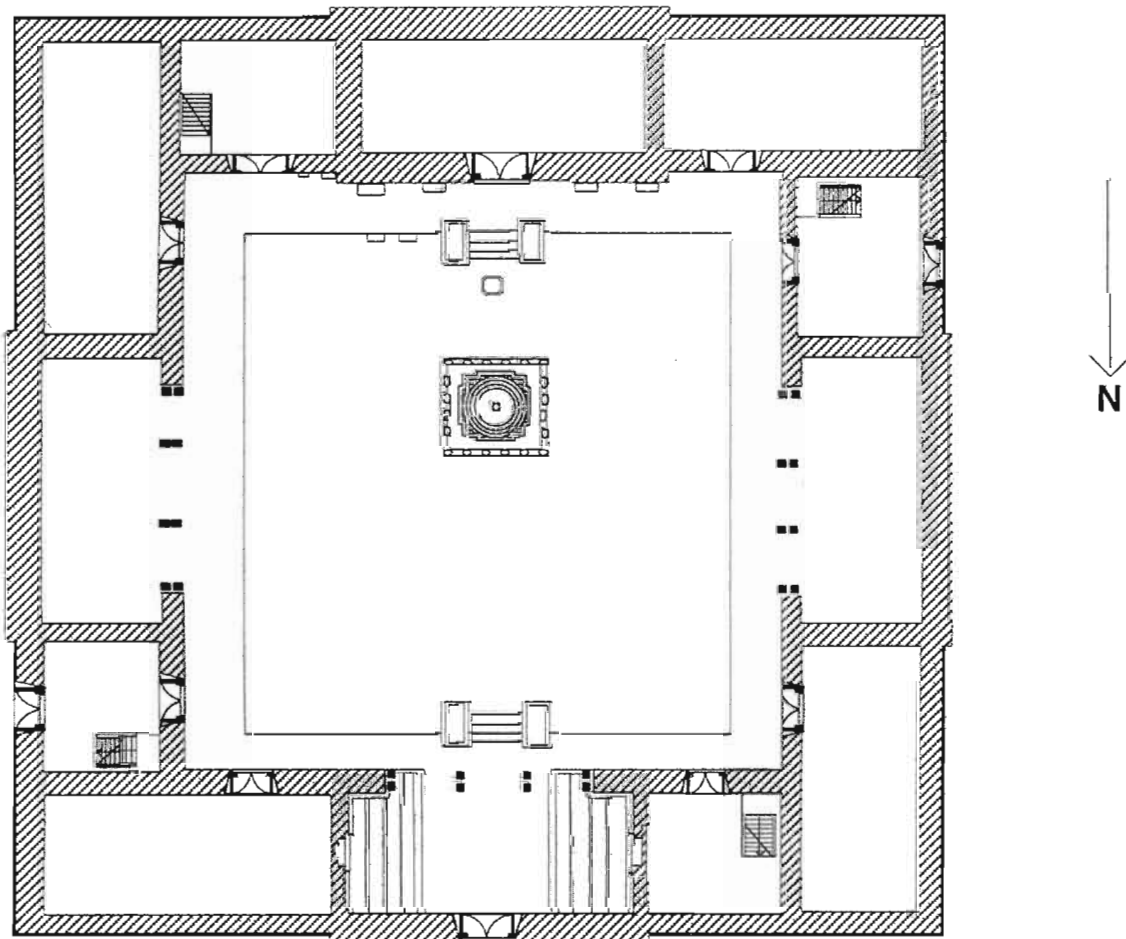
Figure 5.22. Ground Plan of Musyā Bāhā, Kathmandu.
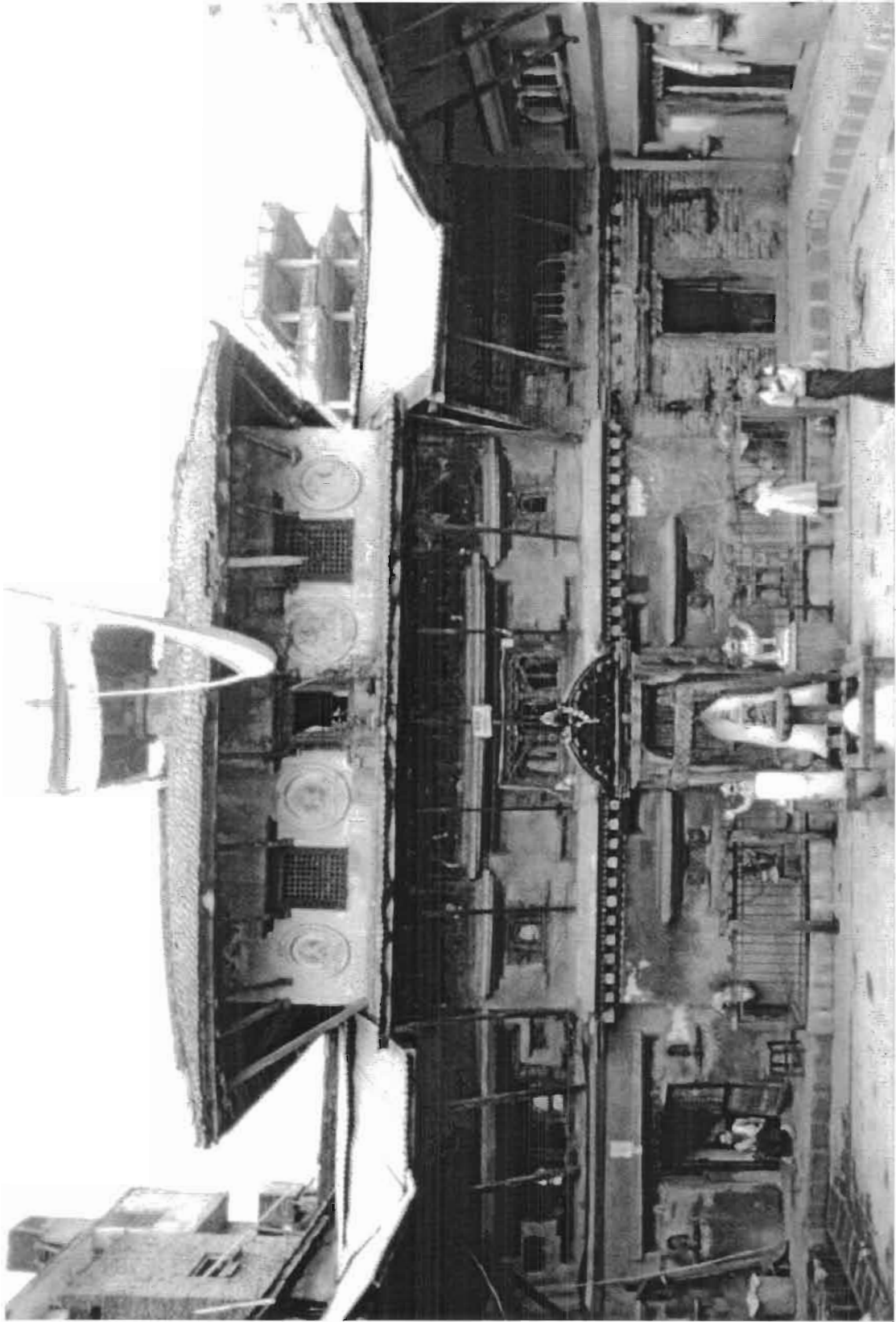
Figure 5.23. Interior Courtyard. Kvā Bāhā, Kathmandu.
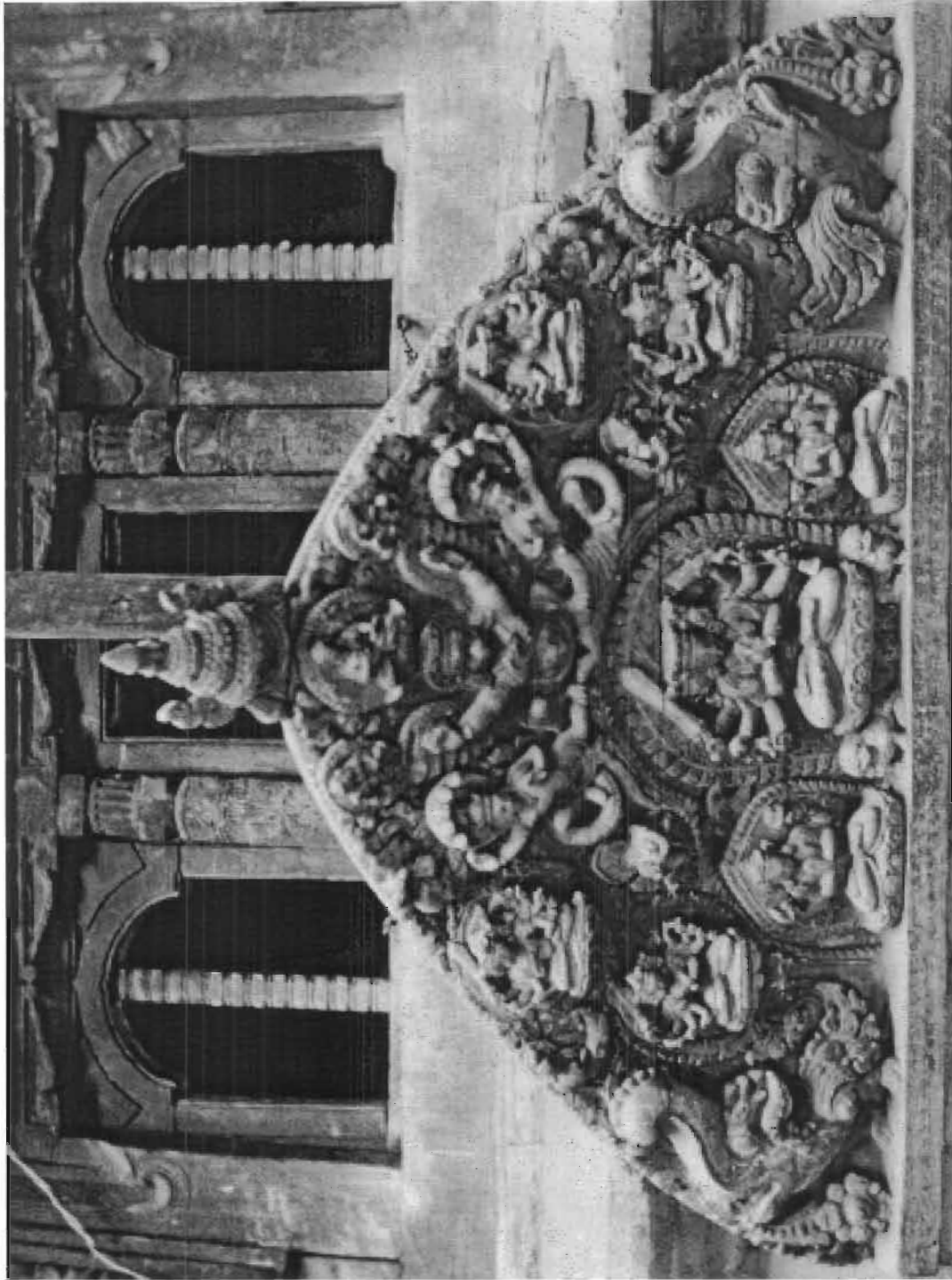
Figure 5.24. Exterior Toraṇa, depicting Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa. Dated N.S. 798 (1678 C.E). Kvā Bāhā, Kathmandu.

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Figure 5.25. Main Toraṇa over shrine door, depicting Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa. South shrine wall. Kwā Bāhā, Kathmandu.

Figure 5.26. Interior Courtyard. Thām Bahī, Kathmandu.
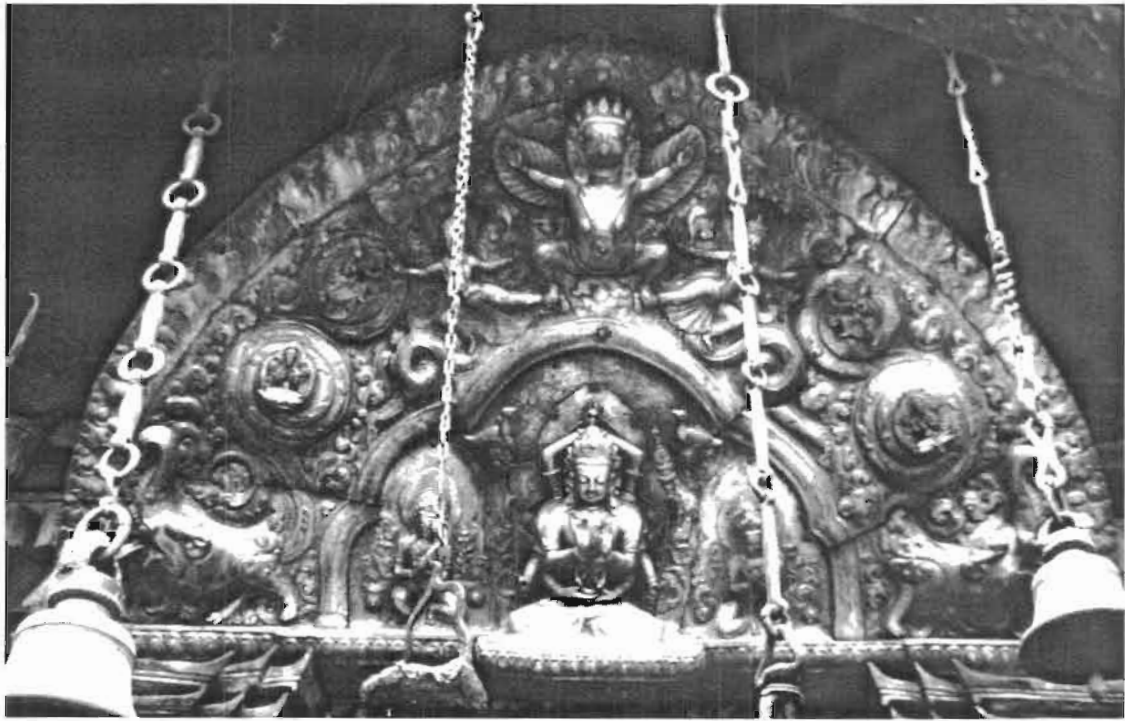
Figure 5.27. (top) Main Toraṇa over shrine door, depicting Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī. Thām Bāhi, Kathmandu. (left) Detail of Nāmasaṅgīti.

Figure 5.28. Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Interior Courtyard. Thām Bahī, Kathmandu.
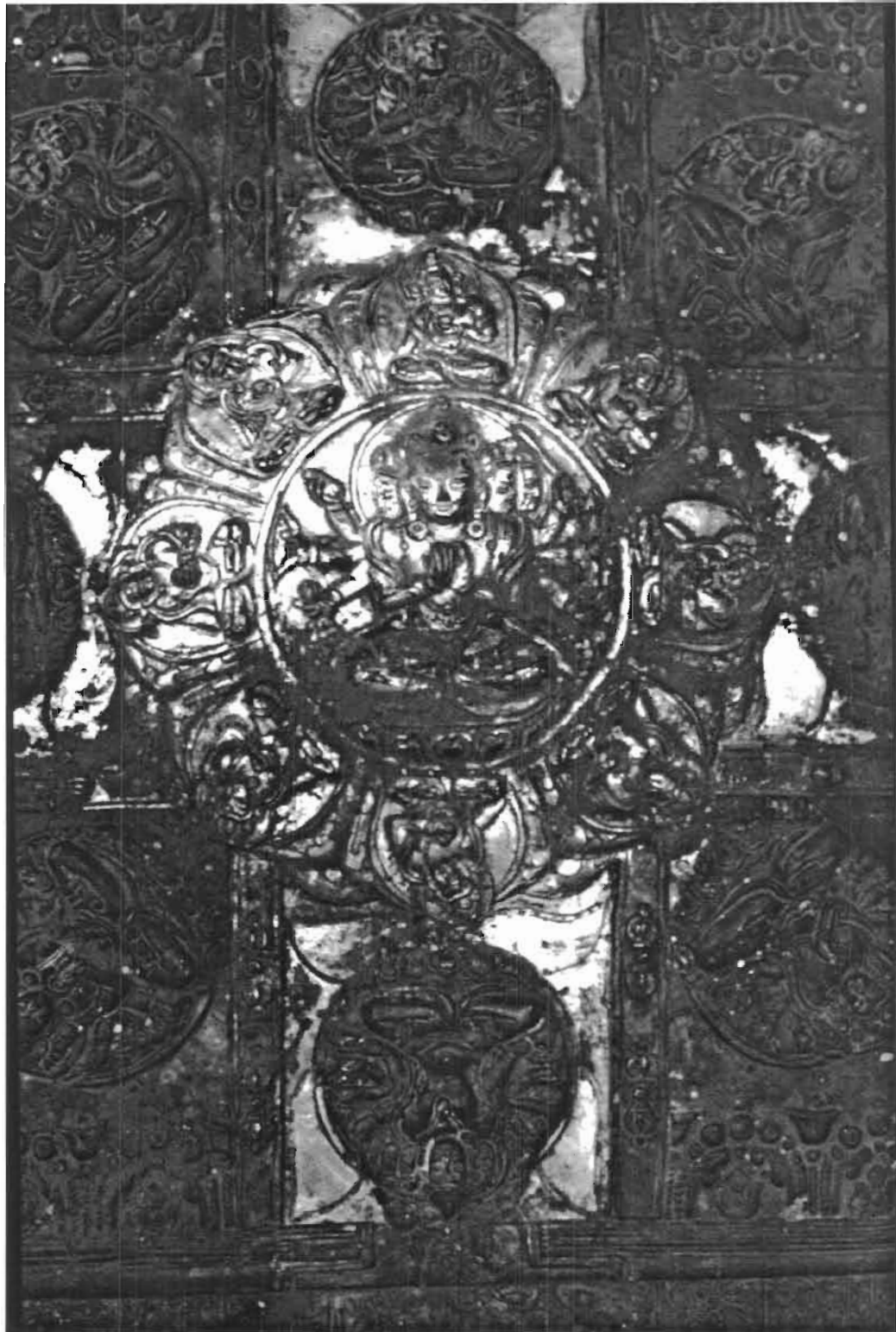
Figure 5.29. Detail of the inner core of the Maṇḍala, depicting
Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa. Interior Courtyard.
Thām Bahī, Kathmandu.

Figure 5.30. Interior Courtyard. Bu Bāhā, Patan. View of South Shrine Wall.
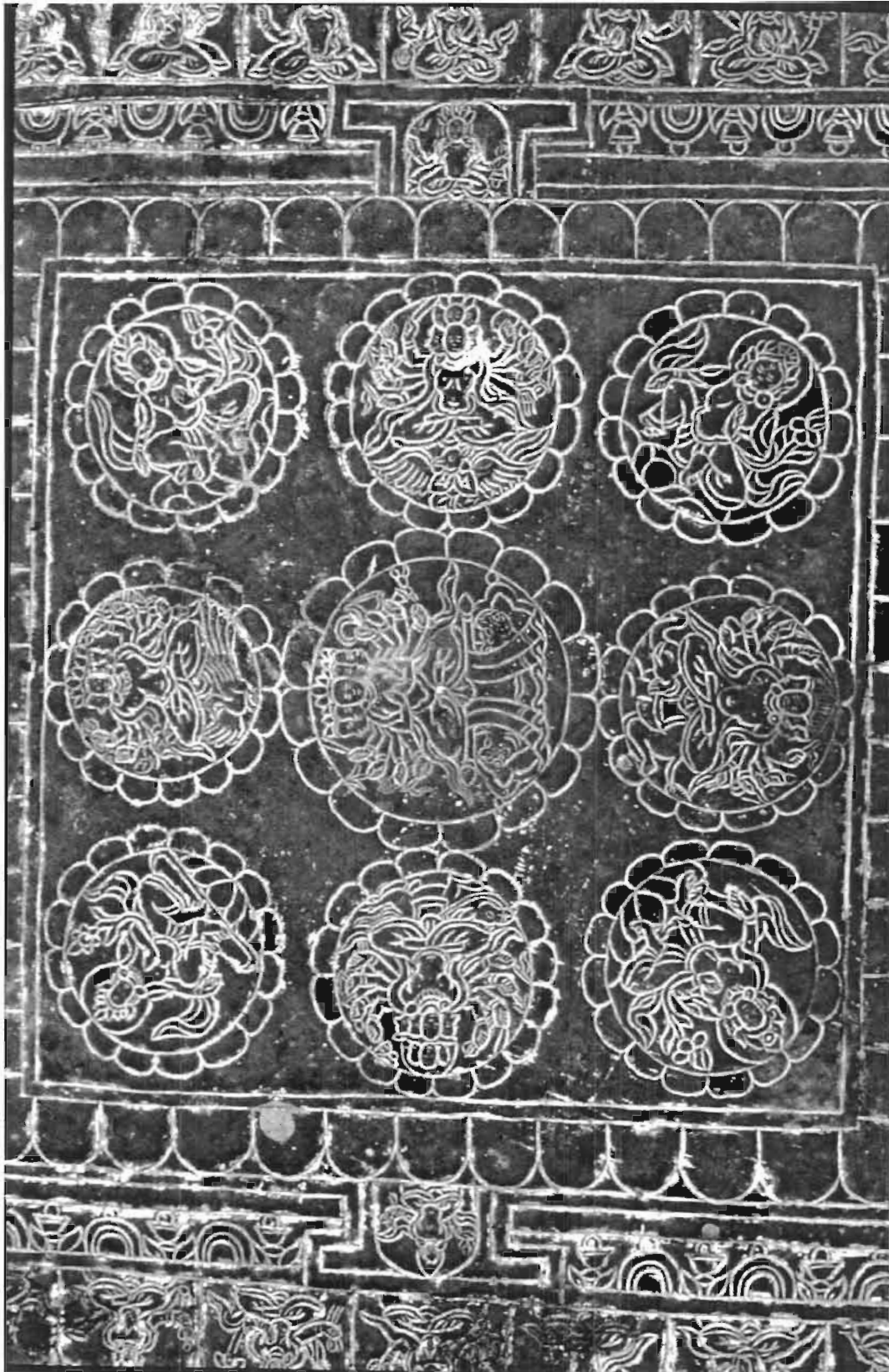
Figure 5.31. Detail of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Bu Bāhā, Patan.
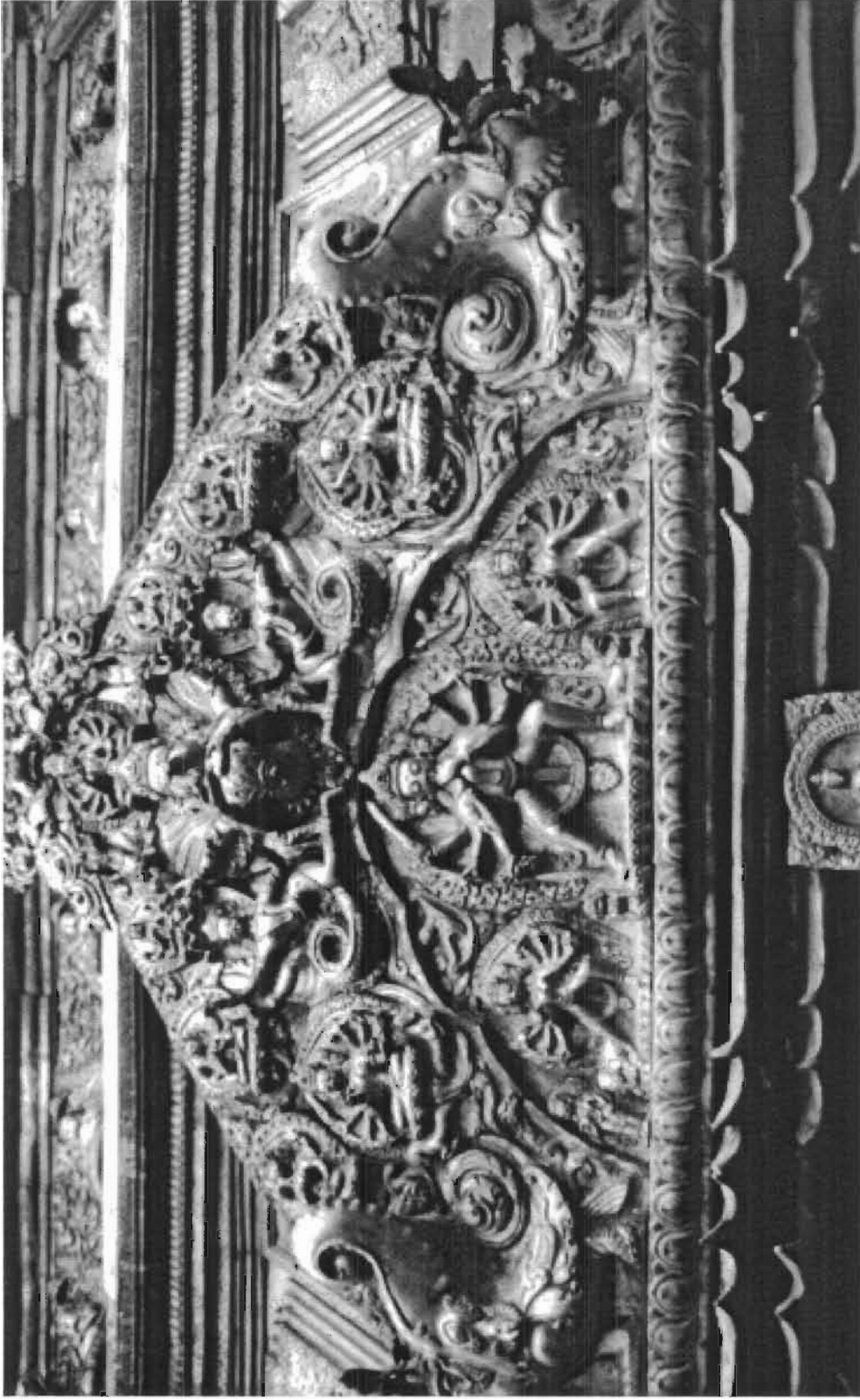
Figure 5.32. Main Toraṇa over shrine door, depicting Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara Mañjughoṣa. Bu Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 5.33. Detail of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa. Center figure. Main Toraṇa. Bu Bāhā, Patan.
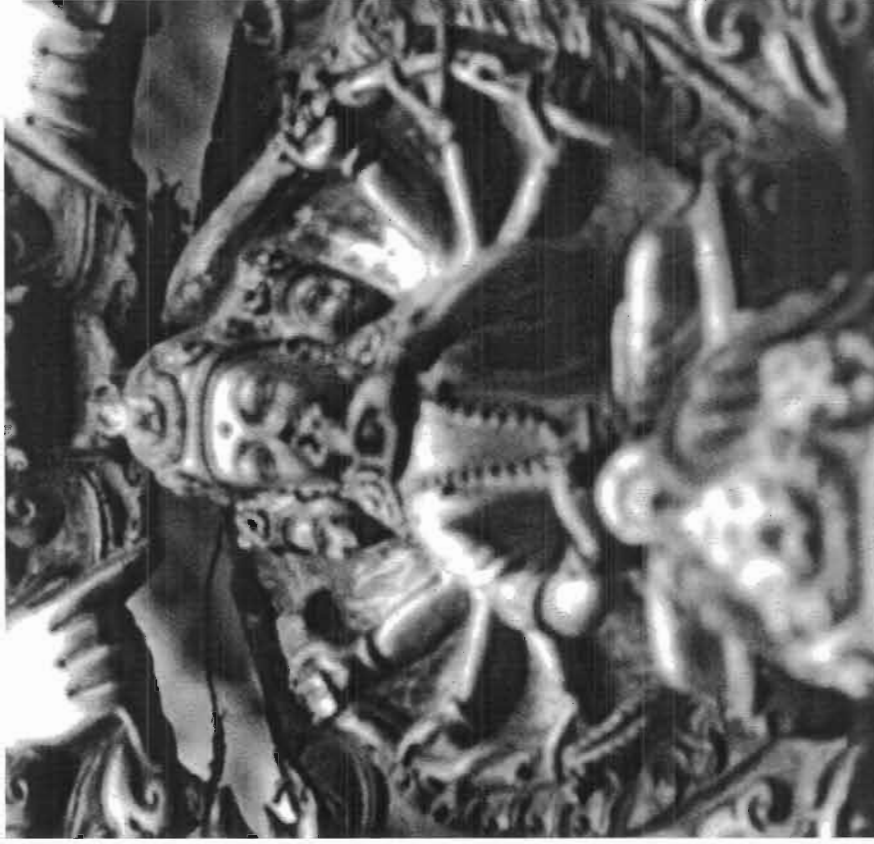
Figure 5.34. Detail of Vajrasattva. Top Center figure. Main Toraṇa. Bu Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 5.35. Main Toraṇa over Āgam shrine, depicting Vajrasattva. North Courtyard Wall. Bu Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 5.36. Detail of Vajrasattva. Main Toraṇa over Āgam shrine. North Courtyard Wall. Bu Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 5.37. Vajradhara/Vajrasattva. 1st strut from East.
Second level. South Shrine wall. Bu Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 5.38. Vairocana/Variant of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara
Mañjughoṣa (?). 2nd strut from East. Second level. South Shrine wall.
Bu Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 5.39. Ratnasambhava, from Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.
4th strut from East. Second level. South Shrine wall. Bu
Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 5.40. Amitābha, from Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. 5th strut from East. Second level. South Shrine wall. Bu Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 5.41. Amoghasiddhi, from Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. 6th strut from East. Second level. South Shrine wall. Bu Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 5.42. Interior Courtyard. Bhinche Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 5.43. Main Toraṇa over shrine, depicting Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa. Bhinche Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 5.44. Main Toraṇa over shrine, depicting Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara Mañjughoṣa. Bhinche Bāhā, Patan.

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Figure 5.45. Toraṇa over shrine, depicting Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara Mañjughoṣa. South Courtyrad Wall. Bhinche Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 5.46. Detail of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa. Toroṇa. South Courtyrad Wall. Bhinche Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 5.47. Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī, above *āgam* window. Second level. Main shrine facade. West face. Bhinche Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 5.48. Interior Courtyard of Hā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 5.49. Exterior Gateway Toraṇa, depicting Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Exterior North Wall. Ha Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 5.50. *Toraṇa* over *kwāhpāḥ dyāḥ* shrine, depicting Buddha Dharma Sangha triad. South courtyard wall. Ha Bāhā, Patan
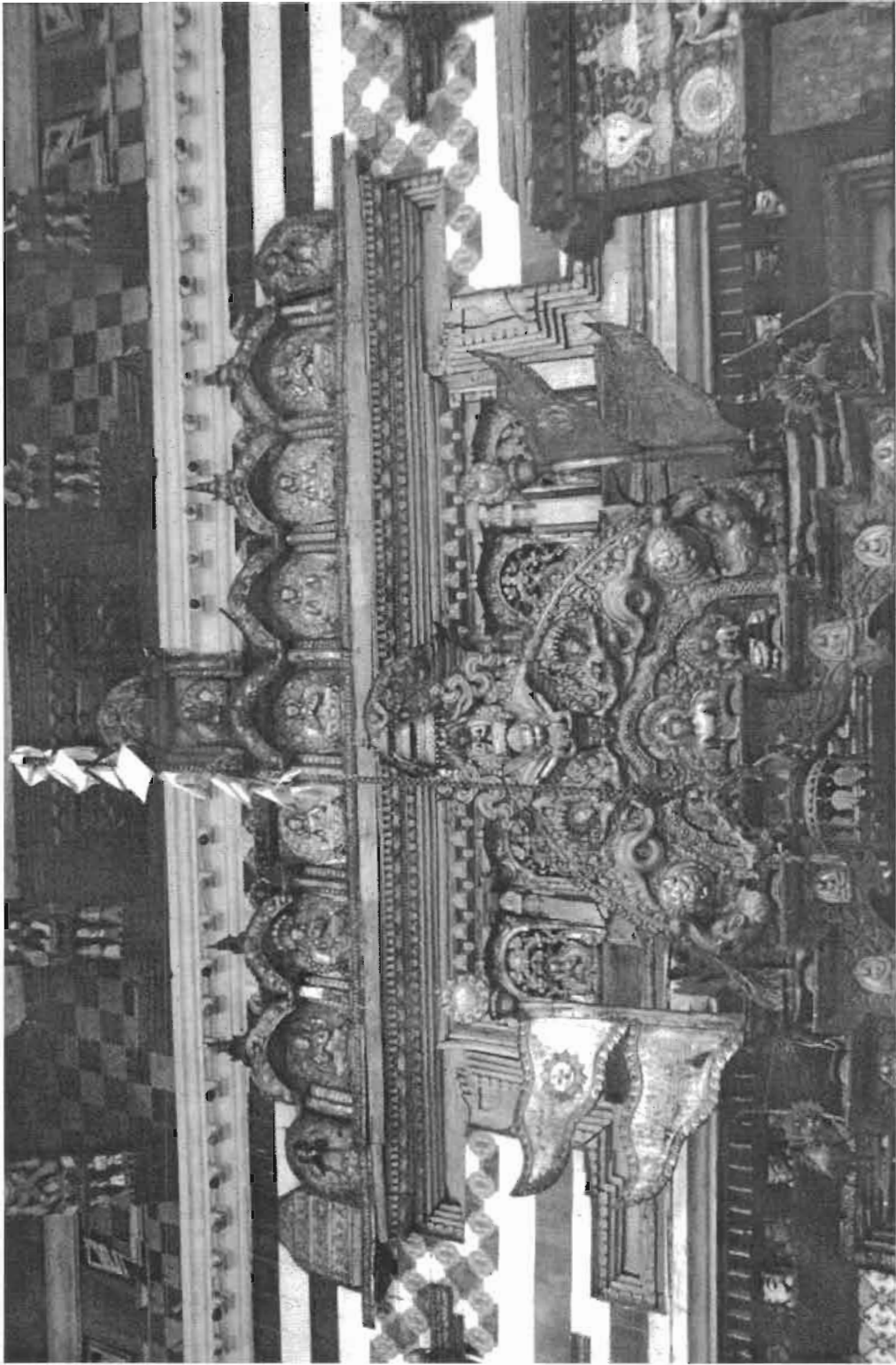
Figure. 5.51. Second level, showing exterior facade of āgaṁ shrine.
West shrine facade. Ha Bāhā, Patan.
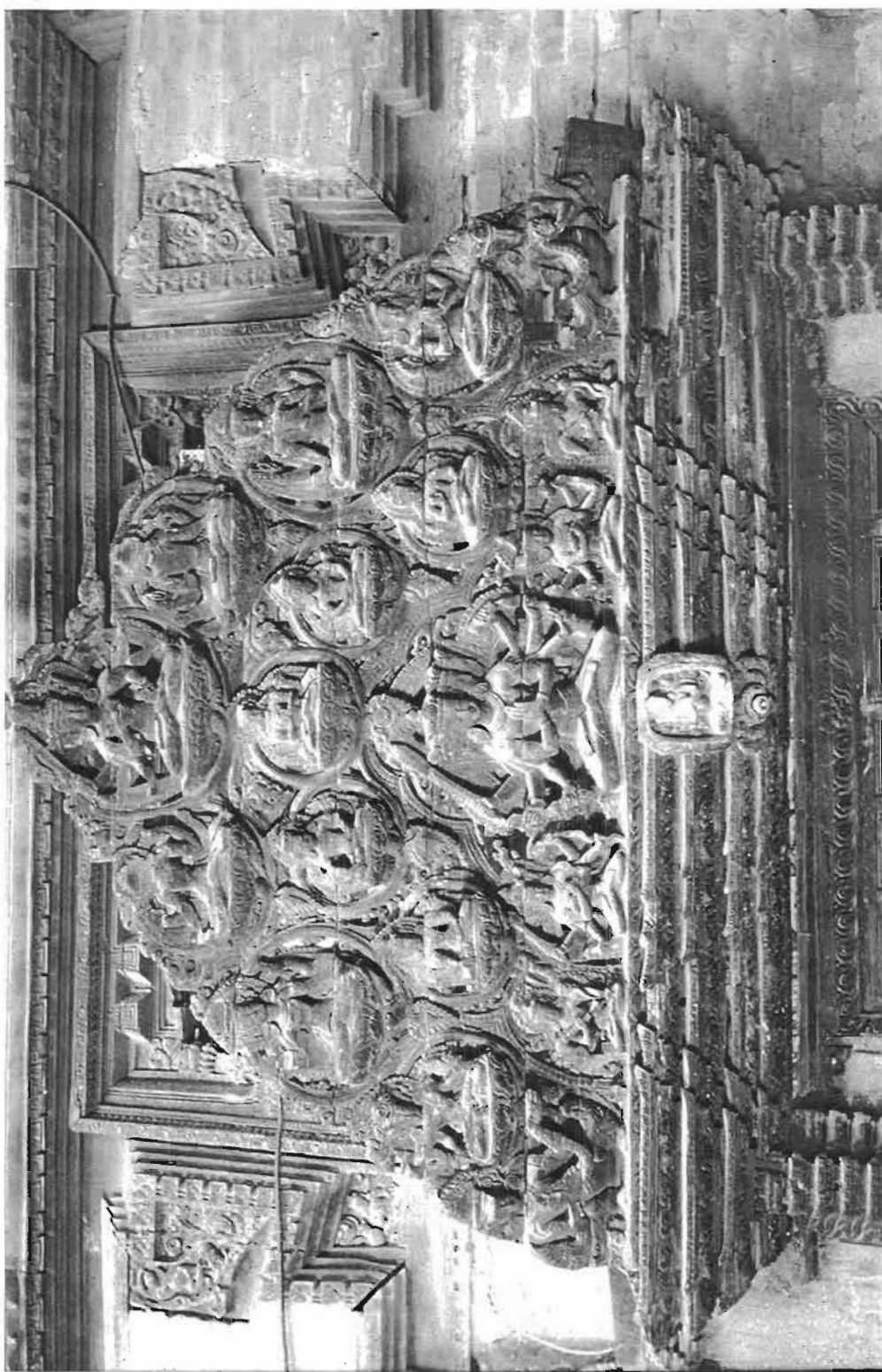
Figure 5.52. *Toraṇa* over doorway leading to *āgaṁ* shrine, representing deities fron the Dhamadhātu Maṇḍaka. South Shrine wall, west end doorway. Ha Bāhā, Patan

Figure 5.53. Exterior of Vajrasattva shrine. West courtyard Wall. Ha Bāhā

Figure 5.54. Interior of Vajrasattva shrine, showing Mañjuśrī (viewer's left), Vajrasattva (center), and Vasundharā (viewer's right). West courtyard Wall. Ha Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 5.55 Ha Bāhā Kumārī. Vasundharā Pūjā, 1994.

Figure 5.56. *Toraṇa* over doorway to Kumārī *dyaḥcheṅ* shrine, depicting Kumārī (center), Gaṇeśa (viewer's right), and Mahākāla (viewer's left). South Shrine wall, east end doorway. Ha Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 5.57 Goddess Kumārī during Vasundharā Pūjā. Ha Bāhā, Patan.

CHAPTER 6

CAKRASAṀVARA MAṆḌALA:

THE THIRD CORE ICONOGRAPHIC COMPONENT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the prevalence of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala in Newar Buddhist art and practice. The primary focus is to examine how the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala relates to the Newar Buddhist practices, and how this theme is an integral component of the visual imagery in Newar Buddhist architecture. As this highly esoteric imagery is generally not shown in public, the conclusions presented here are based on my interpretations of the ritual practices and the visual arts. Consequently, two underlying premises are evident in this chapter: one, the correlation of the ritual practices and the visual art; and two, the repeated allusion to the *yoginī* or goddess tradition.

SECTION I: CAKRASAṂVARA MAṆḌALA IN NEWAR BUDDHISM

Āgaṁ Deities of *Bāhā/Bāhīs*: Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī

Among the meditation cycles of the Anuttara Yoginī Tantras, the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala figures prominently in the esoteric Newar Buddhist traditions of Nepal. Cakrasaṁvara, generally shown in union with his *prajñā* Vajravārāhī, is the principal deity of the *āgaṁ* shrines of most Buddhist monasteries (see Figs. 1.12-14). The Tantric *āgaṁ* shrine serves as the third mandatory component of *bāhā/bahī* architecture, in addition to the principal "*svayambhū caitya*" and the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine. The *āgaṁ* is typically located over the *kvāhpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine and is marked by the characteristic five-fold window, which symbolizes the Jina Buddhas. Although the *āgaṁ* shrine is a required element of Newar monastic architecture, its physical location of the *āgaṁ* is not restricted to the shrine façade. As illustrated by examples from Kvā Bāhā and Bhinche Bāhā at Patan, there are numerous *bāhās* in the Valley, where the *āgaṁ* is found in the *digi*,[1] opposite the *kvāhpāḥ dyaḥ* shrine. At Bu Bāhā in Patan, although the shrine façade houses the *āgaṁ* shrine images, the actual worship of the *āgaṁ* deities is performed in the *digi* in the north courtyard wall (Fig. 6.1). The esoteric nature of the *āgaṁ* shrine is denoted by an elaborate wooden *toraṇa* representing the eight-armed form of Vajrasattva, related to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala (see Figs. 4.34 and

4.35). Suggestive of his Tantric nature, Vajrasattva appears to be the center figure of many *āgaṁ toraṇas*.

In the Newar Buddhist tradition, the esoteric *āgaṁ* deities are generally related to the Anuttara Yoga Tantras, such as Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍakinī, Hevajra/Nairātmā, and Cakrasaṁvara /Vajravārāhī. By far the most popular *āgaṁ* deities are Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, who are the *iṣṭadevatās*[2] of the Newar Buddhist *saṅgha*. The *āgaṁ* shrine and rituals associated with Cakrasaṁvara are not open all the members of the Newar Buddhist community, but are restricted to the initiated Buddhist castes of the Vajrācāryas and Śākyas. More precisely, the *āgaṁ* shrines of the *bāhās* are accessible only to the *saṅgha* members who have received higher Tantric initiations (*dikṣā*). The lay Buddhist practitioners, to varying degrees, can have access to the Cakrasaṁvara initiation.[3] Confined to highly esoteric Tantric practices, the *āgaṁ* rituals in the *bāhā/bahīs* are performed in secret and never seen by the general Buddhist practitioners. Nonetheless, the practice of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala remains a fundamental aspect of Tantric traditions of Newar Buddhism and its visual imagery.

Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala Iconography in Newar Buddhist Art

The two core iconographic themes that we have discussed thus far—the Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala—are found

abundantly represented in the religious architecture as well as independent votive offerings. On the contrary, there is limited visual imagery related to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī that is readily accessible to the public.[4] Because of the esoteric nature of the imagery, the exterior iconographic elements of the *āgaṁ* shrine are rather limited and generally do not directly represent images of Cakrasaṁvara or Vajravārāhī. Often, however, the exterior facades of *āgaṁs* will provide hints to the ritual practices that take place in the *āgaṁ* shrine that is related to the Heruka class meditation. As illustrated in the iconographic analysis of Kvā Bāhā, Bu Bāhā, and Ha Bāhā in Patan, the imagery may directly allude to Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī enshrined inside the *āgaṁ*. The exterior strut iconography of the Cakrasaṁvara *āgaṁ* at Kvā Bāhā in Patan, for instance, depicts the two animal-faced gate-guardians of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala (see Fig. 3.63). Similarly, the *āgaṁ* doorway at Ca Bahī has the four female gate-guardians of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, with Vajrasattva as the center figure of the *toraṇa* depicts Vajrasattva (Fig. 6.2). This provides clear evidence of the identities of the main deities of the *āgaṁ* shrine. Aside from the *bāhā* context, the environs of Svayambhū has among the most important shrines dedicated to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. Although these shrines are not accessible to the public worship, the gate-guardians of the Pratāppur and Anantapur shrines flanking Svayambhū indicate that the shrines are dedicated to the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala deities (see Figs. 3.25-28). Similar

pairs of gate-guardians also mark the exterior and interior entrance to Śāntipur, indicating the esoteric nature of the shrine related to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī (Figs. 6.3-6.6). Although the identity of the āgaṁ deities are "secret", these iconographic clues illustrate the allusion to the esoteric Tantric practices of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography is classified as esoteric ("outer"), whose imagery, however, may be displayed in public. In contrast, the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala imagery belongs to the *guhya/abhyantara* ("secret/inner") category of symbols. This symbolism is most often directly related to esoteric female *yoginīs*, as is the case of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. Such visual symbols related to the *āgaṁ* is comparable to the use of *saṁdhyā bhāṣā* or "twilight language" in the Tantras, where the symbolic meanings and interpretations are revealed only through familiarity and knowledge of the highly esoteric practices. In the same way, the subtlety of the esoteric visual imagery may only be apparent to those who have received Tantric initiations (*dikṣā*) and teachings of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. For instance, at Hāku Bāhā in Kathmandu (Fig. 6.7), the *toraṇas* over the side windows of the *āgaṁ* shrine depict a sword, flanked by the *kapāla* "skull-cup" and *karttṛkā* "flaying knife" (Figs. 6.8-6.9). These highly esoteric symbols are related to the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala cycle, specifically to Vajravārāhī and her manifold *yoginī* emanations. In the Newar Buddhist traditions, these symbols signify the

concepts of generation (*śṛṣṭi*) and destruction (*samhāra*). Specifically, these symbols are intimately connected with Vajravārāhī, who is generally depicted holding a skull-cup and flaying knife. Similarly, these three symbols (sword, skull-cup, and flaying knife) are often collectively worshipped as the goddess Kumārī.[5] To the informed practitioner, the symbols refer the esoteric practices of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, as Kumārī is the *nirmāṇakāya* or physical manifestation of Vajravārāhī.[6] What is significant here is that the esoteric imagery is alluded to as symbols.

There are other instances where the exterior *āgaṁ* facades actually depict the *yoginīs* associated with Cakrasaṁvara cycle. For example, the mural paintings directly above the *āgaṁ* shrine of Kvā Bāhā, Kathmandu, represent the four *yoginīs* of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala (see Fig. 5.23), who are significant in the ritual practices of the Newar Buddhists. The form of the goddess depicted here as the "exoteric" faces of Vajravārāhī serves as an important iconographic reference. The relationship of these *yoginīs* with the Cakrasaṁvara meditations is essential to understand the significance of the visual imagery.[7]

In rarer cases, the deities of the *āgaṁ* shrine are physically "brought" outside, so that even the lay practitioners may have access to their worship. One such example is found in Gujī Bāhā in Patan, where the *āgaṁ* shrine is on the northeast corner of the interior courtyard (Fig. 6.10). The exterior window give no indication of the esoteric imagery related to

Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī. Directly below the *āgaṃ* window, the *āgaṃ* deities are "brought" outside. Here, Cakrasaṃvara is symbolized by a *vajra* surrounded by a garland, while other esoteric symbols related Vajravārāhī such as the skull-cup (*kapāla*) and flaying knife (*karttṛkā*) are also depicted. Flanking these esoteric symbols are the animal-headed guardians of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala (Fig. 6.11-6.12).

Interestingly, the iconography of the *āgaṃ* shrine at Gujī Bāhā strengthens my contention that the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala are intimately related. Specifically, I proposed earlier that the Mañjuśrī's Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala serves as the "outer/non-esoteric" (*bāhya*) face of the highly esoteric and "inner" Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. The exterior *toraṇa* over the *āgaṃ* window in the northeast corner depicts Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara as the center figure (Fig. 6.13), strengthening the deity's symbolic connection with the Cakrasaṃvara *āgaṃ* shrine. Furthermore, the *toraṇa* leading to the *āgaṃ* in the north *dīgi* wall represents Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī as the center figure, who is the personification of the root text of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala (Figs. 6.14 and 6.15). At the top center position is Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara (Fig. 6.16), again reconfirming the relationship between the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍalas.

The above examples indicate that the esoteric imagery of Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala in the context of Newar Buddhist architecture are

usually represented in symbolic form, and are often related to female *yoginīs* of the Maṇḍala. As in *saṃdhyā bhāṣā* of the Tantras that have many layers of symbolism, the Cakrasaṃvara iconography has multivalent layers of symbolism based on the practitioner's personal level of Tantric understanding.

While the iconographic elements that are displayed in public are fairly limited, the shrine images of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī in the *āgaṃ* shrines are often made of metal, stone, or terracotta. Numerous Nepali images and paintings of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī are found in museums and private collections that may have once belonged to the *āgaṃ* shrines of the *bāhās* and *bahīs*. Since the *āgaṃ* shrines are never accessible to the public, these works of art, although displaced from their original context, are the only material evidence we have for iconographic study. For example, the *āgaṃ* shrine images from Cilāñco Bāhā in Kīrtipur now at the National Museum in Kathmandu had six images of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī in different forms.[8] Among these, two sixteenth-century terracotta images of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī, conceived as a pair, appear to have been *āgaṃ* deities.[9] Similarly the Los Angeles County Museum of Art has a number of painting and images in stone and metal from as early as the thirteenth century, thus indicating the prominence of the Cakrasaṃvara practices in Nepal by this date.[10] However, to understand the ritual and iconological significance of these works of art and their contextual

use on *bāhā/bahī* architecture, I will examine the ritual practices associated with Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī in the Newar Buddhist tradition.[11]

In reviewing the ritual practices, I found that the most significant role of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala was evident in the Newar Buddhist ordering of the sacred geography. In the following section, I will discuss the ritual context of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala and its connection to the construction of sacred space. Here, I will not only explore the sacred geography of the Valley as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, but its implications within monastic architecture.

SECTION II: CAKRASAṀVARA MAṆḌALA AND THE CONEPTION OF SACRED SPACE

Sacred Geography as Maṇḍāla

As the works of art related to the Cakrasaṁvara meditation are rarely found in their intended context and, hence, contextual interpretation of these works are difficult because of their esoteric nature, the preeminence of this tradition in Newar Buddhist is best analyzed through ritual practices. Specifically, this section will examine the conception of sacred space in Newar Buddhism, in which the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala plays a prominent role. Anthropologists and historians of religion have previously discussed the sacred geography of the Valley based on the references of literary texts such as the *Svayambhū Purāṇa.* My interpretations employ the visual arts, in that

I looked at the structural form of the Maṇḍala and compared that to the ritual practices. This methodological approach proved to be effective, as I correlated my conclusions with the ritual specialists.[12]

The premise of this analysis begins with the conception of a constructed sacred space. In the Tantric Buddhist tradition, this space is, most often, conceived of as a *maṇḍala,* literally, a sacred circle. In the previous chapters, we have analyzed how physical structures, such as the Newar Buddhist monasteries (*bāhā/bahī*) and *stūpas,* are conceptualized as a three-dimensional *maṇḍala* and incorporate Buddhist cosmological conceptions of Mt. Meru, *axis mundi,* and the enlightenment process. In South Asia, both in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, the idea of sacred space extends itself to physical landscape, where the sacrality is created by the presence of divine beings. The conception of the sacred geography as a *maṇḍalic* space is also central to the Hindu and Buddhist practices in Nepal, however, the Buddhist context of this conception has not been thoroughly analyzed.[13] By looking at the structural form of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, I will analyze how the Newar Buddhists have conceptualized the construction of *maṇḍalic* space.

Seeing The Unseen: Kathmandu Valley as Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala

Both inscriptional references and religious texts such as the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* constantly allude to the Valley's sacred geography as

Nepal Maṇḍala . The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* repeatedly alludes to the sacrality of Valley as a *mandalic* space, at the center of which is the self-created light of Svayambhū Jyotirūpa that generates this sacred space. To further define the *maṇḍala,* the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* also establishes local sacred sites such as the twelve Tirthas eight Vitarāgas, the four rivers, and mountain tops. Thus, conceptually, the *maṇḍala* is physically manifest in the Valley's sacred geography.

In more esoteric terms, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* states the Valley is conceptually in the form of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. This conception is repeatedly confirmed and reified during ritual practices, in both esoteric and exoteric Tantric *pūjās*, specifically in the statement of intent (*saṁkalpa*) that is uttered at the beginning of every Buddhist ritual. As mentioned earlier, the most common and basic Newar Buddhist ritual is the Guru Maṇḍala *pūjā*, which is performed by practicing and initiated Vajracārya priests as a preliminary rite to all Tantric rituals.[14] The Guru Maṇḍala *pūjā* generally begins with a salutation to Vajrasattva followed by the drawing of the *maṇḍala* on the ground. The priest then recites the statement of intention (*saṁkalpa*), which formally declares the officiant and sets the stage for the *pūjā* about to take place. In defining the spatial order, the most important aspect of this worship is the *saṁkalpa* recitation that situates the ritual to be performed within the sacred geographical confines of the *Nepal Maṇḍala*.

The ritual refers to the Valley as a sacred *maṇḍalic* space and ends the recitation with the exact month, day, time, and moment of worship according to the lunar calendar. Setting the stage for the ritual within Valley's sacred geography, the offerer locates the *pūjā* being performed "at the sacred *pīṭha* of Upacaṇḍoha, in the place of Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Caitya, presided by Guhyeśvarī Prajñapāramitā, in the land presided by Mañjuśrī, in the Nepal Maṇḍala that is in the form of Śrī Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala."[15]

What is interesting in this statement is not that the sacred nature of Valley is conceptualized as a *maṇḍala*, but that is conceived in these highly esoteric Buddhist terms. The *maṇḍalic* construct, in fact, is also at the core of the spatial ordering of the Valley's three cities in a Tantric Hindu context, as discussed extensively by Robert Levy and Niels Gutschow.[16] For instance, the Hindu city of Bhaktapur is conceived as *maṇḍala* presided by Tripurāsundarī (a form of the Great Goddess) at the center, surrounded by her eight emanations. These goddesses are the Navadurgās.[17] Transferring this idealized schema to the city's physical geography, we find the eight goddesses manifest as mātṛkā *pīṭhas,* placed at the periphery of the city and Tripurāsundarī at the center, thus forming the conceptual *maṇḍala* (Fig. 6.17). The definition of Bhaktapur's sacred geography is not in the literal mapping, with absolute precision. Rather, the *maṇḍalic* space is conceptually constructed by the presence of the goddesses that replicate the physical form of Tripurāsundarī's *yantra,* in this case.

While the Hindu definitions of sacred space in the Valley have been extensively discussed by scholars, the Buddhist conceptions have been relatively neglected. One major reason is that the Buddhist construct is esoteric and the boundaries are not as clearly defined as in the Hindu context. Therefore, what is significant in the *saṁkalpa* statements quoted above is the express understanding of the Valley's sacrality in a purely Buddhist context, and that too, in highly esoteric terms that is generally restricted to the *abhyantara pūjās*. A second point of significance, and perhaps the key to understanding this conceptual construct, is that Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Guhyeśvarī, and Mañjuśrī figure prominently in the defining of the Valley's sacred geography. As an integral part of Newar ritual practices, with constant references to the Valley as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala in exoteric rituals and inscriptions, this aspect of Newar Buddhist construction of sacred space need to be closely analyzed.

To understand the preeminence of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala as a major component of Newar Buddhist ritual practices and art, I will examine three fundamental issues in this analysis. One, I will explore the sacred landscape of the Valley and define the deities within it in order to map and conceptualize the Newar Buddhist construct of the Valley as Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. I will establish that this reification of the Valley as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala is related to the *pīṭhapūjā* pilgrimage of the eight *aṣṭamātṛka* goddesses.

Two, the iconographic analysis will show that the goddess plays an essential role in this conceptual construct, as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala belong to the *yoginī* class Tantras. This will set the foundations for my analyses of the Tantric *yoginīs* as ontological source of Newar Buddhism and the three core components in Chapter Six.

Three, I will present a buddhological interpretation of this conceptual ordering, specifically examining the relationship of Svayambhū, Guhyeśvarī, Cakrasaṁvara, and Vajravārāhī. The analysis of the Valley as Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala will help clarify the relationship among the core iconography components: Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍalas.

The Structure of the Cakrasaṁvara Mandala

In order to understand the conceptualized mapping in the Valley's sacred geography, I will first briefly examine structural form of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. An inscribed Nepali painting, dated 1590 in the Los Angeles Country Museum of Art, provides an excellent example of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala's core structure (Fig. 6.18). The Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala is based *tantra* of the same name, belonging to the *Yoginī* or Female Tantra of the Anuttara Yoga class.[18] It is described in detail in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* (Maṇḍala # 12).[19] The most basic form of the Maṇḍala

has thirty-seven pairs of deities contained within a series of concentric circles, symbolizing the thirty-seven wings of Enlightenment.[20]

At the center are the generators of the Maṇḍala: the blue four-faced twelve-armed Cakrasaṁvara, shown in union with his *prajñā*, Vajravārāhī.[21] Cakrasaṁvara's principal hands hold the *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* in *vajrahuṁkāramudrā*, while embracing Vajravārāhī. His top upper hands hold the elephant skin; his third right and left hands display the drum (*ḍamaru*) and staff (*khaṭvāṅga*); his fourth pair has an axe and a skull-cup (*kapāla*); his fifth pair dislays a flaying knife (*karttṛkā*) and a noose (*pāśa*), while the sixth pair holds a trident (*triśula*) and the severed head of Brahmā (*Brahmākapāla*). The single-faced Vajravārāhī, shown as a dancing red figure, embraces Cakrasaṁvara and holds a skull-cup and flaying knife in the left and right hands respectively.

In the inner (*abhyantara*) house, the inner pair is surrounded by the four *Yoginīs* [22] in the cardinal directions, each reflecting the color of the Jina Buddha in the respective direction. In the Newar Buddhist ritual texts, these goddesses are collectively called to as *Caturdevī* ("Four Goddesses").[23] In contrast to the usual clockwise direction of circumambulation or meditation, these goddesses are meditated in a counterclockwise order that is characteristic of the *vāma* or left-handed tradition of the *Yoginī Tantras*.[24] The initiate begins at the east at the bottom with blue Ḍākinī, and moving to the north is green Lāmā, red Khaṇḍarohā in the west, and finally to yellow

Rūpiṇī in the south. These *yoginīs* correspond to the *prajñās* of the Jina Buddhas, and specifically in this context, are emanations of Vajravārāhī, the preeminent deity of the Maṇḍala cycle. At the intermediate points of the lotus petals of the inner circle are four vases of generation (*kalaśa*) that are the "juices of the *bodhicitta*" (*bodhicittena rajasā*) and is filled with *siddhirasavad amṛta*—the ambrosia of realization (*siddhi*) that is offered by the *yoginīs*.[25] The symbolism of the four vases is also central to the initiations empowerments received by Newar Buddhists during the *dikṣā* ceremony. This will be discussed in the next section.

The inner house is surrounded by a series of three concentric circles, a form that is unique to the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. These three circles radiating outwards represent the circles (*cakras*) of the Body (*kāya*), Speech (*vāk*) and Heart-Mind (*citta*), with the Heart-Mind *cakra* closest to the center. Each circle has eight pairs of male and female deities, with a total of twenty-four pairs. These deities are called the heroes (*vīra*) and heroines (*vīrā*), whose union represents an aspect of the Enlightenment process. As a *maṇḍala* based on the *yoginī tantra*, the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala considers Vajravārāhī to be preeminent in this cycle, and therefore, as in the painting, only the female deities are represented in the concentric circles. However, their male counterparts are inherently present and they are in union. These deities are also emanations of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. In the exterior spaces of the *maṇḍala,* are the eight female gate-guardians and the

eight great cremation grounds, which create the outer boundaries of the *maṇḍalic* space.

In Tantric meditational visualizations, the twenty-four deities of the Body, Speech, and Mind circles correspond to the twenty-four *cakras* (energy centers) of the *yogin's* body. These energy centers are ritually awakened during the purification process.[26] In a more technical interpretation, the Cakrasaṁvara Tantra specifically states that the twenty-four deities are also present in the physical world. They reside in *pīṭhas*, the self-manifest sacred places. In this way, the *yogin's* meditational body or *vajrakāya* "Adamanatine Body" that is equated with Vajrasattva is identified with twenty-four places. Thus, as the microcosm is identified to the macrocosm, meditational *cakras* are transferred into the geographical *vajrakāya* as a sacred *maṇḍala*. Texts relating to Cakrasaṁvara offer different lists of these twenty-four *pīṭhas* throughout South Asia and Tibet. For example, in the Tibetan tradition, there is a pilgrimage route from central Tibet to Zanskar, Kashmir, Kulu, Hazara, and Swat that pertains to the twenty-four *pīṭhas* presided by the heros/heroines of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala.[27] A similar tradition is found in the Newar Buddhist context, which involve the sacred *pīṭhas* found within the localized region to represent these twenty-four deities. In other words, it is through these twenty-four *pīṭhas* that the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala is defined in the Valley's sacred geography. Specifically, as a *Yoginī tantra maṇḍala,* it is appropriately the female

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deities of the Maṇḍala that are key in mapping this sacred construct. The deities I will discuss in this conceptual construct are Vajravārāhī, the four Yoginīs, and twenty-four deities belonging to the circles of Body, Speech, and Mind.

Manifesting the Maṇḍala of the Valley: The Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala

Based on the references of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* and the *saṁkalpa* statement, the ontological source of the religion is the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū Jyotirūpa and Guhyeśvarī. These primordial Buddhas also generate the sacred geography of the Kathmandu Valley and deities therein. In the exoteric mapping of the Valley are the pilgrimage sites, such as the twelve Tīrthas and eight Vītarāgas, where the uninitiated lay practitioners perform acts of faith and devotion. In addition to this popular sacred geography, the fifth chapter of the *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa* provides an alternate, more esoteric list of eight *tirthas* that pertain to the initiated practices of the Vajrācāryas and Śākyas.[28] In comparing the structural form of the Maṇḍala to the textual references, these sacred sites relate directly to the definition of the Valley as Cakrasaṁvāra Maṇḍala. Interestingly, this esoteric pilgrimage is performed by the Newar Buddhist practitioners as a preliminary rite that precedes the empowerment rituals (*dikṣā*) to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. My interpretation's here are based on the

visual analyses of the Maṇḍala and their correlation to ritual practices and textual reference.

The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* lists eight major cremation grounds around the Valley found at the confluence of rivers—dangerous sites that are located at the periphery of sacred and profane spaces.[29] This creates the outer boundaries of the physical *maṇḍala*, mirroring the cremation grounds (*smaśānas*) outside the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. The names of the cremation grounds, the *caitya*, trees, *nāgas* given in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* are identical to the list found in the *Saṁvarodaya Tantra* and the *Cakrasaṁvara Tantra.*[30]

Then moving into the *maṇḍala* proper are the outer concentric circles of the Body, Speech and Mind. Following the tradition stated in the *Cakrasaṁvara Tantra*, the twenty-four deities of these *cakras* are associated with the twenty-four *mātṛkā pīṭhas* around the Valley. These *mātṛkā pīṭhas* are related to the Aṣṭamātṛkā shrines of the Eight Mother Goddesses, that figure prominently in the Tantric traditions of Hindu and Buddhist practitioners (Fig. 6.19). The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* specifies a list of eight *mātṛkā pīṭhas* and, in more esoteric interpretations, each *mātṛkā* paired with a male counterpart (Bhairava), thus considered to be the *vīra/vīrās* of the Maṇḍala. The deities are associated with a specific color, *bīja*, and directional symbolism.[31] Echoing the understanding of the Tantras, local textual references such as the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* state that sacred *pīṭhas*

provide the practitioner with the power of realization (*siddhi*) and purifies the Body, Speech, and Mind. The list is as follows:[32]

	Mātṛkās	Direction	Bhairava	Color	Bīja
1.	Brahmāyanī	East	Asitanga	yellow	A
2.	Maheśvarī	North	Śukra	white	KA
3.	Kaumārī	SE	Krodha	red	CA
4.	Vaiṣṇavī	SW	Unmatta	black	TA
5.	Vārāhī	South	Kapāla	red	TA
6.	Indrāyanī	West	Ruru	yellow	PA
7.	Cāmuṇḍā	NW	Samhāra	red	YA
8.	Mahālakṣmī	NE	Bhisana	white	SA

Body, Speech and Mind *Cakras* of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala: *Pītha Pūjā* and Worship of the Aṣṭāmātṛkās in Newar Buddhism

How the three groups Aṣṭamātṛkās are associated with the three rings of *yoginīs* of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala is best articulated by the ritual pilgrimage called *pītha pūjā*. In the Newar Buddhist tradition, *pītha pūjā* is performed as a preliminary rite to the *dikṣā* initiation to Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī.[33] The practitioners also refer to the *pīthapūjā* as *pīthasevā* or *purvasevā*, as they are a required component of Tantric worship in order to

perfect *samādhi* and visualization practices. During the *pīṭhapūjā*, twenty-four *pīṭhas* of the *mātṛkās* around the Valley are visited as part of the preliminary rituals of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī initiation.[34] These twenty-four sites are found in three sets of the Aṣṭamātṛkās *pīṭhas*, forming in a conceptual series of ever-widening circles that is identical to the structural form of the Cakrasaṁvara maṇḍala (Fig. 6.20). Beginning with the innermost circle, the first group of eight *mātṛkās* encircles the city of Kathmandu proper and corresponds to the sites given in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*. Although a specific *mātṛkā* resides in each *pīṭha*, her male counterpart—the Bhairavas—are inherently present, although they are not often shown in the visual imagery. The Newar Buddhist practitioners refer this inner circle of Mother Goddesses as the Citta Cakra, following the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala's structure and name. The second group of Aṣṭamātṛkā *pīṭhas* demarcates the external boundaries of the entire Valley, beginning at the Brahmāyanī *pīṭha* in Bhaktapur in the east and extends as far as the Indrayānī *pīṭha* at Satungal, a small village at the outskirts of the three royal cities. Paralleling the red circle of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala in the painting, this group of Mātṛkās is referred to as the Vāk Cakra. The third circle of Aṣṭamātṛkās, appropriately called the Kāya Cakra, covers the region outside the Valley proper, but what constitute the larger conceptual notion of the *Nepal Maṇḍala,* i.e. the kingdom of the Nepal Valley.

The *pīṭhapūjā* pilgrimage, in association with the spatial ordering of the Valley, has been previously discussed by Niels Gutschow and Manavajra Vajrācārya, in the article "Ritual as Mediator of Space in Kathmandu."[35] The authors make two significant observations concerning ritual circumambulation and the conceptual ordering of the Valley. First, the authors suggest a correspondence of the Buddhist Trikāya system in the three *cakras* of the Body, Speech, and Mind. Specifically, the circles are interpreted as the *nirmāṇakāya* of the Body Cakra, the *sambhogakāya* as the Speech Cakra, and the *dharmakāya* as the Mind Cakra. A second theme that the authors examine is the Newar Buddhist practitioners' realization of the microcosm (body) with the macrocosm (country). While these concepts are integral to the technical Tantric practices, the authors do not associate these twenty-four *pīṭhas* as defining the construct of Valley as the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. However, since both the rituals associated with the *pīṭhas* and the Aṣṭamātṛkās mirror structural form of the Maṇḍala, I would suggest that the goddesses, indeed, the map the defining elements of the Valley's spatial ordering as the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. The strongest evidence for this association is provided by the very names that the Newar Buddhists assign to the three circles of the Aṣṭamātṛkās: Kāya Cakra, Vāk Cakra, and Citta Cakra. The same *cakras* of the Body (*kāya*), Speech (*vāk*), and Heart-Mind (*citta*) are at the structural core of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala, and these concentric circles are unique to the Maṇḍala. Furthermore, the twenty-four

Mātṛkā pīṭhas are central to the preliminary rituals of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī initiation, thus further suggesting their relationship to the Cakrasaṁvara cycle.

Following the technical Tantric Buddhist understanding based on the *Cakrasaṁvara Tantra,* these twenty-four *mātṛkā pīṭhas* correspond to the energy centers or *cakras* of the body and are seen as extensions of the *yogin's* own mind enable the practitioner to purify the Body, Speech and Mind and awaken the *bodhicitta* (Fig. 6.21). The Aṣṭamātṛkās, in this context, are supramundane meditational deities (*alaukika devatā*) that enable the practitioner to perfect the Tantric yogic practices.[36] The Mātṛkās, in this context, are referred to as *yoginīs,* and provide the practitioner *siddhi* or the realization the purified *tathāgatagarbha* within. The Buddhist practitioners distinguish the Buddhist context of the Aṣṭamātṛkās as emanations of the generating source, Vajravārāhī. The same set of Aṣṭamātṛkās is contrasted as *laukika devatā* ("mundane deities") when propitiated in the Hindu context, who serve protectors and definers of sacred space in the physical world. Such overlapping of ritual symbolism and sharing of deities have been the reasons for the analyses of Newar Buddhism's "synecretic" nature. However, during my research, the practitioners and informants made distinct sectarian distinctions within these shared practices, particularly in the rituals and the nuances of the symbolism, which, followed either the Hindu or Buddhist

interpretations, depending on the ritual context. The shared context, in both cases, was the Tantric methodology.

The *pīṭhapūjā* or *purvasevā* rituals further clarify role of the Aṣṭamātṛkās in the Tantric Buddhist context, as the Eight Mother Goddesses are generally associated with Hindu practices. Further, the conception of "*pīṭhas*" needs to be carefully analyzed to understand their multivalent symbolic meanings, as definers of sacred space in both the Hindu and Buddhist context. In the *pīṭhapūjā* performed by initiated Vajrācāryas, the twenty-four *Mātṛkās* of Kāya, Vāk and Citta circles are visited and thus the entire Valley circumambulated as a purification and preparatory ritual (*purvaseva*).[37] In performing the pilgrimage, at a basic level, the Tantric practitioner physically and in a literal way, identifies with the universe through the purification process. Through the physical process of purification, the realization of Enlightenment may be interpreted as a literal transformation through progressively more complex yogic practices. In the more esoteric context of Cakrasaṁvara meditation, the awakening of the deities that reside in various *cakras* of the body enables the yogin to generates the *maṇḍala* in his/her own body and to visualizes the macrocosm within himself/herself. Thus, in visualizing the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala within one's own body, the practitioner realizes the identity of the macrocosm and the microcosm and the true nature of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) as a reflection of one's heart-mind (*citta*). This identification is actualized and reified by the

ritual invocation: "All *dharmas* are inherently pure, without intrinsic nature, and without location, thus is my essence is pure; just as the knowledge of emptiness is adamantine, thus the essence of my self is adamantine [as Vajrasattva]."[38] Thus, purifying the Body, Speech, and mind through the Aṣṭamātṛkās *pīṭhas*, the Newar practitioner then enters the inner circle of the four Yoginīs.

Entering the Inner Circle: Four *Yoginīs* of the Valley

The goddesses of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala's inner circle are identified with the four Yoginī shrines around the Valley. According to textual references in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* as well as the oral ritual traditions, these goddesses are identified as Ākāśa Yoginī of Bijeśvarī (Fig. 6.22), Khaḍga Yoginī of Śānku (Fig. 6.23), Vajrayoginī of Pharping (Fig. 6.24), and Guhyeśvarī Yoginī at Pulān Guhyeśvarī near Bālāju (Fig. 6.25). These deities, as forms of Vajravārāhī, are referred to by the general term for Tantric goddesses—*Vajrayoginī* "Adamantine Yoginī" or *Vidyādharī* "Upholder/Provider to Knowledge." In the technical Tantric understanding, the Yoginīs provide the practitioner with the ability to attain *siddhi* or realization through the Tantric yogic practices, hence their popular epithet *siddhidātṛ* "provider of *siddhi*". Similar to the Aṣṭamātṛkās in the outer rings, these yoginīs are direct emanations of the generator of Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, i.e. Vajravārāhī. In the ritual context of the *pīṭhapūjā*, these *yoginī*

shrines are also visited and extensive rituals are performed as preliminary rites to the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī initiations. The hierarchical relationship of the Aṣṭamātṛkā, *yoginīs*, and Vajravārāhī will be examined in Chapter Seven.

Physically, these *yoginī* shrines are located on hilltops, in the outer boundaries of Kathmandu Valley proper, with Śānkhu and Bijeśvari shrines being above the floor of the Valley. Their association with Vajravārāhī further reinforces the esoteric conception of the Valley's sacred geography as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. In understanding these goddesses as definers of sacred space, a significant aspect of their nature is also emphasized and reiterated (as protectors and mothers. Specifically, as protective goddesses, and the *yoginīs* have traditionally been closely associated with kingship and state protection, regardless of the king's religious affiliation. Consequently, the shrines have received substantial patronage from the Hindu kings of the Valley, and continue even today with the Hindu Śāha kings. For instance, the Khaḍga Yoginī shrine was the patron deity of the king of Śānkhu during the Malla period.[39] In the contemporary context, an annual festival to the goddess still commemorates her role as protectress.[40] During the *jātrā*, Khaḍga Yoginī in her form as *mhāsukhvaḥmāju* is taken down to the city from her hilltop abode, along with the ancient surrogate image of Svayambhūcaitya. These deities ritually circumambulate the city of Śānkhu. This annual ritual, thereby, not only affirms the goddess's protective role as

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the city's patron deity, who sustains the well-being of the inhabitants. Moreover, this ritual annually emphasized the Tantric *yogini* (with Khaḍga Yogini as an emanation of Vajravārāhī) and the *caitya* as elemental to the Tantric practices of Newar Buddhism. It is also noteworthy that the annual festival coincides with the anniversary day when the Mānuśi Buddha Vipaśyi threw the seed of the lotus into the lake, out of which emerged Svayambhū Jyotirūpa.[41]

Generators of the Valley's Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala

Thus far, the Valley's sacred geography as the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala has closely replicated the *maṇḍala*'s structural pattern, with the three rings of Aṣṭamātṛkās and the four Yoginīs. This brings us to the center of the Maṇḍala, to the generators Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī. How are the generators defined in this conceptual construct, and what may be the preeminent sites to these esoteric deities? The answer appears to be closely connected to Svayambhū Mahācaitya and Guhyeśvarī, the primordial (Ādi) Buddhas in the Newar Buddhist tradition. Evidence for this argument can be found not only in the ritual context, but more importantly, in the visual imagery at Svayambhū itself.

More evident than in other sites of the Kathmandu Valley, Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala's presence is extensively alluded to at Svayambhū. Specifically, the visual symbolism repeatedly points to the connections of

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Svayambhū and Guhyeśvarī in the Cakrasaṁvara meditation cycle.[42] For example, at Svayambhū, Pratāp Malla's private āgaṁ shrines of Pratāppur and Anantapur are among the largest known temples to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī (see Figs. 3.22 and 3.23). Entrance to this shrine is, however, restricted to the Svayambhū priests. In the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, the Śāntipur shrine at Svayambhū is unequivocally the primordial *pīṭha* to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, where the *maṇḍala* of Cakrasaṁvara was consecrated by Śāntikarācārya.[43] As the premier shrine of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, Śāntipur's esoteric nature is legendary in the oral tradition, which often refers to horrific stories of death befalling those who dared to enter the shrine without the proper empowerment and initiation. Because of Śāntipur's ritual connections to Śāntikarācārya and to Cakrasaṁvara, the shrine become even more important in establishing a divine lineage connection of Guhyeśvarī and the Newar Tantric tradition. As the shrine to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī and the definers' of the Valley's sacred geography, Śāntipur signifies a direct lineage teaching of the Cakrasaṁvara cycle from Guhyeśvarī to Mañjuśrī, to Śāntikarācārya, and subsequently, to the practicing Vajrācārya priests of the Valley.[44] In order reify and commemorate the mythic event when Mañjuśrī received his teachings from Guhyeśvarī, an esoteric *pūjā* to Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī is annually performed at Śāntipur by all the Vajrācāryas of the De Ācārya Guthi of Kathmandu. In the bāhās/bahīs of Patan, a similar *pūjā* is performed at institutions' āgaṁ

shrines themselves. Such esoteric pūjā connected to Svayambhū reiterates its association with the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala cycle.

The Cakrasaṁvara connection with the Mahācaitya comes as no surprise, since the theoretical legitimization for this conception is explicitly stated in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*.[45] The text acknowledges Guhyeśvarī to be the source of the Cakrasaṁvara teachings, as this meditational teaching and empowerment was given to Mañjuśrī by Guhyeśvarī. Further, since the root of the thousand-petalled lotus sprung from the Guhyeśvarī *pīṭha*, the goddess can, in turn, be interpreted as the ontological source of Svayambhū Jyotirūpa itself. The cosmogonic myth of the Mahācaitya thus provides an effective framework to validate the core Tantric Buddhist methodologies, in which the yoginīs are preeminent. Further, that Svayambhū and Guhyeśvarī are the generators of the Valley's conception as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala may be found alluded to in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*. In an explicit reference to the Valley's sacred geography, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* specifically states that three circles of twenty-four *pīṭhas* [of Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala] surround Svayambhū, who is at the center.[46] The text describes that the Nepal Maṇḍala is made sacred and adorned by various *pīṭhas*, where male and female teachers (*ācārya*), practitioners (*yogin*), ascetic (*rāgin*), and meditators (*dhyāni*) should worship at these *pīṭhas*. The text also alludes to the generators of the *maṇḍala*, stating that after all the twenty-four *pīṭhas* are worshipped, Khagānana (Guhyeśvarī) should be first worshipped according to

the prescribed way and then after that, Śrī Svayambhū Dharmadhātu must be worshipped. At the conclusion of these *pūjās,* the practitioner should then worship the *guru* of the Buddhist world system, Mañjuśrī and thus understand the sacred nature of the *Nepal Maṇḍala.*

The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* indicates here two significant aspects in reference to the Cakrasaṁvara tradition of Newar Buddhism. First, Svayambhū Mahācaitya appears to be intimately connected with the Cakrasaṁvara cycle and with the Valley's conception as Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. The second, and perhaps most fundamental to understanding Newar Buddhist iconology, is that Guhyeśvarī is the ontological source of Cakrasaṁvara cycle as well as of the self-arisen Svayambhū Jyotirūpa itself. In other words, the Newar Buddhist tradition conceives of Guhyeśvarī as the generating source of the religion. Extending her role as the generator of the Valley's sacred *maṇḍala* of Cakrasaṁvara, Guhyeśvarī is thus identified with Vajravārāhī.[47]

The conception of the Valley as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala is defined by the methodology of its root *tantra,* in which the goddesses (*yoginīs*) are preeminent. This emphasis on the goddesses in this conceptual construct also establishes the truly Tantric nature of Newar Buddhism and incorporates the highly esoteric methodologies of the Anuttara Yoga Tantras into its core religious practices. How these goddesses define the Vajrayāna traditions of Newar Buddhism and how these goddesses are shared in a different context by Hindu Tantric traditions will be further examined in Chapter Seven.

Constructing the Three-Dimensional Maṇḍalas: *Bāhās* as Maṇḍalic Space

If we conceive of the Valley's sacred *maṇḍala* to be that of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī, what are its implications in our understanding of the construction of sacred space in Newar Buddhist monasteries. How does the premise of a sacred *maṇḍalic* space help decipher the symbolic meanings of the iconographic program? Foremost, the concept that the Valley is a physical *maṇḍala,* made sacred by the presence of the deities within its boundaries may be transferred to the physical spaces of the *bāhās* and *bāhīs.* The ground plans of the monasteries clearly suggest a clearly defined *maṇḍalic* space, with the principal *caitya* (*svayambhū caitya*) serving as the vivifying source (Fig. 6.26). In the Newar Buddhist context, the principal *caitya*'s symbolic assocation with the Svayambhū reaffirms the Mahācaitya's role not only as generator of the Valley's sacred geography, but also of the *bāhā*'s sacred space.

Secondly, the two core iconographic themes present in the visual imagery of the *bāhās,* namely the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, both articulate the concept of *maṇḍalic* space. Here, from the unified iconographic program, it may be inferred that the *bāhā*'s sacred space is the microcosmic conception of the larger macrocosm of the Valley's sacred geography. As a Buddhist *maṇḍala* reifies the Tantric enlightenement

process, the *bāhās* as the microcosm can be interpreted as three-dimensional *maṇḍalas,* where the presence of the deities and their iconographic symbolism create the sacred space.[48] Thus, the construction of the Valley's sacred geography in these esoteric terms serves as key to understanding the iconology of the three core components of Newar Buddhist visual imagery.

SECTION III: RITUAL CONTEXT: CAKRASAṀVARA MAṆḌALA AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO NEWAR BUDDHIST ONTOLOGY

This section will review both esoteric and exoteric rituals that refer to the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala as an integral component of Newar Buddhist practice. The ritual context will be central to interpret the visual imagery, specifically to understand the multivalent esoteric symbolism of Tantric Buddhism.

Exoteric Tantric Buddhist Ritual: *Guru Maṇḍala Pūjā*

For the two caste groups of the Vajrācāryas and Śākyas, ritual empowerment (*abhiśekha*) into the esoteric Vajrayāna path is performed during *bare chuegu*, when the initiates are taught to perform the *guru maṇḍala pūjā* and are given the preliminary *mantras* of Heruka Cakrasaṁvara.[49] As the principal ritual of Newar Buddhism that is performed at the beginning of every complex *pūjā* requiring a Vajrācārya priest, the *guru maṇḍala pūjā* is dedicated to Vajrasattva.[50] As an exoteric

ritual, this *pūjā* nonetheless alludes to higher practices of the Cakrasaṁvara meditations, particularly in the *saṁkalpa* ritual. In the next section, I will analyze the relationship of the *saṁkalpa* ritual and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala in reference to Newar Buddhist sacred space.

The *gurumaṇḍala pūjā* is the *guruyoga* "visualization/meditation on the teacher" that is an essential component of Tantric Buddhist practice. Incorporated into the *gurumaṇḍala* are the fundamental ritual practices of Tantric Buddhism: foremost, *guruyoga,* in which the practitioner acknowledges his spiritual teacher, in this case, Guru Vajrasattva; the purification of the body, speech and mind through yogic breathing and awakening of the cakras (*nyāsayoga*); the use of *mantras* to render the actions efficacious and powerful, in this case, the hundred-syllabled *mantra* of Vajrasattva; the presentation of the adamantine offerings through *mudrā*, that are personified as sixteen offerings goddesses (*sodaśa lāsya*); the creation of the Mt. Meru *maṇḍala,* that symbolizes not only the entire Buddhist world system, but represents the practitioner's own body; and the culmination of the ritual is the visualization (*sādhana)* and identity transfer, in which the practitioner, symbolized as Mt. Meru *maṇḍala* offers himself to Guru Vajrasattva, and in turn becomes Vajrasattva. That the practitioner identifies with the deity during ritual practices is fundamental to all Tantric Buddhist practices, and Newar Buddhism is no exception. Thus, the practitioner becomes Vajrasattva, the Adamantine Being. The significance of

this exoteric Tantric ritual must be understood in order to contextualize the Vajrasattva imagery found in Newar Buddhist *bāhās.*

After this preliminary initiation to *guruyoga,* the initiates are then introduced to the primary *devayoga* practice in Newar Buddhism: the *maṇḍala* of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī. After the *mantra* of these esoteric deities of the *āgaṃ* are given, the Vajrācārya priest concludes the passage-rite ceremony by saying: "You have gone through Śrāvakayāna, and now come to Mahāyāna, the greatest of Buddhist *yānas.* You have participated in some Vajrayāna rituals, and after going through some higher initiations, you will really know what Cakrasaṃvara is."[51] This ritual context specifically alludes to the hierarchic layering found in the key components of Newar Buddhist iconography: Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. As the highest and most complex manifestation of the Tantric tradition, the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala is constantly, although indirectly, alluded to in the ritual practices as well as the visual imagery.

Ritual Initiations of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī

The ritual practices of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī are connected with the life-cycle initiations of the Vajrācārya and Śākya members of the *saṅgha.* The preliminary initiation to Cakrasaṃvara is given to the *saṅgha* members during the mandatory life-cycle *bare-chuegu* ritual.[52] At this time,

the initiates are given the *mantra* of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī as a means of entering the Vajrayāna path. More elaborate and higher Tantric initiations (*dīkṣā*) of Cakrasaṃvara are available for the *saṅgha* members at a later time that allows access to the esoteric rituals of Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī. As highly esoteric Tantric rituals, these rituals involve the married women of the Vajrācārya and Śākya castes, as well as the select group of lay castes such as the Shresthas in Patan, and the *uray* castes in Kathmandu. In other words, higher *dīkṣā* initiation remains a matter of choice, where ideally, the initiate should take the empowerment with his wife.[53] In contrast to the preliminary Vajrayāna initiations to Vajrasattva and Cakrasaṃvara that were included as part of the public *bare chuegu* ceremony, *dīkṣā* is performed in secret, with only other members that have received *dīkṣā* allowed to attended the ritual.[54] Generally, *dīkṣā* initiations are only given at irregular intervals, and all the eligible members of the community, including the laity, may chose to take the initiation.[55] Once taken, the *dīkṣā* meditation must be strictly observed every day. Especially for the lay community of the Tuladhars, *dīkṣā* permits the males to be eligible for special rites performed after death to ensure better rebirth.[56]

Dīkṣā is a optional for the *saṅgha* members, however, access to the esoteric rituals *āgaṃ* shrine and becoming an elder (*āju*) of the *bāhā* are contingent upon receiving the *dīkṣā* initiations. Furthermore, *dīkṣā* is also open to the lay Buddhist practitioners thus allowing them entry into the

Vajrayāna path.[57] Receiving *dīkṣā* is mandatory in order to participate in the esoteric rituals performed at the Tantric *āgaṁ* shrine (either one's personal *āgaṁ* or the *bāhā āgaṁ*) or during life-cycle rites such as *kumārī pūjā*.[58]

As an empowerment ritual, *dīkṣā* provides access to the *abhyantara* or the highly esoteric "inner" rituals of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. Specifically, as an initiation to the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, the initiates are given seven *mantras* of key Heruka class deities of Newar Buddhism, namely Cakrasaṁvara, Vajravārāhī (who is alternately called Vajradevī), Heruka, Hevajra-Nairātmā, Khaḍga Yoginī, Buddhaḍākinī [Bijeśvarī] and Caṇḍmahāroṣaṇa.[59]

The ritual distinctions among the practitioners of those "having access/inner" and "not having access/inner" are also mirrored in the physical layout of the *āgaṁ* shrine in the *bāhā/bahīs*.[60] As shown in the plan of the *āgaṁ* shrine at Kvā Bāhā, Patan (see Fig. 2.15), the shrine has two rooms: an outer room where any initiated *saṅgha* member can enter at the time of the *pūjā* and an "inner" *abhyantara* room where the main deities are enshrined. The inner room may only be entered by the elders of the *saṅgha* who have taken *dīkṣā* or by the initiates during their *dīkṣā* ceremony.

The main *dīkṣā* ceremony takes place in the *abhyantara* shrine and as the initiates are brought into the room, their eyes are blindfolded until they have received the proper empowerment.[61] The esoteric rituals related to the Heruka class deities are therefore referred to as *abhyantara pūjās,* i.e. those

pūjās performed in the "inner" room and participated by only those who have received the higher initiation (*dīkṣā*) of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. The distinction between the "outer" and "inner" categories that is found in the ritual context as well as in the visual hierarchy appears to be a fundamental construct of Newar Buddhist religious practices.

Dichotomy of "Exoteric" vs "Esoteric" in the Tantric Tradition

The difference between the higher initiations such as *dīkṣā* and the more straightforward Tantric rituals as in the *gurumaṇḍala* is the highly esoteric nature of such rituals, using extensive sexual symbolism and preeminence of female imagery. Characteristic of the Tantric tradition, there is a distinct role reversal in the ritual, where the women are the active, generating source of power and thus, play the dominant role during these highly esoteric rituals. During *dīkṣā,* the women are symbolically given first preference, as they must complete their respective ritual procedures before the men. During the empowerment ceremony, the women are also more likely to be dancing and shaking, possessed by the *sakti* of goddess Vajravārāhī.[62] Similarly, in contrast to the norm whereby the male Vajrācārya priest generally holds position of power, it is the wife of the main Vajrācārya priest that has an equally important, if not the central role in the ritual. As Vajravārāhī, also called Vajradevī, she is dressed in red while her husband, dressed in blue as Cakrasaṁvara dance in the inner (*abhyantara*) chamber,

where the initiation is about the take place.[63] During the fourteen consecrations (*abhiśekha*), she offers the symbols of Vajravārāhī's empowerment: alcohol in the skullcups as ambrosia of knowledge (*bodhyamrta)* during the Secret Vase Consecration (*guhyakalaśābhisekha*) and Secret Consecration (*guhyabhisekha)*; the red *ṭikā* powder, symbolizing Vajravārāhī, is put on the heads on the initiates, as part of the consecrations[64] In the culmination of the ritual, she performs the *cakrapūjā* to Vajravārāhī around the *homa* fire, along with five other women, symbolizing the *Sat Yogini*, and ends with the *Kumārī Pūjā,* offered to Vajravārāhī.[65]

In essence, the Cakrsaṁvara Maṇḍala is a *yoginī maṇḍala,* which the imagery and the ritual practices are related to the female. During the rituals, the women, as manifestations of the goddess, provide generative power to the Cakrasaṁvara initiations. Typical of the Tantric teachings of the Anuttara Yoga Tantras, these highly esoteric Tantric *pūjās involve* extensively female symbolism and imagery, as indicated by the visual imagery of the *āgaṁ* shrines. It is in such esoteric Tantric traditions that constitute the reversing of normative categories, such as in the offerings (use of impure substances), rituals (role reversal), and imagery (use of esoteric sexual imagery). This aspect of Tantric practice is also central to the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala practice, which is closely associated with the female imagery and symbolism.

Ritual Symbolism of *Dikṣā* Initiation To Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī

This section will review in some detail the ritual symbolism of the *dikṣā* initiation, in order to understand the doctrinal association of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. Specifically, the primary focus here is to understand the female imagery in Tantric Buddhist practice. Furthermore, an analysis of the ritual tradition examined here is essential to interpret the visual imagery, specifically the overwhelming symbolism to the goddess in the esoteric imagery. The ritual symbolism will also contextualize the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala as an integral component of Newar Buddhist practice and visual arts.[66]

The *dikṣā* initiation is performed in secret and because of the complexity and elaborateness of the rituals, the *dikṣā* initiation may take anywhere fifteen days to a month. Called *Daśabhiśekha Dikṣā Vidhi* "Ritual of the Ten Empowerments", the initiates is given ten or fourteen empowerments of the Heruka deities, and instructed into the *mantras* and meditational visualizations of archetype of the Heruka deities: Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. During the *āgaṁ* rituals, a similar process of meditational visualizations is integral to the ritual. In the following, I will analyze the complex empowerment ritual in reference to the Tantric interpretations of the symbolism.

Following the prescription of the Anuttara Yoga Tantras, there are two stages to the ritual processes: 1) the generation stage (*utpatti krama*), which emphasizes the male or *upāya* aspects; and 2) the completion stage (*utpanna krama*), which emphasizes the female or *prajñā* aspect.[67] The ritual ends with the union of the two stages of generation and completion, with the initiates visualizing themselves as Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. The central symbolism of the empowerment rituals thus reflects the male and female symbolism, and the union of the two as the state of complete Enlightenment. Although Gellner does not analyze the empowerment processes within these Tantric categories, the Newar Buddhist initiation ritual strongly reflect the meditation stages of the Anuttara Yoga Tantras. My interpretation of the ritual process in the following section will be based on the categories.

During the *dikṣā* initiation, the initiate prepares for the ceremony through a series of complex preliminary rituals.[68] After that, the first group of empowerment is given after the generation of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, in which the *mūla guru* dresses in white as Vajrasattva and his wife is dressed in red as Vajradevī. The presence of Mañjuśrī and his wife is also a mandatory element in this preliminary empowerment, and so the assistant *guru* dresses as Mañjuvajra and his wife in *orange* as Keśinīvajra.[69] The presence of Mañjuśrī as Mañjuvajra in the ritual context provides further evidence of this symbolism found in the visual imagery. After the male

initiates are paired with their female partners, the men are dressed in blue symbolizing Cakrasaṁvara and the women in red symbolizing Vajravārāhī. After performing the Guru Maṇḍala *pūjā,* the initiates receive the first group of empowerments of Cakrasaṁvara, which are generally performed during the night. This signifies the male/*upāya* component of the Enlightenment process.

To contextualize the symbolism found in the visual imagery within the ritual practices, I will discuss here in some detail the empowerments received by the initiates. It should be noted that in these *abhyantara pūjās* of the *Yoginī tantras* to which Cakrasaṁvara belongs, the female aspect is preeminent and the initiate receives the empowerment of Vajravārāhī, as the completion of the ritual. Furthermore, symbols associated with Vajravārāhī, such as the vermilion powder, *khaṭvāṅga, kapāla, karttṛkā,* are major components of the ritual symbolism. The final empowerments of the completion stage related to Vajravārāhī is given by the wife of the *mūla guru* as Vajradevī symbolizing Vajravārāhī's *nirmāṇakāya* aspect.[70] It is within these ritual contexts that Vajravārāhī's human manifestation, in particular goddess Kumārī, must be interpreted and analyzed to understand her role within the Newar Buddhist context.

The consecration rituals of the two stages is as follows:[71]

I. Generation Stage (*Utpatti Krama*) : Empowerment of Cakrasaṁvara

1. *Kalaśābhiśekha* (Empowerment of the Vase):

    This is the empowerment of the five Jina Buddhas, who are invoked in the main *kalaśa.* Cakrasaṁvara signifies the totality of the five Jina Buddhas.

2. *Mukuṭābhiśekha* (Empowerment of the Crown)

    Initiates are given the Pañca Jina Buddha crown to meditate on themselves as symbolizing the knowledges of the five Jina Buddhas, i.e. Cakrasaṁvara.

3. *Vajrābhiśekha* (Empowerment of the Vajra)

    The *vajra,* as the symbol of *śūnyatā,* is placed in the initiate's right hand. This symbolizes the male aspect (*karuṇā*), the first of the two components of the Enlightenment process according to the Tantric tradition.

4. *Ghaṇṭābhiśekha* (Empowerment of the Bell)

    As the symbol of female component (*prajñā*), the *ghaṇṭā* is placed in the initiates left hand. The union of the male and female symbolizes the state of enlightenment. The *vajra* and *ghaṇṭa* is the primary attributes of Vajrasattva, on which the initiate visualizes at the

beginning of the ritual. Vajrasattva's relationship to Cakrasaṁvara is further reinforced in the ritual tradition.

5. *Nāmābhiṣekha* (Empowerment of the Name)

To visualize himself as Cakrasaṁvara, the initiate receives a new name as Heruka Cakrasaṁvara reciting the following invocation:[72]

> *Oṁ vajrasattvaṁ 'abhiṣiñcāmī vajranamabhiṣekataḥ /*
> *śrī heruka nāma tathāgata bhurbhava sva //*
>
> Oṁ Vajrasattva empowers me with the adamantine name
>   empowerment /
> I thus become the Tathāgata by name of Śrī Heruka [Cakrasaṁvara]

6. *Mantrābhiṣeka* (Empowerment of the *Mantra*)

The *mula guru* and his wife give the initiates the *mantra* of Vajrasattva and Tara. It is explained that through the *mantras* Vajrasattva becomes Cakrasaṁvara and Tara becomes Vajravārāhī. This is the *mantra* to Cakrasaṁvara, which the initiates receives in the right ear. Again, the ritual context alludes to Vajrasattva and Tara as the "exoteric/outer" face of the highly esoteric practices Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. The visual imagery also frequently alluded to this symbolism.

7. *Patakābhiṣeka* (Empowerment of Headband)

The initiates receive the five-colored thread (*pañcasūtra*) placed on their foreheads, symbolizing the five Jinas. They also receive the *mālā* for the efficacious recitation of *mantras.*

1. *Saraksepābhiśekha* (Empowerment of Shooting an Arrow)

    The initiates come in pairs and shoot a white jasmine with a bow at the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. It is explained that the flower stands for the heart-mind (*citta*) of the practitioner. The bow and arrow is also a prime attribute of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, further alluding to their symbolic association.[73]

9. *Guhyakalaśābhiśekha* (Empowerment of the Secret Vase)

    The Secret Vase refers to the *kalaśa* of Māmak, who is alternately identified in the Newar Buddhist context with Guhyeśvarī/Nairātmā. This aspect is specifically referred to in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*. The initiates are then given the red alcohol in the vase as a purification of the Body, Speech, and Mind. The wife of the *mula guru* as Vajradevī puts the vermilion powder on the forehead for the men and in the parting of the hair for the women. This is the empowerment of Vajravārāhī. The red alcohol and the vermillion powder are symbol of Vajravārāhī. Generally, the color red signifies the esoteric creative aspect of the goddess Vajravārāhī, as indicated by the iconography of the her *nirmānakāya*, Kumārī.

10. *Añjanābhiśeka* (Empowerment of the Lamp Black)

    The *mula guru* puts a spot of silver powder over the vermillion *tika* then puts the lampblack on the foreheads and eyelids of the initiates. The silver removes film of ignorance from the eyes to see the true

meaning of *śūnyatā*. This is the empowerment of Cakrasaṃvara. In the ritual context, the lampblack (*mvāhnī sinha*) symbolizes Cakrasaṃvara.[74] The two colors (black and red) symbolize the union of Cakrasaṃvara (iconographically blue/black [*kṛṣṇa*]) and Vajravārāhī (iconographically red).

11. *Darpaṇābhiśekha* (Empowerment of the Mirror)

The wife of assistant *guru* as Keśinīvajra (the *prajña* of Mañjuvajra) shows each initiate the mirror and light, while the main *guru* or assistant *guru* explains the meaning of *śūnyatā*. They state that all *dharmas* are like reflected images, intrinsically pure and ungraspable and thus Vajrasattva dwelling in the heart of the *yogin* is the reflection of the absolute *dharma*.[75] This is one of the most important statements of the symbolic association of Mañjuśrī and Cakrasaṃvara. The symbolism clearly refers to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala as a means of reflecting the true essence of *śūnyatā* (i.e the Dharmadhātu). Thus the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is the exoteric explication of the true essence of reality.

12. *Prajñābhiśeka* (Wisdom Empowerment)

The initiates eat two round rice-flour breads (*catamari*) with eggs, milk, sweets. The bread symbolizes the *maṇḍalas* of the sun and moon. The sun and moon symbolize Tantric *kuṇḍalinī* meditation, in which the latent

energy centers (*cakras*) are awakened in the process of attaining Enlightenment.

13. *Jñānabhiśekha* (Knowledge Empowerment)[76]

This is the empowerment of the secret knowledge of union of *prajña* (female) and *upāya* (male) as the method of *sahajayāna*. Here, those initiates who are not married leave the room. To symbolize the great bliss (*Mahāsukha*) arising from the union, the couples sit together with their heads touching and a shawl covering their head, while a Tantric song is sung, symbolically alluded to the state of sexual union. After this empowerment is over, the single initiates are allowed to enter the room.

14. *Guhyābhiśekha* (Secret Empowerment)

As paired couples, the initiates dress in the bone aprons of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, holding a skull-cup with alcohol [female imagery/Vajravārāhī] in their left hands and a *damaru* in their right [Cakrasaṁvara]. During the dance, the couples visualize themselves as Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. The *mula guru* and his wife, who have been dancing as Cakrasaṁvara and Vajradevī, circumambulate each couple and ritually drink from their own and the partner's skull-cup. Similarly, the initiate couples also sip the alcohol from their own and each other's *kapālas*. At this moment, the initiates become Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī and the female initiate as Vajradevī starts to shake and

dance encircling the *maṇḍala.* This ends the first part of the generation stage consecrations relating to the empowerment of Cakrasaṁvara.

II. Completion Stage (*Utpanna Krama*): Empowerments of Vajravārāhī.

The second part of the empowerments involves the *maṇḍala* of Vajravārāhī called the *Mahāmaṇḍala* "Great Maṇḍala " or *mulasvaya vidhi,* "ritual of the main flower."[77] In the *abhyantara* room, the *maṇḍala* of Vajravārāhī is drawn as an equilateral triangle at the center of a *yantra,* which has the six *yoginīs* of Vajravārāhī's retinue. A sixteenth century painting of the Vajravārāhī Maṇḍala, now at the National Museum, New Delhi is identical to the descriptions given in the ritual context (Fig. 6.27).[78] In a counterclockwise direction characteristic of the *Yoginī tantra maṇḍalas,* the twelve vowels are placed in a circle around the triangle.[79] It is notable that the twelve vowels is the *mantra* of Vajravārāhī is identical to the esoteric *mantra,* symbolizing the"secret/inner" meaning of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra* as stated in its Anuttara Yoga commentaries. The next circle of the Vajravārāhī Mahāmaṇḍala is circled by the fifty consonants of the alphabet. In the Tantric tradition, the vowels represent the female, while the consonants represent the male component of the enlightenment process.[80] A circle of eight Aṣṭamātṛkā *pīṭhas* encloses the *maṇḍala.*

After performing the *gurumaṇḍala pūjā* and a special consecration *pūjā* to the Vajravārāhī *maṇḍala,* the initiates receive the final empowerments.

First, the *mula guru* and his wife, as Cakrasaṁvara and Vajradevī, offer the initiates the *khaṭvāṅga,* skull-cup (*kapāla*), and flaying knife (*karttṛkā*), which are the quintessential symbols of Vajravārāhī. Visualizing themselves as Vajravārāhī, the initiates place the *khaṭvāṅga* under the arm, while the skull-cup and flaying knife are displayed in *bindumdrā,* a gesture of flicking the alcohol from the cup with their left hand. Then, the initiates are prepared to receive the subsequent empowerments of Vajravārāhī.[81] The symbolism employed in the following empowerments are associated with the esoteric Tantric nature of the female, specifically as the generative and creative aspects of Vajravārāhī.

1. *Guhyapātrabhiśeka* (Consecration of the Secret Skull-cup)

The secret skull-cup (*guhya pātra*) invokes Vajravārāhī as Vārūṇī and symbolizes the four *kalaśas* of ambrosia (*amṛta*) found in the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, in order for the initiates to acquire *siddhi* realization and efficacy of the *mantras.*[82] The initiates take the *pañcamṛta* ("five nectars) from the skull-cup with their left hand and place it on their eyes and mouth with the ring finger as purification. Interestingly, Vārūṇī's role, as a hypostatis of Vajravārāhī's role is better clarified when analyzing the imagery at Śāntipur in Svayambhū.[83]

2. *Guhyakalaśābhiṣekha* (Empowerment of the Secret Vase)

This is t*he* second empowerment of the Secret Vase (kala*śa)*, which symbolizes Vajravārāhī. The secret vase is also referred to the Guhyeśvarī kalaśa, signifying that Guhyeśvarī, the "Secret Goddess" of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* is none other than Vajravārāhī. The initiates thus receive the empowerment of Guhyeśvarī/Vajravārāhī. The *kalaśa,* in the Newar ritual context, is invariably a symbol of Guhyeśvarī's generative and creative powers and therefore, refers to her role as ontological source of the Tantric system.

3. *Sindurābhiśekha* (Empowerment of the Vermilion Powder)

As the *kalaśa,* the vermilion powder (*sinha*) also symbolizes Vajravārāhī, and in the ritual context, the *sinha* is paired with the lampblack, which signifies Cakrasaṁvara. The wife of the *mula guru* as Vajradevī offers the powder on the initiates' forehead. Particularly during the rituals related to Kumārī, the *sinha* power is offered to indicate her status as Vajradevī. Color symbolism here is key to understanding the ritual imagery.

4. *Añjanābhiśekha* (Empowerment of the Lampblack)

The vermilion powder as Vajravārāhī's symbol is then paired with Cakrasaṁvara's symbol, the lampblack powder. The *mula guru,* as Cakrasaṁvara, puts the lampblack powder over the vermilion powder to symbolize the union of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī.

5. *Mantrābhiṣekha* (Empowerment of the *Mantra*)

> The initiates come in pairs and approach the *mula guru* and his wife. They receive the *mantra* of Vajravārāhī in the left ear. The Tantric tradition considers the *vāma* (left-handed) tradition as embodying the female; hence, the ritual symbolism also employs the left side as specifically embodying the female.

6. *Mula Guhyapatrābhiṣekha* (Empowerment of the Main Secret Skullcup)

> The skullcup is Vajravārāhī's quintessetial symbol. As Vajradevī, the *mula guru*'s wife holds the principal "secret skullcup" of Vajravārāhī and offers the red alcohol of the main skull-cup to the initiates.[84] The assistant's wife as Keśinīvajra refills the skull-cup for each initiate. Again, note here the relationship between Vajravārāhī and Mañjuśrī's consort in the ritual context, further providing evidence for the association of Mañjuśrī and Cakrasaṁvara in the Newar Buddhist context.

1. *Prajñābhiṣekha* (Wisdom Empowerment)

> The initiates each the two rice-flour bread (*caṭāmarī*) symbolizing the sun and the moon. This refers to the *yogic* meditation process of awakening the *cakras*. This is followed by a feast (*gaṇacakra*) in which the spectators, who have previously received the Cakrasaṁvara initiation, now join in the sacred circle (*cakra*). The initiates who came as couples eat from the same plate.

8. *Chattrābhiśekha* (Parasol Empowerment)

The elders (*ājus*), who performed the Tantric songs (*caryā*), hold a *chattra* over the head of the couple, who now have received the full empowerment of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. It is explained to them that now they have attained the *chattras* of the Buddhas.

The *dikṣā* rituals conclude with the *homa* ceremony, in which the *mula guru*'s wife, the sponsor's (*jajmān*) wife, and four senior female initiates dress as the six *yoginīs* (*ṣaṭ yoginī*) of the Vajravārāhī *maṇḍala* and sit around the sacrificial fire. The main rituals of the *homa* involve the six *yoginīs,* who hold a skull-cup in their right hand and flick the alcohol into the fire 108 times with their left, again performing the ritual as Vajravārāhī's emanations. Their husbands stand behind them holding the *guhyakalaśa* of alcohol. The conclusion of the ritual is the Kumārī *pūjā,* where the offerings are given to the goddess in which she is specifically referred to as Vajradevī, the Adamantine Goddess, and identified with Vajravārāhī in her creative aspect. The initiates receive a *vase* painted with a blue *vajra* and a red skull-cup, which are kept in their personal *āgaṁ* shrine, as symbols of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. These are placed near their heads when they die.[85]

To summarize briefly, the ritual empowerments reiterate several key aspects of the Cakrasaṁvara tradition in Newar Buddhism. One, as a *yoginī* class *tantra,* the Cakrasaṁvara meditation shows an emphasis on the female

as the agents of empowerment. The ritual symbolism employs the attributes, colors, and symbols related to the Tantric goddess, such as the vase, vermilion powder, skull-cup, flaying knife, *khaṭvāṅga,* and alcohol. Two, the rituals also indicate a symbolic identity of Vajravārāhī and Guhyeśvarī and suggest that the epithet *Guhyeśvarī* ("Secret Goddess") is deliberately ambiguous as reference to the goddess's esoteric Tantric identity. Three, the ritual empowerments also identify the primary goddesses of the Newar Buddhist tradition: Guhyeśvarī, Vajravārāhī, six Yoginīs, Vajradevī/Kumārī, and Varūṇī. How this esoteric tradition translates to the everyday lives of the Newar Buddhist practitioners was discussed in the conceptual construct of the Valley as Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala.

Interpreting the Cakrasaṁvara Rituals and Their Connections to the *Yoginīs*

This section examines the theoretical and technical underpinings regarding the preeminence of the *yoginīs* in the Cakrasaṁvara cycle, and in particular, within the context of Newar Buddhist cosmogonic myth. I will explore here how the Tantric Cakrasaṁvara rituals, specific to Newar Buddhism, takes into consideration the indigenous sacred history of the region.

The conception of the Valley as Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala alludes to Guhyeśvarī as the ontological source of the Cakrasaṁvara cycle in Newar

Buddhism. The Newar Buddhist tradition intimately connects this to the emergence of Svayambhū Jyotirūpa, where Guhyeśvarī, the Secret Goddess, also called the Ādiśaktī Prajñapāramitā in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, resided at the root of the thousand petalled lotus from which had emerged the Jyotirūpa (Fig. 6.28). After Mañjuśrī drained the Valley, he realized that he could not stop the flow of water that emerged from the root. Meditating to stop the water in the *jalaṣṭambana samādhi,* he realized that Guhyeśvarī are resided at the *pīṭha* in her primordial form. On the ninth day of the month of Mārgha, Mañjuśrī purified himself and bathed at Śānti Tirtha and together with his two wives, performed the secret *pūjā* at the Guhyeśvarī *pīṭha* through Tantric songs and dance. Pleased with Mañjuśrī's meditation, Guhyeśvarī manifested herself in her universal forms as Mahāsaṁvara and taught him the *Trisamādhi* or Three-Fold meditation cycle of Cakrasaṁvara and Heruka Vajravārāhī. After receiving the adamantine-water empowerment (*vajrodaka*) from Guhyeśvarī, Mañjuśrī in turn taught this meditation cycle to the Śāntikarācārya, the first Vajrācārya of Newar Buddhism, Śāntikarācārya. At Svayambhū, Śāntikarācārya consecrated the secret *āgaṁ* shrine to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī at Śāntipur, where the annual *diśi* pūjā is performed. Śāntipur is also the location where Santikarācāraya is still resides in *samādhiyoga*.

The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* narrative of the Cakrasaṁvara initiation to Mañjuśrī is found represented in an inscribed cloth painting, displayed during

the Gunla festival at Rāto Macchendranath Temple at Bungamati. The painting belongs to a larger series that depict the emergence of the Jyotirūpa, the draining of the lake by Mañjuśrī and the establishment of the sacred pilgrimage sites. In this scene, the painting depicts Guhyeśvarī giving *darśan* to Mañjuśrī/Mañjudeva, where she is represented as a blue, male Heruka-type figure, symbolizing her role as the generator of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. Anther representation of the mythic narrative is found in the mural paintings at Śāntipur, with each scene described in the inscription. Here, Guhyeśvarī is depicted in her two-handed iconographic form found in Newar Buddhism. She is shown in here in a dancing posture, holding a skull-cup and flaying knife in a manner identical to Nairatmā, which is Guhyeśvarī's alternative epithet in the Newar Buddhist tradition (Fig. 6.29).[86] What is significant here is that in the Newar Buddhist tradition, Guhyeśvarī is intimately connected to the Cakrasaṁvara meditation, with Śāntipur as the principal *āgaṁ* to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. The focus on the *yoginīs*, situated within the framework of Tantric methodologies, is central to the esoteric practices of the religion.

Intrepreting Ritual Symbolism of the Diśi Pūjā

The *Diśi* or *Daśamī Pūjā* is a principal ritual to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī performed in the *āgaṁ* shrines of the *bāhā/bahīs*. The *pūjā* is performed monthly in the *āgaṁ* on the tenth day. An additional elaborate

diśi pūjā is performed on the tenth day of the dark half of Māgha (*māgha kṛṣṇa daśamī*) to commemorate the day when Mañjuśrī received *darśan* from Guhyeśvarī.[87] Each month, the Diśi Pūjā rituals thus commemorate and reify the Cakrasaṁvara lineage teachings from Guhyeśvarī to Mañjuśrī. The actual ritual takes three days, beginning with the night of the ninth day (navamī) when the *Samvarodaya pūjā* to Cakrasaṁvara in performed as the generation *maṇḍala*. Then, on the tenth day (*daśamī*), the *daśamī* (*diśi*) *pūjā* of Vajravārāhī is performed as the completion stage. The stages of generation and completion are similar to the empowerment rituals discussed previously, in which Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī are invoked individually, with Vajravārāhī serving as the activating principle through which the practitioners attain *siddhi*. The meditation and visualizations on the union of the two, on the eleventh day (*ekādaśī*), is the culmination of the esoteric *pūjā*.[88] Similar to the *dikṣā* initiation rituals, the *diśi pūjā* emphasizes the female symbolism, with the major rituals like the *Sindura pūjā, rahasya maṇḍala, Mahāpatra pūjā* invoking Vajravārāhī and her emanations.

According to the *Samvarodaya Dasami Pūjā Vidhi,* the major rituals during the Diśi Pūjā include the Māmakī Pūjā and the Trisamādhi Pūjā. These are visualization, purifications, and worship of the *āgaṁ* deities symbolized by the ritual implements, namely of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. The central focus is the generation/visualization of the deities and their identification with the practitioner. The symbolism and ritual

implements of this ritual will be explored in some detail, as the visual imagery of the Cakrasaṁvara iconography, often, pertains to symbolic elements, without actually representing the esoteric deities. Thus, the esoteric meanings of such symbols are known only to the initiated practitioners.

The layout of the Disipūjā ritual is similar to the *kalaśarcanapūjā vidhi,* with the Māmakī *pūjā* implements placed on the side (Fig. 6.30). As in the esoteric rituals to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, the main *pūjā* (Māmakī Pūjā) is directed to the alcohol pot or secret vase (*guhyakalaśa*), which is filled with red liquor and symbolizes Māmakī/Guhyeśvarī.[89] The *sinduranjana pūjā* is the invocation of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī.

The ritual text states that the vermilion powder container (*sinha*) symbolizes Vajravārāhī and the lampblack pot (*añjanā*) symbolizes the five Tathāgatas, who is in the form of Cakrasaṁvara.[90] For the invocation of the deities, the ritual text instructs the practitioner to place the powder container (*sinha*) at the center of the *maṇḍala* to Vajravārāhī.Then, with the vermilion powder, the practitioner is to draw a double-triangle *yantra* (a quintessential symbol of Tantric goddesses) on the lampblack pot (*añjanā/mohanī*), with the *bīja* "Hum" at the center. Then the practitioner is to invoke Vajravārāhī in the powder container and Cakrasaṁvara in the lampblack pot. After a series of invocation and generation of the deities, the practitioner performs the *Trisamādhi pūjā*—the visualization of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī and

identity transfer through the visualization. Throughout the ritual process, the Cakrasaṃvara tradition reifies the highly complex ritual symbolism of Tantric tradition and brings together the key elements of the religion, namely Svayambhū, Guhyeśvarī, Vajravārāhī, and Mañjuśrī. Symbolized within the visual imagery, these elements translate as Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala, indicating the increasingly esoteric nature of the imagery. The following table illustrates the symbolism of the ritual implements in the *pujā:*

Symbolism of Ritual Implements in Diśi Pūjā[91]			
English	Newari	Sanskrit	Buddhist Identity

Māmakī Pūjā

English	Newari	Sanskrit	Buddhist Identity
1. Lamp	*sukunda*	*dipakunda*	Jina Sūrya Agni
2. Khay Pot (yogurt, oil, meat, eggs)	Khay Gvah pah	*sahaja-sukhabhanda*	Hevajra [Cakrasaṁvara] (*upāya*)
3. Alcohol Pot (red liquor)	Thapi	Guhya Kalaśa Guhyeśvarī	Māmakī Vārūṇī [Vajravārāhī]

Main *Pūjā* Implements

English	Newari	Sanskrit	Buddhist Identity
4. Black Powder Pot	*Makah Dalu mwahni*	*prajnoparaya* sindura	Cakrasaṁvara
5. Yogurt	*dhaupatti*	*saptavrddhi mangalabhanda*	Vasundharā
6. Vase	*kīrtikalaśa*	amrtaghata	Five Jinas
7. Skull-cup (white liquor)	*pātra*	pātra	Vajravārāhī Kumārī
8. Powder Container (vermilion powder)	*sinha/sinhamu*	sindurabhanda	Vajravārāhī
9. Spirit Offering	*bali*		Ganesa, AṣṭaMātṛkās Bhairava
10. Guru Maṇḍala			Vajrasattva

Śāntipur's Symbolic Association with Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī: Iconographic Analysis

To the present day, Śāntipur is the most esoteric secret *āgaṁ* shrine to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. As discussed in Chapter 3, Śāntipur has special connections with the De Ācārya Guthi of Kathmandu, as it is the primary *āgaṁ* shrine to Cakrasaṁvara and the Vajravārāhī for the eighteen main *bāhās* of Kathmandu. Traditionally, all members of the Vajrācārya De Ācārya Guthi performed the annual Diśi pūjā at Śāntipur commemorating the day that Mañjuśrī received the Cakrasaṁvara initiations from Guhyeśvarī. However, at present the rituals are not held in a regular basis.[92]

That the Śāntipur *pīṭha*'s principal deities are Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī is expressly stated in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*. The text describes Śāntipur as the foremost of the five *puras* that are the *pīṭhas* symbolizing the five elements.[93] Although physically located in the northwest side of the *stūpa,* Śāntipur is conceptually located at the east and symbolizes the ether or space and the state of *śūnyatā*Śāntipur is also referred to by various epithets relating to esoteric nature: *Saṁvarapur* ("City of Saṁvara [Cakrasaṁvara]), *Vyomapur* ("City of Space), " *Guhyapur* ("Secret City"), *Ākāśapur* ("City of the Sky"). Following these conceptions, it appears appropriate that in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* Guhyeśvarī, as the Vajravārāhī's *dharmakāyā,* is called Khagānana ("Face of the Sky").

The text explicitly states that in the *pīṭha* resides Mahāsaṁvara (Cakrasaṁvara), the lord of the universe (*mahāviraṁ saṁvaro jagadiśvara).* It describes the shrine as having nine rooms, with the inner *abhyantara* room enshrining the thousand-armed universal form of Mahāsaṁvara and his *prajñā,* Vajravārāhī.[94] The text also describes the nine *nāga maṇḍalas* that are placed in these rooms, which are to be propitiated to ensure the rains.[95] Further, Śāntikarācārya resides there in eternal meditation (*asphāṇika yoga).*[96]

Corroborating the textual descriptions, the visual imagery at Śāntipur indicates the presence of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. As in the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, the animal and bird-faced gate-guardians mark the outer and inner shrine doors (Figs. 6.31-6.34). The *toraṇa* iconography is typical of many *āgaṁ* shrines through the Valley in that the outer and inner *toraṇas* depict the Ādi Buddha Vajradhara as the center figure, holding a *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* in *vajrahuṁkāramudrā.* Vajradhara's presence as the *toraṇa* figure is particularly appropriate, as Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī symbolizes the *dharmakāya* represented in the *sambhogakāya* form.[97] The layout of Śāntipur also follows the structural format of *āgaṁ* shrines, with an outer vestibule area where the exoteric rituals are performed and the inner (*abhyantara*) rooms, where only two ritual specialists are allowed to enter. These are the senior Buddhācārya *Thakāli* of Svayambhū and the senior Vajrācārya priest from Makhan Bāhā, who are responsible for performing the

diśipūjā for state protection and well-being of the country.[98] Despite the intense secrecy maintained at the site at the shrine, the rituals and iconography indicate that Śāntipur is the core site of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī.

Most Newar Buddhist practitioners perform their worship at Śāntipur in the vestibule area and at the inner shrine door (see Fig. 3.38 and 6.35). The door itself serves as a surrogate for the main shrine images of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī and the visual symbols found in the shrine door indicates the emphasis on generative aspects of Vajravārāhī. Understood to be the face of the deity, the door has a pair of eyes and a row of five skulls on the lintel as the crowning element, similar to the attributes of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. The center lock on the inner shrine door is in a form of a gorget and depicts a sword at the center—a symbol of Vajravārāhī that is most often associated with Kumārī in her role as Vajradevī. A similar type of gorget is also worn by Kumārī. To the right and left of the sword are a *vajra* and a *ghaṇṭā,* the dual symbols of *prajña* and *upāya* of the Tantric enlightenment process. A garland of skulls, symbolizing Varavārāhī's attribute, surrounds the central lock; the garland symbolizes the fifty consonants of the Sanskrit alphabet. Another symbol directly associated with the goddess's creative principle is also placed on the door. Specifically, a *kalaśa,* Guhyeśvarī quintessential symbol, rests on a lotus and is flanked by two lions (Fig. 6.36). The presence of the Guhyeśvarī *kalaśa* further

substantiates Vajravārāhī's identity with the Guhyeśvarī, and indeed, the symbolic references to her is appropriate, as she is the ontological source of the Cakrasamvara cycle in the Newar Buddhism. This concept is reiterated emphatically in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*.

Other symbols found on the shrine doorway also refer to Vajravārāhī's presence also refers to Vajravārāhī's presence. Similar to the symbols on the shrine lock, a double canopy is found directly above the shrine door and the larger canopy depicts a sword at the center, surrounded by four *vajras*. Similar to the *maṇḍalic* pattern, the symbols signify Vajravārāhī, and her emanations as the four *yoginīs*. The second canopy in front of the door, and directly above the practitioner's head, depicts Vajrasattva as the center figure. As is typical of the multivalent Tantric symbolism, the visual imagery here not only suggests the practitioner's identity with Vajrasattva, but can also allude to Vajrasattva's role as the primordial *guru* of the Newar Buddhist. At Śāntipur, Vajrasattva may specifically refer to Śāntikarācārya, after whom Śāntipur is named. Indeed, Śāntikarācārya's symbolic association with Vajrasattva is clearly evident in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, where he is variously described as the "*nirmāṇakāya* of Vajrasattva, the *guru* of the universe", "Adamantine Guru" (*vajraguru*), or "reflection of Vajrasattva" (*vajrasattva pratirūpa*).[99]

The iconographic program at Śāntipur emphasizes and defines the esoteric Tantric traditions of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala, in that the visual

imagery extensively uses symbolism related to the *yoginīs.* The role of the *yoginīs* in the Cakrasaṁvara cycle may be further clarified by their relationship to talismanic state protection and kingship.

Rituals in Śāntipur and Their Relationship to State Protection

Although Śāntipur is the preeminent site for the highly philosophical Tantric meditational practices of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī, Śāntipur is more popularly associated with state protection and talismanic rainmaking powers. Śāntipur's significance in the socio-religious context is closely connected to kingship and protection of the country and its proper functioning according to the laws of nature. In this aspect, Śāntipur has traditionally been connected with rain-making (*jalavrsti*), since the *abhyantara* room of Śāntipur contains the jalavrsti sādhana text written from the blood of the nine nāgas, who resided in the tirthas around the Valley. During the secret rituals performed inside Śāntipur, the Vajrācārya priests and the senior Thakāli from Svayambhū have the power to end the droughts through the secret mantras of the rain-making sādhanas.[100] In both historical and quasi-historical accounts related to Śāntipur, the kings of the Valley entered the secret āgaṁ shrine at Śāntipur during droughts, famine and other physical causes that disrupted the proper functioning of the natural order.

For example, the Svayambhū Purāṇa describes the King Guṇakāmadeva of the "Transitional Period" entering Śāntipur to perform the

nāgasādhana pūjā to end the drought. The narrative also retells the legend of King Narenderadeva and the coming of Matsyendranāth to the Kathmandu Valley, in which Śāntipur's rain-making powers play a major role in ending the drought in the country. In fact, Avalokiteśvara's association with Śāntipur is still maintained and reified during the annual chariot festival of Rāto Matsyendranāth, when the priests from Bungamati come to perform a special pūjā at Śāntipur. [101] The mural painting, directly above the entrance door on the interior south wall, depicts a large representation of Padmanṛtteśvara, a dancing form of Avalokiteśvara. Here, he is shown as an eighteen-armed figure in a dancing posture with sixteen arms holding a lotus (Fig. 6.37). Directly to his left and right are the two bird-faced gate-guardians from the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala (Fig. 6.38). This central group is flanked by the four Yoginīs of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala: the blue-faced Guhyeśvarī to the far left of the main figure (Fig. 6.39); Vajrayoginī from Pharping to the left (Fig. 6.40); Khaḍga Yoginī from Śānku to the right of main figure (Fig. 6.41); and a badly damaged figure Ākāśa Yoginī from Bijeśvarī in the far left (Fig. 6.42). Padmanṛtteśvara's presence here alludes to Śāntipur's association with rainmaking, but more importantly, a form of Cakrasaṁvara is also known by the name of Padmanṛtteśvara.[102] Indeed, his representation with the group of four Yoginīs from the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala affirms this metaphor for the rain-making powers of Śāntipur, despite the shrines esoteric nature. [103]

The most detailed description of Śāntipur's association with talismanic state protection and rainmaking is found in the accounts of King Pratāp Malla in the seventeenth century. The inscriptional plaque dated N.S.778 as well as an inscribed painting in a private collection describes in detail King Pratāp Malla's efforts to enter the secret shrine at Śāntipur in order to end the drought in the Valley.[104] These accounts state that in the seventeenth year of his reign, a severe drought hit the Valley and King Pratāp Malla, with the advice of his priests, propitiated the deities of the major Hindu shrines such as Paśupati, Chāngu Nārayaṇa, Gokarṇa, but to no avail. Finally, Pratāp Malla decided to enter Śāntipur himself to perform the *nāgasādhana* ritual and to get the *nāga maṇḍala* written by the blood of the *nāgas,* which was kept inside Śāntipur by Śāntikarācārya. Although a Hindu king, Pratāp Malla's interest in Śāntipur and its rainmaking powers points to the shrine role as talismanic protection and well-being of the Valley. For the complex Tantric rituals to be performed at Śāntipur, Pratāp Malla appears to have received the higher Tantric initiations of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, which enabled him to enter the secret *āgaṁ* shrine of Śāntipur.[105] The construction of Pratāppur and Anantapur suggests Pratāp Malla and his wife's induction into the Cakrasaṁvara cycle. Empowered with these Tantric Buddhist initiations, Pratāp Malla entered the secret shrine of Śāntipur dedicated to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī.

A seventeenth-century painting, now badly damaged, illustrates the reconstruction of Śāntipur and the Pratāp Malla's visit (Fig. 6.43). The inscription on the painting duplicates Pratāp Malla's eulogies to Saṁvara and Vajrayoginī/Vajravārāhī found on the stone inscriptions of the inner shrine door of Śāntipur and outside Anantapur. The painting shows Śāntipur as a series of twenty-seven rooms, contained in three different levels.[106] The narrative beings in the exterior room of Śāntipur, where Pratāp Malla is depicted carrying the *pūjā* implements. Behind the outer door are six rooms. In the second level, there are nine rooms at the center of which is a *maṇḍala* of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī. The inscription states that the King met Mahāsaṁvara, whom he worshipped and found the *Saṁvara Tantra* "concealed in a copper milk-pail."[107] The inscriptional also mentions that the King was accompanied by the two individuals generally permitted to enter the *abhyantara* rooms of Śāntipur, i.e. the head Buddhācārya priest from Svayambhū and the senior Vajrācārya priest from Makhan Bāhā in Kathmandu, a tradition that is still maintained today during the monthly and annual *diśi pūjā* at Śāntipur.

Going down further into the cave, King Pratap Malla entered the third level alone. The painting depicts nine rooms, of which the representation of five rooms is now missing. However, according to the description given by Pratāp Malla himself, the first room shows three giant moths, whose wings extinguished the King's lamp. Moving on to the next room, he encounters the

hungry spirits, labeled in the painting as *rakṣāsa, bhuta, preta,* and *pisaca.* There the King leaves them with the food to appease them. The damaged section of the painting depicted the King's encounters with the *nāgas.*[108] At the center, Pratāp Malla finds a skeletal form of Śāntikarācārya himself seated in *samādhi,* similar to the oral accounts, where he remains in *asphanika yoga.* Beside the teacher is the rain-making *maṇḍala* and the *nāga sādhana* text, drawn by the blood of the *nāgas* and the object of Pratāp Malla's quest. In the last room, Pratāp Malla describes an underground pool, which can only be seen through a small hole. Here, the King is shown seated in *samādhi,* "meditates and inspects everything before completing his task and returning."[109] Upon the completion of the *pūjā* and bringing the *nāga sādhana* text, the Valley received the much-needed rains. Recounting his experiences, Pratāp Malla composed his famous poem, *Vṛṣṭicintāmaṇi* inside Śāntipur.

Pratāp Malla went inside Śāntipur a second time in NS 787 (1667 CE) to again bring the monsoon rains.[110] The oral tradition attributes Pratāp Malla's sudden death in 1674 as a negative result of his entrance into Śāntipur, as he had not performed the required preliminary rituals.[111] After Pratāp Malla, Bhāskara Malla (1700-1714) is also known to have performed a *nāga sādhana pūjā, meghamaṇḍala pūjā* at Śāntipur and Nāgapur to assure proper rains in N.S. 823.[112] Śāntipur's association with state protection and kingship also continued even with the more mainstream Hindu

Shah kings, such as Rana Bāhādur Śāha and Girvaṇa Yuddha Śāha, who established the tradition of the monthly and annual state *pūjās performed* at Śāntipur even today. Each month, an offering is sent by the palace for the worship at Śāntipur.

The above accounts suggest that Śāntipur's significance to the kings of the Valley is related to state protection and the talismanic rain-making powers of the shrine. In the understanding of the Valley as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, Śāntipur serves the preeminent shrine of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī, with Vajravārāhī as the generator of the *Yoginī* class *maṇḍala*. Understood within this context, the extensive royal patronage of Śāntipur by the kings of the Valley may be interpreted as an acknowledgement of Vajravārāhī's role in state protection and ensuring the well being and natural order in the kingdom. In this context, the role of the *Yoginīs* as markers of sacred space.

SECTION IV: ANALYSIS OF ICONOLOGY

Conceptualizing the Relationship between the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍalas

Thus far, I have discussed the significance of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala in the Newar Buddhist tradition and its relation to Svayambhū Mahācaitya and Guhyeśvarī. As indicated by the architectural and iconographic elements of the *bāhās/bahī,* both Svayambhū Mahācaitya and

the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala are integral to the iconographic program of these monasteries. In this section, I exmine the relationship of the two preeminent meditational cycles in Newar Buddhism: the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala .

As discussed in the earlier sections, the commentarial literature interprets the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra,* the root text of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala , through the soteriological practices of the Anuttara Yoginī Tantras. To review briefly the technical analysis, the *Amṛtakaṇika Ṭīkā* interprets the twelved vowels *mantra* of the Nāmasaṅgīti in terms of the *sahaja* practices. The commentary states that the *mantras* represent the twelve sacred locations (i.e., *pīṭhas, upapīṭhas, chaṇḍohas, upachaṇḍohas,* etc.) and the twelve *bhūmis* of the Buddhist cosmology that are to be visualized to exist within the practitioner's body (*vajrakāya*). These vowels are associated with one of the six *cakras* of the *yogin*'s body that, in turn, correspond to the six *kulas* of the Buddhas (the five Jinas and Vajrasattva). To symbolize the purification and union of the *kāya, vāk, citta,* the vowels are grouped in sets of three to signify the four states of bliss (*ānanda, paramānanda, vīrānanada, sahajānanda*), which arise during *yogic* practices, from the union between the *yogic* and the female. Awaking each of the *cakras,* the *yogin* emerges as a fully enlightened being, as Vajrasattva, the *sambhogakāya* representation of the *Dharmakāya.* The commentary expressively states the exoteric and esoteric readings of the twelve-syllabled *mantra,* where in the exoteric understanding

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Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is identified with Vairocana, as the totality of Buddhahood. In the Anuttara Yoginī interpretation, the *Nāmasaṅgīti* states that the central deity generated is the union of the male and female, in which Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara transforms into Vajradhara, who manifests himself as the Vajrasattva and Heruka deities like Cakrasaṁvara to the benefit of the practitioners.[113]

The Newar Buddhist tradition also understands this technical buddhological interpretation to be the fundamental relationship between the two *maṇḍalas,* as the "inner" meaning of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is identical to the Cakrasaṁvara system. As mentioned before, ritual practices also articulate this understanding, as Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara's *abhyantara* form is blue shown in union with his *prajña.* Furthermore, in the initiations to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, Mañjuśrī in his form as Mañjuvajra and his *prajña* as Kesinivajra are integral to the ritual empowerments.[114] This buddhological understanding is also found replicated in the visual symbolism of Svayambhū Mahācaitya, where the *stūpa,* Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the two shrines to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī (i.e Pratāppur and Anantapur) appear to be a single unit. Specifically, Mañjuśrī's role as the transmitter of the Cakrasaṁvara cycle meditation emphasizes the direct connection between Mañjuśrī and the Cakrasaṁvara teachings in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

The symbolic relationship between Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala /Mañjuśrī

and the Cakrasaṁvara in the Newar Buddhist context can be found articulated in numerous paintings of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. A fifteenth century painting from the John Gilmore Ford Collection depicts Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī as the central figures (Fig. 6.44).[115] At the top of the painting are a row of deities, who, in both the Tibetan and Nepali tradition, are related to the particular cycle of teaching. In the Tibetan tradition, the top row generally depicts the lineage transmission of the teachings.[116] Similarly, in the Nepali painting, we also find a direction connection to the teaching lineage in Newar Buddhist tradition. At the top center position is Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī shown in his twelve-armed form found in Nepal. He is flanked by six dancing figures, with three on the left and three on the right. With the exception of the white figure who is six armed, they appear to be four-armed male figures, depicted in the colors of the Jina Buddhas (from the viewer's left to right: white, yellow, red, blue, and green). The additional sixth deity in the far left appears to be a red figure. Since the principal hands of these deities hold the *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* in a manner similar to Vajrasattva, they may be interpreted as forms of the Jinas described in the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra*, in which Vajrasattva is inherently present as the head of the six *kulas*. Furthermore, the two deities in the corners also appear to be related to the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra* cycles. At the far left corner is Mahāvairocana of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, which is described in the fifth chapter of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra*.[117] In the Newar

Buddhist practices and iconography, the Vajradhātu *maṇḍala* is assigned to Vajrasattva as the *kula* head in the tradition of the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra.*[118] At the far right appears to be a form of Mañjuśrī known as Mañjuśrī, represented in his six-armed form, who again is closely associated with Vajrasattva.[119]

The significant point here is that the Cakrasaṁvara painting is intimately associated with forms of Mañjuśrī, and in particular the personification of the Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra appears in the top center, a position usually designated for the source of the teachings. The choice of imagery makes perfect sense, if one understands the lineage transmission of the Cakrasaṁvara cycle in the Newar Buddhist tradition beginning with Guhyeśvarī/Nairātmā to Mañjuśrī and to the first Vajrācārya, Śāntikarācārya. In another layer of interpretation, Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī's presence as the central figure may allude to the "inner and secret" meaning of the Tantra, which, in the Newar Buddhist tradition, is the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala . In the explanations I was given by the ritual specialists, the twelve-armed form of Mañjuśrī as Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī is transformed to the twelve-armed Cakrasaṁvara in the esoteric *abhayantara* interpretation. Although the physical appearance of the deities is different, the practitioner is to understand that the symbolism of the deities, demonstrating the thirty-seven wings of Enlightenment, remains identical. The difference is in the method through which this may be experienced.

That the Dharmadhātu and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala teachings are intimately connected and are the fundamental meditational cycles of the Newar Buddhist tradition is further clarified in other Nepali paintings of the Heruka deities. For example, in the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala painting from the Los Angeles County Museum (Fig. 6.45), Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is again present in the top row of deities, in addition to Mahāvairocana from the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala. Similarly, the Caṇḍamahāroṣana painting from the Zimmermann Collection (Fig. 6.46) depicts the major meditational cycles in the Newar Buddhist context. At the top center position is a two-armed from of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. Flanking them are Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala on his right and Mahāvairocana from the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala on his left. In the far right corner is Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī in his twelve-armed form.[120] Even a cursory iconographic analysis of these works of art demonstrates the symbolic association with Cakrasaṁvara and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As the principal deities of the *āgaṁ* shrines of the *bāhās/bahīs*, Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī is one of the most important esoteric deities in the Newar Buddhist tradition. Because of the highly esoteric practices that requires ritual initiation, the *āgaṁ* shrine and its related visual imagery is

inaccessible for iconography study. Nonetheless, an understanding of their significance within the religion can be gleaned by the numerous ritual practices, such as the *pīṭhapūjā* pilgrimage, the *dikṣā* initiations of the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī, and the *trisamādhi pūjā* to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, which is a mandatory component of the exoteric *gurumaṇḍala* and *Kalaśārcana pūjās* . Reflecting the *abhyantara* ("inner") component of Tantric practice which requires esoteric Tantric initiation, the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala not only unifies the three core components, but also provides a Tantric Buddhist framework to interpret the Newar Buddhist religion.

Most important, the conception of the valley's sacred geography as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala is perhaps the most profound statement of the *maṇḍala*'s significance in the Tantric practices of the Newar community. As reflective of the highly technical and esoteric Tantric methodology practiced by the Newars, this sacred construct strongly underscores the symbolic relationship of the three key core elements, namely Svayambhū, Dharmadhātu, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍalas. Further, this understanding articulates a fundamental premise of Newar Buddhist ontology, that is, the goddess (*yoginī*) is conceived as the generating and root source of the Tantric methodology. In the Newar Buddhist context, it is Guhyeśvarī/Vajravārāhī and her various emanations as the four *yoginīs* and the Aṣṭamātṛkās, who both physically and as a meditational visualization defines and generates the sacred nature of the Valley. In the next chapter, I

will explore in further detail the significance of the *yoginīs* as the ontological source of Newar Buddhism, their buddhological hierarchy and symbolism, as well as their socio-political function.

[1] The *digi* is generally the place designated for community feasts and meeting of the *sangha* members

[2] There is an important distinction in the Tibetan tradition, in that the term *iṣṭadevatā / yidam* refers to a chosen deity that is given to the initiate by the *guru*. In Nepal, the lineage deity is also sometimes referred to as *iṣṭadevatā* or *kuladevatā* ("family deity"). However, in the Newar Buddhist context, one is born into the lineage deity relationship.

[3] See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 289-90.

[4] This presented an interesting methodological problem during my field research. Since I was not an initiated member of the community, any direct discussions of these highly esoteric practices and symbolic imagery with my informants were difficult and deemed inappropriate. However, many aspects of the Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī practices were alluded to during the interviews. As I have not seen any of the rituals, much of the interpretation presented in this section is a result of the textual sources, published sources and the contextual reading of the works of art.

[5] Allen, *The Cult of Kumarī*, 43.

[6] The relationship between Kumārī and Vajravārāhī in the Buddhist context will be discussed in detail in Chapter Seven.

[7] See Chapter Seven.

[8] M. Shokoohy and N.H. Shokoohy, eds., *Kīrtipur: An Urban Community in Nepal* (London: Araxus Monograph on Art Archaeology and Architecture, 1994), Appendix B.

[9] According to the National Museum records, the Cakrasaṁvara image is 62x49 cms., while Vajravārāhī is 69 x 65.

[10] See P. Pal, *The Art of Nepal.*

[11] The information I am using here are the ritual texts, *Samvarodaya Daśami Pūjā Vidhi* and *Trisamādhi Pūjā Vidhi.* My conclusions were also compared with those of Gellner in his seminal work, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest.*

[12] I confirmed my conclusions with contemporary ritual specialists, such as Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, Sūrya Mān Vajrācārya, and Ratna Kājī Vajrācārya.

[13] For the Hindu construction of sacred space, see Robert Levy, *Mesocosm: Hinduism and the Organization of a Traditional Newar City in Nepal.*

[14] Ratna Kājī Vajrācārya, *Kalaśarcanapūjāvidhi*, 5.

[15] There are different versions of the *samkalpa* statement, however, essentially all the *samkalpa* rituals conceptualize the Nepal Maṇḍala as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. In the ritual text to the Cakrasaṁvara *pūjā, Samvarodaya Daśami Pūjā Vidhi*, the *samkalpa* statement is as follows:

". . . .*vāsuki ksetre upachaṇḍoha pithe āryavarta puñya bhūmau karkoṭaka nāgarājālaye nāgavasābhidhana mahāhrde śrī svayambhū caitya sthane śrī guhyeśvarī*

prajñapāramitādhisthite śrī mañjuśrīyāmadhisthita bhumau Nepala maṇḍale śrī samvara maṇḍalākare sudūrjayā bhūmi //

"In the land of Vāsuku [Nāga], in the Upachaṇḍoha *pīṭha* [of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala], in the sacred land of the Āryavrata; in the home of Karkoṭaka Nāgarājā; in the residence of the *nāgas;* in the great lake, the place of Śrī Svayambhū Caitya, presided by Śrī Guhyeśvarī Prajñapāramitā; in the land presided by Śrī Mañjuśrī; in the Nepal Maṇḍala, in the form of Śrī Samvara [Cakrasaṁvara] Maṇḍala, in the vicinity of the Sudūrjayā Bhūmi."

Similarly, in the ritual text (*Kalasārcana Pūjāvidhi*) edited by Ratnakāji Vajrācārya, the *saṁkalpa* ritual differs slightly:

"sudūrjayā bhūmi bhāge upachaṇḍoha pīṭhe śrīheruka virūpakṣa khagānanādhivāsite anekadevālaya sthāne śrī svayambhū Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara sannidhāne /

"In the area of the Sudūrjaya Bhūmi, in the Upachaṇḍoha *pīṭha* [of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala], presided by Śrī Heruka Virūpaksa [Cakrasaṁvara] and Khagānana [Guhyeśvarī], place of home of numerous gods, sustained by Śrī Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara"

[16] See Robert Levy, *Mesocosm: Hinduism and the Organization of a Traditional Newar City in Nepal* and Niels Gutschow, *Stadtraum und Ritual der Newarischen Stadte im Kathmandtutal.*

[17] Levy, *Mesocosm,* 246.

[18] Two major published sources for the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala are Kazi Dewa-Samdup, ed., *Shrichakrasambhara Tantra: A Buddhist Tantra* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1919; reprint, New Delhi: Āditya Prakashan, 1987) and Shinichi Tsuda, *The Samvarodaya-Tantra: Selected Chapters* (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1974). There are numerous Newar manuscripts with commentaries that follow these Tantras.

[19] B. Bhattacaryya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* 26-29.

[20] In its complete form, there are total of sixty-one deities in the Maṇḍala (5+16+16+16+16) i.e five in the inner circle, including Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī; sixteen male and female deities in each of the three concentric circles, and the eight gate guardians in the cardinal and intermediate points). Since the male and female deities in union are understood as one, the sixty-one deities are conceived of symbolizing the thirty-seven wings of Enlightenment.

[21] For detailed symbolism of the iconography, see Susan L. Huntington and John C. Huntington, *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree,* Appendix II.

[22] I use the term *yoginī* here following the contemporary usage in Newar Buddhist tradition. The female deities in the Tantric Buddhist tradition are also referred as *ḍākinīs,* although this term is seldom used in Newar Buddhism.

[23] Herakaji Vajrācārya, *Trisamādhi Pūjā Vidhi,* 48.

[24] The instructions for meditating in a counterclockwise direction are also given in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī.* The Maṇḍala instruction states: *Tataḥ prācāyādidiṣu vāma vartena cakṣvādividikṣu dakṣiṇa vartena nyāsaḥ* "Then begin at the east side, meditating from left to right". See Bhattacaryya, *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* 26.

[25] See Bhattacaryya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* 26.

[26] Kazi Dawa-Samdup, *Shricakrasambhara Tantra,* 26.

[27] Kazi Dawa-Samdup, *Shricakrasambhara Tantra,* 27.

[28] See *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa,* 300-313. This list includes the eight Aṣṭamātṛkās, *pīṭhas,* Bhairavas, cremation grounds, Offering Goddesses, etc. For detailed summary of these sites, see Kolver, "The Evolution of a World Picture", *Numen,* 142. However, Kolver

does not associate the descriptions given in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* with the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala.

[29] The physical locations of these eight esoteric tirthas are identical to the first eight sites of the more popularly known twelve *tirthas*. The differences in this esoteric category given in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* are in the esoteric significance and interpretations of these sites that emerges through rituals practices.

[30] See Tsuda, *Samvarodaya Tantra*, 99.

[31] The specification of the directions and *bijas* differ from the Aṣṭamātṛkās in a Hindu context. See Levy, *Mesocosm*.

[32] *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa*, 300-313.

[33] Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, who served as the *mula purohita* or principal ritual specialist for a number of Cakrasaṁvara initiations, verified that statement initiates had to perform the *pīṭhapūjā* pilgrimage after they had received the initiations, thus reifying the physical *maṇḍala* in the sacred geography of the Valley. Badrī Ratna has officiated in six *pīṭhapūjās* in VS 2022, 2038, 2039, 2041, 2043, and 2054. I also met practitioners, who were performing the *pīṭhapūjā* as part of the initiation ritual, when I interviewed them in 1998. Despite the secrecy associated with the *pīṭhapūjā* and its rituals, the non-initiated practitioners were also aware of its significance and association with the Cakrasaṁvara initiation. For Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya's involvement in the *pīṭhapūjās*, see Aṣṭamuni Gubhaju, *Bhaktikṛti: Guru Paṇḍita Badrīratna Vajrācāryayā Dhautayā Jivanī vā Abhilekha Munā* [Biography of Guru Paṇḍita Badrīratna Vajrācārya] (Kathmandu: Nepahya Bauddha Dharma Sangha, 1998).

[34] Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya stated that preliminary teachings to prepare for the rituals were also given during this time.

[35] See Niels Gutschow and Manavajra Vajrācārya, "Ritual as Mediator of Space", *Journal of the Nepal Research Centre*, 1, 1977, pp. 1-10.

[36] Scholars have found it highly problematic that the Newar Buddhists involve the Aṣṭamātṛkās in their ritual practices. Scholars such as Kolver have suggested that the inclusion of the Aṣṭamātṛkās in the *pīṭhapūjā* reflects a conflation of the Hindu configuration. However, in reference to the counterclockwise arrangement of the Aṣṭamātṛkās, Kolver remarks conversely supports my argument of the *pīṭhapūjā*'s association with the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. He writes, "The way that connects them [Aṣṭamātṛkās], though, can in no sense be called a circumambulation, in the proper sense. Perhaps, it is an intentionally obscured way to refer to the *maṇḍala* of a deity who is thus—in secret, as it were—represented as the central deity of the sequence." The secret deity, in this case, is Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī. Kolver, "The Evolution of a World Picture", *Numen*, 142.

[37] The term *purvasevā* suggests that the ritual may have traditionally performed by the Vajrācārya's before the actual initiation ceremony itself. However, to my knowledge, the *purvasevā* in the contemporary tradition, was performed after the *dikṣā* initiation, suggesting the fluidity of the ritual practices. The pilgrimage is performed at the conclusion of the ceremony, the *abhyantara pūjās* to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, such as when the *rahasya pūjā* and the *Sindurātmaka pūjā* are performed. See Aṣṭamuni Gubhaju, *Vaktikriti: Guru Paṇḍitaa Badriratna Vajrācāryaya Dhautaya Jivani va Abhilekha Muna*, 52-65.

[38] *Trisamādhi Pūjā Vidhi*, 48.

[39] Zanen, S.M. "The Goddess Vajrayogini and the Kingdom of Sankhu (Nepal)", *Puruṣārtha*, 1986:10, 124-66.

[40] Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 70-72.

[41] Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 72.

[42] It is noteworthy that the colophon of the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*, dated 1253 CE and translated by Kazi Dawa-Sumdup from Tibetan, states that the text was written at Svayambhū Mahācaitya and translated into Tibetan from a Sanskrit original. This suggests that by the thirteenth century, the Cakrasaṃvara cycle teachings was preeminent in the Kathmandu Valley and that the Svayambhū Mahācaitya may have been an important site for these practices

[43] See Chapter 5 of the *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇaṃ*

[44] *Samvarodaya Diśi (Daśamī) Pūjāvidhi*, preface, no page numbers

[45] See Chapter 5 of the *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇaṃ*

[46] *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇam*, 313.

> Iti saṃpurṇena pīṭhaṃ caturviṃaśti pīṭhakaṃ /
> Etais cakrai tritiyais ca śrī svayambhū parivṛtam //

> Of all the *pīṭhas*, the twenty-four *pīṭhas*
> Existing in the three *cakras*, surround Śrī Svayambhū

[47] Guhyeśvarī's connection with Vajravārāhī is further reified in the *dīkṣā* initiation of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī. The main empowerment to Vajravārāhī is signified by the *Guhyakalaśābhiśekha*, where the secret vase into which Vajravārāhī is invoked is invariably referred to as the Guhyeśvarī *kalaśa*. Furthermore, the Vajrācārya ritual specialists also explain that the secret *kalaśa* invokes Nairātmā, another epithet of Guhyeśvarī, as she is referred to in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*. I will discuss the relationship between Vajravārāhī and Guhyeśvarī in more detail in the Chapter Seven.

[48] My arguments presented here of the Valley's sacred geography as the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala and the idea of the *bāhās* as a three-dimensional *maṇḍalic* space is further strengthened by recent research on the iconography of Kumārī Bāhā. In her paper, "Conceptualizing the Relationship of Kumārī Bāhā, Maṇḍalic Space, and the Kathmandu Valley (Annual Conference of the Association of Asian Studies, 1998) Janice M. Glowski discusses how the iconographic program at Kumārī Bāhā correlates with the conceptions of the Valley's sacred geography as the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala and the *bāhās* as three-dimensional *maṇḍala*. Glowski's conclusions on Kumārī Bāhā's visual imagery also emphasize the concept of *maṇḍalic* space as reflecting the macrocosm, since Kumārī is an emanation of Vajravārāhī.

[49] Interestingly, this ritual is taught on the day before the monastic ordination, and the initiate performs it again during the day of his ordination as a *bhikṣu*. The performance of the *gurumaṇḍala pūjā* during monastic initiation implies that the entire *bare chuegu* rite may, on one level, be interpreted in a Vajrayāna framework.

[50] Gellner notes that the *gurumaṇḍala* is also performed by some pious Śākyas and initiated lay community as part of their daily ritual, and certainly, by all practicing Vajrācārya priests. See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* 149. During my fieldwork, I also observed that this *pūjā* was also performed by the lay community during *vratapūjās* as a preliminary ritual to other forms of worship. During these *pūjās,* the Vajrācārya priest leads the *jajmān* through the *gurumaṇḍala* as a purification of the body, speech and mind.

[51] As quoted in Allen, 10.

[52] Locke, *Karunamaya,* 46.

[53] To be part of the Ten Pāramitās elders (*āju*) of the *bāhā*, the *saṅgha* members must receive *dīkṣā*, as the elders perform the esoteric rituals such as the *gaṇacakra* and *kumārī pūjā* in the *āgaṃ* shrines.

[54] Gellner notes that there are considerably instances when the male members have taken them before marriage. He also gives an excellent summary of the Tantric *dīkṣā* to Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī that was performed by Āśā Kājī Vajrācārya, who officiated

as main priest in the ritual. See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 280-288.

[55] In 1995, *dīkṣā* initation was offered at Ha Bāhā in Patan after more twenty-five years. According to Siddhi Ratna Vajrācārya from Ha Bāhā *saṅgha*, who had been in charge of organizing this elaborate ritual, stated that there were about seventy-five initiates. During the initiation, each initiate had go in as a pair—male and female. In January 1998, Kathmandu's foremost Vajrācārya, Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya was the chief priest for the Cakrasaṁvara *dīkṣā*, which involved a seclusion of fourteen day for all the initiates.

[56] Lewis, *The Tuladhars of the Kathmandu*, 239.

[57] Lay practitioners who have received the *dikṣā* empowerment required to maintain regular worship in their personal *āgaṁ* shrines.

[58] There is an association in Kathmandu called "Mahāsaṁvara Smārtha Samāj" for the initiates who have received *dīkṣā*, that holds week-long esoteric rituals at Ākāśa Yoginī Temple at Bijeśvarī. In 1982, there was a Thirty-Six Saṁvara Worship, in which 317 people participated. See *Mahāsambar Chattisamat Pūjāyā Riport* (Kathmandu: Vijesvari Bihar Sudhar Samiti, N.S 1102). For summary of *pūjā*, see also Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 305-306.

[59] Locke, *Karunamaya*, 50. During the *Trisamādhi pūjā*, which is the fundamental meditational ritual to Cakrasaṁvara, these Heruka class deities are also invoked. See Herakaji Vajracaray, *Trisamādhi Pūjā Vidhi*.

[60] This format is also applicable to the *āgaṁ* shrines in the private houses, where the inner room and the rituals performed there is restricted to those members who have taken *dikṣā*.

[61] Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 276.

[62] During my interviews, the male informants made particular note of this aspect, which they remarked was perfectly in keeping with the ritual at hand and was to be expected, yet in normal circumstances, would be considered highly deviant behaviour.

[63] The Goddess Kumārī, often invoked into the body of a young girl, is also called Vajradevī, and is to be an aspect of Vajravārāhī.

[64] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 277.

[65] The Ṣaṭ Yoginī, that include Vajravārāhī and her retinue of five *yoginīs* from the Vajravārāhī Maṇḍala are often equated with the Ṣaṭ Pāramitā. In this context, *Kumārī Pūjā* is offered to Vajravārāhī, in her creative and generative aspect (*sṛṣṭi*) as the young goddess, Kumārī. I will discuss this in detail in Chapter Seven.

[66] The information of the *dikṣā* ceremony is based on published sources, both in English and Newari as well as with the help of informants.

[67] Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras*, 47-49.

[68] For detailed analysis and description of the ritual, see Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 273-280. See also, Locke, *Karunamaya*, The initiation rituals are summarized from information given to Gellner by Asha Kaji Vajrācārya, who had acted as the *mula purohita*. The rituals on Cakrasaṁvara follow the *Kriyā Samuccya* while those on Vajravārāhī is based on the *Samvarodaya Tantra*. The interpretation of the empowerments that I have added are also based on the *Trisamādhi Vidhi* and the *Samvarodaya Disipūjā Vidhi*.

[69] This may be seen as further evidence of the symbolic relationship not only between Vajrasattva and Mañjuśrī, but also of the Cakrasaṁvara and Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Before the empowerment, the initiates are given the *mantra* of Svayambhū.

[70] In Chapter Seven, I will discuss the significance of Kumārī as Vajradevī in the rituals of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī.

[71] My analyses of the empowerment is based on the information given by Gellner, Locke, and primary texts. See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 273-280. See also, Locke, *Karunamaya*. See also *Trisamādhi Vidhi* and the *Samvarodaya Diśipūjā Vidhi*.

[72] *Trisamādhi Pūjā Vidhi*, 42.

[73] It should be noted that the *Guhyasamaja Tantra* also refers to Mañjuśrī/Manjuvajra as directing the five arrows at the five cakras of the *yogin*'s body to awaken the *bodhicitta*.
"The "knower of mantras" should contemplate in the middle of the Diamond sky an adamantine Mañjuśrī of great power; he should recollect his projecting point with the praxis of five arrows, and make them fall, in the manner of the formidable thunderbolt, in five spots." See Wayman, The Buddhist Tantras, 206.

[74] *Samvarodaya Dasami (Diśi) Pūjāvidhi*, 69.

[75] Wayman has translated the Sanskrit *slokas* pertaining to the mirror empowerment. See Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras*, 69.

> All *dharmas* are like reflected images
> clear and pure without turbluence
> ungraspable, inexpressible, truly arisen
> from cause and action (*hetu* and *karma*)
>
> Just like Vajrasattva in a mirror that is
> clear and pure, without turbulence; so also
> the Buddhas, universal lords, themselves
> abide in the heart of thee, my son.
>
> Now that you have so understood the *dharmas*
> as without intrinsic nature and without
> location, may you perform incomparably the
> aim of sentient beings, so they may be born
> as sons of the Protectors!

[76] Gellner notes that the two empowerments, *prajñabhiśeka* and *jñānabhiśekha*, are sometimes combined into a single unit as *prajñajñānabhiśekha*.

[77] *Trisamādhi Pūjāvidhi*, 24.

[78] The six *Yoginīs* will be discussed later in this chapter.

[79] *Trisamādhi Pūjāvidhi*, 28.

[80] Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantra*, 69.

[81] As in the previous section, the information of the empowerments is taken from Gellner. I have added my interpretations, based on the ritual texts, such as the *Trisamādhi Pūjāvidhi* and the *Samvarodaya Diśi (Dasami) Pūjā Vidhi*, the ritual texts to Cakṛasaṁvara worship.

[82] *Samvarodaya Diśi (Daśami) Pūjā Vidhi*, 34.

[83] This will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

[84] Gellner also notes that the empowerment of the secret skull-cup is also a key component of other rituals, such as during the lineage deity *pūjā* (*digudyaḥ pūjā*), the Tantric rituals at Mohani (Dasain), and annual Diśi *pūjā* in the *āgaṁ*. See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 242-243.

[85] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 280.

[86] I will further discuss Guhyeśvarī's iconography and symbolic association with Nairatmā and Māmakī in Chapter Seven.

[87] *Samvarodya Dasami (Diśi) Pūjā Vidhi*, "kha".

[88] Samvarodya Dasami (Diśi) Pūjā Vidhi, "ja".

[89] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 278.

[90] *Samvarodya Dasami (Diśi) Pūjā Vidhi*, 69.

[91] Based on *Samvarodya Dasami (Diśi) Pūjā Vidhi* and Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 154-155.

[92] Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, 39.

[93] *Vrhat Svayambhū Purāṇaṁ*, 406.

[94] *Vrhat Svayambhū Purāṇaṁ*, 424-425.

[95] The *Nāgamandala* is described as having the following configuration:

Cardinal Points
1. Center: Varuna (white)
2. East: Ananta (blue)
3. South: Padma
4. West: Taksaka (pink)
5. North: Vasuki (green)

Intermediate Points
6. Agni: Sankhapala (yellow)
7. Vāyu: Kulika (white)
8. Isana: Mahāpadma
9. Nairtti: Karkotaka

[96] Hemraj Śākya, *Svayambhū Sthita Śāntipur: Chagu Adhyana*, 13.

[97] Similar examples are found in Bu Bāhā, Su Bāhā and Si Bāhā in Patan.

[98] During my field research, Najarman Buddhācārya, the head *Thakāli* from Svayambhū alone performed the monthly *diśi pūjā* at Svayambhū, although traditionally, the Makan Vajrācārya priest should accompany him.

[99] *Vrhat Svayambhū Purāṇaṁ*, 398, 400, 405.

[100] According to the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, Śāntikarācārya performed the Tantric ritual known as the *nāga sādhana* for the rain and has written the ritual text in the blood of the nine *nāgas* residing in the *tirthas*. For an iconographic discussion of a painting depicting this narrative, see Mary Slusser, "Serpents, Sages, and Sorcerers in Cleveland", *Oriental Art*, 3:11.

[101] See John K. Locke, *Karuṇāmaya*, 34 .

[102] See Bhattacaryya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, 26.

[103] Padmanrttesvara is also one of the *vīras* in the *kāya cakra* of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala . Furthermore, other forms of Avalokiteśvara are also associated with Cakrasaṁvara. For example, see Ngor Maṇḍala #93 that is dedicated to the 45-Deity Cakrasaṁvara Avalokiteśvara Padmajāla Maṇḍala. Here, the root text is the *Ārya Avalokiteśvare Mula Tantra Rājanāma*.

[104] Gautamvajra Vajrācārya, "Pratāpa Mallako Śāntipurprabeśa [Pratap Malla's entry into Śāntipur], *Purṇimā*, 4, I:4 (V.S. 2021), 7-14.

[105] The emphasis on initiations and empowerment as the proper and required preparation to enter the secret *āgaṁ* shrine is indicated by King Rana Bahadur's accounts. In the late eighteenth century, King Rana Bāhādur Shah forcibly entered Śāntipur, without the required initiation and empowerment, at which time he was immediately struck blind. As a gesture of regret and asking for forgiveness, the Shah kings maintain a tradition of sending a gold coin to perform a special *pūjā* in Śāntipur during Kārttika Purṇimā (the anniversary of the covering of the Mahācaitya and the establishment of the five *puras*) and Magha Purṇimā (the month when Mañjuśrī received the Cakrasaṁvara initiation from Guhyeśvarī). It is interesting to compare Pratāp Malla's accounts i

[106] The same painting published by Gautamvajra Vajrācārya shows the manuscript in better condition, thereby allowing a more detailed analysis of the iconography.

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[107] Slusser, "Serpents, Sages, and Socerers in Cleveland", *Oriental Art*, 80.

[108] The original painting reproduced by Gautamvajra Vajracaraya depicts this section of the now damaged painting.

[109] Slusser, "Serpents, Sages, and Socerers in Cleveland", *Oriental Art*, 81.

[110] Gautamvajra Vajrācārya, "Pratāpa Mallako Śāntipurprabeśa [Pratap Malla's entry into Śāntipur], *Purṇimā,* 7-14.

[111] Hemraj Śākya, *Svayambhū Sthita Śāntipur: Chagu Adhyana,* 39. In other accounts, Pratāp Malla is said to have died immediately after witnessing the ceremonial dance to the Goddess Harisiddhi at the Kathmandu Palace. See Regmi, *Medieval Nepal,* pt. 2. 93-97.

[112] Hemraj Śākya, *Svayambhū Sthita Śāntipur: Chagu Adhyana,* 40.

[113] *Amṛtakaṇika Ṭīkā,* 38.

[114] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* 275.

[115] For discussion of the Cakrasaṁvara iconography, see Susan L. Huntington and John C. Huntington, *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree,* pl. 92, 265-267.

[116] See Susan L. Huntington and John C. Huntington, *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree,* nos. 117 and 118. For example, the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī Tibetan painting of the mature Bal bris style (no.117) shows virtually an identical format. Here, in the top row is the teaching lineage, which includes Vajradhara in the top center position and the Mahāsiddhas such as Luipa, Ghaṇṭāpa, Kanhapa etc., who played an important role in the early transmission of the Cakrasaṁvara teachings.

[117] The Vajradhātu Maṇḍala is described in detail in the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasamgraha.* In analyzing the structural form of the Dharmadhātu and Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, it appears that the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is developed from the basic format of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala in the Shingon tradition of Japan.

[118] In a few *bāhās* in Patan such as Bu Bāhā, Su Bāhā, and Uku Bāhā, the iconography of the six strut figures (the five Jinas and Vajrasattva) based on the *Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra,* depicts Vairocana in this form as Mahāvairocana from the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, instead of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjuśrī.

[119] As we discussed in Chapter Three, the Manjuvajra Maṇḍala described in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* has Manjuvajra at the central deity, who is the essence of the Vajrasattva. Bhattacaryya writes that in this context, Mañjuvajra "is of the nature of Vajrasattva, the sixth Dhyāni Buddha, an extension of the form of the Dhyāni Buddha Vairocana". See Bhattacaryya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* 33.

[120] I am not able to identity the other three deities. They are shown as four-armed figures in union with their females, who are also four-armed.

Figure 6.1. Āgaṁ Shrine to Cakrasaṁvara/
Vajravārāhī. North Courtyard Wall. Bu Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 6.2. Āgaṁ Shrine Doorway, depicting the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala iconography. South Wall, Second level. Cā Bahī, Kathmandu.

Figure 6.4. Animal-Faced Gate Guardians from the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. West of exterior Door. North Face. Śāntipur. Svaymabhū¨Mahācaitya Complex.

Figure 6.3. Animal-Faced Gate Guardians from the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. East of exterior Door. North Face. Śāntipur. Svaymabhū¨Mahācaitya Complex.

Figure 6.6. Animal-Faced Gate Guardians from the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. West of interior shirne door. North Face. Śāntipur. Svaymabhū·Mahācaitya Complex.

Figure 6.5. Animal-Faced Gate Guardians from the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. East of interior shrine door. North Face. Śāntipur. Svaymabhū·Mahācaitya Complex.
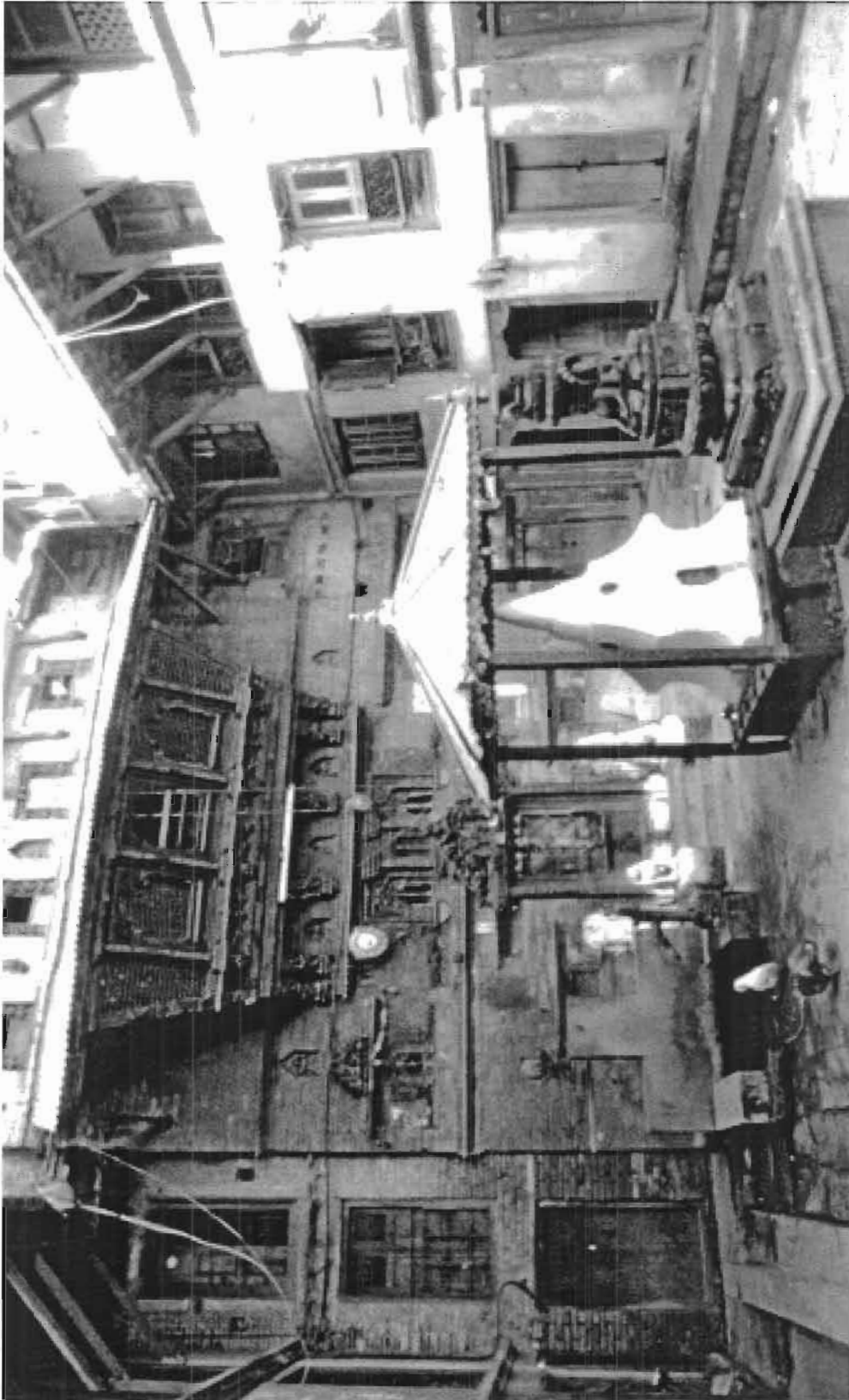
Figure 6.7. Interior Courtyard. View showing shrine facade on south wall. Hāku Bāhā, Kathmandu.

Figure 6.8. (left) Side Window of *āgaṁ* shrine. Second Floor. South shrine facade. Hāku Bāhā, Kathmandu.
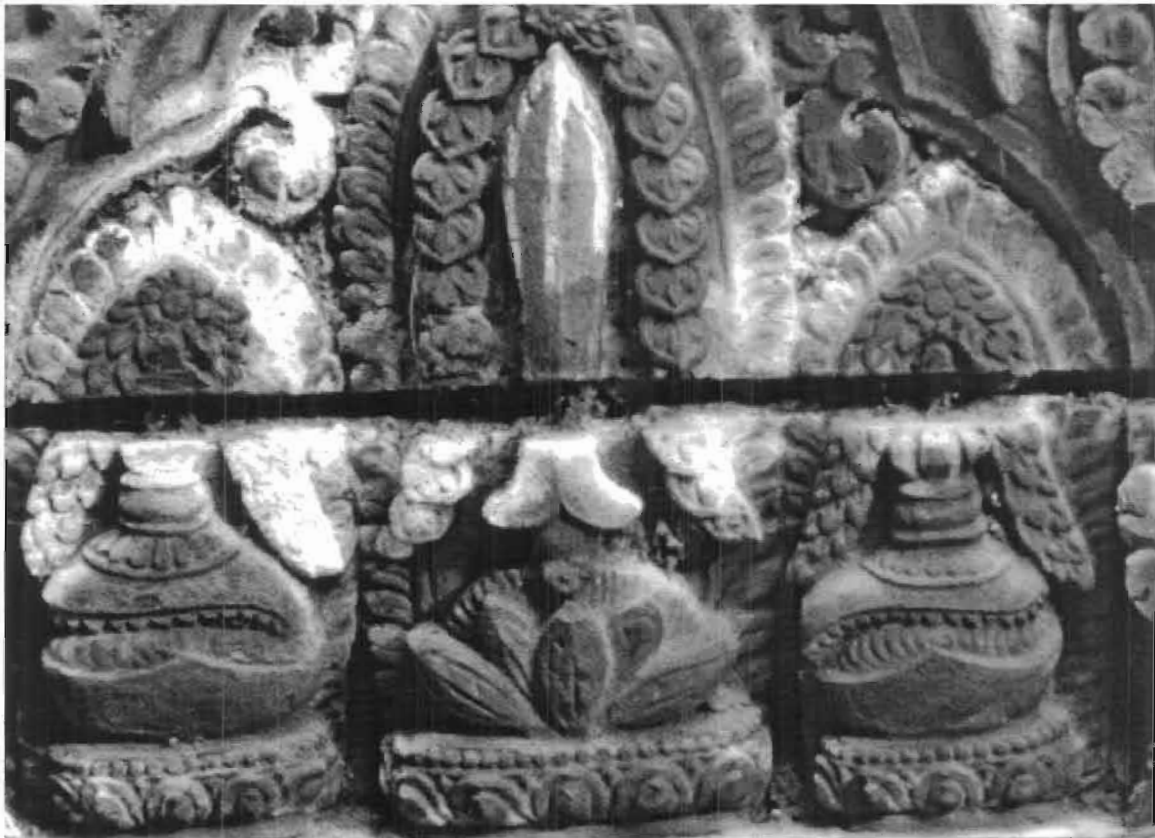
Figure 6.9. (bottom) Detail of *toraṇa* over side window of *āgaṁ* shrine. Second Floor. South shrine facade. Hāku Bāhā, Kathmandu.
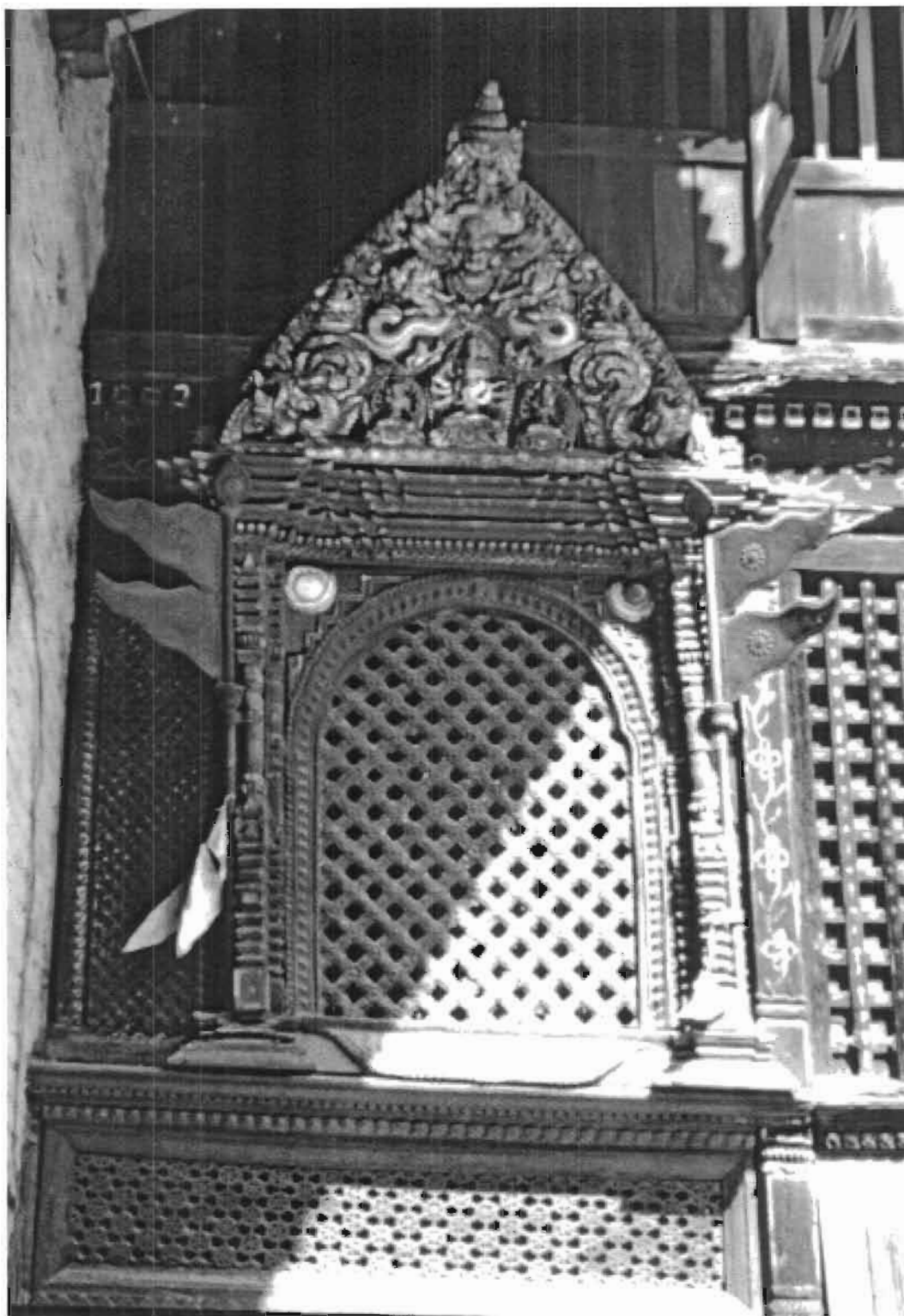
Figure 6.10. Āgaṁ Shrine Window. Exterior. Northwest Corner. Interior Courtyard. Gujī Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 6.11. (top) Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī shrine, below *main āgaṁ*. Northwest corner. Gujī Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 6.12. (left) Detail of the symbolic representation of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī shrine. Located below *main āgaṁ*. Northwest corner. Gujī Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 6.13. *Toraṇa* over *āgam* shrine shrine window, depicting Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara Mañjughoṣa as central figure. Northwest corner. Second floor. Gujī Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 6.14. Door leading to *āgam* shrine. North courtyard wall. East end. Gujī Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 6.15. (top) Detail of Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī as central figure. *Toraṇa* over door leading to *main āgaṁ*. North wall, east end. Gujī Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 6.16. (left) Detail of the Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara Mañjughoṣa. Top center figure. *Toraṇa* over door leading to *main āgaṁ*. North wall, east end. Gujī Bāhā, Patan.
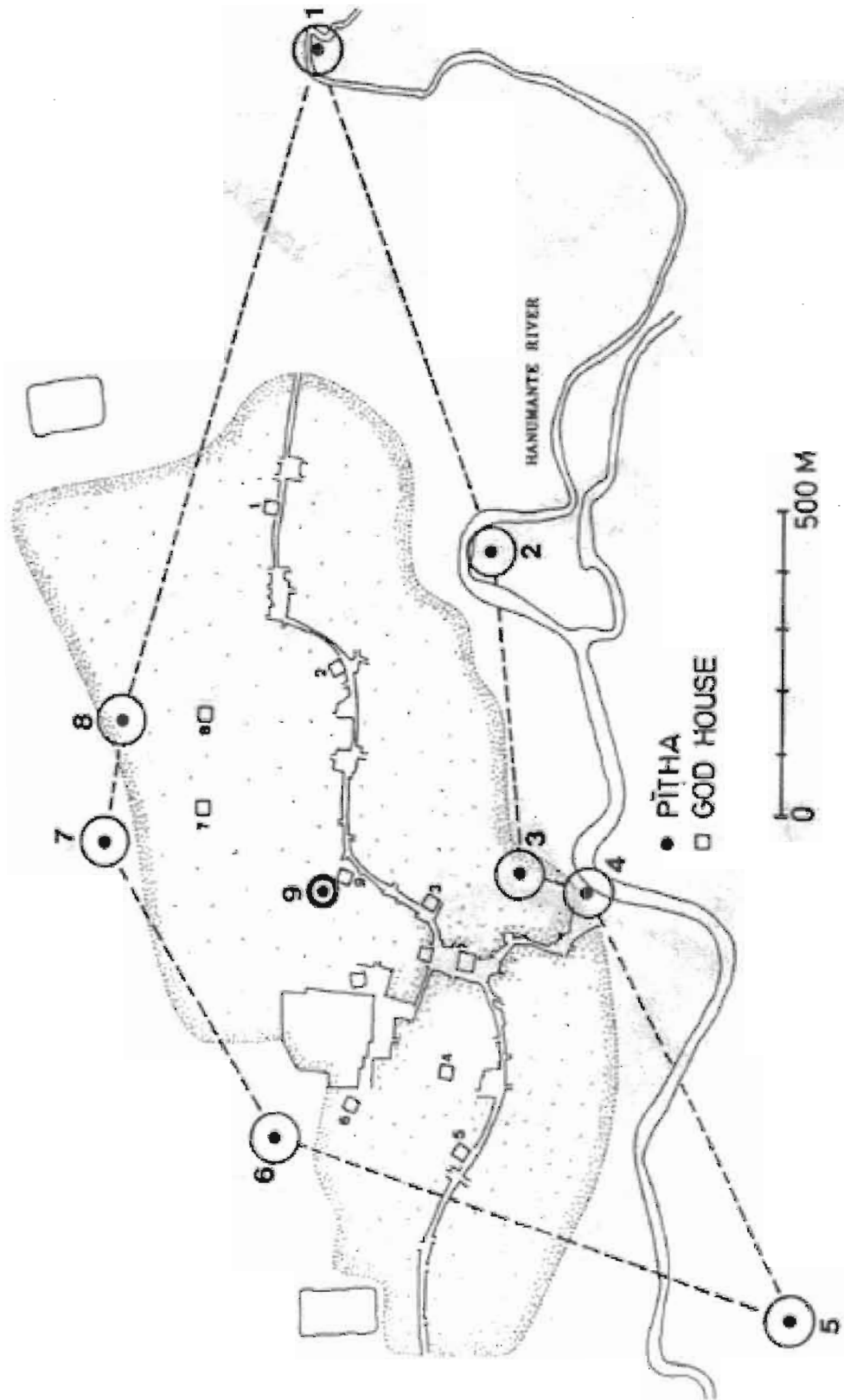
Figure 6.17. Transferring the idealized Mapping of Bhaktapur as *maṇḍala* into physical space. Locations of the Eight Mātṛkā Pīṭhas around the city of Bhaktapur.

Figure 6.18. Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī Maṇḍala. Dated C.E 1590. Los Angeles County Museum Collection.
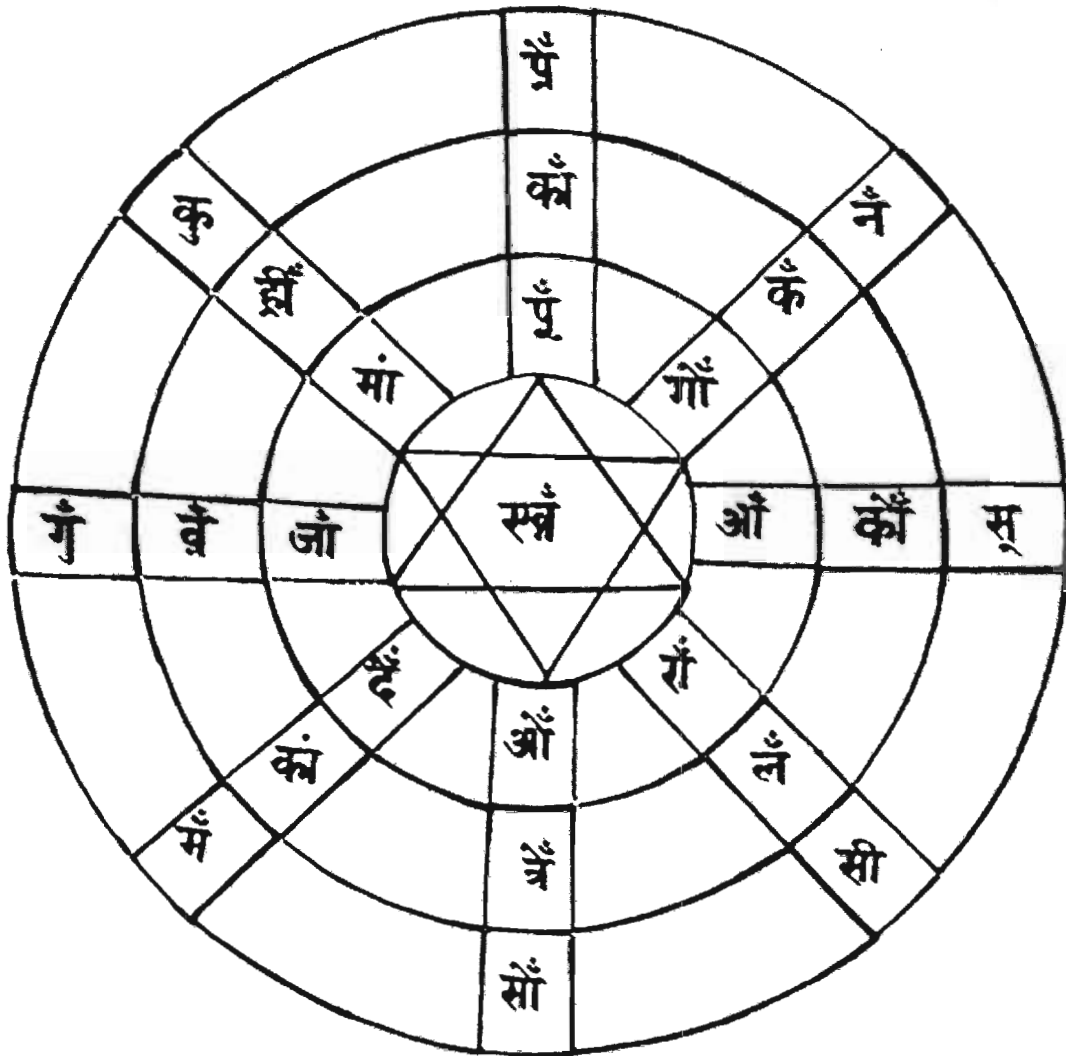
Figure 6.19. *Bijras* of the Twenty-four deities of the Kāyā, Vāk, and Citta Cakra, relating to the twenty-four *cakras* of the *yogin*'s body. This idealized diagram is transferred to the *maṇḍalic* sacred space of cities.
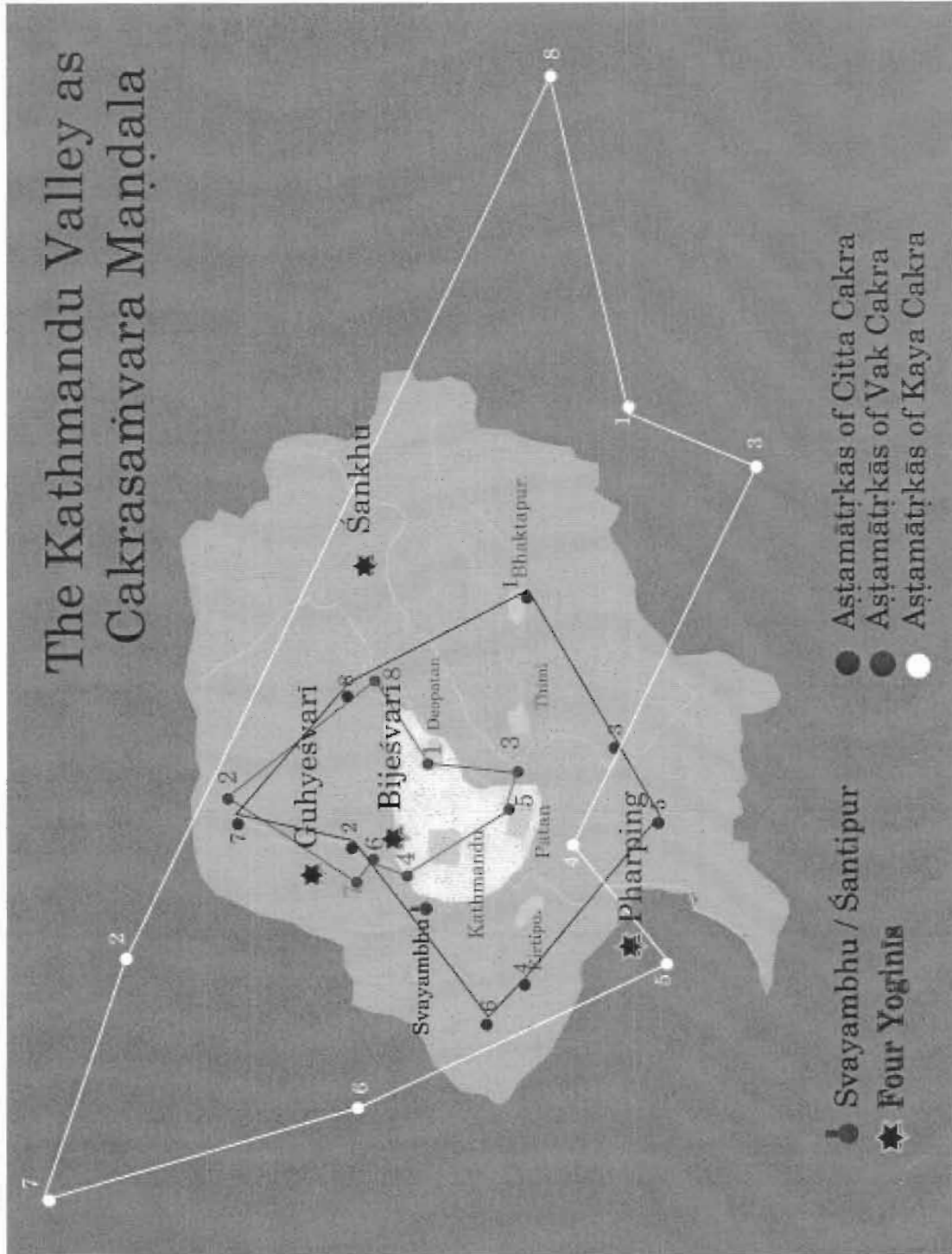
Figure 6.20. Conceptual Mapping of the Kathmandu Valley as the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala, with the Kāya, Vāk, and Citta Cakras represented by the twenty-four *mātṛkā pīṭhas*.
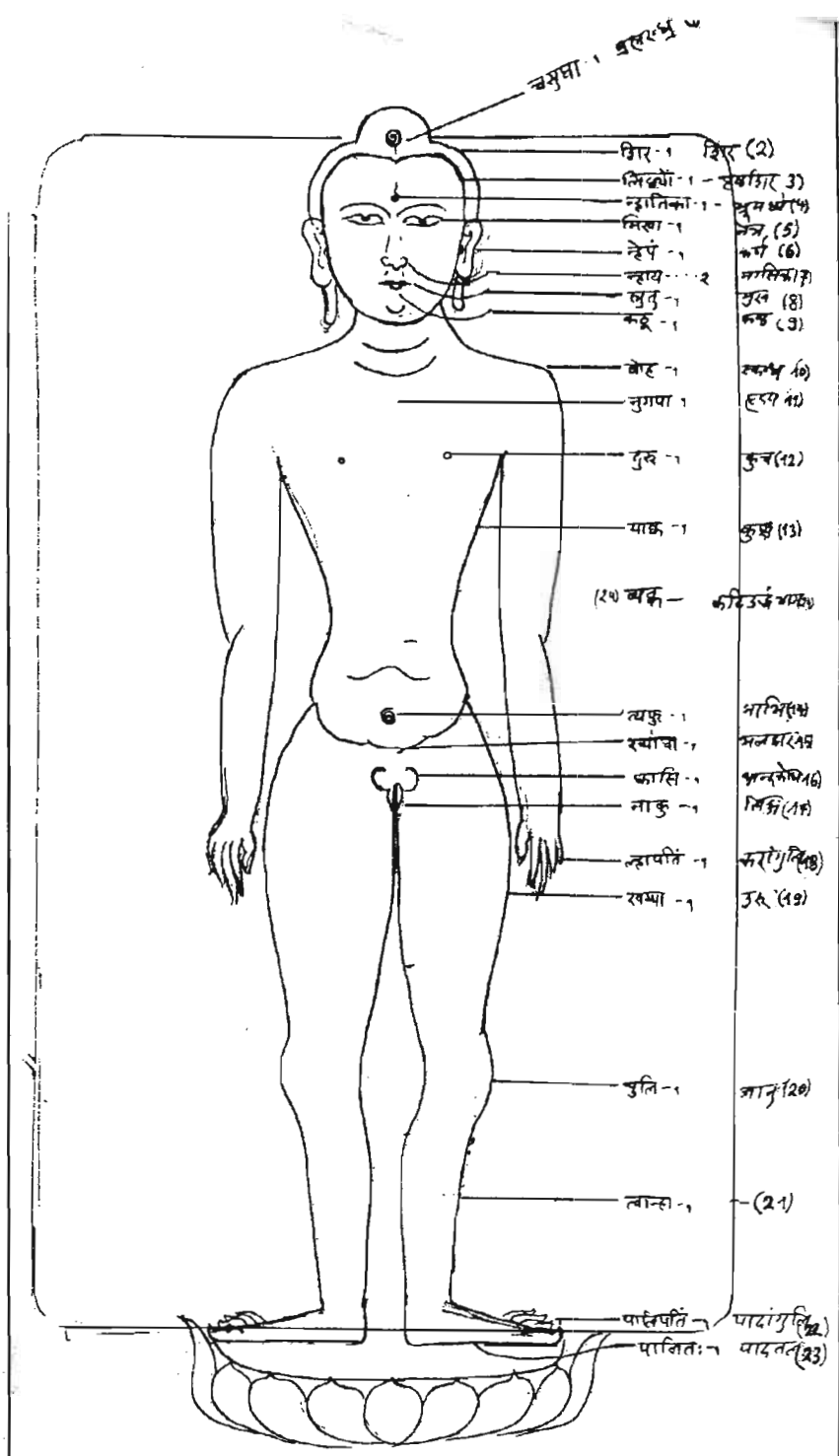
Figure 6.21. Twenty-four deities of the Kāyā, Vāk, and Citta Cakra, relating to the twenty-four *cakras* of the *yogin*'s body.
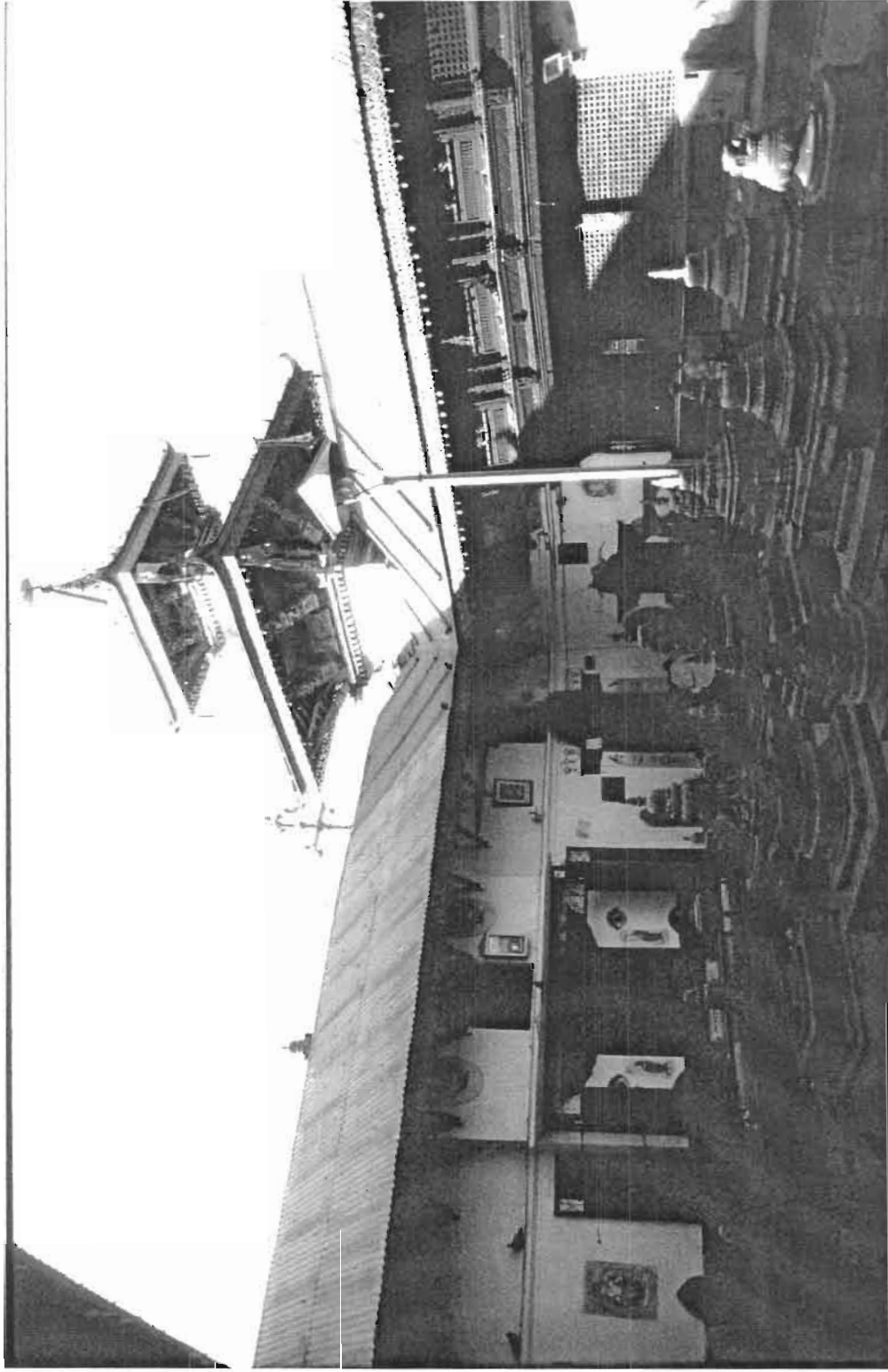
Figure 6.22. Ākāśa Yoginī Shrine at Bijeśvarī, Kathmandu. One of the Four Yoginīs Shrines of the valley.

Figure 6.23. Khaḍga Yoginī Shrine at Guṁ Bāhā, Sankhu. One of the Four Yoginīs Shrines of the Valley.
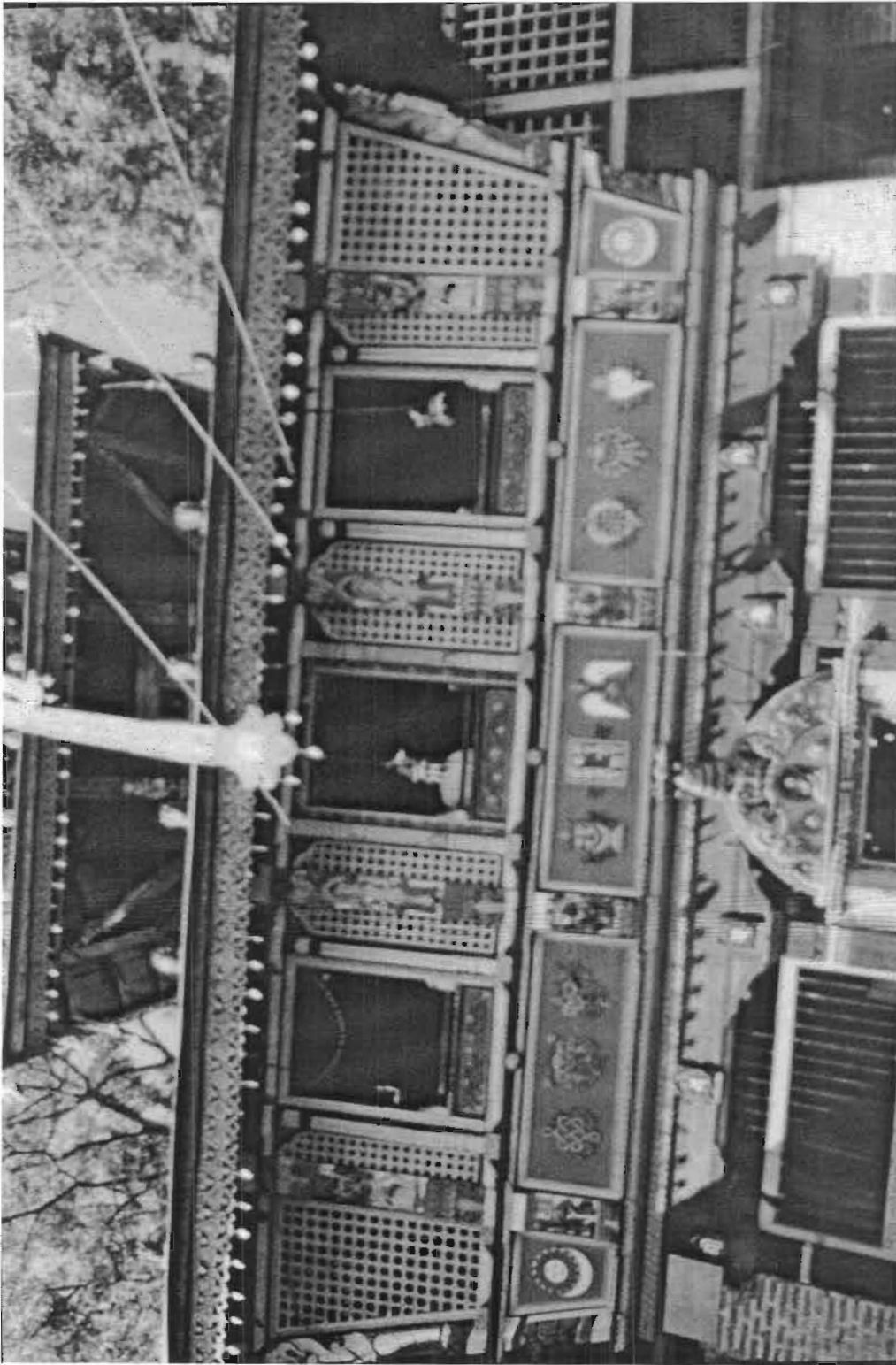
Figure 6.24. Vajrayoginī Shrine at Pharping. One of the Four Yoginīs Shrines of the valley.
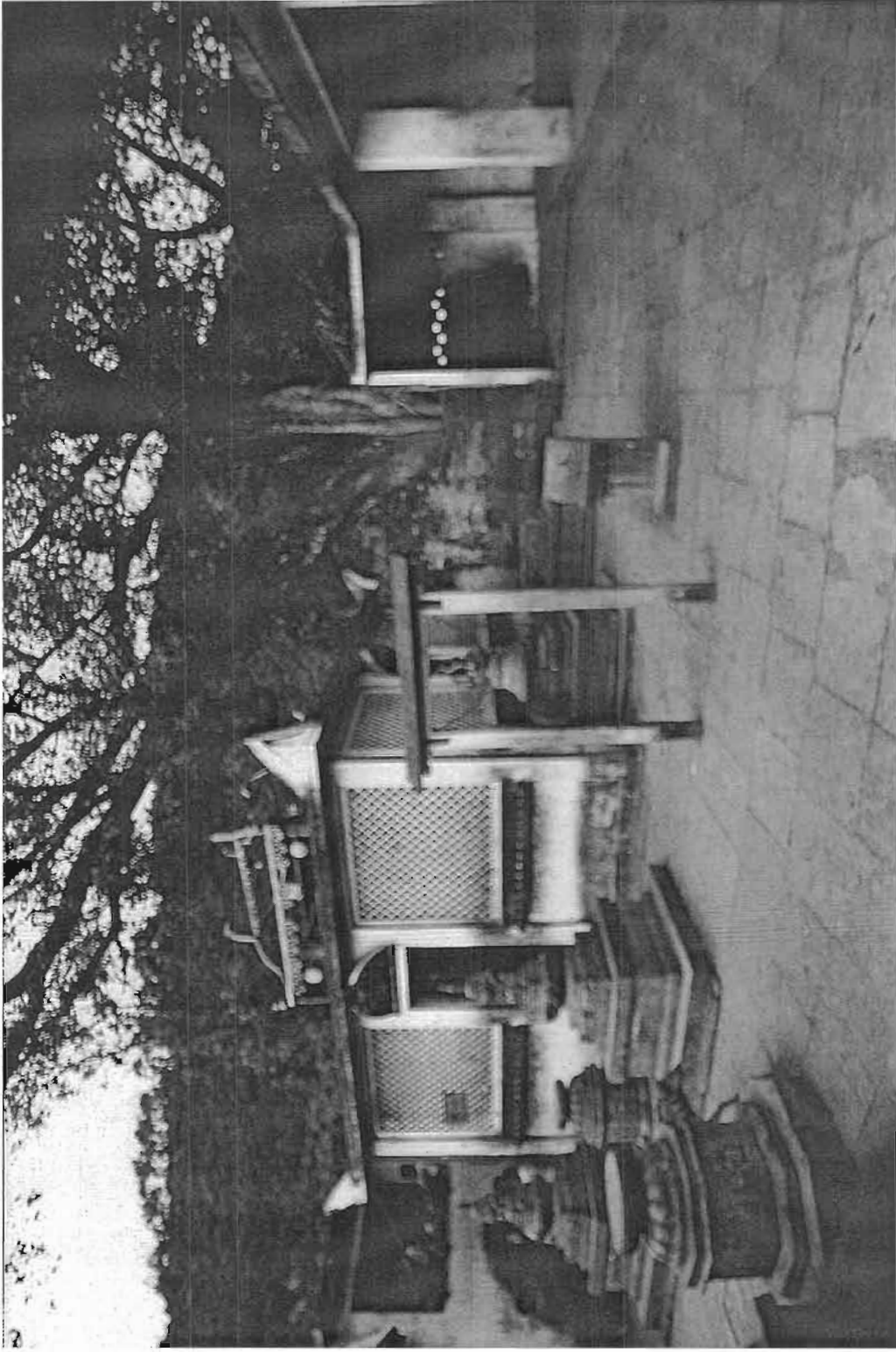
Figure 6.25. Guheśvarī Yoginī Shrine at Pulān Guheśvarī, Kathmandu. One of the Four Yoginīs Shrines of the valley.
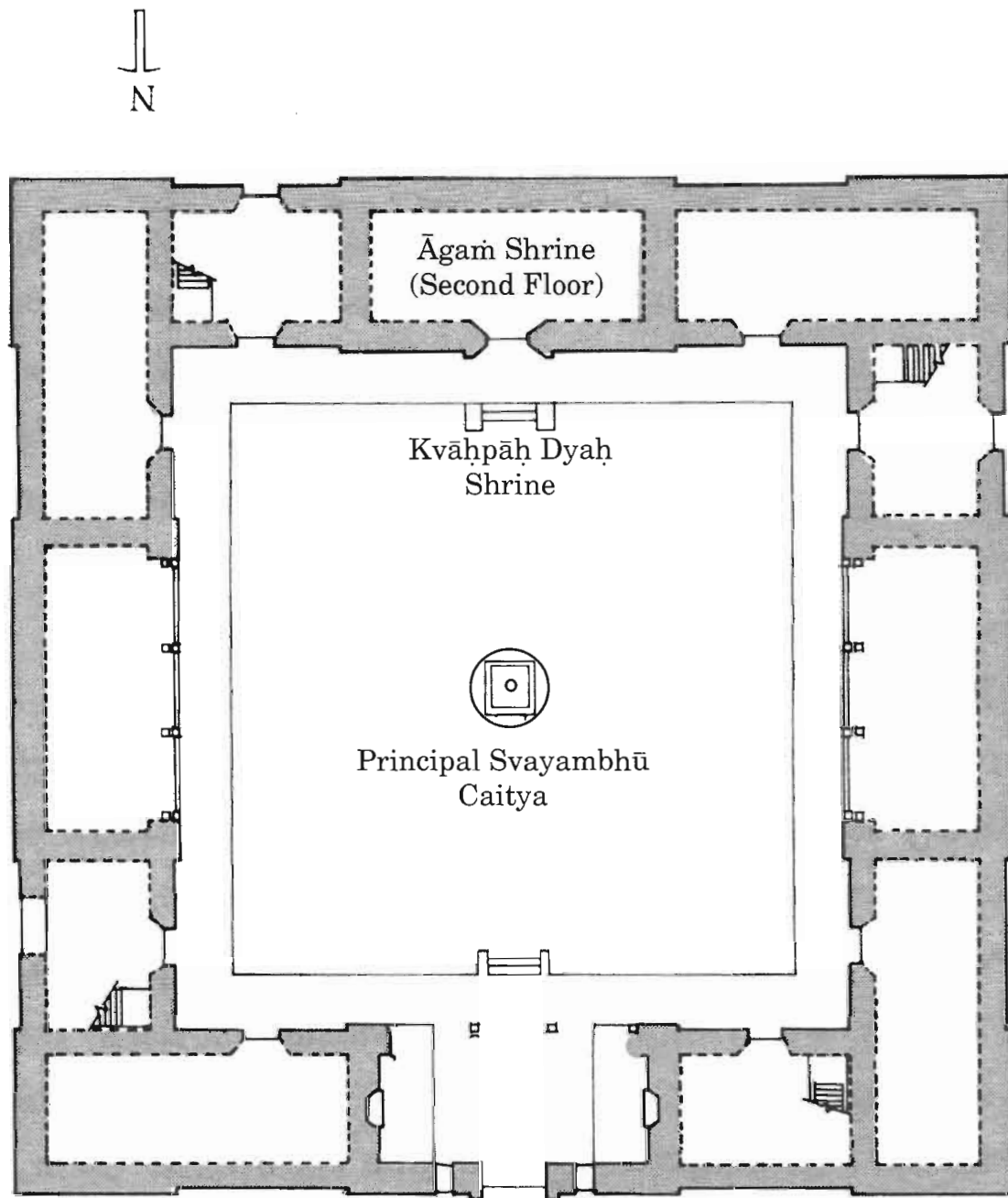
Figure 6.26 Idealized plan of a Bāhā as Maṇḍalic Space, with the principal *caitya* serving generator of sacred space.
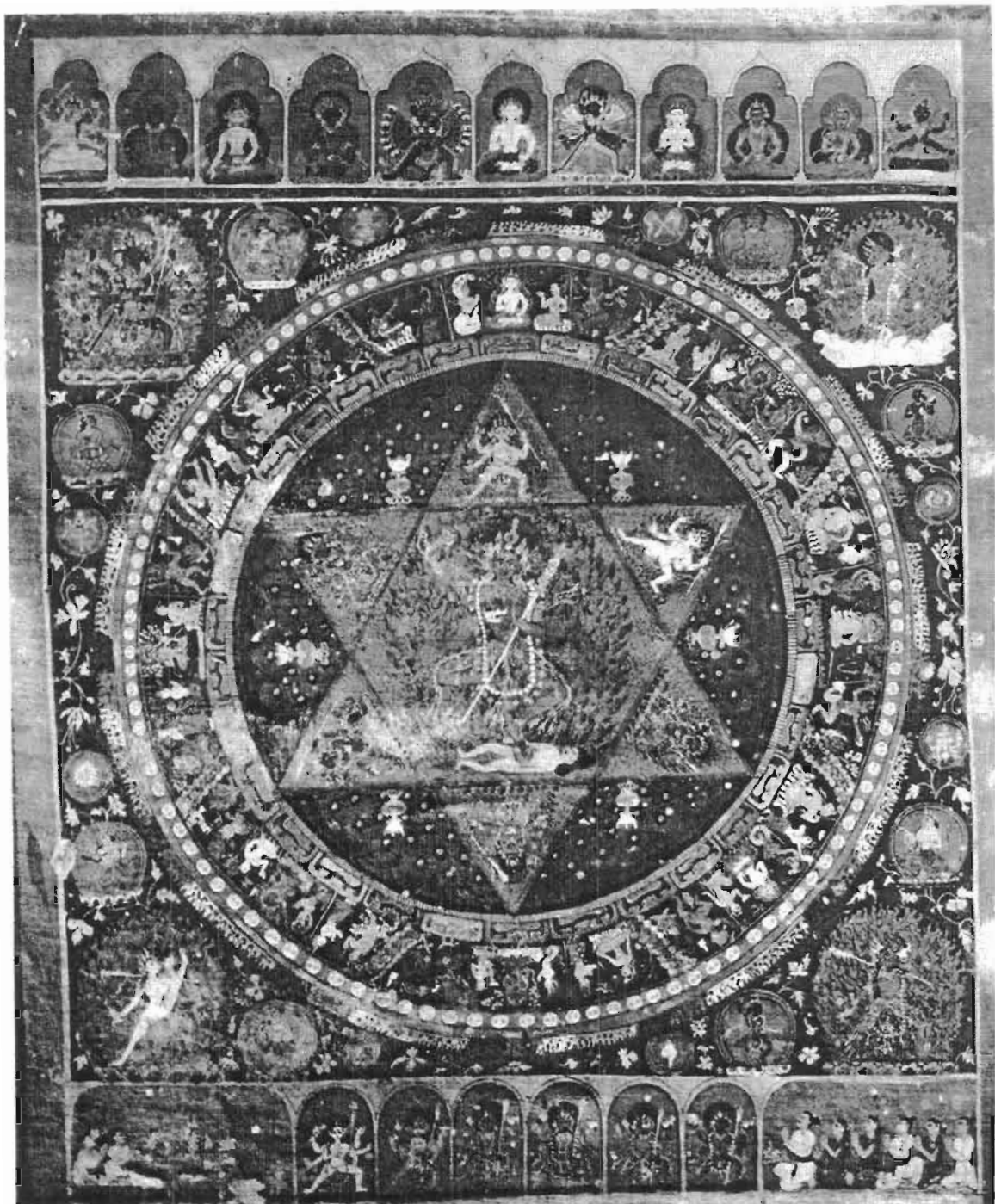
Figure 6.27. Vajravārāhī Maṇḍala. Cloth. 15th century. Delhi Museum.
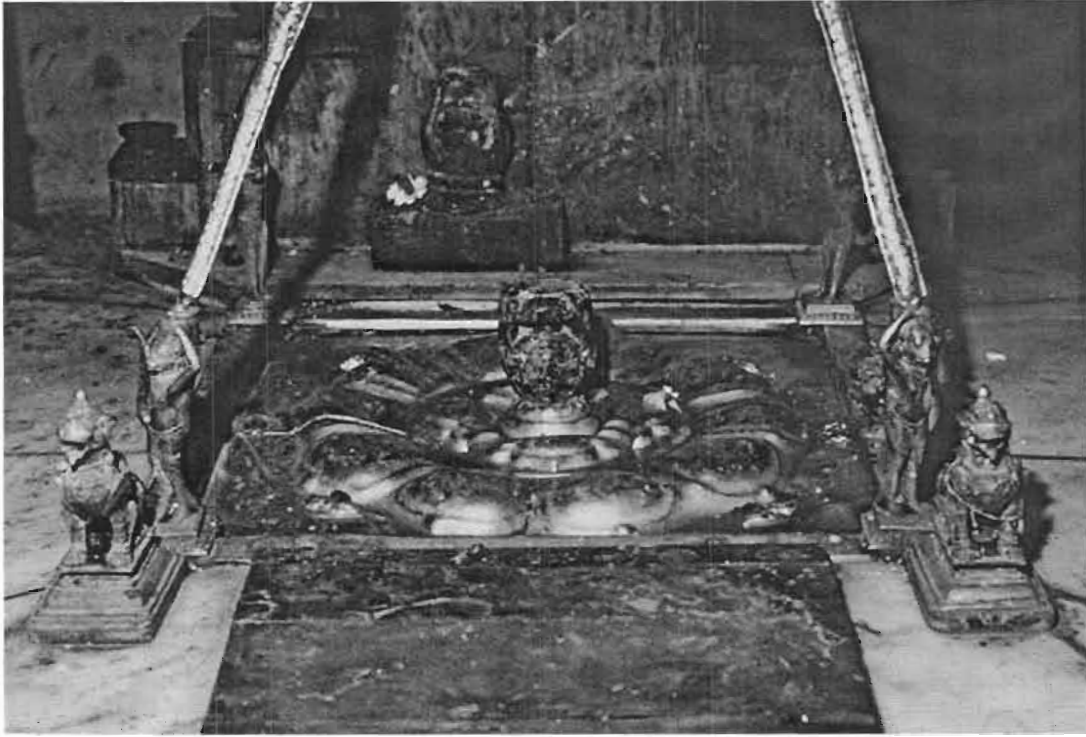
Figure 6.28. Detail of the Guhyeśvarī *pīṭha*, symbolized by the natural spring and *kalaśa*. Guheśvarī Shrine. Pulān Guhyeśvarī, Kathmandu.

Figure 6.29. Ādi Śaktī Guhyeśvarī depicted in her
sambhogakaya form. Mural Painting. North wall. Śantipur.
Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.

१ सुकुण्डा   २ खाय् ग्व:पा:
३ थापिं   ४ माक दलू
५ धौ पति   ६ किर्ति कलश
७ पात्र   ८ सिन्ह
९ वलि पात्र   १० गुरूमण्डल
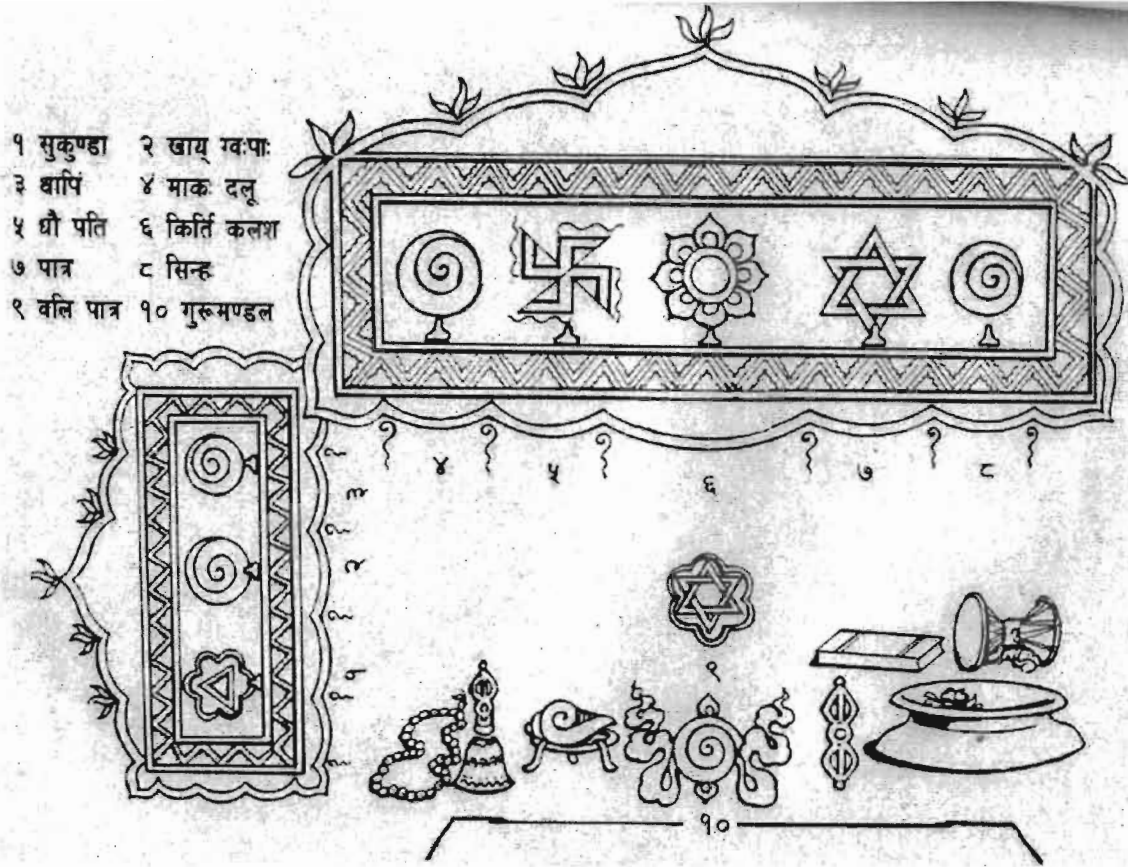
Figure 6.30. Ritual Layout of the Diśi Pūjā, based on the *Diśi Pūjā Vidhi* and *Trisamādhī Pūjā Vidhi.*

Fig. 6.31. Animal Faced Gate Guardians from the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. Exterior Door. West End. South Face. Śāntipur. Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

Fig. 6.32. Animal Faced Gate Guardians from the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. Exterior Door. East End. South Face. Śāntipur. Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

Fig. 6.34. Animal Faced Gate Guardians from the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. Interior Door. East End. North Wall . Śāntipur. Svayambhū Mahācaitya.
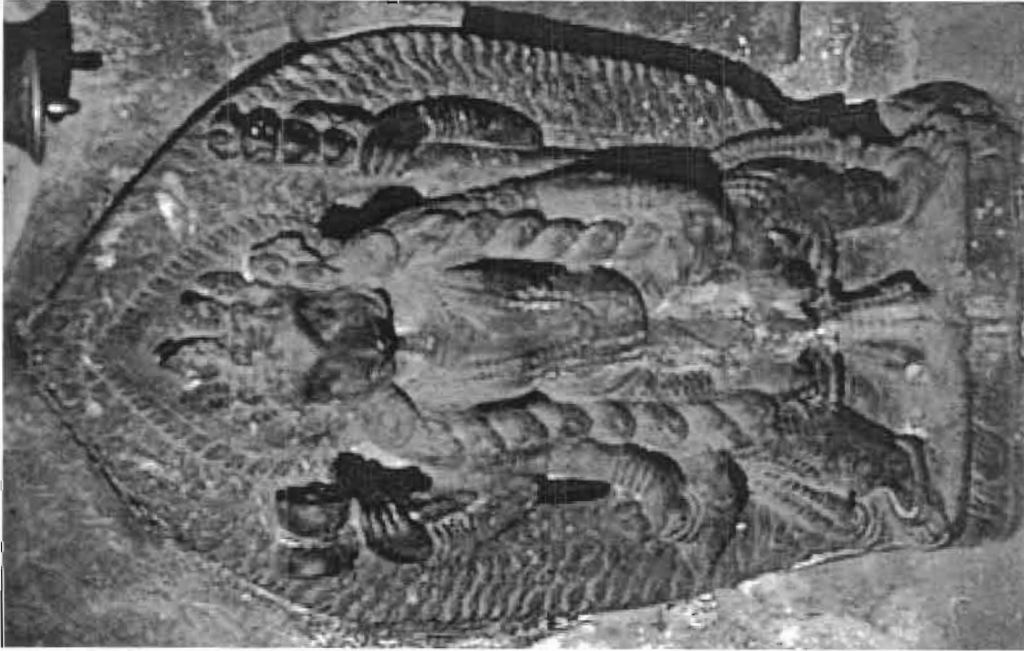
Fig. 6.33. Animal Faced Gate Guardians from the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. Interior Door. West End. North Wall. Śāntipur. Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

Figure 6.35. Inner Shrine door as Main Object of Worship.
Interior North Wall. Śāntipur. Svayambhū Māhācaitya
Complex.

Figure 6.36. Detail of Kalaśa. Śāntipur shrine door.

Figure 6.37. Padmaṛtteśvara Lokeśvara. Interior South Wall, above entrance door. Center Figure. Śāntipur. Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.
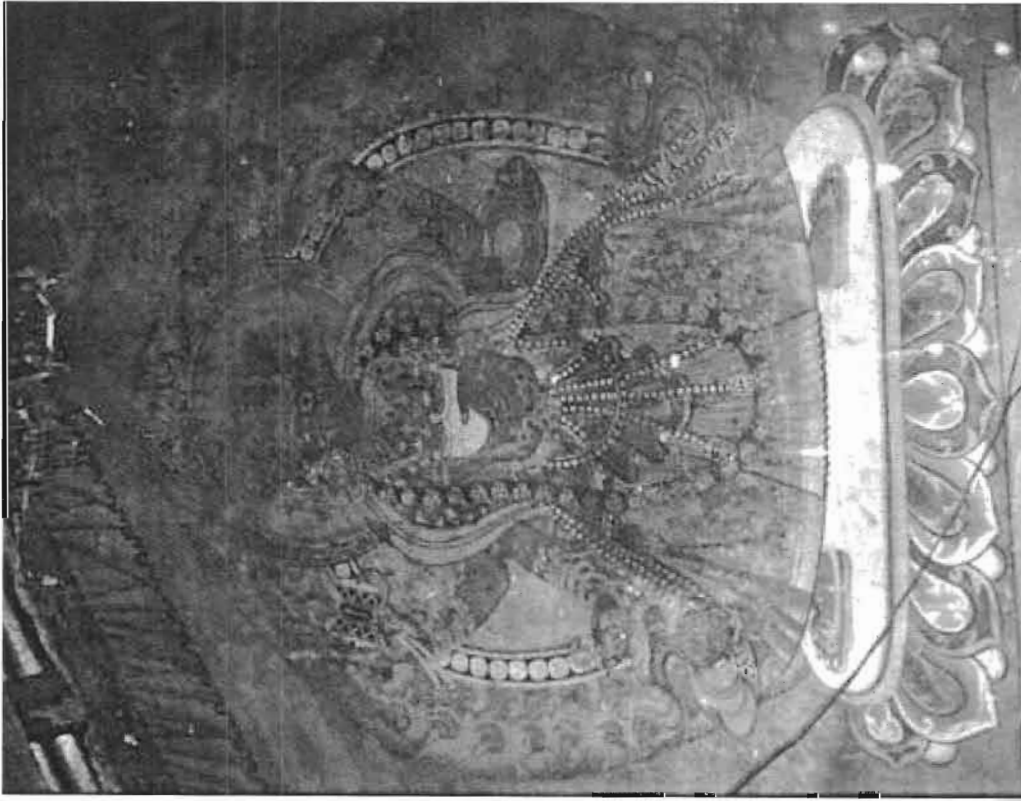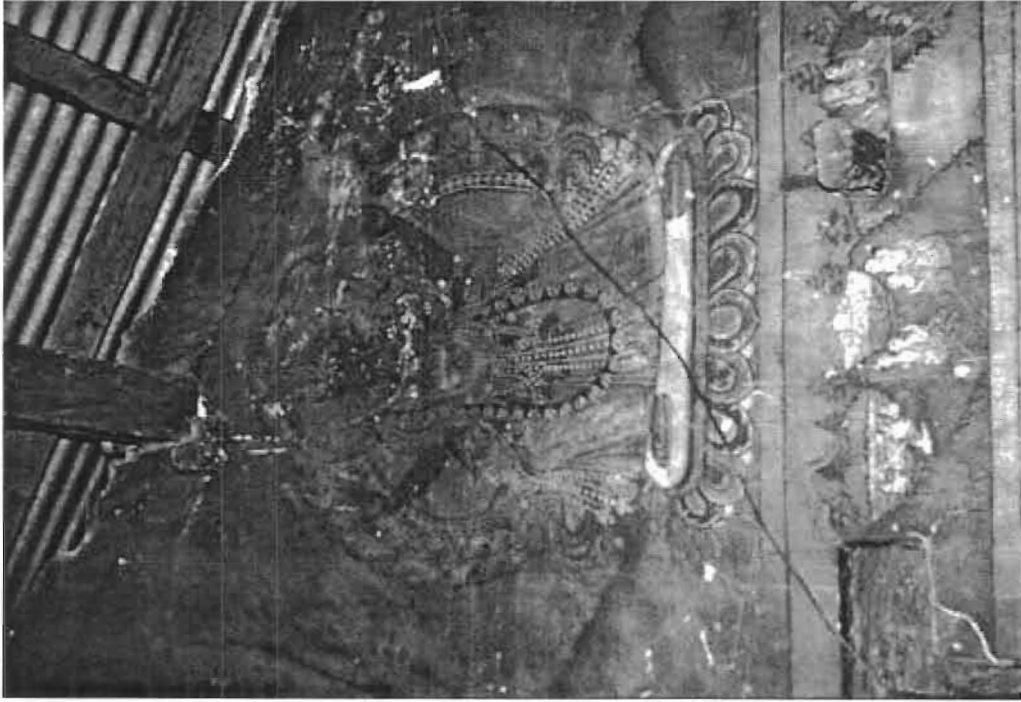
Figure 6.38. Bird-faced Gate-Guardians from the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. Figures flanking Padmanṛtteśvara. Interior South Wall. Śāntipur. Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.

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Figure 6.40. Khadga Yoginī of the Four Yoginīs. Interior South Wall. Śāntipur. Svayambhū Māhācaitya Complex.

Figure 6.39. Guhyeśvarī Yoginī of the Four Yoginīs. Interior South Wall. Śāntipur. Svayambhū Māhācaitya Complex.

Figure 6.42. Ākāśa Yoginī of the Four Yoginīs. Interior South Wall. Śāntipur. Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.
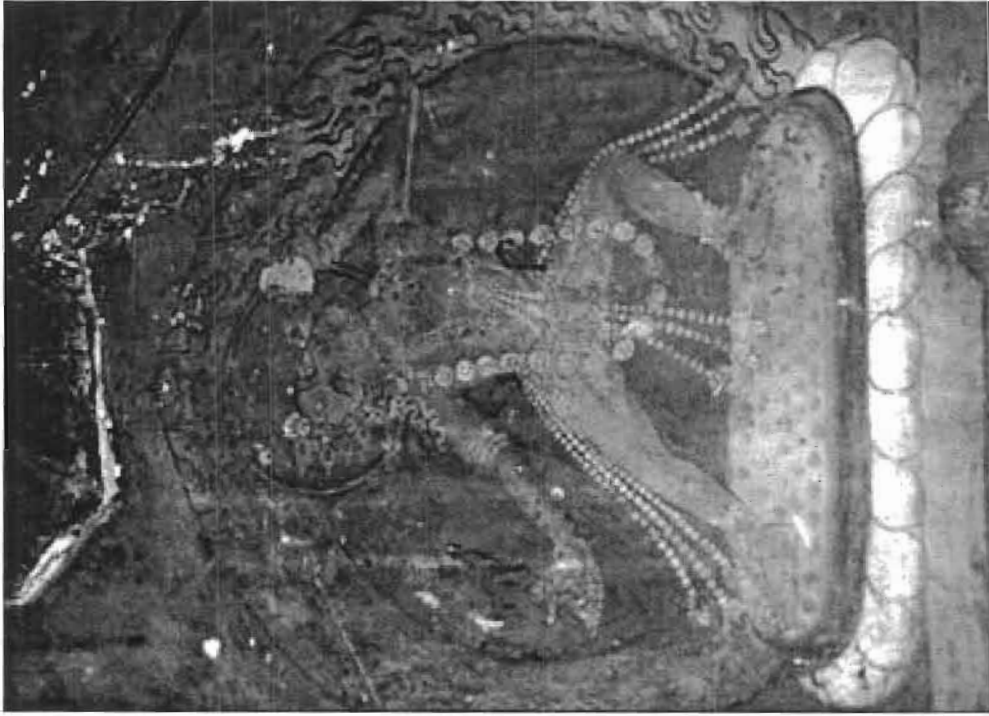
Figure 6.41. Vajrayoginī of the Four Yoginīs. Interior South Wall. Śāntipur. Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.
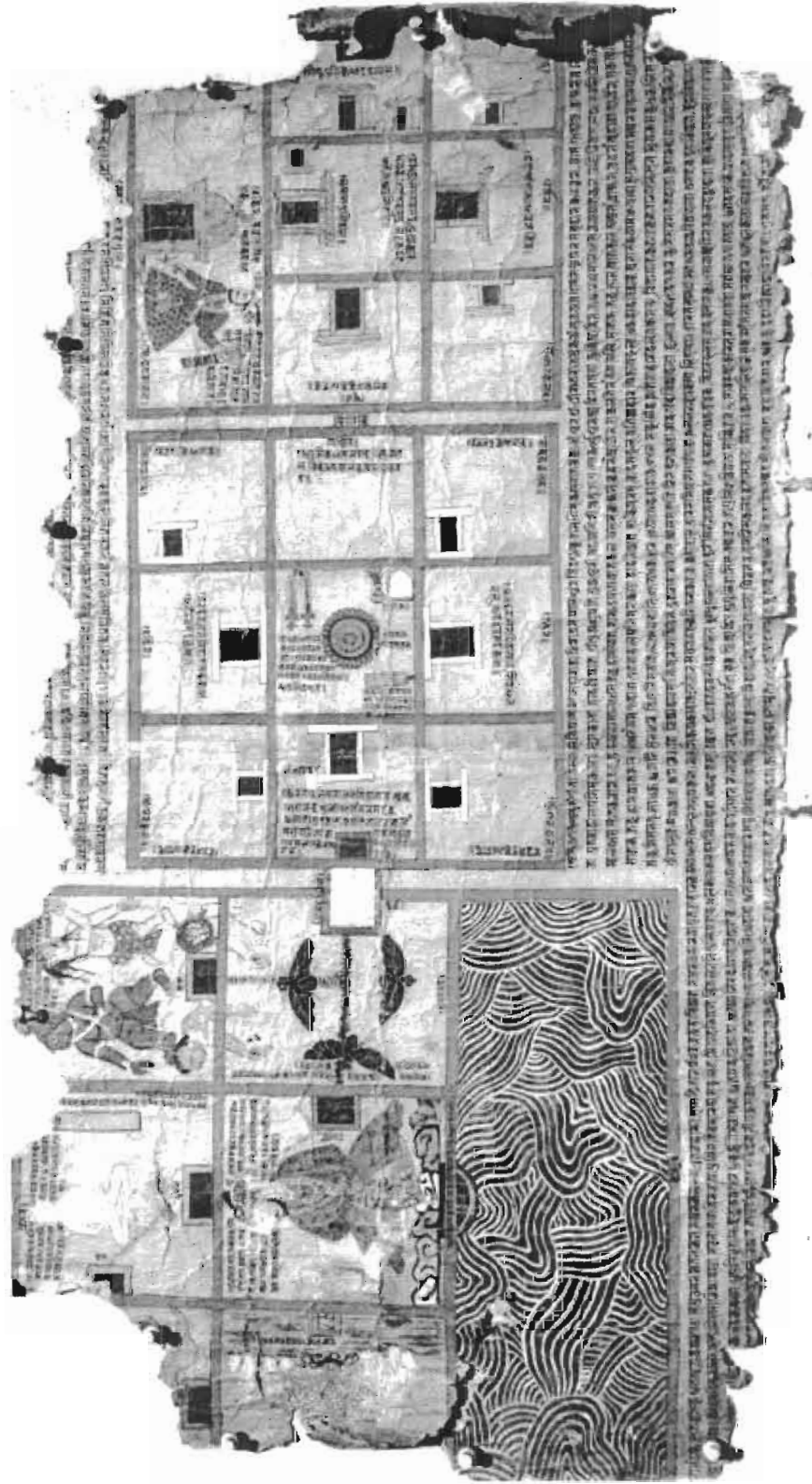
Figure 6.43. Painting of Pratāp Malla's Entry into Śantipur. Private Collection. Seventeenth Century.

Nāmasaṅgīti
Mañjuśrī

Figure. 6.44. Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhi. Cloth. Fifteenth Century. Ford Gilmore Collection.

Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara

Figure 6.45. Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. Seventeenth Century. Los Angeles County Museum.

Figure. 6.46. Caṇḍamahāroṣana. Cloth. Fifteenth Century. Los Angeles County Museum.

CHAPTER 7

THE UNIFYING THEME:

YOGINĪ TRADITION IN NEWAR BUDDHISM

INTRODUCTION

The three core iconographic themes found in the *bāhās/bahīs*, namely Svayambhū Mahācaitya, and the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṁvara *maṇḍalas* encapsulate key ideological constructs of Newar Buddhism. As my research progressed on the core iconographic components of *bāhā* architecture, I encountered time and again a common thread that unified the three elements together. This was the *yoginī* tradition found in Newar Buddhism, which defined the Tantric soteriological concepts of Vajrayāna Buddhism. The *yoginī* worship established and defined the "Buddhist" nature of the religious practice in the Kathmandu Valley, in an environment where the goddesses are preeminent in the Tantric practices of the Hindu and Śakta traditions as well.

There are three basic aims of this chapter: 1) to define how the *yoginī* tradition serves as the unifying element in the three core iconographic themes; 2) to establish the hierarchy of the *yoginīs* of the Newar Buddhist pantheon, articulated by the art and the ritual practices; and 3) to examine the role of the *yoginīs* as the ontology of the religion. It is through the *yoginī* tradition in Newar Buddhism that the essence of the visual symbolism is fully articulated in *bāhā* architecture. In other words, the core iconographic program of the *bāhās* articulate important soteriological methodologies of the religion, in which the Tantric goddess serves as ontological source.

With the help of the Tantric rituals, visual imagery and textual references, I will explore the role of the *yoginīs* in the technical Tantric practices. The premise here is to examine the preeminent Tantric Buddhist goddesses of the Newar Buddhist religion and to provide a buddhological interpretation of the hierarchy of the goddesses in this framework. I aim to show that the *yoginīs,* namely Guhyeśvarī, Vajravārāhī, Vajrayoginī, and the Aṣṭamātṛkās, are critical to the technical Tantric practices of Newar Buddhism.

SECTION I: GODDESSES IN THE TANTRIC TRADITION

Tantric Buddhist Goddesses in Newar Buddhism

In the Kathmandu Valley, the goddess serves a primary role in the Tantric practices of Buddhist, Hindu and Sakta traditions. For the average

lay practitioner, the goddesses that inhabit the Valley manifest themselves in a myriad of forms for the benefit, well being, and protection of the sentient beings.[1] The sacrality of the Valley as *puṇyakṣetra* ("meritorious land") and *maṇḍala* itself is attributed to the presence of the female deities, who chose to reside here in their most primordial forms, thus making the Valley a sacred *pīṭha* ("seat") of the goddess.[2] The distinct sectarian categories of "Hindu," "Buddhist," or "Śākta" may not be accurate to categorize these goddesses of the Valley, since the boundaries between distinctions of religious traditions overlap tremendously. Rather, the Tantric tradition and the preeminence of the goddess within this methodology serve as the common element in these religious beliefs. Interpreted to fit the appropriate attitudes, the goddesses embody multiple meanings within multivalent contexts, and none of these are mutually exclusive.[3]

In this religious environment, the Newar Buddhist tradition similarly acknowledges the female as key component in the soteriological practices of the religion, specifically as the embodiments of the highly philosophical and profound Buddhist concepts of *śūnyatā* and *prajña*. The emphasis on the goddess worship in the Newar Buddhist traditions appears to reflect an older, deeply-rooted Indic tradition of *mātṛkā* ("little mother") worship—a religious substratum that is perhaps more ancient than the Buddhist and Hindu traditions in the Valley.[4] The extant material culture from the pre-Licchavi (1st-3rd century C.E.) that is stylistically close to the Kuṣāṇa period *mātṛkās*

offers a profusion of *mātṛkās* and the group of *Saptamātṛkās* ("Seven Mother Goddesses") sculptures, thus providing ample evidence for the ancient Indic tradition.[5]

The continuity of goddess worship is prominent in the Valley even today, as these early images are still actively propitiated in the community and are affectionately referred to by the Newar practitioners as *mai* ("mother") or *ajimā* ("grandmother"). For instance, the *saptamātṛkā* group from Bagalamukhi Temple in Patan, dated by scholars to the second-third century C.E., is placed inside the main shrine image as Bagalāmukhī, one of the Daśamahāvidyā goddesses.[6] Although badly abraded and damaged, the group of goddesses are worshipped as *ajimā* ("grandmother"). Similarly, the important shrine of Jaibageśvarī in Deopatan also houses pre-Licchavi images of *mātṛkās,* dated to the third century C.E., and placed as main shrine images (Figure 8.1).[7] In contemporary Newar Buddhist practices, numerous Tantric Buddhist goddesses retain the memory of the ancient mother-goddess worship under the epithet of *ajimā.* The Haritī image at Balāju, also dated to the second-third century because of its stylistic affinity to the Kuśāṇa period, for instance, is a sacred shrine for both Hindus and Buddhists. She is equally propitiated by both traditions as the Buddhist goddess, Hāritī Ajimā, or as Sitalā, the Hindu goddess of smallpox (Fig. 7.2). Numerous other prominent goddess shrines are found throughout the Valley, such as the Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍakinī *pīṭha* popularly referred to as Mhepi

Ajimā "Grandmother of Mhepi" (See Fig 3.69), the Bhadrakāli/Vaiśnavī shrine to Lumadhi Ajimā, Kankeśvarī shrine to Kanga Ajimā, and Maitī Ajimā is the shrine to Kumarī/Maitidevi. These are among the powerful Tantric goddesses propitiated in Newar Buddhism. The Newar Buddhist tradition incorporates the ancient Indic cults of the *mātṛkās* and interprets the popular worship into the larger Tantric Buddhist context, as a methodology that affirms the female as source of enlightenment. Of prominence among the Tantric goddesses are manifestations of Vajravārāhī, such as Kumārī, the goddess' manifestation in human form, and Aṣṭamātṛkā "the Eight Mother Goddesses", who in the Tantric Buddhist context, are also emanations of Vajravārāhī.[8]

The significance of the Yoginīs—a term by which goddesses are most often referred in the technical Newar Buddhist context—can be interpreted in two, equally vital, levels, namely, the lay and initiated. The lay understanding of the *Yoginīs* incorporates the more mundane and practical aspirations of the practitioners, in which the goddesses are propitiated for auspiciousness, fertility, good health, prosperity, well-being, and protection. Many popular annual festivals of the goddesses that are participated by the lay Buddhist practitioners, such as Gatilā, Mohani, Ghode Jatrā, Kumarī Jatrā, involve the concepts of well-being, regeneration, renewal, and state-protection.[9] On the other hand, in a more technical buddhological understanding, the *Yoginīs* are realized as supramundane deities that

provide the Tantric practitioner with the realization (*siddhi*) of the Tantric methods of the Enlightenment process.[10] The preeminence of the Yoginīs, perceived within these two interpretation, is strongly demonstrated in the spatial ordering of the Valley as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala that is affirmed time and again through ritual practices. As discussed in the Chapter Six, the conception of the Valley's sacred geography as Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala articulates the role of the goddesses as definers and protectors of sacred space. In a more technical understanding, the goddesses enable the Newar Buddhist practitioner to realize the fundamental essence of Tantric practice, that is, to have an experiential understanding that the phenomenal world (i.e., the Valley) is generated by the practitioner's own heart/mind (*citta*).[11]

The ritual practices emphasize the preeminence of the female in Tantric soteriological methodology. In the *Kalaśarcarana pūjā,* a fundamental Newar Buddhist rite of ritual invocation, for example, *Trisamādhi pūjā* of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī is an integral part of the ritual.[12] As a highly esoteric ritual involving extensive female symbolism, Vajravārāhī is invariably invoked in the *sinha* (vermilion powder container); the Māmakī *pūjā* is also integral to the ritual, in which the goddess is invoked into the Guhyeśvarī *kalaśa,* as the key ritual to the invocation process. How the *yoginīs* serve as the ontology of the Newar Buddhist tradition need to be examined.

Goddess as Ontological Source of Newar Buddhism

Newar Buddhist rituals as well as textual references establish the Tantric goddess as the principal generating force of the religion. Encapsulating the contemporary religious traditions of the Valley and legitimizing them within the Tantric Buddhist context, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* develops the concept of the female as the ontology of Newar Buddhism and of cosmogonic story.[13] Specifically, the *Purāṇa* describes Guhyeśvarī ("Secret Goddess") as the primordial source (*Ādi Śakti*) of the self-arisen Ādi Buddha Svayambhū Jyotirūpa. The narrative also uses symbolic metaphors that allude to the goddess' generative and creation principles. Guhyeśvarī is the mother of all Buddhas (*buddhamātṛ*), according to the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,* and appropriately, it is from the root of the Guhyeśvarī lotus that emerges Svayambhū. Water symbolism and associated imagery of fecundity and generation are indicative of the goddess' primeval nature. Symbolism related to the goddess include the eternal spring of Guhyeśvarī in the form of a hole, symbolized as the *kalaśa* (See Fig. 6.39), the triangular *yantra* on a three-petalled lotus to mark the *pīṭha* ("seat") of the goddess, or a six-sided *yantra* (See Fig. 6.27). The text expressly states that Guhyeśvarī is Ādiśaktī; in this role, she can be interpreted as the quintessential symbol of female creative powers and archetypal Tantric goddess.

The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* also refers to the complex Buddhist metaphors relating to the female as source of insight *(prajña)*, *śūnyatā,* and *dharma*—symbolism that are key to the esoteric practices of Tantric Buddhism. Two fundamental visual symbols of goddess' ontological role, encountered in the art as well as the ritual context, are the *yantra* and the *kalaśa*.[14] The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* specifically states that a triangular *yantra* of Guhyeśvarī, which appeared at the *pīṭha* ("seat") of the Goddess, is a symbol of creation *(śṛti)* and signifies the female generative organ *(yoni)* as the seat of all creation.[15] In art and ritual, the double-triangled *(ṣaṭkoṇa)* *yantra* is used as a quintessential symbol of the Tantric goddess in the Newar Buddhist tradition.[16] For instance, the *maṇḍala* of Vajravārāhī is generally represented as a down-facing triangular or six-sided *ṣaṭkoṇa yantra* (See 6.27) and the presence of the Tantric goddesses in a ritual context is similarly alluded to by the six-sided *yantra* that is drawn on the ground (Fig. 7.3).[17] In Newar architecture, windows that have a *ṣaṭkoṇa yantra* represented on the outside general signify the presence of a Tantric goddess enshrined inside. Numerous examples can be found in the Valley, such as the *āgaṁ* shrine to Annapurṇa/Jñānaḍākinī in Bhotahiti (Fig. 7.4), the *dyo cheñ* to Bhadrakāli in Asan and Tebāhā, or the *dyo cheñ* to Kanga Ajimā (Kankeśvarī) in Yaktatol. These *yantras* symbolize the "seat" of the goddess enshrined, and in many of these places, the goddess is manifest as natural rock.[18]

Aside from the *yantra,* which in the Newar Buddhist context, invariably signifies the goddess, the symbolism of the *kalaśa* and its association with the female is one of the most important aspects of Newar Buddhism. Just as women, specifically married women, inherently symbolize fecundity and auspiciousness, a *kalaśa,* particularly in the ritual context, is the primordial symbol of the goddesses as the source of all creation, generation, fertility, auspiciousness, and abundance.[19] *Kalaśas* are often represented flanking the shrine doorways as the container for the *aṣṭamaṅgala* symbols or are depicted on the doorsill itself (See Fig. 6.30).

In the ritual context, the *kalaśa* is the sacred vessel from which the ritual specialists invoke and generate the deity.[20] For example, the essential element of any formal Newar Buddhist rituals is the *kalaśarcana pūjā,* where a deity can be invited to reside in the *kalaśa* for the duration of the *pūjā.* In ritual context, these *kalaśa* are referred to as Guhyeśvarī *kalaśa,* inherently symbolizing the Tantric Buddhist Ādi Śakti and ontological source.[21] Further, the principal empowerments of Vajravārāhī during the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī ritual is specifically referred to as the *Guhyakalaśa Abhiśekha,* "Empowerment of the Secret *Kalaśa*".[22] As discussed in the *dīkṣā* initiations in the previous chapter, this empowerment reenacts the first initiation of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī given by the goddess Guhyeśvarī to Mañjuśrī. The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* specifically states that Mañjuśrī received the *vajrodaka abhiśekha* "adamantine water-

empowerment" of Guhyeśvarī, as the culminating initiation to Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī. This empowerment is alternately described as the *guhyakalaśa abhiśekha* "secret-*kalaśa* empowerment", in the Newar Buddhist ritual context.[23] In the Valley, the preeminent female deities residing in *pīthas* in their natural forms as a spring or a rock, are often symbolized by *kalaśa,* such as Guhyeśvarī (Fig. 3.82) and Jñānaḍakinī, the consort of Yogamvara (Fig. 2.69). In this way, the ritual and textual references emphasize the Tantric goddesses role as source of power to aid the practitioners on the Tantric path. Specifically, in the Buddhist context, the *kalaśa,* invariably refers to the Guhyeśvarī as the primordial ontological source (Ādi Sakti) of Newar Buddhism.

Pithas: The "Seats" of the Goddess and Their Relationship to the Conceptual Ordering of the Valley

Discussing the significance of the goddesses in the Tantric Buddhist tradition, Alex Wayman writes: "Perhaps there is no clearer example of the tantric goddess as accessory to enlightenment than in the personification in the *śrīcakrasamvara* tradition of the thirty-seven *bodhipaksa dharmah* ["wings of Enlightenment] as goddesses."[24] The conceptual mapping of the Valley as Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī Maṇḍala reinforces the primacy of the Yoginīs in the Newar Buddhist tradition, specifically as the Valley generated by Guhyeśvarī/Vajravārāhī.

In mapping the Valley as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, the Newar Buddhist practitioners emphasize two fundamental aspects of the religion: One, acknowledge the *yoginīs* as the ontological source of the religion; and two, recognize the sacrality of the "seats of the goddess" or *pīthas* as an essential component of Newar religious milieu. As discussed in Chapter Six, the Tantric goddesses that are central to this sacred ordering is Guhyeśvarī, Vajravārāhī, Vajrayoginīs, and the Aṣṭamātṛkās in the three rings of the *kāya, vāk,* and *citta cakra* (See Fig. 6.20). The primordial abodes of these goddesses are *pīthas* or "seats" where they manifested themselves in their most fundamental form and essence.

To briefly summarize the Newar Buddhist conception, the twenty-four *mātṛkā pīthas* related to the Valley's spatial ordering as Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala correspond to the twenty-four *pīthas* of the practitioner's body, thus reflecting a profound understanding of the technical Tantric Buddhist tradition. As mentioned earlier, a core practice of Tantric meditation is enumerated in the tradition of the *Cakrasaṁvara Tantra* is to visualize the *yogin's* body as a *mandala,* in which the twenty-four physical *pīthas* are to be visualized as existing in the Adamantine body (*vajrakāya*) of the practitioner.[25] The *Samvarodaya Tantra* calls the twenty-four physical sacred placed *"bāhya pītha"* or external *pīthas,* corresponding to the "seats" of the *Aṣṭamātṛkās* in the Newar tradition, while those inside the body are called inner/secret *pīthas* (See Figs. 6.19 and 6.21).[26] The *Cakrasaṁvara*

Tantra specifically describes the inner *pīṭhas* as having the appropriate deities reside in it in a manner similar to the external *pīṭhas*.[27] Through visualization, meditational practices, and awakening of the *cakras,* the practitioner's adamantine body is identified with the physical world and the deities of the *maṇḍala,* specifically Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī.[28]

For the Newar Buddhist practitioners, the *pīṭha-pūjā* pilgrimage that incorporates the *Aṣṭamātṛkā pīṭhas* of the circles of the Body, Speech, and Mind, reifies the Valley's sacrality on one level, and at another level, alludes to the fundamental Tantric processes dictated by the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra.* The tradition of *pīṭha-devatās* are integral to the Tantric practices of the Hindu, Buddhist and Śākta traditions of the Valley and are fundamental to understanding the significance and complexity of the goddess tradition in the Newar context in the highly technical and esoteric practices of Tantric Buddhism.

The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* elaborates on the concept of the *pīṭhas* and its significance in the Newar Buddhist tradition as defining the sacred nature of the Valley. The epithets of *puṇyakṣetra, upachaṇḍoha pīṭha, sudurjaya bhūmi* are given to describe the Valley's sacred geography and the manifestation of the self-arisen *pīṭhas* define the sacred nature of the Valley.[29] In the Kathmandu Valley, these *pīṭhas* or "seats" of the goddesses, as self-manifest sacred places, are considered powerful, yet extremely dangerous sacred places, as they exist near cremation grounds or confluence

of rivers that lie at the periphery of the ordered spaces of the sacred. In these *pīṭhas*, the goddess manifest herself in her primordial nature, as natural rocks outcropping and unhewn stone that defies any structural form. An example of an *Aṣṭamātṛkā pīṭha* from the Vāk cakra is Maheśvarī at Mhepi (See Figs. 2.27 and 2.28), alternately known as Jñānaḍakinī or Mhepi Ajimā. Her main image there, is a natural rock form, where she is surrounded by the other *Mātṛkā* figures, also manifested as amorous rock-the quintessential form of the goddess.

Although scholars have analyzed the *pīṭhas* within the Hindu and the Śākta traditions,[30] the role of *pīṭhas* in the Buddhist context need to be closely considered as reflective of the Tantric methodologies of Newar Buddhism. An examination of the nature and function of the goddesses residing in the *pīṭhas* may be helpful in understanding the significance of *pīṭha devatās* in the Valley. Foremost, the goddess' form is interpreted as alternately "manifested" as in the *pīṭhas'* natural rock or "invoked" in anthropomorphic manifestation. For example, in her physical and iconographic manifestations, the Aṣṭamātṛkās are invoked and invited to reside into an object that is other than her primordial dwelling, such as in a kalaśa, an image, or human as in the case of the Goddess Kumārī. In contrast, her "manifested" forms are found in the self-arisen *pīṭhas* as natural rocks that are understood to have existed through time, and thus possess a sacrality surpasses her physical representations. Because the

pīṭhas visually unimpressive and despite the significance of *pīṭhas* in the ritual context, the anthropomorphic and figurative depictions of the goddesses that have generally gained the attention of art historical research.[31]

The very fact that these *pīṭhas* are self-manifest found in the sacred landscape allow for the defining of Valley as a *maṇḍala* in many different religious contexts. It is important to understand that for the practitioners, the sacrality of the Valley emerges through the self-manifest *pīṭhas* and in this context, the arrangement of these *pīṭhas* around the Valley is not understood as a human construct of spatial ordering, but one that is inherent to the sacred nature of the Valley. Encircling the Valley, the goddesses not only sanctify and protect the sacred space, but generate the ordered existence of the sentient beings. Although situated at the periphery, they are, in essence, powerful sacred centers, whose sacrality is accepted by the Buddhist, Hindu and Śākta traditions of the Valley.

The next section will examine the preeminent *yoginīs* in Newar Buddhism and will provide a buddhological interpretation of their hierarchy, as understood by the Newar Buddhist practitioners.

SECTION II: REPRESENTATION OF THE YOGINĪS IN NEWAR BUDDHISM

An Iconographic Analysis of a Newar Buddhist Manuscript depicting Sixty-Four Forms of Cakrasaṁvara

The Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala meditational practices emphasize the preeminence of the yoginīs in the Tantric traditions of the Newar Buddhists. The iconographic analysis presented here will examine the major *yoginīs* of the Newar Buddhist pantheon, and their relationship to the art and ritual practices. As discussed in the previous chapters, the *yoginīs* are closely associated to the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. The emphasis on the *yoginīs* is directly related to the Anuttara Yoga practices, of which the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala is part. Moreover, as a *Yoginī tantra maṇḍala*, the Cakrasaṁvara Tantra demonstrates the preeminence of the female as the embodiments of the Enlightenment process, with Vajravārāhī symbolizing the state of *śūnyatā* and luminous wisdom (*prajña*). In this understanding specific to Newar Buddhism, it is Guhyeśvarī, Vajravārāhī, the four Yoginīs, and the twenty-four Aṣṭamātṛkās are intimately associated with the idealized conception of the Valley as Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala (See Fig. 6.20). In a technical buddhological understanding, as Vajravārāhī is the preeminent deity of the Cakrasaṁvara meditation cycle, the Valley's sacred *maṇḍala* is generated by Guhyeśvarī/Varavarahi, and in turn, through whom all the other deities of the *maṇḍala* emanates. In esoteric terms, the Valley "secret"

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maṇḍala is specifically the Vajravārāhī *maṇḍala,* thus reflecting the preeminence of the *yoginīs* in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

A Newar ritual manuscript representing the sixty-four forms of Cakrasaṁvara perhaps clarifies best articulates the relationship between Guhyeśvarī, Vajravārāhī, the Yoginīs and the Mātṛkās. These are the major Tantric goddesses of the Newar Buddhist tradition, who also manifest the Valley's sacred construct. The iconographic layout of the manuscript illustrates three major themes: 1) the iconological relationship of the yoginīs the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala; 2) the relationship between Svayambhū, Dharmadhātu, Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, and the *yoginīs*; and 3) the hierarchical relationship of the *yoginīs* .

The illustrated manuscript has a double-sided format with eighteen folios on one side and other eighteen on the reverse. Each folio depicts a specific representation of the sixty-four forms of Cakrasaṁvara, which according to the colophon is based on the *Samvarāgama Mahā Tantra* (Fig. 7.5).[32] Each illustration has an invocation to Cakrasaṁvara's specific form written in the Newari script in corrupt but readable Sanskrit. For iconographic purposes, the manuscript is divided into five distinct sections: (1) representation of the sixty-four forms of Cakrasaṁvara; (2) Jina Buddhas in the esoteric forms (3) Guhyeśvarī at the center of the manuscript (4) Nine Yoginīs, including Vajravārāhī, and (5) Aṣṭamātṛkās. In his sixty-four forms, Cakrasaṁvara, is depicted with different animal faces, each corresponding to

the invocation given below the illustration. He is consistently depicted in alidha posture, embracing Vajravārāhī, who is represented dancing with her usual attributes, the skull-cup and *karttṛkā*.

Iconographic Layout of the Hierarchy of the *Yoginīs*		
Center of Manuscript	Guhyeśvarī	
Sancāsanī Devī	Vārūṇī	Yāminī Devī
KhaḍgaYoginī	Vajravārāhī	Vidyādharī (1)
Vidyādharī (2)	Vidyādharī (3)	Vidyādharī (4)
	Four Aṣṭamātṛkās	
	Four Aṣṭamātṛkās	

On the first iconographic section as illustrated above, the manuscript begins with Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, who conforms to the iconographic descriptions given in the texts (Fig. 7.6). He is shown as a blue three-headed and twelve-armed figure, with his usual attributes and in the *pratyālīḍa* posture trampling on the two figures of Kālaratrī and Bhairava. He is represented in the *yuganādha* posture with his *prajñā*, Vajravārāhī embracing him.

Vajravārāhī is shown with her usual attributes and characteristic red color, holding a skull-cup and flaying knife in her two hands. The following ritual invocation is inscribed below the figures:

śrī herukam mahāviram visuddha kulisesvaram /
Namami sarva bhavena dakini gana bhusitam //
Samvaraya namastubhyam dvakaraya namo namah /
Cakrasthitaya devaya cakrasamvara te nama //[33]

Śrī Heruka, the great hero, the supreme lord of the kula
I bow to you with all my being, you who are adorned by the
dākinī ganas
I bow to you, Saṁvara, I bow to your two forms
The lord to resides in the circle (*cakra*), I bow to you,
Cakrasaṁvara

Directly below Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī are the Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, shown in their esoteric eight-armed forms. [34] In a vertical axis below them are the major deities of the Newar Buddhist tradition, namely Caṇḍamahāroṣana, Mañjuśrī, Ārya Tārā, and Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara, all depicted in their esoteric forms. Mañjuśrī is represented in this esoteric forms, as a six-armed yellow figure, holding the sword and book in his upper hands, the bow and arrow in the second pair. His principal hands embrace his *prajñā* in *vajrahuṅkāramudrā*, while holding the *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā*. His female counterpart is depicted as a green figure holding a skull-cup and *karttṛkā*.

The iconographic layout of the first section of the manuscript alludes to the hierarchic layering of the two essential *maṇḍalas* of Newar Buddhism, namely the Cakrasaṁvara and Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Their presence in the manuscript also strengthens my argument that the two meditational cycles are intimately related as progressively higher Tantric meditational practices in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

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The placement yoginīs in the manuscripts will clarify their role and hierarchy of the yoginīs in Newar Buddhism.

Iconographic Layout of the Hierarchy of the *Yoginīs*		
Center of Manuscript	Guhyeśvarī	
Sancāsanī Devī	Vārūṇī	Yāminī Devī
KhaḍgaYoginī	Vajravārāhī	Vidyādharī (1)
Vidyādharī (2)	Vidyādharī (3)	Vidyādharī (4)
	Four Aṣṭamātṛkās	
	Four Aṣṭamātṛkās	

Iconographic Analysis of the *Yoginīs* in the Cakrasaṁvara Manuscript

As shown in the table above, the second iconographic section of the manuscript best articulates the relationship between Guhyeśvarī, Vajravārāhī, the Yoginīs and the Mātṛkās—the key *yoginīs* in the Newar Buddhist tradition (Figs. 7.8, 7.9, 7.10, 7.14). Guhyeśvarī, in her universal form (*viśvarūpa*), is placed at the center of the manuscript, with an invocation referring to her as Hevajrī. (Fig. 7.8).[35] As unique iconographic form in Newar Buddhist art, Guhyeśvarī is represented as a Heruka-class deity. She is blue in color, wears a crown of skulls symbolizing the five senses, and a garland of severed heads. Like Cakrasaṁvara, she stands in *pratyālīḍāsana* on a prone figure. As her universal form, Guhyeśvarī is represented with multiple arms [thousand arms, according to the *Svayambhū*

Purāṇa], and all her right hands hold a seated male figure in *añjalimudrā*. Each of her left hands holds seated female figure whose hands are also in *añjalimudrā*. In the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, Guhyeśvarī is described as *uttarāmukhi* ("north-faced"), and is depicted with twelve heads in addition to the central one.[36] Most prominent is the *merujaṭā* on her head, which depicts the heads of the five Jina Buddhas, one on top of another. The heads are shown with their *kula* colors, starting with white (Vairocana at the bottom) and green on the top (Amoghasiddhi)—an appropriate symbolism for Guhyeśvarī, who is called "mother of all Buddhas" (*sarva buddha janani*) in textual sources.[37] Guhyeśvarī's identification is further established by the inscription, which relates this form of Guhyeśvarī with the narrative found in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*. In the lower left corner is a small figure of Śiva, represented with his usual attributes and hands held in *añjalimudrā*. The colophon reads:[38]

> "*Śāntitirthayā mahātmyasa śrī guhyeśvarī mātānaṁ mahādevayata darśan biyu*
>
> In the Mahātmya of Śānti Tirtha [of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*], śrī Guhyeśvarī gives *darśan* to Mahādeva."

According to the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* narrative, Śiva Mahādeva is unable to find his wife Umā and asks Guhyeśvarī to help him locate the goddess.[39] Guhyeśvarī appears in her universal form with the figure of Umā in each of her hands. Guhyeśvarī asks Śiva Mahādeva to identify his real wife, and Mahādeva, unable to do so, requests Guhyeśvarī to identify his

wife, thereby acknowledging the Guhyeśvarī as the supreme authority and power.

This narrative of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa's* establishes the supremacy of the Buddhist goddess, Guhyeśvarī, over the Hindu deities. In the Buddhist context, Guhyeśvarī is the ontology of Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the Cakrasaṁvara teachings in Newar Buddhism. As the Ādi Śakti, Guhyeśvarī is variously described as *Jineśvarī*, "Lord of the Jinas", *Prajñaparmitā*, Mother of the Buddhas, *nirākāra nairātmā Sunya*, "Formless and Selfless Void", and *buddhamātṛ* "mother of all Buddhas".[40] In ritual and art, she is generally symbolized as a *kalaśa*, triangle, or an opening in the ground. She is also the source of knowledge and the source of buddhahood (*buddhatva phaladayini*), emphasizing the Tantric understand of the female as embodiment of *prajñā*.

Guhyeśvarī's placement at the center of the Cakrasaṁvara manuscript is particularly appropriate and deliberate, as the goddess is the root source of the Cakrasaṁvara teachings in Nepal. In this context, she thus generates the sixty-four forms of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī. Further, she is also symbolically connected to the two other iconographic themes: Svayambhū and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, again as the source.

Vārūṇī

Directly below Guhyeśvarī is a multi-armed goddess, shown dancing on the head of *nāgas* and whose iconographic form is unique to Newar Buddhism (Fig. 7.10)..[41] The goddess is inscribed as Vārūṇī Devī, flanked by two *yoginīs* from the inner circle of the *Vajravārāhī Mahāmaṇḍala*, Sancāsanī Devī on her right and Yāminī Devī on her left. Vārūṇī has a central role to the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala meditation, and her role in Newar Buddhism is clarified by the ritual context. Further, she is also associated with Vajravārāhī's powers of rainmaking and talismanic state protection. In the *Trisamādhi Pūjā* and the *Diśi Pūjā* to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, the Mahāpatra Pūjā ("Great Skull-cup pūjā) precedes and concludes the main section of the Guhyakalaśa ("Secret Kalaśa Pūjā") to Vajravārāhī.[42] Specifically, the *pūjā* is called *Mantrapātra pūjā*, or *pūjā* to the Mantra Skull-cup, where Vārūṇī is invoked into the *skullcup* as an emanation of Vajravārāhī with the following *sloka*:[43]

> *Ākārarena kapālaśca māṁ kārena Vārūṇī*
> *aṣṭadaśadaśa bhujā ekamukhena //*
> *rakta varṇa trinetrā /*
> *khaḍgavānāṅkuśa savye kapāla kuleśa dhvajā //*
> *Tatha gadā tatha ghaṇṭā navamantra varapradā*
> *Sphēṭaka dhanu pāśam ca khaṭvāṅga sakamaṇḍalu //*
> *Sulamudgara viṇā ca gaṇayanti cottarekāre /*
> *Navayovana lāvanya suśobha sura sundarī //*
>
> "In the form of a skullcup (*kapala*), Vārūṇī, whose *mantra* is MAM, is eighteen armed, single-faced, red complexioned, and with three eyes. Adorned with the sword, bow, hook, skullcup, *dhvajā* of her *kuleśa, vajra, ghaṇṭā*, arrow, noose, *khaṭvaṅga*, vase, and *vina* etc. Her hand displaying *varadamudra* grants the efficacy and power of the nine *mantras*. She is at the height of youth (*navayauvana*), auspicious, and the most beautiful female."

The iconographic form of Vārūṇī represented in the manuscript **exactly** conforms to the descriptions given in the ritual invocation. Further, she is shown standing on the head of a *nāga*, alluding to Vārūṇī's relationship with water and rain. In the ritual context, Vārūṇī's is intimately associated with the waters of consecration. Specifically, the water of the conch (*sankhodaka*) is poured into the *mantrapatra,* which is Vārūṇī's quintessential symbol and into which she is invoked. The water symbolism in connection to Varuni is further accentuated by the fact that she arises from the water of the conch-shell, who represents Varūṇa, the lord of the nagas and controller rains, who is invoked with the following verse.[44]

Om nāgapāśatmao nityam jalarājo mahābala
Nirvikalpeti vikhyato varunaya nama stu te

Om, having the essence of the serpent noose (*nāgapāśa*), the king of
    the waters, and one of great strength,
Renowned for your formlessness (*nirvikalpeti*), I bow to you,
    O Varūna

As a form of Vajravārāhī, Vārūṇī is described as the "beautiful female who drinks the alcohol, the *guhyavajrinī* ("the secret *vajra*"), an epithet that is similar to Guhyeśvarī, who was called "filled with alcohol (*surā yuktaṁ*).[45] Further, the Sanskrit word "Varuṇī" is synonymous with liquor.[46] Throughout the rituals, Vārūṇī is repeated invoked particularly during the main *Guhyakalaśa pūjā* ("Secret Vase Ritual") to Guhyeśvarī/Māmakī, establishing Vajravārāhī/Vārūṇī's symbolic relationship with Guhyeśvarī.[47] Here, Vārūṇī's symbolic form, as the *mantra* skull cup (*mantrapātra*), is

filled with alcohol, which in the Tantric context, symbolize the four vases of *amṛta* that is found in the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala.[48] The ritual texts invoke her as[49]:

> *Oṁ nama devī Vārūṇī amṛte amṛta saṁbhave sarvasattva vasyakarī*
> *Amṛte hṛṁ ākham praticcha svahā //*
>
> Oṁ, I bow to you, Vārūṇī Devī, residing in *amṛta* and arising from *amṛta*, making all sentient being roar (?)
> [Mantra] *Amṛte hṛṁ ākham praticcha svahā //*

After the *mantrapatra* invocation, all the deities are invoked into the symbolic implements, i.e., Cakrasaṁvara into the lamp-black vase (*mohanī*), Vajravārāhī into vermilion powder container (*sinhā*) through the efficacy of the *mantras*.[50] Then the main portion of the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī *pūjā* is then directed to the *Guhyakalaśa* or Alcohol Pot (*khay* or *Thapin pūjā*).[51] The *mantrapatra* placed on top of the *Guhyakalaśa*, where Vārūṇī is invoked again. In the invocation, she is said to symbolize the sky element (*kha dhātu*) and the unending ocean (*ksirasāgara*); she resides at the center of the *amṛta* and is thus arisen from the *amrita (atrotappanno sura devi)*. Again described as having eighteen arms, dancing, with a single face, the invocation ends with the practitioner imploring Vārūṇī to cleanse and purify the great desires (*vārūṇī nityam mahāraja visuddhayet*). The ritual then states that Vārūṇī is invoked into the *guhyakalaśa,* thus establishing her symbolic connection with Guhyeśvarī. In essence, she is the "Secret Goddess" (Guhyeśvarī).[52]

The manuscript's iconography, specifically the two *Yoginīs* flanking Vārūṇī labeled Sancāsanī and Yāminī, further establishes Vārūṇī's

association with Vajravārāhī. In the Vajravārāhī Maṇḍala (Fig. 6.27), Vajravārāhī is placed inside a doubled *yantra* and is surrounded by six *yoginīs*. In the visualization meditations, Vajravārāhī is visualized as surrounded by the six *yoginīs* and is invariably invoked together with her other five emanations, who are Yāminī, Mohanī, Sancārinī, Santrāsanī, and Caṇḍikā.[53] The *Trisamādhi Vidhi* names this group as the Pañcaguhya Devis "Five Secret Goddesses.[54]" Judging from Vārūṇī's iconographic placement with two of the *Pañcaguhyadevis* in the manuscript, the sixth unnamed "secret" goddess in the invocation is Vārūṇī. Furthermore, in the manuscript, Vārūṇī is placed directly above Vajravārāhī, thus firmly establishing their ritual association.

To summarize, I propose several significant points regarding Vārūṇī emerge from the iconography of the manuscripts as well as the ritual context. One, Vārūṇī, symbolized as *mantra* skull-cup (*mantrapātra*) is an emanation of Vajravārāhī and serves a central role in the rituals to Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. By conferring the *guhyapātra abhiṣekha* ("secret skull empowerment"), Vārūṇī is invoked for the efficacy and power of *mantras* in order for the practitioner to summon and visualize the deities of the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī *maṇḍala*. In this role, she is prepares the *yogin* with the proper "tools" for *sādhana,* visualization, and yogic meditation. In the Newar Buddhist tradition, water empowerment (*vajrodaka*) is fundamental to the Tantric practices, as according to the *Svayambhū Purāṇa,*

Mañjuśrī's initiation to Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī teachings was concluded with the adamantine water empowerment (*vajrodaka*).

At a less technical level of interpretation, her ritual association with Varuṇa and the sacred waters may serve as a prime basis for Vajravārāhī talismanic function with rain-making and state protection.[55] Vārūṇī's ritual symbolism provides a framework to interpret the concepts of protection, well-being, and auspiciousness for both the lay practitioner as well as the entire country. Yet, Vārūṇī's esoteric identity, hence her true identity, is as *guhyavajriṇī* (secret adamantine female); this aspect is only revealed through the teaching of the Tantric initiation. As an emanation of Guhyeśvarī and Vajravārāhī, she herself is the "secret goddess", unique to the ritual practices of Newar Buddhism.

Vajravārāhī and the *Yoginīs*:

Reflecting the hierarchy of the preeminent *yoginīs* of Newar Buddhism, the manuscript depicts below Vajravārāhī, surrounded by five goddess—two flanking her and three placed below her in a row (Fig. 7.10). The names of the goddesses are inscribed below each figure: the top center as Vajravārāhī, Khaḍga Yoginī to her right, Phampi [Pharping] Yoginī in the lower right, and three goddess generically labeled as *Vidyādhari* "Holder of Knowledge". Again as emanations of Vajravārāhī, the *yoginīs* are red in color, shown holding the skull-cup, flaying knife and *khaṭvaṅga*—the prime

attributes of Vajravārāhī. In the sacred construct of the Valley's Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, the four *yoginīs* in the inner circle (Ḍakinī, Lāma, Khaṇḍaroha, and Rupinī), correspond to the four *yoginīs* of Newar Buddhism, who have specific temples dedicated to them.[56] These are Guhyeśvarī Yoginī, Khaḍga Yoginī of Śānkhu, Vajrayoginī of Pharping, and Ākāśa Yoginī of Bijeśvarī. In the Cakrasaṁvara manuscript, the goddesses are iconographically identical to the form of the four *yoginīs* found enshrined in the temples. These forms are also a standard set of four in Newar Buddhist art, and are often represented on the exterior wall of the *āgaṁ* shrines in *bāhā* architecture

The manuscript is also an invaluable resource for establishing the iconographic forms of the four *yoginīs* (Catur Yoginīs) of Newar Buddhism. In the first row, Vajravārāhī is flanked by Khaḍga Yoginī and Vidyadhari-1. Khaḍga Yoginī, to the right of Vajravārāhī, is shown in her four-armed form, standing *āliḍa* posture with her right leg bent, and holding the sword and lotus in her upper hands, while her principal hands hold the skull-cup and flaying knife at the chest. This form of KhaḍgaYoginī "*Yoginī* with a Sword" is specific to the goddess of Śānkhu, whose main image of the *toraṇa* similarly holds a sword and lotus in her hands. As an iconographic variant, the *Yoginī* on the left side of Vajravārāhī is identified as Khaḍga Yoginī, who is shown in her usual two-armed form. Her left leg is bent in *pratyāliḍa* position and she is depicted drinking from the skull-cup with her left hand,

while her right hand extends back, holding a flaying knife. Her third attribute, the *khaṭvāṅga* is balanced over her shoulders. An identical form of this *yoginī* is found at the back wall of the Khaḍga Yoginī shrine in Śāṅkhu, thus providing clear evidence that both *yoginīs* are forms of the Śāṅkhu Khaḍga Yoginī.

In the lower row of three *yoginīs,* the figure on the viewer's right is inscribed as Phampi [Pharping] Yoginī. However, a comparison with the iconography of the Pharping Yoginī shows iconographic inconsistency in the *Yoginī* of the Cakrasaṃvara manuscript. The main pendent over the Vajrayoginī shrine at Pharping, shows the Pharping *yoginī* with her left extended up over her shoulders, her right leg straight out and the *khaṭvaṅga* balanced across her shoulders (Fig. 7.11).[57] This iconographic form is, in fact, identical to the *Yoginī* on the opposite side of the manuscript, to the viewer's left (labeled as "Vidyadhari 2"), and not to the one labeled "Phampi Yoginī" (viewer's right). The so-called "Phampi Yoginī" of the manuscript is, however, iconographically consistent with the main shrine image of Ākāśa Yoginī at Bijeśvarī. As the "Yoginī of the Sky" (*Ākāśa Yoginī*), she is shown as if flying across the sky, with her left leg extended out, and her right left bent the knee behind her. The inconsistency in the iconography of this image may be attributed to scribal error, as the left and right identifications are reversed.

A number of sets of the Four Yoginīs found in the *bāhā* context further attest to the iconography of these goddess in Newar Buddhist art. The exterior *āgaṁ* facade of Kvā Bāhā, Kathmandu has murals that depict the four *Yoginīs*. From left to right, they are Khaḍga Yoginī from Śāṅkhu, Ākāśa Yoginī from Bijeśvarī, Guhyeśvarī Yoginī from Guhyeśvarī, and Vajrayoginī from Pharping (See Fig. 5.23). Similarly, the Bhaisajayarāja Bāhā in Patan also has a set of metal pendants depicting the Four Yoginīs in a consistent iconographic pattern.[58] The third set, and by far, the most well-preserved mural painting and significant for their iconographic colors is in Tago Ci Bāhā, a small *bāhā* in Kathmandu.[59] Similarly, a votive *caitya* found at the Pharping Yoginī shows the four *yoginīs* at the base of the *caitya* (Figs 7.12-13). As a set of Four *Yoginī* (Catur Yoginī), the goddesses are emanations of Vajravārāhī as seen in the inner circle of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala.

In the manuscript, we have thus far identified the iconography of four out of the five *yoginīs* surrounding Vajravārāhī, as namely Khaḍga Yoginī (flanking the central figure), Ākāśa Yoginī (viewer's right), and Vajrayoginī (viewer's left). By process of elimination, the *yoginī* at the center directly below Vajravārāhī must be Guhyeśvarī Yoginī. To my knowledge, this iconographic form of Guhyeśvarī is fairly unique, as the Guhyeśvarī Yoginī is generally shown in *pratyālīḍa* position, with her right leg bent at the knee in a manner identical with Nairatmā (See Fig.6.39). Further, in her exoteric forms that are found in the sets of four *yoginī* figures, Guhyeśvarī is

consistently represented as a blue figure, rather than red, as in the manuscript (See Figs.6.36-39). In the manuscript, Guhyeśvarī is represented seated with both legs flung over the shoulder and holding the three attributes of Vajravārāhī—the skull-cup, flaying knife, and *khaṭvāṅga*. This iconographic form of Guhyeśvarī, with the exposed female organs, reaffirm Guhyesvarī Yoginī's role as the primordial generative source in the Newar Buddhist context. Further, the placement of Guhyeśvarī Yoginī (here, in her *sambhogakāya* form) directly in a vertical axis below the universal form of Ādi Guhyeśvarī, Vārūṇī, and Vajravārāhī is an unequivocal statement of the four Yoginīs' symbolic association with the primordial goddess (Ādi Śakti) of Newar Buddhism.[60] The association of these goddesses with procreation and fertility was also elaborated by the ritual specialists of Kathmandu and Patan.

An iconographic sketchbook at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art shows an identical configuration of five Yoginīs, as found in the Cakrasaṁvara manuscript (Fig. 7.14). Instead of only Vajrayoginī as the central figure, Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī are represented in their standard iconographic forms, surrounded by the same set of five *yoginīs*. The only iconographic difference is that the placement of the top two *yoginīs* is reversed, with the four-armed Khaḍga Yoginī on their left and the two-armed Khaḍga Yoginī on their right. The lower set of goddesses are identical in forms and placement with the Cakrasaṁvara manuscript. The iconography

of the goddesses in the lower left and right are consistent with the representations of Ākāśa Yoginī from Bijeśvarī and Vajrayoginī from Śankhu. The center figure again is esoteric form of Guhyeśvarī, whose "inner" (*guhya*) meaning and symbolism are revealed only to the initiated practitioner. To my knowledge, this form is never displayed in public; rather, her blue form that is identical to Nairātmā, is her standard exoteric representation.

The terms associated with these goddesses are useful in understanding their role in the Newar Buddhist context. In the manuscript, the deities are generically labeled to Vidyādharī, meaning "Holder/Provider of Knowledge". In the technical Tantric context, the goddesses are the four *yoginī* ("female practitioner") of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. As signifiers of the Tantric soteriological methodology, the goddesses are also referred to by the general term, *Vajrayoginī* "Adamantine Yoginī." They provide the Tantric practitioner with the attainment/realization of *siddhi* to pursue the dangerous Adamantine path. In the Newar Buddhist context, the goddesses are referred to either as Catur Yoginī or as *Vajrayoginī,* with their specific shrines located in four directions at the mountain-tops of the Valley. Thus, the manuscript establishes not only the iconographic identification of the Valley's four *Yoginīs* of the Valley, but articulates their association with the ontological source, Guhyeśvarī.

The highly technical Tantric aspects of Newar Buddhism's four Yoginīs are clearly established in the ritual context and in textual sources. In the

rituals to Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī, two separate *maṇḍalas* are visualized. The first generation *maṇḍala* is to Cakrasaṁvara, in which the four *yoginīs* (Ḍakinī, Lāma, Khaṇḍaroha and Rupinī) are visualized as surrounding Cakrasaṁvara. Next, in the completion stage Mahāmaṇḍala of Vajravārāhī, these goddesses are transformed into her emanations as the six *yoginīs* surrounding Vajravārāhī.[61] These are the five "secret" goddesses (*Pañcaguhya Devi):* Yāminī, Mohinī, Sancāsanī, Santrāsanī, and Caṇḍikā. In another interpretation, the same list of Vajravārāhī and her retinue are called the *Ṣaṭ Yoginī*, the Six Yoginīs, and symbolize the attainment of perfections, with Prajñapāramitā/Vajravārāhī as the leading the list.[62] A similar interpretation is also provided in the *Hevajra* commentary of *Hevajrapiṇḍārtha Ṭīka*, in which these six goddesses are said to symbolize the *prajñā*'s of the six *kulas* (the five Jinas and Vajrasattva), namely Locana, Māmakī, Pandura, Tara, Vajradhāteśvarī, and Prajñapāramitā.[63] Logically, then, the *yoginis'* preeminence in Newar Buddhism is not surprising, taking into consideration that both the *Nāmasaṅgītī Tantra* and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala that refer extensively refer to the Tantric six *kula* systems is so important in the Newar Buddhist soteriological methodologies. Furthermore, the manuscript also articulates the major Tantric goddess of the Newar Buddhist pantheon, and provides a platform to reconstruct the ideological basis of the *yogini* tradition in Newar Buddhism. Specifically, the

yoginī–Guhyeśvarī, Vāruṇī, Vajravārāhī, and the Yoginīs—as the ontological source, are synonymous.

Aṣṭamātṛkās:

The last section of the Cakrasaṁvara manuscript illustrates a group of eight *yoginīs,* with four goddesses depicted in two rows (Fig. 7.15). They are shown as two-handed figures, dancing on the prone figures of the Dikpālas (Guardians of the Eight Directions), whose identity and directional association are inscribed below. Because of their number eight and the directional association, these goddesses can be identified as the Aṣṭamātṛkās, although they lack their general iconographic characteristics or attributes. As discussed in Chapter 6, the Aṣṭamātṛkās in the Tantric Buddhist context serve as major players in the Cakrasaṁvara cycle meditation. Further, these goddesses are also key in defining the spatial construct of the Valley as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. As a group of Tantric goddesses that are also equally significant in the Hindu and Śakta traditions of the Newars,[64] the Aṣṭamātṛkās' roles are elaborated in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa.*[65] However, the directions ascribed to the figures in the manuscript do not appear to follow any textual source that I am aware of. For instance, the four *Yoginīs* in the first row are trampling the Lokapālas of the four directions (Indra, Yama, Varuna and Kubera), while in the intermediate directions, the goddess are standing on Agni, Bhairava, Vāyu and Mahādeva. Nonetheless, because

their directional symbolism are generally associated with the Dikpālas, the *yoginīs* are clearly the Aṣṭamātṛkā group.[66] As protectors of sacred space, the Aṣṭamātṛkās, in their more mundane functions, protect a town, temple, *maṇḍala* or the whole valley.[67] In the Newar Buddhist context, the eight goddesses are paired with the Aṣṭabhairavas, who are the esoteric emanations of the eight Dikpālas. The dwelling places for the Aṣṭamātṛkās, as for the Eight Dikpālas, are the four cardinal directions and the intermediate spaces.[68]

The manuscript ends with an image of Unmatta Bhairava accompanied by Vārāhī, which is a standard iconographic scheme of many manuscripts and sketchbooks (Fig. 7.16)[69] In the Newar Buddhist context, Unmatta Bhairava presides over the *Aṣṭabhairava*, the Eight manifestations of Bhairava, the male consorts of the Aṣṭamātṛkās. In the technical Newar Buddhist understanding following the description of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, the Aṣṭamātṛkās are the *virās* ("heroines") residing in the *pīṭhas* of the Body, Speech, and Mind *cakras*, and are emanations of Vajravārāhī; the Bhairavas are the *viras*, the heros who are identical with Cakrasaṁvara.[70]

The Aṣṭamātṛkās significance in the Valley's sacred *maṇḍala* of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī was analyzed in Chapter Six, in which the physical *maṇḍala* was defined through the presence of the twenty-four *Mātṛkā pīṭhas*, arranged in the ring of three Aṣṭamātṛkā groups.[71] The Aṣṭamātṛkā's primary ritual function as markers and protectors of sacred

space is evident in the spatial ordering of the Valley. It is the Aṣṭamātṛkās that define the space, while Guhyeśvarī, who is placed at the center, generates the deities within the Maṇḍala. Similarly, the placement of the Aṣṭamātṛkās in the last folios of the manuscript and the directional symbolism ascribed for each *yoginī* suggest that the manuscript's iconography replicates not only the sacred *maṇḍala* of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, but also shows the hierarchy of the *yoginīs* and their relationship to Svayambhū, the Dharmadhātu, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍalas.

Scholars have generally attributed the Aṣṭamātṛkā as Hindu goddesses, and their inclusion in Newar Buddhism is often given as proof of the religion's synecretic nature and influence of Hinduism. While such overlapping of traditions indicate the sharing of deities and sites, a close examination of the Aṣṭamātṛkā cult in the Newar Buddhist tradition will show how these goddesses are interpreted in a technical and buddhological framework. This is particularly evident in their association with the esoteric rituals of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. Aside from the eight *Yoginī's* role as definers of sacred and protectors space, the worship of the Aṣṭamātṛkās also serves as an essential component of Newar Buddhist rituals. In the *Kalaśarcana Pūjā, Trisamādhi Pūjā,* and *Diśi Pūjā,* the worship of the Aṣṭamātṛkās is called Cakrapūjā (*Cakah Pūjā*) and is generally performed at the end of the rituals.[72] During the worship, the ritual specialist invokes the

Aṣṭamātṛkās in a circle (*cakra*). Then the *Lokapāla bali,* a Tantric sacrificial offering of the five senses and sense organs is performed, at which point the Lokapālas, who guard the sacred environment are transformed into the Daśakrodha Bhairavas, who guard the eight directions, plus the zenith and nadir.[73] Further, in the preliminary rites of the *dīkṣā* initiation to Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī, the *pīṭha-devatās* worship and pilgrimage to twenty-four *pīṭhas* of the Aṣṭamātṛkās serve as empowerment rituals to prepares the *yogin* to realize the truth of phenomenal existence.

To the average Newar Buddhist practitioner, the Aṣṭamātṛkās' significance will be directly related to her role as protector and mother "*mātṛka.*". These goddesses, as protective deities, are lovingly referred to as *ajimā* "grandmother" and worshipped for the well-being of family, health, happiness, prosperity, and protection from evil. The highly philosophical associations of the Aṣṭamātṛkās that I have alluded to in this study is known to the select practitioners, who are aware of the buddhological implications of the *yoginīs* role in the larger Tantric Buddhist context. There are multivalent functions of the *yoginīs* in the Newar Buddhist context: One, pertaining to the laity and average practitioner, where the goddesses are powerful and protective mothers, who sustain the lives of the devotees; second; pertaining to the initiated and informed practitioner, who understand the buddhological implications of the *yoginīs,* particularly the Aṣṭamātṛkās as emanations of Vajravārāhī, and thus, synonymous as the ontology of the

Newar Buddhist tradition.

To make sense of the two levels of interpretation and symbolism that seem to be inherent in the multivalency and fluidity of the *yoginis* in Newar Buddhism, I would like to point to two basic constructs that are constantly emphasized by the Newar Buddhist ritual specialists. Showing my dogged literalmindedness, I questioned one of the Vajracarya teachers how the *yoginis,* specifically the Aṣṭamātṛkās,[74] could function on one level as powerful, yet benevolent, mother figures related to well-being and protection, while these very same deities, functioned in highly philosophical terms in other contexts. Their multivalencey was explained to me by *two terms*: laukika *devatā* ("mundane deities") and alaukika dev*atā ("supramundane deities).*[75] At the simplest level of interpretation, the *yoginis,* such as the Aṣṭamātṛkās and the four Yoginīs, are *laukika devatās*, who reside in the physical world in order to protect and sustain the ordered existence of sentient beings and guard the ritual sacred space. These deities are thus directly connected to the larger concepts of talismanic state protection and kingship.

The second understanding involves the more complex Tantric concepts, in which the Aṣṭamātṛkās and *yoginīs* are *alaukika devatās*, the "supramundane deities", and function as the highest embodiments of the Tantric soteriological methodologies. These are the *yoginīs* that the practitioners must meditate on and receive empowerments to visualize the

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Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī *maṇḍala*. It was explained to me that the goddess Kumārī most clearly manifests these multivalent meanings, since as a laukika *devatā,* she is one of the eight mother goddesses (aṣṭamātṛkā) and is the powerful and protective mother figure. It is in this role that she serves as a quintessential symbol of state protection, in the cities of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur.[76] In a more technical and buddhological context, Kumārī, as Vajradevī ("Adamantine Goddess"), is an emanation of Vajravārāhī, on whom the practitioners must meditate to understand the true nature of *śūnyatā* and *prajña,* that is the basis of the Anuttara Yoga Tantric, of which the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala is part. In this understanding, the epithet *Vajradevī* is also given to the wife of the main Vajrācārya priest during the initiation rituals, in which she embodies Vajravārāhī.[77]

SECTION III: ICONOLOGY OF THE YOGINĪS IN NEWAR BUDDHISM

Interpreting the Hierarchy of the *Yoginīs*: *Dharmakāya, Sambhogakāya, Nirmanakāya*

The Cakrasaṁvara manuscript discussed above reflects the preeminence of the *Yoginīs* in the Newar Buddhist tradition as the ontological source, specifically relation to the higher practices of the Anuttara Yoga Tantras. Replicating the inherent structure of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala in its iconographic schema, the manuscript articulates the symbolic relationship of the major *yoginīs* in Newar Buddhism, namely Guhyeśvarī,

Vajravārāhī, the four Yoginīs (*Catur Yoginī*), and the Aṣṭamātṛkās. In the conception of the Valley as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, these very goddesses are at the core of the idealized ordering. In other words, the iconographic layout of the manuscript as well as the spatial ordering of the Valley both demonstrate a fundamental understanding of Newar Buddhist ontology, in that the *Yoginīs* are the generative source of the religion.

In the manuscript, the placement of the *yoginīs* in a vertical axis suggests a hierarchic layering of these deities. In a buddhological interpretation of the hierarchy, I propose that the manifestations of the goddesses can be best understood in terms of the basic *Trikāya* system, which demonstrate the three states of Buddhahood, as illustrated in the conceptual drawing (Fig. 7.17). These are the *svabhābha kāyā* ("essence body"), *Dharmakāya* or *Dharma* body of absolute undifferentiated truth, *sambhogakāya*, the Bliss or Enjoyment Body, and *nirmāṇakāya* or Form or Transformation Body.

Briefly, I will discuss the concept of the three bodies as articulated first by the Yogacārā philosophers and later incorporated in the Tantric systems.[78] In order to understand the different natures (*svābhava*) of the phenomenal world, the Buddhist philosophy has developed the concept of the *Trikāya* (Three Body) system, related to the different aspects of Buddhahood. The lowest in the hierarchy, *nirmāṇakāya* refers to the earthly Buddhas that appear to guide the practitioner the path to Buddhahood. The

sambhogakāya, symbolized by the Five Jina Buddhas, is the transcendent body upon whom the practitioner meditates in order to realize the state of Enlightenment. The highest *Dharmakāya* is the absolute nature of Buddhahood, that only exists in the Arūpadhātu realm. The nature of the *dharmakāya* can only be manifest through *sambhogakāya* terms, such as the forms of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhi. Similarly, as *svābhavika-kāya* "self-existent body" is essence of true reality, *śūnyatā* that can only be realized through the purified *bodhicitta. Svābhavika-kāya* manifests the entire range of Buddha bodies.

Transferring the Trikāya framework to the hierarchy of the *yoginīs* in the Newar Buddhist tradition (See Fig. 7.17), Guhyeśvarī is the primordial creative energy and generative source (Ādi Sakti), as described in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa.* She is the ontological source of the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū and of the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī Tantric meditations. She not only generates the sacred Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala of the Valley, but also emanates the deities within it. In this context, Guhyeśvarī is the Dharmakāya, the Absolute Reality, the formless (*nirākāra*), selfless (*nairātmā*) state of the void (*śūnyatā*), as suggested by her various epithets. Because the nature of the absolute is manifest in her numerous emanations, Guhyeśvarī is conceived of as the *svabhāvakāya,* which is essence is the nature of the *Dharmadhātu.*[79]

The essence and nature of the Absolute truth is revealed through the *yoginīs* of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. Specifically, as the generator of the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī *maṇḍala,* Vajravārāhī is the *Dharmakāya* manifest in the *sambhogakāya* form. In other words, Vajravārāhī is Guhyeśvarī represented in her Bliss body. In the ritual context, Guhyeśvarī's *sambhogakāya* aspects also symbolized by Vārūṇī, who thus is understood to be identical with Vajravārāhī. The difference between these forms is that certain characteristics of the goddess are most prominent that others. For example, Vārūṇī emphasizes the attainment of *mantrasiddhi,* the "realization" and efficacy of *mantras.* At a more mundane level, Guhyeśvarī's *sambhogakāya* manifestation as Vārūṇī is closely associated with rain-making and fertility.

Likewise, the four Yoginīs of the inner circle, or *Vajrayoginīs* ("Adamantine Yoginīs") as they are generally referred, are direct emanations of Vajravārāhī; thus in their various iconographic forms can be interpreted as Vajravārāhī's pure *sambhogakāya* form. As meditational deities, Vajrayoginīs are called *siddhidatr,* the provider of *siddhi* ("realization") of the state of the void.

For the Tantric *yogin,* the process of *yogic* meditation through the awakening of the energy centers of the body is intimately associated with the three rings of *yoginīs* found in the *kāya, vāk,* and *citta cakras* of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. These twenty-four *pīṭha-devatās,* corresponding to

the deities who reside in the *cakras* of the *yogin's* body, are the emanations of Vajravārāhī in her *nirmāṇakāya* form. These yoginīs are the Aṣṭamātṛkās, as the physical manifestations of Vajravārāhī, reside in the physical world to protect and sustain the ordered existence of sentient beings. On the other hand, as pīṭha-devatās and meditational deities, the Aṣṭamātṛkās of the twenty-four pīṭhas prepares the yogin to realize the emptiness of phenomenal existence.

At another, less technical, level of interpretation, the hierarchy of the deities may be explained in terms of their physical accessibility of worship. Nirmanakāya forms such as the Aṣṭamātṛkās or Śākyamuni is directly propitiated and worshipped by the lay and initiated community alike, without prior initiation. The manifestations of Vajravārāhī as Vajrayoginīs, like the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, are intermediate esoteric meditational deities, whose forms can be shown in public. However, their "true" or secret meaning is gleaned through Tantric empowerment.[80] The highest category of deities are those belonging to Anuttara Yoga Tantra, such as Cakrasaṁvara/V a j r a v ā r ā h ī, Yogāṁvara/Jñānaḍakinī, and Hevajra/Nairātmā, whose true essence and symbolism is revealed only through initiation and Tantric practices.[81]

That *the yoginīs* demonstrate the Tantric enlightenment process is most clearly articulated in the physical conception of the Valley's sacred maṇḍala. Because the goddesses define the Valley's sacred space, the

exoteric references to the Valley as Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala must be, in esoteric terms, understood essentially as the *maṇḍala* of Guhyeśvarī, where the "Secret Goddess" and her emanations protect, sustain, and define the sacred character of the Valley. In other words, it becomes apparent that the "Secret Goddess" is Vajravārāhī and the *maṇḍala* in question is the Vajravārāhī Maṇḍala. The epithet "Guhyeśvarī" thus can be considered a descriptive term, in that the secret identity of the *yoginī* as Vajravārāhī can only be reveal through the esoteric Tantric practices. Thus, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* unequivocally states that the sacred geography of the Valley is generated by the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū and Ādi Śakti Guhyeśvarī, the *svabhāvakāya* and ultimate symbol of the Dharmakāya. Interpreting this in Tantric terms, the generators of the Valley's *maṇḍala* is inherently Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, the *upāya*/male and *prajñā*/female, who are the Dharmakāya, represented in the *sambhogakāya* form. Through this conceptual ordering of space as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, the Newar Buddhist practitioner articulates the basic ontological and soteriological elements of the religion. In a basic level, the conception of the *maṇḍala* reaffirms the sacrality of the valley, through the *Yoginīs* who generate and define the mandalic space. More importantly, as a visualization meditation, this conception of phenomenal world as the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī Maṇḍala enables the practitioner to understand complex philosophical theories of Buddhism in the most basic of terms-that the phenomenal world is

none other than the creation of one's mind, so its true nature is inherently empty. This realization is the state of *śūnyatā*, that is ultimately internalized through Valley's symbolic maṇḍala of Vajravārāhī and Cakrasaṁvara.

Although the ritual context and textual sources allude to the *yoginīs* as the ontology of the Tantric traditions of Newar Buddhism, their significance in the larger context of the Vajrayāna practices been thoroughly examined. In the next section, I will provide a buddhological interpretation to the role of the *yoginīs* as the ontology of the religion, and also as the essence of the three iconographic components present in Newar Buddhist imagery.

Svabhava Kāya/Dharmakāya: Interpreting Guhyeśvarī as the Primordial Goddess (*Ādiśaktī*) and Ontological Source

The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* describes Guhyeśvarī in highly philosophical terms, thus establishing Guhyeśvarī's manifestation as the *Dharmakāya*. Among her various epithets that refer to the goddess as ontological source are *Ādi Śakti* ("Primordial *Śaktī*"), *Khāganana* ("Face of the Void"), *dharmodaya svarupine,* ("Source of the Dharma"), *ekamāta* ("Foremost of Mothers"), *triloka janani* ("Mother of the Three Worlds [i.e. Kamadhātu, Rūpadhātu, and Arūpadhātu]"), *śūñyarupine* ("Essence of *śūnyatā*"), *Prajñapramita rūpa* ("She whose form is Prajñapāramitā"), *sarvasiddhipradātā,* ("She who provides all *siddhī*").[82] The narrative also addresses Guhyeśvarī as Vajravairocanī, which is another epither Vairocana's *prajñā,*

Vajradhāteśvarī. Guhyeśvarī is also called Vāruṇī, which are again epithets are associated with Vajravārāhī, specifically in the ritual context, during the *sindurapūjā* or Māmakī *pūjā*. As the *svabhābhakāya,* Guhyeśvarī generates Vajravārāhī, as indicated in the ritual symbolism in the Vajravārāhī arises from the *Guhyeśvarī kalaśa.*[83] The ritual symbolism clearly suggests that Vajravārāhī is the *sambhogakāya* emanation of Guhyeśvarī's *Dharmakāya* form. Further, the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* establishes that Guhyeśvarī has twenty-four forms manifest in *pīṭhas,* thus establishing that she generates the three rings Aṣṭamātṛkā goddesses in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

In her role as the ontological source of Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the manifested universe, Guhyeśvarī serves as the archetype of the female principal (*yoginī*) in the Newar Buddhist context. Analogous to the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū Mahācaitya, who symbolizes the totality of Buddhahood, Guhyeśvarī's manifestations appear in many different forms, and their symbolic meaning understood in multivalent levels. Iconographically, some of Guhyeśvarī's iconographic forms may be displayed in public and shown to the uninitiated. In this *sambhogakāya* form, she is identical to Nairātmā in her iconographic form. (See Fig. 6.39). In other contexts, demonstrating her qualities as creative and generative source, the essence of the *Dharmadhātu* or the womb of the Buddhas (*tathāgatagarbha*), she is signified by her quintessential symbol, the *kalaśa* (See Fig. 3.80). In her esoteric form, Guhyeśvarī's secret identity is that of Vajravārāhī (See Fig. 7.11). Because of

the multivalent contexts of the nature, Guhyeśvarī can be interpreted as the *svabhāvakāya*. Guhyeśvarī embodies the most esoteric realms of the Tantric practices, particularly related to the concepts of secrecy and initiation, yet at a very basic level to the non-initiated practitioners, she is the protective goddess who sustains and protects her devotees. As *svabhāvakāya,* she is thus called *bahurupinī* "having many forms" as well as *nirākāra nirañjana nairātmā* "formless pure and selfless" symbol of *śūñyatā.*[84]

The primordial home for the Guhyeśvarī is considered to be the *Guhyeśvarī pīṭha,* the "seat of Guhyeśvarī" or *Guhyeśvarī kuṇḍa* ("lake of Guhyeśvarī"), where the presence of the goddess is represented by the natural spring. For the supreme Buddhist goddess who is the ontological source of the religion, it is ironic that Guhyeśvarī's primordial residence is a disputed matter. Several miles to the northeast of Svayambhū Mahācaitya is the small shrine called Purān Guhyeśvarī "Old/Original Guhyeśvarī," which according to the ritual specialists of Svayambhū and Patan, is considered to the "true" primordial home of Guhyeśvarī. In a slightly different tradition, the ritual specialists from Kathmandu consider the Guhyeśvarī *pīṭha* at Śānti Tīrtha in Pashupati/Deopatan, where Guhyeśvarī gave darśan to Mahādeva in her universal form, to be her main residence.[85] The Guhyeśvarī *pīṭha* at Pashupati, in the contemporary context, is one of the most powerful goddess shrines for the Newars and the Parbates, regardless of religious distinctions. According to the Hindu mythic tradition, it is the secret (*guhya*)

pīṭha where Sati Devī's genitalia fell, when Śiva paraded his beloved wife's body after she committed immolation in the sacrificial fire.[86]

For the Newar Buddhist practitioners, both sites to Guhyeśvarī are "original" and are equally significant and considered the manifestations of the goddess's primordial form, depending on the individual and contextual interpretations. Scholars have generally associated the Paśupati Guhyeśvarī *pīṭha* as the prime site of the Buddhist goddess, Guhyeśvarī and have dismissed the Guhyeśvarī site at Phulbari, perhaps due to the rather unimpressive appearance of the shrine as well as to its relative obscurity to those outside the Buddhist tradition.[87] Since the Guhyeśvarī shrine in Deopatan is not allowed to be photographed, I will briefly discuss here the Phulbari Guhyeśvarī shrine and its visual imagery, specifically because the site reiterates the ideas of creation, regeneration, and fecundity associated with the *yoginī*.

The small shrine of Puran Guhyeśvarī is located in a small village several miles northeast from Svayambhū Hill (Fig. 7.18). The present shrine itself is a twentieth-century reconstruction that replaced the open-air shrine that are more typical of the *pīṭha* shrines (Fig. 7.19).[88] The interior courtyard is fairly small, with four votive *caityas* and two Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala placed on the east side of the courtyard. There is no shrine image in the interior, but Guhyeśvarī is symbolized by a *kalaśa* placed over opening of the hole of natural spring, as the eternal source of water out of which issued the

lotus root of Svayambhū. It is also at this very site that Mañjuśrī is said to have received his initiations of Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī. The hole is at the center of a lotus *maṇḍala,* over which the removable *kalaśa* is placed (See Fig. 7.20). The donative inscription dated N.S. 1086 on the lotus *maṇḍala* invokes the shrine deity as "Śrī Nairatmā residing at Phulbari Guhyeśvarī *kunda* (pond)." The invocation establishes evidence why Guhyeśvarī's iconographic form is identical to that of Nairātmā.

The symbolism of the *kalaśa* is an important aspect of Newar Buddhist practice. As mentioned earlier, the *kalaśa* serves as a quintessential symbol of generation, and in the Buddhist context is a specific reference to Guhyesari as Ādi Sakti, the mother of all Buddhas. Often, as in the case at the Guhyeśvarī shrine, the *kalaśa*'s top is marked by a *yantra,* which is interpreted in diverse terms, as symbolizing the goddesses' creative as well as destructive aspect or in the Tantric interpretation, the union of the male and female. Over the metal canopy at the Guhyeśvaī shrine is a red cloth covering that depicted the double-triangle *yantra,* symbolizing the "seat" of the goddess. As the symbol of the Ādi Sakti, the Guhyeśvarī *kalaśa* also signifies the female creative principle, specifically the *yoni.*

The primacy given to Guhyeśvarī as the primordial goddess who is acknowledged by both the Buddhists and Hindus, (whose identity, however, is reinterpreted to conform to the respective religious traditions) is found in the donative inscriptions at Pulān Guhyeśvarī. An inscriptional plaque of

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V.S. 2025 given by one Bhaktalal Shrestha invokes the goddess in the Hindu context as *jagadamba mātā* ("mother of the universe") and *mahāmaya* ("Great Illusion"). Next to the plaque, another inscription refers to Guhyeśvarī as *Nairātmādevi* from Guhyeśvarī *kuṇḍa*. Similarly, the visual imagery in the chanting hall represents the anthropomorphic form of Guhyeśvarī as Guhyakālī, the epithet by which the goddess is identified in the Hindu context (Fig. 7.21).[89] In her esoteric form, Guhyakāli is shown as a blue figure with ten pairs of arms, dancing in *pratyalida* position on top of prone figures of Bhairava and Siva. For the Hindu practitioners, the goddess Guhyeśvarī is identified with Guhyakāli.

Interpreting the Multivalency of Guhyeśvarī, the "Secret Goddess"

The significant point here in showing these examples is that Guhyeśvarī serves as the archetypal goddesses of the *Tantric* tradition, both Hindu and Buddhist. The identity of the "Secret Goddess" is entirely based on her contextual reference; in other words, the practitioner propitiating her—depending on his/her personal methodological path, namely Hindu, Buddhist or Śākta—provides her specific contextualized identity. My field experience vividly illustrates the fluidity of the goddess' identity. During my research, Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya invited me to a *yogini pūjā* he was officiating at the Guhyeśvarī shrine in Deopatan. The *pūjā* was part of a preliminary empowerment ritual, performed before the *dikṣā* to

Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī. Inside the shrine, he began the Tantric Buddhist invocations and rituals, referring to the goddess as "Guhyeśvarī, Nairātmā, and Guhyavajrinī". Next to him, there was another *pūjā* being performed, this time officiated by a Hindu Newar priest (Karmācārya), in which the priest invoked the goddess as "Guhyeśvarī, Kubjikā, and Guhyakāli," as manifestation of Durgā.[90] For me, this incident was extremely enlightening, as it contextualized the fluidity and dynamism of the *yoginī* tradition practiced by the Newar community of the Kathmandu Valley. Deities and shrines are constantly shared, yet the specified identity of the goddess remained distinct, based on the practitioner's religious affiliation. It was the devotee's personal religious identity that defined the contextual identity of the goddesses. The sharing of sacred sites, particularly those associated with the goddess in the Tantric Buddhist tradition, in the diverse context have often been misconstrued by scholars and such practices that emerge at the core of the Valley's religious environment have erroneously been labeled as "religious syncretism". It is, therefore, important to evaluate how specific constructs of each religious traditions provides the larger ideological, theoretical, and philosophical framework for the local practices.

Thus, in the Newar Buddhist context, the "Secret Goddess" (Guhyeśvarī) as the Ādi Sakti is the ontology of the religion. She is variously called Nairatmā, Vajravārāhī, and Vajravairocani. In this way, with Guhyeśvarī as the principal female energy (*Ādi Sakti*), in its ritual and

religious practices, Newar Buddhism continually affirms the preeminence of the goddesses, and thus shares many of the *Sakta* traditions with its Hindu counterparts.

Interpreting Vajravārāhī as Dharmakāya Manifesting the *Sambhogakāya* Form

The Valley as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala establishes the symbolic identity of Vajravārāhī and Guhyeśvarī, in that Guhyeśvarī in her *sambhogakāya* form as Vajravārāhī generates the sacred *maṇḍala*. Vajravārāhī's significance in the Newar Buddhist context emerges by the fact that she, paired with Cakrasaṁvara, is the premier deity of *āgaṁ* shrine. The Tantric practices associated with Vajravārāhī is integral virtually every ritual performed by the Vajrācārya priest, including the esoteric rituals that may be performed in public. Specifically, the *Trisamādhi* meditation—the visualization of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī-is performed during the *Kalaśarcana pūjā*. As in any Tantric symbol that function in many different levels, the ritual symbolism and esoteric meanings of these rituals are only revealed to the initiated practitioner. For the average lay Newar Buddhist, much of the esoteric symbolism goes unnoticed. However, unlike the scholarly prejudice for the Newar Buddhist ritual specialists who are often seen as mere "performers" of the acts, the Vajrācārya priests are intensely

aware of Vajravārāhī's central significance to the Tantric soteriological methodology of Newar Buddhism.[91]

In the Newar Buddhist context, Vajravārāhī's ritual significance is manifested in the worship of the goddess, Kumārī.[92] Similar to Guhyeśvarī, Kumārī is propitiated by both Hindus and Buddhists in different contexts. The Hindus understand her as the manifestation of Durga/Taleju, while the Buddhists consider her as Vajradevī, the "Adamantine Goddess" and manifestation of Vajravārāhī. In the Newar Buddhist context, the term "Vajradevī" applies to the human manifestation of Vajravārāhī, upon whom the *yogin* is to meditate and visualize as identical to himself/herself. In a ritual context, Vajradevī may be the goddess Kumārī or the wife of the main Vajrācārya priest, as I discussed in the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī initiations. Given that Vajravārāhī and and Vajradevī/Kumārī is synonymous in Newar Buddhism, the questions arise as to the nature of their symbolic relationship and how is this relationship articulated in ritual practice.

In the Tantric Buddhist context, the worship of the goddess Kumārī/Vajradevī is, in essence, worship of Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī. The Vajradevī Maṇḍala that is central to Kumārī *pūjā* is identical to the Vajravārāhī Maṇḍala, in which the central deity, Vajravārāhī/Vajradevī is surrounded by the six *Yoginīs* of the Vajravārāhī Maṇḍala (See Fig. 6.27). Similarly, the Kumārī *pūjās* described by Allen is identical to the *Māmakī*

pūjā of the *Trisamdhi Vidhi* and *Samvarodaya Pūjā Vidhi,* in which Vajradevī in invoked into the *guhyakalaśa* (See Fig. 7.1).[93] The layout of the *pūja* implements and ritual process is also identical to the worship of Vajravārāhī. At the culmination of the *pūjā,* the goddess Kumārī in her human manifestation was seated on the *maṇḍala,* thus unequivocally establishing Kumārī/Vajradevī's identity with Vajravārāhī.[94] Further, the very name of the *pūjā* itself confirms Kumārī's identity with Vajravārāhī, as it is called *mahāsindura abhiśekha* "Empowerment of the Great Vermilion Powder". As I discussed earlier in the symbolism of the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī initiation, the vermilion powder (*sinha/sindura*) is the quintessential symbol of Vajravārāhī, hence, of Kumārī. In other contexts, when the human manifestation of the Kumārī is not available, Kumārī's crown symbolizing her presence may be substituted, as was found on the exterior of the Yogāṁvara *āgaṁ* shrine at Kvā Bāhā.[95] As Vajradevī and a meditational deity (*alaukika devatā*), the goddess Kumārī is also the physical manifestation of Vajravārāhī.

Given these ritual contexts, the goddess Kumārī in her human form thus may be interpreted as the *nirmāṇakāya,* or transformation Body of Vajravārāhī. This interpretation may be further reinforced by Kumārī's conflation with the Aṣṭamātṛkā Kaumārī, one of the eight goddess who define the conceptual ordering of the Valley as Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. Within this context, too, the Aṣṭamātṛkās can be understood as the *nirmāṇakāya* of

Vajravārāhī, and Kumārī as the human manifestation of the *yoginīs* is *nirmāṇakāya* form of Vajravārāhī.

Vajravārāhī's Association with State Protection

Although I will not discuss this issue in much detail here, it is important to point out that the symbolic association with Vajravārāhī and Kumārī may be further clarified thorough their roles in state protection and generators of sacred space. From a socio-religious perspective, Kumārī's primary function is associated with state protection. Specifically, from the fifteenth century, the royal Kumārī's of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur have been intimately identified with Taleju, the *iṣṭadevatā* or tutelary goddess of the Hindu Malla kings, and in the present-day, with Durgā, the *iṣṭadevatā* of the Śāha kings. The Kathmandu Kumāri, as her symbol of protection, each year gives *tikā* to the king to ensure protection of the kingdom and to validate the king's rule and well-being of the countryman. Kumārī's prime function of state protection and legitimization of royal power appears highly appropriate, when we consider the role of the *yoginī* as protectors and definers of sacred space, specifically in the understanding of the Valley as Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala.[96]

The spatial ordering of the Valley as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala reaffirms the *yoginīs'* roles as protectors, specifically with Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī generating the sacred environment of the Valley.

In this understanding, the *yoginīs* not only physically mark the sacrality of the Valley, but also assure the ordered existence of the inhabitants. For the Newar Buddhist practitioners residing in Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur, the larger macrocosm of the Valley's sacred geography is individually transferred to the three cities of the Valley. In other words, each of the three cities, particularly Kathmandu and Patan, are conceptualized to mirror the sacred order of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala.[97] As Guhyeśvarī/Vajravārāhī, who is the ontological source of the entire universe, generates the maṇḍala, thus, it is the yoginīs emanating from the center (Guhyeśvarī/Vajravārāhī) who not only defines the sacred space but also protects, sustains, and assures the well-being of all sentient beings. Understanding the Newar Buddhist conception of the Valley as Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala alludes to the larger issues of the preeminence of *yoginīs* in their fundamental role as protectors.

In the Buddhist context, the cities of Kathmandu and Patan both conceptualized the cities to be in the form of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, with Vajravārāhī as the generator, in which the eight Aṣṭamātṛkā *pīṭhas* define the sacred environment and again, Vajravārāhī generating the mandalic space at the center.[98] It is noteworthy that in the physical layout of the cities, the Kumārī shrine, usually located inside or near the royal palace, is at the conceptual center of this sacred maṇḍala. As Kumārī is synonymous with the emanator Vajravārāhī of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, by logical extension, Kumārī is thus understood to generate the symbolic space of the

city. Given Kumarī's symbolic association with Vajravārāhī, Kumarī is the quintessential symbol of *yoginīs* as state protectors, legitimization of kingship, royal power, and validation.[99] That Guhyeśvarī, Vajravārāhī, and hence, Kumarī are central to the concepts of talismanic state protection and kingship may be best illustrated by the role Śāntipur plays in the Kathmandu Valley's religious environment. Śāntipur, as mentioned earlier, is the secret *āgaṁ* shrine to Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī. Monthly, a Tantric *pūjā* is performed, including a Kumarī which generally occurs at the culmination of the ritual, that is considered mandatory to ensure the protection and ordered functioning of the universe.[100] Although the ontology of the Newar Buddhist tradition, the *yoginīs* also have a significant role in talismanic functions of protection, rain-making, and issues that pertain to the mundane this-worldly concerns. Thus, as a human manifestation of the meditational deity Vajravārāhī, the goddess Kumari in the Newar Buddhist tradition may be interpreted in two levels. As a meditational deity symbolizing the highest Tantric methodologies of the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī cycle, Kumarī is the *sambhogakāya* form of Vajravārāhī. She is thus known in this capacity as Vajradevī ("Adamantine Goddess") and functions in the *alaukika* ("supremundane") level. Kumarī also symbolizes the *nirmāṇakāya* manifestation of Vajravārāhī in her role as state-protector and patron deity of the Malla kings of medieval Nepal. With the Tantric goddess present in the physical form of a young girl, Kumarī's

symbolic function is directly related to the Aṣṭamatṛkās and thus, her identity and iconography is often conflated with the Aṣṭamātṛkā Kaumārī. This dynamic fluidity within which the Tantric goddesses function, particularly in the case of Vajravārāhī and her manifestations, is one of the most salient features of the Tantric Newar tradition. The iconology of Newar Buddhism's core components that I have identified similarly needs to be contextualized within the framework of the *yoginī* tradition as practiced by the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley.

In the analysis above, I have used the *trikāya* as the fundamental construct within which to interpret the *yoginīs* of the Valley. The analysis outlined these major points:

• The conception of the Secret Goddess Guhyeśvarī, as Ādi Śaktī, appears to be specific to the Newar Buddhism. In a technical buddhological context, the goddess is identified with Vajravārāhī, who may be interpreted as the *dharmakāya* Guheśvarī manifest in *sambhogakāya* form.

• Newar Buddhism legitimizes these specific indigenous traditions and practices within highly philosophical and technical Tantric framework that suggest a long history of development.

• With the overwhelming importance given to goddess worship in the Tantric Buddhist tradition, the *yoginī* tradition, as evidenced by texts and ritual practice, serves as the ontology of the religion.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the Kathmandu Valley, the goddess serves a primary role in the Tantric practices of Buddhist, Hindu and Śakta traditions. The basic premise of Newar Buddhist tradition is that the *yoginīs,* evident in their multivalent symbolism and ritual context, is the ontological source of the religion. I will restate some significant issues emerged through the analyses present in this chapter.

- In the three core iconographic components, namely, Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, the *yoginīs*, specifically, Guhyeśvarī and Vajravārāhī serve as the unifying element, as they are central to the ideological framework of the religion. An understanding of the preeminence of the *yoginīs* as the essence of the three iconographic elements helps articulate the unified iconographic program of the *bāhās.*

- Just as the three core themes reflected a hierarchic layering of Buddhist methodologies, there is also an implicit understanding of the three-fold hierarchy of the *yoginīs* of Newar Buddhism. This may be interpreted as symbolizing the *trikāya* system. As the primordial Śakti/Prajñā, Guhyeśvarī is at the highest level, signifying the absolute truth of *Dharmakāya.* Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī are the *sambhogakāya* manifestation of the *Dharmakāya,* as they Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī generates the sacred space of the

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Valley and the cities. The Four Yoginis serve as the pure *sambhogakāya* form, while the Aṣṭamātṛkās are the *nirmānakāya* aspects of the generating source.

• The hierarchic layering also alludes to the three categories found in Newar Buddhist practice, specifically the concepts of 'outer, secret, and inner', in which they refer to progressively higher levels of Tantric practice and understanding. This pattern of hierarchy is a recurrent theme in Newar Buddhism, as it not only pertains to the soteriological practices of the religion, but also the hierarchy of pantheon.

• The hierarchy also pertains to the symbolic meaning (iconology) of the *yoginīs*, in that there are different levels of understanding for the initiated and lay practitioners. The terms *laukika*, "mundane" and *alaukika* ('supramundane") relates to the mutivalent context of the *yoginīs*. For example, in the Tantric context, Guhyeśvarī as the "Secret Goddess" functions within multiple frameworks. As Vajravārāhī, she is secret, as her true "inner" (*abhyantara*) identity can be only revealed through initiation. As deities created to help the practitioners perfect the Tantric practices, these deities are *alaukika*, who aid the *yogin* along his path to Enlightenment. For the average practitioner, Guhyeśvarī or the Aṣṭamātṛkās, as *laukika devatas*, embodies all the generative and creative powers of the Mother Goddesses. In this aspect, their protective functions are significant.

The preeminence of the *yoginīs* thus reflects a fundamental aspect of Newar Buddhist religious practices, in that it is, foremost, a Tantric (Vajrayāna) tradition. The cosmogonic myth in the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* is cast within the Tantric framework, in which *yoginīs* are unequivocally understood as the ontology of the religion. Similarly, as a Tantric system, the rituals performed in Newar Buddhism continue to emphasize the *yoginīs*. In the same way, the essence of the three core iconographic program cannot be understood, without contextualizing the role of the *yoginīs* in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

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[1] Both the Buddhist *Svayambhū Purāṇa* as well as the Hindu, *Nepal Mahātmya* emphasize the goddess tradition as a major element in the religious tradition.

[2] In the Buddhist context, the third chapter of the *Vrhat Svayambhū Purāṇa* is devoted to the concept of the Valley as sacred *pīṭha*, the "seat" of the Goddess. Similarly, the *Nepal Mahātmya* of the Hindu tradition extensively discusses the Valley's sacrality in terms of the self-arisen *śaktī-pīṭhas* found located in the sacred geography of the Kathmandu Valley.

[3] I do not mean to imply here the "syncretic" nature of these goddesses, which has been a greatly misused and misunderstood term attributed to the female deities of the Valley. Instead, what is significant is that the practitioners envision the goddesses to have their distinct identities and meanings in specific contexts, although to the casual observer these distinctions appear blurred. The dynamic fluidity of the goddesses to interact within these diverse contexts enables the multiple layers of interpretation and symbolism in connection to the goddesses in the Tantric tradition.

[4] Current research conducted in the Kathmandu Valley, such as the excavations as Hāḍigaon by ISMEO and art historical research suggest that the *mātṛkā* worship is one of the earliest religious traditions in the Valley. See Giovanni, *Harigaoñ Satya Nārāyaṇa, Kathmandu: A Report on the Excavations carried out in 1984-88;* Bangdel, *Early Sculptures of Nepal,* and Slusser, *Nepal Mandala.*

[5] Current research has revealed the presence of the *mātṛkā* cult to pre-date the Hindu and Buddhist traditions of the Valley. For discussion of the ancient *mātṛkā* tradition in the Valley, see Lain S. Bangdel, "Nepal Upatyakama Paine Mātṛkā ra SaptaMātṛkāka Purāṇa Murtiharu [The Ancient Images of Mātṛkās and SaptaMātṛkās in the Kathmandu Valley]," *Gorakhapatra,* Sravan 11, VS 2054 (1997). See also, Lain S. Bangdel, *Early Sculptures of Nepal,* 13-31. Bangdel discusses the style and iconography of thirty-six *mātṛkās* images, dated to the pre-Licchavi period, which appears to be the earliest sculptural tradition in the Valley.

[6] See Lain S. Bangdel, *Early Sculptures of Nepal,* for examples of early *mātṛkā* images in the Valley.

[7] The *vamsavalis* also allude to the tradition of Kumarī worship that is a significant

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component of contemporary Newar culture to exist as early as the in the Licchavi period, stating that King Vasudeva of the Licchavi period (ca. 7th century) established "Kumarī Gana and Naudurga [Navadurga]" at the Jaibageśvarī shrine. See Wright, *History of Nepal,* 84.

[8] This aspect is alluded to in the core iconographic programs of Newar Buddhist *bāhās/bahīs.*

[9] Given the richness of the goddess worship in the Valley, there is significant research that needs to be done in this area. In the Newar Buddhist context, Mohani (Dasain in Nepali), which is also the most important harvest festival of the Hindus, involves the Anuttaraya Yoga class type of Tantric *pūjās,* such as the *Trisamādhi* of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī, in the personal *āgaṁ* shrines in the homes of the Vajracaryas and Śākyas. In Kathmandu, the nine days of Mohani, corresponding to the Hindu Navaratri "nine nights" of the Navadurgas, are celebrated by visiting the *Mātṛkā* shrines in the ten *tirthas* around the Valley (*navaratha mela*). See Ratna Kaji Vajrācārya, *Yen Deya Bauddha Pūjā Kriyāya Halajwalan,* 124-126. The national festival, Ghode Jatra (Pisaca Caturdasi) is traditionally associated with Lumadhi Ajimā at Bhadrakalī and the Kathmandu royal Kumarī. Gatila is the annual harvest festival to Vasundharā .

[10] See Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras,* for discussion of the goddesses in Tantric Buddhism.

[11] For my interpretation of the sacred geography of the Valley as *maṇḍala,* see Chapter Six.

[12] The *Kalaśarcanapūjā* is the basic invocation ritual of the deity to whom the *pūjā* is directed. Here, the ritual specialists perform the *trisamādhi* visualization of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī as part of the fundamental ritual procedure. See Ratnakaji Vajrācārya, *Kalaśarcanapūjāvidhi,* 30-58.

[13] These references are found in the *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa, Svayambhū Purāṇa,* and the printed edition, *Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa.*

[14] The similarities of the Tantric understand can be found in Wayman's *The Buddhist Tantras.*

[15] The third chapter of the *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa* describes the preeminence of Guhyeśvarī and the female deities in the Valley.

[16] Following the Tantric emphasis, the Hindu and Śakta tradition also employ the *yantra* to symbolize the goddess.

[17] The *Trisamādhi Vidhi, Samvarodaya Diśi Pūjā Vidhi,* and Kumārī *pūjā* use the six-angled *ṣatkoṇa yantra* to symbolize the presence female principal. Similarly, in the visual imagery of Newar architecture, windows that have a *satkona yantra* represented on the outside invariably refer to the presence of the goddess inside the shrine. For example, the *āgaṁ* shrine to Annapurṇa in Bhotahiti, the *dyo chen* to Bhadrakali in Asan and Tebāhā, the *dyo chen* to Kanga Ajimā (Kankeśvarī) in Yakta, all have similar *yantra* windows on the exterior to allude to the goddesses enshrined within.

[18] The Kanga Ajima and Bhadrakāli shrines are *mātṛkā pīṭhas,* where the goddess is manifest as a natural rock.

[19] Ritual specialists in Kathmandu and Patan repeated alluded to this aspect.

[20] In the Hindu context, the *kalaśa* remains a fundamental symbol for the female energy. In the ten day *pūjās* during Dasain, each household has a sacred *kalaśa* into which Durga/Navadurgas are invoked.

[21] Wayman also notes that in the *Guhyasamaja Tantra* commentaries, the female in addition to the *kalaśa,* is also symbolized by the *bīja* "e" is understood to be the secret place for teaching the doctrine (*dharma*), while the male deities are understood to reside in the *bhaga.* See Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras,* 172.

[22] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* 128.

[23] *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa,* 96.

[24] Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantra,* 8.

[25] See Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras* and *Shrichakrasaṃvara Tantra,* ed., Dewa-Samdup.

[26] Tsuda, *The Samvarodaya-Tantra: Selected Chapters,* 60. He writes: "The human body is an aggregate of these twenty-four internal pīṭhas, which are the abode of the twenty-four veins. This ideal of the human body as an aggregate is unconditionally identified with an aspect of the ultimate reality. . . .the human body and the ultimate reality are identified, because they are structurally similar, as both as aggregates of the *pīṭhas.*"

[27] Dewa-Samdup, ed., *Shrichakrasaṁvara Tantra,* 34.

[28] The *Samvarodaya Tantra* states: (The truth) is *samvara* in which all the aspects of the world are fused into one; it is the *maṇḍala. Dakinis* are the veins; when all of them, which are the same time all the aspects of the world as is expressed as *skandhas* [aggregates] or *ayatanas* [, are fused into one and the same state, it appears as the figure of Heruka." See Tsuda, *The Samvarodya Tantra,* 62.

[29] *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa,* 230.

[30] See for example, Levy's work on the *pīṭhas* in his work, *Mesocosm.*

[31] For example, because of the lack of figural representation and specificity of iconographic elements that help identify the *pīṭha* goddesses, art historical research has virtually disregarded the significance of the *pīṭhas* as an integral part of religious traditions of the Valley. Anthropological research, such as those conducted by Robert Levy and Niels Gutschow in the city of Bhaktapur, have analyzed the *pīṭhas* as markers of sacred space and their relationship to spatial ordering. Yet these studies has not situated them within the technical framework of the Tantric Hindu or Buddhist traditions of the Valley. The *AṣṭaMātṛkā pīṭhas* in Kathmandu and Patan have not been thoroughly studied within a similar context.

[32] To what degree the sixty-four forms of Cakrasaṁvara is prevalent in the Newar Buddhist tradition is yet to be research, however, the *Samvarodaya Pūjā Vidhi* also has invocations to the forms of Cakrasaṁvara that are illustrated in the manuscript.

[33] My translation and reading of the colophon.

[34] Interestingly, while the other Jinas are shown in their pacific forms, wearing a crowns and jewelry, Akṣobhya is depicted as a *krodha* figure, wearing the crown of skulls, tiger-skin and is shown seated on two human figures. This angry form appears to be an allusion to Akṣobhya, as the progenitor of Cakrasaṁvara. There also is some variations in the placement of their attributes than those prescribed in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī.* However, the Jinas can be identified by their *kula* colors and *vāhanas*

[35] The invocation is as follows. My translation.
śrī Hevajri nase yuktam hemālām kal[r]am sobhita /
Hemaya nasyate papam tan devi sarana mama //

śrī Hevajri, who is filled with liquor, adorned with the form of the mountains [Himālaya]
O, you who destroy my sins, I am at your mercy, O Devi

[36] *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa.* Reference found in the description of Guhyeśvarī given *darśan* to Śiva in the Śanti Tirtha *mahatmya.*

[37] *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa,* 129. Other references to her as the "mother of Buddhas" are found throughout the *Svayambhū Purāṇa.*

[38] My translation and reading.

[39] Vajrācārya, ed., *Svayambhū Mahāpurāna,* Chapter on the story of Śānti Tirtha.

[40] These are found throughout the *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa.*

[41] As far as I am aware of, I have not found this form of the goddess described in secondary iconographic sources, such as de Mallmann's *Introduction a l'Iconographie du Tantrisme Bouddhique* and Bhattacharyya's *Indian Buddhist Iconography.*

[42] The ritual interpretation presented in this section is taken from *Trisamādhi Pūjā Vidhi,* 11 and *Samvaordaya Dasami (Diśi) Pūjā Vidhi,* 81-122.

[43] *Samvaordaya Dasami (Diśi) Pūjā Vidhi*, 81. My translation of the Sanskrit.

[44] Gellner notes that the conch shell is often worshipped as Varuna, however, in the ritual context, the *Yoginī* Khandaroha from the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala is invoked when the water from the conch is used. See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 361.

[45] *Samvaordaya Dasami (Diśi) Pūjā Vidhi*, 85.

[46] Monier-Willian, Sankrit-English Dictionary.

[47] During the exoteric rituals of the *Kalaśarcanapūjā*, Vārūṇī symbolized in the *mantrapatra* also plays a central role in the summoning of the deities. During the main ritual, the worship is called Māmakī *pūjā*, to the *guhyakalaśa* ("Secret Flask") that is said to invoke Guhyeśvarī. According to the ritual texts, *mantrapatra*, is placed on top of the *kalaśa*, where the deities are to be invoked. On top of the *mantrapatra*, the five-colored thread (pañcasūtra) is place. When the deities are summoned into the vase, the thread (*pañcasūtra*) is given to the priest, the *mantrapatra* removed, and the conch placed on top of the vase together with the priest's *vajra*. The priest then summons the deities through the *mantras* into the thread which is placed in his left hand. Once the deities are summoned, the water from the conch is poured into the *kalaśa* three times and the *mantrapatra* replaced on top of the *kalaśa*. Gellner states that the vase-worship is *kumbhapūjā* and *Vārūṇīpūjā*, and Vārūṇī is alternatively called Māmakī in the ritual context. See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 157.

[48] In the ritual context, the four vases are invoked as Vajrakarota, Samayakarota, Visamaya Karota, Samaya Visamaya Karota.

[49] *Samvaordaya Dasami (Diśi) Pūjā Vidhi*, 89.

[50] The ritual text refers to this act as *sthapana pūjā* "Pūjā of Establishment"

[51] Also described in Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*.

[52] *Samvaordaya Dasami (Diśi) Pūjā Vidhi*, 85-122.

[53] *Samvaordaya Dasami (Diśi) Pūjā Vidhi*, 96.

[54] *Trisamādhi Pūjā Vidhi*, Appendix.

[55] Specifically, Śāntipur at Svayambhū is directly associated with the rainmaking powers, and thus also with Vajravārāhī's talismanic powers of state protection. This aspect will be addressed at late.

[56] Ritual specialist from Kathmandu and Patan provided me this information.

[57] The main image inside the shrine is not allowed to be photographed, however, during my visit inside the shrine, I observed that the main shrine image as well as the central *toraṇa* figure outside her shrine are identical to pendant figure.

[58] See photos in the Huntington Archive collection.

[59] See photos in the Huntington Archive collection.

[60] In a paper presented at the Annual Conference of South Asian Studies at the University of Madison (1997) entiled "Catur Yoginis of the Nepal Valley," Natalie Marsh from The Ohio State University discussed this form of *yoginī* in the manuscripts and their iconology.

[61] See *Trisamādhi Pūjā Vidhi* and *Samvarodaya Dasami (Diśi Pūjā Vidhi)*

[62] *Trisamādhi Vidhi*, 61. This list of Ṣaṭ Yoginīs is equated with the six *pāramitās*, with Vajravārāhī equated with Prajñapāramitā. There are also numerous Tantric *caryā* songs that describe Vajravārāhī surrounded by the five *Yoginīs*, thus the making up the group of ṣaṭ *Yoginīs*.

[63] Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantra*, 171.

[64] The goddesses also define the sacred geography of Bhaktapur in a Hindu context, as the *yantra* of Tripurāsundarī, a manifestation of the Navadurgās. See Levy's *Mesocosm*.

[65] See Chapter 8 of the *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇam*.

[66] See Chapter Six regarding symbolism of the Aṣṭamātṛkās.

[67] Gutschow, *Stadtraum und Ritual der newarischen Stadte im Kathmandu Tal*, 81.

[68] Blom, 44

[69] Blom, 20.

[70] Further, According to the local Tantric traditions of the Valley, there are said to be 64 forms of Bhairava which accompany 64 Yoginīs.

[71] See Chapter Six, pp.561-75

[39] Samvarodaya Dasami (Diśi) Pūjā Vidhi, 142.

[73] *Kalasārcana Pūjā Vidhi, 148.* This information was also given to me by Surya Man Vajrācarya.

[74] Here, I was specifically referring to the role of Kumārī, also considered one of the Aṣṭamātṛkās, as well as an emanation of Vajravārāhī as Vajradevi.

[75] I am grateful to Suryaman Vajrācarya for this information.

[76] Kumārī's complex role as state protector is one of her most important functions in the three cities of the Valley. Forthcoming dissertation research by Janice Glowski at The Ohio State University will shed light on the Kumārī tradition in the Tantric Buddhist and Śakta contexts.

[77] Gellner, *Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest,* 247.

[78] See Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras.*

[79] See Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras,* 51.

[80] Similar to my analyses of the *yoginīs,* Gellner categorizes two types of Vajrayāna—"exoteric" and "esoteric" Vajrayāna. Following Gellner's classification, the *yoginīs* at this level would include the "exoteric Vajrayāna."

[81] This level would incorporate Gellner's classification of the "esoteric" Vajrayāna.

[82] Chapter Three of the *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa* extensively describes the qualities of Guhyeśvarī.

[83] See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* for ritual pertaining to the Vajravārāhī initiation.

[84] See Tantric *carya* songs to Guhyeśvarī, *Cacah Muna,* ed., Ratna Kaji Vajrācārya (Kathmandu: Buddhiman Śākya, 1996), 30; 63.

[85] According to Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, a local tradition considers the shrine at Puran Guhyeśvarī an alternate site to Guhyeśvarī, where the goddess was "brought" from Deopatan by a powerful Vajrācārya priest named Pramadhivajra Vajrācārya. In contrast to Guhyeśvarī at Deopatan which in the contemporary tradition is supported by royal patronage from the Hindu kings, the smaller Guhyeśvarī shrine at Balaju appears to largely supported by Buddhist patrons-a situation that indicates an uneasy tension experienced by the Newar Buddhist in a "Hindu" kingdom.

[86] See *Nepāla Mahātmya.*

[87] Scholars such as Gellner, Slusser, and Gutschow refer to the Pashupati Guhyeśvarī.

[88] The photographs show the renowned Vajrācārya ritual specialists, Amoghavajra performing the *nyasa pūjā* for the renovations, in which the goddess through the power of the Tantrin's *mantras* is invoked to reside in a *kalaśa* for the duration. Local traditions has it even Amoghavajra's erudition and Tantric powers were not enough to contain and control the tremendous powers at the site and he and his son died within a year of the consecration, because he failed to perform the *pūjā* with efficacy according to the strict ritual prescriptions.

[89] I participated in a Buddhist *Yoginī pūjā* at Pashupati Guhyeśvarī, where I observed the Hindu practitioners invoking the goddess as Guhyakali, while the Buddhists identified her as Nairatmā.

[90] In the Hindu context, *Kubjikatantra,* dated NS 693, connects Guhyeśvarī with Kubjikā and describes the goddess as "śrī Guhyeśvarī matiri kubjeśvarī". See Dory Heilijgers-Seelen, *The System of Five Cakras in Kubjikāmatatantra 14-16* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1994).

[91] While not all the practicing Vajrācārya priests may be aware of the complexity and philosophical symbolism of the Tantric rituals, however, the ritual specialists who are

renowned teachers and practitioners have demonstrated profound understanding of the Tantric Buddhist methodology in the highest technical level.

[92] See Michael Allen, *The Cult of the Kumari*. See also Janice M. Glowski's forthcoming dissertation research on the contextual understanding of Kumari worship in the religious environment of the Valley.

[93] Michael Allen states that the six goddess are identified with the six *Yoginis* of the Valley: (1) Ugra Tara Yogini at Bijesvari (2) KhagaYogini at Sankhu (3)AkasaYogini at Bijesvari (4) Vajrayogini at Pharping (5) Vajra Vilasini at Pulchowk (6) Vajrayogini at Bijesvari. In my research, I have not been able to confirm this list. See Michael Allen, *The Cult of the Kumari*, 136.

[94] See Allen, *The Cult of the Kumari*, 93.

[95] See Chapter Three on the iconography of Kva Baha.

[96] Forthcoming dissertation research conducted by Janice Glowski on the Kumari tradition will shed further light on her role as protector and Tantric *yogini*.

[97] This information was given to me by the ritual specialists from Kathmandu and Patan.

[98] Although textual references generally allude to the entire Valley as the Cakrasamvara Mandala, my research indicates that the sacred space of the individual cities themselves may indeed follow a similar idealized conception. During my field research in 1998, the ritual specialists acknowledged that the cities, specifically Kathmandu and Patan are conceptualized as the Cakrasamvara Mandala, thereby transferring the macrocosm to the microcosm.

[99] For example, the visual analysis of Kumari Baha put forth by Janice M. Glowski suggests that the iconographic program itself is a metaphor of the Cakrasamvara Mandala, thus reinforcing the idea of Kumari as generating the sacred mandala of the microcosm. See also Janice M. Glowski's M.A. thesis, *Goddess as Incarnate Image: The Kumari Cult of the Kathmandu Valley* (The Ohio State University, 1995).

[100] A similar ideological schema may be found at Sankhu, where the KhadgaYogini, an emanation of Vajravarahi, is considered to be the state protector of the kingdom of Sankhu. For an excellent analysis of Khadga Yogini's symbolic role in state protection, see S.M. Zanen, "The Goddess Vajrayogini and the Kingdom of Sankhu (Nepal)", *Purusartha*, 124-66.
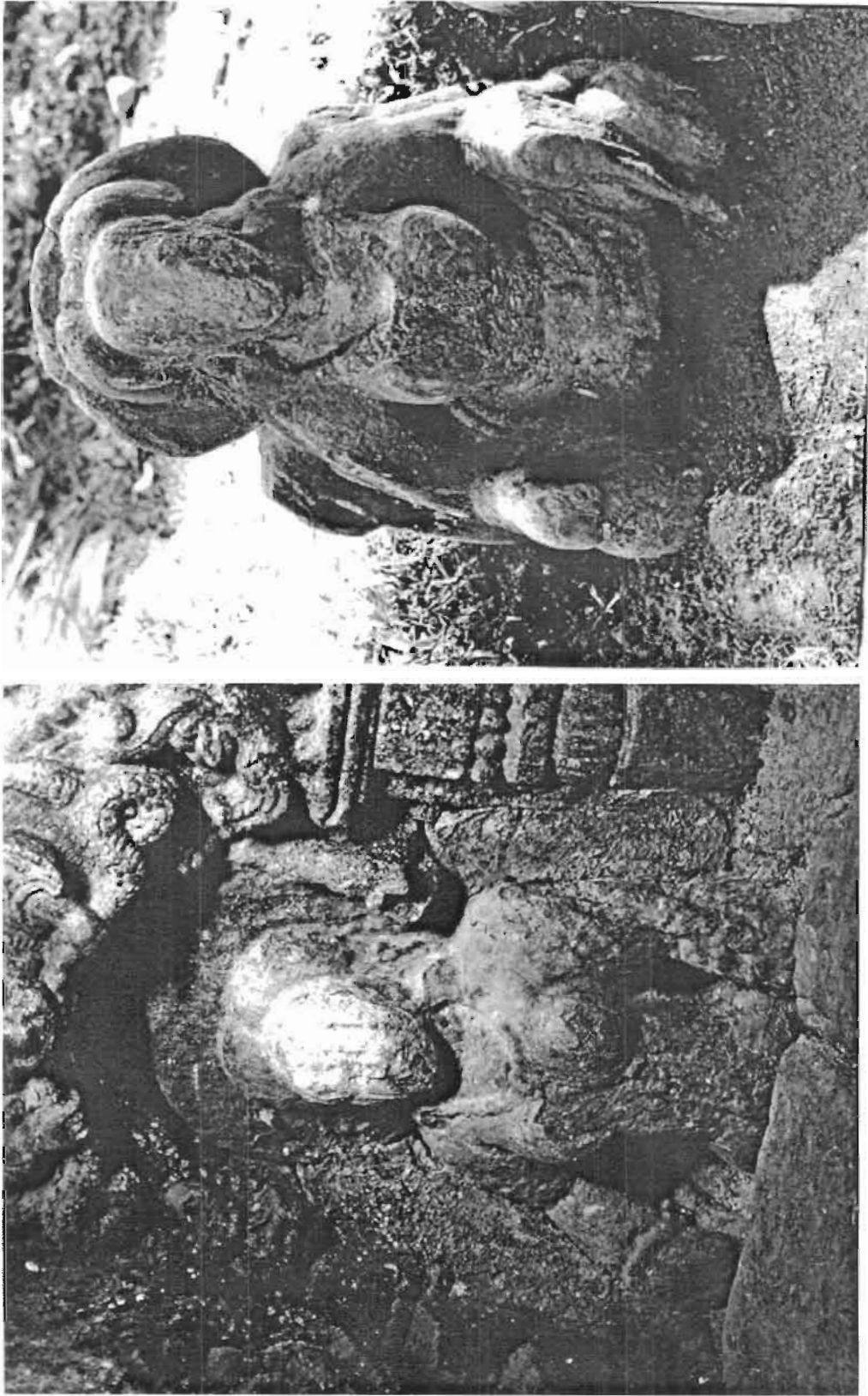
Figure. 7.1. Mātṛkā sculptures from Jaibageśvarī (left) and Kotaltol (righ). ca. 3rd century C.E.

Figure 7.2 Hāritī Ajimā. ca. 3rd century. Bālāju.

Yantra to signify placement of the *yoginī's* skullcup.

१ सुकुण्हा २ खाय् ग्व:पाः
३ ध्वापिं ४ माक: दलू
५ धौ पति ६ किर्ति कलश
७ पात्र ८ सिन्हः
९ वलि पात्र १० गुरूमण्डल
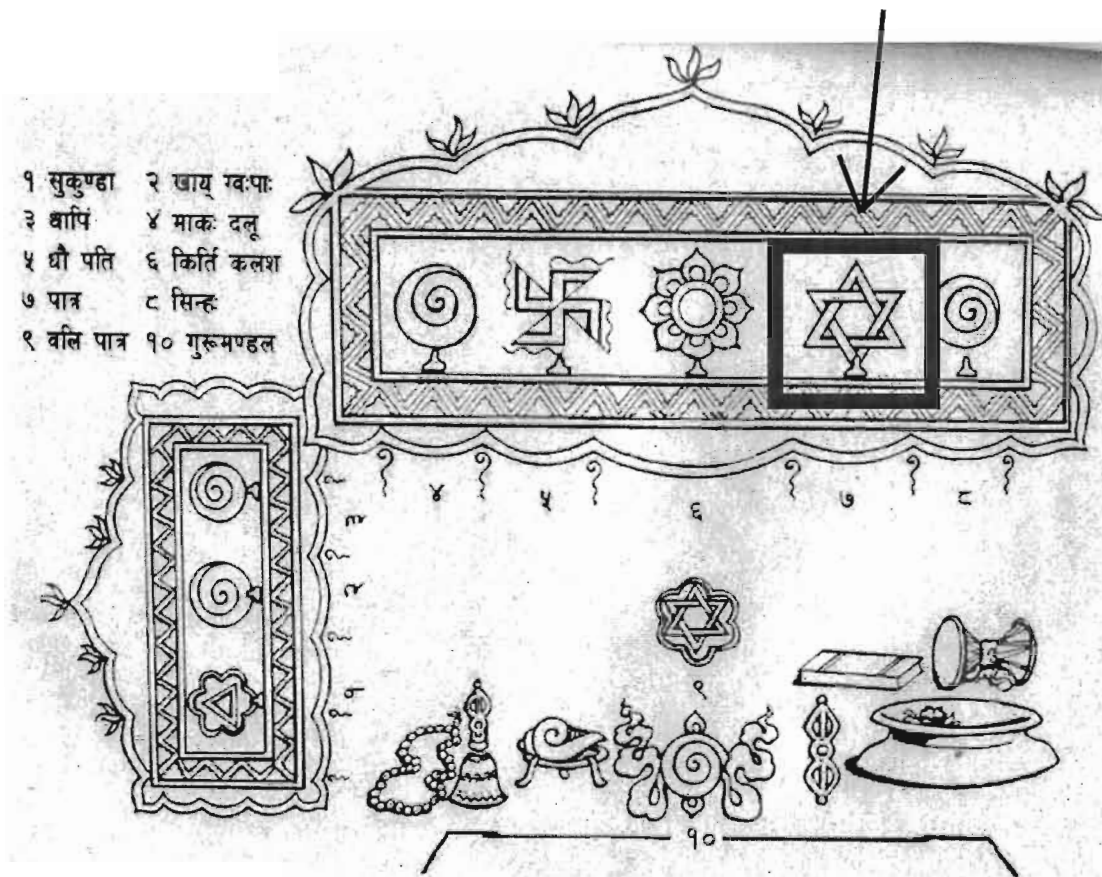
Figure 7.3. Presence of *yoginīs* signified by *yantra* during *pūjā* (ritual context). This layout is related to the rituals to Cakrasaṁvara and Varjavārāhī.
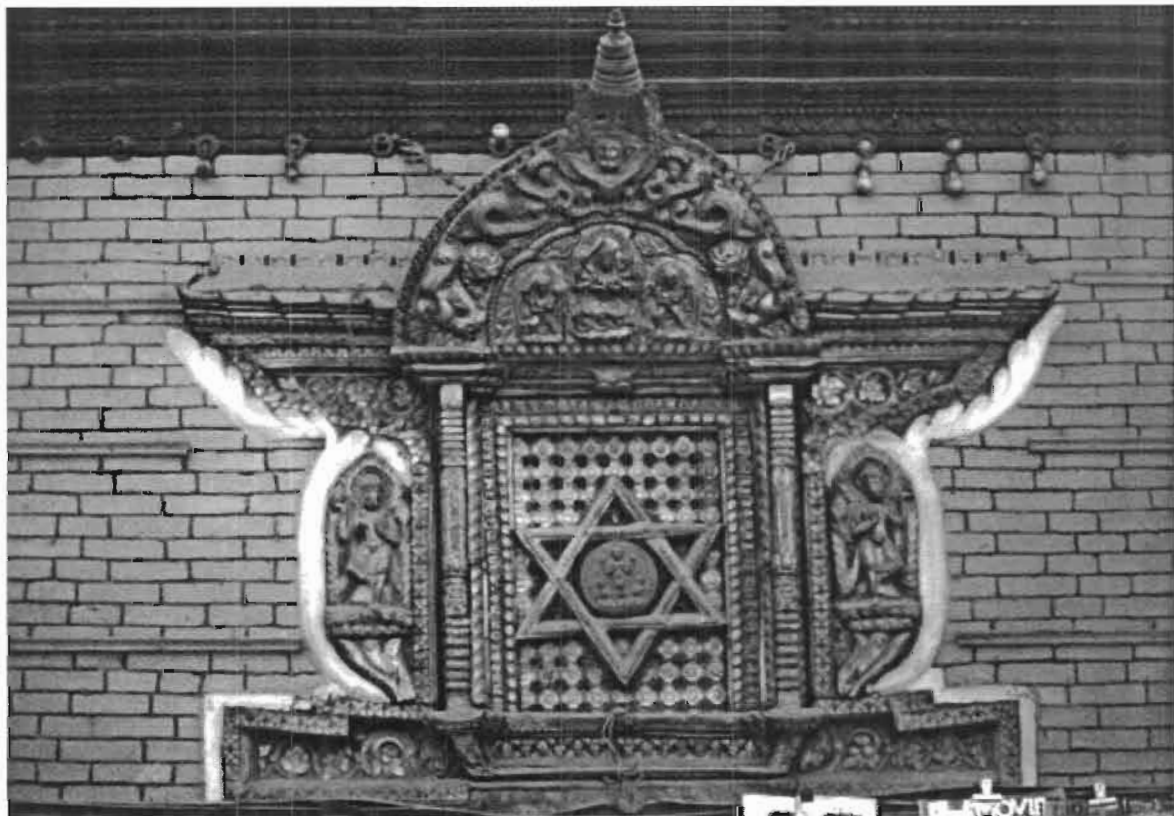
Figure 7.4 (top) Āgaṁ shrine to Annapurṇa/Jñānaḍākinī. (bottom) Six-angled *yantra* outside *āgaṁ* shrine to Annapurṇa/Jñānaḍākinī. Bhotahiti, Kathmandu.

Figure 7.5. Folios 6 and 8 from the Cakrasaṁvara Manuscript, depicting the 64 Forms of Cakrasaṁvara.

Figure 7.6. Folio 1, depicting Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī as the center figures. Cakrasaṁvara Manuscript. Private Collection.

Figure 7.7. Guhyeśvarī from Cakrasaṁvara Manuscript, depicting the 64
Forms of Cakrasaṁvara. Center Folio. Private Collection

Figure 7.8. Vāruṇī, flanked by two goddess and placed below Guhyeśvarī. From Cakrasaṃvara Manuscript, depicting the 64 Forms of Cakrasaṃvara. Center Folio. Private Collection

Figure 7.9. Vajravārāhī (top center), surrounded by five *yoginīs* of the Cakrsaṁvara Maṇḍala. From Cakrasaṁvara Manuscript, depicting the 64 Forms of Cakrasaṁvara. Center Folio. Private Collection
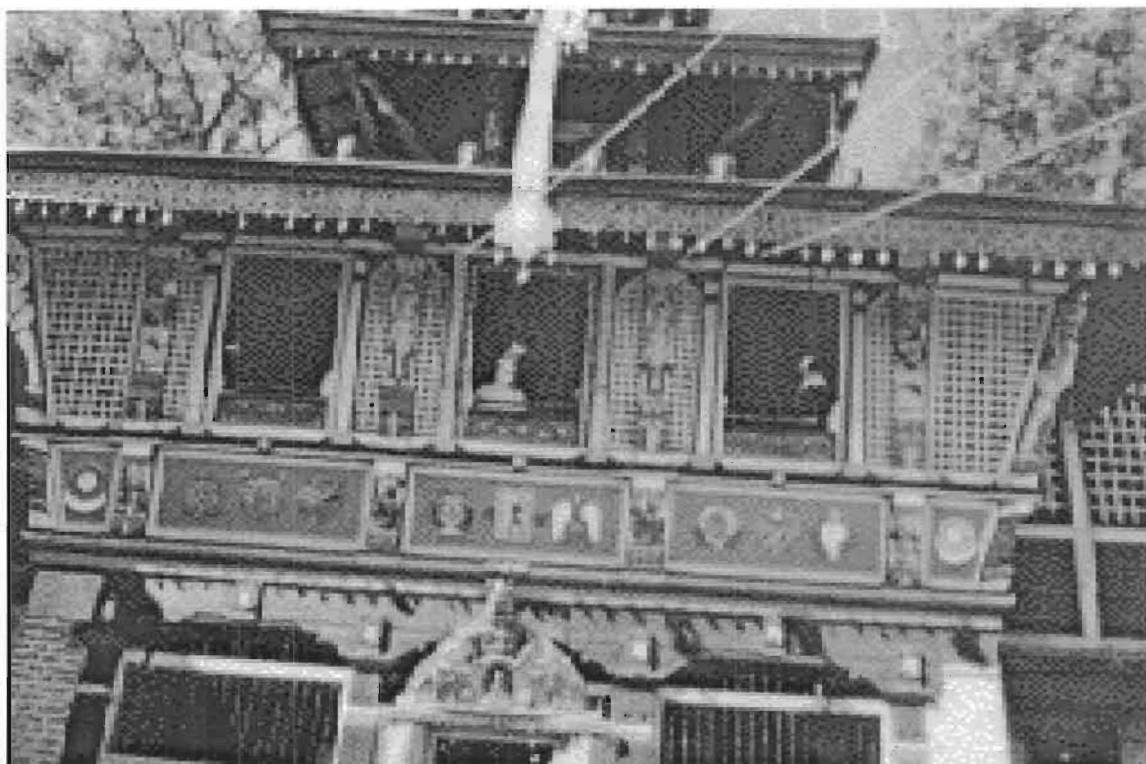
Figure 7.10. Representation of Vajrayoginī on pendant at Vajragyoginī Temple, Pharping. (top) Location of pendant hanging from roof. (left) Detail of pendant.

Figure 7.11. Votive Caitya, depticing the Four Yoginis in the intermediate corners. Vajrayoginī Temple, Pharping.

Top left: Ākāśayoginī;
Top right: Guhyeśvarī

Lower left: Vajrayoginī
Lower right: Khaḍgayogini

Figure7.12. Detail of the Four Yoginīs on the Caitya. Vajrayoginī Temple, Pharping.

Figure 7.13. Sketchbook depicting Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravārāhī, surrounded by the Yoginīs. Los Angeles County Museum.

Figure 7.14. Eight Mātṛkās, as guardians of sacred space. From Cakrasaṃvara Manuscript, depicting the 64 Forms of Cakrasaṃvara. Private Collection

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Figure 7.15. Unmatta Bhairava and Vārāhī Śaktī. Last Folio. From Cakrasaṁvara Manuscript, depicting the 64 Forms of Cakrasaṁvara. Private Collection
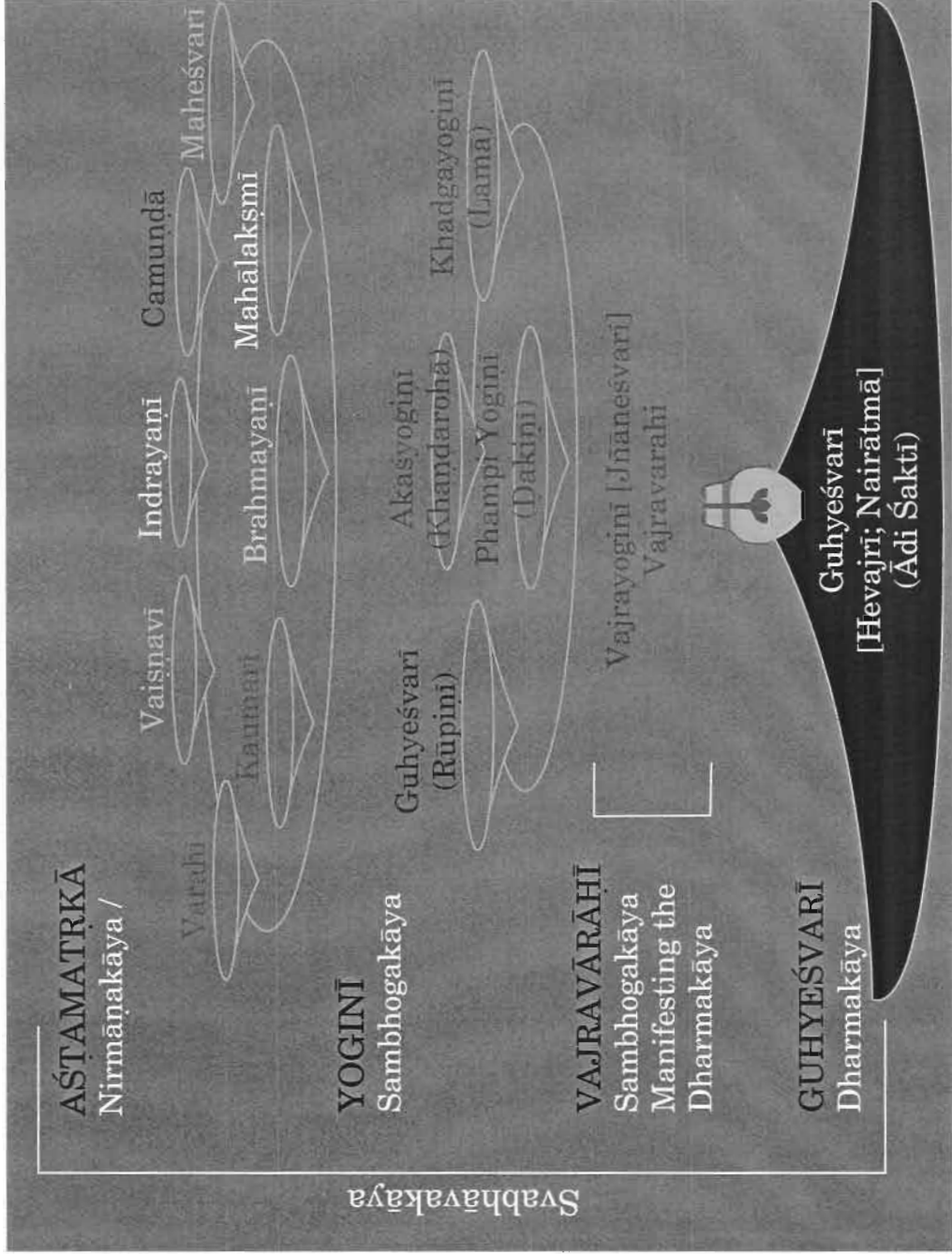
Figure 7.16. Interpreting the Hierarchy of the Yoginīs in Newar Buddhism: Guhyeśvarī, Vajravārāhi, Four Yoginīs, and Aṣṭamātṛkās.
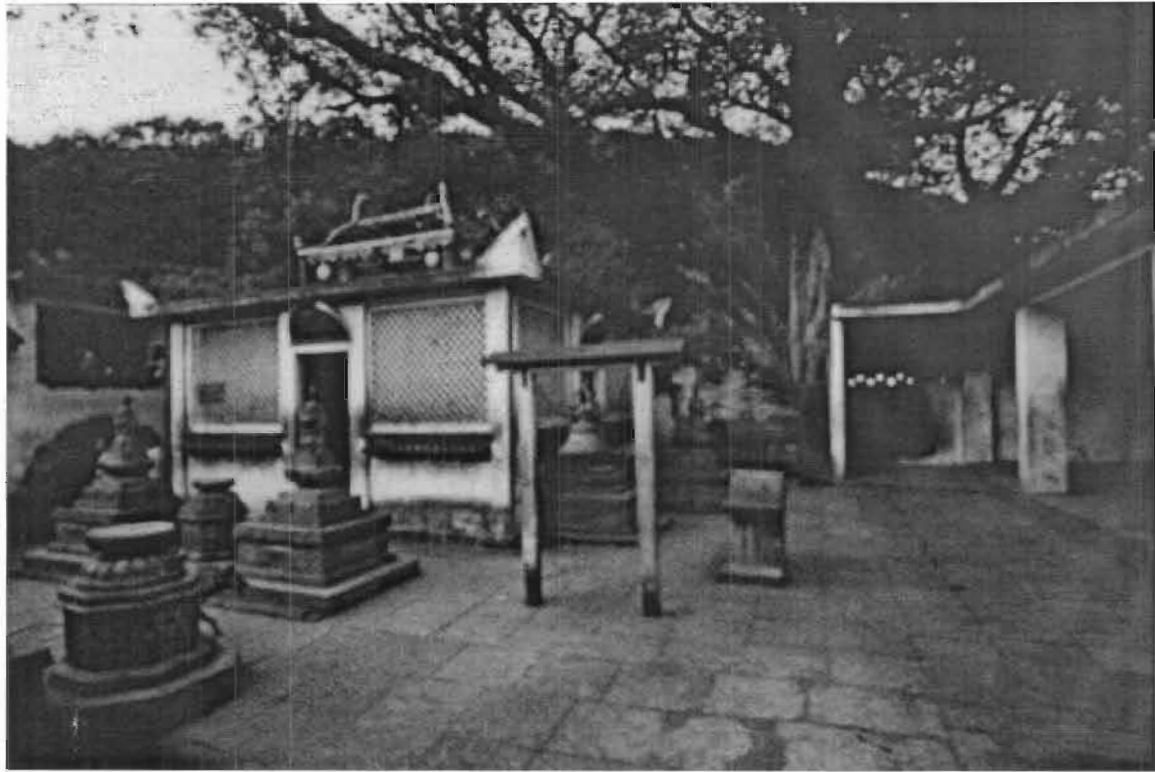
Figure 7.17. Shrine to Guhyeśvarī at Pulan Guhyeśvarī. Balaju.

Figure 7.18. Reconsecration and reburbishment of the shrine by Amoghavajra Vajrācārya.
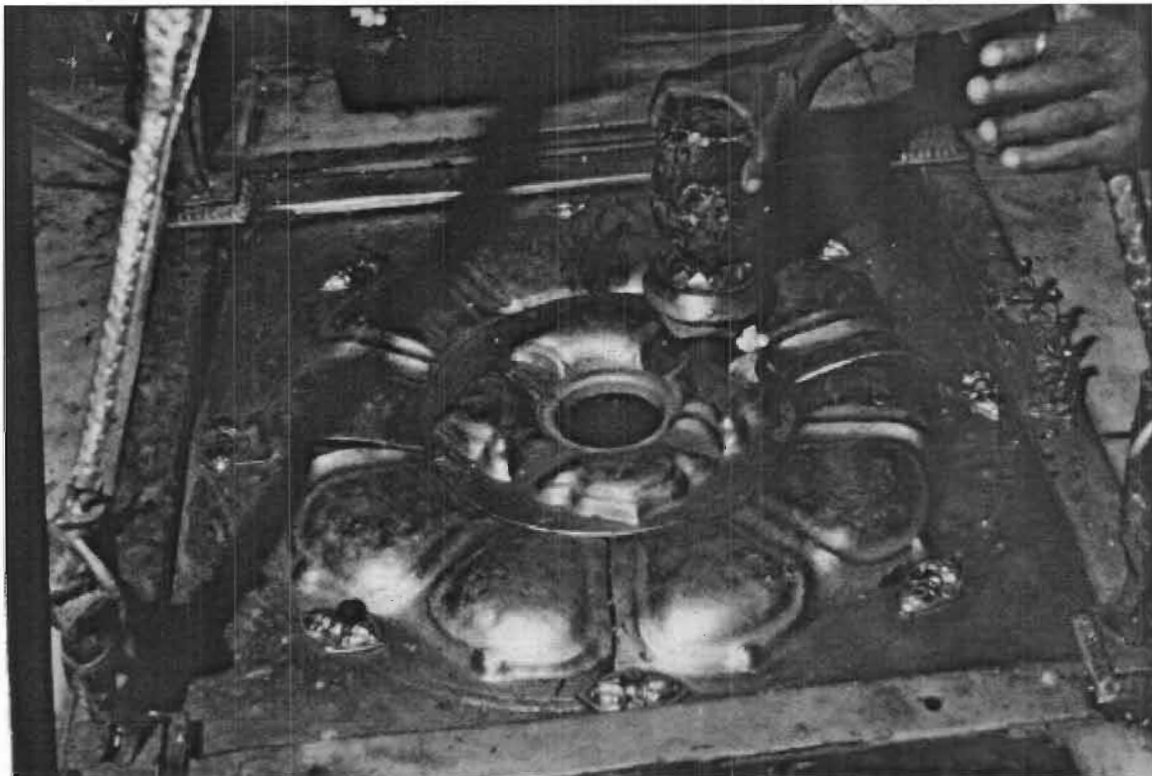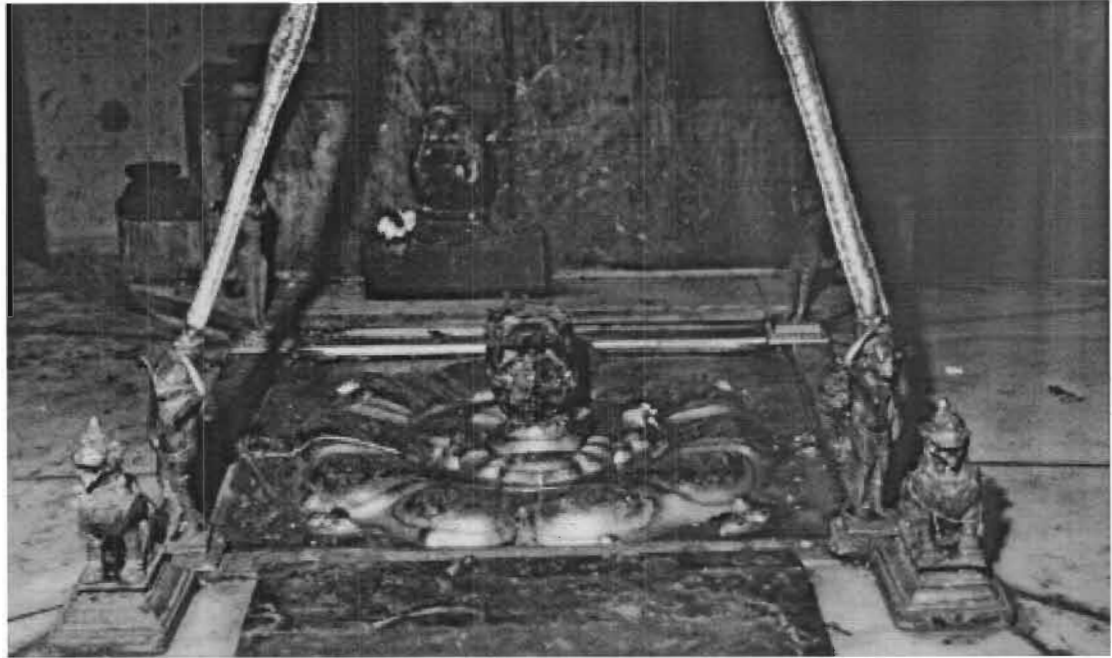
Figure 7.19. Guhyeśvbarī *pīṭha,* showing the *kalaśa* of Guhyeśvarī over the natural spring. Lower photo shows the hole of the Guhūesvarī spring.

Figure 7.20. Representation of Guhyakālī. Located at the south courtyard wall of Guhyeśvari Temple.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

ART TELLS A STORY: TOWARDS AN ICONOLOGY OF NEWAR BUDDHISM

The aim of this study was to examine the visual imagery of the Newar Buddhist monasteries and analyze it in relation to the ritual practices of the Newars. I will briefly summarize here the three major findings of my research:

- Based on their presence in virtually all Buddhist monasteries I surveyed, it may be inferred that there are three major iconographic themes found in Newar Buddhist architecture—Svayambhū Mahācaitya, and the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṁvara *maṇḍalas*.

- The three iconographic themes correlate to the mandatory structural components of *bāhā/bāhī* architecture, namely the principal vivifying *caitya,*

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kvāhpāh dyāh shrine to the exoteric Buddhist deities, and the *āgaṁ* shrine to the esoteric Tantric Buddhist deities.

- The presence of these three iconographic themes reflects a unified

and well-developed program that articulates the basic ideological constructs of Newar Buddhist religion. The unified iconographic program and its conception appears to be unique to Newar Buddhism, as it encapsulates the indigenous Buddhist ontological as well as soteriological elements. In other words, the art tells a story.

While these are the three major points that I concluded in my research, there are also specific ideological constructs that emerged that may help contextualize the key ideological premises of Newar Buddhist iconology and practice. I will briefly summarize my conclusions of the iconographic analyses in the study. The conceptual drawing of the core iconographic program of the *bāhā* will help substantiate my arguments.

- As the first iconographic component in Newar Buddhist architecture, Svayambhū Mahācaitya is symbolically identified with the principal *caitya*. Svayambhū's role as generator of sacred space is based on the premise that the Mahācaitya as the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū, is the ontological source of Newar Buddhism, specifically in his role as the primordial source.

- Based on textual references and the iconographic programs,[1] a buddhalogical equivalency is established between Svayambhū and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. This appears to be a uniquely Newar Buddhist conception that brings together complex Tantric soteriological methodologies and the local Buddhist cosmogonic story. This symbolic identity thus provides an ideological framework to understand the preeminence of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in Newar Buddhism.

- The Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, with Mañjuśrī as the central deity, is a popular votive offering and iconographic theme of the shrine façade. Although esoteric in nature, it is openly shown in public. The Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala serves as the perfect metaphor to articulate the specific Newar Buddhist soteriological practices, in which Mañjuśrī has a central role.

- The iconographic program articulates Mañjuśrī's ritual and symbolic role in Newar Buddhism. As Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, Mañjuśrī is a fully Enlightened Buddha. He is equated not only with Vairocana, but more importantly, with the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū. Hence, the Svayambhū Mahācaitya is also called Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Caitya, as evidence of their symbolic identity.

- The most significant role of Mañjuśrī in Newar Buddhism is that as Ādi Guru, the primordial teacher, who teaches the Tantric empowerments of the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṁvara teachings.

- In the role as Ādi Guru, Mañjuśrī is ritually associated with Vajrasattva, who in the Newar Buddhist context, is the *guru* of the Vajrācārya priests. It is as the Ādi Guru that Mañjuśrī is closely connected with the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, and thus serves as the mediator between the exoteric and highly esoteric teachings of the Anuttara Yoga cycle. This relates to the "secret/inner" symbolism prevalent in the Newar Buddhist Tantric imagery. As appropriately stated by Gellner, "Like Vajrasattva, Mañjuśrī Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara, belongs to the exoteric level of the Diamond Way."[2]

- The Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala iconography, as the *maṇḍala* of the Anuttara Yoga class, emphasizes the preeminence of the Tantric *yoginīs*. This aspect of the visual imagery alludes to the role of the *yoginīs* in Newar Buddhism, as the ontology of the religion.

- The preeminence of the Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhī is best articulated in the conceptual ordering of the Valley as the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. This Buddhist construct of the sacred geography reflects the *yoginīs* as ontology of the religion.

- Most importantly, the three iconographic components (Svayambhū Mahācaitya, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala) suggest an inherent layering or hierarchy in the visual imagery: from exoteric imagery, openly shown to the public, as in the case of Svayambhū and Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, to the highly esoteric and secret symbolism of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. This hierarchy is mirrored in the ritual practices and in the architectural structure of the *bāhās*. This hierarchical layering serves the theoretical framework through which to interpret the significance of the three core iconographic components, and to establish the presence of a unified iconographic program.

- The hierarchic layering alludes to the three categories found in Newar Buddhist practice, specifically the concepts of 'outer, secret, and inner', in which they refer to progressively higher levels of Tantric practice and understanding. This pattern of hierarchy is a recurrent theme in Newar Buddhism, as it not only pertains to the soteriological practices of the religion, but also the hierarchy of pantheon.

INTERPRETING THE ICONOGRAPHIC PROGRAM: HIERARCHIC LAYERING OF THE *MAṆḌALAS*

The core iconographic program of *bāhā* architecture can be best conceptualized as a hierarchic layering of *maṇḍalas* (Fig. 8.2). The three core components are related functionally and symbolically to the three mandatory elements of *bāhā* architecture. The overall iconographic program, thus, articulates a fundamental understanding of Tantric soteriological methodologies, but interpreted and personalized to fit the Newar Buddhist context. As the core iconographic elements, the Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala symbolize progressively higher levels of Buddhist soteriological practice. In this understanding is the hierarchic layering of the visual imagery, from the simplest, most accessible symbol of the Buddhist *dharma* (i.e., the *stūpa*) to progressively more complex Tantric imagery (i.e. the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍalas).

My analysis and interpretation of the visual imagery of the *bāhās* as a progressive hierarchy correlates with the fundamental constructs of Newar Buddhism. In his seminal work, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhism and its Hierarchy of Ritual,* David Gellner shows how Newar Buddhism, as practiced in the contemporary tradition, encompasses the methodologies of Śravakayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna Buddhism

[Three Ways] into a single hierarchical system.[3] Referring to this construct, Gellner suggests that the hierarchy of the Three Ways form an ascending ideological hierarchy, that integrate the apparently opposed ideals of celibacy and restraint of monkshood on the one hand, and the full participation of worldly activities as a householder in another.[4] This same ideological framework is reflected in the core iconographic program of the Buddhist monasteries. The core iconographic themes, namely Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala, serve as perfect three-fold symbols to articulate the basic constructs of the Three Ways of Newar Buddhism.

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[1] See Chapter Three for analysis of Kvā Bāhā's enshrined *caitya*. Also see Chapter Four, for analysis of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and its relation to Svayambhū.
[2] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* 255.
[3] See Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhist and its Hierarchy of Ritual.* As indicated by Gellner's title, he discusses the socio-religious structures of Newar Buddhism as reflective of these categories.
[4] Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* 343.
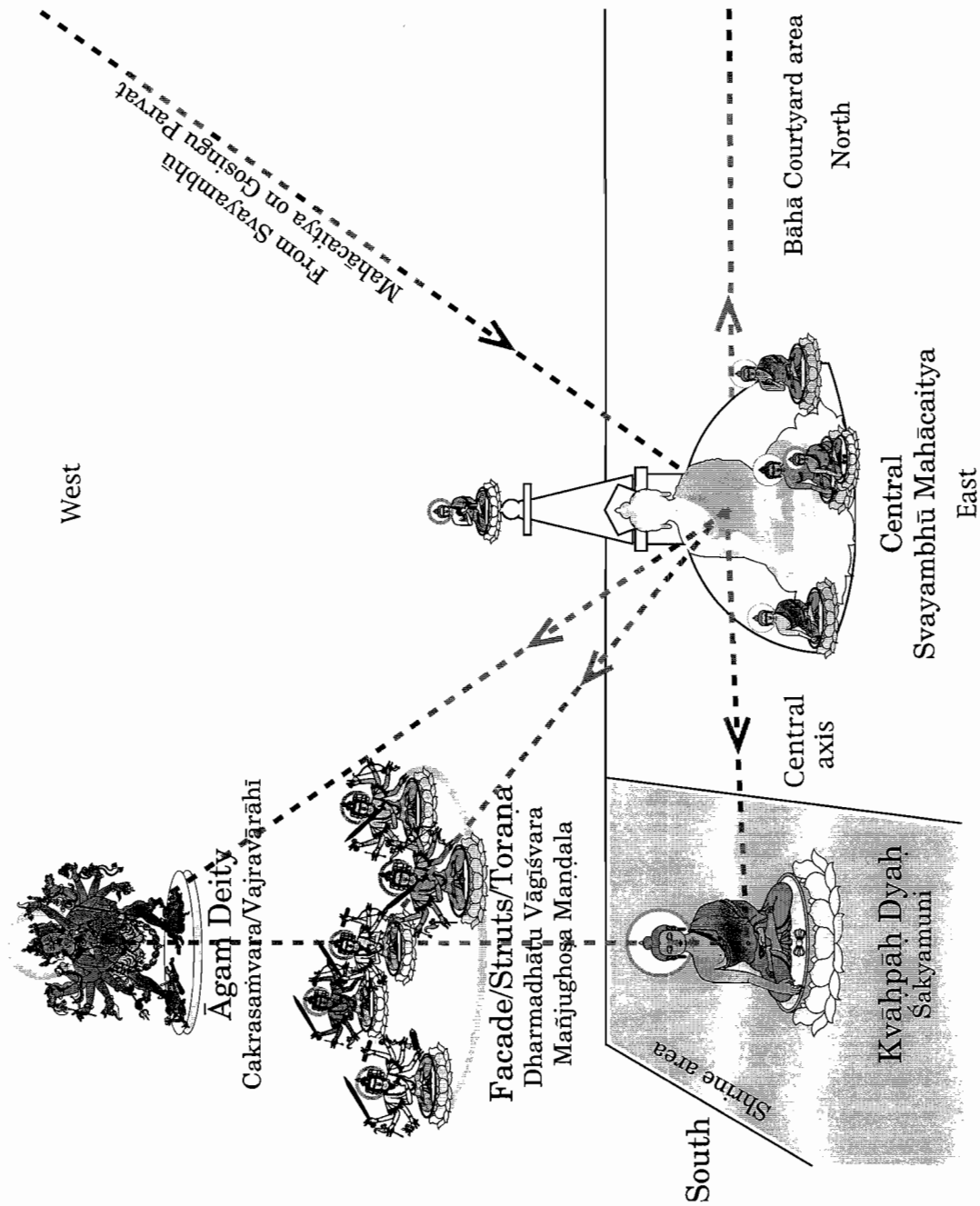
8.1 Drawing showing the Core Iconographic Program of Newar Buddhist monasteries and the relationship among the three iconographic components.

West

From Svayambhū
Mahācaitya on Gosīṅgu Parvat

Bāhā Courtyard area
North

Central
Svayambhū Mahācaitya
East

Central
axis

Āgam Deity
Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī

Facade/Struts/Toraṇa
Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara
Mañjughoṣa Maṇḍala

Shine area

Kvāḥpāḥ Dyaḥ
Śākyamuni

South

Empty "Cupola"
at the very
top of the Bāhā

Dharmakāya
Level

ĀGAM
Esoteric Agam Deity
Cakrasaṁvara/
Vajravārāhī

Ādi Buddha
(As manifest by
means of the
Sambhogakāya)

SHRINE FACADE
Strut/Toraṇa Iconography
Dharmadhatu
Mandala

Facade/Toraṇa
Panca Jina
Maṇḍala

Sambhogakāya
Level

KWĀḤPĀḤ DYĀḤ
Public Shrine

Śakyamuni

Nirmāṇakāya
Level

Svabhāva Kāya

Figure 8.2. Interpretation of Core Iconographic Components inNewar Buddhist Architecture and its relationship to the Trikāya System.

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