

Local Literatures: Nepal

The present article treats the literary heritage of the Indic Buddhist tradition surviving in the Kathmandu Valley, that is, “historical” Nepal. (The country known today as Nepal was only formed in the wake of the conquest by the Gorkhas in the mid-18th cent., and it owes its name to that of the valley.) It focuses on works composed in the Kathmandu Valley, first in Sanskrit alone and since the 17th century increasingly also in the local vernacular – Newari, a Tibeto-Burmese language that is heavily Sanskritized in its literary form. However, Indian Buddhist texts that play a major role in this tradition are also considered – a necessity given the great continuity between these two arenas of literary production.

Buddhism in historical Nepal dates back some two millennia and persists to the present day as the sole remnant of Indic Buddhism, surviving in its original South Asian setting with Sanskrit as its sacred language. It is here that the vast majority of the Buddhist Sanskrit literature has been preserved. In addition to Mahāyāna *sūtras*, *tantras*, and (tellingly few) segments of the Vinaya, all attributed to the Buddha (or a buddha) and hence technically *buddhavaçana*, this corpus also includes Buddhism’s rich narrative literature, exegetical texts, devotional works, ritual manuals, and so on. Many of these works reached the West through Brian Houghton Hodgson, a colonial officer who served in Kathmandu from 1820 to 1843 first as British Assistant Resident and then for the final ten years as British Resident. During his time in Nepal, he dispatched over four hundred manuscripts, some of them newly commissioned copies, to England, India, and to Paris. The manuscripts dispatched to Europe served as the basis for the first academic study of Buddhism in the West, undertaken by E. Burnouf and published under the title *Introduction à l’histoire du Bouddhisme indien* (1844). In addition, R. Mitra (1882) published a description of the manuscripts sent by Brian Houghton Hodgson to the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal at Calcutta. The focus of this collaborative effort has been on the narrative literature, and the assembled summaries serve still as a useful starting point for surveying the literature preserved and partially composed in Nepal. A further important reference tool is the select catalogue of the Buddhist holdings

of the National Archives of Nepal published as part of its multivolume *Bṛhatsūçipatra*.

Following in the footsteps of Brian Houghton Hodgson, much of the corpus of Buddhist (and also non-Buddhist) manuscripts extant in Nepal has been microfilmed since the early 1970s by the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP). Supplementing this, there are other microfilm and digital archives of Nepalese Buddhist manuscripts, such as the digitalized holdings of the Āśā Saphū Kuthi (Āśā Archive; see also Yoshizaki, 1991; 2002) and the microfilm collections of the Buddhist Library in Nagoya, Japan (Takaoka, 1981) and of the – in the meantime disbanded – Institute for Advanced Studies of World Religions (IASWR) at Stony Brooks, New York (which is based on the private collection of the late Mana Bajra Bajracharya from Kathmandu and now kept at the University of Virginia). Moreover, in an ongoing effort, the Digital Buddhist Sanskrit Canon initiative is digitally inputting the Sanskrit literary heritage preserved in Nepal (and also elsewhere), and these texts can be accessed online. Even though these projects and initiatives have greatly facilitated access to the primary sources, research on the literature of the Nepalese tradition has been overshadowed by mining the Nepalese archive for earlier texts of the Indian tradition that were presumably not authored in Nepal. In particular, works written in the local vernacular, Newari, have been neglected (Malla, 1982), and research into this vernacular Buddhist literature has hardly begun.

It is important to bear in mind that Nepalese Buddhism is in its origins not a distinct tradition. Rather, it participated in the Indian literary heritage, and local forms of literary production did not dislodge so much as supplement that heritage, which has furnished the basis of the Nepalese tradition. Accordingly, Indian Buddhist scriptures have continued to be copied and recopied, and – with the advent of printing in Nepal in the second half of the 20th century – they have also come to be printed locally. The center stage is taken by the nine Mahāyāna *sūtras*, which form a quasi-canonical set of scriptures known as the *Navagrantha* (Nine Works):



Fig. 1 and Fig. 2: Worship of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines) manuscript of Kvā Bāhā Monastery in Patan in May 2010. The manuscript is written in gold ink on specially treated dark-blue paper. The loose pages are kept between their two metal book covers as the priest worships them on the purpose-built altar as an embodiment of the goddess of the perfection of wisdom, Prajñāpāramitā. Afterward the text is split up into different sections and allocated to the priests convened for this purpose, who each read aloud the pages allotted to them. In this way, they collectively recite the text in its entirety, which serves to sonically manifest the goddess. (photos by author)

1. *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines);
2. *Gaṇḍavyūha* (which features also as a portion of the, in Nepal unknown, *Buddhāvataṃsaka* collection);
3. *Daśabhūmīśvara* (also known as *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, which likewise occurs also as part of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* collection);
4. *Samādhirāja* (King of *Samādhis*);
5. *Laṅkāvatāra* (Entrance to *Laṅkā*);
6. *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (*Lotus Sūtra*);
7. *Tathāgataḡuhyaka* (commonly identified as the *Guhyasamājatantra* rather than the *sūtra* cited under this name in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*);
8. *Lalitavistara* (The Expansive Sport, A Life of the Buddha); and
9. *Suvarṇa(pra)bhāsa* (Golden Light).

In an alternative (more tantric) version of this configuration (which may have its roots outside Nepal), the *Pañcarakṣā* and *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti* feature instead of the *Tathāgataḡuhyaka* and the *Suvarṇa(pra)bhāsa* (Tuladhar-Douglas, 2006, 144–147).

These canonical works are not so much studied for their content as liturgically recited or put to other ritual uses. For instance, when the three jewels of Buddhism (i.e. Buddha, dharma, and saṅgha), are worshipped in *maṇḍala* configuration as happens at the outset of many rituals, the *Navagranthas* are worshipped as the embodiment of the jewel of the dharma. For this they are arrayed in a *maṇḍala* configuration, with the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* in the center as the most important text. In manuscript form, the *Navagrantha* also serve as physical objects of worship that may be lavishly produced and ornamented with delicate illuminations (Kim, 2013). More specifically, they may be treated as deity icons, as happens particularly in the case of *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* manuscripts, which are consecrated and worshipped as embodiments of the goddess *Prajñāpāramitā* (see fig. 1). The cult of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* continues prominently at the Kvā Bāhā Monastery in Patan, where *Vajrācārya* priests regularly recite this voluminous text by divvying it up among them, with each one taking charge of a different section (see fig. 2). Further important texts for ritual recitation are the tantric *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti* and *Pañcarakṣā*.

In addition to the Mahāyāna scriptures mentioned here, there is also a large corpus of Indian tantric scriptures and ancillary works (Moriguchi, 1989), which form the basis of tantric Newar Buddhism and continue to inform its ritual and

initiatory practices even now. Notwithstanding the distinction of the *Guhyasamājatantra* as one of the *Navagrantha*, later *tantras* such as the *Samvarodayatantra*, the *Samputodbhavamahātāntra*, the *Vajravārāhīkalpatāntra*, the *Hevajratāntra*, and the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantra* are more prominent. Classified as *yoginītantras* and dedicated to deities like *Cakrasaṃvara* and *Vajravārāhī*, they play a central role in the initiatory tantric practice among the Newars. As the large number of manuscripts bears out, even more popular than such full-fledged *tantras* are *dhāraṇī* texts (and *dhāraṇī* collections), which are likewise *buddhavacana* and often identified as *sūtras* in the title. Embedded in a framing narrative, they typically provide spells to invoke a particular goddess (or goddesses, or a buddha) in order to secure the specific blessing associated with that deity, such as longevity (in the case of *Uṣṇīṣavijayā* or the buddha *Aparimitāyus*), freedom from planetary disturbance (*Grahamātṛkā*), protection (*pañcarakṣās*), or wealth (*Vasudhārā*). While these *dhāraṇī sūtras* predate the disappearance of Buddhism in India around the 13th century, and are not of Nepalese origin, their forms of employment in ritual are often specifically local. Thus, the above-mentioned goddesses form the core of the elaborate sequence of old-age rituals developed among the Newars (von Rospatt, 2014). Similarly, the *Saptavārapāṭha*, a relatively late Nepalese compilation prominent in contemporary practice, gives a different *dhāraṇī* practice for each day of the week (and the planet it stands for), starting with *Vasudhārā* (Sunday), continuing with *Vajravādāriṇī* (Monday), *Gaṇapatiḡḡdaya* (Tuesday), and *Uṣṇīṣavijayā* (Wednesday), and ending with *Grahamātṛkā* (Saturday).

Beyond tantric and non-tantric Mahāyāna scriptures, the Nepalese tradition is heir also to the rich Indian Mahāyāna literature that technically is not *buddhavacana* (and thus not scripture per se). While the more scholastic literature of the *Madhyamaka* and *Yogācāra* schools (incl. its *Abhidharma* precursors) lost the traction it once may have had as suggested by the survival of such works as *Yaśomitra's Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* or the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, the tantric literature as exemplified by the works of *Abhayākaragupta* (12th cent.) and *Advayavajra* continues to occupy an important place in Nepalese Buddhism – notable examples are *Abhayākaragupta's Niṣpannayogāvalī* and *Vajrāvalī* (see below) with their treatment of *maṇḍalas* and *Advayavajra's* collection of prescriptive texts, including the *Kudṛṣṇīrghātana* with its *Ādikarma* section on the

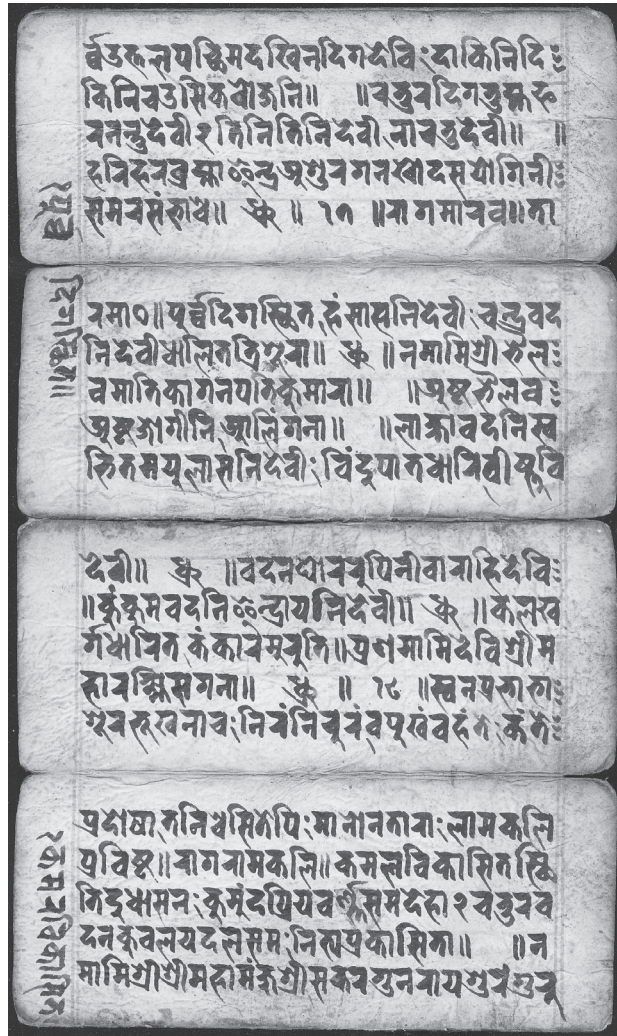


Fig. 3: Undated “folding book” (*thyāsaphū*) from a private collection in Patan. While *thyāsaphūs* are often used as notebooks for historical records, they are also employed for ritual manuals as the specimen depicted here. This is a collection of tantric songs (New. *cacā*) used in esoteric tantric practice. The phrases in the margin function as header and help navigate the text. (photo by Manik Bajracharya)

practices of “beginner” bodhisattvas for the laity (Takahashi, 1993). Closely related to this *Ādikarma* section are Anupamavajra’s *Ādikarmapradīpa* (composed in 1098 CE; La Vallée Poussin, 1898) and the *Ādikarmavidhi*, ascribed to a certain Taṭākara Gupta (?; NGMPP A 1165/7). The prescriptions found in these texts closely match practices still popular among Newar Buddhists, and thus support the assumption that many features of this tradition are of greater antiquity than commonly presumed.

Notwithstanding the impact of such Indian works, far more important has been the literature that the Buddhists of Nepal produced themselves to suit their needs and shape their tradition.

This process began already before Buddhism vanished from India. The most influential is the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā*, authored by Kuladatta in the 12th (or possibly 11th) century in the Kathmandu Valley. While this foundational work foregrounds the establishment of a monastery, it is in essence a collection (*saṃgraha*) of diverse rites (*kriyā*) that relate in various ways to monasticism, including the rite of ordination (*pravrajyā*), as current in Nepal at the time of Kuladatta. These rituals continue to play a central role in the Nepalese tradition, with the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* functioning till this day as the principal source that informs such practice. Both its encyclopedic character and its content (note e.g. the closely matching treat-

ment of the consecration ceremony [Tanemura, 2004; von Rospatt, 2010]) suggest that Kuladatta's work is grounded in the same tradition as the texts of Abhayākaragupta, which have an enduring hold on the Newar tradition. This is supported by the fact that another Nepalese text, which is closely related to Kuladatta's *Kriyāsaṃgrahaṇīkā* – namely, the *Ācāryakriyāsamuccaya* by Jagaddarpaṇa – is grafted onto Abhayākaragupta's *Vajrāvalī*, incorporating most of it verbatim, while deviating and expanding on it as needed, for instance, by inserting the treatment of renovation (*jīrṇoddhāra*) in the section on honorific offerings (*argha*). Attesting to the continuity between these two Nepalese texts and their Indian precursors, they and a further important text authored in Sanskrit in the Kathmandu Valley before the 14th century – namely, the *Hiraṇyamālādaśakriyāvidhi* – were translated into Tibetan and form part of the

Tanjur collection. It is also noteworthy that some celebrated Indian masters, such as Atīśa (11th cent.), Vibhūticandra (12th cent.), and Vanaratna (15th cent.), came to reside in Nepal, where they cooperated with local scholars and produced significant tantric works, which were likewise translated into Tibetan.

The mentioned Nepalese Sanskrit texts have themselves functioned as precursors for the countless ritual handbooks written after the 15th century in a characteristic mix of Newari and Sanskrit. These handbooks are compilations written by Vajrācārya priests for their own purposes and then handed down in the tradition. Usually, these are not new compositions but draw on other handbooks, while allowing some scope for innovative adaptations, for instance, the choice of *stotras* (hymns) to be recited in praise of the worshipped deities. Many such handbooks treat a common stock of rituals that Vajrācārya priests perform in their function as



Fig. 4: The Svayambhū Caitya of Kathmandu on a monsoon-drenched day in July 2013, viewed from the northwest, with the two-tiered temple of Hārīti and other shrines in the foreground. The copper sheets covering the structure above the dome were repaired and newly gilded in the latest renovation completed in 2010. This site is the epicenter of the *Svayambhūpurāna*, the most important narrative text of the Newar tradition. (photo by author)

commissioned priests (*purohita*) for their clients (*yajamāna*). Three arenas of ritual activity stand out, namely the following:

1. the establishment and consecration of a new *caitya* or image (von Rospatt, 1999; 2010; in line with the *Kriyāsaṃgrahaṇī*);
2. life-cycle rituals (*saṃskāra*) that – while originally Brahmanical – are performed in this tradition in a wholly Buddhist idiom; and
3. death rituals including post-mortuary offerings of rice balls (*piṇḍa*) to the ancestors – they relate to the tantric Durgatipariśodhana cult, the prominence of which is also attested by the many *Durgatipariśodhanadhāraṇī* manuscripts and printed versions in circulation.

In the ritual handbooks, the instructions to perform specific ritual acts are generally written in Newari, while the texts to be recited are Sanskrit citations taken from standard works. In addition to invocations and verses of praises, Sanskrit passages include *sādhana* instructions pertaining to the visualization of deities (often beginning with their *bījamantra*, i.e. seed syllable) and the process of rendering them present. Routinely, such instructions are treated liturgically and recited in Sanskrit without necessarily being enacted mentally. Such *sādhana* materials also feature at the core of texts dedicated to the tantric worship of particular deities (e.g. Cakrasaṃvara, Vajravārāhī, and Yogāmbara) or *maṇḍalas* (e.g. the *vajradhātumaṇḍala*). These texts are known in Newari as *deguli* (also spelled *deguri*), a word of uncertain etymology that refers to the detailed instructions of how a tantric practitioner is to perform deity yoga (*devatāyoga*) in order to generate himself as his chosen awakened deity, in the Newar tradition by default Cakrasaṃvara (see Yamaguchi, 2005), through complex processes of visualization that include the elaborate use of mantras and the equally elaborate display of hand gestures (*mudrā*). Often the word *deguli* is qualified in the title as “oral communication” (*mukhākhyāna*). The most sustained study of this genre is a series of articles by Moriguchi (1982; 1983; 1984; 1987; 1995) dedicated to the *Vajradhātumukhākhyānadegurividhi*, which follows the section on deity yoga in the *Kriyāsaṃgrahaṇī* almost verbatim. Closely related to the *deguli* texts are the tantric songs (*caryāgiti*; New. *cacā*) chanted in secrecy as part of the worship of initiatory deities. Often they are sung in accompaniment to tantric dances, which are likewise recorded in handbooks, entitled *padasādhana*s because the dance steps (*pada*) effect the deities’ presence (see fig. 3). As

with the *deguli* manuals, most of the tantric songs are dedicated to a specific deity and have that deity’s iconography as their subject matter. Controversially, given the initiatory character of this practice, anthologies of these songs have been printed and privately distributed (but not officially published) in contemporary Nepal, but a comprehensive text-historical and musicological study of these materials remains an important desideratum. There are also other genres of the ritual literature produced in Nepal that await study. For instance, there is a prominent body of texts entitled *pārājikās*, dedicated to particular Buddhist deities – notably Mañjuśrī, Lokeśvara, Tārā, and Vajrasattva – that has as yet been hardly noticed (but see Bapat, 1977–1978). This genre, despite the usage of the same terminology, does not refer to the four cardinal transgressions (*pārājikā*) entailing automatic and irreversible loss of monastic status, but rather treats lay practices with a focus on the related rituals of appeasement (*śānti*) for averting ill fortune and on the rituals of atonement for offenses including capital offenses (*pārājikā*) – hence its borrowed designation. A closely related text is the *Pāpaparimocananirdeśa*, which is composed in a heavily tainted form of Sanskrit and comes with a commentary written in Newari. It treats rituals of purification and atonement, with an emphasis on the customs negotiating death pollution.

In addition to prescriptive manuals and related tantric texts (which include the *dhāraṇī* manuals mentioned above), there is a sizable body of manuscripts that chronicle the performance of particular rituals and related events (von Rospatt, 2002). Often, such records start out as jottings by priests ahead of the performance of particular rituals, in which they note such details as the technical name of the ritual, the names of the patrons, the auspicious time (astrologically determined) for their performance, and so forth. Such records may subsequently be consolidated into sustained longer historical records devoted to a single shrine or deity, such as the Svayambhū Caitya of Kathmandu (see fig. 4), the Vajrayoginī temple above Sankhu, and the Lokeśvara image of Bungamati village. As exemplified by the accounts chronicling the renovations of Svayambhū in the mid-18th century (von Rospatt, forthcoming), such sources can draw on related works and incorporate mythological materials, ritual prescriptions, and so forth – thus making for a more sophisticated and complex form of historiography. Usually, however, such ritual records consist of basic notes covering a range of ritual events, which the individual

priests keeping them deemed noteworthy. Customarily, they use for this purpose oblong leporello-style books with concertina (harmonium-style) folds (*thyāsaphū*; see fig. 3). Such historical records supplement the large archive of documents and stone inscriptions pertaining to Buddhist temples and monasteries, which record their establishment or renovation, or particular donations (Bledsoe, 2004). Further sources for the history of Buddhism in Nepal can be manuscript colophons and commemorative inscriptions on commissioned scroll paintings and on other religious artifacts. A similar source can be architectural drawings, such as those preserved for the Svayambhū Caitya (Kölver, 1992), which record the building's outline and dimensions for a given time and may also include further historical information. Such drawings have their roots in *vāstuśāstra* (architectural) and ritual literature (Roth, 1980) and may be used when building or rebuilding *caityas* (as *stūpas* are known in the Newar tradition) or temples. Related to this are the numerous manuscripts with iconographic line drawings of Buddhist deities and other depictions used by painters (*citrakār*) and in ritual (Bühnemann, 2008; 2012).

The ritual literature sketched above relates to rituals performed by Vajrācārya priests on behalf of their clients, or to the initiatory, soteriologically oriented tantric practice, likewise overseen by Vajrācārya priests. There are, of course, other significant arenas of religious practice, and by the same token, there are other genres of Nepalese Buddhist literature. Most prominent is the extensive narrative literature, which was anonymously composed in Sanskrit in roughly the 15th century. These texts constitute the last layer of Sanskrit Buddhist literature composed in South Asia. For the study of Newar Buddhism, they are of particular interest insofar as they reflect many characteristics of this tradition. Unlike the ritual literature, these narrative works have received considerable scholarly attention, starting with R. Mitra (1882), though there are still numerous texts of this rich genre that await proper study. The *avadāna* section of S. Matsunami's catalogue (1965, 213–244) offers a comprehensive overview, though it does not differentiate between Nepalese works and their Indian precursors. A good summary of the research (also for non-Japanese speakers) can be found in K. Okano's descriptive bibliography of Sanskrit narrative literature (1998, esp. 185–241), although it omits the *Guṇakāraṇḍavyūha* (see below) and is also otherwise not complete.

Most of these texts are *avadānas* or collections of *avadānas*, typically identified in the title

as *avadānamālā* (garland of heroic legends) or *avadānakathā* (tale of heroic legends). Often, these include tales (*kathās*) that refer to the temporary lay vows (*vratas*) which Nepalese Buddhists may observe on new-, half-, and full-moon days or on other occasions (Lewis, 2000). Generally, such tales provide an account of the past performance of a particular *vrata*, which features heroic protagonists, attests to the efficaciousness of the vow, and may include an etiological explanation of its origins. While they often draw on earlier forms of Indian *avadāna* and Buddhist *jātaka* literature (notably the *Avadānaśataka*, the *Divyāvadāna*, the *Jātakamālā* literature, and Kṣemendra's *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*), they differ in style (simple verses in *anuṣṭubh* meter predominate) and emphasis, and there are also entirely novel compositions. Central are standard Mahāyāna themes such as the generation of *bodhicitta* (i.e. the aspiration to obtain buddhahood) and self-sacrifice as exemplified by the hugely popular *Mañicūḍāvadāna*. There are also certain formal characteristics (Tuladhar-Douglas, 2006, 38–52) that set this literature apart from its Indian precursors, such as the employment of a shared outer narrative frame, which features the teacher Jayaśrī in conversation with the king Jinaśrī *alias* Jineśvarī. This outer frame mirrors (and incorporates) the frame of the monk Upagupta instructing the emperor Aśoka, well-known from Indian *avadāna* literature, and helps to bridge the gap between the listener and the embedded narrative, so the listener can situate herself or himself in the world evoked by the text in question. The narrative Buddhist literature treated here has also been influenced by the sprawling purāṇa literature of the Hindu traditions, with which Buddhism in the Kathmandu Valley has always coexisted. One of the Nepalese Buddhist works to be introduced below is even identified as a purāṇa in the title of its extended versions. Conversely, literary developments in the Nepalese Hindu fold, such as the formation of the *Svasthānīvratakathā* (Birkenholtz, 2010) and the *Pradyumnāprabhāvatī* legend (Brinkhaus, 1987), also owe to local Buddhist influence.

Several of these Nepalese *avadānas*, *avadāna* collections, and other texts have been edited, translated, and studied. A prominent example is the *Bhadrakalpāvadāna* (Tatelman, 1998). It covers the life story of the Buddha starting with the delivery of his first teachings at Sarnath and ending with his visit home in Kapilavastu and his subsequent departure to Svayambhū in the Kathmandu Valley, a move that serves to tie the narrative to the

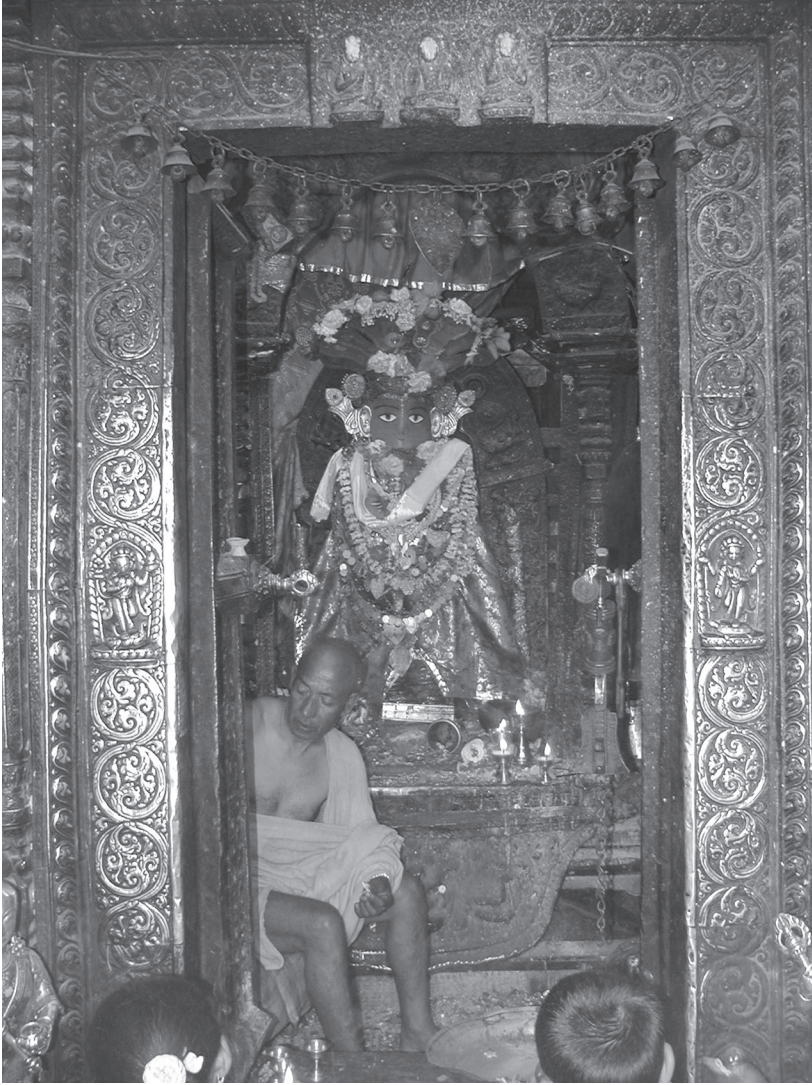


Fig. 5: The Lokeśvara image of Bungamati on its annual sojourn in 2007 in Patan at the temple of Ta Bāhā. The attending priest (*pāñju*) is from the village of Bungamati where the image is based, hence its local name Bunga-dyo. (photo by Manik Bajracharya)

historical Nepal. The text draws on the *Mahāvastu* and other Indian sources, but its extensive narration of the fate of the Buddha's wife Yaśodharā and the tribulations that she had to suffer once Siddhārtha had left her is an original Nepalese creation and differs from other accounts of Yaśodharā found in the Sanskrit and Pali literature. Arguably, it reflects the anxieties surrounding renunciation in the Nepalese tradition, in which monastic renunciation came to be domesticated and restricted to a caste of married householder monks. Indicative of the intertextuality among Nepalese works of this genre, substantial portions of the *Bhadrakalpāvadāna* are shared with the *Samḥadrāvādānamālā*. The *Mahājātakamālā*

(Hahn, 1985) provides another interesting example for intertextual borrowings. Nearly half of it is constituted by the *Karuṇāpūṇḍarikasūtra*, supplemented by episodes drawn from other sources, such as the *Jātakamālās* of Āryaśūra, Haribhaṭṭa, and Gopadatta. Further select works pertaining to the corpus of Nepalese narrative literature are the *Kalpadrūmāvādānamālā*, the *Aśokāvādānamālā*, the *Vicitrakarṇikāvādānamālā*, the *Ratnamālāvādāna* (also known as *Ratnāvādānamālā*; Takahata, 1954), the *Divyāvādānamālā* (which is partially identical with the text established under the name *Divyāvādāna* in the edition of Cowell & Neil, 1886), the *Citra-viṃśatyavadāna(mālā)*, the *Dvāviṃśatyavadānakathā*

(Okada, 1993), the *Kavikumārāvadāna* (Asplund, 2013), the *Kapīśāvadāna* and *Piṇḍapātrāvadāna* (Both, 1995), the *Vratāvadānamālā*, and texts dedicated to specific *vratas* such as the *Ahorātravratākathā* (Handurukande, 2000), the *Lakṣacaitya vrata śṛṅgabherīkathā* (Lewis, 2000, 21–48; and Rajapatirana, 1974), the *Aṣṭamīvratakathā*, and the *Vasudhārāvratakathā*.

Two particularly important texts pertaining to the Nepalese Sanskrit Buddhist literature composed in circa the 15th century are the *Svayambhūpurāṇa* and the *Guṇakāraṇḍavyūha*. Though these two share many features of the Nepalese *avadāna* and *kathā* collections, such as the outer narrative frame with Jayaśrī and Jinaśrī, they differ in thrust and are connected to what already in the 11th century were the two principal sites of Nepalese Buddhism, namely, the Svayambhū Caitya and the Lokeśvara of Bungamati, also known as Buṅgadya, Karuṇāmaya, or Matsyendranāth (see fig. 5). The *Guṇakāraṇḍavyūha* is the Newar adaptation of a much earlier Mahāyāna *sūtra*, namely, the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* (Tuladhar-Douglas, 2006, 57–79), though it also incorporates about half of Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and much of his *Śikṣāsamuccaya*. Like its Indian precursor, it focuses on the cult of Lokeśvara and includes the subordination of Maheśvara (i.e. Śiva) and other Hindu deities.

The *Svayambhūpurāṇa* is extant in a number of versions of different length (Brinkhaus, 1993), bearing slightly different titles. The shortest and earliest version, entitled (*Gośṛṅgaparvate*) *Svayambhūcaityabhāṭṭarakoddeśa*, was probably composed around the early 15th century. It stands apart by being composed in prose and by lacking the Jinaśrī-Jayaśrī and Upagupta-Aśoka narrative frames. It is the sole specimen of Nepalese narrative literature that survives in the form of a palm-leaf manuscript (NGMPP E 1134/2), and it most likely is also the earliest exemplar of this genre (it may, in fact, have helped initiate the production of these texts). Rather than reworking standard Sanskrit narrative material, the *Svayambhūpurāṇa* is a novel composition, though not created from scratch, as it draws on literary tropes that apparently had some currency at the time, and is also related to other texts, notably the *Dvādaśātīrthamāhātmya*. The *Svayambhūpurāṇa* can be viewed as a response to the loss of the Buddhist heartland in North India since the 13th century (von Rospatt, 2009). The principal narrative device for achieving this is the Svayambhū myth. It relates that in prehistoric times, Nepal was a sacred lake on which the primordial Buddha principle (*dharmadhātu*) manifested (*bhū*) itself sponta-

neously (*svayam*) in the form of a light or luminous *caitya* on the pericarp of a lotus blossom. Next, the *Svayambhūpurāṇa* describes the draining of the lake by Mañjuśrī (who came from China in the form of Mañjudeva and took up residence in Nepal), the subsequent settlement of the Kathmandu Valley, its sanctification by *tīrthas*, and other holy places and shrines, as well as the eventual encasement of the self-arisen *dharmadhātu* inside the physical Svayambhū Caitya, which is located at the western outskirts of modern Kathmandu, where it continues to be revered as the most sacred shrine of the Newar tradition (see fig. 4). By incorporating the tantric goddess Khagānānā of the *cakrasaṃvaramaṇḍala* in the narrative and identifying her with the roots of the lotus on which Svayambhū manifests himself, the *Svayambhūpurāṇa* also renders the valley sacred in terms of the cult of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrayoginī. Moreover, it also assigns a prominent role to the serpent deities (*nāgas*) and their role in rainmaking. Its key point is to eulogize historical Nepal and render it independently from India as a sacred Buddhist land. Like no other Newar Buddhist text, it has shaped the religious consciousness of the Newars, their understanding of the history of Buddhism in Nepal, and their place within that history. Attesting to its importance, the *Svayambhūpurāṇa* captured the imagination also of the Tibetans, who produced three translations, one of which is lost.

As part of the general movement to vernacularize Nepalese narrative literature, the *Svayambhūpurāṇa* (in its middle-length version in ten chapters, entitled, with some variations, *Svayambhūcaityasamutpattīkathā*) was translated into Newari (Shakya, 2011). Speaking of its enduring hold on the Nepalese imagination, there is also a modern rendering of it in that language and derived from this, in Nepali, as Gorkhali has come to be known since it became the *lingua franca* of modern Nepal. Among further texts transposed into Newari are the *Mañicūḍāvadāna*, the *Aṣṭamīvrata māhātmya*, the *Siṃhalasārthavāhakathā*, the *Kapīśāvadāna*, the *Kavikumārāvadāna*, the *Sudhanarājakumārajanmāvadānakathā*, the *Vīrakūśāvadāna*, and the *Viśvantarakathā*. To a lesser extent, this vernacularization was also extended to a selection of Indian scriptures of non-Nepalese origin, such as the *Lalitavistara* and the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*. Despite the dearth of manuscripts from before the 18th century, this process of vernacularization (which remains to be studied in detail) started already earlier, as attested by Newari-language manuscripts of the *Vicitrakarmīkāvadāna* (NGMPP D 50/3) and the *Aṣṭamīvrata māhātmya* (NGMPP S 1683/1) from

the mid-17th century and by an even older manuscript of the *Aṣṭamīvratakathā* (NGMPP D 58/5), dating from 1535.

Supplementing the narrative and aforementioned *dhāraṇī* literature is a rich body of devotional literature (not yet studied systematically) composed in both Sanskrit and Newari, consisting of hymns (*stotra, stava*) and songs (*gīta*) dedicated to specific deities and used in their worship (*pūjā*; Sharkey, 2001). This genre is dominated by Avalokiteśvara in his various forms (Amoghpaśa etc.), but (Śākyasiṃha) Buddha, Svayambhū (under various names), Tārā, Vasudhārā, Yaśodharā, Vajrayoginī, and other deities also feature prominently. Furthermore, important hymns are dedicated to the ten powers (*daśabala*) and the eight auspicious signs (*aṣṭamaṅgala* or *maṅgalāṣṭaka*). Although its thrust is more ritual than devotional, another verse composition in Sanskrit, the *Buddhoktasamsārāmaya*, composed in Nepal after the 15th century, is also worth mentioning. Its third chapter prescribes the aforementioned old-age rituals and includes verses that are ascribed to a certain *Nemasūtrapārājikā*.

It is noteworthy that the literary production of Newar Buddhism has continued uninterrupted into the present. To name but a few examples, Amṛtānanda, who worked for Brian Houghton Hodgson and his predecessors in the early 19th century, composed a slew of works, among them the influential *Dharmakośasaṃgraha* and the chapters of Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* missing in the available manuscripts, an addition that E.B. Cowell integrated into his edition (1893). The 19th century also saw the production of Buddhist chronicles of the history of the Kathmandu Valley (possibly on behest of the British Residency). The best known is the compilation by Daniel Wright, the surgeon to the British Residency, published in an English rendition in 1877, commonly known as the *Wright Chronicle*. In 1914, Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya completed the publication of a lengthy literary compilation of the life of the Buddha in Newari entitled *Lalitavistara*, though in truth it draws together a range of narrative works current in Newar Buddhism. A more original rendering of the life of the Buddha, also based on sources outside the fold of Newar Buddhism, was authored by Chittadhar Hṛdaya. His poem *Sugata Saurabha*, published in 1949/1950 and recently translated into English (Lewis, 2007), is written in elaborate Newari verse. There are also numerous prolific Newar scholars, mostly Vajrācāryas but some – like the late

Hemraj Shakya – also Śākyas, who have published hundreds of studies dedicated to particular aspects of their tradition. These publications owe their existence to the growing availability of printing technology in Nepal since the 1960s. The introduction of this technology has also impacted the production of ritual manuals, with printed booklets displacing the handwritten versions that priests traditionally compiled for their purposes, a process that used to allow for considerable variety in practice, reflecting different preferences and ritual traditions.

The steady gains that the Theravāda movement has made in Nepal since its legalization in 1950 (it originated in the 1920s but was originally suppressed) have been accompanied by literary productions in Newari that are inspired by modernist Buddhism, in which this movement is rooted. These literary productions include didactic digests, manuals with extracts from the Pali scriptures recited for protection (*paritta*), and collections of devotional hymns and songs, notably published by the Gyānmālā Bhajan Khala, an association with several branches in the Kathmandu Valley dedicated to chanting hymns in the Indian *bhajan* style. Moreover, in an ongoing effort, most of the Pali *Suttapiṭaka* and parts of the *Vinayapiṭaka* and *Abhidhammapiṭaka* have been translated into Newari and are now being translated partially also into Nepali.

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