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

Volume I

DISSERTATION

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By

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****

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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 Cakrasamvara 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 yoginis 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 yogini 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 yogini tradition as the ontological source of the Newar Buddhism.
To Bibhakar and Deven
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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
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 Māṇ 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 Śakra 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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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.\textsuperscript{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." 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.
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 Śankarācārya visited Nepal and defeated the Buddhists in debate, thereby forcing them to take up the Hinduized householder path. Similarly, the Hindu king, Jayasthitī 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. 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. 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.
In characterizing Newar Buddhism, scholars, such as David Gellner, have defined Newar Buddhism as the “traditional Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism practised by the Newars”. 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. 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. 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. As religious centers of the Buddhist community, the sacred monuments, known as bahis and bahhas, 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 (kwāhpaḥ dyah) of the monastery that is the focus of daily veneration for the sangha; and, third, a secret esoteric shrine to the Tantric deity (āgam dyah). 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 kwāhpāh dyah shrine, and the esoteric āgamā 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 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/bahi architecture. 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/bahi 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 Purāṇа, 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—Aksobhya (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 (Pañcaśīra 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 (nirmānakāya) 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 Nāmasaṅgiti¹⁵ and Cakrasaṃvara.¹⁶ To this day, the Vajrācārya priests of Newar Buddhism trace their lineage to Mañjuśrī as the primordial Teacher (guru), referring to him as Guru 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 Vāgiśvara Maṇjughoṣa. Understood as the root (mūla) maṇḍala of Newar Buddhism, the Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara Maṇḍala’s iconographic theme is one of the most popular in Newar Buddhist art. This core iconographic element appears in numerous permutations in the art. For example, the Maṇḍala occurs as complete freestanding stone or metal repoussé 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 Maṇjuśrī, known as Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara Maṇjughoṣa—“Speech-Lord of the Dharma-essence.” As I will show through the visual imagery, Maṇjuśrī 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala iconography, which is generally found in the Tantric āgāmā 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 Cakrasaṃvara meditation is an integral part of Newar Buddhist practice, particularly as a routine initiation (dikṣā) of the Vajrācārya and Śākya sāṅgha 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 Cakrasaṃvara, depicted with his prajñā Vajravārāhi, have made their way to museums and private collections. Many,
if not all, of them may have once belonged to the Newar Buddhist Tantric āgam shrines. While recent anthropological studies have discussed the ritual aspect of the Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara teachings in Newar Buddhism. Using the objects related to the Cakrasaṃvara theme found in various collections, I will provide a contextual interpretation of the Cakrasaṃvara imagery by studying its significance in Newar Buddhist sacred architecture. Cakrasaṃvara and the other Heruka-cycle Tantric imagery found in the āgam 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 kwāhpāh dyah shrine. The second core iconographic component—Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala of Maṇjuśrī—is found most commonly as part of the shrine facade iconography.
and may be understood as the exoteric mandala that are accessible to the lay practitioners of the community. The third component, the Cakrasaṃvara 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 mandalic 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala) and the core architectural components (principal caitya, exoteric kvāpāh dyah shrine/shrine façade, and the esoteric āgām 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
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 Aksobhya cycle as taught in the Cakrasamvara 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
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*. 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. 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.  

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
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.  

**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. 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.  

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. 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 bahí/bāhā documentation project and took an additional 10,000 photographs of other Buddhist monuments, including Buddhist pilgrimage sites such as the Tīrthas and Vaitarāgā. 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 Swayambhū 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. 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 āgāmi imagery of Cakrasamāvara, 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 inscriptive 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. During this trip, I observed the principal festival to Maṇjuśrī during Śri Pañcamī at Svayambhū Mahācaitya.
I further gathered crucial information on the initiations and meditational practices of the Cakrasamvara 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 Newari that I have translated or those that are published in Newari as a source for visual imagery and to help elucidate the religious significance of Svayambhū, Dharmadhātu, and the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala meditations.29
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 Vāgiśvara." 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 Maṇjuśrī 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, 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/bahi 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.\textsuperscript{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 Swayambhū Mahācaitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in everyday Buddhist practice. In fact, the ritual traditions consistently affirmed the symbolic connection between the Swayambhū Mahācaitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala through various acts of devotion, votive offerings, and \textit{pujās}.\textsuperscript{34} Similarly, the Cakrasaṃvara/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 Cakrasaṃvara initiation, I did not have access to the secret teaching and hence could not directly ask questions related to the esoteric traditions of the Cakrasaṃvara 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 Man 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 Vāgiśvara and the Pañca Jinas.36 The second ritual specialist who provided crucial is Badri Ratna Vajrācārya, one of the most well-respected and leading ritual specialists of Kathmandu. During 1998 trip, Paṇḍit Badri 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 yogini 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 Vāgiśvara Maṇjughoṣa, in which I participated as the jajmān. The first of these pūjās was offered in 1994 at my in-laws' house in Kathmandu. The pājā 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 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). 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. 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 Newari. 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 inscriptive 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 iconometric measurements of the Mahācaitya based on architectural drawings. 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. 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. In this book, Gutschow carefully discusses 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
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 Badri 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 torana 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 Nispannayogāvali. The major portion of the book is devoted to
contemporary line drawings of all the deities in the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, which were sketched by the Newar artist, Gautama R. Vajrācārya.\textsuperscript{47}

The fourth book is a ritual text discussing the prājā 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 Newari source, while the iconographic descriptions again follow the Niśpannayogāvalī. The book was published as part of the actual consecration of a Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala at Thām Bahi in 1984, which I will discuss later in detail.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 Cakrasarāvvara 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 Cakrasamvara imagery.50

The second category is the anthropological studies that describe the ritual practices related to the Cakrasamvara meditation. These ethnographic studies provide reliable resources for the highly esoteric practices of Cakrasamvara that are generally inaccessible to the general public. The most thorough documentation of the Cakrasamvara initiation practices is found in David Gellner’s Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, as described to him by Āśakāji 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 Vajraṇārāhi, the prajñā of Cakrasamvara.53 This resource both helps to analyze the Cakrasamvara iconography and to infer the contextual use of the art within the practices of Newar Buddhism.

The third category of resources relating to Cakrasamvara is the published Newar ritual (vidhī) texts that are used in the performance of the rituals.54 The Trisamādhi (“Threefold Visualization/Meditation”) is the fundamental ritual related to Cakrasamvara / Vajraṇārāhi. A number of
modern publications in Newari outline the complex ritual. 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. Authors that I mentioned earlier, such as Pratapaditya Pal and Adalbert Gail, have examined Buddhist art in terms of stylistic and iconographic issues. In the field of Nepali cultural and religious history, Mary Slusser's two-volume opus, Nepal Mandala, serves as the most comprehensive survey thus far published.

**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), 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, 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 Srāvakayāna, 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, 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 bāhis 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 sangha members, and the annual festivals. In addition, Locke's work on Karunāmaya-Matsyendranath was one of the first detailed anthropological studies on the Avalokitesvara cult in the Kathmandu Valley.

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. 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
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. 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".

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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

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its aesthetic merits, which is contemporaneous to the "classical" Gupta art of India. 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 Kuṣāṇa 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, Prthvi Nārāyana 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 the 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. 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. 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 Prthvī Nārāyana 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 Prthvī Nārāyana 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 Raj. 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 Prthvi Narāyaṇa 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. 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 (vamsāvalīs), 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 vamsāvalīs, were established in 1880 by the Indian scholar, Bhagwan Lal Indrajī's discovery of inscriptive evidence. Until then, the history of Nepal had been based primarily on the accounts of vamsāvalī 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
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". 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.

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. 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', 'Parbatiyā', '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. 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 influential 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 Prthvi Narāyaṇa 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 Pātan, 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. 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. 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 Nepal) 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. 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. 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." 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.

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 Bahadur 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 Bahadur Rāṇā, which forcibly conceded much of the lands owned by the *guthi* 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.\textsuperscript{100}

Although the Rānās 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 Rānā went to Europe, Dr. Henry Oldfield was appointed the resident surgeon, remaining in Kathmandu for thirteen years, from 1850 to 1863. Oldfield’s work, \textit{Sketches from Nipal}, however, was not published until after his death, in 1880.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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.\textsuperscript{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. 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 Aṣṭasahasrāka Prajñāpāramitā, dated Nepal Samvat 128 (C.E.1008). 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.

Aside from the manuscript collection, Wright's contributed 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 vamsāvali, written in Nepali.\textsuperscript{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 Mañjuśrī referred to above is also highlighted throughout this section. Later, in 1970, Bikram Jit Hasrat, in his work, \textit{History of Nepal, as Told by its Own and Contemporary Chroniclers}, would also include another important Buddhist vamsāvali called the Padmagiri Chronicles. Like the Wright Chronicle, the Padmagiri Vamsāvali also begins with the mythological history of the Valley of the self-creation of Svayambhū Jyotirūpa, as based on the \textit{Svayambhū Purāṇa}.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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 Swayambhū Purāṇa (*Vṛhat Swayambhū Purāṇa*) that was based on an eighteenth-century manuscript at the Asiatic Society Library.¹⁰⁸ The Buddhist *vamsāvalīs*, such as the “Wright” and the Padmagiri chronicles and the original Sanskrit text of the *Swayambhū Purāṇa*, are the major textual sources used in this study to understand the Buddhist cosmology and the preeminence of the Swayambhū Mahācaitya in Newar Buddhism. Although the *Swayambhū 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 *Swayambhū 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 *vamsāvalīs*. Dynastic names of the Kirāta, Somavamši, Sūryavamši, Ṭhakuri, 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 inscriptive evidence to substantiate and correct the accounts of
the vamsāvalīs, Nepal’s traditional chronology lacked the definitive
 historicity of specific dynasties and dates. It is to the Gujarati pandita
Bhagwanlal Indrajī that due credit must be given for historicizing the
information of the vamsāvalīs 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 Caṅgu Narāyaṇa 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 Indrajī 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 Manadeva’s dynastic lineage under the descriptive name Suryavamsa, or Solar Dynasty. The dynastic name “Licchavi” was found eulogized in the inscriptions as Licchavi kulaketu, “glory of the Licchavi family”. 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 Paurānic 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 Vaiśāli, 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 Vaiśāli, 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 Vijnian 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 Kumara Devi. 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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. 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.

Specifically, the discovery of Kuśāṇa coins belonging the reign of King Kaniśka I (ca. second century C.E.) in the recent excavations at the Hāḍīgaon 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. An image of King Jayavarmā with an inscription written in Kuśāṇa Brahmi script and giving the date of Śaka Samvat 107 (corresponding to C.E. 185) was found at Māligaoṅ in close proximity to the Hāḍīgaon area in 1992. 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 Kuśāṇa period. These discoveries present important early epigraphic information about Nepal’s ancient history and, further, raises the issue of Nepal’s relationship with Kuśāṇa India. Notably, almost a decade before these discoveries, art historian Lain S. Bangdel had identified nearly forty ancient sculptures with close affinity to the Mathurā Kuśāṇa style, among which eight were found in the vicinity of
Hādīgaoṅ and Māligaoṅ. Bangdel’s research on these early sculptures, particularly the *matrika* sculptures found throughout the Valley, reinforces the suggestion of ties with the Kuśāṇa dynasty.

Although the early twentieth-century British writers greatly contributed to the general body of knowledge on Nepal, 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.

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. Anne Vergati's collaborative work with A. W. Macdonald on Newar art analyzes the visual culture of the Newars through Newar socio-religious traditions. 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 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. 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

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 Indraji, 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 Rānā 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. 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 Gewali, 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 Prthvi Nārāyaṇa Śāha, and the history of the Malla period. 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 Rāmji 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 Rāmji Upādhyāya’s work on historical reconstruction.

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. 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. His greatest contribution may have been the establishment of the Itihāsa Śamśodhana Maṇḍala (Circle for Correction of History) in 1953. This "circle" 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. Outstanding among these
scholars are Dhanavajra Vajrācārya, Gautamavajra Vajrācārya, Maheś Rāj Pant, Akrur Kuwinkel, Bāburām Nepal, Gyān Maṇi Nepal, Bholā Nāth Poudel, Mohan Nāth Pāñdey, Śyām Rāj Pokharel, Laksmana Satyāl, Aiśwarya Dhar Śarmā, Kumār Dhar Śarmā, Ghana Śyām Subedi and Maheśvar Rāj Subedi.¹³⁶

From 1955 to 1958, the Śamśodhana Maṇḍala published a valuable series of pamphlets of their findings under the name Itihāsa Śamśodhana [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 Śamśodhana Maṇḍala that are important contributions to Nepali history. These include Saṁskṛta-Sandeśa [The Sanskrit Message], published by Nayā Rāj Pant and Yogi Naraharināth from 1953 to 1954, Abhilekha-samgraha [Collected Inscriptions], devoted to the publication of unpublished inscriptions; Aitihāsika-patrasamgraha [Collected Historical Papers], primarily of the Śāha dynasty; and Purnimā an excellent Nepali language quarterly that has published the research conducted by the Śamśodhana Maṇḍala, beginning in 1964. Although unfortunately accessible only to scholars who know Nepali, these journals and the contributions of the Śamśodhana 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 Śamśodhana 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 Tīstung, and the other, the inscriptions of the Śāha dynasty. 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). Historians like Dilli 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, Regmi'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.
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.\textsuperscript{142} Today’s generation of scholars like Gautamvajra Vajrācārya, Kaśinath Tamot, and Mukunda Aryāl have also made significant contributions in the Nepali language.\textsuperscript{143}

**BUDDHIST SCHOLARSHIP IN THE NEWARI 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 Newari 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 Parbata Hindu majority. In contrast, Newari 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, Pṛthvi Nārāyaṇa Śāha in the seventeenth century, Newari immediately lost its position as the language of royal courts, and, over the centuries, as the primary medium for the arts and literature. The Rānā regime from 1846-1950 had consciously attempted to undermine the Buddhist traditions in the Valley. Yet, in subsequent years, the Newari 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 Rānā regime in the early 1950s, a new wave of revivalist efforts were propagated by influential Vajrācārya pañḍitas and intellectuals of the lay community in the Kathmandu Valley. To serve this need for religious identity, a vibrant literary movement in the Newari language re-emerged among the Buddhist community. Not only did Newari 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.\textsuperscript{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 Aṣṭami 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 handwritten manuscripts, are also published in printed form, with commentaries in Newari by contemporary Vajrācārya teachers. Among them, the Aṣṭasahasrīkā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Ārya Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra, and Pañca Rakṣā Sūtra, including the Navagranthā, 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.\textsuperscript{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 Newari is an invaluable resource for both Anthropological and art historical research. Of particular importance are the works of respected Vajrācārya and Śākya pāṇḍitas 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, Badri 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 Vajräcārya 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 Vajräcārya priests and scholars in Kathmandu are Amoghavajra Vajkräcārya, Divyavajra Vajkräcārya, Badri Ratna Vajkräcārya, and Ratnakāji Vajkräcārya, all of whose contributions will be briefly discussed here. Often seen as one of the most powerful Tantric siddhas of this century, Amoghavajra Vajkräcārya (1910-1979) was not only a Sanskrit scholar of great repute, but performed many important pūjās in the religious centers of the Valley. Through his efforts to revitalize the modern traditions of Newar Buddhism, Amoghavajra succeeded in re-establishing the authority and respect for the Tantric Vajkräcārya priests in the Buddhist community, particularly in Kathmandu. Among his influential books are the ritual texts for the Guru Mañḍala pūjā and the Kalasapūjā, the two fundamental rituals of Newar Buddhism. These have since been repeatedly republished by other Vajkräcārya priests. Published by the De Ācārya Gūṭhi of Kathmandu, the central administrative body of the eighteen bāhās of Kathmandu that oversees and regulates the rituals of the Vajkräcārya priests, both works are considered to be important resources for the ritual practices of the Kathmandu Vajkräcāryas.
Badri Ratna Vajrācārya and Ratnakāji Vajrācārya are among the foremost practicing Vajrācārya priests who have made significant contributions to Newar Buddhist scholarship. From Sawal Bāhā in Kathmandu—a bāhā reputed for the magical powers of the Tantric siddhas—Badri Ratna and Ratnakāji both follow the lineage of their forefathers in that they are considered among the most authoritative Vajrācārya priests practicing today. 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 Badri Ratna, locally known as Badri 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. Realizing the need to teach the methods of ritual practices in a systematic manner, Badri 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 Samraksana 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 lifecycle rites, exoteric pūjās, and esoteric rituals conducted in secret that have been influential in renewing the interest of the lay devotees and fellow practitioners. In recent years, Badrī Gurjū has offered several initiations (dikṣā) of Cakrasamvara and has organized pīṭhapūjās in the twenty-four yogini shrines around the Valley.

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 āgarās. 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.

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 pāṇḍits. 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 pāṇḍits 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 Newari, among which his translation of the Aṣṭasahasrākā Prajñāpāramitā, Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa, Svayambhū Purāṇa, Lalitavistara, Heruka Tantra, Karabira [Candamaharosana] Tantra, and Samvarodaya Tantra are most significant. Especially for the iconographic and contextual interpretation of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala presented in this study, I shall use his translation and commentary on the Ārya Nāmasaṅgiti 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-Rānā 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 books and pamphlets 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. 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, Hemrāj's scholarly opinions do not always correspond to those of the ritual specialist and Tantric teachers in the community.

The body of scholarship in Newari 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 Newari 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.
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 Royaume Hindou. 3 vols. (Paris: Ernst Leroux, éditeur, 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).


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 Bercht 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.


7. For example, the worship of the Aṣṭamātrikā 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 Aṣṭamātrikās are inextricably connected to the Cakrasaṅāvvara meditation cycle that is practiced in Newar Buddhism.


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"

11 The term ‘monastery’ is generally used to designate these Buddhist institutions of the bāhās and bahis. 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 bāhās and bahis 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 Śyavambhū. The term “stūpa” is most often applied to the large caityas of the Valley, i.e. the four “Asokan” stūpas in Patan and the stūpa at Baudha. Here, I use the term “caitya” to refer to the smaller stūpas found in the Valley, while the Mahācaitya alone refers to Śyavambhū.

13 During my field research, I visited 521 bāhās and bahis of the Kathmandu Valley, among which only two small bāhās in Patan (Ganeśa Bāhā and Siddhi Bāhā) did not have the central Śyavambhū 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 Vrhat Śyavambhū Purāṇam, containing the Traditions of the Śyavambhū 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 vaṃśavali 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 Badri Ratna Vajrācārya’s Newari edition, Śrī Śyavambhū Maḥāpurāṇa (Kathmandu: Sanu Maya Tuladhar, NS. 1103 [1983]). As the abridged translations of the Śyavambhū Purāṇa in English omit some of the significant details for iconographic analysis, I am using the original texts of the Śyavambhū Purāṇa written in Newari.

15 Nāmasaṅgiti is a form of Maṇjuśrī, who is equated with Vairocana. In Nepal, Nāmasaṅgiti is extremely important, and the Nāmasaṅgiti text, from which the deity derives its name, is often recited daily during the morning and evening pūjās in the bāhās/bahis.

16Cakrasaṃvara/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 (āgam) in bāhās, access to which is permitted only after receiving Tantric initiation (dikṣā).

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

As I will discuss extensively in Chapter Six, some of the inscribed Cakrasaṃvara paintings and metal sculptures mention names of the bāhās.

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


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 inscriptive 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.

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 Svaṃabhū and the Dharmadhātu maṇḍala, their symbolic identity continues to take on new, but related, layers of meanings to fit the Newar Buddhist context.

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).

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.
25 I am grateful to the members of the team and would like to thank them for their help and insight during field research: Dr. John C. Huntington, Dr. Susan L. Huntington, Eric Huntington, Janice Glowiski and Larry Hill. I would also like to thank the Samuel H. Kress Foundation and the Department of History of Art for supporting my field research in 1994.

26 I would like to thank the project members of 1996: Dr. John C. Huntington, Janice Glowiski and Chaya Chandrasekhar. I would like to express my gratitude to the Graduate School of the Ohio State University for awarding the Graduate School Alumni Research Award for the field research during this time.

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

28 I would like to thank the Office of International Education of The Ohio State University for funding my research in 1998.

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 Baburāja Sākya from Mahabuddha Temple in Patan traces their family history as craftsmen back to Abhayarāja Sākya, 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 Newari and am married to a Newar Buddhist (Sākya), 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 Ratnakāji 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 Newari (see section on Buddhist scholarship in the Newari language). Further, Paṇḍit Ratna Bāhādur’s own teacher was Kuimansingh, the senior Vajrācārya priest (cakreśvara) at Kva 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 Newari), 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 bāhas where the private pūjas or initiations of the bāhas take place. At Ha Bāhā, the elaborate initiation ritual (dikṣā) for higher initiation of Cakrasanvāra/Vajravārāhi had been also performed the digi 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 Rāj'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.


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 Nispannayogāvali and the Vajrāvali to illustrate the text. Further, he also made a contemporary painting of the Dharmadhātu Manḍala, which is included in the illustrations of the book.

48 Personal communication with author. Further, the inscription on the Dharmadhātu Manḍala at Thām Bahi confirmed its consecration by Badri Ratna Vajrācārya, following a month-long vrata to Dharmadhātu Vagiśvara by the lay patrons.

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


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 Cakrasamvara initiation conducted at Kvā Bāhā. See also Gellner, Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest, 266-279.

52 In Nepal, the term, sakti or Buddha sakti is a popular reference to the Buddhist female deities, although the more formal Buddhist term, prajñā, is generally preferred by the erudite ritual specialists.


54 There are also a number of unpublished original manuscripts written in the Newari script in the National Archives and the Asā Saphu Kuthi that pertain to the ritual and philosophical aspects of the Cakrasamvara Mandala.


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.


61 This is Gellner's translation of the word “Vajrayāna”, 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.


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

69 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.


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 History of Nepal 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 Jayavarman (A.D. 207), which shows strong stylistic affinity with the Kuṣāṇa image of the Mathura regions has created considerable debate among scholars as to whether the political hegemony of the Kuṣāṇa 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 Kuṣāṇa period, thus establishing and validating Nepal's artistic antiquity before the Licchavi period. Bangdel discusses 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.


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 Śrīnivāsa Malla of Patan. Other early missionaries to Nepal included Father


80 See Daniel Wright, *History of Nepal*, with an Introductory Sketch of the Country and People of Nepal; Henry Ambrose Oldfield, *Sketches from Nepal*, historical and descriptive with anecdotes of the court life and wild sports of the country in the time of Maharaja Jang Bahadur G.C.B to which is added an Essay on Nepalese 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 vamsāvali chronicles was discovered by Cecil Bendall. Known as the *Gopālarājavamsāvati*, it is also frequently referred to as the *Bendall Vamsāvati* after him.

81 Derived primarily from oral history, both the earlier vamsāvalis, compiled in the 14th century during the reign of Shhti 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 Licchāvi kings, an image of Jayavarman, with an inscription corresponding to C.E 185, was recently discovered in Hādigaon, 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 vamsāvali chronicles, see Dhanavajra Vajrācārya and Kamal P. Malla, *The Gopālarājavamsāvati* (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, Bibliotheca Himalayica, Series I, vol. 10.).

83 Kirkpatrick, 124.

84 Kirkpatrick, 183. Kirkpatrick is most likely referring to the term Bande or Bānra, an honorific title given to the Śākyas and Vajrācāryas in Nepal. It is interesting that nowhere does he use the term Buddhist or “Baudhamārgī”. 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 Parbats) 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, Bibliotheca 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 Sāha 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 suggest that groups speaking an Indo-Aryan language migrated into the Kathmandu Valley as early as the 1st-2nd century C.E. See Slusser, Nepal Mandala, 8. Further, the recent discovery of an image of Jayavarmā dated to Samvat 107 (second-third century) has an inscription written in the Kusana period Brahmi script indicates the dominance of Indo-Aryan culture.


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.


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).


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.

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.


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 Mahācāitya. These sketches may be studied in relation to the appearance of the completed Mahācāitya as it stands today, since the monument has, since the 19th century, been refurbished and partially reconstructed, especially after the 1934 earthquake.

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.

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

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).

See note 103

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

Hara Prasad Shastri, ed., The Vrihat Svayambhu Purāna containing the Traditions of the Svayambhu Ksetra in Nepal N.S. 842 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1894).


Bhagwanlal Indrai, 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 Gopālavamsāvalī, 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.


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 śāti in Niglisagar in the southern Tarai.


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 vamsāvalīs and the inscription of the later Licchavi king Jayadeva II from Pasupati (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 Kuśāṇa-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 Māligāṇī, 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.


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 Muladevaśa āivadevyākhyāntaka: Das älteste bekannte vollständig überlieferte Newari-Drama (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1987). See also S. Lienhard, Manicudavadanoddhārta: A Buddhist Re-Birth Story in the Nevari Language (Stockholm: Alquist and Wiksell, 1963) and his Nevarīgitiṁañjāri: Religious and Secular Poetry of the Nevars of the Kathmandu Valley (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1974).


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.

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.


Interestingly, the two prominent historians of Nepal, Surya Vikram Gevali 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 Surya Vikram Gevali's works. One could speculate that this omission may be attributed to Slusser's primary informants, Mahēś Raj Pant and Gautamvajra Vajrācārya, two scholars who belonged to Pant's Śamśodhana Maṇḍala.

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


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

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

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


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

In addition to his contributions as a historian in the Śamśodhana 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]", *Purnimā* 3, pt I no. 3 (1964); Gautamvajra 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 Aryan, in a jointly collaborated with Jurgen Winkler also written in English. See Jurgen Winkler and Mukunda Rāj Aryan, *Nepal* (New York: Kodansha International Ltd., 1977).
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 Herākāji Vajrācārya, ed., Sanvarodaya Daśami (Disi) Pūjā Vidhi Pustakam (Yala [Patan]: Yashodhara Mahavihara, 1995).

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.

In his capacity as an accomplished Tantric priest, Amoghavajra refurbished and renovated the yoginī temple at Pulan Guhyesvari, believed to be one of the most powerful Buddhist shrines of Valley.

Amoghavajra Vajrācārya, Gurumandalārccana-pustakām (Kathmandu: De Ācārya Guthi, 1972); Kalaśārcanādi-hayapatiha-pustakām (Kathmandu: De Ācārya Guthi, 1976). Amoghavajra also wrote the introduction to the 108 forms of Avalokiteśvara in Jana Bāhā. See Lokesvarāya Parīcaya (Kathmandu: Lokesvara Sangha, 1979).

Versions of Amoghavajra works on Gurumandalapūjā and Kalaśārcanapūjā have also been later revised and re-published by Ratnakāji Vajrācārya, Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, (both from Kathmandu) and Āśa Kājī Vajrācārya from Patan.

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

Sasvat Vajra, the legendary Tantric priest from Sawal Bāhā, was famous for his magical powers and is said to have established the Mahākāla and Bhadrakāli (Luīmādhi Ajīmā) temple at Tundikhel.

To date, Paṇḍit Badrī Ratna has written over forty-one books, among which his translation of the Svayambhū Purāṇa, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Pūjā Vidhi and Nāmasaṅgiti 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.

Personal communication from Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya. In May 1998 visit, Paṇḍit Badrī Ratna had organized the pitṭapūjā pilgrimage for the initiates who had taken part in the Cakrasamvara initiation. Further, he was also preparing for another initiation to Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhi, in which the initiates were sequestered for fifteen days.

Some of his important works include Nepāla Jana-Jivana Kriyāpaddhati (co-authored with Ratnakāji Vajrācārya) (Kathmandu: Self Published, N.S 1083), Srng Bherī (Kathmandu: Ratnadevi Manandhar, N.S 1094 [1974]), Amoghapasa Lokesvarāya Vṛata Kathā (Kathmandu: Self Published, N.S. 1101 [1981]), Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa (Kathmandu: Sanumaya Tuladhar, N.S. 1103 [1984]), Yalayā Gurumandala [Gurumandala Pūjā of Patan] (Kathmandu: Gurumandala Adhayana Khalah, N.S. 1110 [1990]).

See Ratnakāji Vajrācārya, Yeṣi Deyā Baudha Pūjā Kriyā yā Halaṇīvalan (Materials Required for the Rituals of Kathmandu), (Kathmandu: Nepal Baudha Prakasan, N.S. 1100), Nevāḥ Sanskāra Samśkritīyā Tāhčā (Cultural Heritage of the Newara) (Kathmandu: Vajrācārya Prakasan, 1109), Kalaśārcana Pūjā Vidhi (Kathmandu, Vajrācārya Prakasan, N.S. 1111), and Balipūjāyā Yathārthātā (Reality of Sacrifice-Worship) (Kathmandu: Vajrācārya Prakasan, N.S. 1113).


Vajrācārya Paṇḍit Ratna Bāhādur, tr., Ārya Nāmasaṅgiti Gāthā [with Commentary] (N.S. 1113 [1993]).

158 Unfortunately, Pandit Hemraj'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 Hemraj'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, Sikharākūṭacaitya, Padmavalicaitya, Ḫvālāvalicaitya, Jalalīrvrupasumerucaïtya, and Sumerucaïtya 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 Hemraj 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 practitioners are skeptical and often dismissive of his knowledge on Buddhism and particularly in the Tantric traditions. I have found Pandit Hemraj 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 Ha Bahã, Patan.

Figure 1.2 Rituals performed during Vasundharã Pûjã. Ha Bahã, Patan. 1994.
Figure 1.3. Svayambhū Mahācaitya, View of east side. 1996.
Figure 1.4 Bahā with central Svayambhū caitya. Haughal Bāhā, Patan. 1996.

Figure 1.5 Detail of central Svayambhū caitya.
(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 the Draining of the Lake by Mañjuśrī, according to 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.
Figure 1.10 Strut figures depicting Dharmadhātu iconography. Kwā Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 1.11 Torañā depicting Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa. Rato Matsyendranāth Temple, Patan.
(top left) Figure 1.12 Cakrasamvara. Gilt Copper. Eighteenth Century. Private Collection.

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

(lower right) Figure 1.14 Cakrasamvara and Vajravarahi. 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
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
will also examine the socio-religious organizations of the bāhās and bahīs in Kathmandu and Patan, since they form the religious foundations of contemporary Newar Buddhist society.

SECTION I: THE “STAGE”

MONASTIC ARCHITECTURE IN NEWAR BUDDHISM: BĀHĪ 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 bahī institutions belong to the “monastic” saṅgha of the Vajrācārya and Śākya caste groups. 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 bahi institutions. Generally speaking, Newar Buddhist monastic architecture is referred to as bāhās. 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. 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). 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 (kvāhpāḥ dyah); and third, an esoteric āgām shrine to a Tantric deity (āgam dyah) (Fig. 2.2). The kvāhpāḥ
dyah shrine is usually located on the first floor, opposite the entrance wall. It houses a non-Tantric deity, such as Śākyamuni, Amitābha, Dipānkara, or Maitreya, whose images are exoteric, and, therefore, accessible for all Buddhist practitioners to worship. The secret āgam 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 kvāhpāh dyah shrine, the deities of the āgam are the esoteric Tantric deities of the Heruka class, such as Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhi, Yogāmvara/Jñānaḍākini, or Hevajra/Nairātmā, all of whose ritual meditation require higher initiations (dikṣā).

The three components of bahi 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 bahi, namely, the exoteric kvāhpāh dyah that may be contrasted to the esoteric practices and deities of the āgam shrines.

Although the functional aspect of these shrines accommodates essential distinctions in Newar Buddhist ritual practices, bahi architecture has other elements unique to this architectural category. As indicated in the
groundplan, these include the circumambulatory passage (pradaksināpatha) 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 façade is relatively simple, without the elaborate decorative and rich iconographic elements, such as the strut figures and torana, which are usually present in bāhā architecture.

The overall plan of the bāhī is closely reminiscent of the vihāra format seen at the caves of Ajañṭā 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 Ajañṭā have similar recessed shrines that, as in the bāhis 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 Ajañṭā, allude to the gandhakuti ("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 Newari inscriptions refer to the main shrine images in bāhis as gandhuri dyah, ["deity of the fragrance hall"], a term that is still in use today. Scholars have suggested that this term is derived from the word gandhakuti, and hence, point to the antiquity of the bāhī institution and a relationship with India.\(^8\) Numerous inscriptions mention the bāhī shrine image as śri gāndhuri deva,
śrī gāndhuri tathāgata, or śrī gandhuri bhaṭṭāraka, in reference to the deity residing in the gandhakuṭī.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
Licchavi and pre-Licchavi sculptures (ca. first-third century C.E.) have also been found.\textsuperscript{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 Thām 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.\textsuperscript{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 Cikaṇ 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. Similarly, the locale of the northern “Ašokan” caitya is an ancient site, whose oral history traces the foundation back to King Ašoka’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.

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 Ašoka, 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 (pradakṣināpatha) goes around the kvāhpāḥ dyaḥ shrine and the side walls on the ground floor have an open walkway supported by pillars. Beyond that
is a series of small rooms that now house Theravāda monks residing there during their monsoon rain retreats.\textsuperscript{14}

The central courtyard has numerous votive caityas, with a group of five Licchavi caityas directly in front of the kvāhpāḥ 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 bāhi 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 kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine doorway is surmounted by an inscribed wooden torana, dated N.S. 777 (1767 CE).\textsuperscript{15} The iconography of the torana depicts the five Jina Buddhhas 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 kvāhpāḥ dyah 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 kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine are the three shrines reserved for esoteric worship (Fig. 2.13). The small shrine room in the east is reserved for the goddess Kumāri associated with this bahī. As the physical manifestation of Vajravārāhi, who is also the āgam deity of Ca Bahī, Kumāri is chosen among the daughters of the saṅgha members of bahī. Kumāri’s worship is thus connected to the āgam shrine deities. The shrines directly above the kvāhpāḥ dyah houses a small red image of Vajrayogini, again a form of Vajravārāhi, which I was allowed to see and photograph. The main āgam shrine is located in the southwest corner, and is dedicated to Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravārāhi (Fig. 2.14). The iconography of the exterior doorway represents the four animal-faced gate guardians of the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala (Kākāśya, Ullukāśya, Svānāśya, and Śukrāśya), painted on the outside of the door. As is typical of many āgam doorways, the polychromed wooden toraṇa depicts Vajrasattva at the center, surrounded by four red yogini figures from the Cakrasaṁvara Maṇḍala. Above the āgam is
a small shrine-like cupola, at a vertical axis over the main kvāhpāḥ dyah 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 kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine remains a standard feature of all bāhīs.

**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 inscriptive evidence in the Kathmandu Valley also allude to the association of the bahī with celibate monasticism. 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. Yet, even in the contemporary context, the bahīs continue to see
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. Unlike the bāhās that have sub-branches, called “descendent” or branch bāhā (kācā bāhā), the bahīs 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 bahīs 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 bahīs 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 MANḍALA:
A STUDY OF THE CORE ICONOGRAPHIC PROGRAM
OF
NEWAR BUDDHIST MONASTERIES
IN NEPAL

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The two aspects—that the bahīs have no branches and their communal identity as “sarva saṅgha” regardless of the physical locations of the institutions—suggest that bahīs are significantly distinct from bāhās as institutions for celibate monks. Ritual traditions provide further evidence that the bahīs are distinguished from the bāhās. The bahī saṅgha does not require the services of the Vajrācārya priest; instead, one of the bahīs saṅgha 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 saṅgha, and is not allowed to take private patrons (jajmān), as would a Vajrācārya ritual specialist. This distinction of conferring the ācārya abhiśekha to a Śākya-bhikṣu in the bahī saṅgha 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 saṅgha organization. Contemporary oral history also confirms the bahīs as a separate class of monastery and saṅgha. The
bahi organization emphasizes the Sravakayâna path with the arhat as the ideal, emphasizing celibate monasticism. On the other hand, the bâhâ organization follows Mahâyâna/Vajrayâna, 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 bâhîs were institutions where the practitioners received their initial training and lived as celibate bhikṣus. After their primary fundamental Buddhhalogical training (prâthami ka śikṣā), they then entered the bâhâs to receive higher education and initiations into the Mahâyâna/Vajrayâna paths.²

The distinctions between the Sravakayâna and Vajrayâna traditions are already present by the thirteenth century. By the Malla period, inscriptions referred to bâhâs as sâmsârika tântrika vihâra (“worldly Tantric monastery”) that were inhabited by married Śâkya-bhikṣus. In contrast, the bahîs were called nirvanika vanaprasta vihâra (“other-worldly forest-dwelling [wandering] monastery”), and described as inhabited by brahmâcârya bhikṣus.² Such inscriptional as well as socio-religious traditions provide testimony to two significant points. First, the bahî institution was clearly different from the bâhâ, most likely a celibate monastic tradition, as attested by their physical location, relatively simplicity of architectural form, and contemporary ritual tradition. Second, both the bahî and bâhâ traditions existed side by side. Further, at one time, the two
were probably contemporaneous, although, as known from other information, the celibate bahi 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 bahis served a functional purpose in the teaching at the celibate monastic institution. In fact, many bahis 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 mandalas 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 torana, made of wood, metal, or stone. The torana 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 Śaḍakṣari Lokeśvara, signifying the saṅgha. Other torana iconographic themes include esoteric forms of Maṇjuśri, such as Nāmasaṅgiti and Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara Maṇjughoṣa, 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 (phalāṇcā) 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 Ganeśa (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, yajñakunda, and vajras, usually placed along an axis to the shrine.

As in bahāś, three required components are mandatory elements of bāhā architecture, specifically, the principal caitya, kvāhpāh dyah and the Tantric āgamī 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 bāhāś, 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 bāhāś 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 bāhāś. For example, the whitewashed “Kanaka caitya” of Jana Bāhā / Seto Matsuendranath 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 esoteric *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 esoteric image, most often Śākyamuni in *bhumisparśamudrā*, Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya or Dipāṅkara
The members of the saṅgha of each bāhā take turns serving as priest/god-guardian (dyahpāla) in the kvāhpāh dyah shrine. The current Newari term, kvāhpāh dyah, is derived from the older Sanskrit term, koṣṭhapāla ["guardian of room"], as found in a fourteenth-century inscription. Locke has rightly observed that the current usage of the term kvāhpāh dyah means "guardian of the bāhā / saṅgha", and is also called kvāhpāh 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 Há Bāhā at the pūjā’s conclusion. An additional offering plate was set aside for the kvāhpāh dyah image, who was one of the saṅgha elders in his role as the senior guardian or kvāhpāh āju.

In most bāhās, the exoteric kvāhpāh dyah shrine and esoteric āgam shrine are generally demarcated in two levels. The second level, directly above the kvāhpāh dyah contains the third required element of bāhā architecture: the Tantric āgam shrine. As in the bahis, the āgam enshrines the most esoteric Tantric deities of the Highest (Anuttara) Yoga Tantras, such as Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravarāhī, Yogāṇavāra/Jñānaḍākinī, or Hevajra/Nairātma. Entrance to the shrine is restricted to the initiated members of the bāhā, and, specifically, to those who have received higher initiation (dikṣā). The ritual worship is confined to the elders of the bāhā, specifically to the senior-most Vajrācārya member (Cakreśvara). The higher
initiations (dikṣā) also take place in the āgam shrine. On the exterior façade, a five-fold window that symbolizes the five Tathāgatas (Pañca Jinas), typically marks the āgam shrine. Although in most bāhās the āgam is above the kvāhpāh dyah shrine, there are instances where the āgam is in the digi, the gathering area for the saṅgha, opposite the shrine façade. This suggests that the physical location of the āgam is not the determining factor, although, its presence is a mandatory element of bāhā/bahi architecture.

Other secondary shrines in a bāhā may include a shrine to Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara, and shrines to Nāsadyah (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 façade 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 interconnected 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 torāṇa and strut figures. Over the doorways, both on the exterior and interior shrine door, the torāṇa 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 Manḍala 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 Devis. In some bāhās, such as Chusyā Bāhā, Musyā Bāhā, and Khuṇ 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 torāna 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, kvāhpāḥ dyah, and āgamā 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. These concepts are actualized during consecration rituals, 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.
Other discretionary elements in structure, such as the torana 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 mandalic 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:

\[
\ldots \text{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}
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**Ancient Bāhā Establishments and their Relationship to the Rock-Cut Architecture at Gum Bāhā, Śānkhu**

Licchavi inscriptions, dating from the fifth to ninth centuries C.E., state that there were at least fourteen vihāras established in the Licchavi
period. 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 Swayambhū Mahācaitya by Vṛṣadeva, and Gum Vihāra, also a royal foundation, but without attribution to a specific king. The inscriptions often distinguish these royal foundations as "rāja vihāra", contrasting them to the sāmanyā vihāra, "ordinary monastery", which, mostly likely, had been established by lay patrons. 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 Gum Vihāra still exists. Known by its contemporary name, Gum Bāhā, this bāhā is located on the hilltop at Śānkhu, where it shares the sacred confines with the "Vajrayogini" shrine, an important Tantric Śaṅka 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 “Vajrayogini” 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 Aṣṭamātrkās, 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 Sānci, with a low hemispheric mound. 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 Guri 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). 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 Guṃ Bāhā provides an extant example of ancient vihāra architecture, several significant points may be inferred in reference to the preeminence of caityas in bāhā/bahi 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 Vikramāśilā had stūpas that vivified and sanctified the religious institutions.35

In Nepal, extant material culture, such as the caiya at Gum Bāhā, as well as the contemporary traditions of bāhās/bahis, indicate a religious continuity in the establishment of monastic architecture around the principal caiya. For example, at Gum Bāhā, the monastic community appears to have been located around the rock-cut stūpa. In local history, the caiya is a natural self-manifest rock (“svayambhū”) and is referred to as Dharmadhātu Caitya, reminiscent of the epithet of Swayambhū, the premier stūpa of the Valley. The Gum Bāhā caiya’s sanctity is further amplified in the contemporary context, since the structure’s morphological form serves as visual and symbolic reference to Swayambhū Mahācaitya. In the ritual practices, Gum Bāhā caiya’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 “Vajrayogini”. Additional inscriptive evidence in the bahī, such as the references to gandhakuṭi and gandhuri devātā as the bahī’s kvāhpāh dyah image, also allude to the principal caiya as the central focus of worship, as was true in the rock-cut caiya 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 bāḥās and bahīs. As their ground plan clearly suggests, the interior courtyard and kvāḥpāḥ 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) BĀḤĀS**

The third category of monastic architecture is branch bāḥās (kācā bāḥā), a classification that applies only to bāḥās, and not to bahīs. Structurally, the branch bāḥās are similar to the larger main bāḥās, although the branch units are generally not as impressive and may not have the rich iconographic elements present in many of the mū bāḥās (Fig. 2.26). In theory, the three basic components required of the mū bāḥās should also be present in a branch bāḥā. However, most often, the principal caitya and kvāḥpāḥ dyah shrine are the only two elements present in the branch bāḥā. As an institution, the branch bāḥās may help understand the concept of lineage descent as well as migration pattern among the married saṅgha that
resulted in the tradition of establishing branch bāhās.\`\textsuperscript{31} 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.\`\textsuperscript{32} 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 bāhās 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 dyahpāla 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 dyahpāla 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 Rājkarnikār 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. 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 Pilāṅche Bāhā, Tadhaṅ Bāhā, and Pāṅḍā 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.

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. 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.  

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 bahi, there are three categories of deities related to the distinctive functions of worship related to the saṅgha. These are exoteric shrine deity (kvāhpāḥ dyāḥ), Tantric deity (āgam dyāḥ), and the lineage deity (digu dyāḥ/kuladevatā/iṣṭadevatā). Daily ritual pūjās of the kvāhpāḥ dyāḥ, most commonly Śākyamuni, is the privilege of the saṅgha, where the rotation of the role as caretaker (dyāḥ pālas) is generally based on seniority of initiation. In contrast, pūjās and access to the Tantric āgam deity are confined to the governing body of elders (ājus, thakāli) who have taken dikṣā initiation. The senior-most Vajrācārya, called Cakrēśvara, is generally responsible for the Tantric diśi pūjā during each month in the āgam shrine, although the other ājus take turns to act as jajmāns for the āgam pūjā. The third category, digu dyāḥ, 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 dyāḥ) is the central source of power for the extended family (kula). There is an intimate connection between the family and the digu dyāḥ, (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. 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 “Vajrayogini” of Śānkhu, Yogānvara 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 (dyah 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. For example, the goddess “Vajrayogini” at Śāṅkhu is the lineage deity for many bāhās in Kathmandu and the Kathmandu inhabitants. She was “brought” to Lam Bāhā in Paknājol. Although her annual lineage worship is held at her “new” home, it is preferable to visit her in her original primary location at Śāṅkhu.

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 mātrkā 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 Gum 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 pītha devatās ("seat-goddess"). The most popular of these Tantric goddesses are "Vajrayogini" or specifically Khaḍgayoginī of Śānkhu (see Fig. 2.23) and Yogāmvara/Jñānaḍakinī of Mhepi (see Fig. 2.27). It is noteworthy that although many bāhās identify their lineage deity as the yoginī at Śānkhu, the actual annual lineage pūjā is generally performed at the enshrined caitya at Gum Bāhā. Only the secondary rituals to "Vajrayogini" are performed in her surrogate shrine at Paknājol. Similarly, the Yogāmvara shrine at Mhepi is one of the major lineage as well as Tantric deities of the bāhās. Foremost, it is a mātrkā pītha, and in the Buddhist context, it is dedicated to Yogāmvara's prajñā, Jñānaḍakinī, variously known as Mhepi Ajimā ("grandmother of Mhepi"). Alternately in the Hindu/Śākta context, she is the Māheśvari, one of the Aṣṭamātrkā pīthas.

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. 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 Guhyesvari, 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 mātrkā pīthas, 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 (kumāri) and then reside in their dyocheň, "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. In terms of the ritual significance, the pīthas located at the periphery are symbolic centers and sources of power, despite their physical location.
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 mātrakā pīthas—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 mātrakā pīthas, 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. 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” saṅgha, 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" (saṅgha) of the bāhās and bahīs. As practitioners of the Vajrayāna path, who are undertake the highly esoteric initiations (dikṣā), 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 Vajrayāna 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 bandyajū, whose etymological root is related to the Sanskrit term, vande or vandanā, meaning “those who are worthy of respect” i.e. Buddhist monks. 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 Śākyavamsa (“descendants of the Śākya lineage”), Śākyabhikṣu (“Śākya / Buddhist monk”), Brahmacārya Bhikṣu (“celibate monk”), Cailaka Bhikṣu (“caitya monk”). The terms Śākyabhikṣu and Śākyavamsa 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 Buddhācārya, 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. 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). 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/bahi 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." Quoting the Tantras, Badri 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 Kiṣṇas [Five Jinás]; his feet are the pithas of the mundane (laukika) world and the light of his body are the secret (guhyā) deities. Thus, with these qualities of the body is the honored yogin.”

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 Guṇājyoti 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 ghanṭā silenced against his thigh.

LAY COMMUNITY (UPĀŚAKA)

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. In general, the Buddhist laity (upāśaka) 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, Māṇandhar, and Rājkarnikār. These castes are qualified to receive Tantric Buddhist initiations (dikṣā/dekha) and (nikhān) to allow them to function within the Vajrayāna path. Further, initiation/life-cycle rites to adulthood (kayta pūjā) also defines the identity of the uray community as Buddhist.65

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, Tamrākārs, 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 Thām 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 Thām 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 āgam cheñ, located to the north of the bāhā. Furthermore, that the Kathmandu royal Kumārī also visits Thām Bahī on several occasions throughout the festival year suggest the Pradhāns as major
patrons of Buddhism. Further, the worship of the Kumāri in the Buddhist environment suggests that the Pradhāns receive the Cakrasamvara/Vajrārāhi initiations, since Kumāri, in the Newar Buddhist context, is the physical emanation of Vajrārāhi.

It is noteworthy that the dyah 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 sangha of the bahī. Although Thām Bahi 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 Purṇima 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.\(^a\)

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.\(^a\) 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 (māṭrkās, yogīnīs, and Aṣṭamāṭrkās) such as Guhyeśvarī or Vajrayogini, who are propitiated by both Hindus and Buddhists alike. The power of the māṭrkā pīṭhas, yogīnī 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 dyah pāla ["god-guardian"], while the bhajan khala ["singing group/organization"] chants the Nāmasaṅgiti text in front of shrine and the central Svayambhū caitya. At the end of the morning ritual, a hollow wooden log (ganbhasin gan) 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 pûjā to the main shrine image and circumambulate the enshrined Svayambhū caitya at the center of the courtyard. While the dyah pālas proceed with ritual activities throughout the day, the evening pûjā of lighting the lamps (ārati) is again joined by large number of lay devotees, who gather in front of the shrine to recite dhāranīs and sing devotional songs.

During special pûjā days, such as the tenth day of the month (daśamī), the full moon (pūnhe), the new moon (saṅkrānti), 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 pûjā, others may take darśan of the sacred Aṣṭasahasrikā 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 Amoghapāsa Lokesvara 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
importance of the bāhās and bahis 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 upāśaka 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 bahis have five required pūjās that must be performed by the Vajrācārya and Śākya saṅgha members. These are the nītya pūjā ("daily worship") to the kvāhpāḥ 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 Guṇlā Dharma pūjā, which clarifies the relationship of the "monastic saṅgha" to the laity. The first three pūjās relate directly to the required structural components, namely the kvāhpāḥ 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 Śakyas 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 Śakyas, as the monastic *saṅgha* of the *bāhās*, 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 *bāhās* like Kvā Bāhā in Patan and Jana Bāhā in Kathmandu maintain the elaborate *nitya pūjā* rituals throughout the day; in many smaller *bāhās*, 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 Śakyas 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 *dyah pālas* or caretakers of the Aṣṭamātrkā *piṭhas* 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 Budāhist 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 *ācāleug* consecration ("making of an ācārya") marks the Vajrācārya's status as family priest (*purohita*), who may take hereditary patrons (*iājmāns*). 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. *Diśi Pūjā* at the Tantric Āgam shrine

Pūjā in the highly esoteric āgam shrine is a mandatory ritual, and restricted to the elders (ājus) of the bāhās who have received higher Tantric initiation (*dikṣā*). On the tenth day of the dark half of each month (*kṛṣṇa daśāmī*), a special pūjā known as *Diśi (Daśāmī) Pūjā* is performed by the seniormost āju in most bāhās. The *Diśi pūjā* is performed in secret to the
deities of the Anuttara Yoga Tantras that are popular in Newar Buddhism, such as Cakrasamvara/Vajravarāhī, Hevajra/Nairātma, and Yogānvara/Jñānaśakti. In Newar Buddhism, Diśi pūjā is also intimately connected with the cosmogonic myth, as it re-enacts and commemorates the secret teaching lineage of the Cakrasamvara cycle from Guru Mañjuśrī to the practicing Vajrācāryas. I will further examine this ritual connection in Chapter Six.

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

This pūjā commemorates the establishment of the bāhā and is, most often, directly related to the installation of the principal cāitya, 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 cāityas 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 cāitya 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. 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. 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 kvāhpāh dyah 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 (*pujā*), gift-giving (*dāna*), pilgrimage (*tīrthas*), fasting (*vratas*), life-cycle rites (*saṃskāra*) and public festivals (*jātrā*). These actions are seen as cultivating skillful means (*upāya*) and compassion (*karunā*) 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.
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 (jātra) is symbolically connected to the bringing of seasonal rains and talismanic protection of the nāgas in the Valley. Another aspect through which the laity actively participate in religious activities are annual vratapūjās such as those dedicated to Amoghapāśa Lokesvara 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, (sankalpa), at the beginning of each ritual begins solemn promise that the benefits of the pūjā is not simply for the offerer, but ensures puṇya 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).\textsuperscript{70}

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 (upāsaka). 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,
āgamā 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 Cakrasamāvara, which is optional. The life-cycle ceremonies are performed in front of the principal caitya and the kvāhpāh dyah shrine, while āgamā shrine serves as the site for the secret esoteric dīkṣā initiations.

The rituals of the Buddhist sanīgha 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 sanīgha.

“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. 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 kvāhpaḥ dyāḥ 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 Pañcaśīla and Daśaśīla, 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 cīvara kote vidhi, "the ritual of laying aside the monk’s robes", which is performed in the offerer’s personal shrine or āgam. 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. 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/Bāhis**

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. 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 bāhās mobilize and unify the entire Buddhist community. 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 sangha 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 Saṁyak (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). 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 saṅgha of the bāhā to the lay community. 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/bahi).

The religious observations during Guṇḍā, which falls in the months of the heaviest monsoon rains (July-August), focus around the saṅgha 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 Guṇḍā, when festivals days such as Pañcadāna (the "gift-giving" to the Vajrācāryas and Śākyas), the bahi dyaḥ boye (displaying the deities in the bāhās and bahis), 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 Guṇḍā, thus, reinforces relationship between the initiated saṅgha and the lay community. Further, the Guṇḍā Dharma annually reifies the ideal of a traditional Buddhist monastic
community that has been re-interpreted and re-structured into the Newar Buddhist \textit{sāṅgha} and \textit{vihāra}, as we know it today.

\textbf{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 \textit{sāṅgha}; and two, optional higher Tantric initiation. In both cases, the accessibility to the Tantric initiations are defined by caste.

\textit{"Empowerment of the Tantric Teacher": Life-Cycle Initiation of Vajrācāryas}

In addition to his role as “monk”, a Vajrācārya is the Tantric priest \textit{par excellence}. In addition to the “making of the monk”, the life-cycle ritual \textit{ācāluegū} confers the Vajrācārya his ritual status Tantric priest through the five empowerments (\textit{pañcābhiśekha}). 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 (\textit{kalaśa abhiśekha}), with which the initiate is ritually purified; the Crown Empowerment (\textit{mukuta abhiśekha}), in which he is wears Panca Jina crown, as a symbol of the Enlightenment process; the Vajra Empowerment (\textit{vajra abhiśekha}) in
which he is given the vajra, the symbol of śunya-tā; 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 Cakrasaṃvara, and allow him to function as the Tantric priest in the āgāmi shrine.

Higher Tantric Initiations: Dīkṣā

Subsequent higher initiations called dīkṣā/dekhā provide further empowerments into the maṇḍala of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi, although other Heruka deities such as Hevajra/Nairatmā or Yogācāra/Jñānaabhisambhata are invoked during the initiation. 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. 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. Once taken, the dikṣā meditation must be strictly observed every day. Especially for the lay community of the Tulādhars, dikṣā permits the males to be eligible for special rites performed after death to ensure better rebirth. For the saṅgha members, receiving dikṣā is required in order to participate in the esoteric rituals performed at the Tantric āgāra shrine (either one’s personal āgāra or the bāhā āgāra) or during life-cycle rites such as kumārī pūjā. The higher initiation pūjā is performed in the āgāra shrines of the bāhās.

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 dikṣā, the women are given primacy and they must complete their respective ritual procedures before the men. During the empowerment ceremony, the women are said to be emotionally expressive and more likely to be dancing and shaking, possessed by the sakti of goddess Vajravārahi. 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala is an initiation to a yogini maṇḍala, the women serve as central generative agent into the Cakrasaṃvara 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 dikṣā that are done in the secret āgamā 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 kvāhpāh dyah 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 āgam pūjās and include the deities of the Anuttara Yoga Tantras, of which the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala is part. These esoteric rituals are performed in secret and are participated in by the initiated members of the Buddhist saṅgha.
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 āgamā 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, Vajrayogini, and Guhyesvarī. The most esoteric of these categories are the inner (abhyantara) deities and refer specifically to the highly esoteric Heruka-class deities of the āgāṃ shrines, such as Cakrasamvara/Vajravarāhi, Yogāmvara/Jñānaḍākini, 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 Kā Bāhā's visual imagery, I will discuss the core iconographic imagery in relation to the principal caitya, kvāhpāḥ dyah, and the āgamā 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
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 bahi 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 Nyenma tradition in Tibet.

3 See John Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of the Kathmandu Valley for an extensive survey of bāhās and bahis.

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 bahis in Kathmandu.

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


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

9 Inscriptions at Jyābā Bahi (N.S. 772), Guita Bahi (N.S. 778), Cikan Bahi (N.S. 735), Cithun Bahi (N.S. 791) refer to the shrine image as sri gāndhuri bhāṭṭāraka. 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, Hyumattal, Gana Bāhā, and Thām Bahi have yielded ancient sculptures belonging to the Lichchavi period. Similarly, in Patan the eastern side of the city has yielded many of the known pre-Lichchavi sculptures dating to the first-second centuries CE. It is at these very areas that the bahis are located.

11 For oral history of Yampi Bahi and Konti Bahi, 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 bahi is also ritually associated with the bringing of Rāto Mātyendranāth to the Valley.

14 When I went to Cā Bahi in February 1998, there were major reconstruction 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/bahi variants of a later date.

* Unless otherwise noted, the readings of the dates are my own.

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

For example, an inscription of N.S. 635 (1515 C.E.) in Gita Bahi, Patan refers to “brahmācārya-bhikṣu, Śrījkarharāja and his wife Manamāyi.” See D.R. Regmi, Medieval Nepal, Part III, 104.

Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 515.

Locke, “Unique Features of Newar Buddhism”, The Buddhist Heritage, 94.

In Kathmandu, one “Vajrācārya” priest from Makhā Bahi serves as the priest for all bāhīs. In Patan, the twenty-five bāhīs are divided into two groups: The first group of ten bāhīs is served by one “Vajrācārya” from Jyā Bahi, and the second group of fifteen by the “Vajrācārya” priests from Naka Bahi, where they receive their acā lugeṇa initiation. They are called vajrabhikṣu. In Patan, they do not use the term, “Buddhācārya / Baudhācārya”, as do the priests in Kathmandu. See Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal.

Personal interview with Tantramuni Brahmācārya Bhikṣu from I Bahi, Patan. Scholars have also remarked that the bāhī saṅgha are considered by the bāhī 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.


In some Patan bāhās, the actual shrine is above the digī, and not directly above the kvāhpā dyaḥ shrine, such as in Bu Bahā, Bhinche Bahā etc.

Wright, History of Nepal, 158.

Personal communication with Baddr Ratna Vajrācārya. He served as the main ritual specialist for bāhā consecrations in the contemporary context.

Personal communication from Ratna Kāji Vajrācārya. See also Ratna Kāji Vajrācārya, Yeṅ Deya Baudha Puja Kriyā va Ḥalaṇjvalaṇ for rituals related to bāhās construction.


Dhanavajra Vajrācārya, Licchavi Kākā Abhilekha, Preface, no page number.

Dhanavajra Vajrācārya, Licchavi Kākā Abhilekha, 548-62. For an English translation, see also Dilli Raman Regmi, Inscriptions of Ancient Nepal.

Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 534.

Although I was permitted to see the caitya, photography was not allowed. The caitya 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.

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

While stūpas inherently symbolize Śākyamuni’s relics, many small stūpas were also erected as votive caityas for monks.

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

See discussion of branch bāhās in Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 9-10.

Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 229.

Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 140-141.

Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 41-42.

Aki Bahā, also belonging to the Pradhāns, is a branch of Kvā Bahā that extensively donated begging bowls, now exhibited during Guṇa. Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 48.
In the Tibetan tradition, the term *iṣṭadevata/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 *iṣṭadevata* or *kula devata* (“family deity”). However, in the Newar Buddhist context, one is born into the lineage deity relationship.

The term *kvāhpāḍa dyah* is a popular abbreviation of the word “kvāhcāpala dyah”, meaning “guardian of the sangha”. The term *kvāhpāḍa āju*, “guardian grandfather/elder,” is also used in Patan. The *kvāhpāḍa dyah* is considered part of the *sangha*. Ritual offering given to the elders (āju) of the sangha often include the three deities: the *kvāhpāḍa dyah*, the *āgam dyah*, and the *dīgu dyah*.

In a mixed Vajrācārya and Śākyasyaṅgha, it is not the senior āju that is the Cakreśvara, but Cakreśvara must be the seniormost Vajrācārya empowered to perform the pūjās to Cakrasaṅvara and Vajravarāhī, the most common āgam deities. In a Śākyasyaṅgha, as in Uku Bāhā, the senior elder alone performs the āgam pūjā, although the Vajrācāryas from Bu Bāhā are invited to perform *homa* rituals.

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

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.

Although the goddess is popularly known as “Vajrayogini”, her proper identification among the four *yoginis* of the Valley is Khadgayogini.

Locke notes that even when his informants identify the lineage deity as Vajrayogini from Śāṅkhu, the main lineage pūjā, however, is offered to the caitya at Gum Bāhā, while pūjā is also offered to Vajrayogini.

See Chapter 7 for discussion of the *pitha-devatās*.

Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, 238.

This concept of “bringing” deities in *kalaśas* were alluded to by the ritual specialists.

Of particular significance are the *Aṣṭamātrikā pithas* in Bhaktapur city, whose *dyocheē* are found in the center of the city.

Because the physical location of these powerful *pithas* periphery of the cities, scholars have often tended to emphasize the significance and presence of the *pitha-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.

As mentioned in Chapter One, anthropologists such as Declan Quegley, 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 *mandala*, 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 peripheral boundaries. See Robert Levy, *Mesocosm;* Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*.

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 of 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.

59 Hemraj Śākyā, Rudravarna Mahavihara, 13.
60 Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 120.
61 See Ratnakāji Vajrācārya, Kalasaścana Pūjā Vidhi.
64 Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 262.
65 Ratnakāji Vajrācārya, Newāh: Sanskara Sanskrityā Tāhcāh, 188. Interestingly, Tāmrakara are also included in this classification as Buddhists.
66 One of my key teachers from Kathmandu, Badri Ratna Vajrācārya, known locally as "Badrīgarjha" dedicated most of his services for the benefit of the lay community, including organizing the higher initiations of Cakrasamvarā/Vajrāvārahi.
67 Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 43.
68 The Thirty-Six Šaivism worship performed in Bījeshvari in 1982 included four initiated Tāmrakara couples.
69 Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 407.
70 Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 403.
71 The relationship with Newar Buddhism and the mātrkās of the Valley will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.
72 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.
73 See Locke, Karunāmaya, for rituals related to Jana Bāhā's nitīa pūja and its connections to the Seto Mātysendranāth temple. Also, see Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, regarding rituals in Kā Bāhā, Patan and the various initiation rituals.
74 See Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest for details of the initiation rituals.
75 Herākāji Vajrācārya, ed., Saiva-ra-daya Daśami (Disi) Pūjā Vidhi Pustakām, introduction (no page number).
76 Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal. 11.
77 Niels Gutschow, The Nepalese Caiya: 1500 Years of Buddhist Votive Architecture in the Kathmandu Valley, 75.
78 See Locke, Karunāmaya: The Cult of Avalokiteśvara-Mātysendranāth in the Kathmandu Valley.
80 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.
81 See David Gellner, Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest for discussion of the Newar Buddhist ideology of the "Three Ways": Śrāvakayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna.
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.

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

Generally, the gift includes husked and unhusked rice, grains, or sweets. Gellner states that the term, pañcadāna is etymologically related to the word puñya-ja (merit-boiled rice), pinda-ja (balls of boiled rice) or paṇḍīřu-ja (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.

During the Dharmaḥatū pūjā that I offered at the digi of Ha Bāhā, the senior members were offered dāna at the end of the ceremony.

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

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 dikṣā to Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi that was performed by Āśā Kāji Vajrācārya, who officiated as main priest in the ritual. See Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 280-288.

In 1995, dikṣā 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 Cakrasamvara dikṣā, which involved a seclusion of fourteen day for all the initiates.

Lewis, The Tuladhars of the Kathmandu, 239.

There is an association in Kathmandu called “Mahāsaṃvara Smārtha Samāj” for the initiates who have received dikṣā, that holds week-long esoteric rituals at Ākāśa Yogini Temple at Bijeswari. In 1982, there was a Thirty-Six Saṃvara Worship, in which 317 people participated. See Mahāsambhar Chaitīsamat Pūjāyā Riport (Kathmandu: Vijesvari Bihār Sudhār Samiti, N.S 1102). For summary of pūjā, see also Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 305-306.

Other less elaborate initiations of Caṇḍamahārāsana, particularly important for those Vajrācāryas who are Tantric healers, (vaidya) may also be taken. In fact, a distinction is made between the Caṇḍamahārāsana initiation based on the Karavīra [Caṇḍamahārāsana] Tantra as ācāryā kāye “receiving initiation of Acāla” and the Cakrasamvarās initiation, based on the Saṃvarodaya Tantra as dekha kāye “receiving dikṣā [i.e. Cakrasamvara / Vajravārāhi]” . See Ratnakāji Vajrācārya, Newāh Samskāra Samskṛtiyā Tāhā (Cultural Heritage of the Newara), 17.

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.

These terms may also be applied to a *mandala*, in which *abhyantara* refers to the innermost house or center of the *mandala*. *Abhyantara* is also referred to the inner shrine of the *āgam*.* 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.
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CHAPTER 3

KVĀ BĀHĀ AS ARCHETYPE:
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 Cakrasamvara Mañḍala 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 façade with the exquisite silver torana, reflecting the generous patronage of the large population of sangha 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. 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 kvāhpāḥ dyah, and the āgam̃ shrine.

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Among the most well-preserved monuments in the Valley, Kvä Bähā provides optimum conditions for detailed iconographic study. While the damaged or abraded wooden figures found in many other bähās make thorough visual analyses virtually impossible, in contrast, the primary iconographic documents at Kvä Bähā, such as torānas 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.

Kvä Bähā has the largest saṅgha of any bähā 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 bähā. Historically, a large portion of Kvä Bähā’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 Dhāvkās and Khicāgumās of Nāgdbhā, 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 Nāmasaṅgiti Mañjuśrī in the northeast courtyard wall was established in 1985 by the Nāmasaṅgiti Bhajan Khala, a group that is responsible for the daily chanting of the Nāmasaṅgiti 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 dyahpāla 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 (bahi 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 *Bhāskara-deva Saṃskārita Hiranyavarna Mahāvihāra* or “Hiranyavarna [Golden-Colored] Mahāvihāra founded/reconstructed by Bhāskaradeva.” Because the Sanskrit term *saṃskārita* 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. Based on ample inscriptive evidence that predate the eighteenth century, scholars have attributed the reconstruction, not the foundation, of Kvā Bāhā to Bhāskaradeva in the Transitional period. 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. 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 Thakuri 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 Acharyas, became Banras, and lived in Gnakhā-chok [Nhyaka Chowk] in Lalitpattan [Patan]. The Bhiksus of Devapatan [Deopatan] and Chabahil 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 [kvāhpāḥ dyah] of Piṅgala Bāhā. They accordingly went to see, and found the god buried under the ruins of the Piṅgala Bāhāl, and brought him to Patan. ... Then they took the god to Gnakhā-chok, but he [kvāhpāḥ 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 Āgām-devatās, just as they were in Piṅgala 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”.

Wright’s Chronicle alludes to some key points about the foundation of Kvā Bāhā. It states that the kvāhpāḥ 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 kvāhpāḥ dyah at a new place necessitated the building of Kvā Bāhā, and the bāhā
was, in fact, a royal foundation. Considering these local traditions, the use of the term “samskārita” may be deliberately ambiguous. Hence, read as a śleṣa or play on words, the Sanskrit name Bhāskaradeva Samskārita may be translated both as “founded” and/or “reconstructed” by Bhāskaradeva. In other words, while the structure may have been built for the first time by Bhāskaradeva, the kvāhpāḥ dyah 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. 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. Atiśa’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 Atiśa’s visit, and provides compelling evidence for introduction of new methodologies as practices in northeastern India.
In its present form, Kvä Bähä epitomizes much of Newar Buddhist bähä architecture, as structures that have complex histories and sites that continue to be refurbished and reconstructed through time. As in other bähäs throughout the Valley, the twentieth-century manifestation of Kvä Bähä, 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 Kvä Bähä, 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 Kvä Bähä 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. Familiarity with the structure and a detailed examination of its art are necessary not only to identify the core iconographic elements at Kvä Bähä, but, more importantly, to analyze the unified iconographic program of bähä 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 kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine; and, the Tantric āgam shrine. Unique to Kvā Bāhā, however, an additional āgam 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 mandalic 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 kvāhpāḥ dyah 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 maṇḍala, surmounted by a vajra, is inscribed and dated N.S. 1023 (1903 C.E.). The ritual spaces are marked
in the courtyard, including the *yajñakunda* for fire rituals on the west side in front of the *kwāhpāh dyah* 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). 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*, Varuṇa. According to the sacred history of the site, Varuṇa and his wife Varuṇavatī lived here near the *caitya*.  

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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. 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/fastig related to Amoghapāśa Lokesvara called Aṣṭami 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. For the Patan sangha, 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 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. Furthermore, the *caitya* also serves as the lineage deity (*digu dyah*) of the entire *sangha* 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 *sangha*.

The local history of the site and *vamsāvalis* emphasize the basic concepts of *bāhā* construction, in particular the importance of the central *caitya* and the *kvāhpāh dyah* shrine. The narratives begin with establishing the origins and sacrality of the principal *caitya* at Kvā Bāhā and the subsequent reinstallation of the *kvāhpāh dyah* 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
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 Varuṇāvati, 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 kvāhpāḥ dyah of Piṅgala vihāra.

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The local legend continues the narrative of the construction of Kwā Bahā 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 Śri 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 Varunavatī 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 Hiranyaka had lived there and worshipped the caitya, it was named Hiranyavarna 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 puñhi [full moon], a yajña [fire-ceremony] was to be performed by the guthi, and in the shrine of the āgam devatā, Yogamvara, a secret ratripūjā was performed on each full moon, at which time the gods of the ten bhūmis (Dasabhūmiśvara) would be present."

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, kwāhpaḥ dyah, and āgam 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
Svayambhx 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 bahis.

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 kvāhpāh dyah shrine is raised about two
feet from the recessed courtyard and accessed through a small flight of stairs.

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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 Simhanāda 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 bija 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 Aṣṭasahasrika Prajñāpāramitā text during the morning pūjās.

The kvāhpāḥ dyah houses a large silver image of Śākyamuni, facing east (Fig. 3.11). 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 torana iconography suggests that he may also be identified as the Jina Buddha Akṣobhya, who demonstrates the ādarsajñāna of Śākyamuni. Above the shrine doorway is one of the most exquisite silver toranas in the Valley (Fig. 3.12). It is inscribed and dated N.S. 1021 in the reign of King Prthvi Bir Bikram Śāha (1881-1911 CE). According to the
inscription, this *toraṇa* replaces the original seventeenth-century *toraṇa* that is now placed above the eastern entrance doorway.\(^{21}\)

The iconography of the *toraṇa* is unusual and provides clues to the identity of the main *kvāhpāḥ dyah* image. The center figure on the silver *toraṇa* 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 *toraṇa*’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 *dhyānāmudrā*, 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. Thus, the primary identity of the central Buddha inbhūmisparsāmundrā 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 āgām 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

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deicts 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 Vāgiśvara Mañjughoṣa as the central deity. As will be shown from other examples at kvāhpāh dyah shrine, the recurrent iconographic theme on the shrine façade is that of the Dharmadhātu Mañḍala.

Although the second floor does not contain the āgam shrine as in many other bāhās, the shrine façade still follows the standard architectural designs, characteristic of āgams. Specifically, the five-fold window generally indicates the presence of the āgam above the kvāhpāh dyah 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 Śaḍakṣarī Lokeśvara, shown in his four-armed form, displaying the mālā, lotus, and cintāmanī at his chest. The entire group represents the popular Buddha/Dharma/Saṅgha iconography, with Prajñāpāramitā symbolizing the Dharma, Śaḍakṣarī 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 Kvä 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 dyah 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 crowning element of the shrine facade is a three-tiered chattras. The gilt-copper roofs each have a row of Dipāṅkara heads on the edge (an iconographic element typical of Newar Buddhist architecture). At the corners of the roof are the hanging plaques called hālampo, 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 Āgam Shrines: East Courtyard Wall and Exterior Courtyard

The third essential component of bāhā architecture is the āgam shrine, and Kvā Bāhā is unique in having two Tantric āgam shrines: one, dedicated to Yogāmvara/Jñānaḍākinī and the other to Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhi (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 āgam shrines. As the esoteric component of bāhā architecture, access to these shrines and their rituals are restricted to the initiated elders (āju) of the
śaṅgha. According to elders at Kvā Bāhā, the additional āgamī was necessary due to the large number of śaṅgha members.

Āgamī Shrine to Yogāṁvara and Jñānadākinī

The primary āgamī is that of Yogāṁvara/Jñānadākinī 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 āgamī above the kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine, the Tantric shrine at Kvā Bāhā is located at the digi, which is the continuous open hall suitable for the rituals involving large numbers.24 The actual shrine to Yogāṁvara/Jñānadākinī is found in the inner (abhyantara) room, where only the senior-most ājū is allowed to enter. Only the ten senior-most elders (ājus) called Daśapāramitā ("Ten Perfections") are allowed to serve in the Yogāṁvara/Jñānadākinī shrine.

The imagery found on the exterior of the Tantric āgamī 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 āgamī 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
the central figure, whose iconographic presence is generally found in the toraṇas leading to the āgamī shrines and alludes to the esoteric nature of the shrine.\textsuperscript{25}

The upper portion of the second gateway serves as the exterior/eastern facade of the Tantric āgamī shrine to Yogāmvara/Jñānaḍākīnī (See Fig. 3.14). The esoteric imagery is particularly emphasized on the second level of the exterior facade. The āgamī is marked on the exterior by the characteristic five-fold windows (Fig. 3.16) found on āgamī façade. The window niches, similar to the second floor of the kvāhpāḥ dyāḥ 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 āgamī shrine. As Gellner rightly observes, Vajrasattva is the “exoteric face” of the esoteric deities.\textsuperscript{26}

An elaborately carved two-storied cupola tops the āgamī sanctum proper. Characteristic of the esoteric Tantric methodologies, female imagery is prominently emphasized on the second level āgamī 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, Uśā and Pratyuśā, 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 āgam ūt shrine.

**Tantric Āgam ūt to Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi**

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 Baidyah Bāhā, are also here. The second āgam ūt, dedicated to Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhi and constructed in 1692 C.E., is located on the far western courtyard wall of Ilā Nani.28 To attend to the second āgam ūt shrine, Kvā Bāhā has a subsidiary group of
twenty-elders (*sthāvira*), who sustain the rituals in the Cakrasamvara āgamā. The āgamā shrine is topped by a shrine-like cupola, indicating the presence of the āgamā deity.

Characteristic of āgamā shrines, the Cakrasamvara āgamā is housed on the second floor, again inside the digi. On the lower floor is the exoteric shrine to Caṇḍamahārośana, who is popularly considered a manifestation of Mahākāla. In the Newar Buddhist context, Caṇḍamahārośana is also conflated with the protective deity, Śankaṭā, who is part of the nine constellations (*Navagraha*s). The Caṇḍamahārośana 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, Kvä Bähä 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 Kvä Bähä (See Fig. 3.6). The doorway has standard iconographic features of bähä entrances, such as the large male and female lions and the pair of the gate-guardians, Ganeśa 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 torāṇa, each holding a monk's staff and begging bowl.

The torāṇas at Kvä Bähä are significant for deciphering the iconographic program. It is noteworthy that the torāṇa imagery becomes increasingly more esoteric as one progresses into the interior courtyard. The exterior stone torāṇa 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 Mānuṣi Buddhas. The iconography of five figures is similar to that of the Pañca Jina Buddha,
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 bodhyāngi mudrā, Amitābha in dhyānamudrā, Akṣobhya in bhūmisparsamudrā, Vairocana in dhammacakramudrā, 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 (pāṭī) 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. The south wall (viewer’s left) has an unused water-tank, which was traditionally an important part of the bāhā structure.

The east wall façade 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 façade of the Tantric āgāmī shrine of Yogāṃvara, 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 torana, similar in design to the one on the exterior gateway, is placed over the door. The torana 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 Mānuṣi Buddha, which are iconographically identical to the Jina Buddhas of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. While the exterior torana had Vairocana as the center figure, here, it is Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇjughoṣa, 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 Maṇjuśrī, as described in the Niśpannayogāvalī.33 As in the exterior torana, here too, the top center figure is Vajrasattva (flanked by Maṇjuśrī 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 Maṇjughoṣa.

The torana 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.\textsuperscript{34}

**South Courtyard Wall**

Unlike the upper level of the east courtyard wall that houses the āgamā 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 Saṃyak 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 Lokesvara

On the upper level, the north wall has a Tibetan-style shrine (gumbā) to Amoghapāśa Lokesvara (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 Kvä 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 Kvä Bāhā take turns to act as dyahpāla 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 torāṇas, 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 Vasundhāra. Among the Vajrasattva shrines that I have surveyed in Patan, three deities—Vajrasattva, Mañjuśrī, and Vasundhāra—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 Vasundhāra is the exoteric aspect of Vajravārāhi, the main deity in the āgām 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 āgām shrine that are never displayed openly. 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 kvāhpāh dyah
shrine; and, a Tantric āgam shrine, dedicated to the Heruka-class deities. In examining the visual imagery of Kvā Báhā 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 Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala. These themes have direct correlation to three structural components, namely the central caitya, the kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine, and the āgam.

At Kvā Báhā, 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 Báhā’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 dyah shrine’s visual imagery
- To illustrate that the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala iconography is related to esoteric nature of the āgam shrine
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 mandalic form replicating the process to Enlightenment, with the four Jina Buddhas placed in the cardinal directions. 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 Sukhāvati 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. 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 manḍalic space with Svayambhū as the emanator of its sacred geography, similarly, the bāhās are similarly a manḍalic 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 Itum 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 Sīgha Bāhā, Kathmandu, is specifically called Kāthesimbhu, 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
Kirtipur (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/bahi’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 dyah) 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. The main festival of the bāhā is during the Mukhāśṭhamī 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 hypostasis 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 generator 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 MANḌALA ICONOGRAPHY

The second major iconographic theme that occurs in Kvā Bāhā as well as in most bāhās in the Valley is the manḍala of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṅjughoṣa, a meditational cycle of an esoteric form of Maṅjuśrī. As the preeminent manḍala of Newar Buddhism, the Dharmadhātu iconography appears repeatedly in various forms. It is sometimes found as a complete manḍala 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 Nīṣpannayogāvalī and Vajrāvalī 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 Maṇjuśrī known as Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇjughoṣa. As Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, “Speech Lord of the Dharma Essence”, Maṇjuśrī, in his form as Maṇjughoṣa (“Beautiful Speech”), is the generator of the maṇḍalic space. According to textual sources, specifically the Nīṣpannayogāvalī, 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 ghanțā 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, Vajradhāma, 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 Aḵṣobhya in the eastern quadrant, holding a sword, vajra, arrow, and ankūśa 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 Maṇjuśrī’s attribute, the sword, in one of their hands and are conceived as facing the progenitor of the maṇḍala, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇjughoṣa.

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
mandala 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 kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine façade; (2) in the torana 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 kvāhpāḥ 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 Mandala Iconography as Strut Figures on Kvāhpāh Dyāh Shrine

The most important iconographic theme of kvāhpāh dyāh façade in the west shrine wall relates to the Dharmadhātu Manḍala. 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 Manḍala. 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 prajñā or Buddhaśakti, 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 Manḍala. 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.\textsuperscript{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 kvāhpāḥ dyāḥ strut figures, was firmly established by the mid-seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{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 Torana Iconography**

_Toranās_ are significant components in Nepali architecture, as they provide clues to the iconographic program of the structure as well to the identity of the enshrined deity. At Kvā Bahā, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is a major theme of the _torana_ iconography, beginning with the exterior _toranās_ and moving into the interior space, just as one would enter a maṇḍala. To understand the _bāhā_ as a *mandalic* 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 _torana_ iconography.

1. **Second exterior gateway torana, depicting the esoteric form of the Seven Mānuṣī Buddhas.** The central deity of the _torana_ is Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇjughoṣa, surrounded by the Jinas of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Above the _torana_, 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 Mānuṣī Buddhas in the

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

2. **Four toranas over the doorways of the enshrined Svayambhū Caitya.** Each torana in the cardinal directions depicts the Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala–Ākṣobhya, 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 maṇḍala'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. **South courtyard wall. Torana over the west end doorway.** The torana depicts Amoghasiddhi from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and is identified by his Garuḍa 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, ghāntā, and display the tarjanimudrā. He is surrounded by his Vajrabodhisattvas—Vajrakarma (east), Vajrarakṣā (south),
Vajrayakṣa (west), and Vajrasandhi (north), according to the
descriptions given in the *Nīspannayogāvalī*. At the top center
position is Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara Mañjughoṣa, the emanator of
the *maṇḍala*.

4. **South courtyard wall. Torana over the east end.** The *torana* depicts
Ratnasambhava from the Dharmadhātu Mañḍala, 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, *chattrā*, and
a *ghanṭā*. He is surrounded by his Vajrabodhisattvas—Vajrarañña
(east/lower left), Vajrathejas (south/upper left), Vajraketu
(west/upper right), and Vajrāhāsa (north/lower right), according to
the descriptions given in the *Nīspannayogāvalī*. At the top center
position is Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara Mañjughoṣa, the central deity
of the *maṇḍala*.

5. **Exterior west wall. Entrance doorway torana.** The central deity of
the *torana* is a variant of Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara Mañjughoṣa, in
which his identity is conflated with Vajrasattva (Figs. 3.58 and
3.59). 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 *ghañṭā* 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 *torāṇa*. The *torāṇa* is inscribed and dated N.S. 727 (1604 CE). That the exterior *torāṇas* 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. *Torāṇa* above the five-fold windows. Three large *torāṇas* are prominently placed above the niches of the five Jina Buddhas, with the larger one at the center above Vairocana and the two smaller *torāṇas* above the subsequent niches. The center *torāṇa* depicts Śākyamuni surrounded by the Pañca Jinas Buddhas, while the other two *torāṇas* depict the Jinas from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. The first of the subsidiary *torāṇas* 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 ghanṭā 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 āgām shrine suggests an important symbolic relationship between Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the deities of the āgām 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 Maṇjughoṣa as the central figure. The presence of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala over the outer doors of the enshrined cāitya 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 Mandalas of Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara

While the strut figures and toranas 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 Kā 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 Vāgiśvara 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),
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 (Om dharmadhātave namah; dharmadhātu maṇḍala) and the date of consecration to N.S. 984 (1664 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala and of other Heruka class deities is the third core iconographic component. This theme is directly associated with the esoteric Tantric āgamī 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 Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi. Kvā Bāhā’s visual imagery alludes to the highly technical Tantric practices related to the āgamī 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 āgamī shrines, dedicated to the two of the most important Heruka class deities of Newar Buddhism: Yogāṃvara/Jñānaḍākini and Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi. Generally, most bāhās only have one āgamī 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 āgam shrine constitutes the secret and esoteric ("guhyā/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/guhyā/abhyantara "outer/secret/inner" that pertain to the nature of the visual imagery, refer not only to the hierarchy of ritual, but also correlates to the hierarchy of the visual symbolism found in Newar Buddhist architecture. The esoteric nature of the āgam 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 āgam shrine at Kvā Bāhā is dedicated to Yogāṃvara/Jñānaḍākini. In contrast to its usual place on the second floor over the kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine, the Yogāṃvara āgam is located on the second floor of the east courtyard wall, directly opposite the kvāhpāḥ dyah (Fig. 3.63). The shrine is accessed through the doorway at the south end, with a toraṇa depicting Śākyamuni/Akṣobhya, surrounded by the four Jīna Buddha and Vajrasattva at the top center. Inside the upstairs āgam, there are two separate rooms: an outer secret room (guhyā) and inner (abhyantara) shrine room. The categories of esotericism—"secret" versus "inner"—are also manifested in the physical layout of the āgam 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, Vajravārāhi. 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 āgamī 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 āgamī shrine. The imagery alludes to the esoteric nature of the āgamī through symbolic elements, without directly representing the highly secret deities. Characteristic of the Anuttara Yoga Tantra methodology practiced in the āgamī 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 Vajravārāhi, who is the archetypal deity of the āgamī shrine. Although in theory, the highly esoteric deities of the āgamī shrines are never represented in public, the iconography related to the āgamī employ aspects of these deities that may be displayed in
public. In the esoteric nature of the āgāṁ iconography, Kumārī represented by her crown, and Vasundharā both symbolically allude to the presence of āgāṁ 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 Śakti, the principal deity of the āgāṁ shrine. 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 āgāṁ shrine. Nonetheless, a contextual reading of the imagery indicate that the Anuttara Yoga iconography, specifically of the Cakrasamāvara Maṇḍala, is a dominant theme related to the āgāṁ shrines.

The second āgāṁ shrine at Kvā Bāhā is dedicated to Cakrasamāvara/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 āgāṁ shrine. Among the twelve strut figures on the exterior, the first and the last struts depict the female bird faced gate-guardians from the Cakrasamāvara Maṇḍala (Fig. 3.65). The remaining ten struts depict the Daśakrodhas, shown as terrific angry deities holding a skullcup (kapāla) and flaying knife (karttrkā). The Daśakrodhas, in the context of the āgāṁ
shrines and the ritual performed there, are the esoteric aspects of the ten Dikpālas.  

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 āgāṃ shrines.

Conceptualized as a progressive hierarchy of soteriological practices the three core iconographic components—Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara/Yogāṃvara iconography. Each
of these themes relates to the structural components, namely, the principal vivifying cāitya, kṣāhṭāḥ dyah shrine, and the āgamā 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 Mahācāitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. In this understanding, I propose that the Svayambhū Mahācāitya 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 strūt and toraṇa iconography of the kvāhpāḥ dyāḥ shrine. As both the principal caitya and maṇḍala are consistently found in the bāhās/bahīs throughout the Valley, 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
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 Nīspannayogāvalī.

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). 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 ghanṭā 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 mandalic 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). At the top center position, directly above Akṣobhya, is Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇjughoṣa, the esoteric form of Maṇjuśrī 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 torana 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, Vajratajas, 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 cintāmani 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 torana 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
other torana, Amitabha is surrounded in the outer circle by his kula Vajra Bodhisattvas—Vajradharma, Vajratikṣa, 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 Amitabha. In his second pair of hands is a vajra and ghanṭā. 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 mandalic pattern, the torana 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, ghanṭā, 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 *torana* iconography of Kvä Bähä'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 Vāgiśvara 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 Vāgiśvara Maṅjughoṣa, who generates the entire *maṇḍalīc* space. However, at Kvä Bähä, it is *svayambhū caitya* that takes the place of the central deity Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara, 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 Maṅjuśrī unequivocally signifies that they are interchangeable. In other words, there is a symbolic identity is implied between the *svayambhū caitya* and Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara Maṅjughoṣa.

This understanding may be best clarified visually when comparing the inner core of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the iconographic program of the Kvä Bähä'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 *maṇḍalīc* space of the temple, but the entire sacred space of the bähä itself. This conception of the *svayambhū caitya* Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala as generator and vivifier of sacred
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 maṇḍalīc 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 Maṇḍala) can be transferred to the larger macrocosmic level (Svayambhū Mahācaitya = Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala). The symbolic identity of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya and Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇjughoṣa 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 Maṇḍala 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 Vāgiśvara”, “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 Vāgiśvara” 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 Maṉjuśrī. In the statement of intent (sāṅkalpa) that is recited before any Buddhist ritual is performed, the invocation describes the Valley as a maṇḍala “presided by Śri Heruka Khagānana [Guhyesvarī] and Śri Svayambhū Caitya Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara.”69 Similarly, the Svayambhū/Dharmadhātu/Maṉjuśrī equation also becomes familiar theme in Newari devotional songs. In many of the religious songs (bhañjan) 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

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Vāgīśvara". In other cases, the popular recensions of the Svayambhū Purāna printed in Newari 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 Nāmasaṅgiti Tantra and the Kālacakrā Tantra, which describe him as a fully Enlightened Buddha (samyaksambodhi 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 (puṇya) 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 mandala that demonstrates the Enlightenment process, manifested by the transcendental knowledges of the Jina Buddhas. In other words, a mandala 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 Aksobhya, 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 Aksobhya (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, Maṇjuśrī 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 Maṇjuśrī, the central deity of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is, in all respects, identical with Vairocana, as a fully Enlightened Buddha. Textual descriptions in the Niśpannayogāvalī⁷⁸ and in the Dharmadhātu Kriyā Vidhi⁷⁹ substantiate this association, as Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇjughoṣa is variously described as bhagavān mahāvairocana maṇjughoṣa “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 Maṇjughoṣa= Ādi Buddha

Vairocana = Maṇjuśrī

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 Buddhism, 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
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. 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 kvāhpāh dyah shrine façade.

2. ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE KVĀHPĀH DYAH STRUT FIGURES

The iconography of the struts on the shrine façade helps clarify why the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala serves as a perfect visual metaphor to explain the
relationship between Svaayambhu 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 bāha 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 follows: 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 Nispānnyayogāvalī. 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 ghanṭā, with his principal hands in vajrahumākāramudrā. 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 Nispānna-yogāvalī. 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 Maṇjuśrī 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 Āryamaṇjuśrī Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra, which praises the qualities of Maṇjuśrī 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 Maṇjuśrī as a fully Enlightened Buddha. To explain Maṇjuśrī’s qualities as the totality of Buddhahood in the form of Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara Maṇjughoṣa, the text describes Maṇjuśrī as
manifesting the six Buddha families (sat 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, Maṇjuśri 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 ghanta, 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 Maṇjuśri, the personification of doctrinal text, the Ārya Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra (Fig. 3.78). As a Fully Enlightened Being who is equated with Vairocana,
Namasaṅgiti’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 Nāmasaṅgiti 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 Nāmasaṅgiti 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 Sampuṭa Tantra Vajrasattva with the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala Jinas indicates a conflation between Vajrasattva and Mañjuśrī.
Specifically, the *Niśpannayogāvālī* articulates the relationship of Mañjughoṣa and Vajrasattva in these terms:\(^{86}\)

\[
Iha \ vairocana \ svabhāva \ mañjughoṣa \ suviśuddhadhammadhātu \\
jñānātmā \ svabhā \ vajrasattvena \ mudita
\]

Thus, Mañjughoṣa is the essence of Vairocana and the self of the *sviśuddhadhammadhātu* knowledge, rejoicing [in sexual embrace] with Vajrasattva, who belongs to/arises from his [Mañjughoṣa's] inherent nature (svabhā)."\(^{86}\)

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 Kāv 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 *Niśpannayogāvālī* 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 Mañjughoṣa'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 *Niśpannayogāvālī*.\(^{87}\)
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 Maṇjuśrī. 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, Maṇjughoṣa/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/Maṇjughoṣa, 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. These very cakras are integral to the structural form of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala, in which the three circles that surrounded Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi 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". 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 Cakrasamvara 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 Cakrasamvara 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 Nīspannayogāvalī. The attributes vary slightly from the textual description, and given the contextual understanding, perhaps suggests that this iconographic variant is unique to Newar Buddhism. 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 Āstamahābodhisattvas in the Mahāyāna tradition. Furthermore, each figure also holds the vajra
and *ghanṭā* 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 *ghanṭā*, in a characteristic manner, with the *ghanṭā* 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 *Sampuṭa Tantra*, the fourth level Vajrasattva is depicted as an eight-armed figure. He holds his main attributes, the *vajra* against his chest and *ghanṭā* 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 Niśpannayogāvalī, 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 Bahā strut is virtually identical to the Mañjuvajra Maṇḍala is found in the Niśpannayogāvalī (No. 20) called “Forty-Three Personifications of Mañjuvajra”.92 Just as Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa was described in the Niśpannayogāvalī, 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 (svabhā).50

For a buddhological interpretation, the Mañjuvajra Maṇḍala (#20) is significant in further exploring Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara Madjughoṣa'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 Āryamaṇjuśrī 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 Maṇjuśrī'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 prajñā, who likewise, is identical with himself.
(pradhānabhujābhyām svāprajñālingīto). 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. In the Guhyasamāja, Mañjuśrī'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."

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. 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 Mañjuśrī 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 Cakrasaṅgīvara 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 kvāhpāh dyah 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.75 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 gurumandala 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 mandalas 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 Maṇjuśrī and Vajrasattva. Ample textual evidence is found in many of the maṇḍala described in the Niśpannayogāvali, which states that Maṇjuśrī’s manifestation as Maṇjuvajra is assimilated with Vajrasattva. Specifically, Maṇjuvajra is called bhagavān vajrasattvo maṇjuvajra rūpah (“Lord Vajrasattva in the form of Maṇjuvajra”). 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 Maṇjuśrī may help explain the relative hierarchy of the two major maṇḍalas of Newar Buddhist, namely, the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṃvara 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 Vāgiśvara Maṇjughoṣa Maṇḍala is a Vairocana cycle maṇḍala, it is transformed into an Akṣobhya-cycle maṇḍala when Vajrasattva presides, and is thus manifested as the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala in the “secret”
meaning.\textsuperscript{101} This understanding of the meditational practices may be further clarified by the very fact that the descriptions of the Vajrasattva Maṇḍala, both Maṇjuśrī/Vairocana and Vajrasattva/Aksābhya are present in the inner circle, with “Maṇjuśrī rejoicing with the prajña identical with himself (svābhāprajña).” This buddhological interpretation provides a framework to interpret the two major iconographic components of Newar Buddhist art as a hierarchic layering of mandalas, which gets progressively more complex and esoteric. The outward distinction of the hierarchy is expressed in bāhyatā/guhyatā categories, as the exoteric mandalas, such as the Dharmanadhātu Maṇḍala, may be shown in public, while the highly esoteric meditations, such as Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala, are secret and require Tantric initiation.

Although the conflation between Vajrasattva and Maṇjuśrī is already present in Indian Buddhism by the tenth-eleventh century,\textsuperscript{102} the iconographic programs of the Newar Buddhist monasteries clearly indicates that the significance of both Maṇjuśrī and Vajrasattva reflects the core ideological conception of Newar Buddhism. Given that Maṇjuśrī 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 Maṇjuśrī’s authority as the archetype of Tantric teachers, in empowering the Newar Buddhist practitioners into the Heruka-cycle teachings of the
Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala. This ritual context relating to the higher initiations of Cakrasamvara articulates the hierarchical relationship between Dharmadhātu and the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala.

Hierarchy of the Maṇḍalas: Tantric Commentaries on the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and its Relationship to the Cakrasamvara 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 Cakrasamvara maṇḍala, based on the technical Tantric understanding.

As mentioned earlier, the root text of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is the Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra, which states that Maṇjuśrī 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 Maṇjuśrī’s exoteric form, as the Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara, 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 Cakrasamvara (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 (guhyā) meaning of the Nāmasaṅgīti, in the form of the twelve mantras and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, was expounded by Mañjuśrī to the Indian pāṇḍita, Dharmaśrī Mitra. It is the inner or “secret” meaning that relates to the sahaja methodologies of the Heruka-cycle maṇḍala, such as the Cakrasamvara/Vajraśaṅkara.
When I asked Badrīratna Vajrācārya to expound on the meaning of the Nāmasaṅgiti, 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 Raviśrijnāna’s Amṛtakaṇḍika Tippani and its commentarial exegesis, Vibhuticandara’s Amṛtakaṇḍikodyota Nibandha, both commentaries on the Nāmasaṅgiti and a popularly used text in the Newar Buddhist tradition, the secret meaning of the Nāmasaṅgiti’s mantras is associated with Heruka-class yogic meditational practices, such as Cakrasamvara or Yogāmvara. 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:

A Ā I Í U Ú E A I O AU AM AH sthiti hr̥di / Jñānāmūrtir abhamb buddhaḥ buddhāman trayadhvāwartam //

A Ā I Í U Ú E A I O AU AM AH
Stationed in the heart of the Buddhas abiding in the three times,
Am I the Buddha, gnosis embodiment.

Om Vajratikṣṇa dukkhačcheda praṇā jñānāmūrti
Jñānakāya Vāgiśvara arapatana te namah:

OM. Homage to the, Vajratikṣṇa (Diamond Sharp), Dukkhačcheda (Cutting of Suffering) Praṇājñānāmūrti (Embodiment of Insight-Wisdom), Jñānakāya (Knowledge Body), Vāgiśvara (Lord of Speech), Arapacana (Five-Syllabled Mañjuśrī)
In the exoteric reading of the above śloka, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is equated with Vairocanā as the totality of all Buddhahood and his various qualities described as knowledge-body (jnānasattva), embodiment of Insight-Wisdom (prajñājnānamurti), 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 (jnānasattva), whose secret bija are the twelve vowels (āli).

In the esoteric understanding, the bijas represent the twelve bhūmis of the Buddhist cosmology, which in the yogic meditation is visualized as the yogin’s Adamantine Body (vajrakāya). In another reading, the same vowels refer to the twelve physical places of meditation, such as piṭhas, upapiṭhas, caṇḍohas, upacāṇḍohas, kṣetras, and upakṣetras within the yogin’s body. The body is conceived as the dvadasabhūmi. 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. The mantras and their corresponding joys are:
AIU is the ānanda (bliss)
ĀIUI is paramānanda (supreme bliss)
EOAIM is virasamānanda (great bliss)
EIAUAI is sahajānanda (bliss in union)

The commentary also states that when the bodhicitta is in nirmānakāya, 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 (Cakrāsāmvara 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 urna cakravarti (“lord of the urna”); and at the highest cakra is Vajrasattva, who emerges from the thousand petalled lotus as the uṣṇīṣa cakravarti (“lord of the uṣṇīṣa”). It is
at the highest level in union with *samayamudrā* that Vajradhara manifests himself as Heruka forms, such as Cakrasamvara/Vajravarāhī or Yogāmvara/Jñānaḍākini, 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 Vajrāsattva (*saṭ 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 Mañjuśri’s twelve-syllabled *mantra*. The commentary ends by stating that the outer and inner forms of the *Jñānavajra* ("Adamantine Knowledge") i.e., Vāgiśvara, 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 *āgāmi* shrine, as the yogic practices mentioned in the commentary pertain to the Anuttara yoga.

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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 Cakrasamvara 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 Cakrasamvara / Vajravārāhi cycle by Guhyesvarī. This esoteric teaching was subsequently given to Śantikaracārya, who is the first initiated Vajrācārya in Newar Buddhism. The guru lineage tradition in the Cakrasamvara cycle continues in Newar Buddhist practice, as the āgam 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 Guhyesvarī. 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 Cakrasamvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara, Yogāmvara and Hevajra. In the ritual text of the āgam pūjās (Samvarodayah 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 śri Cakrasaṃvara Vajravārāhi, Hevajra Nairātmā, Caṇḍamahāroṣana Dveśavajrī, Yogāmvara Jñānaḍākīni, 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.\(^{39}\)

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 Yogāmvara and Cakrasaṃvara. This relates directly to the Tantric āgam 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala imagery and the rituals of the āgam 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 Vāgiśvara Mañjughoṣa, and Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara and Yogācāra imagery found at Kvā Bāhā.

On the cupola of the Yogācāra 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 āgāmi shrine deities. Here, the kalaśa is shown protected by a chattrā 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, Guhyēśvarī (Fig. 3.80). In Nepal, Guhyēśvarī is, invariably, represented as a kalaśa, symbolizing her generative power. Guhyēśvarī symbolizes the primordial source, as lotus from which Svayambhū Jyotirūpa emerged took its roots at Guhyēśvarī. As mentioned earlier, Gahyeśvarī, as well as the other yogini maṇḍala, are invariably associated with the āgāmi shrine.
Other female deities, specifically Jñānaḍākini, the female counterpart of Yogāmvara, are also symbolized as a kalaśa. In her dyah cheṇ (“god house”) at Asan tole in Kathmandu where the goddess has been invited to reside, Jñānaḍākini is shown as a kalaśa (Fig. 3.81). In her anthropomorphic form, shown on the temple torana, Jñānaḍākini 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 ghanṭā; 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, Jñānaḍākini’s primordial home is at Mhepi and the specific identity of the Kvā Bāhā āgam deity is the Yogāmvara/Jñānaḍākini from Mhepi. Here, the Yogini, alternately known as Mhepi Ajīmā and Māheśvari, is one of the eight Aṣṭamātrkā pīthas. As is typical of the mātrkā pīthas, a natural outcropping of rock, which is self-manifest, represents Jñānaḍākini. At Kvā Bāhā, the āgam deities, Yogāmvara/Jñānaḍākini further reinforce the connections with Svayambhū Mahācaitya, as the Yogāmvara is the kula devatā of the first Vajrācārya of Newar Buddhism, Śāntikarācārya.\(^{11}\)

In the Tantric understanding, the Yogāmvara/Jñānaḍākini cycle meditation is related to the Heruka class Tantras of Akṣobhya, in which the
central deity, Yogāmvara is an emanation of Akṣobhya while Jñānaḍākini is associated with Vairocana. When Yogāmvara and Jñānaḍākini are shown in union, the Niśpannayogāvali also describe Jñānaḍākini as Vajradhāteśvari and Vajravārāhi. A parallel meditational cycle also occurs in the second āgamī shrine at Kvā Bāhā, where the Cakrasāṃvara Maṇḍala is an Akṣobhya cycle, with Cakrasāṃvara as the Akṣobhya cycle and Vajravārāhi as the Vairocana. As the Yoginī class maṇḍala, it is the female principles that are emphasized, and Kvā Bāhā’s āgamī imagery reflects this doctrinal premise. Further, the Newar Buddhist cosmogonic myth, and its connection with the Cakrasāṃvara cycle is alluded to in the Guhyēśvari kalaśa directly below the āgamī shrine (Fig. 3.83). According to the Svayambhū Purāṇa, Guhyēśvari, as the Ādi Śakti, initiates Mañjuśrī into the Tantric practices of Cakrasāṃvara/Vajravārāhi.

In Kvā Bāhā, Yogāmvara/Jñānaḍākini is also closely associated with the Newar Buddhist goddess, Guhyēśvari. There is a close buddhological and hierarchic connection between the two, and especially as āgamī deities. Cakrasāṃvara and Jñānaḍākini are the two most popular āgamī deities. This direct association is symbolically represented at Kvā Bāhā, as the ground floor directly below the āgamī shrine depicts the Guhyēśvari kalaśa. This shows association with Cakrasāṃvara cycle. The inner (abhyantara) room is the shrine to Yogāmvara and Jñānaḍākini, and access to the shrine and
its daily rituals performed is reserved to only the senior-most Vajrācārya of the saṅgha, referred to as Cakresvara (“Lord of the Circle”) or Cāsalāju. The monthly pūjās in the āgam are attended by the ten elders (Daśapāramitā) of the saṅgha on the full moon day, and deviate somewhat from the āgam 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 Cakrasamvara /Yogāmvara 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 Cakrasamvara. 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 cāitya established the symbolic identity between Svayambhū Mahācāitya and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Second, the strūt iconography of the kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine emphasized the concept of the six kulās in contextualizing the preeminence of Vajrasattva. Further, the iconographic program suggested an intimate conceptual association between Maṇjuśrī and Vajrasattva. Third, the Cakrasaṃvara/Yogācāra iconography revealed the themes related to the secret esoteric teachings of the Tantric āgāmī 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 cāitya is symbolically identified with Svayambhū Mahācāitya. The Svayambhū iconography association is based on the premise that the Mahācāitya is the ontological source of Newar Buddhism, specifically in his role as the Ādi Buddha. In this
ideological conception, Svayambhū (and its hypostasis as the principal caitya) functions as the generator and vivifier of the bāhā/bahi’s sacred environment and Adi Buddha.

- As the iconographic program of Kā 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 Maṇjuśrī as the central deity, serves as the perfect metaphor to articulate the Newar Buddhist soteriological methodologies. It provides buddhological framework to legitimize Maṇjuśrī’s importance in Newar Buddhism.

- The iconographic program articulates Maṇjuśrī’s ritual and symbolic role: Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara Maṇjughoṣa is a fully Enlightened Buddha, equated not only with Vairocana, but more importantly, with the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū. Maṇjuśrī’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 Ādi 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 Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala.

• Mañjuśrī, as a fully Enlightened Buddha, is teacher of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala cycle in Newar Buddhism. Hence, this iconographic theme is appropriate in relation to the āgamā shrines, as the āgamā shrines house the Heruka-class deities such as Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala. This relates to the “secret/inner” symbolism of the visual imagery.

• The Cakrasamvara 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 repeatedly emphasizes this ideological notion of Newar Buddhism.

• The three iconographic components (Svayambhū Mahācaitya, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasamvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala as the core iconographic component of Newar Buddhist architecture; The other illustrates the relationship of these components to the three
structural elements of bähā/bahi architecture, namely, the principal vivifying caitya, the kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine, and the Tantric āgam shrine.

Most importantly, the iconographic program of the bāhas 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 Cakrasamvara Manḍalas). 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 Bähā’s iconographic program and visual imagery, as an archetype of bähā architecture, reflects this hierarchic understanding of the religion. The core iconographic themes, namely Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu Manḍala, and the Cakrasamvara Manḍala, serve as perfect three-fold symbols to manifest the fundamental constructs of Newar Buddhism. To fully understand this premises of Newar Buddhist iconology, I
will, in the subsequent chapters, examine each iconographic component individually and their relationship to Newar Buddhist religious practice.

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.
3 In the annual Bāhā Puja 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 “Hiranyavarna” is also interpreted as a śleṣa. The informants at Kvā Bāhā stated that because the face of the original kvāhpāh dyah image was gold, the bāhā was called Hiranyavarna “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, Hiranyavarna, i.e. “bāhā with a yellow [golden] appearance.” These multivalent interpretations suggest the continuity and popular use of śleṣa 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 Kvā Bāhā’s sacred history in this section is based on Ratnaraj Vajrācārya’s Kvā Bāhāhya Vaiśāvali [The Chronicles of Kvā Bāhā] (Nāgabāhā, Patan: Mangal Ratna Śākya, 1993).
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 Kvā Bāhā, and the fourth at Baregaon. The primacy, however, is always given to Svayambhū Mahācaitya, the Adī 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 Ganēshas (Catur Ganēsa), the four Kālis 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.

My translation. Ratnarāj Vajrācārya, 37

It is strictly prohibited to photograph the shrine image. As far as I am aware of, the only published photographs of kāhpaḥ dyāḥ are in the books published by the members of the saṅgha organization, Hiranyavarṇa Mahāvihāra Sudhar Sāmītī.

The primary identification of the shrine images seated in bhūmisparśamudrā is invariably understood to be that of Sākyamuni. However, in his survey, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, Locke has identified most the shrine images in the earth-touching gesture as Aksobhya, the Jina Buddha of the east who, in technical buddhological terms, represents Śākyamuni’s moment of enlightenment.

Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 31.


I have not verified this statement with the informants of the bāḥā. A 1607 date records major renovations to the structure. See Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust, 139.

Other bāḥās in Patan also have their āgam shrine located at the digi. Examples include Bu Bāhā, Ta Bāhā, and Bhinche Bāhā in Patan. The size of the saṅgha determines the location of the āgam.

In my research, I have found that Vajrasattva is the most often depicted in the toranā leading to the āgam. Examples are āgam toranas of Bu Bāhā, Su Bāhā, and Sawai Bāhā.

Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 134.

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.

Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust, 139.

An inscription, written in grammatically-incorrect English, and dated 1886, states that the stone façade was built by “Krēśna Bīr, one of the Master of Stonecutter 1886.”

According to my informants, the iconography of the Seven Tathāgatas going from viewer’s left to right is: Śikhin, Krakacanda, Kaśyapa, Vipaśī, Śākyamuni, Kanakamuni, and Viśvabhū.

This technical Tantric understanding was conveyed to me by the ritual specialists.

This is a recent tradition that was mandated by the Kvā Bāhā Conservation Trust and started in January 1998.

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*.

This issue will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

At Svayambhu Mahācāitya, the central figure and emanator of the mandala, Vairocana is placed in the south/southeast corner between the shrine of Akṣobhya and Locana. At Kva Bāhā, the Buddha 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.

See Chapter 7 for further examples in which the pendant iconography provides evidence for the identity of the shrine image.

The stories related to each of these pilgrimage sites are intimately connected with Svayambhu Mahācāitya. During ritual practice, Svayambhu as the source is either visited first or last as the beginning or culmination of the pilgrimage, thus reinforcing Svayambhu’s primacy in Newar Buddhism.

The Valley’s sacred geography conceived of as a mandala is understood in multivalent contexts. For example, in the Hindu version of the creation myth, Nepal Mahāmaya refers to Śiva and Pārvatī at the center of the mandalaic space, while the Sākta tradition in Nepal consider different forms of the Goddess to be at the center of the mandala.

Not only is the caitya at Sigha Bāhā referred to as Kāthesimbhū, “Svayambhu of Kathmandu”, but the layout of the sacred space virtually replicates the iconography of the Mahācāitya 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 Svayambhu is often referred to. Especially in the Kathmandu bāhas, the Vajradhātu Mandalas becomes increasingly prevalent after the eighteenth century. The relationship between the Dharmadhātu and the Vajradhātu Mandalas is significant, as it not only suggests a hierarchic layering of mandalas, but that Vajradhātu Mandalas is also another important Vairocana-cycle mandala found in Newar Buddhism, particularly in the city of Kathmandu.


Kva Bāhā has an interesting legend about the Daśapāramitās. According to legend, the Lords of the Ten Perfections/Bhumis (Daśapāramitās) used to attend the pūjā that were performed at the āgāth 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 āgāth pūjās. See Kesar Lall, tr., Kva Bāhā: Hiranyavarna Mahāvihāra, the Golden Temple (Patan: Hiranyavarna Mahāvihāra Sudhar Smiti, 1996), 10.

If the Dharmadhātu Mandalas has a vajra on top, scholars have often erroneously designated such mandalas as a Vajradhātu Mandala. While the Vajradhātu Mandala is also prominent in the ritual practices especially in Kathmandu, the form of the mandala and deities represented are completely different than the Dharmadhātu Mandalas. For example, in his recent book on caityas, Niels Gutschow identifies the inscribed and dated

45 In course of my research, I found different variations to the number of deities found in the mandala. For example, the *Nispayayogavali* states that there are 216 deities. On the other hand, the Newar scholar, Hemraj Sākya specifies that there are 251 deities. Other Newar scholars, such as Badriratna Vajracarya following the ritual text of *Dharmadhātu Vrata Vidhi* states that there are 221 figures in the mandala. While the number may vary, the core iconography of the Jina Buddhhas in the inner circle remains standard. The Tibetan Ngor tradition of the Śākyapa sect 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., *Nispayayogavali*, Mandala 21. The other two ritual texts that I have consulted are *Dharmadhātu Puja 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).


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 *Nispayayogavali*. The Dharmadhātu iconography found in the bāhās/bahis 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 *Nispayayogavali*.

50 At this point in my research, I have not been able to identify the iconographic source for the *Buddhāsaktis* 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 kvāhipād dyah shrine and torāṇa iconography were reconstructed or built during a fifty-year span during the mid to late seventeenth-century.


54 This torāṇa is over the doorway that leads to the storeroom. This torāṇa and the one over the east-end doorway appears to be identical with the north and south torāṇas of the enshrined Svayambhū caitya. Although I have not verified it with the informants at Kvā Bahā, it may be possible that the wooden torāṇas of the south wall were part of the original wooden torāṇas of the enshrined caitya that were later replaced by the gilt copper repousse ones now present in the shrine.

55 Bhattacharyya, ed., *Nispayayogavali*, 54

56 This torāṇa is over the doorway that leads to upper shrines rooms to Amitābha and Tārā.

57 Informants identified this image as either Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇjūghosa or Mahā-Vajrasattva. As I will discuss later in the iconography of the struts on the kvāhipād dyah shrine, this form of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara/Vajrasattva has a doctrinal basis on the *Nāmasangiti Tantra*, which describes Maṇjuśrī 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*. 

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My informants at Svāṃkṣaṃkṣaṃ and Ha Bābā have referred to Vasundharā as the exoteric manifestation of Vajravārāhi. I will discuss the buddhological implications in the analysis of the visual imagery.

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 āgama shrines. While such broad categories are useful in a general sense, the Tantric distinctions of guhyas 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.

Information given by ritual specialists from Kathmandu and Patan.

Rituals performed during the esoteric pūjās, such as the bāli pūjā, have specific rituals in which the Dikpālas are transformed to the Daśakrodha Bhairavas in a ritual context.

In Patan, the free-standing mandalas are popular votive offerings and are found in virtually all bāhās. On the other hand, the Kathmandu bāhās has only a few freestanding mandalas. However, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography was consistently present in the torana and strut iconography.

Although the attributes are identical to those described in the *Niśpannayogāvalī*, the placement of the attributes in each hand is slightly different.

The Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇḍala description in the *Niśpannayogāvalī* lists the four Vajrabodhisattvas (vajrāsattva vajrāja vairāgā, vajrādādhiṇhi pravrttaḥ). In an earlier section relating to the description of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, the text describes the Vajrabodhisattvas in detail regarding their attributes, colors, and kuṇḍa. 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 *Niśpannayogāvalī*. See B. Bhattacharyya, ed., *Niśpannayogāvalī* (Sanskrit text), 44-45.

My research includes many inscriptions found in the Patan bāhās, such as at Uku Bābā, Ha Bābā, Pim Bābā, Ga Bābā, Cīraṅgo Bābā etc. Furthermore, inscriptions found in the Svayambhū complex also clearly refer to the Mahācāitya as “Dharmadhātu Mahācāitya” or “Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara.”


Badriratna Vajrcārya, *Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa*, “ka-ṇa” [Devanāgari page numbers].

The invocation begins with the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇḍala Stotra.

Maṅjuḍuḥṣoṣaṁ mahāvīraṁ sarvamāraṁ vināśakam /
Śrāvākāḥ pradātāraṁ dharmadhātaṁ namāyaṁ

The great hero, Maṅjuḍuḥṣa, destroyer of all mārās

[Emboding]all form and provider, I bow to Dharmadhātu

See also, Alex Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Maṅjuṣṭī: The Maṅjuṣṭī*
The contemporary Vajrācārya teachers, such as Sūryamān Vajrācārya, Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya, and Ratnakājī Vajrācārya, with whom I studied, emphasized this aspect of Dharmaḍhātu Mañjughoṣa as the totality of the six kula system.


Bhattacharyya, ed., Nispayayogāvalī, 23.

Wayman, The Buddhist Tantra, 46.

Sūrya Mān Vajrācārya. Personal communication. This is also referred to in the Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra.

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 Nispayayogāvalī and Vajrāvalī 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.

Mallmann, Etude Iconographique sur Mañjuśrī, 60-61. The Sādhanaṃālā refers to Mañjuśrī as mahārāga rupottama mañjuvajra sarvasattva [All sentient beings Mañjuvajra’s most excellent form, Mahārāga].

The only iconographic difference in the Kṛṣṇa Bāhā strut is that it holds a ratna in the third right hand, instead of the aṅkuśa. The Nispayayogāvalī 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 ghāntā. His right hands, from top to bottom, hold sword, aṅkuśa, and arrow; the left hands, aṅkuśa, pāśa, and bow.

Bhattacharyya, ed., Nispayayogāvalī, 65. My translation

It should be noted that the only extant copies of the Nispayayogāvalī have been found in Nepal, written in the Newari script. In fact, Bhattacharyya’s translation of the Nispayayogāvalī were based on Newari 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.


89 The Guhyasamajya Maṇḍala often hold their kula attributes in their hands, however, here the Jinas holds Maṇjuśrī’s attribute the sword and book/lotus consistently in their upper hands.

90 Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 140-158.

90 Vṛhat Śvayambhū Purāṇam, Chapter 5.

91 The commentarial literature of the Nāmasaṅgiti Tantra refers to the dual interpretation and meaning. This will be further discussed in the next section.

92 Images from the Pāla period in north-eastern India show this connection. I am grateful to Dr. John C. Huntington for point this out.

93 I am particularly grateful to Sūryaman Vajrācārya and Badhiratna Vajrācārya, two learned gurus from Patan and Kathmandu.

94 Banarsi Lal, Aryamaṇjuśrī Nāmasaṅgiti with Amrtakanika-Tippani by Bhiksu Raviśrīñāna and Amrtakanikodyota-Nibandha (Sarnath Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1994), xiv, 18-19. The following explanation is based on this commentary.

95 Wayman, Chanting the Names of Maṇjuśrī, 45.

96 The ritual text to Cakrasamvara, Trismadhi Pujāvidhi, [Rituals to the Three-fold Meditation], emphasizes this understanding.

97 A = pitha; Aa = upapitha; I = kṣetra; Ii = upakṣetra; U = chandoha; Uu = upachāṇḍoha; E = melapaka; Ei = upamelapka; O = smaśāna; Au = upsmāśāna; Am = pilavam; Ah = upilavam

98 B. Lal, Aryamaṇjuśrī Nāmasaṅgiti with Amrtakanika-Tippani by Bhiksu Raviśrīñāna and Amrtakanikodyota-Nibandha, 19.


Yajmānaśya anukampāya adgaccha surva-devvatā Bhagavān śrīmat śrī śrī Cakrasamvara Vajrāvāhīhevajra Nairatmā, Candramahāroṣana Dveśavajra, Yoginvara Jñānaḍakini, sadguru Vajrasattva, Buddhaharmasanga, Pañca Tathāgata, Pañca Tāra Sahita sakala deva devī avahanīya idān vajradhupām nirātayām 1/1

100 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 “Guhyesvarī kalaśa”.

101 Personal communication with Baburaja Buddhacārya. This connection with Śāntikaracārya is significant in the legends of Rāto Mātyāndranāth, as Yoginvara had predicted to Śāntikaracārya that the deity would be reborn as Karunamaya and subsequently come to Nepal.

102 In the Nispayayogavali (#4), as the lord of her own maṇḍala, Jñānaḍakini is blue, in which case her kuleśa is Akṣobhya or Vajrasattva.

103 As the consort of Vajrādaka, the fierce form of Vajrasattva, she is called Vajravārāhī. See Nispayayogavali, #25.
The term *abhyantara* is most often found in the description of *mandalas*, in which the inner core of the *mandala* where the central deity resides called the *abhyantara mandala* or 'inner circle'.

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.
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Figure 3.4 Avalokiteśvara in NW Corner. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.

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(left) Figure 3.17. Detail of torana. Āgam shrine to Yogāmvara. Second Level. Inner vestibule. East face. Kvā Bāhā, Patan.
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CHAPTER 4

SVAYAMBHU 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 (punya) 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/bahi 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/bahi context. Lastly, in the sixth section, I analyze the various representations of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya that appear votive offerings in the bāhās and bahis of the Valley.
SECTION I: HISTORY OF SVAYAMBHU MAHACAIKYA

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 vamsāvali, 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, kaipas,
nor the sacred universal geography. 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. 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.
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 similarities, 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). 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. 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. 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. For example, the Rājatarāṅgīni 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.
In analyzing the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, the text appears to incorporate early traditions of Newar culture, such as the cult of the *nāga* (serpent) and *mātrkā* (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 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 Nāmasangīti, 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. 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 *Gośrīgaporvata Svayambhū Caitya Bhattāraka*, *Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa*, *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, *Vṛhat Svāyambhū Purāṇa*, and *Svāyambhū Purāṇa*. The oldest, *Gośrīgaporvata 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. 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
Svayambhū Purāṇa—broadly follows these essential themes: a series of visits to the sacred lake by the seven Mānuṣī Buddhās; 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 Maṇjuśrī; 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 renaming 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 Narendraadeva of the Licchavi dynasty and King Guṇakāmādeva 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” through which the sacred history acquires validation of its authenticity.

The structural narrative of the Svayambhū Purāṇa follows the tradition of the Purāṇas called sātsarāvāda, “conversation of six”, in which
three groups of interlocutors are superimposed, one on top of another. In the tradition of the sūtras, the Svayambhū Parāṇa 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 Śākyamuni Svayambhū to Bodhisattva Maitreya and Ānanda Bhikṣu just as he had done previously at Gopuccha Caitya (Purāṇ Svayambhū Caitya) itself. In the later versions, a complex series of “link and frame” formats of the sātsamāvāda are incorporated within the text, in which Jayaśri Bhikṣu, residing in Bodhimaṇḍapa Vihāra, retells the story to Bodhisattva Jñēsvara, 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

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 Mānuṣī 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 Nāgavāsahra ("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 Mānuṣī Buddha, Vipaśī, in the Satya Yuga. Vipaśī 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), Vipaśī circumambulates the lake and plants the lotus seed that had miraculously appeared from Akaniṣṭha Heaven in the middle of the lake. Vipaśī 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 Maha-Mañjuśrī from the Pañcaśirśa 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 Guhyesvarī pīṭha, the home of the primordial form of the Primordial Goddess, in her form as an eternal natural spring.\textsuperscript{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 Akaniṣṭha 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 (jnāna) of a fully Enlightened Being. The subsequent Tathāgatas after Vipaśvī, taking darśan of Svayambhū, were thus seeing their own enlightenment reified.
The second Māṇuṣī Buddha, Śīkhi 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 Devi). 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 Māṇuṣī Buddha, Viśvabhū Tathāgata, comes with his disciples to make pilgrimage of the Nāgayāsahṛada and to pay homage to Svayambhū Jyotirūpa. He goes to Mount Phulocca (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, Keśīni/Varadā (who symbolizes wealth) and Upakesīni/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 Candragiri Hill). He then makes a circuit of the holy mountains, going to
Mount Phullocca (Pulchowki), where he leaves his wife Keśinī. From there, he goes to Mount Dhyānocca (Campādevi) where his second wife, Upakeśinī, 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.38 With the waters draining out of the lake and their home destroyed, the nāgarājās, such as Takṣaka, Kulika, and Karkoṭaka, 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 Guhyesvāri pītha.
("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 piṭha, Guhyeśvari gives darśan to Mañjudeva in her universal (viśvarūpa) form. Creating a triangular yantra on a three-petalled lotus to symbolize her piṭha, Mañjudeva performs there the secret esoteric meditations of the Cakrasaṃvara cycle that had been taught to him by Guhyeśvari.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 Svayambhū 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 Nāmasaṅgiti 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 Guhyeśvari and to Svayambhū Jyotirūpa.
As the nirmānakāya of Vajrasattva, Krakucchanda goes to Siphūco (present day Śivapuri), where he expounds on the merits of Svayambhū and Guhyesvarī. In order to initiate his disciples by ritual ablutions (abhiśekha), he invokes Vākṣakti (Goddess of Speech) through the power of his mantras to create the river Vākmati ("Mother of [sacred] Speech, i.e. mantras), currently known as Bāgmati, 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, Keśāvati (present-day Viṣṇumati) at the place where the hair of his disciples had fallen after initiation. At the joining of the two rivers, Vākmati and Keśāvati, the twelve Tīrthas or pilgrimage sites around the Valley were established. In the contemporary context, the Newar Buddhist saṅgha continue to go to Vāgdvāra/ Bāgdvar ("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 Maṇuṣī Buddhas, the fifth Tathāgata, Kanakamuni come from Svabhāvatī country to offer pūjā to Svayambhū Jyotirūpa and Guhyesvāri.

The narrative then continues in the Dvāpara Yuga, when the sixth Maṇuṣī Buddha, Kāśyapa Tathāgata, comes to the Nepal Valley on a pilgrimage offer pūjā to Guhyesvāri, to Svayambhū Jyotirūpa, and to the Maṇjuśrī caitya containing the relics of Maṇjudevācārya. On his way back, Kāśyapa continues his journey until he reached the kingdom of Gauḍ (present-day West Bengal), where he instructs King Pracāṇḍa Deva to go to Nepal Valley. He said: "There are, in this universe, four divisions or islands (dvīpas): Puradvipa, Jambudvipa, Upper Godāvari, and Uttarākhaṇḍa. Of these dvīpas, there is one which is the best and that is Jambudvipa, which in turn contains five kṣetras or holy places, Kāśi kṣetra (present-day Varanāsī), 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 hommage to these holy kṣetras, and you will become a Vajrācārya." Hearing this, King Pracāṇḍa Deva, accompanied by his wife, comes to the Valley to visit the land of the sacred pīthas, and after worshipping at the various sacred places (pīthas, tīrthas,
and *upa-tirthas*), he takes *darśan* of Guhyeśvarī and Svayambhū Dharmadhātu. Seeing the wondrous form of the Jyotirūpa, Pracāṇḍa Deva fears that it would be desecrated in the Kali 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 Vāgisvara Caitya. Pracāṇḍa 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), Agnipur (Fire), Nāgapur (Water), and Śāntipur (Ether). Also known variously as Ākāśapur, Samvarpur, and Vyomapur, Śāntipur 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. It elaborates on the significance of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the Nāmasaṅgīti and narrates the story of the Indian monk named Dharmāśri Mitra from Vikramasilā Mahāvihāra (in modern Bihar), who comes to the Nepal Valley to learn the secret teaching of the Nāmasaṅgīti from Maṇjuśrī. Maṇjuśrī is taught the esoteric meaning of the twelve-syllabled mantra of Nāmasaṅgīti and initiated him to the Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara Maṇḍala. Maṇjuśrī 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 Kali Yuga, the next to last of the Mānuṣi Buddhas, Śākyamuni Tathāgata visits Svayambhū in order to deliver his discourses on Svayambhū Mahācaitya to Maitreya Bodhisattva. 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, Guhyeśvari. 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 āgami 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 Śvayambhū Purāṇa

The Śvayambhū Purāṇa recounts the sacred history of the Śvayambhū 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 Śvayambhū 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 Śvayambhū 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 Śvayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and

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Cakrasaṃvara 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 *nirāṇjana* “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 Purāṇa, 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 Maṇḍala of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇjughoṣa. In the Svayambhū Purāṇa, 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 Maṇjuśrī's secret teaching of the Nāmaśaṅgīti (the root text of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala) all indicate Svayambhū's symbolic connection with Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara.

The complex Tantric symbolism related to the Mahācaitya that is articulated in the Svayambhū Purāṇa echo 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 practitioners, 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. 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 (pūrṇimā) 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 pūrṇimā 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 Guhyeśvari’s esoteric instructions of the Cakrasaṅkara cycle to Mañjuśrī, the mū bāhās in the Valley perform the dīśi (daśami) pūjā in the āgaṁ shrine on the tenth day of each month, thus
monthly reifying the sacred event. On mārga krṣṇa daśāmī (tenth day of the dark half of Mārga), the day when Guhyesvari revealed the secret teachings, the Vajrācāryas perform a larger annual diśi pūjā to Cakrasaṃvara and Guhyesvari at their own āgamā shrines and at the Guhyesvari 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, confirms 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*, 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 Caturmahārājas 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 Kamadhātu ("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.\textsuperscript{31} These votive caityas found in the bāḥā/bahi 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.\textsuperscript{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 bāḥā/bahi 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".\textsuperscript{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 inscriptive evidence also indicate that the Valley is referred to as Nepal Maṇḍala, with Svayambhū and Guhyeśvari at the center of this conceptual construct. Furthermore, in ritual contexts, such as the statement of intent rites (sāṅkalpa), 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.
(4) Female Principle as Ontological Source of the Mahācaitya

Although Swayambhū Mahācaitya is by far the most prominent Newar Buddhist monument in the Valley, the Swayambhū 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 Swayambhū Purāṇa, Guhyesvari, the “Secret Goddess” serves as the key to understanding the esoteric practices of Vajrayāna, specifically the Heruka deities associated with the āgām shrines, such as Cakrasamvara/Vajravarāhī, Yogāmvara/Jnānādākīnī, and Hevajra/Nairatmā. Reflecting her role as generative source, Guhyesvari is addressed by her various epithets: Śakti Swayambhū, Ādi Śaktī (“Primordial Energy”), Khagānana (“Face of the Void”), Nairātmā (“Selfless Void”), Jineśvari (“Female Lord of the Jinas”), Buddhamātṛ (“Mother of All Buddhas”), and Buddhatva Datṛ (“Bestower of Buddhahood”). As the ontogenesis of Swayambhū Jyotirūpa, where the lotus seed took root at the Guhyesvari pīṭha (see Fig. 2.79), Guhyesvari 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
further indicated in the text, when Mañjuśrī, discovering the sacred pīṭha, receives darśan of Guhyēśvari in her universal form. As the embodiment of prajñā and bestower of enlightenment, she teaches him the highest esoteric Samvara cycles, specifically of Cakrasamvara/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, Guhyēśvari establishes herself as the chief source of Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhī meditations of Newar Buddhism. One can therefore state that while Svayambhū Mahācaitya is the ontological basis of Buddhism in the Valley, Guhyēśvari, 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. 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. 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. Similarly, the earliest known chronicle, Bhaṣā Vamśāvalī 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. Another chronicle, the Gopālarājavamsāvalī also states that Vṛṣadeva consecrated/renovated the “Singu-vihāra-caitya bhattāraka.”
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 varūṣāvalīs as the Mahācaitya itself, since the local name for the area is called Singu. However, Nepali scholars have generally interpreted the reference in the Gopālarājavamsāvalī 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 existing. The material evidence strongly suggests that the Mahācaitya may have been extant during the early Licchavi period. That a Licchavi-period caitya stands in front of the kvāhpāḥ dyah 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 inscriptive 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. 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 Aṁsuvarma’s reign (r.605-621), the Mahācaitya was specifically referred to as Svayambhū caitya bhattāraka, 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 kvāḍpāḥ dyah shrine of Syengu Bāhā (see Fig. 4.2).45 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 Swayambhū that may be one of the earliest of its kind belonging to the Licchavi period or even earlier (Fig. 4.4). There are four standing Buddhas carved on the four sides of the caitya, one in each cardinal direction. 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. 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 abhāyamudrā with his right hand raised; the southern Buddha displays varadamudrā; the Buddha on the west shows an unusual dharmacakra-mudrā; while the north side has a Buddha displaying vajramūṣṭi in a manner like the Gandhāran sculptures of the Kuśāna period. The presence of the vajramūṣṭi is significant here, as it symbolizes esoteric teachings of the five knowledges into one, as stated in Tantric Buddhist texts. 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 Thām 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 jewel⁴⁹ (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 Amoghaavati, 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 Sāyambhū'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.

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Other inscriptive indicates that the Pañca Jina iconography was an established schema of Licchavi caityas. For example, a fragment of a seventh-century caitya belonging to Aṃsuvarma’s reign in a courtyard near Guitā Bahī, Patan, has inscriptions that describe Akṣobhya on the east and Amitābha on the west. Visual evidence is this iconographic schema is also found in the Licchavi caitya at Om Bähā, Patan, dated to the eight-ninth centuries. 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 Swayambhū Mahācaitya is the prototype and premier Buddhist monument in the Kathmandu Valley by the Licchavi period.

**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 yasti 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. Many of these teachers resided at Swayambhū and taught there, such as
Śāntarāksita, Padmasambhava, Kamalaśila, Paṇḍita Vanaratna, Atiśa Dipānkarā, and Ratnarāksita. 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. Certainly, the vamsāvalis 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 Vikramśilā Mahāvihāra (present-day Thām Bahī) in 1041. He is also credited with translating several Vairocana-cycle texts and initiating a Newar paṇḍita named Śāntībhadra to his teachings. 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 Vajrāvalī under the teacher, Ratnarāksita. There is also indication of close ties with the Indian Buddhist monasteries, as the vamsavaliś refer to Newar teachers who went to Nālandā and Vikramśilā in northeastern and northern India. 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 inscriptionsal 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 refurbished.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. 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 Kaśṭamanḍapa [Kathmandu]. Donor: Mahāpātra of Kathmandu, Rājaharṣa Bhalloka. The inscription specifically invokes Svayambhū as "Śri Dharmadhātu" and refers to the form of the caitya as symbolizing the three realms of the Buddhist world system—Kamadhātu, Rupadhātu, and Arūpadhātu.

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 "śri Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvaramūrti Svayambhū Caitya." 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
donations also arrived from Tibet, and the “great teacher Sariputra” from India was responsible for overseeing the renovation.  

N.S. 551 (1431 C.E.) During the reign of King Yakṣa Malla (1428-1482), the Mahācaitya is refurbished. Lay donor, Anantajiva Bhāro, offers chattras made of wax.

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 Śvayambhū. The task, begun in 1476, was finally completed on his third stay at Śvayambhū from 1501-1504. Donations were given from the king of Gu-ge in Western Tibet and the ruler of Mustang. Śvayambhū’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 Syamgu”.

N.S. 711 (1590 C.E.) Lay donors from Kathmandu refurbish the Mahācaitya, offering the gilt hālampati and chattras.

N.S. 715 (1595 C.E.) King Śiva Singh Malla (1578-1619) replaces the central shaft and adds a new yāstī. The historical sources describe in detail the ritual consecration for this event.
N.S. 721-725 (1601-1601 C.E.) Lay donor Śakyabhikṣu Jayalakṣa refurbishes the Mahācaitya after it is struck by lightning. King Śiva Singh Malla’s wife, Gangadevi, also gives offerings to Swayambhū.⁷⁵

N.S. 741 (1621 C.E.) King Laksmini 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 Swayambhū.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 Sikhāmu 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 toranas 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
by King Lakṣmi Narasimha, with the rājgubhāju from Sīkhamu Bāhā presiding.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{81} In addition, lay donor Mañjudeva Śākyabhikṣu and King Lakṣmi Narasimha Malla begin repairs of the Mahācaitya in the month of Vaisākha.\textsuperscript{82}

N.S 761 (1641 C.E.) On Āśāda Purṇimā, King Pratāp Malla (r. 1640-74) of Kathmandu donates the shrines of the Buddhas and Tārās, and places metal images in them.\textsuperscript{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 Mandala by the seventeenth century.

N.S 765 (1645 C.E.) Vajrācārya Siddhimunideva enters Śāntipur to perform a secret pūjā on śrāvan kṛṣṇa daśami (tenth day on the dark half of Śrāvan), which commemorates the day that Mañjuśrī received the Cakrasamvara initiation from Guhyeśvari.\textsuperscript{84}

N.S 770 (1650 C.E.) On Śrāvan śukla pratipadā, King Pratāp Malla inscribed his devotional poems on an inscriptive 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 Āsādha (krṣṇa navamī), King Pratāp Malla and his wife, Anantapriyā build the two temples, Pratāppur and Anantapur, to Cakrasyamaṇvara and Vajravarāhi. Inscriptional plaque in front of the Anantapriyā’s shrine states that the temple is dedicated to Ekajaṭā Nila Sarasvati Vajrayoginī, epithets of Vajravarāhi. This may also indicate that Pratāp Malla and his wife may have received the esoteric initiations of Cakrasamvara and Vajravarāhi.

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 Āṣādha. He also composes a sloka for the rains called Vṛṣṭī Cintāmani 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 Cakrasamvara and Vajravarāhi.
N.S 779 (1659 C.E.) In the full moon of Jyeṣṭha, King Pratāp Malla offers a golden canopy to crown the Mahācaitya.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{88}

N.S. 788 (1668 C.E.) On the sixth day of the bright half of Āṣāḍha, King Pratāp Malla offers the metal repoussé vajra and Dharmadhatu Maṇḍala on the east side in front of the Akṣobhya shrine.\textsuperscript{89}

N.S.794 (1674 C.E.) King Pratāp Malla enters Śāntipur for the second time in order to bring the monsoon rains.\textsuperscript{90}

N.S. 880-802 (1682 C.E.) King Pārthivendra Malla renovates the Mahacaitya and replaces the yāsti.\textsuperscript{91} The repairs in 1680 were done by Rang-rig-ras-pa of Spiti, Tibet.\textsuperscript{92}

N.S 830-34 (1710-1714 C.E.) King Bhāskara Malla renovates and refurbishes the Mahācaitya. There is detailed description of the reconsecration.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{94} The architectural drawings in the manuscripts
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 Cakrasaṃvara/Vajrāvarāhī. From the Śāha period onward, Svayambhū also underwent numerous renovations and repairs. Refurbishments and donations to the Mahācaitya are recorded in 1816, 1818, 1825-26 and 1833.95 The latest reconsecration of the central yāstī 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 Buddhasaktis 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 Buddhasaktis, 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 buddhaśakti, 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 Gopucecha Parvat (Fig. 4.16). As mentioned before, the cosmogenic 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{103} Gutschow considers the placement of Bhairava to be a significant testimony of the Svayambhū Hill as the “Primordial Hill”, as Bhairava serves as *kotvāla*, or guardian of the sacred hill “placed at the level of the mythic waters”, as shown in the drawing.\textsuperscript{104} Slightly below the image of Bhairava is also the natural rock representation of the Nāgarāja 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 Buddhhas, beginning
first with Amoghasiddhi’s vāhana, the Garuda, Amitābha’s peacock, Ratnasambhava’s horse, Aksobhya’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 Guhyēśvari, represented in a form of a natural rock placed in a niche. Guhyēśvari’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.
The inscription on the metal-repousse mandala 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 Nispannayogāvali. A pair of liens, also given by King Pratāp Malla flanks the mandala. 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 mandala 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 mandala 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 mandala of Swayambhū and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

In addition to King Pratāp Malla’s Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, a number of ritual maṇḍala and yajñakundas 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 identify. The practitioners and ritual specialists at the site identify these as the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, thus reinforcing the ubiquitous presence of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara at Swayambhū. 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 Swayambhū. 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 yajñakundas is a śaṭkoṇa ("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 Kumāri, Vasundharā, and Vajrayogini, all exoteric forms of Vajravārāhi.
Several metal *yajñakundas* 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 *yajñakunda* 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 *yajñakunda* 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, Ratnamanḍala Caitya, Aṣṭakoṇapapadoparicaryā Caitya, and Bodhicaitya.100

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 Maṇjuśrī 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 Mādhyamikā 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
The caitya is also the lineage deity (digu dyah) of the Buddhācārya ritual specialists of Svayambhū. The four lineages (kavaḥ) of the Buddhācārya families perform a special lineage pūja (digu dyah 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]. 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 Nāmasaṅgiti 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 Cakrasamvara cycle—Pratāppur and Anantapur; the five Pars; and the Hārīti 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 kvālpāh 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 Pars, and the Hārīti 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
court yard. Although the contemporary appearance owes much to the nineteenth-century renovations, these shrines 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 vajrahumkāra 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 Vajravarāhī, the primary deities of the Newar Buddhist āgam shrines—Pratāppur is dedicated to Cakrasaṁvara while the Anantapur is dedicated to Vajravarāhī. In the dedicatory inscription outside of Anantapur, Vajravarāhī is invoked by her epithets: Vajrayogini, Ekajaṭī, and Nila Sarasvati.¹³ 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 Cakrasaṃvara cycle at Svayambhū Mahācaitya is significant. Foremost, it alludes to the meditation's ontological connection with the cosmogonic myth, specifically with Guhyēśvari 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 Vagiśvara, and Cakrasaṃvara. This aspect will be later examined in Chapter Six, when discussing the significance of the Cakrasaṃvara 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 (prthvī) and goddess of wealth (Fig. 4.29). The shrine, facing north, is a fairly simply structure with a single metal roof. The inscribed wooden torana 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. 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 Vajrapārāhi 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
triangle (ṣatkoa 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 Purś 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, Ganeśa, 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 Purnimā (Fig. 4.35), the day

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that commemorates the creation of the Mahācaitya and establishment of the five Purus 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 Varūṇa. 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 Nāgavāsahhrada ("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 (tirthankas). 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/Vajravarāhi, 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 Śāntikaracārya, 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 pītha 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 Vajravarāhi. For example, the guardian figures flanking the exterior and interior doorways are identical animal-faced door guardians
from the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala (see Figs 6.31-6.34). Further, the mural paintings show a preeminance of the Tantric goddesses, or *yoginis* connected with the Cakrasaṃvara cycle. Here, the south wall depicts the inner four *yoginis* of the Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi. 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 Vajravārāhi, the consort of Cakrasaṃvara and also the generator of the Cakrasaṃvara 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 Swayambhū and the senior priest from Makhan Bāhā of Kathmandu, and is the archetypical āgamī 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 Swayambhū who performs the rituals at Śāntipur, monthly dīśī pūjā rituals are performed as a state ritual and are financed by the royal family. Once again, Swayambhū is closely related to esoteric Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi practices, providing further evidence for the associations among the key methodological practices of Newar Buddhism—Maṇḍala of Swayambhū, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala.

Hārīti Shrine

The large gilt copper shrine made located in the northwest side of the Mahācaitya (Fig. 4.40) is dedicated to Hārīti Ajīmā, 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. 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. During special occasions, a metal repousee covering (kavaca lit. "armor") is put over the shrine image. Elaborate rituals specifically related to Hāritī, called chayhakegu pūja are performed daily throughout the day outside the temple by Vajracārya 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 toranas over each of the shrine doors serve as important visual evidence of the goddess' protective function. The main torana on the south depicts the Pañcarakṣā deities, the "Five Goddesses of Protection" and are represented as fully Enlightened Buddhas, with Mahāsahasrapramardini 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 toranas. The dedicatory inscription on the west end torana first invokes Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara and then Hāritidevi, again recalling Mañjuśrī's association with the site.
The torana on the west, north, and east doors also depict the Pañcarakṣā Goddesses. The west side torana, dated N.S. 794, depicts Mahāmantrānusārini as the center deity while the north torana, dated N.S.1024, is identical to the south torana in the placement of the Pañcarakṣā and Ādi Buddha figures. Here, Mahāsitāvatī is at the center and the Ādi Buddhas Vajradhara, Vajrasattva, and Sāmantrabhadrā 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 Jīnas, 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 pendant 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 mātrkās, 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: pvah), and the crowing elements including the hārmiṇa (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 chattrā 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). Above this are the thirteen tiers that reflect the thirteen stages of the Enlightenment process. Over the very top is the chhattra and gajura that cover the central yāstī.

For the iconographic analysis presented here, the ground plan of the caitya and the shrines of the Buddhas and their Buddhasaktis 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 Buddhasaktis, 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). 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 Buddhāśaktis 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 saktis in the intermediate points are in smaller structures. Entering the maṇḍalīc diagram, the practitioner starts at the east at the Akṣobhya shrine (Fig. 4.55). 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, aśṭamaṅgala signs, and a nāga and nāgini encircling the shrine. As in each of the five Jina Buddha shrines, a metal torana 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, Sariputra 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, Vajrapāṇī 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 torana 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
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 torana 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 ghanṭā in vajrahumākāramudrā (Fig. 4.58). Here, the forms of the Ādi Buddha represented on the toranas may be interpreted as the manifested Dharmakāya image of the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū. In the other three toranas on the south, west, and north, the Ādi Buddhas are respectively Apāramitā, Sāmantabhadra, and Vairocana. The top center figure on Vairocana’s torana 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 aṣṭami, 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 Garuda) 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 practitioners, 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 Dyah”, 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 Apāramitā 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 saṃsāra—of life and death—an appropriate imagery related to the Buddha associated with long-life and rebirth in Sukhāvati 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 Akiṣobhya 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 Paṇca Jīna 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. 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 Vāgiśvara Maṇḍala. This statement is consistent with Svayambhū’s iconographic configuration of the Paṇca Jīna Maṇḍala, since the Dharmadhatu Maṇḍala is essentially a Vairocana-cycle maṇḍala, with Maṅjūghoṣa 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. Interestingly, the Piṇḍikrama Maṇḍala belongs to the Guhyasamāja Akṣobhyavajra cycle, with Akṣobhya as the center deity. 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 Buddhaśaktis in the northeast and southeast side, specifically that of Māmaki and Locanā. In the intermediate points between the Jina shrines are the Buddhaśaktis (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 Buddhaśaktis is as follows: Akṣobhya's prajñā is Māmaki (NE); Ratnasambhava's prajñā is Locanā (SE); Amitābha's prajñā is Padmini (SW); Amoghasiddhi's prajñā is Ārya Tārā (NW). Vairocana's prajñā Vajradhāteśvari 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 Māmaki 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. Similarly, the torāṇa 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 Guhyasamājā 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/Vajradhātēśvari. Regarding the iconography of the Buddhāśaktis, the Svayambhū Purāṇa states that the prajñās are Locanā, Māmakī, Pāndurā, and Tārā, beginning in the northeast. 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 samādhyā 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasamvara 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 Cakrasamvara 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 Aksobhya-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 Cakrasamvara 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 śaktis 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 nādi 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 puras 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 puras and culminate their worship at Śāntipur, the esoteric shrine to Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhi. 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 chattrā 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 Maṇḍalas and the Trikāya System: Pañca Jina, Dharmadhātu, and the Cakrasamvara 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. 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 Dharmaṃkāya 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., sānyatā. 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 Dharmaṃkāya 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 bāhāś/bāhīs, this corresponds to the kvāpāḥ dyah 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 Maṇjusrī. The visual imagery at the Mahācaitya also emphasizes this buddhological statement. The inner core of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala virtually replicates the Paṇca Jina Maṇḍala, with Dharmadhātu Maṇjūghoṣa equated with Mahāvairocana. In this technical understanding, the esoteric forms of the Jinas of the Dharmadhātu 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 bāhāś/bahi, 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 Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī. Generally not noted by scholars, the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala and its

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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 Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi) 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 Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala symbolizes the dharmakāya, manifest in sambhogakāya form. In the context of the bāhā/bahīśīs, this pertains to the āgāmī shrine, where Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhi 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 
*Śvayambhū Purāṇa.*

**Sacred Geography of Śvayambhū 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 Śvayambhū are said to embody the Buddhist enlightenment process. For example, there are thirteen *tirthas* or sacred pilgrimage sites associated directly with sacred shrines at Śvayambhū.\textsuperscript{139} These include the shrines to the Five Jinas, the five Buddhaśaktis, Mañjuśrī, Yogāmvara,\textsuperscript{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 Viṣṇumati. 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.\textsuperscript{141} Further, all thirteen *tīrthas* are associated with a specific *nāgarājā* as well as *pīthas* “seats” of the deities, which are represented by natural outcroppings of rock. Most significant

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among these are the piṭhas 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 Purāṇa, which are visited during the Aṣṭami 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 Purāṇa articulates the conception of the Valley as a maṇḍala 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 (saṃkalpa), 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 saṃkalpa ritual, clearly defines the Kathmandu Valley as a sacred maṇḍalic space, with Svayambhū as the generator.

The saṃkalpa recitation is as follows:

Om to Vajrasatva [six]
Om to the auspicious beginning presided by the Three Jewels of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha

Om 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 Dwāpara Yugas, in the northern Pañcāla country of the Bharata continent (bharata khaṇḍa), in the Himālayas in the region of the Vāsuki Nāgarājā, in the Piṭha called Upacchāṇḍojha, in the sacred land of South Asia (āryavrata), in the home of the Karkotaka Nāgarājā, the king of serpents, in the great lake called Nāgavāsa, the dwelling of the great snakes, in the place first visited by Vipaśyī Tathāgata, in the place of Self-Created Svayambhū Lotus, that thus became Śrī Jyotirūpa Svayambhū caitya, which is presided over by Śrī Guhyāśvārī Prajñāpāramitā, in the land presided over by Śrī Mañjuśrī and the Seven Tathāgatas, in the Nepal Maṇḍala which has the form of the Śrī Samvara
(Cakrasamvara) mandala, which is equated to the land Sudārjaya, adorned by the Eight Vaitarāgas, namely Manilīgēśvara, Gokarṇēśvara, Kileōśvara, Kumbhēśvara, Garteśvara, Phanikēśvara, Gandheśvara, and Vikrameśvara, where the four great rivers, namely Krakacanda-created Vāgmati, Kesāvati, Mahīmati, Prabhāvati flow; adorned by the Twelve Tirthas, namely Puñya Tirtha, Śanta Tirtha, Śankhara Tirtha, Rāja Tirtha, Manohara Tirtha, Nirwāla Tirtha, Nidhāna Tirtha, Jñāna Tirtha, Cintāmaṇi Tirtha, Pramodha Tirtha, Sulakṣaṇa Tirtha, and Jaya Tirtha, surrounded by the four great mountains, Jāmāco, Siphuco, Pulācco, and Dhyānaco, adorned by Vajrayogini and the like [Vajrayogini, Khadga Yogini, Vidyādhari, and Guhyēśvari], along with the yoginis and gaṇas and where the Aṣṭa Māṭrkās, Aṣṭa Bhairavas, Simhīni, Vyāghrīni, Ganeśa, Kumāra, Mahākāla, Hāriti, Hanumāna, and Ten Krohas reside, located on the southern bank of the Bāgmati, on the eastern bank of the Kesāvati, on the western bank of the Maniṁbhini, on the northern banks of the Prabhāvati, here within Nepal Mahādala, in the city of Lalitapattan, in the kingdom of Arjavalokiteśvara, in the place of Śri Maṅjuśri 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...vānīṣa, and at this date [....] performing the offering to Śurya (ādityagrāha pīṇḍa), Śri Kuladevata, [iṣṭadevata] Dharmadhētu Vāgīśvara, Cakrasamvara, Vajrapārīhi 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 Maṅḍala", and locates it within the larger sacred geography of South Asia (āryavrata), as part of the Bharata continent, north of the Pāncāla country in the Himalayas. 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 Guhyēśvari.143

The recitation also identifies the Valley with the Cakrasamvara Maṅḍala that is presided over by Guhyēśvari Prajñāpāramitā. Furthermore,
it states that the Upacchaṇḍoha *pitha* is within the Valley, which further relates it to the conception of the Valley as a Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala.\textsuperscript{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 Piṭhas. 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
samkalpa pūjā are interacted with directly by the laity through the Swayambhū Purāṇa.

The Swayambhū 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 discusses 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 Swayambhū 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 Swayambhū Purāṇa. These are the Twelve Tīrthas, the Four Yoginī Pīthas, the Eight Vairāgas, 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 *tirtha* (literally 'ford at a confluence of rivers') is generally associated with Hindu pilgrimage sites. In Nepal, however, the term *pītha* is used only to designate the sacred sites of the Goddess, while *tirtha* refers to both Buddhist and Hindu pilgrimage sites, generally located at the confluence of rivers.

The group of twelve *tirthas* collectively known as *Dvaḍaśa tirtha* is among the most popular Buddhist pilgrimage sites for the laity. 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 Mānuṣi Buddha, Krakucchanda Tathāgata, in order to ordain his disciples. These rivers are known by the names Vākmati (Bāgmati) and Keśavatī (Viṣṇumati). As the Bāgmati 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 *tirthas* are the places where the inauspicious rituals, such as the *srāddha* and *pīḍa* offerings for the ancestors, are performed. On the
other hand, ritual purification by bathing in these tirthas acquire merit (puñya) for the devotees. The tirthas 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 tirtha, 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 tirthas 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 Aṣṭamātrkās, who provide the practitioner with the siddhi powers.\[46\]

In the Newar Buddhist context, the pilgrimage and ritual offerings at the twelve tirthas are clearly specified in the religious ritual texts.\[47\] 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 yogini pītha 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 Puṇya Tīrtha at Gokarna and ending with the Jaya Tīrtha at Nakhu in Patan. 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 Punhi) and ends with the next full moon (Thilā punhi). 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 yogini pithas of the twelve mātrkās, or Mother Goddesses. In Nepal, the aṣṭamātrkās or the Eight Mother Goddess demarcate sacred space as a maṇḍalīc diagram, both in the larger Valley proper and also in the three cities of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur. That these tīrthas are
associated with the twelve mātrakā/yogini pīthas also suggests that the pilgrimage route of the twelve tīrthas are conceptually a maṇḍalic space, specifically related to Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala. How these mātrakā pīthas conceptualize the sacred construct of the Valley as the Cakrasamvara 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 navarātri and generally falls on the tenth day of the bright half of the month of Āświn (āświn śukla ekādasī). Newar Hindus call Dasain "Mohani. The Newar Buddhist also celebrate Mohani in a Buddhist context as an important pilgrimage festival, related to the mātrakās. Newar Buddhists celebrate Mohani by performing Tantric rituals to their istsadevatā. Gellner states that Newar Buddhists interpret Mohani'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. In the city of Kathmandu during Mohani, 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 Guhyēśvari at the Śānta Tirtha. The Buddhist pilgrims celebrate Mohanī by visiting ten holy bathing sites, also called tirthas, which are a different list from the group of twelve Tirthas of the Dvādaśa tirtha. While some of the names overlap, there are other sacred sites that are added during the Navaratha Melā. As with the twelve Tirthas, 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 Yogini Pithas

In Nepal, a pīṭha is invariably associated with śakti or the Goddess. Although different sets of eight mātrkā ("mother goddess") pīṭhas are located around the Kathmandu Valley, four major yogini pīṭhas are located on mountain tops. These are the major shrines to Guhyēśvari, Vajrayoginī, Khāḍgayoginī, and Vidyādhari. In Nepal, these yogini 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 yogini pīṭha of Guhyeśvarī in Deopatan is dedicated to Pārvatī/Sati Devi, the consort of Śiva. Invoked by her epithets, Guhyakāli 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 yogini, who is equated with Prajñāpāramitā, the Mother of All Buddhas and the sambhogakāya of the primordial goddess (Ādi Śakti). 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 Yoginis and Vajravarāhī 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. These sacred sites are generally situated within the confines of a Hindu temple complex, specifically at Śiva shrines. At the yogini pīṭhas the name and identity of the goddess in the Hindu and Buddhist tradition are the same, but interpreted in different contexts. In contrast, 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 Āstamaṅgala 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. 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 Tirthas, the pilgrimage to the Eight Vaitarāgas is
closely associated with the Aṣṭami Vratas and are performed throughout six months of the year, beginning in the month of Śrāvan (similar to the beginning of the Twelve Tirthas) 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 Amoghapāsa 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 Mānuṣi 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 Mānuṣi Buddhas and the mountains associated with them.\textsuperscript{155}:

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4. Vipaśvi Tathāgata: sowed the seed of the 1000 petalled lotus Svayambhū Dharmadhātu, which took root at Guhyesvarī; stayed at Mt. Jāmāco.

5. Śīkhi Tathāgata: Absorbed into Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Jyotirūpa; stayed at Dhyānāco.

6. Viśvabhū Tathāgata: Offered flowers to Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Jyotirūpa; stayed at Mt. Phulocca.


8. Kanakamuni Tathāgata: Visited Svayambhū caitya; lived at Svayambhū Parvata.


10. Śākyamuni Tathāgata: Taught and visited Svayambhū Hill at Pulān Svayambhū and took darśan of Guhyesvarī

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.

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The ritual purification of the Body, Speech, and Heart/Mind of the practitioner through meditation that is integral to the Tantric tradition is also revived 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 (macrocospm) 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 samkalpa ritual of the Guru Manḍala 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 Manḍala pūjā dedicated to the primordial guru Vajrasattva, the Vajrācārya priest purifies himself and ultimately becomes Vajrasattva. One can interpret then, by defining the sacred geography of the Valley during the ritual process of the samkalpa, 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 Guhyeśvari 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 hypostasis 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 dyah) 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 sangha 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

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perhaps be best understood by analyzing the symbolic connection of Swayambhū and the bāhā organization.

The De Ācārya Guthi of the eighteen mu bāhās of Kathmandu is intimately connected with Swayambhū, 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 Swayambhū, and in turn, empowers the Vajrācāryas with the ability to perform their rituals with efficacious effectiveness. Furthermore, the pūjā also emphasizes Swayambhū 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 Swayambhū 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 Swayambhū Mahācaitya, followed by a Tantric pūjā in Śāntipur. 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. The next day, a Tantric pūjā is performed at the āgāni 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 nirmanāpakāya 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 nirmanāpakāya 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 dyah) 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. 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 Kumāri 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 Yogini 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 Khadga Yoginī also receives pūjā and propitiation. 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 Khadga 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 Bhārhat. Now enshrined in a temple dating to the Malla period, the original caitya appears to be shaped out of a natural outcropping of rock.

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 Bähā and the bāhās of Kathmandu, particularly in patterns of settlement, as, indeed, Gum Bähā 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 yogini shrines that play an important role in Newar Buddhist ontology, in this case, the shrine is connected to the Cakrasaṅvara/Vajrvarāhi 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.¹⁰³ 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 Gubhāju is in charge of the pūjā at Svayambhū performed by the Dasadigacāryas, "The Ācāryas of the Ten Directions". The name of the
Dasadigācāryas derives from the fact that traditionally these ten Vajrācāryas were called to go anywhere within the kingdom to perform various talismanic rituals, particularly in face of natural disasters such as famine, drought or flood. In the late Malla period, the royal dasadigācāryas was in charge of performing the daily nitya pūjā at Swayambhū 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.

Furthermore, whenever the Swayambhū Mahācaitya has to repaired, the royally appointed Raj Gubhāju is still required perform a special pūjā (kṣema pūjā) before the work can begin. The inscription at Swayambhū 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, Śri Jñānakirti Senapada of Sikomagunhi Vihāra [Sikhamu Bāhā], the royal Vajrācārya priest. The additional responsibilities of the Royal Gubhaju at the Swayambhū 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 Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi/Ekajati.

Aside from his capacity as Raj Gubhaju that enables him to perform pūjās in the personal esoteric shrines of Pratap Malla and his wife,
Anantapriyā 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. Sikhāmu Bāhā’s association with Svayambhū as lineage deity qualified the saṅgha to be chosen to represent the Pañca Buddhas.

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, 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 puja at Śāntipur. Although this puja was the privilege of Musum Bāhā until the time of King Lākṣminarāsimha Malla (N.S.737-761), the father of Pratāp Malla, 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. 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 (Śakya) from Svayambhū and one Vajrācārya from Makhan Bāhā. 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.

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. Through these Tantric preceptors, the eighteen bāhās of Kathmandu further trace their lineage to Śāntikarācārya, and ultimately to Svayambhū. 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, 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 Narendra Deva and is generally associated with Kvā Bāhā in Kathmandu. He has special connections with Sigha Bāhā and the "Kāthesimbhū" caitya. Through his Tantric powers, he "brought" the Svayambhū Caitya from Kāsi to Kathmandu, where Māmakī resided in a kalaśa or ghaṭa. Hence, the caitya was called Śāntighaṭa Caitya. More popularly, the caitya is also known as "Kathesimbhū"—the "Svayambhū of
Kathmandu” and is the symbolic surrogate of Swayambhū Mahācaitya (see Fig. 2.29 and Fig 4.70). The form and iconographic plan of Šāntighaṭa caitya mirrors the Mahācaitya, including the five shrines to the Jina Buddhas and the Hāriti shrine at the northwest corner. Kathesimbhu’s link with Swayambhū is further strengthened through the “Śāntipur” shrine on the western side, which houses the sacred kalaśa of Māmāki (Śāntighaṭa).\textsuperscript{179} Analogous to Śāntikarācārya’s 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 (hiṭi) at the request of the king of Singhakalpa Nagar (present-day Thamel or Thām Bahī) on Caitra krṣṇa Daśami.\textsuperscript{180} Taking the water from this primordial vase of Māmāki, the Vajrācāryas from Kvā Bāhā annually reify this sacred act and perform a mahābali pūjā annually at the “Śāntipur” shrine.\textsuperscript{181}

Commemorating the "bringing" of the Swayambhū caitya to Kathmandu by Vākvajra, there is an annual pūjā on the Kati Puṇhe, falling on the fourteenth day of the bright half of Āświn, when hundreds of Buddhist practitioners come to Kathesimbhu and recite the Nāmasaṅgiti text. For the Jyāpu community, Kati Puṇhe marks the initiations into the Buddhist community, as passage rite loincloth ceremonies (kayta pūjā) are held at Kathesimbhu and at Swayambhū Mahācaitya on the following day. For the Newar Buddhists, Kati Puṇhe 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 agam dyah is Hevajra-Nairātmā, and the lineage deity is Guhyesvari, 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 [Sarapāda?] written by a Pāṇḍitācārya Śrimat 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 "Āsokan" 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
Guhyeśvari, as the bāhā's lineage deity and one of the most important yoginis
of Newar Buddhism, intimately linked with Svayambhū.\textsuperscript{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 Ekajaṭi/Vajravārāhī shrine on the east side of
Svayambhū called Pratāppur and Anantapur in the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{189} Local informants connects Musum Bāhā with
Śāntikaracārya, since the nāga sādhana manuscript that was written by
Śāntikaracārya with the blood of the nāgas and propitiated during the
rainmaking pūjās at Śāntipur was originally the property of Musum Bāhā.\textsuperscript{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 Gūthi, the eighteen principal bāhās in Kathmandu maintain special relationship with Svayambhū Mahācaitya. The connection is further strengthened by Kathmandu bāhās' ritual connection to Śāntikarācārya, and ultimately, to the secret āgāṁ 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{196}
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, Ķūka 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
version of the Mahācaitya is found to the west of the bāhā, where the annual pūjā is performed by the saṅgha members.

Another important lineage deity in Patan is the enshrined Svayambhū caitya at Kvā Bāhā, previously discussed in Chapter Three.\textsuperscript{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 saṅgha of Ĉūka Bāhā, who have “brought” the enshrined caitya and consecrated it at the bāhā.

For Cilanco Bāhā in Kirtipur, the lineage deity is Yogāmvara from Mhepi as well as the “Vajrayogini” from Sankhu.\textsuperscript{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 Kirtipur 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 Mandala, 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 Caiyta.
As the lineage deities of the four Vajrācārya saṅghas 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. 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. 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 Jñānadākinī, and many
bāhā/bahīs directly “bring” Yogāmvara 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 sangha 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 Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala.
SECTION VI: REPRESENTATIONS OF SVAYAMBHŪ MAHĀCAITYA

Svayambhū as Prototype of Cāitya Form

Numerous votive cāityas are found throughout the Kathmandu Valley, whose stylistic analysis suggest that the Mahācaitya served as the prototype of cāityas in the Kathmandu Valley. Niel Gutschow's thorough study on cāitya architecture reinforces the argument proposed here that Svayambhū is the stylistic and symbolic source. The stylistic variations in cāitya architecture in Nepal are rich, as indicated by Gutschow's research, in which he distinguishes at least nine cāitya typologies. Even within these broad categories, there are many different stylistic and morphological variations found in the cāitya development.

The two examples that I have chosen to discuss here represent those cāityas that allude directly to the Mahācaitya. Specifically, these cāityas exemplify the cāitya 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 cāityas is the concept of stūpa as Mt. Meru and the axis mundī. 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 Mandala**

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 kvāhpāḥ dyah 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 Vairāvādana 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 vimśatikopa ("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 Mañjuṣrī 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 (Śoḍaśabodhisattva). 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 Nāmaśaṅgiti, 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. The top band also has inscriptions bearing the hundred-syllabled mantra of Vajrasattva.

The middle segment of the caitya also follows the viṇīśatikona form, with five niches in each direction. Here, the iconography of the figures is related to the inner core of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. 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 Niśpannayogāvalī. 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 Nāmasaṅgiti, 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 śaktis 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 Vāgiśvara, 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 Nāgavāsahrad. 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/bahi 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 Thanhti, 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 Samgraha. Furthermore, other caityas are also referred to in more descriptive terms, such as Caitya Bhagavān (“Respected Lord Caitya”), Pañcājinālaya (“Abode of the Five Jinas”), and Pañcabuddha Caitya Bhattāraka (“Respected Five Jina Caitya”). 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 Nāmasaṅgiti 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 torana, 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 Maṉjuśrī/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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 Vaṁśāvalī, one of the oldest extant vaṁśāvalī chronicles dated to the twelfth century, also includes the Buddhist creation myth. Other Buddhist vaṁśāvalīs 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 Purāṇa, 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 Kolve, “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, Gośringa, 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 Maṭḍala, 8


11 Brinkhaus, 65.

12 For my research, I have consulted to the original manuscripts of the Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa, Svayambhū Purāṇa, and the Svayambhū Purāṇa.


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.


16 The following is a summary of the printed version of the Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa, edited by Badri Ratna Vajrācārya. See Badri Ratna Vajrācārya, Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa (Kathmandu: Badri Ratna Vajrācārya, 1978).
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 Pulăn Guhyesvāri, near Bālāju to northeast of Svayambhū. Other practitioners insisted that it was the prominent Śakti shrine to Guhyesvāri Bhagavati at Deopatan, which also continues to be extensively patronized by the Hindu royal family.

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 Bāgmati river. All other rivers of the Valley run into the Bāgmati, which after flowing through the narrow gorge at Kotvāl finally leaves the Valley, thus marking the southern boundaries. The other three locations, Chobār, Aryaghat and Gokarna are also gorges.

This connection of Svayambhū, Maṅjuśrī, and Cakrasaṃvara is related to the primordial goddess Guhyesvāri. This is a significant point, which will be further discussed in the following chapters.

In the Newar Buddhist tradition, Maṅjuśrī is often associated with Viśvakarma, the divinie architect. For example, the visual imagery and the iconography of a Viśvakarīa temple in Patan are related to Maṅjuśrī.

Badri Ratna Vajrācārya, Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa, 34.

The eighth chapter of the Svayambhū Pūrāṇa is entitled “the teachings and explanations of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala” (iti śri Svayambhū purāne śri dharmadhātu vāgyavara maṇḍalābhīdhāna pravartanām namsasātamo dhyāyah). This section corresponds to the sixth chapter in the Ṣrī Pāta Svayambhū Pūrāṇa.

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 Sarvasukha Dhārani, and the Mahāmegha Nīrṇāda Vijrambhī Surāketu “Sound for Awakening the Great Clouds, Flags of the Gods”. These Dhāranis along with instructions for the ritual propitiation to the nāgas, and the Nāga maṇḍalas are collectively called the Mahāmegha Mahāyāna Sūtra, which is an important text for the Newar Buddhists, which are recited during times of drought and for making rain.

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 āgām at Šāntipur. 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, Šāntikarācārya.


This understanding was repeated by ritual specialists from Kathmandu and Patan.

Wayman, Light on Indo-Tibetan Esotericism, 67.

The degree and sophistication of interpretation varies, depending on the knowledge and erudition of the Vajrācārya priests.


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, Godāvari Ratnakundali, Bhagirathi Mahāpuṇya, Candrabhaga Khagānana, Yogadhāra Kusumānjali, Suryabhāga Mahāmokṣa, Jñānadāra Mokṣa, Jñānakundala, and Vssundharā. Each of these pilgrimage sites are associated with the Jina Buddhas and their Buddhakūtis. See Hemraj Śākya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 776.

Gutschow, The Nepalese Caitya, 38.

For examples of these votive stupas, see Gutschow, The Nepalese Caitya.


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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.

30 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.


38 Gopālarājāvamsāvali, 65."Tena kṛta singuḥāra caitya bhatṭarāka pratiṣṭhitā sampurṇa kṛtaṃ".

39 See Slusser, Nepal Mandala, 275; Gutschow, The Nepalese Caitya, 86.


41 Dhanavajra Vajrācārya, Licchavikālī 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 [Vršalradeva, ....sri....Śatalākṣmi....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 yaṇas. 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, Licchavikālī 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 (hitā). 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 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 Hemraj Śākya, Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya, and Gutschow, The Nepalese Caitya.

45 During my field research, my informants maintained these Buddhas represent the four Mānuṣi Buddhhas 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, 175.
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 Licchavi period.

I am grateful to John C. Huntington for pointing this out to me.


In Buddhism, the Jewel (ratna) symbolizes the teachings of the Buddha, which is often represented by the cakra or wheel.

This appears to be a popular understanding in Newar Buddhism.

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.


"Om, the image of blue-complexioned Aksobhya, residing in pleasant surroundings, I pay my respects to the peaceful Aksobhya Tathāgata. He who does benefit to the entire universe, I pay my respects to Samantaḥadra, 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 (gubhyādhipati), holder of the pure vajra (vajrādhāram), 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 Paradisi, bow to Samantakusumā 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 Mahāsthāmaprāpta and Lokesvara, I forever bow to Amitābha to resides in Sukhāvati paradise."

See Slusser, Nepal Maṇḍala, vol 2.

Gutschow, The Nepalese Caitya, 124.

Historical accuracy of the personages and their visits may be gleaned from Indian and Tibetan sources, such as the Blue Annals and the life of Dharmaśāmin. For accounts of the Indian teachers in Nepal, see Rajendra Ram, A History of Buddhism in Nepal: A.D. 704-1396 (New Delhi: Motital Banarasisdass, 1978).

Rajendra Ram, A History of Buddhism in Nepal, 32-99


Local history of Tām Bahā. See Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 246.

Hemraj Śākya, Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 191.

George Roerich, Biography of Dharmaśāmin, iv-v.

Hemraj Śākya, Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 123-125.
My major resource here is Hemraj Śakya’s Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya. Other secondary sources used were Regmi’s Medieval Nepal.


See Regmi, Medieval Nepal, 91.

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 137-138

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 150-151.


Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 152.


Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 153.

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 154-159.

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 160-162.

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 164-165.

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 168.

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 170-71.

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 172-77.

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 174-176.

Oldfield, Sketches from Nepal, 222. See also Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 181.

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 180.

Oldfield, Sketches from Nepal, 222.

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 185

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 206. See also, Oldfield, Sketches from Nepal, 222 and Regmi, Medieval Nepal, Pt 3.

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 200-204. See also, PURNIMA, no. 1, vol. 4.

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 206

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 206-8

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 206

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 210.

Gutschow, The Nepalese Cāitya, 88.

Franz-Karl Ehrhard, Views of Baudhanāth-Stūpa, 12.

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 221-230.

See Kolver, Re-Building a Stūpa: Architectural Drawings of the Svayambhūnāth.

Oldfield, 222-225.

Hemraj Śakya, Śri Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 302-306.


Gutschow, The Nepalese Cāitya, 88.

Oldfield, Nepal, 78; and Landon, Nepal, 230.

According to the Svayambhū Purāṇa, the hill is designated different names in each of the four Yugas. It is technically known as Padmāgiri (“Lotus Mountain”) in the Satya Yuga, Vairakuta (“Adamantine Mountain”) in the Dvāpara Yuga, Gśrnga Parvat (“Cow-Horn Mountain” in the Tretā Yuga, and Gopuccha Parvat “Cow-Tail Mountain” in the Kali Yuga.

Gutschow, The Nepalese Cāitya, 90-91. Gutschow provides a detailed architectural reading of the measurements of the site. His observations are also based on the measurements given


121 This may be one of the six Bhaiervas 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 Aphhairava [Water]; a short way down the hill to the east, Tejöbhara [Fire]; to the south-west of the mountain, Vāyubhairava [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.

122 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.

123 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 Śākyā in his *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācāitya,* 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.

124 Hemraj Śākyā, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācāitya,* 86.

125 Gutschow et. al., *Svayambhūnātha Conservation Masterplan,* 36-56.

126 Gutschow et. al., *Svayambhūnātha Conservation Masterplan,* 82.

127 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 Mahācāitya. 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 Gutschow’s comments with the actual practices. See *Caitya Pūjā Vidhi,* 24.

128 Hemraj Śākyā, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācāitya,* 341. This was also said to me by Bābūrāja Buddhācārya, a ritual specialist at Svayambhū.

129 Hemraj Śākyā, *Śrī Svayambhū Mahācāitya,* 341.

130 For detailed accounts of the lineage pūjā rituals associated with Pulān Singu Caitya, see Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya,* 84.

131 Scholars have not associated this shrine with Vajravārāhi directly. However, the inscription in front of the shrine clearly invokes Vajravārāhi as Ekājaṭi Nila Saravatī Vajrayogini. An identical invocation to Vajravārāhi, alternately referred to as Vajrayogini, is also found at the Khadga Yogini Temple in Sankhu, where the goddess is also called Ekājaṭi. Anantapriyā’s invocation of Ekājaṭi suggests that it is an alternative epithet of Vajravārāhi.
For reading of both inscriptions, see Regmi, Medieval Nepal, Pt. 4. Furthermore, the Sadhanamālā considered Ekajaṭī to be identical with Vajravārāhī. See B. Bhattacharyya, 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 Badri Ratna Vajrācārya, Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa, 25.

116 The Svayambhū Reconstruction and Preservation Committee renovated the present building in 1982-82. See Gutschow et. al., Svayambhūnātha Conservation Masterplan, 79.

117 The inscribed names of the yaksas include Maṇiḥbhadra, Pūrṇabhadra, Vaiśravāna, Dhanendra, Kelmālī, Čivikunḍali, Sukheendra, Calendra.

118 The yantra symbolizes the seat/presence of the goddess. Often Vajrayogini, Vajravārāhī, or Kumārī are often represented by a double triangle yantra.

119 According to the informant, the sacrificial offering is technically given to Bhairava on behalf of Vāyudevā, the “god of wind.”

120 Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇam, Chapter Ten.

121 Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇam, 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 Newārī.

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 Mahācāitya 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 Mahācāitya and the center is never considered “vacant”. See Kolver, Re-Building a Stūpa: Architectural Drawings of the Svayambhūnātha, 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 Aksobhya change places, with Aksobhya at the center and Vairocana in the eastern quadrant. Similarly paired mandalas 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 manḍala may also be inherent in the Svayambhū Mahācāitya iconography. See Alex Wayman, The Buddhist Tantras, 46-49.

131 and the realization of the Maṇḍala itself and can be considered as entering the Maṇḍala.

132 This information was given to me by Dr. Alexander Rosplatt from the University of Leipzig, based on his research on the reconstruction of Svayambhū.

133 The Nispannayogāvalī also classifies the manḍala as "Pindikramokta Aksobhya Maṇḍala". See Maṇḍala no. 2, Nispannayogāvalī, 35-37.

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This identification was given to me by the Buddhācārya priests at Svayambhū. de Mallmann, *Introduction à l’Iconographie du Tantrisme Bouddhique*, 232. See also Maṇḍalas 20 and 21 in the *Nīspannayogāvalī*.

Vyha Svayambhū Purāṇa, 371.

This idea was explained by various practitioners, but most notably by Badrīratna Vajrācārya. Gutschow et. al., *Svayambhūnātha Conservation Plan*, 85.


Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 96. The information on the ritual aspect of these tirthas is taken from Gutschow’s work.

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 (dīgha dyah). Like Cakrāsāmvara, Yogāmvara/Jñānaḍākini is important āgaṇī deities. Yogāmvara’s primordial site, Mhepi Ajimā shrine is also situated on a hill and is considered to be a saktiḥita of Jñānaḍākini.


During my research, there were several different versions of the saṁkalpa 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 *Kalaśācarana Pūja Vidhi*. See also Gellner, 191 for another version of the saṁkalpa statement.


Gellner mentions that the *Samvarodaya Tantra*, one of the key Cakrāsāmvara texts, refers to the Himālayas as the Upacchanda-pitha. 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 Cakrāsāmvara maṇḍala.


The cremation grounds as pithas 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.


See Locke, *Karunamaya*, on the Aṣṭami Vrata pūjās and their connection to pilgrimage.


The connection of Buddhism and Hinduism is particularly brought to the forefront during *Navarāṭri* or *Mohani*, particularly in the context of the worship of Talejū, Durgā, Kumārī, and the masked dances of the Nāva Durgā Goddesses. This aspect needs to be discussed further.


Vyha Svayambhū Purāṇa, Chapter Six.

These plaques were offered by the devotees who performed the pilgrimage related to the Aṣṭami Vrata Pūjā to Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara. Information given in the Svayambhū Purāṇa. Reference I used was Badrīratna Vajrācārya, Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa.

Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 128.

Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 192.

The annual ritual is described in Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 255. The governing body of the Āchārya 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.

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.

Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 205-255.

In fact, Locke notes that although his informants cited “Vajrayogini” at Sankhu to be their lineage deity, the Vajrācārya priests at the Khadga Yogini temple verified that the main lineage deity ritual was performed to the caitya, and subsequent pūjā also offered to Khadga Yogini.

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.

One of the major functions of the Sikhumu Rāj Gubhāju is to select the Royal Kathmandu Kumāri and act as dyahpāla of Kumāri Bāhā, which does not have a sangha, but essentially houses the Kathmandu Kumāri.

Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 261.

At present, the pūjā is performed by the Buddhācāryas from Svayambhū, the dyahpālas in charge of Svayambhū, Śāntipur, and the Hāriti 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 Gubhāju and daṣadigācāryas as proxy, as these men are too old to come to the Mahācaitya each day.

Regmi, Medieval Nepal, vol 3, 23.

The five include the Raj Gubhāju, three members of the Sikhumu Bāhā kawal, and a Vajrācārya from Śāval Bāhā.

During my field research, some of my sources also said that the Dasapāramitā symbolized the ten stages (bhūmis) of the bodhisattva path.

Ratnakaji Bajrācārya and Bijaya Ratan Bajrācārya, Nepal Deya Vibharya Tacaḥ (Key to Vihāras in Nepal), (Kathmandu: Self-Published, 1983).

Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 293.

Personal communication with Thakālī Najarman Buddhācārya, the head priest of Svayambhū, who performs the rituals in Śāntipur.


At present, only Thakālī Najarman Buddhācārya of Svayambhū performs the pūjā, as the senior Vajrācārya from Makhān is too old to come for the monthly pūjā. However, priest from Makhān sends money and offering as proxy. 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 Vakvajra to consecrate it. Invoking Mānaki 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, Vakvajra 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 Takṣe Bāhā, where they came to worship their guru.

183 Ratnakaji Bajrācārya, Nepah Dehya Vihāraya Tahca, 83. The Sankrit colophon, quoted by Bajrācārya reads: "Krētacāraya saroruha pada viracita sīrī hevajra sādhanasya vajrapadipanama tippapi visuddhih samapta / Krtiriyam Paṇḍitaśacāraya śrīmat surat padanānīti //

184 Slusser, Nepal Maṇḍala, 67.

185 As will be discussed in detail in Chapter Seven, Guhīśvarī’s identity as Vajraśvārī may emerge from the fact that the lineage deities of both Takṣe Bāhā and Mu Bāhā are Guhīśvarī. Both Bāhās are intimately associated with the worship of the Mu Bāhā Kumāri as Vajrādevī and Vajraśvārī. At Takṣe Bāhā, the Sādya Kumāri resides over the mahābali pūjā, which is often offered to Māmaki, who in turn is an emanation of Vajraśvārī. These rituals may provide clues to the identity of Guhīśvarī “the Secret Goddess”, who are known variously as Nairatmā, Vajraśvārī, and Vajrādevi.

186 Although there is a well in the courtyard of the Bāhā that is associated with Jamna Gubbaju, Śāntipur and Svayambhū, Locke states that his informants insisted that he is not the same Maṇjuvajra 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 Vajraśvārī priest.

189 Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 129-130.

190 Ratnakaji Bajrācārya, Nepah Dehya Vihāraya Tahca, 100.

191 Locke, Karuṇāmaya, 25-30.

192 Locke, Karuṇāmaya, 30.

193 Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 129. Later, the book was conceded by the saṅgha at Makhan Bāhā in the seventeenth century.

194 Locke states that one Tathāgatavajra from Kvā Bāhā set up a guthi for the standarization of the rituals and texts. Although now defunct, the rules are still followed by the Vajraśvārāyas of Patan. See Locke, Karuṇāmaya, 30.

195 Hemrāj Śākya, Śrī Svayambhū Mahācaitya, 230.

196 Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 146.


198 Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 298.
Kva Baha in Patan, for instance, has Yogamvara/Jnanaadakini and Cakrashamvara/Vajravarahi as principal deities of the two agam shrines.

Yogamvara at Mhepi also has a special relationship with the Rato Macchindranath cult, as the pañju priests of Rato Macchindranath, who are dyapalas of the Bungamati shrine consider the Yogamvara from Mhepi to be their lineage deity, who is "brought" to Svayambhû. Every year, before the chariot festival, the saṅgha offer their annual lineage pūja to Yogamvara on the west stairs of Svayambhû leading down to Sântipur.

In this recent book, Niels Gutschow designates a descriptive term Ramyakūtägara Caitya ("Beautiful Palace Caitya") to this type of caitya, based on Amrtananda Sakyas 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 Ramyakūtägara Caityas, however, I have not verified this statement at this point in my research. See Niels Gutschow, The Nepalese Caitya, 261-263.

Gutschow, The Nepalese Caitya, 262.


While Gutschow provides an excellent descriptive analysis of the caitya, he does not identify the iconography of this caitya as related to the Dharmadhatu Mandala.


Niels Gutschow, The Nepalese Caitya, 188.

In my research, I know of only three Baha that have the Dharmadhatu Mandala: Kumari Baha, Tham Bahi, and a small Baha in New Road.

Sarva Tathagata Tattva Samgraha, 54.

Niels Gutschow, The Nepalese Caitya, 8.
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MANIFESTING THE MANḌALA:
A STUDY OF THE CORE ICONOGRAPHIC PROGRAM
OF
NEWAR BUDDHIST MONASTERIES
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DISSERTATION

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*****

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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
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 torana and strut iconography of bāhā/bahi 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 Maṇjuśrī, the Maṇḍala’s emanator and the Valley’s patron deity, who, in the Newar Buddhist context, is equated with the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū. Maṇjuśrī’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. In Nepal, he is incorporated into the cosmogonic myth of the Newar Buddhists, in which, Maṇjuśrī not only creates the Valley but also is identified with Svayambhū Mahācaitya. In his more mundane aspects,
Mañjuśrī is generally propitiated as Lord of Speech (Vāgiśvara) and his identity is often conflated with that of the Hindu goddess of learning, Sarasvatī. On the other hand, as the esoteric Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara 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 Mañjuśrīmūla-ālāpa and the Mahāparinibbāṇa Sūtra, 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/bahi architecture further demonstrates Mañjuśrī’s complex symbolism, through unified iconographic programs in Newar Buddhist architecture, as is found in the iconography of Kvī 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 Cakrasamvara
Maṇḍala.

Textual Sources and Iconographic Description of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala

The textual sources for the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in Newar Buddhist art are the Kriyā Samucayya, Sadhanamālā, Vajrāvalī Tantra, and Nispannayogāvalī. Further, rituals texts describing the visualization of the Maṇḍala and the pūjās associated with it are also useful iconographic sources. 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). The Nispannayogāvalī (#21) describes the Maṇḍala in detail, including the attributes of the deities in the inner house.

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. The central deity, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Māṇjughoṣa, is identical with Vairocana and is a fully Enlightened Buddha (samyaksambodhi tathāgata). 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 ḍhanṭā in his third pair, and his principal hands display the dharmacakramudrā. The eight Uṣṇiṣa 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 kulā. In the intermediate corners of the inner circle are the Buddhāśaktis of the Jinas: Locana, Māmaki, Padmini (Pāṇḍurā), and Ārya Tārā. The entrance to the inner circle is marked by the four guardian deities: Vajraṅkuśa, 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 bhūmiśvari) 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
the eight Offering Goddesses, namely Lāsyā (gestures), Mālā (garland), Gitā (song), and Nrtyā (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 Niśpannayogāvali, these are given as: the eight primary gods of Hinduism; the nine Navagrahas; the twenty-four devas, yakṣas and gaṇas; the eight Mother Goddesses (Aṣṭamātrkās); the twelve Yakṣarājās and Hāriti; the eight Nāgarājās; the eight Mountain Deities; the twenty-eight constellations (Nakṣatrās).

The complexity of the morphological structure suggests that the Dharmadhātu Manḍala, as a Vairocana-cycle maṇḍala, developed from earlier Vairocana-cycle Tantras, such as the maṇḍalas from the Mahāvairocana Sutra and the Sarvataḥgatatattiva Samgraha. Further, a direct structural relationship can be seen between the Dharmadhātu Manḍala and the Manḍala of the Manjuśrīmūlakalpa, a text that is dated to the fourth century C.E. In each maṇḍala, the inner circle is surrounded by
three concentric squares.\textsuperscript{10} Similarly, the Abhisambhodi Vairocana Maṇḍala from the root text, \textit{Mahāvairocana Abhisambhodi Tantra} is also structurally identical to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and has Mahāvairocana as the central deity.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{samaya} symbols, as either circles, squares, \textit{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.

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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 Kāji 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 Maṇjuśrī 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)
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 Vāgiśvara Mañjughoṣa is called a *samyaksambodhi Buddha*, embodying the essence of Vairocana ("vairocana-ātman"). 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 Vāgiśvara 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 Vāgiśvara 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. 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 Maṇjuśrī/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 Kṣa 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 Maṇjuśrī in the art and religious practices of Newar Buddhism. By establishing a relationship between the Nāmasaṅgiṭī Tantra and the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū, this section of the Svayambhū Purāṇa underscores the significance of the Nāmasaṅgiṭī 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. Both chapters begin with the conversation between Bodhisattva Maitreya and Śākyamuni at Gosringu 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 Pāṇḍita, Dharmaśīri Mitra, to the Valley to know the secret meaning of the twelve-voweled mantra of the Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra, the root text of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala.

According to the narrative, Dharmaśīri 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 ao am ah). Mahāmaṇjuśrī, residing at Pañcasirśa Parvat (Wu Tai Shan) in China, realizes through his omniscient insight that Dharmaśīri 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 pāṇḍita, Maṇjuśrī comes to the Valley in his

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nirmāṇakāya form as Mañjudeva to greet him. To test Dharmaśrī Mitra's faith, Mañjudeva disguises himself as an old farmer ploughing a field. 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 Nāmasaṅgiti. 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 Nāmasaṅgiti 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 samsaric defilements and desires was performed, Dharmaśrī Mitra then receives the abhiśekha (empowerment) of Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara. 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 (suvisuddha Dharmadhātu jñāna). The five-fold, ten-fold, and four-fold initiations of Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara 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 “jāmbūṇāda”, 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 *abhiśekha* 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 ratnanaḍala (lit. "gem maṇḍala) as guru-dakṣīṇā (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 śādhana 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 śādhaṇa perform the bodhicaryā vrata for the sake of all sentient beings in this world. Through this, your body will be made sacred (puñya śarīra) 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 sanyaksambodhi 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 esoteric 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 bijas. In an analysis that is identical to the Heruka cycle Tantras, 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 "m", 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. 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 esoteric 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 incorporates 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala of the āgāmī (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 āgāmī 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 Nāmasaṅgiti 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 legitimizes within the religious practices. Third,
the outer and inner dichotomies may be key to interpreting the symbolic and buddhological connections between the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṃvara 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 āgām pūjā or Cakrasaṃvara 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
(abhyantara) rituals include highly esoteric pūjā to which access is restricted and possible only through initiation. The term abhyantara itself derives from the location of the āgām 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 Vāgiśvara, Caṇḍamahāroṣana, Vajrayogini, Guhyeśvari; while the inner (abhyantara) deities are the highly esoteric aspect of the Tantric deities of the āgām 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 Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi,
Yogāmvara/Jñānaḍākini, Hevajra/Nairatmya of the āgāṁ 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 Nāmasaṅgiti further indicated by manuscript drawings depicting the reconstruction of the Mahācaitya. 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 Mañjughośa, 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
to interpret the connection of the Dharmadhātu and the Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala (Aksobhya-cycle maṇḍala). In this esoteric system, the two maṇḍalas, namely the Dharmadhātu and the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala may be respectively interpreted as the generation stage (uppatti-krama) and completion stage (uppanna-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.\textsuperscript{27} On the other hand, the *maṇḍala* of Stage of Completion, are identified as those where the "Buddhas appear in the form of goddesses"\textsuperscript{28} and generally relate to the Akṣobhya-cycle *maṇḍala*. In the Newar Buddhist context, this may be identical to the Akṣobhya-cycle Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala, in which Vajravārāhī is preeminent.\textsuperscript{29} As is characteristic of Vajrayāna soteriological methodologies, the two *maṇḍala* 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 Maṇḍala 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 Maṇḍalas alluded to in the *Svāyambhu 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 (nirāñjana 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 kvāhpāh dyaḥ shrines of the Buddhist monasteries. In the bāhā/bahi context, this component can be interpreted as the principal vivifying caitya in the courtyard.

The equation of Svayambhū with the outer meaning of the Nāmasaṅgiti, 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, vrataś, 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 kvāhpāh dyāḥ, Śākyamuni, who is none other than the nirmāṇakāya form of Swayambhū Buddha himself. Through progressively higher realizations and complex metaphors to explain the Enlightenment process, the essence of Swayambhū or the “inner” meaning of the Nāmasaṅgiti can be interpreted by the highly esoteric sahaja meditations of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Specifically, this would pertains to the Cakrasamvara and Vajravarāhi practices in the Newar Buddhist context. This can be interpreted as the sambhogakāya symbolizing the Dharmakāya aspect of Swayambhū. As secret practices that may be only accessed through initiation, the imagery is not revealed to the public and remained secret in the āgāmi shrines of the bāhās/bāhīs. This element, in Newar Buddhist architecture, is directly associated with the āgāmi 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 Nāmasaṅgiti that connects the two important meditational cycles of Newar Buddhism—the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṃvara 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 Mandala, Nāmasaṅgiti 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 kvāhpāh dyāḥ shrine with the Dharmadhātu strut iconography, and the āgamā shrine with Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi, 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 Nāmasaṅgitī. Indeed, from the seventeenth century onwards, the visual representations of the Mahācaitya invariably embody the three structures—stūpa, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and Cakrasaṃvara shrines—as
an iconographic unit. Although the Pratâppur 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 Cakrasamvara 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 kvāhpāh dyah 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” (abhyaṅtara) 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 abhyaṅtara pūjās, Dharmadhātu is represented in his guhya form, as a fierce blue figure shown in sexual union with his Buddhāsakti.32 Such ritual contexts clearly allude to the fact that Dharmadhātu’s “inner” form is analogous to Cakrasamvara, in which the Akṣobhya-cycle is predominant.33 Further, during the dikṣā initiations to Cakrasamvara, Maṇjuśrī 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 Mandala. 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 Swayambhū 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 Maṇjuśrī’s role as Primordial Guru and his ritual association to Vajrasattva.

SECTION II: MAṆJUŚRĪ IN NEWAR BUDDHISM

Maṇjuśrī as Ādi Buddha and Ādi Guru

In the Swayambhū Purāṇa, Maṇjuśrī is equated with Swayambhū 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 Cakrasaṅvara cycle meditation, Maṇjuśrī is variously called jagad guru, the “teacher of the universe” or “foremost of the teachers in the universe” (eka srētha 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. 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. 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. The visual imagery of Dharmadhātu Mañjughosa clearly alludes to Mañjuśrī’s association with Vajrasattva, as Mañjuśrī holds a vajra and ghanṭā in his hands. Often on a torāṇa, one finds Vajrasattva directly above Mañjughosa, also suggesting an unequivocal statement of Mañjuśrī’s relationship with Vajrasattva. Furthermore, the Vajrācārya priests that I interviewed considered Dharmadhātu Mañjughosa to embody the five Jina Buddhas and Vajrasattva, while Mañjuśrī, in his form, symbolized the six kulas (families) of the Nāmaśaṅgīti 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. In the Newar Buddhist context, this would be
even more pertinent, since the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is a Vairocana-cycle *maṇḍala*, with Maṇjuśrī is identical with Vairocana. Alternately, Maṇjuśrī, 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 Maṇjuśrī/Vairocana.

To suit the Newar Buddhist environment, this abstract buddhological understanding is manifest and through symbolic connection of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, Svayambhū and Nāmasaṅgiti Maṇjuśrī, the personification of the *Nāmasaṅgiti Tantra*. This conception is most clearly demonstrated by a sculpture at Svayambhū Mahācaityya 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 Maṇjuśrī Pāda, symbolizing the feet of Maṇjuśrī 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 Maṇjughoṣa, 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.

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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. According to the narrative, after receiving dikṣā of Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the secret teachings of the Nāmasaṅgīti, and acknowledging Mañjuśrī as the universal guru, Dharmasri 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.
Mañjuśrī states that he will give darśan to Dharmaśri Mitra in disguise, but will be able to recognize him by the utpala lotus that Mañjuśrī will hold in his hand. Dharmaśri Mitra goes back to Vikramśilā Mahāvihāra, where as an enlightened monk, begins teach the dharma and expound the meaning of the Nāmasaṅgītī 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, Dharmaśri Mitra ignores Mañjuśrī's presence and continues on with his teachings.

After the teachings are over and when everyone has left, Dharmaśri Mitra goes to Mañjuśrī and greets him. Realizing the heinous sin he had committed because of this ego, Dharmaśri 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." Thus saying, Dharmaśri 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
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 Nāmasaṅgiti 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.\(^4^2\) 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 Nāmasaṅgiti 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
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 Nāgavāsahrrada 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 am ah); this is also the mantra of the Nāmasaṅgīti. Further, the priest also gives the child the mantra of Mañjuśrī, "Om Vāgīśvarāyah", 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 sangha members of many bāhās in Kathmandu and Patan chant the Nāmasaṅgīti in front of the kvāhpāh dyah 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. Ratnakāji 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."

This ritual association is most clearly articulated and enacted in the gurumāṇḍala 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 identifies 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 Nāmasaṅgiti Tantra, the root text of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara. More importantly, Mañjuśrī also taught the Cakrasamvara/Vajravārahī cycle meditation in this tradition. Mañjudeva also established the lineage tradition of Vajrācārya teachers, after empowering the first Vajrācārya, Śāntigarācārya, with the five-fold consecration (pañcabhiśekha) as the adamantine teacher (Vajrācārya) and initiating him into the highest esoteric teachings of Cakrasamvara and Vajravārahī.

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 Śāntigarācārya, 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 Śāntigarācārya in the annual pūjā at Śāntipur in Svayambhū, where Śāntigarācārya is still said to reside. That Śāntipur is the Tantric āgāmī shrine for the Kathmandu Vajrācāryas also implies that their source of power is connected to the great Tantric siddha, Śāntigarācārya.

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 Śāntigarācārya
variously as vajra guru “Adamantine Guru”, vajrasattva pratirūpa “the likeness of Vajrasattva”, and vajrasattva svarūpa “form of Vajrasattva.” 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). Similarly, early Tantras, such as the Guhyasamāja, and the later Nāmasaṅgiti Tantra, allude to Mañjuśrī ritual identity with Vajrasattva. 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.

Root Text of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala: Ārya Nāmasaṅgiti

The Ārya Nāmasaṅgiti Tantra is the root (mula) Tantra of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, according to the Newar Buddhist tradition. The Nāmasaṅgiti 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. 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.

Although the Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra is generally classified as a Yoga
Tantra class of the Mahāvairocana cycle, it also has a set of commentaries
such as the Amṛtakaṇīkatikā and Amṛtakaṇi-kā-nāma-ārya Nāmasaṅgīti
Tippanī by Sūryaśrijñāna that classifies the text under the Anuttara Yoga
Tantras and interprets the secret meaning according to the sahajā tradition
of the Highest Yoga Tantras. 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 Guhyasamājā
Tantra. Within this division, the Kālacakra-type of commentaries are also
employ the Hevajra Tantra.
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 Nāmatantananrāja “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 Maṇjuśrī as the “teacher of the condensed Tantra.”

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 (Jīna), I take refuge.

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 Yogini (female) class interpretation in the Newar Buddhist context. Given the contextual reading that Guhyesvāri 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 Nāmasaṅgiti in the Newar Buddhist tradition. Certainly, the references to the “inner” meaning of the Nāmasaṅgiti in the Svayambhū Purāṇa allude that the Newar Buddhist tradition clearly employs the esoteric interpretations of the Anuttara Yogini Tantras. The ritual specialists that I interviewed also constantly referred to the abhyantara (“inner, secret”) meanings pertaining to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the Nāmasaṅgiti 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 (trisamādhī yoga) that are usually associated with the Anuttara Yogini class Tantras, in which Akṣobhya, instead of Vairocana, presides in this meditation. The hermeneutical interpretations of the Nāmasaṅgiti 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍalas tradition in Newar Buddhism may be seen as hierarchic layering of maṇḍalas.

Interpreting Maṇjuśrī’s Association with Vairocana-Cycle Maṇḍalas

As indicated by the structural form of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, the Nāmasaṅgiti 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. 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. 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). 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 Nāmasaṅgiti Tantra: Meditations on the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala

As a Vairocana-cycle Tantra, the Nāmasaṅgiti Tantra ("Songs of the Names [of Maṇjuśrī"] expounds the qualities of Maṇjuśrī as a fully Enlightened Buddha (samyaksambodhi buddha). It describes, in highly philosophical terms, the knowledge of the Buddha that is achieved through yogic practices. In the first chapter, Vajrapāni requests Śākyamuni to expound on the "profound meaning" and "broad meaning" of the Nāmasaṅgiti. According to commentarial literature, the "profound meaning" is the absolute truth that is the state of sūnyatā, while the "broad meaning" is the conventional or relative truth that is manifested though the maṇḍala to purify the bodicitta and cleanse defilements.

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. In the Nāmasaṅgiti, 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 Maṇjuśrī exists in the heart-mind (hrdaya/citta) of each kula Buddha and
according to one of the teachings specific to the Newar Buddhist tradition, the list is as follows.⁶⁶

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buddha</th>
<th>Forms of Mañjuśrī</th>
<th>Kula Kulas Described in Nāmasaṅgīti</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Vajrasattva</td>
<td>Nāmasaṅgīti</td>
<td>Mañjuśrī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Akṣobhya</td>
<td>Vajrakhadga [Dukkhabhedā]</td>
<td>Vajra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ratnasambhava Uṣṇiṣa”</td>
<td>Vāgīśvara</td>
<td>Ratna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Amitābha</td>
<td>Vajratikṣṇa</td>
<td>Padma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Amoghasiddhi</td>
<td>Jñānakāya</td>
<td>Karma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 Maṇjuśrī’s role as the Ādi Buddha in the Newar Buddhist tradition. Such citations from the Nāmasaṅgiti as the “essence of the Tantras” and thus naturally to Maṇjuśrī exalted status are often elaborated upon:

“This Nāmasaṅgiti is the pure and immaculate omniscient knowledge (suvisuddha sarvajña jñāna) and the secret of the Body, Speech, and Mind. It is the enlightenment (bodhī) 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 as secondary defilements; the pacification of all hindrances; and the release of all bonds. . . . It is the speedy success 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.”

As a physical manifestation and explication of the philosophical concepts expounded in the text, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala symbolizes the totality and essence of the Nāmasaṅgiti 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 Nāmasaṅgiti, where Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara is called the “Master of Speech,
accompanied by the six Mantra Kings". 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 gkanṭā as a pair of attributes. In other instances, the torana 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. 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.” Similarly, the Nāmasaṅgīti referring to secret mantras of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, states:

"AAIIIUUEAI OAUAMAH sthitohrdi/
jñānamūrtiahambuddho buddhānamtrayadvāravintaṃ //

"AAIIIUUEAI OAUAMAH.
Stationed in the heart [of the Buddhas] abiding in the three times of the Buddhas
I am (aham) the Buddha, the embodiment of knowledge"
Personification of the Text: Iconography of Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī

Although Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara 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 Vāgiśvara, Nāmasaṅgīti is the most popular form 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 Nispannayogāvalī or the Sādhanamālā, nor are images of Nāmasaṅgīti found in the Indian context. 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 one of the six kula buddhas. 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 vajraparyaṇkāsana, with lions flanking his lotus through as an indication of his identity with Vairocanā. 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 Nāmaśaṅgīti are often shown in a double vyakaraṇamudrā, the gesture of exposition (Fig. 5.10). The second pair displays the tarpanamudrā in a gesture of sprinkling the ambrosia contained in the bowl (pātrastha amṛta kṣepanamudrā) 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.\textsuperscript{78} khaṭvāṅga, which in this sculpture displays the symbols of the six kulas. Other representations of Nāmaśaṅgīti 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 (viśvavairopari khadga).\textsuperscript{79} The fifth pair, that generally holds a bow and arrow, is extended outward and the mudrās allude to the presence of Maṇjuśrī’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.\textsuperscript{80}

This form of Maṇjuśrī as the personification of the text is one of the most important deities in Newar Buddhism. In the Newar Buddhist monasteries, Nāmaśaṅgīti Maṇjuśrī is a popular theme in the toraṇa
iconography over the shrine door, visually reiterating Mañjuśrī’s relation to the kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine. In the eighteen main bāhās of Kathmandu, Nāmasaṅgiti’s presence is consistently found in the torana iconography, as will be discussed in the following section. Further, many bāhā/bahis also have individual shrines of Nāmasaṅgiti built, where the Nāmasaṅgiti chanting groups perform special pūjās. Ritual specialists have also stated to me that the twelve-armed form of Mañjuśrī is the exoteric face of Cakrasaṅvara, 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 Vāgiśvara Mañjughoṣa represents the totality of the six kula tradition. In the Dharmadhātu pūja 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 Jinās and wearing a pañca jina crown. At the beginning of the ritual, the Vajrācārya priests performed the guru maṇḍala
pūjā, in which they visualize themselves as Vajrasattva, who generates the Manḍalas (Fig. 5.12). A series of complex meditations related to the Trisamādhi ritual was then performed. 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 Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi. This ritual practice also reinforced the symbolic connection between the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṃvara Manḍala traditions.

During this meditation, the priests invoked the Jina Buddhas into the main kalaśa and into the manḍalas. It was then explained that, as a process of visualization, the manḍalas 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. 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 Cakrasaṃvara.

*Om svābhava suddhah sarvadharmanām svābhavaśuddho'ham/
śūnyatājñāna vajra svābhavāvātmako'ham/
Om vajrasuddhah sarvadharmā vajrasuddho'ham* //
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’ham /
Abhiśincantu maṁ sarvavīragana
Om śrī herukāvajra svābhavatmako’ham /

All heros and yoginis 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 Yogini
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. 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. In each classification of pūjā, the color of Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara 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 Maṇjuśrī 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 Thām Bahī, Kathmandu states that the patrons undertook the vrata of Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara 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 tīrthas and Vitarāgas. Of particular
important during this pūjā is the pilgrimage to the tīrthas of the five Jinas and the Buddhāsaktī around the vicinity of Svayambhū. The participants of the vrata are required to bathe and perform pūjās at these sites. In the Maṇḍala of this pūjā, Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara is white, rather than yellow, and holds the same attributes as the yellow figure. Generally, the homa ceremony is optional and often not required.

In the second category, the Lakṣāḥuti type of pūjās requires homa ceremonies. In this context, Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara follows the form described in the Niśpannyayogāvali, 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 pañcamrta, 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 Maṇjuśrī and the Cakrasaṅkṣara cycle is the form of Maṇjuśrī found in the Ahorātra pūjās of Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara. 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 āgām shrines or in the charnel fields and relate to the "secret/inner" (guhya/ abhyantara) class of rituals, corresponding to the Heruka deities of the
Anuttara Yogini Tantras. In this type of abhyantara pūjā, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is blue and shown in sexual union with his śakti, who is red.\textsuperscript{90}

This esoteric form of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara suggests a parallel with the commentarial exegeses of the Nāmasaṅgit Tantra that employs the Anuttara Yogini 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.\textsuperscript{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 Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi. Further, in this pūjā, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara and his female parallel the practices of the Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi 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 Cakrasaṃvara and Maṇjuśri. For example, the initiations rituals to Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi (dikṣā) require, as an integral part of the preliminary rituals, the presence of Maṇjuśri in his form
as Mañjuvajra\textsuperscript{92} with his śakti, Keśinīvajra (an alternate name for Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara and his praṇā). In this ritual, the senior guru and his wife symbolize Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi, while the assistant ritual specialist and his wife represent Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara and his praṇā.\textsuperscript{93} This second group, symbolizing Mañjuśrī, prepares the initiates for the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi through purification rites.

The esoteric ritual procedures pertaining to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala further indicate its association with the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. Badri Ratna Vajrācārya, in a ritual manual, states that the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇḍala pūjā employs the Trisamādhi "Three-Fold Meditation," which are Rājagṛi Yoga Samādhi, Ādi Yoga Samādhi, and Karma Rājagṛi Samādhi, all of which are generally associated with the meditation cycles of the Anuttara Yoga Tantras.\textsuperscript{94} Further, this meditation process is equivalent to the Tathāgata Caryā, symbolizing the totality of the Tathāgatas.\textsuperscript{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 Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi, when performed in the āgam pūjās and the Diśī Pūjā.\textsuperscript{96} In a complex three-fold visualization process, the practitioner first generates the deity as the "samaya devatā/samayasattva" ("visualized deity"), specifically Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi, and then identifies himself/herself with the
"jñāna devatā / jñānasattva ("knowledge deity"). As discussed in Chapter Two, the commentarial text of the Nāmasaṅgiti, namely, the Amrtakaṇḍikā Ṭīkā gives an identical yogic process to realize the "inner" meaning of the Nāmasaṅgiti. 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 Cakrasaṃvara cycle. In this context, just as Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara appears to be an emanation of Akṣobhya, identified by his blue kula color.

SECTION VI: ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Representations of the Dharmadhātu Mañḍala in Newar Art

The most frequent representations of the Dharmadhātu Mañḍalas found in context of bāhā/bahī architecture are as freestanding mañḍalas, strut figures, and torāṇas. In this section, I will briefly discuss the morphological variations of the freestanding mañḍalas found in Newar Buddhist art and the iconographic patterns found among the strut and toraṇa iconography. To understand the mañḍala iconography in context with the sacred architecture, I will then examine the presence of the Dharmadhātu iconography in five bāhā/bahīs: Thām Bahī, Kvā Bāhā, Musyā Bāhā from Kathmandu and Bu Bāhā and Bhinche Bāhā in Patan.
Freestanding Mandalas

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 Thām Bahī, Sighā Bāhā, Kumārī Bahā, and Lagan Bahā, 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 maṇḍalas, 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 maṇḍala type pertains to the larger Dharmadhātu Maṇḍalas, whose horizontal surfaces are often over three feet in diameter. The base of these maṇḍalas 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 maṇḍala. These larger maṇḍalas, often inscribed and dated, are generally covered with a metal repousse sheet onto which the maṇḍala 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 manḍalas from Bu Bāhā, Patan and Thām Bahi, Kathmandu in the following sections will illustrate the complexity and variation in the Dharmadhātu iconography.

Struts Depicting the Dharmadhātu Mandala 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 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
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 Mandala in Torana 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 Maṇjuśrī. The toraṇa iconography over the main door of the kvālpāḥ dyah image variously depicted Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara, Nāmasaṅgiti, or a form of Maṇjuśrī 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍalas. These two themes are alluded to repeatedly not only at Musyā Bāhā, but also in other religious structures discussed here.
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. 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.

Until the 1970s, the exterior entrance had a painted torana that was inscribed and dated to N.S. 713, corresponding to 1513 CE. 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 Aksobhya 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 kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine. The shrine image is that of Śākyamuni, while the second level of the shrine façade houses the āgāmi shrine to Cakrasamvara and Vaijraśrāhi. An elaborately carved wooden torana over the shrine is inscribed and dated to N.S. 805 (A.D. 1685) and depicts Dharmadhātu Vaiśśvara 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, Śaḍaśrī Lokeśvara symbolizes the Saṅgha/Compassion aspect and Prajñāpāramitā 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 Vaiśśvara 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 Nāmasaṅgiti 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 Vaiśśvara and Nāmasaṅgiti Mañjuśrī is even more clearly articulated in the torana iconography of other bāhās. For example, in the torana of Mu Bāhā, Kathmandu, the central figure is Nāmasaṅgiti,
surrounded by the four Jina Buddhas (Fig. 5.20). Directly above Nāmasaṅgiti where Vajrasattva is generally placed is Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara 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 identity 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.\textsuperscript{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, Ākṣobhya, 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 Maṇjuśrī
and Vairocana. The visual imagery thus indicates that the kvāhpāḥ dyah image of Śākyamuni should also be interpreted as a form of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughosa, 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 kvāhpāḥ 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 kvāhpāḥ dyah and āgamī 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 Niṣpannayogāvali, 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 sakti is also said to be blue. This form, however, is generally not displayed in public.

A metal repoussé 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 Maṇjuśrī 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 āgāmī shrine to Cakrasamvara and
Vajravarāhī. The topmost level has a shrine-like copula, which is inaccessible, but signifies the "empty" dharmakāya aspect of the Enlightened Buddha.\textsuperscript{107} The third floor, directly above the āgarā shrine has mural paintings of four yoginis, to which I will refer again when discussing the Cakrasamvara 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 Vāgiśvara are the generators and vivifying elements of the sacred space. The torana iconography is the most significant visual imagery that alludes to Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography.

(3) Iconographic Analysis of Thām Bahi, Kathmandu

Structurally, Thām Bahi is one of the largest and most lavishly decorated bahis in the Valley (Fig. 5.26). As in the two previous examples discussed, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography is found depicted in the toranas, signifying the conception of the bahi’s sacred space as a three-dimensional Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. In addition, Thām Bahi has one of the few examples of a freestanding Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala found among the Buddhist monasteries in Kathmandu.

The exterior doorway of the bahi on the east side has a wooden torana dated and inscribed N.S.806 (1686 CE). The torana depicts the Buddha
Dharma Saṅgha triad, with the center figure of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara as the Buddha, flanked by Śaḍākṣari Lokeśvara (Saṅgha) and Prajñāpāramitā (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 bāhī. The shrine toraṇa has metal repousse, depicting the twelve-armed form of Nāmasaṅgiti Mañjuśrī, the personification of Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala’s root text (Fig. 5.27). The visual imagery clarifies the relationship between Nāmasaṅgiti 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 Nāmasaṅgiti, 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.
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 Thām 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 Niśpannayogāvali and the ground where the Maṇḍala rested was purified and consecrated by Badri Ratna Vajrācārya, one of the foremost ritual specialists of Kathmandu. According to Paṇḍit Badri Ratna, the offerer was a lay practitioner, who wanted to offer the maṇḍala in memory of his mother. After a series of pūjās and vrataś, 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 Uṣṇiṣa deities (Fig. 5.29). The rest of the inner house is abbreviated, with the Jinas

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are placed in the cardinal directions without their respective Vajrabodhisattva. The gilding on Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara and the Jinas against the otherwise plain copper repousse cover distinguishes the prominence of the inner deities. Unlike other representations where the Buddhaśaktis 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, Thām Bahī 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 Panḍītas from northeast India. Traditional oral history, such as the Svayambhū Purāṇa, attributes this bahī to be the place where Dharmāśrī 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 Dharmāśrī Mitra, hence its name, Vikramśilā Mahāvihāra. Historically Thām 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 Thām Bahī is said to be Vibhūticandrapa from the northeast regions of India, who fled to Nepal from Jagadalla. Of
particular importance is Thām 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". Dharmasvāmin writes:

Further, in Nepāla there is a Vihāra called Thām, 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 Kaśyapa.’ The Lord [Atiśa] then erected a temple [kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine] to worship it. In front of this Stūpa, there is a golden image of Sākyamuni. 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 Thām 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 Himālayas 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 torana 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 Nispannayogāvalī.

The inner house of the maṇḍala (abhyantara maṇḍala) is a square, at the center of which is Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara, surrounded by the four Jinas in the cardinal directions and the Buddhāśaktīs in the intermediate points (Fig. 5.31). In this abbreviated maṇḍala, the Vajrabodhisattras are not represented here. Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara’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
attributes and placement. In addition to his usual attributes to the eight-handed form described in the Nispannayogāvali, 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 ghanṭā in the third pair; a goad and noose in the fourth pair while the principal hands displays bodhyantigimudrā, a variant of the dharmacakramudrā.

The four Jinas, who face Dharmadhātu Vagiśvara, 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 ghanṭā 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 ghanṭā 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 ghanṭā in the second pair; arrow and bow for third pair; and goad and what appears to be a noose. The Buddhaśaktis 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 kvāhpāḥ dyah 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 Niśpannayogāvalī. However, instead of being seated in vajraparyaṅkāśana, the central group is shown dancing in āḷīḍha and pratyāḷīḍha postures. The placement of the three Buddhas—Akṣobhya, Vairocan/Ｄharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, Amitābha—refers to the Tactic purification of the Body, Speech, and Mind that is central to the ritual practices of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala.113 Of the Body, Speech, and Mind components, Vairocan 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 Maṇjuśrī, he is shown in this context with Maṇjuśrī’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 ghanṭā in a manner characteristic of Vajrasattva, with the vajra against his chest in his right hand and the ghanṭā 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 Niśpannayogālī and Vajrāvalī. Like the twelve-armed form of Nāmasaṅgīti, this form of Vajrasattva is a Newar Buddhist iconographic convention, signifying Maṇjuśrī’s symbolic connection with Vajrasattva. Other such examples of Vajrasattva are also found on the toraṇa over the āgamā 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 āgamā shrine also relate to the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography. 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 Buddhasaktis 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 ghanṭa in vajrahunkaramudrā. 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. 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 Nāmasaṅgiti Tantra, as the Maṇḍala is described in the fifth chapter as “The Great Maṇḍala of Vajradhātu” and is related to the Vajrasattva kula. Further, an image of Vajrasattva is placed directly behind the strut figures on this level, at the center, whose placement could
further indicate his connections with the Nāmasaṅgiti Tantra. That the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala strut figures are placed directly outside the āgamī shrine may also point to the symbolic association between Maṇjuśrī, Vajrasattva, and the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. Furthermore, the strut figures outside the āgamī shrine are the “outer” non-esoteric aspect of the highly esoteric Tantric deities of the āgamī, 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 Maṇjuśrī 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 kvāhpāḥ 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 repoussé 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 kvāhpah dyah shrine to Śākyamuni Buddha on the lower level, while the shrine above houses the āgam shrine to Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravāraḥī. Similar to the case in Bu Bāhā, the āgam pūjā is performed at a different location, in the east courtyard wall digi, 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 Śaḍakṣari Lokeśvara (Saṅgha) to his right and Prajñāpāramitā (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 āgamī 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 Nāmasaṅgiti Mañjuśrī as the center figure (Fig. 5.47). The iconographic placement of Nāmasaṅgiti Mañjuśrī over the āgamī shrine and the Dharmadhātu Vaiṣṇava over the kvāhpāḥ dyāḥ shrine may be a direct allusion to the “outer” and “secret” meanings of the Nāmasaṅgiti 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 Vaiṣṇava 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 toranas, 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 façade 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 torana. Placed in a semi-circular panel, the eight-armed Jinas of the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala are represented in their standard iconographic placement (Ratnasambhava, Aksobhya, Vairocana/Maṇjuśrī, 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 (phalāṅcā) 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
whitewashed Licchavi-period caitya that is surmounted by a canopy of nāgas. Inscriptions on the canopy refer to this caitya specifically as “Śvayambhū Dharmadhātu Caitya”, further reinforcing Śvayambhū 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 kvāhpāḥ dyah 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 Simhanāda 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 Saḍakṣari 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 āgam shrine of Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhī is directly above the kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine 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
(Manuṣi Buddhās), flanked by Prajñāpāramitā on the left and Śaḍakṣari Lokeśvara on the right, again reiterating the iconography of the Buddha/Dharma/Saṅgha. An image of Vajrasattva is placed above the windows. Vajrasattva’s placement directly outside the āgām 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 Cintāmanī 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 Cakrasamvara Mañḍalas is further alluded to in the imagery of the āgām toraṇa. The āgām shrine on the second floor is accessed through the doorway on the southwest corner. The exterior wooded toraṇa over the āgām entrance, dated and inscribed, depicts Dharmadhātu Vaiśvara Mañjughoṣa from the Dharmadhātu Mañḍala (Fig. 5.51). The presence of Dharmadhātu here implies his role as the exoteric or “outer” face of Cakrasamvara. Although the Cakrasamvara imagery is not publicly shown to the uninitiated, the Dharmadhātu iconography, in this context, alludes to the esoteric practices of the āgām 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 āgām 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/Maṇjuśrī, 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 Svayamabhū Mahācaityya crown the second and upper shrine roofs, further reinforcing idea of the Mahācaityya 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 kvāhpāh dyah shrine; and a Tantra āgām 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 dyah pāla. In contrast to the Vajrācārya organization (De Ācārya Guthī) 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 ghantā; 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 Mañjuśrī 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 Mañjuśrī 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

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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 ghāntā, 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/Maṇjuśrī, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi. It is significant to note that directly above Vajrasattva is Dharmadhātu Vāgisvara Maṇjughoṣa as Vairocana. This visual metaphor further provides strong evidence for the symbolic relationship of Maṇjuśrī, Vajrasattva, and Vairocana in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

The right torana represents Vasundharā, flanked by Kumāri and Mahālakṣmi. Vasundharā represents the pacific aspect of the goddess Kumāri, who figures prominently at Ha Bāhā. In the Newar Buddhist tradition, the goddess Kumāri as the exoteric and physical (laukika) aspects of Vajra-vārāhī120 (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 dyochēn ("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 torana, which depicts the Goddess Kumārī, flanked by Ganeśa and Mahākāla (Fig. 5.55). During secret Tantric pūjās in the āgam 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 āgamā shrine again points to its role as the bridge between the highly esoteric imagery of the āgamā and the exoteric rituals and metaphors used in the kvāḥpāḥ dyah 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 maṇḍala of Maṅjuṣrī, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala becomes, for the Newar Buddhist practitioners, a particularly appropriate medium to allow Maṅjuṣrī’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 Nāmasaṅgiti Tantra in the visual symbolism of

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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 bāḥās 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). 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 bāhis appears to be well-established and integral to the iconographic program by the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries. The personification of the Nāmasaṅgīti Tantra, namely Nāmasaṅgīti Maṇjuśrī, may indeed be a Newar Buddhist conception, as this iconographic form of Maṇjuśrī 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 Thām Bahī dated 1967 states that the iconographic descriptions were based on these texts. Similarly, the 1688 Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala inscription at Swayambhū offered by King Pratāp Malla mentions that the Maṇḍala’s iconographic source as the Kriyā Samuccaya and the Nispannyaogāvali. 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 Pājā 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 Maṇjuśrī, 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 Bātrī Ratna Vajrācārya says that there are 151. See Hemrāj Śākya, Śrī Swayambhū Mahācāitya, 206-208; Mallmann, Etude Iconographique sur Maṇjuśrī, 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 āśīnas of the inner house.
7 The description of the Maṇḍala given here is based on the Nispannyaogāvali, number 21.
8 Iconographically, Dharmadhātu Maṇjughoṣa may be white, yellow, or blue.
9 I would like to thank John C. Huntington for pointing this out. See also Tajima, Sarvatathāgata Tattva Samgraha, 213.

11. Sonam Gyatso, *Tibetan Mandala: The Ngor Collection*, Fig. 20.

12. For iconographic program of the temples at Alchi, see Groepper, *Alchi: Laddakh's Hidden Buddhist Sanctuary, The Sumtsek*.


17. The texts that I have consulted are the *Vṛhat Śvayambhū Purāṇam* and *Śvayambhū Purāṇa, Śvayambhū Purāṇa*, as well as Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya’s popular printed edition, *Śvayambhū 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 *rātanamandala* is a body mandala, in which the practitioner visualizes his body as Mt. Meru. The offering of the *rātanamandala* is also offered by the *jaïman* during every pūjā that is presided by a Vajrācārya priest and is an integral part of the ceremony.


21. The symbolism of the mantra “evam mayā” is identical to the reading of the Hevajra Tantra. See Snellgrove, *Hevajra Tantra*.

22. *Vṛhat Śvayambhū Purāṇam* 342. “Ekara praṇārūpī ca vamkāram pauruṣamitī / Praṇāpāya svārūpata śavāt devamitī prakṣṭyate /” 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.


24. These terms may also be applied to a mandala, in which abhyantara refers to the innermost house or center of the mandala. Abhyantara is also referred to the inner shrine of the āgarā. 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.


26. In his analysis, Kolver has not associated the symbolic meaning of the vowels found on the chhatras to that of the Nāmasanāgati. However, given the *Śvayambhū Purāṇa*’s explicit reference to the identity of Śvayambhū and the Dharmadhūtu 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. See Chapter Six for discussion of Čakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī.

29. As will be discussed later in this section, Čratāp Malla received the Čakrasaṃvara initiation that enabled him to enter the secret āgarā shrine at Sāntipur. This reconfirms not only Śvayambhū’s association with the Dharmadhūtu Maṇḍala, but also with the esoteric
cycles of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravarāhi. 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.

39The average Newar Buddhist practitioner is, perhaps, not aware of the identity of the shrine deities as Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravarāhi. However, most practitioners seems to have the knowledge that it is a secret shrine to the esoteric deities.

32Badri Ratna Vajrācārya, ed., Dharmadhātu Vratapūjā va Dharmadhātu Vaiśvāvara Maṇḍala, preface, no page number.

33The esoteric aspect of Dharmadhātu Vaiśvāvara was also indicated to me by Badri Ratna Vajrācārya. Personal communication.

34Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 169.


36According to Wayman, Tsongkha-pa’s commentary on the Śricakrasaṃvara Tantra specifically pertains to this reference.


38Wayman, The Buddhist Tantras, 47. This is based on Tsongkha-pa commentaries.

39To my knowledge, this is one of the few sculptures, representing Dharmadhātu Vaiśvāvara with his female consort.

40See Chapter 9 of the Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa.

41Badri Ratna Vajrācārya, Svayambhū Mahāpurāṇa, 145-7.

42The distinction between the Buddha Pāda and the Mañjuśrī Pāda is by the eyes represented on the Mañjuśrī Pāda.


44See Chapter Seven, Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa.

45Bhattacharyya, Indian Buddhist Iconography, 75.

46Wayman, The Buddhist Tantras, 206-207.

47See iconographic analysis of Kvā Bāhā, Patan, in Chapter Three.

48Textual references, such as the Svayambhū Purāṇa, as well as the contemporary ritual tradition confirms this statement. Furthermore, the Niśpannayogāvalī also considers the Ārya Nāmasaṅgiti to be the root text of the maṇḍala.

49Wayman, Chanting the Names of Nāmasaṅgiti, 4.

50Wayman, Chanting the Names of Nāmasaṅgiti, 6.

51The commentaries of the Yoga Tantra categories include Candrabhadraśkriti and Smṛtiijnānakirti, Lilavajra, and Mañjuśrimitrīta. See Alex Wayman, Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī, 47.

52Wayman, The Buddhist Tantras, 234. See also Alex Wayman, Chanting the Names of Nāmasaṅgiti, 6.

53Alex Wayman, Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī, 6.

54Alex Wayman, Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī, 10-22. According to Wayman, Naropa’s commentaries of the Hevajra Tantra make direct reference to the Nāmasaṅgiti. 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 Nāmasaṅgiti. What may be pertinent here for the Newar Buddhist is the associations of the Aksobhya-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 Pañḍitas 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 yogini (female) class tantras, such as the Cakrasaṃvara Tantra are evident. Some of the Nāmasaṅgīti commentaries that are found in Nepal are: Dombi Heruka’s Nāmasaṅgīti Vṛt; Advayavajra’s Nāmasaṅgīti Tīkā and Nāmasaṅgīti Upahāra Vitarka, Lilavajra’s Árya Mañjuśrī Nāmasaṅgīti Tika Saropayika; and Anuparamarakṣita and Indrabhatti’s Árya Mañjuśrī Nāmasaṅgīti Vṛtī, Vāgīśvarakīrti’s Árya Mañjuśrī Nāmasaṅgīti Tīkā; Sūrtijñānakīrti; Suratvajra’s Árya Mañjuśrī Nāmasaṅgīti Arthavalokanāma. In addition, the National Archives also has manuscripts of commentaries employing the Anuttara Yoga Tantras, such as the Nāmasaṅgīti Mantraṭhavalokini Tīkā, Amṛtakanika and Amṛtakanikā Dhyot Tīkā. I am grateful to Pañḍit Sūrya Mān Vajrācārya of Ha Bāhā, Patan and Pañḍit Badri Ratna Vajrācārya of Kathmandu for pointing this out to me.
58 According to the Trisamādhī Pūja Vidhi, the ritual text used in Newar Buddhism, this particularly meditation is the fundamental aspect of the Cakrasaṃvara tradition. See also Göllner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, for references to the Trisamādhi rituals to Cakrasaṃvara.
59 Badri Ratna Vajrācārya. Personal communication. The Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala is considered a Ākṣobhya-cycle maṇḍala.
60 See Wayman, Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī.
63 See Alex Wayman, Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī.
64 Wayman, Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī, 8.
65 Hemraj Śākya, Śrī Svayambhū Mahācāitya, 567.
66 Hemraj Śākya, Śrī Svayambhū Mahācāitya, 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 Candrabhadradakīrti assigns the Mahāmudrā kula to Amoghasiddhi and the mantraṇavidya 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 Ārya Nāmasaṅgīti in the eleventh century also includes these prose sections.
69 See Chapter Eight of the Vṛhat Svayambhā 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

For example, the toraṇa at Ha Bāhā and Bu Bāhā, Patan, show this type of iconography.

Gellner has appropriately classified such practices as the "exoteric Vajrayāna", in which the esoteric deities, such as Vajrasattva, Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, Kumārī, Vajrayogini serves as what he calls the "exoteric faces of the esoteric deities". See Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 253-255.

Wayman, Chanting the Names of Nāmasaṅgiti, 25.

Wayman, Chanting the Names of Nāmasaṅgiti, 26.

The Śādhanamālā 82 describes a Nāmasaṅgiti Maṇjuśrī, whose description is iconographically different from the twelve-armed Nāmasaṅgiti found in Nepal. According to the Śādhanamālā, Nāmasaṅgiti Maṇjuśrī is described as an emanation of Aksobhya and a four-armed figure, holding a book and sword in his first pair of hands and a bow and arrow.

Interesting, Mallman classifies this twelve-armed as "Nāmasaṅgiti (Bodhisattva)" and does not consider this form of Maṇjuśrī 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, Nāmasaṅgiti Bodhisattva should not be confused with Nāmasaṅgiti Maṇjuśrī... Here, as a personification of the "Songs of the (sacred) names" which invokes Maṇjuśrī, 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 Amṛṭānanda qualifies Nāmasaṅgiti 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 Nāmasaṅgiti Maṇjuśrī to be a fully Enlightened Buddha in his twelve-armed form. See Mallmann, Introduction a l'Iconographie du Tantrisme Bouddhique, 274-275.

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.

B. Bhattacharyya, Indian Buddhist Iconography, 207.

In the textual description given by the nineteenth century Vajrācārya priest, Amṛṭānanda in the Dharmaköṣa Samgraha, this gesture is described as "mukūtopari kṛtaṇjālimudrā "aṇjālimudrā 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 aṇjālimudrā, but called "merumāṇḍala 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, Trisamādhī Pūjā Vidhi, in which the mudrā is labelled vajracakra. Hemraj Śākyā also refers to this as the "adhyesana mudrā", or the mudrā of explanation, however, in this context, the mudrā may be more appropriately related to the symbolic understanding of the body as Mt. Meru. See Hemraj Śākyā, Śrī Svaṃyabhū Mahācāitya, 566.

The pūjā was presided by the Vajrācārya priests of Bu Bāhā, with Caityarāj and Kamalraj Gubhājū's as the senior ritual specialists.

Vajrasattva's connections with the five Jinas were further explained to me during the pūjā.
The Trisamādhi pūjā is also the basic esoteric ritual for the āgam 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 Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī. This ritual further clarifies the connection between Dharmadhātu and the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala traditions.

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 Maṇjughoṣa.

Trisamādhi Pūjā Vidhi, 128.

Gellner, Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest, 255.

Personal communication with Badri Ratna Vajrācārya.

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 ghāṇṭā in the principal hands. Both in terms of the attributes and color, this form of different from the descriptions given in the Niśpannayogāvalī. 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. Bhattacharyya, Indian Buddhist Iconography, 103-104.

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 Guṇḍa, during which time homas are not generally performed.

See Badri Ratna Vajrācārya, ed., Dharmadhātu Vratapūjā vai Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara Maṇḍala, preface.

As stated in the commentarial text, Amṛtakaṇṭha Ṭīkā.

Tantric texts also imply that Maṇjuśrī's form as Maṇjuvajra is directly associated with Vajrasattva. See Wayman, The Buddhist Tantras, 47.

Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 275.

Badri Ratna Vajrācārya, ed., Dharmadhātu Vratapūjā vai Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Maṇḍala, preface, no page number.

Personal communication with Badri Ratna Varjārāyā. 1998.

Trisamādhi Pūjā Vidhi. See also the synopsis of the Cakrasaṃvara-pūjā Vidhi in Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 288-290.

See Wayman, The Buddhist Tantra.

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.

The eight pilgrimage sites of the Vitarāgas in the Kathmandu Valley are associated with the Eight Great Bodhisattvas. The Svaṃghāṭa Purāṇa describes in detail the symbolic connections of these Bodhisattvas and the Aṣṭamaṅgala signs. During the Aṣṭami Vrata to Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara, these eight sites are visited sequentially as part of the ritual pilgrimage. At these sites, metal repoussé 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.

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 insessional evidence must be taken into consideration to properly identify the two Maṇḍalas. See Hemrājī Śākya, Śrī Svayamabhū Mahācaitya, 238 and Gutschow.

101 Since most bahiṣ generally do not have elaborate shrine facades, I have not found any bahiṣ that have elaborate strut figures that depict the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography. The Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala iconography, however, is generally present as part of the torana 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 (Chusyā-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 Daśakrođhas.

106 John K. Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 270.

107 This understanding was repeated by various informants in Kathmandu and Patan.

108 Namah śrī dharmadhātu vāgīśvarāya Maṇjuḥoṣaṁ mahāvīraṁ sarva māraṁ vināsakam / Sarvākāra pradātāram dhardhātum namāmyaham /// [first sloka of the Nāmasangiti]

Svati ārya śrīmat śākyasimha tathāgatasya buddhenādi. . . . śrī . . . śāha deva pacṛṣaṁ / [sūba samvat 1097 sāla māgha māsi śukla pakṣe pañcāmasyaṁ tīhau somavare tatāt dine dānapatī tāsya nepal maṇḍale kāntipure śimhakalpa mahānāgare (thabahil) śrī Vikramśila mahāvīhāra nucche kavala pradhāna śrī sūryamān simha śrī badhiratna vajrācārya juyā upadeśānuṇā kriyā sumucchaya sādhānapaṭa vajrāvali ṇispandayogavāle ādi grantha pramāṇusāra tabahil śrīvikramāśilā mahāvīhāra śrī bhagavān devavātra ṛṣi danda rija agrasa sajala pātaśaṁ kikāga bharjekula śiyāgu śrī Dharmadhātu mahāmaṇḍala dayeka sthāna yānaṁ dina jula. //

109 For traditional history of the site, see Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 409-412. The field where Maṇjuśrī was ploughing the land, disguised as an old man, is said to be Sāwā Bhūmi. As stated by Locke, my informants at Thām Bahī confirmed that Sāwā Bhūmi is the land at Sāmā Khusī, which is owned by Thām 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 Prajñāpāramitā found in Thām 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 Thām 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.


117 Wayman, Chanting the Names of Nāmasangiti, 69-73.
Although the five-fold windows above the kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine usually designates the āgamā, here at Bu Bāhā, the actual āgamā is found in the north courtyard wall.

The Seven Tathāgatas going from viewer’s left to right are: Śikhin, Krakacanda, Kaśyapa, Vipaśvi, Śākyamuni, Kanakamuni, and Viśvabhu.

My informants at Ha Bāhā pointed to the strong symbolic connections of Kumārī, Vasundharā, and Vajravārāhi, 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 Vajravārahi, the powerful sexually mature goddess in the evening. There is also a ritual hierarchy inherent in terms of the exoteric and esoteric meanings.

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.

See de Mallmann argument for a Newar Buddhist conception of this iconography. See Footnote 77.
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Figure 5.57 Goddess Kumāri during Vasundharā Pūjā. Ha Bāhā, Patan.
CHAPTER 6

CAKRASĀṂVARA MAṆḌALA:
THE THIRD CORE ICONOGRAPHIC COMPONENT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the prevalence of the Cakrasāṃvara Maṇḍala in Newar Buddhist art and practice. The primary focus is to examine how the Cakrasāṃvara 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: CAKRASĀMVARA MANDALA IN NEWAR BUDDHISM

Āgam Deities of Bāhā/Bāhīs: Cakrasāmvara and Vajravārahī

Among the meditation cycles of the Anuttara Yogini Tantras, the Cakrasāmvara Maṇḍala figures prominently in the esoteric Newar Buddhist traditions of Nepal. Cakrasāmvara, generally shown in union with his praṇā Vajravārahī, is the principal deity of the āgam shrines of most Buddhist monasteries (see Figs. 1.12-14). The Tantric āgam shrine serves as the third mandatory component of bāhā/bahi architecture, in addition to the principal "svayambhū caitya" and the kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine. The āgam is typically located over the kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine and is marked by the characteristic five-fold window, which symbolizes the Jina Buddhas. Although the āgam shrine is a required element of Newar monastic architecture, its physical location of the āgam is not restricted to the shrine façade. As illustrated by examples from Kvā Bāhā and Bhinne Bāhā at Patan, there are numerous bāhās in the Valley, where the āgam is found in the digi, opposite the kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine. At Bu Bāhā in Patan, although the shrine façade houses the āgam shrine images, the actual worship of the āgam deities is performed in the digi in the north courtyard wall (Fig. 6.1). The esoteric nature of the āgam shrine is denoted by an elaborate wooden torāṇa 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 āgām toraṇas.

In the Newar Buddhist tradition, the esoteric āgām deities are generally related to the Anuttara Yoga Tantras, such as Yogāmvara/Jñānakāñā, Hevajra/Nairātma, and Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhī. By far the most popular āgām deities are Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhī, who are the īstadevatās² of the Newar Buddhist saṅgha. The āgām shrine and rituals associated with Cakrasamvara 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 āgām 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 Cakrasamvara initiation.³ Confined to highly esoteric Tantric practices, the āgām rituals in the bāhā/bāhīs are performed in secret and never seen by the general Buddhist practitioners. Nonetheless, the practice of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala remains a fundamental aspect of Tantric traditions of Newar Buddhism and its visual imagery.

Cakrasamvara 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 Cakrasamvara and Vajravarahi that is readily accessible to the public. Because of the esoteric nature of the imagery, the exterior iconographic elements of the āgām shrine are rather limited and generally do not directly represent images of Cakrasamvara or Vajravarahi. Often, however, the exterior facades of āgāms will provide hints to the ritual practices that take place in the āgām shrine that is related to the Heruka class meditation. As illustrated in the iconographic analysis of Kva Bāhā, Bu Bāhā, and Ha Bāhā in Patan, the imagery may directly allude to Cakrasamvara/Vajravarahi enshrined inside the āgām. The exterior strut iconography of the Cakrasamvara āgām at Kva Bāhā in Patan, for instance, depicts the two animal-faced gate-guardians of the Cakrasamvara Manḍala (see Fig. 3.63). Similarly, the āgām doorway at Ca Bahi has the four female gate-guardians of the Cakrasamvara Manḍala, with Vajrasattva as the center figure of the torana depicting Vajrasattva (Fig. 6.2). This provides clear evidence of the identities of the main deities of the āgām shrine. Aside from the bāhā context, the environs of Svayambhū has among the most important shrines dedicated to Cakrasamvara and Vajravarahi. 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 Cakrasamvara Manḍala 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 Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi (Figs. 6.3-6.6). Although the identity of the āgāṁī deities are “secret”, these iconographic clues illustrate the allusion to the esoteric Tantric practices of the Cakrasamvara Manḍala.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Dharmadhātu Manḍala iconography is classified as esoteric ("outer"), whose imagery, however, may be displayed in public. In contrast, the Cakrasamvara Manḍala imagery belongs to the guhya/abhyantara ("secret/inner") category of symbols. This symbolism is most often directly related to esoteric female yoginis, as is the case of the Cakrasamvara Manḍala. Such visual symbols related to the āgāṁī is comparable to the use of saṃdhyā 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 Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi. For instance, at Hāku Bāhā in Kathmandu (Fig. 6.7), the toranas over the side windows of the āgāṁī shrine depict a sword, flanked by the kapāla “skull-cup” and karttrkā “flaying knife” (Figs. 6.8-6.9). These highly esoteric symbols are related to the Cakrasamvara Manḍala cycle, specifically to Vajravārāhi and her manifold yogini emanations. In the Newar Buddhist traditions, these symbols signify the
concepts of generation (śṛṣṭi) and destruction (saṃhāra). Specifically, these symbols are intimately connected with Vajravarāhi, 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 Kumāri. To the informed practitioner, the symbols refer the esoteric practices of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravarāhi, as Kumāri is the nirmāṇakāya or physical manifestation of Vajravarāhi. What is significant here is that the esoteric imagery is alluded to as symbols.

There are other instances where the exterior āgāmī facades actually depict the yoginis associated with Cakrasaṃvara cycle. For example, the mural paintings directly above the āgāmī shrine of Kvā Bāhā, Kathmandu, represent the four yoginis of the Cakrasaṃvara 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 Vajravarāhī serves as an important iconographic reference. The relationship of these yoginis with the Cakrasaṃvara meditations is essential to understand the significance of the visual imagery.

In rarer cases, the deities of the āgāmī shrine are physically “brought” outside, so that even the lay practitioners may have access to their worship. One such example is found in Guji Bāhā in Patan, where the āgāmī 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
Cakrasamvara/Vajravarahi. Directly below the āgam window, the āgam deities are "brought" outside. Here, Cakrasamvara is symbolized by a vajra surrounded by a garland, while other esoteric symbols related Vajravarahi such as the skull-cup (kapāla) and flaying knife (karttrkā) are also depicted. Flanking these esoteric symbols are the animal-headed guardians of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala (Fig. 6.11-6.12).

Interestingly, the iconography of the āgam shrine at Guji Bāhā strengthens my contention that the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala are intimately related. Specifically, I proposed earlier that the Maṇjuśri's Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala serves as the "outer/non-esoteric" (bāhya) face of the highly esoteric and "inner" Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala. The exterior torana over the āgam window in the northeast corner depicts Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara as the center figure (Fig. 6.13), strengthening the deity's symbolic connection with the Cakrasamvara āgam shrine. Furthermore, the torana leading to the āgam in the north dīgi wall represents Nāmasaṅgiti Maṇjuśri 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 Vāgiśvara (Fig. 6.16), again reconfirming the relationship between the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasamvara Maṇḍalas.

The above examples indicate that the esoteric imagery of Cakrasamvara 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 samīdhyā bhāṣā of the Tantras that have many layers of symbolism, the Cakrasamvara 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 Cakrasamvara and Vajravarāhi in the āgām shrines are often made of metal, stone, or terracotta. Numerous Nepali images and paintings of Cakrasamvara and Vajravarāhi are found in museums and private collections that may have once belonged to the āgām shrines of the bāhās and bahīs. Since the āgām 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 āgām shrine images from Cilāṅco Bāhā in Kirtipur now at the National Museum in Kathmandu had six images of Cakrasamvara and Vajravarāhi in different forms.⁸ Among these, two sixteenth-century terracotta images of Cakrasamvara and Vajravarāhi, conceived as a pair, appear to have been āgām 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 Cakrasamvara 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/bahi architecture, I will examine the ritual practices associated with Cakrasamvara and Vajravarahi in the Newar Buddhist tradition.11

In reviewing the ritual practices, I found that the most significant role of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala was evident in the Newar Buddhist ordering of the sacred geography. In the following section, I will discuss the ritual context of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala and its connection to the construction of sacred space. Here, I will not only explore the sacred geography of the Valley as the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala, but its implications within monastic architecture.

SECTION II: CAKRASAMVARA MANDALA AND THE CONCEPTION OF SACRED SPACE

Sacred Geography as Maṇḍāla

As the works of art related to the Cakrasamvara 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 Buddhism is best analyzed through ritual practices. Specifically, this section will examine the conception of sacred space in Newar Buddhism, in which the Cakrasamvara 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.\textsuperscript{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/bahi) 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.\textsuperscript{13} By looking at the structural form of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala, I will analyze how the Newar Buddhists have conceptualized the construction of maṇḍalic space.

**Seeing The Unseen: Kathmandu Valley as Cakrasamvara Mandala**

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 Cakrāsāṁvara Maṇḍala. This conception is repeatedly confirmed and reified during ritual practices, in both esoteric and exoteric Tantric pūjās, specifically in the statement of intent (samkalpa) 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. 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 (samkalpa), 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 samkalpa 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 *mandalic* 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 Upācanḍoha, in the place of Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Caitya, presided by Guhyeśvari Prajñāpāramitā, in the land presided by Maṇjuśrī, in the Nepal Maṇḍala that is in the form of Śrī Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala.”

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. For instance, the Hindu city of Bhaktapur is conceived as *maṇḍala* presided by Tripurāsundari (a form of the Great Goddess) at the center, surrounded by her eight emanations. These goddesses are the Navadurgās. Transferring this idealized schema to the city’s physical geography, we find the eight goddesses manifest as mārkaśa *pīṭhas*, placed at the periphery of the city and Tripurāsundari 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 *maṇḍallic* space is conceptually constructed by the presence of the goddesses that replicate the physical form of Tripurāsundari’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 *samkalpa* 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, Guhyesvari, 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala in exoteric rituals and inscriptions, this aspect of Newar Buddhist construction of sacred space need to be closely analyzed.

To understand the preëminence of the Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. I will establish that this reification of the Valley as the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala is related to the *piṭhapūjā* pilgrimage of the eight *aṣṭamātrīka* goddesses.
Two, the iconographic analysis will show that the goddess plays an essential role in this conceptual construct, as the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala belong to the yogini class Tantras. This will set the foundations for my analyses of the Tantric yoginis 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, Guhyeśvari, Cakrasaṃvara, and Vajravārāhī. The analysis of the Valley as Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala will help clarify the relationship among the core iconography components: Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu, and the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍalas.

The Structure of the Cakrasaṃvara Mandala

In order to understand the conceptualized mapping in the Valley’s sacred geography, I will first briefly examine structural form of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. An inscribed Nepali painting, dated 1590 in the Los Angeles Country Museum of Art, provides an excellent example of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala’s core structure (Fig. 6.18). The Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala is based tantra of the same name, belonging to the Yāgini or Female Tantra of the Anuttara Yoga class. It is described in detail in the Nispannayogāvalī (Maṇḍala # 12). 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.\textsuperscript{20}

At the center are the generators of the Maṇḍala: the blue four-faced twelve-armed Cakrasaṃvara, shown in union with his prajñā, Vajravārāhī.\textsuperscript{21} Cakrasaṃvara’s principal hands hold the vajra and ghanṭā in vajrāhuṃkāramudrā, while embracing Vajravārāhī. His top upper hands hold the elephant skin; his third right and left hands display the drum (damaru) and staff (khaṭvāṅga); his fourth pair has an axe and a skull-cup (kapāla); his fifth pair displays a flaying knife (kartṛkā) and a noose (pāśa), while the sixth pair holds a trident (triśūla) and the severed head of Brahmā (Brahmākapāla). The single-faced Vajravārāhī, shown as a dancing red figure, embraces Cakrasaṃvara 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\textsuperscript{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 Caturdevi (“Four Goddesses”).\textsuperscript{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 Yogini Tantras.\textsuperscript{24} The initiate begins at the east at the bottom with blue Ṛkṣitīṣṇu, and moving to the north is green Lāmā, red Khaṇḍarohā in the west, and finally to yellow
Rūpini in the south. These yoginis correspond to the prajñās of the Jina Buddhas, and specifically in this context, are emanations of Vajravarāhī, the preeminent deity of the Maṇḍala cycle. At the intermediate points of the lotus petals of the inner circle are four vases of generation (kālaśa) that are the “juices of the bodhicitta” (bodhicittena rajasā) and is filled with siddhīrasavad amṛta—the ambrosia of realization (siddhi) that is offered by the yoginis.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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 yogini tantra, the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala considers Vajravarāhī to be preeminent in this cycle, and therefore, as in the painūng, 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 Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravarāhī. 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.\textsuperscript{26} In a more technical interpretation, the Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala.\textsuperscript{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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala is defined in the Valley’s sacred geography. Specifically, as a Yogini tantra maṇḍala, it is appropriately the female
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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala**

Based on the references of the Svayambhū Purāṇa and the samkalpa statement, the ontological source of the religion is the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū Jyotirūpa and Guhyeśvari. 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 Tirthas and eight Vitarāgas, 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. In comparing the structural form of the Maṇḍala to the textual references, these sacred sites relate directly to the definition of the Valley as Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. Interestingly, this esoteric pilgrimage is performed by the Newar Buddhist practitioners as a preliminary rite that precedes the empowerment rituals (dikṣā) to Cakrasaṃvara 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 (smāśānas) outside the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. The names of the cremation grounds, the caitya, trees, nāgas given in the Svayambhū Purāṇa are identical to the list found in the Saṃvarodaya Tantra and the Cakrasaṃvara Tantra.³²

Then moving into the maṇḍala proper are the outer concentric circles of the Body, Speech and Mind. Following the tradition stated in the Cakrasaṃvara Tantra, the twenty-four deities of these cakras are associated with the twenty-four mātrkā pīṭhas around the Valley. These mātrkā pīṭhas are related to the Aṣṭamātrkā 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 mātrkā pīṭhas and, in more esoteric interpretations, each mātrkā paired with a male counterpart (Bhairava), thus considered to be the vīra/virās 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:\textsuperscript{32}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Māṭrkās</th>
<th>Direction</th>
<th>Bhairava</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Bija</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahma\textsuperscript{\textdagger}</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>Asitanga</td>
<td>yellow</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahe\textsuperscript{\textdagger}</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>Sukra</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>KA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaumāri</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Krodha</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vai\textsuperscript{\textdagger}</td>
<td>SW</td>
<td>Unmatta</td>
<td>black</td>
<td>TA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vara\textsuperscript{\textdagger}</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Kapala</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>TA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indra\textsuperscript{\textdagger}</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>Ruru</td>
<td>yellow</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camunda</td>
<td>NW</td>
<td>Samhara</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>YA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahalaksha\textsuperscript{\textdagger}</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Bhisana</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Body, Speech and Mind Cakras of the Cakrasamvara Mandala: Pitha Puja and Worship of the Aṣṭamāṭrākās in Newar Buddhism

How the three groups Aṣṭamāṭrākās are associated with the three rings of yoginis of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala is best articulated by the ritual pilgrimage called pitha puja. In the Newar Buddhist tradition, pitha puja is performed as a preliminary rite to the dikṣā initiation to Cakrasamvara and Vajravarahi.\textsuperscript{33} The practitioners also refer to the pithapuja as pithasevā 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 mātrakās around the Valley are visited as part of the preliminary rituals of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi initiation.34 These twenty-four sites are found in three sets of the Aṣṭamātrakā pīṭhas, forming in a conceptual series of ever-widening circles that is identical to the structural form of the Cakrasaṃvara maṇḍala (Fig. 6.20). Beginning with the innermost circle, the first group of eight mātrakās encircles the city of Kathmandu proper and corresponds to the sites given in the Svayambhū Purāṇa. Although a specific mātrakā 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 Cītā Cakra, following the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala’s structure and name. The second group of Aṣṭamātrakā pīṭhas demarcates the external boundaries of the entire Valley, beginning at the Brahmāyani pīṭha in Bhaktapur in the east and extends as far as the Indrayāni pīṭha at Satungal, a small village at the outskirts of the three royal cities. Paralleling the red circle of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala in the painting, this group of Mātrakās is referred to as the Vāk Cakra. The third circle of Aṣṭamātrakās, 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 *piṭhapūjā* 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.” 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 *nirmānakāya* of the Body Cakra, the *sambhogakāya* as the Speech Cakra, and the *dharmaṇakāya* 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 *piṭhas* as defining the construct of Valley as the Cakrasamāvara Maṇḍala. However, since both the rituals associated with the *piṭhas* and the Aṣṭamātrikās 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 Cakrasamāvara Maṇḍala. The strongest evidence for this association is provided by the very names that the Newar Buddhists assign to the three circles of the Aṣṭamātrikās: 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 Cakrasamāvara Maṇḍala, and these concentric circles are unique to the Maṇḍala. Furthermore, the twenty-four
Māṭṛkā pīthas are central to the preliminary rituals of Cakrāsamāvara/Vajravarāhī initiation, thus further suggesting their relationship to the Cakrāsamāvara cycle.

Following the technical Tantric Buddhist understanding based on the Cakrāsamāvara Tantra, these twenty-four māṭṛkā pīthas 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 Aṣṭamāṭṛkās, in this context, are supramundane meditational deities (alaukika devatā) that enable the practitioner to perfect the Tantric yogic practices. The Māṭṛkās, in this context, are referred to as yoginis, and provide the practitioner siddhi or the realization the purified tathāgatagarbha within. The Buddhist practitioners distinguish the Buddhist context of the Aṣṭamāṭṛkās as emanations of the generating source, Vajravarāhī. The same set of Aṣṭamāṭṛkās 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 “syncretic” 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 *pithapūjā* or *purvasevā* rituals further clarify role of the Aṣṭamātrkās in the Tantric Buddhist context, as the Eight Mother Goddesses are generally associated with Hindu practices. Further, the conception of "pithas" 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 *pithapūjā* performed by initiated Vajrācāryas, the twenty-four Mātrkās of Kāya, Vāk and Citta circles are visited and thus the entire Valley circumambulated as a purification and preparatory ritual (*purvaseva*). 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 Cakrasamvara 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 Cakrasamvara 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].”

Thus, purifying the Body, Speech, and mind through the Aṣṭamāṭrīkās pīthas, the Newar practitioner then enters the inner circle of the four Yognīs.

**Entering the Inner Circle: Four Yognīs of the Valley**

The goddesses of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala’s inner circle are identified with the four Yognī 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 Yognī of Bijeśvari (Fig. 6.22), Khadga Yognī of Śāṅku (Fig. 6.23), Vajrayogini of Pharping (Fig. 6.24), and Guhyēśvari Yognī at Pulān Guhyēśvari near Bālāju (Fig. 6.25). These deities, as forms of Vajravārāhī, are referred to by the general term for Tantric goddesses—Vajrayogini “Adamantine Yognī” or Vidyādharī “Upholder/Provider to Knowledge.” In the technical Tantric understanding, the Yognīs 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 Aṣṭamāṭrīkās in the outer rings, these yoginis are direct emanations of the generator of Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala, i.e. Vajravārāhī. In the ritual context of the pīthapūjā, these yoginis
shrines are also visited and extensive rituals are performed as preliminary rites to the Caṅkramaṅvara/Vajravārāhī initiations. The hierarchical relationship of the Aśṭamātṛkā, yoginis, and Vajravārāhī will be examined in Chapter Seven.

Physically, these yogini shrines are located on hilltops, in the outer boundaries of Kathmandu Valley proper, with Śāṅkhu 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 Caṅkramaṅvara 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 yoginis 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 Yogini shrine was the patron deity of the king of Śāṅkhu during the Malla period. In the contemporary context, an annual festival to the goddess still commemorates her role as protectress. During the jātrā, Khaḍga Yogini 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 Śāṅkhu. This annual ritual, thereby, not only affirms the goddess’s protective role as
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 Vajravārāhi) 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 Vipaśyī threw the seed of the lotus into the lake, out of which emerged Svayambhū Jyotirūpa.¹¹

Generators of the Valley's Cakrāsaṁvara Maṇḍala

Thus far, the Valley's sacred geography as the Cakrāsaṁvara Maṇḍala has closely replicated the maṇḍala's structural pattern, with the three rings of Aṣṭamātrikās and the four Yoginis. This brings us to the center of the Maṇḍala, to the generators Cakrāsaṁvara and Vajravārāhi. 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 Guhyēśvari, 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, Cakrāsaṁvara Maṇḍala's presence is extensively alluded to at Svayambhū. Specifically, the visual symbolism repeatedly points to the connections of
Svayambhū and Guhyesvari in the Cakrasamvara meditation cycle. For example, at Svayambhū, Pratāp Malla's private āgām shrines of Pratāppur and Anantapur are among the largest known temples to Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi (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 pitha to Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi, where the maṇḍala of Cakrasamvara was consecrated by Śāntikarācārya. As the premier shrine of Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi, 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 Cakrasamvara, the shrine become even more important in establishing a divine lineage connection of Guhyesvari and the Newar Tantric tradition. As the shrine to Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi and the definers' of the Valley's sacred geography, Śāntipur signifies a direct lineage teaching of the Cakrasamvara cycle from Guhyesvari to Maṇjuśrī, to Śāntikarācārya, and subsequently, to the practicing Vajrācārya priests of the Valley. In order reify and commemorate the mythic event when Maṇjuśrī received his teachings from Guhyesvari, an esoteric pūjā to Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhi 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' āgam
shrines themselves. Such esoteric pūjā connected to Svayambhū reiterates its association with the Cakrasyāvara Maṇḍala cycle.

The Cakrasāṃvara connection with the Mahācaitya comes as no surprise, since the theoretical legitimization for this conception is explicitly stated in the Svayambhū Purāṇa. The text acknowledges Guhyeśvarī to be the source of the Cakrasāṃvara 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 pītha, 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 yoginis are preeminent. Further, that Svayambhū and Guhyeśvarī are the generators of the Valley’s conception as the Cakrasāṃvara 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 pīthas [of Cakrasyāvara Maṇḍala] surround Svayambhū, who is at the center. The text describes that the Nepal Maṇḍala is made sacred and adorned by various pīthas, where male and female teachers (ācārya), practitioners (yogīn), ascetic (rāgīn), and meditators (dhyāṇī) should worship at these pīthas. The text also alludes to the generators of the maṇḍala, stating that after all the twenty-four pīthas 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 Cakrasaṃvara tradition of Newar Buddhism. First, Svayambhū Mahācaitya appears to be intimately connected with the Cakrasaṃvara cycle and with the Valley's conception as Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. The second, and perhaps most fundamental to understanding Newar Buddhist iconology, is that Guhyeśvari is the ontological source of Cakrasaṃvara cycle as well as of the self-arisen Svayambhū Jyotirūpa itself. In other words, the Newar Buddhist tradition conceives of Guhyeśvari as the generating source of the religion. Extending her role as the generator of the Valley's sacred maṇḍala of Cakrasaṃvara, Guhyeśvari is thus identified with Vajravārāhi.  

The conception of the Valley as the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala is defined by the methodology of its root tantra, in which the goddesses (yoginis) 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 Mandalic Space

If we conceive of the Valley’s sacred maṇḍala to be that of Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravarāhī, what are its implications in our understanding of the construction of sacred space in Newar Buddhist monasteries. How does the premise of a sacred maṇḍalīc 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 maṇḍalīc 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 association 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala, both articulate the concept of maṇḍalīc 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 enlightenment
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: CAKRASĀMVARA MANDALA AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO NEWAR BUDDHIST ONTOLOGY

This section will review both esoteric and exoteric rituals that refer to the Cakrasāmvara 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 Cakrasāmvara.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 Cakrasaṃvara meditations, particularly in the samkalpa ritual. In the next section, I will analyze the relationship of the samkalpa ritual and the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala in reference to Newar Buddhist sacred space.

The gurumāṇḍala pūjā is the guruyoga “visualization/meditation on the teacher” that is an essential component of Tantric Buddhist practice. Incorporated into the gurumāṇḍala 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 lāsyā); 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 esoteric 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 manḍala of Cakrasamvara and Vajravarāhī. After the mantra of these esoteric deities of the āgāra 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 Cakrasamvara is." This ritual context specifically alludes to the hierarchic layering found in the key components of Newar Buddhist iconography: Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala. As the highest and most complex manifestation of the Tantric tradition, the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala is constantly, although indirectly, alluded to in the ritual practices as well as the visual imagery.

**Ritual Initiations of Cakrasamvara and Vajravarāhī**

The ritual practices of Cakrasamvara and Vajravarāhī are connected with the life-cycle initiations of the Vajrācārya and Śākya members of the saṅgha. The preliminary initiation to Cakrasamvara is given to the saṅgha members during the mandatory life-cycle bare-chuegu ritual. At this time,
the initiates are given the mantra of Cakrasamvara and Vajravarahi as a means of entering the Vajrayana path. More elaborate and higher Tantric initiations (diksā) of Cakrasamvara are available for the saṅgha members at a later time that allows access to the esoteric rituals of Cakrasamvara/Vajravarahi. As highly esoteric Tantric rituals, these rituals involve the married women of the Vajracarya 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 diksā initiation remains a matter of choice, where ideally, the initiate should take the empowerment with his wife. In contrast to the preliminary Vajrayana initiations to Vajrasattva and Cakrasamvara that were included as part of the public bare chuegu ceremony, diksā is performed in secret, with only other members that have received diksā allowed to attended the ritual. Generally, diksā initiations are only given at irregular intervals, and all the eligible members of the community, including the laity, may chose to take the initiation. Once taken, the diksā meditation must be strictly observed every day. Especially for the lay community of the Tuladhars, diksā permits the males to be eligible for special rites performed after death to ensure better rebirth.

Diksā is a optional for the saṅgha members, however, access to the esoteric rituals āgāmi shrine and becoming an elder (āju) of the bāhā are contingent upon receiving the diksā initiations. Furthermore, diksā is also open to the lay Buddhist practitioners thus allowing them entry into the
Vajrayāna path. Receiving dikṣā is mandatory in order to participate in the esoteric rituals performed at the Tantric āgamā shrine (either one’s personal āgamā or the bāhā āgam) or during life-cycle rites such as kumāri pūjā.

As an empowerment ritual, dikṣā provides access to the abhyantara or the highly esoteric “inner” rituals of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārahi. Specifically, as an initiation to the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala, the initiates are given seven mantras of key Heruka class deities of Newar Buddhism, namely Cakrasaṃvara, Vajravārahi (who is alternately called Vajradevi), Heruka, Hevajra-Nairātmā, Khaḍga Yogini, Buddhaḍākini [Bijeśvari] and Caṇḍmahāroṣaṇa.

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 āgamā shrine in the bāhā/bahīs. As shown in the plan of the āgamā shrine at Kvä Bāha, 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 dikṣā or by the initiates during their dikṣā ceremony.

The main dikṣā 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. 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 (dikṣā) of Cakrasamvara and Vajravarāhi. 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 dikṣā and the more straightforward Tantric rituals as in the gurumanḍala 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 dikṣā, 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 Vajravārāhi. 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 Vajravārāhi, also called Vajradevi, she is dressed in red while her husband, dressed in blue as Cakrasamvara dance in the inner (abhyantara) chamber,
where the initiation is about the take place. During the fourteen consecrations (*abhiṣekha*), she offers the symbols of Vajravārāhi’s empowerment: alcohol in the skullcups as ambrosia of knowledge (*bodhyamrta*) during the Secret Vase Consecration (*guhyakalasābhisekha*) and Secret Consecration (*guhyabhisekha*); the red *ṭikā* powder, symbolizing Vajravārāhi, is put on the heads on the initiates, as part of the consecrations. In the culmination of the ritual, she performs the *cakrapūjā* to Vajravārāhi around the *homa* fire, along with five other women, symbolizing the *Sat Yogini*, and ends with the *Kumāri Pūjā*, offered to Vajravārāhi.

In essence, the Cakrāṃvara Maṇḍala is a *yogini 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 Cakrāṃvara 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 *āgāṃ* 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 Cakrāṃvara Maṇḍala practice, which is closely associated with the female imagery and symbolism.
Ritual Symbolism of Dikṣā Initiation To Cakrasaṁvara/Vajravarāhī

This section will review in some detail the ritual symbolism of the *dikṣā* initiation, in order to understand the doctrinal association of Cakrasaṁvara and Vajravarāhī. 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.62

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 Daśabhiṣekha 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 Vajravarāhī. During the āgāmi 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. The ritual ends with the union of the two stages of generation and completion, with the initiates visualizing themselves as Cakrasamvara and Vajravarāhi. 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. After that, the first group of empowerment is given after the generation of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala, in which the māla guru dresses in white as Vajrasattva and his wife is dressed in red as Vajradevi. 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 Keśinivajra. 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 Cakrasamvara and the women in red symbolizing Vajravarahi. After performing the Guru Maṇḍala pūjā, the initiates receive the first group of empowerments of Cakrasamvara, 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 Yogini tantras to which Cakrasamvara belongs, the female aspect is preeminent and the initiate receives the empowerment of Vajravarahi, as the completion of the ritual. Furthermore, symbols associated with Vajravarahi, such as the vermillion powder, khatvāṅga, kapāla, karttrkā, are major components of the ritual symbolism. The final empowerments of the completion stage related to Vajravarahi is given by the wife of the mūla guru as Vajradevi symbolizing Vajravarahi’s nirmāṇakāya aspect.70 It is within these ritual contexts that Vajravarahi’s human manifestation, in particular goddess Kumāri, 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 Cakrasamvara

1. Kalaśābhiśekha (Empowerment of the Vase):

   This is the empowerment of the five Jina Buddhas, who are invoked in the main kalaśa. Cakrasamvara signifies the totality of the five Jina Buddhas.

2. Mukutābhiśekha (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. Cakrasamvara.

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 Cakrasaṃvara is further reinforced in the ritual tradition.

5. Nāmābhiṣekha (Empowerment of the Name)

To visualize himself as Cakrasaṃvara, the initiate receives a new name as Heruka Cakrasaṃvara reciting the following invocation:"

_Oṁ vajrasattvam 'abhiṣiucāmi vajranamabhiṣekatah /
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 [Cakrasaṃvara]

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 Cakrasaṃvara and Tara becomes Vajravārāhī. This is the mantra to Cakrasaṃvara, 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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. Sarakṣepābhiśekha (Empowerment of Shooting an Arrow)

The initiates come in pairs and shoot a white jasmine with a bow at the Cakrasaṃvara 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 Guhyesvari/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 Vajrāidevi 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 Vajravārāhi. The red alcohol and the vermilion powder are symbol of Vajravārāhi. Generally, the color red signifies the esoteric creative aspect of the goddess Vajravārāhi, as indicated by the iconography of the her nirmānakāya, Kumārī.

10. Aṇjanābhiśeka (Empowerment of the Lamp Black)

The mula guru puts a spot of silver powder over the vermilion 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 Cakrasamvara. In the ritual context, the lampblack (mvāhini sinha) symbolizes Cakrasamvara.74 The two colors (black and red) symbolize the union of Cakrasamvara (iconographically blue/black [krṣṇa]) 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 Cakrasamvara. 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 kūṇḍalinī meditation, in which the latent
energy centers (cakras) are awakened in the process of attaining Enlightenment.

13. Jñānabhiṣekha (Knowledge Empowerment)

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. Gubyābhiṣekha (Secret Empowerment)

As paired couples, the initiates dress in the bone aprons of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi, holding a skull-cup with alcohol [female imagery/Vajravārāhi] in their left hands and a damaru in their right [Cakrasaṃvara]. During the dance, the couples visualize themselves as Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi. The mula guru and his wife, who have been dancing as Cakrasaṃvara and Vajradevi, 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 Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi and the female initiate as Vajradevi starts to shake and
dance encircling the mandala. This ends the first part of the generation stage consecrations relating to the empowerment of Cakrasamvara.

II. Completion Stage (Utpanna Krama): Empowerments of Vajrayārāhi.

The second part of the empowerments involves the mandala of Vajrayārāhi called the Mahāmandala “Great Mandala” or mulasvaya vidhi, “ritual of the main flower.” In the abhyantara room, the mandala of Vajrayārāhi is drawn as an equilateral triangle at the center of a yantra, which has the six yoginis of Vajrayārāhi’s retinue. A sixteenth century painting of the Vajrayārāhi Maṇḍala, now at the National Museum, New Delhi is identical to the descriptions given in the ritual context (Fig. 6.27). In a counterclockwise direction characteristic of the Yogini tantra manḍalas, the twelve vowels are placed in a circle around the triangle. It is notable that the twelve vowels is the mantra of Vajrayārāhi 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 Vajrayārāhi 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. A circle of eight Aṣṭamāṭrka pithas encloses the manḍala.

After performing the gurumandala pūjā and a special consecration pūjā to the Vajrayārāhi manḍala, the initiates receive the final empowerments.
First, the *mula guru* and his wife, as Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrādevī, offer the
initiates the *khaṭvāṅga*, skull-cup (*kapāla*), and flaying knife (*kartṛkā*),
which are the quintessential symbols of Vajravārāhi. Visualizing themselves
as Vajravārāhi, 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 Vajravārāhi.\(^{81}\) 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 Vajravārāhi.

1. *Guhyapātrabhiśeka* (Consecration of the Secret Skull-cup)

The secret skull-cup (*guhya pātra*) invokes Vajravārāhi as Vārūṇī and
symbolizes the four *kalaśas* of ambrosia (*amṛta*) found in the
Cakrasaṃvara 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 hypostasis of Vajravārāhi’s role is
better clarified when analyzing the imagery at Śāntipur in
Svayambhū.\(^{83}\)
2. Guhyakalasābhiśekha (Empowerment of the Secret Vase)

This is the second empowerment of the Secret Vase (kalaśa), which symbolizes Vajravarāhī. The secret vase is also referred to the Guhyeśvarī kalaśa, signifying that Guhyeśvarī, the “Secret Goddess” of the Swayambhū Purāṇa is none other than Vajravarāhī. The initiates thus receive the empowerment of Guhyeśvarī/Vajravarāhī. 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 Vajravarāhī, and in the ritual context, the sinha is paired with the lampblack, which signifies Cakrasaṃvara. The wife of the mula guru as Vajra-devi offers the powder on the initiates’ forehead. Particularly during the rituals related to Kumārī, the sinha power is offered to indicate her status as Vajra-devi. Color symbolism here is key to understanding the ritual imagery.

4. Añjanābhiśekha (Empowerment of the Lampblack)

The vermilion powder as Vajravarāhī’s symbol is then paired with Cakrasaṃvara’s symbol, the lampblack powder. The mula guru, as Cakrasaṃvara, puts the lampblack powder over the vermilion powder to symbolize the union of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravarāhī.
5. Mantrābhīṣekha (Empowerment of the Mantra)

The initiates come in pairs and approach the \textit{mula guru} and his wife. They receive the \textit{mantra} of Vajravārāhi in the left ear. The Tantric tradition considers the \textit{vāma} (left-handed) tradition as embodying the female; hence, the ritual symbolism also employs the left side as specifically embodying the female.

6. Mula Guhyapatrābhīṣekha (Empowerment of the Main Secret Skullcup)

The skullcup is Vajravārāhi's quintessential symbol. As Vajradevi, the \textit{mula guru}'s wife holds the principal "secret skullcup" of Vajravārāhi and offers the red alcohol of the main skull-cup to the initiates.\textsuperscript{84} The assistant's wife as Keśinīvajra refills the skull-cup for each initiate. Again, note here the relationship between Vajravārāhi and Mañjuśrī's consort in the ritual context, further providing evidence for the association of Mañjuśrī and Cakrasaṁvara in the Newar Buddhist context.

1. Prajñābhīṣekha (Wisdom Empowerment)

The initiates each the two rice-flour bread (\textit{caṭāmari}) symbolizing the sun and the moon. This refers to the \textit{yogic} meditation process of awakening the \textit{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 (\textit{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 chattrā over the head of the couple, who now have received the full empowerment of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravarāhī. 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 (saṭ yogini) of the Vajravarāhī 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 Vajravarāhī's emanations. Their husbands stand behind them holding the guhyakalāśa 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 Vajravarāhī 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 āgāmā shrine, as symbols of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravarāhī. These are placed near their heads when they die.85

To summarize briefly, the ritual empowerments reiterate several key aspects of the Cakrasaṃvara tradition in Newar Buddhism. One, as a yoginī class tantra, the Cakrasaṃvara 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 Vajravrāhi and Guhyeśvari and suggest that the epithet Guhyeśvari ("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: Guhyeśvari, Vajravrāhi, six Yoginīs, Vajradevi/Kumāri, 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 Guhyeśvari 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 Guhyeśvari, the Secret Goddess, also called the Ādiśakti Prajñāpāramitā 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 jalaśṭambana samādhi, he realized that Guhyeśvari are resided at the pīṭha in her primordial form. On the ninth day of the month of Māṛgha, Mañjuśrī purified himself and bathed at Śānti Tirtha and together with his two wives, performed the secret pūjā at the Guhyeśvari pīṭha through Tantric songs and dance. Pleased with Mañjuśrī's meditation, Guhyeśvari manifested herself in her universal forms as Mahāśaṃvara and taught him the Trisamādhi or Three-Fold meditation cycle of Cakrasaṃvara and Heruka Vajravārāhī. After receiving the adamantine-water empowerment (vajrodaka) from Guhyeśvari, Mañjuśrī in turn taught this meditation cycle to the Śāntikarācārya, the first Vajrācārya of Newar Buddhism, Śāntikarācārya. At Svayambhū, Śāntikarācārya consecrated the secret āgam shrine to Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī at Śāntipur, where the annual diśi pūjā is performed. Śāntipur is also the location where Santikarācārāya is still resides in samādhiyoga.

The Svayambhū Purāṇa narrative of the Cakrasaṃvara 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 Guhyeśvari giving darśan to Mañjuśrī/Mañjudeva, where she is represented as a blue, male Heruka-type figure, symbolizing her role as the generator of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. Another representation of the mythic narrative is found in the mural paintings at Śāntipur, with each scene described in the inscription. Here, Guhyeśvari 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 Guhyeśvari’s alternative epithet in the Newar Buddhist tradition (Fig. 6.29).86 What is significant here is that in the Newar Buddhist tradition, Guhyeśvari is intimately connected to the Cakrasaṃvara meditation, with Śāntipur as the principal āgāṁ to Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī. The focus on the yoginīs, situated within the framework of Tantric methodologies, is central to the esoteric practices of the religion.

Interpreting Ritual Symbolism of the Diśi Pūjā

The Diśi or Daśamī Pūjā is a principal ritual to Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī performed in the āgāṁ shrines of the bāhā/bahīs. The pūjā is performed monthly in the āgāṁ on the tenth day. An additional elaborate
\textit{diśi pūjā} is performed on the tenth day of the dark half of Māgha (māgha krṣṇa daśami) to commemorate the day when Mañjuśrī received darśan from Guhyeśvari.\footnote{Each month, the Diśi Pūjā rituals thus commemorate and reify the Cakrasaṃvara lineage teachings from Guhyeśvari to Mañjuśrī. The actual ritual takes three days, beginning with the night of the ninth day (navami) when the \textit{Samvarodaya pūjā} to Cakrasaṃvara in performed as the generation \textit{maṇḍala}. Then, on the tenth day (daśami), the \textit{daśami (diśi) pūjā} of Vajravarāhī is performed as the completion stage. The stages of generation and completion are similar to the empowerment rituals discussed previously, in which Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravarāhī are invoked individually, with Vajravarāhī serving as the activating principle through which the practitioners attain \textit{siddhi}. The meditation and visualizations on the union of the two, on the eleventh day (ekādaśi), is the culmination of the esoteric \textit{pūjā}.\footnote{Similar to the \textit{dikṣā} initiation rituals, the \textit{diśi pūjā} emphasizes the female symbolism, with the major rituals like the \textit{Sindura pūjā}, \textit{rahasya maṇḍala}, \textit{Mahāpatra pūjā} invoking Vajravarāhī and her emanations. According to the \textit{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 āgām deities symbolized by the ritual implements, namely of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravarāhī. 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 Cakrasamvara 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 Māmaki pūjā implements placed on the side (Fig. 6.30). As in the esoteric rituals to Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi, the main pūjā (Māmaki Pūjā) is directed to the alcohol pot or secret vase (guhyakalasha), which is filled with red liquor and symbolizes Māmaki/Guhyesvari. The sindurañjana pūjā is the invocation of Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi.

The ritual text states that the vermillion powder container (sinha) symbolizes Vajravārāhi and the lampblack pot (añjanā) symbolizes the five Tathāgatas, who is in the form of Cakrasamvara. For the invocation of the deities, the ritual text instructs the practitioner to place the powder container (sinha) at the center of the mandala to Vajravārāhi. Then, with the vermillion powder, the practitioner is to draw a double-triangle yantra (a quintessential symbol of Tantric goddesses) on the lampblack pot (añjanā/mohanī), with the bija “Hum” at the center. Then the practitioner is to invoke Vajravārāhi in the powder container and Cakrasamvara in the lampblack pot. After a series of invocation and generation of the deities, the practitioner performs the Trisamādhi pūjā—the visualization of Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi 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, Guhyēśvari, 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:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Newari</th>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Buddhist Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Māmakī Pūjā</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Lamp</td>
<td><em>sukunda</em></td>
<td><em>dipakunda</em></td>
<td>Jīna Sūrya Agni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Khay Pot (yogurt, oil, meat, eggs)</td>
<td>Khay Gvah pah</td>
<td><em>sahaja-sukhabhanda</em></td>
<td>Hevajra [Cakrasaṃvara] (upāya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Alcohol Pot (red liquor)</td>
<td>Thapi</td>
<td>Guhya Kалаṣa Guhyaśvari</td>
<td>Māmakī Vārūṇī [Vajravārāhi]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Pūjā Implements</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Black Powder Pot</td>
<td><em>Makah Dalu mwahni</em></td>
<td><em>prajnoparaya sindura</em></td>
<td>Cakrasaṃvara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Yogurt</td>
<td><em>dhaupatti</em></td>
<td><em>saptavrddhi mangalabhanda</em></td>
<td>Vasundharma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Vase</td>
<td><em>kirtikalaśa</em></td>
<td>amrtaghata</td>
<td>Five Jinas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Skull-cup (white liquor)</td>
<td><em>pātra</em></td>
<td><em>pātra</em></td>
<td>Vajravārāhi Kumāri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Powder Container (vermilion powder)</td>
<td><em>sinha/sinhamu</em></td>
<td>sindurabhanda</td>
<td>Vajravārāhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Spirit Offering</td>
<td><em>bali</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ganesa, AṣṭaMātrkās Bhairava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Guru Mandala</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vajrasattva</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Śāntipur's Symbolic Association with Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi: Iconographic Analysis

To the present day, Śāntipur is the most esoteric secret āgamī shrine to Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi. As discussed in Chapter 3, Śāntipur has special connections with the De Ācārya Guthi of Kathmandu, as it is the primary āgamī shrine to Cakrasaṃvara and the Vajravārāhi 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 Cakrasaṃvara initiations from Guhyeśvarī. However, at present the rituals are not held in a regular basis.⁹²

That the Śāntipur pīṭha's principal deities are Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi 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: Saṃvarapura (“City of Saṃvara [Cakrasaṃvara]), Vyomapura (“City of Space), ” Guhyapura (“Secret City”), Ākāśapura (“City of the Sky”). Following these conceptions, it appears appropriate that in the Svayambhū Purāṇa, Guhyeśvarī, as the Vajravārāhi’s dharmakāyā, is called Khagānana (“Face of the Sky”).
The text explicitly states that in the pīṭha resides Mahāsamvara (Cakrasamvara), the lord of the universe (mahāvirām samvāro jagadiśvara). It describes the shrine as having nine rooms, with the inner abhyantara room enshrining the thousand-armed universal form of Mahāsamvara and his praṇā, Vajravārāhi. The text also describes the nine nāga maṇḍalas that are placed in these rooms, which are to be propitiated to ensure the rains. Further, Śāntikarācārya resides there in eternal meditation (āśphāṇika yoga).

Corroborating the textual descriptions, the visual imagery at Śāntipur indicates the presence of Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi. As in the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala, the animal and bird-faced gate-guardians mark the outer and inner shrine doors (Figs. 6.31-6.34). The torāṇa iconography is typical of many āgam shrines through the Valley in that the outer and inner torāṇas depict the Ādi Buddha Vajradhara as the center figure, holding a vajra and ghanṭā in vajrahumkāramudrā. Vajradhara’s presence as the torāṇa figure is particularly appropriate, as Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhi symbolizes the dharmakāya represented in the sambhogakāya form. The layout of Śāntipur also follows the structural format of āgam 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 Thekāli 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. Despite the intense secrecy maintained at the site at the shrine, the rituals and iconography indicate that Śāntipur is the core site of Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara/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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 Vajradevi. A similar type of gorget is also worn by Kumārī. To the right and left of the sword are a vajra and a ghanta, the dual symbols of prajñā 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 kalasa, Guhyeśvari quintessential symbol, rests on a lotus and is flanked by two lions (Fig. 6.36). The presence of the Guhyeśvari kalasa further
substantiates Vajravārāhi’s identity with the Guhyēśvari, and indeed, the symbolic references to her is appropriate, as she is the ontological source of the Cakrasaṃvara cycle in the Newar Buddhism. This concept is reiterated emphatically in the Svayambhū Purāṇa.

Other symbols found on the shrine doorway also refer to Vajravārāhi’s presence also refers to Vajravārāhi’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 Vajravārāhi, and her emanations as the four yoginis. 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).90

The iconographic program at Śāntipur emphasizes and defines the esoteric Tantric traditions of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala, in that the visual
imagery extensively uses symbolism related to the yoginis. The role of the yoginis in the Cakrasamvara 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 Cakrasamvara/Vajravarāhi, 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 sādhanas text written from the blood of the nine nāgas, who resided in the tīrthas 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. In both historical and quasi-historical accounts related to Śāntipur, the kings of the Valley entered the secret āgām 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. The mural painting, directly above the entrance door on the interior south wall, depicts a large representation of Padmanārttiktesvara, 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 Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala (Fig. 6.38). This central group is flanked by the four Yoginis of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala: the blue-faced Guhyeśvari to the far left of the main figure (Fig. 6.39); Vajrayogini from Pharping to the left (Fig. 6.40); Khaḍga Yogini from Śākhu to the right of main figure (Fig. 6.41); and a badly damaged figure Ākāśa Yogini from Bijeśvari in the far left (Fig. 6.42). Padmanārttikeśvara’s presence here alludes to Śāntipur’s association with rainmaking, but more importantly, a form of Cakrasamvara is also known by the name of Padmanārttikeśvara. Indeed, his representation with the group of four Yoginis from the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala affirms this metaphor for the rain-making powers of Śāntipur, despite the shrines esoteric nature.
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 inscriptive 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 Nārāyaṇa, Gokarna, 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 Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi, which enabled him to enter the secret āgamī shrine of Śāntipur.105 The construction of Pratāppur and Anantapur suggests Pratāp Malla and his wife's induction into the Cakrasaṃvara cycle. Empowered with these Tantric Buddhist initiations, Pratāp Malla entered the secret shrine of Śāntipur dedicated to Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi.
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 Śāṃvara and Vajrayogini/Vajravārāhi 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. 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 mandala of Cakrasāṃvara/Vajravārāhi. The inscription states that the King met Mahāsāṃvara, whom he worshipped and found the Śāṃvara Tantra “concealed in a copper milk-pail.” The inscripational 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.\textsuperscript{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.”\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{111} After Pratāp Malla, Bhāskara Malla (1700-1714) is also known to have performed a nāga sādhana pūjā, megha maṇḍala pūjā at Śāntipur and Nāgapur to assure proper rains in N.S. 823.\textsuperscript{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 Girvanā 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 Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala, Śāntipur serves the preeminent shrine of Cakrasamvara/Vajravarāhī, with Vajravarāhī as the generator of the Yogini 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 Vajravarāhī's role in state protection and ensuring the well being and natural order in the kingdom. In this context, the role of the Yoginis as markers of sacred space.

SECTION IV: ANALYSIS OF ICONOLOGY
Conceptualizing the Relationship between the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasamvara Maṇḍalas

Thus far, I have discussed the significance of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala in the Newar Buddhist tradition and its relation to Svayambhū Mahācaitya and Guhyasvari. As indicated by the architectural and iconographic elements of the bāhās/bahi, both Svayambhū Mahācaitya and
the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala are integral to the iconographic program of these monasteries. In this section, I examine the relationship of the two preeminent meditational cycles in Newar Buddhism: the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasaṃvara 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 Yogini Tantras. To review briefly the technical analysis, the Amṛtakāṇika 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., pīthas, upapiṭhas, chaṇḍohas, upaṭhāṇḍohas, 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, virānanada, sahajānanda), which arise during yogic practices, from the union between the yogic and the female. Awakening 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
Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara is identified with Vairocana, as the totality of Buddhahood. In the Anuttara Yoginī interpretation, the Nāmasaṅgiti states that the central deity generated is the union of the male and female, in which Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara transforms into Vajradhāra, who manifests himself as the Vajrasattva and Heruka deities like Cakrasaṃvara to the benefit of the practitioners.\textsuperscript{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 Cakrasaṃvara system. As mentioned before, ritual practices also articulate this understanding, as Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara’s abhyantara form is blue shown in union with his prajñā. Furthermore, in the initiations to Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī, Maṇjuśrī in his form as Maṇjuvajra and his prajñā as Kesinivajra are integral to the ritual empowerments.\textsuperscript{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 Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī (i.e Pratāppur and Anantapur) appear to be a single unit. Specifically, Maṇjuśrī’s role as the transmitter of the Cakrasaṃvara cycle meditation emphasizes the direct connection between Maṇjuśrī and the Cakrasaṃvara teachings in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

The symbolic relationship between Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala /Maṇjuśrī
and the Cakrasamvara in the Newar Buddhist context can be found articulated in numerous paintings of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala. A fifteenth century painting from the John Gilmore Ford Collection depicts Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi 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 Mahāvaśrocana 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 Nāmasaṅgiti Tantra. 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.

The significant point here is that the Cakrasaṃvara painting is intimately associated with forms of Mañjuśrī, and in particular the personification of the Nāmasaṅgiti 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 Cakrasaṃvara cycle in the Newar Buddhist tradition beginning with Guhyeśvarī/Nairātmā to Mañjuśrī and to the first Vajrācārya, Śāntikarācārya. In another layer of interpretation, Nāmasaṅgiti 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. In the explanations I was given by the ritual specialists, the twelve-armed form of Mañjuśrī as Nāmasaṅgiti Mañjuśrī is transformed to the twelve-armed Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala painting from the Los Angeles County Museum (Fig. 6.45), Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara is again present in the top row of deities, in addition to Mahāvairocana from the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala. Similarly, the Cauḍamahāroṣana 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 Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi. Flanking them are Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara from the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala on his right and Mahāvairocana from the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala on his left. In the far right corner is Nāmasaṅgiti Maṇjuśrī in his twelve-armed form.¹²¹ Even a cursory iconographic analysis of these works of art demonstrates the symbolic association with Cakrasaṃvara and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

As the principal deities of the āgam shrines of the bāhās/bahīs, Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi is one of the most important esoteric deities in the Newar Buddhist tradition. Because of the highly esoteric practices that requires ritual initiation, the āgam 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 pāthapūjā pilgrimage, the dikṣā initiations of the Cakrasamvara/Vajravarāhī, and the trisamādhī pūjā to Cakrasamvara and Vajravarāhī, which is a mandatory component of the exoteric gurumandala and Kalaśārcana pūjās. Reflecting the abhyantara (“inner”) component of Tantric practice which requires esoteric Tantric initiation, the Cakrasamvara 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 Cakrasamvara 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 Cakrasamvara 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/Vajravarāhī and her various emanations as the four yoginis and the Aṣṭamātrkās, 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 yoginis 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 istadevātā/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 istadevātā or kuladevātā (“family deity”). However, in the Newar Buddhist context, one is born into the lineage deity relationship.
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 Cakrasamvara and Vajraśārāhi 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 Kumāri, 43.
6. The relationship between Kumāri and Vajraśārāhi in the Buddhist context will be discussed in detail in Chapter Seven.
7. See Chapter Seven.
9. According to the National Museum records, the Cakrasamvara image is 62x49 cms., while Vajraśārāhi is 69 x 65.
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 Badri 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.
15. There are different versions of the samkalpa statement, however, essentially all the samkalpa rituals conceptualize the Nepal Maṇḍala as the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala. In the ritual text to the Cakrasamvara pūjā, Samvarodaya Daśami Pūjā Vidhi, the samkalpa statement is as follows:

"... vāsuki ksetre upachaṇḍoha pithe āryavarta puīya bhūmau karkotaka nāgarājālaye nāgavasābhidhana mahāhṛde śrī svayambhū caitya sthāne śrī guhyesvari"
prajñapāramitādhīsthite śri mañjuśrīyāmadhīsthita bhumau Nepala maṇḍale śri saṃvara maṇḍalakāre sudūrjaya bhūmi //

"In the land of Vāsuki [Nāga], in the Upachaṇḍha pitha [of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala], in the sacred land of the Āryavṛata; in the home of Karkotāka Nāgārāja; in the residence of the nāgas; in the great lake, the place of Śrī Svayambhū Caitya, presided by Śrī Gubhāsvārī Prajñapāramitā; in the land presided by Śrī Mañjuśrī; in the Nepal Maṇḍala, in the form of Śrī Saṃvara [Cakrasaṃvara] Maṇḍala, in the vicinity of the Sudūrjaya Bhūmi."

Similarly, in the ritual text (Kalasārcana Pūjāvidhi) edited by Ratnakāji Vajrācārya, the samkalpa ritual differs slightly:

"sudūrjaya bhūmi bhāge upachaṇḍha pitha śriheruka viruṇakṣa khagānanādhivāsite anekadevālaya sthāne śri svayambhū Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara sannidhāne /

"In the area of the Sudūrjaya Bhūmi, in the Upachaṇḍha pitha [of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala], presided by Śrī Heruka Viruṇakṣa [Cakrasaṃvara] and Khagānāna [Gubhāsvārī], place of home of numerous gods, sustained by Śrī Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara"


17 Levy, Mesocosm, 246.


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 Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi; 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 yogini here following the contemporary usage in Newar Buddhist tradition. The female deities in the Tantric Buddhist tradition are also referred as dākinīs, although this term is seldom used in Newar Buddhism.

23 Herakaji Vajrācārya, Trisamādhi Pājā Vidhi, 48.

24 The instructions for meditating in a counterclockwise direction are also given in the Nispāṇayogāvalī. The Maṇḍala instruction states: Tatāh prācayādidiṣu vāma vartena cakṣvādavīdikṣu daksina vartena nyāsaḥ “Then begin at the east side, meditating from left to right”. See Bhattacharyya, Nispāṇayogāvalī, 26.


26 Kazi Dawa-Samdup, Srīchakrasaṃbhara Tantra, 26.

27 Kazi Dawa-Samdup, Srīchakrasaṃbhara Tantra, 27.

28 See Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa, 300-313. This list includes the eight Aṣṭamātrākṣas, pithas, 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala.

29 The physical locations of these eight esoteric tirthas are identical to the first eight sites of the more popularly known twelve tīrthas. 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.

30 See Tsuda, Samvarodaya Tantra, 99.

31 The specification of the directions and bijas differ from the Aṣṭamātrkās 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 Cakrasaṃvara initiations, verified that statement initiates had to perform the pīṭhapūjā pilgrimage after they had received the initiations, thus refuting the physical mandala 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 Cakrasaṃvara initiation. For Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya’s involvement in the pīṭhapūjās, see Aṣṭamūni Gubhaju, Bhaktikṛiti: Guru Paṇḍita Badrīratna Vajrācāryaya Dhautaya Jīvani vā Abhilekha Muna [Biography of Guru Paṇḍita Badrīratna Vajrācārya] (Kathmandu: Nepahya Bauddha Dharma Śangha, 1998).

34 Badrī Ratna Vajrācārya stated that preliminary teachings to prepare for the rituals were also given during this time.


36 Scholars have found it highly problematic that the Newar Buddhists involve the Aṣṭamātrkās in their ritual practices. Scholars such as Kolver have suggested that the inclusion of the Aṣṭamātrkās in the pīṭhapūjā reflects a conflation of the Hindu configuration. However, in reference to the counterclockwise arrangement of the Aṣṭamātrkās, Kolver remarks conversely supports my argument of the pīṭhapūjā’s association with the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. He writes, “The way that connects them [Aṣṭamātrkās], 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 Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi. Kolver, “The Evolution of a World Picture”, Numen, 142.

37 The term purvaseva suggests that the ritual may have traditionally performed by the Vajrācārya’s before the actual initiation ceremony itself. However, to my knowledge, the purvaseva 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 abhyantarā pūjās to Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi, such as when the rahasya pūjā and the Śiddurātmaka pūjā are performed. See Aṣṭamūni Gubhaju, Vaktikṛiti: Guru Paṇḍita Badrīratna Vajrācāryaya Dhautaya Jīvani vā Abhilekha Muna, 52-65.

38 Trisamāḍhi Pājā Vidhi, 48.


40 Gutschow, The Nepalese Caitya, 70-72.

41 Gutschow, The Nepalese Caitya, 72.
It is noteworthy that the colophon of the Cakrasaṅvara Tantra, dated 1253 CE and translated by Kazi Dawa-Sumdup from Tibetan, states that the text was written at Svayambhū Mahācāitya and translated into Tibetan from a Sanskrit original. This suggests that by the thirteenth century, the Cakrasaṅvara cycle teachings was preeminent in the Kathmandu Valley and that the Svayambhū Mahācāitya may have been an important site for these practices.

See Chapter 5 of the Vrhat Svayambhū Purāṇa

Samvarodaya Dīśī (Daśāmī) Pūjāvidhī, preface, no page numbers

See Chapter 5 of the Vrhat Svayambhū Purāṇa

Vrhat Svayambhū Purāṇa, 313.

Iī sampurṇena pitham caturviṃaṣṭi pithakam //

Etais cakrāv triśyaś ca śrī svayambhū parivṛtta //

Of all the pithas, the twenty-four pithas

Existing in the three cakras, surround Śrī Svayambhū

Guhyeśvari’s connection with Vajravarāhī is further reified in the dikṣā initiation of Cakrasaṅvara and Vajravarāhī. The main empowerment to Vajravarāhī is signified by the Guhyakalāśabhiṣekha, where the secret vase into which Vajravarāhī is invoked is invariably referred to as the Guhyeśvari kalaśa. Furthermore, the Vajrācārya ritual specialists also explain that the secret kalaśa invokes Nairātīma, another epithet of Guhyeśvari, as she is referred to in the Svayambhū Purāṇa. I will discuss the relationship between Vajravarāhī and Guhyeśvari in more detail in the Chapter Seven.

My arguments presented here of the Valley’s sacred geography as the Cakrasaṅvara Mandala and the idea of the bāhās as a three-dimensional mandalic space is further strengthened by recent research on the iconography of Kumārī Bāhā. In her paper, “Conceptualizing the Relationship of Kumārī Bāhā, Mandalic Space, and the Kathmandu Valley (Annual Conference of the Association of Asian Studies, 1998) Janice M. Glowkski discusses how the iconographic program at Kumārī Bāhā correlates with the conceptions of the Valley’s sacred geography as the Cakrasaṅvara Mandala and the bāhās as three-dimensional mandala. Glowski’s conclusions on Kumārī Bāhā’s visual imagery also emphasize the concept of mandalic space as reflecting the macrocosm, since Kumārī is an emanation of Vajravarāhī.

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 bhikṣa. The performance of the gurumāṇḍala pūjā during monastic initiation implies that the entire bare chugeu rite may, on one level, be interpreted in a Vajrayāna framework.

Gellner notes that the gurumāṇḍala 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 vrata pūjās as a preliminary ritual to other forms of worship. During these pūjās, the Vajrācārya priest leads the jajmaṇ through the gurumāṇḍala as a purification of the body, speech and mind.

As quoted in Allen, 10.

Locke, Karuamaya, 46.

To be part of the Ten Pāramitās elders (āju) of the bāhā, the saṅgha members must receive dikṣā, as the elders perform the esoteric rituals such as the gaṇacakra and kumārī pūjā in the āgarā shrines.

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 dikṣā to Cakrasaṅvara and Vajravarāhī that was performed by Āśa Kājī Vajrācārya, who officiated.

56 In 1995, dikṣā 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, 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, Badri Ratna Vajrācārya was the chief priest for the Cakrasaṅvara dikṣā, which involved a seclusion of fourteen day for all the initiates.

57 Lewis, *The Tuladhars of the Kathmandu*, 239.

58 Lay practitioners who have received the dikṣā empowerment required to maintain regular worship in their personal āgām shrines.

59 There is an association in Kathmandu called “Mahāsaṅvara Smārtha Samaj” for the initiates who have received dikṣā, that holds week-long esoteric rituals at Ākāśa Yogi Temple at Bijeśvari. In 1982, there was a Thirty-Six Saṅvara Worship, in which 317 people participated. See *Mahāsaṅbar Chattisamat Pujā Mg Rājogī (Kathmandu: Vĳesvari Bhār Sudhar Samītī, N.S 1102)*. For summary of pūjā, see also Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 305-306.

59 Locke, *Karunamayā*, 50. During the Trisamādhi pūjā, which is the fundamental meditational ritual to Cakrasaṅvara, these Heruka class deities are also invoked. See Herakaji Vajracaray, *Trisamādhi Pujā Vidhi*.

60 This format is also applicable to the āgām shrines in the private houses, where the inner room and the rituals performed there is restricted to those members who have taken dikṣā.


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 Kumāri, often invoked into the body of a young girl, is also called Vajrādevi, and is to be an aspect of Vajrārāhi.


65 The Śaṭ Yogi, that include Vajrārāhi and her retinue of five yogini from the Vajrārāhi Maṇḍala are often equated with the Śaṭ Pāramitā. In this context, Kumāri Pujā is offered to Vajrārāhi, in her creative and generative aspect (śrīstī) as the young goddess, Kumāri. 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.


68 For detailed analysis and description of the ritual, see Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, 273-280. See also, Locke, *Karunamayā*, The initiation rituals are summarized from information given to Gellner by Asha Kaji Vajrācārya, who had acted as the mula purohita. The rituals on Cakrasaṅvara follow the Kriyā Śamucya while those on Vajrārāhi is based on the Śamvarodaya Tantra. The interpretation of the empowerments that I have added are also based on the Trisamādhi Vidhi and the Samvarodaya Diśiḥpujā Vidhi.

69 This may be seen as further evidence of the symbolic relationship not only between Vajrasattva and Maṇjuśrī, but also of the Cakrasaṅvara and Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala. Before the empowerment, the initiates are given the mantra of Svayambhū.

70 In Chapter Seven, I will discuss the significance of Kumāri as Vajrādevi in the rituals of Cakrasaṅvara and Vajrārāhi.

Trisamādhi Pūjā Vidhi, 42.

It should be noted that the Guhyasamaja Tantra also refers to Mañjuśrī/Manjusvajra 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.

Samvarodaya Dasami (Diśi) Pūjāvidhi, 69.

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 turbulence
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!

Gellner notes that the two empowerments, prajñābhiṣeka and jñānabhiṣekha, are sometimes combined into a single unit as prajñājñānabhiṣekha.

Trisamādhi Pūjāvidhi, 24.

The six Yoginis will be discussed later in this chapter.

Trisamādhi Pūjāvidhi, 28.

Wayman, The Buddhist Tantra, 69.

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 Čakrasamvara worship.

Samvarodaya Diśi (Daśami) Pūjā Vidhi, 34.

This will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

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 (digudyah pūjā), the Tantric rituals at Mohani (Dasain), and annual Diśi pūjā in the āgam. See Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 242-243.

Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 280.

I will further discuss Guhyeśvarī's iconography and symbolic association with Nairatmā and Māmakī in Chapter Seven.

Samvarodaya Dasami (Diśi) Pūjā Vidhi, “kha”.

Samvarodaya Dasami (Diśi) Pūjā Vidhi, “ja”.

Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 278.
Samvarodya Dasami (Diṣi) Pūjā Vidhi, 69.

Based on Samvarodya Dasami (Diṣi) Pūjā Vidhi and Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 154-155.

Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 39.

Vyhat Svayambhū Purāṇam, 406.

Vyhat Svayambhū Purāṇam, 424-425.

The Nāga-mandala 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. Īṣṭana: Mahāpadma
9. Nairita: Karkotaka

Hemraj Śāky, Svayambhū Śhīta Śāntipur: Chagu Adhyana, 13.

Similar examples are found in Bu Bāhā, Su Bāhā and Si Bāhā in Patan.

During my field research, Najarman Buddhācārya, the head Thākāli from Svayambhū alone performed the monthly diṣī pūjā at Svayambhū, although traditionally, the Makan Vajrācārya priest should accompany him.

Vyhat Svayambhū Purāṇam, 398, 400, 405.

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.

See John K. Locke, Karunāmaya, 34.


Padmañrteśvara is also one of the viras in the kāya cakra of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala. Furthermore, other forms of Avalokiteśvara are also associated with Cakrasamvara. For example, see Ngor Maṇḍala #93 that is dedicated to the 45-Deity Cakrasamvara Avalokiteśvara Padmajā Maṇḍala. Here, the root text is the Ārya Avalokiteśvarā Mula Tantra Rājamā." 


The emphasis on initiations and empowerment as the proper and required preparation to enter the secret āgāmī 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 Purnimā (the anniversary of the covering of the Mahācāitya and the establishment of the five puras) and Magha Purnimā (the month when Mañjuśrī received the Cakrasamvara initiation from Guhyesvāri).

It is interesting to compare Pratāp Malla’s accounts with the same painting published by Gautamvaţra Vajrācārya shows the manuscript in better condition, thereby allowing a more detailed analysis of the iconography.
108 The original painting reproduced by Gautamvajra Vajracaraya depicts this section of the now damaged painting.
110 Gautamvajra Vajrācārya, “Pratāpa Mallako Śāntipurprabesa [Pratap Malla’s entry into Śāntipur], Purnimā, 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 Amrtakanika Tikā, 38.
114 Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 275.
115 For discussion of the Cakrasamvara 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 Cakrasamvara/Vajravārahi Tibetan painting of the mature Balbris style (no.117) shows virtually an identical format. Here, in the top row is the teaching lineage, which includes Vajrādhara in the top center position and the Mahāsiddhas such as Luipa, Ghanṭāpa, Kanhaṣa etc., who played an important role in the early transmission of the Cakrasyaśvara teachings.
117 The Vajrādhātu Maṇḍala is described in detail in the Sarvatathāgatātattvasamgraha. In analyzing the structural form of the Dharmadhātu and Vajrādhātu Maṇḍala, it appears that the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is developed from the basic format of the Vajrādhātu 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 Vajrasatvva) based on the Nāmasaṅgiti Tantra, depicts Vairocana in this form as Mahāvairocana from the Vajrādhātu Maṇḍala, instead of Dharmadhātu Vaiśvanāra Maṇjuṣrī.
119 As we discussed in Chapter Three, the Manjuvajra Maṇḍala described in the Nispannaṇyogāvalī has Manjavajra at the central deity, who is the essence of the Vajrasattva. Bhattacharyya writes that in this context, Maṇjuvajra “is of the nature of Vajrasattva, the sixth Dhyāni Buddha, an extension of the form of the Dhyāni Buddha Vairocana”. See Bhattacharyya, ed., Nispannaṇyogāvalī, 33.
120 I am not able to identify the other three deities. They are shown as four-armed figures in union with their females, who are also four-armed.
Figure 6.1. Agam Shrine to Cakrasamvara/
Figure 6.3. Animal-Faced Gate Guardians from the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala. East of exterior Door. North Face. Śāntipur. Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.

Figure 6.4. Animal-Faced Gate Guardians from the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala. West of exterior Door. North Face. Śāntipur. Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.
Figure 6.5. Animal-Faced Gate Guardians from the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala. East of interior shrine door. North Face. Śāntipur. Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.

Figure 6.6. Animal-Faced Gate Guardians from the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala. West of interior shrine door. North Face. Śāntipur. Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.
Figure 6.7. Interior Courtyard. View showing shrine facade on south wall. Hâku Bâhê, Kathmandu.
Figure 6.8. (left) Side Window of āgam shrine. Second Floor. South shrine facade. Hāku Bāhā, Kathmandu.

Figure 6.9. (bottom) Detail of torana over side window of āgam shrine. Second Floor. South shrine facade. Hāku Bāhā, Kathmandu.
Figure 6.10. Ágam Shrine Window. Exterior. Northwest Corner. Interior Courtyard. Guji Bāhā, Patan.
Figure 6.11. (top) Cakrasamvara/Vajravarāhi shrine, below main āgam. Northwest corner. Guji Bāhā, Patan.

Figure 6.12. (left) Detail of the symbolic representation of Cakrasamvara/Vajravarāhi shrine. Located below main āgam. Northwest corner. Guji Bāhā, Patan.
Figure 6.13. Torana over āgam shrine shrine window, depicting Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara Mañjughoṣa as central figure. Northwest corner. Second floor. Guji Bāhā, Patan.
Figure 6.14. Door leading to āgam shrine. North courtyard wall. East end. Guji Bāhā, Patan.
Figure 6.15. (top) Detail of Nāmasaṅgiti Mañjuśrī as central figure. Toranā over door leading to main āgam. North wall, east end. Guji Baḥā, Patan.

Figure 6.16. (left) Detail of the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa. Top center figure. Toranā over door leading to main āgam. North wall, east end. Guji Baḥā, Patan.
Figure 6.17. Transferring the idealized Mapping of Bhaktapur as mandala into physical space.

Locations of the Eight Mātrikā Pithas around the city of Bhaktapur.
Figure 6.18. Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravarāhi Maṇḍala. Dated C.E 1590. Los Angeles County Museum Collection.
Figure 6.19. *Bijras* of the Twenty-four deities of the Kāyā, Vāk, and Cittā 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 Cakrasamvara Mandala, with the Kāya, Vāk, and Citta Cakras represented by the twenty-four mātrkā pīthas.
Figure 6.21. Twenty-four deities of the Kāyā, Vāk, and Cītta Cakra, relating to the twenty-four cakras of the yogin's body.
Figure 6.22. Ākāśa Yogini Shrine at Bijeśvari, Kathmandu.
One of the Four Yoginis Shrines of the valley.
Figure 6.23. Khaḍga Yogini Shrine at Gum Bāhā, Sankhu. One of the Four Yoginis Shrines of the Valley.
Figure 6.24. Vajrayogini Shrine at Pharping. One of the Four Yoginis Shrines of the valley.
Figure 6.25. Guheśvari Yogini Shrine at Pulān Guheśvari, Kathmandu. One of the Four Yoganīs Shrines of the valley.
Figure 6.26 Idealized plan of a Bāhā as Maṇḍalīc Space, with the principal caitya serving generator of sacred space.
Figure 6.27. Vajravarahi Manḍala. Cloth. 15th century. Delhi Museum.
Figure 6.28. Detail of the Guhyeśvari pitha, symbolized by the natural spring and kalaśa. Guheśvari Shrine. Pūlān Guhyeśvari, Kathmandu.
Figure 6.29. Ādi Šaktī Guhyesvari depicted in her *sambhogakaya* form. Mural Painting. North wall. Śantipur. Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.
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 Cakrasamvara Mandala. Exterior Door, West End. South Face. Sāntipur. Śvayambhū Mahāājīta.

Fig. 6.32. Animal Faced Gate Guardians from the Cakrasamvara Mandala. Exterior Door, East End. South Face. Sāntipur. Śvayambhū Mahāājīta.
Fig. 6.33. Animal Faced Gate Guardians from the Cakrasamvara Mandala. Interior Door. West End. North Wall. Sāntipur. Svayambhū Mahācaitya.

Fig. 6.34. Animal Faced Gate Guardians from the Cakrasamvara Mandala. Interior Door. East End. North Wall. Sāntipur. Svayambhū Mahācaitya.
Figure 6.35. Inner Shrine door as Main Object of Worship. Interior North Wall. Šãntipur. Svayambhú Mahācaitya Complex.
Figure 6.36. Detail of Kāliaśa, Santipur shrine door.
Figure 6.37. Pādamartteśvara Lokeśvara. Interior South Wall, above entrance door. Center Figure. Śāntipur. Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.
Figure 6.38. Bird-faced Gate-Guardians from the Cakrasamvara Mandala. Figures flanking Padmanātisvarā. Interior South Wall. Sāntipur. Svayambhū Mahācaitya Complex.
Figure 6.39. Guhyesvari Yogini of the Four Yoginis. Interior South Wall. Šāntipur. Svayambhū Māhācaitya Complex.

Figure 6.40. Khadga Yogini of the Four Yoginis. Interior South Wall. Šāntipur. Svayambhū Māhācaitya Complex.
Figure 6.44. Cakrasamvara and Vajravarahi. Cloth. Fifteenth Century. Ford Gilmore Collection.
Figure 6.45. Cakrasamvara Mandala. Seventeenth Century. Los Angeles County Museum.
Figure 6.46. Caṇḍamahāroṣana. Cloth. Fifteenth Century. Los Angeles County Museum.
CHAPTER 7

THE UNIFYING THEME:
YOGINI TRADITION IN NEWAR BUDDHISM

INTRODUCTION

The three core iconographic themes found in the bāhās/bahis, namely Svayambhū Mahācaitya, and the Dharmadhātu and Cakrasamvara mandalas 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 yogini tradition found in Newar Buddhism, which defined the Tantric soteriological concepts of Vajrayāna Buddhism. The yogini 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 yogini tradition serves as the unifying element in the three core iconographic themes; 2) to establish the hierarchy of the yoginis of the Newar Buddhist pantheon, articulated by the art and the ritual practices; and 3) to examine the role of the yoginis as the ontology of the religion. It is through the yogini 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 yoginis 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 yoginis, namely Gūhyēśvari, Vajravārāhi, Vajrayogini, and the Aṣṭamātrkās, 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.\footnote{The sacrality of the Valley as \textit{punyakṣetra} ("meritorious land") and \textit{māṇḍala} 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 \textit{pīṭha} ("seat") of the goddess.\footnote{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.\footnote{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 \textit{śūnyatā} and \textit{prajñā}. The emphasis on the goddess worship in the Newar Buddhist traditions appears to reflect an older, deeply-rooted Indic tradition of \textit{māṭrkā} ("little mother") worship—a religious substratum that is perhaps more ancient than the Buddhist and Hindu traditions in the Valley.\footnote{The extant material culture from the pre-Licchavi (1st-3rd century C.E.) that is stylistically close to the Kuśāṇa period \textit{māṭrkās}}}
offers a profusion of mātrkās and the group of Saptamātrkās ("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 saptamātrkā group from Bagalamukhi Temple in Patan, dated by scholars to the second-third century C.E., is placed inside the main shrine image as Bagalāmukhi, 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 Jaibageśvari in Deopatan also houses pre-Licchavi images of mātrkās, 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 Hariti 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 Yogāmvara/Jñānadakini pīṭha popularly referred to as Mhepi.
Ajimā “Grandmother of Mhepi” (See Fig 3.69), the Bhadrakāli/Vaiśnavi shrine to Lumadhi Ajimā, Kankeśvari shrine to Kanga Ajimā, and Maitī Ajimā is the shrine to Kumari/Maitidevi. These are among the powerful Tantric goddesses propitiated in Newar Buddhism. The Newar Buddhist tradition incorporates the ancient Indic cults of the mātrikās 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 Aṣṭamātrikā “the Eight Mother Goddesses”, who in the Tantric Buddhist context, are also emanations of Vajravārāhī.⁸

The significance of the Yoginis—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 Yoginis 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 Gatiū, Mohani, Ghode Jatrā, Kumari Jatrā, involve the concepts of well-being, regeneration, renewal, and state-protection.⁹ On the other hand, in a more technical buddhological understanding, the Yoginis 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 Yoginis, perceived within these two interpretation, is strongly demonstrated in the spatial ordering of the Valley as the Cakrasamvara Mandal that is affirmed time and again through ritual practices. As discussed in the Chapter Six, the conception of the Valley’s sacred geography as Cakrasamvara Mandal 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 Kalasarcarana pūjā, a fundamental Newar Buddhist rite of ritual invocation, for example, Trisamādhi pūjā of Cakrasamvara/Vajravarahi is an integral part of the ritual.12 As a highly esoteric ritual involving extensive female symbolism, Vajravarahi 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 Guhyesvari kalaśa, as the key ritual to the invocation process. How the yoginis 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. Specifically, the Purāṇa describes Guhyēśvari ("Secret Goddess") as the primordial source (Ādi Sakti) of the self-arisen Ādi Buddha Svayambhū Jyotirūpa. The narrative also uses symbolic metaphors that allude to the goddess’ generative and creation principles. Guhyēśvari is the mother of all Buddhas (buddhamātṛ), according to the Svayambhū Purāṇa, and appropriately, it is from the root of the Guhyēśvari 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 Guhyēśvari 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 Guhyēśvari is Ādiśakti; 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*. The *Svayambhū Purāṇa* specifically states that a triangular *yantra* of Guhyēśvarī, which appeared at the *pīṭha* (“seat”) of the Goddess, is a symbol of creation (*śṛṭi*) and signifies the female generative organ (*yoni*) as the seat of all creation. In art and ritual, the double-triangled (*ṣaṭkoṇa*) *yantra* is used as a quintessential symbol of the Tantric goddess in the Newar Buddhist tradition. For instance, the *maṇḍala* of Vajravārāhi 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). In Newar architecture, windows that have a *ṣaṭkoṇa yantra* represented on the outside generally signify the presence of a Tantric goddess enshrined inside. Numerous examples can be found in the Valley, such as the *āgām* shrine to Annapūrṇa/Jñānaḍākini in Bhotahiti (Fig. 7.4), the *dyo cheñ* to Bhadrakāli in Asan and Tebāhā, or the *dyo cheñ* to Kanga Ajīmā (Kankeśvari) in Yaktatol. These *yantras* symbolize the “seat” of the goddess enshrined, and in many of these places, the goddess is manifest as natural rock.
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.\(^\text{19}\) 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.\(^\text{20}\) For example, the essential element of any formal Newar Buddhist rituals is the kalaśarcanā 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 Guhyēśvari kalaśa, inherently symbolizing the Tantric Buddhist Ādi Śakti and ontological source.\(^\text{21}\) Further, the principal empowerments of Vajravārāhī during the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī ritual is specifically referred to as the Guhyakaḷaśa Abhiśekha, “Empowerment of the Secret Kalaśa”.\(^\text{22}\) As discussed in the dikṣā initiations in the previous chapter, this empowerment reenacts the first initiation of Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī given by the goddess Guhyēśvari to Maṇjuśrī. The Svayambhu Purāṇa specifically states that Maṇjuśrī received the vajrodaka abhiśekha “adamantine water-
empowerment” of Guhyeśvari, as the culminating initiation to Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi. This empowerment is alternately described as the guhyakalaśa abhiśekha “secret-kalaśa empowerment”, in the Newar Buddhist ritual context. In the Valley, the preeminent female deities residing in pīṭhas in their natural forms as a spring or a rock, are often symbolized by kalaśa, such as Guhyeśvari (Fig. 3.82) and Jñāṇadakini, 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 Guhyeśvari as the primordial ontological source (Ādi Sakti) of Newar Buddhism.

*Pīṭhas: 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 śrīcakrasaṃvara tradition of the thirty-seven bodhipakṣa dharmah [“wings of Enlightenment] as goddesses.” The conceptual mapping of the Valley as Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi Maṇḍala reinforces the primacy of the Yoginīs in the Newar Buddhist tradition, specifically as the Valley generated by Guhyeśvari/Vajravārāhi.
In mapping the Valley as the Cakrasāṃvara 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 Guhyeśvari, Vajravārāhi, Vajrayoginīs, and the Aṣṭamāṭrkās 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 māṭrkā pīthas related to the Valley’s spatial ordering as Cakrasāṃvara 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 Cakrasāṃvara Tantra is to visualize the yogin’s body as a maṇḍala, in which the twenty-four physical pīthas are to be visualized as existing in the Adamantine body (vajrakāya) of the practitioner. The Samvarodaya Tantra calls the twenty-four physical sacred placed “bāhya pītha” or external pīthas, corresponding to the “seats” of the Aṣṭamāṭrkās in the Newar tradition, while those inside the body are called inner/secret pīthas (See Figs. 6.19 and 6.21). The Cakrasāṃvara
*Tantra* specifically describes the inner *pīṭhas* as having the appropriate deities reside in it in a manner similar to the external *pīṭhas.*

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 Cakrasamvara/Vajravarāhī.

For the Newar Buddhist practitioners, the *pīṭha-pūjā* pilgrimage that incorporates the *Aṣṭamātrkā 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 *Cakrasamvara 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. 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 pīthas, the goddess manifest herself in her primordial nature, as natural rocks outcropping and unhewn stone that defies any structural form. An example of an Aṣṭamātrkā pītha from the Vāk cakra is Maheśvari at Mhepi (See Figs. 2.27 and 2.28), alternately known as Jñānaḍakini or Mhepi Ajimā. Her main image there, is a natural rock form, where she is surrounded by the other Mātrkā figures, also manifested as amorous rock-the quintessential form of the goddess.

Although scholars have analyzed the pīthas within the Hindu and the Śākta traditions, the role of pīthas 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 pīthas may be helpful in understanding the significance of pītha devatās in the Valley. Foremost, the goddess’ form is interpreted as alternately “manifested” as in the pīthas’ natural rock or “invoked” in anthropomorphic manifestation. For example, in her physical and iconographic manifestations, the Aṣṭamātrkās 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 Kumāri. In contrast, her “manifested” forms are found in the self-arisen pīthas as natural rocks that are understood to have existed through time, and thus possess a sacrality surpasses her physical representations. Because the
piṭhas visually unimpressive and despite the significance of piṭhas in the ritual context, the anthropomorphic and figurative depictions of the goddesses that have generally gained the attention of art historical research.

The very fact that these piṭhas 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 piṭhas and in this context, the arrangement of these piṭhas 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 Cakrasamvara

The Cakrasamvara 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 Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala. The emphasis on the yoginīs is directly related to the Anuttara Yoga practices, of which the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala is part. Moreover, as a Yoginī tantra maṇḍala, the Cakrasamvara Tantra demonstrates the preeminence of the female as the embodiments of the Enlightenment process, with Vajravārāhi symbolizing the state of śūnyatā and luminous wisdom (prajñā). In this understanding specific to Newar Buddhism, it is Guhyēśvari, Vajravārāhi, the four Yoganīs, and the twenty-four Aṣṭamātrikās are intimately associated with the idealized conception of the Valley as Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala (See Fig. 6.20). In a technical buddhological understanding, as Vajravārāhi is the preeminent deity of the Cakrasamvara meditation cycle, the Valley’s sacred maṇḍala is generated by Guhyēśvari/Varavarahī, and in turn, through whom all the other deities of the maṇḍala emanates. In esoteric terms, the Valley “secret”
mandala is specifically the Vajravārāhi mandala, thus reflecting the preeminence of the yoginis in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

A Newar ritual manuscript representing the sixty-four forms of Cakrasaṃvara perhaps clarifies best articulates the relationship between Guhyesvarī, Vajravārāhi, the Yoganis and the Mātrkās. 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 yoginis the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala; 2) the relationship between Svayambhū, Dharmadhātu, Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala, and the yoginis; and 3) the hierarchical relationship of the yoginis.

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 Cakrasaṃvara, which according to the colophon is based on the Samvarāgama Mahā Tantra (Fig. 7.5). Each illustration has an invocation to Cakrasaṃvara’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 Cakrasaṃvara; (2) Jina Buddhas in the esoteric forms (3) Guhyesvarī at the center of the manuscript (4) Nine Yoganis, including Vajravārāhi, and (5) Aṣṭamātrkās. In his sixty-four forms, Cakrasaṃvara, is depicted with different animal faces, each corresponding to
the invocation given below the illustration. He is consistently depicted in alidha posture, embracing Vajravārāhi, who is represented dancing with her usual attributes, the skull-cup and karttrkā.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Iconographic Layout of the Hierarchy of the Yoginis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Center of Manuscript</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sancāsani Devī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KhadgaYogini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidyādhari (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Aṣṭamātrkās</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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On the first iconographic section as illustrated above, the manuscript begins with Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi, 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 pratyāliḍa posture trampling on the two figures of Kālaratṛi and Bhairava. He is represented in the yuganādha posture with his prajñā, Vajravārāhi embracing him.

Vajravārāhi 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:

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śrī herukam mahāvīram visuddha kulisesvaram/
Namami sarva bhavena dakini gana bhūsitam //
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
dakini ganas
I bow to you, Samvara, I bow to your two forms
The lord to resides in the circle (cakra), I bow to you,
Cakrasaṃvara

Directly below Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi 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 Caṇḍamahārośana, Maṇjuśrī, Ārya Tārā, and Amoghapāśa
Lokeśvara, all depicted in their esoteric forms. Maṇjuśrī 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 vajrahunkāramudrā, 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 yoginis in the manuscripts will clarify their role and
hierarchy of the yoginis in Newar Buddhism.

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**Iconographic Analysis of the Yoganis in the Cakrasaṃvara Manuscript**

As shown in the table above, the second iconographic section of the
manuscript best articulates the relationship between Guhyeśvari,
Vajravārāhi, the Yoganis and the Māṭrākās—the key yoganis in the Newar
Buddhist tradition (Figs. 7.8, 7.9, 7.10, 7.14). Guhyeśvari, in her universal
form (viśvarūpa), is placed at the center of the manuscript, with an
invocation referring to her as Hevajri. (Fig. 7.8).35 As unique iconographic
form in Newar Buddhist art, Guhyeśvari 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 Cakrasaṃvara, she stands in
pratyāliḍāsana on a prone figure. As her universal form, Guhyeśvari is
represented with multiple arms [thousand arms, according to the Svayambhū
Purāṇa], and all her right hands hold a seated male figure in aṇjalimudrā. Each of her left hands holds seated female figure whose hands are also in aṇjalimudrā. In the Svayambhu Purāṇa, Guhyeśvari is described as uttarāmukhi ("north-faced"), and is depicted with twelve heads in addition to the central one. 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 Guhyeśvari, who is called "mother of all Buddhas" (sarva buddha jananī) in textual sources. Guhyeśvari’s identification is further established by the inscription, which relates this form of Guhyeśvari with the narrative found in the Svayambhu Purāṇa. In the lower left corner is a small figure of Śiva, represented with his usual attributes and hands held in aṇjalimudrā. The colophon reads:

"Sāntitirthayā mahātmyasa śrī guhyeśvari mātānam mahādevayata darśan biyu

In the Mahātmya of Śānti Tirtha [of the Svayambhu Purāṇa], śrī Guhyeśvari gives darśan to Mahādeva."

According to the Svayambhu Purāṇa narrative, Śiva Mahādeva is unable to find his wife Umā and asks Guhyeśvari to help him locate the goddess. Guhyeśvari appears in her universal form with the figure of Umā in each of her hands. Guhyeśvari asks Śiva Mahādeva to identify his real wife, and Mahādeva, unable to do so, requests Guhyeśvari to identify his
wife, thereby acknowledging the Guhyeśvari as the supreme authority and power.

This narrative of the Svayambhū Purāṇa's establishes the supremacy of the Buddhist goddess, Guhyeśvari, over the Hindu deities. In the Buddhist context, Guhyeśvari is the ontology of Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the Cakrasaṃvara teachings in Newar Buddhism. As the Ādi Śakti, Guhyeśvari is variously described as Jineśvari, "Lord of the Jinas", Prajñāparmitā, Mother of the Buddhas, nirākāra nairātmā Sunya, "Formless and Selfless Void", and buddhamātr “mother of all Buddhas". 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.

Guhyeśvari’s placement at the center of the Cakrasaṃvara manuscript is particularly appropriate and deliberate, as the goddess is the root source of the Cakrasaṃvara teachings in Nepal. In this context, she thus generates the sixty-four forms of Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī. Further, she is also symbolically connected to the two other iconographic themes: Svayambhū and the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, again as the source.
Vārūni

Directly below Guhyēśvari is a multi-armed goddess, shown dancing on the head of nāgas and whose iconographic form is unique to Newar Buddhism (Fig. 7.10). The goddess is inscribed as Varūni Devī, flanked by two yoginīs from the inner circle of the Vajravārāhi Mahāmaṇḍala, Sancāsani Devī on her right and Yāmini Devī on her left. Varūni has a central role to the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala meditation, and her role in Newar Buddhism is clarified by the ritual context. Further, she is also associated with Vajravārāhi’s powers of rainmaking and talismanic state protection. In the Trisamāḍhi Pūjā and the Diśī Pūjā to Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi, the Mahāpatra Pūjā (“Great Skull-cup pūjā) precedes and concludes the main section of the Guhyakalasa (“Secret Kalaśa Pūjā”) to Vajravārāhi. Specifically, the pūjā is called Mantrapātra pūjā, or pūjā to the Mantra Skull-cup, where Vārūni is invoked into the skullcup as an emanation of Vajravārāhi with the following sloka:

Ākārarena kapālaśca mām kārena Vārūni
aḍṭasaśadśa bhujā ekamukhena //
rakta varna trinetra /
khadgavāṇāṅkuśa savye kapāla kuleśa dhvajā //
Tatha gada tatha ghaṇṭā navamantra varapradā
Sphē-taxa dhanu pāśam ca khaṭvāṅga sakamanḍalu //</nul>
Sulamudgara vinā ca ganaṇyanti cattaretāre /
Navayovana lāvanya suśobha sura sundari //</nul>

“In the form of a skullcup (kapala), Vārūni, 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, ghantā, 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 Vārūṇi 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 Vārūṇi’s relationship with water and rain. In the ritual context, Vārūṇi’s is intimately associated with the waters of consecration. Specifically, the water of the conch (sankhodaka) is poured into the mantrapatra, which is Vārūṇi’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

\[\text{Om nāgapāśatmao nityam jalarājo mahābala}
\text{Nirvikalpetī vikhyato varunaya nama stu te}

\text{Om, having the essence of the serpent noose (nāgapāśa), the king of the waters, and one of great strength,}
\text{Renowned for your formlessness (nirvikalpeti), I bow to you,}
\text{O Varūna}

As a form of Vajravārāhī, Vārūṇi is described as the “beautiful female who drinks the alcohol, the guhyavajrini (“the secret vajra”), an epithet that is similar to Guhyeśvari, who was called “filled with alcohol (surā yuktam).45 Further, the Sanskrit word “Varūṇi” is synonymous with liquor.46 Throughout the rituals, Vārūṇi is repeatedly invoked particularly during the main Guhyakalāśa pūjā (“Secret Vase Ritual”) to Guhyeśvari/Māmaki, establishing Vajravārāhī/Vārūṇi’s symbolic relationship with Guhyeśvari.47 Here, Vārūṇi’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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala.48 The ritual texts invoke her as:

\[
\text{Om nama devī Vārūṇī amṛte amṛta satbhaye sarvasattva vasyakāri}
\]
\[
\text{Amṛte hṛm ākham pratiçha svahā //}
\]

\[
\text{Om, I bow to you, Vārūṇī Devī, residing in amṛta and arising from amṛta,}
\]
\[
\text{making all sentient being roar (?)}
\]
\[
\text{[Mantra] Amṛte hṛm ākham pratiçha svahā //}
\]

After the mantrapatra invocation, all the deities are invoked into the symbolic implements, i.e., Cakrasaṃvara into the lamp-black vase (mohani), Vajravārāhi into vermilion powder container (sinhā) through the efficacy of the mantras.50 Then the main portion of the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi pūjā is then directed to the Guhyakalāśa or Alcohol Pot (khay or Thāpin pūjā).51 The mantrapatra placed on top of the Guhyakalāśa, 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 mahārāja visuddhayet). The ritual then states that Vārūṇī is invoked into the guhyakalāśa, thus establishing her symbolic connection with Guhyēśvari. In essence, she is the “Secret Goddess” (Guhyeśvari).52

The manuscript’s iconography, specifically the two Yoginis flanking Vārūṇī labeled Sancāsāni and Yāmīni, further establishes Vārūṇī's
association with Vajravārāhi. In the Vajravārāhi Maṇḍala (Fig. 6.27), Vajravārāhi is placed inside a doubled yantra and is surrounded by six yoginīs. In the visualization meditations, Vajravārāhi is visualized as surrounded by the six yoginīs and is invariably invoked together with her other five emanations, who are Yāmini, Mohani, Sancarini, Santrāsani, and Cauḍikā. The Trisamādhi Vidhi names this group as the Paṇcaguhya Devis “Five Secret Goddesses.” Judging from Vārūṇi’s iconographic placement with two of the Paṇcaguhya devis in the manuscript, the sixth unnamed “secret” goddess in the invocation is Vārūṇi. Furthermore, in the manuscript, Vārūṇi is placed directly above Vajravārāhi, thus firmly establishing their ritual association.

To summarize, I propose several significant points regarding Vārūṇi emerge from the iconography of the manuscripts as well as the ritual context. One, Vārūṇi, symbolized as mantra skull-cup (mantrapātra) is an emanation of Vajravārāhi and serves a central role in the rituals to Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi. By conferring the guhyapātra abhiśekha (“secret skull empowerment”), Vārūṇi is invoked for the efficacy and power of mantras in order for the practitioner to summon and visualize the deities of the Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhi 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 Cakrasamvara/Vajravarāhī 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 Vajravarāhī talismanic function with rain-making and state protection.55 Varuṇī’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, Varuṇī’s esoteric identity, hence her true identity, is as guhyavajrini (secret adamantine female); this aspect is only revealed through the teaching of the Tantric initiation. As an emanation of Guhyeśvarī and Vajravarāhī, she herself is the “secret goddess”, unique to the ritual practices of Newar Buddhism.

Vajravarāhī and the Yoginīs:

Reflecting the hierarchy of the preeminent yoginiṣ of Newar Buddhism, the manuscript depicts below Vajravarāhī, 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 Vajravarāhī, Khaḍga Yogini to her right, Phampi [Pharping] Yogini in the lower right, and three goddess generically labeled as Vidyādhari “Holder of Knowledge”. Again as emanations of Vajravarāhī, the yoginiṣ are red in color, shown holding the skull-cup, flaying knife and khatvāṅga—the prime
attributes of Vajravārāhī. In the sacred construct of the Valley’s Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala, the four yoginis in the inner circle (Ḍakini, Lāma, Khandaroha, and Rupini), correspond to the four yoginis of Newar Buddhism, who have specific temples dedicated to them.⁵⁵ These are Guhyēśvari Yogini, Khaḍga Yogini of Śāṅkhu, Vajrayogini of Pharping, and Ākāśa Yogini of Bijeśvari. In the Cakrasaṃvara manuscript, the goddesses are iconographically identical to the form of the four yoginis 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 āgam shrines in bāhā architecture.

The manuscript is also an invaluable resource for establishing the iconographic forms of the four yoginis (Catur Yoginis) of Newar Buddhism. In the first row, Vajravārāhi is flanked by Khaḍga Yoganī and Vidyadhari-1. Khaḍga Yogini, to the right of Vajravārāhi, 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 Khaḍga Yogini “Yogini with a Sword” is specific to the goddess of Śāṅkhu, whose main image of the toraṇa similarly holds a sword and lotus in her hands. As an iconographic variant, the Yoganī on the left side of Vajravārāhi is identified as Khaḍga Yogini, 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 *khatvānga* 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 Cakrasamvara manuscript. The main pendant over the Vajrayogini shrine at Pharping, shows the Pharping *yoginī* with her left extended up over her shoulders, her right leg straight out and the *khatvānga* balanced across her shoulders (Fig. 7.11). 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 Bijeśvari. 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 Yoginis found in the bāhā context further attest to the iconography of these goddess in Newar Buddhist art. The exterior agām facade of Kvā Bāhā, Kathmandu has murals that depict the four Yoginis. From left to right, they are Khaḍga Yogini from Śāñkhu, Ākāśa Yogini from Bijeśvari, Guhyēśvari Yogini from Guhyēśvari, and Vajrayogini from Pharping (See Fig. 5.23). Similarly, the Bhaisajyaratāja Bāhā in Patan also has a set of metal pendants depicting the Four Yoginis in a consistent iconographic pattern. 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. Similarly, a votive caitya found at the Pharping Yogini shows the four yoginis at the base of the caitya (Figs 7.12-13). As a set of Four Yogini (Catur Yogini), the goddesses are emanations of Vajravārāhi as seen in the inner circle of the Cakrasamāvara Maṇḍala.

In the manuscript, we have thus far identified the iconography of four out of the five yoginis surrounding Vajravārāhi, as namely Khaḍga Yogini (flanking the central figure), Ākāśa Yogini (viewer's right), and Vajrayogini (viewer's left). By process of elimination, the yogini at the center directly below Vajravārāhi must be Guhyēśvari Yogini. To my knowledge, this iconographic form of Guhyēśvari is fairly unique, as the Guhyēśvari Yogini is generally shown in pratyālīda 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, Guhyēśvari is
consistently represented as a blue figure, rather than red, as in the manuscript (See Figs.6.36-39). In the manuscript, Guhyesvari is represented seated with both legs flung over the shoulder and holding the three attributes of Vajravarahi—the skull-cup, flaying knife, and khatvanga. This iconographic form of Guhyesvari, with the exposed female organs, reaffirm Guhyesvari Yogini’s role as the primordial generative source in the Newar Buddhist context. Further, the placement of Guhyesvari Yogini (here, in her sambhogakāya form) directly in a vertical axis below the universal form of Ādi Guhyesvari, Vārūṇī, and Vajravarāhi is an unequivocal statement of the four Yoginis’ symbolic association with the primordial goddess (Ādi Śakti) of Newar Buddhism. 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 Yoginis, as found in the Cakrasamvara manuscript (Fig. 7.14). Instead of only Vajrayogini as the central figure, Cakrasamvara/Vajravarāhi are represented in their standard iconographic forms, surrounded by the same set of five yoginis. The only iconographic difference is that the placement of the top two yoginis is reversed, with the four-armed Khaḍga Yogini on their left and the two-armed Khaḍga Yogini on their right. The lower set of goddesses are identical in forms and placement with the Cakrasamvara manuscript. The iconography
of the goddesses in the lower left and right are consistent with the representations of Ākāśa Yogini from Bijeśvari and Vajrayogini from Śānkhu. The center figure again is esoteric form of Guhyesvari, 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 esoteric 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. As signifiers of the Tantric soteriological methodology, the goddesses are also referred to by the general term, Vajrayogini “Adamantine Yogini.” 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 Vajrayogini, 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 Yoginis of the Valley, but articulates their association with the ontological source, Guhyesvari.

The highly technical Tantric aspects of Newar Buddhism’s four Yoginis are clearly established in the ritual context and in textual sources. In the
rituals to Cakrasamvara/Vajravārahi, two separate maṇḍalas are visualized. The first generation maṇḍala is to Cakrasamvara, in which the four yoginis (Ḍakini, Lāma, Khaṇḍaroha and Rupini) are visualized as surrounding Cakrasamvara. Next, in the completion stage Mahāmaṇḍala of Vajravārahi, these goddesses are transformed into her emanations as the six yoginis surrounding Vajravārahi. These are the five “secret” goddesses (Paṃcaguhya Devi): Yāminī, Mohini, Sancāsani, Santrāsani, and Caṇḍikā. In another interpretation, the same list of Vajravārahi and her retinue are called the Saṭ Yogini, the Six Yoginis, and symbolize the attainment of perfections, with Prajñāpāramitā/Vajravārahi as the leading the list. A similar interpretation is also provided in the Hevajra commentary of Hevajrapindārtha Tika, in which these six goddesses are said to symbolize the prajña’s of the six kulas (the five Jinas and Vajrasattva), namely Locana, Māmakī, Pandura, Tara, Vajrarahasvari, and Prajñāpāramitā. Logically, then, the yoginis’ preeminence in Newar Buddhism is not surprising, taking into consideration that both the Nāmasaṅgiti 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
yogini–Guhyeshvari, Varuni, Vajravarahi, and the Yoginis—as the ontological source, are synonymous.

Aṣṭamātrkās:

The last section of the Cakrasamvara manuscript illustrates a group of eight yoginis, 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 Aṣṭamātrkās, although they lack their general iconographic characteristics or attributes. As discussed in Chapter 6, the Aṣṭamātrkās in the Tantric Buddhist context serve as major players in the Cakrasamvara cycle meditation. Further, these goddesses are also key in defining the spatial construct of the Valley as the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala. As a group of Tantric goddesses that are also equally significant in the Hindu and Śakta traditions of the Newars,64 the Aṣṭamātrkās’ roles are elaborated in the Svayambhu 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 Yoginis 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 Dīkālas, the yoginis are clearly the Aṣṭamātrkā group. As protectors of sacred space, the Aṣṭamātrkās, in their more mundane functions, protect a town, temple, maṇḍala or the whole valley. In the Newar Buddhist context, the eight goddesses are paired with the Aṣṭabhairavas, who are the esoteric emanations of the eight Dīkālas. The dwelling places for the Aṣṭamātrkās, as for the Eight Dīkālas, are the four cardinal directions and the intermediate spaces.

The manuscript ends with an image of Unmatta Bhairava accompanied by Vārāhi, which is a standard iconographic scheme of many manuscripts and sketchbooks (Fig. 7.16) In the Newar Buddhist context, Unmatta Bhairava presides over the Aṣṭabhairava, the Eight manifestations of Bhairava, the male consorts of the Aṣṭamātrkās. In the technical Newar Buddhist understanding following the description of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala, the Aṣṭamātrkās are the vīrās (“heroines”) residing in the pīṭhas of the Body, Speech, and Mind cakras, and are emanations of Vajravārāhi; the Bhairavas are the viras, the heros who are identical with Cakrasaṃvara.

The Aṣṭamātrkās significance in the Valley’s sacred maṇḍala of Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi was analyzed in Chapter Six, in which the physical maṇḍala was defined through the presence of the twenty-four Maṭrkā pīṭhas, arranged in the ring of three Aṣṭamātrkā groups. The Aṣṭamātrkā’s primary ritual function as markers and protectors of sacred
space is evident in the spatial ordering of the Valley. It is the Aśtamātṛkās
that define the space, while Guhyesvari, who is placed at the center,
generates the deities within the Maṇḍala. Similarly, the placement of the
Aśtamātṛkās in the last folios of the manuscript and the directional
symbolism ascribed for each yogini suggest that the manuscript’s
iconography replicates not only the sacred maṇḍala of Cakrāsāṃvara and
Vajravārāhī, but also shows the hierarchy of the yoginis and their
relationship to Svayambhū, the Dharmadhātu, and the Cakrāsāṃvara
Maṇḍalas.

Scholars have generally attributed the Aśtamātṛkā as Hindu
goddesses, and their inclusion in Newar Buddhism is often given as proof of
the religion’s syncretic nature and influence of Hinduism. While such
overlapping of traditions indicate the sharing of deities and sites, a close
examination of the Aśtamātṛkā 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 Cakrāsāṃvara Maṇḍala. Aside from the eight Yogiṇī’s role as
definers of sacred and protectors space, the worship of the Aśtamātṛkās also
serves as an essential component of Newar Buddhist rituals. In the
Kalaśarcana Pūjā, Trisamādhi Pūjā, and Diśi Pūjā, the worship of the
Aśtamātṛkās is called Cakrapūjā (Cakha Pūjā) and is generally performed at
the end of the rituals.72 During the worship, the ritual specialist invokes the
Aṣṭamāṭrkās 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. Further, in the preliminary rites of the dikṣā initiation to Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravarāhi, the pīṭha-devatās worship and pilgrimage to twenty-four pīṭhas of the Aṣṭamāṭrkās serve as empowerment rituals to prepares the yogin to realize the truth of phenomenal existence.

To the average Newar Buddhist practitioner, the Aṣṭamāṭrkās’ significance will be directly related to her role as protector and mother “māṭrka.”. These goddesses, as protective deities, are lovingly referred to as ajīmā “grandmother” and worshipped for the well-being of family, health, happiness, prosperity, and protection from evil. The highly philosophical associations of the Aṣṭamāṭrkās that I have alluded to in this study is known to the select practitioners, who are aware of the buddhological implications of the yoginis role in the larger Tantric Buddhist context. There are multivalent functions of the yoginis 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 yoginis, particularly the Aṣṭamāṭrkās as emanations of Vajravarāhi, 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 Aṣṭamātrkās, 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 devatā ("supramundane deities"). At the simplest level of interpretation, the yoginis, such as the Aṣṭamātrkās and the four Yoganis, 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 Aṣṭamātrkās and yoginis are alaukika devatās, the "supramundane deities", and function as the highest embodiments of the Tantric soteriological methodologies. These are the yoginis that the practitioners must meditate on and receive empowerments to visualize the
Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhi mandala. It was explained to me that the goddess Kumāri most clearly manifests these multivalent meanings, since as a laukika devatā, she is one of the eight mother goddesses (aṣṭamātrikā) 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. In a more technical and buddhological context, Kumāri, as Vajrādevī ("Adamantine Goddess"), is an emanation of Vajravārāhi, on whom the practitioners must meditate to understand the true nature of śūnyatā and prajñā, that is the basis of the Anuttara Yoga Tantric, of which the Cakrasamvara Mandala is part. In this understanding, the epithet Vajrādevī is also given to the wife of the main Vajrācārya priest during the initiation rituals, in which she embodies Vajravārāhi.

SECTION III: ICONOLOGY OF THE YOGINĪS IN NEWAR BUDDHISM

Interpreting the Hierarchy of the Yoginīs: Dharmakāya, Sambhogakāya, Nirmanakāya

The Cakrasamvara 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 Cakrasamvara Mandala in its iconographic schema, the manuscript articulates the symbolic relationship of the major yoginīs in Newar Buddhism, namely Guhyeśvari,
Vajravārañī, the four Yoginis (Catur Yogiṇī), and the Aṣṭamātrkās. In the conception of the Valley as the Cakrasamvara 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 Yogiṇīs 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 kāya (“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. 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 Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravarāhi. 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), Guhyeśvari 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 Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravarāhi Tantric meditations. She not only generates the sacred Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala of the Valley, but also emanates the deities within it. In this context, Guhyeśvari 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, Guhyeśvari 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 yoginis of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala. Specifically, as the generator of the Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhī maṇḍala, Vajravārāhī is the Dharmakāya manifest in the sambhogakāya form. In other words, Vajravārāhī is Guhyeśvari represented in her Bliss body. In the ritual context, Guhyeśvari’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, Guhyeśvari’s sambhogakāya manifestation as Vārūṇī is closely associated with rain-making and fertility.

Likewise, the four Yoginis of the inner circle, or Vajrayoginis ("Adamantine Yoginis") 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, Vajrayoginis 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 yoginis found in the kāya, vāk, and citta cakras of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala. These twenty-four pitha-devatās, corresponding to
the deities who reside in the cakras of the yogin’s body, are the emanations of Vajravārāhi in her nirmāṇakāya form. These yoginis are the Aṣṭamāṭṛkās, as the physical manifestations of Vajravārāhi, reside in the physical world to protect and sustain the ordered existence of sentient beings. On the other hand, as piṭha-devatās and meditational deities, the Aṣṭamāṭṛkās of the twenty-four piṭhas 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 Aṣṭamāṭṛkās or Śākyamuni is directly propitiated and worshipped by the lay and initiated community alike, without prior initiation. The manifestations of Vajravārāhi as Vajrayoginis, 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. The highest category of deities are those belonging to Anuttara Yoga Tantra, such as Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi, Yogāmvara/Jñānaḍakini, and Hevajra/Nairātmā, whose true essence and symbolism is revealed only through initiation and Tantric practices.

That the yoginis 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 Cakrasaṃvara Mañḍala must be, in esoteric terms, understood essentially as the maṇḍala of Guhyeśvari, 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 Vajrārāhi and the maṇḍala in question is the Vajrārāhi Mañḍala. The epithet “Guhyeśvari” thus can be considered a descriptive term, in that the secret identity of the yogini as Vajrārāhi 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 Guhyeśvari, the svabhāvakāya and ultimate symbol of the Dharmakāya. Interpreting this in Tantric terms, the generators of the Valley’s maṇḍala is inherently Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrārāhi, the upāya/male and prajñā/female, who are the Dharmakāya, represented in the sambhogakāya form. Through this conceptual ordering of space as the Cakrasaṃvara Mañḍala, 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 Yoginis who generate and define the mandalic space. More importantly, as a visualization meditation, this conception of phenomenal world as the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajrārāhi Mañḍala 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 Vajravārahī and Cakrasamvara.

Although the ritual context and textual sources allude to the yoginis 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 yoginis as the ontology of the religion, and also as the essence of the three iconographic components present in Newar Buddhist imagery.

Svabhava Kāya/Dhmamkāya: Interpreting Guhyēśvarī as the Primordial Goddess (Ādiśakti) and Ontological Source

The Svayambhū Purāṇa describes Guhyēśvarī in highly philosophical terms, thus establishing Guhyēśvarī’s manifestation as the Dhmamkāya. Among her various epithets that refer to the goddess as ontological source are Ādi Śakti (“Primordial Śakti”), Khāganana (“Face of the Void”), dharmodaya svarupine, (“Source of the Dharma”), ekamāta (“Foremost of Mothers”), triloka janani (“Mother of the Three Worlds [i.e. Kamadhūtu, Rūpadhūtu, and Arūpadhūtu]”), śūnyarupine (“Essence of śūnyatā”), Prajñapramita rūpa (“She whose form is Prajñapāramitā”), sarvasiddhipradātā, (“She who provides all siddhi”). The narrative also addresses Guhyēśvarī as Vajravairocana, which is another epithet Vairocana’s prajñā,
Vajradhāteśvari. Guhyēśvari is also called Vārūṇī, which are again epithets are associated with Vajravārāhi, specifically in the ritual context, during the sindurapūjā or Māmaki pūjā. As the svabhābhakāya, Guhyēśvari generates Vajravārāhi, as indicated in the ritual symbolism in the Vajravārāhi arises from the Guhyēśvari kalaśa.\textsuperscript{83} The ritual symbolism clearly suggests that Vajravārāhi is the sambhogakāya emanation of Guhyēśvari’s Dharmakāya form. Further, the Svayambhū Purāṇa establishes that Guhyēśvari has twenty-four forms manifest in pīṭhas, thus establishing that she generates the three rings Aṣṭamātrā goddesses in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

In her role as the ontological source of Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the manifested universe, Guhyēśvari serves as the archetype of the female principal (yogini) in the Newar Buddhist context. Analogous to the Ādi Buddha Svayambhū Mahācaitya, who symbolizes the totality of Buddhahood, Guhyēśvari’s manifestations appear in many different forms, and their symbolic meaning understood in multivalent levels. Iconographically, some of Guhyēśvari’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 (tathāgatagarbhā), she is signified by her quintessential symbol, the kalaśa (See Fig. 3.80). In her esoteric form, Guhyēśvari’s secret identity is that of Vajravārāhi (See Fig. 7.11). Because of
the multivalent contexts of the nature, Guhyēṣvarī can be interpreted as the svabhāvakāya. Guhyēṣvarī 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 śūnyatā.84

The primordial home for the Guhyēṣvarī is considered to be the Guhyēṣvarī pīthā, the “seat of Guhyēṣvarī” or Guhyēṣvarī kunda (“lake of Guhyēṣvarī”), 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 Guhyēṣvarī’s primordial residence is a disputed matter. Several miles to the northeast of Svayambhū Mahācaitya is the small shrine called Purāṇ Guhyēṣvarī "Old/Original Guhyēṣvarī," which according to the ritual specialists of Svayambhū and Patan, is considered to the "true" primordial home of Guhyēṣvarī. In a slightly different tradition, the ritual specialists from Kathmandu consider the Guhyēṣvarī pīthā at Śānti Tirtha in Pashupati/Deopatan, where Guhyēṣvarī gave darśan to Mahādeva in her universal form, to be her main residence.85 The Guhyēṣvarī pīthā 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)
pītha where Sati Devi’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 Guhyeśvari 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 Guhyeśvari pītha as the prime site of the Buddhist goddess, Guhyeśvari and have dismissed the Guhyeśvari 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 Guhyeśvari shrine in Deopatan is not allowed to be photographed, I will briefly discuss here the Phulbari Guhyeśvari shrine and its visual imagery, specifically because the site reiterates the ideas of creation, regeneration, and fecundity associated with the yogini.

The small shrine of Puran Guhyeśvari 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 pītha 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 Guhyeśvari is symbolized by a kalaṣa 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 Guhyesivari kunda (pond).” The invocation establishes evidence why Guhyesivari’s iconographic form is identical to that of Nairatmā.

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 Guhyesiari as Ādi Sakti, the mother of all Buddhas. Often, as in the case at the Guhyesivari 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 Guhyesiवाई 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 Guhyesivari kalaśa also signifies the female creative principle, specifically the yoni.

The primacy given to Guhyesivari 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 Guhyesivari. An inscriptive plaque of
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 Guhyēśvari as Nairātmādevi from Guhyēśvari kunda. Similarly, the visual imagery in the chanting hall represents the anthropomorphic form of Guhyēśvari as Guhyakāli, the epithet by which the goddess is identified in the Hindu context (Fig. 7.21). 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 Guhyēśvari is identified with Guhyakāli.

Interpreting the Multivalency of Guhyēśvari, the “Secret Goddess”

The significant point here in showing these examples is that Guhyēśvari 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, Badri Ratna Vajrācārya invited me to a yogini pūjā he was officiating at the Guhyēśvari shrine in Deopatan. The pūjā was part of a preliminary empowerment ritual, performed before the dikṣā to
Cakrasamvara and Vajravarahi. Inside the shrine, he began the Tantric Buddhist invocations and rituals, referring to the goddess as “Guhyesvari, Nairatmā, and Guhyavajrini”. Next to him, there was another puja being performed, this time officiated by a Hindu Newar priest (Karmācārya), in which the priest invoked the goddess as “Guhyesvari, Kubjikā, and Guhyakāli,” as manifestation of Durgā. For me, this incident was extremely enlightening, as it contextualized the fluidity and dynamism of the yogini 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” (Guhyesvari) as the Ādi Sakti is the ontology of the religion. She is variously called Nairatmā, Vajravarahi, and Vajravairocani. In this way, with Guhyesvari 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 Vajravārāhi as Dharmakāya Manifesting the *Sambhogakāya* Form

The Valley as the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala establishes the symbolic identity of Vajravārāhi and Guhyēśvari, in that Guhyēśvari in her *sambhogakāya* form as Vajravārāhi generates the sacred maṇḍala. Vajravārāhi’s significance in the Newar Buddhist context emerges by the fact that she, paired with Cakrasaṃvara, is the premier deity of āgam shrines. The Tantric practices associated with Vajravārāhi 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 Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi—is performed during the *Kalaśarcana pūja*. 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 Vajravārāhi’s central significance to the Tantric soteriological methodology of Newar Buddhism.91

In the Newar Buddhist context, Vajravārāhi’s ritual significance is manifested in the worship of the goddess, Kumāri.92 Similar to Guhyesvarī, Kumāri 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 Vajrādevī, the “Adamantine Goddess” and manifestation of Vajravārāhi. In the Newar Buddhist context, the term “Vajrādevī” applies to the human manifestation of Vajravārāhi, upon whom the yogin is to meditate and visualize as identical to himself/herself. In a ritual context, Vajrādevi may be the goddess Kumāri or the wife of the main Vajrācārya priest, as I discussed in the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi initiations. Given that Vajravārāhi and Vajrādevi/Kumāri 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 Kumari/Vajrādevi is, in essence, worship of Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi. The Vajrādevi Maṇḍala that is central to Kumāri pūjā is identical to the Vajravārāhi Maṇḍala, in which the central deity, Vajravārāhi/Vajrādevi is surrounded by the six Yoginīs of the Vajravārāhi Maṇḍala (See Fig. 6.27). Similarly, the Kumāri pūjās described by Allen is identical to the Māmakī
pūjā of the Trisamdhi Vidhi and Samvarodaya Pūjā Vidhi, in which Vajradevi in invoked into the guhyakalāśa (See Fig. 7.1). The layout of the pūjā implements and ritual process is also identical to the worship of Vajravārāhi. At the culmination of the pūjā, the goddess Kumāri in her human manifestation was seated on the maṇḍala, thus unequivocally establishing Kumāri/Vajradevi’s identity with Vajravārāhi. Further, the very name of the pūjā itself confirms Kumāri’s identity with Vajravārāhi, as it is called mahāsindura abhiśekha “Empowerment of the Great Vermilion Powder”. As I discussed earlier in the symbolism of the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi initiation, the vermilion powder (sinha/sindura) is the quintessential symbol of Vajravārāhi, hence, of Kumāri. In other contexts, when the human manifestation of the Kumāri is not available, Kumāri’s crown symbolizing her presence may be substituted, as was found on the exterior of the Yogāmvara āgāṁ shrine at Kvä Bähā. As Vajradevi and a meditational deity (alaukika devatā), the goddess Kumāri is also the physical manifestation of Vajravārāhi.

Given these ritual contexts, the goddess Kumāri in her human form thus may be interpreted as the nirmāṇakāya, or transformation Body of Vajravārāhi. This interpretation may be further reinforced by Kumāri’s conflation with the Aṣṭamātrkā Kaumāri, one of the eight goddess who define the conceptual ordering of the Valley as Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. Within this context, too, the Aṣṭamātrkās can be understood as the nirmāṇakāya of
Vajravārāhi, and Kumāri as the human manifestation of the yoginīs is nirmāṇakāya form of Vajravārāhi.

**Vajravārāhi’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 Vajravārāhi and Kumāri may be further clarified thorough their roles in state protection and generators of sacred space. From a socio-religious perspective, Kumāri’s primary function is associated with state protection. Specifically, from the fifteenth century, the royal Kumāri’s of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur have been intimately identified with Taleju, the ışṭadevātā or tutelary goddess of the Hindu Malla kings, and in the present-day, with Durgā, the ışṭadevātā 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. Kumāri’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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala.⁹⁶

The spatial ordering of the Valley as the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala reaffirms the yoginīs’ roles as protectors, specifically with Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi generating the sacred environment of the Valley.
In this understanding, the yoginis 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 Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala.97 As Guhyēśvari/Vajrārāhi, who is the ontological source of the entire universe, generates the maṇḍala, thus, it is the yoginis emanating from the center (Guhyēśvari/Vajrārāhi) 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 Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala alludes to the larger issues of the preeminence of yoginis 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 Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala, with Vajrārāhi as the generator, in which the eight Aṣṭamātrākā pīthas define the sacred environment and again, Vajrārāhi 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 Vajrārāhi of the Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala, by logical extension, Kumārī is thus understood to generate the symbolic space of the
city. Given Kumāri’s symbolic association with Vajravārāhi, Kumāri is the quintessential symbol of yoginis as state protectors, legitimization of kingship, royal power, and validation. That Guhyeśvari, Vajravārāhi, and hence, Kumāri 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 āgamā shrine to Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi. Monthly, a Tantric pūjā is performed, including a Kumāri which generally occurs at the culmination of the ritual, that is considered mandatory to ensure the protection and ordered functioning of the universe. Although the ontology of the Newar Buddhist tradition, the yoginis 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 Vajravārāhi, the goddess Kumāri in the Newar Buddhist tradition may be interpreted in two levels. As a meditational deity symbolizing the highest Tantric methodologies of the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi cycle, Kumāri is the sambhogakāya form of Vajravārāhi. She is thus known in this capacity as Vajradevi (“Adamantine Goddess”) and functions in the alaukika (“supremundane”) level. Kumāri also symbolizes the nirmāṇakāya manifestation of Vajravārāhi 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, Kumāri’s
symbolic function is directly related to the Aṣṭamatrkās and thus, her identity and iconography is often conflated with the Aṣṭamatrkā Kaumāri. This dynamic fluidity within which the Tantric goddesses function, particularly in the case of Vajravārāhi 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 yogini 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 yoginis of the Valley. The analysis outlined these major points:

- The conception of the Secret Goddess Guhyeśvari, as Ādi Śakti, appears to be specific to the Newar Buddhism. In a technical buddhological context, the goddess is identified with Vajravārāhi, who may be interpreted as the dharmakāya Guheśvari manifest in sambhogakāya form.

- Newar Buddhism legitimates 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 yogini 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 Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala, the yoginīs, specifically, Guhyeśvari and Vajravārāhi 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, Guhyeśvari is at the highest level, signifying the absolute truth of Dharmakāya. Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi are the sambhogakāya manifestation of the Dharmakāya, as they Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhi generates the sacred space of the
Valley and the cities. The Four Yoganis serve as the pure sambhogakāya form, while the Aṣṭamātrkās 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 yoginis, 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 yoginis. For example, in the Tantric context, Guhyeśvari as the “Secret Goddess” functions within multiple frameworks. As Vajravrāhī, 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, Guhyeśvari or the Aṣṭamātrkās, 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.

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 pitha, 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 sakti-pithas 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 Hādigaon by ISMEO and art historical research suggest that the mātrkā worship is one of the earliest religious traditions in the Valley. See Giovanni, Harigaon Satya Nārāyanā, Kathmandu: A Report on the Excavations carried out in 1984-88; Bangdel, Early Sculptures of Nepal, and Slusser, Nepal Mandalā.
5 Current research has revealed the presence of the mātrkā cult to pre-date the Hindu and Buddhist traditions of the Valley. For discussion of the ancient mātrkā tradition in the Valley, see Lain S. Bangdel, “Nepal Uptayakama Paine Mātrkā ra SaptaMātrkāka Purāṇa Murtiharu [The Ancient Images of Mātrkās and SaptaMātrkās in the Kathmandu Valley],” Gorakhputra, 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 mātrkās images, dated to the pre-Lichchavi 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 mātrkā 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 “Kumari Gana and Naudurga [Navadurga]” at the Jaibageśvari shrine. See Wright, History of Nepal, 84. This aspect is alluded to in the core iconographic programs of Newar Buddhist bāhās/bahis.

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 Trisamādhī of Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi, in the personal āgam shrines in the homes of the Vajracarayas and Śākyas. In Kathmandu, the nine days of Mohani, corresponding to the Hindu Navaratri “nine nights” of the Navadurgas, are celebrated by visiting the Mātrakā shrines in the ten tirthas around the Valley (navarātā mela). See Ratna Kaji Vajrācārya, Yen Deyba Baudha Pūjā Kriyāya Halajwalan, 124-126. The national festival, Ghand Jatra (Pisaca Caturdasi) is traditionally associated with Kumādhi Ajima at Bhadrakali and the Kathmandu royal Kumari. Gati is the annual harvest festival to Vasundhārā.

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 mandala, see Chapter Six.

12 The Kalasārnapajāpūjā is the basic invocation ritual of the deity to whom the pūjā is directed. Here, the ritual specialists perform the trisamādhī visualization of Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhi as part of the fundamental ritual procedure. See Ratnakaji Vajrācārya, Kalasārnapajāpajavidhi, 30-58.

13 These references are found in the Vṛhat Svayambhu Purāṇa, Svayambhu Purāṇa, and the printed edition, Svayambhu 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 Guhyesvarī and the female deities in the Valley.

16 Following the Tantric emphasis, the Hindu and Śākta tradition also employ the yantra to symbolize the goddess.

17 The Trisamādhī Vidhi, Samvrodhayā Disi Pūjā Vidhi, and Kumārī pūjā use the six-angled satkona 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 āgam shrine to Annapurna in Bhotahiti, the dyo chen to Bhadrakali in Asan and Tebhā, the dyo chen to Kanga Ajima (Kankeśvari) in Yakta, all have similar yantra windows on the exterior to allude to the goddesses enthroned within.

18 The Kanga Ajima and Bhadrakali shrines are mātrakā pithas, 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 kalasa remains a fundamental symbol for the female energy. In the ten day pūjās during Dasain, each household has a sacred kalasa into which Durga/Navadurgas are invoked.

21 Wayman also notes that in the Guhyasamaja Tantra commentaries, the female in addition to the kalasa, is also symbolized by the bija “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.

Tsuda. The Samvarodaya-Tantra: Selected Chapters, 60. He writes: “The human body is an aggregate of these twenty-four internal pithas, 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 pithas.”

Dewa-Samdup, ed., Shrichakrasamvara Tantra, 34.

The Samvarodaya Tantra states: (The truth) is samvara in which all the aspects of the world are fused into one; it is the mandala. 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 Samvarodaya Tantra, 62.

Vrhat Svayambhū Purāṇa, 230.

See for example, Levy’s work on the pithas in his work, Mesocosm.

For example, because of the lack of figural representation and specificity of iconographic elements that help identify the pitha goddesses, art historical research has virtually disregarded the significance of the pithas as an integral part of religious traditions of the Valley. Anthropological research, such as those conducted by Robert Levy and Niels Gutshow in the city of Bhaktapur, have analyzed the pithas 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 AṣṭaMātrikā pithas in Kathmandu and Patan have not been thoroughly studied within a similar context.

To what degree the sixty-four forms of Cakrasamvara is prevalent in the Newar Buddhist tradition is yet to be research, however, the Samvarodaya Pūjā Vidhi also has invocations to the forms of Cakrasamvara that are illustrated in the manuscript.

My translation and reading of the colophon.

Interestingly, while the other Jinas are shown in their pacific forms, wearing a crowns and jewelry, Aksobhya 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 Aksobhya, as the progenitor of Cakrasamvara. There also is some variations in the placement of their attributes than those prescribed in the Nispānayogāvali. However, the Jinas can be identified by their kula colors and vāhanas.

The invocation is as follows. My translation.

śrī Hevajri nase yuktam hemālāṁ kai[r]am sobhita /
Hemaya nasyate papaṁ 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

Vrhat Śvayambhū Purāṇa. Reference found in the description of Guhyesvari given darśan to Śiva in the Śānti Tirtha mahatmya.

Vrhat Śvayambhū Purāṇa, 129. Other references to her as the “mother of Buddhas” are found throughout the Śvayambhū Purāṇa.

My translation and reading.

Vajrācārya, ed., Śvayambhū Mahāpurāṇa, Chapter on the story of Śānti Tirtha.

These are found throughout the Vrhat Śvayambhū Purāṇa.

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.

The ritual interpretation presented in this section is taken from Trisamādhi Pūjā Vidhi, 11 and Samvaordaya Dasami (Dīśi) Pūjā Vidhi, 81-122.
Samvaordaya Dasami (Dīśi) Pūjā Vidhi, 81. My translation of the Sanskrit.

Gellner notes that the conch shell is often worshipped as Varuna, however, in the ritual context, the Yogini Khandaroha from the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala is invoked when the water from the conch is used. See Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 361.

Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary.

During the exoteric rituals of the Kalaśarcanapūjā, Vārūni symbolized in the mantrapatra also plays a central role in the summoning of the deities. During the main ritual, the worship is called Māmaki pūjā, to the guhyakalasā ("Secret Flask") that is said to invoke Guhyēśvarī. 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 (pañcarśītra) is place. When the deities are summoned into the vase, the thread (pañcarśītra) 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 Vārūnipūjā, and Vārūni is alternatively called Māmaki in the ritual context. See Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, 157.

In the ritual context, the four vases are invoked as Vajrakarotā, Samayakarotā, Visamaya Karotā, Samaya Visamaya Karotā. Samvaordaya Dasami (Dīśi) Pūjā Vidhi, 89.

The ritual text refers to this act as sthapana pūjā “Pūjā of Establishment”

Also described in Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest.

Samvaordaya Dasami (Dīśi) Pūjā Vidhi, 85-122.

Specifically, Śāntipur at Svayambhū is directly associated with the rainmaking powers, and thus also with Vajravrāhī’s talismanic powers of state protection. This aspect will be addressed at late.

Ritual specialist from Kathmandu and Patan provided me this information.

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.

See photos in the Huntington Archive collection.

See photos in the Huntington Archive collection.

In a paper presented at the Annual Conference of South Asian Studies at the University of Madison (1997) entitled “Catur Yoginis of the Nepal Valley,” Natalie Marsh from The Ohio State University discussed this form of yogini in the manuscripts and their iconology.

See Trisamādhī Pūjā Vidhi and Samvarodaya Dasami (Dīśi Pūjā Vidhi)

Trisamādhī Vidhi, 61. This list of Sat Yoginis is equated with the six pāramitās, with Vajravrāhī equated with Praṇāpāramitā. There are also numerous Tantric caryā songs that describe Vajravrāhī surrounded by the five Yoginis, thus the making up the group of sat Yoginis.

Wayman, The Buddhist Tantra, 171.

The goddesses also define the sacred geography of Bhaktapur in a Hindu context, as the yantra of Tripurasundari, a manifestation of the Navadurgā. See Levy’s Mesocosm.

See Chapter 8 of the Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇam.

See Chapter Six regarding symbolism of the Asṭamātrākās.

Gutschow, Stadtraum und Ritual der newarischen Städte im Kathmandu Tal, 81.

Blom, 44
Further, According to the local Tantric traditions of the Valley, there are said to be 64 forms of Bhairava which accompany 64 Yoginis.

See Chapter Six, pp. 561-75

Samvarodaya Dasami (Día) Pújá Vidhi, 142.

Kalasārcana Pújá Vidhi, 148. This information was also given to me by Surya Man Vajrācārya.

Here, I was specifically referring to the role of Kumārī, also considered one of the Aṣṭamātrikās, as well as an emanation of Vajravārāhi as Vajradevi.

I am grateful to Suryaman Vajrācārya for this information.

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 Glowaski at The Ohio State University will shed light on the Kumārī tradition in the Tantric Buddhist and Śaktī contexts.

Gellner, Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest, 247.

See Wayman, The Buddhist Tantras.

See Alex Wayman, The Buddhist Tantras, 51.

Similar to my analyses of the yoginis, Gellner categorizes two types of Vajrayāna—"exoteric" and "esoteric" Vajrayāna. Following Gellner's classification, the yoginis at this level would include the "exoteric Vajrayāna."

This level would incorporate Gellner's classification of the "esoteric" Vajrayāna.

Chapter Three of the Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa extensively describes the qualities of Guhyēśvāri.

See Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest, for ritual pertaining to the Vajravārāhi initiation.


According to Bāḍrī Ratna Vajrācārya, a local tradition considers the shrine at Puran Guhyēśvāri an alternate site to Guhyēśvāri, where the goddess was "brought" from Deopatan by a powerful Vajrācārya priest named Pramadhivajra Vajrācārya. In contrast to Guhyēśvāri at Deopatan which in the contemporary tradition is supported by royal patronage from the Hindu kings, the smaller Guhyēśvāri shrine at Balajī appears to largely supported by Buddhist patrons—situations that indicate an uneasy tension experienced by the Newar Buddhist in a "Hindu" kingdom.

See Nepāla Mahātmāya.

Scholars such as Gellner, Slusser, and Gutschow refer to the Pashupati Guhyēśvārī.

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 kālaśa for the duration. Local traditions have 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.

I participated in a Buddhist Yogini pūjā at Pashupati Guhyēśvāri, where I observed the Hindu practitioners invoking the goddess as Guhyakaśī, while the Buddhists identified her as Nairatmā.

In the Hindu context, Kubjikatāntra, dated NS 693, connects Guhyēśvāri with Kubjikā and describes the goddess as "śrī Guhyēśvāri matriśi kubjeśvāri". See Dory Heiligers-Seelen, The System of Five Cakras in Kubjikāmatatāntra 14-16 (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1994).

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.

96 See Michael Allen, *The Cult of the Kumari*. See also Janice M. Glowiski’s forthcoming dissertation research on the contextual understanding of Kumari worship in the religious environment of the Valley.

97 Michael Allen states that the six goddess are identified with the six Yoginis of the Valley: (1) Ugra Tara Yogini at Biješvari (2) KhadgaYogini at Sankhu (3) AkasaYogini at Biješvari (4) Vajrayogini at Pharping (5) Vajra Vilasini at Pulchowk (6) Vajrayogini at Biješvari. In my research, I have not been able to confirm this list. See Michael Allen, *The Cult of the Kumari*, 136.

98 See Allen, *The Cult of the Kumari*, 93.

99 See Chapter Three on the iconography of Kāśi Bāhā.

96 Forthcoming dissertation research conducted by Janice Glowiski 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 Cakrasyāvara Manḍala, 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 Cakrasyāvara Manḍala, thereby transferring the macrocosm to the microcosm.

99 For example, the visual analysis of Kumāri Bāhā put forth by Janice M. Glowiski suggests that the iconographic program itself is a metaphor of the Cakrasyāvara Manḍala, thus reinforcing the idea of Kumāri as generating the sacred manḍala of the microcosm. See also Janice M. Glowiski’s M.A. thesis, *Goddess as Incarnate Image: The Kumāri 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 Vajravārāhi, 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)”, *Puruṣārtha*, 124-56.
Figure. 7.1. Mātrkā sculptures from Jaibageśvari (left) and Kotaltol (right). ca. 3rd century C.E.
Figure 7.2 Hāriti Ajimā. ca. 3rd century. Bālāju.
Figure 7.3. Presence of yoginis signified by yantra during pūjā (ritual context). This layout is related to the rituals to Cakrasamvara and Varjavārāhī.
Figure 7.4 (top) Āgam shrine to Annapūra/Jñānaḍākini. (bottom) Six-angled yantra outside āgam shrine to Annapūra/Jñānaḍākini. Bhotahiti, Kathmandu.
Figure 7.5. Folios 6 and 8 from the Cakrasamvara Manuscript, depicting the 64 Forms of Cakrasamvara.
Figure 7.7. Guhyeśvari from Cakrasamvara Manuscript, depicting the 64 Forms of Cakrasamvara. Center Folio. Private Collection
Figure 7.8. Vārūṇi, flanked by two goddess and placed below Guhyeśvari. From Cakrasamvara Manuscript, depicting the 64 Forms of Cakrasamvara. Center Folio. Private Collection
Figure 7.9. Vajravārāhi (top center), surrounded by five yoginis of the Cakrasamvara Mandala. From Cakrasamvara Manuscript, depicting the 64 Forms of Cakrasamvara. Center Folio. Private Collection
Figure 7.10. Representation of Vajrayogini on pendant at Vajrayogini Temple, Phar pang. (top) Location of pendant hanging from roof. (left) Detail of pendant.
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Figure 7.12. Detail of the Four Yoginis on the Caitya. Vajrayogini Temple, Pharping.
Figure 7.13. Sketchbook depicting Cakrasamvara and Vajravarahi, surrounded by the Yoginis. Los Angeles County Museum.
Figure 7.14. Eight Matrikās, as guardians of sacred space. From Cakrasaṃvara Manuscript, depicting the 64 Forms of Cakrasaṃvara. Private Collection
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Figure 7.16. Interpreting the Hierarchy of the Yoginis in Newar Buddhism: Guhyesvari, Vajravarāhi, Four Yoginis, and Aṣṭamātrkās.
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Figure 7.18. Re consecration and refurbishment of the shrine by Amoghadaja Vajracarya.
Figure 7.19. Guhyēśvarī pīṭha, showing the kalaśa of Guhyēśvari over the natural spring. Lower photo shows the hole of the Guhūesvari spring.
Figure 7.20. Representation of Guhyakāli. 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 Cakrasamvara mandalas.

- The three iconographic themes correlate to the mandatory structural components of bāhā/bāhī architecture, namely the principal vivifying caitya,
kvāhpāḥ dyāḥ shrine to the exoteric Buddhist deities, and the āgam 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, 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 Maņjuśrī 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 Maņjuśrī has a central role.

The iconographic program articulates Maņjuśrī’s ritual and symbolic role in Newar Buddhism. As Dharmadhātu Vāgiśvara Maņjughoṣa, Maņjuśrī 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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-vāgiśvara, belongs to the exoteric level of the Diamond Way.”

• The Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala iconography, as the maṇḍala of the Anuttara Yoga class, emphasizes the preeminence of the Tantric yoginis. This aspect of the visual imagery alludes to the role of the yoginis in Newar Buddhism, as the ontology of the religion.

• The preeminence of the Cakrasaṅvara/Vajravāraḥī is best articulated in the conceptual ordering of the Valley as the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. This Buddhist construct of the sacred geography reflects the yoginis as ontology of the religion.
• Most importantly, the three iconographic components (Svayambhū Mahācaitya, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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 Cakrasaṃvara 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala, serve as perfect three-fold symbols to articulate the basic constructs of the Three Ways of Newar Buddhism.

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\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{2} Gellner, \textit{Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest}, 255.

\textsuperscript{3} See Gellner, \textit{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.

\textsuperscript{4} Gellner, \textit{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.
Figure 8.2. Interpretation of Core Iconographic Components in Newar Buddhist Architecture and its relationship to the Trikāya System.
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