PROTECTION, POWER AND POLITICS: AN ICONOGRAPHIC STUDY OF KUMĀRĪ BĀHĀ MAṆḌALA IN KATHMANDU

DISSERTATION

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By

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* * * * *

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this study, the royal (rāj) Kumārī's home, or chem, in Basantapur Tole, Kathmandu City is the largest and most patronized of the extant Kumārī residences. Also known as Kumārī Bāhā, this three-storey, open courtyard, quadrangular brick and wooden structure was established by King Jayaprapāsa Malla in C.E. 1757. Kumārī Bāhā is by far the most well preserved and iconographically articulated of the Kumārī chem, and it houses one of the most important deities in the Kathmandu Valley—the goddess Kumārī. However, the monument has received only cursory attention from scholars. Kumārī Bāhā's excellent physical condition and important structural relationship to other Newar monuments in the Valley make it an important primary resource for contextualizing Kumārī within the Kathmandu Valley's broader socio-religious practices.

This study analyzes Kumārī Bāhā's major iconographic features and interprets them within the context of Nepal's history, sacred histories, and socio-religious practices. The monument's form, function, and iconography are also compared with that of other Kumārī chem, Newar Buddhist monasteries (i.e. bāhās), and temples and shrines dedicated to other
important goddesses in Kathmandu Valley. Other visual culture related to the
goddess Kumārī, such as her jewelry and clothing, ritual implements used during
Kumārī worship, and offerings made by devotees are also examined for their
significance to Kumārī worship.

This study provides the first contextual study of Kumārī Bāhā's iconography
and suggests that the monument's art articulates numerous layers of *mandalic*
patterns, some of which are created by the so-called "*mandalic goddesses,"* the
Astamātrakā (eight little mothers) and the Navadurgā (nine *durgās*). The specific
*mandalas* articulated by Kumārī Bāhā's iconographic program include the
Cakrasamvara/Vajravāhī Mandala, the Guhyasamāja Mandala, Dharmadhātu
Mandala, a Durgā Mandala, and possibly a Śrī Yantra. Further, aspects of the
iconographic program articulate aspects of the Kathmandu Valley's sacred creation
story and define the monument as a microcosm of the Kathmandu Valley, which
many Newars conceive to be a self-manifested Cakrasamvara/Vajravāhī
Mandala. Through the ubiquitous goddess and other imagery, the presence of the
great goddesses Taleju, Vajrayoginī, Durgā, Mahālaksmī, Kālī, and Guhyeśvarī are
also implied at the Kumari Bāhā.

This study's findings suggest that Kumārī Bāhā can be read as a
multi-sectarian monument that incorporates deities worshiped by the *śivamārgī,*
buddhamārgī, and visnumārgī, alike, and the tradition of goddess worship, or
Śakta, is the rubric that unifies these distinctive, but non-
exclusive, religious traditions and their imagery. An examination of historical documents and Kumārī Baha, itself, suggests that the impetus for Kumārī Baha's construction was a dramatic attempt on the part of Jayaprakaśa Malla to protect his kingdom, what is now roughly Kathmandu City, from the onslaught of the Gorkha dynasty, to harness the power of the goddess (śakti) by building Kumārī Baha in the center of his kingdom, and to legitimize his reign by enshrining the goddess Kumārī in the monument. Despite his efforts, the Gorkha's eventually overthrew the Malla dynasty and, with the blessings and legitimation of the state protective goddess, Kumārī, unified the country under the Shah kings. Finally, this study suggests that, given Jayaprakaśa Malla's objective to harness the multiple expressions and power of śakti as it manifests throughout the Valley, his only real option was to propitiate the goddess Kumārī, since she is conceived as the embodiment of absolute creative potential and, therefore, embodies the creative potential of the Valley's most powerful goddesses—Taleju, Vajrayoginī, Durgā, Mahālaksmī, Kālī, and Guhyeśvarī.
Dedicated to Lawrence and Nathan
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I would like to express gratitude to the many people who helped me throughout this project. Foremost, I wish to thank Professors Susan L. Huntington and John C. Huntington, who have contributed extensively to this study since its inception. I am greatly indebted to Susan L. Huntington, my advisor, who has guided my learning and development as a scholar, challenged my assumptions, and inspired my path of study over the years. Words can’t adequately express my appreciation for all that she has taught me. With respect to this study, Dr. Huntington directed my efforts and made critical suggestions regarding areas of research, synthesis of ideas and, most significantly, the final written document. I am grateful for the numerous discussions we have had over the years about Kumāri Bāhā and Kumārī, and for the insights she has generously shared. Her careful and numerous readings of the text gave it a focus, coherence, and logic that would have been absent without her close hand.

John Huntington’s extensive knowledge of Buddhism and Buddhist iconography in Nepal and throughout Asia has been essential to my study of
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Finally, I wish to thank both John and Susan Huntington for allowing me full access to their extensive library holdings and photographic collections. It was a privilege and luxury to have so many resources within arms' reach, and I continue to marvel at their generosity in sharing, without hesitation, these precious materials with their students.

Numerous colleagues at The Ohio State University had a significant impact on my research and writing. I am particularly grateful to my friend and colleague Dr. Dina Bangdel, whose research on Newar Buddhism in Nepal was foundational to my study of Kumāri Bāhā. As fellow graduate students, we shared hours of discussion, both in Nepal and upon returning to Ohio State, and I feel fortunate to have had a colleague who cherishes this area of study as I do. Through extensive conversations, Dina expanded my preliminary understanding of chenś to something deeper and more subtle, beyond the information presented in the current scholarly literature and
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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Among the myriad goddesses that populate Nepal's sacred landscape, Kumārī has become one of the most well known deities in the Kathmandu Valley (Figure 1.1). Scholars identify as many as thirteen human forms of Kumārī in worship today. Captivating in their red garments and distinctive regalia, the Kumāris have separate domains and are associated with specific towns, cities, or religious establishments. The grandeur of Kumārī shrines and residences varies significantly, ranging from a single room in a family home to a small shrine behind a larger structure to separate temple-like structures established through royal patronage. These structures and the visual material related to kumārī worship in esoteric meditations in initiation rituals, at śakti pīthas (self-arisen power places), and in a variety of other contexts communicate the goddess' roles within the larger framework of Nepal's social and religious spheres.

1 Non-human forms of the goddess, such as carved images, also play a role in the socio-religious lives of the Valley's inhabitants.

2 A non-italicized “s” is used throughout this study to pluralize Sanskrit, Nepali, and Newar words. The only exceptions to this are the terms Aṣṭamātrkā and Navadurgā, which are not pluralized since the words mātrkā and durgā are already modified by the words aṣṭa (eight) and nava (nine) to indicate plurality.
The subject of this study, the royal (rāj) Kumārī’s home, or chem, in Basantapur Tole, Kathmandu City is the largest and most patronized of the extant Kumārī residences (Figure 1.2). Also known as Kumārī Bāhā, or Rājālakṣmīkula Vihāra and Rājakirti Manorama Vihāra, this three-storey, open courtyard, quadrangular brick and wooden structure is immediately south of the Malla Palace, Hanuman Dhoka, in the city’s Darbar Square. Established by King Jayaprakāśa Maila in CE 1757, the goddess’ residence is richly adorned with finely carved wooden window lattices, architectural sculpture, and other ornamentation.

Kumārī Bāhā in Kathmandu is by far the most well preserved and iconographically articulated of the Kumārī chems. Royal patronage of the structure and worship of the goddess continue to this day, and has provided Kumārī Bāhā with continuous attention and protection since its creation. Kumārī Bāhā’s excellent physical condition and important structural

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3 The Newar term chem means house or home and is synonymous with the Nepali word ghār. I use the Newar term in this study because it is more commonly used in the context of Kumārī Bāhā.

4 Within the current boundaries of Kathmandu City, several Kumāris are in worship. Today, scholars most frequently use the name Kathmandu Kumārī when referring to the Rāj Kumārī, who resides in Kumārī Bāhā. Other Kumāris in Kathmandu include the Mu Bāhā and Kwā Bāhā Kumāris, whose shrines are located in Wute Tole and just north of Tha Hiti, respectively. The Mu Bāhā Kumārī, in particular, has historically been of great import to the Newar Buddhist Vajrācārya (priests) in Kathmandu, although, according to anthropologist Michael Allen, the position has been vacant since 1972. (See Michael Allen, The Cult of Kumārī: Virgin Worship in Nepal (Kathmandu: University Press, Tribhuvan University, 1975), 36. For the sake of clarity, all references in this study to the Kathmandu Kumārī will pertain to the Rāj Kumārī.

5 For the purpose of this study, the Kathmandu Kumārī's residence will be referred to as Kumārī Bāhā, in order to distinguish it from other Kumārī chem in Kathmandu City. However, the other name, Rājālakṣmīkula Vihāra, will be discussed in Chapter 3 as pertains to the iconographic analysis of the monument.
relationship to other Newar monuments in the Valley make it an important primary resource for contextualizing Kumārī within the Kathmandu Valley's broader socio-religious practices. Stylistic and iconographic analysis of Kumārī Bāhā indicate that the sculptural details are, with one exception, probably original to the structure. Further, the structure's iconographic program appears to be intact, despite the fact that several wooden roundels are weathered nearly beyond recognition (Figure 1.3) and some of the figural representations have sustained damage to the arms (Figure 1.4). Nonetheless, abundant iconographic and contextual information remains to enable the iconographic program to be deciphered.

Kumārī Bāhā's central location and high visibility in the city square has, without question, contributed to much of the attention the goddess Kumārī has received from Westerners. Further, the phenomenon of her manifestation in human form is most likely responsible for the longstanding fascination with this deity. From serious anthropological scholarship\(^6\) to a television spot on *Ripley's Believe It or Not*,\(^7\) the Kumārī phenomenon has captured the international community's attention. The result of this fame

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\(^6\) See Michael Allen, *The Cult of Kumari: Virgin Worship in Nepal* (Kathmandu: Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribuvan University, 1975). A reissued version of this work in 1987 by Madab Lal Maharjan, Himalayan Booksellers, Kathmandu, expands on the topic of girls' pre-puberty rituals and the virginal aspect of Kumārī. Most of the Kumārī photographs are the same. However, some material, such as images of Vajrāyogini and Khadgayogini on Plates 26 & 27 of the 1975 publication, have been omitted in the reissue. Images of *ihi* ceremonies (mock marriage ceremony of Newar girls) and related ritual diagrams have been added in the 1987 reissue.

\(^7\) This television program aired in 1999.
has been the perpetuation of a great deal of misunderstanding, both about the Kumārī tradition and its role within the larger framework of Nepal's religious and social life. In addition, even the serious scholarly publications have left many important questions unanswered. A study of the art and architecture, as well as the other visual culture associated with Kumārī and a contextualization of Kumārī worship within the larger framework of South Asian religious practices, will, hopefully, help to offset misunderstandings about this important religious and cultural tradition, and more importantly, shed light on some of the most foundational beliefs and religious practices in the Nepali culture as they pertain to the Kumārī cult.

**Background and Overview**

Despite the common perception that it is a uniquely Nepali tradition, *kumārī pūjā*, that is, *kumārī* worship, is a vast and, to a large extent, unexamined pan-South Asian and Himalayan phenomenon. A complete analysis of *kumārī* worship in its myriad manifestations is a topic in its own right, and requires research outside the scope of this study. However, in order to understand the complexity of this tradition and the extent to which the goddess Kumārī and her basic characteristics are integrated into Nepal's

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8 To date, more than 1,500 World Wide Web sites acknowledge or highlight the Kumāris. Most of these Web sites are intended to encourage tourism in Nepal or are part of personal travel accounts. Unfortunately, many of these Web sites provide incorrect and misleading historical and cultural information.
social and religious fabric, an overview of the tradition and its many expressions is necessary. The following section outlines the shape of kumārī worship, then suggests a general categorization scheme for the many practices that involve the human forms of the goddess. The suggested scheme is not intended to be a fixed set of mutually exclusive categories. Rather, it should serve as an indicator of this tradition's complexity and widespread integration throughout South Asia.

Overview

Kumārī worship is not unique to the Kathmandu Valley, but is found in the Terai (the lowland areas of southern Nepal) and throughout the Indic region, primarily documented in eastern India, southern India, and Rajasthan. This widespread tradition, which is generally referred to by scholars as the Kumārī Cult, Kumārī worship, or Virgin worship, is actually a pervasive array of rituals, ceremonies, offerings and meditations that emphasize both devotional activities and more technical meditation practices by both lay and advanced technical practitioners alike. Of Kumārī worship in Nepal, anthropologist David Gellner writes,

"Kumārī as a deity is not limited to the well-known living goddesses to whom Michael Allen (1975) devoted his excellent book; these girls are simply human manifestations of a much wider cult which affects almost every Newar and is much older (Lienhard 1978: 260). For buddhamārgi and śivamārgi alike,

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several auspicious life-cycle rituals, and most Observances [sic], end with the worship of Kumārī... [In certain rituals] she is represented by a plate piled high with dishes to be served in the feast which will follow [the ritual]."^{10}

In these contexts and others, the goddess Kumārī—or the śakti (female energy)^{11} that characterizes her basic nature—manifests or is invoked in a multitude of forms, including humans, but also self-arisen rocks^{12}, a plate piled high with food^{13}, art works^{14}, and visualizations^{15}.

A devotee's relationship to these forms varies and is dependent on his or her life situation, religious path, and individual level of understanding. For example, a female devotee of Śiva (a śivamārgi) may propitiate the human form of the goddess Kumārī for her health and her family's well-being. Through visualization and other yogic meditation practices, a Newar Tantric Buddhist priest (Vajrācārya) may engage the energy of this goddess as it relates to the synchronization of his body, speech, and mind. At Cika Bahī in Patan during the annual Vasundhārā (Vasudhārā) pūjā, offerings to the goddess Kumārī in a self-arisen form are taken to the pitha of Bāl (child)

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^{11} Because the term śakti has a range of meanings, such as power, force, female energy, it does not translate easily into English. This study, therefore, uses the term sāti and various translations as is appropriate for the context being discussed.

^{12} Allen notes the worship of the Pañca or five Kumāris in the form of stones at pithas. See Allen (1987), 70-71.

^{13} Gellner, 87.

^{14} See for example Figure 2.57.

^{15} During an interview in 1996, Suryaman Vajrācārya, a senior priest from Ha Bāhā, indicated that in meditations, Kumārī is visualized as a young girl who is approximately sixteen years old with her hair hanging loose, rather than tied in a top knot.
Kumārī, where she is worshiped by devotees from various castes. Such examples demonstrate the practitioner’s direct interaction with the goddess in one of her many forms, including corporeal, meditational, and natural rock outcroppings. In these particular worship practices, the goddess is conceived as immediately present through an invocation ritual or volitional manifestation. However, in other contexts, the goddess may not be immediately present and worshiped so directly, such as when Kumārī’s basic characteristics are acknowledged to be inherent in all young girls during certain rituals and special events.

Indeed, on one level, all young, unmarried girls are implicitly the goddess Kumārī and are thought to embody the auspiciousness and creative potential that characterizes this goddess. On the most literal level, the word kumārī means young girl. According to Per Lowdin, most Newars consider all young girls to be Kumārī until they are about seven years old. Kumārī

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16 Gellner, 82.

17 See Food Ritual and Society Among the Newars. Doctoral thesis. Published in Uppsala Research Reports in Cultural Anthropology. (Sweden: Uppsala University, 1985), 87. A literal translation of the term kumārī does not indicate the many layers of meaning the term can invoke for individual practitioners in different contexts. In addition to being defined as “young, unmarried girl,” the modifier ‘virgin’ is frequently added in the English translation of the term kumārī, even when the term kanya (virgin) isn’t specified. This is particularly true in works dealing with the goddess Kumārī. However, because the term ‘virgin’ carries such strong connotations within the Judeo-Christian-Islamic traditions, it is important to clarify that all rituals involving a kumārī are not necessarily considered auspicious solely because the young child has not had sexual intercourse. I suggest that a kumārī’s auspiciousness is more directly related to sakti, or female energy, in a broader sense—and the way in which that energy is manifest throughout a female’s life—than the worship of sexual status in and of itself. This helps address Allen’s question about why the Kumārī Cult, the worship of virgins as he describes it, is filled with “anomalies.” See Allen (1987), 5. However, if one adopts a view that does not privilege the goddess’ sexual status, but that emphasizes Kumārī as one manifestation of sakti and the embodiment of creative potential, the multiple contexts within which this goddess is worshiped become less
pūjā means both the propitiation of the goddess Kumārī and the propitiation of a young girl. When used in relation to a young girl, the term suggests that kumārī pūjā acknowledges a young girl's basic nature and characteristics, which are, on one level, identical with those of the goddess. These aspects include her general auspiciousness, her protective qualities, and the embodiment of sakti's pure and absolute creative potential—a potential whose ultimate expression occurs in the embodiment of the so-called "Living Goddesses."  

The kumārī tradition, then, constitutes an array of socio-religious practices that involve direct propitiation of the goddess in a number of forms, as well as the acknowledgement of this deity's embodiment in all young, unmarried girls.

These practices and their contexts may be described as exoteric, esoteric, devotional, talismanic, lay, technical, high caste, and low caste, to name a few. Such descriptors can be important for understanding ritual context and deity identity and are not mutually exclusive. Since these

problematic. Therefore, in this study, although the virginal aspect of any kumārī is implicit—particularly since most of the human Kumāris are generally between the ages of two and ten, it is not the critical paradigm in my interpretation of this religious tradition and material culture.


19 Newar Buddhism is defined, on one level, by a hierarchy of ritual, which is iconographically expressed through the art and architecture. For a discussion of Newar Buddhism's hierarchy of ritual, see Gellner, Monk, Householder, Tantric Priest. For a study of how this hierarchy is manifested in the art and architecture, see Dina Bangdel, Manifesting the Mandala : A Study of the Core Iconographic Program of Newar Buddhist Monasteries in Nepal. Ph.D. Dissertation. (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University, 2000). Amid the formal categorizations and hierarchies that define the 'mandala' in which Newars live, Newars also recognize the unpredictable dimensions that arise from the coming together of people and circumstances in a given moment. Within the hierarchy of
multiple layers of meaning and understandings are inherent in all forms of Kumāri, for the purposes of this overview I have divided the propitians of the human forms of the goddess into three broad, overarching categories: household, festival, and institutional. These categories acknowledge the degree of ritualization involved in selecting and worshipping a kumāri, the length of time the kumāri spends in worship or the ritual context, and the kumāri's level of ongoing responsibility for the protection and well-being of a region, either currently or historically.

Household Kumāris
As noted, in Nepal, young unmarried females, or kumāris, are considered auspicious by many religious and ethnic communities, since they embody the creative potential and protective characteristics of the goddess herself. These females comprise the basis of what I call 'household kumāris.' A kumāri's presence is requested at important family activities, such as weddings and household pūjās, where her attendance has the effect of being both favorable and protective. Indeed, a kumāri's presence at most rituals

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20 These categories are not used within Nepal, but are used here to hint at the breadth and complexity of the kumāri tradition.
22 The term "protective," with respect Kumāri and her role as a state protectress, is discussed in Chapter 5.
is considered efficacious to an activity's overall intention. As described to me with respect to one household pūjā during Dasain (Durgā Pūjā) in Nepal, a household kumāri's participation in rituals is generally informal, with her mere presence often being the extent of her involvement. She will sometimes be asked to touch a ritual object or offering, such as a sari offering made during a wedding, as a kind of auspicious blessing. However, unlike kumāris in the other two categories, in these contexts she is not worshiped as the goddess Kumāri. Rather, I suggest it is the young girl's creative potential for prosperity and abundance, along with her general auspiciousness and protectiveness that devotees acknowledge in these situations. To my knowledge, no special rituals or formal installations are needed to define a household kumāri as the goddess Kumāri. A young girl's femaleness is, in itself, an expression of the female energy that is manifested in the goddess. Thus, the household kumāri's auspicious and protective nature mirrors the understanding of sakti, or female energy, in general in the South Asian context.

The protective aspect of kumāris, and females in general, is also expressed in household rituals I have observed, such as bhai (younger

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23 Personal communication from Mrs. Manu Bangdel and Dr. Dina Bangdel.

24 Household kumāri worship that involves esoteric practices may be an exception to this, but is a study that requires investigation in its own right. In parts of eastern India, some families worship the unmarried daughters in the household as the goddess Durgā during Durgā Pūjā. At the end of the ten days, these girls return to their status as, what I am calling, household kumāris. See Allen (1987), 3. In this context, they are more like the
brother) pūjā. Bhai pūjā is an annual ritual that outwardly expresses a female's ability to give protection to her brother. During this pūjā, sisters put tīka (often a mark of red vermillion powder) on their brothers' foreheads and place garlands around their necks. Such blessings from a sister, whether a kumārī or a married female, are described by Nepalis to be auspicious, since they protect the sons in the family for the coming year, particularly from possible injury or death.

Household kumāris, then, are often involved in a variety of daily life and household or family-based rituals and activities. No formal ceremony installs these young girls into the position of the goddess Kumāri, as takes place with Kumāris in the other categories. While the household kumāris embody creative potential, auspiciousness, and protective energies, these qualities generally are not expressed beyond the immediate family.

**Festival Kumāris**

"Festival," the term I suggest to classify the second category of kumāris and kumāri worship, expresses the principal context in which these kumāri practices occur. Here, "festival" is used in a broad sense and encompasses large-scale ceremonies and ritual activities, such as Durgā or Kāli Pūjā, in which a majority of the invested population—beyond the

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festival Kumāris described below, insofar as they spend a limited amount of time in formal worship as the goddess Kumāri.
individual household—participates, usually on an annual basis. For example, during the ninth day (navami) of Dasain, the Nepali equivalent of Durgā Pūjā, nine young girls are selected to become the Nava, or nine, Kumāris. Dressed in red and adorned with simple jewelry, each wears a topknot and makeup characteristic of the goddess Kumāri as they are worshiped by the Acājū (royal “Hindu”) priests at Mulchowk25 in an upstairs room.26 At the ritual’s completion, these Kumāris return to their regular homes and lives as young girls.

Compared with practices associated with the household kumāris, which are informal, Kumāri worship in the festival category demonstrates greater formality and the young girl is more outwardly identified as the goddess Kumāri. Most likely because they serve more than a single household, festival Kumāris are established as the goddess through a selection process, which varies depending on the specific festival, region, or location of the activities, and a host of other factors. The selection process, which may reflect a rotating appointment, selection by a priest, a random drawing of names, or other processes, determines which girl will serve as the goddess Kumāri for the event’s duration. In addition, some installation of the goddess, which may be as simple as dressing and adorning the young girl, takes place. While they are in worship, these ‘temporary’ goddesses are

25 Mulchowk is the Kathmandu Malla’s Palace’s main courtyard.
usually propitiated in a manner similar to that of what I call institutional Kumāris, and other deities in various religious settings.27 As festival Kumāris, the girls are dressed in fine clothing, adorned with flower garlands, and given offerings. As appropriate to the goddess Kumāri, the young girls are generally dressed in red, wear the characteristic topknot, and receive offerings of fruit, flowers, and incense, among other things.

Following the completion of the festival or other event, a festival Kumāri returns to her life as a household kumāri. A ritual may mark this moment of transformation when the form, the human body, no longer houses the deity, although this may not always be overt.28 This parallels the practice conducted with sculptures created as temporary vessels for a deity in South Asia. During Durgā Pūjā or Gaṇesa Pūjā, for example, images of these respective deities are created from ephemeral materials, such as mud and straw. The deities are invoked into the image and worshiped for the duration of the pūjā. At the end of the festival, the deities are asked to leave the forms, which are then carried in procession to a nearby water source and ceremonially submerged in the water where they dissolve.

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For the time that they are installed, festival Kumāris serve a wider community of devotees than the household kumāris. For example, the Nava Kumāris worship in Kathmandu mentioned above is also performed in Bhaktapur, where the Kumāris are first taken to Tebuk chem and worshiped by the local people, and are then brought to the second floor of Mulchowk for propitiation. Through their engagement with a larger community, the Kumāris extend their domains beyond that of the household toward a greater public. Therefore, in treatment and role, the festival Kumāris are more like the institutional Kumāris discussed below. Festival Kumāris differ from institutional Kumāris, however, with respect to the amount of time the young girls spend as the goddess. For the festival Kumāris, this time is limited to the duration of the festival or ceremony, while the institutional Kumāris are installed with the expectation that they will serve in this capacity for a number of years.

Institutional Kumāris

The Kumāris and Kumāri practices that I call institutional have been the focus of scholarship—and the primary window—into understanding the Kumāri phenomenon. Not surprisingly, the more prominent and public

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29 The Nava Kumāris are also referred to as the Gaṇa Kumāris. See Allen, 35, for a discussion of the Nava/Gaṇa Kumāris.

30 Tebuk chem is home to one of the three principal Kumāris in Bhaktapur.

31 Allen (1975), 35.
aspects of Kumāri worship in Nepal, what are classified here as institutional, have acted as magnifiers of the goddesses' role within Nepal's larger social and religious spheres. Compared with household and festival Kumāri practices, institutional Kumāri practices are characterized by a higher degree of formality and ritualization during selection, installation, and worship. The extent to which the worship of each institutional Kumāri is formalized today depends on a number of historical factors, as well as the prosperity and traditionalism of her community.

To date, scholars have identified as many as thirteen human forms of the goddess Kumāri co-existing in present-day Nepal, most of which range in age between two and ten.\textsuperscript{32} Allen notes one unusual case of a Patan Kumāri, who exceeded the age of thirty before the Nepal royal family asked her to step down.\textsuperscript{33} Her family testified to the fact that she never showed signs of the goddess leaving her body, such as bleeding or blemishes, and many in the Patan community continue to worship her as the official Kumāri.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32} It is difficult to say how many Kumāris were worshiped in the past and in what manner they were worshiped. Most of the goddesses in Michael Allen's study on the Kumāris fall into the institutional category. For a detailed listing and description of these Kumāris, their selection, caste affiliations, and worship practices, see Michael Allen, \textit{The Cult of Kumāri: Virgin Worship in Nepal} (1987), 11-64.

\textsuperscript{33} Allen (1987), 39. By 1994, the older Kumāri had been replaced by a child Kumāri. This proved difficult for the community, since the mandate for a replacement Kumāri was made by the royal family, rather than through traditional methods. This break with tradition raised issues regarding the credibility of the selection. Still, the new Kumāri took over all official responsibilities, and many Patan residents acknowledged her as the Patan Kumāri.

\textsuperscript{34} A new Patan Kumāri, enshrined in 2001, is the niece of the this older Kumāri.
Of the identified Kumāris, scholars refer to three—the Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur Kumāris—as Royal Kumāris. This "Royal Kumāri" tradition stems from the Three Kingdom Malla period (CE 1482 ~ CE 1768), when these three large cities were each under the hegemony of a different Malla ruler, and each Kumāri was worshiped by the ruler of her respective city. Royal patronage, as seen historically with other deities, elevated the status, wealth, and visibility of these Kumāris. Although, today, the Nepali royal family propitiates only the Kathmandu Kumāri in an ongoing way, scholars and some practitioners from the three cities continue to refer the Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur Kumāris as 'royal.' The royal Kumāris undergo the most rigorous selection process,\(^{35}\) have the most elaborate installation ceremonies,\(^{36}\) and are identified with the goddess in the most sustained way.\(^{37}\) The Kathmandu Kumāri has the greatest responsibilities and most ritualized life, with the Patan Kumāri a close second.

The remainder of the Kumāris, such as the Jyapu Kumāri of Patan, live less demanding lives with respect to their work as the goddess. Most are propitiated daily (*nītya pūjā*) in the mornings by family members, their caretaker, or senior members of the *saṅgha*, and spend the remainder of the day in ordinary activities. With the exception of daily *pūjās* and special

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\(^{36}\) Allen (1987), 21-22, 36-37, 46-47.
rituals, they, like festival Kumāris, essentially lead otherwise ordinary lives. Yet, despite their relatively unrestricted, nonritualized lives, they are still considered to be manifestations of the goddess, and most are expected to wear the characteristic topknot, a red dress (though more informal than the ritual dress), black liner on their eyes, and, in some cases, a piece of jewelry at all times. Some of the lesser known Kumāris wear only their topknot and black eyeliner on a daily basis. 38

The young girls selected to become “institutional” Kumāris are always ethnically Newar, the indigenous people of the Kathmandu Valley, and are from Newar Buddhist families. Since each “institutional” Kumāri is usually associated with a bāhā, young girls chosen as the vessel for Kumāri generally are selected from the related bāhā’s saṅgha or larger local sphere, and usually from either the Varjācārya or Śakya caste. Some exceptions to this caste status are the Kilagar Kumāri from the Kilagar-Itum Bāhā area in Kathmandu and the Sonimha Kumāri from Mikha Bāhā in Patan, who are both from Jyāpu, or farmer, castes. 39

As noted earlier, the Kumāri selection process varies. The Bungamati Kumāri, for example, is selected from the extended families of the seven

37 As will be discussed in Chapter 5, a Kumāri’s level of ongoing responsibilities and the degree to which her life and worship is ritualized correspond, in part, to her role as a protectress of the state.

38 See, for example, the requirements of the Kathmandu and Patan Jyāpu Kumāris in Allen (1987), 56-60.

Panju Vajrācārya families, with preference given to the oldest eligible girl.\(^4\) The Cha Bāhi Kumārī is selected through a lottery process in which seven to ten preselected girls stand in front of the main bāhā shrine and draw pieces of paper. The girl who receives the paper with a ‘yes’ on it is installed as the goddess.\(^5\)

Regardless of the selection process, each girl is supposed to have certain physical features and personal qualities that indicate she is an appropriate container for the goddess. Most importantly, she should have dark hair and dark eyes, traditional signs of beauty in South Asia, and well-proportioned body parts. Interestingly, the list of “thirty-two perfections” sought when selecting a vessel for the goddess is similar to the thirty-two lakṣaṇās, or auspicious marks, found on a Buddha, such as ‘chest like a lion,’ ‘neck like a conch-shell,’ and ‘hair whorls stiff and turning to the right.’\(^6\) Once selected, the girl is ritually purified and the goddess is invoked into her body.\(^7\)

Each Kumārī’s responsibilities vary, and, in most cases, have changed over the past several decades. For example, the Kumārīs from Mu Bāhā and Kwa Bāhā in Kathmandu, where bāhās are experiencing a high degree of

\(^4\) Allen (1975), 45.
\(^5\) Allen (1975), 47.
\(^6\) See Allen (1987), 165, n. 7 for a complete list of the ideal features provided by a Vajrācārya informant.
\(^7\) A description of the Patan Kumārī’s installation can be found in Allen (1987), 36-37.
deterioration and pressure due to modernization and cultural shifts, have become more limited. Various factors, such as shifting political power, modernization, and the emergence of women in the work force have been factors in altering the Kumārī traditions. Most Kumāris now receive formal education at school or through tutors to prepare them for life in the modern world. Taking her financial future into consideration, the Kathmandu Kumārī, for example, recently received an increase in her pension from the Royal Government of Nepal. At the same time, although the so-called ‘non-royal’ Kumāris have fewer responsibilities than the ‘royal’ Kumāris, rituals associated with the ‘non-royal’ Kumāris can be highly significant to their local communities. In other words, the relative importance of a Kumārī is dependent on her specific context and history, rather than a fixed hierarchy.  

For example, the Kathmandu Newars consider the Mu Bāhā Kumārī to be senior to the Kathamandu Kumārī, and a more important participant in Buddhist Vajrayāna, or esoteric tantric, rituals.  

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44 A goddess' importance must be examined in context. Nepalis from Patan with whom I spoke, for example, indicated that the Rāj Kumārī was of lesser importance to them in their daily lives, since she was 'Hindu' or had more to do with the king and the nation, rather than a personal responsibility to their daily lives. It is difficult to say whether this same view would have been held during Jayaprabha Maîla's reign.  

45 Allen (1987), 51-52. Unfortunately for her devotees, as noted earlier, selection of the Mu Bāhā Kumārī has undergone difficulties in recent times. The Mu Bāhā Kumārī is still considered ritually important, and has historically had a highly ritualized life, living at Mu Bāhā and being tended to in much the same way as the Kathmandu Kumārī is treated today. However, Allen notes that a Mu Bāhā Kumārī has not been selected since 1972, so the Kwā Bāhā Kumārī often serves as her substitute for important rituals.
Reconstructing the Early History of Kumāri Worship

The origin, antiquity, and development of Kumāri worship remains clouded by numerous factors. Textual evidence, as in the extant vamsāvalīs\textsuperscript{46} and vidhis\textsuperscript{47} provides some insight into Kumāri worship, but does not provide a great deal of detail regarding the ritual context, historical context, or forms of the goddess. Further, practices intended to invoke or call upon other goddesses, but that involve a human form of the goddess Kumāri as a focus for worship, shed only limited light on the many strands of the Kumāri tradition. Nevertheless, some important information can be gleaned from such sources.

Texts that identify the location where Kumāri worship occurs sometimes provides clues to the form, human or other, of Kumāri under discussion. For example, the vamsāvalī known as Wright’s Chronicles tells how King Aśoka Malla worshiped the goddess Kumāri at Kwache in order to defeat his enemies.\textsuperscript{48} Generally referred to as Bāla-Kumāri (child Kumāri), the Kwache Kumāri is worshiped today as an image that resides in a dyochem (god-house) situated prominently in the center of the village Sunakothi, just outside of Patan or, alternatively, at her pītha in a sacred

\textsuperscript{46} The vamsāvalīs are indigenous genealogical histories of Nepal.

\textsuperscript{47} A vidhi is a ritual text.

grove outside the village. The text does not designate whether the worship took place at the temple or the pitha, but, assuming the image in worship today was in place by the time of the vamsāvalī, it may be inferred that a human form of the goddess was not in worship at the site.

Evidence of what may be the earliest known written reference to Kumāri worship in Nepal appears in a vamsāvalī that states:

“This Raja [Lakṣmīkamadeva r. C.E. 1024 – 1039], thinking that his grandfather had acquired so much wealth and conquered the four quarters of the world through the aid of the Kumāris, resolved to do the same. With this intention he went to the Patan Durbar, and having worshipped as Kumari the daughter of a bandya, living in a bihar near the Durbar, known by the name of Lakṣmi-barman, he erected an image of Kumari and established Kumari Pūjā.”

Lakṣmīkamadeva’s grandfather, who propitiated the Kumāris with successful outcome, was King Gunakamadeva I (r. C.E. 987 – C.E. 990). This

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49 According to Lowdin, the temple to Bālā Kumāri is the most important and wealthiest temple in the village and is the center of important annual rituals. Worshiped by buddhamārgī (Buddhists), sivamārgī (Saivite), and saktamārgī (Sakta), she receives offerings from individuals from many castes and regularly receives blood sacrifice offerings. Members of the community also considered Bālā Kumāri to be a lineage deity, which is often a family’s most valued deity. The lineage deity tradition reflects some of the oldest practices in the Valley, and may imply great the antiquity of Kumāri worship in this case. Lowdin, 94.

50 Wright, 105.
account places Kumārī worship no later than the last quarter of the tenth century. It is notable that this account provides evidence of the worship of Kumārī in both human and image form. Lakṣmikamadeva was also responsible for establishing Ha Bāhā, now at Ga Bāhā Tole, Patan, the principal structure associated with the Patan Kumārī (Figure 1.5). Originally situated next to the Malla Palace in Patan’s Darbar Square, the Ha Bāhā was moved by Siddhinarsimha (r. C.E. 619-1661) in the 17th century to its present location when the palace was expanded.51 Lakṣmikamadeva’s establishment of Ha Bāhā, and his apparent propitiation of a human Kumārī in the form of the bandya’s daughter, suggests the earliness of the practice of venerating Kumārī in human form.

Nepal’s sacred histories also shed light on the emergence of the Kumāris and Kumārī worship, and suggest the likely antiquity of the tradition. Wright’s Chronicles record a sacred history that tells of Kumārī’s emergence and powerfullness in the Valley in an earlier yūga (era). According to the Chronicles, four Kumāris, listed as “Bal Kumari of Thimi, in the east; Kwatha Kshe Bal Kumari in the south; Maiti Devi Kumari in the west; near Gyaneswara, Mangalapur Kumari in the north, formerly in Bisal-nagara, near Bhasmeswara [and other deities, came to the Valley] ....knowing that

51 Wright, 159.
the influence of the gods was great in Nepal..." The history further states that these goddesses had great power during the Dwapar Yuga. Although these sacred histories do little to establish accurate dates by modern historical measures, they point to a perceived antiquity of the Kumāris and communicate a Newar understanding that the arrival of these goddesses in the Valley is beyond the human memory of our current era, the Kāli Yuga.

An additional oral history, recounted by Michael Allen, reflects the perceived antiquity of the Kumāri tradition in Kathmandu City and involves the Mu Bāhā Kumāri. According to this sacred history, Mu Bāhā was built at the behest of the great goddess Guhyēśvari, who appeared to a Vajrācārya from a Varjācārya settlement near Paśupati, called Pim Bāhā, which was established at least by the Licchavi Period (ca. C.E. 300 – 879). Guhyēśvari told the Vajrācārya to found a new bāhā and to institute the practice of a Tantric pūjā that was dedicated to Śakti and that incorporated a human form of Kumāri. Today, rituals associated with the Mu Bāhā Kumāri often involve her worship as Vajradevi, the laukik, or physical, manifestation of the Tantric meditational dākini, Vajrayogini or Vajravārāhi.

As will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Five, these stories reflect local histories of Kumāri worship, and, although different localities

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42 Wright, 70. See Allen (1987), 68-70 for descriptions of these locations and the practices associated with these four Kumāris.

share Kumāri-related practices and features, no single sacred history comprehensively communicates the various views and understandings held by each community. The Mu Bāhā Kumāri, for example, is principally propitiated by the Newar Buddhist community of Mu Bāhā, and in nearly all contexts is simultaneously considered to be Kumāri, Vajrayoginī, and, on some level, Guhyēsvari. The Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur Kumāris, however, are propitiated by buddhamārgi, śivamārgi, and saktamārgi alike; they may, therefore, be worshiped as Kumāri, Durgā, Taleju, and Vajrayogini, depending on the context. Kumāri’s relationship with other goddesses and meditational deities further complicates the question of her origin, since practices devoted primarily to other goddesses, such as Vajrayogini, may have also involved the propitiation of Kumāri as Vajrayogini. Moreover, the Tantric nature of many Kumāri practices locates them within the realm of protected esoteric traditions. These secret practices are typically limited to the initiated and transmitted in oral form from teacher to disciple. Therefore, even if an early Tantric ritual involved the propitiation of Kumāri, it may have never been documented in written form.

54 Vajravārāhi is the consort of the most important esoteric heruka deity in Nepal, Cakrasamvara.
55 See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the relationship between Kumāri, Vajrayogini, and Guhyēsvari.
In sum, although extant textual evidence about Kumārī worship leaves many gaps in the outline of the history of the tradition, there is evidence to suggest that the tradition was present in a variety of forms from an early date. Several references to the goddess Kumārī in one vamsāvalī indicate that Kumārī worship, in some form, may well have existed in Nepal by at least the 11th century. The host of unique and often locally specific sacred histories, as well as the contemporary goddess practices that involve Kumārī which we know to have ancient roots, point to an even greater antiquity for the Kumārī traditions. Finally, Kumārī worship's centrality to important contemporary religious practices in the Valley, the antiquity of the goddess tradition in South Asia itself, and the numerous ways in which Kumārī, and concepts related to her, are interwoven into the culture's social, historical, and religious fabric, suggest early and deep roots.

Objectives of this Study

This study has three principal objectives: 1. to conduct an iconographic study of Kumārī Bāhā, including related visual material, 2. to contextualize Kumārī and Kumārī Bāhā within the broader sphere of religious practices in the Valley, and 3. to contextualize Kumārī and Kumārī Bāhā within the history of the Valley.

57 Wright, 105.
Objective One: The Iconographic Program of Kumārī Bāhā

The array of visual materials associated with Kumārī worship is largely unexamined by the scholarly community. These materials include their domiciles, shrines, festival accoutrements, ritual implements, clothing, and other objects, as well as images—both crafted and naturally occurring. Kumārī Bāhā in Kathmandu, which houses the Rāj Kumārī, is the most momentous item created for Kumārī worship. It is the largest of the extant Kumārī chem and is the only Kumārī chem that functions as a proper domicile. The Kathmandu Kumārī’s immediate family establishes residence in Kumārī Bāhā during the girl’s tenure as the goddess.58 Of the extant Kumārī chem, Kumārī Bāhā has the most elaborate and well-articulated iconographic program. The monument’s iconography provides clues about Kumārī’s important role in Nepal’s political, social, and religious spheres and helps to decipher Kumārī’s relationship to other important goddess in the Kathmandu Valley. Therefore, this study includes a detailed iconographic analysis of the monument.

Devotees also worship the goddess Kumārī in shrines dedicated to other deities, although this fact is rarely mentioned in scholarly literature. The analysis of such shrines is helpful in determining Kumārī’s religious identity, her relationship with other deities, and her roles in cosmologies of
the Valley. For example, the goddess Kumārī appears at the Purān Guhyēśvarī shrine, a fresh water spring enshrined as the Secret Goddess, Guhyēśvarī (Figure 1.6). A small Kumārī shrine, marked only by red kum kum, flowers, and rice offerings, is located on the right side of the base of the newly renovated marble shrine to Guhyēśvarī (Figure 1.7). According to the pūjārī at the site, a small image of Kumārī was discovered inside the old, brick shrine during the mid-1970s renovation. Whether the image was originally located inside of a sealed niche or simply embedded into the brick wall structure of the shrine is unclear. However, the significance and potential dangers associated with undertaking this renovation left no room for changes in what seems to have been an iconographically significant aspect of the site. The pūjārī at the site also indicated that the image was returned to its original location, now inside the new marble shrine, leaving the goddess invisible to the human eye. Devotees acknowledge the goddess' presence by making offerings toward the area of the shrine that is said to contain the image. Unfortunately, no photographs seem to have been taken of the Kumārī image before it was returned to the shrine.

Festival accoutrements include any objects used during processional or community rituals. For example, the carts, or rathas, used to transport Kumārī through the city streets every autumn during Indra Jatra and

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58 The other extant Kumārī chem act as shrines, rather than homes, for the goddesses.

59 This story was communicated during a visit to Purān Gahyeśvarī in 1996.
Kumārī Jatra are helpful for their iconographic and contextual significance (Figure 1.8). Ritual implements used by priests and offerings made by devotees, such as the sāme bajī⁶⁰ mound placed in front of Kumārī during Kumārī Pūjā, are important (Figure 1.9). This food offering, which is also made to other goddesses, such as Vasundharā, is eaten as prasād, or an offering back from the deity. following the pūjā and, again, helps articulate Kumārī’s relationship to other goddesses in the Valley.

The Kumāris’ adornments, such as their jewelry and clothing, are also examined, since they often provide clues to Kumārī’s religious identity and her relationship with other goddesses in the Valley. The Patan Kumārī’s jābhi (red cloth covered with pieces of silver repossé), for example, displays iconographic features that express her connection to the Aṣṭamātrka, or mother goddesses (Figure 1.10).

Objective Two: Contextualization of Kumārī Bāhā within the Religious Life of the Valley

A second objective of this study is to contextualize Kumārī Bāhā and other visual materials relating to Kumārī worship within the broader sphere of religious practices and belief systems in the Valley. As will be

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⁶⁰ Sāme bajī is a Tantric ritual food that, in this case, is placed before the deity in the form of a large mound. The mound is created from beaten rice, and lined with rows of meat, fish, ginger, and black beans. In the case of the mound placed before the goddess during a Kumārī Pūjā, a duck egg and two pieces of dried fish (common offerings to Tantric goddesses) are placed on top. See Lowdin, 123 and Gellner, 303-304.
demonstrated, an iconographic reading of Kumāri Bāhā reveals that the structure was created as a microcosm of the Kathmandu Valley. The sacred geography of the Kathmandu Valley is provided in the Švayambū Purāṇa, a text that tells of the Valley's creation as an inhabitable space for humans. The Purāṇa discusses the Kathmandu Valley as an inherent sacred place, while ritual invocations describe the specific localities that define the Valley as a sacred region that is in the form of a maṇḍala. A specific Newar Buddhist pilgrimage involving many of the sacred spaces outlined in the ritual invocation physically enacts what is usually a purely meditational practice. Kumāri Bāhā's iconographic program conceptually maps the Valley's sacred geography, which is acknowledged by Newars in these various ways.

Objective Three: Contextualization of Kumāri and Kumāri Bāhā within the History of the Valley

A third objective of this study is to analyze the relationship between Kumāri, her devotees, and the institution of kingship in the historical context. Kumāri Bāhā's iconographic program tells a great deal about the goddess Kumāri's role in the human realm. In particular, Kumāri's role as a protectress of the state is examined, and issues of her localization are considered in light of historical documentation that describes the political situation during the period when Kumāri Bāhā was constructed. The
historical evolution of hegemonic forces, and the changing political boundaries that resulted from territorial conquest, shed light on Kumārī’s role as a state protectress and the impetus for the construction of Kumārī Bāhā. The region that today comprises Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Patan, and selected nearby towns are the primary area of focus. This study considers this region within the context of Newar understandings of sacred space.

**Methodology**

For the examination of material culture, this study adopts traditional art historical methods of visual analysis, including iconographic and spatial investigation. The analysis of Kumārī Bāhā includes a detailed iconographic reading of the images and symbols that adorn the structure and imbue it with meaning, as well as a study of the monument’s ground plan and architectural form. Kumārī Bāhā’s physical relationship to and iconographic similarities with other key structures, such as the royal palaces, other goddess shrines, and various temples, are also examined. Through these analyses and the use of written and oral texts, this study attempts to decipher the originally intended meaning of Kumārī Bāhā’s iconographic program and Jayaprakāśa Malla’s impetus for building the monument.

Studies in semiotics undertaken since the 1980s rightly warn against assuming that symbol and form necessarily have an inherent, static meaning,
as often implied in art historical scholarship of the past century. This study accepts that meaning is largely contextual and, therefore, can be fluid. Indeed, it assumes that an object's meaning is created dialectically, specifically as the object and the context within which it exists may be subject to human agency. In Nepal, as elsewhere in South Asia and the Himalayan regions, societal stratification that correlates to family name and occupation (specifically, the caste system) affords certain groupings and shared understandings about religious and cultural paradigms, which can be gleaned through a contextual analysis of visual culture. Therefore, the views and perspectives of various social and religious groups must be examined to more fully understand an object and its context. To collect such information, anthropological methods were used, including interviews, and the documentation of and participation in rituals. The viewpoint of both technical and lay practitioners of Kumārī, Newar Buddhism, and Śakta worship are taken into account, and their rituals and meditational practices are investigated in this study. The exploration of religious presuppositions, as conceived by the average practitioner, senior ritual specialists, and a host of individuals "in between," provide the contextual foundation for analyzing the art and architecture.

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Using the present to interpret the past has merit for the study at hand, since Kumārī worship has apparently evolved in a dynamic, yet relatively uninterrupted manner for several hundred years. Even the Shah Dynasty acknowledged Kumārī worship from an early date and adopted aspects of the established Malla tradition when they took the throne.\textsuperscript{62} Moreover, interviews with devotees and ritual specialists who participate in this living tradition revealed that they often have clear memories of the Kumārī worship's history within the past several decades. Despite it undeniable value, however, I have used caution when applying contemporary views to the historical contexts, bearing in mind that Nepal's current political situation and ethnic tensions may color Newar interpretations of their histories. In addition, major political shifts over the centuries have altered territorial boundaries and hegemonic patterns. The modern nation of Nepal did not exist prior to the overthrow of the Malla's by the Shah Dynasty in C.E. 1769. Such political and social fluctuations had an impact on Kumārī worship, and although such dynamism may shroud aspects of the Kumārī cult's development, this study reveals that the political shifts may also shed light on the goddess' relationship to political power and her role within the Valley's religious traditions.

\textsuperscript{62} The recent trend to provide formal education for some of the Kumārīs is an example of how the tradition has evolved in recent times.
Primary Sources

Kumāri Bāhā in Kathmandu and the other Kumāri residences, shrines, and related artwork comprise the principal primary sources used in this study, with the focus on Kumāri Bāhā itself. Physical objects, such as temples and natural elements, were photographically documented during field research according to the standards outlined in the *Guide to Photographic Documentation in the Field*.\(^{63}\) Other structures under consideration include the major centers of Newar Buddhist socio-religious activities, the bāhās and bahīs, palace complexes and sakti, or goddess, sites that have relevance to the Kumāri tradition.

Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur cities have the largest concentrations of bāhās and bahīs, although some also exist in the Valley's outlying areas. As a member of an Ohio State University documentation team in 1994 and 1996, I participated in the exhaustive photographic documentation of the Valley's more than 500 bāhās and bahīs, most of which are outlined in John Locke's *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*.\(^{64}\)

The three Malla Palaces located in Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur, and the Gorkha palace—the former seat of power for Nepal's

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\(^{64}\) John Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal: A Survey of the Bāhās and Bahīs of the Kathmandu Valley*. (Kathmandu: Sahayogi, 1985). I am grateful to John C. Huntington, who led the photographic documentation team that visited the more than 500 monasteries in the Kathmandu Valley. Dr. Huntington has most generously made the more than
current ruling Shah Dynasty—were also examined and photographically documented. Unfortunately, the Nepali government only permits entry into a select few courtyards at each of the palaces, and they only allow limited photographic documentation of these monuments. Because of this, I conducted onsite analysis of these structures and have relied on verbal descriptions and drawings from Nepalis who were permitted to enter additional areas of the palaces and graciously shared their knowledge with me. Scholarly works and government records also provide accurate ground plans of the Malla palaces.⁶⁵

In addition to the bāhās, bāhis, and palaces, I have visited and been part of the documentation of numerous other sites that are dedicated to a range of deities and visited by devotees from the Saivite, Vaisnavite, Buddhist, and Sakta religious traditions. The sakti pūthas, or self-arisen goddess sites, are of particular importance to this study (Figure 1.11).

Whenever possible, I have attempted to document ritual implements and related items used in rituals. These objects were also generally photographed prior to or after the ritual event. For example, the Kathmandu Kumārī's red palanquin was photographed both while in storage, and also

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during the Kumārī Jātra Festival (Figure 1.12). Inscriptional evidence, such as that found on the goddesses' jewelry, and related jewelry, was documented in similar fashion. I used photography and video to document rituals, offerings to a variety of deities, pilgrimages, and other dynamic activities and, whenever possible, multiple still and video cameras were used.\textsuperscript{66}

The primary interview sources for this study include dialogue with ritual specialists, individual practitioners and former Kumāris. Suryaman Vajrācārya, a senior ritual specialist at Ha Bāhā, Patan, shared hours of technical Buddhist interpretations of religious philosophy, ritual implements, architectural elements, and various deities. He also described key technical elements, such as Kumārī's iconography and appearance in visualizations, as well as her significance in ritual invocation. I have combined this information with lay understandings of Kumārī that individual practitioners at ritual events and in casual conversations provided to sketch a more complete picture of Kumārī's significance in the Valley.\textsuperscript{67}

Other primary sources I've used for this study include stories and sacred histories that are recounted in texts or during rituals through song

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\textsuperscript{66} I am greatly indebted to the OSU research team, led by John C. Huntington (1994, 1996) and which included Susan L. Huntington (1994), Dina Bangdel (1994, 1996), Chaya Chandrasekhar (1996), Lawrence N. Hill (1994), Eric Huntington (1994), and Siddhartha Sakya, a videographer from Patan, who helped to document a Kumārī Puja. Without their assistance, my research would not have benefited from the use of multiple cameras and simultaneous photography.

\textsuperscript{67} In the case of interviews with renowned ritual specialists or during the communication of sensitive (generally personal or esoteric) information, I am deeply grateful to my friend and colleague, Dr. Dina Bangdel, for her insight and assistance with translations and
and chanting. For example, I examined vaṃśāvalīs to obtain information on the history of the Valley’s various monarchies and the Svayambhū Purāṇa for a Newar Buddhist sacred history of the Kathmandu Valley’s creation. Dr. Daniel Wright, a British officer and resident surgeon in the Kathmandu Valley, helped to reconstruct the history of Nepal in his book History of Nepal. This work contains an introductory sketch of the Kathmandu Valley and its peoples and is followed by a translation of a nineteenth-century Buddhist vaṃśāvalī, which was completed by two Indian employees of the British Residency. This vaṃśāvalī, more commonly referred to by scholars as “Wright’s Chronicles,” provides one of the most detailed accounts of the Three Kingdom Malla Period (CE 1482 – CE 1768), the period of Jayapraخارa Malla’s reign and the construction of Kumāri Bāhā and, therefore, is a primary resource used in this study.

The Svayambhū Purāṇa, and its sacred history of the Valley’s creation, is well-known both in oral traditions and from the translation by Manabajra Vajrācārya and Warren W. Smith. Dina Bangdel’s reading of the Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa, a larger version of the Svayambhū Purāṇa in Sanskrit, 

_interpretations of these discussions. Her scholarly knowledge and remarkable interview skills were incomparable in facilitating and directing these discussions._


69 Hara Prasād Shastri, ed., _The Vṛhat Svayambhu Purāṇa containing the Traditions of the Svayambhu Kṣetra in Nepal_ N.S. 842 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1894).
was central to her dissertation research, in which the creation myth of the Valley played a central role. This study relies primarily on Vajrācārya and Smith's work, and builds on Bangdel's new research and findings, which depend on her reading of the Vṛhat Svayambhū Purāṇa. The Svayambhū Purāṇa is relevant to my research, since a replica of Svayambhū Mahācaitya, as well as iconographic elements that refer to other sacred sites in the Valley, are written about in the text and are found at Kumāri Bāhā. I use this and other information to relate Kumāri Bāhā's iconographic elements to broader patterns of sacred and mandalic spaces found in the Valley.

Research History

My research on Kumāri Bāhā began in 1993 with a preliminary study of photographs and field notes taken in 1970 by John Huntington and Susan Huntington, respectively, now in The Huntington Photographic Archive of Buddhist and Related Art at The Ohio State University, and secondary scholarly sources. Following this initial research, in 1994 as part of an Ohio State University photographic documentation research team, I participated in the documentation of over 500 bāhās and bāhīs, and visited numerous other sites. Researching materials I had collected on this trip allowed me to establish the foundation for my research objectives and contextualization.

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70 Dina Bangdel, Manifesting the Mandala: A Study of the Core Iconographic Program of Newar Buddhist Monasteries in Nepal.
theories of Kumāri and the Kumāri traditions. I tested these working theories in 1996 during a returned visit to Nepal, again with an Ohio State research team.

I documented a lesser-known ritual, which is central to this study, that occurs annually with the Kathmandu Kumāri during the 1996 trip. In Kumāri Jātra, as it is called, Buddhist devotees take the Kathmandu Kumāri from her home and carry her through the streets of Kathmandu in a small, red palanquin. Devotees carry Kumāri through specific bāhās to allow her to see the community’s finest and most important images, including the main shrine images, and, I suggest, to confirm the health and prosperity of her devotees and the city.71

Public festivals and rituals that include Kumāri, such as the Matsyendrenath Festival in Patan, show the goddess in a ritual relationship to other deities in the Valley (Figure 1.13). The Matsyendrenath Festival, held each June to welcome an auspicious rainy season, focuses on the worship of Matsyendrenath, a form of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Devotees bring the Patan Kumāri to the festival and enthrone her on a platform, where she oversees the festivities and receives devotional offerings. Although we photographed and videotaped rituals associated with the Kathmandu Kumāri

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71 The process of carrying deities through the streets to meet with other deities is not uncommon in South Asia, and smaller, processional images that serve as surrogates of important, large shrine deities are often carried through the streets to meet with other gods and goddesses. Indeed, such processional traditions served as the catalysts for the well-known metal-working schools in South India.
whenever possible, as her residence is the focus of my study, a great deal of my research centered on the more accessible Patan Kumārī. Research conducted during 1996 included documentation of a number of private rituals that take place daily in the Patan goddess’ home shrine, such as the nitya, or daily, pūjā\(^{72}\) (Figure 1.14). Like interviews with both technical and lay practitioners, public and private rituals provide a window on the many facets of Kumārī worship, including the goddess’ role in Nepal’s deity hierarchy and relationship to other goddesses, her religious identity in various contexts, and her significance to ongoing life within the Newar community.

**State of Scholarship**

Anthropological and ethnographic scholarship have dominated Western scholarship in the humanities on Nepal. This is not surprising, given the strength and relatively long history these disciplines have had in the region. In contrast, only a handful of scholars have conducted art historical studies in Nepal.\(^{73}\) The result has been precious few books and museum catalogues dedicated to Nepal’s art. Most of these studies present only the most finely crafted objects, or those items that have the greatest

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\(^{72}\) The nitya pūjā was conducted by her grandfather, a high ranking Vajrācārya from Ha Bāhā

antiquity, thus reflecting the more traditional emphasis in art historical scholarship. To date, scholars have given only limited attention to Nepal's broader range of material culture and deeper contextual studies.\footnote{In “The Iconography of the Buddhist Wood-Carvings in a Newar Buddhist Monastery in Kathmandu (Chusya-Bāhā),” Journal of the Nepal Research Center, 1: 39-82, Karl van Kooij provides a greater degree of contextual analysis in this iconographic study of Chusya Bāhā. Dina Bangdel’s dissertation, Manifesting the Mandala, represents the first substantial art historical study on Nepal to consider a wider range of objects within a contextual study.} Thorough art historical studies of Nepal's architecture, including studies of Kumārī Bāhā, have also been limited.

John Locke's volume on Newar Buddhist bāhās and bahīs represents the most substantial study on Kumārī Bāhā to date.\footnote{Society and H.N. Abrams, 1964); and Lain S. Bangdel, Early Sculptures of Nepal (Delhi: Vikas, 1982).} In this survey, Locke identifies Kumārī Bāhā's iconographic features and architectural elements, such as the exoteric and esoteric shrines, the kvāhpāh dyah and āgam, respectively, and specific courtyard sculpture, such as the caitya, that iconographically designate a monument as a bāhā or bahī. He further provides a brief history of Kumārī Bāhā and some principal rituals that take place at the site. Locke's inclusion of Kumārī Bāhā in his survey is significant, since, as the present study shows, it is not only the monument's name that suggests its bāhā nature. Rather, Kumārī Bāhā in Kathmandu is the only Kumārī chem to have the key iconographic elements of a bāhā. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, however, Kumārī Bāhā does not have a
saṅgha (community of practitioners)—another key aspect of a typical bāhā. Indeed, Nepalis often refer to Kumārī Bāhā as Kumārī Chem, or Kumārī’s house, since, as this study shows, the monument functions more as a chem, or god-house, than a bāhā. As I hope to demonstrate, the fact that Kumārī Bāhā may be interpreted as both a bāhā and a chem is significant in understanding the monument and the impetus for its creation.

Not surprisingly, in comparing Kumārī Bāhā’s architectural form with that of other bāhās in the Valley, Locke concludes that Kumārī Bāhā is a “strange hybrid.”

Brief mentions of Kumārī Bāhā also appear in the works of Mary Slusser and Michael Hutt. Slusser’s work, like Locke’s survey, briefly discusses Kumārī Bāhā’s history and its relationship to its patron, King Jayaprakāśa Malla, but focuses mostly on Kumārī worship in general. Hutt, on the other hand, describes some of Kumārī Bāhā’s architectural elements.

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76 Locke, 267. Locke states that, although the Kumārī Bāhā has a number of iconographic elements that are found in Newar Buddhist bāhā architecture, depictions of the Hindu goddess Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardini are ubiquitous on the monument. As will be discussed in Chapter Three, many of the figures Locke identifies as Durgā are, in fact, representations of the Aṣṭamātrkā (eight mother goddesses) and the Navadurgā (nine durgās). These goddess groups are found throughout the Kathmandu Valley in the form of self-arisen manifestations, such as rock outcroppings, and are prominent in Newar art and architecture. The Aṣṭamātrkā and Navadurgā are worshiped in various contexts by followers of the Buddhist, Saivite, Vaishnavite, and Sakta religious traditions. Locke further predicates his assessment that Kumārī Bāhā is a hybrid structure on the fact that both a Buddhist Vajrācārya and a Hindu priest from the palace conduct rituals to the goddess Kumārī at the site.

in this handy guide to the Valley’s architecture. Unfortunately, he makes several mistakes in his iconographic identifications. For example, he describes the third storey window and surmounted torana (lunette) on the east end of Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior north facade as a “star of David window with an image of the Buddha at the center of the torana above it”\textsuperscript{78} (Figure 1.15). The “star of David” is, in fact, a yantra, a pair of opposing, overlaid triangles sometimes used in Newar architecture to indicate the “seat” of a deity and in Newar Buddhist iconography, this symbol is referred to as a dharma dhyā and is often conceived as the maṇḍala of Vajrayogini. The figure on the torana above the yantra is a four-armed seated Kumārī.

Although scholarship on Kumārī Bāhā is limited, scholars have conducted significant research on what I refer to as the institutional Kumāris in Nepal. These studies parallel the broader patterns of Nepal studies, which are situated primarily within an anthropological discourse. Indeed, Kumāri studies owes its foundation to the work of anthropologist Michael Allen, whose book The Cult of Kumāri: Virgin Worship in Nepal was first published in 1975 and continues to be the most substantial work on the topic.\textsuperscript{79} The Cult of Kumāri provides an historical sketch of “virgin worship” in South Asia, while the majority of the book outlines the selection, caste affiliation, day-to-day life, festival participation, and religious identity of each of the

\textsuperscript{78} Hutt, 85.

\textsuperscript{79} Michael Allen, The Cult of Kumāri: Virgin Worship in Nepal.
Kumāris. In exploring the girls' familial relationships and caste, Allen pays particular attention to the passage rites undertaken by young girls in India and Nepal. In this way, Allen discusses Kumāri worship within a sociological framework of puberty rites and rituals, providing insights into the ritual lives of young, prepubescent girls. This methodological approach highlights the Kumāri cult as a unique phenomenon in the Valley and, perhaps more significantly, it classifies Kumāri worship as virgin worship. Allen does not entirely ignore Kumāri's other roles and her relationship to other religious phenomena in the Valley. However, he prioritizes the goddess' human-ness. It is my hope that this study of Kumāri Bāhā and other material culture associated with the goddess Kumāri will provide additional insights into Kumāri's role in the Valley's broader religious practices.

The Cult of Kumāri brought the phenomenon of Kumāri worship to the wider scholarly audience and continues to be an excellent source of information. Many Nepalis embrace Allen's work, using it for an historical overview of the Cult and as a source for English translations of Nepali terms. For example, a sign hanging outside the Patan Kumāri's residence announces the goddess' presence inside and refers to her in as the Śri Bāl (child) Kumāri (Figure 1.16). However, below the devanāgari script—the English "Living Goddess"—reflects Allen's language, now popularized among the indigenous communities.
The Kumari of Kathmandu, a pamphlet published by Heritage Research in Nepal for the purpose of cultural tourism, provides a useful overview of Kumāri worship and Indra Jatra, a festival with which the Kathmandu Kumāri is associated. This pamphlet draws primarily on research conducted by Nepali scholars and tells of sacred histories regarding the creation of Kumāri Bāhā and the establishment of Indra Jatra by Jayaprakāśa Malla. In most of these stories, Kumāri becomes angered at Jayaprakāśa Malla and, to appease her, he builds a chha mandap for her in the Kathmandu Darbar Square. Siddhi B. Ranjitkar authored another small booklet called Kumari: The Virgin Goddess. Ranjitkar’s work provides insights regarding Kumāri’s role as a state goddess and discusses Kumāri as a form of the goddess Mahālakṣmi. My research on Kumāri Bāhā and related visual culture corroborates many of Ranjitkar’s findings, for example, Kumāri’s role as a protectress of the state.

Research currently underway by Russian scholar Boris Ivanov calls into question the use of religious and social practices associated with the Kathmandu Kumāri as a basis for interpreting the Kumāri cult as a whole. Ivanov’s preliminary findings, presented under the title "Cult of Kumāri: A

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81 Regmi, 22-26.
82 Siddhi B. Ranjitkar, Kumari: The Virgin Goddess. (Delhi: Book Faith India, 1999).
83 Unfortunately, Ranjitkar did not footnote the source of many of his findings, probably owing to the publication’s format.
Static Approach," outline the antiquity and complexity of the cult, while highlighting the social and religious differences, rather than the similarities, between the identified Kumāris.\textsuperscript{64} This research, although now in its preliminary stages, could ultimately shed light on the historical development of Kumārī worship.

Two studies focus on the Kumāris' jewelry, Niloufar Moaven's article "Enquete sur les Kumari" and Hannelore Gabriel's "Newar Ceremonial Jewellery for A Living Goddess."\textsuperscript{65} Both articles provide documentation of the goddesses' jewelry, and Gabriel's article includes useful descriptions of how the jewelry is made and its symbolism. Also by Gabriel, the book \textit{The Jewelry of Nepal} briefly discusses Kumārī jewelry within the larger tradition of jewelry wearing in Nepal and includes stunning pictures of the goddesses in their regalia.\textsuperscript{66} Moaven's work also describes sacred histories that tell how Kumārī worship began in Kathmandu. In each of the sacred histories, the goddess, in the form of an adult, fully sexual deity, regularly visits the king (whose identity varies depending on the account) to play dice. This relationship continues happily until the goddess realizes that the king is having lustful thoughts about her. The goddess vows never to appear to him

\textsuperscript{64} I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Ivanov for sending me a copy of this unpublished work in progress.


in that form again, but will only manifest in the form of a young girl from a Newar family. The king must worship the goddess from that moment as a kumāri, or little girl.

My earlier research on the Kumāris, Living Goddess as Incarnate Image: The Kumāri Cult of Nepal questions the notion that Kumāri worship is a unique phenomenon within South Asia and examines the worship practices of the human forms of the goddess Kumāri within the broader context of devotional activities involving images in Nepal. My research indicates that the devotional practices and treatment of the human Kumāris is suggestively similar to that of stone, metal, and other images that serve as vessels for deities. Once deities have been invoked into an image that was crafted by humans, the forms are fanned, bathed, fed, sung to, entertained, and visited in a manner befitting that of an honored guest. Such practices are the rule, rather than the exception in South Asia, suggesting that Kumāri worship is consistent with the broader South Asian propitiation of deities.

Having established that the treatment of Kumāri is significantly similar to that of deities invoked into works of art, the Kumāri cult can be contextualized within the realm of deity worship in the Valley and elsewhere in South Asia. Such contextualization brings to the forefront a different range of interpretive categories that shed light on the tradition from an art historical and religious perspective, rather than purely ethnographic perspective. This
research led to my current study, which investigates the visual culture associated with the Kumārī cult, particularly Kumārī Bāhā.

**Expected Contributions of the Present Study**

This study provides the first thorough iconographic study of Kumārī Bāhā in Kathmandu. It identifies the numerous toraṇa and strut figures on the monument’s exterior and courtyard facades and examines the ways that Kumārī Bāhā’s creators communicated multiple layers of meaning through these figural representations. Imbuing text and art with multiple layers of meaning has been a tradition throughout South Asia for centuries. This study shows that the designers of Kumārī Bāhā, a key royal monument in the Kathmandu Valley, exploited this long-held practice, using imagery of both conquest and protection, to communicate King Jayaprakāśa Malla’s power and legitimate authority, as well as to invoke the power of the great Valley goddesses to protect the kingdom.

This study also shows that the creators of Kumārī Bāhā made extensive use of the maṇḍala concept to fashion the monument as a microcosm of the Kathmandu Valley. For example, the organization of Kumārī Bāhā’s iconographic elements imitates the layout of some of the Valley’s most important religious sites, such as the sakti pīthas, which are

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said to articulate a Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. As such, Kumārī Bāhā is constructed as one of Newar Buddhism's most important maṇḍalas.

This study also demonstrates that Kumārī Bāhā is constructed as a multi-sectarian monument that brings together imagery from the Buddhist, Saivite, and Vaisnavaite, traditions under an overarching theme of Śakti or the goddesses. The approach is inclusive, rather than exclusive or synchretic, suggesting that these well-defined, individual traditions were not mutually exclusive and could be brought together in a harmonious and fluid relationship during the eighteenth century. This study further suggests that King Jayaprakāśa Malla sought Kumārī’s assistance during a time of great financial and political difficulties precisely because of her historical associations with the various religious traditions in the Valley, her religious identity as an embodiment of absolute creative potential, and her role as a supreme protectress of the state.
Figure 1.1. Raj Kumari of Kathmandu. Probably 1994.
Figure 1.3. Weathered roundel located on the west wall lintel in Kumārī Bāhā's courtyard, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 1.4. Damaged strut figure on the third level of the exterior north wall of Kumārī Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 1.5. Main (north) exterior facade of Ha Bahá, Patan, 1994.
Figure 1.6. Purān Guhyeśvarī Shrine, Kathmandu, 1996.
Figure 1.7. Kumārī Shrine located on the south side of the Purān Guhyeśvari Shrine base, Kathmandu, 1996.
Figure 1.8. Kumāri’s *ratha*, or cart, being prepared for the annual Indra Jatra Festival, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 1.9. Sāme baji, or food offering mound, placed in front of the Patan Kumāri during a Kumāri Puja in 1996.
Figure 1.10. Patan Kumāri shown enthroned at the Pañcadāna festival at Ha Bāhā, Patan, and wearing her jābhi (red cloth "apron" covered with pieces of silver repousse), 1994.
Figure 1.11. Mheipī Ajima Shrine, a sakti pīṭha, or self-arisen goddess shrine, Kathmandu, 1996.
Figure 1.12. Devotees carrying the Kathmandu Kumārī through the streets of Kathmandu. Photograph taken in 1996.
Figure 1.13. Patan Kumāri enshrined and in worship at the annual Matsyendrenath Festival, Patan, 1994.
Figure 1.14. Kumāri in worship for the modest nitya (daily) pūjā in the shrine room in her family’s house across the street from Ha Bāhā, Patan, 1996.
Figure 1.15. Kumārī window on Kumārī Bāhā's main (north) exterior facade at the east end of the third level, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 1.16. Sign outside of the Patan Kumāri's shrine in her family home, Patan. The Nepali reads as Śri Bāla Kumāri, "Child Kumāri." However, the English translation, “Living Goddess,” demonstrates the influence in Nepal of Allen's work, 1996.
CHAPTER 2:

KUMĀRΙ BĀHĀ AS A BĀHĀ AND A DYOCHEM

In its brief appearances in scholarly literature, Kumārī Bāhā in Kathmandu has been referred to variously as a bāhā (a Newar Buddhist monastery),¹ a dyochem (god-house),² a chok (courtyard or quadrangle),³ and “a cross between a Newar town house and a bāhā.”⁴ As one scholar puts it, “[t]he shrine...is a strange hybrid.”⁵ In describing the monument as a bāhā, scholars emphasize the presence of specific shrines and iconographic elements at the site, which are essential to classifying a structure as a bāhā.⁶ Referring to the Kumārī Bāhā as a dyochem, by calling it Kumārī Chem or

¹ Locke, 265.
² Slusser, 311.
³ Hutt, 35.
⁴ Locke, 365.
⁵ Locke, 267.

⁶ Bahī architecture is closely related to bāhā architecture, and they share many of the same iconographic features. For a survey of the bahīs in the Kathmandu Valley, see Locke’s Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal.
Kumārī Ghār (house),\(^7\) emphasizes that the monument is a residence for the goddess Kumārī. The name Kumārī Chok not only describes the monument's open courtyard form, but links it to the adjacent Malla Palace, which is divided into individual courtyards that were added over time by successive Malla and Shah kings and that, in some cases, include an enshrined deity\(^8\) (Figure 2.1). As can be discerned by the various conventions used to name the monument, Kumārī Bāhā is distinctive within Nepal's architectural tradition. As an architectural form, it resists simple classification within the Kathmandu Valley's architectural and religious rubrics. For the purposes of this study, I will refer to the monument as Kumārī Bāhā.

This chapter provides an introductory description of Kumārī Bāhā\(^9\) and compares it with bāhā architecture, in general, showing that several of Kumārī Bāhā's iconographic elements were taken from the bāhā architectural tradition. This chapter further demonstrates that, although the monument is referred to as a bāhā, Kumārī Bāhā functions principally as a dyochem and incorporates only a few rituals that are central to life in the

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\(^7\) Nepalis frequently refer to the monument as Kumārī Chem (Newar) or Kumārī Ghar (Nepali).

\(^8\) Evidence of this type of palace expansion is found throughout the vamsāvalis, in inscriptions on donor plaques, and in published and unpublished thṛṣṭāphus. For a discussion of Newar architecture, including domiciles, see Slusser, 130 – 160.

\(^9\) A detailed iconographic description of Kumārī Bāhā is provided in Chapter 3.
bāhās. Finally, Kumārī Bāhā, when compared with other extant Kumārī chems, is a more complex structure and has the most elaborate and systematic iconographic program.

_Kumārī Bāhā: An Introduction to the Monument's Architectural Form_

**Exterior**

In Kathmandu's Darbar Square, the main entrances to Kumārī Bāhā and the Malla Palace are aligned on a perpendicular axis, with the bāhā facing north and the palace facing west (Figure 2.1). Approaching Kumārī Bāhā from the north, moving directly south from the palace entrance, the monument’s main façade becomes immediately visible (Figure 2.2). A triple gilt metal _gajūras_ (bell-shaped finial) surmounted by three _chattras_ (umbrellas) and surrounded by a foliate motif are located at the top center of Kumārī Bāhā's north wall (Figure 2.3). Despite entrances on the east and west sides of the monument, it is clear from the elaborate sculptural display on the monument’s north side that the designers of Kumārī Bāhā meant for visitors to enter through the north doorway.\(^\text{10}\) In contrast, Kumārī Bāhā’s east façade appears unremarkable, with a simple wooden doorframe and

\(^{10}\) Kumārī Bāhā’s north wall is also taller than the south, east, and west walls, suggesting that the north wall was the main façade due to its larger size.
small, largely unadorned windows (Figure 2.4). A storage area, which is marked by a bright yellow gate, today obscures Kumārī Bāhā’s west facade and the adjacent Sikhamu Bāhā (Figure 2.5).\footnote{The storage area houses the Kumārī, Ganeśa and Kumāra rathas, or carts, which are used during the Indra Jātra festival each autumn.}

Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior north facade contains a total of six doorways and fourteen windows, which are arranged in a symmetrical fashion. Bands of wood, which stretch the horizontal length of the north facade, demarcate the structure’s three levels and punctuate the neat rows of windows and doors.\footnote{For a detailed description of the renowned Newar carved wooden doors and windows, including the names of window-types and architectural elements, see Niels Gutschow, Bernard Kölver, and Ishwaranand Shresthacarya, Newar Towns and Buildings: An Illustrated Dictionary (Sankt Augustin: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag, 1987).} The facade’s three levels are further divided into six vertical sections,\footnote{The term “levels” is used to refer to the monument’s three floors or storeys, and the term “sections” is used to describe the six vertical areas of the facade that are created by the recessed and protruding portions of brick.} defined by alternating recessed and protruding sections of brick.

The second, fourth and sixth vertical sections (Appendix A: Diagram A.1 - S2, S4, and S6) project outward slightly beyond the first, third and fifth sections (S1, S3, and S5), giving the facade additional dimensionality. The second and sixth vertical sections (S2 and S6) are the same width, and each has a door on the first level (S2a and S6a) and a single bay window on the second level (S2b and S6b). The second level windows show Sūrya and
Candra superimposed on the wooden lattice screens that cover the window openings (Figures 2.6 – 2.7). Triple bay windows are located on the third level (S2c and S6c).

The third and fifth vertical sections (Diagram A.1 - S3 and S5) are the same width and contain a door on the first level (S3a and S5a) and a single bay window on the second level (S3b and S5b). Artists carved the lattices on these windows in the form of two stunning peacocks, a trademark motif in Newar architecture (Figures 2.8 - 2.9). The third level of the third and fifth sections (S3c and S5c) has delicately carved single-bay windows with nāgas, symbols of auspiciousness, that intertwine and gently curve around the edge of the window’s circular opening (Figure 2.10 - 2.11).

The center section, which contains Kumārī Bāhā’s main entrance (S4a), is the widest of the vertical areas. A large single window flanked by two smaller windows appears directly above the doorway and has a standard wooden lattice screen over the opening (S4b) (Figure 2.12). A large, five-bay window is situated on the third level. At the monument’s east end, the first vertical section bears noticeably less architectural sculpture and wood carving than the other five sections, although, it appears to be part of the monument’s original construction.

On the north facade, wooden torānas surmount five of Kumārī Bāhā’s six doorways and eight of the nine windows on the second level. The window and door on the first vertical section (S1b and S1c) currently do not have
torānas, and no visible evidence suggests that they existed previously. The only torāṇa on the first section is located on the third level (S1c), above a small, single-bay window. A four-armed image of the goddess Kumārī, seated on her peacock vahāna, appears on the torāṇa and a yantra is superimposed on the lattice screen below (Figure 2.13). All of the torāṇas rest on the door and window lintels and hang at a slight angle by two metal rods, probably to make the torāṇa iconography more visible to the viewer.

Visitors enter Kumārī Bāhā's courtyard through the central door, which is decorated with skull, floral, and geometric motifs (Figure 2.14). The elaborate relief carvings that ornament the door's surface include a series of small teardrop-shaped motifs on the door's upper portion and a more angular, criss-cross pattern on the door's lower portion. These surface carvings give the door a textile-like appearance that is suggestive of the clothing worn by Kumārī (Figures 2.15). A severed-head motif on the interior doorframe parallels Kumārī iconography, since Kumārī, like other Tantric goddesses, is sometimes shown with a garland of severed-heads around her neck (Figure 2.16). Among her abundant jewelry, the Patan Kumārī, for example, wears a silver necklace with a severed-heads design (Figure 2.17). Kumārī Bāhā's intricate woodcarvings suggest the monument's royal patronage, with even

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14 In Nepal, it is common to see eyes, hands, and hand-held attributes, which indicate the deity's presence inside, on temple doors. The presence of a textile-like pattern on Kumārī Bāhā's doorway may serve a similar purpose.
the smallest iconographic features, such as the tiny guardian figures located at the bottom of each doorjamb, carved in significant detail (Figure 2.18).

Courtyard

As one moves through Kumārī Bāhā’s main entrance, the structure’s intimate courtyard and the main (south) shrine wall become visible (Figure 2.19 ~ 2.20). Like the exterior north facade, a variety of window-types and doors adorn Kumārī Bāhā’s courtyard walls, and bands of wood span the walls’ perimeter, demarcating Kumārī Bāhā’s three levels. (See Figures 2.21 ~ 2.27 for overviews of Kumārī Bāhā’s courtyard.) A total of nine doorways are located on the first level, and twenty-four windows adorn the second and third levels.

West, North, and East Courtyard Walls (Figures 2.22, 2.24, 2.26)

As the ground plan shows, Kumārī Bāhā has three proper entrances, one each on the west, north, and east sides, which each lead immediately into a vestibule (Figure 2.28).\(^{15}\) The vestibules are visible from the courtyard and have a wooden post and lintel frame and two carved wooden pillars that flank the entryways. Contributing to Kumārī Bāhā’s symmetrical design, two doorways flank each of the vestibules. The windows on the second and third

\(^{15}\) In many bāhās that have an open courtyard structure, the east and west vestibules are chanting halls, shrines to a deity, or some other public space.
levels of the north, east, and west courtyard walls are also arranged symmetrically. Each wall's second level has a three-bay window at the center, which is flanked by two single-bay windows. Toranas surmount the twelve single-bay windows on the north, east, and west courtyard walls' second level. As seen on the exterior, each courtyard wall's third level has a five-bay window at the center, which is flanked by two single-bay windows.

South Courtyard Wall (Figure 2.20)

Kumārī Bāhā’s main shrine wall is located on the courtyard’s south side. The kvāhpāḥ dyah, that is, the public, exoteric shrine, is located on the first level, directly in the center of the south wall (Figure 2.29). Two doorways flank the kvāhpāḥ dyah, and a large single-bay window is located directly above it on the south wall’s second level. Two additional single windows are placed at either end of the south wall’s second level and, as one might expect, a torana surmounts each of the three windows on the second level. An āgamā, or esoteric, shrine is located on the interior of Kumārī Bāhā’s second level, although it is not visible from the courtyard.

Courtyard Area

Kumārī Bāhā’s courtyard area contains freestanding stone sculptures, including a caitya, a maṇḍala, and a yantra (Figure 2.22). The caitya, which is specifically intended to be a replica of Svayambhū Mahācaitya, is situated
directly across from the \textit{kvāhpāh dyah} (Figure 2.30). The \textit{caitya}’s identity as a “Svayambhū” \textit{caitya} is underscored by its morphology, which follows that of the famous Svayambhū Mahācaitya in Kathmandu (Figure 2.31). Immediately north of the \textit{caitya} is a stone carving of the Dharmadhātu Mandala, which rests on top of a carved stone lotus (Figure 2.32). The remaining item, a stone \textit{yantra}, also rests on a lotus (Figure 2.33). Each courtyard sculpture is surrounded by a wooden railing with rows of butter lamps along the top.

\textit{Kumāri Bāhā as a Newar Buddhist Bāhā}

Scholars consider \textit{bāhās} that have symmetrical, open courtyard ground plans and well-defined iconographic programs to be archetypical of

\textsuperscript{16} For a thorough study of the relationship between Svayambhū Mahācaitya and the \textit{Svayambhū caityas} found in the \textit{bāhās}, see D. Bangdel, \textit{Manifesting the Mandala}.

\textsuperscript{17} The Dharmadhātu Mandala is one of Newar Buddhism’s primary exoteric \textit{mandalas} and is conceived as being one in the same with Svayambhū Mahācaitya. See D. Bangdel, 620.

\textsuperscript{18} The courtyard elements at Kumāri Bāhā also serve as objects of devotion, and it is not uncommon for devotees entering the Bāhā to worship the \textit{caitya} and the \textit{mandala} by touching their foreheads to them. Devotees hoping to take \textit{darśan} (to see and to be seen by the deity) of Kumāri from the courtyard may also place a money offering to her on the \textit{mandala}.

\textsuperscript{19} The establishment of such fences around objects is common throughout South Asia and indicates the importance of the enclosed sculpture.

\textsuperscript{20} There are more than 500 documented \textit{bāhās} in the Kathmandu Valley. These centers of Newar socio-religious activity are found throughout the Valley’s three major cities of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur, and in the smaller towns, such Bungamati, Deopatan, and Kirtipur. The main concentrations of these structures are found in Kathmandu and Patan, the most densely populated urban centers in Nepal. John Locke’s etymological trace of the term \textit{bāhā} indicates its origination in the Sanskrit word \textit{vihāra}, a specific architectural form at Buddhist monasteries in the Indic subcontinent, but also the general name often
Nepal's bāhā architectural tradition. For example, Chusyā Bāhā (Guṇākara Vihāra), a two storey structure in Jyatha Tole, Kathmandu, is often cited as one of the most complete and well-preserved of the Valley's bāhās (Figure 2.34). Kumārī Bāhā most closely resembles the Chusyā Bāhā-type of bāhā. Both Chusyā Bāhā and Kumārī Bāhā have symmetrical ground plans, which are built as open courtyard structures with main entrances on the north side, and two less frequently used entrances on the east and west sides and vestibules just inside the entrances (Figure 2.35). Like Kumārī Bāhā, Chusyā Bāhā's main exterior facade and courtyard walls contain used to refer to a monastic establishment. See Locke, 3-17, for an introduction to the bāhās of the Kathmandu Valley, their saṅgha, and their histories.

21 The open courtyard design is not unique to bāhā architecture, but has been prevalent throughout Nepal and the wider Indic sphere for several thousand years. Archaeological evidence from the Indus Civilization in western India dating to the Harrapan period (ca. 2300 – 1750 B.C.E.) shows the open courtyard design used throughout the excavated city plans, including both ritual spaces and domiciles. Slusser contends that Newar architecture on the whole is founded on the basic plan of the so-called Newar farmhouses, which used the open courtyard design. See Slusser, 130-131.

22 See Locke, 272-274, and van Kooij, "The Iconography of the Buddhist Wood-Carvings in a Newar Buddhist Monastery in Kathmandu (Chuṣya-Bāhā)."

23 A variety of architectural forms and iconographic programs comprise the extant bāhā architecture in Nepal. Some bāhās consist of a single shrine wall that stands in the middle of an open field or a large, seemingly unrelated compound. Ta Bāhā (Bhuvanākara Varma Sanskārīta Dharmakirti Mahāvihāra) in Tanga Tole, Patan, for example, consists of a single building that acts as the bāhā's main shrine and is located at the end of a vast courtyard. It has a single, uncharacteristically large Svayambhū caitya located directly in front of the shrine. Two stone Dharmadhātu Mandalas surmounted on octagonal bases are also situated near the structure, one directly between the shrine and the caitya, and one to the west of the caitya (Locke, 136-137). The courtyard area itself is more well known for the large, three-storey Matsyendranath, or Avalokiteśvara, Temple situated centrally within the slightly irregular, rectangular courtyard. For a discussion of the Matsyendranath Temple and the worship practices associated with this form of Avalokiteśvara, also known as Karunāmaya, see John Locke, Karunamaya: The Cult of Avalokitesvara—Matsyendranath in the Valley of Nepal. (Kathmandu: Sahayogi Prakashan for Research Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University, 1980).
elegantly carved doorframes and windows, and the iconography is expressed primarily on the struts and *toranas* (Figures 2.36). Chusyā Bāhā has two main levels, as is commonly found in *bāhā* architecture. In this way, Kumārī Bāhā, a three-storey monument, differs from Chusyā Bāhā and other similarly constructed *bāhās*. Both of the monuments’ courtyards contain freestanding sculptures, such as *caityas* and stone *mandalas* (Figure 2.37).

“Core Iconographic Elements” of Bāhā Architecture

Kumārī Bāhā and Chusyā Bāhā, like other *bāhās* in the Kathmandu Valley, contain what Dina Bangdel defines as the “core iconographic elements” of *bāhā* architecture, which include the Swayambhū *caitya* in the center of the courtyard, the *kvāhpāḥ dyah*, and the āgam. Their presence at Kumārī Bāhā is the primary reason scholars consider the monument to be part of the *bāhā* architectural tradition.

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24 Kumārī Bāhā’s three-storey construction is not unique to Nepal’s architectural tradition. Monuments such as the Durgā Temple in Bhaktapur also have three levels.

25 The quantity and type of courtyard sculpture varies from one *bāhā* to the next. Uku Bāhā (Śivadevarama Saṃskārita Śrī Rudravarma Unkuli Nāma Mahāvihāra) in Uku Bāhā Tole, Patan, has two European-style lions among its plethora of courtyard sculpture. See Locke, 90, for more information about Uku Bāhā.

26 Locke identified the *kvāhpāḥ dyah*, the āgam, and the Swayambhū *caitya* as critical components that distinguish an establishment as a *bāhā*. See Locke, 8-10. D. Bangdel later recognized them as core iconographic elements and provides a thorough study of them within the larger context of Newar Buddhist art and ritual practices. See D. Bangdel, *Manifesting the Mandala*.
Svayambhū caitya

In most bāhās, as with Kumāri Bāhā, the Svayambhū caitya is situated along a central axis in front of the kvāhpāḥ dyāḥ. An overview of the courtyard at Ha Bāhā, looking toward the west wall, shows the main shrine wall, with the kvāhpāḥ dyāḥ and the Svayambhū caitya across from it (Figure 2.38). Although numerous maṇḍalas and caityas populate the courtyard area, the Svayambhū caitya is here distinguished by the whitewash coverings that were made as offerings by Ha Bāhā’s members. A metal canopy supported by copper repousse nāgas, or auspicious snakes associated with the rains, further differentiates the Svayambhū caitya from the other caityas in the courtyard. The Svayambhū caitya in all bāhās is considered a surrogate for Svayambhū Mahācaitya, which plays a central role in Newar Buddhist rituals and the sacred history of the Kathmandu Valley’s creation.27

According to the Svayambhū Purāṇa, in an earlier era the Nepal Valley was a large lake and, therefore, uninhabitable by humans. The great bodhisattva Maṇjuśrī, moved by his deep compassion for sentient beings, assisted the people of the region by wielding his great sword and splitting Koṭvāl Mountain at the south end of the Valley. The lake waters rushed out of the gorge that was created by the sword’s force, making the Valley

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27 For a discussion of Svayambhū Mahācaitya and its centrality to Newar Buddhist sacred history, see Chapter Three of D. Bangdel’s Manifesting the Maṇḍala.
inhabitable by humans.\textsuperscript{28} A thousand-petal lotus, which had been floating on the lake and emitting self-arisen rays of light, came to rest on Gosingu Parvāt hilltop, the site of Svayambhū Mahācaitya.\textsuperscript{29} As the dark age of the Kāli Yuga emerged, humans were no longer able to see the brilliant rays of light. Through his compassion for sentient beings, Śāntikarācārya, the first Vajrācārya in Nepal, covered the self-arisen rays of light, giving it a material form that was visible to humans and available for their worship.\textsuperscript{30} The small Svayambhū caityas located in typical bāhā courtyards serve not only as reminders of this sacred history, but they are conceived as vivifying the bāhā space and imbuing it with meaning.\textsuperscript{31} The presence of a Svayambhū caitya in Kumāri Bāhā’s courtyard, then, links the monument to the bāhā architectural tradition. Further, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, I suggest that it also helps define Kumāri Bāhā as a microcosm of the Kathmandu Valley.

\textsuperscript{28} According to Bangdel’s translation of the text, the gorge was also cut in three other places: Chobar, Gokarna and Aryaghat. For a detailed retelling of the sacred history, see Bangdel, 414-422.

\textsuperscript{29} Vipaśvi Buddha, in an earlier time, is said to have sown the seed of a lotus in the lake that appeared from Akanīṣṭha Heaven. From this lotus arose the Self-Created light of Śrī Svayambhū Dharmadhātu Jyotirūpa (Bangdel, 414). The Svayambhū Jyotirūpa appears as five rays of colored light corresponding to the five Jina Buddhas. This self-arisen manifestation is considered to be the Sambhogakāya, or Bliss Body, of the Dharmadhātu.

\textsuperscript{30} D. Bangdel provides a thorough discussion of Svayambhū Mahācaitya, its environs, and the creation story of the Valley, showing that they are central to Newar Buddhist mapping of space and territory. See D. Bangdel, Manifesting the Mandala.

\textsuperscript{31} D. Bangdel, 122.
The Kvāhpāh dyah

The kvāhpāh dyah is the second of the three core iconographic elements necessary to designate a structure as a bāhā. In the urban areas, the kvāhpāh dyah shrine is generally located on the first level of the bāhā's south wall, across from the main entrance, as seen at Kumārī Bāhā. The kvāhpāh dyah is publicly accessible and typically houses an image of Śākyamuni or Ākṣobhya Buddha. The kvāhpāh dyah at Kumārī Bāhā, however, differs from other kvāhpāh dyah, since it contains five stone sculptures of the Jina (Victory) Buddhas as the central objects of worship, rather than a single Buddha image (Figure 2.39).

As is commonly seen in bāhā architecture, and at Chusyā Bāhā, for example, a small set of stone stairs in front of the kvāhpāh dyah lead to an elevated walkway that surrounds the courtyard and forms a direct approach to the shrine, designating it as an area of significance. Kumārī Bāhā, in contrast, does not have a set of stairs in front of the kvāhpāh dyah (Figure 2.21).

A wooden torana above the kvāhpāh dyah door marks the entrance to the shrine at a typical bāhā and usually depicts a carved image of the deity

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32 Scholars often refer to this area as the main shrine wall, since it houses both the kvāhpāh dyah and the āgam shrines.

33 Other figures worshiped in the kvāhpāh dyah shrine include forms of Avalokiteśvara and the Buddha Dipānkaara.
inside it.\textsuperscript{34} Chusyā Bāhā, for example, has an image of Śakyamuni Buddha in its kvāhpāh dyah and as the central figure on the toraṇa. The toraṇa on the kvāhpāh dyah at Kumārī Bāhā also indicates the shrine content, since it shows the five Jina Buddhas, which are identifiable by the vāhanas on which they sit (Figure 2.40). The five Buddha figures on the toraṇa, therefore, announce to the visitor that the shrine contains the five stone Buddhas (Figure 2.39).

\textbf{The Āgam}

The āgam, the third principal element necessary to designate a structure as a bāhā, is usually located on the second level of the main shrine wall and initiated members of the saṅgha access it by a small set of stairs that are not visible from the courtyard. At Kumārī Bāhā, the āgam is located on the south wall’s second level, directly above the kvāhpāh dyah. Unlike the publicly accessible kvāhpāh dyah, the āgam is accessible only to members of the bāhā who have taken dikṣā (Tantric initiation).\textsuperscript{35} Bāhā āgams typically

\textsuperscript{34} The toraṇa may have a copper-alloy repousse cover, which are typically given as donor offerings to the bāhā, in much the same way that new metal repousse faces are offered to a deity in the shrine.

\textsuperscript{35} Dikṣā is restricted to individuals who optionally chose to engage the Vajrayāna path. For a discussion of dikṣā, see Gellner, p. 266.
house an image of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī. The āgams at both Chusyā Bāhā and Kumāri Bāhā are dedicated to Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī.

Kumāri Bāhā, then, has all three of the core iconographic elements, a Svayambhū caitya, a kvāhpāḥ dyah, and an āgam, which are characteristic of bāhā architecture. However, as Locke points out, these iconographic elements are not the only aspects that distinguish a monument as a bāhā. According to Locke, “...a bāhā is a Newar Buddhist institution with a consecrated Buddha (kwāpā-dya) shrine and an āgam to which is attached a saṅgha of initiated Bare [Vajrācārya and Śākya caste].” The implication here, and elsewhere in Locke’s work, is that a bāhā is not only an architectural form, which has specific iconographic features. A bāhā is also a community—the saṅgha—that defines itself through its ritual actions within the architectural spaces that function as foci of community activities.

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36 These esoteric heruka deities are important to advanced visualization practices in Vajrayāna Buddhism. Hevajra and Nairātmyā are another common deity pair in āgam shrines.

37 Locke, 6. Elsewhere, Locke includes a caitya as another of a bāhā’s distinguishing elements.
The Function of Bāhās

Bāhās function primarily as community centers of social and religious activity. Members of the saṅgha gather in the large communal spaces\(^{38}\) to participate in community pūjās,\(^{39}\) to discuss business issues pertaining to bāhā activities, and to undertake rites of passage that initiate them into the community, for example. In 1994 at Guji Bāhā (Vaiṣya Śri Divāka Varma [Samskārita] Mahāvihāra) in Calachema Tole, Patan,\(^{40}\) saṅgha members gathered in the Bāhā's courtyard to jointly participate in an Amoghapāśa (Avalokiteśvara) Pūjā\(^{41}\) (Figure 2.41). As a Vajrācārya from Guji Bāhā led the proceedings, using a microphone so that his voice could be heard by the participants who filled the courtyard, saṅgha members actively followed along, making individual offerings in the space in front of them. Such community pūjās are a central part of life in the bāhās, and participation is typically limited to the bāhā's saṅgha.

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\(^{38}\) As I observed, the large, open rooms in bāhās have multiple functions, and can be used, for example, as sleeping quarters for the dyahpāhlāh (god guardian) in charge of the kvāhpāh dyah, as spaces for saṅgha members to play music and make bhajan (song) offerings, and as meeting rooms to discuss business.

\(^{39}\) Saṅgha members can also worship individually in the bāhās, although I suggest that bāhā establishments, in general, function foremost as community centers.

\(^{40}\) For more information about Guji Bāhā, see Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 121-124.

\(^{41}\) For a description of the Amoghapāśa Pūja, also known as the Saṅgha Mandala, at Jana Bāhā, see John Locke, Karunamaya: The Cult of Avalokiteśvara—Matsyendranath In the Valley of Nepal (Kathmandu: Sahayogi Prakashan and the Research Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies at Tribhuvan University, 1980), 196-202.
Business meetings are also an essential part of life in the bāhās. For example, in 1996, negotiations for a large Kumārī Pūjā were conducted in a room on the north side of Ha Bāhā (Figure 2.42). Issues relating to the offerer's intention, the cost of the ritual offerings, and the time and place were discussed by several Vajrācāyas and the offerers, who sat around a large table. More casual, follow-up meetings for this pūjā were held in the vestibule inside Ha Bāhā's main entrance, where the participants could sit on the resting benches. Although the pūjā, which was conducted in another large space on the Bāhā's interior north side on the second level, was not open to the entire bāhā sangha, a number of sangha members participated in setting up the ritual space, cooking and eating the food, and singing songs after the pūjā was finished.

The Chuda Karma ceremony is an example of a rite of passage ceremony that marks an individual's official entry into the sangha, the bāhā community. In Kva Bāhā, for example, young males are the central participants in a several day ritual, which includes taking temporary monastic vows. These vows represent the child's acceptance into the sangha, as well as their commitment to the bāhā with which they are affiliated.42

In addition to the core iconographic elements and the associated sangha, lineage deities also play a key role in defining a bāhā establishment,

and its community in particular. According to John Locke, lineage deities are one way to trace the migration of peoples and their affiliations with particular bāhās. As extended families expand and people move from place to place, it is the lineage deity that remains constant in the family. A lineage deity connects and unites a saṅgha, even at the level of identity. A lineage deity is identified by place, as well as by name. For example, the lineage deity of Gum Bāhā in Sanku, Wam Bāhā in Patan, and Nhū Bāhā in Kathmandu is referred to as “Vajrayogini at Sanku.” The shared deity and strong geographic affiliations, then, tie a bāhā and its branch bāhās to specific locations in the Valley, even when the establishment expands or moves to another location. The lineage deities not only bond the communities, on one level they also define them. Thus, a study of lineage deity worship shows that a bāhā and its community are not arbitrarily defined and redefined by the movement of people in and out of neighborhoods. Rather, they are defined by familial ties and deep connections to place.

Bāhās, then, are not simply physical spaces that act as empty containers for unrelated activities, as would be the case in a modern rental

43 Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 516-517.

44 In some cases, when the lineage deity is too far away or it becomes too inconvenient to visit the original site, the deity will be ‘brought’ to a new location, usually by invoking the deity into a vessel of water at the home site and transporting it to the new location and investing a surrogate image or caitya with the essence of the deity.
hall in the United States. They function as centers for the community where sangha members gather to make daily offerings to deities, discuss political and social events, and participate in annual festival activities. The iconography present at a site creates and vivifies the space, in part defining the actions and rituals undertaken by the community. A bāhā is not just a monument. It includes the building or group of buildings, the deities that are propitiated within them, and the sangha and their ritual practices that are central to traditional Newar Buddhist daily life.

Kumārī Bāhā contains the core iconographic elements of a bāhā and, as a result, many of the rituals that are associated with the iconographic elements are conducted at the site. For example, the Rāj Guru, a position held by the senior Vajrācarya from Sikhamu Bāhā,\(^{46}\) conducts the mandatory daily pūjāś in Kumārī Bāhā’s kvāhpāḥ dyah and āgam shrines and performs a short daily pūjā to Kumārī.\(^{46}\)

\(^{46}\) Kumārī Bāhā has close affiliations with Sikhamu Bāhā next door; however, it is not a proper branch of it.

\(^{46}\) In this context, Kumārī is worshiped as the Tantric Buddhist goddess Vajradevi, a form of Vajrāvārāhi (Locke, 267). The Rāj Guru holds the right to worship Kumārī, not because of his affiliation with Sikhamu Bāhā and its relationship to Kumārī Bāhā, but because of his status as the Rāj Guru. During the reign of the Malla kings, the Rāj Guru held significant authority over the social, religious, and political activities in the Kathmandu Palace and the Newar bāhā communities. However, non-Newar Shah kings curtailed the Rāj Guru’s responsibilities during their several hundred-year reign. Today, the Rāj Guru’s role is limited, and his propitiation of Kumārī is continued more out of tradition and propriety than as an essential act on behalf of the kingdom. For a history of the Raj Guru’s position and his evolving role in Kathmandu’s social and political life, see Locke, 267.
However, in contrast to other bāhās, Kumārī Bāhā has no saṅgha or lineage deity of its own and, therefore, does not function as a proper bāhā. In other words, Kumārī Bāhā is not the center, or foci of socio-religious activity and does not link a community. Kumārī Bāhā’s lack of saṅgha is reflected in the public shrine and courtyard area, two places where saṅgha activity is usually evident. As indicated by inscriptional evidence on the objects, many courtyard sculptures and the elaborate jewelry and clothing placed on the kvāhpāḥ dyah image are given as offerings by the bāhā saṅgha. Kumārī Bāhā’s kvāhpāḥ dyah interior and courtyard area are austere and appear almost unused when compared with, for example, that of Uku Bāhā. The stone sculptures in Kumārī Bāhā’s kvāhpāḥ dyah are nearly bare, with only a token piece of white cloth tied around Vairocana Buddha’s neck (Figure 2.39). In contrast, the main Buddha image in the kvāhpāḥ dyah at Uku Bāhā is covered with regalia, including elegant silks and gold and silver jewelry (Figure 2.43). Similarly, while Kumārī Bāhā’s courtyard contains only the mandatory Svayambhū caitya, a stone mandala and yantra, an abundance of sculpture fills Uku Bāhā’s courtyard (Figure 2.44).

The location of the steps in Kumārī Bāhā’s courtyard also suggests that the monument is not used in the same manner as other bāhās (Figure 2.28). Nearly every bāhā in the Kathmandu Valley has a set of steps in front of the kvāhpāḥ dyah, often flanked by stone lions, since the community focuses the majority of their daily worship practices in this public shrine.
Kumāri Bāhā, in contrast, does not have a set of stairs in front of the kvāhpāḥ dyaḥ. Instead, steps are located in the southeast corner of the courtyard in front of the door that leads to Kumāri's shrine, on the north side of the courtyard by the main entrance, and on the west side where the priest from Sikhamu Bāhā enters the monument to conduct his daily pūjās.

Further, the activities that take place in the bāhās during the Buddhist festival month of Gunla—the most important month in the Newar Buddhist calendars, such as the Pañcadāna Festival, are not held at Kumāri Bāhā. Therefore, although Kumāri Bāhā contains the iconographic elements necessary for defining it architecturally as a bāhā, it lacks a saṅgha and lineage deity and, therefore, does not function as one. Instead, Kumāri Bāhā's function more closely resembles that of a dyochem, a home or residence for a deity.

*The Function of Dyochems*

It is commonly know that, unlike a mandir (temple), a dyochem\(^{47}\) is built as a secondary home for a deity that is self-manifest\(^{48}\) (svayambhū) at another location. In other words, a dyochem houses a pīṭha devatā that is

\(^{47}\) For a discussion of pīṭha devatās and their chems, see, for example, Vergati, *Gods, Men, and Territory* and Levy, *Mesoccsm*, 483.

\(^{48}\) Self-manifested deities typically occur in natural forms, such as rock outcroppings and fresh water springs. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, the locations of pīṭha devatās in Nepal have received a great deal of attention in scholarly literature, particularly the mātrikā, or mother goddess, pīthas, which are central to the mapping of Nepal's sacred landscape.
“brought” from the powerful locations of their self-manifestation. The Kumāri Temple at Kvā Che, for example, is a dyochem of the pitha devatā in the nearby wooded area. At some point, the pitha devatā was “brought” from the site of her self-manifestation and installed inside the chem. Since pitha devatās are typically located on the outer edges of a city, dyochems allow pitha devatās to be brought into the inhabited areas and, therefore, physically closer to devotees who wish to propitiate them. By bringing a pitha devatā within the city’s perimeter, I suggest that the power inherent in the pitha is also harnessed and brought into the city’s boundaries.

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49 Keith Dowman, David Gellner, and other scholars have translated the term pitha as “power place.” This translation does not reflect the literal meaning of the Sanskrit word pitha, which simply means “seat.” In art, the term pitha is used to describe the platform on which images are placed, and in the Buddhist context, it is associated with the seat of kuśa grass that the Buddha Śākyamuni used as a cushion for his meditation. Within the Nepali context the term pitha is most commonly heard in reference to the locations where deities manifest themselves. The translation “power place” is helpful in this context, insofar as it communicates the quality or basic character of such locations. My research suggests that devotees consider most pithas, particularly the sakti pithas that are used in a Tantric context, to be particularly powerful because the deity at the site is self-arisen, manifest of its own volition. See Keith Dowman, Power places of Kathmandu: Hindu and Buddhist Holy Sites in the Sacred Valley of Nepal (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions International, 1995).


51 Although a pithadevata is “brought” from another location, the deity continues to reside at the pitha. In addition, referring to a dyochem as a ‘surrogate’ may be misleading, insofar as it implies that the deity invoked into the image at the dyochem is somehow less powerful than the self-arisen deity. As with many situations in Nepal, there is a sense that the invoked deity is equally as powerful, yet not as ‘core,’ as the pitha devata. The deity in the dyochem derives its power from the pitha. Therefore, it is considered equally efficacious for a person to worship at the dyochem as to worship at the pitha. Nevertheless, the pitha is particularly significant given the deity’s self-arisen presence. Interview with Dr. Dina Bangdel.
Devotees commonly refer to the various Kumāri residences and shrines, which serve as homes or places of worship for the human forms of the goddess Kumāri, including Kumāri Bāhā, as dyochems. However, I have not been able to confirm any pitha devatās that correspond to the human forms of the goddess Kumāri, and Michael Allen makes no mention of this phenomenon in his work. Kumāri’s identification with various goddesses in the Kathmandu Valley provides one explanation for why the Kumāri residences and shrines are often called chems. As a form manifestation of goddesses such as Durgā and Vajravārāhi, the human forms of the goddess Kumāri are like the images in dyochems, with the young girls serving as the vessels into which these great goddesses manifest. The various Kumāri

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52 A pitha devatā in Kathmandu just off the Darbar Square is inscribed as the goddess Kumāri, although it is unclear whether this form of Kumāri has any direct relationship to the human forms of Kumāri in Kathmandu. This goddess may, in fact, be Kaumāri, one of the Astamātrka (eight little mothers), since the name Kaumāri is often spelled “Kumāri,” with the “u” omitted.

53 Throughout this work, I will use variations on the expression “identified with” to suggest the identity of a goddess as she exists in relationship to other goddesses. To simply say, for example, that Kumāri is Durgā does little to express the goddess Kumāri’s independent identity and implies that her existence is, in all contexts, directly dependent on her relationship to the goddess Durgā. Although it is true that a devotee may say that he/she is worshipping Kumāri as Durgā during the festival of Dasain, the absolute equating of the two implies a monothematic evolution of the goddess Kumāri and her worship practices—one that requires the presence of Durgā. It is often the case that a goddess, who is worshiped independently within a local tradition, only later becomes associated with or worshiped as a different, more popular pan-Asian goddess. To state in a blanket manner that the local goddess is the more pan-Asian goddess produces a minimalist reading and does not allow for the multiple streams of devotional practices that evolve around the goddess tradition. Therefore, the term “identified with” will be used to imply the somewhat complex, though emically appropriate, absolute equating of two goddesses and the simultaneous acknowledgement of their individual identities.

54 See Chapter 4 of this study for a discussion of the goddesses with whom Kumāri is equated.

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chems, including Kumārī Bāhā, then, can be conceived as houses for goddesses, and the power associated with them, that have been brought to specific locations.55

In contrast to bāhās, which function as centers or foci of localized community activity, dyochems function first and foremost as residences for deities. Dyochems serve the devout, only insofar as they are spaces where devotees can worship deities. However, they are not "community centers" in the same way as bāhās. Dyochem do not have a saṅgha, a community that behaves almost as an extended family and that focuses its social, religious, and political activities around the monument. Instead, worshipers in a dyochem can come from a variety of communities and do not have to be ethnically Newar. For example, a woman from a Newar family might worship Kumārī for relief from bleeding ailments or help with conception and childbirth, while a non-Newar politician might worship the goddess for success in political career.56 Further, a dyochem could house a deity that is worshiped as a lineage deity by a group of people. However, the more prominent sakti pītha devatās that are brought to chems, such as the eight famous goddess pīthas surrounding Bhaktapur,57 are worshiped by a much wider community and are important to the city as a whole. Kumārī Bāhā,

55 For a more detailed discussion of Kumārī Bāhā as a chem in this sense of the word, see Chapter 6 of this study.
57 For a discussion of the eight goddess pīthas around Bhaktapur, see Chapter 4.
then, which is a primary residence for the goddess Kumāri, and which does not have a saṅgha or a lineage deity, functions more like a dyochem than a bāhā.

The fact that Kumāri Bāhā is constructed as bāhā, yet functions more as a dyochem, is unique when compared with other Kumāri chems. Most Kumāri chem are no more than a single room in a bāhā or family home. Because the majority of Kumāri chems are modest in scale, most Kumāris live at their family residences, rather than residing full-time in their chems, and are only brought to the chem when devotees come to worship and for special events.\(^58\) The Kathmandu Kumāri and her entire family, on the other hand, take up residence in Kumāri Bāhā, a complete bāhā-style structure, for her tenure as the goddess.\(^59\)

The following section introduces the other extant Kumāri chems and religious practices associated with the most visible of the Kumāris—the Kvā Bāhā Kumāri, the Patan Kumāri, and the Bhaktapur Kumāri. The Kvā Bāhā Kumāri’s chem at Tham Bahi in Kathmandu is, by far, the most elaborate of the Kumāri chem, next to Kumāri Bāha, and, therefore, it is discussed here for comparative purposes. The Patan and Bhaktapur Kumāris’ chems, and some of the religious practices associated with Patan

\(^{58}\) As noted earlier, Allen indicates that the Mu Bāhā Kumāri once resided in the Bāhā, although Newars no longer continue that tradition.

\(^{59}\) Allen (1987), 25.
and Bhaktapur Kumāris, are also discussed. They, like the Kathmandu Kumāri, had comparable royal status in their respective cities during the Three Kingdom Malla Period when Kumāri Bāhā was built.

The Kvā Bāhā Kumāri’s Chem at Tham Bahi

The Kumāri Chem in the Thamel area of Kathmandu City is a substantial four-storey structure of the “pagoda” style situated in a large open courtyard adjacent to Tham Bahī (Vikramśila Mahāvihara) (Figure 2.45). The Kumāri Chem, which is considered an āgam of Tham Bahi, appears to be of some antiquity, and may date from the early eleventh century, the date given to the construction of Tham Bahī. Unfortunately, the chem has deteriorated significantly, making a thorough iconographic reading of the structure difficult. Unlike Kumāri Bāhā, which bears the majority of its iconographic program on the toranas, the iconography at the Tham Bahī Kumāri Chem is displayed primarily on the struts located under each roof. Unfortunately, the strut figures are badly worn.

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60 The Kvā Bāhā Kumāri in Kathmandu, who is worshiped in the chem at Tham Bahi, is the only Kumāri who, today, has a significant ongoing responsibility, besides the Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur Kumāris. The Kvā Bāhā Kumāri is worshiped in her chem during the two solstices, Disī Pājā, Dasain, and Gai Jātṛā. See Allen (1975), 39. Musicians, family members, and a Vajrācāra from Kvā Bāhā accompany her to the shrine. Aside from these installations in her chem, she spends the remainder of her time in her family home and takes on some of the Mu Bāhā Kumāri’s responsibilities, since one is no longer in office. See Allen (1975), 40.

61 Tham Bahī is also known as Bhagawān Bāhā and Dharmadhātu Mahāvihara. For a discussion of Tham Bahī and its Kumāri Chem, see Locke, 404-413.
The struts\textsuperscript{62} depict 4-armed krodha figures, who hold kapālas (skull-cups) and kaṭṭkas (flaying knives) in their primary hands and damarus (two-sided drums) and khaṭvāṅgas (spears with a freshly severed head, a shriveled head, and a skull) in their second hands (Figure 2.46 – 2.49). These attributes are commonly held by dākinīs (sky-goers), female figures commonly found in Tantric Buddhism, and it would not be out of the ordinary to find dākinīs on the exterior of a Kumāri chem, since Kumāri is regularly worshiped as the Tantric dākini Vajrayogini. However, it is difficult to confirm that the strut figures are female, making the deities’ exact identification difficult to determine. Further, the strut figures do not have distinctive vāhanas that help to identify them. Instead, they stand on top of a composite animal that appears to be part bird and part elephant.

Below the composite animals are four relief panels that seem to depict mithunas, or loving couples, at various stages in their lives. In the panel below the first strut figure from the proper left, the couples are actively engaged in a sexual act (Figure 2.50). On the second panel, they are shown fully clothed and holding hands (Figure 2.51). The third panel from the left depicts a more mature, mustached and turbaned male figure, who appears to be clutching a mature female figure by the waist, as if to pull her back to him

\textsuperscript{62} The first strut from the proper left appears to be a later addition (Figure 2.46). Aside from its superior condition, it is also carved in a slightly different manner. The open area behind the heads of the second, third, and fourth strut figures is not present in the first strut. The composite animal on the first strut is also slightly different from the other composite animals, having more of an elephant head than the others.
(Figure 2.52). The fourth and final panel shows a bearded male ascetic turning away from a woman who holds her head in her hands, as if in despair (Figure 2.53). These small panels may be intended to show passion and desire as it manifests in the male and female relationship—an archetypal subject in Tantric Buddhism—from the early stages to the latter years, when a man leaves his family life to become a wandering ascetic.

The Chem’s remaining iconography is now lost, or badly damaged and difficult to read. Only the shrine doorjambs motifs are legible, showing a kailaśa, or vase, a decorative motif, and a mirror, on both sides of the entryway (Figures 2.54 - 2.55). Despite the Tham Bahi Kumārī Chem’s state of disrepair, the structure’s ample size and refined woodcarving indicate that it had significant, perhaps even royal, patronage. According to Tibetan historical accounts, the great Indian teacher Atiśa (Dīpankara Śrījñana) stayed in Nepal in C.E. 1041, while enroute to Tibet to teach the Dharma and, thereby, beginning the second propagation of Buddhism in Tibet. While in Nepal, Atiśa convince King Anatakirti to build a monastery that would be called Tham Vihāra.⁶³ Whether the Kumārī Chem at Tham Bahi was also built with support from the royal family is unclear, although the Kumārī

⁶³ Alaka Chattopadhyaya, Atiśa and Tibet: The Life and Works of Dīpankara Śrījñana in Relation to the History and Religion of Tibet), Lama Chimpa, trans. of Tibetan sources (Calcutta: Indian Studies: Past and Present, 1967), 322. The Blue Annals also indicate that Atiśa visited Nepal and built Tham Bahi. See George N. Roerich, ed. The Blue Annals. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), 247. I was unable to confirm the identify of King Anatakirti in the vamsāvalis.
Chem’s apparent antiquity and, as will be discussed, Kumāri’s role as a protectress of the state, make royal patronage of the Chem plausible. In any case, it is clear that the Kumāri Chem at Tham Bāhī received substantial, if not royal, funding for its construction. However, its design and iconography do not resemble that of Kumāri Bāhā, whose construction was also substantially funded. As will be shown in Chapter 3, Kumāri Bāhā’s design and iconographic program is well-developed, but bears no similarities to the Kumāri Chem at Tham Bāhī, an earlier monument dedicated to the goddess Kumāri, suggests that the creators of Kumāri Bāhā planned its construction with other guidelines in mind and without consideration of the Tham Bāhī Kumāri Chem’s iconography. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, this study suggests that political motives, rather than the iconography of other Kumāri chem architecture, played a significant role in the design and construction of Kumāri Bāhā.

Patan Kumāri Chem

The Patan Kumāri’s Chem is located in Ha Bāhā in a small courtyard behind the main structure, which is accessed through a doorway that is surmounted by a torana, on the east end of Ha Bāhā’s south wall (Figure 2.56). A large, well-carved torana depicting a four-armed image of Kumāri, flanked by Gaṇeśa on her right and Bhairava on her left, surmounts the doorway (Figure 2.57). Kumāri stands in bent leg posture and holds a kapāla
in her primary right hand and makes the *tarjanimūdrā* with her left hand. Her second right hand holds a bundle of peacock feathers. The attribute in her left hand is broken off, but was probably a *khāṭrka*, the attribute that is typically paired with the *kapāla*. She stands atop of a large peacock *vāhana*, which looks back up toward the goddess as if in devotion. Gaṇeśa is identified by his elephant head and by the rat *vāhana* on which he stands. He also holds a radish and sweets (Figure 2.58). Bhairava stands on top of a human figure, with a sword and shield in his raised hands and a *kapāla* and *khāṭrka* in his primary hands (Figure 2.59).

Just as the *torānas* over shrine entrances typically depict the deity that is inside the shrine, this *torāna* communicates that the goddess Kumārī is accessible beyond the doorway. The Kumārī Chem is situated in a small, intimate courtyard, which contains several small sculpture shrines, behind the main bāhā structure (Figure 2.60). A steep flight of stairs on the courtyard’s northeast corner leads to a pair of worn wooden doors that open to the goddess’ shrine (Figure 2.61). Three small attributes are carved at eye level into a piece of wood at the base of the stairs (Figure 2.62). The center attribute is a bundle of peacock feathers, which is flanked by a radish on the proper right, and a skull-cup and flaying knife on the proper left. The peacock feathers symbolize the goddess Kumārī, and the radish and skull-cup/flaying knife combination represent Gaṇeśa and Bhairava, respectively.
In a Kumārī Pūjā conducted in 1996 with the Patan Kumārī at Ha Bāhā, this iconography was partially present in the ritual context, showing how closely a monument’s iconography can be linked to the ritual activities that take place within it. Vajrācāryas from Ha Bāhā enthroned Kumārī in all of her regalia and situated her opposite the Vajrācārya and jājman (offerer). Individuals preparing for the pūjā leaned a large radish in an upright position against the goddess’ throne (Figure 2.63). Devotees propitiate the radish, which they consider to be the god Ganeśa, as they would a deity. Similarly, the peacock feathers, radish, and skull-cup/flaying knife carvings in Ha Bāhā’s back courtyard at the base of the stairs leading to the Patan Kumārī’s chem are propitiated as the deities by devotees who place kum kum powder on them when they pass through Ha Bāhā’s back courtyard.

The Kumārī Chem at Ha Bāhā is in a somewhat dilapidated state, and daily worship of the Patan Kumārī\textsuperscript{64} takes place in a room that has been designated as a shrine in her family home, just across the street from Ha Bāhā.\textsuperscript{65} An image of Kumārī in her 4-armed, red form marks the entrance to the shrine room in the family home and bears the same iconography as the

\textsuperscript{64} This Patan Kumārī is the granddaughter of one of the thakālis, or senior Varjācāryas, at Ha Bāhā, and his wife, Kumārī’s grandmother, was once a Kumārī.

\textsuperscript{65} In 1996, saṅgha members at Ha Bāhā indicated their intention to renovate the Kumārī Chem at Ha Bāhā and to reinstate her worship in this more public location.
Kumāri image on the torana over the doorway at Ha Bāhā (Figure 2.64). The home shrine is a simple, but spacious room, and Kumāri’s seat is located on the west wall, facing east, near the window (Figure 2.65). Devotees are permitted to worship the goddess in this shrine and nitya (daily) pūjā to the goddess is conducted by her grandfather. For this informal morning ritual, Kumāri is typically dressed in a simple red cotton dress. As always, her hair is tied in a topknot, secured with a red ribbon, her forehead is painted red, and her eyes are lined with kohl. For more formal occasions, such as the Pañcadān (five offerings) Festival in 1994, her forehead is painted neatly with red and outlined with yellow.66 A third eye made of silver and what appears to be black enamel is placed in the vertical position on her forehead (Figure 2.66). Occasionally, the goddess is brought to her chem for special ritual offerings.

For larger, public festivals at Ha Bāhā, Vajrācāryas place Kumāri’s throne on a stone platform just to the proper left of the kvāhpāh dyah shrine67 (Figure 2.67). The goddess is carried, usually by her father, from her family home, and enshrined on the platform for public worship (Figure 2.68). Worship of Kumāri functions on multiple levels. At festivals, for example,

66 As will be discussed in Chapter 3, I suggest that the colors red and yellow indicates the goddess’ identification with the Tantric goddess Vajravārāhi/Vajrayogini, who is of red color, and Vāṣundharā, the goddess of abundance, who is the color yellow.

67 Just as found on Kumāri Bāhā’s exterior east window on the north side, the enthroned goddess is seated directly above a yantra, which is carved on the front of the platform.
the average devotee worships her simply as Kumāri. Those initiated into esoteric practices, however, may consider her also to be a human manifestation of Vajrayoginī. Newar Buddhists accept the validity of these differing perspectives and consider them to be “truths” at different levels of knowledge. The Patan Kumāri, like the Kathmandu Kumāri, has significant responsibilities throughout the year, and she is expected to attend numerous festivals and be available regularly for individual worship. As with the Kathmandu Kumāri, the vaṁśāvalī indicates that a Malla king, in this case Lakṣmīkamadeva, established the worship of the Patan Kumāri. The Patan Kumāri’s modest chem, however, has none of Kumāri Bāhā’s grandeur,\(^{68}\) suggesting, again, that Kumāri Bāhā is unique amongst the Kumāri chem.

**Bhaktapur Kumāri Chem**

The third so-called royal Kumāri Chem is a large, but unornamented, building at the site of Dipankara Bāhā in Bhaktapur. A family with hereditary rights to tend to the Bhaktapur Kumāris occupies the building, which contains two rooms that are dedicated āgam shrines for the Ekanta and Wala Lakhu Kumāris. The Ekanta Kumāri also has two thrones, one

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\(^{68}\) A different chem for the Patan Kumāri may have once been located near the complex of the palace in Patan. When the palace was renovated to include Sundhari Chok, Ha Bāhā, which was previously on the land that Sundari Chok now occupies, was moved to its present location (Wright, 159). Whether the current Kumāri Chem is identical to one that may have existed in the original Ha Bāhā is unknown.
downstairs and the other outside her āgam.\textsuperscript{69} Although no iconography on
this building indicates that Kumārī's chem is inside, a mirror and vase, the
attributes held by Kumārī's attendant figures, are affixed to Dipaṅkara
Bāhā's main exterior facade on the second level (Figure 2.69). The Ekanta
(Bhaktapur) Kumārī resides in her family home and is available for worship.
The Bhaktapur Palace has a chok dedicated to the goddess Kumārī, which his
adjacent to the Taleju Temple, although Kumārī is not regularly worshiped in
it\textsuperscript{70} (Figure 2.70).

\textit{Summary of Kumārī Chem Architecture}

Although the extant Kumārī chems are associated with or contained
within a bāhā, only Kumārī Bāhā in Kathmandu has the three core
iconographic elements, the kvāhpāḥ dyah, the āgam and the Svayambhū
caitya, which identify a monument as a bāhā. The Kumārī chem, whether a
single room or a temple structure may, however, be referred to as an āgam
shrine. In the bāhā context, this would simply mean an esoteric or Tantric
shrine. Any given Kumārī chem may not be considered the 'official' āgam
shrine of a bāhā, though reference to a Kumārī shrine as Tantric isn't
surprising as she is, as we have seen from the small amount of iconography
seen thus far, in most contexts considered to be a Tantric goddess. The chem

\textsuperscript{69} Allen (1975), 32.

\textsuperscript{70} I was unable to enter the Bhaktapur Palace courtyards and, therefore, cannot confirm
what iconographic program, if any, is present in Kumārī chok.
do not function as community centers, as do the bāhās, but solely as places where a deity is worshiped. Therefore, the Kumārī chems, including Kumārī Bāhā, are rightly considered dyochems.
Figure 2.1 Ground Plan of the Kathmandu Darbar Square. Kumārī Bāhā is located in position 13 and Sikamū Bāhā is adjacent to it in position 12. From Slusser, Nepal Mandala. Figure 1.
Figure 2.2. Main (north) exterior facade of Kumari Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.3. Three *gajüras* located on the rooftop of Kumāri Bāhā's north side, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.4. Exterior east facade of Kumāri Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.5. Area to the northwest of Kumārī Bāhā where the festival carts are stored. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.6. Surya window on Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior north facade in position S2b on Diagram A.1 (Appendix A). Kathmandu, 1994.

Figure 2.7. Candra window on Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior north facade in position S6b on Diagram A.1 (Appendix A). Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.8. Peacock window on Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior north facade in position S3b on Diagram A.1 (Appendix A). Kathmandu, 1994.

Figure 2.9. Peacock window on Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior north facade in position S5b on Diagram A.1 (Appendix A). Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.10. Round window with nāgas on Kumārī Bāhā's exterior north facade in position S2c on Diagram A.1 (Appendix A). Kathmandu, 1994.

Figure 2.11. Round window with nāgas on Kumārī Bāhā's exterior north facade in position S6c on Diagram A.1 (Appendix A). Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.12. Window, showing Durga and other deities, located on Kumāri Bāhā’s exterior north facade in position S3b on Diagram A. 1 (Appendix A). Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.13. Window showing Kumārī and yantra on Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior north facade in position S1c on Diagram A.1 (Appendix A). Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.14. Main entrance to Kumārī Bāhā’s courtyard in position S4a on Diagram A.1 (Appendix A). Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.15. Finely carved wooden door on the main entrance at Kumārī Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.16. Severed heads carved on the interior doorjambs of Kumārī Bāhā's main entrance, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.17. Potan Kumāri wearing a silver necklace with the severed-head motif.
Figure 2.18. Guardian figures at the base of the door jambs on Kumārī Bāhā’s main entrance, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.19. View looking into the entrance, through the main vestibule, at Kumāri Bāhā's main courtyard, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.20. Kumāri Bahā’s south courtyard wall, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.22. Kumārī Bāhā's west courtyard wall, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.24. Kumāri Bāhā's north courtyard wall, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.25. Kumari Baha's northeast corner of the courtyard, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.26. Kumārī Bahā's east courtyard wall, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure. 2.28. Ground plan of Kumārī Bāhā, Kathmandu. © John C. Huntington, with Janice M. Glowski, 2002.
Figure 2.30. Svayambhū caitya located directly in line with the *kvāḥpāḥ dyah* in the courtyard at Kumāri Bahā, Kathmandu. The upper portion of the *caitya* is morphologically the same as the Svayambhū Mahācaitya seen below, 1994.

Figure 2.31. Svayambhū Mahācaitya, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.32. Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala located immediately north of the caitya in the courtyard at Kumāri Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.33. *Yantra* located to the southwest of the *caitya* in the courtyard at Kumāri Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.34. Exterior north facade and main entrance of Chugya Bābā, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.35. Ground plan of Chusya Bāhā, Kathamandu. From Slusser, Nepal Mandala. Figure 10. [An entrance to the bāhā is also located on the west side of the monument, although it is not shown in this groundplan.]
Figure 2.36. Prajñāpāramitā torana from Chhusya Bāhā, Kathmandu. This now re-
moved torana once surmounted the monument's entrance, 1970.
Figure 2.37. Caiityas and other sculpture in the courtyard at Chusya Bāha, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.38. Courtyard and south wall of Ha Bāhā, Patan, 1994.
Figure 2.39. Five stone Jina Buddha figures located in the kvāhpaiḥ dyah at Kumāri Bāhā, Kathmandu. Aksobhya (bottom), Ratnasambhava (left - not shown here), Amitābha (top), Amoghasiddhi (right) Vairocana (center), 1994.
Figure 2.40. *Torana* over the *kvāhpāḥ dyāḥ* shrine at Kumārī Bāhā, Kathmandu. The *torana* depicts the Guhyasamāja Jina Buddhas, 1994.
Figure 2.42. The east corner of the north courtyard wall contains a large open room where the Kumāri Pūja business meeting with the Vajrācāryas took place. Ha Bāhā, Patan, 1996.
Figure 2.43. Main Buddha image, adorned with extensive regalia, in the kvāhpāḥ dyāḥ at Uku Bāhā, Patan, 1994.
Figure 2.44. Abundant sculpture fills Uku Bahá’s main courtyard, Patan, 1994.
Figure 2.45. Kumārī Chem, Kathmandu, 1994. The Chem is situated to the southwest of Tham Bahî in an adjacent courtyard.
Figure 2.46. Strut figure shown standing in relaxed posture. The strut is the first from the right on the second level of Kumārī Chêm, Tham Bahī, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.47. Strut figure shown standing in relaxed posture. The strut is the second from the right on the second level of Kumāri Chêm, Tham Bahi, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.48. Strut figure shown standing in relaxed posture. The strut is the third from the right on the second level of Kumāri Chem, Tham Bahi, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.49. Strut figure shown standing in relaxed posture. The strut is the fourth from the right on the second level of Kumāri Chem, Tham Bahi, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.50. Relief panel below strut figure, first from the right on the second level of Kumārī Chem, Tham Bahi, Kathmandu, 1994.

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Figure 2.51. Relief panel below strut figure, second from the right on the second level of Kumāri Chem, Tham Bahi, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.52. Relief panel below strut figure, third from the right on the second level of Kumāri Chēm, Thām Bahī, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.53. Aged couple shown in the latter stages of their life, as the husband is leaving the grieving wife to seek an ascetic's life. The scene is located on the lower panel of the fourth strut from the right on the second level of Kumārī Chem, Tham Bahi. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.54. Mirror motif on the jamb of the shrine entrance to Kumārī Chêm, Tham Bahí, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 2.55. Two *kalaśas* flanking the shrine entrance to Kumāri Chom, Tham Bahi, Kathmandu, 1994. The *kalaśas* are located at the base of the inner-most door jambs.
Figure 2.65. Kumari torana. The torana is located over the east doorway on the south wall of Ha Bahal, Patan, 1994. The doorway leads to a back courtyard and the Kumari Cham.
Figure 2.57. Kumārī, the central figure on the torana over the east doorway on the south wall of Ha Bāhā, Patan, 1994.
Figure 2.58. Gaṇeśa, the proper left figure on the torana over the east doorway on the south wall of Ha Bāhā, Patan, 1994.
Figure 2.59. Bhairava, the proper right figure on the torana over the east doorway on the south wall of Ha Bähā, Patan, 1994.
Figure 2.60. Back (southeast) courtyard of Ha Bāhā, Patan, 1994.
Figure 2.61. Stairs leading up to the Kumārī Chem located in the back (southeast) courtyard of Ha Bāhā, Patan, 1994.
Figure 2.62. Deities represented as attributes at the base of the stairs leading up to Kumārī Chem located in the back (southeast) courtyard of Ha Bāhā, Patan. From left to right they are a skull cup and flaying knife (Bhairava), peacock features (Kumārī), and a radish (Ganeśa), 1994.
Figure 2.63. Kumārī Pūjā, Ha Bāhā, Patan, 1996. The radish being set in place by the priest is considered to be the god Gānēśa.
Figure 2.64. Modern painting of the red, four-armed form of Kumāri located outside of her shrine room in her family's house across the street from Ha Bāhā, Patan. The iconography seen in the painting is identical to the iconography on the Ha Bāhā Kumāri torana, 1996.
Figure 2.65. Kumāri in worship for the modest nitya (daily) pūjā in the shrine room in her family’s house across the street from Ha Bāhā, Patan, 1996.
Figure 2.66. Kumārī being prepared by her grandmother for the Pañcadāna Festival. After she is dressed, the third eye is placed on her painted forehead. Patan, 1994.
Figure 2.68. A devotee stops in the street to touch his forehead to the goddess' feet as she is being carried from her home to Ha Bāhā, Patan, during the Pañcadāna Festival, 1994.
Figure 2.69. Mirror and vase located on the exterior second level of the Dipanțkara Bāhā, Bhaktapur, 1994.
2.70. Ground plan of the Malla Palace in Bhaktapur. The Kumāri Chok is located in position 9 next to the Taleju Temple (11). From Slusser, *Nāpal Mandala*. Figure 3.
CHAPTER 3:

THE MULTIVALENT ICONOGRAPHY OF KUMĀRĪ BĀHĀ:
THE PROCLAMATION OF POWER AND
THE CREATION OF MAṆḌALIC SPACE

The most striking aspects of Kumārī Bāhā are the quantity and quality of the woodcarvings that decorate its walls and facades. Beyond the impressive larger figural representations, the intricate detailing manifests in an ever-increasing display of dancing figures, swirling vegetal motifs, skulls, bone ornaments, and auspicious animals. The carvings not only enhance the appearance of the building, but, as I will show, are the carriers of the structure's iconographic program and meaning. These carvings, which are located on the door and window frames, toranas, and struts, are of the finest artistic quality found anywhere in the Kathmandu Valley. The presence of such detailed work at Kumārī Bāhā is a manifestation of royal patronage that pays tribute to Nepal's goddess tradition and the power it wields in the Valley.

Because it is important to understand the location and details of the main iconographic elements at Kumārī Bāhā, and because these numerous
elements are referred to in more than one chapter throughout this work, a complete set of photographs of the torāṇa and strut figures on the monument's exterior and courtyard facades, ordered as they are mentioned in the text, are located in Appendix A. Diagrams of the exterior and courtyard facades are also included in Appendix A, just before their respective section. (See Appendix A: Diagram A.1, Figures A.1 – A.23 for the location and pictures of the torāṇas and struts on the monument's exterior north facade and Diagram A.2, Figures A. 24 – A.49 for the location and pictures of the torāṇas and struts on the monument's courtyard facades.)

As I propose in this chapter, the systematic selection and placement of iconographic elements on Kumārī Bāhā's facades serve two purposes. First, the iconography on the exterior north facade proclaims a message of strength, protection, and victory through the depiction of multiple goddess figures on the torāṇas. Second, the goddess iconography on Kumārī Bāhā's interior torāṇas and struts, as well as other iconography at the site, creates layers of mandalic patterns¹ that define Kumārī Bāhā as a sacred space. This chapter also shows that Kumārī Bāhā's designers successfully formulated the monument's complex, multivalent iconographic program primarily by using two specific groups of goddess figures, the Aṣṭaṁāṭrkā (eight little mothers) and Navadurgā (nine durgās).

¹ In this study, the term “mandalic pattern” refers both to specific mandalas and the general sense of mandalic spaces that are created by Kumārī Bāhā's iconography.

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Goddess Imagery at Kumāri Bāhā: The Aṣṭamāṭrīkā and the Navadurgā

Female imagery dominates the toraṇa iconography at Kumāri Bāhā. (See Appendix A: Figures A.1 – A.13 and A.24 – A.41.) Previously, scholars have identified all of the female figures on Kumāri Bāhā’s toraṇas as Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardini, the warrior goddess and heroine who slayed the fierce buffalo asura (non-god or demon), Mahiṣa, as told in the Devimahātmya story.2 A closer reading of the structure’s toraṇa iconography, however, reveals that the goddesses are not simply repetitions of a single image of Durgā in her form as the slayer of Mahiṣa. Not only are they individual goddesses, but they are also configured as goddesses that are part of goddess groupings. As this study shows, the figures comprise both the Aṣṭamāṭrīkā and Navadurgā, two important goddess groupings in the Kathmandu Valley.

Of the thirty-one toraṇas on the Kumāri Bāhā’s facades, twenty-four depict the Aṣṭamāṭrīkā and Navadurgā (Figures A.1 – A.9 and A.24 – A.39). Of the eighteen strut figures, ten depict male deities and eight depict female deities (Figures A.14 – A.23 and A.42 – A.49, respectively). The Aṣṭamāṭrīkā appear on the main entrance toraṇa (Diagram 3.1 - T4a1-8) and the interior struts (Diagram A.2 - S1-8). The Navadurgā are located on six of the exterior

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torana (Diagram A.1 - T2a, T2b, T3a, T5a, T6a, T6b) and sixteen of the interior torana (Diagram A.2 - TS1a, TS1b, TS2a, TS2b, TS2c, TW1a, TW1b, TW2a, TW2b, TN1a, TN1b, TN2a, TN2b, TE1a, TE1b, TE2a, TE2b). Three of the remaining six toranas also depict female figures (Figures A.10 – A.11 and Figure A.40), while the remaining three show male figures (Figures A.12 – A.13 and Figure 41).

The Aṣṭamātrkā comprise one of the most ancient forms of deity worship in Kathmandu. Some of the earliest sculpture found in Nepal, most dating from before the turn of the common era, are identifiable as mātrkā figures. The Aṣṭamātrkā are commonly worshipped in their self-arisen non-anthropomorphic forms, generally as rock outcroppings, at pīthas. However, when they are shown in Nepal's art, they are depicted as anthropomorphic figures seated or standing atop of their vāhanas. The individual goddesses are identifiable by their vāhanas and hand-held attributes. The most common group of Aṣṭamātrkā found in the art, artist's sketchbooks, manuscripts, and oral traditions includes the goddesses Vārāhi, Mahālakṣmi,

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5 I use the general term “artist’s sketchbook” throughout this work when referring to the variety of traditional Nepali manuscripts containing drawings of deities and other forms, including iconographic manuals.
Brahmaṇī (Brahmāyani), Kaumārī (Kumārī), Indraṇī (Indrāyani), Maheśvari (Rudrāyani), Vaiṣṇavī (Viṣṇudevi or Nārāyani), Vārāhi, and Cāmunḍa (or Kāli).6 (See Table 3.1 for a standard list of the Aṣṭamātrkā and their iconographic features.) This standard group of Aṣṭamātrkā are depicted on the toraṇa over Kumārī Bāhā’s main entrance as four-armed, standing female figures.7 (See Figure A.10 for a photograph of the main entrance toraṇa and Diagram A.1 - T4a for the toraṇa’s location of on Kumārī Bāhā.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mātrkā</th>
<th>vāhana</th>
<th>usual hand-held attributes</th>
<th>additional feature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indraṇī</td>
<td>elephant</td>
<td>vajra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>banner (dhvaja)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmaṇī</td>
<td>goose</td>
<td>prayer beads (mālā)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>book (pustaka)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maheśvari (Rudrāyani)</td>
<td>bull</td>
<td>double-sided drum (damaru)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>trident (triśūla)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaiṣṇavī (Viṣṇudevi)</td>
<td>Garuḍa</td>
<td>wheel (cakra)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mace (gada)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cāmunḍa (Kāli)</td>
<td>human/corpse</td>
<td>sword (khadga)</td>
<td>emanciated face/body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>shield (phalaka)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vārāhi</td>
<td>boar</td>
<td>sickle</td>
<td>boar face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>fish (matsya)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaumārī</td>
<td>peacock</td>
<td>prayer beads (mālā)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>peacock feathers (māyūra tikala)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahālakṣmī</td>
<td>lion</td>
<td>sword (khadga)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>shield (phalaka)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1. Aṣṭamātrkā and their iconographic features.

6 Occasionally, the goddesses are referred to by different names. The most commonly used names are listed in Table 3.1, and the names in parenthesis are sometimes used instead. As indicated by their identical iconographies, however, the goddesses are the same.

7 Occasionally in Nepali art, inscriptions that provide identifying names are located directly below each figure. Unfortunately, Kumārī Bāhā’s imagery is not inscribed, leaving us to decipher the iconographic program through visual and contextual analysis.
Five of the eight goddesses on Kumāri Bāhā’s main toraṇa are located in a semicircular arrangement along the toraṇa’s outer edge, while the three remaining mātrkās are located along the toraṇa’s base (Diagram 3.1 - T4a1-8.) An inscribed set of Aṣṭamātrkā prints, which hang in the bhajan, or chanting, hall at the Mheipi Ajima shrine, an important pīṭha in Kathmandu, confirm that the goddesses depicted on the Kumāri Bāhā toraṇa are the Aṣṭamātrkā. These paintings also demonstrate that two sets of Aṣṭamātrkā, which have identical iconography and are, therefore, the same goddesses, are sometimes referred to by different names.

Beginning on the proper right of the Kumāri Bāhā toraṇa, the first figure is a four-armed image of Vaiṣṇavi, identifiable by her Garuḍa vāhana (Figure 3.1; Diagram 3.1 - T4a4). The Mheipi Ajima painting inscribed as Nārāyaṇī⁶ also shows a four-armed female figure seated on a Garuḍa vēhana and holding a cakra and gada in her raised hands (Figure 3.2). Moving clockwise around the toraṇa’s edge, a four-armed image of Brahmāṇī is located just above the Vaiṣṇavi image on the toraṇa and is identifiable by her goose vāhana. She holds a string of prayer beads (mālā) and a book (pustaka) in her upper hands (Figure 3.3; Diagram 3.1 - T4a5). The painting inscribed as Brahmāyaṇi in the bhajan hall has the identical iconography (Figure 3.4). Maheśvarī, the goddess in the upper left position on the toraṇa, stands on a

⁶ Viṣṇu is also referred to as Narāyana.
bull and holds a *trisūla* (trident) and double-sided drum (*damaru*) (Figure 3.5; Diagram 3.1 - T4a8). The goddess identified in the painting as Rudrāyaṇī⁹ also stands on a bull and holds a *trisūla* and a *damaru* (Figure 3.6). In the lower left, Vārāhi is easily identifiable by her sow face. She holds a sickle and fish (*matsya*) in her upper hands and stands on a boar (Figure 3.7; Diagram 3.1 - T4a7). The goddess identified as Vārāhi in the Mheipi Ajima paintings also holds a fish, although I am unable to identify the remaining hand-held attribute (Figure 3.8). Finally, Indrāṇī is located directly above the central *torana* figure, below the nāga figures in a slightly lower position than the other *mātrakā* (Figure 3.9; Diagram 3.1 - T4a8). She is seated on an elephant and holds a *vajra* and a banner (*dhvaja*) in her raised hands. The painting labeled Indrāyaṇī depicts the identical iconography (Figure 3.10).

The three remaining *mātrakās* on the *torana* are shown as one large, central figure that is flanked by two attendant figures. The proper left attendant figure is the *mātrakā* Kaumārī¹⁰ (Figure 3.11; Diagram 3.1 - T4a2). Here, she has been depicted as an eight-armed corpulent figure standing in fighting posture astride two peacock *vāhanas*, which face outward but look

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⁹ Rudra is another name for Śiva.

¹⁰ Kaumārī and Kumārī share certain iconographic attributes, including the peacock *vāhana* and the *mālā* and peacock feather hand-held attributes. The *torana* figure is identifiable as Kaumārī, rather than the youthful Kumārī, by her corpulent figure and her *krodha* appearance.
back up toward the goddess. Like the other mātykās, she holds the skull-cup (kapāla) and makes the tārjanīmudrā in her primary hands. Her upper hands hold a sword (khaḍga) and shield (phalaka), and her next hands hold her identifying hand-held attributes, the prayer beads (mālā) and peacock feathers (māyūra tikala). Her lower hands hold a goad (āṅkuśa) and a noose (pāśa). The painting of Kaumārī in the Mehīpi Ajima bhajan hall shows this goddess holding a bundle of peacock feathers and a fly-whisk (caurī) (Figure 3.12).

The left attendant on the toraṇa is Cāmuṇḍa, identifiable by her emaciated body and human vāhana (Figure 3.13; Diagram 3.1 - T4a3). Cāmuṇḍa also stands astride two vāhanas, rather than one, and her primary hands hold a skull-cup and make the tārjanīmudrā. This eight-armed figure holds a sword in her upper right hand. The upper left attribute is missing, but, based on the expected attribute pairing, it was presumably a shield. Her next hands hold a double-sided drum (damaru) and a khaṭvāṅga, and her lower hands hold a flaying knife (karṭri) and a severed head. The painting inscribed as Cāmuṇḍa at Mheīpi Ajima also shows an emaciated female figure holding a sword (khaḍga) and shield (phalaka) in her raised hands (Figure 3.14).

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11 It is not uncommon in toraṇa iconography to see Kaumārī and Cāmuṇḍa flanking a central figure in this way.
The remaining goddess, the central image on Kumārī Bāhā's main toraṇa, is an eighteen-armed female figure, carved in deep relief. She is dressed in a long, pleated skirt and choli, or cropped top, that covers her chest and leaves her abdomen exposed (Figure 3.15; Diagram 3.1 - T4a1). The goddess stands with her right leg bent and her left leg extended outward in a posture commonly made by female warrior deities, and a knee-length garland of severed heads hangs around her neck, indicating her fierce disposition. The figure stands on a lion vāhana and holds a sword and a shield in her upper hands, as does the Mahālakṣmi figure in the painting at Mheipi Aijima (Figure 3.16). However, the toraṇa goddess is shown defeating the asura Mahiṣa—an iconographic feature not typically associated with the Aṣṭamātrkā.

On the toraṇa, Mahiṣa is depicted as a virile young warrior drawing a sword, and is shown emerging from the body of a buffalo, whose head has been severed by the goddess and lies upside down in the center of the scene. The goddess stands confidently, grabbing the asura's hair with her lower left hand. In her lower right hand, the goddess holds the upper portion of what is meant to be a triśūla, or trident. In Nepal, most iconographic representations of the defeat of Mahiṣa by the goddess Durgā show Devi thrusting the trident into the demon's chest, delivering the fatal blow to her enemy. With this, she eliminates a worldly threat that none of the male deities could accomplish alone (Sketch 3.1).
The depiction of eight goddesses, seven of which are part of the Asṭamātrkā set, on the torana suggests that the remaining goddess, the central figure, completes the Asṭamātrkā group and, therefore, is Mahālakṣmi (See Diagram 3.1). One could argue that the torana depicts Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardini surrounded by seven mother goddesses. However, the saptamātrkā (seven little mothers) tradition is, unlike in India, largely unknown in Nepali art from the Malla period on, and, as my research suggests, the depiction of only seven of the very popular eight mother goddesses on a Newar temple from this period would be highly unusual in Nepal. In the case of Kumārī Bāhā, it would be particularly incongruous, since a complete set of the Asṭamātrkā appear on the monument’s interior struts (Diagram A.2 – S1-8; Figures A.42 – A.49). Although the central goddess is shown with more than four arms and slaying Mahiṣa, iconographic features not typically found on Asṭamātrkā imagery, she is, nonetheless, the

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12 In my study of extant Nepali art and architecture from the Malla period, Asṭamātrkā imagery has been ubiquitous. However, I have not seen a set of saptamātrkā in the art of the Kathmandu Valley from the Malla period.
eighth mātrkā, Mahālakṣmī. An alternative name for Kumāri Bāhā, Rājalakṣmī Mahāvihara, further suggests that the central image on the main toranā is Mahālakṣmī.

In addition to being the mātrkā Mahālakṣmī, I suggest that the inclusion of Mahiṣa imagery with the central goddess image indicates that the figure is also the Navadurgā, Mahālakṣmī. The Navadurgā set, like the Aṣṭamātrkā set, appears regularly in Nepali art, and the figures are depicted as multi-armed fierce warrior goddesses, who wield swords and shields and, in most cases, are shown slaying Mahiṣa. In Nepal, the Navadurgā most commonly have the same names as the Aṣṭamātrkā, with one additional goddess added to the group.

In my study of Nepal’s art and artists’ sketchbooks, the Navadurgā do not seem to have a standard set of hand-held attributes and, therefore, identifying the Navadurgā by their hand-held iconography is not always

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13 To my knowledge, Ranjitkar is the only scholar, other than myself, to identify the central figure on the main toranā at Kumāri Bāhā as Mahālakṣmī, rather than Durgā Mahiṣāśuramardini. See Ranjitkar, 11-12.

14 In Nepal, the Navadurgā are well known for their role during the festival of Dasain (Durgā Pūjā), when nine males don Navadurgā masks and costumes and perform elaborate dances that demonstrate the Navadurgā’s fighting prowess. These dances typically take place in the city’s Darbar Square and often include procession. See Levy, 231-234. Through their iconography and performance, the Navadurgā express their power and military might, articulating these fierce goddesses’ ability to defeat an enemy.

15 The Navadurgā’s presence in early artists sketchbooks is largely unknown. For more information about the history of the Navadurgā in Nepali artist sketchbooks, see Blom, 51-52.

16 Blom, 43-52.
possible. Therefore, the context and vāhanas must be relied upon in determining the goddesses' identity. (See Table 3.2 for a common list of the Navadurgā.) In the case of the central figure on Kumārī Bāhā’s main toraṇa, however, the hand-held attributes do contribute to the identification of the goddess as the Navadurgā, Mahālakṣmi.

The central goddess on the Kumārī Bāhā toraṇa holds the following hand-held attribute pairs, from top to bottom: a sword and shield, an arrow and bow, a wheel and mace, a vajra and bell, a goad and noose, and the gestures of varadamudrā (gift granting gesture) and abhayamudrā (gesture granting the absence of fear). The two lower hands hold the trident handle and the asura’s hair, while the primary raised hands hold a damaru and a khaṭvāṅga. A late thirteenth-century sketchbook used by painters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>durgā</th>
<th>vāhana</th>
<th>additional identifying feature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indrāṇi</td>
<td>elephant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmāṇi</td>
<td>goose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maheaśvari</td>
<td>bull</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Rudrayani)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaiṣṇavi</td>
<td>Garuḍa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Viṣnudevi)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cāmuṇḍa (Kāli)</td>
<td>human/corpse</td>
<td>emaciated face/body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vārāhi</td>
<td>boar</td>
<td>boar face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaumārī</td>
<td>peacock</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahālakṣmi</td>
<td>lion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ninth goddess varies according to context</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2. Navadurgā and their iconographic features.
Bhakptapur\textsuperscript{17} includes inscribed drawings of the \textit{Navadurgā}, who stand in fighting posture as they defeat the \textit{asura} Mahiṣa (Figure 3.17). The Mahālakṣmī figure in this group of goddesses holds the identical attributes as the central figure on the \textit{toraṇa} at Kumārī Bāhā. Only the order of presentation is switched on a few items. From top to bottom, the hand-held attributes of the sketchbook figure are a sword and shield, an arrow and bow, a goad and noose, a \textit{cakra} and mace, a \textit{vajra} and \textit{ghanta}, and the \textit{varadamudrā} and \textit{abhayamudrā}. Again, the lower hands hold Mahiṣa's hair and a trident, which, in this case, is fully depicted. Like the \textit{toraṇa} figure, the sketchbook figure's raised primary hands hold a \textit{ḍamaru} and a \textit{khatvāṅga}. Both the goddess on the \textit{toraṇa} and the Mahālakṣmī figure in the sketchbook stand on a lion mount.

Another eighteen-armed warrior goddess sketched in a 19\textsuperscript{th} century artist's handbook, now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, suggests an additional layer of meaning on the Kumārī Bāhā \textit{toraṇa} and a third identity for its central goddess figure. This sketchbook figure, shown as an individual goddess rather than part of a group of goddesses, also has the identical hand-held iconography as the \textit{toraṇa} figure and stands on a lion mount (Figure 3.18).\textsuperscript{18} The inscription above the sketchbook figure identifies

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{17} Blom, 46.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{18} Blom, 41.}

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this goddess as Sri Durgācandra Bhagavati thus suggesting that the torāṇa figure may additionally be conceived as Durgā.\textsuperscript{19}

The sketchbook artists, however, rendered a different iconographic composition than that seen on Kumārī Bāhā’s torāṇas. Rather than standing victoriously over Mahiṣa, as the goddess on the torana does, the Durgā figure in the sketchbook holds two asuras, Nisumbha and Sumbha, captive by securing their waists with nāgas. Nisumbha and Sumbha also appear in the Devimahātmya and are defeated by the great goddess.\textsuperscript{20} In the sketchbook image, the artist’s main intention seems to be the visual depiction of Durgā’s defeat of Nisumbha and Sumbha. In contrast, the torana imagery gives less emphasis to the narrative moment from the Devimahātmya when Durgā defeats Mahiṣa. Although Mahiṣa is shown, by surrounding the central figure with seven of the Aṣṭamātrkā, rather than the fierce Navadurgā warriors who accompany Durgā into battle, the iconographic focus is shifted away from the sacred history, and more attention is given to the predominant mātrkā imagery. Moreover, the trident, the weapon that

\textsuperscript{19} In other sketchbooks and artwork I have examined, and on Kumārī Bāhā’s torāṇas, it appears that the hand-held attributes on the ten to twenty-armed mātrkā and durgā figures are selected from a standard set of elements. The elements that are ultimately used in a given figure or figure group, as well as the actual order of the items in the hands, however, vary. The exceptions to this are the sword and shield, which are consistently held in the upper hands. Such variation in hand-held attributes may be due to local traditions. For a discussion of hand-held attributes, see Chaya Chandrasekhar’s forthcoming dissertation from The Ohio State University.

\textsuperscript{20} Coburn, 245.
deals the final blow to the \textit{asura}, is not fully depicted on the \textit{toraṇa}. Only the handle is shown, further suggesting a play of multivalency between this figure as a \textit{māṭrka} and a \textit{durgā}.

Despite the iconographic distinctions between the \textit{Aśtamāṭrka} and the \textit{Navadurgā}, and the fact that they usually appear as distinct groups in the art, many Newars commonly conflate these goddess groups. In artist sketchbooks, the \textit{Navadurgā} are typically shown as a group of eight, rather than nine, multi-armed female figures that are inscribed with names typically given to the \textit{Aśtamāṭrka} (Figure 3.17). Further, local devotees regularly state that the \textit{Aśtamāṭrka} and \textit{Navadurgā} are exactly the same goddesses, despite the obvious difference in number. As Slusser states, “In practice...the Nepalese Naudurgā [Navadurga] are synonomous with the Aśtamāṭrka, to which a variable ninth manifestation is joined. Thus, when the Nepalese speak of the Naudurgā, they in fact refer to the Aśtamāṭrka.”\textsuperscript{21} Whether the latter portion of Slusser’s statement is consistently true, scholars generally accept that \textit{Aśtamāṭrka} and the \textit{Navadurgā} are regularly considered by many Nepalis to be the same goddesses.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{21} Slusser, 322.

\textsuperscript{22} Some Nepalis, for example, some the learned Newar Buddhist Vajrācāryas, may not identify the \textit{Aśtamāṭrka} with the \textit{Navadurgā}. Instead, they may identify the \textit{Aśtamāṭrka} with \textit{yoginis} (See Chapter 4). The subtleties of the relationship between the \textit{Aśtamāṭrka} and the \textit{Navadurgā} have not been examined. When referred to in most scholarly texts, the conflation of the figures is acknowledged, but little or no additional interpretation regarding why one goddess group might have been depicted over another for representation in a given. A systematic study of the context in which \textit{Aśtamāṭrka} and \textit{Navadurgā} groupings appear
The seamless, yet subtle, blending of the Mahiṣa (i.e., Durgā) and mātrkā imagery on the toraṇa, then, suggests that the toraṇa’s iconography is multivalent. The central goddess figure may be read as Durgā Mahiṣāsurasamardini, as scholars have suggested. However, the presence of both Mahiṣa and mātrkā imagery, and the fact that the Aṣṭamātrkā and Navadurgā have the same names and are considered by many Nepalis to be identical, suggests that the eight goddesses on Kumārī Bāḥā’s main toraṇa can be read as both the Aṣṭamātrkā and the core eight Navadurgā. The multivalent reading of the central figure on Kumārī Bāḥā’s main entrance toraṇa, I suggest, indicates that multivalency is being used as a primary communicative device in the monument’s iconographic program.

Nine Exterior Torāṇas

In addition to the main entrance toraṇa, nine additional toraṇas, located over the doors and windows of Kumārī Bāḥā’s exterior north facade, depict mātrkā and durgā imagery, again implying the possibility of multivalent readings of the goddess figures (Diagram A.1 – T2a, T2b, T3a, T3b, T4b, T5a, T5b, T6a, T6b).

The Nine Torana Figures as the Aṣṭamātrkā and Navadurgā

may reveal patterns of usage and a greater understanding of the historical and contextual relationship between the groups.
As noted earlier, the Astamātrkā and Navadurgā are most readily identifiable by their vāhanas, since their hand-held attributes can vary. Interestingly, however, the goddesses depicted on the eight toraṇas surrounding the central toraṇa on the second level do not have vāhanas that iconographically identify the individual goddesses (Figures A.1, A.2, A.3, A.4, A.6, A.7, A.8, A.9). Nonetheless, as I suggest below, the contextual analysis and other iconographic elements on the toraṇas indicate that these goddesses can also be read as the mātrkās and durgās (Sketch 3.2).

The goddesses on six of the toraṇas have multiple arms, hold a skull-cup and make the tarjanimudrā, and slay the asura Mahiśa, suggesting that they are fierce durgās (Figures A.1 – A.4, A.6 – A.9, Diagram A.1 - T2a, T2b, T3a, T5a, T6a, T6b). The fact the goddesses do not stand on unique vāhanas makes distinguishing these goddesses difficult. However, other iconographic elements on these toraṇas suggest the goddesses’ identities. The deity depicted in T2b is probably the durgā Mahālakṣmī, since this figure
is set apart from the five goddesses on the other torana by its more elaborate iconography (Figure A.2). In contrast to the other five goddesses, who each have one face and sixteen arms, the central figure on this torana has four faces and twenty arms. Like the Mahalakshmi on the main entrance torana (Figure 3.15), this goddess holds a damaru and khatvanga in her primary raised hands. Also like the main entrance torana, the Mahisha on the torana in position T2b is depicted as a warrior figure emerging from the body of a slain buffalo, whose severed head rests upturned in front of the victorious goddess. The buffalo corpse is omitted from the other five toranas and, instead, only the human form of Mahisha is shown. The torana in position T6b, in fact, does not even show the asura (Figure A.9). Instead, the trident handle held in the goddess’s lower right hand implies Mahisha’s defeat.23

The krodha figure depicted in position T2a is probably the durgā Kaumārī since the krodha mātrkā figure on the main entrance torana was identifiable as Kaumāri by her peacock vahana (Figure A.1). Maheśvari may occupy the torana in position T5a since the attribute in her second left hand, directly below the shield, appears to be a trident (Figure A.6). Unfortunately, the attribute in the corresponding hand is broken. Based on the standard pairing of hand-held attributes, the missing attribute would have been a damaru. Vaiṣṇavi, the goddess probably depicted on the torana in the T6a

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23 The torana in the T6b position may not be original since it is the only goddess of the group of six that does not actually show Mahisha but only implies his defeat by the presence of the trident handle. However, no other aspects of the torana suggest that it is not original.
position, holds a wheel and conch in her raised primary hands (Figure A.8). I was unable to identify which of the remaining two goddesses on torana T3a and T6b were Indrani and Brahmāni (Figures A.3 and A.9).

The two goddesses in positions T3b and T5b are set apart from the other six goddesses on the torana just discussed insofar as they do not have vāhanas and, instead, stand on lotuses. In addition, neither of these goddesses is shown defeating Mahisha. The goddess Cāmunda, seen in Figure A.4 (T3b), is located to the proper right of the central torana (T4b) and is identifiable by her emaciated face. The face of the goddess on torana T5b, to the proper left of the center torana, is damaged (Figure A.7). This figure may be the goddess Vārāhi, who has a boar face, since all of the other goddesses shown on this set of eight torana have human faces. In addition, a torana on Kumāri Bāhā’s south courtyard wall shows Cāmunda and Vārāhi paired as attendant figures to a central goddess (Figure A.13, Diagram A.2 – TS1b). The truncated iconography on toranas T3b and T5b, I suggest, communicate that the eight goddesses in this group can be read on one level as mātrakās. Their placement within the group of eight torana that depict durgā figures, however, also suggests that they may be read as durgās. Like the main entrance torana, the blending of mātrakā and durgā imagery on these eight exterior toranas, allows for the possibility of multivalent readings of Kumāri Bāhā’s exterior torana. (Sketch 3.3).
When the eight goddesses are read as the core *Navadurgā*, they are conceived as surrounding a central goddess that appears on the central *torana* on the second level (T4b) (Sketch 3.4). The figure on this *torana* is a twenty-armed Durgā, standing in warrior posture (Figure 3.19, Diagram 3.2 - T4b1). Although the goddess’ hand-held *attributes* are largely indiscernible,

the figure is identifiable as Durgā by her lion mount and the other iconography on Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior *torana*. For example, directly above
the central figure are Maheśvara (a form of Śiva) and Maheśvari, who are recognized by the damaru and triśūla. Maheśvara holds in his upraised right and left hands, respectively. His lower right hand makes the abhayamudrā, while the lower left hand appears to hold a pot (Figure 3.20, Diagram 3.2 - T4b4). The placement of Śiva above the central figure suggests that the goddess is Durgā, who is a form of Pārvatī, the consort of Śiva.24

The two small toranās over the windows that flank the central window on the second level also suggest that the central figure is Durgā (Figures A.30 and A.31, Diagram A.1 – T4d and T4e). The toranās depict the gods Gaṇeśa and Kumāra, traditional attendants to the goddess Durgā, on the right and left, respectively (Figures 3.21 – 3.22). The elephant-headed god Gaṇeśa is shown in a four-armed form that holds the noose and axe in his raised hands. His lower hands make the varadamudrā and hold a container full of sweets. His rat vāhana is missing from this rendering. Kumāra, the ever-youthful male god, is shown in a four-armed form and is most easily identifiable by the peacock vāhana. He holds a string of prayer beads and peacock feathers in his raised hands, while his lower hands make what appears to be the vitarkamudrā and hold a pot. Further evidence to suggest that the central goddess on the toranā is Durgā occurs on the interior south wall’s second

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24 In a presentation titled “Hidden Identities of the ‘Great Black One’: Images of Mahakala from the John and Berthe Ford Collection” at the American Council of Southern Asian Art (ACSSAA) conference, 2001, Natalie Marsh demonstrated that vertical alignment of deities in artwork may indicate a relationship between the deities.
level (Figure A.28, Diagram A.2 – TS3b). This interior toraṇa depicts Durgā in a traditional form as Mahiṣāsura-mardini and is situated directly in line with the exterior toraṇa. On the interior toraṇa, Gaṇeśa and Kumāra are also shown as attendant figures to the goddess.

The figures on Kumāri Bāhā's nine exterior toraṇas, then, create a set of Navadurgā. Eight of the toraṇa display the core Navadurgā, namely, Kaumāri, Mahālakṣmi, Indrāni, Cāmuṇḍa, Maheśvari, Vārāhi, Vaiṣṇavi, and Brahmāṇi (Diagram A.1 - T2a, T2b, T3a, T3b, T5a, T5b, T6a, T6b), while the central toraṇa depicts Durgā, herself. The eight durgā are conceived as surrounding the goddess Durgā, who emanates the group of eight goddesses. The concept of a central goddess who serves as the ninth durgā in a Navadurgā group and who emanates the remaining eight goddesses is prevalent throughout Nepal. For example, Newars often consider the eight Aṣṭamāṭrkā pīthas that surround the city of Bhaktapur, when combined with the goddess Tripurasundari who resides in the city's center, to simultaneously be the Navadurgā. In this configuration, Tripurasundari, a prominent goddess whose pītha is in the center of Bhaktapur, is envisaged as emanating the eight Aṣṭamāṭrkā pītha devatā that surround the city, thus creating the Navadurgā.25

This group of eight goddesses can, simultaneously, be read as an independent group of the Aṣṭamāṭrkā. In this reading, the central toraṇa on

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25 Levy, 154-155.
the second level (T4b), which depicts Durgā, would not be considered part of the goddess group, but would have a discrete iconographic program (Sketch 3.5).

![Sketch 3.5. When the eight goddesses are read as the Aṣṭamātrikā, the central torana on the second level has a separate iconographic identity and can be read as "Durgā Victorious" over the asura Mahiṣa. Sketch by John C. Huntington, with Janice M. Głowki.]

In this context, I suggest that the central torana's iconography is read as the time of the peace and harmony that followed Durgā's defeat of Mahiṣa, one of the world's greatest enemies.

The Central Torana as a Discrete Iconographic Entity

The goddess Durgā, the central figure on the torana, is not shown defeating Mahiṣa, nor is the goddess' triumph over the asura suggested by the presence of triśūla, as we have seen elsewhere. Instead, Durgā stands confidently astride two lion mounts and is surrounded by a host of gods and goddesses. In addition to the Maheśvara/Maheśvarī figures directly above Durgā, four additional loving couples appear on around the goddess. The five pairs of male and female deities are spread evenly in an arch along the
torana's edge, in a manner similar to that of the mātrakās on the main entrance torana. The female figures embrace their male companions and make the abhayamudrā with their left hand, while attributes held in the male figures' hands identify the couples.

In the proper lower left position are Indra and Indrāṇi, identifiable by the vajra and umbrella Indra holds in his upraised hands (Figure 3.23; Diagram 3.2 - T4b2). His second right hand makes the varadamudrā, while his left hand embraces his consort. Moving clockwise, Brahma also makes the varadamudrā and holds his consort, Brahmāṇi, with his lower hands. He is identifiable by his pointed beard and the prayer beads and book he holds in his raised hands (Figure 3.24; Diagram 3.2 - T4b3;). At the top right are Viṣṇu and Vaiṣṇavi, or Viṣṇudevi as she is often called in Nepal (Figure 3.25; Diagram 3.2 - T4b5). These figures are identifiable by the wheel and mace Viṣṇu holds in his raised right and left hands, respectively, and the lotus and conch he holds in his lower hands. Finally, a bhairava and what appears to be a mātrakā, the standard consort of a bhairava, occupy the lower left position. The bhairava, identifiable by his krodha form and the nāgas he wears around his neck holds the sword and shield in his raised hands, and with his lower right hand makes the varadamudrā (Figure 3.26; Diagram 3.2 - T4b6). This

26 Blom, 21-32.

27 A bhairava's most commonly holds a skull-cup and flaying knife in his main hands, although these attributes are not present in this image. For example, see Chapter 2, Figure 2.59.
bhairava may be a krodha form of the god Śiva, rather than one of the Aṣṭabhairava (eight bhairava), specifically, since only one bhairava is shown on the torana, when the set of eight are often depicted in Nepali art. However, since the mātrkās are central to Kumārī Bāhā's iconography, the designers may have included a bhairava/mātrkā pair on this torana.

The depiction of these gods and their consorts on a torana that has Durgā as the central figure suggests that this torana depicts the period after Durgā's defeat of Mahiṣā. Four of the male deities on this torana, Indra, Brahma, Maheśvara, and Viṣṇu, are key figures in the Devimahātmya. According to the famous story, these gods were not able to permanently kill Mahiṣa, who was wreaking havoc on in the human realm, since upon his death, the great asura would simply transmigrate and assume a new form. In an attempt to defeat Mahiṣa, the gods combined their energy and created the great goddess Durgā. Each of them gave her their most powerful weapon, but it is with Śiva's trident that Durgā delivers Mahiṣa a fatal blow. However, the complete absence of Mahiṣa imagery from this torana suggests that the narrative moment when Durgā slays the asura—a moment that is alluded to repeatedly elsewhere on the monument's toranas—is not depicted on this torana and, I suggest, was given a different iconographic meaning. As if to remind visitors to Kumārī Bāhā of the universal equanimity that came

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28 Coburn, 224-225.
from this victory, the gods are shown peacefully with their consorts around the triumphant warrior goddess. All of male deities make the varadamudrā, the gift bestowing gesture, suggesting that their gift to the world was the mighty Durgā, who rid the world of a powerful adversary. This central torana, therefore, reads as an independent iconographic entity, when the surrounding eight torana are read as the Aṣṭamātrkā.

*Kumārī Bāhā’s Courtyard Toranas*

The blended Aṣṭamātrkā and Navadurgā imagery seen on Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior torana is also found on the monument’s interior toranas. Sixteen toranas, located on the first and second levels of the courtyard walls each has a Navadurgā as its central figure, flanked by two attendants (Figures A.24 – A.39, Diagram A.2 – TSa1, TSa2, TSb1, TSb2, TWa1, TWa2, TWb1, TWb2, TNa1, TNa2, TNb1, TNb2, TEa1, TEa2, TEb1, TEb2). The goddesses are shown as durgās, standing in fighting posture astride their vāhanas and impaling the asura Mahiṣa with their tridents. The sixteen deities, however, are not shown as two identical groups of eight goddesses,
with each durgā duplicated on two toraṇas. Instead, they are distinct goddesses, each standing on a different vāhana and having unique iconographies.29

The standard eight durgās are depicted in positions TS1a, TW1b, TW2b, TN2b, TN1a, TE1a, TE1b, and TE2a. On Kumārī Bāha’s south courtyard wall’s first level at the east end, Vaiṣṇavi stands astride her garuḍa vāhana (Figure A.24 [TS1a]). The toraṇas on the second level of the west wall depict Indraṇi, identifiable by her elephant vāhana and Kaumārī, who is shown as a corpulent figure standing on a peacock (Figure A.29 [TW1b] and Figure A.31 [TW2b]). On the west end of the north wall’s first level, Brahmāṇi is depicted on her goose vāhana (Figure A.32 [TN1a]), while three toraṇas on the east wall depict Cāmunda,30 Mahalakṣmi31 and Maheśvari standing on a human, a bull, and a lion, respectively (Figure A.36 [TE1a], Figure A.38 [TE2a], Figure A.39 [TE2b]). Only the goddess Vārāhi is not shown. However, the toraṇa in position TN2b does not appear to be

29 As noted previously, the hand-held attributes are often inconsistent among the durgā figures and, therefore, do not contribute uniquely to the iconographic identification of the goddess figures.

30 In this carving, Cāmunda is not shown in her typical emaciated form, although she is identifiable by her human vāhana.

31 As will be discussed in Chapter Five, this figure is most likely Mahalakṣmi since the central goddess on the main entrance toraṇa is identifiable as Mahalakṣmi, thus indicating Kumārī’s identification with this goddess. Since the courtyard toraṇa is over the door that leads to Kumārī’s shrine, the figure depicted is probably Mahalakṣmi.
original, and although it currently shows a goddess on a Garuḍa, it is possible that the original torana depicted Vārāhī on her boar vāhana (Figure A.35 [TN2b]).

The identities of the additional eight goddesses are more difficult to determine, owing to the fact that their vāhanas are not typically seen in durgā or māṭrkā imagery. Three of the goddesses are shown standing on a snake, a horse, and a corpse, respectively (Figure A.26 [TS2a], Figure A.34 [TN2a], Figure A.37 [TE1b]), and an additional three figures stand on lions (Figure A.25 [TS1b], Figure A.27 [TS2b], Figure A.30 [TW2a]). The goddess standing on the corpse is likely to be identified Kāli. To my knowledge, no māṭrkā or durgā figures are shown standing on a snake or a horse. The remaining two goddess figures do not have vāhanas and, instead, stand on a lotuses (Figure A.28 [TW1a], Figure A.33 [TN1b]).

These goddesses may comprise an unusual group of sixteen durgās, which are rarely depicted in Nepali art. However, when considered within the broader context of Kumārī Bāhā’s iconography, I suggest that these sixteen toranās and their goddesses can be read as two sets of Aṣṭamāṭrkā/Navadurgā figures, one on the first level and one on the second level. The combination of māṭrkā and durgā imagery to create multiple iconographic layers in the toranās’ imagery is a repeated theme on Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior north facade iconography. The most direct example of this layering is found on the main entrance torana, where a central durgā figure,
Mahālakṣmi, is surrounded by seven of the eight mātrakās, allowing for the torana iconography to be read simultaneously as the Aṣṭamātrakā and the core Navadurgā. Therefore, it would not be unusual to find this same theme on the courtyard facades. Further, the courtyard toranas are placed in a highly symmetrical arrangement, with eight toranas over the end doors on the first level and eight toranas over the end windows on the second level, suggesting that the sixteen toranas can be read as two sets of eight toranas that depict the Aṣṭamātrakā and the core Navadurgā.

Finally, the eight toranas on the second level flank an additional torana, which is located in the center of the south wall and depicts the goddess Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardini, flanked by Gaṇeśa and Kumāra (Figure A.40 [TS2c]). The second level toranas depict a total of nine goddesses, all of whom are shown slaying Mahiṣa. These can be read as the core Navadurgā, with the central Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardini figure conceived as emanating the remaining eight durgās, an iconography that is mirrored on the nine exterior toranas in positions T2a, T2b, T3a, T3b, T4b, T5a, T5b, T6a, and T6b, which show eight durgās surrounding a central Durgā located on the torana on the second level above the main entrance. Since the Navadurgā are typically comprised of the eight mātrakā, plus one goddess, the second level torana goddesses can be also read as the Aṣṭamātrakā surrounding Durgā. The eight goddesses depicted on the first level toranas can be read both as durgās, since they are shown slaying Mahiṣa, and as the Aṣṭamātrakā,
since the south wall's central toraṇa does not depict the goddess Durgā, but the five Buddhas (Figure A.41; [TS3a]), leaving only eight goddess figures on the first level toraṇas.

A third set of goddesses, located on the courtyard struts, encircles the courtyard's third level. Although the figures' arms are damaged, the goddesses stand on vāhanas and are identifiable as the Aṣṭamāṭṛkā. In the east and west corners of the south wall are images of Vaiṣṇavī and Vārāhi, who are identifiable by their Garuḍa and boar vāhanas, respectively (Figure A.42; Diagram A.2 - S1, and Figure A.43; Diagram A.2 - S2). The struts on the west wall show depictions of Indrāṇī on her elephant and Cāmūṇḍa on a human (Figure A.44; Diagram A.2 - S3 and Figure A.45; Diagram A.2 - S4). Mahālakṣmī and Brahmāṇī, standing on their lion and bull vāhanas, occupy the struts on the north wall (Figure A.46; Diagram A.2 - S5 and Figure A.47; Diagram A.2 - S6), while the east wall struts show Maheśvarī on her bull and Kaumārī on her peacock (Figure A.48; Diagram A.2 - S7 and Figure A.49; Diagram A.2 - S8). These eight goddesses encircle the monument's third level, thus creating a ring of Aṣṭamāṭṛkā on Kumārī Bāhā's courtyard walls, and further suggesting that the durgās on the courtyard toraṇas can also be read as māṭṛkās.32

32 The third level does not contain toraṇa iconography, since the structure of the five bay and circular window types do not support toraṇas.
Kumārī Bāhā’s designers took full advantage of the Aṣṭamāṭrkā and Navadurgā’s multidimensional relationship and innovatively combined the goddesses’ iconographies on the monument’s toraṇas. Durgā imagery is mingled within traditional sets of Aṣṭamāṭrkā, while māṭrkā figures replace their durgā counterparts within cohesive sets of Navadurgā. The skillful blending of iconographies allows the basic characteristics of both goddess groups to be simultaneously read into the monument.

Proclamations of Power and the Creation of Maṇḍalic Space

The Newars consider both the Aṣṭamāṭrkā and the Navadurgā to be protective goddesses and the Aṣṭamāṭrkā, specifically, have been traditionally associated with the creation of maṇḍalic space. The idea that māṭrkās articulate boundaries, create sacred space through the generation of maṇḍalas, and, subsequently, protect that space is a central theme in Newar culture. Scholars, such as Neils Gutschow, Manabajra Bajracharya, Bernard Kölver, Anne Vergati, Robert Levy, and others have written extensively on the topic.  

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According to this body of research, the Aṣṭamāṭṛkā, as they manifest at their pīṭhas on the borders of cities, villages, and towns, are conceived as generating a maṇḍala and serving as markers of the outer boundaries that define the internal space from the external space, order from chaos, and safety from danger. Vergati discusses the maṇḍalic arrangement of the māṭṛkās by stating, “To place a god or gods in this pattern [in the cardinal directions and in the four intermediary points] was to order space; it was also to take the town which they protected out of the context of disordered space which surrounded it.”

34 The Aṣṭamāṭṛika’s role as definers and protectors of space in Newar culture cannot be overstated. Sylvain Lévi says: “The only goddesses which deserve to be mentioned for their local function... are the Eight Mothers (Aṣṭamāṭṛika) who are considered as the Guardians of Nepalese towns.”

35 Although most of the research on the Aṣṭamāṭṛkā and their relationship to the creation of sacred space has focused on the city of Bhaktapur, the Aṣṭamāṭṛkā define space in other cities, towns, and villages, such as Kathmandu, Panauti, and Thimi, as well. In speaking generally about the māṭṛkās, Gutschow states, “Matrikas are one of the most essential,

34 Vergati, 146.

and indeed most frequent, devices for the sanctification of Nepalese towns....
Hence, in the earliest layer accessible to us through Nepalese materials... the
eight *Matrikas* are used to define *space*.\(^{36}\) Given their import as definers of
space, it is no wonder that scholars commonly refer to the *Aṣṭamāṭrkā* as ‘the
Maṇḍalic Goddesses.’\(^{37}\)

In order to define *maṇḍalic* space, it is not necessary that the *māṭrkās*
adhore to a particular diagrammatic placement. Robert Levy discusses the
“nine Maṇḍalic Goddesses” whose *pīṭhas* define the city of Bhaktapur as a
sacred *yantra*.\(^{38}\) Eight of these nine goddesses are the *Aṣṭamāṭrkā*, whose
self-arisen shrines surround the city and correspond to the four cardinal
directions and the four intermediary directions. A painting from Bhaktapur
expresses a conceptual relationship between the goddesses whose shrines are
conceived as being arranged in the shape of a *yantra* on the outer edge
(Figure 3.27).\(^{39}\) In contrast, a map of Bhaktapur shows the actual physical
locations of the *Aṣṭamāṭrkā pīṭhas* (Figure 3.28). Lines drawn between the
*pīṭhas* show that the *Aṣṭamāṭrkā* shrines are not actually situated in the

\(^{36}\) Gutschow and Bajracharya, “Ritual as Mediator of Space,” 4.

\(^{37}\) See, for example, Levy, *Mesocosm*, 487-488.

\(^{38}\) Levy, 154-155.

\(^{39}\) This painting also shows a second ring of Bhairava figures and a interior ring of Gaṇeśa
figures.
form of a yantra. Nonetheless, this inconsistency is overlooked by Newars, since the conceptual supercedes the physical arrangement of the mātrkā pīthas.

The famed Aṣṭamātrkā that surround Bhaktapur, as we will recall, are also read as the core Navadurgā when they are grouped with a central goddess. At the center of both the diagram and the map (Figures 3.27 and 3.28), are nine goddesses, eight that encircle the city and a ninth goddess in the city center who Kölver first identified as Tripurasundari and who is conceived as generating the eight other goddesses.40 “The central goddess Tripurasundari is...at the center of the maṇḍala’s power. She is a ‘full’ goddess, and the peripheral forms are partial and more specialized. She is represented at the center of the lotus or maṇḍala where power is concentrated and at its maximum, and sometimes to similar effect as a point sending out rays of power in each of the eight directions of the compass to each of the eight pīthas at the boundaries.”41

I suggest that the Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardinī on Kumārī Bāhā's courtyard toraṇa, like Tripurasundari, is part of the group of nine goddesses shown on the second level toraṇas, yet she stands apart from them. The central placement of Mahiṣāsuramardinī iconography on the Durgā toraṇa differentiates this Durgā image from the remaining durgā figures and

40 For a discussion of these goddesses, see Kölver, “A Ritual Map from Nepal.”

41 Levy, pp. 167-68.
suggests that she can be read as a “full” goddess, who emanates the remaining core Navadurgā. Therefore, although it may be a somewhat opaque concept to the casual visitor, the twenty-four goddesses on Kumārī Bāhā’s courtyard walls, like the pītha devatā around Bhaktapur and other cities in the Valley, are envisioned as defining Kumārī Bāhā as a sacred maṇḍalīc space. The goddesses on the torāṇas, like the pītha devatās around the cities and towns, encircle the monument’s courtyard and create the sacred space. The depiction of the torāṇa goddesses as the fierce warrior durgās only emphasizes their role as deities who protect the space.

**Exoteric and Esoteric Iconographies**

Kumārī Bāhā’s overall iconographic program also appears to follow a broader theme, which is ubiquitous throughout Newar Buddhism. Specifically, the iconography on Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior north side and interior courtyard walls can be divided into exoteric and esoteric elements, respectively. Commonly referred to as bāhya (outer) and guhya (secret), these terms can be used to classify Newar society, by dividing individuals into groups of uninitiated (outer) and initiated (secret) members of a bāhā. Deities may also be classified in this way and are said to have an exoteric (outer) and an esoteric (secret) “face.”42 For example, Vasundharā is

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42 See Gellner for a discussion of bāhya, guhya, abhyantara (inner), 257.
considered to be an exoteric deity, who is the public face of the esoteric goddess Vajrayogini.\textsuperscript{43} Uninitiated devotees worship Vajrayogini in her exoteric form as Vasundharā. The exoteric/esoteric relationship between Vasundharā and Vajrayogini is acted out during a festival in the village of Sanku when an image of Vajrayogini is taken from the Vajrayogini Temple, located on a nearby mountain, and carried through Sanku’s streets.\textsuperscript{44} During the festival procession, the image is referred to as the “yellow-faced” goddess, a probable reference to Vasundharā.\textsuperscript{45} Vasundharā is yellow in color and rituals that involve this goddess often include extensive use of yellow, while Vajrayogini is depicted as a red goddess.

\textit{Bāhya} and \textit{guhya} are also articulated in \textit{bāhā} architecture through the presence of the \textit{kvāhpāḥ dyah}, a publicly accessible shrine, which is available for worship to uninitiated members of the \textit{sāṅgha}, and the \textit{āgamā}, a shrine which is only available to initiated community members. I suggest that Kumārī Bāhā’s architecture visually expresses the \textit{bāhya} and \textit{guhya} paradigm through its iconography. At Kumārī Bāhā, the exterior of the structure is covered with what might be considered more exoteric concepts.

\textsuperscript{43}Gellner, 174.

\textsuperscript{44}Zanen discusses this festival in S. M. Zanen, “The Goddess Vajrayogini and the Kingdom of Sanku (Nepal),” \textit{Puruṣārtha} 10, 1986, 125-166.

\textsuperscript{45}In a presentation titled “Iconography of Vasundhara in Nepal: Deciphering Categories of Tantric Buddhist Methodology” at the Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison-Wisconsin, 2001, D. Bangdel suggests that the processional deity, taken from the Vajrayogini Temple and referred to as the “yellow-faced” goddess during the Sanku festival, is Vasundhara.
and deities. For example, the less specified mātrkā/durgā figures, which stand on lion vāhana, rather than more specific vāhana, communicate the widely known story of Durgā as the slayer of the great enemy, Mahiṣa. Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior is the monument’s “public face” and is intended to be, primarily, an expression of strength and confidence—the power of śakti to defeat any enemy. The goddess figures on the courtyard toraṇas, on the other hand, are present primarily for the, perhaps, less obvious purpose of generating maṇḍalic space, as noted previously. In addition, the three rings of mātrkā/durgā figures on the courtyard walls, as will be discussed in Chapter Four, generate the esoteric Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala.

Additional “exoteric” deities are also found on the structure’s exterior strut figures. Lining the top of the third level, directly under the roof overhang, are the dasadikpālas or the ten male deities who guard the ten directions (Diagram A.1; Figures A.14 – A.23). They are identifiable as by their vāhanas as Indra (elephant), Vāyu (deer/goat), Isāna (bull), Nṛtti (human), Varuṇa (makara), Yama (buffalo), Kubera (horse), Agni (ram/goat), Brahma (goose), and Viṣṇu (boar), from the proper right, respectively. In some contexts, Newars consider the dikpālas to be the exoteric forms of the bhairavas. The Aṣṭabhairavas, or the esoteric forms of the dikpālas, are present on Kumārī Bāhā’s third level courtyard walls on the five-bay windows’ jambs (Figure 3.29), again, suggesting that the monument’s exterior contains exoteric figures, while the courtyard walls display more

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esoteric deities and concepts. *The bhairava* figures alternate with *mātrkā* figures the window jambs. The presentation of both the *bhairava* and the *mātrkā* are generic, since no *vāhana* distinguish them. However, we can be certain that the jamb figures are pairs of *bhairava* and *mātrkā* figures since the *bhairavas* are shown as the standard corpulent, *krodha* figures with bulging eyes, distended abdomens, and *nāgas* around their necks.

An additional depiction of an exoteric figure occurs on the window above on the exterior third level at the east end of the north facade (Figure A.11; Diagram A.1 - T1c). The *torāṇa* shows a four-armed image of the goddess Kumārī, who sits cross-legged and is flanked by two large gems. In her upper right and left hands she holds a *mālā* and peacock feathers, while her lower hands makes the *varadamudrā* and support a *kalaśa* against her left thigh. An examination of Kumārī’s relationship to other goddesses, in this case Vasundhārā and Vajrayogini, underscores that the *torāṇa* image is an exoteric rendition of the goddess Kumārī. Specifically, through hand-held attributes, the artists have shown Kumārī’s identification with the goddess Vasundhārā.

Kumārī’s iconography on the Kumārī Bāhā *torāṇa* is nearly identical to that of the goddess Vasundhārā.46 Vasundhārā is typically shown with six

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46 We can recall that the Kumārī on the *torāṇa* at Ha Bāhā and on the sign outside of the Patan Kumārī’s home shrine had significantly different iconography than that seen on the *torāṇa* at Kumārī Bāhā. In these instances, she holds a skull-cup and makes *tarjanimudrā* with her primary hands, and holds a flaying knife and peacock feathers with her raised hands.
arms (Figure 3.30). Her upper right hand generally holds a mālā or makes an abhayamudrā-like gesture, while her middle hand holds three gems and lower right hand makes the varadamudrā. Her left hands from top to bottom hold a book, a sheaf of grain and a kalaśa. Although Kumāri is shown with only four arms, her hand-held attributes are suggestively similar to those of the goddess Vasundharā. Similar to Vasundharā, Kumāri's upper right hand holds the mālā, and she makes the varadamudrā with her lower right hand. Especially characteristic of Vasundharā's iconography, Kumāri's lower left hand holds a kalaśa.47 However, her upper left hand holds a bundle of peacock feathers, rather than the sheaf of grain held by Vasundharā. This subtle difference makes the distinction between the goddesses and the identification of this figure as Kumāri unambiguous.

Kumāri's identification with Vasundharā, an exoteric goddess, is also expressed during the Vasundharā Puja in Patan. During the Pūjā, Kumāri is seated on her throne during at Ha Bāhā. To emphasize that Kumāri is being worshiped as Vasundharā, the yellow-faced goddess, a yellow silk cloth is draped around Kumāri's shoulders48 (Figure 3.31). During the Vasundharā Puja at Ha Bāhā, the women of the community dress in yellow and perform

47 The kalaśa may alternatively or also be shown below Vasundharā's foot.

48 It is interesting to note that, Kumāri is seated directly over a yantra, which designates the "seat" of the goddess. A yantra also appears on the window lattice directly below the Kumāri torana at Kumāri Bāhā. This combination gives a clear indication that Kumāri Bāhā is first and foremost the home or "seat" of the goddess Kumāri.
religious activities, as noted previously. Miranda Shaw states that during the Kathmandu Vasundharā Vrata (austerities) the women of the community dress in fine yellow clothing, fast, and undertake pilgrimage around the city, making offerings and doing pūjās for the welfare of their family members. According to Shaw, through this vrata, the women act as bodhisattvas and, ultimately, become Vasundharā herself.⁴⁹ Hence, the yellow garments are more than symbolic. They are visual indicators that the women are transformed through the Vrata and ultimately share identity with Vasundharā. Therefore, the yellow cloth placed around Kumārī’s shoulders indicates that she is, in this context, Vasundharā.⁵⁰

A formal garment that also indicates identity sharing and transformation, and that was likely worn by a Kumārī during the Vasundharā Vrata, is now held in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Figure 3.32). Made from fine yellow brocaded silk that was probably imported into Nepal from China, this fragment of a child-size vest is generously embroidered with red, blue, green, yellow, black and white silk thread. The embroidery work creates foliate motifs and figural representations that ornament what would have been the garment’s front

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⁴⁹ Miranda Shaw, paper presentation at the International Association of the History of Religions, Durban, South Africa, August 2006.

⁵⁰ In addition to being identified with Vasundharā, Kumārī also is understood to be a physical manifestation, or laukik form, of the esoteric goddess Vajrayogini/Vajravarahi, and it is within the esoteric shrines at Kumārī Bāhā that she is worshiped as this goddess.
lower panels. Now stitched together for display purposes, the panels’ surfaces are badly worn and much of the decoration on this once spectacular piece has been lost. The vest’s small size and skillful embroidery work, as well as the fact that it was made from the finest materials available in the region, suggest that it belonged to a human form of goddess Kumārī who had royal status, possibly one of the royal Kumāris of Kathmandu, Patan, or Bhaktapur.

The blue and red male krodha figures at the top of the proper right and left triangles, respectively, are bhairavas, possibly identifiable as Samhara Bhairava and Krodha Bhairava, who are listed in some artist’s sketchbooks as having these colors, respectively.\(^5\)\(^1\) Immediately to Samhara Bhairava’s right is the goddess Bhadra Kāli, who is identifiable by her squat posture and severely emaciated body. Here, Bhadra Kāli is shown as a red deity, suggesting that she may also be Rakta (red) Kāli, an important goddess in the Kathmandu Valley. She is paired with Sveta (white) Kāli, who is also somewhat emaciated and seated to the left of Krodha Bhairava. The remaining female figures in the triangles comprise the standard group of Aṣṭamātrkā, goddesses who play an in important role in Kumārī Bāhā’s iconographic program.\(^\)\(^5\)\(^2\) The individualized vahānas associated with this


standard set of eight goddesses are missing from this composition, although other characteristics and attributes help to identify the goddesses. For example, a horizontal third eye on her forehead is unique to the goddess Indrāṇī, who is located in the proper left corner of the right triangle. Camuṇḍā, the red emaciated goddess, is located below Indrāṇī, while what is probably the goddess Vaiśnāvī is across from Camuṇḍā.

Below Sveta Kālī in the proper left triangle, the goddess Vārāhī is identifiable by her boar face, while Kaumārī, located to Vārāhī's right, is depicted as a kroḍha figure, as seen in the iconography at Kumārī Bāhā. The goddess in the top proper right corner is probably Brahmāṇī, based on the process of elimination. At the bottom of this triangle is Maheśvari, who holds the damaṇu and triśūla, while Mahālakṣmī, the remaining mātrkā is seated at the bottom of the proper right triangle. The depiction of Mahālakṣmī and Maheśvari in frontal, rather than tree-quarter.

Just as the yellow cloth around the Patan Kumārī's shoulders underscores her role as Vasundhara during the puja, so would the wearing of the vest make Kumārī's identification with the exoteric goddess Vasundhara unmistakable. The Kumārī image on the Kumārī Bāhā torāṇa, like Patan Kumārī at Vasundhara Pūjā, can be read as an exoteric goddess, further suggesting that the iconography on Kumārī Bāhā's exterior north façade, and the message that it sends, is primarily bāhya, or exoteric, and publicly accessible. The esoteric aspects of Kumārī Bāhā's courtyard iconography, on
the other hand, are less obvious. Although the iconography is visible to anyone, initiated or uninitiated, who might enter the courtyard, the role the iconography plays in defining mandalic space may be unseen. Kumārī Bāhā’s courtyard iconography, then, is not unlike the image of the esoteric goddess Vajrayoginī, which is made visible during the street procession at Sanku, but which is understood and worshiped by the uninitiated villagers to be the exoteric goddess Vasundharā.

Kumārī’s third eye also expresses the goddess’ identification with the goddesses Vajrayoginī and Vasundharā. Kumārī’s forehead, the location of her third eye, is generally painted red and then outlined in yellow during festivals or other public worship. As noted, Vajrayoginī and Vasundharā are typically associated with the colors red and yellow, respectively. I suggest that the inner red area of the third eye represents the esoteric goddess Vajrayoginī, while the outer yellow line represents the exoteric goddess Vasundharā, suggesting that Kumārī is conceived as a physical manifestation of both female deities.

Summary

Those responsible for defining Kumārī Bāhā’s iconography creatively combined goddess imagery from the ancient and ubiquitous mātrkā tradition with durgā imagery from the well-known Devīmahātmya stories. The creative and protective aspects of the mātrkās were intentionally blended
with the fierce, warrior prowess of the durgās. This mingling of iconographies allows for multivalent readings of the monument’s iconographic program, which expresses both a message of power, protection and victory over the enemy through the durgā imagery and defines the monument as a sacred and protected space through the māṭrkā imagery. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, using māṭrkā and durgā imagery to define Kumārī Bāhā as a sacred space also contributes to articulating the monument as a microcosm of the Kathmandu Valley and the religious practices associated with it.
Diagram 3.1: Location of the Aṣṭamātrkā/Navadurgā figures on the toraṇa over the main entrance to Kumāri Bāhā’s north façade.

T4a1: Mahālakṣmi on a lion
T4a2: Kaumārī on a peacock elephant
T4a3: Cāmunḍā on a human
T4a4: Vaiṣṇavi on a Garuḍa
T4a5: Brahmāṇi on a goose
T4a6: Mahēśvari on a bull
T4a7: Vārāhi on a boar
T4a8: Indrāṇī on an
Figure 3.2. The Aṣṭamātri Narāyani located in the chanting hall at the Mheipi Ajima Pitha, Kathmandu, 1996.
Figure 3.3. Mātrka Brahmāṇī on the main entrance toraṇa of Kumārī Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram 3.1 - T4a5.
Figure 3.4. The Āṣṭamātrka Brahmāyāni located in the chanting hall at the Mheipi Ajima Piṭha, Kathmandu, 1996.
Figure 3.5. Mātrka Maheśvari on the main entrance torana at Kumāri Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram 3.1 - T4a6.
Figure 3.6. The Āstamātrika Rudrayani located in the chanting hall at the Mheipi Ajima Pitha, Kathmandu, 1996.
Figure 3.7. Mātrka Vārahi on the main entrance toraṇa at Kumāri Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram 3.1 - T4a7.
Figure 3.8. The Astamatrika Vārāhi located in the chanting hall at the Mheipi Ajima Pitha, Kathmandu, 1996.
Figure 3.9, Mātrika Indrāni directly above the central figure on the main entrance torana at Kumārī Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram 3.1 - T416.
Figure 3.10. The Aṣṭamāṭrka Indrāṇī located in the chanting hall at the Mheipi Ajima Pīṭha, Kathmandu, 1996.
Figure 3.11. *Mātrka Kaumāri*, the attendant figure to the proper right of the central figure on the main entrance *torāṇa* at Kumāri Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram 3.1 - T4a2.
Figure 3.12. The Āṣṭamātrika Kaumāri located in the chanting hall at the Mheipi Ajima Pītha, Kathmandu, 1996.
Figure 3.13. Mātrka Cāmunḍa, the attendant figure to the proper left of the central figure on the main entrance torana at Kumāri Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram 3.1 - T4a3.
Figure 3.14. The Aṣṭamātrka Cāmundā located in the chanting hall at the Mheipi Ajima Pīṭha, Kathmandu, 1996.
Figure 3.15. Mahālakṣmi, the central figure on the torana over the main entrance to Kumāi Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram 3.1 - T4a1.
Figure 3.16. The *Astamātrka* Mahālakṣmī located in the chanting hall at the Mheipi Ajima *Pitha*, Kathmandu, 1996.
The figure to the left is identifiable as Mahālakṣmi by the context, the inscription, and her lion mount. The hand-held attributes are the same as those held by the central goddess on Kumārī Bāhā's main torana.

Figure 3.17. Navadurgā from an artist's sketchbook. From Blom, Figure 54.
Figure 3.18. *Sri Durgacanda Bhagavati* image from an artist’s sketchbook. From Blom, Figure 49.
Diagram 3.2: Location of Durgā and deity couples on the Kumārī Bāhā’s second level central *torana* on the north facade.

T4b1: Durgā on lions
T4b3: Brahma/Brahmāṇī (*vajra* and *dhvaja*)
T4b5: Viṣṇu/Vaiśṇavi (*cakra* and *gada*)
T4b7: female attendant figure

T4b2: Indra/Indrāṇī (*mala* and *pustaka*)
T4b4: Maheśvara/Maheśvarī (*damaru* and *triśūla*)
T4b6: Bhairava/Mātrka (*khadga* and *phalaka*)
T4b8: female attendant figure
Figure 3.19. Durgā, the central figure on the torana over the main entrance on the second level of Kumāri Bāhā’s exterior, Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram 3.2 - T4b1.
Figure 3.20. Maheśvara and Maheśvari on the torana over the main entrance on the second level of Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior, Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram 3.2 - T4b4.
Figure 3.21. Ganeśa, the central figure on the torana above the window that is right flanking the central window on Kumārī Bāhā's exterior north facade, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 3.22. Kumāra, the central figure on the torana above the window that is left flanking the central window on Kumāri Bāhā’s exterior north facade, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 3.23. Indra and Indrāṇī on the second level torana, above the main entrance, on Kumāri Bāhā's exterior north facade, Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram 3.2 - T4b2.
Figure 3.24. Brahma and Brahmāṇi on the second level toraṇa, above the main entrance, on Kumāri Bāhā’s exterior north facade, Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram 3.2 - T4b3.
Figure 3.25. Viṣṇu and Vaiṣṇavī on the second level toraṇa, above the main entrance, on Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior north facade, Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram 3.2 - T4b5.
Figure 3.26. Bhairava and Mātrka on the second level torana, above the main entrance, on Kumāri Bāhā's exterior north facade, Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram 3.2 - T4b6.
Figure 3.27. Conceptual map of the mātrka, bhairava and gāṇeṣa pīthas in Bhaktapur. From Kolver, Plate I.
Figure 3.28. Actual locations of the mātrka, bhairava and gaṇeśa pīthas. From Kolver, Plate III.
Figure 3.29. Āṣṭamātrīka and Āṣṭabhairava jamb figures on the five-bay window on the Kumāri Bāhā’s south courtyard wall on the third level. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 3.30. Vasundharā painting. From P. Pal, Art of Nepal, Plate 17.
Figure 3.31. Kumāri being worshiped as Vasundharā during the Vasundharā Pūjā, Ha Bāhā. Patan, 1994.
Figure 3.32. Yellow silk vest, when worn by a Kumārī during a Vasundharā Pūjā/Vrata, indicates Kumārī’s identification with the goddess Vasundharā, who is the exoteric face of Vajrayoginī. Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
CHAPTER 4:

KUMĀRĪ BĀHĀ AS A MICROCOSM
OF NEPAL MANḌALA

Mapping and defining the sacred space of the Kathmandu Valley and its cities continues to be one of the most studied topics in scholarship on Nepal. By at least the 1970s, scholars had recognized the centrality of sacred space within Newar culture and had begun to explore the relationship between the physical, metaphysical, and conceptual aspects of sacred space.¹ This chapter focuses on Newar concepts of sacred space and explores the way in which this important religious paradigm was brought to bear at Kumārī Bāhā, as articulated through the monument’s iconographic program. This study draws two principal conclusions about Kumārī Bāhā and its relationship to Newar concepts of sacred space. First, I suggest that Kumārī Bāhā’s iconographic program may articulate several specific sacred manḍalas

¹ In 1992, this study reached a pinnacle in Robert I. Levy’s book Mesocosm: Hinduism and the Organization of a Traditional Newar City in Nepal (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Pvt. Limited, 1990). This near-encyclopedia study examines the sacred mapping of Bhaktapur’s architecture and explores the relationship implicit in Newar notions of the universe—the macrocosm—and individual and group socio-religious practices—the microcosm. Refering to Bhaktapur as the “stage,” Levy explores the way in which the city functions as a mesocosm—a sacred space that exists as an intermediate in a dialogue between the macrocosm and the microcosm.
that are central to Newar religious practices, specifically, the Cakrasamvara/Vajraxārahi Maṇḍala, the Guhyasamāja Maṇḍala, and a Durgā Maṇḍala. The maṇḍalic iconographic program, therefore, engenders sacrality at the site. Second, in defining the monument as a Cakrasamvara/Vajraxārahi Maṇḍala, I propose that the creators established Kumārī Bahā to be a microcosm of the Kathmandu Valley, which Newars believe to be an inherently sacred space that takes the form of a Cakrasamvara/Vajraxārahi Maṇḍala.²

The Cakrasamvara/Vajraxārahi Maṇḍala

The Cakrasamvara/Vajraxārahi Maṇḍala is one of the most important maṇḍalas in Newar Buddhism. Dedicated to the heruka deities Cakrasamvara and Vajraxārahi, the Cakrasamvara Tantra describes the principal iconographic elements of the Cakrasamvara/Vajraxārahi Maṇḍala are described in the Cakrasamvara Tantra.³ According to the Cakrasamvara Tantra, the blue Cakrasamvara and his red consort Vajraxārahi are depicted at the center of the maṇḍala in passionate embrace. Twenty-four yoginīs surround these united, central deities. The yoginīs appear in three sets of

² For a significant, recent contribution to the study of sacred space as it relates to architecture, see Lindsay Jones, The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison (Cambridge, MA: Distributed by Harvard University Press for Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, 2000).

eight that are demarcated by three concentric rings. A sixteenth-century Nepali painting corresponds to this description (Figure 4.1). Surrounding the central couple are three sets of eight yoginis, placed in three concentric rings, each shown embracing her sexual partner (Figures 4.2 – 4.4). The highlighted cakras (Figures 4.2 – 4.4) represent the kāya (body), vāk (speech), and citta (heart/mind), the three cakras of the Cakrasamvara/Vajravarahi Maṇḍala and three energy centers in the practitioner’s body. As meditational aides, such paintings visually map the practitioner’s path to purifying and synchronizing his or her body, speech, and mind. The three rings of the Maṇḍala are framed by four T-shaped elements that represent the four gateways that face the cardinal directions and provide entry into the Maṇḍala (Figure 4.5). Four additional yoginis are situated in the intermediary directions between the gateways.

The Cakrasamvara Tantra also describes the presence of eight charnel grounds as a key component of the Maṇḍala. Charnel grounds are places where the dead traditionally are brought for corpse disposal in Tibet and for cremation in Nepal. Such places are populated with a variety of beings, landscape features, and architectural elements. For example, representations of charnel fields may include a caitya, a Mahāsiddha, or great wisdom yogin, a tree, the cremation fire, a tīrtha (bathing place) and
one of the Aṣṭadīkpāla. In the Maṇḍala, as in actuality in the Kathmandu Valley, the grim and terrifying charnel grounds are located outside of the boundaries of inhabited cities and towns. The painting visually expresses the peripheral locations of the charnel grounds by depicting them in a ring outside of the four gateways (Figure 4.6). Eight tīrthas divide the ring into eight sections. Each section represents one of the charnel grounds. A detail of the east charnel ground from a Cakrasamvara/Vajrayārāhi Cycle Mandala painting in the Helmut and Heidi Neumann Collection that dates to the mid-fourteenth century reveals the presence of a cremation fire, a Mahāsiddha, a tree, a tīrtha, yoginī and one of the Aṣṭadīkpāla (eight regional guardians) (Figure 4.7).

The sixteenth-century painting described here is an excellent example of an extensively articulated Cakrasamvara/Vajrayārāhi Maṇḍala, since it shows most of the main components described in the text. Artistic renderings of this Maṇḍala in Nepal, however, are ubiquitous and vary greatly. These works range from simple sculptures that depict only the central figures of the Maṇḍala to complex paintings that show most of the Maṇḍala’s elaborate

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4 Kazi Dawa-Samdup, 30-31.


6 The figures that appear in the registers outside of Mandala in this and other paintings typically represent a lineage of teachers and practitioners of the Cakrāsamvara Cycle. These figures sometimes provide clues regarding the school or sect of Buddhism to which the painting belongs. For example, the figures at the bottom of the painting wear red pointed hats, indicated that this painting was probably made for the Sakya sect.
components. Regardless of the degree of detail represented, all of these works signify the Cakrasāṃvara/Vajravārahī Maṇḍala, albeit in a more or less abbreviated form. For example, the hundreds of Cakrasāṃvara/Vajravārahī sculptures used in the āgam shrines at many bāhās in the Kathmandu Valley comprise some of the most truncated representations of this Maṇḍala. A seventeenth-century image from Nepal that likely belonged to an āgam or personal esoteric shrine at one time only depicts Cakrasāṃvara (Figure 4.8). Cakrasāṃvara, a twelve-armed figure, is identifiable by his hand-held attributes, such as the flayed elephant skin that he holds by the legs, outstretched behind his back.\(^7\) The figure may have once been surrounded by other sculpted or painted figures from the Maṇḍala. However, even if it was the item in worship, the presence of the central deity implies the presence of the entire maṇḍala, since Cakrasāṃvara is, to my knowledge, always considered by initiated Newar Buddhists to be a meditational and, therefore, maṇḍalic deity.

Slightly more elaborate sculptural renditions of this maṇḍala are also extant. Another metal sculpture from Tibet shows the maṇḍala inside a lotus bud, whose petals open and close, and demonstrates the wide variation of the Cakrasāṃvara/Vajravārahī Maṇḍala found in the Himalayan region (Figure

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\(^7\) The rogue elephant held by Cakrasāṃvara is commonly known to symbolize the practitioner’s untrained mind, which roams about wildly, out of control with discursive thought. Depiction of the flayed elephant skin represents the practitioner’s taming of his or her own mind through the process of meditation.
4.9). At the center are the embracing Cakrasamvara and Vajravarahi, surrounded by a ring of yogini figures. Cakrasamvara and Vajravarahi are joined, signifying the union of the male and female principles and the simultaneous emergence of perfect compassion and wisdom. The heruka couple's sexual union implies the inseparability of absolute wisdom and compassion and, through meditation practice on these heruka figures, the practitioner's awakened realization of absolute compassion and unobstructed wisdom.⁸

Early Nepali paintings of the Cakrasamvara/Vajravarahi Mandala, like the sculpture, usually show an abbreviated form of the mandala. A fifteenth-century Nepali painting, now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, prominently displays the deep blue Cakrasamvara and Vajravarahi embracing in the center of the composition (Figure 4.10). The central couple is surrounded by four small yogini figures, the eight charnel grounds that are consistently part of this mandala, and a host of heruka deities at the outer edges of the painting.⁹ Hence, the Cakrasamvara/Vajravarahi Mandala has been articulated in a variety of ways.


⁹ To my knowledge, a complete study of this compositional type has not been undertaken. A discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of this study. However, this compositional style of the central couple surrounded by four yoginis probably references the four major yogini pithas that contribute to the defining of the Kathmandu Valley as a Cakrasamvara/Vajravarahi Mandala.
The Kathmandu Valley as a Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala

One of the most fascinating examples of the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravarāhī Maṇḍala within the Newar Buddhist tradition emerges from Newar concepts of sacred space and ritual practices. In this representation, the entire Kathmandu Valley takes the form of the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravarāhī Maṇḍala. In their article, "Ritual as Mediator of Space in Kathmandu," Niels Gutschow and Manabajra Bajracharya identify twenty-four mātrkā pithas\(^{10}\) in the Kathmandu Valley that are arranged in three sets of eight and that "...exist in three separate and widening circles." (Figure 4.11)\(^{11}\) The smallest of the consecutive rings of Aṣṭamātrkā pithas outlined by Gutschow and Bajracharya surrounds the city of Kathmandu. The next set of pithas encircles the entire Valley. The third group of pithas occasionally extends beyond the Valley and is significantly more dispersed, while still remaining in territories that were under the hegemony of the

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\(^{10}\) D. Bangdel notes that, although the mātrkā, as definers of space, are acknowledged by most religious traditions in Nepal, different sets of pithas may be important to different sects, D. Bangdel, 784.

\(^{11}\) Gutschow and Bajracharya, "Ritual as Mediator of Space in Kathmandu." *Journal of the Nepal Research Centre*, no 1. (Kathmandu: Nepal Research Centre Publications, 1977) 4. It should be noted that these concentric “circles” actually take the form of polygons that have some overlap of their outer edges. This does not, however, undermine the validity of their role, since they are conceptualized as concentric circles, like those in the painting of the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravarāhī Maṇḍala painting.
Newar kings. In practice, the māṭrkā rings would be read from the outer, or the kāya cakra, to the inner, or the citta cakra, with the very center being equated with mahāsukha, or great bliss. No obvious visual indictors or signage denote that these particular Aṣṭamāṭrkā pīṭhas comprise three conceptual groupings, which combine to make a set of twenty-four goddesses. However, Gutschow and Bajracharya note an esoteric ritual practice that links this grouping. Known as the caturvimśatipīṭhapūjā, or pīṭhapūjā, the practice is performed by Vajrācāryas and takes place over the course of one year. During this time, Vajrācāryas undergo pilgrimage to each of the pīṭhas in the three circles. By undertaking this pilgrimage practice, visiting each of the locations and engaging in rituals at each site, the practitioner purifies his own body, speech, and mind, since, in this context, these rings of pīṭhas correspond to the kāya, vāk, and citta cakras.

The outer, middle, and central rings of the māṭrkā pīṭhas, which correspond to the kāyacakra, the vākcakra, and the cittacakra, respectively, are associated with the yogic cakras, or energy centers, in the practitioner’s body. The kāyacakra is located in the forehead, while the vākcakra, which is associated with speech, is located at the throat. The cittacakra, or heart/mind center, is found in the center of the chest and is associated with

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12 Gutschow and Bajracharya, 4.
13 Gutschow and Bajracharya, 4.
14 For a further description of this pūjā, see D. Bangdel, 780-786.
the mind or thought. As an entire group, the twenty-four mātrkā pīṭhas correspond with the twenty-four substances that comprise the physical world and the human body.¹⁵ Practitioners typically accomplish purification and synchronization of body, speech, and mind through meditational practices that, in part, focus on these centers of the body. In the caturvimśatipīṭhapūjā, practitioners undertake this purification process within the physical landscape through pilgrimage, thus, identifying the human body, or the individual, with the outer world. Through agency and physical action in the external world in the form of this pilgrimage pūjā, the practitioner purifies and synchronizes his body, speech and mind, as he would do in meditation. The following passage by Gutschow and Bajracharya, based on ethnographic research, expresses a modern, and possibly, traditional, Newar Buddhist understanding of the relationship between the internal and external worlds, and the degree to which Newar culture and religious practices are rooted in the land that surrounds them, the country they inhabit.

“...his pilgrimage makes him realize how the world he inhabits, the world characterized by Newar culture, is mirrored in his body, is [identical] with it....”¹⁶

¹⁵ Gutschow and Bajracharya, 9.
¹⁶ Gutschow and Bajracharya, 9.
The *pīṭhas*, then, are conceived as generating the phenomenal world, and the pilgrimage practice expresses the relationship between the macrocosm and the microcosm that is the practitioner’s body.

In his discussion of “merit-making through local pilgrimage,” David Gellner builds on the work of Gutschow and Bajracharya regarding the three rings of the *Aṣṭamāṭrkā pīṭha*s and the concept of the Kathmandu Valley as a *maṇḍala*. Recalling a recitation called the “Adya mahādāna” (“And now the great gift”) spoken by the Vajrācārya at the beginning of every ritual, Gellner quotes the line that identifies Nepal as a Cakrasaṃvara Manḍala: “...in the land presided over by Śrī Maṇjuśrī, in the land (or maṇḍala) of Nepal, which has the form of the maṇḍala of Śrī Saṃvara [i.e., Cakrasaṃvara, the main Buddhist Tantric deity]...” Through her examination of the artwork, textual evidence, and ritual practices, Dina Bangdel shows explicitly that the three rings of *māṭrkā pīṭha*s are the three *cakras* of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala.\(^{19}\)

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\(^{17}\) Gellner, 189-192.

\(^{18}\) Gellner, 191-192.

\(^{19}\) Bangdel makes explicit the relationship between sets of *māṭrkā* rings and the Valley as being in the form of a Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala in her dissertation, where she provides a thorough discussion of the *māṭrkā pīṭhas* and their role as goddesses who define the Kathmandu Valley as a Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. See D. Bangdel, Chapter 6.
Kumārī Bāhā as a Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala and Microcosm of the Valley

The *Cakrasamvara Tantra* and the painting seen in Figure 4.1, indicate that the kāya, vāk, and citta cakras of the Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhī Maṇḍala are defined by twenty-four yoginīs. At Kumārī Bāhā, I suggest that the three rings of mātrkā/durgā figures on the monument’s courtyard toranas and struts serve as equivalent to the yoginīs in the painting. Therefore, I propose that the monument is conceived as a Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhī Maṇḍala (See Sketch 4.1 and Appendix A: Figures A.24 – A.39, Diagram A.2).

20 See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the three rings of mātrkā/durgā figures on Kumārī Bāhā’s courtyard facades.
The *caturviṃśatipīṭhapūjā*, discussed above, supports the idea that the mātrkās, who are conceived as identical with the durgās in certain contexts, are equivalent to the *yoginīs* in other contexts, since during the pilgrimage to the twenty-four mātrkā pīthas, Newar Buddhists physically acknowledge that the three cakras of the Valley’s Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala are defined by the mātrkā pīthas. D. Bangdel notes that Newar Buddhist practitioners who undergo this pilgrimage prior to their initiation into the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi practice cycle refer to the goddesses at the mātrkā pīthas they visit as *yoginīs*, suggesting that the mātrkā pītha devatās can be equivalent to the *yoginīs* of the maṇḍala. “The Aṣṭamātrkās, in this context [pīṭha pūjā], are supramundane meditational deities (*alaukika devata*) that enable the practitioner to perfect the Tantric yogic practices. The Mātrkās, in this context, are referred to as *yoginīs*, and provide the practitioner *siddhi* or the realization the purified *tathāgatagarbha* within.”

The substitution of mātrkā figures for *yogini* figures in the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi Maṇḍala at Kumārī Bāḥā, then, is consistent with Newar expressions of this sacred diagram. The depiction of the cakra goddesses as mātrkās, rather than *yoginīs*, at Kumārī Bāḥā creates a relationship between the monument and the Valley’s sacred space, in which

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21 D. Bangdel, 784.
the body, speech, and mind cakras of the Valley's Maṇḍala are formed not through the presence of yogini sites, but through the three groupings of the Aṣṭamaṭrkā pithas.

It is notable that, it is unusual for bāhā architecture to contain three complete levels on all four sides.\textsuperscript{22} When a bāhā is constructed as a complete four-sided monument, typically it has two levels on three sides and three or five levels on the main shrine wall. Instead, Kumāri Bāhā is a highly symmetrical, three-tiered monument in which the levels are overtly demarcated on both the exterior and courtyard facades through the placement of strips of wood horizontally between them on each facade (Figures 4.12). This visual differentiation of the levels emphasizes the grouping of the toranas and struts into three consecutive circles of eight goddesses, corresponding, I suggest, to the three rings of goddesses that form the cakras of the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi Maṇḍala.

Correspondence to the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi Maṇḍala is also suggested by the six\textsuperscript{23} charnel grounds depicted in the relief carvings at the end of the courtyard lintels on Kumāri Bāhā's first level (Figures 4.13a-f). The small panels show a linga, a sacred tree, a tīrtha, the cremation fire, and

\textsuperscript{22} See Chapter 2 for a discussion of bāhā architectural types.

\textsuperscript{23} Only six, rather than eight, charnel grounds are carved on the lintels at Kumāri Bāhā, since the south courtyard wall does not have a vestibule, but is the main shrine wall.
a caitya. In addition, each panel bears the depiction of a different animal, namely, a dog(?), an elephant, a peacock, a lion, a boar, and a bull(?). The similarity between the selection of animals and the vahānas of the goddesses suggests that these animals may be intended to represent the mātrakās vahānas. If this is the case, this would be a further link the charnel grounds in the reliefs to those of the Valley, since each Valley charnel ground has a mātrakā pitha associated with it. If the three-dimensional scheme of the courtyard facade were rendered as a two-dimensional diagram, with the top level becoming the inner cakra and the first level becoming the outer cakra, the charnel grounds would be approximately located at the periphery. As in the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi Maṇḍala painting, the charnel grounds encircle the body, speech, and mind cakras (Figure 4.1).

The daśadikpāla figures on the exterior north facade's struts can also be interpreted as elements in the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi Maṇḍala, thus reinforcing the theory that Kumārī Bāhā is conceived as the Maṇḍala (Figures A.14 – A.23; Diagram A.1 – S1 - 10.). Although they are not depicted in the charnel grounds at Kumārī Bāhā as they are in the painting, their presence on the exterior of the monument correlates with their positioning at the outer edges of the Maṇḍala. Eight dikpāla are typically represented in the Maṇḍala, while ten appear at Kumārī Bāhā. However,

24 The charnel ground carvings at Kumārī Bāhā can also be read as a direct reference to the charnel grounds that accompany the actual Āstamātrakā pithas.
since much of the *mandalic* patterning in the Valley is conceptual, rather than literal, the presence of two additional *dikpālas* does not negate the Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhī theme at the site, and one could argue that even when eight *dikpāla* are depicted, the *aṣṭadikpāla* are implied.

The *Svayambhū caitya* in the center of Kumārī Bāhā’s courtyard provides additional evidence that the monument is defined as a Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhī Maṇḍala. As noted in Chapter 2, the *Svayambhū caitya* is one of the core iconographic elements of all bāhā architecture, and it is conceived as being a surrogate for the *Svayambhū Mahācaitya* in Kathmandu. D. Bangdel has shown that, not only is the Mahācaitya conceived to be at the conceptual center of the Valley, but it also, on one level, generates the Valley’s *maṇḍala*.25 *Svayambhū caitya* in Kumārī Bāhā’s courtyard, then, as a surrogate of the original *caitya*, may be read as generating the monument’s *maṇḍalic* space—the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhī Maṇḍala. Further, the *yantra* located in Kumārī Bāhā’s courtyard symbolizes the goddess Guhyeśvari, who is conceived as being the ontological source of the Kathmandu Valley (Figure 4.13g). According to the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, Guhyeśvari was the source of the great lotus from which the *svayambhū jyotirupa* arose. Together, the *yantra* and the *caitya* in Kumārī Bāhā’s courtyard, I suggest, reiterates the sacred history of the

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25 D. Bangdel, 432.
Valley’s creation and further indicate that Kumārī Bāhā is a microcosm of the Kathmandu Valley. In addition, Kumārī Bāhā is one of the only bāhās in Kathmandu City to have a Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala in its courtyard,26 further suggesting that Kumārī Bāhā was intentionally constructed to reiterate the Valley’s sacred geography.

As noted earlier, Kumārī is a laukik, or form manifestation, of the meditational deity Vajrayogini/Vajravārāhi,27 thus underscoring the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi Maṇḍala association with Kumārī Bāhā. During Kumārī Jatra, held each autumn, Newar Buddhists take the Kathmandu Kumārī from her chem and place her in a small red palanquin lined with thick, red cushions and covered in red cloth embroidered with gold thread (Figure 4.14). Stripped of its coverings, the base of the seat shows three circular rings, carved neatly into the wooden seat (Figure 4.15). Just as Vajravārāhi stands inside of the kāya, vāk, and citta cakras of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala, so Kumārī is placed inside the palanquin on top of three cakras—an act that I suggest symbolizes her oneness with the goddess Vajravārāhi.

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26 The Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala is a common iconographic feature in the bāhās of Patan City.

27 D. Bangdel, 918.
The Jina Buddhas at Kumāri Bāhā

The layering of meanings and complexity of iconography described above is also developed in other imagery at Kumāri Bāhā. The figures of the Jina Buddhas carved on the toraṇa over the kvāhpāḥ dyah depict a kvāhpāḥ dyah iconography that, to my knowledge, is unique to Kumāri Bāhā. In addition, the presence of five stone Jina Buddha sculptures inside the shrine also relates to the concept of māṇḍalas and the generation of māṇḍalic space already noted.

The toraṇa above the shrine depicts a complex, esoteric, six-armed form of the Jina Buddhas. The Jina Buddhas are the core iconographic figures that are commonly understood to be inherent in most māṇḍalas. The Jina Buddhas are clearly identifiable by their vāhanas and the attributes they hold in their primary hands. In the center of the toraṇa is Vairocana, who is seated on a platform that shows his lion vāhana at the base (Figure 4.16). His holds his identifying attribute, the cakra, in his primary right hand in front of his chest. His primary left hand holds the ghanta, or bell, which is silenced against his left leg. Vairocana holds the other Jina Buddhas' identifying attributes, or kula symbols, in his remaining hands—the vajra, the sword, the lotus and the triratnas (three jewels).

28 A toraṇa located on the second level of Chusya Bāhā's south courtyard wall may also depict a Guhyasamāja Cycle Mandala. However, Chusya Bāhā's kvāhpāḥ dyah iconography, like that of most bāhās in Kathmandu, contains a single image of Śakyamuni/Akṣobhya Buddha.
To Vairocana’s right is Aksobhya, seated on an elephant platform and holding a vajra in his primary hand (Figure 4.17). The remaining attributes, in a clockwise direction starting from the lower left, are the cakra, the sword, the lotus, the noose and the ghanta. Amitābha, seated to Vairocana’s immediate left, is identifiable by his peacock vāhana. He holds the ghanta in front of his chest and his kula symbol, the lotus, in his outstretched right hand (Figure 4.18). His remaining attributes are the vajra, the sword, gems and the noose. Ratnasambhava, the Buddha shown above Aksobhya, is seated on a horse vāhana and holds the gems of his ratna kula in his proper right hand (Figure 4.19). He also holds the vajra, the sword, the cakra, the lotus, and the ghanta. Finally, Amoghasiddhi, who is located above Amitābha, holds a visvavajra in his primary hand, and the cakra, the sword, the padma, the noose, and the ghanta in his remaining hands (Figure 4.20).

My research suggests that, based on the hand-held attributes, these five Buddhas correspond to the central figures in the Piṇḍikramoktāksobhyamanḍala, a Guhyasamāja cycle maṇḍala, that is described in the Nispanniyogāvali.29 The text describes the Jina Buddhas as

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29 The Nispanniyogāvali is one of the most often used texts in Newar Buddhism. For a reproduction of the Nispanniyogāvali palm-leaf manuscript, now in the National Archives, Kathmandu, see Nispanniyogāvali: Two Sanskrit Manuscripts from Nepal, compiled by Gudrun Bühnemann and Musashi Tachikawa (Tokyo: The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1991). A translation and recollection of the Nispanniyogāvali is available in Marie-Therese De Mallmann, Introduction A L'Iconographie Du Tantrisme Bouddhique, (Paris: Bibliothèque du Centre de Recherches sur L'Asie Centrale et La Haute Asie, 1975), 1.
six-armed figures with kula symbols rotating in their hands. Guhyasamāja\textsuperscript{30} cycle mandalas typically feature Akṣobhya, rather than Vairocana, as the central figure, and each Buddha’s hand-held attributes are specifically described as the kula symbols, plus the ghanta. The Jina Buddhas on the torana, however, consistently hold the sword, rather than one of the standard attributes, that is described in the Piṇḍikramamandala.\textsuperscript{31} At the same time, Manjugosha/Manjuvajra, a form of Manjusri, is a central figure in the Piṇḍikramamanda, and, as is well-known, Manjusri’s characteristic attribute is a sword. Further, in Nepal, Manjusri is referred to as “Vairocana Atman,” or the self of Vairocana.\textsuperscript{32} In this light, it is understood that Vairocana, rather than Akṣobhya, is the central figure on the torana.\textsuperscript{33}

A small image of Vajrasattva appears at the top center of the torana (Figure 4.21). During the Gurumandala Pūja, the practitioner meditates on himself as Vajrasattva, the purified, adamantine being and, through this

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\footnote{The Guhyasamāja Maṇḍala is classified as a Father Tantra. It may have been selected for Kumārī Bāhā’s kvāpāḥ dyah, since the Cakrasavara/Vajravārāhi Maṇḍala is classified as a Mother Tantra. Together the maṇḍalas could signify the male and female principles, which are conceived as compassion and wisdom, respectively, the essential components of enlightenment.}

\footnote{For further information on this mandala, see Yoga of the Guhyasañjātantra: The Arcane Lore of Forty Verses by Alex Wayman. (Dehi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977), 126-130.}

\footnote{For a discussion of Manjusri as “Vairocana Atman,” see D. Bangdel, 266.}

\footnote{Manjusri’s central importance in Nepal cannot be overstated. As noted earlier, according to the Svayambhu Purana, Manjusri’s great compassion led to the draining of the Kathmandu Valley, which was once a lake. This act made the area inhabitable for humans. Reference to Manjusri in Nepali artwork, directly or indirectly, is ubiquitous in the Kathmandu Valley, and variations of maṇḍala cycles that include him are common in Nepal.}
\end{footnotesize}
meditational process, becomes the deity. In Nepal, Vajrācāryās first engage in this meditational practice to become Vajrasattva before beginning to perform a ritual or pūjā (Figure 4.22). Donned in a Vajrasattva crown, the priest raises his hands, which hold the vajra and the ghanta and, at that moment, the practitioner is transformed into the deity. I suggest that, in the same way, the Vajrasattva image depicted on the top of the toraṇa is conceived as the generative component of the maṇḍala. In other words, just as the purified practitioner generates the maṇḍalas upon which he is meditating, so Vajrasattva generates the toraṇa mandala.

In the shrine interior, the Pañca (five) Jina Buddhas, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi, and Vairocana, are depicted as two-armed seated figures, identifiable by their hand gestures, namely, the bhumisparśmudrā, the varadamudrā, the dhyanamudrā, the abhayamudrā, and the dharmacakramudrā (Figure 4.23). In Tantric Buddhism, the Jina Buddhas comprise the core elements of a maṇḍala. As on the toraṇa, inside the shrine, the sculpture of Vairocana is slightly larger than the sculptures of the other Buddhas. The presence of all five Buddhas in the kvāhpāḥ dyāḥ is highly unusual and further suggests the importance of maṇḍalic patterning at Kumāri Bāhā, as the primary interpretation of the Jina Buddhas is as a maṇḍalic grouping.

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34 For more discussion of this practice, see Gellner, 148-151.
In no other case, of which I am aware, do sculptures of five Jina Buddhas occupy the kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine. In addition, Kumāri Bāhā’s kvāhpāḥ dyah is unusually stark, with the Buddha figures’ only adornments being small cloth offerings that hang around their necks. By comparison, the interior of the kvāhpāḥ dyah shrine at Uku Bāhā in Patan shows a fully adorned Buddha, in this case Śakyamuni/Akṣobhya, with fine clothing, jewelry and other regalia (Figure 4.24). Daily pūjā to the Buddha image involves an elaborate ritual that includes the offering of rice, kum kum powder, incense, and water, and the dyahpāhlāḥ tends to the Buddha by fanning him with a large cauri while ringing a bell. Therefore, although Kumāri Bāhā’s kvāhpāḥ dyah may seem relatively insignificant from the standpoint of the Bāhā’s function, and even its decoration, the presence of the five stone buddhas in the shrine and those on the the torāṇa iconography add another mandalic scheme to Kumāri Bāhā’s iconographic program. Since the five Jina Buddhas are the core element in Tantric mandalas, it may be suggested that the inclusion of this unique kvāhpāḥ dyah iconographic feature at Kumāri Bāhā, served the very specific purpose of generating further mandalic layers in the monument.

Kumāri Bāhā as a Durgā Maṇḍala

Additional mandalas may also have been incorporated into the iconography of Kumāri Bāhā. The notable presence of Durgā and Durgā-
related imagery at Kumāri Bāhā raises the issue of whether the monument’s iconography also expresses a Durgā Maṇḍala. A Nepali painting, probably dating from eighteenth-century and now in the Kathmandu National Museum, Kathmandu, suggests that this may be the case, since the painting’s iconography is suggestively similar to that found at Kumāri Bāhā (Figure 4.25).

A large image of Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardini is prominently featured at the center of the painting (Figure 4.26). Here, in addition to defeating Mahiṣa, the great goddess also subdues Nisumbha and Sumbha, two additional asuras that appear later in the Devimahātmya story. The central figure is flanked by two vertical registers that are divided into six sections each. The center four sections of each vertical register contain an image of a goddess, creating a total of eight goddesses in the grouping around the central figure (Figure 4.27). These eight goddesses stand on lion vahānas and are shown slaying the buffalo demon Mahiṣa. That there are eight goddesses in the group suggests a possible link with Aṣṭamātrkā imagery, but the fact that they have iconographic features indicative of the Navadurgā cycle suggests that these painting images may function on multiple levels.

The iconography of the eight goddesses and the central Durgā in the painting bears striking similarity to the iconography of the exterior toraṇa iconography at Kumāri Bāhā (Appendix A: Figures A.1 – A.4, A.6 – A.9; Diagram A.2 – T2a, T2b, T3a, T3b, T5a, T5b, T6a, T6b). The eight toraṇas
over the doors and windows on the first and second level of the Bāhā show mātrakā/durgā figures standing on lion vahānas. I propose that, conceptually, the figures can be read as surrounding the central Durgā figure that appears on the second level toraṇa, directly above the monument's main entrance. As occurs in the painting, they can be read as a group of eight goddesses, correlating on one level to the Aṣṭamātrakā. Additionally, they comprise a group of eight goddesses surrounding a central, primary, and generative goddess, creating a group of Navadurgā.

There are other similarities between the iconography of the painting and Kumāri Bāhā. For example, in the painting, sixteen mātrakā figures are arranged in two groups of eight in the outer vertical registers (Figure 4.28). Eight of these, identifiable by their respective vahāna, correspond to the common list of Aṣṭamātrakā. The additional eight goddesses are seated on corpses. Kumāri Bāhā's courtyard toraṇa iconography also bears sixteen goddess figures, here comprised of the two rings of eight mātrakā-durga figures located on the toraṇas. As in the painting, eight of the sixteen goddesses stand on their unique and characteristic vahānas, eight stand on lions identical vahānas. In contrast to the corpses that appear in the painting, the Kumāri Bāhā goddesses stand atop lions. The presence of sixteen female figures, eight of which can be identified as the core mātrakā
figures and eight who may represent a single type repeated eight times, suggest significant iconographic similarities and suggests the presence of a Durgā maṇḍala at Kumāri Bāhā.

The painting's upper register contains the Aṣṭabhāirava, four located on either side of a dancing form of Śiva, who is situated on a vertical axis directly above the central Durgā image (Figure 4.29). The Aṣṭabhāirava are identifiable by their vāhanas, their kroḍha appearance, and the nāgas that hang around their necks. At Kumāri Bāhā, the Aṣṭabhāirava are paired with the Aṣṭamāṭrkā on the courtyard facade's third level window jambs, with two bhairava paired with two māṭrkā on each of the four windows, making a total of eight bhairava figures (Figure 4.30).

Directly below the Aṣṭabhāirava, in the painting's second register from the top, are what appear to be Navadurgā figures (Figure 4.31). Although they are individualized by their clothing and attributes, each goddess stands on a lion, but only a few of them are shown slaying Mahiṣa. As just discussed, the māṭrkā/durgā figures on Kumāri Bāhā's exterior north facade also stand on lions, rather than the distinct vāhanas typically seen in Aṣṭamāṭrkā and Navadurgā imagery (Figures A.1 – A.4, A.6 – A.9; Diagram A.2 – T2a, T2b, T3a, T3b, T5a, T5b, T6a, T6b). Also, as seen on the Bāhā's exterior toraṇas, not all of these māṭrkā/durgā figures are shown slaying Mahiṣa. Again, an the monument and the painting do not match perfectly, but this may not be required to prove the suggestion that the durgās at
Kumāri Bāhā may represent a Durgā Maṇḍala. Indeed, as I will suggest in Chapter 5, Kumāri Bāhā’s iconography represents a new iconographic synthesis, deliberately fashioned to serve the needs of its creators. Such variations may have been necessary to allow the images to have multiple and fluid meanings.

Along the horizontal register directly below the central figure of the painting is a set of Aṣṭadīkpāla. These figures flank three female figures, namely, Bhadra Kālī and two krodha figures seated on corpses (Figure 4.32). Bhadra Kālī is located in the center of the row, directly in line with Durgā and Śiva, who are in the middle and at the top of the composition, respectively. She is identified by her emaciated body and squatting posture. Bhadra Kālī is not explicitly depicted at Kumāri Bāhā. However, the dīkpāla, ten, rather than eight, are located on the monument’s exterior struts (Figures A.14 – A.23; Diagram A.1 – S1-10). As in the case of the Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhi Maṇḍala painting, eight dīkpāla are depicted in the painting, rather than the ten dīkpāla that occur at Kumāri Bāhā. Again, this iconographic variation may have been necessary for the creation of a cohesive, multi-layered iconographic program.

The central portion of the badly damaged bottom register shows what appear to be the patrons of the painting engaged in worship practices. Gaṇeśa and Kumāra flank this group on the proper right and left sides, respectively (Figure 4.33). At Kumāri Bāhā, the torāṇas located over the
small windows on the monument’s exterior second level depict Gaṇeśa and Kumāra (Figures A.12 – A.13; Diagram A.1 – T4c and T4e).

The similarity of the iconographic features of the painting and Kumāri Bāhā may be more than coincidental, or even the result of broadly shared iconographic elements through the Valley, and possibly suggests the presence of a Durgā maṇḍala or at least an added layer of Durga imagery to the mātrkā/yogini imagery at Kumāri Bāhā. As in the case of the mātrkā/yoginis, there may also be geographic reference to region of the kingdom, for while Newar Buddhist texts and ritual practices indicate that the Kathmandu Valley exists in the form of a Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala, a vaṃśāvalī states that Kathmandu takes the form of Durgā’s sword. Although I have found no reference that correlates specific physical locations with Durgā’s sword or a Durgā maṇḍala, further study may reveal that the city has been mapped in this detailed way and that the resulting sacred space corresponds to a Durgā maṇḍala. Again, as will be shown in Chapter 5, the desire to link the iconography of the monument to the the kingly realm of Jayaprabha Malla, the creator of Kumāri Bāhā, may have resulted from a deliberate strategy.

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35 Although one cannot say for certain that the painting depicts a maṇḍala, the fact that the painting shows a large central deity surrounded by related figures suggests a maṇḍala format.

36 Wright, 103.
Through the inclusion of *matṛka/durgā* imagery, the “*maṇḍalic* goddesses,” and associated iconographic elements at Kumārī Bāhā, the sacred space is repeatedly generated. The Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi Maṇḍala of Kumārī Bāhā echoes the Maṇḍala that defines the Valley as an inherently sacred space, and, therefore, suggests that Kumārī Bāhā is a microcosm of the Valley’s sacred geography. Recognizing naturally occurring sacred spaces and defining human-made spaces as *maṇḍalas* is common in Newar socio-religious activities. Newars traditionally maintain that numerous physical forms, including temples, cities, human bodies, and the Valley participate in or take the form of a *maṇḍala*.\(^{37}\) To use the words of anthropologist David Gellner, “...the Valley is indeed conceptualized in the rituals and inscriptions of both Buddhists and Hindus as a maṇḍala and... the maṇḍala model serves to structure space in a host of other contexts as well...”\(^{38}\)

Among the sacred sites in the Nepal *maṇḍala*, the most relevant of to the study at hand are the *Aṣṭamāṭrkā pīthas*, the locations where mother goddesses are said to physically manifest in the human world. While individual *pīthas* behave as “points” of sacredness, when combined into groups, these self-existing sacred places generate or mark larger areas of sacred space. Any areas enclosed in their collective boundaries are deemed

\(^{37}\) The *maṇḍala*, in fact, is conceived as generating the phenomenal world.

\(^{38}\) Gellner, 190.
sacred. The simultaneous presence and conceptual grouping of the
Aṣṭamāṭrkā pīthas around Bhaktapur define the boundaries between the city
and the periphery, the internal and the external, between order and chaos,
and between the safe and the dangerous. Implicit in this boundary marking
is the notion of protection—that which is contained within the sacred circles
is protected by the powerful mother goddesses who present at the edges.39
By inference, I suggest the iconography on the courtyard walls of Kumārī
Bāhā functions in the same manner.

Kumārī Bāhā as a Śri Yantra

An additional maṇḍalic pattern in Kumārī Bāhā’s iconographic
program may be the Śri Yantra, a maṇḍala central to the Śakta Tantric
tradition. In his dissertation, Jeffrey S. Lidke explores the relationship
between Śakta Tantra, kingship, and the goddesses Tripurasundari, Taleju,
and Kumārī. Centering his research in the city of Bhaktapur, Lidke notes
that Śakta Tantrikas, a group of Tantric practitioners that includes many of
the Malla Kings, conceive the Kathmandu Valley to be in the form of a Śri
Yantra maṇḍala, which is generated by the great goddess, Devi.
Unfortunately, I was only recently able to secure a copy of Lidke’s

39 For a discussion of the Aṣṭamāṭrkā pīthas around Bhaktapur and their role as definers of
space and protective forces, see Anne Vergati, Gods, Men and Territory: Society and Culture
dissertation, and, therefore, have not been able to pursue this line of research as it may pertain to Kumāri Bāhā as a microcosm of the Kathmandu Valley.

My preliminary examination of Kumāri Bāhā, in light of Lidke’s study, suggests that, if the monument is conceived as a Śri Yantra, it is not explicitly articulated in the iconographic program. However, one could argue that this maṇḍala is implicit, given the fact that, as Lidke demonstrates, when a king and other tantrikas, propitiate Kumāri as Guhyeśvari, in the visualization, they overlay the Śri Yantra on the goddess’ body and cognize the equivalent nature of the goddess, the Valley, and the body—in essence, the unity of the phenomenal world. Given Kumāri Bāhā’s complex iconographic program and its extensive use of ślesa, it is highly probable that additional layers of meaning may be present, and I hope to extend this study with an eye toward Lidke’s findings.⁴⁰

*The Valley Goddesses and Kumāri Bāhā*

In addition to the Aṣṭamāṭṛkā and Navadurgā, which are depicted on the torāṇas throughout Kumāri Bāhā, I suggest that the monument’s iconography implies the presence of other important goddesses in the Kathmandu Valley, namely, Vajrayoginī, Durgā, Kālī, Taleju, Mahālakṣmi, and Guhyeśvari. Eight figures, one carved at each corner of each of the four

five-bay windows on the courtyard's third level, are regularly depicted in Nepali art, two accompanying each of these goddesses. The corner window jamb figures on the west wall depict the dancing Simhini and Vyaghrihiti, who are identified by their lion and tiger faces, respectively, as well as their hand-held attributes (Figures 4.34 and 4.35). Both figures hold skull-cups in their primary right hand and make the tarjanimudra with their primary left hand. The figure on the south corner holds a damaru and a khatvanga in her raised hands. The north corner figure's raised upper right arm is damaged, but it is likely that it originally held a damaru, the attribute often paired with the khatvanga. These dakinis often attend Vajrayogini and are sometimes be depicted outside of her shrine, as seen at Sanku (Figure 4.36).

The corner window jamb figures on the north wall show Ganesa and Kumara (Figure 4.37 and 4.38). Ganesa is identifiable by his elephant head, as well as the tusk and sweets that he holds in his primary right and left hands, respectively. Kumara is shown holding a gem and a pot in his primary hands and a mala and a bundle of peacock feathers in the raised hands. Ganesa and Kumara are often shown accompanying the goddess Durga, as seen on the south courtyard wall of the second level at Kumari Baha (Figure A.40).

The corner jambs on the west wall show a skeleton and a hairy corpulent figure (Figures 4.39 and 4.40). These figures appear at numerous pithas, and may symbolize the presence of various pitha devataas found
throughout the Valley. For example, they are painted on either side of the shrine entrance at the Kāli pīṭha in Kathmandu (Figures 4.41 and 4.42). Given the prominence of the goddesses alluded to by the jamb figures, the skeleton and corpulent figures depicted at Kumārī Bāhā may suggest the goddess Kāli, one of Nepal’s most regularly propitiated pīṭha devatās.

The attendant figures on the south wall’s corner window jambs suggest the presence of the goddess Taleju (Figures 4.43 and 4.44). These pacific female figures, one of whom holds a mirror and one of whom holds a vase, often accompany the goddess Taleju. The toraṇa above the famous golden gateway at the Bhaktapur Malla Palace depicts Taleju, who has one foot placed on her Garuda vāhana and is flanked by vase-and-mirror-holding female figures (Figure 4.45). Ranjitkar has suggested that the mirror-and-vase-holding figures are the goddesses Sarasvatī and Vasundhāra, and that, at Kumārī Bāhā, they attend the goddess Mahālakṣmi.41

Ranjitkar’s assertion seems to be based on knowledge obtained through personal involvement with the Kumārī cult. Although I cannot confirm the specific identity of the mirror-and-vase-holding goddesses as Sarasvatī and Vasundhāra, my iconographic research supports Ranjitkar’s suggestion that these figures may indicate the presence of Mahālakṣmi at the site, since she is prominently depicted as the central goddess on Kumārī Bāhā’s main entrance toraṇa. Mahālakṣmi’s presence on Kumārī Bāhā’s

41 Ranjitkar, 11-12.
main entrance *toraṇa* infers that she is equivalent to Kumāri, since my study of temples and shrines in Nepal indicates that the deity depicted over a *dyochemi*’s entrance is usually the deity worshiped in the monument.

These mirror-and-vase-holding female figures also attend Kumāri. The exterior of Dipaṅkara Bāhā in Patan, where the Bhaktapur Kumāri is worshiped, shows a large metal mirror and vase, which serve as non-anthropomorphic representations of the attendant figures that hold them. As if to proclaim Kumāri’s presence at the site, the mirror and vase are attached to the exterior second level of the structure (Figure 4.46). Therefore, it is possible that the mirror-and-vase-holding attendant figures on the south wall jambs, simultaneously indicate Taleju, Mahālakṣmi, and Kumāri.  

Finally, I suggest that, when read as a set, the eight attendant figures on the window jambs, which individually indicate the presence of Vajrayogini, Durgā, Kālī, Taleju, and Mahālakṣmi at the site, suggest the goddess Guhyeśvari’s presence at Kumāri Bāhā. The entrance to the Guhyeśvari *pītha* near Paśupatināth is marked by a large, concrete gateway (Figure 4.47). Artists have depicted three sets of attendant figure pairs, all of which are present at Kumāri Bāhā, on the Guhyeśvari gateway. Ganeśa and Kumāra flank the entrance at the base of the gate (Figures 4.48 and 4.49).

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42 As will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Five, Taleju, Mahālakṣmi, and Kumāri all have a relationship to kingship. Therefore, in Nepal, these attendant figures may be associated with goddesses who have royal affiliations.
The skeleton and corpulent figures stand in bent-leg posture, facing inward, directly above Gaṇeśa and Kumāra, respectively (Figure 4.50 and 4.51). On the brightly painted toraṇa over the entrance, Simhini and Vyāghriṇhī, the lion and tiger faced dakinis, flank a kalaśa, the most common representation for Guhyeśvari in Nepali art (Figure 4.52).

Kumāri and the Valley Goddesses

The corner window jamb iconography on the five-bay window on Kumāri Bāhā’s courtyard facades not only indicate the presence of the Valley’s great goddesses at the site. I suggest that the iconography also underscores Kumāri’s equivalence with these goddesses. Scholars have discussed Kumāri’s relationship to the goddesses Taleju, Vajrayogini, and Durgā at length and have demonstrated that Kumāri is worshiped as these goddesses in various contexts. For example, each day the Acāju from the palace visits Kumāri Bāhā and, in Kumāri’s main shrine, worships her as Taleju, the tutelary deity of the Malla and Shah dynasties.\(^{43}\) Similarly, the Rāj Guru from Sikhamu Bāha propitiates Kumāri as Vajrārāhi/Vajrayogini in Kumāri Bāhā’s āgam.\(^{44}\) Finally, during the Dasain Festival each autumn, Nepalis propitiate Kumāri as the goddess Durgā.\(^{45}\)

\(^{43}\) Locke, 257.

\(^{44}\) Locke, 257.

\(^{45}\) Allen, 32-34.
Scholars have given less attention to Kumārī's relationship with Mahālakṣmī. However, the depiction of Mahālakṣmī as the central figure on Kumārī Bāhā’s main entrance torana suggests that Kumārī is also equivalent to Mahālakṣmī, who is worshiped in Nepal in her own right apart from the other Aṣṭamātrkā and Navadurgā. Similarly, scholars rarely note an association between Kumārī and Kālī, and, to my knowledge, their relationship is not overtly indicated iconographically elsewhere in the Valley. However, her presence amongst the other goddesses, with whom Kumārī is known to be associated, at Kumārī Bāhā suggests that a relationship between the two deities may be implied at the site.

The goddess Guhyeśvari, I suggest, should be placed in a somewhat different category from the other Valley goddesses, since she is conceived as being equivalent to all of the goddesses alluded to in Kumārī Bāhā’s iconography. According to practitioners, the goddess Guhyeśvari, located at the Guhyeśvari pīṭha near Paśupati, for example, is the ontological source of Durgā, in the form of Pārvatī, who is the consort of Śiva. The Guhyeśvari site stands in close proximity to the Paśupati Temple, which is dedicated to Paśupati, a form of the god Śiva as lord of the animals. According to local practitioners, these sites are often thought of as a pair of sites dedicated to Śiva and his Śakti, and each site has a devotional following in its own right.

At the Puran Guhyeśvari shrine, Guhyeśvari is linked with Kālī, as suggested by the prints that hang on the wall of the changing hall. The
central print depicts an image of the goddess Guhyakāli, the "Secret Dark Goddess" (Figure 4.53). The dyahāpahlāhs at the site indicated that this goddess was, in fact, a form of Guhyēśvari. Thus, significant visual evidence at Guhyēśvari and other goddess sites located throughout the Valley demonstrate Guhyēśvari's identification with Vajrayoginī, Durgā, and Kālī.

A link between Kumāri and Guhyēśvari is suggested at the recently renovated Puran Guhyēśvari shrine in Kathmandu, where a fresh water spring is venerated as a self-arisen manifestation of the goddess Guhyēśvari (Figure 4.54). A metal repousse lotus covers the top of the shrine (Figure 4.55). A small hole in the metal covering provides access to the spring water, and devotees often make offerings of duck eggs to Guhyēśvari through this opening. The circular opening is closed by a stone kālaśa that represents Guhyēśvari. At the base of the Guhyēśvari shrine platform is a small shrine that the pūjāri at the site stated was to the goddess Kumāri (Figure 4.56). Only a small opening, kum kum powder, and flower offerings mark the location of this shrine, which is otherwise indistinguishable from the rest of the marble platform. The pūjāri also indicated that, when the Guhyēśvari shrine was renovated in the 1970s, a small image of Kumāri was discovered

46 Mary Slusser also indicates that Guhyakāli is a form of Guhyēśvari. See Slusser, 216.

47 Suryaman Vajracarya, one of the foremost Newar Buddhist priests in Patan, indicated that at a critical time in his life, he went to visit the Guhyēśvari shrine, placed his hand inside the shrine opening and received an egg, which he considered to be prasad from the goddess and a good omen.
in the place where the Kumārī shrine is currently located, and that it was replaced inside the Guhyēśvari shrine before the renovation was completed.

Finally, the Patan Kumārī's chem in the back courtyard of Ha Bāhā may also express that Kumārī equivalent to Guhyēśvari. The Kumārī shrine's interior contains a stone lotus surmounted by a stone kalaśa (Figure 4.57). As at Puran Guhyēśvari and on the toraṇa at the Guhyēśvari shrine near Pasupati, the kalaśa in the Patan Kumārī's chem, which is conceived as Guhyēśvari, articulates the Patan Kumārī's association with this goddess.

Kumārī Bāhā, then, serves as a premier expression of Śakti. Through its iconographic program, the monument is a testament to Śakti worship in the Valley, simultaneously invoking the power and protective qualities of the Valley's most important goddesses at the site. Further, through her associations with the Valley goddesses, Kumārī's religious identity transcends sectarian boundaries. Within the context of Kumārī Bāhā, she is Śakti, a sacred female force that takes multiple forms to protect, to generate, and to help maintain the well being of the Kathmandu Valley's inhabitants.

*Guhyēśvari, Vajrayoginī and Kumārī as the Trikāya*

Within a Buddhhalogical framework, the goddesses Guhyēśvari, Vajrayoginī, and Kumārī are, collectively, manifestations of the trikāya—the Dharmakāya, the Sambhogakāya, and the Nirmāṇakāya—or the three bodies of buddhahood. Guhyēśvari is conceived as the Dharmakāya, or Dharma
body, and constitutes the formless, indestructible nature of existence. Her manifestation in the Valley as a fresh water spring and her representation as a kalaśa, a container for water or alcohol, communicates this goddesses formlessness and her role as the source of life. In the Svayambhū Purāṇa, she is described as the ontological source of the jyotirupa, and the place where Vipasva Buddha sowed the seeds of enlightenment. As the Dharmakāya, she is śūnyātā, or spacious unconditioned potential, from which the form goddesses in the Valley manifest.

Guhyeśvari's relationship to the Kathmandu Valley as its ontological source suggests that she is also the ontological source of the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi Maṇḍala and, therefore, of Vajravārāhi/Vajrayogini.48 This goddess, like Cakrasaṃvara, is considered to be a Sambhogakāya, or Bliss Body, manifestation of the trikāya and is considered to be identical to, yet distinct in form from, Guhyeśvari.49

Kumāri, within the context of the Guhyeśvari-Vajrayogini-Kumāri triad of goddesses, is considered to be the Nirmāṇakāya, or Form Body of the

48 Within the context of the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi Maṇḍala and elsewhere, Vajravārāhi and Vajrayogini are conceived as being the same goddesses. Depending on the context, however, it may be appropriate to refer to her by either or both names. Therefore, references to Vajravārāhi, Vajrayogini, or Vajravārāhi/Vajrayogini appear throughout this work, but, essentially refer to the same goddess.

49 Vajravārāhi functions principally as a meditational deity, although as Vajrayogini, she is also manifested at various yogini sites that are part of Newar Buddhist cosmology. In addition, personal stories of encounters with Vajrayogini abound in the Valley, as they do in Tibetan literature. In these accounts, Vajrayogini often takes the form of an old woman or a hag. In Nepal, one of the most commonly known and institutionalized physical manifestations of Vajrayogini is the goddess Kumāri.
group. Tantric Buddhist rituals, such as described by Allen, refer to Kumārī as Vajrādevī, indicating that she is a devī, and a laukik, or form, manifestation of Vajrayogini. Thus, within a Buddhhalogical framework, Guhyēśvarī, Vajrayogini, and Kumārī are, simultaneously, one and the same. Further, they are an expression of the fluid relationship and ultimate equivalence of form and emptiness, a central tenet of Tantric Buddhism.

Within this paradigm, the three levels of Kumārī Bāhā, in addition to corresponding to the body, speech, and mind cakras of the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi Maṇḍala, may also correspond to the trikāya system, as is the case with other bāhās in the Valley.50 Guhyēśvarī’s presence at Kumārī Bāhā, implied by the attendant figures on the third level window jambs, indicates that the monument’s upper level is associated with the Dharmakāya. The second level, houses the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi āgam shrine, can be equated to the Sambhogakāya, leaving the first level of the structure to correspond to the Nirmāṇakāya. The Jina Buddhas in the kvāhpāḥ dyah interior are meditational deities and, therefore, are Samboghakāya forms. However, the qualities associated with the Jina Buddhas, such as the five wisdoms, are aspects of the practitioner’s enlightenment, and the human practitioner is a form, or Nirmāṇakāya, manifestation of the trikāya. Moreover, on top of the kvāhpāḥ dyah toraṇa is an image of Vajrasattva, the purified being that the practitioner becomes at

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the beginning of rituals and other meditational practices. For example, in Newar Buddhism, the Vajrācāryas regularly don the Vajrasattva crown and become the purified being, Vajrasattva, prior to performing pūjās and other rituals. Therefore, defining Kumāri Bāhā’s first level as the Nirmāṇakāya is consistent within the Newar Buddhism context and follows logically from the identification of Guhyeśvarī, on the third level, as the Dharmakāya, and Vajrayogini, on the second level, as the Sambhogakāya.

Summary

In summary, the goddesses and maṇḍalas articulated through the iconography at Kumāri Bāhā define the monument as a multi-layered mirror of the Valley and its religious practices. Through the invocation of various goddesses and references to powerful sites, such as the Aṣṭamātrkā pīthas, the creators amplified the sanctity of Kumāri Bāhā’s created sacred space.

The importance of maṇḍalic patterning at Kumāri Bāhā cannot be overstated. Through a complex layering of iconographies, the structure is comprised of an intricate weaving of the maṇḍalas and maṇḍalic spaces and, in some cases, calls forth aspects of the Valley’s sacred geography, such as the Svayambhū Mahācaitya, and the Cakraśamvara Maṇḍala of the Kathmandu Valley. The appearance of well-known physical reference points in the Valley and its deities, such as the Aṣṭamātrkās, the Navadurgās, the yoginīs, Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardini, Taleju, Vajrayogini, Kāli, Mahālakṣmi,
and Guhyeśvari further invokes important places and goddesses found throughout the Valley. Such abundance of sacred elements, which bring to mind the Kathmandu Valley, reflect what must have been careful planning and clear intention on the part of Kumārī Bāhā’s creators. It is certainly no accident that Kumārī Bāhā’s iconography communicates Kumārī’s identification with important mandalas and the most powerful goddesses in the Valley. Indeed, I suggest that their presence is actually invoked, thereby resulting in the coalescence of these protective entities in the center of Kathmandu City—the city that was under the hegemony and care Kumārī Bāhā’s royal patron, Jayaprakāśa Malla. Through the monument’s iconographic expression, Jayaprakāśa Malla proclaimed his affiliations with some of the most powerful goddesses in the Valley, including Mahālakṣṇī, Durgā, Taleju, Guhyeśvari, Kāli, and Vajrayoginī. Such associations helped to validate his reign and amplify his credibility as a victor in battle and the rightful protector of the kingdom—something he struggled with throughout his thirty-nine years as the king of Kathmandu.
Figure 4.1. Cakrasamvara/Vajravarahi Mandala, which includes the kāya (body), vāk (speech), and citta (heart/mind) cakras around the central figures. Nepal. Ca. 16th Century. Present location unknown.
Figure 4.2. Cakrasamvara/Vajravarāhi Mandala with the kāya (body) cakra highlighted. Nepal. Ca. 16th Century. Present location unknown.
Figure 4.3. Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravarāhi Mandala with the vāk (speech) cakra highlighted. Nepal. Ca. 16th Century. Present location unknown.
Figure 4.4. Cakrasamvara/Vajravarahi Manḍala with the citta (heart/mind) cakra highlighted. Nepal. Ca. 16th Century. Present location unknown.
Figure 4.5. Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravarāhi Maṇḍala, with the four T-shaped gateways highlighted. Nepal. Ca. 16th Century. Present location unknown.
Figure 4.6. Cakrasamvara/Vajravarahi Mandala with the charnel grounds highlighted. Nepal. Ca. 16th Century. Present location unknown.
Figure 4.7. Detail of the east charnel ground from a Cakrasamvara/Vajravarahi Cycle Mandala. Tibet. Ca. 1356 - 1360. Helmut and Heidi Neumann Collection, Switzerland.
Figure 4.8 Cakrasamvara. A metal image, probably dating to about the 17th century, that was likely in a bāhā āgam or personal esoteric shrine. Private Collection.
Figure 4.9. Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhi Maṇḍala in the form of a lotus. Private Collection.
The Kathmandu Valley as Cakrasamvara Maṇḍala

The following Aṣṭamātrikās appear once in each cakra:
1. Brahmāyani
2. Maheśvari
3. Kaumārī
4. Vaiṣṇavi
5. Vārāni
6. Īndrāyani
7. Cāmunda
8. Mahālakṣmī

Drawn by John C. Huntington with Dina Bangdel © 2002

Formalized arrangement of the Cakrasamvara/Vajravarahi mandala

Svayambhu / Šantipur
Five Yogini mandalla

Aṣṭamātrikās of Cittā Cakra
Aṣṭamātrikās of Vāk Cakra
Aṣṭamātrikās of Kāya Cakra
Deities of the Mahāsukha Cakra

Based on Bajracharya and Gotischow with additions and corrections

Figure 4.11. Three rings of pithas visited during the pitha pūjā.
Figure 4.12. South courtyard wall of Kumārī Bāhā, Kathmandu 1994. The Bāhā's levels are demarcated by bands of wood that encircle the perimeter.
Figure 4.13g. The Guhyesvari yantra at Kumāri Bāhā is conceived as the ontological source of the Kathmandu Valley.
Figure 4.14. Devotees carrying the Kathmandu Kumāri through the streets of Kathmandu, 1996.
CHAPTER 5:

POWER, PROTECTION, AND POLITICS

Kumāri Bāhā’s iconographic program is not only well-planned, coherent, and profound, but I propose, was designed with a specific purpose in mind. In an attempt to discern why Jayaprakāśa Malla built such a considered and elaborately designed monument as a residence for the Kumāri that he installed, this chapter considers the visual evidence of Kumāri Bāhā in conjunction with written historical documentation. The findings suggest that Jayaprakāśa Malla built Kumāri Bāhā, first, to protect himself and his kingdom from the onslaught of the Gorkha invaders; second, to send a message of his empowered reign and the defeat of his worthy adversary, and third, to legitimize a long, but arduous reign that was characterized by extensive internal strife and repeated attempts at overthrow by warring factions from outside the Valley. In short, after facing years of strife and ongoing military pressure during the 18th century, Jayaprakāśa Malla called for the assistance of Kumāri to help secure the future of his kingdom. Further, drawing from nearly every major iconographic source in the
Figure 4.57. Guhyesvari kalaša. Kumāri Chem shrine interior in the back courtyard of Ha Bāhā, Patan, 1996.
Figure 4.15. Seat of the Kathmandu Kumāri’s palanquin after the red cushions are removed, showing the three cakras carved into the wood. Photograph taken during the Kumāri Jatra, Kathmandu, 1996.
Figure 4.16. Vairocana on the torana over the kvāhpāh dyaḥ on the south courtyard wall of Kumārī Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 4.17. Akṣobhya on the torana over the kvāhpāh dyah on the south courtyard wall of Kumāri Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 4.18. Amitābha on the *torana* over the *kvāhpāh dyah* on the south courtyard wall of Kumāri Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 4.19. Ratnasambhava on the torana over the kvāhpāh dyah on the south courtyard wall of Kumari Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 4.20. Amoghasiddhi on the torana over the kvāhpāḥ dyah on the south courtyard wall of Kumāri Bahā, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 4.21. Vajrasattva on the top of the torana over the kvāhpā dhyaḥ on the south courtyard wall of Kumārī Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure 4.22. Vajrācārya as the purified being Vajrasattva. Kathmandu, 1996.
Figure 4.23. Five stone Jina Buddha figures located in the kvāhpāḥ dyah at Kumāri Bāhā, Kathmandu, 1994. Akṣobhya (bottom), Ratnasambhava (left - not shown here), Amitābha (top), Amoghasiddhi (right) Vairocana (center).
Figure 4.24. Main Buddha image, adorned with extensive regalia, in the kvāhpāh dyāh at Uku Bāhā, Patan, 1994.
Figure 4.26. Durgā, the central figure in the painting. Ca. 18th century. Nepal. Kathmandu National Museum, Kathmandu.
Figure 4.27. *Durgās*, standing on lion mounts, located on the interior vertical registers of the painting. Surya and Candra are located above each group of four goddesses. Ca. 18th century. Nepal. Kathmandu National Museum, Kathmandu.
Figure 4.29. *Aṣṭabhairavas* that flank Śiva and are located on the top horizontal register of the painting. Ca. 18th century. Nepal. Kathmandu National Museum, Kathmandu.
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CHAPTER 5:

POWER, PROTECTION, AND POLITICS

Kumārī Bāhā’s iconographic program is not only well-planned, coherent, and profound, but I propose, was designed with a specific purpose in mind. In an attempt to discern why Jayaprabhāśa Malla built such a considered and elaborately designed monument as a residence for the Kumārī that he installed, this chapter considers the visual evidence of Kumārī Bāhā in conjunction with written historical documentation. The findings suggest that Jayaprabhāśa Malla built Kumārī Bāhā, first, to protect himself and his kingdom from the onslaught of the Gorkha invaders; second, to send a message of his empowered reign and the defeat of his worthy adversary, and third, to legitimize a long, but arduous reign that was characterized by extensive internal strife and repeated attempts at overthrow by warring factions from outside the Valley. In short, after facing years of strife and ongoing military pressure during the 18th century, Jayaprabhāśa Malla called for the assistance of Kumārī to help secure the future of his kingdom. Further, drawing from nearly every major iconographic source in the
Kathmandu Valley, Kumārī Bāhā’s patron and creators systematically integrated core elements from all of the Valley’s major religious traditions. The result of these deliberate efforts resulted in a monument that was unlike anything created before it in Newar history.

While inscriptive evidence and the vamsāvalis say little regarding the building of Kumārī Bāhā and nothing regarding the direct impetus for its construction, details of Jayaprakāśa Malla’s activities and the critical events that took place during his reign are chronicled in these sources. In particular, the vamsāvali that is often referred to as Wright’s Chronicles documents key events in Jayaprakāśa Malla’s life that help to characterize his reign and the period leading up to the building of Kumārī Bāhā. This vamsāvali provides one of the most detailed accounts of the Three Kingdom Malla Period (CE 1482 – CE 1768) and has been one of the more authoritative historical sources in scholarship since its publication. Although the vamsāvali does not chronicle history in the manner that one might find in, for example, Chinese imperial records, it portrays many of the major events that were preserved through oral and written traditions and eventually compiled into written texts. Using this document and the contextualized iconographic study of Kumārī Bāhā’s visual data presented in this study thus far, the narratives in the vamsāvali are corroborated, and a picture of royal motive and intention for building a home for the goddess Kumārī begins to take shape.
Historical Sketch of Jayaprakāśa Malla’s Reign

The following historical sketch of Jayaprakāśa Malla’s life and thirty-nine year reign is summarized from Wright’s Chronicles,¹ and paints an historical backdrop that helps suggest why Jayaprakāśa Malla constructed Kumāri Bāhā. On the whole, the vamsāvalī does not seem to bias for or against Jayaprakāśa Malla, the other Malla kings, or Prithvi Narayana Shah. Rather, they seem to chronicle events that the compiler, other historians, and oral tradition considered significant, such as the building of temples, transitions in the monarchy, and results of key military campaigns.²

Upon his father’s death, Prince Jayaprakāśa Malla was selected to succeed the throne and rule the city of Kathmandu. However, although his father indicated to palace officials that, upon his death, he wished Jayaprakāśa take the throne, the officials favored Jayaprakāśa’s brother, Rajyaprapkāśa. Fearing that he would be overthrown, during the period of mourning for his father, Jayaprakāśa had his brother expelled from the Darbar.³ Such dramatic actions set the tone for the remainder of his reign,

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¹ The following historical sketch is summarized from Wright, 152 – 156.

² The vamsāvalīs primarily record historical events that relate to the monarchy and the upper classes in Nepal, as well as the founding of bāhās and sacred histories. They are, however, largely silent about the events of the common persons.

³ Wright, 152. Rajyaprapkāśa went to Patan and was taken in by King Viśnu Malla, who had no children and chose to adopt Rajyaprapkāśa as his son.
and the last king of Kathmandu spent the majority of his rule struggling to maintain power warding off internal coups and battling with external invaders.

Staving off internal problems largely involved killing, imprisoning or harassing those Jayaprakāśa Malla perceived to be his enemies, including some advisors, fellow rulers in the other cities, and even his son’s mother. Being greatly offended by Jayaprakāśa Malla’s mistrust and his ban on them nearing his person, the Tharis (palace officials) installed Narendraprakāśa, one of Jayaprakāśa’s brothers, as king presiding over the villages of Sanku, Changu, Gokarna, Nandigram, and Deopatan. Shortly thereafter, Jayaprakāśa defeated his brother, who fled to Bhaktapur and remained there for the rest of his short life. Several of the Tharis were imprisoned for their actions, although they continued to plot against the king and gained favor with Rani Dayavati, the wife of his then eighteen-month old son. Installing the infant as king, they forced Jayaprakāśa to leave the Darbar. After being turned away from several places, Jayaprakāśa found refuge and support at Guhyēśvari, where he spent two and a half years in exile. The auspicious receipt of a fish as prasāda from the goddess was viewed as an omen to retake his kingdom, which he did, killing and imprisoning numerous people.⁴

⁴ Wright, 152.
Numerous other stories in the vamsāvalī tell of other rulers' general dislike for Jayaprakāśa. Ranjit Malla, the king of Bhaktapur, for example, was said to be glad to hear that Jayaprakāśa Malla's son had died of small pox, as it signaled the king's ruin.⁵ Indeed, Jayaprakāśa was not without responsibility for being disliked, as his punishments were severe and often degrading to people who held high status. For example, upon hearing that six officials from Patan had blinded his brother, he captured them and their wives, made them dress as beggars and witches, and forced them to beg at every shop. In their humiliation, they vowed to overthrow the king.⁶ These ongoing internal conflicts gave Prithvi Narayan Shah, ruler of the Gorkha kingdom outside the Valley, cause for celebration, as it bode well for his lifelong pursuit to overthrow the Mallas.

Previously, Jayaprakāśa Malla had clashed several times with the Gorkha king, and repelled him from overthrowing Kathmandu for eighteen years. One of his greatest victories over the Shahs took place at Naokot, a strategically important location that had been usurped by Prithvi Narayan Shah while Jayaprakāśa was at Guhyesvari. He defeated the Gorkha king, taking back Naokot and further assisted, and succeeded, in the defense of Kirtipur.⁷ These victories, however, came at a price. Upon returning from

⁵ Wright, 155.
⁶ Wright, 153.
⁷ Wright, 152, 154.
exile and defeating Prithvi Narayan at Naokot, Jayaprapāśa Malla’s fortunes declined sharply. He went to extraordinary lengths to raise money to pay additional soldiers who could help defend his land, such as selling the windows from the Paśupati Temple that were donated by Viṣṇu Malla of Patan and taking money from the Paśupati and Jayavagesvari treasuries.8 In the midst of this extraordinary political and financial turmoil, shortly after the defeat of the Gorkhas at Kirtipur, Jayaprapāśa Malla built a home for the goddess Kumāri in the Kathmandu Darbar. The timing of this construction project at first glance would seem to be completely anomalous, given the king’s severely limited reserves and the threats to his survival. Therefore, I suggest that the investment of resources and energy into this monument was intended to help validate his reign and strengthen his position in the kingdom. In other words, Jayaprapāśa Malla saw the construction of Kumāri Bāhā as part of the solution to his problems. Although Jayaprapāśa Malla’s intention for building Kumāri Bāhā is presented, here, as primarily political, there were likely other influences and motivations, such as his devotion to the goddess, herself, and his dharmic role as the king to protect his kingdom. Indeed, the creation of a magnificent monument at the heart of his kingdom for Kumāri and imbued with the protective powers of other goddesses and manḍalas of the Valley, could protect Jayaprapāśa Malla’s kingdom, help to

8 Wright, 155.
proclaim the king’s ability to be victorious over the enemy, and legitimize Jayaprakāśa Malla’s rule over the kingdom of Kathmandu.

Protection

Through its layers of mandalic patterns and the incorporation of the Valley’s most powerful goddesses, Kumāri Bāhā’s iconographic program unites the Valley’s protective forces at the center of Jayaprakāśa Malla’s kingdom—offering protection that this troubled king desperately needed at the time of the monument’s construction. The layers of protective mandalic patterns depicted at Kumāri Bāhā include the “manḍala goddesses”—the Aṣṭamātrkā—who are well-known for their role as creators of sacred space. Their presence on the monument’s courtyard facades generates the Cakrasaṃvara/Vajravārāhi Maṇḍala, the manḍala that defines the Kathmandu Valley as a sacred space. Other protective mandalic patterns include a possible Durgā manḍala and the Guhyasamāja Maṇḍala articulated by the Guhyasamāja Jina Buddhas on the kvāhpāh dyah toraṇa. The individual goddesses brought to bear in a protective manner at the site

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9 The Guhyasamāja is traditionally categorized as a Father Tantra, and it may be present at Kumāri Bāhā as part of the essential pairing of male and female principals. In Newar Buddhism, the Guhyasamāja and Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍalas are the principal Father and Mother tantric practices undertaken by the initiated and technical practitioners. The joint presence of the Cakrasaṃvara and Guhyasamāja Mandala in Kumāri Bāhā’s iconography, then, may be intended to invoke compassion and wisdom, the male and female principals that are the core aspects of enlightenment or awakened mind.
include Durgā, Taleju, Mahālakṣmi, Kāli, Vajrayogini, and Guhyeśvari, all of whom are embodiments of śakti, or female power.

These iconographic elements, along with the Svayambhū caitya, the Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala, and the Guhyeśvari yantra in Kumārī Bāhā's courtyard, contribute to the defining of Kumārī Bāhā as a microcosm of the Valley and its most protective forces. While the notion of protection has been used interchangeably with the idea of guardianship to describe the role of the goddesses in Nepal. For example, the Aṣṭamāṭrī are referred to as deities who encircle cities and towns, serve as “guardians” of the inhabited spaces.10 I propose that the notion of protection within the context of Nepal's goddess tradition implies a more active and integral role in the culture on the part of the deity. The Aṣṭamāṭrī who encircle Nepal's cities, villages, and regions are part of a physical maṇḍala, and, as such, they not only mark and define the boundaries of space and territory, but they participate in the creation and generation of that space. In contrast, the dikpāla, for example, are deities who function primarily as boundary guardians or, gatekeepers. Although they are associated with the cardinal and intermediary directions, as are the māṭrīs, they do not serve a creative and generative role in the way that the

10 Sylvain Lévi, 386.
goddesses do. In other words, the female figures offer protection through their generative power, rather than the more limited notion of boundary protection.

Much of the protection offered by the female deities is preventative. For example parents, may take their children to a goddess shrine for blessings, and, in addition, to place the child in the care of that goddess. There is a sense that, as Suryaman Vajracarya, a prominent priest from Ha Bāhā in Patan, explained, from that point onward, the child’s future is in the goddess’ hands. Certainly, the family continues to care for the child, but there is a sense in which the deity is ultimately responsible for the child’s well being.¹¹

It is in this sense of protection that I suggest Jayaprakāśa Malla constructed Kumārī Bāhā and propitiated the goddess Kumārī. Each year, during the Indra Jatra Festival, when the king propitiates Kumārī and receives tīka from her, she not only validates his kingship, but, I suggest, that he places his kingdom in her protective hands. In placing the tīka on his forehead, she grants prasād and accepts his request to protect his kingdom. In the case of Jayaprakāśa Malla, as the Chronicles and a reading of Kumārī Bāhā’s iconographic program suggests, the goddess’ protection from the onward-marching Gorkhas was badly needed.

¹¹ Personal communication from Suyaman Vajracarya in 1996.
That some scholars identify the goddesses, and the Aṣṭamātrkā in particular, as protective in the same sense as guardian figures, may be, in part, due to early scholarship's emphasis on the center as primary and the periphery as less important. However, the concept of mandalic space suggests a close relationship and relative dependency between that which is at the center and on the fringes. In his book Orderly Chaos: The Mandala Principle, Chögyam Trungpa discusses the practical defining of physical maṇḍalas not simply as a circle or a cosmic diagram, but as an association, or a society, that contains a center and the area around it. The center and the fringe exist in terms of relativity and interdependency. The fact that the fringe exists means that the center exists, and vice versa. In other words, the periphery is powerful and crucial to the center's existence. Therefore, the Aṣṭamātrkā imagery at Kumārī Bāhā not only defines the monument as a sacred space and brings the protective aspects of the Valley's periphery into the center of the kingdom, but their presence on the monument reinforces the essential and mutually synergistic relationship that exists between the periphery and the center—and in the eighteenth-century, between the protective goddesses and King Jayaprabhāsa Malla.

The importance of “bringing” the periphery to the center is underscored by the fact that Kumārī Bāhā is referred to as a chem. As

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discussed in Chapter 2, monuments referred to as *cheṃs* most commonly house *pīṭha devatās*, who are brought from their self-arisen locations, which are usually on the city’s periphery, into the more inhabited spaces. The Kumāris, however, whose shrines and residences are referred to as *cheṃs*, have no corresponding *pīṭhas*. I suggest that their shrines and residences may be called *cheṃs* because the Kumāris are conceived, on one level, as manifestations of other prominent goddesses in the Valley, and by installing the Kumāris into their respective shrines, one also “brings” specific goddesses into the space. For example, the Mu and Kvā Bāhā Kumāris, as well as the Patan Kumāri, is most frequently propitiated by *buddhamārgī* and, therefore, identified with the goddess Vajrayogini. As Vajrayogini, Kumāri is also identified with Vajravārāhī and is, therefore, conceived as being at the center of the three rings of *Āṣṭamāṭrka pīṭhas* that define the Kathmandu Valley as a Cakrasamvara/Vajravārāhī Maṇḍala. In contrast, the Bhaktapur Kumāri, who once was propitiated by the rulers of Bhaktapur and, today, is worshiped mostly by *śiva mārgī*, is more closely associated with Taleju and Durgā.

From Kumāri Bāhā’s iconographic program, it appears that Jayaparakāśa Malla recognized that the various regional Kumāris’ are identified with specific goddesses. Kumāri Bāhā’s iconographic program not only articulates the monument as a microcosm of the Kathmandu Valley, but it brings together all of the goddesses, from multiple religious traditions, with whom the various regional Kumāris are most closely identified. In other
words, Jayaprakāśa Malla identified the most protective and powerful aspects of the Valley’s religious traditions, regardless of religious sectarianism, and brought them into the center in the form of a single monument.

_Empowerment_

The _durgā_ figures on Kumāri Bāhā’s exterior north facade _toraṇas_ do not stand on individualized _vahānas_, as would be commonly found in Nepali art. Instead, they have the unusual trait of all standing on lions. In addition, they are shown defeating Mahiṣa. Thus, without close analysis, they appear to be multiple depictions of Durgā in her Mahiṣāsuramardini form. The central _toraṇa_ on the second level of Kumāri Bāhā’s exterior, I have suggested, shows Durgā victorious, having defeated the _asura_ and peacefully surrounded by the gods and their consorts. Therefore, power and victory over the enemy appear to be the overwhelming message created by Kumāri Bāhā’s exterior iconography.

Kumāri Bāhā’s Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardini-related iconography would have been well-known, esoteric knowledge that was accessible to the average eighteenth-century Newar. Upon seeing these sculptures, most of the city’s inhabitants would easily have recalled the story of Durgā’s supremacy and defeat of a great and worthy opponent. As the patron of Kumāri Bāhā, Jayaprakāśa Malla would have been closely coupled with the monument,
and, therefore, linked to this popular sacred history. Just as the great goddess Durgā defeated a tenacious enemy who transformed himself after each defeat by the gods, so could Jayaprakāśa Malla overcome the Gorkha nemesis that had plagued the Malla Dynasty since the beginning of his reign.

Today, the famous sacred history recounting the Durgā’s defeat of Mahiṣa is acted out annually during the festival of Dasain. A large and powerful living buffalo, indicating the asuras final form, is paraded into Kathmandu’s crowded Darbar Square. Eventually, the buffalo is killed when his head is severed with a sword. The sacred history is reenacted in front of Kumārī Bāhā, where a battalion of wooden durgās on Kumārī Bāhā’s main facade looks down at the scene. It is unclear whether this festival took place in a similar manner during Jayaprakāśa Malla’s reign. Nonetheless, the citizens of Jayaprakāśa Malla’s kingdom would have regularly seen the durgā iconography on Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior facade, which, serving almost as a billboard intended, at least in part, to proclaim the legitimacy of Jayaprakāśa Malla’s reign by instilling confidence in his constantly challenged hegemony.

Legitimization

I suggest that Jayaprakāśa Malla chose to propitiate the goddess Kumārī, rather than one of the other deities in the Valley, during his turbulent reign, in part, because of her history as a goddess with close associations to statehood and strong regional ties. As indicated by their
names, each Kumārī is identified with the town or location with which she shares a name. For example, the Patan, Bhaktapur, Bungamati, and Kathmandu Kumāris each presides over the cities or villages in which they live.\textsuperscript{13} A Kumārī can also be affiliated with an individual bāhā community, such as the Mū Bāhā Kumārī. Although these names for the human Kumāris during the eighteenth-century are not specifically mentioned in the vamsāvalīs, Wright’s Chronicles tells how King Asoka Malla worshiped the goddess Kumārī in order to defeat his enemies, and distinguishes which Kumārī was worshiped by stating her location at “Kwache,” which is a chem in the center of the village Sunakothi, just outside of Patan,\textsuperscript{14} suggesting that the Kumāris previously were also distinguished by their local.

Ranjitkar states that “[e]very Newar settlement once had a State Living Goddess Kumārī because a monarch ruled each such settlement with the blessing of the Living Goddess.”\textsuperscript{15} The histories outlined throughout the

\textsuperscript{13} In some cases, a Kumārī may be associated with a bāhā community that is situated within a city, while a different Kumārī presides over the city itself. For example, the Mū Bāhā and the Kwa Bāhā Kumāris both live within the current boundaries of Kathmandu City. In this case, the Rāj Kumārī of Kathmandu is responsible for the city of Kathmandu and, since the consolidation of the kingdom, for the entire country. Since the time of Jayaprakāśa Malla, the king of Kathmandu, and later of Nepal, are said to have propitiated her annually with the hope that she will acknowledge his right to rule the kingdom. The Kumāris’ present day local and regional affiliations, then, do not fall within mutually exclusive boundaries, and their territories sometimes overlap. Such geographic divisions and associations likely reflect the growth and decline of Newar principalities in the region, as well as monastic communities.

\textsuperscript{14} Wright, 122.

\textsuperscript{15} Ranjitkar, 1. Some Kumāris also seem to have been installed for different purposes. For example, according to oral history documented by Locke, Guhyēśvari is said to have appeared to a Vajrācārya from Pim Bāhā, telling him to found a new bāhā and to institute

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vamsāvalis indicate that prior to the Shah Dynasty’s overthrow of the Malla kings in the mid-eighteenth century and the unification of Nepal as we know it today, the Kathmandu Valley was divided into numerous political entities that functioned as independent or semi-independent principalities. Some were no larger than small villages, while others were cities. Over the centuries, political boundaries shifted, and leaders marked new territory, creating new kingdoms and absorbing old ones into their fold. The current city of Kathmandu, for example, was once comprised of several smaller entities. Some of the more prominent principalities in the Valley that are recorded in the vamsāvalis include Kirtipur, Nagarkot, and Deopatan. As strategic military positions, they appear regularly in the literature, which chronicles their ongoing pursuit by ambitious monarchs.

While Ranjitkar's statement regarding the Kumāris' role as a state goddess may not have applied in the case of every settlement, today, the existing Kumāris do appear to be linked to what once were distinct principalities or settlements. Further, it seems likely, and even probable, that area rulers propitiated the Kumāri in their region. In short, we can be certain that the Kumāris were significant as regional benefactors, and, in

the practice of a Tantric pūjā that was dedicated to Śakti and incorporated a human form of Kumāri. See Allen (1987), 52. The reference to founding a new bāhā likely indicates the establishment of a new settlement. Given the specific mention of a Tantric pūjā, the ritual spoken of likely relates to Kumāri’s worship as Vajrayogini. This does not preclude the possible affiliation of the Mū Bāhā Kumāri with state sovereignty; however, this aspect is not described by the oral tradition.
specific cases, we can be certain of a Kumāri’s affiliation with larger principalities and monarchs. Locke and Allen’s research indicates some degree of royal affiliation for the Cha Bahī Kumāri (near Deopatan), the Jyāpu Kumāri of Patan (from the Sonimha area near Mikha Bāhā), the Jyāpu Kumāri of Kathmandu (Itum Bāhā/Kiligar area) and the Kwa Bāhā Kumāri (worshiped in Thamel area at Tham Bahī). In addition, the Chronicles indicate the royal establishment of the Kathmandu and Patan Kumāris by Kings Jayaprakāśa Malla and Lakṣmikamadeva, respectively, and records that Guṇakāmadeva, Laskṣmikamadeva’s grandfather, successfully worshiped the Kumāris for the benefit of his kingdom.

Therefore, I contend that there is significant evidence to suggest Jayaprakāśa Malla had a clear precedent for propitiating Kumāri as a state-affiliated goddess in order to benefit his kingdom and to legitimize his reign. At the same time, Jayaprakāśa Malla’s actions must have imbued the Kathmandu Kumāri with unprecedented importance, an importance that may have, in turn, had a powerful and lasting impact on the Kumāri Cult, itself. Specifically, Jayaprakāśa Malla’s construction of Kumāri Bāhā and the establishment of Kathmandu’s Indra Jatra Festival may have influenced

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16 Locke, 401 and Allen, 62.
17 Allen, 58-59.
18 Allen, 56 and Locke, 269-270.
19 Wright, 105.
the development of the Kumārī cult, just as the rise and fall of the three major cities, Bhaktapur, Kathmandu, and Patan, has had an impact on the tradition and the roles of the three so-called “royal” Kumāris. A larger kingdom, united under early Malla rule (C.E. 1200 – C.E. 1482), included the cities of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur, as the areas were configured at the time. It wasn't until the Three Kingdom Malla Period, however, that the Malla kingdom was formally divided into the three cities of Bhaktapur, Kathmandu, and Patan by King Yakṣa Malla, who thus distributed his territory and placed it under the auspices of his three sons, one of whom, the regent of Kathmandu, was Jayaprakāśa Malla’s ancestor. This distribution led to the development and current prominence of the three cities as we know them today.

Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur were the most powerful kingdoms prior to the Shah overthrow, so it is not surprising that the Kumāris of these three cities held a great deal of power. Further, they continue to be the most visible, and are still referred to as royal goddesses. The worship practices involving the Bhaktapur, Kathmandu, and Patan Kumāris are, as discussed in Chapter 1, the most elaborate, ritualized, and institutionalized of the Kumāris. However, the importance of the Patan and Bhaktapur Kumāris, since the mid-eighteenth century, has waned due to Kathmandu’s rise as the modern nation’s capital city and the Rāj Kumārī’s role as the formal state
Kumāri. A brief look at the history and current situations of the Kumāris suggests how the current state of Kumāri worship is linked to and influenced by state sovereignty and the political status of a given region.

The Bhaktapur Kumāri now attends school and the Patan Kumāri is formally educated by a tutor who comes regularly to her home. Such activities would have been unthinkable in the past, since the goddesses are considered to be omniscient, making formal education unnecessary. While the Kumāris' formal education may be due in part to external influences and Nepal's increasing modernization, it is notable that the first Kumāris to begin attending school are those who no longer preside over a formal state. It may be inferred that such a dramatic alteration in the Kumāri tradition could have bode ill for the kingdom if it was the wrong decision.

The present-day situations of the Patan and Bhaktapur Kumāris further demonstrates how closely the status of the Kumāris is linked to political patronage and the state. The Patan Kumāri's official chem has fallen into disrepair, and she is worshiped most frequently in a shrine in her family home. According to a priest from Dīpaṅkara Bāhā, the Bhaktapur Kumāri's now modest jewelry reflects little of the former splendor of her jewelry. He indicated that the finer pieces had been stolen and sold to the international art market. One can imagine the uproar that would be caused by the theft of the current Royal Kathmandu Kumāri's jewelry. It would be
perceived not only as theft from a deity's shrine but, given her status as the state goddess, an assault to the kingdom itself.

In sum, the Kumāris appear to have had strong affiliations with regional politics prior to Jayaprakāśa Malla's reign, and these affiliations seem to have been amplified during the Three Kingdom Malla period. Jayaprakāśa Malla likely propitiated Kumāri and constructed Kumāri Bāhā because of Kumāri's long-standing role as a state or regional goddess. Kumāri Bāhā's effect on the subsequent development of the Kumāri Cult and the goddess' role as a supreme state goddess who legitimizes the reign of the Nepali kings each year during Indra Jatra is unknown. However, it is notable that at the time of the Shah overthrow, Bhaktapur, rather than Kathmandu, was the more prominent city, since during Yaksa Malla's time it served as the Malla Dynasty's capital. Despite Bhaktapur's importance, Prithvi Narayana Shah chose to propitiate the Kathmandu Kumāri and establish his capital in Kathmandu upon defeating Jayaprakāśa Malla.

With the Shah Dynasty's conquest of the Valley, the country was unified under Prithvi Narayan Shah. By selecting Kathmandu, not Bhaktapur, as the capital, the Kathmandu Kumāri became the official goddess of the state. But, in contrast to her role during the reign of Jayaprakāśa Malla, she was no longer responsible only for the city of Kathmandu. Instead, the entire country held sway under Shah hegemony, became her responsibility and the cities of Patan and Bhaktapur became part
of the newly consolidated territory. Like the other Kumāris in the Valley, the Patan and Bhaktapur Kumāris continue to be worshiped locally by devotees in their region, but their formal status as goddesses of the state has been lost, and their so-called royal status is merely an artifact of history. One wonders what influence Kumāri Bāhā, the most elaborate of the Kumāri chem, may have had on Prithvi Narayana Shah’s decision to propitiate the Kathmandu Kumāri and place his kingdom in the hands of this goddess. Ironically, as a microcosm of the Valley, Kumāri Bāhā’s iconography is a poignant harbinger of the unification of the country that took place after the defeat of its creator.

Why Kumāri?

The possible reward of protection and power afforded to Jayaprakāśa Malla through the construction of Kumāri Bāhā as a microcosm of the Valley, with its protective mandalas and powerful goddesses, helps to explain the king’s motive for building such an elaborate and complicated monument during a time of great fiscal difficulty. However, the fact remains that Jayaprakāśa Malla chose to dedicate the monument to and enshrine the goddess Kumāri, rather than one of the Valley’s other powerful goddesses, in this unprecedented monument. Given his obvious objective to harness the multiple expressions and power of sakti as it manifests throughout the Valley, I propose his only real option was to propitiate the goddess Kumāri,
since is conceived as the absolute creative potential and embodies the creative potential of the Valley’s goddesses.

As discussed in Chapter 1, this sense of potential is contained within any female child. The worship of all young girls, or kumāris, acknowledges that young girls embody this fundamental characteristic, creative potential, of the goddess Kumāris. The broader tradition of kumārī worship, then, mirrors the institutional Kumārī tradition, which acknowledges that Kumārī is a core and critical component or manifestation of all of the expressions of śakti. Indeed, I suggest that it is precisely Kumārī’s identification with absolute creative potential, a concept that traverses all of Nepal’s major religious traditions, that allows this goddess to be considered a manifestation of all of the Valley’s goddesses. It was this creative female power, śakti, that king Jayaprakāśa Malla was trying to harness.

Because she is conceived as the embodiment of creative potential, Kumārī is the perfect goddess to be enshrined in a monument that visually articulates the multiple iconographies, messages, and maṇḍalas of the Valley’s sacred geography. As the form manifestation of Guhyeśvari, the ontological source of the Kathmandu Valley and a goddess whose presence is also suggested by Kumārī Bāhā’s iconographic program, Kumārī represents both the physical manifestation of the absolute source of all things, and one can infer, the genetrix of the monument’s entire iconographic program and all of its protective and powerful qualities therein.

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CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The objectives of this study were to conduct an iconographic study of Kumāri Bāhā, an important primary document that appears to be original, with the exception of one torana on the north courtyard facade, including related visual culture, to contextualize Kumāri and Kumāri Bāhā within the broader sphere of religious practices in the Valley, and to contextualize Kumāri and Kumāri Bāhā within the history of the Valley. The iconographic program, which appears deceptively simple at first glance is, in fact, remarkably complex. Closer study of the monument's major iconographic elements reveals that Kumāri Bāhā incorporates iconography from all of the Valley's major religious traditions, including Buddhist, Saivite, Vaisnavite, and Sakta, and seamlessly blends them under the Sakta rubric. The monument's female imagery, primarily mātrkā and durgā imagery, generates layers of mandalic patterns and invokes the presence of the Kathmandu Valley's most powerful goddesses, including Durgā, Taleju, Vajrayogini, Mahālakṣmī, Kāli, and Guhyeśvarī.
A contextual study of Kumārī Bāhā reveals that the monument is conceived as a microcosm of the Kathmandu Valley, whose sacred geography manifests as a Cakrasamvara/Varjavārāhi Maṇḍala that is generated through the self-arisen sakti pīṭhas. The iconographic program brings the sakti pīṭha devatās, who reside on the periphery of maṇḍalic space and are conceived as generating and protecting the Valley’s sacred geography, into Kathmandu’s center. Through Kumārī Bāhā’s iconographic program, then, the periphery becomes the center and the goddesses’ power is centralized for the kingdom’s protection. As a chem, or home for the goddess, Kumārī Bāhā exemplifies the Nepali dyochem tradition, bringing not one pīṭha devatā, but all of the mātrkas, durgās and individual goddesses into the inhabited space.

The iconographic program corroborates written historical evidence and suggests that King Jayaprakāśa Malla intended to harness sakti through the monument’s construction, thereby securing his kingdom during a tumultuous reign. In this way, Kumārī Bāhā is revealed to be a product of a singular moment. The complexity of Kumārī Bāhā’s iconographic program suggests that other secondary iconography at the site may also yield further findings and interpretations. Although this study focused principally on the political impetus for the construction of Kumārī Bāhā, and only looks briefly at Jayaprakāśa Malla’s devotion to Kumārī and Guhyeśvari, a more in depth study of the religious motivation behind Kumārī Bāhā’s construction will, no doubt, shed further light on the monument, Kumārī’s religious identity, and
Kumārī worship's role in the Kathmandu Valley. For example, an analysis of Tantric worship\textsuperscript{1} practices, often performed by kings, that define Kumārī as Guhyēśvarī, Taleju, and Tripurasundari and allow the Tantrika to harness the goddess' energy for their kingdom's benefit may shed further light on Jayaprakāśa Malla's construction of an elaborate monument to Kumārī.

Jayaprakāśa Malla and Kumārī Bāhā's designers did not develop a new iconography or new iconographic forms. Instead, they drew on existing artistic traditions and combined traditional iconographies from the Valley's major religious traditions to create a new statement—a statement reflecting the king's concerns at the time of the monument's construction. Such creative expression is found elsewhere in South Asia, where royalty employs existing iconographies to convey both political and religious messages.

Kumārī Bāhā iconographic program suggests that the monument's patron and creators were part of a larger rubric of similar royal initiatives that have taken place throughout the Valley, indicating the need for further contextual iconographic study of Nepal's architecture. Regardless of Jayaprakāśa Malla's motives for creating such an extraordinary monument for the goddess Kumārī, it is ironic that the goddess he chose to propitiate for the purpose of protecting his kingdom and preserving his hegemony ultimately validated the reign of his main rival and usurper, Prithvi Narayana Shah.

\textsuperscript{1} See Lidke, \textit{The Goddess Within and Beyond the Three Cities}.  

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APPENDIX A:

TORANA AND STRUTS ON KUMĀRĪ BĀHĀ’S EXTERIOR NORTH FACADE AND COURTYARD FACADES
Diagram A.1: Kumārī Bāhū, Exterior North (main) Facade.
Sections, levels, toranas and struts.

Diagram by Janiec M. Glowska
(not drawn to scale)

Levels

S1 S2 S3 S4 S5 S6 S7 S8 S9 S10

T1c

T2a

T3a

T4a

T5a

T6a

T2b

T3b

T4b

T5b

T6b

Sections
S1 S2 S3 S4 S5 S6

T2a = Figure 1
T2b = Figure 2
T3a = Figure 3
T3b = Figure 4
T4a = Figure 5
T4b = Figure 6
T5a = Figure 6
T5b = Figure 7
T6a = Figure 8
T1c = Figure 9
S1 - S8 = Figures 14 - 23
Figure A.1. *Torana*, with Kaumāri as the central figure, located on Kumāri Bāhā’s exterior north facade in position T2a on Diagram A.1. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.2. Toraṇa, with Mahālakṣmi as the central figure, located on Kumārī Bāhā'ā exterior north facade in position T2b on Diagram A.1. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.3. *Torāṇa*, with Brahmāni or Indrāni as the central figure, located on Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior north facade in position T3a on Diagram A.1. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.4. **Torana**, with Cāmunda as the central figure, located on Kumāri Bāhā’s exterior north facade in position T3b on Diagram A.1. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.5. Torana over the main entrance on Kumāri Bāha's exterior north facade in position T4a on Diagram A.1. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.6. Torana, with Maheşvari as the central figure, located on Kumāri Bāhā's exterior north facade in position T5a on Diagram A.1. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.7. Torana, possibly with Vāraṇī as the central figure, located on Kumārī Bahā's exterior north facade in position 7Cb on Diagram A.1. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.8. Torana, with Vaiṣṇavī as the central figure, located on Kumārī Bāhā's exterior north facade in position T6a on Diagram A.1. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.9. Torana, with Indra or Brahman as the central figure, located on Kumari Baha's exterior north facade in position 18b on Diagram A.1. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.11. Torana, with Kumāri seated on a peacock as the central figure, located on Kumāri Bāhā's exterior north facade in position T1c on Diagram A.1. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.12. Ganesa window, right flanking the central window on exterior north facade of Kumari Baha in position T4b on Diagram A.1. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.13. Kumāra window, left flanking the central window on exterior north facade of Kumāri Bāhā in position T4b on Diagram A.1. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.14. The *dikpala* Indra shown on the first exterior strut from the proper right on Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior north façade. Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram A.1 - S1.
Figure A.15. The dikpāḷa Vāyu shown on the third exterior strut from the proper right on Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior north facade. Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram A.1 - S2.
Figure A.16. The dikpāla Isāna shown on the sixth exterior strut from the proper right on Kumārī Bāhā's exterior north facade. Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram A.1 - S3.
Figure A.17. The dikpāla Varuṇa shown on the eighth exterior strut from the proper right on Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior north facade. Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram A.1 - S4.
Figure A.18. The *dikpāla* Kubera shown on the tenth exterior strut from the proper right on Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior north facade. Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram A.1 - S5.
Figure A.19. The dikpāla Agni (?) shown on the ninth exterior strut from the proper right on Kumāri Bāhā's exterior north facade. Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram A.1 - S6.
Figure A.20. The *dikpāla* Nṛtīti shown on the seventh exterior strut from the proper right on Kumāri Bāhā's exterior north façade. Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram A.1 - S7.
Figure A.21. The dikpāla Yama(?) shown on the eleventh exterior strut from the proper right on Kumārī Bāhā’s exterior north facade. Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram A.1 - S8.
Figure A.22. The dikpāla Brahma shown on the fourteenth exterior strut from the proper right on Kumāri Bāhā's exterior north facade. Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram A.1 - S9.
Figure A.23. The dikpāla Viṣṇu shown on the sixteenth exterior strut from the proper right on Kumāri Bāhā’s exterior west facade. Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram A.1 - S10.
Diagram A.2: Kumārī Bāhū Courtyard Toranas

Diagram by Justine M. Ghirshman

(not drawn to scale)
Figure A.24. *Torana*, with Vaiṣṇavi as the central figure, located on Kumāri Bāhā's south courtyard wall in position TS1a on Diagram A.2. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.25. Torana, with a Navadurgā standing on a lion mount, as the central figure, located on Kumārī Bahā's south courtyard wall in position 15b on Diagram A.2. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.26. Torana, with a Navadurga on a snake as the central figure, located on the south courtyard wall of Kumārī Bāhā in position TS2a on Diagram A.2. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.27. *Torana*, with a *Navadurgā* on a lion as the central figure, located on the south courtyard wall of Kumārī Bāhā in position TS2b on Diagram A.2. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.28. Torana, with a Navadurgā on a lotus as the central figure, located on the west courtyard wall of Kumāri Bāhā in position TW1a on Diagram A.2. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.29. *Torana*, with Indrāni on an elephant as the central figure, located on the west courtyard wall of Kumāri Bāhā in position TW1b on Diagram A.2. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.30. Torana, with Mahalakṣmi on a lion as the central figure, located on the west courtyard wall of Kumārī Bāha, in position TW2a on Diagram A.2. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.31. Torana, with Kaumāri on a peacock as the central figure, located on the west courtyard wall of Kumārī Bāhā in position TW2b on Diagram A.2. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.32. *Torana*, with Brähmani on a goose as the central figure, located on the north courtyard wall of Kumāri Bāhā in position TN1a on Diagram A.2. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.33. Torana, with a Navadurgā on a lotus as the central figure, located on the north courtyard wall of Kumāri Bāhā in position TN1b on Diagram A.2. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.34. Torana, with a Navadurgā on a horse as the central figure, located on the north courtyard wall of Kumāri Bāhā in position TN2a on Diagram A.2. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.35. *Toraṇa*, with Vaiśnava on a Garuḍa as the central figure, located on the north courtyard wall of Kumāri Bāha in position TN2b on Diagram A.2. This does not appear to be the original *toraṇa*, which may have contained an image of Varāhi in the center. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.36. Torana, with Cāmunda on a human as the central figure, located on the east courtyard wall of Kumāri Bāhā in position TE1a on Diagram A.2. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.37. *Torana*, possibly with Kāli on a corpse as the central figure, located on the east courtyard wall of Kumāri Bāhā in position TE1b on Diagram A.2. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.38. Torana, with Mahālakṣmi on a lion in as the central figure, located on the east courtyard wall of Kumārī Bāhā in position T62a on Diagram A.2. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.39. *Torana* with Maheśvari on a bull as a central figure, located on the east courtyard wall of Kumāri Bāhā in position TE2b on Diagram A.2. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.40. *Torana*, with Durgā Mahiśāsuramardini, flanked by Gaṇeśa and Kumāra, on the south courtyard wall of Kumāri Bāhā in position TS2c on Diagram A.2. Kathmandu. 1994.
Figure A.41. Torana, with the Guhyasamāja Jina Buddhas, over the kvāhpāh dyah on the south courtyard wall of Kumāri Bāhā in position TS1c on Diagram A.2. Kathmandu, 1994.
Figure A.42. Vaiśṇavī mātrka on the east strut on the south courtyard wall of Kumāri Bāhā. Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram A.2 - S1.
Figure A.43. Vārāhi mātrka on the west strut on the south courtyard wall of Kumāri Bāhā. Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram A.2 - S2.
Figure A.44. Indrāṇī māṭrka on the south strut on the west courtyard wall of Kumāri Bāhā. Kathmandu, 1994. Diagram A.2 - S3.
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