

BUDDHISM

CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Edited by
PAUL WILLIAMS

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THE UNIQUE FEATURES OF NEWAR BUDDHISM

John K. Locke, S.J.

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The political unit known as modern Nepal has existed since the latter part of the 18th century when the first king of the present dynasty, Prithivinarayan Shah, starting from the small kingdom of Gorkha in central Nepal, began the process of uniting the numerous petty kingdoms in the hills into one nation. Over the centuries the hill area has provided a haven for people from north and south, so that the present racial make-up of the country is a mixture of various Asian elements, and Nepal has been called the 'ethnic turntable of Asia'. Prithivinarayan Shah himself likened his kingdom to a flower garden in which flourished the four traditional castes and thirty-six tribes (or sub-castes).

Nepal, however, has existed as a country since at least the beginning of the Christian era, and for most of that period consisted of the Valley of Nepal (or the Kathmandu Valley) plus some of the surrounding hill territory as far east as Dolakha, as far west as Gorkha, north to the Tibetan border and south almost to the plains of India, the amount of territory depending on the fortunes of the various dynasties. The original inhabitants of the Valley are Newars, who still comprise about half its population. Here also there has been a meeting of races and cultures. The Newars have been active traders with the plains and with Tibet from the beginning of their history right down to the present, and the Valley has provided a new home for refugees from India from the time of the Buddha and the rise of the Mauryan dynasty to the time of the Indian Mutiny in 1857. There is a difference though. Throughout the hills, refugees and new settlers tended to settle on isolated hillsides and in the shelter of inaccessible valleys where, until the push for development and modernization in Nepal which began after 1951 and brought improved communications and new opportunities, they remained as closed units, cut off from their neighbours of a different race and culture on the nearby ridges and in the valleys beyond. In the Valley, the newcomers from the north and south were integrated into Newar society, becoming Newars in the

process and making, in turn, a contribution to the cultural fabric of Newar society. As a result the term 'Newar' is not a racial term, but a cultural term, denoting the very rich and complex culture of the society of the Valley. It denotes a people who speak a common language, Newari, and who share a common but diverse culture.

Since the beginning of recorded history in the middle of the sixth century AD the Valley of Nepal has been ruled by Hindu kings. The first historical kings were the Licchavis (c.400–900 AD), presumably refugees from Vaiśālī (near Muzaffarpur in modern north Bihar) who had left their homeland several centuries before rather than submit to the Mauryan dynasty.¹ They were Hindus and ruled 'by the favour of Paśupatinath'. They were followed by a line, or several lines, of kings conveniently grouped together under the name 'Thākuri' who ruled from c.900 until 1200 AD. This is a period of little information as the 'Thākuri' kings left few inscriptions, and what knowledge we have about this period is limited to occasional notes on manuscripts, mostly Buddhist, which end with "copied in the year such-and-such during the reign of king so-and-so". Yet it is clear from what little we know that these kings were also Hindus. They were followed by the Mallas, not a single dynasty, but at least three separate dynasties all claiming Rajput descent and all Hindus who ruled from 1200 AD until the fall of Bhaktapur to Prithivinarayan Shah in 1769. Yet extant historical records show that, from the time of the Licchavis down to the present, Hinduism and Buddhism have existed side by side in the Valley, presenting a picture that is a reflection of the relationship between the two in India throughout the period when Buddhism flourished there. Buddhism appears not as a movement separate from or opposed to the stream of culture of the subcontinent, but rather as an integral part of the religious culture that grew and flourished in its soil.

The Buddhism of the Valley of Nepal is tantric and therefore Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna. It is often said to be unique and it is in many ways. However, it is not unique because it is tantric. It is basically the same kind of Buddhism that one finds in the Tibetan culture, whether within Tibet or among those of other countries who share the same culture, such as the Sherpas and other northern border people of Nepal. The rituals performed by the tantric Buddhist priests of Nepal are the same as the rituals performed by the lamas and basically the same as the rituals performed by the priests of the Shingon sect of Japan. The tantric texts on which their teachings and ritual are based are the same. It is not unique because of the plethora of multi-armed and multi-headed tantric deities (Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, protective divinities). These are found wherever one finds tantric Buddhism. All of these rituals and deities plus the tantras on which they are based can be traced to the great centres of late Indian Buddhism such as Nālandā, Vikramaśīla, Odantapurī, and Jagaddalla.

It is not unique because it is 'mixed up with Hinduism' as has so often been said. At the level of Buddhist dharma, at the level of understanding the meaning of rituals and the meaning of the multifarious deities, the Newar Buddhists are not 'mixed-up' at all. They have very clear ideas. The only ones confused are

the outside observers who are used to seeing earlier and simpler forms of Buddhism which flourish today in a non-Hindu society. David Snellgrove remarked several years ago:

“We forget that . . . Buddhism, being one of several religions which grew and developed on Indian soil, was affected like all the others by the rich and extravagant tendencies which characterized medieval Indian civilization . . . Indian styles of architecture with their stylized and symbolic arrangements, were then as much Buddhist as Hindu, for they were all part of the same cultural heritage. Likewise temple liturgies and techniques of *yoga* belonged to an Indian patrimony developed and enriched over the centuries by generations of worshippers and religious practicers, and the craftsmen who produced the images, religious paintings and temple decorations and ritual implements, worked in the same artistic mediums and styles. Śaivite tantrism and Buddhist tantrism presumably developed as the different aspects, conditioned by their sectarian differences, of a common Indian development in philosophical thinking, in approach to the gods, in building styles and all the rest. It is thus a misleading interpretation of events, if one assumes that Buddhism was now suddenly pervaded and corrupted by Hinduism. Throughout the one thousand seven hundred years of its long history in India, Buddhism could find no expression which was not part of the Indian scene.”²

The uniqueness of Newar Buddhism, however, is related to the fact that it is embedded in a dominant Hindu society confined within a very small geographical area. Buddhism in India flourished in a Hindu society, but within a vast area where it was possible for the monks to truly withdraw from Hindu society to establish their monasteries in relatively remote places where they were less affected by the customs and strictures of Hindu society. In the Valley of Nepal, Buddhism flourished within the confines of the three small walled cities of Patan, Kathmandu and Bhaktapur, where it was very much a part of its (Hindu) surroundings.

In order to understand Newar Buddhism I think it is important to approach it with an open mind and attempt to understand it on its own terms, that is, within the context of its own ideology and institutions, and without prior judgements about what constitutes Buddhism. This is important, because so many western writers on Newar Buddhism begin their treatment by saying that it is an unorthodox, aberrant or corrupt form of Buddhism mixed up with Hinduism. This creates a prejudice in the mind of the reader which precludes any real understanding of Newar Buddhism, because the frame of reference is orthodox (usually Hīnayāna) Buddhism as it is practised today in non-Hindu countries, or as we find it delineated in the classical Buddhist texts which propose the ideals and say little about the way Buddhism was actually lived among the Buddhist population at large.

The Newar Buddhists, like Buddhists everywhere, take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṅgha, but in a Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna context. The Buddha is, of course, the historical Śākyamuni Buddha, but in Mahāyāna and tantric Buddhism the five transcendent Buddhas (Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Amitābha, Ratnasambhava and Amoghasiddhi) are more known and have a more important place in the ritual than the historical Buddha. In a tantric context these five are presided over by the *Ādi-Buddha* or Vajrasattva, the personification of *śūnyatā*. Much of the devotional life of the people centres round the worship of the Bodhisattvas, especially Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī; and the tantric rituals are centred on the *maṇḍalas* of such deities as Cakrasamvara-Vajravārāhī and Hevajra-Nairātmyā. The Dharma is, of course, the Four Noble Truths and the Eight-Fold Path, but understood in a Mahāyāna context and practised according to the tantras. There are eight Mahāyāna sūtras and one tantric text which the Newar Buddhists to this day consider to be their canon: *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Gaṇḍavyūha*, *Daśabhūmīśvara*, *Samādhirāja*, *Laṅkāvatāra*, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, *Lalitavistara*, *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, and the *Tathāgatagūhya* (or *Guhyasamājatantra*). These texts are recognized as the official texts, some of them (especially the *Prajñāpāramitā*) are recited at various times, and the books are worshipped. Today, however, there are few, even among the priestly class, who understand Sanskrit and can study these texts.

All of this is standard Mahāyāna and tantric Buddhism; what is unique is the lifestyle of the saṅgha and the *vihāras* in which they live.

The term *vihāra*, of course, refers to the Buddhist monastery, the place where the *bhikṣu-saṅgha* live. In Newari there are two terms for these buildings: *bāhā* and *bahī*. *Bāhā* is derived from the Sanskrit *vihāra* (*vihāra* > *vāhāra/bāhāra/bāhāla* > *bāhāl* > *bāhā*).³ The term *bahī* seems to have been derived from the Sanskrit *bahir*, and these institutions were so-called because they were outside or at the edge of the old cities.

The traditional style of the *vihāra* seems to have been handed down from the earliest days of Buddhism, and this can be traced if one looks at the well-preserved cave monasteries of Ajantā and Ellora built in western India some two thousand years ago. There one sees the same pattern that can still be found off the streets and alleys of the cities of the Valley: a series of rooms built round an open courtyard with a special room opposite the entry-way, which serves as the shrine of the monastery. *Vihāras* in Nepal were built of brick and wood and because of both the climate and frequent earthquakes there are no existing *vihāra* buildings which pre-date the sixteenth century. Many institutions are much older than this; and some of the ornamentation – carved windows, roof struts, *toranas* – were preserved from earlier buildings and may be as old as the twelfth century. However, even the oldest foundations have been continually rebuilt, often much more recently than one would suspect by looking at the buildings.

The traditional style of the *bāhā* has been best preserved in a *bāhā* of Kathmandu known as Chusyā Bāhā. The present buildings were built in 1649 AD,

though the struts supporting the roof may be a hundred years older. Chusyā Bāhā is a two-storied building of brick and wood built round an open and paved courtyard. The courtyard is sunken and the ground floor plinth is a foot or more above this pavement. Opposite the entrance is the shrine of the *bāhā*, which contains an image of the Buddha sitting in *vajrāsana* and showing the earth-touching gesture. The carved doorway of the shrine has a wooden door of lattice work enabling one to see into the shrine even when the door is closed. Three sides of the ground floor are open halls. One of these is the entrance hall which has two benches and images of Mahākāla and Gaṇeśa set into the wall. These two images are placed at the doorway of each *bāhā* and *bahī* as protective deities.⁴ To these is usually added a third protective deity, Hanumān, who is often represented simply by a triangular chink in the wall rather than by an image. In each corner of the quadrangle are two small dark rooms, one with a stairway leading to the upper storey. Each of these four stairways leads to an apartment of three rooms on the first floor. Each of these four apartments is separate with no interconnecting doors or passageways. Above the shrine of the Buddha is a five-fold window, behind which is a large room (*digi*) where the elders of the saṅgha meet, and off which is a doorway leading to the shrine (*āgam*) of the secret tantric deities of the saṅgha. A bay window over the entrance projects over the courtyard, and the outside of the upper storey is pierced by several windows. The outer wall of the ground floor has two other doorways, but no windows. All of the windows of the first floor are elaborately carved, and the tile roof is supported by a series of exquisitely carved struts portraying various deities, each of which is named.⁵ Above the roof is a bell-shaped finial (actually an inverted *kalāśa*) known as a *gajūra*. Over the street entrance and also over the door of the shrine is a *torāṇa* or tympanum. The one over the street entrance portrays Prajñāpāramitā (a personification of the Mahāyāna text) and the one over the doorway of the shrine portrays Mahākṣobhya, a tantric form of the transcendent Buddha Akṣobhya. In the courtyard of the monastery are two *caityas*, an image of Tārā and a stone image of Vajrasattva flanked by figures of the two donors of the image.

The structure of a *bahī* is similar but has its own distinctive features. It is also a brick and wood structure, usually of two stories, built round a courtyard. In general it is a simpler structure with less ornamentation than the *bāhā*. There is usually only one opening in the entire ground floor, the main entrance, and usually one mounts a flight of steps up to the entrance. In most *bāhās* the entrance is at ground level. Inside the entrance are the images of Gaṇeśa, Mahākāla and Hanumān. The entire ground floor, except for the shrine, is usually one continuous open hall. In one corner, usually to the left as one enters, is a single staircase leading to the upper storey. The shrine is a small, windowless room situated directly opposite the main entrance and offset from the rest of the building so that it is possible for devotees to circumambulate it. The upper storey usually has a projecting balcony which enlarges the space, but like the lower floor it is usually undivided and a continuous open hall except for a single

blind room directly above the shrine. This room houses the secret tantric deity of the *bahī*. The first storey of the building usually has three or five windows on the outside, except for the side of the building which houses the shrine, which has fewer. The balcony running round the upper storey is frequently enclosed with lattice screens. The upper storey often has another balcony extending out over the entrance to the street. The roof is wide and overhanging, and the space under the roof is usually unused. Above the shrine is a small temple-like structure: a sort of hanging lantern or cupola.

This seems to have been the traditional architecture of a *bāhā* and *bahī*. However, few today conform to this prototype. The *bahīs*, if the buildings have survived at all, have more consistently maintained the traditional architecture. Many *bāhās* today consist of a courtyard with residential buildings, most of which have been constructed at different times and often in different styles, with a *bāhā* shrine opposite the entrance. The shrine has preserved certain distinctive features: a carved doorway with lattice work surmounted by a *torāṇa* and flanked by two small, blind windows. Usually the entrance to the shrine is marked by two stone lions. The first storey of the shrine usually has a five-fold carved window and contains the *digi* and the *āgam*. If there are more than these two stories to the shrine the upper stories, which often have living quarters, may have over-hanging balconies, carved windows or even modern glass windows. The roof, which may be of tile or corrugated iron sheeting, is commonly surmounted by one or more finials, often in the form of a *caitya*.

Especially in Patan, there are places where the shrine is much more elaborate, becoming in fact a modified, multi-roofed temple set into the complex of buildings round the courtyard. The facade of the shrine is often decorated with a profusion of Mahāyāna and tantric deities, some of stone or cast metal, others done in repoussé brass or gilded copper. The facade of a number of these shrines has been covered with gaudy, ceramic tiles. At Bhince Bāhā in Patan the shrine is actually a free-standing temple of three roofs.

There are a few examples of another type which might be called an extended *bāhā* complex: a very large courtyard (almost as large as a football field and sometimes resembling a park) surrounded by residential buildings with a *bāhā* shrine located along one side. The courtyard is usually filled with images and *caityas*. Perhaps the best example of this is Bu Bāhā in Patan.

Another type of *bāhā* is what I have called the modern *bāhā*. This consists of a courtyard surrounded by residential buildings with a small Buddha shrine somewhere in the courtyard but not a separate section of the buildings. Sometimes the shrine is entirely free-standing, either set to one side or in the centre of the courtyard. Sometimes it is a small plastered shrine set against one wall of the courtyard building. I call these 'modern' because all the examples encountered were founded or built within the past one hundred to one hundred and fifty years, and seem to reflect the deteriorating economic status of the *bāhā* communities. There are no complete *bāhā* complexes, such as Chusyā Bāhā, which have been constructed within the past hundred and fifty years. Even reno-

vations of old shrines after earthquakes or the ravages of time tend to be simplified structures or 'modern' *bāhās*.

Whatever the present style, there are three essential elements to a *vihāra*: the shrine of the Buddha, a *caitya* and a tantric shrine.

The image of the Buddha, known as the *kwāpā-dya* in Newari, is the centre of the non-tantric worship of the community of the *vihāra* and his shrine is the one shrine which is open to the public. The current term *kwāpādyā* is a contraction of *kwā/koca-pāla-deva* which is found in earlier inscriptions. This in turn appears to be a Newari variant of the Sanskrit term *koṣṭhapāla* which is found in one fourteenth century inscription and is used as a synonym for the Buddha.⁶ *Koṣṭhapāla* means a guard, watchman or storekeeper and hence the current tradition that the term means the 'guardian of the saṅgha'. In Patan one also finds the term *kwāpā āju*, the 'guardian grandfather'.

In most *vihāras* the *kwāpā-dya* is an image of the Buddha sitting in *vajrāsana* and showing the earth touching gesture. This is also the iconographic form of the transcendent Buddha Akṣobhya. Some claim that the image is always the historical Śākyamuni Buddha and not the transcendent Buddha Akṣobhya; but in some cases we have inscriptions, put up at the time of the consecration of the image, which clearly state that the image is Akṣobhya (especially in Kathmandu). Over fifty percent of the *kwāpā-dya* images are of this form of the Buddha. The next most popular image is a standing Buddha figure showing the boon-granting gesture with the right hand and with the left hand raised to the shoulder level and gathering up the ends of the robe in an elegant sweep. This is a popular form of the Buddha in Nepal: very ancient and certainly pre-tantric. Nepali scholars identify this gesture as the *viśvavyākaraṇa-mudrā*, and popular devotion identifies the image as Maitreya⁷. There is no justification for this hand posture (*mudrā*) or for the identification of the image as Maitreya in standard iconographic texts, but it is certainly common in the oral tradition of the Valley.⁸ Some of the images are one of the other transcendent Buddhas, Padmapāṇi-Lokeśvara or Maitreya. All of the *kwāpā-dya* images are non-tantric deities except for one image in Bhaktapur of Mahāvairocana. The images face north, east or west. The favoured direction is north, with over half of the shrines oriented to that direction; east and west are about equally divided. The shrine never faces south as this is considered inauspicious – south is the direction of Yama-rāja, the lord of death and the underworld.

In the courtyard of every *vihāra* is a *caitya*. The *caitya* or *stūpa* has from the earliest days been the specific symbol of a Buddhist institution. Many of these *caityas* are small stone monuments only about three feet high, and most of them are not over six feet. A few *vihāras*, however, such as Sigha Bāhā, Yatakā Bāhā and Mahābū Bāhā in Kathmandu, have been built round large *stūpas*. Especially in Kathmandu the *caitya* in the courtyard of the *bāhā* is often given a lime whitewash with the result that after several centuries it appears as a shapeless white mound or white spire. Popular folk devotion calls such *caityas* 'Aśoka Caityas' in the popular belief that they were all erected by the Emperor Aśoka.

In addition to the official *caitya* in every *vihāra*, one often finds an array of other votive *caityas*, erected by members of the *saṅgha* or by lay people, in memory of the deceased. In nearly every *vihāra* courtyard in Patan and in many in Kathmandu and Bhaktapur, one also finds a *maṇḍala*, either entirely of stone or of repoussé brass (or copper) mounted on a stone base. The *maṇḍala* in question is the Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara *maṇḍala*. This is one of the largest of the tantric *maṇḍalas* and the central figure is Mañjuḥṣa, a form of Mañjuśrī considered in this *maṇḍala* to be of the family of Vajrasattva.⁹

The third essential feature of the *vihāra* is the *āgam*, or tantric shrine, where the initiated members of the *saṅgha* gather to worship the secret tantric deities of the *saṅgha*. The deities in question are most frequently Cakrasamvara-Vajravārāhī but occasionally Hevajra-Nairātmyā or one of the other tantric pairs.

Another feature of most of the *vihāra* shrines is the *torana* or tympanum over the doorway. In ancient India the *torana* was a decorated arch or arched doorway leading into a shrine. In Nepal this has become a semi-circular decorated panel over the doorway of a shrine (whether Hindu or Buddhist), whose main figure usually depicts the deity in the shrine. However, in the case of the *vihāras*, the figure is often another form of the Buddha, a tantric figure or a representation of an aspect of the Dharma.

The outer circle of the *torana* is identical in almost all cases. In each of the lower corners is a *makara* (sea monster) facing out. Above the *makaras* rise swirls of vapour often personified with figures of deities and ending in the coils of two serpents with human heads. The coils of the serpents are held fast by a figure above. This figure is either a *garuḍa* grasping the serpents in his talons or a *cepu*, a sort of Bhairava mask with hands on either side of the face, which grasp the serpents. Above the rising vapour are usually found figures of the sun and the moon.

In the centre of the *torana* are found one or more Buddhist figures. One of the commonest motifs found on the *toranas* of the *vihāras* is the five transcendent Buddhas, usually with Vairocana in the central position but occasionally with Akṣobhya in the centre. Another common motif is the Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha. The Buddha is usually Akṣobhya. The Dharma is a four-armed figure of Prajñāpāramitā with two hands joined before her breast in the *bodhyaṅga*- (or *dharmacakra*-) *mudrā* and the other right and left hands holding a garland of beads (*mālā*) and a book, the text of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. Alternatively she may hold the stem of the blue lotus on which rests the *Prajñāpāramitā*. The Saṅgha is represented by a form of Lokeśvara. This is usually Ṣaḍakṣarī-Lokeśvara, a four-handed, seated form with the two main hands joined in the *namaskāra-mudrā* and the other right and left holding a garland of beads and a lotus respectively. This is the Lokeśvara who is a personification of the six-syllabled *mantra* (*ṣaḍakṣarī-mantra*) – *Oṃ Maṇi Padme Hūṃ*. Occasionally the figure is a seated, two-handed Avalokiteśvara holding the lotus in his left hand and showing the boon-granting gesture with his right hand. In several places, mainly in Kathmandu, the Buddha is represented by Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara. This is a figure

with four faces (though often only three are shown) and eight arms. The two main arms show the *dharmacakra-mudrā*. The remaining right hands hold a sword, arrow and a *vajra*; and the left hands hold a book (*Prajñāpāramitā*), a bow and a bell.¹⁰ Another form of this same deity, known as Mahārāga-Mahāmañjuśrāi, is also occasionally found. This form also has four faces and eight hands. The four left hands hold the arrow, noose, book (*Prajñāpāramitā*) and a bell, the right hands hold a bow, an elephant goad, a sword and a *vajra*.¹¹

Another popular motif, especially in Kathmandu, is the figure known as Nāmasaṅgīti, a personification of a text often recited in the *vihāras* of Kathmandu. This is a single-faced figure with six pairs of hands. The first pair at the heart show the gesture of fearlessness, the second pair of the crown show the gesture of supplication (*añjali-mudrā*), the third pair usually each hold a staff: one with the double, crossed *vajra* (*viśvavajra*) surmounted by a sword and the other a *khaṭvāṅga*. The fourth pair exhibit the gesture of homage to the departed (*tarpaṇa-mudrā* – the specific *mudrā* of the Nāmasaṅgīti), the fifth pair the gesture of sprinkling nectar (*kṣepaṇa-mudrā*), and the sixth pair rest on the lap in the gesture of meditation (*dhyāna-mudrā*) with the begging bowl resting on them. The figure sits in *vajrāsana* on the lotus seat and wears five ornaments, each representing one of the transcendent Buddhas: the wheel (*cakra*) – Akṣobhya; ear rings (*kuṇḍala*) – Amitābha; the necklace (*kañṭhikā*) – Ratnasambhava; bracelets (*rucaka*) – Vairocana, and a cincture (*mekhalā*) – Amoghasiddhi. This deity seems to be a peculiarly Nepalese creation; it is not found in Indian texts.¹²

Every *vihāra* has two names, a Newari name and an official Sanskrit name. The Newari name is often a place name (Dhwākā Bāhā – ‘the *bāhā* near the [city] gate’), a direction (Wam Bāhā – the ‘Eastern Bāhā’) or a nickname (Cikan Bahī – ‘Mustard Oil Bahī’). Especially in Patan the official Sanskrit name often commemorates the founder or chief donor of the foundation: Śrī Lakṣmīkalyāṇa Varma Samskārita Ratnākara Mahāvihāra (Ratnākara Mahāvihāra founded by Śrī Lakṣmīkalyāṇa Varma).¹³ The term *mahāvihāra* was used in India for a cluster of *vihāras*, or a large *vihāra* that had many branches, such as existed at Nālandā. In Nepal the term *mahāvihāra* is used without any discernible rationale, often the smallest and most insignificant foundation is called *mahāvihāra*, and some important and ancient foundations are called simply *vihāra*.

The most unique feature of Newar Buddhism is the *bhikṣu-saṅgha* which constitutes a sort of priestly class in Newar society. Four features characterize this *saṅgha*: (1) All of the *bhikṣus* are married. (2) Entrance into the *bhikṣu-saṅgha* is limited to the sons of initiated *bhikṣus*. (3) Some of the initiated *bhikṣus* belong to a higher sub-class of tantric priests. (4) The *bhikṣus* do not live by alms, but have a secular occupation to support themselves and their families. Traditionally the Śākya were goldsmiths, and the Vajrācāryas the same, as well as professional priests. Even in the Malla period many Śākyas were carpenters or bricklayers. Today both Śākyas and Vajrācāryas engage in a wide range of occupations.

The general Newari term for the *bhikṣu* is *bare*, derived from *vande* a term of

respect for the Buddhist monk.¹⁴ In inscriptions and other documents from the Malla period they are called *Śākyabhikṣu* or *Śākyavaṃśa* (implying descent from the clan of the Śākyas), and in Patan those who were members of a *bahī* as opposed to a *bāhā* were often called *Brahmacarya-bhikṣu* (though in fact they were married). Today most of the ordinary *bare* use the surname Śākya, while those who are tantric priests use the surname Vajrācārya.

The saṅgha of most monasteries claim descent from a common ancestor, or one of several brothers who are considered to be the founders of the *vihāra*. Few *vihāras* can document their history and origins, but the tradition of descent from a common ancestor is preserved in legends and underlined by the worship of a common lineage deity (*digu/degudya*). Every Newar (and in fact every Nepali) lineage has such a deity which is worshipped once a year by the lineage members as a group. Every family of Śākyas or Vajrācāryas has a lineage deity; and, in all but a few cases, all of the members of the saṅgha of a *vihāra* share a common lineage deity. Lineage deities are usually situated outside the town or village, and the shrine consists of a very simple enclosure with one or more aniconic stones. For most people, the lineage deity does not have a name, it is simply *degudya*. However, in most cases the lineage deities of the members of a *vihāra* have an identity. Frequently the deity is a *caitya*, or one of the transcendent Buddhas, but very often it is identified as a tantric deity such as Cakrasaṃvara, Yogāmbara or Vajrayoginī. The common descent is also underlined by the fact that marriages within a saṅgha are forbidden on grounds of consanguinity. The exceptions prove the rule: in the few cases where marriages are permitted within the saṅgha, it is because the saṅgha is made up of two or more groups of people with different origins.

From the viewpoint of Buddhism the *bhikṣus* initiated in a given *vihāra*, plus their wives and children, constitute the saṅgha. However, in Newar society this has further ramifications. The Valley has always been ruled by Hindu kings and is basically a caste society. The *bare* are in fact a caste, the highest caste among the Buddhist Newars, with the tantric priests considered to be slightly higher than the other *bare*. Their position is the same as that of the brahmins among the Hindu Newars.

From the viewpoint of social custom and social interaction, the members of a *vihāra-saṅgha* constitute a *gūṭhī*. A *gūṭhī* (Sanskrit *goṣṭhi*) is an organization based on caste or kinship, or occasionally on geographical propinquity, which ensures the continued observance of the social and religious customs and ceremonies of the community. *Gūṭhīs* in general are social institutions which determine the rights and obligations of a Newar towards his community. Every Newar is a member of several such *gūṭhīs*, and membership in religious and functional *gūṭhīs* (such as the funeral *gūṭhī* – *si gūṭhī*) is compulsory and inherited. Such membership defines a person's place in society, and to lose membership in such a *gūṭhī* is to lose one's place in society. Each *gūṭhī* originally had an endowment, some agricultural land, from which the members obtained an annual income to finance the activities of the *gūṭhī*. Whatever

money was left over from the specific activities of the *gūṭhī* was used for an annual feast.

Each *gūṭhī* is well-organized and has strict rules and conditions for membership and the performance of prescribed functions. The most senior member of the *gūṭhī* is called *thāyṣa* or *thakālī*, and he acts as the chairman of the *gūṭhī* and of the board of elders who oversee its functioning. Their main function is to maintain the discipline of the members. The *gūṭhī* passes judgment in cases of dispute among members and takes action against those who violate its rules. A majority vote can levy punishments for infractions or even expel a member. Infractions would include bad manners, irregularity in attendance, failure to fulfil one's assigned role in the *gūṭhī*, breach of caste regulations. Every *gūṭhī* has an annual meeting when business is conducted and a feast is held. In addition to the *thāyṣa* there is also a *gūṭhī* administrator. The position of administrator is rotated through the membership, and it is the duty of the current administrator to make arrangements for the annual meeting and feast, and to finance the feast if there is insufficient revenue from the *gūṭhī* endowment.

In the case of the *vihāras*, the structure of the *gūṭhī* has been grafted on to the structure of a Buddhist monastic community. The members of the *gūṭhī* are the initiated *bhikṣu-saṅgha*, the elders are the *sthavira* and the senior-most elder, the *mahā-sthavira*. The functions which they oversee are the daily, monthly and annual Buddhist observances in the *vihāra*, initiations into the *bhikṣu-saṅgha* and the discipline of the *saṅgha*, which in this case consists in seeing that prescribed rituals are performed in turn by the members and that social or caste regulations are observed.

Every Buddhist monastic community in India had some common religious exercises each day – brief and simple in Theravāda monasteries, much more elaborate in Mahāyāna and tantric foundations. One of the main features of this worship was, and still is, *Buddha-pūjā* – the worship of the image of the Buddha enshrined in a monastery.¹⁵ The *vihāras* of the Valley also have a daily *pūjā* which is at least a worship of the main image enshrined in the *vihāra*, the *kwāpā-dya*. It seems that originally the *vihāras* had a full schedule of rituals throughout the day. This is no longer true except at a very few places like Jana Bāhā in Kathmandu and Kwā Bāhā in Patan.¹⁶ All have a ceremony in the morning (shortly after sunrise, the time depending on the time of the year). This is the official, prescribed worship, the *nitya-pūjā*, and consists primarily in the offering of the *pañcopacāra-pūjā* and the recitation of hymns. The *pañcopacāra-pūjā* is a five-fold offering consisting of flowers, incense, light, scent and food (*puṣpa, dhūpa, dīpa, gandha, naivedya*). Most also have an evening service, the main part of which is the offering of a light to the deity, the *ārati-pūjā*.

The daily rituals are performed by the initiated members of the *saṅgha* in turn. The attendant on duty is called the *dya-pālā* or *dya-pā*, the guardian of the deity. In most *vihāras*, rotation is through the entire roster of the initiated from eldest to youngest. However, in a number of the *vihāras* the rotation is by

household or lineage. In some places today the rituals are always performed by one man. Service in the shrine of the *kwāpā-dya* is one of the main rights and duties which is conferred on the members of the saṅgha by their initiation, and it is a privilege indeed as no one but the initiated members of the saṅgha may actually enter the shrine. Until very recent times every member of the saṅgha faithfully took his turn as *dya-pālā*. Today many find this inconvenient and get another member of the saṅgha who has the time to take their turn. In some *vihāras* failure to take one's turn reduces one to the status of a sort of fringe member and disqualifies one from serving as an elder of the saṅgha. In other places it seems to make no difference. The term of service varies, but is most frequently one lunar month or one lunar fortnight. Originally the attendant had to spend the entire period of his service in the shrine at the *vihāra* and to follow the monastic rules of a monk for that period. This is seldom the case today. In most *vihāras* the *dya-pālā* comes in the morning and evening, opens the shrine, performs the prescribed rituals and returns immediately to his home or his quarters in the *vihāra*. In a few of the principal institutions he remains on duty throughout the day, and members of the saṅgha as well as lay people come for the prescribed rituals or to perform their own private devotions.

Certain days of the month are sacred to the Buddhists, especially the full moon day and the eighth day of the bright half of the month, which is sacred to Avalokiteśvara. At many of the *vihāras* one can see large groups of people (mostly women) who come to perform a fast and ritual in honour of Amoghapāśa-Lokeśvara (the *aṣṭamī-vrata*) on this day.

Theoretically every *vihāra* (as also every *caitya* and every other Newar shrine, Buddhist or Hindu) has an annual festival which commemorates the founding of the *vihāra* and is called *busā-dañ*, the 'birthday'. Traditionally this has been the one day in the year when the entire saṅgha of a *vihāra* gathered for religious exercises and a feast. From the viewpoint of the structure of Newar society, this is the annual meeting and feast of the *vihāra gūṭhī*. In Patan the custom is almost universally observed; in Kathmandu, as families have moved away from their old homes and as income from the endowments has diminished, the custom has begun to die out.

Another annual observance of the entire Buddhist community is what is known as *Guṅlā dharma*. *Guṅlā* is the name of one of the Newar months, occurring usually from mid-July to mid-August (from the beginning of the bright half of *Sravan* to the end of the dark half of *Bhādra* on the national calendar), and the whole month is sacred to the Buddhists. This custom is perhaps an echo of the ancient monastic custom of the 'rainy season retreat'. Throughout the month there are special observances at the *vihāras* and at the homes of Buddhists. Each day is supposed to begin with fasting; streams of people can be seen each morning going to Svayambhū, the large *stūpa* outside of the city of Kathmandu, and women and girls fashion countless numbers of clay *caityas* which are thrown into the river at the end of the month. At the *vihāra*, it was the custom to recite texts during this month, especially the text of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, but this

custom has largely died out. Following are three customs which are still rather generally observed during this 'month.

First is the *pañcadāna*, the giving of five offerings. Originally this was the offering of gifts of food to the monks and the present custom is an adaptation of this. On the appointed day, which differs in each of the cities, the Buddhist lay people prepare a sort of altar at their home adorned with Buddhist images. In front of the altar they place baskets with four kinds of grain and salt. Throughout the day *bare* (Śākyas and Vajrācāryas) of the city come and collect their share of offerings. Many of the wealthier Śākyas and Vajrācāryas no longer make the rounds, but there is still a continuous procession of *bare* throughout the day. In Bhaktapur the ceremony is enhanced by a procession of the five main Dīpaṅkara images of the city. These proceed to a central place where the faithful from the area place their offerings, and the *bare* of that neighbourhood come to receive them. After some time the procession moves on to the next neighbourhood and so on throughout the day. The whole custom is intimately connected with Dīpaṅkara, and in each of the three cities the main image put out on this day is of him. In Patan people say that the custom originated when Dīpaṅkara Buddha himself came to Patan to seek alms and took the alms offered by a poor, old woman of Guita Tole in preference to the rich offerings of the king. A statue of this woman is put out each year on the day of *pañcadāna*. Dīpaṅkara is one of the earlier Buddhas said to have come before Śākyamuni, and who is supposed to have predicted his coming. His cult attained a great popularity in Malla Nepal, and there are images of him at almost every *vihāra*. The images are donated by individuals who have the image consecrated and then usually install it in one of the *vihāras*. All of these images are brought out in procession at the time of the *samyak* ceremony, which is held every five years at Kwā Bāhā in Patan and every twelve years at Bhuikhel below Sṣayambhū in Kathmandu. The ceremony is a sort of general *pañcadāna* to which are invited the saṅghas of all the *vihāras* in the city. In Malla times it was the custom for wealthy traders to sponsor such a *samyak* ceremony when they returned prosperous from a long trading expedition to Tibet.

The second observance is what is known as *bahī-dya-boyegu*, the "showing of the gods in the *bahīs*". Traditionally this lasted for ten days, and on the first day the members of the *vihāra* and the lay people used to bring whatever images, Buddhist relics, paintings or books they had to put on display for ten days. Perhaps the custom began first at the *bahīs* where they have large open halls suited for such a display. Now the custom is fast dying out. Most *vihāras* no longer put anything out for display, and those which do have a rather meagre display for only a day or two. Many reasons are given for this, the most common being fear of theft; but the fact is that a very large number of these ancient relics have already 'disappeared'.

Patan has an observance that is not found in the other cities, the *matayā* or 'festival of lights'. This occurs on the second day of the dark half of the month of *Guṇlā*; and on this day the people of Patan, carrying lighted tapers, candles or

torches, go in groups to visit all of the *caityas* and *bāhās* of the city of Patan. Given the large number of *bāhās* in Patan, to complete the circuit of all of them is a day-long endurance test. This occurs on the day after *gāijātrā*, a Hindu festival commemorating those who have died within the past year; and the *matayā* is considered to be the Buddhist equivalent. This festival is not observed in either Kathmandu or Bhaktapur. There is, however, a similar observance known simply as *bāhā-pūjā* which can be performed by those who wish at any time of the year and is not a commemoration of the dead. It consists in a visit to each of the *bāhās* in the city, and substantial offerings are made by the participants at each site. The ritual is an expensive one and seldom performed again.

Another annual observance at the *vihāras* is what is known as *disā-pūjā*, 'directional worship'. Performed twice a year in Paus and Jyestha (December and June), this ritual marks the solstice, the end of the sun's journey north or south, and at the level of popular folklore is said to stop the sun's progress and turn it back.

Harkening back to the monastic practice of having a head of the monastic saṅgha (the *mahā-sthavira*) and the custom that ordinations cannot be performed without the presence of the monastic community, each *vihāra* has a number of elders who theoretically oversee the life of the saṅgha and whose presence is required for valid ordinations. In the days when the life of the saṅgha was more vigorous and touched on the daily life of the people more closely, the governing committee was busy and had clearly defined duties. At present their duties are limited to making arrangements for daily services in the shrine, making arrangements for the annual religious observances and feasts, seeing to a few routine business matters like making repairs to the *vihāra* shrine, and settling alleged violations of *vihāra* customs and caste regulations. In many *vihāras* today the elders are no more than honorary seniors who have no clearly defined functions other than to be present at ordinations and to sit in the place of honour at feasts. Most *vihāras* have five or ten elders, some have twenty or twelve, and many of the *bahīs* have only one. Ordinarily the elders hold office on the basis of strict seniority of initiation and, in a *vihāra-saṅgha* that is made up of both Śākya and Vajrācāryas, irrespective of whether one is a Śākya or Vajrācārya, with one exception. The *cakreśvara*, the one who has to perform the tantric rituals in the secret tantric shrine, must be a Vajrācārya if there are Vajrācāryas in the saṅgha. The *cakreśvara* is always one of the elders, so there must be at least one Vajrācārya elder.

As noted above membership in the *vihāra-saṅgha* is limited to the sons of the initiated members of a given *vihāra*. The sons must be born of a mother of equal caste; if the mother is of a lower caste the son is ineligible. The saṅgha of a *vihāra* is in effect a patrilineal descent group. The initiation is known as the *bare-chuyegu* (the 'making of a bare') and is essentially the *pravrajyā*, or first initiation of a *bhikṣu*.

The age for initiation is about ten years, in any case before puberty. However, this may vary considerably. Initiation ceremonies are lengthy and expensive;

hence, especially in the smaller institutions, initiations are held at irregular intervals whenever there are enough candidates to share the expenses. About a week before the actual initiation the candidates come to the *vihāra* and, after presenting five betel nuts, *pān*, flowers, sandalwood paste, fragrant incense and a lamp to the senior-most member of the *saṅgha*, they formally request the *pravrajyā* initiation from him. On the day before the initiation itself the candidates come again to their *vihāra*, and in a ceremony that lasts most of the afternoon, they are taught to perform the *gurumandala* rite, a basic rite in honour of Vajrasattva that is performed before every Vajrayāna ritual and which they will have to perform on the next day. At the conclusion of the ceremony the head of the *saṅgha* ties a tuft of hair at the crown of each candidate's head with a piece of cloth containing a particle of gold, or with a gold ring. This is in preparation for the shaving of the head on the following day: the day of the *pravrajyā*. The term *cūdā-karma* (or *karāṇa*) ('making of the top knot') is often popularly used for this rite and is found in some of the ritual texts, but it properly applies only to the first part of the ceremony. The terms *upanayana* and *vratibandha* are also popularly used, even by the *bare* themselves, but they are not found in the ritual texts and are obviously used in analogy to the Hindu initiation rite.

First, the candidates perform the *guru-mandala* rite as learned on the previous day. The rubrics then specify that a short explanation be given to the candidates of the meaning of the *pravrajyā* rite, after which they take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha. Then, the five rules of discipline are read to the candidates. At the conclusion of this the candidates again request initiation, this time from the officiating Vajrācārya priest. Next, the candidates, who sit in a line according to age, are led away from the area of the rituals to a barber seated at the edge of the *vihāra* courtyard for the *cūdā-karma*. The barber shaves the head of each boy, leaving a top knot (*cūdā*), as is done by caste Hindus. Then the boy is presented with a loin cloth. The giving of the loin cloth (*mekhalā-bandhana* in Sanskrit, *kayata-pūjā* in Newari) and the shaving of the head apart from the top knot is the initiation rite for all of the Newar castes exclusive of the *bare*. Thus the *bare* is first initiated as a householder. The point is underlined in the ritual texts themselves, for at this point the priest or his assistant is told to address the candidates: "As a result of the rites which have been performed you are now householders. It is not too late to change your mind. Do you really want to be *bhikṣus*, and why?"¹⁷ The candidates respond that indeed they do want to be *bhikṣus* and again request the *pravrajya* initiation.

This is followed by the *pravrajyā* itself. The candidates are led in turn to a spot directly in front of the shrine of the *vihāra*. There the senior-most member of the *saṅgha* cuts off the top knot and the loin cloth. Then the five eldest members of the *saṅgha* and the officiating priest pour sacred water over the candidate's head. The cutting of the top knot and shedding of the loin cloth symbolize the renunciation of the status of householder and the rejection of caste status by the *bhikṣu*.

Following the *pravrajyā* proper, the candidates are invested with the robe of a

bhikṣu, a red or yellow robe, to which is added two silver bracelets, a pair of earrings, and a silver necklace. The candidates are then presented with the *bhikṣu*'s begging bowl, a staff and a ritual umbrella. The presiding priest then gives each of them a new name saying, "You are now a *bhikṣu*; you must not hanker after the life of a householder, a home, or such things. You must lay aside your household name. I will give you a new name, the name of a *bhikṣu*."¹⁸ Then the candidates perform the *pūjā* of the *maṇḍalas* of the Three jewels: the *Buddha-maṇḍala*, the *Dharma-maṇḍala* and the *Śaṅgha-maṇḍala*. They then listen to the reading of the ten rules of discipline of the *bhikṣu*. The ritual texts then give a prayer to be recited at the conclusion of the investiture: "May all those who have undergone this rite of *pravrajyā* in the presence of the Buddha, ever be victorious by the favour of the gods and the power of fire, water, sky and the vital spirit, as long as Mt. Meru stands, as long as the Ganges flows, as long as the earth, the sun and the moon remain constant."¹⁹

At the conclusion of the investiture each of the candidates in turn is handed a golden *kalāśa* and is led carrying it into the shrine of the *vihāra*. As an initiated member of the *śaṅgha* he has the right to enter this shrine and the duty to serve as an attendant of the Buddha.

The *bhikṣu* must beg his food daily and the next rite is a ceremonial offering of alms to the new *bhikṣus*. A low basket is placed in front of each of the *bhikṣus* and a procession of people comes along to offer uncooked rice and coins to them. The first to offer alms to each must be the boy's mother's brother, who offers him not only rice, but also a tray containing a new set of clothes which he will don four days later. Finally the new *bhikṣus* are taken out of the *vihāra* in procession round the neighbourhood. In Kathmandu this procession always goes to Hanumān Dhokā, the old royal palace, where the *bhikṣus* present betel nuts to the throne of the king.

The boys are now *bhikṣus*, and for four days they must live the life of Buddhist monks, though they continue to live at home whether the family has quarters inside of the *vihāra* or outside. They have to observe the regulations of diet of the monk (only one meatless meal a day, taken before noon), avoid contact with anything unclean, and keep the ten rules of discipline. They have to go out each morning to beg their food, and for this they must go to the houses of their mother's brothers and their father's sisters. Beyond this they ordinarily go to the houses of any other relatives who call them, usually three or four houses a day.

Four days after the *pravrajyā* rites the young *bhikṣus* return to the *vihāra* for the ceremony of "laying aside the monk's robe" (*civara kote vidhi*). The rite is also called *vratamokṣaṇa* (release from the vows). For this ceremony the boys are taken up into the secret tantric shrine of the *vihāra* there they make the following petition to the officiating priest, "O guru, O *upādhyāya*, we find that it is too difficult to spend our whole life like this as *śramaṇas*." The priest responds, 'If you find it too difficult to live as *śramaṇas* then live as householders. If you want heaven (*svarga*) you can obtain it by being a householder, but do not indulge in violence, do not tell lies, do not covet another's wife. If you

avoid these things you will obtain heaven.”²⁰ They then lay aside their monk’s robes and put on the new set of clothes given them by their mother’s brother on the day of the *pravrajyā*. Finally they are given a *mantra* of Heruka Cakrasaṃvara.²¹

According to the tradition of the Newars, the *bare* do not cease to be *bhikṣus* by the above rite, but pass from the state of celibate *bhikṣus* to that of householder *bhikṣus*, a fact underlined by the name *bhikṣu* or *sākyabhikṣu* used to refer to them down the ages. Allen records of the ceremonies in Patan, that after their completion, the boy is taken home, where he is introduced to some elementary Vajrayāna rituals by the family Vajrācārya priest, after which the priest addresses him along the following lines: “You have gone through *Śrāvakayāna* and now come to Mahāyāna, the greatest of the Buddhist *yānas*. You have participated in some Vajrayāna rituals and after going through some higher ordinations you will know what Chakrasambar is.”²² From the viewpoint of Vajrayāna Buddhism, the initiated passes through successively higher forms of Buddhism. Starting as a totally uninitiated boy, he is first initiated as a householder (*upāsaka*). Then he becomes a Hīnayāna monk through the *pravrajyā*. With the “laying aside of the robes” he embraces the Mahāyāna state and, if he is a Vajrācārya, he will be further initiated into the mysteries of the Vajrayāna -- the adamant way: the highest and most powerful of the Buddhist ways of attaining enlightenment.

Entrance into the ranks of the Vajrācāryas is limited by birth; only the sons of Vajrācāryas may be initiated. The Vajrācārya initiation, known in Newari as the *ācā-luyegu* (the ‘making of an *ācārya*’) and in Sanskrit as the *pañcābhiṣeka* (the ‘five consecrations’) is always given after the *bare-chuyegu*, in Kathmandu usually the day after the “laying aside of the robes”, and in Patan at a later date.

The initiation consists of five tantric consecrations: the *kalasābhiṣeka* (water flask consecration), *mukutābhiṣeka* (crown consecration), *vajrābhiṣeka* (*vajra*, or diamond, consecration), *ghaṇṭābhiṣeka* (bell consecration), and *guhyābhiṣeka* (secret consecration). The *kalasā*, ritual crown, *vajra* and bell are the implements which the Vajrācārya uses for his performance of the ritual. The secret consecration was originally the consecration of the tantric *yogin* with his consort and symbolizes the union of *prajñā* and *upāya* (wisdom and means), the female and male principles of Vajrayāna philosophy. At present the candidates are presented with a flower garland and shown a picture of Heruka Cakrasaṃvara in union with his consort Vajravārāhī. Following these consecrations, the candidates are given a different *mantra* of Heruka Cakrasaṃvara from the one they were given before. They are then enjoined to secrecy about the details of these initiation rites. In practice the secrecy is taken to refer to the *mantra* itself; this is always passed from *guru* to disciple and never divulged or written down even in the ritual texts.

Having taken these consecrations, the Vajrācārya is empowered to perform the *homa* sacrifice, an essential part of all major rituals, and to confer consecrations. He is further empowered to perform the secret tantric rites in the *āgam* of

the *bāhā*, or in his own home if he has such a shrine. He is entitled to have *jajamānas* – client families – for whom he acts as priest and from whom he receives a stipend for his services. In each *bāhā* where there are Vajrācāryas, there is an *acārya-gūṭhī* composed of all the Vajrācārya members of the saṅgha, and in Kathmandu there is an overall organization of all the Vajrācāryas of the city known simply as the *Ācārya-Gūṭhī*. This *Ācārya-Gūṭhī* was responsible for standardizing ritual and providing ritual texts for its members. For this reason there is greater uniformity in the performance of ritual in Kathmandu than in Patan or Bhaktapur; and the Vajrācāryas of Kathmandu are recognized by their confrères in Patan and Bhaktapur as experts in the performance of the ritual. The *Ācārya-Gūṭhī* also strictly controlled the relationship between the Vajrācāryas and their clients. Client families were passed on from father to son as a right consequent upon ordination. The clients had no say whatsoever in the selection of their priests. However, as a result of a dispute some years ago which lasted nearly thirty years, the *Ācārya-Gūṭhī* lost its hold both over its priests and over its clients. Now people feel free to call any Vajrācārya if they are dissatisfied with their priest.²³

From a religious and social point of view, the most vital service provided to the Buddhist community by the *hare* is the priestly service of the Vajrācāryas. They are needed for caste initiations, marriages, worship of the lineage deity, and all principal *pūjās*, whether performed in the home or at a *bāhā*. Hence the dominant place of the Vajrācārya and of the *Ācārya-Gūṭhī* in Kathmandu, whose eighteen *bāhās* are still recognized as the principal *bāhās* of Kathmandu.

There are today some 363 Buddhist *vihāras* still extant in the Valley, but they are not all of equal status. Among the *bāhās* there are two broad categories called in Newari *mū-bāhā* and *kacā-bāhā*; that is, main *vihāras* (Sanskrit *mūla*) and branch *vihāra* (Sanskrit *sākha*). A main *vihāra* is one in which *bare-chuyegu* initiations are rightfully performed. The branch *vihāras* are just what the name indicates: branches of the main institutions founded when the pace in the original *vihāra* would no longer accommodate the ever-expanding saṅgha, or when a lay donor was moved to found a *vihāra* and donate it to one lineage of an existing *vihāra-saṅgha*. Originally it seems that new monasteries were founded with independent saṅghas, but there came a time when the number of official monasteries became fixed and new foundations were considered to be branches of the original monastery. In such a case the members of a branch are still considered to be members of the main monastery and must receive their initiation there, take their turn in the shrine and serve as elders of the saṅgha. At the same time they have similar obligations towards their branch monastery.

Thus in Patan there are eighteen main *bāhās*, called 'The Fifteen Bāhās'.²⁴ In addition there are over 130 *bāhās* which are branches of these main monasteries.²⁵ In Kathmandu there are eighteen *bāhās* belonging to the *Ācārya-Gūṭhī*, all of which have Vajrācārya members and several have only Vajrācārya. To this day they are considered to be the most important *bāhās* of Kathmandu,

despite the fact that there are ten other main *bāhās* of Śākya where *bare-chuyegu* initiations are performed. Both the main *bāhās* of the *Ācārya-Gūṭhī* and the ten Śākya *bāhās* also have branches. In Bhaktapur there are only nine main *bāhās*, some Śākya and some mixed. All of the extant Bhaktapur *bāhās* are main *bāhās*.

The *bahīs* form a separate class of monastery, but today the difference between the two has been lost for all practical purposes. We have seen above certain architectural differences between the two types. Certain other superficial differences are obvious. Most of the *bahīs* are in a general state of disrepair in contrast to the *bāhās*, especially the main *bāhās* of Patan, which have been kept up and are periodically renovated. The saṅghas of the *bahīs* are small and continually decreasing so that the membership of the *bahī-saṅghas* accounts for only 5.4% of the total *bare* in the Valley. Several institutions which were functioning fifty years ago are now empty and falling into ruins. Because of their small numbers, *bahīs*, except for Cikaṅ Bahī in Patan, usually do not have branches. In general the members of the *bahīs* are financially less well off than the members of the *bāhās*. The organization of the saṅgha of a *bahī* is different from that of a *bāhā*. In Patan there are two groups of *bahīs*, one comprising ten *bahīs* and the other fifteen. In Kathmandu there are sixteen *bahīs*. Though initiations are (or were until recent times) performed in all of these *vihāras*, each of these three groups of *bahīs* had one overall saṅgha (*sarva-saṅgha*) with five elders for each of the two groups of Patan and a group of sixteen elders in Kathmandu, one from each *bahī*. This system is somewhat modified now, as the two groups in Patan have broken up in recent times, and several of the *bahī-saṅghas* in Kathmandu have died out entirely.²⁶ In Patan, until recent times, the members of a *bahī* were called *brahmacarya-bhikṣu* rather than *śākya-bhikṣu* or *śākya-vamśa*. Though the term is still known, most of these people today prefer simply Śākya.

All of these are rather superficial differences, and if one asks *bare* today the difference between *bāhā* and *bahī*, they are hard pressed to give a meaningful answer. Members of the *bāhās* will often say that the *bahīs* were later foundations set up for people of mixed or lower castes. Historical evidence contradicts this contention. A number of the *bahīs* have definitely been in existence for six hundred years or more. I Bahī and its associates in Patan are probably about nine hundred years old, Guita Bahī in Patan existed in 1024 AD, Thaṃ Bahī in Kathmandu certainly existed in 1041 AD and Cā Bahī in Kathmandu certainly goes back to Licchavi times, though the present saṅgha seems to be later. The members of I Bahī claim brahman descent, and though this cannot be proven with documentary evidence, some of their still current customs confirm this. It is true that the members of the *bahī-saṅghas* were, until recent times, looked upon as somehow slightly lower than members of a *bāhā*. Members of a *bāhā* would usually not give their daughters in marriage to a *bahī* nor would they take wives from them. This prejudice has almost disappeared today. Others will say that the organization of the *bahī-saṅgha* is less structured and that the *bahī* people have

fewer rituals to perform. To an extent this is true, but the statement is made against the background of a theory which says that the more rules one has to follow and rituals one has to perform the higher one's religious status. Today in fact there is little difference, and one has to look at the history of the two institutions to find the original difference.

The position of the Śākya and Vajrācāryas in Newar Buddhist society is clear. They are the *bhikṣu-saṅgha*, and the Vajrācāryas among them are the priests of the entire Buddhist community. Their religious traditions and their rituals are all clearly tantric Buddhist, and if asked they will identify themselves as Buddhists. The question of the lay Buddhists – who they are and what percentage of the Newar population they constitute – is one which has vexed every commentator.²⁷ The Newar trading class of Kathmandu (the *Udāya*), most of the *Mānandhars* and the *Citrakārs* are clearly and consciously Buddhist. Beyond this there are few clear distinctions. Most commentators have settled on the criterion of the family priest – if a family, or a caste, uses Vajrācārya priests for their life-cycle rites and family rituals they are classed as Buddhist, if they use brahmins or tantric Hindu priests they are classed as Hindu.

I have used this criterion myself, but have increasing doubts about its usefulness. The farmer class among the Newars, the *Jyāpūs*, make up some forty-five percent of the total Newar population. They constitute a large percentage of the population of the three cities, and the bulk of the population in the villages which dot the plain of the Valley. There are no *bare* in most of these villages, so the people call a Vajrācārya priest from Patan, Kathmandu or Bhaktapur when they need one. Until recent times nearly 100% of the *Jyāpūs* used Vajrācārya priests. These were the priests assigned to them in days gone by, and they continued to call them for the performance of life-cycle rites or death ceremonies, and to preside over the annual festival of the principal deities of their villages or area of the city. The principal deity in these villages and in the *Jyāpū* sections of the cities, is usually a tantric Hindu deity – Harisiddhi, Bhagavatī, Nāsa Dya (the Dancing Śiva) etc. In recent times many of the *Jyāpū* families, especially in more remote places like Sankhu and Dhulikhel and in the city of Bhaktapur, have begun to call brahmin priests (usually non-Newar brahmins) to perform their life-cycle rites and the commemoration of the dead. When questioned as to the reason for this, they respond that these brahmins offer their services cheaper, it is more convenient to call them, or it is more politic to have brahmin priests in a Hindu kingdom.²⁸ When they switch priests the only thing that changes in their religious culture is the priest – they continue to worship the same deities with the same rituals, and understand their life-cycle rites and ceremonies for the dead in exactly the same way.

What we seem to have is a substratum of religious rites and customs that were originally purely animistic but which have been influenced by outside forces of a higher tradition – tantric Hinduism which has resulted in Hindu names for the deities, stories from the *Purāṇas* to explain their background, and modes of worship that are tantric and Hindu. Tantric Buddhism contributed the

priests, and this probably came about because of the availability of the Vajrācāryas. In Malla Nepal there were far more Vajrācāryas than brahmins, especially in Patan and Kathmandu. Even today in Bhaktapur, the most Hindu of the three cities, there are only 26 households of Newar brahmins as opposed to 209 houses of *bare*, about half of whom are Vajrācāryas.²⁹ It is clear that in Malla Nepal there were barely enough brahmins to serve the needs of the court and the aristocracy who were caste Hindus. In fact, the use of brahmin priests may well have provided a convenient distinction between the rulers and the ruled. From the viewpoint of the people (i.e., the *Jyāpūs*), the Vajrācāryas were accepted and respected above all because they possessed power – power to ward off evil, to subdue malevolent deities, to coerce supernatural forces and to bend them to the use of the villagers.³⁰ Even to this day people in the Valley, even non-Newars, will say that the most powerful *jhānkrī* is the Vajrācārya.³¹ If then one uses the criterion of the family priest to classify people as Hindu or Buddhist, what information does this convey? Very little indeed. What is needed is a fresh anthropological analysis of the religious customs of these people from a different viewpoint.

What are the historical antecedents that led to the unique features of Newar Buddhism today? At the outset it must be said that one cannot give a definite answer to this question at the present state of our knowledge. In what follows I will attempt to draw together what few threads we have from the medieval period, and try to form some tentative hypotheses.

Buddhist stories and legends give a hoary antiquity to Buddhism in the Valley, tracing human habitation to a visit of Mañjuśrī, who drained the lake that once filled the Valley. Legends speak of visits to the Valley by the legendary Buddhas who preceded the historical Buddha: Kāśyapa Buddha, Krakucchanda, Kanakamuṇi, Dīpaṅkara; and some of the *vihāras* are said to have been founded by these early Buddhas. Legend speaks of a visit to the Valley by the Emperor Aśoka. The four *stūpas* at the cardinal points of the city of Patan are attributed to him, many ancient *caityas* in Kathmandu are attributed to him, and he is said to have married off a daughter to a *kṣatriya* of Nepal. In their old age she and her husband founded a *vihāra*, the present Cā Bahī, which was named after her. The Sanskrit name of this *vihāra* is often given as Cārumati Vihāra.³²

Given the proximity of the Valley of Nepal to Lumbini and Kapilavastu and to the areas of North Bihar where Buddhism spread rapidly even during the time of the Buddha, it is quite possible that the Dharma found its way to the Valley during the lifetime of the Buddha himself. It is not *a priori* impossible that the Emperor Aśoka visited the Valley, but there is no contemporary evidence of such a visit either from Nepal or from Buddhist sources in India. Unlike India, where the ancient Buddhist sites are abandoned ruins, the ancient sites in Nepal are still active shrines. Hence archeological investigation of sites such as the four *stūpas* of Patan is impossible without offending the religious sensibilities of the people.

The first contemporary evidence of the presence of Buddhism in the Valley comes from the corpus of Licchavi inscriptions ranging from 464 to about 880 AD and comprising nearly 200 inscriptions, some of them mere fragments.³³ Vṛṣadeva, a king of the Licchavi period who precedes the time of the earliest inscriptions, is said by the inscriptions and by the chronicles to have been a Buddhist and to have founded a monastery at the famous Svayambhūnāth Mahācaitya.³⁴ The inscriptions mention 14 *vihāras*, and the *Gopālarājavamśāvalī*, the earliest and most reliable of the Nepalese chronicles, mentions six *vihāras* from this period.³⁵ Though all of the kings, except possibly Vṛṣadeva, seem to have been clearly Hindu, some of the monasteries were founded by royal patronage or royal grants: Śrīmāna Vihāra built by Mānadeva and Rāja Vihāra built by another king, possibly Aṃśuvarmā. An inscription from the time of Aṃśuvarmā mentions religious taxes and the institutions which the collected revenue support. Among these institutions (mostly Hindu shrines) are several *vihāras*.³⁶ Two inscriptions, both dated Samvat 103 (678–9 AD), from the time of Narendradeva, grant large tracts of land to *vihāras* for their support. With the grant of land and its income went certain other rights. The saṅgha was entrusted with authority to collect the taxes for their own use and to function as civil authorities, settling disputes among the people and issuing punishment for crimes committed by people within their territory.³⁷ Even at this early date one sees the saṅgha very much involved in secular business.

From the inscriptions themselves we know nothing about the internal operation of the *vihāra*, the makeup of the saṅgha, or the life-style of the *bhikṣus*. We know nothing about the sect or sects the *bhikṣus* of a given *vihāra* belonged to, except for a fragmentary reference at Sankhu to the *mahāsāṅghika-bhikṣu-saṅgha*.³⁸ There are a number of references to the *bhikṣu-* or *bhikṣuṇī-saṅgha* and one reference to a *śākya-bhikṣu*.³⁹ From a number of references in inscriptions to Avalokiteśvara and images of him from the period which have survived, we know that Mahāyāna Buddhism flourished. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-tsang noted that there were both heretics (i.e. Hindus) and true believers (Buddhists) in Nepal. The temples of the gods and the monasteries existed side by side and there were a total of about 2,000 monks who studied both the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna.⁴⁰ It seems that Vajrayāna Buddhism was known, but certainly had not attained the dominance it later enjoyed.⁴¹ This is really the sum of our knowledge of Buddhism during this period. Of the extant *vihāras*, only one can be traced with any degree of certainty to the Licchavi period: Guṃ Bāhā at Sankhu, the Guṃ Vihāra of the inscriptions. The Svayambhū Mahācaitya of course still exists, but the *vihāra* has long disappeared.⁴²

The next period of Nepalese history is the so-called Thākūrī period which extends from about 750 AD (or 879 AD if one counts from the beginning of the Nepal çra) until the first of the Malla kings in 1200 AD.⁴³ It is a period of which our knowledge is limited. Few inscriptions have survived and what little we know of even the political history of the period comes mostly from colophons on manuscripts, largely Buddhist, which mention the name of the reigning king

and occasionally a few other bits of information. From the large number of Buddhist manuscripts which were copied during this period it is evident that Buddhism flourished. Contemporary records mention eleven of the still extant *vihāras* and another thirty-one *vihāras* which are unknown today.⁴⁴ The Buddhist manuscripts include standard Mahāyāna texts such as the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* and the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, collections of Buddhist stories such as the *avadāna-kathās*, plus a large number of tantras and tantric ritual texts, the most popular of which was the *Pañcarakṣā*. All of the manuscripts are in Sanskrit; there is not a single Pāli text from this period.

One of the most important sources of information on the Buddhism of this period is a collection of 140 palm-leaf land deeds found a few years ago at Ukū Bāhā in Patan. The earliest of these is dated Nepal Samvat 103 (982–3 AD) and they extend down to the early part of the Malla period. Nearly all of them deal with land transactions involving *vihāras* and the residents of *vihāras*. Some thirty-seven of these have been published and the entire corpus is currently being edited.⁴⁵ Those which have been published give the names of a number of the *vihāras* of Patan, most of which are unknown today. The residents of the *vihāras* are usually referred to as *śākya-bhikṣu* or simply *bhikṣu*; a few are identified as Vajrācārya. What strikes one immediately in these documents is the large number of *śākya-bhikṣus* and *bhikṣus* who are buying and selling land in their own name. There are only a few instances of transactions in the name of a saṅgha or a *vihāra*. This would seem to indicate a high degree of secularization. An analysis of the entire corpus of these documents will perhaps shed more light on this question.

Another source of information on this period is the Tibetan records, for it was precisely at this time that the Dharma was being revived in Tibet and many Tibetans were coming to Nepal and India to study and receive initiations. Records such as the *Blue Annals* attest to the presence in the Valley of a number of pandits and tantric adepts under whom the Tibetans studied. Many of these were Indian, but some were definitely Nepalese, indicating that there were at least some of the residents of the *vihāras* who were scholars and yogic adepts. These included such famous Indian scholars and *siddhas* as Vāgīśvarakīrti, Vibhūticandra, Buddhaśrī, Ratnarakṣita, Śāntarakṣita, Vasubandhu. Atiśa or Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna as he was known in India, spent a year in Nepal in 1041–42 AD and built a temple or shrine at Taṃ Vihāra (the present Taṃ Bahī in Kathmandu). He noted that the discipline and the manner of conducting the study of the doctrine at this *vihāra* was excellent.⁴⁶ Early in the thirteenth century the Tibetan Dharmasvamin spent several years in Nepal staying at the *vihāra* at Svayambhū where he studied under Ratnarakṣita and Mahāpaṇḍita Ravindradeva. He too mentions Taṃ Vihāra and notes that from the time of Atiśa until the present the religious rites were properly observed in this monastery.⁴⁷ Among the Nepalese scholars mentioned are Anutapagupta and Vairocana (disciples of Atiśa) [*Blue Annals* p. 850], Nayaśrī [p. 1053], Bandepa, also known as Paindapatika [p. 402], Buddhaśrī [Taranātha p. 317], Phammthin-pa and his four

brothers [*Blue Annals* p. 380ff].⁴⁸ The last of the famous Indian pandits came in the fifteenth century and was a Bengali known as Vanaratna and called by the Tibetans 'The Last Great Pandit.' He spent several years in Nepal, went to Tibet and then later returned to Nepal, where he retired to a monastery which still exists, Gopicandra Mahāvihāra (Pintu Bahī). What is strange about all of these scholars and *siddhas* mentioned by the Tibetans is that the Newar Buddhist tradition has retained no memory of any of them. The case of Vanaratna is the most striking, as a painting of this man was made the year after his death in 1468. This painting was preserved at Pintu Bahī until 1862 when a copy was made because the original had become faded. Both paintings have identical inscriptions in Newari explaining who the man was, and in the case of the second painting, why the new copy was made. Today the earlier painting is in the Los Angeles County Museum, the later one is in the Bharat Kala Bhavan in Varanasi and no one in Pintu Bahī has ever heard of Vanaratna.⁴⁹

The Malla period (1200–1769) is characterized by much more abundant information. The early period, down to the end of the reign of Yakṣa Malla (1482 AD) presents a picture that is a continuation of the so-called Ṭhakuri period with references in a variety of sources to *vihāras* and the manuscripts copied by those who live there. By 1482 we have references to at least forty-four of the extant monasteries and another seventy-six which no longer exist.⁵⁰ There are an increasing number of references to Vajrācāryas. The earliest reference to a Vajrācārya who is definitely a native of the Valley comes from a copper-plate inscription dated 218 NS (1097–8 AD), which refers to one Vajrācārya Dharma Siṃha of Vajraśīla Mahāvihāra, one of the still extant main *bāhās* of the *Ācārya-Gūṭhī*.⁵¹ After 1100 AD there are abundant references to Vajrācāryas and their *bāhās*.

The monks continue to be referred to as *bhikṣu*, *sākya-bhikṣu* or *sākya-vaṃśa* implying descent from the clan of Śākya, a claim still made by some of the Śākyas. The term *brahmacarya-bhikṣu* appears for the members of the *bahīs* in Patan. A manuscript of 561 NS (1440–41 AD) gives rules for the conduct of the *bare-chuyegu* (*vandechuya* in the text) in a Patan monastery – Vaṃ Bāhā, one of the extant main *bāhās*. It lists the various donations that are to be made at the time of initiations and specifically states that if any member of the saṅgha has a son who is of a lower caste (*jātī*) than himself (if he is the son of a woman of a caste lower than *bare*), the boy is not to be initiated.⁵² This is a clear statement of three facts: the members of the saṅgha are married and have sons, membership in the saṅgha is limited to sons of members, and pure caste status is a prerequisite for initiation.

As one moves into the late Malla period, after Yakṣa Malla one gets further unequivocal references to married *bhikṣus*. An inscription of 631 NS (1510–11 AD) refers to one *sākya-bhikṣu* Śrī Jyotirāja Pāla, his mother Ullāsa Lakṣmī and his wife Abhaya Lakṣmī.⁵³ An inscription of 635 NS (1514–15 AD) refers to one '*brahmacarya-bhikṣu* Śrījakaṛājajū and his wife Manamayī'.⁵⁴ From this time on there are a large number of such references, usually in inscriptions which record

donations and repairs to the *vihāras*. Such inscriptions often list the names of all the members of a donor's family. Few such inscriptions have survived from the earlier periods, so one cannot draw any conclusions about when such married monks first appeared, or when the custom became general. Even the term *bhikṣuṇī* is occasionally used for the wife of a Śākya or Vajrācārya.⁵⁵

When celibate monks entirely disappeared is a question that simply cannot be answered at the present state of our knowledge. I have been given concrete examples of celibate Newar monks in the Valley within the past two hundred years, but they were clearly exceptions to the rule and individual, isolated occurrences. They seem to have been men who had spent some time in Tibet, received ordination there as Mahāyāna *bhikṣus* and continued their practice when they returned home. Most of them seem not to have been *bare* but *Udāya*, i.e., men who by caste were excluded from the rank of monk (*bare*) in Nepal. Slusser is of the opinion that there were celibate monks in the Valley up to the seventeenth century.⁵⁶ This opinion seems to be based on Wright's chronicle, (= *History of Nepal*) which states (in speaking of the arrangements for the *vihāras* made by the king of Patan in the seventeenth century): "The Yampi Bihār, built by Sunaya Misra was nirbānic (i.e., the inhabitants did not marry) . . ."⁵⁷ It must be noted that this interpretation of *nirbānic* is Wright's not the chronicle's, and it is clear from the rest of the account that they were in fact married.

David Gellner's recent paper on the *vihāras* of Patan has shed considerable light on this whole passage in Wright's chronicle. Gellner has gone back to the original Nepali text; and it is clear that Wright's translators have omitted several key words and mistranslated others. Gellner treats this passage in the context of his treatment of Cikaṅ Bahī of Patan, which is the one exception to the general pattern of decay in the *bahīs*. Cikaṅ Bahī has a large saṅgha of 135 Śākyas. This saṅgha is very active; the *bahī* buildings have been kept in good repair (and are currently being extensively renovated), and over the last hundred and fifty years they have built and consecrated several branches. This seems to have been a result of two factors: the relative wealth of these families and the fact that they have kept alive something of the original traditions of the *bahīs*. One of the aged elders of Cikaṅ Bahī gave Gellner the following account:

"When the *bāhā* were inhabited by married *śākya-bhikṣus* who worked for their living, there were still *brahmacarya-bhikṣus*, unmarried monks who did no work, in the *bahī*. In the *bāhā* they did tantric rituals, had *gūṭhis*, (i.e. annual ritual obligations) and so on, but in the *bahī* all they had to do was keep the rule of celibacy (*brahmacarya pāle yāye*). Then one day the king decided that the 1200 *ropanī* of land belonging to the Knoti Bahī was too much, and he took the land to feed his soldiers. 'Since you live by begging,' he said, 'go ahead and beg!' Eventually they had to marry and find work, although the 64 kinds of work had already been given out to the 64 castes. So they did as the Śākyavamśa were doing."⁵⁸

What this seems to indicate is that the *bahīs* are relics of an earlier and celibate tradition. For a long time after the distinctive feature of these communities, their celibacy, had been abandoned they continued many of their traditions. Finally, in the face of the overwhelming popularity of the *bāhā* traditions, the ritual and social high status of the Vajrācāryas, and the official sanction of this tantric Buddhism (with its round of ritual which fit so well into the structure of 'Hindu society') by the ruling elite, the *bahīs* were relegated to a place outside the mainstream of the Buddhist tradition of the Valley. Perhaps it is in this sense that the term *bahir* (outside) has the greatest import.

This line of reasoning is confirmed by the relevant passage in Wright's chronicle. Siddhi Narasiṃha, the king of Patan, had called together the elders of the 'Fifteen Bāhā', and made arrangements for their government. He then called the elders of the twenty-five *bahīs* of Patan. The chronicle calls these *vihāras* '*nirvāṇik vanaprastha*'. Wright explains this term as meaning "the inhabitants did not marry", though it is abundantly clear from the chronicle that they were in fact married. The term seems meaningless because Wright's translators have omitted the contrasting term which the chronicle writers used for the *bāhās*: '*samsārik tantrik vihāra*' ('this-worldly tantric *vihāra*'). The chronicle clearly contrasts *nirvāṇik vanaprastha vihāras (bahīs)* and *samsārik tantrik vihāras (bāhās)*. When the king tried to make reforms in the *bahīs* similar to the reforms he made in the *bāhās*, the members of I Bahī complained that since they followed the other-worldly forest-dwelling dharma they could not take the tantric initiation of those who are members of a worldly tantric *vihāra*. The chronicle then describes the arrangements made for the *bahīs* in general and especially for I Bahī concluding:

"In this way the rules were established both for the worldly tantric (*samsārik tantrik*) monasteries and for the other-worldly forest-dwelling (*nirvāṇik vanaprastha*) monasteries."⁵⁹

One sees here an intermediate stage. Celibacy had disappeared, but the *bahīs* were still repositories of a different tradition which their members wanted to preserve. However, their efforts were doomed as they were caught in an anomalous situation. They were custodians of the tradition of the celibate monks, but they were not celibate. The king was anxious to make all of his subjects conform to the traditional customs of Hindu society. One of these customs was the performance of the fire sacrifice (*homa*) after the death of a member of a family in order to purify the household and its members. Since they were married men with families, they must also adopt this custom, and for this they must have a priest who is empowered to perform such a sacrifice. He may be Buddhist, but he must be a Vajrācārya, as the priests from *bahīs* were not recognized (by their own people or the majority community) as Vajrācāryas and hence did not perform the fire sacrifice. So Vajrācāryas from Dhūṃ Bāhā were assigned to be the priests of I Bahī. The *bahī* priests continued to function for rituals pertaining to the monastery itself, but Vajrācāryas from the *bāhās* became the family

priests of the families attached to the *bahīs*. This arrangement further blurred the lines of distinction between *bahīs* and *bāhās* and today few people know where the line is and what it signifies.

Gellner concludes his analysis of the situation of the *bahīs* with the following statement:

“The decline of the *bahī* was evidently already under way when Siddhi Narasiṃha made his reforms, since the chronicle tells us that certain *bahī* were empty, their inhabitants having moved on after taking up the householder *dharma*. The members of the *bahī* made a virtue of their being the descendants of the last truly celibate monks, but this was not enough to stop a steady decline in population. Wherever possible members must have transferred to *bāhā*; but precisely because such practice is in theory not allowed it is impossible to trace it or prove it. The lower prestige of the *bahī* is due to the fact that the Buddhism of the Newars is Tantric: celibate monastic Buddhism, of which the *bahī* are the most prominent representatives, is given a place, but only the lowest one. The *bahī* themselves have been less and less able, and less and less interested, to combat this assessment.”⁶⁰

These considerations lead to three conclusions: (1) It is the *bahīs* not the *bāhās* which are the repositories of a celibate monastic tradition. (2) In the days when celibate communities existed, if celibate monks decided to become householder monks, they left their celibate monastery (even if it meant leaving the place empty) and joined or founded a *bāhā*. They did not turn a *de jure* celibate institution into a householder monastery. (3) Celibacy as such had ceased to be observed in the *bahīs* by the seventeenth century. (Recall the inscription of 1514–15 noted above which speaks of a married *brahmacarya-bhikṣu*.)

Even in the days when celibacy was observed in these monasteries, it had its unique features. Wright’s chronicle recounts the foundation of I Bahī (Yampi Vihāra) in an earlier era by one Sunaya Śrī Miśra, a brahman from the plains who had become a Buddhist monk. He spent a long time in Tibet studying the *dharma*, and finally settled in Patan where he built a monastery for himself (Yampi Vihāra). Later two of his disciples, Govardhana Miśra and Kāśyapa Miśra came from the plains and each built separate *vihāras*. Later yet his mother and his sons came and found him in Nepal. He built for them a house near his *vihāra*. Then “when a grandson was born, he made his son become a *bhikṣu* also. His wife placed an image of Kuliśeśwarī to the south of the *bihar*. He made it a rule for his descendants, that, on the birth of a son, they were to leave their homes and live a life of celibacy.”⁶¹ Even in this early tradition where celibacy is enjoined, one finds that the monastery is not open to all but is a family affair for the descendants of Sunaya Śrī Miśra, and that a man first married and later retired from a worldly life to the monastery. Presumably a similar custom was adopted for the other two monasteries he founded for his disciples.

Are the *bahīs* then older institutions than the *bāhās* as some commentators have speculated? This is doubtful. My survey of the *bāhās* and *bahīs* shows that we have only two confirmed dates for extant *bahīs* before 1200 AD (i.e., the beginning of the Malla period). These are for Guita Bahī in Patan and Tham Bahī in Kathmandu. On the other hand we do have several confirmed dates from the so-called Ṭhākūrī period for *bāhās* of the *Ācārya-Gūṭhī* in Kathmandu and the 'Fifteen *Bāhās*' of Patan. We also know that several of the principal *bahīs* were *founded* in the time of Jayasthiti and Yakṣa Malla: Ubā Bahī and Ibā Bahī in Patan, Nhāykañ and Syaṅgu Bahī of Kathmandu. Another curious fact is that except for two manuscripts copied in Dugañ Bahī (Ṣaḍakṣari Mahāvihāra) in Kathmandu, we have no manuscripts copied in *bahīs*. Buddhist manuscripts were copied by people in *bāhās*, usually Vajrācāryas. However, I would hesitate to draw any conclusions from this data about the relative age of the *bahī*. We know so little about the so-called Ṭhākūrī period that an argument from silence is very weak indeed; and we have no way of knowing if what data we have is in any sense a representative sample of data from that period. It may well turn out to consist of chance finds from certain groups that are in no way representative of the society as a whole. What does seem clear is that from the viewpoint of the dominant tantric Buddhists of the Kathmandu Valley, the *bahīs* represented an archaic form of Buddhism. No definite conclusions can be stated, but my own hypothesis is that the two institutions perhaps existed side by side from the earliest days. Gradually, and as a result of the ascendancy of the Vajrācāryas and their form of tantric Buddhism, the celibate communities diminished, finally succumbing to the dominant tradition and becoming married 'celibate monks' (*brahmacarya-bhikṣu*), still trying to maintain something of their original traditions. If more accurate information on the Licchavi and so-called Ṭhākūrī period is ever made available, we may well find that the celibate communities were always in the minority.

It has often been said that the *bāhās* and *bahīs* are all former monasteries. This statement is erroneous on two counts. First, in the accepted tradition of the Valley they are still monasteries, that is, abodes or shrines of an initiated saṅgha of householder *bhikṣus* and tantric priests, the Vajrācāryas. If the statement means to say that the *bāhās* and *bahīs* were formerly the residences of celibate monks, it is also inaccurate. Most of the *bahīs* may well have housed celibate monks at one time. The branch *bāhās*, which make up the bulk of the number, were clearly founded for a lineage of a householder *bāhā*. Though it cannot be proven yet with any degree of certainty, it is entirely possible that the main *bāhās* have always been what they are today: *vihāras* for a married saṅgha. We have no evidence that they were ever anything different, and how else explain the consistent tradition of a common descent for all members of the saṅgha and a common lineage deity? They may well have been founded by individuals who had once been celibate monks, but the individual then left his former monastery and founded a family *vihāra* (or a *samsārik tantrik vihāra*) which has been passed on by heredity from one generation of his descendants to the next.

The key seems to lie in the two words *samsārik*: having families and being busy with things of this world, and *tantric*: there are no Vajrācāryas in *bahīs*. The fact that in later days the members of the *bahīs* were indeed married is irrelevant; they were the guardians of a celibate tradition, a different tradition.⁶² The absence of Vajrācāryas does not mean that the *bahīs* were non-tantric. Every *bahī* has its tantric shrine (*āgam*) and the rituals they perform are basically tantric. The point is that they were independent from the *bāhās* whose members were by definition householders and from Vajrācāryas who were priests to such families, and whose *bāhās* had a much more elaborate and structured ritual adapted to a householder tradition.

From the viewpoint of the *bāhās* this has a different meaning. Several years ago one informant gave me the following explanation of *bahīs*:

“In the days when all of these communities were open to any qualified candidate the *bahīs* were a lower class of *vihāra*, where the *bhikṣu* would receive his first training. After completing his training he would become an *upasampradaya-bhikṣu* and join a *bāhā*, where he would study further and receive further training, which would eventually entitle him to become a Vajrācārya.”

This is the view of a Śākya attached to one of the principal *bāhās* and expresses quite accurately the view of the dominant *bāhā* community who consider the tantric traditions of the Vajrācāryas to be a higher form of Buddhism. It may also reflect the reality. The *bahīs* may well have housed the last communities of celibate monks (true *brahmacarya-bhikṣus*) who had the leisure to pursue a study of the dharma. Their *vihāras* may well have been schools of the dharma where Buddhists from the *bāhās* could go to learn the basics of the dharma.

This line of reasoning, however, overlooks another explanation for the development of Newar Buddhism which is found in the later chronicles and is known to many people today. According to this tradition, Śaṅkarācārya came to Nepal, defeated the Buddhists, destroyed their manuscripts, killed many of the monks and forced the remaining monks to marry.⁶³ This is the source of a general theory upheld by some foreign and many Nepali writers that an abrupt change took place when nearly all the monks and nuns suddenly married and abandoned the traditional celibate life style of the *bhikṣu*.

There is no contemporary evidence for a visit by Śaṅkarācārya to Nepal from either Indian or Nepalese sources. He would have come to Nepal at the height of Licchavi power, but there is no evidence from the Licchavi inscriptions of such a visit and no evidence of a religious upheaval resulting in the virtual destruction of the Buddhist tradition. Furthermore, there is no evidence of either a visit by Śaṅkarācārya, or a concerted effort to destroy Buddhism in the earliest and most reliable chronicle, the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī*. To expect such an event at this time does not fit what evidence we have of the history of Buddhism in Nepal. From the evidence, it is clear that the greatest flowering of Buddhism in the

Valley of Nepal occurred long after Śaṅkarācārya in the Ṭhākūrī period. If one has to explain the later changes by a single event or a period of persecution of the Buddhists, one would have to look for this in the Malla period or shortly before its inception.

It is entirely possible that the story arose from the coming of a later Śaṅkarācārya who is known from a single inscription dated 262 NS (1142 AD). According to the evidence of the inscription, this man twice visited Nepal and in his second visit in particular gathered quite a following. In his religious practice and doctrine he was the antithesis of the great Śaṅkarācārya – a follower of Dvaitavāda, an expert in yoga and a tantric master who covered himself with the ashes of a Śaiva *sādhu* and rode a bull. Even this inscription though gives no evidence of a violent attack on the Buddhists. It does indicate a growing influence of tantric Śaivism at the highest levels. He is reputed to have given *dikṣā* to the sons of the king, Śivadeva, to have repaired the Paśupatināth temple and to have introduced tantric rituals in the worship of the lingam there.⁶⁴

What evidence we have from the Ṭhākūrī period and the early Malla period supports the theory of a gradual change, eventually resulting in the disappearance of celibate monks. It is interesting that this myth of Śaṅkarācārya is found only in the later chronicles written in the last century after the Gorkhali conquest. In speaking with Vajrācāryas and Śākyas I have found a different strain in the oral tradition. I have been continually told that the state of Buddhism is due to the pressure exerted on the community by Hindu kings, who forced them to conform to the social model of standard Hinduism. The king always mentioned in this connection is Jayasthiti Malla. This must be linked with the general tradition that Jayasthiti Malla imposed a reorganized caste structure on Newar society. This contention is also found in the chronicles, but again only in the later chronicles. There is no mention of it in the *Gopālarājavamśāvalī*, the last part of which was composed during the reign of Jayasthiti Malla and is almost a day by day chronicle of events of his reign. That Jayasthiti Malla was a staunch Hindu is clear, and if he had reorganized society along Hindu lines one would expect this to be heralded in the chronicle. The only evidence we have of a king directly interfering in the running of the *vihāras* is the story in Wright's chronicle (still current in the oral tradition) of Siddhi Narasiṃha reorganizing the monasteries of Patan. His reorganization of the *vihāras* seems to be an attempt to induce some order into a chaotic situation and ensure that the traditions are preserved. Objections were only raised by members of the *bahīs*, who complained that he was forcing on them a custom at variance with their traditions. Yet it is clear that he does this only because they are not what they claim to be: celibate monks. If they had been celibate monks without families there would have been no need to impose family priests on them. I would see the myth of Śaṅkarācārya as a reflexive attempt by the better educated and more reflective members of the Buddhist community to explain the discrepancy they perceive between the Buddhism of the Mahāyāna sūtras or the tantric texts and the way it is lived by the community at large.

In light of this one must ask the question: is Newar Buddhism corrupt? A resounding 'yes' has been given by almost every western writer on Newar Buddhism.⁶⁵ Yet what does it mean to say that Newar Buddhism is corrupt? It can be taken in two senses. It could mean that the type of Buddhism practised in Nepal is itself corrupt, or it could mean that the present situation is a deterioration from an earlier period when a pure, pristine type of Buddhism was practised.

One has the impression that many writers find Newar Buddhism corrupt because it is tantric. This is a biased judgement, and ultimately any evaluation of Newar Buddhism must be made against the yardstick of their Mahāyāna-Tantra tradition. A common complaint is that it is mixed-up with Hinduism. Again, this often seems to be a judgement of tantric Buddhism with its multiplicity of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, protective deities and demons, plus the tantric ritual. The iconography of many such deities has been 'borrowed' from the Hindus, or better from the general treasury of Indian tradition. Thus, many forms of Avalokiteśvara (e.g., Nīlakaṇṭha-Lokeśvara) show heavy Śaivite borrowings and the very name Lokeśvara is ambiguous to the outsider. But Avalokiteśvara is not Śiva and no Buddhist would conflate the two. The rituals performed by the Vajrācāryas and the rituals performed by the Hindu tantric priests may seem identical to the casual observer, but the meaning and purpose of the rituals is totally different.

The most common complaint concerns caste – the *bhikṣus* have become a caste and the saṅgha is a closed society. This is indeed contrary to the Buddhist tradition that the saṅgha is open to men and women of any caste. Yet the complaint is often made against the background of a very questionable thesis, namely that Buddhism was a revolt against caste and that caste was unknown among the Buddhists. Buddhism was a revolt against caste to the extent that it denied that 'salvation' was open only to the brahman or the high caste and that it admitted all comers into the saṅgha.⁶⁶ However, throughout its history in India, Buddhism existed in a caste society. The monk could withdraw from that society to his *vihāra*, but the lay Buddhist remained very much a part of Hindu society and lived according to its traditions, making use of the brahmins to perform the usual rituals and initiate his sons into their caste. By becoming a Buddhist a man chose a different way of salvation, he did not opt out of (Hindu) society. What a study of Newar Buddhist society then presents us with is not so much a corrupt form of Buddhism, as some inkling of the way Buddhism functioned in India as a part of the Indian (Hindu) scene. It is indeed, as one writer has called it, 'the survival of Indian Buddhism'. With the disappearance of Buddhism in India, Nepal was cut off from a source of renewal, and because of the very closed and confined nature of the society of the Valley its position within a Hindu society was pushed to its logical conclusion – the monks became a caste. Yet this development which is so decried is probably the most important factor in the survival of Buddhism in the Valley. It survived because the monks became a caste, thereby insuring that their sons would of necessity be ordained *bhikṣus* in order to maintain their place in society. This created a permanent

Buddhist community and prevented its complete absorption by Hinduism, as happened in India. What is surprising is that so much of the tradition has survived to the present day.

The question of the deterioration of the Buddhist tradition of the Valley is somewhat vexed. It has generally been presumed that the Valley, and especially Patan, had a glorious Buddhist past characterized by large communities of celibate monks and a great number of scholars and pandits. Speaking of Patan, Snellgrove has written: "Patan must have been a kind of vast university-city, differing little in its mode of life from similar towns in medieval Europe. In fact its buildings, its traditions, its way of life, must have been modelled on the great monastic universities of central India."⁶⁷ Again: "This city was once a place of sanctity and learning, where monks and pandits were glad to come and visit. Some came from India to teach. Others from Tibet to learn."⁶⁸

From Nepalese sources we have little to support such a thesis. We know that in the medieval period there were a great number of monasteries and a great number of *bhikṣus* and *śākya-bhikṣus*, especially in Patan and Kathmandu. We know that a lot of manuscripts were copied in this period. Manuscript copying is not scholarship, and the evidence from the colophons is that the manuscripts were copied, often on commission, to gain merit either for the copier or for the one who commissioned them. Internal evidence suggests that the manuscripts, like the manuscripts of early medieval Europe, were copied by monks who did not understand the language. Manuscript copying was a profession which did not presuppose a knowledge of Sanskrit or of Mahāyāna philosophy. Many of the manuscripts were tantric ritual texts and we see a growing influence of tantric ritual and the dominance of the whole Buddhist scene by the Vajrācāryas. *Vihāras* continued to be built and repaired, often by the Hindu elite, *caityas* were erected, and Buddhist art flourished, especially the making of metal caste images and woodwork. The cache of palm leaf land deeds from this period suggests that the *bhikṣus* were very busy with buying and selling land and the management of such property. They also contain several references to Śākyas as *suvarṇākara*: goldsmiths. By 1440 it is clear that *bhikṣus* of the *bāhās* of Patan are married men and the *saṅgha* a family and caste affair.

From Tibetan sources we know of a number of learned scholars and famous *siddhas* who flourished in the Valley from the eleventh to the fifteenth century. Some of these were Indian, some Nepalese, but none of them are remembered today by the Nepalese. In Kathmandu the memory of four great *siddhas* has remained alive: Mañjuvajra, Līlavajra, Suratavajra, and Vākvajra. To these must be added Śāntikarācārya who is revered as the first Vajrācārya. All of these men were tantric *siddhas*, and even they are mere shadows. No one knows when they lived or what they did beyond some legendary accounts of their use of tantric power. The scholars have been totally forgotten, as though they were irrelevant to the whole tradition. Perhaps the medieval picture is much closer to what we find in the late Malla period. Scholars there were, but they were the exception to the rule; and what scholarship there was, withered once it was cut off from a

source of renewal in India. Buddhism in the Valley has always been a popular religion catering to the needs of a largely uneducated and agricultural society which has always been a caste Hindu society, though perhaps less rigidly so before Jayasthiti Malla.

Despite this, every Newar would admit that today a deterioration has set in. The story cited above of the painting of Vanaratna is a case in point. 125 years ago he was remembered, and it was so important to the people of Pintu Bahī to preserve his memory that they made a new copy of the faded painting. Within the past thirty years the paintings were both sold and Vanaratna has been forgotten. People will point to the deteriorating state of the *vihāras*, especially in Kathmandu where soaring cement boxes replace sections of the *bāhā* complex, so that all that is left of the original architecture is the shrine of the *kwāpā-dya*. Except at a few places, like Jana Bāhā in Kathmandu and some of the main *bāhās* in Patan, rituals, are performed perfunctorily with few people in attendance. Fewer people attend many of the festivals each year, and there is more and more of a carnival atmosphere. Many people call the Vajrācārya for only the most essential rituals, and even at these one often finds that the family leaves the priest to perform the rituals alone. They are present at the beginning or only when their presence is required. Vajrācāryas are poorly paid for their services. People are paying them the same stipends they were years ago before inflation, and it is impossible for a man to make a decent living functioning only as a priest. One has the impression that they are providing a service that the people still feel obliged to make use of but one which they find increasingly irksome or irrelevant. Many young Śākya and Vajrācāryas know of their *bāhā* only as the place where they received their caste initiation. One Śākya of Patan, about thirty years old, says he has visited his *bāhā* only once: at the time of his initiation. He does not remember the name of the *bāhā* and can give only the most general indications of its location. There are few Vajrācāryas today who know any Sanskrit and who can explain the Dharma or even explain the rituals they perform. When questioned by their clients they respond that it is all secret and they cannot explain it to any but the initiated.

These changes are a part of the general socio-economic and political changes which began with the Gorkhali conquest, but have intensified since 1951 when Nepal was opened up to the outside world. The most important factor in these changes, which affect all sectors of Newar society and not just the *vihāras* or the Buddhists, is the undercutting of the economic basis of Newar cultural institutions. All Newar cultural institutions are regulated by *gūthīs* and financed by revenue from *gūthī* lands. Several factors have cut into this revenue. The most obvious is the ever increasing population of the *vihāras*. The members of the families who farm the land of the *vihāras* are also increasing. Land is not increasing. A given piece of land must now support more farmers and feed more people at *gūthī* feasts. Even if all the endowments had remained intact, the whole system would be under strain. But they have not. Some lands were confiscated by the Gorkhalis when they conquered the Valley, and more agricultural

land was taken by the Ranas to build their palaces from the latter part of the last century up to 1950.

The most important factor, though, has been the Land Reform, effectively implemented in the Valley. Land reform gave and guaranteed rights to the tenants who farmed the land, and it limited the amount of rent they have to pay to their landlords, whether individuals or corporate bodies such as a *gūṭhī*. Secondly, land reform seems to have given the *coup de grâce* to the bond of trust which existed between the *bāhā* communities and the cultivators of their land, the *Jyāpūs*. The members of the *vihāra-saṅghas* were the religious leaders of the *Jyāpū* community – the *Vajrācāryas* served as their priests and the *Śākyas* lived in and tended the religious centres which formed an important part of their religious-cultural milieu. They were also the only educated members of the community. To the *Jyāpūs* they were all *gurujū*. Whereas most landlords of the Valley are present on the day of the harvesting of the rice, either personally or through their agents, and make sure that every grain of rice is measured and that they get their share, this was not the custom of the *vihāra-saṅghas*. The *Jyāpūs* harvested the rice and, without fail, they brought the customary share, or a payment in cash to the *vihāra*. The members of the *saṅgha* seldom, if ever, visited the site of their lands; they knew they were safe in the care of the *Jyāpūs* and that they would get their due share. This arrangement was under strain because of the increasing press on the land. Land reform bestowed on the farming community an increased sense of security and independence. In many cases they simply stopped bringing the share to the *vihāra*, and the members of the *vihāra*, suffered in silence. Furthermore, many of the *Jyāpūs* have taken further advantage of land reform and the confused state of ancient records to lay claim to the land as owners and not simply as tenants. They simply got their names registered in the field book of the cadastral survey. It takes documentary proof and a court case to dispossess the man whose name is listed on that field survey. Again, members of the *vihāra-saṅghas* have deplored this, but done nothing. Much of this shows also a loss of a feeling of solidarity among the *bare*. In fact, it is not only the *Jyāpūs* who have taken advantage of the changed circumstances. I have been given many concrete examples of members of the *saṅgha* getting *gūṭhī* land registered in their own names and then selling it off. In a very few cases the *saṅgha* has taken the initiative, sold off their *gūṭhī* land and put the money obtained into a trust or simply a long-term deposit in the bank. In this way their endowment has changed from fields to a deposit in the bank. The annual income continues to fund the feasts and other activities of the *gūṭhī*. However, this fixed annual income buys less and less each year, unlike the old income which was a fixed quantity of produce or a fixed percentage of the harvest.

Along with this undercutting of the economic basis is a growing change in the life style of the *bare*, especially in Kathmandu. Many of the *bare* are in businesses which have prospered, or in government service. When a family has the means they usually sell off their cramped quarters in the *vihāra* and build a

house on the outskirts of the city. Others find that there is simply not room enough in the *vihāra* for their growing family, and either buy or rent quarters wherever available in the city. This migration is breaking up the old communities. Whereas in former times all members of the saṅgha lived in the *vihāra* and thus shared in the daily round of ritual, the monthly and yearly observances and the local festivals, they now return to their *vihāra* only for the annual festival or the worship of the lineage deity. In some cases they return only for the all-important initiation of their sons. The round of ritual and the stories told during the rituals served as the catechesis of the young – the vehicle by which the traditions of the community, its values and obligations were passed on to the young. This has been lost. Even for the young who still live in the *vihāra* there are more alluring attractions than watching rituals – Hindi films, videos, or a stroll with their friends down New Road. This pattern is most obvious in Kathmandu, but in ten years' time the situation in Patan will be identical.

It is also the Śākya and Vajrācāryas, and more so the wealthy trading class among the Buddhists of Kathmandu, who have taken the greatest advantage of the availability of modern education. This has had two effects. Vajrācāryas who have the education go into the professions or into government service, with the result that the young Vajrācāryas who are left to carry on the tradition are the least educated members of the community. The better educated Buddhists who want to preserve their Buddhist traditions then have no one within their own tradition to turn to for an exposition of Buddhism commensurate with their own education.

Many sincere Buddhists within the community are acutely aware of the crisis this has provoked. Groups have been formed and efforts are being made to spread the Dharma through books, seminars, singing groups, etc., but one wonders if a renewal of traditional Mahāyāna Buddhism is possible without an educated and celibate saṅgha. A true revival, however, is taking place, but it is a Theravāda revival: another matter.

Notes

- 1 Not all scholars agree in identifying the Licchavis of Nepal with those of Vaiśālī known from Indian History and the Buddhist records. The name is unusual, and all we really have is a common name. What is clear is that the Licchavis of Nepal came from the plains as they were very clearly caste Hindus with a highly developed Sanskrit culture.
- 2 D. L. Snellgrove, "Appendix" in Etienne Lamotte, *Towards the Meeting with Buddhism*, Rome 1970, 129–30.
- 3 The etymology of this word is clear from the Malla period inscriptions where the Sanskrit term and the derivatives *vāhāra/bāhāra/bāhāl* are interchanged, often within the same inscription. See Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, Kathmandu: forthcoming, 479, n. 1.
- 4 This custom of protective deities goes back to ancient times. I-Tsing, who travelled through India in the latter part of the seventh century, reports that it was common to find an image of Mahākāla near the door or in the kitchen of the great Indian *vihāras*.

- He identifies him as belonging to the beings of the Great God (Maheśvara = Śiva) and placed there to protect the *vihāra*. I-Tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, Delhi 1966, 38.
- 5 All of these wood carvings have been photographed and described in Kerel Rujik van Kooij, "The Iconography of the Buddhist Wood Carvings in a Newar Monastery in Kathmandu (Chusyā-Bāhā)", *JNRC* 1, 39–82.
- 6 The earlier Newari form is found in a number of documents. For the Sanskrit term see Sankarmān Rājvamsi, "Sthitimallako pālako Vi. Sam. 1545ko Māncandra Śakyako Tāmraptra ra Tyasko Aitihāsik Vyākhyā", *Pūrṇimā* 4, 54–55.
- Some have interpreted *kwāpā* as a shortened form of *kwātha*. (See for example Siegfried Lienhard, "Nepal: the Survival of Indian Buddhism in a Himalayan Kingdom", in Heinz Bechert and Richard Gombrich, *The World of Buddhism*, London 1984, 112). *Kwātha* is a Newari term for a fort and it is true that some of the *vihāras* were referred to as forts, especially *bahīs* on the edge of the city and two *bāhās* now called Kwa Baha. However, most of the *vihāras* were not forts and were not referred to as forts. I have heard this etymology only from people at Kwā (= Kwātha) Bāhā in Patan. Informants at other *vihāras* have consistently denied this etymology; and, more important, the term *kwāthapāla* (*deva*) does not occur in any document.
- 7 See Hemrāj Śākya, *Buddha Mūrti Chagu Adhyayana*, Kathmandu, 1097 NS (Nepal Samvat), 90.
- 8 This figure appears on a number of early monuments such as the seventh century *caitya* at Dhwākā Bāhā in Kathmandu, where Pal tentatively identifies it as Maitreya. The *caitya* has four figures: Śākyamuni Buddha, two Bodhisattvas and this figure. Though Maitreya is usually portrayed as a Bodhisattva, he is also portrayed as a Buddha, and there seems to be no reason to have two images of Śākyamuni on the same monument. Furthermore, on some similar monuments the fourth figure is another form of Maitreya which is unmistakable. Pratapaditya Pal, *The Arts of Nepal*, Part I, Leiden 1974, 28.
- 9 For a complete description of this *mandala*, see *Niṣpanayogāvalī*, 60–68, and for the Sanskrit text 54–65.
- 10 See *Sādhanamālā*, No. 61. This tantric deity assumed a very prominent place in the devotion of the Newar Buddhists in the Late Malla period. No one has been able to explain the sudden popularity of this deity, which is not found in earlier iconography.
- 11 *Sādhanamālā*, No. 62, 63. This deity belongs to the lineage of Amitābha, while Dhar-madhātuvāgīśvara belongs to the lineage of Vajrasattva, but informants have consistently equated the two to me.
- 12 See Marie Threse de Mallman, *Introduction à L'Iconographie du Tantrisme Bouddhique*, Paris 1975, 206; and B. Bhattacharyya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, Calcutta 1968, 206. There is also a Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī which is found in the *Sādhanamālā*, No. 82, but this is quite a different deity – a form of Mañjuśrī with three faces and four arms. The Nepalese Nāmasaṅgīti is identified as a form of the Buddha himself.
- 13 This is the well-known Ha (or Hakhā) Bāhā of Patan.
- 14 *Bare*, and more especially its Nepali corruption *bāṇḍā*, is considered to be a derogatory term and hence is seldom used today by the *bare* themselves. I continue to use it here because there is no other inclusive term which applies to both Śākyas and Vajrācāryas; and in speaking of the *vihāra-saṅgha* it is important to emphasize that they form one group with equal rights and duties.
- 15 See Sukumar Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*, London 1962, 136 and *passim* for descriptions of the *pūjā* performed in Indian monasteries; also I-Tsing, *op. cit.*, 147–50.

16 See John Locke, *Karuṇāmaya*, Kathmandu 1980, 175–181, for a description of the more complete rituals still performed at Jana Bāhā in Kathmandu. Hemrāj Śākya gives the following schedule of rituals formerly followed at Bhinchu Bāhā in Patan:

- 1 Early in the morning, about 4:30, the *dya-pālā* should rise and open the outer door of the shrine of the *kwāpā-dya*.
- 2 The *dya-pālā* goes for a ritual bathing (*pañca-snāna*).
- 3 He sweeps the floor of the shrine.
- 4 He washes all of the *pūjā* vessels.
- 5 He prepares the materials for the *pañcopacāra-pūjā* (flowers, incense, a light, scent and food). While he is doing this a group of devotees gather to recite the *Nāmasaṅgīti* and other Mahāyāna sūtras.
- 6 In order to arouse the mind of enlightenment in himself the *dya-pālā* recites a hymn (*gāthā*) known as the *Akāśā-dhātu*.
- 7 He recites verses from the Mahāyāna sūtras.
- 8 As the group in front of the shrine recite the *Nāmasaṅgīti*, begging bowls are offered to the Buddha.
- 9 The *dya-pālā* opens the inner door of the shrine and laying aside his street clothes, he dons the saffron robe of a monk.
- 10 He takes the large metal plate used for the offerings to the Buddha and meditates on its meaning as he recites an appropriate verse.
- 11 He performs a *nāga-pūjā* to the water vessel used for the rituals.
- 12 Before going into the inner sanctum of the shrine, he places the ceremonial metal mirror on the ground in front of the shrine and draws the letter 'Om'.
- 13 Ringing a bell and offering grains of rice three times he performs the ritual known as the purification of the body (*kāya-śodhana*).
- 14 Pouring a stream of water over the metal mirror he recites a hymn (*gāthā*) called *Yan-maṅgalam-sakalasattva-hṛdi-sthitasya*. (This is the daily, ritual bathing of the image of Buddha.)
- 15 Taking the mirror in his hand, he recites the *gāthā Prativimva-samadharma* as he goes round the deity three times.
- 16 He sprinkles the worshippers who have gathered with the bathing water as he recites the *gāthā Abhiṣeka-mahāvajra*.
- 17 Pouring out the remaining water he traces a *maṅḍala* known as the *dhara-maṅḍala*.
- 18 Just before dawn he touches this *dhara-maṅḍala* which he had traced earlier and draws on it a crossed *vajra*.
- 19 On this spot he places the 'shoes' of the *kwāpā-dya*.
- 20 He takes the wooden gong outside and striking it 108 times he recites the *Aparamitā-dhāraṇī*.
- 21 He offers a libation to the seven Tathāgatas (Vipaśin, Sikhin, Viśvabhū, Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, Kāśyapa, Śākyamuni).
- 22 He offers the *pañcopacāra-pūjā* with a meditation. (This is the main part of the morning worship, the *nitya-pūjā*.)
- 23 While this is going on, the group that gathered to recite the *Nāmasaṅgīti* recites a number of *gāthās*, a hymn to Vairocana and another hymn.
- 24 Recitation of the *Saptavidhānuttara-pūjāstotra*.
- 25 Recitation of the two *dhāraṇīs*, one in honour of Śākyamuni and the other in honour of Aparamitā.
- 26 Recitation of the *Daśapāramitā-stotra* and the *Buddhatrailokyanātha-stotra*.
- 27 Recitation of the *Bodhipariṇāmana-gāthā* and the *Anuttarabodhi-jñānapada*. (This concludes the early morning rituals.)
- 28 In the middle of the morning, between eight and nine AM the *dya-pālā* places a

- sort of throne or seat on the *maṇḍala* just outside the main entrance to the shrine and having placed a *caitya* on this he offers a libation to it.
- 29 Next he takes the key to the main door of the shrine and ringing a bell he makes a circuit of all the shrines and *caityas* in the complex.
- 30 When he comes back he sounds the wooden gong 108 times as before.
- 31 Again he offers the *pañcopacāra-pūjā*.
- 32 Waving the yak-tail fan he recites the *Daśapāramitā-stotra*.
- 33 Singing the praises of the Buddha, he closes the door of the shrine. (After this he goes to take his rice meal.)
- 34 Between two and three in the afternoon he again opens the shrine and sounds the wooden gong 108 times.
- 35 He recites the *Daśapāramitā-stotra* waving the yak-tail fan.
- 36 In the evening between five and six he again sounds the wooden gong 108 times and makes a circuit of the shrines in the compound as before.
- 37 Again he offers the *pañcopacāra-pūjā* to the Buddha.
- 38 About seven in the evening a group of devotees again gather to recite various hymns.
- 39 At the conclusion of the hymns they recite the *Daśapāramitā* and the *Buddha-trailokyanātha-stotras* after which the *dya-pālā* recites the *Dīpādāna-stotra*, lights a lamp and offers *āraṭī* to the Buddha. Then the devotees offer *āraṭī*, after which they are given a saffron *ṭīkā* and flowers. This concludes the *āraṭī* ceremony and the daily schedule of rituals.
- 17 John Locke, "Newar Buddhist Initiation Rites", *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, Vol. II, 2.9.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 13.
- 21 This description is based on a *bare-chuyegu* ceremony I witnessed in Jana Bāhā in 1974; some details of the ceremony are slightly different in Patan, but it is essentially the same ritual.
- 22 Michael Allen, "Buddhism Without Monks: The Vajrayāna Religion of the Newars of Kathmandu Valley", *SA* 3, 1–10.
- 23 See Locke, *Karuṇāmaya*, 47–50. For an account of the long dispute which effectively broke the power of the Ācārya-Gūṭhī see Colin Rosser, "Social Mobility in the Newar Caste System", in C. von Fürer Haimendorf, (ed.), *Caste and Kin in Nepal, India and Ceylon*, Bombay 1966, 68–139.
- 24 According to tradition, the *bāhās* of Patan were reorganized by Siddhi Narasiṃha, the king of Patan, in the seventeenth century. When he made the new rules there were fifteen main *bāhās* in Patan. Later he amalgamated the two village institutions of Kir-tipur and Cobhār to those of Patan, and later still a new one was founded, bringing the total to eighteen, but they continued to be called 'The Fifteen Bāhās'. See the section below on the main *bāhās*.
- 25 At Kwā Bāhā in Patan, six of the branches are semi-independent, performing their own initiations. They may well have been separate institutions that were amalgamated to Kwā Bāhā. This is the only case of such semi-independent branches. In a recent article David Gellner has referred to these as independent branches and the other branches as Lineage Monasteries, a very accurate term. David Gellner, "The Newar Buddhist Monastery – An Anthropological and Historical Typology", 7, 39–9.
- 26 See Gellner, *op. cit.*, 19–25 for certain other differences he found in Patan, not all of them valid for Kathmandu.
- 27 See for example, Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, "Elements of Newar Social Structure", *JRAI*, No. 86, Part 2, 18–19, and Rosser, *op. cit.*

- 28 See Rosser, *op. cit.*
- 29 Niels Gutschow and Bernhard Kolver, *Bhaktapur*, Wiesbaden 1975, 56, 58.
- 30 Such power is still the key to understanding the villager's respect for the Vajrācārya. A few years ago Iswar Anand Śresthācārya, a Newari linguist, was collecting data on the vocabulary peculiar to a village festival. He was speaking with the eldest man of an entirely Jyāpū village and asked the man why they called the Vajrācārya and what he did. The man remarked that it was the custom. The interviewer kept returning to this question seeking a fuller answer. In exasperation the old man finally said, "Look, I am a simple villager. What do I know about such things. The Vajrācārya comes, he does his *pūjā* and recites his mantra and the pot of beer needed for the festival begins to shake. Then the festival can start. It can't start until the pot shakes."
- 31 The *jhānkrī* is the spirit healer of Nepal, a man possessed by the spirit of a deity who can cure diseases and overcome the malevolent influences of evil spirits or witches.
- 32 Cārumati Vihāra is not the official Sanskrit name of this *vihāra*, and Slusser concludes that the Newari name has given rise to both this popular Sanskrit name and the daughter of Aśoka. Mary Slusser, *Nepal Maṇḍala*, Princeton 1982, 276–7.
- 33 See Dhanavajra Vajrācārya, *Licchavikālkā Abhilekh*, Kathmandu, 2030 vs and Dilli Raman Regmi, *Inscriptions of Ancient Nepal*, New Delhi 1983, for the corpus of these inscriptions. For a survey of what is known of Buddhism from these inscriptions see also, Theodore Riccardi, "Buddhism in Ancient and Early Medieval Nepal", in A.K. Narain, (ed.), *Studies in the History of Buddhism*, Delhi 1980, 265–81. Strangely, there are no pre-Licchavi Buddhist remains. There are a number of Hindu pieces from as early as the second century BC, but it is only from the fifth century onward that one finds Buddhist pieces. See Lain S. Bangdel, *The Early Sculptures of Nepal*, New Delhi 1982, 7.
- 34 Dhanavajra Vajrācārya, *Licchavikālkā Abhilekh*, 548–62.
- 35 *Ibid.*, inscpt. 77, 133, 134.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 77.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 133, 134.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 136.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 121.
- 40 Sylvain Levi, *Le Nepal*, 1, Paris 1905, 154–5.
- 41 See Vajracarya, *op. cit.*, 371, and Slusser I:272–3.
- 42 At the present time there is a *bahī* at Svayambhū which is a fourteenth century foundation. There is also a community of Vajrācāryas (called *Bauddhācārya*) who are initiated at the Mahācaitya. They may be the successors of the ancient *bāhā* community, but they have no *vihāra* at the present time.
- 43 The term 'Ṭhākūrī period' is most unsatisfactory as it purports to be a dynastic title; but there is no certainty that the earliest of these kings were indeed a new dynasty at all, and they were certainly not all of one dynasty. The Malla kings in turn may well be of the same dynasty as the last of the Ṭhākūrī kings. Slusser (*Nepal Maṇḍala*) has used the term 'transitional period' and this has been followed by Luciano Petech in the new edition of his *Mediaeval History of Nepal*. However, a 'transitional period' of over three hundred years sounds strange indeed and seems to suppose a transition from one clear-cut situation to another. Furthermore, the new term has not been accepted by any Nepali historian.
- 44 Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, Appendix II and III. It is important to emphasize that these records simply mention these monasteries in passing. They do not indicate the date of foundation, but state the fact of their existence at the date mentioned. They may well be much older. There were also probably many more monasteries in existence which are not mentioned in these random finds.

- 45 Hemrāj Śākya, *Śivadeva Saṃskārīta Śrī Rudravarna Mahāvihāra Sthita Talpatra-Abhilekh*, Patan, 2524 BS. A critical edition of nearly all of these documents prepared by Prof. Bernhard Kolver and Hemraj Śākya is currently in the press.
- 46 Alka Chattopadhyaya, *Aīśa and Tibet*, Delhi 1981, 322; George N. Roerich, (tr.), *The Blue Annals*, Delhi 1979, 247. See also Luciano Petech, *Mediaeval History of Nepal*, Rome 1984, 41–43 for a correction of the earlier translations of the relevant passages.
- 47 George Roerich, *Biography of Dharmasvamin*, Patan 1959, 55–6.
- 48 In his translation of the *Blue Annals*, Roerich consistently claims that Vāgīśvarakīrti and Phamtimpa are the same man. Nowhere does he give any evidence for the identification. It is clear that Vāgīśvarakīrti was an Indian and equally clear that Phamtimpa's brothers were Nepalese.
- 49 Ian Alsop, *The Crowns of the Vajrācāryas*, forthcoming.
- 50 Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, Appendix I and II.
- 51 Hemrāj Śākya, *Śrīsvayambhū-Mahācaitya*, Kathmandu 1098 NS, 124.
- 52 Hemraj Śākya and T.R. Vaidya, *Medieval Nepal*, Kathmandu 1970, 30–31.
- 53 D.R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, Calcutta 1965–6, Part 3, 69.
- 54 *Ibid.* 3: 104.
- 55 Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, 481, n.4.
- 56 Slusser, *Nepal Maṇḍala* 1, 288–9.
- 57 Daniel Wright, (ed.), *History of Nepal*, Kathmandu 1972, 235–6.
- 58 Gellner, *op. cit.*, 25.
- 59 Gellner, *ibid.*, p. 30 from his retranslation from the original manuscript of the relevant passage from Wright's chronicle. This passage has been entirely omitted by Wright's translators.
- 60 Gellner, *ibid.*, 32.
- 61 Wright, *History of Nepal*, 116.
- 62 What is important is that these monasteries were *de jure* celibate institutions. This sort of reasoning is not so unusual. Nepali brahmans today will explain their superior status by the fact that they are forbidden to drink alcohol. When one points out that today many brahmans (perhaps even the informant) do, the informant will respond that this is irrelevant. What is important is that as a caste they are non-drinkers; and so they were defined in Nepalese law. The old code of law (*Mūlukī Ain*), in force until twenty five years ago, divided the clean castes into two broad categories: those who wear the sacred thread (*tagadhāri*) and those who drink alcohol (*matvalī*).
- 63 See for example Wright, *History of Nepal*, 118–20.
- 64 Dhanavajra Vajrācārya, "Madhyakālik Nepālkā Ek Prakhyāt Rājā Śivadeva", *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, Vol. VIII, 1: 217–18.
- 65 See Stephen Greenword, "Monkhood versus Priesthood in Newar Buddhism", in C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, *Contributions to the Anthropology of Nepal*, London 1974, 129–31, for selections from writers from Hodgson to Snellgrove. To these can be added Slusser's similar remarks, *Nepal Maṇḍala*, 1, 136–7.
- 66 Leinhard, *see references*.
- 67 Snellgrove, *Buddhist Himālaya*, Oxford 1957, 102–3.
- 68 *Ibid.*, 95.

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